



# WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

## *Late Summer Newsletter*

Volume 46/two

March/April 2016

*Warringal Conservation Society is a local, not-for-profit, community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.*

*Formed in 1970, the Society is an active and productive steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.*

### **Join us!!**

Warringal Conservation Society is not just a local environment group: it is stimulating, fun and companionable and takes an active role in the wider community.

Single \$15,  
Family \$20  
Pension/student/  
unemployed \$10  
Life \$150

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. We may edit for legal, space or other reasons. Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Warringal Conservation Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Jenny Macklin MP.

## MARCH MEETING

### **Myrtle Rust**

Dr Elizabeth Minchinton is a Biosecurity Officer specializing in Plant Pathology, in the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. She will speak about Myrtle Rust and its impact in Australia. Myrtle rust is an exotic fungal disease affecting plants of the Myrtaceae family which includes many familiar Australian native plants such as eucalypts, tea tree, bottlebrush. It is of South American origin and was first noted on Australia in 2010. The potential environmental impacts of myrtle rust are of great concern and plant nursery and forestry industries are also worried about the

## APRIL MEETING

### **Bag it: is your life too plastic?**

Following a viewing of this award-winning film Penny Grose, WCS and Transition Warringal member, will lead a discussion of issues raised the film, and what actions we can take. Try going a day without plastic. In this touching and often flat-out-funny film, we follow "everyman" Jeb Berrier as he embarks on a global tour to unravel the complexities of our plastic world. What starts as a film about plastic bags evolves into a wholesale investigation into plastic's effects on our oceans, environment, and bodies. We see how our crazy-for-plastic world has finally caught up to us...and what we can do about it.

**Meetings on first Thursday of the month  
from 7.30 pm at the Old Shire Offices,  
60 Beverley Road.**

**Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre and  
Greening Australia. Melways map 32:D3. All Welcome**

## AT A GLANCE

### March

**Thursday 3rd:** General meeting - Myrtle Rust

**Sunday 6th:** Clean up Australia Day (See news and Events)

### April

**Thursday 7th:** General meeting - Plastic

**Sunday 10th:** Weeding (See news and Events)

## News & Events

### Upcoming WCS activities\*

Sunday March 6th, 10am-12noon. Clean Up Australia Day.

Silt Pond, northern end of Banyule Swamp, Melways ref: 32:F1. Bring gumboots & rubber gloves. Silt pond is near Banyule Native Gardens; follow the main Yarra Trail around to nearly opposite playground.

Sunday April 10th, 10am-12noon, Weeding. Removing woody weeds. Robinia, Bend, Warringal Parklands Melways Ref: TBC

\*See facebook for updates:  
[www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety](http://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety)

### Night Walk Report

On the night of Sunday the 14th February about a dozen of us went on night walk at Banyule Flats led by WCS member George Paras. Leaving just on dark on a very still night we were able to locate lots of animals. The red light that George used provided a good view of the wildlife without dazzling or disturbing them. Some of the possums we saw continued chewing leaves. The highlight of the night was seeing a Powerful Owl on a low branch not far from the Yarra.

Sightings for the night were:

- White Striped Free-tail Bat (one that we could hear)
- Gould's Wattle Bat (dense mane)
- A Forest Bat (either Little, Large or Intermediate, George couldn't tell)
- A couple of Ringtail Possums
- At least 3 pairs of Brushtail Possums
  - female with lighter colour chest hair
  - males have darker chest

- A juvenile Powerful Owl
- Fruit Bats (heard)
- Little Corellas
- Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos

Thanks to George for leading the walk and Meg from the Banyule bush crew for taking notes of sightings.



*Top: Brush-Tail Possum; Bottom: Powerful Owl. Photos by Anthea Fleming.*

## Who we are and how to contact us

### Warringal Conservation Society Inc

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**Planting Coordinator:** Heather Smith

**Committee:** John D'Aloia, Anthea Fleming, Celia Smith, Daphne Hards, Dianne Williamson, James Deane.

## Report to February General Meeting

### Planting and Working Bees

Heather Smith, our working bee co-ordinator, has been liaising with the BCC Bush Crew to plan a series of planting and maintenance activities for 2016.

### Banyule Flats Night Walk

In conjunction with the Banyule Bush Crew we are conducting a night walk on Sunday 14th Feb, meeting at Somerset Drive car park (Melways 32F2), 8.00pm for 8.15pm start. Members and friends are invited. We will walk quietly along the Yarra Trail, spotting interesting creatures as they leave their homes to begin a night of foraging. The walk will be about 1 - 1 1/2 half hours. RSVP by email: [elephantstamp@optusnet.com.au](mailto:elephantstamp@optusnet.com.au)

### Grants

We have been successful in our application for a 2015/6 \$550.00 *Melbourne Water Community Support Grant*. This money will be used to subsidise the cost of our insurance policy.

### Wildlife issues

We wrote to several ministers and organisations expressing our concerns about proposed oil drilling in the Great Australian Bight. This letter was also distributed to members with the February newsletter. We received a response to our letters from the National Offshore Petroleum Safety & Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) advising that they have received a submission for drilling from BP. NOPSEMA have undertaken an initial assessment of the environment plan and determined that the plan does not meet regulatory requirements. By law, NOPSEMA must and has provided BP with an opportunity to modify and resubmit the environment plan. Minister Greg Hunt has responded to our letter advising that the matter is the responsibility of NOPSEMA.

Despite protests a Duck Hunting season has been announced to start on Sat. March 19<sup>th</sup>. Daphne Hards and Celia Smith will assist the rescue team on the opening weekend. We wrote to Jaala Pulford, Minister for Agriculture, a letter requesting the cancellation of the duck shooting season for 2016. The response from the Minister was non-committal. The weekend Jan 30/31 the Age, Herald Sun and Weekly Times reported there was disagreement in Labor government re duck shooting season decision. WCS urges members to contact local MLAs and Minister Jaala Pulford to stress a reversal.

Strathallan Golf Club, located adjacent to La Trobe University, wrote to us their concerns regarding potential sale or development of the site. Any such development would have a significant impact on habitat in the area. Daphne and Anthea conducted a bird survey at the site to establish a record of wildlife. We have responded to the Club and asked them to continue to inform us of any developments.

We received a further response from Helen Vaughan, Regional Director, Barwon South West: Dept of Env Land, Water & Planning, regarding our letter on Cheetham Salt Fields, Moolap. Information on the progress of the proposal is available from <http://delwp.vic.gov.au/parks-forests-and-crown-land/managing-land/moolap>. Community consultation includes an on-line survey which closes on 12 February.

Lawrence Pope has provided information regarding issues related to flying foxes at Yarra Bend: a 'no fishing' sign has been erected at Yarra Bend, but is only in English; and funds are sought to support the rescue group, Victorian Bat Clinic 'Fly by Night' [www.gofundme.com/babybatrescue](http://www.gofundme.com/babybatrescue)

### North East Link

The January issue of RACV's *Royal Auto* had an article recommending completion of the N-E Link. "Both routes would involve tunneling to avoid passing through sensitive areas...." The curfew on night truck traffic has had mixed result. WCS will watch this issue closely.

### Residential development zones

Richard Wynne, Minister for Planning has appointed an Advisory Committee to report on the application of zones that provide for residential development in metropolitan Melbourne and the four regional cities of Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and Latrobe. We received an invitation to respond to the *Residential State of Play Report* by Monday 29 February 2016. The report, which contains a specific section on Banyule, is available from <http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/planning/panels-and-committees/current-panels-and-committees/managing-residential-development>

*Daphne Hards (WCS Treasurer and Committee Member)*

## Fishing and Fruit Bats at Yarra Bend



**No Fishing**



**Fishing from the banks into the Yarra River is prohibited at Bellbird Picnic Area.**

### **A Big Thanks to Yarra Bend Parks Vic!**

Parks Vic has installed **No Fishing** signs, and they seemed to be having a good effect according to the observations on New Year's Day of Lawrence Pope from Victorian Advocates for Animals (VAFA). Over the next few months, VAFA will also attempt to have these signs displayed in other languages as well as English.

Members are encouraged to visit the Bellbird colony of grey headed flying foxes (Mel 2DK6)

whenever they can. If any person is observed fishing inside the colony area, where the signs are, please ring the Yarra Bend Parks Office on 94883999 and inform them. Tim Carver or another Ranger will respond and ask them to leave or face a fine. The signs are clear – 'No Fishing!'

VAFA are also asking people to support the Victorian Bat Clinic, Fly by Night, in its work of caring for flying foxes. The clinic is run by the dedicated Tamsyn Hogarth, and her clinic is desperately needed to be successful and sustainable.

Many flying foxes have been treated at Fly by Night for a myriad of injuries and ills. This has included the overnight treating and returning of dozens of flying fox babies from the latest heat event in Melbourne. Please support this vital work and donate to Fly by Night at:

<https://www.gofundme.com/babybatrescue> or send a cheque to Tamsyn Hogarth, 5 Roy Rd, Olinda Vic 3788

*Celia Smith*

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## **Warringal Habitat Links: installing nest boxes in greater Heidelberg**

How would you like to have a sugar glider living in your garden? Come along to Transition Warringal's Habitat Links presentation about what sugar gliders and some of their friends need to survive and thrive in suburbia.

When: Saturday 5 March, 2pm – 4pm

Where: Presentation at Rosanna Library, followed by an interpretive walk through Rosanna Parklands  
Guest presenter: Richard Francis, consulting ecologist

As we acknowledge the social and environmental problems humans have created, we are striving to re-establish harmony – within ourselves, within our communities, and with nature. This project is helping us reconnect with the fauna that has occupied this land for millennia. It will support local residents to support local indigenous arboreal species by offering low cost nest boxes in return for a commitment to monitor and maintain them.

We are effectively expanding Montmorency Community Group's biodiversity project downstream, with one significant modification to suit the different landscape in the Heidelberg area: nest boxes for a range of local species will be offered so that more local people can get involved. Sugar gliders are the focus in Montmorency because

they are supported by the good habitat connectivity across that suburb. In contrast, the only such habitat around greater Heidelberg is along waterways and some linear parks.

Our project follows Monty's model, including:

- consultation with ecologists from ABZECO (Applied Botany, Zoology and Ecology)
- nest box replication by volunteers
- offer of nest boxes to local residents at cost of materials; and
- tree canopy access training to meet the council's requirement to install and monitor nest boxes in parks and reserves.

Two Rosanna residents, Robyn Ball and Jennifer Chellew, had fun completing the one day course early in February. The first boxes they install will be for Friends of Salt Creek's Rosanna Parklands nest box project, also inspired by Monty. We'll hear more about that at the event on Saturday 5 March.

*Penny Grose*



## February Speaker - Rebecca McIntosh - Marine Debris and Wildlife

Rebecca is a research scientist working with Phillip Island Nature Parks and spoke to WCS about marine debris with an emphasis on her work on entanglement in Australian fur seals.

Marine debris of human origin include trawl net, monofilament fishing line used by recreational anglers, straps from bait boxes, twine, plastic bags, rope, shade cloth, clothing, rubber rings, ribbons from helium balloons, string and a range of other plastic objects that find their way into the sea.

Seals and many other marine species are affected, usually by entanglement or ingestion. About 50% of the seals where Rebecca works at Phillip Island show evidence of some form of entanglement. This causes cutting wounds and can affect the ability seals to feed. Whales also become entangled in large debris like fishing nets. Smaller plastic debris enter the food chain and about 90% seabirds have plastic in their gut that can cause blockages or be toxic.

At Phillip Island, Seal Rocks and the Summerland peninsula are home to about 30,000 fur seals. Males weigh about 350kg while females are about 100kg. Visually observing seals while they are ashore reveals those that have an entanglement. Trawl net (47%) and recreational fishing line (22%) are the most common culprits. Pups are more likely to become entangled because of their curious and playfully nature. If it is feasible, Rebecca and her colleagues will attempt to capture seals (with what looks like a giant butterfly net) and remove the entanglement. However this is only possible with females or young males, as the size of adult males makes it impossible to safely net them. If young

pups are around, seals cannot be captured because pups would be trampled in the panic that ensues when humans jump out with nets. Bad weather and other responsibilities also make consistent removal of entanglements difficult. On a good day Rebecca mentioned that it might be possible to unentangle 3-7 seals. Since 1997-2013 - 363 seals have been unentangled with a success rate of 20 to 100% each trip and an average of 55%.

Given the amount of effort that it takes to unentangle a seal, efforts need to be made to prevent entangling debris getting into the seas in the first place. Initiatives include encouraging commercial fishers to ensure that damaged nets and bait box straps don't end up in the sea. Rebecca mentioned that commercial fishers are often quite receptive to addressing these issues because they increasingly rely on their catch being given a tick of approval for sustainability. Recreation anglers are more diverse group that is harder to engage with, but efforts are being made to encourage the use of non-stainless hooks that rust and fall out.

On land we need to ensure effective waste management and minimisation, and more effort needs to be put into removing rubbish that does find its way into the sea. Individuals can make sure that rubbish goes in the bin, take part in beach cleanups, buy environmentally certified seafood, avoid products (like some cosmetics) that contain microplastics, and refrain from liberating helium balloons with plastic ribbons attached

*James Deane*

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## Nature Notes February 2016

Denise Fernando – An Eastern Koel in her garden in Macleod, and a Black-Faced Cuckoo-shrike

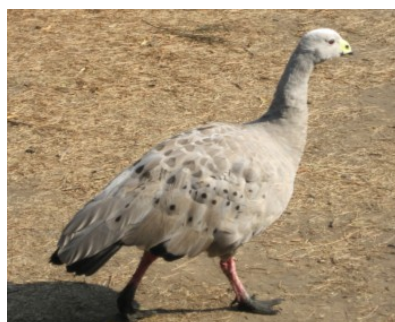
Heather Smith – Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in Warringal parklands

Dianne Williamson – Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, Kangaroos, a Fox, and a platypus in the Yarra

Doug – six Tawny Frog mouths at Salt Creek

Irene Kearsy – Brush tail possums in the daytime

James, Robert, William Deane and Gianna Romano – Platypus in Yarra near Dora street in December 2015, Maria Island in Tasmania - Devils, Cape Barren Geese, Native Hens, Pademelons and Wombats.



## Nature Notes February 2015 cont

Bugs from Daphne Hards' garden in Ivanhoe.

1. A Hoverfly
2. Horntail wasp
3. Western Honeybee

Have these been identified correctly? Let us know  
(warringal3084@gmail.com)



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Publication No: 100005201

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