



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Early Winter Newsletter

Volume 43/three

May/June 2013

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.

MAY MEETING

Leadbeater's Possum

Leadbeater's possum is the threatened faunal emblem of Victoria. Logging of the Mountain Ash forests has resulted in the loss of Leadbeater's Possum habitat. Bushfires, disease, drought (climate change) and collapsing old habitat trees are also threats. Sue Bendel is Vice-President of the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum and will update members on the plight of this iconic mammal.

JUNE MEETING

Bird Photography

Sonja Ross is the leader of Birdlife Australia's Melbourne Photographic Group. She is an excellent photographer herself. At the June meeting, she will show us two beautiful compilations of digital bird photos taken by the Photographic Group's members. They are: *The Early Bird catches the Worm*— birds catching and eating not only worms but insects and other prey, and *Singing in the Rain* - bird activities at and in water – drinking, bathing and swimming. This should be a delightful evening for all our members.

**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

May

Thursday 2nd: General Meeting - Leadbeater's Possum

Sunday : Friends of Plenty River Working Bee (see news & events)

June

Thursday 6th: General Meeting - Bird Photography

Sunday 16th: Planting at Western Habitat Link (see news & events)

Friday 21st: Deadline for contributions for the July August newsletter

News & Events

Upcoming Plantings

Sunday 26th May - Friends of Plenty River working bee. WCS will join with Friends of Plenty River at Yallambie Park. *Melways map 20: K8*

Sunday June 16th - Planting at Western Habitat Link
Continuation of planting along the Banyule Creek Access from Plymouth Street, Heidelberg. *Melways map 32:D3.* Walk across shared path through old stockyards to creek (50 metres).

Clean up Australia Day Photos

See March President's Report below.



Loading bags of rubbish



Weeding—Anthea and William with an uprooted Pittosporum undulatum

Treasurer's Misadventure

During the early weeks of getting to grips with the role of Treasurer, way back in late 2011, I caused an error in the recording of the subscription renewal dates of a few members, including my own. It amounted to awarding the few an extra year's credit. This error has now been corrected and if you notice a change in the renewal date on your address sticker, this is due to my naïve mistake, for which I apologize. *Daphne Hards*

President's Report - March 2013

Clean Up Australia Day

News from WCS Facebook site:

Our March working bee joined forces with Clean Up Australia Day. Kylie (Banyule Bushland Management crew) says: WCS and the general public should be very proud of themselves (28 people), a total of 38 bags (rubbish & recycling) (roughly because of the consolidation) were picked up! That's a massive effort! All that rubbish weighed in at 180kg! That's a lot considering the size and weight of the majority of rubbish was plastic bags and little bits of wrappers etc!

The winner for this year's most popular item -

7eleven's Slurpee drink container. Perhaps someone should let them know? Gianna, Robert, Dianne and Kylie were part of the WCS turnout, augmented by a good handful of the general public. Thanks to Kylie for organising and advertising. A lot of rubbish was collected, including gym equipment, marquee poles and signage.

Darebin Parklands Association complimented on WCS efforts and advised that they got a pretty good haul (30 bags) from Darebin Parklands also. Three cheers for volunteers! (But no cheers for Coke, Schweppes and other big beverage manufacturers whose legal action threatens to scuttle the NT 10c

Who we are and how to contact us

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Presidents Report - March 2013 cont.

container deposit scheme).

Heritage Assessment for Banyule Flats & Warringal Parklands

Representatives of Warringal Conservation Society & Friends of Banyule met with John Dyke of Context Consultants on evening of 4 March 2013, with respect to having a discussion and guided tour of Banyule Flats as part of the early phase for a heritage assessment for Banyule Flats & Warringal Parklands.

Mr Dyke was provided with extensive ecological, social, cultural and historical information about the area, and has been referred to many sources in order to build a case for heritage listing. As previously advised, this is very much in the early phase, and Mr Dyke was extremely appreciative of the information provided to him for this important work. We hope to keep members apprised of the progress.

An Angry Summer – news from Environment Victoria

News from Environment Victoria disclosed the following information: Our ‘angry summer’ saw 123 records broken! This summer was the hottest on record - the number of hot days has doubled since 1960. QLD and NSW were underwater. Devastating

fires raged across southern Australia once more. These incidents add up to an unmistakable emerging trend, predicted by climate scientists for years.

Environment Victoria, and other environment groups all over Australia have been calling for action on Climate Change. Unfortunately, major political parties of all stripes have continuously caved to the mining, oil and gas industry lobby groups. It’s an insane situation whereby tax payers foot the bill for billions of dollars of handouts to these fossil fuel companies that already make billions of dollars profit every year.

EV have stated that if we want to prevent catastrophic climate change we need to stop Government from giving our money to these fossil fuel companies, who are the main contributors to climate change and our governments continue to pay them to pollute.

EV are leading a sustained, national campaign to stamp out fossil fuel subsidies and polluter compensations. You can help by making this federal budget in May the beginning of the end for fossil fuel subsidies. But there is only two months to do it. EV are seeking urgent donation to assist them in their campaign. Members are urged to consider contributing to this campaign.

President’s Report - April 2013

Flying Fox Colony at Yarra Bend & Fishing

Following a spate of very unfortunate incidents with fishing line and hooks at the Grey-headed flying fox colony site in Kew on the Yarra River in late 2012 – early 2013 the Victorian Advocates for Animals, Animals Australia, Wildlife Vic, Friends of Bats, and many other groups and individuals lobbied the Dept of Primary Industries (Fisheries) for a ban on fishing at the site.

While we were not able to achieve a ban I am happy to report that we have made progress. Following a meeting with DPI / Fisheries today professional signage will be installed at the jetty and at either end of the reserve asking fishermen to fish outside of the colony area.

The signs will carry DPI / Fisheries and VR Fish logo (and Wildlife Victoria’s pending approval from same). Once the signs are installed we will put in place regular checks on the colony to monitor it for problems associated with fishing.

I would like to thank all who for lobbied for action on this issue and will give an update once signs are installed. Let’s hope they will make a difference.

Indian Mynas in the suburbs

Members are advised that Banyule Council has approached WCS to advertise an information session regarding Indian Myna’s. Council has advised that over the last couple of years many people have expressed concern about the impact of Indian Mynas on our hollow dependant species.

Indian Mynas are a common sight across our suburbs and are well known for taking over scarce breeding hollows required by rainbow lorikeets, rosellas and sugar gliders. Many people frustrated by the numbers of Indian Mynas in their gardens are keen to reduce the populations of these birds. Julia Gibson from the Yarra Indian Mynas Action Group (www.yimag.org.au) has had some success with trapping and reducing the numbers of these birds on her property. She will share her experiences, discuss traps and what you can do at home. Participants will also have a quick walk into the Parklands to explore the control methods trialled in this public open space.

Sunday, 21st April 2013, 2pm – 4pm, Darebin Creek Environment Centre

Nature Walk Report - Saturday 23rd March Banyule Flats 2013

On a grey morning, we met at the Somerset Drive Car-park where Daphne Hards had set up her camper-van and awning as a base. We put up the old original WCS banner, unfolded the table and a few posters, and were ready for members and visitors. We had a total of twelve, Anthea, Daphne, the Deane family, Rosemary Pierce, George Paras and his friend Paul Clyne from Chicago, John Dyke, who is preparing a Heritage Submission for BCC, Pat Tippett from the Historical Society and two newcomers, Irene, and Bee Ng . Dianne and Celia nobly stayed at base to assist any late-comers.



Daphne had brought two Frogmouth skin specimens – an adult and a young one – and after inspecting them, we found a live Frogmouth perched on a shaggy tree just through the gate.



On the Oval edge was a small flowering Yellow Gum, which attracted Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets. Noisy Miners scolded them.

We walked down to the Swamp where five Yellow-billed Spoonbills perched in a dead tree, and duck numbers had risen to 42 Black Duck and a few Chestnut Teal, perhaps in response to the Duck Shooting Season. Coots and Australian and Hoary-headed Grebes dived for food. A group of Strawneck Ibis flew past and some Red-rumped Parrots landed in the dead trees. We also admired Banyule House, built before the Gold Rush and still handsome.

Back along the track we stopped at the Billabong – more Black Ducks, a White Ibis and a White-faced Heron – and William Deane pointed out the large brown pupal cases of two Swift Moths which must have emerged in the rain which accompanied Thursday's big storm. The larvae live underground, feeding on roots, and emerge when mature to split their pupal cases, and fly off as huge grey-brown moths to mate and lay eggs. The Silvereyes and



1



2



3



4

1. Using spotting scopes to see birds at the swamp
2. Looking at Black-Faced Cuckoo-Shrikes
3. Swift Moth Casing and the hole it came from
4. Fox scat?

Grey Fantails in the treetops were probably autumn migrants from Tasmania, but a pair of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes were summer birds, soon to fly north.

Along the Windmill Track, William and Robert pointed out scats of Wombats and Kangaroos – which was as close as we came to seeing any mammals – though someone heard a couple of thumps, which may have been a Swamp Wallaby. This section is managed by Melbourne Parks and it is all too apparent that they do little weed control. The conspicuous pods of Kapok Vine were far too numerous; so were dead Spear Thistle stalks. A flock of Little Corellas flew overhead ; so did a Brown Goshawk. This may have been why there were few birds visible along the river-bank. As we crossed the grass towards the Billabong, a White-faced Heron flew in to hunt insects in the long grass, and we saw that a Red Gum had split in the storm – half had fallen on the grass.

Nature Walk Report cont

We don't always realize how many Eucalypts can be seen around Banyule Flats. James Deane collected specimens and showed them to clarify identification. Old plantings of Yellow Gum, Blue Gum and Ironbark around the oval, the ubiquitous River Red Gum, and a fine *studleyensis* (natural hybrid of River Red Gum x Swamp Gum) and more recent plantings from the WCS Megaplanting of 1989 include Swamp Gums and Manna Gums. Yellow Box are found on the slopes. There are at least five wattle species.

Back at the Car-park, Dianne had provided some very welcome Easter buns. We checked the bird-list, and found that between us we had seen or heard at least 42 species – quite a good score for an autumn morning. I am very grateful to all the Society members who helped to make the morning a success.

Anthea Fleming



1. *Redgum flower buds*
2. *Manna gum flower*
3. *Eucalyptus studleyensis*

Duck Season 2013

Victoria's recreational duck shooting season began on March 16th this year. Several Warringal Conservation Society members joined the main Coalition Against Duck Shooting teams that focused on rescuing birds at Lake Baal Baal near Kerang.

On the Opening weekend, forty-five wounded birds were brought in and treated at the on-site veterinary unit. Eighty-two dead birds were taken back to Melbourne and displayed in front of the Premier's office on Monday morning (including 3 protected and illegally shot Avocets, a Blue-billed duck and 5 Eurasian Coot). As in all previous years, Department staff collected all dead birds for disposal.

In the week following the Opening weekend, information was leaked to the Coalition that the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) was trying to cover up a massacre of birds which had taken place on the Opening weekend at a floodplain near Boort. Rescuers visited that floodplain on the following weekend and, despite the reported cover-up, found 43 illegally shot protected Freckled Ducks, 25 Eurasian Coot, a Swan, Hoary-headed Grebe and Blue-billed Duck as well as 85 so called 'game' species. These were displayed outside the Premier's office the following Monday and provided undeniable evidence of illegal

shooting of rare, threatened, and protected species of Australian waterbirds.

Already this season, rescue teams have found more than 280 shot protected Ducks. These rescue teams will continue patrolling every weekend until the recreational duck shooting season closes on June 10. The numbers of found dead and wounded birds are regularly listed on Birding-aus.com

You can help our native waterbirds by contacting Daniel Andrews, Leader of the Victorian Labor opposition Daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au and calling for Labor to change its policy to one opposing recreational duck shooting.

Celia Smith



Nature Notes - Member's Observations

WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE DAY MAKES...

On the WCS Nature Walk, early on a cool morning, we saw 42 species of birds. A few days later, on

Wed. 24th March, I had been asked to lead a group of students from RMIT Environmental Studies round Banyule Flats, and Daphne Hards nobly assisted me. It was unfortunate that this was a very hot windy af-

Nature Notes cont.

ternoon – the temperature rose to 33 degrees, so conditions were poor. After finding the Tawny Frogmouths near the car-park, we went to the Swamp, where the best birds were, sheltering from the wind along the far bank. Just as well we had some telescopes – we saw Black are also on the move - observers in the Blue mountains have been counting Yellow-faced Honeyeater Duck, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes, some Coots, and a White-faced Heron, a Yellow-billed Spoonbill and three Cattle Egrets, and the resident pair of Silver Gulls.

Walking round the Billabong, we saw a few more common bush birds, including two Crimson Rosellas – but the total bird species number was only 21. However, we did quite well on mammals – my group disturbed four or five Kangaroos in the East Paddock, and Daphne's group were thrilled to have an excellent view of an Echidna, which was digging round the roots of a tree.

Anthea Fleming

AUTUMN MIGRANTS IN APRIL

The birds which came south for the summer are by now departing on their way north. Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes seem to have left. There seem to be more Eastern Spinebills about in gardens, paying

particular attention to our Fuchsia (an old-fashioned variety with tiny flowers). Red Wattlebirds also love this plant. In the front garden the Little Wattlebirds have arrived – they feed from a red-flowered exotic, and they are waiting for the pink Protea bush to flower. They seem more than a match for the Red Wattlebirds.

On Sunday 7th August, we visited an Open Garden in Outlook Drive, Eaglemont. As we left, I noticed Silvereyes and a Spinebill in a Hibiscus by the front gate. Then I saw a bright chestnut-coloured bird suddenly dash over the road to dive into a pittosporum hedge and a garden full of ferns – a Rufous Fantail, on its migration northwards. Next day, I saw three Gang Gangs fly over our garden – they like hawthorn and cotoneaster berries, so are often seen in gardens.

Flame Robins used to be regular winter visitors to our parks – they are now seldom seen, except as odd pairs or small groups moving through on passage – still, we may be lucky enough to see them and other 'red' Robins such as Scarlet Robins. The Silvereye population has changed over – the birds now in our gardens are the darker-flanked form, which includes Tasmanian birds, while the lighter-flanked birds which nested here have by now all moved north.

Anthea Fleming

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