



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Early Winter Newsletter

Volume 42/three

May/June 2012

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

Protecting Marine and Coastal Environments

Simon Branigan is the Marine & Coastal Project Officer for the Victorian National Parks Association. His work helps to ensure the health and diversity of the marine, coastal and estuarine environment by facilitating effective and informed community engagement in marine planning, management and conservation while also developing and promoting policy solutions for marine and coastal conservation. Simon will talk about current projects and issues in marine conservation.

JUNE MEETING

Leadbeater's Possum and its Habitat

Leadbeater's Possum is an endangered marsupial that inhabits the Central Highlands of Victoria. It is our state faunal emblem. Due to timber harvesting and fires the species is facing diminished habitat, and is showing serious population decline. Ray Gibson from Field Naturalists Club of Victoria will be our guest speaker on June 7th, when he will talk about this special animal, and the work that their group do to monitor its progress.

**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

April

Sunday 29th: Impressionist Laboratory meeting 10am Yarra Flats
(see News and Events)

May

Thursday 3rd: General meeting: Marine and Coastal Environments
Sunday 6th: Working bee with the Friends of Plenty River

June

Thursday 7th: General Meeting: Leadbeater's Possum
Sunday 17th: Infill planting at the Swamp viewing area
Sat 23rd: Deadline for contributions to July/August Newsletter

News & Events

Yarra Flats Park/Impressionist Laboratory Information Session

Sunday, 29 April 2012, 10am-2pm Yarra Flats Park, cnr The Boulevard and Banksia St.

A Parks Vic plan for Yarra Flats proposes:

1. A wetland that will treat stormwater; a great idea if the billabong area is properly restored.
2. An eco-adventure course in the old red gums on the billabong site. By restoring the health and full extent of the billabong area, it could have an eco-adventure course next to and over the original billabong. Or it could build the course in another part of the park.
3. An Impressionist art gallery with accompanying car park, which would irrevocably compromise the natural value of the park, and prevent any future restoration of the billabong. The gallery is a great idea, just in the wrong location.

Show you care about Yarra Flats Park. Come along to the Information Day at Yarra Flats Park, cnr The Boulevard and Banksia St.

For more information on the plan:

[http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/search/?](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/search/?query=yarra+flats+park)

[query=yarra+flats+park](#)

[YarraFlatsUpdateJune2011.pdf](#)

[Banyule%20Gallery%20Feasibility%](#)

[20Summary%20-%202028-08-09.pdf](#)

Upcoming WCS activities

Sunday May 6th - Shared working bee with the Friends of Plenty River at Yallambie Park, Yallambie Melways map: 20 K8. From 10am.

Sunday June 17th: Infill planting at the Swamp seat (southern end) to enhance entrance area and bird food. Enter from Somerset Drive Viewbank.

Who we are and how to contact us

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WCS on Facebook

For the latest news, updates and reports, go to:

<http://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety>

You don't need to sign up to look at the page.

Thanks to WCS planting coordinator Anthony Fernando for organising this.

Planting Report - New Playground in Warringal Parklands, Sunday March 18th

Over 500 Flax lilies (*Dianella revoluta*) plus a couple of Bush Peas (*Pultenea sp*) were planted around the new playground. A couple of families walking or riding by stopped and helped.



Newsletter

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News & Events cont.

Activity Report - Mulching and Tree Guarding at the 40th Anniversary Planting, Sunday April 15th

The forty Red Gums we planted last year have outgrown their small plastic tree guards. Only one has been lost and was replaced. The trees were mulched and new heavy duty tree guards installed. Thanks to Kylie from the Banyule Bush Crew for organising mulch and equipment.



Time to put that old fridge on ice (The Age, April 15th)

Dr Tom Chalko had just built an off-grid eco-house. But during the summer, while he waited for his solar panels to arrive, he was short on electricity. "I needed refrigeration, but I didn't have enough energy for it," he recalls. "My small vertical fridge was consuming more energy than my wind turbine was able to produce."

Suspecting that chest freezers were more efficient, he began tinkering with one to suit his needs. When it comes to retaining cold air, conventional fridges have a bafflingly straightforward design flaw: every time you open the door, cold air escapes. That doesn't happen with a chest freezer. "When you open the horizontal door, no warm air gets in - because cool air is heavier, it stays in the fridge," Dr Chalko says.

He devised a thermostat that kept a chest freezer at fridge temperatures and, for even better efficiency, cut off standby power while the compressor wasn't running. His converted chest fridge now runs for only about two minutes every hour, and consumes an average of about 0.1 kilowatt-hours per day. That's about 10 times less than the best vertical fridges, and up to 50 times less than the worst energy guzzlers.

See <http://mtbest.net/chest-fridge.html>

Bid to cut risk of floods

Towns fight rising waters - Controversial state plan - Rivers 'to become drains'

Victoria is considering a controversial plan to clear vegetation from the state's waterways in a bid to cut the risk of flooding for regional communities, sparking complaints that it will turn the rivers into "drains".

.. A parliamentary enquiry has been warned that management of rivers and flood levees has been haphazard, without clear lines of responsibility for constructing or maintaining them.

Water Minister Peter Walsh has told *The Age* the enquiry was specifically set up to consider removing vegetation from floodways in a bid to clear floods more rapidly.

This appeared on the front page of *The Age* on Tuesday 6th March this year. However it was also reported that this plan would be opposed by New South Wales. A submission to NSW Dept. of Premier and Cabinet said "Rivers should not be seen as

drains to move floodwaters away quickly. In the 1950s much clearance of riverine vegetation in an attempt to 'open up' waterways exacerbated flooding downstream and increased the scour effect of floodwaters." This submission also pointed out that "Vegetation was crucial for healthy waterways, cutting silt and reducing the scour effects of floods."

I am glad to say that this report was followed up by a number of well-argued letters to the Editor, arguing on the value of riverine vegetation to the health of the rivers, to wildlife and fish conservation and to tourism and even to agriculture. I can only hope that the Victorian Government has paid some attention.

I have vivid recollections of what happened when the MMBW had the management of the Yarra. During the 1970s, and probably for many years before, a crew would descend on Wilson Reserve. Where snags were found likely to impede boat movements, a bulldozer or bobcat would clear an

Bid to cut risk of floods cont.

access track through the riverside vegetation and shrubs. The fallen tree was then heaved out with cables, using a strong live tree on the bank as an anchor point. Sometimes the fallen tree was left on the bank; more often cut up and removed. Sometimes these trees were dragged together and burnt, scorching surrounding trees and providing a sunlit ash-bed for weeds.

The consequences of the de-snagging process were always the same. The anchor-tree suffered under the strain; its bark was damaged by the cables and many of its roots were broken. The tree was weakened. Erosion in flood-time washed away soil from its surviving roots until the tree found itself on the river's edge, with its roots out in the air. Eventually it too fell into the river, making a large circle-slip and taking the whole soil-disc on the remaining roots. This of course added to the river's silt load. Wilson Reserve was rapidly losing land to river erosion. This eventually led to expensive stabilisation which was carried out by the MMBW with rockworks.

Meanwhile, the cleared lane to the riverbank admitted light to disturbed soil which was rapidly colonized by weeds, particularly blackberries. There used to be banks of blackberry hedge more than two metres high, plus all the other weeds – Pittosporum, Privet, Hawthorn, Tree Tobacco, thistles and

nightshade, all interwoven with *Tradescantia*. Clearing riverside vegetation will of course remove much of the surviving natural habitat.

Floodwaters of course can cause terrible damage to farming, tourism and general access – but they are an inevitable part of life on this continent. Trying to speed drainage by clearing vegetation and straightening stream courses can only lead to increased erosion, land salinity, and the loss of native fish and other wildlife. Grazing on river frontages (recently quietly restored along the Murray by the Victorian Government) also contributes to water pollution and habitat destruction. Is 'river clearance' another planned assault on the Murray River Red Gum National Park?

For an excellent illustrated summary of information on river management, past and present, see "*The State of the Rivers, Victoria*" published in 1983 by the Standing Committee on River Improvement (which included our late member Reg Johnson OAM) for the State Rivers and Water Management Commission. We have a copy in the WCS Library, with another volume in the series, "*The State of the Catchments*.". I consider both essential reading.

Anthea Fleming

Duck shooting season 2012

Every year in Victoria during the duck hunting season, hundreds of thousands of waterbirds are shot from the skies, with one in four birds being left to die a prolonged and cruel death from their injuries. This barbaric "sport" has been banned in Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, and has never been allowed in the ACT. Research (1) has shown that 87% of Victorians want it banned. It seems the decision to allow another duck shooting season this year may have been made merely to appease a very small but vocal minority of people in the shooting organisations and clubs who have been given lengthy consultation time with the government. This minority will now have an even stronger voice with the introduction of a new body called Game Victoria which aims to promote and grow the game sector. Game Victoria will operate within the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) which has taken over the role of the Department of Sustainability (DSE) in managing duck shooting.

Late last year DPI officers, rice farmers and

shooting organisations claimed there were large numbers of waterbirds in Victoria and that a shooting season was necessary. Yet the results of Professor Richard Kingsford's annual aerial survey had shown an increase in waterbirds in northern Australia and not in Victoria. Waterbirds are breeding in areas with exceptionally good habitat and food supplies in a natural attempt to increase their numbers and genetic diversity. This genetic diversity is essential for species' survival in a country so subject to droughts and floods. However, Professor Kingsford's results were ignored and the Victorian Government announced a full 12-week season, with a bag limit of ten game birds each day, to go ahead in 2012.

The campaign to ban duck shooting, which has now been running for more than 26 years, swung into action. Teams of volunteers from all walks of life mobilised to protect the wildlife of several wetlands in Victoria. The biggest volunteer team went to Lake Buloke, near Donald. Donations

Duck shooting 2012 cont.

poured in to help buy new equipment such as ballistics goggles, fluoro vests, white tops and hats, orange flags. People organised payment and information marquees, minivan drivers and buses, vets and wildlife carers, a doctor and medical team, legal representatives, cooks to feed an “army” of rescuers, and cars to tow the kayaks, bags to collect rubbish left by shooters, the toilet and other important gear. Volunteer rescuers even came in minivans from Queensland, New South Wales and the ACT. Most importantly, media teams and photographers from all over Australia were galvanised to document (2) what has become an annual bloody massacre of Victorian wildlife in the name of “sport” and “preserving cultural traditions”.



Despite a rescuer having been shot in the face last year, and charges laid by DSE and DPI at the end of the 2011 season for harassing and hindering hunters by blowing whistles and waving flags, rescuers were undeterred. No police, DPI or DSE were to be seen at first. When they did arrive, they were kept busy investigating reports of shooters firing before the opening time and taking pot shots at protected species. There were few arrests of rescuers. Two people however, including high profile campaigner Laurie Levy, provided the perfect media opportunity (3).

Rescue teams will continue patrolling Victoria’s wetlands every weekend until the end of the season on June 11th. Several Warringal Conservation Society members attended the opening weekend and have gone out with the rescue teams on weekends since then. They have actively voiced their opposition to duck shooting in the media and to politicians. All WCS members who want this very cruel and environmentally destructive “sport” banned are urged to act and add to the collective voice so that it can no longer be ignored by the

Government.



References

Available on website: www.roymorgan.com
See photos at <http://fair-projects.org/portfolio/duck-rescue-2012-3/> and click the arrow at bottom right of photos to scroll through them
A small sample of Opening weekend media:
TV news stories:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/duckrescue1?feature=mhee>
The Age opinion, 22 March 2012 - Andrew Cox:
<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/hunting-a-game-ducks-cant-win-20120321-1vk1h.html>
The Drum, 26 March 2012 - Sarah McKenzie:
<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3912794.html>
3JJJ radio program, 19 March 2012: <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/hack/stories/s3456983.htm> (scroll down to the black bar and click left arrow beside 'Hack - Donald Duck Hunting'.

Celia Smith

April Speaker - Anthea Fleming - Wandering with a camera

Recently in a train, I noticed that 10 of the twelve passengers were busy with mobile phones or I-pads (the last had a newspaper). I was the only one looking out of the windows. Factories and railway yards are not very interesting, but you never know what you might see.

Have you ever looked at the cross on the Burgundy St. Scots Uniting Church? It is made up of Scots Thistles. And do you ever notice other architectural details, such as Victorian cast-iron with a bird motif (found in Alphington)? Older buildings are full of such ornaments and reliefs, usually on their upper parts above shop windows. One of the finest is the Druid who stands on the Friendly Society Building, opposite the RMIT in Swanston St.



Burgundy St Church

In Bulleen Park there is a lively bronze eel sculpture, which reminds us how important the Bolin Bolin Billabong was to the Wurrundjeri, who held eel-feasts and corroborees there. And the human use of parks is also an interesting topic. My main reason for park visits is nature observation, but I also photograph what people do. Perhaps the file may come in handy if some future bureaucrat ever decides that a park is 'unnecessary' because he thinks no-one uses it – or never does anything to generate money. Obviously, organised sport of all kinds is one of the reasons parks were provided in the first place. But people use parks for so many other things, such as exercise for themselves and their dogs - at all ages, they walk, jog or cycle, singly, in families or large groups. We nature-lovers watch, record and photograph birds and other fauna. Others fly model planes and kites. Many just like to be somewhere peaceful where they can read or study. Picnics are very popular – alas, not everyone takes their rubbish home. W.C.S. and other conservation groups have working-bees to re-establish trees and plants, and then weed, mulch and water them in drought.

I sometimes see a man illegally releasing a possum he has trapped – the poor creature rushes up the nearest tree, but its chance of finding an unoccupied nest-hollow is slim, now that large mature trees are scarce. I have photographed a dog furiously barking and jumping at a hollow which

concealed a possum – the dog's owner did nothing to discourage it.

Some people use the river – I found two Chinese men fishing near Burke Rd Bridge; they caught a sizeable carp and put it in a keep-net, doubtless intending it for a meal. It's a pity that so many anglers abandon yabbie-nets and snagged or broken fishing-line – a deadly trap for platypus and for birds of all kinds.

Other people mess about in boats – canoes, kayaks and more improvised craft such as the assorted craft used in the Scouts Raft Race which I saw at Warrandyte.

Despite its polluted state, boys swim in it and really enjoy swinging on a rope or stolen fire-hose to splash into the river. This is officially forbidden, because of the real danger of serious injury from hitting a hidden snag in the ever-changing river. But there is no doubt that it's fun.

Children love parks – official playgrounds have excellent facilities these days, but there are so many unofficial forms of play such as stamping in the mud, or just running about. Now that so many people have tiny gardens, or none at all, this is more necessary than ever.

My own main interest is of course birds – but I also find plenty of other things to watch and photograph – occasional kangaroos and koalas, lizards, and insects. Butterflies and dragonflies are particularly attractive, and they are almost as challenging as birds for the photographer.



A dog harassing a possum



Magpie entangled in fishing line

Anthea Fleming

RMIT Students visit Banyule

On Tuesday 13th March I was asked to help with some students of the RMIT 's Conservation and Land Management Course, who were making a bird survey of Banyule Flats. There were about 20 students, plus their lecturer Nevil Schultz and a camera-man. This seemed too many to take around in a single group, so I asked Daphne Hards and Xenia Dennett for assistance, which they very nobly provided. Brian took some telescopes to the Swamp so everyone got a chance to use them. The newly returned pair of Black Swans were dragging weed about – perhaps starting nest construction. We each took a small group in a different direction and saw about 35 or 40 different species between us – again swarms of migrant dark-flanked Silvereyes were the commonest species, with good numbers of Grey

Fantails. Daphne's group saw a Brown Goshawk, and mine saw a Yellow-faced Honeyeater (another migrant passing through) as well as a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets which were hanging head-downward from the edge of a hollow in a dead willow; they stayed in this position for about five minutes. We were also able to watch a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike perching in full view, than dashing into nearby foliage after some large insect prey, before returning to its perch to bash and eat it. We were very fortunate in perfect autumn weather. All participants said that they had enjoyed the morning, and I certainly did.

Anthea Fleming

Nature Notes for April - Member's Observations

On 8th March, Anthea Fleming saw a pair of Crested Shrike-Tits (now uncommon) and a family group of Golden Whistlers at Wilson Reserve, as well as swarms of Silvereyes and Grey Fantails – probably migrating birds moving through from Tasmania.

On 12 March two Masked Lapwings were on the roof of the Football Club near the Old Shire Offices – they may intend to nest on the flat roof.

On 24 March we added a new species to the Fleming house-list – we glimpsed three Pelicans flying, probably following the Yarra upstream. Other interesting birds were a very large flock of Corellas which passed overhead after dark, very noisily, on 22 and 23 March. On 24 March they settled in some Sugar Gums behind the house in the evening dusk; I counted between 60 and 100 birds, many with red faces. When they all took off to fly away, I realised that I had seen only a tiny part of a huge flock as a cloud of white birds headed off down the creek, looking like a snow-storm.

On the 28th March, at lunch-time, we heard a lot of noise from Pied Currawongs which were moving through the gum-tree canopy, heading south along Darebin Creek in pairs and small groups – I counted

Warringal Conservation Society Annual Subscriptions Due by July 1st

Membership application/renewal (for July 2012-June 2013)

Name:	Annual subscription type:
Address:	<input type="checkbox"/> Single \$15
Phone:	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20
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Special area of interest:	<input type="checkbox"/> Life subscription \$150

Donations always welcome

**Please send this form and subscription (cheque or money order) to:
Warringal Conservation Society PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 VIC
(Or come to our monthly meeting and see treasurer Daphne Hards)**

Nature Notes cont.

about 25. The resident local pair protested loudly and tried to chase them off.

Anthony Fernando saw two Pacific Black Ducks in his garden. Denise had seen a Grey Fantail there.

Elizabeth Ainsworth had seen a dead Kangaroo that morning in Waiora Road, about 100 m. south of Southern Road.

Jane Crone reported Crimson Rosellas in her garden (Eaglemont) and numbers of Silvereyes in the Pittosporum hedge.

Robert Bender showed pictures of a Cup-moth caterpillar – one undisturbed, another showing the rosettes of stinging bristles it can protrude from turrets on its back. Melbourne children used to call this larva the “Chinese Junk” or (in Sydney) the “Bondi Tram” but William Deane calls it a “Bulldozer”. All these names refer to the distinctive rectangular shape of the larva.

Greg Stanfield belongs to a model plane club – he reported that a 'light grey raptor' had showed interest in a model plane, following as it circled, but about 50 m. higher. Greg is also interested in the provision of canoe and kayak launching places along the river. The difficulty is in providing car access; also, as Robert Bender pointed out, riverside paths allow Foxes easy access to the riverbanks, where they kill many platypuses.

Robert Bender had been canoeing in Studley Park, helping with rubbish clearance. He took the opportunity to photograph some of the escaped population of Eastern Water Dragons, which sun themselves on rocks and branches. He also photographed a female Darter. Other photos showed two fungi, one the introduced Yellow Velvet Top, which is a North American parasite on conifers, causing heart-rot; and *Omphalotus nidiformis*, the native luminous Ghost Fungus.

Anthea Fleming



Doug Western's photograph of a Golden Orb Weaver Spider taken on the WCS night walk in February at Banyule Flats

Would you like to receive your newsletter by email rather than a paper copy in the regular mail

Save paper and see the photos in colour. Contact the editors at james.deane@monash.edu.au

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