



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Pre-Spring Newsletter

Volume 42/five

September/October 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.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Beyond Zero Emissions

Peter Castaldo from the organisation Beyond Zero Emissions will be our speaker. Beyond Zero Emissions Inc. is a not-for-profit research and education organisation developing blueprints for the implementation of climate change solutions.

OCTOBER MEETING

Annual General Meeting

Sustainable Homes

Alan Leenaerts will present on his low energy suburban house conversion. The presentation covers going carbon neutral in the suburbs, and zero mains water use. Topics that will be discussed are: how to heat your house for under \$200 a winter, the limitations of the energy star rating system, and zero water gardening. Alan will also discuss how quality of life improves when you have a low carbon lifestyle.

**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

September

Thursday 6th: General Meeting - Beyond Zero Emissions

Sunday 9th: Western Habitat link planting*

October

Thursday 4th: Annual General Meeting - Sustainable Homes

Sunday 21st: Beverley Rd wetland planting and water watch*

Sat 20th: Deadline for contributions to Nov/Dec Newsletter

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

News & Events

Warringal Conservation Society Annual General Meeting - October 4th

Our October meeting will be the AGM. Speaker to follow AGM business. Nomination forms for positions are attached to the newsletter

Upcoming WCS activities

September 9th - Banyule Swamp

Planting at the Western Habitat link to catch up on those missed due to wet conditions over winter.

October 21st - Beverley Rd Wetland- Infill planting and waterwatch activity with Julia Vanderoord

For updates see:

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

National parks to be opened up for development (The Age 23 Aug 2021)

Victoria's national parks will be opened to private tourism development under sweeping changes announced by the state government. Treasurer Kim Wells said 'It will give more visitors, domestic and international, an opportunity to experience our beautiful and unique natural environment and it will ensure Victoria's tourism industry is better able to compete for tourists in the ecotourism market.'

Sentinel Chickens: what birds tell us about our health and the world

This is the title of Nobel Prize winning scientist Peter Doherty's new book. An immunologist by trade, Doherty's title alludes to the use of chickens to monitor the spread of viruses. The book considers the plight of birds and their broader role as indicators of environmental health. For a summary <https://theconversation.edu.au/peter-doherty-why-our-fine-feathered-friends-deserve-better-7504>

Planting Report - National Tree Day at Yallambie Park - Sunday 29th July

WCS members joined Friends of Plenty River, enthusiastic locals and people passing by at Yallambie Park. Over 800 plants went in at the same site as last year on the bank of Plenty River. Last year the area had been home to lots of rabbits and was dusty and full of burrows. Rabbit control and fencing has worked well and last years plants are looking good. This year mostly grasses (Tussock grass, wallaby grass and kangaroo grass), lillies (*Dianella*) and ground covers (kidney weed) were planted. Some of the previously grassed area on side of the shared path was planted with indigenous grasses, sedges and shrubs.



Who we are and how to contact us

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

Presidents Report - July

Car Parking in Warringal Parklands

In response to a request from a member, enquiries were made at BEAC regarding concerns that there were plans to annex part of Warringal Parklands to put additional car parking spaces. I am pleased to report that the issue was raised, and it is confirmed that there are no such plans in existence. This should be minuted in BEAC minutes.

Marching Girl Bend Area opposite Warringal Parklands

A further request was made regarding the Marching Girls Bend area, opposite Warringal Parklands. This issue was also raised at BEAC, with notation that consideration should be made to management of the area given car parking disturbance & local ducks grazing on the site. Further information about this area and proposed management has been sought.

Presidents Report - August

Banyule Homestead

Some members may have received a flyer in their mailboxes regarding the Banyule Homestead from Friends of Banyule, Heidelberg Historical Society & Concerned Residents of Banyule.

We are all very much aware of the application by Banyule Management Ltd to subdivide the Banyule Homestead, and to build 3 two-storey townhouses in its grounds. Although Banyule Council opposed the application, Heritage Victoria saw fit to allow the application.

Accordingly, a planning application under the Planning & Environment Act has been made.

For those wishing to act:

- formal objections close on 7 August 2012, and it is said that resident can still write to Council after that date.
- Send an email, write a letter or phone your local Councillor & tell them what you think
- If formally objecting
 - o Give full name & address
 - o Quote Reference P905/2010
 - o Reasons for objections cited by others have included:
 - o Importance of maintaining the integrity of the historical site (according to councillors statements – the city of Banyule was named after the homestead)
 - o Inconsistent with cultural Heritage provisions of the planning scheme. Cultural importance of the Homestead (kitchen garden & trees were included in a famous painting – Dorothy Davies)
 - o Inconsistent with Neighbourhood Character in the Banyule Planning Scheme
 - o Overdevelopment of the site
 - o Size & Bulk of proposed development out of scale with surrounding neighbourhood
 - o Lack of protection of vegetation on the site
 - o Inconsistent with the built environment provisions of the planning scheme

More information can be obtained from Friends of

Banyule & Heidelberg historical Society.

Climate Commission Conversation

On 24 July 2012 at Storey Hall at RMIT, a forum was held with Climate Commissioners headed by Tim Flannery to discuss the climate impacts and opportunities for Victoria.

The Climate Commission was established to provide an independent and reliable source of information about:

- o the science of climate change,
- o the international action being taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the economics of a carbon price.

The Commission meets with people all around Australia, and has published a number of reports explaining climate change and what it means for us. During 2012, the Commissioners are meeting with members of the public around Australia, and will be producing new information on the science and impacts of climate change as well as the opportunities – in Australia and worldwide – that acting on climate change will bring.

The Commission is made up of experts from a range of fields relevant to climate change and is not subject to Government direction. The Commission is also supported by a Science Advisory Panel.

The Commissioners are:

Professor Tim Flannery (Chief Commissioner)

One of Australia's leading writers on climate change. An internationally acclaimed scientist, explorer and conservationist, Professor Flannery was named Australian of the Year in 2007.

Professor Will Steffen

Climate science expert and researcher at the Australian National University, Canberra.

Professor Lesley Hughes

Head of the Department of Biological Sciences at Macquarie University and an expert on the impacts of climate change on species and ecosystems.

Mr Gerry Hueston

A prominent businessman who recently retired as

Presidents Report - August cont.

President of BP Australasia, after a career with BP spanning 34 years in a variety of management and senior executive roles in New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the United Kingdom.

Professor Veena Sahajwalla

Associate Dean (Strategic Industry Relations), Faculty of Science, and Director, Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology, at the University of New South Wales.

Mr Roger Beale

An economist and public policy expert, and currently the Executive Director of Economics and Policy at Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

The climate conversation began with a brief introduction by panel members outlining the climate impacts Victoria is likely to face as well as the opportunities, the audience were provided with a short outline of the impact. These briefly included:

Victoria's climate is already changing, and poses significant risks to the State.

Over the last 40 years much of eastern and southern Australia has become drier, with Victoria experiencing a 10-20% reduction in autumn and winter rain over the last 20 years. Climate related- extreme events are expected to increase in frequency & intensity in the future. Heatwaves, drought & bushfires of past decade a window into that future.

Snow depth decreasing in Vic Alps

Hot days increased over past few decades to likely to continue

Critical infrastructure (roads, rail & powerlines) vulnerable

Conditions for large & intense bushfires likely to become more common

Number of very high to extreme fire danger days could increase significantly over the next few decades

Global sea-level rise is near the highest levels scientists expect. This means that a potential 1 m rise over this century is a serious risk threatening Victoria's iconic beaches, and thousands of residential and commercial buildings.

The forum also explored how Victoria, and Australia, can find solutions that minimise the risks of climate change while providing extra benefits for our health, community, economy and environment. Harnessing clean energy, taking advantage of new economic opportunities and building sustainable communities can all provide new opportunities for Victorians.

- Victoria's current installed wind energy capacity

(the maximum amount of energy that could be produced by wind at any one time) is only a fraction of the total wind resources that could be harnessed.

- Victoria has substantial renewable energy resources. Victoria receives enough energy from the sun to produce double the state's current energy needs, and parts of Victoria have some of the best conditions in the world to harness wind energy.
- Around the world, investment in renewable energy is growing strongly and costs are rapidly coming down. For instance, in some countries the cost of solar electricity is now competitive with retail electricity prices.
- Making our cities more sustainable can also make them healthier and more livable, while reducing energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Improving the environmental performance of buildings, for instance by using more energy efficient lighting, heating, cooling and refrigeration, offers opportunities to save energy costs and provide healthier conditions for workers. Melbourne has world class examples of green buildings.

Many questions from the audience ensued during the course of the forum. The topics covered were varied and wide ranging, including alternate energy sources, education, carbon pricing, and the climate science.

One of the key messages for the evening included:

- This is the Critical Decade
Spread the Word & become involved.
see www.climatecommission.gov.au

Warringal Prize

On Thursday 26 July 2012, La Trobe University conducted its prize ceremony for faculty of Education and Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering. As members are aware, the Society sponsors an annual prize in the School of Life Sciences, in the department of Zoology.

The Warringal Conservation Society prize was established in 2010 to recognise student excellence in the area of conservation. It is awarded to a student with the best course weighted average mark score upon completion of the first year of the Bachelor of Science (wildlife and Conservation Biology). On behalf of members, I wish to congratulate **Mr. Peter Henry Charles Zammit** for his achievement, and wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

John D'Aloia

July Speaker - Clayton Simpson - Street Lighting

Clayton Simpson is the sustainability and resources conservation officer for the Banyule Council. He spoke about street lights and efforts increase their efficiency.

Lighting accounts for a major proportion of the council budget and is responsible for around 45% of its greenhouse emissions. There is resistance to reducing the use of street lighting in the community, with security and safety issues often being used as arguments for increased lighting. As such, efforts to reduce cost center around the use of more efficient technology.

96 watt mercury vapour lamps are old and inefficient technology, but are reliable and still used for widely for street lighting. Twin 14 watt T5 fluorescent units could reduce electricity usage by two thirds without any obvious difference in light levels. T5 lights have been trialed in Somerset Ave in Viewbank, something that most of us who have been there at night did not notice. The main issue with replacing mercury vapour lights with newer more efficient systems is the initial cost. To upgrade

the Banyule council would need \$14 million dollars over 3 years and the projected pay back time would be about 14 years. The council has attempted to obtain funding for a street lighting refit, but these applications have not been successful.

Clayton also discussed other efficiency options. Light that are triggered by motion can be used in for security lighting in alleys used by pedestrians. LEDs are also useful in some cases but at present the low light spread of these limits their use for general street lighting. The idea of solar powered street lighting was also discussed. While the cost of solar technology is dropping, the light poles required to mount these larger and wind-catching units are much more expensive and this negates any efficiency gains.

Clayton and his colleagues are preparing another application for street lighting upgrades that will be go to the federal government in late 2012.

James Deane

August Speaker - Robert Bender - Freshwater turtles of the Kimberley

In April 2011 I and my stepson Lachlan joined an Earthwatch team in the Kimberley, to drive along the Gibb River and Kalumbury Roads, visiting four streams and snorkeling to capture turtles of two species. The project was almost sabotaged by the Chilean Cordon Caulle volcano, which grounded planes for a fortnight, and by cyclone Yassi, which destroyed the dirt roads of the Kimberley, gouging them out to a depth of nearly 2 metres. The turtle species were a short-neck, *Emydura australis*, and a long-neck, *Chelodina barranguntji*, about which little is known so their conservation status and habitat needs are unknown.

Nancy Fitzsimmons (Canberra Uni) and Tony Tucker (Florida turtle researcher) took five of us on two 4WDs for 14 days, with the roads we needed being opened to traffic just the days we needed them. A brief luxurious stop at El Questro's Zebedee warm spring pool, then we were off to our first river, the Drysdale, on a cattle station. We spent one day at turtle school, learning about turtle nets, measurements to be taken, the coding system and labeling of carapace scutes, canoeing, snorkeling, assessing turtle gender. Then we were off into snorkeling the Drysdale and bagging our first 54 turtles, then sorting them into retraps and new captures. Tony scored notches on 3 marginal scutes

with a triangular file and we had to measure, weigh and record data about each turtle, as part of a long-term mark-recapture study to assess growth rates, ratio of males to females, ratio of breeding to non-breeding females, ratios of the two species, and whether they move between streams. Tony performed a keyhole surgery procedure to examine the gonads of mature females and assess their breeding condition, then we released all the turtles into the same stream. After two days, during which we became quite efficient and quick at turtle assessing, we moved on to the next site, further up the Kalumburu road, at King Edward River, detouring to see wonderful rock art sites along the way, some dated to 30,000 years ago, well before the great art caves of France and Spain. We captured another 110 turtles there, and got to handle a freshwater crocodile Tony caught for us. Then had a recreational day at Mitchell Plateau, trekking to glorious rock art sites and lunching by the spectacular falls.

Next stop was a long drive to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Mornington wilderness camp, to snorkel Annie Creek. Hugh McGregor, formerly of Friends of Wilson Reserve, is now working on a PhD on feral cats and fire regimes. We mingled with the 30+ young research students

Freshwater turtles of the Kimberley cont.

working on various projects and lectured them about the biology and study of turtles.

Final stop was Bell Creek, in the west Kimberley, where we met the Wunggur Rangers, a local aboriginal team of trainee park rangers, part of whose training involved snorkeling for turtles so we worked with them for two days, and attended their first-ever public presentation on Cultural Awareness, to the people at the campground. After a morning watching the sun rise over Bell Gorge, we were off towards Derby, stopping at Windjana Gorge to walk the river into the ancient fossil reef, explore Tunnel Cave, and finish up looking at the dinosaur footprint tracks at Broome.

We had captured and recorded 384 turtles, 142 of them recaptures, 314 short-necks and 70 long-necks. Cane toads are on the way into the Kimberley and will no doubt have an impact on turtles, especially the carnivorous Long-necks. Nancy made some tentative moves to persuade the Mornington researchers



to include work on aquatic species in their program.

The project was started almost 20 years ago, and has recorded the growth rates of many turtles, Nancy's genetic samples show they never move between catchments so each stream is precious as the local turtles totally depend on it being healthy.

On my return I started work on a project of capturing, measuring and recording the local Long-necked *Chelodina longicollis*. Total catch to date is one turtle.

The project is a very important one for filling a gap in knowledge about freshwater turtle species and their ecology, for the training of the Ngilinyin aborigines to fit them for managing the fauna of their traditional territories and having real work within their country, and for educating us city-folk about the Kimberley, its rock art, its conservation issues, and the significance of turtles as part of the management program for this very large area. The Chilean volcano and the cyclone almost stopped us, but in the end we had a wonderful and productive expedition, contributing valuable data to a long project and all enjoying the experience very much.

Robert Bender

Creeping Mistletoe on exotic trees in Heidelberg

In August 1995 John Seebeck, then at ARI, surveyed 40 km of suburban streets near his institute, between Waterdale and Upper Heidelberg east to west, between Southern and Banksia north to south. He found 128 trees with mistletoe, 64 of them Prunus, 29 oaks, 22 Plane trees, 9 Birch and 4 Elm. He published his findings in the June 1997 Victorian Naturalist. I have been repeating his survey of the same area 17 years later. Nearly all the Prunus seem to have been pulled out and replaced, so all those mistletoes are gone. Many of the Plane trees,

especially in St Hellier St, still have small mistletoes in their upper branches, but along Lloyd St (just south of Bell) where Seebeck found 15 oaks with mistletoes there are now 33 oaks, 15 on the north side of the road and 18 on the south, two with about 30 mistletoes each and several with over 10 mistletoes, all looking very healthy and much easier to see when the deciduous trees have shed their leaves in winter.

Robert Bender



Oak in Lloyd St with 30 mistletoes



Another Lloyd St oak with many mistletoes

Nature Notes - Member's Observations

July

Anthony Fernando saw a Buff-Banded Rail at the La Trobe University moat and 30 Black Cockatoos

Anthea Fleming saw Black Cockatoos

Alex D'Aloia saw Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos

Ibis were seen at the site nominated for the Impressionist Laboratory

Brian Fleming saw a GangGang Cockatoo

Robert Bender reported Creeping Mistletoe as detailed on previous page

August

Robert Bender reported two Kookaburras at a working bee – one caught a frog. He also saw a Crimson Rosella in a peppermint gum at Ivanhoe Grammar School. He showed a photo of a Wombat taken by Stan Barker – another was reported from Warringal Park. After a fall of 20 ml of rain, a flock of 50 Little Ravens appeared on Chelsworth Park to take earthworms flooded out of their burrows.

Anthea Fleming reported that on 10 July, a Black-shouldered Kite was seen at Darebin Parkland and at the same park, on 23rd July, a fine spring-like day, Crested Pigeons were seen mating.

On Sunday 29th July, a Fox trotted through the courtyard next to the house at 10.15 a.m and ran out into Clark Rd. During July, a Tawny Frogmouth was heard calling in the back garden on most nights, and on 2nd August, it was calling while sitting on top of the clothes-hoist.

Daphne Hards saw a Spotted Pardalote in her garden on 2nd August.

Beryl Jarman has heard frogs calling in her garden.

Heather Smith reported that a large flock Pied Currawongs flies over every afternoon; they also see Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos.

John D'Aloia said that after he closed the Hall after the July Meeting, he met a pair of Foxes chasing each other, probably courting, in the park by the car-park. He also said that both Brushtail and Ringtail Possums had eaten his vegetable plants.

James Deane reported a Black-Shouldered Kite near the railway tracks in Clayton, Wombats next to the horse paddock near the river in Ivanhoe, and water birds (below: Dusky Moorhens, Teal and Black duck) at Darebin Parklands.



Nature Notes cont.

BANYULE FLATS IN AUGUST

The 1st of August dawned as a very foggy day, which lasted till after 10.30 at the Banyule Swamp. Mist rose from the water and Banyule House was almost invisible on the hill. Australasian Grebes, Coots and Hardhead Ducks were diving for food in the deep water and I also saw a pair of Black Ducks and the resident pair of Silver Gulls. Welcome Swallows were zipping over the water and a couple of White Ibis passed overhead.

At the west gate to the Billabong, two Wood Ducks were cackling as they checked nest-hollows in the old tree by the gate. As I walked around the south edge of the Billabong, I noticed very few small birds about, apart from a few Grey Fantails and Brown Thornbills. I have not seen a Yellow Robin here for a long time. By 11.30 am, the sun was just coming out having risen above the fog – the Silver Wattles looked splendid all along the river, with many clumps of native Clematis also in bloom. Near the Windmill a couple of Blue Wrens perched on the fence – an immature male hunted insects in the cracks and a blue male paused just long enough for a photo. Usually they are far too fast for me! Grey Butcherbirds and Grey Currawongs called and a flock of about 60 Strawnecked Ibis flew overhead, going eastward.

On Sunday 12th August, a sunny morning, I walked across the dog-exercise area from Plymouth St, splashing through puddles and wet grass. Magpies were collecting earthworms. Little Corellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos called overhead. I saw a single Swan on the Swamp, plus some Chestnut Teal, Hardheads and the grebes. Two Coots were carefully preening each others' heads close to shore, and the Silver Gulls were standing on the broken nest-box in which they have previously attempted to nest. The wattles and Clematis were still glorious and Tree Violet was beginning to flower, though its beautiful scent was not yet apparent. The red-flowering Ironbark south of the Oval had attracted Rainbow Lorikeets, Red Wattlebirds and Noisy Miners squabbling among the foliage. My walk took me upstream over the Plenty Footbridge and past the powerlines. I found cattle in a paddock accompanied by two Cattle Egrets, and a large party of Silvereyes working their way through the Tree Violet shrubs, accompanied by Grey Fantails, and a female Golden Whistler – a typical winter mixed feeding flock. But the Grey Shrike-thrushes were already giving their spring call, more tuneful than the simple whistle which is their winter contact-call. It looks as if we will have an early spring.

Anthea Fleming





NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE 2012 - 2013

I, _____ hereby nominate _____

for the position of _____

Signed: (Proposer) _____

(Seconder) _____

I, _____ hereby agree to accept the above position if duly elected.

Signed _____

All signatories must be financial members of Warringal Conservation Society



NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE 2012 - 2013

I, _____ hereby nominate _____

for the position of _____

Signed: (Proposer) _____

(Seconder) _____

I, _____ hereby agree to accept the above position if duly elected.

Signed _____

All signatories must be financial members of Warringal Conservation Society

Warringal Conservation Society Annual Subscriptions were due July 1st

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

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Mobile:

Email:

Special area of interest:

Annual subscription type:

Single \$15

Family \$20

Concession (seniors, students etc) \$10

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.

Indigenous plants currently in flower



1. Tree violet; 2. Hardenbergia; 3. Running postman; 4. Indigo; 5. Blackwood wattle

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

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64, Rosanna 3084



**WARRINGAL
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY**

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