



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Late Summer Newsletter

Volume 47/two

March/April

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

Gary Presland - Landscapes of Aboriginal Melbourne

Dr Gary Presland is an archaeologist, historian and author. His principal interests are in the landscapes and Aboriginal culture of pre-European Melbourne. He has written twelve books and many articles in his field. His latest book is a history of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria. More information on Gary and his work at: garypresland.com.au

APRIL MEETING

Speaker to be announced

Check www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety for updates

**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 2nd: General meeting at 7.30pm - Gary Presland -
Landscapes of Aboriginal Melbourne

Sunday 5th: Clean up Australia Day - Banyule Flats (See News &
Events)

April

Thursday 6th: General meeting at 7.30pm - topic to be announced

Saturday 8th: Friends of Salt Creek working bee (See news and
Events)

Sunday 9th: Friends of Plenty River working bee (See news and
Events)

Thursday 27th: WCS fundraiser - Heidelberg Theatre Company Pride
and Prejudice (See news and Events)

News & Events

Sunday 5th March - Clean Up Australia Day 10am to 12noon - Join us for Clean Up Australia

Day at Banyule Flats. Meet: Somerset Drive car park. Then members /friends can wander wherever they would like to! Any large bits of rubbish can just be left in a pile and the Banyule Bush Crew will collect it later!

Members can register online at:

<http://www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/Banyule+Flat+s+Reserve>

Encouraging people to book online so Council have an idea of numbers

Saturday 8th April - Friends of Salt Creek Working Bee

10am - 12noon, Meeting point to be confirmed (check WCS Facebook). Join Friends of Salt Creek in Rosanna Parklands to do a Direct Seeding project – scattering a variety of indigenous seed that has been collected from nearby reserves.

Sunday 9th April - Friends of Plenty River Working Bee

Details to be confirmed. (check WCS Facebook).

Thanks to East Ivanhoe Foodworks

Our February meeting picnic diner was a great way to start the year. The dinner was supported by East Ivanhoe Foodworks through goods donated via their shopper rewards program.

Heidelberg Theatre Company tickets

Pride and Prejudice preview night – full costume show prior to opening night. Thurs 27th April at 7.45pm Heidelberg theatre Turnhum Ave Rosanna.

This is a WCS fundraiser with 18 tickets available - \$20 each at March meeting or email WCS to reserve a ticket.

Report - World Wetlands Day Twilight Walk, Sunday 5th February

This was a very wet evening, but wetlands need the occasional top up. A small group headed as the rain briefly turned to drizzle. We first went to the Banyule Swamp where we saw a Darter, White Ibis, Silver Gulls, Grebes and two White-Eyed Ducks. We then did a lap of the Banyule Billabong stopping to have a look at the site where the pump was set up for the recent filling of the swamp from the Yarra river. On the way back we stopped to look at the swamp depth gauge which is now showing that the water level has dropped to less than 1m from a high point of about 1.8m at the end of pumping last year. Upon returning to the Somerset Rd car park we saw Tawny Frogmouths. Even if the weather is bleak, it is always worth getting out for a walk!



Who we are and how to contact us

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General Meeting Report - Feb 2017

Australia Day Awards

Congratulations to Jane Crone and Anthea Fleming, two deserving WCS members who received awards at this year's Jagajaga Australia Day ceremony.

Vale Julianne Bell – A Champion of Public Open Space

The environment community was saddened to learn that the Secretary and Founder of Protectors of Public Lands Victoria, Ms Julianne Bell, passed away last Friday. Julianne was a tireless campaigner and defender of Public Open Space. She will be sorely missed. 2pm.

Save Strathallan Open Space Community Coalition

Meetings have been held over the past few months to devise a way in which to oppose La Trobe University's attempt to annex the public open space, occupied by Strathallan Golf Club, for development. The next meeting will be held on 8 Feb 2017.

World Wetlands Day, 5th Feb.

We are celebrating with a Banyule Flats Twilight walk on Sun 5th Feb.

Planting and weeding activities.

Heather is planning 2017 activities and locations with the bush crew.

Passion Mashing - Sat 6 May

Jim Mead, our Banyule Environmental Sustainability Education Officer, is organising a group workshop with a few members from all the Friends of Groups across Boroondara, Banyule, Darebin, Manningham and Nillumbik together for a workshop to give them ideas and strategies to help reinvigorate our FO Groups.

Coming events

We have been unable to re-schedule the visit to Trust for Nature's Harbury because of fire risk during summer months.

February Speaker - Trevor Edwards - Deception in Orchid Pollination

Dr Trevor Edwards spoke about the specialised pollination strategies used by Australian orchids.

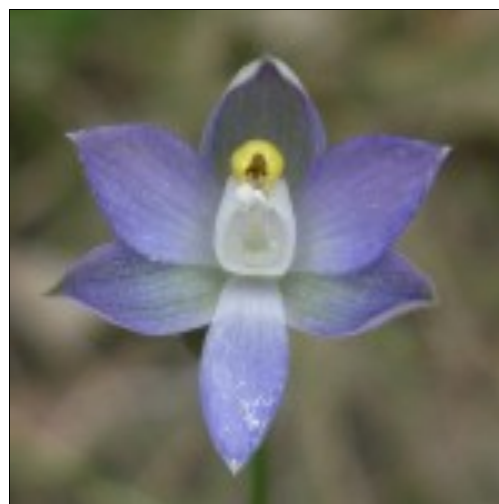
Orchids, like many other plants, need a third party to transport their pollen to another flower. Pollination can be achieved by offering a reward like oil or nectar. However about a third of Australian orchids offer no reward and use deception instead. Mimicry is common: *Cryptosylis* species mimic female wasps to trick males into visiting; greenhood orchids mimic fungal fruiting bodies that serve as brood sites for gnats; *Diuris* species have yellow and red flowers that attract pollinators visiting bush peas.

Sun orchids (*Thelymitra* species) grow in eastern parts of Australia, and have radially symmetric flowers without a reward that open during the day. Many Sun orchids have blue flowers, but they don't closely resemble other common flowers in the areas they grow. Blue flax lilies are widespread but are not a good match. Flax lilies are also buzz pollinated by native bees which is unlikely to be compatible with the aggregations of pollen that orchids use (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLFcQrfutIA for a video of *Dianella* buzz pollination). Sun orchid flowers match the those of blue irises (*Orthrosanthus*), but these irises are mainly found in the west of Australia. Blue irises were previously present in eastern Australia but have disappeared. It appears that Sun orchids are mimicking a type of

flower that is no longer present where they grow. The specialised pollination strategy of Sun orchids means that some species are disappearing. Other sun orchids have become capable of self pollination to reduce their reliance on pollinators.

Trevor's talk gave us a fascinating look at the complicated deception-based pollination used by orchids, and illustrated why they are difficult to conserve without a good understanding of their biology.

James Deane



Thelymitra pauciflora
(fmthomasresearch.wordpress.com)

Vale Significant Tree

On the banks of the Yarra at Wilson Reserve, near the Sea Scouts' Den, stood a tall, triple-trunked Manna Gum. It must have been on the original road reserve, which once extended from Marshall St. to the river-bank, and it must have been there when white men first came to the district. While the land was privately owned, c. 1910, this was the only public land on the river-bank. This is why the Scouts were able to build their original Den there. A photograph taken by the late Chris Bailey (one of WCS' founder-members) shows the original Den, built from bush-poles and tar-paper by the Scouts themselves, their boats on the river, and the Manna Gum in its original glory. Diving platforms had been constructed among its branches. This is the picture which appears on the notice beside the disused concrete Den.

By the time I first got to know it, about 1970, it had lost two of its trunks but was still a very fine tall tree. Prof. Malcolm Calder once told me that it might well be 400 years old, to judge by the thick trunk at the base, and that he believed it to be the only Manna Gum of its size to be found so far downstream in the Yarra system. It was recorded in the original WCS "Significant Trees Register" of 1982.

But age and recent droughts had been taking their toll. Large branches fell in recent years, and finally, on the night of 25th October 2016, wild winds and continued under-cutting by the flooded river resulted in the whole tree's fall. Before its trunk and limbs

were cut up, Council Bushland Crew collected seed material in the hope of propagating its descendants. The trunk was estimated by tree-ring count to be between 150 to 200 years old – but was the thicker lower trunk investigated in this way? Its absence makes a surprising gap on the river bank. I am sure there are many others who are sad to see it go.

Anthea Fleming



Left: The Manna Gum next to the Sea Scouts Den in 1932 (Photo: Chris Bailey).

Above: The same tree in 1985.

Join Duck Rescue

The Victorian recreational duck shooting opening weekend will be on Saturday March 18 and Sunday March 19 this year. Volunteers are needed to help rescue wounded native waterbirds. The location of the wetlands attended depends on a number of factors and will not be determined until closer to opening. Buses will get volunteers to their accommodation in the evening of Friday March 17th along with private cars. Some food and drinks are

provided during the day, and there is a communal meal on the Saturday evening. All new rescuers must attend one of the information meetings in early March which will provide important information and a briefing on current conditions. Rescuers are also needed to help patrol the wetlands each weekend of the shooting season (which closes on June 12). Go to www.duck.org.au and click on the left side of the page to register your interest.

Nature Notes - February 2017

Anthea Fleming – Banyule flats – pair of Pink-eared ducks, White-necked Heron, Little Pied Cormorant with eel, family of Australasian Grebes, Coots, King Parrot eating peaches in garden, Galahs making nest in tree hollow, fruit bats heading out to Silky Oaks, January Bird life Australia outing – yellowish Red-Rumped parrot (mutant/unusual variant), Rainbow Lorikeets in Tree violet eating berries.

Heather Smith – Exotic Ring-neck parrot

Dianne Williamson – Marbled Gecko, Crimson Rosellas

Gary French – native bees pollinating Flax Lilies (*Dianella*) good seed/berry set this year.

James Deane - Matted Flax Lilly in front garden in Yallambie visited by native bees and berries produced



1. *Little Pied Cormorant with eel*

2. *Rainbow Lorikeet in Tree violet*

3. *Australasian Grebes*

Photos: Anthea Fleming

Rubbish Dumping



*Photo:
Naz Giuliani*

This message (censored) was written on top of a pile of rubbish at the end of Bonds Rd not far from the Yarra in Westerforlds park. The rubbish was taken away, but the make-shift sign stayed. Rubbish dumping is a constant problem in the car parks and dead end roads along the Yarra. If you see anybody dumping rubbish, get photos and as many details as possible (car number plates, description of dumpers, time, place etc) and pass them on to the council or Parks Victoria, depending on who manages the area.

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warringal3084@gmail.com

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



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