



Warringal  
Conservation  
Society

**50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION IN BANYULE**

**Vol 50/two March/April 2020**

*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 \$20  
Family \$25  
Pension/student/  
unemployed \$15  
Life \$200

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 Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaga

**MARCH SPEAKER**

**Andrew Skeoch - What can we learn from listening to nature?**

Andrew is a naturalist, bioacoustic researcher, musician and nature sound recordist. The sounds of our natural environment are comprised of birdsong, frog choruses, insect choirs, and mammal calls. Andrew will discuss: how these animal repertoires evolved, what we can learn by studying them, how the noise of our modern world effects nature's sonic balance, and how the songs of nature influence our own species.

**APRIL SPEAKER**

**Michael Goddard**

Michael has studied science and law, and works in environmental assessment. He will provide an overview of the rules pertaining to clearing of native vegetation and how offsets are calculated. These topics are particularly relevant to the recent approval of the North East Link.

**MAY SPEAKER**

**Virginia Trescowthick - Environmental Legislation**

Virginia is a lawyer for Environmental Justice Australia (EJA). She will speak about EJA, their latest projects and provide an overview of environmental legislation in Australia.

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

**Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre**

*All Welcome*

**AT A GLANCE**

March

**Sun 1st:** Clean up Australia Day at Grotty Pond (See news & events)

**Thurs 5th:** General meeting at 7.30pm - Sounds of nature

**Sun 15th:** Banyule Festival Parade 10-11am (See news & events)

April

**Thurs 2nd:** General meeting at 7.30pm - Vegetation Clearing/Offsets

**Sun 5th:** Weed removal - site to be confirmed (See news & events)

May

**Thurs 7th:** General meeting at 7.30pm - Environmental Legislation

## Message from the President

Some very sad news has come to us today (22/2/20) that Dennis O'Connell has passed away (20/2/20). Dennis was the recently retired President of Friends of Banyule, our 14-year colleagues in pushing against inappropriate infrastructure projects, including two campaigns against a freeway through Banyule. He was passionate about demanding better public transport solutions. He inspired us to keep going and will be greatly missed. Taken too soon, our condolences go to Toni and Dennis's family.

On the 11th February 2020 it was announced that Banyule, Manningham, Booroondara and Whitehorse Councils will mount a Supreme Court challenge against the Premier and Planning Minister Wynne's decision that the North East Link Project shall proceed without amendments. We were so disappointed that strong recommendations given by the Inquiry and Advisory Committee were swept aside, so we support the Councils' move. This road should have better outcomes.

Since the last newsletter I have had a hip replacement, so fair to say I have not been out and about in nature. From my hospital bed in Donvale I heard a Tawny Frogmouth which gladdened my heart. Slow but sure, I hope to be running soon. Hip-hop-hop-along.

*Daphne Hards*

## News & Events

### **Clean Up Australia Day at Grotty Pond**

**Sunday 1st March, 10-12pm, Grotty Pond**

Main Yarra Trail, Banyule Swamp North, Viewbank. Latitude: -37.745579 | Longitude: 145.089143 (See map for location).

This is an official Clean up Australia Day event. To register please go to:

<https://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/fundraisers/kyliedamico/grotty-pond---silt-pond--banyule-flats>

Bring yourself, family and friends and give us a hand at Grotty Pond. Despite its uninspiring name, this small but significant piece of local environment is pretty special - Rare Australian Painted Snipe have been seen here. After Grotty is cleared, if we have time we will spread out around the swamp perimeter. Bring own gloves and wear suitable footwear. Children are very welcome but must be supervised. More details on WCS Facebook.



### **Who we are and how to contact us**

#### **Warringal Conservation Society Inc**

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**Committee:** Anthea Fleming, Celia Smith, Daphne Hards, Doug McNaughton, James Deane, Heather Smith, Michelle Giovas.

### **HELP REQUIRED! Banyule Festival Grand Parade, Sunday 15th March.**

This year WCS is 50!

On Sunday 15th March we will be part of the Grand Parade but **we need YOU!** The theme is team work and that is exactly what the Society has been doing for 50 years. We need as many folk as possible to join us in the parade down Burgundy Street.

We will need people to carry banners, a giant 50 (see below) and other signage, and also lots of people to just walk along with us. There is a place for everyone and we will all be wearing our new WCS t-shirts!

Sunday 15 March. Assembling 9am in Mount Street near the station, then parade down Burgundy Street 10am-11am. Finishes at Rosanna Rd intersection.

### **WE NEED YOU! Email**

Heather <mailto:elephantstamp@optusnet.com.au> to register you participation or if you have any queries.



### **April working bee:**

Sunday 5 April - 10:00am-12:00 noon

Woody Weed removal at Warringal Parklands  
TBC: possibly along the Salt Creek as it comes down to the Yarra River confluence.

Exact location to be confirmed – watch the WCS Facebook page for more details.

### **Report on Night walk at Banyule Flats**

Wet weather on Saturday 15th February meant that only eight people participated, but it was still worth getting out. We circumnavigated the Billabong in an anticlockwise direction. On the way out we saw an adult Brush-tail Possum with a baby on its back at the top of a Red Gum. Then we saw a fox and some rabbits it was stalking. A Tawny Frogmouth was spotted on a branch near the Yarra and silently flew

off after we had watched it for several minutes. On the way back we saw Ring-tail Possums. Near the carpark there was a cat hunting around Tawny Pond. The only common animal we missed was a Wombat. Thanks to George Paras for sharing his spotting skills and knowledge.

### **2020 Victorian Duck Season**

Despite drought, fires and concerns about declines in waterbird numbers, duck shooting season will still go ahead in Victoria. The season has been shortened to five and a half weeks (May 2nd -June 8th), the bag limit reduced to 3 birds per day, and Blue-winged Shoveler have been added to the prohibited list.

Sean Dooley from Birdlife Australia noted "There's been a 80 per cent reduction in waterbird numbers since the 1980s, down from one million waterbirds to 200,000 in recent counts, and we've had an incredibly dry year this year, to the extent where pretty much the only standing water in eastern Australia is in Victoria. Those wetlands that are left will have larger numbers of birds... many will be drought refugees from further north. And the ducks just don't need this now, not after the dry conditions we've seen and not after the recent devastating fires."

See the full Birdlife Australia media release on Victorian duck season at: <http://birdlife.org.au/media/gutless-government-ducks-its-responsibility/>

### **Heidelberg Theatre Company Dates for 2020**

The 2020 program of plays is available to purchase through WCS as charity tickets, cost \$20 each, where \$10 comes to the Society. To purchase tickets see Doug McNaughton at a meeting or email the committee on: [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com)

Three Little Words by Joanna Murray-Smith

Wednesday 29th April

And A Nightingale Sang by C.P.Taylor

Wednesday 8th July

The Beauty Queen of Leenane by Martin McDonagh

Wednesday 9th September

The Lady Killers by Graham Lineham

Wednesday 19th November

### **Welcome to New Members**

We extend a warm welcome to Allison van de Meene and family, and to Jane McLachlan, and trust that their membership will be rewarding.



## Committee Report - February 2020

### WCS turns 50

2020 marks Warringal Conservation Society's 50th Anniversary. Celebrations will include the Banyule Festival Parade, a dinner and a planting.

### Committee Activities

- Organising start of year dinner
- Continuing involvement in the campaign to end duck shooting
- Attending protests requesting a better North East Link design
- Meeting with Anthony Carbines, Ivanhoe MLC regarding the North East Link
- Michelle Giovas represented WCS on NELP-Community Liason Group and the Banyule

Environmental Advisory Committee.

- Daphne Hards attended site meeting for the proposed Yarra Flats tree top zipline project.
- We have been advised that a 5km Parkrun will be held each Saturday at 8am in Warringal Parklands/Banyule Flats.

### North East Link

Early works beginning soon. Planning Minister Richard Wynne chose to ignore expert panel advice to: extend the tunnel north, simplify/remove interchanges, exclude Borlase Reserve as tunnel boring machine launch site, make Simpson Barracks a "No-Go Zone", and reconsider Eastern Freeway widening. Protests will continue.

*Michelle Giovas*

## February Speaker Report - Jim Poulter - Aboriginal Land use in Banyule

Dr Jim Poulter is a local historian whose family settled in the Templestowe area in the 1840s. Jim's family has had intergenerational friendships with members of the local Aboriginal community, meaning that he can draw on accounts passed down through the generations. He also avidly researches and interprets early European accounts of the Australian landscape and its Indigenous inhabitants.

Jim noted that it used to be taught that Aboriginal people had been in Australia for about 4000 years. This date has gradually been pushed back to 40-50 thousand years, but is probably longer because this figure represents the useful limit of radiocarbon dating. Core samples showing evidence of regular burning suggest a figure in excess of 100,000 years.

Aboriginal management of the land relied on cold fire mosaic burning during April and May to reduce undergrowth and favour grasslands. Captain Cook noted that the Australian landscape was free of underwood with thick grass and widely spaced trees. He witnessed Aboriginal burning and mistakenly thought that it was being used to flush prey rather than manage the land. John Batman also thought the grasslands he observed were natural. He also noted stone fish traps/farms.

Aboriginal fire-based management resulted in a landscape with groups of trees supporting possums and plains with kangaroos and emus. Jim noted that his Great Grandfather's Aboriginal friend was perplexed by the manner in which European settlers fenced land; surely if you gave the animals what they were after they would stay around without the need for fences. Cleared hill tops produced grasses that yielded edible seeds, and wet gullies were rich

in orchids and the native daisy Murnong with edible bulbs. Murnong (*Microseris lanceolata*, see below) is superficially similar to the introduced Dandelion and was reported to be particularly prolific by early European settlers. Grazing stock, pest species like rabbits, introduced weeds, land clearing and the lack of appropriate burning regimes means that Murnong is now quite rare.



Ponds that Europeans thought were natural features were related to Aboriginal aquaculture. Creeks were modified to form farms for fresh water mussels and yabbies. Places like Moonie Ponds and Waurm Ponds are likely to be named after features constructed by Aboriginals. Harvesting eels as they ran back out to the ocean was also an important seasonal event.

Aboriginal travel routes called Songlines were coded into songs. Trees and other features of the landscape were used as points of reference in Songlines. Yingabeal, the large River Red Gum scar tree at the Heide Gallery, is an important marker tree located at the convergence of several Songlines. European settlers and explorers made use of Songlines and many are now major roads.

For those interested in hearing more on this topic, Jim and Uncle Bill Nicholson are presenting "A Digital Tour of Aboriginal Manningham" on 22nd April (<https://events.humanitix.com.au/a-digital-tour-of-aboriginal-manningham>).

*James Deane*

## Nature Notes - February 2020

Doug McNaughton reported two Striated Thornbills in his bird bath.

James Deane - Reported a Boobook family with 3 young on Viewbank Hill and in his backyard. One owlet disappeared about Christmas and the other two are now ranging further to Banyule Swamp and the Cattle Yards. Wedge-tailed Eagles have been regular visitors to Viewbank Hill. Swans have left Banyule swamp - first the parents, then the four grey young ones. Departure or predation? It may be relevant that the Melbourne Fox population is estimated to be 13 per square kilometer.

William Deane reported seeing 3 Wombats in Banyule Flats.

David Herbett saw a Nankeen Night-heron near Banyule Flats. Anthea Fleming noted that the name "Nankeen" refers to the brown/yellow colour of cotton fabric that was once imported from China.

Anthea Fleming showed some slides -

- a crowded log in high water at Banyule Swamp - a large cygnet, a large Long-necked Turtle and a Coot. When a second large turtle arrived it sat on top of the first to sun-bathe.
- Pink-eared Duck pair with 5 young (the 6th was out of sight).
- A pair of Chestnut teal with three young ducklings.

Banyule Flats Night Walk: Fox, many rabbits, Brush-tail Possum with young on back, Tawny Frogmouth, several Ring-tail Possums, a grey and white cat near Tawny Pond.

## WCS Annual Subscriptions

### WCS subscriptions were due July 2019

WCS membership subscriptions for 2019/2020 were due in July. These are used for the costs of running the Society that include hall hire, insurance, and postage. Subscriptions can be paid to the Treasurer Daphne Hards at a meeting or planting, or a cheque can be sent by mail using the form below. Subscriptions can also be paid electronically directly into the

Society's bank account using the following information:

Account Name: Warringal Conservation Society  
BSB: 633108 Account No: 143918613

Be sure to identify yourself as the depositor. To be certain, you can email [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com) that your deposit has been made.

### Warringal Conservation Society Annual Subscription

**Name:**

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**Special area of interest:**

**Where did you hear about us?:**

**Annual subscription type:**

**Single \$20**

**Family \$25**

**Concession (seniors, students etc) \$15**

**Life subscription \$200**

**Membership application/renewal (for July 2019-June 2020)**

**Donations always welcome**

**Please send this form and subscription (cheque or money order) to:**

**Warringal Conservation Society PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 VIC**

## Nature Notes cont.

A young Ringtail Possum which sheltered on a window-ledge, under the shade of a sun-blind. It stayed for a week or so.

At Wilson Reserve, there was a heavy crop of *Coprosma* berries. Blackbirds and Red Wattle-birds were feeding on them.

On 26 January, I saw two or three Reed Warblers in the reeds in the Bailey Billabong at Wilson Reserve. They were common every summer until the Council handed management of the Chelsworth Park sports fields to Ivanhoe Grammar School. Weedkiller on the Oval also affected the Common Reed growth and the Reed Warblers disappeared.

A less pleasing sight on the same day was a Pointer dog which bolted into the Ephemeral wetland, trailing her lead. Every bird that could flew out at once - but at least one young duck, still at the flightless flapper stage, could only escape by swimming and diving as fast as possible. The Pointer galloped after it, completely deaf to its owner's calls. I was seriously afraid that the duck would die of exhaustion as it was repeatedly chased up and down the narrow shallow swamp. The dog's owner clearly had no control over it. I don't know if the duck survived.

*ANTHEA FLEMING*



*Swans at Banyule Swamp prior to their departure/disappearance.*

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Save paper and see the photos in colour. Contact us at [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com)

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



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