



Warringal  
Conservation  
Society

50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION IN BANYULE

Vol 50/six Nov/Dec2020

*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

COVID-19 restrictions have changed the way we are operating. Check [www.warringal.org.au](http://www.warringal.org.au) or WCS on Facebook for updates on our activities.

## NOVEMBER MEETING (ONLINE)

### **Steve Marshall -Stormwater pollution**

Steve is an environmental scientist who works with Bio2lab in the water industry (<https://bio2lab.com.au>). He specialises in real-time environmental monitoring systems and data analytics. Steve will speak about the nature of pollutants in stormwater, the principles of water sensitive urban design and how sophisticated monitoring can provide the data required to improve the health of urban waterways. This topic is relevant to the North East Link which will need to deal with significant volumes of road runoff with the potential to harm local waterways and the Yarra River

## DECEMBER MEETING (ONLINE)

### **Members' Night**

WCS members will give short presentations about interesting trips and places. Contact WCS if you have something you would like to present.

### **When operating normally:**

**Meetings on first Thursday of the month (except January) from 7.30 pm at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Road, Heidelberg.  
Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre**

## AT A GLANCE

### November

**Thurs 5th:** Online Meeting - Stormwater pollution\*

### December

**Thurs 3rd:** Online Meeting - Members' Night\*

### January 2021

No meeting

\*See News and Events for more details

## Message from the President

Dear Members,

The Warringal Conservation Society has a rich history spanning 50 years and continues to be an important voice for conservation and the environment in Banyule. It is a great honour and responsibility to take on the role of President.

Many thanks to retiring President Daphne Hards for all she has done over the last three years. Daphne's time at the helm coincided with some of the busiest years the Society has seen. The North East Link Project began in earnest and the Environmental Effects Statement hearing demanded a great deal of the Society's time in 2019. In 2020 planning was underway for our 50th birthday celebration when everything had to be reorganised to accommodate changes enforced by the arrival of Covid-19. Fortunately Daphne will continue as Treasurer and a committee member. We also thank retiring committee members Heather Smith, Celia Smith and Michelle Giovas. We are pleased to welcome former President John D'Aloia and Rob Granter to the committee.

It is hard to anticipate what 2021 will bring. Online meetings have been very successful and will continue for the foreseeable future, maybe longer. At some point we will resume our plantings and outings, and finally have a face to face (with masks) get together to celebrate 50 years of the Warringal Conservation Society.

*James Deane*

## News & Events

### Online WCS Meetings

Meetings will continue to be online for November and December 2020 and will use Zoom software (available free at <https://zoom.us/>). A meeting code will be emailed to members prior to the meeting. If you get a hardcopy newsletter and would like to join the meeting, email or phone us for the code, or check WCS Facebook. Meetings will feature the familiar format of a speaker followed by Nature notes.

Thursday 5th November at 7.30pm

Stormwater pollution - Steve Marshall from Bio2Lab.

Thursday 3rd December at 7.30pm

Members' Night - Short presentations (~5min) on interesting trips and places by members. Contact WCS at [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com) if you would like to present.

### Warringal Prize

Our Society sponsors a prize given each year by La Trobe University to a first year Bachelor of Science (Wildlife and Conservation Biology) student for outstanding academic achievement. In this way we are encouraging a career in Environmental Science. The Warringal Prize survived the hiatus of Covid-19 though there was no prize giving ceremony. This

## Who we are and how to contact us

### Warringal Conservation Society Inc

PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

Email: [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com)

Web: <https://warringal.org.au/>

[www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety](https://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety)

**President:** James Deane

Telephone: 8060 8983

**Vice President:**

John D'Aloia

**Treasurer:** Daphne Hards

Telephone: 9497 4831

### Newsletter

Editor: James Deane

Telephone: 8060 8983

Email: [wcs.editor@gmail.com](mailto:wcs.editor@gmail.com)

Compilation & Mailing: Heather Smith, Don Stokes

**Planting Coordinator:** Heather Smith

**Committee:** Anthea Fleming, Daphne Hards, Doug McNaughton, James Deane, John D'Aloia, Rob Granter.

year's winner was Georgia Angus and below is her thank you note.

*To the generous donors for the Warringal Conservation Society Prize,*

*I am writing to express my gratitude for the support you have provided the students at LaTrobe. Specifically, as a recipient of the prize this year, I appreciate that your support will enable me to further apply myself to my studies in the years to come. My apologies for being unable to thank you in person - nonetheless, I am very thankful for your encouragement. I hope this message finds you and your family in good health.*

*Sincerely, and with gratitude,*

*Georgia Angus*

### **Victoria's Faunal Emblem Beating the Odds**

In June a small environment group won its case in the Victorian Supreme Court to protect Leadbeater's Possum from illegal logging. The court decided Vic Forests had been logging unlawfully in 26 areas of critical habitat, and planned to log unlawfully in 41 more. This was a massive reward for the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum who had accumulated heaps of data about breaches and possum populations. But the battle is not yet won as Vic Forests have lodged an appeal. The judgement is expected soon.

For those who would like to read further there is an excellent article on the whole story of Leadbeater's Possum in Updates on Environment Justice Australia's website, or use this link: <https://www.envirojustice.org.au/projects/possum-magic-could-fell-an-industry/>

*Daphne Hards*

### **Snap Send Solve (www.snapsendsolve.com)**

This is a mobile phone app to report issues that need council attention (maintenance, hazards, vandalism etc). You take a photo of the issue and describe the problem. Based on your location, a report is sent to the relevant council or land manager.



*Image: Arabella Eyre*

### **Annulus Billabong Watering**

Annulus Billabong is located in the Yarra Flats park bordering onto Ivanhoe and Eaglemont. Like many of the Yarra's billabongs, it rarely floods naturally. There was a time when water was regularly pumped into Annulus and Anthea Fleming remembers it as a substantial water body supporting a good population of waterbirds. In recent decades it has seen very little water and its value as wildlife habitat has declined. Early in October Melbourne Water used two pumps to fill Annulus Billabong from the Yarra River. There was a brief interruption early in the process when the pipe was cut, probably in an attempt to prevent dirt jumps being flooded. Repairs were made, pumping resumed and water depths were soon in excess of 1.5 metres in parts of the billabong. Waterbirds have rapidly moved in (see photos by Andrew Lees). This project is part of a Melbourne Water initiative to rejuvenate Billabongs on the Lower Yarra floodplain.

*James Deane*



### **Welcome to New Members**

We extend a warm welcome to Belinda Lovell and her family, and Penny Braybrook, and trust that their membership will be rewarding.

### President's Report from the Committee

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020

A warm **Welcome** to everyone.

I should like to acknowledge that our meeting is being held on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, and I pay my respects to all Torres Strait and Aboriginal elders past, present and emerging.

The last twelve months have been like no other. After a collective sigh following the North East Link major campaign in 2018-9, WCS was ramping up for 2020 being our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. Last summer was dominated by drought, heat and ferocious bushfires. Then the pandemic struck, and remains foremost in our lives. Much of our usual activities have been cancelled but we have adopted the new technologies and currently hold our meetings online. Our work in advocacy has continued strongly.

**Education** Face to face meetings continued through to March 2020; in that time we had excellent presentations on the History of Heidelberg District, population change in Melbourne, mapping Aboriginal land use in Banyule, and what we can learn from listening to nature. Once we gained some confidence with Zoom meetings we have heard about the measures taken by Banyule Council to control fox numbers, and how environmental offsets for infrastructure projects really work. We thank all the speakers.

**Conservation** There have been no WCS plantings or restoration work at Banyule Flats or Warringal Parklands since Clean Up Australia Day in March this year. But hey, we can bask in our achievements as thousands discovered this area during lockdown and have visited in droves. Recently our Vice President, James Deane, has been able to help a Duke of Edinburgh Award participant and WCS member to do environmental work at Banyule Flat that includes planting, weeding and rubbish collection.

**Excursions and Events** In October 2019 WCS shared the hosting of a very successful gathering of all the Banyule Friends groups. The Bush Management team invited everyone to Banyule Flats for lunch and to showcase what has been achieved and consider the way forward.

In November the Sunday planters and WCS members were treated by the Bush Management Team to an outing to Organ Pipes National Park in

Sunbury. We were generously shown around by Friends of Organ Pipes, Robert Irvine and Robert Bender. The geology was fascinating, the revegetation process spectacular and topped off by an account of Robert Bender's twenty-year bat box program.

The 2020 Banyule Festival in March was going to see WCS in the Grand Parade as a 50-year showcase. Two days prior it was cancelled due to Covid. Very disappointing after 4 months of planning with so much work put into new t-shirts, banners, building and painting numbers. I am sure we will find time to celebrate at some point in the future.

**Membership** Our membership has grown significantly over the last 12 months, from 78 paid up members to 120, i.e. 50%. This is amazing for WCS and we thank all new members for your interest. We also have 31 Life Members and 6 Honorary Life Members.

In May/June we sent out a survey to the membership to find out a range of things – what you value from WCS, are you happy with a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, can you help the committee, etc. This was a valuable exercise in lockdown and gave us guidance. Thank you to responders.

In February this year our revered member, and past President of Friends of Banyule, Dennis O'Connell, passed away. Dennis believed in infrastructure projects that would end our dependence on cars. He campaigned strongly against the North East Link in 2008-10 and again 2017-9. He had 37 letters accepted by the Age and we miss that skill.

**Awards** There have been no awards this year for WCS or its members.

Each year WCS finances a prize given to the student who gains top marks in first year Bachelor of Science (Wildlife and Conservation Biology) at La Trobe University. 2020 has been like no other, no award ceremony was held but there was a recipient, Georgia Angus, who received \$500 in July. Thanks to everyone who has contributed through their donations to encouraging a young person towards a career in environmental science.

**Advocacy** This year we have continued to advocate on many fronts. Our work has been reactionary rather than proactive, but issues have arisen which needed our local response. I believe WCS continues to be an acknowledged voice in all local

## AGM 2020 cont.

conservation issues. Notable examples include:

1. The North East Link. Minister Wynn's crushing decision to go ahead with the toll road as per a reference design was delivered in December 2019. We believe that the longer tunnel model and other modifications would save endangered trees, plants and wildlife, so we endorsed the combined Councils challenge of the decision in the Supreme Court. We also placarded on the streets, and supported Friends of Banyule and Sustainable Cities (Friends of the Earth) in their protests.
2. Comments on the North East Link – Proposed Templestowe Road Soccer Facilities
3. A Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria
4. A Submission to the Review of the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
5. A Submission to the Draft 10-Year Yarra Strategic Plan

And I addressed Banyule Council on the following items:

6. Greening Update and Tree Canopy Coverage in

Banyule

7. Planning Amendment and Permit to Allow Outdoor Activity at Yarra Flats Park
8. Koala Habitat at Banyule Flats
9. Disc Golf in Warrigal Parklands.

**Community Presence** Our website continues to be one of our best assets. There were 1200 hits in the July quarter prominently for Latest News, our magnificent map and membership details. A great reward for the site maintenance crew, thank you.

Facebook is also a topical and ever-reliable communicator and we thank Heather Smith for her dedication.

Last but by no means least the WCS newsletter emerges regularly six times a year. The whole committee contribute but we thank our editor James Deane, who does a great job with the support of Gianna Romano. WCS is most grateful to Kate Thwaites for printing the newsletter in 2019-20.

**Thanks**

**Daphne Hards  
President**

## 2020 AGM MINUTES

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MINUTES - October 1, 2020

The meeting was online. The Notice of the Meeting was in September/October 2020 Newsletter. 2019 AGM minutes and call for Committee member nominations were distributed to members more than 21 day before the AGM date.

**Meeting opened:** 7.35 pm

**Present:** Daphne Hards (President) and 23 financial full members

#### BUSINESS

##### 1 Confirmation of Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting were confirmed.

Moved: John D'Aloia                      Seconded Heather Smith                      Motion carried.

##### 2 Annual Report of the Committee

President Daphne Hards presented an informative report on WCS activities for 2019/2020. The report was accepted.

Moved: James Deane                      Seconded: John D'Aloia                      Motion carried.

##### 3 Financial statements

Treasurer Daphne Hards presented the 2019/2020 financial statements as audited by Stan Obliubek. Members were advised that in accordance with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, the financial statements had been reviewed by the Committee, which agreed that they give a true and fair view of the financial performance and position of WCS for the year 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The financial report was accepted.

Moved: Doug McNaughton                      Seconded: James Deane                      Motion carried.

Stan Obliubek was re-appointed as WCS auditor for the year 2019/2020.

*..continued next page*

## 2020 AGM MINUTES cont.

### 4 Election of the Committee

The President declared all Committee positions vacant and nominated Don Stokes as the Returning Officer for the election of positions. Appropriately completed and signed nomination forms were checked by the Returning Officer. As there were no contested positions the Returning Officer declared the following appointments for the year 2020/2021 without an election:

President	James Deane
Vice-President	John D'Aloia
Treasurer	Daphne Hards
Secretary	vacant
Committee	Anthea Fleming, Doug McNaughton, Rob Granter

James Deane thanked the committee for their work over the last 12 months

### 5 Annual subscription

Members were advised that there would be no change to subscription fees in the next financial year.

**Meeting closed:** 8.05 pm

## 2020 FINANCIALS

S. E. OBLIUBEK  
Chartered Accountant

93 New Road  
Oak Park 3046

### INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

#### Scope

I have audited the attached Statement of Receipts and Payments for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 of the Warringal Conservation Society Inc.

The Society's Committee is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial reports and the information contained therein and has determined that the accounting policies used are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members.

I have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of the Society. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act. I disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

#### Qualification

As is common for organizations of this type, it is not practicable for the Committee to maintain an effective system of internal control over subscriptions, meetings income, donations and other fund-raising activities until their initial entry in the accounting records. Accordingly, my audit in relation to these items was limited to amounts recorded.

#### Qualified audit opinion

In my opinion, (except for the effects of such adjustments, if any, as might have been determined to be necessary had the limitation discussed in the qualification paragraph not existed) the financial report presents fairly the results of its operations for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.



S. E. OBLIUBEK  
Chartered Accountant  
Auditor

8th August 2020

## 2020 FINANCIALS cont.

### WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

#### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

as of 30th June 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash	4,047	3,475
Investments	15,612	15,378
<b>Total Assets</b>	19,659	18,853
 <b>Membership Fund</b>		
Balance Brought Forward	18,853	15,656
Surplus /Deficit for year	806	3,197
<b>Total Membership Fund</b>	19,659	18,853

### WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

#### STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

for the year ended 30th June 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>		
Subscriptions		
Prior year	20	90
Annual subscriptions	875	720
Next Year	275	-
Life membership	400	400
Donations	1,811	4,488
Sales of publications (Books and Cards)	20	20
Bank interest	235	388
Grant-Melbourne Water (Insurance and Postage)	1,599	1,100
Sundries	75	295
<b>Total Revenue</b>	5,309	7,502
 <b>Expenditure</b>		
Newsletter costs	135	120
Meeting expenses( Hall Hire & Lectern)	342	264
OSO Office Rent	132	132
Insurance Premium	525	539
Administration Expenses(PO Box Rental)	380	130
Printing of Membership Leaflets	-	982
Website Upgrade/Maintenance	305	275
Wood for KAFF stand, Film Course fee	-	119
50th Banners, T Shirts and numbers 50 for KAFF	1,694	-
Freeway Corflute Signs/Get on Board Flyers	-	817
WCS Prize - Latrobe University	500	500
Subscriptions	190	225
Donations	300	200
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	4,503	4,304
 <b>Surplus/Deficit for year</b>	806	3,198

## The Beginning by Doug Western

*The following account was written by Doug Western, the first President of the Warringal Conservation Society. It was published in our newsletter in 2012 and provides wonderful personal insight into the beginning of our society 50 years ago. Sadly Doug is no longer with us, but his legacy lives on through the conservation and revegetation efforts he inspired.*

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Apparently I have the genetic background of an environmentalist and this manifested itself during my role in the formation of Warringal Conservation Society in 1970.

You see my mother's grandfather, Alfred George Bolto, or A.G. as he was affectionately known, was Chairman of Mannum Town Council in South Australia during the early 1920s. Mannum is a town on the banks of Murray River and its trees were cut down and used to fuel paddle steamers. His daughter Enid told me responsible for the Murray's lagoons in the area being declared bird sanctuaries.

On the same side of my family I have a cousin who became a Professor of Biology and my mother was interested in native birds and plants too.

When I was about five years old I listened to Phillip 'Crosbie' Morrison's radio nature programs on Sunday evenings. His subject matter was so interesting it would leave me gobsmacked.

I was about ten when I replaced Mum on her Council of Adult Education trip to see Superb Lyrebirds in Sherbrooke Forest. Naturalist, Jack Hyett, was our leader and I was excited when we saw our first Lyrebird and when we saw our seventh I was blown away.

Mum introduced native plants to our garden and our bird list lengthened. I was about 15 when I noticed instructions how to build a propagation cold frame in *Your Garden* magazine. After completing it I struck the seeds of Yellow Gums, Hair-pin Banksias and Melaleucas and pricked them out into tubes. In about 1966 I donated ten Yellow Gums to Banyule High School and they still grow in the Theatre car park that remains even though the school was sold off for housing development. Mum planted a few Yellow Gums along the Yarra River in 1966 too. Two still grow there.

At the time I was a student at Banyule High School and one day our class marched down to the Yarra River Flats below our school and planted native trees. Children from other local schools were also involved and three plantations were completed

that day. It was great fun.

My father was bullying me at the time and I would seek solace walking around Warringal Parklands Swamp and along the Yarra River in Heidelberg. The native birds distracted me from the causes of my anxiety and I attempted to identify them. One day when I was pondering life the thought, *I'm going to discover the true essence of my natural self*, flashed through my mind. I also made observations about human society and compared them to the natural world. I noted how each native bird was distinctively unique and was living in a particular niche in a range of habitats and I decided humans functioned similarly within human society. That observation helped decide humans are a product of nature and human society has powerful effects on the lives of everything on earth. In fact I would become angry when I thought of the selfishness of humans because they destroyed countless numbers of other living things and species. I also decided I wouldn't have children until I had resolved the hang ups I was developing so I wouldn't inflict them on my children.

I joined Bird Observers Club Inc. (BOC) when I was 17. H. R.(Reg) Johnson, a Macleod resident, was President at the time. I attended many meetings of the club and Reg would drive me home to Rosanna afterwards. At one BOC meeting in 1965 or 1966 our speaker spoke about impending climate change and global warming. That was the first time I had heard of these concepts and they sounded logical to me. I met many BOC members at meetings and field excursions and I learnt a lot about birds. I also joined Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. and Society for Growing Australian Plants Inc. Among the many people I met were Robert Marston 111 and Peter Thomas who were also regular bird watchers along the Yarra.

That year I also noticed the trees we school children had planted two years earlier were being overgrown with weeds. I wrote a letter to City of Heidelberg's Chairman of Parks and Gardens Committee to complain about the problem and I mentioned other conservation issues too. Cr Vern Henderson, Chairman of the Committee, called at my home on a Sunday while I was on a BOC outing and expressed interest in meeting me and discussing the issues I had raised. A few weeks later I met him and another Councillor at his home. He expressed surprise I was 17 years old. Vern worked for Victoria's Forests Commission so he had an environmental interest. The outcome of our

## The Beginning by Doug Western cont.

discussions were that he committed Council to maintaining our tree plantations properly, he offered me a role in choosing plants for a landscaping project near football ovals in Warringal Parklands (this project didn't happen) and he strongly suggested there would have to be a strong display of public support for conservation measures before Council would act. Vern Henderson and Reg Johnson (employed by Land's Department) caught trains to work in the city. It appeared it was possible they caught the same train sometimes and I sometimes wonder if they knew each other and discussed conservation matters at that stage. Reg, in his book, *Boiled Wheat and Rabbit*, expressed frustration that Heidelberg Council did virtually nothing to support conservation measures in the 1960s.

I met the Holywell family about this time and often viewed Banyule River Flats through telescopes mounted next to their living room window.

Reg Johnson was great support for me. I was a young man with a fragile psychology. And he proved his support when he organised a meeting of local people interested in birds. This took place at Rosanna Tennis Club's club rooms. To a large audience Reg presented a slide show and talk about Australian birds. Shortly afterwards we formed a committee with the aim of forming a conservation society.

Apparently we planned well because the inaugural meeting of Warringal Conservation Society (WCS) at Heidelberg Civic Centre went smoothly. An early planning problem was easily solved. Seventy people attended and that meant we needed a bigger meeting room. We had organised Cr Henderson, who was Mayor of Heidelberg at the time, to chair the meeting so he had the influence to easily solve our problem which was actually a blessing. I felt very pleased and honoured when Dr Len Allen, President of Yarra Valley Conservation League, nominated me as first President of Warringal Conservation Society. And I was elected to the position unopposed. Thank you.

And I thank everyone who has supported WCS during its 42 years of great work. You have continued to provide 'a strong display of public support for conservation measures' throughout the municipalities of Heidelberg and Banyule. Keep up the good work.

*Doug Western, 2012*



*Doug with one of his Banyule High School Yellow Gums in what is now the Banyule Theatre carpark.*



*Doug looking out over the Banyule Swamp, an area that he noted was saved by lobbying from the Warringal Conservation Society.*

## Cassinia sifton - a weedy native plant

The September update from Bushcrew team Kylie and Warwick mentioned a relatively recent weed coloniser of the Melbourne area, *Cassinia sifton*. Although native species becoming weeds is not uncommon, I was interested to hear that a *Cassinia* [one of my own favourite plants] had joined the list.

There has been a long history of confusion between the names *Cassinia arcuata* and *C. sifton*, sometimes also identified as *C. theodorii*. However, recently taxonomists decided that *Cassinia arcuata* in Victoria is predominantly *C. sifton* from NSW, with only a very small population of true *C. arcuata* in the Wimmera. So, this means that what most of us know as the overly abundant indigenous plant *C. arcuata*, is actually a native weed from NSW.

Wide spread in central NSW and Victoria, it is now spreading through South Australia and Western Australia. *C. sifton* can grow in a wide variety of habitats including dry forest, woodland, and flood plains. Often a pioneer species following fire or other disturbance, it is able to grow on naturally infertile, dry, rocky and acidic country. In his 2017 research article, A. E. Orchard argues that as there are no records of the species in Victoria prior to the major gold rushes of the 1850s, it is possible that it was introduced from NSW by miners during this time.

Sifton is an erect aromatic shrub to 1.2–2(–3.0) m high. Flowering between February and April, blooms are linear or very narrowly conical, often drooping when young, becoming a deep red to brown, sometimes almost purplish at maturity. *Cassinia arcuata* has white or cream flowers and petals, is generally odourless and is usually a larger plant with branches up to 1.5 cm in diameter compared to *C. sifton*'s at approximately 1 cm.

Fast growing and weedy, *Cassinia sifton* seedlings establish rapidly on bare ground to form dense shrubby stands. Seed production is massive – studies showing a single mature plant able to produce 4100 million seeds. These can germinate readily at any time of the year, mostly in autumn.

Now found across Melbourne, *C. sifton* is in most of our Banyule reserves. It has always been here, but the recent reclassification has turned it into a weed. It's fairly certain that we may have actually planted some ourselves in our revegetation areas! As have most other bushland regenerators, so we have all contributed to it being in Melbourne.

Kylie and Warwick are slowly removing it from Alma Brown and Yandell Reserves, by cutting and painting or by hand weeding if it's small enough to be removed without ripping up the soil. Stands are only removed if there is plenty of habitat from other vegetation around it. After all, it is still habitat and it would be labour intensive and destructive for wildlife to just remove it all at once. Removal can be done at any time of the year, and is best done in stages, slowly over time, so it's always on their list of things to do.

*Heather Smith*



## September Speaker - Michael Goddard - Vegetation Offsets

Michael has scientific and legal training, and works as an ecologist. He was the perfect person to take us through the complex rules that regulate the removal of native vegetation, and the unfortunate case of the Matted Flax-lily and the North East Link.

Vegetation offsets were developed as a last resort to recoup something when avenues for avoiding and

minimising vegetation loss are exhausted. The aim is to permanently preserve vegetation or habitat comparable to what will be lost, with a like-for-like principle applying. Vegetation offsets have been commercialised and can now be purchased on an open market.

State offsetting rules address trees native to

## Vegetation Offsets cont.

Victoria, native understory where there is greater than 25% cover, and wetlands. If an area is to be cleared, the results of a Native Vegetation removal report by the Department of Land, Water and Planning is used to calculate offset requirements. Offsets can be general or species-specific in the case of rare or threatened plants and animals. General offsets take into account the number of large trees and area and quality of native vegetation that will be lost. Species-specific offsets use habitat modelling to assess the impact on rare or threatened species.

A significant problem with the species-specific offsets is that habitat modelling is imperfect and there is limited scope for correcting omissions for rare species. The shortcomings of this system are painfully obvious when we consider the North East Link Project and its impact on the endangered Matted Flax-lily. Approximately 2000 individual Matted Flax-lily remain in the wild and the species is listed as endangered at the State and Federal level. Works in the Simpson Barracks east of Greensborough Rd will destroy an area of remnant bushland that supports around 100 Matted Flax-lily. However, this area does not appear on the official habitat modelling map for the species. Although the modelling is clearly flawed, in this case it means there is no requirement to offset lost Matted Flax-lily habitat under Victorian rules. Had modelling reflected reality, the required Matted Flax-lily habitat offset for would have been impossible to secure and necessitated a project redesign.

The rarity of the Matted-Flax lily means that it is also protected under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Federal rules do not rely solely on habitat modelling and theoretically should provide some protection for the significant Matted Flax-lily habitat in the



*Matted Flax-lily*

Simpson Barracks. However, the North East Link Project proposed relocating the affected Matted Flax-lily to other sites, arguing this would completely offset the loss of Matted Flax-lily habitat. This contention is implausible given the generally poor outcomes of previous Matted Flax-lily translocation projects. Despite this, the Federal Minister for the Environment is not bound by weight of expert advice and signed off on the plan. This outcome highlights another shortcoming of the current system.

While the Matted Flax-lily is a disappointing case study of offset rules in action, Michael did point out that offset markets can provide a financial incentive for land holders to protect trees and habitat. Offsets also provide some positive environmental outcomes when removal of native vegetation is unavoidable. He did however caution that the availability of offsets should not remove the obligation to prioritise approaches that avoid and minimise

*James Deane*

## October Speaker - Alex Maisie - Lyrebirds

Alex is a long term member of the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Study Group, a volunteer-based organisation that has operated since 1958. He has just completed a PhD studying the ecological roles of the Superb Lyrebird.

The Lyrebird gets its name from the beautiful tail feathers of the male. It is also well known for its ability to mimic other birds and sounds of forest. David Attenborough famously documented the human-based sounds of captive raised Lyrebirds, but wild birds do not readily mimic human sounds.

Alex spoke about Lyrebirds in the Dandenongs, an

area featuring tall eucalypt forest that has recovered after being cleared and heavily disturbed. Here Lyrebirds forage on the forest, turning over large quantities of leaf litter in the process. It has been estimated that on average a Lyrebird moves about eleven truck loads of soil and leaf litter each year. This process is important for the health of the forest as it promotes the abundance insects and other invertebrates, and encourages seed germination.

Lyrebirds have faced a number of challenges over the years with their habitat being cleared, being hunted for hat decorations, and the introduction of

## Lyrebirds cont.

predators such as the fox. Deer are becoming more abundant in Lyrebird habitat and damage the moist gullies that they prefer. Lyrebirds have also recently lost about 40% of their habitat to fire. They are quite good at surviving a fire front by sheltering in gullies, hollows, burrows, pipes and dams. However, following a fire they struggle to find food and the stark landscape makes them more vulnerable to predation by foxes.

Alex also showed footage of Lyrebirds nesting. Nesting is most often in the understory near a creek and the female incubates the eggs for 6 weeks before hatching. Alex finished his talk with the heartening news that wet conditions have made 2020 one of the best Lyrebird breeding seasons on record.

*James Deane*



*A male Lyrebird (Photo: Alex Maisie)*

## Nature Notes

### September

Michael Goddard - Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*) - an uncommon introduced plant on a site visit.

Gianna Romano – A Koala in Westerfolds Park (photo 1).

Heather Smith – Blue-tongue lizard, a large and handsome pied cormorant perched on a branch in the middle of Beverly Road wetland.

James Treadwell - An Echidna at Banyule Flats just east of the Windmill (photo 2).

Elizabeth Ainsworth – White-bellied Sea Eagles nesting on webcam.

Robert Bender - Australasian Grebe and a Yellow Robin that was banded in 2012.

Keith Pigdon - Rare sighting of a Blue-faced Honeyeater in Viewbank.

Celia Smith - Platypus in the Yarra at Finn's Reserve and Westerfold's Park

Helen Boak - Platypus in the Yarra at Finn's Reserve

Dianne Williamson – Platypus in Yarra near Plenty Confluence

Richard Welch - Blue tongue lizard with young.

Kim Davis - Powerful Owl, wildlife rescues at Banyule Flats (Ring-tail Possums and Kangaroo Joey).

Daphne Hards - Tawny Frog-mouth calling, White-faced Herron and Pink-eared Ducks.

George Paras - Blue-tongue lizard living in a PVC pipe.

Denise Fernando - Bulbine Lily, Chocolate Lily and Riceflower at Cherry Street Grasslands (photo 3).



## Nature Notes cont

### Sept cont.

Anthea Fleming - Flying Foxes visiting a big Yellow Box in flower. A Blackbird in garden.

William Deane - Boobook, Hardheads at the Banyule Swamp, and a male Powerful Owl calling on Viewbank Hill

Tom Melican reported that in August the Yarra rose as high as the Banyule Windmill, but did not enter the Billabong. Floodwater also entered Bolin Bolin and low-lying parts of Wilson Reserve.

James Deane - microscopic life from Banyule Swamp – Diatoms, *Vorticella* and *Paramecium*.

### October

Robert Bender - Yellow Robin, Grey Shrike Thrush, Grey Fantail, Australasian Grebe, Weasel Skink, and a Brown Tree-frog. Vandalism of plantings at Wilson Reserve. Koala near Burke Rd Billabong.

John D'Aloia - Rainbow Lorikeets, Currawong being attacked by Noisy Miners.

Dianne Williamson - White-winged Choughs, Swamps Wallabies and a mob of Kangaroos at Yarra Parklands

Tim Curmi - Capturing Maquarie Perch from the Yarra for breeding program.

Liz Evan - Tawny Frogmouth have nested for the 13th year in a row in the same tree, same branch, and same fork.

Gianna Romano and James Deane – Sacred Kingfisher near the Yarra, Boobooks calling from Riding for the Disabled horse paddocks. Grass-leaf Trigger plants in Flower at Cherry Street Grasslands.

Anthea Fleming - A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo stripping pear flowers.



## Warringal Conservation Society Annual Membership Renewal July 2020 - June 2021

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Special areas of interest: *This helps us when arranging speakers and events.*

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## Nature Notes cont.

### Wildlife in the Garden

A Lynx Spider, slender and pale-coloured, was using a Scabious bud as a lookout, and I noticed a second slightly smaller one climbing the stem. It was conspicuous because it had black palps, which it was rotating as it climbed. Now and then it paused and stuck two legs out straight, like a salute. It ignored the aphids on the stem. This looked like a male display, so I fetched the camera. The male continued his climbing routine, but the female suddenly pounced away in pursuit of flying prey. She returned to the bud, but not for long - she leapt away through nearby branches. Later I found a female holding an egg-sac. They are called Lynx Spider (*Ocyopes sp.*) because of their cat-like leaps - no web is built. The legs are covered with fine bristles.

ANTHEA FLEMING



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