

Warrinal Conservation Society is a local community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.

Formed in 1970, the Society is an active and productive steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.

Keep up to date on WCS activities by visiting our Facebook page or website www.warrinal.org.au

Join us!

WCS has a lot to offer: plantings, activities and monthly meetings with guest speakers from a wide range of disciplines and interests. There is membership information in this newsletter or go to the web page.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather, and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. Note we may edit for space or legal reasons. Opinions expressed in guest material are not necessarily those of the Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaja.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

JONATHON TICKNER: Bird Photographer

Three and half years ago Jonathon decided to dedicate his spare time to exploring and documenting the Merri creek, using photographs and Instagram to share his discoveries and observations. He has spent countless hours exploring and revisiting the creek between Craigieburn and Abbotsford. In the process he discovered a keen interest in bird photography and birding. Jonathon will share what he found on that journey and will present some of his best photos and the stories behind them.

OCTOBER MEETING

PAUL DAVIS: Updating Banyule's Biodiversity Plan

Biodiversity can be defined as the diversity of all living things. A high diversity of plants and animals builds resilience in an ever-changing climate and safeguards against future threatening processes. Paul is Banyule's Biodiversity Advisor and he will give us an update on the Draft Biodiversity Plan's progress, and get your feedback before he starts pulling together any physical document for the Biodiversity Plan.

Meetings are the first Thursday of the month from 7.30pm

Please note that monthly meetings are face-to-face at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Road.

Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre

All Welcome

AT A GLANCE

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 7: General Meeting from 7.30pm

Sunday 10: Working Bee: 10am-12noon.

Location: The Entry Beds: Banyule Native Gardens.

OCTOBER

Thursday 5: General Meeting from 7.30pm

Sunday 15: Working Bee: 10am-12noon. Location TBC



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Great to see members enthusiastically getting stuck into weeding at our last activity. Maintaining plantings while they get going is just as important as putting the plants in the ground. We will be doing more weeding to ensure our planting are established and unencumbered by invaders as we move towards the warmer months. The Warringal Conservation Society Annual General Meeting will be in October and we are looking for new faces on our committee. You will see from Daphne's message below that she is finishing up as treasurer at the AGM. In addition to a new treasurer, we also need additional contributors to communications and meeting organisation. Being on the WCS committee is not too onerous (generally one committee meeting per month) and is very rewarding. Please get in touch if you think you can help.

James Deane

FROM THE TREASURER

Greetings again!! I am writing on a typical August day – cold and windy – but there is plenty to do as the days get longer and the wattles brighten our lives. WCS has been out attacking European weeds like thistles, Moth Vine (Kapok) and reporting to the Bush Crew of groves of Deadly Nightshade. Thanks to the Narap Rangers who attacked the latter.

What to say? Our 2023 AGM is just a month away. No one has emerged to express an interest or willingness to take the Treasurer's reins. The committee have suggested that I set out what I do, so that my role is not a mystery. Nothing is difficult, but there is a need to be tidy, diligent and responsible.

1. Record all cash receipts and payments. We use a cash receipt book and two separate Excel spreadsheets.
2. Monitor Bendigo Bank accounts (3). Most membership payments/other transactions happen electronically.
3. Make payments. Our new debit card makes this a lot simpler than cheques.
4. Maintain the membership database, recording payments, members' details.
5. Send receipt letters following membership payment. We plan that this will be done shortly by an electronic program.
6. Occasionally apply for grants, one or two annually.
7. Complete the annual report to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission.
8. Prepare an annual report for WCS AGM.

Please help the Society by giving this a go. I have enjoyed it but it is time to hand over to someone younger!

Daphne Hards

NOTICE OF AGM – OCTOBER MEETING

The 2023 Annual General Meeting will take place at the October meeting, from 7.30pm, Old Shire Offices.

WCS NEEDS YOU! The committee is short staffed and overloaded which is not sustainable. Help is needed to continue the role the Society has played, and is playing, in the protection of the Banyule environment. WCS needs some enthusiastic people to nominate for committee positions.

To nominate or discuss doing so, send an email to warringal3084@gmail.com.

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

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FB: www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety

President: James Deane. Telephone: 8060 8983

Secretary (Acting): Heather Smith

Treasurer: Daphne Hards. Telephone: 9497 4831

Committee: Anthea Fleming, Rob Granter, Doug McNaughton, Michelle Giovas.

Planting Coordinator: Rob Granter

Newsletter: Editor: Heather Smith 0423 191 977
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JULY> The Yarra River Keeper

Charlotte Sterrett began by giving us a brief background of her previous international NGO development roles and what had led her to her present position as the Yarra River Keeper.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association (YRKA) is a for-purpose, apolitical grass-roots organisation. As part of the international Waterkeeper Alliance, they work closely with local communities, traditional owners, businesses and government at all levels to advocate for the health of the Yarra/Birrarung. YRKA believe that the river is and has always has been a source of life, sustenance, cultural and spiritual significance. The organisation’s mission is to protect and restore Birrarung and its tributaries, from source to mouth, for current and future generations.



YRKA’s work is wide ranging and includes citizen science, education, revegetation, and litter control. All done by just six staff and a volunteer Board who work alongside the many community voices along the Yarra River. At the heart of their work are stewardship and advocacy, believing in collective impact. This also includes active listening, learning and partnering with Traditional Owners and other stakeholders.

Charlotte outlined the threats to the river, saying we live in the Anthropocene – a time where humanity dominates over nature, causing rapid global environmental change, environmental degradation and destruction and climate change. For the Yarra this means habitat destruction, pollution, development that harms the river and not enough environmental water – does this indicate a slowly dying river?

With climate change Victoria is becoming warmer and drier, so less water flowing into rivers. Streamflow in the Yarra has already decreased 16% since 1975, and this is expected to continue, perhaps up to 40% depending on climate change scenario. Flows into Melbourne storages are already in deficit by 50 - 70 GL per year (desalination makes up the gap). Population growth makes this worse, with demand for water is growing, while availability is declining. On top of this, temperature changes affect fish and aquatic ecosystems through loss of habitat and shading. There is increased evaporation and transpiration rates (drying river pools, seasonal wetlands) and increased stormwater during extreme weather events.

Charlotte spoke about their areas of work to achieve their vision. Apart from wide ranging **community** and **organisation** engagement and education projects, **Influence** (in 2023) included:

- State election campaigning in key electorates, Greens and ALP supported all their asks, including stopping native forest logging in our catchments
- Publication of the Birrarung Confluences Report
- Local advocacy campaigns in Bolin Bolin, Abbotsford and Fairfield
- Presentation at the EES hearing for the Mountain bike trail in Warburton
- On the river advocacy with EPA, MW, local councils, DEECA

And **River Health** (in 2023/24) included:

- Maintenance of existing sites and replanting sites after floods
- New sites – Mullum, Fox Billabong, a site near Plenty River confluence, a site near Eltham.
- Support to at least three friends’ groups (mentoring, auspice, etc)
- Micro-plastic litter trap development
- At least monthly litter clean-ups (businesses)

Charlotte and YRKA believe that there must be a mindset change to foster waterscape and landscape change. This will need stronger communities (active citizens, effective States) and connection to each other and nature ‘**one living, integrated entity**’. Traditional Owner values must become the norm, not the exception and there must be more water for the river and its inhabitants. And finally, but not last – a swimmable Yarra/Birrarung!

Heather Smith

NOTE: Charlotte recommended a book due to be released in September, *A Clear Flowing Yarra* by [Harry Saddler](#).

AUGUST> Powerful Owls

Associate Professors Raylene Cooke and John White from Deakin University presented a fascinating talk on the biology of the Powerful Owl.

The Powerful Owl is Australia’s largest owl and has a distinctive deep “woooo-hooo” call. Males are slightly larger (up to 65cm tall and 1700g in weight) than the female (up to 54cm and 1600g). Possums are their preferred prey (see photo). To thrive, the Powerful Owl needs abundant prey (250 - 300 possums per year), roost trees where they can safely spend the day, well-treed landscapes to travel through, and very large nest hollows to breed in. Threats to the Powerful Owl include habitat loss and degradation, predation (particularly foxes taking young), human disturbance, a lack of nest hollows, and rodenticides (mouse and rat poison).



Raylene described a study that uses miniature GPS trackers to understand how Powerful Owls move through the landscape. This involves capturing an owl to attach a tracker and then recapturing it after a month or so to retrieve the tracker and data. Thirty-nine owls have been tracked over greater Melbourne (including Banyule), the Mornington Peninsula and Western Victoria. The tracking data gathered shows that Powerful Owls are territorial and have home ranges from 140 to 1442 ha (1.4 to 14.4 square kilometres). The smallest territories consist of high-quality habitat, while the largest are poorer quality, heavily modified habitat. Each night owls usually travel over 4km, transiting rapidly through suburban areas and paddocks, and spending more time along rivers and streams.

John spoke further on the emerging threat that rodent bait poses to Powerful Owls. The management of pest rodents in Australia relies primarily on potent second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs). These fast-acting poisons kill rodents after a single dose but persist in the body at levels that can poison any animal that subsequently eats the dead rodent. The high risk of non-target species succumbing to secondary poisoning has led to SGARs being banned in many countries, but they are still readily available in Australia.

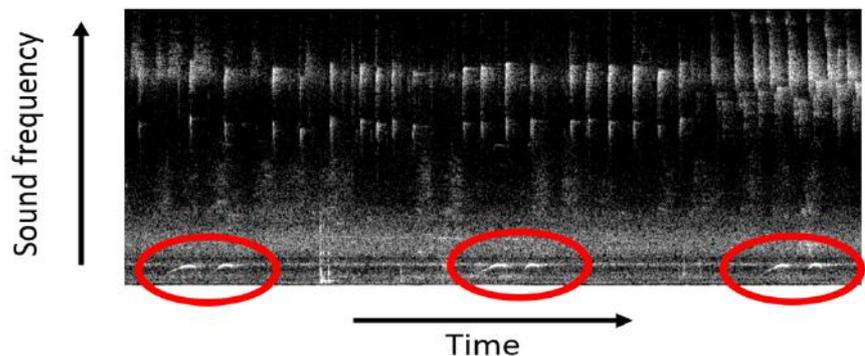
Given that Powerful Owls eat possums rather than rodents, their exposure to SGARs was expected be low. However, analysis of tissue from Powerful Owls that had been found dead revealed SGAR in 88% of cases. 33% of owls sampled had levels of SGAR high enough harm or kill them. Further investigation revealed detectable SGARs in Powerful Owl prey species; 91% of Brush-tail Possums and 40% of Ring-tail Possums. Thus, it appears that the indiscriminate use of SGARs represents a very real threat to the Powerful Owl. These findings show why Australia should follow the lead of other countries and ban the unregulated sale of SGARs to the public.

James Deane

Using automated audio monitoring to detect Powerful Owls

During 2023 WCS conducted a local Powerful Owl monitoring project that was made possible by a Banyule City Council Environmental Grant. Purpose designed wildlife song meters (programmable audio recorders) have been used to detect the distinctive “woooo-hooo” call of the Powerful Owl. Song meters programmed for night recording have been placed at strategically chosen sites along the Yarra corridor (good habitat away from human noise). Recordings are analysed visually as a spectrogram (a plot of sound frequency versus time) to identify the low frequency double hoot of a Powerful Owl (marked in red on the spectrogram included).

This approach has been remarkably effective with over 150 instances of Powerful Owl calls being detected since February 2023. This has provided information on preferred habitat and how patterns of habitat use change seasonally.



James Deane

WORKING BEES

The August working bee was held at 'The Long Bed' in the Banyule Native gardens. Weeding was on the agenda as many of the native species were being encroached on. An enthusiastic Warringal Conservation Society group along with the help of Banyule City Council Senior Ranger Warwick McCallum removed a huge number of weeds and left the area with a renewed amount of 'breathing space' for the native plants to grow into. If you haven't walked around this particular area for a while, think about incorporating it into your next Banyule Flats stroll. As the tree species get taller and taller, with a number in flower at present, they set a great top storey to the ever-maturing under-storey in this beautiful spot.

Rob Granter



NATURE NOTES

JULY:

Daphne Hards: Saw Gang Gangs at her home

Lynne Matheson: Gang Gangs at Rosanna Parklands

Greg Stanford: White-eared Honeyeater. Observed hair in it's nest

Jane Crone: Two Spinebills in Salvia's. Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos overhead and Wood duck perched on her chimney

Heather Smith: Spinebill in Correas.

John D'Aloia: Has observed an increase in Lorikeets and Crested Pigeons in Rivergum Walk – is this because of canopy/tree loss due to NEL?

James Deane: Seen on holiday in WA - a large flock of wild Budgerigars and many feral roaming cats.

Anthea Fleming: Spotted on a neighbour's roof – a Raven pecking at something in the gutter. It appeared to be a good-size - Blackbird size

AUGUST:

Daphne Hards reported the presence of three drilling rigs in River Gum Walk and near the Rosanna Primary School. She has had a Magpie-Lark (alias Mudlark) in her garden.

Elizabeth Evans has seen Tawny Frogmouths in River Gum Walk.

Anthea Fleming reported on a recent trip to Western Victoria. Satin Bowerbirds were seen at Skenes Creek. She showed photos of a Swamp Harrier in flight, and birds on the beach at Rutledges Cutting near Tower Hill – Red-capped Plover, the endangered Hooded Plover, and the Double-banded Plover, a winter migrant from alpine parts of New Zealand. She also showed photos from Tae Rak, the historic aboriginal eel-farming site at Lake Condah, near Budj Bim National Park – a tour here was very interesting and enjoyable, with eels and fishing techniques on display, and a White-bellied Sea-eagle made an appearance.

Lyn Easton showed a marvellous video of a regular visitor to a Willow Peppermint (*Eucalyptus nicholii*) in her garden - a female Collared Sparrowhawk (*stills next page*). The video was taken by Lyn's husband Geoff and gave us a detailed view of the hawk as it fed on a Spotted Dove. This is a regular capture – apparently

NATURE NOTES

a neighbour feeds doves, and the hawk finds them easy to catch. This demonstrated that improvised photo techniques can be very successful - it was taken with a mobile phone and a telescope, through a window. The introduced Spotted Dove is a fairly large capture for a Sparrowhawk.

Anthea Fleming



WCS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP /RENEWAL JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

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

Subscription types:

- Single \$20 Concession \$15 (seniors/students etc)
 Family \$25 Life subscription \$200

There are three ways to renew:

1. Renew online at:
www.warringal.org.au/about-us/membership
2. Pay by direct debit:
Acc name: Warringal Conservation Society
BSB: 633 108 Acc no: 143918613
(Be sure to identify yourself as the depositor.)
3. By mail: Fill in this form and mail with your cheque or money order to:
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 Victoria.
Any queries email: warringal3084@gmail.com

- I would like to receive my newsletter by email.
 Yes - put me on the Plantings notification list.

LATE UPDATE!! SAVING THE OLD GROWTH RIVER RED GUM AT LA TROBE

Members will have seen a recent campaign to save a significant Redgum outside the AgriBio building on the La Trobe campus. The building is leased by Honeywell and they put an application into the Darebin council to have it removed. After a petition with about 600 signatures was presented, La Trobe put out a media release saying "...as owner of the land on which the tree is located, La Trobe has denied permission for the tree to be removed." However, only Darebin Council can stop the tree being removed and it appears that the application for the tree removal is in fact **STILL LIVE!!** (Quote application no: D/285/2023)

It is imperative that we get as much attention and action as possible to stop the tree's removal or being turned into a 'Habitat' tree which is the dreadful option being mooted by La Trobe.

Check WCS FB page for updates, contact all Darebin Councillors, and sign and share the petition at <https://me.getup.org.au/petitions/save-our-urban-old-growth-trees>

Heather Smith

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084



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