Warringal Conservation Society

HIGH SUMMER NEWSLETTER Volume 53/1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

Warringal 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.

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.

Keep up to date on WCS, local and not so local environmental news by visiting our Facebook page or our website www.warringal.org.au

Join us!

WCS has a lot to offer: Planting events and monthly meetings with guest speakers from a wide range of disciplines and interests. Membership forms and details in this newsletter or go to the web page.

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

FEBRUARY MEETING

Andrew Wood, Yarra River Keeper Association (YRKA)

Current and future plantings along the Lower Yarra by YRKA.

In his role of Specialist Advisor, Andrew advises YRKA on ecological regeneration and landscape architecture, ensuring planting plans are carried out with both aesthetic and ecosystem functions in mind. He studied Architecture, and then Landscape architecture at University and has a diverse range of professional experience, including working at Yarra Bend park. Andrew will speak about the YRKA revegetation efforts along the lower Yarra, including some exciting plans for sites in Banyule.

MARCH MEETING

RESCHEDULED MEMBERS NIGHT

The December meeting was disrupted by storms and power failures.

Join us for an evening of discussion and conversation as three members – Anthea Fleming, James Deane and Rob Granter - finally get to share their stories on varied environmental topics.

AT A GLANCE

FEBRUARY

Thursday 3: General meeting from 7.30pm.
Sunday 26: Night walk – details to follow

MARCH:

Thursday 3: General meeting from 7.30pm.
Sunday 6: Clean Up Australia Day and the Malahang Festival

Meetings are the first Thursday of the month from 7.30pm and are CURRENTLY ONLINE.

MEETING LINK: **https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82408230022?pwd=K2VzdGNlWjZwL3lBcGZoUDhBbDM1QT09**

Meeting ID: 824 0823 0022 ***Pass code: 302662***

The link will also be on the Facebook event posts.

Late December - still plenty of water in the Banyule Billabong. Photo: H Smith

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

We finally got together in person for the December general meeting at the Old Shire Offices – and then the power went out for a couple of hours due to a storm! We are lucky that Anthea Fleming and George Paras do not need an electronic presentation to tell an engaging story so all was not lost.

Late in December, a plaque commemorating 50 years of the Warringal Conservation Society was finally installed on the embankment to the east of the Banyule Swamp. It is in a prominent position close to some of our best work, and marks an area where we will be busy planting over the next few years.

We are grateful to Chris Callahan from the Banyule Bush Crew for organising the plaque and the rock to which it is attached. Thanks also to Kylie and Warwick and the Narrap Rangers for completing this fantastic planting.

From left: WCS folk - Rob Granter, James Deane, Anthea Fleming, Robert Deane, and BCC Rangers Kylie D'Amico and Warwick McCallum.

Photo: R Granter

***Please note that an official celebration will be organised when we are all able to meet up safely.**

NEWS UPDATES

Can't see the wood for the trees?

The Banyule Urban Forest Strategy needs your response!

Banyule City Council say they recognise the importance of green landscapes and are committed to protecting, enhancing and managing our urban forest well into the future.

However, the strategy runs the risk of failure unless there's a strong commitment to maintaining ecological function, and strengthening biodiversity, by nuanced matching indigenous species to EVERY tree-planting opportunity. Miles of nature strip plantings of South American Jacarandas will not stand local biodiversity (or residents) in good stead in the future.

To have your say now - go to: https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/UrbanForest

Welcome to WCS

Welcome to new member Isabella Wroniecki and Jake McKenzie, we hope to meet you at the Flats or at a planting soon.

What is a weed?

The Draft Weed management strategy is up for review. It will be determining what a weed is, which are of the highest priority in different settings in Banyule, and developing plans to control them. To ensure our parks and bushland areas maintain their integrity, effective and targeted weed control allows for more desirable species to grow.

Have look and see if any of your local 'weeds' can be replaced by a similar native plants instead. ***Go to: https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/Weeds***

Photo: H Smith

Cape Ivy

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Warringal Conservation Society Inc
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Email: warringal3084@gmail.com
Web: www.warringal.org.au
FB: www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety

President: James Deane. Telephone: 8060 8983

Vice President: John D'Aloia

Treasurer: Daphne Hards. Telephone: 9497 4831

Planting Coordinator: Rob Granter

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

Newsletter: Editor/Layout: Heather Smith 0423 191 977
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Thistle removal at Banyule Flats

On 27 November, we gathered to remove thistles at a site not far from the windmill at Banyule Flats. We joined forces with the Friends of Yarra Valley Parks and the Yarra River Keeper Association (YRKA) to chip out and remove thistles around an ephemeral wetland before they set seed and recolonised areas that had recently flooded. There was an excellent turnout and we managed to clear a larger area than initially planned. Andrew and Lachie from the YRKA took several large piles of thistles away and have since returned to spray newly germinated thistles.

The aim is to do a long term weed control and revegetation project on this site to re-establish quality habitat in this intermittently wet area. We are likely of be doing planting work here over the next few years. Thanks to everyone who attended.

James Deane

Photo: J Deane

Ban Duck shooting - the ad campaign

WCS recently contributed to Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting's campaign to run two ads in The Age and the Weekly Times. They expected the Game Management Authority would be making a recommendation to Ministers in the week of the 10th of January so they were keen to counter it with an advert or two to show their steadfast position.

Banyule Biodiversity Photo Contest winners

Congratulations to members Rob Granter on 2nd place with his image *Banyule Swamp in Fog*, and Jenifer Chellew's honourable mention for her *Eastern Spinebill* photo. The photo contest was part of the Spring Outdoors Program which aimed to showcase Banyule's biodiversity and natural landscapes, and attracted 50 high standard entries.

Apart from the Swamp's mystery, Rob's photo celebrates the trees, while no longer living, still offer such important habitat values to all the bird species that visit the Swamp.

Take a stroll through Banyule

Banyule Walk & Talk is an exciting new web-series created by local artists Troy Larkin and Lou Endicott that highlights different urban nature walks around Banyule.

The idea for the series was born out of the 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns, when both artists relied heavily on Banyule's green spaces for exercise, mental well-being and a place to recharge and relax.

Each five-minute episode explores different local parklands (yes Banyule Flats is included) and the historical, cultural and environmental attributes that make each walk unique.

Check them out:
www.banyule.vic.gov.au/Events-activities/Whats-on/Community-events/Banyule-Walk-Talk

FAUNA REPORT

Photo: J Deane

Boobook Owls

The Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*) is Australia's smallest owl (about 30cm tall) and is named after its distinctive two note "boo–book" call. It is dark brown in colour with vertical white flecks on its chest and is common throughout much of south eastern Australia, including Banyule. The Boobook is related to Australia's largest owl, the Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*; up to 60 cm tall). Boobooks hunt insects and small vertebrates during the night and spend the day roosting in dense vegetation or a tree hollow. They nest in tree hollows towards the end of the year and typically raise two or three young that emerge in summer. Boobook owlets are fluffy and white, with darker markings around their eyes and make a constant trilling sound that can easily be mistaken for an insect. Boobook owlet trilling can be distinguished from an insect because the source moves rapidly around the treetops. Owlets are much less watchful than their parents, so listening for their trilling on a summer night is a good way to locate a family of Boobooks.

James Deane

GUEST SPEAKER REPORT

NOVEMBER > RE-GROWING WILDLIFE HABITAT IN OUR BACKYARDS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

George Paras, Tangible Ecology.

George began with a quick outline of our 'neighbourhood' being our local land-use, restoration history and a discussion of its implications for regenerating and securing wildlife populations in situ.

He spoke of the Wurundjeri – Kulin nation and their link to landscape and land capability. Then of European invasion and the introduction of grazing/agriculture, going on to describe in detail the changes of land use for this area over time, until today where it hardly represents anything like what was here. Is it no wonder that we have lost so much of our biodiversity?

Based on extensive expertise and experience, George explained what was needed to bring back our fauna. Providing examples of what is involved, he highlighted the specific requirements for insectivorous Microbats, arboreal and ground-level mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and insects.

We must look at the environment in a holistic way - not piecemeal. If we wish to 'regrow' our biodiversity we must make sure they have the necessities including (but not limited to) food, shelter, water, places to breed, safety from predators, unpolluted eco systems.

This was a very comprehensive talk – with an amazing amount of detail and knowledge. It was recorded and is well worth listening to. It can be accessed at this link

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/DXlXS0jPBHlb8jFS3_KhllO3cccUhLztrSqtc-qrO-HlgJ_BIKHbz6k_E0qPZWHg.9DDD94MB7XbA3s7

WCS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022

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. By mail: Fill in this form and mail with your cheque or money order to:
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 Victoria.

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. Renew online at:
www.warringal.org.au/about-us/membership

Any queries email: warringal3084@gmail.com

☐ I would like to receive my newsletter by email.

☐ Yes - put me on the Plantings notification list.

DECEMBER > MISTLETOES

Mistletoes are important in the Australian ecosystem, except in Tasmania. They tend to flower during seasons when other honey-flora are less available, so they attract nectar-feeding birds. Around 2013 we had a major eruption of Scarlet Honeyeaters around Banyule, attracted by heavy flowering of Grey Mistletoe (*Amyema quandang*) on Silver Wattles. Its greyish leaves are similar in colour to the host-tree. Eucalypts, particularly River Red Gums, carry Drooping Mistletoe (*A. pendula*) whose leaves resemble their host's leaves in shape.

Recently attempts have been made to establish Mistletoes on city Plane Trees, which would provide some sustenance to urban wildlife. Creeping Mistletoe (*Muellerina eucalyptoides*) is often seen growing on Pin-oaks, plums and other street trees. Contrary to popular opinion, they do not kill the host tree. Mistletoes draw fluids and minerals from the host, but have ample chlorophyll for photosynthesis. Their leaves are eaten by Brushtail Possums. Koalas and Yellow-bellied Gliders.

A long list of birds rely on mistletoe nectar, including many honeyeaters, including the Painted Honeyeater and the highly endangered Regent Honeyeater. The flowers are followed by sticky berries, much favoured by the tiny Mistletoe-Bird and others. The Mistletoe-bird is famous as the chief spreader of Mistletoe – the sweet pulp is rapidly digested. The bird then deposits the seed on a branch, where it may well grow into a plant. Lorikeets enjoy the berries but do not pass the berries – they are described as destructive feeders.

Mistletoe-birds are spring and summer migrants to Banyule. The male is striking with its shiny dark blue back and wings, and red on upper breast and vent – and a dark stripe on is white belly. The female is plain grey and white, with a pink patch under the tail. The nest is cleverly concealed among gum-leaves – a neat grey-white sac built of spider web and plant down.

Mistletoes also support the Mistletoe Moth (*Comocrus behri*). The adult feeds by day on the flowers – it has handsome black and white stripes and furry orange legs. Far less known are the beautiful Azure Butterflies (*Ogyris species*). As in other blue butterflies, the larvae are cared for by ants, which collect sweet secretions from the larvae and escort them out to feed at night. As the adults neither feed from flowers nor descend to the ground, the only hope of seeing them is to find the chrysalids hidden under bark and rear them at home. Many years ago, I succeeded in doing this, but I never saw the wings spread - the butterflies kept them closed. When released, they instantly flew to the tree-top and hovered round the mistletoe leaves. They are illustrated in Michael Braby's Complete Field Guide to Australian Butterflies. I have also seen Imperial Hairstreaks (*Jalmenus evagoras*) on mistletoe, and Wood Whites, alias Jezabels, (*Delias aganippe*) also depend on it.

Last year a Drooping Mistletoe settled on one of my Red Gums – it is growing steadily and is now in flower and starting to fruit. I hope to observe what wildlife may visit it.

Anthea Fleming

All photos by A Fleming

Grey Mistletoe flowers

Mistletoe-bird

Mistletoe Moth caterpillar

Drooping Mistletoe

Mistletoe-bird on nest

Banyule Billabongs – January 2022

When all is bleak what better to do than walk in the warm, humid drizzle at Banyule Flats. Very mind-relaxing. The mission of the day was to check out what was happening at Banyule Billabong, for this short report on the status of Banyule billabongs. For many years dry and weedy, they were inundated by a Yarra River flooding event in June 2021. Most of them are still holding water.

Banyule Billabong is still part full, though its level has fallen about 70% due to high temperatures and winds. Weed decomposition has progressed to clear water, and ducks are enjoying plentiful duckweed. Elizabeth Ainsworth reported an adult Dusky Moorhen on a nest, and Daphne spotted a female Darter and a White-faced Heron. Breaking the surface was the unmistakable spine of a Carp.

Andrew Lees, President of Friends of Yarra Flats Park, has kindly reported on the billabongs south of Banksia Street. He said; 'The Annulus Billabong is now dry (dried up about two weeks ago). The striking thing is the lush carpet of Lesser Joyweed and knotweed over the base now.

The Banksia Billabong only has about 30cm of water left, stretching over about 40m. There are several European Carp in the water which appears to be poorly oxygenated now. It will probably dry up in the next couple of weeks.

The Phillips Fox Billabong still has plenty of water. It has only dropped about 30cm from full. It should have water right though summer if past patterns are any guide.

There is another significant billabong in Yarra Flats Park which we call the Peninsular Billabong. It still has a reasonable about of water in it - perhaps 70-80cm in depth. This billabong is in from the water tap which is halfway down the park and I have included a photo of it if you are not familiar with this one.'

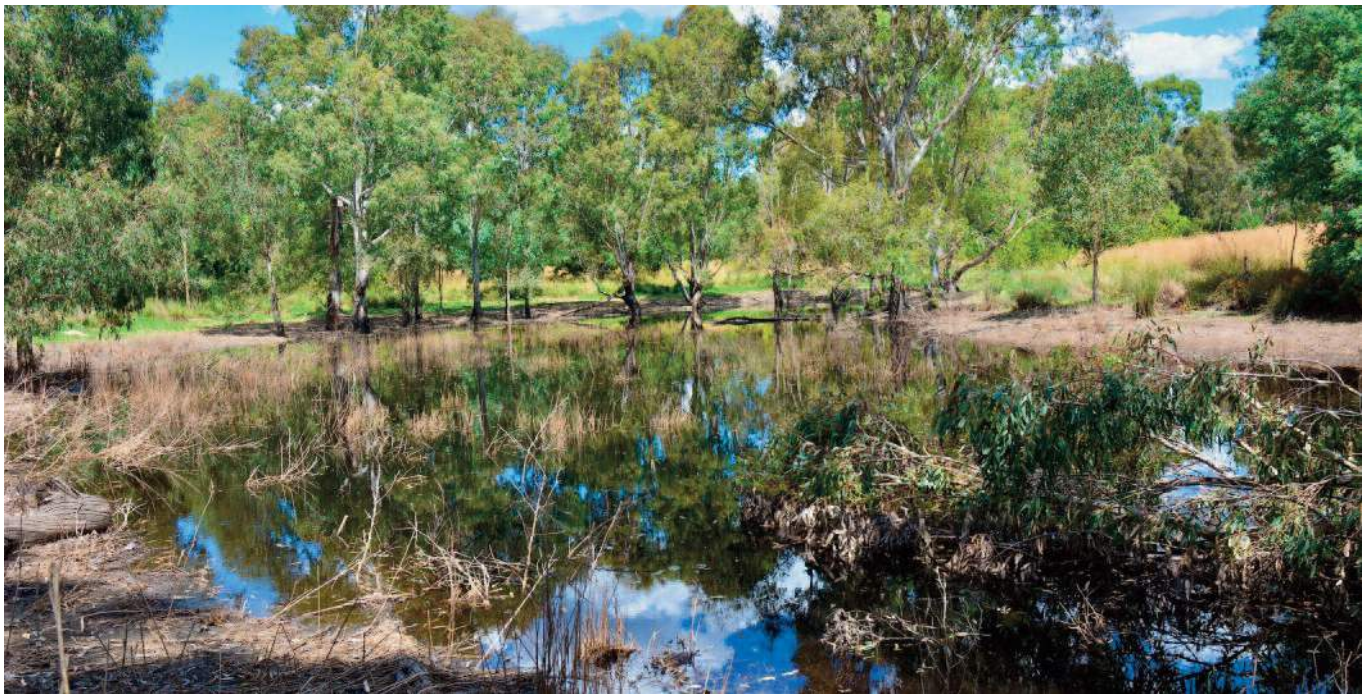
News from Wilson's Reserve is equally good. Thank you, Robert Bender who reported that Reedy Billabong 'is nearly full - much water being diverted to sprinklers this dry summer, so no longer overflowing as it has been continuously over the past two years.

Bailey Billabong is about 60-70% full, and Horseshoe Billabong is still about 40-50% full.'

Other depressions at Wilson's Reserve are still holding water.

The Banyule floodplain environment has been the winner, with the groundwater being replenished, tree roots drenched, weeds drowned and waterbirds happy to breed and raise their young on replenished waterbodies. There's much to watch over summer.

Daphne Hards



Both photos: A Lees

WORKING BEES 2022

2022 Working Bee Calendar

After two years it looks hopeful that we may be able to venture out into the Flats again to join our Bush crew friends Kyle and Warwick on some working bee adventures!

Plans below may change or number of volunteers may be capped if Covid-19 is still restricting activities and work. Plans may also change depending on NEL works

First step is to get the dates into your calendars. Then watch the newsletter, emails and Facebook for up-to-date details.

February

Saturday night 26: Spotlight walk

March

Sunday 6: Clean Up Australia Day
Meet near Somerset Drive car park

April

Sunday 10: Woody Weed removal with Friends of Salt Creek

May

Sunday 15: Planting at Tawny Pond
AND 50th Birthday Celebration - *more details closer to day.*

June

Sunday 19: Planting at Banyule Swamp East

July

Sunday 10: Planting at Native Gardens - entry bed 1

August

Sunday 14: Planting at Native Gardens - entry bed 2

September

Sunday 11: Woody weed removal OR Hand weeding TBA

October

Sunday 9: Hand weeding TBA

November

End of Year Field Trip, organised by WCS

NATURE NOTES

November 2021

Robert Bender reported on a friend's video of an Echidna intercepting an ant-trail; and his own sightings of a Frogmouth, Spotted Pardalote, White-plumed Honeyeater and a Night-Heron. Also, a spider moving off to safety with her egg-case.

Robert Deane saw Striated Pardalotes nesting in a big tree.

Lachlan Deane had photo of a grey Shrike-thrush.

Lynne Matheson saw a Platypus at Finn's Bridge, also nesting herons along the Plenty Trail. Anthony and Denise Fernando commented that Finn's Bridge is a regular site for Platypus.

Daphne Hards reported hearing Flying Foxes in the Repat. Hospital campus, and watching White ibis commuting overhead, travelling north-west to south-east or in reverse.

Anthea Fleming showed some photos of insects taken at Maranoa Gardens with the FNV – notably a Damsel-fly, which had captured a small moth and was eating it. First time she have ever observed a damsel or dragon-fly with prey.

John D'Aloia reported a Bluetongue Lizard, Crested Pigeons, Currawongs, Kookaburras and Noisy Miners. Flying Foxes have been visiting an Ironbark.

Rob Granter reported that Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos have been stripping his Macadamia nuts – but drop them after eating the outer green case. Presumably they have not yet found the excellent nut inside the proverbially tough shell - although their beaks are tough enough to find a way in.

John Bartlett has seen a Grey-headed Cuckoo Shrike Darebin Creek.

Photo: J Deane (Boo books)

NATURE NOTES

December 2021

George Paras spoke about the Sugar gliders near his house in Victoria Cross estate. Young without adults were first discovered in a nest box, with the adults appearing later. The young have emerged and can glide, but are clumsy compared to the adults. They have been following mother to nearby Ironbark and then on to an established trail. One was more hesitant, possibly scared of a resident Brushtail possum.

Heather Smith – An Eastern Koel calling loudly from 2am. A White-faced Heron standing in nest at Fanning Bend. Also an (as yet unidentified) fungi.

John D'Aloia – King Parrots at house

Daphne Hards – Fox, cat and rat in garden

James Deane – Three Goshawk chicks in a nest next to the Yarra in Viewbank.

Photo: J Deane

Lene Jakobsen – Saw and heard a Kookaburra

Jen Chellew – Tawny Frogmouths in Rosanna Parklands.

Anthea Fleming reported on a young Red Wattlebird. It had left the nest before it could fly well with half-grown wing feathers. This is quite normal. It was quite capable of getting up into a Lemon Verbena bush, where its parents were feeding it. The feathers grow very fast and it needed no care from concerned humans whatever.

Photo: A Fleming

She also saw a female Spotted Pardalote whizzing about, collecting spider-web from window-frames and under the veranda, doubtless for nest-building.

And often sees a solitary White Ibis patrolling Darebin Creek – for the first time in November, it came into her garden and was searching the long grass patch for skinks or insects.

Below: Boobooks on TV arial

Photo: J Deane

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

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