Warringal Conservation Society

DEEP WINTER NEWSLETTER Volume 54/4 JULY/AUGUST 2023

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.

Keep up to date on WCS activities by visiting our FaceBook page or website www.warringal.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.

JULY MEETING

CHARLOTTE STERRETT: Yarra River Keeper

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association (YRKA) is an organisation that supports the many community voices along the Yarra River. The work of the YRKA includes citizen science, education, revegetation, and litter control. Charlotte is the Yarra River Keeper and will speak about current YRKA projects, the big picture for the Yarra River and the role of community groups in advocacy and ecological restoration.

AUGUST MEETING

ASSOC. PROFS RAYLENE COOKE and JOHN WHITE: Exposure of Powerful Owls to second-generation rodent bait

Raylene and John work at Deakin University and are experts on Australia's largest owl, the Powerful Owl. Their GPS tracking work has provided great insight into how this secretive species uses habitat in an urban environment. Raylene and John will speak about their recent work showing that the stronger active agents used in second-generation rodent baits are detectable in Powerful Owls and other nocturnal birds.

AT A GLANCE

JULY:

Thursday 6: General meeting from 7.30pm.
Sunday 16: Working Bee: 10am 12noon. Location TBC on WCS FaceBook

AUGUST:

Thursday 3: General meeting from 7.30pm.
Sunday 13: Working bee: 10am 12noon. Location TBC on WCS FaceBook

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
Melways map 32:D3. **All Welcome**

Photo: HSmith

Banyule Creek's Callahan Falls swollen by recent rain.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We have been treated to the sight and sound of flocks of Gang-gang cockatoos along the Yarra recently. Gang-gangs are regular winter visitors, but their numbers have been declining. A big part of the problem is thought to be a shortage of nesting hollows in the mountain forest where they breed over summer. The upcoming end to native forest logging in Victoria will see the number of hollows gradually increase and should help hollow-dependent species like the Gang-gang cockatoo. Where ever they occur, hollow-bearing trees are a precious resource that needs to be preserved.

James Deane

INQUIRY INTO VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL NATIVE BIRD HUNTING ARRANGEMENTS

As this newsletter goes to print the Native Bird Inquiry is gathering evidence from key organisations on the second day of public hearings. The Select Committee is considering the operation of annual bird hunting seasons, arrangements in other jurisdictions, the environmental sustainability and impacts and the social and economic impact.

For updated information and transcripts from the hearings go to: *https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/nativebirdhunting/hearings*

Photo: From Parliament of Victoria

Lyn and Laurie from Coalition Against Duck Shooting give their evidence on the second day of public hearings.

WHAT NEXT FOR URBAN FOREST STRATEGY?

Thanks to all who participated in the surveys, wrote submissions and attended the community consultation sessions. The feedback has been analysed with three key themes emerging: Measurement (measurable and achievable targets, recorded and reported on), Tree species selection (appropriate so as to manage impact, shade, habitat etc) and Private land (new plantings, land clearing, new developments). Full report at: *https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/UrbanForest/FeedbackStage3*

The strategy will be presented at the **7 August Council** meeting for Council to consider its adoption. The document itself will be available to the public as part of the meeting's agenda available on 2nd August.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The society extends a warm welcome to new member **Geoff King and family**. We met Geoff at the May planting and were pleased to see him again at the June planting accompanied by family member Ash.

REMINDER: Membership renewals are due 1st July. Easy on our website or see page 4.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING GUIDE WCS INTO ITS NEXT 50 YEARS?

Formed by local residents who loved our bushland and wildlife, the WCS has worked to protect and restore the environment in Banyule for over 50 years. Our group's effectiveness and longevity has been due to the efforts of passionate and knowledgeable committee members. **We currently have a pressing need for new committee members to ensure that the society can remain resilient and keep up its important work.** Our Treasurer is retiring at our October AGM and the secretary role is being filled on a temporary basis. While we can strategically reduce our efforts to some degree, finance and communications are essential functions.

Like to help? Have a chat to any of the committee below or email (warringal3084@gmail.com). Not ready for a specific role? Nominations for general committee members are also very welcome.

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Warringal Conservations Society Inc
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084
Email: warringal3084@gmail.com
Web: www.warringal.org.au
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
Email: wcs.editor@gmail.com

MAY > DAVID DE ANGELIS
Frogs of the Middle Yarra catchment

David is a local naturalist, environmental educator, and consultant with interests in the ecology and conservation of frogs, and citizen science. He works with ABZECO, La Trobe University's Wildlife Sanctuary, Holmesglen Institute, and is on the Frogs Victoria committee.

David spoke about aspects of frog biology and preferred habitats, emphasising how much we still don't know about the distribution and ecology of frogs in the Yarra catchment. He referred to a paper prepared for the North East Regional Organisation of Councils (NEROC) by Cam Beardsell in the 1990s as still one of the most comprehensive reports on the frogs of the middle Yarra catchment, which runs roughly from Yarra Glen to Dights Falls.

David also paid credit to Ewen McGilp, an Honours student who completed his thesis in 1994 (prior to the NEROC report) on the distribution of frogs in the lower Yarra catchment. He noted that since then there hasn't been much attention focused on frogs in the middle and lower Yarra, apart from some of Melbourne Water's programs. Much of the information we have is incidental or opportunistic, and comes from biological databases like the Atlas of Living Australia, iNaturalist, and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. And these records can be useful, if treated cautiously, in inferring occupancy and the likelihood of particular species persisting.

Human pressure and the persistence of the chytrid fungus are two main reasons for frog declines in Middle Yarra catchment. Climate change is also now playing a wide ranging role in their survival – particularly their breeding habits. For example, the Southern Toadlet tadpoles take six months to mature (some other species metamorphose within a matter of weeks). That means that enough water needs to stay in the breeding grounds for all that time. Some sites the species was known for in the past have been totally destroyed by development and no rain or groundwater could have saved them. In their favour though, is the length of time this species has to spend trying to replace itself – a lifespan of up to ten years (even up to 20 years in captivity!).

David's presentation covered around 16 species of frogs in three groups: those who have persisted, those who have declined and the invaders. A few examples of these are:

COMMON FROGLET (*Crinia signifera*). This is a small frog to 30 mm. Extremely variable in colour, pattern and texture, ranging from fawn to dark brown with a range of contrasting patterns and markings. Unfortunately, like so many of our local species it has likely declined in the area relative to its historical abundance. This species is resistant to Chytrid fungus but may act as a vector, passing pathogens around endangered species like the Corroboree Frogs. Older folk often tell stories of seeing and catching tadpoles - likely belonging to this and a few other common species - in puddles on the side of the road. This is not common anymore.

VICTORIAN SMOOTH FROGLET (*Geocrinia victoriana*). A small frog to 30 mm. Grey-brown above with darker flecks or blotches. Toes are unwebbed. Still surviving at Wilson Reserve in Ivanhoe, but declined in some other urbanised sub-catchments including the Mullum Mullum. Also still found at the 100 Acres Reserve in Park Orchards, and several seasonally wet gullies through Warrandyte on the south side of the Yarra. Possibly better able to take advantage of slightly wetter areas, they don't seem to have declined locally to quite the same extent.

EASTERN BANJO FROG or POBBLEBONK (*Limnodynastes dumerilii dumerilii*). Familiar to many, this is a large frog to about 70 mm long. Light to dark brown above, usually with yellow-orange markings on the flanks, it is doing fairly well and regularly found throughout in the area. They sometimes seem to disappear, because they can burrow or hide in compost or soil.

Sadly, the GROWLING GRASS FROG (*Litoria raniformis*) is now thought to have disappeared from the middle Yarra catchment. Development of known sites has sealed the fate of the species for good since about 2004 and David showed us a stark difference in the range over time.

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Photo: Museums Victoria Collection

Photos x 2: D DeAngelis

Common Froglet, Victorian Smooth Froglet and Eastern Banjo Frog or Pobblebonk

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

A few species have been introduced to the Melbourne area – including PERON'S TREE FROG (*Litoria peronii*) was first recorded at Yan Yean Reservoir in December 1985 and the EASTERN DWARF TREE FROG (*Litoria fallax*), introduced from Queensland/NSW was first recorded in Moorabbin in October 1999. These species, unlike many of their native counterparts are expanding instead of contracting. It is unknown how they got here and what their impact is or will be.

David's talk was very informative – although the continual movement of amphibians around the state and their replacement by human development is a worry. However, despite the apparent broader picture of loss and reduction, most species appear to be hanging on in gardens, parks and reserves and many are still familiar to us.

Heather Smith

(For more frog info download the Melbourne Water App: www.melbournewater.com.au/education/citizen-science/frog-census)

FROM THE PLANTING COORDINATOR

HARGREAVES MEMORIAL PLANTING

A well attended day in May to remember our sorely missed friend John Hargreaves. The working bee was followed by speeches by Dave Legat and Renee Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Project coordinator from Birdlife, who had come all the way from Langwarren to join us. After a light lunch, a group of special plants where put in near the swamp seat.

Photo: T Crawshaw

Above: Dave Legat starts the planting at the memorial site.

MORE UNDERSTORY FOR THE STUDLEY PARK GUM

Thank you to our wonderful community (especially the new folk who joined us) who participated in our June working bee. You all helped to set up another habitat restoration area on the Banyule Flats that will bring immense joy for many years to come. Thank you also to BCC Senior Ranger Warwick McCallum and Bushcrew ranger Rachel from your continued help, it is greatly appreciated.

Rob Granter

Below: the June working bee planters.

Photo: Supplied by R Granter

WEED WARRIORS ARE BACK: With the warmer-than-usual weather, mats of young thistles are edging the billabongs and plump pods are already hanging from the Moth Vines. Let me know if you would like to join us.

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.

JUNE > JOHN MCGUCKIN & MICHELE GIERCK
Establishing native fish habitats

A Director of Streamline Research, John is a limnologist with over 30 years of experience in environmental research of inland aquatic ecosystems. He has wide spread aquatic knowledge and in particular, the nationally threatened dwarf galaxias – *Galaxiella pusilla*.

John's presentation was about the Yaruk Tamboore wetlands which are situated among farmland to the east of the Rosanna Golf Course. Originally this whole area along the Yarra River was ephemeral wetlands. Yaruk Tamboore was established in 2011 to with the aim of establishing a permanent wetland that could support the re-establish a native fish population in it.

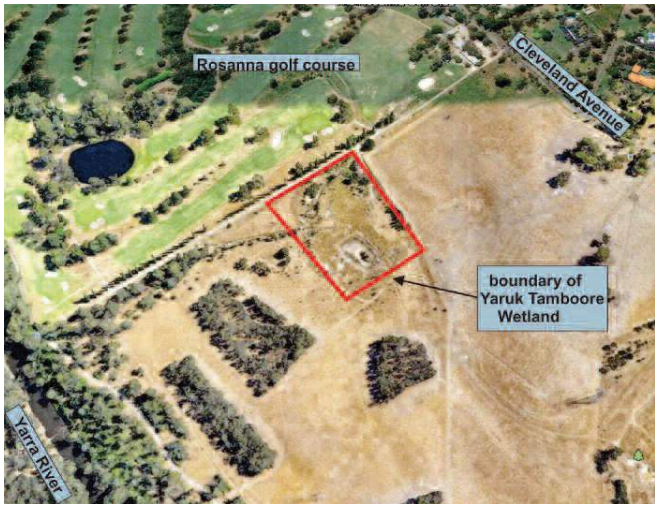

Image supplied by John McGuckin

Beginning with a weeding and revegetation program, the area had started to provide the environment needed for fish - such as food sources and cover for breeding - until a flood event in 2015, when floodwater from the Yarra allowed an inflow of pest fish species including Carp, Goldfish, Eastern Gambusia and Oriential Weather Loach. This was managed by 'liming' the waterway where the Ph of the water is raised to kill the pest species.

In 2017 stocking with native fish species commenced, Common Galaxias (2017 and 2019), Australian Smelt (2017) and Southern Pygmy Perch (2018) which for some years were doing very well.

Unfortunately, during the particularly dry summer of 2020, all the ponds completely dried up, devastating the native fish population.

Undeterred, the wetland was again re-stocked with native fish species. These were doing well until, in 2022, a suspected incident of contaminated runoff from the golf course again killed all the fish.

As things began to recover, 2023 brought a new flood event with another frustrating inflow of pest fish species. So despite the best efforts of John, the aim of establishing a permanent native fish population in the Yaruk Tamboore wetlands has been unsuccessful.

Site B in 2017

Site 1 in 2020

John concluded his presentation with his recommendations for future management of the area, which included:

> Removal of pest fish species and perhaps isolating the wetland from future flooding

> Provide permanent water or manage as ephemeral wetland

> Ensure a supply of good quality water

> Continue to establish Aquatic plants

> Restock fish once other issues have been rectified

> Closely monitor the area in the short and long term with management goals

John has also recently been involved in supplying the scientific information for a wonderful children's book written by local freelance writer and environmental educator, Michele Gierck. After John's presentation, she spoke briefly of her journey – writing and publishing her award-winning children's book *Gladys and Stripey – Two little fish on one BIG adventure*, based on the nationally threatened fish species the dwarf galaxias (Galaxiella pusilla).

Both were interesting speakers and we look forward to hearing more about John's work in the future.

Rob Granter

(For more information about the book go to Michele's website https://michelegierck.com.au/gladys-and-stripey/)

NATURE NOTES: MAY + JUNE

MAY:

Jane Crone Saw Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos

Martin Short reported seeing4 Gang Gangs and a Buff banded Rail on the escarpment at Yellowbox Terrace, Rosanna.

Greg.. Sighted a Blue tongue Lizard

Celia Smith observed a flock of 50 Wood ducks

James Deane saw a Powerful Owl on Viewbank hill.

JUNE:

Daphne Hards, Jennifer Chellew, Doug McNaughton all saw and heard flocks of Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos.

Gianna and James Deane reported a flock of Gang Gangs feeding on Hawthorn along the Main yarra Trail towards the confluence of the Plenty and Yarra Rivers.

James Deane showed a photo from one of his trail camss of a large deer in the Montpellier Billabong. He thinks there are at least four in the area.

Jennifer Chellew found a dead Tawny Frogmouth in tope section of Heidelberg Park.

Robert Deane reported carp in the billabong.

Heather Smith observed a dozen Straw-necked Ibis feeding alongside about 30 White Ibis on the oval below the OSO. Also a flock of about 100 Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos. Heard Kookaburrras calling from Pine tops in Heidelberg Park, and then the answering calls from the Flats.

Anthea Fleming reported sightings in her garden over 3 days including a Cuckoo Shrike, a Sparrow hawk and a Wedgetailed Eagle overhead. Elsewhere: Cattle Egrets and friends at the banyule Swamp, a Spinebill in Jane Crone's garden and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Also Female Soldier Flies (Wingless) who lay their eggs on rotten wood.

Photo: J Deane

Photos: A Fleming

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

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