Warringal Conservation Society

PRE-SPRING NEWSLETTER Volume 53/5 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 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.

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. 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 future. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place, and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been 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

ASSOC PROFESSOR GRAEME COULSON
Peri-urban Kangaroos: Living the big city life

A/Prof Coulson works at University of Melbourne and is an expert on Kangaroos living on the edge of suburbia (peri-urban). He will explain the factors that determine kangaroo population size and their overall health on the urban fringe. He will also discuss non-lethal population management strategies

OCTOBER MEETING

DR BIRGITA HANSEN Building our knowledge about habitat requirements and movement of Latham's Snipe

Dr Hansen is a senior research fellow in the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation at Federation Uni. Her research focuses on the conservation of shorebirds, waterbirds and their wetland habitats, with a growing emphasis on achieving outcomes through technology-enablement. She leads The Latham's Snipe Project, a national citizen science project investigating their movement patterns and habitat use.

AT A GLANCE

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 1: General meeting from 7.30pm

Sunday 11: Join FoSalt Creek at Rosanna Parklands See page 8 for more.

OCTOBER

Thursday 6: General meeting from 7.30pm

Sunday 9: Handweeding - location TBC 10am–12noon

Meetings are the first Thursday of the month from 7.30pm

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

Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre and Greening Australia. Melways map 32:D3. **All Welcome**

Photo: A Fleming

Male and female Red-rumped Parrots seen testing the water recently at Wilson Reserve.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Our general meetings this year have been well attended in both online and face-to-face formats. In a large part, this has been due to the calibre of the speakers we have been able to attract. We have heard about local revegetation projects, environmental legislation, wildlife in the suburbs and slime moulds; all from excellent speakers who really know their topic.

We are excited about our upcoming speakers for September and October; A/Prof Graeme Coulson on Kangaroos and Dr Birgita Hansen on Latham's Snipe. Graeme and Birgita are experts who will give entertaining and informative presentations.

Our excellent lineup of speakers is due to the work of the committee. One of the joys of being on the committee is being able to approach eminent experts and prominent local figures on behalf of the society.

The Warringal Conservation Society has credibility garnered from over fifty years of work on environmental issues, and more often than not the response to requests is "yes, I would be delighted to speak to your group". If having an excuse to contact an environmental advocate/expert you have always admired sounds appealing, consider nominating for the Warringal Conservation Society committee at our Annual General meeting in October. *James Deane*

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 6 October 2022

7.30pm, Old Shire Offices, Heidelberg

Please consioder nominationg for one of the Officer positions or dip your toe in as a general committee member. **NOMINATION FORM on page 7**.

BUSINESS ARISING

1. Confirmation of Minutes of 2021 Annual General Meeting
2. Annual Report of the Committee
3. Financial statements
4. Election of members of the Committee
5. Annual subscription fee

AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3....

Good with numbers and have a bit of time to spare?

After 11 years Daphne wants to pass the Treasurer position to someone else. It would be ideal to pass the baton on at the next AGM in October 2022, so please give it thought. Our finances are in great shape!!

For more info contact Daphne on email: warringal3084@gmail.com

HAVE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

Send your stories/ photos to wcs.editor@gmail.com
Copy deadlines for Nov/Dec issue: 15 October

VALE JOHN HOOK 1925-2022

John and his late wife Mary were long-time members of the Society and as well as attending many working bees and events, could often be found in the kitchen setting up supper for the general meetings when they were held at the Uniting Church in Burgundy Street.

Liz remebers 'I knew John through military history events and then dropping in on him at Strathalan occasionally. He had an amazing record of learning to speak Japanese for the War Crimes Tribunal, as well as being a survivor at Sandakan.'

Liz Evans and Heather Smith

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The society extends a warm welcome to new members **Alicia Curry**, **Margaret Lewis** and **Shelby Williamson** and looks forward to catching up with them at a working bee or meeting soon.

Also a belated warm welcome to **John Hargreaves** who has dived in head first by joining the Committee and the Kapok Crew (see page 4).

SPRING INTO SPRING OUTDOORS!

Banyule's Spring Outdoors program is back and bookings are open. Follow the link to see the exciting range of events being held over the spring season in Banyule. Go to: www.banyule.vic.gov.au/Events-activities/Major-events/Spring-Outdoors-Festival

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

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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

Vice President: John D'Aloia

Treasurer: Daphne Hards. Telephone: 9497 4831

Planting Coordinator: Rob Granter

Committee: Anthea Fleming, John Hargreaves, Doug McNaughton, Michelle Giovas

Newsletter: Editor: Heather Smith 0423 191 977
Email: wcs.editor@gmail.com

DUCK SHOOTING AND THE NOVEMBER STATE ELECTION

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD IN TIME FOR THE STATE ELECTION.

Each year, the Victorian government allows thousands of normally peaceful public waterways to become blood baths for up to three months. It is time Dan Andrews joined QLD, ACT, NSW and WA to ban Recreational duckshooting.

DUCK SHOOTING IN 2022

In 2022, despite the evidence from annual aerial surveys conducted by the University of NSW over the last thirty years that shows native waterbird numbers in Eastern Australia have declined by 90 per cent, the Victorian Government declared a three month long duck shooting season from March 16th to June 13th. A Federal Court Injunction failed to prevent this.

Yet again, members of WCS joined other volunteers to rescue wounded birds at Lake Bael Bael - a beautiful Ramsar listed wetland near Kerang. Here, over the next three months, countless birds were illegally shot. They included threatened Blue-winged Shovelers and Hardhead Ducks, other non-game ducks, protected Eurasian Coots, Swans, Spoonbills, and tiny Grebes. Most of the evidence of this illegal shooting was again documented and reported by volunteers rather than the Government's own publicly funded compliance team.

We witnessed many terrified birds, including swans with cygnets too young to fly, having to abandon their eggs and nests to escape the incessant gunfire. Amidst the noise and mayhem, brave volunteers ran to rescue and carry the wounded birds, their beaks and bones shattered by gunshot and left for dead, to the on-shore volunteer Vets from Wildlife Victoria and the Coalition against Duck Shooting. Many birds were saved from the guns because of the actions of these rescuers.

We observed officers from the Game Management Authority checking hunters' bags at Lake Bael Bael. But nearby, within the first few days of the season, a large deep pit where scores of shot dead birds had been recently buried was discovered by wildlife rescuers. Presumably these dead birds were shot for "fun" and not for food; and they were buried to escape detection. It is obvious that a considerable amount of public money is being wasted every year in failed attempts to provide the necessary supervision and regulation of hunters on Victoria's wetlands during the duck shooting season.

The evidence of illegal shooting at Lake Bael Bael, along with recent expert science showing that duck shooting is unsustainable and has serious environmental impacts on nationally protected species and on Ramsar wetlands, was included in a second legal challenge mounted against the Game Management Authority and the Federal Agriculture and Environment Ministers. But an urgent injunction to stop the shooting was again denied. Unless it is banned first, further legal action to ban duck shooting under the EPBC Act is planned ahead of any possible 2023 season in Victoria.

Celia Smith

Further Resources:

1. www.ecosystem.unsw.edu.au >research projects
2. www.regionalvictoriansotds.com.au
3. www.duck.org.au

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET YOUR VOICE HEARD IN THE NOVEMBER STATE ELECTION.

If you hate the cruelty, the suffering and don't want to see native waterbirds spiral to extinction, please phone, email or write with your views and ask for a permanent ban on duck shooting in Victoria to:

The Hon Daniel Andrews – Premier of Victoria.
daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au
Tel: 9651 5000

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio - Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Solar Homes, Co-ordinating for DELWP.
lily.dambrosio@parliament.vic.gov.au Tel: 96379504

The Hon. Anthony Carbines – State Member for Ivanhoe, Minister for Police, Crime Prevention, Racing.
anthony.carbines@parliament.vic.gov.au
Tel: 9457 5328

Please also phone or email or write/cc a copy of your letter to your State MPs in both the Upper and Lower Houses.

Talkback radio and letters are also a good way to get public support and action for a ban on recreational duck shooting.

ABC Radio: Talkback: 1300 222 774, Texts: 0437 774 774

Weekly Times: letters@theweeklytimes.com.au

The Age: letters@theage.com.au

Photo: Coalition against duck shooting

KAPOK ATTACK! Weeding continues...

The intrepid Kapok Crew has completed 6 attacks since 6 June. Daphne organised gorgeous weather until our last outing on 13 August, when a downpour plus hail soaked us to the skin, but failed to dampen our collective resolve.

In Zones II and III (see map), the densest *Araujia sericifera* infestations, we've made good progress. All visible pods were removed and bagged; main stems were cut and painted. Carted by wheelbarrow to a drop-off point, a supportive BCC Bush Crew picked up the bags. Champions!

Attack locations on Parks Victoria estate are now registered courtesy of our colleagues at Friends of Yarra Valley Parks. Listed on the ParkConnect website under Upcoming activities, Kapok Crew can read a brief and sign in online.

Weeds of Australia lists 24 alternative common names for *A. sericifera*. Because butterflies and moths are trapped by their probosci when taking nectar (most are later released after pollinium – a mass of pollen grains – is attached) it is called Cruel Plant or Moth Vine. Ingestion is poisonous to livestock, domestic animals and humans. Contact with the milky sap causes skin and eye irritation, and can result in a severe allergic reaction. And it stains clothes. A hat, eye protection, old clothes with long sleeves and legs, gloves and water for washing are essential in your kit to tackle this one. It's another WCS fashion statement.

In Victoria, this South American native is classified as a minor environmental weed. Considered a transformer species (no, NOT from Cybertron) it changes the character of ecosystems by smothering and toppling trees and shrubs when it climbs, and smothering ground cover plants where it creeps. It reproduces mainly by seed. Dispersal vectors are wind and water, occasionally dumped garden waste and contaminated fodder. Distribution is mostly restricted to riparian vegetation and damp sclerophyll forest in or near urban areas, according to VicFlora. Where there is no record of *A. sericifera* in Banyule Flats! No longer cultivated as an ornamental vine, it is still found in Melbourne gardens, including my friend's place on Moonee Ponds Creek.

In case you're wondering, Kapok Vine is not the source of fluffiness used in kapok pillows, mattresses, upholstery and life preservers...or blowgun darts. That is *Ceiba pentandra*, which grows in Caribbean, Central American and north South American rainforests. This buttressed giant can reach 60m in height, 18m in circumference and produces many hundreds of pods. Imagine the logistics needed to weed those monsters.

John Hargreaves

If you'd like to join the Kapok Crew email warringal3084@gmail.com for future dates.

UPDATES: WORKING BEES / ENVIRONMENT / EVENTS / ACTIVITES

WHITTLESEA LEADS THE WAY by endorsing its 24 hour cat curfew

On the WCS FB page recently there was a link to the Invasive Species Council's Feral Cat campaign which highlighted Australia's mammalian extinction record (worst in the world) and how cats have contributed to two thirds of these species' demise. There has also been research indicating that domestic cats - being in higher populations around the suburbs - are in fact doing as much damage or more than feral cats.

So it was good to hear of the recent cat curfew news from neighbouring Whittlesea Council. At their July meeting, the Council endorsed the introduction of two key actions: a 24-hour cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats.

Coming into effect from 1 August 2023, these actions will help enhance the welfare and safety of cats, and create a safer environment between pets and wildlife.

Extensive community consultation, industry research and benchmarking of other local Councils over several months influenced the decision to tackle this animal welfare issue head on. More information: *www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/community-support/pets-and-animals/cat-management/*

It's probably time we ask that Banyule consider these options.

Heather Smith

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS EXPO

A huge native plant (tubes to advanced) and book sale, native flower displays, gift stalls. Refreshments available

Saturday, 27 August 2022, 10am - 4pm
Sunday, 28 August 2022, 10am - 4pm

Eltham Community and Reception Centre
801 Main Road, Eltham. More info go to:

https://apsyarrayarra.org.au/australian-plants-expo/

DRAFT HEIDELBERG PARK MASTERPLAN

WCS recently commented on Stage 3 community consultation of the Heidelberg Masterplan Plan (see Shaping Banyule web site). Previous public exhibition rounds had resulted in major improvements to the draft plan but WCS felt it propitious to make further comments:

1. The recent State of the Environment Report 2022 reported that there are more exotic than native plant species currently in Australia, thus WCS considers that the 'planting palette' of garden beds should not consist solely of Mediterranean plants but should include indigenous species.
2. The northwest area of Heidelberg Park is sloping grassland with well-spaced pines and conifers. The draft plan specifies adding further interest with other species of pine and conifer. WCS agrees with this but our sleuths have noted that 15 – 25 trees have already been planted here and the majority of these are deciduous exotics. We pointed out that this development flies in the face of having a plan yet to be adopted by Council.
3. The escarpment behind the football ground and Marching Girls Common is weed infested and largely vegetated with self-seeded Oaks, which shed acorns that migrate to areas adjacent to Salt Creek and the Yarra River. This is causing an ongoing weed problem for both the Council and for Melbourne Water. The escarpment should be weeded of the self-seeded Oaks and planted strategically to enhance the established original trees.
4. A wetland planned for Marching Girls Common has the potential to be great wildlife habitat. WCS noted that an indigenous planting palette that maximises this potential should be specified.
5. The cost estimates of this ambitious plan were itemised over 2.5 pages but not totalled. WCS wondered whether this was an oversight.

Daphne Hards

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.

JULY GUEST SPEAKER REPORT

ANDREW LUCAS: Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks and the Murundaka/Montpelier Precinct

Andrew Lucas, long-time member of Friends of Yarra Valley Parks (FoYVP), spoke about their decade-long, on-going project to restore the degraded Murundaka and Montpelier areas.

FoYVP conduct on-the-ground environmental works along the suburban reach of the river between Plenty River to Warrandyte area - including Viewbank, Murundaka, Montpelier, and Tikalara Park.

After application to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, FoYVP were notified of the approved names for the projects. The property is called Murundaka meaning Stay/live at, and the wetlands are Yaruk Tamboore, meaning Magic Waterhole.

A large range of stakeholders involved in the Murundaka/Plenty River and Yarra//Montpellier Reserve area include Parks Vic HQ, the Minister and local members, DWELP, Banyule Council and Councillors of both Banyule, Manningham.

Murundaka and Montpelier comprise a very substantial area of EVC Plains Grassy Woodland and EVC Plains Grassy Wetland. In the early 2000s, it was a haven for blackberry, rabbits, foxes and other exotic weeds such as thistle, box thorn and Patterson's Curse. Melbourne Water funding made the initial restoration of about 80 hectares possible.

FoYVP prepared a 5-year Strategy for Murundaka and Montpelier that included the re-flooding of Yaruk Tamboore wetland and Murundaka swamp and a major reduction in the rabbit population through ripping and baiting. Commenced in 2007, full rehabilitation will take 15-20 years and will be a major environmental improvement.

Most recently, activity at Yaruk Tamboore saw the re-introduction of native fish to the wetlands: southern pygmy perch, common galaxias and Australian smelt. Painted Snipe have been sighted on occasion.

Community vision and public involvement

While FoYVP acknowledges that Melbourne Water went to substantial lengths to engage with the public during the initial stages of formulating their 'Collaborative Actions' draft plan, they feel that it is silent on the involvement and role of community - particularly Friends groups who have long championed for the Yarra and made substantial improvements to it with their volunteer efforts. FoYVP believe that the plan should specify roles and responsibilities for community and Friends groups and provide, among other things, funding that enables community groups to play a key role - not simply be a 'bolt on' afterthought.

PLANNING THE VISION

WETLANDS REINSTATEMENT

YARUK TAMBOORE NOW

Unfortunately, since 2016, progress has stalled as FoYVP have not been in a position to lodge a grant application with Melbourne Water for the past four years. Also Parks Victoria has insisted that all grant moneys provided to the FoYVP are surrendered to Parks Victoria *enbloc*, where they are disbursed at Parks' sole discretion.

The consequence of this policy prevents FoYVP from actively managing and participating in these environmental activities, as it would make them in breach of the undertakings given in the Friends' grant applications with Melbourne Water. These contractual undertakings commit the group to a providing an equivalent amount of voluntary contribution to match to funds provided by Melbourne Water – which is not possible. Without resolution Andrew believes that the community will lose interest and 'walk away' from the Yarra. To forestall this outcome FoYVP proposes that this area of the river should function under joint management arrangements between the FoYVP (representing the local community), Parks Victoria and the Wurundjeri. He strongly believes that Friends Groups have a lot of experience and knowledge of the areas they work on which should be reflected in the management plans for these areas of public land (which is Yarra River land).

Lots of questions followed, and some meaty issues to consider in light of our own engagement with land authorities.

H Smith

AUGUST GUEST SPEAKER

JACINTA HUMPHRIES: Birds in the 'burbs: How do birds respond to urban development?

Jacinta is in the process of finishing a PhD on the impact of urbanisation on birds at Latrobe University. She shared her findings with us at our August meeting.

Urbanisation is the process whereby natural habitat is lost to roads, housing and other built structure as our cities expand and become denser. Urbanisation is one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in the greater Melbourne area. If we look at aerial photos of Banyule from 1945, the landscape is primarily open agricultural land with scattered areas of remnant bushland. Widespread clearing of trees can be seen, but George Paras noted that many of the open areas would have still supported a diversity of grassland species. Fast forward to the present and most of the landscape has been covered by houses, roads, shops, carparks and other infrastructure. The result is less wildlife habitat, and remaining habitat is also of a lower quality and less connected.

While urbanisation usually results in an overall reduction in bird species present, Jacinta explained that there are winners and losers. Some birds are considered urban avoiders, for example the Yellow Robin, because they never come to terms with urban areas. Others, like cockatoos, are urban adapters because they make forays into urban areas to exploit opportunities when they arise (e.g Rob and Chris Granter's Macadamia tree). Then there are urban exploiters like Magpies, Ravens, and Red Wattlebirds, that live permanently in the suburbs.

Jacinta examined several Melbourne suburbs with varying degrees of urbanisation to understand the interaction between urbanisation and bird diversity. Hawthorn and Kooyong were examples of high urbanisation through to Hurstbridge and Mt Evelyn at the lowest end of the urbanisation scale. 250 hours

were spent in the field documenting the abundance of 71 native and 5 exotic bird species.

Jacinta noted that as the percentage of area covered by built structure increased, the overall number of native bird species went down. High density urban areas were characterised by the presence of the Blackbird, Wattlebirds, Rock Dove (feral pigeons) and Musk Lorikeet. Medium density areas had Grey Fantail, Eastern Spinebill and Spotted Pardalote. Low density areas saw the appearance of a much more interesting selection of birds including Wrens, Striated Pardalote, Kookaburra, Oriole, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, King Parrot and Thornbill.

It was also notable that the presence of nearby bushland reversed some bird loss in urban areas by acting as a source population for visiting urban adapter species. This makes a strong case for maintaining interspersed patches of good quality bushland throughout our urbanised suburbs. Increasing the quality of habitat in urban areas by well-planned revegetation is another way bird diversity can be increased.

We thank Jacinta for speaking about her most interesting studies. The flurry of questions and comments that followed showed that the presentation was greatly appreciated.

James Deane

WCS NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE 2022-2023

All signatories must be full financial members of Warringal Conservation Society
Contact the Secretary at warrigal if you wish to lodge a Proxy vote: warringal3084@gmail.com

I, _____ hereby nominate _____

For the position of: _____

Signed: (proposer) _____

Signed: (seconder) _____

I, _____ hereby agree to accept the above position if duly elected

Signed: _____

NATURE NOTES

Apologies - July /August nature notes were mislaid

NATURE NOTES - AUGUST

Anthea Fleming enjoying the signs of spring for Nature notes: Blackbirds fighting each other. Red Wattlebird collecting spider-web from trees and windows. A Collared Sparrowhawk flew over backyard, going upstream along Darebin Creek - screams of protest from everything else with feathers.

Photo: A Fleming

BATHING PARTY AT WILSON RESERVE

At Wilson Reserve, a wattle has fallen into the Reedy Billabong. For birds, this is a real improvement, as it makes a safe drinking and bathing place. A party of Red-rumped Parrots were taking advantage of it - so absorbed that, after a quiet approach, I was able to photograph them. Submerged twigs are safe to cling to while submerged, and the dry ones a good spot for preening and drying off. At least two adult males were present, and several females and young.

With their short legs, parrots can be at a disadvantage. I remember seeing a pair of Gang Gangs in the snow at Mt.Baw Baw. They took turns to hang onto a small root, rather like a jug-handle, which allowed a safe approach to a small creek. The waiting bird kept watch from a higher branch. With snow six inches deep, getting a drink was difficult.

Anthea Fleming

WORKING BEE CALENDAR 2022

We'd love to see you! Put the dates below into your calendars, then watch for newsletter/ email /Facebook updates. All start at 10am, finish around 12noon – usually with a cuppa and chat to finish with.

September

Sunday 11: National Tree Day was caneled due to COVID, so instead we're going over to join Friends of Salt Creek at their planting.
10am - 12noon with a BBQ to follow. Location map and details will be available on FB and by email soon.

October

Sunday 9: Hand weeding TBA
Sunday 30: Banyule Grasslands Walk

November

Sunday 13 TBC: An end of Year Field Trip, supported by BCC Bush Crew. All details still being confirmed.

BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS

Sunday, 16 October 2022. 7:00am to 11:30am
Meet: Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverly Road, Heidelberg
Join academics Jacinta Humphrey and Andrew Bennett in a walk around Banyule Flats and then return to talk about what you have seen over a cuppa and breakfast.

Learn about the influence of urbanisation on birds and the importance of habitat patches and changes in our local bird community over time.

SPACES LIMITED - YOU MUST BOOK:
www.banyule.vic.gov.au/Events-activities/Whats-on/Community-events/Breakfast-with-the-birds

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

Warringal Conservation Society