Warringal Conservation Society

SUMMER 2025 Volume 56/1 FEBRUARY/MARCH

From 1970 Warringal Conservation Society has been an active and effective steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung as traditional custodians of the land on which we live and meet, and pay respect to past, present and future elders.

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

General meetings are now bi-monthly.

See you all in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Meetings are the first Thursday from 7.30pm at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Rd, Heidelberg. Enter from Beverley Road.
All Welcome

FEBRUARY MEETING

DR SUSAN HOBEE: Returning Order from Chaos in a Grassland: a comparison of floral visitor assessment methods and resulting networks.

Dr Hoebee is Senior Lecturer, Lab Head for Plant Reproductive Ecology and Conservation Genomics at La Trobe University, Bundoora. She is presenting the outcome of Masters research by Allison Menzies. Allison is a WCS Prize recipient.

APRIL GUEST SPEAKER: JEFF DAVIES

Jeff is a wildlife artist specialising in birds and their environment. He is most known for his work on the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* (HANZAB), by Birds Australia.

NEW AND RENEWING!

The Society is delighted to welcome new members **Lucinda Borketey** and **Jim** and **Gabby Royston.** ALSO, a shout out to renewing members **Jean Leith, Celia Smith, Kylie Jordan, Penelope Braybrook, Brian Abasalom** and **Greg Stanfield** - thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to meeting you all in person at a meeting or working bee soon.

COMING UP

FEBRUARY

Thursday 6: General Meeting from 7.30pm
Saturday 22: Twilight Walk. See page 2.

MARCH

Sunday 2: Clean Up Australia Day. See page 2.

THANKS TO DAPHNE HARDS

Daphne has decided to stand down from the Committee. While happy to help new Treasurer Leonie when needed, she is looking forward to more 'me' time. On behalf of the Society, the committee express their heartfelt thanks for all the hard work that she has done over her years of involvement. **Daphne has made a significant contribution to the Society.**

LAUREN LEAVING BUSH CREW

One of our favourite Bush Crew members, Lauren Dwyer, who worked predominately with the Friends of Salt Creek is moving on to the Glen Eira Council where she will take up the Urban Biodiversity Team Leader role. WCS enjoyed her company at various combined WCS/Salt Creek working bees. Lauren starts her new position in February and will definitely leave a hole that can't be filled. **Best wishes for the future Lauren.**

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Warringal Conservation Society Inc
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084
Email: warringal3084@gmail.com
Website: www.warringal.org.au
FB: www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety

President: James Deane

Treasurer: Leonie Pope

Secretary + Newsletter: Heather Smith

Planting Coordinator: Rob Granter

Committee: Anthea Fleming, Michelle Giovas, Doug McNaughton and George Paras.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Sunday 2nd March 2025. 10am-12pm.

Our parklands feature remnant indigenous and exotic historic vegetation, swamps, billabongs, waterways and sporting facilities. The Yarra River and the Banyule Swamp keep birdlife plentiful, some rare or threatened in Victoria, and others are migrants, such as the Latham's snipe. Rubbish is not helpful to any of these areas. **Your help on the day will be a great contribution to keeping the parklands beautiful and will help us to care for the flora and fauna that live there.**

Meeting Point: We will meet in the Parklands near the end of Plymouth St, Heidelberg, close to the Main Yarra Trail and Banyule Cattle yards. Look for a white BCC ute - we will be supported by Warwick our Senior Ranger. Be sure to register: https://register.cleanup.org.au/fundraisers/warwickmccallum/warringal-parklands-banyule-flats-54598

TWILIGHT WALK

Saturday 22 February from 8pm.

WCS will be running our annual Twilight walk again. Meet at the bottom of the Somerset Drive car park close to the Main Yarra Trail.

Meet at 8.00pm for an 8.15pm start.

Bring your own torch to help with walking in the dark. We will have leaders with stronger torches with red lenses for spotting wildlife. Please wear sturdy footwear and mosquito repellent.

Keep an eye on the WCS FB page for more details or last minute changes depending on weather.

HELP! NEWSLETTER ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Are you fairly proficient in Word and know your way around a basic template? The WCS editor will be away for seven weeks (mid-April to the end of May) and we need a volunteer to do the June/July newsletter. You would need to gather content and photos, prepare the newsletter and then produce a PDF for emailing and a PDF for printing.

If this sounds of interest to you, please call me directly on 0423 191 977. *Heather*

2024 NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

Gresswell Nature Conservation Reserves walk with George Paras

Although it was a rainy day, which put off a few people, it was perfect to see creeks and stormwater/drainage projects in action. The walk was led by George Paras who, with his long involvement with the area, had a lot of interesting insight and information to tell us.

Photos: J Deane

The group also stopped off at Bundoora Secondary College to see agriculture, animal husbandry, the indigenous plant nursery and the native fish breeding projects. Thanks to Assistant Principal Brian Daniells for showing us around and explaining the environmental program and the work underway by the students.

Midway through the 4km walk, we stopped for a welcome cup of tea and a break at Strathallan Golf Clubhouse. Our thanks to Strathallan Golf Club committee member Geoff Blackwood, who arranged for Sunday Pro shop manager to Kevin host us with free tea and coffee. Many thanks to George who was, as usual, full of interesting information, history and stories.

Top: George holds forth in the rain.

Left: Bundoora Secondary College fish breeding and vegetable garden projects.

UNUSUAL AND EXCITING FIND

On Wednesday 22 January a local birdo found the dead body of a male phascogale on the oval near the end of Somerset Drive in Viewbank. An astounding find – especially considering what a people/dog heavy area this is. The body has been sent to the Melbourne Museum, reported on inaturalist and to The Phascogale Project (TPP). William from TPP offered…

"There is continuous riparian habitat connectivity from the Eltham population. Plus, it's a male, which disperse several km away from maternal site. Would be worth doing a survey to determine if it's an isolated male or if there is a population on site. There is definitely suitable habitat. Dogs are no issue for Phascogales. They are nocturnal, mostly arboreal. They have persisted with foxes in many areas."

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

NOVEMBER> Robert Bender: Conservation volunteering in another country

Crossroads Learning Centre and Nature Preserve at Big Creek Door County, Wisconsin USA.

At our November meeting we heard from esteemed member Robert Bender (OAM) who spoke about his experience of conservation volunteering with Minneapolis Parks in Wisconsin, from May to mid-August, 2024.

Robert worked with interns, in groups and on his own to remove invasive weed species like Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) by hand and Buckthorn – a deep rooted shrub requiring a mattock. He also tackled Crownvetch (*Securigera varia*). A close relative of the vetch that is a serious problem in Melbourne and which can be seen growing in the Foodworks Ivanhoe East Rose Garden.

Above: Crownvetch (*Securigera varia)*.

Below: Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus) and* Bumblebee - Tri-coloured species *(B. ternarius*).

In the USA there are four levels of Government and Robert was mainly working with a not-for-profit organisation dealing with the County level of government. Robert entertained us with interesting stories of volunteering at various locations including serious weeding at "Crossroads", Big Creek and planting at Green Bay Botanic Garden.

Robert then moved on and regaled us with stories of counting Little Brown Bats (weight 8 grams) at the "old barn" located on a farm property, known as Three Springs, Sister Bay – a small village 45 minutes north of Sturgeon Bay. This bat population (originally about 800) is recovering from White Nose Syndrome (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) which struck USA's bats, mainly affecting cave-roosting species, especially Little Browns. This groups' numbers plummeted to about 65, a drop of 92%. Most bats succumbed to the deadly fungus which accumulates as a white coating on hibernating bats' muzzles and wings. It originated in France, where bats have had millennia to develop immunity, arrived in USA about 2000, where bats had little or none.

Photos: R Bender

We also heard about The Bumblebee project, which is a new project monitoring the state's 21 species bumblebees and one has just been rated as endangered. Nobody knows if the species are in decline so volunteer sightings are very important. Robert was pleased to find two species in Patsy's garden. The talk finished with an analysis of volunteering trends and of course some many wonderful anecdotes from Robert.

Michelle Giovas

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

DECEMBER> Members night: European walks and Chelsworth Park Defenders

Rob Granter spoke on his recent trip that included many wonderful walks in the UK, Austria and Norway, and we also heard from Anthea Fleming about the Defenders of Chelsworth Park.

ROB GRANTER – Highlights of some European short walks

For our December meeting, member Rob Granter took us through some of the highlights of his recent trip through the UK, Austria and Norway with his wife Christine.

They climbed Ben Nevis and despite not seeing much due to a white-out after 1000m altitude the experience was unforgettable. A chance road side stop at the Beinn Eighe, Britain's first National Nature Reserve (set up in 1951), turned into a beautiful unexpected walk through the largest stand of Scottish Pines in Scotland's north-west. It wasn't just the Scottish pines that were striking, Loch Maree, the Birch and Rowan trees and the incredibly varied forest understory all the way to the stunning alpine meadows were all amazing highlights.

The Isle of Skye was rich with the stunning walking experiences of "The Old Man of Stor" and the "Quiraing". They then ventured across to Ireland and the spectacular coastline of the Giant's Causeway and stunning 600m cliffs of Sliabh Liag in County Donegal and the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare. Continuing south to Killarney and the ring of Kerry.

Then across by ferry into Wales where they were shown some beautiful walks by their friends based in Cardiff, from the dinosaur coast to the "Four Falls Trail" through the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Next on the itinerary was Austria for two weeks of walks, wine and wonderful experiences. Finishing off with the highlights tour in the beautiful Flam Valley in Norway with its stunning Autumn colours. Of course, the talk was accompanied by Rob's marvellous photos. **Thank you, Rob**.

Photos: R Granter

Top: The Old Man of Stor and the Quiraing on the Isle of Skye.

Bottom left: Rock formations along the dinosaur coast.

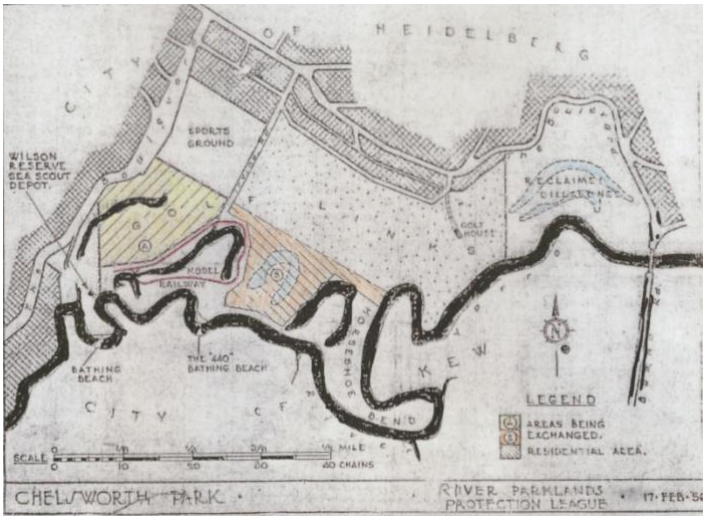
Bottom right: Autumn colours in the Flam valley, rising from the Aurlandsfjord.

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

ANTHEA FLEMING: Defending Chelsworth Park

Below is part of Anthea's presentation given in November 2024 at the Wilson Reserve Centenary event.

Originally the Irvine property, this land east of Wilson Reserve became a Golf Course in 1930. Heidelberg Council acquired it in 1936. Post-World War II, much of it became rubbish tips – later sports fields. The 'Lost Billabong' was also filled. In 1954, Council made a secret land swap with the Golf Course lessees, giving them much riverside land in exchange for their area near the Boulevard. Local residents were distressed to find a fence at Irvine Rd, preventing access to the 440-Yard Beach and to the river-bank, and to see large trees and 'scrub' being removed by machinery.

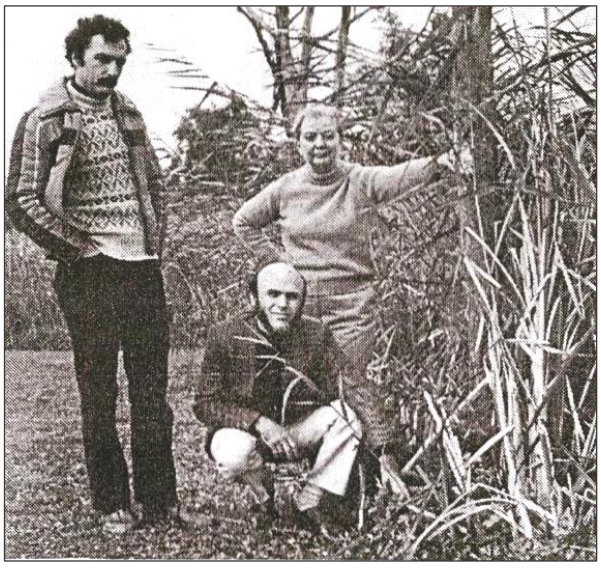


Local resistance was led by Ellis Stones, the famous landscape gardener. Living nearby, he wrote a furious letter to *The Argus* [15 August 1954] and led riverside meetings. With Chris Bailey and others, he pulled down the fence one night. His neighbour Ken Johnson told me of the night he came home from fishing, to be told: "Grab a shovel and get down to the Horseshoe!" The lessees were attempting to drain it, and a furious effort was made to fill in the drainage ditch. This time, Heidelberg City Council also helped repairs with a bulldozer.

In November, at a meeting in the Town Hall, the River and Parklands Protection League was formed, with Ellis as President. A petition with over 600 signatures was presented to Council. The deputation was told that it came too late.

League members had been shown different versions of the contractor's plans – one showed a 50 ft. reserve around the main Billabong and along the riverbank, others did not. Legal Opinion stated that access to the track to the 440 Beach was 'inviolable', and most of the Billabong track remains. But the riverside path upstream was lost, until re-opened for walkers and cyclists in 1998.

The League lapsed until 1981, when the proposal to lease the sports fields to Ivanhoe Grammar School met strong opposition. Now the Chelsworth Park Riverlands Protection League, it was led by Dr. John Merory and Betty Dowell. They campaigned against vandalism – there were then no gates and cars drove anywhere. An environmental study was commissioned, and members attacked willows and blackberry. Betty raised thousands of native plants, and buffers were planted around the Oval, and along the south edge of the Reed Billabong. With her sons, she improvised a fence around the Central Wetland, to keep the mower out. Up sprang tussocks of native *Poa and* some young Wattles.



Top: Map developed by the River Parklands Protection League in 1956, showing the areas exchanged by the Heidelberg City Council with the Golf Club.

Bottom: Members of the Chelsworth Park and River Protection Leaguer inspecting a reed bed beside the Yarra. From left: Mr Sean Leahy, Dr John Merory and Mrs Betty Dowell.

Despite more than 100 written submissions, the lease was granted – and continues. One unexpected result was that weed-killer, used on the Oval, to kill Capeweed flowed into the Billabong and killed off its reed-bed. The Park's Reed-Warbler population disappeared.

In 1996, with Banyule Council's support, the Friends of Wilson Reserve was formed, with many of the same personnel and led by Robert Bender. May it long continue.

Anthea Fleming

NATURE NOTES

NOVEMBER 2024

Apologies to anyone who contributed to this section at the November meeting – unfortunately due to an oversight no records were taken.

Robert Bender supplied a collection of photos on a USB at the meeting which did make it into the newsletter folder. The files included a host of interesting creatures including Grass Skipper butterfly, a family of Krefft's Gliders and some lovely bird photos by a new Wilson Reserve member, Teik Ju Choo. Teik Ju thinks the Rufous Songlark may be a first sighting for this area.

He also showed a photo of an Eastern Broad-nosed bat. Caught in late October, it was a wrist-banded male. Banded Jan 2015, so born Oct 2014. Robert caught him on his 10th birthday, which is very old for a little bat.

Photos: Teik Ju Choo

Photos: R Bender

Top: Krefft's Gliders. Left to right: Teik Ju Choo's Rufous Songlark and Spotted Pardalote. Eastern Broad-nosed Bat – showing the banding.

FOR SPACE: Robert's December sightings are included on this page as well.

Another set of interesting photos covering a wide range of frogs, birds including Brown Tree Frog, a Darter drying itself, a wonderful Calocambra cockroach, having found many under the same blanket of Trad. Also, a series of photos of a vixen and her four cubs playing in the sunshine, on the Kew side of the Yarra.

Clockwise from right: Brown Tree Frog. Vixen and cub. Calocambra Cockroach. Darter drying off.

NATURE NOTES

DECEMBER 2024

Don Stokes on the Odyssey House Suspension Bridge, watched a pair of White-faced Herons building a nest from sticks in a large branch overhanging the Yarra River.

Denise Fernando had an echidna in her garden

Lene Jakobsen spotted a large tiger snake in the St Johns Riverside Community Garden, as well as lorikeets in her loquat tree.

Meg Fleming reported on water snails and native ants

Jennifer Chellew was delighted to see a large Blue-tongue lizard in her garden

Photo: H Smith

Martin Short had observed mass of insects on a tree along the main Yara trail. It was a Monkey Puzzle tree (*Araucaria Araucana*) and the insects were Mealybug Ladybird *(Cryptolaemus montrouzieri). Also known as* Mealybug destroyer, it is a species of ladybird beetle native to eastern Australia which predates on mealybug (which apparently look like the ladybird nymph) and soft scale insect parasites of Hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*).

Photo: M Short

Jane Crone had three King Parrots including one juvenile sleeping in her Salvia bush.

Anthea Fleming reported: A solitary Mud-dauber Wasp has been building its cells in my porch – about one a day, sometimes one and a half. Twelve have been completed. Each contains one or more spiders, plus an egg. When the row was complete, she filled in the gaps with mud. The wasp is not threatening and I take care not to bother her.

Photo: Online source

She also spoke on the advantages of a neglected garden full of weeds: on 19th November, I saw this Buff-banded Rail walking about in my courtyard. I went round by the front of the house and watched it diving into the Seaside Daisies by the side-path. It returned to the courtyard and to the backyard, where I was delighted to glimpse a young one – about half-size, very leggy, covered with black down and a few wing feathers. It vanished into cover, but I got some pictures of the adult.

Photos: A Fleming

Heather Smith watched two Eastern Spinebills investigating and possibly eating from Agapanthus flowers.

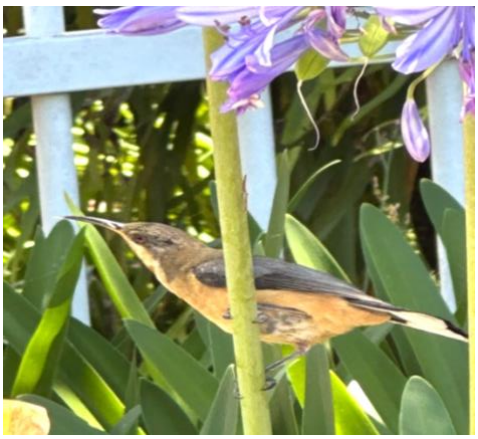


Photo: H Smith

From the top:

White-faced Herons nest building.

Mealybug Ladybird nymph and adult.

Mud-dauber Wasp with its mud egg cells.

Adult Buff-banded Rail.

Spinebill in Agapanthus.

Your ongoing membership enables the Society to actively undertake projects that contribute to advocating for wildlife and the natural environment, to provide information to members and the community ranging from local to global environmental issues.

MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL JULY 24 – JUNE 25

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.

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