Warringal Conservation Society

AUTUMN 2025 Volume 56/2 APRIL / MAY

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

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

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**

NEW AND RENEWING!

The Society is pleased to welcome renewing members **Fiona Campbell** and **Robert Ives** - thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to meeting you all in person at a meeting or working bee soon.

Is your membership up to date? You can renew online or use the form on the back page.

NEWSLETTER ASSISTANCE NEEDED

If you know your way around a basic Word template WCS needs you! The editor will be away April/ May so we need someone to produce the June/July newsletter. You would need to gather content, prepare the newsletter and then produce PDFs for emailing and printing.

If you can help out, please email the Society at warringal3084@gmail.com.

APRIL MEETING

JEFF DAVIES: Wildlife Artist specialising in birds and their environment

We are excited to have a pre-eminent bird illustrator as our guest speaker. Jeff will be discussing both his studio paintings and book illustration. In the mid 1970's Jeff studied Fine Arts at Caulfield Institute of Technology, focusing on abstract oil painting. However, for the past 40 years his studio work has been based on the realist presentation of birds in their environment.

Appointed as chief artist in 1987 to the 10-year project "*Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*", Jeff went on to produce (from 2007) *The Australian Bird Guide* and *The Compact Australian Bird Guide*. He likes to work at larger scale to show more of the plumage and habitat of the subject species.

He says of his work "*I want people looking at my work to recognise familiar scenes, reminiscent of their own observations of wild birds.*"

COMING UP

APRIL

Thursday 4: General Meeting from 7.30pm
Sunday 27: Planting activity. See page 2.

MAY

Sunday 25: Planting activity. See page 2.

THE SOCIETY HAS TAKEN THE LEAP!

Thanks to Rob and Leonie we are now on Instagram. We want to reach people who could be interested in our working bees. Check us out at:

www.instagram.com/warringalconservationso

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

A fantastic number of community members joined in the "Clean Up Australia Day" event at Banyule Flats on 2 March (42 to be exact).

Thank you to everyone that joined in. It was so great to see so many families from Viewbank Cubs and Scouts. Martin also was especially brave in heading into the Viewbank Creek area and pulled out a heap of rubbish.

Thank you also to Sam and Warwick from Banyule Council for setting up and managing the event

PLANTINGS + WORKING BEES COMING UP

APRIL: SUNDAY 27: PLANTING. We will be out in the back paddock again – to consolidate this area as an emerging wildlife corridor. Lifts for those needing them from the Somerset car park at 10am. **Watch Facebook for more details.**

MAY: SUNDAY 25: PLANTING. Back at the Alan Noy wetland area. The plants put in last year are flourishing! We will do some infill planting to bulk this corridor up.
Watch Facebook for more details.

TWILIGHT WALK

In February eleven enthusiasts withstood the high night time temperatures and gathered at the Somerset Drive carpark at Banyule Flats in the hope of spotting Krefft's Glider. Krefft's glider is a small nocturnal tree dwelling gliding marsupial with a stripe on its head and black fluffy tail. It used to be known as the Sugar Glider until recent scientific work resulted in a reorganisation of glider names. Whatever name they go by, we were keen to see one. Led by James Deane we were not disappointed.

Eliza from the Banyule Bush Crew explained that the council have installed many nest boxes over the last few years, and they have been a great success. The first creature we saw was a Rainbow Lorikeet occupying a box designed for possums. We turned our attention to several boxes specifically designed for gliders. They have an entry that is too small for possums and a baffle that that needs to be negotiated to access the main compartment. This puts most other animals off, but gliders love them. James knew which boxes are popular with gliders and we waited as it got dark, checking with binoculars. It wasn't long before a glider's head popped out of one of the boxes, contemplated the audience then jumped out onto the top of the box. It was soon joined by a friend. They climbed high into the tree and launched, gliding into the nearby canopy.

As it got darker, we did a lap of the Banyule Billabong and spotted Fruit Bats, Microbats, a Brush-tail Possum, a Wombat, lots of Rabbits and a Fox.

All up it was a very nice night for a walk and there was plenty of wildlife to see.

Leonie Pope and James Deane

Top left: Viewbank Cubs and Scouts in on the CUAD action!
Bottom left: Martin braved the Creek for his collection.
Photos R Granter.

Above right: A tangle of Krefft's Gliders. *Photo J Deane.*

GUEST SPEAKER REPORT

FEBRUARY> Dr Susan Hobee: The effectiveness of eDNA metabarcoding vs traditional survey methods

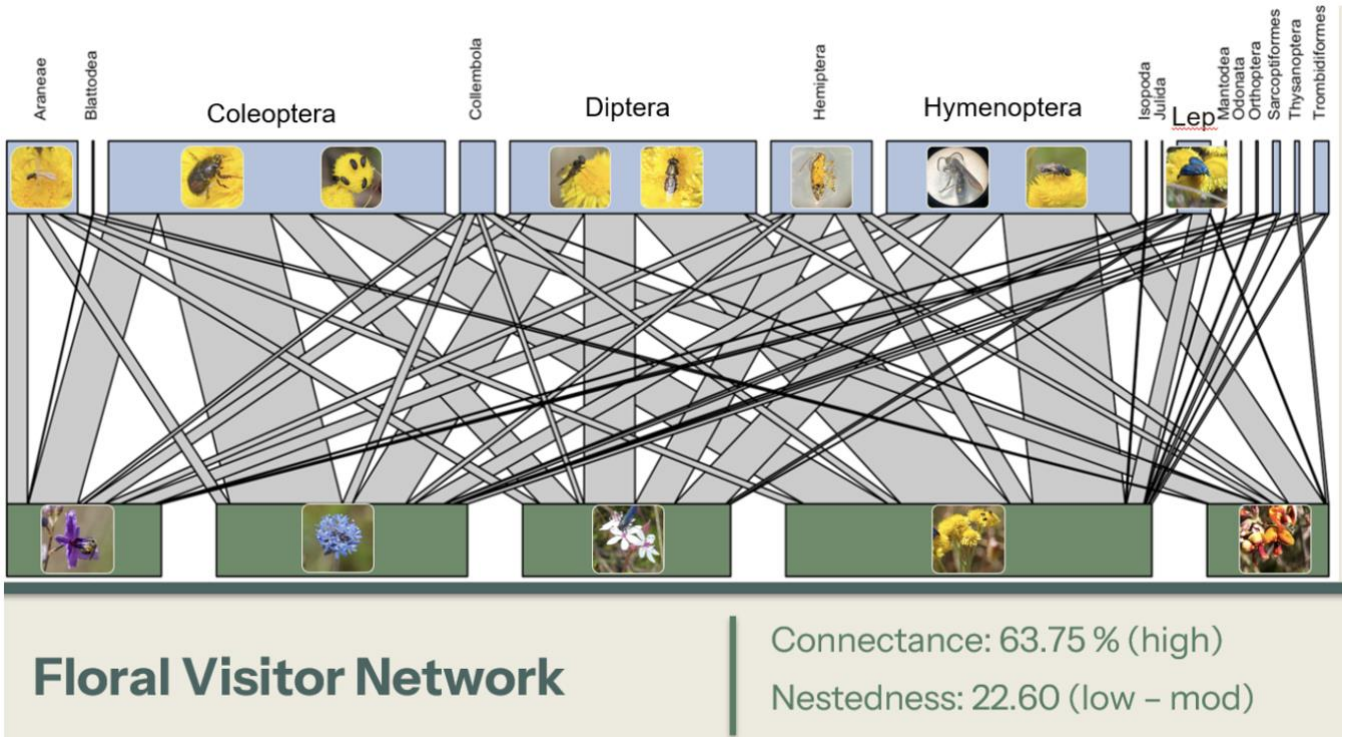
At our February meeting we heard from Dr Susan Hobee, Senior Lecturer at La Trobe University in Ecological Plant and Animal Sciences. Dr Susan presented on behalf of her Masters student, Allison Menzies.

Allison's Masters project was "*to discover how effective eDNA metabarcoding is at surveying invertebrate grasslands floral visitors compared to traditional survey methods*". eDNA metabarcoding is a method for assessing biodiversity by extracting and sequencing DNA from environmental samples (like water, sediment, or air) to identify the species present. The project compared eDNA metabarcoding against traditional survey methods of using observations, sweep nets and vane and camera traps. Additionally, the survey data Allison has collected at Illabarook Grassland Flora Reserve is also invaluable to understand and describe the local floral visitor and pollinator community.

Illabarook Grassland Flora Reserve is part of the critically endangered Victorian Volcanic Plains Grasslands Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) and home to native grasses like Themeda triandra (Kangaroo Grass), Austrostipa species (Spear Grasses), and Rytidosperma species (Wallaby Grasses). It also features beautiful flowering plants like daises, lilies and heaths

Invertebrates, such as bees/wasps, beetles, flies, "true bugs" and butterflies/moths perform critical ecosystem services including pollination, which is arguably the most important of ecosystem services. However, unfortunately many invertebrate orders are projected to decline by up to 40% worldwide over the next few decades. This decline (including habitat vulnerability) and the surprisingly few invertebrate pollinator community studies here in Australia within native habitat was a significant driver for Allison's research.

This bipartite plot demonstrates the data over the Spring survey period. The five plant species are on the bottom and the invertebrate orders on top. The lines are interactions between and widths here indicate volume of the same. We can see here that the Coleoptera, Diptera, Hymenoptera and Hemiptera are all well-represented. But Lepidoptera less so. (CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)



GUEST SPEAKER REPORT (continued)

- The connectance metric for this plot is out of 100 and shows us the proportion of interactions that are occurring out of the total number of possible interactions. The value here is 64 per cent, which is high for this kind of network.
- Nestedness is a measure of specialisation asymmetry. It gives us an idea of the levels of directed and purposeful generalisation and specialisation in the network. Generalisation provides robustness, specialisation maintains diversity. The value of about 23 out of 100 is relatively low. So, although there are many interactions going on, there is a low balance of generalisation and specialisation. We are looking at a network with lots of visits but they aren't' well-structured or directed, it's a little chaotic. But this is a Visitor network and many of these invertebrates are here for many reasons and not just with pollination in mind.

The study concluded that eDNA is comparable to traditional methods as it picked up the greatest number of invertebrate orders and provided an excellent return for effort. eDNA alone cannot identify pollinators, it needs to be used with another survey method. Such as sweep netting which also proved to be excellent with the highest capture rate of traditional methods and it allows us to also identify pollinators.

Michelle Giovas

CONTROLING DOGS AND CATS

2024 saw a review of Council's *Public Order for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Public Places*. The final document was adopted by Council on 24 June 2024, with it coming into effect on 1 February 2025. Among the list of changes of particular interest to WCS included the following:

Dogs are prohibited in environmentally sensitive areas. Where are these? There is a list but it is not clear, and the same areas appear under both versions of 'control'.

a) Dogs are prohibited from entering the following environmentally sensitive reserves including *Banyule Flats Wetland and Banyule Billabong and Warringal Swamplands.* and…

b) Dogs must be on-lead or another suitable restraint mechanism when in areas designated by signage in the following reserves: *Banyule Flats (Wetland and Banyule Billabong) and Warringal Swamplands*

Confusing? Yes indeed. Surely a clear, detailed map showing actual boundaries would add clarification for dog owners and the general public? What about 'signage'? The new boundaries need new signs explaining why Fido swimming in the swamp to chase water birds is not on.

Importantly, also commencing on 1/2/25 was the **two-year cat curfew trial from 7pm to 7am**. We remain hopeful that the six-month enforcement amnesty supporting cat owners to transition to the curfew WILL lead to more responsible cat ownership and less dead wildlife.

Of course, the **obvious question relevant to both dog and cat management is who/where/how will these new guidelines be monitored or enforced?**

The Order and its accompanying documents can be downloaded from the Shaping Banyule website (https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/PETS).

Heather Smith

NATURE ON NATURE STRIPS?

Recently Council staff and interested community members had an opportunity to discuss, question and have input in to the draft ***Nature Strip Planting Guide lines*,** which are part of the Urban Forest Strategy.

Although most folks don't give the strip of weedy grass between them and the road a second thought, they provide space underground for drainage, electricity and other infrastructure, while above is space for waste collection, street trees and lighting.

They could also provide some very important benefits to our natural environment. A well-planted nature strip is a wonderful opportunity to make these public spaces more biodiverse, increasing habitat for pollinators and helping keep streets cooler.

Some of us found the draft guidelines to be quite prescriptive in regards to easement measurements (ie 60cm 'no dig' around street trees), bin spaces and walk throughs etc, however there were some terrific positives – no weed species, and a plant list of indigenous and native plants to help preserve biodiversity by supporting local insects and pollinators. Not to mention that they're also well-suited to the local climate and soil conditions.

The Council wants your thoughts and ideas. **Input closes 18 April 2025.** Do the survey, or have a chat at a pop-up session, or register for one of the three Community information sessions which you can attend in person or online.

For more details and to see the draft guidelines: https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/NatureStrips

Heather Smith

NATURE NOTES

FEBRUARY 2025

Susan Hobee told us she had discovered Native bees in a dead Pine tree in Heidelberg Park. They arrive and go into single burrows around twilight.

Diane Williamson observed a Butcherbird with a good-sized chick nesting in a River Red Gum on the Main Yarra Trail close to the river. Also spotted – a platypus at Wilson Reserve in the Billabong.

Daphne Hards reported a Ring Tail Possum and Sugar Gliders in boxes at Rosanna Parklands. And at the Banyule Billabong had seen a Red Wattle Bird

James Dean saw a Spotted Crake at Banyule Swamp and a large Blue-tongued lizard in his garden.

Doug McNaughton noticed a White-Faced Heron at Rosanna Parklands. And about 50 Ibis.

Robert Bender had photos of a Channel billed Cuckoo at Irvine Road, Ivanhoe and shared some information about them. Channel-billed Cuckoos prefer to lay eggs in the nests of ravens or currawongs. The Ivanhoe bird chose a raven nest. The Ravens have been very frantically and conscientiously gathering food for the ever-hungry chicks. Over recent years it has been moving down into Victoria, and is now breeding here. A global warming phenomenon: moving away from the equator into areas no longer too cold. Robert also had a set of images showing the various stages of Paper Wasp nest construction and life form from egg to pupae to adult.

Anthea Fleming reported Silver crested cockatoos at Leo's Carpark. She also had a list of observations made in her garden including Blue banded bee, King Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Swallows. There were also some great photos of a Channel Cuckoo.

Michelle Giovas reported a group of about 30 Welcome Swallows sitting on powerlines next to the Old England Hotel.

Leonie Pope

Photos: A Fleming

Ravens working frantically to keep two fledglings fed. *Wikipedia* informs us that: The Channel-billed Cuckoo is the largest brood parasite in the world, and the largest cuckoo. They are thought to form pair bonds for the duration of a breeding season. Pairs work together in order to aid the laying of eggs in host nests; the male will fly over the nest in order to provoke the nest occupants into a mobbing response, whereupon the female will slip into the nest and lay an egg. Alternatively, the pair may work together by attacking an incubating bird, driving it off the nest and allowing the female to lay. After the breeding season, in March and April, birds breeding in Australia begin to migrate northwards to their wintering grounds in New Guinea and Indonesia.

Photos: R Bender

Left: Two cells capped. Grub emerging from bottom cell. Three adults on duty. Middle: 9 January: more cells constructed at the top left of the nest. Right: 26 January: 5 wasps on duty and more cells caped.

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.

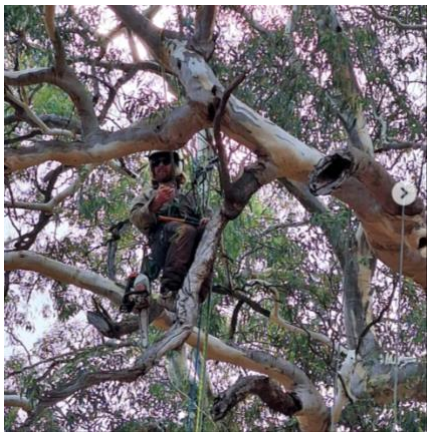
Any queries email: warringal3084@gmail.com

☐ I would like to receive my newsletter by email.

☐ Yes - put me on the Plantings notification list.

ONE WAY TO DEAL WITH A HOUSING CRISIS

WCS is pleased to auspice local environmental projects that help increase the viability of our biodiversity. These photos are from a project funded by a Banyule Environment Grant and proposed by WCS member Judith Venerables. It aims to accelerate the formation of hollows in River red gums to provide a wider range of nesting opportunities to indigenous birds, animals and bats. The area targeted is bordered by the Yarra and Plenty Rivers connecting it more viably to those existing wildlife corridors and through them to Westerfolds Park and the Banyule Flats.



Photos: R Granter

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

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