# Warringal Conservation Society

SPRING 2025 Volume 56/5. OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

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 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 MEMBERS

The Society is pleased to welcome new members **Harris Williams, Nick Bradley, Jennifer McMullen** and **Cath Bradley.** We look forward to meeting you all 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.**

## COMING UP

**OCTOBER**

**Thursday 2: General Meeting (+AGM)**
from 7.30pm at the Old Shire Offices

**Sunday 26: Working Bee.** Location TBC.
Keep an eye on social media/website.

**NOVEMBER**

**Field Trip TBC:** Watch social media for updates.

**DECEMBER**

**Thursday 4: General Meeting**
from 7.30pm at the Old Shire Offices

## OCTOBER MEETING

### Dr Peter Griffioen - Wildlife call recognition using artificial intelligence

Peter works at the Arthur Rylah Institute and will talk about his work using artificial intelligence (AI) to rapidly identify wildlife calls. Acoustic monitoring using small recording devices is now routinely used to survey for wildlife. Hundreds of hours of audio data can easily be gathered and manually analysing recordings to identify wildlife calls rapidly becomes impractical.

Peter has developed software that can be trained to listen to recordings and rapidly identify the calls of frogs, birds, bats and other mammals. This technology is making acoustic monitoring more cost-effective, allowing for larger areas to be surveyed and new species to be detected from existing recordings.

## DECEMBER MEETING

### Jennifer Chellew: Iceland's Ring Road

**Wondrous waterfalls, lunar landscapes and the cutting cold**. WCS member Jen Chellew will showcase her two-week exploration of glaciers, wildlife, thermal activity and pools, mountains, weird land formations, Northern Lights and waterfalls as seen from the island's Ring Road in October 2024. No food pictures, promise.

**WCS ON FACEBOOK**
facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety

**WCS ON INSTAGRAM**
@warringalconservationsociety

## 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.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Notice of the 2025 Election of Committee and Annual General Meeting

The election of key officer positions and committee members. **Calling for nominations by 5pm 18 September 2025. This can be done by emailing WCS at warringal3084@gmail.com**

Members will vote on the proposal to raise the membership fees and remove the Life Membership category.

For the first time since 2016, there are two proposed changes to the Society's membership costs and structure:

**1. A $5 increase to the annual membership fees commencing July 2026**. New annual membership fees would be: Concession $20, Individual $25, and Family $30. This is due to rising administrative costs, stricter guidelines by traditional funding bodies and a lack of traditional income.

**2. To simplify the membership structure by removing the Life Membership category.** There has been a steady increase in the number of Life Memberships which will leave the Society vulnerable to less reoccurring income in the future. The cost to provide member benefits is now exceeding the initial revenue generated, which is leading to financial strain on the organisation.

**Note that this decision will not affect present Life members.*

**IMPORTANT: If you wish to vote or nominate your membership must be up to date.**

Renew online www.warringal.org.au/get-involved/ and pay by direct debit.

Or Direct Debit: Acc: Warringal Conservation Society. BSB: 633 108. Acc no: 143918613

## PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE WORK OF WCS

At the AGM, all positions become vacant and the Committee is looking for new members.

The longevity of the Society depends on fresh ideas, skills and enthusiasm to take it into the future.

If you would like to become involved, please email warringal3084@gmail.com and one of the committee members will contact you.

## WINTER TWILIGHT WALK

If our February Night Walk was conducted on one of the hottest nights, the Night Walk of 16 August was the coldest, or so it seemed. According to BOM we were out walking, looking for wild life in 7 degrees. Thanks to the participants, parents and children and those from neighbouring areas.

Led by George Paras and James Deane the group were educated about not only the fauna and flora of the area but the history of Banyule Flats and the significant contributions the WCS has made to the area.

It had rained previously and a participant noted that Krefft's gliders are unlikely to emerge in the rain. George also remarked that winter nights are long, so gliders are not in a hurry to leave the comfort and safety of their box. So, no gliders to be seen. Undeterred we moved on to see what else we could find. We saw the introduced animals, fox and rabbit but also Ringtail and Brushtail possums and four Wombats.

It was great to see parents with their children.

*James Deane*

Participants admiring the chilly twilight over the Banyule Swamp. *Photo: L Pope.*

## OUTBREAK OF TREE TOBACCO

The WCS Gorilla weeding crew have been eradicating a massive outbreak of Tree Tobacco along the western edge of the South paddock.

Photo: R Granter

## GUEST SPEAKER REPORT

### AUGUST> MIKE CLARKE: Managing fire for wildlife: it's not rocket science, it's way more complex than that!

**We were very pleased to have Mike Clarke, Prof. emeritus of Zoology, Ecological, Plant and Animal Sciences at La Trobe University as a guest speaker at the August meeting.**

Mike discussed the growing ecological impacts of bushfires and the importance of understanding fire regimes. He noted that the January 2025 Palisades fire captured media attention due to its impact on celebrities, but the much larger Little Desert fire in Australia, received far less publicity despite being nearly ten times the size. While the Palisades is likely to be rebuilt in a few years, recovery in the fire-affected mallee ecosystems will take much longer due to the slow regeneration of nutrient-poor soils and leaf litter.

Megafires are becoming increasingly common worldwide, driven by a combination of flammable vegetation, dry conditions, low humidity, high temperatures, strong winds, increased lightning (due to more storms), and human-related ignition sources. Climate change will alter fire regimes unevenly across different landscapes, but a general increase in dry periods and extreme weather conditions is making it easier for fires to start, persist, and grow.

Despite the damage caused by fire, ecosystems can recover spectacularly from fire — but only under the right conditions. Fire can be both a disaster and a regenerative force depending on its frequency, season, severity, extent, and patchiness.

Large fires can have devastating effects on native fauna. For instance, the pygmy possum in the mallee can face a decade-long shortage of nectar and insects post-fire. For many animals, survival depends on the availability of unburnt refuges. However, recolonisation of recovering habitat can be limited by the distance between refuges and the time it takes for essential features to recover — the smallest of tree hollows may take 40+ years

Plants have many adaptations to cope with fire: tubers, epicormic buds and resistant or protected seed that germinates after fire. However, plants like Banksias still require time to recover between fires to produce viable seed. Thus, fire frequency, rather than intensity or extent, is often the most critical factor. Too frequent fires can prevent plant regeneration entirely.

Fire has been shaping Australian ecosystems for 60 to 100 million years, long before humans arrived. Aboriginal cultural burning also had diverse purposes — including access and food production. Burning was not uniformly applied across all landscapes and the frequency of burning varied greatly. It can be challenging to reapply cultural burning practices. There is also a constant balancing act between ecological objectives and demands for hazard reduction.

Mike concluded by emphasising that we need to understand how fire work affects different ecosystems, connect patches of habitat, engage with fire planners, plan for a fiery future and avoid putting people is risky places. Achieving these aims require establishing good working relationships between communities, scientists, and land managers.

*James Deane*

Mike and his colleague Andrew Bennett work alongside a team of 10 scientists studying fire in the Mallee regions of Victoria, SA and NSW. If there is too much fire too often, the things (food/shelter) that the animals and plants need won't recover in the time between fires. They have discovered that the impact of some fires can last for half a century to a century. *Photos: La Trobe Uni.*

## ELECTRIC BLUE – THE CREEK NOT THE ICEHOUSE SONG!

Early on the morning Wednesday 16 July the North East Link Project released an unknown quantity of brilliant blue liquid "acrylic polymer" to our once beautiful Banyule Creek from the Lower Plenty Rd site works. The material is used as a dust suppressant on their massive spoil mounds and dirt haul roads.

NELP and Environment Protection Authority Victoria initially refused to identify what the material only saying to the community that the material was "safe" but that we should stay away! Also saying that the they didn't know what impacts the spill would have on the environment. However, this material can only to be handled if staff wear personal protective equipment (PPE), gloves and goggles because Liquid Acrylic polymer is hazardous to human health.

Eight hours after the spill NELP, working with Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, Banyule City Council and the EPA, commenced pumping out the creek to sewer to collect the toxic spill. There remains some concern that not all the material was collected and may have been discharged to the Yarra, as the material degrades it changes from blue to green to yellow. A slug of yellow material was evident at Callahan Falls in Banyule Creek just upstream from the Yarra.

NELP have and continue to have many water pollution incidents including heavy sediment discharges to the Plenty River, and foaming chemicals to Salt Creek. The difference this time was that the spill was electric blue and easy to spot.

*Michelle Giovas*

Photos: M Giovas

## THE LITTER BIRD-EN
## MONITORING BIRD-LITTER INTERACTIONS

### Do you have a camera and a keen eye for bird-litter interactions?

This citizen-science based research project is investigating the impacts of littering on birdlife. The aim is to collect images of birds interacting with litter, and then analyse the images to determine what types of interactions are occurring and which species are involved.

Whenever you come across a bird - litter interaction, take a photo of it and upload it to the website.

## NATURE NOTES

### AUGUST 2025

Photos: J Chellew

**Jen Chellew** was delighted to see two King Parrots in her neighbours' property.

**Don Stokes** observed a pair of Wood ducks investigating chimneys along a street in Heidelberg Heights, presumably looking for hollows.

**Diane Williamson** had seen one Wattlebird, commenting they had become rarer around her area. Had seen a Deer in Fitzsimmons Lane.

**Daphne Hards** reported that her night camera had filmed a cat in her garden at 6am. Had called the Council about action but was disappointed in their response – advised her to research where it had come from.

**James Dean** saw flocks of 25-50 Black Cockatoos feeding Wattles near the Bourke Road bridge. Also had photos: a Powerful Owl wing which may be DNA tested to see which of the Owls along the Yarra River corridor has died. He also reported finding a newly dead Samba Deer in Bonds Road near the Main Yarra Trail.

**Irene Kearsey** commented on the number of dead kangaroos on the road to Kangaroo Ground – about 4-5 every week.

**Jane Crone** saw Galahs picking Nut Grass out of grassed areas; three Crested Pigeons, witnessed dive-bombing Noisy Miners.

**Michelle Giovas** reported seeing Buff Banded Rail in the mud along Banyule Creek. Also spotted a Blue Tongue Lizard sunning itself.

**Rob Granter** also saw Buff Banded Rail along Banyule Creek. And a mob of Kangaroos.

**Robert Bender** reported on two Glider boxes he had put up in 2012. They had been vacant in April but now have Gliders breeding in them. He also had photos of three Robins, Bronzewing, Swamphens, Red-browed Finches, Little Wrens, a Kookaburra and a Brown Tree Frog – darker in colour than usual.

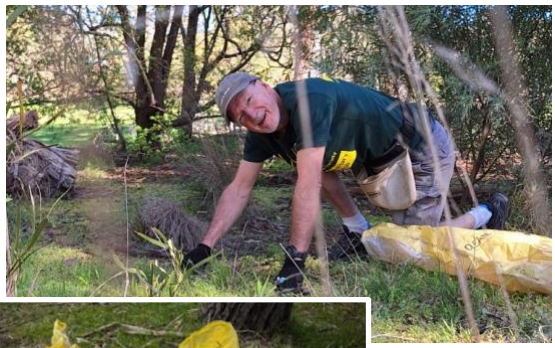
*Heather Smith*

## WORK HAPPENING AROUND THE BANYULE FLATS

### THE SEPTEMBER WORKING BEE

Hand weeding the Long Bed in the Viewbank Native Gardens. A small but dedicated crew of eight: Amanda and Martin (on his birthday), Lena and Peter, James and Rob. Once the weeds were removed, we were able to see Chocolate Lilies that were self-sown in this area that would have been out competed if the weeds were left to thrive. Thanks to Sam from the Bush Crew for his valuable support.

Photos: L Pope



Photos: R Granter

Planting coordinator Rob Granter getting his hands dirty and enjoying it!
*Photo: L Pope.*

### WEEDING WARRIORS

WCS President James Deane has been supervising Duke of Edinburgh Award students Holly, Keira and Maya from Viewbank secondary College in helping to remove the invasive Moth Vine from the Banyule Flats.

The Moth Vine infestation was smothering the native flora and this eradication work has made a negative impact.

One of WCS's newest members, Nick Bradley has also been doing a fantastic job removing the Moth vine infestation in the Banyule Flats area.

Photos: R Granter

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 25 – JUNE 26

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.

### WCS NOW HAS PAYID®

Use it to pay or renew your membership or to make a welcome donation. It's a convenient and secure way to send and receive payments. Just put in the account name: Warringal Conservation Society and ID number: 88059344924 and it will be transferred into our account.

## CHILDREN'S FROG BOOK LAUNCH

**Sunday 9 November, 10am to 12pm, Old Shire Offices**

***'Litoria and her wetland friends'*** is author Teisha Sloane and illustrator Katie Howard's book about a Growling Grass Frog and her wetland friends and how our actions may affect their home (such as dirty water, rubbish etc). WCS provided a letter of support for their application to the Banyule Arts and Culture Grant program in 2024.

The event will feature a Q&A with Teisha and Katie, book sales, talks about frogs, a walk to Banyule Swamp and lots of activities.

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

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