

WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Pterostylis* sp. aff. *revoluta*

Common name: Large Autumn Greenhood

Family: Orchidaceae

Flowering Period: March to June

Sector: Yarra & Co-op Sector of the Bend of Islands

A medium height orchid found in dry and moist soils of the Box-Stringybark-grassy dry forest-valley grassy forest and the Box-Ironbark woodland.

The Large Autumn Greenhood has both flowering & non-flowering plants which grow from tuberoids, (the swollen end of a root), which are replaced annually and produce other tuberoids to form a small colony.

The non-flowering plants consist of a rosette of 5-10 long-stalked, bluish-green ovate to oblong leaves, to 20 mm long, which grow from the root shoot junction. The non-flowering rosettes grow amongst the flowering plants a few weeks after the commencement of flowering.

The flowering plant consists of a single upright stem up to 25 cm tall with 3-5 pointed stem bracts, closely sheathed or spreading up the stem. The single flower at the top of the stem has six floral segments, (typical of all orchids) consisting of three petals and three sepals. Two petals and one sepal make up the large translucent white hood, with dark green stripes, 45 mm long, often lightly streaked with brown. The hood of the flower leans over in a gentle curve ending in a fine tip to 20 mm long. The two widely flared lower sepals end in long points above the hood. The curved pointed labellum, (a modified petal) long and pointed, protrudes from the bottom of the hood, to attract the pollinators to the Column (the male and female parts).

Small flies or fungus gnats pollinate the plant.

Cric Henry

Sketch by Ross Henry





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's hard to imagine, how hot and dry it was over the early summer months with those devastating bushfires, now that the milder Autumn change has brought, gentle rains and absolutely gorgeous misty mornings, with cool clear days and magnificent sunsets...

You can hear the newly quenched landscape breathing a sigh of relief, along with so many of our native active wildlife. There's no better place to be self-isolated than here within our beautiful bush.

I do hope that all of you are doing well and are supported during these very interesting times. While many people have friends and family to help, we do have our close-knit conservation focused community as well.

Living in the Bend of Islands was a move I made with my wife Zainil, a few years ago. We both love the life we've created here and treasure the peacefulness, beauty and those rare magical moments when you meet, eye to eye with a curious sugar glider, or a startled baby owl, or even a majestic wedge tailed eagle. Not to mention the interesting chats with like-minded friends and artists. This is a very special place that grows on you and we will not take it for granted.

Recently, I took on the role of President, which has certainly been a deep dive into uncharted waters and a very steep learning curve for me. This role has opened my eyes to the very passionate and energetic group who are extremely dedicated and work tirelessly to protect, maintain and preserve our ELZ. You know them well from the Planning Sub-Committee; Frank Pierce, Janet Mattiske, Carol Bonny and Alan Bonny and Robyn Duff. They never miss anything and are known and respected by many members of NSC, Melbourne Water and DEWLP as well. They've also been very supportive of me taking on this role.

The BICA Committee has some returning members including; Pam McMahon as Vice President, Julie Martindale as Secretary, Mike Pelling as Treasurer, Jo Henry and Phil Wierzbowski. Plus, we welcome our new BICA member, Joy Flanagan, a long time RTBC Co-op resident.

We also said goodbye to our previous President Sue Grad, along with Deirdre Lucas, Kimberly Kifun, AB Bishop and Rodrigo Castellanos. I would like to thank them for their hard work and efforts. They have left big boots to fill and I'd like to encourage others to join our BICA Committee.

Unfortunately, most of our regular events are currently postponed, but this hasn't slowed our activities in this busy start to the year;

- We have seen one of the worst bushfire seasons on record and have fortunately come through this unscathed. Peter Mildenhall gave a very sobering talk about the dangers, and a summary can be viewed on the BICA website.
- There's been interest from the media after Samantha Landy wrote an article 'Melbourne's Secret Suburb

Unearthed' in February and then in March, Domain did a brief TV piece for Channel 9 called, "Welcome to Australia's Secret Suburb'. Both of these articles were very informative of our ELZ and are available via links from the BICA website.

- Well known residents Tom and Carol Ann Fisher, recently sold their gorgeous mud brick home and will be sorely missed as residents, but I'm sure they will come and visit at the upcoming Cafe Benders. All the best from us here at BICA...

Pursuing the objectives of BICA, here's our recent activities;

- Sugarloaf Link - Deer, Fox and Weed Control - Thank you to all those who have participated in this project. I'm aware that our deer population has been reduced. Thanks to our subcommittee.
- Candid Critters - We now have the cameras, so watch out for photos of our 'Brush Tailed Phascogale' hopefully soon. Thanks to Jo Henry and Frank Pierce.
- Yarra River Strategic Plan - Thanks to those who added your voice, we look forward to a positive response coming back from the Draft Plan. Pam and Andy McMahon and other submitters.
- Volunteer Grant from Australian Government - More tools have now been purchased for Landcare and will be put to good use. Thanks to Pam McMahon.
- GMA Hunting Maps - Work is being done for recreational shooters to not access land within the BOI, and thanks to Alan Bonny for his work here.
- Council Elections - Please stay abreast of movements here and thanks to Janet Mattiske for our updates.
- Deer Monitoring Program - A Landcare Drone Monitoring survey to assess deer movements is planned for the cooler months and all residents in the area will be notified prior.

I would like to sign off with an acknowledgement of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land on which our meetings take place. And pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

I'd also like to acknowledge each of our BICA Members who take time out of their lives to meet, give their input, value everyone's opinion and expertise, listen to everyone's voice, and doing this while showing a healthy mutual respect for each other, consistent with the purposes outlined in our BICA constitution.

Please stay connected via our BICA Website and Facebook Group along with our regular emails. And feel free to reach out to us through these channels, and please also maintain your BICA membership too. We do really appreciate this.

Enjoy Autumn in the Bend,

Michael Dempsey



FROM THE SECRETARY

BICA Membership at April 2020

Welcome to new members Margo Heeley and Phil Edwards.

A huge THANKS to everyone who has renewed their membership this year (which runs from 1 Oct 2019 to 30 Sep 2020). Your membership and support for the aims of BICA really does help to maintain a strong voice for the conservation and protection of everything that we value about the Bend of Islands, so that our unique Special Use Zone remains intact.

BICA, through the Committee and the Planning Sub Committee, is quietly working on a number of local planning issues at the moment. Some of these issues are:

- Input via submissions and the Panel Hearing to the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan (shaping the way we protect and use the river for the next 50 years)
- Ongoing discussions with council re wandering domestic cats in the BOI
- Trying to get some areas of land in and adjacent to the BOI removed from the Game Management Authority list of areas publicly available for hunting by the general public
- Liaising with various govt departments such as DELWP, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water, to ensure that weeds on the land they control in and around the BOI are eradicated.
- Planning issues such as transferral of DELWP land to Parks Victoria

And on the ground:

- We are about to start a Camera Trap project to monitor phascogale populations around the Bend. This was originally planned to be a community project and when social distancing permits, we will be expanding the project to invite BICA members to take part in their own camera trap projects.
- If you haven't already had a look, take a wander down Gongflers drive to see the difference the deer exclusion fence is making to the recovery of vegetation on the escarpment.
- We're working with the State Library to have all the old hard copies of the BICA newsletter digitised and made available online.
- Ongoing involvement in the Sugarloaf Link project, by the coordination of the weed control component within the BOI.

Overdue Subscriptions

There are still some stragglers who haven't yet renewed their membership this year and a few for whom membership has completely lapsed (overdue for 2 years). We invite you to pay your subs directly into our bank account.

Please contact me if you're not sure whether you're current or not and for our banking details: bicacomm@gmail.com

Upcoming General Meetings

It looks like the scheduled June General Meeting may not go ahead but we'll keep you posted if that changes.

The AGM has been rescheduled to Sunday 15th November.

Thanks all.

Julie Martindale (Secretary)

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BICA Community Activities



Since our last Newsletter in November 19, apart from our constant monthly activities, which include **Landcare**, **Cafe Benders** and **Bird Survey**, our extra events include:

Night Event - A large crowd gathered for an evening of wonderful music and singing. Heaps of talented musicians, including many kids. So many commented on the intimate atmosphere of our fire station. Many thanks to Paul and Ross and all who contributed to making such a successful evening

AGM - a good turnout to hear Matt Sleeth, a conservation ecologist and naturalist. He presented on three bioregions of Australia. (Tropical Island, Central deserts and South-Eastern forest.), with some of the biggest threats to wildlife in these areas, and the initiatives and solutions being implemented to help preserve native fauna. This was well demonstrated by his experience of the impact of an invasive reptile.

Cafe Benders Christmas Evening - This again was a great success. wonderful music by Kirk, Ross, Luke and happy singing by all. Much to the delight of the kids- Santa arrived, with a basket of goodies. Also, a photo competition was held, with many great photos being entered.

Canoe Run - A good turnout saw 16 Kayaks take to our beautiful river. The weather was perfect, and great fun was had by all.

Clean Up Australia Day - 11 wonderful residents turned out to clean up our roadsides, and fill a skip!

Due to the restrictions around Covid-19. we are of course unable to proceed with our usual calendar of events. Sometime in the hopefully not too distant future, when the restrictions ease, we can plan some events/activities, that fit in with what we are allowed and what everyone feels comfortable with.





BICA MATTERS

SUZ2 & YOU – FENCES

Our 'residential national park' concept is defined by the unique Bend of Islands planning scheme **SUZ2 - Environmental Living** usually referred to as the Environmental Living Zone (ELZ).

One of the parameters defined is fencing. The intention is to ensure that our wildlife have unrestricted access to as much of the Bend of Islands habitat as possible while providing for human occupation. To achieve this the Planning Scheme requires that there will be no boundary fencing.

If you have tried to grow something in the Bend for kitchen or indigenous plant regeneration the local fauna always show a keen interest in whatever you have planted. Individual native plants can be protected by plant guards until they are established but for broader revegetation and food production you may require a fenced area.

- For bush regeneration the SUZ2 provisions specify that a fence may be installed without a permit providing that the fence is a post and wire see through type fence, less than one metre high, enclosing a maximum of 1000 square metres.
- For a kitchen garden a maximum area of 150 square metres can be fenced for growing vegetables, flowers and fruit for the household. The area should be adjoining or close to a house and not extend along access ways or boundaries.

The relevant sections of SUZ2 are: -

Fences

Fencing, including property boundary fencing is prohibited except for the protection of regenerating bush, protection of kitchen gardens, statutory safety requirements and boundary fencing as specified below. Solid or substantially solid fencing styles (eg brick or paling fences) will generally not be permitted. These restrictions are intended to facilitate fauna movement and minimise the visual impact of fencing.

Existing boundary fencing enclosing land used for grazing purposes can be replaced with a permit. Additional internal fencing on land presently used for grazing purposes may be erected with a permit.

For the purposes of this clause no permit is required for bush regeneration or kitchen garden fencing provided it is:

- Of post and wire-see through type;
- and in the case of bush regeneration fencing it is:
- Less than 1.0 metres high and
 - Does not enclose more than 50% of the site or 1000m² (whichever is the lesser).

Kitchen Garden is defined under the clause for Planting of Vegetation: -

Planting of Vegetation

No vegetation, except vegetation indigenous to the area, is permitted to be planted.

This does not apply in kitchen garden areas. For the purpose of this clause, a kitchen garden means a garden area, adjoining or close to a house, for vegetables, flowers and fruit for the household. The area of the kitchen garden should not exceed 150 square metres and should not extend along access ways or boundaries. Plants on the Shire of Nillumbik Environmental Weed List 2009 as incorporated in this Scheme shall not be planted.

If you want to have a look at the SUZ2 document http://planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/nillumbik/ordinance/37_01s02_nill.pdf

Alan Bonny.





News from the Fire Brigade

What a lot of water under the bridge since the last newsletter...both literally and metaphorically!

We began the year with catastrophic fires across vast swathes of south eastern Australia, fire brigades stretched very thin with members involved in Strike Teams and support to the fire fights, with trucks and other vehicles sent to areas of greater need and the Nillumbik area very dry and dangerous.

The heavens opened in mid-January and really since then we have had excellent rainfall and moved from one of the driest FDI's on record to one of the wettest!

That 'emergency' of early 2020 has moved to a slower moving and more insidious 'emergency' in the form of the Coronavirus pandemic. As a brigade we have had to take on a number of guidelines and restrictions in the way we operate while still providing a local emergency service.

You should always call 000 in the case of an emergency and feel confident that we will be able to respond appropriately.

At the moment we are not undertaking physical training together but maintaining our skills and management meetings on line and keeping our equipment and trucks ready to respond to any callouts.

It is a good time to check your smoke alarm, have a look around the property and house and get prepared for the next fire season ... who knows what spring will bring?

As many of you know we are an aging brigade and will be undertaking further recruiting, especially for day time responders, once the pandemic emergency subsides.

This message from CFA District 14 will be of interest:

Why You Shouldn't Use Water to Extinguish an Oil or Grease Fire!

Oil or grease and water don't mix. Never pour water on an oil/grease fire.

This is a "Slow Mo Guy's" video which is an example of what can happen when water is poured onto an oil/grease fire.

CFA District 14 Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/CFADistrict14>

Stay safe!

PS The Christmas Hills Fire Brigade really appreciates the donation of nearly \$30,000 from the Warrandyte Community Bank to provide a new state of the art standby generator at our North Station. This will provide emergency power for the use of the brigade in any short- or long-term blackout in the area and enable us to continue to provide a vital emergency service to help protect the local community.

The generator has just been installed:

Cheers

Peter Mildenhall Lieutenant 1/Community Safety Co-ordinator

H: 9712 0577 M: 0400 120 577



Liz Mildenhall and James Armstrong
Backburning at night. - Cann River January 2020



Is your smoke alarm working.....

Test monthly



Dust annually



Replace every 10 years



The Victorian Fire Services recommend using smoke alarms with a 10 year lithium battery

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/smoke-alarms>



THE GREEN WEDGE

As many of us have been currently spending time enjoying our peaceful Bend of Islands bush, appreciating its beauty, its plants, its birdlife and other creatures, even noticing the weeds! many of us have commented "how lucky we are to be able to isolate in this special environment! "

We are indeed privileged to live in one Melbourne's Green Wedges and I was reminded of how important that is when reading the latest local news in "Round-about", an article which Editor, Pam Lawson and Author, Kahn Franke have given permission for us to reprint below;



GREEN WEDGE

Reg. No. A31739L

PROTECTION GROUP INC.

In brief :- GWPG Submission to Nillumbik Green Wedge Management Plan 2019

The Green Wedge Protection Group (GWPG) was formally incorporated in 1995, following municipal amalgamations. Less formally, the Group has existed since the early 1970s. The Purposes of the Green Wedge Protection Group include:-

- Working to ensure that residents and public officials of the Shire of Nillumbik act together to protect the environment; develop a high quality urban lifestyle within limited designated areas; and promote a rural lifestyle with sensitive farming and enhanced conservation objectives.
- Ensuring the Green Wedge is the strategic focus of the Shire of Nillumbik.
- Providing input to the Shire of Nillumbik and other decision making bodies on any matter considered relevant to the Green Wedge.

The Green Wedge Protection Group is heavily involved in state and local planning issues, both currently and prior to the group's formal inception, and will continue to provide advice and direction to authorities to ensure the intent of our Green Wedges is upheld at all levels of Government, and the values protected.

The GWPG have had many phone calls and discussions with community members who have diligently read the draft GWMP. Most, if not all find themselves confused, unsure and doubt their ability to respond at any level. Some believe that the plan is too complex for them to understand, many believe it is very badly written and random. A document that is circular, convoluted and unclear, that does not inspire, and completely misses the desired role of supporting and enhancing the environment and biodiversity. There are also those that believe it is designed to "pull the rug over our eyes" that it purposefully meanders so that unravelling the true intent is time consuming and difficult.

Whether it is a lack of experience in putting together a GWMP, little understanding of our green wedge, its communities and the complexity of the planning scheme or the extremely tight timeline to produce the draft GWMP the document fails the "pub" test, it is not easily understood.

Background

The Green Wedge concept has been in place now for nearly fifty years. In that time very little has changed. The vision is the same, zoning names have changed but the controls are similar. The biggest changes have been the introduction of the UGB by the Bracks Labor Government and the weakening of controls over uses by Liberal Government Planning Minister Matthew Guy.

The NE green wedge that Nillumbik's boundaries are based on is one of the most intact of the twelve wedges surrounding Melbourne. It is so because the communities across Nillumbik have supported the planning scheme, accepted the controls, understood the need for preservation of biodiversity, were aware of their surroundings, particularly with regard to fire, and sought to preserve the rural and bushland vistas that typify Nillumbik. Properties changed hands, generally prospective purchasers understood the green wedge principles, did their due diligence concerning planning controls and joined a community who prized the rural lifestyle.

With time, properties have become more expensive, changing the demographics across the green wedge. There are elements within this new demographic that appreciate the beauty and the lifestyle but seem not to understand why the Nillumbik landscape still exists. The acceptance for the need for planning controls by residents has ensured that the Nillumbik Green Wedge is Melbourne's most environmentally intact. Not since the inception of the NE green wedge has there been an attempt to "consider" changing planning provisions that have protected this area, as we now see in this draft GWMP.

These "considered" changes to the planning scheme were not recommendations from the majority report by Council's Community Panel. If not a Panel recommendation, then whose? While the intent is clear, the justification is non-existent. This council is actively attempting to remove, relax and reduce controls over the green wedge which will hasten its slide into obscurity.

Kahn Franke, President, Green Wedge Protection Group.



BIRD NOTES

The following can be reported since November 2019: -

Lyrebird Records

34 new Lyrebird records have been reported. 29 of these were from Stevenson Creek north of the Co-op on Skyline Rd; 4 in the gully north of Henley Rd near Taylor's; and Greg Phillips saw a bird on his balcony on 2/4/20.

We now have 381 Lyrebird records reported since July 2000. Details and analysis, updated at the end of each year, can be found on the Birds Page of the BICA website.

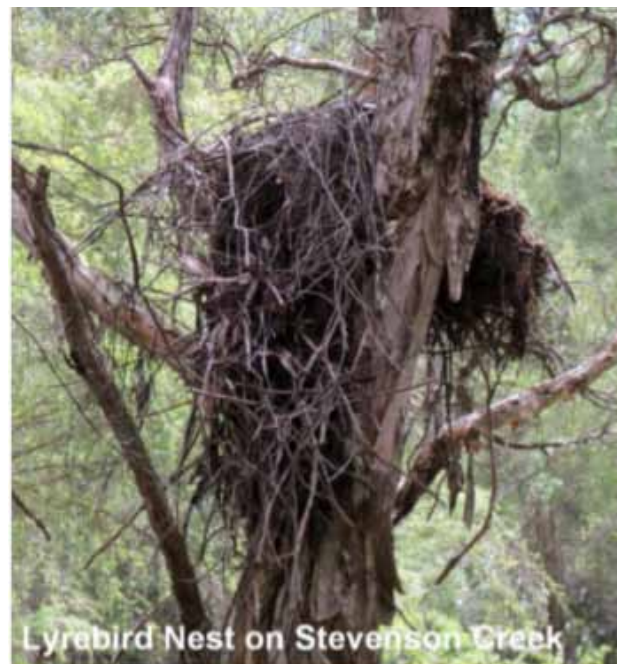
A lyrebird nest has been reliably identified about 5m up a melaleuca on Stevenson Creek north of the Co-op. This nest was seen in January 2016, so the latest that it would have been built is winter 2015. This is a significant record as it is the 1st proof of breeding activity in the Bol.

Please pass on details of any 'encounters' you are lucky enough to have with these iconic birds. Our records form concrete evidence that the Warrandyte-Kinglake Habitat Corridor is working and that 'Stevenson Creek/Skyline escarpment' is an important part of this link.

Bird Survey Highlights

The outstanding sightings for the period were -

- **December: Swamp Harrier, Red-capped Robin (juv.), Lyrebird, Scarlet Honeyeater and Satin Flycatcher** were recorded at the north east section of the Co-op



- **January: White-winged Triller and Crescent Honeyeater** at Yanakie
- **February: Scarlet Honeyeater** was seen again just north of the Co-op
- **March: Crested Shrike-tit and Brush Cuckoo** (a family of 4) at Yanakie
- **April: Rose Robin** (separate sightings of male and female) and **Rufous Fantail** at Yanakie

Other Interesting Observations

The **White-throated Nightjars** completely eluded us this season, except for sound records, they were first heard on the Co-op on 3/10/19 and last heard on 11/3/20. A fixed sound recorder was used for most of the time and fox control was used where we thought the birds were most likely to breed.

The **Powerful Owls** have been calling regularly throughout the Bend over the last month or so, as breeding activities commence. One was observed by several walkers, clutching the remains of a magpie, high above the road in lower Catani Blvd. on 3/4/20.

The Birds Page of the BICA Website has lots of links to information about the birds of our area, as well as a summary of our on-going bird survey. All sections have recently been updated.

See <https://bendofislands.wordpress.com/flora-and-fauna/birds/>

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings you make and pass them on to Frank Pierce, (97120237), or email – jmandfp@bigpond.com - especially Lyrebirds.

All are welcome on the bird survey walks on the 2nd Sunday of each month, (when the Covid-19 protocols have been lifted). See the BICA Calendar for start times; we meet at the top corner of Henley and Catani.

Frank Pierce





Robin Redbreasts Mean Winter is Coming – Maybe?

England has Robins (the European Robin actually) and consequently so does pretty much every part of the world that is English speaking. They are not necessarily closely related and, in many cases, don't even look much like each other. In North America, Robins belong to the thrush family while in Africa, Asia and Europe they are members of the Old-World Flycatchers. Australia's Robins belong to their own family (Petroicidae) the Australasian Robins. It is a family of about 49 species which are endemic to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand and several Pacific Islands.

In the Bend we have a few robins. There are five red-breasted robins which are the original local version of "Robin Redbreast" that appealed to the early colonists, but there are also Yellowbreasts and Greybreasts. As we enter Winter, we also enter our Robin season as the permanent resident species are bolstered with a few visitors. So, while there are more different types of robins to look through at this time of year, only some of them are harbingers of the Winter. The most common is the Scarlet Robin which is with us and in our bird baths all year round.

Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*) - Robin Redbreast and Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) - Robin Yellowbreast are present all year round as breeding residents. They are both quite common. The Scarlet Robin hangs out in pairs in drier areas of The Bend. They are a perch and pounce type of hunter picking small invertebrates largely from the ground. They often join mixed species feeding flocks. The Eastern Yellow Robin is present in the more closed areas of forest along creek and gully lines. It is a morning and evening bird often singing before the sun rises. Another habit that singles it out is that of perching sideways across a vertical trunk of a tree where it too pounces on food on the ground.

But as the weather cools, Rose (*Petroica rosea*) and (sometimes) Pink Robins (*Petroica rodinogaster*) start to move into the local forest areas from wetter and higher regions. The Rose Robin is our most arboreal robin. Around the Bend, they feed high in the treetops often with mixed flocks. Pink Robins, on the other hand, feed low to the ground. They often flit from one piece of fallen timber to the next looking for food to collect from the leaf litter. Rose Robins have already been spotted this year so they are around if not very common.

The cooler weather also brings Flame Robins (*Petroica phoenicea*) down from the mountains where they breed. These robins tend to prefer more open areas in the Winter where they may be seen perching on fence posts in farmland. They do pass through



Scarlet Robin



Eastern Yellow Robin



Rose Robin



forested areas but don't tend to stay for very long. While they are common in Southern Victoria, they have only rarely been recorded in Bend of Islands.

The last of the Redbreasts that we might see here is the Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*). This is a small robin that behaves in a similar manner to the common Scarlet Robin. These are birds of the dry inland and have turned up here at various times of the year. The local Scarlet Robins don't welcome its' visits and often are seen giving the lone Red-Capped a hard time.

Jacky Winter (*Microeca fascinans*) is a small grey-brown robin. They, like the Red-capped are a bird of the drier country. They tend to live in open woodland often close to open country. They have not fared well with human disturbance through building and farming and were last recorded breeding in The Bend many years ago. They did breed in Watsons Creek this year though, quite close to us. And they have been reported in local mixed feeding flocks this Autumn. So, keep an eye out for them.

Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*) has a male with distinctive black and white plumage, but unfortunately, they have not been recorded close to our area for about 50 years!

Before I go, I will refer you to Frank Pierce's article on our BICA website with identification notes for the redbreasts! Males and females each have their challenges but are not too hard to tell apart.

<https://bendofislands.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/robins.pdf>

Gavin Masters



Flame Robin



Red-Capped Robin, male



Red-Capped Robin, female



What will be The Bend's Next New Bird? - Revisited

At this time last year, you may recall we did a survey of some local bird (nerds) - I mean watchers, and came up with a list of what they thought the most likely new birds to be recorded in The Bend might be. The list compiled was:

| The Next Bird | Frequency of Selection |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Barn Owl | 7 |
| Pink-eared Duck | 5 |
| Australasian Shoveler | 4 |
| Australian Spotted Crike | 4 |
| Hooded Robin | 4 |
| Noisy Friarbird | 4 |
| Purple-crowned Lorikeet | 4 |
| Stubble Quail | 4 |
| Yellow-billed Spoonbill | 4 |
| Australasian Pipit | 3 |
| Baillon's Crike | 3 |
| Blue-faced Honeyeater | 3 |
| Hoary-headed Grebe | 3 |
| Rufous Songlark | 3 |
| Spotted Harrier | 3 |

One year on and only one of these birds has been seen locally, the Yellow-billed Spoonbill. However Australian Shoveler has been seen at Henley Golf Course and Australian Pipit and Rufous Songlark have been seen in KG near the post office. As we are all limited in where we can travel at the moment, I thought it might be useful to remember this list and keep an eye open for any of these birds (as well as other new ones) as you walk locally for exercise.

Gavin Masters

Neko's Moth

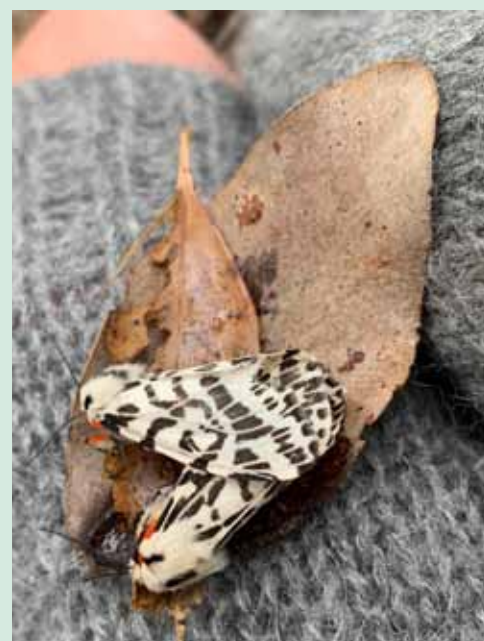
Tiger Moth - *Spilosoma glatignyi*

We went on a walk to get some fresh air and as we came back we found two beautiful Tiger Moths on a Long Leaf Box branch. It was not very colourful but very pretty. They have wonderful markings on their wings either black and white or brown and white. The two moths were mating. We read that the female is slightly larger than the male.

The caterpillars have a very round orange head and are rather spikey with tiny colourful shapes like flowers. The hairs of the caterpillar can cause a slight rash in some people.

Thank you Frank for your help to identify!

Neko Armstrong





HAKEA MOTH - *Oenochroma vinaria* - A Local Gem

Frank Pierce



We are lucky to have **Prickly Needlewood** *Hakea decurrens* growing near our house.

This is the larval food plant of the **Hakea Moth** *Oenochroma vinaria*, which is attracted to the light of the window at night.

The moth lays its eggs on the **Prickly Needlewood**. When the caterpillars hatch, they feed on the leaves of the bush, going through several growth stages until reaching about 60mm long.

The caterpillars eat the green skin off the leaves, exposing the white flesh. This is a good indicator of their presence.

The caterpillars rely on camouflage, they vary in colour and can be quite difficult to find, despite their size. They typically rest along a branch stem, but curl to a defence posture, with protruding spikes, when disturbed.

They eventually drop to the leaf litter to pupate.





MELBOURNE WALKER

Found this great article about Yering Gorge in an old "The Melbourne Walker" magazine from 1945, published by the Melbourne Walking & Touring Club. I had always wondered why "The strange mood of our river induced it to desert its easy course through the flats and wear a channel through the Yering Gorge". Now I want to explore it all myself.

Julie Martindale.

YERING GORGE

By M. J. HARKINS.

HIDDEN away between Coldstream and Yarra Glen, at the foot of the Christmas Hills, Yering Gorge is a geological curiosity and a place of great scientific beauty. No roads lead to Yering Gorge for it is surrounded by private property, but its presence is made known by the spring flood water that yearly spreads over the flats between Healesville and Yarra Glen. In the spring, when the Yarra River, swollen by rain and melting snow, sends rushing torrents down from the mountains, the stream is checked in the Yering Gorge. The water cannot overflow from its basalt walled prison and as a result, is forced out across the low-lying country at the entrance to the Gorge near Yarra Glen.

Many proposals have been made to relieve the position including one that the Gorge be blasted out to allow a free passage for the water. This, however, would only spread the flood waters below Yarra Glen, for the river has again to pass through the Warrandyte Gorge which is larger than Yering.

The tortuous course of the Yarra River before it enters the Gorge is always a matter of comment by visitors to the Christmas Hills district. From the heights of The Big Hill which sentinel Yarra Glen township, a lovely pattern of green flats spread away to a blue mountain background. In the foreground, Yarra Glen lies snug and compact with the old-world complacency of an English Village - occasional spires, gardens, a tree-lined main street and trim farms in emerald green settings heighten the impression. Through the soft green flats the Yarra River winds and twists in a series of billabongs and bends. In Spring, the river is outlined in a blaze of wattle gold; otherwise the channel could not be distinguished from the great sheet of flood waters that overflow across the flats.

The strange mood of our river which induced it to desert its easy course through the flats and wear a channel through the Yering Gorge, has

an explanation which goes back to a prehistoric period when another great river flowed down past the Dandenongs to the sea near Frankston. Traces of this stream in the form of sand and gravel may still be found on several hill-tops in the vicinity of Lilydale. Then a volcano belched forth a molten flood which covered the course of the river, causing it to alter its flow from a southerly to westerly direction. It is difficult to explain why the Yarra chose to force a channel through the hard basalt in the Christmas Hills but through the centuries it has worn away the basalt until only isolated patches remain.

Yering Gorge is a lovely sanctuary where the Yarra enters in a broad sheet to be turned into a seething mile-long cauldron of broken water. Near the entrance to the Gorge is a lovely river bend where wattles are a glory in the spring. Further on, the Gorge becomes narrow and precipitous. Great cliffs fall sharply from the Christmas Hills, their ledges and fissures the home of ferns, lichens and mosses. On the south bank which is less rugged is a tangle of scrub and tea-tree that is the home of innumerable birds and possums. As the river swirls along, the bright black eyes of an inquisitive platypus will protrude from the stream, to be followed by a graceful dive into the depths.

The Yering Gorge is not readily accessible even to walkers, who must first secure permission from the owners of the adjacent private property before penetrating its depths.

(Directions for a walking tour to the Yering Gorge are obtainable from the Tours Office, Melbourne Walking Club. -Ed.)



GIANT GUMLEAF KATYDID - *Torbia perficita* - Life Stages recorded in BOI

Frank Pierce





OUR SIGN TREE

One of the things that I found fascinating and loved when we moved to the Bend in 1992, was the Sign Tree, with notifications of upcoming community events nailed to it. At that time, it was on the opposite side of the road and closer to the bridge and it was a tree! Eventually the tree senesced and it was decided to relocate to the present site.

Fast forward to the 2000's and my son Jeff Drummond, (also known as JD and Magnus Adigard) moved in with us and offered to paint signs for upcoming events. Wolfgang Krause supplied him with the freshly made and painted blanks and Jeff then did his thing, handed them back to Wolfgang who then hung them. (A good majority of the regular signs still used are Jeff's.) On several occasions Jeff mentioned that he would love to make a new "Tree". Council at the time were advertising for interest in a Community Project. I discussed it with the BICA Committee and with the community at a crowded Cafe Benders and there was overwhelming support for Jeff to apply for the grant to make a Sculptural Sign Tree. The application was approved. He made several starts on concepts, but due to his struggle with depression and anxiety they were never completed. The Council officer involved with the Grant knew of Jeff's struggles with his health and told him to take his time and try not to let it stress him. His ideas and skills have grown over the years and recently he made a beautiful totem for us that stands at the top of our track. This inspired him to design and complete the long-awaited Sculptural Sign Tree.

I am very proud of him finally being able to fulfill his commitment.

It's a wonderful achievement.

Carol Bonny.

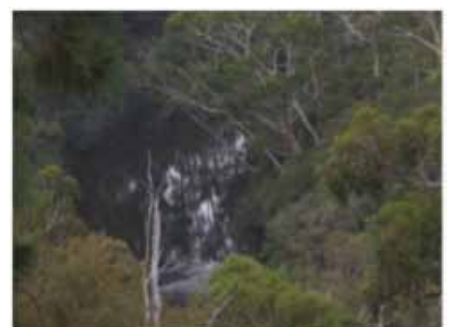




3 MONTHS IN 12 PHOTOS

These twelve photos can represent the last three months and all that has happened around the world from our own bush suburb. The heat is shown in various images. The savage bushfires that have charred parts of this state for good. The dramatic rain increase recently, lighting up a dark room. The more recent ones show that, despite the catastrophic summer, that we are moving into the colder half of the year. From then, we will rewind and come back to warmth and so on, until the end of eternity, whatever happens. Not evident in the photos, but deep in our hearts lays a lump. The current events are changing the way we all live but we are some of the luckiest people out there. We have a tool, that not many have. In a time of need, such as now, we can reflect on nature to keep us calm and relaxed. So, to all, I wish good luck for the coming time ahead.

Jarrah Pauli (age 12)





IT WAS FRIDAY NIGHT ...



It was Friday night, I was waiting for my partner to arrive and reading Mick Woiwod's excellent 'Once around the Sugarloaf' when she rang to say: "There's a massive snake lying across the road down by the bridge". It was the work of a minute to don my Tarzan outfit and swing on down.

The first person on the scene was local resident 'Jane' who had already done the heavy lifting: avoiding running the snake over, securing the area, keeping her lights on it, waving through traffic and ringing a potential snake catcher. The prize for such diligence was cold pizza and a flat battery.

By now totally in character I leapt out of the car, rusted the monster and made a grab for its massive neck. We writhed about on the asphalt as it wrapped its giant coils around me in a death embrace. OR, from the distance of the longest stick I could find I gently coaxed it off the road. It took a leisurely path onto the verge and up into some Burgan.

It was at this point I realized it was a Carpet python, generally docile, not local and either an escapee or dumped. Carpet pythons are slow and particularly amenable creatures, which is why they make good pets and why so many of the wild ones are eaten by foxes and feral cats (what aren't) and are now considered endangered. Chicken farmers used to use them to keep rats at bay. It turns out it was a Murray Darling carpet python, and a long way from home, so now, having invited it into the scrub we had to retrieve it. 'Jane' unwrapped its tail from a branch and I offered it a stick to climb onto - the one that had me at the other end! So now I held a branch with a python at one end and me on the other. Surely not a workable long-term arrangement. Luckily there was a large plastic camping box in the back of the car so I wrestled - ok, dropped, it into that and the Bend of Islands bush telegraph took over. Linda - the Co-op's resident animal rescue expert came by to pick it up and deliver it to Kirsten at the Stringybark Wildlife shelter. It will then go up for legal adoption via The Unusual Pet Vets.

Addendum

The next morning, I found a baby small-eyed snake in the doorway between the bedroom and bathroom. Unfortunately, it was a little damaged by the door opening. Kirsten kindly volunteered to take it to Healesville Sanctuary where they can take a look at it.

Tarzan

aka Richard Laurie

Fringe Benefits

The downside of the corona virus is the forced separation from our extended families, missing the birthdays, anniversaries etc. Also, the frustrations we encounter when we go out and endeavour to obtain some basic food staples from empty shelves at the supermarkets.

The upside is that we live in an environment where we can go out for walks in our beautiful landscapes and usually encounter nobody else. Social distancing here isn't the draconian sentence that many urban dwellers are now struggling with.

The birds we watch every day seem singularly unperturbed by the crisis enfolding the human race and just go about their regular tasks bringing joy to us in the process.

One thing a lot of us have tackled during the enforced home stay is technology in all of its varying forms. People are teaching and working from home, having meetings via Zoom, creating Skype and messenger groups, doing online Yoga classes plus a myriad of other things no one would even have contemplated 12 months ago.

We have tried a few of these and sometimes it becomes a bit clunky as our internet struggles to cope, but we still manage to have some laughs. The other night we conducted our first-ever online book review for our book club. I think a glass of wine helps especially when your video becomes pixelated or the audio fails.

These things however have hi-lighted to many of us the inadequacy of the internet service in this area. Maybe when this is all over, we should as a group demand a better service from our overlords.

I'm not sure about the rest of the benders but we have found so many projects to do here that I'll be glad when the crisis is over so I can have a rest.

Stay safe everybody.

Neil & Jenny

PS, a little story I wrote for our writing class may give you a smile?

Corona Crisis

I scream, "go away", but the beasts just close in and engulf me. Their eyes, the first thing that alarmed me, wild, frantic, unblinking as they bore down. I was warned not to attend so early but disregarded the advice.

"What could go wrong?" I told my friends.

Now the nightmare unfolds around me. I am first trapped in a narrow aisle then mercilessly trampled underfoot. Unlike in Pamplona at the San Fermin Festival and the running of the bulls, there is no Red Cross personnel here to help me.

The first wave has passed leaving me laying on the floor bruised and battered. A terrifying click-clacking at the other end of the row strikes terror into my very soul. I know it is heralding yet another onslaught which is about to bear down on me.

The sound of a siren screaming and reflections of blue and red lights bouncing off buildings is what I awoke to. A pair of paramedics are looking down at me but I can't discern any of their features as they are fully garbed in white protective gowns, their faces covered with masks under a transparent shield.

We stop at the intensive care entrance and the ambulance is met by two fully gowned orderlies with a gurney. I am gently transferred and wheeled into the hospital. There are red signs everywhere stating, caution coronavirus patients must follow the red line. My carers disregard this instruction and follow a blue line and park me in a small cubicle in the casualty department.

After many hours a weary doctor attends. His diagnosis is eventually completed and I end up in a crisp white bed in the general ward, wrapped in bandages and fitted with multiple plaster casts.

Now with plenty of time to reflect. Visions of walking frames and walking sticks come to me, nightmares that will never leave.

I wonder if I really needed to call into Coles at 7.30 am for that packet of tissues.

Neil Taylor



Strange and Unusual Sightings in the Bend

MOST WANTED

Because of the Coronavirus we have been spending a lot of time at home and have been going on lots of walks. We started noticing unusual creatures in the Bend. Some of the creatures aren't native. Have a look at the photos we took. Do you think you can find more? I challenge you!

6 photos in one month

Ned Pauli (age 10)





From the Editor:

Thank you to all who have contributed to this Newsletter

Keep sending in your articles and photos of the Bend of Islands jmandfp@bigpond.com

Editor: Janet Mattiske Design and Layout; Greg Phillips

CAFE BENDERS

Come and join us for Coffee and Cake at Café Benders held every third Saturday, starting at 10.00 am until 12 noon at the South Fire Station, 50 Cluni Bv, Bend of Islands

All proceeds go to the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade



POSTPONED

CAT Traps



BICA has purchased two compliant cat traps that are available for borrowing. They are available at the Mildenhall's with full instructions for use

BICA Facebook Page

We want to be able to keep you up-to-date with what BICA is dealing with on your behalf and we want you to be taking part too.

Join up and we'll keep the information coming!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/157412771573945/>

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