

Band of Islands Conservation Association

Newsletter No 20.

July '89.



What Indigenous Plant is flowering ?

Botanical Name: *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*

Common Name: Red Ironbark

The Red Ironbark is quite a spectacular tree at this time of year.

It is a medium sized tree with clusters of large creamish flowers hanging down on long flower stalks amongst the drooping soft blue green leaves. The soft tones of the flowers and foliage are strongly contrasted by the black, hard, deeply fissured trunk.

The flowers are prolific honey producers evident by the busy activity of birds. In particular, the parrots pick off the flowers in hundreds and scatter them onto the ground below leaving a carpet of soft creamy flowers.

In the ELZ the Red Ironbark is usually found in the drier open forests in association with *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box), *Eucalyptus macrorrhyncha* (Red Stringybark) and *Eucalyptus gonilocalyx* (long Leaf Box), on ridges of well drained, gravelly soil.

In the past Red Ironbark had been extensively and selectively felled for its strong hard durable timber for use in building and firewood.

It is a rare species in some localities and its existence in the ELZ is considered of great botanical significance. The preservation and re-establishment of this species should be given serious consideration.

Cric Henry

Fuel Reduction

Because normal summer lightning fires are extinguished by the C.F.A., and aborigines don't burn any more, abnormally high levels of fuel build up in parts of the bush. A layer of leaves and twigs 3 inches deep is enough to support a fierce crown fire in summer. Less will have the same effect on a slope or with a wind. If the amount of fuel is doubled, the fire intensity is quadrupled. The problem is to reduce this dangerous fuel.

One way is to use a strong rake to make big heaps and burn them. BUT if you use this method you will

- cause erosion with the rake
- sterilise the soil under the heap
- damage the overstorey and nearby plants.

As you **must** interfere with the ecosystem it is better to use a variety of methods at different times of the year and always leave about one third untreated. This produces a diversity of habitat types and a richer fauna.

How often should you burn?

If you don't burn at all, the thick layer of leaves will mulch the forest floor in some places (especially north slopes), smother such plants as violets and allow many species to become senescent and die out because there is no regenerating fire.

Bush plants react in different ways to fire. Many grasses, sedges, etc. soon shoot up after being burnt. Eucalypts in our area grow lots of shoots on their trunks even if their crowns are destroyed and gradually produce new crowns. Pea plants and wattles etc. are killed by fire which in turn germinates their seeds. However enough time must have elapsed since the last fire for the plants to have matured and produced an adequate stock of seeds.

Thus if you burn frequently you will ultimately wipe out wattles and pea plants etc. and incidentally remove the food supply of some animals. For example, bronze winged pigeons eat wattle seeds and black tailed wallabies browse on pea plants rather than grass. You will however produce lots of perennial grasses and sedges. Therefore in our area if you want wild-flowers you should burn no more frequently than every 7-10 years. Perhaps divide your property into sections and treat one each year.

When should you burn?

It's too wet to burn in winter and you must not burn in summer. This leaves spring and autumn. There are problems and advantages with both.

Spring burns are good because:

- lower layers of litter are moist so the fire is not too fierce and less soil is exposed
- logs which are habitats are still moist and less likely to burn.

Spring burns are bad because:

- it is distressing (but not ecologically important) to see that wind-flowers burnt
- sometimes the fire is not hot enough to germinate seeds because of moisture
- roots of trees may occasionally smoulder away underground and lead to a fire in summer
- nests of low nesting birds will be burnt.

Autumn burns are good because:

- rain is imminent for complete blacking out
- less plants are flowering
- less birds are nesting.

Autumn burns are bad because:

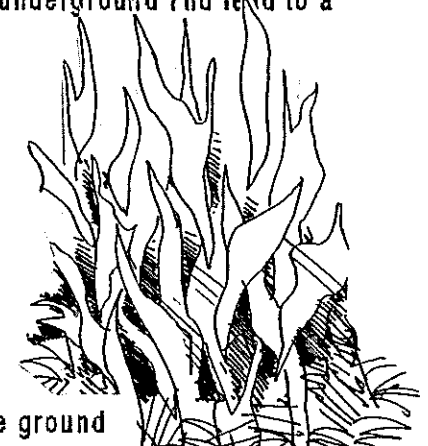
- habitat logs burn more easily as they are dry
- some birds, such as quail, nest in autumn on the ground
- all litter is burnt and a moist underlayer does not remain to protect the soil from erosion.

It is up to you whether you burn in spring or autumn as long as you are aware of the problems.

How should you burn?

You should discuss your fuel reduction plan with the C.F.A. and preferably advise them when you plan to burn. Here are some guide-lines:

- Have plenty of people, rakes and knapsack sprays available
- Check the weather forecast



-Preferably burn on Saturday so you can make certain it is all blacked out during Sunday

-Start after lunch as the humidity increases towards evening and quietens down the fire

-Rake control lines about 1 metre in width around a manageable area raking litter inwards

-Rake litter away from important trees so they are not damaged and allow termite infestation

-Make a test burn on a 20 metre patch to get an idea of possible intensity i.e. flame height and speed of travel

-Start the burn from the top of the slope and as it slowly burns downhill start burning inwards from the downhill control lines

-When it has burnt downhill about 10 metres start fire about 5-10 metres below the front to ensure some hot burning to promote seed germination

-Finally ignite along the bottom control line

-Later make certain the burnt area is blacked out.

These guide-lines will vary depending on location, topography and wind direction. Remember the fire creates its own wind.

Fuel Reduction and Soil Production

Damage to soil was so bad in the hot 1939 and 1962 wildfires that topsoil became friable and washed away, leaving light coloured sub soil and lay and "floaters" (stones once embedded in the soil). On steeper northern slopes little soil has formed because when litter is moist it is too cold for bacteria to compost it and when it is warm it is too dry. Soil does form but slowly.

To speed up soil formation and reduce fuel it is a good idea to gently rake leaves and twigs and stones into rows along the slope contours - perhaps against a fallen branch - and stamp on the litter to compress it and speed decomposition. If you check again in the spring you will see your rows have been invaded by fungi of many colours and after a few years if you dig through a row you will find the 'soil' below the row is

dark as microorganisms take organic materials downwards. Also the row of leaves will be collecting silt from erosion and rich soil will be seen. Don't place the rows exactly at right angles to the slope as water running over the downhill edge may cause erosion below the row. You only have to slow the water flow not stop it. If you reduce the speed of water flow by half, you reduce its soil carrying capacity by at least 8 times. Don't expect plants to appear in the rows for some time because of the mulching effect.

The Co-op was commended by three officers of the Soil Conservation Authority including the chairman, Alex Mitchell, who inspected their raking program. However this has been discon-



tinued because some members raked much too enthusiastically and actually caused erosion and damage to plants. Only a light cane rake should be used. The great advantage of this method in selected places is that the organic matter and nutrients enrich the soil and improve its structure instead of going up in smoke.

Fuel Reduction around your house

If you don't remove the fine fuel from about 50 metres around your house, when the wildfire comes (and it will!) the burning litter may be piled along the walls of your house by the fierce winds and make a bonfire. If you burn as often as fuel accumulates you will end up with only grasses, sedges and trees - which is ok. However if you want wind-flowers you must be more careful. One way is to allocate sites for small fires and gently rake litter to these places for burning. Then gently rake the ashes and stones about 3 metres downhill to form rows which will slow up the inevitable erosion and encourage rows of wind-flowers. Planting seeds collected during the previous summer promotes these natural gardens.

Although plants such as some wattles are not flammable (lists of such plants are available) others like hedge wattle and bergens are highly flammable and should be kept away from the house. You can easily check the flammability of bushes by trying out a branch in your fireplace.

Conclusion

If residents allow litter to build up for a long time, the wildfire that will come will be horrendous, damaging our bush and destroying houses. (The energy from the Upper Beaconsfield fire exceeded that of an atom bomb!!) This can be avoided. However the methods you use to reduce this dangerous fuel will determine the aesthetic quality of your bush.

* This article from Tim Ealey will be we hope the first of many concerning bush fire threat and what we should do about it.

Bird Survey

Bird life, the numbers and diversity of species, is often a good indicator of quality of habitat. One of the main aims of the ELZ and its provisions is to maintain and enhance the quality of the Bend of Islands bush. How effective are the provisions? In order to find out, it is hoped that a number of monitoring techniques will be established quite soon. The first is we hope pleasurable, especially if you are a bird watcher.

Aim: To accumulate comprehensive sighting and breeding records of resident and migratory birds in the Bend of Islands.

Where: Specific areas will be visited regularly including Watsons Creek, the Yarra River, the Gongflers Peninsula, the Henley-Catani triangle, Skyline ridge, Stevensons Creek and the Billabongs.

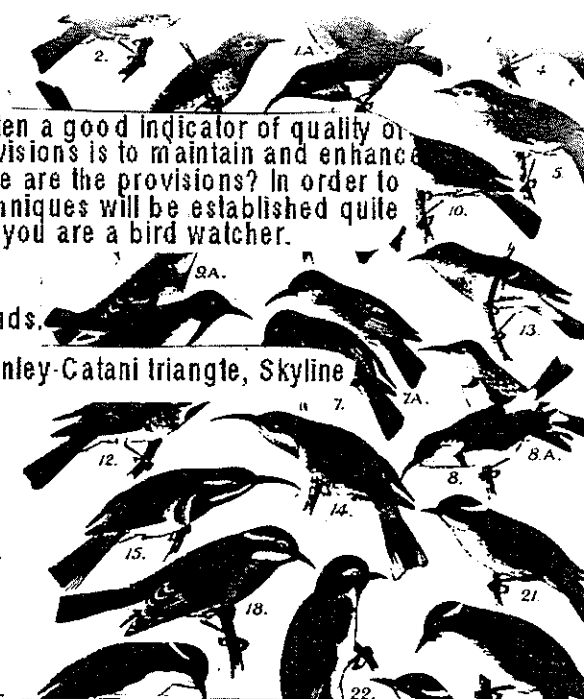
When: Walks will take place, approximately one (1) per month commencing 8-30 a.m. on a Sunday morning.

Meet at Henley Road Tank.

Bring your binoculars, pencil and note book.

Walks for 1989: 30th July, 20th August, 17th September, 29th October, 19th November, 17th December.

Contact Janel Mattiske 712 0237 for information.



Some Winter Flowering Plants to look out for.

Large-medium trees *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*

Red Ironbark

Tall shrubs *Acacia genistifolia*

Spreading Wattle

Hymenanthera dentata

Tree Violet

Low shrubs *Goodenia ovata*

Hop Goodenia

Correa reflexa

Common Correa

Epacris impressa

Common Heath

Acrotriche serrulata

Honey Pots

Herbs *Anguillaria dioica*

Early Nancy

Pterostylis nutans

Nodding Greenhood Orchid

Pterostylis longifolia

Tall Greenhood Orchid

from Cric



The Weed Flora of the E.L.Z. Where to next ?

The recently published *Weed Flora of the ELZ, Kangaroo Ground, Victoria. An Assessment of Effects and Management Strategies for Control* (Carr, McMahon and Todd 1988) is an historic document; it offers information about the current status of weeds in the ELZ and makes recommendations for their control and/or elimination. Additionally, it was privately funded, probably a national "first", and a great credit to those members of the ELZ whose activities over the years gone by created the funds to do the job. As a biologist who began public life as a Weed Physiologist with ICIANZ in 1958, and who has returned to ecological studies since 1976, I'd like to raise some issues that arise now that the community of the ELZ has taken this all-important first step.

The first issue that arises is "what is a weed?" **Outside** the ELZ, weeds are usually defined as "undesirable plant species growing in locations where they are causing one or more problems for the current land-use activity". This circular type of definition ("It is a weed because it is undesirable because it is a plant growing where it does which makes it a weed because.....") underscores the point that there is nothing inherently "good" or "bad" about a particular plant species; it is **its impact on our perceived land-use options that makes it into a weed.**

Within the ELZ, whether a plant species is judged by a landholder to be a weed or not will depend on the individual land-holder's view of the good or harm that flows from the presence and abundance of the species on that parcel of land. Where the land is privately owned, this creates a great deal of room for disagreement among landholders about the status of a particular species as a weed. To an ELZ landholder with a non-conforming use-right to run horses, cattle or sheep, native scrub may appear to be a weedy nuisance, taking over the pasture species on which the farm's income depends. To a conservation-oriented landholder with no non-conforming use-rights, the scrub species may be God's gift to humanity, to be preserved at almost any price, while the plants that feed domestic livestock in the paddocks of the ELZ farmers are anathema in need of urgent removal! To such a person, any non-native plant can be seen as a major threat.

Further, within any one piece of private land, the strictness with which a conservation-oriented owner regards alien plants as undesirable may vary a lot. Some of those most strongly opposed to any foreign plants in the ELZ nonetheless would see no problem with having a kitchen garden full of non-native plants, in some cases with European weeds in abundance between the rows of vegetables and flowers! Others see no harm in extending the radius within which they

"tolerate" alien plants to the "house-lot area" that surrounds the house. Here you will find a range of plants "tolerated", or even prized, grown because they are beautiful in autumn or spring, or because they flower early, or in winter, or keep away mozzie, or are good for bees etc. Others go so far as to "inflict" their decisions in these matters on their neighbours by planting aliens along property boundaries, or near the roadside, often to give a dense, quickly growing screen of vegetation behind which to shelter their home from wind, noise, car headlights etc. Still others tolerate "major weeds" because they wish to make some money out of them in the future; stands of nearly mature, very harvestable Monterey pines come to mind!

The bottom line here is that someone's weed may be someone's *elses delight; no weed control programme in the ELZ, or anywhere else, will get far if it fails to understand this fact and its consequences on people's perceptions of their responsibilities in the area of conservation management.

The second issue relates to the prior histories of land-use within what is now the ELZ of the Shire of Healesville. Mick Woiwod and others have gathered a moderately detailed understanding of the post-1962 fire history for at least some of the land now in the ELZ. For example, I have been informed that most of what is now "Atunga" was at one time a grazing property, which was almost totally destroyed by the 1962 burn. It was subsequently bulldozed over a large part of its existing area, the logs wind-rows and burnt again. It has three water-catchment dams that affect it.



has had hundreds of thousands of gallons of Watson's CK water pumped through its now somewhat decadent orchard in times past, and has had extensive fertilization of the orchard area by sullage water pumping, chooks, and goats during Neil and Abbie's period of ownership. Great care was taken by them to ensure that none of the nutrients from the sullage escaped far from the gardens and orchard area. Nonetheless, Carolyn and I would be kidding ourselves if we failed to take these facts into account when we look at the distribution of alien plants on what is now our property.

It is likely that a fairly complete picture of the local history of most parts of the ELZ could be obtained from among current and past residents and I would urge that such a compilation begin since it is as important to weed management as the survey just completed. For example, if a land-holder wishes to eradicate sweet-scented vernal grass from the property, knowing that it is where it is now largely because that part of the property was once a grazing lease is helpful in deciding what approach to adopt to elimination or control of the grass.

The third issue I should like to raise at this time concerns gathering knowledge about just what is happening with plants that are deemed to be undesirable on a particular place. Fundamentally, one needs to know if the "invaders" are spreading, or static, or going backwards, because it determines what one does next. This requires simple, on the spot measurements by you, the land-owner, backed up with known information about the usual behaviour of the species concerned, where that information is available. I am happy to discuss how to make those measurements and have already got one of my Honours students (Gerry Rayner) looking at the issue of invasion of Yorkshire Fog Grass (*Holcus lanatus*) and Quaking Grass (*Briza maxima*) for his research project this year. He will soon be approaching some of you to secure your agreement to him installing some small research plots on your land. Naturally, where two or three ad-

acent land holders can agree about the weediness or otherwise of a particular species, a combined assault on the problem is likely to be more fruitful of a solution.

The bottom line here is to avoid wasting resources of money and time and personal effort; a knowledgeable and co-ordinated attack will pay handsome dividends.

It seems to me that this most unusual community of humans, among whom we have come to live recently by virtue, apparently, of some strange chains of coincidences, is a microcosm of what is happening on the larger scale in the debates about Conservation Management of Environmental Resources. I am heavily involved as a professional biologist with these issues, especially in the Mallee at the minute. Such matters are chock-a block with opposed views about land-use options and strategies, creating thereby divergent and potentially divisive attitudes. Resolution of this type of difficulty seems to be one of the major issues involved in living in any community. How to develop a Social Conscience in an environment that values the rights of individuals to do their own thing, while conserving and regenerating our Natural Resources? The diversity of attitudes to be found among current residents on weeds and non-conforming use rights should provide all of us with a chance to see what progress we can make personally towards acceptable solutions of what I think are moderately difficult matters to manage well, but worth the effort nonetheless. C' est la vie!

Terry O'Brien

4.3.89



Bird of the Month

WHITE FACED HERON

ARDEA NOVAEHOLLANDIAE

A bird I have noticed recently which I have not seen for a while in the area is the white faced heron. They are quite common and usually inhabit wetlands, water courses, dams and pasture as well as coastal environments.

They eat a wide variety of food including crustaceans, amphibians, fish, insects and mice. They forage in pasture or by wading in shallow water.

The white faced heron is a two tone grey colour with a white face and throat, black bill with yellow legs. They are about 670 mm in length.

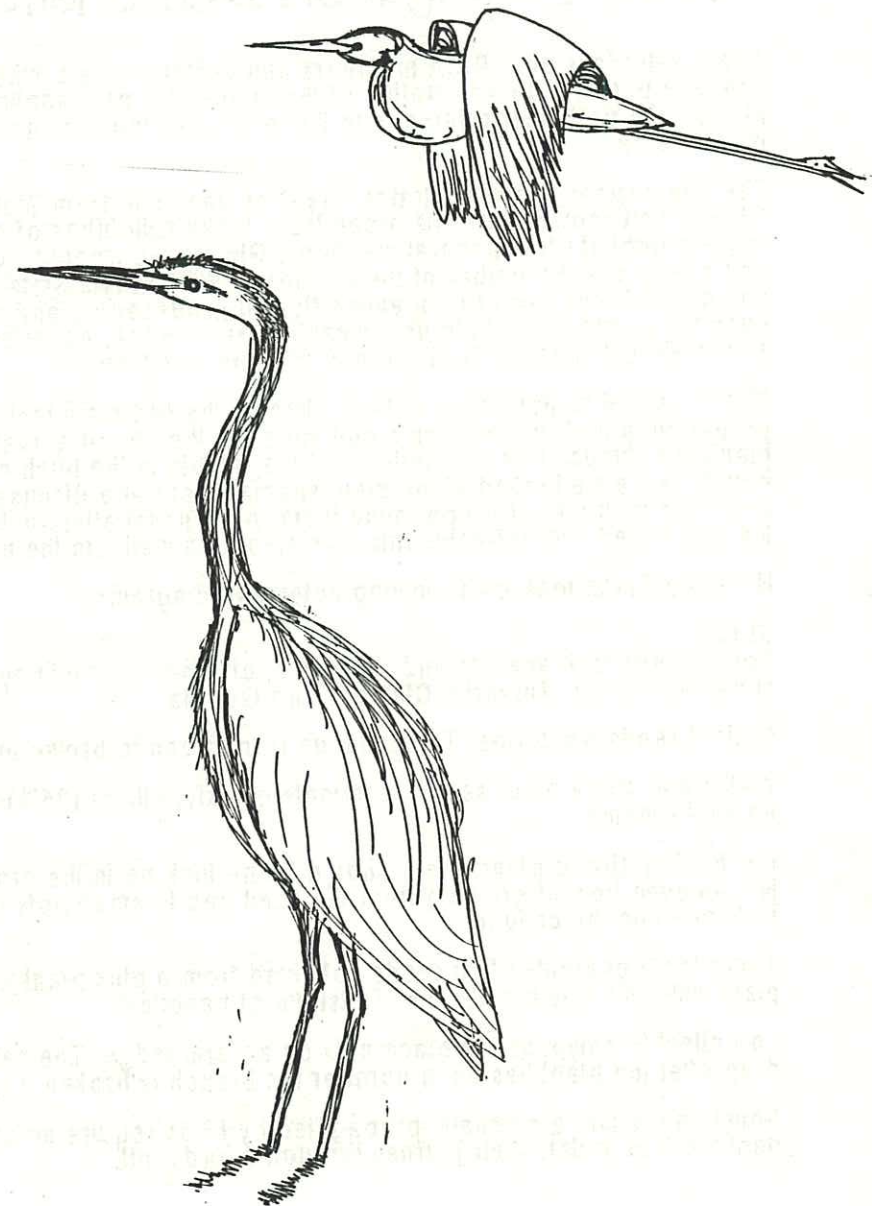
In flight, like other herons they fly with the neck folded, head close to the body and legs trailing behind.

While fishing in the Yarra down Gongflers Drive I have seen a pair on a couple of occasions flying down stream. Sometimes they alight on a dead tree, but they appear to be quite timid and fly off making a squawking noise when I stand up to reel in the line.

We found a good time to see water birds on the river is just before dusk. Duck, coots and other water fowl fly in and land in the water and trees, to roost I presume. Even when it's totally dark you can hear the whistling of air through feathers, a few squawks then a splash as a group of ducks land in the water. I'm not sure if they float around all night or swim to cover at the bank.

As you can probably gather, identification of the birds is pretty tricky at this time of the evening, but you can usually determine what bird is what just before the sun goes down. I have 'spot lighted' a few ducks with the torch swimming around and they appear to be black and wood ducks. There is usually the odd coot swimming amongst the grass and reeds along the bank of the river as well. They can be observed throughout the day in most spots along the river. I have observed birds flying, in the evenings as I have described, in most places I've been fishing in the area.

Matthew McCallum



Field Day

Plant Propagation Demonstration

A few Saturdays ago, BICA members and visitors were privileged to see and take part in a demonstration of techniques for propagating native plants, with particular reference to those species indigenous to the Bend of Islands area.

The guest speaker/demonstrator was Glen Jameson from Warrandyte. Glen is well known to us; his green truck laden with tubes of sale is a regular sight at BICA general meetings. Glen is a gardener by profession and a very active member of the Friends of Warrandyte State Park. He is committed to the use of indigenous flora in landscaping and restoring bush areas and brought to us a wealth of knowledge, experience and, above all, enthusiastic dedication to what he was telling us.

Members and visitors were able to observe the two main techniques of propagation and, under Glen's guidance, try their hand at making and planting cuttings. This was followed by a ramble in the bush near Janet's house where we looked at the plant species there and discussed appropriate methods of propagating them. As is usual after such occasions, the day ended with refreshments; this stage ran well into the night...

Hilary Jackman took the following notes and diagrams.

SEEDS

Some seeds last: acacias and eucalypts, others won't last beyond one germinating season: Bursaria, Clematis and Goodia.

Collect seeds when ripe. They change from green to brown and black.

Wattle and some other seeds germinate quickly, others (25%) won't come up until Autumn.

For healthy strong plants there should be no hick-up in the growing stages, just an even flow of growing from the seed bed to small pots to bigger pots and into the ground.

There is no guarantee that seeds collected from a pink plant will produce a plant with pink flowers. It's the "Tattslotto of genetics".

To collect Eucalypt seeds place nuts on a warm ledge. The seeds will drop after the plant has been burnt or the branch is broken off.

Some seeds that are usually propagated by birds require an acid or detergent wash to imitate their journey through a birds gut.

WATTLE AND PEA SEEDS

For hard case seeds pour boiling water over and leave overnight. Dry the seeds so they don't stick together when you try to sprinkle them out evenly in the tray. The seeds that float are the weaker ones, but may be worth planting.

PEAT MIX - 50/50 peat moss and washed sand (no nutrient).

SOIL MIX - Washed sand, wood shavings, soil, leaf mulch and Osmocoat (3 month slow release fertilizer). It must be friable.

PLANTING

In seed tray put 1/3 - 1/2 soil mix and tamp down evenly (use seed tray of the same size). Spread seeds evenly. Cover seeds with peat mix to the same thickness as the seed. For very small seeds the top coat may need to be put on through a sieve. Label - Plant name and date. Put out for the next rain or water, but remember they must be kept moist once watered.

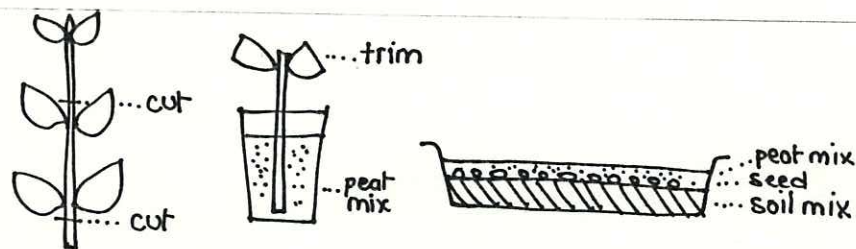
CUTTINGS

Most things will grow from cuttings. Plants are not damaged by taking cuttings. The tricky bit is collecting the right part of the plant. Not too limp, not too woody and rigid. After flowering there is a flush of growth which then hardens off in about a month. This is the best material for cuttings. Cuttings can be stored sprinkled with water in a plastic bag in the fridge for a short time. Select material, cut stem just a bit below a set of leaves, remove these leaves, cut off any floppy stem on top of the next set of leaves and reduce the remaining leaves. Push cutting into a tray which contains just peat and washed sand mix, no soil. Water. When transplanting cuttings don't bury deeper than the collar. Glen suggests placing both seeds and cuttings trays on a north facing verandah under plastic over an aluminium frame.

TRIGGER PLANTS Very fine seeds. Brown colour when ripe. Very prolific, so plant sparingly.

BURSARIA Seeds black or brown when ripe. Don't last beyond one germinating season. Spread thickly. Easy to grow hardy plant that flowers in late summer.

GRASSES Grasses can be propagated from seed or by division.



People, roof area and water storage

I hope these figures which are for house supply only, may serve as a useful indication to anyone planning a house or experiencing problems with their water supply.

There are several reasons why it is necessary to keep water consumption to a minimum. The most important, in my view, is fire prevention. The more we use the more we have to treat. In the Bend of Islands the absorption rate of the soil is extremely slow requiring an enormous length of trench for each house. If the trenches overflow the phosphates and nitrates which are almost untreated by a septic tanks are spread across the bush floor providing nutrients for the native and non native grasses and shrubs to flourish. This added growth has a dramatic effect on the fine fuels which are available to a fire. Once the fertility level has been increased it is almost impossible to remove. There are many examples of areas similar to ours which are now fertilized by inadequate water treatment and are a maintenance nightmare (lawn mowers on Sundays). North Warrandyte is probably the closest example.

I urge you to carefully consider your needs in relation to your lands ability to consume your waste water.

I have used the following figures:

rainfall: 567 mm/year (lowest in last 10 years)
consumption per person: 25300 lt/person (average of locals asked)
no rain period: 3 months
fire fighting reserve: 4250 lt

all of which calculate to: (for metric people)
1 person needs 60sq/m or more of roof and a 10575lt tank
2 people need 100sq/m or more of roof and a 16900lt tank
3 people need 145sq/m or more of roof and a 23225lt tank
4 people need 190sq/m or more of roof and a 29550lt tank
5 people need 235sq/m or more of roof and a 35875lt tank
or for imperialists.

1 person needs 6 squares or more of roof and a 2488gal tank
2 people need 10 squares or more of roof and a 3976gal tank
3 people need 14.5 squares or more of roof and a 5464gal tank
4 people need 19 squares or more of roof and a 6952gal tank
5 people need 23.5 squares or more of roof and a 8441gal tank

.....Jeph



Usefull Plants in the Bend of Islands

COARSE DODDER LAUREL

Cassytha melantha R. Br.

Also known as Devil's Twine and Devil's Guts.

IDENTIFICATION: Leafless "spaghetti" that grows on many types of trees and shrubs.

There are 14 species of Dodder Laurel in Australia, with three in Victoria. *Cassytha melantha* is the only species I have seen in Kangaroo Ground. The other 2 species are more slender and do not cover trees in a tangled mass the way Coarse Dodder Laurel does.

DISTRIBUTION: Widespread through open forests in south eastern Australia.

CULTIVATION: The seed germinates on the ground and the twining stem attaches itself to a nearby plant. Once the parasitic association is established, the Dodder Laurel loses its connection with the ground, taking all its nourishment from the host plant.

I haven't tried it, but it should be possible to grow *Cassytha* into potted plants (e.g. eucalypts) via their parasitic proclivities. Then ensure the host is well looked after, and you should be able to look forward to a few fruit. Dodder Laurel plants could equally well be transferred onto other suitable small trees.

Remember that it will kill its host, so keep it cut back to a manageable size.

USES: Similar plants are distributed world-wide, and they have been put to many uses:

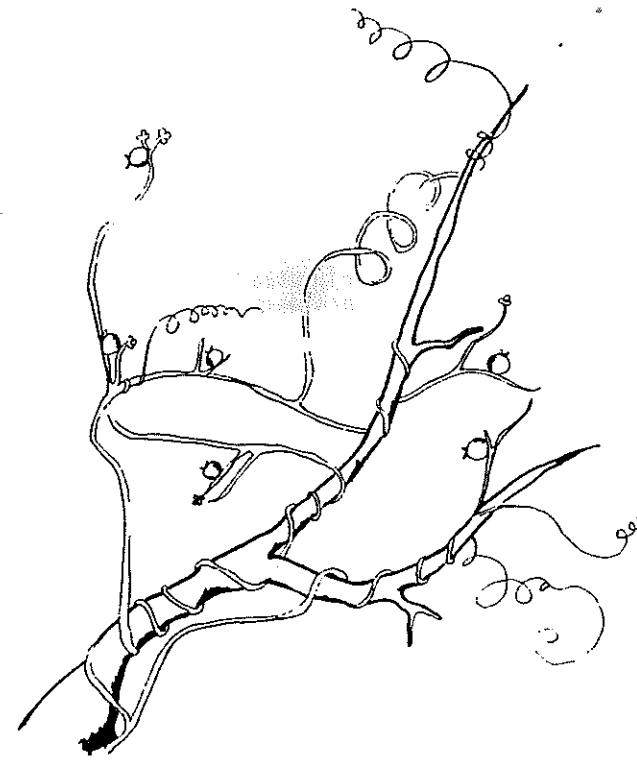
1. FOOD: The round fruit has a single hard seed. When ripe, they become translucent and fall from the plant.

They are edible raw - Jennifer Isaacs in her book **Bush Foods** describes them as "very aromatic and tangy". I would say blandly sweet with an unpleasant aftertaste. They are also very sticky and spitting out the seed can be a chore.

Making jam from the fruit gives a more acceptable product, as the aftertaste is reduced and the fruit doesn't have to be completely ripe. Remove all seeds before making the jam, as it is almost impossible to extract them from the finished product (which resembles green, almost set glue).

Aborigines chewed the unripe fruit of Dodder Laurels as a kind of chewing gum. In India last century, *Cassytha* fruits were used to flavour buttermilk.

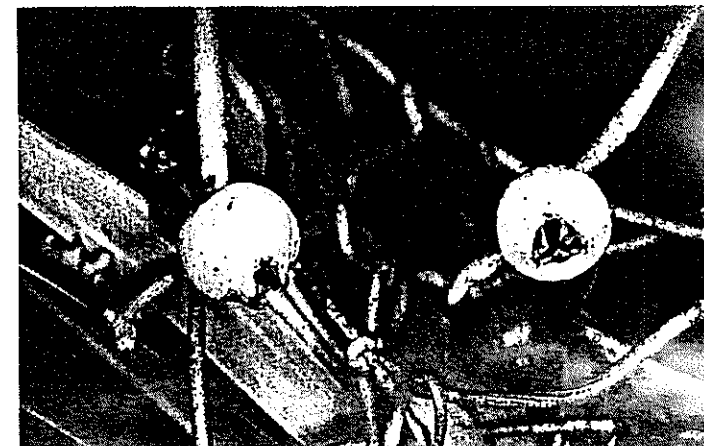
Another suggestion (I have not tried it yet) is to squash the ripe fruits, mix them with boiling water and filter off the liquid as a sweet drink.



DEVIL'S TWINES
(*Cassytha* species)



Other names:
Dodder laurel,
devil's guts, black-fellow's twine



2. **MEDICINAL:** I cannot find a record of *Cassylia melantha* being used medicinally. However, some species contain alkaloids which could give them medicinal properties. It remains for the local species to be tested carefully (remember - alkaloids can be toxic!)

Medicinal uses of related species include - infusion taken for pains and high temperature; contraceptive (perhaps abortifacient); made into hair tonic; used as disinfectant (eyewash and for cleaning ulcers); taken internally for dysentery and bilious attacks; to treat piles; and applied externally to rheumatic pains and general aches.

On the other hand, Lassak and McCarthy in their book *Australian Medicinal Plants* quote an 18th century Australian authority as stating Australia's Dodder Laurels are medically inert.

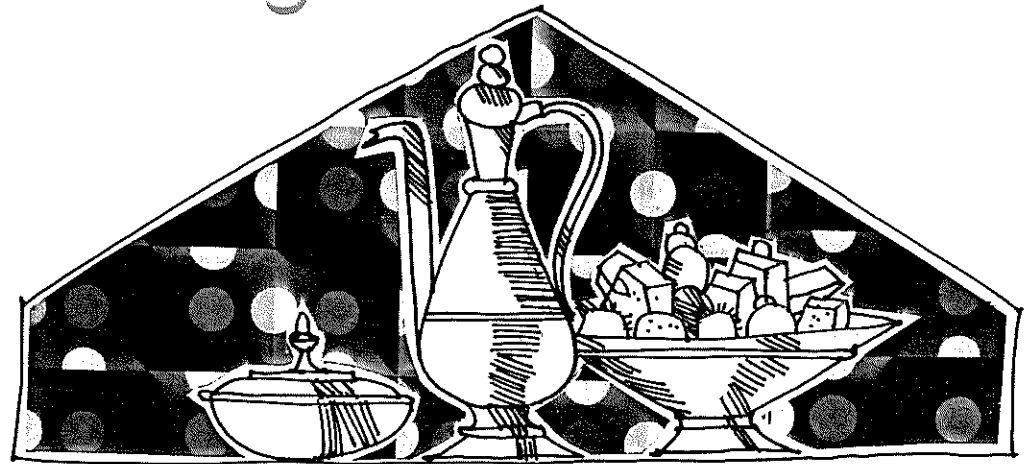
3. **OTHER:** Again, I have not located records for the local species.

However, much information about Victorian Aboriginal plant usage have been lost. Some of the following uses of related species from interstate and overseas may well represent possible usage of *C. melantha*: as string eg. for roofing or tying garlands of flowers; made into footwear; a cushion to carry things on the head, or as covering from sun and rain; and as ready made fishing nets.

4. **HISTORICAL:** Culpeper puts all Didders under the dominion of Saturn and states they "participate of the nature of those plants whereon they grow".

The small white flowers represent baseness in one version of "The Language of Flowers".

Rodney Barker.



Lebanese Dinner

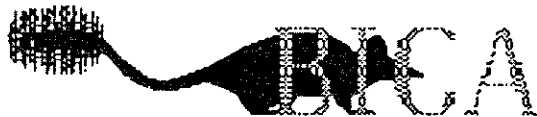
Carolyn O'Brien has organised a BICA fund raising dinner at a beautiful restaurant -

**DUMAYAZAD,
329 DONCASTER ROAD,
NORTH BALWYN (BYO),**

At 7.30 p.m., Thursday 27th July. Only \$25 a head. Bring as many heads as possible. It will be a great night. Friday is not normally a high achievement day anyway. So instead of our social contacts consisting of flash waving through windscreens, come share a Hummus with these mysterious ships in the nights.

Contact Carolyn on 712 0352. Prepay by 23rd July.

We hope this will be a regular get together. So do come.



BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
C/O Post Office Kangaroo Ground 3097

Committee Report

The 1989 Committee was formed at the February Annual General Meeting and has the following membership:

Frank Pierce	President	712	0361
Michael Pelling	Vice President	712	0286
Janet Mattiske	Secretary	712	0237
John McCallum	Assistant Secretary	712	0319
Chris Steed	Treasurer	712	0558
Rod Barker		712	0423
Sandy French		712	0443
Neil Harvey		712	0462
Ross Henry		712	0547
Terry O'Brien		712	0352
Robyn Langford		712	0551

A comprehensive structure of sub-committee has been established to ensure a spread of responsibilities over the broad range of our activities.

The sub-committees work covers activities such as public relations, land sales, newsletter production, fund-raising dealing with authorities and so on.

Progress is being achieved with the Shire of Healesville on the finalisation of the Planning Scheme and the production of a publication on the ELZ.

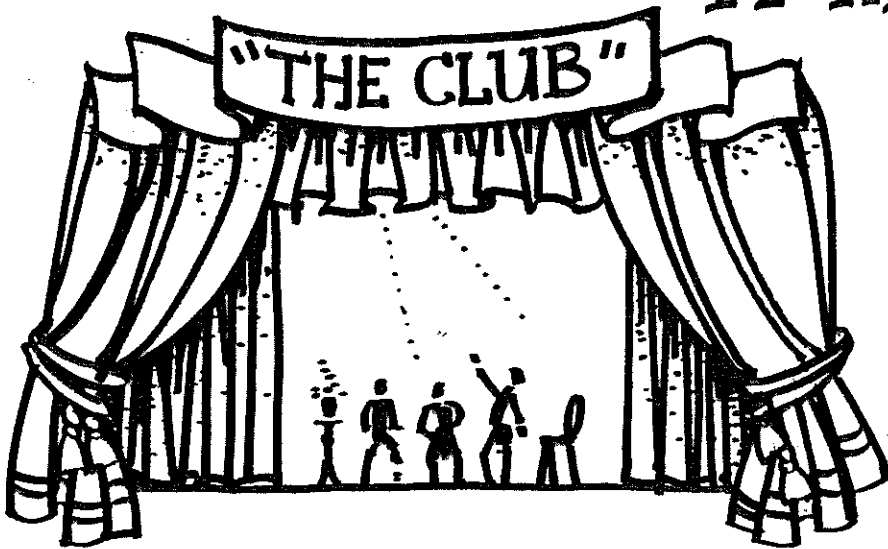
Several Working Bees have been held, the Fire Brigade Shed has been painted and looks much better, and roadside vegetation in Catani Boulevard and Gongflers Drive has been cut back after liaison with the Council.

The Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority Regional Strategy Review has been completed and a report has been published. Members have been asked to submit comments on the relevant issues in the near future.

Please contact any committee member if you have any problems or suggestions on ELZ matters.

Frank Pierce
President

A Theatre Night for our Fire Brigade



On Saturday 26th August we plan to have a night at the Eltham Little Theatre to see David Williamson's 'The Club'.

Our recent theatre night raised \$80 and we plan to up the ante on this one.

We are hoping to sell 40 tickets at \$13 per head and this includes supper at the theatre as well.

If you're interested please ring any of the 3 people below as soon as possible.

Janelle Grigg 712 0426

Margaret Wolwod 712 0563

Sheila Dixon 712 0542

Some Weeds to Watch

The weeds featured in this issue are examples of garden escapes; plants which have colonized bush areas as a result of being deliberately planted nearby. Many of our weeds fall into this category although in many cases such as that of the infamous Shell Grass (*Briza maxima*) their uses as ornamental plants has been forgotten and their status is now simply that of a widespread weed.

The popularity of Australian native plants over the past few decades has resulted in a large number of species from all over the country being established in gardens many hundreds of kilometres out of their natural distribution. In many cases they are able to invade adjacent bushland. This invasion is not always apparent until conditions are just right. An example of this occurred in the Anglesea/Airey's Inlet area in recent years. Immediately after the fires of 16 February, 1983, vast numbers of seedlings of 'garden shrubs' notably *Albizzia lophantha*, a native of SW Western Australia, appeared. The seeds had lain dormant in the soil until the fire stimulated their germination and the plants have since flourished at the expense of the local flora.

I have chosen two garden plants which I know to have the potential to invade our bushland. I know because in the past we have cultivated them out of ignorance and have seen them spread.

Acacia longifolia (Sallow Wattle)

This is a fast growing species and this feature has no doubt made it popular with gardeners. It comes to maturity in one or two years and readily sets seed. Like most Acacias it has two kinds of seed; those which require fire to germinate and those which germinate without such stimulation. The latter kind of seed result in small Sallow Wattles appearing nearby within a very few years of the original planting. The other kind of seeds remain dormant in the soil until a fire.

Deliberate planting around the Sugarloaf Dam has resulted in the establishment of *A. longifolia* along Skyline Road beyond the switching station turn-off. Another nearby area where this species has gained a foothold is where Skyline Road meets the Eltham-Yarra Glen Road. Here it is accompanied by at least two other non-indigenous Acacias and Sweet Pittosporum (*P. undulatum*), a native of coastal Eastern Victoria and regions north from there. Recently there has been some suggestion that *A. longifolia* is native to the area now covered by the Warrandyte State Park and that efforts should be made to encourage its re-establishment there. At my most charitable I allow that this is as a result of confusion over common names and that the "Sallow Wattle" of Warrandyte is another species, possibly *A. mucronata*.

The drawing shows the shoot of a young plant; the pale golden flowers are arranged in loose spikes and appear in spring.

Control is by pulling, preferably when the plants are young and have not set seed. Older plants (which may have reached tree size) should be ring-barked and left to die.





Solya heterophylla (Blue-bell Climber)

This is another popular garden plant for the same general reasons as *A. longifolia*.

It is a vigorous climber and for much of the year it bears small but attractive bell-shaped, five petalled, blue flowers. These are followed by fleshy fruits, pod-shaped and about 3 cm long and the seeds that these contain seem to have no difficulty in spreading and germinating, even in relatively undisturbed bush. The drawing shows part of a fairly large plant with mature fruits. The ease with which *Solya heterophylla* spreads reminds us that even although our zoning provisions restrict planting of non-indigenous species to our "kitchen gardens", it does not prevent them from spreading to the nearby bush (and even further afield). Seeds that are wind-borne, water-carried or which stick to the bodies of animals do not take much notice of wire netting!

If you have had *S. heterophylla* in your garden, look around for young plants and remove them while young; certainly before they flower and set seed.

B.I.C.A... a privilege or a duty ?

Immediate personal and business events demand much of our time but new energy is available here where we live and, hopefully, flourish. If we are all responsible to and for each other, we are even more so here where the successful nurturing of the land depends on the enthusiastic co-operation of us all, so if it seems a bother look out your window on a moonlit night (or even open the door and look out) or come home to those health giving trees doing good things to the air.

Here we have a happy congruence of diversity of interests and training (including the sculpture exhibition) where we can benefit from professionals in biology, land use, weed control, chemistry, psychology and many allied subjects, as well as those with a wealth of experience or those sympathetic to our cause.

What is our cause? We know the land is not ours but rather a trust, so each work party is perhaps an act of devotion (!) together with a gaiety in companionship, a commitment and a step forward in land management.

Now the nice part

We are so close to the drama of life forms from pond minutae to beetles, bugs, birds and larger creatures, many quiet and unseen during the day but most lively at night. We share this refuge with them.

We welcome those who feel like we do about the bush. Someone has helped a group of walkers to orientate themselves. They all looked peaceful and contented as they walked down the last hill to their car.

A student left some mysterious white cylinders for tuans to leave some evidence if they are around. (They certainly are and will dig neat holes in any bananas or avocados left around if they come inside at night.

The kookaburra looks with intent at a blue tongue drinking at the pool. Disturb them?

The antichinus nibbles the pasta and in the end drowns in the water jug.

The wallabies prune the indigophera severely and weeds are a worry. But there's always "the wind on the health brother".

Do bombard the editor with questions. Have a box somewhere. Lets have a competition (age 5 - 20 yrs) about movement (animals, trees etc). Prize a secret.

Congratulations on the last issue.

Finally may I quote from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for the future " There can be no place for the poor in spirit, the sceptics, the pessimists, the sad of heart, the weary and the immobilists! Life is a ceaseless discovery. Life is movement."

Fire Brigade Report

Summer Fire Season

Despite a very warm, dry early spring this year's summer period was unusual in that NO Fire Danger Period was declared for the Shires of Ellham and Healesville. The overall weather conditions which determine the degree of curing of grass or the Drought Index which is used to calculate forest fire danger were marked in early and mid summer by rain and mild temperatures. This fact, together with the CFA's apparent reluctance to impose needless restrictions, led to this action by the Authority's Lilydale Office.

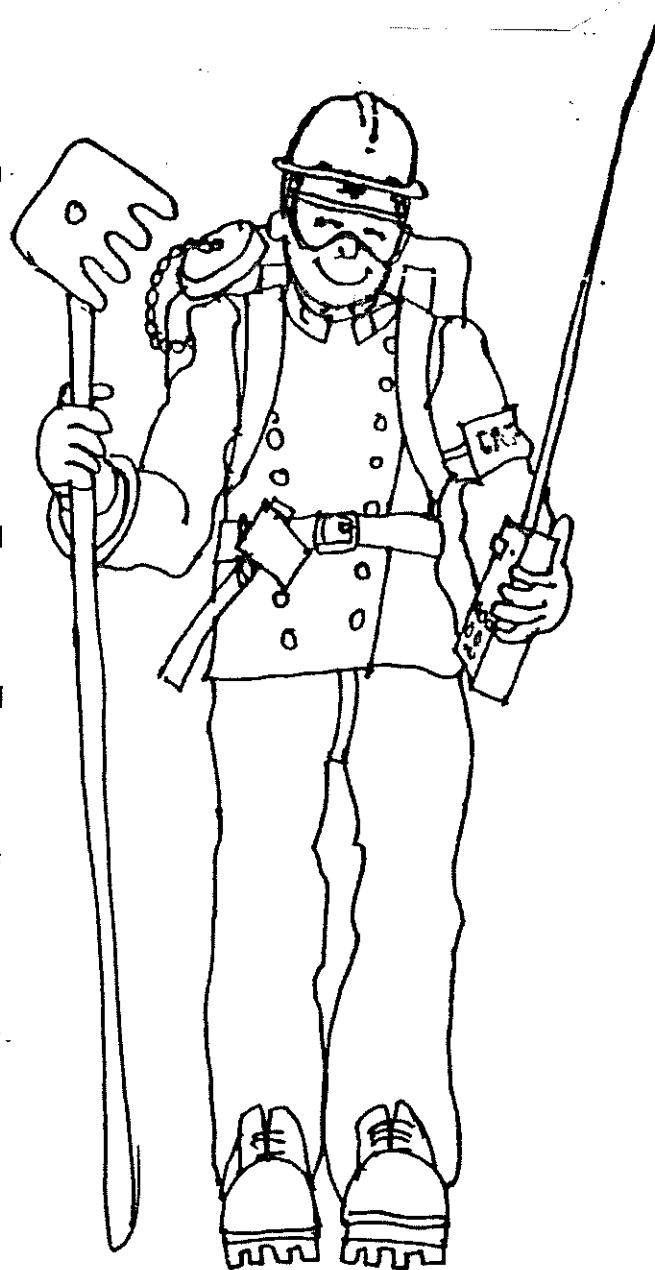
Regional Fire Prevention Competition

Fire Danger Period or not, the Brigade has again had a busy year. Weekly training and maintenance, Municipal Fire Prevention Committee meetings, preparation of the Fire Prevention Plan for the area, Group meetings, brigade meetings, officer's meetings, visits to new residents, special brigade training days and nights, Group training, Fiskville training and many other activities have again been organized, attended or taken place as the case may be. As part of the brigade's community awareness and involvement program, a well attended public meeting was held in December. A recently released video "Buildings and Bushfire" was shown and landowners' responsibilities in fire prevention and protection were emphasized. We have had very few fire calls, most being to motor vehicle accidents.

All in all, our activities resulted in us **winning for the second time** our section of the Region 13 Fire Prevention Competition! On points we were sixth overall in the entire Region! Congratulations are due to all brigade members for this fine result!

Brigade Elections

April this year saw the biennial election of office bearers in the brigade and results are as follows:



Captain: David Herd	730 1429
Secretary: Robyn Adams	730 1761
1st Lieutenant: Jeph Neale	712 0458
2nd Lieutenant: Fred Kober	730 1576
3rd Lieutenant: Dianne Simmons	730 1761
4th Lieutenant: John McCallum	712 0319
Communications Officer: Kit Carson	719 7492
Apparatus Officer: Robyn Adams	730 1761

The above take up duties on 1 July, 1989 for two years and we congratulate them on their election and wish them well.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

* Brigade meetings take place on the **first Wednesday** of each month in the North (Main Road) station at 8 pm.

* Weekly training is at 10 a.m. **each Sunday**, odd dates in the South (Catani Bvde) station, even dates in the North station.

* Other occasions and events as announced.

ALL WELCOME TO ALL OF THE ABOVE!

For Fire ring 712 0454 or 719 7487.

Another Bird Story - with a moral

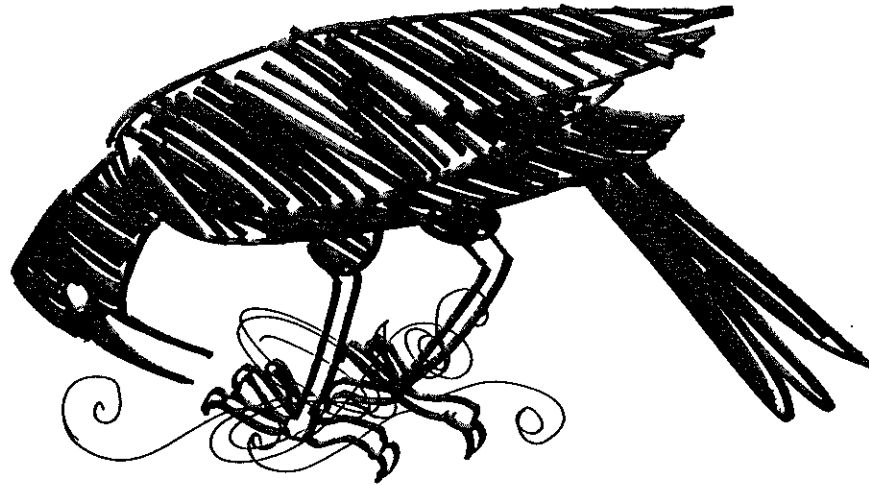
Recently Shayne Parris told me about a visiting chough that had fine plastic filament tightly wrapped around both legs. The legs were also joined by a strand about 10 cm long. The bird was one of a group of five and was having trouble walking and perching.

When the birds came to my house I made friends with them by sitting on the ground and feeding them. The affected chough took food from my hand but was far too evasive for me to either catch it or trap it in mosquito netting provided by Shayne.

Asking John McCallum, asking if there was a bird catching net around. No luck. John suggested using an animal trap. I had seen Jannik Schou, the field naturalist in our crew of six on the small schooner 'Dick Smith Explorer' effortlessly catching penguins and sea birds with a long handled net in the Antarctic and I thought this was the way to go. I set about constructing one but gave up when I could not find suitable materials. I then cut the side out of a big cardboard fruit box and made a bird wire slide to cover the opening. I baited the box and waited. An hour or so of waiting was to no avail. No bird would go into the box.

I then carried the 1 metre long (heavy) wire mesh animal trap over from Harvey's garden and set this up on the ground close to where I was working on parts of my Land Rover engine on the back porch, from where I could observe the birds.

I attached a string to the trip loop of the trap to enable manual (personal) operation and put food on the floor. The birds were now down the slope so after a period of slowly attracting them back to the porch I watched and waited. For hours it seemed, the birds picked up every scrap of food I had laid around the trap. They would look at the large bait inside but would not cross the threshold and go in.



Finally one bird went into the trap. It was not my quarry. Others followed. At last my quarry plus two other choughs entered the trap. I pulled the string, the door clanged shut and I had them! After an initial jumping and fluttering the birds settled down to enjoying Rula Skoerriage's delicious lasagna on the floor while I telephoned for help. Jeph Meate promptly came over with a scalpel. We managed to release the unaffected birds so that my gloved hands were able to hold the bird while Jeph very carefully cut away the nylon fishing line on its legs and the bird was restored to full mobility. When we released it it did not fly away like the other two but resumed feeding on the ground nearby. Jeph said 'You probably have a friend for life'.

And the moral? Parents and children enjoy your fishing but please take home any tangled line that you may have cut from your reel.

Norm Linton-Smith

C.C.V.

ANYONE WITH INFORMATION ABOUT RE-CYCLING AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE PRODUCTS, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE HOME AND OFFICE, PLEASE FORWARD IT TO CAROLYNN O'BRIEN, 'ATUNGA', HENLEY ROAD, KANGAROO GROUND, 3097, OR PHONE 712 0352.

THIS INFORMATION CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO OUR ELZ COMMUNITY. PERHAPS YOU CAN STILL REMEMBER SOME OF GRANDMAS HOUSEKEEPING HINTS. LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU SOON!



THE C.C.V. URGENTLY NEED SOME MORE FUNDS - WILL YOU HELP?

The environmental concerns of our group, like many other conservation groups around Victoria benefit directly through the influence the Conservation Council brings to bear. Decision-makers in Victoria pay attention to the Council because of its large and varied membership, including ours. However funding and fund-raising have not kept up with the spiralling costs associated with the successful operation of the CCV. It urgently needs our help.

Last year the council put the conservation point-of-view in 59 submissions to Government and represented its membership on 34 Government committees. Our support for the Conservation Council also helps achieve some important long-term conservation goals at the council's Environment Centre in the city. Public education about the environment is pursued through Greens Bookshop, through its publication "Environment Victoria" and through the information service. Every day the volunteer program at the Environment Centre places a new worker in a useful job. These workers have the opportunity to build personal skills and quickly see that they can influence decisions about the environment. The Environment Centre also provides seven environment groups with shared office equipment, encouragement and expertise.

As a member of the CCV we receive the monthly publication, "Environment Victoria", which keeps us informed of environmental issues and publishes details of projects, meetings and debates. The CCV offers subscription rates of \$20 to members of member groups, and if you are interested you could contact Bernie Maguire at the centre on 654 4833. If you would like further information, would like to have a look at "Environment Victoria", or have an issue you would like raised at the CCV, please feel free to contact me as your representative on the Council - Carolyn O'Brien, phone 712 0352.

IF YOU CAN HELP WITH A DONATION AT THIS TIME, PLEASE SEND THE TEAR-OFF SLIP ALONG WITH YOUR DONATION TO THE CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF VICTORIA, THE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE, 247 FLINDERS LANE, MELBOURNE, 3000. (Centre enquires: phone 654 4833).

For your donation to be tax deductible, it needs to be made payable to The Victorian National Parks Association with a signed request that the money be granted to the Conservation Council of Victoria as on the tear-off slip below.

Please find enclosed my donation of \$ _____ to The Victorian National Parks Association of
Victoria.
I prefer my donation to be granted to the Conservation Council of Victoria
Yours sincerely,

Member of Bend of Islands Conservation Association

