

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

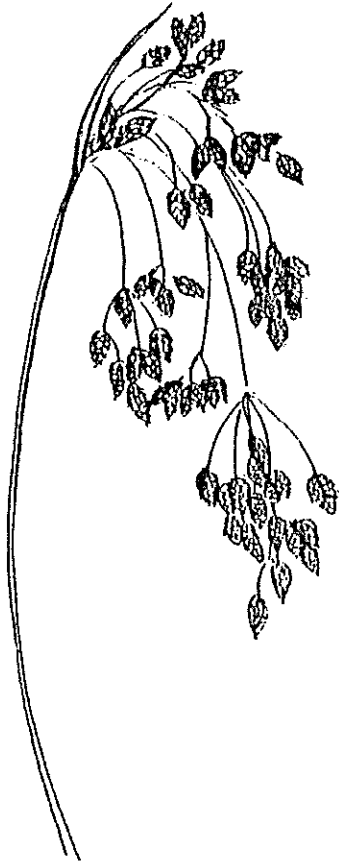
President: Alan Bonny 9712 0648 C/- Post Office, Kangaroo Ground, Vic, 3097 - Editor, John McCallum 9712 0319

Number 41 March 1998

WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING?

by Cric Henry

BOTANICAL NAME:	<i>Schoenoplectus validus</i>
COMMON NAME:	River Club-rush
FAMILY:	Cyperaceae
FLOWERING PERIOD:	November to April



Schoenoplectus validus is a species of the riparian and fresh water swamp habitat, and was found growing in the moist soils on the banks of the Yarra River. The River club-rush is a large, robust, tufted, perennial herb. It has many soft, spongy, cylindrical, green stems, reaching up to 1.5 metres high. The plant spreads readily along the water's edge by woody underground stems or rhizomes. The dark brown flowers are numerous, in a loose, umbel-like panicle to 70 mm. long, with an erect bract at the end of the stem. The flowerhead consists of many branched flowering stems arising from the same point with the flowers lying at roughly the same level forming an umbrella shape. The sessile flowers form ovoid spikelets less than 1 cm. long.

River club-rush prefers a sunny or semi-shaded situation and moist, nutrient rich soils. It produces seeds prolifically and in ideal conditions will self seed readily. Propagation is by fresh seed or division by rhizome.

Schoenoplectus validus is a useful species to stabilise the soil on the edge of a pool or river bank and to provide an attractive and interesting accent plant. It provides valuable food and habitat for seed eating birds. The stems have been used for weaving mats and basket making.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Alan Bonny

As autumn returns to the Bend, I look forward the change to less volatile weather. We have survived what was predicted to be an extremely dangerous summer without major incident and should be able to relax a little in the near future. Since the last Newsletter, Christmas is now just a dim memory and a few things are bubbling.

The proposal to sub-divide 200 Skyline Road goes to panel early in April. If you commented to council regarding this matter you should have been advised about the hearing. Nothing has been received regarding the management plan for Mt Lofty but things are happening; an archaeological survey was carried out last month and rabbit poisoning with Pindone is about to begin. Adjacent landowners (on our side of the river) should get notification prior to the program. The Pindone program is needed because the RCV has lost its impact. The local populations have evolved quickly to a 50% immune status. The Bend of Islands Directory and BICA calendar for '98 were distributed early in the year and you should have them prominently displayed. By now you will be well aware of the Working Bee on March 15 and the Night Event on March 21. See you there.

A FOOD CO-OP FOR THE AREA

by Sue and Phil Vaughan

We are looking at re-establishing the Food Co-Op that apparently was quite successful some years ago.

Our idea is that the Co-Op would purchase bulk food items, such as, flour, rice, cereal, dried fruits, and nuts, etc., and thus, reduce the amount of packaging we all consume and hopefully save money at the same time.

Each member of the Co-Op would purchase plastic buckets (airtight) which would be filled for a set cost. Everyone would use the same sized bucket (ie: 2.2 litre), so there can't be arguments over the quantities supplied.

We envisage a nominal membership fee of around \$20.00 per family would apply, so the buckets and the first purchases of produce could be covered.

The Co-Op cannot work unless we have at least 10 members, so if you are interested give us a call on 9730 1148 after hours.

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

by Carol Bonny

Within the pleasant confines of the Millington abode the February general meeting updated those present on the status of the ongoing activities in the area. We were entertained by a Summers production of co-ordinated slides showing the various faces of the Yarra Valley accompanied by the strains of the music of Handel and Vivaldi. Compiled to promote the tourist potential of the region, the slides were most appealing as well as entertaining as a 'pick the place' test. To complement the regional flavour of the afternoon, our own Barb Whiter educated us on the delights of being a volunteer guide at the Healesville Zoo. Barb's informative and entertaining presentation was illustrated with some great slides of the Zoo. Thanks to the presenters and hosts for an entertaining and educational day.

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Articles may be submitted either written, typed, on computer disc or emailed. If on disc or emailed, please use SimpleText (Macintosh) or Word, either for Macintosh or Windows. Text should **not** be formatted. It should have single returns after paragraphs and should not have indents. Single space at the end of sentences is standard.

email address is: mccallum@elthamcoll.edu.au

The *Land for Wildlife* status of the property will then be retained so long as these objectives continue to be upheld. If the property changes ownership then the new owners need to re-apply for registration under the scheme.

Land for Wildlife is responsive to the needs of landholders and recognises that each landholder will have a different capacity to participate in the scheme.

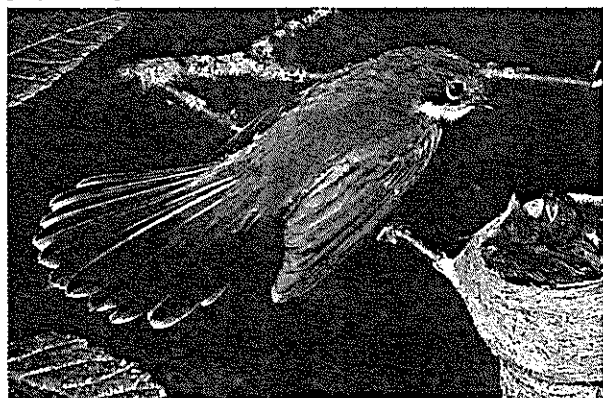
If you are interested in joining the scheme then we suggest that you apply now, even if you don't think your property will yet qualify for registration. We can give you advice now to help you achieve your goals and you will be kept informed, as you progress toward registration, through our publications.

How do I join *Land for Wildlife*?

Fill in the form provided in this brochure and post it to your nearest office of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. An officer of the Department will contact you to arrange for a meeting to discuss your plans. Subject to a favourable assessment, your property will be entered on the *Land for Wildlife* register. If you do not qualify at this time, you may wish to work toward registration with our help.

Do something positive for yourself, your family and your property by doing something positive for wildlife.

Join us in protecting native wildlife throughout its range for the benefit of current and future generations - you can play an important role.



Imagine your property making a contribution to the survival of our magnificent native wildlife. Rufous Fantail by Ian McCann.

Features of *Land for Wildlife* at a glance



It's free.

There are no fees. The scheme recognises the significant contribution being made by landholders.



Voluntary.

Landholders make a personal commitment to the scheme. They may withdraw at any time if they wish.



Free of legal binds.

Land for Wildlife status does not alter the legal status of the property in any way. It does not convey the right of public access (for hunting or any other purpose) nor does it mean that the area is an official wildlife sanctuary prohibiting hunting all year.



Co-operative

Jointly managed with the Bird Observers Club of Australia, a community organisation.



Inclusive

Farms, bush blocks, parks, school- grounds, golf-courses and cemeteries; small and large properties are eligible.

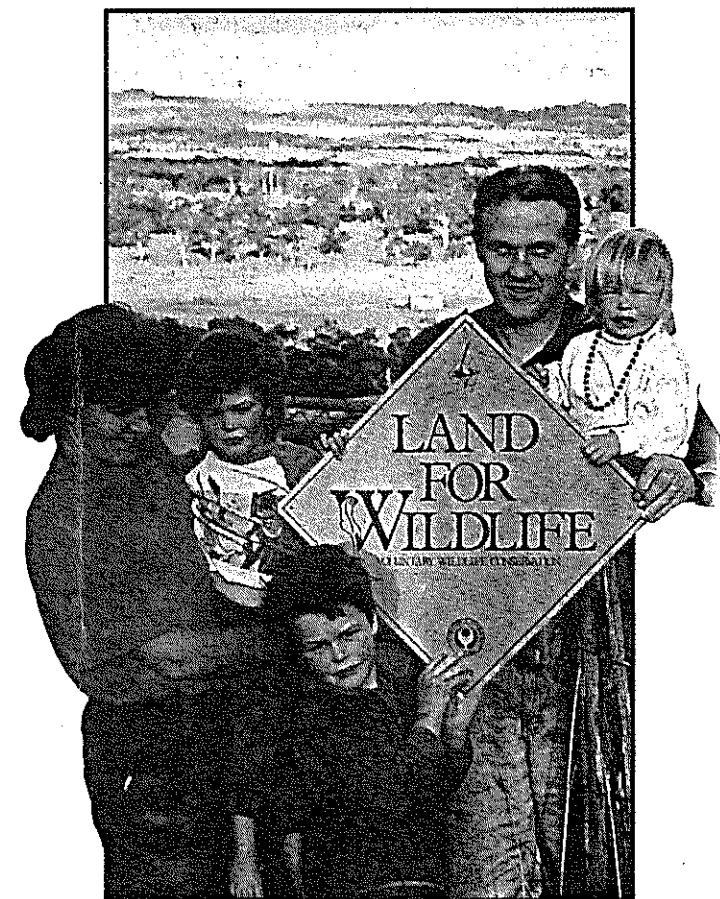


Groups

Groups can also be registered (ask for our group brochure). Group registration is particularly suited to a number of small blocks or several larger properties with a 'landscape approach' to wildlife habitat.

LAND FOR WILDLIFE

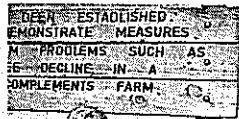
VOLUNTARY WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



How you can help wildlife on private & community - owned land

What is Land for Wildlife?

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary scheme which aims to encourage and assist private landholders to provide



habitats for wildlife on their property, even though the property may be managed primarily for other purposes.

If you wish to create or protect wildlife habitats on your property, for any of the reasons outlined here, then the *Land for Wildlife* scheme can offer you advice and assistance, whether you manage a farm, a bush block, a council park or school ground. *Land for Wildlife* status will not change the legal status of the property in any way.

Farms, bush blocks, parks, golf courses, etc. can participate.

Land for Wildlife was established in 1981. In 1994, over 2300 properties are participating throughout Victoria. You can join our network of landholders and share the benefits.

What can wildlife habitat do for my property and I do for wildlife?

Two thirds of Victoria is privately owned and, of this, only 5% retains its natural bushland cover. Private landholders hold the key to the survival of many species of wildlife.

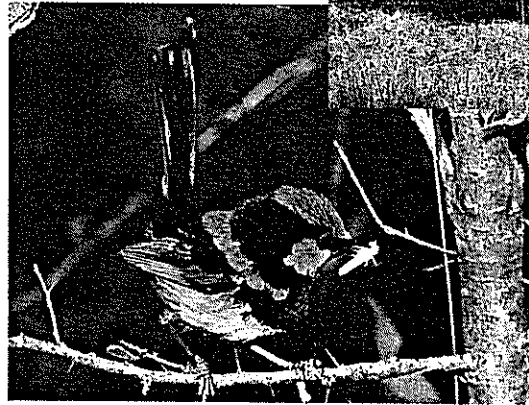
Wildlife habitat on private land can:

- contribute to the survival of plants and animals that are dependent on the habitats that once occupied the fertile areas now largely used for agriculture. Remnant native vegetation is especially important.
- play a major role in sustainable agriculture. For example, it can assist in erosion and salinity control and in maintaining natural means of controlling pests.

- provide links between nature reserves, allowing for wildlife movement and genetic interchange.

Most importantly, you can demonstrate your commitment to maintaining our native plants and animals so that they continue to characterise our environment. Every bit of cared-for habitat counts.

Wildlife habitat can provide shade and shelter for livestock.



Natural pest control.



S. Platt

K & B Richards

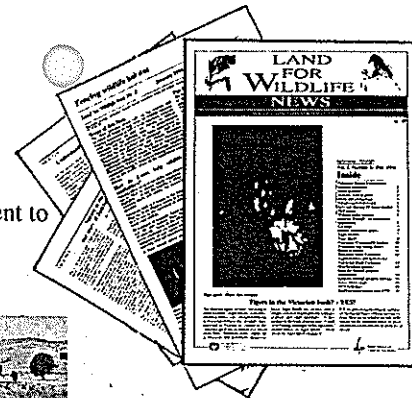
What are the benefits of joining Land for Wildlife?

Land for Wildlife can offer you: Advice

- on how wildlife habitat can be integrated with other uses of private land to the benefit of the landholder and wildlife.
- on the management of wildlife habitat, the fauna occurring in an area, its ecological role and its needs.
- on other forms of assistance or incentives that are available.

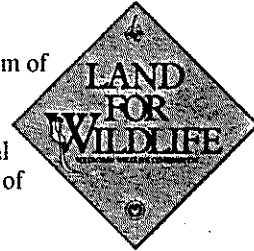
Each property applying for *Land for Wildlife* status is individually visited - a great opportunity to obtain on-site advice.

Contact with like-minded landholders and a chance to share in their ideas and experiences through the scheme's publications, at field days and other activities.



Written information in the form of regular newsletters and a more detailed *Notes* series.

A *Land for Wildlife* sign is provided free of charge to acknowledge the efforts being made on behalf of wildlife conservation.



The scheme is backed-up by its own team of extension staff, with access to the wide-ranging skills and resources in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Bird Observers Club of Australia.

Land for Wildlife can go hand-in-hand with other land management schemes such as *Landcare*. Consider fencing and revegetating an eroding stream bank with local native vegetation. The river frontage is protected from erosion,

plants are protected from pests by wildlife, the landscape is improved, shelter is provided for livestock, native fauna adds to the interest of the area and it may provide a relaxing fishing or picnic spot.

The scheme can help you to create a 'healthy ecosystem' on your property.



Ian McCann

The Brolga is a threatened species that depends on private land for breeding habit.

Qualifying for Land for Wildlife

Before being admitted to the scheme, property owners will need to establish that it is their intention to manage the property in a way which clearly pursues the maintenance and enhancement of native flora and fauna or in a way which attempts to integrate nature conservation with other land management objectives.

KEN SIMPSON AT BICA

by Bob Millington

How pleasant it is when the unexpected happens, as it did last November when Ken Simpson addressed the BICA annual general meeting.

You would think that Ken, author of one of the most-respected field guides to Australian birds, would tell us about, well, Australian Birds. So he did but only after a lovely digression through geology and climate.

First, geology. "Think of travelling east or west along Melbourne's main roads," he suggested. "It's like a roller coaster. You are going up hills and down them continuously. This is because the ridges run north-south."

Then climate. "Prevailing winds and weather patterns mean that, with these ridges, you will have different climates, mini-climates on each side of the ridge.

Ken then handed around a scrap of paper showing his diagram of a typical split up of the weather on the ridges of the Dandenongs. It was wet and lush in the north-west corners and relatively arid and sparse on the south-east.

Or was it the other way around?

Anyway it means that birds and animals can differ greatly within a very small area. Ken started his slide presentation with a shot of an Echidna. "It's got nothing to do with the subject, I just love the photo" and finished with a sunset. "Lovely, isn't it?"

In between were dissertations on cuckoos and their labour saving device of parking eggs so that their young can be brought up by cuckoo-sitters, and a wide ranging look at more familiar birds.

Hope he comes back.

CAFE BENDERS, AN APPRECIATION

by Jo McCormick

I love my Eltham home, the sprawling old timber house that once was a dairy farm with its large, secluded garden.

But it is becoming ever more difficult to ignore all the changes around the area. The rising tide of hastily built units, the increase of traffic and the proliferation of street signs, not to mention the loss of many big trees all claim my attention whenever I go out. However, in spite of these bigger changes, I think that what annoys me most is the increasing 'grottness' of the street. Fast food cartons, Pepsi and Coke bottles or cans just dropped anywhere and the car owners who park their cars on any convenient nature strip and clean out their overflowing ashtrays straight onto the grass!

So, when I am feeling particularly old and grumpy and out of step with the times, imagine how good it seems to me to be able to say to myself, 'next Saturday is Cafe Benders day'. Then I get in my car and head for the hills. Driving slowly enough to enjoy the countryside; no beastly freeways to negotiate. I arrive and park my car near the water tank. Picking up the bag of stale bread and milk thistles that I have brought for Claire's chooks I plunge happily into the real life of Cafe Benders. Friendly greetings all round from friendly people who seem to have their values and priorities sorted out right. People happily selling each other their home made breads, jams or honey. Discussing their painting or photography or house renovations or planning the next variety performance, solstice party or moonlight picnic. Then there's Alan's superb coffee and the delicious home-made cake and the chat.

Do you wonder that I love Cafe Benders?

CUCKOOS AROUND THE BEND

by Frank Pierce

This article was printed in BICA Newsletter Number 40 in October 1997 without the identification table. It is reprinted here in full with the table.

There are some pretty hedonistic humans in the Bend of Islands but there are five species of birds that regularly call this place home and that have made self-interest an art form.

They fly north every winter to avoid the cold. They have nothing to do with the tiresome chores of raising offspring. Why build a nest, sit on eggs, feed and other wise look after the young when some other bird will do it for you?

As soon as they hatch, first thing that the nestlings do in life is to throw out all of the other eggs from their host parents nest, just so that they get all of the attention.

The five cuckoos that are regularly found in the Bend of Islands are the pallid, fantail, brush, Horsefield's bronze and shining bronze. For comparison their particulars are listed in the table.

These birds have many common peculiarities.

- Two forward facing and two backward facing toes compared with passerine birds that have three forward and one backward facing.
 - They fly south in spring to breed; the female lays one egg in a nest of the host species, sometimes removing one of the host's eggs at the time.
 - Many nests can be parasitised by the one breeding female simultaneously.
 - After hatching the nestling has a sensitive hollow in its back; it uses this to thrust all the other eggs or hatchlings from the nest, thus displacing potential competition for food and attention.
 - They eat mainly insects and their larvae, particularly hairy caterpillars.
- By adopting begging postures and making juvenile calls the young

cuckoo ensures a constant supply of food from the hosts and sometimes from other birds of the host or even different species.

The adult birds call persistently when breeding, often from the tops of trees or dead branches. They are difficult to observe without first hearing them. Even then they are often not easy to see.

Their presence at breeding time often causes the host species to make alarm calls and sometimes mobbing of the cuckoo occurs by a group of potential host birds.

The name cuckoo comes from the call of a European species. There has been some misnaming of Australian birds such as the black-faced cuckoo-shrike. They are not related to the cuckoos and do not parasitise other birds.

It is interesting that the host birds are so much smaller than the cuckoo. For example the prospect of a pair of fairy wrens feeding a fantail cuckoo is quite amazing. The cuckoos achieve this by a number of strategies. They have smaller eggs than other birds of their size; the eggs are often of a similar size to the host's eggs. Secondly they eliminate the hosts offspring, either at egg stage or as nestlings, so that the host is only looking after one offspring rather than several. Thirdly, by persistent begging, they elicit the assistance of other birds in addition to the host parents.

The cuckoo story is a far cry from the normal boy-meets-girl, build a house and have kids model. It is a good example of diversity in nature and perhaps is paralleled by the fact that there are a lot of humans who don't cope with the suburbs and the John and Betty model.



PALLID CUCKOO

Common Name	Pallid Cuckoo	Fantail Cuckoo	Brush Cuckoo	Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo
Scientific Name	<i>Cuculus pallidus</i>	<i>Cuculus flabelliformis</i>	<i>Cuculus variolatus</i>	<i>Chrysococcyx lucidus plagosus</i>	<i>Chrysococcyx basalis</i>
Size (mm)	280 - 330	250 - 270	220 - 260	160 - 180	150 - 170
Voice	Male: loud whistle ascending scale often repeated monotonously. Female: coarse, brassy whistle.	1. Far-carrying trill with downward inflection. 2. Mournful rising whistle 'p-whee'.	1. Ascending ph-ph - phew, ph-ph-phew, becoming louder and more persistent. 2. Series of descending notes, 'fear, fear' fear...', increasing in volume	Series of whistles with upward inflection followed by a few downward trills.	Series of whistles with downward inflection.
Identification features of adult. (Juveniles are quite different and often difficult to distinguish)	Grey bird, white spot on nape, yellow eye ring. Toothing to edge of tail.	Slate grey above, rufous or buff throat and breast, yellow eye ring, white notches to edge of tail, legs yellow	Grey head, pale buff chest, grey eye ring, legs grey-pink	Bright metallic green bird with unbroken barring on underparts extending to chin.	Dull bronze with dark line through eye, incomplete barring underneath, rufous at base of tail.
Types of host in order of preference	Honeyeater, flycatcher, woodswallow, oriole, cuckoo-shrike	fairy wren, thornbill, scrub wren, occasionally honeyeater, flycatcher	flycatcher, fantail, honeyeater, occasionally gerygone, fairy-wren, scrubwren	thornbill, fairy wren, scrubwren, fly-catcher, silvereye, honeyeater	fairy wren, thornbill, gerygone

SOME IMPORTANT DATES FOR '98

March 15 Working bee
 March 21 Night Event
 April 12 Canoes at Easter

April 19 Arbor Day -
 May 3 General Meeting
 May 17 Working Bee

BICA NIGHT EVENT 1998

Don't miss the Night Event on March 21. As usual it will be held at Rentos's property on the corner of Henley and Catani near the Fire Station.

Come along for diverse and stimulating entertainment from a variety of local and other artists.

The evening begins with a BBQ at 6.30. BYO everything

LAKE PERIYAR WILDLIFE RESERVE: A JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF SOUTHERN INDIA

by Teri O'Brien and Constanza Maffi

(continued from the last issue)

I have become so used to the fact that she has been taking the pictures that I forgot to take the camera, which is not on hand when a family of four common otters erupts from the water to take a sand bath on the bank, and when a pack of thirteen of the native wild dogs allows us to approach within 30 metres of their band on the bank.

This somewhat more foxlike Indian counterpart of the African Hunting Dog displayed its ability to attack large game later that morning. We had just finished breakfast when the bark of alarmed sambar was followed by splashing just beneath the Lodge. The dogs had flushed two sambar, an adult and a calf, both of whom set off at high speed along the water's edge. The lead dog made two unsuccessful grabs at the hamstrings of the terrified calf before the adult saved its life by leading it into deep water. Two dogs swam out to the sambar, but they were no match for the adult in a metre of water who splashed them by kicking water at them. I noted that only seven dogs had taken part in the charge on these two sambar and soon spotted the other six, spread out in line abreast ready to cut off the sambar if they had turned back to the forest.

After a few minutes of restless prowling, the dogs that charged trot back to what I think is the overall leader of the pack, the dog furthest up the slope and with the best view of the unsuccessful action. I imagine the sharply-worded criticism he will mete out later to the dog that twice jumped for the calf's hamstring and missed! They melt into the woods, but it takes an hour before the sambar tentatively leave the water and themselves vanish into the woods. No elephant, deer or bison emerged till evening and I am left to wonder just how dangerous these wild dogs are.

The Lodge has a marvellous book on the Wild Animals of India, from

which it emerged that, like their African counterparts, these packs are skilful hunters who regularly attack and kill large game and are known to have killed panthers when challenges arose over the spoils of a kill. Only if they are starving have they been known to attack humans, and usually only if the human is alone. I already know from experience of feral pigs in Australia how dangerous wild boars can be, and the damage done to African villages by elephant stampedes is legendary. Such damage does occur outside of Hollywood movies! The reasons for the moat, and the instructions "not to leave the Lodge unaccompanied" took on greater significance.

After three cruises on the Lake, rich in cormorants, egrets, cranes, storks, kingfishers, and lapwings, we were both anxious to explore the forest nearby. With customary good will, Mr Balakrishnan arranged for the services of a guide from the Forest Department for the following morning.

We set off at 0830, our guide leading the way, and accompanied by a pair of very shy Brits who came to stay one night. We passed a viewing station where a zoology Ph.D student is keeping track of animal numbers in the clearings and bank areas within view of his elevated hide. An hour later, we have seen no large animals, but the lantana bushes are in bloom and visited by spectacular butterflies. We emerged at the edge of a deep inlet, and are introduced to a tribal man who ferried us across on his raft of seven lashed bamboo poles, paddled by an oar. I had to go alone, too heavy to be accompanied, about which a good deal is made in dialect and pantomime, but after disembarkation, it gave me a few moments to look at the fishing nets, fishing poles, cooking pots and other rafts unaccompanied by my colleagues.

I see that the tribals have been collecting the ash from the fires, but I am told they do not use it to make soap or pot scourer as their Amerindian and Australian aboriginal counterparts do, and as my great-grandmother used to do in the Australian bush. It is carted back to the village gardens, somewhere along the track that leads from the head of the inlet we

have crossed. I realise that for the first time since setting foot in India, we have contacted a hunter-gatherer society in its modern form, modern because other members who emerged later on the track from the invisible village, carried western umbrellas, and understood some English, certainly enough to accompany wide, toothless grins with polite requests for baksheesh! I would have loved to visit that village! Next time.

We are suddenly fortunate; within minutes we are overflowed by a pair of the Great Indian Hornbills, accompanied by a sound from their beating wings like an old steam engine labouring up a steep grade, and we get several more views of them in the next

hour. Two short contacts with groups of the shy Nilgiri langurs had left me wondering if we would ever see more than moving branches accompanied by their call.

However, our patience is rewarded eventually by a wonderful close-up view of a group who stayed unaccountably at the forest margin for several minutes before moving off. A small family of elephants aroused much interest in our two guides, some interest in our accompanying Poms, and none in us who had been blessed with much better views of elephants the day before.

Our return journey took us to the tribal's day shelters, made from palm leaves, partly protected by a large tropical tree I could not identify. Here two men, lightly loaded, on their way to the rafts join us. Ten minutes later, an immensely-heavily-loaded woman makes her way to the same rafts; so much for women's liberation!

Two lots of 50 rupees for our tribal guide and his services, and it is back to the lodge, but not before we have sighted a family of the large Malabar giant squirrels, and a noisy troupe of Bonnet Macaques, so widespread in Southern India.

Two species of woodpecker add to the one I have seen at the lodge, and at the end, I have got 32 species of bird on the list for Periyar Lodge, not counting the unidentifiable sunbird and "woodswallow". During our few days there, we had spotted elephants, sambar, bison, giant and small

squirrels, two species of monkey, wild pigs, wild dogs, otters, and large turtles and been close enough to all of them to feel we were watching more or less normal animal behaviour, with no contrived Q4 viewing opportunities".

The rains, which had been threatening to arrive for days past, finally came that evening, giving the region some relief from the unrelenting dry of the previous season. Perhaps they awoke the invisible large cat, probably a tiger, whose scent seriously disturbed a herd of sambar who, having carefully identified its source, took off at high speed, barking furiously, in the other direction.

Checkout was done in the dark, with the usual Indian power failures, and the long walk from boat to car in the pouring rain did not do any of my none-too-waterproof packs and their contents much good. We were on our way to Cochin, and for the next two days, our cottage room overlooking the Harbour in the Bolghatty Palace Hotel was festooned with drying clothes. But our stay in fabulous Cochin is another story: Stay tuned!

BOOTBENDERS STEP OUT

by Carol Bonny

The inaugural walk of the Bend of Islands Boot Benders walking group was enjoyed by an enthusiastic group who braved the wilds of the Murrundindi Scenic Reserve on Sunday February 22. Cool mountain streams, tree ferns, hyacinth orchids, lyre birds, diverse vegetation, waterfalls, pleasant stops for lunch and tea breaks, scenic reviews in superb weather and good company all made for a great day. If this sounds OK, join in on Sunday March 22 for the next wander. Meet at 9.00 at the top corner of Catani and Henley to car pool to Jumping Creek. For more details contact

Marie Krause 9712 0498

Carol Bonny 9712 0648

Jenny Taylor 9712 0614



DIET OF THE WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE IN THE YARRA VALLEY

by Steve Craig

Like other Raptors, Wedge-tailed eagles regurgitate pellets containing the undigested remains of their prey.

Cindy Hull, a student at Victoria College, Rusden Campus in the early 1980's collected 172 pellets and prey remains from beneath seven Wedge-tailed eagle nest sites in the Yarra Valley over a three year period.

Skull and skeletal remains were compared with reference collections while fur and feather remains were examined microscopically and again compared with reference material.

Some very interesting results were obtained

- 62% of the pellets contained remains of only one prey species, 29% contained two, 8% contained three and 1% contained four different species.
- Although the remains of fourteen bird species were detected compared with 12 mammalian species, 82% of prey taken was mammalian with rabbits (49%) the most important mammalian prey.
- The Ringtail Possum (20%) was the second most important prey item. Other mammalian species consumed included Brush-tail Possum (3%), Black Wallaby (3%) and one record each of a Gould's Wattled Bat and a domestic or feral cat. The remains of Sheep and Goat made up 2.3% and 1.9% respectively, of prey items recorded.
- Birds consumed included Domestic Fowl (2.3%), Sacred Ibis (0.8%), Black Swan (0.8%), Pink-eared Duck (0.4%), Crimson Rosella (0.8%), Australian Raven (1.2%), Feral Pigeon (0.4%), Blackbird (1.2%), Laughing Kookaburra (1.2%), Tawny Frogmouth (0.4%) and Pied Currawong (0.8%).
- No reptiles were recorded which contrasts with the diet of the Wedge-tailed Eagle in more arid areas of Australia.

The results of this study support earlier descriptions of the Wedge-tailed



eagle as a species capable of taking a wide range of live prey species and carrion which enables it to occupy a broad range of habitats throughout mainland Australia.

NATIONAL CLEAN-UP DAY REPORT

by Peter Gurney

On Sunday 1st March twenty locals tackled a number of clean-up tasks in and around the Bend of Islands. This was our eighth involvement in National Clean-up Day which has been conducted nationally for the last nine years. It is quite amazing that we are still finding old dumps of rubbish to remove, and it is even more amazing that there is new litter and rubbish being spread along our roads and through our bushland each year.

One of our clean-up teams tackled the road verge of Henley Rd all the way from Oxley Bridge to the Yarra Glen Road. Working in pairs on specific sections of the road the workers cleared all the litter that had been tossed from cars over the last two years, which is when we last tidied Henley Rd. They did a great job and collected about 20 bags of litter. Thanks Neil and Jenny Taylor, Chris, Andrew and Matthew Steed, Bob and Trish Millo, Carol and Alan Bonny.

Another team consisting of Claire Watson, Barb Snell and Wolfgang and Marie Krause cleaned up an old rubbish dump in the bush on Melbourne Water land in the ELZ. A skip full of rubbish was removed from the dump and some old partly buried fencing was also removed and the old dump filled in. We will plant out the dump site in the Autumn and it will

soon return to its original natural state.

Phil and Sue Vaughan alone tackled Skyline Rd. They collected many bags of litter from along the road including some household rubbish which contained what seems to be the name and address of the person who dumped the rubbish. This has been passed to Nillumbik Council staff for investigation. Despite the quantity of litter collected Phil and Sue commented that there seemed to be less litter along Skyline Rd than in the past. The Jim Beam and Coke bloke still exists though.

Marg and Mick Woiwod cleaned up around "The Three Bears". They were so enthusiastic that I had to send reinforcements down there to help them get all the rubbish up to the skip. There were many dozens of beer bottles and heaps of other junk cleared away. More remains for next year.

Liz and Peter Mildenhall diverted their Sunday morning walk along the river bank and picked up a quantity of flotsam and jetsam. Before they registered at the fire station they had already picked their way around Catani and Henley finding very little litter indeed.

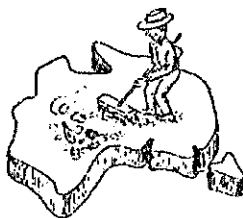
Apres clean-up we had a barbecue at the Gurneys and somehow a few bottles of wine were opened which, when emptied, went in the recycling bin. Thanks very much everybody, not only for your good work but also for your marvellous spirit. See you next year.

UP THE CREEK

by Carol Bonny

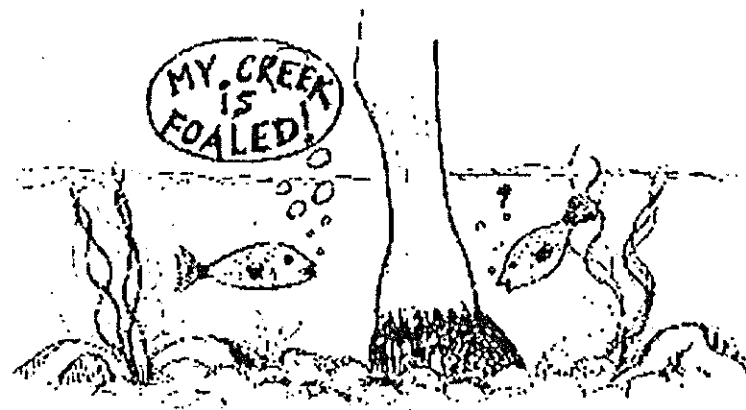
Greening Australia and the Shire of Nillumbik, spurred on by Margaret Burke of the Osborne Peninsula Landcare Group, are busy at work trying to get the Watsons Creek upstream landowners involved in a corridor project.

The initiative will cover the Watsons Creek corridor from Kinglake



National Park to Warrandyte State Park. Funding, it is hoped, will come from the National Heritage Trust (ex-Telstra booty). BICA have attended a meeting convened to introduce the scheme to some of the residents. There was a good attendance and positive interest shown. Weed removal and fencing to protect the creek bank were seen as priority tasks.

It was disappointing, therefore, to see the introduction of a large number of horses back on the Melbourne Water property, Yanakie, at Oxley Bridge. With no fencing along the creek the unrestricted horse access can only have a negative impact on the fragile creek environs. We can expect an increase in vegetation destruction, erosion and weed infestation. It is ironic that Melbourne Water allow this on their land while promoting a scheme of subsidised fencing to protect waterways. Is it a case of 'do as I say, not as I do'?



THOSE BINS!

If you are going to be away and cannot put out your wheelie bin late on Sunday or take it in when it is empty, why not ask a neighbour to help? It would certainly help keep the Bend of Islands beautiful! (JM)

FOREST FOREVER



Last year, Norm Linton-smith attended a 'Forest Forever' camp in East Gippsland. In this issue (page 18) and the next of The BICA Newsletter we bring you an account of the many interesting things that Norm saw and did.

One thing that Norm did was to interview Jill Redwood and obtain information about the organisation 'Concerned Residents of East Gippsland (CROEG). This group are active in the fight to save the forests of East Gippsland and Norm urges people to consider supporting them. Membership includes the bimonthly news magazine, 'Potoroo Review', and support for this group would assist them in their work.

Here is an application form for membership of CROEG. Consider supporting them in their work

CONCERNED RESIDENTS OF EAST GIPPSLAND MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name.....
Address.....
..... Postcode..... Phone..... Date.....
Do you have any skills or resources to share?.....
.....
Local or supporters membership - \$15 or \$12 concession (includes the Potoroo Review)
Donation..... Amount enclosed..... Many thanks.

Send to: CROEG, Bonang Hwy Goongerah, 3888

PESTIES - "THE SILVERFISH"

by Pamela Gurney

Not a fish at all you know! Although I do wonder why I always see them in the bath. And how do they get there?

I was talking to my Western Australian sister last week. She was lamenting to me that they have been on their rural farming property for 38 years and considering moving to the city. "I've never been able to have a proper garden here. The rosellas always come and tear at the rosebuds before I can ever enjoy their blooms." I could have continued an intriguing discussion with her - what about the wallabies, the rabbits, the wombats, the choughs, and closer inside the home, the white-ants, the borers, and the silverfish?????

Silverfish love starch. Starch found in bookcovers, framed pictures, and clothing. They also eat dead bodies of other insects as well as their own skins and sometimes each other. These pesties are cannibals. They are one of the most primitive of insects and they have no wings. They come out of their eggs already as tiny little silverfish and run around for the rest of their lives, resting during the day and eating all night long.

Credit for my silverfish potion goes to Laura who told me about it some years ago and I've been sticking up my house ever since. Look under any piece of furniture and you will see small pieces of cardboard on which I have painted the potion. Sometimes the potion becomes a sticky mess and runs off the cardboard all over the floor where it conveniently collects fluff balls.

Laura suggests that you can paint it on to the undersides of drawers and the ceiling of your wardrobe. She did warn though to be careful as she made the potion one day with chocolate icing sugar as she had no white icing sugar, and it dripped a sticky, brown mess over Tim's clothes.

The potion is simple to make -

50% icing sugar

40% starch

10% borax

Mix to a consistency of icing for a cake (not too runny)

Paint it all around the house.

I wonder if it can have an effect on European wasps?



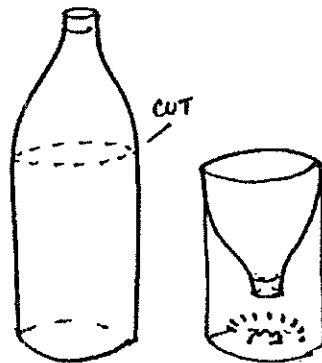
A WASP TRAP

by Sheila Dixon

When Barb and I were sitting down to a roast dinner the other night and about thirty wasps managed to get in through the wire door, that was it! I'm allergic to them and, after covering our dinners, Barb managed to send them to God with a spray can.

It's time, I though. I had been planning to make a wasp trap and next day made three. They are a bit like the bought ones only cheaper. Grab a plastic lemonade bottle, cut off its neck, turn the cut off bit over and stuff it into the base of the bottle, funnel fashion.

Now find a morsel of meat and pop it in the oven until it smells nice. Drop it into the bottle. Now tie some string



around the bottle and hang it up in a tree. Don't put it where you walk. They will be around the bottle in about 5 minutes! If the bottle is in the sun, better still; they die more quickly. I put a bit of water, not enough to cover the meat, in mine and the blighters drowned. That's the last meal they have before passing to the other side.

It seems to have got rid of all of my wasps in a few days. Have a go!

COOEE FROM THE COBAWS!

by Denise Dalton

I have relocated to an area north-east of Kyneton, on the edge of the forest, where the land abounds in monolithic granitic outcrops. I am surrounded by the detritis of early pioneering families, which is falling prey to the ravages of weather and time.

Since moving here in mid-August, I have been frustrated by the sight of an old ruin which I pass every time I drive out my front gate. I would love to uncover what remains of the granite foundation, before it becomes completely overgrown by the trees which have been planted by former owners. I can also see, everytime I take this trip, the pile of chiselled rock bulldozed into a heap on my next-door neighbours weekend retreat.

But to compensate for the frustration, I have the delight of enjoying, every morning, visitors in the shape of feathered friends, winging their way in from the surrounding bush as soon as they spy me at the kitchen window, making the heartstarter for the day! Greedy Crimson Rosellas! Bully Crimson Rosellas! Fighting as if they are having their one and only meal for the day! After they have taken their share, the smaller, sociable birds move in. Fairy wrens, Firetails, Scrubwrens, even Magpie babies with their mums, making a hard job of picking up seed sideways with their beaks.

ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS

by Steve Craig

What Is a Weed?

According to the Australian Concise Oxford dictionary a weed is a "wild plant growing where it is not wanted"

The problem is that what is considered a useful plant to one person is seen as a weed to another and this creates conflict between those of us who are passionate about maintaining the natural values within the ELZ and others who perhaps have a more casual attitude.

To an avid gardener anything that has an attractive flower could not possibly be considered a weed. To a farmer, however, weeds are plants which can result in increased costs through lost production (Weeds cost Victoria at least \$360 million in lost production each year). But even then there is still some dispute. What is described as Paterson's Curse in Victoria is known as Salvation Jane in South Australia.

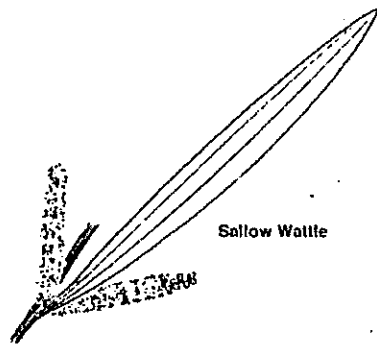
Plants which are introduced from another area and are capable of spreading into natural bushland areas are called "environmental weeds"

Environmental weeds can generally be defined as "any non-indigenous (i.e not originally occurring) plant which invades or prevents regeneration of indigenous or local plants.

This means that as well as non-Australian species, many Australian native plants could be described as environmental weeds e.g Cootamundra Wattle, Varied Sallow Wattle, Flinders Ranges Wattle, Sweet Pittosporum. All these plants are Australian natives which do



Cootamundra Wattle



Sallow Wattle

not occur naturally in the ELZ and are serious environmental weeds.

Whenever a plant is introduced to a new area, the potential exists for it "escape" and become permanently established with often devastating results.

Problems Caused By Environmental Weeds

1. Hybridisation: Some plants are considered environmental weeds simply because they readily hybridise with indigenous species and so threaten their continued existence. Planting "anything anywhere" increases the risk of hybridisation.
2. Replacement: Indigenous plants are often replaced by environmental weeds because they cannot compete with the more aggressive invaders.
3. Prevention of regeneration: The aggressive nature of many environmental weeds means that they can quickly invade disturbed areas and prevent germination and regeneration of indigenous species.
4. Unstable ecosystems: Environmental weeds have the potential to upset the stability or balance of natural ecosystems and may cause their radical change or collapse. The habitats of our indigenous flora and fauna can be permanently damaged by the invasion of environmental weeds.
5. Reduced aesthetic and recreational values: Environmental weeds cause loss of biodiversity and often impede access to areas used for recreation.

What You Can Do

- Obtain a list of environmental weeds from BICA. Don't plant or propagate them.
- When buying plants from local nurseries avoid plants with the potential to invade bushland. Better still insist on local species.
- Obtain a list of indigenous plant nurseries from the Shire of Nillumbik or Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Remove environmental weeds from your property and encourage your

neighbours to do the same

If unsure about the identity of a particular plant or the best method of control, contact the Shire of Nillumbik Environmental Officer on ?? or the Department of Natural Resources and Environment at Box Hill on

WILDLINE

by Trish Millington

It was dark, hot and very early in the morning when the cry came from Bob. 'Trish there's a possum on my head!' And so there was. One of my ringtails had decided to break free and explore the territory. Such are the joys of being a foster carer for our wildlife.

This particular ringie, named Piglet due to its love of food, was a real character and very lovable. A couple of nights later she greeted us at the front door having again escaped by making a little hole in her soft wire home.

While I was arranging a transfer to something more secure, she decided to taste Bob's glass of wine. Having been dissuaded from this idea she thought that a game of chess was in order and proceeded to knock kings, pawns and bishops flying in all directions!

Back in captivity, she was introduced to a male called Brutus, so called because he bit me when I picked him up from the local vet in Warrandyte. They fell in love and happily cuddled and ate together for some weeks. They were released a few weeks ago. However Piglet was back the next day. We put her into the bedroom and left the door open so that she could come and go. She decided to stay and for three nights she played mostly over our heads, on our bedside tables and up and down the curtains. During the day she slept peacefully curled up on a chair. On the fourth night she left permanently. She was a real treat and I hope that she is happy and well in her natural environment.

Wildline, the phone number for The Wildlife Care Network, is changing on March 9. It is 050 054 00 00. Both numbers will operate for a little while.

A TALE OF TWO NEST BOXES

by Denise Dalton

There were three of these wonderful creations around our house, under the eaves. They had been in regular use for three or four years. We first put them up because, when we built the house, we had one pair of pardalotes make a nest in a hole between the top course of mudbricks and the roof. They returned for a couple of years, until we re-rendered and covered the hole, forcing our regular guests to try to nest under the roof, which would have been horribly hot for the parents and probably deadly for baby pardalotes.

So, when the BICA nest-box making event was scheduled, I saw this as a perfect opportunity to provide our pardalotes with off-the-plan home units. We all gathered at Barb Snell's on the day, with hammers, wood, bandaids (precaution being the watchword!), and, of course, plates of food for afternoon tea (most important!) Wood and nails were provided, courtesy of Wolfgang, who had also cut out the required pieces for the various boxes (including possum & bat). I took home two pardalote boxes and one bat box, which I can't claim as being my own creation entirely. As we had a resident bat during winter, in the rolled up canvas awning, I thought he would LOVE a nice, new, cosy home, where there was no chance of being disturbed on an early sunny day. Alas, he turned up his little snout at the offered abode and stayed put in the awning!

Not so the pardalotes - they took to their boxes like a duck to water! In fact, each year, another pair arrived looking for a nesting spot. As each new pair tried to make their nest under the roof, after pulling out great chunks of insulation and dropping it all over the ground, we put up more boxes. We had a final total of three, and I would have liked to put up more, but I was advised that this was not a good idea. I don't know why, it seemed a perfectly good idea, to me! I could just imagine the house completely surrounded by nest boxes!

A Tale of Two Nest Boxes (continued)

Each spring, the boxes were occupied by these lovely little birds, who announced their arrival with many varieties of joyous calls and wing gyrations, to attract a mate. Last year, their were babies in all three boxes, hatching progressively over the months of October/November. Then - disaster! The first hatchlings seemed to be doing quite well, until I found a dead one on the ground below the box. I found two more, dead in the nest. The second group, housed in a nest box just outside the back door, hatched some time later. I could sit & watch the two parents on feed relay. Then, one night as I was returning home, I heard a feeble 'tweet' which appeared, at first, to be coming from the box. But it wasn't, and I couldn't quite pin down where it was coming from. When I stood in one spot, it came from another and vice versa. I concluded it must have been babies in the nest, disturbed by the sensor light into thinking it was feed time, and went to bed. Next morning, sitting near the box while enjoying a morning tea break, I noticed a movement on the ground. It was a baby pardalote, with the barest of feather covering, moving its head and opening its tiny beak. I picked it up- it was SO cold - and tried to warm it & give it some sustenance, but it was too late. It died in my hand. Why, I wondered, did it leave the nest so early? How did it get out of that box, with its long tunnel and deep chamber inside? And why did the two in the other box die? Did their parents abandon them? Did it get too hot, under the eaves and close to the tin roof? Perhaps someone reading this has an explanation, which could be published in the next newsletter. It has never happened before and seems very curious.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY OFFICE PAPER

from Steve Craig

Paper mills owned by Amcor produce the only office paper made in Australia. This paper is made from pulpwood (wood-chips) obtained from Victorian and Tasmanian native hardwood forests despite the fact that Amcor is the Country's largest plantation owner.

A campaign was launched in September last year to highlight Amcor's environmental vandalism and to encourage consumers to boycott the companies two main office papers, REFLEX and COPYRIGHT.

Amcor claims to produce a 100% recycled paper, but its a fake. Their two lines called RENEW 100 and RENEW 80 are made largely from pre-consumer waste, that is, paper which has never seen an office or been marked by ink. The other small components are cotton linters and new or used milk cartons (5-20%). Pre-consumer waste is merely printers off-cuts or build up from the paper vat in the factory.

There is currently no environmentally friendly office paper made in Australia. The Native Forest Network in Melbourne has been investigating the alternatives and has that the only acceptable option is to use imported papers. If enough people use this type of recycled paper, hopefully it will encourage Australian companies to respond to public demand. While Australia actually exports large volumes of its post-consumer waste paper. Amcor is refusing to make genuine environmentally friendly paper from this resource!

ALTERNATIVES

Naudilaus or Canon 100. - An Austrian archival quality paper suitable for copiers which produce up to 40 copies a minute. It contains at least 51% post consumer waste and is non-bleached. \$7.50 a ream. To order Ph Canon 13 1393.

Steinbeis or RC 100. - A German non-bleached recycled paper. It photocopies well and sells for \$7.50 from the paper House (but this outlet is owned by Amcor). Ph 9239 8880.

Cyclus. - A Danish paper sold in Australia through CPI and in Melbourne through an independent paper merchant, KW Doggett at Heidelberg West. It is made from 100% post consumer waste, is virtually dust and acid free and guaranteed for laser printers. Free deliveries for orders over \$100. Sells for \$8.25 a ream. Ph 9459 4499.

Steer clear of papers made from Indonesian, Malaysian or Brazilian wood pulp (imported by Spicers). Some is sourced from rainforest wood fibre and some from plantations established over cleared rainforest. Both America and Europe produce the genuine article but the European paper is cheaper and easier to obtain.

If you would like more information contact Anthony Amis from the native Forest Network in Melbourne. Ph 9419 8700 or write to Box 222 Fitzroy 3065.

SOURCE: POTOROO REVIEW OCT-NOV 1996

EUROPEAN WASPS

by Steve Craig

The mild winter last year followed by the hot, dry summer this year, has resulted in a bumper season for the European Wasps and their numbers are currently on the increase. Wasp researchers, Local, State and Federal Government representatives and politicians met recently to discuss the current distribution of wasps and the problems they cause and to investigate methods to better manage the situation.

The meeting highlighted the fact that very little is known about the current distribution of wasps around Australia because their populations have been relatively low over the last few years and interest in monitoring and control has declined.

Little is known about the impact wasps have on natural ecosystems, although we do know that they cause significant problems in recreational areas.

European Wasps not only cause nuisance to the public and problems to grape growers and orchardists, they also pose a serious health risk.

The Australian Venom Research Unit estimates that about 1,500 Victorians report to the emergency departments of hospitals each year following wasp stings and that bees and wasps together cause twice as many hospitalisations as snake bites.

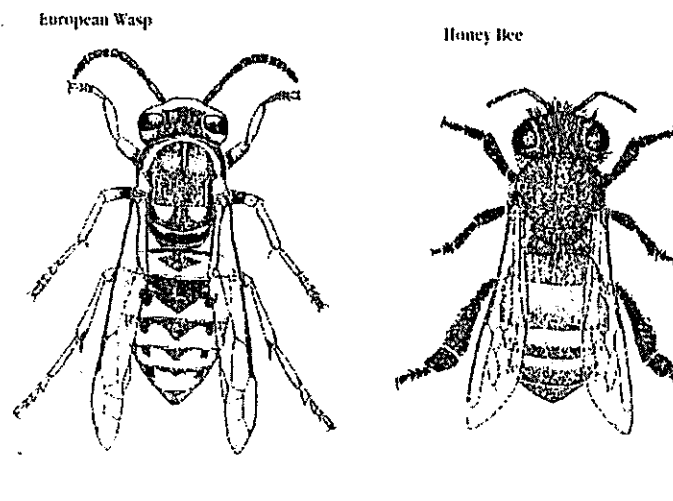
The general agreement amongst experts is that we will never eradicate

wasps from Australia and we therefore need to learn to live with them. The best management strategy we have at the moment is the reporting and destruction of nests.

A European Wasp Task Force has been set up with Victorian and interstate representatives to develop proposals for the Government to consider. The proposals may include further research to investigate other means of wasp control, such as the use of toxic baits, which have been trailed successfully on other wasp species overseas.

Meanwhile, in addition to destroying wasp nests you could try trapping these nasties in a home made wasp trap. Investigations into attractants for wasp traps have been completed recently at Keith Turnbull Research Institute at Frankston. Attractants are the most important component of wasp traps, the trap structure doesn't seem to be as important as what's inside the trap.

Information on traps and a wide range of other wasp-related topics is available on the wasp infoline, a recorded information service from KTRI. Freecall 1800 060 864, or checkout the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Internet site <http://www.nre.vic.gov.au>.



ATLAS OF VICTORIAN WILDLIFE

by Steve Craig

The Atlas of Victorian Wildlife is a computer data base of locality records of Victorian Wildlife, threatened invertebrate and freshwater fish species. It functions as a tool for land managers, wildlife planners and wildlife researchers by providing information about species distribution and status within defined areas of Victoria.

Records have been collated from a wide range of sources including those submitted by interested members of the public. For example the bird database comprises all Victorian records collated during the Atlas of Australian Birds project conducted by the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union (now called Birds Australia), plus records collected by staff from the Flora & Fauna Branch (DNRE) and other interested groups.

A major application of the data is to provide a state-wide perspective when assessing applications to list a species under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. For this reason state-wide coverage with accurate point data is essential. Such data are also required in defining sites of zoological significance or prediction of species distribution based on climatic, soil and vegetation profiles. The Atlas data also form the basis of wildlife information utilised by the Department of Natural Resources & Environment's Geographic Information System.

Since faunal populations are dynamic and the abundance of all species changes with environmental conditions and land-use changes, recording your observations and contributing these records to the Atlas will help in monitoring the status of these species across the State.

I would like to encourage everybody within the ELZ to become "Wildlife Atlasers" by systematically recording your observations and submitting them for inclusion in the State-wide database. This is a very rewarding experience and will help you to really tune in to what's happen-

ing around you.

If you're interested and would like to know how to go about it, give me a call at work on 5964 7088 and I will arrange to provide you with some personal instruction, or if enough people are interested we might look at running a workshop in the near future.

A LOCAL FERN: SICKLE FERN

by John McCallum



Sickle Fern (*Pellea falcata*) is widespread in southern Victoria and, although it can grow in a variety of habitats, is usually found in wetter forest or in sheltered situations along stream sides. It often forms a carpet on the ground in such shady areas. It is in this riparian habitat that *P. falcata* is found in the Bend of Islands. It has been seen at the foot of the cliffs off Catani Boulevard and probably grows all along the river. It occurs also in Tasmania, Bass Strait islands, NSW, Queensland, SE Asia and India.

Sickle fern has a very short rhizome with clustered, erect fronds forming handsome, shiny dark-green tufts up to 75 cm tall but usually about 30 cm. The rachis (stem) is clothed in small hairs and shiny scales. The pinnae (leaflets) have very short stalks and are undivided with simple, sometimes wavy, margins. The pinnae are dark green on top and paler underneath and about 5 cm long. A feature of this fern are the bare stems that persist after the pinnae drop. Further, the new fronds are not as coiled as they are in most ferns. They tend to be bent back and 'nodding', straightening out as they mature rather than uncurling from the more familiar fiddleback or crozier configuration.

The sori (bundles of sporecases) are arranged in wide bands just in from the leaf margins on mature pinnae.

Sickle Fern is easily cultivated and can be obtained from specialist nurseries. It grows well either in a pot or in the ground and can do well even in sunny situations provided enough water is available.

LANDCARE GROUP

by Phil Vaughan

Things are going to schedule on our project at Watson's Creek. We have another 4 to 5 months of work to complete the time allocated for the grant, and approximately \$2,000 to spend in this time. This shouldn't be hard to do, with some 500 to 800 plants to purchase, along with chicken wire and stakes to protect them once planted.

Any of you that have been down at the bridge recently would have noticed we've been busily spreading mulch. The mulch was supplied courtesy of the contractors working on clearing the power lines. Another 20 to 30 cubic metres are required to finish the job.

The working bee in February was put to good use, we have started laying jute matting on the North side of the creek, covering the Pennyroyal as we went.

The March and April working bees will be used to plant-out the area, so those of you that are allergic to weeding, here is your chance to assist in the project! Bring along your gloves, spade, mug and afternoon tea to the next two working bees, your assistance is greatly needed. Also, the April working bee will be followed by a BYO BBQ at the South Fire Station to help us celebrate our Arbor Day.

We have missed out on applying for funding through the National Heritage Trust grant program; time has been against us once more. Other grant programs will be available later in the year (Parks Victoria grant submissions are due around September). Please give thought over the next few months to any projects that you think maybe of interest and notify me, Peter Gurney, Trish Millington, or Sue Vaughan, to discuss them further.

WEED OF THE MONTH: PATTERSONS CURSE

by Steve Craig

Also known as "Salvation Jane" Paterson's Curse originated in the Mediterranean region and western Europe but has spread to most temperate regions of the world. The Purplish-blue, funnel-shaped flowers are produced in terminal clusters on erect stems commonly 30-60 cm high from September to December.

The earliest record of its occurrence in Australia was at the Camden gardens of John Macarthur near Sydney in 1843 where it had been introduced presumably as an ornamental plant. By 1900 it had been recorded from many areas. It is now well established throughout south-eastern Australia where it costs millions of dollars each year in lost production.

The plant was introduced to Cumberooona about 1800 as a garden species by the Paterson family, hence the common name now used throughout most of Australia. Salvation Jane is the common name applied mainly in South Australia and there are two possible origins for this name. The first is that the plant was a "salvation" to farmers in a drought year, the other that the shape of the flower resembles the bonnets worn by ladies of the Salvation Army.

Patersons Curse is a declared noxious weed under the Catchment & Land Protection Act (1994) and is poisonous to a number of grazing animals. Pigs and horses are most susceptible, while sheep, goats and cattle are least effected, although the stiff bristles on the mature plant irritate can irritate the udders of dairy cattle. Some medical practitioners claim that it effects human health by causing such things as "hay fever" (or should that be "Patersons fever"?).

It is a prolific seed producer and seeds are rapidly spread by vehicles, farm machinery, contaminated hay, silage, wool and animal fur. Mature plants will completely smother pasture leaving large patches of bare ground at the end of summer which are then prone to soil erosion.

Patersons Curse is best controlled by spraying with herbicide during the early Autumn months when it is in the seedling (rosette) stage, followed by a pasture improvement program. Infestations of the size currently visible on Melbourne Water land in Henley Road will require a large investment of human and financial resources to bring under control. Small infestations or isolated plants can be removed with a hoe or shovel. Complete eradication will only occur when the supply of soil stored seed is exhausted. Seed can remain viable in the soil for over 8 years.

THE 1997 'FOREST FOREVER' CAMP

by Norm Linton-Smith

Does the clear felling of old growth forest in East Gippsland upset you and do you feel helpless to do anything to stop it?

There is something you can do. For a mere \$15.00 pa (\$12.00 concession) you can join the 'Concerned Residents of East Gippsland' (CROEG) and be one of about 350 other people who belong to this organisation. It is headed by a wonderful person called Jill Redwood who lives very close to these forests and is devoting her life to their protection. Please consider the membership form included with this newsletter.

I attended this year's CROEG 'Forest Forever' camp at Goongerah during the Melbourne Cup holiday weekend. Goongerah is about eight hours drive from the Bend of Islands. The camp site is Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DRNE) area of bush with no electricity or water laid on but with good drop toilets and the Brodribb River close by with clear, safe drinking water. Jill lives next to the campsite on 22 acres of partly cleared land with dairy goats, freely ranging chooks and a fruit and vegie garden. Her house was self-built and runs on solar electricity and wood for heating.

I arrived at the camp at 4.00 pm on Saturday, 1 November and set up my little tent close to a toilet, water tank, information tent and a large tarpaulin slung between trees on a steel wire rope, tensioned with a hand winch, to form a high roof as protection in the event of rain; none fell during my four day stay. About 60 people of all ages from babies to over seventies like myself were camped in small clearings all over the large treed area. A quite attractive understorey featured many wildflowers including a group of handsome leopard orchids. On the drive up from Orbost (about 11 km) I had passed tree after tree with spectacular displays of vivid red Gippsland waratahs. The blooms are about 10 cm across. I saw lots of other flowers including egg and bacon varieties, wattles and daisies.

After a good meal I joined a meeting at 7.00 pm when a car pool was formed and a convoy set off towards the Errinundra National Park. We were led by Dr Kevin Thiele, a botanist, for spotlighting and he soon showed that he knew a lot about animals and birds. It was thrilling to see and hear yellow-bellied gliders calling one another; I had only heard them before on Andrew Skeogh's stereophonic tapes which had made in the same area. (Andrew and Sarah played at one of our night experiences a few years ago.) Kevin identified several owl calls but in spite of his accurate mimicry he was unable to attract any to us. We saw several greater gliders and sugar gliders, the later of which can be seen any night at the Ealy's living room. Kevin became very excited when he spotted a feathertail glider about 10 metres up a tree trunk. This tiny creature, only about 10 cm long, with a remarkable feather-like tail could only be seen to advantage with binoculars. It was a successful night and it was after 11.00 pm when we got back to camp.

The next day a long convoy followed Jill's car to various logging coupes in National Estate areas of old growth forest. This is forest with trees of all ages up to perhaps 400 years old. One of the coupes which Jill said was finished with except for the burning of everything left on the ground, it being unsuitable for either chipping or milling, was practically clear of any standing trees. There were a few habitat and seed trees left

(in compliance with DNRE's code of forest practice) and lying on the ground were trunks of 2 and 3 metres in diameter. I and others were shocked that such trees, which must have been 3 or 4 hundred years old, could be slaughtered like this and just left to rot or burn. Jill suggested that such trees, after being felled, could be rejected for milling because of large hollows or crooked grain. They could also be rejected for chipping because of their huge size as there is a glut on the woodchip market and loggers probably look for the most easily chipped logs. She also said that the regeneration burn could also destroy the few trees left standing.

We also visited a remarkable natural clearing which is wet grassland and our resident expert, Damien Cook, explained this to us.

Most of us then elected to walk the Rooty Break Trail in the Errinundra National Park. This is old growth forest too and it is full of trees of all ages, including giants perhaps 500 years old and near the end of their lives. Some had hollows so big that four people could stand together in them. The very big trees were mountain grey gums or shining gums. For an almost spiritual experience, walking along the Rooty Break Trail is a must.

Back in camp, after dinner, we were treated to a solar-powered outdoor slide show by David Cameron, a botanist specialising in rain forest ecology. By the way, David said that he had been a guest speaker at BICA meetings twice over a 10 year interval and again a few months ago at a talk on the Warrandyte State Park. He is a very fluent speaker and with a humorous touch and an apparent encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject; he held the interest of his audience for many hours. I was very tired after an energetic day and was cold in the open air so I retired at about 11.30. The show apparently finished at 2.00 am!

The 240 volt power came from a trailer containing twenty 12 volt batteries which were charged during the day by about 3 square metres of silicon cells mounted on the trailer. The system was designed and built by an electronics engineer member of CROEG and it worked bril-

liantly, powering the slide projector for all those hours, the lights in the toilet, the information tent and the marquee.

The next few days activities started with lunch at a picnic spot by the Bonang highway about 27 km from the camp towards Orbost. After lunch we drove on about another 6 km to Paradise Ridge Road into which we turned after cramming as many as possible into the three 4WD utilities so as to reduce the number of conventional drive vehicles on this lesser kind of track. At last we stopped. Our leader was David Cameron and he was going to lead us to several hectares of remnant but intact warm temperate rain forest. Back in camp he had indicated this area on a large satellite photograph displayed at the information tent. We were now in National Estate forest somewhere between the Snowy River National Park and the Bonang Highway. Logging is allowed in National Estate forests even though they may be intact old growth forest with all the environmental values of an ideal National Park. The Errinundra National Park containing the Rooty Break Trail was such an area until campaigns by the Victorian National Parks Association and other groups succeeded in influencing the Land Conservation Council to recommend National Park status. This was finally accorded, I think, in the late 1980s. The battles for protection of such marvellous areas still continue.

To be continued in the next issue



Sender: Blice

