

*Warringal Conservation Society is a local, not-for-profit, community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.*

*Formed in 1970, the Society is an active and productive steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.*

### Join us!!

Warringal Conservation Society is not just a local environment group: it is stimulating, fun and companionable and takes an active role in the wider community.

Single \$20  
Family \$25  
Pension/student/  
unemployed \$15  
Life \$200

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. We may edit for legal, space or other reasons. Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Warringal Conservation Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaga

## MAY MEETING (ONLINE)

### Katja Gutwein - Tackling Wombat Mange Together

Wombat mange is caused by a mite infestation that causes skin irritation and wounds. Untreated mange can kill wombats. Our speaker Katja has been a wildlife carer for a number of years and is a founding member of Mange Management Inc. This group is raising awareness about wombats with mange as well as providing free treatment kits to landowners across Victoria. See <https://mangemanagement.org.au/>

## JUNE MEETING

### Biodiversity Policy, Research and Programmes, and Integrated Water Management in Banyule

John Milkins (Environmental Operations Coordinator) will discuss the current Water Plan and the maintenance of Banyule's natural and constructed wetland and water sensitive urban design assets. Paul Davis (Biodiversity Officer) will speak about the Council's Biodiversity Plan and draft Weed Management Strategy.

## JULY MEETING

### Robert Bender

Microbat surveys at Wilson Reserve in Ivanhoe.

### General meetings:

**Meetings are on first Thursday of the month from 7.30 pm at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Road, Heidelberg (note that our May meeting is online)**

## AT A GLANCE

### May

**Thurs 6th:** Online General Meeting - Wombat Mange

**Sun 16th:** Planting at Tawny Pond\*

### June

**Thurs 3rd:** General Meeting - Water & Biodiversity

**Sun 20th:** WCS 50th Anniversary Planting\*

### July

**Thurs 1st:** General Meeting - Microbats

**Sun 25th:** National Tree Day

\*See News and Events for more detail

## Message from the President

Dear Members,

Not many people living in the suburbs of Melbourne are lucky enough to have a swamp nearby. The Swamp is a highlight of Banyule Flats and beacon for wildlife, particularly birds. A pair of Black Swans has recently arrived at the swamp. One has a collar identifying it as a seven year old female who also spends time at the Western Treatment works, Williamstown and Albert Park Lake. She and her mate had cygnets at Banyule Swamp last year so they obviously think it is a good spot to visit. Humans also appreciate the Swamp it has been a focus for the Warringal Conservation Society's field trips and planting activities over the years. In June we will gather not far from the Banyule Swamp for a planting to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Conservation Society (details on the next page). We hope to see you there.

James Deane

## News & Events

### Upcoming Meetings

Thursday 6th May at 7.30pm

General Meeting (Online via Zoom).

Katja Gutwein - Speaking on "*Tackling Wombat Mange Together*". Speaker followed by Nature Notes.

Meeting ID: 872 9934 6120

Passcode: 771130

Thursday 1st April at 7.30pm

General Meeting (Old Shire Office). John Milkins and Paul Davis from the Banyule City Council speaking on the "*Biodiversity Policy, Research and Programmes, and Integrated Water Management in Banyule.*" Followed by Nature Notes.

### Plantings

Our planting and weeding activities have resumed and we have something planned for every month through to October. Rob Granter has taken over as

Planting Coordinator. We thanks Heather Smith for all the work she has done in this role over several years.

Sunday 16th May - Planting at Tawny Pond (named after the local Tawny Frogmouths). 10am - 12noon. Next to Somerset Drive Car Park at Banyule Flats (see below).



## Who we are and how to contact us

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**Planting Coordinator:** Rob Granter

**Committee:** Anthea Fleming, Daphne Hards, Doug McNaughton, James Deane, John D'Aloia, Rob Granter.



## News & Events cont.

### \*\*\* Sunday 20th June - WCS 50th Anniversary Planting – Swamp East Embankment \*\*\*

10am - 12noon. Come and celebrate 50 years of WSC by planting next to the Banyule Swamp. The planting site is not far from the Somerset Drive Car Park at Banyule Flats. See the location below



### Eltham Copper Butterfly habitat in Montmorency at risk.

Endangered Copper butterflies have been identified in remnant bushland that may be lost to level crossing removal works near Montmorency station. The butterflies were discovered by a citizen scientist early this year. Their federally recognised endangered status means that there should be an obligation to protect these butterflies and their habitat under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. In practice the Act often fails to deliver because outcomes are subject to Ministerial discretion (eg Matted Flax-lily habitat and the North East Link). Hopefully some genuine action is taken to protect Eltham Copper Butterflies and their habitat in this case.

### Cleanup Australia Day report

We met at the Banyule Stockyard on Sunday 7th March. This is new site for us and we worked downstream along the river and across Banyule Flats to the sports fields near the swamp. Lots of rubbish was collected, including parts of a lounge suite and a bike that was pulled out of Banyule Creek near where it joins the Yarra. Thanks to the Banyule Bush Crew for coordinating the event and carting rubbish away.



## March Speaker Summary

### Dr Barry Clarke - Adverse Environmental and Social Consequences of Artificial Light at Night

Barry spoke about the increasing amount of artificial lighting and how this affects humans and the natural world. As a local example, he presented his own data from Viewbank indicating a steady increase in skyglow since 2005. Artificial light disrupts the natural daily and seasonal rhythms of most animals. In humans exposure to artificial light at night has been linked to increases in serious diseases including cancers, dementia, heart disease and diabetes. For wildlife, artificial light can disrupt feeding and breeding cycles resulting in the loss of biodiversity.

The main drivers of increased lighting are safety and fear of crime. Barry discussed studies suggesting that increases in light do not necessarily reduce crime or improve road safety. He also noted that LEDs are widely used because of their energy efficiency, but emit more of the blue light which is thought the most disruptive to the natural cycles of most living creatures. In summary, the information that Barry presented makes a strong case for being much more thoughtful about the way we use artificial lighting.

*James Deane*

## April Speaker Summary

### Janine Rizzetti - Planting Heidelberg

Janine is from the Heidelberg Historical Society and gave us an engaging account of agriculture and horticulture in the Heidelberg area.

Early European visitors to the area noted wide plains dotted with clumps of trees. This was a consequence of thousands of years of Aboriginal intervention through burning, digging and altering watercourses. Yam daisies (*Microseris sp.*) were plentiful and provided a staple food source. Upon European settlement, grazing and soil compaction from cattle and sheep all but eliminated Yam Daisies and they are now uncommon.

Early land sales were conducted from Sydney, with large areas bought by speculators who later subdivided and sold, or let land to tenants. Farming of various types, vegetable and fruit growing, and viticulture expanded through the mid 1800s. Hawthorn and gorse were planted to form hedgerows.

The Victorian Agricultural Society was formed in 1848 by farmers from the Plenty and Heidelberg districts. An annual show was held until the late 1890s when it was discontinued due to the depression and competition from other shows. Agriculture in the area went into a decline in the late 1800s due to a series of destructive floods and exhaustion of the soil.

The arrival of a railway in 1888 made the area a tourist attraction, with visitors impressed by the Englishness of the landscape. A number of formal

gardens were established and a cricket ground and horse race course were established. Many of the early tree plantings were dominated by conifers.

As the area became increasingly subdivided through the early 1900s, people took great pride in their gardens. The Ivanhoe Horticultural society had its first meeting in 1906 and continues today as the Ivanhoe Garden Club.

Chinese market gardens were also a feature of the Yarra floodplains from about 1880 to the 1930s. The immigration restriction act of 1901 and flooding in 1934 put an end to these gardens.

Plantings in our area have involved planning gardens and parks as part of new subdivisions. Notable examples include Mt Eagle and Glenard Estates designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin. In 1969 the Golf Links Estate was established retaining part of the old golf course and existing trees as Rosanna Parkland.

Many of the more recent planting efforts have aimed to restore some of the original indigenous vegetation that has been lost. This includes work by WCS and our colleagues from other local environmental groups including: Friends of Yarra Flats Park, Friend of Wilson Reserve, Darebin Parklands Association, Friends of Salt Creek, and Friends of Plenty River.

*James Deane*

## Update on Duck Season in 2021

The Victorian Government has recently announced a significant easing of hunting restrictions for the 2021 duck shooting season. The “bag limit,” or the number of ducks a shooter can kill each day, has risen from two birds to five. And the geographic restrictions that limited where Chestnut Teal and Grey Teal can be hunted have been removed. The season length remains the same and lasts from May 26<sup>th</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, the shooting lobby is now putting pressure on the Government to change that length.

The changes to restrictions were announced after the Game Management Authority (1) or GMA released the results of a pilot aerial survey conducted by the GMA and the Arthur Rylah Institute in November 2020. In this pilot survey, wildlife consultants counted the number of game ducks in



*(Photo: Anthea Fleming)*

over 650 water bodies in Victoria from a helicopter, and used satellite imagery to assess the amount of water in the landscape. By this method, Victoria's game duck population was estimated to be almost 2.5 million. The GMA has said this number is much higher than previous methodology indicated and therefore the sustainable harvest level can be increased for the 2021 season.

Until now, the Victorian Government has relied on the long-running Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey (2) or EAWS which is an aerial survey conducted annually by the University of NSW late in the year. This provides an estimate for numbers of individual species of ducks and for overall duck numbers across several States. The annual large surveys provide the most valuable long-term objective data about waterbird abundance in Australia. They indicate that numbers for all individual game duck species, as well as the overall number of native ducks, have fallen by as much as 90% since the surveys began in 1983.

Ducks are migratory and they will fly to where

## Duck Season cont.

there is enough water and good habitat to sustain them, as there is in Victoria at the moment. But the evidence that native duck numbers have declined very significantly in Eastern States in the last thirty years is undeniable. Moreover, the EAWS survey conducted in late 2020 indicated that breeding abundance and breeding species richness had also decreased considerably compared with the previous year, with only three species recorded as breeding.

Australia has come through a very dry period, and waterbird populations across Eastern Australia are low. Birds need to be able to bounce back. Duck hunting threatens native ducks and the biodiversity of our State. The Victorian Government needs to put more protections in place for all of our native ducks rather than open up the wetlands for a killing spree! Our Politicians need to hear what most Victorians want - an end to duck shooting in this State!

Please contact:

- 1) Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas, Minister for Regional Development/Agriculture (mary-anne.thomas@parliament.vic.gov.au)
- 2) Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change/Solar Homes (lily.dambrosio@parliament.vic.gov.au)
- 3) Anthony Carbines MP, State Member for Ivanhoe (anthony.carbines@parliament.vic.gov.au)

References:

1. <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/when-to-hunt/2021-duck-season-arrangements>
2. <https://www.ecosystem.unsw.edu.au/research-projects/rivers-and-wetlands/waterbirds/eastern-australian-waterbird-survey>

*Celia Smith*

## Nature Notes

### March

In Tasmania, James Deane was fortunate to see a young Wedgetailed Eagle – the Tasmanian subspecies is rare and endangered. As it flew over, the bird checked to inspect Naz Giuliani who was sleeping on a creek bank.

Dianne Williamson reported Pied Cormorants at Banyule Swamp.

Heather Smith visited Glenelg National Park - the river there is tidal for a long way up; she saw a large flock of Gang Gangs drinking at a spring.

Anthea Fleming observed a Musk Duck at Banyule Swamp. She also saw a flock of seven King Parrots flying downstream along Darebin Creek, and an adult and a young Black-faced Cuckooshrike by the Creek. She reported that her daughter had planted a Pine Tree at Blackburn, in hopes of pine-nuts. But the first cone produced by the young tree was shredded by a pair of Gang Gangs.

Nicholas Deane saw an Echidna at Banyule Flats.

### April

Robert Bender showed a slide of Ladybirds – an interesting form, the Orange-spotted Ladybird, which is black with orange-yellow spots. He also reported Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, and a Swamp Wallaby at the Horseshoe Billabong.

James Deane saw a Tiger Snake on the Yarra Trail, near Burke Rd Bridge. Also on the Trail, near the power-lines above the Plenty Footbridge, he saw a mob of Kangaroos with a white young one among them.

An enquiry from Daphne Hards – what is the name of the spider which shelters in a curled dead leaf? Answer – the Leaf-curling Spider. This is very common in gardens and the bush – it starts with a young green leaf and pulls it into shape with its web. Occasionally, it may haul an empty snail-shell into its web and use it as a shelter.

Jen Chellew saw a Brown Goshawk, Brown Thornbills and Spinebills in her backyard in Rosanna

Anthea Fleming visited the Craigieburn Native Grasslands Reserve, where the dominant life-forms were swarms of a yellow-winged grass-hopper. European Goldfinches were numerous, feeding on thistle heads, and Yellow-rumped Thornbills were seen – both too fast and wary for photos. At Yan Yean Reservoir Black Ducks and Chestnut Teal were seen on wetlands, and a hybrid between the two was photographed. Also a Southern Brown Tree-Frog and a Musk Duck (photos on next page).



## Nature Notes cont.

1



2



1. Grasshoppers
2. Yan Yean reservoir  
with burning off in the  
background
3. Male Musk Duck
4. Black duck/Chestnut  
Teal hybrid
5. Brown Tree Frog

3



4



5



Good Friday, 1st April, was quite a hot day – nearly 30 degrees. I was sitting outside in the courtyard with some of the family, when my grand-daughter pointed out a Bluetongue Lizard moving into the courtyard. It approached slowly and cautiously, then changed direction and moved straight across the courtyard at a fast scuttle - being out in the open was obviously dangerous. It gained the shelter of pot-plants along the far side and made its way along to where it could clamber up over small pots and reach a plastic water trough. Here it took a long drink, then went on and moved under the fence. In future I shall take care to keep shallow water-dishes in the garden filled in dry weather. It's not only birds which need a drink. The Easter hot weather must have been the last of summer – a week or so later, there were reports of a foot of short-lived snow on Mt. Baw Baw...

ANTHEA FLEMING

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COVERING THE CITY OF HEIDELBERG