

Warrinal Conservation Society is a local community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.

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

Keep up to date on WCS activities by visiting our FaceBook page or website www.warrinal.org.au

Join us!

WCS has a lot to offer: plantings, activities and monthly meetings with guest speakers from a wide range of disciplines and interests. There is membership information in this newsletter or go to the web page.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather, and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. Note we may edit for space or legal reasons. Opinions expressed in guest material are not necessarily those of the Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaja.

NOVEMBER MEETING

ROBERT BENDER: Volunteer conservation in Wisconsin

Recently returned from the USA, Robert will talk about his experience with the several forms of Conservation volunteering in Door County Wisconsin. One is weekly working bees at an eco-centre in Sturgeon Bay, with expert "restorationists" and public-spirited citizens. Another is Friends groups contributing to maintenance of Land Trust and state parks. They are very different from Victorian Friends groups.

DECEMBER MEETING

MEMBERS NIGHT: the Powerful Owl Project and the underwater wonders of Exmouth.

Join us for a relaxed evening hearing from members on their favourite topics: James Deane's project – audio tracking Powerful Owls along the Yarra and Michelle Giovas's dive to meet an incredible sea giant – the whale shark. We'd also like to hear about your favourite or most exciting sighting for Natures Notes.

Meetings are the first Thursday of the month from 7.30pm

Please note that monthly meetings are face-to-face at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Road.

Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre
All Welcome

AT A GLANCE

NOVEMBER

Thursday 2: General Meeting from 7.30pm

DECEMBER

Thursday 7: General Meeting from 7.30pm



Salt Creek leaves its barrel drains at Edgar Street, Rosanna to continue above surface until its confluence with the Yarra.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At our October Annual General Meeting we reflected on another successful year of planting, fascinating expert presentations, and environmental advocacy. Thanks to everyone who contributed, particularly the Warringal Conservation Committee (Daphne, Heather, Rob, Anthea, Doug and Michelle).

Our society recently contributed to the running of Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule Flats (see report that follows). This Banyule City Council event is always popular and showcases the amazing wildlife habitat we have in Banyule. Many of the participants will undoubtedly be back to explore further with Anthea's [Banyule Flats map](#) in hand. *James Deane*

REPORTS

Annual General Meeting

At the October AGM, President James Deane gave an overview of the Society's projects, meetings and financial position for 2022-2023. While thanking retiring Treasurer, Daphne Hards for her long diligent service, he also mentioned the ongoing major challenge being the recruitment of people onto the WCS committee. He acknowledged the Banyule Bush Crew for their support of the working bees and members of the 2022-23 committee – particularly Rob Granter (Planting Coordinator) and Heather Smith (Newsletter/social media).

The Society would like to thank James for his leadership and for agreeing to continue as President for another year. Secretary position filled by Heather Smith but Treasurer position is vacant. Committee members returning include Anthea Fleming, Rob Granter, Doug McNaughton, Daphne Hards and Michelle Giovas. We are pleased to announce that George Paras has agreed to joined the committee.

New Members

The Society warmly welcomes new members Jarrod Green, Leonie Pope, Anneliese Straubli and Jamie Kennedy. We look forward to seeing all soon at a meeting or activity, and hope your membership will be a rewarding and enriching experience.

A HUGE THANK YOU!

Daphne will be a hard act to follow. She has made a terrific contribution to WCS over the years she has been a member. She was encouraged onto the Committee and then did a stint as President.

Since then, she has worked diligently as Treasurer, while also holding together the Secretary position when it could not be filled. Always saying what she thought, she has high standards, working hard to ensure the Society continued to have a strong voice in the protection of Banyule's environment and Biodiversity. WCS is pleased to award Daphne with an Honorary Membership of the Society. She intends to enjoy more bird watching trips but has agreed to keep a watchful eye over the Treasurer position until a replacement comes on board. WCS and the Committee give our heartfelt thanks for Daphne's eye for detail and commitment.



And the Nominations are...

Congratulations to Michelle Giovas who has been nominated for the 2023 Banyule Citizen of the Year. Apart from being on the WCS committee, Michelle is President of the Friends of Banyule. WCS wishes her all the best with the nomination. The award will be presented at the Banyule Community Ball (28/10/23).

THE WCS TEAM AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Warringal Conservation Society Inc
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084
Email: warringal3084@gmail.com
Website: www.warringal.org.au
FB: www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety

President: James Deane
Secretary: Heather Smith

Treasurer: Vacant

Committee: Anthea Fleming, Daphne Hards, Rob Granter, Michelle Giovas, Doug McNaughton, George Paras

Planting Coordinator: Rob Granter

Newsletter: Heather Smith

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

SEPTEMBER> Jonathon Tickner (@merri-creek-wanderer)

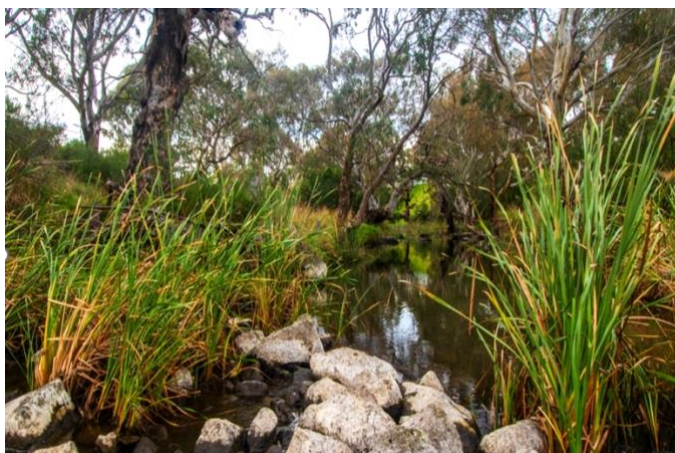
Photographer Jonathan Tickner took us on a fascinating trip along the Merri Creek, from Craigieburn where he used to teach, to near his home in Northcote/Abbotsford. Tucked inside a loop of the Merri to the east of Craigieburn is Rushwood Reserve – sounds like a gem of a spot for wildlife. Jonathan had great views of Sacred Kingfisher and Swamp Wallaby and, “on the basalt rocks opposite”, Cunningham’s Skink *Egernia cunninghamii*, which loves to bask on rocks.

Next stop was Curly Sedge Creek, named for the rare Curly Sedge which has a corkscrew blade. The creek joins the Merri from the northeast in Somerton. A special resident is the endangered Growling Grass Frog which likes the water ribbon habitat. Tall old River Red Gums dot the landscape, where Jonathan spotted native bees on Kangaroo Grass. From our travels up the Hume Freeway, we all know that these Epping Grasslands are under threat. Dotted through are gullies with rocky escarpments where rainwater maintains cooler, damper refuges for native plants i.e. seedbanks. Environmental burns are carried out to reduce weed growth.



Photos: J Tickner

Top left: Cunningham’s Skink. Above: Tawny Frogmouth and chick. Left: Merri Creek at Craigieburn



South of the Metropolitan Ring Road the Merri Creek is bordered by housing, but supporting a walking track in parkland. The Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) along with Friends of Merri Creek maintain the health of the Creek and environs. Bird surveys are conducted during the year. Jonathan’s bird photos were superb: Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Falcon and Australian Kestrel. Greenfinch, Red-browed Finch and

Goldfinch in grasslands, Horsfield’s and Fantailed Cuckoos, Flame Robins and the rare but introduced Red-whiskered Bulbul.

Good bird species can still be seen from Fawkner south to the Yarra confluence in Abbotsford, at Dight’s Falls. This is a credit to the hard work of many to maintain the creek environs. Strettle Wetland in Thornbury is one such gem, supporting, on occasion, Tawny Frogmouth, Collared Sparrowhawk and Western Gerygone. Nearby there have been recent sightings of Painted Buttonquail.

Jonathan closed with some Bird photographic tips – it still sounded hard!! He likes action shots where the subject is flying or perhaps feeding. One can adjust the focal length to highlight the bird with little background, or retain background for context. Lighting and exposure are always important. Jonathan avoids midday glare and hard shadows, preferring the softer light of dawn and dusk. He gets magnificent results in bright cloudy conditions. It all takes practice!

Daphne Hards

GUEST SPEAKER REPORTS

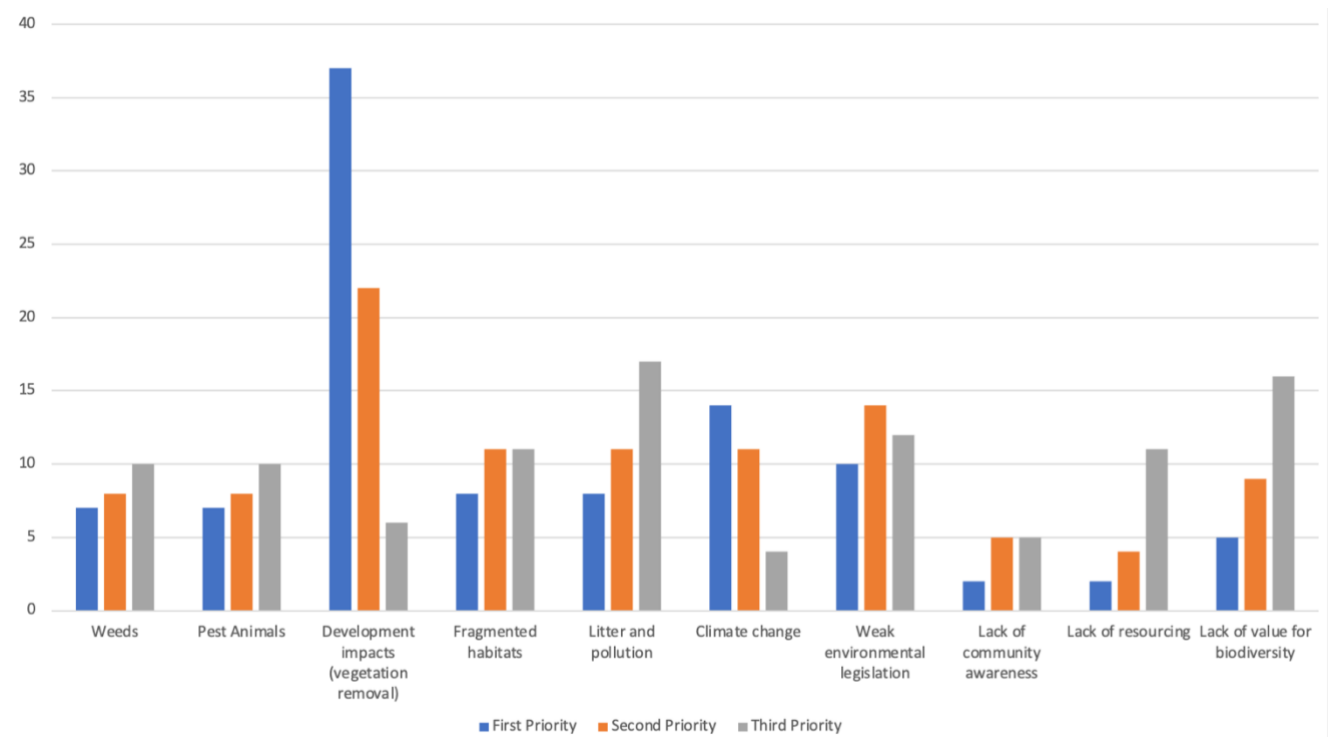
OCTOBER> Paul Davis and Banyule's Biodiversity Plan

Banyule's Biodiversity Advisor, Paul Davis came to talk us through the results from the recent online survey and workshops held to get community input for the Biodiversity Plan. These will be the basis for a detailed analysis of how Council currently performs, compared to other industry organisations, in biodiversity management. Paul discussed the ethical and moral value of biodiversity generally. He outlined some of the main issues – none of which really surprised:

- Banyule is falling behind when it comes to protecting our environment and biodiversity from urban development. We need to understand and implement industry best practice.
- Private land is where the greatest loss of tree canopy and flora occurs
- Biodiversity literacy needs to be increased – Council and Councillors
- Strengthen relationships with other agencies (ParksVic, VicRoads, Catchment Authorities, other councils)
- Monitoring – to collect Friends Group's data to support of protection of biodiversity (Powerful Owl project, Bat, frog data etc)

Paul presented a range of interesting graphs and stats gleaned from the survey/workshops. These will be analysed and then early findings will be presented to Council in November. The graph below shows what respondents' thought were the biggest threats to biodiversity.

Heather Smith



Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule Flats

The number of attendees were down, probably deterred by the weather forecast - cold, windy and showers. Fortunately, the rain held off during the morning. My station was at the Swamp with John Milkins Banyule Environmental Operations Coordinator, with three telescopes between us. The water was high and birds not very numerous. Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal and Hardhead were seen, a Little Pied Cormorant, and many Silver Gulls - one with a chick in a nest-box. Red-rumped Parrots were perched on the dead branches. A Magpie-lark was sitting in its mud nest on one of the dead trees. As usual, children enjoyed telescope views of birds as did adult visitors.

Both Australian and Hoary-headed Grebes were present in good numbers, plus a very unusual visitor, an immature Great Crested Grebe. This lacked the adult's striking head plumage, but was noticeably larger and

(Continued) Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule Flats

longer than the other grebes, with a longer beak, black cap and a dark streak down the back of the long neck. The foreneck and breast were white and the back grey. It was feeding steadily, spending far more time under water than on top. I got a good if brief view through the telescope, but alas, no photo. The sighting was confirmed by John and also Andrew Bennett, a group leader from Latrobe University. The last time I saw this species at Banyule Flats was in the early 1970s. I hope it will stay!

Those who walked by the Yarra saw several spring migrants - Oriole, Sacred Kingfisher and Rufous Whistler. Stay-at-homes were seen too - Golden Whistler, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Little Corellas, Grey Fantails and the Superb Fairy-wren, to give the Blue Wren its proper name.

At the Breakfast, James Deane spoke on WCS' history and work, inviting people to attend meetings and join. Andrew Bennett used our 'Birds of Heidelberg' (1981) when speaking of the changes in bird life since then and the present, and Paul Thomas spoke on the Council's work in the reserve. Several people took away free copies of the Bird book and 'Beautiful Banyule'. They also looked at the display of posters and photos. I wish to particularly thank Heather Smith for her help in putting it up on Saturday night.

Anthea Fleming

Banyule Spring Outdoors program event: Salt Creek walk

It was a classic spring morning when we met up with local naturalist, George Paras at the southern end of Rosanna Parklands to begin a tour that explored the southern half of the Salt Creek catchment down to its confluence with the Yarra River. It is definitely one of Banyule's more interesting urban wildlife corridors. As we walked, we heard about the history of land use along the corridor, the past and present impacts on wildlife and vegetation, and community action projects. Having spent a lot of my childhood exploring the Yarraman and Mile Creeks in Dandenong in the late 60s I was pretty excited to legally get over the Yarra Valley Water gates to see the massive barrel drains and surviving heritage trees that pre-dated the 1835 suburban subdivisions.

George finished his talk by distributing a list of actions we could do to support this important wildlife corridor (see abbreviated list below). I highly recommend this event and it is well worth checking out the wide range of Spring Outdoors events being run by Banyule, Manningham and Nillumbik. Thanks to Paul Davis (who also joined us) and his colleagues for their ideas and hard work to get these activities up and running.

Heather Smith



Photos: H Smith

Top left: Behind the old Rosanna Council offices – soon to be Woolworths. Delivery truck access will destroy the wildlife corridor along between the boundaries. Salt Creek runs in barrel drains beneath this section. Right: Salt Creek now above ground but contained in a concrete channel (view from Brown Street near Rosanna Road).

Salt Creek wildlife corridor: support actions (*abbreviated list*)

George suggests getting to know your local Ward councillor and when you email your suggestions, questions or dismay at destruction always cc all councillors and mayor (www.banyule.vic.gov.au/About-us/Councillors-and-Council-meetings/Councillors) and Banyule CEO Alison Beckwith (Allison.Beckwith@banyule.vic.gov.au). Keep in mind what would help Salt Creek to regain and retain its mojo:

- Protection of ALL Original Indigenous Heritage trees pre-dating suburban subdivision
- Urgency of enhancing the Wildlife Corridors with Indigenous plantings of LOCAL provenance
- Value Salt Creek and parallel Railway land parcels, no matter how small. The value of biodiversity gains in even small reserves planted with Indigenous plants. The value of 'stepping stones' of dense habitat along Wildlife Corridors.
- Join Friends of Salt Creek and Associated Parklands whose aims are to preserve, restore, and enhance the Salt Creek and its Associated Parklands.
- Know the value of Turnham Ave trees on former Library/Council site and Rosanna Station precinct
- Look out for dense Indigenous planting opportunities along boundaries, walkways, corners of land.

Feral Deer

Feral deer are emerging as one of Australia's most serious environmental and agricultural threats and Victoria has possibly the largest deer population in Australia, estimated at more than a million animals.

There have been regular recent reports of deer in parkland along our local stretch of the Yarra (Yarra Flats, Montpelier Billabong and Banyule Flats). The species detected appears to be the Sambar deer, a large bodied deer that is widespread in Victoria. These deer damage native vegetation along the river through grazing and trampling, including some of our revegetation efforts. Startled deer are also a danger to people visiting our parks or driving on nearby roads at night. For more information see: <https://invasives.org.au/our-work/feral-animals/feral-deer/feral-deer-in-victoria/>



Photo: J Deane

James Deane

WORKING BEES

Thank you everyone who rolled up and rolled up their sleeves to weed and plant at the Native Garden Entry Beds at the September working bee. There were so many things in flower there, it is amazing to think that we put these plants in only one year ago.

If you haven't walked around this particular area for a while, think about incorporating it into your next Banyule Flats stroll. As the tree species get taller and taller, with a number in flower at present, they set a great top storey to the ever-maturing under-storey in this beautiful spot.

Rob Granter



Photos: R Granter

NORTH EAST LINK UPDATE

Ring Road Completion Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP)

Urban Design and Landscape Plans (UDLPs) have been released for:

- the first stage of the Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Burke to Tram Roads
- to complete the M80 Ring Road in Greensborough, connecting it with the NE Link Tollway.

The two UDLPs are online and you can help shape local design elements in your area **by making a submission on [Engage Victoria](https://engage.vic.gov.au/ring-road-udlp) from now until 5 pm Sunday 29 October 2023.**



Community Concerns are still:

- the massive 8-10 lane trench further dividing Watsonia,
- the green bridges at Elder Street and Watsonia Rd are seriously inadequate, so the community loses more open space opportunities and real connectivity
- the multi storey carpark for the Watsonia station is still a total mystery, and DDA compliance for the station has still not been confirmed
- that NELP are not listening to impacted local community who face living through years of construction hell.

Have your say at <https://engage.vic.gov.au/ring-road-udlp>

You can also visit the NELP HUB at Watsonia to view the plans and get a dose of spin in person.

WCS member Michelle Giovas is on the NELP Community Liaison Group North. Feel free to email comments or concerns to her at michellegiovas@gmail.com

NATURE NOTES

Dianne Williams reported a Kookaburra in her garden, also Spinebills Eastern Rosellas and King Parrots. Further up the Yarra, she saw 150 Kangaroos.

Don Stokes saw a Currawong attacking a baby Little Raven.

Jane Crone saw a King Parrot.

Patsy showed some film of Rainbow Lorikeets checking out a possible nest hollow.

Robert Bender showed many slides from his stay in Wisconsin - notably a docile and harmless Ribbon Snake, and an American Robin - actually a thrush, and Red-winged Blackbird (not a thrush). Suburban estates are fenceless, but dogs are confined by a 'shock fence', a buried wire which sends a shock to the dog's collar. The American Black Duck is bigger than ours. A museum Triceratops skeleton evoked a visitor's comment "That challenges my faith!"

James Deane saw two Wedgetails overhead.

Doug McNaughton saw four pairs of Frogmouths nesting at Rosanna, a Sulphur-crested cockatoo was trying to evict a Ringtail Possum from its hollow; the Ringtail eventually fell to the ground. Doug rescued it and put it in another tree. Magpies then chased the cockatoo away.

Anthea Fleming showed some wildflowers from Gresswell Forest - Chocolate/Vanilla Lilies, and a splendid drift of Bulbine Lilies. Also, a young Kangaroo on the hop at Yarra Flats.

Anthea Fleming



Photo: A Fleming

Anthea's photos from Gresswell Forest.



Left to right: Trigger Plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*), Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*), Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) at Gresswell Forest.

Your ongoing membership enables the Society to actively undertake projects that contribute to advocating for wildlife and the natural environment, to provide information to members and the community ranging from local to global environmental issues.

WCS MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL JULY 2023 – JUNE 2024

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Special areas of interest: *This helps us when arranging speakers and events.*

Subscription types:

- ☐ Single \$20 ☐ Concession \$15 (seniors/students etc)
☐ Family \$25 ☐ Life subscription \$200

There are three ways to renew:

1. Renew online at:
www.warringal.org.au/about-us/membership
2. Pay by direct debit:
Acc name: Warringal Conservation Society
BSB: 633 108 Acc no: 143918613
(Be sure to identify yourself as the depositor.)
3. By mail: Fill in this form and mail with your cheque or money order to:
PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 Victoria.
Any queries email: warringal3084@gmail.com

- ☐ I would like to receive my newsletter by email.
☐ Yes - put me on the Plantings notification list.

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084



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