

*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

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

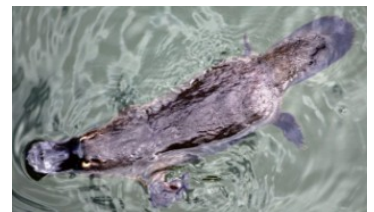
### **Environmental Conservation and Restoration**

Mark Bachmann is the Principal Ecologist and Manager of Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT), a not-for-profit organisation that does environmental surveys, consulting and restoration work. NGT manages a series of reserves funded by income from consulting services, government grants and donations. Mark will speak about small mammal ecology, private land conservation, wetland restoration, and the design/implementation of novel conservation programs. For more information on NGT see <https://natureglenelg.org.au>

## OCTOBER MEETING\*

### **Urban Platypuses**

Platypus are an unusual and iconic animal that live in our local waterways. Josh Griffiths is a wildlife ecologist who works with the Cesar Australia and specialises in studying the platypus. He will speak about the biology of the platypus, the habitat they require and their conservation status. He will also discuss the threats platypus face in an urban environment, monitoring projects that provide insight into how they are doing, and opportunities for members of the public to contribute data via citizen science programs.



**\*Will be preceded by our Annual General Meeting from approx 7.30-8.00pm**

### **General meetings:**

**Held on the first Thursday of the month from 7.30 pm  
CURRENTLY ONLINE, but normally at the Old Shire  
Offices, 60 Beverley Road, Heidelberg.**

## AT A GLANCE

### September

**Thurs 2nd:** General Meeting - Conservation & restoration\*

### October

**Thurs 7th:** AGM followed by General Meeting - Urban Platypuses\*

### November

**Thurs 4th:** General Meeting - Details to be announced.

\*See News and Events for more details

## Message from the President

Dear Members,

We would love to be out there as a group planting, but it will have to wait a bit. In the meantime we can use our daily exercise time to enjoy the beautiful vegetation that has grown from decades of previous planting.

As a conservation society, we advocate for the preservation and restoration of our parks and bushland reserves. Conservation often involves prioritising threatened and endangered species for protection and extra attention. We are lucky to have some rare species in our area like the Matted Flax-lily and the Powerful Owl. However, it is important not to overlook the opportunities our area provides to see more common native animals and plants. Banyule and the nearby Yarra corridor is one of the few places in suburban Melbourne where residents can reliably see kangaroos, wombats, a huge variety of birds and pre-European River Redgums. If people develop a love for nature by getting to know these common species, they are also likely to care about the plight of rare and endangered species.

*James Deane*

## News & Events

### Upcoming Meetings

Thursday 2nd September at 7.30pm

Online General Meeting

Mark Bachmann speaking on environmental conservation and restoration. Followed by Nature Notes. Zoom meeting link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84576170542?pwd=QU5BZEdlTUlyenNPNzliYmZTWVVAZzZ09>

Meeting ID: 845 7617 0542

Passcode: 616438

Thursday 7th October at 7.30pm

(Online or Old Shire Office)

Annual General meeting at 7.30pm (see pg4) then General Meeting (approx 8pm) with Josh Griffiths speaking on urban platypuses. Followed by Nature Notes. Check WCS facebook for details.

### Upcoming Plantings

Plantings are postponed until further notice. We may resume as smaller groups when restrictions allow. Check WCS facebook for updates.

### Kapok Vine control at Banyule Billabong

With the cancellation of our scheduled plantings, a few of us have refocused as smaller groups to remove Kapok vine from Banyule Billabong. This has been an ongoing project that spans land managed by Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and Banyule Council.

Kapok Vine (*Araujia sericifera*) is an invasive climbing weed from South America. It smothers and outcompetes native vegetation, and spreads rapidly via large pods that release masses of fluffy airborne seeds. Control involves collecting and disposing of pods, cutting the plant just above the

## Who we are and how to contact us

### Warringal Conservation Society Inc

PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084

Email: [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com)

Web: <https://warringal.org.au/>

[www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety](https://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety)

**President:** James Deane

Telephone: 8060 8983

**Vice President:**

John D'Aloia

**Treasurer:** Daphne Hards

Telephone: 9497 4831

### Newsletter

Editor: James Deane

Telephone: 8060 8983

Email: [wcs.editor@gmail.com](mailto:wcs.editor@gmail.com)

Compilation & Mailing: Heather Smith, Don Stokes

**Planting Coordinator:** Rob Granter

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

ground and poisoning the roots. The plant exudes irritating milky sap when cut so gloves and glasses are a must.

Over the last couple of years we have worked along the eastern side of the Banyule Billabong to address some of the worst areas. Melbourne Water have also done weed control in the swamp that included Kapok Vine removal. The Banyule Bush Crew has assisted by picking up and disposing of the large piles of pods we often collect. By revisiting the same area several times to take care of vines missed in the first sweep, we have managed to make good progress. We are now looking to other parts of the Billabong to get on top of smaller infestations that have the potential to spread.

The Banyule Council has information on Kapok Vine in their “Weeds in Banyule booklet” (<https://www.banyule.vic.gov.au/About/Documents/Weeds-brochure>).



*Top: Kapok Vine releasing seeds.*

*Bottom: (Left to right )Rob Granter, James Deane, Heather Smith, Don Stokes, Daphne Hards, William Deane, Gianna Romano and Robert Deane with bags of Kapok vine pods collected at the Billabong. (photos: Rob Granter).*

### **Yarra Flats Tree Tops Adventure Course Proposal Panel Hearing**

A proposal for a tree-based adventure course at Yarra Flats park was considered by a State Government planning panel in July. The site of the proposed course is Banksia Billabong, a wetland which periodically fills from the Yarra and supports a number of quite old River Red Gums. The Banyule Council referred the project after receiving mostly negative feedback from Banyule Residents. See <https://shaping.banyule.vic.gov.au/C107> for details of the proposed planning amendment.

At the hearing, the company proposing the adventure course naturally made a case for the project to proceed. Many community groups and individuals presented arguments against the proposal, largely centred around fears that the ecological values of the area would be compromised. In a disappointing turn of events, the Banyule Council appointed a barrister to argue in favour of the development, and against the wishes of nearly all Banyule residents who presented. WCS was represented by James Deane who outlined concerns relating to the extent of proposed “dead wooding” and “canopy clean up”. Installing the course and associated walk ways may involve up to 15% of the canopy of some trees being removed. Ongoing pruning to ensure human safety appears to be open ended. Thus WCS expressed concerns that removal of dead wood and hollow bearing limbs will reduce the quality of the area as wildlife habitat.

Stay tuned, the planning panel will have submitted their report and a decision from Banyule Council and the State Planning Minister is expected shortly.

### **A longer tunnel for the North East Link?**

In June this year the Victorian State Government announced that the Spark consortium is the preferred bidder to deliver the tunnelling component of the North East Link Project. This was followed by an article in the Age newspaper reporting that the consortium’s bid proposed extending tunnelling under Greensborough to emerge just north of Simpson Barracks (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/state-s-favoured-bidder-proposes-longer-north-east-link-tunnel-20210624-p58419.html>). A longer tunnel could prevent loss of remnant bushland in the Barracks that supports wildlife and threatened plants. This option was recommended by the North East Link Inquiry and Advisory Panel to reduce environmental and social impacts, but was rejected by the Planning Minister.



## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Thursday October 7, 2021  
7.30pm (Old Shire Offices or Online)**

### **BUSINESS**

- 1 Confirmation of Minutes of 2020 Annual General Meeting
- 2 Annual Report of the Committee
- 3 Financial statements
- 4 Election of members of the Committee
- 5 Annual subscription fee

### **July Speaker - Robert Bender - Microbats of Wilson Reserve**

We managed to have a meeting at the Old Shire Offices in July and heard an inspiring tale of citizen science from Robert Bender.

The natural hollows and crevices that provide safe roost for microbats take many years to form and have largely disappeared from Wilson Reserve in Ivanhoe due to widespread clearing of older eucalypts. In August 2000 Robert and David Barr installed 8 bat boxes at Wilson Reserve in Ivanhoe. The aim was to encourage bats into the area by providing an alternative to scarce natural roosts. Boxes can also be easily checked to allow population monitoring and other studies. It was hoped that as bats emerged from their winter hibernation, they would take advantage of the purpose designed boxes.

Several years of box checking and disappointment ensued. Spiders were the most common bat box occupant found. Ants, wasps and even a Brushtail Possum used the boxes, but bats were absent.

Where others may have given up, Robert persisted. In February 2005 a Gould's Wattled bat was found during a box check, followed by more of the same species later in the year and pregnant females in spring. By March 2006 the colony of Gould's Wattled bats using the boxes had grown to 93 individuals. Shortly after this, another species of bat, the White-striped Freetail, was detected during box checks. The now successful project was enlarged with the addition of more boxes in 2006. Since then Eastern Broadnose, Large Forest and Chocolate Wattled bats have been detected. Stanley Barker has also installed bat boxes at the nearby Burke Rd Billabong.

The bat box project has provided opportunities to study bat biology. As well as documenting bat numbers and breeding, projects with researchers at the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University have investigated: parasites affecting

bats, the links to bat populations at Organ Pipes Park and the La Trobe Wildlife Reserve, the mixed paternity (different fathers) of twin bat offspring, bat diet, and the value of bat boxes for offsetting habitat loss. An important finding has been that bat boxes suit the needs to of the generalist species Gould's Wattled bat, but they are not used frequently by other species. This indicates that bat boxes are a useful supplementary measure, but cannot be expected to completely offset the loss of trees with natural hollows and crevices.

*James Deane*



1. Mother with young hanging onto her belly.
2. Close up of a young bat.
3. Record number of bats in a single box (102).

## August Speaker - Pam Whitely - Wildlife Health



Wildlife health surveillance is essential for managing habitat and ecosystems. It provides baseline data to determine whether wildlife is doing better or worse, and also provides insight into diseases that can be transferred between wildlife, humans, agricultural animals and domestic animals.

At our August general meeting we heard from Pam Whitely who runs Wildlife Health Victoria Surveillance from the University of Melbourne Veterinary School at Werribee. Pam investigates causes of wildlife death and poor health throughout Victoria, often relying on reports from the general

public. Pam presented a series of wildlife case studies that included mite-induced mange in Koalas, dehydrated Ring Tail Possums, viral beak and feather disease in parrots, chytrid fungus infection and aluminium poisoning in frogs, waterbirds with bacterial infections, parasite infection and phalaris (grass) toxicity in Kangaroos, and a dolphin suffering from infection by a cat parasite. We also heard about rodenticide (eg Ratsak) poisoning of wildlife. WCS committee member Doug McNaughton contacted Pam regarding the death of several Tawny Frogmouth at Rosanna parklands. The bird that Pam examined had internal bleeding and rodent poison in its liver, suggesting that it died from eating poisoned mice.

Wildlife Health Victoria Surveillance is keen to gather data from across Victoria, particularly arid and alpine regions which are currently understudied. There is also a scarcity of information on reptiles. While reports from the Melbourne area are over-represented, Pam is likely to be interested in notable or large events. A flier explaining Wildlife Health Victoria Surveillance with Pam's contact details can be found on the WCS website under publications (<https://warringal.org.au/resources/publications>).

*James Deane*

## Nature Notes

### July

The storms and heavy rain during June brought great destruction to the Dandenongs, but did little damage to the Banyule area. The Yarra flooded along its course, rising high enough to fill most of the billabongs. Dianne Williamson showed pictures of the Plenty confluence, and James Deane had taken a time-lapse series of the Yarra at Banyule Flats. The water first flowed in at the west end, but then rose to flow in at the Windmill end; the river had risen to cover the base of the windmill. The ephemeral billabong in the South Paddock also filled, revealing the lines of a shallow former billabong. By the time Daphne Hards inspected Bolin Bolin Billabong, the river had fallen and was flowing out of the billabong and back to the river. Ducks and herons hastily investigated the new water and frogs rejoiced noisily. Only the Annulus in Yarra Flats missed out. This flood contributed far more water to the Billabongs than has been achieved by recent official watering, and should be a tonic for River Red Gums and riverine woodland.

In Wilson Reserve Bailey and Reedy Billabongs both filled. Robert Bender showed a tragic photo (taken by Ro Nixon) of a grieving mother Wombat – her well-grown young one had been unable to escape their flooded burrow and had drowned. Wombats find the riverside soil easy to burrow in but it can be perilous.

As I backed the car out on 20<sup>th</sup> June, to join the Kapok Vine Working-bee, I spotted a very large bird perched in the backyard Sugar Gum. Binoculars showed that it was a Powerful Owl! Daylight sightings are very rare. Next moment it had gone.

Doug McNaughton reported seeing 2 Powerful owls in an Ironbark at Macleod – where there are plenty of Ringtail Possums to feed them.

On 28<sup>th</sup> June, I saw a small flock of Cattle Egrets at Banyule Swamp – my only sighting this year. I also



## Nature Notes cont

glimpsed a Wombat dashing into its burrow at the west end of the billabong.

*Anthea Fleming*

Photos shown at the meeting (below) included:

Anthea Fleming - 1) a Gum Moth caterpillar, 2) A fungus on dead wood a Banyule Billabong, 3) a Raven collecting nest material and 4) A Kookaburra at Banyule Billabong .

Dianne Williamson - 5) Flooding as seen from the bridge at the confluence of the Yarra and Plenty Rivers and 6) A Wombat at the site of the flooding doing burrow repairs a couple of weeks later.



## August

7

Doug McNaughton reported large numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets at Upper Heidelberg Rd and Preston.

Daphne Hards showed photos of an interesting Case-moth – its case was formed of two gum-leaves stuck together.

On the Main Yarra Trail at Bonds Rd, Dianne Williamson saw a group of 14 White-winged choughs feeding on the ground.

Rob Granter was lucky to see a Platypus in the Yarra at midday.

Robert Bender reported 3 different small Tiger Snakes, about 30 cms long, while weeding at Wilson Reserve. Also a tiny Southern Brown Tree-frog (*Litoria ewingi*), a Striped Marsh Frog, and a Weasel Skink. He has been attacking the growths of Ivy in the centre reserve in Rotherwood Rd. Cape Ivy and masses of Large-leafed Privet were also removed. He showed photos of a serious weed, the Cape Leeuwin Wattle (*Paraserianthes lophanta*), from WA. Nurseries sell it as a 'native' but its weed potential is high

James Deane saw some King Parrots, and Pied Currawongs at Phillips Fox Billabong which were attacking a brood of very young Black Ducklings. The ducklings were able to escape by diving underwater till they reached cover.



## Nature Notes cont.

Heather Smith quoted Brett Lane's recent comments on the importance of citizen science, now that so many nature survey programs are under-funded or de-funded. Much of the environmental evidence put forward at government enquiries is 30 years out of date, being derived from regional fauna surveys made in the 1990s. In addition, Environmental Studies courses now carry expensive fees.

Anthea Fleming was pleased to see a pair of Brown Thornbills in the back garden – the first for many years. She showed photos of her non-indigenous wattles currently in flower: 1) Ovens Wattle (*Acacia pravissima*), 2) Knife-leaf Wattle (*A. cultriformis*) from the Pilliga, 3) Wyalong wattle (*A. cardiophylla*) and 4) an unidentified species. She also showed a photo of a Red Wattlebird feeding on a tall Grevillea shrub (5 & 6).



\*\*\*\*\* Reminder - yearly subscriptions are due each July \*\*\*\*\*

**Warringal Conservation Society Annual Membership Renewal July 2021 - June 2022**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### Subscription types:

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Concession \$15 (seniors/students etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life subscription \$200                |

### There are three ways to renew:

1. By mail: Fill in this form and mail with your cheque or money order to:  
 PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 Victoria.

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. Renew online at:  
[www.warringal.org.au/about-us/membership](http://www.warringal.org.au/about-us/membership)  
 Any queries email: [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com)

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to receive my newsletter by email.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes - put me on the Plantings notification list. |



## Nature Notes cont.

Lydia Sims sent a lovely picture of wattles in bloom at the Banyule Billabong (below) - a nice reminder of what most of us can still enjoy during another lockdown.



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**CONSERVATION SOCIETY**  
COVERING THE CITY OF HEIDELBERG