

# INDIGENOTES

Images of the Yarra at North Balwyn by Ken Duxbury

# Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at North Balwyn

*By Ken Duxbury*

Whilst going for an early morning walk recently, (on 5 October 1998) through a small Yarraside park just upstream from Burke road Bridge I unexpectedly came across two Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. The birds were stripping the bark off dead (or almost dead) and senescent Silver Wattle trees with their powerful beaks, and then gouging for boring insects. Some of their excavations spectacularly large.

I believe that this food-gathering emphasises the ecological importance of retaining dead, dying and insect-riddled trees, rather than trying to create a sanitised landscape in which all the plants are green, healthy, full of youthful vigour, and free of decay.

It also negates the view that Black Wattles are undesirable trees because they are short lived and prone to borer attack. These characteristics do make Black Wattles an unsuitable species for street and carpark planting. In such situations, species such as Blackwood and Lightwood are more appropriate.

There is also a need for native vegetation protection controls to protect dead, dying and diseased vegetation, unless there is some compelling reason - such as public safety - for the tree (or other vegetation) to be removed. This applies to borer-inhabited gum trees as well as to wattle trees.

The still-living Silver Wattle trees at North Balwyn were heavily bedecked with Grey Mistletoe, a very attractive species which flowers for most of the year, and appears to grow only on wattle trees, mainly along water courses. It seems to grow most vigorously on senescent rather than on young and vigorous trees. It provides specialised habitat for Mistletoe Birds and other birdlife and is the host plant for the Wood White and other butterflies.

The return of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo to the Yarra Valley appears to be due to the extensive revegetation carried out since the mid 1970's, with the development of the Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park. I have also seen flocks of more than ten of the birds on the wing, perching in riverside River Red Gums, and (in September 1995) feasting on Pine cones.

The birds to have returned about ten years ago after a very long absence; I first observed them in September 1989. In a chapter on Birds of the Melbourne District prepared for the *Handbook of the Australasian Associa-*

*tion for the Advancement of Science*, Melbourne Meeting 1900, G. A. Keartland observes that (p. 109): "Although in the early [eighteen] fifties these birds were common in the neighbourhood of Heidelberg and other places along the course of the Yarra, they are only found at present in the vicinity of the Dandenong Ranges. Their slow flight and loud cries as they traverse from one part of the ranges to another at once proclaiming their identity. They extremely fond of the larvae of insects, which they extract from decayed trees by the aid of their powerful bills."

Despite the great habitat and recreational potential of the small Yarraside Park upstream from Burke Road it is being sadly neglected - and actively mismanaged - by the City of Boroondara. No revegetation works and minimal weed control works have been carried out. A large part of the land has for several years been used as a dump for fill material, and for leaves and litter collected from storm water drains. The litter includes such things as aluminium cans, plastic bags, polystyrene cups, plastic bottles, cigarette butts and packets and McDonalds residue. The material is left exposed to the elements, and can be and is washed or blown into the river. There is also a problem with weeds being brought into the area, especially the seeds of Ash trees - a popular Boroondara street tree.

I have written to the City of Boroondara and local councillors about this matter, and have also had a letter published in the local paper but have not achieved any positive response. Unfortunately, the condition of this park is typical of the other open spaces along the Yarra which are managed - or should be managed - by the City of Boroondara. In the five years since Boroondara was created, almost no weed control (other than slashing of exotic grasses) and little or no revegetation has been carried out. This attitude - which appears to be an extension of the old City of Camberwell's attitude to the Yarra Valley, is epitomised by their so-called Land Reclamation, i.e. rubbish tip project, of 1959-74 - in stark contrast to the extensive weed removal, revegetation and trail construction works recently carried out on the Ivanhoe side of the river by the City of Banyule, with funding from Parks Victoria.

Post Script:

I have just learnt that the City of Boroondara has applied for Parks Victoria funding for the enhancement of the area of open space upstream from Burke Road Bridge. This will, I hope, usher in a new era in which Council cherishes its riverside open space, and works towards realising its full conservation and recreational potential.

# A Cooperative Man - Les Smith

## Barry Traill profiles a committed conservationist and good friend of the Trust for Nature

Some conservationists think that they are veterans after three or four years. It's when you meet people like Les Smith that you realise some people have made a commitment spanning three or four decades and are still helping to protect and manage significant chunks of the world. Les has helped a plethora of organisations over the years. Amongst other things, he has been President of the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society and Secretary of Environment Victoria. However, most importantly from Trust for Nature's perspective, he has been a strong supporter of conservation cooperatives, where groups of people get together and put up their own money to buy threatened bushland.

His first involvement in conservation was in post-war England where he helped lobby for the creation of national parks. In Australia he became an active conservationist in the Blackburn area soon after his arrival here in 1953. In the early 1970's there was a need to protect bush after the controversy surrounding a proposal to clear the Little Desert. This led to the idea of forming conservation cooperatives. Under this concept, dozens or maybe hundreds of individuals would each put in a share and collectively raise the funds to buy threatened bush. Les was keen to get involved and joined the first two such co-ops in Victoria. He says, "It was a practical way of helping protect a piece of land. It especially appealed because it allowed me and my family to have a continuing involvement with the land, something that's a bit more tangible than a simple donation."

Les has had most to do with the Urimbirra Cooperative (Urim-beer-a). He has been a shareholder since it's earliest days, and a Director since the early 1980's. He remembers that it was set up in 1973 to protect an important 388 hectare block of land on the northern fringe of the Little Desert. The area had rare Yellow Gum woodland and large areas of Mallee Heathland.

He pays strong tribute to Bob English, who worked tirelessly to get the concept up and to "sell" it to enough people to make it viable. In the end, more than a hundred people kicked in with one, two or more shares of \$25. The grand sum of \$6,000 was quickly raised and the land purchased and protected.

Les has vivid memories of the celebratory first trip to see the land. "More than 100 people came up. We camped at the nearby Bill's Gully hall and travelled to the block in a converted Land Rover with seats in the back. It was very wet and we had trouble getting to see our new purchase." Since then the Co-operative has steadily maintained its role of protecting the land. Shares are passed down to children who have come

to value "their" block of wonderful Mallee heath and woodland.

In 1990, the Co-operative voted to place a conservation covenant on the property to ensure its permanent protection. To add to the value of the land, in 1993 Andrew Luke bought an adjacent 640 hectares which is now also protected with a covenant. Then in 1995 a new opportunity arose to buy an adjacent 647 hectares! The Cooperative was keen and a push was made to sign up new shareholders. The entry price hadn't changed - \$25 still bought a shareholder the right to be part of the Cooperative. The money was soon raised and Urimbirra is now the proud owner of over 1000 hectares of extraordinary Mallee wilderness. As well as Urimbirra, Les is a member of no less than three other conservation cooperatives: Timboon, Kurri-Kurri (both near Warrnambool) and the Montrose Environment Group Cooperative at Wartook.

Les is passionate about this approach to protecting bushland. "It's a great way of protecting bushland without a big outlay of dollars by an individual. People can 'own' a block for \$200 or less and have the satisfaction of knowing that they've protected it."

### **About Conservation Cooperatives**

Cooperatives to buy bushland can be set up by any group of individuals. Strict state laws apply to their setting up and operation. The Trust for Nature encourages members and supporters to consider developing a cooperative to protect important bushland areas. Further details can be obtained from the Registrar of Cooperatives in the Office of Fair Trading, Victorian Department of Justice or contact Barry Traill or Brian Whelan at the Trust for Nature (03 9670 9933).

The first cooperative in Victoria was one set up by the Montrose Environment Group which bought land at Wartook. The second was the Urimbirra Cooperative. New shareholders are welcome in the existing cooperatives which have conservation cooperatives on their land: Urimbirra, Kurri-Kurri and Timboon. The Trust for Nature office can provide contact details.

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### **Stop Press! More Little Desert land to receive protection**

At a landscape level, the Urimbirra Coop's 1,000 hectares is part of a huge area of land now protected on the north fringe of the Little Desert Park. There are already 2 covenants in the area plus the new Urimbirra property where a covenant is being negotiated. In addition, the Trust's recent Mt. Elgin purchase adds nearly 300 protected hectares of crucial Red Gum wetland. And only one month ago more land was purchased by Trust members Bob and Sari Cruce with assistance from local Trust supporter and Mallee lover Whimpey Reichelt and Trust for Nature staff Neil Marriot and Barry Traill. They plan to covenant this stunning 600 hectare property just to the west of Urimbirra. In total this will bring the land protected by the Trust in the district to over 2500 hectares of mallee and woodland!

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Source: Nature News, Newsletter of the Trust for Nature (Victoria) No. 9, October 1998





















# Threatened Species Network Community Grants 1998-1999

The Threatened Species Network (TSN) is a community based program funded from the Endangered Species Program of the Natural Heritage Trust and World Wide Fund for Nature Australia (WWF). The Threatened Species Network's mission is to involve the community in the recovery of threatened species and ecological communities.

## **Endangered Species Program:**

The Commonwealth Endangered Species Program is funded from the Natural Heritage Trust. The goal of the Endangered Species Program is to protect and conserve Australia's threatened species and ecological communities. For further information: <http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten>

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## **World Wide Fund for Nature :**

WWF's mission is to conserve nature and ecological processes by preserving genetic, species and ecological community diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable and promoting actions to reduce pollution and the wasteful exploitation and consumption of resources and energy. WWF's goal is "To stop, and eventually reverse the accelerating degradation of our planet's natural environment, and to help build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature."

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The Threatened Species Network Community Grants have been established to support and inspire community work to recover threatened species and ecological communities. The Grants aim to provide seed funding to assist community groups to take on long term responsibility for conservation and recovery of populations of threatened species and ecological communities.

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## **Who can apply for these grants**

Incorporated community-based organisations are invited to apply for funding. Incorporated regional or catchment management organisations will be considered where the majority of members are non-government community representatives. Applications from community groups working in partnership with state government agencies, local government, schools or universities are encouraged, however, the latter organi-

sations are not eligible to apply for funding by themselves.

## **What activities are eligible?**

In order to be considered for funding, proposals should:

1. Help to remove threats to populations of threatened species which are considered a national priority. Projects that help remove threats to endangered ecological communities will also be considered.

## **Threatened species and threatened ecological communities:**

For a list of nationally threatened species and nationally threatened ecological communities listed under the *Endangered Species Protection Act* (1992) contact your state TSN Coordinator or view it at: [http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/lists/esp\\_lists/](http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/lists/esp_lists/)

## **'Unlisted' species and ecological communities:**

Where a species or ecological community is considered to be threatened but is not listed under the *Endangered Species Protection Act* (1992), applications should be accompanied by a nomination prepared in accordance with the instructions at:

[http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/legislation\\_strategies/australias\\_environmental\\_legislation/20.htm](http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/legislation_strategies/australias_environmental_legislation/20.htm), and/or [http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/lists/listing\\_processes/ecolcomm.htm](http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/lists/listing_processes/ecolcomm.htm)

2. Be consistent with any Action or Recovery Plan. For information about Action and Recovery Plans contact your state TSN Coordinator or view: <http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/plans>
3. Be for 'hands on' work. Work undertaken should aim to mitigate major threats on-ground.

## **Project work may include:**

- enhancing, restoring, and establishing key habitat;
  - controlling feral animals and weeds;
  - establishing population survey and monitoring programs;
  - managing visitor access;
  - sign posting;
  - establishing conservation management agreements for key sites on private land;
  - propagating and planting of threatened plant species (see Appendix A);
  - managing for fire;
  - fencing.
4. Encourage the local community to take on responsibility for on going management within a short period of time. Preference will be given to projects which establish or strengthen existing partnerships between industry, Local or State Government Bodies, educational institutions, community groups, and landholders.
  5. Be site specific and not necessarily cover the entire range of the species.

6. Funded projects will be substantially in the public interest and must not include activities that are the primary responsibility of a government agency.
7. Projects will be funded in the expectation that the Threatened Species Network can promote them as models of best practice conservation elsewhere in Australia.
8. Projects should include substantial contributions in addition to grant funds. In general, the value of the proponent's financial and in kind contributions should match or exceed the funds sought. Preference will be given to projects that use the grant funds for materials, equipment hire, travel, communications, and expert advice, rather than salaries. Administration costs should not exceed 10% of the project budget.
9. Where the proposed work is to be conducted on land not held by the applicant, evidence of approval from the landholder must be provided.
10. The proponent is responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals. Projects will not be considered unless there has been consultation with the appropriate government agency regarding compliance with legislative protections. Although licences are not required at this stage, an indication from state government staff that permits are likely to be granted should be included in the application.

In some instances, funding may be provided to focus on 'flagship' species (such as koala or Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby) which are not listed as nationally threatened, provided the project will lead to broader habitat conservation that would benefit nationally threatened species and ecological communities. Relevant information concerning the background or need for the project should be provided. Projects which have been discussed with your state TSN Coordinator are more likely to be successful.

### **Funding**

In this round up to \$300,000 will be distributed nationally to a range of projects. In the project application should be costed in a similar manner to the rates recommended in the Natural Heritage Trust "Guide to new applications 1999-2000", which can be viewed at or obtained from the Natural Heritage Trust Hotline: 1800 065 823; or <http://www.nht.gov.au/funds.htm>.

### **Due date**

Applications must be lodged with the WWF head office by 5.00 pm, Eastern Summer Time, on Wednesday 6 January, 1999.

### **Time lines**

Project work in most cases is expected to be undertaken from April 1999 and completed by April 2000. Funds for approved projects will be available from March 1999.

### **Assessment Panel**

Applications will be assessed by a National Assessment Panel comprised of representatives of the WWF, Environment Australia, and three independent experts.

Successful applicants will be required to:

- use the grant funds for the purposes specified in their application;
- maintain a separate record of the financial administration of the grant, which may be audited;
- report on the project outputs and financial expenditure;
- acknowledge the contributions of the Natural Heritage Trust, Environment Australia and WWF where appropriate, including with an on site sign;
- advise the state TSN Coordinator in a timely manner of public activities to enable the Network to advertise these events for public participation;
- provide digital or 35 mm images of the project activities;
- be available for media events on site if appropriate.

### **Lodging your application**

Supporting material should be no more than eight, A4 sized pages containing black and white text and graphics. An electronic version of the application form is available from the Threatened Species Network Coordinator in your state, or on the TSN website at: <http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn>  
Please use this form to prepare your application but it cannot be lodged electronically.

### Address to lodge applications:

Attention: Miriam Streulens  
TSN Community Grants  
World Wide Fund for Nature Australia,  
GPO Box 528, Sydney NSW 2001  
Ph: (02) 9299 6366, Fax: (02) 9299 6656  
E-mail: [mstreulens@wwf.org.au](mailto:mstreulens@wwf.org.au)

### **Contacts:**

#### State TSN Coordinators:

VICTORIA Felicity Faris Ph. (03) 9650 8296 Fax (03) 9654 6843 Email: [tsnvc@ozemail.com.au](mailto:tsnvc@ozemail.com.au)  
NEW SOUTH WALES Claire Carlton Ph (02) 9279 1519 Fax (02) 9299 4411 Email: [ntsnnsw@peg.apc.org](mailto:ntsnnsw@peg.apc.org)

### **Appendix A: Guidelines**

Projects involving growing and planting threatened plant species, or simply planting for habitat restoration, should adhere to:

Australian Network for Plant Conservation 1997. "Guidelines for the Translocation of Threatened Plants in Australia", ANPC, Canberra. Available from ANPC @ \$10: ph. (02) 6250 9509, fax (02) 6250 9599, e-mail [anpc@anbg.gov.au](mailto:anpc@anbg.gov.au)

Environment Australia, Sustainable Landscapes Branch 1998. "Bushcare Species Policy". In *Bushcare Program Outline*, EA, Canberra. Available from Environment Australia free: ph. (02) 6250 0247, fax (02) 6250 7217, e-mail [john.williams@ea.gov.au](mailto:john.williams@ea.gov.au)

# IFFA activities:

**IFFA (Vic) End of Year Gathering:  
7:30 pm onwards,  
Monday 21 December 1998  
150 Lygon St., East Brunswick  
Thai Nee Restaurant**

The restaurant is closed on Mondays and owner and IFFA member, Eric Ward is kindly offering the place to IFFA to hold an end of year gathering.

All IFFA members have been working hard for our indigenous flora and fauna throughout the year but we haven't provided the opportunities to meet as a group to hear about people's good works.

So, please come along with your stories for the year (a slide projector will be available), and ideas, thoughts or actions that you may have to help rejuvenate that earlier collective spirit of IFFA.

Finger food, dips, breads etc. will be provided and maybe a curry or two. BYO drinks. To help sort out food needs please RSVP to Peter Tucker if possible at (03) 9818 1537 (AH).

## **SPIFFA**

Public meetings are on the first Monday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Waterfall Gully Community Centre, corner of Bayview Rd. and Nixon St., Rosebud.  
Contact: Jon Greening (03) 5985 5561.

## **Membership**

IFFA membership costs  
\$40 for non-profit organizations,  
\$50 for corporations,  
\$25 for individuals and families,  
or \$20 concession.

**Membership includes  
11 issues of Indigenotes per year.**

*Members should check the mailing label to ascertain the status of their membership. If people require and invoice, please send a purchase order and we will oblige accordingly.*

*Otherwise we do not issue reminders to members.*

*Cheques can be remitted to the Membership Secretary's P.O. Box as listed. A receipt will be attached to the front page of the following issue.*

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### **Office Bearers:**

**President:** Roger Jones, 20 Patterson St., Bon Beach 3197 Ph. (03) 9772 1707 (ah) or (03) 9239 4555 (bh). Fax (03) 9239 4688. Email: roger.jones@dar.csiro.au

**Vice-President:** Peter Tucker, (03) 9818 1537 (ah).

**Secretary:** Lill Roberts, P.O. Box 192, Blackburn South 3130, Ph. (03) 9878 0858 Email: lill@netspace.com.au

**Membership Secretary and Treasurer:** Neil Gardiner, P.O. Box 2055, East Ivanhoe 3079, (03) 9499 7048.

**Committee members:** Geoff Carr (03) 9481 7679(bh) and (03) 9380 8582.

### **Editorial team:**

**c/o P.O. Box 228, Preston, Victoria, 3072.**

Editor: Lincoln Kern, (03) 9480 4680 (ah).

Coming Events: Marcus Bechley

Contributions to *Indigenotes* should be sent to the editor — the deadline for the next issue is November 15th. Contributions can be typed or hand written but computer disk copies on PC-compatible format is preferred.

*The views expressed in Indigenotes are not necessarily those of the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association.*