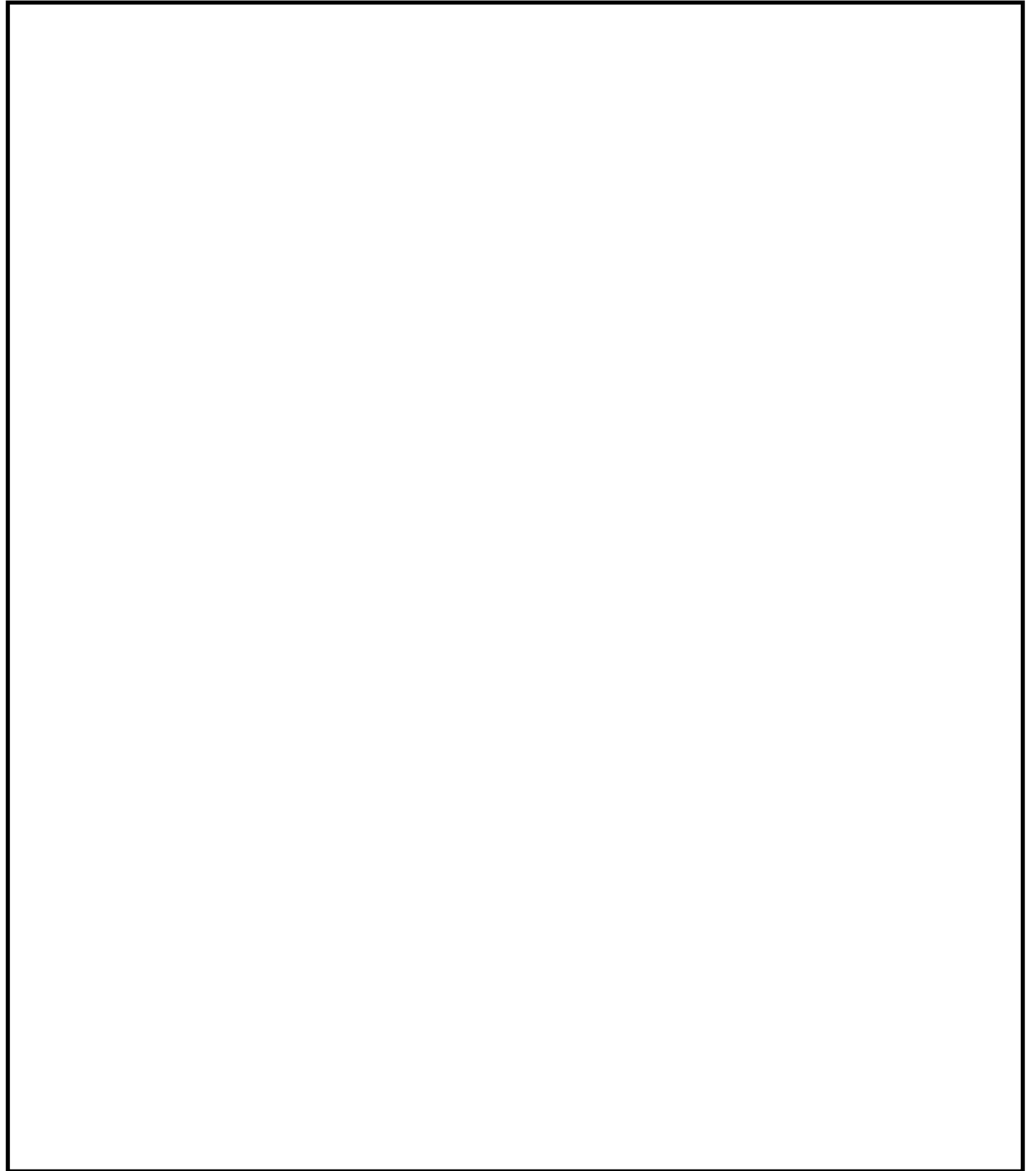


INDIGENOTES



PLAINS WANDERER

A regular series by botanist Ian Lunt* on endangered native grasslands and grassy woodlands

Who says 'small is beautiful'?

The consumer catchcry 'big is better' is often heard from conservationists. Big reserves can contain more ecosystems, more species and may be more viable than small remnants. But this need not always occur. And what priorities does one give if there simply aren't any big remnants to choose from?

The opposing argument to 'big is better' is 'small is bad', and the ecological equivalent to 'small is bad' is the damning 'small remnants are inviable'. And everyone knows that inviable remnants are not worthy of resources. But are small remnants really inviable or is this merely a convenient excuse for inactivity? The prophecy of inviability is obviously self-fulfilling: any remnant deemed inviable will receive no management and, as predicted, will inevitably degrade and disappear.

In coming Plains Wanderer articles I want to examine the pervasive notion of remnant viability. Judgements on 'viability' are implicit in many day-to-day conservation decisions, even though there has been little practical research on what constitutes a 'viable remnant' for plants (animals are somewhat better served in this regard). At a simple level, what do we mean when we talk about a 'viable remnant'? Many people mean a remnant that can survive in perpetuity without human intervention. But under this definition, can any grassland or heathland that needs regular burning ever be viable?

The repercussions of decisions on viability are enormous - they can determine the life or death of a remnant. So it is a bit worrying that we all have such woolly definitions on 'viability'. I don't have lots of answers to give, but the issue is important enough to deserve a thoughtful prod. In this column we'll examine a small part of the big problem; are lots of small remnants intrinsically bad?

An oft-repeated lament of grassland conservationists is, 'wouldn't it be nice if we had a few big reserves instead of lots of tiny remnants'. This lament often precedes the sad refrain (as if stoi-

cally acknowledging the decline of the family dog), 'because... you know... these small reserves ... they aren't really viable any more ... are they?'

I'll discuss viability in a later column, but first let's examine the underlying belief that a few large reserves are intrinsically better than many small remnants. A couple of big remnants might be easier to manage than many small ones, but are they necessarily the most effective way to save grassland species and communities? Let's examine the issue from a historical perspective.

The 1893 Grassland Conservation Strategy

Nineteenth century planners were diligent and thorough, although rather uncreative, creatures. They followed three very simple rules: Rule 1 - All roads and allotment boundaries go straight, regardless of topography. Rule 2 - Fertile land is for crops, not-quite-so-fertile land is for grazing, and infertile hills are for forestry. Rule 3 - Liberally pepper the maps with future town sites. Conservation? Sorry, no rules for conservation.

But imagine that the early planners did have an enlightened rule for conservation, Sub-rule 4(g): 'grassland reserves are to be set aside in every agricultural and pastoral region, but are not to exceed 0.5% of the area of any region'. Had such a rule been enacted and all these remnants survived, we would have ended up with about the same area of grassland remnants as now survives in many regions. The only difference is that these remnants would have been set aside by design rather than fortuitously being saved by accident.

If you were the 19th century grassland planner for the western basalt plains, how would you design the placement of the remnants? Let's assume that conservation priorities were much the same then as now, so you will of course be an exempt employee, fresh from university, with no funds for fieldwork or travel, virtually no base-line data, and six weeks to complete the '1893 Grassland Conservation Strategy' for the minister to launch at the forthcoming election.

Should you declare a few 'big' reserves (e.g. five at

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300 ha each) or lots of tiny remnants (e.g. 500 at 3ha each)? What shape should the remnants be, square or linear?

The young planners would of course have consulted their university notes on island biogeography and might have concluded that it was far better to save a few large round reserves than many small linear remnants. That's what I remember being told at uni. Simple. Solved. But would we be in a better position now if someone had made such a decision, or are we better off by having lots of linear remnants?

Fortunately, no such planners existed last century. There is little doubt that plant conservation is now in a far better position by having many small remnants rather than a handful of big reserves of comparable area and quality. (This probably isn't true for animals though). The reason is simple. No region is completely the same. Rainfall, topography and soils vary greatly, even across 'boring flat plains'. A few large compact reserves will include just a small proportion of this environmental variation. By contrast, lots of small, widely scattered remnants will include more environmental variation. As plant species change with environmental conditions, more species and communities are likely to be protected by protecting the widest possible amount of environmental variation.

From a historical perspective, there is little doubt that, if we had to lose 99.5% of all grassland regions to agriculture, we have probably saved far more species and far greater variation in our grassland communities by accidentally saving many small remnants. Many species would have been lost had only a handful of large remnants survived. Furthermore, while the textbooks universally decry the value of linear remnants, linear remnants (assuming they are viable) can include much more regional variation than can a few circular or square reserves of the same area.

For example, the Derrimut grassland reserve in western Melbourne occupies 154 ha (or 1.54 million square metres) and is about 1.5 kms long by 1 km wide. A linear remnant, 20 m wide, would have to be 77 km long to contain the same area. A 77 km remnant would stretch from Melbourne to Geelong, and would obviously include far more environmental variation than the rectangular reserve at Derrimut. It presumably would also encompass a greater range of vegetation communities and plant species.

If our young grassland planners had set aside five

square reserves, each of 300 ha (i.e. 1.7 km long by 1.7 km wide), then 15 million square metres of grassland would have been set aside. If this area was all in a 20 m wide strip, the remnant would have stretched for 750 km; from Melbourne to Hamilton and back again. Such a long linear remnant would undoubtedly include many more plant species and communities than five square reserves. (Many animals require a rectangular habitat to provide adequate food supplies and home ranges, but the shape of the remnant is largely irrelevant to small grassland plants).

Grassland conservation has a grim future because so much has been lost, so little of what remains is secure, and even less is managed properly. Nevertheless, the common refrain that grasslands are badly off just because all of the remnants are small is a little too simplistic.

If we had to choose a network of reserves which collectively occupied only 0.5% of each grassland region, without having any base-line botanical data to guide our choice of sites, we probably couldn't have picked a better strategy than to save many long thin remnants. The small remnants saved on our rail-lines and roadsides undoubtedly encompass far more species and communities than would have been saved in a handful of big reserves of comparable area. Small remnants may be bothersome, but from a historical perspective they certainly aren't all bad. Perhaps small can be beautiful.

Erratum: Neville Scarlett's article in January's Plains Wanderer column referred to *Euphorbia scabra*. This should of course have been the endangered Rough Eyebright, *Euphrasia scabra*. My mistake from some late night typing.

Slaughterhouse Tasmania

By John Robin*

Each month I get my copy of *Indigenotes*, and marvel at the mass of urban enthusiasm and activity surrounding revegetation in Melbourne.

Things are vastly different in rural northern Tasmania, where sheep are gumbooted and men are nervous!

There are a scattering of landcare groups across the north of the state, and a small but active collection of Field Nats and SGAP groups, but by the time you have a secretary and treasurer, there aren't enough greenies to go around!

Conservation in my local area, the Great Western Tiers, presents a sorry story indeed. The Tiers are a major junction of northern, southern, eastern and western floras and faunas. There are large Karst systems at the western end and a largely horizontal stratification of doleritic soils of the alpine central plateau (circa 11,300m) with their cliffs and scree slopes, overlying Ordovician sandstones, including sandstone cliffs, below it.

The Tiers contain alpine herbfield to dry sclerophyll, King Billy Pine to Kangaroo Grass, and there area a number of subalpine and montane Sphagnum bogs, of various Sphagnum species.

There are ten known eucalypt species in the area, with low altitude occurrences of *Athrotaxis cupressoides*, *Podocarpus lawrencii* and *Telopea truncata* along the Meander River (300m elevation). The area contains 3 rainforest community types, two poorly reserved, twenty-seven wet forest community types, ten of which were poorly conserved, the dry forest types are yet to be studied.

Bizarre mixtures of species occur, such as *Eucalyptus amygdalina* (Black Peppermint) dominated *Sphagnum cristatum* bogs, to the co-existence of the species on the Meander River mentioned above, with unlikely species such as *Monotoca glauca*, *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, *Banksia marginata*, *Epacris exerta* and *Bossiaea riparia*.

All species of Tasmanian mammals are found in the area (including sightings of Thylacines over a number of years), there are 70 species of birds known from the region including Wedge-tailed Eagle, White Goshawk, and a host of other raptors, wrens, robins, thornbills, honeyeaters, cockatoos and cuckoos.

There are eight known reptiles, four known native

* C/o P.O. Meander, Tas 7304.

fish, including River Black Fish and although no extensive invertebrate surveys have been done, the area is known to contain velvet worms (Onychophorans) and the living fossil Hairy Cicada (*Tettigarcta tomentosa*). If what flies through my house (and carries most of it away) is anything to go on, the invertebrate fauna will prove immense. There is also a highly evolved and endemic cave fauna too.

The Parks Wildlife and Heritage Dept. have recommended in an internal report that the whole of the Great Western Tiers be proclaimed a National Park. The report was hidden, only being leaked a few years ago.

Despite this wealth of spectacular flora (oops! I forgot the creeping rhizomatous *Poa* sp.) and scenery to rival the Blue Mountains, the area has been and is continuing to be clearfelled. The timber goes to APPM.

The west slopes of Warner's Sugarloaf was clearfelled over a few years in the late 80's, and wiped out a local population of what was thought for several years to be *Glycine latrobiana*. It has since been determined as *G. tabacina*. But Forestry knew about it, wiped out over half the colony, fenced the rest, the fence got nicked, and the rest was swamped by a sea of regenerating grasses. The whole area, including the rare riverine flora on the Meander River was subsequently clearfelled and bulldozed for the Meander Irrigation Dam (Drinking water for Deloraine downstream is so heavily polluted that it is heavily chlorinated (some readings of *E.coli* were "too numerous to count") but the dam was not there for drinking. The Irrigation Dam was subsequently scrapped. There is massive streambank erosion now occurring involving mobile "silt" including "particles" up to 1 metre in diameter causing braiding and the eventual connection of the Tamar Delta with Wilson's Promontory (for the new interstate highway, no doubt) The entire valley floor of the virtually pristine Huntsman valley and the slopes of Mother Cummings Peak have been clearfelled, rainforest just burnt in situ and huge *E. nitens* plantations put in. The Karst system at Mole Creek is used as a local rubbish tip with disastrous results for the cave ecology of the area.

Logging protests have occurred in the area for a decade now, and at one stage virtually the entire adult population of Jackey's Marsh was in jail for protesting. Forest festivals each year are an excellent opportunity to provide ecological educa-

tion to the thousands of visitors who come for the annual Australia Day event, but the festival also attracts rednecks, who set fire to logging slash in 1983, which burnt thousands of hectares of wet forest, rainforest and alpine moorland and Pencil Pine communities. The latter never recovered. Some of this area, which was and still is in some areas grazed by sheep, suffered massive soil erosion where the entire A and B horizons, with root mat, peeled back like a rug on a wooden floor, revealing bedrock. Each successive flash flood peels this alpine carpet further onto itself. As the area is now World Heritage (alpine area only) it is the National Park's problem. They have no money or staff to do anything about it.

The fire which swept up the Tiers also triggered huge landslips on the Sandstone. These soils are highly erodible, a fact stressed by a report done for the Forests Commission by the Mines Dept. The report was kept secret, and even after its eventual publication, logging, including cable logging is still to proceed on these soils. (Logging recommences on the tiers, late March).

The nearby Gog Range is being logged, clearfelled and converted to pine and eucalypt plantations right now. The particular valley that is being logged at the moment (Garden of Eden Ck.) contains the Giant Crayfish *Astacopsis gouldii*. The Forests Commission zoologist has visited the site for field work once, several years ago. A local group has obtained a Federal Govt grant to do zoological surveys of the species in the region, which is being interrupted by logging of the study area funded by Federal government Helsham compensation money! Tell Ros Kelly, or her successor all about it! Results of the study so far have shown that there is a direct correlation between logging and degree of disturbance and disappearance of the Crayfish. There also seems to be a campaign to get rid of the higher Crayfish numbers found in the pristine stream control site by baiting - 24 baits were found in one day! Inland Fisheries say the species is not in danger, and the Forests Commission says the same (surprise surprise).

To add insult to injury in this battle, the local residents are continually harassed by shooters, trailbike riders and by numerous anti green incidents such as blowing up a local bridge, cutting telecom main cables, slashing conservationists car tyres, sideswiping vehicles and recently the assault of two people in a car at night by five men with pieces of sawn wood!

A local Landcare group was set up a few years ago

and we successfully fenced a Sphagnum bog (which was up to 1.5m deep) from cattle, and proceeded to fence Jackey's Creek for erosion control and replanting of indigenous vegetation. Unfortunately, after 3 km of fencing, one of the principal landowners involved leased his entire farm to two gentlemen from the local Tasmanian community who shot and 1080 poisoned over 4000 native animals. The area contains the rare and endangered Bettong, or did!

Massive protests ensued which resulted in several acts of violence against the local green community (I was beaten up and held against an electric fence in this process) and the charging of many people with the quaint act of "interfering with a furrow". It could only happen in Tas.

This unfortunately killed the landcare group, and outside labour is being sought to complete the project. Our next project will be more challenging, working with Forestry to restore the Meander Dam site. This is a multi-million dollar repair job, which due to the energy of winter floods, may fail anyway.

So, as you contemplate your next micro hassle over your local council-run indigenous nursery or whatever, spare a thought for conservation in the land of rednecks. It must be echoed over all sorts of parts of Australia.

Come for a visit. Bring a UN peacekeeping force for good measure. The ecology, the scenery and the weather are, to say the least, stunning (let alone a crack over the nut with a piece of four by two). There are several ecotours in the area. Cadman and Norwood (003)695 150 walk up the convict constructed Warner's Track onto the top of the plateau and you can walk for weeks without seeing anything human. Debbie Hunter also operates an award winning Cave Tour of wild caves. She can be contacted on (003) 638 142. Private tours can also be organised to visit Sphagnum bogs, or to see *E. obliqua* and *E. delegatensis* with DBH (diameter at breast height) of up to 8 metres. Yes you read correctly. Alternatively you can just camp and absorb the scenery, while it lasts.

Further reading

The Great Western Tiers - The Case For Conservation. Deloraine Environment Group (003) 622 713. A very detailed book.

Kirkpatrick, J.B. et. al. The wet eucalypt forests of Tasmania. Tas. Conservation Trust (002) 343 552.

Kirkpatrick, J.B. et. al. Conservation status of the vegetation and flora of the Great Western Tiers. Geography Dept. Univ of Tasmania.

Coming events:

The Great Aussie Flower Spectacular Plant native - plant autumn - save water.

3 & 4 April, 9.30am - 4.30pm.

Organised by the

Society for Growing Australian Plants Vic Inc.

At the Information Centre, Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Includes display of plants indigenous to Melbourne's regions.

Admission: \$2.50 adults, children under 14 free. Contact Nicky Rose on (03)698 4301 (BH) or (03)764 9135 (AH).

Conferences/Workshops/ Talks

- 5 April Mon 6pm. **Cladistics and biogeography of *Eriostemon* (Rutaceae)** by Michael Bayly, School of Botany, University of Melbourne. Seminar held by the Australian Systematic Botany Society. National Herbarium, Sth Yarra. Tom Entwisle (03) 655 2313.
- 6 April Tues 8pm. **An update on Leadbeater's Possum research**, by David Lindenmayer. Organised by Fauna Survey Group. Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave. Felicity Garde (03)808 2625.
- 15 April 9am. **Creating a Healthy Future - Many Voices from One World**. A conference linking cultural diversity with care for the environment. This conference will present a variety of perspectives from environmental speakers and representatives of various cultural groups. Through this, strategies will be developed assisting people of non-english speaking backgrounds access environmental materials and programs. Herbarium, Birdwood Ave. Enquiries: Pat Katsakostas (03)482 2344.
- 16 April 8pm. **Insect Watching**, a talk by Ian Endersby. Organised by the Entomological Society of Victoria Inc. Clunies Ross House, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville. Ken Walker (03)419 5200.

Excursions and field trips

- 27 March, Sat. Fauna Survey Group (of FNCV) **Mt Cole final trip**. Contact Russell Thompson on 434 7046 for details.
- 27 March, Sat. Botany Group of FNCV: **Weeds at Courtney's Road**. Leader: Margaret Corrick. Contact Joan Harry (03)850 1347.
- 28 March, Sun. **Walk, Talk & Gawk: Lake Moun-**

tain. An alpine playground in winter but a peaceful mountain retreat in summer with alpine heathlands, sphagnum bogs, snow gums and spectacular views all revealed under the guidance of the noted naturalist, Jane Calder. BYO lunch. Bookings: W. Branagan (03) 818 6102.

- 4 April, Sun. **Pond life at Jells Park**: general excursion of Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. Leader: Ian Endersby with help from the Microscopy Group. Contact Dorothy Mahler (03)435 8408.
- 9-12 Fri-Mon. **Pallister Reserve near Port Fairy**. Easter Camp of Fauna Survey Group. Contact Felicity Garde (03)808 2625.
- 17 April Sat. **Leadbeater's Possum survey** - Fauna Survey Group Field Survey. Contact Felicity Garde (03)808 2625.
- 17-18 April. **Vegetation survey weekend with FO French Island**. You will need to let Fay or Clive know if you are going because they may need to book the bus; phone: (03)772 9668.
- 25 April, Sun. **Bat survey with FO Warrandyte SP**. For more details contact Margaret Burke (03)844 1060.
- 3 April Sat. **Walk, Talk & Gawk: Brimbank M.P.** The Maribyrnong River flows a tortuous and steep valley through the Keilor basalt plain. A degraded area has been restored and provides interesting and easy walking. Leader: Geoff Durham (03)523 5559.
- 17 April Sat. **Walk, Talk & Gawk: Kurth Kiln**. An easy half day walk in the impressive Gembrook forest, includes a visit to a Second World War charcoal kiln. Bookings: W. Teltscher (03)481 3882.
- 18 April Sun. **Walk, Talk & Gawk: Werribee Gorge SP**. Led by Jack Myers who is a local expert who delights in pointing out the geological and other features of this rugged gorge. Jack: (053)67 2482.

Restoration Activities

March

- 25 Thurs. **FO Warrandyte SP** propagation day. This event takes place every Thursday. Other revegetation activities on weekends. Ian or Margaret Burke (03) 844 2659.
- 25 Thurs 10am-12noon. **Sandringham Community Nursery** - volunteers propagation activities. Sandringham Council Depot, enter Reserve Rd or Talinga Rd. This is on every Thursday and Saturday.
- 27 Sat 2pm. **FO Sherbrooke Forest**. Project afternoon at Hardy Gull and Lyrebird Track.

Pulling up ivy and wandering jew Meet at the south end of Grant's picnic ground, Kallista (Melways map 75 K4) at 12 noon for lunch (BYO). Vivien Freshwater (03) 754 3093.

28 Sun 10am. **FO Wildlife Reserves** - La Trobe Uni. George Paras (03)479 2871.

28 Sun 11am-4pm. **FO Royal Park West**. Hand weeding and seed collecting. Adam Muyt 481 4682.

28 Sun. **Mount Eliza Association for Environmental Care** Reserves project day. Call Anne on (03)787 2034 on the evening prior to the project day for details of proposed activity, venue and equipment required. Also on the 24th & 25th of April.

28 Sun 10am-1pm. **FO Braeside Park** working bee. Ron Pearson (03) 584 7443.

April

3 Sat, 10am. **Green Link Box Hill**. Working activities, venue is the Council Nursery in Nelson St, Box Hill, but it would be wise to ring Minette on (03)898 1364 beforehand. GLBH also holds its working activities every Monday and Tuesday morning.

3 Sat. **FO Gellibrand Hill Park**. Jenny Caddaye (03) 744 6093.

4 Sun, 10am. **FO the Helmeted Honeyeater**, works group activity day. Meet at the Yellingbo store. Mark Ashby (059)66 2681. FOHH also hold nursery activity days on the 7th & 12st of April. For these, meet at the Healesville Sanctuary main entrance at 10am. For further details on nursery activity days contact Pat Madeley on (03)727 2359.

4 Sun 1.00pm. **FO Warrandyte SP** along with the **Townscape Committee**, planting the area around the new Billabong created by Doncaster/Templestowe Council. Followed by Billy-tea & damper. Margaret Burke (03)844 1060.

4 Sun 9am. **FO Buckley Falls**. Bannockburn Quarry off the Upper Papermills Road. Continue with removal of plum trees on the steep slopes opposite the quarry. Tony Woolford (052) 43 6340.

5 Mon, 10am. **Green Link Box Hill**. Activities day. These events are held every Monday and Tuesday morning, with Monday being Nursery work. Council Nursery in Nelson Street, Box Hill, further details, contact Minette (03) 898 1364.

10 Sat. **FO Dandenong Ranges NP**. Contact Graham Barstow (03) 758 6935.

11 Sun, 10am-3pm. **FO the Yarra** Galatea Pt, Mel 2D, D7. Judy (03) 347 2252. Also on Wed 28

April.

11 Sun 10am. **URAGE** (Upwey Regional Action Group for the Environment). Weeding to restore indigenous vegetation along Ferny Creek. Meet at cnr Dean & Morris Rd. Rob Stephen (03) 754 3792.

12 Sun 2-5pm. **Green Link Camberwell**. Natural Heritage Walk at 2pm followed by a planting at 3pm. Meet at the corner of Dion St & Welfare Pde; Melways map 60, ref E7. Dianna Burgess (03) 809 2092.

17 Sat, 10am. **FO Bradshaw Park** planting day. For details on meeting location contact Dave Bainbridge (03)580 5992.

17 Sat 9.30am. **FO Werribee Gorge & the Long Forest Mallee**. Judy Douglas (053) 67 2672.

18 Sun 9am. **FO Buckley Falls**. South Barwon lower car park. Digging of holes on the slopes by the lower track in preparation for planting. Tony Woolford (052) 43 6340.

18 Sun 10am. **Men of the Trees**. Deep Rock, Yarra Bend Park; Melways map 2D, ref D6. Minette Russell Young 898 1364.

18 Sun. 10am-12noon. **Brunswick Tree Group** Moonee Ponds Ck. Eric Ward (03) 388 2123.

18 Sun 1.30pm. **Darling Mills Bush Regenerators (NSW)**. Meet at the corner of Westmore Drive & Range Rd, West Pennant Hills. No previous experience necessary, just enthusiasm! Robyn Becket (02)872 4510.

24 Sat 9.30am. **FO Organ Pipes NP**. Meet at the Park Office. Robert Bender (03)499 2413.

24 Sat. **Botany Group (of FNCV) excursion**. Boneseed pulling at Seawinds. Contact Joan Harry (03)850 1347

Visitors/participants are welcome to all events listed in Indigenotes.

The **Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers** offer a wide variety of restoration activities throughout most of Australia. For further information contact ATCV: National Headquarters in Ballarat: (053) 33 1483.

A large range of activities such as bushwalks and "Friends" activities are published by the **Victorian National Parks Association** in their newsletter. For details contact VNPA on (03) 650 8296.

Thank you to all the people who contact us regarding on-coming events their groups are organising. If other people wish to have their events covered, please get in touch with Dimi Bouzalas, (03) 386 0264

24 April Sat. **Walk, Talk & Gawk: Yarran Dheran.**

Snippets:

Research info needed on Living with the bush.

John Robin would like to hear from anyone interested in contributing research information and experience for a proposed book entitled "Living with the bush". This is proposed as an ecological manual for landmanagers. It is designed not primarily at bushland management, which has already been covered by numerous publications, but at ameliorating the ecological effects of our lives on indigenous ecosystems.

A wide range of ecological problems will be reviewed and discussion on possible solutions initiated. Some proposed topics include:

- an evaluation of current research and experience in environmental weed control;
- review of other ecological problems caused by exotic flora (altered hydrology, physiography, encouragement of exotic biota);
- environmental weed spread by everyday practices - vehicles, compost and fodder transport, horse riding, stock movement, free range grazing etc;
- building design modifications to discourage exotic fauna;
- the impact of firewood collection on ecosystems;
- eutrophication - a review of the impact of various farming methods and sewage treatment on the eutrophication of ecosystems;
- agricultural and urban landscape designs to minimise the ecological impact on indigenous ecosystems;
- minimizing the impact of roading and services on indigenous ecosystems;
- review of disease and other parasitic transmission between domestic stock and humans to indigenous fauna and its impact; and
- conservation genetics and landcare.

The project is the subject of an National Soil Conservation Program grant application and the proposed completion date for the book is June 1994. A series of interactive seminars is proposed after completion.

If anyone thinks they might have useful information for this book, including suggestions for further topics, please contact John Robin on (003) 695 328, or c/- P.O. Meander, Tasmania 7304.

The Biennial Friends Conference was held over the Labor Day weekend at Rawson Village near Mt. Baw Baw. Representatives of 35 of the 115 Friends Groups attended, caught up with old friends, exchanged information, discussed the broader political issues and formulated policy to present to Mark Birrell, Minister for the Environment.

The main concerns were:

That the Friends Network supports the VNPAs position on the restructuring of the Parks Service within DCNR. This would allow Rangers more direct control over their budget and give them a greater sense of "ownership" of their park or reserve.

That if DCNR use contractors in Parks and Reserves, there should be a licensing or registration process to ensure that contractors are appropriately skilled.

That DCNR take action on feral animals and an expression of support for the Companion Animals Act.

Speakers included Ian Harris (DCNRs Director of Parks and Public Lands), who was impressed by the broad scope and obvious commitment of those working in Friends groups. Tony Lee spoke on the value of Friends groups in the long term monitoring of parks and reserves. Adrian Daniell, a lecturer in population genetics outlined the usefulness of population genetics in nature conservation. We learned the language of the frogs from Murray Littlejohn, Gerry Marantelli and their multi media show.

A discussion of interest was introduced by Di Ward (DCNR) and Fay Valcanis (Warrandytes Parkcare Officer). How do we involve people from non English speaking backgrounds in nature conservation? A few groups reported successful activities and we discussed some of the difficulties and possible strategies. The work of Dimi Bouzalas and the Diversity Coalition was highlighted.

Lisa Pittle

Koorie Food - Koorie People: more Island delights

At Christmas we were given a wonderful book titled "Koorie Plants Koorie People" by Nelly Zola and Beth Gott. As well as being an introduction into Koorie culture, it also gives an insight into alternative ways of using the plants of French Island. [The book covers a huge range of Koorie plant use with engaging text and beautiful photographs.] Water plants such as Cumbungi, Water Ribbons and Phragmites formed an essential part of the Koorie diet. Seeds of Coast Wattle, fruits of Pigface, Coastal Beard-heath and the now rare Coast Ballart and leaves of New Zealand Spinach are just a few of the foods that were gathered in season. "Cones of the Coastal Banksia were soaked in water to extract the nectar and made into a sweet drink." The fruit of the Kangaroo Apple "was a source of much enjoyment" as were the fruits of the Prickly Geebung and the Prickly Currant Bush. Many orchids and lilies were harvested for their corms, like digging potatoes. Gum was extracted and eaten and axe handles were made from Silver and other wattles. Blackwood bark was used as treatment for rheumatism. Mistletoe leaves were steeped in water to make a potion for curing fever. Stinkwood leaves were bound around the head to relieve headache. The leaves of Red Gum were used in aromatic steam baths for a variety of illnesses and the gum was used to shrink and seal burns. The roots of geranium species were used to treat diarrhoea. The young juicy stems of Bracken Fern were rubbed on to relieve the stinging and itching of insect bites. This is one to definitely try after a day on French Island.

Many other traditional uses for plants which are commonly found on the island [and across Victoria] are described in the book. Most importantly, the book shows us a side of Koorie culture which we have chosen to ignore for most of our short period of time in this land.

-Clive Gordes, Friends of French Island Newsletter March 1993

Note: "Koorie Plants, Koorie People" is available for approx. \$20.00 from the Koorie Heritage Trust at the Museum of Victoria, where there is also a good exhibition on Koorie culture on at the moment, or the Greens Bookshop, Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

Books

Management Plans for VCE Students

Do you have contact with a student or landowner who needs some help to work on a management plan? 'The Management Plan CAT Kit' by Geoff Parr-Smith (Blessington Books) is written for VCE students of Geography and Environmental Science but also provides a useful reference for anyone setting out to prepare a management plan. This book describes the planning process. \$7.95 from the CNR Information Centre.

Source: Land for Wildlife Newsletter February 1993.

"Standing up for your local environment" (3rd Edition)

Jenny Barnett of the Victorian National Parks Association has completed the massive task of updating this important book yet again because of the many changes to planning laws and relevant legislation in recent times. The changes in legislation include Environment Protection, Mineral Resources Department (replacing the Mines Act), Flora and Fauna Guarantee (including native vegetation controls and dog and cat controls) and Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Other pieces of legislation added to this addition include Local Government, Dangerous Goods, Litter, Archeological and Aboriginal Relics Protection, Petroleum and Federal Environment Protection (Impact Proposals). Jenny has also added advice on how to subpoena witnesses, how to lobby politicians and where to get legal assistance.

The VNPA, with the financial help of the Victorian Law Foundation, is about to publish the completely revised and newly designed third edition of this invaluable guide. This book will be very valuable in all the small local struggles we all need to take part in the name of conservation. For further info contact the VNPA on (03) 650 8296 or write to the Publications Officer, VNPA, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne, 3002.

Source: Park Watch March 1993

Snippets:

Long Forest Mallee needs help

Long Forest Mallee, inbetween Melton and Bacchus Marsh, is the only area of mallee vegetation south of the Dividing Range. It is not a large reserve and its' boundaries have continually been assualted by subdivision and the problems that more humans in a bushland area bring. The 'Barleyfield' is in the heart of the Long Forest, providing part of an east-west bush corridor across Long Forest Road, linking the Djerriwarrh and Coimadai Creeks. The 85 ha property has been looked after after as a continuous part of the surrounding Long Forest reserve for nearly 30 years. In 1990 the owners applied to subdivide, proposing that the majority become part of the reserve while a small portion, a regenerating area, be subdivided for residential development. The planning process made significant improvements on the original proposal but four lots were still allowed. The Friends group and VNPA are trying to raise money to buy one or two important blocks and make them a part of the reserve, because every dwelling avoided is less impact on the unique flora and fauna of the Long Forest. Contributions, which are tax deductible if sent to the VNPA, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne 3002, noting that it should go to the purchase of the 'Barleyfield', are required for this purpose. Contact Janet Laversha on (053) 674229 for more info.

Coffee or wildlife?

Alan Greer suggests in the Sydney Morning Herald that a modest levy could be imposed on cat food and cat care products to fund the study of further aspects of the feral cat problem, and to help solve it. Greer argues that because domestic cats provide a steady stream of strays which can become feral, it is not unreasonable to impose the levy. He estimates in the article "Miss a coffee and save our wildlife" SMH December 1992, that cat owners spend \$328 million each year on cat food and care products. He suggests that approximately \$3 million could be leveed from this total, equivalent to a cup of coffee each year for each cat owner. This says Greer would fund a lot of research, and would be very acceptable to cat owners.

Evans St rezoning

advertised.

The Shire of Bulla has notified IFFA that it is advertising an amendment to rezone land at the south west corner of Station and Evan Sts Sunbury from Restricted Light Industrial to Restricted Business and to include specific development provisions in the scheme for the site.

The fact that the site, which carries a grassland remnant of state significance, has not been reserved is a sorry tale of State Government inaction, and a lack of recognition at the local government level of the importance of the site. The rezoning proposal includes an explanatory report which covers the social effects, traffic effects, car parking, economic effects, state planning policy etc, but fails to mention that the development would utterly destroy almost half of the grassland site by covering it in buildings and bitumen. The concept plan for the development shows a possible 2 metre landscape strip adjacent to the remaining grassland.

Submissions on the amendment should reach the Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Bulla, P.O. Box 42, Sunbury, 3429 by 23 April, and should quote reference T/5/303.

Submissions Needed to Land Conservation Council Reports:

Parks and Forests Services Study

The Council has prepared its' final report, **Advice to Government**, which provides details of the parks and forests resources to be managed, parks and forests management in the in the current Department of Conservation and Natural Resources structure, the role and functions of a Parks Service and Forests Service, options for proposed departmental structures and a discussion of issues arising from the options. The report results from a direction from the Government to the LCC to inquire into and advise on the establishment of separate Services within DCNR. Copies of the report are available free of charge from: Information Victoria Bookshop, 318 Little Bourke St., Melbourne and DCNR Bookshop, 240 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne and from regional DCNR offices.

Both the Conservation Council of Victoria and Victorian National Parks Association have written submissions on this vital issue that the Liberal government has created. The CCV believes that yet another restructure of DCNR would be damaging, particularly one that recreates the old Forests

Commission. They also emphasize that the LCC study assumes that the current level of timber harvests from native forests is commercially viable, compatible with conservation objectives and ecologically sustainable. They disagree with these assumptions and discuss them in their own submission which is available for \$2 from CCV, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000. The VNPA has a different position; they support a separate Parks Service as long as DCNR remains as an integrated department. Their submission includes a lot more detail about other possible restructuring; it's available from the VNPA, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne 3002, for \$7. Both submissions would be useful in writing any personal submissions on the proposed restructures. Good luck!

Source: The Age 12 March 1993, VNPA Newsletter March 1993 and Parkwatch March 1993.

A Central Highlands National Park?

The LCC released the descriptive report for the Melbourne Area 2 in 1991 which included information about the Central Highlands region. The VNPA responded with a recommendation for a national park centred on Lake Mountain and extending to Mt. Disappointment to Mt. Baw Baw and from Bunyip State Park to Fraser National Park. The LCC will release its Proposed Recommendations sometime in March, we'll see then what they recommend to the government. It will be an important document to respond to because most of the Central Highlands is presently unprotected and the area certainly needs it and deserves it. Please do what you can, every letter counts!

Source: Parkwatch March 1993

Bush Regeneration Course postponed

The Save the Bush Project at the National Trust (Vic) is postponing the Bush Regeneration Techniques course. It was to start on March 17 in Frankston and we will be delaying it until Wednesday March 31 at the same venue. It will still have the usual specialist lecturers on Wednesday evenings and the Saturday practical sessions in bushland reserves around Frankston. We need some more students for this course!! For more information and/or applications please call Elizabeth Donoghue or Lincoln Kern at the National Trust on 654 4711 from 12:00 pm onwards from Tuesday to Thursday.

VNPA Friends Conference

Jobs:

Ranger at Mooramong Grassland Reserve

Applications are invited for the position of Ranger at the National Trust property 'Mooramong' situated near Skipton. The Ranger is responsible for the management and development of a Nature Reserve re-establishing the indigenous flora and fauna of the basalt plains. The reserve is currently 100 ha and will be increased to 200 ha in the future. The position requires a broad range of skills including:

- knowledge of bush regeneration and vegetation restoration techniques
- aptitude for manual work
- keeping of records
- good PR and communication skills
- self-motivation and flexibility
- ability to work with an advisory committee and staff on the property.

It is envisaged that the appropriate candidate will have relevant tertiary training plus a minimum of two years work experience. Accommodation and other specific living expenses will be met by the property. Salary by negotiation. Written applications only to the Manager, Mooramong, Beaufort 3373. Closing date: 26 March 1993

Administrative Assistant at Save the Bush

The Save the Bush Project at the National Trust (Victoria) is looking for a capable person to assist the Project Manager. Save the Bush is dedicated to retaining and restoring Victoria's indigenous vegetation; it runs courses, offers management advice and provided trained bush regeneration crews. The position is at this stage only for one day per week, but there is the possibility of a gradual increase in hours. We need someone who has good word-processing skills, good typing speed, some understanding of bookkeeping and experience of office administration. If you are interested please contact the Project Manager, Elizabeth Donoghue, at the National Trust on (03) 654 4711.

Merri Creek needs Jobskills staff

Merri Creek Management Committee is looking for additional staff to employ for 6 months under the Jobskills programme. Applicants must have been unemployed and receiving benefits for at least 12 months, and have some demonstrated interest in reveg or restoration.

Contact Tony Faithfull (03) 4847687 (w) for details.

IFFA activities:

IFFA (Vic)

Next meeting:

Tuesday 30 March at 8 pm at the Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra (Melways map 2G ref 12A). Hans Brunner from Deakin University will speak on the fragmentation of habitat on the Mornington Peninsula and its implications for native fauna. All welcome.

Committee meeting:

Tuesday 6 April at Michele and Peter's 6.30pm onwards. Contact Michele for details.

SPIFFA

Mon 5 April Waterfall Gully Ctty Centre, Cnr Bayview Rd and Nixon St, Rosebud South at 7.30 pm. Mike Cusack will be giving an illustrated talk "A year in the Kimberleys" Contact Mark Adams (059)851122.

Indigenous Nurseries Network:

No meeting this month. Next meeting Tuesday 27 April 6.30pm. Contact Murray Ralph (03) 419 3040 or Sue Mills (03) 383 2937.

NSW activities:

Next meeting:

Monday 5 April 7.30 - 10.00pm at the Maiden Theatre, Mrs Macquaries Rd, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. **John McCarthy, horticulturalist and ethnobotanist, will speak on "Aboriginal plant use and modern horticulture - a future in common?"**

Inappropriate land use in Australia has lead to the present day environmental degradation. John has studied how indigenous people use the land to obtain their food, medicines, tools and building materials. He will describe the potential for combining traditional land use methods and modern horticultural techniques to restore and enhance the land's productivity. John will also discuss how to apply this knowledge to the home garden.

Contact Sally Fisher (02)9706486 (work), Penny Brown or Andrew McGahey (02)9133681 (work)

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.

Memberships should be sent to the Secretary.

*Include your name, address
and phone numbers,
and a bit about yourself.*

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Contributions to Indigenotes should be sent to the editors — the deadline for the next issue will be 2 April.

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