

INDIGENOTES

**Sugar Glider Drawn By Stephen Powell
Please refer to the article on page 14**

Restoring the Los Angeles River : a Forty Year Art Project.

by Lewis Macadams.

My name is Lewis Macadams and I am a poet. In 1985, Pat Patterson, sculptor and architect, Roger Wong, who owned a gallery called the Los Angeles Museum of Art, and I rendezvoused with architect Fred Fisher for a cup of coffee. After taking each other's picture, we used a pair of wirecutters to slice through the L.A. County Department of Public Works' fence, then we clambered down the concrete walls into the concrete channel of the Los Angeles River. We felt like we were exploring the moon.

We didn't know where we were going, but instinctively we walked upstream. (I use the term "stream" here loosely. This was before the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant came on line, and reclaimed water began flowing, and the pieces of the river that hadn't been paved over started regenerating). Roger, Pat and I came to the confluence of the Los Angeles and Arroyo Seco. The air around us was in an unholy din. A Southern Pacific freight train rumbled up the tracks on one bank. A Santa Fe freight rumbled down the tracks on the other. Traffic on two freeway bridges and the Riverside Drive bridge roared by. The odor was industrial. The scene was latter-day urban hell.

As poet Gary Snyder once observed, concrete is just inverted riverbed: eventually the river will reclaim itself. When that happens, the concrete riverbottom has to be repaved. That day a dozen guys in t-shirts were jackhammering the pavement in front of paving machines. I noticed many of their heavily muscled arms were mottled with festering sores where untreated nicks and scratches had come into inadvertent contact with the algaed water that flowed down the channeled river's cement invert.

We knew this must have once been a beautiful spot, a year round stream in a climate that only receives about ten inches of rain a year. I envisioned it a sylvan glen, a thicket, an avalon, a marsh, a place of great blue herons, where a kingfisher darting at a steelhead's flash might accidentally flush a doe. Today the culvert that links the arroyo with the river is jammed with junk, with so much household garbage it's practically a flood hazard. People were sleeping in derelict cars. Luckily it was too noisy to hear ourselves think, so when we asked the river if we could speak for it in the human realm we didn't hear it say no. And that was how the Friends of the Los Angeles River began.

But that was only the first part of the original Friends of the Los Angeles River performance. The second part took place onstage at the Wallenboyd Theatre in downtown Los Angeles that night. As part of Angels flight, a series of performance pieces, Pat Patterson built a fifteen foot high Los Angeles River totem pole out of timbers he'd hauled out of the channel. I turned into William Mulholland in a white suit, retracing the life of the father of modern Los Angeles, from the day he rode into town, a young immigrant Irishman on a horse and spotted the river for the first time, through old age and obloquy in the aftermath of the collapse of the San Francisquito Dam and the greatest manmade disaster in the history of California.

Pat, Roger and I learned two things from the performance, both obvious. First, rivers want to wend. They don't want to go in straight lines. Second, we discovered that the river's totem was the sycamore tree. Later I found out that in any southwestern riverine ecology, the sycamore is the climax vegetation, the leafy aristocrat that waits for everything else to be in place and in good health before it returns.

In one sense Friends of the Los Angeles River is the act of calling, then welcoming back the sycamores. In another sense Friends of the Los Angeles River is an artwork, an on-going performance. I've always tried to reserve for the organization the freedom claimed by artists - to take any tack, to work in every realm - in proceeding on behalf of the river. By calling Friends of the Los Angeles

River a forty year artwork I hoped to fortify us all against impatience and frustration and cynicism. It took more than forty years to screw the river up: I'm sure it will take more than forty years to bring it back to life again. From the beginning we said that not until the yellow-billed cuckoos (one of the extirpated birds of the river system) were singing in the branches of the sycamore tree and the steelhead trout were swimming up the river to spawn (the last steelhead was caught in the river in 1940, the year after the Army Corps of Engineers concreted the channel), would Friends of the Los Angeles River's work be done.

By calling Friends of the Los Angeles River a forty year artwork, I hoped to remind myself that bringing the river back to life would take longer than my own life, and that all of us are in service to an idea: creating a Los Angeles Greenway from the mountains to the sea.

Today, the Wallenboyd Theatre is long gone. Roger Wong is dead. The Arroyo Seco - at least the top end of it, the Devil's Gate Dam area above Pasadena - has been renamed the Hahamungna, a pre-european name for the canyon meaning 'Flowing Water, Fertile Valley'. Friends of Los Angeles River now has several thousand names on its mailing list and a board of directors that tends to roll its eyes when I talk about our activities as a forty year art work. As of today, the Arroyo's confluence with the Los Angeles River has hundreds of young trees, including dozens of young sycamores. Seeing these young sycamores makes me realise how far we've come.

Seeing how much concrete there still is in the river - they estimate it took 17,000 men pouring three million barrels of the stuff by hand - reminds me how far we have to go. I think that the most delicate, and in many ways the most important task is that, while we're imagining and working for the Los Angeles River that we want it to be, we find the beauty in what already is. When in doubt, come down to the river. Let it talk to you. In one of his poems Gary Snyder says that underneath the concrete the river is always there, laughing. And it will laugh last.

Reprinted from the Whole Earth Review, No. 85, Spring 1995

Destruction of revegetation works at Ferny Creek

URAGE is a local environmental body which was formed to restore and retain native flora and fauna along Ferny Creek, Upwey in 1993. Since its inception URAGE has weeded, planted and maintained approximately 4 hectares of land along Ferny Creek on both Public and Private locations. The Community and Sherbrooke Council recognised the beauty and value of the beautiful creek and its lovely bush. Both worked together to attain an excellent result - until Melbourne Water came on the scene and bulldozed a very large portion. They also cut down numerous native trees which were holding together the banks of the creek. They have done this type of action before but not to the extreme as in this case.

Melbourne Water did this to stop erosion of the creek but by removing the trees that held the banks together they made matters worse. Melbourne Water cleared an area that the Department of Conservation had studied along with URAGE which was found to contain many valuable species of indigenous flora such as Bootlace bush (*Pimelea axiflora*), Cinnamon Wattle (*Acacia leprosa*), Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia verticillata*), Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), Hazel Pomaderris (*Pomaderris aspera*) and Australian Clematis (*Clematis aristata*). This does not include all the species that URAGE and others planted over the last three years. These include Dogwood, Tree Everlasting, Burgan, Golden Tip, Hop Goodenia, Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate etc. etc. etc. The number and variety of natives planted on the demolished site is endless.

URAGE has eliminated environmental weeds, coordinated a CFA burn off and replanted. But to no avail! Melbourne Parks & Waterways along with Sherbrooke Council have provided financial support to URAGE when in the end it was a waste of time. Matters like this one have to be published!!

**Mr Robert M. Stephen
Secretary URAGE.**

Will any mulch do?

By Elizabeth Donoghue

Some years ago, Tony Faithful published an article in this journal entitled "Will any tree do?" To many of us it seems incredible that the question was ever asked - we now hold it as an article of faith that restoration or revegetation plantings must consist of indigenous plants from the nearest possible seed source in order to recreate some of the site's former diversity.

Most of us would have no difficulty with the argument that soil type, in terms of its geological history, structure and chemistry, is one of the most important determinants of which vegetation occurred on any site. We group Melbourne's vegetation communities in terms of their soil types - Basalt Clays, Tertiary Sands, Silurian-derived Sedimentary Hills etc. In general, we would never dream of planting Basalt derived plants on, for example, Silurian soils.

And yet far too frequently, we finish off our projects by dumping a load of heavy woodchips derived from diverse and often exotic species onto that soil whose original composition has formed the basis of our vegetation rehabilitation decisions. I am amazed by some of the examples I have seen of grossly inappropriate mulching of otherwise competently executed revegetation projects. Project managers who are painstaking in their choice of species and provenance, soil preparation and planting timing technique, frequently stop thinking intelligently when it comes to mulching. This is a plea for us all to re-think our current mulching practices, and ask ourselves some questions, both practical and philosophical:

1. Are we, when we mulch a completed planting, risking doing more harm than good?

Pick up a handful of decomposing wood-chip mulch which has been derived from exotic tree prunings. You usually will see that it has a different colour and texture to the natural soil. It is probable that its introduction is changing the pH of the natural soil, with long-term consequences that we cannot foresee. It is likely that it provides excellent habitat for non-indigenous soil micro-organisms, which may be actively hostile to the growth of indigenous trees and shrubs. They may also compete with and destroy existing indigenous soil micro-organisms which would have been beneficial to the health of the planting. This in turn, might result in the plants lacking resistance to pathogens, or to normal stresses like dry periods. Just as in the 1990's we are busy drilling and filling weedy natives planted during the 70's by people who didn't consider the consequences,

perhaps in 20 years time we will be scalping soil we have damaged with exotic wood-chip mulches.

Mulches derived from prunings of exotic plants add nutrients to the soil. Sites become invaded by weeds for a range of reasons, one of which is the addition of unnaturally high levels of nutrients. By mulching are we perpetuating this situation, and creating perfect conditions for weeds? I often see weeds such as Panic Veldt (*Ehrharta erecta*) or Annual Veldt (*Ehrharta longifolia*), which thrive in high nutrient soils, growing rapidly in these mulches.

Logic suggests that mulches such as coarse wood chips and black plastic destroy habitat for ground-dwelling creatures, or for animals and birds which need to forage on the ground. Many fibre mulches are held together with nylon. Given that it is often used on creek banks, we should be asking where the nylon strips go once the fibre has broken down. Does the nylon material enter our waterways, and does it injure waterbirds and other animals?

2. By indiscriminate mulching we often miss important opportunities to conserve elements of the ecosystem we are trying to recreate.

I have lost count of the times I have seen sites where both the understorey and regenerating overstorey have been destroyed in the name of revegetation. Thick mulch has been laid through areas where it is obvious that a rich indigenous seed bank, or small standing plants have been smothered by mulch. Had they not, the planted area would have been a more complex ecosystem from day one. It would have been healthier, more diverse, provided better habitat, and be more likely to become self-sustaining.

I know a number of sites along a Western suburbs creek where tree and shrub plantings have been heavily mulched with chipped street tree prunings. Where the mulch ends, a thick carpet of Wallaby Grass (*Danthonia* spp.) begins. The planners of these projects have missed a wonderful opportunity to give the planting an almost instant understorey of naturally occurring grasses. The mulch they have used has destroyed an important part of the very vegetation they were supposedly trying to restore.

There is a site along the Yarra where masses of Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Tree Violet (*Hymenanchera dentata*), Prickly Currant Bush (*Coprosma quadrifida*) and Silver Wattle (*Acacia*

dealbata) seedlings are emerging from recently disturbed bare earth. A few metres away, grasses have been planted, and mulched. No natural regeneration is happening here. The seed, obviously present in the soil, has been smothered. What a waste? The silliest examples of this sort of practice occur where grasses are planted into carpet or black plastic. Many grasses will shed large amounts of seed in their first season, and new plants will come up thickly throughout and beyond the planted grasses at the end of the first season. Mulching destroys a wonderful opportunity to extend the area of indigenous vegetation with little or no management input.

3. Why do we allow revegetation to be ugly?

Few mulches are aesthetically pleasing, and many, especially black plastic and carpet are hideous. Have you ever seen roses or exotic annuals in parks surrounded by black plastic? So why do we do it to our own vegetation? Surely one of the best ways to persuade the public that indigenous vegetation is worth conserving is through its beauty. We all shudder when we see whole suburbs draped in black plastic, as has happened in suburbs to the west of Melbourne. And carpet around wetlands ruins the pleasure of walking there, and as for the delicate wildflower display garden where each plant sits in a desert of coarse woodchips - why bother? The idea of this planting was to educate the public in the beauty of grasslands, but to do that, the planting surely has to be beautiful.

4. Mulching may make the project costlier in the long term.

One of the reasons we mulch is to save the cost of follow-up weed control. However, it may be less cost effective than it looks. Most of us will be familiar with projects where the plants died or failed to thrive because oxygen or water could not penetrate the thick layer of wood-chips to the plants' root zone or areas where trees and shrubs have been killed because weed mat has not been removed from around growing trunks. The loss of these plants is hardly good economy. And natural regeneration, which most likely is inhibited by the use of mulch is surely the most cost-effective form of revegetation.

If we sat down and costed two or three days for a small crew to carry out follow-up weed control, we might find that the cost is lower than the hidden long-term costs. It might also be less costly than coming back at regular intervals and cutting black plastic away from the growing trunks of trees and shrubs.

5. With good planning, mulching may be unnecessary?

We mulch for weed control and for moisture retention. However, moisture retention can be improved by laying logs and branches around a site. These of course make excellent habitat. Natural leaf and grass litter will soon accumulate and moisture penetration and retention will be assured.

On steep slopes, branches can be fixed across the slope, or material such as chicken wire can be used, as at Cape Schank, to prevent erosion. Techniques like these are as effective as carpet or black plastic, and will cause less damage than either of these materials.

If we really believe we have to mulch, materials derived from indigenous vegetation are obviously preferable. Only such material should be considered near or on remnant or revegetation sites. I have often heard land managers argue that Eucamulch is too expensive, but the real costs of anything else are probably far greater. And there are often alternatives on hand - Themeda hay, or Poa hay, or reeds which can be cut back and used - thereby providing habitat for soil micro-organisms and other creatures which should be an integral part of the community.

We need to ask ourselves what we are trying to achieve. Are we planting ecosystems or just practicing another form of amenity horticulture? Is the pursuit of short-term lack of maintenance preventing us from thinking about other objectives? Do we want a few trees and shrubs, and a landscape that is purely utilitarian? Or do we really want to "put it back" as far as possible, and create healthy areas of vegetation with the best possible chance of ultimately healing the land on which they are planted, becoming self-sustaining and capable of regeneration, and capable of providing habitat for a range of animals from birds down to invertebrates and soil micro-organisms? And do we want beautiful revegetation sites to educate the public about the beauty of our flora so that more people come to love and value it, or do we want people to associate indigenous plants with black plastic, crude woodchips and old carpet?

More on Waterbuttons, *Cotula* *coronopifolia*.

A reply to Heyligers comments on the status of this species.

My earlier note on the accidental listing of Waterbuttons, *Cotula coronopifolia* (CC), as an introduced plant in two consecutive editions of *A Census of the vascular plants of Victoria* has been regarded as good news by all wetland managers I have spoken to since, but does not appear to satisfy everyone. Heyligers' (H) article includes new information and discussions which are useful; however, his interpretation of these seems curious to me. He seems ambivalent about its status, yet some of the evidence he presents strengthens the case for its being a long established native plant. I will look at his comments and arguments in this light.

A/ The third section of H's article looks at whether CC is a weed, and while I agree with his conclusion that it should not be regarded as one, this is based around his assumption that CC is an introduction. In part, this is because he uses the idea of acquired species; these are regarded as introduced species which have been brought in by 'non-human methods of spread to the location in question'. Although a useful concept in plant geography, this is also an artificial separation of plants which are relatively new, but natural, additions to our flora, from those which have already been here long enough to have evolved into new species or varieties. By this definition, a plant which arrived by natural means 30,000 years ago but is still not really different from its ancestors is regarded as introduced! By any more conventional criteria, such a plant must obviously be regarded as a native.

There is also an important practical aspect involved here which H does not consider; if CC is recognised as a useful native species, then there will be few situations in which its growth will need to be controlled. Treated as an exotic, its sometimes vigorous growth will require time and resources to control where it is actively competing with native species. While these issues are not important at the academic level, they are crucial to all wetland managers.

B/ H presents some new evidence on the early records of CC in Australia, but his interpretations are not obvious ones. For example he puts a peculiar construction on Britten's (1906) publication of Brown's (1802-1804) collections of introduced and possibly introduced plants from the Port Jackson area. This paper lists 29 species as introductions, but Brown had placed a question mark against two of them including CC. It seems obvious to me that this was meant to show that Brown was not convinced that CC was introduced. However, H makes the suggestion that it 'might' mean that 'he was uncertain about its identity', even though Brown would already have been familiar with CC from South Africa, and probably from European collections as well.

H then uses this dubious suggestion as an explanation of why CC is well-represented in Brown's collection. This is possible of course, but a simpler and more realistic interpretation is that Brown collected a lot of CC because it was abundant in the Port Jackson area, and that he was not convinced that it had been introduced there.

C/ H doubts that CC is capable of floating from South Africa to Australia, and his 'feeling is that birds were instrumental in the dispersal of CC to Australia'. This is certainly possible, although the suggestion would have been more valuable if he could have suggested a bird which occurs in CC habitats in both South Africa and Australia, and migrates between these directly. I don't know of any such bird.

However, H has been premature in dismissing my suggestion that pieces of CC could float alive to Australia. As a plant ecologist he must have a knowledge of statistics, yet he makes this oversimplified statement - 'the chances of survival, even for hard-coated propagules adapted to floating, are virtually nil when it comes to travelling intercontinental distances'. In fact, any single event with a 'virtually nil' chance, multiplied by millions of such events and hundreds of thousands of years becomes virtually a statistical certainty. Further from my own trials, broken pieces of CC will float for at least four months in a reasonably healthy condition, quite long enough, for them to drift from Africa to Australia.

H uses another South African coastal species *Arctotheca populifolia*, as an example of a different group of the Asteraceae, which has not managed to drift to Australia. However, this is not a comparable example because a) it isn't a wetland plant adapted to permanently wet, often saline conditions; b) it is not capable of surviving for any length of time immersed in seawater and c) it doesn't have brittle stems which will put out roots while floating.

The existence of currents capable of carrying CC from South Africa to Australia are well-documented.

mented. These have carried far more improbable things to our shores, the most dramatic example being two gigantic eggs of *Aepyornis maximus*, an extinct flightless bird from Madagascar (*Australian Natural History Magazine* 24(7)). These are the largest of all eggs, and could never have been anywhere near as common or as well-adapted to sea travel as CC, yet both arrived in W.A. undamaged.

D/ In my earlier note I pointed out that by the time of Mueller, CC occupied much the same range as it does today. H's explanation is 'that it had reached its ecological limits and thus could go no further'. He is asking us to believe that from an introduction not long before 1800, CC spread from southern Queensland to Tasmania, inland through Victoria and the Murray-Darling, and to W.A. in less than 60 years, then stopped and spread no further. This supposed explosive spread, unmatched by any other known introductions over the same time period, is in contrast to his description of the spread of CC in North America and Europe.

H also makes a tentative suggestion that CC may have been introduced by 'early sea-faring explorers or traders' well before Port Jackson settlement. He is the only person to have made such a suggestion, and there is absolutely no evidence or reason to think that it might be true for CC. Certainly, some plants are likely to have been brought in by humans pre-European settlement, for example *Acacia farnesiana* and *Datura leichardtii*. However these are essentially tropical species which have entered through the north- an improbable route for CC which is a temperate species.

E/ It is obvious from the discussion so far that there has never really been any evidence that CC has been introduced into Australia by humans, and that it is perfectly capable of having arrived naturally by sea. H does not dispute that it could have arrived by natural means; indeed he feels that it most probably was brought in by migratory birds. While I don't dispute a possible arrival as seeds attached to birds, unless a suitable migratory species commuting between CC habitats in Australia and South Africa can be identified, I believe the sea route remains more plausible. However, much of the discussion above is based on an assumption that CC originates in South Africa; again there seems to be no actual evidence for this. *Cotula* is a widespread genus which also includes species in the southern hemisphere. It is quite possible that CC has evolved here, and is an acquired species elsewhere. Perhaps instead of speculating about how CC arrived in Australia, we should be looking to see if there is evidence that it is one of our earliest and most successful exports?

REFERENCES

- Britten, J. (1906) Introduced Plants at Sydney, 1802-1804. *J. Bot.* 44: pp234-235
Heyligers, P. (1985) Waterbuttons, *Cotula coronopifolia* *Indigenotes* 8(5): pp2-4.

Kloot, P.M. (1984) The introduced elements of the flora of southern Australia. *J. Biogeography* 11: pp63-78.

Romanowski, N. (1994) *Cotula coronopifolia*: return of a native. *Indigenotes* 7(11): pp2-3.

Some comments on groundstorey restoration

To the Editor

With reference to Ian Lunt's article 'Great Expectations' I have had some success in restoring small areas of native grass and herbs in badly degraded areas on my own block and in a nearby bush reserve, using the gardener's technique (I am not a botanist) of planting tubestock in small numbers of a wide variety of herbs and small shrubs known to be indigenous to the area, to see what would flourish and what would not. Some herbs obviously have greater pioneering capabilities than others and established easily, for example *Brunonia* and *Lagenifera*. Others did not. In fact most of the tubestock, which was not very vigorous in the first place, died within the first year. But this winter, three and half years after I began the restoration, I have healthy, self-propagating colonies of *Brunonia australis*, *Goodenia lanata*, *Helichrysum scorpioides*, *Hibbertia stricta*, *Lagenifera* species, *Pimelea humilis*, *Wahlenbergia stricta*, *Anthropodium strictum* and *Stylidium graminifolium* growing among the grasses, established at their own pace and in their own time.

The point I am making is that restoring 'natural' ground cover is obviously going to take time and lack of success in the first few years is no indication of the final outcome. Secondly, to avoid disappointment, and to provide natural conditions it is probably a good idea to plant as wide a variety of plants as possible, in small numbers - a wide variety because some plants are better pioneers than others, and small numbers because, as Ian Lunt has pointed out, once they get going, they spread rapidly.

**Judy Wallace
Harkaway**

Coming Events:

For IFFA events see back cover

Conferences/Workshops/Talks

- 17 July Mon "Koorie Plants & Land Management" 8 pm. An illustrated talk presented by Dr. Beth Gott, hosted by the Society for Growing Australian Plants. Venue: National Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra 3141. For more information contact Enid Bowman (03) 9882 5297.
- 31 July - 2 Aug Annual Conference of the Soil and Water Conservation Association of Australia. The conference is to be held at Hilton on the Park, East Melbourne, and will focus on the theme 'Exploring Practical ways of monitoring land and water health'. Contact Viv McWaters on (03) 9480 7274 or (03) 9499 3387.
- 14 Mon August "Koorie History around the Merri Creek" 7.30 pm. A talk presented by Consulting Archaeologist Isabel Allender. Hosted by the Friends of Merri Creek. Venue: Harry Atkinson Centre, Lake Grove, Coburg. For further information contact Ray Radford on (03) 9419 3613
- 28 - 30 August Second Fisheries Communicators Conference, Coffs Harbour, NSW. For further information please contact Roger Bell at NSW Fisheries on (02) 566 7801.
- 25 - 29 September Wetlands for Water Quality Control. James Cook University, Townsville, Qld. The focus of this conference is on artificial or constructed wetlands as treatment systems for municipal effluents, industrial wastewater and stormwater runoff. Enhancing degraded natural wetlands will also be covered. Contact the Conference Secretariat, c/- WITA (Qld) Inc, PO Box 209, Albert St Brisbane, Qld 4002. Ph (07) 224 2647 or fax (07) 224 7999.

Excursions and Field Trips

- Every Sunday Discover Queensland's Toohey Forest. 7 am. sharp. Rain hail or shine we will leave from the high picnic area on Toohey road for a 2 hour bushwalk. Inquiries Margaret Collins (08) 848 7829 or Lorrie Davis (08) 848 4816.
- 22 Sat July Friends of Sherbrooke Forest - Lyrebird Survey. 6 pm. Meet Grant's Picnic Ground. Ring Norm Carter (03) 9754 4424 if interested. BYO torch, pencil, watch & compass. Dress warmly.
- 23 Sun July Penguin research tours, with Earthcare St Kilda Inc. Bookings are essential. Phone (03) 9531 5036.
- 24 - 28 July 'Save the Koala Week' school activities at Westerfolds park. Contact (03) 229 7233.
- 8 Tues August Koala Count. Organised by the Friends of the Koala. Meet at the Koala Conservation Centre, Phillip Island. Contact (059) 522 407.
- 23 Sat - 24 Sun September Agair Inc. 1995 Wildflower

Show & Art Show. 10 am. - 5.30 pm. Adults \$4, Pensioners/students \$2, children 12 and under free. The admission price includes: local wildflower display, display of Australian Native Garden Flowers, terrestrial orchid presentation, wildflower walk, bus trip to see wildflowers, sound and light show, entrance to art show, environmental displays, stage display 'Coastal Heathlands', and children's activities. There will be native plants, arts and crafts and environmental books, cards etc. for sale. Refreshments will be available. For further information contact (052) 434 286, (052) 632 011 or (03) 9890 8216.

Restoration Activities

July

- 22 Sat FO Sherbrooke Forest - project afternoon. 1 pm. Sherbrooke Lodge Road (75 H3). Weed control of ivy and holly. Contact Jeff Preston (03) 9755 2602.
- 23 Sun FO Merri Creek 10 am. Planting day at Hare Street, Fawkner. For further information contact Ray Radford on (03) 9419 3613.

August

- 6 Sun FO Merri Creek - Litter Blitz: Along Edgars Creek, working south from Edwardes Street, Preston. For further information contact Ray Radford on (03) 9419 3613.
- 9 Wed FO Sherbrooke Forest 9.30 am. Project morning at Woodfall Track. Meet Woodfall Track Gate (75 F6). Control of ivy. Contact Jeff Preston (03) 9755 2602.
- 12 Sat FO French Island 9am. Project Day - Fairy Ferns, site preparation. Departing from Stony Point on the Ferry. Please let Francis know on (03) 9783 4213, if you can come, at least 3 days prior to project day so enable travel arrangements can be made.
- 19 Sat FO the Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Project Day. 9.30 am. Meet at the Happy Valley car-park, Long Forest (approx. opposite Sundew Ave. in Long Forest Rd.) We will continue with the survey and mapping project in Long Forest if the weather is suitable. Other activities for the day will include removing tree guards from unsuccessful plantings along Old House Track and pulling up scattered and isolated cactus plants (eg. Prickly-pear). We may even have some trees to plant on the day if the caterpillars don't become too active beforehand.
- 20 Sun Greenlink Yarra Bend 10 am - 1 pm. Planting and maintenance day by the Yarra. Meet near the Cox Oval just off Yarra Bend Rd, Fairfield. Mel ref 2D D6. For more information contact Ralph Nischwitz on (03) 9482 4185.

Regular Restoration Activities:

9876 3807 (Mel 35 A3)

1st Saturday of the month:

Greenlink Box Hill - also every Monday and Tuesday at 10am. Minette Russell-Young (03) 9898 1364.

FO Gellibrand Hill State Park - 9.45am. Mark Corr (03) 95572783

Loughies Bushland - Nth Ringwood 9.30 am. Meet cnr Kubis & Werac Drv. Carole Clarke (03) 9870 8126.

1st Sunday of the month:

FO Evans Street Grasslands - 9.30am. Helen Graesser (03) 9744 4097 (Mel 113 B10)

FO Fourth Hill - 10 am - 12 noon. Meeting place varies. Dave V. Bockel (03) 9844 2659.

Heathmont Bushlinks - works in 5 different areas 10 am - 1 pm. Roger Lord (03) 9870 5262.

2nd Saturday of the month:

Wurundjeri Garden - 10am. Dorothy Sutherland (03) 9818 4706 (Mel 45 A11)

FO Timber Reserve - 2 - 3pm. Brian Phefley (03) 9844 2659 (Mel 35 G3)

Tereddan Drive Reserve, Kilsythe - in July working bee is the 3rd St. Graham Lorimer (03) 9728 5841.

2nd Sunday of the month:

Greenlink Camberwell - 3pm. Diana Burgess (03) 9809 2092 (Mel 60 E7)

Friends of the Yarra - 10am. Also Wednesdays. Judy Rutherford (03) 9347 2252 (Mel 2D D7)

FO the Wandering Brogil - Joy Hildebrand (03) 9844 2638 (Mel 23 D8)

Gad's Gang at Stony Creek - Mark Gardner (03) 9844 3799 (Mel 23 C9)

FO the Hundred Steps - Keith Vagg (03) 9844 1457.

FO the Common - Kim Dowcra (03) 9876 3807, Deb Parker (03) 9846 2214.

3rd Saturday of the month:

FO Bradshaw Park - 10am (9am in Nov & Dec). Dave Bainbridge (03) 9580 5992 (Mel 87 E10)

3rd Sunday of the month:

Men of the Trees - 10am. Minette Russell-Young (03) 9898 1364 (Mel 2D D6)

Meander (Menzies Creek & Emerald Tourist track) - 10am. Kate Forster (059) 685 828 (Mel 125 F12)

Brunswick Tree Group - 10am. Eric Ward (03) 9388 2123

FO One Tree Hill - Diane Silveri (03) 9710 1331

Osborne Peninsula Landcare - Margaret Dimech (03) 9844 3812 (Mel 23 J9)

FO Pigeon Bank Creek - 2pm. Linda Bromilow (03) 9844 2541 (Mel 23 J6)

FO Tindals Wildflower Reserve - 11am. Kim Docwra (03)

Last Saturday of the month:

FO Organ Pipes National Park - 10am. Carl Rayner (03) 9331 2810

Last Sunday of the month:

Friends of Royal Park West - 10am. Mick Arundell (03) 9380 8075 (Mel 29 C12)

JB Hubbard Reserve - Nth Ringwood. Carole Clarke (03) 9870 8126.

Week day activities:

FO the Koorngong - first Wednesday of the month at 10am. Cathy Willis (03) 9844 1841.

Fred Rogers Reserve - Heathmont 12 am - 2 pm. Gwen Elliot (03) 9879 1427

FO the Koalas inc - Koala counts are held at the Koala Conservation Centre, Phillip Island, every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Contact (059) 522 407.

FO Stane Brae - second Wednesdays 10am. Ron Taylor (03) 9844 4285.

FO Warrandyte State Park nursery activities - every Thursdays at 10am. Afternoon activities: walk, flora, fauna, park skills. Margaret Burke (03) 9844 1060

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

For Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers activities around Australia contact the National Headquarters on (053) 33 1483.

Earthcare/Naturelinks now have a calendar of all their projects in the Port Melbourne to Elwood region. For copies please phone (015) 865 027 or (03) 9209 6475

Thank you to all the people who contact us regarding on-coming events their groups are organising. If you wish to have your events covered, or you can see corrections that need attention please get in touch with Elissa Kerassitis on (03) 9379 1116.

Snippets:

Wombat Forest Bus Tours

Logging in the Wombat State Forest:

"The management of the Wombat Forest is driven by timber and woodchips, with little long-term consideration for rare flora and fauna, water catchments or tourism. At the current rate of overcutting, many experienced bush workers believe there will be no meaningful sawmill industry left within ten years."

-Wombat Forest Society

"The Wombat is a beautiful forest, producing clean air, clean water, flora and fauna habitat, recreation and timber, professionally managed on a sustainable basis."

-Norman Huon, Executive Director, Victorian Association of Forest Industries, press release, 24/6/94.

Confused? Don't know who to believe?

See it with your own eyes. Bus Tour of the Wombat State Forest. Spend a relaxing Sunday afternoon on a guided tour of the Wombat Forest, conducted by experienced bushmen and local residents. See the good, the bad, and the ugly of the Wombat Forest, then be informed. Afternoon tea included at a picnic spot in the forest.

1:30 - 4:30 PM, Sunday Afternoons,

On the Following Dates in 1995:

3rd Sunday of Every Month

16 July, 20 August, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November, 17 December

Tickets available from Daylesford Health Food Shop, Vincent Street, Daylesford. Adults: \$12.00, Concession: \$9.00, Family: \$24.00.

For more information and bookings, phone: (053) 48 3632 or (053) 45 7521.

Presented by the Wombat Forest Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 51, Trentham, 3458.

The Soil and Water Conservation Association of Australia (SAWCAA) Annual Conference '95

July 31 - August 2, 1995 Hilton on the Park, East Melbourne, Victoria

Communities, scientists, governments, businesses and individuals are all doing their bit for the environment. But how do we know it's working? This Conference will provide the very latest ideas, information and techniques about how you can give your catchment a health check-up. It will be conducted in a way which allows everyone to have

an opportunity to tell others about their programs, share their ideas, ask questions and to build an understanding of land and water health. All of the Conference workshop sessions will be recorded in the proceedings for you to take home with you at the end of the Conference. The theme of this year's Conference is:

Exploring Practical Ways of Monitoring Land and Water Health

*What needs to be monitored?

*What techniques, methods and approaches are being used to monitor changes in land and water health?

*What can the community and scientists learn from each other's monitoring programs?

This Conference will:

*introduce many practical ways of monitoring land and water

*explore issues and opportunities relating to monitoring natural resources

*refine techniques for best practice in monitoring land and water health

*provide fellowship, stimulating ideas and fun!

Participants will experience a feast of networking, presentations, methods and celebrations. You will be able to share experiences with committed practical land and water managers from across Australia facing common challenges in managing natural resources and monitoring land and water health.

For further information contact Viv McWaters on (03) 9480 7274

Source: YarraCare News, Newsletter #7, June 1995

CNR Salinity Guide

A guide on Salinity in the North West Yarra catchment will be available within the next 2 weeks. The guide covers topics such as salinity processes, assessment and management. For information please contact:

Catchment and Land Management on (03) 9480 7408.

Source: YarraCare News, Newsletter #7, June 1995

Yarracare Discussion Papers Out Now!

Yarracare have just released the latest discussion papers. They are:

In the Waterways Series: *Recreation in the Yarra Catchment*

In the Land Management Series: *Management of Parks in the Yarra Catchment* and *Planning in the Yarra Catchment*.

For copies, please contact Vicki at the YarraCare office on (03) 9480 7408.

Source: YarraCare News, Newsletter #7, June 1995

Community Streamwatch Report for 1993-94

A new report presents the results of the 1993-94 year of water quality monitoring under the StreamWatch Program. Melbourne has around 4000 km of waterways and water quality is monitored at 50 sites: 18 primary sites where sampling is done weekly; and 32 sites which are sampled every 4 weeks. Aquatic invertebrates are surveyed at 45 sites and sediment contamination is measured at 34 sites.

The following indicators are monitored to assess the water quality at each site:

- * E. coli (pathogens)
- * Toxicants (heavy metals)
- * Nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus compounds)
- * Suspended soils
- * Turbidity
- * Dissolved oxygen and biochemical oxygen demand
- * pH (acidity)

In addition to water quality monitoring, a number of sites are surveyed to assess stream conditions and management performance:

- * Aquatic invertebrates
- * Sediment contamination
- * Stream environmental condition
- * Stream amenity
- * Litter
- * Community perceptions

The results of monitoring have been translated into ratings of environmental quality to indicate poor to excellent condition for each site. This rating system was chosen to enable easy compari-

sons between waterways and makes the information accessible to non-specialist readers. For more information contact (03) 9816 7040.

Source: YarraCare News, Newsletter #7, June 1995

Weed Removal Success at Anglesea

The importance of weed removal is demonstrated in several reserve at Anglesea. After five years of working on Milkwort (*Polygala myrtifolia*) at one site, we found the Helmet Orchids (*Corybus incurvus*) where Milkwort had been very dense. Other orchids and mosses also returned.

Last year we weeded an area of coastal vegetation where Milkwort was thick and high with practically no understorey. This year conditions were conducive for germination and milkwort seedlings came up in their millions - 100 to the handful! But all was not lost for a number of species, which had been there before the Milkwort takeover, also appeared - first the Purple Swainsona (*Swainsona lessertifolia*), then the Coastal Twinleaf (*Zygophyllum billardieri*), then a native geranium and what appears to be Karkalla (*Carbobrotus rossii*) and several *Poa* species. I expect Silky Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia sericea*) later on.

Most of these seedling plants had not been seen there for some time as the tall species shut out light and took up moisture.

In our area the general rule is: remove the weeds, the indigenous plants will re-appear.

Mary D. White, 2 June 1995

Snippets Cont.: Moreland Open Space Strategy

The Merri Creek Management Committee in association with Context Pty. Ltd. and EDGe Consulting, has won the contract to prepare the City of

Moreland (the amalgamation of Brunswick and Coburg Councils) Open Space Strategy. The Strategy will include goals and objectives, as well as policies and guidelines for the future management of open space across the municipality.

The MCMC's primary role in the project will be to prepare a computer-based inventory of open space, a categorisation of open space types, preparation of a nature conservation plan, and input to a 5 year works and maintenance program for the municipality. Most of this work will be carried out by Tony Faithfull and Rod McLellen, although other MCMC staff are likely to participate in the project.

Source: MCMC News, June 1995

Bad News for Australia

National Geographic reports the discovery of a mouse-sized fossil jaw in 100 million year old deposits in the badlands of Utah "making this marsupial the oldest yet known anywhere". Worse still, *Australian Geographic* has an article by Michael Archer on a 60 million year old platypus from Patagonia - its first recorded appearance outside Australia.

Source: RoySocVic Notes on the News, 1996 No. 3.

Merri Grasslands Hopes

We are receiving indications that land containing nationally significant grassland at Craigieburn may be made available for sale in 1995. Now is the time to make your tax-deductible donation to the Merri Grasslands Appeal. The Merri Creek Management Committee, Victorian National Parks Association, Friends of Merri Creek and Victorian Conservation Trust have been working to bring land at Craigieburn onto the market for purchase as a conservation park. The VCT is running an Appeal to hold funds for this purpose. Donations above \$2.00 are tax-deductible. To make a donation, send your cheque or money order to the Victorian Conservation Trust at 49 Spring St., Melbourne 3000, with the following wording: "Please find enclosed my unconditional donation to the VCT. I request that the Trust give preference in the allocation of the donation to the Merri Creek Grasslands Appeal."

Source: MCMC News, June 1995

Survey of grasslands and grassy woodlands on private land

The Victorian Conservation Trust has obtained federal funding through a Save the Bush Agency Grant to conduct vegetation surveys of grasslands and grassy woodlands on private land in the Wimmera, south west Victoria and Gippsland. These regions have been targeted because very

little information exists on private land remnants in these areas.

It is anticipated that information gathered during the project will enable more effective conservation planning and extension activities in these areas. It is hoped that the proposed surveys will also increase public awareness of the need to conserve and manage these poorly reserved habitats.

The surveys will involve a community workshop component where landholders can attend to register their interest in having a survey conducted on their properties. Several workshops will be conducted in each region during August and September 1995. The field surveys will be conducted from October 1995 to January 1996 with a final report being prepared by March 1996.

If you would like to know more about the project or would like to register your property for a survey, please contact James Todd at the Trust on (03) 9651 4040 or check local papers for a community meeting near you.

Environment on the agenda for Clarence

Care for the environment is receiving a high priority in Clarence, Tasmania, this year.

Council in co-operation with Landcare and Coastcare groups has coordinated activities and

made a number of major Landcare programmes possible.

Projects include:

Monitoring of algal blooms at Cremorne.

Combating inundation at Pipe Clay Lagoon.

Enhancement of the entrance to Cremorne.

Revegetating the dunes at Bellerive and Howrah.

Fire hazard reduction at Natone Hill.

Revegetation following removal of willows at Barilla Bay and Risdon Vale rivulet.

Erosion control at Opossum Bay.

Plans for a TAFE bush management course.

The establishment of a monthly community consultative committee made up of representatives of the Landcare groups in Clarence has led to more effective use of resources and funding.

All groups work in co-operation and the committee is aware of their requirements. Because the committee has planned ahead it has been possible to put in for funding for larger projects.

The committee has also ensured better use of the Council's Landcare and Coastcare trailers. The trailers which contain tools and information on weed control to help make their work more effective, are used by two or three groups most weekends. The trailers raise the profile of Landcare work. Colourful murals have been painted on all sides of the trailers by the Risdon Vale community group with the help of community artist Caz Rodwell.

The introduction of a bushland management course being developed through TAFE will teach participants to assess a bushland area and work out what is needed to overcome problems.

Provided by Phil Watson, Clarence City Council

The Massacre of the Murray

This Easter we headed for the Murray, just East of Corowa. As we arrived beside the riverbed the initial response was joyous. But it only took two minutes for us to realise the massacre occurring. We had difficulty getting in to the State Reserve because of hundreds of grazing cattle. The evidence of cattle within the reserve was pretty obvious. No new trees, shrubs, grasses, anything! The only obvious thing on the reserve was cow dung! In forty years there will be no trees left and the entire reserve will be an open mass of dung, weeds and erosion.

We could see hundreds of new seedlings of River Red Gum, Acacias, grasses, etc., but everything was eaten two inches off the ground. No enforcement of keeping cattle off the riverbed was in place and the local cattleman had every intention to graze his cattle on the reserve, regardless of the signs.

Why does it matter you say? Well apart from the barren land and the dung, the river beds were falling into the river nonstop. At one point the bed, which was 6 ft high, had whole segments six feet long falling into the river.

Of course the constant waves caused by the waterski boats added to the problem. If people remember, the winds came through on the Sunday very strong. Because of the masses of dieback along the banks, along with the erosion and degradation caused by the cattles and boats, what happened? Another massive River Red Gum fell into the Murray! The waterskiers got a bit upset - it blocked their path!

When is the Victorian/NSW governments going to do something bfore it's too late? At least S.A. is planning a program to stop continual degradation of the Murray, its banks and catchment.

Next Easter I think we will head for Wombat Forest...that's if Midway hasn't shipped it all to Japan in the form of Woodchips!

Mr Robert Stephen, Olinda.

Book: **The Orchids of Victoria**

The Orchids of Victoria is the first comprehensive and up-to-date pictorial identification guide to Victoria's diverse and beautiful native orchids. More than 270 species occur in the wild in Victoria, making the orchids one of the largest native plant families represented in the state. It is one of the most flora in the world and is also potentially at risk: more than one-third of the species are considered threatened and many are highly endangered.

The Orchids of Victoria is designed for the amateur and professional alike. Each species - including several that have not been illustrated before - is shown in full colour in over 270 high quality colour photographs. The detailed description of each species is designed to make identification simple, and is accompanied by a distribution map and information about its flowering time, habitat and conservation status. Also included is the most up-to-date information on the biology and ecology of orchids.

With its easy-to-follow aids to identification and authoritative text, *The Orchids of Victoria* is an invaluable companion for orchid-lovers in the home or field.

Gary Backhouse is a scientist with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Jeffrey Jeanes is an amateur field botanist and photographer.

A Miegunyah Press Title with RRP of \$59.95. Available at Greens Bookshop and other good stockists.

Sugar Glider Counts at Organ Pipes

By Angelique Stefanatos

In February 1989, thirteen sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) were released at Organ Pipes National Park in the hopes of establishing a new breeding colony in the successfully revegetated park. Since Organ Pipes was declared a national park, tens of thousands of indigenous plants have been planted. Much of this work has been carried out by the Friends of Organ Pipes who were the first 'friends' group in Victoria.

In the first week of May 1995 approximately 200 traps were placed in trees over a period of four nights to monitor the hopefully growing or stable sugar glider population. This process sounds very simple but it actually involved a lot of thought and physical effort.

Firstly, all the wire traps had to be covered in plastic to keep the sugar gliders dry during the inevitable Victorian downpours, and the traps were numbered so we could release the animals back into familiar territory. We also had to make up huge batches of sticky sugar glider bait which consisted of rolled oats, lots of honey and dried apple. This was supposed to be stuffed into surgical cotton gauze but usually ended up over our hands, hair and faces. The gauze held the ingredients together but still allowed the sweet aroma to entice the hungry sugar gliders - and unfortunately, brushtails, rats and European Wasps - into

the traps. When the animals tugged at the bait, the trap closed behind them. Another pest the sweet baits attracted were hungry park rangers who hadn't eaten their breakfast!

An usual addition to the traps were socks which were kindly donated by 'Holeproof' (who must have wondered why sugar gliders needed socks). The socks were actually very important in keeping the gliders warm on those frosty nights, as well as making them much easier to catch when they were snugly curled up in a sock.

A backpack-type sprayer filled with a honey/water mixture was used to spray the trees containing traps, in order to attract the sugar gliders. Of course as you were spraying up into the trees you'd be completely showered with sticky liquid. I had nightmares of being carried off by ants attracted to my honey-coated body!

However, I survived for that exciting day when we first checked the traps, and I was not disappointed. Even though you know what to expect from seeing photos, sugar gliders are so much more beautiful in the flesh with their big eyes and big pink noses. But one thing the photos don't tell you is they're smelly. But you don't worry about such things when you have to put one of these warm balls of fluff up your jumper to keep it warm. Even though their extremely cute, they make a horrendously loud noise for such a small animal, as I discovered while stuck up a ladder face to face with one.

Next the sugar gliders were 'processed' by having their details recorded such as weight, colour and sex. The process is very 'high-tech' these days and one of the first things done is to 'scan' the animals with a machine like the ones in supermarkets that scan groceries. Although the inserting of a micro-chip into a new animal is not the most pleasant procedure for it, once inserted, the animal can be scanned in the field and released immediately (if previously trapped) with minimal handling. It can even be scanned through a bag so it doesn't have to see us.

Other forms of identification used are tattoos and ear tags but unfortunately both procedures aren't particularly pleasant for the animal. But in most cases animals had to have backup ID in case one method failed, or extra ID because of confusion concerning identification used by past researchers. In these situations I think we need to remember that we are doing the research for the benefit of the animals, and their welfare should be given first priority.

However, nothing is wasted and the tiny pieces of skin removed for the ear tags are going to be used for genetic identification of individuals and to try to establish genetic relationships within the colony.

In total, 31 individuals were trapped including six that were previously unrecorded or were new young. This indicated the population was stable. Numbers may have been down due to the cold wet weather which could have discouraged the gliders from foraging far. Another reason may be that Black Wattles (*Acacia mearnsii*), one of their major feed trees, are showing signs of senescence. A revegetation program will soon be needed to continue supporting the sugar glider population.

The best part of all was releasing the sugar gliders at dusk and watching their agile movements from branch to branch, and seeing them glide with such accuracy to their nest boxes. I felt privileged to be there but sad that so few Australians have seen this wonderful part of our forests. With programs like this one at Organ Pipes maybe soon more people will get the opportunity to see these wonderful animals in the wild.

**Excerpted from Friends of Warrandyte State Park
Newsletter, May/June 1995**

IFFA activities:

IFFA (Vic)

Meeting venue:

RAOU Headquarters, 415 Riversdale Road
Hawthorn East, Melways 45 H 12 It is on the north
side of Riversdale Road a few hundred metres west of
Camberwell Junction.

Next meeting:

Tuesday 25 July, 7:30 pm at the RAOU.
Everyone welcome!

Committee meeting:

**The Committee meeting is now the second Monday
of every month. Contact any committee member for
the location.**

SPIFFA

Contact Mark Adams (059)851 122.

Indigenous Nurseries Network subcommittee:

Contact Murray Ralph (03) 419 3040 or Sue Mills (03) 383
2937.

NSW activities:

Next meeting:

In the Maiden Theatre, Mrs Macquaries Rd, Royal
Botanic Gardens Sydney. Contact Sally Fisher (02)
9706486 (work).

Table of Contents:

Restoring the Los Angeles River: a Forty Year Art Project	2
Destruction of Revegetation Work at Ferny Creek	3
Will any mulch do?	4
More on Waterbuttons, <i>Cotula coronopifolia</i>	6
Some Comments on Groundstorey Restoration	7
<u>Coming Events:</u>	8
<u>Snippets:</u>	10
<u>Snippets Cont:</u>	12
<u>Book:</u>	
The Orchids of Victoria	14
Sugar Gilder Counts at Organ Pipes	14

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