

# INDIGENOTES

Another drawing from The Flowers of Toohey Forest 1995  
Calendar.

# Questions from the Ganges

By Fran Peavey

I'm from Idaho. It doesn't generally occur to a girl from Idaho to think of playing a part in the cleaning up of the Ganges River. But a friend from India, Dr. V.B. Mishra - a hydraulic engineer and a Hindu religious leader - asked me to help him clean up the river. I had no experience of cleaning up rivers. I knew nothing about sewage. What I did know about was how to build a strategy for social change. That, it seemed, was what Dr. Mishra and his group needed.

When I went to India, I used strategic questioning to help people form their own opinions of what should be done to clean their sacred river. I began by building a series of questions, starting with how they saw the problem themselves. "What do you see when you look at the river?" "How do you feel about the condition of the river?" "How do you explain the situation with the river to your children?" I listened carefully to how they explained to themselves what they saw. Essentially I was looking at their logic as well as their words. I was looking for the cultural wiring around the river.

I couldn't say: "Oh, I see that the river is polluted." In the context of India, that would be like my saying "Your mother is a whore" to a westerner. It would be a cultural insult, and the Indians would, at best, stop listening. To arrive with a fixed idea of the situation would create reaction and resistance. So I had to find out how they explained the pollution to themselves.

Over and over I heard something like "the river is holy, but she is not pure. We are not taking care of her the way she needs us to". The funny thing is that, after hearing this reply, I started to think less in terms of "pollution" and more in terms of "people not taking care of the river". This was an important change of perspective. "Pollution" is an abstraction that does not address the responsibility of the people who are

making the mess. "Pollution" focuses attention solely on the river. It is almost as if the river is to blame for being polluted!

People often said "I see the problem but others don't." This told me a lot about their society's taboos, and about the distance between people - what they can and cannot talk about with each other. When the subject is the holy Ganges, the symbolic burden is so great that to say what you think may seem sacrilegious or crazy to others. Culture defines what we may say and how to say it. While it is useful to bring gifts from one culture to another, it is more powerful to find strategies for change within the culture facing the change.

I needed first to understand their change views - how they expected change to happen, what kind of strategies had their confidence. In India, no social change can compare to the country's liberation from British control; this colours their perception of how change takes place. When I asked how the change happened, I heard many strategies for change - satyagraha (passive resistance), fasting, direct action, pressuring civic leaders, citizens' assemblies, marches to the capital - means of working for change that are embedded in Indian culture. They were willing to use these strategies now to clean their holy river. I would then ask, "What would you like to do to clean the river?" And they would apply their change views to this specific situation.

One thirteen year old suggested that he and his friends would like to "get some sticks and go up and down the river and persuade people not to toilet on the river." I did not evaluate this idea but passed it on to the Foundation members. They recognised the seeds of a great idea in the one the young man offered. Thus the idea of the home guard was born. For five years, a team (of adults) equipped with sticks walked the riverfront or travelled in a boat, through India's most holy city, Varanasi. Their task was to discourage citizens from acts disrespectful to the river - defecating, washing with soap, and dumping animal carcasses into the river. (Before you get too judgemental about these behaviours: most people in India do not have bathrooms in their homes. And it is hard, in a city of over a million, to find ground in which to bury cows, goats and

dogs when they die).

People often told me that it was impossible to clean the river. Rather than obediently assuming it was impossible, I started to think that maybe it was going to take quite a long time and that I had better start thinking about the next generation in my questioning. I was already talking to young people, but I added a question for the adults: "How are you preparing your children to clean up the river?"

Everyone in the Mochan Foundation had been asked that question. To a person they had said: "We are doing nothing to prepare the children to clean the river." But their love of the river, their love for their children, and the void in their answers to that question could not long coexist in their minds. The dissonance was too great.

One afternoon when I was taking a shower, someone came running in and said "Peavey, come right away, we've got a great idea." I thought, "Gosh, you know, I rarely get summoned from the shower by a great idea." I quickly dressed and joined the other Foundation workers. They were enthusiastically discussing a plan: "We're going to have a poster-painting contest for all the students in Benares. We'll hang the winning posters up at a large musical event. The adults will see what the children see and be embarrassed..."

It was an original idea and clearly the idea was theirs. Everybody in that room had been asked a question about the preparation of their children for river-cleaning work. Could that question have had anything to do with the emergence of the idea about the poster contest? I believe it did. But I didn't come up with the poster idea; it was their idea, and so they had enthusiasm around it.

We have had poster contests almost every year since then. Five to eight hundred young people have regularly gathered on the banks of the Ganges for poster-making competitions.

For several years running, the Sankat Mochan Foundation held a citizens' assembly. Officials of the Ganges Action Plan came to a large multicoloured tent to discuss the progress of the

work and plans with members of the Foundation and the local citizens. In this public forum, the officials gave their presentations; then citizens stood at the microphone and spoke of their own ideas and asked questions.

People need to come up with their own answers. Questioning can catalyse this process. A powerful question grows a life of its own as it chisels away at a problem. Don't be disappointed if a great question does not elicit a great answer right away. A very powerful question, a long-lever question, may not have an answer at the moment it is asked. It will sit rattling in the mind for days or weeks as the person works on an answer. If the seed is planted, the answer will grow. Questions are alive.

From the Whole Earth Review, No. 86 Summer 1995

# Sleepy Hollow Wildlife Shelter Needs Help for Koalas

Dear Editor

My name is Pam Cale and I run the Sleepy Hollow Wildlife Shelter at Tooradin. A Wildlife Shelter Permit Holder is licensed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to take in sick, injured and orphaned native animals and birds for rehabilitation and eventual release back into their natural habitat.

I have operated my Wildlife Shelter for 13 years and take in between 3,000 and 4,000 animals, including birds, a year. This is a voluntary operation and is run from my own home. We receive no funding or subsidy and it costs us approximately \$150 per week to run the shelter.

Some of the regular species we care for are Feathertail and Sugar Gliders, Brushtail and Ringtail Possums, Pygmy Possums, bats and Flying Foxes, Wallabies, Kangaroos, Koalas, Wombats, Echidnas, lizards and tortoises. Some less common species we have cared for include Green Tree Frogs, Water Dragons, seals and snakes. The birdlife ranges from wrens, robins, parrots, pelicans, swans, owls through to large birds of prey such as Peregrine Falcons.

The main reasons for these animals coming in are dog or cat attacks, road hits and loss of habitat. Disease and shooting also take a toll. Often adult animals do not survive and leave us with orphans to hand raise. Some of the animals are only bruised or concussed and only need to be held for the short term. For more intensive care animals may need up to six months to be rehabilitated and ready for release. Some of the unfurred orphans may need 18 months of care before they are ready for release.

All the animals and birds need to be given the correct formula and feed. When raising the orphans they have to be given a special low lactose formula and as they grow it is important to feed them the food they will be finding when they are released. Orphaned pouch young (which are all called Joeys) need to be kept at temperatures and conditions which simulate the mothers pouch. We use heat pads, hot boxes and humidifiers for this. They need to be given the attention and care they would get from their mother while they are young, but when weaning time comes it is important to dehumanise them as well. Because the unfurred joeys are attached to the teat we sometimes have

to feed every one or two hours around the clock.

The releasing of the animal is as important as the raising to ensure a good chance of survival. Possums, gliders and bats need to be released in nesting boxes to simulate hollows; wombats need to have a burrow; kangaroos need to be released into a mob and birds into flocks etc. Habitat needs to be correct and food plentiful. If this is all done properly it requires hard work and alot of heart ache at times. The personal rewards come for me when the released animals can be sighted 6 months later or better still with a Joey in the pouch. Some times they bring their young back to show you as if to thank you.

Our house is no longer coping with the amount and different variety of species I take in, in particular the ever increasing amount of koalas finding themselves in trouble. Koalas stress easily and need to be kept separate from the other animals. The baby koalas require intensive care and need to be separate from the sick and injured adults.

We are now in a position where we urgently need to upgrade our facilities to be able to accommodate these animals. If anyone is able to assist us in our efforts to set up a koala hospital and nursery donations can be sent to:

**Sleepy Hollow Wildlife Shelter**

**Pam Cale**

**3 Matthew St.**

**Tooradin 3980**

or ring Mark and Lynette on (059) 851122 for further information.

**Pam Cale**

## **Platypus Pursuits**

### **Do platypus still live in urbanised sections of the Yarra River and its tributaries?**

Last summer, researchers from the Australian Platypus Conservancy and Melbourne Water joined forces with a dedicated group of wildlife veterinarians and community volunteers to undertake platypus field surveys along a number of waterways in the lower Yarra catchment. In addition, information on recent public sightings of platypus near Melbourne was gathered through the Great Platypus Count, conducted in association with *The Age*. The Platypus Count attracted nearly 100 reports of platypus seen by anglers, canoeists, birdwatchers, pedestrians and bicyclists. The sightings were concentrated in two areas: the Yarra River upstream of Lower Templestowe, and the Plenty River upstream of Greensborough. People were particularly likely to see platypus in the Yarra near Warrandyte State Park, where the animals were observed climbing out of the water onto logs, floating quietly in midstream, and playing in rapids. Few recent reports were received of the platypus in the inner suburbs, although animals were possibly spotted on three occasions last year along the lower reaches of Merri Creek. Single sightings were also reported along Gardiners Creek and the point where Chandler Highway crosses the Yarra in Kew.

The results of the field surveys confirmed that platypus are still reasonably abundant in parts of the upper Plenty River catchment. In addition, the animals were found in the lower reaches of Watson's Creek (in Kangaroo Ground), Diamond Creek (in Eltham) and - to the surprise of many people - the lower Plenty River (in Yallambie) and Mullum Mullum Creek (in Doncaster East and Templestowe).

Along the Yarra, juvenile platypus were encountered near Kangaroo Ground and Warrandyte and at the mouth of Diamond Creek, indicating that the species is breeding successfully in the river at least as far downstream as Templestowe.

The Australian Platypus Conservancy plans to continue undertaking field surveys near Melbourne over the next few years, both to replicate this year's findings and to expand the geographic scope of the work.

#### **Upcoming Lecture Series**

The Australian Platypus Conservancy is presenting a program of public lectures through August 1995. They will be presented by Dr. Melody Serena, the project's co-ordinator at a number of venues around Melbourne. For further details contact: (03)9716 1626.

#### **Why not become a Friend of the Platypus?**

The Australian Platypus Conservancy is a non-profit association and depends on the support of individuals, community groups and businesses who share an interest in this amazing species. For additional information contact (03) 9716 1626

**From Ripples, Newsletter of the Australian Platypus Conservancy**

## **New Publications: Managing Vertebrate Pests: Rabbits**

A new book on rabbits has been published by the Bureau of Resource Sciences and the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology. Titled **Managing Vertebrate Pests Rabbits** it is one in a series of publications dealing with vertebrate pests. This volume aims to provide land managers with "best practice" national guidelines for managing the agricultural and environmental damage caused by rabbits. There are six parts to the book covering the history, distribution and biology; impacts and use; community attitudes; techniques and management; Strategic rabbit management and future directions.

**On a first glance it looks like being an essential addition to the library for land managers and anyone interested in rabbit management. A copy will be available at the meeting for people to have a browse.**

## **Australian Grasslands**

This new brochure, produced by the Grasslands Ecology Program (within the Australian Nature Conservation Agency) describes the ecological value and current status of these highly threatened vegetation types in Australia. Available from the ANCA on 1800 671 717.

## **The Bushweed Database 2 of Environmental Weeds in Australia**

This publication, compiled by J.T. Swarbrick and D.B. Skarratt, brings together the scattered information on weeds of urban bushland, national parks, roadsides, riverbanks, shorelines and other areas that are maintained or valued for their natural vegetation. Entries for each of the 1059 known species of environmental weeds in Australia cover common and scientific names; origin and spread in Australia; biology; impacts on environmental systems; distribution; and control methods. Available for \$45 (plus \$3.35 p & h) from the University of Queensland. Order by phoning (074) 601 450.

# DCNR'S Flora Information System

The Flora Information System (FIS) is a botanical, geographic information system in which floristic data from a range of site-based and grid-based sources all over Victoria are stored (currently over one million records from over 25,000 sites and 933 ten minute grids).

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources currently has over 20 computers supporting the FIS Statewide mainly based at the major work centres.

The FIS consists primarily of seven components. These are:

1. DATA INPUT - the storage and editing of floristic data.

There are several types of floristic data:

**Site Specific Quadrat Sampling:** All vascular plant species are recorded from sites of a predetermined size (eg 30m<sup>2</sup> for forests or 10m<sup>2</sup> for grasslands) and assigned a cover/abundance value. Other information such as the date of collection, accurate locality (Lat-Long or AMG), altitude, collector, etc. are also stored with the quadrat.

**Herbarium Records:** Records of specimens held at Melbourne Herbarium.

**Incidental Records.** Where exact localities of species are known but a complete species list has not been recorded. e.g. VROT sitings and weed locations etc.

**Defined Area Species Lists:** Species lists from a defined areas (e.g. sub-block: (Beaublehole) or flora reserve). Cover abundance not necessarily noted.

**Ten Minute Grid Sampling:** Information from a range of sources (including quadrat) is incorporated into a single list for each grid. The source of data is noted. This database is good for providing a general overview of species distribution across the State and is being used in this manner in the Flora of Victoria.

All records in the FIS are stored as unique numbers which correspond to a standard species numbering list. The nomenclature for the species is regularly updated and is consistent with that recommended by the National Herbarium of Victoria.

Sources of data include:

DNCR staff - flora survey teams, Flora & Fauna Guarantee Officer's, other regional staff, etc.

Herbarium records

J. H. Willis and A.C. Beaublehole data

Private consultants

Field Naturalists

2. ANALYSES - the hierarchical classification of quadrat based information for use in vegetation and mapping studies or animal habitat definition and delineation.

This is the principal and most complex analysis used in the FIS. Other analyses include:

Searching for information from specified areas (Ranging from large parts of Victoria e.g. natural regions to very local areas e.g. small reserves).

Searching for species across a selected range of sites

Calculating the proportion of introduced species over a range of sites

Calculating the mean altitudes over a range of sites

Calculating the mean number of species for a range of quadrats

3. OUTPUT - printouts of raw data, reordered data or results of data analysis.

At each stage of data entry and analysis, printouts to a floppy disk can be generated. These printouts may be of raw data (e.g. quadrat information), of reorganised data (e.g. list of all species found in a selected range of sites organised in family order), or of the results of an analysis (e.g. two-way table). Outputs can be loaded into a Word Processing file for editing or incorporating into a document/report. Results of data analysis/searches can be used as input for other functions of the System.

4. DISPLAY - both graphic and non-graphic displays are a feature of the FIS.

All program access and data entry is via easy-to-

use menus. A range of error messages and checking routines are built into the programs. The distribution of quadrats or ten minute grids containing selected species (or other features) can be displayed on computer generated maps of Victoria or local study areas. These maps can have a range of overlays, such as roads, rivers, lakes, topography, National Parks etc. Overlays can be added as required and can be derived from various sources (e.g. CNR GIS, AUSLIG GIS, or custom designed). Super VGA monitors can also utilise a feature which allows the display of quadrat localities on geographically registered satellite images or aerial photographs. This option has the potential to improve the use of PC's in the land use and vegetation mapping areas. All screen displays can be saved in a variety of formats (e.g. TIF) which can be easily loaded into Word for Windows (or other word processing packages) and integrated with text.

5. PREDICTION - the use of existing data to predict the localities of similar vegetation, environments or species, elsewhere.

There are two basic procedures within the FIS for predictions, one based on climate and the other based on the floristic composition of quadrat sites. The climatic prediction program (BIOCLIM - John Busby / ERIN) uses a predetermined, 6 minute latitude-longitude grid of climatic data to predict the distribution of sites with a similar climatic regime to that of a series of selected sites in the database.

The floristic prediction program (SIMILAR - Viridans) uses the floristic composition of all the quadrats in the database (or a selected subset of them) to predict the distribution of sites with a similar environment to that of the selected site.

Both routines are quick to run and are accessed by one or two menu commands. As with all modelling, predictions are not an end in themselves but the starting point of an iterative process.

6. DESKTOP PUBLISHING - much of the output from the above programs can be enhanced so that it is of publication quality.

The map outputs from the screen can be enhanced through special software so that high-resolution, laser printed products can be created. The output for all components of the package can be imported into Word for Windows and other desktop publishing packages for final formatting and editing.

7. SOFTWARE - the open nature of the menu and the generality of the output files means that a wide range of standard and non-standard software can be incorporated into the FIS to customise parts of the system for individual use.

The FIS operates through a dynamically-linked software system: Viridans P/L, that is run on IBM compatible computers. External software used includes: Word for Windows, AutoCAD, Excel, DrHalo4, Dbase, CorelDRAW, Scanrix, Halo Imager and ArcInfo.

This is an overview of the capabilities of the FIS. In a future issue of Indigenotes we hope to provide information on the an FIS Request Information Order Form, a Quadrat Recording Sheet for the Melbourne Area and a Flora Incidentals Recording Sheet.

We also hope to provide information and guidelines for the exchange of data i.e.:

- a.) the collection of appropriate data for input into the FIS and
- b.) the availability and access to data from the FIS.

For further information on the Flora Information System contact:

Fiona Young or Michele Arundell  
Flora Section, Department of Conservation and  
Natural Resources  
123 Brown Street  
Heidelberg 3084.  
Phone: (03) 9450 8736 or (03) 9450 8711  
Fax: (03) 9450 9799

# Coming events:

## For IFFA events see back cover

## Conferences/Workshops/Talks

- 3 Sun September - Protecting and Managing Remnants, a seminar session presented by Greening Australia Victoria. The session includes manual and notes, participation certificate, all training materials, light lunch, concession rates to members and community groups. For further information and bookings contact (03)9421 0900.
- 5 Tues September Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Meeting. 8pm. Herbarium hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. David Morgan, Zoology Department, Melbourne university will speak on "Estimating Populations".
- 9 Sat September - Fundamentals of Weed control. A training session presented by Greening Australia Victoria. Session includes manual and notes, participation certificate, all training materials, light refreshments, concession rates to members and community groups. For inquiries and bookings contact (03)9421 0900.
- 20 Wed September - Using direct seeding, a training session presented by Greening Australia Victoria. Session includes manual and notes, participation certificate, all training materials, light refreshments, concession rates to members and community groups. For inquiries and bookings contact (03)9421 0900.
- 22 Fri September - Slide night organised by the Friends of Warrandyte State Park. Alan Webster, our Powerful Owl expert will be our guest lecturer. For more information contact Marg Burke (03) 9844 1060 or Betty Oke (03) 9844 3763.
- 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.
- Thursday 16 & Friday 17 November 1995. Managing with Climate Variability Conference. The purposes of the conference are to review the progress of the National Climate Variability Research and Development Program; to disseminate and discuss the results of projects supported under the first phase of the program; and to plan future activities for support under the second phase of the program. The conference will be held at the Lakeside Hotel, Canberra. If you are interested in attending the conference please contact as soon as possible - Managing with Climate Variability Conference, C/- Conference

## Excursions and field trips

- Every Sunday discover Queensland's Toohey Forest. 7am 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.
- 3rd Sunday of every month - Bus Tour of the Wombat Forest. See logging in the Wombat Forest with your own eyes. Spend a relaxing Sunday afternoon on a guided tour of the Wombat Forest, conducted by experienced bushpeople and local residents. Afternoon tea included at a picnic spot in the forest. 1.30pm - 4.30pm on the following dates, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November, 17 December. Tickets are available from Daylesford Health Food Shop, Vincent St, Daylesford. Adults \$12, Concession \$9, Family \$24 (2 adults, 2 Children). For more information or bookings contact the Wombat Forest Society on (053) 48 3632, or (053) 45 7521.
- 26 Sat August Field Naturalist Club of Victoria Botany Group Excursion. Join leader Val Stajsic on a visit to remnant woodlands in the Melton - Bacchus Marsh area. Meet 10am at the Melton Railway Station carpark (south side) melway 116 K3.
- 27 Sun August Friends of Stony Creek meeting, followed by a wildflower walk with botanist David Cameron. Contact Mark Gardiner on (03) 9844 3799.
- 3 Sun September Field Naturalist Club of Victoria general excursion - a ramble with naturalist Cecily Falkingham through the Olinda State Forest. Meet 10am sharp at Silvan Reservoir off Stonyford Rd - Melway 120 G11. When you leave Monbulk-Silvan Rd, and you turn onto Stonyford Rd, the entrance to Silvan dam is the first carpark on the left. Will travel in a convoy.
- 16 Sat September Fauna Survey Group Stag watching at Mt. Macedon. Ring Dan Harley on (03) 9592 8952 for details.
- 23 Sat - 24 Sun September Angair 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.
- 22 Sun October - Guided orchid walk in One Tree Hill, a critical part of the land link to th Kinglake National Park. Our guide is Cam Beardsall whose knowledge of both the area and its botanical significance is unsurpassable. Contact Diane Silveri on (03) 9710 1331 for further details.

# Restoration Activities

## September

1 Fri Spring Planting Festival Launch at Westgate Park. The Spring Planting Festival will be celebrated during the months of September and October with particular emphasis on the Schools planting day on the 15th of Sept. Schools will take their classrooms outside as they lend a hand with a wide range of activities including planting trees for shade in the playgrounds and monitoring the health of nearby bushland. Port Melbourne, Point Cook, Phillip Island - Bass Valley, Braeside, Malvern, Sydenham and Cranbourne will be putting in an extra effort this year by hosting the major Festival sites on the weekends of the 1st and 2nd/3rd 16th/17th of September. Melbourne Parks and Waterways, Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources along with local councils will be organising entertainment, food and fun for everyone who comes along to help with the planting. The festival Hot-line (1800 806 555) will direct the public to their nearest planting site.

3 Sun Heathmont Bushlink - working bee at Heathmont Railway line. Meet at the northern end of the Heathmont Station car park, Melways ref 50 A11 at 10am. BYO weeding tools and a cup. Contact Roger Lord on (03) 9870 5262.

9 Sat FO French Island 9am. Project day - Mt. Wellington erosion work. 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 travel arrangements can be made.

10 Sun URAGE (Upwey Regional Action Group for the Environment) Working bee. Meet 10am. Contact Robert Stephen on (03) 9751 2407 for venue and information.

For Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers activities, contact ATCV: (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) 9650 8296.

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

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, (03) 379 1116.

# Regular Restoration Activities

## 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) 9557 2783

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, Kilsyth. 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) 844 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)

9876 3807 (Mel 35 A3)

### **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.

FO Damper Creek, Mt. Waverley (Melways 61 D10) 10-12 pm. Contact Barry Hunter on (03) 9807 3211.

### **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

## **VNPA Box-Ironbark Camp, September 23-24.**

Box and Ironbark forests and woodlands form a unique ecosystem, with many rare and threatened species dependent on them. Over 85% of these forests have been cleared and there are continuing threats. While agricultural land uses have decreased, gold mining and timber harvesting are still serious threats. This camp aims to discuss these issues and strategies for the conservation of these forests.

The camp will be at Kooyoora/Melville Caves State Park (near Inglewood, 40kms nth-west of Bendigo) on the weekend of 23-24 September. Bring a tent, food and drink and the VNPA will provide:

- expert guides, botanists and biologists
- a spotlight walk to discover the nocturnal Box-Ironbark communities
- forest tours to examine effects of mining, forestry and grazing on the area

Costs cover campsites, equipment and guides: Adults - \$ 20 weekend or \$10 one night. Concession is \$7, no charge for children under 16 (Families welcome). To secure your place contact Charlie or Simon at the VNPA office on (03) 9 650 8296. Maps and information will be provided upon booking but places are limited!

### **IFFA Field Trip:**

## **Kamarooka State Forest**

Come along and see this beautiful state forest with

its mix of Mallee, Grey Box and Box-Ironbark vegetation. Neil Gardiner, our devoted treasurer and local in the area will be organising this trip at the best time of year for wildflowers. The organised walk will be on the Saturday but a campsite will be available for Saturday night for those who want to stick around.

**Date: Saturday 21st October, 1995**

**Meet: Near Bendigo (call for directions)**

**Contact: Neil Gardiner (03) 9499 7048**

## **ANPC Field Trip to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens: 9/9/95**

The Australian Network for Plant Conservation, ANPC, is based at the botanic gardens in Canberra and was established after a conference in Canberra in 1991. Its role is to be the co-ordinating organisation for *ex situ* cultivation or as it is now being referred to integrated plant conservation in Australia. The network locates and brings together information on integrated plant conservation activities in Australia and provides access to this information for members. It has established the National Endangered Flora Collection to provide information on endangered plants being grown by members, produces a quarterly newsletter *Danthonia* and organises workshops, training courses and conferences.

The Victorian region of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation ANPC is holding an informal discussion/meeting on Saturday 9 Sept. 95 at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. It is a BYO lunch affair beginning at 12.30 PM for lunch with a tour of the gardens kicking off at about 2 PM. The focus for the day will be on the conservation of plant communities at Cranbourne, the future scope for *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation of rare or restricted plants at the gardens and issues related to the management of remnant bushland.

**Meeting Place: Administration Building, RBG, Cranbourne**

**Entry off South Gippsland Highway,**

**Melways Ref 133 K10**

**Lunch 12.30 onwards;**

**Gardens Tour 2-4 PM**

**Enquiries: Leslie Hammersley 059 963787.**

## **Botanic Guardians: Help Needed for Rare Grassland Species Monitoring**

IFFA has just undertaken a project under the Botanic Guardians scheme administered by DCNR to survey identified sites on the Melbourne-Geelong rail line for populations of *Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*, the button wrinklewort and *Senecio macrocarpus*, the large fruit groundsel. At present Action Statements are being prepared for these two species under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Information gained from the survey will be valuable in planning future management strategies. The aim of the project is to map the occurrences of the plants on the sites, assess the status of the populations in terms of numbers of individuals present, signs of recruitment and identification of threats such as weed invasion and present the information in a report to Geelong region of CNR.

It is planned to visit the sites three times over the spring - summer in October, November and December. Proposed dates are:  
**8 October, 1995**  
**12 November 1995 and**  
**10 December 1995.**  
These are all Sundays (less trains).

If you are interested in being involved and seeing some of our remnant railside gardens please call Peter Tucker on (03) 9818 1537 AH to arrange times and transport.

### **Caretaker Wanted**

We require a person or persons who would be interested in caretaking 400 acres of bush with some clearings. The place is at Rocky Hall, adjoining the New Coolangubra National Park about 45 Km inland from Pambula (South east NSW). Lyrebirds, Wombats, Goannas, Gliders, Wallabies etc. Small one bedroom mud brick cottage, (solar power & phone) available in December. No dogs or cats. Rent free in return for caretaking.

Ring Lynette or Mark on (059) 85 1122 or (015) 32 0292.

## **Jobs in Conservation:**

### **La Trobe University Wildlife Reserve**

Supervisor/Leading Hand (2 positions), in the Wildlife Reserves, La Trobe University. Two supervisors are required to supervise 24 New Work Opportunity trainees on a six month training programme. The programme will deliver competency-based training in the restoration and management of indigenous flora and fauna in areas under the management of the La Trobe University Wildlife Reserves. The successful applicants should have demonstrated field experience in revegetation and bushland management including recognition of Victorian plants and animals, the control of environmental weeds using chemical and manual methods, collection and propagation of indigenous plants, and site interpretive skills.

The appointees are to provide the day to day supervision of trainees and therefore expected to have well developed interpersonal skills, be involved in planning of job schedules and maintenance of records. An Associate Diploma of Applied Sciences (Resource Management) or equivalent qualification would be an advantage. Salary range \$27,134 - 28,796 pro rata. For a position description telephone (03) 9479-3671. Applications in writing quoting reference number ADMD\*/5046 including two written work references or two referees' names, telephone and facsimile numbers, should be forwarded to Personnel, La Trobe University, Bundoora 3083. Closing date 25 August 1995.

**La Trobe University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provides a smoke-free work environment.**

### **Victorian Conservation Trust**

#### **Land Programmes Manager**

Salary Range: \$30,000-\$35,000

The Victorian Conservation Trust is committed to the protection of natural areas on private land. The role of the Land Programmes Manager will be to ensure that all properties in which the trust has an interest are managed according to best practice conservation principles.

The L.P.M. will have a sound knowledge of ecological processes in Victorian Plant communities, habitat management techniques and bio-diversity monitoring. Relevant scientific or resource management qualifications are essential. He/she will have well developed communication skills, be able to manage projects within a budget, produce sound technical reports and simple information and education materials relating to nature conservation on private land. Details of duties can be obtained from Natalie Keenan on (03) 9651 4040. The Trust is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applications should be forwarded by 1st September 1995 to the:

The Director, Victorian Conservation Trust  
49 Spring St., Melbourne 3000  
Fax: (03) 9651 4048

# Steele Creek Threat

Ten years ago, 18 ha. of public open space on the flood plain of Steele Creek in Niddrie was rezoned 'Residential'. Prospective buyers phoned Melbourne Water in 1993 to ascertain the land status. They were told that there were no development plans for its open space.

Imagine the anger when six months later after purchase of the property the residents found the land was due for sale. So angry were Niddrie residents that within two weeks an Action group was formed and a public meeting called. Seventy residents met with Melbourne Water representatives and planning Consultants. The residents pointed out that;

- it was a flood plain
- the traffic figures supplied were 10 years old
- the Hutchinson St. drainage area had been subdivided
- Melbourne Water land was land-locked as the road into it was privately owned
- the private developer also opposed the plan
- Keilor Council opposed the development in spite of all the council officers writing reports in praise of the scheme.

By the time of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearing 18 indigenous plant species were identified. At no stage did Melbourne Water provide an overall flora and fauna survey. Residents were dismayed that Biosis identified more plants but said that the site was non-viable because of weeds unless intensely managed.

Members of the Coghlan St. Action Group attended the so called 'public' auction as they wished to ask;

1. Is the land landlocked?
2. Are indigenous plants on the site protected under the F.F.G Act by the state?
3. Is part of the site on the flood plain of Steele Creek?

In response, however, the real estate agent read out a statement which stated;  
"The vendor has decided to videotape these auction proceedings. The reason for this is that there has been concerns that those who objected to the development of the land, notwithstanding that the vendor has undertaken the correct procedures and has obtained a planning permit for residential development may attempt to disrupt these proceedings.  
Any person who remains and disrupts proceedings will be considered a trespasser..."

The video cameras were kept trained on them. As the auction was held at a private reception place, residents were unsure of their legal rights and were therefore silenced. However, resentment at the continued authoritarian attitude of Melbourne Water have led to the locals calling it Kremlin (Braedon Place is the developers name).

Our fight to preserve our open space has become a fight for democratic processes and accountability. Not for one moment have we felt that the issue was fairly handled. Not only have we lost our last chance at a decent sized piece of open space we have lost our:

- significant plants and seedbank
- exacerbated a dreadful traffic situation
- added to our air pollution
- experienced total powerlessness - while our commissioners acting on behalf of the State government sell of our assets.

**Jos Van Den Berg**  
**Coghlan Action Group**  
**23 Spring St., Niddrie 3042**

## Commentary from your Editor

I was involved in this issue in a small way so I would like to comment further on this particular issue and its wider implications. This is yet another example of the present State Government's process of asset stripping and unfettered development in public open space and areas of high conservation value, regardless of the values of the assets involved and community feeling. The sale of Central Creek grasslands by VicRoads, the Grand Prix in Albert Park and the insane asylum at Yarra Bend are other similar issues that come to mind.

The Coghlan Street site in the Steele Creek Valley does not have particularly high conservation values but it was still valuable and strategic open space. The information collected on these values was woefully inadequate and certainly contributed to the pro-development decision that the AAT came to in this case.

The report submitted by Biosis (Costello 1994) looked at botanical values on the site and in my opinion was inadequate and incomplete. It only identified one area of native vegetation in the sea of exotic vegetation on the site while I personally found three distinct areas on the site with native vegetation (see attached map) and Vanessa Craigie identified one of these in an affidavit before the AAT in October 1994.

Costello (1994) also identified the native vegetation present as possibly Escarpment Shrubland after Froud (1992), not Western Basalt Plains Grassland

**Map: The development in the Steele Creek valley with remnant vegetation highlighted.**

and therefore not protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. This seems to be a copout in my opinion because Escarpment Shrubland is an integral part of native grassland ecosystems on the basalt plains of Victoria and is probably rarer than the strict Plains Grassland community because of extensive clearing and disturbance along watercourses across the plains. The rarity of Escarpment Shrubland, whatever level of disturbance, was not highlighted in any way. The report actually concluded that the vegetation community couldn't be determined because of the lack of indigenous species on the site. However, 18 indigenous species were found on the site, all of which are typical of the complex of Basalt Plains vegetation types, all of which are rare. None of these considerations were highlighted either.

Costello concluded the report by categorising the site as "non-viable in the medium to long-term

unless intensively managed" with no qualification or explanation of what non-viable means. I must vehemently disagree with this point. All of the indigenous species on the site had survived despite substantial efforts to destroy them historically and ongoing neglect or hands-off land management since urbanisation. The species were the disturbance adapted members of the Plains Grasslands, for example *Oxalis perennans*, *Stipa scabra*, *Senecio quadridentatus*, *Convolvulus* spp. etc.. Admittedly, the species would disappear with extensive disturbance such as plowing and road building but would have survived indefinitely if the site was left alone. I would be the first person to categorise the maintenance of grassland remnants in urban areas as a form of gardening because of the extensive disturbance processes inherent in the urban environment but it is still useful and much more economical to start with a remnant to restore than from scratch.

I would also like to start a campaign to eliminate the terms 'viable' and 'non-viable' from conservation literature because of their subjective nature. It is not possible to establish any clear criteria for determining the status of a site using these terms and their use, particularly 'non-viable', can easily give the green light to developers and bureaucrats to destroy valuable remnants. The same term, 'non-viable', was used to characterise the Merinda Park/Gippsland Plains Grassland site in Cranbourne but it had also survived modern civilisation for many years without conservation management. The only thing left of that site now is a few polystyrene boxes of plants despite much community struggle and viable alternatives to its destruction.

Costello (1994) also mentioned nothing about the value of the Steele Creek valley as a habitat corridor. The Merri Creek Management Committee has

## **Steele Creek Threat and Commentary Cont.**

proven that animals will use restored creek corridors; two wallabies made it to Yarra Bend via the Merri in 1994 (only to be killed by dogs). The development on Steele Creek makes a wide corridor, from the Maribyrnong River north to Tullamarine and the airport, into a bottleneck.

The site was also an excellent piece of open space. It was a wide open valley with housing on the escarpments above; a perfect situation for recreating a natural experience for visitors. With appropriate revegetation work the valley would have been an excellent opportunity to recreate a semblance of an indigenous landscape in an otherwise urban landscape.

So, in summary, we have lost yet another valuable piece of open space and remnant vegetation through a flawed planning process. I have condemned the consultant's botanical report for the Steele Creek site in this commentary but it probably wouldn't have mattered what it said. This kind of development decision is much more political and economical, regardless of the inherent conservation significance, so resistance to such developments and asset stripping must come from the community as a whole, not necessarily conservation groups. Please write to the Premier, your MPs and the now "customer-focussed" Melbourne Parks and Waterways about this and related issues and to ensure that valuable public land is not put on the private market for development.

I would also like to get news of any other issues concerning the development or sale of public land with significant conservation values into the pages of *Indigenotes* as well as any ideas for actions to confront the problem. What can we do?

## **Lincoln Kern**

### **References**

- Costello, C. (1994) Coghlan Street, Niddrie Vegetation Assessment. Report prepared for Mallesons Stephen Jaques by Biosis Research Pty. Ltd.
- Frood, D. (1992) Vegetation of the native grasslands in the Merri Creek Valley, outer Melbourne area. Ecological Survey Report 42. Dept. of Conservation and Environment, Victoria.

## **Native Grasses Have Their Place In Farming**

**By Sue Brunskill & Warren Vogel**

More than 130 farmers and land care representatives attended four native grass pasture seminars across NE Victoria.

The main point to come out of these days, was that it is better to concentrate pasture improvements on the areas of the farm that will benefit the most - the richer, moister soils, and the more arable

## **Lowland Native Grasslands in the ACT: Implementation of a Recovery Plan; Call for Grant Applications**

The Wildlife Research Unit, ACT Parks and Conservation Service (ACTPCS) funded under the Australian Nature Conservation Agency Endangered Species Program to carry out research that will aid the conservation of lowland native grassland and component species in the ACT region. In the Recovery Plan prepared in 1991 and revised in 1992, priority research requirements were identified for the threatened community. These have been further prioritised on the basis of research that has been carried out to date.

Grant applications are invited for any of the research topics listed below. Other research topics will be considered also.

### **Specific Topics:**

1. Management effects on ecosystem processes
  - Control of Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) and/or African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*)
  - Rehabilitation: e.g. enhancement of habitat, effects of the removal of a particular management practice, weed removal and translocation of species
  - Impacts of management on invertebrates
2. Public Education and information dissemination
  - Field guide to grassland species
  - Production of a 'wanted' poster: graphic representation of threatened species to invite general community to inform government if species of concern are sighted

### **General High Priority Areas**

1. Nationally threatened species (Habitat usage, management studies, factors influencing distribution based on present habitat and historical processes.)
2. Ecosystem Studies (Studies of the interrelationships between flora, fauna and variables.)
3. Management (Studies of the impacts of different management techniques.)
4. Survey Work (Surveys for threatened and uncommon species.)

### **Lower Priority Areas**

1. Other grassland species habitat studies.
2. Taxonomic studies.
3. Co-evolution research.
4. Computerised plant or invertebrate ID.

Proponents will develop a proposal and budget, have up to a two year time frame but may be structured in stages, and should not exceed

\$10,000 in any one year. In an application of three to five pages, please indicate: 1) Topic, 2) Background Information, 3) Aims, 4) Methods, 5) Expected outcomes, 6) Time frame of project, 7) Details of research organisation, person doing study, supervisor's name and contact details, and 8) Budget details.

This is the last year that funding for research will be available under the Recovery Plan. For further information contact: Sarah Sharp, Grasslands Project Officer, ACT Parks and Conservation Service, Ph. (06) 207 2125, Fax (06) 207 2122, P.O. Box 1119, Tuggeranong ACT 2901. Applications are to be submitted by COB, 8 September 1995.

## **Reports to the ACTPCS, Wildlife Research Unit:**

Driscoll, D. (1994) Invertebrates of lowland native grasslands in the ACT: Conservation and research strategies for a Recovery Plan. Technical Report 9, ACTPCS.

Greenslade, P. (1994) A study of the use of indicator groups in assessing the conservation value of native grassland sites in the ACT and NSW. Report to the ACTPCS, May 1994.

Melbourne, B. (1993) The assessment of insect biodiversity. A case study: ants and carabid beetles in grasslands of the ACT and NSW. Report to the ACTPCS, December 1993.

Osborne, W. and Jones, S. (1995) Recovery Plan for the pink-tailed worm lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*). Technical Report 10, ACTPCS.

Osmund, H. (1994) *Delma impar*, the striped legless lizard, genetics, physiological limits and activity patterns. Report to the ACTPCS, December 1994.

Rowell, A. and Crawford, I. (1995) Survey of the morabine grasshopper *Keyacris scurra* (REHN) in the ACT. Report to the ACTPCS, June 1995.

Sharp, S. B. (1994) Lowland native grasslands in the ACT and surrounding region: literature review and research strategy for a Recovery Plan. Technical Report 8, ACTPCS.

Smith, W. (1994) An ecological and taxonomic study of the local earless dragon *Tympanocryptis lineata pinguicollis*. Report to the ACTPCS, December 1994.

All reports are available for \$2.00.

## **Management of relict lowland grasslands Proceedings of a workshop and public**

**seminar: September 24 and 25, 1993**

### **ACT Parks and Conservation Service: Conservation Series No. 8**

Lowland native grasslands (temperate grasslands) were once a major landscape feature throughout south-eastern Australia. They occurred as extensive plains in NSW, ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. The remaining grasslands are now highly fragmented and modified. They have been identified as a nationally threatened community and contain a number of nationally threatened species. Lowland native grasslands, perhaps more than many other systems, require active management to retain or enhance their conservation values.

On 24 and 25 Sept. 1993 a workshop and public seminar were held at the University of Canberra, ACT, with the aim of addressing issues relating to the development of conservation plans and the implementation of management regimes in relict lowland grasslands. It was attended by researchers, managers and other interested people working in the field of lowland native grassland conservation and management from the ACT, Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and Queensland.

**Copies of the Proceedings are now available at a cost of \$15.00 per copy (includes postage) from Grasslands Project Officer, Wildlife Research Unit, ACT Parks and Conservation Service, P.O. Box 1119, Tuggeranong ACT 2901.**

# 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 29 August, 7:30 pm at the  
RAOU.

## Show and Tell

A meeting night for members to tell us the good  
bad and the ugly of what's happening out there in  
the wilds:

- what plants and animals you've seen out there - any  
successes in weed control techniques we could  
apply
- any failures we should be aware of or
- an opportunity to show your pots of flowering plants

If you can't make it and there is an issue you  
would like to raise please contact a member of the  
committee.

A night of information exchange on the carbon  
based life form Indigenet. See you in real space  
not cyberspace 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.**

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

## Table of Contents:

Questions from the Ganges	2
Sleepy Hollow Shelter Needs Help for the Koalas	4
Platypus Pursuits	5
<u>New Publications</u>	5
<b>Managing Vertebrate Pests: Rabbits, Australian     Grasslands, Bushweed Database 2</b>	
DCNR's Flora Information System	6
<u>Coming Events:</u>	8
More Things To Do	10
<b>Box-Ironbark Camp, IFFA Field Trip, ANPC Field     Trip to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens</b>	
Botanic Guardians Project	11
<u>Jobs in Conservation:</u>	11
Steele Creek Threat and Commentary	12
Grasslands in the ACT	14
<b>Grants, Reports and Conference Proceedings</b>	

## Office Bearers:

**President:** Roger Jones, 106 McConnell St.,  
Kensington 3031. (03) 9372 1582 (ah).

**Vice-President:** Peter Tucker, (03) 9482 2344(bh)  
and (03) 9510 1034(ah).

**Secretary:** New Secretary Still Needed!!.

**Membership Secretary:** Lynlee Smith, P.O. Box  
328, Clifton Hill 3068. (03) 9460 1669(ah).

**Treasurer:** Neil Gardiner, 174 Lower Heidelberg  
Rd., Ivanhoe 3079, (03) 9499 7048.

**Committee members:** Sharon Mason (03) 9386  
5235(ah), Geoff Carr (03) 9481 7679(bh) and (03)  
9380 8582(ah), Greg Bain (03) 9563 5617(ah) and  
David Lockwood.

**Editorial team:** c/o P.O. Box 228, Preston, Victo-  
ria, 3072.

Editor: Lincoln Kern, (03) 9481 4682 (ah).

Coming Events: Elissa Kerassitis (03) 9596  
8127(ah).

**Contributions to Indigenotes should be sent to the  
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September 8th.**

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