

INDIGENOTES

Another drawing from The Flowers of Toohey Forest 1995
Calendar.

Greetings from the Top End, land of the finches.

For those of you who do not know Don Franklin, he was Yellingbo's Ornithologist before Bruce. Don is now working in the Northern Territory. Below is an article about his current work with Gouldian Finches.

There are ten of them, species of finches that is. This diversity is, in part, driven by one of the Top End's most quintessential, yet humble inhabitants, the spear-grass Sorghum. With each wet season, the spear-grass germinates and flourishes, blanketing an area approaching that of Victoria, rising rapidly to 1.5 - 3 metres in height only to wither even before "The Wet" has concluded. Its annual legacy is a vast mat of flammable straw that fuels the fires and burns two thirds of the Top End every year, and a rich bounty of large nutritious seeds. Sharing these and other grass seeds with the finches are eight granivorous pigeons and doves, six quail and four granivorous parrots and cockatoos.

Every one of the finches is a little gem, from the tiny yet cheeky Double-barred Finches that feed on the lawn around my flat in Darwin, to the brilliant Crimson Finch of the Pandanus swamps or the boldly marked Chestnut-breasted Mannikin. But none is more striking than the Gouldian Finch. Looking at them in the book I thought them merely gaudy and in need of a lesson in colour co-ordination. Having now seen them in the wild and caught and handled them, I can vouch that the colours sparkle and meld together in perfect brilliance. The famous bird-man, John Gould, who named so many Australian birds, saved this one for his wife; Elizabeth, must have been a beautiful and much-loved woman.

But alas, the Gouldian Finch is in trouble. Though still widely dispersed in the wild from Cape York to the Kimberleys, it was abundant. Perhaps three major breeding sites remain in the Northern Territory and one in Western Australia, each containing several groups elsewhere. The sites are separated by hundreds of kilometres, much of which is seemingly suitable habitat. To see a hundred alight together at a waterhole was once unexceptional. To see forty or fifty in the course of a morning at a favoured waterhole is now a rare privilege; few or none is much more normal.

I was recently the recipient of this privilege. There were black-headed birds, a few red-headed individuals and three with a peculiar half-black and half orange-red combination, as well as numerous dull-colored young birds. For two exciting weeks I banded finches at two sites in the Northern Terri-

tory as part of population, diet and disease studies. We caught about 70 Gouldians, along with several hundred Long Tailed and Masked Finches. And I hope to do more work with them in the coming months.

Why should a bird with a wide distribution in an essentially pristine environment be on the decline? Considerable research over a number of years has focused on several theories, but the bird and its problems are proving most difficult to come to grips with. Some comparisons with the Helmeted Honeyeater illustrate the problems.

Recovery actions for the Gouldian Finch are less urgent than the Helmeted Honeyeater, because the numbers are greater. The Gouldian Finch also has the advantage that its habitat is more or less intact, and not subject to any widespread conflicting land use interests. Mostly they prefer rockier ground which is virtually useless for grazing, though in places it clashes with gold mining interests. Further more, the species is well established, and breeds freely in captivity.

But that's about where the advantages end. The Gouldian Finch population has proven impossible to estimate even roughly, and is so widely dispersed it makes both study and management, extremely difficult. Attempts to build a life history profile for the species using a banding program, as we so successfully did with the Helmeted Honeyeaters, have failed. It mostly failed because banded individuals are almost never seen again. Why are they not seen again? A serious negative impact from capture and banding can probably be ruled out. Are they highly mobile, moving away from the point of capture and disappearing into the vast wilderness of the tropical woodland? Possibly; there's some evidence to support this suggestion, and some evidence against. Are they very short lived? Again this is possible, for they are prolific breeders at a young age. Or could they be just too wise to be caught a second time? Believe it or not, this is perhaps the most likely explanation, for when we introduced a new trapping method, the recapture rate suddenly jumped from about 1% to 10%, and the maximum known age for a wild bird doubled from two years to four.

One theory for the decline of the Gouldian Finch is that it is suffering from infection by an introduced air sac mite. There's no doubt that the mites are there and that they can cause death. But are they really introduced? And are they limiting the population? An experiment in which some captured

wild birds were treated for the mite infestation, and released back into the wild appears to have failed. This is for a number of reasons, but most particularly because, if you can't recapture many Gouldian Finches then how can you determine whether treated birds are surviving better than untreated birds?

Another theory concerns the impact of changed fire regimes upon food supply at critical times of the year. One version of the theory argues that seeds are in critical short supplies at times in the wet season, after the first rains germinate the seed, but before the new season's crop becomes available. The availability of alternative seed sources, it is argued, is affected by the timing of fires. Aboriginal burning prior to European settlement, particularly early in the wet season, may have promoted the seeding of certain species at the critical times, ensuring a year round food supply. In the absence of this pattern of burning, food supply is now periodically critical. Nice theory. Trouble is, there's hardly a shred of evidence to support it.

Another version of the theory argues that although fires destroy a portion of the seed crop, they render the rest more accessible to the finches. Under the patchwork burning regime administered by the Aborigines, there was always somewhere that was bare for the finches to feed. The fire regimes now in place, are more likely to be extensive and severe and, although frequent, do not occur every year. It is thus argued that in some years, there is little accessible seed because of the dense mat of unburnt dry grass covering the seed crop, which by then has dropped to the ground. Why do the Gouldian Finches like to feed on burnt ground? And why would the Gouldian Finches be affected and not other species? And lastly, why doesn't cattle trampling and grazing create alternative feeding opportunities?

Until now, conservation efforts of the Gouldian Finch have focused largely on "pure" research into its biology and ecology, in an attempt to identify the factors that have contributed to its decline. Much has been learnt, but a surprising amount remains unknown. It is my feeling that in the future we will see a more experimental approach such as manipulating fire regimes, to see what best suits the birds. But, in the absence of any satisfactory way of counting the birds, to measure their response to an experiment in addition to many other complications, this isn't going to be easy. The future of the Gouldian Finch remains uncertain.

Don Franklin

From the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Newsletter, Volume 7, No. 3, 1995.

The destruction of the native grassland at Merinda park, Cranbourne

Although the rare and endangered plants at the Cranbourne grasslands were 'protected' under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, the area was destroyed to build the railway station and car park late last year. All three ministers (Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Coleman; Minister for Conservation, Mr Birrell and Minister for Transport, Mr Brown) supported the action.

The Public Transport Corporation paid \$20,000 (from the Federal 'Better Cities' funding) to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in exchange for a permit to over-ride the FFGA.

The Wilderness Society described the action as "disgraceful". A spokesman for Mr Coleman said that other identical grassland sites had been found and the \$20,000 had been spent to protect them. Seedlings had been removed from the Merinda Park site before its destruction and these would be planted at the alternative sites. A planning officer, John Dee criticised the action because, he argued, that the railway station could have been moved several metres to the east and the plants would have been saved.

From the Friends of Evans St. Grassland Inc., Newsletter No. 2 August 1995.

Now available: copies of the Evans Street Grassland Management Plan.

Copies can be purchased from the Secretary for \$7.50 (plus \$2.50 posted). Helen Graesser, Secretary, Friends of Evans Street Grasslands, PO Box 604, Sunbury 3429.

National Community Environmental Monitoring Project

The Australian Conservation Foundation received 1994/95 funding through the Landcare program to produce a National Directory of Community-based Environmental Monitoring (CEM) Groups, and to report on the use and refinement of Australian CEM as a tool for environmental improvement.

Community involvement in environmental monitoring is growing rapidly in Australia. The ACF National Directory of CEM projects will provide a first, indicative national overview of CEM initiatives. It will include summarised information on monitoring methods, data handling, and links to decision making and will enable community groups just starting out to learn from the best practitioners in Australia.

Submissions Welcome

As well as a National Directory of Environmental Monitoring Groups ACF is preparing a set of recommendations on Community Environmental Monitoring for the Federal Government. These recommendations will report on the relevance of CEM data to State of the environmental reporting; the extent to which CEM might improve environmental management, and recommendations on ways in which CEM might be better supported.

Individual and group submissions which address some or all of the questions below are invited from individuals and groups involved in monitoring.

1. Does community environmental monitoring result in better environmental management? (what is the evidence)
2. How can community environmental data be used at a regional scale?
3. Can community data be combined to provide an integrated view of the environmental health of a whole systems? eg. a home, a wetland, a farm, a catchment or a town.
4. What scope is there for mutual sharing of data between community groups, government departments and research organisations?
5. How can professional monitoring groups and voluntary community environmental monitoring groups learn from one another?
6. How can better links be forged between resource management agencies involved in monitoring and Community based monitoring efforts?
7. How can Community Environmental Monitoring be

assisted, improved and encouraged?

8. Is there a need to produce national guidelines for community environmental monitoring, so that a greater number of interested people can be involved, data quality standards can be raised and community monitoring results compared? If there is a need, what should be the process?
9. Is there a role for the community to play in the State of the Environment reporting?

Submissions should be returned to: The Community Environmental Monitoring Project, c/- Sandra Haffenden and Terry White, Australian Conservation Foundation, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065. Phone (03) 9416 1166 or fax (03) 9416 0767.

Bushland- saving research

A \$30,000 research grant, to devise better ways of revegetating damaged bushland has recently been awarded to Dr. Jann Conroy and Tein McDonald from the School of Horticulture at the University of Western Sydney Hawksbury. Ms. McDonald's research involves fieldwork trials in NSW and looking at a wide range of case studies from all over Australia. The specific aim of the project is to examine the potential and limits of natural plant recovery so that restoration project managers can more effectively harness natural regeneration processes and use natural models for their reconstruction or replacement.

"I am closely monitoring regeneration on ten sites in the Ku-ring-gai, Ryde, Hornsby, Concord, Jervis Bay and Port Kembla areas," Ms. McDonald said. "I'm less formally monitoring about 100 other sites in the Sydney area that have been regenerated in the last ten years. I interview the people that are involved in the regeneration process before treatment and after because I'm interested in finding out what theory can learn from practice."

The study is one of only nine projects, Australia-wide, to be part of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) and the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation (LWRRDC) funded project. The ANCA/LWRRDC program, as a whole, is the first of its kind in Australia and is one of only a few operating globally to conserve the world's indigenous vegetation.

Ms. McDonald said "I began researching in this area because I was finding regeneration was occurring on sites that were presumed to have low regeneration potential - but on some sites no regeneration was happening where regeneration was expected. The need clearly exists to find better ways of predicting regeneration potential. After the wild fire, in January '94, we were finding regeneration in sites that we thought were not regenerable. We found that if we removed weed competition for long enough that recovery appeared to come for some species but not for others and we want to better understand this. With my research I have found if soil seed banks (seed lying dormant in the ground) are intact, many bushland sites can start the regeneration process even after 20-30 years of weed infestation or grazing. The implications of the research are that we may be able to more accurately predict restoration potential and better prioritise so restoration resources can be directed to areas that are going to be the most responsive."

Ms. McDonald will draft a set of guidelines from her research which will add to the a general understanding of the vulnerability and strengths of bushland. The general public needs to be aware of the vulnerability of bushland because we do destroy that seed bank and leave sites degraded for too long the sites will never recover," Ms. McDonald said.

Publicity is important to ensure that bushland managers and land holders who may benefit from the results have the opportunity to become aware of the project's existence and utilise its findings.

Contact: Tein McDonald, School of Horticulture, UWS Hawkesbury
(045) 701229 W

Source: UWS Hawkesbury Press Release 14/8/95

\$3m Remnant Vegetation Program

The Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation (LWRRDC) and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) have developed a new \$3 million national R and D program to better understand the processes and requirements to rehabilitate, manage and conserve remnant vegetation. The new program, currently underway until 1998-99, supports a combination of ecological and socio-economic research and development. Nine ecological projects on remnant vegetation will receive almost \$2m in funding support over the course of the projects. They include:

Guidelines for the Maintenance and Improvement of Natural Bush in Tasmania by Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick, University of Tasmania, is tailoring the 1991 Management Handbook for Tasmanian Native

Bush to produce information sheets for landholders and improved management procedures for agencies working to protect remnant vegetation.

Extinction Processes and Fauna Conservation in Remnant Box-Ironbark Woodlands by Dr. Andrew Bennett, DCNR, Victoria, aims to develop vegetation management methods to reverse extinction processes in the historic gold mining regions of central Victoria.

Maximisation of Bird Biodiversity in Yellow Box Woodland Remnants by Dr. Chris Tidemann and Kenneth Er, Australian National University, has completed research to maximise the management of woodlands for species diversity.

Practical Solutions for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Remnant Woodland by Dr. Richard Hobbs, CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology, aims to develop practical methods for rehabilitating remnant vegetation based on an understanding of the processes leading to degradation.

The Role of Corridors and Retained Vegetation in Biodiversity Conservation by Dr. David Lindenmayer, Australian National University, aims to develop methods to conserve biodiversity in fragmented landscapes.

Ecosystem Resilience and the Restoration of Damaged Plant Communities by Tein McDonald and Dr. Jan Conroy, University of Western Sydney (described above).

Bushland Restoration Using Smoke Stimulated Germination Technology by Dr. Kingsley Dixon, Kings Park Botanic Garden - Perth, is studying this technique as an alternative to using fire to stimulate germination of bushland areas.

Further Development of a Socio-Ecology Extension Program as a Australian Model by Dr. David Goldney, Charles Sturt University, is putting ecological knowledge into an easy-to-apply kit form to encourage landholders to integrate remnant bushland conservation into agricultural practices.

LWRRDC and ANCA intend to fund additional socio-economic R and D on remnant vegetation after considering the priorities at a workshop in Melbourne recently. For further information contact Phil Price at LWRRDC on (06) 257 3379.

Coming events:

For IFFA events see back cover

Conferences/Workshops/ Talks

3 Tues October. Fauna Survey Group meeting. All welcome to attend. Speaker Andrew Bennett will present results from a recent fauna survey in Victoria's Northern Plains. Meeting start at 8pm. at the Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra.

Monday 9 October. Field Naturalists Club General Meeting. 8pm Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. Guest speaker Dr Jim Bowler will talk on the Murray-Darling Basin. Contact Noel Schleiger (03) 9435 8408

12 Thurs October Botany Group Meeting of the FNCV. 8pm Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. Guest Speaker will present a talk titled "Proteacea - new knowledge about an old family". Contact Noel Schleiger (03) 9435 8408

25 Wed October Geology Group meeting (Field Naturalists Club of Vic) . 8pm Herbarium Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. Jim Patterson from Monash University will speak on climate changes during the last 10,000 years, from evidence of glaciers and semi-permanent snow from our part of the world.

26 Thurs October "Birds of Tropical Australia". A Study meeting presented by the Bird Observers Club of Australia. Speaker: Ellen McCulloch. Book early. Venue: BOCA Library at rear of 183 Springvale Rd, Nunawading. Supper is provided. \$5 members, \$10 non-members. The money raised helps to fund our conservation efforts. Phone (03) 9877 5342 for bookings.

16 Thurs & 17 Fri 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 Solutions, PO Box 135, Curtin ACT 2605.

23 Thurs November "Penguins with Crests". A Study meeting presented by the Bird Observers Club of Australia. Speaker: Ken Simpson. Book early. Venue: BOCA Library at rear of 183 Springvale Rd, Nunawading. Supper is provided. \$5 members, \$10 non-members. The money raised helps to fund our conservation efforts. Phone (03) 9877 5342 for bookings.

26 Sun November Grassland Plant Identification and Management training day. Greening Australia will hold a special training day at the Evans St. Information Centre. The day will include a tour through the grasslands. Full fee: \$25, GAV members \$6, Concession \$10. BYO lunch. For inquires or book-

ings contact Mary Satchell or Dale Tonkinson on (03) 9421 0900.

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. Spring is the best time to join our walks. 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 bush people and local residents. Afternoon tea included at a picnic spot in the forest. 1.30pm - 4.30pm on the following dates, 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.

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.

1 Sun October Bird watching at Yellingbo Reserve - Field Naturalists Club of Victoria General Excursion. Join David Ap-Thomas of the Bird Observers Club of Australia to see free flying Helmeted Honeyeaters (hopefully), Southern Emu Wrens and perhaps a Powerful Owl. Gates open 10 am for walk at 10.30 am. Bring lunch. Optional afternoon walk. At Yellingbo turn right to Seville then left into Macclesfield Rd. At 2.5 km, turn right at large pine tree. club entrance downhill on right. Melways 119B F11. Book with Dorothy Mahler (03) 9435 840.

8 Sun October Wildflower Walk. Join in on a guided tour to discover the beauty of the Evans St. Grasslands in flower. Meet 2pm at the information Centre, Evans St (Shield's St end). Melways 113 A11. Contact Helen Graesser on (03) 9744 4097.

14 Sat October FO Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Social Walk. Join in on a Spring walk through the Lower Werribee Gorge. Meet at 10am. at Exford Weir Rd opposite the Long Forest Rd turn off on the Western Freeway. Bruce will be taking us on another great walk so don't forget your bushwalking gear, suitable shoes, lunch, drink, camera and binoculars to carry. Contact Janet Leversha on (053) 674 229.

14 Sat October Fauna Survey Group (Field Naturalists Club of Vic) Stag watch - Leadbeaters Possum. Be a

part of this important monitoring work of Victoria's faunal emblem, in Victoria's beautiful Central Highlands. Contact Ray Gibson for details on (03) 9874 9408.

- 22 Sun (?) October - Guided Orchid walk in One Tree Hill, a critical part of the land link to the Kinglake National Park. Our guide is Cam Beardsall whose knowledge of both area and its botanical significance is unsurpassable. However, as orchids do not run on our time-table, the date of 22/10 may have to be changed. Contact Diane Silveri on (03) 9710 1331 for any date changes, meeting place and time.
- 11 Sat November VAAE Presents Western Grasslands Tour. The Victoria Association for Environmental Education has included a tour of the Western grasslands as part of its "Windows on endangered species" programme. James Ross will be the guide and the field trip will include tours of several grasslands, concluding at the Evans Street Grasslands. For further details or bookings please contact David Pace on (03) 9285 9355 or Helen Graesser (03) 9744 4097. There will be another guided walk held on Sunday the 12th of November.

Restoration Activities

October

- 1 Sun FO Evans Street Grasslands - 9.30 am Working bee at the grasslands. Melways 113 A11. Contact Helen Graesser on (03) 9744 4097 for details.
- 4 Wed FO the Helmeted Honeyeater. 10am. Nursery day at Healesville Sanctuary. Park in the car-park and ask the receptionist at the front gate for directions. Contact Jeff Dickinson or Marita Hannigan on (03) 9568 2768. There is also another nursery day on Sunday the 22nd of this month meeting at Healesville Sanctuary at 11am.
- 8 Sun FO the Helmeted Honeyeater. 10am Revegetation Day. Meet at the Yellingbo Store. Melways ref. 119B J8. Contact Tanja Biederman on (03) 9429 8638.

For other Restoration activities see the "Regulars" List

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) 650 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, 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) 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 the Helmeted Honeyeater - 11am. Nursery activities - Healesville. Jeff Dickinson (03) 9568 2768.

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

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 *Rutidosia 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.

Fungi Hunters Wanted for Pilot of an Australian Fungi Mapping Scheme

Do you want to help out and be at the forefront of scientific endeavour in Australia? Do you want to learn more about fungi? Help out in the pilot mapping scheme and make a report when you see one of these fungi!

Amanita muscaria ('fly agaric')

Amanita xanthocephala (No common name exists but it will be called the 'Little Red Amanita' in the pilot)

Aseroe rubra ('starfish fungus')

Dermocybe austroveneta(=*Cortinarius*) (green *Cortinarius*)

Mycena interrupta ('pixies parasol')

Pleurotus nidiformis ('ghost fungus')

The two *Amanita*'s are in Shepherd and Totterdill, Mushroom and Toadstools of Australia, 1988, Incarta Press. The others are in Bruce Fuhrer's Field Companion to Australian Fungi (published by the FNCV).

Basic information required for each record is:

- 1) species name
- 2) locality
- 3) grid reference - either latitude/longitude (to nearest minute is fine), or Australian map grip reference, or grid reference from Melway etc.
- 4) observer's name (ie. your) name and address
- 5) date observed
- 6) habitat and associated tree species

A colour print or transparency is valuable in supporting the record. Please mark if the return of the photo is required. Send your record and photograph and dried sample (if possible) to Tom May at the following address: FUNGIMAP, c/o Tom May, National Herbarium of Victoria, Birdwood Ave., South Yarra, Vic. 3141.

Snippets:

Botanic Guardians Project Grant for Long Forest

The Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee recently received a grant from the Botanic Guardians Scheme. The funds received will be used to Survey and Monitor the Rocky Chenopod Open Scrubland at Long Forest Mallee, in particular the Long Forest Flora Reserve. We anticipate it will take the Friends Group approximately 12 months to complete with a report due in June next year.

We are going to survey, monitor and make preliminary management recommendations for this vegetation community which is listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. It already has a draft Action Statement.

In detail the project will:
investigate and map the extent of this community in the reserve;
identify threats to sites in the Reserve ie. regeneration levels, weed levels, pest animal populations, effects of management actions (fire, visitors, education groups, track erosion, etc.);
suggest management actions for sites such as possible fencing, pest plant and animal control etc.;
identify suitable remnants on public and private land outside the Reserve for management, such as consideration of planning applications and approaching land holders with regard to Land for Wildlife, etc.

Source: FO Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee Inc. Newsletter, August 1995

Western Australia Introduces New Clearing Policy

Western Australia has joined South Australia and Victoria in introducing regulations to prevent over clearing of native vegetation. The WA Minister for Primary Industry has announced a package of resources to improve the management and protection of remnant vegetation on private land in agricultural regions. The \$6.75 million dollar package involves extra assistance for fencing of native vegetation, more support through the State Landcare Program for revegetation and new controls on the clearing of native vegetation.

Primary Industry Minister, Monty House said "Revegetation can have significant benefits in terms of farm profitability, nature conservation and the rehabilitation of degraded waterways. Experience has shown that it is far more cost-

effective to fence existing remnants than to re-establish these areas with new plantings." Mr. House said new regulations would restrict clearing on farms and shires which were already over-cleared, particularly those with less than 20% remnant vegetation. Even if a property has more than 20% cover, any proposed clearing cannot threaten conservation values or cause land degradation.

Financial incentives involve:
boosting the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme to \$900,000 per year. The Scheme provides a 50% subsidy for fencing off areas of natural vegetation;

funding for fencing vegetation fringing waterways and wetlands;

an extra \$500,000 per year over the next three years for revegetation activities on farmland.

A taskforce will also be developing a State revegetation strategy.

Mr. House said most of these programs to improve vegetation management would be implemented in cooperation with land conservation district committees and catchment groups. An information sheet outlining the new policy is being distributed to all Shire offices, farming groups, Department of Agriculture offices and land conservation district committees. Contact the information hotline on (09) 368 3766.

Source: Bushlines Newsletter No.6, July 1995

Land Clearing Alarm

Two recent studies show Australia's rate of land clearing continues alarmingly. A CSIRO study of land-cover disturbance, using satellite data, found over 80% of the continent's land-cover was significantly to substantially disturbed. More than one million square kilometres of forests and woodlands have been cleared or thinned since European settlement. The disturbance by clearing and grazing has been and will continue to be a significant driver of biodiversity loss.

The second report, for the biodiversity unit of the federal Department of Environment, Sport and Territories concludes that the vulnerability to disturbance is high almost anywhere. As much land has been cleared in the past 50 years as in the preceding 150. Extensive clearing for agriculture occurred in the 1960's and 1970's and is continuing. The rate and scale of recent clearance has significant implications for Australia's biodiversity.

Source: Earth Garden No. 93, September-November 1995

Action Page: Yarra Bend Still

Threatened

The government has announced that the planning process for the proposed asylum for the criminally insane at Yarra Bend Park will commence on 11 September 1995. The proposal will be on exhibition until 9 October 1995 and public submissions are invited up to that date.

The Yarra Bend Protection Group (YBPG) is holding a public meeting at the Collingwood Town Hall on Wednesday 20th September commencing at 7:30pm to explain how the community can participate in the planning process. The YBPG has already put a submission to five State Government Ministers proposing the asylum be co-located with the new men's prison at Laverton North. We believe the relocation of Fairlea together with surplus land at Fairfield Hospital presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enhance Yarra Bend Park. The only replies we have received from the Government to date have come from the Health Department bureaucrats.

Health and Community Services will mount displays at the Cities of Boroondara, Darebin and Yarra, and hold an Open Day at Fairfield Hospital. YBPG requested permission from those bodies to put up alternative displays but this was refused by all except the City of Yarra.

We believe that co-location with the new men's prison will be better for psychiatric patients, will save the government money, and will further enhance Yarra Bend Park which has just been approved for listing on the National Estate. We demand the government explain why co-location with the men's prison is not appropriate.

It is vital that you attend the public meeting on 20 September and tell your friends. Please contact YBPG on 9486 2097 for more information.

East-West Road Link Threatens Gardens

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne (RGBC) are threatened by road options identified in the Cranbourne East-West Road Link Environmental Effects Statement. VicRoads have appointed Kinhill Engineers Pty. Ltd. to undertake the EES into the feasibility of the Cranbourne East-West Road Link. 3 corridor options for the link include: Option 0 - Sladen Street; Option 1 - Ballarto Road and Option 2 - a corridor to the south of the RGBC have been investigated in Phase 2 of the 3 phase study. Option 1 and Option 2 severely impact on the RGBC.

The Royal Botanic Gardens totally opposes any alignments in the Ballarto Road Corridor and

also the northern alignment in the Southern Corridor.

Points of objection include the following:

The context of the EES ignores the State and regional significance of the RBGC.

Critical decisions on corridor options are being made without full analysis of the environmental impacts, completion of specialist studies or adequate assessment of community views.

The cost/benefit analysis of road options does not include the costs of environmental protection. Their inclusion would eliminate the claimed traffic benefit for Ballarto Road.

Option 1 and 2 have completely unacceptable environmental impacts on the natural habitats, high open space quality, visual amenity and tourist potential of the RGBC.

Options 1 and 2 are completely contrary to existing planning controls protecting the RGBC.

The Ballarto Road option severely impacts on 2 wetlands of State Conservation Significance. The wetlands and associated plant communities contain at least 25 regionally significant plants, a diverse amphibian population and known habitat for a population of Southern Emu Wrens and the threatened Swamp Skink (*Egernia coventryi*).

The Ballarto Road Alignments will severely affect the development of the Australian Garden, deemed to become a major tourist destination of national and international significance.

The Southern Corridor Alignments impact on the future development of the Botanic Collection, the Wylies Creek Wetlands and the viewsheds of the RBGC.

Information on the EES is available from:

Mr. Don Raisbeck

Project Supervisor Cranbourne East-West Road Link Kinhill Engineers Pty. Ltd.

P.O. Box 7440

Melbourne Victoria 3004

Ph. (03) 9867 5911

Questions related to the RBGC can be directed to Mark Jenkins at the Gardens. Ph. (059) 963 782 or Fax (059) 968 166

The RBGC provides a rare opportunity to conserve valuable remnant vegetation and significant flora and fauna. Moreover, the Cranbourne site offers a new concept in Botanic Gardens, destined to be a world class venue for the appreciation of Australian flora and fauna. We need your support in protecting this important site.

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 26 September, 7:30 pm at the
RAOU. Dr. Melody Serena, from the Aus-
tralian Platypus Conservancy, will speak
on "The Platypus in Urban Melbourne".
Everyone welcome!

Committee meeting:

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

Southern Peninsula IFFA:

**October 1: AGM, Office Bearer's needed, please
commit a little time and bring ideas for future
projects.**

**October 8: SPIFFA's 5th Birthday. Dedication of
the Betty Cliff Reserve.**

Contact: Mark Adams (059) 851 122

IFFA Field Trip:

Kamarooka State Forest

Come see the Whipstick with Neil Gardiner who
will be organising this trip at the best time of year
for wildflowers. The organised walk is on Saturday
but campsites will be available Saturday night.

Date: Saturday 21st October, 1995

Meet: Near Bendigo (call for directions)

Contact: Neil Gardiner (03) 9499 7048

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.*

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**Contributions to Indigenotes should be sent to the editor
— the deadline for the next issue will be October 13th.**

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