

The Glenfern

The Official Newsletter of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

Edition No. 50 2024

SHARING AND CARING TOGETHER

Over the past six months the bushlands have been the focus for networking, discovery, and new projects. The Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands have been fortunate to receive the interest and assistance of some curious community groups we can now call our colleagues.

In April we had the privilege of providing a venue and workspace for a multi-faith community program called Healing Our Nature Connection, facilitated by a partnership between Hills Walking Together, Tecoma Uniting Church, the Australian Catholic University, and Forest Therapy Victoria. The group from across Melbourne and the hills attended the bushlands for an afternoon of exploration, conversation, and getting their hands dirty. Learning about the Friends Group's relationship with the reserve and the work we do. The afternoon was capped off with a nourishing yarn with Uncle Murrundindi.

With some intrigue and input from local plant experts, the Friends group have trialled a different style of planting this May. I encourage you to dig a little into the detail about the purpose of this project, as presented in Tim's article overleaf. Assisting on the day was a visiting crew from Gardens for Wildlife Knox, who joined the planting party after a tour of the bushlands punctuated by plenty of inspiring

questions. This reminded me how fortunate we are to have so many passionate and knowledgeable conservationists in our region.

With the bushlands responding well to the last two seasons of good rainfall, we've seen the vegetation responding well, along with the weeds. But many hands make light work, as we saw at our July working bee. A collection of energetic helpers from the local Geocaching community reached out with the generous offer to assist with our weeding as part of their 'Cache In Trash Out' commitment to keep the places they visit in good shape. Outnumbering our own volunteers on the day, the visitors were obliging to get stuck into the task at hand and answer the questions from the Friends Group curious about the global Geocaching scene. Who knew there are caches in Glenfern waiting to be found?

As the season rolls on, we continue to plan for some exciting new projects on the horizon and manage some protracted projects from yesterday. The Friends Group maintains a steady member base, but there is always room for more boots and curiosity in the bushlands as we grow, together.

Jackson Ellis, President



friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

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REVEALED: MYSTERY OF THE FENCED-OFF AREAS

If you've seen the fenced-off areas of grass at the corner of Glenfern Ridge Track and Hill Track, you might have wondered what they are for. Well, we can reveal that this is the site of a little conservation experiment!

This part of Glenfern Bushlands is home to indigenous and introduced grasses that have formed thick thatches. We think these thatches make it difficult for other plants to establish, and they might be preventing the area from developing a rich and diverse flora.

The solution? We aren't sure, so we decided to do an experiment. The obvious approach would be to plant hundreds of indigenous tubestock. But is it really worth the effort to plant indigenous herbs, or could we simply thin the grass thatch and achieve a similar effect. Simply disturbing an area of bushland can lead to new plants establishing from the soil's 'seed bank'.

We prepared planting sites ahead of time, planning five treatments across three areas:

- An area of weedy cocksfoot grass was slashed back and the grass removed. We planted half the area with indigenous herbs and left half unplanted. We fenced the area off to protect against hungry herbivores.
- An area of indigenous weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) was slashed back and weeds removed. We planted half the area with indigenous herbs and left half unplanted. We fenced the area off.
- An area of kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) was slashed and left unfenced.

In all, we planted 700 tubestock seedlings. Fortunately we were assisted by volunteers from Gardens for Wildlife Knox.

We'll report back on the results of the experiment. If it turns out that simply disturbing the grass can lead to a significant increase in indigenous plant diversity, it could be a great option for other parts of Glenfern Bushlands.

Tim Edwards

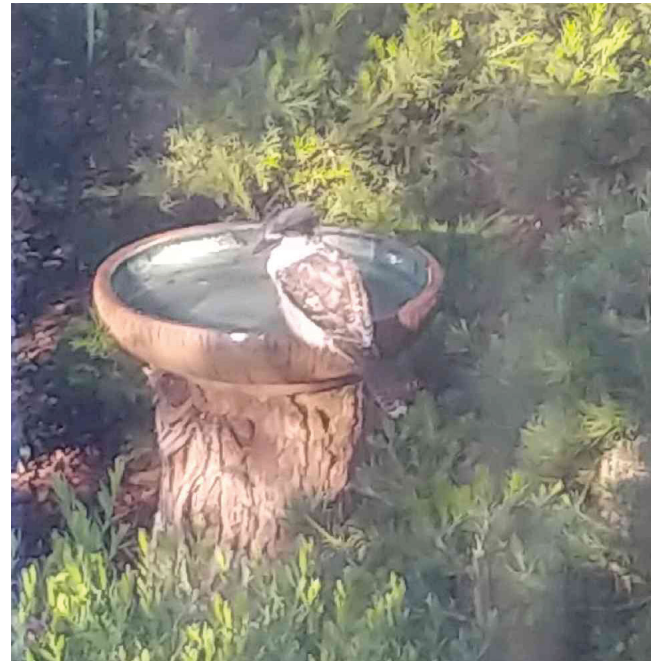


BIRDS IN OUR BACKYARDS

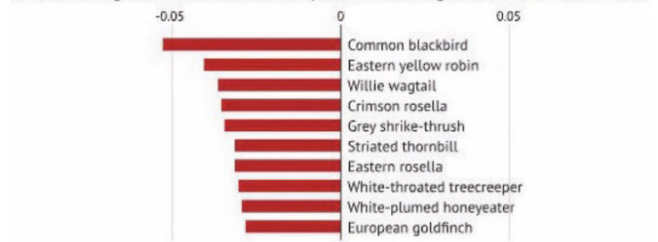
I work conscientiously to attract birds to frequent my property in Upwey by planting and growing native plants such as grevilleas and banksias. I have installed 3 bird baths in cater for large birds and small birds. This has resulted in the sound of splashing and flapping as birds, particularly the large birds such as magpies, crows, and currawongs, practically empty the bird-bath of water as they submerge their bodies in the water. It is highly engaging to observe the bigger birds in their twos and threes taking turns to wash and bathe in the birdbath – sometimes demanding that it is their turn and to turf the other bird out. This can result in loud squawking and jostling for positions on the rim of the birdbath.

So my enjoyment from watching a range of birds make use of my birdbaths was somewhat dampened when I read an article in The Age newspaper on 27 April 2024 by Adam Corey who wrote about his interview with Dr Annie Naimo, an urban bird expert, who has real concerns about the concentration and domination of specific types of birds in Melbourne's urban gardens. Dr Naimo has noted that birds such as currawongs, little ravens, rainbow lorikeets, magpies and noisy miners are dominating Melbourne's parks, gardens and skies to the detriment of other bird species such as willie wagtails, crimson rosella, thornbills, and treecreepers. These birds are being forced elsewhere because they are not as aggressive and adaptable to urban environments. Their numbers are diminishing and so is the diversity of birdlife in our gardens. The concern is that I am seeing it with my own eyes. It is true that my birdbaths are dominated by currawongs, noisy miners, magpies and raven/crows. The only other birds that frequent my birdbaths are the wattle birds and the rosellas. I am not seeing any of the tiny birds such as the willy wagtails and wrens. This is concerning and has tempered my delight in seeing the antics of the birds in my birdbaths.

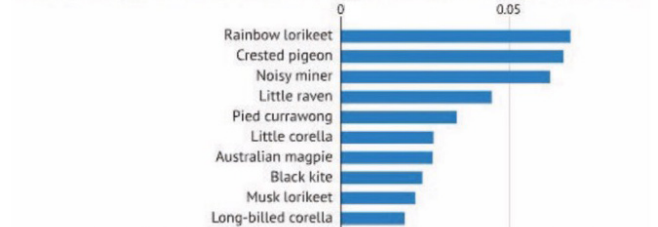
So what can you do to help? Set up a shallow birdbath in a sheltered part of your garden, preferably under small trees or bushes with narrow branches. This will protect any birds using it from predators from above. Place a sloping rock or tile in the middle of the bath so they can always get access to the water, and keep it clean and filled in summer. Most birds will drink early or late in the day, so watch for them at those times



Flying low and high – changes in prevalence of bird species in Melbourne
Birds with the greatest relative decrease in prevalence across greater Melbourne, 1972-2019



Birds with the greatest relative increase in prevalence across greater Melbourne, 1972-2019



Source: Dr Carly Campbell, QUT
Ref: The Age 26 April 2024
Values reflect a coefficient of relative annual sighting decline / increase



DAVID'S TRACK AND REFLECTIONS

You may have noticed new track markers at the Forest Park Rd entrance and the Depot entrance to the reserve signalling 'David's Track'. Last Month we caught up with David Moncrieff – the former president of the Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands for ten years, for a photo and to reflect on his time with the group. David attributes his inspiration for joining the group were his love for trees and that Glenfern is very close to home – both geographically and metaphorically.



We reflected on the many projects David was instrumental in bringing to the bushlands, and some of his highlights, these included:

- Removing the last of more than 25 abandoned cars.
- Seeing the end of the sweet pittosporum forest after 20 years.
- Powerful owl research project.
- Regeneration of the old quarry, with amphitheatre, frog bogs, and plantings.
- Welcoming school and university groups to the reserve, including international students who'd never been in the bush before.
- Celebrating members days with friends and the community.

We are very thankful for the multitude of contributions David has made to the bushlands and the friends group over the years and are pleased to be to celebrate his commitment with the naming of David's Track through the area of the bushlands formally known as Forest Park Reserve which was added to Glenfern Valley Bushlands under David's leadership.

David shared some words of encouragement to anyone thinking about joining a friends group, 'Get involved, there are always plenty of things to do. Don't wait till you finish your garden.'

The Glenfern

WORKING BEE SCHEDULE 2024

Conservation Conversation • Wed 2nd Oct, 9 am

Annual General Meeting • Thurs 10th Oct
Light Supper and Guest Speaker 7:00 pm
Annual reports and review of the year 7:30 pm
All members welcome

Member's Lawn Bowls Night • Sat 26th Oct, 7:30 pm
Upwey Tecoma Bowls Club

Conservation Conversation • Wed 6th Nov, 9:00 am

Restoration Morning • Sun 17th Nov, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 4th Dec, 9:00 am

Join us for twilight picnic and possum prowl in
February 2025 • details on website later.

Sunday working bee 9:30 am–12:30 pm,
Mid week 9.00–11.00 am.

Meet at the central car park, Glenfern Road,
Upwey.

Bring a water bottle, strong shoes, and gloves.
Tools and morning tea provided.

Come and join us to help restore the bushlands
while learning more about local flora and fauna.

See our Facebook page for more info about
working bees and tree planting days.

**PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE AS
SCHEDULING DEPENDS ON WEATHER
AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS.**

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Forest to Foreshore, Kallista

Bushland Management and Ecological Restoration

**And thanks to Melbourne Water and
Shire of Yarra Ranges for their services**

We continue to welcome a high number of visitors
to the reserve, please remember to take your
rubbish home and have your dogs on leads to keep
all our animals happy. Thank you.