

# The Glenfern

The Official Newsletter of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have not had a Newsletter for a while, I am so glad it is back.

The current issue of Covid-19 has caused its fair share of anxiety to our group and our community and interrupted our conservation work and meetings. For some, it has been far more serious. Australia has had to deal with epidemics and pandemics before. In fact, past disease outbreaks make fascinating reading. In an article by Ian Townsend in the Griffith Review (Aug 2007) serious diseases are put into perspective.

"In Australia, when it comes to epidemic disease we have a collective amnesia. The terrifying epidemics that have swept through Australia in the past – diseases such as smallpox and plague, tuberculosis and polio, childhood killers such as whooping cough and diphtheria – are not only outside the experience of most people, but the events themselves appear to have been erased from our cultural memory."

Covid-19 will be dealt with, and we can move on. That will leave us

with more than enough crises to work on. The urgent need for work on conservation and global warming has not gone away. These are issues where our group can work locally to make a difference. Volunteer work is critical to keeping our Glenfern outdoor space in good order and available for community use.

Our work progresses in the reserve, despite the loss of many volunteer working sessions in lockdowns, we are managing to control weeds, plant trees, organise contractors make observations and plans for the future.

Keep an eye on our Facebook Page to see when we are volunteering in the reserve. We need your help now. Our AGM is coming up in a couple of months – we must look to our long-term future. We look forward to new faces to help drive our wonderful community project forward for generations to come.

*David Moncrieff, President*

## FAIRHILLS STUDENTS GIVE GLENFERN A HAND.

The passing of our knowledge to others is not only a key aim of our group, it also provides much enjoyment. Each year, a group of Fairhills High School Outdoor Education students visits our Reserve to learn the importance of Nature Reserves, and to give us a hand for a few hours.

For some time, we've been wishing to plant seedlings into what we call Area 14, a piece of Council's creek-side land which has been annexed to Glenfern. It's a slightly tricky spot to access, but with many hands we soon had all the sleeves, mats, stakes, tools and of course plants ready to go.

After a brief safety talk and then planting lesson, it became a flurry of activity, so that within an hour or so, 140 plants were in their new homes. Within a few years, this should transform the area, so that it will be more obviously a part of our Reserve.

After a quick bite of lunch and chat at the amphitheatre, we split into two groups and took a meandering path through a rehabilitated section. The students learned of the twenty-year battle with weeds, and the transformation that has occurred.



This battle continues of course, and we are most grateful to the students for their assistance and youthful enthusiasm. We look forward to next year's group who may see the contribution this group has made.

Andrew F



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P.O. Box 1283, Upwey, Victoria 3158 • [glenfernvalleybushlands@hotmail.com](mailto:glenfernvalleybushlands@hotmail.com) • [www.glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au](http://www.glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au)

## MISTLETOEBIRDS

On this marvellous little reserve of ours, we have been fortunate enough to have Mistletoebirds breeding. They are small birds, 10-11cm. The male has a blue/black back and head, bright scarlet throat and breast and his belly is whitish with a broad black central stripe.

The female has a grey back and head with a blackish tail, she is a paler grey underneath, lightly mottled on the breast and her under tail is mottled with pale red. They are often solitary except in the breeding season-Oct to March. They are active and agile but often difficult to see in the foliage.

Marleen and I were lucky enough early one morning to find a nest of this unusual little bird. The nest is a beautifully woven pear shape with a hole in the side. It is made of downy plant material, spiders' webs, egg sacs, web debris, lichen or faded wattle-blossom, hung from a leafy twig, 1-15m high. It's an elaborate affair built only by the female. She usually lays 3 white eggs, which only she incubates. Both male and female feed the young.

Their prime food source of food is mistletoe berries, but they do occasionally supplement their diet with nectar, pollen, berries and fruit of native and introduced plants and also insects. It is well adapted to its diet of mistletoe berries, it passes the seed through in about 25 minutes, then they wipe their bottom on a branch of a host tree, the seed readily germinates, creating a future supply for the Mistletoebird. They are important in the dispersal for the mistletoe species.

Australia is home to more species of mistletoe than anywhere else in the world, it has 90 species of which 70 of these are Native. The mistletoe plant has a bad name as a parasitic plant, but they are only semi-parasitic. Unlike parasitic plants, they do have leaves and produce chlorophyll, the host plant provides it with water and support. The only reason they need a host is to provide it with water and support - they use the host as a root system. Each fruit has one large seed and is covered with a sticky coat. Native Aussie Mistletoes aren't just beautiful, they're ecologically important, they rely exclusively on birds to spread their seeds.



Despite their bad reputation, mistletoes can be important - even beneficial. Their flowers, fruit, nectar and leaves are all highly nutritious and a wide range of wildlife utilise this plant - Koalas, Sugargliders, Possums, birds and insects are amongst these. They also provide birds with good nesting sites.

These two species depend on each other, as the plant provides food and shelter, and the birds help it propagate. Unfortunately our Mistletoebirds didn't manage to get their chicks through as the Ravens attacked the nest from the bottom.

We hope for better results next year.

Anne Comer

## AN OPEN LETTER FROM FRAN

A hidden gem for many, but much appreciated and used by others, is the Glenfern Valley Bushland Reserve in our very own locality.

This 40 hectare of precious community land is bound by Glenfern Road, Ferny Creek, New Road and the Yarra Ranges Council depot.

The Reserve would have been enjoyed and used by Australia's First People, it being Wurundjeri country. From the 1860's the land was farmed until its purchase by Boral Quarries in 1977. The quarry was active for only a short time before the land became Crown Land. It is now Reserve land managed by the Yarra Ranges Council and the Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands.



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The latter group began its involvement 20 years ago when a group of concerned locals campaigned to have the site restored. There followed countless hours of dedication, skills and devotion to bring about an inviting place of tranquillity for the community to enjoy at their leisure. Flora and fauna are beneficiaries with huge swathes of unwelcomed invasive plants removed to allow for regrowth of native vegetation and new plantings.

***The Group's Mission: To conserve and enhance the diversity of native flora & fauna of the Glenfern Valley Bushlands while preserving community access & encouraging education and compatible use for the enjoyment of current & future generations.***

The Yarra Ranges Council and Melbourne Water are very supportive, enabling the group to continue their work. The progress made over the 20 years has been remarkable thanks to the generosity and foresight of a band of dedicated locals. Many of the originals are still active. They took on a big task since the land had become the dumping ground for one and all with 4WD's & motorbikes leaving deeply rutted tracks.

The Reserve's tracks, some flat and some with gentle climbs, now meander through a variety of vegetation types from grasses to upper and mid storey trees and shrubs, providing for a variety of fauna who call it home, use it seasonally, or as they wish.

Where once the quarry was, in the centre of the Reserve, an attractive gathering area has been created with artistic seating, frog ponds & wonderful views - a place to enjoy a rest, a quiet time or a chat and picnic with family and friends.

***The Friend's Group meet twice monthly, on the 3rd Sunday, from 9:30am - 12:30pm and on the first Wednesday from 9:00 - 11:00am.***

As a recent member I am inspired by the group and its endeavours, finding them very welcoming and willing to share their story and skills to new members. I would also like, in this article to applaud and acknowledge the pioneer group whose commitment has provided this wonderful space and local treasure. I encourage you to visit it and maybe even become a member.

Frances Henderson



Bush restoration work is fun and rewarding.  
Join the group and become involved.

[glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au](http://glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au)



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# The Glenfern

## WORKING BEE SCHEDULE AUGUST – NOVEMBER 2021

- Wednesday 4 August — Conservation Conversation
- Sunday 15 August — Bushland Restoration
- Wednesday 1 September — Conservation Conversation
- Sunday 19 September — Bushland Restoration
- Wednesday 6th October — Conservation Conversation
- Sunday 17 October — Bushland Restoration
- Wednesday 3th November — Conservation Conversation
- Sunday 21 November — Bushland Restoration

Sunday Working bee 9.30am-12.30pm

Wednesday Working bee 9am-11am

Sunday working bee 9:30-12:30 AM, mid week 9 - 11 AM. Restoration is usually weed pulling or planting, midweek are more casual and concentrate on cleaning up fallen trees etc.

Meet at the central car park, Glenfern Road, Upwey. Bring a water bottle and strong shoes, tools and morning tea provided.

In the event of a Fire Ban or inclement weather the working bee will be cancelled.

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



By being a financial member of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands, you enable the group to gain valuable Funding Grants to finance works in the reserve.

If you would like to become a financial member, please download the membership form from our website at:  
[www.glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au](http://www.glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au)

### MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY:

\$5 Concession, \$10 Individual, \$15 Family or  
\$50 for a business sponsor.

Three year memberships and now also available.

Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.  
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## Prickly Currant Bush – *Coprosma quadrifida*

When you are going for a walk at Glenfern, particularly in the riparian area near Ferny Creek, keep your eyes open for an upright, fine leaved shrub about 2m x 1.5. It is fairly common so I'm sure you will find one. When you do, have a closer look and you will see fine spines along its branches which provide protection for small birds.



Prickly Currant Bushes are dioecious, (either male or female) and flower September to December. The green flowers are insignificant and in January to March turn into small, orangey-red berries which the birds love to eat. The berries have a sweet, slightly tart taste and can be eaten raw or cooked.

The Prickly Currant Bush ticks many boxes for a plant to consider when planning a garden for wildlife. It's not too large, provides habitat and food for birds (and some bush tucker for humans). Rosella and Wattle Birds often climb around in the bush, picking off the berries. It can even be made into a hedge, just tip prune to encourage bushy growth. Tube-stock is available at Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery and Knox Environment Society.

Linda Fullagar

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Armin Korchan Ph 5968 3297  
Or: [armin@weedsmart.com.au](mailto:armin@weedsmart.com.au)

Photos: Marilyn Bull,  
Yarra Ranges Local Plant Directory

*Due to recent travel restrictions, there are more visitors to Glenfern than in the past. We are glad that locals are visiting our beautiful bush! However, can we ask that you take your rubbish home, and keep dogs on a leash. Thank You! Keep all our animals happy.*



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