

The Glenfern

The Official Newsletter of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT AUTUMN 2022

Since our last newsletter we have seen some changes in the Friends Group – mainly a return to regular working bees post Covid lockdowns, new volunteers and some changes to the committee. At the most recent AGM, David Moncrieff stepped down from his role as president after 10 years of dedicated service and leadership. During his time as president, David was instrumental in many significant improvements to the reserve, including redevelopment of the quarry site and the recently completed removal of the sweet pittosporum. The group and the reserve are very appreciative for his work and long standing commitment. I have some big work-boots to fill!

After moving to Upwey in 2017, I very quickly fell in love with the Glenfern Valley Bushlands and joined the group immediately. The Friends Group holds a tremendous volume of knowledge about the reserve and the local ecology, which they are eager to share. I feel very supported as the new president of the group. Linda Fullagar, who has been very active member of the Friends Group from the beginning, has been elected to the shared position of Vice President with Rory Cox. The group as a whole is in a great place to take on the challenges of the year ahead.

This year we have some new contractors working in the reserve, who bring with them fresh knowledge and skills. With their work, the ongoing support of Yarra Ranges Council plus Melbourne Water and the energetic volunteers, we are busy tackling the backlog of invasive species following the mild, wet summer and missed working bees over 2020–2021. A recent refurbishment of the notice board and displays, and the ongoing upgrade to the reserve entrances are enhancing user experience, as we continue to see a high number of visitors. In the upcoming tree planting days, we will be replacing some of the lost habitat from climate change and woody weed removal, for our resident fauna. New volunteers are always welcome and needed – I look forward to seeing you in the reserve soon.

Jackson Ellis
(President)



CHERRY BALLART (native cherry) *EXOCARPOS CUPRESSIFORMIS*



The Cherry Ballart tree is found in the Glenfern Valley Bushlands Reserve and is doing particularly well this year. It has an appearance similar to the cypress being a tall shrub or small tree growing to a height between 3–8 m.

The furrowed, droopy green branches are soft to touch and the leaves are reduced to inconspicuous scales. The small flowers are arranged in clusters on short spikes with only one of the flowers eventually forming a fruit. The edible red fruit is a globular, hard, greenish nut, 4–6mm long. As the fruit develops the stalk swells to 5–6mm in diameter and turns yellow or red. The seed-like fruit is found on the outside of the fleshy false “fruit”, hence the original name *Exocarpos*. The fruit is considered to have the highest sugar level of any native fruit in the forests of southern Victoria. The “fruit” is picked when it is so ripe it is ready to fall from the tree.

(continued next page)



friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

P.O. Box 1283, Upwey, Victoria 3158 • glenfernvalleybushlands@hotmail.com • www.glenfernvalleybushlands.org.au



@glenfernvalleybushlands



@FriendsOfGlenfernValleyBushlands

Plants are found in open forest, in shallow soils and on granite outcrops and known to be semi-parasitic on the roots of neighbouring plants. It can photosynthesise, but gains extra nutrients by attaching its roots to host plants. Once established their dependency upon the host tree is considered to be less. Eucalypts and wattles are known to be used as host plants.

Dispersal of the species is by birds attracted to the bright pedicels. Propagation of the plant seems to be very unreliable.



Indigenous Australians used the wood of the plant to make spearthrowers as well as bull roars and the sap was used to treat snake bites. The pale wood is very fine-grained but often striking colour variation. The timber was historically used for making furniture, gun-stocks, and tool handles while today it is more commonly used for producing decorative and ornamental pieces of art-work.

EEK! IT'S AN EEL!

Glenfern Valley continues to surprise us! On our recent night walk, along with several sightings of possums, owls, bats, spiders and ants, we had the pleasure of an encounter with a Short-Finned Eel. Around 90cm long, our eel quietly glided upstream, perhaps just as surprised as us by the sighting.

Endemic to Australia, Short-Finned Eels have a fascinating life-cycle. Mature adults migrate from their freshwater homes out to sea, then thousands of kilometres around the eastern coast to the Coral Sea. After spawning, perhaps exhausted by the trip, the adults die. The millions of larvae are then carried back down the coast by ocean currents. The surviving larvae, then metamorphose into a tiny tubular form known as glass eels. One to three year old glass eels find estuaries and streams, acclimatise to fresh water, and gain their brown-silver-yellow colouration.

They are quite determined in their travel upstream, and can overcome dams and waterfalls by travelling over wet ground like snakes. In the case of our Ferny Creek, they must travel through some kilometres of pipe. Eels generally live for 16–20 years, though some females may live much longer till they feel the conditions are right to migrate.

To our knowledge this is the first sighting in Ferny Creek for many years, and we're delighted that the health of the Creek has improved enough to allow their existence. And of course, another very good reason to keep dogs on leash and out of the water! Please keep your eyes peeled and let us know if you are lucky enough to sight one of these beauties.

Andrew F



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COMMON BIRDS YOU MAY SEE IN OUR BUSHLAND RESERVE

Over eighty species of birds have been observed over the years in Glenfern Valley Bushlands. Here are the most common that you may encounter. The full list of species can be found on our website.

NATIVE BIRDS

Australian King-Parrot
Australian Magpie
Australian Raven
Australian Wood Duck
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Brown Thornbill
Common Bronzewing
Crimson Rosella
Crested Pigeon
Eastern Rosella
Eastern Spinebill
Eastern Whipbird
Eastern Yellow Robin
Galah

Golden Whistler
Grey Butcherbird
Grey Fantail
Grey shrike-thrush
Laughing Kookaburra
Little Corella
Magpie-lark
New Holland Honeyeater
Noisy Miner
Pacific Black Duck
Pied Currawong
Rainbow Lorikeet
Red-browed Finch
Red Wattlebird

Silvereye
Spotted Pardalote
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Superb Fairy-wren
Tawny Frogmouth
Welcome Swallow
White-browed Scrubwren
White-naped Honeyeater
White-throated Treecreeper
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo
Yellow-faced Honeyeater



Photograph of the quarry from May 2019 (left). It shows the quarry embankment soon after it was planted out. Today it is completely covered (right). The area has been landscaped with stone amphitheatre, logs for climbing on, and two frog ponds. A good place to bring the children – check it out!



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WORKING BEE SCHEDULE WINTER 2022

Conservation Conversation • Wednesday 4 May
Bushland Restoration • Sunday 15 May
Conservation Conversation • Wednesday 1 June
Bushland Restoration • Sunday 19 June
Conservation Conversation • Wednesday 6 July
Bushland Restoration • Sunday 17 July
Conservation Conversation • Wednesday 3 August
Bushland Restoration • Sunday 21 August

Sunday working bee 9:30am-12:30pm,
mid week 9.00-11.00am. Come and join us
to help restore the bushlands while learning
more about the local flora and fauna. See our
Facebook page for more info about upcoming
working bees and tree planting days.

Meet at the central car park, Glenfern Road,
Upwey. Bring water bottle, sturdy shoes and
gloves. 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

MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY:

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

Three year memberships are now also available.

Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.
P.O. Box 1283, Upwey Vic. 3158
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We continue to welcome a high number
of visitors to the reserve, please remember
to take your rubbish home and have your
dogs on a lead to keep all our animals happy.
Thank you.



Golden Whistler



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