



**friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands Inc.**

Newsletter

**No.11 Autumn 2005**



A Successful Clean Up Australia Day 6 March 2005

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**To conserve and enhance the diversity of native flora and fauna of the Glen Fern Valley Bushlands while preserving community access and encouraging education and compatible uses for the enjoyment of current and future generations.**

## **A Message from our President**

*Dear Members and Supporters,*

I hope that as you are reading this that there is a new fence being built along the southern edge of the Reserve. It is certainly imminent! The fence is a sad necessity that will help reduce the damage done by 4WD's and motorcycles, whose owners choose to ignore the many signs posted around the reserve. This is costing around the \$30,000 mark and represents the last big item to be funded by the \$100,000 provided by the Victorian Government and Shire of Yarra Ranges two years ago. The other items were the Management Plan, various contractor works (removal of pines, dumped cars, some weeds), and the levelled car parks and a slew of minor items such as several large skips for rubbish. After this we are back on the Shire regular budget for reserves and any large works such as information shelters,

track works, fencing, significant weed control and the like will need to be funded by any grants we can attract. Other minor items (chainsaw fuel & oil, herbicide & applicators, small tools, mailing, stationery etc) that the Friends group needs are funded out of subscriptions and donations, currently around \$1000 a year, so we are keen to attract more members! So spread the word, put a sticker on your car, be a member!

Once the fence is in place our activities around the Reserve will become more and more visible as the rubbish heaps are burnt in Autumn, more trees are planted in Winter & Spring, and of course in early March the Clean Up Australia Day event. After all the hard work of the last few years, rubbish dumping has decreased significantly and this year we had slightly smaller skips to fill and less large rubbish to collect. It was also a great opportunity to appreciate the beautiful aspects of the reserve while seeking out litter, to chat with other members and supporters, and see for ourselves how well the indigenous plant life is responding to the end of the drought and to being released from competition by weeds.

After intensively examining and sorting the goals expressed in the Management Plan (available from our web site) and consulting with the Shire of Yarra Ranges Asset Management and Environment teams we have set some priorities for 2005. For the Friends group the really big one is weed control, followed by rubbish removal, community education, planting and planning tracks for the future. These are all reflected in our group calendar for 2005.

Please don't form the impression that it is all hard work slogging around the reserve straining your back pulling weeds; there are many benefits to be gained from joining with the Friends Of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands. Not least is the satisfaction of working with friends to improve your local natural environment, increasing your awareness of the natural world and the many features that make this reserve so special and caused it to be reserved. From this I have developed an interest in gardening, furthered my knowledge of the huge variety of bird and plant life so close to home, and enjoyed watching the seasonal changes, especially if spotting animals such as koalas and wallabies as they move through.

To further our enjoyment of the ebb and flow of nature I would like to take an idea proposed by Alan Reid of the Gould League and establish a local timeline record. This only needs people to send in a small observation that reflects something different happening with the seasons. A complete record could be kept on our website and seasonal highlights published with each newsletter. Simple observations such as "Musk Lorikeets flocking over the reserve, feeding on flowering gums (which?) in February". "Patterson's Curse Flowering in January in the grasslands along Glenfern Road", "Blackberries fruiting strongly in February." Over a few years we will learn what to expect, deepen our appreciation of the natural world and track the improvements our efforts are making. So send your observations in anytime.

Our gratitude goes to Noel Cliff, Shire Councillor, for his recent kind donation towards expenses for tools and chemicals to remove weeds. It is very much appreciated.

*Ian Rainbow*

## February Working Bee Report



The February working bee gave us all a good walk in relatively unfrequented scrub. Counting of the Silver Wattles planted last November revealed a survival rate of about 50%. This is a very good result given that we unfortunately (for the saplings that is!) had a hot dry spell immediately after the planting day. We also welcomed a couple of new recruits in Rachel and Liz. Quite a few birds were spotted, including a flock of Gang Gang Cockatoos and many immature Crimson Rosellas watering in the creek and Silvereyes in the Deadly Nightshade. Some interesting flowers discovered included Twining Glycine, an everlasting daisy (yet to be identified) and what may be a Yellow Star. Photos of the latter two will help with the ID we hope. Liz also brought word of a tortoise in the creek that Serg has identified as a Common Long-necked Tortoise, a great new sighting for the Reserve. Repeat weeding west of the Quarry Track saw great improvement in a good section of the Valley Grassy Forest. It was also good to see the new saplings of all sorts of indigenous species rising above the grasses, now that they have been freed of the Boneseed and Pittosporum cover and competition. I think we are winning!

**Mystery Flower?** The Yellow Star mentioned above would be flowering completely out of season so perhaps we could have a mystery flower? Any ideas?

## Clean Up Australia Day

**6 March 2005**

An excellent attendance (24) once more at this year's Clean Up Australia Day in Glenfern Valley Bushlands. We filled two 4 metre skips, less rubbish than in previous years but that's good news. The volunteers concentrated on cleaning the New Road end of the Reserve and also extracted some years old rubbish discovered deep within the bush near the Sewerage Depot.

Our show bags and left over trees from the last Community Day came in handy for the new people and all the teenagers who came along. , Now there are only a few persistant "car"cases and who knows what buried in the deeper tracts of weeds from many years ago! I think the scale shows the

success of the clean up campaign of the last 2 years and that very little new rubbish is appearing.

Thanks especially to Andrew & Linda for the 4WD and trailer and to Sarah and Serg for keeping all the day organisational details under control. Now all we need to do in preparation for next year's event is to move any rubbish we find on working bees to near the nearest track to accumulate for next year.

## Bird Movements

**Gang Gang Cockatoos** arrived back in the Reserve a good month earlier than last year, our first sighting being in the first week of February. Numbers of this wonderful bird with its 'creaky door' call seem to be well up on the last couple of years too. The increase in numbers and the timing of their autumnal migration through the Dandenongs is possibly the result of normal summer rainfall after so many years of drought.

Another bird that has arrived in significantly larger numbers in the last month or so is the **Musk Lorikeet**. Somewhat smaller than the Rainbow Lorikeet, it is a much faster bird in flight and a much greener bird in colour than the larger Rainbow. It has been seen regularly in large flocks moving quickly around dusk. The milder summer with the resulting explosion of flowers on the local gum trees is probably a major reason for their presence in the area at the moment.

We can also report several sightings of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** around the edges of the Reserve. A sighting of this magnificent bird is always special.



**Our Reserve Birds**

Each Newsletter we will look at some of the wildlife that call our reserve home.

### The Dusky Woodswallow

The Dusky Woodswallow is usually seen in the Reserve in the autumn months of March and April. It is a smoky brown in colour with a white edge along its blue-grey wing. Around 18cm in size it is often seen on dead branches where its characteristic tail wag can be observed. An open forest and woodland bird (Description from Simpson & Day Field Guide to the Birds of Australia).

## Timelines

## What's been observed in recent months

- Blackberries fruiting heavily in January-February
- Scattered Patterson's Curse flowering through the grasslands all summer
- Many Musk Lorikeets in flocks visiting flowering Eucalypts in February-March
- Common Long-necked Tortoise sighted in the creek in February
- Three Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring over the reserve in early February
- Considerable flood damage along creek in early February
- Some of the Silver Wattles planted in November 2004 now recovering from dry spell
- Various Flax-lilies flowering and producing distinctive large blue berries in January-February

## Next Working Bee – Saturday 17 April 2005 at 9.30am - 12.30

Please bring gloves, hand tools, water, and, depending on the weather, a hat or wet weather gear. Entry for cars is via the Parks Victoria (Fire Access) gate on Glenfern Rd, Upwey (about ½ way along the land) The site reference is Melways 74G10. In the event of a Total Fire Ban or inclement weather the working bee will be cancelled.

Working bees are held every 3<sup>rd</sup> alternating Saturday or Sunday morning of the month. Members, Committee and interested supporters meet on-site to take part in weeding, rubbish removal and inspections of previously weeded areas.

## Some Working Bee Statistics

On average 12 people attended the 10 working bees for 2004. At 3 hours each Working Bee this equals 360 volunteer hours.

At last year's Clean Up Australia Day 40 people attended for 4 hours (=160 hours) and at Community Discovery Day 65 people attended for 3 hours (=195 hours) for a grand total of 715 volunteer hours on site for 2004!

Then there are the Committee meetings: 11 each year of 2 hours duration with an average 5 in attendance equals 110 committee meeting person hours for the year. (Then there's the newsletter that is measured in strong coffee...).

## Newsletter Contributions/Feedback

## Do you have any ideas or feedback for our newsletter?

It's your newsletter! Would you like to share some of your knowledge, experiences, with our group?

Have you seen anything interesting during your walks in the Reserve? Spotted an Echidna or a Wallaby? Seen a flock of Ibis flying overhead?

We're sure that whatever has been of interest to you will be of interest to others, so why not drop a line to our editor Mark for possible inclusion into future newsletters.

## Spot the Native



### Manna Gum (Eucalyptus Viminalis)

When you next walk along the creek, look up and you will see some magnificent gum trees. They have white and creamy trunks and upper branches, and shed their bark in long strips (hence their other popular name "Ribbon Gum"). Look for the buds, which form a cross. At the moment they are flowering and provide copious nectar for bees and birds. The Manna Gum is also an important food tree for koalas, so keep an eye out for them too. Please report any sightings to us! Notice too the saplings, which are now coming up in response to our weeding in the area. The Manna Gum really is a spectacular tree, so stop a while to admire.

## Walking In The Reserve

Along the Quarry Track, starting immediately below the main central car park you can expect to see lots of honeyeaters in the gum trees on the left, a large Cape Wattle flowering near the start on the left and also one just after the fork to the top of the quarry. To the right is an area cleared of boneseed and Pittosporum over the last 2 years and now rich in native grasses, particularly Kangaroo grass and Spear grass species, which are a feature of the significant grassy woodlands found in this Reserve. Another smaller track to the left just above the quarry opening eventually leads down to Ferny Creek. A very pleasant and shady walk.

Around the quarry you may notice Hemlock with its characteristic mousy odour. Hemlock is very

toxic, so we'll leave removal to the experts.

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