

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.

# The Glenfern

The Official Newsletter of The Friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands Inc.

Edition No.19 Spring 2007

Planning is well under way for the next event

Community  
Discovery Day

Sunday  
21st October,  
9:30 – 12:30.

Guided tours to look for birds and learn about indigenous plants and weeds and if it rains enough we'll also plant more trees

**ALL  
WELCOME**

Call Ian on 9754 8425 AH  
or check the website for further details.

## VISIT BY TRINITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION STUDIES STUDENTS



Photo: Gill Anderson-Derescykj

Last year a group of about 40 young students from Trinity College visited us for some experience in the Australian bush and to learn about our rehabilitation project. It was so much fun for all that they asked to repeat the trip this year with a new batch of students. Early in September 50 students arrived to learn to plant seedlings, putting in 49 eucalypts and wattles from the Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery, and then they learned all about cutting and poisoning Sweet Pittosporum. The activity was fairly strenuous in strange surroundings for urban kids from all parts of Asia, but enthusiasm and curiosity did not flag and the FoGFVB committee members acting as group leaders faced some fairly severe questioning about the reserve, climate change, weeds and plant identification! FoGFVB members and students had a really enjoyable morning and made a great contribution. We look forward to next years visit.



friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands Inc.

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# Glen Fern Valley Quiz Spring 2007



1. Name two road boundaries of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands. (1 point each)
2. Who is the official manager of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands? (2 points)
3. Name two committee members of GFVB. (2 points for each)
4. What is the common name for *Eucalyptus viminalis*? (2 points)
5. What Australian animal likes eating the leaves of Manna Gum? (2 points)
6. How large is GFVB in hectares? (2 points)
7. What is the name of the creek on the eastern boundary of GFVB? (2 points)
8. Name three major weeds in GFVB. (1 point for each up to 3)
9. Name three weed removal techniques used at GFVB. (2 points for each)
10. When is Discovery Day (Community Open Day) held at GFVB? (2 points)

## A Place to Come

By Gill Anderson Derezyckij

*I breathe deeply  
and Inhale the essence of my country.  
The scent of eucalypts,  
The clear, clean air.  
The freedom that we take for granted  
As I travel here and there to far flung places  
I am struck by the crowds,  
The dirt, the smog, the noise, the smells.  
The further away I go  
The more I want to come back home  
Our open space,  
The trees, the hills,  
I watch the clouds and the branches blow.  
To walk alone, and hear birds call  
Or listen to the silence  
These things are ours,  
They're free,  
Still here for you and me.  
So hold them dear,  
Protect them please  
Before they are bulldozed,  
Built on or taken away.*

## Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*)

**Other common names:** Victorian box, Mock orange, Australian cheesewood, New Zealand Daphne, Victorian Laurel, Wild coffee.

Sweet Pittosporum is a large rounded shrub/ small tree. It has large dark green leaves, which spread out allow at little as 2 –10% light to penetrate the canopy.

An Australian native with a natural distribution in or near wet forests east of the Great Dividing Range from Brisbane to Westernport in Victoria, it has spread beyond its native habitat by gardeners keen on its hardiness and sweet perfume and by fruit eating birds and is now well established in Melbourne and other places in Victoria.

It is now classified as an environmental weed in most of Victoria, but as it is a native plant why should we worry? Outside its normal range it forms dense thickets under which few plants e.g. sedges, can survive the deep shade and possibly inhibitory chemicals Pittosporum may produce. The devastating effects on indigenous vegetation are easily seen along Depot Track in Glen Fern Bushlands, where you can also see how we are attacking the problem! Control is by frilling and filling, cutting and dabbing with glyphosate or just pulling out the small ones.

Photos: Ian Rainbow



## Report on National Tree Day, Saturday 26th May

This year after recent rains we decided to plant early and try to give our trees and shrubs a better chance to survive by adding water-retaining crystals, a good slurp of water before and Seasol (kindly donated by Seasol P/L) after planting, along with the usual weed mat and protective sleeve and stakes. About 50 people, including many Upwey South Primary Students and their parents came to help plant more than 300 plants, some of which were propagated from Yellow Box seeds gathered in the Reserve.

Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery donated plants to give away to participants and loaned tools. David Moncrieff and Richard Homersham both loaned trailers. Roger Mazzolini and Sandra Cory provided tank water. The Shire of Yarra Ranges provided all plants, mats, stakes and sleeves and insurance cover was provided through Planet Ark, organisers of National Tree Day. Many thanks for making available these essentials for the job.



# What's been happening around Upwey and Tecoma??



☘ Two reports of sightings around the suburbs show just how lucky we are to live so close to the bush. Jackie managed to creep up on a Swamp Wallaby that browses regularly in her yard to collect this image.

☘ Not far away at Sue's place the terrifying cry of the "screaming woman" owl has occasionally woken the family at night, leaving them wondering why bird watchers might welcome this as a sign that the Barking Owl is returning south of the Great Divide! This hair-raising call is variously attributed to both Barking and Powerful Owls that have also been seen in the area.

Photo: J. Hegger

## Why Victoria needs deposits on drink containers

Peter Cook has campaigned actively for many years to convince governments to legislate for drink container deposits to encourage return of containers. Drink containers are some of the most frequently seen litter in our beautiful reserve, so such legislation would benefit the users of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands. Many advantages would accrue if Victoria adopted a scheme such as that in South Australia, including less unsightly litter, saved ratepayers money, rewarding young Australians who collect cans and bottles, saving resources by increasing recycling, cutting greenhouse emissions, creating jobs in recycling and helping the Shire fulfil its zero waste policy. To learn more and express your support go to [www.AFROCAB.org.au](http://www.AFROCAB.org.au).

**REPORT RUBBISH DUMPING OR GRAFFITI IN THE RESERVE TO  
SHIRE OF YARRA RANGES ON 1300 368 333.**

## Mistletoe – Friend or Foe?

Mistletoe carries the weight of various common perceptions, in Europe traditionally a source of fun or embarrassment at Christmas parties, as a parasitic plant it is usually thought to have no redeeming features. Yet it does fit neatly into the ecology of the Australian bush. The tubular flowers are designed for nectar seeking honeyeaters and give sustenance to many at otherwise lean times of the year; in return these active birds unwittingly provide a pollination service. After flowering the fruits attract other birds, some being almost wholly dependent on the berries as food, in particular the Mistletoe Bird, which returns the favour by spreading the seeds to good growing sites by attaching them in its sticky droppings to branches. Mistletoe does not encourage leaf browsers; despite its succulent leaves often containing more water and nutrients than the leaves of the host they are often unpalatable or even toxic.

Mistletoe is commonly an edge dweller, infesting trees mainly at the more open edges of forests than in denser bush. Healthy trees can usually bear a few mistletoe guests, but isolated trees can be over-

whelmed and killed by heavy infestations, since mistletoe extracts all the water and nutrients it needs from the sap of the host. Mistletoes are often shorter lived than the host plants, and removing them does not always save the host. Perhaps they are a symptom rather than a disease?

So what do we do about these decorative parasites on the trees of our reserve? I vote to leave them alone, to accept them as part of the natural processes of growth decline and decay and see them as an important attracter and food source for many of our birds. If we lose a few trees it will not matter since removing weeds, encouraging regrowth and planting will more than replace those temporary losses.

In Glen Fern Valley Bushlands there are two main mistletoes, both shown in flower here. They are distinguished by the colour and shape of the leaves, as well as the opposite directions the flowers are held. Grey Mistletoe, with upright flowers, is always seen on Wattles, especially Silver Wattles (*Acacia dealbata*), while Drooping Mistletoe, with drooping flowers, can also attach to Eucalypts.

Photos: I. Rainbow; Mistletoe Bird © Ian Montgomery [birdway.com.au](http://birdway.com.au) with permission

Grey Mistletoe (*Amyema quandang*)



Mistletoe Bird



Drooping Mistletoe (*A. pendulum*)



# The Glenfern DIARY for 2007

- \* Sunday 18th February
- \* Sunday 4th March –  
*CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY*
- \* Saturday 17th March
- \* Sunday 15th April
- \* **Saturday 26th May**  
***NATIONAL TREE DAY***
- \* Sunday 17th June
- \* Saturday 21st July
- \* Sunday 19th August
- \* Saturday 15th September
- \* Thursday 18th October – AGM
- \* **Sunday 21st October –**  
***COMMUNITY & WEEDBUSTERS DAY***
- \* Saturday 17th November  
9:30 – 12:30 am  
Central car park  
Glenfern Road, Upwey  
Melways 74 G10

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#### **Answers to Quiz:**

1. New Road & Glenfern Road; 2. Shire of Yarra Ranges; 3. Ian Rainbow, Serg Zaccaria, Sarah Tebbutt, Richard Homersham, Roger Mazzolini, Sandra Cory, Gill Anderson-Derezyckj, Marilyn Thomas, Andrew Fullagar, Linda Fullagar, Paul Derezyckj; 4. Manna or Ribbon Gum; 5. Koala; 6. 40 ha; 7. Ferny Creek; 8. Sweet Pittosporum, Boneseed, Blackberry, Ivy, Wandering Trad, etc etc etc; 9. Hand removal, drill & fill, cut & dab, spray; 10. October 21st.

#### **Scores:**

1-7 Come to learn more about your reserve at Discovery Day.  
8-14 Not bad. Come and give us a hand at the next working bee. It's informative and fun.  
15-21 Very good. You've been to a working bee or two haven't you? Come again – we need you!  
22-27 Excellent. You're definitely committee material. Talk to us.

Working bees are held every 3rd 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. Everyone is welcome. 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. Please bring gloves, hand tools, water, and, depending on the weather, a hat or wet weather gear. In the event of a Fire Ban or inclement weather the working bee will be cancelled.