

Newsletter

No.8 Autumn 2004



Photo by Serg Zaccaria

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.

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What's been happening?

- Glenfern Valley Bushlands was **officially made a Reserve** late last year. It has been an amazing effort by all involved to get to this point in relatively so short a timespan. The land is now officially protected from any future threat of subdivision.
- The Shire of Yarra Ranges has taken over the management of the Reserve following lobbying of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) by our Friends Group.
- Signs have been erected along Glenfern Road, at the New Road carpark and along the approach to the SouthEast Water sewage depot prohibiting trail bikes and 4WD vehicles within the Reserve. Already there has been a marked decrease in their presence which is a welcome development.
- The Clean Up Australia Day on March 7 was a huge success with an excellent turnout of 27 people to again fill a skip full of dumped rubbish within the Reserve (see photo above). Several more car bodies were discovered and these will be removed soon.
- The Official Opening of the Reserve will be held on **Tuesday 27 April at 1.30pm** with Mary Delahunty, the Planning Minister in attendance. All members and supporters are welcome but the ministers dept requires a list of all attendees, if you would like to attend please call Serg on 9756 6160 or e-mail glenfernbushlands@hotmail.com ASAP.

What's Out There

Spring and Summer visitors have gone but the Reserve is still alive with birdsong. As everyone who lives in the hills knows Autumn brings one of our best-loved visitors, the gang gang cockatoo. Their familiar 'creaky door' calls have been heard in the area since early March and they should still be around for a few more weeks before they eventually head north.

Recent walks in the Reserve have yielded sightings of many interesting bird species, among them the comical looking Crested Shrike-tit, often heard stripping bark from gum trees in their search of bugs, the Dusky Woodswallow and the Brush Bronzewing. Recently a Whistling Kite was seen soaring high over the Reserve, sending the bush birds below into a cacophony of alarm calls. This brings a point to mind if you're out walking in the Reserve - sudden excited bird calls often mean a bird of prey is in the vicinity and this is a chance to view what is always a special sight. We have recorded around 10 bird of prey species in the area which is an excellent number.

If you see anything of interest on your walks in the Reserve why not share it with the rest of the Friends Of Group. Mammals especially have always been hard to spot and any sightings of Swamp Wallabies, Koalas, Echidnas or Wombats (anything in fact, even foxes) with a record of the date will be gratefully included in the Group's Fauna database.

Clean Up Australia Day, March 7th 2004

This event was a great success for the Glen Fern Valley Bushlands, attended by at least 27 people over 4 – 5 hours. The skip was filled to overflowing! A wonderful effort by all concerned and leaving only a small residue of intractable or extremely well hidden rubbish for future efforts. We hope no more rubbish arrives, and with the new signs prohibiting vehicles there is good chance of reducing the problem to zero. Very little of the material collected was surprising, except for the sheer mass and volume, although I did bring home a quite presentable copy of *Power Without Glory* by Frank Hardy, and we found three of the new signs that had gone missing.

The benefits of removing the rubbish are many: less rubbish visible will attract less new rubbish dumping, hazards are reduced by removal of risky material, there is less risk for wildlife and greater opportunity for new growth and habitat formation, the place is more attractive and pleasant to be in.

Well done and thanks to all concerned.

Book Review

by *Ian Rainbow*

"The Australian Bird Garden, creating havens for native birds" by Graham Pizzey, Angus & Robertson, 2000; price around \$35

This very readable book, with many wonderful photographs is not a gardening book with hints on potting, grafting, fertilising and building garden beds for the latest variety of roses. It's

certainly pleasant reading about Australian plants and creating an environment likely to encourage native birds to visit a garden, enlivened with occasional anecdotes by the late Graham Pizzey, one of the most authoritative and widely published Australian authors on birds.

It's great virtue is the simply understood picture of how the ecology works, with the roles of all components clearly explained in context. Thus fungi aid nutrient absorption by the roots of

flowering plants which helps plants provide habitat and food to many raiding insects, which in turn feed animals and birds and so on up the food chain to the peak predators and back again as bodies are recycled. The interactions described are not all to the detriment of plants as they use birds and insects for pollination, pest control and seed dispersal by an amazing array of strategies. Pizzey covers all the major bird and plant groups in Australia, dissects the interactions, and in the process translates some data from the scientific literature making it digestible and informative.

A lesson in gardening well grounded in a thorough knowledge of bird behaviour, plant characteristics and their relationships, I recommend this book to members of the Friends of Glen Fern Valley as an enjoyable read to inform our rehabilitation of the Reserve by understanding the whole ecology and not just any one aspect.

Here's one interaction, not necessarily wanted, in the Reserve. A female Gang Gang eating berries on an introduced tree! Can some one name the tree?



photo by Ian Rainbow

A note to members

There is always room for some new faces on the committee and we would welcome any contribution members can make to the running of the group. If you have a particular interest in flora or fauna, this is the group for you. If you would like to help out, please contact Serg Zaccaria or Sarah Tebbutt on the number given above.

Wormhole Books in Main Street, Upwey (next door to the post office) has agreed to collect membership renewals for the group. Drop in and see Sandy and browse through the amazing books in the shop.

- **Working bees.** Every 3rd alternating Saturday or Sunday morning of the



friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands Inc.

month. Members, Committee and interested supporters meet on-site to take part in a working bee.

Next working bee is scheduled for *Sunday 18 April at 9.30am - 12.30pm*

Followed By *Saturday the 15th May*
Sunday the 20th June
Saturday the 17th July

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.

- ***Flora and Fauna Surveys.*** Our Fauna and Flora groups regularly carry out survey work. If you are interested in attending a survey, please contact the group.
- ***Committee meetings.*** The committee meets once a month and we welcome the attendance of Members. Please contact us using the details above if you'd like to attend.

Website

Check it out for breaking news and other information. The site contains an image gallery, animated flyovers of the Reserve and a complete archive of newsletters. A big thanks to Roger Vize for his work on this site. <http://glenfembushlands.tripod.com>

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? If so drop a line to our editor Mark for possible inclusion into future newsletters.

Corporate Sponsors

Pig & Whistle Tavern, 1429 Mt Dandenong Tourist Road, Mt Dandenong. Phone 9751-2366 for bookings

Ruby's Café, Burwood Highway, Belgrave. Phone 9754 7445

Upwey and District Community Bank, 30-32 Main Street, Upwey. Phone 9754 1200 for all your banking needs.

Wormhole Books, 27A Main Street, Upwey Phone 9754 5440

Naturally, any other businesses out there that can assist us would also be sure to receive a mention in our newsletter!



As a business you can sponsor our newsletter for as little as \$50 per edition (3-4 per year). Newsletter distribution is 200 local households.

Let us know if we can help you with your business.