



Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Inc.

Member, Victorian Environment Friends Network. Registration No A0023301R. ABN 88 694 409 020

September 2009

Co-ordinator Bill Everard 03 53678913 Secretary Janet Leversha 03 53420160



What's On Next?

19 September, Saturday

Planting, Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve. *Note change of activity!*

Meet at the Western Water gate off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Rd west of Merrimu Reservoir, **Melways 328 K7**. At North-west block extend planting and do repairs. Bring lunch, drink, hat and a big smile.

11 October, Sunday

Brisbane Ranges Flower Show, Friends of Brisbane Ranges and Parks Victoria at Anakie Staughton Vale Hall 10am - 4.30pm.

11 October, Sunday

Wyperfeld Centenary Celebration, Wyperfeld National Park. BBQ lunch, RSVP and info. PV Info Centre 131963.

17 October, Saturday

Boxthorn removal, seed collecting and mapping at Sylvestines Subdivision, on the land now part of the Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve.

Meet just past the south end of Bence's Road at the intersection of Flanagans Drive and Condor Drive. **Melways Map 334 J3**.

Bring lunch, hat, gloves and protective clothing as you will be handling boxthorn.

21 November, Saturday

Pricking out seedlings at Parks Victoria Depot, Bacchus Street. **Melways 333 E8**.

Meet at 9.30am, bring any local seedlings that you have grown, a stool and dibber sticks. A BBQ lunch will follow at Judy and Stan's home, 42 Grant Street, Bacchus Marsh. Friends supply meat and veggie burgers but please bring a salad to share.

Free training for volunteers to be offered by Parks Victoria

Ranger Jo Stewart has asked us to respond to an offer of volunteer training from Sjaan Field, *Volunteer and Community Programs Coordinator*, Parks Victoria.

Jo has particularly asked us to respond to the possibility of ACUP, *Agricultural Chemicals Users Permit* training. How many of the Friends Group members are interested in this course?

The following is part of Sjaan's message.

...This year the Community Participation Unit is allocating some funding towards volunteer training...

Parks Victoria will offer training where possible to build the skills of volunteers and enable them to undertake a broader range of activities in line with their interests. Training helps volunteers to work safely, build independence and is a form of reward and recognition.

Please consider what types of training would benefit your key volunteers and speak with some members to identify what they would like to do in the next ten months. Courses could be individual or group training...

The types of training could be:

- o Four wheel, driver training*
- o First Aid*
- o Agricultural Chemicals Users Permit (ACUP)*
- o How to write grants*
- o Chainsaw use...*

We need to get back to Jo immediately after the September Project day. If you are interested please let Bill know by or on 19 September 2009. He will relay the message.



130 people took part in the planting on W. James Whyte Island Reserve, owned by Conservation Volunteers Australia, on 19 July 2009. Volunteers were from CVA, VNPA, FOWG & LFM, Lions, local residents and others.

Photo: Helena Lindorff

Jen's Project Reports

Saturday 20 June, 2009 Planting and Weeding: Werribee Gorge

On this cool, overcast morning, a select group of friends met at Meikles Point picnic area. We were joined by some of our Rangers. We began by planting Saltbush (mainly infilling), guarding and watering, assisted by Ranger Tony. At morning teatime we discussed the Grow West day, which will be held next month.

We then finished of the planting duties with the help of Ranger Jo. After Lunch, we checked the plants from last planting, and removed the guards from the plants that didn't make it, and did some sowing of River Red Gum seeds that had been collected with the assistance of some helpful Cockatoos.

Then we drove up to the top car park where we attacked the galenia weed, and replaced it straight away with Saltbush.

Saturday July 18 2009: Preparation for planting, W. James Whyte Island Reserve.

Marking the site, making tree guards, placing toilets, tents and seedlings was undertaken by Friends, CVA volunteers, Tim and Trevor of Grow West with Ken and Elaine from CVA.



Above: On Sunday 19 July, volunteers led by experienced team leaders quickly formed effective teams. *Photo: Helena Lindorff.*

Right: On Saturday Friends, Doug, Jack and Geoff with CVA volunteers and others made up tree guards. *Photo: Bob Reid*

Sunday 19 July, 2009: Grow West Planting, W. James Whyte Island Reserve,

On this windy day, the organisers, team leaders (who had been at the site yesterday doing preparation works like erecting the shelters) and assistants met in a field off Palmers Lane at 8.30.

We had a quick meeting to learn how the day was going to run, and then volunteers started coming to register for the day. After they had organised their tools, they helped put guards together until enough people had assembled to make a planting group, then they were conveyed to their planting site courtesy of members of a Mobile Landcare 4wd Club.

Once at the planting sites, people planted many species, including Long Leaf Box (*Eucalyptus gonioncalyx*), Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasurina Verticillata*) Varnish Wattle (*Acacia verniciflua*) and Fragrant Saltbush (*Rhagodia Parabolica*) into their allocated rip lines and put guards around the trees.

Morning Tea was brought to the planters. The trees were watered as they went. Lunch was held at the marquee on the planting site. Soup, burgers, sausages and salad (food organised and served by Lions Club) then we had a group photo and official thanks to all people involved including St John's Ambulance.

There was more planting and guarding to do after this, all work was completed by 3 pm when we were treated to a lovely afternoon tea. Then it was pack up time, and we waited for our four-wheel drive taxis.



Above: Tim and Trevor, Grow West, discuss the planting with John Cuttler.

Saturday 22 August, 2009: Simpson's Conservation Block.

We met on a cool overcast morning and drove in three 4-wheel drives to the first of the planting sites on Graham Simpson's Farm. Here we did some infilling, guarding and watering, while Graham's Dog, Archie, (with one brown and one blue eye) attempted to distract us from our work by being very friendly and cute and asking for pats. Some new faces arrived while we were at this site, including two young children, a brother and sister, Ben and Emma, who enthusiastically pitched in. One of our members took the opportunity to do some bird watching.

We moved to the second site and had a wonderful morning tea. During morning tea, the dog slept on the back of Graham's ute and did not show any interest in our meal. We were doing more infilling here, as well as some seed collecting. It got quite windy, and all the birds hid.

Then we went down the hill to the third site for Lunch and a very short committee meeting. Then everyone got busy with the seed collecting, infilling, guarding and watering. There were native Silky Bluegrass, Red box, Grey Box and saltbush planted on this site.



Left: At the end of the day, some of the Friends who planted at Graham Simpson's Conservation Block on 22 August 2009. Emma and Ben (standing on the log) became the water dispensing experts as they helped during the day.

Photo: Jenny Trehwella

Photos at top of front page by Jenny Whipp

'A marvel of concealment' (Keartland 1890) Marilyn gives us another reason to walk on a wild and windy day!

Something remarkable happened yesterday (30 Aug, 2009) I took the Melton branch of the Australian Plants Society into Long Forest. The wind was strong and bitterly cold so birds were just about non-existent, but we all enjoyed the plants, including orchids, the scenery and the fresh (!) air.

We had lunch at the start of Happy Valley Track. As we walked towards the picnic table, I saw a small bird hopping around about 30 metres away. As it flew off, I realised from the size, shape and the way it moved that it was a Speckled Warbler. I didn't get binoculars onto it and I didn't mention it to the group as it had gone.

Later as we sat eating our lunches, I saw two birds fly in to the same spot. I got the binoculars on one and it was carrying a large pale down-feather, nearly as big as the bird. I nearly fell off my chair.

There's only one reason for a small bird to carry a feather – it's lining a nest. Then the bird hopped down between two roots of a mallee tree and, through a gap under the roots, I could see it working the feather into place.

A few people got a brief look at the birds this first time, and better looks later when it or its mate came back twice more with more feathers.

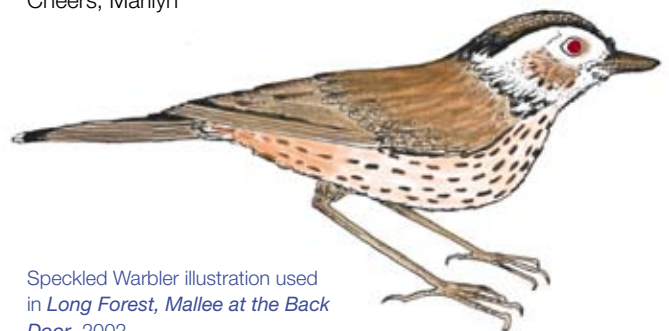
We didn't go over to the nest because I didn't want to disturb the birds. I want to try to follow the progress of this nest over the season.

So it pays to go bird-watching, even in the coldest, windiest, most unpromising conditions.

I've never found a Speckled Warbler nest in Long Forest in 28 years and as far as I know, neither has anyone else, although I've seen fledged young being fed. In the past, when I talked about the Long Forest Speckled Warblers, I used a photo of a nest that Rob Mackenzie, Dean and I found in the You Yangs.

You beauty!

Cheers, Marilyn



Speckled Warbler illustration used in *Long Forest, Mallee at the Back Door*, 2002.

Jen's Report - Hindmarsh Planting Weekend 14 -16 August 2009

On Friday at Lunchtime, A bunch of people met at *Southern Cross Station, Melbourne* with luggage ready to catch a bus to *Nhill*. ...

Towards evening, we arrived at *Whimpy's Little Desert Lodge*, where we were to be accommodated for the weekend....We got an official 'Welcome to Country' from 'Aunty' Nancy Harrison, an elder in one of the local tribes, *Wotjobaluk*, and she thanked the four other local tribes for allowing us to be involved in this event.

...The three sites for this day were *Hassetts* and *Jacks Track* at *Rainbow*, and *Mallee Dunes* at *Yanac*, the property owned by Bernie Fox and Sue Hayman Fox. I was in the group heading to the latter. ..., Daryl Ackers gave us some information about the local area, the crops and water access. Central Pivots are used to pump underground water reserves for watering the stock and crops: which include Wheat, Fava beans (used for making baked beans), Carrots (which are grown with Vetch, a type of legume, to prevent the young carrots being destroyed by blowing sand) and canola. Some farmers are using GM Canola, which can't be killed by Round up. This poses a problem if the canola gets wild.

When we got off the bus at Mallee Dunes Rae Talbot, the site leader, welcomed us and told us how she wanted the planting and guarding done. Sue and Bernie then told us a bit about their property, and how they had ... permission to build a terradome on it where they could live and have nature heat it in winter and cool it in summer, and it would be a refuge in times of fire.

We then started to put together the milk carton guards with the bamboo sticks, until

various sub groups broke away with the seedlings Rae had given them, and moved off to their designated planting area, which had been ripped. Our little group went up and over the hill. We worked in small teams to dig the holes, plant the seedlings about 6 metres apart, and put the guards on, making sure the bamboo sticks did not cross over the plant. Before we went to lunch, the trees we had planted got watered. ...

When we got back to the planting, we were mostly in-filling between the trees we had planted with smaller shrubs. It didn't take long to get the trees planted, but it took ages to get every tree watered. While teams did the watering, other people assisted to pack up all the equipment and socialised. During this time, even though we hadn't had any rain we spotted a beautiful rainbow in the sky!!! With a backdrop of cumulonimbus clouds. Someone found a small, recently dead snake that had been killed by a bird, after some consideration it was decided that it was a fully-grown Masters Snake. By the time everything was watered and put away, it was 5.30! ...

After Main course was over, we stepped outside the Marquee and were treated to a smoking ceremony and a dance about Man, Emu, and Kangaroo performed by Sunny and Jordan, of the *Wotjobaluk* tribe, who had painted their bodies and wore only short shorts (Lucky it was a mild evening). We were encouraged to become actively involved in the smoking Ceremony. We had to walk around in a circle close to the fire and rub the smoke onto our skin. It was a different and enriching experience.

After this beautiful cultural demonstration, we had fruit salad and ice cream. We were then treated to some speeches, and three visual presentations, the first on the Flowers of the Wimmera, Then we got an overview of farming, and then members of the *Wotjobaluk* tribe spoke about all the tribes of the region, what the area means to them, and about Mt Zero Salt, ... After these presentations were over, we were invited to step outside and listen to a band from Rainbow called 'The Lazy Farmers Sons'

On Sunday we had a slightly later start,... we made our way to Whimpy's Mallee Block, which was surrounded by a fox-proof-fence, and had some old farm machinery as features. We had to walk along a lengthy dirt path over some hills before we got to the planting area. In teams of 2 or 3, we planted along rows of rip lines, laying the plants about every 6 metres, arranging species at random. When everything was planted and watered, we climbed on or stood around a trailer for another Photo Op, Then Whimpy thanked us for our efforts and told us a bit about the Mallee Block, which he bought in 1975. He claims there are 2 or 3 pairs of Mallee fowl nesting on the block.

We then walked back to the buses and Steve took us back to the Lodge for a Lunch of soup, fruit, rolls and sweet slices.

We were given a quick thank you and goodbye and told we had 2 minutes until the buses was leaving, ...then we were off back home again...

(Full text of Jen's Hindmarsh report will be available at the September project day)

Mistletoe and its complex community – A Long Forest Track Sign

Mistletoebirds favour fruit of Mistletoe



Four trackside signs for *Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve* are being produced with the support of a Parks Victoria grant. The theme for the signs is '*Communities of Long Forest*'. Some of the ideas for the signs include:

Sign 1 Long Forest – a special plant community

This sign will explain the special significance of *Long Forest* flora.

'...The Bull Mallee dominated woodland plant community is listed under Schedule 2 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* 1988 as *Rocky Chenopod Open Scrub*. This plant community is rare and is protected from clearing on both public and private land...'

Sign 2 Long Forest Woodland – refuge for threatened Woodland Birds

'...In Long Forest there are many species of bird that are woodland specialists. The mallee and box woodland in Long Forest is of great value as habitat for the threatened woodland bird community. Species such as Brown Treecreepers, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Diamond Firetails, Jacky Winters and Speckled Warblers use the woodland to feed, nest, rest, roost and shelter from predators...'

Sign 3 Down on the Ground – Intimate relationships

'Lichens and mosses reduce water and wind erosion, reduce runoff of water and regulate water seepage into the soil, improve soil nutrition by helping fix nitrogen and organic carbon useful to plants and provide niches for seedlings and invertebrates...'

Sign 4 A web of Life – Mistletoe and its complex community

'...There is a symbiotic relationship between mistletoe, Southern Purple Azure Butterfly and Sugar Ants (*Camponotus* species). The ants protect the larvae of the butterfly in exchange for the sweet excretion from the grub...'