



WHIRRRAKEE

August 2002

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO
FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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| | | | |
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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single \$34; Family \$40; Concession: Single \$28.50; Family \$34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is \$34. These rates include GST.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members: Kate Lottkowitz; Trevor Marshall; Rob Moors, Jan Orr, Stan Pelczynski; Bob Ruddick

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active sub-group:

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)

Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)

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Front Cover: Photographer: Sabine Wilkens

A bird in the hand..... The photo pictures Glenise Moors showing us some bird bits from her frozen collection. The occasion was a workshop held before the June general meeting (see page 3). As with all the workshops so far, the audience was very attentive and appreciative, particularly of the hands-on component.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 23, No. 7, August 2002

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

| Item | Contributor | Page |
|--|------------------------|------|
| Bits of bird and other workshops | Sabine Wilkens | 3 |
| Bird Observer Group - July Observation | Kerrie Norris | 3 |
| Fauna Study Group - Excursion | Kerrie Norris | 3 |
| June General meeting: Speaker: Ern Perkins | Sabine Wilkens | 4 |
| Box-Ironbark Meeting | | 4 |
| July General Meeting: Speaker: Michael Looker | Sabine Wilkens | 5 |
| Spring in the Bendigo Bush | | 7 |
| Invitation to the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture | Ballarat FNC | 7 |
| Cats with Bells on | Steve Davidson | 7 |
| Response to Flora for Fauna website | Frances Cincotta et al | 8 |

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.

Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editors' Note

Tom Burton has gone to America to study frogs, watch hummingbirds and waders amongst other things. He will not be back till next year, so please direct all mailed Whirrakee articles to Sabine Wilkens (to the address on the inside front cover).

Yesterday I saw my first Golden Wattle for this year - always a very special occasion. Has anybody felt that shrubs seem to flower earlier each year? Ern Perkins reported that somebody has actually measured this to be true (see June speaker write-up on page 4). What a great, low-work intensive long-term project for someone to see if it applies to Bendigo species as well.

Bits of birds and other workshops

Author: Sabine Wilkens

Glenise Moors conducted the June workshop with the promising and un-intimidating title "bits of birds" (I felt I could go along, knowing nothing at all about birds). We were told that for an unexperienced birdo, the silhouette of a bird and its beak shape are the first things useful for identification but feathers are a more fascinating topic in my opinion. Feathers make birds into birds and distinguish the real birds from dinosaurs, but they are not just used for flying. How many other uses can you think of?

Here are some: Buoyancy (in waterbirds), water proofing, sexual display, camouflage, nesting material, warmth and flight. Are there any others? In most feathers, the smallest units, the barbs, possess barbules and these attach the barbs to each other forming a more or less solid surface for the wind and water to pass by. Down feathers, on the other hand, can do what they do because the barbs do not possess barbules and the barbs thus remain separate and fluffy, creating a warming effect.

The size of feathers ranges enormously. Pelicans, eagles and vultures have large flight feathers while the white ring around a silvereye's eyes is also made from feathers, this time extremely tiny ones. Feathers also possess an aftershaft, a more or less prominent section that comes off at the base of the feather. This is so prominently developed in emu feathers, that the feather looks bifurcated. Why would emus have such feathers?

There could have been a whole evening spent just talking about feathers, but other features were mentioned too. Changes in appearance from young birds to mature ones, methods of feeding and feet. However, Glenise saved the highlight of the workshop for the last few minutes...it came when she pulled out a number of birds (from her freezer) and handed these around. A bird in the hand, albeit dead and stiff and cold, is something so special to behold...why is that? Perhaps it reminds us how fragile life really is!

Prior to the July general meeting, Rob Watkins held a workshop on basic photography and how to make the best of your equipment. I did not attend the workshop but one satisfied listener noted "It was very good, we could have gone all night" There was so much interest and so much material to cover that we can have several more of these workshops in the future. Thank you very much Rob.

The next workshop will be held prior to the September AGM. We will be looking at wattles in flower.

These workshops have been a great success so far. We are always looking for more people to conduct them. If you have any ideas of what could be presented, give it a try if you haven't already done so..... or even just turn up for one.

Bird Observers Group Observation 2/7/02

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.

Approximately 70 sighted at 11.45am at the Burke and Wills monument, Castlemaine by Bruce McInnes and friends. The birds were closely observed as they fed on the *Pinus radiata*.

Fauna Study Group – Excursion

28th August

Frogs by Night (Rain, Hail or Crisp)

The Growling Grass Frog is sure to be heard, along with the local garden varieties. We can also be certain, that those with the knowledge will have interesting snippets of information to share and debate on the topic of frogs (French and cooking jokes aside!). Despite Tom Burton's description of how to locate frogs (*Whirrakee* Vol 22, No. 2, March 2001) we hope not to endure the discomfort and lack of sleep seemingly necessary. Children are welcome and guaranteed to find some 'frogs in the pond'.

Location: Kangaroo Flat Botanical Gardens, picnic pavilion - Camp St Kangaroo Flat

Time: 6.00pm Share B.B.Q. tea (BYO food and utensils, public BBQ available)
7.30pm Serious business of frog location/identification begins

Bring: Torch, sturdy footwear, warm and weatherproof clothing, recording equipment, magnifying glass etc.

Contact: Kerrie Norris ph. 5447 8017.

June General Meeting

Author: Sabine Wilkens

The June speaker was Ern Perkins, an eminent, long-standing field naturalist from the Castlemaine area.

Some time ago, he wanted an answer to the question that many of us are thinking about occasionally but putting aside as too hard: "Is the bush getting better or worse?"

It is extremely difficult to quantify how things are changing around us because there are usually so many other changes masking the one we are looking for. Too often we rely on anecdotal evidence (the bush used to be so much better in the old days.....) because any other (hard) evidence is too hard to get, and anyway, it often suits our world view that things are getting continuously worse. Ern Perkins was not satisfied with anecdotal evidence and so the PHOTOPOINT project began.

The purpose of the project was to document changes in the greater Castlemaine region by taking photos from a large number of locations from the exact same points over a long period of time. This sounds like a pretty good idea, but the technical challenges were enormous.

Many decisions had to be made before the project could begin, and any of them had to be right, not just for the moment but for the next decades to come. There was a database to be chosen for entering information about the photos, there were the photographs to be stored safely and made permanent somehow and a decision had to be made where to house the negatives. There were the film type to be chosen and the type of paper to print the photos on, the resolution of the digital image and how to store these. In addition, decision had to be made what to photograph, how often to photograph it, what information to accompany each photo and how the photopoints should be identified.

It was a miracle the project went ahead at all and another miracle that in the current climate of ever changing computer abilities and compatibilities, many of the tricky decisions happen to have been the right ones in the sense that information can be transferred to ever new systems without loss.

To decide on the location of the photopoints, Mt Alexander Shire was divided into one minute grids and as many areas as possible were photographed, with the accompanying information being collected by a standard data sheet detailing longitude and latitude amongst

other things.

Ern showed us some photo sets taking several years apart. In some sets, the roadside shrubs on the side of the road had got smaller, blackberries have grown bigger or eucalypt saplings have grown taller. In some sets there was surprising little change in the vegetation, possibly due to prolonged dry conditions over much of the last decades.

Ern has also been a personal witness to some of the changes in the bush. He has been particularly interested in the decline of bush birds over the last few decades. There is some evidence that bush birds rapidly declined after the 1982 drought and another decline became obvious later and a very recent article points to the fact that in certain places, the bush is virtually eaten out by grazing kangaroos. However already in 1971, a decrease in native birds in the Whipstick was written about. Then, the collection of birds eggs was identified as the causes of this decline.

Big questions like 'what causes the decline in bird numbers' cannot be seriously investigate unless the state of the vegetation is known over the period in question.

Apart from the Photopoint project, Ern has been looking closely at the vegetation around the Castlemaine area and some of the plants recorded or planted there at some stage are just not there any more. Along a nature trail in Castlemaine, species like Wirilda, Early Black Wattle, Gold Dust Wattle, Showy Parrot Pea, Goldfield's Grevillea, Urn Heath and Sheoaks have disappeared, even the Cootamundra Wattle has disappeared from this particular trail.

In the Taradale area, Heathy Parrot Pea, Tall Sun Orchids and Dwarf Bush Peas have been reported decades ago, but Ern has never seen these despite looking hard for them.

Other changes have been noticed. Choughs and Galahs have come into the Maryborough/Castlemaine area only in the last 20 years. Are these birds responsible for the change in vegetation or is it the other way round?

One difficulty with following changes in vegetation and birds is the uncertainty about which plant exactly a historic article is talking about. There are plant lists about for this region from last century but the common and latin names have most likely changed since then and the real identity of the plant is hard to track down, unless herbarium specimens exist.

One interesting change has been noted about the time of flowering in the local wildflowers. For a long time, Richard Fitter has been recording when wildflowers came into bloom. Up to ten years ago, it has been more or less constant but since then flowering has been earlier and earlier, in some species 20 or even up to 55 days earlier. Some people believe this to be a consequence of global warming. If the trend continues, it might have significant consequences for the food supply and pollination relationships in the bush.

To really answer the question if populations have actually decreased and speculate as to the causes of these declines, long-term monitoring is essential. The Perkins' have been involved in such a long-term study. Ern and his wife do regular and frequent bird monitoring of a number of sites in the Castlemaine area.

For the last three years, they have surveyed seven sites regularly (that's about 70-80 surveys per year) and he has found that over this period in time, a lot of little birds went down in number. For example, the scarlet robin and white-eared honeyeaters declined dramatically, while others, like the sulphur-crested cockatoo, increased in numbers.

Such long-term studies are extremely rare and understandably so. Ern made the point that not only does this monitoring need to be done, it is also extremely important to get the recording right, ie, what information is collected and how it is stored. If there is no coordination in this matter in a regional context, we might be re-inventing the wheel over and over again and all the bits cannot be put together because they all belong to different jigsaw puzzles.

This concept did inspire the audience and the bird group continued to discuss this idea in their subsequent meeting.

Thank you Ern for this fascinating talk.

Editor's comment: For years, I have been suspecting that flowering happens earlier each year and was always put in place by our experts! However, listening to ErnPerkin's talk, it just might happen very slowly and gradually, or to selected species only.

You are invited to an information evening with

Box-Ironbark Friends

at Senior Citizens Golden Square Clubrooms
old High Street, Golden Square on
Thursday, 22nd August 2002, 7pm

Jason Doyle, VPNA, will show slides and talk about the campaign to protect the box-Ironbark forests.

Stuart Fraser, BDEC, will talk about the unprotected Bendigo forests.

Supper will be provided.

July General Meeting

Author: Sabine Wilkens

The speaker for the night was Michael Looker, Chief Executive Officer of Trust for Nature.

Whenever extra chairs are needed for a meeting, it is always a promising sign. So it was for this meeting. It was a fitting time to talk about Trust for Nature as the organisation is in its 30th year, in fact it was one of the earliest, if not the earliest organisation dedicated to conservation and biodiversity on private land in Australia. Michael told us that it was set up by the Hamer Government, specifically to address the issue of conservation on private land.

In Victoria, 65% of land is privately managed and conservation and biodiversity activities on private land receive much less funding compared to public lands. Yet, many significant habitats and species inhabit private lands, grasslands are a topical example.

The threats to such habitats and species within them are similar to those on public land but with a few extra pressures, e.g. land clearing, land degradation, fragmentation, harvesting, chronic defoliation by increased number of herbivorous insects, exotic weeds and feral animals, changed hydrological cycling, nutrient enrichment and soil compaction, altered fire regimes and threats of subdivision.

For the first four years, the activity of Trust for Nature (TfN) was restricted to land purchases but since then, other activities have become equally or more important, ie covenants, public appeals, maintaining a revolving fund for buying and selling conservation properties, training and education as well as advocacy for private land conservation.

One of the pivotal activities of Trust for Nature is the placing of **protective covenants** on titles, a conditions agreed to by land owners and TfN which has to be adhered to once the land is sold. A stewardship program then monitors the adherence to the covenant conditions. The Trust puts away money for every property that is covenanted, to maintain the stewardship program. At present, the Trust has approved 790 covenants.

Public appeals (these are tax deductible) are a source of funds to maintain TfN's activities. Often it is hard to collect funds from the public once they have been pledged, particularly if the land has been secured by the Trust in the mean time as a temporary measure. A wonderful example where a public appeal helped secure an important piece of land was Mt Elephant. A small community who felt very strongly about wanting to restore the mount raised a large amount in a short time.

A **revolving fund** is a more recent concept (established in 1989) that has allowed many purchases of important parcels of land, placing of covenants and then re-selling and being able to use the money for other purchases etc. This is a growing activity for the Trust.

Another activity which can grow potentially is the **conservation education and training** side. Field days bring communities together and create a network of interested parties who can end up helping each other. In the political arena, **advocacy for private land conservation** is going on as well, albeit at a low level. Lobbyists may push for a tax deduction options for TfN supporters and land owners with covenants.

In Victoria there are ten regional coordinators for the ten catchments of the state. Elvyne Hogan, familiar to most of us, is the coordinator for our own catchment.

At present TfN owns 53 properties across the state, others have been bought and surrendered to the crown, for example to add to National Parks. Reasons for land purchases are varied and interesting. Mt Elephant, mentioned above, is a

site with interesting vegetation assemblages and rare and endangered animals that inhabit these. In the middle of Nhill, many single town blocks were purchased because they appear to be the habitat for two rare sun moth species co-existing in this unusual habitats. In Dimboola, a large parcel of land was purchased and named the Snape Reserve after Brian Snape the recently retired chairman of the Trust. The entire site covers 1800 acres and has no less than eight types of vegetation communities, including some rare ones.

Rod Orr has recently had a lot to do with an area of grassland also purchased recently by TfN.

Land purchased is either added to existing reserves, left to be managed by the community responsible for its purchase or left with TfN to be administered and managed. The latter is often preferable as community management teams are very often totally enthusiastic at first, but then the novelty wears off and member are more and more struggling to find volunteers to do the work. With TfN managing the land, there is more stability in the approach, however, the community does not quite get the sense of ownership, the prospect of which may have given the project its initial enthusiasm.

In the future, TfN hopes to move to bigger and bigger things for example landscape scale conservation, an approach which looks at the bigger picture of the entire landscape, not just a small area in isolation. It is also hoped that covenants, the stewardship program and the activities around the revolving fund will increase. TfN does do some lobbying for rebates and tax deductions and it is hoped once these are in place, more people will be sympathetic in getting involved.

The reputation of TfN in Victoria is growing beyond the state borders. Other states are now installing similar schemes and in the not-to-distant future it is hoped that a national system of private land conservation can be organised.

Where does all the money come from to do all this good work? The state only gives TfN a small administrative grant annually and for the rest of its activities the organisation relies on private funding alone. At present, the plan is to save up for a large endowment fund which could be invested and all activities undertaken from the interest alone.

In that case it would be a good thing if the interest rates went up.....

This was a thoroughly positive and interesting talk. Thank you Michael for coming all the way to Bendigo on a cold winter's night.

Spring in the Bendigo Bush

This year, the club's activities in the annual 'Spring in the Bendigo Bush' will be scaled down, there will be no wildflower show for example. However, the club has pledged to organise two days with walks – one walk on the 1st of September to the Whipstick led by Graham Hill and another on the 15th of September to Salomon Gully and the Diamond Hill area. Both walks will have long and short versions so they should suit people of all levels of ability and enthusiasm.

It is also planned to launch the new and improved edition of 'Wildflowers of Bendigo' on the 18th September (however, this date is not set yet and may have to be postponed).

A picnic is planned for the Wellsford forest on September 29.

In addition, the 'Box Ironbark Living Records' CD will probably also be launched in October as the production team has been successful in obtaining all the funds required.

So – even though it is a reduced program, there are still plenty of activities to get involved in. Spring is not far off, one can almost feel the golden wattle buds bursting open.

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture – Invitation to all Members

The Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat extends a cordial invitation to members of our club to attend the annual Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.

The guest speaker will be **Mr Geoff Williams** from Australian Platypus Conservancy. The subject of his talk is "**Platypus Research and Conservation**" and will cover topics such as feeding, habitat requirements, life cycle and population status.

The lecture commences at **8pm on Friday 6th September 2002**. It will be held in the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, corner Gillies and Gregory Street, Ballarat.

Admission is free and supper will be provided.

Cats with Bells on

from: Davidson, S. *Ecos* 111, April-June 2002, page 34

This short article talks of the superb hunting skills of domestic cats and how cat owners sometimes try and curb this activity by either fitting a bell to their cats' collar to warn potential prey of the cat's approach or by keeping cats indoors. Whilst the efficiency of the latter is in no doubt, the efficiency of cat bells has been contentious.

Two Australian studies have shown them to have no effect on predation rates. However, a more intensive study in Scotland in which cats in the trial wore bells for only half of the eight weeks of the study time showed that prey delivery was reduced by about 50%. During bell-wearing periods, the cats took home a total of 82 mammals, 26 birds and 10 amphibians, while for the same period without bells, cats delivered 167 mammals, 48 birds and 11 amphibians. Bell wearing thus significantly reduced predation on birds and mammals.

The study can be found in Ruxton G.D., Thomas, S. and Wright, J.W. 2002. Bells reduce predation of wildlife by domestic cats (*Felis catus*). *Journal of Zoology* (London) 256: 81-83.

**BDECs comments on 'Flora for Fauna' as presented on the website
www.floraforfauna.com.au**

Written by Frances Cincotta, Stan Pelczynski and Barbara Pelczynska, July 2002

Introduction.

We were very pleased to see the concept of flora for fauna being promoted through the Internet. We believe that human beings are but one species on the planet and that we should consider the impact of our activities on all the other animals in our environment. Gardening is a human activity which, in affluent countries like Australia, is more about pleasure and enjoyment than the necessity of food production. We hope that once people become educated as to the reliance of native fauna on the native flora (of which every country, be it U.S.A., U.K., or Australia) then their decisions about what to plant around their home will be wiser. As we hear about more and more plants becoming environmental weeds when planted outside their country of origin, such as Gazanias going feral in Australia, and Melaleucas going feral in Everglades U.S.A, it becomes obvious that (where there is not an imperative for food production or growing trees for fuel) people should plant the native species of their own land. Taking this argument one step further leads one to the conclusion that local native plants are the most appropriate ones to grow.

At the present time the sale of native plants for gardens in Australia is only a fraction of the sales of plants from other countries (exotics). If the efforts of the Flora for Fauna initiative (along with the Australian Plants Society etc.) are successful we could expect the proportion of Australian species to exotic species planted by Australian gardeners to increase. This would be desirable, but if even better information is supplied to consumers/gardeners then we could hope for more local native plants to be planted in every locality rather than W. A. Banksias in Victoria and Queensland rainforest plants in N.S.W.

The Website

The Flora for Fauna website is very colourful, appealing, and easy to use. We like how it takes you through step by step. We are also pleased to see that it includes links to material which explains the importance of biodiversity, etc. While we applaud the whole concept we are very disappointed in the content of the plant selection lists it provides at present.

In the descriptive passage "About this website" it is stated that the website gives a "comprehensive database with full details of over 260 plants". This is misleading as Australia has some 25, 000 native plants, so the Flora for Fauna website at this stage describes only about 1% of the flora of Australia. We realise that more plants are being added "as information becomes available", but we argue that the information is already available in such texts as Eliot and Jones "Encyclopedia of Plants" and Wrigley and Fagg's "Australian Native Plants". If all the gardeners in Australia only used these 260 plants as a basis for their selection then the aims of Flora for Fauna cannot be achieved as Australian fauna depends on the full diversity of its flora. The functioning of each of the hundreds of different ecosystems primarily depends on the flora and fauna specific to that ecosystem. Unless we protect and enhance the flora from these ecosystems by planting them in our gardens we will destroy the very basis of Australia's biodiversity. Perhaps the website was launched prematurely?

Comments on Specific Plant Selection

When we went through the steps for creating a garden here in Bendigo and came to "Find your growing zone", we noticed that Victoria is divided only into three zones, so that the same plants are recommended for us in Bendigo as for most of the state.

We have analysed the list of 109 shrubs which it suggests "will flourish in your local area" and we were very disappointed that it contains only two truly indigenous species to Bendigo. The other 107 plants are either not local species (65) or are hybrids/cultivated varieties (42). See attached list for how we have analysed this.

The definition of "indigenous" is "occurring naturally in an area; not introduced". It always has to be accompanied by a definition of the area that is being referred to eg. "indigenous to Bendigo" or "indigenous to Australia". On the website as it stands now the word indigenous is used to describe any plant native to Australia or derived from native species ie. the word "indigenous" is used as a synonym for "native".

For a user of the website, going through the process of defining your local growing zone within a particular state the implication is that the resultant list will be plants indigenous to that growing zone when in fact only a small percentage of them are, and even then they are not identified as such.

Bendigo is the centre of Box-Ironbark country

which is mega-diverse. In our publication "Gardening with Local Native Plants" (published by the City of Greater Bendigo, a copy enclosed) gardeners can choose from a list of 71 indigenous shrubs, and this list does not claim to be comprehensive! It includes Whirrakee Wattle which grows nowhere else in the world and deserves a place in every garden in Bendigo region.

If the aim of Flora for Fauna is for nurseries to sell more Australian plants, then the plant lists simply need adding to. The Bendigo Native Plant Group and Field Naturalist Club put on a wildflower show each spring, showing that several hundred native species can be successfully grown here.

All 25,000 Australian plants have co-evolved with the fauna so are dependent on the fauna for pollination, seed dispersal or what ever. However, such a broad approach ignores the complexity of Australian biodiversity according to the link to CSIRO website "Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms; different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and ecosystems of which they are a part". Therefore, if the aim is to get gardeners to select plants that are best for the local environment, as the title Flora for Fauna implies, then the plant list need to be more accurate and be based on what is best for local ecosystems.

Getting back to the specifics, the list of shrubs recommended on the website for Bendigo includes:-

- 19 Grevilleas, but not the two locals. *Grevillea alpina x lanigera* is included, but it should not be as it could hybridise with our local form of *Grevillea alpina* thus polluting its gene pool;
- *Hakea sericea* and *H. decurrens* "Pink Lace" which are closely related to the Bendigo plant *Hakea decurrens* ssp. *physocarpa* and could hybridise with it thus destroying the genetic integrity of our local population;
- 'Happy Wanderer' which could be detrimental in the same way as *H. sericea*, namely by polluting the gene pool of Bendigo form of *Hardenbergia violacea*;
- only one wattle which is not a local (whereas our local pamphlet recommends 10 local wattles)

A technical point - some grevilleas are listed under "G" whereas others are found under their common or commercial name, such as "C" for

Cherry Ripe - it could be frustrating if one is trying to get representation from all the different families of Australian plants. For that reason it would be better if all the Peas were listed together, all the Hakeas together, etc.

Conclusion

We would like to see changes introduced to this excellent scheme so as to influence a real change in our gardening culture and practice for the betterment of our environment. We would appreciate a response to our concerns. Please inform us whether you intend to take the desired steps to correct the terminology on the website (especially the terms "indigenous" and "comprehensive" which are misleading). If there is not adequate budget to make the plant list comprehensive, then this should be acknowledged and links could be used to direct people to local sources for further information, such as Councils, the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association etc. and to the subset of the horticultural industry who specialise in growing indigenous plants.

We refer you to an article by Jill Hamilton printed in "the Australian" on 21-8-01. Jill Hamilton founded Flora for Fauna in Britain in 1995 and warns us in this article that in Britain "hybrid superflowers make slim pickings for wildlife". It is likely to be the same here so that it is better for our wildlife if we plant our true species. Jill may be horrified that Flora for Fauna in Australia is being used to promote hybrids and cultivars (even though with only 200 years of mucking around with Australian Plants, our hybrids and cultivars are probably more similar to the original species than in Europe where people have been gardening for many more centuries.

Finally

We stress that conservation of biodiversity is of paramount importance to the achievement of ecological sustainability and our survival as a species.

Up till now gardens have been and still are a part of the threat to Australia's biodiversity both because of their cumulative size and plants that escape from them. It is high time that they should be treated as a part of solution to the ecological problems we face now. We have great faith in the good will of Australians - once people are properly informed they will do the right thing. We urge you to review the list of recommended plants with emphasis on indigenous plants as being the ideal flora for fauna.

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings 2002– Second Wednesday 8:00 pm

Please check each WHIRRAKEE for additional events or changes. If a workshop is planned, it will start at 7:00pm. The speaker will be introduced at 8:00 pm.

| Date - 2001 | Topic | Speaker |
|--------------|--|---------------|
| 14 August | Spineless Wonders - an Introduction to the Importance of Invertebrates | Dr Alan Yuen |
| 11 September | ***Annual General Meeting*** | |
| 9 October | Grevillea Hunting Around Australia | Neil Marriott |
| 13 November | What has been achieved in Waterways Management in the NC Region | Greg Peters |
| 11 December | Christmas Dinner | |

In readiness for the Annual General Meeting, nominations for office bearers are called for now. Nominations are due in August. There are many vacancies for the executive, committees and sub-committees which need to be filled with eager volunteers. Please consult the inside front page for the types of positions available and consider standing for one of them.

Nomination Form:

I,.....nominate

.....

for the position of

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Seconded by.....

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday, August 14 7.30pm

Alan Yuen from the Australian Museum will talk about 'Spineless Wonders - an Introduction to the Importance of Invertebrates'

Wednesday, September 11

A workshop will be conducted prior to the AGM.

'A closer look at wattles' will start at **7.00pm**
Some wattles will be provided. To increase variety and allow better comparisons between species B.Y.O wattle.

The AGM will start at **8.00pm**.

All members are encouraged to come.

The Workshop in November will deal with Plant Names - Latin Roots, BFNC Indigenous Garden, conducted by BFNC botanists.

Fauna Study Group

Wednesday, August 28 7.30pm
(6.00pm if attending/sharing the BBQ)

Frogs by Night - on location at Kangaroo Flat Botanical Garden (see separate article page 3)

Wednesday, September 25 A.G.M.
- topic of interest to be announced.

Bird Observers Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm. Next meetings are on:

Wednesday, August 7 7.30pm
Topic; Keeping records, a subject inspired by Ern Perkins' presentation 'Monitoring Changes in Box-Ironbark Forests'.

Wednesday, September 4 7.30pm
Topic: Mystery birds - seldom seen, but constantly heard in Spring.

Excursions

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th August

Swift Parrot Survey
Contact: Matthew Comer
(ph 5432 2380 for details)

Saturday 24th August

Spring Gully Reservoir
Meet: 9.00am Shakespeare Street gate
Contact: Glenise Moors
(ph 5439 6254 for details)

October Excursion (date to be announced)

Field trip - Grassland Birds
Contact: Anne Bridley 5449 3479.

Future Excursion

Could people interested in a day excursion to Healesville Sanctuary (for a behind-the-scenes tour) please contact Maurie Lewis (0407 427179) or Bill Holsworth (5443 4063)

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture

(see page 7 for details)
Friday 6th September, 8pm
Ballarat Horticultural Centre, corner Gillies and Gregory Streets, Ballarat.
Admission is free and supper will be provided.

You are invited to an information evening with **Box-Ironbark Friends** at Senior Citizens Golden Square Clubrooms old High Street, Golden Square on **Thursday, 22nd August 2002 at 7pm**

Jason Doyle, VPNA, will show slides and talk about the campaign to protect the box-Ironbark forests.

Stuart Fraser, BDEC, will talk about the un-protected Bendigo forests.
Supper will be provided.

VNPA Bushwalking and Activities Program, Saturday August 31
KAMAROOKA STATE PARK (limit 15)
GRADE: Medium, 16 km
LEADER: Keith Stockwell 5480 9254
stocky@echuca.net.au>stocky@echuca.net.au
Circuit walk through flowering wattles, mallee, box and melaleuca, using a recently cut track through thick scrub and a dry creek bed.