

FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK
NEWSLETTER



Native orchids

Exquisite jewels of the wild

There are more than 100 species of local orchids found in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. A great many of them are found along roadsides and in reserves in the Hoddles Creek area in Spring and Summer, enjoying the wide range of different environments and vegetation communities. But without the knowledge of how to look for them, you might easily walk right past these tiny gems of the plant world.

Native orchids come in a startling array of shapes and colours, often captured in their names – Sun Orchids, Bird Orchids, Elbow Orchids, Hyacinth Orchids, Onion Orchids, Greenhoods, Spider Orchids, Tongue Orchids and Pink Fingers – and they have fascinating relationships with other plants, insects and fire.

To provide you with a glimpse into this special world of shape and colour, Friends of Hoddles Creek is hosting an evening of orchid appreciation, where orchid enthusiast Emily Noble will share her love of orchids, with highlights from her vast collection of exquisite images (details below).

Emily worked in the Bushlands section of Yarra Ranges Council and is involved with the Field Naturalists Club, currently as secretary of the Ballarat Club. Emily's one hour illustrated talk will be followed by opportunities for questions and refreshments.

Right: just a few of the remarkable native orchids that can be found in bushland reserves in Victoria



Here's something you definitely shouldn't miss.

FOHC are hosting an illustrated talk by orchid enthusiast Emily Noble.

When: 7 pm, Monday October 26, 2015

Where: Hoddles Creek Primary School, Gembrook Road, Hoddles Creek

Kurth Kiln revegetation day

There is an old conundrum that goes like this: 'If one man can build a wall in 10 hours, then 60 men should be able to complete the same job in 10 minutes'. Of course, in real life it doesn't work like that – some parts of the job need to be done before others, the 60 men get in each other's way and it still takes hours to build the wall.

But this limitation doesn't apply to the kids of Hoddles Creek Primary School. During a day of revegetation in Kurth Kiln Regional Park, they demonstrated that 33 of them could plant 30 plants in 10 minutes in an area only a few metres by a few metres. Then they moved on to the next site – 70 plants in under 20 minutes! Holes were dug, plants selected, planted, guarded, staked and watered, in what one spectator described as 'organised chaos'.

The revegetation was arranged by the Friends of Kurth Kiln and carried out in the Scout Loop Campground in the western section of the Park, not far from the Kiln. After some tree felling and bulldozing to increase the capacity and safety of the camping area, and the installation of new fireplaces and picnic tables, it was looking a bit bare and battered.

Parks Victoria gave some safety advice. Henriette suggested that the planters work in pairs – one to dig, the other to plant, then swap for the next plant. Hoddles Creek adopted a 'buddy' system with the youngest children being paired with an older student – since the whole school was there, some of the planters were quite small! Students were divided into groups, each group moving off to one of the planting sites Henriette had prepared earlier.

At school earlier in the week, each student had decorated a tree guard and these were generally used to protect the first plantings of the day.

Food for everyone

At one site, the planters were watched closely by a pair of yellow robins which hung on nearby trees, keeping an eye out for what might be dug up. Every now and then they would swoop down to claim a snack, sometimes within a metre of the diggers. Once a few plants were in, staked and guarded, the robins found it even more convenient to perch on a stake while waiting for lunch.

Lunch for the workers was a sausage or two (or three or



100 students get to work

Thirty-three students from Hoddles Creek (everyone who was at school that day) and sixty-three Grade Threes and Fours from Cockatoo lent a hand to replant areas not suitable for camping – buffers between campsites, boggy spots and odd corners. **Between them, more than 1,000 seedlings of species which grow naturally in the area were planted.**

As the students arrived, Henriette of Friends of Kurth Kiln demonstrated the planting process, and ranger Rozz from

four, but I'm sure those boys worked extra hard) in bread, back at the Kiln. Friends of Kurth Kiln had been cooking up a storm – more than 250 sausages were ready for the hungry, but very well-mannered, hordes.

After lunch, the schools were presented with certificates of appreciation, then park ranger Rozz organised a running-around game, with parts for poachers, rangers, foxes, native animals, chain saws and trees (the trees weren't supposed to run around).

The bus came to pick up the Cockatoo kids after lunch, but for Hoddles Creek, it was back to planting. Of the 12 sites

prepared, there were still 3 or 4 to be done and now they wished to refine the process. Rather than splitting up into a group for each site, the whole school would plant together. Their 'blitz' approach worked amazingly well and allowed the job to be completed.

Hoddles Creek's performance was impressive and a credit to the school. Being country kids accustomed to outdoors and dirt was part of it, but the small size of the school and a spirit of care and cooperation fostered by the teachers were also factors in a day's work, which was not just harmonious, but productive beyond expectations.

History and nature combine at Kurth Kiln

If you're not familiar with Kurth Kiln Regional Park, it's well worth a visit. Situated on Gembrook Road, the Kiln and associated historical displays are unique and there are some lovely picnic spots.

There are walks along Tomahawk Creek upstream (the Thornton Track) and downstream (Tomahawk Track) from the Kiln. The upstream walk starts on the other side of the creek from the Kiln and returns via the Scout Loop Track, past the new plantings. There may even be a member of your family who would like to show you the tree guard that was their particular work of art.



Spring is for the birds

Springtime sees a burst of activity in the bird population of Hoddles Creek (or is it just that it's warm enough for us to go outside?). As the temperature rises, water containers and bird baths provide a welcome drinking and bathing spot. However, don't forget to add a suitable perch (a rock or brick, or a large stick) – this will also provide a means of escape for smaller birds.

Here are two of our spring favourites.

Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*)

This is a moderately common bird in our region of Victoria. It belongs to the genus *Eopsaltria* which translates as 'dawn-harper'. Appropriately, they are among the first birds to be heard at dawn and it's surprising to find a small bird with such a big voice. The voice includes a variety of high bell-like piping, a repeated "chop chop" and some scolding notes.

This small bird is inquisitive, sociable and friendly it seems, but for a very good reason, that being food! Yellow Robins are known to follow the farmer or gardener around, as any form of digging usually spells food, with their main diet consisting of insects from vegetation and the ground.

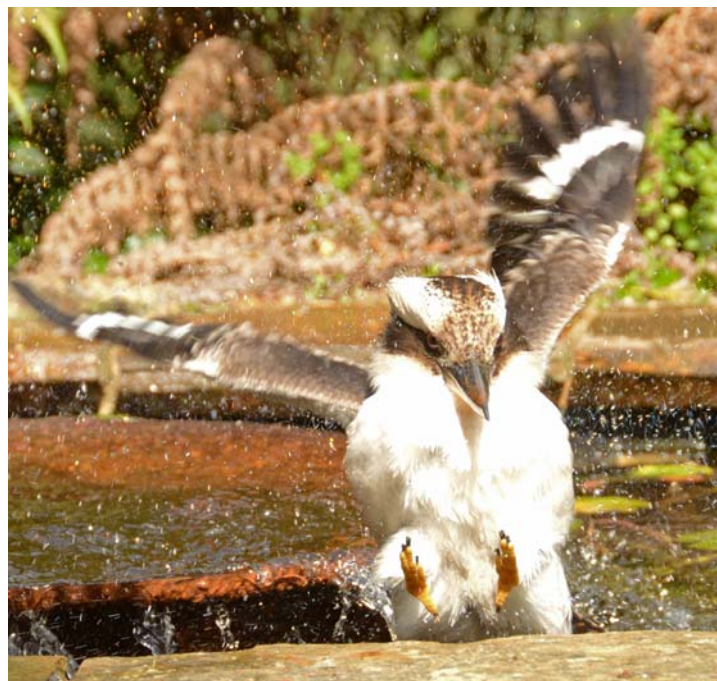


Superb Fairy Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*)

In 2013, this little bird was voted Australia's favourite according to a national poll of 8,000 residents conducted by Birdlife Australia and it's easy to see why. The Superb Fairy Wren, or Blue Wren, is frequently found in parks and gardens throughout Victoria.

The more striking male bird is easily recognisable from his blue plumage, while his female counterpart – commonly referred to as the Jenny Wren – has a dusky brown plumage that is comparatively drab. While the coloured males are often seen with an apparent "harem" of females, a proportion are probably young males that have not yet developed their breeding (blue) plumage. This is attained after one year, with the blue tail of the non-breeding male visible after six months of age.

Superb Fairy Wrens feed on insects and other small arthropods caught mostly on the ground or from low bushes. Feeding takes place in small social groups in what sometimes appears as a small army of birds hopping around on the ground. To advertise, defend territory and keep close together, both sexes of the Superb fairy-wren have a song comprising of loud, rapid notes ending in a trill.



Larger birds, such as this kookaburra, have no problems taking off from the surface of a birdbath. However, smaller birds will be grateful for a branch, rock, or stick placed in the bath to provide a launching site.

Like to join FOHC?

The Friends of Hoddles Creek are always on the lookout for new members to add new ideas, new helpers and new friends to our group. If you'd like to join, simply contact us with your name, address and phone or email details. You can mail these to FOHC, PO Box 298, Yarra Junction, Vic 3797, or email us at friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com.

See more at our new website (www.friendsofhoddlescreek.com) or on Facebook – just search 'Friends of Hoddles Creek' or 'FOHC'.

