

FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK NEWSLETTER

Animals are pedestrians, too

A message from the President

Travelling around Hoddles Creek – especially along Lusatia Park Road and the Launching Place-Gembrook Road – you can't help but notice the results of the uneven battle between our native animals and cars and trucks. Several of the grey kangaroos that provide a wonderful picture in the paddocks in the early morning and evening have not made it across the road. Wombats are regular victims on all our roads, as are parrots, kookaburras and other native birds.

Why the carnage? One clear reason is speed. While the maze of different speed zones on our main roads doesn't help, the simple solution is to slow down. The TAC message about slowing down to avoid human pedestrians applies just the same in avoiding collisions with animals. It is not reasonable behaviour to consider animals 'expendable' in our desire to get there faster.

The magic of Hoddles Creek depends on a balance between the human and animal inhabitants. Our time is not worth their lives, so please slow down and keep your eyes peeled, especially at night and in the early morning – even if it's just to save on the costs of panel beating. And if you do hit a bird or animal – stop and see what you can do to help. Don't just drive on; this is your problem.

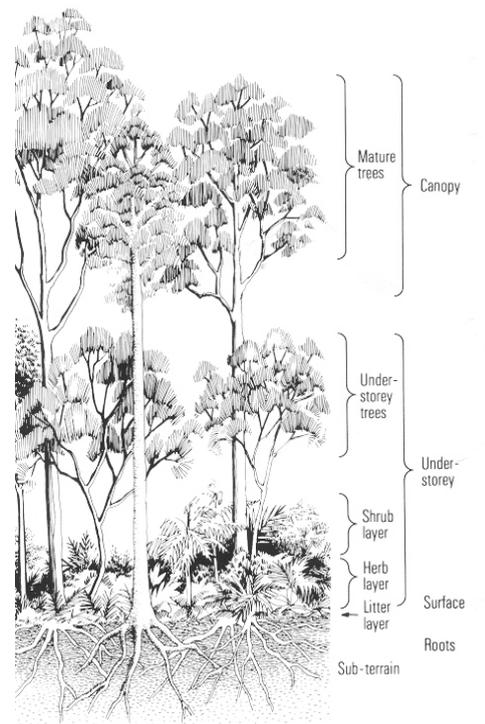
Peter Mauger

If you do accidentally injure an animal or bird, or come across an injured animal, wildlife assistance is available by ringing 0417 380 687.

Thanks again to Jill the postie for her help in delivering the FOHC Newsletter.

The importance of understorey

The right trees in the right places provide many benefits. But trees are only part of the rural landscape. Beneath the tree canopy there is likely to be a mixture of shrubs, tree seedlings, low trees, grasses, herbs, vines, ferns and mosses. These plants, together with the decomposing litter, make up the understorey.



Hoddles Creek is noted for its rich diversity of plant species and, in a healthy plant community, the understorey often has most of the diversity. For example, one hectare of natural woodland may contain three or four tree species, but perhaps 30 or more understorey species.

Understorey species take many different forms and contribute greatly to the region's ecology yet, this rich diversity of species is often unnoticed. Small animals and birds need undergrowth as well as trees for shelter, feeding, nesting and protection from predators. Many eat large numbers of insects and may reduce a landowner's need to spend money controlling certain pests. (continued overleaf)



Planting for fire safety

Right now, fire safety might not be at the top of your list of priorities, but deciding what plants to grow near your home can play an important part in managing fire risk. Here are some guidelines to consider:

- Don't place trees or shrubs close to or touching your house
- Use hard surfaces, such as gravel or paving next to your house, especially to the north and west
- Use well watered low-flammability ground covers near your house
- Develop a radiant heat shield (stone wall, earth mound or fire-retardant hedge) on the north side of your house
- Place a vegetable garden, pool or other safe surface between your house and the expected fire direction

Many indigenous and native species have lower flammability and can form part of a fire-smart garden. Suitable species include:

Indigenous

- Acacia melanoxylon (Blackwood)
- Acacia myrtifolia (Myrtle Wattle)
- Banksia spinulosa (Hairpin Banksia)
- Correa reflexa (Common Correa)
- Dianella tasmanica (Tasman Flax Lily)
- Lomandra longifolia (Spiny-headed Mat Rush)
- Olearia argophylla (Musk Daisy Bush)
- Pandorea pandorana (Wonga Vine)
- Pomaderris aspera (Hazel Pomaderris)
- Solanum aviculare (Kangaroo Apple)
- Spyridium parvifolium (Dusty Miller)
- Viola hederacea (Native Violet)

Native

- Correa alba (White Correa)
- Correa baeuerlenii (Chef's Cap Correa)
- Eriostemon myoporoides (Long-leaf Wax Flower)
- Eucalyptus maculata (Spotted Gum)
- Myoporum parvifolium (Creeping Boobialla)



The importance of understorey

(cont'd from front page)

Litter is not rubbish

Lying above the top soil is a layer of organic debris from plants and animals known as litter. It consists mainly of leaves, twigs, fallen branches, animal bodies and droppings. Decomposing litter is important in soil formation. Actions of bacteria, fungi, animals and weather break the litter down into its chemical components and release a variety of minerals to the top soil. Minerals released from this litter are essential nutrients for plants.

Removal of this litter is devastating to wildlife, the understorey and the

trees. The serious tree decline in rural Australia has been widely publicised but in many areas, understorey species are disappearing at an even faster rate.

Like so much in nature, it's very much a 'You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' situation. They all need each other in order to survive. [Information sourced from Greening Australia.]

Control of feral cats

Feral cats and foxes are a serious threat to native wildlife. Cat traps are available, on loan and free of charge, from Greg Mitchell at DNRE, Symes Road, Woori Yallock (5964 7088).

How to join FOHC or get more information

It's easy. Just complete your details in the space provided below and post to the address shown on the front of the newsletter. Meetings are held bi-monthly and there is no joining fee. We maintain a watching brief over developmental projects and seek to ensure that regulations related to tree clearing, maintenance of wild life corridors, water usage from local waterways and use of chemical sprays are adhered to. We play a 'hands on' role in weed clearing, rubbish removal, regeneration and maintenance of bushland areas, especially along waterways. Apart from work, we also have luncheons and organise other fun activities. There is no age restriction, all that is required is an interest in helping to maintain the special environmental aspects of Hoddles Creek – your home.

COMPETITION WINNER

Well done to all those who entered our Autumn competition. The winner of Jeffrey Hodges' *Natural Gardening in Australia* was Joy Bellizia. Congratulations! And to all those who are curious, the correct answers were KANGAROO, POSSUM, PLATYPUS and BANKSIA. Look out for our next competition in the Spring Edition of the Newsletter.

Name:.....

Address:

Phone:

Email:

I'd like to join Friends of Hoddles Creek.

I'd like more information. Please ring me.

Thanks to Melbourne Water for the grant for this newsletter.