

Rare and vulnerable: Hoddles Creek Education Area deserves protection

As advertised in our last newsletter, botanist Dr Graeme Lorimer presented key findings from his Vegetation Assessment and Mapping Project to a standing room only meeting at the Hoddles Creek Primary School. Dr Lorimer has extended his previous meticulous work in the Hoddles Creek Education Area (HCEA) by surveying the gully next to Prices's Road and an area on the Reserve's western edge. The following are highlights from his presentation.

Rainforest in the HCEA

Although not completely typical of Victorian rainforest (no Myrtle Beech or Southern Sassafras), a 40 metre band of vegetation along the creek next to Prices Rd

fern (*Todea barbara*). The tree-ferns support a range of epiphytic fern species, as well as the Veined Helmet Orchid (*Corybas diemenicus*) and many mosses and liverworts. Other understory shrubs found were native mulberry (*Hedycarya angustifolia*) and Tallow Wood (*Pittosporum bicolor*).

The ground flora is dominated by the Hard Water-Fern (*Blechnum wattsii*) and the Ray Water-fern (*Blechnum fluviatile*). Vines such as the Twining Silkpod (*Parsonia brownii*), Wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*) and the Toothed Clematis (*Clematis aristata*) are also common.

Dr Lorimer's surveys have identified a total of 327 plant species, of which 70 (59 indigenous and 11 introduced) had not been previously recorded in the HCEA.



Dr Lorimer records the position of a significant find in the Hoddles Creek Education Area

While most were common, several species are regionally rare (Gunns Willow Herb - *Epilobium gunnianum*, Swamp Lily - *Ottelia ovalifolia* and Hill Xanthosia - *Xanthosia tridentata*), or rare throughout Victoria (Jungle Bristle-fern - *Cephalomanes caudatum* and Oval Fork-fern - *Tmesipteris ovata*). The Long pink-bells (*Tetratheca*

best fits the description of Cool Temperate Rainforest. As such, it comes under the Department of Sustainability and Environment's classification as 'endangered' (the highest level of threat). The canopy has almost no eucalypts, but is instead dominated by native dogwood (*Pomaderris aspera*) and blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*).

The understory is dominated by tree-ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica* and *Cyathea australis*), as well as dense patches of King

stenocarpa) is a globally rare species, being rare in Victoria, the only place in the world that it exists.

Fire risk in the HCEA

As is normal for rainforests (but unlike any other vegetation in the Hoddles Creek Education Area), many plant species in the gully beside Prices Rd have little or no capacity to recover or recolonise following fire. This is particularly true of the rare Jungle Bristle-fern and the Oval Fork-fern, as well as the other filmy-ferns.



FOHC Newsletter is also on line at www.provender.com.au/fohc.

Thanks to Yarra Ranges Council for generously printing the Newsletter.

Rare and vulnerable

(continued from page 1)

The presence of these species indicates that the site has probably escaped fire for centuries. The Department of Sustainability & Environment's mapping of fire history suggests that it burned in 1992, but the scale of the mapping is too coarse to capture the details of what has happened in the creek channel.

Based on DSE maps, the 1992 fire was a prescribed burn and a 2005/6 prescribed burn also went very close to the area, if not into it. The department includes the gully within a 'fuel management zone' called 'broad acre fuel reduced mosaic', indicating that the area generally will be burnt in a mosaic pattern over time.

Dr Lorimer's findings clearly show that the vegetation in the gully beside Prices Rd is highly significant and very sensitive to fire. In the section of his report "Implications for Management", Dr Lorimer states that it is of very high importance that the gully beside Prices Rd should not be subject to prescribed burning and should be a focus of protection in the event of a bushfire. One aspect of such protection could be to change the fuel management zoning to 'Prescribed Burning Exclusion Zone'. The FOHC strongly supports this recommendation.

Both the original report and the updated report are available on the FOHC website (www.provender.com.au/fohc).

At right: the rare Long Pink-bells (upper) and Jungle Bristle-fern (lower) found in the HCEA.



Parrot Picassos

A big thank you to everyone who entered the King Parrot colouring competition in our last Newsletter. Prizes were presented at the Hoddles Creek Primary School assembly in March and the prizewinning entry from one of our young artists is shown at the left.

The 20 entrants ranged in age from a 3 year old budding Picasso to over 30's in the adult section and the judges were faced with some tough decisions.

The primary school age winners were Charlie, aged 6 years, who received a cricket set donated by Launch Hardware and Caitlyn, also aged 6 years, who received a "Lego" house set donated by Free Choice Stores in Yarra Junction. Leanne was the adult winner with a \$20 gift voucher donated by Country Gardeners Nursery and Shelley was the teenage winner, with a \$20 gift voucher donated by Yarra Junction Pharmacy.

Congratulations to the winners and thanks again to our local businesses for supporting us with their generous donations.

Bring birds to your garden

One of the great pleasures of a garden is watching the birds that come to feed. You can attract many native birds by providing clean water and the right choice of plants to provide fruits, berries and pollen. When providing water, make sure that it is changed regularly and use shallow bowls, preferably raised up on a log or rock to protect smaller birds from predators. Trees and shrubs make nesting places for birds and nest boxes can provide a safe haven for many of our bird species whose usual nest sites have been destroyed by burning and logging.

We've put together a few suggestions for attracting different species of birds to your garden. You can also talk to your local nursery about good plants to use.

Blue wren – these small birds are insect eaters, who will forage in many low shrubs.

New Holland Honeyeater – feeds on insects and nectar. Ideal plants include kangaroo paws, banksias, grevilleas, correas and heath (Epacris).

Eastern Spinebill – this beautiful bird feeds on nectar, insects and berries. Heath (Epacris), correa and grevillea species are all ideal food sources.

Parrots and lorikeets – King parrots, crimson rosellas and rainbow lorikeets enjoy a mix of seeds, fruit, berries and nectar. They will feed on larger Eucalypts (E. Leucoxydon, sideroxydon and ficifolia), as well as larger grevilleas, hakeas and tree acacias. Crimson rosellas also enjoy banksias (spinulosa, marginata and serrata).

Wattlebirds – these handsome birds eat insects, nectar and fruit. They will be attracted by grevilleas, banksias and trees such as Eucalyptus leucoxydon.

We'd love to hear any of your hints for bringing these or other birds to your garden. Please write to us at Friends of Hoddles Creek, PO Box 298, Yarra Junction 3797, or email to friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com.



Grevillea 'Superb', a great bird attracting choice

Does anyone care about speed limits on Gembrook Road?

In our last Newsletter, we raised concerns about the bewildering number of speed limits on Gembrook Road and the unsuitability of the 100 km/h limit that applied to several sections between Warburton Highway and Lusatia Park Road and asked for your opinions. **To our surprise, we received only two responses to this item!** We would be happy to take up this issue with VicRoads, but we

need to know what the Hoddles Creek community thinks about the issue. Do you support a change to a maximum speed limit to 80 km/h or do you think the current limits are fine and safe? Without community involvement, nothing is likely to change. Please write to us at FOHC, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, 3797, or email us at friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com to let us know.



Hoddles Creek Primary School goes outdoors



Bob Finch and Men's Shed OHS Manager Rob Barber with a group of students in the outdoor classroom

Following on from an early Friends of Hoddles Creek initiative to establish a native plant revegetation program at the school (helped by teachers, students and parents, with the generous supply of plants, mulch and earthmoving services), federal government funds supplied as a part of the schools development program were used to construct an outdoor classroom on the site in 2011.

The latest phase of the program has involved construction of new tables and benches for the classroom. Using funds supplied by the RACV, FOHC vice-president Peter Mauger approached

vice-president of the Yarra Junction Men's Shed Bob Finch, to see whether members would be interested in construction. Member Peter Cesar took up the challenge and the necessary timber was supplied by Bowerbird timber in Millgrove.

The beautifully constructed tables and benches are now in place, having been handed over to delighted teachers and pupils in May. It's great to see this community project bring together so many local groups and individuals with such a great result. Well done to everyone concerned.



Peter Mauger and Bob Finch try out the new furniture in the outdoor classroom

Come on and join FOHC

The Friends of Hoddles Creek group is looking for new members. FOHC was formed after a meeting of Land for Wildlife members in the area. We keep an eye on local development projects, aim to increase awareness of general environmental issues, especially those of particular interest to Hoddles Creek, and we have several 'hands on' projects.

Membership of FOHC has no age limits; all that is required is an interest in helping to maintain the special environmental aspects of Hoddles Creek – your home. If you would like to join, or if you would like more information about the group, simply complete the details in the box and send to FOHC, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, Vic 3797, or email us at friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Phone:

Email:

I'd like to join Friends of Hoddles Creek.

I'd like more information.