

FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK
NEWSLETTER



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

Thanks to Yarra Ranges Council for their generous printing of the Newsletter.

Echidnas keep their cool

Summer is with us once again and the short-beaked echidna, *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, has now well and truly emerged from its winter torpor and hibernation, possibly mated and a female may be carrying a puggle (young echidna) in its pouch.

Echidnas are monotremes – egg laying mammals – and 21 to 28 days after mating, the female lays a single rubbery skinned egg into her pouch, where it hatches around 10 days later into a puggle. The puggle suckles on milk secreted from

believed to be fatal), echidnas avoid extremes in weather and are generally seen in the early morning or late evening during the summer months, feeding on their diet of ants and termites (which can provide the echidna not only the nutrition it requires, but much of its water requirements as well).

Echidnas have an acute sense of smell, with sensors in the tip of their snouts used to detect food. They amble about on strong, stout limbs, using their strong claws to pull apart nests and rotting logs in search of food.



An roving echidna cools off in its own backyard plunge pool

special patches of skin in the pouch and is generally left in the burrow while its mother seeks out food. The young echidna is weaned at around 6 months, when it leaves the burrow to venture out into the world on its own.

Echidnas are found throughout Victoria – in fact they are the most widespread native animal in Australia. They are usually found in open heathland, forests, woodlands, scrublands and grasslands and, if you live in the bush, possibly in your backyard.

In adverse weather conditions they shelter under bushes or burrow into the soil. With a body temperature between 30°C and 32°C (body temperatures above 34°C are

Tongue tied

The echidna's tongue is its sole means of catching prey and it can protrude 18cm outside the snout. *Tachyglossus* translates as "rapid tongue" and measurements have shown it can move in and out of the snout up to 100 times a minute.

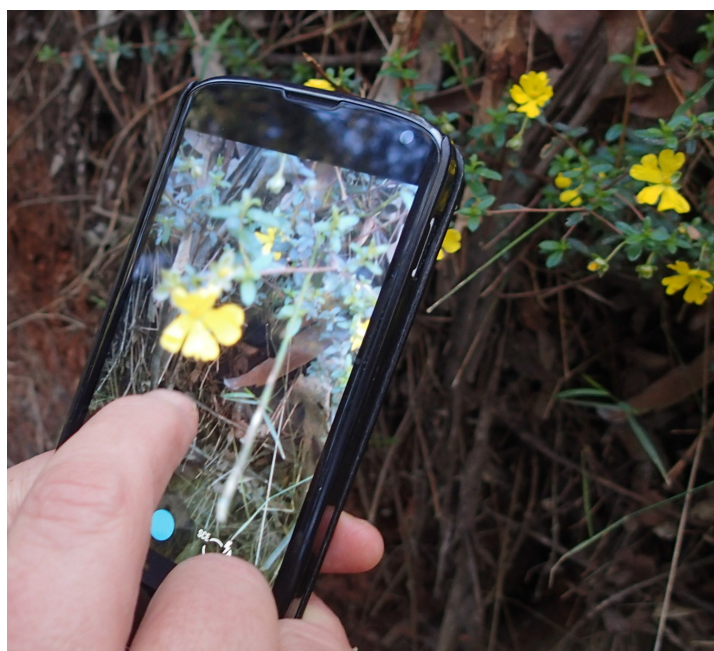
On hot summer days, echidnas are known to seek out fresh water and even enjoy a bath. If you have echidnas around your home, consider placing a large bowl of water at ground level in a secluded shady spot and you may have regular visitors.

Find us on Facebook and view our video of an echidna keeping cool.

sustainably Living in the bush

An abundance of natural beauty and biodiversity

Living in contact with the rich beauty and diversity of the bush is the primary reason many of us have chosen to live in the Hoddles Creek area. From late winter through to summer there is a wondrous succession of flowers – from the profusion of wattles, the hosts of hairpin banksias, through to the sublime flowering of clematis, wonga vine, love creeper and apple berry that wend their way up through the understory. From towering mountain ash forests, through fern gullies reminiscent of ancient Gondwanan rainforest landscapes, to open forest bushland dominated by native grass understory, there is beauty everywhere.



Many native animals inhabit this ancient, forested landscape. Wallabies secretively darting through the understory, wombats grumpily tolerating our intrusion into their domain and echidnas amiably ambling along in search ant nests to disinter.

Yellow Bellied gliders emerge from their protective tree hollows, sounding their witchy chuckle as they glide off into the night. Primordial goanna lizards roam the landscape stealing a meal or two (including baby rabbits!), before returning to their protective tree hollows. Giant Yellow Tailed Black cockatoos raucously wing their way through the forest in search of witchetty grubs and Banksia cones (you can believe that birds are living dinosaurs in our midst). Vivid flashes of colour signal king parrots and rosellas darting through the forest or arriving at our homes demanding a free meal and the whimsical and melodious mimicry of lyrebirds echo across misty winter mornings.

Botanical reports commissioned by FOHC on the Hoddles Creek Education Area and the Hoddles Creek Reserve (both reports available on our website) have scientifically demonstrated the rich natural biodiversity of this region. These surveys have found rare and intriguing plant species along the length of Hoddles Creek – not the least of which is the remnant Gondwanan rainforest plant, Jungle Bristle Fern (pictures on our facebook page).

Challenges of living in the bush

There are times when it is easy to forget the luminous beauty of the bush and the wonder of its native inhabitants. As the harsh summer sun bleaches out the rich colours, we often begin to see the bush more as potential fuel for fire. Fear of wildfire comes to dominate our senses. There are times when the bush just seems too close – when storms bring branches down near our houses,



when storms bring branches down near our houses, when wombats chew through our just ripe crop of corn, or possums eat our apples and deer ringbark our fruit trees. There are the very real issues of lack of local employment opportunities, long and expensive commutes downtown and poor telecommunications (what's broadband?).

And it's getting harder and harder to ignore that huge 'elephant in the room' – climate change. Climate scientists are ringing an increasingly loud bell of warning that we are on track for major climatic disruption. How do we live in the bush with the threat of 'catastrophic fire'?



A community sustainably living with the bush

Human beings are not 'apart from nature'. Friends of Hoddles Creek believe that we can live sustainably alongside and amongst the bush and its native inhabitants. We can appreciate and protect its natural beauty and diversity and at the same time create a strong and resilient sustainable local economy.

There are many people in our community who have made creative responses to the opportunities and challenges of living in the bush. We believe that we should share these sustainable living stories to create a stronger community

with a greater respect and engagement with its natural environment.

So, we are asking you to share your 'sustainable bush living' stories with us. How do you engage with the natural environment?



Tell us *your* sustainable bush living stories

What discoveries have you made? What unique wildlife have you observed? What interesting behaviours have you seen? How have you responded to the challenges to living in the bush? How have you balanced stewardship of your bush property with the need to protect yourself from bushfire? What are your thoughts on how we should be responding to climate change? **We would love to hear your stories and we are sure that other residents of Hoddles Creek would too.** You can email us at friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com, or mail us at PO Box 298, Yarra Junction Vic 3797 (if you don't want your comments to be identified, that's fine too - just tell us). We will collate your stories and place them on our website and Facebook pages. And we'll publish extracts in our future newsletters.

Learn to love our wombats: a post script

After the recent talk on wombats and the effect/treatment of mange by Pamela Wiencke at Hoddles Creek Primary School, several residents in the Hoddles Creek area and neighbouring areas have reported sightings of wombats, possibly infested with mange, to **Mange Management**.

The properties involved are being investigated, with infra red/motion activated cameras. While there do appear to be some 'hotspots' of mange, we are also getting many photos of healthy animals.

A wombat badly affected by mange has been sighted in grounds of Hoddles Creek Primary School by the Principal. The schoolgrounds and surrounds were investigated, but we were unable to establish a burrow regularly used by this wombat. Principal John McKelvie has been supplied with Cydectin and a scoop and pole to treat the wombat, if he spots it again. The area will be checked again soon. Remember, mange can be treated effectively and the wombat restored to good health.



A healthy young wombat snapped recently with an infra red/motion activated camera

Reminder: Kits for treating wombats infested with mange can be picked up from local vets and Mange Management volunteers, who will also provide advice and support.

Come on and join FOHC

The Friends of Hoddles Creek are always on the lookout for new members. To join, just 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 website (www.provender.com.au/fohc) or on Facebook – just search 'Friends of Hoddles Creek' or 'FOHC'.



Preserving your bush property for future generations

The Hoddles Creek area has significant intact bushland with high natural biodiversity and good 'connectivity' across the broader landscape. But there are increasing pressures on this habitat with its unique flora and fauna, including incremental clearing, too frequent burning (often resulting in the loss of hollow bearing trees), feral animals and the increasing impacts of climate change.

Many of us are lucky enough to own properties with remnant bush and wonder if new owners or future generations will feel as connected to the natural landscape and its occupants as we do. **Placing a Conservation Covenant on your property will ensure that its environmental values are protected 'in perpetuity'.**

A conservation covenant is a legally binding covenant attached to the property title that defines the land use of part of the property in question. Usually remnant bushland is mapped as 'bushland protection zone' and other activities as 'domestic zone', which makes allowance for existing activities including residential housing, hobby farming, etc. The conservation covenant is negotiated between the land owner and Trust for Nature.

The process of establishing a conservation covenant is undertaken by Trust for Nature, is relatively simple and usually will not cost you anything. You will be surprised how much you learn about your property through the flora and fauna surveys and where your property fits in terms of the broader landscape habitat connectivity.

There are many potential benefits to taking out a conservation covenant on your land, including:

- Bush protection 'in perpetuity'
- Up to 2/3 reduction in council rates
- Increased property value with Victoria wide marketing through the TFN magazine and website
- Participation in environmental/ carbon offsets programs
- Linking up to sustainable business opportunities (e.g., bed and breakfast, tourism, local honey production)
- Simply feeling good knowing that you are 'doing your bit' to preserve biodiversity and help combat global warming (it has been demonstrated that our eucalypt forests 'sequester' more carbon than almost any other forest on the planet).

For more information contact Ben Cullen the regional coordinator for Trust for Nature on 0407 044 821 or visit the TFN website: <http://www.trustfornature.org.au/>

You can also speak with members of FOHC who have taken out conservation covenants by email: friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com or contact Keith Jesse on 0490 003 231.