

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.

Yellingbo Conservation Area: State Government accepts expansion plans

In 2011 the Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was requested to investigate public land in the Yellingbo area. Their investigation focussed on the biodiversity and ecological values in the area and made recommendations to conserve and enhance these values. Notice of this investigation, published in November 2011, received more than 70 submissions. Draft proposals were published in December 2012, resulting in a further 79 submissions, including one from Friends of Hoddles Creek.

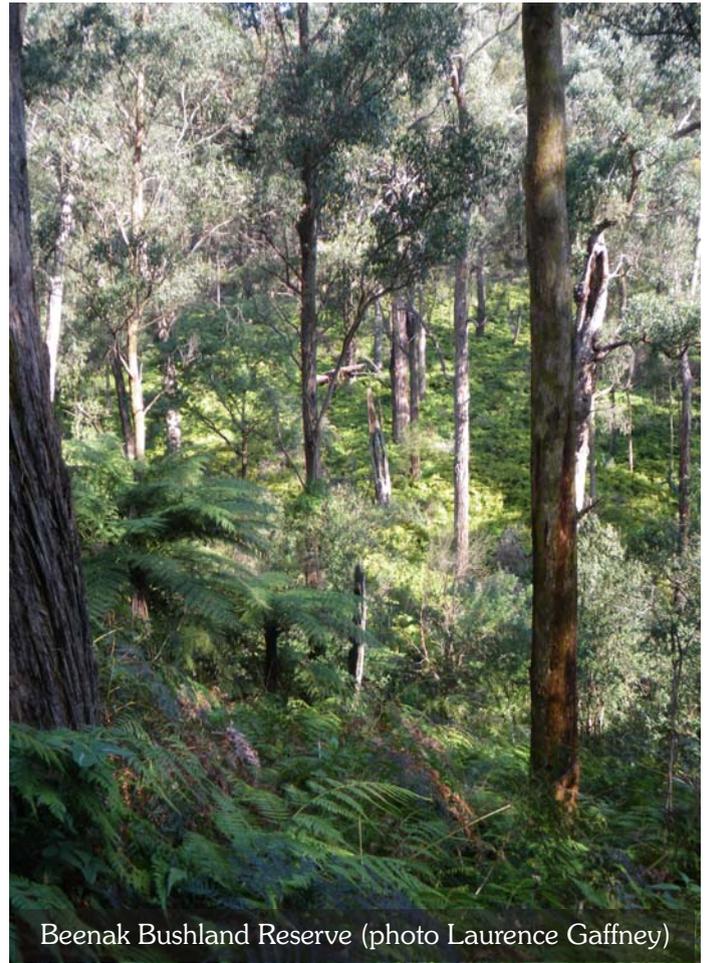
When the final report was released 7 August 2013, we were pleased by both the response to submissions and by the level of protection that would be afforded to sensitive areas of our local environment.

The Victorian Government Response to the VEAC *Yellingbo Investigation* was tabled in Parliament and released on March 11, 2014. The government's response supports all of VEAC's recommendations in full or in principle, apart from the implicit recommendation to name the proposed new area the *State Emblems Conservation Area*. This has been dropped in favour of *Yellingbo Conservation Area*. Some of us feel that this name change is a pity, as the Hoddles Creek sections are really some distance from Yellingbo. However, the important thing is that protection will be afforded.

The existing Hoddles Creek Education Area, Beenak Bushland Reserve, and the Stream Frontage Reserves of the Sheep Station, Upper Hoddles & Wet Lead creeks are to become a part of this Yellingbo Conservation Area.

The Government has decided that Parks Victoria (the current land manager of much of the public land in the area already) will

manage the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area. Additionally, a coordinating body will be established including representatives from interested community organisations, as well as public land managers, waterway managers and local government.



Beenak Bushland Reserve (photo Laurence Gaffney)

The majority of the changes to public land use that will now take place as a result of the Government response occur in the Hoddles Creek area, with the Hoddles Creek Education Area, the Beenak Bushland Reserve and the Stream Frontage Reserves of the Upper Hoddles & Wet Lead Creeks being changed to Nature Conservation Reserves, in recognition of their strategic importance and high conservation significance.

Friends of Hoddles Creek believe that these changes will provide a more coordinated approach leading to improved management of public land and habitat conservation outcomes in this area.

Three little birds

Our Local Songster

The **Golden Whistler** (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) is one of the best-known and distinctive birds of eastern and southern Australia. In this area they are most commonly seen in summer and will visit gardens to feed on insects and then perch in trees to sing.

The male bird's plumage is distinctive and stunning, with his black, white, gold and olive plumage. The female is dull in comparison, mainly a brownish-grey, with some streaks of grey-buff, or even white. She may have an olive tinge through her colouring. Both are about 17cm in size.

The bird in our photograph was spotted during one of our



walks in the forest of what we commonly refer to as the G55 of Kurth Kiln Regional Park, whilst conducting our hollow tree survey in February. It is clearly a male, and from the size and ruffled feathers it is possibly a young bird.

Birds breed between September – January, the nest being a small cup of rootlets, plant stems, grass and slender leaves, lined with finer grasses. It is usually placed upright in a fork or tall shrub. A pair usually produces two, sometimes three eggs.

The song is melodious and often as stunning as the male's colours. It can be quite long and end with a whip crack. Often heard are loud, persistent, clear whistling notes, also a low plaintive seep. During the breeding season the golden whistler calls persistently, both male and female exhibiting equal vocal ability.

There is no clearly defined migratory pattern after breeding, but they wander a great deal locally with many, especially young birds, moving out into drier forest country in autumn and winter, which may be why they seem to disappear suddenly from our gardens and properties, usually at the same time as we get good autumn rain.

Rare Bird Drops in to Hoddles Creek

Last November, a concerned resident delivered an unusual specimen in a small box to Hoddles Creek Primary School, to be passed on to Friends of Hoddles Creek. It was a small, predominantly red bird about 9cm long that apparently fell from the sky into the backyard of local resident Merle Cunningham. The bird was dead.

Smart thinking staff at the school put the bird in the freezer and contacted us. It was identified as a **Scarlet Honeyeater** (*Myzomela sanguinolenta*), quite a rare bird for this area. We did some investigating, contacting Bruce Quin, Senior Scientist and Ornithologist with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and this is what he had to say:

Many thanks for your email re the Scarlet Honeyeaters in Hoddles Creek. Yes, they are moving further west and probably in response to a warming climate. I was told of approximately 30 in the Cardinia Reservoir habitat a couple of weeks ago. I think it was two years ago we had lots of them at Yellingbo and about three years ago we had one in a garden in Woori Yallock (during that year they were being recorded as far west as Wonga Park). They have been seen at Badger Creek during the last two summers.

They are migratory and typically occur at this time of the year in East Gippsland. So, they are probably vagrants for the Yarra Valley and Cardinia Catchment, but migratory for East Gippsland. Thank you for alerting me to your interesting/exciting sighting.

Friends of Hoddles Creek are concerned about our local wildlife, even if they are not residents. We welcome our readers to contact us with their stories, no matter how small they may seem. Thank you for your consideration, Merle, and we apologize for the delay in sharing your story.



Have you seen any unusual birds in your area? Do you have any news or stories about Hoddles Creek that you would like to share with our readers?



A Hollow for a Home

This **White-throated Tree Creeper** had perched herself on the up-right post of my clothes line. While I've known for many years that we have Tree creepers in the area, I'd never seen one up close before. I was able to have a really good look and to take a couple of photographs.



The White-throated Tree Creeper *Cormobates leucophaea* is found in Eastern Australia, mainly on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range, from South Eastern Queensland, through New South Wales and Victoria and into parts of South Australia.

It is dark brown, 13-15 cm in size, with a distinctive white throat and chest, and white streaks on its flanks, edged with black. The wings have a red bar that is visible in flight and the undertail is barred. The female, as in our photograph, has an orange mark on the sides of the face.

Tree creepers build their nests inside small hollows. The female builds the nest and incubates the eggs, but both parents care for the young. The eggs are incubated for 22-23 days.

These birds feed mainly on ants, but also on other small insects. They are usually seen foraging on the trunks and branches of eucalypts, especially those with rough bark.

We'd love to hear from you. Just mail us at Friends of Hoddles Creek, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, 3797, Vic, or email us at friendsofhoddlescreek@gmail.com.

Wombat Wonderings

Hasn't it been disturbing to see so many dead wombats on the sides of local roads?

Why is this happening?

Maybe, after a long dry summer, followed by reasonable autumn rain, the roads are lined with sweet grass, tempting wombats out of the gullies to feed. Unfortunately, wombats will never develop 'road sense', as their dominant sense is smell, so they are often hit by vehicles travelling too fast to avoid them.

The number of wombats seen on roads is no real indication of wombat numbers, as they will travel some distance for food.

Examination shows that most of the dead wombats are very healthy individuals, of prime breeding age. Mange Management volunteers have noted that, while there are pockets of mange, there are many areas where wombats are healthy. There are also many locations in the local area where wombats are not found, so the density of wombats in one location cannot be taken as an indication of the population of a wider area.

There are not many countries in the world where one can be less than a two hour drive from the CBD of a major city and be surrounded by wild life.

Slowing down on the local roads at night will assist in preserving one of the wonderful features that comes with living in this area.

Finally, if you sight a wombat with mange go to www.mangemanagement.org.au for helpful advice.



DianaVera

Slowing down while driving at night will help reduce family tragedies like this.

sustainably Living in the bush

We all have our own reasons why we choose to live in this area. I like the bush. I've lived in Hoddles Creek for most of my life. I like our nice clean air, the sound of rain on the tin roof, the taste of fresh water that isn't loaded with chemicals. I have a good sized vegetable garden, which means that we can eat fresh food that hasn't been contaminated with sprays.



Diane's vegetable garden is a source of pleasure and produce.

We share with the local wildlife population as they live here too. This means that the vegetable garden has a good sized fence to stop them getting in and eating the lot. Wombats seem particularly fond of carrots and the wallabies and possums are keen on pruning things I would rather they didn't prune.

For over thirty years I've kept a list of birds we have here and the list is still growing as I identify more, either by sight or by their call. I recently discovered that the mysterious 'chow chow' call we could hear in the early morning and in the evening was in fact the Eastern yellow Robin, a frequent visitor to our garden. I spotted the White Throated Treecreeper shown in this issue on the post of the clothes line. Hearing a Sooty Owl and the Powerful Owl on some nights gives me pleasure.

I've come to appreciate our local bush even more as I learn

more about the plants in our area. The flora survey work by Graeme Lorimer has been an inspiration and makes me keen to further my knowledge.

However, I am concerned about the threats to our environment because I think it important to live in harmony with our environment. We are faced with more clearing, logging and burning. I've been trying to educate myself more

in respect to prescribed burning and have read many documents related to the Royal Commission. I understand the rationale behind the increases in prescribed burning, but I'm not convinced that this will afford the level of protection that many people believe it will provide. There is a risk that this course will result in giving people a false sense of security while ignoring other more important safety measures.

Whilst safety of people must be paramount, I also think it important for people to understand that improving community safety in the face of increasing risk from bushfires is not a choice between human welfare and the environment. I would like to see some stands of bush just left undisturbed. Let the trees in some areas grow old and develop hollows that provide

nesting sites. Let us leave some areas for the plants and wildlife to be protected. Therefore I think we also need to embrace the concept of "Living with the Bush."

Diane Packer

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'.

