



**The Greater
Dandenong
Environment
Group Inc.**

Newsletter!

June/July 2001

HELLO!

Greetings all! Since our last edition, haven't we been busy?! Since May the group has had quite a flurry of activity, what with prowling and stalking fauna, talking to school children, walking in wetlands and remoulding the hive (the nursery busy bee, that is)! A big thankyou to all those involved in the activities over the past few months – Well done everyone! Now for the juicy details....

ASSOCIATION AMALGAMATION!

GDEG, Little River Earth Sanctuary and The Field Naturalists Club of Vic. – Fauna Survey Group.

Through the initiative of our President, the Fauna Survey Group held a fauna survey (naturally!) at Little River Earth Sanctuary from Friday May 18th to Sunday May 20th. The kind staff at Little River allowed the group of us to stay in the caretakers' house, which was a blessing for me, I hate camping in winter! Friday afternoon the fun began, as the Harp Traps were set up along the tracks in Zone one of the sanctuary (thankyou guys for leaving Amanda and myself behind in the cabin – much appreciated!). The traps were checked later that night, alas the traps were bare but we decided to spotlight instead, and with the help of Joel and Ben (Little River fencing crew) we saw Ringtail Possums and Froglets. Bright and early Saturday morning two of the Fauna Survey members decided to check the Harp Traps, in which they found seven bats of two different species, including the rather cute Chocolate Wattle Bat. The rest of Saturday was dedicated to the setting up of the Elliott trap lines and the Pit-fall line as well as upturning rocks in order to find frogs, lizards, snakes and small mammals. In fact, through upturning rocks and old sheets of Iron, a number of species of frog were found including Spotted Marsh Frog and a rather large Banjo frog. Under old sheets of Iron, a Whip snake was found and near the “rubbish tip” a Fat-tailed Dunnart was found. Before heading of to the local pub for some grub we checked the Elliott trap lines but nothing was caught until the next morning. Sunday morning heralded the capture of eleven *Mus Musculus* -run of the mill House Mice! Within the Pit-fall line another mouse was caught as well as a Spotted Marsh frog or two. Overall a fairly successful weekend – thankyou to Ian for organising it!

Lyndale Primary's “Great Australian Night Prowl”

The “Great Australian Night Prowl” took place on Saturday the 26th of May at Churchill National Park and was a great success. Twenty-six adults and students were lead by Ian, wielding his red spotlight through the Park. The prowl produced sightings of twenty-six Ring-tailed Possums, five Brush-tailed Possums, one Sugar Glider, one Powerful Owl and one unidentified Owl, and a bat, with four more bats being heard on the Anabat as well as two distinctive frog calls being heard. The students seemed to enjoy the evening immensely and their time with “Ranger Ian”.

The Next Generation of Environmentalists: Lyndale P.S, Grade 5/6

(Ranger) Ian visited the students in grade 5/6 to talk to them about monitoring wildlife and the traps used in fauna surveys. Ian demonstrated this by bringing in the traps we commonly use on fauna surveys, such as the

Harp Trap, Elliott Trap and Cage Trap. The students enjoyed Ian's talk and even asked him a few questions about his passion for the environment; quote...

"Why do you work on the environment?" "Because it is the most important part of our lives."

"How did you start an environment group?" "I just found a group of similar friends who felt we could do something for our environment in Dandenong".

Amanda and myself also visited the students of grade 5/6 to talk to them about biodiversity and food webs. We invited the students to act out a food web by becoming different plants and animals and forging the links between what animal ate what. After that got a little confusing, with the help of the students we drew the web on the board. It was great fun and I thank the students for their enthusiasm!

GROUP ENDEAVOURS

Walk in the Wetlands

On the cold and raining Sunday morning of the 17th of June, Ian, Julie, Dorothea, Ingrid, Amanda and myself embarked on our walk through the wetlands behind the Stud Rd Basketball Stadium. Through the clay we trudged, dropping Ian's telescope along the way, trying to spot as many birds as we could. The walk was of scientific value as we aimed to provide the Council with observational data on the bird-life present within the wetlands. A total of nineteen species of birds were recorded, including Great Cormorants, White-faced Herons, Hoary-headed Grebes and a number of duck species, such as Chestnut Teals and Maned Ducks.

Busy Busy Busy Bees!!

On the 24th of June, a number of us gathered at the Nursery for our big Busy Bee! While Ian, Dorothea and Ingrid reconstructed and completed the capillary bed; Judith and I set it upon ourselves to reclaim the old aquatic plant bed, which was filled with weeds, dead plants and stagnant slush. With the added help of Amanda, Grace, Matthew and Jack, we turned a pretty dilapidated bed into a wetland/marsh, utilising the fibreglass pond found inside the greenhouse. Grace and Matthew with the help of Jack (who is just four years old, but a fantastic little worker) set about turning the area in front of the greenhouse into usable garden beds. Dorothea did an excellent job in purchasing and potting up some attractive ceramic pots, which really helps to beautify (or distract from) the front door. The group of us enjoyed a hearty BBQ to reward a successful days work! Thankyou to all involved, without you the nursery face-lift just wouldn't have happened. A special thankyou to Ian for the BBQ and to Jack – great raking buddy! And another special thankyou to Ingrid for volunteering to paint a mural for the front door – then it really will be beautiful!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

- Judith spotted a flock of Ibis flying in a 'V' over Lyndale P.S
- Also within Lyndale P.S. are a number of Wattle birds, Rosellas and Magpies that like the She-oaks within the Gardens
- Within Alex Wilkie Reserve, Ian has spotted Garden Skinks, Butcher Birds and within the police paddocks, two Kangaroos!

SPECIAL MENTION:

Congratulations to Grace Maglio, as Grace's property in Bangholme is the first in the City to be designated "Land for Wildlife".