

July 2012

# osborne

NORTH WARRANDYTE OSBORNE PENINSULA LANDCARE



OSBORNE  
LANDCARE

# osborne

NORTH WARRANDYTE OSBORNE PENINSULA LANDCARE



## Next Event

We will be planting along the Lowestoft riverbank on **National Tree Day - Sunday 29th July**. The Ringwood Field Naturalists Society will be joining us so mark this date in your diary now. We will send a reminder flyer closer to the date.

## Annual General Meeting

The Osborne Landcare AGM will be held on Sunday 14th October at 4pm at 39 Osborne Road.

## The Winter Issue

In the long dark days of deep winter, much is stirring in nature apart from the fungi. The early wattles start to bloom, and so do the secretive early orchids. Magpies and ravens are nest building, the frogs are chorusing their joy of damp nights, and some of the marsupials, including Brushtail possums, already have young in their pouches.

What we read as the dormancy of the coldest season is actually the veiled preparation for the explosion of flowing and the arrival of so many bird and animal offspring that rings in the Spring, the season of renewal and, incidentally, weeding. ❄️

## Yes It Has Been Cold!

We're almost half way through winter and it feels like it has been a wet, cold and dark one so far. The river is rushing and Warrandyte is looking so green it is almost phosphorescent. It is a pleasant walk through Warrandyte on the brisk cold days, when the wind is not blowing. Some statistics on the weather in North Warrandyte for the month of June 2012:

**Temperature:** Highest: 17.0°C (1st June 2012). Lowest for two decades : 0.5°C (20th June 2012) Average: 9.6°C

**Rainfall:** In 16 wet days, the wettest on June 22 delivered 17.6mm. Total monthly rainfall: 82mm

**Wind:** Strongest wind: 59.4 km/h (20th June 2012).

Sourced from [willyweather.com.au](http://willyweather.com.au) ❄️

Christine Kearton

## Our Cover



Photo: Wayne Rankin





## In Appreciation Of The Humble Fungi

Fungi are a vital part of the ecosystem. They are among the earth's recycling agents, decomposing dead plant material and returning nutrients to the soil.

**Fungi are a vital part of the ecosystem. They are among the earth's recycling agents, decomposing dead plant material and returning nutrients to the soil. With so much rain, our recent autumn and winter has been wonderful for seeing a wide range of fungi in our gardens and parks.**

Much fungi is unseen and includes very interesting, diverse and ecologically important organisms. We associate them with the moist forest understory but they also live in deserts, marine environments and grasslands.

Fungi are as uniquely different from plants as plants are from animals. Unlike plants, they don't have chlorophyll so can't manufacture their own energy. Fungi can be seen around leaf litter as very fine white fibres called fungal hyphae that comprise the feeding and growing body of the fungus.



Hyphae obtain nutrition from rotting leaves, wood and soil, secreting enzymes that dissolve organic matter and then reabsorbing the nutrients. Fungi thus recycle plants after they die, transforming them into rich soil. If not for fungi, the earth would be buried in several feet of debris and life on the planet would soon disappear.

The success of most plants depends on their ability to foster mutually beneficial relationships with fungi. This relationship extends plant root systems, allowing them to exploit greater volumes of soil for nutrients and water. In return, trees protect the fungus from predatory soil microbes and provide carbohydrates. Over 90 per cent of tree species depend on this mutual association.

The current known number of Australian fungi species is 11,846. It is reported in Park Watch that despite the development of national biodiversity conservation strategies there have been few advances in Australian fungal conservation. Much, they believe, needs to be done to change our perceptions towards fungi

There are many varied forms of fungi around Warrandyte, such as the large, shell-like protuberance on a tree in Osborne Road photographed by Ruth Rankin.

Another striking soil fungus is called "earthstar," so named because the outer wall of the spore-bearing body splits open into a star. To learn more, check out *Fungimap* Victoria.❁

Jill Jameson



### The pretty, prickly Hakea sericea

Silky hakea is flowering now and is an uplifting sight on a dull winter's day.

The shrub has masses of fragrant white or pink flowers and prickly leaves which provide a safe habitat for small birds.

In the 18th Century, Hakea was named for Baron von Hake of Hanover, who was a patron of botany. The sericea part of the name comes from the Latin sericus, meaning silk, which in turn goes back to the Seres, a Chinese sect famous for their silk.

Hugo, my grandson, is in the Hakea group at his Preschool and he and his friends enjoyed watching the woody fruit open to reveal the seed which they then sowed. When the resulting seedlings are big enough they will plant them in the Preschool garden.❁

Shelagh Morton



## Found: At least one Koala!

In response to the article in June's Warrandyte Diary under the heading "Where have all the Koalas gone", I can tell you where at least one beautiful koala is. In the valley behind No 35 K.G Road.

In response to the article in June's Warrandyte Diary under the heading "Where have all the Koalas gone", I can tell you where at least one beautiful koala is. In the valley behind No 35 K.G Road.

I had a delightful half hour watching the fascinating animal climbing up and down trees and wandering on the ground around me while my camera clicked.

I hope he stays safe and that he has some friends out there.✿

Shelagh Morton

### The Koala

The Federal Government recently classified the koala as vulnerable in Queensland, NSW and the ACT, yet the iconic marsupial is not considered threatened in Victoria despite the fact that populations have been declining in the Grampians, Strzelecki Ranges and Mt Macedon. This winter, Warrandyte koala aficionados alerted us to the idea that koala numbers are either in decline or that the animals are rapidly dispersing from our area.

This close relative to the wombat has survived in Australia for over 20 million years and the fossil record reveals that as recently as 50,000 years ago, there were giant koala - twice the size as their present-day descendants - snoozing up gum trees.

The word -"Koolah"- comes from Sydney aboriginal dialects and supposedly means "doesn't drink water". Its scientific name, *Phascolarctos cinereus*, means "ash coloured, pouched



bear" and the species differs in size and fur density across its historic range that stretches from SA to Cape York.

In the south, Koala are bigger than in the northern climes, with males weighing up to 12 kgs. Their mating grunt, from which females judge their worthiness as mates, can be heard for a kilometre.

Nocturnal and dozy for 18 hours a day because of the poor nutrition it gains from eating the leaves of manna, swamp, grey gum, red box and red gum, in the wild koala can live for up to 18 years and the breeding females can, in good conditions, produce a joey each year. The young stay in the pouch for six months, and then ride on their mother's back for another six months before they begin to climb and forage for themselves.

Historically hunted for fur and heavily culled as pests, the greatest current threat to koala populations comes from domestic animal attacks, traffic

accidents, loss of habitat and the disease *Chlamydia* which causes blindness and infertility. In Queensland, the disease has been blamed for 50 per cent of population decline.

Present day populations are hard to estimate but four years ago the Australian Koala Foundation proposed that as few as 100,000 animals might exist in what is left of their traditional range. As Deb Tabart, head of the Foundation has said, one of the animal's biggest issues is that it favours the same habitats as humans who are invading the east coast's sea and tree change environments.✿

### Opportunity to grow your own!

Mal Parsons of 13 Koornong Cres is looking for a neighbour who would like to share her veggie garden as it is too large for her to manage.

The lucky neighbour would share in the produce in return for working in the garden.

Interested? Give Mal a call on 9844 1175.✿



## Wise Action In Support Of Owls

Have you heard the whoo whoo of the Powerful owl each night as it hunts for food?  
Or, you might have heard the barking of one of our resident Barking owls?

Have you heard the *whoo whoo* of the Powerful owl each night as it hunts for food? Or, you might have heard the barking of one of our resident Barking owls? Both these species are threatened and together with the Brush-tailed Phascogale will be Osborne Landcare's focus over the next four years.

Dunmoochin Landcare Group, with the support of Cottles Bridge LG, Arthurs Creek LG, Strathewen LG, St Andrews LG, Smiths Gully LG, Christmas Hills LG, Bend of Islands LG, North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula LG, Queenstown Cemetery Friends Group and Nillumbik Shire Council, has been successful in the **Communities for Nature grants Conservation Corridors**. DSE was

happy to note that the application demonstrated a good strategic project and funding to be received will be \$599,134 over 4 years.

For Osborne Landcare this will mean some funding for a four year period to regenerate bush as habitat and improve biodiversity to support the owls.

Actions will include: Removing woody weeds, spraying and burning of grassy weeds and planting vegetation to support the threatened species. Installation of remote-sensing cameras will monitor owls and other threatened species and their predators.

We look forward to working with our neighbouring landcare groups in this project. ❄️

Ruth Rankin



## Membership – so worth it!

**\$15...** What can you buy for this amount nowadays? Not much. Well think again!

Membership of Osborne Landcare Group costs just \$15 for a family for a whole year and entitles you to discounted plants from our nursery.

Your membership assists us when applying for funding grants and can be interpreted as an indication of your appreciation of the wonderful landscape that we share and care for.

Membership fees are now due. So please show your appreciation by filling out the form on the back of this newsletter and by putting it in No. 36 Osborne letterbox along with your fees.

And thank you! ❄️

## Our Birds in Winter

It is cold and wet and our “fine weather” friends have left us. The Cuckoos and Leaden Flycatchers are currently basking in the sun in northern Australia and New Guinea. However the Superb Blue Wren and other “resident” friends are spending winter with us.

It is cold and wet and our “fine weather” friends have left us. The Cuckoos and Leaden Flycatchers are currently basking in the sun in northern Australia and New Guinea. However the Superb Blue Wren and other “resident” friends are spending winter with us.

Why do some birds migrate and other choose to stay? The primary reason is the availability of suitable food.

In our temperate climate, berries, nuts, seeds, nectar and “meat” are always available in one form or another, providing year round food for some birds. Insect populations change with the seasons generally forcing insect eaters to migrate. Exceptions include Superb Blue Wrens which band together to forage.

So who am I seeing wintering on the peninsula?

At dusk I hear a pair of Powerful Owls calling to each other before setting off to hunt for small mammals and birds. They will be mating and making their nest deep in a hollow tree. Their chicks will hatch and fledge in early spring.

The little Eastern Yellow Robin is my constant companion in the garden, hanging sideways on a tree trunk then foraging in the soil disturbed where I have weeded.

The musical virtuosos Grey Shrike Thrush and Golden Whistler are around but their best singing will not start until the mating season begins late July.

My birdbath is busy every day at 4 o'clock when little birds come to bathe; Honeyeaters, Scrub Wrens, Fantails, Superb Blue Wrens and unidentified LBBs.

A flock of nomadic Yellow-tail Black Cockatoos flies overhead. They are also called Funereal Cockatoos because of their black colour, haunting cry, and slow wing action.

A Buff Banded Rail has apparently been sighted in Wombat Gully. It is a shy bird that nests in dense foliage near water.

Whilst winter may seem inhospitable, there is a wealth of wonderful bird life on the peninsula. ❄️

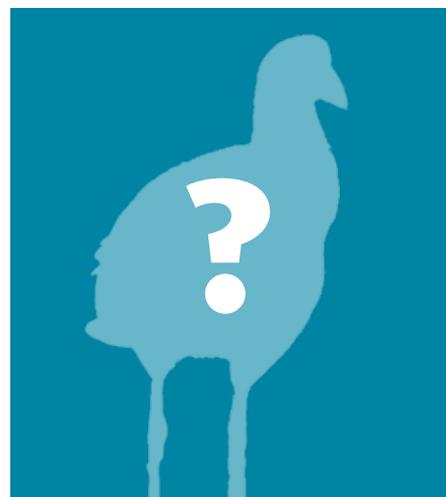
Ann Penrose



Leaden Flycatcher (migratory)



Golden Whistler (resident)



### What birds are these?

There have been several recent sightings of a pair of long-legged, hen-like birds scurrying across the sealed section of Koornong Cres, at the lower end of the hill near Wombat Gully.

So far, no-one has been quick enough to take a photo of our mysterious feathered friends. **Is this it below?**

So keep your eyes peeled when walking in those parts and let us know if you can identify these birds. ❄️





## Plants In Ground

Peninsula Residents and friends turn out in force to plant 1300 plants.

### Gail Watts braves the cold to see watt's in her garden >>>>>>

The winter solstice has passed but it really feels crisp out there. However, Mother Nature has been leaving myriad gifts for us to enjoy. What is that tiny bright orange thing, and those inconspicuous leaves? Who would have thought in a few months they will produce beautiful orchids?

See those green shoots, they're cockatoo fun-time plants. Which cocky can decimate the most daffodils in the least time? What about the fungi? They deserve muddy knees to get down close and look at how perfect they are and to appreciate their amazing variety.

The veggie garden is looking a bit weird. The Brussels' sprout leaves are lacy, the snow peas are aptly named and the rhubarb has hibernated. The soil looks and smells much like coffee grounds and the fruit trees are naked. But the compost bin is lovely and warm and the worms are working away at next season's soil.

The kookaburras are still waiting for more skinks, and the rosellas are having a great time on the lawn, pretending to be chooks! Some very keen birds have even been seen in the birdbath. And there are tiny birds fluttering around the native flowers peeking from behind leaves. The magpies are loving the easy meals coming out of the ground, cheekily aerating our lawn for us!

So go out there with your cameras and see what you can find in your garden. ❄️

Gail Watts



## Plants In Ground

### Lowestoft Planting on Sunday 27th May 2012

Following a particularly wet week, 12 Osborne Peninsula residents were rewarded with a beautiful sunny morning to plant in Warrandyte State Park at the rear of Lowestoft - No. 37.

The small gully was planted out with grasses and sedges as part of a Parks Victoria grant.

Our group was so efficient that we had planted 700 plants by 11.30 am.

A big thank you to those who participated. ❄️

### Roadside Planting on 1st July 2012

12 Residents braved the cold to plant local indigenous shrubs and grasses on the roadside opposite Nos 11 and 13 Osborne Road. This area had been prepared by our spray contractor Annie and our hard working Wombat Weeding Group who had spent several hand weeding sessions on this site.

Approximately 600 shrubs and grasses were planted in 1.5 hrs.

Thank you to those residents who participated. Mother Nature joined in with a gentle watering just as we finished. As you can see by the photo we cater for all ages! ❄️



## Nursery Note

There are still plenty of luscious plants in the nursery for you to get into your gardens, even though we have had the first two plantings of the season. So do place your orders now.

We are quite short of tubes and boxes so please return any you have promptly. Be careful to return only those tubes that have come from our nursery as we are at pains to keep Myrtle Rust at bay.

We have propagated Eucalyptus species for the first time for some years. Find out if you have a suitable spot to grow some.

**Shelagh:** 9844 3610  
**Ruth:** 9844 1959



### North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare

#### Committee

**Ruth Rankin:** 9844 1959 Secretary

**Christine Kearton:** 9844 3737 Treasurer

**Jill Jameson:** 9844 2289

**Jenny Brown:** 9844 2255

**Sam Eadie:** 9712 0785 Nursery

**Shelagh Morton:** 9844 3610 Nursery

**Ann Penrose:** 9844 0934

**Gail Watts:** 9844 2909

**Join Now and help protect your environment.** Membership fees of \$15 are due and payable on 1st July each year, or when joining. Fees accompanied by the form below can be left in Treasurer Christine's letterbox, 36 Osborne Road. **Many thanks.**



### Membership Details for Nth Warrandyte, Osborne Peninsula, Landcare Incorporated.

**Names:** (All household members)

**Address:**

**Telephone No:**

**Email:**

**Signed:**

We wish to join this organisation and agree to pay \$15.00 annual membership fee (includes GST) to cover the persons named above and abide by the rules and constitution of the Nth Warrandyte, Osborne Peninsula, Landcare Inc.