

*We wish to acknowledge The Wurundjeri People, the traditional custodians of our region, and all Aboriginal Elders, past and present.*

### News in Brief

#### Autumnfest

'Celebrating our Community Harvest and 11th Birthday of the Healesville Organic Farmers market'. HEWI has enjoyed supporting our local permaculture group for each of those 11 years! Once again our stall will offer indigenous seedlings for a gold coin donation – or a bag of weeds – as well as information on our Great Forest National Park campaign and the Monster Climate Petition.

> **Saturday, March 21 9.00am – 3.00pm Coronation Park**

#### Say goodbye to fertilisers - are worms the answer?

Worm castings generally make available 5x more nitrogen, 7x more phosphorus and 11x more potassium than surrounding soil. David Davidson is a worm and microbe farmer - worms are the vehicle to breed soil microorganisms. Join David and Steels Creek Landcare Group to find out how worms can assist you, in the garden or on the farm for more feed, greater water retention and fewer weeds. \$5 donation on the day includes lunch. RSVP: [steelscreeklandcare@gmail.com](mailto:steelscreeklandcare@gmail.com)

> **Saturday March 28, 11.30am Steels Creek Community Centre 695 Steels Creek Road**

#### Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA)

The VBA is a web-based information system designed to manage information about flora and fauna in Victoria. It is administered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, with input from the Arthur Rylah Institute, Museum Victoria, Birds Australia, independent researchers and community members. A workshop session will be held for environmental volunteers with a limit of 25. Lunch and the next forum agenda setting to follow. To register click here: <http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Events/Community-Environmental-Engagement-Forum>

> **Saturday, March 28, 10am to 12noon Japara Living and Learning Centre - 54/58 Durham Road, Kilsyth**

#### Frogs – constants, colonisers and conservation dependants presented by David De Angelis

Learn about our north eastern frogs, threats to species of conservation concern and recent research for the management of frogs in our increasing urban environment.

> **Wednesday April 1, 7.30pm Grand Hotel, Warrandyte**

*A community group acting to protect and conserve important elements of our local environment*

*Such a beautiful, balmy autumn to listen to our birds - and other less melodious fauna - as they move through the vegetation we are all trying to save from the threats that our own species is imposing on our innate environment.*

*This newsletter includes some quotes from the current FriendsNET, so apologies if you have already read them; they cover most of our own local concerns with a slightly different emphasis.*

### "TOP FIVE PRIORITIES FOR VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT"

From Ray Radford, Convenor, Victorian Environment Friends Network.

#### 1. Properly fund Parks Victoria

This deserves top billing as in recent years the Parks Victoria budget has been so severely cut that it now has less staff than when it was created in 1996, even though the area of parks has significantly increased! Proper funding here would mean more rangers, better control of pest plants and animals, and overall better management of our National Parks.

#### 2. Rewrite Vegetation Clearing Regulations

The regulations introduced by the previous government are not working well, they rely on inaccurate datasets and maps, there is no on-site assessment, and there's little consideration given to the vegetation type being cleared.

#### 3. Establish the Great Forest National Park

This proposed National Park would stretch from Kinglake across Yarra Ranges to Mt Baw Baw and north to Lake Eildon, home to the world's tallest flowering trees, the Mountain Ash, and the endangered Leadbeater's Possum (Victoria's fauna emblem). It would add 355,000 hectares to existing national parks and it is less than 90 minutes from Melbourne. (an update below)

#### 4. Rule out private development in National Parks

After reviewing (if not scrapping) the last-minute lease for a luxury resort and spa development at the Quarantine Station in Pt Nepean National Park, the government needs to ensure that private development is ruled out in all national parks. Nowhere else in the world allows new private development in national parks and it has been well established that the best place for such development is just outside national parks. This not only benefits the parks but also the local community.

#### 5. Institute a Statewide Biodiversity Strategy

This needs to happen along with a review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act to protect Victoria's habitats – as promised before the election. Huge residential development is already going ahead on the outskirts of Melbourne, particularly in the north, where Growth Corridor Plans were released before Biodiversity Conservation Strategies. This kind of back-to-front planning has to be stopped in order to conserve what little is left of our native grasslands.

### WATER BUGS DIVERSITY in the GRACE BURN

When we welcome back the same students who planted along the Grace Burn last year we will be able to demonstrate the new Waterbugs App that has been released recently by Melbourne Water Watch. Visit <http://www.thewaterbugapp.com/> to download this newly available App that is a fantastic resource for both water quality monitors and all of us intrigued by our aquatic invertebrates. This free App is available on both Google play and iTunes.

> **Friday March 27, 9.00am – 12noon, Queens Park rotunda**

### PESTICIDES AND RIVER INSECTS

A research paper published in 2013 found that within the Yarra Valley pesticides remove up to 42% of "stream invertebrates" which damages the health of rivers and removes the food supply of larger animals. Compliance with legal controls over pesticide concentration did not help, as risk assessments fell well short of protecting biodiversity, so new approaches to assessing biological impacts are needed. In the Yarra Valley where pesticides were used, entire families of invertebrates went missing including mayflies, stoneflies, dragonflies and caddis flies. These are food sources for birds, fish and platypus, some of them eat algae and prevent blooms and some assist in the breakdown of litter like twigs and leaves on the water. Heavy

## Up Coming Events

- March 21**  
International Day of Forests
- March 21**  
**Autumnfest**
- March 22**  
Ectopia Junction Festival  
10.00am – 4.00pm
- March 25**  
**Environment Round Table**  
**Parliament House**
- March 26**  
Planned Burning consultation  
The Memo, Healesville  
6.30pm – 9.00pm
- March 27**  
Waterbugs with HPS  
Grace Burn
- March 28**  
Earth Hour [earthhour@act.wwf.org.au](mailto:earthhour@act.wwf.org.au)
- March 28**  
Worms v. fertilisers  
Steels Creek Community Centre  
11.30am – 3.00pm
- March 28**  
Victorian Biodiversity Atlas  
Kilsyth  
10am -12noon
- March 29**  
Leadbeater's Possum Rediscovery  
Picnic at Cambarville (Noon – 4pm)  
(March 29 – April 4 Leadbeater's  
Possum Awareness Week)
- April 01 & 03**  
Frogs of the north east  
Warrandyte 7.30pm
- April 16**  
**HEWI meeting**
- April 17,18**  
Fire Ecology Forum  
Lilydale
- April 24**  
WaterWatch monitoring  
Grace Burn

### News in Brief cont..

**Field walk** – Craig Cleeland will look at breeding habitat of the Victorian Smooth Froglet and Southern Toadlet in the Warrandyte State Park. Craig has over 15 years field experience and a strong interest in frog conservation. The Southern Toadlet is listed as vulnerable in Victoria; possible reasons for this species' decline will be discussed. Wear warm clothes and bring a torch. Bookings essential: 9840 9124.

> **Friday 3 April, 6.30 pm – 8.30 pm**

## Community Environment News

rains induce pulses of increased pesticide concentration, and have most impact on species that are slow breeders or unable to relocate. Fast breeders recover quickly from population crashes, but slow breeders (a year to two years), struggle to recover from these events. Monitoring every creek is not possible, but some targeted studies are needed to check whether pesticide pulses are eradicating species and families of organisms from some streams. The Australian partner in the team was Dr. Ben Kefford, Sydney University of Technology.

<http://www.pnas.org/content/110/27/11039.full?sid=60c1267a-d65f-46ec-970a-a03f12e3a3b7>

*NOTE: Our Grace Burn Waterwatch records from our bi annual invertebrate counts have not demonstrated any significant reduction in populations over the past 5 years. This may be due to the relatively smaller amount of agricultural activity upstream from our monitoring sites. But such research is a warning sign and increases the importance of our regular monitoring results that are uploaded on to the Melbourne Water database.*

### REVIEW OF BUSHFIRE FUEL MANAGEMENT

This is another vitally important issue that local groups are currently addressing and the Vic. Gov. review is one response to widespread community concerns about the inordinate amount of fuel reduction burns that have been proposed.

The review will examine a risk-based approach to bushfire fuel management against the existing hectare-based performance target program. The Inspector-General for Emergency Management has been asked to deliver his report by the end of March 2015.

In the meantime, DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) is holding a public consultation process to understand what works well in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and what could be improved for future iterations. If you would like more information, please email the East Central team at [east.central@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:east.central@delwp.vic.gov.au).

> **Open House session, Thursday 26 March 2015, 6:30 to 9pm, The Memo, 235 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville**

### FIRE ECOLOGY FORUM

This timely forum is the first in a series organised by Yarra Ranges Council, Southern Ranges Environment Alliance and the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning. There will be a range of speakers independent of DEPI to allow for open and non biased discussions on best practices.

Learn more about fire ecology, share your knowledge, meet others interested in fire ecology and learn how research influences bushfire management. click here <http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Events/Fire-Ecology-Forum> to register. Limit of 60.

> **Friday 17 April, 6pm to 8:30pm with dinner**  
**Saturday 18 April, 9am to 5pm plus dinner**  
**Yarra Ranges Council offices, Anderson Street, Lilydale**

### OUR GREAT FOREST NATIONAL PARK

The new website is stunning! <http://www.greatforestnationalpark.com.au/>

The bushfire season is over and the burning season has already begun. As I write, at least three coupe regeneration burns are underway in Toolangi State Forest, ignited by helicopter. These burns, an almost inevitable component of the clearfell logging regime, compound the insult to the montane wet forest ecology, and nearby communities, imposed by industrial forest management. They strengthen the case to end this madness by declaring, as soon as possible, the Great Forest National Park. The new state government is in the process of setting up a taskforce to consider the proposal and formulating terms of reference. In the meantime, Environment Minister Lisa Neville MP has invited HEWI to attend a round table discussion on environment.

Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt MP has still not announced the upgrading of Leadbeater's Possum to Critically endangered, although he received advice from the Scientific Committee in December. The Friends group has written to Minister Hunt expressing concern at the unexplained delay and calling for an announcement before Leadbeater's Possum Awareness Week begins at the end of March.

*We are delighted that Steve has been invited to represent HEWI and Friends of Leadbeater's Possum at the Environment Round Table convened by the Hon. Lisa Neville, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water on March 25. We have high hopes that this will be the first of many such consultations with volunteer groups and field workers with their combined experience and knowledge based on scientific evaluations.*



ABN: 67 253 515 594 Reg. No. A0018935T

[www.hewi.org.au](http://www.hewi.org.au)

<http://roundleafpomaderris.org.au>