

# FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

May 2008, no. 3



**BRAESIDE PARK**

<b>A Plea for the Orangutans</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Activities Calendar</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Plants for Sale</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadbeater's Possum</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Visit to Mt. Rothwell</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Nursery News</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Park Report</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pelagic from Ulladulla</b>	<b>7</b>



**BRAESIDE PARK**  
Phone 9265 7300  
Lower Dandenong Road  
Braeside 3195  
[www.braesideparkfriends.org.au](http://www.braesideparkfriends.org.au)



## A Plea for the Orangutans

If rainforest clearing proceeds at its current rate in Indonesia, Orangutans may be extinct in the wild within a decade. This gentle ape shares 97% of its genes with humans and has been described as the 'thinker of the jungle' by one of its champions, Dr. Willie Smits. Yet, giant palm oil plantations are replacing Indonesian lowland rainforest, which is the orangutan's only home.



Young orangutans. Photo © Discovery

What has this got to do with our lives in Australia? It is the world's insatiable appetite for cheap vegetable oil, in the form of palm oil, for food and many other

products that is driving the disappearance of lowland rainforest, especially in southeast Asia.

Having seen massive oil palm plantations in New Britain, I know that the oil palm is the Crown of Thorns of the rainforest. It's spiky and it's taking over.

How can you help? Please write to supermarket, bakery and other food companies asking what sort of vegetable oil they use. Stress the importance of avoiding palm oil. Next time you go to these shops, enquire about the source of their food oil. Consider paying more for ecologically friendly food oil. Write to the Indonesian and Malaysian embassies, urging them to regulate the palm oil industry so that it uses existing agricultural land, rather than clearing rainforests.

Also, you can join the Borneo Orangutan Society to help them fight rainforest clearance. Details are available on their website at [www.orangutans.com.au](http://www.orangutans.com.au) More information about the palm oil industry is at [www.savetheorangutan.org.uk](http://www.savetheorangutan.org.uk)

*The Editor*

### Community Garden

The Open Day on the 16th March was very successful, with about 15 participants. Monthly meetings have been held, providing very productive feedback. Participants have visited other community gardens to gather ideas. Most of the group came to plant propagation and some came to the first community planting in April.

Ground works for Garden facilities have already commenced, so if Friends are passing by the Nursery, please have a look.

### NEXT COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> of June 9.00am to noon

Follow the arrow signs to planting site

### Australian Government Community Water Grant Received

*From Bev Bancroft*

The Friends Group has received \$11,434 for the installation of a tank to collect rainwater and to recycle water to the Propagation area.

The tank has been put in and the plumbing and electrical work have been completed.

Round 3 Water Grant Projects provide not only substantial water savings, they also involve a high level of community commitment through volunteer hours & co-contribution to Projects. Our project was supported because it is community orientated, demonstrates public benefit and involves practical on-ground works that will save or protect water resources.

Friends of Braeside Committee has used some of its own funds for a third tank, which gives us 75,000 litres of water savings.

Thanks To The Helpers  
Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson  
Bev Bancroft  
Ian Parsons  
Park Rangers

#### FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK Inc.

Lower Dandenong Rd. Braeside 3195 Phone 9265 7300 Melway Map 88 D8  
President: Margaret Hunter, 9588 0867  
Secretary: Elsie Anderson, 9583 6099  
Postal Address: PO Box 608 Braeside, Vic. 3195  
[www.braesideparkfriends.org.au](http://www.braesideparkfriends.org.au)  
Treasurer: Bev Bancroft, 9551 4578  
Editor: Val La May  
ACN A 002 4027 B  
Newsletter contributions:  
[fobraesidepark@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fobraesidepark@yahoo.com.au)

# Friends of Braeside Park

# ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Activity	Time/Day	June	July	Aug
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, <b>1:30pm</b> at the Visitor Centre	23	28	25
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Wed & Sun	2 7 15 18	5 7 16 20	2 4 17 20
Seed & Cutting Collection Meet at Robin Car park	10:00 - 12:00 noon The Fri. before the 1st Sat. of the month	6	4	1
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	17	15	19
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs	<b>Community Planting Sun. 29th</b>	<b>Community Planting Sat. 26 National Tree Day</b>	Community Planting Sun. 24
Special Activities		<b>Autumn Mystery Tour Sun. 1st Park Office 9am</b>		AGM Sun. 17th

## Mystery Heathland Plant Identified

A plant growing in the Park's Heathland area had puzzled Nursery workers for a while. The plant has now been identified as *Lepidosperma laterale*, the Variable Sword-sedge.

The sedge is on the Park's original flora list and grows prolifically in Braeside Park, as well as other parts of the Sandbelt area.



Variable Sword-sedge growing in NZ.  
Photo: Kaikohe plants website

### Plants for Sale

**Braeside Park Plant Propagation Nursery**  
1st Saturdays & 3rd Sundays  
10am till noon  
Reasonable Prices!

## Leadbeater's Possums and Friends

By Jane Cranshaw, Healesville Sanctuary Guide

These highly endangered possums, Victoria's faunal emblem, number approximately 2,500 animals at the last count, and declining – they seriously need Friends.

Not many people have seen a Leadbeater's, as they are nocturnal and live in the canopy of Mountain Ash forest in the Central Highlands of Victoria. They are agile small possums, closely related to Sugar Gliders and about the same size, though they lack the gliding membrane. However they are good "leapers" and can jump spectacularly between branches.

They live in colonies in large tree hollows, with one breeding pair in each group; sometimes a few surplus males; but never mature daughters as the mother will chase them out. They need several large holes for alternative den sites and shift around every few days, probably according to weather and to confuse the local Owls. They use scent for recognition, and keep in touch by hissing and chatter.

Seventeen colonies were discovered at Yellingbo last year, where the possum's bites on wattle trunks to procure sap are exploited by the Helmeted Honeyeaters – one endangered species helping another! A small population has also been found at Lake Mountain above the snowline, some of them denning inside the thickened tree root system of the snow gums.



Leadbeater's Possum, average length about 330mm.  
Photo © Dave Watts

Decades of timber extraction coupled with occasional intense bushfires have left the possums with limited high quality habitat; they need not only old tree hollows but also a healthy understorey of wattle for a sap supply. The fires of 1939 in the Central Highlands allowed the growth of much wattle following the opening up of the canopy; and the dead Mountain Ash remained standing providing the hollows. So for a

number of years the population grew to a peak in the 1980s. Now, the Mountain Ash "stags" are rotting and many fall each year, significantly affecting possum numbers.



Leadbeater's Possum nestbox from recycled plastic  
photo © Friends of Leadbeater's Possums

Nesting boxes have been successfully trialled; but the possums show a marked preference for those made of recycled plastic – they are warmer, and are also longer lasting than the traditional timber boxes. Expensive though - they cost \$150 each.

If you would like to help this possum, please consider sponsoring a nest box, perhaps with others, or becoming a member of the Friends of Leadbeater's Possums for just \$10. The newsletter will keep you up to date with the ongoing research and news of the nest box project. For \$15 you can become an active Field Volunteer and join in nest box monitoring, or stag watching in the summer.

For further details:

email the Friends' Education Officer Pam Miskin  
[pmiskin@wintechologies.com.au](mailto:pmiskin@wintechologies.com.au)

or phone Jane Crawshaw on 9735 1563. The group is based in Healesville.

*Ed's note: thanks to Elsie Anderson for requesting Jane to write this article.*

# A GUIDED NIGHT WALK AT MT ROTHWELL

10 May 2008

By Marj Seaton



Rufous Bettong. Photo: [www.mtrothwell.com.au](http://www.mtrothwell.com.au)

Mt Rothwell is a 'hill' in the You Yangs but, more importantly, it is home to a secret pearl in our natural environment.

Dr John Warmsley (the man with the cat fur hat) established a property designed to protect and foster some of our endangered and vulnerable native animals in an area free of feral pests such as cats, foxes and rabbits. Although he is not now involved at Mt Rothwell, a private group is trying to maintain the property—now known as the Mt Rothwell Conservation and Resource Centre.

We arrived at the office and were met by Paul Mervin, the manager, who was to take us through the 'Woodland Walk'. There is another walk, the 'Rocky Rises' and we'll try to do that at a later date. Different animals can be seen on the two walks.

Before we started, we could hear the squeaks of a barn owl, and watched Red-bellied Pademelons (extinct on mainland Australia) and Long-nosed Potoroos (vulnerable) checking out the tables for any dropped bits of food. Several Pademelons were seen adjacent to the office and water tanks.

The walk was along a dirt track, with a quite a few ruts but essentially flat. Almost immediately Paul's torch, scanning the area ahead, showed us Rufous Bettongs (extinct in Victoria), pademelons and potoroos hopping about in profusion. They are fast, very light and surprisingly unaffected by the torchlight.

Paul made his point strongly that without cats and foxes, the native animals breed readily and are confident to come out and feed. Feral proof fences, 12 km long, are carefully checked daily with a computerised system monitoring the electric fences. Attempts have been made to remove rabbits and have largely been successful. Some remain but apparently these are causing few problems.

Further along, Ben, youngest in our group, spotted a Pobblebonk frog just off the track; this probably came

from a waterhole not too far away. There are two waterholes on the property and these are topped up manually to ensure water for the animals. At the waterhole we saw, there were plenty of insects but no other evidence of frog life – they need rain to start calling.

Our next excitement came from the sighting of an Eastern Barred Bandicoot, a surprisingly small animal but incredibly fast once it had started to run. Bettongs, potoroos, pademelons and brushtail possums seemed to fill the space. We learnt how to distinguish between the male and female possums.

Moths are obvious food for some of the fauna, but with so little rain, there didn't appear to be much feed, however, the animals were feeding intently. They are ideally suited to the harsh conditions.

The Centre depends on a group of keen volunteers who attend 3 days a week and also whenever needed as guides for the walks. Their nursery is currently inoperative but they hope to reinstate it to grow shrubs, grasses and other low growing plants.

Financially, the Centre struggles, so values highly the income received from the guided tours it runs. Partial support comes from some organisations needing to offset the damage done elsewhere (eg by VicRoads) and support from DSE, particularly to assist in protecting the Eastern Barred Bandicoot.

I can highly recommend this walk for a group activity.

Some necessary details:

- Bookings are essential. Phone 5283 1602, or email [info@mtrothwell.com.au](mailto:info@mtrothwell.com.au) Adult entry is \$20, children \$10.
- A group size of 10 is ideal, but if you are not sure that all will attend, allow for a couple more in your plans. On our trip, one car with 7 people was lost and locked out; and with only 9 left, we had to pay extra to cover insurance and guide fees. Some nights run with less than 10, so enquire about overall cost.
- To get there, take the Geelong Freeway and turn off at Little River. Melways keymap on Page 11 (not map 11) C 10 will direct you along the You Yangs Road then along the Little River-Mt Ripley Road to the 'Little River Earth Sanctuary'. Go in at driveway 985 and on through an adjacent property to the office. We took about 1½ hours from Oakleigh using Citylink on a Saturday afternoon. Make sure you are there in plenty of time before it gets dark as the driveway is hard to spot, particularly after dark as, at present, there is no sign. The walk starts as darkness descends.

The website, [www.mtrothwell.com.au](http://www.mtrothwell.com.au), has a map, photos of some of the animals and extra information.

## Nursery News—Growing 'Twisty Rush'

By Marj Seaton

Planting has started with a full nursery to draw on. We continue to prick out and take cuttings but the main pressure is off for the moment.

**Visitors:** We had another visit from the girls of Mentone Girls' Grammar who always work with enthusiasm. There was also a contingent of folk forming the new Community Garden Group who visited during April to see how we did things and to have a go themselves at some of our regular tasks including pricking out and the inevitable weeding. It was pleasing to find some of the same people attending the Planting Day in April.

**Trenching:** Ranger Digger and his offside Max dug a trench stretching the length of the compound past the propagating igloos, worktables and shed. This was needed for installing the plumbing and electrics for the new water tanks to be used by the Propagating Group and the Community Garden Group. Makes for a very precarious and congested work area but it will all be worth it when completed, knowing that we will be using tank water for most of our needs instead of town supplies.

**Cats:** Kittens have been found in the propagating area. If you see any in the Park, please report immediately to a Ranger or to the Park Office as the cats are feral pests and quite wild.

**Growing:** There are still *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Banksia marginata* and grasses to prick out but we also are trying to grow a rush found in the Heathland, using a bog method. It grows prolifically so we'd like to be able to plant it elsewhere in the Park if possible. We haven't identified the particular rush yet but will put some effort into that if we can germinate the seed; in the meantime, it's just 'twisty rush' because of the twist in the leaves.

We hope to see more of the Friends at the next Planting day –Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June. It's very satisfying to collect the seed, grow the plants, then plant them and see them develop into plantations beautifying the Park.

The Nursery still needs a small bar fridge; if you have one in good condition, ring Marj on 9570 6293.

## Park Report—Three Tanks Waiting for Rain

From Ranger in Charge Des Lucas' monthly reports

### Revegetation Program

Planting sessions are progressing in the Salinity area, Kestrel Car park, Heathland Burgan area, and along Howard Road, with the help of students from Kingswood Primary School. Burgan removal continues in the Heathland.

### Pest Animal Program—Rabbits

Population monitoring is ongoing; warren ripping will commence in June. Baited oats are now used instead of carrots.

### Rainwater Tanks

Now that 3 tanks are installed and connected to the Nursery, an official opening will take place later in the year.

### Community Garden

The Garden group visited CERES in May. Construction is underway in the nursery area for a car park and site preparation for an igloo and a shed. The shed's been ordered and will provide more congenial accommodation than the current facilities.

### Track Maintenance

The self-guided track and the Howard Road Track have been re-surfaced.



Volunteers planting at the May Community Planting Day. Come along on June 29th!

## Pelagic voyage from Ulladulla

'Tahiti Petrel!' That cry failed to waken your editor, asleep in the bowels of MV Banks off Ulladulla, NSW. I was one of the birdos aboard the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association's long-range pelagic trip.

The Society, known as SOSSA, regularly runs birdwatching oceanic trips, 'pelagics', from Wollongong and Ulladulla. SOSSA is continuing the work of the NSW Albatross Study Group, who were the first in the world to band seagoing Albatrosses in the 1950s.

We left Ulladulla on Saturday night, 5th of April and returned Monday night the 7th. Not your normal one-day pelagic, and not aboard the usual tossing fishing boat. MV Banks was a 'PT' in the Australian Navy, before a re-fit for tourism and birding trips. At 100 feet in length, this ship can handle rough weather.

Not that we had rough conditions on our trip—the sea was a bloomin' mill-pond the whole time. Which made for smooth riding, but meant that some of the rarer seabirds were most likely missed, as they are usually seen in stormy weather.

Even though the crew kept plying us with delicious food, we mostly couldn't take our eyes from the binoculars, searching for birds for our life-lists.

There were some non-birding highlights on our trip. As we left harbour Saturday night we witnessed a light-show as dolphins surfed our bow-wave, glowing with luminescent algae. On Sunday night the ship lights attracted swarms of cuttlefish of all sizes. Ghostly-looking Storm-Petrels came to feed on the cuttlefish. Several passengers stayed up most of the night to catch the cephalopods for next day's lunch. Sightings of Marlin and Skipjack Tuna occurred periodically.



Campbell's Albatross. Photo © Brook Whyllie

On the trip back to port, we watched the SOSSA people catch Shearwaters in a large net for banding. Not an easy task when the boat is steaming along!

Several of my 'target species' were in abundance, especially Gould's: and Great-winged Petrels.

Unfortunately, I did miss out on the Tahiti Petrel, as the dawn sighting was the only one.

A total of 28 species of seabirds were identified, listed below:

Grey-faced (Great-winged) Petrel <i>Pterodroma macroptera gouldi</i>
Solander's (Providence) Petrel <i>P. solandri</i>
Kermadec Petrel <i>P. neglecta</i>
Soft-Plumaged Petrel <i>P. mollis</i>
White-Necked Petrel <i>P. cervicalis</i>
Gould's Petrel <i>P. leucoptera</i>
Tahiti Petrel <i>Pseudobulweria rostrata</i>
White-Chinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
Black Petrel <i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>
Fluttering Shearwater <i>Puffinus gavius</i>
Wedge-tailed Shearwater <i>P. pacificus</i>
Short-tailed Shearwater <i>P. tenuirostris</i>
Flesh-footed Shearwater <i>P. carneipes</i>
Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>
'Gibson's Albatross' <i>D. e. gibsoni</i> (Wandering subspecies.)
'Campbell Albatross' <i>Thalassarche melanophris impavida</i> (Black-Browed subsp.)
Buller's Albatross <i>T. bulleri</i>
Shy Albatross <i>T. cauta</i>
'White-capped Albatross' <i>T. c. steadi</i> (Shy subsp.)
'Indic Yellow-nosed Albatross' <i>T. chlororhynchos carteri</i> (Yellow-nosed subsp.)
Wilson's Storm-Petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
White-Faced Storm-Petrel <i>Pelagodroma m. dulciae</i>
White-Bellied Storm-Petrel <i>Fregetta grallaria</i>
Red-Tailed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>
White-Tailed Tropicbird <i>P. lepturus</i>
Australasian Gannet <i>Morus serrator</i>
Pomarine Jaeger <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>
Crested Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>

The next twice-yearly long-range trip from Ulladulla is 18-20th of October, 2008. SOSSA's website is at [www.sossa-international.org](http://www.sossa-international.org), or phone 02) 4272 4626.