

Spring 2023

Angair Quarterly

Bringing you stories from the Anglesea, Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna.



Image: Dean Smith

The Art of Taxidermy

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Angair inc. (R/N A0002974W)

3C McMillan Street, Anglesea, Vic. 3230

Phone: (03) 5263 1085

email: admin@angair.org.au

 www.facebook.com/angairaustralia

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A new lease on life for Angair's animal specimens

Kaye Traynor and Rob Shepherd

The Angair office contains an impressive list of resources including the Mary D. White natural history collection, John Landy butterfly collection, Herbarium and the Angair library. Anyone who has spent time in the office would also be impressed with the outstanding array of taxidermy specimens that greet you as you enter. From the tiny Feathertail Glider to the Shy Albatross, the collection provides an important educational resource highlighting the diversity of our local fauna.

Recently, most specimens in the collection were put into Perspex containers, allowing them to be taken into the natural environment for educational purposes. However the story of our collection and the highly specialised techniques used in taxidermy go back several decades. This article describes the origin of our collection and the pioneering work to establish this valuable resource.

Angair acquired the Mary D. White Resource Centre in 1988. The building housed Mary White's library collection, and is used as an office and meeting room for Angair and related conservation groups. It is also a display area for the local natural history collection comprising mounted and dried material as well as samples in spirit jars. Former Angair president Helen Tutt obtained glass fronted showcases from various sources including the Anglesea Historical Society and they have been used very satisfactorily to house the majority of the collection.



My husband, Michael Traynor, was the original taxidermist and prepared several locally collected specimens for Angair. Mike had been a museum taxidermist, or preparator, at the National Museum of Victoria. When he retired in 1987, he found there was a very real demand for interpretive displays in information centres, conservation venues, National Park education offices etc. in order to inform people about the local wildlife.

Responding to this need Mike and I formed a small business which involved preparing mounted material to be used for this purpose. An essential requirement was to obtain a permit to allow us to handle protected material. The terms of the permit meant we only prepared specimens for authorised holders of Wildlife Permits, and detailed records were kept concerning any animals held under the permit.

When we moved to Anglesea in 1992 we soon became aware of the rich biodiversity in the land, beach and ocean environments. An example of the unknown occurred in 1997. Mike was contacted by Ted Faggetter, an Angair member, who had come across an object on the beach at Hutt Gully. He was trying to explain that some marine creature had washed ashore. It turned out to be a mass of Goose Barnacles attached to a large piece of timber. It created a great deal of interest at the time and made us very aware of just how much there is to learn about the flora and fauna in our area.

The business expanded and we undertook projects all over Victoria. Apart from taxidermy, we constructed foregrounds with habitats, burrows, nesting sites, wetland scenes etc into which the mounted animals were placed to create a realistic natural setting.

The first registered record for Angair was in 2001. A Weedy Sea-dragon was found on the beach. It was almost devoid of natural colour and was weather-dried. It was given a specimen number, location where found, and its present location. Over time the collection has grown considerably and now numbers 36 prepared specimens.

The material has been used extensively over the years, some of it on loan to environmental educators. Specimens were also part of the themed stage display at earlier Angair shows where they were placed in a natural environment: a night forest, heathland, coastal wetland, or gardens.

Mike was always aware of the value of specimens which came to him. They were mainly road-kills or beach-washed. There was always a concern that the skin would not be viable. It was important that it be removed from the body as quickly as possible. If left too long, fur may slip or feathers fall because of the rate of decomposition. Rare and endangered animals, such as the Rufous Bristlebird, are irreplaceable and require the very best attention at this point to preserve them.

Our present taxidermist is Dean Smith (also museum-trained). Dean is always busy with a substantial backlog of orders. The waiting time is quite long, but well worth it for he is a very skilled preparator. We have a number of Dean's mounted works in our collection.

The following five photos show the skill and time required to produce a taxidermy specimen. This example illustrates the taxidermy development of a Rainbow Lorikeet.



Figure 1. Skin removed from body.



Figure 2. Artificial body made from woodwool, coconut fibre, dacron and foam. Wires attached to wing and bone.



Figure 3. The mounted skin is sliced open to highlight the internal structure.



Figure 4. Ready for the final stage. Bird carded and pinned. Drying will take 3-4 weeks.



Figure 5. After drying, pins are removed. Some natural pigments fade on legs and face. Colours are painted back using artists oils. Final clean and preen of feathers and the bird is ready for display.

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Angair has an original set of 11 taxidermy animals placed in Perspex boxes for protection. They are the Common Bent-wing Bat, Fairy Prion, Little Penguin, Peregrine Falcon (juvenile male), Peregrine Falcon (juvenile female), Red-capped Plover, Rufous Bristlebird, Shy Albatross, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Intermediate Egret.

Recently, 17 more specimens were boxed: the Bassian Thrush, Buff-banded Rail, Common Ringtail Possum, Dusky Antechinus, Eastern Barn Owl, Eastern Spinebill, Feathertail Glider, Musk Lorikeet, Nankeen Kestrel, Red-browed Finch, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Striated Pardalote, Sugar Glider, Swamp Rat, Laughing Kookaburra, juvenile and adult Tawny Frogmouth.

These 28 specimens are available for loan to environmental educators. Recently, several specimens were used to great effect in an Angair Family Walk around Allen Noble Sanctuary by locating them in their natural environment. We encourage members to make use of this important educational resource.

Angair's collection also includes several animals not in boxes: the Common Bluetongue Lizard, Koala, Short-beaked Echidna, Short-tailed Shearwater, White-lipped Snake. These are not available for loan.

Some of the specimens will be on display at the Wildflower & Art Show on 16 and 17 September.

We gratefully acknowledge Geoff Giles for his assistance on this project. Taxidermy photographs courtesy of Dean Smith.



Common Ringtail Possum protected in Perspex box, was placed in natural habitat on a recent guided family walk around Allen Noble Sanctuary.

Mike and Kaye Traynor were awarded honorary life membership of Angair in 2011 for their contribution to so many areas of the society's mission, just two years before Mike's death.

Mike's energy greatly added to Angair's activities. He wrote the fauna reports in the monthly *ANGAIR NEWSLETTER*, prepared the specimens that were the foundation of the Angair collection, instigated mammal surveys in the Lorne hinterland and led the monthly bird walks at which he insisted on serious bird-watching, not social chatter.

Kaye's contributions to natural history understanding are mainly artistic: the illustrations of Pauline Reilly's series of 15 children's books, hundreds of drawings in Angair publications, upgrading the Angair logo in 1994 and being one of the design team for the mosaic on the east wall of the Angair office.

You can see Kaye's work, along with that of fellow artist Ruth Hurst, in *Drawn to Nature*, in the Wonder theme in the Angair Nature Show, www.angairnatureshow.org.au



It's showtime!

Ann Feilding

Angair members who have followed the Alcoa coal mine saga over the decades will get a chance to see the progress of the mine rehabilitation in a photographic display that is a feature of this year's Wildflower & Art Weekend. The man who has overseen the rehabilitation, Warren Sharp, will be on hand for much of the weekend to answer your questions.

Many other environmental agencies and community organisations will be at the show: Friends of the Hooded Plovers, Barwon Water, Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, the Field Naturalists Club and the Friends of the Eastern Otways. The Anglesea CFA will also be there which gives you an opportunity to think about your summer fire plans and have local experts provide fire preparation and prevention advice.

The art component of the weekend, featuring nature-themed works by local artists and photographers, will again be held in the Anglesea Community House. And younger artists from the Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Primary Schools will decorate some of the Memorial Hall with their artistic vision.

The familiar components of the weekend – the displays of gorgeous local flora, including our famous orchids, the guided walks in neighbouring bushland, the indigenous plant sales, children's activities and rolling visuals from the [Angair Nature Show](#) – will all be part of a very enjoyable and informative weekend.

The Wildflower & Art Weekend runs from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and Sunday, 16 and 17 September, in the Anglesea Community Precinct, McMillan Street. Entry prices of \$5 for adults, \$2 for students and concession card holders; children get free entry.



**ANGAIR
WILDFLOWER
& ART WEEKEND**



Image: Rob Shepherd

16 & 17 September 2023
10 am – 4 pm
Anglesea Memorial Hall
McMillan Street, Anglesea

Visit online at: www.angairnatureshow.org.au

Enquiries: email admin@angair.org.au
phone 5263 1085
www.angair.org.au



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Pea flowers for spring

Chris Morrissey

Did you know that there are over 16 different genera of pea plants growing in the Anglesea and Aireys Inlet district? They are in a range of colours from mauve, purple and pink to yellow, orange and red; they can be ground covers, climbers or small to large shrubs.

The flowers of pea plants are irregular in shape and all have five petals. The larger, upright petal is called the standard, two smaller side petals form the wings, and the two lower petals join together to form the keel. Many of the local peas are commonly called 'egg and bacon' plants because of their red and yellow colouring. Four of the more common 'egg and bacon' plants belong to the genus *Dillwynia* and are known as Parrot-peas.

The Grey Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia cinerascens*, is the first of the four to flower in late winter.



Grey Parrot-pea, Image: Gail Slykhuis



Showy Bossiaea, Image: Ellinor Campbell

One of the lesser-known 'egg and bacon' peas, and not common in the district, is Showy Bossiaea, *Bossiaea cinerea*. Growing to one metre in height, it has dull green leaves, paler and hairy below, two cm long, narrowly triangular and with a point on the end. The leaves are not crowded together, and are mostly opposite along the stem. The new growth is pale green and may have a bronzy tinge.

Its pea-flowers are usually single and have yellow standards that are red on the back; the rest of the petals are reddish-brown. Small, smooth pods will be produced after pollination. It flowers in late winter into spring. Showy Bossiaea grows in coastal heathland and open forests.

The more common Bossiaea is Creeping Bossiaea, *Bossiaea prostrata*. This is a ground-hugging plant which trails along the ground and may creep through other vegetation. It is dainty and can be hidden amongst other vegetation, making it difficult to find. The leaves are small and variable in shape, round to oval, alternate, dark green and not crowded along the stem. Both stems and leaves can be smooth or have short hairs. The flowers are single or in twos; the back of the standard is dark reddish-brown and the front is bright yellow with red streaks at the centre. Creeping Bossiaea flowers in spring and small pods follow if fertilisation has occurred.



Creeping Bossiaea, Image: Ellinor Campbell

Both of the Bossiaea have small to inconspicuous stipules. These are pairs of leafy appendages at the base of the leaves. The genus name is after Bossieu de la Martinière, the botanist on the ship La Pérouse which visited Sydney in 1788.

Have you noticed a small, white daisy appearing in moist heathland and woodland? It is probably *Allittia uliginosa*, the Heath Daisy. It is quite common in our area at this time of year. Heath Daisy is a perennial herb with a rosette of lance-shaped leaves at the base and up to 11 cm long. A single daisy flower grows from the centre of the leaves on a stem up to 30 cm in length. The flower often has mauve on the back of the petal-like ray florets.



Heath Daisy, Image: Ellinor Campbell

As spring gets into full swing, try and spend time outside to enjoy the abundance and variety of flowers in the botanical hotspot that is Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. Make sure you have the *Flowers of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet* book with you!

References: Margaret MacDonald, 2009, *Flowers of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet*, Inverted Logic, Melbourne.
Enid Mayfield, 2013, *Flora of the Otway Plain and Ranges 2*, CSIRO, Melbourne.

Keeping watch on our unique estuary environments

Rod Brooks



EstuaryWatch volunteer group

What is an estuary?

An estuary is an area where a freshwater river or stream meets the ocean. The mixing of freshwater and saltwater creates a unique environment that is home to a diverse array of plant and animal life, including many species of fish, birds, and mammals. Estuaries also play an important role in the larger ecosystem by serving as breeding and feeding grounds for many marine and aquatic species, as well as helping to filter and purify water as it flows from inland areas to the ocean. Additionally, estuaries can serve as important recreational areas for activities such as fishing, boating, and birdwatching.

What does EstuaryWatch do?

EstuaryWatch is a citizen science program where volunteers meet once a month to collect valuable data on the condition of the health of their estuary. It was started by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) in 2006. There are 18 active EstuaryWatch groups across Victoria. Locally, there is an EstuaryWatch group monitoring the Painkalac Creek and another group monitoring the Anglesea River.

Painkalac Creek Estuary

The Painkalac Creek is approximately 20 km long and the estuary is 3.5 km in length. It is a very dynamic environment with freshwater flow controlled by a dam at one end and artificial openings the norm at the other end (the first artificial opening was reported in the 1890s).

The Painkalac Estuary is an intermittently open estuary that is mostly closed, except in high-rainfall years such as in 2022. Conditions are frequently changing with varying amounts of freshwater flowing into it and sea water entering it when the mouth is open. As salt water is heavier than freshwater, there can be a layer of fresh water overlaying a salt wedge while at other times there is just a mix of fresh and salt water (known as brackish water) which can extend for over 2 km upstream.



Painkalac Creek Estuary, Aireys Inlet, Image: Margaret Lacey

More details of the estuarine values and threats can be found at www.estuarywatch.org.au/estuary/ccma/46

What data is collected?

Physical and chemical measurements of water are taken at 0.5m depth intervals from the top to the bottom of the estuary at four different sites along the estuary. In addition, the mouth condition and sand bar at the entrance is measured and photographed each month. All data is uploaded to a publicly accessible database at www.estuarywatch.org.au.

We now have 15 years of data for the Painkalac that can be used to inform better estuarine management as well as be incorporated into research projects and the decision support tool for artificial estuary openings in Victoria.



Painkalac Creek, Image: Margaret Lacey

What does the data show?

The temperature of the Painkalac Estuary can vary from 8 degrees in winter to 29 degrees Centigrade in summer. The water can become quite turbid (cloudy) after heavy rain and heavy rain can also make the top layer of the estuary somewhat acidic. This is most likely due to acid sulphate soils in the catchment area leaching acid into the creek when the soils are very wet.

The acidity levels normally return to normal with a reduction in the rainfall pattern and only affect the upper layers of the estuary. The lower depths, containing more salt water, are not normally affected and have a more neutral acid level so are suitable for fish. Salinity levels vary enormously depending on the amount of sea water entering the estuary following an opening, while evaporation in summer can lead to higher salinity levels as well.

Oxygen levels can vary dramatically due to photosynthesis and bacterial decomposition. Photosynthesis, the process by which plants and algae use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen, can result in high oxygen levels in the water. This can become extreme with algal blooms (which have not been observed in the Painkalac Estuary in recent years). The decomposition of organic matter by bacteria can also lead to low oxygen levels.

When large amounts of organic matter, such as dead plants and leaf litter, accumulate in the water, the bacteria that break it down use up oxygen in the process. This can lead to low levels of oxygen at the bottom of the estuary but in the Painkalac the upper levels are rarely affected to the same degree, meaning that fish and other aquatic organisms are seldom affected.

How healthy is the Painkalac Estuary?

Based on the physical/chemical data collected by EstuaryWatch volunteers over 15 years, we can say that the estuary health and swimming safety have been mostly good (except for some isolated high E. coli levels that are being monitored by the Surf Coast Shire Council). There is little obvious impact of the artificial openings on our monthly readings, suggesting that there is reasonable management of the openings.

Overall, the data support the view the estuary is quite resilient within the constraints of the dam and the artificial openings. However, the ongoing monthly monitoring by the EstuaryWatch volunteers is vital to ensure that the health of the estuary is maintained, and we can all continue to enjoy the many benefits bestowed on us by the estuary.



Painkalac Creek Estuary, Aireys Inlet, Image: Margaret Lacey

How can I get involved?

EstuaryWatch in our region is managed by the CCMA. For more information, visit www.estuarywatch.org.au

We are often looking for more volunteers for the Painkalac EstuaryWatch program, so come and join an active group of volunteers who are passionate about their local environment and enjoy meeting once a month to collect valuable data on the condition of their local estuary and play an important role in protecting it.



EstuaryWatch WaterWatch Victoria Youtube, Come and join us, be an EstuaryWatch volunteer!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptnlh2Akqg8

The private life of Water Ribbons

Sally White

It happened during the Angair Family Walk at the Allen Noble Sanctuary last July. We were walking along the boardwalk, admiring the flower spikes of the Water Ribbons, *Triglochin procera*. Water Ribbons were a useful food source for the Aboriginal people of western Victoria. Their tiny fruits on the seed head could be eaten raw or cooked and the tubers under the water were roasted.

Swans, like those at Allen Noble, like them too. They eat the fleshy leaf shoots and use mature leaves as nesting material. The ribbons also provide good shelter for frogs and fish.

The pale-green flowers are small and plentiful but rarely seen close up unless you want to get your feet wet or have a handy boardwalk. I reached down to draw one spike closer for a better look. A voice behind me said 'Look, it's smoking!'. A thin grey wisp – like breath on a winter's morning – floated across the water. I shook the stem again. Another puff drifted away. Looking closer, I saw that the surrounding leafy ribbons were covered with a whitish bloom. Pollen. And more pollen.

Accidentally I had imitated a breeze, triggering one of the essential but secretive mechanisms that ensure the survival of a species: dispersal.

It is rare moments such as these that observing nature's intimate secrets is such a privilege and a joy.



Rain, rain stay away for the Angair Camping Weekend

Janet Stephens



Come on campers, let's try for one more time after last year's rain cancellation! Everyone is welcome to come camping on 27-29 October. This time we propose camping either at Greenhill Lake Camping Ground near Ararat or at Langi Ghiran State Park, depending on numbers. Greenhill Lake can accommodate more campers. Both offer room for vans and tents, fireplaces and toilets.

Langi Ghiran State Park has an interesting history. The Djab Wurrung have left numerous signs of occupation including rock art, shelters, scar trees and artifacts. Major Mitchell climbed Langi Ghiran in 1836 on his expedition through 'Australia Felix' and two reservoirs were built from local rock in 1880. One still supplies some of Ararat's water today.

There will be a choice of two walks on Saturday, one easy and one moderate to hard. Both walks head off from the Langi Ghiran camping area. The Water-race Circuit is a five-km easy walk up to the old Ararat Reservoir and water race. Keep your eyes open along Easter Creek for the area's two endemic species: the Langi Ghiran Grevillea and the Grampians Bitter-pea. The more strenuous track to climb to the summit of Mount Langi Ghiran is 12-km return. On Sunday morning, we hope to explore Christine and Peter Forster's restoration site on the Bullock Hills nearby.

Of great interest is the two-km return trail leading to the Lar-ne-Jeering rock art shelter. The entrance to the site is found just off the Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat. It can also be reached by driving there from the camping ground. Lar-ne-Jeering means 'home of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo' in the local Djab Wurrung language. The shelter consists of two large boulders with the rock art inside protected by a metal fence. It is still quite visible but sadly the meaning of the images has been lost to us.



For non-campers, there is plenty of accommodation in Ararat. Buangor is another possibility about the same distance away. If you wish to spend more time, there is plenty to do in the surrounding area – lots of wineries for one thing and of course the Grampians not far distant.

The usual Angair Camping Weekend arrangements apply for campers: bring a curry or casserole to share on Friday night, meat for a barbecue on Saturday and a salad or sweet to share. We hope the non-campers will join us for the Saturday night barbecue.

Contact Janet Stephens, 0417 325 971 or stephens.janet@gmail.com to register.

My OBP Odyssey

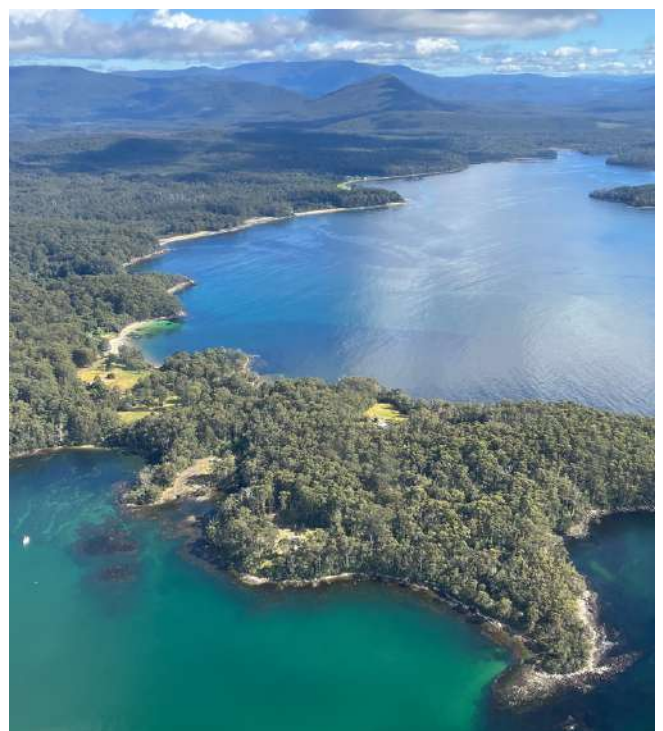
Ellinor Campbell

It has long been a dream of mine to see an Orange-bellied parrot (OBP) in the wild. I have been on numerous, and fruitless, OBP surveys near Lake Connearre. Several visits to the bird paradise at the Werribee Treatment Plant had been similarly unsuccessful. The nearest I may have got to seeing any was when two small parrots alighted in front of my car at the treatment plant, but of course they had gone by the time I got my binoculars on them. I had seen some in an aviary a few years ago on a visit to Healesville Sanctuary. Visitors were allowed inside the aviary, so I spent a heavenly hour observing them flying about and calling. The few other people who popped in during my time there were more interested in the other bigger birds in the aviary. One woman commented on the pretty 'love birds'. For me seeing birds in aviaries was not the same as in the wild.

Finally last year I decided to 'bite the bullet' and fly to Melaleuca in Southwest Tasmania. It is here they are known to breed successfully in the spring and summer, after overwintering in the Victorian and South Australian coastal wetlands. They have been supported in this for many years by the provision of nesting boxes and feeding stations at Melaleuca and a breeding program, mainly at Healesville Sanctuary. I was really unsure if I would be successful at Melaleuca, as Angair members who visited there a few years ago saw none on the feeding tables. They saw a few parrots at distant nesting boxes, but only one was seen clearly enough to identify. However recently OBPs have been making a comeback due to the breeding program, with many being released into the wild. Before I went I heard that about 50 had arrived at Melaleuca, and by December 70 birds were recorded there.

The only way I could get there was to book a general day tour on a small aircraft, which also included a boat tour of Bathurst Harbour. I told the booking people that I was really interested in the OBPs and did not think I would go on the boat tour, which clearly was not the norm!

So, finally, the big day came. I had checked the weather forecast, and, in my short holiday in the Apple Isle, was able to organise my booking for a day with a good forecast. And so it was: sunny and still, just perfect. I couldn't wait. The flight there was over the sea, and the return flight was over the mountains, with beautiful clear views on both flights.



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On arrival I went straight to the main bird hide and sighted one parrot-like bird with its back to me.



Then it was time for the boat tour, but no way was I leaving the hide after such an uncertain sighting. The young pilot/guide/food provider left me with a very tasty lunch and morning tea, and I happily farewelled the rest of the group, most of whom had not the slightest interest in parrots.

So there I was – alone for several hours with (maybe) OBPs. Had I made the right decision? A boat tour on beautiful Bathurst Harbour, with wine included, would have been very pleasant.

I sat quietly in the large, comfortable bird hide, which had lots of information about OBPs, and the beginning of white settlement there with Denys King.

Finally another bird arrived at the feeding table, then two, and when seen through the excellent resident telescope, they were definitely OBPs – absolute bliss! Then, wonder of wonders, a few more flew in, each one vying for a spot at a bird feeder. I glued my eye to the telescope. After a while I tried, and had some success with, digiscoping – taking photos of the birds with my phone through the eyepiece of the telescope. Finally, feeling oh so satisfied, I sat back in a comfortable chair and enjoyed the nice food provided by the tour guide.



Bird activity had quietened down, so I thought I might take a look at another hide I had heard about, which was a short walk on the other side of the runway. This second hide turned out to be quite small with just a couple of chairs, and was clearly used for recording birds at the feeding tables. And birds there were: lots! A constant flow of parrots wanting food, at least a couple of dozen. I was not good at reading their identification tags or rings, but after a time I was able to get an idea of the differences between the rich green adult males with orange bellies, the duller females, usually without an orange belly, and the duller immature birds. It was an opportunity I had never imagined I would have.

A few really gorgeous Beautiful Firetail Finches also spent time on the table vying for their turn at the feeders, which had been overtaken by parrots. These finches are found only in Tasmania and around the south-east coast of mainland Australia, and they were a new ‘tick’ for me – a nice bonus.



I was reluctant to leave, but decided to have a further look around the area, plus a return visit to the other hide. Which meant more excitement for me with a quick, but good, view of a pair sitting on perches outside a nesting box.

On further exploration I enjoyed looking at the very different plants, plus the views of the mountains, and the ‘serenity’. I only saw a couple of other people, mostly near the runway when two other light planes flew in. I had time for another visit to the first hide and to see a few more birds before the others returned from their boat trip

I felt ready to leave. I had lived my dream!

What next? Maybe Queensland for Cassowaries, another unfulfilled dream, despite several visits to rainforests where they are ‘always’ seen.

Slow build of an indigenous bush garden

Rob Howden

More than thirty years ago when we purchased our house block in Anglesea it was mainly indigenous bush, just the way we wanted it. Inspired by the book, *Bringing Back the Bush* by Joan Bradley, our aim was to maintain and nurture the existing trees and plants creating a house surrounded by an indigenous bush garden of low maintenance and natural bush beauty.

Locating the house to maximise the garden area, avoiding major established trees while ensuring a sunny orientation was important. We chose to build a two-storey house to minimise the footprint of the building. We were however unable to avoid the results of the plumbers filling the sewer trenches leaving topsoil at the bottom and clay at the top. This area required treatment with gypsum and leaf mulch for some years and now, to some extent, has recovered. This season we were delighted when a Vanilla Lily grew and flowered among the native grasses, Silver Banksia and Hedge Wattle in this section.



Freesia, *Freesiax alba* x. *F. leichtlini*, Boneseed, *Chrysanthemoides monilifera* and Agapanthus, *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis*

The area was not pristine bush. International weeds such as Agapanthus, English Ivy, Freesias and Boneseeds were easily identified and removed. Freesias are still a constant pest requiring removal each spring. It has taken us more time to identify Australian native weeds such as Sallow Wattle, Bluebell Creeper and Sweet Pittosporum. The Surf Coast Council provides a free online brochure, *Top 20 weeds Anglesea to Eastern View*, which has helped so too has volunteering at Angair's weekly weeding sessions.



Pale Vanilla Lily, *Arthropodium milleflorum*, Silver Banksia, *Banksia Marginata* and Hedge Wattle / Prickly Wattle, *Acacia paradoxa*.



Bluebell Creeper, *Billardiera fusiformis*, Surf Coast Council, *Top 20 Weeds Anglesea to Eastern View*.

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It hasn't been completely low maintenance and while encouraging the existing plants we have supplemented them with plants from Angair's indigenous propagation program. Some weeds do continue to appear however occasional weeding and a dressing of mulch from trees that needed to be lopped has minimised them.

We do have small areas of grass that require occasional mowing, mainly to reduce fire risk. To allow plants to germinate and grow we keep the mower blades as high as possible and when new plants appear mark them with small bamboo stakes and the areas requiring mowing are reducing as the 'garden' areas expand. From time to time we have cut out wattles to allow more light for the lower plants and sometimes cut back trees overhanging the house to reduce possum activity on the roof and fire risk.

There are many rewards. We enjoy an indigenous garden with a bush outlook in all directions. Native orchids such as greenhoods, wax-lips, donkey and hyacinths appear during the different seasons while other small plants – Cranberry Heath, Dianella, Hibbertia and the ground hugging Dichondria – have spread across the block. We are also watching our two small self-sown grass trees, hoping they might flower sometime soon.



Nodding Greenhood, *Pterostylis nutans*, Rosy Hyacinth Orchid, *Dipodium roseum* and Wax-lip Orchid, *Glossodia major*.

Two bird baths positioned near the house for close observation of visitors both large (currawongs, parrots, magpies) and small (wrens, honey eaters, fantails) are all regular visitors. We have planted small bushes close to the bird baths so that the smaller birds have escape routes when threatened by larger species.



Black-anther Flax-lily, *Dianella revoluta var. revoluta* and Kidney weed, *Dichondra repens*.

Cockatoos visit in numbers but only after the wattle has flowered and seed pods appear. Kangaroos visit regularly, mainly at night helping to keep the grass down and sometimes staying during the day to rest in a safe sunny spot just outside our living room windows.



We have become more conscious of the seasons and look forward to the comings and goings of flowers and birds. We hope that the White-faced Herons will return to nest again in the tree above our carport or that the kookaburra will again nest in the possum box.

Keeping the indigenous bush has been rewarding and proved possible on a site about twice the size of a regular house block.



When gold is bad

Christina Boon



As the gold of the winter wattles dims, another golden, much less desirable, flower emerges. Gorse!

Gorse is a noxious weed introduced as a fencing solution from western Europe. Living up to this role, gorse forms spiny, dense and impenetrable thickets. It is extremely flammable, threatening assets nearby. It is a favourite haven of foxes and rabbits, decreases land values, affects farm stocking rates and seriously threatens bushland and recreation reserves. These effects, combined with its potential to spread to all soil types and most climatic zones in Victoria, it is no wonder gorse has climbed the ranks to be listed as a Weed of National Significance (WoNS). It is one of the most problematic weed species in Australia.



Image: Lizzy Harper Illustrations

Keep your eye out for gorse plants locally. Although it is not common in Surf Coast's bushland areas, it grows vigorously on roadside verges such as along the Surf Coast Highway from Bellbrae to Freshwater Creek, in pastures and sometimes in gardens.

It is a leguminous plant covered in hard spines at all its terminals, with bright yellow, pea-like flowers that set seeds when the plant is about 18 months of age.

The prolific seeds mature between January and March and mainly fall around the parent plant. But in hot dry weather the pods can explode, ejecting seeds up to five metres away. They can also be spread by transportation of soil, sand or gravel, livestock, birds, ants and water run-off.

Gorse seeds are viable for decades; therefore, it is wise to tackle the new, small, isolated plants first. Then make a plan to eradicate the main stand. Surprisingly, many of us are unfamiliar with gorse or have misconceptions around its control.

We at the Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT), a not-for-profit organisation, want to support communities and individuals in reducing gorse in their local area through grants, resources, networking and information events.

If gorse is a problem on your land, we encourage you to head to our website www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au and consider connecting with your local community group www.landcarevictoria.org.au/LVI/Get-Involved/Find-your-local-Landcare-group.aspx For encouragement, tips, events and grant announcements, please follow the Victorian Gorse Taskforce on Facebook or Instagram.

Christina Boon is Communication and Community Engagement Officer at the Victorian Gorse Taskforce.



Weeping for a neglected unique grass

Neville Millen

It was sad to note that most buyers at Angair's annual Wildflower show last year thought the Weeping Grass, *Microlaena stipoides*, we provided looked like a weed, so the plants were left on the shelf en masse, when 1600 other tubes of varied species were bought eagerly.

The plant's scientific name derives from the Greek. The genus name comes from micros=small and chlaina=cloak. The species name, stipoides, refers to the grass genus stipa, or spear grass, and oides means 'like'. So Weeping Grass looks like a small spear grass, but has narrow in-rolled leaves having the appearance of being partly wrapped in a cloak. Weeping Grass in tubes is always green, leafy and robust-looking as it mats and spreads by rhizome. A relative species to Asian rice, and often called Meadow rice grass, it produces small but more nutritious grains than rice.

It is characterised by an upright habit up to 50 - 70 cm, with several extended delicate flower stalks, 25 cm long, with spikelets of triple narrow triangular florets between 10 - 40 mm long.

It has large pale, almost white anthers that visibly hang down from the flowers in November to December and then seed between January to March.

It grows naturally and best in shaded damp heath and woodland areas but can grow in full sun. The leaves stay green all year, even in drought, and when mixed with Common Wallaby-grass in a garden, Weeping Grass adds contrast with its slender green sprays of delicate flower heads against the more light-coloured tufted flower heads of the Wallaby-grass.

Well worth buying to add to your garden!

Weeping Grass plants will be available at the Angair Wildflower & Art Weekend 16 - 17 September 2023.

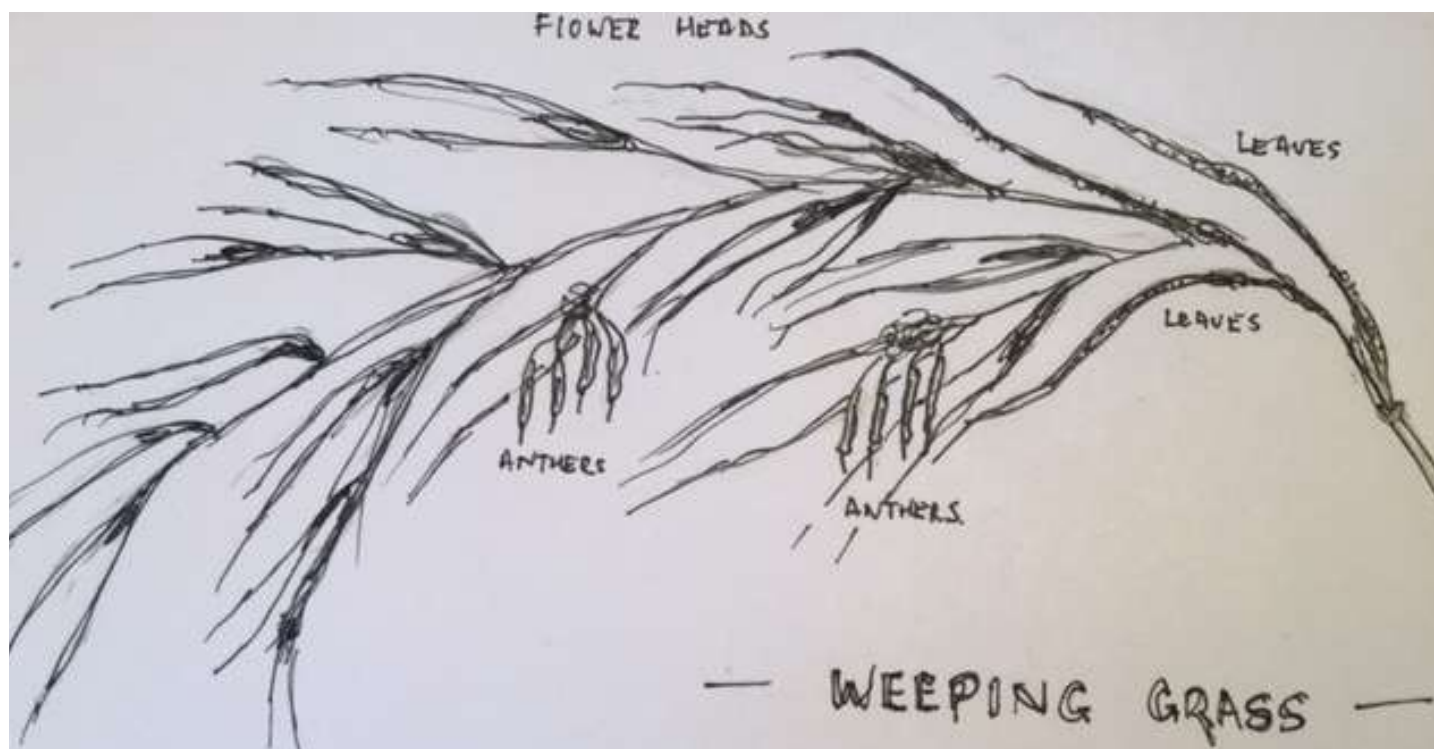


Illustration of weeping grass flower head. Credit: Neville Millen.

After the storms

John Lenagan



Shy Albatross, Image: Nick Lambert

Recently you may have noticed a couple of large whitish seabirds gliding across the swell lines approximately 800 m offshore. They were the Shy Albatross, *Thalassarche cauta*, and the Black-browed Albatross, *Thalassarche melanophris*. We are quite familiar with seeing the Australasian Gannets and Pacific Seagulls cruising the coastline but they are only half the size of these albatross which can have wingspans up to 2.5 m.

Normally these species are considered pelagic (open ocean dwelling) and typically cruise the open seas away from land when not nesting and raising their young. They occasionally come closer to the coastline after winter storms, possibly seeking refuge and regaining their strength before returning to their natural hunting grounds out on the open waters.

I find they are the most elegant birds to watch as they glide across the swell lines using the updraft that rises up in front of each swell, then cruising back down into each valley before rising up again. They can do this for hours with no flapping of their wings. If and when they do settle down on the water to swallow their catch or have a social break, they take off again by facing into the apparent wind and effectively running across the surface with their large webbed feet. After six to eight powerful steps, wings outstretched and without a single wing beat, they effortlessly glide up and are off.



Black-browed Albatross, Image: Mauricio Silvera

Their main food is squid, schooling fish and crustaceans that can be found at the surface. They often take their catch on the wing. They do not swim below the surface like the gannets and petrels and are known to scavenge for fish bycatch dumped by fishing trawlers; sadly, this is often the reason many albatross fall victim to baited hooks used by the longline trawlers.



Shy Albatross, Image: Michael McSweeney



Shy Albatross, Image: Geoff Walker

The key identifying markers differentiating our two recent visitors from a distance are their underwing patterns.

The Shy Albatross has a fine dark border to the full extent of the underwing with a characteristic black thumb mark at the base of the leading edge.

The Dark-browed has a more extensive dark pattern spreading across its leading edge, ending with a more distinct darker wingtip.

When observed more closely the Shy Albatross has a faint grey shadow on its neck and shoulder and a grey–yellow bill with a prominent yellow tip; the Black-browed has an all-white head and shoulder with a more pronounced dark eyebrow and has a yellow bill with an orange tip.

The Shy Albatross breed on three remote islands off the coast of Tasmania. They have a life span of up to 60 years and are currently listed as endangered with approximately 15,000 pairs counted in the 2020 breeding season. The Shy Albatross is Australia’s only endemic albatross.



Black-browed Albatross

The less frequently visiting Black-browed Albatross can live up to 70 years and has its breeding colonies on the South Georgia and Falkland Islands. Their numbers have also been declining over the last 10 years and this albatross is unfortunately the most common albatross species found drowned on the longlines with ever more international trawlers fishing in the southern oceans.



Black-browed Albatross, Image: Tout Terrain

The orchid delights of spring

Margaret MacDonald and Alison Watson

Spring is the time of the year that we most look forward to, with many of our most impressive orchids flowering in this season. The first of our colourful orchids, the yellow and brown Leopard Orchid, *Diuris pardina*, was seen flowering in early August at Fairhaven, with further observations now recorded throughout the Anglesea district. Look for the brown blotches on the back of the long-stalked upright yellow petals. The second species of *Diuris* to flower in our district each year is the Donkey orchid, *D. orientis*, which usually flowers just as the Leopard orchids are finishing. The petals are large and erect, looking a little like donkeys' ears. Later in spring you may find two more *Diuris* species, Golden Moths, *D. chyseopsis*, or the Tiger Orchid, *D. sulphurea* which are both rare in the district.



Leopard Orchid, *Diuris pardina* and Donkey orchid, *D. orientis*.

Greenhood orchids are still continuing to impress us all with large colonies of the familiar Nodding Greenhood, *P. nutans*, being observed in many places. But there are now many other greenhood flowers to stumble upon. Small colonies of the tiny Dwarf Greenhoods, *P. nana*, are appearing in heathland and forests, and some magnificent colonies of Maroonhoods, *P. pedunculata*, have been observed.

The Blunt Greenhood, *P. curta*, with its large blunt flower and twisted labellum may be seen in open forests and woodlands. This species prefers Aireys Inlet to Anglesea, and is not often seen. Tall Greenhoods, *P. melagramma*, are having a good year with many tall plants seen along the edge of tracks. Late in July we were excited to find a small number of the extremely rare Green-striped Greenhoods, *P. chlorogramma*, growing in the Gum Flat area. Similar in appearance to the Tall Greenhood, the shape of the hood is more rounded and usually has a green central stripe on the labellum, in contrast to the brown stripe on the labellum of the Tall Greenhood. Look for the Anglesea endemic orchid, Unicorn Bearded Greenhood, *P. unicornis*, with the long pointed tip on the end of its hood. It is producing distinctive rosettes at the present time and should be flowering in September. The smaller, Southern Bearded Greenhood, *P. tasmanica*, starts flowering later in October. These are both rare orchids.



Tall Greenhoods, *P. melagramma*, Green-striped Greenhoods, *P. chlorogramma* and Unicorn Bearded Greenhood, *P. unicornis*.

The first spider orchid we recorded to flower this year was on 11 August when the Wine-lipped Spider Orchid, *Caladenia oenochila*, was seen in the O'Donohue area. This orchid can sometimes be confused with the Southern Spider Orchid, *C. australis*, which flowers later. This rare species also has a dark red labellum, but it has dark red flattened clubs on the sepals. Many other hairy spider orchids are appearing throughout the district but are not easy to identify until the flower appears.

The distinctive Mayfly Orchid, *Acianthus caudatus*, with its long filamentous sepals and heart-shaped leaves are being seen in many places and should continue to flower for many weeks. On warm days the flowers emit an unpleasant odour and this attracts a high level of insect activity. Both species of Gnat Orchids, *Cyrtostylis reniformis* and *C. robusta* are continuing to flower.



Wine-lipped Spider Orchid, *Caladenia oenochila* and Mayfly Orchid, *Acianthus caudatus*.

We were just waiting for Bluebeard Orchids, *Pheladenia deformis*, to appear, especially in the burnt areas where they often grow in spectacular clumps. Suddenly we got a message from Helen and Lance to say they had seen a small one at the top of Messmate Track. And the ever-reliable Wax-lip Orchid, *Glossodia major*, should very soon be seen in all shades of purple. We have observed many buds during the last few weeks so expect lots of flowers in the next few months.

Leaves of Hare Orchids, *Leptoceras menziesii*, are being seen in areas which have recently been burnt. Tiny buds are forming at the base of many of the leaves and this is very exciting, as although we have many colonies of leaves for this species each year throughout the district we seldom see flowers unless the area where they are growing has been burnt. We are hopeful for a spectacular display in spring. We are also seeing buds on the large fleshy leaves of Red Beaks, *Pyrorchis nigricans*, which will perhaps flower in September. This species also requires a burn to produce a flush of flowers although occasionally we find one or two flowers each year in an unburnt area.



Bluebeard Orchids, *Pheladenia deformis* and Great Sun Orchid, *Thelymitra aristata*

Also flowering in September and known from just one site in the district, are Brown Beaks, *Lyperanthus suaveolens*. These orchids don't need fire to flower.

You may ask what about the sun orchids. To many people these colourful orchids are the highlight of the orchid season. We can say that a variety of sun orchid leaves are appearing throughout the district and we were amazed to find two well-developed flower buds on the Great Sun Orchid, *Thelymitra aristata*, in mid-August. If not taken by a hungry kangaroo or wallaby we should have some spectacular flowers to show in late September.

We have also observed a good number of the wide leaves of the Blotched Sun Orchid, *T. benthamiana*. This is one of our later flowering sun orchids. The leaves appear early, but the flowers are usually seen in November and December. October is the peak month for the sun orchids so if there is a hot, sunny day early in October make sure you head out to enjoy their beauty.

These are just some of the orchids to be seen in the next few months; so please let us know if you find something special at margmacmoggs@icloud.com or alison577@gmail.com.

We appreciate your support, and it is so important to record all sightings. All of our orchids are documented and photographed in *Orchids of the Anglesea District*.

Volunteers find new species in Otways snail hunt

Ann Feilding

Volunteers have made a significant contribution to the discovery of five previously undescribed species of snails and potentially one unrecorded snail genus in the Otway Ranges. After training, the volunteers conducted snail surveys on public and private land to assess the distribution and variety of species. They searched in snails' preferred habitat: at the base of trees, in rolled-up bark, logs and forest leaf litter.

Ecologist Louisa Bartels of the Threatened Species Conservancy reported the finds to the Otways Ecological Research Forum 2023 held in Colac in late August. The new snails joined the many snail species, many endemic, that can be found in the region.

The endangered Otway Black Snail, *Vicaphanta compacta*, is perhaps the best known of the five carnivorous land snail species found in the Otways and the only endemic one. Its body is grey-blue to black. Its globular glossy black or dark brown shell and lack of an orange frill around its foot distinguish it from its fellow land snails in the wet and cool temperate rainforests of the Otways. Partly nocturnal, it eats slugs, earthworms, soft insect larvae and other snails (except its own kind).



Images: State Wide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams [SWIFFT](#)



Angair (Anglesea, Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna) is dedicated to preserving our indigenous flora and fauna, and to maintaining the natural beauty of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet and their local environments.

www.angair.org.au

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung of the Kulin Nation and the Gadubanud of the Maar People as the Traditional Owners and protectors of this place.

We also acknowledge their ancestors who cared for the land, water and marine areas and all its biodiversity for thousands of years. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future who continue to care for this place.

This issue:

Editor: Sally White

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Next issue:

Our next issue will be published in December 2023 and will be the summer edition. We welcome any contributions of local, seasonal or general environmental interest. Send your contributions to angair.communication@gmail.com by mid-August and clearly label them 'for Angair Quarterly'.