

Autumn 2025

Angair Quarterly

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



Juvenile Nankeen Night Heron.
Image: Margaret Lacey

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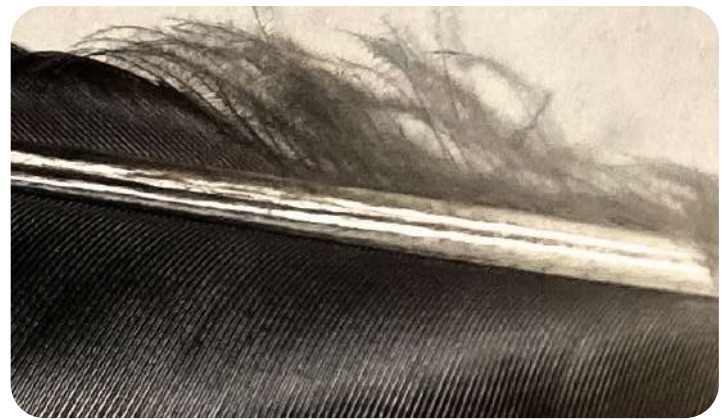
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The many functions of feathers

Wendy Cook

The long narrow black feather had fallen onto the short dry grass. I picked it up and saw it shine blue in the sunlight. The tip of the feather had a rounded point and the shaft was close to one edge. Perhaps it fell from a raven's wing. When I moved the feather through the air I could feel resistance. Two wings with stiff feathers like this could really push a bird up off the ground and through the air. With a magnifying glass I could see the barbs or hairs branching off the shaft, and the smaller barbules branching off the barbs. The barbules have even smaller branches which are hooks holding all the barbs together. This feather was a primary, one of the longest and narrowest flight feathers on the end section of the wing. They produce most of the power when the bird flaps its wings downwards. As the wing comes up, they rotate and separate to reduce air resistance.



The flight feathers closer to the bird's body are secondaries. They are shorter and broader and don't separate or rotate. They help provide lift. Most birds' tails are a fan of twelve feathers similar to the wing feathers. The feathers towards the centre are the most symmetrical. The tail helps with steering and stability during flight and with braking during landing.



Crimson Rosella Image: Sally White



Juvenile Nankeen Night Heron Image: Margaret Lacey

Birds have other feathers which are not involved in flight. Contour feathers cover the bird's body. They are more symmetrical and overlap like roof tiles, with waterproof tips and fluffy bases. On the wings they are called coverts and shape the wings aerodynamically as well as providing some protection for the flight feathers. Beneath the contour feathers are downy feathers which are fluffy and without hooks to hold the barbs together. They provide insulation, and may also be used to line nests. Bristles are small feathers sometimes found around the eyes and beak. They have only a few barbs near the base. They may help to sense the surroundings, to trap insects close to the beak when feeding and to protect the eyes and nostrils.



Crimson Rosella Image: Sally White

Many birds use their feathers for camouflage. A young bird, its mother sitting on the nest, a nocturnal bird resting during the day, a bird feeding on the ground and a predator waiting for a meal all have reason to stay hidden. They may have dull plumage which blends with the background. Markings such as stripes, spots or a mottled pattern can help the bird resemble its surroundings, or break up its outline so that it is harder to see.



Dusky Woodswallow. Image: Margaret Lacey

At other times, birds wish to be seen. During the breeding season, males of some species sacrifice the benefits of camouflage for the advantages of being bright and showy so they can attract a mate. Specialised feathers, such as a cockatoo's crest can be used in communication. Subtle differences in colour and pattern may help birds to distinguish individuals.



Rainbow Lorikeet Image: Margaret Lacey

Birds need to take great care of all these feathers, which they do by spending several hours each day preening. They may start with a bath to clean their feathers or a roll in the dust. Both remove parasites. Many birds have a preen gland near the base of their tail which provides oil to spread over their feathers for waterproofing, flexibility and protection. Some birds, including parrots and owls, have special feathers which disintegrate into powder down which is another protective technique. Birds use their beak and feet to spread oil or powder, to keep the hooks holding barbs together and to place every feather correctly, thus ensuring the best insulation and flight.



Gang-gang Cockatoos. Image: Rob Howden

Eventually, despite all this attention, feathers become battered and worn and don't work as well. They become looser and fall out, leaving space for a new feather to grow. Some birds moult gradually, losing matching feathers on each wing, to maintain balance while flying. These birds take weeks or months to replace a complete set of feathers. Others, such as ducks, moult quickly and may have a short time when they cannot fly. Birds also moult to change into and out of breeding plumage, and as they grow from a chick to an adult. Growing new feathers requires a lot of energy, so birds usually moult at a time when they are not breeding and there is plenty of food.

We were wrong

Sally White

The 2024 winter issue of Angair Quarterly carried Chris Morrissey's interesting article about a prostrate form of Ballart, *Exocarpos nanus*, or Alpine Ballart which is found in the Victorian High Country, a long way from the Cherry Ballart, *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, a familiar tree in parts of the Surf Coast.

The image used with the story was, unfortunately, not the Alpine Ballart at all. It was Carpet Heath, *Pentachondra pumila*, another small prostrate plant that also loves alpine country. A native of Australia and New Zealand, as a heath it is a member of the Ericaceae family. It has small white flowers and red hollow drupes that grow on the branch ends and ripen in summer. To my eye, these drupes look misleadingly similar to the fruit of the Alpine Ballart.

Although the image was incorrect, Chris's description of the Alpine Ballart was right in all aspects.

As a compare and contrast exercise, have a look at the two images: one the Alpine Ballart, one the Carpet Heath.



Carpet Heath *Pentachondra pumila*



Alpine Ballart *Exocarpos nanus*

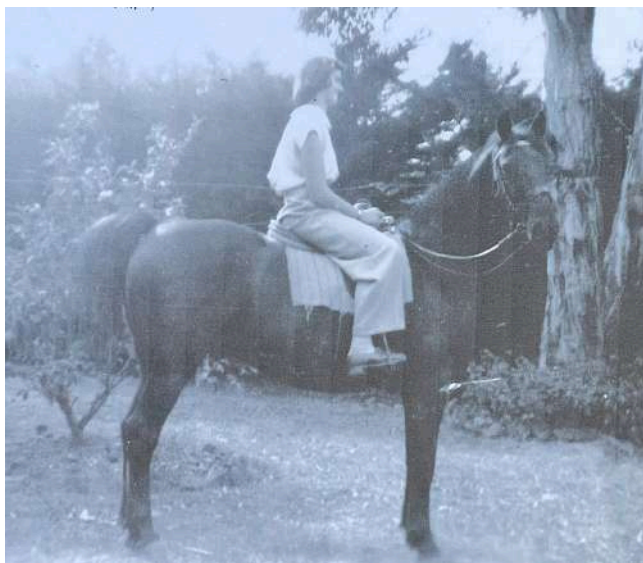
Capturing the art of nature

Angela Rutherford

Artist Ruth Hurst, 97, sits in an airy, spacious room with a garden view at her Grovedale residential aged care home gently reminiscing with her dear friend, Kaye Traynor, about the years spent working for Angair. Quietly spoken and modest, Ruth is proud of her contribution. She marvels at the influential organisation that developed from the work of a small number of people.

She is happy that she and her husband, Jack, who died in 2015, were able to contribute, along with many others who became close friends. Angair recognised the couple's commitment when they were made honorary life members in 2008.

Ruth always loved the natural world, drawing flowers for as long as she can remember, saying that 'there is something quite beautiful about wildflowers'. Growing up on farms in regional Victoria, she loved spending time in the bush, and riding her favourite horse Prince – 'black, shiny and handsome' — on long day rides. She was, she says, a natural country bush girl.



After her training at RMIT in commercial art and dress design, flowers gave way to frocks for several years. She designed and made numerous garments including wedding dresses: 'I used to be pretty handy at that sort of thing'.



Children (two sons) put a brake on things for a while, but her kitchen was 'always full of masses of material'. She remembers Paynes Bon Marche, the store in Bourke Street until the mid-1950s, for its laces, and Georges wasn't bad for fabrics, but more expensive. She made wedding dresses for each of her daughters-in-law.

Ruth and Jack loved Anglesea from their first holiday here in 1953, and built a house in McMillan Street which later became their permanent home. Jack retired in 1978, and they joined Angair. They still made time for road trips covering the length and breadth of Australia.

In her early years with Angair, Ruth took advantage of the walks led by Mary D. White, an accomplished naturalist and teacher. Mary has a special place in Ruth's memory. These walks enabled her to study wildflowers in close detail, and apply technical skills she had learnt at RMIT. This led to productive years of plant illustration for diverse Angair projects.



Scaevola pallida

Ruth and Jack were collaborators: Jack was a skilled engineer and was always inventive. They were a can-do team. They were both involved in the major Anglesea Regeneration Project: a systematic 10-year analysis of bush recovery after the 1983 bushfires. Ruth was recruited to do plant profile drawings for the study's published results.



Ruth's own work was regularly exhibited at the annual art exhibitions which were part of the weekend. She also donated a set of flower drawings for correspondence cards that were launched in 2002 as an Angair fundraiser, sets of which can still be purchased. She contributed pen-and-ink line drawings for the publication *Angair – A Natural History Study*. She illustrated the original Angair newsletter segments, Flower of the Month and Weed of the Month and designed a series of library book plates for donated books.

The Hursts were big contributors to the Angair Wildflower and Art Weekend for many years. They teamed up with Kaye and Mike Traynor to design and make sophisticated dioramas showcasing local flora and fauna. Ruth painted the large backdrops. Climbing up a ladder, using acrylic paint and large brushes, she would start with the sky and clouds, and work her way down to a foreground of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses.



Getting these compositions to stage presentation involved a mighty amount of work by a lot of people. This included the collection of materials, which were often stored at Ruth's house. 'Our house looked like a junk yard.' The show was always enjoyable till the packing up afterwards. 'The men didn't like that'. Due to budget and storage limitations, the unique painted backdrops were ephemeral, being painted over every year.



Ruth has one of her own watercolour paintings of a Spider Orchid hanging on the wall in her room. It is something of a favourite, recalling for her the pleasure of coming across a field of these elegant orchids in the bush.

As a grandmother of four and great grandmother of six, Ruth appreciates the role Angair has played in getting children interested in nature. And she enjoys seeing that her art hasn't stopped with her: watching with pleasure as some of her great grandchildren just 'sit down and draw flowers and birds'.

Acknowledgements: Kaye Traynor.

Reference: Gibson, Roslyn, 2019, *ANGAIR: the first 50 years*, ANGAIR Inc., Anglesea

To view some of Ruth Hurst and Kaye Traynor's artwork go to

Drawn to Nature under the Wonder theme on www.angairnatureshow.org.au

Mourn for the decline of the Weeping Mallee

Neville Millen



Eucalyptus sepulcralis. Credit: Currency Creek Arboretum

Driving in the eastern zone of Western Australia's Fitzgerald National Park on Moir Track, our group of four came across a sign for Sepulcralis Hill, heralding the fact that we had entered the domain of one of the most unique eucalypts known to botanical science, Weeping Mallee or *Eucalyptus sepulcralis*. It is estimated that approximately 200 trees exist in the wild in this location north of East Mount Barren, 20 kilometres from the seaside town of Hopetoun. There are six other recorded sites of the species in the park with four sites being close to the coast. The estimated total number of trees is 3000.

It was disappointing to find an extensive wildfire two years ago had wiped out half of the trees in the eastern zone of the park. This left what we observed to be the remaining stands of trees in groups of three to five, close to the road over 100 metres. We did not venture into the thick heathland in search of other trees due to warnings of *Phytophthora cinnamoni*. There was a boot-cleaning station at the roadside lookout at Sepulcralis Hill.

E. sepulcralis was given its scientific name in 1882 by Baron Ferdinand Von Mueller, the 19th Century chief botanist of Victoria, who was an authority on the genus. He named the species for its weeping foliage, for 'sepulcralis' refers to a sepulchre, tomb or grave. Von Mueller said the species would feature prominently at grave sites throughout the colonies due to its weeping habit which was symbolic for weeping over the tomb of the deceased. I don't think the species became as popular as von Mueller predicted but I hope it exists in some cemeteries, as half its number have been cremated in situ and a similar wildfire may see to its extinction in the wilds of the eastern ranges in Fitzgerald River National Park.

Eucalyptus sepulcralis has slender limbs to heights of three to eight metres. These limbs are smooth-barked and silvery in colour. The trees have a unique weeping habit like a willow, with long thin leaves on wispy branches that in some cases almost hang to the ground. We saw no plants in flower, but the species has lemony-yellow flowers in clusters of seven buds, and the seed pods formed after flowering are urn-shaped and large – about the size of billiard balls.



Image of flowers and pods of *E. sepulcralis*,
Florabase.dbca.wa.gov.au

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Von Mueller, Ferdinand (1882), *Eucalyptographia*, vol 8, Victorian Government Printer, Melbourne. Retrieved October 2024.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucalyptus_sepulcralis, retrieved Oct 2024

I note on reading an article on Von Mueller's *Eucalyptographica* (1882) that the *E. sepulcralis* he initially classified was collected in 1880 by Campbell Taylor in the north west coastal area of WA that includes Exmouth, Shark Bay and the Upper Gascoyne region.

This raises an anomaly: how could two plant populations of the same species exist independently 1800 kilometres apart? Could some Aboriginal travellers have brought the seeds down to the south west coast of WA, through some ancient seed exchange, or did the prevailing tidal movements bring the species' large seed pods down in the Indian Ocean and wash these ashore at Fitzgerald River? The mystery remains.

My view is that von Mueller got a specimen that was mislabelled as to its botanical provenance, for no *E. sepulcralis* exists in the northern Gascoyne area, but it is endemic in an arc north of Ravensthorpe, between it and Hopetoun, and westward along the south west coast from Hopetoun to Mid Mount Barren, a distance of 40-50 kilometres.

Discoveries in the tomato patch

Rob Shepherd

Like many Angair members I have a tomato patch that I carefully tend over summer. As they start bearing fruit, interest significantly increases from a variety of backyard inhabitants. The first half-eaten green tomato is my cue for netting the patch. While this is relatively effective at keeping the large visitors out, it is important that the insect pollinators have access.

It is common to find a variety of pollinator species, together with predatory insects that have followed them, trapped within the netting. This provides an interesting array of insects that can be photographed to aid identification via apps such as iNaturalist.

I recently photographed a large fly (Fig. 1) that iNaturalist considered to be a member of the Bristle Fly or Tachinidae family; there are more than 8200 known species in the family so getting to the level of genus or species is for the experts! Although the fly was dead, close inspection revealed small white larvae moving near the end of the fly's abdomen (Fig. 2).



Fig.1



Fig.2

My first thought was these were parasites that had infected the fly as it is common for parasites to immediately abandon a deceased host. However, after further reading, what I was likely seeing were larvae abandoning their dead mother. While almost all fly species lay eggs that later hatch into larvae or 'maggots', a small number of species lay live larvae. Species with this characteristic are described as ovoviviparous.

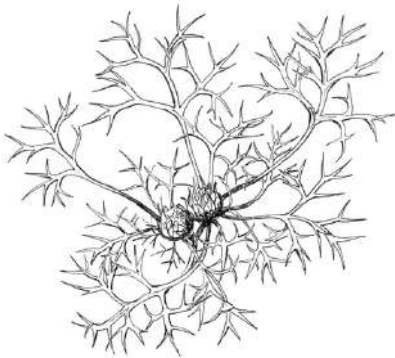
Ovoviviparous insects are insects that retain fertilised eggs inside their bodies until they hatch, then give birth to live young. The eggs contain enough yolk to nourish the embryo until it hatches. Ovoviviparous insects do not provide oxygen or nourishment to their developing eggs; they merely provide a safe brooding chamber for development. Ovoviviparity is also observed in the wider animal kingdom; these are animals that produce eggs but retain them inside the female's or male's body until hatching occurs so that 'live' offspring are born. This group comprises a wide array of animals, including certain insects, fish, lizards and snakes. Although rare, male ovoviviparity, where the male retains fertilised eggs in his body until the young are born, is observed in seahorses.

In contrast, most insects are oviparous, developing their eggs internally and fertilising them just before they are laid outside of the female. Hatching takes place some time later.

Like ovoviviparous species, female oviparous species do not provide additional nutritional support to their young; the developing young inside the egg feed on the egg yolk. Examples include all birds, most insects and reptiles. The monotremes – the platypus and echidna – are the only mammals that reproduce oviparously.

Finally, in viviparous organisms females retain fertilised eggs inside their bodies and the developing embryo connects with the mother via the placenta for exchange of food, nutrients and gas, and after a period that can range from weeks to almost two years (in the case of elephants), give birth to young. All mammals except the monotremes are viviparous.

One thing I remain unsure of is whether the death of the Bristle Fly triggered the early release of the larvae. While it would make evolutionary sense for that to occur (as it does in parasitic species), I don't have the data to prove it. Nevertheless, it is amazing what you can learn from caring for your tomato patch.



Isopogon ceratophyllus



Caladenia australis



Eucalyptus globulus



Chiloglottis valida

**Ruth Hurst's
drawings**

The elusive orange-bellied visitor

Madeleine Slingo

Picture this: it's the depth of winter on the shores of Lake Connewarre and a blustery, undeniably frosty wind is blasting across the landscape. You're layered up to the nth degree and you're wondering if your fingers and toes will still be attached by the end of the day. However, you nevertheless proceed to take a (very) slow meander through an unsheltered, treeless paddock of saltmarsh. Why? You know you have a unique opportunity to encounter a handful of the beautiful and elusive Orange-bellied Parrot – if you're lucky.

Through my work in conservation and natural resource management, I've had the privilege of having the aforementioned experience over the last few winters.

For me, seeing an Orange-bellied Parrot in the wild is an opportunity to stop, reflect and channel a deep gratitude for a moment of truly witnessing nature at its finest.

Why? The Orange-bellied Parrot, *Neophema chrysogaster*, is listed nationally as critically endangered and one of only two true migratory parrots in the world. There are very few Orange-bellied Parrots (OBPs) left in the wild, so when I am standing in front of a flock of, for example, seven birds, I'm highly aware this could be close to 10 per cent of the entire population of the species. They're also extremely cute.

Despite its name, I find the unmistakable brightness of their 'grassy' green colour to be one of the most unique and eye-catching characteristics of the OBP.

Orange Bellied Parrots on Moonah
at Lake Connewarre.

Credit: Corangamite Catchment
Management Authority





Figure 1. Orange-bellied Parrot Distribution Map Credit: Corangamite Catchment Management Authority

In remote, south-west Tasmania, are the only known breeding grounds of the OBPs in a place called Melaleuca, a spot only accessible by hiking or flying in. This is where these approximately four-gram little beauties spend their summers. Then in early autumn, they begin migrating north, travelling approximately 500 km to spend the winter here with us in Victoria (Figure 1). This is where the mystery arises. There is little known about where exactly the OBPs are overwintering in Victoria, although there's plenty of available habitat and food given the low population numbers.

The Bellarine Peninsula on Wadawurrung Country is a primary location for the saltmarsh habitat suitable for the OBPs, and they have been spotted feeding or perching on plant species such as Shrubby Glasswort, *Tecticornia arbuscula*, Coastal Saltbush, *Atriplex cinerea*, Beaded Glasswort, *Salicornia quinqueflora*, and Austral Seablite, *Suaeda australis*. However, the habitat available now is continually threatened by human impacts and degradation.



Salicornia quinqueflora at Lake Connemare.
Image: Madeleine Slingo

Habitat protection – predominantly on private land – has been a priority for those working with this species on the Bellarine Peninsula, to ensure the migrants have something to greet them when they arrive after their arduous journey.

There are also concerted efforts across both Victoria and Tasmania in captive breeding and release. I have been lucky enough to meet and work with private landholders, whose generosity has been central to the habitat protection work undertaken particularly on the shores of Lake Connemare.

Private land is often host to untouched gems of remnant habitat, not just saltmarsh, for endangered species which, when tapped into, can be key to the progress of programs like this one.

View the video about Orange-bellied Parrot Mainland Release Trial.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmex6Yx01GY>

There is ongoing effort through the national recovery plan, government funding and volunteer endeavours which are providing meaningful outcomes for this already limited population. You can follow the regular updates from the Tasmanian Department of Natural Resources and Environment which has welcomed record-breaking numbers of migrants enjoying their summertime home on their FaceBook page:



www.facebook.com/TasmanianOrangebelliedParrot

Each year, there are more and more OBPs arriving back in Melaleuca, a lot of whom haven't been spotted during winter on the mainland, where new monitoring methods are being tested and tweaked each season to help locate more over-wintering birds.

By continuing to protect habitat and food sources for the OBPs, we in Victoria will be providing them a welcoming place over winter and will give me the pleasure of knowing they are still visiting each year.

What laid those little eggs?

Kaye Traynor

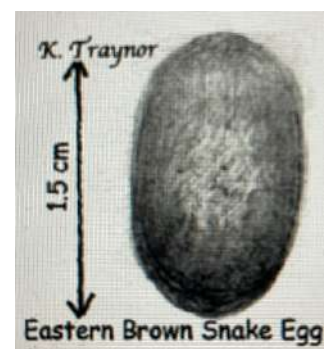
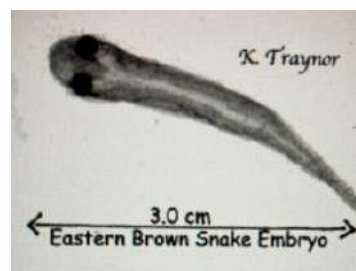
In February 2014 Kaye Traynor illustrated and wrote the following article for the Angair newsletter detailing the summer's interesting snake encounters. She quoted propagation team leader Bill McKellar at length on one encounter found on the McKellar property, Grasstrees, near Point Addis.

'We should be used to sharing our area with the fourth and fifth most venomous snakes in the world – the Eastern Brown Snake and the Tiger Snake – as well as the Copperhead, number seven on the venomous list. These [last two] snakes, as well as most lizards, are viviparous (having live young).

During the last heatwave, both a Tiger Snake and a Copperhead were identified at Grasstrees. On the same day, it was startling to find in the potting mix near our shed 54 live and 60 empty snake eggs. They were about 1.5 cm by 1.0 cm, white, oval and with a leathery shell. Inside were embryonic snakes. Investigation indicated these to be Brown Snake eggs. They are the only egg-laying snakes big enough to produce these eggs. Brown Snakes generally lay 15-20 eggs and sometimes will lay eggs with other Brown Snakes.

The staff at the Museum of Victoria were impressed with the high number, as was the local snake catcher. Thus we appear to have 2-3 female Brown Snakes living around our propagating shed, which, so far, has not caused us any grief. At least the *Rattus rattus* population has disappeared! That's made an easier life for our tiny plants.

The idea of having 54 or more baby snakes around us was worrying, so the eggs have been relocated to a rabbit burrow a long way from home.'



Saving lives by saving land

Louisa Bartels*

In 2022, Australia committed to conserving 30 per cent of its terrestrial, inland water, and coastal marine areas by 2030, in line with the global biodiversity framework. A crucial aspect of achieving this goal is private land conservation. With approximately 60 per cent of Australia's land privately owned, the role landowners have to play is significant.

Many landholders are already taking actions to improve habitats for wildlife, removing invasive plant species and allowing native ecosystems to regenerate, or revegetating degraded landscapes on their properties to enhance ecosystem resilience. An example with which Angair members are very aware is the restoration of Lot 2 in the Painkalac Valley. Restoring habitat helps to reconnect fragmented landscapes and link habitats to adjacent bushland, nature reserves or national parks and improves ecosystem connectivity.

Various conservation agreements and covenants offer landholders valuable ways to preserve their land both now and into the future and receive land management support. One such conservation program is the Wildlife Land Trust (WLT).

The WLT is the national private land conservation program of Humane World for Animals. It's a network of over 920 member-owned sanctuaries that are conserving and restoring their land, committed to preserving wildlife and habitats.

The trust is an inclusive and free program with participating landholders varying in their land use. They include farmers, eco-accommodation providers, conservationists, wildlife carers and regular landowners who want to support wildlife on their land.

Properties must be sized over one acre to be eligible for the WLT program; however, exceptions can be made for smaller properties with high biodiversity value. To become a member, landholders must agree to not partake in recreational or commercial hunting of wildlife, commercial logging or harvesting of timber or other activities that would destroy wildlife habitat on their property. The agreement is not legally binding, and the program complements current or future land protection arrangements.

WLT members benefit from the program through personalised conservation advice and support on conservation issues, access to wildlife events and, potentially, funding assistance through grants. Members can share their conservation stories with other members through the twice-yearly print newsletter and monthly e-newsletters.

Initiatives accessible to members also include Sanctuaries You Can Stay designed for accommodation providers who want to connect with environmentally conscious travellers. Landholders seeking an environmentally-minded steward for their land to maintain its biodiversity can also advertise through the Sanctuaries for Sale website section.

If you are interested in joining the Wildlife Land Trust, the first step involves filling in a simple application form with an overview of your property and goals for your land. Scan the QR code or visit the link to start your application <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/wlt> Learn more about what the WLT is all about at <https://hsi.org.au/australian-wildlife-and-habitats>

* Louisa Bartels is the WLT Program Officer and you can contact her at lbartels@hsi.org



Humane World
for Animals.
Wildlife Land Trust

What's the cost of a sparrowhawk family dinner?

James Orton

Local birdwatchers were stirred to debate at the end of January by sightings of Collared Sparrowhawks at Distillery Creek. This was partly the inevitable discussion as to whether the birds really were Collared Sparrowhawks or Brown Goshawks, both of which are found throughout Australia. The birds are very similar, although the Brown Goshawk is somewhat larger. Anyway, in this instance the square-cut (not rounded) tip to the tail, the call and colouration around the face confirmed it was a sparrowhawk.

Someone in the local bird chat group who had been overseas remarked on a Thursday: 'since I got back on Monday I've barely seen a single bird!'. A rough calculation suggests this was not bad luck. The average weight of a sparrowhawk is 170 grams. Assuming they eat about 20 per cent of their weight each day and 75 per cent of their food is birds, the family would need around 130 grams of bird food a day. New Holland Honeyeaters weigh around 20 grams, and based on these figures, the five sparrowhawks would eat around 45 honeyeaters per week!



Adult Sparrowhawk. Image: Margaret Lacey

Normally sparrowhawks are hard to notice. As suggested by their name, they hunt small birds, and wait for their feathered prey, hidden and quiet in the trees. The sparrowhawks at Distillery Creek were often making a big racket. Turns out there was a family of two adults and three young birds, and dinner time was very noisy.



The three young birds at Distillery Creek are shown in the photo (left) and one of the adult birds in the other (top).

Note the different pattern on the breast of the young birds. They are very handsome birds, but very scary if you are a small bird!

Juvenile Sparrowhawks
Image: Katie Pahlow

Autumn orchids await the seasonal rains

Margaret MacDonald and Alison Watson

It has certainly been a long dry summer and we are desperately hoping for some rain to help our orchids. There are a number of species that respond to the autumn rains that used to be a relatively regular occurrence. Despite the changing climatic patterns, we will stay optimistic.

A few Autumn Wasp Orchids, *Chiloglottis curviclavia*, have already been seen with the paired dark-green leaves pushing their way through the dry, hardened soil. The tiny flower didn't last long in the dry hot weather.



Autumn Wasp Orchid. Image Graham Lee



Fringed Midge Orchid. Image; Margaret MacDonald

We will keep fingers crossed for our Midge Orchids: the Fringed Midge Orchid, *Corunastylis ciliata*, which as with all *Corunastylis* species has the upside flower emerging from a slit near the top of the cylindrical leaf, the extremely rare Sharp Midge Orchid, *C. despectans*, and the Bearded Midge Orchid, *C. morrisii*, with its dense flower spike.



Large Autumn Greenhood. Image Graham Lee



Parson's Bands. Image Graham Lee

Large Autumn Greenhoods, *Pterostylis ampliata*, Fringed Hare Orchids, *Leporella fimbriata*, Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucullatus*, Tiny Greenhood, *Pterostylis parviflora*, and Brown-tipped Greenhood, *P. clivosa*, are possible autumn sightings. These orchids, like us, will be anxiously awaiting early autumn rains.

Parks Victoria resumes deer control

Sally White

Parks Victoria has extended its deer control program in the Great Otway National Park (GONP) and the Eastern Otways to include private landowners whose properties adjoin the park and who want to get rid of the damaging pests. To participate in the program, landowners have to register their interest by emailing the Deer Control Coordinator at westregiondcp@parks.vic.gov.au and signing the consent form.

Authorised deer shooters will operate at night using thermal technology to pinpoint the animals' whereabouts. Many of the deer carcasses will be harvested and taken to approved processing plants. The hunters will avoid shooting animals in wetlands, waterways or close to tracks to minimise the impact on water quality and leaving carcasses to upset visitors. If this is impossible the carcasses will be moved away from the site.

The GONP will generally remain open except the areas immediately affected will be closed from 5 pm to allow visitors to leave safely. If you're planning a walk through the park, you can find the up-to-date information about closures on the Parks Victoria website. The program will not operate during school holidays and on Friday and Saturday nights.

Deer were introduced to Australia in the mid-1880s as part of the misguided 'acclimatisation' schemes aimed at bringing animals and plants familiar to Europeans to the Australian colonies. These included rabbits, foxes, blackberries, prickly pear, gorse – and deer.

The deer population is increasing and their range has expanded considerably. In the past 20 years, it is estimated that deer have almost doubled in range nationally. Alarming, given the right seasonal conditions and left uncontrolled, deer populations can increase by 34-50 per cent each year.

The animals cause considerable damage to the local environment. Their hard hooves trample and destroy plants and compact the soil. They compete with native animals for food. They ringbark young saplings. They foul the water sources and spread weeds. Outside the bush areas, they are a significant road safety hazard and can also impact a range of agricultural pursuits.

The two species most commonly seen on the Surf Coast and in the Otways came from Europe. They are the large Red Deer, *Cervus elaphus*, a subspecies of which is the emblematic animal of Scotland, and the smaller Fallow Deer, *Dama dama*, which has a spotted coat that changes with the seasons. The latter has been noted to eat a highly flexible diet which bodes ill for our bushland. There have also been sightings in the Otways of small numbers of Sambar Deer, *Rusa unicolor*, which is native to the Indian subcontinent.

A successful deer control program in our area is much needed and you can help keep tabs on the numbers of deer around the Surf Coast. Parks Victoria encourages people to record sightings of deer, report damage and log any private control actions by using Deer Scan on www.feralscan.org.au/deerscan.



Blanket Weed: another unwelcome introduction

Peter Forster



You need more fingers than on two hands to count the environmental weeds from South Africa that threaten our Surf Coast landscapes: Boneseed, Polygala, African Box-thorn, Agapanthus, Cape Weed, Gazania, Watsonia, Bridal Creeper, Cape Ivy, Arum Lily, Dolichos Pea and more.

Blanket Weed, *Aizoon pubescens*, is another. It is also called Coastal Galenia, Carpet Plant, Blanket Plant, or Carpet Weed which gives you an idea of what it looks like. It forms dense mats to 600 mm high and 1.6 metres wide which have the potential to smother desirable plants and prevent germination of native species.

Blanket Weed has been spotted and removed recently at several street verge/footpath locations in Anglesea (McDougal Road) and Aireys Inlet (near the lighthouse café). If you spot this invasive weed you can easily remove it pulling it out. Make sure you get the taproot! The infestation in McDougal Road was about one metre in diameter and half filled a green bin provided by an accommodating nearby resident.

There is another larger infestation on an old tip site near Pipeline Track. Angair volunteers have been assisting DEECA with revegetation on this site and a contractor has been hired to spray the weeds.

If you have travelled up the Western Highway west of Bacchus Marsh in the Pentland Hills you can get an idea of how invasive this weed is; it almost completely covers large paddocks on the south side of the highway so that all other groundcover is eliminated. It also occurs and is spreading on the Geelong Ring Road and the sides of the Geelong-to-Ballararat Road under gum trees where there is bare ground.

Blanket Weed is mainly a plant of open native vegetation and roadsides and waste places, only invading degraded paddocks. It reproduces by seed which are dispersed by wind and water or spread by birds and livestock. It can also spread in soil, seeds and sometime roots and root particles that are attached to machinery or people.

The species was introduced to the coal-mining areas of New South Wales, like so many other weeds, as an erosion control measure. It is drought and salt tolerant and it grows in sandy or loamy soils, poor soil, and beach sand. It has also been recorded as growing around old mine sites on stony, shallow soils. It spreads along roadsides, waterways and other disturbed areas and prefers low elevation areas, winter rainfall and long dry summers.

Native salt bush species (members of the family Chenopodiaceae) are similar in some ways to Blanket Weed, the flowers of which have 10 stamens while saltbush species have five or fewer. In the United States of America Blanket Weed was introduced as a useful erosion control because of its vigorous, dense growth and because its succulent leaves characteristic of the Chenopod family, were perceived to be advantageous for fire control.

Whatever its value to erosion control, Blanket Weed is of no agricultural value. It was tested unsuccessfully as a potential pasture species in western New South Wales in the 1990s and studies have shown that it can produce toxic levels of nitrates and soluble oxalates if grown in fertile soils. This is generally found in areas where over-grazing has occurred. The toxic compounds were not found in high levels in plants grown in infertile soils. The plant's flowers are attractive to bees but those that collect the nectar produce honey with such a disagreeable bitter flavour that it is unsaleable.

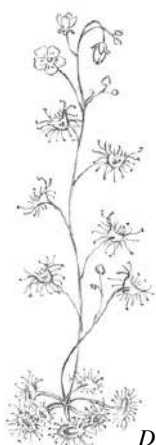
In urban areas it can invade any disturbed areas like roadsides, parks, footpaths and lawns. Elsewhere it aggressively invades coastal dunes, disturbed open vegetation, roadside vegetation, and rocky outcrop vegetation. In Victoria, it has been recorded in dry coastal vegetation, low grasslands, grassy woodland, dry sclerophyll forest and rock outcrop vegetation. Blanket Weed is a difficult weed to control once established and an integrated approach using numerous control methods is necessary.

The weed can be controlled with the use of a registered herbicide applied using a foliar spray on fresh new growth when plants are actively growing during winter, spring and summer. Optimal control is achieved for immature plants or before flowering. The use of herbicide alone will require follow-up checks and retreatment. Replanting bare areas will help prevent re-establishment and reduce the number of follow-up treatments.



Hand-pulling and forms of mechanical removal, such as ploughing, chipping and grubbing, are effective management options so long as the large taproot is removed; otherwise plants will regrow. Removing large infestations can potentially leave significant areas of bare ground so it is wise to consider a vegetation replacement program to prevent re-invasion by other weeds and a return of the Blanket Weed.

Reference: Weeds Australia, <https://weeds.org.au> accessed on 28/12/2024



Drosera peltata



Acacia dealbata

Ruth Hurst's drawings



Pterostylis nutans



Caladenia congesta

Allen Noble Sanctuary fans have plans

Anne Davies



Source: Anglesea Historical Society

The Allen Noble Sanctuary, a naturally-occurring freshwater marsh, feeds into the Painkalac Creek and therefore is part of the Painkalac valley and catchment area. The first post-settlement photographs of the sanctuary (from the late 1800s into the early 1900s) portray a denuded farming landscape featuring the Angahook Homestead next to a swamp accessible to stock.

During the 1900s, much of the land was subdivided but the wetland was gifted to the then Barrabool Shire by Allen Noble, a descendent of an early settler family and keen bird watcher. In the 1960s and the early 2000s, significant work removed a build-up of silt, created open water and landscaped a place where indigenous plants and animals could thrive. Now an Angair group – the Friends of Allen Noble Sanctuary (FANS) – has been gathering for monthly working bees to weed, prune, plant and mulch led by Barry Whelan.

At the end of 2024 the FANS surveyed the sanctuary's users. Most respondents are regular visitors, often walking there alone but sometimes visiting with family, friends, their dog/s or community groups.

Details of the survey results can be found on the FANS page of the Angair website. In order to consider the survey results and to collect more data about the current conditions at the sanctuary, the Painkalac Valley Network, together with the FANS, has established a working group.

Over summer, members have been testing the water quality and the results can be found on the Painkalac Valley Network section of the Angair website. So too can the bird and mammal list that Katie Pahlow, with a group of dedicated observers, has compiled. So far, they have listed 105 birds and four small mammals.

The next step is for the working group to develop a management plan for the next 25 years. In undertaking this work, we will draw on the expertise of the Painkalac Valley Network, Angair, Aireys Inlet and District Association (AIDA), the Surf Coast Shire (SCS) and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA).

And of course we would welcome your input too!



Angair's Who's Who 2025

An active and growing community group such as Angair has a large number of volunteers who take on responsibilities to keep the whole thing running. Here are the names of those hard-working members and their special areas of interest. If you want to get in touch with any of these volunteers to join their group or ask for information, send an email to admin@angair.org.au and the office will pass your request to the right person.

Committee of Management

President: Liz Fenwick
Vice-President: Rob Shepherd
Secretary: Meredith Sussex
Treasurer: Conrad White
Committee members: Ellinor Campbell, Ash Clearihan, Roger Ganly, Lecki Ord, David Walmsley, Sally White

Specialist Committees

Communications: Sue Couper
Education: Ellinor Campbell
Finance: Conrad White
Flora and Fauna: Chris Morrissey
Information Technology: Bill Clarke
Membership: Lecki Ord
Plant Propagation: Roger Ganly
Wildflower and Arts Weekend: David Walmsley

Special Interest Groups

Environmental Care: Janet Stephens
Friends of Aireys Inlet Valley and Coastal Reserve: Roger Ganly
Friends of Allen Noble Sanctuary: Barry Whelan
Friends of Eastern Otways (GONP): Colleen Miller
Friends of Moggs Creek: Margaret MacDonald
Friends of Point Addis Marine National Park: Bronwyn Spark
Painkalac Valley Network: Rod Brooks



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 and present who continue to care for this place.

This issue:

Editor: Sally White
Production: Olivia Clarke, Bill Clarke

Next issue:

Our next issue will be published in June 2025 and will be the winter edition. We welcome any contributions of local, seasonal or general environmental interest. Send your contributions to angair.communication@gmail.com by mid-February and clearly label them 'for Angair Quarterly'.