

Friends of Coolart

NEWSLETTER 1/86

February

Dear Friend of Coolart,

We hope that 1986 has started well for all of you - it certainly has for Coolart, with more visitors than ever before in January. Our thanks to all the Friends who provided additional staffing during this busy time.

ROSTERS

Once again we are asking for your help on Saturdays and Sundays. Enclosed with the newsletter are two blank roster sheets - green for Saturdays and white for Sundays - covering the period February to May of this year. If you would like to assist, please fill in the sheets and return them as directed. When the duty rosters are complete a copy will be sent to all volunteers.

We hope that both new and old Friends will want to help in this way - you will all be very welcome

WEEKDAY HELP

If any Friends are available to help in the shop on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Wednesdays, please ring Mrs Jo Eabry, (059) 89 8394, or leave a message for her at Coolart.

COMING EVENTS

Coolart Guides

For those Friends who are interested in training as guides for groups of visitors to Coolart the next meeting will be at Coolart at 2.00 pm on Saturday, 15 March, (not 9 February as previously arranged). Brian Thomas, our assistant Warden, will lead a bird observer training session, and general notes on Coolart should be available.

Bradley Method for Bush Regeneration

On the weekend of March 22 - 23 Coolart will be host to two experienced bush regenerators from the National Trust of NSW - Evelyn Hickey, who for ten years was the administrator of the Trust's Bush Regeneration Program, and Joan Larking, one of the current supervisors of the Program.

At the invitation of the Committee of Management these two ladies will be running training sessions at Coolart.

The aim of the Bradley method is to restore and maintain a satisfactory ecosystem whereby natural regeneration can occur, i.e. help the bush to help itself.

The basic principles of the method are:

- 1) work from the least weed infested areas to the more heavily infested.
- 2) keep soil disturbance to a minimum.
- 3) allow native plant regeneration to dictate the rate of weed removal.

Regenerators must also be skilled in assessing those areas where the method can best be applied, and in recognising and identifying plants, both native and exotic. It is a slow, long-term method requiring considerable training and commitment by those who are prepared to work as regenerators, but when applied to suitable areas of weed-infested bushland, such as parts of Coolart, it is both very effective and permanent.

The weekend will be divided into four sessions. On Saturday morning, 22nd March, there will be a general introductory session to which all Friends are welcome. The remaining three sessions, (Saturday afternoon, and Sunday, morning and afternoon), will be for intense training of a small group of Friends. As the sessions require considerable personal supervision our two trainers have set a limit of 10 for this group.

Making the selection has been difficult. We have used the lists of Friends involved in working parties and tree-planting during 1985 as a basis for our choice, and the Warden will be getting in touch with some of them to see if they are interested, and have the time to make such a commitment.

We plan to hold further training sessions later in the year when this group of trainees have become more experienced, and we have started to use the method in suitable areas at Coolart.

Plant Shop

After a very successful Australia Day weekend when the Plant Shop raised \$180, it will now be closed until Easter Day, Sunday, 30th March, when another sale of plants and produce is planned. Donations of suitable goods will be welcome. Our thanks go to the Friends who helped stock the shop for the January effort, and especially to Jean Ellis and Jo Eabry for all their time and effort.

Tree Planting

As mentioned in the Warden's report, (see below), tree-planting working parties are planned for each Saturday and Sunday in April. Why not pack some lunch, bring the family, do a little tree-planting, and spend the rest of the time just enjoying Coolart.

Nature Prints Exhibition

These beautiful prints by Eric Hochberg will be on display until the 6th April in the upstairs gallery rooms. Don't miss them.

Visit to French Island

It is hoped to arrange a weekend visit to French Island, Westernport Bay, sometime during May. Des Quinn from the Friends of French Island has agreed to lead a group and to show us areas of particular environmental interest, as well as some bird and animal life.

It may be possible for some of us to stay overnight on the island. More details will be provided later.

REPORTS

Annual General Meeting. November 10, 1985

Approximately 40 Friends attended the AGM at which the following were elected to the 1986 Friends' Committee:- Bruce Benton, Jo Eabry, Graeme Enting, Matt Ferguson, Randolph Hargreaves, Dorothy Morrison, Beryl Smith, Ian Taylor, Marion Taylor. Thanks were expressed to Jean Hodgson, retiring 1985 committee member, who did not seek re-election. Chairman of the Committee of Management, Gordon Cameron, and Warden, Steve Yorke, both addressed the meeting and Friends raised some issues of concern, including the adoption of the new logo. As a result of these discussions the Friends' Committee will meet with the Committee of Management to determine the role and responsibilities of the Friends' Committee.

Observatory Opening. 23rd November, 1985

Many thanks to all the Friends who helped in so many ways to make the Observatory opening such a resounding success. All who attended, including Friends, invited guests, and the Minister for Conservation, Forests, and Lands, Ms Joan Kirner, who performed the official opening, had a most enjoyable day, and the reputation of Coolart was greatly enhanced.

Christmas in the Stables. 14 December, 1985

More Friends than ever before enjoyed a barbecue tea, an organ and bagpipe recital, carol singing, and a Christmas supper in the house. A botany walk before tea and a spotlight tour after supper completed the evening.

WARDEN'S REPORT

Linda and I would like to wish all Friends a happy and prosperous New Year. I'm certain that, for all of us, 1986 will be just as exciting, enjoyable and productive as last year. What makes Coolart such a wonderful place, beyond the natural beauty and environmental values, is that so many people are involved. This was brought home to me on the day of the official opening of the observatory by Joan Kirner - Friends, staff, CEP people and guests all there in support. I would like to thank the Friends who came to the opening, and especially those who helped with prior organisation and catering. It was a great day.

There is always so much to report on what's been happening I can only mention some of the highlights.

Back in November, our Friends propagating group got stuck in and potted up the native seedlings in the now operational greenhouse. 2100 seedlings into tubes in just 2 sessions! They are now out in the new shadehouse and the gums are nearly half a metre tall. Think of all the work we have created for our tree-planters! We plan to continue with wetland and woodland planting this autumn, so each Saturday and Sunday in April are proposed as treeplanting days. If a few Friends come on each day, 2000 trees will be no trouble at all.

I mentioned manna gums and koalas in the last newsletter. I can now report that most of the trees are recovering very well indeed and unseasonal weather has produced exceptional growth. At the end of November, the Department's koala crew came down to take a few koalas away and I was most impressed with their skill in catching them with the least possible trauma, even though there were a few 'hairy' moments. The injury list amounted to a torn finger and a badly torn hat, but the final score was 8 koalas caught and transferred to the Briars at Mornington.

For our birds, 1985 was a brilliant year. Ibis are still raising chicks in early January; chestnut teal are still occupying nest boxes; the black-shouldered kites have 3 youngsters; and so much more. Three plumed egrets in November added a new record to Coolart's list and a pair of freckled duck arrived in December.

1985 was excellent for visitors too. Almost 27000 visited, 5000 up on the previous year. More and more people are becoming aware of just how special Coolart is, and I must thank all the volunteer Friends for helping to make a visit to Coolart such an enjoyable experience.

There have been a few recent changes for visitors: self-service tea and coffee are now available on each open day besides Sunday; the audio-visual is being shown at 1.30 each day and being very well received; there is a new Coolart brochure incorporating 'things to see and do'. When you see the new brochure, please let me know what you think of it - your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Another change is the realignment of the Woodland Walk - it now begins near the carpark and passes the Bird Observers Club hide in the bush dam paddock before joining the original track. New guide notes are currently being prepared.

Once again, all the best for 1986; we hope to see you all sometime this year.

New members - Oct 1 to Dec 31

Mr and Mrs D. Worrall, the Dunn family, John and June Zwar, Philip and Edith Straw, Christine Straw, Mr and Mrs Keeran, Mrs L. Robinson, Robert and Dorothy Veitch, Trevor and Laurel Andrews, Dr McFeeters (life), the Carey family, Mr and Mrs P. Stafford, Mrs Marjorie Russell, Mr and Mrs P. Galbraith, Mr and Mrs P. Grant, Peter and Kathie Strickland, Dr and Mrs H. Wain, Dr J. Thompson and Dr S. Denton, Rex and Phyllis Stevenson, Mrs Yulie Greig, Jocelyn Talmage, the Asker family, Dr and Mrs N. Berry, Denise Krake, David Christmas, Mrs Mary Hood, Gary and Valerie Richardson, Bill and Christine Pearse, Mr and Mrs I. Hamilton, Dr Ron Wells MLA, Bob and Grietje Croll, and Mr and Mrs R. Cox.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Friends' subscriptions are now due and may be sent directly to:-

Coolart Reserve,
P.O.Box 84,
Balnarring,
Victoria. 3926.

or returned with your roster sheets.

Please make cheques payable to Coolart Committee of Management, complete the slip below, and return both to Coolart.

Friends of Coolart - Subscription for 1986

NAME

ADDRESS

. POST CODE

Membership Category (please circle the appropriate category)

Single \$10.00 p.a.

Joint (Husband and wife) \$15.00 p.a.

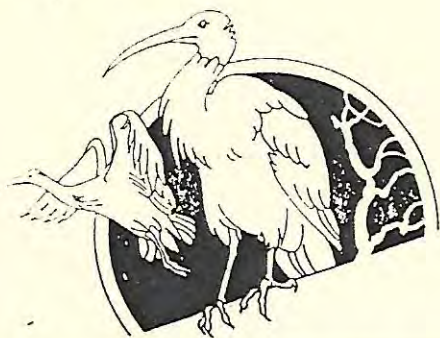
Family (Parents and school-age children) \$20.00 p.a.

Life (single) \$100.00

Life (joint) \$150.00

I enclose cheque/money order for \$ as payment for my subscription to
the Friends of Coolart for 1986.

Signature



Friends of Coolart

MAY 1986

NEWSLETTER 2/86

EDITOR M. Taylor

Dear Friend of Coolart,

From time to time some of you have asked about the Coolart Committee of Management - who are they and how are they appointed? In addition, many of our newer Friends may not know that we also have a Friends Committee. This issue of the newsletter invites you to 'Meet the Committees'.

Coolart Committee of Management

Members of this committee are appointed by the Minister for Conservation, Forests, and Lands, following a recommendation from one of the groups or organisations who are represented on the committee. The present members are:

Mr Gordon Cameron. Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. Chairman.

Cr Lorna Bennetts. Hastings Shire Council.

Mr John Cunningham. Dept. Conservation, Forests, and Lands. Dandenong Region.

Mr Ron Gamble. Education Department of Victoria.

Mr Ron Robb. Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council.

Mrs Marion Taylor. Friends of Coolart.

Mr John Vince. Victorian Association for Environmental Education.

Advice has just been received from the Department that the two vacancies which occurred when the Department was restructured will be filled by Mr Gary Backhouse, Wildlife Officer, and Mr John Richardson, Assistant Regional Manager, Services, both from the Dandenong Region of the Department.

Friends of Coolart Committee

Members of this committee are elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Coolart. As well as planning and organising activities and functions for the Friends, this committee acts on requests from the Committee of Management and makes recommendations to that committee on matters of concern to the Friends. The 1986 committee members are:

Mr Bruce Benton. 059 74 1632

Mrs Jo Eabry. 059 89 8394

Mr Graeme Enting. 059 82 1709

Mr Matt Ferguson. 059 74 2188

Mr Randolph Hargreaves. 059 71 3237

Mrs Dorothy Morrison. 584 4401

Mrs Beryl Smith. 417 3051

Mr Ian Taylor. 568 0253 & 059 821580

Mrs Marion Taylor. 568 0253 & 059 821580 Convenor.

If Friends have any matters which they would like to bring to the notice of the Committee, any of the above members would be very pleased to hear from them.

ROSTERS

Although both bird and visitor activity diminishes during the cold weather, Coolart still needs all the usual service points manned, especially on weekends.

If you are not one of the lucky ones who is heading north for the winter, perhaps you could help from time to time. Enclosed with this newsletter are the two blank roster sheets- green for Saturdays and white for Sundays - to cover the months from June to September. Please fill them in and return them as instructed. When the duty rosters are complete a copy will be sent to all volunteers.

COMING EVENTS

French Island Visit

A bird observing tour of French Island has been arranged for Saturday, 24 May, and a general tour of the island is available on Sunday, 25 May. Some accommodation can be provided at the French Island Lodge on Saturday night. Friends may book for either or both tours, and may choose to go home on Saturday night and return via the ferry on Sunday morning. The ferry leaves Stony Point pier at 9.00 am each morning and we would be returning at approx. 5.00 pm in the evening.

Des Quinn of the Friends of French Island will lead the bird tour and transport on the island will be provided by tour operator Alan Chandler.

Cost: Saturday or Sunday - \$9.00 per person plus \$5.00 ferry fare. Bring your own cut lunch.

Over-night accommodation - \$45.00 per person. This includes dinner on Saturday night and breakfast and a cut lunch on Sunday.

As numbers are limited, especially for accommodation, please contact Mrs Marion Taylor, 03 568 0253 or 059 82 1580 as soon as possible to reserve a place for either day or to book accommodation. Pre-payment is required for accommodation.

Attention all gatekeepers (and other interested Friends)!

On Sunday, 15 June, there will be a meeting at 2.30 pm at Coolart to discuss a possible re-design of the entrance/exit to the car park and the siting of the 'sentry box'. The Committee of Management have asked the Friends for a recommendation on this problem. If you cannot attend, please put your suggestions in writing and post them to Mrs Marion Taylor, 19 Midlothian St, Chadstone. 3148.

REPORTS

Sheep and Wool Day

Jean Hodgson

The South East region of the Black and Coloured Sheep Breeders Association held their annual sheep and wool display in the grounds of Coolart on January 26th. Once again the weather was perfect and the spinners and weavers of the Peninsula displayed their craft on the lawns - a very colourful sight with many visitors trying their skill at spinning. The wool shed was a hive of industry with shearing throughout the day and a display of breeds of sheep with the owners nearby to answer queries.

The sundials made by Fritz Masée set up in the herb garden were an interesting feature. (Maybe we could have one as a permanent fixture).

We had over 700 visitors to Coolart, and, thanks to Steve, Brian, and the Friends, all went well. To give an indication how busy we were, there was a queue outside the dining room waiting their turn for the famous Coolart Devonshire teas.

Thanks to all concerned.

Bradley Method Weekend

Bruce Benton

Eve!yn Hickey and Joan Larking from NSW National Trust spoke to us on Saturday morning, 22nd March, and the afternoon and Sunday morning were spent on practical work under instruction on two areas of Coolart. Sunday afternoon was taken up with visits to Buckley's Reserve, Balnarring, (very heavily infested with Sweet Pittosporum, a native Gippsland, but a weed on the Peninsula), and a reserve at Bittern which was a joy, a seemingly rare phenomenon these days - beautiful, untouched Australian bush!

The Bradley Method is so simple we probably all wonder why we didn't think of it,

(cont. P.4.)

WARDEN'S REPORT

Relief at last - good April rains after three very dry months has the place lovely and green once again. The dry weather, however, has brought lots of visitors - over 10 000 to the end of March.

The main item to report is the recent commencement of our second Community Employment Program, with six workers for six months. Their task is to plant upwards of 15 000 trees and shrubs, grown from local seed in our nursery, in the "Panhandle" area towards Balnarring Beach. In their first six weeks, over 10 000 trees have been potted into tubes, and should be ready for planting out in July, August and September. Other works include weed and rabbit control, Woodland Walk realignment, a bridge across Home Creek and the construction of a new wetland - this time using salt water pumped by windmill from Merricks Creek - hopefully to attract migrant waders.

We have recently installed pipelines from the Lagoon to the Wetlands and from the latter to the depression by the beach track. Our aim is to be better able to control the water level and salinity of the Wetland thereby improving bird habitat. We have also built a concrete spillway on the Wetland to prevent the possibility of flooding the Observatory, and we've also solved the mudbrick erosion problem by recoating the walls with Raw Earth Emulsion.

There's too much more to mention, except for my exhibition upstairs of Victorian orchid photographs. I hope to see many Friends on our forthcoming French Island trip. Bye for now.

BIRD REPORT by Brian Thomas, Assistant Warden

I am very pleased that Marion has asked me to write a few words on Coolart's birds. Firstly, it gives me the opportunity to say hello to the Friends who as yet I haven't met and secondly it gives me the chance to share my experience at Coolart.

One of my first jobs was to create with sand and pebbles a nesting area for plovers. This was situated on the island immediately in front of the observatory. It wasn't long before the birds discovered it and to our delight a pair of Masked lapwings (Spur-winged plovers) took up residence, built what passes for a nest as far as lapwings are concerned (a few sticks and a scrape in the ground) and proceeded to lay and incubate their eggs, exposed to all weather and the curious gaze of hundreds of visitors. The nest was defended vigorously, Swamp harriers were themselves harried by the parents, Swampheens were kept well clear and even the Assistant Warden trying to clean the observatory windows was given short shift! After about three weeks the eggs hatched and the chicks, which were mobile quite soon after hatching, stayed in the island for a day or so before being led away by their parents.

I have been impressed by the number of raptors (birds of prey) that either inhabit or visit the reserve. Our Black-shouldered kites successfully reared three young, an indication of an abundance of food, probably mice. In lean years only one young might be raised. The Brown goshawks managed two chicks and they were to be seen and more frequently, heard, around the garden and lagoon. One, in an over-enthusiastic hunting attempt was seen to plunge into the lagoon and scramble out to sit looking rather sheepish on a log.

Swamp harriers, Kestrels and Little falcons are seen regularly and occasional exciting sightings of Little eagles and Whistling kites, but the most thrilling of all was a visit by an immature White-breasted sea-eagle to the lagoon.

The adult birds are magnificent creatures with pure white head and body and grey back and wings. This one was still in its immature plumage but was impressive nonetheless. It appeared to have a surprisingly small head but its wings were enormous, and when spread revealed with whitish wedge shaped tail. The eagle's arrival certainly stirred the ducks up but when they realised he was not hunting they soon settled down, some even went to sleep beneath him! He stayed for nearly two hours although it wasn't always peaceful for him as the Goshawk took exception to his presence and swooped him several times.

It has been a good breeding season for the birds and I have had great pleasure in watching several build their nests and rear their young. In particular the Orange-winged sittellas who decided to nest in a tea-tree "ear marked" to be cleared from near a guarded manna gum. With chain saws buzzing beneath them they continued to build their nest (their tree was spared). Despite their co-operative breeding habits they took a very long time to complete the nest, but when done it was a masterpiece of camouflage. Before long, eggs were laid and eventually hatched and hungry mouths kept the group busy searching along the branches and under bits of bark for insects.

With the long spell of dry weather we've had, the lower wetlands have almost dried out leaving only a few muddy patches which are full of eels. I noticed that the mud was criss-crossed with fox tracks - could they be hunting the eels? The answer wasn't long in coming when a few days later I saw a fox trotting around the edge of the upper wetlands with an eel hanging from his jaws. Even though the fox obviously had his breakfast the birds were taking no chances; the ducks all took to the water and the Hoary-headed grebes formed themselves into a raft; only the Swamphens stayed on the land, one startling the fox by flying out in front of him.

These are just a few of the interesting things I have seen during my first six months. I feel very privileged to work at a place where part of my job is to watch these beautiful and wonderful things happen and it is my pleasure to share them with you.

Bradley Method Weekend (cont. from P.2.)

although a lot of us have used it in some form, such as replacing soil and overburden after weeding in the bush.

The important thing is to be able to identify the various plants in the area to be worked, and Steve Yorke agreed to compile a reference file of pressings of the various plants and grasses in Coolart for ease of identification.

The enthusiastic students were Steve Yorke, Brian Thomas, Les Smith, Ann-Heather White, Jon Browning, Kathy Strickland, Ann Raymond, and the writer of this report. For the Bradley method of bush regeneration, see the publication Bush Regeneration by Joan Bradley, published by Mosman Parklands and Ashton Park Associations. A copy is available in the library in the Friends' room.

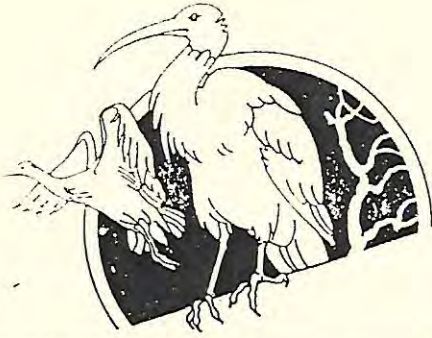
Plant and Produce Shop

Jo Eabry

The Shop opened on Easter Saturday with a marvellous response to requests for stock. We had a busy time naming and marking-up all the pot plants donated by so many gardeners. The standard was the highest ever, and plants were well-established, healthy, and attractive.

Trixie Chambers provided a highlight once again with her beautiful Rock Cyclamens and they went with speed! Jean Ellis came from Reservoir to supervise the 'Easter SundaySpecial' and on that day we had an array of jams, chutneys, sauces, cakes, and fruit produce, together with handcrafts that included some excellent needle-work. Stamps, Proteas, and hand-painted bird plaques were all sellers.

The shop raised \$336.93 over the Easter period - thank you for your response and generosity. We are open until the end of the May holidays and donations of goods would be welcome. If you feel you could become a Plant Shop supporter on a yearly basis would you let us know.



Friends of Coolart

SEPTEMBER 1986

NEWSLETTER 3/86

EDITOR M. Taylor

Dear Friend of Coolart,

Did you know that Coolart has been steadily building up a reference library of books and journal articles in the areas of conservation and the environment, native vegetation, plant propagation, birds, and wildlife. Friends of Coolart, the Warden, and the Committee of Management have all contributed to the collection which is housed in the Friends' room. There is a small card index, and some of the titles are available for loan. If you are borrowing, please be sure to leave a full and clear record in the loans book.

Art Shows

With assistance from Vonne Walshe who has considerable experience in organising wildlife art exhibitions, the Committee of Management are planning the first of several exhibitions at Coolart in November. To do this we need to staff the upstairs gallery rooms on weekends and open days during the week between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm. As we must also keep all the usual Coolart service points operating we are appealing to Friends who do not normally help at Coolart, but would like to make this art show their special effort. Please ring Mrs Marion Taylor, 03 568 0253, if you can help.

Plant Shop

The plant shop has been closed for the winter, but was open during the August/September school holidays. The stock was just sufficient to encourage customers and there were enough sales to make it worth while. We would like to open more often, especially at weekends from December through to Easter. For this we need both stock and staff, and if you can help in any way please fill in the sheet on the Friends' room notice board, or ring Margaret Fraser, 059 85 2321, or Jo Eabry, 059 89 8394.

Dates for Your Diary

September, 28, and the last Sunday of each month - Bradley Method working parties. (See Warden's Report, P. 3.)

October - Tree planting each Saturday and Sunday of the month. BYO barbecue lunch.

November, 1/2. - Visit to French Island. By popular demand a second French Island visit has been arranged for Saturday, 1st and/or Sunday 2nd. Cost per day is approximately \$13 per person, including the ferry fare, and overnight accommodation is \$45 - \$50 per person in addition. Please ring Mrs M. Taylor, 03 568 0253, if you are interested. Further information will be sent to you.

November, 16. - Victorian National Parks Association picnic at Coolart. Bring your sandwiches or a barbecue lunch and meet VNPA members and other Friends' groups.

November, 23. - Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Coolart at 3.30 pm in the Observatory. We hope to have a guest speaker and to be joined by the Friends of French Island for an evening barbecue to follow the AGM. Further information and nomination forms for the Friend's Committee will be sent out later.

Cont. p 4.

WARDEN'S REPORT by Steve Yorke

It seems that only yesterday Linda and I had returned from holidays in South East Asia ... and here we are back from this year's trip! In early June, we attended the International Symposium on Wetlands, held at the Shortland Wetlands Centre in Newcastle to co-incide with World Environment Week. The Centre, headquarters of the Hunter Wetlands Trust, is well worth a visit for its breeding colony of all four Australian egrets. The Trust have taken over a rugby leagues clubhouse and are developing it as an interpretive centre. The rugby playing field is being excavated to form a wetland. From swamp to landfill to football oval and back to swamp.

The Symposium was a great success. 42 papers were presented including mine on Coolart's wetlands, and over 150 people attended. Interest in wetland conservation is booming!

From Newcastle, we continued northward to the sunshine of Noosa and the highlight of our trip, Fraser Island. What a wonderland! Rainforests on sand dunes, crystal lakes, bountiful birdlife, including the scarlet honeyeater, and dingoes. Made even more memorable by the excitement of hiring a 4WD for negotiating beaches, barges, and very rough sandy tracks.

And then back to the cold and wet of a Coolart July. In four months from April to July, we have had more than 400 mm (or 16 inches) of rain. The lagoon and the wetlands all filled earlier than usual, and we even have new wetlands where none occurred before. All this water has stimulated the birds into nesting and the ibis nested earlier this year than ever before.

Our CEP "Panhandle" Revegetation Project is about to finish and an enormous amount of work has been done. The Woodland Walk has been realigned and the sandy sections covered with wood chips for erosion control. Propagation far exceeded our expectations with 18 000 trees and shrubs potted. But we've had problems. With the wet and very cold conditions, their growth slowed to zero in June, and many are still too small to plant. The CEP crew will have planted 6000 trees by the time they finish, but there are lots more to go in.

Each Saturday and Sunday in October are proposed as treeplanting days for interested Friends. Please come along and bring a BBQ lunch.

While on CEP, yet another project is underway. Four workers will be with us until the end of January to grow and plant a huge range of bird-attracting natives each side of the entrance road. So far, seed of 200 species has been sown in the nursery. If any Friends could donate seed of any natives suitable for heavy wet ground, we would be very grateful.

As well as the "Aboretum" Project, we have also employed a teacher for six months to develop educational materials for visiting school groups and general use, including audio-visuals and activity sheets.

Other news includes the demise of the footbridge to the beach because it was condemned as unsafe by Ports and Harbours. We've applied for funds, \$30 000 in all, from Tourism and from Conservation, Forests and Lands. Here's hoping. There's lots more happening, and we hope that all Friends can visit soon to see the developments, and with Spring arriving, come and enjoy the birds and the garden.

General NewsShop

With Christmas approaching rapidly, please keep in mind that our shop carries a wide range of gifts to suit all budgets. This year we have a new Coolart brooch in brass and enamel at \$2, and a number of beautiful 1987 calendars.

Bradley Method of Bush Regeneration

Calling all Bradley trainees, and Friends who would like to learn about this exciting method of bush regeneration! Spring is the best time to make a start on systematic removal of bush weeds, and so, beginning September 28, the last Sunday of each month is proposed for working bees. Please contact Steve on (059) 821333 if you can come.

New Members - January 1 to June 30

Mrs Trigs, Mr and Mrs Barber, Mr and Mrs Collins, Wendy Macklin, David and Bronwen Gibbs (life), Mr and Mrs Saunders, Kate Guard, the Ferguson family, the Firestone family, the Crocker family, Mr and Mrs Beetham (life), Mr and Mrs McPhee, Ms Catherine Wallace, Dr and Mrs Cuming (life), Mrs Faye Pattinson, Richard and Lois Cuming, the Rosenberg family, Mr and Mrs Proust, Mr and Mrs Cannington, Mr and Mrs Corden, Mr and Mrs Trigg, Miss E. Meikle, the Seale family, Ken and Rose Stafford, Lindsay and Helen Williams, Gwenda Whitford, William and Grethe Schulz, Betty Hotchin, Margaret Dott, Jean Almond, J. and R. Chapman, Peter and Marie Kearns, Anna Batt, John and Lorraine Meehan, Peter and Gloria Bell, Pauline Sanders, Barry Wold, Eric and Valerie Bennet, W. & A. Simpson, Penny Richards, Liz Ryan, Peter and Joan Goode, Gladys White, Jack O'Callaghan, Wyn Keding, Peter and Susan Wilson, Dr and Mrs Scotton, Mr and Mrs M. Scotton, Dr Heather Mitchell, Chris Roe, B. and D. Coote, Brian and Margery Coleman, Helen Scholes, Rod Simpson and family, Gwen Bethune, Ross and Sue Whitehead (life), Peter Murray (life), Susie Korchma (life), Jim and Kathy Levitt, John and Lesley Kepert, Sally Brown, Noel and Margaret King, Barbara Bell, Doug and Patsy Coates, Mr and Mrs R. Clarke, Mr and Mrs R. Morris, Mrs J. Craig, Ms A. Craig, Mr and Mrs G. Spence, Mr and Mrs M. Lazarus, Mr and Mrs M. Sadler, Mr Ken Simpson, R. Cramond.

BIRD REPORT by Brian Thomas, Assistant Warden

April at Coolart saw the arrival of one of our prettiest visitors, the Flame robin. Aptly named, these feathery fireballs can be seen throughout our colder months perched on fence wires, their orange-red breasts glowing in the Autumn sunshine, a sight that never failed to brighten by day. The females do not have their mate's flamboyant plumage and can be easily overlooked, but once one has learnt to recognise them they seem to be more common than the males. The female's quiet brown colouring does of course work to her advantage when incubating her eggs. If she had her partner's flaming breast it would be like a neon sign advertising the nest site to predators.

Autumn was a time of change in our duck populations, and we saw large flocks of Chestnut teal, Grey teal, Black duck and Shovelers come and go. The shovelers were my favourites and at times over 70 could be seen on the lagoon. I liked to watch them feeding - 20 or 30 would congregate in a rough circle and all would paddle furiously with their bright orange legs, each duck following another, filtering the churned up water with their shovel-shaped bills for aquatic plants and animals.

After a dry Autumn the Winter rains began to fall bringing a burst of activity from the waterbirds. Chestnut teal and Black duck began courting displays, while the Masked lapwings and the Black swans, which were nesting on the same island, exhibited two extremes of nest design. The lapwings made no more than a shallow scrape amongst the pebbles, whereas the swans built an enormous nest of weed. Even after the pen had laid her eggs, they continued adding material to the nest throughout the incubation period. Unfortunately, after four weeks the swans' eggs disappeared and all four of the lapwings' chicks fell prey to an unknown predator.

The most exciting sight on the lagoon was that of a Swamp harrier catching a Chestnut teal. Unfortunately I only turned my binoculars on the scene just after the harrier had struck and was to be seen half submerged with the teal held

beneath the water in its talons. Such was the weight of the prey that the harrier could not take off, but flapped across the surface of the water to a nearby island where he dragged himself and his prize up onto a low bush - a bedraggled but triumphant winner in the struggle for survival. The ducks quacked and swam about quite close to the hawk until the excitement wore off and they gradually dispersed and continued going about their business unconcerned by the sight of one of their fellows being eaten. Ducks seem to have very short memories, or perhaps they just know that Swamp harriers never have more than one duck for breakfast.

Dates for Your Diary (cont from p 1.)

December, 13.- Christmas in the Stables. Don't miss our annual Christmas function at Coolart. We are planning a bird observation walk during the afternoon, a BYO barbecue and carols in the stables, supper in the house, and, if possible, a spot-light walk after supper.

Rosters

Enclosed with this newsletter are two blank roster sheets - green for Saturdays and white for Sundays - to cover the months of October, 1986, to January, 1987. As these are some of the busiest times at Coolart we could do with plenty of help at all the usual service points. If you are able to assist, please fill in the rosters and return them as instructed. A copy of the complete duty roster will be sent to all volunteers.

Wanted - Coolart Historical Information

Post-graduate students from Melbourne University's Landscape Architecture Masters Course are particularly interested in the history and development of Coolart from 1890 onwards, and especially in the period between the Grimwade and Luxton owner-ships. If you have any documents, photographs, or other information, or know of anyone who has, Estelle Redlick, 857 9943, would be very pleased to hear from you.

Friends of Coolart Memberships

Your current membership entitles you to visit Coolart free of charge, but memberships are not transferrable, and if you bring non-members with you, they will be expected to pay the normal admission fee.

Friend's Projects

Money raised by the Friends can be used for special projects, subject to approval by the Committee of Management. If you have any ideas for suitable projects which would benefit Coolart, please let us know.

Car Park Entrance/Exit

Thanks to those Friends who sent comments and suggestions for the re-design of the car park entrance. After consideration of these and other ideas which were put forward at the meeting on June, 15. it was agreed to recommend to the Committee of Management that: i) the narrow entrance road on the left should be closed off and form part of the re-designed start to the Woodland Walk.

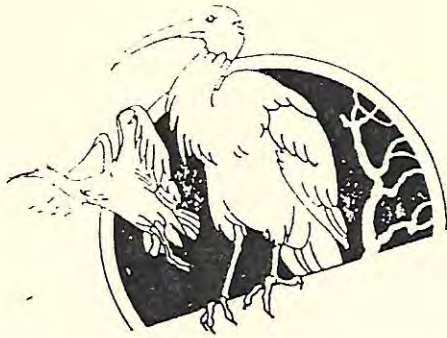
ii) entrance should be directly into the first car-parking bay.

iii) a new exit road should be constructed from the top of the centre car-parking bay, through an existing gap in the trees behind the sentry box, to join the entrance road. Appropriate 'Keep left' and 'No entry' signs should be erected at this junction.

iv) the top of the second plantation should be extended to prevent traffic leaving via the entrance route.

v) the sentry box should remain where it is, but could be extended to give more bench space.

The Committee of Management have accepted these recommendations and will implement them as funds become available. The narrow entrance road has already been closed off.



Friends of Coolart

NOVEMBER 1986

NEWSLETTER 4/86

EDITOR M. Taylor

Dear Friend of Coolart,

The Friends' Committee and the Committee of Management wish all of you and your families a very happy Christmas, and a most successful New Year.

Annual General Meeting - Sunday, 23rd November

The meeting will be held at Coolart in the Observatory at 3.30 pm. Unfortunately our planned guest speaker will not be available.

The agenda and a nomination form for the Friends' Committee are enclosed.

All Friends are invited to a BYO barbecue in the stables after the meeting.

Art Exhibition

The first Coolart Wildlife Art Exhibition is planned to open on Saturday, 29th November, and will run for five weeks.

If any Friends would like to assist with staffing the exhibition, please phone Marion Taylor 03 568 0253.

Christmas in the Stables - Saturday, 13th December

As announced in the previous newsletter, the day will commence with a bird observation walk at 4.00 pm and barbecues will be ready by 5.30 pm. This will be followed by carols in the stables, a supper of mince pies, shortbread, and Coolart Christmas cake in the house, and if the weather allows, a spotlight walk after supper.

Drinks and the supper will be provided, but Friends should bring their own provisions for the barbecue.

We hope that some of the other Friends of National Parks will join us and that many Friends and their families will enjoy this happy occasion.

Duty Rosters

Thanks to all the Friends who returned their duty rosters. Although there were many offers of help there are still a few gaps, especially on Saturday afternoons. If any Friends can help to staff the gate or the shop at these times, please phone Marion Taylor 03 568 0253.

Congratulations

Many Friends will be pleased to hear that John Cunningham and his wife have a new baby son - their first child. John is one of the longest serving members of the Coolart Committee of Management. Congratulations to all the Cunninghams.

Annual Report - Friends of Coolart - 1986

At the 1985 Annual General Meeting the following were elected unopposed to the 1986 Friends' Committee: Mr B. Benton, Mrs J. Eabry, Mr G. Enting, Mr M. Ferguson, Mr R. Hargreaves, Mrs D. Morrison, Mrs B. Smith, Mr I. Taylor, Mrs M. Taylor.

Mrs J. Hodgson did not seek re-election.

The Committee met eight times, (including one joint meeting with the Coolart Committee of Management).

Activities organised by the Friends' Committee included catering for the opening of the Observatory in November, 1985, Christmas in the Stables, two visits to French Island, (in May and November), and a special meeting of Friends to recommend a plan for the entrance/exit to the car park.

In January, 1986, the Friends of Coolart joined the Victorian National Parks Association.

Throughout the year Friends have been involved in many projects at Coolart, such as the Bradley Method Workshop in March, tree-planting, (especially in October), plant propagation, restoration of old equipment, training as Coolart guides, and general working parties, as well as staffing and providing stock for the Plant Shop.

Offers of help for Saturday and Sunday duty have been consistently good.

Many new Friends have joined throughout the year, and we hope to welcome still more in 1987.

Bridge over the Creek

Unfortunately it will not be possible to cross from Coolart to the beach this summer.

The bridge over the creek was condemned as unsafe by the Ministry of Transport and the Committee of Management were instructed to remove the decking to prevent its being used.

The Committee are making efforts to secure funds necessary for its replacement, but it is unlikely that these will be available until well into 1987 at the earliest.

Education Activities

Coolart Education Officer, Mandy, has been hard at work producing an excellent series of activity sheets for use by visiting school groups. They offer a range of Coolart-based projects and are graded according to age.

Schools who book in are sent a set of these sheets and may make as many copies as they need. This allows teachers to plan suitable activities for their students prior to the visit.

Schools who have used the sheets have been very enthusiastic about them.

Mandy has also used the sheets with great success as a part of the school holiday activities she organised for children in September.

Plant Shop

It is planned to open the Plant Shop as often as possible during December and January.

If you can help by donating suitable goods, or by giving some time to staff the shop, please ring Jo Eabry 059 89 8394.

Veteran Cars at Coolart

On Saturday, 8th November, the Veteran Car Club held their annual rally and barbecue at Coolart.

The paddock beside the carpark was full of wonderfully maintained veterans, with polished metal and gleaming paintwork.

Tourers, buses, sedans, a motorcycle and a fire engine, complete with bell and ladder, showed their paces to an admiring audience.

Dozens of old cars, from Rolls Royces to a tiny tiller-steered veteran travelled sedately along the drive to Coolart, escorted by R.A.C.V. vans and two police motorcyclists.

Both drivers and spectators had a really enjoyable day. We hope to see them all again next year.

New Library Books

The following titles are among the new books recently added to the library in the Friends' Room:

Aquatic plants of Australia, by Aston

Ferns of Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, by Duncan and Isaac

Australian freshwater life, by Williams

News from the Wardens

Spring has been an exciting time at Coolart this year, and both the Warden and the Assistant Warden have plenty of news for Friends.

WARDEN'S REPORT by Steve Yorke

What a wonderful spring! Brian's lovely report will tell you all about the tremendous nesting season that we are experiencing. It's all because of the rain, almost 30 inches so far this year. Our visitors are not so keen, but the birds, and the garden, love it.

1986 has been the year of the tree. The CEP Revegetation project was extended by a month, thank goodness, so that more trees could be planted. The crew themselves also prepared a submission for more funding to show just how keen they were. Altogether, they planted 7500 trees, shrubs, and even ground covers - 20 species in all - in the "Panhandle" area along Merricks Creek. A plant every 2½ metres!

Our Arboretum project is progressing well, with mulching of the existing entrance road plantings and more than 3000 new plants of over 200 species have been propagated.

And, on top of all that, our Friends, together with volunteer scouts, guides, brownies and Rotarians, have also planted 1600 trees in the coast woodland and by the wetlands.

I'm looking forward to your Annual General Meeting so that I can report more fully on what we've achieved this year and on future plans. I hope that as many Friends as possible are able to attend.

Linda and I are delighted to announce that Linda is expecting the birth of our first child at the end of December. Could there possibly be a better place to raise a child?

If we don't see you, we would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.

BIRD REPORT by Brian Thomas, Assistant Warden

Springtime at Coolart is undoubtedly the most glorious time of year - despite the unpredictable weather. It is a time for family matters, when the birds are busy courting, nest building and rearing hungry youngsters.

The Black swans have had a particularly successful year with one pair on the lagoon nesting secretively and surprising me by suddenly appearing with three cygnets! The pair on the lower wetlands did even better producing six cygnets although one parent disappeared before they hatched. To confuse things a swan turned up some three weeks later with a single cygnet which promptly forsook its parent and joined the other six. On the upper wetlands, after having their first clutch taken by an unknown predator, our third pair of swans built a second nest and their eggs should be hatching very soon.

As usual several pairs of Chestnut teal have bred and can be seen foraging with their broods amongst the water plants on the wetlands. One day as I was walking past the end of the wetlands a male Chestnut teal burst from the undergrowth and did the well known broken wing act for twenty metres up Luxton Drive. I was not one to be fooled by such theatrics and immediately inspected the spot from which he had emerged. There I found several small ducklings concealed amongst the foliage and I hurriedly left them safely hidden so that the family could be reunited as soon as possible.

Our most notable breeding success this year has been that of the Shovelers, a pair of which hatched out eight ducklings. This is the first breeding recorded at Coolart for this species. But it is always exciting and heartwarming to see baby birds, even the common ones like Swampheens and Coots which have also had chicks this year.

Four pairs of Welcome swallows (what a lovely name) have nested either in or on various buildings on the property. They are not fussy where they nest - from a simple tin bird hide to the imposing main house - as long as it is a man-made structure, it's OK by them. One pair tried desperately to nest in the workshop, flying in with mud and straw every time the door was opened, sometimes getting locked in if they were not noticed and having to wait until someone opened the door to let them out. They built their nest, but must have realised that it was a risky way to raise a family, having to depend on others to open their front door (especially at weekends) and so decided to try again elsewhere.

Another couple made the Minsmere hide their home - no door problem here, just fly in and out the window! Above the notice board they constructed their little mud nest and attracted a lot of attention from visitors as they flew in and out feeding their four hungry chicks.

Coolart's birds are starting to become exhibitionists. A Spotted pardalote performed his nest hole excavations in a sandy bank in front of an appreciative audience near the Observatory. They watched enraptured, both with the beauty and industriousness of this jewel-like little bird.

What a wonderful place Coolart is, especially at this time of year when everyday brings something new to marvel at - investigate or just sit back, watch and enjoy it.