Issue 37 - September 2016

# Wombat Forestcare Newsletter

**Welcome to our spring edition.** Birds are busy building nests, wattles are flowering, and the plentiful rains bring the promise of an abundance of wildflowers. Enjoy your walks.
**Gayle Osborne** (editor) and **Angela Halpin** (design)

The Ink Cap, *Coprinus comatus*, in its many guises that mushroom into fizz.

## Fungal Fizz

**Words & Images by Alison Pouliot**

Diverse and delightful fungi enrich the Wombat Forest yet many of them don't have names. However, even with nameless fungi, we can often recognise a familiar species, not necessarily by specifics, but from an overall generalised impression. Birdwatchers call this jizz, in reference to birds. Jizz combines learned and intuitive knowledge, focussing on the bigger picture of form, movement and habit, more so than particular details. No equivalent term exists for fungi.

Poor appreciation of fungi relative to animals and plants is reflected in the lack of language to describe them. As one might expect, the weaker the cultural connections to fungi, the fewer the fungal words in that culture's language. Historically, Australians are not typically mycophiles and consequently fungal words in the English vernacular are scant. There are no collective nouns, for example, for fungi. Even the names for a mushroom's parts are less well known than those of a flower. Given the growing interest in fungi, it's time to expand our fungal vocabulary.

In this article, I propose a new addition to the fungal lexicon – FIZZ – as a contraction of *fungal jizz*. Like jizz for birds, the fizz of a fungus could include gestalt plus elements such as form, growth pattern, texture, smell, habitat, 'behaviour,' along with all the things that tell us it's not something else. Fizz is a distillation of what we cognitively understand and intuitively feel about a species. Fizz develops from lived experience, from daily wandering and intimate

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liaison with fungi over extended periods. Every fungal moment fosters fizz. Familiarity allows us to interpret limited information in a meaningful way – through looking, sensing, absorbing, repeating, recognising patterns, trends and relations and laying down memory. Very slowly, one's brain becomes fungally infected with fizz.

Learning to recognise fungi requires awareness of fizz, tuning to the senses and instinct, along with scientific understanding. It requires a shift from looking to seeing and then sensing and feeling more broadly. It is about conscious tuning to affordances, subtleties and nuances, presences and absences, tracks and traces. Many of us know the experience of recognising a familiar fungus, even if we can't name it. Although it might not look like the idealised illustration in the field guide or has been distorted by age and lost its characteristic colour or smell, it is fizz that reveals it.

Fizz comes from jizz, but where did jizz come from? The etymology of jizz is uncertain, particularly whether it should be called giss or jizz. Some birdos suggest that giss was originally a military acronym for General Impression of Size and Shape in reference to aircraft and has been borrowed by the birding community. However, others claim the term is older dating back to 1922 when it was first used by Thomas Coward in his book *Bird Haunts and Nature Memories*. Others still posit that it is a corruption of the similarly meaning words, *guise, gist* or *gestalt*, or a contraction of 'just is', as in the assured answer to, 'why is that bird X?' Jizz also has rather an unfortunate homonym. The unscrupulous organisation known as Google delivers its highly censored take on the world via its search engine, yet still spits out over a hundred million hits on another more pornographic interpretation of the word jizz. But let's not linger on jizz and focus on fizz.

Jizz and fizz are very helpful terms. These short and punchy words carry incredibly useful and evocative meanings. The catchall German word, *Gestalt*, for which there is no real equivalent in English, partly captures fizz. But fizz goes further than just gestalt or form or habitat and is often an amalgam of ill-defined or incomplete aspects of a fungus that capture its essence, allowing us to recognise it is as perhaps regal or elegant or enchanting. Fizz grows from time and patience and keen observation. You can't recognise a fungus from its fizz unless its traits and patterns, its *vibe*, are infused in your being. The best way for fizz to flourish is to first familiarise oneself with more frequently encountered fungi. It is fizz that allows one to spot a clump of Ink Caps, *Coprinus comatus*, at a distance and instantly recognise them. However, for many fungi, fizz is useful for getting to the level of genus rather than species. And unfortunately, even fizz is unlikely to help with the notorious little brown mushrooms. But oh look, it's that time again. I think I'll fix myself a gin fizz . . . ■

## The Red and White Mystery Mushroom

**Words and images by John Walter**

When I first came across this little red mushroom it was known as *Mycena viscidocruenta*, sometimes called the Ruby Bonnet. Then, in 2008, DNA analysis determined that it was more closely related to *Panellus* than to *Mycena* and the new genus *Cruentomycena* was established to accommodate it. This little red beauty now goes by the rather difficult name of *Cruentomycena viscidocruenta*.

The viscid cap and stem are clearly seen in these two images of normal fruit-bodies.

Viscid is of course a reference to the sticky, glutinous secretion often found on the stem and cap of this

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small mushroom; and cruenta is Latin for blood stained, clearly in reference to the colour. So the original name would translate as the "Sticky Blood Stained *Mycena*". Now the new genus translates as the "Blood Stained *Mycena*" so the complete translation of the new name would be the "Sticky Blood Stained Blood Stained *Mycena*". Hmmm!

Perhaps I should put the names to one side and focus on where you find this little Ruby Bonnet. It is one of the first fungi to fruit after rain, and I have found it in early March after a summer downpour but you can still see it later in the season. It is widespread in the wetter parts of the Wombat Forest but never common or plentiful at any one site. The caps can spread to 20mm in diameter when they fully open but I generally find them around 10mm when the margins are still curved down. This small size, and the fact that they grow on litter, on the forest floor means they can be easily overlooked if you have not trained your eye to find blood spots amongst the forest litter.

The two images above (one from 2012, the other from 2014) show the white sectors on the cap. The stem on some looked like the traditional barber's pole with its red and white stripes.

One population near Lyonville has a particularly rare and interesting trait. When I first found the colony in 2012 it had around 70 mushrooms, making it one of the largest groups I have found of this species. What was especially interesting however, was that around 1/4 of them had some part of the cap or stem (or both) with no blood staining. These patches were pure white! Even some of the gills were white, giving the colony an appearance somewhat similar to a variegated shrub.

Mushrooms can lose their colour as a result of leaching after heavy rain and sometimes when growing beneath a stick or some other debris the colour will not develop properly, giving a bleached appearance. The colour change in this population was clearly not due to either of these factors so I wrote to Dr Tom May, Senior Mycologist at the National Herbarium of Victoria seeking his advice.

Tom responded that he had not seen anything like this before and conjectured that it was a bit like "sectoring" which you sometimes see in fruit like oranges. In cases of sectoring, 1/4 or 1/8 of the fruit will display a rough skin in a uniform shape. Tom went on to note that due to the way that fungal hyphae grow, it is unlikely that you would end up with a defined sector becoming affected as happens in the orange, and then he questioned how it is that several fruit-bodies have been affected at the same time?

Clearly some of the fruit-bodies have been affected in sectors and on a return visit to the site in June 2014, I again found red and white fruit-bodies, although this time, there was less than a dozen, which is too few for a collection. While I hope to make a collection for the Herbarium for future study, and, while this is an unexplained and interesting phenomenon, it is unlikely any funding or time would be available at the Herbarium to undertake such a study in the near or even medium future. One additional observation that might be of value to a future researcher is that the site has been subjected to a wide range of rubbish dumping. I wonder if some chemical deposit from the rubbish may be behind this red and white mystery. ■

# Not a hollow argument

**By Trevor Speirs**

The Wombat Forest has been heavily impacted over the past 150 years, from the early gold miners to the logging industry, but fortunately you can still find terrific patches of forest with stands of hollow-bearing trees.

Peppermints and Messmates dominate the ridges and have hollows of various size and numbers (there are excellent stands along Clear Water Creek), but the smooth barked gums would probably be the most consistent provider, and of these, the Mountain Grey Gum *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa* is king. They can be distinguished from Manna Gums and Candlebarks by their long leaves and much larger fruit and buds.

It is not uncommon to find Mountain Grey Gums with a diameter of around 150cm. at chest height, with the occasional giant up to 200cm. Individual trees often have several hollows exceeding 30cm in width.

In the sedgy riparian areas, Swamp Gums *Eucalyptus ovata* are prominent, and while their hollows are generally smaller they are no less important.

Hollows, of course, mean homes, and the Wombat has numerous mammal and bird species, both threatened and common, that utilize these habitats, meaning competition is keen.

**Top:** Relaxed Possum.
Photography © Juliet Summers

**Above:** Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris* finds a home.
Photography © Gayle Osborne

As researchers near Canberra discovered, a home is not always a castle, when they observed an on-going battle between Southern Boobook Owls and Common Brushtail Possums.

Persistent attempts by the possums to invade an incubating female owl's nest finally bore fruit, with one possum entering the hollow when the bird temporarily ventured out to feed. Once inside, the brushtail ate all but one egg and then used its ample body to block the entrance, preventing the owl from returning for several hours. Incredibly, the remaining egg was hatched and a chick was successfully fledged.

The Boobooks' battles continued the next breeding season, not only with the possums, but also with attacks from Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. [1]

These observations were in an urban area, not in a large forest like the Wombat, but it is probably an indication of the combat and competition that would exist between hollow dependent species, especially in areas where hollows are at a premium.

In the Wombat last spring, as Powerful Owls were ending their breeding season in a large Mountain Grey Gum hollow, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos had started their breeding, occupying a hollow in a similar sized tree just 15 metres away. With Cockies being an occasional prey of Powerful Owls, this seemed a rather precarious, albeit bold, place to breed. However, it does seem that wherever there are good stands of old habitat trees, Sulphur-cresteds are never too far away.

A slightly unusual sighting early last spring, was that of a Long-billed Corella peering out of a Candlebark hollow from just within the forest. These birds were rarely seen in this region before the 1970s, but have expanded their range rapidly in recent decades, with their large flocks a constant (and loud) presence here in the warmer months. Fortunately for the forest dwellers, at this stage Corellas are rarely seen deep in the forest.

When spotlighting this year on a mild July evening, a glimpse of what happens in our forest after dusk was had when nine Greater Gliders were seen, either emerging from their hollows, or feeding in the foliage of mainly old Mountain Grey Gums. The Gliders were either solitary or in small groups and all found in a transection of only about 300 metres.

It really is paramount that the Wombat Forest is able to continue to mature, and provide the hollow bearing trees so essential to our unique wildlife, from tiny microbats to large Mountain Brushtail Possums. ■

**References**

1. Olsen, J. & Trost, S. (2009) Common Brushtail Possums *Trichosurus vulpecula* evicts nestling Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae* from its nest hollow *Australian Field Ornithology* 26:46-52

# Cinderella's Joyweed

**Words and images by John Walter**

When I started this series of Cinderella articles I stated that I would write about the Lesser Joyweed and the Variable Stinkweed at some later stage. Well now I have arrived at the last article of the series and I still haven't told you about Cinderella's Joyweed nor their stinky friend so I guess the time is now!

I have to admit that whenever I see the name Lesser Joyweed, I wonder what the Greater Joyweed is. No! Not that, this is a botanical article, not a reference to an alternative recreational substance. Lesser Joyweed *Alternanthera denticulata* is a member of the Amaranth family along with spinach, the beets, a number of medicinal herbs and garden plants and several sources of food seed. Somewhere among this mix of species is the source of the name Joyweed but it is far from clear how the name came about. I have not been able to trace any use of the name Greater Joyweed and there is no reason why there should be a species with this name. Our Lesser Joyweed might be named for being smaller in stature than some other Joyweed, or has smaller leaves or flowers.

Many of the *Alternanthera* species carry the name Joyweed and in Victoria we have the Common Joyweed *A. nodiflora* plus an unnamed species known as Plains Joyweed. We also host two South American species, *A. pungens* known as Khaki Weed and *A. philoxeroides* is the state prohibited Alligator Weed. This latter plant was reportedly widely grown by the Sri Lankan community who mistakenly believed it was the popular leafy green vegetable, "mukunuweena", available in Sri Lanka and used as a herbal remedy on the sub-continent. We know the leafy green as *Alternanthera sessilis*, the Sessile Joyweed and this species was the first to be named as an *Alternanthera*, making it the "type" species of this genus and it is clearly the most famous of the Joyweeds.

The then Department of Sustainability and Environment and Primary Industries supported research by Lalith Gunasekera and promoted the use of Lesser Joyweed as a suitable substitute for mukunuweena. There was concern that once the use of Alligator Weed was banned, there would be an increase in cultivation of Sessile Joyweed and a consequent escape of yet another recognised weed

The sprawling habit of the Lessor Joyweed and pink tinted seed capsules nestled amongst the remains of the flowers make this an easy species to identify. You can find it in dryer country usually on the margins of intermittent pools, ponds or streams.

species into the environment. Gunasekera published a comparative chemical analysis of the Sessile and Lesser Joyweeds and found the Sessile carried slightly higher percentages of protein, fat and fibre, plus higher percentages of all minerals except phosphorus and iron than did the Lesser. The study also found that the Lesser Joyweed could "confidently be promoted as an alternative".

The most logical explanation for the name Joyweed that I have found has its origins in Mexico in 1519 with the arrival of Cortes and the Spanish into the world of the Aztec who were then ruled by Moctezuma II. Cortes was not the first Spaniard to land on the Mexican coast but his expedition resulted in the conquering of the Aztecs. Here the Spanish found a bread they called "alegria" which means "happiness" in the Castilian language we now recognise as Spanish.

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Alegria was also used as the name for both the seeds and the plant that gave rise to the bread and it is suggested that the English translation was "joy", hence the name Joyweed.

It is not as simple as that, however, for the plant that provided the seeds for the bread was a member of the genus *Amaranthus* which are closely related to, but have substantially larger seed heads than *Alternanthera*. The seeds of *Amaranthus leucocarpus* were also used to create sweets and candies but it was their use to create idols (after being mixed with human or animal blood) and offered to the Aztec deities that saw the *Amaranthus* fall from favour back in Europe. The Catholic view of the world could not condone such activity and the Spaniards soon declared it a crime for the locals to grow the plants. Back in Europe, the *Amaranthus* became known as "pigweed", suitable only as animal feed. The delineation between species and genera was not as clearly established in the 1500s as it is today and somehow the name Joyweed was applied to the members of the genus *Alternanthera* even as its cousin the *Amaranthus* was losing favour. So how did the name Joyweed make the crossover between genera and survive this turmoil? I suggest it will require a substantial thesis, if not a PhD, to solve that question.

The story of the Variable Stinkweed *Opercularia varia* is a far simpler one to tell. For a start, the leaves are reported to smell rather badly when you crush them, although I have never tempted fate by trying this out. It seems the variable bit also has to do with the leaves which sometimes have short bristly hairs, and on other plants are hairless and the shape is also somewhat variable. The stems are generally prostrate in local plants but they can also vary and are sometimes more upright.

With smelly leaves, tiny insignificant flowers and a low growth habit, it is no wonder that most people do not notice this species. It is not listed among the species used by Aborigines, nor is it used in herbal remedies or recognised as a butterfly food plant and I cannot even find an interesting story about its name to raise your interest levels. Rest assured, like all the Cinderella plants, there is something special about this stinkweed even if we do not know it yet. Think of it as Cinderella before the ball, before she was "discovered" by the prince. Be comforted by the knowledge that while we cannot see its redeeming features there are certainly other creatures out there who have learnt to feed on it or use it as shelter, and for these creatures, this Cinderella is a Queen! ■

**References**

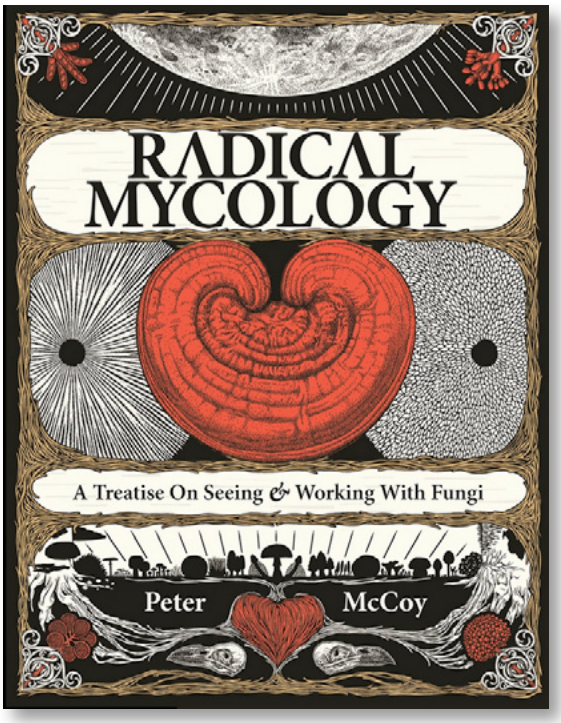

1. Gunasekera, Lalith (2008) Sessile Joyweed (*Alternanthera sessilis)*: a popular leafy vegetable in South East Asia but federal noxious weed in USA-*Proceedings of the 16th Australian Weeds Conference*, The Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International – see www.cabi.org
2. Austin, Daniel F. (2004) *Florida Ethnobotany* - entries for both *Alternanthera* pages 76-77 and *Amaranthus* pages 79-81


The tiny flowers of Variable Stinkweed are barely noticeable and the prostrate habit means you will have to get on your knees to see them. The unusual shape of the open seed capsules is very distinctive and I like their soft but spiky look.

# Radical Mycology Book Review

**By Alison Pouliot**

'All life is connected. This is the primary lesson that fungi teach', so begins *Radical Mycology – A Treatise on Seeing and Working with Fungi*. A hefty 700-page compendium by self-taught mycologist, Peter McCoy, this broad-reaching account encompasses the science, history and culture of fungi in an appealingly personal and quirky style.




*Radical Mycology* focuses largely on human relationships with fungi and how to actively develop and maximise their use as food, medicine and in mycoremediation. It also spans themes including mushroom identification, ethnomycology, lichenology, the ecological significance of fungi, conservation, psychedelic fungi and the influence of fungi on human cultures.

McCoy writes technically without being encumbered by jargon, moving across scales of time and space and often drawing on human analogies to make abstract concepts accessible. Much of it is based on McCoy's own experience, experimentation and research, providing the reader with many different access points to the world of fungi. He begins with mycelium as a literal and metaphorical framework for thinking about fungi, nature and society. He questions language, concepts and the ways in which knowledge is generated in relation to fungi, using the notion of mycelial connectivity as a model for augmenting scientific knowledge with insights from alternative sources.

The book's twelve chapters are encompassed within the sections: Expression, Connection, Relation, Collaboration and Integration. These section titles set the tone for how McCoy approaches fungi and within the first paragraphs he advocates the significance of their interconnectivity and uniqueness, especially in fulfilling ecological roles not provided by other organisms such as building soil, a theme too often overlooked in other books on fungi.

Following a brief overview of the significance of fungi, he launches straight into their taxonomy and biology with a brief account of spores and other microscopic structures and fungal reproduction. Almost half of the book is then devoted to mushroom cultivation, beginning with basic principles, followed by detailed instructions, methods, recipes, charts and advice on sourcing and recycling materials, all supported by extensive appendices.

*Radical Mycology* is not so much a book for mycologists. It is more an instructive guide for mushroom cultivators and a broad range of fungus enthusiasts. While accessible to novices, it also includes a level of technical detail for those with a more advanced grasp of fungal biology and chemistry. It is very much a homegrown, low-tech, low-budget manual with a strong permacultural influence, underpinned by McCoy's strong activism motivation.

Being so far-reaching, *Radical Mycology* is likely to appeal to a broad audience, the trade-off being that inevitably some sections will be of greater interest than others. Not being a mushroom cultivator, I most enjoyed those chapters with an ecological, conservation and philosophical focus, particularly the second last chapter, 'The Mycelium is the Message' where McCoy links mycelial networks with systems theory, political movements and social justice. In the final chapter, 'Mycnognosis', he explores the history of the use of psychedelic fungi with a sensitive and measured approach, explaining their chemistry, effects, cultural history and controversies. However, more scientifically-oriented readers might, for example, be less inspired by some of the ideas in the seventh chapter, 'The Pharmycopeia', particularly the homeopathic preparations, hermetic philosophy and alchemical and astrological correspondences.

The book is cheap for US$50. If there were another

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print run, thorough proofing to eradicate the many small typographical errors and repetitions would increase its professionalism. Fungi are such wonderfully evocative and visual organisms and McCoy writes about them with great verve. I therefore thought it was a shame that the quality of the photography and reproduction didn't match McCoy's talent as a thinker and writer. However, these are not really criticisms of McCoy, but perhaps more so a reflection of the lack of recognition for fungi and the challenge of finding a major publisher willing to invest in such a tome.

McCoy casts a wide mycelial web and in doing so will certainly attract new fungus advocates. The strongest message he imparts is about how fungi offer a framework for more expansive ways of thinking: ''challenge[ing] us to look beneath the surface, live on the edge, explore the unknown, adapt, respect imperfections and differences, and to look for another way forward'. ■

An extended version of this review was first published in the Fungimap Newsletter.

McCoy, Peter. *Radical Mycology: A Treatise on Seeing and Working with Fungi*. Chthaeus Press, Oregon, 2016.

# Trashing the Wombat: How many burns can the forest bear?

**By Gayle Osborne**

The Fire Operations Plan has been approved and to our horror, the extent of the planned burns detailed for the Wombat Forest and the Hepburn Regional Park are significant. This public land covers approximately 55,000 hectares, with 13,600 hectares listed for planned burns over a period of three years.

What does this mean for the fauna of these forests? The Hepburn Regional Park and northern section of the Wombat has already been subjected to a high percentage of planned burns and we understand that the population of Brush-tailed Phascogales *Phascogale tapoatafa* is in decline. The decline may partially be explained by lower than average rainfall over recent years, but it would seem that burns must increase the pressure on populations as phascogales primarily eat insects and spiders extracted from under the bark with their sharp claws. Planned burns are carried out to not only remove the ground litter but also to char the bark on the eucalypts (to prevent the burning bark from flying ahead of the fire and causing spot fires). Surely this could obliterate the phascogales' food supply.

They are reliant on hollows to breed and shelter. Recent research shows that a quarter of hollow-bearing trees can be lost in a planned burn.[1] The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Action Statement for this species states that 'Fragmentation of remnant habitat, loss of hollows and inappropriate fire regimes affect habitat quality and are thought to be contributing factors in their decline, as is predation by the introduced Red Fox (*Canis vulpes*) and Cat (*Felis catus*).'

The action statement adds emphasis with 'The paucity of hollow-bearing trees is of particular concern for the conservation of the Brush-tailed Phascogale.'

Burns are planned for Mt Wilson and Babbington Hill, and Greater Gliders *Petauroides volans* are found in the gullies surrounding these hills. The Wombat State Forest is the western edge of the Greater Gliders' range. Recently listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act due to plummeting numbers, they face pressures from planned burns. Surveys have not been carried out to establish their locations in the forest although members of Wombat Forestcare are attempting to locate as many populations as possible prior to the burns being carried out.

Greater Gliders are specialist feeders, relying almost exclusively on eucalypt leaves. Unlike Koalas and possums, which also feed on eucalypt leaves, the Greater Glider has a low body weight. As eucalypt leaves are low in nutrients, Greater Gliders need to consume large quantities, requiring substantial energy expenditure.

Their home range is only 1 - 4 hectares and they tend to stay put, even when most of their habitat has been depleted by logging. They will use a number of hollows within their home range, a common trait with hollow-dwelling mammals to deter predation, by not emerging from the same place every evening.

Prof David Lindenmayer states 'Such specialization may make such species vulnerable to a range of drivers of environmental change, placing them at risk of significant decline or even local extinction.' [2]

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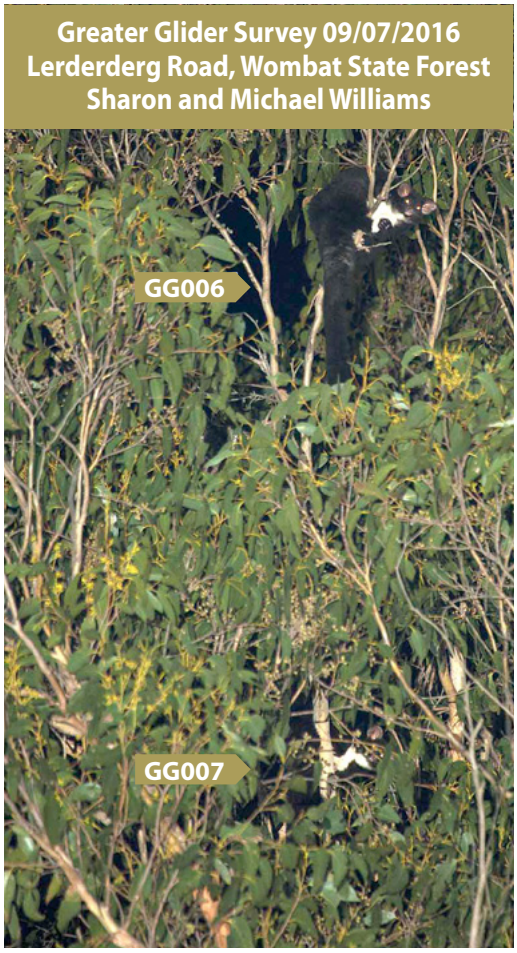
Greater Gliders are mainly found in gullies along creeks, and although fire tends to be kept out of these areas, the smoke can be quite intense. Oxygen depletion and inhalation of smoke could cause death. There is a lack of research into the effects of smoke on mammals, particularly arboreal mammals. There is also a lack of research into the coating of smoke on leaves and whether this affects the food source for Greater Gliders.

As Greater Gliders are prone to heat stress and other changes caused by fire, planned burns pose a serious threat to their survival.

Although Greater Gliders' habitat is primarily along the gullies, they also inhabit hollows in trees on hillsides. In a recent burn opposite the Lyonville Springs many of the large old gums were weakened by the burn and continued to fall over for a number of years.




Survey carried out by Sharon and Michael Williams. Photography © Michael Williams

The burn planned for Babbington Hill extends south to Lyonville, where Greater Glider habitat is found in flatter damp areas that will be subjected to fire. This burn also includes the forest north of the Bullarto Reservoir where there are massive hollow-bearing trees with a Greater Glider population.

Inappropriate fire regimes were listed as a threat factor in the conservation advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (EPBC Act 1999) on Listing Eligibility and Conservation Actions for Greater Gliders and the document recommends that there should be a Recovery Plan for the Greater Glider and that one of the Primary Conservation Actions should be to 'Reduce the frequency and intensity of prescribed burns.' [3]

Prof David Lindenmayer states 'that many studies have demonstrated that significant decline and/or extinction is frequently the result of multiple threatening processes.' [4] All the warning signs are there; by burning Greater Glider habitat we are adding a very threatening process, which could be the tipping point for our gliders.

Responses of wildlife to planned burns have barely been studied. Surveys have not been carried out to establish, prior to a burn, whether important species inhabit a site. Large areas of dry peppermint ridges have been burnt that could easily have had Eastern Pygmy Possums or Brush-tail Phascogales. Have we already lost species? We will never know.

The Department created much of the fuel problem by allowing the Wombat Forest to be so extensively logged. In many areas the regrowth has increased the fire risk. Somehow, the planned burn issue feels like a repeat of past dealings with the department. During logging of the Wombat, the community was constantly told that the timber harvesting was sustainable. 'Don't worry girlie, it grows back', one of our members was told by someone connected to the logging industry. Well, here we are again. A department that claims it knows best due to its reliance on computer modelling.

Research in the Mountain Ash forests shows that from 7 - 50 years post-logging those forests are more likely to burn, and to burn at a higher severity. It is possible that the department should thin the very young regrowth as a way of reducing fire risk.

The Fire Operations Plan is entirely reliant on planned burns to reduce risk in a bush fire. What happened to other methods that could possibly do more to reduce risk, such as weed control and other measures close to towns? We suggest a precautionary approach. ■

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1. Bluff L. (2016) Reducing the Effect of Planned Burns on Hollow Bearing Trees *Fire and adaptive management report no.29*. Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

2. & 4. Lindenmayer et al. (2011). How to make a common species rare: a case against conservation complacency *Biological Conservation 144*, 1663-1672.

3. http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/254-conservation-advice-05052016.pdf

# Trevor's Bird Page

**By Trevor Speirs**

## White-throated Treecreepers

The familiar, high-pitched piping calls of the White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaeus* are synonymous with the wet forests and woodlands of South Eastern and Eastern Australia.

With the breeding season now in full swing another call being constantly heard throughout the Wombat is their rather lovely mellow courtship trill.

As can be seen in the accompanying photos, with their very large feet and claws, treecreepers are extremely well adapted to landing against and climbing trees in the search for insects, mainly ants.

Differing from sittellas, which travel downwards, treecreepers usually start near the base and work upwards, and occasionally, seem to defy gravity by hanging upside down under horizontal branches.

While White-throated Treecreepers are a common and sedentary species in our forest, they are no less fascinating to observe as they go about their unending, daily routine of probing the bark and trunks of our various species of eucalypts. ■

**Left:** Male White-throated Treecreeper.

**Right:** Female White-throated Treecreeper with distinctive orange mark on the side of the face.
Photography © Gayle Osborne


## Wombat Forestcare Membership research • education • action

Wombat Forestcare Inc. is dedicated to preserving the biodiversity and amenity of the Wombat State Forest by utilising the skills and resources of the community. By becoming a member you will have input into our activities and projects, and give support to caring for our forests.

For memberships and further information contact Gayle Osborne, (03) 5348 7558 or email info@wombatforestcare.org.au

**Membership fees are only $15 single and $20 family. Visit our website - www.wombatforestcare.org.au**