

What is happening in the Wombat Forest in winter? Brush-tailed Phascogales are mating. Silver Banksias are flowering, providing winter nectar for birds and small mammals. As usual, it is fungi heaven, so many wonderful species to be seen.. **Gayle Osborne** (editor) and **Angela Halpin** (design)

Yellowhammers

By Trevor Speirs

Old time naturalists, bird watchers and the like, had many descriptive names for animals and birds; Storm-Petrels being called Mother Carey's Chickens by sailors is a classic, and another particularly quaint one was Yellowhammer for the marvellous Eastern Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus*, found throughout forests and woodlands of eastern Australia.

Author and renowned ornithologist A.H.Chisholm, early last century, referred to Eastern Shrike-tits as Yellowhammers, likening their behaviour to that of the woodpecker family.

Crested Shrike-tits use their powerful parrot-like bills to tap and strip bark fibre for nesting material, as well as noisily levering and pulling away bark in search of insects such as hard-shelled cicadas. Seed cases are also cracked open for their contents.



Male Eastern Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus* at Rise and Shine Bushland Reserve at Clydesdale. Photography © Geoff Park

Another fascinating use of their bill was observed back in the early 1970s along the Dandenong Creek at Vermont by a Melbourne naturalist, Mrs Beryl Richards. Beryl reported seeing a Crested Shrike-tit snapping a 2 inch (50 mm) long twig, about half the thickness of a pencil, off a dead Black Wattle branch. Holding the twig sideways in its bill, the bird then probed a crack in the wattle branch a couple of times, extracting a grub, which it promptly ate.

While not sure if there have been similar reports, Beryl was certain of her observation; she was only 10 metres away and used binoculars. This behaviour puts Crested Shrike-tits in the realm of the few other bird species that are known to use tools.

Crested Shrike-tits use the bark fibre, grass stems and copious spider webs to build a soft, deep, cup shaped nest. The nest is built in a somewhat precarious position, attached to the

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Female Eastern Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus* at Rise and Shine Bushland Reserve at Clydesdale. Photography © Geoff Park

twiggy outermost branches, often high, of a eucalypt. These branches are so thin they are unable to support the weight of any likely predator. The leaves and buds above the nest are curiously nipped off.

Sedentary and territorial with large home ranges, Crested Shrike-tits are regarded as rare to uncommon in most bird guides, and this is probably also the case in the Wombat. However, in areas of the forest where the habitat is more open but with good stands of suitable eucalypts (Manna gums and Candlebarks), small parties of these entertaining, acrobatic birds with their erect, crested punk hairstyles, can be encountered fairly regularly.

NB. There are two other geographically separate subspecies, one in Northern Australia *Falcunculus whitei*, one in Western Australia *Falcunculus leucogaster*. All three differ slightly in their colouring patterns. ■

Reference

Richards, Beryl 1971. 'Shrike-Tit using Twig', Australian Bird Watcher 4 (3): 97-98

Motion-sensing Camera Project

Due to a number of grants, we now have nine motion-sensing cameras rotating in three locations in the Wombat Forest.

Motion-sensing cameras have made it much easier for community members to survey wildlife.

These camera projects are incredibly rewarding for all involved. There have been sightings of Brush-tailed Phascogales *Phascogale tapoatafa* and Eastern Pygmy Possums *Cercartetus nanus* in the Chettle Road area, east of Trentham.

Sadly, there have been sightings of foxes and feral cats in proximity to these native species. It is hoped that we are successful in a grant application for feral cat control.

Wombat Forestcare wishes to express their appreciation to the R. E. Ross Trust for three years of funding to engage a facilitator to manage one of these camera projects, and the Wettenhall Foundation for funding the purchase of three cameras and incidental expenses.

Previous grants from Bendigo Community Bank (Trentham) and Hepburn Wind have also made these projects possible.

None of this would have been achievable without our dedicated volunteers.



Feral Cat



Brush-tailed Phascogales *Phascogale tapoatafa*

Why we shouldn't log the Wombat, not even a little bit

By Gayle Osborne

Would it matter if VicForests authorised a small amount of selective sawlog removal from mature forest in the Wombat? Some people would say that this would be beneficial, that the retained trees would increase in size, that hollows would form more rapidly.

There is only 8% mature forest left in the areas available for harvesting. The old growth forest is long gone, the result of human avarice. We have a history of treating the Wombat as a resource.

Driving around the Wombat, it is heartbreaking to see the vast areas of regrowth. Forest management assured us that we should not worry, that sustainable yields had been set, that the trees grow back. Well, yes they do, but we are going to have to wait a very long time to see a properly working ecosystem.

For VicForests to suggest sawlog harvesting, however small, when the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation is starting is outrageous. VEAC is assessing the Wombat and other state forests for their natural and cultural values, to make recommendations to the government regarding their appropriate management. Will VEAC recommend that the Wombat be reclassified as a 'Park'?

With so little of the Wombat in good ecological shape it is not acceptable to disturb this small amount of mature forest. Can we believe VicForests? Past experience has shown that assurances are easily broken. We saw this with the Mudlark Trial in 2004 (Community Forest Management), where community volunteers spent hundreds of hours to establish the project. Once the sawlogs were removed, despite written undertakings from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, promised rehabilitation works were never carried out.

Recently, VicForests authorised some logging in the Strathbogie

Ranges. They stated that "The single-tree selection method that was used for this operation is low-intensity and leaves more trees behind than are taken." It is easy to see from these images why the local environment group is outraged and why we should be very concerned.

Coupes in the Wombat have been thinned for commercial and domestic firewood for some time. This takes place in regrowth that is approximately 40 years old. It is hard to say whether this benefits the retained trees, as there is considerable coppicing from the stumps of the removed trees.

A commercial firewood coupe has come to our attention. It is 800 metres from a Brush-tailed Phascogale *Phascogale*

tapoatafa record and we have recently become aware that management zones should exist for the protection of phascogales. However, VicForests have not responded to our request for their locations.

Along the roadside of the coupe is a rare plant, Hairy Beard-heath *Leucopogon microphyllus* var. *pilibundus*. It seems that there is not a requirement to protect this plant, as it is only 'rare'. These examples show that there are not appropriate protections in place.

Sir David Attenborough supported a Great Forest National Park and his opinions are as relevant to the Wombat and other forests.

"The maintenance of an intact ecological system is the only way to ensure the existence of biodiversity, safeguard water supplies and provide spiritual nourishment for ourselves and future generations."

Our mature forest needs to be left intact for its inhabitants. We need to let the ecological and evolutionary processes play out.

Details of the Wombat Forestcare 'Say No to Logging' campaign are on our website.



Logging straight through a drainage line.
Source: Our Strathbogie Forest



This is Vicforests' 'you'll never even know we've been in there', low-intensity, 'single tree selection' logging. Marvel at this sensitive technique that leaves more trees behind than it takes. Note how carefully the single trees are selected to minimize disturbance to the forest. Before logging, this was high-quality Koala, Powerful Owl and Greater Glider habitat – now, it's a firewood supply.

Source: Our Strathbogie Forest

Women of the Wombat . . . and beyond

Words & Image by Alison Pouliot

Conservation draws men and women from all walks of life for all sorts of reasons. While they might have different motivations and approaches, knowledge and beliefs, they're often united by a shared feeling of moral outrage. Many have a common aim of questioning and fighting for change of inappropriate policy or management, usually tied to a particular place or species. Wombat Forestcare members represent this spectrum of folk, all fighting for the forest.

I was surprised to notice recently that almost all requests I receive to run conservation workshops, were from women. This struck me as interesting. Why such a gender imbalance I wondered? These requests come from Landcare or Bushcare coordinators, ecological consultants or public relations staff with Catchment Management Authorities, universities and the like. I quickly realised that much of the so-called conservation 'extension work', 'community development work' or staff training relating to conservation issues, is organised by women.

Australian women have actively participated in environmental conservation since before Federation through to the current day; as scientists and explorers, artists and activists, poets and polymaths and contributors in many other ways. However, scientific societies, nature studies groups and bushwalking clubs were originally and exclusively the domain of men. From the early 1920s, women managed to elbow their way in, even though their findings were not recorded and contributions seldom acknowledged.

From the 1980s, the environment movement grew rapidly in Australia. The Decade of Landcare followed thanks to the initiative and innovation of Joan Kirner (then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) and Heather Mitchell (then president of the Victorian Farmers Federation). Together they recognised and understood the dynamics and empowerment of voluntarism and united unlikely alliances. Various other environmental initiatives got off the ground during this time including the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Then in 1992, the Australian Government signed Agenda 21 – a voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations targetting sustainable development that came about at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, as well as the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change. Many women

contributed, often as volunteers, but some in paid positions and at one point there was almost equal representation of women in leading State and National positions. Today the imbalance has returned and the environment 'industry' is characterised by a prescriptive management approach, highly resistant to innovation and change.

Gayle Osborne is one innovative woman who has taken a leadership role in conservation. When I suggested the theme of this article to Gayle, she was quick to mention how the collaborative approach of key men and women has made the group successful. Gayle became interested in conservation following intensive logging of the Wombat. She and her partner joined the protest movement. Wombat Forestcare grew out of a number of local groups and, as Gayle notes, was lucky to have people with diverse skills,



Gayle Osborne at home in the Wombat
Photography © Alison Pouliot

all committed to the protection of the forest. She points to the pivotal role played by Murray Ralph in the creation of the group, and how he provided her with the ecological knowledge that enabled her to convene Wombat Forestcare following his retirement. Today, Wombat Forestcare's membership has roughly equal representation of women and men (54% women 46% men) and the committee has four women and three men.

Although Wombat Forestcare is well represented by women, we are still under-represented in the sciences and in conservation. In a recent issue of the Monthly magazine, science writer Margaret Wertheim raised her concern

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about the lack of science on the agenda at a gender equality conference in Melbourne in late 2016. While commending the breadth of topics and engaging speakers, says Wertheim, 'I raise this not as a point of criticism but rather with a note of sadness, and also a hint of alarm'. This concerns me greatly too, but in my experience, the women are there, although usually with limited influence and in a voluntary capacity. Women are often doing the work on the ground and within the community, but are needed across the spectrum and hierarchy.

Effective conservation requires a great range of skills. It requires solid understanding of the environment and environmental issues and policy, but also diplomacy, patience and sensitivity to environmental nuance. It requires innovation, creativity and imagination. It requires moving away from a transactional command-and-control approach to a more collaborative, inspirational and transformational

approach. It requires diverse thinking and women have a significant role to play in realigning this culture of environmental 'management' to something more attuned with current day understanding of ecology, environmental issues and human influence on the planet.

The Wombat Forest, indeed all Australian forests, are threatened by a current political mindset fixated with the tired rhetoric of the Aussie battler fighting against nature, zealously reinforced by our prime minister. It fuels a myopic argument to chop it down, constrain or erase it. We live in a country characterised by unpredictability and extremes, quirks and surprises. They are precisely what drive the evolution of our eccentric, highly adaptable and unique biodiversity. It's not to be 'battled against', but to be 'worked with'. Thank goodness for all those women and men who have the insight and imagination to recognise the difference. ■

White and "Woody" - More Mycenas from the Forest

Words and images John Walter

If you have been out in the forest this autumn you might have noticed that there are a lot of *Mycena* species to be found out there. I have mentioned thirteen species so far in this series of articles and I can easily double that number with "finds" that I have been able to put a name to. I also have at least another twenty-six finds that I cannot name. Some of these are likely to be unnamed species, others will be named but are not species I have learned to recognise and some are also likely to be species that I do know but have not identified because they are an unusual colour or show some other difference from the standard form.

In this article, I want to tackle some of the many white, or near-white *Mycena* species of the Wombat. I find the white species to be some of the most difficult to photograph and virtually all my early attempts are too embarrassing to show. Things have improved with a better camera but you must balance the high level of reflection from a flash and the auto-focus on many cameras functions poorly as it tries to define the shape of such small white objects in the glare.

Mycena albidocapillaris is a small species whose pileus (cap) is generally less than 5mm diameter with a comparatively long stipe (stem). The cap is generally pure white but sometimes you see a light brownish tinge, particularly on older specimens and the stipe can appear translucent. You will find this growing in large numbers on old fern fronds, leaves, twigs and pieces of shed bark in the wettest parts of the forest such as the deep gullies between Trentham and



Above: *Mycena albidocapillaris* growing prolifically on the old stems of a tree fern.

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Blackwood. You must examine this species closely if you hope to identify it as there are a few similar species that grow in the same conditions.

The top of the cap should be depressed (a little dimple) and the cap and stipe are covered with short white hairs. Latin scholars will know that *albidus* is white and *capillaris* means hairlike and you might think the name is a reference to these short white hairs. It is a little trickier than that however, the noted South Australian mycologist John Burton Cleland applied the name *Mycena subcapillaris* to this species in 1933, describing it as being “near to the species *M. capillaris*”, which is a very similar, even smaller white species from Europe. None of the descriptions or images I can find for *M. capillaris* mention hairs on the cap or the stem but they do describe the stipe as threadlike. Later research identified that the name *M. subcapillaris* was already in use for another species and the name was revised to *M. albidocapillaris*, or the “white capillaris”. I find this a little odd as the original *M. capillaris* is a white species and Cleland, when applying his name, noted that it differed from *M. capillaris* “in being distinctly larger and in the pileus being often brownish.” So, the species that is sometimes brown is now named as the white form of a species that is already white!

I can sense the reader is reaching for a large woody club with which they intend to teach me a lesson for being so pedantic. I apologise, but it does amuse me. Our next white species is very similar although the cap is slightly smaller and in one of Grgurinovic’s descriptions the stipe is naked but this is not mentioned in her original description. This is *Mycena maldea*, named from yet another of AW Reed’s Aboriginal words “malde” meaning “different”. According to Grgurinovic, who named the species, the odour is “strongly nitric or not distinctive” and other texts also refer to the nitrous odour but the words “or not distinctive” implies the odour is not always present. In her later text Grgurinovic, noted that this species also produces very fine stems known as criniform stipes which do not develop a proper cap but can give the appearance of a tangled mess around the fruit bodies. These stipes were not mentioned at all when she first described the species however. I have found numerous colonies of small white fungi with a strong nitrous odour and copious criniform stipes and there is generally a mix of naked and hairy stipes within the colony. The only true way to identify these species is microscopically but I suggest the criniform stipes are a good clue even if the nitrous odour is absent.

I have included images of some other small white *Mycena* species that I have found locally but have not yet been able to name. It is likely they are some of the many unnamed species. We should also look at the *Mycena minya*, *Mycena piringa* and *Mycena pitereka* conundrum and risk driving the reader out to find something rather large and woody



M. maldea is often seen on litter or even old grass stems and is readily identified by the nitric smell and criniform stipes.



Unidentified *Mycena* with strongly decurrent gills, on litter and occasionally has a criniform stipe or two.



A much larger unidentified species in which the gills appear to form a collar around the stem.

once again. The names “minya” and “pitereka” are both Reed’s Aboriginal words, this time meaning small and white respectively. “Piringa” comes from Endacott’s equally unreferenced collection of Aboriginal words and means frost.

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All three species have small whitish-grey to smokey-white caps covered with white frosting giving them a mealy appearance. The cap diameter is reportedly different for each species as is the stipe length, and while *M. minya* and *M. piringa* have some frosting on the stipe, the longer smooth stipe of *M. pitereka* does not. The field data written up in the descriptions of these three species is based on only one or two collections which, I suspect, has not identified the full extent of natural variation for each species making it extremely difficult to identify these species out in the field. For example, the cap of *M. minya* is recorded as being 6mm in diameter with a 9mm long stipe and it grows on the bark of a living eucalypt whereas *M. piringa* is only 3mm in diameter on a 6mm stipe and grows on *Eucalyptus* and *M. pitereka* is largest with a 16mm cap and 19mm stipe growing on stumps and bark of fallen trees.

A review of the available fungi field guides shows different sizes and substrates for these species and while all three species are illustrated, each of the three main guides has only one species each. By judicious use of a magnifying lens you may be able to see features that help separate these species in the field but ...

OW! Stop that!

OW! I haven't told you about the special cells ...

OW! ... or the disks at the base of the stipes ...

OW! OK! OK! Put the woody club down and just go out into the forest and enjoy the mass of white mycenae awaiting your discovery and don't be afraid to get up close for a smell test or examination with a lens. OW! ■

References

- Cleland, J B (1934 & 1935) *Toadstools and Mushrooms and other Larger Fungi of South Australia* Part 1 (1934) and Part 2 (1935)
- Grgurinovic, C (1997) *Larger Fungi of South Australia*
- Grgurinovic, C (2003) *The Genus Mycena in South Eastern Australia*
- Endacott, S J (1987) *Australian Aboriginal Words and Place Names and their Meanings*
- Reed, A W (1988) *Aboriginal Words of Australia*

The field guides are:

- Fuhrer, B (2005) *A Field Guide to Australian Fungi*, includes an image of *M. minya* on what appears to be dead wood or perhaps shed bark, not living bark as described by Grgurinovic.
- Gates, G & Ratkowsky, D (2016) *A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi* 2nd edition illustrates *M. pitereka* and describes the cap as 4mm dia. and the stipe as 12mm, not 16mm and 19mm as per Grgurinovic.
- Hubregtse, J (2017) *Fungi in Australia* Rev 2, a down loadable guide from the FNCV available at <http://www.fncv.org.au/fungi-in-australia/> includes a page on *M. piringa* – while these species were verified microscopically, one image appears to show caps around 6mm diameter based on the size of the lichens in the background, not 3mm as listed in the text and Grgurinovic.



Mycena 'tiny, all-white' as named in Gates, *A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi* 2nd ed., smells strongly of bleach and is photographed here in the Otways but may be found in the wettest parts of the Wombat.



A mass of frosty *Mycena* - the proportions of the cap size and stem length seem wrong in all images and when taken in conjunction with a substrate of shed bark or old wood, this makes accurate identification of all these virtually impossible. I prefer to use the name *Mycena minya* group to cover all of them for now.

Egg and Bacon 3

Daviesia, the Bitter-peas

Words and Images by John Walter

One of the many enjoyable parts of researching and writing this series of articles is being able to access the historical journals on the internet and discover the wealth of knowledge therein. These days, I can do in an hour or two what would once have involved an extended visit to a major Australian herbarium library or perhaps even a sea voyage to Kew in the UK.

The early publications often contain beautiful colour plates such as the plate for *Daviesia leptophylla* shown opposite.¹ It was not labelled as *Daviesia leptophylla* when it was painted, but more on that later. The genus *Daviesia* was named by Sir James Edward Smith in 1798, some six years earlier than his efforts on *Dillwynia*. If you guessed it was named after a botanist called Davies then you take the prize, however, as the original text is written in Latin, I am not able to provide a precise translation. My three years of Latin study was so long ago I have forgotten almost all the grammar.

*“In honorem clariffimi [clarissimi] Hugonis Davies, ... de plantarum Britannicarum studiosis [studiosis] optime meriti,”*² which I loosely translate as “In honour of the renowned Hugh Davies, ... a most deserving student of the British plants”. The two words in brackets are mine, in the 18th century, the letter “s” was written as an “f” unless it appeared at the end of a word or was a capital, something worth remembering if you are following up your family history.

Davies was a Welsh Anglican clergyman from the island of Anglesey whose specialty was the flora of Wales. He was a Fellow of Smith’s Linnean Society and was indeed well known or renowned in the botanical circles of the time.

The first *Daviesia* to be cultivated in Kew Gardens was in 1792, but of course, it did not have a formal name then. It appeared in a list of plants being grown in Cambridge Botanic Garden in 1807 (where it was also first grown in 1792) as *Daviesia ulicina* which was Smith’s preferred name for the species.³ Unfortunately for Smith the name was officially recorded as *Daviesia ulicifolia* by Andrews in 1803 when the species was formally described.⁴ Smith blamed the gardeners for misusing his original name and creating the confusion.⁵ The name *ulicina* is a reference to the plant being like gorse, whereas *ulicifolia* refers to the foliage being like gorse. Gorse is *Ulex europaeus*, also a pea flower and shares its sharp spines with *D. ulicifolia*.

We now accept the name *D. ulicifolia* as under the rules, that name had precedence even though it was a mistake.



Above: *Daviesia virgata*, now recognised as *D. leptophylla*, 1 Flower & bud, 2 Standard, 3 Wings, 4 Keel, 5 Calyx, Stamens & Pistil, 6 Pistil (ovary, style & stigma)

The obvious feature of this plant is the sharp spines adorning the end of the branchlets and phyllodes. All *Daviesia* species have phyllodes instead of leaves. A phyllode is a modified (generally flattened) stem or branch, which has the appearance of a leaf but lacks the many pores (stomata) of a leaf. This is an adaptation to our dry climate, which reduces the level of water lost to the atmosphere. The other key identifying feature of the *Daviesia* is the upturned dark chocolate or purple tip of the keel clearly seen in detail 4 of the plate reproduced above.

The Gorse Bitter-pea *D. ulicifolia* is the first of three species of *Daviesia* found in the Wombat forest. In many locations, it seems like this is the only shrub present, perhaps with a bit of bracken alongside. The small phyllodes are sometimes narrow, but in this district, they are generally oval and come equipped with a long tapering pungent tip.

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Note the tip of the keel peeping up through the wings on the flowers

Left: Phyllodes, spines and flower of *D. ulicifolia*

Centre: Phyllodes and part of raceme of flowers of *D. latifolia*

Right: Phyllodes and flower of *D. leptophylla*

The flowers are sometimes found in small clusters or more commonly with 2 or 3 together at the base of the phyllodes.

The next one of our Bitter-peas to be named was *Daviesia latifolia*, the Hop Bitter-pea. *Latifolia* means broad-leaf and this was the common name given to it when it was first named in 1811.⁶ The large broad phyllodes with wavy edges make this an easy species to identify and it can produce so many flowers in big racemes or bunches that it is jaw dropping. I know of two populations near Glenlyon and it is also recorded in the southern part of the Wombat, but it is not commonly found. Alfred Ewart noted in his 1930 *Flora of Victoria* that “The leaves possess a tonic principle, and have been used as a medicine and also as a substitute for hops.”

The last of the local Bitter-peas is the Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *Daviesia leptophylla*, which is very common in Central Victoria but perhaps not quite as common in the Wombat as the Gorse Bitter-pea. This plant was very popular in 1832 as it was described twice, with different botanists applying different names. The ultimate winner was *D. leptophylla*, presumably because it was published earlier in the year but the other name, *D. virgata*, appears to me to be the correct name.⁷ This mystery is something for me to follow up elsewhere lest you start looking for the *Mycena* laden woody club once again. The long narrow phyllodes (lepto means slender or narrow) are the key to identifying this *Daviesia* species.

So, to recap, you can identify the Bitter-peas by the flowers, which are much smaller than those on other Egg and Bacon and are near circular or perhaps slightly oval and always with a small v-shaped notch at the top. The key feature of the flowers is the keel, which has a dark upright point pushing through the wings just in front of the standard. From there it is simple; spiny phyllodes and branches means *D. ulicifolia*, large broad phyllodes with wavy edges is *D. latifolia* and long narrow phyllodes indicates *D. leptophylla*.

In the next newsletter, I will tackle the largest group of the Egg and Bacon, the *Pultenaea*. As we have twelve species in my local list, plus the one closely related *Almaleea* species, we will have to spread them over a few issues and I might start by presenting the one vulnerable and three species that are listed as rare.

References

1. Hooker, W J, (1832) *Curtis's botanical magazine* Vol 59, Plate and text species 3196, labelled *D. virgata*
2. Smith, J E (1798) The Characters of Twenty New Genera of Plants, *Transactions of the Linnean Society* Vol 4, page 220
3. Donn, J (1807) *Hortus Cantabrigiensis*, page 95
4. Andrews, H C (1803) *The Botanist's Repository of New and Rare Plants* Vol 5, Plate and text species 304
5. Smith, J E (1804) Remarks on the generic Characters of the Decandrous Papilionaceous Plants of New Holland pages 506-507 which appeared in *Annals of Botany* edited by Konig & Sims and published 1805.
6. Brown, R (1811) *Hortus Kewensis* pages 20-21
7. *D. leptophylla* was published in Don, G (1832) *A General History of the Dichlamydeous Plants* Vol 2, page 125 and well as in Reference 1 above as *D. virgata*

Most of these references (plus many more) can be found, read, downloaded and enjoyed at the Biodiversity Heritage Library at <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

Nature Study in Glenlyon

Living close to the Wombat Forest is a privilege, yet our busy lives mean that we do not enjoy it as much as we could. We need to be connected to the natural environment and this is particularly important for children, in an age when so much of our nature study comes via a screen.

Glenlyon Upper Loddon Landcare Group and the Glenlyon Progress Association recognise this. They provide children with the opportunity to interact more closely with the natural world, using engaging and playful exploratory activities to help children gain an understanding of how animals interact with their natural environment. Each program is themed and supervised, involving naturalists to share their knowledge and answer questions.

They recently initiated a nature study program, titled What's In Our Backyard At Glenlyon? The first excellent event was held in May and attended by over 140 children and adults at the Glenlyon Dam.



Cleo the Peregrine Falcon looks up from her lunch.
Photography © Sandy Scheltema



Mokey the Southern Boobook Owl.
Photography © Sandy Scheltema

Martin Scuffins and Talia Barrett (Leigh Valley Hawk and Owl Sanctuary) aim to teach conservation through wild encounters. They brought three diurnal raptors; a Peregrine Falcon, a Nankeen Kestrel, and an Australian Hobby, and a nocturnal bird of prey, a Southern Boobook Owl. Their hunting habits, biology and threats to their existence were explained. Most of these threats are from man and include being hit by cars and loss of habitat.

It is rare to be close to birds of prey, to see their patterned feathers, sharp beaks and powerful talons, and we watched with delight as the birds flew low to collect food from the handlers.

Martin Scuffins said, "These birds are perfectly adapted to the environment in which they live, and that environment is the environment they share with us. It's up to us to protect their habitat. Species minus habitat equals extinction. We don't own the environment, it belongs to these creatures as well."

On Sunday 2 July the theme is plants on the Loddon River, examining leaves, flowers, pods and bark. ■

For more information on the nature study program at Glenlyon - landcare@glenlyon.vic.au

Wombat Forestcare Membership

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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