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Wombat Forestcare Newsletter

Greetings from the Wombat Forest. We are moving from fungus season to the early signs of spring. Wattles, hakeas and heaths are all flowering. In October 2010 Wombat Forestcare launched a campaign for 'park status' for the Wombat Forest and we are now much closer to achieving this goal. Read about this exciting development. **Gayle Osborne** (editor) and **Angela Halpin** (design)

Proposed Wombat-Lerderderg National Park

Words by Gayle Osborne

The Wombat State Forest, located on the Great Dividing Range between Daylesford and Woodend, is a critical refuge for many threatened species and this has been recognised by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC). The Central West Investigation draft report recommends a combination of national park, regional and conservation parks for the Wombat State Forest.

The role of VEAC is to provide independent and strategic advice to the state government regarding protection and management of the environment and natural resources on Victoria's public land.

The Central West Investigation draft report recommends that approximately 28,000 ha of the current Wombat State Forest be combined with the Lerderderg State Park (approx 24,000 ha) to form the new Wombat-Lerderderg National Park. The remainder of the Wombat Forest would become regional and conservation parks.

Greater Glider *Petauroides volans.* Photography © Gayle Osborne

For the people who love the Wombat, who seek out the migratory birds, the amazing array of fungi in winter and the summer wildflowers, it should not be a surprise that VEAC has also recognised the importance of the Wombat as vital for the protection of many species.

The VEAC draft report notes "Good numbers of greater glider are also being recorded in the wetter forests of the central Wombat ranges; this constitutes the only population of this threatened species west of the Hume Highway. The presence of breeding powerful owls is significant, as this species requires very extensive areas of forest to provide an adequate food source of possums and gliders, and usually nests in large hollows high up in old living eucalypts."

A primary purpose of a national park is to protect biodiversity and act as a refuge for threatened species and we have long known that the Wombat, which forms a significant part of the only largely intact native vegetation in central Victoria, fulfills this role. It is gratifying to see this acknowledged by VEAC.

The VEAC report recognises the importance of the Wombat as headwaters for seven major rivers and notes, "The draft recommendations for Wombat - Lerderderg National Park and Wombat Regional Park provide improved water supply security for the headwaters of several of western Victoria's most significant rivers."

Section 18(d) of the VEAC Act (d) states "the need to provide for the creation and preservation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of parks and reserves within the State". Simplistically, this means that there is an obligation to ensure that percentages of Ecological Vegetation Classes

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(EVCs), for which there are nationally agreed targets, are represented in protected areas.

The Wombat Forest is in the Central Victorian Uplands bioregion and there is a significant shortfall of EVCs in protected areas (i.e. parks and conservation reserves). The VEAC recommendations are in line with its obligations under the Act.

The creation of a regional park in two sections around Trentham, Blackwood and south of Daylesford, as well as in the east of the Wombat would allow for a range of activities including bushwalking, dog walking, horse riding and domestic firewood collection close to towns.

The section of the Wombat north of Daylesford would become a conservation park. This is a new category of park and although managed for conservation values this classification is not as restrictive as a National Park.

The draft recommendations represent a wonderful result for conservation in the Wombat Forest and would protect it from logging and most mining.

The successful campaign, launched in 2010, for this VEAC investigation is the result of a strong partnership with the Victorian National Parks Association, The Wilderness Society, Bendigo & District Environment Council and Ballarat Environment Network. Critical support has come from other regional groups and lobbying by our members.

VEAC also recommended that the Wellsford State Forest be partially incorporated into the Bendigo Regional Park and a new Wellsford Nature Reserve created. A new Pyrenees National Park and a regional park would be created.

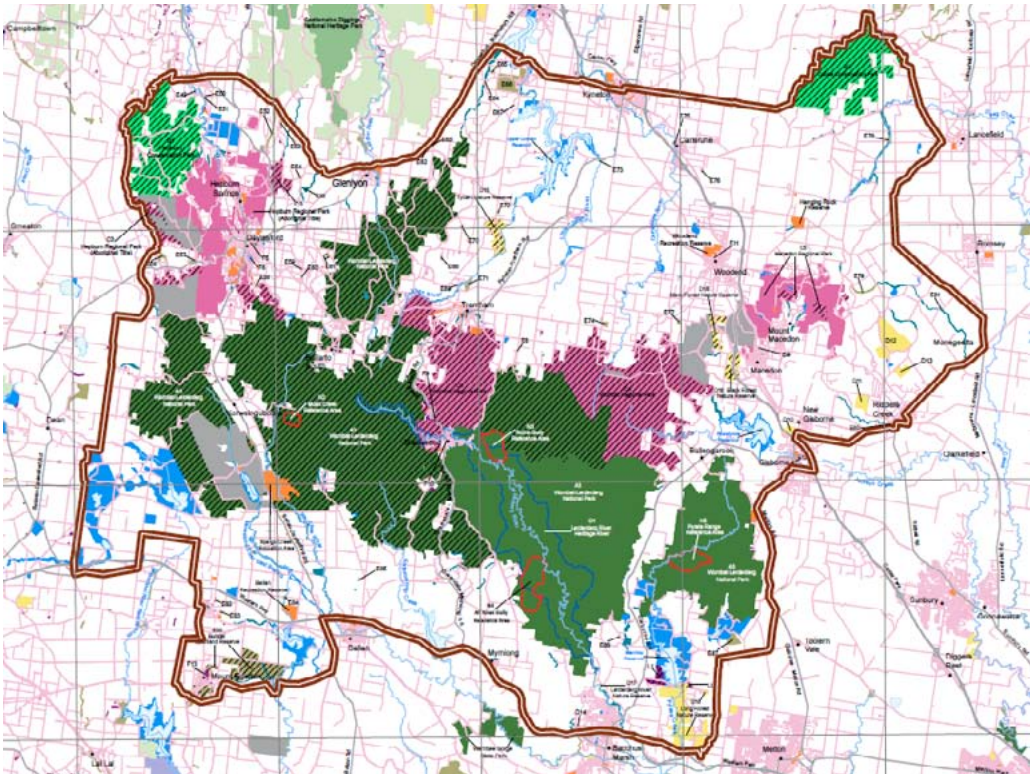
The outlook is not so good for Mt Cole and Mt Lonarch State Forests. Ben Nevis Nature Reserve (1088 hectares) would be created on the northern flanks of the current Mount Cole State Forest and 1406 ha from the Mt Cole forest added to Mount Buangor State Park to form the Mount Buangor National Park. However, the remaining areas of state forests will continue to be logged.

It is doubtful that this logging, which includes clear-felling, is sustainable. In about 2003, due to an inability to supply sawlogs from the Mt Cole area forests, the government bought back the licence. Considering this, it seems inconceivable that 15 years later 1,000 m^3 of sawlog can be sourced annually from the area. During this time, an escaped planned burn damaged a large area of Mt Cole and an estimated 3,000 trees fell in extreme wind events, contributing to a reduction in sawlog availability. As a result of poor forestry practices, areas of forest have been damaged by the fungus *Armillaria*.

Timber harvesting in these forests is of great concern to conservationists and bushwalkers and submissions will be made to VEAC for improved conservation at Mt Cole and Mt Lonarch.

With the exception of the lack of environmental protections for Mt Cole and Mt Lonarch, Wombat Forestcare is particularly pleased with the draft recommendations.

The draft report is open for public comment until the 31st October, with final recommendations due in March 2019. The Victorian government will then decide whether it will accept all or some of the recommendations.
http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/investigation/central-west-investigation



Draft recommendations for public land use in the Central West Investigation area

(Wombat Macedon Region)

Public land use category

- National park, State park
- National heritage park
- Conservation park
- Regional park
- Nature reserve
- Bushland reserve
- Historic reserve
- State forest
- Water frontage, beds and banks reserve
- Water production reserve
- Community use reserve
- Utilities and government services reserve
- Land leased or licensed for plantation purposes
- Uncategorised public land

Public land use overlay

- Reference area
- Heritage river
- Investigation area boundary
- Recommended change in public land use
- Major road
- Major waterway or waterbody

Tawny Frogmouth
A Cryptic Creature

By Trevor Speirs

The scientific names of natural world species are always interesting and I think this is definitely the case with the frogmouth family. A species with twelve members found throughout the Asian and Australasian region, it was a famous late 18th century Frenchman, Georges Cuvier, who was responsible for the frogmouth's not so complimentary generic name *Podargus* from the Greek *podagra*, meaning feeble or gouty feet. The Tawny Frogmouth, endemic to Australia, has the specific name *strigoides* meaning owl-like, however, although nocturnal, it is the frogmouth's large wide gape and weak feet structure that separates it from the owl family. Two other Australian frogmouths, the Papuan and Marbled Frogmouth are found in the north of the continent as well as neighbouring islands and countries.

The Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*.
Photography © Gayle Osborne

While there are several records of Tawny Frogmouths in the Wombat Forest, it is on the forest edge and particularly in towns and along country roads where it is most often found. This is one species that hasn't suffered from increased urbanisation, with street lighting attracting potential prey and providing the open spaces that suit the frogmouths' hunting methods. Of course, roads bring cars and tragically many a frogmouth is caught in the headlights and struck while catching its prey. The natural world also has its own perils for frogmouths, as Gippsland environmentalist Jill Redwood discovered recently. After hearing a long, raucous bird fight during the night, the next morning Jill was surprised to find a Southern Boobook standing over a dead Tawny Frogmouth. Boobooks feed on much the same sort of prey as frogmouths and when you consider that frogmouths are quite a bit larger and heavier than Boobooks this does seem a very unusual event. Why a Boobook, a reclusive daylight bird, would still be in the open, albeit over its prey, several hours after dawn is also quite mysterious.

Southern Boobook standing over a dead Tawny Frogmouth.
Photography © Jill Redwood

It was once believed that the Tawny Frogmouth took most of its prey in the air. However, stomach dissections, particularly in the 1930s by renowned ornithologist Dominic Serventy revealed that the vast majority of its food was moving terrestrial invertebrates, with prey including centipedes, crickets, grasshoppers, spiders, beetles and weevils. Occasionally, small mammals, frogs and reptiles are taken.Using a perch and wait strategy, when a prey item around the size of a mouse is caught, it is held in the bill and relentlessly beaten against a branch or the like, possibly a tenderising process, then consumed well after the unfortunate victim has expired. This is very similar hunting behaviour to that of some members of the Kingfisher family.

As the spring breeding season gets into full swing, keep an eye on the ground below trees for whitewash and moulting feathers, which could indicate a frogmouth nest above. Although these birds are a master of disguise, seemingly able to become part of a tree, they sometimes sit at right angles on a branch giving away their position. Any bird seen sitting on the scrappy stick nest during the day will be a male, with breeding duties shared by both sexes during the night. ■

Reference:
Serventy, D.L. (1936). Feeding methods of Podargus. *Emu*, 36, 74-90.

It's all in the name: some tips for naming fungi in the field

By Alison Pouliot and Tom May

The desire to name organisms is human nature. Be it in everyday vernacular or scientific nomenclature, naming plays an important role in understanding the natural world.

There are three components to *naming* when it comes to species. Firstly, the species must be delimited; that is, the variation within it is circumscribed, and the species separated from close relatives, using whatever characters are available. Secondly, a Linnaean binomial (genus+species) is applied to the species, as delimited. These two components are the bread and butter of taxonomists. The third component of naming is *identifying*, which means assigning a name to a specimen or observation. This is something we all do, not just taxonomists. We *identify* when we look up to the sky and say 'wedgie' or when we observe a cluster of mushrooms and say 'ghost fungus'. Some identifications can be as rapid as a glance at the silhouette of a bird, or could take hours of careful inspection of fine details of the surfaces of a mushroom, or even the characters of its spores under a compound microscope.

Few scientists are employed as taxonomists in Australia today. The *taxonomic impediment*, or dearth of taxonomists, especially mycological taxonomists, reflects the lack of recognition of the importance of naming species. However, if you're unlucky enough to ingest a poisonous mushroom, you'll be grateful that a taxonomic mycologist can identify the culprit and help determine the best course of action, depending on the toxin ingested. A taxonomist might well save your life! Indeed, accurate naming of species underpins all aspects of biological science, as each species has unique characteristics.

This article explores the third phase of naming - identification, in particular the importance of correct identification and how to deal with uncertainty in identification. Accurate identification of species has important implications for distribution and hence ecology and conservation.

Recording fungi

Lists of animal, plant and fungus species have been recorded by naturalists since the first issue of *The Victorian Naturalist* in 1884. In recent decades, the general public has contributed to the understanding of the whereabouts of species through the collection of distribution records. Today, the ubiquity of the Internet, social media and nature platforms enables contributors to place records in the public domain, allowing for mass data collection, and also ready visualisation of records such as through the Atlas of Living Australia (https://www.ala.org.au/).

The Fungimap project (https://fungimap.org.au/), founded in 1996, was the first fungus-mapping scheme in the Southern Hemisphere. Almost a thousand participants have contributed

Oudemansiella gigaspora group – a distinctive Fungimap target that is mapped as a group of species that are not readily distinguishable in the field. Photography © Alison Pouliot

more than a hundred thousand fungus distribution records, making it one of Australia's largest citizen science projects. Several Wombat Forestcare members actively contribute records to Fungimap and these account for most of the knowledge about the distribution of fungi in our local forests. However, identifying fungi presents additional challenges relative to animals and plants. This is because fungi are characterised by relatively high species richness and a large number of rare or little-known species. Moreover, fungal taxonomy is unstable and many decades behind that for animals and plants. This instability manifests in several ways, including changes in both generic and species concepts, as well as discovery of novel species. Recent advances in molecular mycology are revealing a staggering diversity of fungus species.

Identifying a fungus to species level by macro-characteristics alone is not easy. Those who have stumbled across LBMs (little brown mushrooms) or members of the genus *Cortinarius* (with over 2000 species worldwide) know how difficult they are to identify. This is why Fungimap focuses on carefully selected 'target species' – those with conspicuous features recognisable in the field, with few or no look-a-like species. The choice of target species increases the likelihood of accurate identifications. It also increases the satisfaction for the identifier in being able to give a name to a specimen. At the same time, it is important to resist putting a name on something unless you are very sure of the accuracy of your identification, because inaccurate identifications have implications.

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The importance of accurate records for conservation

The accuracy of fungus records is important for mapping the distribution of fungi. This feeds into our understanding ecology and allows for effective conservation and management. There are implications of applying the wrong name to a species, especially for rare species. It is better to 'under-record', that is, to leave a species at genus level, than assign it an incorrect species name. This approach ensures higher data quality.

So-called 'false positives' or 'type 1 errors' are errors in data reporting that falsely indicate the presence of a species due to a mis-identification. An example would be the incorrect recording of the wet-forest specialist *Vibrissea dura* from the mallee, due to confusion with a stalked puffball. 'False negatives' or 'type 2 errors' are the failure to identify a species that is present, perhaps because it is very similar to another common species that is already known from an area. Both types of errors have consequences for conservation research. False positives outside of the known distribution can be picked up by expert reviewers (from inspection of maps) and can be corrected as long as there is supporting information such as a photo or specimen (see below). False negatives of rare or inconspicuous species can be especially difficult to detect. Errors in reporting fungi can bias analyses; for example, when creating species distribution models or estimating the rates of local extinctions or colonisation. As most conservation hinges on the presence of rare species, it is critical that data about rarity are correct.

Dealing with uncertainty in naming

There are some simple protocols for naming species where identifications are uncertain. If you can identify your observation to genus level but not to species level, it is best to describe it as 'Genus sp.', ('sp.' being shorthand for 'species). For example, *Russula* sp. If your observation does not match well to the particular species known from an area, add a question mark between the genus and species names. For example, *Russula* ? *marangania*. If there is a possibility that your observation might be a rare species, do include this information, but include it in the notes rather than make the identification definitely. Some online citizen science portals (such as the ALA direct recording facility) use whatever name you supply without any checking at the time of record submission. This can lead to misleading records appearing on maps.

If the species recorded is known to be a species complex, use the word 'group' following the genus and species name. For example: *Oudemansiella gigaspora* group. Being easy to identify, the *Oudemansiella gigaspora* group is a useful target 'species group', distinguished by the brownish pileus (cap) that is sticky when fresh, the rather widely spaced, white lamellae (gills) and the rooting stipe base. Until recently, Australian members of this group were lumped under the name of the European species *Oudemansiella radicata* (sometimes placed in the genus *Xerula*). A taxonomic revision of *Oudemansiella* and related genera revealed that *O. radicata* is not present in Australia, but there are a number of closely related species that look rather similar in the field. *Oudemansiella gigaspora* was originally named *Hygrophorus gigasporus* by Cooke and Massee in 1887. Because this is the oldest name among the members of the group, we use *O. gigaspora*, as the basis for the 'group'.

If you see a particular species regularly that has something distinctive about it but you cannot identify it, make up a 'tag name' or 'field name'. This is a better option than assigning the Latin abbreviations 'aff.' (meaning 'similar to') or 'cf.' (meaning 'compare with') to a described species, particularly when that described species does not occur in Australia. Do not use tag names that look like species epithets (i.e. not in Latin). A short phrase is best, especially one that conjures up unique features that separate the species from others. For example, *Mycena* 'tiny blue lights', as used by the FNCV Fungi Group for a tiny bluish *Mycena* that is bioluminescent. Ideally, lodge a voucher collection (i.e. submit a dried fungus specimen) under that tag name in a reference collection such as a herbarium. This allows mycologists to name the species once revisions have been carried out. You'll need appropriate permits to make a collection, especially from nature reserves. You may be able to get advice on permits from your local Friends, Landcare or Fungus Interest group.

Supporting your record

When submitting records of fungi, it is always useful to include a photograph, especially if it is the first time you have recorded a particular species. Photos that are submitted with records should show distinctive characters of the species. For example, for mushrooms, it is important to show the underside of the pileus so that the lamellae are visible, and provide a clear view of the base of the stipe. Also note features not evident from a photo, such as the texture of surfaces or odour.

In the case of a record being submitted for a rare species, or one that is found outside its usual distribution range, Fungimap will usually seek more information from the recorder if a photo it not provided or not adequate for identification. Given the ephemeral nature of many fungus sporing bodies (the visible reproductive part of the fungus such as mushrooms and puffballs), they might well have disappeared before Fungimap can respond. In this instance Fungimap encourages the recorder to look out for the species the following season and capture further photos.

Taxonomy is tricky business. Identifying fungi to species level takes time and practice. Start with the ones that are most conspicuous and easily recognisable. The more often you see the same species, the more familiar you will become with the extent of variation within that species. Equip yourself with a field guide (such as the guide to Fungimap target species, *Fungi Down Under*) and a hand lens to see some of the smaller details. You are quite likely to see at least a few of the Fungimap target species each time you visit the forest during the fungus season. Each fungus distribution record, even of common and widespread species, helps scientists understand species distribution and contributes to the conservation of biodiversity. ■

Oeuf et Bacon 7
Bossiaea, the French Connection

Words and images by John Walter

So far in this series, all our genera have been named by just one Englishman, and the genera still to appear were also named by the English. The *Bossiaea* however, are the preserve of the French. Botanist, Étienne Pierre Ventenat established the name *Bossiaea* in 1800 in his publication *Description of New and Little Known Plants, Cultivated in the Garden of J.M. Cels* [my translation of the French title][1]. The plant had been introduced into the garden in 1792 and originated from Botany Bay, although there is no indication in that text that it was collected by the botanist it was named after. Ventenat wrote that it commemorated Joseph Hugues Boissieu La Martinière who was a Doctor of Medicine, and botanist with the ill-fated La Pérouse expedition. Boissieu La Martinière had visited Botany Bay with the expedition in 1788, arriving on Jan 26, the same day the first fleet relocated from Botany Bay to Sydney Harbour. Boissieu La Martinière may well have seen the plant (*Bossiaea heterophylla*) that was named after him, but it is unlikely he collected it as it would be long past flowering and even the seeds would have ripened and fallen by late January. In early March, the two vessels of the La Pérouse expedition left Botany Bay and were soon after wrecked off the Solomon Islands. There were apparently many survivors but no one from the expedition found their way home or was ever found by another European vessel. Ventenat's younger brother, Louis, was the chaplain and naturalist on the expedition sent to search for La Pérouse (led by Antoine de Bruni d'Entrecasteaux) but both Bruni d'Entrecasteaux and the younger Ventenat also did not survive to return to France.

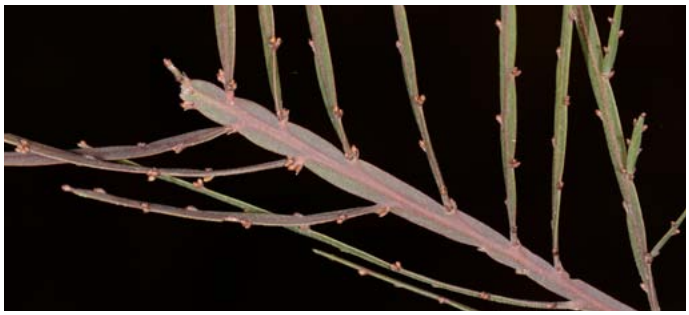
We have reliable records for six *Bossiaea* species in the Wombat Forest and I have been fortunate enough to examine five of them. The sixth species is *Bossiaea obcordata*, which was collected by Cliff Beauglehole near XL Track in 1959. There are several records further south in the Lerderderg State Park, but it may not have survived in the Wombat and is not covered here.

"I found a good patch of *Bossiaea bracteos*a - Mountain Leafless Bossiaea yesterday" reads my email to Gayle Osborne in October 2011. It turns out that I had stumbled across one of the patches of *Bossiaea vombata* which is known from just five living plants within the Wombat Forest and three older collections from East Gippsland that were previously identified as either *B. bracteosa* or *B. riparia*. What I had considered to be a dense clump of plants was actually a single plant with extensive rhizomatous growth extending for several metres and was also a yellow flowered specimen. The other plants do have some bacon to go with their egg.

Flowering branchlets of *Bossiaea vombata* showing the brown enlarged bract and bracteoles with the darker coloured scales below. The yellow-flowered form is on the left.

The brown bract and bracteoles have fallen away as the flower develops leaving the scales behind. Note that the lowest of the scales is charcoal-coloured, larger and sharply pointed. This is the cladode scale and is the remains of the leaf. The other scales are called inflorescence scales.

Regular flower colour of *B. vombata.*



Compare the branch and cladodes of *Bossiaea riparia* (above) with *Bossiaea vombata* (below). The branchlets are at right angles to the branch in *B. riparia* but not in *B. vombata.*

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This endangered *Bossiaea* is one of the 12 leafless species found in eastern Australia and like its close relative *B. bracteosa*, it has one large bract and two large bracteoles at the base of the flowers which mostly fall off just before, or when the flower opens, leaving the smaller scales behind to confuse the unwary. *B. bracteosa* does not occur in the Wombat Forest, however another leafless species, the rare River Leafless Bossiaea, *B. riparia*, is found in several locations near Sailors Creek.

This species forms a more regular shaped bush or shrub growing from a multi-branched stem and the flattened branches (called cladodes) have a light covering of white hairs when young. The cladodes on *B. riparia* are held with the flattened face at, or near to, right angles to the prior branch on plants I have seen, whereas the cladodes on *B. vombata* present their flattened face in the same plane as the prior branch. This is clearly visible in the images above. The bract and bracteoles are much smaller on *B. riparia* and remain on the plant until after the flowers have opened, although they may drop after that.

Regular readers may recall that my suggestion for a common group name for the *Bossiaea* is the Small-leaf Peas. After all, there is no smaller leaf than no leaf at all as demonstrated by the two species above. The leafless group of *Bossiaea* have flattened stems with wings each side of the core structure instead of leaves. This makes them a bit like many of our *Acacia* species which also have modified stems instead of leaves as an adaptation to reduce water loss in our dry climate.

Our remaining *Bossiaea* species all have small true leaves and these leaves are heart-shaped on *Bossiaea cordigera,* the Wiry Bossiaea. We have all learned to associate "cardio" to the heart, but that is the Greek, while "cordi" is the Latin equivalent. The Wiry Bossiaea is also listed as a rare species, so three of our six Wombat Forest *Bossiaea* species are listed as either rare or endangered. It is a straggler or scrambler, sometimes reaching up to 1.5 metres where it has the support of other plants. The opposite, heart-shaped leaves are so distinctive you could not readily confuse it for any other locally found species. It is found throughout the Wombat Forest with good populations in the headwaters of the Campaspe River and around Trentham and Lyonville.

Our next *Bossiaea* species also has very small leaves, but they alternate along the branches and are oval, rather than heart shaped, making it easy to visually separate from the Wiry Bossiaea. It is also a very prostrate plant, hugging the ground and often forms extensive mats covering several metres.

This is *Bossiaea decumbens*, the Matted Bossiaea and it prefers the damp sheltered places within the dryer forests. I know places near Glenlyon where it easily

Top and above: Heart-shaped leaves and the flower of *Bossiaea cordigera*. Note the greenish through to rusty tone in the wings of the flower.

Third and fourth: Leaves and flowers of *Bossiaea decumbens*. The greenish muddy tone in the wings is not apparent in these flowers but is commonly seen on other plants of *B. decumbens*.

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covers a strip several metres wide and stretches for 15 or 20 metres along the roadside without a break. This species was previously confused with *B. buxifolia*, a New South Wales species that extends into the far east of the State of Victoria. You will find it listed under this name in older publications such as the 1996 *Flora of Victoria* Vol 3, but the online version is fully revised. My botanical Latin publications tell me that decumbens means prostrate with tip rising upwards.

Our final *Bossiaea* is also known for its prostrate habit, so much so in fact, that it was named *Bossiaea prostrata*. It is therefore a little surprising that it is commonly known as the Creeping Bossiaea. Its leaves are as much as 3 times longer than the last two species, often 15mm long and occasionally reaching 20mm or more. The leaf shape is generally oval but can be almost circular on some plants. It is not mat forming but creeps amongst the other plants, showing a leaf or two here and a flower there. The flowers also have the greenish tone on the wings, which I see as an indicator the local leafy *Bossiaea* species. It is the most widespread of the species and is found in a wide variety of habitats.

The elder Ventenat went on to describe the plants in the famed Malmaison estate of the Empress Joséphine, wife of Napoléon I. One of these plants was a *Platylobium* species that is central to our next article in this series, further extending our French connection into the realm of Oeuf et Bacon. ■

Top and above: Mixture of leaf shapes found on *Bossiaea prostrata*.

Flowers of *B. prostrata* showing the strongly marked back of the standard petals which is characteristic of this species.

Notes

1. The French title is *Description Des Plantes Nouvelles Et Peu Connues, Cultivees Dans Le Jardin de J.M. Cels*

References

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- Callmander M et al (2017) "Etienne-Pierre Ventenat(1757-1808) and the gardens of Cels and Empress Josephine" *Candollea* 72(1): 87-132
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A rare fungus or just a species out of place?

Words and images by John Walter

Recent research and DNA work has turned the field of taxonomy upside down. Many species once thought to be related have been clearly shown to have closer relatives in other branches of the tree of life. This has led to a wave of name changes with, no doubt, many more to come. The following species was known as *Hygrocybe pseudograminicolor* until 2013 when the name was changed to *Gliophorus pseudograminicolor* but that is not why it features in this short article. This species was once thought to occur in association with Myrtle Beech trees *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, but of course we have no Myrtle Beech in the Wombat Forest. So, I was surprised to find a small population near Blue Mountain in 2011 and excited to find a much larger group nearby in 2017 and could make a collection for the herbarium. Collections such as these are important to help our mycologists understand the relationships between our fungi and our forest species and demonstrate that there is a lot more to understanding our fungi than looking up the DNA and handing out a name.

This was not the first time I had found a species associated to the Myrtle Beech trees in the Wombat Forest. In 2011 my nose led me to a small population of *Cortinarius perfoetens* that I wrote about in our 'March 2012 newsletter under the title "Stinky Fungus makes food for thought". I did not see my stinky friend again until 2014 and this time it was in large numbers and I was able to make a collection for the herbarium. The next sighting was in 2017 but after the dry lead into autumn, I have not seen it this season.

Both these species are rare in the Wombat Forest, or perhaps that should read "Both these species are rarely seen." Both times I found *G. graminicolor* it was in the dark shadows beneath the Musk Daisy-bush *Olearia argophylla* and was extremely difficult to see, even when you knew some were there. And there are seventeen *C. perfoetens* in the lower image opposite although most casual observers would only notice five or six.
You could easily walk past thinking it was one of the more common Cortinars found in our forest but if the fungi are fresh and your nose is tuned in, the gently wafting smell of burnt rubber should alert you to the presence of something a little more unusual.

One of the seventeen is virtually impossible to see, so I guess you have to know it is there. Good luck with the other sixteen and why not get out in the forest and try your luck at finding some fungi. Who knows, you might even find a rare species. ■

Gliophorus pseudograminicolor stands out in the light of the flash.

Cortinarius perfoetens collection.

Cortinarius perfoetens in situ.

Snakes alive, but only just!

By John Walter

Three very cold pythons have had a lucky escape thanks to the keen eyes of one Malmsbury Landcare member. Rayna was out looking for fungi at one of our project sites in the Wombat Forest near Spring Hill on June 11 and spotted what she first thought was a snake and its shed skin. This discovery came to my attention several hours later when I was asked to assist with the identity of the snake in question. The snake was certainly not a local species and the lighter coloured "skin" had a distinct python appearance which prompted a quick visit to the site before it became too dark to see if they could be located. We found the snake was still in the same location and both it, and the nearby skin, were two very cold pythons, and then a third python was spotted just a few metres away. I am advised that the "snake" is a Children's Python *Antaresia childreni* found in northern Australia from the Gulf Country through to the Kimberley and the "skin" is a Jungle Carpet Python *Morelia spilota* var. *cheynei* and is restricted to the rainforests of tropical north east Queensland. The third snake was a second Children's Python although its markings were not as pronounced. It had commenced shedding its skin and had some damage to its jaw. These snakes had clearly been dumped in the forest and had not moved more than a few metres. Fortunately, we had a tub in the car we use to carry tools etc. and this served as a carry bag to deliver the animals into appropriate care. They are now fully recovered and in the care of a specialist wildlife vet who also happens to be a snake aficionado. ■

Rayna's original image that alerted us to the situation, the "snake" is just left of centre and the "skin" is coiled on the bark near the tree trunk.

Three snakes in a tub. Photography © John Walter