

The Glenfern

The Official Newsletter of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

Edition No. 53 2026

PRESIDENT'S LETTER AUTUMN 2026

With autumn firmly established in Glenfern Valley Bushlands, the plants and animals are obviously breathing a sigh of relief following an extremely dry summer.

We saw some of them from a slightly different perspective in February, when we hosted our annual nightwalk. Nearly 40 people formed into 3 groups armed with white and red torches. Sightings included kangaroos, eels in the creek, possums, a sugar glider chasing his prey, swamp wallaby, a snoozing butcher bird and multiple spiders, including one scurrying across the surface of the creek. We found that animals, eels in particular, were less disturbed when we illuminated them with red light rather than white light. Something to bear in mind for future walks.

After the summer break, we've started our regular Wednesday and Sunday working bees again. We often have an informative talk during morning tea at these events and in March our Vice President Jackson treated us to a fascinating presentation: samples of water from the creek – and the creatures that live in it. We saw a range of aquatic beasts, including dragonfly nymph, caddisfly larvae, water boatmen, fish and flatworms. It's great to see the creek so healthy and full of life.

We thank Melbourne Water for awarding us a new conservation grant. This will go towards further planting on the creekside. You might have noticed last year our contractor, Forest to Foreshore, planted a large number

of trees and sedges. Given the drought, we decided to survey how these plantings had gone. The survival rate for the trees, muttonwood, blackwood and silver wattle was impressive. This autumn we'll be planting more trees, shrubs and sedges, including more messmate and manna gums to ensure we have a healthy canopy over the coming decades.

The most remarkable transformation in the last few months has been a small fragment of Glenfern Valley Bushlands on the north side of the creek. Known as Area 14, this part of the reserve hasn't been well looked after. A small group of Friends has organised a work plan and a series of working bees over summer to protect it and improve it. You can read more about their efforts in this newsletter.

An update on the 12 nest boxes installed by Yarra Ranges council last year. We've been keeping an eye on the and while no birds have taken up residence, our fauna officer Mike Sverns reports one "heavyweight" occupant has moved into a nest box that had been earmarked for kookaburras...

We hope to see you at a future working bee for a chat – and maybe a bit of bush restoration.

Tim Edwards
(President)



Possum in Nest



Greenclimber



Ivy Crew



friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.

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AREA 14 – A SPECIAL PROJECT



Before Area 14, Photo by S Robinson



Steps, Photo by S Robinson

Area 14 has a unique history and place in Glenfern. It is a small piece of Council land wedged between private properties beside Ferndale Rd on Ferny Creek's northern side. Resulting from a subdivision along Ferndale Rd, (in those days a rough track), Council secured this small piece to act as a buffer to the creek. It was forgotten and neglected for many years until the Friends discovered its existence, and secured its management as part of the greater Bushlands area. We have held several working bees over the years, which included some planting and weeding. Sadly, it was subjected to heavy machinery by unauthorised parties, and provided a dumping ground for much tree material.

Recently, a new working group of Friends reassessed the area with the aim of creating a feature from a degraded site. After several meetings, a draft plan emerged which provided a new sense of opportunity. Much of the dumped woody material was removed to allow better access. A new rock stairway was installed which provides a safer and more obvious entry point from the road. We've also removed weedy grasses, English Ivy and Blackberry to encourage indigenous plants.

Re-infection of weeds threatens the site due to its position on Ferndale Rd. To protect against this, in the next two months we will clear and tidy a section of the road bank, then replant thickly with a variety of appropriate indigenous species. We will also more clearly define the site as part of Glenfern.

Following this project, our aim is to consider a Stage 2, to continue the work along the rest of the bank, and remove more of the hard-to-reach weeds.

We are indebted to Yarra Ranges Council for their financial support and advice for this project. Already we've been rewarded with substantial improvement, while we proudly reclaim the lovely Area 14 as a special piece of our beautiful Bushlands.

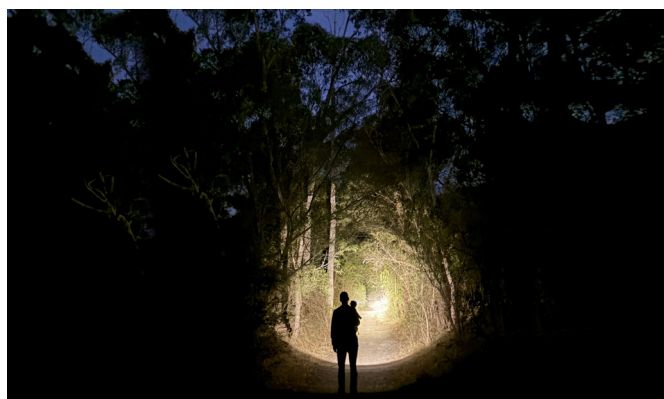
Andrew F



NIGHT WALK 7TH FEBRUARY

The Friends group started off the new year with our annual night walk. The event started with a picnic at Bagunggadjiirri meeting place attended by most of our usual members, watched over by a solitary Eastern Grey kangaroo from the top. Several new families came along with children. Thanks to them for coming – children are always welcome!

The creek was very low due to the recent hot weather, but still running. Most of the inhabitants of the reserve stay around the riparian area in summer, and we saw several of the usual possums and nocturnal birds. We also found some less usual fauna:



Swamp wallaby, Photo by L Fullagar

Swamp wallaby

This small wallaby was hiding in the dense vegetation near Owl Loop. Recognisable by the white stripe on their face, their preferred habitat is dense shrubby bush near a creek. Their fur has shades of black, brown, red and grey, which helps hide them from predators. They are also good swimmers and can easily cross waterways. Common in outer suburban areas, they can often be seen under the trees in Sherbrooke Forest and in bushy backyards.

Short-finned eels

We saw two or three of these at the top of the creek. These amazing animals live in fresh water, but breed in the ocean. When grown, they return to the waters they originally came from. They have been known to travel for kilometres through pipes and over ground to reach their home. We hope their presence is a sign that the creek remains healthy and rubbish free.



Water Spider, Photo by L Fullagar

Water spider

This was a new one – a delicate white spider hunting over the surface of the water. It was running back and forth in a still patch catching tiny insects. Possibly an Elegant Water Spider (*Dolomedes facetus*), although the white colour is unusual. If anyone knows about spiders and can identify it, please let us know.

Walking in the bush at nighttime is different from daylight – you can hear more activity than you can see, but life is still going around all around.

Marilyn Thomas



The Glenfern

WORKING BEE SCHEDULE 2026

Conservation Conversation • Wed 1st April, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 19th April, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 6th May, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 17th May, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 3rd June, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 21st June, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 1st July, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 19th July, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 5th August, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 16th August, 9:30 am

Conservation Conversation • Wed 2nd Sept, 9:00 am
Restoration Morning • Sun 20th Sept, 9:30 am

Sunday working bee 9:30 am–12:30 pm,
Mid week 9:00–11:00 am.

Meet at the central car park,
Glenfern Road, Upwey.

Bring a water bottle, strong shoes, and gloves.
Tools and morning tea provided.

Come and join us to help restore the bushlands
while learning more about local flora and fauna.
See our Facebook page for more info about
working bees and tree planting days.

**PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE AS
SCHEDULING DEPENDS ON WEATHER
AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS.**

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ORB SPIDERS IN YOUR GARDEN

These elegant creatures are common in most of Australia, with over 100 known species. The web, usually spun at nighttime, begins with a couple of anchoring strands between two branches, then the radiating lines are attached to these. Lastly, the sticky strands are spun from the centre outwards. The web lasts the night and is usually abandoned in the morning, while the spider rests during the day.

Female spiders will lay their eggs in autumn before dying. The spiderlings will hatch out and spin small webs during the winter, then grow to full size over the summer.

They are often seen on gardens, usually over a compost heap or piled branches, to take advantage of insects that live in damp places. They are a welcome addition to any garden, as they help keep gnats and mosquitos under control.



Orb Spider seen on the night walk.

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Forest to Foreshore, Kallista

Bushland Management and Ecological Restoration

**And thanks to Melbourne Water and
Shire of Yarra Ranges for their services**

We continue to welcome a high number of visitors to the reserve, please remember to take your rubbish home and have your dogs on leads to keep all our animals happy. Thank you.



friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands Inc.