

Friends of Sassafras Creek

Newsletter Edition 13

Feb 2026



Sassafras Creek - Photo by Meghan Lindsay

Jane's journal

Welcome to the Summer edition of Friends of Sassafras Creek's Newsletter.

Our AGM was held on November 6 in the Yarra Ranges council building at Monbulk, with a fascinating presentation on Native Bees by Clancy Lester. We also elected and welcomed our new committee with last year's members returning for another year. Thanks to Jane Hollands, Meghan Lindsay, Sally Bewsher, Carla Farrell, Alex Maisey, Marion McNeil, Brian Bloomer, Mark Phelan and Georgia Angus for their support.

Our first main 2026 working bee for February will be along the track below where the track crosses over Olinda Crescent. This area towards Nobles Lane is the site of our new 2025 Landcare grant. There are remnant patches of Cool Temperate Rainforest in this area. The goal is to restore this area with removal of woody weeds, to create growing space for native plants. Revegetation with ferns and Southern Sassafras trees will enhance habitat. Contractor work by Diverse Bush Management has already begun. Our Wednesday working bee was Wednesday 28 January, returning to Lyrebird Falls for weeding in this special area.

The Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs (CWAD) provided a grant to our group some time ago for further works in the secret garden below the properties at #1 and #3 Warwick Farm Rd. Further removal of woody weeds will take place as well as treatment to some large sycamores. Works will be completed by local group Forest to Foreshore and began in January this year.

(continued from page 1) Our committee met several times with Parks Victoria about replacement of the damaged sign at the start of the track in Sassafras township. FOSC will be providing PV with some artwork for the sign, showing some of the animals and birds that may be seen on a walk.

Yarra Ranges Council continue upgrading the Village Green in Sassafras as part of their Ngurrak Barring (Ridgewalk) project. New rotunda still to be placed in the area.

Jane Hollands
Friends of Sassafras Creek

Emperor Gum Moth in Jane's Garden

The Emperor Gum Moths, *Opodiphthera eucalypti*, are much less common nowadays than they was in past years. It belongs to the Saturniidae family, are about 12-15cm in size and have four eye spots (one on each wing). A few years ago, when I was visiting Jane, we observed an Emperor Gum Moth exiting its cocoon on an azalea in Jane's garden. The photos to follow were taken over about two hours, as it emerged. The moth's wings had not completely dried when I left and Jane said it was gone the next morning.



Photos by Sally Bewsher

These moths are found in Victoria and northwards along the Dividing Range and coastal areas of eastern Australia into Queensland, with some sightings recorded elsewhere. The European Wasp is a predator of the caterpillars and is believed to be partially responsible for the reduction of the moth's numbers (continued on page 3)



*Above: The Emperor Gum Moth ready for flight in Olinda - photo by Jane Hollands
Below: Emperor Gum Moth eggs (left) and a young caterpillar chowing down on a gum leaf (right).
Photos taken in Castlemaine by Joan Broadberry*



Emperor Gum Moths lay their eggs on eucalypt leaves of which the caterpillars eat once they hatch from their tiny egg cases. Initially the caterpillars are dark brown to black, but they gradually change colour as they grow and moult their exoskeletons, becoming the bright green and blue we are familiar with. (The last time I observed this was near Castlemaine, where the low-growing eucalypt enabled me to see egg cases and a range of caterpillars in different stages of development). The caterpillars then build a cocoon in which they pupate into an adult moth. Adult moths only live for one or two weeks, before mating and laying eggs.

Sally Bewsher

Weed watch - Orange Pore Fungus

When we think about introduced species invading Sassafras Creek, Deer, Blackberries and Sycamore Maple spring to mind. But it's not just invasive plants and animals causing problems. We've got weedy fungi too, such as Orange Pore Fungus.



Orange Pore Fungus - Photo by Meghan Lindsay

Orange Pore Fungus (*Favolaschia calocera*) is small but hard to miss. It lives on fallen logs, sprouting clusters of small, bright orange, ping pong-shaped fruiting bodies in Autumn. As the name suggests, underneath they're covered in distinctive tiny pores.

They're native to Asia. They first popped up in a few bushland reserves in Melbourne in 2004, likely arriving as microscopic spores hitching a ride on imported goods. They've now spread from south-east Queensland to Tasmania and south-west Western Australia, including into Sassafras Creek.

Like many fungi, Orange Pore Fungus breaks down decaying wood for nutrients. Problem is, every log it spreads to is one less food source for native fungi. Much the same as a weedy plant, it can take over habitats, crowding out native fungi. Once established, it's pretty difficult to control. The best strategy is stopping it spreading to new places.

You can help stop it (and other weeds and plant diseases) spreading by cleaning your shoes thoroughly after every walk. A stiff brush to remove dirt in boot treads and a spray with a 70% methylated spirits in 30% water will remove weed seeds and kill fungi spores.

We suggest carrying a disinfecting kit in your car with a stiff brush and spray bottle of disinfectant to use after visiting parks and reserves. You can also help protect Sassafras Creek by sticking to the track when you visit to reduce the chances of accidentally spreading it from one part of the creek to another.

Dumped rubbish in our park

In mid-January the below waste was illegally dumped at the carpark of the entry to Perrins Creek Reserve (aka the Secret Garden). It was reported to council who thankfully acted quickly and removed it the following day. Ridding ourselves of unwanted goods by dumping them in natural environments can have devastating effects on the nature we love, such as water and soil pollution which in turn can pose a risk to wildlife who rely on these resources for their survival.



For information about appropriate waste options in the Yarra Ranges head to the council website:
www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Our-services/Waste

The latest from FOSC working bees

Our Wednesday working bee in November was a sunny afternoon with no rain so Sally, Edie and Jane got stuck in to weeding the area closer to Wembley Street at Beagleys Bridge. Sadly, a very large Mountain Ash had fallen, landing across the Sassafras Creek trail where contractor work had removed ivy as well as drilled and filled bay trees growing in the area. This tree had a large opening on the track edge, having survived an attempt to light a fire in the hole prior to 2020. The bottom area of the tree showed a rotting trunk with the trunk splitting into pieces. We checked out the extensive damage to the area. Worked removing the emerging ivy and monbretias along the track edge.



Above: Edie and Jane next to the fallen Mountain Ash looking upstream of the Sassafras Creek

Below: Jane on the other side of the tree



Contact FOSC



Are you interested in joining FOSC or have a question about weeds in your garden? Have you got something you'd like to add or see presented in the newsletter? Wanna come to a working bee? We would love to hear from you!

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Friends of Sassafras Creek acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve, the Wurundjeri People, and their connections to this beautiful forest. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

(continued from page 5) In late November we visited the Secret Garden with weed bags at the ready.

Many plants FOSC have planted over the years continue to need regular removal of pesky weeds including ivy, holly, sycamore among others. It was a great day with lots of native plants liberated from weeds!



Above and below: Wonderful volunteers at our working bees, keeping FOSC ticking along and caring for our precious ecosystem



We fit in an extra Sunday working bee after Christmas at Beagleys Bridge. We spent time tackling woody weeds, in particular many tutsan bushes covered with very ripe seeds. We completed further drilling and filling of sycamore trunks and other large woody weeds. A pleasant sunny summers day well spent!