



Heho Herald

Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Newsletter

**Patron: Her Excellency Professor the Honourable
Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria**

Autumn 2026 Edition 146 Volume 38 Number 1

President's Report

Sue Bendel

Welcome to 2026

We have had a very dry and dusty start to the year. Hopefully we will have a good Autumn break. It is with sadness that I need to mention the passing of Noel Gross, early in the morning on January 28, 2026. Noel was the leader of the seed collecting group for many years and made a huge contribution to the Friends.

As mentioned in the previous *HeHo Herald* we have some new committee members, as well as those continuing, and I would like to take the opportunity to introduce these wonderful people to you, our members. The committee is made up of individuals who are aware that we need to act as custodians for those areas where the Helmeted Honeyeater currently lives and may be able to in the future. You will find some of their stories further into this report. Our dedicated Secretary, Madi Hoey, has unfortunately needed to retire from the committee. Thank you so much Madi for all you have done for FOHH. We wish Madi good luck for all her future endeavours.

In the words of Sir David Attenborough, *"It's surely our responsibility to do everything within our power to create a planet that provides a home not just for us, but for all life on Earth."*

Part of that responsibility is to provide an awareness and education with regards to the Helmeted Honeyeater. Having a stall at local markets and events is a good way to achieve this aim. Stephanie Ross and I attended the Yellingbo Christmas Fair on December 7, 2025, where we set up a stall with plants, merchandise, information and children's craft activities. The Yellingbo community were delighted that we were able to attend this year, as it is the third year running that the Christmas Fair

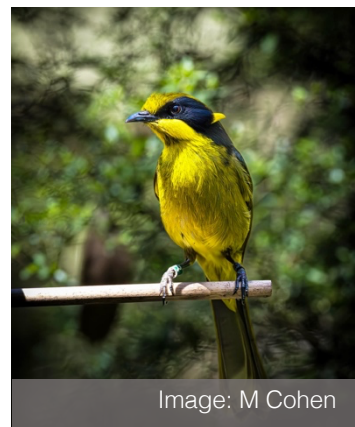


Image: M Cohen

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has been held at Sheepstation Creek Reserve, but the first time FOHH has attended. We have plans to attend again in 2026. As public awareness is such an important part of FOHH, we are hoping that some members of our HeHo Community would be interested in either joining a subcommittee to plan these events, or be able to attend events, even if only for one hour. People are usually very responsive and positive about our work, making conversations very enjoyable, and occasionally leading to new friendships or renewing old ones.

Meet the committee

Our current committee consists of ten members. In this edition of the *HeHo Herald*, I would like to introduce six of them.

Richard Case

Needing no introduction, Richard has been writing his own column in the *HeHo Herald* for many years. However, there are some things about Richard that some of you may not know. Rich was lucky enough to join the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater on the night it was formed, in 1989. Subgroups were set up, and he joined the Survey Team because he wanted to and the Works Group because he thought he should do. The West Gippsland Surveys proved that there were no Helmeted Honeyeaters outside Yellingbo. This was a sad truth but important to those who provided funding. The Works Group changed focus and was renamed the Reveg Group and later, the Seeds and Weeds Group. At some point, Richard became leader which continues today. In 1991, Rich joined the Committee, of which he is still a member-do you see a trend developing? Rich considers it an absolute privilege to be associated with the Friends, its people and the things we have achieved. Together. Richard's efforts have been commended many times. The work he does to support the organisation is nothing short of amazing. Richard is now the Master of our special Seed Shed, a most important part of our organisation.



Robin Young

Robin is the partner of the late Michelle Faram (nursery manager for almost 20 years). Robin helped feed the birds in 2009, became handyman at Yellingbo and joined the Committee. He later became a Life Member. Previously Robin worked as a Ranger in Far North District South Australia, a position which he held for 28 years, until retirement in 2009. Robin was first a Ranger at the Gammon Ranges at the Gammon Ranges National Park situated in the Northern Flinders Ranges. He pioneered the light aircraft operations for Parks within South Australia, as Chief Pilot for 21 years. Robin went to every major Parks fire as spotter one. Initially based in Leigh Creek to service remote Parks, he made many flights to and from Adelaide International Airport. Robin also worked as a Sheep Station Manager, share farmer. Robin has two daughters, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren from a previous marriage. He enjoys visiting the nursery, helping with odd jobs and conversing with the volunteers.

Ruby Stone

Ruby has been involved with the Helmeted Honeyeater since 2022, when she first began volunteering as a supplementary feeder. Ruby completely fell in love with the Hehos and completed her university placement for Bachelor of Wildlife and Conservation on the program. Her passion for Hehos even encouraged her to pursue a postgraduate certificate in Ornithology at Charles Sturt University, which she completed in 2024. Ruby first joined the FoHH committee in 2024 as the Membership Secretary, to enable her to continue her passion for the Helmeted Honeyeater after moving to Bendigo. She is working on improving the membership process used by the Friends group, with the aim of making it easier to have more financial members - and therefore more support for this amazing bird. Despite the long commute between Bendigo and Yellingbo, Ruby still comes to feed the birds every 2 months and it is one of her favourite ways to use her free time.



Kellie Grattidge

Residing in Cockatoo, Kellie was co-opted on to the FOHH management committee as Vice President at a meeting after the AGM and is very well qualified to assist the committee with many tasks. Kellie studied Horticulture at Burnley (Park and Garden Management Stream) straight after high school and completed work experience at Braeside Park and the Herbarium. She has since worked in various nurseries including indigenous nurseries and on revegetation teams. Kellie has also done some casual ranging work with Parks Victoria. She spent some time volunteering at the Creswick Seedbank where she studied a short course in Propagation and seed collection. Kellie is a third of the way through studying Environmental Science at Charles Sturt University. She also has qualifications in Outdoor Recreation. Kellie is also a very experienced events manager with sell out performances at major venues and the Earth Show where she had a panel of speakers for the Environment including the Friends of the Leadbeater Possum, Music and Visual projection. Kellie has been an intermittent attendee at volunteer events at Yellingbo, attending planting days and walks. She also volunteered at the Hepburn Wildlife shelter.

Nicholas Patterson

Nic is our merchandise officer. He is a teacher and PhD student with a deep appreciation for the outdoors, when he's not in the classroom or working on research.

He's usually outside — often with binoculars in hand. He's most at home in places where the phone signal drops, enjoying nature and everything it holds.



Pam Gambrell

Pam will be well known to many members as she and Pete joined The Friends in 2009. Their first event was the 20-year celebration, where they had a great time, but knew no one. They did learn a lot about this rare Bird though! At that stage they were still working, so could only participate in weekend activities. They joined Richard Case in his varied activities once a month. Once Pam and Pete retired, they were in boots and all. They fed the birds at Blue, White and Green site once a fortnight and joined the Tuesday crew in the Nursery. Pam and Pete stayed until stumps back then with Michelle and Robin after most volunteers went home after lunch.

Pam has learned so much from her involvement and gained appreciation of the natural bushland and every creature that calls it home. Yellingbo is a favourite place! Long may it prosper.

Reading about the involvement of many of our committee members, and the pleasure and knowledge they have received from volunteering, I am providing a reminder that there are many and varied volunteer opportunities with FOHH. It is an opportunity to have fun, meet like-minded people, share a cuppa and learn about the Helmeted Honeyeater and its habitat.

We look forward to many of you taking the opportunity to become engaged with FOHH and the many opportunities, whether it is for a casual visit, or regular commitment. Come and join us for fun and friendship.

Out in the Field

By Bruce Quin



Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area



Helmeted Honeyeater 2025/26 Breeding Season

The 2025/2026 breeding season for the Helmeted Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix* and genetic rescue birds has become one of the most successful on record. 41 breeding pairs and 67 fledglings have been confirmed, figures that are considerably higher than final figures for the 2024/2025 breeding season – 34 breeding pairs and 46 fledglings. Fledglings have been produced at all but one site including “Mauve Site” where supplementary feeding doesn’t occur and successful breeding was last recorded during the 2008/2009 breeding season. 19 of the 41 breeding territories of the 2025/2026 breeding season contain at least one genetic rescue bird; 32 of the total number of fledglings of the season are from these pairs.

The 41 breeding pairs at Yellingbo NCA is only two less than the record number for the lifetime of the intensive Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program (1989 to the present) occurring in the 2020/2021 and 2022/2023 breeding seasons. The number of fledglings for the current breeding season is pushing towards the record number of 75 which occurred during the 2019/2020 breeding season.

Considering the extended low rainfall periods during the 2025/2026 breeding season, it's exceedingly pleasing to have such a successful breeding season.

Final figures for the 2025/2026 breeding season for Helmeted Honeyeaters and genetic rescue birds will be given in the next edition of HeHo Herald by Amy Tipton of Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action; Amy is the new Senior Ornithologist for the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program. The Helmeted Honeyeater supplementary feeding and monitoring program is managed by Amy's Supervisor Paula Nink. Please email Paula heho@deeca.vic.gov.au if you would like to join the team.

This is my final HeHo Herald article and thank you so much for your most highly valued assistance to the program! I have really enjoyed the comradery, and I hope my articles have been informative! I will be assisting the program voluntarily as indicated in the next section of my article. See you at Yellingbo!



Best wishes-Bruce

Translocation News

By Nick Bradsworth



Cardinia Creek

The newly established population of Helmeted Honeyeaters at Cardinia Creek has had a productive first breeding season. For the 2025-26 season, I have documented 19 nests, and of these, six nests have fledged eight young. This is a fantastic result, considering the season started quite slow and many nests were failing. It has been difficult to monitor these fledglings as most HeHo activity through summer has been in the canopy foraging on natural food, with lots of Wombaroo nectar mix leftover (another good result!) We will have more accurate numbers on fledgling survival after we trap young for banding. Preparations have commenced for 2026 HeHo releases, at this stage, it will be a smaller cohort of birds (10-15 individuals) that will bolster the existing Cardinia Creek population, with more details to come over the next few months.



A HeHo nest and tiny nestling in January 2026 at the Cardinia Creek site

Image: N Bradsworth



O'Shannassy Catchment

The O'Shannassy HeHos have had a tough breeding season, with only five known fledglings produced. Conditions seem to have been favourable with plenty of natural foraging occurring through summer as well. Causes of nest failures is unknown, but presumably by Pied Currawongs, Kookaburras and potentially Tiger Snakes too. At this stage, it does look like O'Shannassy will receive a small number of zoo-bred birds for release in autumn which will help this population given the reduced fledgling output.

Reflecting on the past 32 years

By Bruce Quin



Bruce Quin, Senior Ornithologist for Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program from 1994- 2026.

The time for me to “hang up my boots” from the program in a paid capacity arrived last year! After more than three glorious decades working for the Victorian Government (DEECA and its predecessors) as an Ornithologist for the Helmeted Honeyeater my role was changed to a 12-month fixed term position with no guarantee of the position existing in 2027. After much deliberation and an unsuccessful attempt to have the position reinstated as ongoing via the Public Service Union, I decided not to apply for the fixed term position (yes, I would have had to apply for the position because of me being an ongoing employee!) and take a package. However, I ‘leave’ it in excellent hands!

However, I am volunteering two days per week with the Helmeted Honeyeaters at Yellingbo and am doing administrative work too. I am content in retirement now the initial shock has resided. Thank you so much for being a part of my journey! I have been most fortunate to

have worked with so many wonderful people from numerous organisations endeavouring to save the Helmeted Honeyeater and its habitat, with the flow-on effect being to assist the conservation of other flora and fauna. I will always remember the many people associated with the program who we have ‘lost’ and am so grateful our paths crossed!

Highlights of the Recovery Program

Additional to having a wild population of Helmeted Honeyeaters four times the size it was at the beginning of the program (1989) are:



The Yellingbo Liwik Barring LCA; another example of a major achievement by community (it was Bob Anderson and Jeff Latter who initiated this).



Purchase of land with key habitat by Trust for Nature & Judith Eardley Save the Wildlife Association (and government) for the Yellingbo NCA.



Implementing Genetic Rescue of the Helmeted Honeyeater; directed by Paul Sunnucks, Sasha Pavlova and Diana Robledo Ruiz (world class Geneticists working to save the Helmeted Honeyeater!).



Two reintroduced populations managed by Zoos Victoria (Upper Yarra and Cardinia Creek).

Furthering our knowledge on the Helmeted Honeyeater's ecology (for example, habitat use; predators of nest contents; factors influencing the success of the captive – release program).

During the past 32 years we experienced the Millennium Drought and the horror of Black Saturday. What relief when the news came through about 4am the day after Black Saturday that the Bunyip Ridge Wildfire (Bunyip State Park) had missed the Helmeted Honeyeater sites by about 300 metres! And further relief when we first got back into Yellingbo and realised embers from one of the Black Saturday fires had fallen into Blue Site but not ignited!

And last but certainly not least, the beautiful Helmeted Honeyeaters! For over 32 years you have captivated me, thrilled me, worried me and saddened me! What a privilege it was to be your Ornithologist from mid-1993 to the end of 2025! I look forward to volunteering for you! A special mention to “Helena” our genome-sequenced bird who, with “Henry” had a remarkable breeding record of seven consecutive successful nests (including 2 broods of 3 fledglings) spreading across three breeding seasons! Also, “Super Mum” (now a Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater education bird) and her mate “Super Dad” who also had extraordinary breeding success that helped re-establish the Blue Site neighbourhood of Helmeted Honeyeaters within Yellingbo NCA.



Photo taken in June 2012 of Henry (closest bird) and Helena, a pair of Helmeted Honeyeaters with exceptional breeding success.

Image: N Bradsworth

Recovery Efforts

By Amy Tipton and Paula Nink (DEECA)

For Bruce

Bruce, as you reflect on 32 extraordinary years with the Helmeted Honeyeater program, I want to thank you for the dedication, passion and unwavering commitment you have given to this remarkable bird and its habitat. Your mentorship and guidance have shaped so many of us, including myself, Nick Bradsworth and countless students and volunteers, and your patience and insistence on careful attention to detail have set a standard we will carry forward. Your dedication to the program has always been infectious; it has inspired a community, strengthened partnerships, and built a recovery effort that stands as a legacy to be profoundly proud of. You have had a lasting and deeply meaningful impact on our extraordinary volunteer community, fostering not just skills and knowledge

but connection and purpose. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for nurturing my love of birds from my early days volunteering in the program over a decade ago, through my roles with the Friends group and Zoos Victoria, and now in my time at DEECA. Your guidance has shaped my journey in ways I will always be grateful for. The legacy you leave, in the birds, the habitat, and the people you have mentored, will continue to flourish.

Farewell Viv

We have also farewelled Vivian Amenta, who served for many years as our Program Manager and Chair of the Recovery Team. Vivian's dedication to the Helmeted Honeyeater was steadfast, but just as significant was her unwavering support for her team. In an ever-changing government environment, she consistently fought for us, backed us, and ensured the program remained focused and resilient through uncertainty. Her leadership, integrity and commitment to both the species and the people working to save it have left a lasting mark on the program and on all of us who had the privilege to work alongside her.

Going Forward

As we navigate yet another government restructure and digest the continued strain placed on threatened species and threatened places, I enter this next chapter maintaining a genuine glimmer of hope. The challenges before us are real, shifting priorities, finite resources, and increasing pressure on the landscapes and wildlife we care so deeply about, yet the strength of this program has always been its people. With the continued support of our extraordinary community of volunteers and partners, I am confident we will keep delivering a program that strives to conserve the Helmeted Honeyeater long into the future. Paula and I extend our most heartfelt gratitude to every one of our wonderful volunteers who keep the cogs turning, those in the field, behind the scenes, at working bees, on surveys, in meetings and in moments of quiet dedication that so often go unseen. You inspire us to show up each day with purpose and determination, to advocate fiercely not only for the Helmeted Honeyeater and Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area, but for the health of our entire environment. It is your commitment, resilience and belief in what is possible that gives us hope and fuels the fight for the future of this species and the special places it calls home.



(from left to right) Bruce and Viv processing a captive bred HeHo for release, Amy and Bruce sharing a joyous moment in the field, a 2025/2026 fledgling being processed.

Images: A Tipton



Our Seed Collecting Elder

By Julie Thompson

We acknowledge elders past, present and emerging. In the seed collecting world, Noel Gross was our elder and she left us in January 2026. We also acknowledge our elder Michelle Faram who had vast seed collecting knowledge. The Seedies continue to walk through the bush, as women have done for thousands of years across this country, carrying the knowledge we gathered by being with Noel and Michelle. Noel was a teacher, environmentalist and world traveller. Our lives intersected when Noel was in her late seventies. In 2011, she and her husband Dudley called out for assistance from Johns Hill Landcare Group, of which they were members. I put my hand up as I felt very strongly in preserving the extensive knowledge about indigenous plants they had gathered over three decades.



Noel delivering seed to Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Nursery, February 2014

Image: J Thompson

Shortly afterwards, Sheila Hampson joined the team. It was clear from the start that Noel was the leader and very eager to share her knowledge. However, there was a caveat. Both Sheila and I were continually tested by Noel. The teacher came out in her and we learnt botanical names of about 80 species, observed how to identify seed ripe for collecting, then techniques to process the various types of seed.

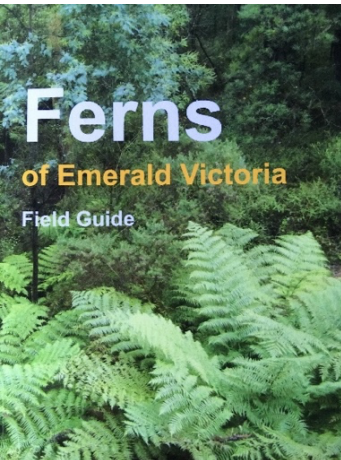
The seed collecting season would typically start in October collecting fluffy *Olearia* species, through to March with deliveries to Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Nursery. We would be greeted by a very excited Michelle as she looked through the carefully cleaned and labelled seed packages. The routine for seed collecting was to meet every Tuesday morning at various locations including Avonsleigh, Emerald, Macclesfield and Gembrook during the summer. We would start with an essential coffee and cake while sharing items or articles for 'show and tell'. This changed with the passing of Dudley in 2016 where we tended to meet every Tuesday throughout the year. Autumn we would collect cuttings, winter was quiet and spring required visits to locate species in flower in preparation for summer seed collecting. Noel's favourite place in spring was Button Grass Track in Bunyip State Park.



February 2015

Image: J Thompson

Ferns of Emerald Victoria- Field Guide



Noel always carried her camera and took wonderful photos of fungi, plant and animal species. This passion for photography gained new purpose. In winter 2017, we decided to explore ferns in the Emerald area. Together Noel, Julie and Sheila, self-published *Ferns of Emerald Victoria – Field Guide*. Noel's skill of photography is revealed in the amazing photos of ferns. More than 200 copies have been sold including some international sales.

A second book followed about mammals in 2018.

It is yet to be published. Noel had done a lot of research about mammals in our area and had taken lots of photos to support the text. She read the draft in 2025 and was quite happy with the content.



Julie, Noel and Sheila celebrating the book launch at Emerald Lake Park, June 2018

Image: J Thompson

Sharing the Knowledge

Sharing knowledge was very important to Noel and she was delighted with the additional interest. Five ladies joined the team in 2022 and eagerly listened to pearls of wisdom from Noel. After so many years it was effortless for her to remember species while out in the bush. It is important to The Seedies to spend time together in the bush and continue the purposeful work of collecting precious seed for local Indigenous Nurseries. Sheila has moved out of the area, but we all remain connected – Marianne, Gaye, Liz, Beth, Judith, Sheila and Julie. The presence of Noel is with us while we continue to collect seed.

In February 2024, a very reluctant Noel was coaxed into speaking by the gentle producer and film maker Michael Portway of Grassland Films. There was no script and The Seedies were delighted that we have a record of Noel.



Welcoming new *Seedies*, November 2022

Image: J Thompson

Farewell Noel

On reflection, I think Noel was quite a shy person. She enjoyed going out by car and travelling at seed collecting pace (about 5 km per hour) examining the plants. Stopping for photos. She had fabulous travel stories from around the world and extensive knowledge of parks and reserves across Australia. Noel maintained huge folders of photos and information on Wright Forest, mammals and seed collecting.

She did not like the limelight. In making decisions on where to collect seed Noel often said - this is a democratic organisation and the majority rules! When we asked her do we have enough seed, the reply was – I don't bloody know!



Noel checking seed delivery,
January 2025

Image: J Thompson

Written by Julie Thompson. Member of The Seedies and Johns Hill Landcare Group.

Citizen Science Matters

By Sue Tardif

Over recent weeks, our community has come together to celebrate two lives lived humbly and for nature.



It's with sadness, that I acknowledge the passing of Noel Gross on 28/01/26. She would have been totally surprised by the large turnout of people at her memorial celebration in late February. Noel didn't just support a wealth of conservation initiatives, she started many and was actively involved in others, right up to her death. Whilst her passion for conservation was legendary, so was her dislike for any actions that negatively impacted on the natural world. If you loved and knew, or wanted to learn about, indigenous plants, Noel was your friend and shared her wealth of knowledge generously. I don't say this lightly, Noel was one-of-a-kind. Her advocacy for, and commitment to nature will be missed.

My congratulations go to Alan Clayton for being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2026 Australia Day Honours for his service to conservation and the environment, and to the community. It was a pleasure to be a FoHH staff member during Alan's tenure as President from 2018-2022. I could always rely on his listening ear and support. Without that, the FoHH citizen science program would not have blossomed. Straight away, Alan understood why I wanted to introduce it, and he placed his confidence in me to develop and deliver it. It's just one example, amongst many, of Alan's commitment to the community. Thank you, Alan.

The summer months have also seen two long-standing employees that the FoHH have worked closely alongside finish up at their workplaces. Collectively, Jack Dinkgreve (Parks Victoria, PV) and Bruce Quin (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, DEECA) worked for over sixty years in the environmental field, bringing a wealth of knowledge to the management of habitat and fauna at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area (YNCA). Their departure as paid staff (Bruce will continue as a volunteer) marks a significant transition for both YNCA and the Helmeted Honeyeater recovery. We look forward to meeting, and working with, the new PV and DEECA staff in due course. As land manager, PV has always been very supportive of the citizen science program, for which I thank Jack immensely.

The hot, dry summer meant I delayed the 2026 start of the on-ground events for the citizen science program. Little did I know that the dry, dry season would continue until the end of February! Hasn't that bit of rain been a blessing, but so much more is needed before the rain penetrates the topsoil. In mid-February, Robert, Bruce and I spent a lovely few hours in YNCA doing some initial planning for the 2026 citizen science program. Whilst there, we wondered how the few bird species we saw using the low-lying swampy areas found anything to eat in the murky looking water. We hoped that the Satin Flycatcher (on a nest high in a Manna Gum), Azure Kingfisher and White-faced Heron chose their breeding and hunting ground well. It was also interesting (or worrying) that we didn't see any dragonflies or damselflies where we'd commonly see many at this time of year.



Azure Kingfisher, *Ceyx azureus*, Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*, White-Faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* below at YNCA
Images: B Tardif and K Seamer

Our events through to early June are now listed on our website, with places filling fast:
<https://www.helmetedhoneyeater.org.au/get-involved/come-to-an-event-2/>

Whilst our on-ground events focus on being outside and collecting fauna, flora and fungi data, there are other ways to be involved. Josiah is a VCE student who is passionate about birds and being in nature, and he also loves data and spreadsheets. Josiah asked if his IT skills could help improve the way I collate our bird data and save me time. Yes please! More on this in an upcoming Heho Herald.

Seeds and Weeds

By Richard Case



Surveys, seed collecting and admiring the Universe have kept us busy this time around.

For December, I decided we needed a nice relaxing botanical survey, a real hands and knees day. So, we went to Maccy Creek Bushland to do a circuit around the two lower cells of the deer fence. Starting from the bridge, we came to the Fairies' Aprons, a fascinating carnivorous plant growing in a gutter. A bit further down in the opposite gutter were Tall Yellow-Eyes, another plant that has been here for years. Blue Dampiera was flowering and common throughout the bushland, a lovely sight. We came to a little perched swamp where the Swamp Gums are only about 15m high and found a Gristle Fern, not as common in the Reserve as its cousins. Crossing the floodplain, we met with Angled Lobelia, Small St. John's Wort (not the weed), Hair Sedge and Thread Speedwell. At the dam, we heard an Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog calling on this isolated body of water. I've heard this "Banana-box frog" from Parslow's Bridge to McColl's Swamp, and I guess they're more widespread than that. Nearby, along the shore were heaps of the tiny Swamp Goodenia. Walking back down the other side of the fence, we met with Common Wedge-pea and Pale Grass-lily. We found in flower, a plant I've been chasing for a long time, sorry, it doesn't have a common name but the scientific name is *Dianella sp. aff. caerulea* (West Gippsland). It can be told from the other three local Dianellas by its lilac anthers and the plant's general shape. At the end of our journey were two final surprises: Wiry Bossiaea, rather rare, and Streaked Arrowgrass, a Water Ribbons relative.

January began collecting Heath Wattle, a rather pretty, little shrub. We moved on to Cocky Ck and east of the Pipeline came to a dry puddle, home to wetland plants and a patch of Fen Sedge, which we don't often collect. It also contained a Copperhead, hiding from us in the grass. We moved away to give the snake space and continued our collection. After that, we went a kilometre or so downstream, hearing, then seeing a juvenile Brown Goshawk along the way. The object here was to re-survey an old quadrat, particularly for Black-anther Flax-lily. A lot had changed in 30-odd years, and the area was criss-crossed by wildlife tracks. Over half of the plant species were missing, including the Flax-lily. On the way back, we saw

Seeds & Weeds Dates

Sunday 15 March (not the second Sunday)

Note- No Seeds & Weeds in April or May

Sunday 14 June

Sunday 12 July

**We meet at the Nursery at 9.15am,
1217 Macclesfield Rd**

Events are automatically cancelled by weather events including wind gusts of 50 kph, thunderstorm, severe, extreme, catastrophic, and total fire ban days. Please check Yarra Glen forecast and Bureau of Meteorology warnings at 5pm the day before.

Crested Shrike-tits and an Austral Ladies Tresses orchid, these seem to grow in exposed positions, or maybe they're just easier to see there. After lunch we re-surveyed two more quadrats, again failing to find either the Pale or Black-anther Flax-lilies, although the Tasman Flax-lily is quite common. Next stop was Beer's Bridge, where the Bronzewings feed on the seed of the Silver Wattles we planted in 1999. Along the track, we came across a big Goanna up a tree trunk, it became agitated, hissing, so we moved away. Funnily enough, it was about the same size as, and in a similar location to another one we had seen in the 1990's. Their lifespan in the wild is supposed to be 10-15 years, so clearly not the same one. Nearby, we collected Purple-sheath Tussock-grass, Forest Wire-grass and Tasman Flax-lily. Examining one of our Ragwort control sites (which had flowers nearby; dealt with four days later), we heard a rustle in the grass just ahead of us, not wanting another snake experience we stood back and saw that it was just an Echidna. What a nice way to end the day.

In February, we went down to a site on Cocky Ck where we collected Tasman Flax-lily, Woolly Tea-tree and a large amount of Spiny-headed Mat-rush. The edge of the swamp was nearby so there were all sorts of interesting vegetation and birds. Swamp Harriers, a Whistling Kite and Dusky Woodswallows flew past and a Shelduck called from the far side of the swamp. Moving on a little, we collected Swamp and Scented Paperbarks. Next stop was at a puzzle plant. Like a cypress. With a regularity of the branchlets dividing in twos. The whole plant only 40cm high anyway. Growing in a patch about 3m wide. Greyish-green foliage with dangly straw-yellow willow-like flowers. At home, I found it was Bushy Clubmoss and that it had also been found nearby in 2008 by a Botanist. Clubmosses, apparently, are fern-allies which reached their peak in the Carboniferous Period. The dangly bits are the "clubs". After lunch, we went to Woori Yallock Ck, looking first at Hazel Pomaderris but no seed, only some tiny flowers still forming. Maybe the dry times have something to do with this. On to a Twining Glycine we've been watching. It's had a hard time with floods a couple of years ago, been overgrown by Cleavers (and weeded), but bravely this year put out a few flowers, which slowly developed into seed pods, which slowly ripened, which we collected. There don't seem to be many around, but they are easily overlooked. Next, we tried the Late Black Wattle but no seed on that either. On to the Depot, where we collected Pale Flax-lily, Clustered Everlasting and Victorian Christmas Bush, all from garden or reveg plantings.



Image: M Cohen

Nursery News

By Marita Hanigan



Summer in the nursery means lots of plants being pricked out for the new planting season which we hope will start in late March or early April – it all depends on when rain decides to make an appearance. It also means we need to be mindful of water and be vigilant with the sprinkler system. Without access to mains water, we are reliant on rainwater and pumping from the Woori Yallock Creek, under licence of course. Since December we have been only able to pump at intervals and from the middle of January, the creek has been too low to enable us to pump water at all. So, we rely on the amount of water we can store which is roughly 200,000 litres. That equates to around 3 weeks of watering the whole nursery. This year January has been the driest recorded for many decades and has stretched those resources to the fullest. Fortunately, we have a good friend and reliable supplier of carted water with Ron, from Ron Kraan Contracting, who is currently keeping us topped up till the rain comes back and we can pump from the Woori again. Ron is a great guy and loves to tell a yarn and he's also a great supporter of wildlife. He's not backwards in coming forwards with his generosity when help is needed with one of his recent acts being showering the Grey Headed Flying foxes at Brimbank Park.

No mains water also means a reliance on pumping creek and potable water around the whole Yellingbo house and nursery site. So, when the pumps decide to one by one all have hissy fits, things get challenging. Thankfully that 10 days or so is over now and all seems to be running well – cross fingers! Our thanks go to the PV plumber Cameron Heath and his dad Graeme for going the extra mile and answering our myriad of calls for help promptly and efficiently. And to Cafas All States pumps who made an emergency dash out on a Friday afternoon when our regular repairer couldn't make it.

Enough of the challenges, now onto the good vibes. You may recall in the last issue we reported that the polyhouse covers were going to be replaced thanks to a generous anonymous donation and that happened in December when Mat and his team from Fair Dinkum Greenhouses spent 3 days taking the old covers and wooden supports down and replacing them with new covers and aluminum supports. Yep – just 3 days and it looks great!



New poly house plastic makes Igloos 1 and 2 much brighter both inside and outside.

Images: M Hanigan





Simon Dent (PV ranger far left) with the Volunteers enjoying a great spread at Nursery lunch Dec 2025

Images: A Whitelaw



Just as Mat and his team were finishing the polyhouse covers, we had our annual Nursery Christmas lunch. Thanks to catering done by the Tasty Az with additions provided by staff and vols we were well fed and all had a lovely time. Thanks to Sue for bringing the merchandise (yes there were a few sales) and for helping with the organizing and for taking part. Thanks also to the COM members Richard, Robin and Pam for coming along on the day and helping out. It was a lovely day where we all got to catch up with friends old and new.

The whole team has been busy pricking out, potting up, dividing and cleaning plants and we've managed to produce 5340 plants for Dec 2025, 8093 plants for Jan 2026 and halfway through Feb we are up to 4646. Considering the days lost to Total Fire Bans and delays due to watering issues, when compared to last year figures of 7288 Dec 2024, 12,747 for Jan 2025 and 8516 for Feb 2025 we are a little behind but have time to catch up, which we are sure we will do.

Till next time – thanks to all our supporters, volunteers and the COM. And if you know a rain dance please practise it!

Flowering in the Nursery now



Swamp Daisy-bush
Olearia glandulosa



Purple Loosestrife
Lythrum salicaria



Angled Lobelia
Lobelia anceps

Sustainable conservation

Financial sustainability of FoHH is crucial in maintaining long-term conservation projects, works and roles for the survival of the Heho. Funding is secured through grants, donations, bequests, merchandise and nursery sales.

Donations

Personal and in-kind donations enhance and support a variety of ongoing and established FoHH conservation projects and events.

Our heartfelt thanks for the generosity of *all* personal donations we receive through various ways. The following people have donated through the GiveNow platform and agreed to be published...

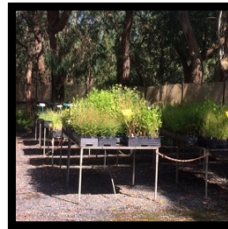
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Shop

Purchasing Heho merchandise or indigenous plants from our nursery contributes to FoHH financial sustainability, advocacy and local revegetation.



Shop online to find Heho gifts, books and apparel by visiting the FoHH website or scanning the QR code.



Visit FoHH Indigenous Plant Nursery in Yellingbo for local plants at great prices. Check the FoHH website for opening hours and days.

Scan to shop

Give

Contribute to community programs that benefit your community and environment or consider a bequest in your will to support FoHH's conservation efforts.



*If you shop at IGA, you can nominate FoHH on your **Community Benefits Card** and 0.5% of your shopping docket will be directed to us.*



Are you considering leaving a gift to the Friends in your will? Use the QR code to find all the relevant information you'll need on FoHH website.

*You can donate your refunds from **Container Deposit Scheme** to FoHH by selecting us as the registered donor using charity ID - C2000009578 or the barcode above.*



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FoHH respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands known as Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and wildlife and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



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