

Heho Herald

Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Newsletter

Summer 2023 Edition 137 Volume 35 Number 4

President's Report

Virginia Wallace



Welcome to the Summer Edition. Unfortunately due to high winds we had to cancel our Special Open Day at Yellingbo on 7 September. Much planning had gone into the event however we plan to hold it in March of 2024. It's important to offer opportunities to organisations and funds that support us, to come and see some of the amazing work we are doing.

On 21 October we held our AGM at Yellingbo. It was great to see members and the Committee there, and also to hear of the work that regular HeHo Herald contributor, Dr Nick Bradworth, is doing at O'Shanassy's Catchment in establishing a second colony. Every Committee experiences change and renewal, and our AGM was no exception. Two long-serving members of the Committee, Alan Clayton and Suzanne Cox, indicated that they would not renominate. Alan gave this organisation his heart and soul for six years as President, helping to take the organisation to the one it is today, with its DGR status. With Alan we were very lucky as we received a two for one package in the form of grant writer extraordinaire Dorothy Scott, who with her efforts, secured some of the largest grants this organisation has ever received. We presented them with life membership at our AGM.



Alan Clayton and Dorothy Scott receive life member certificates from Virginia at the AGM

Image: A Gregorovich

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Our former Treasurer Suzanne Cox took the organisation from a small operation to the one we see today, with four staff and a range of funding sources. It is not easy being a Treasurer administering multiple grants and we also honoured Suzanne by presenting her with life membership. Suzanne was unable to be present on the day, but I have posted her a certificate of appreciation.

We are lucky that Renee Nutbean, a local resident with a wealth of corporate and environmental experience, has agreed to join our Committee and we look forward to Renee's contribution.

Sadly, our long-standing Community Engagement Facilitator, Sue Tardif, resigned effective at the end of November. Sue runs our Citizen Science program, as well as supporting social media and communications. We thank Sue for everything she has done for us and also her generosity in continuing to run Citizen Science for us as a volunteer after the end of November. We continue to apply for grants to run our non-nursery operations although this is a very tough time to be looking for funding. As a Committee we are also in the process of finalising our Strategy for 2024 so will be able to update you all on it in the first edition of 2024.

I also very much enjoyed our Faunal Emblems Festival on Saturday 18 November, where we celebrated our faunal emblems.

Have a peaceful Christmas break and we look forward to what 2024 will bring.



A thank you to Dr Nick Bradsworth for presenting on his work at the AGM.

Image: A Gregorovich

Out in the Field

By Bruce Quin

@ Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve

2023/24 Helmeted Honeyeater Breeding Season

In my article for the Spring edition of HeHo Herald, I reported on the 2023/2024 breeding season for Helmeted Honeyeaters starting relatively early, possibly reflecting an El Nino weather pattern developing during spring – summer 2023. Climatologists did announce an El Nino being present from September 2023 and this weather pattern is predicted to continue into autumn 2024 for the southern hemisphere.

Three nests with clutches produced unusually early (the first week of August) during the 2023/2024 breeding season with a total of five fledglings. To date, from 27 completed nest attempts, 24



fledglings have been confirmed from 15 successful nests. Four active nests are known and there are numerous other females suspected to be sitting on eggs or nestlings. 24 pairs occupy 24 breeding territories, but this includes one lost female (predated at the nest site) at a Cockatoo Swamp neighbourhood replaced by another and a female shifting territory within a Woori Yallock Creek neighbourhood to a male who had temporarily become unpaired because his mate required “rest recovery” to heal a fractured collar bone at Healesville Sanctuary’s Australian Wildlife Health Centre. Corresponding figures from late November 2022 for the 2022/2023 Helmeted Honeyeater breeding season were 25 breeding pairs and 13 fledglings. Positively, more fledglings have been produced during the first three and a half months of the current breeding season. However, many fledglings were produced during January, February and even early March 2023, and with the presence of an El Nino weather pattern, a relatively early end to the 2023/2024 breeding season may occur.

2023 release of birds from captivity

During April 2023, 10 birds (two Helmeted Honeyeaters and eight genetic rescue birds) from Healesville Sanctuary’s captive-breeding program were released into Cockatoo Swamp, next to wild Helmeted Honeyeaters. The number of 2023 release birds being confirmed as still alive is now four (genetic rescue) birds, though we may find others. A female was recorded further upstream from the release area on 29 September 2023. Two other females and one male from the release group have shifted to a Helmeted Honeyeater neighbourhood on Woori Yallock Creek within the reserve.

My next update on the Yellingbo Helmeted Honeyeaters will provide an update on the 2023/2024 breeding season and 2023 release. Best wishes for the rest of 2023 and for 2024. Bruce.



Photos 1 & 2. Despite “El Nino”, 76 mm of rain fell at Yellingbo during 3-4 October 2023, flooding ground below some Cockatoo Swamp supplementary feed stations. Photos: Bruce Quin.

Translocation News

By Nick Bradsworth



@O'Shannassy Catchment Translocation Site, Yarra Ranges National Park

It is busy times in the middle of the Helmeted Honeyeater breeding season at the O'Shannassy Catchment. So far this season, we have had eight confirmed breeding pairs produce a combined 16 nests, of which six chicks have fledged. We are pleased with these results but once again, I have unfortunately seen Tiger Snakes predating nestlings (and earlier this year than last). One nest was also lost to Agile Antechinus predation, and one was blown out of the shrub due to high winds.

I am monitoring nests closely where I can by installing camera traps, and if the shrub is isolated from connecting vegetation, I have started to install wire chicken mesh fences around nests to exclude snakes from entering. We have also transported two clutches of eggs from O'Shannassy to foster parents in captivity at Healesville Sanctuary, and both have been accepted by the new parents which is wonderful. As always, our fingers are crossed for more nests, more fledglings, and more fledglings reaching independency!

Have a great summer and Festive Season!



Our trooper female at O'Shannassy "Light green/red/yellow" feeds her two fledglings. Both of these individuals have now been leg-banded and DNA sampled with much appreciated assistance from Bruce Quin and Amy Tipton. Photo: N Bradsworth

Seeds and Weeds

By Richard Case



An interesting time with a search for a lost plant, seed collecting and lots of weeds.

In August, I tried to find and collect Mountain Grey Gum. Although quite common in the ranges, it's sparse in the Reserve. The first ones we went after were found in the early-1990's on steep slope of Woori Yallock Ck. We wandered over the hillsides, with Messmates, Swamp Gums and Mountain Swamp Gums until the fence led us uphill. Near the top of the southern Roma Hill, we found the Mountain Grey Gums, including some which we could collect seed from, the others were a bit tall. Crimson Rosellas were feeding in the trees overhead and a Spotted Pardalote came close and then went to ground level, perhaps a nest. Down the next valley we collected Manna Gum, always useful. On the way back, we looked at the Friends first planting (1990). It's looking pretty good, with dense tea-trees near the gums of the earlier BOCA planting providing a mixture of habitat. After lunch, we looked for another patch of Mountain Grey Gum but failed to find them. All was not lost because we did find some Agapanthus (a weed) and will deal with them later. Also, some Green Scentbark which we collected from. A little further on we had a lovely view down to the start of the morning's walk.

September provided a cool and calm day after recent strong winds, so we went looking for fallen branches and came across a Swamp Gum. The branches had a few Drooping Mistletoe in them, interesting to see this close-up as it is usually in the upper branches of its host. We spent a while picking over the Swamp Gum, some of it was still green but we managed to get a reasonable amount of ripe seed. Then we went looking for Red Stringybark. Not much had fallen, only a few branch tips with no seed on them but we did find a small amount on a low-hanging branch. A Fantailed Cuckoo called, the Heath Wattle was in bloom and on the way back we saw an Echidna. We then went on to weed Stinking Iris, our second year on this one, we were able to consolidate last year's efforts and push further into the gully from the original roadside infestation. We also got a lot of Ragwort and removed an Arum Lily, noted last year but unreachable then, four sacks in total. In the afternoon we

Seeds & Weeds Dates

Sunday 12th November

Sunday 10th December

Sunday 14th January

Sunday 11th February

Sunday 17th March (not the second Sunday)

**All events start at 9.15am from the Nursery,
1217 Macclesfield Rd**

All events are automatically cancelled by COVID restrictions or severe 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.

We encourage all volunteers to be fully vaccinated and stay home if unwell.

Carpooling may be necessary, please bring a face mask and hand sanitiser.

returned and removed two sacks of the Agapanthus noted the previous month. Then finished by assessing another site and collecting Manna Gum and Green Scentbark seed.

A lovely sunny morning with valley fog greeted us in October. At Parslow's Bridge, the creek was running at 1.3m, down from 2.2m on 4 October (over the lower, upstream side of the bridge) after heavy rains. Meeting the others, we went to Beer's Bridge, where the floods had washed strands of Water Ribbons on top of the bridge! No Angled Onion was showing here, an area we had under watch since 2008. We dug out one sack of Red-hot Poker from McColl's Lane, work on this plant started in 2004 but got serious last year, with careful removal of the entire plant and its fleshy roots to prevent re-growth. Back at the House, we dealt with a few weeds. Only a handful remained of the Angled Onion patch we started weeding only last year. A new cohort of weeds we decided to tackle included Cape Weed, Black Nightshade, Sow Thistle and Rough Sow Thistle; a combined total of four sacks. After lunch we went down the floodplain to the Montpellier Broom patch, which we have been removing and preventing from seeding since 2007. None were found this year although we found three last year. Next was a rather diverse patch where we removed one Ragwort and one Pittosporum. The Holly and the Tree Tobacco removed last year have not returned. A White-faced Heron sprang up from the paddock as we walked to the Billabong Angled Onion patch. We started this one in 2015 but only found a small amount today. Finally, we went to Shaw Rd Wetland and started a new patch of Wood Forget-me-not, a weed we have had success with in the past. It likes the edge of wetlands (amongst other places) and mustn't be allowed to spread. The seed pods easily stick to mammal fur and it is often found spreading along little tracks in the bush. We worked away carefully on this one but only covered about a third of the area before we ran out of time, having removed three sacks. More next time.

Nursery News

By Michelle Faram



With another year drawing towards a close, it is time to reflect on what has once again been a very busy, if not hectic time at the Friends nursery. Each passing year has required more orders to be filled, which of course requires more plants to be grown, and this year that has been no different. Last year we grew over 100,000 plants and this year we hope to pass that figure.

Since March, the nursery team have sorted and packed over 60,000 plants into over 140 orders, the plant orders are additional plants to those we sell onsite through our retail sales, which has also been going well

and has kept us busy serving customers and trying to keep it restocked with plants. Along with our own revegetation program, run by Eliza, it is exciting to know that there are so many people from different local organisations, community groups, businesses and private landholders utilizing our plants to enhance or create new habitat for our beautiful wildlife. Some of our plants have gone to revegetation projects conducted by, Parks Victoria, Yarra Ranges Council, Cardinia Council, Melbourne Water and Zoos Victoria, at Haining Farm, Yarra Valley treatment plant, Healesville Sanctuary, Upper Yarra Cemetery, Emerald Lake Park and reserves and waterways across the Yarra Valley among others.

The nursery team continues to be busy completing orders for this year. We have also started receiving lots of orders for Autumn 2024. Spring plant production is now in full swing to ensure we have plenty of plants for next year. Anna joined our team as an assistant nursery manager just over three months ago and with a wide range of skills and knowledge has been a great addition. The volunteers continue to turn out in good numbers on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. It is quite amazing what is achieved each year from pot sorting to dipping and washing of pots, seed sowing, cutting production, dividing of plants, potting, pricking out seedlings and watering to maintenance tasks like weeding, pruning, grass cutting, equipment and irrigation repairs. With the help of our team, we have managed to achieve a lot this year despite a couple of hiccups. The seed storage facility is almost ready for use with an access ramp in place and more recently the installation of compactus shelving, we are just awaiting the power to be connected and the shelves to be filled. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this important project. Through grant money as part of securing the future of the Lowland Leadbeater's Possum project from Melbourne Water we were able to have shade and frost cover installed to help boost our production.

A big thankyou to Marita, Anna and the nursery volunteers for another excellent and successful year. It would be impossible to achieve what we have without your valuable contribution.



Eucalyptus obliqua and
Eucalyptus baxteri grown
for a Melbourne Water
project at Silvan



A privileged role

By Sue Tardif



The end of a year is often a time of reflection. What was achieved? Who made that possible? What did we learn? Will next year be similar, or different?

Nothing quite brings those thought processes to the front of your mind like writing a final report for a funding body! Over the past three years, we have been fortunate to have had the financial support of The Ross Trust through their Biodiversity Conservation Challenge and Change grant program to further develop, and deliver, many of our community education programs. Eliza's article highlights how her program areas have benefited from this funding, whilst an overall objective of my role has been increasing community ecological literacy (what is known about the natural world around us) and increasing volunteer recruitment. Alongside this, an important aim has been raising awareness of threatened species conservation and profiling the simple actions we can all take, no matter our age or background, to improve biodiversity outcomes.

Of note to this end has been the establishment in 2021, with further development in 2022-23, of two new initiatives, the Citizen Science Program and Youth Reference Group (18-31 year olds). These two program areas work closely together, consolidating a shared goal of engaging a broad demographic of volunteers whose circumstances may otherwise exclude them from volunteering eg due to work, family or study commitments. The Ross Trust funding had a focus of attracting new volunteers living within a 30 kilometre radius from Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area (YNCA). The Citizen Science Program attracted 248 of the 298 (83%) new volunteers living within this area that were recruited into the Friends programs. Many more volunteers living further afield also participate and are equally welcomed! Seventy-nine events attracted 1,214 attendees, who together, have so far recorded 1,026 flora, fauna and fungi species in Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area and surrounds – evidence of its rich biodiversity.

With its roots in a 12-month 'Next Generation of Environmentalists' Program in 2021-22, a Youth Reference Group (YRG) for 18-31 year olds was formed. Its convenor, Amy Gregorovich, is the youth representative on our Committee of Management.

The YRG has a contact list of 35 young people, with an average of 4-5 volunteers attending regular events. YRG participants also regularly attend the Citizen Science Program events, cultivating cross-generational learning and sharing. We have been thrilled to attract 34 new volunteer enquiries for one of the Friends long-standing volunteer programs, coordinated by Richard Case, the Seeds & Weeds Days.

Four long-term volunteers are now joined regularly by 8 new volunteers, with additional new volunteers participating on a casual basis. This has positively assisted in the program's sustainability. These programs are building knowledge in individuals, and the Friends more broadly, about the plant, animal and fungi species that find refuge in YNCA. It is only with that knowledge, and broad community support, that we can advocate effectively for its future. One of those new volunteers, Robert, sums it up beautifully.



Macclesfield has been my home for over 60 years. I was intrigued to learn more about the local birds, so I came along to a bird survey morning. It was such a delightful experience that I now do both the flora/fungi and fauna surveys regularly. The plants, animals and fungi are of special interest to me, as I am trying to manage my property as a safe habitat for wildlife. I enjoy taking part as we share our knowledge, as the many eyes notice all sorts of unique things that we come across in the bush - Robert

Going back to those questions...

What was achieved?

Great people have been 'found' on our YNCA doorstep who are learning that science is for everyone. No matter their age or background, they have become enthusiastic contributors to recognised scientific biodiversity databases and the community's understanding of YNCA and its surrounds. Together, we're sharing knowledge and many moments of pure joy and wonder!

Who made that possible?

Individuals can achieve good things, but it's the many people quietly contributing, often in the back-ground, that makes the long-term difference. I thank you all!

What did we learn?

Our community of volunteers and paid staff have valuable, and valued, skills that they are willing to share. Together, we advance the communities knowledge of, and contribution to, threatened species conservation. We have also learnt the enormous value of funding opportunities that are longer than 12-months in duration. Thank you to The Ross Trust for taking this journey with us over the past three years.

Will next year be similar, or different?

In 2024, we will continue to look for ways to secure delivery of our signature, and developing, programs. This Heho Herald article will take on a new title and feature co-authors, myself and Amy Gregorovich, Convenor of the Youth Reference Group. Amy and I look forward to enriching the collaboration we've developed and sharing it with you!

Scan to get involved

If you celebrate Christmas, I wish you a joyful day. To everyone, have a safe, fun and happy New Year season. I look forward to our paths crossing at Yellingbo in 2024!



Volunteers proudly wearing merch, sharing knowledge in bird surveys, joining family citizen science events, and young people leading Twilight surveys.

Image: S Tardif



Beyond Yellingbo

By Eliza Lamb

What a year it has been with our Beyond Yellingbo program! Since starting in the Project Officer role in February, I have had the privilege of meeting many of our current participants as well as welcoming new landholders into this fantastic program. While it has been somewhat of a challenge negotiating two roles with FoHH, I round up this year feeling a sense of satisfaction and pride in being able to support our landholders in their conservation work on their properties.

So far this year we have had 10 additional properties join the program. A number of these are close to the YNCA and Sheepstation Creek, but also include a new node of properties in Monbulk along Nathania Springs and two large properties in Menzies Creek.



Taking a rainy walk with Yarra Ranges Council
Bushland Management Team with Monbulk
Landcare's Bill Incoll.



This spring saw several plantings on properties undertaken before the warm weather sets in, with some opting to delay until next year due to the ground becoming too dry. Many properties have had weed control works and we have weed control projects currently underway through a Landcare grant with Macclesfield Landcare Group. These works are focusing largely on environmental weed infestations of Spanish Heath, Blackberry and Ragwort. I joined the local Landcare networks recently at the Wandin Seville Field Days on 13th October. It was wonderful to network with the affiliated Landcare groups, and chat with landholders visiting the event. As part of my role, Field Days and events for landholders are an important way to connect with the local community and develop partnerships. I had some great conversations with landholders, hearing about how they manage environmental issues that impact their livelihoods. While these conversations can often bring opposing views around management (and sometimes fiery debate!) a common ground that balances caring for the environment and protecting agricultural assets is often found...often over a shared interest and love of the little brown birds or owl species!

As I prepare for more property visits over the coming months with current and prospective Beyond Yellingbo participants, I am forever grateful for the support of our Beyond Yellingbo Steering Committee and the wonderful partnership between Beyond Yellingbo, Melbourne Water and Yarra Ranges Council. As a local property owner, I recently spent time with Monbulk Landcare's Bill Incoll and the Yarra Ranges Council Bushland Management Team exploring ways the residents on my street could improve the conservation value of our street verges and contribute to the Beyond Yellingbo effort and Liwik Barring Landscape. On a day of heavy showers and everyone getting soaked through, our spirits and passion for the environment across our respective groups could not be dampened!

Wishing all our Beyond Yellingbo participants, FoHH members, volunteers, and friends a safe, happy and healthy festive season ahead.

Family Fun Day



On Saturday 18th November from 11.00am to 3.00pm, FoHH and stakeholders involved in the conservation of the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum held a family fun day at Yarra Valley Ecos in Wesburn. This free event showcased many of the programs and conservation work undertaken by participating organisations including Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, DEECA, Zoos Victoria and many more! FoHH was so excited to host this event, which was kindly funded through the Upper Yarra Community Led Recovery Grants Program. We had lots of activities for families including facepainting and an interactive wildlife display. Over 300 people visited on the day.

Coordinator's Column

By Eliza Lamb



As we approach the end of the 2023, I've been reflecting on the many activities that have occurred throughout the year across our programs at FoHH. School, community and corporate groups took part in habitat restoration events within the conservation area, with around 6000 tubestock from the nursery going into Burrumma Biik, Heho Woori population sites, and Green Site via 16 unique events. These events provided opportunities for communities across Melbourne to volunteer their time to plant habitat, learn about the work of the Friends and the conservation effort to save threatened species. These sessions also provide a means for individuals to consider further conservation action they can take – whether through planting habitat on their own properties, controlling weeds and pest animals, or raising awareness of the plight of threatened species with their networks or through fundraising.



I am fortunate to spend time with engaged and determined young people through schools, community outreach and excursions. Many young people, families and schools have been in touch with us throughout the year to tell us about conservation actions they are taking. Lotus and her mother Amber contacted FoHH earlier in the year to tell us about the artwork she had created to sell and raise fund for the Friends! Lotus then became one of the Helmeted Honeyeater Ambassadors at her school, and I look forward to hearing about her future conservation efforts after completion of our program. All four Ambassador schools recently spent time at the nursery learning about propagation and growing native plants. Michelle shared her incredible knowledge and experience with the students, parents, and teaching staff on their visits. The students got so much from the sessions and have played an important role in the production of thousands of plants – when we consider all the components they participated in, from sowing seeds in trays, creating trays of cuttings, and pricking out and planting up seedlings. A special thanks to the nursery team for supporting this valuable program.



The Ambassador program, a core educational program at FoHH, has been running for many years. I have had many conversations over my time in the Environmental Coordinator role about its importance, with a number of individuals highlighting that through their child's involvement as an ambassador they became volunteers with FoHH or joined our Beyond Yellingbo program! Community engagement is a core objective of the National Recovery Plan for the Helmeted Honeyeater, and our work at the Friends is at the very heart of this delivery. An engaged community raises awareness at a broader scale, encouraging others to be part of the conservation effort to save threatened species. While volunteering is often calculated by Not-for-Profit organisations through in-kind support for grants, aspects of volunteerism and engagement transcend monetary value, and are in fact priceless for the organisation and the individual. This value comes via a deep satisfaction and connection to a cause bigger than ourselves. It is in the friendships gained, and the connection to others and nature. Volunteering gives individuals a sense of purpose, along with developing valuable skills, and positive benefits to our physical and mental health. At its very heart volunteerism is a shared determination to protect and conserve our environment for all.

Helping a Heho

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Donations can be made through our website on a new donation platform

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Lens cloth



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You can also support our work by choosing gifts from our beautiful new online shop.

Scan to shop



Kids & Conservation

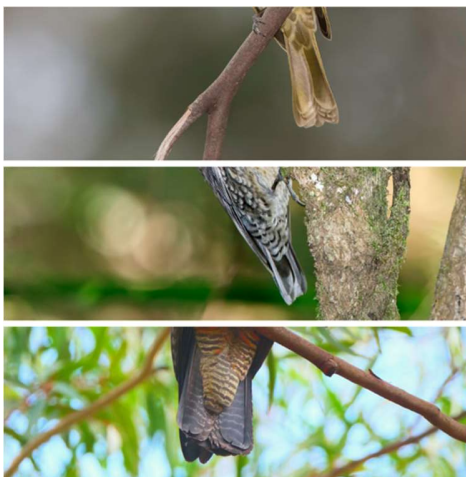


The Helmeted Honeyeater is sometimes called a flagship species. What does this mean and why is it important? Spoiler alert! Flags and ships have nothing to do with it!

Flagship species are usually animals that people are familiar with, have one or more appealing features and cause an emotional reaction in people. Flagship species help to increase awareness about the need for conservation initiatives such as planting or protecting habitat, not leaving rubbish behind and keeping our creeks and rivers clean. These things are very important to help the Helmeted Honeyeater survive. The Helmeted Honeyeater makes a great flagship species as it's only found in Victoria, and it's Victoria's bird emblem, so it will always have a special place in Victorian people's hearts.

Importantly, the conservation actions that help Helmeted Honeyeaters, also benefit many other plants and animals that it lives alongside but who aren't as well known. By looking after the Helmeted Honeyeater, we are also providing a home for a whole group of plants, animals and fungi. It's a win win!

Draw a line to link the photo with the animal's name. You can also cut it out and connect!

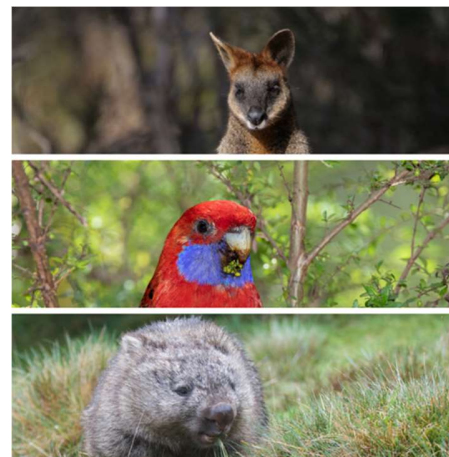


Whose tail is that?

Swamp
Wallaby

White-eared
Honeyeater

Crimson
Rosella



Whose head is that?

Common
Wombat

White-throated
Treecreeper

Gang-gang
Cockatoo

Shirley Ruhsam and her husband Kurt (deceased 2013) were valued members of the Friends. They attended the Friends meetings held each quarter. At the time membership was over 300 members; thanks to the interest of so many people such as Shirley and Kurt the Friends' became an important advocate for the environment. It was always a pleasure and a special delight to welcome Shirley and Kurt and be able to inform them of the Friends work to improve the status of the critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater.

Bob Anderson, Inaugural President

Heho Supporters

Donations are very important to us and help support the variety of conservation activities FoHH undertakes for our special bird.

So our thanks go to the generosity of...

Jonathan McConchie Ulla Kjellstrand Virginia Wallace Dorothy Scott



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.



FoHH would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from Yarra Ranges Shire for printing and distribution of the Heho Herald.



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.

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