

I am a retired scientist, an organic chemist, and my main retirement hobby is bird photography. I have been interested in birds and nature in general for the whole of my life.

### **Preservation of existing green space**

It has been very good to see that Victoria now has some new National Parks, but the green spaces we already have parks, reserves, gardens etc need to be carefully preserved. Great to see the rare Eltham copper butterflies have had priority over rail track extensions.

It is very sad to see pushes from big companies like Hanson Quarries trying to grab extra land for profit from a green wedge next to the Churchill National Park. Offsets can never replace a unique environment. This park was more extensively used during lockdown and has trampling damage and the numbers of kangaroos, in areas where I have walked for many years, have dropped dramatically with no visible grazing of grass in some areas. Other animals such as echidna are harder to judge as they are less common normally but I have yet to see one this year. I did see wombat droppings recently.

Adjacent to Churchill National Park is Lysterfield Park. Is there any reason why this can not be incorporated into a larger national park with Churchill National Park as well, as they are administered as one by Parks Victoria. This protection has meant that the endangered Swift Parrots, over-wintering from Tasmania, have been seen there this year.

The Dandenong Creek acts as a green corridor through the Eastern suburbs and stretches are slowly being attended to and improved. However I have seen big golden carp in the creek in Shepherd's bush which will be killing native fish and damaging the creek beds. Plastic pollution is quite shocking and very apparent after flood events.

To maintain the creek the water must flow even under drought conditions. Is it legal to pump water from the creek to irrigate adjacent farming land such as can be seen in the Dandenong Creek in Bushy Park? The shack/building protecting the pump can be seen on the landscape version of google maps as a white spot in the green at approx 37°52'33.0"S 145°11'34.1"E. The market gardeners recently took down part of their fencing and took a bulldozer through Park's Victoria land to improve their irrigation system.

Logging, even by State government run companies such as VicForests, seems to be running amok, going ahead even in regions where endangered protected species are resident; such as the powerful owl and various sorts of glider possums and rare endemic grevilles in the Mount Cole State Forest. Some of this logging has gone ahead without proper wildlife surveys/prelogging surveys. The surveying and taking notice of the results needs to be strictly enforced.

Urban developments also threaten various rare species such as the Blue Billed Duck at Lake Knox. Excessive urban development is mainly due to the migrant intake being well above what can be catered for before the arrival of that nasty virus.

Serendip Sanctuary has been muted for large changes/removal under the You Yangs Precinct Master Plan, this is very short sighted as it provides both cage protected breeding for some very rare species and good close viewing as well as outdoor viewing for many interesting and some endangered species. It should be preserved. The State government should also be actively helping places such as the Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre which is trying to reestablish locally extinct species.

### **Stricter Laws**

There needs to be stricter supervision with fines or even jail for those harming

native flora and fauna. The lack of rangers etc on the ground has meant that many people think they can get away with ignoring native animal/bird protection.

Over the last year I have seen a fisherman fishing within 10 metres of a no-fishing sign at Blackburn Lake.

I have seen someone about to fly a drone over a nesting Ibis colony in Jell's park. Both these gentlemen tried to pretend they didn't understand English until I took photos!

I have also seen drone users several times at Westgate Park (a well known bird sanctuary in the middle of Melbourne); in restricted air space as well as flying over Parks Victoria land.

It is also very common to see people walking their dogs, frequently off leash, in spite of language independent signage indicating either no dogs at all or no unleashed dogs.

It seems to be a very retrograde step to see a notice at Jell's park saying the double gates are being left open as "the gate has not been serving its conservation purpose and will be left permanently open.

Last year in Shepherd's Bush one of last season's two powerful owl fledglings was killed apparently by an off leash dog roaming through at night time. I was told that the damage did not look like a fox kill. Powerful owls are an endangered species. Even the Monash council could do better here as in the past fireworks have been let off in Jell's Park which scared the powerful owls away temporarily and to roosts I had never seen them use previously.

Last year there was the case of the Gippsland farmhand who poisoned many wedge-tailed eagles, the sentence imposed was farcical and totally inadequate.

More recently there have been the Koala deaths due to land clearing in Western Victoria. I have not seen the outcome of prosecutions, maybe they are still ongoing, but will they be proportionate to the crime? Koalas are an Australian icon, how could they be allowed to be driven to extinction as is quite likely here in Victoria.

Platypus are critically endangered throughout Australia and yet they are being killed by dogs (near Cockatoo) and illegal yabbie trapping (near Jindavik). Some criminal convictions would help people think about their behaviour more carefully and provide an example to others that lives of endangered species do matter. I have not seen the platypuses that live in Westerfold's Park since before lockdown in spite of going to look several times now.

### **No duck shooting**

Another travesty involving birds is duck shooting. This is an anachronistic "sport" as so many of the shooters are totally unable to identify a duck and distinguish it from protected duck species or other protected species. Duck shooting should be banned totally. Many other states in Australia already have banned duck shooting for good reason.

### **Control of Feral Species**

Most feral species cause damage wherever they are. I have a friend who runs a nursery in the Dandenongs; he has no end of trouble with the deer breaking into his nursery in spite of substantial fences. Often the damage of feral species is so extensive that it is not recognised as such. I grew up in NZ where there used to be many, many scree slopes formed from eroding rocks, now with many years of deer eradication, including shooting, those scree slopes are revegetating and the bush coming back. I am sure that revegetation after fires would be sped up without all the feral animals damaging/killing local flora and fauna. Biological methods of controlling feral animals would be preferable to shooting or poisoning but they do not exist for most feral species at present.