

ROUND THE BEND
CONSERVATION CO-OPERATIVE

A residential conservation community



Supporter Impact Report 2025

*Protecting biodiversity
and conserving habitat*

WWW.ROUNDTHEBEND.ORG.AU

CONTENTS

News & Events	4
Activities: Fauna	9
Activities: Flora	16
Emerging Threats	20
Observations	22
Discoveries	27
Gallery	30
Out Team	30
Acknowledgements	31



Being Watched: A pair of Powerful Owls and a Swamp Wallaby.



Honouring our Past, Siezing the Moment, Ambitious for the Future

Building on 50+ years of commitment to caring for the environment, 2025 has been a landmark year for the Co-op in the pursuit of our aim to protect biodiversity and conserve habitat.

As you will read below, progress over the last 12 months has been built on a foundation of active and committed membership, collaborative partnerships with like-minded organizations and incredibly generous support from philanthropic organizations and individuals.

We thank our partners and our donors for their faith in us. Our achievements, our ability to remain bold in our aspirations and adopt new technologies is absolutely dependent on your support.

To remain impactful in the face of the increasing challenges of climate change, invasive species and cost escalation we need our existing donors and supporters to stick with us and we need new donors and supporters to join us.

We welcome enquiries from anyone and any organization about how additional support, now or in the future, can help protect the unique environment of this important part of the Bend Of Islands. Whether new grant opportunities, one-off or regular donations or a gift in your will, your support can make a real difference to our mission. We are happy to work with donors to ensure anonymity or to acknowledge donations publicly.

Please reach out to our Secretary or Treasurer to discuss your ideas.

secretary.roundthebendcoop@gmail.com

treasurer.roundthebendcoop@gmail.com

NEWS & EVENTS

Conservation Covenant

In April 2025 a Deed of Covenant with Trust for Nature was signed by the Minister for the Environment and recorded on our title. We celebrated this landmark in July with a small gathering where Trust for Nature officers officially handed over our conservation covenant signs.

A conservation covenant permanently protects and conserves private land with natural, cultural or scientific values. It restricts activities that may damage native habitat on the land, such as clearing, intensive farming or subdivision...and it lasts forever.



Christmas Guinea-flower



This species (*Hibbertia porcata*) is only known in two Victorian locations, both in Nillumbik: on the Co-op and at One Tree Hill.

In December, the Scientific Advisory Committee published their preliminary recommendation to support the nomination of the Christmas Guinea-flower for addition to the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 Threatened List. We hope that in the longer term, it will also be listed under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

We greatly appreciate those who helped with the nomination, in particular Warren Tomlinson from Nillumbik Shire Council, and those who have worked towards its conservation over many years in Nillumbik.



Fauna Management Plan

Building on the Co-op's successful Flora management plan, which has guided our work since 2012, we are creating a Fauna Management Plan. This will provide important strategic direction and allow the efficient use of our physical and financial resources. This work is being done with Field Ecologist Partners as our consultants. When completed, the Plan will provide comprehensive guidance that will assist us to set priorities and focus on projects that give us greatest value in managing our valuable biodiversity.

Thanks to Warrandyte Community Bendigo Bank and Wettenhall Environment Trust for supporting this project; and to Field Ecologist Partners.

Maroondah Aqueduct Trail Folly

The proposed Maroondah Aqueduct Recreation Trail would see our Northern boundary opened-up to the public for horses, dogs, bikes and uncontrolled human traffic. We continue our efforts to stop the project, as it poses a major threat not only to the Co-op, but to the overall integrity of the ELZ and the Bend of Islands.

BICA has provided on-site briefings for the new Nillumbik Councillors and senior officers, to emphasise the importance of the Bend of Islands and the ELZ, including specific briefings on the folly of the proposed trail.

The work of the Co-op has been instrumental in providing empirical research data that confirms the high biodiversity value of the proposed route and the destructive impact of the proposed trail. Please stay informed about this issue.

You can read the detailed case against the trail [here](#).



Panic veldt grass control: mission impossible?

Both the 2012 Weed Mapping and Management Strategy and our individual Site Weed Management Plans highlighted that Panic Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta*), growing on and below our house sites, was the biggest single threat to the environmental integrity of the Co-op. This weed was not invading from outside but was being generated because of our presence.

This particularly invasive plant is notoriously difficult to control and presented a daunting task. Nevertheless, we decided to attempt it despite many people with experience of this weed considering it 'mission impossible'.

Our first step, in 2014, was to define the problem by documenting the extent of infestations and to develop a practical identification method. The next year we instigated a control program staged over five years and in 2020 we successfully completed the program and eliminated a major threat to the environmental integrity of the Co-op.

The key to successful control has been consistent follow-up to prevent any plants from seeding. We undertake annual inspections of all sites in September as a safety net to ensure that effective control is being maintained and the 2025 data shows that the weed is at minimal background levels and is being effectively controlled. Good news and something to be proud of!

Thanks to Nillumbik Shire Council.



Rethinking Bushfire Management

In November we teamed up with Kinglake Friends of the Forest to host a packed-out community information session on bushfire science. Our speaker was Dr Philip Zylstra, who came to bushfire research from a background in fire management and remote area firefighting. Since that time, he has developed the first and only peer-reviewed fire behaviour model for Australian forests outside of West Australian Jarrah.

Most of us are very aware of the incredibly damaging effects of planned burning – the human health impacts of smoke, the destruction of hollow-bearing trees and degradation of ecosystems. But Dr Zylstra took us through the origins of the planned burning industry and the empirical evidence of its ineffectiveness as bushfire management.

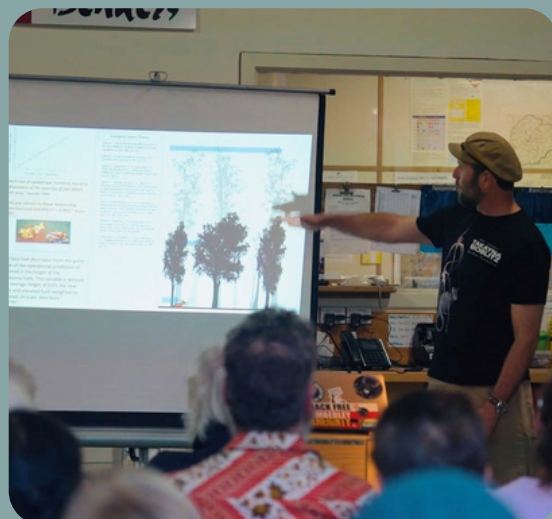
He also explained why Strategic Fuel Breaks (SFBs) are ineffective: thinning forests and the creation of SFBs both reduce canopy cover, which is the only thing that can slow down wind during a bushfire. Even in the Black Summer Bushfires 88% of the canopy did not burn and therefore it was acting to slow down the fire.

The talk was followed by great questions and contributions from our knowledgeable community.

Dr Zylstra has just published a new paper with Dr David Lindenmayer about how stopping planned burning can make forests more resilient to bushfires even in the face of worst-case-scenario climate change.

Read The Conversation article [here](#) and the peer-reviewed paper [here](#).

Thanks to Kinglake Friends of the Forest



ACTIVITIES: Fauna

Small Mammal Survey

This year we conducted our first ever co-ordinated mammal survey. The target species were Brush-tailed Phascogales and Slender-tailed Dunnarts, however we aimed to collect information on all mammals who live here.

Locations were chosen to cover a range of vegetation types and aspects. Only one location was in a gully to reflect the preferences of our target species. We used two bait types: one tasty (peanut butter-oat balls) and one nasty (tuna oil). Based on advice, we standardised the distance between camera and bait, aiming for 1.5 metres. Five cameras were also set up in trees in gullies to capture the activity of arboreal mammals.

Twelve mammal species, nine bird species and no reptiles were recorded.

Mammals

Antechinus, Wombat, Grey Kangaroo, Phascogale, Fox, Swamp Wallaby, Common Brushtail Possum, Common Ringtail Possum, Rattus Rattus, Rabbit, Kreffts (Sugar) Glider, Echidna.

Birds

Superb Fairy-wren, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, White-browed Scrubwren, Bassian Thrush, Eastern Yellow Robin, Australian Raven, White-throated Treecreeper, Buff-rumped Thornbill

In the survey of arboreal fauna we were thrilled and delighted with the detection of a Feathertail Glider (*Acrobates pygmaeus*). Not known to have been observed in the Bend of Islands since the 1990s, this tiny marsupial is the world's smallest gliding mammal, weighing in at a tiny 12 grams. They are omnivorous, feeding on nectar, pollen and insects.



As the first survey gathering baseline mammal data for the Co-op using camera traps, we hope that the data will be useful in informing our future conservation efforts.



Installing arboreal cameras



It wasn't just small mammals interested in the baits!

We are grateful to the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and Wildlife of the Central Highlands (WOTCH) for generously loaning high quality fauna cameras for this survey.

The Great Dunnart Mystery

One of the species we hoped to find in the Small Mammal Project are Slender-Tailed Dunnarts (*Sminthopsis murina*) which, although not sighted on the Co-op, have been sighted in the wider region with similar habitat. They are listed as vulnerable on the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Threatened List.

Since 2014 we have participated in a program run by Nillumbik Shire Council to provide habitat for Dunnarts using tiles but with no success. A field trip to a property in St. Andrew's where Dunnarts are present gave us some valuable insights into the best set-up for nesting sites: thick terracotta for better insulation; coconut fibre for nesting material.

Based on this new understanding we installed new tiles, using construction associated with successful design, in two locations on the Co-op. We will continue to monitor all the tiles and hope to see evidence of Dunnarts and perhaps solve the mystery of whether they are here or not.



Setting up Dunnart tiles

Thanks to Deb & Rob Oliver of St. Andrews for their advice and encouragement.



Brush-tailed Phascogale population audit

The principal objective of this annual audit is to build a longitudinal data base which can provide information on changes in the Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*) population.

This year's audit was incorporated into the small mammal survey. We were thrilled that Phascogales, which are listed as Vulnerable, were present at 15 out of 16 locations in the Small Mammal survey, and more regularly than last year.

This is a considerable improvement over last year's results, in part attributable to improved cameras, improved camera locations and settings and improved positioning of bait stations. The high number of sightings is a positive indicator of the health of our Phascogale population.

Our monitoring was carried out in conjunction with Melbourne Water, and as Phascogales have a significant habitat range it is most likely that we share some of the same population.

Thanks to Melbourne Water.



Fox control

Our third Canid Pest Ejector (CPE) trial concluded in May and resulted in a significant increase in the strike-rate, where a CPE has been triggered. Using our motion sensing cameras to identify places where foxes are regularly sighted has enabled us to set up CPE devices in more productive locations.

The three CPE proof-of-concept trials have helped us refine our techniques and success rate and has attracted support from Nillumbik Shire Council, and funding from the Department of Agriculture, for an expanded trial to a wider catchment area enlisting neighbouring Landcare groups.

The trial program will include training and certification for participants to be able to handle 1080 CPE baits, leading to significant cost savings, increasing our capacity to continue our fox control program and to measure its effects in a broader area.

Thanks to Warrandyte Community Bendigo Bank, Nillumbik Shire Council and the Agriculture Victoria.



Nestbox monitoring

The Co-op has 20-plus nestboxes dotted across the property, most installed in the early days of the Co-op in bushland still recovering from the last wildfire through the area in the 1960's. The objective then was to augment natural tree hollows to provide habitat for birds and mammals. It wasn't until 50 years later that we began systematic monthly monitoring of the nestboxes and recording results.

It is predominantly Sugar Gliders (Krefft's Glider, *Petaurus notatus*) taking up residence, with the occasional short stays by Brush-tailed Phascogales. Sugar Gliders generally remain in residence for less than a month, however, one nestbox is atypical because it has had Sugar Gliders occupying it for six months, yielding a wealth of data on Sugar Glider behaviour..



One feature is their very cautious departure behaviour, sometimes taking several minutes before they are comfortable leaving to set off for a night's foraging, behavioural characteristics most likely related to survival. This compares with their very streamlined return.

However, there are consequences, as captured by our cameras:



Bottlenecks in the departure lounge

You have to empathise with the Sugar Gliders queueing up, anxious to get out for a pee after a long night (day) in the sack.



Limits to growth

A well-fed Sugar Glider struggles to squeeze back in through the opening (that others negotiate with great speed) after a good feed. Sugar Gliders consume up to 25% of their body mass when foraging.

Within days of this struggle, the entire family of five Sugar Gliders left the nest box and haven't returned. They have not moved to other nest boxes and so presumably they have found suitable natural hollows without the weight restrictions.

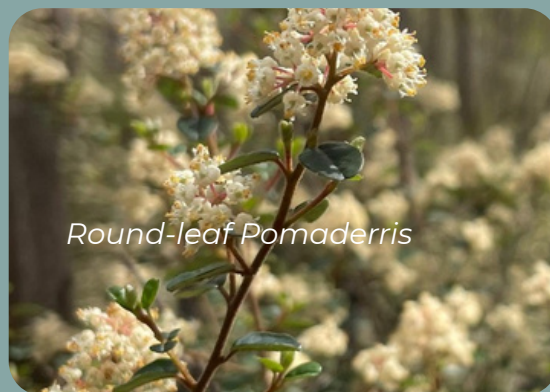


ACTIVITIES: Flora

Protection of Significant Flora

We have been surveying, repairing, and making design improvements to our exclusion plots protecting significant flora which have been breached by famished browsers during the dry spell over Winter. This has included tightening-up and raising fencing around endangered flora including Round-Leaf Pomaderris (*Pomaderris vacciniifolia*) and Dandenong Range Cinnamon Wattle (*Acacia stictophylla*) and well as guarding recruits of other significant, if not listed, flora across the Co-op.

It has been interesting to note that despite the high browsing pressure this year, no-one seems to want to eat Large-leaf Bush-pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*). Many guards have been moved from these plants to prioritise other more palatable species.



Wine-Lipped Spider-orchid reintroduction

This orchid (*Caladenia oenochila*) was once common in Nillumbik but is now locally threatened throughout the Shire. A few individual plants, found in the 1980's, were the last records on the Co-op.



Reintroduced in 2018 by Nillumbik Shire Council using seedlings from the National Herbarium of Victoria, the orchids have flowered once again in the exclusion plot east of C track. This year we had 6 flowers from 5 plants, and 5 additional buds that failed to flower. This is the lowest count of flowers since 2019, possibly due to the dry conditions and no pollination took place.

Thanks to Nillumbik Shire Council.

Burgan control

Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) is a native species that needs to be kept in check to allow other species to prosper, particularly ground cover plants. Once the Burgan has taken over it is almost impossible to regenerate the lost ground layer which exists in 'non-Burgan' areas.

This year we completed a sweep of the boundaries of our highest quality zones and pulled out many hundreds of this pioneering species. The idea is not to eliminate Burgan, but to stop further spread, thus maintaining our biodiversity and protecting the highest quality zones of the Co-op from encroachment.



Weed control

A key priority remains preventing the spread of weeds on the Co-op. The hard work and smart planning of so many people over the years has kept the Co-op in a comparatively weed-free state, a unique position for bushland so close to Melbourne.

This year a survey of the gullies indicated there was no need for a work party focusing on woody weeds, although residents have removed small numbers of blackberries and thistles when encountered.

The grassy weed load was much reduced in 2025 due to the dry conditions, which had continued from February 2024. However, an extremely wet November threatened a late resurgence of the highly invasive Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Fortunately, with close monitoring, we established that extensive follow-up works were not warranted.

As well as weeding by Members at work parties, we continue to employ contractors to deal with this invasion, which would otherwise overwhelm us. We also took advantage of the dry conditions to reduce the weed pressure in a wider strip below one of our main control lines, by whipper-snipping the Sweet Vernal to prevent seed set. This has been a success, and we plan to continue this and keep monitoring the results.

Thanks to Nillumbik Shire Council's Land Management Incentive Program for their long-term support of our Sweet Vernal control program; Canopy Connections and Wallaby Bushland Management.



Stevenson Creek

We have again managed a weeding contract for Stevenson Creek in and adjacent to the Aqueduct Reserve north of the Co-op. Target weeds have included blackberry and thistle and weeds are now almost at back-ground levels.

An in-house Melbourne Water weeding crew have been responsible for work on Stevenson Creek downstream of the Co-op to Watsons Creek, and on the Melbourne Water track to the north within the Aqueduct Reserve adjacent to the Co-op. Good progress has been made although much work still needs to be done. Target weeds include Arum Lily, Angled Onion, Japanese Honeysuckle and of course thistles and blackberries.

Co-op members have conducted weed surveys along the creek to assist with our continued collaboration with Melbourne Water and to ensure that this critical biodiversity hotspot is prioritised for resources.

Other tributaries have been targeted by Co-op volunteer weeders who have been rewarded with views of Powerful Owls, and sightings of Damselflies and Dragonflies.

Thanks to the Melbourne Water and the Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways program for their long-term support.



EMERGING THREATS

Neat Feather-moss

This prolific weed, (*Pseudoscleropodium purum*), has been observed blanketing entire hillsides in the Nillumbik area, outcompeting native species like orchids, lilies and herbs. Once established across large areas it is extremely difficult to remove because it can regenerate from a tiny fragment.

Over the past year we have surveyed this plant throughout the gullies on the Co-op, involving many Co-op members and residents. Fairly large patches of the moss have been found along Stevenson Creek and throughout some gullies.

After a successful initial trial removing a small patch of moss in one gully, we are now removing it from other areas. This is a significant control effort because this threat has only recently been on the radar of government and Landcare groups. We have an opportunity to lead the way in the management of this invasive species.

Thanks to Jake McKenzie for taking the lead on this weed incursion.



Removing a small patch of moss

South African Weed Orchid

A nasty, highly invasive environmental weed, (*Disa bracteata*), that produces millions of dust-like seeds allowing it to spread easily and form dense colonies. It invades bushland, where it can compete with and exclude smaller native plants such as lilies, grasses and orchids.

Plants were found on the Co-op for the first time this year.

Disturbing the plant can cause further spread, so there is a skilled BICA Disa team (which includes Co-op residents) ready to respond and safely remove it as required. Each plant's location is also recorded for annual follow-up and to monitor for potential spread.



OBSERVATIONS

Koala sightings

This Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) was observed just north of A track on the Co-op, and later that day seen crossing the Aqueduct track. This adds to our list of iconic threatened species reliant on the intact contiguous habitat provided by the Bend of Islands and Melbourne Water land to our North.



Lyrebird breeding

As in recent years, throughout the winter male Superb Lyrebirds (*Menura novaehollandiae*) were heard actively calling from mounds in several areas of the Co-op and in July we were very pleased to discover a new nest on Stevenson Creek with a female tending an egg.

We installed two motion-sensing cameras and in August our cameras recorded movements within the nest at night which was probably the hatching of the egg.

The adult bird was captured pausing at the nest entrance to feed the chick before entering the nest and later in the month the chick could be heard chirping.

In September we had our first sighting of the chick at the nest entrance and in October our cameras recorded the fledging chick's first flight from the nest.

This is another significant proof of the on-going re-establishment of the Lyrebird in the Bend of Islands, the importance of the habitat link from the Kinglake Ranges to the Yarra and of this biodiversity hotspot within the habitat corridor.

It also highlights the importance of continued efforts to protect and enhance this biodiversity hotspot, as recognised in the Yarra Strategic Plan, with weed and fox control, and to strictly maintain the exclusion of public access, dogs, trail bikes and horses from the area.

Thanks to Dr. Alex Maisey for his interest and invaluable advice.



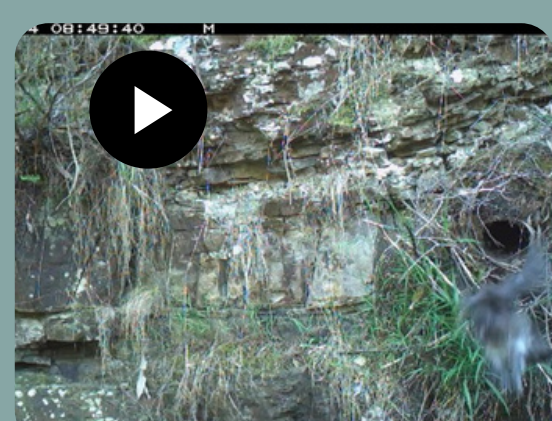
Camera set up before camouflage



Adult above the nest



Chick at nest entrance



Video: from hatching to fledging

White-Throated Nightjar

The White-Throated Nightjar (*Eurostopodus mystacalis*) has been monitored on the Co-op for many years and documented since 2007. These birds are extremely elusive, and it is likely that breeding is attempted annually in this area.

Monitoring is done by a team of residents using WhatsApp to record calls, and more recently with sound recorders and a motion-sensing camera. This year, through the support of members, we have deployed a new generation of monitors purchased from the Australian company, Frontier Labs. The technology for monitoring calls is evolving quickly as are AI approaches for analysing data once obtained.

Unfortunately, despite three breeding events in previous seasons, successful breeding was not detected this year. There was, though, an increase in the number of calls recorded by residents and the sound recorders picked up many more records, providing a very significant contribution of additional data.



The White-throated Nighjar roosts on the ground



Checking bioacoustic recorders

Thanks to Nillumbik Shire Council, Wildlife of the Central Highlands and Members for supplying the recorders; to Kristian Bell from from Nillumbik Shire Council for providing the data from the NSC Forest Monitoring station on the Co-op. We are also grateful to experts from Museum Victoria and Frontier Labs for their advice on deployment and analyses.

Nature in the Raw

On the Co-op we live very close to nature, observing the seasonal changes in the vegetation and the migration and breeding of the animals, experiencing the deep underlying rhythms of the natural world.

But we also see the raw side of nature with exposure to the brutal realities of the fight for survival. This is far from the pretty 'Disneyfied' picture presented in many documentaries and films.

A startling demonstration of this is the video from one of our camera traps that captures a Powerful Owl taking a Ringtail Possum.



The Powerful Owl is the apex predator of our nocturnal avian world, yet it is extremely nervous on the ground, on the lookout for its own predators, in contrast with its very matter-of-fact approach to dealing with the Possum – a routine exercise done with expert efficiency.

The most likely predator threatening the Owl at ground level would be a fox, or perhaps a cat. These have replaced the Dingo which would have been active for a few thousand years prior to its local demise after European settlement.

A common reaction to this video has been “Oh, the poor Possum”, but we have camera trap evidence of Ringtail Possums predated the eggs of an Eastern Rosella nest, as have Sugar Gliders, which are at the top of the ‘cuteness scale’ for many people.

Almost all carnivorous and omnivorous native species have developed specialized predation on other native species for their survival. This underpins the ‘balance of nature’, from the largest mammals and birds down to the smallest insects.

Living close to nature provides a wonderful opportunity to get a more realistic appreciation of the amazing complexities and interconnections of the natural world.



A Powerful Owl with a Grey-headed Flying Fox



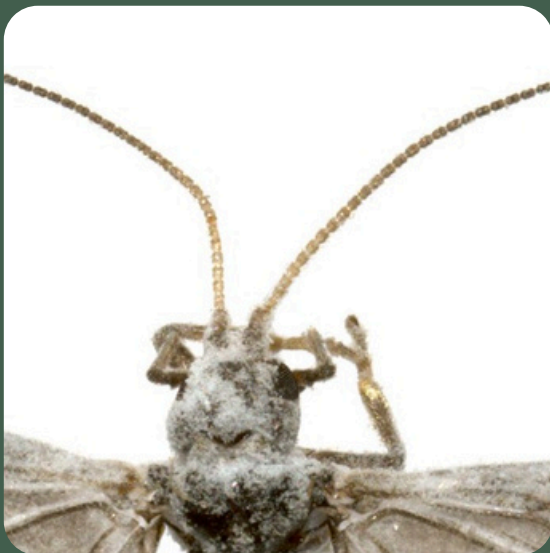
This Feather-legged Assassin Bug, is another example of a creature that preys on other creatures. It specialises in predation of ants such as Jumping Jacks.

Discoveries

New lacewings

In 2025 we recorded four new species at our light-sheets, bringing our Co-op Lacewing List tally to 57 species.

Two of the new species are from the Coniopterygidae family, the Dustywings. These are the smallest lacewings, with wing lengths of 3mm, so small that positive identification usually requires microscopic examination.



Kay's Dustywing,
Neosemidalis kayi
See [iNaturalist](#)

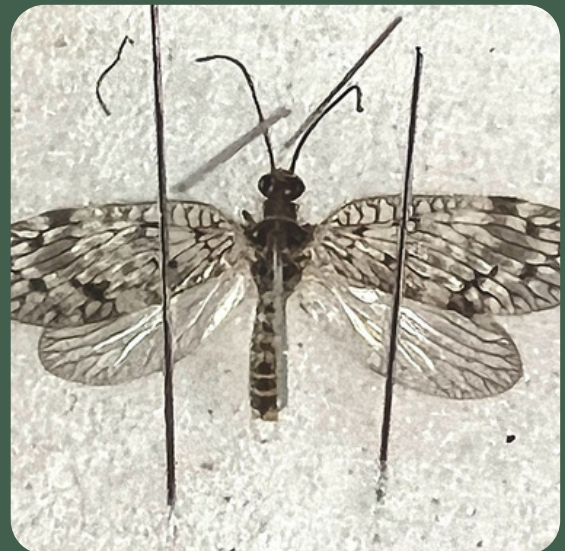


Veined Dustywing,
Neosemidalis nervalis
See [iNaturalist](#)

Our third new record was an unnamed species in the Chrysopidae family, the Green Lacewings. This species had only been recorded once before, when it was photographed at Anglesea on 20th December 2021. This was a rare find, so the specimen was collected and now sits in Museum Victoria, as Specimen number NEU 3000, awaiting taxonomic classification, once sufficient supportive data becomes available.



This species has been incorporated into the recently published 'Lacewings of Victoria' with the temporary name of *Chrysopidae* sp.(2). See [iNaturalist](#).



Our fourth new record was *Carobius pulchellus*, of the Hemerobiidae family, the Brown Lacewings. This is also very small, with a wing length of 5mm. See [iNaturalist](#)

We are building good baseline data that should be useful to gauge population changes into the future. See our Lacewing website page [here](#).



Strongylurus cretifer



Katydid

The light-sheets are a great way to survey the invertebrate fauna of the Co-op. As well as moths and lacewings, there is a fascinating variety of insects, including beetles, caddisflies, dobsonflies, wasps, katydids, plant hoppers, cicadas and many more.



Red-tipped Greenhood

Pterostylis clivosa

Found on the Co-op after a few years of being missing or hiding.



Juniper Wattle

Acacia ulicifolia

Another significant record, added to the Co-op plant list.



Slender Stylewort

Levenhookia sonderi

A tiny ephemeral herb, listed as endangered in Victoria.

Our Team

Board of Directors

Amy Callinan, Lynne Johnstone, Neill Kamminga, Caroline Kardachi, Richard Laurie, Murray Paternoster, Duncan Sadler

Fauna Group

Alana Duncan, Kay Hawkins, Lynne Johnstone, David Keir, Felicity Law, Jake McKenzie, Pierre Noirjean, Erica Palatinus, Murray Paternoster, John Roberts, Duncan Sadler, Aawa White

Flora Group

Alana Duncan, Rowena Groundwater, Doug Hilton, Neill Kamminga, David Keir, Richard Laurie, Felicity Law, Jake McKenzie, Murray Paternoster, Chris Pierce, Duncan Sadler, Aawa White



Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the Members, Friends and Associates who have put so much effort into our conservation work in 2025. Special thanks to Jake McKenzie, a resident tenant, who participated in so many key projects this year.

Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative is a proud member of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association (BICA).

Patrons

Mel Keely and Kirk Anderson
Jenny Neale
Anitra Nelson

Supporters

Agriculture Victoria
Anonymous philanthropic donor
Friends of the Co-op
Melbourne Water
Nillumbik Shire Council
Trust for Nature
Warrandyte Community Bendigo Bank
Wettenhall Environment Trust

All words and images by Members and residents of the Co-op.
Editor and designer: Karyn Kamminga
Comments and queries about anything in this Report can be directed to the Secretary, and will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Contact Us

Social media: [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
Email: secretary.roundthebendcoop@gmail.com
Website : www.roundthebend.org.au



**ROUND THE BEND
CONSERVATION CO-OPERATIVE**

A residential conservation community

