



Welcome to the spring edition. Almost there, we are celebrating the presentation of the Bill to create the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park. In the meantime read about Striated Thornbills, mimicry in the insect world and the decline of Greater Gliders in the Wombat Forest. **Gayle Osborne** (editor) and **Angela Halpin** (design)

Introducing one of the other LBJs

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*



Words and image by Lynda Wilson

For many birders, the LBJs or Little Brown 'Jobs' can present some of the greatest challenges in our bird identification endeavours. As Trevor described in the last Wombat Forestcare Newsletter (June 2025 edition), the Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata* is one of those LBJs that can be a challenge to distinguish, in particular, from the Brown Thornbill.

Both the Striated and Brown Thornbills can have distinct dark striations on the chest, but it is the fine cream to white striations on the rufous-brown crown and around the eyes and cheeks of the Striated Thornbill that give it its name. The upperparts of the Striated Thornbill also have a greenish tinge, unlike the Brown Thornbill.

These little thornbills tend to spend most of their time in groups high in the canopy of eucalypt forests and other woodlands, flitting from leaf to leaf, and often hanging upside-down, gleaning insects as they go. Brown Thornbills may head up to the heights as well, but tend to be more at home lower down, amongst dense foliage and

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*. Photography © Lynda Wilson.

into the shrub layer. Striated Thornbills will occasionally venture down lower to the ground, especially when in need of a bath and a drink. Small groups can be observed frequenting artificial bird baths, especially those positioned in native gardens with relatively mature eucalypts.

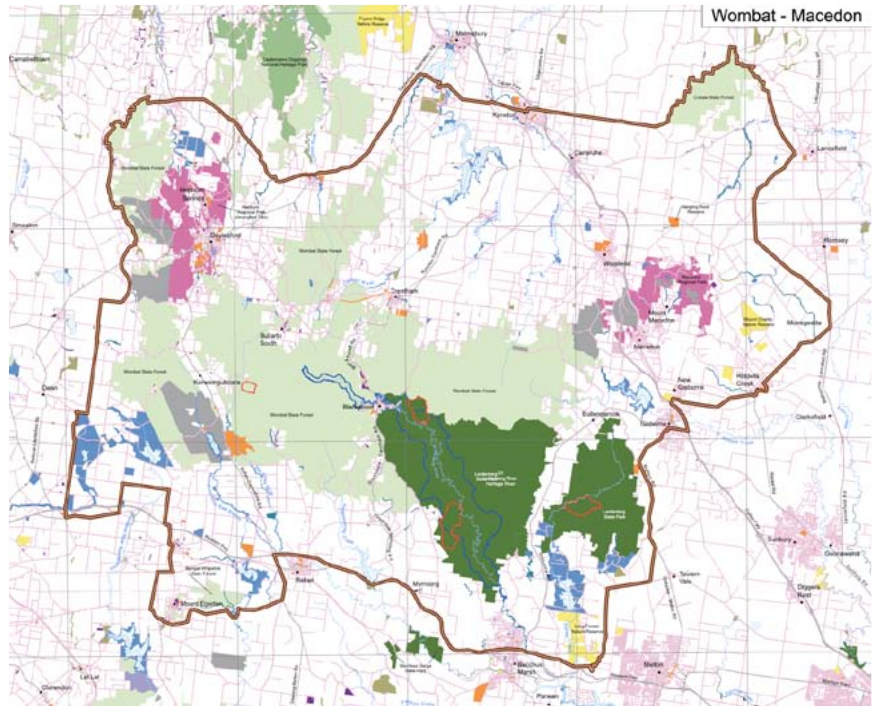
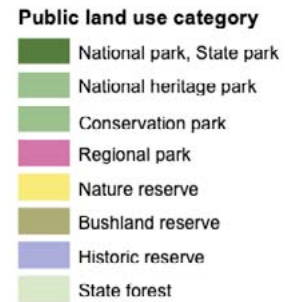
The distribution of the Striated Thornbill extends across southeastern Australia, from the mid-Queensland coast right around to Adelaide. Four sub-species have been recognised, with *A. lineata lineata* being found across New South Wales and most of Victoria, up to the Grampians.

Unlike the melodious calls of the Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbills are almost constantly in communication with each other with their subtle high pitched metallic 'tiziz-tiziz' of a call.

Noting the variation in behaviours, where they hang out, the difference in calls and a few distinguishing features can help break down some of the mystery of these LBJs. ■

By Gayle Osborne

National parks form the foundation of biodiversity conservation and the protection of flora, fauna and fungi. They also provide people



The map displays the Wombat - Macedon region with various land use zones. Key features include:

- Urban Zones:** Shaded in pink, including areas around Wombat, Macedon, and other towns.
- Green Zones:** Shaded in green, representing rural and agricultural land.
- Blue Zones:** Shaded in blue, representing water bodies and wetlands.
- Yellow Zones:** Shaded in yellow, representing specific land use areas.
- Grey Zones:** Shaded in grey, representing specific land use areas.
- Topography:** The map shows the surrounding landscape, including hills and valleys.
- Infrastructure:** Major roads and highways are shown in red and orange.
- Geographical Labels:** Various towns and locations are labeled, including Wombat, Macedon, and others.

Proposed land tenure Wombat-Macedon Region. Source: VEAC 2019

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with opportunities to increase their awareness of nature and to enjoy outdoor recreation. Recreational shooting is not an appropriate activity in national parks and will not decrease feral animal populations in any meaningful way. Feral animal control is undertaken by Parks Victoria in an appropriate manner.

Four new regional parks are still to be legislated within the existing Wombat State Forest: Spargo Creek Regional Park (1693 hectares), Blackwood Regional Park (3707 hectares), Fingerpost Regional Park (5442 hectares) and Barkstead Regional Park (4855 hectares).

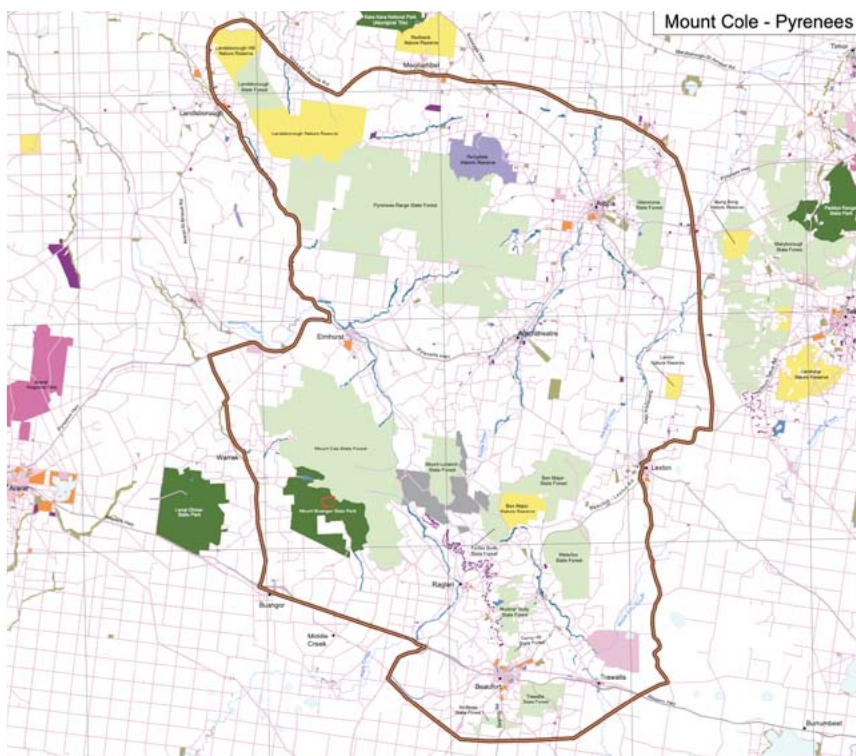
An additional 2947 hectares will be added to the Hepburn Regional Park.

In the central west 7 regional parks, 11 nature conservation reserves, 18 bushland reserves and expansions to existing reserves have yet to be legislated. It is our understanding that these will be included in a Bill for the new Public Land Act. We need to continue to lobby the government to ensure that this legislation is also presented to parliament soon.

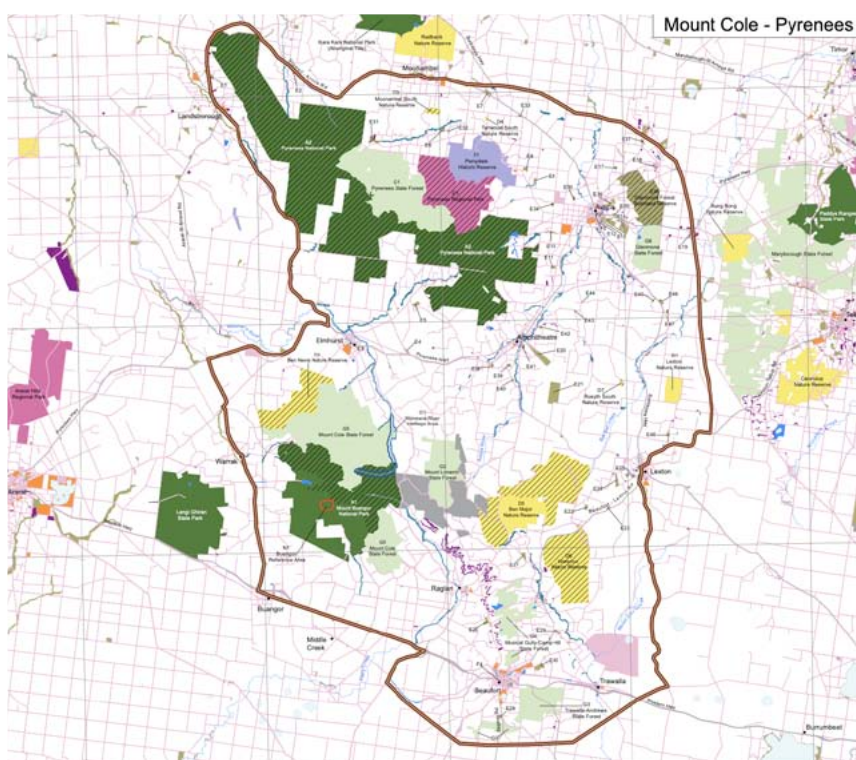
The maps show the current land tenures and all the parks and reserves that will be created by legislation. The pale green of state forests has been replaced to a great extent by the dark green of the promised national parks and the deep pink of the regional parks as well as other reserves.

Our community has worked hard to have the Wombat Forest recognised for its incredible wildlife. For more than 14 years, Wombat Forestcare, working with the Victorian National Parks Association, has campaigned for 'Park' status for these forests. So many Wombat Forestcare members and supporters have attended protest events, written letters to politicians and supported the campaign in numerous ways, ensuring that the campaign has been successful.

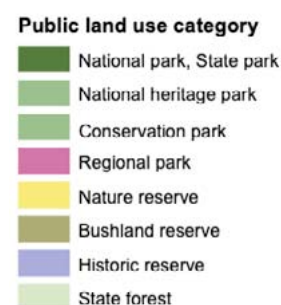
We are on the home stretch, but we need to keep up the pressure to make sure that all the parks and reserves are legislated soon. ■



Existing land tenure Mt Cole-Pyrenees Region. Source: VEAC 2019



Proposed land tenure Mt Cole-Pyrenees Region. Source: VEAC 2019



Storms, surveys and Greater Gliders

By Trevor Speirs

In 2020 the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) established 42 survey sites for the EPBC listed endangered Greater Glider *Petauroides volans* in and around the Wombat State Forest. This is an excellent initiative and it is to be hoped repeat surveys will be conducted over the coming years. Long term surveys can provide important data such as population fluctuations and tree species used for feeding or denning, information which can be used for making the correct management decisions for the survival of threatened species like the Greater Glider.

The destructive storm event of June 2021 severely impacted many of the gullies and creeks which support the bulk of Greater Gliders in the Wombat and resulted in the loss of many large hollow-bearing trees, hollows that gliders and other arboreal mammals need for denning and breeding. Large and mature eucalypts are also vital feed trees for Greater Gliders which exist only on the nitrogen rich leaves and buds of various species of eucalyptus. In 2022 DEECA, the Arthur Rylah Institute and associates revisited 32 of the survey sites which had been impacted by the storm and the results of these surveys have been presented in a recently published paper.

The study found that one year after the storm, Greater Glider numbers had declined by around a third in the survey sites that were storm impacted. The report's modelling also estimated that the population of Greater Gliders in the Wombat Forest had decreased from around 13,500 before the storm to just under 9,000 post storm, or around a 36% reduction. While this is a disturbing finding, it should be noted that fortunately a number of glider areas were either unaffected or only minimally impacted. However, it is worth remembering that one of the reasons for the Greater Glider being listed as endangered nationally is that the species has been found to have "an overall rate of population decline exceeding 50 percent over a 21-year (three generation) period, including population reduction and habitat destruction following the 2019–20 bushfires".¹

Although around 45,000 hectares, much of the Wombat is at present not capable of supporting substantial numbers of gliders, mainly due to past intensive logging. This has resulted in large areas of immature regrowth forest and therefore a dearth of large hollow-bearing trees.

Note

1. <https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/254-conservation-advice-05072022.pdf>

Reference

Cally, J. G., Macak, P. V., Chick, M. P., Blake, B., Wagner, B., & Ramsey, D. S. L. (2025). Mature forest habitat mitigates the decline of an endangered greater glider population through a widespread disturbance event. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 578, 122440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2024.122440>



Greater Glider *Petauroides volans*.
Photography © Gayle Osborne.

The drier ridges that are dominated by smaller and shorter eucalypt species like narrow-leaved peppermint are also not suitable Greater Glider habitat. Historic and more recent destructive forestry practices have created discrete or fragmented populations of Greater Gliders within the forest meaning localised extinction is possible should extreme weather events occur, especially catastrophic wildfire.

Several years ago DEECA began installing nest boxes of various sizes in different areas in the Wombat and also the Lerderderg State Park. This is a worthwhile and welcomed project but there is definitely an opportunity for the department to expand on this, especially with nest boxes specifically designed for Greater Gliders and similarly sized arboreal mammals. Prototypes of these nest boxes have been deployed in the field and they appear successful as Greater Gliders have been observed using them. A number of the storm affected areas are difficult to access but some of the hardest hit sites do have driveable tracks nearby making the task quite achievable for qualified arborists. With Greater Glider numbers in decline over much of their range, this is a practicable way to assist in their recovery until the forest matures and provides natural hollows. ■

Mimicry - the art of deception

By Ken Walker

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We mere humans have a saying that “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”. The insect world is full of imitation or mimicry; but in their world, mimicry is not used for flattery but for survival – no flattery is ever intended in the natural world.

Insect mimicry comes in many shapes and forms. We categorise all forms of mimicry under two banners: Batesian and Mullerian mimicry.

Batesian mimicry: This is where a harmless species takes on the shapes and colours of a harmful or distasteful species in the hope that it will fool and trick its predators into leaving them alone with the predators thinking they are attacking a harmful or distasteful species. A very common and universally known warning coloration is the black and yellow stripes of many species of wasps and bees. Some harmless species of flies, and even some beetles, have developed similar black and yellow coloration to mimic the potentially dangerous wasps and bees. This type of mimicry, where a harmless animal mimics a dangerous or unpalatable animal, is called Batesian mimicry.

(As an aside, Batesian mimicry is named after Henry Walter Bates (1825 – 1892). In the 1840s and 1850s, Bates spent several decades in the Amazon and collected many species of similar looking butterflies. He was the first to put forward the theory of mimicry and so the name was given in honour of his work.)

Batesian is the most common form of mimicry, and it occurs throughout the insect world.

Hoverflies (Family Syrphidae) are masters of Batesian mimicry in many forms. Some hoverflies mimic paper wasps (Vespidae). Below is *Sphaerophoria macrogaster* – a common hoverfly mimicking the striped colour pattern of a wasp.



Photo by Reiner Richter.



Another hoverfly also with vespid wasp like markings - *Simosyrphus grandicornis*. Photo by Adam Edmonds.

Many species of Vespid or paper wasps have similar yellow and black markings.



Paper wasp *Ropalidia romandi*. Photo by Lek.



Vespidae Paper wasp – *Eumeninae*.
Photo by Graeme Cocks.

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Then there are hoverflies that look like European honeybees. *Eristalis tenax*, commonly known as the bee-fly, has been introduced to Australia from Europe. A close up look will show it's a fly as it has only 2 wings rather than 4 wings on a bee and the antennae are only 3 segments rather than 12 segmented in the bee. Otherwise ... a close match to a honeybee.
Photo by David Francis.



European Honeybee – *Apis mellifera*
Photo by Reiner Richter.

Then there are hoverflies that mimic the shape and colours of a wasp to help gain protection from its predators.



Photos by Jenny Thynne.

Or how close does this hoverfly resemble these wasps?



Photo by Graeme Cocks.



Photo by Ken Walker.



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A Long-horned beetle (*Cerambycidae*) mimics a wasp.
The beetle is the MIMIC and ...
Photo by Reiner Richter.



The wasp, *Australozethus tasmaniensis*, is the MODEL:
Photo by David Francis.

Many long-horn beetles mimic wasps or ants.



Wasp mimicking long-horn beetle, *Hesthesia angulatus*.
Photo by Rudie Kuiter.

Some Robber flies (Family Asilidae) mimic parasitic wasps.

Here is the MIMIC: Robber fly *Cabasa pulchella* (Family Asilidae). Photo by Hermit.



Here is the MODEL – *Callibracon* sp. wasp (Family Braconidae).
Photo by Reiner Richter.



An ant mimicking cerambycid beetle - *Zoedia divisa*.
Photo by Martin Lagerwey

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Yet another case of a fly mimicking a wasp.

Here is the MIMIC: Bibionid fly *Bibio* sp. (Family Bibionidae). Photo by Linda Rogan.



Here is the MODEL – *Callibracon* sp. wasp (Family Braconidae). Photo by Reiner Richter.

Mimicry can sometimes work in the opposite direction such as with Jumping spiders where they want to be able to get close to their prey without being discovered as a spider.



Spiders exhibit an amazing array of shapes and colours and some spiders specialise in mimicking ants. The MIMIC -- Ant mimicking Jumping spider - *Myrmarachne rubra*. Photo by Martin Lagerwey.

Here is another Ant mimicking *Myrmarachne* jumping spider. Notice how the spider uses its front pair of legs to resemble the ant's antennae.



Mimicking a *Polyrhachis* ant. Photos by Martin Lagerwey.



The MODEL – Sugar ant *Camponotus*. Photo by Benoit Guenard with permission.

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Mullerian mimicry is where many species of distasteful or harmful species all take on the same shapes and colours. Here there is a “herd immunity” effect. If a predator attacks any one of the harmful species and gets stung or eats a distasteful insect, then all species that look similar will all be ignored by that predator. In other words, one individual dies but many others gain immunity.

The classic Mullerian example is for a group of almost 100 species butterflies (The *Heliconius* butterflies from

Hyleoides conicinna. Photo by Reiner Richter.



South America) all have the same shape and colours. All butterfly species are distasteful and so they help each other deter predators.

Australia has few good Mullerian examples, although one is commonly cited.

The colletid bee (*Hyleoides conicinna*) orange-yellow abdominal stripe pattern is repeated in many other wasps. ■

Pompilid wasp *Cryptocheilus bicolor*. Photo by Graeme Cocks.



Yellow Skinhead

Words and image by Gayle Osborne

This year, the low autumn rainfall resulted in a disappointing fungi season in the Wombat Forest. I visited a patch of forest that has been reliably prolific for fruiting bodies for many years and was amazed to see a yellow cortinari species that I thought might be the endangered *Cortinarius canarius* known as the Yellow Skinhead.

I submitted the photos to iNaturalist and was pleased to have the identification confirmed by Dr Tom May, mycologist, at the National Herbarium of Victoria.

Fungi are an immeasurably important part of our ecology, yet despite this they have been largely overlooked in conservation in Australia.

Due to a lack of information about population size, distribution and life history, very few fungal species have been listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The ‘Threatened List’ updated in March 2025 only registers eight species of fungi and lichen. Hopefully this will start to change as more species are described and listed, and their locations established.

Listing of a species that is very rare helps ensure that it will be protected from management activities. Unfortunately, around 2,000 hectares of the Wombat have been subjected to salvage logging by machinery weighing around 35 tonnes compacting soil and possibly destroying rare fungi or even fungi that have not previously been identified. ■



Cortinarius canarius. Photography © Gayle Osborne.

Powerful Owl Update

By Gayle Osborne

Powerful Owl young are leaving their nest hollows now. It is tricky timing our visits to the breeding sites as the young are only near the hollow for a short time where they are quite exposed and easy to see. The young are then shepherded deeper into the forest and our opportunity to record the breeding is lessened.

Trevor Speirs has located a newly fledged owl in the forest at Bullarto and is visiting the site regularly to see if a second chick will emerge from the hollow.

If we visit a site at dusk, the chicks can often be heard trilling from the nest hollow. Young Powerful Owls make a distinctive high-pitched trilling call to beg for food and to communicate with their



Powerful Owl chick at Bullarto.
Photography © Trevor Speirs



parents. Trevor uses a song meter to establish that breeding has taken place, but unless we see the young we cannot be certain that the chicks have successfully fledged.

The information about breeding and roost trees is very important for the conservation of the owls. Recordings of the trilling can also be entered on the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA). We enter all our sightings with photographic evidence onto the VBA so that the trees can be protected during management activities by the Department of Environment such as track works and planned burns. ■

The adult owl has a ringtail possum ready for the evening meal for the chick.
Photography © Trevor Speirs

Wombat Forestcare

research • education • action

Wombat Forestcare Inc. is dedicated to preserving the biodiversity and amenity of the Wombat State Forest, Central Victoria, Australia, by utilising the skills and resources of the community.

By becoming a member you will have input into our activities and projects, and give support to caring for our forests.

For memberships and further information contact Gayle Osborne, (03) 5348 7558 or email info@wombatforestcare.org.au

Membership fees: \$15 single and \$20 family. Visit our website - www.wombatforestcare.org.au

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