

Valley Reserve

This exhibition of photographs by members of Waverley Camera Club is inspired by Indigenous knowledge, culture and the unique flora and fauna found in Valley Reserve, Mount Waverley captured during May 2021.

Members of the Camera Club have engaged with Aboriginal Elders and artists in the lead up to this year's NAIDOC Week celebrations to listen and learn about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, culture & Country.

The theme for NAIDOC Week 2021 is Heal Country. Heal Country means embracing First Nation's cultural knowledge and understanding of Country as part of Australia's national heritage so that the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are respected equally by all Australians.

The Valley Reserve is a 15 hectare bushland reserve which is a vital habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. As an ecology that is preserved intact it provides an insight into how Mount Waverley looked before urban development.

Home to more than 55 native species (of flora and fauna), including 32 significant plant species, the reserve site is considered to be of Regional Zoological Significance.

In and through creative practices, the exhibition Valley Reserve is a way of acknowledging First Nations understanding of Country, respecting cultural knowledge and celebrating NAIDOC Week 2021 for people of all ages.



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VALLEY RESERVE

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

■ Colleen Singleton

Imperfect beauty | Little things | Promise | Reaching |

Taking the photos and listening to the stories of Country, I came to the realization nothing is perfect and yet everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted bent in weird ways and still be beautiful, just like us and from small things mighty things can grow.

■ Elaine Whitton

Fungi- Valley Reserve | Seed pod collection- Valley Reserve | Holding on |

In today's climate, nature is in a continual fight for survival. When we look carefully, we see hope for the future of the ecosystem. Plants encase their seeds in protective pods ready to rejuvenate the land. Multitudes of fungi emerge from the decaying, discarded leaves and branches evoking a sense of wonder. It remains for us to allow this circle of life to continue by caring for the land on which it is found.

■ Geoff Shaw

Clarke's pixie cap mushrooms | Orange pore fungus | Orange pore fungus 2 |

In this hectic, overbuilt world Valley reserve is an oasis of peace and tranquility. IT is a place where it pays to stop, to relax in the ambience, and let nature come to you. Down by the creek I stopped and looked around. After a few minutes I realised there were tiny fungi of diverse sorts all over the place, thriving on fallen logs in the cool, moist autumnal climate. They make fine subjects for photography and a little research reveals some fascinating facts about them.

Like many fungi, the main part is a mass of tiny filaments, the mycelium, that grows into and digests the wood. The photos show only the ephemeral fruiting bodies, that spring up in moist weather to make and release the spores. These drift on air currents where they may spread to other dead branches. Fungi provide an essential service breaking down the wood and recycling the nutrients. The brown ones are Clarke's Pixie Cap mushrooms, an endemic species widespread in Australia. The pretty orange ones, the Orange Pore Fungus, surprisingly, are an invasive species first recorded in Madagascar in the 1940s, that has since spread widely around the world.

■ Helen Warnod

Fungus in the leaf litter | Leaves and pods | Rubus parvifolius | Towering above |

I lived in Mt Waverley as a child in the 1950s and, despite my parents' stern words, my siblings and I used to ride down Valley Road to 'The Bush' on our bikes to play cubby houses with sticks and bark in the thick undergrowth.

I returned to Australia in the 90s and did not consider visiting the area, due to surrounding housing development. Participation in this project has afforded a nostalgic journey and a moving experience knowing that this area has been afforded the opportunity to regenerate.

My photographs attempts to capture the cycle of life: grandeur of the trees, the beauty of the flora and the delicate balance of nature regenerating.

■ Ian Coombs

Trickle of life |

As a young boy I spent many a day running, bike riding, exploring the reserve with cubs, scouts, and with friends. I loved the nature/bush looking for tad poles, getting dirty, away from parental control. It was a place where if you wanted to be a little naughty, it was the place to go. Like the time when a friend & I pinched one of his dad's cigars, lit it and nearly died with the first puff. Now some four decades later, I enjoy the reserve for the green space, the beauty, the aroma of smells, especially after rain, plus its ability to revitalise you when walking thru nature.

■ Jennifer Sui

Blue flowers | Cyclosous interruptus 2 | Ready to burst | Viscum Coloratum |

I love macro photography, so when I was walking through the Valley Reserve, I was looking for some small details of the trees and plants. I was quite impressed by the variety of plants and trees at the reserve, but my eyes lit up when I saw that small bush where some of the beautiful blue flowers grow. The more I looked, the more I loved them as the shade of the blue is quite unique and the flowers are delicate.

Then I found the fern-looking-alike cyclosous interruptus as they were so green and popping against the sunlight. I also found the young one which was ready to pop nearby, so I captured both #40 and 39, hoping to show the growth of the plant. Finally, I noticed the viscum coloratum when I looked up, as I loved the shape of it. All the four images are just single shots with my Canon 5d Mark 4.

■ John Morter

Black Wattle Sap #1 | Black Wattle Sap #2 | Black Wattle Sap #3 | In The Thick Of It |

I lived within a stone's throw of Valley Reserve for about 20 years, and I've enjoyed many rambles along its various paths. But, it wasn't until I was challenged to take photos in the reserve that I looked much closer than a general appreciation of the natural bushland setting ... and this was amplified by the walk I attended, led by Ian Hunter, which encouraged me to look at small details – such as the sap seeping from black wattle trees, appearing honey-coloured in the autumn sunlight.

For this exercise, I used a macro lens and a focus stacking technique; whereby I took multiple shots at close focus (as many as 20 separate shots for each final image), with the focus point shifted very slightly with each shot ... and then I used software to select the sharpest parts of each shot and merge them all into a finished image. This resulted in a degree of detail and depth that's extremely difficult to capture in a single shot, if at all.

■ John Noble

A timeless track | Great Expectations | Hidden treasures | Is this suburbia |

The Valley Reserve is many things to many people. My images attempt to highlight different aspects of what I see and what I feel when there. A young eucalypt - a product of an imaginative replanting program contrasted against its tall mature peers, what of it's future in this caring and supportive environment.

A composite image of fungi in the reserve during May, hopefully depicting the range of habitats and species, the joy of slowing down and getting really close to these gems of the bush. The makings of a lush fern gully, so such progress in such a short time. I try to imagine who has walked this land before me, what it may have looked like in earlier days.

The monochrome image reflects my thoughts - unclear, rambling in time, my difficulty in focusing on reality. I sometimes feel this is not my 'place', but each time I return I feel more at peace with myself, I will come back again – for me this is a powerful place.

■ Kenneth Barnett

Young Bracken | Corymbia aparrerinja (ghost Gum) | BackYard Buddies | Blackwood Sap |

I often walk through the Valley reserve and like to take photos of the different shrubs and trees and interesting sap on the bark. My favourite tree is the Ghost Gum, because it has distinct Lines and angles of its limbs I also like the way Young bracken can be used to stop the sting from insects.

■ Michael Silverstein

Returning to nature | Silver spines | The dark before the dawn |

I decided to try something a little different and headed down at dawn to watch the sunrise and day begin. I watched the day start and life waking up. Humans out in the early morning running and wondering through the very peaceful bush surroundings, listening to the birdsong and watching darkness fade away to a beautiful day. A very peaceful start to day.

■ Rosie Hughes

Small seed | Bush flower | Bush and fungi | Wattle | “Seeing the Light” |

A group called the Aboriginal Advancement League was established in 1957. As a student during the 1960's a branch of this group was established at Lilydale High School where I was a student. We learnt about the poverty, malnutrition and disease that existed among Aboriginal communities. We slowly realized that significant numbers of the Aboriginal population had been murdered. I talked about this tragedy to the adults around me. My father thought the best solution to this "problem" was to simply let the Aboriginal population "die out." He held an imperialist view that he was English, and I was an English descendant, far removed from the Aboriginal population.

Fortunately attitudes have changed. Wurundjeri Elder Ian Hunter walked with us and spoke to our group about the ways Indigenous people gathered food, lived and preserved the natural habitat. He shared secrets of the Valley Reserve. We enjoyed an enlightening talk given by Peta Clancy, decedent of the Bangerang people, academic and photographer, about Indigenous histories of the local area. I was shocked to view her maps and physically see how many murders had taken place in Victoria. First nation people are gaining their rightful place in History, along with the respect and recognition they deserve. We are finally seeing the light and the way forward. I wanted my images to capture the light of Valley Reserve, and reflect the enlightening times we are entering in 2021.

■ Ross Eddington

Wattle about to pop | Water pool | Native bloom |

I enjoyed the experience and challenge in capturing images for the exhibition. I had never been to Valley Reserve previously, as I do not live nearby and to a degree, it is concealed from any main stream thoroughfare. However, the experience made me focus and appreciate the parkland more than if I was a visitor merely taking a stroll. I attempted to photograph detail that could have easily been passed by. I saw many people enjoying the environment but they appeared to see the 'forest but not the trees'. I think there is more to see than just beautiful bushland and will endeavour to visit again soon.

■ Sim Chong

Fungi next to the walking track | Edible tree sap |

I have always been interested in the traditional uses of trees and plants for food and medicinal purposes. As an immigrant I found the programs about bush tucker very educational and want to experience it. So I was very eager to learn more from Ian Hunter about the trees and plants at Valley Reserve and what and how they were used for. This has given me a new appreciation of the reserve and as a photographer I want to capture the beauty and to preserve the knowledge.

Recently I have also taken an interest in fungi as a forager and photographer. So as I was walking around the reserve, I saw a few different varieties that took my attention. The one by the walking track stood out.

■ Stephen Hilton

Sunset | Casuarina Nuts | Blackwood Wattle Seed Pods | Mini Garden |

I've walked through the reserve on many prior occasions, but the walk with Ian Hunter gave me a much better appreciation of the different varieties of native plant life that it supports and how some of the plants were used by the local aboriginal people. It also encouraged me to pay more attention to the smaller details than I have in the past. It's a challenging time of year to photograph the area as there is not a lot of colour in the plant life, so I thought I would photograph the reserve in the late afternoon in order to take advantage of the warmer light.

■ Tim Keane

She Oak | Lush | Origins |

I have always had an appreciation of the beauty of the indigenous flora of Australia and how it starkly contrasts with the ordered gardens and farms of other cultures. More recently, with a growing understanding of the advanced sustainability practiced by the First Nations, I am becoming aware of the depth of the symbiotic relationships developed with the land by those First Peoples over more than 60,000 years: the concept of Country. I feel HOPE; that this dawning understanding of the beauty, sustainability, and holistic benefits inherent in caring for Country will lead to a healing, not just of the land but also ourselves. My photographs aim to foster that hope.

■ Trace O'Rourke

Bark | Healing hands | Fire |

The opportunity to explore the Valley Reserve taught me about the land's resources and how it can be used whilst treating it with respect

■ Tuck Leong

Valley Reserve -1 | Valley Reserve -3 | Valley Reserve-7 | Valley Reserve – 8 |

The Valley Reserve reflects the remnant vegetation that extended throughout the area prior to the urbanisation of Melbourne and now a sanctuary for flora and fauna in the area.

During my wanderings through the bushland I imagined the indigenous inhabitants walking through forest to source vegetation for their usage and dashing to capture some native animals for sustenance. The images simulate the movement of peoples past and their veneration of the habitat. They imply as well my inadequate knowledge of the culture of the indigenous inhabitants.

■ Vicki Moritz

Valley Reserve Edible fruit | Valley Reserve Water chestnut | Blackwood saponification | Casaurina lifecycle |

For over 20 years I have blindly walked my dogs through the Valley Reserve, twice on most days. The education by Indigenous members of our society during May 2021 has opened my eyes to the value of this area. Rather than just being messy bush with convenient tracks it is habitat for plants and animals, and offers food, medicine and even soap for those who know where to find it. Spending time looking more closely with camera in hand I now see this area differently.