

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee PO BOX 2170 Greenvale 3059 P 9333 2406 F 9333 2413 E info@mpccc.org

### Co-ordinator's ramblings....

Dear fellow creeky creatures, there's so much going on right now, it's hard to know where to start. This season's Ponderings is jampacked with creeky goings-on but there's still more that needs to be mentioned!!! Firstly, you will notice in this mailout that we have included our new brochure "The Tale of the Moonee Ponds Creek". We're very proud of this effort,

which has mostly been produced in-house by our talented staff. The brochure can be folded out to reveal a rather fetching poster illustrating whole of the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment. Where do you fit in this picture?

We are also in the process of developing a short film about the creek with artists 'Studio 1'. (Check us out next year's Tropfest). Getting back down to earth - we (and you) have just completed another fantastic planting season. Our friends groups just keep multiplying! Once again, thanks

for all your marvellous efforts - make sure you check out pages 2 and 3 of this issue to get the full story of what went on this season. Not ones to rest on our laurels, we have also included the Spring Planting Calender in this edition. There are more new planting sites popping up including Delhi Reserve in Travancore and Vanberg Road in Essendon, as well as Strathnaver Grasslands in Strathmore. There are also plantings at all of our regular planting sites, so no-one need miss out on getting their hands dirty.

We've got a special day planned for Saturday 2nd August. This is our special Friends get together BBQ, which we are combining with an activity day at Woodlands Historic Park. It's a chance for us to say thanks for all your hard work for the year, as well as being an opportunity to meet fellow creek enthusiasts (more details page 5).

Those of you who live in the upper catchment of the creek may be familiar with Broadmeadows Valley Park and the Yuroke Creek. These once badly ne-

> glected parts of the catchment will continue to receive the attention they deserve as Hume City Council will soon embark on the development of a masterplan for the Broadmeadows Valley Park. In addition. Melbourne Water have recommitted cently \$25,000 for revegetation works along the Creek. You Yuroke may notice these works developing in the next couple months as you drive over the creek

Simply Dedicated: Julie Law never stops caring for the creek (above) & Bob Steadman (below) just keeps on watering Johnstone Street.

And lastly, but not

least, congratulations to two stalwarts of the creek, Alex Smart and Bob Steadman, who both recently received well deserved Centenary Medals for their contributions to local community and the environment, particularly Moonee Ponds Creek.

Bob Steadman also put a huge effort in this planting season; helping at 7 of our 9 planting days!! Bob provides invaluable assistance with his water pump-especially when our 400 litre water tank runs out. Julie Law receives an honourable mention for almost (if it wasn't for some bad timing) making it to 6 of our planting days this season. We really appreciate your dedication Julie...and scones.

See you at a planting day or two in Spring!

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# dedication in the dirt An Autumn Planting Season Success

If you want to meet a great bunch of people, with strong community spirit, flushed with the good looks of fresh air and success then you should've come along to this year's Autumn planting season. A total of nine planting days were held along Moonee Ponds Creek and almost 200 people joined in to help plant an amazing 2,590 native plants. Here's how it panned out at each of the sites this season...

# Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek Wright Street, Westmeadows

Seventeen members of the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek in Westmeadows held a lovely planting afternoon within their rabbit proof fence area, despite the threatening rain clouds. Funded by Hume City council, 610 plants (including 550 speedlings) were planted. Yes, s'P'eedlings. Able to be planted into a hole created by a swift poke of a stake, speedlings are a wonderfully quick way to plant grasses. The only constraint is they dry out quickly, so are best suited for moist sites. Thanks to Julie and Kim for those yummy scrummy scones!



Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek well rewarded for their efforts with fresh scones and lashings of cream.



Phew! 250 plants in two hours. The Friends of Sacred Kingfisher finally relax for a sausage or two

# Friends of the Sacred Kingfisher Wyton Close, Westmeadows

This growing Friends group are now into their fourth year. This year's planting was funded by Hume City Council and the group decided to spend the money on bulking up planting beds from previous seasons to ensure a good result. Twenty-four people joined us on the morning and 250 tubestock were planted. Thank you to Matt and Greg for cutting all those holes into the jute mat! Thanks also to Danielle for cooking up our yummy barbeque lunch.

# Friends of Jacana Wetlands Jacana Wetlands

Into their second planting season the Friends of Jacana Wetlands were joined by lots of new faces. As part of the April planting, Jessica Miller from Merri Creek Management Committee ran a waterbug activity, which was very much enjoyed by the younger participants. And Scott found a large worm. Twenty seven people turned up to help plant 134 plants into jutemat. In May, Friends Of Jacana Wetlands direct seeded *Acacia paradoxa* using clay based "seed bombs". In the Spring edition of Ponderings we'll let you know if germination was successful. Twenty three people joined in to plant 120 plants, all staked and guarded, into the "Swamp Wallaby Valley". Thanks go to Julie and Lee for cooking the BBQ lunch. These plantings were funded through Moreland's Community grants program.



What a Whopper!!

BIG THANKS to the following people who kindly assisted us in towing the planting trailor:
Barry Cartledge from Melbourne Water, Mick and Andrew from Melbourne Water, Lee Scerri from Moreland
City Council, and Julie Law from the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek

#### winter ponderings





Jacinta tows Rhys around the planting site at Gowanbrae

## **Gownabrae Residents** Adelaide Blvd., Gowanbrae

Gowanbrae Residents, now into their second season, had two plantings this Autumn. With the help of 22 people just over 100 Redgums, Yellow gums, Yellow Box and Blackwood were planted in May. Once mature. these trees will create wonderful wildlife havens, and much needed shade for people using the bike track. In June, 13 relentless people planted an amazing 450 plants into the pair of mulched beds, which now beautify the east side of the footbridge and complement last year's Spring planting on the west bank. We could barely keep up with this incredibly active group who kept going for another hour after the BBQ! Both plantings were funded through Moreland's Community grants program.



Andrew discovers the iovs of Lomandra



On Saturday 31st May, we held a Debut Planting for Nina's new group in Oak Park/Strathmore. What a wonderful atmosphere and so many lovely people to meet! We started off by planting a mulched slope which seemed quite gentle compared to the grassy wild slope we finished up on (complete with angry European Wasps!). After isolating the wasp zone, everyone gave their calf muscles a real sherpa workout. It was very interesting seeing the different skiing techniques used to come back down the slope again. In the end 40 people planted 300 tubestock. We hope to give this new Friends group a name at their next planting day. Many thanks goes to Nina Eason for inspiring such a happy new group and thanks to Vince for doing such a sterling job on the barbeque!



Strathmore resident Anna bravely clings to the slope

#### **Bass Street Residents Group Bass Street, Pascoe Vale**

The Bass Street Residents are now into their second planting season. (Rainy weather seems to favour Bass Street plantings). Despite the rain and wind twelve tough individuals joined us and planted 280 tubestock. The mulched entrance beds are looking great, and we've still left plenty of room for Stafford and his brothers to play cricket! This is a really lovely spot on the creek, treasured by all who are lucky to live next to it. This planting was funded through Moreland's Community grants program.



Stef and her mum beautify Bass Street

Wonderous Waterbearers Kaye and Grace at Kensington

#### Friends of Lower Moonee Ponds Creek **Bruce Street, Kensington**

Despite threatening forecasts of hail, the sun smiled down on the fourteen brave Friends of Lower Moonee Ponds Creek who joined in to plant 340 tubestock next to the creek at Bruce Street this season. So far we have been focussing on infilling an existing bed, originally created as part of a Spring Planting Festival. The group's founding member Kaye Oddie, is keen to create a wildlife haven along the west bank with shrubs and waves of Poa grasses. We think it will look beautiful!

#### A call to all creek enthusiasts

At the conclusion of our Autumn Planting Season, we now have 9 official friends groups along the creek and new groups are cropping up every season. There is plenty of creek to be cared for so if you have been thinking about starting a new group in your area or joining an existing one—there are a number of things you could do: Come along to a planting day near you during our spring planting season (see calendar with this issue), read our article about caring for a patch of the creek on page 6, or just give us a call and have a chat about your ideas, we will be more than happy to support you. Ph: Elissa on 9333 2406 Tuesday or Friday.

# THEED

They often come from a galaxy far, far away but they make their home here pretty quickly. Weed invasions are at our doorsteps and armies of introduced species are spreading at a rapid rate throughout the state.

Private land holders and government bodies have been in a battle to tackle weed infestation for generations. Weeds are recognised as the second most significant threat to natural ecosystems and can lie in wait for years undetected, like aliens amongst us, ready for the right conditions to strike. Then, before you know it, numbers explode, building up rapidly over large areas.

It is unrealistic to expect the Victorian community to eradicate all weeds in the State, given the enormous costs involved, however an effective battle plan is

## Hitchhiker - Going My Way?

Avoid picking up this hitchhiker. It may look like a friendly native grass, but in this case looks are definitely deceiving.

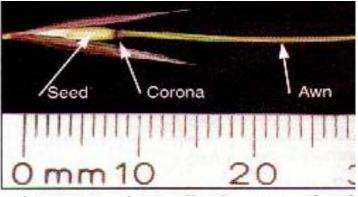
A 'Weed of National Significance', Chilean Needle Grass (*Nassella neesiana*) has been in Australia since the early 1900's, being first recorded in Australia not far from the Moonee Ponds Creek Catchment. It is commonly found in nature-strips, lawns, farmland, sporting grounds and roadsides.

When introduced to remnant vegetation it will quickly out-compete native grasses such as Kangaroo Grass rapidly developing a thick sward of thatch; smothering wildflowers that normally grow amongst native grasses. Once established, it is extremely difficult to control and it is a real survivor. Not only does it have sharp seeds, which look very similar to native Spear Grasses, but it also has other seeds called 'cleistogenes' which are hidden seeds. These seeds are found in the stem and do not need to flower to develop, even when kept short, via grazing or slashing. Chilean Needle Grass seeds often get caught in your socks or stuck to your pets, particularly dogs. To prevent the accidental spread of Chilean Needle Grass play it safe, avoid walking and driving in affected areas. Take care not to collect contaminated rocks or soil. If you have livestock and are currently buying in fodder, take a closer look. Are there any suspect seeds?



being launched. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) are officially waging war on weeds with the launch of the 'Weed Alert Network' of weed spotters. The program asks for people to be involved in identifying and reporting potential new and emerging weeds. It may involve a sighting of a new weed in an agricultural, horticultural or bushland area, along a roadside verge or even being sold at a weekend market or nursery. Effectively assessing the extent of weed infestation throughout the state will assist in the appropriate allocation of funds for weed control and education in future.

If you are ready for battle and would like to assist in the program, contact Kate Blood on 5349 2833, or e-mail: kate.blood@nre.vic.gov.au. For more information visit: www.nre.vic.gov.au/plntanml/pests/weedstrategyon.



A Chilean Needle Grass seed still attached to the seed head (Photo courtesy Landcare Victoria and Agriculture Victoria)

Chilean Needle Grass can be difficult to distinguish from Native Spear Grasses. The following characteristics help to identify the two. Chilean Needle Grass commonly has lime green leaves and a 'corona' or a distinctive ring around the seed. These seeds are borne on a flower spike, which hangs to one side. Whereas Native Spear Grasses are often grey in appearance and the seeds do not exhibit a corona.

Currently the Department of Primary Industries is developing a number of education tools to raise the profile of this serious weed and prevent its spread. The public can also play a vital role in helping to combat Chilean Needle Grass. To help with mapping this weed, the Department would like to hear from anyone who has come across an infestation. For further details or information please contact Natasha Baldyga at the Bacchus Marsh Office during office hours on **(03) 5367 2922**.



# The tale of the Dambusters

Who said computer games are more exciting than playing by the creek? Peter Flanagan recalls his adventures as a young boy growing up near the Westbreen Creek (a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek) in Pascoe Vale during the 1960's and confesses to his involvement in the notorious Westbreen Creek Dambusters Squadron.

I remember when most of the Westbreen Creek was above ground from the Northern Golf Course right down to Railway Parade. It was contained for the last of its journey to the Moonee Ponds Creek in a big pipe under Railway Parade. Exploring it with torches was a forbidden delight and a secret rite for 10-13 year old boys.

Northumberland Road was unmade in the 1960s, with a huge expanse of Alyssum growing in the open drains. There was a footbridge and a big pipe over the creek at the bottom of the hill near Fawkner Road. A man with an extensive vegie garden lived here on the river flats. We kids would annoy him by building a dam across the creek far upstream and then play Captain Guy Gibson of the Dambusters Squadron and send him a flood on a sunny day. I do not think he ever worked it out. When the 'creek in the pipe' was extended past him, Northumberland Road was made right over the top of the buried pipe.

We used to explore the wildlife in the creek and collect frog spawn and tadpoles (Pobblebonks, I think). These grew into frogs in containers in our backyards. Eventually they would leap out and spend the summer hopping around at night under the sprinklers. Lawns were actively cultivated in those days and sprinklers seemed to run all day and much

of the evening. There was a poor kid's trip to the public baths under each one.

We collected cardboard boxes from the grocer's in Devon Road and would slide in them down the grassy slopes to the creek over what is now Longview Street. We also rode our bikes down the impossible slope from Austin Crescent into what is now Gavin Park, with brakes locked the whole way, for an extra thrill.

Occasionally we would see a hawk over the upper reaches of the creek or someone would be agisting a horse near the Pascoe Vale Girls School. In those days horse-drawn carts were common for pick ups (night soil) and deliveries - briquettes, bread, and milk (milk was still by horse and cart in the early 1970s). I remember when Danin Street had its large open foul-smelling pestilential drains replaced with a made road and formed gutter. Such an advance!

I remember also when there was an abandoned house in a frog swamp where there is now Crowley Court. Does anyone else remember any of this?

Peter's memories have provided us with great information about some of the changes which have occurred along the creek in the past 45 years. Almost anyone who has spent time along the creek could have made observations which complete our growing picture of the creek environment, past and present. If you have any memories of the creek or some historic photos, we'd love to share your stories. 9333 2406 Contact us on or info@mpccc.org. All photos would be reproduced at our expense.

## Upcoming Events

Moonee Ponds Creek Social Day Saturday 2nd August 10am-2pm

Join us for a fun-filled day of exploring, playing, beautifying and (of course) eating and chatting. We will be spending the morning exploring the dam in the old Greenvale Hospital property (and cleaning up as we go). BYO binoculars for a spot of birdwatching on the way. We'll also be running some fun kids games—adults are welcome to join in and most probably will. At 1pm

there will be a BBQ lunch and a chance for a chin wag at the beautiful historical Homestead. It's a great way to meet all the other Friends Group members along the Moonee Ponds Creek and find out what's happening. Everyone is invited—Yes, that's you!

We will meet at the Woodlands Historic Park Ranger Depot. Enter 1055 Somerton Road, Oaklands Junction (follow the signs) Melways 178 C8. Please RSVP by Friday 25th July on 9333 2406 or email elissa@mpccc.org.

MPCCC Spring Planting Season August 2nd to September 28th

No sooner have we put away the tools for the Autumn season but we are planning for Spring. Join us on a day that suits you, for lots of planting fun. Just check our calendar (included) for details.

National Tree Day
Sunday 27th July 10am—3pm
5500 trees and shrubs to be
planted at Wright Street, Westmeadows. Melways 6G5
Further Information:
Anna Kruk 9205 2473 or visit
www.planetark.org/treedaypage.cfm?pageid

# Look honey, our very own piece of the creek!

We'd love you to own a piece of the creek for free! We're talking about taking ownership of a patch of the creek simply because it means something to you. Andrew Gemmell, Secretary of the Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek, continues his vigilant plea for people to care for the creek;

In my last communication I called for volunteers to act as guardians and reporters for a short section of the Moonee Ponds Creek. I imagined that, like me, a number of people are very familiar with a certain stretch; they walk it, ride it and, most importantly, they notice little changes in it.

Well, I didn't get a huge response but Nina Eason volunteered to look after the area from about Bass Street Pascoe Vale north to John Pascoe Fawkner Reserve. Thanks Nina.

So a few of us thought we might approach people individually. Our database has contact details for hundreds of people who have shown an interest in the creek environment. By matching these enthusiasts with areas of the catchment we will be able to build up a more comprehensive and dynamic picture of the creek. We also hope that these fine people might write the occasional small article about their piece of the creek and even take some time to improve the creek environment in a way which best suits them.

I live in Moonee Ponds and I spend a bit of time cycling between there and the city. In particular the stretch between Flemington Road and Dawson



Students from Brunswick Secondary College volunteer to take care of a stretch of the creek.

Street is my stomping ground. The creek is an unprepossessing concrete channel along this reach but recent revegetation works have really improved the amenity. Many volunteers, including my students from Brunswick Secondary College, have spent many days digging and planting and they are making a real difference. It is a great thrill for those kids to visit the creek now, some 3 years after their plantings at Holbrook Reserve and see the wonderful growth of tall trees that has resulted. With the blessing of Melbourne Water we hope to take the plantings closer to the concrete, being careful not to obscure sight lines on the shared path.

There is a wonderful feature along this part of the creek, an escarpment at the end of Union Street with a good deal of remnant vegetation. The Brunswick Tree Group has worked long and hard to keep it intact and it really is a splendid sight. There is a hidden stormwater outlet which cascades gently down the cliff, creating a mossy, ferny wonderland (check the picture). If you scrunch up your eyes (and put on a few jumpers) you could be in tropical Queensland!

Just a bit further south is the Essendon Community Garden, burgeoning vegetable and flower patches lovingly tilled by local gentry. Travancore Park is south from there, with its swings and slides and beautiful indigenous plantings and further along local school kids have created art hanging on the freeway walls at Delhi Reserve. It is edifying to see the very large number of dog-walkers, bike riders, joggers, kids and older people just enjoying the open space.

Please come on board and tell us about your piece of the creek.

Contact:

Andrew Gemmell
Secretary, Friends of Moonee
Ponds Creek Ph: 0438 655 585
gemmell @a1.com.au

We will be keeping you up to date on where people are volunteering to care for a piece of the creek. In the Spring issue of Ponderings we will publish a map so you can see where the gaps are. There may be an orphan patch near where you live!



# Do you hear what I hear?



If we could keep an eye on a patch of the creek we could be keeping an ear out for frogs too.

Frogs can breed in the most unlikely places like drains and backyard ponds. One of the main reasons Melbourne Water set up the Frog Census 18 months ago was because they couldn't 'get to every single water body in Melbourne'. Frogs are an indicator of stream and river health and hundreds of people have participated in the community-based monitoring program since it started to see just how many hoppers are out there!

In the last census period 13 species of frog were discovered throughout greater Melbourne (that includes 3 new species!). Results from the Census of Spring 2002 have just been released. Visit: www.frogs.melbournewater.com.au.

On the site you can also view a map of where different frog species have been found and discover more about the frogs themselves. Melbourne Water holds Frog Identification Training Days (contact Rhys Coleman on 9235 7256) or you can participate by recording frog noises and sending tapes into Melbourne Water for identification and addition to their database.

**Did you know?** ... changes in climatic conditions can affect frog calling patterns. Lauren Edwards, an honours graduate at the University of Melbourne is currently undertaking research into variations in calling activities of different frog species in and around Melbourne. Her results will be really helpful for programs such as Frogwatch. Who knows what rare and sensitive species is hiding in a drain somewhere waiting for the perfect temperature to croak?

# People Like Us

# Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd.

There's good news close to home on the Greenhouse front.

Enhanced climate change, caused by excessive amounts of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, is a critical issue for the whole planet. For current and future generations to prevent further climate change, we must respond at an international as well as a local level.

Luckily Moreland is home to a very innovative, community driven approach to climate change through the Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd (MEFL). MEFL was established by Moreland City Council in December 2000, to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions. MEFL are a separate entity from Council, with an organizational structure designed to maximize the potential of reducing community emissions.

For the past year MEFL have been working full throttle to reduce greenhouse emissions by focusing on energy usage. They run innovative programs aimed at changing the behaviour of households and business and work with a range of community organizations.

A good example of MEFL's innovative approach is the Kinda Cooling Project. This project was a finalist in the recent United Nations Association of Australia 2003 World Environment Day Awards. MEFL worked with the Brunswick Kindergarten to develop and implement a passive cooling plan for the kindergarten. They raised the funds to implement the measures required (such as external blinds) by selling energy efficient compact fluorescent globes in a "chocolate drive" fashion. The project lead to the installation of 260 compact fluorescent globes in houses throughout the municipality, which equates to a saving of around 130 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions! MEFL are hoping to work directly with another three community based organisations in the coming year to implement similar projects as well as small businesses and households, through their Home Energy Stars Project.

MEFL are happy to help any member of the Moreland community interested in reducing their energy usage. Please contact: 9381 1722

## Indigenous Plant Star of the Season Introducing... Eutaxia — Carpets of Flame!

We are proud to introduce our second plant star: the Small Leaved or Common Eutaxia (Eutaxia microphylla). This robust little shrub (up to 1m high x 1m wide) is equally happy as a dense groundcover in your garden or in a large pot, as it is in its native grassland or red-gum woodland habitat. It loves a prune to promote a dense cover of red and orange pea flowers which create the appearance of a profuse carpet of flame from August through to October. Once it gets going this lovely shrub will tolerate most situations from periods of drought to waterlogging, however it really doesn't like shade. You could grow it in a rockery or on steeper parts of the garden and contrast it with other ornamental groundcovers such as Convolvulus cneorum which has blue bell flowers from October through summer. Or if you want to be strictly 'indig' you could try growing it with Wahlenbergia communis a native pale blue flowering



shrub. We will be giving away Eutaxia when you help out at planting days, amongst Eutaxia macrophylla

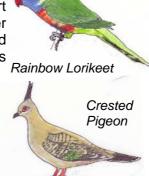
# Winter Sightings

Its bird season! We've had plenty of reports of feathered friends from our expert twitchers all along the creek. Tom Baker spotted a Rainbow Lorikeet (pictured) and a Scaly Breasted Lorikeet in Westmeadows as well as 18 crested pigeons (pictured).

We have a bit of a mystery sighting from our Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek planting day in May. Either a male 'Flame' or 'Scarlet' Robin was seen. The males of both species are most distinctive with bright red chests but are almost indistinguishable between the species, unless you're pretty quick with the binoculars. Both robins leave their forest homes to spend winter in the lower open grassland, woodlands and gardens. So keep an eye out to spot the difference. The red chest of the Flame Robin reaches almost up to his beak and down to his tail. The Scarlet Robin has a noticeable black collar before the red starts and white below the tail. Good Luck!

Julie Law was privileged to witness a flock of Red-browed Firetails twice! (pictured) Once at Jacana Wetlands and again at Westmeadows.

Our 'believe it or not' sighting of the season has to be the Pelican Natasha Baldyga spotted at Yuroke. Natasha also saw a White Fronted Chat (pictured). You may see





White Fronted Chat



Red-browed Firetail

these lovely little birds perching on a fence or tussock as they like open damp ground and grassy clumps. They also have a distinctive 'swagger' and according to Natasha they sound much like a Finch.

Lastly, the MPCCC team got a rare, close look at an Eastern Spinebill (pictured) whose delicate beak was entangled in some shade cloth near the depot in Woodlands Historic Park. After half an hour of intensive scissor surgery, the beak was freed from the mesh and the brave female was set free just in time for the breeding season in August. We are looking forward to a visit from the kids.

There are plenty more birds to be spotted out there along the creek as well as other animals. So keep your eyes peeled. Even if you can't identify your sighting straight off, just record some details and we'll give it a go. You never know what we might discover. A good reference book is 'The Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia' Published by Angus and Robinson.

If you have any interesting, rare or exciting sightings along the creek, please email us at info@mpccc.org. We now have a record keeping system to track flora & fauna changes along the creek.

### Do we have your details right?

After distributing our Autumn issue of Ponderings we received some mail too... approximately 30 newsletters were returned to us undelivered because of incorrect addresses or mis-spelt names. If we made any mistakes with your details this time around please let us know. We like to get it right. Ph: 93332406 or E-mail: corrections to info@mpccc.org