



moonee ponds creek
co-ordination committee

Ponderings

Summer 2010-11

Issue 32

Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Coordination Committee Inc

advocate

educate

interpret

participate

rehabilitate

revegetate



It's 'Clean Up' time again! Sunday 6 March

Yes, the first Sunday in March is **Clean Up Australia Day**, so get your gloves and hat and come and join the action.

To find a site near you, go to the Clean Up Australia Day website: www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au or better still come along to the site at **Debney Meadows Primary School** — if you have been to this site before you will know the wonderful array of food and activities that you can enjoy after helping with the Clean Up, at this or any other site along the Creek.

This year **Wild Action** the **Zoo That Comes to You** will be bringing a variety of animals big and small for you to hold — if you are brave enough!

So come and join us, help clean up Australia, then savour the goodies — sausage sizzle, African food, stalls and the zoo!! **See you there!**

Sunday 6 March from 10.00am, lunch 12.30
Debney Meadows PS, Flemington Mel 29 A12

Contact Bronwyn Riddell for more information:
bronwynriddell@hotmail.com or call 0438 355 953

What's in this edition?

- Clean Up Australia Day
- News of MPCCC
- Westmeadows transformation
- Creek activities
- Studying invertebrates
- Exciting Sightings



Moving in, moving on — news from the MPCCC

We have a new home!

Thanks in no small part to the hard work of Julie Law and Stella Blay, the MPCCC library, records, etc. which had been in storage since we vacated our old office at Parks Victoria's Woodlands depot, have now been moved into our new home at Melbourne's Living Museum of the West. Pipemakers Park, Van Ness Avenue, Maribyrnong, (entrance opposite Warr's Road)

Inspired by memories of gatherings past at Woodlands, we also managed to put on an introduction to our new home on the Friday of the weekend before Christmas, albeit with less notice than we might have liked, but still a good introduction for those who were able to get there.

Strategic Plan sign-off — finally!

A year after we were seeking comments on a working draft, the MPCCC working party monitoring the development of our Strategic Plan has signed off on the latest version. So now we can come to grips with the main concern for the remainder of the year, determining the future of MPCCC as an organisation.

We are planning a launch for the release of the Strategic Plan. Invitations will be sent to everyone on our *Ponderings* distribution list, but keep an eye on our website if you aren't on the list: <http://mpccc.org>

Have you come across this website?

Speaking of websites, have a look at this one. From there you can monitor water levels in the Creek, and easily navigate to lots of data on our and other local streams: www.melbournewater.com.au/content/rivers_and_creeks/rainfall_and_river_level_data/site.asp?SiteID=67.

Maintaining the history of the Creek

At the Living Museum we are sharing space with St Albans History Society who have a quality digital archiving system which is available for use by other local organisations.

We are keen to digitise the historical materials we have, relating to the Moonee Ponds Creek.

If you have any photographs or other historical materials about the Creek, we would love to hear from you so that we can scan them and add the images to the collection. Please email me at: info@mpccc.org, or write to me c/o MPCCC, PO Box 2170, Greenvale 3059.

I plan to be at the Living Museum most Wednesdays, other times can be arranged if needed. Tony Smith, President, MPCCC

The Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee gratefully acknowledges the support of these councils.



Transformation at Westmeadows



Moonee Ponds Creek downstream of Westmeadows Village

Next to Broadmeadows Road there is a little stretch of the Moonee Ponds Creek that flows through steep rocky banks. I am sure that many of those who travel along the road there are totally unaware of the little gem that lies not 50 metres from where they are speeding. On the other hand, cyclists have a smooth track that winds next to the creek, where they can enjoy the abundant bird-life inhabiting the trees, shrubs and reeds that grow in this stretch.

The group that dedicates itself to this area call themselves the **Friends of Sacred Kingfisher**, because once, while they were working there, one of these beautiful birds was spotted along the creek.

The site in August 2006 — weeds, erosion and bare soil



August 2006 - looking west

The site sprayed, mulched and planted ...



August 2006 - looking east

In 2006, it was decided to tackle this very weedy site. There were a few *Carex* struggling to survive amongst the weeds, but the area was very neglected, and damaged by the recent housing development that had taken place to its north.

The group decided it was time to take on the challenge! A large area was sprayed, mulched and planted with grasses and shrubs, but the plants struggled to grow in the compacted soil.

In May 2007, few of the things that had been planted still survived, but the weeds had been kept at bay and the Friends of Sacred Kingfisher were undaunted!

More planting was done, and in 2008 the mulched area was increased, and more plants put in, gradually reclaiming the grassed area.

It's been a long process of dedication... and now it looks like this ...

The spring rains last year were enormously beneficial, and at last the site is flourishing.

With the help of Hume City Council, the Friends of Sacred Kingfisher, have started to work on the southern side of the creek, next to the Broadmeadows Road.

In September 2010, hundreds of grasses and shrubs were planted in a large mulched area. Unfortunately, the weeds have enjoyed the rains so much that few of the natives planted there have survived. Hume has applied for a Melbourne Water Grant to assist in revegetating this reserve, and work crews have been dedicated to getting rid of the weeds.



May 2007 - looking west



June 2008 - looking east



Jan 2011 - looking west



Jan 2011 - looking east



Jan 2011 - looking west

Friends of Royal Park

The Friends of Royal Park recently received \$3,000 from CSL Ltd and Landcare to protect and enhance Royal Park's environmental attributes through CSL's Giving for Good program. This money has been used to purchase binoculars and field guides to enable more volunteers to participate in our regular bird surveys in Royal Park West. The grant will also help us to reintroduce Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) into the Bushland Escarpment and to establish a monthly water quality monitoring program within Wetlands Storage and Treatment Ponds by June 2011.

CSL staff were the first people to use our new bird survey equipment at the CSL Gift-Giving Day in the park in September. Bronwyn Riddell coordinated a day of activities in which CSL staff volunteered their services to improve our park. Fay Ball introduced these volunteers to local indigenous culture, whilst Brendan Marks taught them a thing or two about boomerang throwing. Phil Mawditt, Royal Park Officer, helped volunteers to weed and plant in the White's Skink habitat. They also enjoyed a well-deserved bush tucker morning tea and hearty lunch.

For more information on Friends of Royal Park, Parkville Inc: visit www.friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org, or E-mail info@friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org



CSL staff and other volunteers weeding the White's Skink habitat in Royal Park West (Photo: Richard Smith, Landcare Australia)

Our thanks go to all involved for a wonderful day!

What's happening along the Creek?

Moonee Valley Council report from Michelle Gooding

With financial support from our local Holden dealer, works at **Five Mile Creek** are progressing. This year's planting will focus on the older revegetation beds on the eastern bank all the way down to the confluence with Moonee Ponds Creek. You may have noticed some mulching pruning and erosion control measures in preparation.

Major works at **Debneys Park** will be getting under way soon, with planning now finalised and the project's completion date of 30 June 2011. This project will build on the 1st stage works which included new paths, play spaces and trees. This second stage aims to integrate Debneys Park with the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Strathnaver Reserve, between the grassland and **Boeing Reserve**: vegetation refreshing will commence soon, with removal of woody weeds and re-mulching of the garden beds.

Clean Up Australia Day is coming up. If you would like to register a site in Moonee Valley, the Council is happy to provide advice and additional essential materials. For more information and to register your site go to: <http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/>

Moonee Valley's Integrated Waterways Advisory Committee held its first meeting in December and will meet every two months to discuss issues and projects focusing on the waterways in Moonee Valley. If you have any queries or would like to contribute please contact

Frank Kinnersley who represents the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek on the Advisory Committee. You can contact him through info@MPCCC.org.

Moonee Valley Council are also working regularly along the Moonee Ponds Creek with Conservation Volunteers Crews. These guys mulch, weed, collect native seed, lay erosion control materials, prune and will plant during Autumn and Winter. If you would like more information about how you can volunteer, contact Conservation Volunteers Victoria via www.conservationvolunteers.com.au or 1800 032 501

Moreland Council report from Lorene Arthur

Melbourne Water is currently undertaking a weed removal project from **Jacana Wetlands** to **Bell Street**, removing mostly juvenile woody weeds and invasive species such as fennel and blackberry. This will be followed by revegetation works in the planting season.

Sites are being prepared for the planting season with community planting days being planned for **Gowanbrae** estate, **Margaret Street** (Oak Park), **Westbreen Creek** (Pascoe Vale), **Denzil Don Reserve** and **Union Street reserve** (West Brunswick). Planting dates to be confirmed.

If you are registering a **Clean Up** site in Moreland, contact the council after you have registered and they will arrange to collect the rubbish.

Do you ever think about what's under your feet?

Briony Norton is a PhD student in the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (ARCUE), at the University of Melbourne, looking at a bit of the world that most people overlook - leaf litter and the critters that live in it. She wrote this article for us about her work, including looking at a site along the Creek.

Leaf litter and fallen dead wood are critical components of ecosystems, providing physical structure on forest floors, which serve as foraging areas and shelter for a range of plant and animal species, as well as contributing to nutrient, carbon and nitrogen cycles.

Not only is leaf litter often overlooked and under-appreciated, but people often actually clear it away to create 'tidy' landscapes. This is particularly common in urban areas where there are large areas of land modified to suit human preferences. Despite their importance, we know very little about dead wood and leaf litter in urban environments and the impacts of modifying them.

To learn more I am working at 21 sites across the northern suburbs of Melbourne with remnant *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) overstoreys.



Briony vacuuming leaf litter



A Blue-tongue lizard enjoying leaf litter

Half the sites are bush remnant patches which are managed to reflect a pre-European vegetation community and the others are urban recreational parks, where the grass is mown and the landscape is managed for human preferences. One of these sites is at a park in Westmeadows near the creek. I have made a variety of measures of the vegetation at these sites, which show that there is far less litter and woody debris in recreational parks than in remnants.

At these sites I have also made collections of 'ground-active' invertebrates. These groups are important for litter decomposition and returning nutrients to the soil, and are the groups that are most likely to be affected by the alteration of leaf litter and woody debris. I am focussing particularly on beetles and ants, as well as on two groups that are particularly important for litter decomposition - isopods (slaters) and diplopods (millipedes).

The patterns of insect biodiversity and abundance I observe will help us better understand the impacts on invertebrate groups that we rely on to help maintain healthy ecosystems, and help guide our management of leaf litter and woody debris.

Results about the invertebrates are still coming in, but the ants in particular are showing some interesting patterns so far. In areas where litter and woody debris levels are lower, the ant genus *Iridomyrmex*, which thrives in more open areas and includes the well-known meat ants, are numerically dominant.

Where leaf litter and woody debris are less disturbed, members of the genus *Rhytidoponera*, which are opportunists that don't compete well with dominant ants like *Iridomyrmex*, dominate. This is a similar pattern observed in other studies.

The decomposer groups - the slaters and millipedes - are very much under-studied in urban areas, and the results from this study have been interesting. I have found that the fauna is almost exclusively introduced species, but that there is a wider range of species present than was previously recognised. These results have implications for conservation of these groups of organisms, and in thinking about how the history of the sites may have led to this situation. I look forward to having a more complete picture late in the year.

And we look forward to hearing the results of this fascinating and important study!. Ed.



Tullgren funnels used to extract insects from leaf litter

Sightings

Fauna and flora observations along the Moonee Ponds Creek. If you see anything interesting, please tell us about it, contact Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org.



To walk from Essendon Primary School to Five Mile Creek is a long way if your legs are only a few centimetres long, but that is what this mother **Pacific Black Duck** did, with her brood of five ducklings. And the café was closed so they couldn't even stop for coffee and muffin.

Moonee Valley Landscape crew carefully chaperoned the little group, making sure they arrived safely, and were much relieved when the duck and her babies reached the water and swam happily away.

If you come across sick or injured wildlife contact your local Wildlife Victoria Volunteer on 1300 094 535.



Miniature space ships?



No, these are eggs of a **Pentatomid bug** (a **Shield Bug**) and the wasp is testing them with her antennae before parasitising them. The wasp is probably a species of **Trissolcus**.

Jeff Triplett of Friends of Woodlands Historic Park took this amazing picture.



The **Yellow-tailed black cockatoos** spotted in Autumn last year, are still around, and this shows just how powerful their beaks are! They have been foraging for bugs in senescing Black Wattles at FW Olver Reserve in Pascoe Vale South, where Lorene Arthur of Moreland Council snapped them, late last year.

Royal Park Bird Count

The next Royal Park Bird Count will be on **Sunday 20 February, 2011, 9am to 11am.**

Meet at the car park, Trin Warren Tam-boore (Bellbird Waterhole) – Royal Park Wetlands, Oak St, Parkville (Melway 29 C12).

No experience required! All equipment provided. For more information, please contact Nicole Spillane on 0401 276 948 or info@friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org

Can we send you *Ponderings* electronically?

We would prefer to send you *Ponderings* electronically. It's better for the environment, and less of a burden on our minimal resources.

So if you would like to get *Ponderings* sent to your Inbox, please send your email address to ponderings@mpccc.org.

The environment thanks you!



Bat Count

Thanks to those who made it to the January count. We had a fantastic turn out of people and bats – we had 48 counters and about 38 – 40 thousand bats!

It is great to have so many counters because it allows us to get an average when a few people count the same stream of bats. It really improves the reliability of the count and improves the confidence we can have about the size of the Melbourne population. So hopefully many of you enjoyed it enough to come back in February!

The next count is on wed 16 Feb with a meeting time of 7:45 pm.

We will be meeting in the usual meeting spot at the Car park for the Yarra Bend Park Golf course (Melway map 2D G7).

New counters and regulars are very welcome.

For further information contact Dr Rod van der Ree, on 8344 3661, 0412 562 429 or rvdr@unimelb.edu.au