



autumn ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee 2004

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creek = rubbish = happy bugs!

Clean Up Australia Day proved to be a hit amongst locals of all ages. The benefits filter up and down the Moonee Ponds Creek, providing a cleaner, healthier home for all creek residents! See pages 2 & 3 for more.

co-ordinators ramblings...

The days are growing shorter and the nights are cooling....it can only mean one thing.....yes, that's right, it's planting time again. Excitement is building as we head into our 4th season, with 16 plantings scheduled throughout April, May and June. Check out our calendar enclosed in this issue - there's sure to be a planting near you. In particular, we'd like to highlight the monthly activities of the Tullamarine Freeway Action Group. This dedicated group, headed by the indefatigable Audrey, has been working in the Brunswick section of the creek for the last seven years, and is truly inspiring. Their working bees and locations are all in our calendar for this season. If you are close to the area, it is well worth checking out the transformation they have made to their local creek environment.

Speaking of dedicated creek volunteers, a big thanks to all who

participated in our creek cleanup on Sunday 14th March - for a full low down of the day and what was achieved, check out page 3. An especially big thanks to our Keep It Clean queen Nicolette for her fabulous efforts in organising & co-ordinating the day - without her it just wouldn't have happened.

We can't stress enough just how much we rely on the ongoing support of Friends groups and volunteers, who put in countless hours every year to make a change to their local environment. This season we'd like to particularly acknowledge and thank one of our most dedicated creek volunteers for the fantastic effort that she has put in to our waterwatch program - Helen Suter. Without Helen, waterwatch along the creek would be minimal, to say the least. Helen has been fantastic in introducing other volunteers to waterwatch along Moonee Ponds Creek as

well as keeping up monitoring at several locations. The information collected is invaluable in giving us a regular snapshot of the health of the creek. So thanks Helen, we are truly grateful!

Now for an update on some of the work that we are doing! Page 4 of this issue highlights the progress of a new landscape development plan for the new Jacana Wetlands. The plan will be available for community comment in the second week of April - check page 4 for details.

And last but not least, we would like to report that Elissa & Matt became the proud parents of a healthy baby girl, Tahlia Faye, on Friday 27th February. I'm sure you'll all join us in congratulating the proud new parents on the new addition to their family & hope to see them at a planting day in the not too distant future....

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a bountiful summer of bugs

Helen Suter, Volunteer Waterwatch Program Co-ordinator, has plenty of good news about the bugs in the creek. It may be too soon to tell but it's looking like a significant factor in the burgeoning of our bug populations is the ever improving Jacana Wetlands

The Water Monitoring Group, which is growing in numbers, were pleased to discover some very interesting results for invertebrates in the Moonee Ponds Creek in January this year.

A bit of scoring background: According to the official Waterwatch monitoring program each invertebrate found in a creek is given a 'bug score', based on how tolerant it is to degraded creek conditions. The most tolerant invertebrates are given low bug scores, and the most sensitive, higher bug scores, with a maximum score of 8.

At Holbrook Reserve, West Brunswick Freshwater Shrimp, considered a sensitive aquatic invertebrate (score 5) and Water Boatmen (tolerant aquatic invertebrate, score 4) were found. This was very exciting because the normal population is bloodworms (very tolerant, score 1). The creek condition, based upon the number and type of bugs found at Holbrook Reserve rated as fair, whereas to date it has been poor.

At Mitchell Parade Weir large numbers of Water Boatmen were found as well as 6

Damselfly larvae and 2 Dobsonfly larvae (both score 6). To date this site has had mainly freshwater snails (score 3), Amphipods (score 4) and bloodworms. The creek condition at Mitchell Parade Weir is generally



Volunteer waterwatchers are intrigued by all the crazy bugs in our creek water...

ally is fair but in January rated as very good. It appears that the Jacana Wetlands are certainly helping improve conditions for bugs in the Moonee Ponds Creek. At Jacana Site 2 (south of the wetlands), 20 Damselfly larvae were found as well as 2 Caddisfly larvae (score 7), 1 Dragonfly larva (score 6), 7 freshwater mussels (score 5), numerous

flatworms (score 3) and freshwater segmented worms (score 1). Jacana Site 2 has always had the largest array of bugs and has been the site where the more sensitive bugs have been found. The creek condition at Jacana Site 2 rated as very good.

Jacana Site 1 was looking healthier than it had for the previous samplings, with less mosquito larvae and more Water Boatmen, Whirligig Beetles (score 3) and some freshwater Mites (score 5). We also noted that creek vegetation was starting to grow back. However the creek condition at Jacana Site 1 (north of the wetlands) still remained poor to fair. The February sampling showed bug numbers similar to those observed in late 2003.

We have a new team member, Patricia, who is now involved in sampling in the two concreted sites. Thanks to Matt, Carolyn, Rebecca and Nonie for helping us at Jacana Site 2 during the January and February samplings. If anyone else is interested in coming along to a sampling day to see what the bugs look like then please contact me on hsuter@mira.net or MPCCC on 9333 2406. Next sampling will take place mid-March.



...some local creek residents

could you be the eyes of the creek?
Over the past two issues of Ponderings, we have been asking people to adopt their very own piece of the creek. There are still plenty of areas between friends groups that need a watchful eye. If you are interested please contact Andrew Gemmell on gemmell@a1.com.au



We can't believe just how much rubbish this small but dedicated Jacana team managed to collect between the 5 of them - Well Done!

did someone say clean up?

Give them bags, rubber gloves and some afternoon tea and creek lovers will jump at the opportunity to clean up their local waterway. Nicolette Vaszolyi tells us how a few dedicated people relieved the creek of over 1.4 tons of litter in one afternoon!



On Sunday 14th March 2004, residents and friends group members joined forces to clean up the Moonee Ponds Creek as part of Clean Up Australia Day. More than 90 people participated in the clean up at 7 sites along the creek to show their support for the creek and help reduce the estimated 180 tonnes of litter that washes into it each year via the stormwater system.

Well everyone knows some people are litterbugs, but after witnessing the haul from the Clean-up day, no-one involved could quite believe just how far a few bits of rubbish can go. Volunteers collected 143 bags of rubbish from sites in Flemington, Oak Park, Strathmore Heights, Gowanbrae, Jacana Wetlands, Koala Crescent - Westmeadows and the Westmeadows Shopping Precinct weighing an estimated 1430 kilograms or 1.43 tons! It seems lunch-time is litter-time for a lot of people with plastic drink bottles, plastic bags, food packaging and cigarette butts being the most common items found along with a large collection of shopping trolleys and car tyres. Some more un-usual items were a Keep-Left sign dragged up at the Westmeadows shopping precinct by Greg and Tamara DiNatale and a Monopoly Hotel found at Boeing Reserve. That brings a whole new meaning to 'playing' by the creek...



First prize for most unusual piece of litter goes to Greg and Tamara at Westmeadows Shopping Precinct



Kelvin Thompson MP was on a mission at Boeing Reserve scouring the creekbank for stray litter. Go Kelvin!



Sometimes cleaning up the creek means actually getting in it! But that wasn't a problem for these keen local residents at Racecourse Road Flemington who weren't about to let a bit of rubbish get away from them.

Nicolette would like to say a VERY BIG THANK YOU to everyone who helped make the clean up such a big success. Special thanks go to: Julie Law, Kim Westcombe, Carolyn Layton, Gabrielle Stannus, Arun Baskaran, Andrew Cremona, Leanne Bartling, Mary Cox, Kaye Oddie and Barry Cartledge from Melbourne Water and the MPCCC team: Natasha Baldyga, Stephanie Spathis, Melanie Taube, Madeleine Bisits and Dave Rider. More thanks go to Moreland, Moonee Valley and Hume Councils and City West Water for supporting the event.

Did you know?

Over 677,000 people took part in Clean Up Australia Day

transforming the jacana valley



It was just over a year ago that Melbourne Water commenced construction of the Jacana Wetlands. The wetland system was originally constructed to treat approximately 200 hectares of runoff from the Broadmeadows area with a view to significantly reducing nitrogen loads entering Port Phillip Bay. Today if you visit the southern section (south of the Western Ring Road in Glenroy) you will see what an immense transformation has taken place. Where the Moonee Ponds Creek previously meandered through a denuded valley there is now a vast wetland system teeming with birdlife. But that's not the end of it. Moreland City Council and the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee have bigger visions for the site yet...

before...



The wetlands during construction in 2002



The wetlands only five months ago in November 2003 looking east to Glenroy



The wetlands today.

The wetlands system is an exciting development in this section of the creek with the potential to provide extensive wildlife habitat and become an ecological and recreational asset of regional significance.

In 2003 Moreland City Council funded MPCCC to develop a Landscape Development Plan which provides a vision for the long term development of the wetlands and surrounding valley. The plan is being developed in close consultation with Melbourne Water and friends of Jacana Wetlands. The plan covers the area bordered by the Western Ring Road to the north and west, Glenroy residences to the East

some of the proposed developments include:

- Staged Revegetation of the entire site including riparian species, vegetation for bird habitat, native grasses and scattered River Red Gums.
- Reservation of a large portion of the site west of the wetlands as a protected habitat zone for birds and other wildlife.
- An interpretive trail around the wetlands including a boardwalk across the wetlands. Signage will include information about wetland ecology, creek ecology, history of the valley, the retarding basin and its function
- Passive recreation areas for picnics, gatherings and events, performances and general use
- Seating and rubbish bin facilities
- Directional maps for navigation around the site and links to Glenroy, Gladstone Park, Jacana and the northern wetland development, Broadmeadows and Gowanbrae.

The plan will be displayed for public comment for three weeks from the second week of April 2004 at the following locations:

- Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows Town Centre
- Moreland City Council Offices, Bell Street Coburg and Glenroy Shopping Strip
- MPCCC website www.mpccc.org

An information night will be held in April and all are welcome to attend and provide feedback on the plan. Details will be posted on the MPCCC website. For more information on the Jacana Wetlands Landscape Development Plan please contact Madeleine Bisits on 9333 2406.

indigenous totems bring artistic touch to creek

By Alli Coster

You may have noticed that the Moonee Ponds Creek has become home to a showcase of eye catching public artwork. The City of Moonee Valley recently commissioned prominent Aboriginal artist Glenn Romanis to produce pieces of functional public art, which interpret the themes of the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Glenn Romanis is an experienced artist, who incorporates indigenous themes into his works utilising an extensive range of artistic mediums. Glenn is extremely familiar with the history associated with the Moonee Ponds Creek and surrounding areas, making the project rich in historical significance.

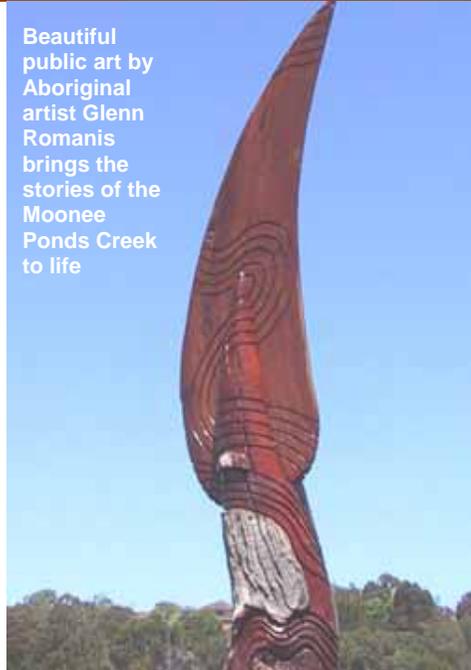
The project is one of many identified in the Moonee Ponds Creek Public Art Strategy and aims to create a visual link and a unified trail through a common theme along the creek. The works consists of three totem sculptures at different locations along the creek and are constructed from Red Gum timber and basalt pieces. Each piece has a functional element, as they provide seating within the area.

Each piece has a special meaning, reflecting the historical significance of the Moonee Ponds Creek. Travancore Park features a totem sculpture developed around an industrial theme, featuring cogs, nuts and bolts. This theme was chosen as it symbolises the past use of the land along the creek.

The piece within Boeing Reserve signifies the flora and fauna of the Moonee Ponds Creek, while the sculpture at Cross Keys Reserve represents an Aboriginal boomerang, throwing stick and a Lil lil, a dangerous weapon used in battle.

The sculptures act as an effective link along the Moonee Ponds Creek and the themes filter fantastically throughout the different locations. Through the totems project Glenn Romanis has certainly created an interesting way to connect the wider open space network, and the historical themes associated with the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Beautiful public art by Aboriginal artist Glenn Romanis brings the stories of the Moonee Ponds Creek to life



ABOVE One of the beautifully sculpted totems at Boeing Reserve.

BELOW Detail of hand carved seat at Travancore



The totems are most definitely worth a look! You will find them at the following locations...

Travancore Park
Melways ref. 19 B:10

Boeing Reserve
Melways ref. 16 D:5

Cross Keys Reserve
Melways ref. 28 K:1

I remember mushrooms....

From mushrooming to committed creek rep; Terry Mundy, has been associated with the Moonee Ponds Creek in various (interesting) ways over many years. Terry has lived 'a stone's throw' from the creek for most of his life where he used to hunt for mushrooms with his dad (yes, mushrooms by the creek!). Despite a brief period away Terry now resides about as close as can be where his house backs on to Boeing Reserve, Strathmore. In his own way, Terry is a one-man co-ordination committee, representing the interests of the Moonee Ponds Creek as a member of Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, Boeing Reserve Advisory Committee and Strathmore Progress Association, which was instrumental in preventing the concreting of a section of the creek in the early 70's. And he wishes he could do more...!



Many years ago, over 50 in fact, our Pascoe Vale house was on the edge of the post war housing creep. Glenroy was an outpost at the top end of Pascoe Vale road, and further out was the end of the electric railway line, which to me seemed like the end of the world.

In those days private cars were rare and my father owned a small motor bike that he used for transport. Occasionally when the season was right he would pop me on the back and take me to Glenroy to go mushrooming along the Moonee Ponds Creek. One of our favorite places was near the train line that crossed the Moonee Ponds Creek at the trestle bridge. We would park the bike and wander down to and along the creek flats looking for mushrooms. As a child, not much amazed me but I have memories of how desolate the creek appeared with cows grazing in treeless paddocks. Bird life was scarce because trees were removed to encourage a rich cover of grass on the grazing land. However this land was ideal for mushrooms.

We used to walk downstream until we came to the only place with any notable trees, which were Oak trees filled with nuts. Nowadays this is the area known as the John Pascoe Fawcner Reserve. Interestingly, this is how the surrounding region got its name: Oak Park. We would walk back to the trestle bridge pushing through the odd Box Thorn bush full of rabbits.

What a change today, this part of the creek is well groomed with parks, playing fields, and plenty of trees. Birdlife is abundant with black ducks raising their young in the ponds along the creek. Housing and people may have encroached along the creek today but the restoration work we are doing is making it healthier than it was over 50 years ago.

backyard thugs: Kikuyu

By Natasha Baldyga

Weeds and waterways are a seriously bad combination. This is mainly because waterways, by their very nature act as 'water-highways' that transport loads of water and nutrients, perfect for weed growth.

In today's world, creeks are subject to many impacts. The simple act of sweeping garden leaves down the street gutter can have dramatic affects. As garden waste breaks down, excess nutrients enter the waterway becoming almost like liquid fertilizer, perfect for nutrient loving weeds. But it doesn't stop there! If that pile of leaves you swept down the street had a few seeds amongst it, this could mean double trouble for the creek!

If they are not being washed down the gutter, weed seeds are being blown in the wind or they are climbing over the back fence! Yes, even climbing the back fence! Often they prove difficult and expensive to eradicate or control once they escape into the local environment. There are many examples of plants that escape from our gardens commonly called 'garden thugs' along the creek.

For this edition of Ponderings we'll concentrate on one that many of us have in our garden as a lush green lawn that needs regular mowing in the warmer months of the year; Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*). Kikuyu is often mistakenly referred to as Couch or Buffalo Grass, which are in fact different types of grasses with similar characteristics. Kikuyu can easily become a pesky weed.

Provided that there is sufficient moisture and nutrients, this grass can quickly invade and smother native vegetation. Control is often difficult as this grass has underground runners or **rhizomes**, that can create new individual plants when broken off from manual removal. Have you ever noticed these runners climbing telephone poles? This plant should get an 'A+' for determination!



Another way Kikuyu spreads is when it is either accidentally or deliberately spread. Sometimes Kikuyu is given a helping hand to spread in areas along the creek where people throw garden clippings or soil over the fence or when clippings are used for mulch around trees.

So what can you do to prevent this garden thug becoming rampant in your neighbourhood? Well, the easiest solution is not to grow it in the first place. There are many other alternatives; both native and introduced that are just as hardy, but less invasive, which can be used when establishing a lawn. Native lawns can provide a beautiful alternative. In Broadmeadows and parts of Glenroy it is not uncommon for lawns to have Red Anther Wallaby Grass (*Chionocloa pallida*) which has survived from times when the whole area was once Open Grassy Woodlands.

people like us bird observers club of australia



exciting bird moments with BOCA...

Prepared by Annette Cook, Environmental Education Coordinator

It was a crisp autumn morning in Melbourne when we set off for the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee. The main objective of the outing was to spy the Oriental Pratincole, a small migra-

tory bird visiting the safe wetlands from the northern hemisphere. What an amazing sight, not only a pair of pratincoles but thousands of ducks and long-legged, migratory waders, nonchalantly going about the business of feeding, seemingly unaware of the excited humans peering through their binoculars and scopes.

This is the type of experience members of the Bird Observers Club of Australia have the opportunity to enjoy. Our education and activity programs offer

something for everyone. School holiday activities, The Magic of Owls and Finding Nemo's Birds, provided fun informative programs for the under fourteens. Lectures and bird talks at the Nunawading headquarters give participants important background information and improved identification skills. Outings, camps and longer trips throughout Australia enable members to

experience, first hand, a variety of birds and their habitats.

A bi-monthly magazine, The Bird Observer, connects members

Australia wide with anecdotes, birding information and special sightings. The junior members are contributing to and informed by the newly introduced Stickybeak Club Newsletter. Scientific reports can be found in the journal produced by BOCA called Australian Field Ornithology. Many of enquires and requests for information from the general public are handled each week by the BOCA staff and volunteers.



would you like to find out more?

To find out more about how you can experience some rare and exciting bird moments please contact the Bird Observers Club of Australia on 9877 5342, information@birdobservers.org.au or visit our web site www.birdobservers.org.au

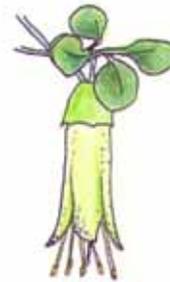
frog watch



Melbourne Water's Frog census is on again this autumn. The census is conducted quarterly to monitor Melbourne's frog population and species range. Participation in the frog census involves visiting your favourite local "frog spot" to record frog calls. Interested frog watchers can receive an Autumn 2004 "Frog Kit" consisting of all the necessities for you to participate in the frog census. Free information sessions will be held to train you in frog call identification and recording techniques.

for more information visit www.frogs.melbournewater.com.au Melbourne Water

'screen' stars of the season

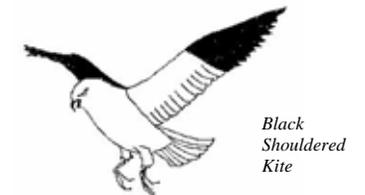


Correa glabra

This season, instead of bringing you a single plant star, we're bringing you three! They're the screen stars for this season - Woolly Tea-tree, Wedge-leaf Hop Bush & Rock Correa. All these little beauties make fantastic screening plants, and let's face it, who doesn't have some unsightly visage that they'd like to permanently blot out from their landscape. And because they're all indigenous to the Moonee Ponds Creek you'll be providing habitat for local birds & insects as well as keeping out the Joneses. Woolly Tea-tree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*) has lovely soft grey green foliage and white nectar filled flowers. It grows to a height of 2 to 3 metres and most importantly (for a hedge), retains its basal foliage. It doesn't mind a bit of shade, is good for boggy conditions, but can withstand dry periods. One of the best reveg plants we have is the Wedge-leaf Hop Bush (*Dodonea viscosa* ssp *spatulata*). It's incredibly drought tolerant & loves the sun. It's glossy green foliage forms a handsome dense bush up to 2-3 metres tall. The new growth in spring is a dark purple and pink 'hops' fruit are also features. Last, but not least, there's the Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*), another fantastic little reveg plant that is used often for it's superior drought tolerant qualities. It's a very reliable neat little plant, which makes it a great candidate for a hedge up to 2 metres. As Correa can withstand severe pruning it also has the potential to become the indigenous plant world's answer to the ubiquitous box hedge.

autumn sightings

This Autumn, we'd like to report on the exciting sightings (try saying that really fast) down at Jacana Wetlands over the last couple of months. This fantastic development continues to amaze & delight with the bird life it has attracted so far. First off, those intrepid MPCCC bird spotters Maddie & Mel saw Australasian Grebes and a Black Shouldered Kite at Jacana Wetlands in Summer. Natasha (Friends of Yuroke Creek) has seen Stilts in the northern section of Jacana Wetlands - a bird reported by Greg Bain to be a common coloniser of new wetlands. Trusty FO Jacana Wetlands bird spotter Andrew Cremona has also seen Avocet (Black) Swans and grass birds (related to cistecolas) over summer. A myriad of dragonflies have also been seen over the whole summer period. In addition to Jacana, we have a sighting by Tom Baker (FO Upper Moonee Ponds Creek) of a Rufous Night Heron adult at Koala Crescent, Westmeadows - they migrate every year apparently. Our new community liaison & support officer, Steph, has also reported seeing water rats at Nursery Corner, Strathmore as well as a Wedge Tailed Eagle flying over the creek at Strathmore! Finally, has anyone noticed the annual Autumn millipede march across the bike path in Westmeadows has started again? Why is it so?



Black Shouldered Kite



Black Winged Stilt

upcoming events...

Autumn Planting Season

Some leaves may be falling but it's the perfect time to get natives in along the creek. Our first planting day of the season is on April 3rd 10am-12noon at FO Jacana Wetlands, east creek bank. We will be holding a day in your area and waterwatch too in Gowanbrae and Jacana Wetlands! So check the calendar for details, it's always fun, and this time we will be experimenting with some interesting lunches....

Litter Enforcement Forum

When: April 21st 2004 9am-1pm
Where: Moreland City Council Concert Hall, Coburg
Contact: Nicolette Vaszolyi on 9333 2406 or nic@mpccc.org

Melbourne Water

GreenGardeners Workshop

Tue June 1, 8 & 15
Council Chambers, Sunbury 6:30-9pm
Tue August 3, 10 & 17
Moreland City Council Concert Hall, Coburg. 6:30-9pm

Tullamarine Freeway Action Group

These creek enthusiasts have been beautifying the Moonee Ponds Creek in response to the widening of the Tullamarine freeway for the past 7 years. They meet in different areas along the creek in Brunswick West on the 4th Saturday of the month between March and October. Please call Stephanie Thursday or Friday to find out where they shall be meeting 9333 2406.

Moonee Valley Environment Forum - Energy/Cities for Climate Protection TM

Interested in local energy issues? Come along to a discussion on how the Cities for Climate Protection TM program is helping the City of Moonee Valley to reduce its energy use.

Monday 10 May 2004 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Civic Room, Civic Centre
9 Kellaway Ave, Moonee Ponds, 3039
For further information or to RSVP, please contact Arun Baskaran on 9243 9105 or abaskaran@mvcc.vic.gov.au