



Ponderings

Summer 2013-14 Issue 43
Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee
Ponds Creek Coordination Committee Inc

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Tax-deductible donations can be made to the MPC Environment Fund.

Go to mpccc.org for information.

advocate educate interpret participate rehabilitate revegetate

Happenings on the Creek – things to get involved in ...

Clean Up Australia Day - Sunday 2 March

There are three sites along the Moonee Ponds Creek where you can go to help clean up:

Gowanbrae - meet at footbridge over the Creek opposite the corner of Adelaide Boulevard and Hannah Pascoe Drive, Mel: 16 C3; 10.00am to 12.00noon, site coordinator: Andre Braakhuis.

Boeing Reserve - meet at footbridge at end of Boeing Road, Strathmore Heights, Mel: 16 D5; 8.00am to 10.30am, site coordinator: Heather Davis.

Macaulay Station - meet Garden Centre carpark, cnr Stubbs Street and Macaulay Road, Kensington, Mel: 43 A3; 10.00am to 12.00noon, site coordinator: Carolyn Webster.

For more information go to www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/join/



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'Live. Grow. Explore. Community Day' a day of free events hosted by Landcare and Jemena

Sunday, 23rd March at Woodlands Historic Park from 11.00am to 3.30pm



Hosted by Landcare Australia in partnership with local electricity distributor Jemena, and supported by Hume City Council, this free event includes a BBQ, ice creams, live music and an opportunity to enjoy the natural environment. All ages can learn about home grown sustainability initiatives, with stalls and presentations ranging from smart energy use and bushfire safety; to growing indigenous plants and setting up a vegetable garden. After a 'Welcome to Country' by Wurundjeri representatives and smoking ceremony there will be:

- **Children's activities** including the Landcare Fairy, face painting, and pony rides
- **Reptile encounters** – wildlife up close, as well as a chance to see wild kangaroos in the Park.
- **Future Sparks** – interactive display where electricity will be provided by pedal power!
- **Vasili Kanidiadis** of Vasili's Garden to Kitchen TV show will be there to provide local gardening tips
- Entertainment by live bands including popular African band **FLYBZ**



Planting Kangaroo Grass, and two enthusiastic pony riders at last year's event



While you are there, you can get involved in helping to remove some exotic weeds from the Park – every little bit helps!

For more information, visit: www.landcareaustralia.com.au.

Note that the location is different from last year – this year it will be happening near the Living Legends, so enter from Oaklands Road (Mel 177 H9) – there will be signs to follow.

Learning about stormwater from Melbourne Water

It was good fun last year – so don't miss it!!



'Catchment Crawl' – Saturday 29th March

Trevor Hausler, Waterwatch Coordinator, Merri Creek Management Committee is organising a 'Catchment Crawl' for the Moonee Ponds Creek – you can either ride up the Creek from Cross Keys to Jacana, or go on a guided wetland walk at Jacana.

Meet at Cross Keys Reserve, Essendon (Mel: 28 K1) at 9.30am (for those who want to ride) or at Jacana Wetland access via Moonee Boulevard (Mel: 6 D12) at 11am, where morning tea and drinks will be provided.

At Cross Keys Reserve a macroinvertebrate sample will be collected from the creek, then Trevor will guide the ride to Jacana Wetlands, up the Moonee Ponds Creek (approx. 9km).

At Jacana Wetland there will be a walk and talk about the wetland and the collection of another macroinvertebrate sample.

There you can help with the identification of the bugs found in each of the samples.

Bookings essential – Trevor Hausler: trevor.hausler@mcmc.org.au or 9380 8199

But wait – there's more...!!

Horseshoe Bend Working Bee
Sunday March 30,
10.00am to 12.00noon

Extending the area planted last year, we will be laying jute matting on a sloping site, getting it ready for planting later in the year – see back page.

Friends of Lower Moonee Ponds Creek

In the beginning ... there were stretches of bare soil, grass and weeds ... by Kaye Oddie



The first planting day in May 2001, looking north up the west bank towards Macaulay Street



Planting the west bank near Arden Street bridge in August 2003. Note the Red Gum saplings already several metres tall.

The Friends of Lower Moonee Ponds Creek grew out of the push by local residents of North Melbourne and the North & West Melbourne Association, for the embankments along the Moonee Ponds Creek to be

replanted after the dismal failure of the revegetation undertaken following the construction of CityLink. Transurban/CityLink, in conjunction with the Greening Australia and the MPCCC, organised the replanting of the western Creek embankments between the Macaulay Road and Arden Street bridges in successful community and schools events in May and June 2001. Over 4000 indigenous plants were planted into what were bare banks.

The Friends of Lower Moonee Ponds Creek, under the auspices of MPCCC, then continued infill revegetation projects with community plantings upstream and downstream along these lower sections of the Moonee Ponds Creek. MPCCC co-ordinators included Elissa Simmonds, Melanie Taube, Maddie Bisits and Stephanie Spathis.

Melbourne Water maintained the mowing of the grassed areas so that the Creek provided pleasant open spaces for local residents to enjoy - feeding ducks, watching the black swans and herons, walking the dog, fishing - as well as importantly, providing habitat and biodiversity for native flora and fauna. (And it was in the stretch below the Arden Street bridge that a platypus was sighted in the spring of 2013 – see the Sightings section. Ed.)



This site in February 2014, from across the Creek. The saplings have become elegant trees. And the bank blanketed in shrubs.

Sadly, these pleasant open space areas, their habitat, biodiversity and biolinks, would be destroyed by the construction of the four-lane elevated freeways, part of the proposed East West Link, along the Creek.

Later in the decade, the FLMPCC focused more on the area to the south of Arden Street, where the banks widen and for a very short stretch the Creek is liberated from CityLink. A lack of maintenance in this area means that the Kikuyu is now knee deep, and little remains of the hopeful plantings done in 2008.



Looking South to Arden Street Bridge, young saplings and bare banks in 2000, and in 2005



Next to Vic Track land, the eastern bank in 2008 and 2014



Melbourne Water has been busy along the Creek ...

As part of its ongoing Capital Works Program, Melbourne Water has been clearing woody weeds from the Creek in three locations.

In the stretch between the confluence of Five Mile Creek and the Moonee Ponds Creek to the end of the White Poplar infestation, in line with Eric Street, Essendon, Melbourne Water has been undertaking control of large woody, scrambling/climbing and herbaceous weeds within the creek corridor. This was completed in December 2013 to January 2014. The weed species removed included: Boxthorn, Willows, Canary Island Date Palm, Blackberry, Blue Periwinkle, Cape Ivy, Cotoneaster, Desert Ash, Gorse, Hawthorn, Pampas Lily of the Valley, Peppercorns, Prickly Pear, Prunus, Robinia, Sweet Briar Rose, White Poplar.

Revegetation with 470 plants will be undertaken in September 2014. A mix of the following species will be planted: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *E. viminalis*, *Acacia pycnantha*, *A. melanoxylon*, *A. paradoxa*, *A. implexa*, *Banksia marginata*, *Allocasuarina littoralis*, *Bursaria spinosa ssp. Spinosa*, *Rhagodia parabolica*, *Callistemon sieberi*.

The other sections to receive attention were further north. This was a capital improvement project that started in July 2010. The intention of the project was to manage woody weeds and establish additional native vegetation along two separate reaches of Moonee Ponds Creek. The weeds removed included: African Boxthorn, Artichoke Thistle, Willows, Desert Ash, Cotoneaster, Broom, Spiny Rush, Gorse and Blackberry.

Reach 1 – extended from Pascoe Street in Westmeadows, past the confluence with Yuroke Creek, to the footbridge just north of Jacana Wetlands
Reach 2 – Fran Street in Gowanbrae to Strathnaver Avenue in Strathmore

Planted species included: River Red Gum, Blackwood, Lightwood, Sweet Bursaria, Tree Violet, Hedge Wattle, Golden Spray, Prickly Moses, Woolly Tea Tree, River Bottlebrush

An additional section of woody weed control was recently completed in January/early February 2014 to target a large infestation of Blackberry and Desert Ash near the Broadmeadows Deviation. The dry weather meant that access was possible to this steep section, enabling a 'nibbler' to get in to tackle the blackberries.

The project is due for completion in March 2015. Regular on-going maintenance (e.g. follow up weed control) will be undertaken in the project areas to ensure that regrowth of targeted weed species is controlled and revegetation is maintained.

Well done Melbourne Water – it is great to see some of these woody weeds removed from the Creek to allow for revegetation with more appropriate species!



Looking south to the top of Primrose Street, Essendon, a number of trees and shrubs have been removed from the bank

Stimulating playground emerges from forgotten tributary

Brunswick Montessori Children's House have reclaimed the path of Melville Creek ... from Anne Miles

In the 1940s the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works straightened and covered Melville Creek – a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek – transforming it to the Melville Main Drain No 4320 and the parcel of land through which it once flowed is now the playground for Children's House.

Brunswick Montessori Children's House Inc. is the result of the dedicated work of a group of parents and teachers volunteering their time to create a best-practice, non-profit Montessori kindergarten. Children's House is co-located with Brunswick North West Primary School.

Children's House utilises the Montessori Method in order to foster independence and a love of learning for children and their families. Over one hundred years ago, Dr Maria Montessori revolutionised education and today Montessori is recognised as the largest pedagogy in the world. A natural external play space – as an extension of the indoor classroom – is a crucial feature of a best-practice Montessori centre. As stated by Maria Montessori, "There must be provision for the child to have contact with Nature, to understand and appreciate the order, the harmony and the beauty in Nature so the child may better understand and participate in the marvellous things which civilisation creates."

In early 2013, Children's House commissioned landscape architect, Katherine Rekaris, to design a 'child in nature' external learning environment and play space that would allow children the opportunity to explore their natural world and appreciate what it has to offer.

The goals of the child in nature project were to:

- 1) To provide a seamless extension and transition between the internal and outdoor environments/classrooms where children can use their own volition to engage in open-ended, multi-aged play and sensorial exploration by smelling, touching, tasting, hearing and seeing what the natural world has to offer.
- 2) To rehabilitate a natural area where children – through continual movement – learn and develop skill and competence in the areas of:
 - a) fine motor (picking and preparing fruits/vegetables/flowers, collecting native treasures)
 - b) gross motor (balancing, climbing trees, running up and rolling down hills, digging and transferring soil)
 - c) collaborative play (socialisation and togetherness)
 - d) cognition (thinking, planning, attention/concentration, problem



Katherine Rekaris' design for the 'Child in Nature' playground at Brunswick Montessori Children's House



Bare bones – the results have been well received by Anne's children, and it will get even better with further planting

solving)

e) creativity

f) independence

3) To provide children with an active understanding of sustainability, not just by talking about how to preserve the earth's resources, but through venturing outside and experiencing, wondering and learning about nature's delicate balance first hand.

In her overall design, Katherine felt it important to recognise and pay tribute to the land as it existed prior to European settlement. In order to achieve this she designed a rain garden as a monument

to the original Melville Creek. The rain garden will fill with water and drain at a slow pace allowing the children to pull on their boots and enjoy splashing and playing in a shallow body of water. Along the banks of the rain garden are several sand play areas in which they can play, learn and socialise.

As part of the design process, Children's House consulted with Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and identified a selection of indigenous and native plantings that reflect the history of the site, attract birds and insects and also

provide the children with abundant texture, colour, smells, treasures and shade. Both groups have also been working to document the history of the site and to collect a series of photographs of the Melville Creek prior to its significant alteration.

Some of the species chosen for the overall landscape and rain garden include: *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ssp. *Connata* (Yellow Gum), *Brachychiton acerifolius* (Illawarra Flame tree), *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), *A. pycnantha* (Golden Wattle), *Callistemon sieberi* (River Bottlebrush), *Pultenaea daphnoides* (Large leaf bush pea), *Pimelea humilis* (Common Rice Flower), *Oxalis perennans* (Yellow Wood-sorrel), *Kennedia prostrata* (Running Postman), *Bossiaea prostrata* (Creeping Bossiaea), *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass), *Austrostipa elegantissima* (Feather Spear-grass) and *Craspedia variabilis* (Billy Buttons)

Children's House wishes to acknowledge the importance of the relationship with Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, particularly the work and input of Kay Oddie who has added valuable insights and recommendations to the project. Moreland City Council and GJ Gardener Homes via Fifteen Trees, also contributed to the rain garden through in-kind support and donations.

Boeing Reserve Master Plan Review

Moonee Valley City Council is seeking ideas and feedback from the community to help in the preparation of an updated Boeing Reserve Master Plan. The existing plan was prepared 10 years ago, and Council has made some improvements in line with that plan, but further upgrades of this key regional open space are recommended in the MVCC Playspace Plan 2013-2023, to provide a higher level of play experience for more age groups. For example, Council's Skate and BMX Strategy recommends the upgrade of the skate facilities. Council has also been investigating opportunities for capturing stormwater flooding from the Essendon Fields site, and harvesting it for irrigation of the sports ovals; and the possibilities to improve the sporting club rooms and associated community facilities.

Council would like the community's views on these proposals as part of the master planning process.

The Moonee Ponds Creek forms one boundary of Boeing Reserve, so any activity there has the potential to affect the Creek, for example, issues such as litter getting into the Creek from users of the reserve, and control of stormwater inflows. For more information visit mvcc.vic.gov.au or contact the Open Space Design Team on 9243 8888, or email parkimprovements@mvcc.vic.gov.au, to provide feedback.

Have your say!

MVCC will be holding a Community Information Session at Strathmore Heights Community Centre, Boeing Reserve (Mel 16 C5)
Date: Saturday 1st March
Time: 12noon to 2pm
Why not go along to learn what is being considered and take the opportunity to make recommendations?

Councils' Creek Activities

Broadmeadows English Language School students find strange creature in the Creek!!! From Melissa Doherty



Just before Christmas I worked with primary and secondary students from the Broadmeadows English Language School, doing a ponding activity and water quality testing, with samples taken from Moonee Ponds Creek.

Most of the students are newly arrived migrants with very little English, where for example prior to my visit, they didn't even know what a creek was. The students, regardless of age, were all very excited to look at a range of aquatic bugs under the microscope and learn how these bugs are an indicator of water quality. There was a massive flush of freshwater shrimp, but no highly pollution sensitive bugs were found.

We did find a mystery bug that was see-through, jelly-like, and under the microscope we could see small red worms moving around inside it. Unfortunately, I had a technical issue with the USB mini-microscope and the photos of the 'bug plus internal parasites' weren't saved. Hopefully a Melbourne Water contact will be able to help identify it, because I couldn't find anything like it in any of my ID resources.

The following week, after donning safety glasses and gloves, the students took turns to act as scientists and do the range of water

quality tests, following the WaterWatch method. Due to recent rains, we found high turbidity and nutrient levels. The students now have a much better idea about the water cycle, the impacts of stormwater pollution and an appreciation of wetlands.

A biodiversity-related education program is being provided to schools in Hume, and the Urban Biodiversity Officer can be contacted on 9205 2466 for more information.

Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek awarded Moonee Valley City Council Sustainability Environment Grant. From Michelle Gooding



Congratulations to Kaye Oddie for successfully acquiring the grant on behalf of the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek. The project is to control weeds, lay jute matting for soil stabilisation and weed control, and planting. We are revegetating an area of 400m², in a site just upstream from the area we planted in 2013, at Horseshoe Bend. Spraying has started and for the next tasks we are calling for community support to help out with.

On **Sunday 30th March, from 10.00am to 12noon** there will be a working bee to lay jute matting on the sloping section; then on **Sunday 6th July, 10.00am to 12noon** will be a Planting and Mulching Day, followed by refreshments.

Sightings

Have you seen any interesting flora or fauna along the Creek? Please tell us about it. Contact Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org.

We have been sent some very exciting sightings for this edition ...

In October, Melbourne Water received a report of **Platypus** having been seen near Arden Street, Kensington! Although little can be seen from the photograph, the ripples are indicative of platypus swimming and the observer was able to see them emerge from the water, and confirmed they were not diving cormorants.



Two platypuses spotted near Arden Street, Kensington

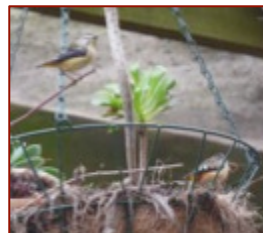


Judy Allen's garden was visited by this Tawny Frogmouth family (Dad sat on another branch!) and the Pardalotes borrowing coir for nesting material

Anna, who provides so many great shots from her rambles along the Creek, sent us these pictures of a Growling Grass frog, Black-winged Stilts and Red-kneed Dotterel, she described seeing all these at Jacana as BLISS!



Red-kneed Dotterel, Growling Grass Frog and Black-winged Stilts, seen at Jacana in January



Gems of the Creek

What is your favourite bit of the Creek – natural or man-made? Send your ideas to Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org - I look forward to hearing about them.

A man-made landscape this time... Tony Smith sent this picture.



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We, and the environment, thank you!