



moonee ponds creek  
co-ordination committee

# Ponderings

Autumn 2012

Issue 36

Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek  
Coordination Committee Inc

advocate educate interpret participate rehabilitate revegetate



## Thank you to everyone who helped!

### What's in this issue?

- ❖ Clean Up Australia Day
- ❖ Celebrating FO Strathnaver Grasslands
- ❖ Exciting Sightings
- ❖ Going Batty
- ❖ Autumn Planting Calendar

After the recent rains the Moonee Ponds Creek was flowing swiftly, but that didn't stop 106 volunteers signing on for Clean Up Australia Day 2012 at the Debney Meadows Primary School. Once again, CityLink Neighbourhood Connections provided a great reward for these willing participants who came to help clean up around the Creek and Debneys Park at Flemington.



Picking up soggy rubbish down by the Creek



Getting down to work – collecting little bits of broken glass!

Peter Little from Trans Urban and his daughter meet a Fairy Penguin



Unlike on previous years when sizeable bits of hard rubbish were fished out of the river (including a mattress one year, and car wheels), this year it was mostly the tedious and fiddly bits of general litter that filled the bags – a much harder task! But still nearly everyone managed to fill a bag or two and altogether 115 bags of rubbish, chairs, light fittings and other yucky stuff were collected!

And after all that hard work, everyone tucked into a Rotary barbeque and the wonderful African food provided by the United Somalia Women's Group and the African Women's Association, and had close encounters with native animals provided by Wildlife Action.

Happy volunteers with the fruits of their labours



Getting up close and personal with an olive python!

Twenty-four mainly Chinese elderly, (the average age 76!), signed on at the site near Macaulay Station, to help clean up along the Creek. A bus was organised by Vic Police to pick them up and take them to the Macaulay Road site and then afterwards, to transport them to Flemington to join volunteers there for lunch and to meet our native animals.

The day brought together volunteers from the local community and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, United Voice, Way to Happiness (Church of Scientology), Victorian Police, Kensington Neighbourhood House, Urban Communities, Rotary North Melbourne, the United Somalia Women's Group and the African Women's Association.

### How did you go on Clean Up Day?

There was an encouraging decline in the amount of litter collected at Kensington. The Creek had remarkably less litter in it on Clean Up Day – I would like to think that this was an indication of better littering habits, but I suspect it was more likely to be a result of the heavy rain we had prior to Sunday 4 March that had swept it all down-stream and out into the Bay.

At Gowanbrae a major type of 'litter' was the tree guards that Melbourne Water had used further up the Creek to protect the plantings they had done last year on the banks, well within the high flow level.



Tree guards washed down the Creek at Gowanbrae – there were lots more in the bags

# Saving Strathnaver Grasslands

Strathnaver Grasslands is a tiny patch of remnant Western Plains grassland on the slopes above the Moonee Ponds Creek in the Strathnaver Reserve. In spring it has a wonderful display of wildflowers and its rich diversity of grasses, herbs and forbs, show us what the grasslands were like that used to dominate this part of Victoria. It is an area well worth a visit, particularly in spring, although it does bring a realisation of just what we have lost.



*Chrysocephalum* and *Convolvulus* in spring 2003

Rocky basalt outcrops dot the area, and these have probably been instrumental in the preservation of the flora – making it too difficult to mow! It has had a chequered history during which inappropriate trees were planted, and their subsequent removal generated some distress to the local residents. However, it is a treasure worth preserving for future generations.

A group on a wildflower walk in October 2003 examine the struggling remnants in the bare clay soils



In the early 2000s, concerned locals and other individuals got together with the help of the MPCCC, to form the Friends of Strathnaver Grasslands, and their dedication helped to rescue this little patch and preserve it for us all to enjoy.

Not only did the group persevere in revegetating the area, some of them spent hours methodically removing the onion weed that was spreading into it – that's dedication for you!

On the rocky outcrops, lichen and mosses grow. Some of this lichen has been estimated to be at least 100 years old!



It is not only spectacular trees like Red Gums that can live for centuries – these little plants are just as tenacious and in far less hospitable positions.



FO Strathnaver Grasslands in May 2004

A swathe of Silky Blue grass in April 2012



The area is now maintained by Moonee Valley Council, and the past couple of years of good rains has been wonderful for the grasses and other plants including the pretty shrub *Eutaxia microphylla* which is struggling to survive along the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Although grasslands are not at their best in autumn, it is great to see how much of the bare clay patches are being colonised with self seeding Silky Blue grass (*Dichanthium sericeum*) and Redleg grass (*Bothriochloa macra*). These native grasses are successfully competing with weed grasses, and some are growing above knee height, although there are still patches of couch and other exotic grass species. While I was visiting the grasslands this month, in just a short visit I spotted such a variety of plants I am really keen to go back in spring to see them all flowering.



Planting grasses into bare soil in May 2008 and the same area today



Planting *Chrysocephalum* in August 2005

Luxurious growth in April 2012



## News from Moonee Valley City Council by Kathleen Kemp

The Northern Sewerage Project has concluded. The Van Berg Road entry to the Moonee Ponds Creek has been improved with development of a park including planting of mature trees, installation of seating and path that connects Van Berg Road to Donald Avenue. An upgraded pram ramp and bicycle symbols on the road complemented by directional and park signs will make it easier for cyclists and walkers to re-join the path at Primrose Street.

The revised Cycling and Walking Strategy will be going to Council in two weeks, so as yet we cannot report on the results of the community consultation or on the strategy's adoption, but we would like to thank everyone who made a submission

The Council has a walking trail along the Creek, which includes the Strathnaver grasslands. For a brochure describing the trail, go to: <http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/experience-moonee-valley/walking-and-cycling.aspx>; call the Council's Citizen Services on 9243 8888 or drop in to the Civic Centre, 9 Kellaway Avenue, Moonee Ponds.

## CAT REMINDER!

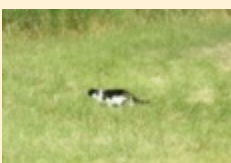
No doubt I am preaching to the choir, but we really do have to be more vigilant in controlling our pet cats.

This cat is a frequent visitor to the Jacana Wetlands. Just one cat like this is so destructive – even if it doesn't kill (and I'm sure this one is a killer), just its presence will disturb feeding, interrupt care of nestlings and generally stress the birds and animals. Add to that the damage it will do to lizards and frogs and you can imagine the impact just one wandering cat can have on an area like this.



### Cats kill

ALL cats, even well-fed pet cats, can kill wildlife. In Victoria, on average, each pet cat can kill 25 creatures every year; this adds up to 12.5 million creatures every year. At the same time, *feral* cats eat the equivalent of seven native rosellas each week. – that's around 70 million animals killed by feral cats every year. (source <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/plants-and-animals/native-plants-and-animals/caring-for-wildlife/protect-your-cat-protect-your-wildlife>)



Most wildlife killed by roaming pet cats is caught just outside the back door. All cats, including your pet cat, hunt by instinct. Often a captured bird or possum will appear undamaged but, almost certainly, it will die within 36 hours from shock or infection. Cats' mouths are hot-beds of bacteria. One bite to a native animal leads to rapid spread of infection against which it has little resistance. Cats carry Toxoplasmosis, a disease which can devastate wildlife populations. So please, if you have to have a cat, make sure you keep it inside from dusk to dawn, as an absolute minimum; that it has at least one bell on its collar, is desexed and registered.



# 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](mailto:ponderings@mpccc.org).

During her frog walks Anna Lannigan has seen some great birds on or near the Creek, and she has sent us some fabulous pictures – these are just a few...



A Great Egret wearing its breeding plumage, and three weeks later, breeding plumage gone, with a Eurasian Coot, at Jacana Wetlands



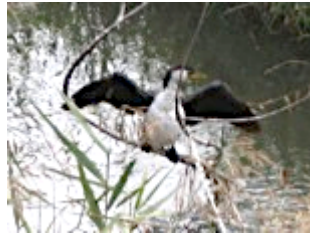
Crested Pigeons are now a relatively common sight in urban areas, since the drought they have realised the easy pickings to be had in town.



Anna has been excited to welcome these two visitors to her garden: a Grey Butcherbird having a splash, and a young Eastern Spinebill



These three Magpie Larks were keeping an eye on the new ponds work going on at Jacana



A wet, bedraggled Little Pied Cormorant perched precariously on a small branch in the middle of the Creek at Strathnaver



This noisy mob of Little Corellas perched on a fallen tree across the Creek at Westmeadows, then came down to drink, before flying off.

Have you seen anything exciting along the Creek? Do let us know – send us a picture and a note about when and where you saw it. We love to hear about life along the Creek. Contact us at [ponderings@mpccc.org](mailto:ponderings@mpccc.org).

## Going in to bat for some fascinating creatures...

**Do you know what are the most common native mammals in the Melbourne urban area?** No, not possums – it's microbats.

These tiny creatures vary in size from the Little Forest Bat, which weighs less than a 10 cent piece and would easily fit into a matchbox, to ones the size of your hand.

They eat insects, and we should welcome them and celebrate their presence in our gardens because they can eat up to 600 hundred mosquitos in an hour! They also eat beetles, moths and bugs, including some insects that are major agricultural pests, so are very helpful to humans, yet many people don't even know they exist.

They emerge from their roosts at dusk, and use echolocation to navigate and find food. Most of their calls are above the range of human hearing so we are rarely aware they are there, or we may mistake them for big moths.

Like many other native animals and birds they rely on tree hollows and cracks to roost in, so old trees and trees with hollows are very important.

Humans are having a very detrimental effect on them. Street lighting, particularly lighting around parks where bats may go to feed and roost, keeps some species away, limiting their range and ability to gather food. We remove dead branches or cut down old trees concerned with safety of falling limbs. We allow our cats out at night – cats are major predators on bats.

There are 17 species of bats in Melbourne, some of which have adapted to an urban environment, but others have disappeared from the inner suburbs. There is a direct correlation between the density of housing, the number of big trees and the number of species of bats. More houses = fewer bats; more trees = more

bats. Where trees are scarce, some bats may roost in nooks and crannies in buildings, or in the roof space. If you find you do have bats in your roof, see it as a bonus. They don't wear hobnail boots like possums and they eat lots of mosquitos!

**What can you do to help?** All bats are protected native species. If possible leave dead branches, or if you have to prune – leave a stump; keep your cat inside; don't disturb bats if you find them; put up some bat boxes; join a roost box monitoring program, and find out more about these little neighbours.

Visit the Australasian Bat Society website [ausbats.org.au](http://ausbats.org.au) for some fascinating information and the busting of bat myths.

## Black Swan Monitoring

**Have you seen any Black Swans on the Creek – or anywhere else in Victoria, recently?**

Dr Raoul Mulder would like to hear from you. He has been recording sightings of black swans with their tags for over a decade, and he wants your help.

He has set up a great interactive website where you can record your sightings and send photographs – the website is worth visiting even if you haven't got any to report because it has interesting information and some beautiful pictures of swans.

The address is: [myswan.org.au](http://myswan.org.au).

At the website you can report your sightings directly and receive an instant and up-to-date report on your swan, its history and recent movements.



Photo: G Nobel

# Autumn Planting Calendar

| Date                      | Friends' Group                     | Time         | Location   | Melway Ref | Council       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--|------------|---------------|
| Sun 6 May                 | FO Upper Moonee Ponds Creek        | 10am-1.30pm  | The Tarnuk, end of Wright St, Westmeadows (Lunch at 12.00)   | 5 G6       | Hume          |
| Sun 6 May                 | FO 5 Mile Creek                    | 2-4pm        | 5 Mile Creek Reserve, end of Government Rd, Essendon   | 28 J2      | Moonee Valley |
| Sun 13 May                | FO Westbreen Creek                 | 10am-12 noon | Westbreen Creek, Joyce Reserve, Northumberland Rd, Pascoe Vale   | 17 A6      | Moreland      |
| Sat 19 May                | FO Moonee Ponds Creek              | 1-3pm        | Bass Street, Oak Park  | 16 H9      | Moreland      |
| Sun 20 May                | FO Moonee Ponds Creek              | 10am-12 noon | Talbot Reserve, Talbot Rd, Strathmore  | 16 K12     | Moonee Valley |
| Sat 26 May                | Brunswick SW Planters              | 2-4pm        | Moonee Ponds Creek, Hope St, West Brunswick  | 29 B6      | Moreland      |
| Sun 3 June                | CityLink Neighbourhood Connections | 1-3pm        | <b>World Environment Day planting</b><br>Royal Park, next to bike track near the Trin Warren Tam-boore wetlands, Oak St, Parkville | 29 D12     | Melbourne     |
| Sun 17 June               | FO Sacred Kingfisher               | 10am-1.30pm  | Moonee Ponds Creek, opposite Circular Rd, Westmeadows (Lunch at 12.00)   | 6 B8       | Hume          |
| Sat 23 June               | Brunswick SW Planters              | 2-4pm        | Moonee Ponds Creek, Denzil Don Reserve, Victoria St, West Brunswick  | 29 B7      | Moreland      |
| Sun 8 July                | FO Westbreen Creek                 | 10am-12 noon | Westbreen Creek, Joyce Reserve, Northumberland Rd, Pascoe Vale   | 17 A6      | Moreland      |
| <b>National Tree Day!</b> |                                    |              |  |            |               |
| Sun 29 July               | Gowanbrae Residents                | 10am-12 noon | Moonee Ponds Creek, cnr Primula and Adelaide Blvds, Gowanbrae  | 16 D1      | Moreland      |
|                           | FO Upper Moonee Ponds Creek        | 10am-1.30pm  | The Tarnuk, end of Wright St, Westmeadows (Lunch at 1.00)  | 5 G6       | Hume          |

Come and join us!



For information about any of these planting days, contact:  
**Hume:** Cassandra Borg on 9205 2466  
**Moonee Valley:** Michelle Gooding on 8325 1830  
**Moreland:** Lori Arthur on 8311 4386  
**CityLink Neighbourhood Connections:** Bronwyn Riddell on 0438 355 953

## Community Planting Day and Welcome Back Celebration Moonee Ponds Creek Reserve/Bass Street

The section of the Creek at the end of Bass Street, Oak Park (Melway ref 16 H9) has been unavailable to the community over the last few years due to the Northern Sewer Upgrade works. Melbourne Water completed its works earlier this year, and has provided Council with a Community Benefits Fund to help rehabilitate the site back to public open space.

Following consultation with the local community in August and November 2011, the Open Space Design and Development Unit of Moreland Council has been landscaping and revegetating the site between Pascoe Vale Road and Marks Street to the North.

In a fitting way to welcome the community back to site, Council invites members of the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and the local community to come together to plant some trees, share an afternoon tea and celebrate the return of the site to the community.

**When:** Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May

**What time:** 1-3pm

Please wear sturdy closed-toes shoes.

For more information call Lori Arthur on 8311 4386

## Bat Count

The April Fruit Bat Count, was a very pleasant evening, with perfect bat counting conditions. About 18,000 bats were counted, which is about normal for this time of year!

The next bat counts will be Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, with a meeting time of 5:30pm, and Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June with a meeting time of 5.15pm.

Meet, as usual, at the Yarra Bend golf course car park (Melway 2D G7).

A volunteer is needed to count from the Yarra Boulevard Bridge which crosses the eastern freeway. One good thing about this counting spot is that you can turn up about 15 minutes later than the those meeting at Yarra Bend Park. It would be nice to rotate this spot amongst a few different people so if you are able to help out occasionally, please let Rodney van der Ree know.

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

