



moonee ponds creek
co-ordination committee

Ponderings

Winter/Spring 2011

Issue 34

Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Coordination Committee Inc

advocate

educate

interpret

participate

rehabilitate

revegetate



The slope above Primula Boulevard at the end of National Tree Day

What's in this edition?

- ➔ National Tree Day
- ➔ Frogs along the Creek
- ➔ Gowanbrae — then and now
- ➔ Exciting sightings
- ➔ Creek activities
- ➔ Speaking for the Creek
- ➔ Spring planting at Royal Park
- ➔ Diary Dates



A little Saltbush
(*Rhagodia spinescens*) is
given a new home

This year was the 16th National Tree Day.

Since 1996, more than 15 million native trees, shrubs and other plants have been planted by over two million volunteers across Australia — and the two events along Moonee Ponds Creek this year certainly made their contribution to this impressive total!

One was held at **Gowanbrae** with the **Gowanbrae Residents Group**. A beautiful, sunny morning ensured a great turn-out with over 35 people coming to help plant up along the new path to the Community Centre off Primula Boulevard. This steep site will soon be covered with native vegetation, and all those wonderful volunteers can feel a glow of pride when they see the results of their hard work!

With the help of Pascoe Vale Girls College on Schools National Tree Day (Friday 29th July), volunteers on National Tree Day (Sunday 31st July) and a follow up planting day with horticulture students from NMIT on 25th August, over 1000 plants were established on this site. Species were selected to provide habitat, cope with the exposed conditions and be consistent with, and complement, plantings at the Community Centre and around the Gowanbrae estate. They included

two tree species: Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*), Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*), shrubs: Rosemary Grevillea (*Grevillea rosmarifolia*), Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) Gold dust Wattle (*Acacia acniacea*), Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*) and Saltbush (*Rhagodia spinescens*), and two understorey plants: Flax lily (*Dianella revolute*) and Spiny Mat Rush (*Lomandra longifolia*).

The other site was at **The Tarnuk**, with the **Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek**. Last year a new site was established, and this year, further planting was undertaken in this area to convert what had been just part of the open grassed area, into a continuation of the woodland next to the Creek. For the second year, a group of enthusiastic girls from Sarwera Youth came to help plant



Girls from Sarwera Youth having done their bit!

along with a group from the Hoa Lu Scouts. However, the ground was so hard it was a struggle to dig into it, and Roger, from Hume Council took volunteers on a ramble along the creek to give everyone a rest from digging. In total 70 keen volunteers planted around 900 local native tube-stock at the site. What a fantastic effort!

Both these events were rounded off by a free barbeque, and everyone went away satisfied at a good job done on a beautiful day!!



Hard at work for National Tree Day
planting at The Tarnuk



Watering is so important...
two year old Nicolas Scalia
takes it very seriously

Our Favourite Frog Lady!

Anna Lanigan has been recording frogs in the Hume and Moreland area for six years. She monitors the Moonee Ponds Creek, its tributaries and the Jacana Wetlands. A favourite spot is the small wetland adjacent to the creek in the Cambridge Gardens estate, Atwood. This beautiful area with its huge river red gums and new wetland vegetation is home to five varieties of frogs: the Common Eastern Froglet, Spotted Marsh Frog, Pobblebonk, the endangered Growling Grass Frog and a favourite of Anna's the wonderful Whistling Tree Frog. To hear her recordings, visit MPCCC.org.

The presence of frogs is a great measure of the health of our waterways and this is one of the main reasons for the **Frog Census** that takes place in Spring and Autumn. Short sound grabs are sent into Melbourne Water along with a site sheet giving the location (Melway reference) and time of day and date. Volunteers can try to estimate the number and variety of frogs heard. It's always fun after the census to get a report sheet to see if you were right.

Volunteering for **Frogwatch** is very rewarding and Anna is happy to be contacted by any aspiring frog detectives. If you don't have time to volunteer just send Anna an email, (alanigan@optusnet.com.au) tell her where you have heard frogs and she'll be happy to visit them so they can croak and be counted! For more information about the Frog Census or Frogwatch visit: www.melbournewater.com.au/frogs

Gowanbrae — changing from boring to beautiful



Looking north to Jacana in 2004 and in 2011



Over the past three issues, *Ponderings* has been celebrating the efforts of Friends groups along the Moonee Ponds Creek to transform their section of Creek-side vegetation. In this issue we have reached Gowanbrae and show the achievements of the Gowanbrae Residents group.

In 2003, the area between Adelaide Boulevard and the Creek was an empty, weedy, flat stretch of grass, through which the Creek meandered. A group of residents in this newly developing suburb decided they wanted to restore the river flats to a bit of their former glory.

With the long term aim of establishing Red Gum woodland riparian vegetation, in the eight years since then, several attempts have been made to establish native vegetation along the Creek.

At first the attrition rate was high. Tube-stock planted amongst the aggressive grass struggled to survive, but later attempts, after the weeds had been sprayed, and the planting beds mulched, were more successful. Now these plots are alive with a variety of trees, shrubs and understorey plants.

The beds either side of the two bridges have been particularly successful, and seven years of growth have seen bare beds changed to dense shrubbery.

Further north, the younger plots are well established, and both sides of the Creek are beginning to be clothed in more appropriate vegetation.

Extensive recent plantings by Melbourne Water inside the banks will also help to boost the Creek's natural character.

Looking north to the Jacana outlet, one of the areas where Melbourne Water has been active in establishing bank-side vegetation.



Next to the southern bridge in 2004 and in 2011



Fred and Christine in front of the area they helped plant in August 2007 and the same



John and Audrey plant a Red Gum in 2007 and this is it now, four years later!



On a very wet day in August 2008, stalwart Gowanbrae Residents started planting in this large bed. Steph showed Audrey how to get a plant out of a pot; and the reward of all these efforts, in 2011, is this flourishing area!



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.

Our 'exciting

sightings' come from Julie Law of the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek — actually she's a friend of the whole creek!

Julie was riding her bike through The Tarnuk recently when she heard some rustling in the long grass next to the creek, she stopped to listen and a little juvenile echidna waddled out of the grass, licking up a few ants on its way, it came to within a metre of her foot! Its bright eyes showed no fear, and it waddled casually back to the grass again! What a fantastic experience!

This one was snapped in The Tarnuk in 2005 —perhaps it's a parent of the one Julie saw!

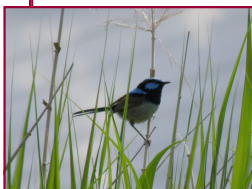


Julie also saw an Australian Pied Cormorant sitting on a branch at the Bent Street–Grundy Street barbeque area ...

...and a Grey Fantail flitting about flashing its fan tail!



Anna Lanigan took this great picture of a Blue Fairy Wren at Jacana



And just for fun—here's an exciting sighting I had in July, on a little island off the coast of the US–Canadian border at a Puffin rookery!



What's happening along the Creek?

Moonee Valley Council report from Michelle Gooding



Moonee Valley City Council is developing a 10 year plan to improve the standard of the Moonee Ponds Creek Path and to address the safety issues raised in the shared path audit.

The plan will estimate the costs and identify potential sources of funding. Projects will include installing a concrete path to replace the damaged bitumen sections.

Five Mile Creek

The Council is applying for a Melbourne Water grant to continue improvement works in Five Mile Creek.

The work will focus on the confluence of Moonee Ponds Creek and Five Mile Creek with removal of weeds and revegetation.

The friends of Five Mile Creek continue to work regularly, and have put in more than 500 plants this year!

Join us on October 23rd from 2 to 4pm for a Walk 'n' Weed. Meeting at the end of Government Road, Essendon.

Debneys Park Launch

On 5 October, Moonee Valley City Council hosted Family Fun in the Park to celebrate the launch of some exciting projects in Flemington. The event, was held at Debneys Park, where Council launched some exciting projects:

- 🌳 Flemington Community Gathering and Play Space

- 🌳 Debneys Park and Moonee Ponds Creek Transformation Project
- 🌳 The Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan

Moreland update from Lorene Arthur



Moreland City Council

With the weather warming up, the community planting season is coming to a close. In conjunction with local planting and school groups, Moreland City Council ran 10 plantings along the creek with more than 130 participants helping to plant over 3000 plants. Including National Tree Day at Gowanbrae.

Planting sites will continue to be maintained by Council contractors to ensure establishment. A big thank you to all volunteers.

The Open Space Design & Development Unit held a Design Workshop for the community and local residents on site at the Bass Street/Moonee Ponds Creek Reserve on Saturday 8 October 2011.

This was to discuss the Landscape improvement works that the Council will be completing in the Reserve once Melbourne Water has finished their project. Although small in number the group gave good feedback regarding seating and revegetation options, and possible entry treatments for the Reserve.

The landscape works are on track to be completed before the end of the year, with supplementary plantings to follow.

Speaking for the Creek *

Tony Smith, President MPCCC

There seems no end of things demanding the voice of the Creek.

Talking to councils: Moonee Valley and Moreland Councils have received funding from the Northern Sewerage Project, for remediation of construction shaft sites at Vanberg Road (city end of the Trail gap) and Bass Street (near Pascoe Vale Road bridge) and the Creek's interests need to be taken into account.

Hume is seeking feedback by November 18 on their Draft Natural Heritage Strategy http://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Whats_On/Your_Say/Draft_Natural_Heritage_Strategy_2011_%E2%80%93_2015 with Community Information Sessions October 24-26.

Moonee Valley have an Ormond Park Master Plan <http://mvcc.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/plans-and-strategies/ormond-park-draft-master-plan.aspx> out for comment until November 4. This includes a new footbridge connecting to Holbrook Reserve in SW Brunswick.

Advocating for the Trail: Works to the Mt Alexander Road bridge over the Creek will close the Trail under the bridge, until mid December, but the new section of Trail past the Ice Sports Centre and the reinstated old trail beyond have restored the connection to the confluence with the Yarra, south of Footscray Road. Ring Road widening works and the consequent Trail disruption generates almost weekly updates, and the flicker of interest in a good Trail connection to Melbourne Airport has again gone cold.

Protecting the Creek: Focus at the northern end of the Creek remains on capping the hazardous waste dump and remediating illegal dumping in a quarry south of Woodlands. You can track the changes over the last couple of years at NearMap.

<http://www.nearmap.com/?ll=-37.670098,144.862826&z=16&t=k&nmd=20110820>. Please register with them to encourage a service which is proving invaluable to voluntary environmental groups.

Voicing concerns: At either end of the Creek, the Cities of Hume and Melbourne are both deep in planning processes with consequences for the Creek. Extreme densification of the industrial edge of West and North Melbourne threatens more overshadowing to a reach already overshadowed by City Link, while plans for a linear park along the Creek on the NW boundary of Docklands are far from settled.

Hume now has no official position on the E14 road reservation above Jacana wetlands and up Yuroke Creek, hopefully contrasting their earlier position that it should be developed to service Craigieburn Town Centre located uncomfortably far from the now electrified railway.

What a difference six weeks can make!

Anna Lanigan took these two pictures of the southern pond at Jacana in late August and early October. From a dry, grassy depression, to a frog filled pool, six weeks is all it has taken to see life come back to the wetlands.

Listen to Anna's recording of the frogs on the MPCCC's website: MPCCC.org



There has been another controlled release of raw sewerage to be diluted by the storm filled stream. The break in the drought having arrived before completion of the Northern Sewerage Project.

Some steps forward: The second stage of the playground at Debneys Park flats, where Bronwyn continues her Creek-inspired work with the local community, is now open. It features a lookout across the top end of what was once called Railway Canal.

Gowanbrae Residents Group are organising Gowanbrae Valley Festival by the Creek on Sunday October 23 <http://gowanbrae.org.au/>

This is also the deadline for trying to put together a network of local groups caring for the environment, to submit an Expression of Interest relating to the state government's commitment to part-fund 60 new local Landcare facilitator positions. <http://www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/funding/victorian-local-landcare-facilitators-initiative-1/fact-sheet> A share of a part time facilitator does not quite replace our full time co-ordinator of times past, but it would be a good step forward. Meanwhile we will most likely need to go to our Annual General Meeting in November without all the changes we might like to make to the MPCCC Rules to reflect our need for wider participation and changing responsibilities.

*A couple of years into a role which is expected to speak for the Creek it only becomes harder not to anthropomorphise, not to speak of the Creek as though it were a sentient being. If it were able to talk, I imagine top of its list might be to again be able to wander freely across its flood plain in millennial torrents.

Diary Dates

Date	What?	When?	Where?	Mel	Council
Sun 23 Oct	Friends of Five Mile Creek, Walk 'n' Weed	2 – 4pm	End of Government Road, Essendon.	28 J1	Moonee Valley
Sun 23 Oct	Spring Planting Day	11am – 3pm	Royal Park, Old Poplar Road, next to the car park	29 G11	Melb
Sun 23 Oct	Gowanbrae Valley Festival	11am – 4pm	Adelaide Boulevard, (see gowanbrae.org.au)	16 D2/3	Moreland
Sun 30 Oct	Go Batty! (see below)	12 till after sunset	Yarra Bend Park, Bellbird Picnic Area	2D E7	
Wed 9 Nov	Bat Count	7.30pm	Yarra Bend Golf Course car park	2D G7	
Wed 7 Dec	Bat Count	8.00pm	Yarra Bend Golf Course car park	2D G7	

2011 is the year of the Bat!









Go Batty !!



**AT YARRA BEND PARK
(BELLBIRD PICNIC AREA)
SUNDAY 30TH OCTOBER**

From 12noon to the fly-out after sunset

-  **LOOK** closely at Grey-Headed Flying Foxes and their babies through telescopes
-  **DISCOVER** how these upside-down animals live
-  **LEARN** about the many different kinds of bats and their environmental importance
-  **TAKE** a tour of the colony (hourly)
-  **MARVEL** at the spectacular fly-out when 10,000+ bats leave the colony after sunset
-  **ENJOY** the beautiful bushland setting, picnic area and walking trails



Bat Count

Thanks to the handful of intrepid counters who made it to the September count – unfortunately there weren't quite enough people to cover all the positions, so just the main ones were covered. I have extrapolated the results for the less busy positions, so I estimate that about 17,000 bats left the colony, which is similar to a recent static count tally of about 19,000 bats. Rod van der Ree

We are holding a "bat day" at the colony at the end of October – (see article) please invite your friends!

The next counts are Weds 9 November with a meeting time of 7:30 pm, & 7 December at 8:00 pm

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 Rod van der Ree, on 0412 562 429 or rvdr@unimelb.edu.au

Spring Planting Day

Celebrate the Year of the Forests at a Spring Planting Day

The best way to appreciate your natural environment is to experience it first-hand. On Spring Planting Day, join us at Royal Park for a free gourmet BBQ, multicultural lunch and other free activities. Experience bush tucker, plant indigenous plants and grasses and make Creeky Creatures – plus much more.

Sunday 23 October, from 11 am to 3pm

Royal Park, Old Poplar Road, next to the Car Park, Melway 29 G11 For more information, call the City of Melbourne 9658 9658 or visit: thatsmelbourne.com.au



Royal Park Winter Bird Count



Hardhead duck



Spotted Pardalote

Twelve people attended the winter survey on 26 June 2011. The weather was fine and sunny but windy.

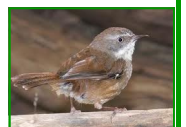
The total number of birds and species recorded on the survey was lower than usual, possibly due to the windy conditions.

Highlights for the day were Hardhead on the wetlands, Spotted Pardalote near the Treatment Pond and in the Skink Habitat and Eastern Spinebill and White-browed Scrubwren on the Escarpment Woodland.

For information on the next survey, please contact info@friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org or Nicole Spillane on 0401 276 948



Eastern Spinebill



White-browed Scrubwren

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!