



autumn 2005

ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Co-ordination Committee



Our beautiful and exciting new site! Westbreen Creek in Pascoe Vale is a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek. There are many treasures to be found here. Why not pay it a visit?

See page 8 for more details

co-ordinator's ramblings...

Well, here it is, our Autumn edition of Ponderings, and just in time too. Although it doesn't really feel like Autumn, does it? My brother, who's moved to the Sunshine Coast, once remarked to me that he got rather tired of the endless days of sunshine. I thought he was crazy at the time, but now, with day after day of perfect cloudless skies, I'm just hankering for some grey clouds and miserable drizzles. I reckon all the plants and animals are too. The rain and floods we had back in February seem like a distant memory, but we still keep on planting in the hope that the rains will come back again. We're halfway through our autumn planting season and once again, I am reminded that volunteers are at the heart of returning the creek

back to it's former glory. We now have over fourteen Friends groups working tirelessly along the creek, with a new one starting up this Autumn. The Friends of Westbreen Creek will be having their inaugural planting on the 6th August. I encourage everyone to come and help out this fledgling group on their first planting day. You'll be amazed, as I was when I first visited, what a special little site it is, in the heart of Pascoe Vale. For more information on Westbreen Creek and the planting day there, see page 8 of this issue. One of last week's topics on ABC Radio's 'Australia Talks Back' was volunteers and the contribution they make to Australian society. There was much discussion on what volunteers contribute, but

also what they get out of volunteering. It was an apt topic in National Volunteers Week. I hope that you get something out of being a creekly volunteer, we certainly couldn't achieve what we do without you. Thanks again to all of our wonderful Ponderings contributors for this season, from Judy Allen and Helen Suter with their regular articles, to all of those who contributed their sightings. See you down the creek!

We need a bean counter!
Our regular bookkeeper, Jim, has flown the coop to Bendigo so we're in urgent need of some sessional bookkeeping assistance. If you're interested please email mel@mpccc.org, or give us a call at the office on 9333 2406.

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platypus playing

Steph's cousin remembers....



"Platypus and an abundance of courting frogs". Could this really have been the Moonee Ponds Creek only 20 years ago?

I have recently returned and am once again living in extremely close proximity to the creek after over a decade away, a decade north of Victoria, in Sydney. Here I had Platypus playing from dawn to dusk along my local creek, where I would play along the waters edge as I had in my youth (well, almost), along what is now a creek I sadly do not instantly recognise as positive.

The Moonee Ponds Creek has changed quite a bit in my short lifetime. Jim Beam now comes in a can and litters its banks, much of the native flora that I played amongst has now been replaced by concrete or neat manicured lawns, and a freeway now runs across the terrain where once only the sure-footed and knowing would tread. The creek was my playground in my youth, a place of wonder

and discovery, a place I remember untamed and teeming with wildlife.

The noise during spring was incredible. Frogs courting and in such abundance, clearly visible to even the unsearching eye.

Magical moments still exist today, although quite different. I still am amazed by our wonderful creek.

Their spawn, in some places, stretched from bank to bank, metres of it wriggling in the sun attracting turtles to the feed. We were wary of snakes in the long grass and often handled blue-tongued lizards and other skinks.

On hot summer days, as a kid, I would swim in those waters to cool off. I took for

granted the fish that surrounded me. Of course there were the introduced species as well, which I thought not a villain back then, foot-long gold fish, rabbits and foxes. It was my wonderland, my "bush", and played a significant role of discovery right up to my teens. The first flowers I ever gave to a girl were born of the creek.

Recently I saw the two eels that I spied daily for a couple of months die, as many others did along our waterways. But, I have also witnessed volunteers

removing rubbish, read of passionate people planting back our native flora, and watched a dozen ducklings disappear underneath their mother as she nested with her partner by the bank at dusk.

a few bugs have gone missing!

By Helen Suter



After our 'very buggy' summer and those torrential rains in February, our survey results show that bug numbers in the Moonee Ponds Creek have somewhat diminished. The bugs that appear to have survived the changes in the water flow are the Side Swimmers or Scuds, Black Fly larvae (they actually stick to the bottom of the creek and feed with their heads bobbing in the fast flowing water), Waterboatmen, Damselfly larvae (Coenagrionidae) and Net Spinning Caddis Fly larvae (Hydropsychidae). We have also found some other Caddis Fly larvae attached to the bottom of rocks within the creek, even in the concrete-channelled Holbrook Reserve. It is highly likely that these rocks have been washed down from other parts of the creek.

It is interesting to note that salinity and pH levels were similar to those recorded prior to the heavy rains. It is possible that pollutants and salty sediments were washed into the creek during the downpours.

We have begun to create our own bug voucher collection. This is a collection of correctly identified bugs, preserved in an ethanol/water mix. The collection assists us with the accurate species identification of common and uncommon bugs that we find in the creek, and also for those that are difficult to identify. The identification of the bugs in the voucher collection will be done with the aid of the Waterwatch co-ordinators based at the MCMC. Each bug, and its details which are written on a piece of paper, are housed in a bottle.

We are all looking forward to our bug numbers building up again. It is expected to be a slow winter, but the promise of a bountiful spring to follow is always there. More info? Contact Helen Suter on 0438 456 602 or helensuter@pacific.net.au.

dates for your diary
sunday, june 19th @ 9am
sunday, july 10th @ 9am
sun, august 14th @ 9am

strathnaver grasslands

big day out!

By Judy Allen

**WATCH GARDENING AUSTRALIA,
ABC, @ 6.30PM ON SATURDAY 4TH
JUNE. DON'T MISS IT!!!**

When the ABC's Gardening Australia program approached me and asked if I would be happy to answer a few questions to camera for a segment with presenter Josh Byrne, I was thrilled. The segment would only run for a total of five minutes, and the topic was to be on 'indigenous plants'. Too easy, or so I thought!



All of us!



*Judy and
Josh
amongst
the
pretties.*

In fact, the easiest part of the day was answering a question about the differences between indigenous Australian plants and native Australian plants. The tricky bit was walking slowly near Josh Byrne, turning a corner, answering three questions about VINC nursery, turning another corner, and at a certain phrase, stopping and pointing. Who would have known that walking and talking could be so hard? I suppose I was expected to look relaxed and knowledgeable as well!

The filming itself took a whole nine hours for the tiny five minutes that goes to air. The grassland remnant at Strathnaver Reserve features as part of the segment. Josh introduced the site whilst standing next to a large remnant River Red Gum. When this is happening, look into the background and see who is walking down the path next to the Moonee Ponds Creek. Perhaps the stars of the next mini series, "The Days of our Moonee Ponds Creek"? Ah, showbiz, its so hard being a star!



*Was that
take 5 or
take 50?!*



*Checking
out the
site.*



*And action!
We love
being on
set.*

many thanks to green corps

The latest Green Corps team have spent part of their 6-month placement undertaking valuable rehabilitation works along the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Dominic, Margaret, Skye, Danny, Grace, Terry, Andrew, Luke and their wonderful team leader Bridget, have undertaken:

- * indigenous plant propagation and seed collection;
- * planting semi-aquatic and aquatic indigenous species;
- * predator-proof fencing removal and installation;
- * woody and herbaceous weed removal;
- * Sugar Glider and Eastern-barred Bandicoot monitoring program;
- * water quality testing;
- * and planting along the Elephant Trail at the Melbourne Zoo.

The team at MPCCC would love to say a huge thanks to the Green Corps team for all their hard work along the creek.



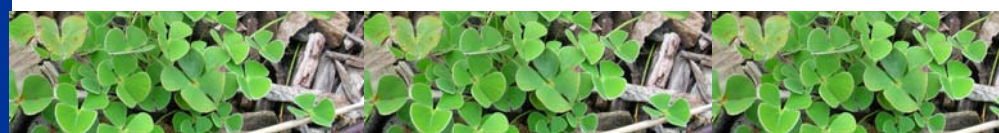
Planting along the Elephant Trail at the Melbourne Zoo.



Hand weeding along the banks of the Moonee Ponds Creek.



The team at Wilson's Prom with Parks Vic rangers.



People Like Us

weed warriors



The Weed Warriors theme is “tell them and they will know, involve them and they will understand”. This theme really does capture the entire vision of the program.

Weed Warriors is an innovative national education and awareness program supported by CRC for Australian Weed Management. It aims to empower the community and bring the weed message to the next generation of land and water managers. The program utilises biological control as the vehicle to introduce weed studies into school curriculum.

The Weed Warriors Program is a six week program that includes a combination of classroom and field-based activities that enable students to answer questions about local weed issues and to contribute to the stewardship of local places.

The program involves students with direct observation and active hands-on participation. In the classroom, the students rear biological control agents (natural enemies) that target local priority weed species. The biological control agents are released by the students into the local environment. A monitoring program is then established and maintained. The weed species targeted vary from region to region. The main programs running in the Port Phillip region are Bridal Creeper and the Bridal Leafhopper and Gorse and the Gorse Spider Mite. In some areas, Patterson's Curse is targeted with the students collecting and re-releasing the Crown Boring Weevil.



Through the study of weeds and their control using natural enemies, students are empowered by the hands-on role they play in the solution. By releasing the bio-control agents and monitoring the establishment and impact of the agents over time, students can see outcomes that are meaningful to them and which have implications to their day-to-day life. Weed Warriors instils in students a sense of connection to, and responsibility for, their natural surrounding that is critical for bringing about lasting change.

The establishment of mentor-student relationships is an important aspect of the program. Schools are linked with key stakeholders in environmental management in their local areas. Students are actively engaged by professionals and community members who strive to inspire students to develop a passion and thirst for knowledge.



More info? Contact Megan McCarthy (Victorian Weed Warriors Co-ordinator) on 9785 0193 or go to www.weeds.crc.org.au

Bridal Creeper and the Bridal Creeper Leafhopper

The natural enemy of Bridal Creeper is the Bridal Creeper Leafhopper. Bridal Creeper Leafhoppers feed and lay eggs on the under side of bridal creeper leaves. The eggs hatch in 2 weeks, with another 2 weeks lapsing before the nymphs reach adulthood. Not long at all! The leafhoppers have sucking mouthparts that pierce the individual cell walls of Bridal Creeper leaves and extract the cell contents. They generally feed on adjacent cells, producing a zigzag damage pattern of white spots. Dense populations of leafhoppers can remove all the cell contents of Bridal Creeper leaves, leaving them completely white.



Adult Bridal Creeper Leafhopper



Damaged leaves

Gorse and Gorse Spider Mites

Gorse Spider Mites live in communal webs on Gorse bushes. The females congregate in a 'feeding colony' and move slowly en masse as they feed along Gorse shoots. The mites have sucking mouthparts that pierce individual cell walls of Gorse foliage and extract the cell contents. This causes the foliage to look bleached and brown. Extensive feeding pressure can kill shoots, reduce plant growth and overall plant biomass and abort the production of flowers. Both eggs and inactive larvae are left behind in the webbing as the colony advances.



Adult Gorse Spider Mite



Spider Mites in communal web

EcoRecycle Vic.



As environmentalists and consumers, we are all aware of the importance and positive benefits of recycling. Australians have embraced the kerbside collection of plastic, glass and paper for recycling by our local councils. But, there is much more that we can do when it comes to recycling.

"We encourage and assist Victorians to reduce solid wastes and to use resources sustainably". "Our vision is that Victorians will lead the world in the sustainable use, recovery and reuse of materials."

EcoRecycle Victoria's vision and purpose are admirable indeed. The organisation began in December 1996, and still continues to work in partnership with businesses, industry, community groups, schools and government departments to meet the challenge of reducing waste. Their programs and services are aimed at creating long-term practical solutions to our growing waste problem by using materials more efficiently to create less waste; and improving recycling systems to prevent waste from going to landfill. Currently, they are developing a strategy for the management of solid waste in Victoria: "Towards Zero Waste: A Materials Efficient Strategy for Victoria".



recycle what where

Recycling Services in Victoria

This is an online directory that lists over 300 Victorian organizations that provide a collection or drop off service for recyclable materials. Simply select the appropriate category, e.g., glass, automotive, electrical equipment, scrap metal, corks, garden materials, timber, clothing, plastics, etc. Press search, and a whole list of companies appear on the screen. Find the one nearest to you, and away you go! I love this page, it answers so many questions!

Waste Wise Shopping Guide

The Waste Wise Shopping Guide, launched in 1999, is an online directory that lists over 160 companies who construct and sell products that are made from recycled content. This page is very similar to the one above. After you have selected your category, scroll through the list of companies until you find what your after. What a fantastic way to purchase products responsibly and support environmentally-conscious companies.

Council Waste and Recycling Services

This link has a listing of all the councils within Victoria, and their associated web links. Find your council, go to their website, and then follow the links. Each council site tells you all the different materials that you can recycle; and when and how.

Household Chemical Collection Timetable

Do you know what to do with unwanted paint, wood varnish, paint stripper, swimming pool chemicals, fluorescent tubes, gas cylinders, medicines, smoke alarms, nail polish, herbicides or batteries? EcoRecycle hold free collection days where you can drop off all these unwanted household items, plus many more. The webpage has a 6-month timetable that lists dates, times and collection addresses.

Disposal and Resource Recovery Facilities Map

The map shows you where all Victorian resource recovery facilities, transfer stations, drop-off facilities, and licensed and unlicensed landfills are located. Each location includes the address and a list of materials accepted.

Did you know?

The waste hierarchy, outlined in the Environment Protection Act 1970, sets an order of preference for dealing with waste. The waste hierarchy (pictured in the triangle above) is avoid, reuse, recycle, energy from waste, treat, contain and dispose. When we follow this hierarchy, we ensure that we are making the best possible use of our precious resources.

EcoRecycle offers a bi-monthly bulletin called Update, which contains EcoRecycle's latest projects and recycling industry developments. You can receive Update free via email. They also have numerous publications available free of charge.

Go to www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au.

And you will learn lots and lots about where you can recycle all different sorts of things.

clean up australia day



At five locations along the creek, our wonderful volunteers helped make this years Clean Up Australia Day a complete success! Many thanks go out to everyone who gave up their Sunday morning and came along to help out.

Westmeadows Creekline Clean Up

The Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek and the Apex Club of Essendon banded together to collect many bags of rubbish from the creek behind Forester Hall. A shower screen, fly screens and a bicycle were also retrieved. The Apex Club then put on a BBQ for lunch. Thanks!

Jacana Wetlands North Clean Up

Melanie and her three hard-working volunteers did a great job with a total of 13 bags of litter. One volunteer was riding his bike past, and decided to stop and help out. He collected plastic bottles along the bike path, riding up and down, filling his bag as he went. As the litter traps were washed away during the floods, litter was in abundance, in particular those light, floatable plastic drink bottles.

Jacana Wetlands South Clean Up

A great day was had by Andrew Cremona from Friends of Jacana Wetlands, and his willing band of volunteers, which included many enthusiastic kids! They collected a marvelous 25 bags of rubbish from the wetlands. Some interesting finds were a tyre and a real estate agents sign.

Cross Keys Reserve Creeky Clean Up

Ten volunteers collected a total of 25 bags of rubbish and recyclable materials from the creek bank and bike path. An old rusty bike with only one lonely tyre was retrieved from the creek. An Australian Hobby gave a glorious exhibition of acrobatics for the volunteers, chasing a flock of starlings. And, there was a possible Water Rat sighting! Wildlife sightings like that certainly give us incentive to continue on.

Flemington Road Bridge Clean Up

Maddie and fourteen wonderful volunteers collected a total of 26 bags of rubbish. Two very unusual items were found: a car bumper bar and a row boat! Maybe somebody decided to catch the train into the city instead, and left their creek-going vessel behind.

Special thanks go out to John, who has been collecting rubbish around Dynon Rd, Flemington. He had accumulated around 100 bags in March. Thanks John!!



Flemington Rd Bridge. This would make cycling to work a challenge.

The Jacana South gang.



Jacana Nth. John, the plastic bottle collector extraordinaire, and his bike!

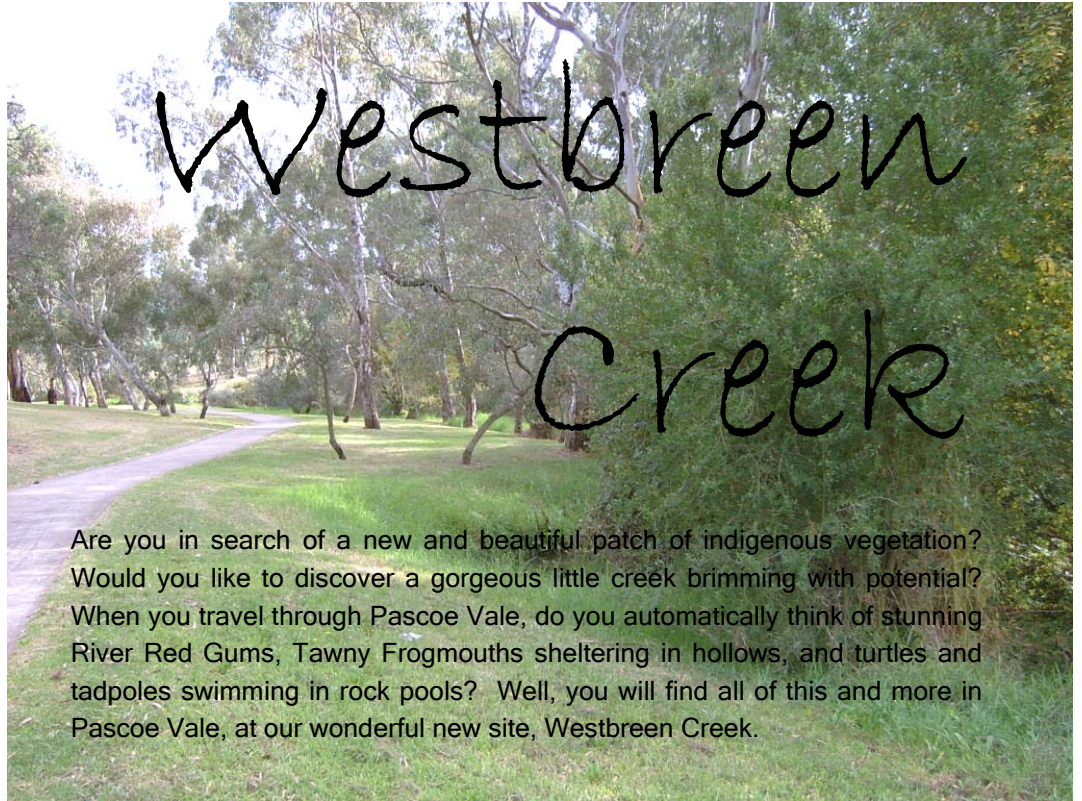
Where Is Westbreen Creek?

Westbreen Creek is a small waterway located in Pascoe Vale. It is in fact a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek. The creek begins its journey at the Northern Golf Club. It then flows down through the K.W. Joyce Reserve, and continues on in a barrel-drain through Gavan Park and Austin Crescent Reserve, eventually ending its travels at the Moonee Ponds Creek near Gaffney St in Pascoe Vale.

What Is To Be Found At Westbreen?

At the creek's headwaters in the Northern Golf Club you will discover remnant River Red Gums that are like apartment buildings for native wildlife! They have many hollows; big, little and all the sizes in between; that provide homes for nesting parrots, Galahs, Kookaburras and Tawny Frogmouths. It is highly likely that Brush-tailed and Ringtail Possums are about too. Shallow rock pools filled with warm water are full of tadpoles who wriggle away when the local kids come looking. The Long-necked Turtle searches for food in the deeper sections, lifting his nostrils just above the waters surface to obtain his vital intake of air, giving his presence away. The canopy created by the beautiful, gnarled eucalypts casts dappled shade across Westbreen Creek and the adjacent pathway, inviting us to wander further.

The area that MPCCC is focusing on is the section that runs through K.W. Joyce Reserve. Beautiful old remnant Sweet Bursaria's, wattles and semi-aquatics are to be found here.



Are you in search of a new and beautiful patch of indigenous vegetation? Would you like to discover a gorgeous little creek brimming with potential? When you travel through Pascoe Vale, do you automatically think of stunning River Red Gums, Tawny Frogmouths sheltering in hollows, and turtles and tadpoles swimming in rock pools? Well, you will find all of this and more in Pascoe Vale, at our wonderful new site, Westbreen Creek.



Urgent Call Out: Frog Friends Wanted!

The resident friendly frogs of Westbreen Creek are searching for some willing volunteers, be they big or small, to help with replanting the creek edge for this fledgling Friends group.

The edge of the creek line is missing some vital elements. The aquatic reeds and groundcovers that provide protection and food for the frogs, tadpoles and turtles need to be replaced.



Ah, to meander along the gentle curve of a creek's edge.....and lose yourself in the loveliness.

You'd be crazy to miss the very first, the inaugural, the absolute beginning, the pioneer, the premier and first edition in the Westbreen Creek reveg. story!

Saturday 6 August
10am – 12 noon
Meet @ K.W. Joyce Reserve,
Pascoe Vale.
Melways ref: 17 A6

The Westmeadows and Upper Moonee Ponds Creek Interpretation Strategy “Bringing the story of Westmeadows and the Moonee Ponds Creek to life”

You may remember from previous articles in Ponderings that MPCCC was busy developing an Interpretation Strategy for the upper Moonee Ponds Creek and historic Westmeadows township. We were fortunate to receive funding from the Tullamarine Landfill Community Fund to enable us to undertake this important project. Well, the good news is that the strategy is almost completed.

The strategy recognises the Westmeadows township and the Moonee Ponds Creek, especially through Wright Street Retarding Basin Reserve and Woodlands Historic Park, as special places: rich in Aboriginal cultural history, post-European settlement history and important ecological values. It aims to communicate these values to the community in the most innovative and engaging ways. The strategy contains a series of detailed recommendations for a variety of interpretive methods such as walking trails with signage, guided tours, environmental activities, festivals and events, art installations, interactive webpage's, educational material and workshops.

One of the primary aims of the strategy is to raise awareness and appreciation of the study area; inspiring, challenging and stimulating people to recognise and understand its significance. The process is much like telling a story, restoring meaning and putting people in a cultural and environmental context. The Strategy will be completed in July 2005 and will be available for comment via the MPCCC website www.mpccc.org. Feedback from the community is welcomed.

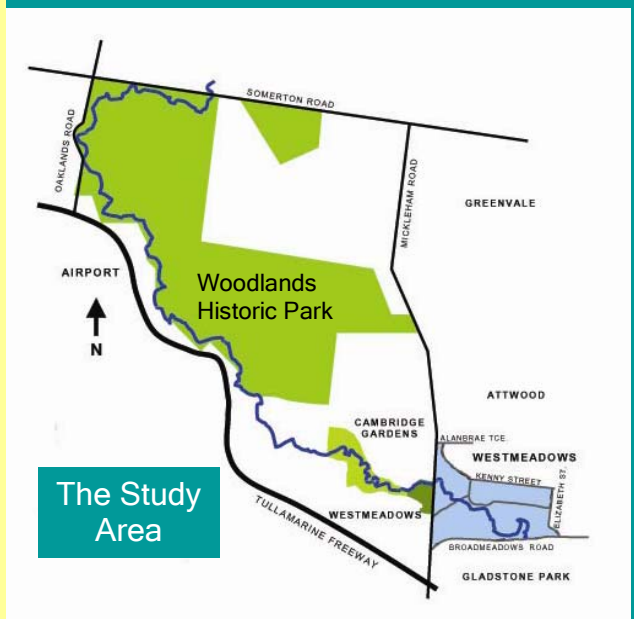
So what's the next step in the process? Well, it is envisaged that some of the major recommendations in the strategy will be considered for funding by Tullamarine Landfill Community Fund. These may include a series of interpretative signage along the Moonee Ponds Creek and within the Westmeadows town centre.

For further details regarding the strategy, please contact Maddie at MPCCC on 93332406 or maddie@mpccc.org.

Good interpretation can leave visitors feeling connected, inspired and alive with curiosity.....



The old Broadmeadows



‘looking at success’ hand-weeding day

In the spring of 2004, the Friends of Strathnaver Reserve planted out 700 indigenous wildflowers and grasses. The soil was shallow, and much drier than was expected. The outlook was grim.

In late summer, March 2005, we returned to the Reserve; and hooray, success! The Everlasting Daisies and Redleg Grass were growing prolifically, even setting seed. The Sweet Hound's Tongue was flowering; its sweet smelling white flowers sitting atop fuzzy leaves. The Weeping Grass had also set seed, with little germinants around the parent plants. Everything had survived. Everything had flowered. Most of the plants had set seed, and some had germinated.

To celebrate our planting success, we hand-weeded Giant Mustard, twelve bags in total, and three bags of Phalaris in preparation for our next planting in August 2005.

For dates of future events at Strathnaver Reserve, contact Stephanie on 9333 2406 or steph@mpccc.org

plant stars of the season

our glorious grasses



Our beautiful, perennial native grasses have their own special cycles of dormancy and active growth. Judy Allen, our wonderful contributing writer, most ably describes these amazing growth strategies.

Native grasses are divided into two groups according to their different photosynthetic pathways. They are called C3 and C4 grasses. The nifty C4 grass has one more step in its photosynthetic pathway. This extra step allows the C4 grasses to photosynthesise at higher temperatures, allowing them to gain energy for longer periods of the day, especially over summer. Most photosynthesis stops at temperatures above 20C, rendering the affected plants into a state of induced dormancy until the correct temperatures return. C4 grasses are still photosynthesising at 35C!

Therefore, C3 grasses are called 'spring growing grasses', and C4 grasses are called 'summer growing grasses', although they do a little growing over spring.

Some common C3 grasses include Wallaby Grass (the ones with white fluffy seed heads), Spear Grass (the ones with fiercely pointed seed heads), and the sadly named but edible Weeping Grass. These species actively grow through late winter and early spring, and flower in late spring. By mid-summer they can look brown and dormant, but stoic.

Some common C4 grasses are Kangaroo Grass (the illustration is an example), Windmill Grass, Silky Blue-grass and Redleg Grass. Kangaroo Grass obtains its name from the beautiful seed head, which might look like a kangaroo foot, or perhaps kangaroos like to lie down in this grass. Kangaroo Grass is green in spring. In summer, the flower heads turn a rich terracotta brown as they ripen, and some of the foliage turns brown also. In winter the whole grass turns either a pale blue or red-purple, perhaps reflecting the truth that they really are tropical plants that have made their way south. All C4 grasses turn blue or red-purple over winter, thus enabling them to capture a different part of the light spectrum, allowing for more efficient photosynthesis over the colder winter months.

What is that extra step that C4 grasses perform? When plants get hot, they close their stomata. Stomata's are small openings found on the underside of the leaf. When the stomata is closed, the plant doesn't lose as much water, which is particularly important over summer. However, with the stomata closed, the



Photosynthesis

plant is unable to obtain carbon dioxide, which they get from the air. Without carbon dioxide, photosynthesis is unable to occur. (I'm sure you all remember that plants use carbon dioxide and water to produce carbohydrates, oxygen and water. Sure!). To sum up, the plant will cease to grow.

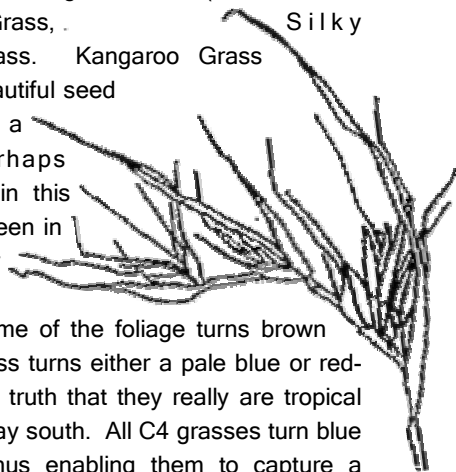
The clever C4 grasses have a different strategy. They collect carbon dioxide from the air and store it in the leaf. When they get hot, they will still close their stomata, but because they have a reserve of stored carbon dioxide in the leaf, they are still able to photosynthesise. And that is their extra step. They collect and store the gas they need, in readiness for the hotter parts of the day.

Therefore, in summer, these highly adapted species of native grass can grow for longer periods during daylight hours, and for most of the hot and dry summer months.

Mel's footnote

I remember when I was at college, a lecturer once remarked that *Themeda* was a bit of a relic from Gondwana days, that it hung on in Victoria when the rest of the rainforest species retreated to the north with the last ice age. Interestingly, this suggests that *Themeda* is not the best adapted to our dry Victorian plains. The thought came to mind again when I stopped by the side of the Newell Highway in northern NSW on a February road trip. I was amazed to see *Themeda* tussocks growing over a metre high and incredibly lush, a far cry from the rusty resilient grass of the western plains of Victoria. Steph says that the *Themeda* seed heads at Western Plains Nursery are almost head height with the unseasonably warm Autumn weather and irrigated nursery conditions.

Did you know? *Themeda* is derived from the Arabic word *Thaemed*, which roughly translates as 'depression in which water lies after rain, subsequently drying in summer'...



winter nature notes



The coldest weather of the year after the solstice does not slow down the fauna as most of the residents are involved in breeding activities to gain an advantage over the spring/summer migrators. The flora begins to awaken with flowering processes being prepared. The blooming of the wattles marks the returning sun from the Northern hemisphere.

JUNE "EARLY WINTER"

Black Cormorant Formations



Early in the morning along the creek you may see flights or "strings" of **Black Cormorants** flying from their overnight roosts to their favourite daytime feeding places. There are 5 kinds of Cormorants in Victoria.

The Toothbrush Caterpillar

The larva of the native **Painted Acacia Moth** looks like an animated toothbrush, carrying four large tufts of bristles on its back. The larvae are found on wattles, apples, pears, roses and pine trees. The female moth is remarkable in that she emerges as a large, wingless, golden brown and furry blob who sits on the cocoon producing a pheromone to attract a winged male.

The First Thornbill Nests

Yellow-rumped Thornbills begin building their double nests in over-hanging leaves of wattles, eucalypts and pines later this month. The bottom chamber has a side entrance and here the eggs are laid. On top is a cup-shaped false nest which many believe is a cuckoo decoy.



The First Mistletoe Flowers

The parasitic **Dropping Mistletoe** has bright red flowers. The red and blue **Mistletoe Bird** is presently feeding on insects around these flowers. When the fruits ripen they will swallow these too. The sticky seeds will pass rapidly through and adhere to another eucalypt branch. Mistletoe is also host to the caterpillars of the **Imperial and Wood White Butterflies**.



Fungi, Fungi, Fungi

With large, shiny, brown caps and a bright, yellow, spongy underside, the many species of **Boletus** are characteristic features of the early Winter period. The native **Giant Bolete** may weight up to 30kg and be almost a metre across its red-brown cap. Its flesh becomes host to fungus flies whose maggots cause rapid putrefaction. The sponge matter underneath is really a dense collection of long, spore-filled tubes.

JULY "WINTER PRE-SPRING"

Possums and Pouches

Brush-tail Possums and **Sugar Gliders** have young in the pouch. The Brushy usually has one young, which stays in the pouch for 4 months. Sugar Gliders usually have two young, who leave the pouch at 8 weeks and remain in the nest for another 8 weeks.

Spitfires Cluster On Eucalypts

Small grey-green grubs with dark heads will now be found in clusters on eucalypt twigs. They are the larvae of the **Sawfly Wasp** and at night they travel to other branches and trees to feed on the leaves.

Here Come The Cuckoos

The attractive fawn-breasted **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** will be arriving soon to give their descending trilling call. Soon to follow will be the larger and plainer **Pallid Cuckoo**, with its chromatic scale call.



A series of rapid rising inflection whistles will reveal the small but beautiful **Shining Bronze-cuckoo**, they love to eat caterpillars. Each of these cuckoos has a barred tail and each has the habit of laying eggs in other birds nests.

Wattles Highlight The New Season



Last century, Barak, the aboriginal chief of the Wurundjeri tribe along the Yarra River, declared a wish to die when the wattles bloomed. Many **wattles** begin blooming this month, they include Golden, Hedge, Myrtle, Varnish, Silver, Cootamundra and Sallow.

Magpies Collect Nesting Materials

Many **Magpie** pairs are already building their large stick nests. Territory advertising and rigorous defence of territory boundaries has been going on for some time now. One or two females and some of the juvenile females of last years brood are allowed to stay with the one dominant male. Some will start to lay eggs towards the end of this month. There are usually 3 to 5 pale green/blue eggs, blotched with brown.



AUGUST "PRE-SPRING"

Spiders Love Wattles



Wattle flowers provide safe havens and feeding places for many species of colorful spiders such as **Crab, Flower** and **Theridion spiders** and the hatchlings of the **Orb Spider**. Use your magnifying glass to count the number and arrangement patterns of their eyes! Different families have different eye patterns.

Ibis Build Nesting Platforms



Straw-necked and **Australian White Ibis** are now building their nests which are compact shallow cups of sticks and reeds, in trampled Cumbungi and reeds, in wetlands and farm dams. The rains of winter provide fresh flows of water to the wetlands and dams. Chicks will soon appear.

Pardalotes Investigate Burrow Sites

The beautiful little **Spotted Pardalotes** are now investigating roadside banks for potential nesting sites. These canopy-feeding birds come to the ground at this time to build nests at the end of long nesting tunnels. The related **Striated Pardalotes** nest much later in holes and spouts of old eucalypts and sometimes in the eaves of houses.



Cup Fungi Under Eucalypts

At the foot of large eucalypts in woodlands or wet gullies you will find several species of the attractive **Disc** or **Cup Fungi**. They come in colours of orange, yellow, brown, pink or grey. Raindrops help to disperse the spores.



Now This Would Be Nice Wouldn't It!

Bandicoots are active at this time of year in our larger bushland remnants and national parks. Maybe you will see one on your next camping holiday to one of our national parks.



autumn sightings

Exciting news was conveyed to us via Jessica Miller, Waterwatch Co-ordinator with MCMC. Dianne Phillips and students from Flemington Primary School alerted Jessica to some fish strandings in the sediment pond alongside the CityLink Flemington Road off-ramp on the creek just before Easter. Jessica identified the fish as the native Common Galaxias. "It is fantastic to see that despite the nature of the creek at that point (concrete channel), fish are still moving up and down the waterway and native ones too!", said Jessica. It has been recommended that the effect of the sediment drain outlet or barrier on native migratory fish be investigated. For the Melbourne Water report contact deb@mpccc.org or for more info on native fish go to www.nativefish.asn.au



The resident Swamp or Black Wallaby has been seen on the creek at Wright St, Westmeadows, early on a late March morning.

A Lined Earless Dragon was seen at the Woodlands depot by Mel and Steph.



A most splendid fellow was spotted at a little farm dam on Somerton Road in Greenvale by Deb and Steph. It was a Yellow-billed Spoonbill. He foraged in the muddy waters with his wide bill.

The Easter weekend at Westbreen Creek in Pascoe Vale was a treasure trove of all things wet and slimy. Jed and his three brothers from Pascoe Vale Primary School found two medium sized yabbies, multiple Common Froglets and ten tadpoles (with



legs and without!). Thanks go out to the four boys and their collection nets and buckets. All were returned to the creek after much excitement (the wildlife that is).

A Brown Snake! Mel warily backed away from a very large Brown Snake on the creek in Westmeadows.



An Orb Weaver Spider has been entertaining Bev Lamborn with its nightly web construction on her verandah.

Wendy Graham from Strathmore has sent us a lovely letter. Willie Wagtails (a pair nested on her clothesline this year), Magpie-larks, Red Wattlebirds, New Holland Honeyeaters and White-plumed Honeyeaters all call her garden home. She writes, "However, on 19th Feb this year a glorious first. A pair of Crested Shrike-tits. A flash of olive, yellow and black caught my eye and I looked up thinking it was a New Holland Honeyeater. But, no. Poking around under loose bark on the trunk of a *Euc. scorparia* was a little bird with a yellow breast, distinctive black and white stripes across its head and an erect black crest". Well done Wendy! According to Pizzey and Knight, they are a rare species.

Wayne Right of Gladstone Park also saw a Crested Shrike-tit, hopping around his bird bath.



...upcoming events

Farmers' Market @ Collingwood Children's Farm
 Saturday 11 June
 Saturday 9 July
 Saturday 13 August
 8.00 am

Victorian producers bring their best, freshest, low chemical produce. Try organic seasonal fruit and vegetables. Or maybe olive oil, eggs, bread, jams, honey, free range chooks, venison, rabbits, buffalo, smoked fish and eel.

The Children's Farm is at the end of St. Heliers St, Abbotsford.
 Melways ref: 44 G5

More info?
 p: 9417 5806
 e: enquiry@farm.org.au
 w: www.farm.org.au

Beth Gott Broadmeadows and District Garden Club
 Tuesday 14 June
 7.30pm

This inspirational speaker will talk about Aboriginal culture and the western plains.

Meet at Wiseman House, Glenroy (rear of the old Church of England).
 Melways ref: 16 J2

More info?
 p: Bev Lamborn on 9338 4076.

Baking Group @ CERES
 Saturday 2 July
 Saturday 6 August
 2.30pm

Fire up the cob oven! A Baking Group meets regularly at the CERES Community Oven, to encourage the spirit of sharing, and to bring different parts of the community together to celebrate the common experience of food and life. Bring along food, drink, anything you want baked in the oven, home-made produce to share, musical instruments and tools of other creative pursuits.

More info?
 p: Panyota Miller on 9489 6839
 w: www.ceres.org.au

Planet Ark National Tree Day
 Sunday 31 July
 8.00am

July is the month for a tree spree. The 10th annual National Tree Day is on again. Last year's Tree Day saw 250,000 volunteers plant over a million trees.

Join MPCCC for another planting extravaganza at Wright St Reserve.
 Melways ref: 5 G5

More info?
 p: MPCCC on 9333 2406 or Planet Ark on (02) 9251 3444
 e: steph@mpccc.org or admin@planetark.com
 w: www.planetark.com

Ongoing Bird Atlassing Birds Australia

Birds Australia needs atlasers to assist in the ongoing Atlas project. The Atlas data provides information on the distribution and relative abundance of each bird species, indicating how these have changed over time, and can provide information on the effects of land management on particular bird groups.

All you have to do is make a list of birds on an Atlas Record Form whenever you are bird watching. This can be at any time, and at any location in Australia.

More info?
 p: Michelle Sweeney on 9882 2622
www.birdsaustralia.com.au