



winter 2004 ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Co-ordination Committee



The Autumn Planting Season has enticed many a volunteer down to the creek over the past 3 months, like these folk from the Brunswick South-West Planters. Maybe it was the joy of planting...or perhaps the promise of hot soup! Either way, we've had an outstanding season! **See pages 4-6 for more...**

co-ordinators ramblings...

Hi Everyone,
Yes, another Ponderings hits the door steps. We've had a great Autumn effort and once again all of us here at MPCCC are heartened by the hard work of all our volunteers. We have a three page spread in this edition to celebrate—see page 4 for all the details. This coming Spring brings some changes to the shores of MPCCC—we say goodbye to Maddie for six whole months as she traverses the globe. Thanks Maddie, for all your dedication & heart felt efforts in changing the way we look (& see things) here at MPCCC. I'll be away most of the Spring season too, but our planting program will be left in the capable hands of Steph, Natasha, Sarah & Penny. The first exciting planting of the season will be part of the "Trees 'n' Tunes" extravaganza on National Tree Day—Sunday 25th July. For more details on this day, see

page 8. We'd like to thank our generous sponsors, CityLink (for sponsoring the solar powered music component of the day) and Westmeadows Country Bakery (for providing yummy afternoon tea treats) for helping make this day even more special. Speaking of helping hands, we'd also like to acknowledge the help of the 'Accessorise 'girls', who've cheerfully been doing lots of planting flier copying & distribution as part of their community service work. Our Spring Planting Calendar has a few extra special events this season, including wildflower walks. Thanks Judy Allen (FO Strathnaver) and Jeff Triplett (FO Woodlands Historic Park) for running these events with us. We'll also be hosting a presentation by the Wilderness Society on Tasmanian Forests, including a spectacular slide show. This will be held at the depot here at Woodlands on

Thursday 5th August. To RSVP, or for more info, call Steph at the depot, or email to steph@mpccc.org And now for my final soapbox effort. We recently attended the Victorian Landcare Forum, where we heard many different stories of landcare experiences, but one particular theme stood out to me, and that was the real lack of partnerships with indigenous groups. The positive side of the story was that there was a lot of willingness at the forum to change this. We were also lucky enough to meet & talk recently with Norm Hunter, a local Ganung Willam Balluk elder, as part of our research for our interpretation strategy. It highlighted to me the need to start building partnerships with local indigenous groups & I'd like to see us do this in the next year. If anyone has any ideas about this, I'd love to hear from you.

In this issue

Page 2
WaterWatch
Update

Feathering the
Nest



Page 3

Sweet Memories
of the Creek

Page 4 - 6

Autumn Planting
Season

Page 7

Backyard Thugs
Gazania mania!

Plant Stars of the
Season
Native
Groundcover
alternatives

Page 8

Winter Sightings
Have you seen a
Hoary Headed
Grebe?

Upcoming Events

:: winter water watch

cold, wet and windy

By Helen Suter

Winter has proven to be cold, wet and windy for both water monitors and bugs in the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Air and water temperatures during our July monitoring day both peaked at 10°C. Despite the cold air temperature we ventured out but have been unable to find such enthusiastic bugs.

The stream condition score (based on the number and types of bugs found) has dropped at all sites along the creek with the increased winter flows and decreased temperatures. The most active bug that we have found is the Caddisfly Larvae, the ones that have stick-like cases around

them, and these are considered to be one of the more sensitive bugs (bug score 7). At Jacana Reserve (Site 1) we found 80 Caddisfly Larvae in our June sampling, so that is a good sign. Very small freshwater segmented worms do also not seem to mind the cold.

The upside of the increased winter rainfall on the creek is that there has been a bit of a flushing out of the system. The most obvious change has been that the salinity has dropped in the creek, although it is still considered high. Turbidity has also increased with the increase in flow rate after recent heavy rains.

One trend that has started to develop is that pH increases downstream in the creek and is likely to be due to the addition of detergents and other alkaline material in stormwater. Another interesting trend is that phosphorus levels at Jacana Site 2,

below the retarding basin, have been higher than at the other sites. We are unsure of the reason why at this stage. The fact that phosphorus levels dropped downstream is a good sign indicating that phosphorus is being adsorbed onto the creek sediments and taken up by instream vegetation as the water flows towards the Yarra River.

Thanks again to all those enthusiastic water monitors, Daniel, Patricia, Noni, Carolyn and Jenny who endured the icy winter winds that sweep along the creek. If anyone else is interested in coming along to a sampling day (it's not that cold really) to see what we get up to then please contact me on hsuter@mira.net or MPCCC on 9333 2406.

Regular water watch updates can also be found on our website www.mpccc.org

Springtime in gardens brings with it a surge of life, with lots of native plants in flower, an increase in insect activity, and birds selecting and preparing their nesting sites.



feathering the nest

By Judy Allen

To assist birds during this breeding season you could put out an offering of nesting material. Each bird species prefers its own nesting material but if you offer a range of materials you will find out what is popular—and see which birds are breeding in your area. Here's some suggestions for nesting materials:



Feathers and fur are soft and provide insulation to keep the eggs warm. Carpet underlay and jute mat are also useful as insulation in nests.

Threads and fabric Short lengths of threads and fabrics can be woven into nests, and used as lining. Don't use nylon or polyester as the ends may get wrapped around the chicks legs.

Bark strips and dead grass are good for lining nests. Consider planting grasses such as Tussock grass and Kangaroo grass for next years nesting season.



Spider web is often used to stick these materials together, so you might find birds hovering around your windows at this time.

A nice way of presenting these offerings is to put them all in an onion bag, or open weave mesh bag, and hang it from a tree, and just watch birds collecting these treasures from your family to theirs.



sweet memories of the creek



The fondest memories of being a kid are of rolling down grassy hills and hours spent making daisy-chain crowns. Natural settings such as the Moonee Ponds Creek are important places for playing out our childhoods, however as Mimi Tamburrino recalls they are not always safe from encroaching development.

We migrated from Italy and arrived at Station Pier, Port Melbourne on Good Friday 4th April, 1958. After searching for the ideal suburb to live in we immediately fell in love with Moonee Ponds and it was here that we happily resided for almost a decade. Yet by the late 1960s my father decided that a new house in a new area would be better for us and so we moved to Lot 1 (no.95) Augustine Terrace, Glenroy West. We relocated from McPherson Street, Moonee Ponds, which my mother called “the heart of civilisation” to the “end of the world - far away from everybody we knew”. Our Italian friends were unable to visit because they didn’t know where

‘ We would sit on top of a hill and roll down the valley to the creek and wet our feet in its clear water. We felt like the only two people in this paradise ’

appeared to us as if on top of a mountain, simply because to the west there was absolutely nothing but valleys, rolling hills and of course the Moonee Ponds Creek. The Moonee Ponds Creek was lush with vegetation (heaps of thistles), wild and beautiful. Every time my sister and I would walk with our little brother to the creek, native birds would fly off in clusters. My brother with his little mates; the Elveys, grew up near the creek. They would go down to get yabbies and come back home with a frog or two, to my mum’s horror.

There were rabbits aplenty running wild all over the place. Behind our house, as far as the eye could see (right over to

Glenroy was and they didn’t have cars to get there.

It was a new suburb with no roads, no sewage, and few services, but with open spaces that took your breath away. The Augustine Terrace of then

the other side of the valley, which is now all of the developed Gladstone Park) there was nothing but lush green rolling valleys right up until the creek which became sprinkled with yellow wild daisies during springtime. My sister and I would make necklaces of daisy-chains and crowns for our heads in those overwhelming fields of yellow daisies.

We would sit on top of a hill (which is now surrounded by Ridgeway Avenue and Moonee Boulevard - no streets existed then) and roll down the valley to the creek and wet our feet in its clear water. There were stepping stones that we would use to get to the other side. It was great fun. We felt like the only two people in this ‘paradise’. Whether it was by design or simply by accident, whenever Frances and I went roaming down the valley to the creek there was no one else but us two small sisters.

I treasure the memories of a childhood spent playing along the banks of the Moonee Ponds Creek. To this

day I can recall with vivid clarity the time my younger brother got his pants full with mud. It was my mother who washed them on the banks of the creek in its clear water and laid them on a bush and within no time the sun had dried them up.

By the end of 1965 the housing development picked up it’s pace and from our kitchen window we could see earthmovers re-shaping the valley, digging deep into the side of our favourite hill. We could no longer see all the way down to the creek anymore. Although new neighbours and people moving in was cause for some excitement my Dad in particular hated the new developments with a passion. He growled and said “we cannot be at peace anymore”. The creek was soon transformed into a dumping place for old car parts and rubbish. We now had to be careful when we walked along the creek because there was all sorts of debris including discarded prams and old tyres. It made us incredibly sad and even angry, in a way, that people could be capable of such a thing.

The valley has now been completely transformed. The Moonee Ponds Creek is again calling and welcoming anyone who wants to wander along its banks and enjoy the serenity of the sound of its water streaming slowly along, just as I remember the sound of the water gently moving along the creek as a child. I feel a deep sense of nostalgia when I think of the creek behind our house in Glenroy, and it’s difficult for me to describe the overwhelming openness, the clean fresh air and the depth of its natural beauty.

friends of jacana wetlands

Jacana wetlands, glenroy

The Autumn planting season kicked off on the 3rd of April at the ever transforming Jacana Wetlands!

17 pairs of hands planted 200 tube stock into 3 jute matted areas alongside the Creek. They then reunited on the 23rd of May and 18 people continued planting and guarding 145 trees and shrubs in the Wallaby Area.



Thomas and Carmen hard at work harvesting a bunch of Brassica



This happy crew are hard at it beautifying the Jacana Wetlands.

Jessica Miller from Waterwatch also came along for the day, she showed willing volunteers some of the invertebrates found within the wetlands and the creek. Check out our regular Waterwatch update on Pg 2 and discover some of the other finds...

The FO Jacana have also been busy during the two 'Spruce Up' days held this season. Volunteers hand weeded around existing plantings and in side tree-guards, another great way to get together and be involved along the creek!

autumn planting season

The Autumn Planting Season has been a great success, many new faces have been involved in our community days as well as our many regular dedicated volunteers.

16 community plantings and two school group plantings give a grand total of 18 Planting Days. All up there were 338 pairs of hands that weeded and planted 4,833 trees, shrubs and groundcovers!

Thankyou to everyone who has come along and joined in for your great support and smiles. A special Thank-you goes out to Elissa for handing over such a warm and friendly program. You've done a great job and it's been a delight! And many thanks to our friendly planting day staff Natasha, Deb, Sarah and Penny. Look forward to seeing you all again in Spring!

Stephanie

boeing reserve troopers

strathmore

The Troopers are expanding the efforts of last season with the jute mat area near the Trestle Bridge



Planting in the sunshine at Boeing Reserve

This group met on 17th April and 11 volunteers planted 280 plants including species of wildflowers. A visit to this bed in Spring should be a colourful

experience! Many thanks to Des who kindly offered the hard workers a few of his home grown chillies to take home.

On the 6th June the group scaled the steeper part of the planting site, planting 200 tubestock between 8 volunteers. This site is coming along beautifully! Look out for a few new park benches that Moonee Valley

Council has donated to the area. Friends Group leader Arun and MPCCC have chosen some pleasing spots to install them.

friends of lower moonee ponds creek

This site always seems to have an aquatic bird or two foraging through the mud or waiting motionless on the bank.



Sonya employs her special yogic planting technique

200 tubestock went into the ground as infill planting and the Friends Group did a fine job of planting up a rather steep section of the bed too. This section is getting to be rather thick, which among other things, is great for providing birds with cosy thickets to nest in.

8 enthusiastic volunteers returned to the site on May 30th and their great efforts resulted in another 200 plants being planted in the mulch beds.



Humans and furries alike find bugs fascinating!

gowanbrae residents

Two great days planting alongside the South footbridge at Gowanbrae.

We planted 465 tubestock and grass cells on May 2nd and Jessica Miller from Waterwatch joined the day, exploring and identifying the invertebrates found in the area. The 20th June had 10 people planting 309 tubestock and grass cells. A terrific effort by all.

A big thankyou to Scott for organising the mulch for these beds.

friends of attwood creek

Beautiful remnant Red Gums line this tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek,

and the two families who came along to the planting day on the 18th April did a great job of staking and guarding 40 shrubs along the creek bank.

Although we will not be having a planting along this section of the creek during Spring, we will certainly be back and rearing to go next Autumn. A big Thankyou to Yvonne for getting this Friends Group up and running again!



This is how you do it Dad!

strath-oak planters *strathmore*

Planting out mulch beds on the Strathmore side of the creek was the flavour of the day on the 24th April.

300 tubestock were planted by 10 volunteers, complementing the work done last season in the mulch beds alongside the bike path. Luckily the rain held off during the planting, but welcomed the newly planted tubestock with a shower after everyone had packed up and headed home. Good one Mother Nature!!

bass street

The beautiful Bass Street beds were planted out on the 15th May with 10 busy pairs of hands planting 220 tubestock. These beds are looking fantastic, especially in the light of the sunny Autumn day that we planted in! Our new lunchtime menu of homemade hot soup and crusty bread went down very well for its first appearance!



Steph in her extended Bass Street backyard

essendon residents

After finally preparing a site for this enthusiastic group (Melbourne Water are doing some works along the creek where we first intended to plant), 14 creek enthusiasts

came along and planted 250 tubestock. After a soup explosion in the trailer was tamed and volunteers filled their bellies, we came up with a few names for this group, although we didn't quite get a chance to vote on one! We will get around to it come Spring time. Many Thanks to Dennis Torpy and his sons for planting and tree-guarding 25 plants next to their efforts from last year between Hopetoun Avenue and the creek.



Lindsay and April experience planting joy in Essendon.

friends of upper moonee ponds creek

It was a lovely afternoon on May the 30th and 8 volunteers arrived at Wright Street in Westmeadows to plant tubestock and grass cells while overlooking the creek and, of course, tasting Julies' fresh scones! 100 Poa cells were planted alongside the bank and 150 tubestock were staked and guarded, adding to the fabulous work that has been happening at this spectacular site in the past. A further 150 tubes and 300 cells were planted by Julie and Kim later on.

Thankyou to Anna from Hume City Council for organising this planting.

brunswick south-west planters



Afternoon tea enjoyed by all the Brunswick South-West planting team after a good days work! This site has been transformed into a haven of green over the years .

This amazing group, formally know as the Tullamarine Freeway Action Group, have been at it along the creek for the past 7 years, and wow do they have some drive!! MPCCC's trusty planting trailer was a little late to our first planting together due to a flat battery in our hire car, but when we finally arrived everyone was hard at it, pulling weeds and spreading mulch! We put in 214 plants among 12 people & pulled out a HUGE pile of weeds that Lee Scerri from Moreland City Council happily removed later on.

13 people came along to the next planting day on the 26th June and 240 tubestock were planted in just under an hour. A fantastic effort by all! A big thank you to Audrey and Michael for their great ideas and ongoing support.

lowther hall , may 28th

Lowther Hall was also involved with planting mulch beds at the Jacana Wetlands this season. With dark clouds looming on the horizon, the 40 grade 4 girls launched straight into the planting, getting all 310 tubestock into the ground in record time! A few spatters of rain didn't deter the students or the parents who were well equipped with gumboots & rain jackets. After doing a lap around the wetlands and recording many sights and features, the hungry team enjoyed a BBQ, finishing off just as the rain began to fall.



A little bit of rain didn't stop these waether -proof Lowther Hall girls

school-arama at jacana! north essendon primary school

85 Grade 3's from Essendon North Primary, boarded buses to Jacana Wetlands, donned their sunhats and charged down the slope to the planting site where the MPCCC staff

The group were ready and rearing to go and split up into their three activity groups to explore the Jacana Wetlands in different ways. Jess Miller brought along her trusty Waterwatch Trolley and collected water samples for the Grade 3's to observe and identify. In the meantime the other group was out exploring the wetlands and the Jacana Valley. While this was happening another group were with MPCCC staff planting out grasses,

shrubs and trees. Many hoots of "I Love Planting!" and "Would anybody like some help?" were heard coming from the students who worked so enthusiastically and well together. All groups got a chance to rotate and experience the many things this special site has to offer. We planted 600 tubestock on the day, a fantastic effort by all students, teachers and parents who were involved on this balmy day.

A special Thankyou to Emma, Leslie and all the teachers, students and parents at Essendon North Primary and Lowther Hall for their wonderful ideas and enthusiasm that make these days so successful and fun.



Essendon North Primary girls inspect the watery wonders at Jacana Wetlands

strathnaver reserve

Although our planting day was cancelled this season, a lot of work has been happening on weekends at this special site, at the busy hands of Judy and the other volunteers she invites along! The detailed work of weeding out nasties from amongst the many remnant species at Strathnaver Reserve is a fine art. How far does the root go down? How many bulbs need to be removed to ensure the weed does not return? Is this an indigenous plant or an exotic weed? Check out the Spring calendar for the date of the Wildflower Walk at Strathnaver and get to know some of the little beauties that are still surviving along the creek.

:: backyard thugs

gazania mania

Who doesn't want a garden bursting with colour? Resist the temptation & investigate! Those exotic beauties can hide runaway potential.

Many of us want to have a garden that is both beautiful and sufficiently robust to tolerate the harsh Australian climate, so it's not surprising that many people choose to grow plants from other parts of the world such as South Africa or the Mediterranean with similarly severe climates. Unfortunately, as many of these plants have already adapted to extreme conditions, sometimes more than our own, they can take off with a vengeance in our gardens. In no time they seem to jump the back fence like a tomcat on a moon lit night only to run rampant in our bush.

There are many examples of garden plants gone loose, you just have to look at our beloved Moonee Ponds Creek. What with the dreaded Kikuyu, (which was the feature of an exposé in the last edition of *Ponderings*), to Morning Glory with its magnificent magenta parasol flowers, which literally pulls the fence down to make it's great escape. To the more innocent-looking Gazania with its beautiful sun-ray flowers, that come in a range of vibrant yellow and orange hues.

But the beauty of these exotic species can hide quite sinister potential. You guessed it that dreaded 'w' word again...WEEDS! Unfortunately that beautiful carpet of Gazanias you have in the garden also poses a serious environmental threat. Like most daisy-like flowers it's seeds are airborne, being swept up by even the slightest of breezes. So it's not surprising that we can find Gazania's far down by the creek, especially in those dry and barren areas where nothing else seems to grow. They seem innocent but like most weeds they never seem to stay put and before long they're in our natural areas competing against our beautiful wildflowers.

So what can the responsible gardener do to help protect our native flora? See our plant stars for some native alternatives...

:: groundcover alternatives

plant stars of the season



Common Everlasting

This season we're focusing on some beautiful groundcovers that may be great substitutes to use instead of that plant thug the Gazania (our weed for this issue). They belong to the same family as the Gazania - Asteraceae - and are our own 'little rays of sunshine'. Some are more vigorous than others, so we'll start with the toughies first:

Brachyscome multifida (Cut-leaf Daisy) and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (Common Everlasting). Both can form quite dense mats but are very different in appearance otherwise. Cut-leaf daisy is a well known plant that has many cultivars (specifically bred strains with

special features, such as different flower colours). As its name suggests, it has very finely divided bright green leaves - a bit like Chamomile, but is more upright in habit. It usually bears a proliferation of lilac 'daisy ray' flowers throughout the year.

Common everlasting couldn't be more different in appearance, with soft grey foliage & bright yellow button flowers held on slender stems. Many of you may know it from our planting days, where it is used often due its drought tolerant attributes. In fact, both Cut-leaf Daisy & Common Everlasting would make a lovely combination in the garden, especially planted en masse.

A little more delicate, but no less lovely, are *Calocephalus lacteus* (Milky Beauty Heads) and *Brachyscome basaltica* (Basalt Daisy), two charming grassland plants that like the moist microclimates in grasslands called Gilgai.

Milky Beauty Heads has lovely soft fine grey foliage that forms quite a thick mat, and soft whitish flower heads.

Basalt Daisy has small finely divided bright green leaves and white daisy ray flowers on tall slender stalks. Both would fill a boggy spot in the garden nicely.

quick gardening guide

Cut-leaf Daisy

Form: Perennial herb, 20-40cm in height
Growing tip: Thrives in a full sun position (but can tolerate partial shade) on a range of soil types that are well-drained and moist.

Basalt Daisy

Form: Perennial herb up to 50cm in height
Growing tip: Enjoys full or partial sun locations in wet, poorly-drained soils (ideal for ponds, bogs, marshes).

Common Everlasting

Form: Perennial herb up to 60cm in height
Growing tip: Performs well in most gardens but best in open locations with full midday sun in soils with good drainage.

Milky Beauty Heads

Form: Perennial herb up to 70cm in height
Growing tip: Ideal for open gardens in cooler climates (this species is frost-resistant) in moist soils.

winter sightings

We have sightings from all along the creek this season & we expect more with the coming spring. As usual, birds have been seen aplenty. It's great to see such diversity of birdlife out there.

First up, Rob Ellis (our new City of Melbourne Rep) sighted some Hoary Headed Grebe chicklets and our lovely mascot, the Purple Swamphen, along the creek at West Melbourne.

Two beautiful black swans have graced the Jacana Wetlands in recent months. Sadly,

one of these was the victim of predators. Flame Robins, the harbingers of Winter, have been seen recently at Woodlands Historic Park.

Many birds of prey have been sighted in recent months, including a Peregrine Falcon outside the shops at Westmeadows

(thanks Deb), Whistling Kites outside our depot here at Woodlands & Wedge Tail Eagles around Mickleham Road, Greenvale. Excitingly, we've had reports of other wildlife along the creek too, including Yabbies caught by Strathmore Primary School (& then released again of course!) and an Echidna behind a house at Gowanbrae.

Our last recent sighting suggests those stray shopping trolleys that find their way into the creek may have some benefit - Louise Whiting has sighted eels hanging out in a shopping trolley in the creek near Cross Keys Reserve.

Thanks to Alan Flack, Friends of Brunswick South West Planters, for his excellent bird sighting lists. These can now be viewed on our website at www.mpccc.org.



Flame Robin



Hoary Headed Grebe



Black Swan



Purple Swamphen

...upcoming events

Trees 'n' Tunes

National Tree Day
25th July

This day promises to be bigger than Ben Hur this year. There'll be planting, music all day, lovely free food as well as water-watch, the ACE stormwater trailer & walks 'n' talks. Come & learn more about the upper catchment of Moonee Ponds Creek & enjoy a social day.

More details in the flyer enclosed with this newsletter.

Spring Planting Season

As soon as one season ends, another one starts! We've got another exciting season planned for Spring, starting with Friends of Jacana Wetlands on Sunday the 8th of August. Seventeen events are planned for this season, including wildflower walks at Strathnaver Reserve & Woodlands Historic Park. See our calendar for all the details, which are also available at www.mpccc.org

National Tree Day

Fanny Street Reserve
25th July

A Community Tree Planting & BBQ will be held to celebrate National Tree Day on 25th July at Fanny Street Reserve Moonee Ponds. The event starts at 11.30am. Come & meet local Moonee Valley Councillor & MPCCC member, Lydia Kauzlaric. This event is organised by Moonee Valley City Council.

For more details, call Simon Bennett at MVCC, on 9243 8846.

Advanced Waterwatch Training

Saturday 24th July

Brush up on your waterwatch skills at this advanced workshop for regular waterwatchers & educators. Venue: CERES Education Centre 3 Lee Street East Brunswick. Time: 9am to 4pm. Bookings Essential! Contact Jess Miller at MCMC on 9380 8199 or ww@mcmmc.org.au.

Frog Watch

Did you know the threatened Growling Grass Frog lives in the Moonee Ponds Creek?

Find out about this creature & others by taking part in the Melbourne Water Frog Census this Spring. This census is primarily supported by volunteers & contributes valuable information that helps us protect frog populations, as well as telling us something about the health of our creek. Commencing soon. For more information or to register, visit <http://frogs.melbournewater.com.au> or call Melbourne Water on 131 722.