



autumn 2006 ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds
Creek Co-ordination Committee



editor's ramblings...

Hello Creek Dwellers,

You may notice, and be asking, where is the co-ordinator's ramblings? Why does it say editor's ramblings?

Melanie has now finished up as the Co-ordinator, and unfortunately, a replacement has not been found as yet. The position is currently being advertised.

Tony Faithfull is stepping in as a temporary co-ordinator until the position is filled. He will be in the office for two days a week. Tony was previously the manager of MCMC, so he is ably equipped to look after the MPCCC's needs.

Stephanie and Debbie (me!) are still on board. Steph is continuing her position of maintaining and supporting our friends group network. I am still writing Ponderings, and Steph and myself are spending 3 days a week along the creek, maintaining numerous sites within Moreland City Councils boundaries.

Elissa has been helping me out along the creek with the on-ground works whilst Steph's injured knee heals. She has been fitting this in around primary school hours, as Jack has begun prep this year!

And Bronwyn Riddell is our newest staff member. Turn to page 6 to meet Bronwyn and find

out about her new position. She has brought a fresh enthusiasm into our workplace.

I would like to remind all of you are part of the 'creek community', and MPCCC is here to support your activities along the creek. There are many ways that you can actively become involved: become a Waterwatcher, start a new Friends Group, report a wildlife sighting, write a tale for Ponderings or share your creek memories with others. Have you been to a planting before? Why not give one a try this year. They are perfect for that 'feel-good' buzz.

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buzz pollination

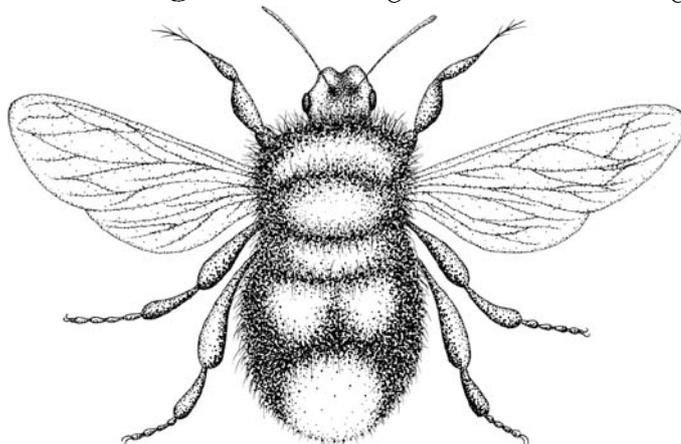
Australian Native Bees play an important role in our gardens. Judy Allen tells us why.

What is the first image that springs to mind when we think of flowers awaiting pollination? It is probably that of a garden bed full of inviting colorful flowers, with their faces turned towards the sun. Pollen rests invitingly on the outside of their anthers. They wait patiently, quietly, for an insect to pass by and accidentally pick up some grains of pollen, whilst sipping on sweet nectar.

But, some plants have the capacity to select which insect will take their pollen. They do this by requiring the insect to be able to perform what is known as 'buzz pollination'. And the flower doesn't even offer a nectar drink in appreciation of the performance.

To buzz pollinate, the bee must wrap her body around the flower pointing the anthers toward her stomach. She then vibrates her body making a distinctive buzzing sound. This shakes the pollen from out of the anthers - like shaking salt from a salt shaker. The pollen lands on her belly and she stores it in leg pouches to take away.

European Honey Bees (*Apis mellifera*) are unable to buzz pollinate, but the many species of Australian Native Bees can. These bees are important to both our native and introduced plants in our gardens and bushland. Exotic plants in the veggie patch that can be buzz pollinated include tomatoes, chillies, capsicums, potatoes, strawberries, kiwifruit and lemons. Indigenous plants that need buzz pollination include Kangaroo Apples (Solanaceae family) and Flax Lilies (the *Dianella* group). Because these bees are small and solitary, they can easily be mistaken for wasps or flies visiting the flowers.



The easiest way to attract one of the local native bees, the Blue Banded Bee, is to grow blue and purple flowers. When planting out your tomatoes next season, plant them amongst native Chocolate Lilies and Bluebells. Your tomato crop could increase by as much as fifteen percent.

You can simulate buzz pollination at home. I took my *Dianella* flower inside. After checking its yellow and black anthers and finding no pollen, I touched the flower on the side of my small electric onion chopper for a few seconds. I checked the flower again. Success! Yellow, powdery pollen grains were sprinkled over the black part of the anthers.

To perform buzz pollination in the garden you could use an electric toothbrush, or any portable, vibrating object - like a tuning fork perhaps.



The 2006 Autumn Planting Calendar has arrived! You will find it enclosed within your Ponderings.

Steph has put together another great planting season with the help of our numerous friends groups.

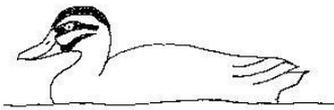
So as Mel would say, "See you down the creek!"

2006
autumn
planting
season



waterwatch

hooray!
we now
have our
own
waterwatch
kit.



Sampling for January has eluded the Waterwatch Monitors with too many holiday activities taking place, so there isn't any results to report on the water quality in the Moonee Ponds Creek.

However, there is still some exciting news!! The MPCCC has finally obtained its very own Waterwatch Kit for the Moonee Ponds Creek Water Monitoring Group. By having our own kit, the Water Monitors can now safely ensure that the equipment we use each time is the same. This is very important when comparing data and results. The Waterwatch Kit will be accessible at all times, making the organisation of monitoring dates much easier. Thanks to Elissa Simmons from the MPCCC for organising the purchase of the kit.

We've enjoyed borrowing the kits from the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC), because it has given us a chance to interact with the Waterwatch Co-ordinators Jessica and Kate, who have given us lots of help and inspiration. Kate and Jess have both recently left MCMC. Kate has left to take up a position in Horsham and Jess has gone to WA, so we will miss them both. We hope to keep in touch with the new Waterwatch Co-ordinator, as I'm sure we will still have many questions to ask.

If you would like to become a volunteer Waterwatcher in 2006, contact me on helensuter@pacific.net.au or the MPCCC on 9333 2406.



thoughts of a bushland regenerator

Sandy Simpson, bushland regenerator at Royal Park, shares her thoughts with us on the creation of a wetland system and our favourite frog, the Growling Grass Frog.

Royal Park was once an aboriginal camping ground. It is the largest park in the City of Melbourne, comprised of 188 hectares.

The newly-created five hectare Wetlands and Water Recycling Project are situated in the western section of Royal Park. It has been created with the aim of providing new habitat areas; new recreational and educational opportunities; to enable water recycling for irrigation of park areas; and to improve the water quality in the Moonee Ponds Creek.

The plant species have been selected for their ability to remove nutrients from the water. Over 45,000 terrestrial plants and 114,000 aquatic plants are to be planted, including many species of Eucalypt and Acacia, as well as shrubs and groundcovers. *Dianella*, *Lomandra* and Kangaroo Grass will also be planted. Plants on the Koori Trail include *Indigofera australis*, *Enchylaena tomentosa* and *Microseris lanceolata*.

Rocks, logs and the emergent and submergent aquatic plant species will provide habitat for frogs, such as the Growling Grass Frog. These frogs will provide food for bird species such as Egrets.

The Growling Grass Frog was once widespread and is now considered an endangered species by the IUCN—World Conservation Union and a threatened species by the Flora and Flora Guarantee Act 1988. The Growling Grass Frog ranges from a dull olive-green to bright emerald and has golden eyes. The belly is white while the hind legs are bright blue. They are amongst the largest frogs to be found in Melbourne.



plant star of the season

devilish delights

If you are after a glorious blue flower with dramatic foliage in your garden, (and lets face it, who can go past blue flowers in a planting scheme), then you may like the indigenous plant *Eryngium ovinum* or Blue Devil.

The glorious metallic blue spiky flower heads of the Blue Devil seem to reflect the early summer skies and as summer wears on, this perennial herb disappears completely, underground, only later reappearing as wet winter soils pick up some spring warmth. The new growth emerges as a spiky tuft of stiff prickly leaves with a green waxy appearance.

By mid-summer the flowering stems extend to 60cm and a mass of crowded bright blue flowers is produced with long spiky, bracts to 2.5cm in globular, thistle-like heads on rigid branched stems. The stems and bracts are a metallic blue and, together with its 'spiky' look give rise to its common name, Blue Devil.

The terminal flower heads open first; below them are the side branches which open next and flowers on the side branches appear until all flowers are open. Each flower lasts several weeks, giving the plant an impressive display of colour. The flowering period extends over a long period from late spring well into summer

Blue Devils will thrive in an open position in moist, heavy clay soils with full sun. They will tolerate wet winter/dry summer soil, but will not cope with permanently wet feet. They are very hardy and extremely tolerant of drought conditions. To extend their growth and flowering period, apply a small quantity of native plant fertiliser around the base of plants. Cut back the spent foliage and flower heads to ground level

in late summer. Do not fear, they will arise from the soil to flower once again.

Eryngium—after the ancient Greco-Latin name for a similar plant commonly called Sea Holly;
ovinum—from Latin, referring to sheep.



backyard thugs

a prickly beast

The robust form, shading abilities and capacity to draw on water and nutrients at depth gives the weed Artichoke thistle or *Cynara cardunculus* an edge over smaller indigenous plants normally found in grassy ecosystems.

Artichoke Thistle is a native of the Mediterranean regions, and was introduced to Australia late last century, either by accident with fodder or grain, or as an ornamental plant. It is found mainly on medium to heavy soils and generally in the less cultivated areas such as roadsides, waste land and permanent pastures.

This familiar weed forms a rosette of very large leaves, up to one metre or more in diameter, that are silky greyish-green on top and almost white underneath, due to the dense mat of white hairs. They are deeply divided, each lobe ending in a strong yellow spine.

In spring, a tall, branched flowering stem up to two metres high is produced. One large blue or purple flower forms at the end of each branch. The flower head consists of tubular florets which are surrounded by a series of rigid spines. Each plant may produce up to 50 flower heads! The seeds are equipped with a 'parachute' of feathery bristles about 4cm long. Seeds are set in summer, germinate in autumn and rapidly form a large flat rosette of leaves and a deep tap root.

Controlling Artichoke Thistle is easier when the plants are immature. Within a few months of germination, the plants develop stout taproots, which are very laborious and difficult to remove, and usually results in considerable soil disturbance. The seedlings can be dug out before the taproots thicken over spring. To prevent re-growth ensure the taproot is fully removed. The plants can also be sprayed with a herbicide that is specific for broad-leaved plants.





people like us

BRITEPlants

The search was on. Our horizons needed to be broadened. MPCCC has obtained its plants from two very reputable indigenous nurseries for numerous years. But a new year brings a new breath of wind. How could we diversify? Where else could we source our indigenous plants from? Was there a nursery that satisfied our needs to 'link the community'? Was there anyone that was just that little bit different?



We are all happy to say, yes, this place does exist. We have embarked on an exciting new journey, and will be obtaining a part of our indigenous tubestock for the planting program from a wonderful nursery with a brilliant purpose.

people with abilities, not disabilities

Running as a not-for-profit organisation since 1978, Brite Industries offers employment opportunities and training to people with disabilities. The company has three divisions, including Brite Plants, and employs some 130 people. The nursery is a professional, competitive and successful business, and at the same time, a unique work environment that trains and employs people with disabilities.

The Nursery Manager likes to think of his workers as people with abilities, not focus on their disabilities. They work hard and are part of a professional and serious business. In turn, they work in a creative environment where they obtain opportunities that they may not get elsewhere. Ownership and pride in their work is encouraged.

nursery accreditation

To encourage the workers to put in their very best effort, Brite Plants recently became accredited through the "Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme". This form of accreditation works according to a set of "Best Practice" guidelines that covers most aspects of a wholesale nursery. It is a benchmark within the Nursery Industry that all wholesale Nurseries aspire to.

Obtaining accreditation was an exciting moment for Brite Plants and its employees. It proves to the industry that the organisation is among the best, and proves to the employees that they are doing a great job. Brite Plants is not a charity and the accreditation helps the employees realise that they are equal.

future directions

Over the last few years Brite Plants has received some government funding for staff training, but remains one hundred percent self-generating. Like many other nurseries, Brite Plants has been forced to look for new ways to generate sales and now sells stock to wholesalers, retail nurseries, garden centres, landscapers, councils and the general public.

The Nursery Manager states that many people assume that Brite Plants has an advantage by having a relatively large number of staff and paying lower wages. This is not the case though. Each employee has special needs, and as a result of this, their productivity is at a very different level. The nursery is flexible and works with plants that are tough, but easy to manage.

stephanie's visit

When Stephanie visited Brite Plants, she remarked upon her return about how happy and cheerful all of the employees were, smiling and waving excitedly, as she walked through the nursery. Some of them will move on from Brite and find work elsewhere, while others may stay at the Broadmeadows nursery for the rest of their working lives.





The MPCCC has partnered with CityLink in order to deliver a unique environmental education program aimed at bringing communities together.

CityLink Creek Connections aims to reach out to those in the Moreland, Moonee Valley and Melbourne areas that don't traditionally get involved in environmental education experiences. Such groups may include the elderly, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, the disabled or those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is our hope that by educating such groups about their local environment and getting them involved in activities, they will develop a greater appreciation of their surroundings and form stronger links within the community.

bridging the
gap in
environmental
education

After successfully obtaining funding from CityLink, we have employed Bronwyn Riddell, our Education and Interpretation Officer. Bronwyn will identify the relevant target groups within these communities and develop an appropriate strategy and activities for engaging them.

"We want to reach out to those people in the community that for whatever reason, haven't thought to come to us or get involved with their local environment before," states Bronwyn. "This program aims to break down the barriers that are preventing those from getting involved, and in doing so we hope to assist them in developing stronger connections with their environment", she said.

CityLink CEO Brendan Bourke said the program formed a wonderful fit with CityLink's Corporate Social Responsibility objectives and the project as an excellent example of what a good corporate partnership can achieve.

"The MPCCC wanted to both expand its reach, and broaden its skills base so it could offer an education-based program. CityLink in turn wanted to extend its community relations program so it reached deeper into the community and benefited a broader cross-section of its neighbours. It's an excellent result for all involved," he said.

If you would like to know more or become involved with the *CityLink Creek Connections* project, you can contact Bronwyn Riddell on 9333 2406 or email bronwyn@mpccc.org



CityLink CEO Brendan Bourke and MPCCC's Education & Interpretation Officer Bronwyn Riddell stand next to the CityLink mascot.

welcome bronwyn!

Excitement is how I would describe my feelings when I learnt that I had been selected as the new Education and Interpretation Officer at MPCCC.

My background is in developing and implementing environmental programs, and delivering them to a diverse range of people and cultures. I'm also particularly interested in the areas surrounding community environmental education and waterway management.

For the last four years in my role as Education Officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) I have delivered educational, cultural, heritage and interpretational programs of the RBG Living and Non-living Collections across all years of schooling, specials needs, english as second language and TAFE groups.

Other employment roles include Project Officer for Parks Vic. on the Victorian Youth Development Program; Co-ordinator of Schools' Garden Awards; Special Projects Program Co-ordinator for Conservation Volunteers Aust where I managed National Tree Day, Olympic Landcare, Weedbuster Week, Arbor Week, Ballarat Schools for Conservation, Shell Students for Conservation and Australian Habitat Program; and as an Education Officer at Natural Resources Conservation League.

Three days a week I will be implementing the *CityLink Creek Connections* project, where I will be aiming to connect with those in the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment community that have a barrier to becoming involved in environmental education experiences. And I will be spending one day a week on the implementation of the Westmeadows and Upper Moonee Ponds Creek Interpretation Strategy.



clean up australia day sunday 5th march



Why not ride your bike?

Local residents and friends group members will join forces to clean up the Moonee Ponds Creek and its tributaries as part of Clean up Australia Day. Numerous people are expected at 6 sites along the Moonee Ponds, Yuroke and Westbreen Creeks to show their support. They will help to reduce the estimated 180 tonnes of litter that washes into the creeks each year via the stormwater system.

<p>Westmeadows Clean Up with the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek</p> <p>Westmeadows 9:30am to 11:30am Melways: 5 J6</p> <p>Enter site via the Reserve on Koala Cres between house numbers 40 and 42. Meet along the creek.</p> <p>Car: park on Koala Cres.</p>	<p>Westbreen Creek Clean Up with the Friends of Westbreen Creek</p> <p>Pascoe Vale 10am to 12pm Melways: 17 A6</p> <p>Enter site from Northumberland Rd or Cornwall Rd. Meet on path at K.W Joyce Reserve.</p> <p>BBQ and vegetarian lunch afterwards at Cr. Milad El-Halabi's at 1 Arndt Rd, Pascoe Vale (17 A7).</p> <p>Train: Pascoe Vale station (16 K9). Be prepared to walk up a bill hill though! Car: park on Northumberland Rd.</p> <p>Contact Jude on 0419 562 067 on the day.</p>	<p>Broadmeadows Valley Park Yuroke Creeklime Clean Up</p> <p>Meadow Heights 10am to 1pm Melways: 6 G3</p> <p>Meet at the Pavilion off Barry Rd.</p> <p>A BBQ will follow the event with Waste Wise give-aways!</p> <p>Car: park on site.</p> <p>Contact Karen Toirkens on 9205 2200.</p>	<p>Clean Up The Wetlands! with the Friends of Jacana Wetlands</p> <p>Glenroy 10am to 12noon Melways: 6 E11</p> <p>Enter site next to 60 Moonee Blvd (6 E12) or at the Broadmeadows Club (6 E10). Meet under the Western Ring Road bridge.</p> <p>Train: Jacana station (6 G11). Cross pedestrian bridge over Pascoe Vale Rd and head down the hill to wetlands. Car: park on Moonee Blvd.</p> <p>Contact Andrew Cremona on 0438 066 932 on the day.</p>	<p>John Pascoe Fawknor Reserve Clean Up</p> <p>Oak Park 10am to 12pm Melways: 16 F6</p> <p>Meet at the Oak Park Tennis Club in Francis St.</p> <p>Train: Oak Park station (16 H6) is a ten minute walk. Car: park at the Oak Park Tennis Club and in Francis St.</p> <p>Contact Stephanie Spathis on 0416 399 753 on the day.</p>	<p>Clean Up On The Creek with Nth Melb Sustainability Group</p> <p>Kensington 10am to 12pm Melways: 2A B5</p> <p>Enter site via Bent St. Meet on west creek bank, south of Macaulay Rd.</p> <p>12noon to 1pm BYO picnic lunch and chairs/picnic rug. Relax with fellow volunteers.</p> <p>Train: Macaulay station (2A C5) is adjacent to the site. Car: park on Bent St. Spaces are limited.</p> <p>Contact Gabrielle Stannus on 0404 322 035 on the day.</p>
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Don't forget to bring your sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen, drinking water, sturdy footwear, gloves and tongs. Adventurous folk can bring gumboots or waders!
You must sign in before starting the Clean Up.



seasonal sightings

We welcome all of your interesting wildlife observations, be they big or small! If you have any wildlife sightings, don't forget to forward them onto Deb at deb@mpccc.org or on 9333 2406.

Andrew Cremona of Friends of Jacana Wetlands has had many visitors in January. He was lucky enough to have a Blue Tongue Lizard travel through his backyard near Jacana Wetlands in late January. Our favourite, the Crested Pigeon, is now seen regularly around his house and the wetland. And the pair of Nankeen Night Herons that were sighted last year have returned to the wetland this year.

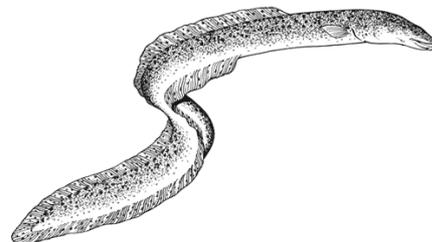


Nankeen Night Heron

The Nankeen Night Heron is a stocky, stooped heron with a large head, short neck and short, yellow legs. They have a black crown, rich cinnamon upperparts and whitish underparts, washed buff. This heron roosts in companies in leafy trees on rivers and lakes, and in city parks and gardens. They will even sit in leafless exotic poplars and willows, usually near water. At dusk, they move out in slow-flapping, loose flocks, like Grey-headed Flying-foxes. They forage by day, seizing their prey whilst wading or occasionally while hovering. Their nest is a loose structure of sticks, in a colony over water, often with egrets or cormorants.

Thanks for reporting your sightings Andrew.

A large Short-finned Eel was sighted at Margaret St in Oak Park during December. Melbourne had experienced some heavy downpours the night before and the creek was flowing swiftly over the embankment that separates the natural creek flow from the concreted section. The eel was floundering against the embankment, trying in vain to climb up this vertical barrier. Eventually we watched the eel drift back downstream. This poses a few questions. Is this concrete barrier prohibiting eels and fish from swimming upstream and completing their natural lifecycle? Should a "fish ladder", such as the one at Dight's Falls on the Yarra River, be installed to allow upstream movement? What do you think? Thanks Michael Brown, (Steph's partner) for your observant observation.



Short-finned Eel

...upcoming events

Biganga
Melbourne Museum
4 March 2006 to
28 February 2007

A major Melbourne Museum exhibition at Bunjilaka for the Commonwealth Games. An exhibition of contemporary etched and burnt possum skin cloaks by respected indigenous artists Lee Darroch, Treahna Hamm and Vicki Couzens.

The project aims to inform the general public about the continuing indigenous cultural tradition of making possum skin cloaks.

www.melbournmuseum.vic.gov.au and follow the links from Bunjilaka.

"Can The Suburbs Be Made Sustainable?"
Garden of Eden
Sun 12 March
7.00pm

Co-founder of permaculture David Holmgren will lead us in a discussion on this crucial issue for urban sustainability.

The Garden of Eden is a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing environmental education.

Please RSVP by Thurs 3 March on 9696 8013 or mail@gardenofedenproject.net.au

The garden can be found at the Old Albert Park Railway Station, Ferrars Place, Sth Melbourne.

www.gardenofedenproject.net.au

Brunswick Music Festival
Brunswick Town Hall,
Mechanics Institute
Performing Arts Centre
and other venues
Tues 28 March
to Sat 8 April

The Brunswick Music Festival has been held annually in March since 1989 and is one of Victoria's premier music festivals and a major multi cultural event for Australia.

The program showcases ethnic, indigenous, acoustic and traditional music, featuring local musicians, alongside interstate and international guests.

www.brunswickmusicfestival.com.au

Harvest Festival
Ceres
8 Lee St, Brunswick East
Sunday 2 April
3-9pm

Come and celebrate the beautiful, mellow season of Autumn with, well what else really, a festival full of harvesting at Ceres.

Enjoy authentic cultural food, cooking demonstrations, performances, stalls, kids activities, talks, tours and sustainable agriculture.

Tickets \$12/\$9 or \$20/\$14 for families.

Tickets are available at Ceres on 9388 1707 or email harvest@ceres.org.au

Go to www.ceres.org.au for general info.

Field Naturalist's Club of Victoria
Grey-headed Flying-Fox
Monthly Count
Wed 12 April, 5.30pm
@ Yarra Bend Golf Club car park. Melways ref 44 H3. Contact Megan Davidson or Ian Kitchen AH on 9795 7423.

The Evolution of the Yarra River
Sun 23 April
Lex Ferguson will lead an all-day trip (by car) from Heidelberg to Yarra Glen. Register with Rob Hamson AH on 9557 5215.

Rare or Threatened Plants in Victoria
Thurs 18 May
Dr David Cameron, Senior Botanist speaks at the meeting rooms in Blackburn @ 8pm. Contact Karen Muscat on 0411 219 940.