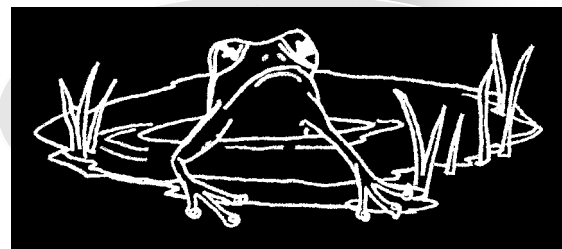




ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee PO BOX 2170 Greenvale 3059
P 9333 2406 F 9333 2413 E info@mpccc.org



Co-ordinator's ramblings .

Hello fellow Creek Ponderers. It surely is a strange time in the world. First the drought, then the fires and now war. In such tumultuous times, it helps to know there are good people out there doing good things.

We'd like to acknowledge all the members of the local community who are helping to build a better world. It was fantastic to see so many of you at our Christmas knees up – our depot feels truly warmed! We're busy planning another get together on Sunday 13th July to both celebrate the Autumn planting season and so that all you Moonee Ponds people can 'rub shoulders'. But seriously, it is a great way to catch up with people and groups who have similar goals – it's good to know you are not alone!

We will keep you posted about this event in the Winter edition of Ponderings.

We have plenty more information about the creek in this issue including waterwatch, more creek memories and Clean-up Australia, as well as sightings and the soon to be regular 'Plant Star of the Season'.

Now for a brief update on some of the projects we mentioned in the last issue. Our website is still under construction with lots more information to be loaded in. Thanks to Maddie, our website is one of the most stylish around – for a sneak preview, turn to page 5. Melbourne Water is currently undertaking the massive job of planting out much of the Jacana Wetlands on the south side of the Western Ring

Road. Construction of the northern side is due to commence soon. Many animals are already taking advantage of these new wetlands – see 'Autumn Sightings' on page 8 for more info. Check out this exciting new development and join Friends of Jacana Wetlands on Saturday 12th April for the first planting of the season.

We have a full autumn planting season planned and our team is looking forward to seeing some new as well as familiar faces. We'll also be catching bugs & testing the water at our plantings this year to introduce waterwatch. For more info, see page 2 of this edition. For the lowdown on the who, what & where of the planting season, check out our Autumn planting calendar, enclosed with this issue. Wishing you peace, rain and a happy planting season.



Yam Daisy
Microseris lanceolata

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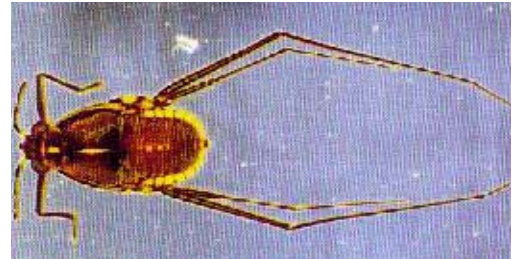
Upcoming Events

The Autumn Planting Season is upon us! Details Page 8

why watch water?

The truth about what lies beneath

Most of us can say we've seen a dragonfly and perhaps even a diving beetle but would you know a freshwater shrimp if you saw one? Just because most of the creatures that live in our waterways can't be seen without a microscope or a magnifying glass doesn't mean they haven't got a lot to give.

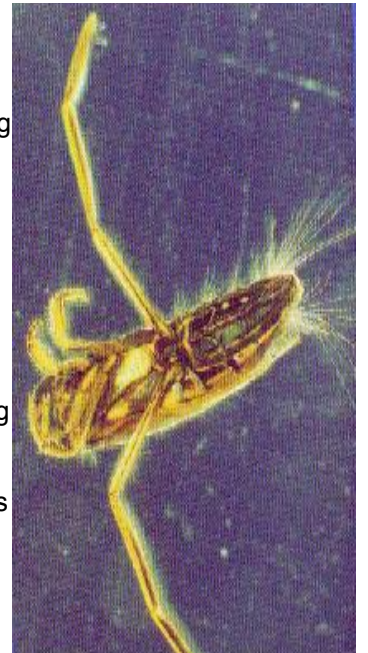


What is waterwatch?

Waterwatch is a national community water monitoring program initiated by the Commonwealth Government in 1993 in response to growing public concern about the health of our waterways. Waterwatch is a national network of schools, community groups, local councils, individuals and private land owners taking an active role in protecting and managing waterways.

Why should we do it?

As the Waterwatch Victoria website states "good quality water is important, since poor-quality water can affect human health, harm wildlife and limit food production". Urbanisation has had a huge impact on our waterway health. Clearing of vegetation has removed much of the habitat of native flora & fauna – including the macroinvertebrates (waterbugs). Adding to this is the increased water runoff from urbanisation that carries all sorts of unwelcome stuff into the creek – including dog droppings, pollutants and any other material that us humans drop in the streets or flush down the drains. The end result is a dramatic decrease in the water quality of our streams. Monitoring the health of our waterways can guide us in our activities to revitalise the creek, including revegetation, placement of litter traps and education – particularly with local industry.



What can you find?

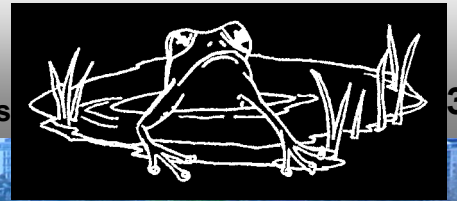
Waterwatch involves doing a range of chemical tests of the water or sampling and observing the little critters that lurk on or beneath the surface of water. You can find all sorts of interesting creatures in the creek, as well as some not so welcome stuff such as blue-green algae. Monitoring all of these contribute to the 'big picture' of creek health. Macroinvertebrates (the little critters) are often the focus of waterwatch activities because, as well as being indicators of stream health, they're so much fun to watch! We also test the physical and chemical conditions of the water, including measuring pH, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, turbidity (suspended solids), *E.coli*, phosphorus & nitrate levels.



We're learning how

The MPCCC team are about to attend a Waterwatch training evening with Jessica Miller, the waterwatch co-ordinator based at Merri Creek Management Committee. Armed with our new knowledge, we will be able to conduct waterwatch sessions at all of our planting days this season. You'll all be so thrilled (or disturbed) with what you find in your own little patch of the creek, that soon you'll be out there with the ice-cream bucket on a pole, regularly monitoring

An interesting & informative article on waterbugs can be found on the Melbourne Water website – go to <http://thesource.melbournewater.com.au> & click on back issues Dec 2002. There's also a comprehensive new guide out called **The Waterbug Book** by Edward Tsyrlin & John Gooderham, which can be purchased at the NRE bookshop.



Your Little Piece of the Creek

Some of the Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek have been talking about ways of involving more people in protecting our creek and further improving its environment.

Most of us live near the creek and spend a fair bit of time walking or riding along its length. Its a long creek (38 KM) and no-one can be totally familiar with all of it. Most of us are intimately concerned with a 2 – 3 km stretch.

So we thought what if people volunteered to concentrate on a few kilometres each. They could “mind” that section, reporting anything that was worrying them to the MPC Coordinator (Melanie). They could also report sightings of flora and fauna, recommend ideas for art-work or highlight



Brunswick Secondary College Students Bug-catching at Docklands

the need for interpretive signage. People can become the experts on their section so that if the MPCCC or the Friends needed some information or some community action, we would know exactly who to contact.

Please contact me and let me know which section of the creek you would like to call your “little piece”.

If we all take care of a little piece, the whole creek will be in safe hands.

Write to:
 Andrew Gemmell
 Secretary, Friends of the MPC
 15 Kipling Street
 Moonee Ponds 3039
 e-mail: gemmell@a1.com.au

Jacana Wetlands Namesake

The newly developing Jacana Wetlands on the Moonee Ponds Creek may be named after the suburb in which they are located, but did you know that Jacana is also a type of water bird?

The Comb-crested Jacana, *Irediparra gallinacea*, a handsome bird with a large red comb, has the nifty trick of being able to walk across water lily leaves and other floating water plants. Hence its other common names the ‘Lily-trotter’ or ‘Lotusbird’. The Jacana’s ability to ‘walk on water’ is due to its disproportionately long toes which support its light body. They also nest on floating vegetation, and are the only birds that can pick up and carry eggs and chicks under their wings.

Unfortunately the Comb-crested Jacana will never visit our Jacana wetlands as they live in the fresh water lagoons of north-east and northern Australia. They also occur in tropical or sub-tropical areas of South America, Africa, India and South-east Asia. But it’s nice to think that Jacana Wetlands shares its name with such a lovely bird.



Comb-crested Jacana

Who is behind all of this?

meet the faces of MPCCC...

Elissa

Hello fellow creeky creatures. I live in Glenroy with hubby Matt and our two year old son Jack (and yes) my cat Lou. Professionally speaking you'd call me a Horticulturist, but it's not just about plants as I love working with and being part of a community. I've been lucky enough to be working in revegetation for nearly ten years now. I dabble in a few other hobbies such as glass mosaics, permaculture and drawing and must confess to an addiction to cups of tea and books (especially in combination!). I also love putting on a good pantomime and am thinking of a new production featuring MPCCC's mascot, the Purple Swamphen. So to any of you who enjoy slapping on a bit of grease paint, and slipping on a furry or feathered costume – I'll be in touch.



Mel

I'm a horticulturist too (we're plant lovers out here) and live in Gladstone Park with two dogs (Basil & Kyra) & pussycat (Chloe). I love my local environment, which happens to be the Westmeadows end of Moonee Ponds Creek. I've been walking my dogs down there for 20 years now, it's a place which provides me with some peace. It's where I first got to know my indigenous plants and the joys of discovering little remnants hanging in there. My passion has been grasslands and the forbs or 'pretties' that are to be found in them. After working for Hume City Council in the environmental field for 4 years, I washed up on the shores of the Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee and I haven't looked back since! I love working with local communities to better their environments; a planting day always inspires me & makes me realise why I do this job. My other passion is herbs, it's how I first got into plants, so I'm studying Herbal Medicine part time at night. Do you know that many of our weeds are also excellent healing plants?



Maddie

You guessed it: surfing the creek is my forte! Besides that I am a planty person too. So many horticulturists, so little time! If there's one thing we know about out here it's that plants and people belong together – we're a bit sentimental like that. And just when you thought I was getting predictable with a background in horticulture, landscape architecture, open space planning and hospitality, I have a pretty full and varied role at MPCCC. Ever wondered who puts together all our snazzy looking fliers and newsletters? Probably not – but that's me. Apart from that I am currently working on designing our new website (see article opposite) as well as other exciting projects such as our new 'look' and information brochure. I do love to get out too and get my hands dirty for the odd planting day. Living at the 'dirty' end of the Moonee Ponds Creek in West Melbourne, I can really appreciate what a difference a few groups of passionate people can make to the creek— frankly it's inspiring!



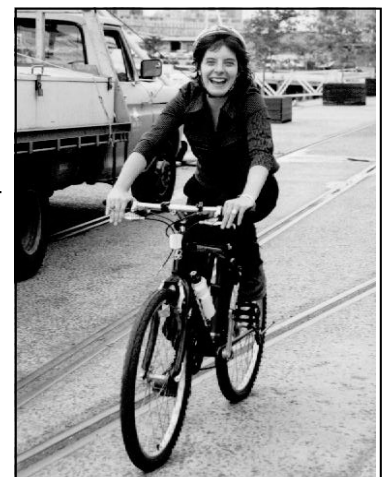
Nicolette

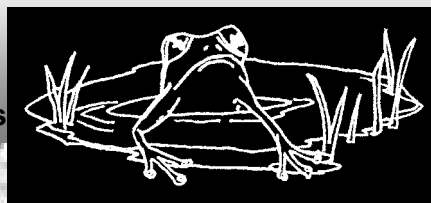
Having worked for many years in event management and arts & cultural development, I have finally decided to follow my true passion – rubbish!

Yes, it's true - I'm obsessed! As Education & Promotion coordinator of the Moonee Ponds Creek – Keep it Clean Project, my role is to develop litter education campaigns and activities, promote awareness of stormwater issues and the health of the creek. It's a lot of fun and we've made a lot of progress – I look forward to telling you more about it in coming issues!! I live in North Fitzroy with my cat Fin (who thinks he's a dog) and when I'm not at work, I like to indulge my other passions – long walks, cooking and watching films!

But that's enough about us, we want to hear about you!

Next edition stay tuned to meet one of your fellow creek volunteers and hear about what inspires them.





Elissa Recalls

Elissa Simmons is currently our dedicated community planting co-ordinator but once upon a time she was a young girl exploring the Moonee Ponds Creek...

I first got to know the creek's Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek and Friends of the Sacred Kingfisher when I started working for Hume City Council back in 1996 as the Greening Horticultural Officer. But my memories of the creek extend further back to when I was 14 years old, visiting my friend Ishelle in Westmeadows. We had a terrific time exploring the creek. It was a real adventure balancing on logs, rock hopping, catching tadpoles (we always let them go again), dodging the artichoke thistles and the grumpy farmer in his ute. I thought these wild expanses with its open skies were beautiful. The creek had its moods – sometimes a lazy slow flow, easy to jump across. Other times, gushing water riding up the creek banks, making us scratch our heads trying to figure out a way across. I've got wonderful memories of the Moonee Ponds Creek, and I'm glad to be part of this community in creating many more happy memories to look back on. I'm actually looking forward to reaching 90 years old, when I will sit next to the creek and watch people and animals alike enjoying a mature creek woodland which they could've sworn had always been there.

Do you have any memories of the creek or some historic photos? We'd love to share your stories so come and chew the fat at one of our planting days or contact us on 9333 2406 or e-mail info@mpccc.org. All photos would be reproduced at our expense.

under construction

the MPCCC website in the making



These are some of the illustrations that will be animated in colour on our new website

The Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee is about to go global! We are very excited about our website even though it is only in its infancy. We are working hard to create a site that we hope everyone will enjoy. For a start we will lure you all in with an animated home page showing some of the more prominent creatures and vegetation along the creek. Just when you are getting excited about the moving pictures there will be plenty of options for where to go from there. You can learn about the ecology of the creek on our education page, be inspired about all the ways to get involved both in the home and along the creek, download the latest issue of Ponderings, listen to people's reflections on the creek and even explore the creek with our interactive map.

Of course all of this will take time but we are already underway and the first stage of the website should be up and running soon. Some temporary information is currently guarding the site whilst the finished product is preparing for its debut on the international stage!

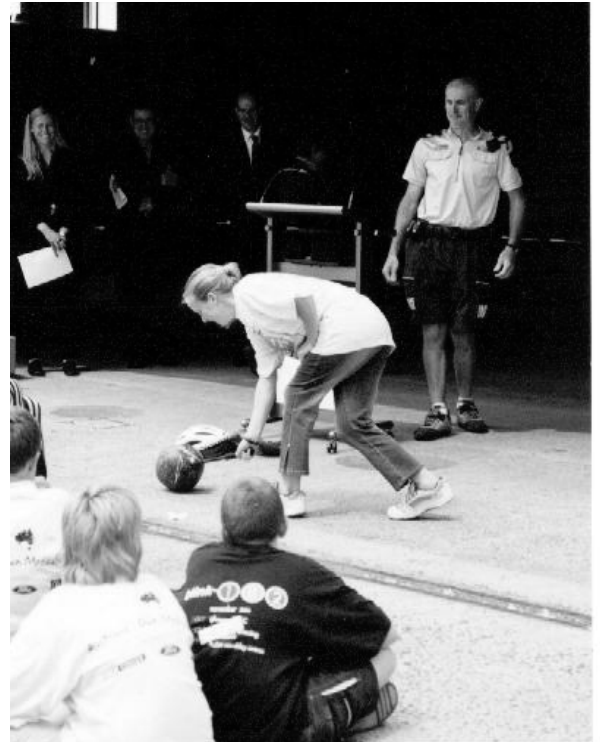
Visit info@mpccc.org or call Maddie on 93332406 .

Getting Down & Dirty

Recent events at Clean Up Australia Day

Clean Up Australia day has just come and gone, and as usual, many dedicated volunteers got out there and got dirty for the sake of the Australian environment.

Moonee Ponds Creek had it's fair share of help; activities kicked off on Friday with the "Moonee Ponds Creek On Your Bike" campaign for the Schools Cleanup Day. School kids from Strathmore Secondary College, Hume Valley School & Broadmeadows Special Development School participated in cleanups along the creek, then rode their bikes to Docklands, where they were treated to many activities including stormwater games, bike education sessions & a BBQ lunch. Everyone had a great day (especially the smashing of the watermelon). Thanks to Nicolette Rose who single handedly pulled off the event as part of the Moonee Ponds Creek Keep It Clean Project. Thanks also to Docklands Authority, Ford Australia, Melbourne Water, City West Water, Niddrie Cycles, VicRoads, EPA Victoria, Waterwatch and the Amphibian Research Centre for supporting the event.



A Strathmore Secondary College Student takes out her frustrations on an unsuspecting watermelon, effectively demonstrating why we should ALL wear bike helmets.

Then on Sunday it was on again when MPCCC joined forces with the Gowanbrae Action Group and local residents to clean up the Gowanbrae stretch of the creek. Many bags of rubbish were carted away, including a whole picnic shelter's worth of polystyrene builders packaging and two trailer loads of miscellaneous rubbish. Local residents also provided their trailers for carting rubbish away. It is really impressive to see the community spirit that is present at Gowanbrae – for more information visit the Gowanbrae Action Group website at www.gowanbrae.org.au. Thanks to all the residents involved for a fantastic effort. We will see you in the coming months at your community planting days (see our planting calendar included with the newsletter).



Gowanbrae residents proudly display their bulging bags of rubbish.

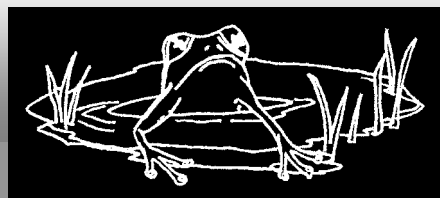
Recent News in Bass Street & Wheeler Street

Bass Street Layback Works

Recently, Melbourne Water performed some 'layback' works along a concrete lined section of the creek near Bass Street, Pascoe Vale. The works are aimed at decreasing the gradient of the slope of the creek bank. The area will be planted up this season with indigenous plant species and will be augmented by plantings with Bass Street residents in Autumn.

Wheeler Street Gets Connected!

Moreland City Council had a recent victory with the handover from the State Government of a small parcel of land at the bottom of Wheeler Street in Pascoe Vale. What's the significance to us? you might ask. Well, this little wedge of land forms a vital link to the creek for residents of Pascoe Vale. Moreland City Council have been lobbying for some time to have the land handed over to them so that it could be developed as a strategic open space link to the creek. We look forward to seeing this space being improved as open space in the near future.



*The latest from
the 'Keep It Clean'
Project...*



Tidying up the Tracks

A ride on most of Melbourne's suburban trains doesn't quite make for a scenic trip! Railway lines are the no-mans land of public open space and often treated like the local tip.

The Moonee Ponds Creek – Keep it Clean project is taking action to target the litter problem along the Broadmeadows and Upfield train lines in collaboration with M>Train and the Victorian Litter Action Alliance. A "community fix-up" litter education campaign has recently been launched, involving traders on Sydney Road, Brunswick and students from Brunswick Secondary College, and a plastic bag litter reduction campaign in conjunction with Clean Up Australia's "Bag Yourself a Better Environment".

In the coming year, the Moonee Ponds Creek – Keep it Clean project will be working with MPCCC to expand its education and promotional activities. This will include working with schools, community groups and councils within the catchment to develop new litter action campaigns and activities. We will continue to work with shoppers and traders to reduce plastic bag use and packaging litter. The project will also link in with other litter and enforcement activities including work currently being undertaken on charity bins and illegal dumping. There will be lots of events, launches and fun stuff too! So keep in touch, it's going to be an action packed year!!

The Moonee Ponds Creek – Keep it Clean project is a \$2.6 million initiative involving Federal, State, and local government as well as community groups, school and industry bodies. The objective is to implement a coordinated litter management program within the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment and subsequently reduce the amount of litter in the creek.

*For more information, or to get involved – please contact
Nicolette Rose
Education & Promotion Coordinator
Moonee Ponds Creek – Keep it Clean
P: 03 9235 2112 F: 03 92357168
nicolette.rose@melbournewater.com.au*

People LIKE US

Environment Victoria Working Together Protecting Victoria's Environment

Refuse to use Reflex? Return the Flow to the Snowy? Unchain Australia – stopping Native Vegetation destruction?

If any of these phrases ring a bell with you, then you have come across Environment Victoria at some stage before! EV has now been protecting Victoria's environment, on behalf of all Victorians, for over 30 years. We were formed when a group of people came together to fight for the area now known as the Little Desert National Park. This coalition of local people and groups was so successful that the Conservation Council of Victoria was born. In 1994, the name was changed to Environment Victoria.

Today, EV is a membership-based organisation, with individual members and affiliated groups supporting the organisation across the state. **We encourage proactive, practical and positive outcomes to environmental problems**, by working with individuals, families, community organisations, industry, business and Government.

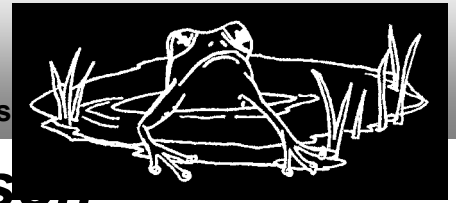
EV campaigns on a range of issues representing the state wide needs of Victoria's environment including: 1) forests, 2) healthy rivers and 3) climate change, as well as particular issues of concern to our supporters – such as the Plastic Bag Levy and Saving Point Nepean.

We have worked previously with the Moonee Ponds Creek Coordination Committee, with EV volunteers helping to clean up a section of the creek and undertake revegetation activities.

In the area of **Healthy Rivers**, EV is working to improve the health of Victoria's rivers and streams. This involves working with communities across the State, as well as lobbying Government. If you are interested in joining our network of River Health Volunteers – or just to find out more about this campaign, please contact Sue Phillips at EV on 9341 8106 or email: sue.phillips@envict.org.au.

On the issue of **Climate Change**, EV focuses on reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from transport, the energy sector and household consumption. EV also aims to stop clearfelling and woodchipping of Victoria's **native forests**.

Like all not-for-profit organisations, EV relies on volunteers, donations and membership. If you would like to find out more about EV's work, please visit our web site at www.envict.org.au or contact Helen Scott on 9341 8115 or email helen.scott@envict.org.au



Indigenous Plant Star of the Season

Introducing Gold Dust Wattle – A Creek-bank Delicacy!

With each newsletter we will feature an indigenous plant species we consider 'gardenworthy'. Many of you involved with revegetation over the years will be familiar with these plants, so we'll try to mix the common with the esoteric to keep you all entertained. This month we've picked the Gold Dust Wattle, a plant close to many a revegetator's heart (we know Julie Law will be pleased!). Gold Dust Wattle's boffin name is *Acacia acinacea*; the Latin derivation of 'acinacea' means curved or sword-like. This may refer to the coiled or spiraling shape of its seed pods. The overall appearance of the wattle is more delicate than many of our indigenous plants and may even bridge the aesthetic gap for native plant skeptics. In nature this plant varies in size, but in garden conditions may grow over to 2 metres in height and width. It often forms a gently weeping habit, which is most pleasing, especially when in flower. The stems are covered in small dark green leaves (more correctly known as phyllodes for the botanically exact). Gold Dust Wattle is one of the earliest of the indigenous plants to flower, gladdening the hearts of winter dreary Melbournians as early as August with its masses of deep golden flower 'balls'. It often continues to flower up to November – now that's good flowering value. It's indigenous to open forests and riparian escarpments on drier soils of Victoria, making it extremely drought tolerant. We use it often in revegetation along the drier banks of the creek. Plant one today!!



Acacia acinacea

Upcoming Events Autumn Planting Season

Our Autumn planting season is about to begin, with the first event scheduled for Saturday the 12th April at Jacana Wetlands. We have a jam packed season planned, with new groups from last year planting again, including FO Jacana Wetlands and Gowanbrae residents. We're also welcoming some new additions, with residents from Strathmore and the FO Grass Trigger Plant planting with us for the first time this year. We will be running water-watch activities at our plantings this year also (see article on page 2). It's a great way to improve your little patch of the world and get to meet other lovely people, especially over a BBQ at the end of the planting. We've included our **planting calendar** in this issue so you know exactly what's going on, when & where. Please feel free to attend any of the plantings that are interesting to you – it's good to check out other parts of the creek that you mightn't have seen before.

For more information email Elissa at elissa@mpccc.org or call us at the office on 9333 2406

Autumn Sightings

After a long, hot, dry summer it's encouraging to be able to report on some interesting sightings along the creek. There's been plenty of activity around the new Jacana Wetlands area, as reported by Leanne (Friends of Jacana Wetlands). Over Summer, Leanne has reported seeing a Royal Spoonbill, Banded Plovers, Little Eagles, a juvenile Wedge Tailed Eagle and, of course, many native ducklings. Two Kangaroos and a Swamp Wallaby have also been visitors to the area.

An Echidna has been spotted by Greg Bain of Melbourne Water along the banks of the creek at Westmeadows. We have also seen this little creature on our drive into work but it's very encouraging to see that they're happy to hang out in the more urbanized sections of the creek.

The MPCCC team was on a creek reconnaissance last week and saw plenty of birdlife, including a Pelican, Cormorant and Little Egret downstream of Footscray Road (Docklands area) and a Crested Pidgeon (very cute) at Strathnaver Reserve, Strathmore. But we don't need to venture far for a glimpse of the interesting birdlife along the creek, as a pair of Tawny Frog Mouths have been spotted getting cosy in the nook of a Eucalypt right outside the MPCCC depot!

Whilst most plants are not flowering at this time of year, apart from the Eucalypts, keep an eye out for flowering native grasses, which will still be hanging onto their seed heads at this time of year. One of the more common (and prettiest) native grasses along Moonee Ponds Creek is Silky Blue Grass (*Dicanthium sericium*). This grass can be distinguished by its silky soft blue-green foliage and perky seed heads which look a little like furry caterpillars. Many Spear Grass (*Stipa*) species are also dominant at this time of year – their seed heads generally have a more weeping form. A good identification guide is the **Flora of Melbourne**, available from the NRE bookshop or drop into Moreland's Information Counter in Pascoe Vale Road Glenroy and grab a free copy of their booklet on local native plants. Think about using native grasses in your garden as they are incredibly resistant to drought and can be a sublime alternative to the lawn (you'll be the 'individual' of the street and you'll feel good inside!).

If you have any interesting, rare or exciting sightings along the creek, please email us at info@mpccc.org. We now have a record keeping system to track flora & fauna changes along the creek.