



Ponderings

Winter 2012

Issue 37

Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Coordination Committee Inc

advocate educate interpret participate rehabilitate revegetate



Northern Sewerage Project site, when work started in 2008

Bass Street Reclaimed

The same view today



In the first half of 2008, work began on the Northern Sewerage Project, with a vertical shaft being dug in the little park beside the Moonee Ponds Creek, at the end of Bass Street, Oak Park. The destruction of this park was particularly galling to all the volunteers who had helped create a green haven there in 2004. Work was due to finish in 2012, and this timetable was met, with work being completed early this year. All that can now be seen of the sewerage project is a dark green rocket-like structure set inconspicuously against the trees.

Melbourne Water provided Moreland Council with a Community Benefits Fund to help rehabilitate the site back to public open space, and in mid May, the local community and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek got together for an afternoon of planting, followed by afternoon tea.

With the help of an auger to dig the holes, an array of shrubs, grasses and other native plants were quickly established, and carefully watered in; all supervised by a pair of Willie Wagtails

The dark green 'rocket', (all that remains of the sewerage work) hiding in the trees; with new young trees in the foreground.

Our site supervisor!



What's in this issue?

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- ◆ National Tree Day
- ◆ Amazing transformation at Strathmore Ponds
- ◆ Capping Tullamarine Landfill
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Angie and Frank planting *Lomandras* at the end of the site



Matt & Mia Lily make sure a little gum tree is well watered in



Lori Arthur of Moreland Council, getting down to work

Kelvin Thomson, a significant friend of the Moonee Ponds Creek, at the Bass St planting



Looking NW up the Creek along the large area we planted out

Why do people do things like this?

When I went back last month to see how things were growing at the site, this was what greeted me. Somebody – probably more than one person – had methodically pulled out all the tree guards on the bank below our planting site, and left them to blow into the Creek. Fortunately, Lori at Moreland Council was able to get them gathered up straight away, and reinstated on the plants to continue their protective role. If you see damage to planting sites like this, please let your local council know so that it can be sorted out before more harm is done.



Transformation at Strathmore Ponds



The bank above the Creek between John and Gregory Streets, in 2005 and 2006

The enthusiasm and dedication of an Oak Park resident, Vince Aitken, led to the establishment of the Friends of Strathmore Ponds, devoted to the restoration of the last stretch of Creek before it is channelled into concrete and the stone crossing at the end of Gregory Street.

As the Creek winds its way south, little pockets of green are left at the ends of streets and the backs of houses, and this is an attractive stretch of creek, where it widens out after the sharp bend at Nursery Corner. There were a lot of exotic species growing there at first, but these have gradually been replaced by a variety of native riparian species, indigenous to the area.

Further up the Creek, very little other than weeds were growing in the narrow stretch above the bank. Now, tall wattles, hop bush and gums line the track that follows the creek bank.

The area has been transformed. From the first plantings in October 2004, the receipt of a Melbourne Water grant in 2005/6, and with the involvement of local residents, the area is now unrecognisable. Because of the wonderful growth that has been achieved, it was very difficult to locate the original viewpoints of photographs taken at early plantings, and often impossible to stand in the same spot!



The bank above the Creek between John and Gregory Streets, in July 2012



It wasn't possible to stand at the top of the bank as in this 2008 picture. The growth is too dense now.



Two sites along the Creek celebrated the 2012 National Tree Day – one at The Tarnuk and one at Gowanbrae.

The soil was beautifully moist ready to give the new tubestock the best start on National Tree Day 2012.

At Gowanbrae, Moreland Council had prepared a new site along the top of the bank and around 15 volunteers, from the Gowanbrae Residents Group and the 1st Strathmore Cub Scouts, were soon giving a new home to grasses, *Dianella*, *Goodenia*, *Einadia* and a few wattles and red gums.

Up at The Tarnuk, over 1,000 plants were put in, (a variety of grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees) building on the area tackled on the last two National Tree Days. This area that was once weed-infested grass is becoming a diverse woodland, thanks to the hard work of the dedicated Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek, with the support of Hume Council.

It's good to see how well last year's site at Gowanbrae is doing



Julie shows off her NTD hat at The Tarnuk

Part of the Gowanbrae site planted out with dianellas, grasses, goodenias and the odd red gum



How great to have so many children helping at both sites, including Audrey at Gowanbrae who is a dab hand at planting; she's been at it since she was three, and featured in many a *Ponderings* picture!

Audrey's an old hand – she even has her kneeling mat.



Tegan and Jade at Gowanbrae

Part of the Simmons family at The Tarnuk – other old hands at planting

Willows are choking the Creek ...

Just up stream of the Strathmore Ponds, there is a stand of beautiful weeping willows on the eastern bank. Beautiful, yes, but look what they're doing to the Creek! Their fibrous roots are forming a mat spreading out from the bank.

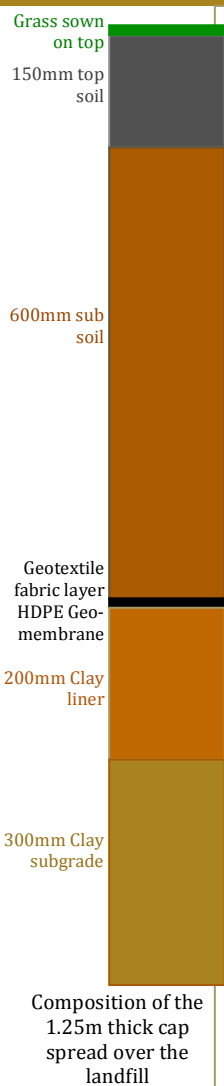
This traps sediment and chokes the flow changing the creek's nature. The branches that fall are no good for invertebrates that live in the creek. It is too soft and breaks down quickly, unlike the hard wood from gum trees that stays in the water providing homes and protection. Instead of the constant, slow drop of leaves, like native trees, they dump them all at once, causing eutrophication of the water, taking the oxygen from fish, invertebrates and plants. They've got to go!

Roots from the willow forming a mat across the Creek



Capping the Landfill

What have the councils been doing?



While the Tullamarine Landfill site is now closed, it will still need looking after for many years to come. A group of interested people from the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and the MPCCC were invited to go and see what Transpacific is doing to protect the Creek and the surrounding area from any nasties that may want to escape from the rubbish buried in the landfill. Since the site's closure, Transpacific's main focus has been on rehabilitation, carrying out ongoing monitoring and investigating options for potential future uses.

The Creek meanders between rocky banks right below the north wall of the landfill, so it is important to prevent any leachate from polluting it, or the ground water. Transpacific is taking many steps to stop both gas and liquids from escaping. One of these measures is the 1.25m thick cap that now covers the site. This both stops water getting into the landfill and allows for the control and capture of gases coming out. In addition, Transpacific has built a retaining wall over 100m long, on the north side, to protect the Creek and has planted the steep north-facing slope above it with a variety of indigenous ground covers, shrubs and trees. These will help stabilise the slope and restore lost habitat.

So successful has the grass sown on the capping been, that kangaroos from Woodlands are already visiting for a feed.

For more information contact Olga Ghiri on 9552 1716, or email olga.ghiri@transpac.com.au.



Looking east along the north wall, revegetation in progress. Retaining wall and the Creek to the left.



Council started replacement of the degraded bitumen path network through the southern section of Jacana wetlands parkland in June however the wet weather has caused delays

in completion. Improved access points (steps and pathways) have been constructed at the end of Bass, Marks and Main Streets in Oak Park enabling safer and more enticing entry to the creek corridor. Improved access is also being investigated at John Street. The 12m high chain mesh fence at Oak Park Reserve has been replaced with a shorter, black mesh fence to improve the interface between the reserve and the creek and to allow revegetation through this area to grow. Park improvements works at Bass Street following the completion of the Yarra Valley Water Northern Sewer Project, have been completed with funding from projects Community Benefits Fund. Improvements included a path connection through the reserve from Pascoe Vale Road, seating area, signage, landscaping and revegetation. The return of the site to the community was celebrated with a planting day with local residents and Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek on Saturday 19th May.

Council has been successful in three Melbourne Water Corridors of Green grants along the creek and its tributaries at:

- Primula Boulevard, Gowanbrae
- FW Olver Reserve, Pascoe Vale
- Joyce Reserve, Westbreen Creek, Pascoe Vale

Council is also assisting the Brunswick South West Planters with delivery of a Melbourne Water Community Grant for their site on the creek in West Brunswick.

These grants are being delivered with help from community groups, schools and local residents through community planting days and the funding will help to expand and maintain revegetation works along the creek into 2013.

Lori Arthur

In June this year Moreland City Council set targets to achieve best practice stormwater management in Moreland, to reduce stormwater pollution and improve the health of our waterways. Council will implement stormwater best practice by putting rainwater tanks in Council facilities, rain gardens in the streetscape and stormwater reuse and improvement systems in our sports grounds. You can play a great role in this achievement by installing a rainwater tank that collects roof water (visit <http://www.water.vic.gov.au/saving/home/rebates> for government rebates on tanks) and using this water for toilet flushing, gardening and clothes washing. Residents can also put a rain garden, visit <http://raingardens.melbournewater.com.au/> for further information. Rainwater capture and use in urban areas or rain gardens helps improve the quality of stormwater that flows into our creeks and waterways.

Mazib Rahman



Hume, in partnership with the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek and Friends of the Sacred Kingfisher, has continued its revegetation of the creek corridor downstream of Woodlands Historic Park. This included a National Tree Day event at The Tarnuk in Westmeadows, where 25 eager volunteers planted in excess of 1,000 indigenous plants. Well done to everyone involved! Hume is also in the final stages in the development of the Jacana Valley Masterplan, which will provide for enhanced appreciation of the natural environment and greater recreation opportunities.

Damien Harrison

Sightings

Fauna and flora observations along the Moonee Ponds Creek. If you see anything interesting, please tell us about it. Contact Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org.

The most exciting sighting for me happened at The Tarnuk on National Tree Day. While I was walking next to the Creek, I heard a thumping noise and a Swamp Wallaby bounded up the bank and away, appearing and disappearing in the long grass.



I was pleased to see two pairs of Chestnut Teal on the Creek, one pair at the end of Bass Street, and one at Strathmore Ponds above the ford.

These Gregarious Sawfly Larvae caused great excitement among the children on NTD at Gowanbrae. They are not true caterpillars; the sawfly is a type of wasp. When they are disturbed, they wiggle their tails and exude a nasty brown liquid from their mouths, which gives them their common name: Spiffires.



Winter Planting Calendar – Everyone is welcome!

Date	Friends' Group	Time	Location	Melway Ref	Council
Sat 8 th Sept	FO Moonee Ponds Creek with Tulla Sydney Alliance	1-4pm	Planting at Jacana Wetland Park and meet at TSA site compound, Pyke Drive, Gladstone Park Stay for a BBQ after the planting RSVP to community@tullasydney.com.au or call 1300 297 090 (press option 2, then option 4) or just turn up!	6 C10	
Sun 9 th Sept		10am-12 noon	FW Olver Reserve, The Boulevard, Pascoe Vale South	29 A1	Moreland
Sun 16 th Sept	FO Upper Moonee Ponds Creek	10am-12 noon	The Tarnuk, end of Wright Street, Westmeadows	5 G6	Hume

Creating a 'natural' tree population



Moonee Valley Council is taking steps to reverse the damage done over many years, to animal, bird and reptile habitats, when old and dead trees have been removed. Michelle

Gooding describes what Council is doing to create a more natural tree population.

A healthy tree population often contains trees of different ages including saplings, healthy middle age trees, mature aging trees and dead trees, called stags, which might be fallen or still standing.

This range of trees doesn't occur in our urban environments. The mature aging trees are often removed, as they are no longer considered 'useful' to us. However these trees are extremely useful to more than 300 species.

Microbats, possums and birds can only make their homes in the hollows of mature trees because it often takes more than 80 years for hollows to begin forming.

Moonee Valley's tree crew are creating 'habitat trees' to assist native wildlife. This is a practice in which trees that have died are pruned to remove the weight from their limbs but are left standing to provide roosts and hollows for various species of wildlife.

Not all trees and locations are suitable for this procedure as certain species are less stable than others. MVCC tree crews regularly inspect both habitat trees and living trees for stability and safety.

The next step is to create artificial hollows in the branches, rather than manufactured boxes fixed to the tree, these are cut into the existing branches. The shape, size and orientation of the branch and hollow are adjusted to suit the needs of particular species.



Rather than remove this dead tree in Woodlands Park, Essendon, the branches overhanging the path, and other potentially hazardous ones have been removed leaving stumps where hollows can form or be created. Although it is dead, this tree can go on giving life to so many different creatures.

Well done Moonee Valley Council!

Are you a Facebook wiz?

We need help to set up a Ponderings Facebook page.

CAN YOU HELP?

If you can give us some guidance, please email info@MPCCC.org

Bat Count

Two fruit bat counts have been held since the last edition of *Ponderings*, both graced by spectacular full moons, and wintery conditions. In July 6,000 bats were counted, and in August there were 6,500.

Have a look at the Australasian Bat Society website for some fascinating fact sheets about bats big and small: <http://ausbats.org.au/#/bat-information-sheets/4562894228>

The next bat counts will be Wednesday 29th August, with a meeting time of 5:45pm; Wednesday 26th September with a meeting time of 6.00pm; and Wednesday 31st October, at 7.30pm.

Meet, as usual, at the Yarra Bend golf course car park (Melway 2D G7).

For more information, contact Rod van der Ree on 8344 3661, 0412 562 429 or rvdr@unimelb.edu.au



Fascinating Fact!
Research from Sydney has shown that male Grey-headed Flying foxes often return to the same branch in a colony year after year, to establish a territory.