



Ponderings

Spring-Summer 2014 Issue 45
Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee
Ponds Creek Coordination Committee Inc

advocate educate interpret participate rehabilitate revegetate

Thank you Bendigo Bank!

Bendigo Bank has kindly provided a grant for the production of four more editions of *Ponderings*. We are very grateful for their generosity. It will enable us to continue providing information and support to the Moonee Ponds Creek Communities.

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- ◆ FoMPC end of year gathering
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- ◆ Exciting sightings – invasion of the Nankeen Night Herons!

Help shape Five Mile Creek Reserve...

Five Mile Creek is a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek, and where they meet is a little reserve that combines the convenience of a playground and barbeque with the natural meanderings of the Five Mile Creek. This treasure is hidden away from view behind houses and a retirement village. Moonee Valley City Council are preparing a Masterplan for the management of this little park, where cyclists meet pedestrians and dog walkers, and the needs and desires of the residents may not always be in harmony.



Sharing ideas for Five Mile Creek Reserve

An information morning was held in November, when park users were invited and encouraged to describe what they would like to see happening in their park. Council officers welcomed these contributions. While the cut-off date for input was Friday, 5th December, if you have an idea you really want to put forward, there is still time, and any good ideas will be taken on board in developing the plan. If you would like to hear more about the reserve, come along to the barbeque area in the **Five Mile Creek Reserve (end of Government Road, Essendon, Mel 28 J2) on Friday 12th December, at 5.00pm**. Ginny Moylen from the Friends of Five Mile Creek will tell us about the reserve and her aspirations for it, then a Moonee Valley Council officer will provide feedback on the information sharing process. **This will be followed by the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Christmas Party / barbeque. All are welcome – BYO food and drinks! And if you don't mind counting chickens before they hatch – help celebrate the demise of the E-W Link!!**

If you can't make it on Friday evening, visit the MVCC website: <http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/Experience-Moonee-Valley/Parks-and-playgrounds/Main-Parks/Five-Mile-Creek-Reserve.aspx>

Congratulations Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek ...!!

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek have been awarded a 2014/15 Sustainable Environment Community Grant from Moonee Valley Council.

The grant will be used to revegetate an area near the old bluestone ford across the Creek near the former nursery, down from Mascoma St, Strathmore.

No date for the work has been set as yet, but everyone will be welcome to help with the planting. More information will be provided in the next edition of *Ponderings*.



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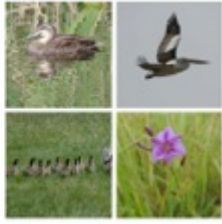


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A short hop from frogs to birds – a new interest has become a passion for Anna Lanigan



After a decade or so of Frogwatch Anna became known as "The Frog Lady" ... but these days other passions are leading her astray. This is a tale of how one thing leads to another

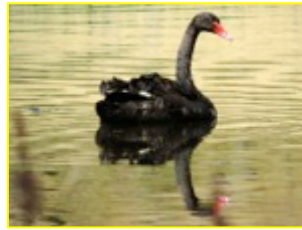
and another and this story comes with a warning ... counting birds is VERY addictive...

Last year I received an email from my Frogwatch contact Richard Akers at Melbourne Water saying "Anna, while you are out and about recording frogs you might as well count the birds as well." The email had been copied to Chris Purnell at Birddata. Ok I thought let's give it a try.

When I started this new adventure I didn't know a Hardhead from a Chestnut Teal or a Pacific Black...a duck was a duck ...end of story, but this is where the addiction comes in, the challenge to get it right becomes irresistible.

I've had a long time interest in photography so the next step was inevitable ...could I get a photo of each of the birds I've been able to identify. I'd been taking my camera along on my field trips anyway because sometimes encounters are fleeting and a quick photo even if blurred can be enough to seal an identification. The photos of birds began piling up on my computer with little semblance of order.

My interest in photography and the environment had already lead me to participate in the 2013 "Hume in Focus" photo competition organised by Hume City Council and from that event I discovered and joined the Craigieburn Camera Club. Many members in this fun group share an interest in wildlife photography so on one of our monthly meetings we were treated to a



A Black Swan at South Jacana

visit by Ken Walker from Melbourne Museum and a talk on his favourite project "BowerBird".

On that day for me it was as if all the planets came into line. BowerBird is a Citizen Science project that invites everyone to share the gems and mysteries of our natural environment. From the smallest insect to the tallest tree there is a place for it on BowerBird. Membership is free and easy to establish, once you join, the vast library of images is there to enjoy and to add to. You can even set up your own Projects.

I'm working my way through my bird counting sites assigning each of them to a project and now have an instant perfect way to keep track of the birds, flowers trees, even an occasional frog that I've been able to identify and photograph. Better still the link address to my Project Sightings allows me to share my progress with my friends and relatives all around the world. While there are photo-sharing sites that can do the same thing,

BowerBird has the bonus of experts that can assist and give feedback on tricky identifications.

It also gives a powerful aid to promote and protect our precious spaces such as Trin Warren Tamboore in Royal Park that was facing certain demolition and still needs our vigilance and protection.

The success of BowerBird as a monitoring aid, is highlighted by the recent City of Melbourne Bioblitz. Members of the public were invited to get out into their parks and gardens in the first two weeks of November and seek out and photograph the plants and wildlife that survive in the busy and vulnerable urban landscape. Over 700 sightings have been added to the City of Melbourne Project and there are still more to come. BowerBird and Participate Melbourne have been stunned by the response, and the wealth of information will be the mainstay of a research project at RMIT.

So as I said at the beginning one thing leads to another and another. We will have a BowerBird Project Site for Moonee Ponds Creek and I invite all of our readers especially our young readers to come on board and become Citizen Scientists and seek out the treasures along our creek so that we can celebrate its value and diversity. But I warn you – it's VERY addictive.

Links: BowerBird website and a project example South Jacana Wetland.

<http://www.bowerbird.org.au/>

<http://www.bowerbird.org.au/projects/4353/sightings>

Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek end of year gathering



Come and join us for a Barbeque!!

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and the Friends of Five Mile Creek, invite all our friends from along the Creek to join us on:

Friday, 12 December from 5.00pm.

Where: Five Mile Creek Reserve, end of Government Road Essendon, (Mel 28 J2).

BYO food and drink

Come and hear about the plans for the Five Mile Creek Reserve, share ideas for it and the Moonee Ponds Creek and get to know other members of the Creek Communities.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Citizen Science – BowerBird Website gives us all the opportunity to contribute to scientific knowledge

BowerBird came about because of the need for such a service, writes Ken Walker of Melbourne Museum.

Prior to the development of BowerBird, there were only three websites, all in the northern hemisphere where amateurs could upload their nature images, share with others and hopefully get an ID. These were Project Noah and iNaturalist (both American) and iSpot (Natural History Museum of London).

For a specimen or an image to be scientifically useful, it must have data on Where and When the image was taken (Spatial / Temporal data).

Without Spatial and Temporal data we cannot add a dot to a distribution for a species or say when it occurred. The combination of records over time and space makes where and when it occurs, known to science.

I think the final straw for me was when a spider image taken in Geelong was posted to Project Noah in North America and then I was contacted back in Australia to provide an identification. What a long way to go to reach me!!

About seven years ago, the Federal Government provided \$30 million to develop a National Biodiversity website called Atlas of Living Australia – ALA. The purpose of ALA was to aggregate all of the Museum and Herbaria records into one place and to make these records available for use.

However, ALA realised that they were only getting scientific records (Museums and Herbaria) but none from citizen science. So, they funded me to build Australia's first citizen science website. We called it BowerBird and the rest is history.

Citizen scientists are now the eyes for observational science. Their wonderful bird and other records are local contributions which when fed into ALA become part of the national picture for a species – local to national. Ken Walker

Oh dear! I see what Anna means – I have looked at the website, joined, and now can't wait to send in some observations! There are so many projects to choose from – it's a great community of interested citizens – I urge you to have a look and join in. Ed.

Pampas Lily-of-the-Valley – a weed to watch out for ...

As its name suggests, this pernicious weed originated in South America – but wherever it came from it is definitely not welcome here!

Pampas Lily-of-the-valley (*Salpichroa organifolia*) is a very vigorous, sprawling, rambling 'forb' (ie a flowering herbaceous plant, not a grass), that has rhizomes that can be up to a metre below the surface, so as you can see it is very difficult to eradicate. Above the ground it grows up, through and over everything, smothering all in its path, from low ground covers to tall shrubs, and it is becoming established along the Moonee Ponds Creek, and in Five Mile Creek Reserve, where it is currently taking over the bank on the western side of the reserve.

What does it look like? It has green to greyish-green, 1.5 – 3cm long, oval, rather hairy leaves, either singly or in pairs, on stems up to three metres long, that become prostrate as they grow. Its flowers look rather like the Lily of the Valley after which it is named, white bell-shaped, flowers hang down on short stems, which are followed by yellow berries that contain up to 20 seeds. A single plant can produce 2,000 seeds a year!



White bell-shaped flowers hang down on short stems

It dies down in the autumn, reappearing in late winter and spring, spreading both above and below ground.

It spreads vegetatively and by seeds dispersed by birds. Small pieces of root grow readily, so great care must be taken when disposing of plant matter.

How can it be removed?

Getting rid of it is difficult – it can be knocked-back by spraying, but as it grows over other plants, they will be damaged in the process. It is virtually impossible to eradicate by manual removal because of the depth of its roots, but a combination of the two methods, done repeatedly over several years, can control it.

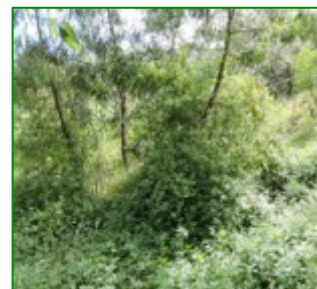
For more information, have a look at the DEPI website:
<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds/pampas-lily-of-the-valley>



A monoculture developing as Pampas Lily-of-the-Valley smothers everything on a bank at Five Mile Creek Reserve



Greyish green oval leaves up to 3cm long.



Two sapling wattles are providing support for this rampant weed. It will soon sprawl all over both unless tackled soon.

Horseshoe Bend Update

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek held several activities at Horseshoe Bend, part of our Moonee Valley Council 2014 Community Grant – the first event was to lay preparatory jute matting in March, before planting the site in July and August. Then in October, weeding and mulching was undertaken to help the plants establish and survive the forthcoming summer. We are gradually reclaiming this area of previously mown grass and weeds, to create habitat next to the Creek.

The plantings have been a mixture of shrubs and forbs, with some grasses, providing the different layers of strata needed by different birds and animals, from ground cover, to mid-storey under the established trees.

It is going to need repeated efforts to combat the tenacious weeds – Mallow and Kikuyu in particular, but it is encouraging to see the things we plant survive and thrive, despite the difficult conditions.



The site in August – tall weeds hiding the struggling natives



The site in October – piles of mulch waiting to be spread



Bright orange fungus playing its part in breaking down this log



Work-in-progress – piles of weeds and cleared patches



All the plants got a watering in October – Kelvin Thomson was there to help



The site after all our hard work – weeded, watered and mulched!

Thank you to everyone who came along to help, including the 15th Essendon Sea Scouts, Michelle Gooding and Kimberley Cooper from Moonee Valley City Council Kelvin Thomson MP, president of the FoMPC, and the FoMPC members, their children and grandchildren and members of the local community. With your help we can make a difference.

John Street Reserve – FoMPC 25th Anniversary Planting



In the middle of June, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek got together with community members for a planting and BBQ to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the group's formation. It was held at the end of John Street, Pascoe Vale, where Melbourne Water and Moreland Council had removed the elm suckers that were growing along the bank of the Creek, and an illegal carport had been removed from the road reserve. Moreland Council had created new steps down to the Creek-side track, and prepared the beds ready for planting. All was ready for the community to get together to transform this site. The pictures tell the story!



And this is what the reserve looks like today – well worth all that hard work!!



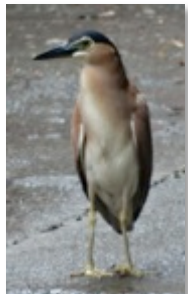
Welcome back Lori and thanks Vince!
Lori Arthur, who was instrumental in getting this project off the ground, (ably followed by Vince Andreana) is back from maternity leave – welcome Baby Jack! Lori and Vince will be sharing the role of Natural Resource Management Officer at Moreland Council.



Sightings

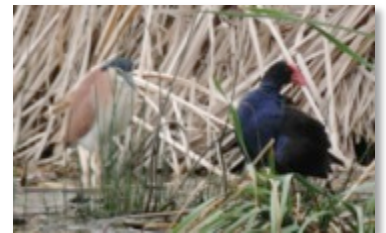
Fauna and flora observations along the Moonee Ponds Creek. If you see anything interesting, please tell us about it. Contact Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org.

Nankeen Night Herons have been seen all along the Creek in the last few months – how fantastic that these stocky birds are taking up residence along our Creek!



Anna Lanigan saw this one with fine white breeding plumes, having a scratch, as it roosted in a *Casuarina* in South Jacana Wetlands also at the end of November.

And this one at Flemington Race track keeping a close eye on a Swamp Hen ...

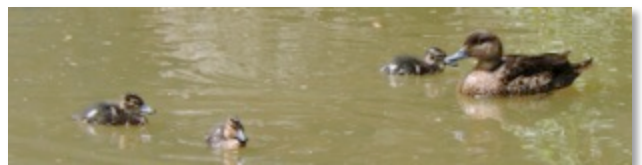


Mother Chestnut Teal with some of her brood in the pool, Five Mile Creek

This Ring-tailed Possum had made a dray in a wattle tree in Five Mile Creek Reserve



Tony Smith saw this one at the southern end of the Creek, fishing under the Flemington Road Bridge at the end of November.



Gems of the Creek

Poppy told us about her favourite bridges at the top and bottom of the Creek: the bluestone bridge at Westmeadows, built in 1869, and the Bridge over Dynon Road, a 'Moderne' heritage listed bridge erected in 1939. Two very different bridges, spanning two very different sections of the Creek, but both Gems of the Creek!

This picture of the Westmeadows bridge was taken in 2004. The shrubs on the Creek banks have now grown so tall, that sadly, the elegant contrasting stonework is no longer visible.



The Dynon Road bridge was the first permanent bridge erected over the flood-prone Creek at this point, using reinforced concrete to withstand the power of flood waters coming down the Creek.

What is your favourite bit of the Creek – natural or man-made? Send your ideas to Stella, at ponderings@mpccc.org - I look forward to hearing about them.

It has decorative columns and ornate wrought-iron balustrading – all needing a thorough cleaning!

