

Spinulosa

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Newsletter of Montrose Environmental Group inc.

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PO Box 7, Montrose, 3765. Secretary John Venn, phone 9728 3950

MEG membership

by Kim Wormald

MEG membership consists of both active members and quiet supporters. **WE NEED YOU ALL!**

Members who are able to participate in MEG activities speak highly of the friendly, welcoming, community spirit that pervades everything we do. It is a joy to see young families, not so young families, singles, couples and the wise elders of our community happily wandering and working together.

Our quiet supporters also play a vital role; the greater our membership base the more weight we carry when lobbying the Shire. This is particularly important when we are in the process of battling an issue as huge as the proposed expansion of Boral's Montrose Quarry.

So, **please encourage friends, family and neighbours to join MEG.** Whether they become active members or quiet supporters they will be highly valued, and they'll get a special mention in the next edition of Spinulosa!

Thanks to Tom Grucza, retiring MEG public officer

Tom Grucza is a MEG member of well over twenty years standing, and has been MEG's Public Officer for the whole fifteen years of its incorporation. He is standing down from that role, and we give him many thanks for a job well done.

Before becoming Public Officer, Tom was very active on the MEG committee and in activities such as working bees. He was Treasurer for a while, and perhaps his most demanding role was organising the MEG Show. (Members from the late 1970s and the 1980s will recall how huge and popular these events were, and their organisation was a very big job.)

The MEG Committee have sent Tom a card and gift as a token of appreciation.

MEG Christmas Party



**CALLING ALL ACTIVE MEMBERS and
QUIET SUPPORTERS!**

You are **ALL WELCOME** to MEG's
Christmas Party at Dodo and John's place.

When: 12 noon on Saturday 11th December,
straight after the Bungalook Conservation Reserves Working Bee.

Where: 43 Pioneer Way, Kilsyth South

Bring: BBQ meat, chair, plate of food to share.

Provided: Tea, coffee and juice will be provided

After all the hard work of the year it will be great to treat ourselves to a party. We could play cricket, ride bikes, wander through the reserve, sit and chat and smile, share ideas for next year, whatever!



Bungalook Creek Care (Kilsyth South)

by Kim Wormald

Once again Bungalook Creek Care are grateful to Melbourne Water for their expertise and willingness to continue beautifying the creek between Fussel Road Retarding Basin and Liverpool Road. A weed management strategy has been implemented that includes spraying residual Blackberry and Patterson's Curse and mechanically digging out Pampas Grass from an adjoining property. It has been decided not to slash the creek reserve immediately west of the retarding basin, as so many self-seeding eucalypts and other indigenous natives are thriving. The 450 plants (planted last year) are looking remarkably strong.

Bungalook Creek Link-Up

Such enthusiasm! Recently a group of Bungalook Creek-carers met to discuss establishing a coordinated approach to caring for the creek from its source on Mt Dandenong to Bayswater Road. There are a number of individuals and groups that regularly work to enhance the creek. If you are interested in learning more about us please contact Kim, 9761 9914.

Quarry Vegetation Survey

Dr Graeme Lorimer is a professional environmental scientist and is MEG's technical advisor on matters of flora, fauna and air pollution related to Montrose Quarry. However, his past opposition to a quarry expansion means he doesn't have the necessary independence to act as an expert witness in the Environmental Effects Statement process.

The MEG Committee believes that it is vital, on behalf of our community, to challenge and correct any flaws that may have arisen in assessment of vegetation that Boral proposes to destroy. The MEG Committee has therefore appointed an independent consultant botanist to survey Boral land south of the existing quarry pit. Boral have given permission for Matthew Dell, accompanied by Graeme, to study the area.

We will gratefully receive any donations, large or small, towards the cost of this consultant. Please indicate that your donation is to help with the 'flora study'.

Shire of Yarra Ranges Educating for Sustainability Expo

by Noel Morgan

Lillydale Lake on a beautiful day (19th October) was the perfect venue for the Educating for Sustainability Expo. The event was attended by about 750 school students who participated in a great range of environmental activities provided by government agencies, regional agencies and community organisations. Schools already advanced in developing environmental sustainability programs showcased their activities. MEG Committee Member Marga Wennersten, who is now the Shire of Yarra Ranges Environmental Education Officer coordinated the Expo. Other MEG Committee members assisted on the day in registration, traffic control, or as teachers in charge of students.



Platypus in Olinda Creek

by Kim Wormald

The Australian Platypus Conservancy announced in its recent newsletter, Ripples, that the "record for the most times that a given individual has been recaptured is jointly held by two platypus in Olinda Creek (one female, one male) each of whom has been detained by nets on eleven occasions since 1996".

It has also been announced that an 'old man' platypus was captured and released in the creek. He was first captured 9 years ago and registered as a male of 3 years or older. The age of male platypus can be estimated in the first 3 years of their lives by examining the development of the venomous spurs on their inner hind ankles.

The APC conducts platypus surveys along more than 50 rivers and creeks in the Yarra River catchment, including sections of the Olinda Creek between Mt Evelyn and Lillydale Lake.

You can learn more about these surveys, and about platypus in general, by visiting <http://www.platypus.asn.au>. Thankfully we have come a long way since the days when these intriguing creatures were killed for their fur.

Action on National Park Weeds

by Noel Morgan

Parks Victoria have provided a \$10,135 grant to be shared between four local groups to assist in weed removal activities. The groups involved are the Thompson's Rd Area Fireguard and LandCare Group, MEG, and two small groups at Kalorama and Lower View Rd Montrose. The grant is being used to purchase equipment and to fund contract weeding in some difficult areas of our local sections of the Dandenong Ranges National Park. The groups will oversee the contract work in addition to their direct weed removal activities.

Annette Muir, assisted by Noel Morgan, both members of the Thompson's Road Fireguard/LandCare group and MEG, also helped by local advice, have mapped the upright woody weed density on the north-west slopes of the National Park between Montrose and Kalorama. Weeds were counted by traverses of selected one hectare grid squares. The resultant map is shown below and is being used for targeting weed removal

activity by the groups. The white areas marked X on the map have been cleared of weeds by various group and subgroup activity since mapping, over the past six weeks. This activity included a MEG working bee close to McKenzie Grove.

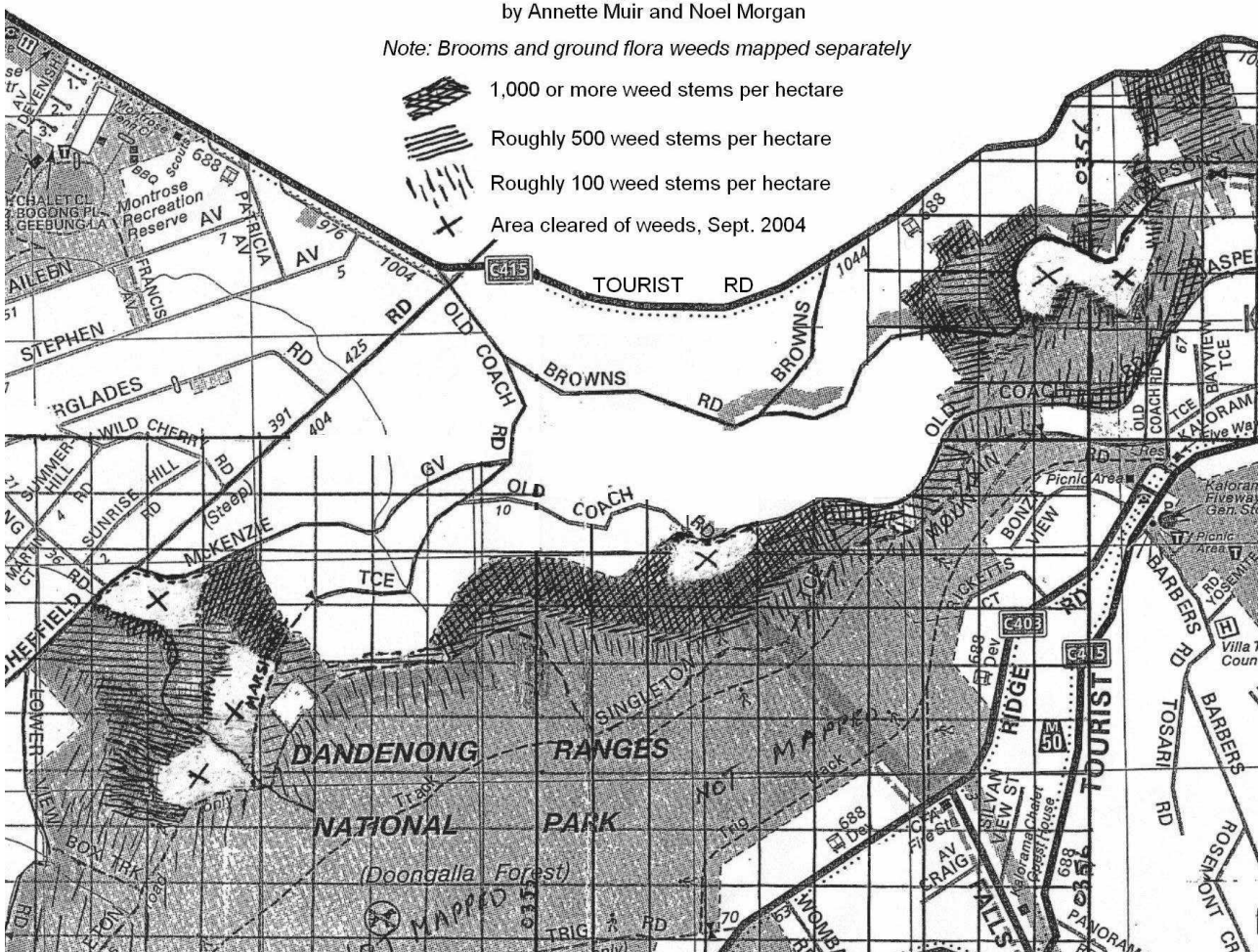
The weed map clearly demonstrates the impact on the National Park of weed invasion from private property and associated roadsides. There were approximately 35,000 stems of upright woody weeds in the area mapped, dominated by Sweet Pittosporum with considerable Monterey pine, Bonesed, Cotoneaster, Hawthorn, Privet, Prunus, Desert Ash, Broom species, Holly, Karamu, Willow Hakea, Cedar Wattle, Cootamundra Wattle etc. Areas of ground cover and climbing weeds such as Ivy, Blue Periwinkle, Blackberry, dense patches of young Broom and Euryops, Banana Passionfruit etc.

During this spring, there has been a wonderful display of flowering native plants in our local National Park, many of which are in danger of being completely overrun by environmental weed species.

Dandenong Ranges Natl Park Weed Mapping, Sept. 2004

by Annette Muir and Noel Morgan

Note: Brooms and ground flora weeds mapped separately



Friends of Heathfield Creek Update

by Danny Barr

There was excitement in the air as The Friends of Heathfield Creek gathered together on the last Sunday of October for their monthly working bee and 2nd year birthday celebration. Over 30 friends and neighbours, half of which were children, planted seedlings in areas which have been prepared, weeded and mulched. The community chattered away, marveling at the beautiful spring flowers, trigger plants, everlasting daisies, common rice flower and bearded orchids all blooming within this special piece of remnant forest.

After planting we gathered for the birthday morning tea - birthday cakes and party food. The children and adults sang "happy birthday" to all of us and blew out the candles. We were joined by some special guests; Lorraine Pedda, Montrose Primary School Gardener and Head of the M.P.S. Environmental Committee and her children Katrina and Glen; Tim the Tankman; and Kim Wormald, President of the Montrose Environmental Group. Kim presented a certificate and an indigenous plant seedling to each child (supplied by the Friends Group). The children received their certificates so proudly with beaming faces.

It was wonderful to reflect upon the gifts we have all received from this reserve that is now regenerating and flourishing, slowly becoming free from choking ivy, blackberries and other environmental pests. We also reflected upon the community, our proud environmental ambassadors, all working and playing together for the greater good.

All are welcome to attend our working bees, held on the last Sunday of every month at Heathfield Creek Reserve, cnr of Belvedere Drive and Richards Road, 10 am - 12 noon. Contact: Claire, ph 9728 2290.

Habitat Corridors Strategy

Maroondah City Council is in the process of considering submissions regarding their Habitat Corridors Strategy. MEG has suggested that Maroondah City Council include liaison with interested groups in adjoining shires to help create wildlife corridors that will truly benefit local and regional biodiversity and habitat.

The following article was written several years ago by environmentalist Steve Craig, and was reprinted in the October edition of The Understorey newsletter this year. Steve Craig passed away in June 2004.

Are you killing them with 'kindness'?

by Steve Craig

Well meaning members of the public, including residents of the Yarra Valley, are literally killing native wildlife with kindness by feeding them junk foods like meat, bread, seed and sugar water on a regular basis. The commercial production of seed bells and assorted accessories is now well established to service an increasing demand from people who are being encouraged by some seed producers, animal welfare groups and bird clubs to feed native wildlife. Damage to fruit and nut trees, cereal crops and houses constructed of softwoods like Western Red Cedar and Radiata Pine have all been directly linked to the feeding of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Discarded food attracts vermin, and sick birds visiting feeding tables may also increase the risk to human health. Many people derive enormous personal pleasure from "taming" wildlife and seeing them close at hand by giving them hand outs, but did you know that you could be literally "killing these animals with kindness"? It is inappropriate to treat our wildlife as though they were simply there for our own pleasure. Feeding wildlife alters their behaviour and turns them into beggars. If you are genuinely concerned for the well being of our wildlife, you will actually be helping them more by not feeding them.

There are a number of reasons why you should not feed wildlife:

- Wild animals often become dependent on the provision of food and lose the ability to forage for themselves. Adults that are dependent on artificial food fail to teach their young how to find natural foods.
- Artificial feeding concentrates birds in large numbers in one place and attracts vermin and pest birds. This upsets the balance and social behaviour of natural populations and may also increase the risk of predation. Increased concentrations of animals dependent on "hand outs" may displace other species in the local area.
- Feeding wildlife on a regular basis with artificial items like bread and processed foods contains salt in quantities which is not present in the natural diet of buds and

other wildlife, and this can cause inadequate dietary balance.

- Processed meats like mince, which is often fed to birds like Kookaburras and Magpies, contain large amounts of fat. The natural diet of these birds includes lizards, frogs and insects, which are all low in fat.
- Bird seed sold through supermarkets, grain stores and pet shops is not the kind of seed birds normally eat. It is often of low quality and contains the seeds of pest plants as well. PVA glues are used to hold some seed bells together and this unnatural product may be harmful to wildlife.
- Seed can be contaminated by pesticides, and thereby poison birds that eat it.
- Seed left out in damp conditions rots and grows mould that is toxic to parrots and other animals.
- Artificial sources of food can maintain sick birds that would normally die rapidly. The disease *Psittacosis*, which can also effect humans, is spread from bird to bird at feeding tables more readily than in a natural situation. Birds that feed on honey or sugar water can also suffer from a bleeding disease caused by lack of pectin normally obtained from the nectar of flowers.

Many people have the mistaken belief that wildlife and particularly birds, need supplementary feeding and that without this supplementary feeding the local wildlife will starve. However, Australian wildlife are well adapted to the changing seasons and climate, and are able to exploit a range of natural foods at different times of the year.

Droughts, floods and fires are natural events that may cause temporary food shortages, but this is a natural form of population control. The fittest individuals survive and produce well adapted offspring. The greatest threat to our native wildlife is the loss and degradation of habitat. Remnant habitat, particularly areas containing fallen logs, old hollow trees and native shrubs and grasses should be maintained and protected. Wildlife should be gradually weaned off artificial food to give them time to adjust to a natural diet again.

There are a number of ways you can assist local wildlife other than by putting out food for them:

- Plant local (indigenous) native food plants that provide nectar, insects, fruits and seeds.
- Providing a shallow water bowl, away from vegetation that may conceal a predator, can attract many birds and other native animals.

Nest boxes can also be erected for hollow dependent species.

- By not keeping cats and dogs, your property will be more attractive to native wildlife.

The Land for Wildlife scheme run by the Department of Sustainability and Environment is another source of information and free advice for property owners. Learning more about the natural behaviour of local wildlife, their habits, pattern of activity, where they feed, breed and shelter, although not as predictable as seeing birds at a feeding table, is an exciting challenge and a very rewarding experience. Refer also to Land for Wildlife Note "Encountering Wildlife Without Feeding" for more information.

Memorial Seat for Steve Craig

Mt Evelyn Environment Protection and Progress Association (MEEPPA) informed MEG that they are installing a memorial seat to honour the work of environmentalist, Steve Craig. They state that "Steve was an expert on the Powerful Owl and took a great interest in the preservation of the Owl Land Reserve". MEG has contributed towards the seat, which will provide nature lovers with a good excuse to relax and watch the wind in the trees.

Eucalypt hollows

Eucalypts develop hollows at all ages, but hollows suitable for vertebrate fauna do not typically appear until trees are at least 120 years old. Hollows for larger species may not appear until trees are at least 220 years old.

(From Land for Wildlife News, Vol. 5, No. 7, 2004; original reference: Gibbons, P & Lindenmayer, D. (2002). Tree hollows and wildlife conservation in Australia. CSIRO Publishing.)

Voluntary service recognised

MEG member Graeme Lorimer has recently received an award from the Maroondah City Council for 15 years of voluntary work in running the Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves. Congratulations Graeme!

Calendar of Events

Fire Ecology seminar, by David Van Bockel and Anthony Owen, **2 December, 7:30pm**. David and Anthony will talk about fire as a conservation management tool and illustrate its role in bushland ecology through a series of local case studies. David Van Bockel, Ranger at Warrandyte State Park, has over 10 years experience in fire ecology, controlled burning and wildfire fighting. Anthony Owen is an environmental consultant who uses fire as a management tool. This seminar is part of the Manningham City Council Environment Seminars series, held at The Function Room, Grand Hotel, 120 Yarra St, Warrandyte (Melways Ref 23 E11). The seminar is free and no bookings are required. Supper is provided. For further information contact Cathy Willis: ph 9840 9122, or cathy.willis@manningham.vic.gov.au

Bungalook Conservation Reserves Working Bee, Sat 11 December, 9.00am - 12.00pm. Meet at the end of Ormond Place, Kilsyth South. Contact: John & Dodo Kelly, ph. 9761 6616

MEG Christmas Party, Saturday 11th December, 12 noon, at 43 Pioneer Way, Kilsyth South (Dodo & John's house, adjacent to the Bungalook Cons. Reserves). Bring your own BBQ meat, chair, and plate of food to share. Tea, coffee and juice will be provided.

The MEG Committee

Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month, commencing at 7:45 pm.

President: Kim Wormald Ph. 9761 9914
Vice President: Barbara Glenwright Ph. 9728 4316
Secretary: John Venn Ph. 9728 3950
Treasurer: Glen Wormald Ph. 9761 9914
Member: Marga Wennersten Ph. 9737 1124
Member: Noel Morgan Ph. 9728 4634

Contributions for the next issue of <i>Spinulosa</i> can be posted or emailed to Kathryn Lorimer at 13 Kyamba Ct Bayswater North 3153, or ecology@optusnet.com.au
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