

Spinulosa

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Newsletter of *Montrose Environmental Group Inc.*

MEG Website: www.meg.org.au Regn. No. A0018558J

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MEG AGM

Our Annual General Meeting was a great event this year on 22 July 2017 with around 30 people attending. The renovations at the Montrose Town Hall look great and it was easy to find the new entrance to our venue.

The new format was a great hit with many members turning up early to attend the AGM and more turning up in time for the Guest Speaker. Our Treasurer Karen Davies was the Master of Ceremonies and she also delivered the Treasurers report.

Graeme Lorimer presented a great time lapse photo montage of vegetation at Bungalook Conservation Reserve. One set of photographs documented the vegetation recovery after an ecological burn conducted in April 2016. The other set of photographs documented changes in vegetation cover after ecological thinning of Thatch Saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*) in the ground layer was conducted. This aims to open the understorey, hopefully benefitting orchids and other wildlife. The photos of both the ecological burn and slashing are included on pages 2 and 3.

The election of office bearers was conducted by Councillor Tim Heenan. Again we have a very small committee, consisting of:

- John Venn - Secretary

- Karen Davies - Treasurer
- Marcus Wills Cooke - committee member

Thanks must also go to Annette Muir who manages the membership database and Fiona Sutton who edits Spinulosa. These people have been very dedicated to the group and would very much appreciate your help. Thanks must also go to the other generous people who contribute their time to our group and the environment, and of course our members for their continued support.

Guest Speaker: James Fraser

James Fraser from Melbourne Water was the guest speaker for the event and he gave a fantastic presentation on frogs.

Why are frogs so important, do you think? Well,

- Tadpoles eat algae and transfer energy up the food chain
- They are both prey and predators
- They are important to medical research and may hold the secret to cures we don't yet know about
- They're great for pest control, especially mosquitoes
- As they are sensitive to pollution and other environmental changes, they



are a good indicator of environmental health

- They have significant cultural value
- They have intrinsic value just for being themselves.

Of all the classes of vertebrates, frogs are the most threatened group with approximately one third of all frog species being threatened.

James also spoke about the Frog Census App that is available for the general public to use to record frog species where they are observed or heard. Using the Frog Census data James could tell us which species have been recorded in and around Montrose and he gave a great overview of the identification of each species, including playing calls for us to hear.

If you would like to receive a copy of James' presentation, which he was kind enough to leave with us, please email info@meg.org.au.



Guest speaker James Fraser from Melbourne Water talking about the Frog Census program.



MEG Treasurer Karen Davies and Councillor Tim Heenan.

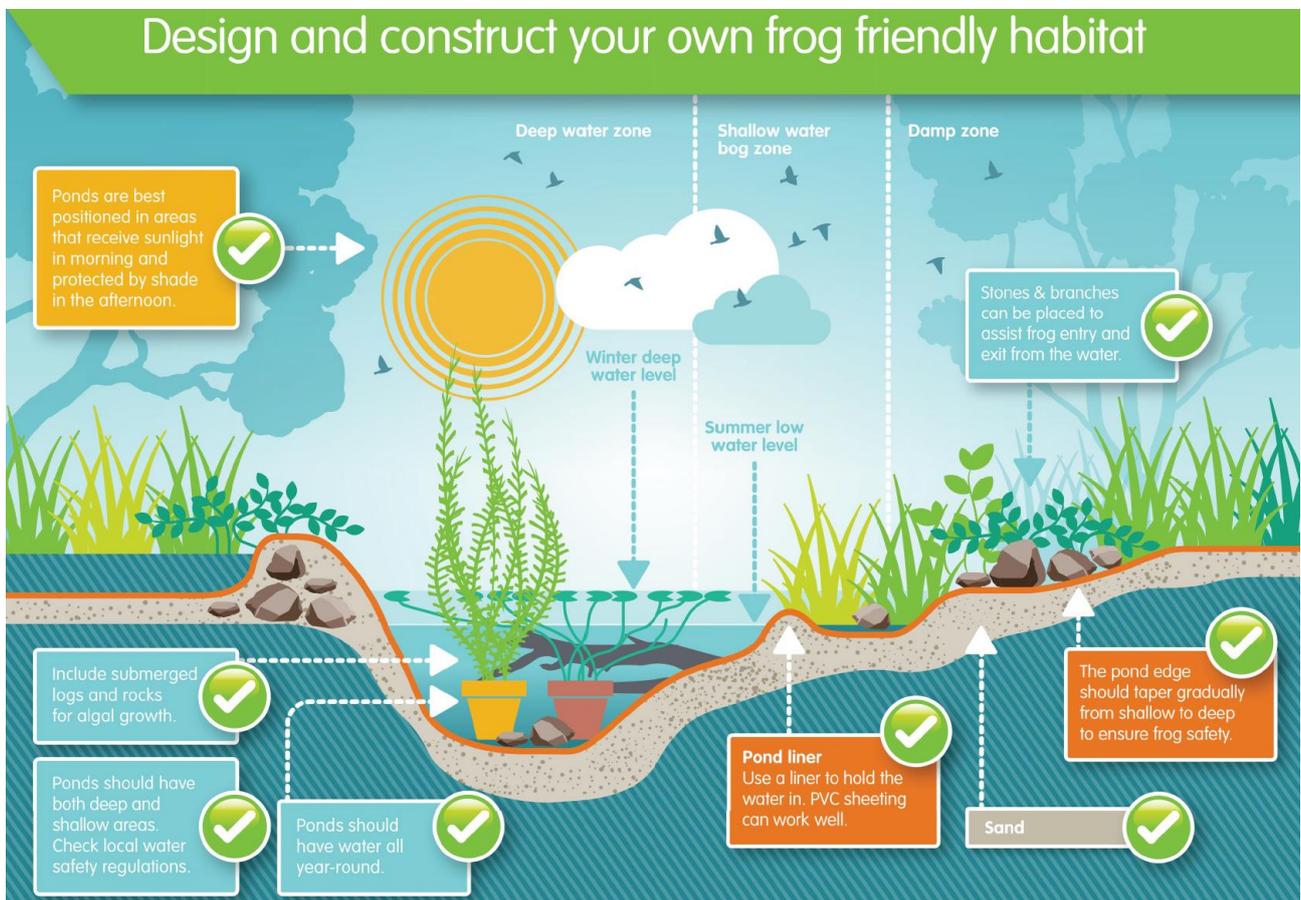


Dr Graeme Lorimer presenting time lapse photos of burnt vegetation at Bungalook Conservation Reserve.

To reduce Thatch Saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*) biomass, the vegetation was carefully slashed to open up spaces for orchids and other wildflowers to germinate and grow.



Time lapse photos of the vegetation the morning before the ecological burn (top left), five days after the burn (bottom left), 16 days after the burn (top right), and one year and four months after the burn (bottom right).





Creating a frog friendly habitat

(Reproduced from the 2016 Melbourne Water brochure)

Why create a frog habitat?

There are 35 frog species in Victoria and 16 of these live in Melbourne. All around the world frogs are declining, partly due to habitat loss, pollution and chytrid fungus. Frogs help control insect populations and they also provide essential food sources for many predators. They can act as an indicator of waterway health as they are often sensitive to changes in their habitat. By creating frog-friendly habitat you will be helping to provide vital habitat for these amazing creatures.

Help us fill the gaps

You can help to protect frogs by participating in the Melbourne Water Frog Census. It's easy to get involved – simply download the Frog Census app on your smartphone and record what you hear. Your report will automatically be sent to us via the app and we will identify which frogs you have recorded. Your data will then be added to our records to help safeguard these vocal little critters. If you don't have access to the app you can use a recording device and attach the datasheet found on the Melbourne Water website www.melbournewater.com.au/frogcensus

Creating frog friendly habitat

See the diagram on page 3 above for some design and construction tips your own frog friendly habitat.

It is best not to introduce fish into your pond, they may eat frog eggs. Exclude cats and dogs from the pond area; they may hunt the frogs.

Birds may also use the pond. Ensure adequate shelter and protection for frogs and tadpoles by placing rocks and logs around.

Macroinvertebrates will colonise the pond; they can be important food sources for frogs. Good diversity of water bugs indicates a healthy pond.

When the habitat is established, frogs will colonise the haven on their own. Never

relocate a frog or tadpole as this can spread disease.

Avoid positioning the frog pond underneath deciduous trees – this can contribute to poor water quality and algal growth in autumn.

Use local indigenous vegetation. Plant a variety of species both in and around the pond. Avoid floating plants and plants with toxic leaves.

Ensure that polluted water cannot enter the habitat. Don't position the pond downstream from areas that may be using herbicides and pesticides.

Ponds positioned in areas that will collect water after rain are ideal. Rainwater collected from a roof is a great source of fresh clean water.

For more information, references and further reading please visit:

- Melbourne Water (www.melbournewater.com.au/frogs)
- Amphibian Research Centre (www.frogs.org.au)
- Sustainable Gardening Australia (www.sgaonline.org.au)

Waterwatch engages with the community to protect our environment. To connect with your local community group, please contact waterwatch@melbournewater.com.au or call Melbourne Water on 131 722.





Australasian Gannet



Did you manage to work out the identity of the mysterious bundle of fluff from the previous edition of *Spinulosa*? The clues were:

- I drove for 6 hours to get to the site
- There is only one site on the mainland used by this species
- Access to the site is restricted and via a locked 2m high fence
- Maremma Sheepdogs were used to help protect the species during the breeding season
- They are now protected from humans, foxes and cats by locked gates and electrified fences
- Adults of the species forage at sea
- This young bird will attain its adult plumage when it is between 2 and 5 years old

Well it was an Australasian Gannet chick. The only Australian onshore breeding site for the Australasian Gannet is at Portland on the western Victorian coastline. The adult birds start visiting the rocky outcrop in late winter and the last of

the fledglings leave the site during autumn. They nest in colonies on the bare rocks with the nests spaced just beyond pecking distance of each other.

Australasian Gannets are magnificent seabirds. The adults are black and white with a golden yellow cap that extends along the back of the neck. They are spectacular feeders, diving from considerable height above the water to catch fish, which they often swallow before re-emerging.

Also, the bush birds still aren't back in my garden – I missed a couple of calls that may have related to my request about a birdbath or garden where I could quietly sit one afternoon¹. I'll give my mobile number this time so I don't miss the calls for which I'm hoping.

Happy birding, Kim Wormald

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Visit www.lirralirra.com for weekly updates and images on all kinds of bird species.



¹ In the last *Spinulosa*, Kim put out a special request for anyone with a birdbath

or garden that she could visit to quietly attempt to photograph the birds.



Brickworks Working Bee Invite

MEG invites members to assist in addressing weeds at Brickworks Conservation Reserve, Montrose. The next working bee is Saturday 19th August from 10am - 12noon approximately. The purpose is to continue working on Sweet Pittosporum and other woody weeds in the area where we have been previously working. Morning tea is supplied and there is the option of doing a nature/monitoring

walk around the reserve also. Meeting place is the car park at Cambridge Road.

Could you please indicate your attendance to Karen Davies for catering purposes: kdav246@yahoo.com.au

Please BYO cup for morning tea and garden gloves if you have some.

Please wear appropriate clothing for working outdoors (long sleeves, pants and closed shoes, hat, rain jacket, etc.).

Upcoming Events

Brickworks Working Bee

Help remove Sweet Pittosporum at the Brickworks Conservation Reserve.

When: Saturday 19 August 2017, 10 am to 12 noon.

Where: Brickworks Conservation Reserve, meeting at the car park at Cambridge Road.

Spring Bird Survey

We are currently planning our spring bird survey which will most likely occur in October. More details will be emailed once the date has been confirmed.

Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves

Meet 9:30 am, 2nd Saturday of the month. Meet at the end of Ormond Place, Kilsyth. Contact Graeme Lorimer after hours for details on 8711 3474.

12 Aug, 9 Sept, 14 Oct, 11 Nov, 9 Dec

Montrose Upper Landcare Group, MULGa

Meet 9:30 am, 1st Saturday of the month, corner Old Coach Road and Browns Road, Montrose (or wherever the sign there directs you). Contact David Mackrell 0417 054 402 or Robin Gredler 9761 8180.

2 Sept, 7 Oct, 4 Nov, 2 Dec.

Friends of Heathfield Creek Reserve

Meet 10am, last Sunday of the month. Meet on Belvedere Drive near Richards Road. Contact Claire Thomas 9728 2290.

27 Aug, 24 Sept, 29 Oct, 29 Nov.

Spinulosa Newsletter Enclosed from the Montrose Environmental Group Inc.

Sender:
Montrose
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PO Box 7,
Montrose Vic
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Hairpin Banksia
(*Banksia
spinulosa*) at
Bunyip State Park
– the namesake of
out newsletter

