



Spinulosa

September 2012

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Newsletter of Montrose Environmental Group Inc.

MEG Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~meg> Regn. No. A0018558J

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Note from the President

With the new financial year comes the new year for MEG. And what a busy year the last one has been! This edition of Spinulosa includes the annual summary of activities and happenings for the group, a synopsis of the Climate Change presentation given by Greg Hunt at our AGM, and a feature on the beautiful Scarlet Robin by our resident birdo, Kim Wormald.

It was fantastic to see many of our members at the AGM to support the group, enjoy a delicious lunch, catch up with friends and make new ones, and be re-inspired to step up our efforts reducing our input toward climate change.

Isn't it nice to have Spring in the air! The early flowers are coming out, chicks are hatching, I even saw my first snake (Tiger) for the season in mid-August. As usually with the coming of spring, we will also be holding our annual Spring Bird Walk later this month. Given the bird activities I've observed in the last few weeks, they should be nice and active giving us a really good chance to see some beautiful birds in action. It would be great to have you join us!

Fiona Sutton.



A Changing Climate Changes Lives

Greg Hunt at the AGM gave us plenty to think about. In a changing climate, do we wait for governments to act or do we make changes to our own behaviour?

Greg pointed out some of the changes that may affect us as individuals in the short and longer term, such as increases in average rainfall, increases in extreme rainfall events, sea level rise and storm surges. The recent drought years have concerned many who live near forests or grasslands, but we want to live in those areas. Forest fire risk days and grassland fire risk days are likely to increase over the next decades.

Companies selling household insurance are already pointing out one of the reasons for premium increases – reinsurance firms have suffered from the string of recent natural disasters and want compensation for the new, increased risk. Electricity providers will have to be more diligent in their maintenance of poles and wires to prevent bushfire, and this has its financial cost.

Climate deniers have gone to absurd lengths to prove their point. (For a detailed account of this see Robert Manne's article in The Monthly August 2012.)

So, many implications of climate change are known, but what can we as individuals do and what should we do? Simple actions like switching off appliances at the wall, avoiding overheating or over cooling rooms are now well known savers of energy. Greg suggests 65% of household hot water is used in the bathroom, so turning down the hot water thermostat may lead to a saving. The biggest users of household energy are hot water (31%), and refrigeration (14%).

The savings and changes we make in the home are largely hidden. What we can do is influence others and counter statements that deny climate change as a problem. It

may be as simple as letting people know that we don't share their views. Knowledge is not a sufficient motivator for action – this has changed the debate from a fact driven one, to a psychological one relating to people's morals.

Where to from here?

Impacts of climate change will not happen overnight; we need an active government and an engaged community. This process is underway but it is too slow.

Everyone's actions – from reducing their impact on climate change, to influence others to do the same – count.

MEG Annual Summary

July 2011 – June 2012

MEG has had a very busy year with the commencement of the monthly MEG working bee along with providing other volunteer opportunities and events to involve the community in their environment.

With the departure of Sue Plumb and Ann Williamson from the committee throughout the year, the committee reshuffled to fill the vacant positions. I have taken on the role as President and Newsletter Editor, Roger Rooks is now the Treasurer, and we welcomed back Annette Muir as Membership Officer. Thanks must go to Sue and Ann for their contribution to the group over the years, and to the current committee members who have taken on new roles.

As of June 2012, MEG had 49 financial memberships either as groups, families or singles.

AGM July 2011

Last year 30 people attended the AGM to hear Jim Robinson of Greening Australia talk about habitat gardens for your local fauna species.

Jim gave a wonderful slideshow presentation discussing the importance of food, shelter and breeding resources for our native animals. He explained how local fauna depend on local plants for

many of these resources, and how the flora also depends on the fauna for pollination, seed dispersal and pest control. The overriding points when designing a habitat garden were to incorporate all structural levels in your design from trees to shrubs to ground covers, and to utilise species that flower and fruit at different times throughout the year. Removal of environmental weeds is also important as they generally attract introduced fauna species, and monitoring your garden to track fauna use changes over seasons and years is a rewarding exercise.

Many people stayed on for the delicious lunch of soups, cakes, slices, and tea and coffee. Thanks to The Soda Tree, now the Mountain Hub Café, for their support bringing the soups to the venue, as they are again this year.

Spring Bird Walk

The Spring Bird Walk was held on the 15 October at Lillydale Lake. Ann Williamson led the walk which was attended by four people who enjoyed seeing a variety birds, including the Great Egret which is rare in the area.

Christmas Picnic

The Christmas Picnic was held at The People's Garden on Saturday 3 December, and attended by a group of MEG members, including most of the committee,

who enjoyed a relaxed lunch and brief walk around the garden.

Wild Action

At the request of the authors, funds raised by the sale of Walkabout Montrose are to be spent on environmental education. Based on this guideline, a presentation by Wild Action – the zoo that comes to you – was given to Montrose Primary School. The session focused on local biodiversity and on local animals. It was a successful event, where two groups of Grade 4 students, totalling 60 students, enjoyed the company of a Kookaburra, Tawny Frogmouth, Lace Monitor, Blue-tongued Lizard, Flying Fox and Koala.



Corey, Steph, Lauren and Kurt with Jay and a koala



Corey with a Tawney Frogmouth



Daisy with a Blue Tongue Lizard

Boral Quarry

It's been pretty quiet on the quarry front. The meetings continue, and they focus on blasting, planting and weed management.

MEG Working bees

Over the past year MEG has trialled and decided to continue holding a monthly working bee at various locations around Montrose and surrounds. This year working bees have been held at Doongalla Pony Club, Kevin Heinze's People's Garden, Dandenong Ranges National Park other Shire and private land. Working bees have been attended by as many as six volunteers that have made a great impact by removing environmental weeds for remnant bush and planting indigenous plants into MEG's section of the People's Garden. Home made cakes and slices along with tea and coffee follow the working bee and are thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves (by Graeme Lorimer)

The Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves is a small offshoot of MEG which works on conservation of a cluster of reserves in Kilsyth South owned variously by Melbourne Water, Maroondah City Council and the Trust for Nature. The reserves include rich, rare bushland and the only known habitat of the Kilsyth South Spider-orchid, of which only three plants are known to survive.

The group has working bees on the second Saturday of each month, 9:30 am to lunchtime. There are typically 5-7 members at these events but up to about 20 on special occasions such as this year's post-fire educational session. The usual working bees focus on manual weed removal, rubbish collection, nature walks and fellowship. We're a diverse but close bunch. We tried in vain to attract more junior members last spring by running an open day with children's events and promotion through local schools and elsewhere. We always welcome more people and spring is a good time to join us for a morning.

Despite our small numbers, we think we've made a real, positive difference to the natural environment of the reserves over the past year. We have brought under control some of the worst weeds, such as Gorse and Spanish Heath and our rehabilitation of areas damaged by BMX bikes has gone very well. Some weeds such as a patch of Japanese Honeysuckle are still hard to get on top of (particularly with the breaking of the drought) but there is reason to be optimistic.

A highlight during 2011-12 is that two prescribed burns have been conducted: one affecting most of the Trust of Nature's two hectares and the other affecting the core habitat of the Kilsyth South Spider-orchid (in the hope of stimulating germination). Our group was involved in the planning of the fires. We are monitoring the return of plant species and flammable material to assist future fire management. It's also an excellent opportunity for learning about what fire does and how effective prescribed burns are in reducing bushfire hazard.



Overall, it's been a fulfilling year for the group's members and a good one for the reserve's environment.

Agapanthus planting at the Chocolate Shop

After a concerned member wrote to MEG expressing their concern with a recent planting of Agapanthus at the front of the Chocolate Shop in Montrose, MEG wrote to the shop to providing information about the impacts of Agapanthus as an environmental weed. We were very pleased to see that the planted

Agapanthus plants have since been removed - well done to the Chocolate Shop for their responsible gardening work.

MEG Brochure

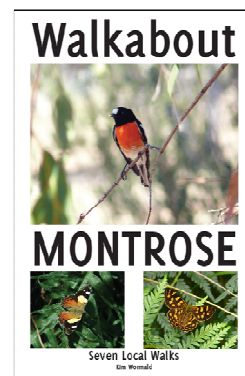
In an attempt to attract new members, I have updated the brochure which details what MEG does as a group, why people should consider becoming a member, and how to join. Feel free to take a copy to give to friends and neighbours who may not know of us.

Website

The website is gradually coming together. After attempts to edit the 'new' website to improve the design, colour scheme, functionality and information proved rather difficult, we are now trying again starting from scratch with the help of Andrew Lorimer and his father Graeme. Hopefully the new site with heavily revised content will be up and running in the next few months.

Walkabout Montrose

Walkabout Montrose is still on sale in a number of locations around Montrose including Montrose Post Office, Montrose Meats and Kurunga Native Nursery. Sales this year have slowed from previous years, as would be expected.



Other matters

Finally, a big thankyou must go to Len Cox for covering the cost of the venue for our AGM and for officiating at the election of office bearers. Also, thanks to the Mountain Hub Café for bringing down the soups for today's lunch. Len and the Mountain Hub Café - your ongoing support is greatly appreciated.

ACTIVITY: Spring Bird Walk

Sunday September 30th

As in many years past we have arranged a walk in our local area with bird expert Ken Harris, who is donating his time.

We will meet at Five Ways, Kalorama at 3.30pm Sunday September 30th. The walk will take about an hour and a half. We will walk mostly along Singleton

Terrace; terrain is mainly easy and flat with a few slopes and we will be travelling slowly with Ken.

The location of the meeting place is the car park close to the cafe at the crossing point of Mt Dandenong Tourist Road, Ridge Road and Old Coach Road Kalorama. We look forward to seeing old and new members on the walk.

Lirralirra Birding Blog

After being a birder for many years I recently took up bird photography and am loving every moment of it. It means I can still look at birds after dark and I get to see them in amazing close-up detail.

My favourite thing about winter is the annual visit of Scarlet Robins to Montrose. They are exquisite little birds that you may have seen perching on low branches or fences before pouncing down to the grass to catch insects and grubs.

The female Scarlet Robin in the image spent an hour or so with me one morning. She came very close and didn't seem at all bothered by me or my camera.

If you enjoy birds you might like to visit my blog: www.lirralirra.com and while away a few extra moments with nature.

Happy birding, Kim.

PS. if anyone knows of an active nesting site that could be photographed (at a

distance without disturbing the birds or the site) I'd be very interested - 9761 9914.



(c) Kim Wormald - lirralirra.com

Upcoming Events

Spring Bird Walk

Meet 3:30pm, Sunday 30th September, at the car park close to the cafe at the crossing point of Mt Dandenong Tourist Road, Ridge Road and Old Coach Road Kalorama; contact John Venn for details 9723 4700.

Montrose Environmental Group Working bee

Meet 1pm, 3rd Saturday of the month. Location varies around Montrose; contact Roger Rooks for details 9728 5455.

15 September, 20 October,

17 November, 15 December.

Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves

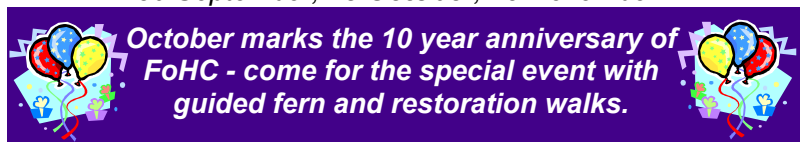
Meet 9:30 am, 2nd Saturday of the month. Meet at the end of Ormond Place, Kilsyth. Contact Graeme Lorimer for details 8711 3474 after hours.

13 October, 10 November, 8 December.

Friends of Heathfield Creek Reserve

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

30 September, 28 October, 25 November.



MEG Committee Office Bearers – 2012-2013

Five committee members were nominated and accepted during the election of office bearers held at the AGM, one of which will be taking on the previously vacant role of President. The committee for the July 2012 – June 2013 year includes:

Fiona Sutton – President
John Venn – Secretary
Roger Rooks – Treasurer
Annette Muir – Committee Member (silent)
Kim Wormald – Committee Member (silent)

If you can spare one evening a month for the monthly meetings, it would be great if you could consider becoming an active committee member. For more information email MEG info@meg.com.au or call the secretary on 9723 4700.

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