

Community Action Saves Parkland Funding

Overwhelming community action has convinced the Banyule City Council to cancel the proposed cuts to their funding of the Darebin Parklands. Council received over 100 responses against the proposal - an amazing effort given the short notice.

The motion re the cuts was debated at Council on October 30. The gallery was packed with opponents to the proposals. The Mayor noticed that it was the largest response he has witnessed.

In response to community feeling, Council amended the original to allow funding to continue to 2025.

Six speakers spoke against the motion - two community representatives and four involved with the park. Here is a summary of their points of view:

Maryanne Newton, President of Friends of Darebin Parklands, emphasised the importance of the park to community, and the Rangers contribution to providing opportunities for many community groups. She also pointed out the crucial role that the rangers play in promoting and organising the involvement of locals in revegetation projects.



Photography was not allowed in the meeting

Graeme Hamilton, Former CEO DCMC, highlighted the importance of the funding the wages of Rangers which had been questioned by one of the councillors. He explained how the funding cuts would have a drastic impact on services.

Pete Wiltshire, Head Ranger Darebin Parklands, spoke passionately about his involvement in the park for nearly 40 years. One of the issues raised by council was risk management within Rockbeare Park. Peter pointed out that the rangers had been successfully managing risk for many years.

Sue Course, 'The Mother of the Park', long term advocate for the park, observed that 50 years ago she and others had fought to save the park and its viability was once again threatened by the cuts. Her passion for the park is an inspiration to us all.

Belinda Hill, Ivanhoe resident and neighbour of the park, expressed a local perspective.

Dominic McKenzie shared his experience of being part of the Banyule Bush Crew, which would be expected to pick up the Rangers' work.

Ian McMaster

The resolution of Council is as follows:

That Council:

1. *Formally notes the finalised audit process and thanks Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC) for their contribution and participation in the audit.*
2. *Acknowledges the DCMC's response in relation to the audit findings.*
3. *Request officers liaise with all stakeholders involved in the independent Audit of DCMC to enable public release of audit findings.*
4. *Confirms its commitment to ongoing funding of the DCMC in 2023/24 and 2024/25.*
5. *Advise DCMC of Council's intention to review its contribution to the Darebin Parklands coordination division (land management).*
 - a. *Noting that the review will include the concerns raised by the community relating to proposed cessation to funding the Darebin Parklands land management division.*
 - b. *Notes that the review is in line with Council's procurement obligations as per the Local Government Act 2020.*
6. *Note a review of the structure and delivery of catchment management services, that considers Integrated Water Management obligations, in partnership with other LGA funding bodies during the 2024/25 financial year.*
7. *Request the review of the Darebin Parkland coordination division (land management) and the Creek Coordination (catchment management services) consider:*
 - a. *Any decision is with the intention to improve the ecology and biodiversity values along the Darebin Creek, Banyule and the broader area.*
 - b. *Provide opportunity for community input into the review.*
8. *Receive a report by December 2025 to present the outcomes of the structure and delivery of catchment management service and contribution options for the Darebin Parklands coordination division (land management).*
9. *Cease Councillor nomination and representation to the Darebin Creek Management Committee Board effective 31 October 2023.*
10. *Note Council's two representative positions on the Darebin Creek Management Committee Board would be occupied by nominated officers with specific skills suited to the Board's needs.*

President's Report

2023 has been an active and successful year for the Friends of Darebin Parklands, with fantastic community engagement and participation at our 50th celebration, Junior Ranger and adult events including Spotlighting walks, the Snake Awareness event and the wonderful speakers at our General Meetings. It was lovely to welcome in 2023 with a talk by our own Katy Marriott, now Melbourne Water (MW), followed by engaging and topical talks on the fish ladder from MW's Dana Grech and turtles by Dr Franciscus Scheelings.

The Ivanhoe Wetlands are looking lush with our 2023 Victorian Landcare Grant funding four park care days and the Thursday crew's continued restoration blitzes. Our volunteers continue to have an impressive impact, contributing more than \$50,000 of in-kind labour annually.

On a less inspiring note, the recent proposal to the Banyule City Council to cut funding Parklands was distressing as it revealed a lack of understanding of:

- 1) The extensive community involvement and investment in the Parklands and their use by a diverse range of users, and
- 2) how the skilled management by the Parklands' Rangers is critical to maintain the Parklands environmental and community values.

The community response to Banyule Council's proposal was magnificent and has secured the Parklands funding until June 2025. The Councillors and Council Officers have indicated they will seek to build on the benefits the Parklands brings to the community. Our challenge now is to ensure that Banyule and Darebin Councils remember this when the next round of funding is under consideration.

We're anticipating an exciting 2024, including Park Care days, junior ranger events, spotlighting and talks from expert speakers. To keep up the momentum, the Friends of Darebin Parklands is actively seeking members to join the committee, adopt an event or issue to ensure the Parklands remain an oasis for wildlife and our community, please get involved.

We look forward to seeing you at the Friends of Darebin Parklands end of year BBQ at 6:30 pm Tuesday 28 November to conclude 2023!

Maryanne Newton



'Kookaburra in the golden hour'



Watercolour by Madeleine Jenkins from a reference photograph taken on the healing trail at Darebin parklands. Commissioned by Tracy Painter with 15% of proceeds donated by Madeleine and Tracy to restoring native habitat for birds at the parklands, especially Kookaburras!

Cr. Alida McKern Alternative Motion:

While the adopted motion has given a reprieve to Banyule's funding to the Darebin Parklands under a review process, I did not support the above motion (now carried) due to the following concerns:

1. Lack of detail as to what the review process looks like, and no detail as to how the review involves the DCMC, community, funding partners and other stakeholders
2. Lack of detail as to the community engagement plan. Again, what does this look like, who and how will community be engaged?
3. Cessation of Councillor representation on the DCMC—Councillor representation to be replaced by Officer representation

Report from the Rangers

Well, this year has flown by!

Firstly, Pete, myself and all staff at DCMC would like to say a big thank you for all of the support you've given over Banyule's proposed plan to cease DCMC's funding, which has now been amended to continue the funding for the next two years. We've been overwhelmed by the support received and it's been really humbling to see how much you all care about the park-lands and us. Thank you!

Park Assistant Role

As Pete isn't the young lad he used to be and he's currently dealing with some old man health issues, DCMC is advertising for a part-time Park Assistant role to help out with the load and support old Pete and young Kim. This role will begin as a 3-month trial period with the potential to be extended. It will be advertised on NRM Jobs if you know anyone who may be interested.

Revegetation Project

We've completed the first stage of our big revegetation project "Restoring Ivanhoe Floodplain" where Thursday Crew, along with Community Park Care Day volunteers, have planted over 7000 plants! Stage 1 was supported by a Melbourne Water Grant. Pete, myself and volunteer Jared did a lot of preparation work leading up to the planting. Already you can see progress in the transformation of the area. Be sure to stroll down there to have a look if you haven't already!

Next year Stage 2 will commence which is supported by a Jemena grant. Thank you to everyone who has been involved or has supported us! On top of volunteer planting, Pete and myself have also done a lot of planting alongside regular weed control (amongst other park jobs).



Thursday Crew

The Crew have simply been amazing again this year. On average, there's been a group of around 20-22 volunteers each week. Along with weeding and planting, the crew have propagated plants and have attended various upskilling workshops. It's just a great community of people and we welcome anyone to come along and see what it's all about! 9am-11am every Thursday.

The Crew make an important impact on the park. Thank you, Thursday Crew!

Overall volunteer stats for this year (March – Nov) – Park Care Days, Kinders & Thursday Crew:

- **1362 volunteer hours**
- **Volunteer in kind contribution - \$61,380**
- **9,400 plants planted**
- **96 individuals have volunteered their time to helping the parklands this year!**

Spiritual Healing Trail and Sidney Clifton plaque

The spiritual healing trail plaque's have had a facelift! After 20 years, the writing had faded to the point where it was difficult to read the plaques. All the plaque's have now been redone and they look brand new! Pete's in the process of securing them back onto the rocks.

If you've wandered down to the reflection pool lately (below the Sidney Clifton house near the off-leash area), you may have noticed a very large rock placed by the side of the creek. A plaque has been made, funded by the Clifton family to commemorate Sidney Clifton and will be se-cured onto the rock.

Nest Box Monitoring

The birds started breeding very early this year. This isn't a surprise as we saw a warmer Winter and lots of food sources available. The Rainbow Lorikeets started breeding as early as May!

Next box maintenance is an important part of the program and throughout the year we in-stalled new boxes and replaced old ones. We've also collaborated with an engineer to carry out testing on boxes made from different materials to test the thermal qualities of each. We're al-ways looking at ways to improve boxes and continue researching. Look for the stats from our most recent survey in this newsletter.



Community Park Care Day volunteers

See you around the park!

Kim & Pete

Park Botany Workshop



Botanist Michael Cincotta from Nangak Tamboree/La Trobe Wildlife Sanctuary, gave the Thursday Crew a walking talk around the Parkland on 2 November.

Here is Kim's report.



Defoliation of Eucalypts in the park

- Lerps are found on Eucalypt leaves
- Lerps are a sugary covering that are made by psyllids (sap sucking insects) when they're in their juvenile stage (nymphs)
- Lerps are eaten by many species of wildlife including Noisy Miners. Because they're so dominant, they chase off other animals that would eat both lerps and the insect and eat all the lerps, leaving the insects
- The insects over populate as a result and the tree starts to die back - making it vulnerable to diseases and over-browsing from possums (they'll target the new, fresh Eucalypt tips as the other leaves die off and don't recover)



Plant workshop

Notes from park walk
with Michael Cincotta



Saltbush

- Fire retardant because of their high salt content
- Berries are food for lizards & birds
- Edible groundcover



Nodding Saltbush
etnedia



Ruby Saltbush
enchylaena tomentosa

Feather Spear-grass



- Seeds spiral to 'drill' down into the soil
- Flowering tufts full of seed blows easily in the wind like a tumbleweed

Honey Brown Beetle

- This is the larvae of native Honey Brown Beetles
- Their larvae is beneficial in turning over highly carbonaceous material, breaking it down into usable components for soils
- The larvae is needed in order for Eucalypt forests and woodlands to thrive



Weeds

- Non-native saltbush
- Annual herb
- Edible
- Common near waterways



Fat Hen
atriplex prostrata orache



Cockfoot
dactylis glomerata

- Non-native (Europe)
- Perennial grass
- Has some habitat value but displaces native grasses

Grey Sedge
carex divulsa



- Has soft leaves - native carex have sharp edges of leaves
- Dark green leaves - natives are a lighter green
- Have a strong root system
- Seed bank of 10 years



Ecological burns of grasses

- Undertaking ecological burns in a grassland area can benefit native grasses while reducing non-native grasses
- A burn will demolish annual grasses and delay seeding of perennial grasses
- Will stimulate growth of native grasses

DCMC Coordination report

November 2023

As we left behind the winter planting season and entered Spring the Coordination team pivoted to our citizen science ecological data collection and weed control at our revegetation project sites.

The phase 2 agreement with La Trobe University has been finalised for the **Nangak Tamboree** project. The Narrap Unit are busy controlling weeds around priority remnant and revegetated areas and have drafted a plan for Autumn burning. The area will be surveyed this month by La Trobe University Students from the Botany Society with the Narrap Unit as well as Biosis and Trust for Nature.

The **McLeans to Greenhills Road** had a community weeding and bird watching day on November 19 promoted with the City of Whittlesea Landcare and Community Development Officers. We are finalising the contract to extend the project further north towards the Western Ring Road with the City of Whittlesea through their **Greening Whittlesea** program.

The **Habitat Conservation and Management (HCMC)** is nearing the end of its second year with DCMC with positive feedback from participants, including some of the Thursday crew, and interest from prospective 2024 students.



Dr Randall Robinson leading HCMC participants at Longforest

Feedback from participant: "Jimmy, Sarah and I are loving the course, the speakers and field trips have been fantastic!"

Citizen Science

Recent data collection through citizen science activities includes monitoring for platypus (0) at the Yarra confluence, bird observations in Heidelberg West (48 species), 17 participants and Thomastown East (27

species), 8 participants. During October, our volunteer nestbox monitors recorded 9 Krefft's Gliders inhabiting our nestboxes, along with 11 Brushtail and 11 Ringtail possums. Our seasonal frog monitoring began with the volunteer training on Wednesday November 11. We are exploring the opportunity of a collaborative project with Melbourne University and Hanson Wollert Quarry to analyse the quarry site conditions to determine why they are so favourable for Growling Grass Frogs.

We currently have three active Waterwatch water monitoring sites along the lower Darebin Creek, including the Darebin Parklands.

Darebin Creek Education Program hosted a number of school excursion to the Darebin Parklands since August.

10th Ivanhoe Scouts had a spotlight night finding out what comes out at night in the Parklands.

Wales Street Primary Thornbury year 5s investigated water quality of the Darebin Creek and macroinvertebrates living in the leachate pond.

Concord School, Bundoora students found out about the animals that live in the Parklands and their habitats, including nestboxes.

St Anthony's Primary Alphington year 3/4s investigated water quality of the creek.

Northcote High year 11s learnt about leachate treatment system with a tour by Peter Wiltshire.

Carey Baptist Grammar prep students discovered local waterbugs.

Since mid-August we have engaged 1,180 students in 68 sessions from 19 schools and scout groups throughout the Darebin Creek Catchment.



Wales St Primary students given instructions by Peter Grenfell for creek water quality testing at Darebin Parklands



Farewell Graeme Hamilton



Graeme responds to Margaret's farewell speech at the lunch event in the Gleeson Centre.



Research on stomach flora of turtles

At the August General Meeting at the Gleeson Centre, guest presenter Dr Franciscus Sheelings from Melbourne Uni gave an entertaining talk about his research amongst turtles in the Duck Pond and Ivanhoe Wetland.



He shared his surprise at how many turtles swam into his trap overnight.

His current project focuses on the microbiome of reptiles, and how this influences physiology and evolutionary biology.



Introducing Annette Salkeld

After only a few months in the role of DCMC CEO, Annette is loving working close to home, in her local familiar parkland, and in a relatively small organisation after her previous work in a large body (the Nature Conservancy). She appreciates the staff as skilled, passionate and dedicated people who know and like their work.



The poor show of partnership by Banyule Council was a baptism of fire in which staff felt undervalued and undermined, but the response of the outraged community in its diversity was overwhelming – visits, phone calls and emails. People not only asked "What can we do?" but "How are you?"

The experience drove home the importance of how the Parklands are managed, emphasising relationships and safety, and encouraging the activities of such a wide diversity of groups from Bush Kindies to Senior Citizens, including students, people with disabilities and different cultures.

Annette is committed to working with Councils to ensure there are proper planning processes and community engagement. Management and community (eg Friends networks) need to work together to keep Councils accountable and responsive, with agreements that survive change. But Council funding is not enough, so other sources need to be found.

Darebin Creek is 50 km long, so there is a lot of opportunity!

interview by Jeanie Adams

Turtles are on the move!



(above) Eastern Long-necked Turtle
(left) Turtle digging nest

It's breeding season (Nov-Feb) and there are lots of turtles that live in Darebin Parklands.

You may see them walking around in various locations, especially after it has rained. They can walk kilometres in search of a mate or nesting site to lay their eggs.

What to do if you find a turtle:

- Observe from a distance! It's fascinating to watch them but be mindful not to stress it out by standing too close
- Leave it where it is (unless it's on a road, path or in immediate danger). They are looking for that perfect nesting spot! Moving them can disorientate them (and they'll just walk again to try to find a spot). You can call the Rangers on the office phone for advice.
- Keep dogs on leads! It's common for wildlife to be attacked/played with by off leash dogs.
- If in the off-leash area, put your dog on a lead until you're away from the vicinity of the turtle.

Conversation with Sue Course

When I suggested to Sue Course that she might like to contribute to this newsletter she seemed keen, and when I finally sat down to talk with her at her home, I realised why that was not surprising. Sue began the first newsletter of what was then Darebin Parklands Association in 1973 and edited it until 2001. Way back then it was a matter of writing by hand then paying for it to be typed and reproduced. It was on paper and put into letterboxes. Sue also spent 35 years on the committee.

The "origin story" is well known, of Sue going with Anthea Fleming and their children to play in Rockbears Park and seeing the bulldozers in action. (See Anthea's photos in the August newsletter). That got them started, but I wondered what keeps a woman going for fifty years? "It was so interesting!" she said. When I asked about setbacks, she ignored that word and talked about finding solutions to challenges, problem solving and the constant learning process. They learned how to plant trees, shrubs and grasses properly, how to control weeds, how to grow their own seedlings. How to deal with politicians, how to run a petition to have the parkland rehabilitated and extended.

Her conversation was peppered with the names of people and groups who helped in so many ways, large and small, and became her friends. There were weed experts, a forester to identify the MMBW's gift of 300 trees, old Ellis Stones to supervise the planting (by throwing potatoes to create a scatter pattern), a geology teacher, a botanist or several, a history researcher, a graphic designer. There were her neighbours she co-opted, and the Darebin neighbours of the park who supported working bees with afternoon tea and a hose and buckets of water.

Ivanhoe Grammar boys did hours of community service attacking boneseed. Then that program was finalised with a "boneseed



hunt" for children to find the remnant plants. Not only did the committee take out insurance against accident, they insured against park damage by having "demerit points" for wrong plants. One boy pulled up 500 plants!

Sue was a nurse and a mother of four, but she became the voluntary first Ranger, who found out where potential support was, and built on it. That job only ended when Council were persuaded to employ a part-time Ranger, and the volunteers then built a shelter for that person. Sue found herself liaising with Heidelberg Council which was relatively encouraging, while Northcote Council had only one keen member, Ron Gleeson whose name is

memorialised in the administrative centre. She organised volunteers and tours to show the community what they might lose. She pursued influential people like Premier Dick Hamer, and when he came to visit, they fed him mulberry ice-cream. He made a 1 for 1 offer to Northcote Council, plus a \$25,000 grant to eliminate weeds. The wall of blackberries were sprayed, then Easter was spent by volunteers burning the dead plants.

Sue has kept a small glass bottle which contained olive oil, a souvenir of the last Olive Festival in 2001.

"The best event in the park", she said, and I can't help wondering if we could do it again for her. And for us all.

When asked about the future, Sue said "I'm not worried about it, not after that meeting!" She was referring to the recent Banyule Council meeting where the community turned up to show our concern. Even then, Sue admitted that she was still learning, honing the skill of public speaking to make the most of her allocated 2 minutes. And finally she went on to talk about the need for strategies to keep Councillors interested (especially Darebin) "to make sure nothing like this ever happens again".

Jeanie Adams



Nest Box Action



6 Eastern Rosellas have fledged successfully! This was the first clutch for the season. The first chick fledged on the 2nd Nov while the last chick fledged on the 5th Nov. Interestingly, the female has already returned to the same box clucky, so we're thinking she may lay her second clutch – round two!

We saw 3 Kooka eggs when we were inspecting! Let's see how many chicks hatch. Last year the successfully raised one chick while the year before they raised two.

The microbats have moved on which isn't unusual as they have multiple roosting sites.

I was successful in a grant which will help fund 4x new nest box cameras. Once I have them all set up, I'll reach out to you all to discuss volunteers carrying out some nest box monitoring. Stay tuned!



The Thursday Crew take a break



Join the Friends of Darebin Parklands

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Date:

Membership options (choose one)

Individual annual	\$20	[]
Individual 3 year	\$55	[]
Family/couple/household annual	\$25	[]
Family/couple/household 3 Year	\$70	[]
Concession Annual	\$15	[]
Concession 3 year	\$40	[]
Organisation annual	\$70	[]
Organisation 3 Year	\$200	[]

Families or individuals can join the DPA through our website at www.dpa.org.au Fill in a membership form and pay online.



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Spotlighting Walk, above
and Snake Awareness event, below



Events calendar 2023

24-27th November
Great Southern Bioblitz

28 November
General Meeting and BBQ



**This weekend! The Great
Southern Bioblitz is 24-27th
November.**

This is a chance for you to get involved in observing, recording and identifying organisms (animals, fungi, plants) to show what biodiversity we have here. You will need the phone/web app called *iNaturalist* to participate.

Register for Darebin [HERE](#) and use code GSB23DAR

Register for Banyule [HERE](#) and use code GSB23BAN

More information about the bioblitz can be found on the website [HERE](#)



Get more details during the year at
www.fdp.org.au or
www.facebook.com/darebinpark



Quarry Workers

The quarry workers were shunted into the pit via a fly which sits behind in this shot. Children often worked in the pit.

Part 2 of Peter Wiltshire's



The Crusher

Workers load the crusher where rocks were smashed to make blue metal that lined the local roads.

Powerpoints Presentation

The Quarry



1968 The Quarry Hole

This photo taken in January 1968 shows the quarry after it had exhausted its basalt rock. The lower right corner was 60m deep.



The Alphington Tip

After 6 million tonnes of blue stone had been removed the quarry now owned by Boral was closed in 1966. In 1967 Northcote Council was granted a lease to use the quarry for domestic rubbish tip and within 6 years the site is filled.



The Day the tip caught fire 1st March 1968

BRIGADE FUNERAL FOR FIREMAN, 37

An Australian flag horizontally lowered from 2nd Thomson Street stands at half mast from the 30th High Street to the fire station in tribute to Senior Fireman Eric Simpson, who died from injuries on Sunday night.



Eric Simpson (37) died from injuries on Sunday night. He was a Senior Fireman at the fire station in Northcote. He was a member of the fire brigade for 15 years. He was a member of the fire brigade for 15 years. He was a member of the fire brigade for 15 years.





Meanwhile in other sites of the now Darebin Parklands
Other parcels of lands were used for horse agistment, dairy farming and McLoosly's riding school.



The Founders of Darebin Parklands
Sue Course & Anthea Fleming

In 1970 MMSW (Melbourne Water) started channelling the creek and these two visionaries rescued the creek and the idea of Darebin Parklands was born.

The Day of the Vision



Change is in the air

1971 The Rockbeare Conservation Group is formed and its members share a vision of turning these urban wastelands into a bushland park. 1979 Northcote Council purchases the northern lands and floodplain as a Parklands.



Darebin Parklands is born

1977 The Premier Dick Hamer agrees a \$ for \$ purchase of the rest of the Royal lands with Northcote Council and the Darebin Parklands is born.



Councils Come together

Northcote and Heidelberg Councils form an Darebin Parklands interim management committee which has now become Darebin Creek Management Committee Inc or DCMC.



1972 View from Pine Ridge to rail bridge
Ivanhoe Floodplain



Top of Pine Ridge
Looking south south west

to be continued