



DAREBIN PARKLANDS NEWS

March 2026

Bad News – Crime in the Parklands!

Equipment

Many people have already heard that the Depot, where major equipment is stored, has been broken into on three occasions in December and January. A significant amount of essential Rangers' equipment has been stolen including both off-road (non-registered) vehicles, ride-on mower, chain-saw, leaf-blower and others.

The culprits are 'professional' with knowledge, skills and tools to expedite their crimes. They have hidden their identities with masks and by breaking cameras, but are probably known. The police are working on the case but need evidence to make convictions.

Meanwhile equipment is being replaced, the cost slowly covered by insurance. You will no longer see a Gator, but a bigger CF Moto. Guided by a Security Consultant and partially supported by Councils, DCMC is undergoing a serious and expensive security upgrade. This includes an unbreachable storage container.

But the cost to our staff has been immense in terms of time and effort, providing documentation to get insurance, selecting and purchasing new equipment, and implementing the upgrade. Hopefully this will set us up for many years of security.

Kim said "We're tough, we'll get back on our feet, it'll just take some time! We'll keep you updated on when Thursday Crew starts back once we've made a plan. I know you'll all understand and share support, so thank you!"

Wildlife

At around the same time (December and January) the Parklands were victims of a different sort of crime, and the emotional cost to us and our staff has been in some ways greater. A number of nest-boxes were damaged or destroyed in two raids.

These happened at weekends and it seems that the culprits wore uniforms that made them look like Rangers. Technically their crime is 'interfering with wildlife habitat', but most assume the goal was poaching, as the targeted boxes were home to sugar-gliders.

We are all encouraged to keep our eyes open at weekends for people looking like Rangers. There are no new Rangers. So if you are suspicious, call Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000 who have a dedicated wildlife section. And take photographs.
<https://crimestoppers.com.au>



Good News

Agreements with Councils

DCMC CEO Annette Salkeld reports that progress is good on the ten-year agreements with both Banyule and Darebin Councils. There are plans to talk with both Friends groups in the next few weeks.

Banyule's agreement will be completed by March 18th, and after briefing, will go to full Council in June. Darebin's agreement will be completed by April 1st and will only require the Council CEO to accept.

Both agreements will be for five plus five years, with presentation of an annual plan and budget. There are no drastic changes and two full-time Rangers are specifically written into the agreement, but nor is there any more money. The differences are that the targets are more long-term, measurable, documented, quantified and reported. Which does mean more work for staff!

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We acknowledge that we operate on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.

FDP and FDC Friends share love of Darebin Creek.

On February 14 Friends of Darebin Creek committee invited Friends of Darebin Parklands committee and members to lunch and to discuss plans for 2026. The theme was sharing our love of our creek.

Margaret de Kam (FDC President) welcomed FDP members and explained that the aim was to identify what the two groups shared and how they could work together.

There were 19 of us including 5 from the FDP Committee. Belinda gave a summary of FDP's 2025 activities.

These topics were addressed by different people, each with potential for cooperation:

- **Tawny frogmouths:** a growing number of local nesting sites suggest an opportunity for a possible citizen science program to encourage more people to identify with the natural environment.
- **Rodenticide dangers:** a campaign is needed to encourage restrictions on the retail sale of baits known to be hazardous to frogmouths and similar birds.
- **Plastic pollution** in the creek, includes synthetic grass and polystyrene from building sites, as well as general dumping, is being surveyed and probably requires a review of tip charges.
- **Fish hotels:** people can get involved in creek surveys,

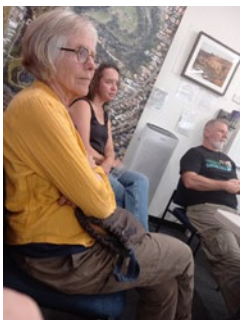


fish hotel construction workshops and promotion of these in cooperation with Ozfish.

- **Weed eradication:** focussed campaigns are needed to remove specific weeds of concern for the creek, e.g. goldenrod. This would include training to assist identification, urgent before seeds spread in March!
- **Trip to the source:** the tour of upper reaches of Darebin Creek is now planned for spring (after planting season).
- **Darebin Sweepers:** regular third Sunday creek cleaning over about 10 sites, with a limited number of volunteers, could be encouraged amongst FDP members.

• **Yarra Riverkeeper Association:** Carina Watson outlined the history and actions of the association with an annual Birrarung Riverfest and high level of community engagement. A waterways summit is being organised this year, a community voice for the river, to increase awareness prior to the State election, with potential for our involvement. She also noted the work of the Urban Waterways Alliance (which includes DCMC as a member).

• **Communications:** each committee could share information to the other's mailing lists, and invite an 'observer' from the other committee to each of their meetings, to improve understanding.



Margaret de Kam reminds us that, thinking of us working together, friends might be interested in the Blake Street activity, clearing and planting and studying the Tawny Frogmouths.

Check the Friends of Darebin Creek link here and see other shared activities on page 8.

The African Weed Orchid project is also planned. This is a tricky weed given the seeds can be spread so easily. It will require working on knees in possibly wet conditions.



Talia says DCMC are holding a fish habitat workshop in April as part of the OzFish/Microsoft project, but there are few details yet.

Apart from that workshop, all other fish hotel building workshops are being run by OzFish. They held a few as part of our planting days last year, and have a few more planned for this year – most likely as part of our planting days again.

Birds in the Burbs

Improving habitat for native birds in residential areas



On Tuesday, December 2 at our end-of-year event at the Gleeson Centre, we heard from **Dr Jacinta Humphrey**, Urban Ecologist and Research Fellow from RMIT.

The ultimate neighbourhood bully

The Noisy Miner is a native honeyeater that has adapted well to urban areas and increased in number in cities in recent decades. Noisy Miners are territorial and highly aggressive towards other bird species. At high densities, they exclude small bush birds by physically attacking them (called 'mobbing') and driving them out of the area. They then take over entire gardens, streets and parklands.



Why do some birds cope better than others? And what can we do to better support the more sensitive species?

With LaTrobe University's Research Centre For Future Landscapes she carried out a PhD study in urban Melbourne, aimed to investigate how birds respond to urbanisation, particularly to changes in housing cover and canopy tree cover across residential neighbourhoods. They selected 30 'suburbs' (urban landscapes each 1 km² in size) ranging from 9–39% housing cover and 13–63% tree cover, in north-eastern Melbourne.

In each suburb, birds were surveyed at 10 'sites' located in residential streets, urban parklands, along creeks and streams, and in native bushland. Each site was surveyed five times, spread across the breeding and non-breeding seasons of 2018 and 2019, for a total of 1500 surveys.

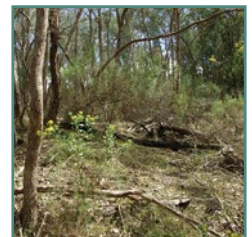
What makes a site suitable for bush birds? The best way to improve habitat for bush birds is to increase native mid-storey and shrubs, and reduce Noisy Miner numbers.

Birds that depend on native vegetation ('bush birds') are particularly vulnerable to urbanisation because the patches of habitat that remain in cities are often small, isolated and degraded. As a result, bush birds are rare in most urban environments. We investigated which habitat features of residential streets, urban parklands, streamsides and native bushland were most important for species of bush birds.

Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*) are a big problem! They were recorded in all 30 suburbs, at 279 of the 300 sites. Where Noisy Miners were common, such as in residential streets and open parklands, bush birds were scarce.

The importance of native bushland

Intact patches of native bushland within, or adjacent, to residential suburbs are critically important for bush birds. These patches provide specialised habitat and resources that birds cannot find elsewhere in cities. They can also function as source areas for populations of bush birds from which some individuals can move into, or visit, suburbs. It is essential to protect, manage and restore remaining patches of native bushland, and minimise human disturbances and threats to these special places.



Further information Organisations and websites:

BirdLife Australia Birds in Backyards Program:
<https://birdlife.org.au/projects/birds-in-backyards/>

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria:
<https://gardensforwildlifevictoria.com/>

The Playbook for Urban Biodiversity:
<https://www.unimelb.edu.au/cities/research/projects/current-projects/playbook-for-urban-biodiversity>

<https://doi.org/10.26181/25485955>



Thursday Crew Christmas



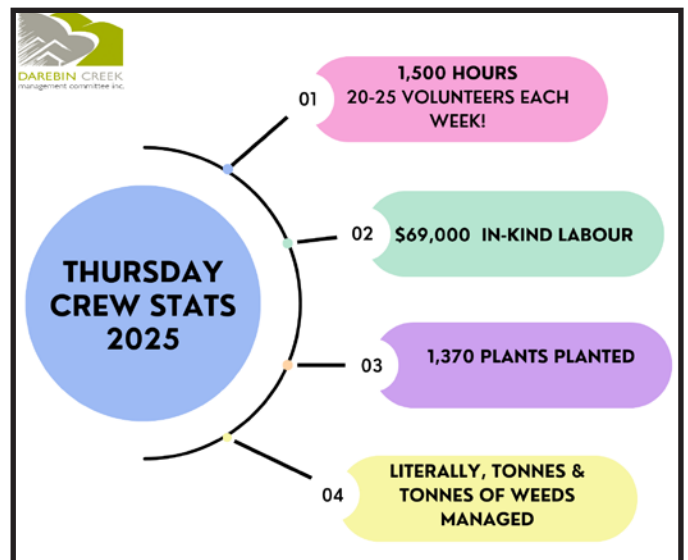
Some people just can't resist the opportunity to pull out weeds!



The end of the year was celebrated with speeches and good food.



Kim and Peter decorated as 'Personal Trainers' and John as 'Workforce Logistics'



Thursday Crew Volunteer Profile:

This is the fifth of a series of brief profiles of Thursday Crew volunteers.
Graeme Vernon (photographer) and Duncan Pitt (interviewer).

Introducing Scott Tarleton

Do you live locally?

Yes, I'm very fortunate to live within walking distance.

How did you become involved with the Thursday Crew?

On a walk through the Parklands I noticed crew members working along the creek. Curious, I got chatting to Ranger Kim and realised it was a regular volunteer thing.

What do you like most about volunteering for the Thursday Crew?

It's nice to feel you're contributing to help sustain and re-establish native flora in this unique environment. It's also quite social, draws a diverse group of people, from students to retirees, all with interesting stories and backgrounds ... and morning tea is provided.

Are you otherwise involved with the creek and Darebin Parklands?

I volunteer for nest box monitoring and I've helped water seedlings over summer. It's also been rewarding participating in community Park Care days planting native shrubs for wildlife and witnessing the resulting transformation of the Ivanhoe Floodplain. I've also enjoyed attending interesting events/talks organised by Friends of Darebin Parklands.

Which weed do you dislike the most?

Well it's a bit bigger than a weed and I think there's only a couple in the Parklands but I'll nominate the Canary Island Palm (we've a chequered history).

Do you have a favourite area in Darebin Parklands?

I appreciate and enjoy it all, Darebin Parklands contain so many great spaces ... but observing the water flowing at the numerous creek crossings would be my favourite

Do you have other environmental interests?

Just trying to make sensible decisions around recycling and reducing plastic use. I've always enjoyed walks and hikes in the natural environment and open water swimming.

Any other comments or suggestions?

Rangers Kim and Pete do a fantastic job caring for and improving the Parklands biodiversity. Any support we, the community, can provide them can only make for a better environment.



Clean Up Australia Day



On March 1 we had 26 volunteers and collected 19 bags of rubbish and some large items. Thank you to all the volunteers.



Photos by
Jocelyn Pitt and
Graeme Vernon.

Robert Key Stone (r) deserves recognition for collecting all the large items.

Graeme Vernon, Duncan Pitt

DCMC Catchment and Engagement

Meet the Neighbours - Green Street Revegetation Group

Along Darebin Creek, the Green Street Revegetation Group shows what's possible when a community comes together with a shared vision. In 2009, Michelle discovered a Melbourne Water grant supporting revegetation along the creek. She brought the idea to her neighbour Chris, and together they saw an opportunity to transform a weedy, underused stretch of land into something meaningful.

Starting with little experience but a strong passion for nature, they began learning - studying native plants, connecting with local groups, and inviting neighbours to take part. What started in their own backyards quickly expanded, with more residents joining each year and helping to grow both the project and the community behind it.

Today, the once-degraded area is a thriving wildlife corridor, with an increase in native birds and biodiversity. Their work focuses on planting indigenous species, improving shade, and stabilising creek banks to reduce erosion - creating a space that supports both environmental health and community wellbeing.



But the impact goes beyond the landscape. Green Street has fostered a rare sense of connection in an urban setting, where neighbours know each other, share knowledge, and take pride in caring for their local environment.

For Michelle, the work is grounding and restorative; for Chris, it's the visible transformation over time that keeps her motivated. Together, their story is a powerful reminder that grassroots action can create lasting change.

Therese Grinter, Project Officer

DETAILS OF THESE EVENTS IN Darebin Creek Catch-up

To subscribe: info@dcmc.org.au

PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP, Wollert, Friday 27 March, 10am – 12 noon

FAUNA MONITORING IN GRASSY WOODLANDS, Wollert, Sunday 29 March, 10am – 12 noon

ACOUSTIC MONITORING WORKSHOP, Gleeson Centre, Tuesday 31 March, 6:00-7:30pm

BUSHCARE AT ARCH GIBSON RESERVE (FDC Event) Kingsbury, Sunday 8 March, 9am - 11am

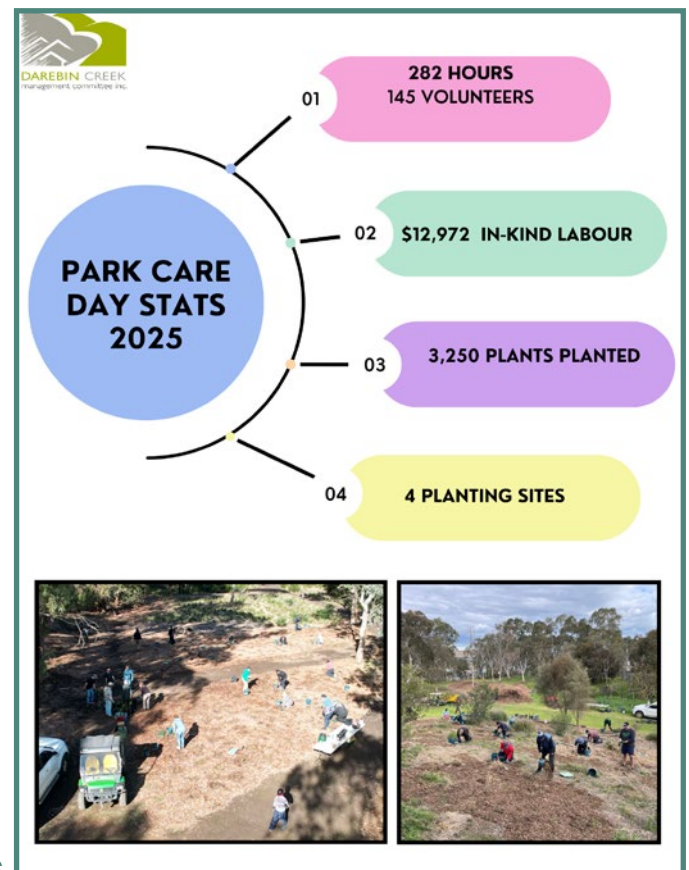
DAREBIN CREEK SWEEPERS (FDC Event) Location to be announced, Sunday 15 March, 9am - 11am

ECO-FESTIVAL 2026 (Banyule City Council Event) Montmorency, Sunday 15 March, 11am – 4pm

WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY FESTIVAL (City of Whittlesea Event) South Morang Sunday 15 March, 11am – 5pm

FRIENDS OF HILLCROFT PARK WORKING BEE (Friends of Hillcroft Park Event) South Morang, Sunday 22 March, 10am - 12 noon

CREATE BY THE CREEK (Draw Plants Together & Snakebird Designs) Gleeson Centre, Mondays 16, 23, 30 March 6-8pm



Report from the Rangers

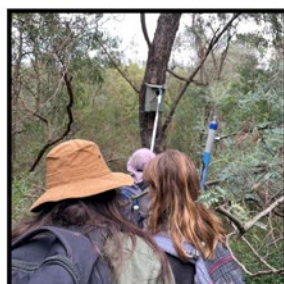
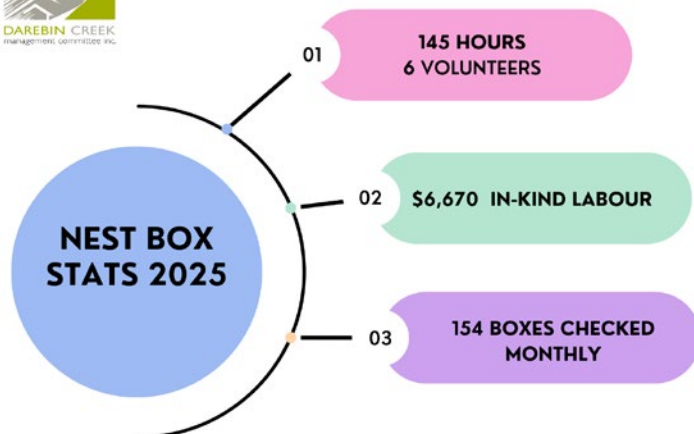
The park's near-celebrity Tawny Frogmouths

Some exciting news for the 2025 bird of the year and Darebin Parklands!

A crew from a UK-based television production company have been working on an exciting new series focused on urban wildlife found in iconic cities around the world, with one of the episodes set in Melbourne.

Darebin Parklands mix of restored bushland, open grasslands and riparian zones creates a haven for birds, reptiles and small mammals, making it an ideal setting to showcase how wildlife can coexist and even thrive alongside suburban development.

The crew spent some time filming a family of Tawny Frogmouths in Darebin Parklands and the interactions they have with their urban surroundings. The series is set to air in 2027 – watch this space!



Removing bees from our nest boxes

Honey bees have infested a number of nest boxes in the Parklands and particularly in Pobblebonk. These boxes have been uninhabitable by the birds and animals which should be using them.

The rangers have organised a beekeeper to deal with the problem. The process involves enticing the bees to move into a beehive box installed at the same location. The queen bee is transferred to the new box and the entire hive follows. After a few days (when all the bees are in place) the box is sealed and removed. The bees are relocated to an apiary at a distance from the parklands and the site is then available for installation of a new nest box.

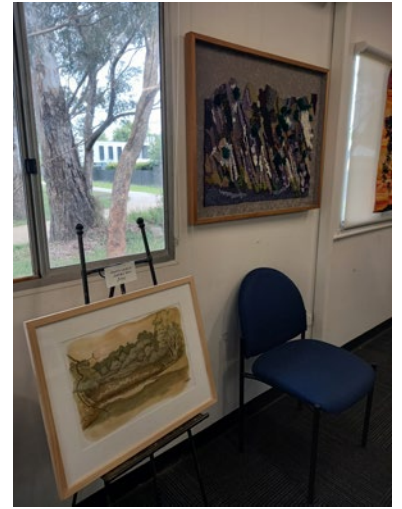
We look forward to seeing more of our regular guests using the accommodation as intended.



Alphington Open Studios

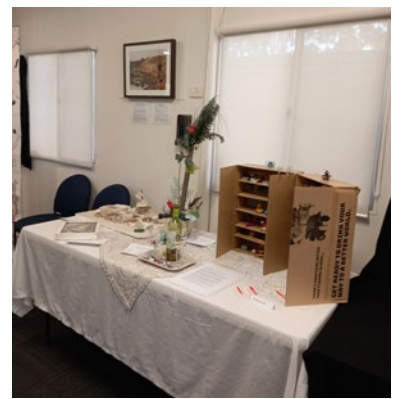
Parkland Artists

Ten artists, including three photographers, were part of the Alphington Open Studios in a diverse group show in the Gleeson Centre on the weekend of November 22-23, 2025. Visitors were impressed to see the familiar meeting room turned briefly into a gallery. There is interest in doing it again this year.

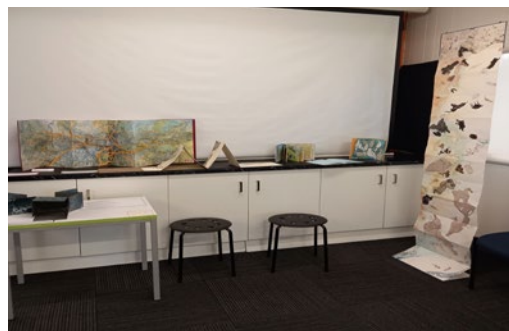


Above – cards from Lisa Hui and Nicole van Dijk, Anne Silbereisen's watercolours, Sharyn Madder's watercolour and Mary's tapestry.

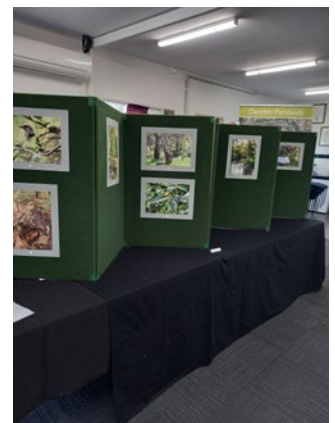
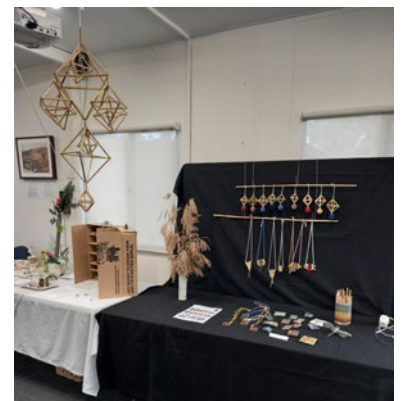
Left – Mary McArdle's embroidery, Maggie Brown's works on paper.



Right – Carolyn Lunt's installations of detritus, Jeanie Adams' Phragmites himmeli and textile jewellery.



Below – photography by Lisa Hui, Kim Davis and Graeme Vernon.



Goldenrod, another garden escapee

So many of Darebin Creek's weed problems began life as a pretty, valued garden plant bringing colour and joy with attractive leaves and autumn flowers. Too often someone then carelessly or callously dumps garden waste along the creek and a new weed problem is born. The plant establishes and is often carried downstream to colonise where it will. Our creek is an open system after all.

Goldenrod, genus *Solidago*, a native of the Americas, has followed this path and now is a problem weed on the Darebin.

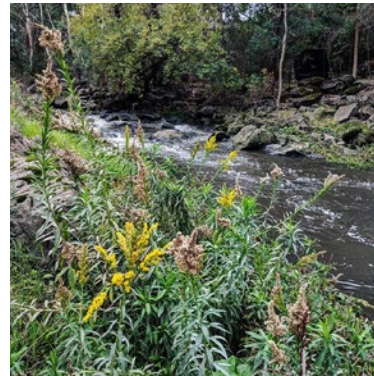
Our version is the South American Goldenrod, *Solidago chilensis*. This species, and its North American cousin, are significant environmental weeds in many parts of the world. Our incursion probably began sometime in the 2010s and is now well established. They extend from south of Southern Road to the McGeorge House at the confluence. The "best" infestation for an easy view is at the drain outlet next to the first creek crossing south of Heidelberg Road in Sparks Reserve.

On Darebin Creek, Goldenrod has established along the lower banks where it finds an eroded patch or an eddy which is submerged during high creek flow and then exposed the rest of the time. It propagates via seeds or plant parts and then can also spread via underground rhizomes, making it tricky to eradicate.

So what if anything is to be done about this weed, and can we volunteers make a difference?

Essentially this is a problem for Melbourne Water but the reality is that they don't have the resources to tackle every problem thrown at them. I'm encouraged that we can do something worthwhile because in Darebin Parklands an infestation developed on the "avulsion" island just downstream of the dog walking area - out of sight - and after intervention by the Rangers, simply pulling them out, this infestation is under control and declining. I would love us to be able to boast that we eradicated this weed from our Creek, and hope to make this a reality over the next few years.

Graeme Hamilton



Above: Goldenrod in flower in Thornbury

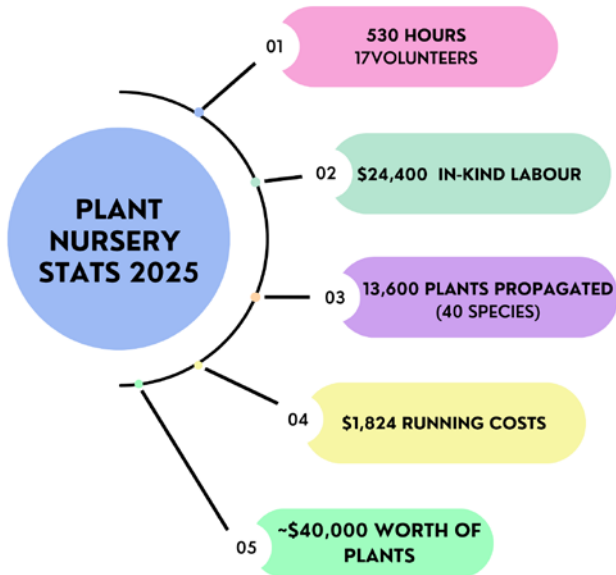


Goldenrod forest and Goldenrod roots



Below: Sparks Reserve flowering soon, and in flower. Catch it before it seeds!





HERBS & LILIES

- Arthropodium sp.3* (Chocolate Lily)
- Bulbine semibarbata* (Leek Lily)
- Calocephalus citreus* (Lemon Beauty Heads)
- Chrysocephalum semipapposum* (Clustered Everlasting)
- Daisy Mix*
- Dianella revoluta* (Black-anther Flax Lily)
- Dianella amoena* (Matted Flax-lily)
- Leptorhynchos squamatas* (Scaly Buttons)
- Linum marginale* (Native Flax)
- Lythrum salicaria* (Purple Loosestrife)
- Microseris scapigera* (Yam Daisy)
- Vittadinia Gracilis* (Woolly New-Holland Daisy)

GROUND

COVERS/SCRAMBLERS

- 60 *Acaena novae-zealandiae* (Bidgee Widgee)
- 840 *Acaena ovina* (Sheep's Burr)
- 750 *Atriplex semibaccata* (Berry Saltbush)
- 300 *Billardiera scandens* (Apple Berry)
- 50 *Convolvulus angustissimas* (Pink Bindweed)
- 47 *Einadia nutans* (Nodding Saltbush)
- 31 *Enchylaena tomentosa* (Ruby Saltbush)
- 15 *Kennedia prostrata* (Running Postman)
- 365 *Mentha australis* (Native River-mint)
- 168 *750*
- 900 *475*

Social Media

Friends who are users of social media will have noticed that our Facebook and Instagram accounts have been very active over the past couple of years. They have been effective in advocacy and have attracted a number of new people to FDP events.

For this we have Belinda Hill to thank. Unfortunately for us, Belinda has other things to do with her life, so needs to pass the baton to someone else this year. Are you that person? Or do you know someone who would like to take it on.

If this is new to you, it is quite possible to learn the skills from scratch, it is also possible to minimise time spent by streamlining some processes. And others will always be there to offer support such as information and images.

Contact us at the addresses below or Belinda via social media.



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Join the Friends of Darebin Parklands

www.fdp.org.au/become-a-member/

Membership options

These membership categories and fees were approved at the AGM in May 2025.

Type	1 year	3 years	Includes
Individual	\$25	\$60	One membership (15 yrs+)
Family	\$30	\$75	One or two memberships (15 yrs+) *
Organisation	\$50	\$120	Name & email for one member representative required. Show membership certificate on request.

* Junior Ranger memberships included – no limit on number, and names are not required. A current family membership will be needed at events.

Events calendar 2026

- March 15 ... Creek Sweepers
- March 19, April 16 ... Water quality monitoring
- March 21 ... Alphington Show with FDP stall
- April 3-19 ... School holidays including Easter
- April 28 ... FDP Committee
- May 12 ... AGM, Annette Salkeld (EO, DCMC) guest speaker
- May 17 ... Park Care Day

Alphington Show

at Alphington Community Centre, 2 Kelvin Road
at 1 pm on Saturday March 21
Friends of Darebin Parklands will be there!



Part 9 of Peter Wiltshire's Powerpoints Presentation

Cicada



Blue Damselfly



Green Damselfly



Hover Fly



Wingless Grasshopper



Praying Mantis



Spider Killing Wasp



Sawfly Larvae



Black Sawfly Larvae



Thank you

Thank you Peter Wiltshire

Parkland photographs and other ideas.

Sadly this is the end of our serialisation over ten issues of Peter Wiltshire's comprehensive 169-page Powerpoint Presentation, starting with history and then a series of flora and fauna.

Created in 2023, the story is inevitably incomplete. However this need not be the end of photographic documentation of flora, fauna and changes in the parklands. Many other people take photographs.

If you take photographs yourself, or have old photos of events, please let us know. Your photos could be included in a future Parkland News.

Perhaps you are interested in a possible exhibition of parkland photographs. Even a competition!?

Let us know your thoughts.

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What ideas do you have for future Parkland News?

- **Do you have a story to share?**
- **Can you share an art work?**
- **Do you have questions to ask?**

Let us know your creative criticisms.



*Bush Kindy kids on a recent rare rainy day,
by JA*