

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

August 2009, no. 4



BRAESIDE PARK

Annual General Meeting	2
Friends' Achievements	2
Bush Stone Curlew	2
Activities calendar	3
Native Animal Presentation	4
Park Photo Gallery	5
Autumn Mystery Walk	5
Nursery news	6
Park report	6

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Printed in the office of Mark Dreyfus,
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The opinions expressed in this
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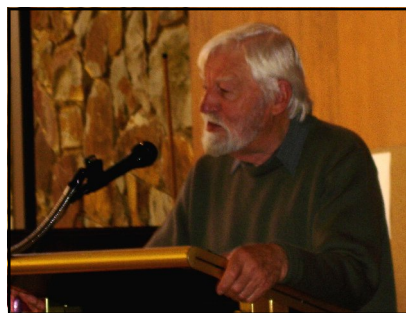


Annual General Meeting—celebrate the Friends' 20th birthday

Roll up on Sunday 16th of August and help us celebrate the 20th birthday of Friends of Braeside Park.

Founding President Eric Mitchell will present the highlights of our history. Eric will also introduce the new audio-visual program on the Park. This program is going to be installed in the Visitors' Centre later this year.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND PARTY
Sunday 16 August, 2.30pm
Visitors' Centre



Eric Mitchell receiving the Best Friends award in 2006.
 Photo: B. Jackson

Bush Stone-curlew in next-door Southern Golf Course

From the report by Ranger in Charge, Des Lucas

Shortly after the February bush fires, a Bush Stone-curlew turned up in the Southern Golf Course. Des took the bird's photo on June 4th.



This rare visitor to Melbourne came amidst a flurry of sightings of unusual birds in Melbourne following the fires. (Including a flock of up to 15 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in the Park and neighbouring suburbs during autumn and winter.)

The Stone-curlew normally occurs from northern Victoria to the inland, in lightly timbered country. So important was this record of an urban Stone-curlew it was sent to Bird Observation and Conservation Australia for their 'unusual sightings' report. As of mid-July, the bird was still in the golf course.

Spring Heathland Walk, Sunday 20 September

Join us as Norm Cornwell leads us around the Heathland Reserve. We'll search for orchids and other wildflowers; with any luck the Wedding Bush will provide photo opportunities. Meet at the Visitors' Centre at 2.00pm. Afternoon tea following the walk.

Some recent Friends' achievements

Friends and Wednesday Project workers have planted nearly 2000 grasses into the Park as part of the Catchment Management Authority Grasslands Grant.

A Small Equipment Grant has enabled us to buy a folding table and hot pots for planting day refreshments, as well as a new freezer for storing specimens for future display.

The Community Plantings this year have been very successful—the first with a visit from Federal Member for Isaacs, Mark Dreyfus. Mark stayed all morning planting trees and saw at first hand the benefit of the grant for the tea facilities. Morning tea will now be provided to thirsty planters on future Planting Days.

Ranger Ernie's 'A Team' (the Wednesday Project Workers) are also indulging in welcome morning breaks with tea. Join the group to help out and enjoy muffins and biscuits too.

NEXT COMMUNITY PLANTING DAYS

Sat 1st & Sun 30th of August
9.00am to noon

Follow the arrow signs to planting site
 Morning tea provided

Thanks To The Helpers
 Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson
 Bev Bancroft
 Ian Parsons
 Park Rangers

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FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK**ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

Activity	Time/Day	Aug	Sept	Oct
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, 1:00pm at the Visitors' Centre	24	28	26
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Wed & Sun	1 3 16 19	5 7 16 20	3 5 18 21
Seed & Cutting Collection Meet at Robin Car park	10:00 - 12:00 noon The Fri. before the 1st Sat. of the month	31 July	4	2
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	17	15	20
Bird Group	9.00am at the Dragonfly Display, Karkarook Park Mel. 78, D7			Bird Walk at Karkarook Park Sun. 11th Oct.
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs	Sat. 1st Aug National Tree Day planting Sun. 30th Aug. Planting day	Sun. 13th Sept. Planting day	
Special Activities		AGM & PARTY Sun. 16th Aug 2.30pm Visitors' Centre	Heathland Walk Sun. 20th Sept 2.00pm Visitors' Centre	

Karkarook Bird Hide Opened

After much planning and effort the new bird hide at Karkarook Park has opened. The hide is located on the main lake. Karkarook is Braeside Park's 'sister park' and is managed by 'our' rangers. Featuring extensive wetlands, the park is on Warrigal Road at Melway 78 D&E7. Congratulations go to Rotary Club, Parks Victoria and the Friends of Karkarook Park on achieving this milestone for the park.

Note: the Friends of Braeside Park Bird Group will be doing a bird-walk at Karkarook Park on Sunday 11th Oct. Meet at the Dragonfly Display (a short walk west of the first car park) at 9.00am. BYO morning tea.

Black Snake Productions Fauna Demonstration, 27 June

From the report by Ian Parsons

How do you fill the Visitors' Centre on a winter afternoon with Mums and Dads and lots of young children? By inviting Michael Alexander, of Black Snake Productions, to show off his collection of live Australian animals.

On Saturday the 27th of June, about 60 people crammed the Visitors' Centre, to be entranced by Michael (ably assisted by his young daughter). The first creature he handed around was a small scorpion, followed by a Huntsman and a Red-back Spider. These lovely animals were safely in perspex boxes, and accompanied with warnings about scorpions and spiders in general.

More gentle animals, such as cicadas and mantids, were then passed around. As he showed some Amphibians, Michael spoke about the extinction threat facing once-common Growling Grass Frogs and local Tree Frogs, due to environmental changes and disease.

Reptiles made up the major part of the demo, with tortoises, skinks, a Land Mullet, Bearded and Water Dragons and a Shingleback handed around for admiration and even patting by the eager children.

Then came the show-stealers: brightly coloured goannas large and small, together with sensational non-venomous snakes such as Pythons and Carpet Snakes up to 2 metres long. The snakes had particularly beautifully markings.

Crocodiles were the grand finale. Michael showed both the Freshwater and the Saltwater crocodiles. These were even passed around for admiration.

(Fortunately the crocs were juveniles and they also had their jaws taped for added security.)



Michael Alexander showing off a juvenile crocodile.
Photo: I. Parsons

Throughout his presentation, Michael's emphasis was on preserving and treasuring native plants and animals, both in the home environment as well as in the wild. He also had pointers about which animals are suitable for household pets.

At the close, Friends President Margaret Hunter thanked Michael and his daughter for their entertaining and educational presentation.

Black Snake Productions has a web site at:
<http://www.blacksnakeproductions.com.au/>

Did you know: about the Cranbourne Meteorites?



'Cranbourne no. 2' weighing just 1525 kilograms.
Photo: © Melbourne Museum

Some time in the dim past, a group of iron meteorites crashed to earth in a line to the south of the present city of Cranbourne. Reports of chunks of meteorites started appearing in the 1850s as farmers dug them up while ploughing. Local Aborigines reputedly used to dance around one meteorite chunk, thinking it sacred.

Twelve large fragments have been found; originally spread from Clyde south-west to Langwarrin. The British Museum unfortunately holds the largest piece (3,550kg), known as 'Cranbourne 1' (thereby hangs a tale, as to how our largest piece ended up in London); while several large pieces of the meteorite are in Melbourne Museum's collections, including the specimen in the photo to the left.

You can see a somewhat tacky model of the meteorites on the South Gippsland Highway, just north of the McDonald's. (Melways 133, K1). The City of Casey web site has detailed documentation of the meteorite fall and its history; Casey also has a meteorite piece on long-term loan from the Museum.

A Photo Gallery of Braeside Park

It's not a building with photos, rather a web site featuring mainly the animals found in the Park.

For many years, Friends members John and Wendy Chapman have been walking the Park on the lookout for good photography subjects. Both are keen photographers, with lots of digital SLR camera gear.

John and Wendy had so many photos that they decided to share the images with the online world. To take a tour of this photo gallery in 'cyberspace', just go to the following web address:

<http://www.chappo1.com>

Many of the photographs will look familiar; that's because of the generosity of John and Wendy in providing their photos for use in this newsletter, the colour inserts and also for the new audio-visual program for the Visitors' Centre.

What bird am I?

A riddle by Polly the Birdo

My first is in cow but not in sow.
 My second is in father and also in mother.
 My third and fourth make a single sound,
 Which in nouns may be found.
 My fifth is in song but not in verse.
 My sixth is in handbag but not in purse.
 My whole is a bird that you will see
 In the Murchison locality.

Answer: (White-winged) Chough

Autumn Mystery Walk, 7 June 2009

From the report by Margaret Hunter



Mystery Walkers at the Community Garden.
 Photo: VL

The Autumn Mystery Walk, led by Ranger in Charge Des Lucas (as usual, in shorts) attracted a good group despite the long weekend. We enjoyed a walk of one and half hours around different areas of the park that are not often seen, with many highlights including the amazing growth of over 1500 river red gums in the racecourse paddock, by a mystery of nature which was a highlight for many of the group. These amazing trees are the signature tree of this area and the park history, with many seen in surrounding areas of the park as well.

The other highlights included: continuing work on facilities and planting at the community garden which

has come ahead in leaps and bounds over the last twelve months (why not visit it sometime?); former sewerage farm pipes and equipment, often passed and not often noticed; ongoing problems with rabbits, which is a long term battle for park staff and volunteers; improved health of red gums due to the lowering of the park's water table from lack of rain; salinity in some areas and problems with rubbish entering the park from the Dingley Waterway.

We were able to use this Sunday morning to learn about the management and control issues, including future plans for the development of Braeside Park; work on the natural environment issues; the disappearance of some of the bird life, including the ibis often seen in the park in greater numbers in the past; and to see a canoe that has not been used for well over twelve months due to low water levels at the wetland.

Yes, we all managed to find our way out of the tracks where Des took us, to the welcome barbeque and cuppa prepared by Ernie and Jo at the conclusion of the walk. This was also the chance to talk of future mystery walks and other discoveries waiting to be made. Why not make a date and join us next time?

Thanks to Des for his commitment to these walks and for the opportunity to learn about the park. (There will be a longer article on the Friends website.)

Nursery News—lots of visitors

By Marj Seaton

It's relatively quiet in the nursery just now. This year's plants are all either in the hardening off areas ready for planting by the Wednesday Project Group or on Community Planting days, or still in the igloo waiting for a bit more growth. Now that the heat beds are up and running, we have taken a few cuttings of Correas, Wedding Bush and Hibbertia, and sown trays of Bursaria, Chocolate Lilies and Allocasuarina to start our run for next year.

Spring cleaning: One of the main tasks for the Propagating Group at present is the cleaning out of old pots and boxes in the shadehouse. There are a lot of pots that have lost the original plants and are now only housing healthy weeds. Some too are challenging, having also lost their labels, so if there are no tubers in the pots out they go –we're being brutal this year.

Visitors: Killester College students have worked hard in their patch, planting Lomandras, Indigofera and Goodenias in particular.

Ron Pearson was welcomed back, together with his son and granddaughter. Ron was interested in seeing all the changes that had been made as a result of the

Community Garden's establishment. (Ron founded the Nursery.)

Jeff Smith, who consulted for the Park for some years over the Grasslands area, brought some of his students doing their Diploma in Conservation and Land Management at Chisholm Institute TAFE as part of their excursion involving management and community involvement.



Hibbertia blooming in the Nursery.
Photo: VL

Park Report—Federation Trail projects

From Ranger in Charge Des Lucas' monthly reports

Staff news

It's a popular time for leave, with many rangers recently back from, or about to go on leave. Ranger Ernie is recovering from his recent operation. Kevin Symons from Dandenong Valley Park is stationed at the Park to help out until the end of August.

Nursery Management

All the igloos now have new irrigation systems, resulting in significant water savings. Only the shade house and hardening-off areas need upgrading. The heat bed improvements are complete. Thanks to recent rain, the water tanks are 3/4 full.

The next community plantings are on Saturday 1st & Sunday 30th of August, from 9am to noon.

Follow the arrow signs to planting site.
Morning tea provided

Grants

Planting is underway in recently cleared areas of the Burgan and Woody Weed Removal program.

An Application has been completed for a grant for further protection of Red Gums in the Salinity Revegetation project.

Pest Animal Program—Rabbits

In wet years, rabbits usually stop breeding in the wet winter; in the current dry conditions they breed all year. Thus a pair of rabbits can now produce over 500 offspring a year. This is why rabbits are now everywhere in the Park. But control efforts this year have reduced numbers by 78%, from an estimated 1000 down to 239, as determined by transect surveys. Surrounding property owners are also actively carrying out rabbit control programs.

Community Garden

The chess board at the Federation Trail site is nearly complete. Work on the sundial will shortly commence. Twelve species of trees are being planted in the site.