

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

January/February 2010, no. 1



BRAESIDE PARK

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The opinions expressed in this
newsletter are the authors' and
do not necessarily reflect those
of Parks Victoria or its staff.



Friends' corner

Grasslands Project supported

The long-running Grasslands Project has again been recognised by a grant from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. The CMA had received 74 applications for grants last year and only a select few were successful.

Friends of Braeside Park will receive \$11,800 to continue the revegetation and restoration of the Park's Grasslands area. The work protects and enhances our Red Gum Grassy Woodlands habitat.

Ranger Ernie led a tour of the area on a hot December day last year so that Wednesday Project workers and other volunteers could get an overview of what has been achieved. The amount of successful regeneration, including natural revegetation, is nothing short of amazing. It is also gratifying to note the large number of understorey plants, such as grasses and wildflowers that are thriving in the area.



The giant chess board on Howard Trail
Photo: J. Chapman

Community Garden update

Watch for an Open Day on Sunday the 16th of May; many activities are in planning. Kallister College is planning a mural for their art wall in the schools area. The display of work done by Mentone Girls Grammar School is also in progress.

The giant chess board in the Howard Trail section of the garden is nearly ready for action.

International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations has declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. The aim is to raise worldwide awareness of biodiversity and its importance to human survival, as well as to engage more people in active conservation work.

Many activities will occur in Australia on the theme of conserving biodiversity. To find out what is happening, check the Australian Museum web site at:

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Biodiversity/>

Park's area to expand?

There is an unused road reserve adjacent to the western border of Braeside Park. Rather than lying unused, this small land parcel could be added to our Park.

Fortuitously, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) has been investigating unused crown land in Melbourne and possible future uses for this land, in relation to improving the livability of Melbourne. In February 2009, the Friends group Secretary made a submission to VEAC's enquiry requesting that this land be added to Braeside Park. As yet, we have received no reply regarding our submission. But we live in hope; after all 2010 is an election year for Victoria. Watch this space?

Black Falcon in Park

The Black Falcon's 'stronghold' is arid and semi-arid country, with occasional sightings near our coast. In mid-January some Park visitors sighted this powerful bird in Braeside Park. The Black Falcon often frequents wetland areas so that is possibly what attracted it.

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	Feb	Mar	Apr
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, 1.00pm at the Visitor Centre	22	22	26
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	3 10 17 24	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Wed & Sun	1 6 17 21	1 6 17 21	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	5	5	2
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	16	16	20
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs			Coming in May: Sat. 29th Planting Day
Special Activities				Coming in May: Sun. 16th Community Garden Open Day

Frog facts

Did you know the following facts about frogs?

- Frogs cannot swallow with their eyes open.
- Frogs never drink. They absorb water from their surroundings through their skin.
- Frog skin contains many antibiotics, which protect them from fungi, viruses and bacteria.
- Only male frogs call, varying the pitch of their call slightly from nearby rivals.
- Male frogs are usually smaller than females.
- There possibly as many as 240 species of frogs in Australia, about 9 of which occur in the Melbourne area.
- Frogs are the most endangered vertebrates in the world, with about 30% of species under threat of extinction.



Reference: Tyler, M.J. & Knight, F. *Field guide to the frogs of Australia*, CSIRO publishing, 2009.

Seed for revegetation—alert

Summarised by Kaye Proudley

Interesting research published recently (Dec. 2008) by the CSIRO contradicts what has always been held to be best practice in the field of seed collection for revegetation projects.

Indigenous plant growers have long held the belief that by collecting seed only from local remnant vegetation, they are doing the best possible thing to produce plants that have grown acclimatized to local conditions.



Bursaria spinosa seed capsules opening
Photo: VL

loss is high and across large areas, 'local' seed sources are often small and isolated and can be severely inbred resulting in poor seed crops. This can lead to germination failure and poor seedling growth." Dr. Broadhurst has led a team reviewing the appropriateness of using local seed, how much seed and the types of populations that should be sampled, and the impact that over-harvesting might have on remnant populations.

"The current emphasis on using local seed sources for revegetation will, in many cases, lead to poor restoration outcomes, particularly at broad geographic scales" Dr. Broadhurst says. "Our findings show that seed sourcing should concentrate less on collecting from local environments and more on capturing high quality and genetically diverse seed."

"This will ensure that restored populations across Australia have ample genetic diversity to respond to changing environments over the coming decades."

The results of the review have been published in an article titled 'Seed Supply for Broadscale Restoration: Maximising Evolutionary Potential' by Broadhurst, L. M., et al., which appears in the December 2008 edition of the journal *Evolutionary Applications* from Blackwell Publishing.

Now Dr. Linda Broadhurst, Research Scientist - Plant Industry, CSIRO (email Linda.Broadhurst@csiro.au or phone 02 6246 4988) states that "where vegetation

VALE

Phyllis Pearson

It is with regret we report that Phyllis Pearson passed away in early January. Phyllis had been a long-time supporter of Braeside Park, along with her husband Ron. Phyllis was also active in local plant groups, including the then Dingley Plant Society. Due to illness, Phyllis had not been able to participate in our activities for some time. We have missed her quiet enthusiasm.

Our sincere condolences go to the family and friends of Phyllis.

The *WildCountry* project

From an article by Noel Young in *The Castlemaine Naturalist*, April, 09

Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia, and faces an extinction crisis, with an estimated 44% of native plants and 30% of native wildlife extinct or threatened.

The Wilderness Society has initiated the *WildCountry* campaign, covering several vulnerable areas, including the Kimberley area, Cape York, and the region covering western Victoria across to adjacent areas of South Australia and New South Wales. This region is termed the 'Great Southern Sanctuary' and represents an ambitious program to protect and restore nature in the area. The project was inspired by work in the US and involves continent-scale research and analysis.

Land controlling body representatives and other stakeholders are currently forming a plan of action for the project. The project aims include:

- Protecting the Cobboboonee forests in the south and the Red Gum and malle woodlands in the north.
- Collaborating with the Habitat 141 project [described in the Feb '09 issue of this newsletter].
- Preventing logging and the spread of weeds.
- Lobbying government to implement ecology-based bushfire management and restore environmental flows to rivers.

Project workers use remote sensing, especially satellite mapping, to establish remnants of native habitat and prioritise areas for revegetation. The aim is to establish biolinks to increase habitat for endangered species, including Grey-crowned Babbler and Major Mitchell's Cockatoo. Core areas need to be increased, links added and buffer zones established, so that wildlife can migrate. This should help vulnerable species to survive climate change.

Government and industry funding is enabling purchase and revegetation of private land to form the corridors. A description of this project is in the US Wildlands Network site: <http://www.twp.org/cms/page1237.cfm>



Belah woodland at Scotia Reserve, NSW
Photo: VL

Sustainable living and gardening

From a talk at the Royal Botanic Gardens by Rob Cross and Roger Spencer, 24 November, 2009

Which aspect of your life would you say contributes most to your ecological footprint? Car travel? Water use in your home and garden? Home heating and cooling? Apparently the above are not the biggest contributors.

According to Rob Cross and Roger Spencer, of the Royal Botanical Gardens Melbourne, most of our eco-footprint is 'embedded' in the goods we consume—food, materials, products, etc. Indeed, we all consume so much that in the last 50 years worldwide trade has increased twelve-fold. With a world population of some 7 billion, we have a heavy footprint on this earth.

Most of this talk was devoted to outlining positive measures being taken overseas and in Australia and changes we can make at home, mainly in the garden.

Starting at the urban scale, street planting and paving are now increasingly aimed at slowing the flow of water, to retain it where needed and improve runoff quality. Water-Sensitive Urban Design is a new buzzword. In Germany, by law any roof over a minimum size must be a 'green roof', incorporating gardens and water use.

At home, there are options such as the 'Rain Reviva' a bladder water tank which is installed beneath buildings. Grey water systems can help remove pollutants from our waste-water stream.

Other practical ideas:

- Use liquid laundry soap—it has less salt.
- Trees and shrubs in the garden increase the *volume* of habitat by providing a vertical component.
- Look at the productivity of garden plants: select those that provide habitat, mulch, bark, pollen, flowers, or fruit.
- Select low-maintenance, long living plants.
- Don't discard all your 'green waste'; leaves and mulch add to the 'natural capital' of your garden.
- Select hard landscaping materials with smaller eco-footprints, e.g. polypipe uses 103,000 kilojoules/kg to produce, versus kiln-dried timber at 2,000 kJ/kg.

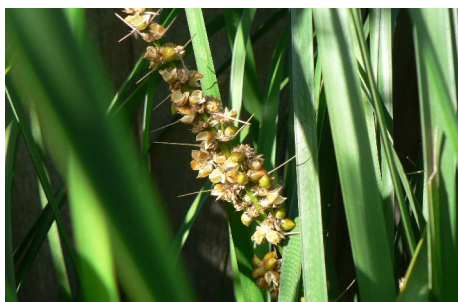
Reference: Cross, R. & Spencer, R. *Sustainable gardens*, CSIRO Publishing, 2009

Nursery News—sowing the seeds

By Marj Seaton

Watering: We have a brand-new watering system in the shadehouse (water taken from the three big rainwater tanks installed over recent years) and we are learning to adjust to its idiosyncrasies. As the igloo where we store our pricked out plants is filling up, we're starting to think about using the second igloo too but not for a little while yet. The hardening-off areas are being refurbished with new tables so that we won't have to put so many plants on the ground in future. Although rabbits are plentiful, the effect of lifting boxes on ageing backs is the main concern.

Seed collecting: Bill and I collected *Lomandra* seeds on New Year's Day. Hopefully these will germinate better than some we have sown recently. We have our suspicions that last summer's heat may have had dire effects on some of the seeds stored in our shed.



Very ripe *Lomandra* seed. Photo: VL

Sowing: We are still sowing grasses and Knobby Club-rush, as these will be in demand for the planting season this year. For the first time in some years, we have had some success with our sowing of *Acacia dealbata*. This tree is Braeside's first wattle to flower at the end of winter and glows in the bush with its very strong yellow colouring.

Gardens: Have you been past the Community Garden and schools' gardens recently? The trees are flourishing, *Indigofera* and *Goodenia* are racing ahead and the structure of the gardens is becoming clear.

The Propagating Group is hopeful that some of our readers might consider spending the odd hour or two a month with us this coming year. It's a relaxing activity and our facilities are much improved. Our volunteer numbers are seriously depleted and it would be great to have a few more people to chat with as we work. Please think about it. It's an ideal activity for retirees and for young people looking at a career in the environment.

Best wishes for a good year,
Marj

Park Report—swale to be deepened

From Ranger reports

Dingley Waterway improvement

The Dingley Waterway is a major source of water for the Park's wetlands and ponds. There is a swale in the Park which takes water from the Dingley Waterway and channels it to the wetlands. This swale has become silted up over the years; which means that when water flow is low (as it has been for most of the last 13 years) water keeps going down the Waterway rather than being diverted into our wetlands.

The Friends have agreed to pay for a mechanical digger for one week to de-silt and remodel the swale. This work will increase the amount of water flowing into the Park. We are hoping that matching funds will also 'flow' from an authority such as Melbourne Water or Parks Victoria to extend this work.

Pest Animals—Rabbits

Every summer dumped pet rabbits appear in the Park, made obvious by their odd colouration. These usually don't last long, as they are picked off by predators.

'Scrub rabbits' are also active currently; these are lone bunnies, not part of a warren.

Pest animals—Feral Cats

Feral cats are frequenting the Works Yard and also the interior of the Park. Due to animal control legislation and funding limitations, there are few options for controlling these four-legged threats to our wildlife.

Fire Breaks

Rangers have been doing slashing to put in fire breaks around the Park's perimeter, along the Howard Trail, and also around and within the Heathland Reserve. Only Heathland tracks which have previously been slashed will be re-done and only to a maximum width of 5 metres.

Summer slashing has other benefits: it suppresses weeds and also promotes growth and regeneration of native grasses and shrubs such as melaleuca.