



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM is on Tuesday 25 May. Come along and hear about what we've been up to over the past year, and enjoy a presentation by leading nature-based play expert, academic and author Sue Elliott. Sue will speak on "Mud pies and daisy chains; the benefits of outdoor play in nature." The meeting starts at 8pm, in the parklands environment centre, Separation Street, Alphington. All welcome.

Fun, games, comings and goings

We've almost recovered from the excitement of the sixth annual Darebin Parklands Picnic Races, held in March. A record crowd of around 100 people alternated between laid back picnicking and tossing boots eggs and other games.

Thanks to everyone who came along and joined in so enthusiastically, including our guest of honour, Banyule councillor Jenny Mulholland. Also, a big welcome to the 42 new members who signed up on the day. Check out photos from the day on page 3.

Recently we also held the annual Junior Ranger spotlighting walk. Check out the Junior Ranger Page for details on this and other events for our younger members.

We have several events coming up over May and June, including park care days at our new planting site on the Darebin Floodplain on 16 May and 6 June (celebrating World Environment Day). As well, our AGM is coming up on 25 May.

The DPA organises 10 community events each year and is also involved in projects on revegetation, water quality and more. If you're interested in becoming more involved in our projects and activities, the AGM is

your chance to volunteer for the committee. No special skills are needed; just a commitment to our vision for the parklands as a wildlife haven and a place to appreciate nature and a willingness to work as part of a team.

Feel free to speak to any committee member or contact us at info@dpa.org.au if you would like further details.

At the AGM we will farewell our founder, the "Mother of the parklands" Sue Course, who has decided to stand down from the committee after an amazing 37 year stint. We'll celebrate Sue's achievements at the AGM, and we'll also pay tribute to her in the next edition of DPA News.

And finally, DPA memberships are due at the start of each calendar year. If you haven't yet renewed your subscription, there's a form on the back page of this newsletter that you can fill out and return. If you're not sure whether you are financial or not, please drop us a line at info@dpa.org.au and we'll let you know.

Ingrid Svendsen
President

DPA events 2010

- May 16** Park care day
- May 23** Junior Ranger photo workshop
- May 25** Information evening/AGM
- June 6** Park care day
- June 20** Junior Ranger drain stencilling
- July 18** Park care day
- August 20** Junior Ranger bonfire night
- August 31** Information evening
- October 10** Kids' Catch a Carp Day
- November 30** Information evening
- December 5** Park care day





Rare owl wisely drops by for a visit

Hello members

We are racing along this year, preparing sites for the major planting projects planned to commence during winter.

On the lower Darebin Floodplain we have cut out most of the silver wattles that were dominating the landscape in preparation for the plantings, which will provide a more realistic and balanced riparian zone and improve the amenity of the area. It is planned that 24,000 indigenous plants will be planted with 9000 in the mulched Melbourne Water site and a further 15,000 planted in the DCMC site that is not mulched. We have deliberately planned our site to have no mulch so we can encourage regeneration in the next few years. Rohen is managing the site and will be spending a lot of time down there over the next year or so.

I have managed to reduce the temporary fence in length so it leaves the large opening in the southeast corner unfenced. The fencing contractors are expecting to install the fence in late May.

The Darebin Council has funded the installation of 14 new seats around the parklands as well and a new post and rail fence around the top of the amphitheatre and down to the bluestone steps.

The DCMC will shortly be installing new dog waste bins around the parklands that will have integrated bag dispensers. The new bins will finally allow us to deal with the dog waste without the awkward lifting or letting rain fill the bags. Believe me when I say this is a win win project for everybody.

The next up and coming park care day on 16 May will hopefully be a planting activity along the creek on the Darebin Floodplain. I say hopefully due to the fact our plant order might not be quite ready so early in the planting year but I'm sure we'll have something to get into the ground.

The site is upstream from the Clifton Bridge, on the Darebin Floodplain.

I recently found out with sadness that Sue

Course is resigning from the DPA committee. I would just like to say that Sue is looked upon as the mother of the Darebin Parklands by us here. Along with the other founding DPA members their contribution is reflected in what the DPA has become and the how the parklands has developed.

I thank you Sue for all your support over the many years and hope to see you in Hidden Valley on Thursday mornings.

On 29 March in the olive slope we had a powerful owl calmly sitting in an olive tree for the day. Powerful owls are amazing birds. They are Australia's largest owl – adults can reach 60 cm in length, have a wingspan of up to 140 cm and weigh up to 1.45 kilograms. They are also officially listed as vulnerable, so it was a great thrill to have one visit the park. I managed to get some good photos of it by sitting in amongst the boxthorn of the olive slope adjacent to the duck pond and as you can see, it's pretty impressive.



Seeya in the park,

Peter Wiltshire
Ranger in charge





Picnic Races fun and games



New monarchs (l-r) Matilda H, Noah M, Oliver D and Ruby C

A record crowd of around 100 people tossed, caught, raced and picnicked at the sixth annual Darebin Parklands Picnic Races in March. Thank you to: all the volunteers who assisted, special guest Cr Jenny Mulholland, photographers, **Peter Harvey** and

Kevin Ritchie and head ranger Peter Wiltshire for helping us set up and pack up on the day. More photos are on our website at dpa.org.au.



Boots away!



Women sack racers hop to it



Splat!



Look, up in the sky!



Aspiring Kings of the Mountain

Action Plan updates

Last May the DPA endorsed the 2009-11 Action Plan, following extensive member feedback. The following is a summary of detailed progress reports that will be presented at the AGM in May. Regular updates are also posted on our website at www.dpa.org.au

Revegetation The Ivanhoe riparian revegetation project is finished, with almost 10,000 plants planted at nine park care and community planting days. Planting will start on Darebin Floodplain site in May and work is underway to identify a new site for next year.

Water quality Initiatives include attending a water quality conference and staging Catch a Carp Day. Anti water pollution platypus stencils will soon be painted on drains around the park, and work is underway to identify opportunities for whole of catchment water quality projects.

Monitoring of dog off-leash areas The DPA has served on Darebin Council's dog access reference group, and has also raised issues such as the lack of after-hours enforcement.

New environment/education centre concept plan Consultation with stakeholders including the Darebin Creek Management Committee and Darebin Council has revealed strong support. An initial scoping workshop with major stakeholders including all levels of government will be held in May.





An insight into cleaning up



A small and enthusiastic team from the Melbourne office of Pitney Bowes Business Insight took part in Business Clean Up Day in the parklands in March, gathering an impressive two ute loads of rubbish from around the Snake Grass and Reflection Pool areas.

As well as plastic bottles, sushi soy sauce fishes, lost tennis balls and the ubiquitous polystyrene, unusual finds included a single shoe, a witch's hat, bits of a barbeque, a drum brake and a mattress that required a team effort to lug out of the creek itself.

Pitney Bowes would like to say a big thank you to the Darebin Parklands rangers Peter Wiltshire and Rohen Davis for their assistance on the day, which included providing extra rubbish bags and using the ute and tractor to shift all the rubbish and recycling that was collected.

If your company has a corporate social responsibility or volunteer work release program and you would like to discuss opportunities to make a meaningful contribution around the park, please contact the DPA at info@dpa.org.au.

We have mid-week and weekend planting events, or we can assist in helping you to organise something tailored to your needs.

May park care day

Our first park care day of the planting season is on Sunday 16 May, and we'll be kicking off work at our new revegetation site on the Darebin Floodplain, just upstream of the Clifton Bridge. We'll be planting shrubs and trees to make a natural vegetation barrier around the off-leash dog walking area.

The project will help improve the parklands' habitat values, and beautify this part of the park.

Site preparation work has commenced already and planting will continue at this site at our park care days in June and July.

Afternoon tea and all equipment is provided. All welcome.

Work is underway to identify a new planting project for the 2011 planting season. Members may recall that the DPA obtained a grant of \$5100 from Melbourne Water for a revegetation project at the Snake Grass area, on the northern boundary of the park.

Unfortunately, technical advice has revealed that this location is not suitable for a community planting, and so in consultation with Melbourne Water we are seeking an alternative location within the park. We will update members further in future editions of DPA News.

In other planting news, the Ivanhoe riparian revegetation project is now complete and well established. During the 2008 and 2009 planting season, the DPA and other community organisations, including Mary Immaculate School, planted almost 10,000 native grasses, groundcovers, shrubs and trees at the site, downstream of the Clifton Bridge.

This project was generously financed by Melbourne Water, which contributed \$10,000, and Banyule Council, which contributed \$1000.





The Junior Ranger Page!

Camp out fun for lucky prize winners



Photo: Susie Rogers

Lucky Junior Ranger camp out winners Elizabeth G, Rebecca G, Hugo L-K, Liam H, Lily M and Sam F (pictured above) enjoyed a fabulous night of campfire cuisine and a personal spotlighting tour at this year's event in February. Junior Ranger members are eligible to enter the prize draw to win tickets to the camp out. The prize is drawn late in the year – watch the newsletter for details.

Seeing spots!

Around 30 Junior Rangers and their parents took part in the Park after Dark spotlighting walk recently. We saw bats, currawongs, possums, eels and spiders. We were hoping to see the powerful owl that has recently taken up residence in the park, but perhaps we were too noisy. Thanks to ranger Pete for leading the walk.



Photo: Erwin Jackson

Junior Ranger events

Photography workshop Professional photographer Terry Murphy, from Kommune Photography Studio in Alphington, will run a workshop for Junior Rangers on Sunday 23 May, between 1.30pm – 3.00pm. Bring your camera and an adult to accompany you. This event is for members of the DPA Junior Ranger Club (guests are welcome and can join on the day for \$2). You can enter your photos in the DPA photography competition for a chance to win a great prize and have your work exhibited and included in the DPA calendar. More details on the day.

Poster competition Kids attending our park care day on 16 May can design a poster to advertise our June park care day, which celebrates World Environment Day. This year's World Environment Day theme is Many Species, One Planet, One Future. Prizes are on offer and the best poster will be displayed in the park and on our website. Drawing materials and templates provided.

Drain stencilling Join the DPA and WaterWatch at 10.30 am on Sunday 20 June to paint anti-pollution platypus stencils on drains around the park. Meet at the enviro centre.

Bonfire Night The Junior Ranger bonfire night is coming up on Friday 20 August. This is a members only event, so if you are not a Junior Ranger already please come to the membership desk on the night and sign up. More details in DPA News and on the web closer to the date.

Info: Carina Watson 0403868745





Melbourne Water at work

Helen Maconachie, Melbourne Water's river health officer for the Darebin Creek catchment, spoke at our February information evening. Helen gave a progress report on Melbourne Water's project concept plan for Darebin Parklands, which has included reforming the Reflection Pool, creation of a new creek access point near Donaldson's Creek and major bank stabilisation works along the southern section of the shared trail, near the railway bridge.

Helen said the aims of the concept plan were to control woody and invasive weeds; protect significant rock escarpments; revegetate key areas and protect assets such as paths and public safety.

So far Melbourne Water has:

- Used 1000 tonnes of rock to stabilise the creek bank and prevent undercutting of the shared trail, near the railway bridge
- Widened and reshaped the Reflection Pool to control erosion
- Created a new creek access point for all park users upstream from the Reflection Pool, near Donaldson's Creek
- Removed willows and other woody weeds.

A major revegetation project around the Reflection Pool is expected to start by mid-year. However the much-needed removal of invasive and environmentally damaging willows from around the Abercorn Street footbridge, on the park's northern boundary, has been put on the backburner by Melbourne Water.

Helen explained that the works in this steep and difficult-to-access site have not been funded for this year, but may go ahead later. She said consultation with park users and residents would happen before any work started.

Helen said Melbourne Water was committed to helping to improve the parklands in collaboration with the

community, through its routine maintenance works, its capital works projects and its community grant scheme, which has recently funded major works in the park, including the \$10,000 Ivanhoe riparian revegetation project. Melbourne Water, she said, was keen to work with the community and "people who embrace waterways".

News in brief

Photo comp entries now open

Entries to the DPA's 2010 photographic completion are now open. The categories are people in the park and the parklands environment, with Junior Ranger and adult sections. The competition is open to DPA members, and entries are open until 31 August. Entries are featured in the competition exhibition and winning photos will be included in the 2011 DPA calendar. Details and entry forms are at www.dpa.org.au.

Free public talk on Rakalis

Geoff Williams from the Australian Platypus Conservancy will talk about the biology and conservation of the fascinating Rakali (native water rat) Monday 31 May at 7pm at the parklands environment centre. Limited numbers; bookings essential. Contact Peter Grenfell at DCMC on 9499 4454 or 0423 957 129 or email pgrenfell@dcmc.org.au.

Hidden Valley planting group

The DPA's Hidden Valley planting group now meets on Thursdays at 9 am. The group weeds and plants in Hidden Valley, upstream from the Clifton Bridge, on the Ivanhoe side of the park. The parklands' new ranger, Rohen Davis, works with the group and is teaching people about weed identification. If you would like to spend an hour or two helping, please contact Sue Course on 9499 6770.





Council backflip ‘disappointing’

The DPA is disappointed that Darebin Council has reneged on its commitment to undertake a rigorous review of the effectiveness of the dog off-leash arrangements in Darebin Parklands.

The DPA has actively followed this issue on behalf of members as part of our commitment to maintaining the parklands as a wildlife haven and a place to appreciate nature. We know this is a high priority for our members, as monitoring of the dog off-leash area was one of the most supported items in last year’s Action Plan survey.

DPA members may recall that in November 2008 Darebin Council took the extraordinary step of abolishing a municipality-wide prohibition on dogs and cats in conservation parks to allow it to create a dog off-leash area on the environmentally sensitive Darebin Floodplain in the parklands.

On the eve of local government elections and in response to a strident campaign by the dog lobby the council rejected less environmentally sensitive areas of the park for the off-leash zone. It disregarded its own long-held policies and independent expert advice from the Darebin Environmental Reference Group and other bodies.

At the time, the council foreshadowed a rigorous evaluation after 12 months. A council report stated that the evaluation criteria would include feedback from users, the number of reported incidents, enforcement statistics and impact on flora and fauna. The DPA supported the proposed evaluation. We believe a considered and thorough assessment is in the interests of good governance and all park users, including responsible dog owners.

Sadly, in response to the DPA’s enquiries on this issue, the council recently confirmed that there will be no evaluation. Instead the council, at meetings late last year, rubber stamped two internal reports which it claims cover the areas foreshadowed for the evaluation. The reports contained a total of eight paragraphs on the parklands’ new off-leash arrangements.

On a more positive note I am pleased to report that the council has agreed to a number of measures which will benefit park users, including responsible dog owners, and help protect the parklands’ habitat values.

The council has agreed to:

- Undertake more enforcement at the peak dog walking times, after hours and at weekends
- Reprint an inaccurate map produced last year showing the boundary of the off-leash area in the wrong place.

In addition, as a result of agreement reached through the council’s dog access working group (which includes the DPA and the DOGs group) the council’s original proposal to turn the beautiful Reflection Pool into a dog swimming hole will not proceed. Melbourne Water has constructed a new creek access point for all park users near Donaldson’s Creek, upstream of the Reflection Pool.

As a result of the working group process the council has also given a public commitment to abandon its plan to construct a permanent 500 metre long wire mesh fence across the Darebin Floodplain. Instead the council has agreed to plant a vegetation barrier as a less intrusive and more environmentally friendly way to mark the boundary of the off-leash area. The DPA will assist with this work at park care days this year.

The DPA will continue to liaise with Darebin and Banyule councils to balance the needs of responsible dog owners, other park users and the park’s wildlife and habitat values. We will keep you informed of major developments.

– Ingrid Svendsen, DPA president

**DPA News is published quarterly by the
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Darebin Parklands Association – 2010 Membership Application

Junior Ranger Members	Parents and Other Members
Family Name: _____	Family Name: _____
First Name(s): _____ _____	First Name(s): _____ _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to receive DPA news and updates by email (please print clearly)

Membership Type	Cost	Qty	Total
Junior For all kids who want to have fun and contribute to the park.	\$2		
Concession Unwaged, seniors and students	\$10		
Individual One person	\$15		
Family One or more adults plus Junior Rangers, from the same household or family.	\$20		
Corporate	\$50		
Donations Donations of \$20 or more are tax deductible. Make your cheque out to our partner Landcare Australia Ltd and you will receive a tax receipt.			
Return this form and payment to: The Treasurer, DPA, PO Box 3, Ivanhoe 3079 Please make cheques payable to: Darebin Parklands Association Inc. Or pay us directly (add your name as a reference): BSB 633108 Acc 116325457			

My interests are: <input type="checkbox"/> Urban parks <input type="checkbox"/> Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Animals / Birds <input type="checkbox"/> Geology <input type="checkbox"/> Other...	I can help out with: <input type="checkbox"/> Planting/Horticulture <input type="checkbox"/> Event organising <input type="checkbox"/> Development projects <input type="checkbox"/> Grants/fundraising <input type="checkbox"/> Other...	Office use only Date: Payment received by: Payment by cheque / cash / direct credit Database: New / Renew
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