



August information evening

Sam Bayley, Yarra Catchment Landcare Coordinator at the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority is guest speaker at our next information evening on **Tuesday 28 August** at 8 pm, in the parklands environment centre, Separation Street, Alphington. All welcome.

Comings and goings

Five years ago the DPA set the long-term goal of reinstating native animal habitat so that more animals, including the platypus, return to live in and around the Darebin Creek.

Recently we received two welcome signs of progress toward this goal with the news that the Australian Platypus Conservancy has recorded a confirmed sighting of a platypus just north of the parklands and that experts are predicting that koalas may soon return to the Darebin Creek (details page 3)

We hope these are signs of things to come and we will continue our efforts to create habitat, improve water quality, reduce litter and encourage responsible pet ownership.

The good news on wildlife comes as the parklands master plan is being finalised. The plan will guide the park's future over the next 10-20 years and we hope it will see a range of actions to improve the park's habitat values and bushland character (details page 3)

The DPA's master plan submission is on our website at www.dpa.org.au Thank you to the members who provided invaluable feedback at the master plan consultation session in May, and through our member survey conducted last year.

The DPA is also writing another major submission, on the City of Banyule Public Open Space Review. The review is on the

council's website and submissions are open until the end of the month. Our submission will be on our website shortly. In between all of the research, consulting and submission writing we've also been having fun, with a huge bonfire night, a spotlighting walk for our Junior Rangers and productive Park Care Days in May and June. Thanks to rangers Peter and Catherine for their help with these events.

Our next Park Care Day is on 16 September at the park's newest wetland, Pobblebonk Pond. If you haven't yet explored this delightful corner of the park, this is your chance.

On a sad note the DPA has farewelled our vice-president Karina Rook, who is going to live in London. We wish Karina and her family well and thank Karina for her extraordinary work for the DPA on everything from Clean Up Australia Day to our history project. In the interim secretary Andrew Turpin will take over as vice-president, while committee member Maryanne Newton becomes secretary.

Finally a big thank you to all of our members who have renewed for 2007 and also to those people, including loyal life member Keith Anderson, who have made generous donations to assist our work. We appreciate your support.

Ingrid Svendsen
President

DPA events 2007

August 28 Information evening
September 16 Park Care Day
September 21 Junior Rangers bonfire
November 10 Catch-a-Carp Day
November 25 Park Care Day
November 27 Information evening





Return of the Lone Ranger

Hello members,

We are in the middle of winter. As I write it's snowing in the Dandenongs so cold is the front moving through Victoria at present. We have had good rainfall recently, which has broken the drought for the parklands as the soils deep down in most areas of the park have been received some moisture at last. Since I last wrote we have had two Park Care Days and a bonfire night. The bonfire night was a huge success although I won't be building the next bonny as big. I was a nervous wreck watching the kids running around dancing in the red snow which were the embers pouring out of the sky. But everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and no-one got hurt so that was a win.



The Park Care Days were a great help to us once more. On 20 May we got rid of debris and piles of dead wood along the Yarana Road fence line and re-oiled the rangers' hut on the Rockbeare side. The 17 June day saw planting along the creek at the Westpac site. An impressive 300 grasses and *Lomandra* were planted into the slope, which is fantastic.

The leachate project is still humming along although no further work has been done on the ground as yet other than working out how to float 100 bio-bales successfully.

The shared trail is bubbling along at last. As I write contractors clearing a path for

the trail are undertaking works and also preparing for the construction of the bridge across the creek. Unfortunately three manna gums had to be removed. A group of us desperately tried to save the trees but the path alignment was limited by room and in the end the trees had to go. We have left the large trunks at the site in the hope that, with Melbourne Water assistance, we will be able to place them in the creek banks as future platypus habitat.

The master plan is moving along and I expect the next public consultation period to start within the next few weeks. The DPA will of course be a priority on this process, along with adjoining neighbours. Currently Katherine is in Vietnam for four weeks on annual leave and Hugh resigned on 17 June, the last Park Care Day. You guys scared him off! Only kidding. Hugh resigned to become a postie, a job he has always wanted. Good luck and thanks for everything Hugh.

The moral of this story is being the lone ranger things might be a little slower over the next month so bear with me if you can. I will advertise in August for a new ranger.

Seeya in the park,

Peter Wiltshire
Head ranger

Help us get organised

The DPA is looking for a filing and archiving wiz to help us to get our large collection of records and photographs in



order. If you have

some spare time and can assist with this important task, please contact DPA committee member Sue Course on 9499 6770 or email

secourse@bigpond.com for details.





Welcome back, platypus and koala

The DPA is celebrating news that koalas and platypus could soon return to live in Darebin Parklands, where they thrived a century ago.

Earlier this year the Australian Platypus Conservancy recorded a confirmed sighting of a platypus in the Darebin Creek, just north of the parklands.

At the same time, the parklands' head ranger, Peter Wiltshire, has backed Department of Sustainability and Environment predictions that koalas will continue to migrate downstream along the Yarra River habitat corridor and eventually return to the Darebin Creek. Already there are koalas living at Banyule Flats in Heidelberg, only five kilometres away.

Five years ago the DPA officially adopted the long-term goal of reinstating habitat to encourage the return of platypus and other native animals.

The likely return of these iconic Australian native animals is a fantastic achievement for the community, especially the DPA, which has worked to transform the parklands from a barren and degraded former tip and quarry into one of Melbourne's best urban bushland reserves.

Our volunteers, including almost 100 Junior Rangers, have worked with the park's rangers to plant thousands of trees offering food and shelter for native animals. With community support, the DPA is also working to improve water quality, clean up litter and encourage responsible pet ownership.

Everyone in the community can play a part in helping to make sure that platypus, koala and other native wildlife can live safely in the park.

The new parklands master plan, funded by Banyule and Darebin councils, offers a unique opportunity to recognise and protect the park's primary role as a bushland wildlife reserve.

Darebin Parklands in 2027

"In 20 years time we want the park to be what it is now – but better."

This DPA member's comment, at the formal consultation session on the parklands master plan in May, summed up the views of many about Darebin Parklands' future.

Around 50 members packed the parklands' environment centre to have a say on the document which will guide planning for the park over the next 10-20 years. Members strongly backed strengthening the parklands' role as native animal habitat and maintaining its bushland character. Issues included:

- Planning controls to protect the park from encroaching industrial, commercial and residential development
- Encouraging public transport use and using nearby car parks at the Darebin Enterprise Centre and Alphington railway station as an alternative to constructing more car parking
- Maintaining the park's education program and building an improved education centre
- Designating the parklands a conservation reserve to allow more effective measures to protect wildlife
- Ensuring that dog off-leash zones are not in sensitive habitat areas.

The DPA's submission, based on our bi-annual member survey and the master plan consultation session, is on our website at www.dpa.org.au.

A draft of the master plan is due for completion this month, and will be made available for further public comment. The DPA is on the master plan steering committee and will provide input throughout the process. Further member feedback is welcome. Contact us at PO Box 3, Ivanhoe, 3079 or info@dpa.org.au





Dogs' freedom is in your hands

Like many of you, I regularly enjoy walking my dogs in the parklands. However, there are many people who will not walk in the park for fear of dogs; or those whose quiet enjoyment of the park is spoilt by an encounter with a dog.

As dog owners, it is often difficult for us to understand how people cannot love our canine friends, and why anyone would want to see dogs banned from the parklands.

But no matter how irrational or ill-founded a person's reaction to your dog may seem, it is a genuine reaction. It doesn't matter that you know your dog is just running for a sniff if the other person thinks the dog is coming up to tear off a limb. Trying to allay fears with reassurances like "Don't worry, he won't hurt you" or "It's OK, she won't bite", doesn't help. Non dog-savvy people are often genuinely afraid and uncomfortable around dogs, no matter the shape, size or personality of the beast.

It is very important for those of us who walk dogs in the parklands to bear this in mind for several reasons. The first is that it is polite, and showing empathy with other people contributes to building a strong community where we respect each other. If this is not sufficient motivation for you to consider how your dog affects others in the park, then perhaps the more pragmatic and selfish reason will move you. If there is a serious dog attack, or a string of minor dog "incidents", there will be no off-lead dog walking allowed in the park. It is as simple as that. Local councils will not bear the risk of complaints and litigation by people inconvenienced by dogs, no matter how much lobbying and campaigning dog owners undertake.

There is a real risk of legal action if a dog "attacks" someone and there is no legal

recourse against councils for banning off-lead walking in the park. It is up to us as responsible, thoughtful dog walkers to self-regulate our behaviour so that the parklands remain a safe and enjoyable park for all; not just for dog owners. If you see a dog owner allowing their dog to run amok, politely point out that there is a real risk that the park will disallow dogs altogether if they don't control their pet. There are no resources for regular policing of dog activity in the park by authorities: it is in your hands.

– **Andrew Turpin**
Committee member and dog owner

Getting busy in the park



Photo: Tim Bull

At our Park Care Day in May we cleaned up our new Yarana Road, Alphington, planting site, and in June we planted 300 grasses in Hidden Valley. At our next Park Care Day, from 1-3 pm on 16 September, we'll be planting around the new Pobblebonk Pond wetlands, on the Ivanhoe side of the creek. All welcome.

DPA News is published quarterly by the Darebin Parklands Association Inc

Incorporated Association A0031183G

Post PO Box 3, Ivanhoe, 3079

Email info@dpa.org.au

Phone Ingrid, 0409 007 530

Web www.dpa.org.au





The Junior Ranger Page!

Platypus on paper and plate

We celebrated the return of the platypus to the Darebin Creek at our last Park Care Day in June at an afternoon tea featuring a special platypus chocolate cake made by Junior Ranger Zoe R. Those quick enough to get a slice said it was delicious. Thanks Zoe!

Junior Rangers also took part in a competition to design a poster for our September Park Care Day. They produced many beautiful entries.

An independent panel of experts with great difficulty selected three winners each featuring platypus in the creek.

First prize was awarded to Zoe R, second prize to Annie O'D and third prize to Ruby C.

Congratulations to our winners. You can check out their entries at www.dpa.org.au.

Watch out for Zoe's poster, which will also appear around the park soon.

– **Carina Watson**
Junior Ranger co-ordinator



The platypus cake goes down a treat (above); artists Ruby C and Merrick C hard at work (below)

Winning poster competition entries: first, by Zoe R, (above left), second, by Annie O'D, (above) and third, by Ruby C, (below)



Bonfire night and Catch-a-Carp

Featuring marshmallow toasting, spud roasting and sparklers, the members only Junior Ranger bonfire night is always a favourite. It's on Friday, 21 September, at 7 pm. Also coming up is Catch-a-Carp Day, a chance for kids under 16 to have fun while ridding the creek of an environmental menace. Catch-a-Carp is on Saturday 10 November. More details soon!

Park after Dark

Our first Junior Ranger activity for the year was a spotlighting evening in May. Ranger Peter Wiltshire led a group of eager kids around the park in search of nocturnal wildlife. Always excited to be in the park after dark, the kids took turns to shine the strong light into trees and the creek and turned up a number of creatures. We found possums, ducks, bats, spiders and shadows that could have been something...

