



### Garden escapees and other pests

The City of Banyule's new land care officer, Belinda Moody, will share some insights about how to control feral garden plants and other weeds that threaten bushland like the Darebin Parklands at our next information evening on **Tuesday 27 November** at 8 pm, in the parklands environment centre, Separation Street, Alphington. All welcome.

### A safe haven for wildlife?

By now many members will have heard the sad news that a kangaroo taking refuge in an on-leash area in our park was mauled to death by uncontrolled pet dogs in late October. This distressing incident highlights the challenges the DPA faces in helping to maintain the park as a wildlife haven and a place to appreciate nature. DPA members are actively working to create more native animal habitat in the park, and we have recently seen some exciting signs of success, with a platypus sighting north of the park early in the year and predictions that koalas will soon return. The awful death of the kangaroo shows how totally incompatible uncontrolled dogs are with the safety of native wildlife.

This is the third serious dog incident in recent months, and follows attacks on a child and adult. The DPA is concerned, not just for wildlife but for the safety of all park users. We are seeking an urgent meeting with our ward councillor and Darebin mayor Marlene Kairouz. We want immediate council action to remove off-leash areas from habitat zones, provision and promotion of alternative off-leash parks, more council enforcement of dog restrictions in the park and prosecution of the dog owner responsible for the kangaroo's death. We will keep you informed of progress.

On a more cheerful note, the DPA has just submitted to our project partner Westpac our final report on the fantastically successful Hidden Valley restoration. Westpac provided a grant of \$18,000 and the services of it staff to help with the work, and DPA members contributed an amazing \$41,000 worth of voluntary labour during the two year project. Check out the before and after photographs on page 5.

As this is our last newsletter for 2007, I'd like to thank you all for your contribution to the park this year. We hope to see you at our final activities for the year, the **Park Care Day** on Sunday 25 November and the **information evening** on Tuesday 27 November.

We're looking forward to your continued involvement in 2008. Annual memberships are due in January but if you'd like to get in early please fill out and return the form on the back of this newsletter.

Have an enjoyable holiday season.

**Ingrid Svendsen**  
President

### DPA events 2007/2008

**November 10** Catch-a-Carp Day  
**November 25** Park Care Day  
**November 27** Information evening  
**February 3** Park Care Day  
**February 26** Annual General Meeting  
**March 2** Clean Up Australia Day  
**March 23** Picnic Races  
**May 18** Park Care Day  
**May 27** Information evening  
**July tbc** Creek excursion and planting day  
**August 26** Information evening  
**September 14** Park Care Day  
**November 25** Information evening  
**November 16** Park Care Day





### **Park inspires poet**

Northcote poet Marietta Elliot recently won the Northcote Leader newspaper writing competition with her delightful musings on our very own Darebin Parklands. Here is her award winning poem.

### **SEASONS, Darebin Parklands**

#### **AUTUMN**

On the path  
a giant pink worm moves  
like peak-hour traffic  
The old man's red umbrella  
has a yellow hammer and sickle  
He says it only cost six dollars  
He doesn't care what's on it  
as long as it keeps him dry

#### **WINTER**

From a distance  
ripples around the periphery  
calm in the centre  
up close  
the whole lake ruffled  
I wish I could see it  
from two places at once  
Native hen pulls  
at submerged carp carcass  
A fleshy thread  
hangs from its beak  
On wave swell  
the carcass breathes  
On the shore a family line up  
for a photograph  
A young man asks me  
to take the picture  
A woman walking by offers to take it  
so I can join in.

#### **SPRING**

Ducks fossicking  
in white scum  
and green algae  
On a bench, a man wearing  
one white sock and one green sock

#### **SUMMER**

Wave shimmer  
filtered through eucalypt  
Two shots ring out  
Brown snake

skin glinting in the evening sun  
slithers off the path  
into the long grass

#### **AUTUMN**

A young woman tells me  
she is making a film of the lake  
from her tent on the path  
over twenty-four hours  
I tell her I have been sitting on my rock  
for a year

### **Plant nursery news**

The DPA's plant nursery will be planting for the 2008 growing season in February next year, instead of this month. For the last couple of seasons many of the plants we are good at growing like grasses, shrubs and small trees (pictured below) have been well and truly ready to put into the ground by about May. But the ground is still too dry, and the schools and farmers who take a number of our plants are not yet ready to plant them. So this season we will do our community seed-planting afternoon on Sunday 3 February next year. Another advantage will be not having to look after the plants over the summer holidays, and hopefully not through so much hot weather.

We also hope to grow some plants, such as *Dianellas*, by division, directly into 6" pots. So if you are an old hand, or want to have a go at growing plants for the park and the Darebin catchment, then join us on Sunday 3 February.





### **'The worst day of my career'**

Hello members,

October is usually our wettest month, but the lack of rain so far indicates that the park is in for a hot dry summer. That means watering the historic trees and plantings again. The soils are already very hydrophobic especially on Pine Ridge and the surrounding slopes, so it's going to be tough to get the water into the ground. Several of the old pines are already looking highly stressed. Although they are near the end of their life cycle it would be a shame to lose them, as they are majestic in that setting.

The new section of the shared trail and bridge has been constructed south of the railway bridge and they have done a stunning job. The bridge looks fantastic and that section of the creek is very pretty. The trail amusingly comes to an end up a against an old cypress pine. This section of the trail will be closed to the public until the final land acquisition (from tree to bridge) is completed and the rest of the trail is constructed through to Sparks Reserve.

The Darebin Parklands Master Plan is still being finalised with attention being directed to the future habitat/vegetations zones and entrances to the park, especially from the Banyule side. The DPA has submitted comments and issues to be addressed by the master plan.

The leachate bio-bale project has been installed although we haven't finished putting all the bales into position. At present we have installed 1,600 of the 8,000 to go into the pond on the pontoons. Infrastructure for the electricity and pipe work has been installed and expect to complete the project in the next month. Finally, we had our first kangaroo in the park recently. We don't know if it came from the Yarra end or upstream of the park but it was a welcome addition. We were concerned for its safety due to the number of dogs visiting the park and unsuccessfully tried to trap it with wildlife rescue workers. The next day it was

chased most of the day by dogs and in the end was mauled to death next to the duck pond while I tried to fight off the dogs. It was the worst day of my career. I have had it with out of control dogs at the park. If people can't control them DON'T let them off a leash. Below is a photo of the roo as I'd like to remember him, taken by Angela Fischer in Snake Grass area.

Enjoy the park,

**Peter Wiltshire**  
**Ranger in charge**



### **DPA – the illustrated history**

The DPA's history project is progressing well. Historian and author Dr Erica Nathan has begun researching and reviewing DPA material archived in the State Library of Victoria and other historical materials. Erica has put a proposal to the history project committee for a 50,000 word illustrated book about the history of the DPA and its predecessor the Rockbears Park Conservation Group and of the area and the landscape more generally.

The committee is now focused on raising funds to employ Erica to do further research and writing, and also to get the book into production.

If you would like to know more about the project, to join the history project committee or its fund-raising sub-committee, please contact Sue Course on 9499 6770 or Eve Recht on 9497 1332.





### **This park work's not hard**

Imagine it's 9.30 am on a sunny Monday morning and you're sitting on the rocky outcrop that juts into the Darebin Creek along the Hidden Valley. You dip your buckets into the creek and carry the water back to where the members of the working bee are planting young *Lomandra Longifolia* plants on the hillside.

The splash of water curling over the rocks fills the air, so you don't hear voices until you return to the area where the others are working. Sue Course is bending down to examine a tiny plant. 'Oh, this little Happy Wanderer doesn't look too happy,' she says, gently untangling a trail of leaves from the encroaching weeds. Sue Kelly pauses to ask whether anyone has found any more of the pesky 'wandering jew' plants. She's collecting these weeds into a plastic garbage bag because if even one little piece is left on the ground it'll grow back.

As Karina scrambles down the slope to collect more of the young *Lomandra* seedlings, she brushes against a lush patch of greenery, and the gorgeous scent of native mint drifts past. Barry pauses in his weeding and planting to survey the bank of the creek. 'Where are those grasses we planted last year?' he says, frowning. It seems that the weeds might have smothered them. But no. There they are, green and healthy after the winter rain, clumps of feathery leaves glittering in the sunlight.

It's a working bee but it doesn't feel like work.

If you'd like to join in these informal, mostly spontaneous get-togethers, just give DPA committee member Sue Course a ring on 9499 6770. You're sure to enjoy yourself, and it's a way of giving something back to this beautiful park that brings us all such joy.

– Catherine McArdle, DPA member

### **Award for park 'mother'**

Congratulations to DPA founder and committee member Sue Course (pictured below), who has received the Victorian Environmental Friends Network's 2007 Best Friends Award for her untiring 35 years' service to the park.

The FriendsNet citation reads:

*Committed, tenacious and always energetic. This is how Sue Course was described by one of her referees. For almost 35 years Sue has played a vital role in the Darebin Parklands Association, dedication that has earned her the title the "Mother of Darebin Parklands".*



*Sue was a foundation member of the Rockbeare Park Conservation Group, the forerunner of the DPA. In 1973 Sue mobilised her neighbours when the then MMBW brought in bulldozers and began knocking down trees along the Darebin Creek. She passionately convinced a Victorian Premier and an Australian Deputy Prime Minister to back her goal of turning a degraded former quarry and tip into one of Melbourne's best urban bushland reserves.*

*Sue has held many roles including honorary park ranger, newsletter editor and publicity officer. She remains an active committee member and still keenly pursues funding for projects to improve the park.*





## Spot the difference



The restoration of Hidden Valley, on the Ivanhoe side of the creek, is one of the most ambitious revegetation projects undertaken by the DPA. As these before and after photographs, taken in June 2005 and September 2007, show, the results are spectacular. The two year project, developed by DPA member and landscape rehabilitation specialist Dave Mitchell, has seen pre-European vegetation re-established in this unique corner of the park, controlling weeds and erosion and improving its habitat value. With assistance from Westpac Bank, which donated \$18,000 and volunteer labour, as well as help from head ranger Peter Wiltshire and you our members, we have transformed Hidden Valley. The final planting will be completed next spring, after which you will be invited to the grand opening.



## TLC for mulberries, Pobblebonk

Thanks to the stalwarts (and a few new faces) who turned out in force to the **September Park Care Day**. We cleared cape broom, blackberries and dead wood from the slopes adjoining the newly created Pobblebonk Pond, near the train bridge on the Ivanhoe side of the creek. Then we planted many native trees and shrubs and crossed our fingers for rain. Check out more photos on our web site at [www.dpa.org.au](http://www.dpa.org.au). Our **November Park Care Day**, the last for the year, will be held on Sunday 25 November, from 1-3 pm, at the mulberry grove on the Alphington side of the park. We'll be mulching and watering these century old trees to try to help them survive the hot, dry summer. Afterwards please join us for afternoon tea when we'll also have the prize draw for the **Junior Ranger camp out** to be held later in the year. Financial JRs can bring along their card to enter the draw for this fantastic prize.



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## The Junior Ranger Page!



### Bonfire night worth the wait

After two postponements, our patient Junior Rangers finally got their bonfire on Friday, October 12. A perfect spring evening and a crackling good fire made the event worth the wait for the 30 JRs who attended.

And while the big blaze was a magnificent sight, the smaller marshmallow fire also got its fair share of attention as Junior Rangers crowded in with toasting sticks.

The bonfire is one of the ways we say thanks to our Junior Ranger members for their enthusiasm and contribution throughout the year.

The DPA also thanks ranger Peter Wiltshire, whose ongoing support makes it possible for us to run our Junior Ranger program.

### Catch-a-Carp Day is coming!

Join us for a morning of fun and fishing on Saturday 10 November at Catch-a-Carp Day.

This is a great way for kids to enjoy a spot of fishing while ridding the creek of environmentally damaging carp.

We'll provide bait and nets, and direct you to some good fishing spots. We have 20 rods available for loan or you can bring your own if you have one.

There'll be great prizes, and the morning finishes with a free sausage sizzle at 11.30 am.

The event is open to children under 16 years. All children must be supervised by an adult. Catch-a-Carp Day is free for Junior Rangers (you can join on the day) or \$2 for non-members. Meet at the environment centre in Separation Street, Alphington, at 9.15 am.

For further information, contact Carina on 9499 7517.

### JRs have got something to spray...

Earlier this year a platypus was sighted in the creek north of the parklands, and now our Junior Rangers have given local residents a reminder about keeping the platypus' home clean. In late October a group of Junior Rangers joined water Watch officer Julia Vanderoord to paint platypus stencils on drain covers around the park. The stencils remind people that rubbish dropped in the street goes down the drain and into our creeks, rivers and bay, harming wildlife.

A big thank you to Julia for organising this great activity. We'll stencil more drains soon.





## 2008 membership application

First name.....

Last name.....

Junior Ranger names.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Phone.....

I would like to receive *DPA News* and updates by email. My email address is (*Help us to stay in touch – please write clearly*) .....

Membership type <i>(please tick one box)</i>	Cost	Number	Total
<b>Individual</b> One person	\$15		
<b>Active Membership</b> Yes! I/we will come to DPA Park Care Days in 2008. Please give me an Active Member discount.	\$10		
<b>Junior Ranger</b> For all kids who want to have fun and contribute to the park. <i>(Please collect your Junior Ranger card at any DPA event).</i>	\$2		
<b>Couple/family/household</b> Two adults and any number of Junior Rangers, from the same household or family. <i>(Please collect your Junior Ranger card at any DPA event).</i>	\$20		
<b>Concession</b> Unwaged, seniors and students	\$10		
<b>Corporate</b>	\$50		
<b>Donations</b> It's not tax deductible but it will make you feel good! <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Please tick this box if you would like to us to acknowledge your donation in DPA News</i>			
<b>Please make cheques payable to Darebin Parklands Association Inc. Return this form and payment to the Treasurer, Darebin Parklands Association, PO Box 3, Ivanhoe 3079.</b>			

**My interests are...**

- Urban parklands
- Plants
- Animals
- Geology
- Birds

**I can help in...**

- Planting/horticulture
- Event organising
- Development projects
- Grants/fundraising
- Other...

Office use only

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt issued by: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment by: cheque/cash

