



August information evening

The Darebin Creek Management Committee's new Waterwatch officer Julia Vanderoord will speak about how we can all help improve the health of our local waterways at our next information evening, on **Tuesday 29 August** at 8 pm, in the ranger's office, Separation Street, Alphington. Information: 9499 3849.

Highs and lows for the DPA

The DPA has had joy and sorrow in equal measure over the last couple of months. Elation over our United Nations World Environment Day Award was closely followed by great sadness as one of the founders of the DPA, Laurie Course, passed away last month. On behalf of everyone at the DPA, I extend our sympathy to Sue Course and her family. A tribute to Laurie is on page 3. We were named joint winners of the United Nations Association of Australia awards in June, in recognition of our role over the last 35 years in creating and maintaining the Darebin Parklands as a special piece of bushland in suburbia.



Picture: UN Association Australia

Sue Course and Graeme Martin (right) accept the UN award. More pictures at www.unaavictoria.org.au

The award is tribute to everyone from our founders such as Sue and Laurie Course to our newer members, including our growing band of Junior Rangers. And of course we acknowledge that it was also made possible by the work of the park's rangers, especially Peter Wiltshire. Another win has been securing Banyule Council funding for a long-overdue master plan for the park. Darebin and Banyule councils have now agreed to contribute to the plan, which will ensure continued sound stewardship of the parklands into the future, and help achieve the priorities nominated in last year's member survey. I would like to thank Banyule's Cr Jenny Mulholland for her support.

Since the last newsletter we've had successful Park Care Days in May and June, and another is scheduled for September 10 (details page 6). In July we also hosted a fantastic Junior Ranger bonfire night (details on our new Junior Ranger page on page 5).

Thanks to all those who have renewed their 2006 subscription. If you have not yet re-joined and you would like to continue to receive *DPA News*, please return the accompanying membership form.

– **Graeme Martin, president**

DPA events 2006

- August 29** Information evening, 8 pm
- September 10** Park Care Day 1–3 pm
- October 13** Bonfire night
- November 18** Catch-a-Carp Day
- November 26** Park Care Day 1-3 pm
- November 28** Information evening





Comings and goings in the park

Hello members,

There have been a few changes at the Darebin Creek Management Committee since my last report in April.

My long serving trusted assistant Rhys Collins resigned in June to become the Waterwatch officer along the Maribyrnong River. Rhys was an exceptional ranger and we wish him the very best in his new position. In the interim I have increased Katherine's days from three to four and employed Hugh Charlesworth three days a week to help maintain the park. Hugh worked for us four years ago and until recently was with Department of Sustainability and Environment down at Orbost. Many of you may have already met him but if not, please say hello when you see him around the park.

Our partnership with RMIT continues to grow with the Horseshoe Mound project, near the Smith Street, Alphington, entrance to the park almost complete. RMIT students are also assisting the parklands in developing a brief for the management plan which has been funded by Banyule and Darebin Councils.

We have planted more than 3000 plants in the park over the last three months with the help of the DPA, Westpac, Ford Australia, Ivanhoe Primary School, and Ivanhoe Boys Grammar. The Ford graduates' day in late May saw 1000 plants planted in a morning with the help of 125 Ford employees; the Westpac project in Hidden Valley continues to soldier on and the DPA Park Care Days are always good value. Ivanhoe Primary School has two sites in the park, which it has sponsored and planted, and the rangers have been planting wildflowers at the Snake Grass site and on the islands at Ivanhoe wetland.

Currently we are working on a new-guided walk brochure for the park funded by Darebin Council and Vic Health. Banyule

Council is funding a historical trail through the park in conjunction with the brochure.

This project has been long overdue and we are excited about producing a guided walk brochure for the parklands.

The Junior Rangers had their bonfire night on Friday 14 July and I thought it went very well. There was some serious marshmallow burning and consumption on the night. The next "all ages" bonfire night will be on Friday 13 October. Watch out for more details closer to the date.

The next Park Care Day will have a Waterwatch theme with Waterwatch officer Julia Vanderoord running a water sampling activity for the Junior rangers. I recommend participating, as Waterwatch is a very good program that most schools have done, plus Julia is good value and worth meeting.

Our Catch-a-Carp Day is planned for 18 November so stay tuned for further info on that in the next newsletter.

Finally I have commissioned some RMIT students to provide a report and recommendations on our dog walking policy and to examine the future management of dogs in Darebin Parklands.

We originally set up the dog walking areas for locals but now we have dog walkers driving over 10 kilometres to come here nightly. Currently we are removing 90 kilograms of dog waste every four days and supplying more than 100,000 waste bags per annum, which is a very expensive exercise. Public liability issues are also causing us great concern. We recently had a brawl between dog walkers and some bike riders, which I am sure you would agree is no good for any of our park users.

So if some students approach you about this issue please take the time to respond, as their report is an important piece of research that will most likely be used in the management plan.

Seeya in the park,

Peter Wiltshire
Head ranger





Vale Laurence Course

Laurence (Laurie) Course, founding member of the DPA

9 June 1926 – 11 July 2006

Hundreds of local residents stroll around Darebin Parklands appreciating the beautiful unspoilt area next to the Darebin Creek. This would not have been possible without the work of one of the founders of the DPA, Laurence Course, who died on 11 July after a long battle with illness.

In recognition of this outstanding contribution in the environmental area, the Darebin Parklands Association was recently awarded a United Nations of Australia World Environment Day Award for the best community based environmental project.



Laurie Course pictured with Sue Kelly and Aaltje Harvey at a DPA Park Care Day.

Laurence, a foundation member of the DPA's forerunner, the Rockbeare Park Conservation Group, and later the DPA, was a vital contributor. He will always be remembered for his work as a key player with this association, of which he was later made a life member.

In 1973 with his wife Sue and other members of the community he successfully lobbied state, federal and local politicians to extend Rockbeare Park in Ivanhoe to include another 72 acres of privately owned land in Alphington which was later to become the Darebin Parklands.

Laurence was also well known in art circles. He will fondly be remembered by many students at Melbourne University, where he was a lecturer in fine arts for 30 years.

These contacts at Melbourne University proved very valuable in his work at the Darebin Parklands. Laurence was able to enlist the help of many experts for professional advice on environmental matters.

As a keen amateur photographer he took many photographs depicting both the bleak, barren, weed infested areas of parkland as well as some of the few remaining beauty spots.

He regularly attended DPA Park Care Days and meetings of the association where his contributions and strategies were highly valued.

After Laurence's retirement from Melbourne University he became an enthusiastic attendee of Banyule Council meetings where he showed his special interests for planning and strategy.

He was also a great fighter against inappropriate development on the perimeter of the parklands and bordering Ivanhoe shopping centre.

He spent many days at VCAT fighting developers and much time beforehand meticulously researching and developing his presentations.

In more recent times due to ill health Laurence has taken more of a back seat but his contributions to the community will always have a special place.

Ten days before his death, Laurence was recognised for his outstanding service to the community, when he was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Craig Langdon, the Member for Ivanhoe, as part of the Victoria 150th birthday celebrations.





Valuing our volunteers

The DPA is very proud of its achievements as a volunteer organisation, which is why we have nominated for the 2006 National Australia Bank Volunteer Awards.

The NAB runs the awards each year. They recognise best practice in volunteer management for local and regional not-for-profit organisations in Australia.

State awards of up to \$7000 are granted, as well as an additional \$3000 for the national winner. Various merit awards are also distributed.

As part of the nomination process we were asked to supply a letter of support from an independent and prominent person. Rob Gell, who is president of Greening Australia Victoria and also involved in several other environmental groups, generously agreed. Rob is a long-standing DPA supporter. He renewed his acquaintance with us in June when he hosted the United Nations World Environment Day Awards in Melbourne (one of which was won by the DPA). Rob's glowing testimonial to the DPA is opposite.

Winners of the NAB Volunteer Awards are announced in late September. We'll keep you posted on the outcome.

– **Karina Rook**

I am writing to support the Darebin Parklands Association (DPA) in their application for a 2006 NAB Volunteer Award.

The Darebin Parklands Association provides an invaluable service to the local people who visit the Darebin Parklands through their dedication to improving the parkland and finding innovative ways to involve the community in maintaining and using the parkland.

I was initially made aware of the work of the Darebin Parklands Association in the late 1980s when I was invited to open an observation tower in the first period of their programme. From that early knowledge of their vision for the Darebin Creek precinct I have been able to follow the DPA's progress over a number of years. Since joining the board of Greening Australia Victoria I have been able to follow the groups work and have visited the Darebin Parklands as a guest of the City of Darebin on a number of occasions.

There are several hundred members of the Darebin Parklands Association, many of whom regularly participate in events held in the park. Over the last twelve months, the Darebin Parklands Association have organised a broad range of activities including 'Catch-a-Carp Day', four Park Care Days and installation of pollutions signs. At these events, the committee supervise tree planting, provide afternoon teas, and organise fun activities for the Junior Rangers.

The entire operation of the Darebin Parklands Association is entirely based on volunteers who contribute an enormous amount of time to support their local community and improve the natural environment of the Darebin Creek. Importantly the group has been able to carry the importance of their ongoing work over decades. This is particularly important in environmental management programmes of such scale.

I would like to commend the voluntary work of the Darebin Parklands Association and endorse their application for this award to give their members due recognition for their great works and enthusiasm.

Yours sincerely,

Rob. Gell FRGS, FEIANZ
Environment Ambassador, Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games
savewater!® Ambassador
President, Greening Australia Victoria Inc
Chairman, Mornington Peninsula and Westernport Biosphere Reserve
Foundation Member, Victorian Coastal Council





The Junior Ranger Page!



Above: Junior Rangers (left to right) Oliver D, Samuel D, Giacomo B, Aiden T, Dane PS and Georgie M get busy on their posters.



Left: Competition winner Ophelia D creating her winning poster (pictured above).

Poster boys and girls

DPA members and park visitors would have noticed the colourful posters around the park for our June Park Care Day. These were created by Junior Ranger Ophelia D the winner of the first ever Junior Ranger Poster competition. Organised by Junior Ranger Dane PS, the competition was held at our Park Care Day in May.

With 15 high-quality entries, it was a tough one to judge. Fortunately, we had some professional help from our resident artist Maureen McDermott. The judges were impressed with the detail and message of Ophelia's poster.

Congratulations to all entrants. You can view all the finalists' work at www.dpa.org.au



Bright sparks Tessa J was one of about 50 kids who attended the Junior Ranger bonfire night in July. With sparklers, marshmallow toasting and a spectacular blaze, it was a great way to ward off the chill of a winter night. Bonfire night is our way of saying thanks to our junior members for caring for the park. We'd also like to thank rangers Peter and Hugh for once again putting on such a great night.

Catch-a-Carp Day is coming!

Darebin Creek's feral fish had better watch out, because on Saturday 18 November Catch-a-Carp Day returns to the park.

Catch-a-Carp Day is a fun way to help rid the creek of an environmental menace, allowing native fish and other water creatures to thrive.

So dust off those fishing rods and get down to the park for some angling practice this weekend!

Watch out for all the details in our next newsletter.



Got a bright idea for the Junior Ranger Club? Then we want to hear from you. If you have a suggestion or you'd like to get involved in running Junior Ranger activities, please fill out and return the form on page 8 of this newsletter.





Trees a crowd at our planting days

We made the most of the planting season at our May and June Park Care Days. In May visiting environment groups from the City of Brimbank helped us plant at the Island site; while in June we spruced up the garden beds near the Yarana Road entrance and also planted wildflowers at the Snake Grass site.

Left: The DPA crew blitzes at the June Park Care Day. Right: Junior Ranger Adam McK supervises Mum Alida at the May Park Care Day.



September Park Care Day

At our next Park Care Day on **Sunday 10 September** from 1-3 pm we'll return to the Island site (enter via Smith Street, Alphington, and follow the trail down). We'll check on the trees we planted in May and do some more planting. Junior Rangers will also get a chance to help do a checkup on the creek's health with Waterwatch officer Julia Vanderoord. Bring your gardening gloves and don't forget your Junior Ranger card for the prize draw. Afterwards please join us for afternoon tea. For information call Graeme on 9499 3849.



Nursery-school links grow

Meadowglen Primary School in Epping is one of six schools that have received plants grown from seed by DPA members as part of our plant nursery project. Therese Grinter of the Darebin Creek Management Committee has worked with schools along the Darebin Creek and took these photos of some of our 2005 and 2006 crop. The schools are very glad to receive one or two boxes each of our beautifully healthy plants. Students and teachers work with Therese to plan landscapes and learn about indigenous flora and fauna as well as planting out the trees.

In November we will again plant seeds of indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses. The seedlings will be planted in the park and up the creek next year. It's a great activity for those who are interested in plants and can look after one of two boxes of seedlings over the summer.

In the past, we have used seeds from various local seed banks, as well as some collected in the park. I am hoping to collect more from the park this year. This is another rewarding activity that offers a new perspective on the park. If you are interested in being part of the nursery, give me a call on 9497 1332, and make sure you come to our November Park Care Day.

– **Eve Recht**





Council's cat copout

Native wildlife in sensitive locations such as the Darebin Parklands looks set to remain vulnerable to cat attacks, following Darebin Council's backdown on the issue of responsible pet ownership.

In a submission last September to the council's review of animal management laws, the DPA urged a cat curfew in areas near important wildlife habitat like the Darebin Parklands.

The park's wildlife, which includes more than 50 species of birds, is at risk from the many cats that live around the park. Roaming pet cats undermine the DPA's goal of encouraging more wildlife by creating native animal habitat.

Our 2003 member survey rated responsible cat ownership as a high priority, which is why we launched our successful *Home Cats Safe Cats Safe Wildlife* campaign. This helped spread the word about the benefits of keeping cats inside owners' houses or in garden cat enclosures, and lead to a decline in attacks on wildlife in the park.

We had hoped the council would heed its own animal management and biodiversity policies and build on our good work with a permanent and enforceable cat curfew. But instead it has reportedly dropped plans for a night-time cat curfew, following noisy protests by some cat owners.

This lack of courage is immensely disappointing to organisations like the DPA, which are working hard to ensure that native wildlife can survive and thrive.

Despite the council's backdown, we are heartened that many pet owning DPA members already recognise the special responsibility that comes with living near a bushland park.

Our *Home Cats Safe Cats Safe Wildlife* leaflet has plenty of tips about building garden cat enclosures and training cats to live happily indoors. It is endorsed by the RSPCA and Cat Protection Society and is available on our website at www.dpa.org.au and from the rangers' office.

Mailbag

The DPA received many messages of support from members following our win at the United Nations Association of Australia's World Environment Day awards in June. Here is a selection.

A wonderful recognition of a wonderful group of people.

Congratulations to all concerned.

**Judy Elsworth,
Eaglemont**

WELL DONE, that's fantastic. You thoroughly deserve the award, Darebin creek is a unique and gorgeous park which you're always adding new and creative touches to. The spirit of the land is very strong there, thanks to all your continuing work and care for it.

CONGRATULATIONS.

**Nicola, John and Finbar Byrne,
Alphington**

Congratulations, Graeme, to you and the rest of the committee. Great news and well deserved.

**Mark Creamer,
Alphington**

If you have some news to share, drop us a line at info@dpa.org.au.

Email news saves trees and money!

Choosing to receive your copy of DPA News by email rather than post is a simple way you can help the DPA to reduce its environmental impact and save money, allowing us to devote more of our limited resources to important projects in the park. To switch to email newsletters email info@dpa.org.au.

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Attention all Junior Rangers!

The DPA would like to hear your suggestions for future Junior Ranger events.

We are planning an action-packed calendar of events for 2006, including bonfire night, wildlife spotlighting and Catch-a-Carp Day. We'd like your ideas about how to make them even better and any other feedback you might have.

Please email us at info@dpa.org.au, or complete the form below and send to:

Darebin Parklands Association
PO Box 3
Ivanhoe 3079

If you have any questions, please phone Ingrid on 0439 315 584

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

My ideas for future Junior Ranger events are:

Yes, I would like to help organise some future events.

