

Darebin Parklands Association Newsletter

Water quality matters!

The Darebin Parklands Association's next general meeting is on **Tuesday, November 25**, at 8 pm, in the ranger's office, at the end of Separation Street, Alphington.

Ben Scullin, WaterWatch officer based at Darebin Parklands, will talk about WaterWatch and projects aimed at improving water quality and the role the DPA can play.

This is a vital issue for the park and the DPA, which has a long-term goal of encouraging the return of the platypus. The major impediment to platypus returning to the Darebin Creek is the quality of the water, especially rubbish and polluted storm water run-off from industrial areas.

**The DPA's AGM is on
Tuesday, February 24.
Mark it in your diary now!
Other meeting dates for
2004 are: May 25, August
31 and November 30.**

Fires, felines and frontier fun

It's been a hectic few months for the Darebin Parklands Association, with hundreds of people attending special events in the park, the launch of the

DPA's Home Cats Safe Cats Safe Wildlife campaign and a start to the new Koori spiritual healing trail.

In August, around 50 adults and children spent a fun morning on a **ramble** along the creek viewing the route of the proposed new bike path through the park (see story and pictures back page). Last month more than 300 people were treated to an awesome spectacle at the Darebin Parklands **community bonfire night** (story back page).

In October the DPA also launched one of its major projects for the year, the **Home Cats Safe Cats Safe Wildlife** campaign (see story inside). The public education campaign is a crucial part of the DPA's long-term goal of encouraging the return of the platypus to the creek in the park. It aims to raise awareness of the benefits of keeping cats in backyard catteries or inside the house. Local cat owners and the Banyule and Darebin councils have given the campaign a warm reception. Work has also started on the long-awaited **Koori spiritual healing trail** through the park (details in the ranger's column next page).

Another innovation for the DPA is our new email address. If you'd like to make a suggestion for activities in the park, contribute a letter or item for the newsletter, subscribe to our newsletter by email service or give us any other feedback, drop us a line at

darebinparklandsassociation@yahoo.com

Ranger's report

Dear members

Firstly I'd like to thank the DPA members (in particular Ingrid) who supported the recent bonfire night. It was a lot of fun and the feedback to us at Darebin Parklands has been very positive. We will most likely repeat the event next year as it helps us burn debris that usually would be taken to a green waste station, so in fact the bonfire saves us a lot of time and money while being a great excuse to enjoy the night.

The shared trail link through the parklands is now fully funded to the creek, although Parks Victoria will not be funding the bridge this year. We are expecting the shared trail to be constructed through the park in the next three months. The funding of the bridge and trail over the creek through to Sparks Reserve will be undertaken next financial year, we hope.

Works on the spiritual healing trail have commenced and we now have the Koori symbols, plaques and wording of the brochure established. A path has been constructed into Snake Grass and Mt Puffalo has had additional soil deposited in preparation of work that we will be undertaking shortly to renovate the peak with a circular seat and the creation of a rock wall on the southern side of the peak. The trail is expected to be completed by February 2004.

Melbourne Water will be undertaking significant works along Donaldson Creek and the bend along the Darebin Creek below Wynstay Crescent. These works will include rock placement and bank restoration that will be revegetated. Willow trees that are a risk to public safety will also be removed.

You might have seen the large willow that spilt in two upstream from the Donaldson Creek confluence.

We have placed erosion logs on Pine Ridge and will be planting within the logs to help consolidate the slope. We will also continue planting along the creek with the assistance of the Green Corps.

At the Darebin Creek Management Committee AGM this week Ron Gleeson was again appointed president for the second year with Allan Wicks vice-president. Jamie Chancellor was appointed secretary and John Greenland appointed treasurer/public officer.

I best stop writing as there is mowing to do and I'm sure Rhys will be getting tired of doing it on his own.

Seeya in the Park.

Peter Wiltshire

Grow your own with the DPA

The DPA will soon be growing trees for the park, with the help of the RE-Tree scheme organised by the TreeProject. In January, TreeProject will supply us with boxes of potting mix and 500 seedling tubes. In early February, we will plant our own seeds into the tubes before sending the boxes home with volunteers for six months of TLC. In spring, we will have river red gums and other trees and shrubs, grasses and wildflowers ready to plant in the park. This is a fun project and your children and grandchildren will benefit from the trees you grew yourself!

To be involved, contact Eve Recht: phone 9497 1332, or email everecht@optusnet.com.au. For more

information about the TreeProject, go to www.treeproject.asn.au
Catyard blitz!

Cat owners are being urged to keep their cats inside or in backyard cat enclosures as part of a new push to curb attacks on wildlife in Darebin Parklands.

Backed by the RSPCA and the Cat Protection Society of Victoria, the campaign is one of the Darebin Parkland Association's major projects for 2004. It is part of a comprehensive strategy to protect wildlife in the park from predators, restore native animal habitat and encourage the return of the platypus.

"As part of the campaign every household around the park last month received a **Home Cats Safe Cats Safe Wildlife** leaflet and fridge magnet," Darebin Parklands Association vice-president Graeme Martin said.

"The leaflet highlights the benefits of keeping cats at home. Cats that are kept inside the house or in backyard catteries live up to three times longer because they are kept safe from road accidents, fighting and diseases such as feline AIDS," Mr Martin said.

"Pet cats are potentially a huge problem in Darebin Parklands. They prey on birds, lizards, possums and frogs. Baby birds born at this time of the year are especially vulnerable," he said.

"We estimate around 300 cats live on the perimeter of the park. Research shows pet cats kill an average of 30 native animals a year. That's a staggering 9000 animals killed around the park each year.

"Next time people walk through the park, I invite them to think about what it would look like with 9000 more native birds and animals."

RSPCA Victorian president Dr Hugh Wirth has endorsed the campaign. Dr



Wirth said keeping cats at home was a "simple and humane" step pet owners could take to help protect wildlife. "It's responsible, not cruel, to keep your cat

safely at home. Cats kept safely away from road accidents, fighting and diseases live longer and happier lives than those that roam," Dr Wirth said. The campaign is also backed by the Cat Protection Society of Victoria. Executive director Dr Carole Webb said "responsible cat owners keep their cats at home".

The Home Cats project arose from a survey of DPA members late last year, which found strong support for a campaign on responsible pet ownership. It has received an enthusiastic reception from local cat owners, and from the Banyule and Darebin councils, which funded the initiative.

Media interest has been strong, with the campaign making front-page news in papers as far afield as the Diamond Valley News. Dr Wirth also praised the campaign on his ABC radio show after a caller from Ivanhoe rang to say the leaflet had prompted her decision to build an enclosure for her cat. Dr Wirth

said his own cats were very happy in their “adventure playground” enclosure.

☺ **Two great offers for cat owners!**
See back page for details.
Great offers for cat owners!

Free! Like to become a responsible cat owner but not confident about building your own cat enclosure? Why not volunteer for the DPA **Catyard Blitz** project? Our team will come to your house and build you a basic backyard cat enclosure. We'll supply all the labour and contribute to the cost of materials. In return, you and your happy cat will help us publicise the benefits of keeping cats at home. Interested? Email Ingrid at darebinparklandsassociation@yahoo.com or telephone 0409 007 530.

Discount! Perhaps you'd prefer the no-fuss option of buying a ready made cat enclosure. The new Melbourne-based company Safe-T-Pets is offering DPA members and anyone living around the Darebin Parklands a 10 per cent discount on its pet enclosures. The company specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of backyard pet enclosures. It installs pet doors and also has a range of accessories including toys, pet beds and litter trays. The discount offer is valid until January 31, 2004. For a free quote, contact Safe-T-Pets on 9444 0648 or 0412 217 190 or email Safe_T_Pets@hotmail.com

Where there's smoke

A massive inferno in the Darebin Parklands would normally be something to panic about – but not on bonfire night. A huge crowd of more than 300 turned out to watch for the first – and hopefully annual – Darebin Parklands community bonfire night on Friday, October 17. The results of the huge weeding and pruning

effort by the rangers and Green Corps volunteers in recent months, the four-metre high bonfire provided an awesome spectacle. Flames leapt several metres into the air and embers and sparks created mini pyrotechnic display in the early evening sky. The event went off without a hitch, thanks to excellent planning by the rangers, who set up a firefighting tanker and hoses and supervised the blaze conscientiously all night. With entry by gold coin donation, the night also proved a winner for the DPA, raising around \$200, which will benefit tree-planting projects in the park.

Up the creek

About 50 people joined the DPA's “bike path wamble” on Saturday, August 23. We walked along the route planned for the bike path from the Darebin Parklands along the creek and under Heidelberg Road. Eventually the path will connect to the main Yarra bike trail.



It was a fascinating walk as we learnt about the many bureaucratic hurdles that have been negotiated so far to acquire the land. However, there are still many obstacles, let alone actual construction, before we will be peddling along the path. Stay tuned, as we may

need some community pressure to remind the local and state government of their commitment to completing the path.