

Celebrating 40 years of caring

This is a landmark year for the DPA, as we celebrate our 40th birthday. There are not a lot of grassroots community environment organisations that manage to sustain passion, interest, momentum and vision over such a long time, so everyone who has been involved in the DPA past and present can feel rightfully proud of this milestone.

We will be celebrating our birthday in May, and the planning for this will start in earnest soon. If you have ideas, or would like to be part of the planning team, please email us at info@dpa.org.au.

As well as our birthday party, we will have our normal jam-packed schedule of community events happening throughout the year, including park care days, information evenings and Junior Ranger Club events. So far we have 11 events on the calendar, with more to come (details on our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#)).

The DPA had some sad news at the end of last year, with the death of local indigenous leader Uncle Reg Blow. Uncle Reg was heavily involved

in the parklands, and we mourn his loss. Our tribute is on page 4.

In happier news I am delighted to report that the DPA has formed a partnership with the family of former Victorian Premier Sir Rupert Hamer to assist in delivering one of our major projects, a feasibility study of a new Darebin Creek catchment environment and education centre. As many of you would know, Sir Rupert was a great patron of the parklands in its early days, and so we are thrilled that his family is renewing its association with the DPA and the parklands. More details are on page 3.

Our first event for the year, the information evening on 26 February, promises to be fascinating, with the creators of The Nest artwork, Gary Tippett and David Bell our guest speakers. Hope you can make it, and look forward to seeing you in the parklands soon.

Ingrid Svendsen
President

February info evening

Egging each other on

Gary Tippett and David Bell, the artists behind The Nest artwork, will speak about their inspiration and the challenges of making a five tonne egg from recycled timber at our next information evening, on Tuesday 26 February. The meeting starts at 8pm in the Gleeson building at the parklands environment centre, end of Separation Street, Alphington. All welcome!

Events calendar 2013

February 26.....	Information evening
March 3.....	Clean Up Australia Day
May 3.....	Junior Ranger wildlife spotlighting*
May 12.....	Park care day
May 28.....	AGM
June 23.....	Park care day
July 21.....	Park care day

* Members' only event. Friends/guests can join at the event.

Pete's page

News from the ranger in charge

It's a dry old argument in the parklands

G'day DPA members,

How much the park has changed within 60 days is amazing. Since 27 November the parklands has virtually had no rainfall, just a very occasional light shower and the results are all here to see. Many plants have died including some decent sized red gums and most of our 2012 plantings.

We have started watering once more and have put drip feed bins around the mulberries.

In November I was battling to keep on top of the mowing; now some of those same areas have become dust bowls.

Let's hope we get some rain soon. *[Just call him the rain-maker. Torrential rain fell the day after this column was submitted – Ed]*

The shared trail link under the Heidelberg Road bridge is almost completed and is expected to be open to the public in late February or early March. Apparently some incorrectly fabricated collapsible hinges are the culprit and the only hold up to the trail being opened.



You might have noticed that I have closed the public toilets and replaced them with portable units. The simple reason is that drug users were using the toilets as a place to shoot up. It was becoming a public safety issue as the drug users had demonstrated aggressive behavior.

DCMC has worked closely with the local police command to help reduce the drug activity at Darebin Parklands.

The park got some bad publicity regarding this issue in early December that DCMC was very disappointed about, but I think the park got through all the negativity relatively well in the end.

To date it has obviously reduced the drug use in the park, but we still find syringes around the public toilets building and in other sections of the park, so this issue is still ongoing. It is planned that the public toilets will be re-opened late February as the school excursions bookings resume.

We spent the summer months renovating the visitor centre for the upcoming school year. It is planned that the building will always be opened to the public whenever DCMC staff are on duty but not necessarily around the buildings. We plan to install security cameras that monitor the centre allowing visitors to come in and view our animal and brochure collection.

Sadly we have lost Uncle Reg Blow the inspiration for the spiritual healing trail and the many other activities he conducted at Darebin Parklands. Reg was a great man and is sorely missed by all of us at here DCMC. Our sympathies go out to his family and the Aboriginal community.

Lastly some good news, Ranger Rohen had a four kilogram baby girl, Mya, on 23 December at the Mercy. Rohen, dad Andrea and baby and doing very well, and as you'd expect from Rohen she has motherhood under control and is blossoming like a flower in her new role.

See you in the park,

Peter Wiltshire
Head ranger



JR NEWS ROUNDUP

Junior Ranger camp out

As this edition of Darebin Parklands News was being produced, a group of lucky and super excited Junior Rangers were getting ready for their camping adventure in Darebin Parklands. Ben R, Levi W, Lucas G, Augustus P and Toby R were winners of the end of year prize draw, and so will be going along to the camp out this month.

The prize includes a fantastic fireside feast, a personal spotlighting tour with Ranger Pete and an unforgettable night under the stars in the parklands, so the kids are due for a great treat. We'll bring you some news and photos in our next newsletter.

Don't forget that all financial JRs are eligible to enter the prize draw, which is held at the end of each year, so all you have to do is make sure you are a paid up member, and come along to our final event for the year to put yourself in the running.



Wildlife spotlighting with Ranger Pete

Our next JR event is wildlife spotlighting with Ranger Pete on Friday 3 May. Who knows what you might see – if you're lucky, possums, bats, turtles, owls, eels and more!

This event is for members of the Junior Ranger Club only but you can bring your friends as new members are welcome to join at the event.

Further information is on our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). Look forward to seeing you there!

HAMER FAMILY GETS ON BOARD WITH ENVIRO CENTRE PROJECT

The DPA is thrilled to announce that the family of former Liberal Premier Sir Rupert Hamer is partnering with us on a major project, the feasibility study of the proposed Darebin Creek catchment environment and education centre.

Just before Christmas the Hamer Family Fund confirmed a \$7,000 allocation toward the project, which the DPA is working on jointly with the Darebin Creek Management Committee.

As members will be aware, Sir Rupert was a crucial early supporter of the parklands, and his patronage and financial support were pivotal in the establishment of a park on both sides of the Darebin Creek. Last year members of the Hamer family, including Lady April, visited the parklands at the invitation of the DPA. We are delighted not just with their financial contribution but at the opportunity for the Hamer family to work with us continue to build on Sir Rupert's legacy in the parklands.

The Hamer Family Fund grant brings the non-government contribution for the project to \$18,000, including allocations from Banyule, Whittlesea and Darebin councils and the DPA.

We are now in a position to seek matching funding from the Victorian Government's community grants scheme, which redistributes pokies losses back into the community. Preliminary discussions with the government have already taken place and we are now speaking with Banyule and Darebin councils about developing a detailed proposal to put to the fund.

Members may recall that the master plan for the parklands, commissioned by the Darebin Creek Management Committee in 2008, recommended a new environment and education centre for the Darebin Creek Catchment as a high priority project.

The centre would allow expansion of the thriving environmental education program, which caters to more than 5000 students a year, provide better accommodation for staff and also spaces for community use.

Up and down the creek



We recently received a report of murky water in the Darebin Creek. The water was white with fine sediment and was coming from Donaldson's Creek – a small creek that joins the Darebin Creek just upstream from the Reflection Pool. I reported it twice to the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) as I noticed it again a week later. If you need to call in a spill, you can call the EPA hotline on 9695 2777. To make it easier to track and report spills, the DCMC is replacing drain signs along the creek. These signs have a unique number that you can quote when making pollution reports to help the EPA pinpoint the source.



For a number of years, DCMC coordination staff have been installing and monitoring nest boxes along the Darebin Creek. We recently hired a cherry picker and checked over 60 nest boxes along the creek and were pleased to find a pair of sugar gliders, amongst other wildlife. DCMC has applied for a grant to fund a Friends of Darebin Creek nest box construction event and bird survey, the purchase of a number of specialised nest boxes from La Trobe Wildlife Sanctuary, a nest box camera and further cherry picker hire.

Check the Friends of Darebin Creek Facebook page for some fantastic photos of flora and fauna along the creek by bush crew member Todd Hunter.

Enjoy your creek,

Peter Grenfell, DCMC Project Officer
pgrenfell@dcmc.org.au

Vale Uncle Reg Blow



The DPA extends its heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of indigenous leader Uncle Reg Blow. Uncle Reg, the driving force behind the parklands' unique spiritual healing trail, passed away in December following an illness.

Uncle Reg (pictured above at the DPA's 35th birthday celebration in 2008) was a great friend of the parklands and the DPA, and was always full of enthusiasm and new ideas. Early last year he discussed with the DPA his vision for a "healing place" in the parklands to compliment the spiritual healing trail. Reg envisaged this as a calm place for quiet contemplation and meditation.

The idea received an enthusiastic reception when we surveyed members on it in our last member survey, and we will talk to his family about delivering on this vision, as a fitting tribute to a wonderful man.

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