

Presidents Report

By the time you're reading this, we will have completed our first park care activity of the year - Clean Up Australia Day, where thousands of people across Australia pick up litter in their local areas.

Over the summer, we've been seeking your perspectives on the park via a short survey. DPA members and friends have identified litter as a key threat to the park, along with pollution, invasive species and encroaching development.

It's also been lovely to read about what you really value, such as the opportunity to spend time in nature, a wild space so close to the city and wide-open spaces for free-ranging children and dogs.

Your survey responses will feed into the development of the new Darebin Park Management Plan. Your input will help us to prioritise projects to improve the park, plus the issues which need to be addressed.

Read on for more about the plan, including survey results so far and Ranger Pete's top project priorities. P3

We'll devote our first General Meeting on 31 March to a discussion on the management plan, with information about proposed projects and lots of opportunities to share your thoughts and find out more.

We're also looking forward to some terrific Junior Rangers activities over the next few months, including a return of our popular 'catch a carp' activity with Fishcare on 22 March and an incredible performance from Dream Puppets in the amphitheatre on 18 April.

We've scheduled three Park Care Days for the year, with plans to expand the grassy woodland developing in Zeroland and more new plantings on Mount Puffalo. It's really looking quite lush.

Lastly, if you are yet to join up as a member in 2020, this is a right time to do it. Our strong membership base enables us to advocate and care for the Parklands, as well as holding events and running activities in the park.

DAREBIN PARKLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Between November 2019 and June 2020, the Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC) will develop a new management plan for the Darebin Parklands. The 10-year plan will set clear strategic direction, guide day to day operations and inform annual budgets.

The plan is being developed by a small team of DCMC staff, including the Executive Officer and the Parklands Rangers. An environmental consultancy called Practical Ecology is providing the environmental assessment and DPA are supporting community engagement and consultation.

The DCMC is developing the plan on behalf of Darebin and Banyule Councils. Once the plan is endorsed by the DCMC Board towards the middle of the year, we anticipate that it will then go through normal internal local government processes for adoption by the Councils.

Community engagement and consultation

DPA is supporting engagement with people who visit the park for any reason and people living nearby. So far, we've done this by asking three questions via an online survey, postcards, a drop-in consultation and conversations in the park.



The online survey is open for a few more days – if you haven't completed it yet, you can find it here: [: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BJQ7CMB](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BJQ7CMB)

DCMC has also held early consultations with the DPA Committee – and will meet with the Thursday Crew, our dedicated volunteer group, on 5 March.

At our General Meeting on 31 March, the DCMC Executive Officer, Graeme Hamilton, will join us to outline the key proposals in the plan. Graeme will also describe the next steps for the plan, which will include opportunities for you to view and comment on the draft written plan in April

DPA has advocated that the draft written plan is available for public view and comment for as long as possible – at least four weeks. We will also be preparing a submission in response to the plan and encourage others to do so as well.

What we've heard so far

The survey is giving us a well-rounded view of current community perceptions of the park, helping to ensure that our thinking reflects current use patterns, values and concerns

We've had over 260 responses, mostly from people living locally and visiting at least once a week. We invited people to describe the many ways in which they use the Parklands – over 70% of respondents enjoy walking in the Parklands, 44% bring their dogs, 42% come in a social or family group, 36% cycle and 20%

These were the top responses to questions on values and concerns:

What do you value most about the Parklands?

- The opportunity to be in a natural place, so close to the city
- Birds and wildlife
- A great place for the dog to run off-leash
- Wide open spaces
- Walking and bike paths

What are the biggest threats to the Parklands?

- Development and the risk of too many people in the park
- Dogs off-leash in habitat and recreation areas
- Pollution and litter
- Invasive species – weeds and mynas
- Climate change

We were happy to see some shout outs to the Rangers, recognising their efforts in developing and maintaining the park, as well as several responses which described how they value the layers of history.



Dr Graeme Hamilton.
Executive Officer
DCMC.

Sofie Anselmi.
President DPA

Graeme and Sophie have spent many hours guiding the progress of the Management Plan

Next steps

Once the survey closes, we'll do more analysis on the changes identified by some respondents. While many like the park just as it is, some of you are seeking some more understorey plantings to enhance the bushland feel, plus new facilities like a dedicated nature play area and improved paths.

This analysis will complement assessment by DCMC staff and Practical Ecology to identify a range of short-term and long-term projects for prioritisation in the plan. Many will need funding through Council or external grants, but others will be possible within DCMC resources or with help from volunteer organisations such as the DPA and Friends of Darebin Creek.

On Pete's Page, you'll see Ranger Pete's top five project priorities. After 35 years of developing and caring for the Parklands, Pete's projects know it better than the back of his hand – these projects are founded in his observations of the park responding to a drier climate and changes in how the park is used and valued by visitors.

Lastly, once this plan has progressed, we'll also review the DPA strategic plan – probably around the middle of the year. We're anticipating that the new management plan will emphasise the connection between the Parklands and the rest of the Darebin Creek catchment, with an opportunity to better reflect that in our own plan.

Sofie Anselmi. President DPA

Pete's page

News from the ranger in charge

Hello Members. Where to start?

As I write this it is raining cats and dogs outside and the creek is flooding which isn't unusual in February but it's a nice change from the dry and hot conditions, we've had over the last two months.

It's exciting times here at Darebin Parklands, as we work through developing a new management plan to take the park onto the next 10-15 years. I'm a fan of the consultants DCMC has appointed Practical Ecology, as they have been great supporters of Darebin Parklands and its ranger for the past 25 years so expect I it will be a great step forward for the parklands.

As the ranger of the park I have desperately needed an updated management plan to assist me develop and improve the parklands and protect it for future generations. It has changed so much since 2008, so as you can tell I'm stoked that finally we will have a completed plan to work too soon. Some of the exciting projects being proposed include;

- Upgrading the shared trail throughout the parklands to 3 meters from the old 2.4 meters width. It makes such a difference to both pedestrians and cyclists having that extra 600mm width.
- Upgrading the picnic shelter allowing more families to share a more open and friendly space with more BBQ's and tables yet giving enough space in-between groups to feel comfortable and private.
- Improving disability access especially for wheelchair users by creating a network of accessible pathways into the parklands from the car park area which at present doesn't serve the disabled very well.
- Design and construction of a 100 metre long all-weather fiberglass mesh path below the Olive slope along the western side of the creek to allow park users to explore that side without stumbling and slipping on the muddy rocks. It will also help us protect habitat zones on the Ivanhoe side by providing an alternative route to the path alongside the Ivanhoe Wetlands, especially dog walker.

- Diverting stormwater from Separation and Smith streets system into the leachate Duck Pond. This will dilute the concentrated nutrients and containments of the leachate improving the water quality beyond any previous treatment programme we have planned or engaged.



Not just a series of Duck Ponds!!

This is just a few of the project proposals that are exciting for the future of the park. The last one selfishly is my personal goal as my children are always telling me that when I pass, they'll throw my ashes into the leachate. So how better than to annoy my kids by making the water quality so good that the ponds are just wonderful wetlands!

Over the last three months our buildings here have been completely renovated with the inclusion of another office for Graeme by Darebin Council. We also got repainted buildings inside and out, new carpets, new blinds and lighting. A big thanks to Darebin for the renovations which I think was brought on to prevent me doing anything after I asked if I could cut one of the walls out.

Moving on, I'm planning to take a couple of months off starting March 10th and leaving the Parklands in the capable hands Ranger Kate. To assist Kate while I'm gone DCMC has employed Janette Kodaih who will be work at DCMC 3 days week. Thanks to everyone who turned up for Clean up Australia Day.

PTO

Pete's page

[continued]

Insect of the month

Honeybrown Beetle, *Ecnolagria grandis*

Let me introduce you to the Honeybrown beetle that is everywhere in the park right now. They slowly and clumsily fly about not looking in total control if I may say and usually end up on you if you happen to be in their way. They like to munch on dead leaves and fungi.



Larvae

The larvae are brown and look furry and are very numerous in late spring, on bark and leaves found on the ground. These are probably the easiest insects to find in the parklands right now along with the bush flies



Photo of Larvae courtesy of Martin Lagerway

Peter Wiltshire. Head Ranger

DATES FOR PARK CARE DAYS.

(Please check email updates/notice boards prior to events in case of any location changes!):

May 17th (1pm-3pm) -Infill planting of native grasses and lilies at Zeroland [Next to car Park]

June 7th (1pm-3pm) - Park Care Day - Planting shrubs and ground covers on Mt Puffalo

July 26th (1pm-3pm) - Park Care Day - Planting Zeroland infill planting

August 16 Park Care Day [TBC] Combining with **Darebin Creek Sweepers** for planting and /or litter control;

VOLUNTEER WITH THE DPA

We are seeking volunteers to help with weeding and planting in the parklands. A weekly group works under the guidance of Ranger Kate who teaches weed and plant identification. Work usually lasts 2-3 hours on Thursday morning from 9-11am. Ranger Kate is not only an excellent Ranger with extensive bushland management knowledge but she also provides a delicious morning tea for the volunteers

The emphasis is on projects that stabilize the creek banks and planting that focuses on revegetation of areas like Snake Grass and Zero Land. Volunteers also participate in seed collection and propagation.

We are looking forward to another productive year in 2020. If interested in volunteering please contact: Ranger Kate: kate@dcmc.org.au

Events calendar 2020

- '31 March.....General Meeting
- Management Plan review
- 17 May..... Park Care Day
- 26 May..... Annual General Meeting
- 7 June.....Park Care Day
- 26 July..... Park Care Day
- 16 August..... Park Care Day

For more details on events in 2020 see our website;

<https://www.dpa.org.au/events-calendar/>

Up and down the creek

News from the DCMC Coordination Division

<http://friendsofdarebin creek.org.au/events-darebin-creek/>

Strategic Planning

We are developing DCMC's first ever Strategic Plan. This is an important step towards meeting our full potential as custodians of Darebin Creek and an exciting time for the organisation. Staff have had extensive consultations with our stakeholders including councils, the DPA, Friends of Darebin Creek, La Trobe University, schoolteachers and Melbourne Water. A Strategic Planning Workshop was held on Monday 24th February, where participants were able to shape the Vision, Mission, Aims and Objectives for DCMC. The draft DCMC Vision is:

The Darebin is a healthy and natural creek supporting thriving communities of plants and animals. A place where the connections of people and nature are deepened. A place where the interdependence of human and environmental wellbeing is understood, respected and nurtured. Darebin Creek brings communities together as a place of discovery, recreation, restoration and celebration.

New projects and events

We were recently successful in securing two grants through the Jagajaga and Cooper electorates, as part of the federal government Communities Environment Program.

The central project question to be investigated is: What role do wetlands associated with Darebin Creek have in providing food resources for frogs, Rakali, and Platypus?

We are aiming to train twenty volunteers to monitor macro-invertebrate populations in Darebin Creek and adjacent wetlands to detect differences in species abundance over time and between sites.

To begin, we will deliver a macroinvertebrate ID training workshop at the Gleeson Centre on Saturday 4 April. If you are interested, please contact us on info@dcmc.org.au Numbers are limited. We will also be having a platypus eDNA workshop later in the year (date to be determined).



DCMC staff are also working on the Nestboxes for Wildlife Project, funded by City of Darebin, which seeks to improve monitoring, connectivity and the number of quality nestboxes along the creek from the Parklands to Reservoir. The Escarpments and Meanders Project, funded by Melbourne Water, will revegetate escarpments and nearby meanders to increase biodiversity, control weeds and stabilise creek banks along the Darebin Creek in the area above McKimmies Road,

Friends of Darebin Creek.

Friends have been busy with several events, including the Grow for Growlers event in Epping, a Nestbox Building event with Tom from Banyule Bushcrew, and the upcoming Clean Up Australia Day at what must be a record number of sites along the creek. There will be another Nestbox Construction Day coming up at the Gleeson Centre on Sunday 29 March, this time run by DCMC staff.

Darebin Creek Education Program (DCEP)

The DCEP is well underway in 2020 with many schools booked in for creek-based learning and activities. Thornbury High School will be engaged in a number of sessions where they will be continuing to monitor the health of the creek water below Fez's Wetland. Students from Al Siraat College in Epping, a school that backs onto the Findon Creek (a tributary of the Darebin), will also be engaged in multiple sessions. Other schools involved in multiple sessions with the program include Alphington Grammar, St Monica's College in Epping and Lalor North College.

Graeme Hamilton and I recently presented at the Banyule Nillumbik Teachers Environmental Network (TEN) meeting at Edendale Farm. The aims are to inform local teachers about environmental education opportunities and to network with other teachers. I also presented at the Whittlesea Hume TEN last year. Peter Grenfell



Peter Grenfell. DCMC Education Officer



Catch a Carp

Sunday 22nd March - 9.30-11.30am

Darebin Parklands. Separation St entrance

Join FishCare for a morning of activities, fishing and fun to help remove carp from our beautiful Darebin Creek. Carp are an introduced species and a threat to native fish species.

Baits, nets and rods are provided for participants, but places are limited. A parent or guardian must be present and supervise children at all times.

Fish Care Victoria has organized a great day for our Junior Rangers.

Firstly, they will meet at the Education Centre classroom where they will learn about the following topics:

Licenses, fishing sustainably, how to catch, measure and release fish. They will also be taught casting. Then it's off to the creek to catch a carp.



NB This event is for Junior Ranger members only. Not a member???

Families (or individuals) can join the DPA through our website: <https://www.dpa.org.au/>



Junior Rangers - Events for 2020

Sunday 22nd March (9am - 12am)

'Catch a Carp'. Fishing Day

Saturday 18th April(7pm)

Dream Puppets 'Dreamer in the Deep'

End June / Early July - Wildlife Victoria & learn

how to make a Joey Bag

Weeknight in August - Spotlighting with the

Parkland Rangers - meet those animals that

come out after dark!

November - Gum leaf art - decorate your own

gum leaf (for a Xmas card?)

Please check our website

<https://www.dpa.org.au/events-calendar/>

and Facebook page for confirmation of these activities and other events for 2020

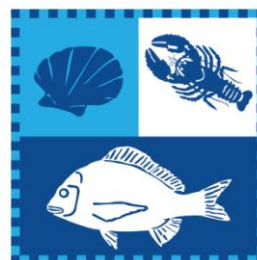
Dream Puppets 'Dreamer in the Deep' Saturday 18th April.7.00pm

Dream Puppets is an Australian puppet theatre company based in Melbourne

The performance runs for 45 minutes and is entirely puppetry and has been performed in many educational settings including kindergartens and primary and secondary schools

The story is about 'Dreamer' whose bed becomes a yacht and carries him to the Great Barrier reef where he has many adventures. A golden sea horse is his guide as he explores the wonders of the reef.

<http://www.dreampuppets.com/Home.htm>



**fishcare
victoria**



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