



NEWSLETTER

March, 2010

Edition No 31

FFDC Inc. PO Box 5044, Heathwood Vic

Website : <http://ffdc.friends.melbournewater.com.au/>

FIRST FRIENDS OF DANDENONG CREEK Inc. no A0039273V

TANJENONG TALES

THIS NEWSLETTER IS FUNDED BY MELBOURNE WATER AND KNOX AND MAROONDAH COUNCILS

President's Report

Welcome to the 31th edition of Tanjenong Tales.

Car Park—seat and table

A new seat and table was erected by Knox Council in December alongside the bike path in the vicinity of the new car park near the Wantirna Road bridge. The location was chosen to make it accessible by people with mobility issues. We thank Knox Council for the funding and the work. See the photo on page 2 of the newsletter.

Clean Up Australia Day

Despite threatening weather we had 20 people including members and volunteers turn out for our annual Clean Up Australia event on Sunday 7th March. 8 bags of rubbish were collected over a 2 hour period. That does not seem much but it is testament to the people who regularly clean up the creek and surrounds all year round. It was great to see several children involved. Thanks to every one who participated and Frank Sullivan for organising the event.

General Committee

We need 4 more members to join the General Committee. If you can spare an hour a month and have or would like to gain some organisational skills please contact me via the email address on the back page.

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Young volunteers at the FFDC Clean Up event on Sunday 7 March

President's Report (continued)

National Tree Day Planting on Sunday 1st August

Please note in your diaries our annual tree planting day on Sunday 1st August from 1:00 to 3:30pm. A venue is yet to be decided but look for details on our website closer to the day.

Charlie Miller— President

Yarrabing Wetlands

Yarrabing Wetlands is located on the Dandenong Creek just east of the EastLink Motorway in Wantirna. It is 2.2 hectares in area. The dominant features of the reserve are the wetland areas and stately manna gums (*Eucalyptus Viminalis*). The reserve has three vegetation communities, riparian forest, swamp scrub and seasonal wetland. Developed in 2000, the wetlands provide important habitat for wildlife including the Spotted Marsh Frog, Pobblebonk Frog, White Faced Herons, Australian Wood Ducks and Dragonflies.

Today, Yarrabing Wetlands is an important natural asset for conservation, recreation and water control. The habitat types found at the site are significant because of their reduced numbers elsewhere in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

To help protect the flora and fauna of Yarrabing Wetlands:

- Walk along defined paths,
- Join the First Friends of Dandenong Creek,
- Walk your dog on a leash,
- Grow indigenous plants in your back yard to expand habitat,
- Avoid planting environmental weeds in your garden,
- Take your rubbish home.

Enquiries: Anita Infanti, 14 Magnolia Street h 9800 2465 m 0417 117 296



The new table and chairs on the bike path near the car park at the Wantirna Road bridge

Wildlife on the Waterways

Before European settlement, Dandenong Creek and its extensive wetlands would have provided habitat for a large number and great variety of fish, animals and birds. Animals such as kangaroos, possums, wallabies, emus and many species of small marsupials and waterfowl were common in the woodland and along the creek lines. The greatest concentrations of birds and animals were around the adjacent wetlands during summer. Studies indicate that many species of native animals have been lost from the area. Ringtail and Brushtail possums, echidna and more than 20 bird species remain.

Most of the middle and lower sections of the creek have been channelised and only remnants of the original vegetation remain, in small pockets along the Dandenong Creek corridor. Many old billabongs and wetlands throughout the Dandenong Valley are occupied by a diverse mix of plant communities. Many plant species found in the area were utilised by Aboriginal people. Today, most of the original vegetation has been removed because of residential development, drainage, clearing and hydrological changes.

Three species of native fish (as well as Long-necked tortoises) are found in Dandenong Creek. A number of fish now found in the Dandenong Creek have been introduced from overseas. The most numerous fish in the Dandenong Creek is the small Mosquito fish (also known as Eastern Gambusia), which is native to north and Central America. Mosquito fish were introduced to Australian rivers and creeks to reduce mosquito numbers but have made no significant difference to mosquito numbers. They attack small native fish including the young of larger fish species, and take their food. Dwarf galaxias were found in wetlands and small creeks along Dandenong Creek until about 10 years ago. Competition with and attack by Mosquito fish along with habitat loss due to land development are the main causes for the loss of this threatened native species along Dandenong Creek.

Some of Australia's most iconic bird species may be found at times along the Dandenong Creek, which is a haven for a variety of birdlife including insectivorous birds, nectar-feeders (such as the honeyeaters), birds of prey, seed-eaters and waterbirds. Among the waterbird species known to inhabit Dandenong Creek and its environs, the Cattle Egret, Australasian Bittern and Blue-billed Duck are listed on Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Three species on this list are migratory and protected by international migratory bird agreements between Australia, Japan and China: Latham's Snipe, Great Egret and Cattle Egret. About 11 bird of prey species are regularly recorded along Dandenong Creek or in the area, including the beautiful Peregrine Falcon and Wedge-tailed Eagle.

The flora of Dandenong Creek plays a vital role in providing food and shelter for the nectar and seed eating species of native birds. Many of the established trees such as eucalypts have hollows in them that birds and mammals depend on for nesting, roosting, or simply shelter and protection from predators.

Among the many frog species known to inhabit Dandenong Creek, the Growling Grass Frog is perhaps the best known. Listed on Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, the Growling Grass Frog population has declined throughout its entire range over the past two decades and is no longer found in much of the Melbourne area where it was once prevalent. The croak of the Growling Grass Frog has often been compared to the sound of a boat's outboard motor on low throttle. Frogs are also extremely important to our ecology. Many people are unaware that frogs are recognized as good indicators of a healthy environment, especially of water quality and toxins. This is because amphibians are covered in skin that must stay moist at all times, making them susceptible to foreign substances entering waterways.

Article from "Know Your Creek—Dandenong Creek" by Melbourne Water. Full publication is located at: http://healthywaterways.melbournewater.com.au/content/know_your_river/know_your_river.asp

Memoirs of the Dandenong Creek and Surrounds—Part 5 by Barry Robinson—FFDC Vice President and Life Member

After coming back from holidays at Rosebud the first thing we would do was go exploring down at the creek to see what had changed in the month that we were away. We would also talk to the other kids to find out what they had been doing over the holidays and what Christmas presents they had received.

While playing down at the creek we were always careful to keep away from where Heatherdale Creek joined it just west of where Eastlink is today. This was because a lot of the time Heatherdale Creek smelt awful because of the sanitary depot upstream. On a windy day with a north westerly blowing it gave off a foul smell. One of the holes that we used to swim in was just below Boronia Road bridge, by this time we thought it was clear and safe (or we thought so) to swim or play in. Another thing that had to be done in our swimming hole was de-snag it after a period of not using it to make sure no one had an accident when jumping or diving in.

When the weather was too cold to go swimming we would go rabbiting with our ferrets down along the banks and along the flats on both sides of the creek. If we were lucky it was rabbit for tea.

Dates to mark on your calendar

Sunday 25 April 2010—Annual Sausage Sizzle Fund Raiser at Bunnings in Bayswater. 11:00am to 5:00pm. Contact Barry Robinson on 98011628 if you can spare 2 hours on the day.

Saturday 28 May 2010 - Tree planting at Magnolia Reserve in Wantirna. 10 am to noon. Contact Anita on 0417 117 296.

Sunday 1 August 2010—National Tree Day
More details can be found on the FFDC website nearer the day.

For more up to date information on the events above you can check details on our website:
<http://ffdc.friends.melbournewater.com.au/>

Next edition of the newsletter is in July 2010, please email me your ideas for articles or stories of interest by the end of June at :
charlie.miller@optusnet.com.au

Sometimes the ferrets would make a kill and then fall asleep in the burrow. We would then have to dig them out which was hard work.

Along the creek where it was overgrown with blackberries a lot of foxes lived. When you were walking along the banks of the creek even though you could not see their lairs you could tell they were about because of the smell.

At some stage the bridge over Wantirna Road was replaced due to it being too low and narrow. This meant that school was always in because traffic could now pass over the bridge even in the worst floods. (What a blow).

The next major problem was when the boffins decided to deepen and straighten the creek in the late 1960's. This was to control the regular floods that occurred after heavy rain. They completely wrecked it. This supposedly made everyone happy except for the poor little critters that lived in and around the creek.

Come and help us in our endeavor to return our wonderful creek to something that resembles what it was when I was a boy.

Good bye and thanks,
Barry Robinson.

This concludes our series on Barry's memoirs of the Dandenong Creek and surrounds.

FFDC Committee for 2009-2010

President: Charlie Miller
Vice-President: Barry Robinson
Secretary: Vivien Holyoake
Treasurer: Frank Sullivan

General Committee:

Heidi Victoria MP
Barbara Richards
Bill Jones
Vicky Pearse
(4 vacancies)

Committee meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month (Feb to Nov) starting at 7:30pm in the Ringwood room at the Ringwood Library. All members are most welcome to attend.