

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

April 2012, no. 8



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BRAESIDE PARK

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The opinions expressed in this
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Open Day - Community Garden and Nursery

Visit the Community Garden and Nursery Facility and see first hand how this environmentally friendly site has changed. Undertake a guided tour and learn how to grow local native seedlings which are great for your home garden or about protecting and enhancing our environment.

There will be light refreshments including tea, coffee, soft drinks and a free sausage sizzle.

Local native plants for sale.

Free plant to anyone who joins the Community Garden Friends Group on the day.

Date: Sunday 20th May 2012

Time: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Venue: Braeside Park, Lower Dandenong Road Braeside (Melway 88 D8) follow the signs after entering the park

Wednesdays with Ernie's 'A Team'

By Bev Bancroft

Well we are back into a very heavy workload

GRASSLANDS

Several days have been spent mowing and weeding and cutting back grasses.

HEATHLAND

Because of the warm wet Summer, weeds such as *Acacia longifolia*, Passionfruit, etc. have had a big surge in regeneration - so lots of chopping and ring-barking has been done.

The Easter Bunny found us at morning tea & added a bit of fun to our morning!

VISITORS CENTRE

Removal of tree guards, frames etc. from the garden have improved the outlook.

SCHOOLS

Mentone Girls Grammar School pupils have resumed their Wednesday visits. They have been pricking out, mostly grasses for our grassland project. They have been undertaking another task which is very necessary, cleaning seed and they will learn to set seed for later use.

Keysborough Secondary College have commenced with us on Fridays. So far they have tidied up the Community Garden, resurfaced the paths and even washed 500 pots.

Many thanks.

More help is always needed for a variety of jobs - everyone is most welcome.

- meet at the Park Office, Wednesdays 9 am - 12 noon.

- morning tea provided

Wednesday afternoons are continuing 1pm - 3pm in the Friends Community Garden for anyone that may be keen to learn about propagation.

Thanks To The Helpers

Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson
Bev Bancroft
Marj Seaton
Park Rangers

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Friends of Braeside Park - ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Activity	Time/Day	April	May	June
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, from 13.00 at the Visitor Centre	23	28	25
Community Garden	09.30 - 12.00, 3rd Sun of the month at nursery	15	20	17
Community Projects Weekday	09:00 - 12:00 Wednesday at the Park Office	4	2	6
		11	9	13
		18	16	20
		25	23	27
			30	
Nursery open for plant sales	10.00 - 12.00 3rd Sunday of the month	15	20	17
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Sun	7	5	2
		9	7	4
		15	20	17
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	13.00 - 15.00 Wednesday	-	9	-
			23	
			-	
Seed & Cutting Collection. Meet at Robin Car Park	10.00 - 12.00 Fri before 1st Saturday	6	4	1
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	09:00 - 12:00 3rd Tues	17	15	19
Community Projects Weekends	09:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs		Community Planting Day Sat 26th	Community Planting Day Sun 24th
Special Activities	Times to be advised			

Help is at hand for injured wildlife: call **AWARE** (Patterson Lakes Branch) on **0412 433 727**

Hooded Plovers: A Good News Story

By The Friends of Venus Bay

Looking out for the birds at Waratah Bay

Hooded Plovers are threatened shorebirds that nest on beaches during summer, with only about 450 left in Victoria. Birdlife Australia has been coordinating a monitoring program to help the breeding success of this species for a number of years. We attended a volunteer's information session in October at Venus Bay offering our help. It was suggested that there might be breeding birds on the Waratah Bay beach, within Cape Liptrap Coastal Park. After walking a fruitless couple of kilometres from Waratah, we saw the tell tale signs of a couple of the small grey and white birds with black heads (they are a bit smaller than a blackbird in length but plumper) moving around in the shingle at the top of the beach. On a closer look there were not two but three, one being a little chick, you can imagine our excitement as so few birds manage to even get as far as hatching young; we estimated it was about 10-14 days old and was subsequently banded with an identifying orange flag, marked JX, on its left leg. A few days later, much to our surprise there were three chicks not one; two must have been hiding nearby. All three fledged and JX was last seen by other volunteers monitoring a beach near Wonthaggi.

Over the summer months more 'Hoodies' came and went and three more eggs were laid in a scrape above the high tide mark in November. One of the pair had an orange flag marked BT, it was banded at Venus Bay last year. Unfortunately a storm, just as they were due to hatch, destroyed the nest. A week later the adults surprised us again by appearing with one chick, presumably an egg had hatched prior to the storm.

Our third family for the season hatched on 7 March, this nest had been monitored with a research camera. At the time of writing, three weeks later, there are still two chicks alive and well

These birds have a really hard time trying to nest on busy beaches over summer with people and dogs liable to tread on the well camouflaged eggs. Once hatched the young chicks are not fed by the parents but are led to the water's edge and guarded while feeding on small crustaceans, leaving them vulnerable to being chased by dogs; it takes five weeks for them to be able to fly.

Next time you walk along the beach please take extra care looking out for these fascinating birds. Our remaining chicks won't fly until after Easter so please obey the 'no dogs' regulations that apply to this part of Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, helping these birds reach adulthood.

For further information www.birdlife.org.au/bird-profile/hooded-plover

www.birdlife.org.au/projects/beach-nesting-birds/for-volunteers



Hooded Plover Adult
Photo: www.bird.net.au



Hooded Plover Chick
Photo: www.ecovoice.com.au

Nursery News

By Marj Seaton

There is a lovely lot of greenery in the shade-house just now. With the weather still blowing hot and cold, we daren't move them out to the hardening off area yet, but that will need to happen soon, in preparation for our planting days.

We're not sowing much – it's too late in the season as the plants would be far too small to plant out this year, and too big if we keep them for next year. Some grasses might go in though, as the Wednesday group plants large numbers in the grasslands block even quite late in the planting season.

Once again, we would like to express our appreciation for the work done by the two schools, Mentone Girls' Grammar and Keysborough Secondary College, who spend sessions at the nursery on a fairly regular basis. Without their help, we would be unlikely to provide the large number of plants required by the Rangers for planting throughout the Park.

In the last newsletter, I commented that we had taken cuttings from a new stand of *Ozothamnus* found in the north of the Park. Well, they struck well and with luck, we should be able to plant a dozen or more in the Park this year. We'll repeat this in the future. Another plant I would like to try taking cuttings of is *Kennedia prostrata*. We don't get many seeds for this plant so if it would grow from cuttings we would be able to plant more around the picnic areas.

Our *Lomandra* germination has been poor this year, but there are some coming up now. We tried sowing fresh seed and also older seed that might have broken any dormancy and we hope the present crop gives us some to plant later in the year.

It is hoped that quite a few friends will visit the nursery in conjunction with the Community Garden Open day to be held on Sunday May 20th. It is a good opportunity to purchase a few plants and to see what has been done around the grounds.

Bird Sightings from March 2012

Report from Steve MacDonald

10 March 2012

Pink-eared Ducks
Shoveler Duck
Fork-tailed Swifts, last record 14 years ago
Australian Shelduck
Golden Whistler (Female)

17 March 2012

Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Blue-winged Parrot (Female)
2 Pied Cormorants
Little Corellas
Yellow-billed Spoonbill

The Friends group is looking for volunteers to help with bird surveying so if you are interested in birds and would like to help with Bird Surveying in the Park please contact Bev Bancroft. It's an activity that can be carried out on a week day or a weekend and no previous experience is necessary.

Are there times when you see a bird and would love to know what it is or just know a little bit more about it and its habits? A couple of websites that are very useful are www.birds.net.au and www.birdsinbackyards.net Birds in Backyards is especially useful as it has a bird finder which enables you to narrow down your search by inputting size, shape and colouring details. Alternatively invest in a good bird field guide, there are plenty to choose from.

Grassland Grant

By the Editor



The Friends group has received a grant from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Authority to be spent on maintaining and improving the Grasslands block which is located within the central area of the park. Ernie's A-Team spend a lot of time and considerable effort in maintaining and expanding this area. One of the regular monthly jobs is mowing the introduced pasture grasses to remove seed heads and reduce the natural regeneration and so allowing the indigenous grasses to expand and out compete the introduced grasses. Therefore it has been decided to spend some of the grant on a Deutscher mower which is a rugged, self-propelled, easy to use mower with a 22" cutting deck. This should help make the A-Teams job a little easier.

"Temperate grasslands and grassy woodlands are among the most under-represented ecosystems in Australia and are recognised nationally as among the most threatened vegetation types. The Natural Temperate Grassland and Grassy Eucalypt Woodland represent some of Victoria's most threatened and fragmented ecosystems. Both ecological communities were formerly extensive on the Victorian volcanic plain but now comprise mostly small, highly fragmented remnants in a landscape that has been largely cleared for agriculture.

Less than five per cent of the original extent of both communities remains, although patches in good condition are likely to constitute less than one per cent. Most known remnants are small – under 10 hectares in size. Many patches of these ecological communities require recovery efforts because they are so degraded, due to weed and feral animal invasion and loss of native biodiversity, that their capacity to maintain ecosystem function is impaired. These ecological communities provide habitat to several nationally and state-listed threatened species." (DSE)

From the above you can see just how important it is to maintain and hopefully gradually increase the Grassland block within the park. Without all the hard work put in by the Friends group and the park rangers this small piece of priceless vegetation would probably no longer exist. The Grassland block is a 3 hectare area protected by rabbit proof fencing and the subject of hand weeding, brush cutting, monthly mowing and extensive planting. The result of all this hard work is an extension of the original remnant area and a massive improvement in the quality of vegetation.

The introduced pasture grasses are gradually being reduced and replaced by indigenous native grasses and flowers. In Spring it is a beautiful sight with waving sheaths of *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo grass) and other native grasses and lovely spring flowers such as *Arthropodium strictum* (Chocolate Lily), *Burchardia umbellata* (Milkmaids) and of course the centrepiece is the lovely orchids *Diuris punctata*

I have been lucky enough to spend some time working in the Grassland block and also just spending time enjoying the wonderful sights and being let loose with my camera! My work is involved with ecological restoration and it is a joy to see such a lovely piece of native grassland, they really are few and far between.

In order to maintain and further improve the condition of this area lots of future hard work is required. I call it hard work but actually it is a pleasure to sit with other members of the Friends group and hand weed or even to chuff around with a mower. So if you have a spare Wednesday morning and would like an opportunity to "play" with the new mower or take part in some hand weeding, why not join Ernie's A-Team and add to this lovely area of the Park.



Grasslands In Spring
Photo: J St Quintin

Another way to increase the native grasses in our local environment is to consider replacing your lawn with native grasses or to include an area in your garden dedicated to grassland species. A mixture of Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) and *Austrodanthonia* sp. can give you a lovely soft lawn which requires very little maintenance. It can be a little slow to establish but is well worth the wait. The big benefit is that it can reduce your mowing schedule to 4 to 5 times a year and once established requires very little watering and of course you are supporting a highly threatened vegetation community!

Myrtle Rust

By the Editor using information from the DPI website

The fungus *Uredo rangellii* (myrtle rust), recently found in Victoria for the first time poses a threat to Victoria's nursery, forestry and beekeeping industries, as well as to public parks and gardens and native forests. It can potentially attack all species of the Myrtaceae plant family. DPI has now detected myrtle rust at 41 sites in Victoria, mainly at production nurseries and wholesale outlets in and around metropolitan Melbourne.

Myrtle rust attacks young, soft, actively growing leaves, shoot tips and young stems, as well as fruits and flower parts of susceptible plants.

The first signs of myrtle rust infection are tiny raised spots that are brown to grey, often with red-purple haloes. Up to 14 days after infection, the spots produce masses of distinctive yellow/orange spores. Severe rust disease in young trees may kill shoot tips, causing loss of leaders and a bushy habit. Myrtle rust attacks young, soft, actively growing leaves, shoot tips and young stems, as well as fruits and flower parts of susceptible plants.

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Myrtle Rust on a Melaleuca Paperbark
Photo DPI

Early identification of this rust is vital for effective management and DPI should be notified immediately of all plants suspected of being infected with myrtle rust.

To report suspected myrtle rust, please telephone DPI on 1800 084 881.

To avoid spreading the disease:

- Do not touch, move or collect samples of the suspect plant material

A Leggy Park Visitor

By the Editor



If you keep your eyes peeled whilst walking around the park you may be lucky enough to spot one of our more colourful spiders hanging out in the shrubbery, the St Andrew's Cross Spider.

The St Andrew's Cross Spider commonly builds its web amongst shrubs and other vegetation or against walls of buildings. It normally hangs upside down in the web with two paired legs placed along each arm of the cross. It is hard to see from these pictures supplied by Des Lucas (Ranger in Charge) but the web has silken bands which form a X shape and the legs of the spider roughly lie along these lines in four pairs.

It is not known why the spider weaves its web in this way with the X form but it may be that the silken cross is used for strengthening the web, for camouflage or for enhancing prey captures. It is known that the cross reflects ultraviolet light that is particularly attractive to insects.

So next time you are strolling through the park or just pottering around your own back garden, keep an eye out for one of these rather pretty spiders. By the way the bite of this spider is considered harmless so they are quite safe to have around your back garden.

Park Report

From Ranger in Charge Des Lucas' monthly reports

Revegetation Program: Climate Positive is looking to plant a further 6 hectares this year with a planting in October. The planting will contain mainly upper-storey species, including Redgums and Wattles.

Parks Victoria Grants 2011/12

Burgan Grant: consolidation and maintenance period – planting and weed control in all areas treated previously – weed spraying has commenced.

Burn Program: Monitoring of the 7 Hectare Heathland burn site is underway with the main focus being on controlling weed species and monitoring regeneration of indigenous species.

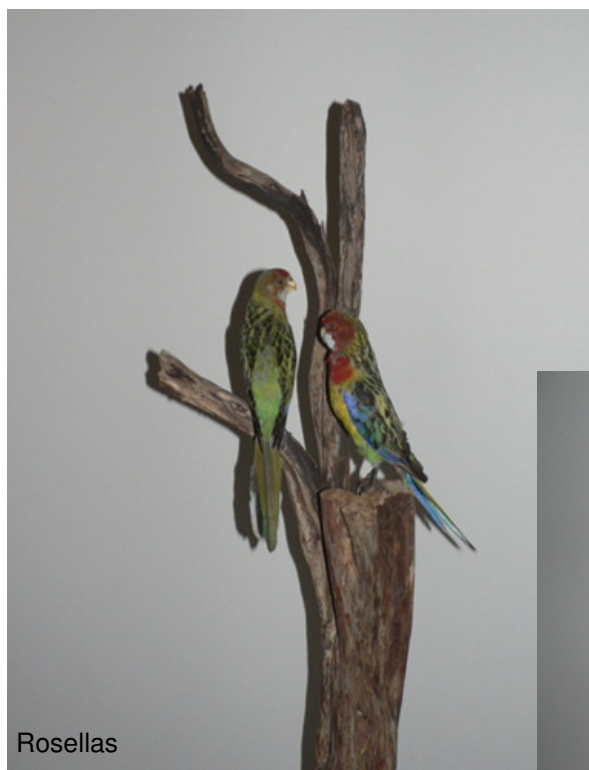
EDM Line: Park staff are discussing with the DSE the possibility of installing a interpretive sign to inform park visitors of what the EDM line is about.

Keysborough College: There has been a request for a year ten student activity in the Park on Friday mornings 11:00 to 11:50 commencing this Friday – Ranger staff will undertake a park tour with the students.

Other News

The Friends group have received a grant from the Kingston Council, part of which has been spent on purchasing 3 new birds for display in the visitors centre and also on repair to some of the birds already on display in the centre. The 3 birds that have been purchased from the taxidermist are 2 Eastern Rosellas and a Sacred Kingfisher. Both of these bird species can be seen within the park. The Rosellas can often be spotted on the ground feeding on nuts and seeds, especially under the larger Eucalypts. Whilst the Kingfisher is more likely to be spotted around the wetland areas and if you are lucky enough to spot one they are a spectacular flash of colour as they dive for food.

If you would like a close up view of these or other birds that can be found in the park, check out the display in the Visitor's Centre.



Rosellas



Sacred Kingfisher