

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

September 2012, no. 10



BRAESIDE PARK

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The opinions expressed in this
newsletter are the authors' and
do not necessarily reflect those
of Parks Victoria or its staff.



Photographs Still Required

You may remember in the previous Newsletter that we requested people to forward any photographs they may have of the park that are suitable for a computer based presentation about Braeside Park running in the Visitors centre. Unfortunately there hasn't been a high response to this request and we are still looking for suitable photographs to use in the presentation.

The Park is looking particularly pretty at the moment with all the Spring flowers coming into bloom so if you, or any of your friends are a budding photographer or just like taking photos of nature it's a wonderful time to explore the park with your camera in hand.

The photographs can be of anything in the park that you think have the wow factor, it can be a bird, animal, plant or landscape.

Please send you digital photo's to the following des.lucas@parks.vic.gov.au

If you feel there is a need to provide a short description about your photographs then please add text into your email with a relevant link to the photograph.

Many thanks for your support on this exciting project.

Wednesdays with Ernie's 'A Team'

By Bev Bancroft

GRASSLANDS

Time has been spent mowing and weeding. More grasses have been planted.

Looking good for spring as many of the Lillies & Shrubs are ready to flower.

HEATHLAND

We have been toiling here - removing mostly feral passion fruit plants which in some cases are rampant, covering whole trees with roots the size of your arm

Really hard Yakka !!!

VISITORS CENTRE

Maintenance has continued with mulching and planting of grasses & shrubs. AND the Spectacular Cypress Sculpture which has been completed and is of much interest to Park visitors.

SCHOOLS

We have a new group from Mentone Girls Grammar School who are very enthusiastic. They started off with an orientation walk to the birdhide which concluded with a complete circuit of the Park.

They have raked and tidied the propagation area, completed the mulching of the Visitors' Centre area for the last community planting, and washed lots of pots &

pricked out grasses.

Well Done!

Chisholm TAFE have also spent time in the propagation area, pricking out Eucalypts/Grasses and helping with maintenance (including the watering system).

Brighton Boys Grammar School have helped out at Karkarook Park with the removal of tree guards, etc. in readiness for the last community planting. They will be coming monthly to do planting, mulching etc.

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	October	November	December
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, from 13.00 at the Visitor Centre	20	26	No Meeting
Community Garden	09.30 - 12.00, 3rd Sun of the month at nursery	21	18	16
Community Projects Weekday	09:00 - 12:00 Wednesday at the Park Office	3	7	5
		10	14	12
		17	21	
		24	28	
		31		
Nursery open for plant sales	10.00 - 12.00 3rd Sunday of the month	21	18	16
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Sun	6	3	1
		8	5	3
		21	18	16
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	13.00 - 15.00 Wednesday	17	7	-
Seed & Cutting Collection. Meet at Robin Car Park	10.00 - 12.00 Fri before 1st Saturday	5	2	Nov 30
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	09:00 - 12:00 3rd Tues	16	20	18
Community Projects Weekends	09:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs	-	-	-
Special Activities	Times to be advised	14th Oct Breakfast with Birds, Meet at the Visitors Centre	Sunday 25th 2-00pm - 4.00pm Mystery Walk with afternoon tea	Weds 20th End of Year BBQ

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

The Brushtail Possum at Braeside Park

By Neil Morley

Neil Morley has recently joined the Friends Group but has a long association with the Park. He has kindly written the following article about research that he carried out at the Park in the 1960's.

During the 1960's I carried out an extensive capture/recapture live trapping program at Braeside on the Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*. At that time Braeside was still a Sewerage Treatment Works and the surrounding area acted as a buffer zone and was also used at various times for sheep and cattle agistment. The research was for an external Master of Science at the University of Melbourne under the supervision of Dr. and later Professor John Thomson. The site was chosen because of its large number of dead trees which provided excellent nesting sites for the possums. In addition to these, there were many younger trees providing plenty of foliage for these arboreal marsupials.

The title of the project was The Population Dynamics of the Brushtail Possum and this required regular live trapping of the site. Cage traps were set in late afternoon generally using apple as bait and inspected early the next morning. At the time I was teaching/lecturing and so this was generally done on weekends and school holidays. The traps were set at the base of trees with hollows and of the 30 traps set, generally about 12 possums were captured. The animals were transferred into a hessian bag which kept the animals quiet while tagging and measuring significant body parts. When this was complete, the animal was released at the base of the tree and it generally ran up that tree and into a hollow. Evidence of this can probably still be seen around the Park by the scratches on the trunk and there are also remaining attached to larger trees, galvanized numbered tags. These allowed the location of the animal to be noted. Over many trappings, a home range could easily be mapped for the animals in the population. This was traced onto an enlarged aerial photograph which could identify individual large trees.

The actual trapping period covered 12 years and this longitudinal study gave an excellent range of data over life span of this animal. Possums were identified using ear tags and measurements included pinna (ear) length, pes (rear foot) length and tail lengths and the weight of the animal. In addition to this, females had their pouches inspected for young, where head length determined the age of young, nipple lactation or enlargement and general pouch condition. Males had their testes measured to determine activity and the sternal patch (used for marking territory) was also measured. The general breeding season is reported as being in May but the area was so 'good' for the possums, that a secondary breeding season in September had half of the breeding females producing young.

Over 500 animals were trapped during this period and the regular trapping gave important data on the home range of males and females, the movement of young, particularly the young males and the survival of young in a population. The above aspects were the focus of the study but associated blood work, radio tracking and the relationship with other species was also recorded. Since the study was over a long period, many other happenings occurred including the stealing of traps and animals, the removal of many possums prior to my study, the release of animals by professional trappers until stopped and the clearing of trees and the construction of the trunk sewer.

If readers were interested, I could outline in more detail some of the findings the study provided. During a previous research study on Cormorants, a large number of Black Cormorants, *Phalacrocorax carbo* were observed roosting in the area and it was during this time that the excellent site for a possum study was chosen. I now live in Queensland and am very pleased that Braeside has been designated as a Metropolitan Park which provides protection for the range of fauna and flora species present. The facilities seen on a recent trip to Victoria are excellent to give the public the opportunity to interact with the area which I visited over many years.

When you are walking on the Wetland trail, look for these galvanized numbered tags on the old dead tree trunks.



Nursery News

By Marj Seaton

It is very quiet in the nursery just now. Maintenance like washing pots, weeding and general tidying up always has to be done, and plants shifted from the igloo to the shade house or to the hardening off areas. There is still a little pricking out to do each time.

As the plants are taken for planting we reduce the amount of water we use by closing down some of the zones within the watered areas – we have already emptied one of the igloos.

We still have quite a few large eucalypts and acacias waiting for planting and there are many very small eucalypts in the igloo that we hope will be big enough for the Climate Positive teams to plant a bit later in the year.

Peas are flowering in the heathland now, the wattles have been putting on their show since early august and soon the wedding bush will flower, so we'll be back to seed collection and sorting soon.

If any Friends would like to consider purchasing some of our indigenous plants, the best time to call in is on the third Sunday of every month when the Community Gardeners hold their working bees from 10am till 12 noon. Visitors are always welcome to help with any of the jobs being undertaken at those times, such as pricking out of seedlings or cuttings, weeding, cleaning pots or picking up the twigs after the white cockatoos have sharpened their beaks on the topmost shoots of the Kurrajong tree within the nursery compound. Alternatively, just sit and chat to one of the workers or the rangers or simply enjoy the Park.

Report from the AGM

By Elsie Anderson

Our 23rd Annual General Meeting was held on 12 August. A new Committee was elected. We welcomed a mix of former office holders and several new ones. The Committee for 2012/13 consists of Frank Archer, Beverley Bancroft, John Burns (our new secretary), Joanne Cody, Margaret Hunter, Dorothea Kassell, Heather Lamond and Trish Magree.

The business part of the AGM was soon concluded and followed by an interesting account by Dr. Terry Anderson of the time when Braeside Park was the site of a sewage treatment plant. There are remnants in the Park of this 'murky past' including the old pumping plant and a concrete tank near the Parks office. Terry gave us some background on the horrific problems of treating the vast quantity of effluent generated by the booming city of Melbourne in the late 19th century. This forced the formation of the Board of Works with responsibility for sewerage Melbourne.

The sewers took the effluent to what was a remote area at Werribee where some treatment occurred. However by the 1930's this was inadequate. Suburbs extended down the opposite side (East) of the Bay. Septic tanks polluted Mordialloc Creek and the swimming beaches. The needs of this area were met by the opening of a treatment plant at Braeside in 1939. This was a much more up to date system than that at Werribee and the fertilised pastures were still used for grazing. Eventually the city outgrew even this system and the very modern South Eastern Treatment Plant at Bangholme was built. Far sighted local community leaders and the management of the Board of Works decided to create a Park on the Braeside land. This began the long task of transforming the area into a natural and recreational facility enjoyed by us all.

Hair Traps

By Glen Oliphant

You may remember that last year the Friends Group decided to use some of their fund to purchase some hair traps to be used to monitor the fauna using the park as home.

Just recently the Chisholm TAFE students have begun using the hair traps in the regeneration block to establish which species are using the regeneration block. Also they hope to establish what effect mowing within the block has on the fauna populations. So far the traps have been set for three weeks with nothing to report as yet. All trap location have been recorded and a map will be produced. This will be an ongoing project for the TAFE students who are studying for qualification in Conservation and Land Management.

We look forward to hearing more of their findings in the near future.

Kingston Seniors Festival

By Elsie Anderson

The Friends of Braeside Park are offering some attractive activities as part of this festival.

Thurs 4th October at 10.00am – 11.30 all are invited to a simple morning tea at the Visitors Centre with a ranger presentation of some of our interesting mounted specimens of some of the wild life found in the Park. He will give us a chance to view them close up. This will be followed by a short guided walk to the nearby wetlands on formed paths.

Friday 19th October 9.45am – 12.00noon - for those who love the Park but cannot walk the distances a free bus tour of the Park is offered to ten people starting from the Visitors Centre, prior registration is essential. Register with Elsie Anderson 9583 6099, the first ten callers will get the seats.

The Visitors Centre is reached by entering from Lower Dandenong Road and following the signs.

Sunday 21 October 10.00am – 12.00 noon - come to see where we grow plants for the Park. A tour of the plant nursery is offered and a chance to join in with plant propagation if you wish. Drop in any time in that morning. Enter the Park from Lower Dandenong Road and turn right down the cypress drive. Signs will indicate the turn. The nursery is at the end of the drive next to the Parks office.

Seniors are also invited to join **Breakfast with the Birds** on 14th October. Breakfast with the Birds will take place on Sunday 14th October 7.30am - 9.30am, meet at Visitors Centre. There will be a free BBQ at 9.30am. Prior booking with Parks' Office is essential (for catering purposes). 9265 7300.

The EDM Line

By Elsie Anderson

In 1981, as the Park was being established, an additional use for this open space was found. Have you noticed the concrete columns at intervals along the cypress drive?

Perhaps you have read the new sign on the Howard Road Trail near the drive explaining their importance. These columns form the Electronic Distance Measurement Calibration baseline. This enables surveyors from the Melbourne Metropolitan District to verify the accuracy of their instruments against a national standard of length.

In 2011 the line was upgraded with five new piles. The original ones had become unstable owing to changes in rainfall and water table. The upgrade is of deep driven bored piles that will last much longer.

Other Park News

By the Editor

If you have visited the park recently you may have seen the chainsaw carving of the cypress trunk near the Visitors Centre which was financed by the Friends Group. The carving depicts some of the native fauna that would originally have existed in the Braeside area before white settlement and has been attracting a lot of attention from visitors to the park. Unfortunately the heavy rainfall and high winds of the last 12 months has resulted in a few of the Cypress trees becoming dangerous and having to be removed leaving some stumps along Cypress Drive. The Friends Group hope to have further stumps carved if sufficient funds and grants can be raised.

New arrivals in the Park

