

# Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



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## July 2015 Newsletter

### NEXT ACTIVITY:

### NATIONAL TREE DAY PLANTING SUNDAY 26 JULY - 2 PM TO 4 PM

Our National Tree Day planting will be along Skeleton Creek, between Markham Way and Merton St, Altona Meadows. This will be a really big day as we plan to put in 375 plants - so we'll need all the help we can muster! We will pre-auger holes to help the activity run smoothly.

If we get all the plants in, this will complete the 1000 target for the Melbourne Water grant planting at the site this year. Meet and register at the sign-in table, corner Markham Way and the access gate to the Skeleton Creek shared path (Melway Map: 208, D3).

Please note: we've had to change the usual 1 pm to 3 pm timeframe to **2 pm to 4 pm**. This one hour later start is to allow our Hobson's Bay Ranger, Libby Rigby, to get there from another big National Tree Day event (expect the hard-working Libby to sleep well on the Sunday night!).

### HOBSON'S BAY COMMUNITY FUND PLANTING DAY SUNDAY 9 AUGUST - 1 PM TO 3 PM

Last year we were given a \$1000 grant from the Hobson's Bay Community Fund to do revegetation work along the Creek.

Our Community Fund Planting Day will be from 1 pm to 3 pm on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August, along the Creek, near Selwood Place, between Merton St and Markham Way, Altona Meadows.

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*For the midweek planting on Tuesday 16th June, a healthy number of hands, assisted by Hobson's Bay Senior Ranger Andrew Webster, put in 200 plants near Selwood Place, Altona Meadows - earning an enjoyable light lunch, provided by Denice Perryman.*



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We hope to put in about 333 plants. Colleen Gates, our Wetlands Councillor and Mayor, and Hayden Raysmith, our Community Fund contact, will be invited to attend. Entry will be best through the gate at the end of Merton St, where there is a car park, and also where the sign-in table will be located (Melway Map: 208, E4).

### CARSHALTON COURT PLANTING MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE

The Friends' planting at the Carshalton Court, Hoppers Crossing, site last year saw 30C+ heat and hot blustery winds – a thoroughly unpleasant day (as some volunteers would remember well).

Our Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June planting, however, was mild and calm, which made our activity this time much more comfortable and enjoyable. We had the large numbers we've been enjoying in the past – 22 this time, including our Dera Sacha Sauda community group friends!

Even more wonderful was that a lot were 'boomer-angs' who'd come back to join us; we do seem to be gathering a following, which is most encouraging.

We also had Elana, a Year 12 student, and her dad Ron join us for the first time. She was very keen and even spent time picking up rubbish after the event. Thank you Elana - and we hope you return to join us again!



With help from Sal Hussein, Conservation Team Member, Wyndham City Council, we managed to put in 278 plants, mainly grasses including the beautiful \*silky blue grass, with a few ground cover plants.



This was to help the habitat for \*Cunningham's Skink, which is a small lizard that calls this part of the Creek home.

Thanks to all the help, we finished early and enjoyed a nice afternoon tea. We will have to ask Maddie Veale, Natural Environment Officer, Wyndham City Council, for more plants next time!

*\* Silky Blue Grass (Dicantheum sericeum) is green, blue, grey and purple, and forms an erect tussock. It's drought tolerant, effective as ground cover when planted in groups, and provides seed for small birds.*

*\* Cunningham's Skink (Egernia cunninghami) is a sun-loving, large skink species native to southeastern Australia. It can reach up to 400 mm in length, and may be confused with blue-tongued lizards. The species is named in honour of Alan Cunningham, explorer and botanist.*



*At Carshalton Court, Hoppers Crossing, planting day on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June we had the large numbers we've been enjoying in the past, including our Indian Dera Sacha Sauda community group volunteers.*

### ANDREW ACTIVE COMBATING THE OXALIS

The ever efficient Andrew Webster, Senior Conservation Ranger, Hobson's Bay City Council, has already carried out the spraying of the creeping oxalis weed at Clarendon Court, Seabrook (as mentioned in our June newsletter).

This is 'Step 1' in preparations for next year's planting.

The Markham Way/Merton St, Altona Meadows, site was sprayed at the same time, during which time more mulch was delivered and spread.

Our Creek Water Close/Markham Way, Altona Meadows, planting site had mulch delivered and spread too, which makes this area look quite fantastic. This has been a site that took off from day one and just seems to flourish more as time goes by.

"While out bike riding I've noticed big works around 100 Steps too," commented Denice Perryman. "Hobson's Bay Council seems to be full of action at the moment, which is very commendable!"



## CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOU!

By Denise Perryman,  
Secretary Friends of Skeleton Creek



I subscribe to \*Bush Heritage Australia and its quarterly newsletter 'Bush Tracks'. In the current Winter 2015 edition there is a must-read article titled 'Volunteering – it's good for you too!'

This is a positive story, which provides new research that sheds light on the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering - particularly those who volunteer in the outdoors and doing conservation work.

I directly related to the quote from a volunteer right at the beginning of the article: "The natural environment is where we came from, it's important to our life, it sustains us and there is something about being in it that I find tremendously uplifting."

When I was working I used to say being in the bush gave me a store of serenity to draw on when I needed it.

The 'Bush Tracks' article refers to a recent study by the Beyond Blue organisation and Deakin University.

The study found a clear link between a person's time outdoors and their sense of physical, emotional and mental health.

Other studies have found that over 60% of those who volunteer at least five times a year say it helps them feel less stressed.

It supports research that showed that volunteering is the 2nd greatest source of joy. Interestingly, dancing came in at number 1 ... so perhaps we should celebrate at each planting of a plant and dance around it to cover all bases!

I can certainly concur that conservation volunteering is physical, productive and useful and gives a sense of achievement. It is great for volunteers as well as making a huge difference to where we live. And we do it right here with the Friends of Skeleton Creek!

*\*Bush Heritage Australia is a private conservation organisation that protects millions of hectares of ecologically important land, thanks to the generosity of everyday Australians who support them.*

The link to the volunteering article at the Bush Heritage Australia website is:

<http://www.bushheritage.org.au/news/headlines/news-2015/volunteering-its-good-for-you-too.html>

... One of our FoSC members, Duncan Kennedy, had his own volunteering story to tell when asked to do so by his employer \*Epicor.

In the following column is an edited extract of Duncan's article that will appear in the next issue of the EpicGiving program online newsletter (for Epicor's internal employees worldwide).

By Duncan Kennedy,  
Member Friends of Skeleton Creek

For me the important criteria was that the volunteer organisation was local, giving me the opportunity to contribute directly to the community and in-line with the 'think globally, act locally' philosophy I strongly believe in.

The group is made up mostly of local people, and I quite enjoy working with like-minded local people on a local project that benefits the entire community. Being in the outdoors and in nature is also a positive.

I travel by train to work. I walk to the local train station to and from home along Skeleton Creek, so I feel a strong connection to the Creek environment.

It is very satisfying to see over time a section of the Creek that was once barren to develop into a fully-fledged native ecosystem, supporting local threatened species, such as the Growling Grass Frog, along with a number of other birds, animals, reptiles and insect species.

The benefits from this volunteer activity are very tangible - as seeing a once small plant grow into a large tree over time is very easy to appreciate.

Skeleton Creek flows into the Cheetham Wetlands, considered a wetland of international significance (migratory birds), so improving the quality of the water and water way has a wider impact as well - all from the simple act of planting trees and plants and maintaining them.



Also important to me is that this volunteer activity is very accessible - requiring no special skills or abilities, outside the ability to use a pick, hammer and a bucket of water.

*Duncan Kennedy: 'The benefits from this volunteer activity are very tangible.'*

While not involved in my volunteer day through EpicGiving, on the other volunteer planting days (FoSC plant monthly, normally on a Sunday), I usually involve my two daughters (ages 3 and 7), giving them the opportunity to develop local community service values.

Typically the day involves digging holes, planting local native and indigenous plants and surrounding them with guards and stakes and mulch (this enables these plants to get to a size where they won't get eaten by local animals), and then giving them a quick water.

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We plant in winter so the plants have some chance of surviving on the local rainfall, while in summer they can struggle in often hot drought-like conditions.

This volunteering activity takes about two hours all up and is followed by a hearty afternoon tea. ❖

*\*Epicor Software Corporation is a global business software company, based in Austin, Texas, USA, with a regional office in Melbourne. Through its EpicGiving program, Epicor gives employees one day off with pay per year to support a qualifying organisation of their choice.*

*National Australia Bank has a similar scheme - the NAB Employee Volunteer Program. NAB employees receive a minimum of 16 hours paid volunteer leave each year. FoSC send information about our upcoming working bees to the NAB Employee Volunteering Coordinator, as well our monthly newsletter.*

### **'PLEASE DON'T FEED THE BIRDS!' SKELETON CREEK FOOTBRIDGE**

A prospective new Friends' member has observed in her walks that too many people are feeding the birds at the Skeleton Creek footbridge - between Seabrook and Altona Meadows (opposite Ravenswood Court, Seabrook, and Henry Drive, Altona Meadows).

She suggested there should be a sign up, warning that it was bad for the health of the birds, as well polluting the Creek. Denice recalls there used to be a sign there.

Denice has now advised Andrew Webster at Hobson's Bay City Council, who's now organising a new (and more secure) 'Please don't feed the birds!' sign for the footbridge.

### **INCORPORATION BUSINESS NOW ONLINE**

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), who administers our incorporation, are changing the way it does business.

myCAV is a new account system that lets incorporated associations manage their obligations, such as updating contact details and lodging annual statements, all in one place online. This is a major change from the previously paper-based functions involved in running an incorporated association.

Denice Perryman and Ewen Cowie went to a CAV briefing at the Altona North Library on the 24th June. FoSC has now created a new 'myCAV' online account, with Denice, Ewen and Angela Whiffin in official positions under the required CAV compliance rules.

### **FOSC MAILING LISTS UPDATED**

John Dawes, our Publicity Officer, has gone through and cleaned up and updated all our Gmail contacts and group mailing lists (and will continue to maintain these lists). Hopefully, there's no more duplicate contacts and defunct email addresses, however, notify John if you want to change your email or subscription. *Refer box opposite.*

### **'LIKE' OUR FACEBOOK PAGE?**

The Friends of Skeleton Creek has a Facebook Community Page. If you haven't 'liked' it yet, go to: [www.facebook.com/friendsofskeletoncreek](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofskeletoncreek)

## **FRIENDS OF SKELETON CREEK**

### **2015 CALENDAR**

*\*\* Starting and finishing time of activities are 1 pm to 3 pm, unless otherwise advised.*

(Hobson's Bay City Council activity highlighted in **bold**, Wyndham City Council activity underlined)

**Sun 26 July** - National Tree Day planting between Markham Way / Merton St, Altona Meadows (note later start time: **2 pm - 4 pm**)

**Sun 9 August** - Hobson's Bay Community Fund planting between Markham Way / Merton St, Altona Meadows

Sun 23 August - Planting at Carshalton Crt, Hoppers Crossing

Sun 27 September - Weeding / Maintenance at Catalina Court, Point Cook

**Sun 25 October** - Mulch spreading (if needed), Markham Way / Merton St, Altona Meadows

**Sun 22 November** - Weeding at Clarendon Crt, Seabrook

*Note: sometimes we may need to adjust our plans close to the time of each activity.*

The next FOsc meeting is on Wed 5 Aug, 7:30 pm, at the Old School House, Laverton (corner of Kiora St and Cameron Av).



*The Friends of Skeleton Creek gratefully acknowledge the support of Melbourne Water*

### **Newsletter Publication Details**

- Editorial content provided by Denice Perryman
- Edited and produced by John Dawes, using Serif PagePlus DTP software
- Published as a PDF file and distributed electronically to FoSC newsletter mailing list recipients

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome. Please send to:

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