

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



June 2016 Newsletter

NEXT ACTIVITY:

Planting Day

Sunday 26th June, 1 pm to 3 pm
Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing
[Melway Map 203 B11]

We're calling on all the help we can get as we have 400 plants to go in. Some of us will arrive earlier to spread out the plant tubes in readiness for when the rest of the volunteers arrive. We will not need to use jute mats this time, as we have mats on the bottom half of the slope, towards the creek, already.

Meet at sign-in table, end of Bromage Close and entrance to the creek. As always, a local council ranger will work with us. Bring gloves if you have any. All else provided - including afternoon tea. Hope to see you there :)

PAST ACTIVITIES

Sunday 22nd May planting day between Clarendon Court and Point Cook Rd, Seabrook, we had 20 volunteers - our biggest non National Tree Day number ever! A great turnout - including NSW visitors Wayne and Vicki Dunn who came to lend a hand after meeting Denise, Greg and John Stirk earlier when they were spreading out the plant tubes.

The site was steep and rocky and the auger was hard work on the upper slopes. We put in 350 plants - it felt like every one of that number by end of the day!

Council support on the day was from HBCC's reliable conservation ranger Libby Rigby - this time with a young conservation-smart and eager helper - her daughter Stevie. Local Wetlands Ward Cr Carl Marsich and his son Oliver joined us, too. In all, a 'feel good day' with a very social afternoon tea after the hard yakka.



It was a great turnout for our big planting day between Clarendon Court and Point Cook Rd, Seabrook, on Sunday 22nd May.



Ranger Libby Rigby was Hobsons Bay Council's support on the day with a young conservation-smart and eager helper - her daughter Stevie.

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Past Activities cont. from Page 1

Wednesday 14th June midweek planting activity was again down the creek at the Clarendon Court, Seabrook, site. Ten volunteers, including Todd Ackerman from National Australia Bank volunteers, put in the remaining 150 plants (500 in total) at this site. Council support on the day was from HBCC's super senior conservation ranger Andrew Webster.

Not the usual afternoon tea - but a sumptuous picnic lunch from FoSC Secretary Denice Perryman - tasty hot pumpkin soup, buttered bread rolls, cheese and tomato, watermelon, etc, etc! Thank you Denice and to all our helpers on what was a pleasant, cool but sunny day.

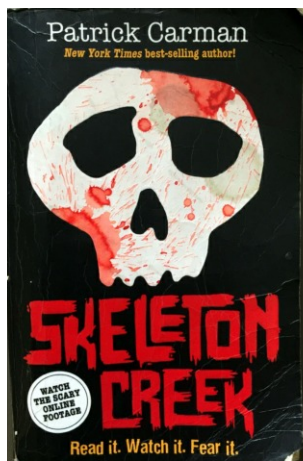
Volunteer Shane Fincke (below) brought his Rainbow Lorikeet along to socialise with the group. He had saved the bird along road in distress. 'Walker' has feather disease and cannot fly, so Shane does his best to feed and care for it.



Our midweek planting activity on Wednesday 14th June was again down the creek near Clarendon Court, where 10 volunteers put in the remaining 150 plants (500 in total) at this site.



Strange things are happening at Skeleton Creek!



... Actually it's the novel and interactive video series for teenagers - set in the fictitious town of Skeleton Creek, Oregon, USA.

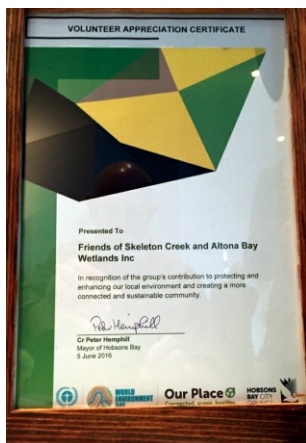
The title of the mystery suspense novel 'Skeleton Creek' caught the eye of Senior Ranger Andrew Webster at a secondhand bookshop. He immersed himself in the storyline and has since donated the book to us.



Shane Fincke looked interested in reading the mystery suspense book 'Skeleton Creek', donated by Andrew Webster to our group. In the background is FoSC Secretary Denice Perryman busily preparing not the usual afternoon tea - but a sumptuous picnic lunch for the volunteers.

The book is now doing the rounds in the group.

Note we need to remind ourselves that the book's purely fiction! Our Skeleton Creek, officially called 'Skeleton Waterholes Creek', is so called by the first Europeans because flows were seasonal and when dry resembled the outline of a skeleton.



To celebrate World Environment Day on Sunday 5th June, Hobsons Bay City Council hosted an afternoon tea (held at Williamstown Football Club's Seaview function centre) for more than 80 of Hobsons Bay's most active and passionate environment and conservation volunteers.

The Friends of Skeleton Creek (represented by Denice, Angela, John D, Kristine and Diana) were one of 25 volunteer groups represented and recognised for our contribution to the local environment and making our local community a better place to live.

FoSC President Angela Whiffin made an inspirational short speech about our group's activities, followed by council representatives Cr Mayor Peter Hemphill and Cr Angela Altair presenting the volunteer appreciation certificate (*shown above*) to Angela and a small native plant to each one of our group.

Thank you to Hobsons Bay City Council and Cr Mayor Peter Hemphill and Cr Angela Altair for recognising the local environment and conservation volunteer effort.

World Environment Day in Hobsons Bay

Laura Nix, Hobsons Bay Council Assistant Environmental Engagement Officer, ran a World Environment Day activity for Hobsons Bay staff on Wednesday 1st June. Denice Perryman attended and had a stall to promote our group. Williamstown Wetlands, Newport Organic Collective, and Transition Hobsons Bay were all represented.

Erin Rhoades spoke about her plastic free life and promoted Plastic Free July. Doris Pozzi spoke on DIY Green Cleaning and gave out a sheet of recipes for cleaning products. The dishwasher tablets that cost 10% of commercial ones will be trialled by Denice.

Greg's going Batty!

We wouldn't normally advertise such things, but this one is good news. The Lions Club of Altona has agreed to fund FoSC member Greg Orr's microbat boxes.

Many thanks to FoSC's Catherine Curtain, also an Altona Lion's Club member, for raising the funding possibility and helping it along.

The presentation is on Wednesday 22nd June at the Altona RSL, in conjunction with the Altona Lions Club president's hand-over dinner. Greg will attend the dinner to accept the presentation, as Denice will be away and it's Greg's baby anyway.

We will then get HBCC to OK the trees we choose to put up the bat boxes, opposite the creek in Altona Meadows.

Networking across the North-Western Shoreline of Port Phillip Bay

The 'North-Western Shorelines' group meeting on Monday 23rd May was organised by Scab Duty and Friends of Williamstown Wetlands.



The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum to discuss current activities and as a networking opportunity for all interested environmental groups along the Bay from the mouth of the Yarra River to Geelong.

The group is supported by Port Phillip Eco Centre, Hobsons Bay City Council, and the Wader Beach Litter Hotspots project. The Wader Beach project is funded by the Victorian Government through the Litter Hotspot Program.

The meeting was a continuation of the Western Shorelines meetings held in 2014 and 2015. The name has been changed to North Western Shorelines to align with the Baykeeper Education Program.

Attendees were:

Nicko Lunardi (Scab Duty, Chair);
Neil Blake (Baykeeper);
Ross Headifen, Ramona Headifen (3207 Beach Patrol);
Rob Bradley (3030 Beach Patrol);
Matt McArthur, Melinda Corry (3018 Beach Patrol);
Andrew Christie, Caroline Esbenshade (Point Cook Marine Care);
David Speller, Hugh Kirkman (Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care Group);
Nelli Huie, Sarah Hayward, Kelly (Great Australian Bight Alliance);
Maria McGaun (Friends of Greenwich Bay);
Susie Inglis, (NatureWest);
Kathy Faulkner, Helen Walsh (Plastic Bag Free Inner West);
Gerard Morel (Melbourne Water);
Shaun Young (Hobsons Bay City Council); and
Ian Rae, Marilyn Olliff, Nick Olliff (Friends of Williamstown Wetlands).

Unfortunately, the Friends of Skeleton Creek could not find anyone available to go on the evening. If interested in getting involved with the North-Western Shorelines group, email waderbeach@gmail.com

* Who's Scab Duty? The group's idea is for everyone to start taking responsibility for the plastic trash you see on the street. Webpage: www.ScabDuty.com

Looking into the Future

Hobsons Bay Council's Sustainable Environment Advisory Group

By Denise Perryman

Hobsons Bay Council's Sustainable Environment Advisory Group (SEAG) role is to provide advice to the council on long-term strategic environmental sustainability issues affecting Hobsons Bay and raise community awareness and involvement. SEAG was established in 2006. Cr Angela Altair is the SEAG chairperson.

FoSC member Catherine Curtain is on the SEAG committee. She spoke at our June FoSC meeting about the work of the committee. One of the main initiatives is the 'Say NO to Plastic Bags' campaign.



**SAY NO TO
PLASTIC BAGS**

This is difficult as council has no power to pass bylaws in this area. In country towns it has

been a voluntary process involving education.

Catherine cited the work of microbiologist and environmental scientist Associate Professor Mark Osborn, RMIT University (he lives in Altona). Plastic poses both physical and chemical threats to aquatic life. It leads to damage or death of animals following plastic entanglement or ingestion and/or can lead to accumulation of pollutants absorbed on plastic surfaces. Once ingested, co-pollutants can be absorbed into tissues and accumulated in the food chain - and ends with us!

Integrated Transport Plan

Part of the integrated transport plan being developed is a pedestrian/cyclist bridge at the boundary of Hobsons Bay/Wyndham for crossing of Skeleton Creek, which will connect with the Federation bike trail; going over the freeway is not considered favourably as future widening could be a problem.

Summary of Efforts

A summary of council's environmental sustainability efforts so far include:

- decreasing greenhouse gas emissions;
- running 42 environment school events;
- 163 sustainability events;
- the use of 29.4 Ml of stormwater for watering;
- Sustainability Victoria's 'Detox your Home' plan;
- 108 people recycled home chemicals; and
- My Smart Garden's 22 events.

Thanks Catherine (I hope I didn't miss too much).

[On Wednesday 25 May, five FoSC members attended the Council's Biodiversity Strategy forum at the Williamstown Town Hall. Given that open space makes up 21% of the land area of Hobsons Bay, the Council is committed to working for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and our local ecosystems.]

Bayside College's Final Activity

FoSC's final community partnership activity with Bayside College on Tuesday 24th May was a planting day along Markham Way, Altona Meadows, when 14 students put in 200 plants. Well done all round to the students and our volunteers!

Grant Money in for Signs

The grant money from Hobsons Bay City Council has been received for the educational/interpretative signs design. Denise deposited the cheque for \$2000 into our FoSC bank account.

If it can be "Denise Perryman's Seat" along the shared path in Altona Meadows, it can be "John Dawes' Interpretative Signage" - as it was his suggestion and push for it.

Bob Winters, our sign contents provider/designer, thinks he can work within the council's standardised design brief, so it remains for Denise to discuss further with Fran Collings, Graphic Designer/Brand Manager for Hobsons Bay City Council.

Once we have sorted out a few issues we will get a signage design subcommittee under way. On the subcommittee are Denise, Greg, John D, Angela, and, of course, Bob Winters.

Next Steps in NatureWest Survey



At our March meeting, Denise Perryman had given her best shot in compiling information for the NatureWest survey presented by Susie Inglis, Landcare Facilitator for NatureWest.

Susie came to our meeting to present a group consultation model she is developing to survey conservation groups with the aim to aid further development for the next five years. FoSC is an affiliate group member of NatureWest.

We collected all the relevant information for Susie's return visit at our June meeting. Our next step is to come up with a strategic plan for the next five years. Where do we want to be? How do we get there? How will we know when we arrive? In the past we have just done plantings, but not had a long-term plan.

To this end, we have set up a subcommittee of Denise, Angela, John D and Kristine, with Susie to guide us. The first meeting will be on Wednesday 24th August. In the meantime, Susie has emailed Denise the required NatureWest format to fill in our current information - then for Denise to send to our members to check and, if necessary, to add any further relevant information.

* NatureWest, based at the Old Homestead at Werribee Park, is a not for profit organisation supporting Friends, Landcare groups, schools and other community groups in Melbourne's West. Link: <http://naturewest.org.au/>

Allaying a Resident's Fears

By Denise Perryman

An Altona Meadows resident who lives opposite the creek between Markham Way and Merton St commented via our Facebook page that we should cease planting there due to snake problems and concern about personal safety having seen people lurking in the bushes.

She was also concerned about the phragmites reed overgrowth along the creek.

We probably have finished planting at this site, but thought we would try to allay her fears to the extent we can. She had noted more snake activity since our plantings, but HBCC's Andrew Webster was able to say this

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has been a general phenomenon across Hobsons Bay. Greg Orr suggested vermin control and removing uneaten pet food. Bird aviaries with seed attract mice – and attract snakes.

Snakes will generally move away from people if not cornered or attacked. Frogs are 'tiger snake food' and snakes occur naturally along waterways where frogs live.

I contacted Altona North Police and see if there have been any attacks in the area, and perhaps bring some perspective to the fears. A police officer assured me that there had been no crime along the creek there for over the four years he had been in the area.

Phragmites are a natural filtering agent, but are growing excessively due to nutrients and dog droppings flowing from development upstream. At one stage we contacted Melbourne Water but they would do nothing as they said phragmites are a good filtering agent for pollution.

I replied to the concerned local via our Facebook page to allay her concerns, which she was grateful for.

FoSC Conservation Bike Ride - Sunday 17th July

Organised by Denice Perryman, we plan to ride from Merton St, Altona Meadows, to the RAAF Lookout, Point Cook. BYO lunch. Look for details on our Facebook page.

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: friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com

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FRIENDS OF SKELETON CREEK

2016 CALENDAR

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

Sun 26 Jun - Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

Sun 24 Jul - National Tree Day (alternative day), Creek Water Close, Altona Meadows

Sun 14 Aug - Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

Sun 25 Sep - Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

Sun 23 Oct - Merton St/Markham Way, Altona Meadows

Sun 27 Nov - Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

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

Friends of Skeleton Creek meetings are held the first Wednesday in the month, starting at 7:30 pm, Old Laverton School, Altona Meadows (corner Kiora St and Cameron Ave). All are welcome! The next FoSC meeting is on Wednesday 6th July.

Membership 2015/2016

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.

Your volunteering at our activities is highly valued, even if you can only find time to contribute a few hours during the year. Membership is not compulsory, but it can help you feel more connected with our group.

Cost: Individual FoSC Membership/Mailing List - \$10.00; Family FoSC Membership/Mailing List - \$15.00

Membership is effective from the AGM date of 4th November 2015 through to the next AGM and renewal date of 2nd November 2016. Payment details are on the FoSC Membership Form. You can request the membership form any time by emailing:

friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com



The Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc. gratefully acknowledge the support of Melbourne Water

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