

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



March 2016 Newsletter

NEXT ACTIVITY:

MULCHING DAY, SUNDAY 3RD APRIL

**1 pm - 3 pm, Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing
[Melway Map 203 B11]**

Our March activity had to be moved to Sunday 3rd April, due to Easter intervening.

Please bring gloves and a rake with you, if you can. Meet at sign-in table, where Bromage Close meets the Creek.

As always, a local council ranger will work with us. Afternoon tea provided. Get your mulch muscles warmed up for the day! Hope to see you there :)

Further information from FoSC Secretary, Denise Perryman, 0429 167 013.

Bromage Close Site Preparations

Denise contacted specialist weed control contractor Rosie Haas to ensure that the second spraying of the site is done before our mulching day on 3rd April.

Wyndham Council will supply the mulch for us.

This is fantastic, as it saves us \$550 that can go into buying plants. Wyndham Council have been unbelievably helpful.

Once the last spraying is completed we will get in the rocks for the site.

Sheoak and Spiny Rush Removal

Darren Wright, Wyndham Council Conservation Officer, contacted us about the agreement reached with Wyndham Council and Melbourne Water on the identification and removal of many hundred non-indigenous sheoaks and all the spiny rush near the Creek.

The area in question is from Sayers Rd, Hoppers Crossing, south to the Boardwalk, Point Cook.

The she-oaks will be replaced by river red gums. The other non-indigenous sheoaks will be left as roosting trees for the nankeen night herons. It has been really

pleasing and courteous of key stakeholders to inform us early in the process.

Nankeen night herons grow to around 60 cm in height and are fawn and white. They are a night time hunter that quietly moves in shallow water on the lookout for insects, crustaceans, fish and frogs. Nankeen night herons breed in colonies alongside egrets and cormorants in trees above water.



Many Helping Hands at Merton St/Markham Way

**Sunday
28th Feb**

Mulch spreading is the 'flavour of the month' this time of year. We had 33 helping hands turn up on a warm Sunday afternoon.

One group removed stakes and guards from plants, which no longer needed them, at the Merton St /Markham Way, Altona Meadows, site (these will be used for our next planting).

Another group spread mulch at this site. A third group spread mulch at our National Tree Day site, Creek Water Close,



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around the corner. The day was a family-friendly day with a flurry of activity. It is really heartening to see a group of this size.

A great turnout for our mulching activity along the Creek in Altona Meadows. Though some didn't stay around long for their well-earned afternoon tea, and to get in our end-of-day group photo.

Friends at 'Suburbs to Sea Movie and Muffin Night'

Over 60 people gathered at Point Cook Community Centre on Friday 4th March for a special 'Suburbs to Sea Movie and Muffin Night' to learn about litter and its impact on the environment as part of Wyndham City's Green Living Series.

The event was organised by Bruce Boddington from Point Cook Open Spaces in collaboration with Wyndham City Council and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)'s Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI).

The Australian Government's National Landcare Program, Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence Fees and Wyndham City Council jointly funded the evening.

The Friends of Skeleton Creek were represented by Denice Perryman, John Dawes and Kristine Konings. We had prime space near the entry door and had an encouraging 11 people sign up for our newsletter.

We watched some short films and presentations on the issues with suburban litter entering local waterways, wetlands and beaches - a real eye-opener! One of the biggest killers of bird and marine life is plastic, in all shapes and forms. Among the speakers were Neil Blake, Port Phillip Baykeeper, and John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper.

Well done to the organisers for an informative evening, especially Bruce Boddington (the caterers and their freshly baked muffins were exceptional, too).



At the 'Suburbs to Sea Movie and Muffin Night' were (from left): Denice Perryman, Kristine Konings, and John Forrester.



Creek Educational/Interpretive Signage Council Onboard

Things have been moving fast for the much needed Educational/Interpretive Signage in the Hobsons Bay Council side of Skeleton Creek.

This is due to the help of Andrew Webster, Hobsons Bay Senior Conservation Ranger, and Bob Winters, a friend of our group with years of public education experience. A submission from Bob was sent to the relevant officer at Hobsons Bay City Council to gauge whether we will be eligible for a council grant for this project.

The answer has come back in the positive. Andrew has since been out to look at the signage on the Creek's Sanctuary Lakes (and Wyndham Council's) side. While he liked the content, he thought the signage board's structure will not be robust enough (read vandal proof) for our needs.

Our group approved Andrew's alternative sturdy metal structure that is proposed to be embedded in the ground with six bags of concrete. In the meantime, Bob Winters is happy to go ahead with the new structural design.



FoSC QR Barcode

By John Dawes

Andrew Webster asked us if we wanted the proposed new signage to display a QR Code (Quick Response Code) to link to our Facebook Community Page.

A QR barcode is a nifty way for people using a smartphone to scan the code and go directly to a website such as a Facebook Page (obviating the need to type the URL Internet address into a web browser).

I have since generated a QR barcode with the URL of our FoSC Facebook page. A smartphone user has to have a QR barcode scanner app on their smartphone (downloadable from the smartphone's app store).

If you have QR scanner app on your smartphone, why not test our new QR barcode above - and 'like' our Facebook page if you haven't already?

A Community Partner - Bayside College



Not to be outdone by Seabrook Primary School, we now have Bayside College (Kororoit Creek Rd, Williamstown) ask if we will be a community partner for a group of their Year 9 students.

As discussed at our last meeting, we thought over a period of weeks we could do a bike ride to conservation sites in the Hobsons Bay Council municipality, and possibly Wyndham Council municipality if the legs hold out.

Denice could check out some conservation sites if Andrew Webster could provide her the information.

We could also do a mulching, weeding and rubbish collection day, with perhaps some bird watching. The final day could be a planting activity.

Denice will check the days available with her Bayside College contact.

Angela's Arbour

Angela Whiffin, President of Skeleton Creek, has had her eagle eye on a drain site near Wallace Ave in Point Cook, near Williams Landing Train Station.

It has interesting rocks and valuable remnant vegetation.

Currently rubbish is being dumped there and some rocks moved about. Station commuters are randomly parking there (probably illegally). Angela will speak to Craig Dodson or Darren Wright at Wyndham Council to see what can be done to protect this site.

National Tree Day

Angela and Denice have worked out that we should have in hand 300 plants for National Tree Day. Note this will not be on the official day (Sunday, July 31st) but a week earlier on Sunday 24th July for our activity at Creek Water Close, Altona Meadows.

Boneseed - a Bone of Contention

On our first FoSC bike ride in January we found the invasive boneseed plant near 100 Steps, Altona Meadows. Ranger Andrew Webster was going to take care of the plant on HBCC-controlled land. That was where the straightforward bit ended!

Looking at aerial maps, Bernie McCarrick of Parks Victoria was sure the rest was on DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) land. Denice contacted DELWP ranger Peter Kennedy who thought otherwise.

He and Bernie were having interesting discussions the last Denice heard, with Bernie very sure it was DELWP land. We await an outcome of the boneseed eradication in this "no man's land", which remains a bone of contention.

Boneseed is a South African plant, first introduced to Australia as an ornamental in the 1850s. Boneseed impacts adversely on native vegetation. It's prevalent in the You Yangs, where it was introduced to control soil erosion. Parks Victoria has a program for eradicating it.

Focusing with NatureWest

Group Consultation Survey



Susie Inglis - a former Hobsons Bay Council Ranger, now Land-care Facilitator with NatureWest, came to our March meeting to present a group consultation survey, to help conservation groups like ours focus on what we specifically want to achieve in our local conservation space in the next five years.

We thought Susie's strategic plan model had much merit for our group, including assisting us in applying for grants; some of which may be under the NatureWest associate membership umbrella with other conservation groups.

So in partnership with NatureWest, we agreed to be further involved in the group consultation survey process. We have since paid a small yearly membership fee and re-joined NatureWest as an associate member.

Susie left us with a survey form to complete about our group, and she will return to our June meeting to further the process. In the meantime, we will prefill the form as much as possible.

NatureWest (formally 'Western Melbourne Catchments Network') is a not-for-profit association for individuals, groups and organisations that share an environmental vision for the wider Werribee catchment. NatureWest recently moved into new headquarters at the old home-stead at Werribee Park. <http://naturewest.org.au/>

Friends of Skeleton Creek

Internet Domain Name Registered

By John Dawes

With the assistance of Colleen Miller, Co-ordinator NatureWest, I have registered a domain name for us - friendsofskeletoncreek.org.au, which is DNS (Domain Name System) hosted at the NatureWest website.

If anyone were to type 'friendsofskeletoncreek.org.au' into an Internet browser, it would take them directly to our page at the NatureWest website.

The site also has a Google Calendar of our year's activities (which is generated from our FoSC Gmail account).

Our Facebook page and NatureWest page are now linked to each other from either site.

We expect more traffic and promotion of our activities from our new domain name, as well as for NatureWest.

Thanks Colleen for pointing me in the right direction!

In with Bushcare's Major Day Out

We have again registered for Bushcare's Major Day Out. This year it will be officially on Sunday 11th September. Our closest date is Sunday 25th September, for maintenance at Bromage Court, Hoppers Crossing, so we will badge this date as our Bushcare activity on their website.

We have asked John Hogg (the ex-mayor of Hobsons Bay City Council, and father of FoSC committee member Diana Hogg) to do a talk on the successes and challenges to conservation in our area as he sees them.

Bushcare's Facebook page is at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BushcaresMajorDayOut/>

Friends Conservation Bike Ride 2

By Denice Perryman

The first conservation bike ride by our group in January - thanks to organiser/lead Kristine Konings - was so popular we decided to have another one!

On Sunday 13th March, Kristine, John D, Anthony Gomez (all the above are members of BayWest Bicycle Users Group), John Stirk and Denice set off from where Merton St meets the Creek in Altona Meadows and we rode to Williamstown.

Angela joined us for a pleasant longish lunch in the courtyard of Cafe Cirino in Nelson Place.

The return trip involved a diversion along the boardwalk at the Jawbone Arboretum and the nearby Jawbone Wetlands (developed and maintained by the Friends of Williamstown Wetlands), where the knowledgeable Angela told us about the vegetation, bird life and history.



At the boardwalk, Jawbone Arboretum, Williamstown, were (from left): Anthony Gomez, Kristine Konings, John Dawes, Angela Whiffin, and Denice Perryman.



Bird watching at the Jawbone Wetlands, Williamstown.

We then stopped at the Paisley Challis bird hide, where the Kororoit Creek flows into Port Phillip Bay. The newish interpretative sign helps to identify the type of birds that can be spotted out on the mudflats.

This is another wonderful Friends of Williamstown Wetlands project in conjunction with the Hobsons Bay City Council.



Bird watching, with the help of the interpretative sign, at the Paisley Challis bird hide (John Stirk on right).



At the DK Grant Reserve, Altona, and the interpretative sign of the many migratory shorebirds, overlooking the lagoons and the Cheetham Wetlands.

Another stop home was at the DK Grant Reserve, Altona, overlooking the lagoons and the RAMSAR-protected Cheetham Wetlands. Here we spotted many migratory Red-necked Stints, unique little creatures, measuring 15 cm long, that fly to Siberia some 10,000 km for the breeding season.

Thanks again to the fantastic organisation Kristine!

(Keep an eye out for our next conservation ride, which could be westwards; to be advised.)

Wyndham Council Waste & Litter Strategy

Denice filled out a very long Wyndham Council Waste & Litter Strategy survey to pass on our group's views. There was no spot for comments on the damming of our Creek by the Hallmark developer - so, not to be thwarted, she put this in an email in her reply to Trevor Prowd, Wyndham Council's Natural Environment Officer.

FoSC Postal Address Change

We received Australia Post renewal notification of \$126 for our Laverton PO Box. As most of our correspondence comes by email these days, we decided at our last meeting not to renew our PO Box.

John Dawes has since notified our new postal address to key contacts. Our new postal address is our secretary's: 12 Hopetoun Court, Altona Meadows, 3028.

Meeting Numbers

By Denice Perryman

Our last monthly meeting (always the first Wednesday in the month at the Old Laverton School, Altona Meadows) was a busy and longish meeting, which must mean we're involved in a lot of issues! The 11 people attending the meeting was almost overwhelming (in a positive way, of course) to the old hands used to just three or four faces. Thank you to the new attendees, including Catherine Curtain who took out a family FoSC membership on the night. We look forward to seeing you next time :)

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 is:

- 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

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 April.



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

FRIENDS OF SKELETON CREEK

2016 CALENDAR

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

Sun 3 Apr - Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

Sun 17 Apr - Clarendon Court, Seabrook

Sun 22 May - Clarendon Court, Seabrook

Tue 14 June - Midweek planting, 10 am to 12 pm, Clarendon Court, Seabrook

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.

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

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