

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



May 2016 Newsletter

NEXT ACTIVITY:

Planting Day

Sunday 22nd May, 1 pm to 3 pm

Clarendon Court, Seabrook

[Melway Map 208 B1]

This month's activity will be a planting day along the creek between Clarendon Court and Point Cook Road, Seabrook. We have 350 plants to go in on a bit of a steep site.

Meet at sign-in table, end of Clarendon Court and entrance to the creek's shared path. As always, a local council ranger will work with us. Bring gloves if you have some. All else provided - including afternoon tea. Hope to see you there. Further information from FoSC Secretary, Denice Perryman, 0429 167 013.

Midweek Planting

We also have an upcoming midweek planting day at the same Clarendon Court site on Tuesday 14th June, from 10 am to 12 pm. All up we have allocated 500 plants to go in at this site, so another 150 plantings for 14th June.

Andrew Webster, our Hobsons Bay Council's Senior Conservation Ranger, says if required an auger to dig out holes will be made available on both days.

PAST ACTIVITIES

Spreading a Small Mountain

Markham Way/Merton St, Altona Meadows Working Bee, Sunday 17 April

We had 16 people turn up on a perfect weather day when we spread the small mountain of mulch opposite the shared path along Markham Way.

We also watered the plants put in last year, opposite the creek, from Markham Way towards the Merton St end. We had a 'bucket brigade' working along the shared path with volunteers taking turns to fill buckets from Council Ranger Libby's new water tank trailer.



The volunteers removed what was before a small mountain of mulch, opposite the shared path along Markham Way.



We had a 'bucket brigade' working along the Markham Way/Merton St shared path.

Denice took up FoSC member Catherine Curtain's suggestion having a safety and hazards warning poster prominent next to the sign-in table. Attention was drawn to it as FoSC

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volunteers signed in. It will change for each activity, with whiteboard marker ticks on relevant risks. Thanks for the suggestion, Catherine.

Seabrook Primary School

A Field Day by the Creek

Our group hosted another field day for Seabrook Primary School children down by the creek, adjacent to Carinza Ave, Altona Meadows (just off Point Cook Rd) on Wednesday 20th April.

Organised by FoSC President Angela Whiffin, some 150 students were put in three groups:

‘A’ Group – mini-bug invertebrate investigations, staffed by FoSC member John Hogg, and HBCC Senior Conservation Ranger Andrew Webster;

‘B’ Group - a ‘walk and talk’ with Angela, focusing on water quality, litter issues and the natural habitat; and

‘C’ Group - planting instruction of 150 hardy ground covers and shrubs by FoSC member Greg Orr and Secretary Denice Perryman.

We noted the high engagement in the day’s activity by the teachers, parents and students.

Andrew’s Webster’s new boss Michael Hobbs had come especially to see us in action. Denice impressed upon Michael how our Friends group appreciate the support from Council and the enjoyment we get from working with Andrew and fellow ranger Libby Rigby.

Bayside College Students

Conservation Bike Ride

By Denice Perryman

A bike ride along conservation points of interest was the first of our student activities with our community partner Bayside College held on Tuesday 3rd May.

We headed off from Bayside College, Kororoit Creek Rd, Williamstown, at 9 am. The students were good and we made it all the way to the ‘Denice Perryman Seat’, opposite the creek in Altona Meadows - despite the ferocious winds ... and it didn’t rain until we arrived back at school!

Our next activity is on Tuesday 17th May, 9 am to 1:30 pm, which will be weeding, rubbish collection, watering, and a bird walk is the plan. We will meet at Markham Way, Altona Meadows.

Tuesday 24th May, 11 am to 3 pm, will be a planting activity at the Markham Way site.

Upcoming Hobsons Bay Events

Biodiversity Strategy

On Wednesday 25th May, 6:15 pm to 7 pm, at Williamstown Town Hall, Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes all members of the community to join them in the



Some of the 16 volunteers who turned up on a perfect weather day, enjoying a well-earned afternoon tea provided (as always) by Denice Perryman (far left).



Photographed near the ‘Denice Perryman Seat’ were local Wetlands Ward councillors Colleen Gates and Carl Marsich who came to lend a hand.

Council’s Biodiversity Strategy information forum.

Hobsons Bay Council has recently completed an independent review on the state of biodiversity within the municipality. These findings will shape how we manage and protect our natural environment over the next five years and inform the development of Council’s Biodiversity Strategy.

Denice, Diana, John and Kristine have registered to attend. If anyone else is interested, please register via the Hobsons Bay website homepage:

<http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Arts-Leisure/Festivals-Events/Upcoming-events/Our-natural-environment>

World Environment Day

Invitations have come to us for HBCC’s World Environment Day events.

World Environment Day is celebrated every year on 5 June to raise global awareness to take positive environmental action to protect nature and the planet Earth. It is run by

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the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

HBCC has a World Environment Day activity for Hobsons Bay staff on Wednesday 1st June. Denice has been invited, will attend and run an information table for our FoSC group.

Another invitation has come from Jen McQueeney, Hobsons Bay Council Environmental Engagement Officer, to celebrate World Environment Day with an afternoon tea, on Sunday 5th June, from 3 pm to 5 pm, Seaview Function Centre in Williamstown. Five FoSC members have accepted the invitation to attend.



Wyndham Council's Volunteers Morning Tea

By Denice Perryman

Angela and I represented our group at the Wyndham City Council Volunteers Morning Tea for National Volunteer Week at the Civic Centre, Werribee, on Tuesday 10th May.

We were addressed by Wyndham Mayor Cr Adele Hegedich, a community volunteer herself. John Forrester from the Werribee River Association spoke of their vision for the future and said they're always looking for new volunteer faces.

Last speaker was Sinead Mildenhall, Vice President of West Welcome Wagon (WWW), who gave a moving speech about the way their WWW Facebook page driven group distributes aid to asylum seeker families settling in Melbourne's West.

They provide good quality donated items, particularly whitegoods, in home English language support, food aid, community connectedness, to scarves knitted in the colours of the asylum seekers choice. WWW hope to get a warehouse soon, so donated goods no longer need to be stored at volunteers' homes.

If this is what Sinead is organising at age 23, her future looks very bright! Further info about WWW:

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

'Give Happy, Live Happy' seemed a very appropriate Wyndham City Council volunteer's motto. The morning tea was pretty yummy, too – think white chocolate rocky road with pistachios.

There was healthy food there, too ☺

NatureWest Survey Coming Along



Denice has given her best shot in compiling information for the new NatureWest survey presented by Susie Inglis, Facilitator NatureWest, at our March meeting.

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.

We wished to be further involved in the process, and it was moved that we become affiliate members of NatureWest.

Denice has now prefilled the survey form in as much as possible for Susie's visit to our next meeting on Wednesday 1st June. Some of the data Denice has come up with, in collaboration with the FoSC committee, include:

- What are the group's aims and current highest priorities?
 - We revegetate, conserve, protect and enhance Skeleton Creek and its catchment. We educate the community and school groups about our creek and the need to protect it.
- Total area of Skeleton Creek managed by the group?
 - 15,375 m² (approx. 1.5 hectare) (admittedly, Denice says this is a 'guesstimate').
- How many plants were planted by our group last year?
 - Our past Minutes show 2060 plants went in last year.

Denice has also listed quite a number of activities/events or training attended by the group in the past 12 months. This has lifted our profile in the community – along with the further promotion of our activities through this monthly newsletter, our Facebook Page and new webpage, located on the NatureWest website. Links:

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

<http://naturewest.org.au/municipalities/353-hobsons-bay/hobsons-bay-groups/419-friends-of-skeleton-creek-4>

* 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/>

Firewood along the Creek

FoSC member Wrenford Brown noticed a person cutting up firewood along the creek in Tarneit. The fellow desisted when Wren asked him to and said he didn't know it wasn't allowed.

In a case of quick and efficient action by Wyndham City Council, Peter Gibbs spoke to Craig Dodson, Area Leader Conservation, who had signs up very promptly.

It seems more signage and information is required by Council to make it clearer to the public that this is not permitted.

Boneseed Removal Advice

Peter Kennedy from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) phoned Denice to say staff at DELWP are applying for a grant to remove the boneseed at a site near the Cheetham Wetlands. Thank you Peter Kennedy for keeping our group informed.

Design Grant Approved

Skeleton Creek Educational/Interpretative Signage

By Denise Perryman

I have been notified by HBCC that our submission for our educational/interpretative signage design grant has been approved. This is great news!

We will now set up a subcommittee to work with Bob Winters, who will be project manager.

He is our local flora and fauna expert, and was part of the team that developed the successful interpretive signs at Sanctuary Lakes.

Bob provided the nature values and messages and provided most of the photos and identified the locations of the nature-based signs.

We will be pay Bob the \$2000 grant for this; though Bob will be providing around \$4000 of 'in kind service', which we are most grateful for.

Next Steps

Next steps is for the funding of the signage construction costs.

This is where our local Wetlands Ward councillors have stepped in to help, having spoken to Cr Colleen Gates at our last activity on Sunday 17th April.

Colleen was able to tell me that there is \$20,000 set aside in the next HBCC budget, part of which can be used for our Skeleton Creek signage construction. The money should be available in September for this purpose.

Background

Sanctuary Lakes community has placed around 20 graphic panels along its section of Skeleton Creek and around the lake. Bob Winters has observed that these panels are very well used with people stopping for over a minute to read them.

This includes walkers, bike riders dismounting and family groups with adults discussing the panels with their children.

Interpretive signs attract, involve and educate people about the natural flora and fauna, biodiversity, cultural and historic features of a natural area.

Last year John Dawes had brought it to our attention that there is a dearth of educational /interpretive signs along the shared path on the Hobsons Bay Council's side of Skeleton Creek compared to Wyndham Council's side

That's when we started the ball rolling, discussing the request first with Andrew Webster, other HBCC council staff, Bob Winters, and lately Cr Colleen Gates, through to submission of the design grant, now approved.

Greg's Looking into Bat Boxes

ForSC Member Greg Orr has been collecting information on getting two suitable bat boxes for each end of Markham Way / Merton St, Altona Meadows.



Bat boxes are artificial roosts designed to encourage bats into areas where there are few roosting sites.

He has found two suitable constructions - \$55 for the basic version and \$70 for the deluxe.

Gerard Morel from Melbourne Water is investigating whether we will be able to add this to our grant application for 2017.

Two other funding possibilities are Hobsons Bay Council's Community Fund and the Altona Lions Club.

John Hogg has been working with the Altona Lions Club on possible funding. Catherine Curtain, an Altona Lions Club member, has also offered her support.

(Lions Clubs around Australia will be donating more than \$100,000 to over 100 local projects as part of its 'Community 100' program.)



Shown here is one of the 20 interpretive graphic panels along Wyndham Council's section of Skeleton Creek and lake, developed by Bob Winters.



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

Slow Plant Progress

Peter Gibbs, Environment Officer Wyndham Council, met with Gerard Morel, Melbourne Water's River Health Officer, and Chris Bell, a landscape architect, at the creek in Point Cook (near where Hallmarc Developments dammed our creek unannounced last August) to look at the natural regeneration and weed invasion there.

Plants have been ordered but are slow to arrive. So only when they do will the revegetation work get underway.

Currently, spiny rushes are being removed and couch weed sprayed a number of times.

They also talked about improving the approvals and works process in the future.

Melbourne Water and City West Water will need to approve the works on waterways and better communicate with stakeholders including our Friends group and the local community.

Welcome Back Vincent!

It was great to have Vincent Chea re-join us after an absence, part of which was spent in Arnhem Land.

We look forward to seeing your cheery face in the future!

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- Edited and produced by John Dawes, using Serif PagePlus DTP software
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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

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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 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.

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 1st June.

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

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