

# Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



President	Secretary	Treasurer	
Angela Whiffin	Denice Perryman	Ewen Cowie	PO Box 452 Laverton Vic 3028
<a href="mailto:angelawhiff@hotmail.com">angelawhiff@hotmail.com</a>	<a href="mailto:deniceperryman1@gmail.com">deniceperryman1@gmail.com</a>	<a href="mailto:friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com">friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com</a>	Incorporation No. A0029721P
Tel 93692892	Tel 93158072	Tel 93158603	

## April 2015 Newsletter

### MULCH SPREADING AT ALTONA MEADOWS, SUNDAY 19TH APRIL, 1 PM – 3 PM

This working bee activity will be along Skeleton Creek, between Creek Water Close and towards end of Merton St, Altona Meadows. This will be in preparation for our planting on Sunday 24th May. Ranger Libby from Hobson's Bay City Council has been spending lots of time dumping smaller amounts of mulch along the site to make our job easier on the day. If time permits, we will also remove any rubbish, as well as stakes and guards that are no longer required.

Meet and register at 1pm, intersection of Creek Water Close (formerly Markham Close) and Markham Way, Altona Meadows (Melway Ref: 208, D3).

### PLANTING AT CATALINA COURT

*Report by Elizabeth Simpson*

We had quite a good turnout for the planting along the Creek, at the bottom of Catalina Court, Point



*The volunteers enjoyed a well-deserved afternoon tea after putting in 500 plants along the Creek, at the bottom of Catalina Court, Point Cook*

Cook, on Sunday 22nd March. Narpinder's group, the Dera Sacha Sauda, was not available to help this time as Hobson's Bay City Council had pre-booked the group for other volunteering activities. But there were enough keen volunteers to get the job done - and surprisingly quickly. It was a pretty hot day so it was quite uncomfortable out there in the full sun

(this might have encouraged the speed of the planting ☺).

We put in 500 plants - mainly Poa and other grasses, Lomandra, Dianella and Acaena species. Wyndham City Council helped a lot with a large watering wagon and powered auger.

The soil is very rocky and it can be quite difficult to create a decent planting hole – but, once again, Sal from Wyndham City Council put his back into it and the work went very quickly. Then it was just a matter of getting the ‘bucket brigade’ on the job and watering the new plants thoroughly before calling it a day.



*The soil is very rocky and it can be quite difficult to create a decent planting hole*

Maddie Veale provided us with refreshments and it was great to stop under the shady gum trees at the edge of the Creek and enjoy a chilled juice or cup of tea or coffee. Maddie also provided a selection of cakes and pieces of fruit (just about the nicest cantaloupe I've eaten this year!).

And thanks to Peta for once again taking some great photos for our Facebook page. Thanks also to Wyndham City Council for the support and to everyone who turned up on the day.

These people were Denice, Angela, Matt, Liz, David and Sharon and Bev and Tom. Great work everyone! Almost as pleasing was the fact that we had four apologies. I am hoping that we are starting to get a core of committed locals. Just let's hope we get some rain soon to keep our little plants alive.

*Postscript: A week later, Sal came and spread an enormous amount of mulch around the planting. Hopefully, this will help keep the failure rate down. Thank you very much to Wyndham City Council!*



### **CARINZA AVE GRANT COMPLETED**

Hobson's Bay City Council has recently done work to remove the excess growth of phragmites (the common reed) at our Carinza Ave, Altona Meadows, planting site (*pictured above*). It was beginning to invade our planting area, which we didn't want.

We have now completed our grant works at this site. To wrap up the process, Denice will do an 'End of Grant' report for Melbourne Water. It is always good to see works successfully completed.

### **POINT COOK ROAD UNDERPASS UPDATE**

As you will be aware from the last few newsletters, we have been trying to get the underpass flood-proofed.



Colleen Gates, our Mayor, and Carl Marsich, our Councillor, have been working on our behalf to this end. Colleen trusts council has now purchased a pump for the job.

Cath Stephenson, a local FOSC member, informed Denice that a clean-up had been done in the underpass. The recent rain has shown the need for the pump to be installed. We will continue to work on this long outstanding issue.

### **SEABROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT**

FOSC group has been asked by Seabrook Primary School to be involved in their water quality theme studies. Angela Whiffin has agreed to do some educational work with some 140 students.

The plan is to do a 'walk and talk', maybe a planting, and some water quality testing. Angela would like to show them the difference in the quality of water that flows from a drain straight into

the Creek to the water in a catchment pond, as well as explore microbugs in the Creek. It is looking like a huge undertaking for Angela, so we may need to prune some bits off to make it more manageable!

### **A HELPING HAND FOR A SKELETON CREEK BABY TURTLE**

*FOSC member Cath Stephenson was amazed when she came across a nest of Eastern Long-necked Turtle eggs in the process of hatching while walking along the south side of Skeleton Creek, between Point Cook Rd and Palmers Rd.*



*Here's her personal (and harrowing) account of saving at least one of the baby turtles:*

The nest of turtle eggs were up near the back fences of local houses, a good 100 metres from the Creek. The ground there is about 4 metres higher than Creek level and is currently terribly dry.

It's a busy and noisy section - where locals ride 2-stroke petrol powered pushbikes, motorcycles, and council maintenance trucks and other moving vehicles regularly drive through, as well as people walking their dogs.



*The nest of turtle eggs were up near the back fences of local houses, a good 100 metres from the Creek*

I was absolutely amazed to see two turtles hatching in this extreme environment. I quickly got out my iPhone to take a video, but while fiddling with it, one of the baby turtles disappeared!

I then 'ummed and ahhed' about taking the remaining one home. It was so exposed that I felt it had little chance of surviving.

So I took it home and, thinking I was doing the right thing, I put it in my fish pond.

About 5 hours later, I got around to reading up on the care of baby turtles. Then what I read horrified me ... they can drown!

Frantically, I searched the pond, pulling out all the water plants and running my hands across the bottom. No turtle! Oh, what had I done?

But when I turned to pick up the plants to put them back into the pond, there it was - caught up in the roots, and motionless. Thinking I had drowned the baby turtle, I placed it on my veranda table, while I finished repairing the damage to the pond.

When I turned back to pick it up to bury it, suddenly, two tiny back legs did a massive 'frog kick' and its head on its long neck whipped around. It was alive - after hours of being trapped in the fine filaments of water plant roots!

I then used a seed-raising propagation box to make it a little terrarium, with sphagnum moss, a water dish, some broken terracotta pots to hide under and a lid so it couldn't escape.

I kept the baby turtle for another 36 hours, putting the terrarium in the sun in the morning to allow it to warm up and regain strength.

Then on the Monday morning, it was so warm that the turtle got into the water dish under the terracotta pot. So I decided it was strong enough to release it back down near the Creek.

I released it to the side of one of the tunnels the water birds create as they go in and out of the Creek, about 2 metres from the water's edge.

When I went back to the hatching nest on the Saturday evening, from where I had took my little guy, I unfortunately found the second turtle dead on its back, about a metre from the nest. The nest itself had broadened and deepened as more of the hatchlings had hatched and climbed out.

I do hope the little one I cared for (and nearly drowned) and released down the Creek survives!

*... Interestingly, the April 2015 issue of 'Ranger Ramblings eNews', published by the Hobson's Bay City Council Parks department, carried a fact sheet on the Eastern Long-necked Turtle. Here are some excerpts:*

The Eastern Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) is also referred to as a snake-necked

turtle. The Eastern Long-Neck's shell will eventually grow to around 25cm in length, with its neck almost the same length.

The upper shell or carapace can vary in colour from light reddish-brown to almost black, while the lower shell or plastron is usually creamy-yellow, sometimes with other dark brown markings.

The feet have strong claws and are webbed for swimming. The jaws are made of hard, horn-like material and, if provoked, can deliver a painful bite.



*The Eastern Long-Neck's shell will eventually grow to around 25cm in length, with its neck almost the same length*

At certain times of the year, long-necks often wander in search of new homes. This often brings them in contact with roads and fatalities and injuries from motor vehicles are common.

They inhabit almost any type of relatively slow moving water body from farm dams to major rivers and lakes.

The female lays between 4-20 hard-shelled eggs during spring and early summer in an excavation in the bank of a swamp or stream. The young tortoises usually hatch after an incubation time ranging from three to eight months. Some females may produce two or three clutches in one season.

To subscribe to 'Ranger Ramblings eNews' go to: [http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/News\\_Publications/eNews/Ranger\\_Ramblings](http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/News_Publications/eNews/Ranger_Ramblings)

#### **LIKING FRIENDS OF SKELTON CREEK FACEBOOK PAGE**

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, FOSC Facebook administrator Peta Keown is looking for good photos to put on our page. So if you have any suitable ones, please contribute to the site.

To promote FOSC, if you haven't done so already, can all our members/volunteers with Facebook accounts please "like" our group and also ask their like-minded friends to do the same ☺. Our page's at: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofskeletoncreek>

## **FOSC 2015 CALENDAR**

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

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

**Sun 19 April** - Mulch spreading between Merton St / Markham Way, Altona Meadows

**Sun 24 May** - Planting between Merton St / Markham Way, Altona Meadows

**Tues 16 June** - Planting between Merton St / Markham Way, Altona Meadows

Sun 28 June - Planting at Carshalton Crt, Hoppers Crossing

**Sun 26 July** - National Tree Day planting between Merton St / Markham Way, 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) between Merton St / Markham Way, 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 6 May, 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*