

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.



February 2016 Newsletter

NEXT ACTIVITY:

MULCH SPREADING, SUN 28TH FEB

1 PM - 3 PM, MARKHAM WAY/MERTON ST, ALTONA MEADOWS [MELWAY MAP 208, D3]

This month's activity will be a mulch spreading day to existing plantings. Andrew Webster, Senior Conservation Ranger, Hobson's Bay City Council, has done a great job of mulch delivery to the site over the holidays. If enough helpers turn up, we may also do some mulching at the nearby Creek Water Close.

Meet at sign-in table, corner Markham Way and gate entrance to the shared path.

As always, a local council ranger will work with us. Bring gloves if you have some. All else provided - including afternoon tea. Get your mulch muscles warmed up for the day. Hope to see you there :)

Further information from: FoSC Secretary, Denice Perryman, 0429 167 013.

A Busy Year Ahead

Plant Numbers Finalised

The native plants, ground covers and shrubs, needed for our group's plantings this year have now been finalised by FoSC President Angela Whiffin and Secretary Denice Perryman, and ordered.

Angela, who works at Newport Lakes Native Nursery, where FoSC source most of the plants, needed to put in an order early for the scheduling of the nursery's seedling production. The order consists of:

- **Clarendon Court** - 500 hardy plants and 500 weed mats
- **Seabrook Primary School Field Day** – 150 hardy ground covers and shrubs
- **National Tree Day** – our Hobsons Bay Council allocation, plus what's left over from 2015
- **Bromage Close** – 796 assorted plants

Angela will be a busy girl. Our group will be busy too!

Suburb to Sea Movie and Muffin Night

Friday, 26TH February

Our group has been asked to participate in the 'Suburb to Sea Movie and Muffin Night' at the Point Cook Community Centre, 7 pm - 9 pm.

The evening is part of Wyndham City Council's 'Green Living Series' during February and March.

The evening will focus on the issues associated with suburban litter entering local waterways, wetlands and beaches with the screening of some short films and presentations.

The audience will have the chance to chat with the speakers after the films. Muffins, tea and coffee will be provided, as well a chance to win a lucky door prize.

This event has been made possible by the collaboration of local Wyndham community groups, Wyndham City Council and the Department of Environment, Lands, Water and Planning (DELWP). More information from:

http://www.experiencewyndham.com.au/whatson/suburb_to_sea_movie_and_muffin_night

Activity Date Change

Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing

By Denice Perryman

We've had to reschedule our Sunday 27th March working bee at Bromage Close, Hoppers Crossing (which would've been on Easter Sunday) to Sunday 3rd April.

Angela and I met Wyndham City Council's conservation officers Darren Wright and Craig Dodson at the Council's depot to flesh out the Bromage Close grant organisation on 2nd February.

We then met specialist weed control contractor Rosie Haas and her team on site to organise two sprayings ready for this year's activities.

It was funny while we were there hearing the Growling Grass



Continued next page

Continued from Page 1

Frogs and Spotted Marsh Frogs singing up a treat - as if to welcome us to improve the site and their local habitat! I'm sure it had nothing to do with the fact that it was raining at the time :)



Spotted Marsh Frogs sang up a treat.

Darren Wright had marked out the 70 m x 5 m site in preparation for the spraying. Thanks Darren.

Rosie has completed one spraying and we're waiting on the second spraying, so this grant is definitely well under way for 2016!

We will be having some big plantings coming up at Bromage Close on Sunday 26th June and Sunday 28th August - so set aside these days to help if you can.

We have contacted Narpinder early to make sure we can get her Dera Sacha Sauda group onboard to once again provide their valued community volunteering assistance!

Clarendon Court OK'd

Andrew Webster contacted Denice to check if we were happy to plant at Clarendon Court, Seabrook - Hobsons Bay Council's second site for our group in 2016. This has since been OK'd by Melbourne Water's River Health Officer, Gerard Morel, who approves where our grant money is spent. This outcome is a bonus for FoSC.

Input to Wyndham's Environment and Sustainability Strategy



Trevor Prowd, Wyndham Natural Environment Officer, sent us the Council's 'Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2016 - 2040 - Public Consultation Draft'.

Our input included:

- lower tip costs for residents, as a way of tackling rubbish dumping in and around the Creek
- in any activity affecting our Creek, Council needs to greatly improve community consultation, tighten up housing development approval processes and greatly improve communication between stakeholder authorities, such as the environmental debacle experienced when Hallmarc Developments dammed our Creek at Waterhaven Estate, Point Cook - unannounced, for 50 days last year

Visitors to the Wyndham City Council area are also urged to provide input on any concerns they have.

To further advance the development of the Strategy, Council encourages the community to provide its feedback and comments on the document by Friday 4 March 2016. Details at:

http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/aboutwyndham/consultation/environment_and_sustainability_strategy_2016_204

Shortage of Interpretive Signs

Hobsons Bay Council's side, Skeleton Creek

Some time ago, John Dawes 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.

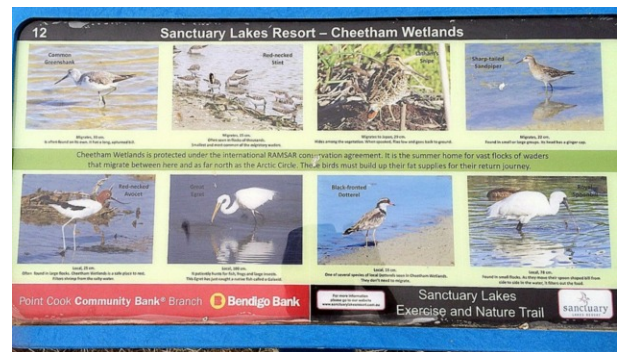
In the Wyndham Council zone there are signs for users of the shared path in Point Cook and along the track adjacent to the Creek in Sanctuary Lakes.

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

To remedy this, we will be applying for funding for signage from Hobsons Bay City Council.

Bob Winters, our local bird expert, who spoke at our AGM, and was involved with the educational/interpretive signs at Sanctuary Lakes, has offered to shepherd us through the process. Thanks Bob, very generous of you.

Below are some of the signs on the Sanctuary Lakes side of Skeleton Creek, photographed recently by Denice.



‘A Dog’s Breakfast’ in the Cheetham Wetlands

Strategies to Protect the Area

Hobsons Bay Council’s recent annual Dog’s Breakfast at Apex Park was an event to raise awareness that the off-leash parkland is one of the most significant areas in Port Phillip Bay for an array of bird species, including migratory shorebirds, some of which are under threat.

Port Phillip Bay tidal movements, with long-term deposition of shelly sand drifting from the south, have created a crossable sand spit at the mouth of Laverton Creek, giving people and their dogs easy access to the restricted Ramsar-protected Cheetham Wetlands.

Hobson’s Bay Council has since erected temporary signs in Apex Park, however, there are no clear signs in Parks Victoria’s side, where the council has no control, to say the area is restricted.

Our Domain

The Friends of Skeleton Creek group’s domain not only covers our volunteer conservation activities along the Creek but also in the ‘Altona Bay Wetlands’ - an area considered to cover the meandering mouth of Skeleton Creek, which flows east into Port Phillip Bay, the Truganina Coastal Parklands and 100 Steps, and towards the mouth of Laverton Creek.

FoSC will contact Parks Victoria to see if we can work with them in the immediate future. Angela Whiffin has suggested a dogs-on-the-beach offset, east of the Cheetham Wetlands entry point, to compromise the dog owners.

The trespassing issue not only includes people and their dogs wandering into the wetlands via the sand spit from Apex Park - but anywhere there are incursions inside the fenced ‘off-limits’ in the Cheetham Wetlands, such as noisy and environmentally disturbing trail bike riding.

Denice has been in contact with Councillor and Deputy Mayor Sandra Wilson, who has been at the forefront of the campaign to protect the wetlands and the bird habitats, to see where our group can help.

Cr Wilson commented that Hobsons Bay City Council’s development of its Open Space and Biodiversity Strategy for the period 2014-2026 will tackle the issue in partnership with the community and stakeholder authorities - though the solution needs to be balanced for people’s enjoyment of the area without having a detrimental impact on the natural habitat.

Beach Litter Patrol

Another one of Cr Wilson’s conservation projects she has championed is ‘Altona Beach Patrol 3018’, which held its inaugural event on Sun 7 Feb.

The event attracted 50 people and gathered 27 bags of litter with a weight of 96 kilos - all from Altona Pier east to the rocky groyne. Some FoSC members and supporters were also there to volunteer in the clean up.

The next Altona Beach Patrol working bee is on ‘Clean Up Australia Day’, Sun 6 March, from 2:30 pm. More information at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/416332805242915/>

Inaugural Friends Bike Ride

Another Ride Planned 13th March

By Denice Perryman

We held our first bike ride in modern times on Thursday 28th January, riding from the end of Merton St, Altona Meadows, along the scenic Hobsons Bay Coastal Trail, through Altona to Williamstown.

Angela, Greg Orr and myself were ably led by Kristine Konings, FoSC Committee and BayWest BUG (Bicycle Users Group) member, who seemed to have thought of everything.

Riding near 100 Steps, Altona Meadows, Greg spotted (with his ever keen conservation eyes) the invasive boneseed plant. Boneseed is a South African plant that was first introduced to Australia as an ornamental and grown in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne gardens in the 1850s.



Spotted on the inaugural FoSC bike ride near 100 Steps, Altona Meadows, was this invasive boneseed plant [From left, Denice Perryman, Angela Whiffin and Greg Orr.]

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.

I will contact Andrew Webster about this plant in the Hobsons Bay territory and also DELWP about the invasive weed on the land they control.

In Williamstown we hooked up with FoSC’s Wren and Kay Brown and had lunch together in Nelson Place. To top things off, the driving rain that came down during our lunch break had gone through by the time we rode home.

We all enjoyed the day so much that we’re now lining up for the next ride. This will be on a weekend to cater for those working weekdays.

The next FoSC ride we’ve planned is on Sunday 13 March, starting at 11 am, weather permitting - same route as the last, with a lunch stop in Williamstown (venue to be decided upon).

This event will be created on our FoSC Facebook page, and a reminder will be sent out via our group email for members and supporters interested in coming.

Any queries about this ride, please contact Kristine on 0425739011.

Green Water near the Ford

On a recent bike ride, Denice noticed green water at the mouth of the Creek near the ford to the Cheetham Wetlands.

Bernie McCarrick, Ranger, Parks Victoria, told Denice that he had seen green water in the lower parts of the Creek before. He said as it washes over the ford it is just part of the ecosystem. The brine fly and birds feed off it as it's nontoxic.

Isn't this good to hear?!

Membership 2015/2016

Friends of Skeleton Creek & Altona Bay Wetlands Inc.

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

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 welcome!

The next FoSC meeting is on Wednesday 2nd March.



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 28 Feb - Markham Way/Merton St, Altona Meadows

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 28 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.

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

Newsletter Distribution List

Email Changes? Unsubscribe?

If you want to advise of a change to your email address or unsubscribe from this newsletter, please email Friends of Skeleton Creek Publicity Officer with the necessary details to:

friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/friendsofskeletoncreek

Friends of Skeleton Creek Committee

Secretary	President	Vice President
Denice Perryman deniceperryman1@gmail.com	Angela Whiffin angelawhiff@hotmail.com	John Dawes dawesj2@gmail.com
Tel 0429167013, 93158072	Tel 0430551631, 93692892	Tel 0408663376
Treasurer	Postal Address	Facebook Community Page
Ewen Cowie de.cowie@bigpond.net.au	12 Hopetoun Court Altona Meadows 3028	Administrator John Dawes
Tel 93158603	CAV Incorporation No. A0029721P	Friends of Skeleton Creek Email
		friendsofskeletoncrk@gmail.com