

Editorial :

Regular visitors to Damper Creek could not fail to notice the thoughtless dumping of tyres at the Stephenson's road carpark. In fact this act was not thoughtless, but a carefully calculated move to avoid the disposal fee for tyres. A quick check on the City of Monash website shows that a charge of \$5-80 is made for car tyres without rims and \$9-40 for tyres with rims. A not inconsiderable expense considering about 50 tyres were dumped and a similar number were dumped late last year at the same place. We hope that evidence found with the tyres is sufficient to secure a prosecution. Certainly the resultant fine will far exceed the council's disposal fee.

A side story concerns the attempt by Council workers to move the tyres. This attempt was quickly abandoned when a snake appeared from the pile of tyres. At least some part of the environment benefited from the tyres, however temporarily.

I know many members of FODC are keen environmentalists and it will be of no surprise that there are many recycling options. The company "Reclaim" uses old tyres to produce a wide range of safety surfaces for playgrounds and sporting uses. Of course there are many "old school" uses such as recapping and making doormats and thongs, but more exciting is the process of pyrolysis whereby the tyres are heated in a low oxygen atmosphere to produce: 1kg of steel, 4litres of oil, 4kg of carbon and 850litres of combustible gas. Perhaps those fees collected for the disposal of old tyres should be used to establish a pyrolysis plant?

By coincidence this week the "Sustainable Living Festival" is being held in Melbourne. There is a programme of events which can be accessed by going to "festival.slf.org.au" or by ringing 92491888.

BIRDS RARE AND COMMON PART II: SUMMER '09/10

In late Spring I received an email from our President, Helen Clements, with an attachment note from a friend across Park Rd. and photo of a rare Grey Currawong. Her neighbor had been listening to a program about the rare bird – and was "spooked" when she glanced out her window and there it was on the rooftop, looking at her! She took a quick snap: the same attractive image that is on the Park Rd. notice board. Yet it doesn't do justice to his long yellow legs and strut, knees angled out.

He seemed to make his home the enclosed sanctuary [on the east side of Damper Creek] from the Children's Playground to the far end where the Ranger's road dips down – yet seemingly to prefer the more open, drier land at each end. And one day I encountered his mate and large, fluffy baby, both grey too, near the Park Rd. end. But I haven't seen them since the big January rain that brimmed the lake and shot big logs and debris over the dam wall.

A few days later I was walking along the top path and stopped beside the open gate leading down to the rock wall – and looked, disbelieving, at a small bird sitting on the lowest [bare] branch of the small gum beside the sandy path. He seemed all beak: it was large and shaped like a kookaburra's. He was bell shaped, with tiny black feet. But what amazed me was his colour: a brilliant purple blue. He was a rare Azure Kingfisher,

the smallest of the Kingfisher family, which feeds only on live food in streams. They dive into the water almost vertically – and so his odd shape and tiny feet. In the ensuing week I saw both his mate and young one, similarly shaped, but a little disappointing in apricot tinged beige. And then they were gone – perhaps at the first hint of pollution.

But our ducks are still there: "old faithfuls". Or are they? I *think* the handsome red-brown parents in the breeding pond are our old pair, more richly fed. Their first batch was sadly depleted by predators, then by flooding rain. Their second was protected so carefully – father and mother at either end, that amazingly all eight young ones grew to maturity. At noon the parents watched over the eight, who slept on a small island in the breeding pond. From my vantage point above I looked, amazed, to see the eight arranged bill to tail in a shining copper coloured spiral. No wonder that predators were confused! While later four disappeared overnight – probably to other waters.

Junior and his partner have raised two batches also – with mixed success. The "second best" breeding spot near the reedy inlet [opposite the little "bridge", now defunct] is not protected by overhanging swamp gums, while the long necked tortoise that swims there, fancies young ducklings too. At the moment there is just one of Junior's last batch, now half grown. Yet – super at camouflage and great at a turn of speed, he (or she?) may well survive!

Guest Speakers for 2010

February Tony Walker of the Friends of Scotchman's Creek and Valley Reserve on the topic of Waterwatch testing.

Guest Speakers (continued)

April

Ian Nicholls of the Monash University Geology department

June

Doug Scott on the subject of the Canning Stock Route

August

Dr Mardie Townsend of Deakin University on the benefits of open spaces and volunteering

A programme of guest speakers has been planned running through into 2011. However, any and all suggestions are welcome to "spice up" our monthly meetings.

Working bee / Clean up Australia Day

Please note that the working bee which would normally be scheduled on February 28th has been held over to March 7th to coincide with Clean Up Australia Day.

We will be meeting at our usual place at the Park road car park, morning tea provided.

Duck Pond cleanout

After much planning due to the possible hazardous nature of the sludge, the "duck pond" will be cleaned out to restore the habitat for the ducks and tortoises. During this work the lower path will be blocked to walkers.

Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Alvie Hall (corner Alvie Road & High Street Road) and start promptly at 7:30pm

Working Bees are held on the following Sunday from 10am to 12:30pm (morning tea at 11am).

Any late changes to the working bee location will be posted on the Alice Street bridge.

Friends of Damper Creek Important dates to remember:

	February	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 24th - 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Clean up Australia Day 10-00am to 12-30pm	Park Rd car park
	March	
Meeting:	Wed 24th- 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Sun March 28th 10-00am to 12-30 pm	Middle bridge
ADDRESSES & TELEPHONE NUMBERS		
President:	Helen Clements helenclme@gmail.com	98075952
Secretary:	Campbell Miles	98037707
Treasurer:	Frank Carder	98334383
Editor:	Doug Scott Please email material for the newsletter to dougscott@optusnet.com.au	417300866

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Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra Catchment.

Please address all mail to:
The Secretary
PO Box 2063
Mount Waverley 3149

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FRIENDS OF DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.

Reg No. A0029531G

www.vicnet.net.au/~damper

P.O. Box 2063 Mount Waverley

DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

February 2010

