

Editorial : What Worth an Endangered Species?

During the 1970's a number of family and friends bought acreages in country areas. Motivations for this move were varied, some wanting a place to retreat from the city life, others building a family home within commuting distance of their workplace. On viewing these properties, I noted varying degrees of remnant vegetation and how this remnant vegetation contributed to the environment of the block and how it affected its' maintenance. In the best examples with an uncontaminated remnant vegetation, surprises would abound among the (to some eyes) nondescript native grasses, with seasonal displays of various orchids, lilies, heaths and prostrate pea flowered plants. On such blocks maintenance was negligible except for areas immediately around the house where disturbed soil allowed introduced weeds to invade.

During this time I formed the opinion that it would be a worthwhile exercise to own a bush block solely for the purpose of preserving the remnant vegetation, but the passage of time and the emergence of other priorities relegated this vision to a dream. The difficulties, fencing, weed and vermin control, relationships with neighbouring properties, not to mention the travel cost (and carbon footprint) of visiting the property won the day.

In 1991 the Bush Heritage organisation was born with the objective of preserving areas of high conservation value within Australia. Working with donations from the public, Bush Heritage has purchased a

total of 7 million hectares of high conservation value (and low farming value) land across the country. Donations allow a professional assessment of properties available for purchase and expert management to enhance its' conservation value.

In Victoria Bush Heritage owns properties totalling 817 hectares in north-central Victoria known as Nardoo Hills. An orchid, the Robust Greenhood, long thought extinct and not seen since 1941 has recently been recorded on this former grazing property. Such treasures do exist, even on land previously used for agriculture. Had this land remained in private ownership it is unlikely that this plant (and other rare species) would have been discovered and protected.

You can visit Bush Heritage properties and view the areas protected by the organisation. See

www.bushheritage.org.au/gettinginvolved_visit, or just visit the website www.bushheritage.org.au.

Waverley Historical Society Notes

Did you know that Damper Creek was once the centre of aquatic sports in the Waverley district? In the 1890s, well before the local roads were sealed with bitumen, the east branch of Damper Creek which now flows between Stephenson's Rd and High Street Rd was a very deep waterhole. This hole was created during the construction of St Stephens Church in 1865. William Stevenson sic (after which Stephenson's Rd is so named) supplied the bricks using clay taken from the area of Damper Creek. The bricks were fired on site in a simple kiln using local wood. During the winter months the hole quickly filled with water

and the local residents constructed a dam wall at High Street Rd to enlarge the water hole, extending it to almost 150 yards long stretching from Stephenson's Rd to High Street Rd.

During the summer months local residents; Messrs Lirpa and Loof, set up a diving board near where the old brick kiln stood. The depth here was about 12 foot while the rest ranged from some sandy shallows at the east end to about 9 feet at the west. It was not long before swimming races and diving competitions were held. A rudimentary starting platform was constructed across the water adjacent to the diving board while the finish line was stretched across the water 50 yards to the east. The natural shape of this valley was ideal for the local families to set themselves up on the grassy slopes to watch their family members competing in the swimming races. Indeed, many a youngster, after sitting through the sermon in St Stephens on a hot Sunday would rush down to the pool for a swim. New Year's Day marked the major event where the extensive prize money was well earned. A local bookmaker busily operated there on the day. Would be champions came from Nunawading to the north, Dandenong to the East and Oakleigh to the South. On New Year's Day 1902 it was rumoured that the young lad (barely 10 years old) entering under the name of Francis Goodfix, who won the 50 and 100 yards races against youths many years older, was none other than Frank Beaurepaire, who later went on to compete in 1918 London Olympics and become Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

About 1909 the swimming races were moved

to Scotchmans Creek near what is now the Oakleigh Swimming Pool as the yearly rainfall was insufficient to maintain water level in the Damper Creek waterhole due to the local farmers pumping water for their farms. The starting platform collapsed and the area became overgrown with blackberries. In 2008, almost 100 years since the last swimming races, Monash Council earthworks on the banks of the creek uncovered the remains of the wooden diving platform.

References.

They Continued Steadfastly (The History of St Stephens Church), Sturrock M., and the first April Files of the Waverley Historical Society.

Guest Speakers

April: The Simpson Desert in Flower

Doug Scott

June: Sustainability Issues

Meg Ralph

August: Native Fish

Ron Lewis

November: The Paradox of Sustainable Mining

Weeders Notes

Any member who does weeding in the reserve outside the monthly working bees must report their hours and area of work to the council. This can be done by downloading the form from the Damper Creek website and emailing it to michaelq@monash.vic.gov.au or by dropping the form into the letterbox at the council depot in the reserve. This information is important to allow the

council to monitor the level of volunteer activity in the reserve and is an indicator of the level of interest in the reserve (and consequently the funding it receives).

Friends of Damper Creek Important dates to remember:

	April	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 27th - 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun May 1st 10-00am to 12-30pm	At the Park rd Notice board
	May	
Meeting:	Wed May 25th 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun May 29 th 10-00am to 12-30pm	TBA

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Damper Creek Reserve Inc. is a member of 'Landcare'
and 'Land for Wildlife' Volunteer Nature Conservation.

***Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra
Catchment.***

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

The Newsletter of

**FRIENDS OF
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.**

Reg No. A0029531G

www.vicnet.net.au/~damper

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

April 2011

