



Damper Creek Doings

Newsletter of the Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve inc.

October 2021



From the President's Desk

The last eighteen months have been a challenge to all of us. For many it has given us a new way of doing things, such as working from home, having meetings on Zoom, educating ourselves using webinars and managing without travelling all over town. If we have not embraced the digital world before, the last eighteen months have been an eye opener. We are now about to face a new set of challenges: restarting the old world without losing the good things we have learned.

Members have always known the value of our little reserve and fought to preserve and improve it. The wider public has now discovered Damper Creek Reserve and it is now widely known and used. The Park Road playground is now so heavily used that car parking is at a premium and the trails are continually populated by dog walkers, joggers, cyclists and (even) geocachers. As a new population comes to know and appreciate the reserve, those who have loved the reserve for decades have shown a new pride. The council have developed the landscaping around the Council compound and the nature strip plantings have been improved. Members have worked closely with the council to plan and implement the latest plantings and much effort has been put into keeping the latest plantings free of weeds. The benefits of the work put in over 2020 and 2021 will be with us for years to come.



The Park Road nature strip planting is home to many **Trigger plants**. Trigger plants are distinguished by a spring loaded pollen holder which suddenly releases when an insect alights, thus ensuring pollination of the next plant visited by the insect. The local variety, **Stylidium armeria**, is quite a showy plant, there are others in the reserve but they are harder to find. Once flowering is finished trigger plants blend in with grasses and can be hard to spot.



Dusty Miller *Spyridium parvifolium*

A delightful shrub which will grow to 2 metres if allowed, but will prune well to a smaller size. The flowers are small but are surrounded by white, powdery leaves which improve the show. When seen from a distance, the plant appears to be dusted with flour, hence the common name. There are a number of these in the reserve but they also make an excellent garden plant.





Common Everlasting

Chrysocephalum semipapposum

Brilliant when in flower, this is a common understorey plant which blends into the background when flowering has finished. There are many of these in the Park Road nature strips. Commonly available from indigenous nurseries, it makes an excellent garden plant which performs at it's best when pruned hard after flowering. It can spread from rhizomes and blends well with native grasses.



Bulbine Lily: *Bulbine bulbosa*

Common around Damper Creek, the Bulbine Lily forms a delightful part of the ground cover. Although individual plants can be short lived, it seeds prolifically and new plants will pop up spontaneously throughout the garden. Seedlings can be distinguished by their fleshy leaves and are easily pricked out and transplanted to other parts of the garden.





Our AGM

Because of COVID we have delayed our usual August AGM until November. The mode of meeting and location are yet to be decided. Prior to the meeting please consider serving as a member of the committee. All positions will be vacated for voting at the meeting. In addition to the standard positions we also have a number of general committee members. Some general committee members have roles such as Webmaster, Waterwatch, Membership, Noticeboards, Photography, DCD Editor, etc.. Other positions do not have allocated duties. It is entirely possible for you to invent your own position, so join the committee and put your stamp on FODCCR. Nomination forms are attached, please forward your nomination to the secretary.

BEES

When we think of bees we usually think of the European Honey Bee. The European bee is vitally important to agriculture and is a common visitor to domestic gardens.

Worldwide, the European Honey Bee is in decline from a number of diseases and the use of insecticides. Many hives are also destroyed in wildfires. Apiarists are struggling to satisfy the needs of agriculturalists to provide bees for pollination of orchards and crops. Bees are precious and there is a movement to locate hives on city rooftop gardens to provide honey for restaurants.

When a hive swarms, bees will seek a new home and will temporarily or permanently settle in a most inconvenient place. Pest controllers are often called in to destroy the swarm, which is a travesty as bees are valuable as an economic and ecological resource.



This swarm has taken up residence on garden furniture. Given time it will move on but a better option is to have it removed to be housed in a purpose built hive.

You can ring the Bees Helpline on 1902 241 059

The local bee keeping group is:

The Beekeepers Club (Doncaster) Email: president@beekeepers.org.au

Website: <https://www.beekeepers.org.au>

Native bees are a different matter. There are over 2000 species with different habitat requirements. They are often solitary and require a diverse environment provided by bushland or a wildlife friendly garden.



Photo :Birdlife Australia

Powerful Owl

A recent seminar hosted by the City of Whitehorse detailed the life of this magnificent bird. This is a very large bird, with a wingspan up to 1.8 metres, the largest owl species. Several years ago one was observed in Damper Creek Reserve and I was privileged to see it fly off for its evening hunt. It was a truly magnificent sight. The seminar included tracking details for a number of individuals, including one which could have been the one seen in our reserve. The unfortunate sequel is that this individual was later found dead, an autopsy confirmed that the bird had been poisoned. The source of this poison was most likely from a prey animal (they eat possums, not rats) and an accumulation of poisons from its prey caused its death.

Members have previously reported the death of Tawny Frogmouths. As these birds have a similar diet to Powerful Owls, it is likely that they ingested the same poison. The speculation is that people have been using second generation anticoagulant rat poisons (SGARs) to kill possums around their homes. These poisons are commonly available from supermarkets and hardware stores.

Poisons suitable for killing rodents which are not fatal to predator birds (FGARs) are available.

The seminar may be viewed by following this link: [Recording](#)

Meadow Project

Plans are under way to convert an area of grassland at the rear of the Park Road properties into a wildflower meadow. The area has certain advantages in that it is bordered on three sides with good quality revegetation, thus minimizing weed incursion. Timing is good in that it will allow site preparation prior to planting in Autumn next year. Many details need to be finalized. At this stage the proposal was greeted with enthusiasm from the City of Monash.



Noisy Miners

These aggressive birds are taking over our bushland. They gang up and chase much larger birds such as Magpies and Currawongs. More importantly, they attack and exclude smaller birds. We, as a society, have unwittingly favored these bandits by clearing the mid and low level shrubbery and favoring lawns. Not only do we prefer an open view, but we also plant precisely those plants that are the Miners' preferred food source. Grevilleas, Callistemons, Banksias and Hakeas. These provide the Miners with the nectar they want. Other honeyeaters enjoy the same plants too, so how to help our smaller honeyeaters without favoring the Miners? The answer lies in creating refuges, areas with dense foliage which the Miners avoid. Prickly foliage helps, Sweet Bursaria, Prickly Currant bush and Tree Violet come to mind. The gaps can be filled with other, non prickly, plants such as Goodenias, Daisy Bush and Wattles. Besides these, it is ok to add nectar bearers such as Correas and Hakeas as the other plants will provide refuge for smaller birds. It may take a few years to get the effect but the smaller birds will return. Happy planting.

(Refer to *theconversation.com* 14/10/21)

October Meeting October 27th 7-30pm

Due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID restrictions, we will meet via Zoom again. An agenda and Zoom link will be emailed prior to the meeting.

Dates to remember:

October 27th Monthly Meeting 7:30pm via Zoom

(link to be forwarded to members)

October 31st Working Bee Sunday 10-00am (To be advised)

November 24th 7:30 Annual General Meeting (To be advised)

Annual Get together November 28th (To be decided)

Report it!

Have you seen something along Damper Creek that you think needs attention? Please contact Monash Council and leave a report. You can contact them the

following ways.:

www.monash.vic.gov.au/contact/request-a-service

Phone(03) 9518 3555 or download the App – Snap, Send, Solve

The content of this newsletter reflects the opinions of the editor and the Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve. Content is welcome and should be emailed to dougscott3@bigpond.com or to the secretary at

secretary.dampercreek@gmail.com

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