

Editorial : Council elections

By now you will have received your ballot papers for the upcoming council elections. These elections are critical for the friends group and, indeed, all conservation minded individuals. Information gleaned by our president indicates that the Vegetation Protection Overlay,(VPO), which was narrowly retained last year on a vote by councillors, has emerged as a major issue by candidates at this election, and the numbers are not looking good at this stage. In case you are not familiar with the VPO, it is a local law which seeks to prevent the removal of mature trees from private properties within specified areas of the City of Monash.

Following the vote last year the Council reinstated the office which provides advice and assessment of trees as a service to ratepayers. In the history of the VPO there appear to be few, if any, instances of the council preventing ratepayers from removing trees where there is a valid reason for removing them. The VPO acts as a dampener which moderates tree removal, a prompt which asks ratepayers to think twice before removing a tree and to apply for a permit if it exceeds the dimensions of a trunk circumference greater than 500mm at a height of 1200mm above ground. These provisions are quite modest as they apply only to the VPO areas and to relatively large trees, not the middle vegetation layer which, arguably, should also be retained.

As a member of the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve, you should be concerned at the potential for vegetation loss in Monash generally and specifically around Damper Creek itself. However valuable Damper Creek

Reserve is, it forms only a part of the environment for wildlife within the City of Monash. Leafy gardens in the vicinity of the reserve multiply the effective area of the reserve, making it a viable environment for many species of birds and animals. It is proper that those who benefit from the proximity of the reserve and the surroundings which form an extended ecosystem, are subject to controls which prevent the destruction of that ecosystem.

Yet, a number of councillors and would-be councillors feel strongly enough about the VPO provisions that they are willing to actively campaign for their removal. If you feel that Monash benefits from the VPO areas and the effective extension that they provide for the network of reserves in Monash, then seek out candidates who will vote to retain the VPO.

Bushland Reflections

I have had the privilege of visiting a number of bushland areas over the last month. This is not a new activity for me, but there are always surprises. In the north-west of our state is a series of desert reserves, encompassing a huge proportion of our state, and yet they are unknown to many Victorians.

Stretching north-west of Horsham are the Little Desert, Big Desert, Wyperfield, Murray-Sunset and Hattah-Kulkyne parks. In a previous age the Wimmera river would have flowed through this area to the Murray. These are true wilderness areas rendered accessible by highways that pass through Nhill and Ouyen. Travellers on these major routes would have little indication of the dunes, mallee scrub and dried lakebeds that occupy these areas. Having been involved with the Friends of Damper Creek, a sensitivity to these areas is

inevitable. The near total elimination of native vegetation with farming is evident, as is the resilience of the native flora where farming has not disturbed the land. In intermediate areas, roadsides, stock routes and railway reserves, a surprising amount of native flora remains, often in an uneasy alliance with pasture grasses and escaped crops.

Travelling northwards through Mildura to Lake Mungo the traveller is confronted with the stark reality of climate change as the remains of aboriginal middens and extinct animals reveal this barren area to have been lush, fertile country. The recent rains have not been sufficient to produce any standing water but have, at least, provided a show of wildflowers in the lakebed and surrounding dunes. The excellent visitor's centre tells the story of a previous age and provides food for thought on where the climate for the country may be heading with a few degrees of temperature rise.

Guest Speaker

Our previously announced guest speaker has "gone bush" and will not be able to address the October meeting. He has interesting stories to tell and we should expect to hear from him in 2013. In the meantime Campbell is endeavouring to get a guest speaker for the November meeting.

New Secretary

As the maximum tenure for a secretary of FODCR is two years, Campbell Miles could not continue as secretary without contravening the constitution.

It is, therefore, a pleasure to announce that we have a candidate for secretary, Maryann

Hawthorn. Please come to the October meeting to welcome Maryanne to the position.

Mynahs

Recently The Age published an article about the Indian Mynah, relating to its pest status and the displacement it causes to native wildlife. These birds are generally a problem around Melbourne and in Damper Creek they have displaced sugar gliders and other native species from their nesting boxes and have become a nuisance to adjoining property owners. "The Age" article suggests that traps are effective and our President is currently investigating suitable designs and a strategy for trapping these birds in properties adjoining Damper Creek.

Working Bees

Last month's working bee in the Tarella Dve / Swayfield Rd area was successful in removing a large quantity of ivy and blackberries. Work will continue in this area for the October working bee. The area is challenging due to its steepness and density of vegetation but with the majority of the ivy and blackberry removed it will now be much easier to patrol the area to remove regrowth. Management of this area will be a long-term challenge.

Council Related Issues

The dumping of rubbish at Stephensons Road carpark is an ongoing issue that has been reported to the council. Council is aware of the issue and is awaiting allocation of suitable equipment for its removal.

Annual BBQ

Don't forget to reserve Dec 2nd for our annual BBQ. This year we will be holding it at the end

of Richard Rd as the Alice St area revegetation is making this area impractical.

Important dates to remember:

	October	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 24th - 7:30pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun Oct 28th 10-00am to 12-30pm	Tarella Dve steps
	November	
Meeting:	Wed 28th- 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
BBQ	Sun Dec 2nd 10-00am to 12-30 pm	Richard Rd
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Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra Catchment.

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The Newsletter of

FRIENDS OF DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

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