

# DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

August 2019

The newsletter of  
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Editorial:

Visitors to Damper Creek will not fail to notice that over the last couple of weeks the bush has come alive with the flowering of the wattles. Wattles comprise one of the most significant groups of plants in the Australian landscape. So iconic are they that the "Golden Wattle" was chosen as the nation's floral emblem. The nation's sporting teams invariably wear green and gold in recognition of the significance of this group of plants. September 1<sup>st</sup> is "Wattle Day", a cause for national celebration!

Wattles get some bad press on two grounds.

Firstly, they are closely associated with hay fever. Studies have shown that wattles are not to blame for the unfortunate hayfever symptoms. One simple observation helps to confirm this, wattle pollen is heavy and falls straight to the ground, often carpeting the ground beneath wattle trees. The vast majority of hayfever is caused by grasses, predominantly ryegrass. Grasses have light pollen which can be carried vast distances by the wind. So, don't blame wattles for your hayfever!

Secondly, they have a reputation for being short lived. There is some justification to this reputation and it is found in the role wattles and similar plants play in the Australian environment. Wattles are pioneer species, they are amongst the first plants to emerge after a bushfire or other ground disturbance. The seeds of wattles have a hard coat which can protect the seed for long periods of time, decades or even longer. This hard coat cracks under the influence of fire or mechanical damage such as bulldozers. Seeds can lay dormant in the soil even if there are no obvious parent plants in the vicinity. Following fire sometimes a monoculture of wattles will emerge, thousands of plants suddenly dominating the land. At this stage another characteristic of wattles comes into play. Wattles have nitrogen fixing nodules on their roots, increasing soil fertility and preparing the ground for those species which take over after the wattles die. Over the years the vegetation matures and the wattle seeds wait patiently for the next cataclysm.

Not all wattles are short lived. You would do well to research species before planting one in your garden. Some species grow very fast and very large and then die due to insect attack or just old age. Trees such as the Black Wattle and Silver Wattle fall into this category and these trees can be seen in Damper Creek Reserve at all stages of their life cycle. They grow too large for a suburban garden so best to enjoy them in the bush. However, at last count there are over a thousand wattles endemic to

Australia and they cover an amazing range of growth habits. Many are small plants, even prostrate, that are easily managed to suit the suburban garden. On the other hand, the Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) can, under forest conditions, grow into a 30 metre giant, a long lived plant with strong, durable timber prized for furniture making. Here are some wattles currently in flower in Damper Creek Reserve.



Silver Wattle



Hedge Wattle



Spreading Wattle



Myrtle Wattle



Prickly Moses



Golden Wattle

## City of Monash August Council Meeting

At the August meeting a motion from the Environmental Advisory Committee will be debated which recommends Council declares a Climate Emergency. If passed, the motion would highlight a range of local environmental issues and lead to an increase in prioritisation of these matters.

The meeting will start at 7pm on Tuesday 27th August 2019, and if there are interested parties in the public gallery then Cr Fergeus has suggested that he will move to have the motion brought forward for debate so people don't have to wait around.

It's always helpful to have members of the public in the gallery when potentially controversial debates are taking place, and even to have members of the public ask questions of Council. Instructions for lodging a question can be found here:

<https://www.monash.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Council/Council-Meetings/Public-Question-Time>

It would also be helpful to lobby Councillors regarding this debate.

**Please consider attending the meeting as numbers in the gallery have a significant impact on the debate.**

**This Golden Whistler** was spotted in Damper Creek by Ray who lives in St Johns Wood Road. Other sightings of this species have been reported.



**Vale - Ray Anderson** - after recent years of ill health fought bravely with good humour. The Friends extend their deepest sympathy to Jill, Stephen, Kate and families.

Ray, a former school teacher, skilled in IT, a bridge player, a keen conservationist, a biologist, photographer, and traveller/adventurer, lived near Damper Creek Reserve for over fifty years. Many would have known him in the past walking in the Reserve with his beloved dog Mishka. RIP.

**July Guest Speaker:**

Dr Lindy Lumsden entertained us with stories the fascinating lives of microbats. These tiny creatures are almost unknown to most of us but they exist in large numbers and perform a valuable service by devouring up to half their body weight in mosquitos per night. As if Lindy's entertaining presentation was not sufficient, she then produced several of the creatures to give us a "close encounter" experience. We can encourage these creatures by installing a specialised nesting box and leaving dead trees to provide habitat.

**Bushcrew activities:**

The park road nature strips have benefited from additional plantings of indigenous plants. More trees have been planted along the upper path behind Park road along with numerous ground covers. This will eventually rejuvenate the area surrounding the park bench where a mature tree was removed last year.

The practice of auguring holes before planting has been very successful with a record number of plants planted on National Tree day at Scotchman's creek.

The use of prickly plants to provide habitat for small birds will be considered for an area surrounding the "duck pond".

**For Your diary**

Tuesday August 27<sup>th</sup> Monash Council meeting 7-30 at the Council offices.

Wednesday August 28<sup>th</sup> AGM 7-30pm at Alvie hall

Sunday September 1st Working bee 10.00am to 12-30 location Damper Creek East (behind the bowling club)

Guest speaker for November meeting:

Campbell Miles "An expeditionary cruise to Alaska, British Columbia and Haida Gwai" -

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