

Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley Inc

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2005

THE MAINTENANCE CREW

FMV's intrepid maintenance crew are out doing their bit and don't they look good in their new fluoro jackets printed with Friends' title and kindly sponsored by Moonee Valley Council. On Wednesday mornings, Ian, Bronwyn and Lorraine can be found somewhere by the Maribyrnong spraying, planting, watering and other jobs to follow up the riverside improvement projects. At Grimes Flat (Mel 27 E9) they have had to install taller tree guards to outwit their resident wallaby who had taken a liking to the newly planted trees.

At the Avondale Heights escarpment the team has removed a stand of English Broom, enhancing a planting done there by girls of Penlight Essen don Grammar School some time ago. Close by, in a rocky recess between the Tea Gardens and Canning Street Oval, an educational garden financed by City West Water is being planned and preparations are under way. In view of the liability of this rocky cliff to rockfalls, FMV is negotiating with MV council to have the surface made safe.

Despite the drought, which is not wanting to go away, it is heartening to walk beside the river and over the escarpment and see young trees almost a metre tall in places. Some other sites are being prepared for plantings later in the year.

Weed control is an ongoing effort for the trio and they see a noticeable decrease in dreaded scotch thistle and aniseed/fennel in the areas they tend. If you have some spare time on Wednesday mornings and would like some physical activity, you would be very welcome to join the team. Just contact Ian (9336 1550), Bronwyn (9317 8819) or Lorraine (9317 7718) to check where they will be working. Fun and morning tea guaranteed - so they say.

Over recent months our vice president Ian has been out and about promoting the Friends and the work we have been doing. Groups he has addressed include Essendon Strathmore Lodge, St Marks Men's Fellowship, Doutta Galla Lodge and the Kandistag Rover group.

PLANTINGS

Special effort this year will be at Grimes' Flat and there will be two planting days - SUNDAY 28 AUGUST and SATURDAY 10 SEPTEMBER. 10AM TO 1PM AS USUAL. COME ALONG AND BRING SOME WILLING HELPERS TOO.

PIPEMAKERS PARK UPDATE

With the help of a dedicated work team Pipemakers Park is looking good. The wetlands now have water in them, thanks to recent rains and the frogs and birds are happy.

Much pruning has been done allowing better visibility throughout the park and some restoration work has begun on a mosaic near the wetland area. A local group of disabled people together with work for the dole teams are assisting in general garden maintenance. Most of the planted areas have been mulched to prevent further weed invasion so that maintenance in the park can be reduced.

As with most re-vegetation sites, management of weed re-growth is the key to fostering the establishment of recently planted seedlings. Without regular weeding in the first few years, the indigenous plants would be overwhelmed and lost. With weeding, the plants mature and may even self-sow in a year or two, making the job so much easier.

Environmental work over the past year has included maintenance of the History of the Land garden and the surroundings of the historic buildings. The "Envirofund" Project works recently completed were mainly throughout the wetlands and the riverbank and escarpment. Signage has been updated and an indigenous nursery has been established. Further applications for project funding have been lodged with State and Federal agencies and we look forward to more resources being available in the coming months.

The vision of key people in the past in procuring the wonderful asset, Pipemakers Park, is now beginning to show its value to the community though residential development is encroaching on its boundaries. "Friends of Pipemakers Park" meet and undertake work throughout the park on Sunday afternoons between 1 and 4pm. If you have some time we would love to see you. Join us and learn about our wonderful asset. Telephone the Living Museum on 9318-3544 for information or just turn up at 1pm on Sunday to meet Brett Hosie the Environmental Projects Coordinator.

MARIBYRNONG WILDLIFE CHECKLIST

The Maribyrnong Wildlife Checklist that has been on the website (fmvonline.com) since late 2004 was initiated by the Afton Street group. The list that they prepared was assembled from observations of the piece of land that is becoming the Afton Street Conservation Park. But FMV has interests beyond that block; essentially from the confluence of Deep Creek and Jacksons Creek to Westgate. Ultimately perhaps for this project we might set the upstream boundaries at the upper catchment, around Macedon. Time will tell how it develops. Clearly if other interested groups become involved it will result in a more comprehensive survey. It may well result in the recording of species that are new to the area and possibly in the description of species new to science. Who knows?

The "Afton Street" list gives us essentially birds and mammals but perhaps we should be planning to include the major groups of all plants and animals including those that dwell in the river. It is easy to see that the scope of this proposal is way beyond the expertise and resources of the FMV but at this stage we should consider where we start, then build on that. There is a wealth of interest and knowledge 'out there' but if we are to make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge of our river then we must collaborate wherever possible, passing data both in and out of the group so that for example we exchange observations and records with specialist groups like the Australian Plants Society and Bird-watching Australia.

To set out to record ALL the different types of plants and animals present would be unrealistic but we can establish an ever-expanding checklist, starting with the obvious then adding the unusual or noteworthy. From here, FMV needs your feedback which can be through any of the committee members. PLEASE let us know whether you think it is a good idea and whether we should go ahead with it or how it could be managed.

FMV AGM 2005

In view of current interest in the 'floodability' of the lower Maribyrnong in relation to the effects of the bund wall proposed to flood-proof the Flemington Racecourse, our guest presentation is very timely. Maribyrnong resident David Sheridan will be showing his movie of the 1973 Flood and giving his account of it. AGM business will be at 7.30 on Wednesday August 3rd and the "Flood" will be on at about 8pm. All members welcome. See you there.

John Upsher, Ed.