



# *Newsletter*

## *No. 28 Autumn, 2013*

### **Friends of Williamstown Wetlands Inc**

#### **President's Report 2012**

The rain continued to nurture our plantings in the past year, so once again we did a good deal of pruning so that paths were clear and plants could flourish. To make space for new plantings in the Arboretum, we needed to remove some of the original saltbush plantings and prepare the ground for new species. More posts and signs were needed, of course, and funding for these came from Parks Victoria grants. Hobsons Bay City Council supported us, too, in many ways – providing mulch, signing us up on workdays so that we had insurance cover, and publishing our Arboretum Brochure. Melbourne Water assisted us with Water Watch, which has now accumulated a considerable body of data, and Melbourne Water staff again helped with a frog night where we learned more about the fauna and heard them carousing in the school wetland.

Clean Up Australia, concentrating on the Paisley-Challis Wetland in early March, was very successful and our numbers were swelled by the presence of Third Williamstown Scouts led by their Akela Helen Deahl, and assisted by their parents. Council backed our efforts by arranging for a skip and removal of the ton or so of rubbish that we collected. The Scout Group worked with us again on the May workday when several of their members organized and took part in the work with the aim of earning badges for their efforts.

After several years of discussions between us and Council, and one budgeted but unimplemented

project, we eventually saw the beginning of the vegetation management plans for the Jawbone Reserve and the adjacent plantings on the Rifle Range Estate. While this was going on, residents' angst over sight-lines had caused them to poison several Eucalypts near our notice board and along Rae's Hill adjacent to the growing development at Williams Cove. In related action, we noted that the developer (Stonehenge) had removed a number of plants from the lake shore, and learned that Council has required reinstatement of those plantings. We hope that establishment of the plan, and a mechanism for calm discussion and sensible change will help to avoid future examples of selfish vandalism. Members had the opportunity to respond to the draft plan and to attend the community meeting in June where it was discussed. Further discussions should take place before the plan is completed and we hope to see it adopted by Council in the second half of 2012.

We were also consulted about a plan by engineering consultants assisting Exxon Mobil to remediate contaminated ground water from the pipeline leak near Champion Road. Under the proposal, saline, but otherwise decontaminated water will be diverted down stormwater drains which discharge into the Challis Drain immediately upstream of the Paisley-Challis Wetland pond. Since the pond is already a saline due to seawater intrusion, and plants there are salt-tolerant, we had no objection to the proposal.

We contributed to planning, with Council, of a grant proposal to Victoria's Department of Sustainability and Environment for funds to construct a path on the western fringe of the Paisley-Challis Wetland. A path parallel to the southern section of Millers Road would encourage

responsible access to the small bird hide that overlooks the Kororoit Creek estuary.

Over the years we have accumulated a large number of documents, including minutes and submissions prepared by the group (originally Friends of the Rifle Range), and consideration has been given to archiving this important document collection. Documents such as major reports are publicly accessible in libraries. Many of our own documents are held in electronic form which permits easy archiving. Others will need to be scanned, and this should be possible at the University of Melbourne without charge. This will take time, as will the gathering and sorting our holdings so we can decide how best to manage them.

With help from Colleen Miller, Marilyn has set up a website for us and is slowly enriching its content.

As in earlier years, the committee worked smoothly and efficiently in organizing the year's activities, and I commend our Secretary, Sandra Thorn, Vice President, Richard Leppitt and Treasurer Marilyn Olliff for their efforts.

**Ian D. Rae**  
**July 2012**

## Preserving Our Past

We have accumulated documents covering the 25 years since the development of the Merritt (Williamstown) Rifle Range began, and a serious effort is underway to sort out what should be kept, to make digital images of documents and to store these in ways that make the information accessible to anyone who might wish to explore this suburban environment narrative. The advice we have received from archivists is that making electronic copies does not mean that the paper copies can be discarded (as we once thought), so we will still need to find a home for the original documents, which would occupy about one metre of shelf space.

What we examined so far includes original correspondence with state government departments and agencies such as the then Urban Land Authority (now after several name changes, Places Victoria), local government and other interested parties. This largely concerns the development of the Rifle Range Estate and the setting aside of land with conservation values that eventually became the Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve. We also have documents describing the community consultations that were held and the formation of a support group, first entitled Friends of the Rifle Range but later Friends of Williamstown Wetlands Inc. The efforts of people involved in those early days are clearly described and deserve to be remembered. Further correspondence generated in the 20+ years of our group's existence show how our representatives were involved with state and local government in consultation and decision-making. Outcomes such as the construction and operation of the nursery at the nearby school, and successive work-for-the-dole programmes, show the effectiveness of our involvement.

There is also a near-complete run of minutes of Friends' meetings, membership and committee lists, and periodic newsletters, together with drafts and final versions of many brochures produced over the years. Some more recent documents are already held in digital format.

Accompanying these 'ongoing' records is an extensive photograph collection, including paper and electronic copies.

At this stage, a large part of the document collection has been examined. Extraneous material (including duplicates) is marked for disposal, while other documents that have been collected by various members and officebearers are being organised into categories and timelines. Truly a work in progress, and one that will take a while to complete.



## Waterwatch program

In 2012 we continued to be part of Melbourne Water's Waterwatch program and measured the water quality for turbidity, dissolved oxygen, phosphates, ammonia and pH at about three monthly intervals. The results were similar to those for 2011, indicating that the water quality is reasonably good.

We can get a good idea of water quality by looking at the variety of tiny creatures that survive in our wetlands. One of the most interesting activities in the Waterwatch program is scooping up bugs from the water, particularly around the reeds growing in the shallows. During 2012 we found plenty of water boatman, backswimmers, freshwater shrimps, flatworms and occasionally damselfly larvae.

Freshwater shrimps, damselfly and dragonfly larvae are quite sensitive to a reduction in water quality, so are a useful indicator of local conditions.

In our most recent catch we found lots of water boatmen and freshwater shrimp.

**Water boatmen** grow up to about 12mm long, have long paddle-like legs for swimming, and are very common in our wetlands. They are true bugs, in the family *Corixidae*, and so don't have gills. They breathe at the surface and often carry a bubble of air when they are underwater. Water boatmen can tolerate some reduction in water quality. Find out more about water boatmen at <http://www.biodiversitysnapshots.net.au/BDRS/public/speciesInfo.htm?spid=702&mode=fieldguide>

**Freshwater shrimp** *Paratya australiensis* can grow to 5cm or more. The ones we caught were only about 2-3cms. They are more sensitive to water quality than water boatmen, and so it is good to see them thriving in our local wetlands. They are almost transparent but easily recognizable. You can find out more about them at

<http://www.biodiversitysnapshots.net.au/BDRS/public/speciesInfo.htm?spid=826>

cont. p4





We also caught two mosquito fish *Gambusia holbrooki*. These fish were introduced to Australian waters in 1925 to combat mosquitos. Unfortunately they compete with native fish and can quickly dominate a local ecosystem once introduced. In 1995 they were declared a Noxious Aquatic Species under the Fisheries Act and must not be returned to the water if caught.



*Red-necked stint*



*Common green shank*



*Sharp-tailed sandpiper*

## Migratory Waders

There are three species of migratory waders commonly found at Jawbone Reserve. There are:

- Red-necked Stint
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
- Common Greenshank

They are usually found:

- on the mudflats in Altona Bay at low tide
- in the saltmarsh or on the mudflats either side of the boardwalk
- in small numbers on the lake shore

There has been a serious reduction in numbers of birds and numbers of species that migrate to Australia. The East Asia – Australia Flyway is the recognized route flown between Siberia and Australia. Large scale coastal reclamation projects in the Yellow Sea (the major refuelling stop for many species) are destroying critical stopover sites in the flyway.

In Australia too valuable feeding areas are lost to:

- Coastal development
- Draining of wetlands
- Disturbance by people, dogs and vehicles

Consequently less birds and fewer species are spending their southern summers in Port Phillip and in particular at Jawbone Reserve.

# Friends of Williamstown Wetlands Inc

## Activity Days for 2013

### 10.00am until 12.00pm



**Meet at the Arboretum, Jawbone Reserve. Melways Ref : 55 J10**

#### **Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup>**

Bird Walk followed by some construction work to build a path and a BBQ.

Meet at 10:00am at the Anglers Club, corner of Maddox Road and Grey Reserve Road, Melways 55F8.

#### **Sunday May 26<sup>th</sup>**

Planting in Paisley Challis Wetlands  
Meet at the Anglers Club, corner of Maddox Road and Grey Reserve Road, Melways 55F8.

#### **Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup>**

Water watch - testing the water quality and catching some water bugs.

Maintenance at the Arboretum

Meet and Register at the Arboretum, Rifle Range Reserve, Williamstown, Melways Ref: 55J10

#### **Sunday July 28<sup>th</sup> National Tree Day. For more information check out**

<http://treeday.planetark.org/about/>

Meet and Register in the car park at Newport Lakes Park, Newport, Melways Ref: 55G3

#### **Sunday August 25<sup>th</sup>**

Planting and path construction work in the Paisley Challis Wetlands.

Meet at the Anglers Club, corner of Maddox Road and Grey Reserve Road, Melways 55F8.

#### **Sunday September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Planting and maintenance at the Arboretum

Meet and Register at the Arboretum, Rifle Range Reserve, Williamstown, Melways Ref: 55J10

#### **Sunday October 27<sup>th</sup> Bird and Plant Walk and Talk at the Arboretum.**

Meet and Register at the Arboretum, Rifle Range Reserve, Williamstown, Melways Ref: 55J10

#### **Sunday November 24<sup>th</sup>**

Evening Frog Watch - a short talk on our local frogs and a walk around the ponds.

Meet and Register at Williamstown High School Nursery, Bayview Street, Williamstown, Melways Ref: 55K10

**Sunday July 28<sup>th</sup> – Family Day  
Planting - National Tree Day  
and Barbecue lunch at  
Newport Lakes Park**

**This is also the occasion of our**

**AGM**

**at 1230**

**(don't miss out!)**

**Nominations are called for positions on the Committee. Our rules indicate that half of the committee stand down each year. Their positions are thus vacant for any nominees. However, they are willing to continue should there be no nominees for the positions. A NOMINATION FORM CAN BE FOUND ON THE BACK PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

## ***Fans of Frogs***

The final activity day for 2012 saw members of Friends of Williamstown Wetlands along with a group of people of various ages gather together to learn some interesting facts about frogs. Facilitated by Andrew Webster from Hobsons Bay City Council with the assistance of FOWW Vice President Richard Leppitt, the evening provided information on frogs in general along with facts about specific species.

### **Did you Know:**

- . While frogs have lungs and nostrils, they breathe primarily through their skin. Lungs are used as a “booster” when frogs are active on land but they breathe solely through their skin when in water or buried in soil.
- . Frogs protruding eyes enable them to see in several directions at the same time.
- . There are many different kinds of frogs. Each species has a distinctive call to ensure that the right mate is attracted.



. The Common Froglet (*Crinia signifera*) is wide spread across Eastern Australia. While the colouration and pattern of this frog varies, it can be identified by its distinctive, cricket-like, chirping call.

. The Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) once common around Melbourne is now so

rare that it is classified as endangered. This frog's green and gold warty skin make it easily recognisable.



. The Pobblebonk or Eastern Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerili*) is common around Melbourne and its musical call, reminiscent of a banjo can often be heard of evening at the wetlands adjoining Williamstown High School Bayview street campus.

. You can visit [www.frogs.melbournewater.com.au](http://www.frogs.melbournewater.com.au) for further information.

. Friends of Williamstown Wetlands welcome you to join them for a variety of activities and fun. Visit our website [www.friendsofwilliamstownwetlands.org.au](http://www.friendsofwilliamstownwetlands.org.au) for a list of our 2013 activity days.

### Friends Visit to Ricketts Point Marine Care Sanctuary – End of Year Celebration

Near perfect weather conditions set the backdrop for a trip to Ricketts Point on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December for members of the Willy Wetland committee. After a successful visit by the Friends of Ricketts Point Marine Care Sanctuary to Jawbone Reserve in August 2012, FoWW decided to hit the return button and take the opportunity to reciprocate, as part of our annual Christmas celebration.

Upon arrival we were introduced to local FRPMCSG members who proceeded to provide an informative commentary about historical aspects of the local area, particularly with regard first (indigenous) peoples' communities and the likely impact of western settlement.

During a tour of the site, we noted some significant plant species naturally occurring in the region, in addition to rock fossils, and various species of seaweed located about the foreshore. We learnt about ongoing issues for the group in relation to revegetation management around the dunes and foreshore area which now affect direct access to and from the beach, in addition to the continued impact of erosion by storms and tide surges.

It was interesting to note interpretative signage along the walking path, highlighting the significance of artists from the Heidelberg school, who gave credence to the site with their land and sea scape impressionist paintings around the time of the late 1800's. You could see why, views across the reef to the horizon were wonderful. We also learnt about a well-kept secret. That snorkelling in this vicinity is paramount in such a diversely rich marine environment that is almost on your doorstep. For further details check out the web link- <http://www.marinecare.org.au/index.php?view=article>HYPERLINK "http://www.marinecare.org.au/index.php?view=article&id=70"&HYPERLINK "http://www.marinecare.org.au/index.php?view=article&id=70" id=70

To top the morning off, we all enjoyed lunch on the deck at the beach café after a brief but edifying bird walk. In all, wonderful way to wind up the year

RPMCS is located just off beach Rd, near the Beaumaris Yacht Club.



## Shorebirds 2020

On behalf of Friends of Williamstown Wetlands I have agreed to participate in Birdlife Australia's Shorebirds 2020 project. This project, for our group, involves counting quarterly all shorebirds and related species at the mouth of Kororoit Creek. Shorebird count data aids conservation by highlighting population trends and identifying threats to shorebirds.

Shorebirds are usually found near intertidal habitats or inland wetlands and feed by wading in shallow water and probing wet mud or sand with their bills. Australia is home to 18 species of resident shorebirds. Every summer a further 38 shorebird species regularly migrate to Australia from their northern hemisphere breeding grounds.

If you would like to help with the count (no experience necessary) or need further information please contact :

Richard Leppitt

0418505120

Leppittrichard4@gmail.com

**Vegetation is not just to make the area attractive: it also serves an ecological purpose. A member makes this comment following the removal of some plants after complaints from residents.**



Thought maybe my quail photos would remind the Council and local residents of the importance of the vegetation. These photos were taken from the park bench near the FOWW display board opposite the arboretum. I was just sitting there a few weeks ago when this family of quails came out of the bushes behind me and crossed the bike path to the arboretum. Obviously the vegetation between the playground and the bike path is very important for them.



# Friends of Williamstown Wetlands

Nomination Form  
Committee of Management 2013-2014

I hereby nominate (Name).....

For the position of .....

Proposed by: .....

Seconded by:.....

I accept this nomination for the above position

(Signature of nominee).....Date.....

(Return to Secretary

Friends of Williamstown Wetlands Inc.  
 If not delivered return to:  
 20 Smith Ave. Williamstown 3016




***SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE FOR THE YEAR 2013 -14***

***FRIENDS OF WILLIAMSTOWN WETLANDS -- ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION***

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSTCODE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TELEPHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Receipt Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Send your \$15(fam), \$10.00(sing.) or \$5(con.) subscription to Treasurer or Membership Secretary.