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NEWS



LETTER

ISSUE 15 for DEC/JAN 2003.

News items for publication to Bill ed. at gempark@netspace.net.au or to PO Box 91 Emerald before 24th of each month. This and the previous 10 issues are published on the internet at the FELP web site to be found at www.emeraldlakepark.com.au. Click on the frog logo!

EDITORIAL.

December began with a spurt of activity at the park. We have two extra assistant parks officers in Danielle and Niomi, they are doing a great job too. The sealing of the roadway from the rail crossing to the bus loop has been welcomed by all stakeholders. This completes the entry circuit to the Puffing Billy Car Park giving smooth and dust free access. The roadway is complete with curbing on the left terminating in a catch box and drain beneath. This is a great investment in infrastructure and client value adding, thanks to all concerned and to Brian Foster for following it through. When the road was completed the adjacent indigenous bushland soon looked refreshed in spite of the lack of rain. For the many of us who enjoy our native bushland, increased utility and enjoyment of these areas will now be possible. Hopefully when time and funds allow it, picnic facilities and maintenance of these areas will improve.



January continued with plenty of activity, The Waterslide was opened on Boxing Day and is being run by our Kiosk operator Craig Curry. A nearby van has been installed for ticketing and food services, while a fully qualified attendant assists with monitoring the slide. Richards wife finally had a baby boy, "Max", both are well and doing fine. Richard took the week off to help out at home. We had Steve as Park Ranger for the week, kicking off the installation of ten new picnic tables. These neat metal and timber models were made up by Brian's group and are a welcome addition. Much work has been done around the Kiosk and Waterslide area, most recently involving some heavy lopping of a large dead tree overhanging the slide. Works on the multi use path have not yet begun but moves to integrate its design a little more smoothly with existing infrastructure have been undertaken, with input from Brian and his crew. Finally a meeting was held to keep everyone up to date on the Emergency Management arrangements for the park. Great work Guys and Gals, thanks and keep it going!

PET PENGUINS

A man drives to a petrol station and has his tank filled up. While doing this the attendant spots two penguins sitting on the back seat of the car. He asks the driver, "What's up with the penguins in the back seat?" The man in the car says, "I found them but don't know what to do with them." The attendant ponders a bit then says, "You should take them to the zoo." "Yeah, that's a good idea," says the man and drives away. The next day the man with the car is back at the same petrol station. The attendant sees the penguins are still in the back seat. "Hey, they're still here! I thought you were going to take them to the zoo!" "Oh, I did," says the driver, "and we had a swell time. Today I'm taking them to the beach."

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE PARK

Echidna Sightings

Early December while walking in the evening we sighted an echidna foraging high up in the newly mown western slopes grass. We watched for a little while as he continued searching for grubs or ants, quite oblivious of our presence. Since then we have seen several more echidna in the hills area, it seems the warm weather has brought them out of hiding this year.

Tortoise Sighting

On about the 10th December a tortoise was seen along the east bank of the lake. Later on Max and Christine spotted it again beside the roadway and moved it to the lake edge. Apparently appreciating the move it scurried off into the water and disappeared.

Visiting Birds

Noel has reported seeing a couple of new birds on the lake. Unfortunately I have forgotten their names one I think was a dusky? swamp hen. A sole Cormorant was also spotted about the same time. The new pair of Little Grieb has darker head and neck than our original pair, so I'm not sure if this is the same species? Meanwhile the Magpies were busy chasing the Currajong's out of their territory in the bus loop area. Swooping and following them at high speed down towards the lake. It is interesting that they tolerate people well, while they occasionally dive bomb the dogs. I guess they know on which side their bread is buttered.

ANIMAL DECISIONS

Q How does a dog tell the time?

A. By looking at the ball.

Seriously dogs can make decisions! Each day Jodie (my dog) decides which of several different circuits we will take for our walk. Sometimes even choosing Wright Forrest to the Lake Park. Surprisingly when playing ball she will also decide when to quit. So while playing together with her black friend, it becomes a competition as to who will determine "It's quitting time." Both enjoy having that power over the game, and I do too.

VANDALISM

Touch wood, vandalism hasn't been too bad this season. Some insight into teenage behavior is becoming clearer with further knowledge of brain development.

The areas of the brain that monitor and control or moderate our behavior are the "frontal lobes." These areas, situated behind

the temples are among the last to mature and in teenagers are not "fully connected". Their ability to moderate extreme behavior or empathise with others on whom their behavior might impact must be developed. It is very important for a child to have appropriate guidance during this period of developmental growth. This is necessary to instill a normal sense of where to draw the line and when and how to empathise with others. Teachers have great influence on their pupils in this respect and I am sure they do their best to help out.

It is unfortunate that they may be the sole influence and stabilising factor in many young lives. Bullying and Vandalism then may be the result of inadequate guidance in teenage development.

PARK WEATHER

The warm weather was expected but to get a whole month without rain was a bit stressful. January began with about 10 - 14 mm around new years day and we then had to wait until the 31st for the welcome 21 - 24 mm in the Lake Park region. Fortunately most plants survived and there is still a bit of green in the grass here and there. Temperatures topped at 40+ degrees a little cooler than the 44.1 top temp in Melbourne on one of the hottest Saturdays we've had for years.

Elsewhere in Victoria fires reached the ACT and NSW with some serious losses in Canberra and other towns. Our thoughts go out to those that have lost their homes and stock in this disastrous season. With the cool Summer last year this comes as a bit of a shock and many have stirred to clearing up around their homes. Some might think it a bit late now but I guess it is only too late when your home is on fire.



Footbridge at Sunrise (7.00am) February 2001

WEBSITE POPULARITY

Our website continues to get plenty of hits ie. over 2330 since its inception. Some changes have been made to keep it up to date, with the waterslide attraction added. Frequent updating and improvements seem to be keeping it popular with visitors. Any ideas you may have are welcomed and will be considered. Just send me an email. Recently Emerald Bell Real Estate published a glossy printed Newsletter "Emerald & Surrounds Close Up" featuring Emerald Lake Park and listing our site. Take a look at this, it is wonderful publicity for the park and a great example of the Community working together.

WORKING BEES 2003.

We had some of the parks visitors helping at our Mid January Working Bee, when we were spreading mulch over the grounds adjacent to the Puffing Billy Car Park. Many thanks to the boys and their Mum for this help (good frontal lobe training). Our Working bee on the 1st Saturday of February was filled by carting mulch to the Environment Center garden and to the Hebe hedge area and spreading it. Barrows, forks and rakes were the order of the day.

For the first 6 months of this year the scheduled dates are as follows. Times continue to be from 9.00am to 11.00am with a cuppa afterwards. Every little bit helps so don't worry if you can only attend occasionally.

<p>January 2003 Saturday nil. Sunday 12th. <i>complete</i> Thursday 16th. <i>complete</i></p>	<p>April 2003 Saturday 5th. Sunday 13th. Thursday 17th.</p>
<p>February Saturday 1st. <i>complete</i> Sunday 9th. Thursday 20th.</p>	<p>May Saturday 3rd. Sunday 11th. Thursday 15th.</p>
<p>March Saturday 1st. Sunday 9th. Thursday 20th.</p>	<p>June Saturday 7th. Sunday 15th. Thursday 19th.</p>

Working Bee Priorities

Mulching of garden beds will continue even though the warmer weather is with us. The chip mulch could be better distributed in preparation for this so that we can get the most out of our short couple of hours. The next target is the Poolside BBQ garden, Sunday 9th. Hopefully when we do get rain from now on it will be a bit more soaking than some of our past showers. We need about a millimeter for every inch of mulch depth just to penetrate to the soil. Interestingly the amount of moisture in the air is significantly higher in Summer with moderate humidity. This potentially can provide heavier falls when precipitated, we can only remain hopeful.

THE NEXT FELP MEETING.

The next FELP meeting, Will be held on Sunday 11th February at 11.15am in the Environment Center or nearby open air after the Working Bee.

NEWSLETTER CONTENT.

PS. I take total responsibility for all unauthored articles and the Editorial content in this and all previous issues of our newsletter. However I could do with some help with material relevant to the park for publication. If you have an interesting item, point of view or comment about the park please send them in.
 Bill Whitbourn (editor).