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NEWS



LETTER

ISSUE 16 for FEBRUARY 2003.

News items for publication to Bill 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.

Even more activity in the park this month with 9 helpers from a State Govt. Community Jobs Program. The second of an annual scheme in which Puffing Billy have participated. This year additional people were offered, some of whom were kindly made available to the park. With direction from our experienced parks officers, they have been busy trimming trees, clearing out excessive undergrowth, mulching and other jobs on the teams to-do list. On completion of their 13 weeks they will each be issued a Certificate of Horticulture. The park has never looked so good with all this work in progress, especially now that regular mowing of the grassed surrounds is well established.

Other surprises include new BBQ tops for many of our older well worn BBQ's this will add value to the parks amenities. The new picnic tables are already well used by visitors and many of the older ones have been freshened up with a coat of paint.



DINNER

An elderly couple were having dinner at another couple's house and after their meal, the wives left the table to go to the kitchen. The two elderly men were talking, and one says: "Last night we went out to a fabulous new restaurant that I'd highly recommend." The other man says: "What's the name of the restaurant?" The first man thinks long and hard with a furrowed brow, finally saying: "Ah, what is the name of that red flower you give to someone you love?" His friend replies: "A carnation?" "No, no. The other one," the man says. His friend suggest "The poppy?" "No, no, no" growls the man. "You know - the one that is red and has thorns." His friend says: "Do you mean a rose?" "Yes! Thank you!" the first man says. He then turns toward the kitchen and yells: "Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?"

THE PARK AND THE EMERALD FORUM

The Emerald forum planned for March 21st - 23rd. will define the future of Emerald. A preliminary Forum showed environmental issues were most popular and the state of the Park was of concern. Since that time the Park has received renewed interest by Council. Let us hope that this has not been at the expense of other areas in Emerald. Can we expect this effort from Council and State Government to continue? Will this effort extend to other parts of our town? What can we do to ensure this is the case? Come along make your thoughts known, and develop an action plan. Friday 21st 6.00pm, Saturday 9.00am, and Sunday 2.30pm, Food and drinks provided free.

WANDERING DOGS

Stray dogs continue to wander in the park. However these are now detained (tied up) until Bylaws impound them and fine the owners wherever possible. So please spread the word that strays are not welcome in the park. Apart from fencing them in, a suitably entertained dog will be less likely to wander, than one that is bored. I have found they will wait patiently for hours in the expectation of consistently timed regular exercise or play. Richard recently discovered how much dogs love the park too. After introducing his Kelpie to the park with a walk around on his day off. The next day, this smart canine was found waiting when he arrived for work.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE PARK

Deciduous Ornamentals

The ornamental trees are showing early signs of coloring due to the dry summer. I am told this may impact on the autumn colors this season. Of course the recent rain has been welcomed and has greened the hills again. The park is looking great considering the extremes we have suffered.

Mulching

Large quantities of mulch have been generated by the working group due to regular chipping of the tree trimmings. With a little help from the friends this has been spread on gardens and bare ground areas. There is much room now for planting shrubs and prostrate ground cover type plants. The friends are planning some plantings when the time is suitable.

Creek Cleanup

Park Officer Richard has made good use of the working group to cleanup the creek area on lake Tribulation Trail. I'm sure that under Richards expert direction this area will be suitably treated and enhanced. It is already looking great and will become an outstanding feature walk for our nature lovers.

Pool Gardens

Jamie's group have been working on the pool area. A rock edge contains two mulched areas suitably landscaped to make a feature. The trees have been trimmed and this has opened the area to improve the view of the pool itself.

Signage

Many Signs have been replaced and repainted and so the vandalized bits we have become used to are fading away. The Bunnerong Amphitheatre was lost to new visitors over the rise but now is announced prominently by the revived sign along the trail. Thanks to the working group and parks assistants for this.



LIFE ON THE LAKE by Noel

Over the extremely dry summer, a few more bird species have turned up on the lake. While an occasional vagrant Hardhead has been seen, in February there were three of these rather plain little ducks, while the steadily multiplying Purple Swampfens were joined by a pair of Dusky Moorhens and an Eurasian Coot.

Hardhead *Aythya australis*

The only Australian representative of the worldwide Pochard subfamily of diving ducks, Hardheads (aka White-eyed Ducks), are found throughout the country, apart from the arid interior, extending to nearby Pacific Islands and parts of Indonesia. The male has a large rounded head of a rich, dark brown, the color of most of rest of the plumage. The lower breast is white, mottled brown, and the undertail coverts are white - usually the most conspicuous feature while the duck is floating on the water. Another feature of the floating duck is the way the body seems to slope rearwards. In flight the broad white wingbars are revealed. The eye is white and the bill is black with a blue bar near the tip. The female is paler with a brown eye. (The less common Blue-billed Duck has a bill that is all blue, and similar colored plumage, without any white.) Most of the Hardheads food is obtained by diving, and it remains under the water for some time, raking the mud in search of vegetable and animal food.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*

Dusky Moorhens are found in suitable habitats throughout eastern Australia and the far southwest, but not Tasmania, also extending to New Guinea and the Indonesian region. They are similar in appearance to the now familiar Purple Swampfen, though slightly smaller. The red frontal shield is not as conspicuous as that of the swampfen, and the red bill is tipped yellow. The plumage is dark olive-brown above, slate-black below, and the under edges of the tail are white. The legs are greenish-red above the 'knee', dull yellow below. Dusky Moorhens feed on aquatic plants and insects, and while shy in the wild, they are quite common in town lakes.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*,

Related to the moorhens and swampfens, Eurasian Coots are common in suitable habitats throughout Australia and Eurasia. Their plumage is slate-grey, darker on the head, the bill and shield being white. The legs are blue-grey the toes having flattened lobes. The birds feed ashore or in the water, mainly on vegetable matter. They are highly nomadic, traveling long distances, mainly at night.

It will be interesting to see if the birds stay and multiply like the Purple Swampfens. Also noticeable are the Australasian Grebes still in their breeding plumage with a yellow spot between the bill and the yellow eye, and a chestnut stripe down the neck.

A HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS

A history of the friends activities will be put up on the Friends web site shortly. Beryl has put one together for us and with a few added dates will be placed on the site for your perusal. It's a little long for our newsletter. A printed version will be available too.

WORKING BEES 2003.

We should be able to do some planting soon and a list of suitable plants is being organized by our gardening coordinator Peggy. These will be purchased from local nurseries. Some weeding of Montbretia is also planned and further mulching when more material is available.

WORKING BEE DATES

March 2003	June 2003
Saturday 1st.	Saturday 7th.
Sunday 9th.	Sunday 15th.
Thursday 20th.	Thursday 19th.
April	July
Saturday 5th.	Saturday 5th.
Sunday 13th.	Sunday 13th.
Thursday 17th.	Thursday 17th.
May	August
Saturday 3rd.	Saturday 2nd.
Sunday 11th.	Sunday 10th.
Thursday 15th.	Thursday 21st.

WORKING BEE PRIORITIES

Much work is being done by the constant efforts of the Community Jobs Team so the friends will be able to concentrate more on helping to keep the gardens tidy and seasonal mulching. So far we have not made use of the compost that has been generated from two years of Autumn leaf collection. This will require some co-operative help with transport to site by the parks officers if it is to be made use of.

THE NEXT FELP MEETING.

The next FELP meeting, will be held on Sunday 13th April at 11.15am in the Environment Center or nearby open air after the Working Bee.