

President: Bill Whitbourn 5968 3110
Vice Pres:
Secretary: Lee Ferris 5968 6656
Treasurer: Heather Whitbourn 5968 3110

Correspondence to:
C/O P.O. Box 91,
Emerald Vic. 3782
www.vicnet.net.au/felp

NEWS



LETTER

ISSUE 20 for JULY 2003.

Contact Bill with items for inclusion at gempark@netspace.net.au or send to PO Box 91 Emerald before 24th of each month.

View them on [our web site!](#)

EDITORIAL.

There is no doubt that the Emerald community is blessed to have such a large, beautiful and diversely characterized park in its midst

I imagine that most of Melbourne's population would be happy to swap their local park (if they have one) for ours. Emerald residents within walking distance or that use public transport including Puffing Billy are welcome to enter and enjoy their visit for free.

Visitors and locals that arrive in their cars pay a small fee for parking within the grounds. It should be noted that not only has this fee been reduced, from the \$7.00 per car in 1996 but since the meters were installed charges allowed a per hour rate. This meant that locals and others could stay for a short while to walk the dog for a minimum \$2.00 ticket. No increase in visitor numbers was ever recorded since this change. In fact the reduced revenue means that all Cardinia ratepayers increasingly subsidize our park, whether they visit it or not. Thankfully, most Emerald residents that drive to the park seem happy to pay the parking fee. For those that visit every day to exercise or walk the dog, an annual season pass rated at say, 10cents a day should be made available. Perhaps the few that don't visit often or at all use the present fee as an excuse but this doesn't fit with the numbers. Also many that enjoy our park like to help out by joining or supporting our Friends group.

FLORIDA ALERT.

Due to recent heavy rains and flooded conditions, the State of Florida is advising hikers, hunters, fishers and golfers to be on the alert for alligators while in Bay, Seminole, Osceola, Polk, Brevard, Citrus, Duval, Nassau, St. Johns and Orange Counties.

They advise people to wear noise-producing devices such as little bells on their clothing to alert but not startle alligators. They also advise the carrying of pepper spray in case of an encounter.

It is also a good idea to watch for fresh signs of alligator activity. People should recognize the difference between small young alligator and large adult alligator droppings.

Young alligator droppings are smaller and contain fish bones or bird feathers. Adult alligators droppings have little bells in them and smell like pepper spray.

BIG BIRD IS BACK

Each year about this time, we are visited by "big bird". Standing about 50cm high with a white head and an all light grey body. Often it is seen sitting on the pool fence looking out over the lake. Sometimes it is seen with a mate, although we aren't sure if this is the same bird. Jamie has identified the species as a White Faced Heron. Early one morning I spotted the pair circling Lake Nobelius before they perched high up in the Manna Gums as seen from above the Gums amphitheatre. They were making a rather gurgling sounding call to each other. Later in the month I saw the pair again, this time they were foraging in the grass on Chandler Oval where they seemed quite at home.

GIANT MOUNTAIN GRASS

Jamie has discovered several healthy specimens of a native Giant Mountain Grass. This tall grass has seed heads (fine short strands about 20cm long spraying out from the top of the stem with multiple small seed along their length. The seed stems grow to about 2 meters or so tall and are about 1cm diameter at the base. Quite an interesting find as the species is listed as threatened. Its name *Dryas divisa* but not sure of the spelling as an internet search did not reveal anything. Attempts to propagate the grass in Gembrook are being undertaken by one of their groups.

DISCOVER OUR TRAILS

Children are born with a tremendous sense of wonder and need for discovery. They are on a world discovery tour from the moment of birth but from about the age of three they absorb and retain every new experience with amazement and wonder. As adults we might otherwise think we have seen it all and stay at home. World discoverers of all ages are visitors of our park and children that experience that adventure are visitors forever.

I've met many a world discoverer in our park. One man was on his own, he was from South Africa and touring our country just to discover what we had to offer. He'd taken a ride on Puffing Billy and was so impressed with our park that had returned in a hire car for another look around.

The many trails in our park are a rich domain of opportunity for nurture of a child's natural sense of discovery and wonder. What is around the next bend, where does this lead and what animals live here they ask? Teachers naturally cater to the needs of their young charges and visit our park often. They need to know what opportunities there are to satisfy their prodigious curiosity. The friends leaflet was designed to cater for these needs and is available on our web site. The many trails are marked on a map with a number of features to look for.



On the way to the wishing well.

WINTERFEST DISPLAY

Our Winterfest stand was again on display this year and was successful in exposing our groups activities to the public. The weather began well as it was dry and the sun shining in the morning while we set up in the Marquee sponsored by Cardinia Shire. Many thanks to all who helped man the stand, braving the wind that got quite strong in the afternoon. The marquee was a definite plus thanks to the Shire people and James Gibson for organizing this. We nevertheless managed to sign up at least one new member, and sold a few of our badges. On behalf of our group I extend a warm welcome to our newest member Fiona Bridson. Fiona has already contributed by joining the August working bee on Saturday, thank you Fiona.

WEB SITE MOVED

The Friends web pages have been updated and moved to the State Library's Vicnet free hosting server. Links to these pages from the new official web site, thanks to Amy will preserve access from the emeraldlakepark.com.au domain. The web address and direct link to our pages is now "www.vicnet.net.au/~felp" which is a little shorter but a bit more obscure. I don't expect this will impact on visitation in the longer term. As our park pages become redundant they will eventually be removed but for the time being, visitors will automatically be directed to the vicnet pages. The intention being to redirect some of the now prolific search engine listings and user favorites to our new pages. More than 4000 visitors entered our park pages via the domain name during it's 18 months lifetime. Revisits and other accesses were probably not counted in this total, nor were visits directed to our newsletter. When time permits there will be some additions to continue to raise interest in our group, our aims and our park.

RAIN WONDERFUL RAIN!

The rain in the park area was very welcome in July. Early in the month there was much concern that the park might suffer from the continued drought. However the total for the month, about 122mm, was the best rain we have seen for many months. We are now getting some significant runoff, the creeks are flowing strongly and the lake is a little higher. Our Wishing Well unfortunately has not filled! Normally has about 1 meter of water, we were sure the drought was to blame. It is now clear that the feed from the spring is blocked and some maintenance is required. I expect this will follow shortly as current plans for improving this feature progress.



The Emerald Lake Park Wishing Well.

WORKING BEES.

Working bees for July have been devoted to the removal of weed species in the area below the Puffing Billy line on the West border of the park. Quite a bit of Spanish Heath has already been removed and piled up for disposal.



So for July, in spite of being interrupted somewhat by the rain we managed 18 working hours. Thanks to, Peggy Stonehouse, Leo Stauber and Liam, Sheila Hampson, and Heather and Bill Whitbourn a worthwhile effort.

There is still a bit more Spanish Heath remaining in this area so we plan continue with it's removal for a few more WB's next month (August). Also some planting assistance to the parks winter works program is planned. Tools required are saws, secateurs, Gloves Spades, herbicide and rakes.

WORKING BEE DATES - 2hours only.

August. Saturday 2nd. 9.00am Sunday 10th. 9.00am Thursday 21st. 1.30pm	November. Saturday 1st. 9.00am Sunday 9th. 9.00am Thursday 20th. 1.30pm
September. 2003 Saturday 6th. 9.00am Sunday 14th. 9.00am Thursday 18th. 1.30pm	December. Annual FELP BBQ the date to be announced.
October. Saturday 4th. 9.00am Sunday 12th. 9.00am Thursday 16th. 1.30pm	

THE NEXT FELP MEETING.

Please note!

The next FELP meeting, will be an **Annual G.M.** to be held on Sunday 14th September at 11.15am in the Environment Center after the Working Bee.

We will be having a sausage sizzle after this (12:30pm?) at the Boatshed BBQ so everyone please come along to the meeting to provide some discussion and then join us to enjoy a relaxing day in the (hopefully) sunshine. The children are welcome too of course as are our Rangers and old and new members. This was a great success last year and we hope to have more informal gatherings of this type in future.