

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Sassafras Creek



Jane's journal

Cool winter nights have finally arrived accompanied with mild days. Some rain but more needed. Working bees have progressed, mainly caring for revegetated areas where grants have been completed.

Our Landcare grant is nearing completion and includes hosting a Deakin University Enviro Club student group, with a guided lyrebird walk with Alex Maisey in Sherbrooke Forest. Followed by helping us plant Southern Sassafras trees along the creek.

Contractor works for our Melbourne Water grant, in an area between Lyrebird Falls and Kays Picnic Ground, have begun. While on a working bee here recently, we were disappointed to see a large amount of rubbish dumped in an area between the road and creek. Unfortunately as Parks Victoria staff are taking protected industrial action for fair pay and proper funding, the clean up will be delayed. We absolutely support their industrial action though and fair pay for our amazing park rangers!

FOSC have been working with Parks Vic to create a new sign at the start of the track in Sassafras. Artwork by one of our fantastic volunteers Georgia Angus, showing wildlife you may see on the walk, will be featured. It will soon be placed at the rear of the Mechanics Hall. Yarra Ranges Council need to finish the revamp of the car park which will finally include new public toilets. Looking forward to seeing this new sign!

We continue seeing new volunteers finding us through Park Connect, our webpage and Facebook. It's always great to have new volunteers join us! Finally, a big thank you to Ash for her hard work putting together this newsletter since 2021. All the best on your new adventure!

Working bee diary ---

26 April

We arrived at the normal parking area to find Perrins Creek closed. We moved to another area in Perrins Creek Reserve, below 1 and 3 Warwick Farm Road. We had 7 FOSC members plus one local volunteer working hard to rip out weeds. Contractor works followed by revegetation in the area required follow up weed control. An important part of the revegetation process!

28 June

Ten volunteers on this Olinda morning - 7 FOSC members and 3 visitors, including Corey McFayden, our Yarra Ranges Landcare Facilitator. General weeding activity, sweeping through the area around the tributary to Perrins Creek.

26 July

A final visit to our Landcare grant area along Sassafras Creek in the area below The Crescent. The Deakin Enviro Club will join us in August to plant Southern Sassafras trees along the creek's edge.

29 May

Spent the morning potting up Mother Shield Ferns and moving seedlings into tubes for planting later this year. We have an agreement with Parks Victoria to collect seeds and cuttings from the reserves to propagate and plant at our working bees.



June working bee - Jane Hollands



Montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*) - Reiner Richter/iNaturalist

Pesky weeds

Montbretia

Montbretia is a significant environmental weed in the Dandenong Ranges and can be found throughout Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation. This perennial herb is a hybrid (as indicated by the 'x' in the species name) created when two South African plants *Crocsmia aurea* and *Crocsmia pottsii* were crossed in France during the 1880s. The flowers bloom from December to April and are a bright orange colour that is sure to catch your eye on your next walk through the forest. In fact, you may begin to notice this plant throughout much of your walk as it often grows in large clumps.

It is rather persistent due to the corms that grow beneath the ground and can form a chain of up to 14! Hand weeding using a tool such as a small garden fork is an effective way of removal, however, you have to be sure to not leave any of the corms behind. If you've been to a FOSC working bee you'll know that volunteer Marion is an expert at removing this tricky weed!

If this weedy spotlight has caught your interest be sure to sure to check out our [previous newsletters](#) which cover Arum Lily, Wandering Trad, Red Cestrum, Aluminium Weed, Sycamore Maple, English Holly, Sweet Pittosporum, Spreading Clubmoss and Orange Pore Fungus!

Wonderful wildlife

Gippsland Spiny Crayfish



Gippsland Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus kershawii*) - Reiner Richter/iNaturalist

Gippsland Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus kershawii*) are formidable freshwater crustaceans that live in the lower reaches of Sassafras Creek. Reaching up to about 30 cm in length and weighing as much as 1.8 kg, a mature Gippsland spiny crayfish is an exciting animal to encounter while exploring the creek.

A very large individual, such as the one pictured here, may be several decades old. Gippsland Spiny Crayfish grow slowly and depend on healthy, permanently flowing waterways with plenty of shelter beneath rocks, logs, roots and undercut banks.

These crayfish are important detritivores and omnivores. By shredding leaf litter and feeding on decaying organic matter, they help break down material and recycle nutrients through streams and rivers. Younger crayfish may also provide food for native predators such as Platypuses and Rakali.

Despite how slow growing they are, Gippsland Spiny Crayfish can still be taken recreationally in some Victorian waters, although strict fishing regulations apply. These include a daily bag limit of two, size restrictions and the requirement to immediately return any female carrying eggs (known as being “in berry”) to the water (article continues on next page).



Gippsland Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus kershawi*) - Reiner Richter/iNaturalist

Individuals vary considerably in colour, from striking orange-brown to the muddy green and olive shades more commonly seen.

Like many freshwater animals, Gippsland Spiny Crayfish are vulnerable to declining water quality and prolonged drought. Sediment and bank damage caused by deer wallowing may degrade their habitat, while pesticide or nutrient runoff from surrounding land uses could also affect water quality in tributaries of Sassafras Creek. Protecting shaded stream banks, clean water and natural instream shelter will help make sure these remarkable animals remain part of our creek ecosystem.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve, the Wurundjeri people, and their connections to this beautiful forest and the wildlife that call it home. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

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