

Annual report 2024-25

Management of Westgate Park

Westgate Park will be transferred from Parks Victoria to the City of Melbourne on 1 Jan 2026 and work has begun in planning the move to the Wharf Road Triangle. The Department of the Environment agreed to use the Westgate Park Fund for a new bbq, architecture for the new compound/nursery and project manager to assess concept designs, work schedules, service connections etc.



Progress was initially slow but the City of Melbourne team has been excellent to work with and we are looking forward to the development. We formed an internal steering group and established short, fortnightly meetings with City of Melbourne. Several tours and workshops have been run. Progress was slow initially but the City of Melbourne team has been excellent to work with.

The City of Port Phillip gave notice to vacate the Williamstown Road site by end March 2026 so the timeline is very tight!

Bili Nursery

160,000 plants were produced this financial year, up 17,000 on the previous year.



Staff were able to improve our propagation success for the Raising Rarity program with over 570 *Xerochrysum palustre*, Swamp Everlasting plants propagated – a significant increase on the 20 original plants. We also had great success in overcoming the difficulty of germinating *Alyxia buxifolia* – up now from 40 to 80 per cent. 500 *Senecio macrocarpa* plants, which are critically endangered, were propagated for the Greater Western Grasslands for Parks Victoria.

We significantly increased and diversified our customer base, attracted substantial sales to organisations like Footscray Arts and the large revegetation project on Point Ormond. We assisted with DEECA's Cooler Green West Project with staff delivering plants to primary schools as far away as Little River. We are now the preferred provider for DEECA. We held four Gardens for Wildlife workshops for the City of Melbourne.

We held workshops in seed preparation, sold plants on Environment Day at Fed Square, took tours of Melbourne Cemetery Biodiversity Plantings and provided plants.

Security and NextDC

Thieves continued to take copper wire from the vacated HWT printing press but our security system has held up well and the police have been very helpful. August was the first indication that our new neighbours would be a data centre. We met with them and viewed the plans. Construction is some years away and the building will be equivalent to 8 storeys occupying most of the site.

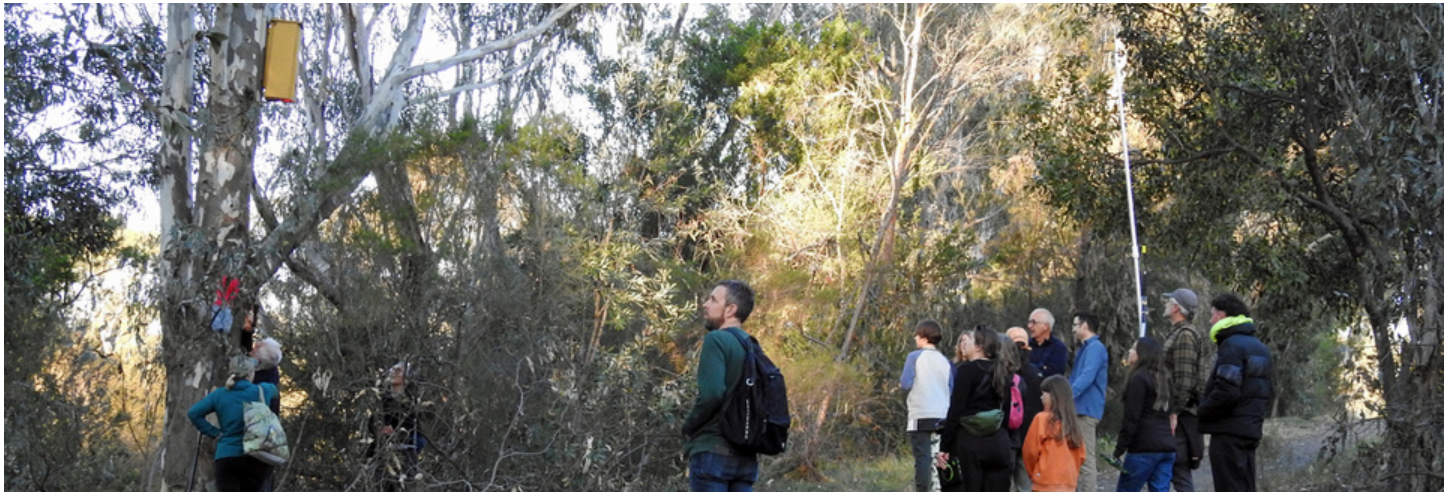
Fires and weeds



We were devastated at the many fires lit in the Park this year. The most severely burnt were areas of around Horseshoe Lake where our large stands of *Muehlenbeckia florenta* were set alight along with many trees. The fire at the top of Lookout Hill was difficult to control because of the steep slopes and is awkward to replant. Monday and Wednesday work crew have nonetheless done a fantastic job of revegetation but more work will be needed to keep those weeds at bay. Controlling weeds is an enormous challenge for us and huge thanks to the volunteers who do the work of pulling them out!

Projects

Microbat monitoring has been marvellous. We attracted many new people to the Park, keen to see microbats in their nest boxes. It's quite exhilarating to be walking the route in the darkness, capturing the echolocation sounds in real time, when microbats are flying across the freshwater lake. Linda has done a great and enthusiastic job in organising the monitoring.



The Yarra River Keeper Riverfest in Sept, supported by a City of Melbourne grant was a huge success with plants, sausage sizzles, tours, clay birds and other activities.

Birds

Rob Youl and his team of bird watchers have for 25 years, watched, listened, recorded and photographed 177 bird species in Westgate Park once a month at 8.30am, adding up to ~300 surveys since the beginning. The group has now written a remarkable story about these birds, their breeding habits, habitats and movements, their numbers, those that have disappeared and the new birds that come. More on this in the new year!



A special mention to Ursula Dutkiewicz for her skills in capturing our beautiful birds. We are blessed with photographers – Elke Link, Peter Parrington and Peter Petinatos and others.

Communications

Two new banners now grace the Bili Nursery entry, Bonnie developed a coms strategy and Mars did an excellent job promoting our plants on social media. Our new website was completed in February.

Engagement with local schools

Year 9 Albert Park College students held an 'exhibition' for potential career opportunities in horticulture and another group came to volunteer at Bili Nursery.

Propagation at the compound

New stainless steel benches are now filled with seedlings thanks to propagation by George and Lecki. This means we can bring back some of the many lilies, herbs and groundcovers that have been lost to dryness and weeds over the last few years.

Corporates

Our corporate program was very successful in raising funds and people-power for both the nursery and park and a big thank you to Andrea for her work on this and the support provided by staff and volunteers.

Thanks

Our good friends the ACF Macnamara deserves a special mention – always willing to pitch in whether its cleanup along the river, pulling out mountains of weeds or planting so expertly. Landcare Australia supports our efforts too. Thank you!

A huge thank you to our many volunteers in Bili Landcare. Large areas of the Park have been weeded and replanted this year, thanks to their efforts. The garden beds in the River Section have been trimmed, weeded and mulched. The salt lake edge and seating area is looking splendid, revegetation around the oval is doing well and plants are surviving on Lookout Hill to name some. Thank you, Chris, for your leadership and work on this and for overseeing the new compound works. Good to have your skills there.

Thanks to Rhod for the amazing work you do, also Mars and Emery, and Maggie and Matt.



It was hugely important year for us. Thank you Janet Bolitho our Secretary, Rosey Haas, our treasurer, Linda Lucas our events organiser, Chris Stephen, Dave Knott, Baida Hercus, Ana Backstrom and Angelo Indovino. We were sad to see Bonnie Seymour resign but she had to further her studies.



15 November 2025
