

Restoring the Peninsula's Iconic Coastal Moonah Woodland

Sandy beaches, rugged cliffs and the twisting, somewhat haunting Moonah trees are natural features many imagine when they visualise the southern Mornington Peninsula, an area of unique beauty much loved by holidaymakers and residents.

Not only is the Coastal Moonah Woodland visually stunning, it performs an important function. It helps stabilise dune systems and prevents erosion caused by climate and sea level changes, which are current, and accelerating, threats for our coastal communities. Many of the Moonah trees within this and adjacent vegetation communities are extremely old.



Old Moonah off Ochiltree Rd., Pt Nepean - Monmar
Photo credit: Gidja Walker

With less than 8% of its original distribution remaining, Coastal Moonah Woodland is listed as a threatened community under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and is in urgent need of support.

Rather than sit idly by and let these iconic plant communities disappear, People and Parks Foundation, Parks Victoria, Mornington Peninsula Shire, St Joseph's Primary School Sorrento, St Mary's Star of the Sea Parish, Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association, the Nepean Conservation Group Inc and other community members have created a 'Moonah NatureWise Community' program for the southern part of the Mornington Peninsula.

This highly engaging cross-sector program encourages and supports people to Nature Dose in ways that help to restore Coastal Moonah Woodland communities. Nature Dosing is both connecting with, and caring for, nature, for at least two hours a week, for healthier people, places and planet.

Alison Hill, Managing Director of People and Parks Foundation, explains that '*Moonah NatureWise*' 'aims to deliver multiple benefits, including environmental outcomes, health and wellbeing outcomes, and a broader, deeper community sense of agency and connection to place, in the face of biodiversity loss, climate change and, for many, eco-anxiety'.

The program on the Peninsula will include Moonah Woodland Community restoration, enhancement and celebration, through arts and events, across locations such as school grounds, community areas and potentially on private properties.

Founding partner school, St Joseph's Primary School Sorrento, will be supported to connect with and protect existing remnants of Moonah Woodland Communities and to restore and celebrate their own pockets of Moonah Woodland Community on or near their school campus, including in the Parish grounds.

School households will be encouraged to actively support this program, including considering what they can do at home to protect, nurture and promote the health of their local environment, and themselves, through regular Nature Dosing.

Monica O'Shannassy, Principal of St. Joseph's School, said the school is thrilled to be part of this program: 'It aligns with the high priority we place on sustainability, conservation and wellbeing. It will continue the work we have been doing as a three-star ResourceSmart School, particularly in the area of biodiversity. We are an active school and enjoy propagating indigenous plants and working with Parks Victoria rangers at Point Nepean National Park, with Friends of Rye Foreshore and the Nepean Conservation Group.'

While much of the initial focus will be on sites within the Point Nepean National Park and Police Point Shire Park, there is a great opportunity to take this Peninsula-based Moonah Woodland Program community-wide, provided that sufficient funding can be raised. Those interested in supporting the restoration, enhancement and celebration of these iconic plant communities can [donate](#) via the People and Parks Foundation website. Donations are tax deductible.

Gidja Walker, president of Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association, (SPIFFA) hopes that the program will provide a greater understanding of, protection for and connection with our unique landscape.

If you are interested in becoming involved in restoring Coastal Moonah Woodlands in our local area, please make contact with one of the following for further information:

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