

Rotunda Wetland

Hall Reserve • Clifton Hill



SITE INFORMATION NOTE 2

Wetland Partners

Merri Creek Management Committee

Development, on-ground management and funding submissions

Yarra City Council

Site maintenance funding

Friends of the Quarries, Friends of Merri Creek (FoMC) and local community

Volunteer works and funding submissions

Melbourne Water

Technical advice

Parks Victoria Agency grants to MCMC in 2000 and 2001

Initial establishment funding

Envirofund, Melbourne Water, Federal Community Water Grant

Funding for extension and site development

Golder and Associates, Greencorp participants, volunteers from Tree Project and Conservation Volunteers Australia, students from Spensley Street Primary School

On-ground tasks

November 2000



Volunteers from the local community and schools are a vital part of the creation and maintenance of the wetland

Inviting wildlife to Clifton Hill

In November of 2000, the construction of the Rotunda Wetland in Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill was commenced by Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) with Yarra City Council and Melbourne Water as key partners. MCMC has worked with the community and its partners to strengthen the wetland's water-treatment and habitat values in subsequent years.

These site information notes outline the environmental history and cultural and ecological values of this site.

Enthusiastic locals maintain momentum

Local people's determination to reverse the long term decline of their environment has driven a strong, ongoing volunteer contribution.

Being only a few kilometres from the Melbourne CBD, close to public transport and the Merri Shared Trail, the site has also been popular with

corporate volunteer groups organised by MCMC.



The inviting, highly visible wetland environment has encouraged newcomers to get involved in hands-on activities.

EVC 125 — Plains Grassy Wetland

open wetland that often dries in summer. Small Spike Rush and true rushes are common. Nardoo dominates the wetter parts of this wetland.

EVC 654 — Creekline Tussock Grassland

occurring along drainage lines. Common Tussock Grass dominant.

EVC 851 — Stream Bank Shrubland

Typical species are River Red-gum, River Bottlebrush, Silver Wattle and Blackwood.

EVC 895 — Escarpment Shrubland

Typical species include Black Wattle, Lightwood, Sweet Bursaria and Drooping Sheoke.

Benchmarks describing EVC's can be found at the Conservation and Environment page of the Department of Sustainability and Environment's website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/index.htm>

ECOLOGICAL VEGETATION CLASSES

are widely used in Victoria to categorise different kinds of vegetation

Wildlife corridors are physical linkages between large patches of native vegetation, through which wildlife populations can move to re-colonise surrounding areas



A newly born Eastern Blue-tongue, found while handweeding among the plants

At an ecological crossroad

Hall Reserve is near the junction of wildlife corridors along Merri Creek and the Yarra River.

Hall Reserve adjoins Yarra Bend Park. The urban reach of the Merri Creek wildlife corridor runs for 13 kilometres north from here to the Western Ring Road.

The wetland site includes 1.4 hectares of revegetation. There is 11 hectares of remnants and revegetation between Heidelberg Rd and the Eastern Freeway.

The Hall Reserve plantings are modelled on the Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) listed above

Stormwater from surrounding streets first enters a sedimentation pond at point 'A', then moves into further ponds and marshes and a shallow gully before joining Merri Creek

Blue Wrens and Bluetongues

Water and diverse revegetation lures wildlife.

Birds including parrots and honeyeaters visit wetlands to drink and bathe. Mature trees attract canopy-hunting birds such as Spotted Pardalotes. Superb Fairy Wrens nest in the dense shrubberies that have replaced their former homes in blackberry. Common Froglets have colonised the ponds. Blue-tongue Lizards hunt snails in the moist undergrowth and boulders. Diverse 'micro-habitats' including free water and mud, leaf-litter, bark and grasses support a corresponding diversity of invertebrate life.

HOW TO GET THERE

Parking is available along The Esplanade, Clifton Hill, Melway Map 44 H1, near the end of Spensley St.

The Merri Shared Trail / Capital City Trail passes by the wetland approximately 200 metres south of Heidelberg Road.

Clifton Hill Railway Station on the Epping-Hurstbridge line is nearby. The number 546 bus running between Melbourne University and Heidelberg Railway Station passes along Heidelberg Road

From Woodland to Wetland

Why build a wetland where one never existed before?

The side of a hill without an obvious drainage line is an unlikely place for a wetland. The impetus for its

development lay in making the most of the existing conditions and addressing urban stormwater pollution.

The ancestors of today's Wurundjeri would have known a sunny woodland. However, grazing by livestock, and the cessation of traditional Wurundjeri practices such as burning

soon followed the influx of non-Indigenous peoples in the 1840s. Exotic vegetation became dominant with associated loss of sensitive fauna. In the 1940s to 1960s irrigated lawns and exotic trees were part of the Hall Reserve landscaping. Stormwater from the nearby streets was directed into the park and reached the Merri Creek via a shallow ditch. This ditch was colonised by weeds, including Blackberry.

From the 1970s Australian native plants (and after the mid 1980s strictly indigenous plants) were planted in surrounding parklands. Hardy wildlife began to re-establish.

When the wetland was developed, non-indigenous native trees were retained and exotic weeds were eradicated. Water follows a zig-zag path through the ponds, designed to slow the downhill flows.

The new wetlands initially had an unstable ecology, favouring mosquitoes. Ecosystem establishment was accelerated by introducing aquatic organisms from an established wetland.

Expansion of revegetation in subsequent years connected the wetland habitat to the Merri Creek with dense

understorey to encourage small animals.

Periodic removal of large macrophytes such as Bull-rush aim to reduce accumulated nutrient and encourage biodiversity.



Mid 1998

A graffiti covered rotunda stands near a weedy ditch, a barren landscape in the eyes of most wildlife.



March 2000

Redesigning the landscape



October 2000

Plants rapidly establishing



May 2004

Community handweeding



December 2006

Habitats emerge as plantings mature



Wetlands in the Merri Creek Valley

Wetlands are highly depleted in the Merri Creek valley.

A wetland is a site where the wetness of the land is sufficiently frequent and sustained to influence the composition of the associated vegetation. Wetlands vary widely and some may not hold water for years at a time. Merri wetlands included swamps, ephemeral drainage lines, creeksides and flats.

Wetlands are productive ecosystems providing habitat for native animals and plants, including rare and threatened species. They assimilate and recycle nutrients and trap sediments. They act as flood control basins, aiding the hydrological stability of the catchment. Wetlands are sites of cultural, scientific, recreational, landscape and educational interest.

Approximately 5.5% (2,145 ha) of the Merri Creek catchment was once occupied by wetlands. The two largest swamps, Old Inverloch and Herne's Swamp near Wallan together occupied over 1,700 hectares

Only 83ha (less than 4% of original wetland area) remains, mostly in very poor condition. Farm dams, watercourses, artificial ponds, lakes and wetlands now occupy about 318 ha of the catchment, but biodiversity and wetland function of such areas is often low.



The wetlands have transformed the Rotunda in Hall Reserve into a place of contemplation and ever-changing interest.

Where to from here?

The Rotunda wetland is a model for further intensive revegetation in this area.

Devising reliable and economical ways to sustain indigenous vegetation and fauna in urban settings is a prime challenge for MCMC. This wetland is fully planted and natural regeneration is occurring, however changes to both routine and intermittent ecological interventions will be needed to help adapt to change.

Additional plantings to 'link' the wetland to other revegetation have begun. MCMC's community engagement programs aim to foster lasting custodianship roles with activities that involve schools, volunteers and local residents in wetland upkeep.

Merri Creek Management Committee

Merri Creek Management Committee Incorporated (MCMC) is an environmental coordination and management agency formed in 1989 to achieve a shared vision for the waterway corridors of the Merri Creek Catchment. Its members include all the municipalities in the catchment: the Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra City Councils plus Mitchell Shire Council, the Friends of Merri Creek and the Friends of Wallan Creek. Representatives of these member groups form a Committee of Management which develops policy and guides the activities of MCMC's approximately 20 staff. The primary purpose of MCMC is to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities.

Opportunities to be involved in this site and information about MCMC's other work can be found at www.mcmc.org.au

Less than 4% of wetland areas remain in the Merri Corridor, most in poor condition.



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