

Merri News

FEBRUARY 2013

Newsletter of Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) 2 Lee St East Brunswick VIC 3057

Fire & water = wildflowers

Fire is a crucial process in maintaining floral displays and habitat richness in Native Grasslands. If rain comes before and after a fire, the results can be spectacular.

Hidden amongst the native grasses are many wildflowers, including orchids and other plants with tasty tuberous roots. They are most prominent in the season following a fire, before the grasses regain their dominance. 2012's summer burns

and a wet winter saw Milkmaids, Rice Flowers and Chocolate Lilies flower vigorously at Ngarri-djarrang (Central Creek) Grassland in Reservoir. Over 80 new remnant Plains Yam Daisy (*Microseris scapigera*) were detected at Kalkallo Common in the area burnt by MCMC earlier.

For thousands of years the Wurundjeri sustained these landscapes with their finely tuned knowledge of fire behaviour and ecological response. Grassland vegetation evolved alongside this burning, allowing delicate plants to prosper amid vigorous grasses.

Merri Creek Grasslands are now being prepared for ecological burns in late summer and autumn. The Ngarri-djarrang, Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Road) Fawkner, and Kalkallo Common Grassland Reserves



are some of the few remaining patches of Native Grassland that once covered most of the land north and west of Melbourne.

MCMC implements an annual program of burning, followed by rigorous weed control. This work is supported by the managing bodies (Darebin, Hume and Moreland City Councils). Grants from the State and Federal Governments have enabled MCMC to engage Wurundjeri people in the annual burning program and to reintroduce burning at Kalkallo Grassland.

If the drought conditions of recent months continue, it will be interesting to compare floral responses to this season's fires next spring.

Photo shows a spectacular display of wildflowers at Ngarri-djarrang (Central Creek) Grassland in Reservoir.

Latest MCMC staff changes

Farewell to Emily Jordan who resigned from the Parkland Management Team to take up full time study. We'll miss her focus, commitment and high quality work over the last three years. Of the 11 Parkland Management team members, ten have ongoing employment with MCMC, and one is temporary.

The 2011-12 MCMC Annual Report is now only available on our website. See under: "Information / Publications"
(We can print off a copy on request.)

Platypus sightings

On 17 January, around 8.30pm, a Preston resident watched a Platypus in Merri Creek for about five minutes just south of Bell St. It was about 25 cm long and was in and out of the water and grooming itself.

There was an even more unusual sighting about 6am on New Years Day. A Fawkner resident clearly saw two Platypus near Moomba Park, Fawkner. He said that they were swimming in the creek for around 15 minutes and surfacing regularly.

For upcoming community events, see the calendar on our website: www.mcmc.org.au

Successful funding applications

Needle-grass project continues in Merriang:

Merriang District Landcare Group (MDLG) and MCMC developed a Needlegrass Management Plan for five properties along the Merri Creek in 2012. The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PP&WCMA) has provided funding to expand this plan and continue Nassella control and training.

A big year for southern Fawkner: Two grants will run in tandem at Fawkner, allowing us to extend and consolidate the Imaroo St escarpment, which is sustained by Moreland City Council funding.

FoMC received funds from PP&WCMA to restore the areas on the escarpment that harbour the endangered Matted Flax Lily. This will include a community planting and also activities with the local primary school supported by the Merri Creek Environment Fund. A management plan will be developed for another significant population of Matted Flax Lily on a previously unmanaged escarpment, with works afterwards.

Join the Community Planting at Imaroo St Fawkner on Sunday 12 May, 10am-12.30pm.

MCMC received funds to plant trees and shrubs along the creek near Imaroo St and restore an especially diverse patch of creekside flora. This project will also remove Hawthorn across the Imaroo site with the help of a group of corporate volunteers.

Busy time for Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn) Grassland:

FoMC received a Melbourne Water Community Grant to conduct woody weed control and planting of Drooping Sheoke along two kilometres of the Merri Creek at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn) Grassland. This project will build on the works done by MCMC, Hume City Council, Melbourne Water and the land manager, Parks Victoria.

A community planting day is scheduled at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn) Grassland on 25 August.

MCMC is surveying Curly Sedge (*Carex tasmanica*) and Tough Scurf-pea (*Cullen tenax*) at Galgi Ngarrk in Epping for the Dept of Sustainability & Environment. The survey will help control the weeds that threaten these endangered plants.

...and Kalkallo: The PP&WCMA is funding gorse removal and replacement with Hedge Wattle on Stony Knolls at Kalkallo. Hume City Council has committed significant works to this project.

Join the Community Planting and Gorse removal in Kalkallo on Sunday 5 May, 10am-12.30pm.

Grants now often include Wurundjeri archaeological inspections of sites and for sharing awareness of the cultural and ecological values of the creek. Several Wurundjeri visits are being planned for these projects.



Waterway Friendly Workplaces

Over ten years and through various projects, MCMC has visited industrial precincts throughout the catchment to discuss how poor workplace practices pose pollution risks to nearby waterways.

In 2012 MCMC worked with Whittlesea City Council on a new project, *Waterway Friendly Workplaces*. After training by MCMC staff, a special team (pictured above) visited 25 workshops in an industrial estate close to Edgars Creek in Thomastown.

These workplace visits provided a direct, face to face opportunity for those working in industrial areas to consider the proximity of workplaces to local waterways and the need to prevent stormwater pollution. Each team declared their 'no-dob' position, which encouraged open conversation. The team used a special resource kit of materials including maps, information about managing industrial waste and relevant local and EPA laws. A record of each workplace visit was created and assessed later to guide Whittlesea City Council's consideration of future support in these districts.

Above photo: From left - Trevor Hausler (MCMC), Peter Grenfell (Darebin Creek Management Committee), Julia Vanderoord (Waterwatch) and Voytek Lapinski (Whittlesea City Council).



School kids love Waterwatch

The MCMC *Waterwatch* Coordinator, Trevor Hausler, showed local frogs and a Blue-tongued lizard to eager school kids in the City of Melbourne Junior Rangers holiday program. The kids learnt about the frog's life-cycle, their calls and how to make a frog-friendly pond.

The Merri Creek Environment Fund

The Merri Creek Environment Fund is seeking donations for revegetation and conservation works in the Merri Creek catchment. *Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.* For credit card payment see our website. Make cheques out to Merri Creek Environment Fund and send to MCMC, 2 Lee Street, East Brunswick, 3057. Drop in a cash donation or contact us to arrange a direct deposit.

Learn about waterbugs

Wednesday 10 April, 6.30-8.00pm

Carlton Library, 667 Rathdowne St North Carlton

Find out about these fascinating bugs and their importance to stream health. Bookings essential - contact Trevor Hausler on 9380 8199 or email: trevor@mcmc.org.au

Download *Merri News* from our website or obtain a printed copy from:

Merri Creek Management Committee 2 Lee St East Brunswick VIC 3057. Phone: 9380 8199.

Email: admin@mcmc.org.au Website: www.mcmc.org.au