

Merri News

FEBRUARY 2012

The quarterly newsletter of Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) - caring for the Merri Creek

Red-browed Finches in MCMC garden

In late 2011 a small group of native Red-browed Finches were regular visitors to MCMC's front garden. The finches fed on the seed of Clustered Wallaby-grass (*Austrodanthonia racemosa*) and the berries of Nodding Saltbush (*Einadia nutans*).

A MCMC staff member has also seen the finches nearby on Merri Creek in East Brunswick, in grasses that were planted in July 2011. These bird visits show the value of using indigenous plants to quickly create habitat, even in a small garden area.



Learning about nature through art

MCMC works closely with people living in the Merri Creek catchment to protect and promote indigenous biodiversity. We have been using printing as a way to develop community knowledge with a variety of groups - connecting people and nature through art.

After a printing demonstration, participants learn some details of indigenous plants, their names and their uses by traditional owners, the Wurundjeri people.

Photo: Girls printing at Banksia Gardens Community Centre in 2011.

Annual Report 2010-11 available now

Download the report off our website at www.mcmc.org.au, or phone Ray Radford on 9380 8199 for a hard copy.

Merri Creek Guided Bike Rides

Sunday 15 April 10am-1pm - Preston

Departing Robinsons Reserve Preston we will head downstream focusing on Darebin's wetlands

Sunday 29 April 10am-1pm - Whittlesea

From City of Whittlesea Public Gardens, through Galada Tamboore and onto the new path alongside Merri Creek, discovering creatures and landscapes.

Each ride is approx 8km return. BYO lunch to these family friendly events. Booking is essential – contact Jane on 93808199 or jane@mcmc.org.au

Friends of Merri Creek win 2011 Victorian Urban Landcare Award

MCMC congratulates our member group, Friends of Merri Creek, upon winning the 2011 Victorian Urban Landcare award. This is on top of winning the 2010 Port Phillip & Westernport Landcare Award, *Community Group Caring for Public Land*. The Friends now go on to represent Victoria in the Urban Landcare category at the National Landcare Awards to be held in September.

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.* Please make cheques out to Merri Creek Environment Fund and send to MCMC, 2 Lee Street, East Brunswick, 3057, or drop in a cash donation (sorry, no credit card facilities) or contact us to arrange a direct deposit.

Gorse out, seed in

Help remove gorse and collect wildflower seeds from a new native grassland site at Kalkallo on 12th February.

The nine hectares of public land south of the cemetery contains stony knolls along the Kalkallo Creek.

Unfortunately neglect has meant that four hectares of the reserve is currently covered in Gorse! Among the Gorse are pockets of delicate wildflowers, including Pussy-tails and Plains Creamy Candles. We can now begin to remove the Gorse away from the wildflowers and plan for the restoration of the site.

After Gorse removal, participants can help pluck seed-heads of native wildflowers for a regeneration trial funded by a *Caring for Our Country* Grant. (MCMC staff members have seed collection permits.)

The trial will apply research from Victoria University involving small scale disturbance, as was once applied by Wurundjeri during the harvesting of food plants, and by the digging of small native mammals, now extinct. If successful, the technique may be applied widely across our reserves and beyond.



Gorse chop & seed collection Sunday 12 February

Malcolm St, Kalkallo next to Cemetery, 10am-12.30pm. Melway 367 F2. Light refreshments provided. Phone Ben at MCMC 9380 8199 (BH). If it's very hot or raining heavily, ring on the day to confirm on 0421 683 926.

This event is made possible with assistance from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Bush Guardians Grants Program.

Photo shows volunteers and three MCMC staff members (centre and right) after removing Gorse at Kalkallo Common in September 2011.

Urbanisation of upper Merri – last chance for biodiversity planning

The expansion of Melbourne's urban growth boundary in 2009 included a huge chunk of the upper Merri. In late November the Victorian government released drafts of the next phase of planning: the *Growth Corridor Plan* and the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*. Although the latter designates some sites for conservation, it also allows the clearing and offsetting of all other native vegetation and fauna habitat areas.

The government also simultaneously released detailed precinct plans, which really should come after the Corridor Plan and Biodiversity Strategy are finalised. MCMC was alarmed by this out-of-sequence approach and made detailed submissions – see our website.

We are especially concerned about a proposed Principal Town Centre on Merri Creek north of Donnybrook. This could bring high density urbanisation to within 50m either side of the creek, threatening critical Growling Grass Frog habitat and severely limiting the potential for Merri Creek to provide fauna habitat and high quality parkland in a natural setting.

For upcoming community events, see the MCMC website: www.mcmc.org.au

Merri is most popular waterway

Merri Creek is Victoria's most popular urban waterway – says a Dept of Sustainability & Environment survey: *'My Victorian Waterway: Personal connections with rivers, wetlands and estuaries in Victoria'* Nov. 2011, p6. See: <http://www.water.vic.gov.au/environment/rivers/community-connections-to-local-waterways>

Another Merri Platypus sighting

About 6:25am on Friday 16 December 2011, Northcote resident Melanie Barnes saw a platypus in Merri Creek just upstream from CERES in East Brunswick. She watched it for about two minutes, swimming on the top of the water and then diving for about 30 seconds or so.

STOP PRESS – Blackwater event at Edwardes Lake wetland

On 20 January, hundreds of dead carp were found in the wetlands upstream of Edwardes Lake in Reservoir (Edwardes Lake is on Edgars Creek, a major tributary of the Merri.) A large influx of organic matter used up oxygen in the water, causing it to turn black and smelly, leading to the death of aquatic life. At the time of writing, the source was unknown and the blackwater was being pumped out to be replaced with clean water.

Merri Creek Management Committee produces these quarterly newsletters for the wider community in the Merri Creek catchment. You can download this in colour from our website (see below) or contact Ray Radford for a hardcopy at:

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