

Merri News

AUGUST 2012

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



Bad outcome for biodiversity with Melbourne's growth 'planning'

In June, the Victorian Government released its final North Growth Corridor Plan, dedicating even more land in the Merri catchment to urban uses. This growth 'planning' leaves an indecently narrow corridor along much of Merri Creek, locates a major town centre (Lockerbie) straddling the creek, proposes a non-existent habitat link from Merri Creek to a yet to be defined Red Gum Woodland reserve in Wollert, and whittles away other proposed conservation areas.

The Growth Corridor Plan is supposed to reflect a detailed Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, but that is yet to see the light of day. In the meantime, the next level of planning, Precinct Structure Plans, have been finalised for three big new suburbs in the upper Merri: Lockerbie, North Lockerbie and Merrifield West. The Lockerbie plan shows major roads located as close as 40m to Merri Creek and high density residential and commercial development on the other side of the roads.

The state government has also announced so-called 'Logical Inclusions' to growth areas. In the Merri this includes Red Gum Woodland in Mickelham and all of Wallan, including flood-prone land at Hernes Swamp. MCMC is advocating to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment for better protection of the Merri.

See MCMC's website for a map of the growth area, including the 'Logical Inclusions.'

Photo, by Dr G. Heard, shows prime Growling Grass Frog habitat on the Merri at Kalkallo. The frog is threatened by the urban expansion.

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

New virtual tour of Grasslands

A new Google Earth Tour allows you to virtually fly up the Merri Creek valley visiting the grassland and woodland sites of MCMC's three year project: *Reinforcing Grassland Ecological Values*.

The two minute tour takes you to five endangered ecosystems in our 'own backyard' and summarises the restoration activity, with links to detailed information.

Now in its final year, this Australian Government Caring for Our Country project has allowed us to pursue more strategic Grassland restoration goals than is possible under one-year grants. The works include ecological burning and digging, in partnership with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners. A benign spray-on grazing deterrent is being trialled to protect young shrubs from hungry wallabies, while mapping with aerial photographs is aiding strategic weed control.

Technical details of the project's work will soon be available in an E Newsletter, *Merri Restoration Notes*. Email: admin@mcmc.org.au to be on this email list.

View the Virtual Grassland Tour by following the links on the MCMC website.

Waterwatch at Coburg's Carnivale

On Saturday 16th June, *Waterwatch* held a very successful stall at Coburg's Carnivale.

It was a hectic and fun day for all those involved, especially the three *Waterwatch* coordinators. Children and adults were able to see some of the creatures from our local waterways and to discuss how to look after them.

The kids also created a range of weird and wonderful critters from the materials provided and these were later displayed in Coburg Library.



New MCMC mum

Congratulations to MCMC *Waterwatch* Coordinator, Jane Bevelander and her husband, Lee, on the birth of their daughter, Abigail, on 22 June.





Local creeks and faraway places

Over the last year around 1,500 people have participated in over 70 sessions to creatively explore how local pollution events affect not only our streams but way beyond, even to faraway oceans.

Storming for Cleaner Water is an MCMC initiative focusing on the health of waterways from a local perspective. In one of the sessions MCMC guided students at Epping Views Primary School to understand the way creeks are connected to oceans and how some creatures, such as the Short-finned Eel, have a life cycle that takes them a long way from Merri Creek catchment. Later students used their knowledge to build a lively picture of their local area that included Aboriginal Traditional Owners, Edgars Creek, geology and the Coral Sea, to teach hundreds of other students at school about the importance of local stormwater.

This program is funded by Whittlesea City Council and delivered by MCMC in partnership with Darebin Creek Management Committee.

Photo shows students learning that polluted water travels through tributaries in waterway systems by hooking arms together.

Friends of Merri Creek President honoured with an OAM

MCMC congratulates the Friends of Merri Creek President, David Redfearn, on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in the General Division, in the 2012 Australia Day Awards.

David was honoured for his service to conservation and the environment, local government, and the community. Besides being President of Friends of Merri Creek since 2004, he was also MCMC President from 1990-99.

New staff including some returns

MCMC's Parkland Management Team has swelled with the appointments of new team members, Michael Day, Deb Hatton and Tom Dell'Oro. In addition we are lucky to see the return of two former staff members, Jim Brien and Clayton Fenech.

The Catchment Program has appointed Trevor Hausler as *Waterwatch* Coordinator while Jane Bevelander is on parental leave. Trevor has stepped down from his role as MCMC President to take up the position. Ann McGregor is the new MCMC President.

Murnong, Moths and Merriness

Over the next four years, the Merri Creek catchment will benefit from three State *Communities for Nature* grants.

MCMC has received \$149,247 for the project: *Reversing the decline of Microseris scapigera* (Murnong or Yam Daisy) in the Merri Catchment. This project will search for Murnong at three sites where it once occurred but has not been seen for several years. We will assess the site conditions at Kalkallo Common, where there's a thriving Murnong population, and trial techniques to re-establish and maintain Murnong at Ngarri-djarrang (Central Creek) Grassland, Reservoir.

The other two *Communities for Nature* grant projects come from Friends of Merri Creek (FoMC) which has contracted MCMC to help implement the projects.

\$138,374 is for the project: *Continuing and extending Golden Sun Moth density and habitat surveys*. The surveys will assess Golden Sun Moth density in relation to vegetation characteristics and habitat management. The information gained will guide MCMC to manage the quality of grassland and Sun Moth habitat at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grassland), Campbellfield.

\$150,000 is for the project: *Galada Tamboore grassland and escarpment restoration: bringing the management together*, to consolidate remnant vegetation. MCMC will work with Melbourne Water to burn and manage two hectares of Plains Grassland for the first time in seven years, and establish pollination pathways for remnant Dianella (Flax Lily) populations and its specialist pollinator, the Blue-banded Bee. We will also run events to interpret the ecological and cultural values of this site for a variety of community groups.

Want to help do a survey? If you would like to be on the list for a survey of Murnong or Golden Sun Moths, email: admin@mcmc.org.au.

Wedge-tailed Eagles at Bababi Marning

MCMC staffer, Jim Brien, snapped this pair of 'wedgies' at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grassland) in April, near Merri Creek in Campbellfield.



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.

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