

# Little Survivors

It is a thrill to occasionally stumble across the survival of rare flora and fauna, long presumed absent from our fragmented landscape. Merri Creek Management Committee staff members have cherished memories of rediscovering urban populations of Grassland Copper Butterfly, Golden Sun Moth, Swamp Tigertail Dragonfly and, in 2015, Amethyst Hairstreak Butterfly. All these species were assumed absent from reaches of the Merri Creek with no recent records, or even any records at all.

In November 2016, we experienced that thrill again. At the end of the work day in Heathcote Junction, MCMC's Ecological Restoration Planner Brian Bainbridge photographed a dull brown butterfly feeding on Rice-flower. He compared the photo with a copy of ['Butterflies of Australia'](#) and identified it as Yellow Ochre, *Trapezites lutea*, which was later confirmed by Museum of Victoria. In 2000, this butterfly, sometimes called the Rare White-spot Skipper, was known from only four sites in Victoria!

The Yellow Ochre doesn't travel far and is probably breeding on Wattle-mat Rush, *Lomandra filiformis*. The Heathcote Junction site is 20 kilometres from the nearest records for Yellow Ochre at Broadford. On the northern boundary of the Merri catchment, the Heathcote Junction site includes patches of high quality Box-stringybark woodland groundstorey among an established housing estate. It is protected as a gas pipeline easement and flora reserve. MCMC is re-establishing native grasses here after a pipeline duplication in 2014.

Fortunately, Mitchell Shire Council had also contracted MCMC to reduce biomass on the perimeter for fire protection. We were able to accommodate the butterfly's needs by leaving patches of its caterpillar's food plant uncut while still reducing the tall grasses surrounding them. This treatment will probably favour the butterfly which prefers open conditions.



**Next steps?** MCMC is keen to find partners to help identify the butterfly's needs and measures that support their continued survival at this site.



(Above) Yellow Ochre Butterfly and other species rediscovered by MCMC: (clockwise from top left) Amethyst Hairstreak, Grassland Copper Butterfly, Golden Sun Moth and Tigertail Dragonfly.

