

Merri News

NOVEMBER 2012

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



Good country for a canoe

For the first time in over 100 years, local traditional owners have made a single sheet bark canoe at a site nearby the Merri catchment. MCMC worked with many partners to support this project.

Traditional Wurundjeri skills and knowledge were revived and re-developed over two years (including stone tool-making workshops) and combined with modern methods. The eucalypt was carefully selected, considering its age and the trunk's shape for suitability. Then a sheet of bark 3 x 1 metres was removed over four hours and slowly dried over a fire.

This was a strong culture building event for Wurundjeri, who had three generations involved in the October canoe-making day. The next steps are to make paddles, shape the dried canoe, and float it.

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.

Help save a Threatened Species

The Golden Sun Moth, Plains Yam Daisy and Growling Grass Frog are threatened species found in the Merri catchment. All suffer from the ongoing effects of past management, weeds, urbanisation and habitat fragmentation. The populations of these species ebb and flow in response to natural fluctuations in the climate, possibly made more marked by the effects of climate change. Their small, fragmented populations have limited ability to re-colonise where local extinction has occurred and this threatens the survival of these species. Understanding population change is a crucial part of helping them to have a future.

Community volunteers have been monitoring the Plains Yam Daisy at Kalkallo Common since 2010. This has revealed a thriving population of over a hundred plants, perhaps increasing in response to recent wetter conditions. This monitoring has expanded the options and priorities for helping this species.

In contrast, Golden Sun Moths appear to have suffered a population crash over this same period. They seemed to thrive and expand their range in the previous years of drought conditions! Has planning for urban expansion saved enough of the dry, warm slopes that may form the moth's refuge during runs of wet summers?



Experienced and committed volunteers can help to answer such questions by monitoring the progress of these species. However, monitoring can be difficult: Plains Yam Daisies 'hide' among a bunch of similar looking plants in dense grassland; and Golden Sun Moths only reliably emerge during hot, still sunny days in early summer. Monitors need patience, flexibility and stamina to concentrate.

Over the next four years, MCMC and Friends of Merri Creek will be hosting volunteer monitoring programs for Plains Yam Daisy and Golden Sun Moth, funded by Victorian Government Communities for Nature grants. We are also collaborating with the Victorian National Parks Association *NatureWatch* program, which is developing resources to ensure that monitoring of these Threatened Species is effective.

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



Roll-up, roll up and learn

In August MCMC Catchment Program staff supported Brunswick East Primary School with their regular Friday morning activities on the Merri Creek at Albion Street.

The Prep children were introduced to the natural sights and sounds of the creek environment, listening to frogs and birds calling and observing the variety, colour and texture of the vegetation.

The enthusiastic young learners were also introduced to some of the waterbugs found in the creek and to local frogs and their tadpoles.

Workplaces and waterways

Building on ten years of experience delivering environmental education to industrial workplaces, MCMC has partnered with Whittlesea City Council to develop a project called *Waterway Friendly Workplaces*. The project aims to limit industrial workplaces' potential to pollute stormwater that could then flow on into creeks and rivers.

The project's first stage is to build and train a team to visit businesses in the Thomastown and Bundoora industrial areas. The visits will raise awareness of waterway issues and assist businesses in improving their workplace practices.

Later stages will continue engaging with businesses and consider the development of guidelines, planning permit conditions and enforcement mechanisms.



Strong winds and flooding rains

On 6 September, strong winds felled trees like this one south of Blyth St East Brunswick. On 19 August, Merri Creek was high, as shown (right) at North Coburg.



Who else is learning?

The sustainability idea for schools has really caught on! In the last ten years MCMC has seen schools more confidently develop programs that go beyond one-off interactions about single environmental issues. Many schools are now bringing the whole Prep to Grade 6 cohort into ambitious concentrated programs so that learning is across many environmental topics and therefore communicating environmental complexity without hesitation. MCMC's role varies but involves explaining how catchments work and highlighting the terrific qualities of indigenous plants and animals through interactive activities.

Mill Park Secondary College and Epping Views Primary School recently held large events on a range of key environmental issues. MCMC guided sessions for students who were eager to examine and handle indigenous plants and were amazed about how plants are able to support creatures like frogs, platypus and tiny freshwater macroinvertebrates.

MCMC staff changes

MCMC welcomes Jim Brien back as a permanent Parkland Management Team member. We are also delighted that Malcolm Hauser will stay with the Team until December, and Tom Dell'Oro and Michael Day until the end of February. However, we bid farewell to Deb Hatton and Clayton Fenech, who have both left to pursue other work opportunities and travel overseas.

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



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

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