

# Merri News

FEBRUARY 2011

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

## Keeping an eye on grasslands

The dramatic changes when trees are planted along Merri Creek are readily apparent. But how can you tell whether management is improving the quality of endangered Native Grassland where the changes are less visible? 'Monitoring' involves recording repeated observations over time and helps us learn from the results of our works.

Some recent projects are improving the monitoring of Ngarri-djarrang (Central Creek) Grassland in Reservoir, leading to wide reaching benefits.

Darebin City Council is funding the implementation of the new Ngarri-djarrang monitoring strategy, which includes monitoring and reporting on vegetation quality, weeds and even community attitudes. Permanent monitoring plots have been installed through the nine hectare grassland to help measure changes. We are also tracking the survival of a small planting of the Plains Murnong (Yam Daisy). This will inform a larger re-introduction of this threatened species.

A three year Australian Government Caring for our Country project includes monitoring to tackle some of the most 'thorny' weed problems. Tertiary students are assisting in the monitoring tasks as part of their training. In December, a group from NMIT helped assess 120 small plots for the density of a Chilean Needle Grass infestation in a corner of the reserve. The resulting map will be compared with aerial photos to assess the potential of photo interpretation and will also assist Chilean Needle Grass control works over the three years of this project.

As well as gathering data on vegetation quality, monitoring of the grassland has found Grassland Copper Butterflies (*photo*), last seen here in 1999. It has also confirmed the identity of a Golden Weather Glass, a yellow lily that was not previously recorded at Ngarri-djarrang.



Reporting and dissemination of results will be funded through the Australian Government Caring for our Country, so results will reach other land managers who may be struggling with similar problems.



Ngarri-djarrang is among the few Native Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain with a documented management history extending over two decades. This provides much needed evidence about the capacity for maintaining small Native Grassland reserves among urban developments. The results of the Ngarri-djarrang Grassland monitoring project will therefore have significance well beyond the Merri catchment.

### The Ngarri-djarrang name is now official

Darebin City Council has now registered the Wurundjeri name, *Ngarri-djarrang* (meaning 'thigh'), in the Register of Geographic Place Names for this site, previously known as Central Creek Grasslands. This name was provided by Wurundjeri Elder, Doreen Garvey-Wandin, as part of a series of innovative names for the grasslands along Merri Creek which make up parts of the 'mother's body' (or *Marran Baba*) the name of Parks Victoria's new Merri Creek park.

Although the names were bestowed in August 2006, *Ngarri-djarrang* is the first of the Merri Creek grassland sites to have the name officially registered. The others are: *Bababi Djinanang* (Mother's Foot) for Juke's Rd Grasslands in Fawkner; *Bababi Marning* (Mother's Hand) for Cooper St Grasslands in Campbellfield; and *Galgari Ngarrk* (back bone) for Craigieburn Grasslands in Epping/Wollert. We hope that it won't be too long before the other names are also registered.

Above photo: students from NMIT Epping Conservation and Land Management course assist MCMC staff members to carry out a survey of Chilean Needle Grass density.

For upcoming community events see the MCMC website: [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au)



## Program inspires indigenous art

Funds from our grants sometimes have unexpected repercussions. Recently, when Indigenous students and teachers from Kangan Institute's Gunung-Willam-Balluk Learning Centre showcased their 2010 artwork, students' work showed a growing affinity to indigenous flora and fauna. One student, Nathan Eldridge showed a beautiful piece featuring indigenous plants based on a series of workshops with MCMC's Angela Foley.

Funding from the International Year of Biodiversity also enabled 173 people to participate in 41 workshops in the parklands of the Merri catchment and at Bunjilaka, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum.

Above photo: Angela Foley (MCMC) at left with art student Nathan Eldridge, in between teachers Karen Lovett and Auntie Maureen Simpson at the Gunung-Willam-Balluk Learning Centre.

## 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.

## Responses to rain

This wet spring and summer has been a refreshing change for nature observers along the Merri Creek.

The rains have led to an influx of Common Brown Butterflies and extended flowering of the endangered Matted Flax-lily. In contrast, some migratory birds seem to be remaining inland to breed.

Three Latham's Snipe, which is listed on international protection treaties for migratory birds, were seen at a flooded grassy wetland, north of Melbourne. Latham's Snipe spend summer roaming eastern Australia seeking flooded grassland, wetland and paddocks to feed in soft mud before migrating to Japan to nest.

## **FREE** Training in water testing

Are you interested in learning about the health of your local creek, wetlands or river? Can frogs, platypus or even native fish survive in your waterway?

*Healthy Waterways Waterwatch* Melbourne runs free training sessions for anyone wanting to find out about testing the health of waterways. You will learn the different sampling techniques, including "water bug" sampling and identification, how the results are used and how to develop a monitoring plan. It's fun, free and very easy to do! No experience is necessary.

All equipment and lunch is provided.

**Saturday 26 March, 9.30am - 4.30pm**

**Bookings essential:** Jane Bevelander 9380 8199 or email [jane@mcmc.org.au](mailto:jane@mcmc.org.au) (the venue is in Parkville).



## Murnong (Yam Daisy) Harvest

The second Murnong Harvest, organised by the Merri and Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group and supported by the Wurundjeri Council and MCMC, was held in November at De Chene Reserve, Coburg. Despite very wet weather, over 40 people joined in the traditionally based harvest and cook-up of Murnong.

The harvest of the edible Murnong (or Yam Daisy) came after a Welcome to Country from Wurundjeri Elders, Auntie Kitty and Auntie Alice. A splendid performance in the pouring rain didn't stop Elder, Bill Nicholson, leading Jindi Worobak's dancers, who danced up a storm and set the atmosphere, sharing their Indigenous cultural heritage.

A semi-aquatic carnivorous plant, Beaglehole's Bladderwort was unexpectedly found in a flooded gilgai (depression) in a Native Grassland in Kalkallo. Other gilgai plants like Narrow-leaf Nardoo and Waterwort are also re-emerging from temporary wetlands.

The wet challenges MCMC to keep threatening weeds in check, but also helps us understand how our environment responds to long-term climatic variability.

## Annual Report 2009-10 available now

Download the report off our website at [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au), or phone Ray Radford on 9380 8199 for a hard copy.

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](mailto:admin@mcmc.org.au) Website: [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au)**