

Merri News

MAY 2008

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



A wildlife windfall

Destructive wind storms, such as that which ripped across Victoria on 2nd April, are mercifully rare. The cost to humans has been high, but the winds have brought a habitat bonanza for animals along the Merri.

The more mature planted trees now produce large branches and logs that form substantial features for wildlife. Fallen logs and branches are a vital part of the habitat structure for woodlands. Their upper sides provide lizard 'lounges' for basking on sunny days. The cool moist undersides harbour worms, springtails, centipedes and beetles. These spots also make good places for skinks and geckos to lay eggs.

As the wood decays, animal life flourishes. Beetle larvae, ant and termite colonies, fungi and fungus gnats proliferate. These feed spiders and predatory insects, which in turn are food for robins, shrike-thrushes and other insect-eating birds.

The scars and broken stumps remaining on the trees may provide the start of hollows. So, in a decade or two, parrots, owls and tiny insect-eating bats may also be beneficiaries of that single wild wind!

The removal of fallen timber for firewood has been recognised as a major threat to birds and other wildlife in Victorian woodlands. So, as the long and expensive cleanup continues, we encourage crews not to be too thorough in cleaning up of the parkland, leaving some of this habitat 'windfall' for wildlife to harvest.

The *Northern Nature – Creek Connections* project, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust, is continuing with workshops on weeds and on community engagement. For more details, see our website: www.mcmc.org.au. Later on, there will also be more Fawkner safaris, which have proved to be an effective way to introduce newcomers to the creek corridor.

End of an era

MCMC's Parkland Team has seen the end of an era with Deb Lawson, our longest serving team member accepting a team leader position with Conservation Volunteers Australia.

MCMC had only been in operation for three years when Deb joined in late 1992.



After over 15 years of valued contribution to the Merri's restoration, MCMC wishes Deb all the best and looks forward to working with her in her new role.

For upcoming community events and the 2006-2007 MCMC Annual Report, see the MCMC website: www.mcmc.com.au



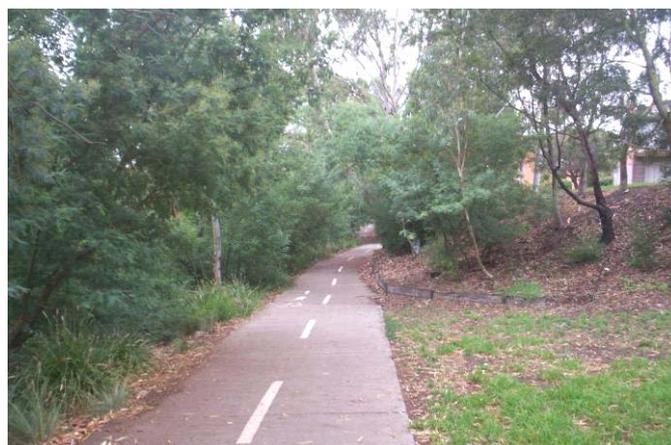
Uncover, Recover & Discover

Now you can uncover, recover and discover the Merri Creek through planting days and historic displays as part of Friends of Merri Creek's Federal Community Water Grant project, which MCMC has been contracted to implement.

Many have already attended plantings at Robinson Reserve in Preston and Hall Reserve in Clifton Hill. These plantings aim to restore the biologically productive and dynamic vegetation that fringes the creek, wetlands and tributaries.

Displays have been created that inform people of how far we have come and accompanying text prompts the reader to consider the changing fortunes of the Merri and what part they could play in its future. Those new residents and children who weren't around twenty years ago have been surprised to view the landscape of the Merri in the 1980s.

The displays can be seen at plantings and school visits and will soon be available on the web. Check www.mcmc.org.au



All are invited to the final planting for this project at: **Aitken Creek Craigieburn on Sunday 11 May 10am-1pm**, enter at Hexham Court (Melway map 387 C12).

Above photos, from MCMC's treasure trove of records, show the transformation of Robinson Reserve in Preston, looking north towards the swing bridge at Harding St Coburg/Kendall St Preston, from the early 1980s (at top left), in 1992 (at top right), and in 2008 (at bottom right).

Who's watching our water?

Our waterways are full of opportunities for learning and the *Merri & Moonee Ponds Creeks Waterwatch* program is a great way to do this. *Waterwatch* has been running at MCMC for 11 years and it has always depended on community volunteers collecting the bulk of the water quality data.

The large variety of monitoring groups are based all along Merri and Moonee Ponds Creeks and their tributaries. They range from the well established Friends of Merri Creek *Streamteam* to the Friends of Merlynston Creek, which is made up of two brothers who live near the creek. In the last couple of years we have had a marked increase in the number of monitoring groups. Groups which deserve an honourable mention for their continued regular sampling include:

- Friends of Merlynston Creek
- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek
- Friends of Merri Creek *Streamteam*
- Outlook Road Water Monitors (*Coburg*)
- Friends of Edgars Creek
- Adopt-a-Lake group (Edwardes Lake)

Since 2006, MCMC *Waterwatch* staff have themselves added reliable scientific data by conducting quarterly water quality tests at six sites in the Merri Creek catchment stretching from Brunswick to Somerton.

We have also involved nearby schools in this long-term project, which allows them to see changes in the creek over time.

If you would like to join a community water monitoring group or even to start up your own group, please contact Jane Bevelander on 9380 8199.



Photo: The Outlook Rd Water Monitors (*Coburg*) testing turbidity (or the clearness of the water).

The next *Waterwatch* training session is Sunday 15 June at Diamond Valley Learning Centre, Greensborough. Bookings are essential - ring Jane Bevelander on 9380 8199.

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.

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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