

Merri News

MAY 2012

The quarterly newsletter of Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) - caring for the Merri Creek

Leaders in education

In March, MCMC participated in Greening Australia's twelfth *Toolbox for Environmental Change* forum at Melbourne Museum. The 2012 forum focused on school-community partnerships, student leadership and promotion of sustainability within school communities.

The MCMC workshop, *Cultural traditions and a sense of identity: Putting biodiversity education into an Indigenous cultural heritage context* was a huge success and was led by a special team of eight to truly reflect our commitment to student-led learning and school-community partnerships.

Uncle Bill Nicholson, Wurundjeri Elder and educator from Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council, provided a Welcome to Country and co-presented the workshop. Five Grade 6 students from Thornbury Primary School (who had never been to a conference before) played a co-presentation role, showing examples of their work relating to the Merri Creek catchment, talking about acknowledging Traditional Owners, and answering questions. Dave Crawford (freelance specialist in Aboriginal culture and land restoration and ex-MCMC staffer) contributed by leading a hands-on activity making string from indigenous plants using traditional methods.

The workshop also featured Bill and Dave's collection of skin, plant, stone, wood and bark objects, stimulating further interest about Aboriginal culture (see photo).

The workshop showcased MCMC's approach to blending Indigenous cultural heritage with education about biodiversity and waterways. This important work could not have been achieved without funds from The Ian Potter Foundation, The Bjarne K. Dahl Trust, The Council of Australian Museum Directors, and support from the Whittlesea, Darebin and Yarra City Councils.

Plan it right – for our kids' sake

While natural areas provide important opportunities to educate about indigenous biodiversity, MCMC's *Learning Grounds* program has been helping schools to create their own thriving indigenous gardens for over ten years with planning workshops, collaborative design sessions and advice about plants. To find out more, contact Angela Foley at: angela@mcmc.org.au

Vale Harold Mackrell OAM

Harold Mackrell, who died peacefully at 88, made a valuable contribution to Merri Creek. He was a Friends of Merri Creek representative on the MCMC Board and/or one of its sub-committees from 1996 until 2009. We also enjoyed his good humour and fund of stories.



New waterway restoration grants

Melbourne Water's Corridors of Green program will fund MCMC's restoration of weedy patches amongst a stretch of indigenous vegetation adjoining Aitken Creek in Craigieburn during 2012 and 2013.

Friends of Merri Creek has contracted MCMC to undertake two projects from funds received through Melbourne Water's River Health Incentives Program.

Linking up the Merri Habitat Corridor in Fawkner will revegetate weedy patches amongst Native Grassland as well as Streambank and Escarpment Shrubland near Emma and Hare Streets in Fawkner. You can help with this planting on **Sunday 15 July**.

Bringing the Merri Island back to life will revisit one of the first major Merri Creek projects. Weedy undergrowth on "The Island," near Merri Park, Northcote, will be replaced with indigenous species. This will improve the fauna habitat provided by trees planted in 1988. You can help with this planting on **Sunday 5 August**.

For full details of the above projects, other upcoming community events, and the 2010-11 Annual Report, see the MCMC website: www.mcmc.org.au



No smoke without fire?

MCMC's regular burns in Native Grasslands attempt to reintroduce the effects of the Wurundjeri's burning tradition. Grants allowed Wurundjeri Traditional Owners to participate at some of the burns (*see above photo*).

Despite a demanding ecological burning season, MCMC completed four Native Grassland burns in February and March.

Summer rains fostered continued grass growth which made for awkward burning conditions. Green grass at Wallan Community Park barely smouldered, while Ngarri-djarrang (Central Creek Grassland) smoked more than was expected. Darebin Council Bush Crew's assistance was much appreciated in dealing with this smoke. Thorough preparations enabled the burn at Bababi Djinanang, (Jukes Rd Grassland) in Fawkner to continue, despite variable wind.

Recent Friends of Merri Creek gorse removal events helped to prepare breaks to prevent fire escaping into trees at Kalkallo Common. Burning here will stimulate the rapid regrowth of precious Plains Yam Daisies (Murnong) at this site and so prepare for a community survey of this culturally important plant on **Sunday 29 April**. If you're interested, please book with Brian at MCMC: brian@mcmc.org.au or phone 9380 8199.

Ecological burning is a very challenging task, but it is all worth it to see grasslands respond with improved health, manageability and more biodiversity.

Burns were funded through Federal Caring for Our Country Grants, Wallan Environment Group, Friends of Merri Creek CMA grant and a Landcare/Be Natural Grant. They were also supported by Mitchell Shire and Darebin, Hume and Moreland Councils.

Above photo: Wurundjeri Traditional Owners, Ash Firebrace (left) and Aunty Alice Kolassa (3rd left), with MCMC staff at Kalkallo Common.

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.



Frog Journeys

In spring and autumn MCMC ran two frog discovery evenings at Edwardes Lake Park in Reservoir, through the *Waterwatch* program.

In November 2011, over 50 people came on a balmy spring evening and heard Pobblebunks and Common Eastern Froglets while learning how to contribute to the Melbourne Water Frog Census (*see above photo*).

The second evening in March was overcast but mild and a group of 11 people walked north of the main lake to an ephemeral wetland and heard more Common Eastern Froglets. This was a relief after a tough summer for Edwardes Lake which suffered a black water event and threatening blue-green algae levels.

Above photo: MCMC's Jane Bevelander (2nd left), leads the session.

Platypus talk on Wednesday 30 May

Carlton Library, 6:30-8:00pm. Presented by Geoff Williams from the Australian Platypus Conservancy. A light supper will be supplied. Bookings essential to Jane Bevelander on 9380 8199 or jane@mcmc.org.au



Farewell to valued staff

MCMC has said farewell to two of the Parkland Management Team's most experienced team leaders; Maryann Weatherill and Dave Crawford.

Maryann (*at top*) began with MCMC in 2007 and looked after our direct seeding program. She will be missed for her commitment to the team and to the areas that MCMC manages. She has left to travel the world.



Dave (*at left*) began with MCMC in 2003 and was valued for his great expertise in vegetation restoration, particularly on Native Grasslands. He was also a key driver in building a partnership with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners. He now works with Acacia Environmental management.

We also gave our best wishes to Clinton Hallissey after he left at the end of his two year traineeship.

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

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