

Merri News

AUGUST 2013

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

Out and About

The Victorian Women's Trust funded MCMC to connect with Indigenous women and visit special places together near the Merri Creek. In May, four Wurundjeri women toured in memory of Aunty Winifred Bridges, who loved to get out on Country with her family.

The women first visited Merri Park Wetlands in Northcote where they enjoyed the sounds of Pobblebonk frogs.

Later they explored Galada Tamboore in Campbellfield. This area is particularly special because in 1998 the Wurundjeri Council bestowed the name 'Galada Tamboore', which means 'stream waterhole' in their traditional Woiwurrung language.

A little upstream of the waterhole, Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Alice Kolasa clambered around the rocky creek with a net to look for freshwater macroinvertebrates.

Photo © MCMC: Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Alice Kolasa, at Galada Tamboore - experiencing the Country of her ancestors.



“Merri Creek is the best thing about Melbourne...”

So said noted local musician, David Bridie, in the July issue of *The (Melbourne) Magazine*. MCMC thanked David for his comments, and he replied: “*The creek is still one of my favourite parts of the northern suburbs. Good on you for all the great work you do. It is an oasis amongst the industrial city.*”

Major flood on the Merri

Saturday 1st June was Melbourne's wettest June day on record and the media issued a “major flood warning” for Merri Creek at Bell St and St Georges Rd in Coburg - meaning the water was 5m above its normal level.

The flood subsided rapidly, leaving huge amounts of mud, litter and debris all along the creek. But MCMC and Moreland City Council still went ahead with the World Environment Day planting in Coburg on 2/6.



Photo: The Merri shared path is underwater just downstream of Bell Street Coburg, a few hours after the flood.

School's out!

Thomastown Secondary School students made the hour long walk from Thomastown to Reservoir and back for educational sessions at Edwardes Lake Park in June. Over three days, nearly 150 Year 7s and 8s joined in activities about water quality and biodiversity relationships, as part of the *Edgars Creek: Creek Connections* project, funded by PP&W CMA, and City of Whittlesea's *Storming for Cleaner Water*.

The students impressed MCMC staff with their high level of engagement and willingness to participate.

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.

Archaeological site tour

In April, MCMC staff enjoyed a tour of one of the most significant Indigenous cultural sites in Australia: the Mount William Axe Quarry near Lancefield.

For thousands of years, Wurundjeri people quarried greenstone from here, which was valued highly for axe heads, as it was very hard and stayed sharp for a long time.

Staff members were guided around the site by Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin. We all felt a deep sense of awe, which was only heightened by the rain, cold and mist on the day.

Burns at Mount William

In May, MCMC was honoured to work for the Wurundjeri Council to help burn grassy areas at the Mount William Axe Quarry site. It was a privilege to work under the guidance of Fire Captain, Uncle Dave Wandin, and together with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners, to burn this sacred country for the first time in generations.



Above: MCMC staff and guides at one of 34 flaking floors at Mount William Axe Quarry, where the Wurundjeri shaped the stone into axe head blanks.
Right © MCMC: Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin, by a culturally significant rock at the site.



How we care for country

Here are a few of the inspirational outcomes from the two Australian Government *Caring for Our Country* (CfoC) grants that MCMC finished in June:

- A machine wiped out the masses of gorse that threatened rare wildflowers in Wallan;
- Swarms of tiny native daisy seedlings emerged from a Reservoir grassland;
- A mosaic of ecological burns rejuvenated rare plants in a grassland in Kalkallo.

MCMC worked with CfoC funding for three years on the *Reinforcing Grasslands* project, and one year on the *Urban Waterways* project. The three year grant allowed us to trial ecological restoration techniques that couldn't be done with shorter term funding, and to develop important new relationships:

- We collaborated with Wurundjeri people to adapt traditional land management techniques, crucial for the restoration of native grasslands;

- Female MCMC staff assisted young women students from a local Islamic college to survey vegetation in a Fawkner grassland;
- Victoria University's extensive research on wildflower establishment was trialled for the first time in native grasslands. The trials, at Ngarridjarrang in Reservoir, and Kalkallo Common, aim to increase wildflower populations in grasslands.

CfoC requires us to think beyond the life of the grant and identify short, medium and long-term outcomes, some of which are now bearing fruit.

Works on the fascinating Plains Yam Daisy began under CfoC, and now continue through Victorian Government *Communities for Nature* funds. Other projects, including burning at Mount William, are continuing the collaborations with Wurundjeri that were initiated through the CfoC grants.

Some of our CfoC trials will continue to be monitored, and new projects are being considered to build their value. A current challenge is to share our new knowledge and skills with our fellow Volcanic Plains conservationists. More information notes, articles and web-pages are in the pipeline.

These projects will help us to develop best practice in the management of Volcanic Plains landscapes.

Find out more - look out for the following:

- Background reports on the MCMC website.
- Plains Yam Daisy monitoring activities.

For upcoming community events see our website: www.mcmc.org.au

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

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