

Merri News

FEBRUARY 2008

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

New Stop the butts project



MCMC's pilot *Stop the butts* project, which worked with Darebin City Council to reach culturally and linguistically diverse communities in 2006, has received new funding from Sustainability Victoria. The project showed us that when project team members spoke in a community language, we had more success in reaching those language groups.

The new funding will enable MCMC to train about eight people who are fluent in a language other than English and then support them to conduct community talks and achieve coverage in ethnic media about cigarette butt litter.

Free Multicultural Environment Advocate traineeships

If you are fluent in English and another language, and are interested in a free one day training program to become an environmental speaker in your language, contact Dimi Bouzalas at MCMC on 9380 8199 or dimi@mcmc.org.au

Photo: Vasili interviews a winner of the poster competition in 2006.

Hotline for Wildlife

An emergency telephone service is available to help people with native animals that run into strife in the suburbs. Why not file this number in your mobile phone:

Phone: WildLine 0500 540 000 (24 hours).

All wildlife is protected by law, so if you find injured or threatened wildlife, take care of your own safety and **call the WildLine wildlife rescue number as soon as possible.**

Volunteers can respond to all manner of wildlife rescue calls. For further information log on to:

<http://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/common.html>

Many of our wild neighbours are vulnerable to the hazards of urban surrounds. Wallabies, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Echidna, Eastern Long Necked Turtles, Bluetongue Lizards, Tawny Frogmouths, migrating birds and many others reside in the Merri's urban reaches.

Out there!

In January, MCMC brought kids and local residents to Central Creek Grasslands in Reservoir, where they learnt about grassland ecosystems and freshwater bugs and experienced assorted reptiles presented by the snakehandler. This was part of the *Northern Nature – Creek Connections* project funded by the Natural Heritage Trust.



Another holiday event was held at Docklands, where families in the City of Melbourne's Summer of Fun Program relished the chance to get up close to freshwater bugs from our waterways. Later, they sailed around the bay, more aware of the habitat of the waters that flow into it.

Photos at the grasslands: Top: The snakehandler displayed reptiles. Above: Kids wear their coloured paper Sacred Kingfishers.

In order to help local fauna, MCMC carries out restoration of native vegetation in parkland and advocates for indigenous plants in private gardens to strengthen corridors for wildlife.

While it is great to see animals in the city, they do face a variety of hazards: recently a Wallaby in central Melbourne was hit by a car and a dead wombat was found in Northcote. Sometimes animals suffer from our soft-hearts as well, such as recent cases of feeding kangaroos and the 'rescue' of a wild bluetongue mistakenly thought to be an escaped pet.

The Merri was once a clear rocky creek that hosted rich and plentiful wildlife. The survivors that dwell in the remaining habitat deserve our utmost support.

Annual Report 2006-07 available now

Download the report off our website at www.mcmc.org.au, or phone Ray Radford on 9380 8199 for a copy.

Bilingual Parks Tour Guides course wins Kookaburra Award

MCMC's Bilingual Parks Tour Guides course was recognised in November 2007 with the winning of a Parks Victoria Kookaburra Award for the Multicultural category. The course was acknowledged for its initiative and responsiveness to a growing need of reaching and involving diverse communities in linking with Australia's nature.

Many new arrivals find it difficult to find out about parks and to understand the points of interest. The 11 park guides, who each have different cultures and speak 14 languages, now have the skills to assist diverse groups to explore parks.



The Parks Victoria Kookaburra Awards recognise and honour people who have made an outstanding contribution to the development, conservation and appreciation of Victorian parks and to encourage community involvement in the future development, conservation and use of the park system. The Bilingual Parks Tour Guides course was coordinated by MCMC's Dimi Bouzalas and run in partnership with Whittlesea City Council, Parks Victoria and the Northern Melbourne Institute of Technology, with funding also provided by the Department of Community Development and Planning, Office of Women.

**For upcoming MCMC Community Events
See MCMC website: www.mcmc.com.au**

More grants for the Merri

MCMC and Friends groups will again be busy restoring habitat along the Merri Creek Corridor this year thanks to grant funding to supplement regular works.

MCMC received \$75,000 through the EPA alternative sentencing provision for restorative works at Merri Park Wetland, Northcote, Hall Reserve Wetland, Clifton Hill, Moomba Park, Fawkner, and Rushall Reserve, Craigieburn as well as various community education programs.

Friends of Merri Creek (FoMC) received \$21,219 from Australian Govt Envirofund to restore disturbed areas of Central Creek Grassland, Reservoir.

FoMC received \$25,707 from the Australian Govt Water Fund Community Water Grants to convert exotic vegetation to appropriate Streambank Shrubland vegetation, modified for urban conditions, at Robinson Reserve Preston, Hall Reserve Clifton Hill and Aitken Creek Craigieburn.

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:

**Merri Creek Management Committee 2 Lee St East Brunswick VIC 3057. Phone: 9380 8199 Fax 9380 6989
Email: admin@mcmc.org.au Website: www.mcmc.org.au**

A bit seedy, but a good sort!

In December (or early summer), native grass seed matures and MCMC tries to harvest some seed before it drops, blows or hitches a ride. Our key target species are Kangaroo Grass for patching up gaps after weed control and Wallaby and Spear Grass seed for spreading into tricky spots on steep slopes where planting is impractical.

Seed collection and direct seeding is vulnerable to weather conditions. Seed production on all grass species was severely reduced in 2006 by lack of spring & summer rains. In 2007, a severe spring drought was followed by welcome summer rains. These rains enabled the Kangaroo Grass seed to mature and high average temperatures hastened seed ripening. We appreciate the flexibility of our volunteer Friends workforce who were at the ready for an early harvest at Cooper Street Grassland this summer.

The collection of seed with the community is a great day out, although tolerance of sharp Spear Grass seeds digging into ankles is required! The thirty-odd precious bales of seed and stem (thatch) collected will be stored over winter. It will be spread just prior to peak germination conditions (around November) to restore grasslands at Central Creek in Reservoir and at Jukes Road in Fawkner.



Photo above: MCMC's Maryann Weatherill sorts the collected seed.

Photo left: Some of the Biligual Parks Tour Guides displaying their Kookaburra Award, with Parks Victoria Chief Executive Officer, Mark Stone, at rear right and MCMC's Dimi Bouzalas second from right.

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.

The Melbourne Water Community Grants Program funded the following four projects:

- \$20,000 to MCMC to develop a five year Management plan for Central Creek Grassland, Reservoir, and on ground works including ecological burning, weed control, planting and local community events.
- \$20,000 to FoMC to encourage local communities, particularly the residents of the flats at Holmes St Northcote, to increase awareness of native vegetation and the threats of environmental weeds and strengthen habitat links between Hall and Walker St Wetlands, Clifton Hill.
- \$8,427 to FoMC on behalf of the Merri & Edgars Creeks Confluence Area Restoration Group to recreate Riparian Escarpment Shrubland in the area just south of Murray Rd Coburg.
- \$17,673 to the Friends of Edgars Creek for restoration of three locally significant sites along Edgars Creek.