



Even more is happening on the Merri

On top of Yarra Valley Water's ongoing northern sewerage construction works and Melbourne Water's Merri Creek Improvement Project (reported in Nov 2008), even more works are occurring on the Merri.

New shared path near Rushall Station

A new shared path has been created between Rushall Station and the High Street bridge. It was built as part of the Merri Trail Review to provide less gradient and fewer turns than the previous path. Unfortunately, it meant that some vegetation had to be sacrificed, but there will be reinstatement plantings funded by the City of Yarra and the Australian Government Regional Catchment Investment Plan (keep a lookout on our events calendar).



Clifton Hill Rail Project

The new rail bridge has been completed and trains are running on the new city bound railway track between Clifton Hill and Westgarth Stations. However works are still ongoing underneath the bridge at Urquhart Street Northcote and on the Merri Creek shared path.

Pipeline works at Bakers Rd Coburg North

A new water pipeline has been laid underneath Merri Creek from Bakers Road to McMahons Road Coburg North, causing a temporary closure to the shared path. It is expected that the works, including upgrading access to the footbridge across the creek between the roads, should be completed by the time you read this.

New path bridge on pipeline crossing

Another new water pipeline will be built starting under Holden Street North Fitzroy, then across the creek replacing the current pipeline bridge and continuing under the parklands alongside Merri Parade Northcote. Although the works will temporarily disrupt the shared path in that area, cyclists will be well compensated by a new path bridge on top of the pipeline to connect with the Capital City Trail. The Victorian Government and Melbourne Water will fund the works which will provide cyclists with an alternative to the on-road route over the St Georges Road bridge and narrow Rushall Station footbridge. Work is due to begin mid-year and expected for completion in early 2010.

St Georges Road Roundabout works

Works are expected to begin later this year to install traffic lights and build associated roadworks to remedy the dangerous roundabout at the St Georges Road bridge between Northcote and North Fitzroy.

Streamteam coordinator awarded

On Sunday 1st March, Greg Woodward, the Merri Waterwatch Coordinator, came to the regular water quality monitoring session on the creek and presented the Streamteam Coordinator, Irene Baker with a certificate recognising five years voluntary work.

This is a very well-deserved award because, since Irene became the Coordinator in mid 2004, she has been extremely diligent, doing regular tests every month, including January and presenting a detailed report of the results. The group now attracts a regular enthusiastic bunch, plus some interested extra people.

However, before Irene became Coordinator, the Streamteam had already been going for five years. It was started by Tim Brown in 1999 when the monitoring was done at Galada Tamboore near Barry Rd Campbellfield. Brendan Casey took over the role in 2000, when he made the vital discovery of a colony of Growling Grass Frogs on the creek. He was followed by John Lawson in 2001, Maggie Sutcliffe in 2002 and Chris Sullivan in 2003, when the monitoring was moved to the current site, upstream of the St Georges Rd bridge, Nth Fitzroy.

The Streamteam has continued to learn more about monitoring since the early days. Soon training will be available



MCMC Waterwatch Coordinator, Greg Woodward, presents an award for five year service to our Streamteam Coordinator, Irene Baker

to enable the Streamteam to make more specific identification of the water 'bugs' – for instance a damselfly will be defined into about three other lower family groups.

If you're interested, why not come along to one of the monitoring sessions on the first Sunday of each month upstream of the St Georges Rd bridge, Nth Fitzroy at 2-3.30pm, or phone 9354 9885.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE UPPER MERRI

We ask all FoMC members and supporters to please make a submission on the new Draft Urban Growth Boundary, which is expected to be released in May. It should be announced in the media or check the Growth Areas Authority website at <http://www.gaa.vic.gov.au/>.

We need as much support as we can get if we are to ensure that development does not impact upon rare native grasslands, important habitat corridors, or sites of geological or Aboriginal significance. You can see more about our vision for the upper Merri valley: NATURE ON MELBOURNE'S NORTHERN DOORSTEP on the FoMC website www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc under "News."

Woody weed (almost) removed

Thank God for the Regeneration Group regulars, who made up seven of the eight people who removed woody weeds at Bababimorning (Cooper St grasslands) on 22 February (the eighth was young Ryan, a local from Craigieburn). This was the first ever FoMC weed poisoning event that we have done without the assistance of MCMC, Parks Victoria or a Council works team. We mopped up a section of the Merri Creek escarpment for about 200 metres south of the rear of the Istra club, - a really great effort. If we are able to repeat this effort on future weed removals, we should just about be able to see the grasslands clear of woody weeds in the next year or so.

There are still a few more chances to take part in this most rewarding activity, so please come along and help out if you can (see calendar for details).

Friendly neighbours

On the north side of Melbourne and elsewhere, ecological groups have arisen, as folk take control of their piece of the natural environment. The Wallan and Malcolm Creeks, Craigieburn grasslands, the Moonee Ponds Creek and the park out at Woodlands, the Darebin Creek and the Alphington wetlands, their character unique is protected with good plans.

In Coburg the Friends of Edgars Creek find themselves rubbing shoulders with MECCARG*. For the first, the Pied Cormorant's the emblem, it appears on their excellent Quarterly; could the second use the Blue Tongue Lizard?, there was one near the Murray Rd bridge. Our calendar lists their activities: they're not short of energy or expertise.

In Reservoir, Lysterfield, Adelaide, Canberra and Eildon, what a difference a dam makes! With the rugged ravine on the downstream side and above it the flourishing wetlands, and the reeds and the trees and the ripples in the breeze, the Edwardes Lake too has its Friends.

All three groups enjoy wonderful scenery. The Edgars Creek goes from a murmuring rivulet wandering over a plain, to the splendid expanse of the Edwardes Lake Park with wildfowl assembling in flocks; then striking escarpments and meanders, the waterfall, the secretive confluence. MECCARG* has the handsome old bluestone bridge, the natural lake and the tessellated pavement, and the channel emerging at Goff St...

So these dedicated greenies play their part in preserving our precious planet; they're a link between those who have gone before, and those who are going to come after.

Paul Prentice

* MECCARG: Merri & Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group.

Update No. 3 on the new Merri Creek Parklands (Marran baba)*

Andrew Shannon, Team Leader Community Engagement and Communications, Urban Parks, Parks Victoria, supplied this update of the proposed new park north of the Western Ring Rd.

Strategic Directions Plan: A Steering Committee comprising representatives of Melbourne Water, City of Whittlesea, City of Hume and Parks Victoria has endorsed a Strategic Directions Statement for the Merri Creek Parklands (Marran baba)*. The area under discussion is the 15 km section north of the Western Ring Road through to Craigieburn East Road in Craigieburn. The seven page Statement outlines the importance of protecting the flora, fauna, archaeology and geology while providing considered community access to areas of the parkland. Check for the statement on the Parks Victoria website: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Master Plan for Galada Tamboore: As the first stage in implementing the parklands, a master plan is being developed for Galada Tamboore in Thomastown/Campbellfield. Galada Tamboore has important flora and fauna habitat but its overall significance is less than the grasslands at Cooper Street or Craigieburn. As such it is better placed to become the main visitor park within the broader Merri Creek Parklands. The master plan will set out trails, picnic facilities and play areas for the 320 ha site while protecting the habitat areas. The Victorian Government has allocated \$2.8 million to building stage 1. Construction is expected to occur in mid 2010.

The majority of the area is owned by Melbourne Water as a retarding basin and one of the key questions will be whether in the future a retarding wall at the southern end will be needed to cope with the growing urban development upstream. The master plan won't resolve this but will need to take it into consideration.

*Naming: Wurundjeri language names were proposed by Doreen Carvey-Wandin, a Wurundjeri elder on behalf of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc. for the sections of the new parklands. Marran baba, which means "body of mother" has been proposed for the whole of the new parklands, with the various grasslands having names of the mother's foot, thigh, hand and backbone.

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being developed to guide the protection of Galada Tamboore's archaeological and heritage values.

A biodiversity assessment will be prepared which includes a review of all previous studies together with further field surveys.

Community consultation will be a key challenge at Galada Tamboore. The area is not currently considered a vital part of its local communities. While many people have viewed the area from the top of the escarpment, few have ventured down to creek level, where much of the beauty of the site is to be found. To help overcome some of the barriers, Parks Victoria has contracted Merri Creek Management Committee to run three extra tours in its *Nearby Nature* program to introduce local people to the new park site. The main period for people to be able to comment on a draft master plan is expected to be in June 2009. Parks Victoria plans to hold an on-site Discovery Day during the consultation period to introduce people to the area.

For further information keep an eye on the FoMC Newsletter and the Parks Victoria website: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.



WETLANDS UPDATE

Below is the latest news regarding FoMC's approaches to Moreland, Darebin and Yarra Councils about creating wetlands along Merri Creek or its tributaries.

MORELAND WETLAND FEASIBILITY STUDY
Moreland City Council is currently in negotiations with Melbourne Water regarding objectives, funding opportunities, project scope and other source control opportunities further up the stormwater catchment. The tender is being finalised and will go out soon; the consultant's report to Council is due June 30th 2009.

RE-DESIGN OF STRETTLÉ WETLAND
Although Darebin City Council earlier promised that this year's Capital Works budget would include a re-design of this wetland to take stormwater, competing

demands meant that the promise couldn't be kept. The reasons are that the amount of requests is far higher than what is in the budget; the wetland re-design isn't required for drainage purposes; and there is more emphasis on maintaining or replacing existing assets, such as creek trail and bridges (for which Darebin has committed substantial funds). However, Darebin has said that the Strettle Wetland re-design is still on the agenda — it's just a matter of priorities. Additionally, there may also be a further opportunity for wetland creation in the future.

PROPOSED WETLAND AT HEWSONS HOLLOW, CLIFTON HILL
Yarra City Council engaged a consultant who brought up several good options for this proposed wetland at Hewsons Hollow (south of Hall Reserve) Clifton Hill. However, none seemed to be financially viable due to the expensive necessity to lay pipe from the Ramsden St carpark to Hewsons Hollow. Nevertheless this wetland idea hasn't totally dried up yet, and it may still be possible in a modified form, without directly taking stormwater.

Birds of late summer along the Merri

The second quarterly bird survey was conducted at ten sites along the Merri and Edwardes Lake, in February-March 2009. Despite the long hot, dry summer, the total bird numbers were only a little less than in last spring's surveys. There were quite a few changes in the species seen.

The most interesting sighting was the Blue-billed Duck in Clifton Hill, an endangered species in Victoria. Other new species this time included Musk Lorikeets (at six sites) and Little Lorikeets, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Hobby and Peregrine Falcon.

There were more ducks, Rock Doves, Silvereyes, and House Sparrows than were counted last spring. Spring-summer visitors, the Sacred Kingfishers, were still present along the Merri, but no cuckoos were seen this time.

The most commonly-seen bird last spring, the Red Wattlebird, was present in much smaller numbers this time. Other honeyeater numbers were also down (White-plumed Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, and New Holland Honeyeater). This is possibly due to the shortage of flowering eucalypts now, which were abundant in October-November.

No Brown or Rufous Songlarks were recorded. Brown Songlarks were recorded at three sites last spring. Brian Bainbridge reported that Rufous Songlarks had been at Bababi djananang (Jukes Road Grassland) since about October, and nested there., but the males' singing ceased in late January/early February.

The next round of surveys will be held in May – see the Calendar for details. Beginners are welcome.



Blue-Billed Duck (Geoffrey Dabb, Canberra Ornithologists Group)

Summary of results from nine of the ten sites:

- ☞ 76 bird species, 13 introduced
- ☞ Total estimated birds: 2,199
- ☞ Most common bird: Rock Dove (243)
- ☞ Birds seen at all sites: Common Starling, Common Myna
- ☞ Site with the highest numbers of species: Blyth St-Moreland Rd. E Brunswick (38)

Ann McGregor

Merri Birdwatch Convenor

MORE MERRI BIRDWATCH SURVEYS

There are three more bird surveys this year at ten sites along Merri Creek. All surveys will be from 8.45-10.30am as below. *BYO* binoculars if possible. The contact for all Birdwatch events is Ann McGregor 0429 386 102.

THE FOLLOWING EIGHT SITES WILL HAVE SURVEYS ON 24 MAY, 9 AUGUST, 8 NOVEMBER:

JUKES ROAD, FAWKNER

Meet on Merri Path at end of Jukes Road, Fawkner (Melway 818 A2).

EGAN RESERVE-HARDING ST-STRETTLE RESERVE-NORMANBY RD

Meet at bluestone steps at end of The Grove, East Coburg (Melway 30 A3).

COBURG LAKE RESERVE

Meet near the car park, Lake Grove Coburg (17 H10).

EDWARDES LAKE

Meet at the playground adjacent to Griffiths St, Reservoir (Melway 18 E5).

CERES TO MORELAND ROAD

Meet at the seats on the path at rear of CERES, East Brunswick (Melway 30 B7).

MERRI PARK, PHILLIPS RESERVE

Meet at the end of Victoria St, East Brunswick, at BBQ shelter (Melway 30 B8).

HALL RESERVE- YARRA BEND PARK

Meet at the Rotunda, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill (Melway 2D D1).

GALGI NGAARK (CRAIGIEBURN GRASSLANDS)*

Meet at the O'Herns Road gate off Hume Highway (Melway 180 E6).

Surveys at GALADA TAMBOORE* will be on 24 May, 30 August, 8 November.

Meet at the end of Hatty Court, Campbellfield (Melway 7 K6).

Surveys at BABABI MARNING (COOPER STREET GRASSLANDS)* will be on 28 June, 30 August, 22 November.

Meet near the Istrian Club, the Cooper St, Epping (Melway 387 K10).

* For sites with an asterisk, car pool outside the MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick leaving at 8.15am.

NO DOGS PLEASE. The presence of dogs has been found to reduce the number and variety of birds to be seen.

Lessons to be learned

The bushfires have been a tragic and complex affair. We have seen some of the best and the worst of human behaviour: miraculous escapes and hopeless situations; water-bombing, improved protection of firefighters; touching care for both pet and wild animals; generous donations, including blood; the dilemma of aid for the uninsured.

Around the world various spectacular events occur: volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, tsunamis and tidal waves, tornadoes and hurricanes, ice-storms and heatwaves and floods. Some are of purely natural origin, others are probably associated with global warming; again, landslides are often caused by heavy rain running off deforested slopes.



Bunyip Ridge bushfire, near Tonimbuk (www.telegraph.co.uk)

None have the same human involvement as bushfires, which people may start – mostly by accident, through powerlines, cigarette butts, refractive glass fragments etc. – and generally try to stop, since they're more open-ended than the other ones, and we can make a difference to their impact. But we can't do anything about lightning strikes; and we're stuck with the painful questions of how to catch and deal with arsonists. The preventative approach of counselling likely offenders has apparently been successful in South Australia.

There's also the paradox that fire is an essential part of the environment, in southern Australia at least: it clears out dead biomass and speeds the return of minerals to the soil, facilitates the germination of some species, in particular the mountain and alpine ash, and "lets a thousand flowers bloom" as choking natural litter is eliminated. The rejuvenation of grasslands through ecological burns is a marvellous case of stewardship of the planet.

But they are controlled, in complete contrast to the unprecedented ferocity of the recent conflagrations in Victoria and (in 2003) Canberra – rather reminiscent of the devastating torrents of rocks and superheated gases from volcanoes' most violent outpourings. With global warming surging ahead and the low rainfall in southern Australia – which somebody has rightly declared should no longer be called a drought, since that implies it's only temporary – we can expect more of the extreme dryness and heat and powerful winds which made these fires almost unstoppable.

Fire-resistant homes, shelters, buffer zones must surely be the rule in future: one envisages such possibilities as dwellings set into hillsides, with panoramic views from floor-to-ceiling windows across which heavy reflective metal screens could be rolled in a couple of minutes, or even free-standing ones of concrete, stone or mud-brick with similar defences. And exotic trees such as oaks would be very hard to burn.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment will have to do a lot more fuel reductions, and will have less

money available for other projects; the reduced quantity and quality of our water supplies will increase the urgency of constructing the desalination plant, or getting water from Tasmania or from recycling. The use of grey water must be increased; and of tanks, despite the Minister's lack of interest.

These problems are symptoms of the major world one, climate change, which threatens the richness and diversity of life on this planet. Who knows what deterioration may occur as crucial links in the biosphere are lost, what starvation and epidemics; what, for example, the death of the Great Barrier Reef and others, from rising temperatures and acidity, could do to the ecology of the Pacific Ocean. It's a real worry to see how apathetic and timid the Federal Government is on this vital matter, setting weak targets on reduction of emissions, making huge concessions to polluters, dragging its heels on solar, wind and geothermal energy. We must keep up the pressure.

Our vegetation may need periodic bushfires, but not of this new intensity which will require elaborate measures to prevent loss of life. For the foreseeable future we will endure these occasional extreme weather conditions which could foster destruction almost on the scale of an atomic bomb: it may take the rest of the century to bring carbon dioxide concentrations and climatic conditions back to what they were fifty years ago.

And that's if the world starts now, before the reflective ice melts and more solar heat is absorbed, before the tundra thaws and releases vast amounts of the extra dangerous greenhouse gas, methane. The toxic atmosphere of Venus serves as a warning of what our greed and lethargy may lead to if we leave things until it's too late.

Paul Prentice

FoMC PLEDGES BUSHFIRE HELP

Friends of Merri Creek extend our sincere condolences to those who were adversely affected by the devastating bushfires in February.

As we're sure that our members would like to do something useful for the survivors of this tragedy, we have pledged, along with MCMC, to lend a hand at future revegetation projects in the affected areas. When the time comes, a special announcement will be made about this and then we'll need you to help put our words into action.

Historian's Kangaroo Grass Seed Harvest

I had put my name down in December 2008 with another FoMC Life member, Allie Dawe, to take part in the annual harvest of Kangaroo Grass seed.

Unfortunately the December date was cancelled when it was discovered that, owing to the unseasonably cold weather, the seeds weren't ripe. However, by the new date of 9 January, sufficient seeds were ripe to make the operation worthwhile and when Allie and I arrived at Bababi marning (Cooper St grassland) the harvest was already in progress.

The Western Basalt Plains Native Grasslands are an ecosystem at great risk. They used to cover more than 230,000 hectares of southeastern Victoria. In 1824, when explorers Hume and Hovell, after great travail, broke through the Great Dividing Range at Mt Disappointment, they beheld the extensive plains spread out before them. They saw—and smelled—smoke: the Woiworung people were using fire stick burning methods to manage the grasslands to attract game. The explorers called this promised land Iramoo.

At some point, John Batman and the Port Phillip Association became aware of the potential of Iramoo as prime grazing land for their prize-winning Merino flocks, then over crowded in land-starved Van Diemen's Land. In 1835, Batman and his party arrived in Port Phillip Bay on the sloop *Rebecca*. The British government refused to recognise his subsequent 'treaty' with local Aboriginal people, but European settlement took place rapidly in its wake, anyway.

The widespread and intensive use by pastoralists and other settlers of the native grasslands that followed the European invasion led to their rapid degradation. (Richard Broome in his *Coburg: Between Two Creeks* notes how early in the story of European settlement sheep were being run along the Merri and in present day Moonee Ponds—well ahead of official land sales by the British Crown). Today there are only about 3,000 hectares of the grasslands left. Just under 1000 hectares have been preserved in five sites between Donnybrook and Reservoir. The grasslands may not look impressive to the casual observer, but in reality they teem with life: more than 350 native flowering plants and 200 birds and animals make their home there.

The day of the seed harvest was very hot with a persistent and irritating northwest wind. I paused for a moment under the marquee and Dave from MCMC told me that recently he had seen swamp wallabies and a mob of about twenty kangaroos down by the creek at dusk. Entering the grasslands proper, I soon caught sight of the roos, heading eastwards towards the creek.



The prolonged drought had made the harvest meagre, and even native flowering plants were doing it hard. Allie and I soon joined the redoubtable Paul Prentice in raking up and gathering cut stalks of Kangaroo Grass and putting them in sacks which we later dragged back to the marquee. They



weren't as heavy as they looked—which was just as well as we had to lift one over a fence.

Allie soon spotted Claudia James, the representative to MCMC from the

Friends of Wallan Creek. Allie, who is a Friends of Merri Creek representative on the MCMC executive, had met Claudia previously at meetings. At the end of the harvest, over a lunch of felafel, hummus, salad and pita, Allie, Claudia and I discussed ways to promote the involvement of local secondary schools in environmental projects in the community.

It was a hot day, but a satisfying one. We met some committed and purposeful stakeholders in the Merri and environs, and once the seed is separated out back at the MCMC office, it can be planted to further the great work of preserving this endangered ecosystem and extending habitat for native fauna. And for the community at large to marvel at and enjoy.

Leslie Fraser (Historian and FoMC Honorary Life Member)

MERRI WORK COMMENDED

The catchment-scale restoration of Merri Creek has been selected in the 'Highly Commended — Projects with Potential for Biodiversity Research Partnerships' category in the *Ecological Management and Restoration Journal's* 'Top 25' ecological restoration projects in Australasia. Congratulations to MCMC for nominating the project — although we can take a share of the credit too. See the MCMC website: www.mcmc.org.au for a report on the restoration of Ngarrri djarrang (Central Creek Grassland) in Reservoir.

DOB IN A LITTERER

The recent bushfire tragedy makes it even more important to report people who throw a cigarette especially from motor vehicles, but it also applies to any litter. You can do this through the Environment Protection Authority, either by downloading a form from their website http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/litter/docs/litter_form.pdf or phoning 1800 35 25 55, to have a form sent. There is also an online option, but you need to register to use it. Some forms are also available at the MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick.

Around the Horseshoe Bend

From the north-west and the north-east they come with extravagant meanderings, Melbourne's two great waterways, to their meeting near the head of the Bay; they're complemented by the Werribee, Plenty and Patterson Rivers and a host of creeks and channels.

Continuing the symmetry, their most spectacular loops are on exactly the same latitude; and in twin miracles of foresight, both areas have been preserved for the benefit of the environment and our youth. East Keilor has Brimbank Park and the Horseshoe Bend Children's Farm on the Maribyrnong; the charming village of Warrandyte, a State Park and a scout camp beside the Yarra at Pound Bend.

It's actually the union of Jacksons Creek and Deep Creek just west of the airport that creates the Maribyrnong River; and only 37 km. from there to the Yarra as the fish swims, or about half that as the crow flies. Among its many memories of yesteryear, Solomans Ford between Sunshine North and Avondale Heights used to give access to the Ballarat goldfields; while an old stock bridge relocated from Punt Rd leads to the former Kensington saleyards, now replaced by attractive housing and mini-parks.

The shared footway offers broad vistas, including at one point the river on one side and a lake on the other. It meets the Ring Road path at the E. J. Whitten Bridge, and links up with the Capital City Trail via Footscray Rd, and Williamstown and Altona via Hyde St; and it's quite close to a number of stations, from Seddon to Ginifer to Moonee Ponds.

Jacksons Creek originates on the slopes of Mount Macedon; Deep Creek further north, between Kyneton and Lancefield. The former has the more eventful journey, encountering the Bendigo line at beautiful Riddells Creek and again at bustling Sunbury – site of the first Ashes Test in 1882 at Rupertswood, the former mental institution "Caloola" now become a Victoria University campus, an historic gaol and court house, and Emu Bottom Homestead, built in 1836.

But the creek's most unique features are the striking columnar basalt formation (with hexagonal shapes like the Merri's tessellated pavement) known as the Organ Pipes, and the neighbouring one that evokes a cathedral window, the Rosette Rock – not to be confused with the renowned hieroglyph-translating Rosetta Stone of ancient Egypt. The pioneering local Friends' group has transformed a weed-infested rubbish dump into a showpiece with Visitor Centre, nursery, and studies of tiny radar-equipped bats; the alien-looking touches of dark green in the 60-metre-deep valley are actually an indigenous conifer, *Callitris glaucophylla*.

The longer but more obscure Deep Creek passes by Darraweit Guim, Konagaderra Springs and the hamlet of Bulla; and after absorbing the Emu Creek, pursues its circuitous perambulations (they all do that around here) until it becomes the other parent of the Maribyrnong.



The new-born river wends its way past the Farm and the Park to the time-honoured Tea Gardens, end-point of the "Blackbird" cruises that start by the Hopetoun Bridge near Hopkins St in Footscray. Just past the Steele Creek is the majestic Lily St bluff, attainable by zigzagging paths put in by enlightened authorities, as was the single-pylon Afton St footbridge. Houses in Chifley Drive are at elevated levels; at the Anglers Tavern they simply remove carpet and stock from the lower floor when a flood is expected, then do a quick clean and resume normal operations when the place has dried out again.

Meanwhile the left bank has play and sports grounds, barbecues, parks, rowers' and anglers' clubs and the smart, recently rebuilt Boathouse to match the two senior ones on the Yarra. The No. 57 West Maribyrnong and the No. 82 Footscray to Moonee Ponds trams glide past; above Canning St there's just the 476 Moonee Ponds to Hillside bus – happily it is still a fairly wild, remote area.

Steep escarpments and expansive open stretches alternate as we take in such attractions as Fairbairn and Pipemakers Parks, Jack's Canal and Edgewater Lake, and the Frogs Hollow and Newells Paddock Wetlands. The refurbished Royal Agricultural Society Showgrounds, Flemington Racecourse famed for the Melbourne Cup, and the community facilities and historical displays near Maribyrnong St reflect the diversity of people's interests.

Lastly there's the equally fascinating industrial sector, with vessels of various types and sizes, cranes, semi-trailers, and stacks of containers. Here the natural grace of the leisurely creeks and the suburban comfort of the placid river are succeeded by the romance and rigours and perils of maritime commerce: we've come to the totally different world of a major trading port.

Paul Prentice (Committee member)

Saturday 2 MECCARG* Planting

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a digging tool and a bucket. Email: meccarg@hotmail.com

Sunday 3 Woody Weed Removal

Bababi marring (Cooper St grasslands), near Istrian Club, 10am-1pm. Melway map 180 K10. Car pool outside the MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick before 8.45am. Light refreshments provided. Funded by Parks Victoria. Please register with Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 or email: megan@mcmc.org.au.

Sunday 3 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 3 Litter Clean-Up

Murray Rd Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 18 A11. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 17 Friends of Edgars Creek Riparian Planting

Meet at Notice Board adjacent to Ronald St, Nth Coburg 1-3pm. Melway map 18 A9. Phone Stephen 042 563 4212.

Sunday 24 Second Bird Survey at most sites for 2009

8.45-10.30am at nine sites along the creek. See p. 4 for details. Phone Ann 0429 386 102.

Sunday 31 MCMC Planting & BBQ

Near Rushall Station North Fitzroy, 10am-1pm. Melway map 30 D12. Funded by the Federal Government's Caring for Country Program. Phone Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199.

JUNE

Saturday 6 MECCARG* Planting at the Quarry

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a digging tool and a bucket. Email: meccarg@hotmail.com

Sunday 7 Litter Clean-Up

Clara St East Brunswick, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A5. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 7 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 7 Friends of Edwardes Lake Wetland Planting

Meet at the Scout Hall Car Park (off Leamington St) Reservoir, 10am- 12.30pm. Melway map 18 E4. Combined planting event with Friends of Edgars Creek, Refreshments provided. Phone Kate 0419 352 004.

Sunday 14 Infill Planting & BBQ

Merri Park Northcote, follow the flags from cnr of Sumner Ave & Winifred St, 10am-1pm. Melway map 30 C8. Funded by an Aust. Govt 'Caring for our Country' grant. Phone Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199.

Friday 19 FoMC newsletter deadline

Please send articles to admin@mcmc.org.au.

Sunday 21 Planting & BBQ

The woodlands at Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill, 10am-1pm. Melway map 44 H1. Funded by an Aust. Govt 'Caring for our Country' grant. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 21 Friends of Edgars Creek Planting:

Restoring a Creekline tussock grassland

Meet at Notice Board adjacent to Ronald St, Nth Coburg 1-3pm. Melway map 18 A9. Phone Stephen 042 563 4212.

Saturday 27 Planting & BBQ

Ngarrri-djarrang (Central Creek grassland), Davidson St Reservoir, 10am-1pm. Melway map 8 B12. Funded by an Aust Govt Regional Catchment Investment Plan grant. Note this is a Saturday. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 28 Woody Weed Removal

Along the Beveridge to Wallan rail line, 10am-1pm. Meet at the Wallan Railway Station. Melway map 646 G11. Car pool outside the MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick before 8.45am. Light refreshments provided. Funded by an Aust Govt Regional Catchment Investment Plan grant. Please register with Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 or email: megan@mcmc.org.au.

Sunday 28 Second Bird survey at Bababi marring

(Cooper Street Grasslands) 8.45-10.30am. See p. 4 for details. Phone Ann 0429 386 102.

JULY

Saturday 4 MECCARG* Planting

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a digging tool and a bucket. Email: meccarg@hotmail.com

Sunday 5 Litter Clean-Up

Near Rushall Station, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 D 11. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 5 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 12 Planting & BBQ

Robinson Reserve, at end of Goodwin St West Preston, 10am-1pm. Melway map 30 B2. Funded by Landcare Australia/SP AusNet. Phone MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 19 Friends of Edgars Creek Planting:

Tree custodian planting

Meet at Notice Board adjacent to Ronald St, Nth Coburg 1-3pm. Melway map 18 A9. Phone Stephen 042 563 4212.

AUGUST

Saturday 1 MECCARG* Planting

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a digging tool and a bucket. Email: meccarg@hotmail.com

Sunday 2 Litter Clean-Up

Aitken Creek Craigieburn at Axminster Drive, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 386 J 10. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 2 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 2 City of Yarra National Tree Day Planting

Quarries Park Clifton Hill, 10am-1pm. Melway map 2D C3.

Sunday 2 Friends of Edwardes Lake Nat. Tree Planting

Meet at the Scout Hall Car Park (off Leamington St) Reservoir, 10am- 12.30pm. Melway map 18 E4. Phone Kate 0419 352 004.

Saturday 8 Planting & BBQ

Imaroo St, Fawkner, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 17 K6. Funded by Landcare Australia/Spicers Paper. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 9 Third Bird Survey at most sites for 2009

8.45-10.30am at eight sites along the creek. See p. 4 for details. Phone Ann 0429 386 102.

Sunday 16 MCMC 20th Anniversary Planting & BBQ

Near Rushall Station North Fitzroy, 10am-1pm. Melway map 30 D12. help celebrate MCMC's 20th Anniversary by joining in this BIG planting. Funded by an Australian Govt 'Caring for our Country' grant. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

* MECCARG = Merri & Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group.