

Friends of Merri Creek



NEWSLETTER

November 2005
–January 2006

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2005 Annual General Meeting

2.00pm Saturday 12 November, 2005

CERES Environment Room, Lee Street East Brunswick

AGENDA

- Presentation on the Growling Grass Frog—Geoff Heard
- Election of the 2006 Friends Committee
- Election of six Friends Representatives to MCMC
- Setting the Annual Subscription Fee (*Note: the following new membership fees are proposed: Individual: \$18, Household/Organisation: \$24, Concession: \$10, Corporations: \$60*)

All members are invited to attend the AGM

Have your say in running the Friends' group, elect our Committee and find out about Geoff Heard's interesting research on the Growling Grass Frog. Please note that we are proposing increased subscription fees. We aim to conclude the meeting by 3.30pm. Afterwards, join us for drinks, nibbles and a chat.

Interested in being on the Committee?

If you are even vaguely interested in a role on the Friends Committee or in being a representative to the MCMC, or in volunteering for one of the various Sub-Committees, please ring Ray Radford on 0422 989 166. Also contact Ray for a Nomination Form, which must be received before 11 November. However, nominations will be welcomed for any vacancies at the AGM. An election will only be held if the number of nominations exceeds the vacancies.

Check Your Membership

Please note that only financial members can vote at the AGM or nominate for positions. If you wish to vote but are currently unfinancial, your membership fee and application form will need to be received before Wednesday 9 November. Unfortunately, memberships cannot be approved at the AGM. ❀

Merri Creek Park Plan out in December(?)

The Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, has told us that, after an 18 months delay, he finally wants to release the Draft Concept Plan for Merri Creek Park in December.

We'll believe it when we see it, but we ask members to please check the Parks Victoria website (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au), in December and make a submission (see below). There should be a period of at least three months for public comment.

FoMC has long awaited this major new park, in the Merri Creek corridor north of the ring road, in the hope that it will protect some of the amazing assemblage of natural and cultural heritage in the middle reaches of the Merri. However, there will be a lot more important sites that are certain to be outside the boundaries of the proposed Park. For example, see our proposal for a Merri Creek State Park, prepared along with the Victorian National Parks Association on our website: www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc and bear in mind that we have found additional sites since then.

We felt that the original Parks Victoria proposal did not go far enough and we are now concerned that it may be watered down even further. We ask Friends members to make a submission that urges Parks Victoria to protect all the sites with significant conservation values, even if they cannot be incorporated in the Park. (Your submission could even say that FoMC has

Continued overleaf

Scoop: Ned Kelly born by the Merri Creek

According to new information provided by historians Dr Maikel Annalee, Gary Dean and Bill Denheld, the Wallan East part of Merri Creek is where Ned Kelly was born.

The clue came from Ned's reference to a little hill, (still there today). Ned said on a train to Melbourne after his capture when approaching Beveridge Station, "if you look to the left, do you see a little hill over there – that's where I drew my first breath." Historians mistook this information as being said by Ned on his way up to Beechworth for his trial a month later. This caused later historians to look for Ned's birth place on the wrong side of the rail line and to mistake Mt Fraser for the little hill. In fact, Ned's little hill is 3 km North East of Mt Fraser and nearby is where John and Ellen Kelly built a snug little hut when they first got married. Evidence has now been found of that dwelling and, in Ned's own words, his birth place.

Few people today realise that Ned was one of the first born Australians, born into an underclass that, along with the politics of the day and the hardships experienced by those early settlers, resulted in the formation of 'The Australian Natives Association (ANA). One of his neighbours at Wallan East, the 'Gormans' were instrumental in forming the ANA group in Berrigan NSW. Kelly's outbreak struggle and the Gorman connection to ANA later lead to the formation of the Federation of Australia in 1901.

So, through Beveridge / Wallan East, Ned had an influence to the founding of our Nation. The land where all this happened from 1850's to today still hasn't been developed. However, there is talk of major subdivisions for Beveridge and Wallan East - turning swamp areas and historic properties into suburbia. Will someone one day have Ned's birth place in his back yard and a swimming pool overlooking remnants of Hernes swamp as a golf course?

*Edited from information provided by **Bill Denheld** (historian)*

More about this interesting scoop can be seen on the website: www.ironicon.com.au/nativened.htm

MERRI CREEK PARK PLAN OUT IN DECEMBER *Continued from page 1*

identified many of these sites.) It is not enough to simply link the existing public reserves and unwanted land left over from the freeway project. This area deserves a visionary park plan that encompasses remaining areas of endangered ecological communities that are virtually unprotected anywhere else, as well as sites of Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, and space for recreation and sporting activities for the residents of the growing northern suburbs.

Please stress in your submission that Parks Victoria should use the Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) to set aside land

Tales of the Fo

The Streamteam is a group of Merri Creek Friends who monitor the water quality of the Creek every month at a spot just upstream of the St Georges Rd Bridge. Our program is also part of Waterwatch Victoria, who have trained us and continue to support us in many ways – providing the monitoring equipment and plenty of amazing facts about the little creatures we come across in the Creek.

We have been monitoring at the St Georges Rd site since April 2003, there are also some data for the site as far back as August 2000. We test both the physical quality of the stream and the number and diversity of macroinvertebrate creatures living in the water.

It is remarkable to find how much life there is in the Creek – fresh water shrimps, water boatmen, backswimmers, water striders, segmented worms, snails, midge larvae, flat worms (apparently a primitive life form), damselfly larvae, dragonfly larvae, fish and even an eel! This year for the first time since we have been looking, we have seen a lot of caddisfly larvae, that are some of the more sensitive of the beasties that could be found in the water. We were very excited by the arrival of the caddisfly larvae and had some discussions about what it means – does it mean that the water quality is improved?

Well – the most likely explanation was that there was very little rain during the months of March through to June. The lack of rain meant less polluted stormwater coming off our



Most of the regular gang who monitor the first Sunday of every month: Kathryn, John, Lea, Irene and Harold.

for public purchase. (Currently, the Government is reluctant to apply the PAO to any new sites, as it believes that the existing debt liability is too high.)

FoMC has started an Upper Merri Campaign group to try and protect these important northern sites. Already, a number of politicians have given their support to the campaign. If you would like to attend campaign meetings or to be included on the campaign email list, please contact Ray Radford on: admin@mcmc.org.au. 🍀

MC Streamteam



Some more regular Streamteam members: Graham, Blaine and Rowena – no they're not having soup, they're looking for bugs!

streets into the Creek, which gave the community of bugs living in the Creek an opportunity to survive and thrive.

It is also fascinating to watch the cycles that the macroinvertebrate populations go through – how the shrimp, damselfly larvae and water boatmen are sometimes there in huge numbers while other months there are only a few. As we accumulate more data we may be able to find connections between the creatures we find in the water and physical quality of the water, such as pH, turbidity, salinity, dissolved oxygen, stream flow and dissolved phosphorus.

If you are interested in joining the fun or finding out more, please contact the Coordinator on 9354 9885.

Irene Baker

Mural sees light of day

The environmental mural on a factory wall in Merri Parade Northcote (reported in the last newsletter) has recently been completed. Now the sun really shines all the time on the Merri Creek! The sun mural was designed and painted by two Northcote High School students, James Borg and Chris Maunders, as a VCE



project. FoMC initiated the idea for an environmental mural and facilitated a grant from Darebin Council to the school to produce it. Congratulations to the students on a great job and thanks to all those who assisted in this project. 🌻

Merri-ly we plant along

The Friends Planting & Hands On Group has been successfully involved, from May to September, in 17 activities involving 374 volunteers. Remarkably, not one was washed out by rain — a few drops at times, but more often than not, fortuitously, rain fell before or afterwards.

The planting sites this year ranged from below Rushall station to the Craigieburn grasslands and across to the Aitken Creek (a tributary of the Merri) within the city of Craigieburn itself. MCMC, as always, provided the organization and the splendid BBQs, and local or interested people turned up at some sites to contribute. In addition, Planting Group members took part in the National Tree Planting days and pulled out weeds at the Strettle wetlands, a Friends site.



Planting habitat grasses for the Golden Sun Moth at Craigieburn Grasslands on 11 September.

One notable example of the plantings this year has been the transformation of the area below Rushall station from an overgrown forest of exotics to a sweep of native grasses, reeds and trees. Equally impressive long-term was the planting of thousands of grasses as habitat for the elusive Golden Sun Moth, which was described in an earlier edition of the Newsletter. We hope to see an explosion in the population of this moth in later years through this.

An added bonus to the satisfaction felt after completing a planting is to go for a walk with one of the MCMC experts to discover plants, bugs and critters (to use very non-expert terms) indiscernible to the inexperienced eye. We can only marvel at the enthusiasm and dedication of those MCMC staff who give of their time and knowledge.

There are still activities coming up for the rest of the year, in relation to past plantings, to involve those interested in learning more about the Merri and its environs and assisting in its preservation. Keep an eye on the events calendar and come along.

Our thanks go to all who have assisted in the plantings and hands-on activities over 2005, and we hope to see you again in 2006.

Ruth Shiel (Planting Group Coordinator)

Secretary's Report: Friends Activities 2005

2005 Friends Committee

President: David Redfearn; Vice President: Ann McGregor; Secretary: Ray Radford; Treasurer: Colin Abbott; Membership Secretary: Julie Mason; Office Coordinator: Jack Svendsen; General Committee Member: Leslie Fraser. Also on the Committee were the following Representatives of Sub Committees: Planting Group: Ruth Sheil; Litter Group and Walks, Talks & Tours: Paul Prentice; Streamteam: Irene Baker; Newsletter Layout: Dean Lombard. The Committee met monthly from February.

Friends Representation on MCMC

The Friends were represented on the MCMC by: Trevor Hausler as MCMC President, Ann McGregor as Secretary, Allie Dawe as Treasurer, plus Alan Brennan, Paul Prentice and Peter Mollison.

The Friends representatives are among the most consistent members at the five meetings of the Merri Creek Management Committee, with most also attending some of the quarterly Sub-Committee meetings.

The Substitute representatives were Harold Mackrell, David Redfearn, Julie Mason and Colin Abbott, most of whom also attended various MCMC meetings.

Planting and Hands-on Activities

After an extremely hectic year in 2004, this group severely slashed the number of activities for which the group is responsible from 15 last year to only 6 this year.

33 people, including a large complement of staff from the geotechnical engineers, Golder Associates, planted 300 plants, tree-guarded many of them and spread some mulch, assisted by Darebin Bushcrew, at the Friends' site near Strettle wetland, Thornbury, on World Environment Day 5/6. 8 people planted 450 plants and tree-guarded over a quarter of them at Imaroo St Fawkner for our Envirofund grant on 19/6, (*changed from Woody Weed Removal*). 6 people planted 357 plants at Central Creek grasslands Reservoir, on 26/6, also for our Envirofund grant.

61 people, including the Member for Wills, Kelvin Thomson, planted 2078 plants near Rushall Station Nth Fitzroy on 28/8, again for our Envirofund grant. 35 people planted 2,500 native grasses (one species was planted for the first time in the world) to help conserve the Golden Sun Moth at Craigieburn Grasslands for our Threatened Species Network grant, with the Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands and the Friends of the Organ Pipes on 11/9. Eight people handweeded the Friends' site near Strettle wetland, Thornbury on 9/10.

In addition, lots of members attended other activities, mainly held by MCMC. Despite reducing our activities, we still put over 5685 plants in the ground, which is almost two-thirds of last year's massive total of 9140. This was mainly due to planting lots of 'speedlings' which are much quicker to plant than the usual tubes.

Once again we had the support of the Merri Creek Management Committee Parkland Management Team who helped us with most of the plantings and supplied barbeques later. Thanks also to the Darebin Bush Crew for resourcing the Friends' plot at Strettle Wetlands and to the Rangers at Craigieburn grasslands.

Coordinator: Ruth Sheil.

Litter Clean-ups

Heaps of litter was once again cleaned up in every month except January: 2 people at Keady St Nth Coburg on 7/11/04; 12 people at Rushall Station Nth Fitzroy on 5/12/04; 3 people at Alister St East Brunswick on 6/2; 6 people at Normanby Ave Thornbury on 13/3; 9 people at Murray Rd Coburg on 3/4; 7 people at Walker St East, Northcote on 1/5; 15 people at Strettle wetlands, Thornbury on 5/6; 1 person at Bell St East Coburg on 3/7; 7 people at Harding St East Coburg on 7/8; 8 people at Alister St East Brunswick on 4/9; 5 people at Walker St East, Northcote on 2/10.

Coordinator: Paul Prentice.

Streamteam

This dedicated group conducted water quality tests every month except February, (due to floods) upstream of St Georges Rd Bridge Nth Fitzroy. The tests show that water quality is influenced by stormwater inputs - deteriorating after heavy rain events and improving in dry conditions. Attendances were: 3 people four times; 4 & 5 people twice, and 6, 7 & 8 people once.

Coordinator: Irene Baker.

Walks Talks and Tours

Paul Prentice organised two of his "Triple Treats" featuring cycling, walking and boating on 20/3 and 10/7. He also offered walks from Coburg Lake on 17/4 and from Dights Falls on 12/6. Unfortunately, no-one chose to attend any of these events.

Coming up is a tour of Cooper St Grasslands with Brian Bainbridge on 13/11 and two surveys of critically endangered Golden Sun Moths on 11/12 (24 people in '04) and on 18/12 (18 people in '04).

Newsletter

Four Newsletters were distributed in February, May, August (12 pages) and October, with wonderful layouts by Dean.

This year, we decided to print the newsletters instead of photocopying them at the Moreland Council offices. Then, after two newsletters, we decided to post the newsletters ourselves, rather than through the Council offices. However, we again thank Moreland City Council for their generosity in providing photocopying and postage for our newsletters for many years.

Layout: Dean Lombard.

Other Activities and news

On 4/3 we held a Members' Social Get-together & BBQ attended by 23 people at Trevor Hausler's home in Coburg.

Thanks to Jack Svendsen, Warren Cooper and Monica Williamson for regularly staffing the office; to Simon D'Alfonso for keeping our website looking great; to Angie Retallek for taking on the role of New Member Welcomer; and to Ruth Sheil who maintained our only updated sign at the footbridge near Roseneath St. Clifton Hill.

Melbourne University student, Sian Smith, has started a history of our group for her Honours thesis; while Victorian College of the Arts graduate, David Wardell, has started filming a video about the group.

Information stalls were held at the Yarra Community Festival on 20/2, the Sydney Road Street Party on 27/2, and coming up at the Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival at CERES on 26/11.

We initiated the idea of an environmental mural on a factory wall in Merri Pde Northcote and facilitated a grant from Darebin Council to Northcote High School students to design and paint it.

Over 350 people attended about 35 Friends' events and we also had input to a number of policies, plans and strategies. Most important were: meetings with DSE to consider strengthening planning controls along waterways; the Galada Tamboore Working Group; Melbourne Water's Merri Creek Improvement Project; the Aurora Treatment Plant; Stages 1 & 2 of the Northern Sewerage Strategy; and Darebin Council's Merri Park Masterplan. We also talked with Moreland Council about creating a new wetland to replace the one that was removed from Pentridge Village and we objected to Moreland's ugly rock stabilization treatment, with its damage to remnants, near Parker Reserve Nth Coburg.

Ray Radford (Secretary 2005)

Kangaroos in the top paddock!

We gratefully gaze at the great eastern greys as they gracefully graze upon grains of all grades; but from Temora to Gilgandra, their favourite fodder is Themeda triandra!

It's a handsome herb, with chunky, nutritious seed-heads, and commonly known of course as kangaroo grass: some MCMC staff and Friends harvested a large quantity of its seed around last Christmas, intense heat followed by rain having provided ideal conditions. The sight of a whole field of it was the highlight of a wildflower walk near Cooper St in late spring, during which we also saw Blue Devil and Convolvulus, a praying mantis and a songlark.

Planting and weed control, wildlife monitoring and educational excursions – all of them satisfying activities that play their part in the preservation of our modest local equivalent of the prairies, savannas, pampas and steppes. And a lot of the action seems to start from one particular spot: O'Herns Rd, the site of our gas pipeline picket a few years ago, in the defence of the celebrity Growling Grass Frog.

One never tires of passing the Goodyear sign and coming to the simple, rough-edged concrete bridge that blends in perfectly with its surroundings: above it a magnificent jumble of rocks in the Merri Creek, below it a long limpid pool adorned with rushes and water ribbons; beyond it a steep stony track up the east bank that gives the hammies a solid workout, and then the sweeping panorama of the Craigieburn Grasslands.

In the distance the whitish smudge of a quarry – not a pretty sight, but it has prevented much worse intrusions, with extensive areas locked up for conservation rather than released for housing. And you know the usual happy ending: the hole is later filled with rubbish, and eventually covered over and turned into a park.

Even better, the methane from the decaying matter is likely to be collected and used as a clean source of power these days, instead of escaping into the atmosphere to become a worse greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Meanwhile we face a sinister array of unwelcome plant species which threaten the integrity of these grasslands, a tiny remnant of what was once a major ecosystem in Victoria: the worst is the insidious Chilean Needle Grass, so much harder to detect and eradicate than briar roses for example.

Chopping off the latter with long-handled bolt cutters and leaving the beautiful tree violets in sole possession of the old,



Praying Mantis

low stone walls was really just a bit of a romp; compare that with the finicky, exhausting work of removing the tenacious knotweed, complete with

roots of course, from the Merri Wetland in Northcote, whose advanced state of restoration owes a lot to the relentless efforts of Planting Group member Pascale Pitot.

A textbook search-and-destroy operation was carried out last November near O'Herns Rd, when Brian Bainbridge trained three Friends to identify the South American invaders by the characteristic collar beneath the seed-head, and pinpoint their positions with metal spikes, then Alex Davern, another MCMC officer, could simply move in with his heavy tank (of herbicide) and blast away. We'll certainly want to enlist more recruits for this vital campaign.

Folk flocked from afar for the first formal Golden Sun Moth counts, conducted in December: hundreds were seen on the first occasion, but on the second, under cloudy skies, only a handful. Their mating is a race against time, the adult form lives for only a few days – talk about speed-dating and a fast-running biological clock! The males must have been waiting for bright sunshine in which the egg-laden, earthbound females would be easier to spot.

And as for those marvellous marsupials, whose fluid, energy-efficient movement is more akin to low flying with strong wing-beats than to scampering or even galloping... Like the quokkas of Rottneest and the copper butterfly of Eltham, the kangaroo and the moth could well become the animal and insect icons of the Merri Creek native grasslands.

Paul Prentice (Committee member)

Note: There are more surveys of endangered Golden Sun Moths on December 11 & 18 (see calendar)

Help plan our plantings in 2006

Join us at a Friends' Planting & Hands-On Group Planning Meeting

6.00pm Wednesday 23 November, MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick

Participate in the planning of our Planting and Hands-On Activities for 2006. With Brian Bainbridge, MCMC Technical Officer.



Golden Sun Moth

Friends Network Conference

The Friends of Merri Creek kindly made me their delegate to this event, organised by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA); and so it was that after a three and a half hour drive on Friday 16th September I arrived at the Roses Gap centre in the northern Grampians or Gariwerd.

The sylvan setting, including a small lake (kayaks on the shore) and lofty hills, was complemented by a welcoming atmosphere and the modern and scrupulously clean facilities. The sandy soil which didn't stick to one's shoes like Merri mud was also a bonus!

Proceedings got underway next morning with a presentation on the Grampians and their unique geology – effectively floating on the substratum, which is important as we shall see. Then it was time to "Meet the Managers": mine was Cr Darryl Argall of Wimmera Shire. He considered both his Council and the State Government reasonably sympathetic towards environmentalists' requests; approaches to Council staff, he said, were best directed through the CEO.

One participant mentioned the tourism value of scenic spots as a "selling point", but Cr Argall declared that this could lead to over-development if weak Councils gave in to economic pressures such as coastal areas were experiencing. And Bernie Fox, of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges, emphasised the value of a pat on the back when Councils did something right.



The outlook from the site of the Friends Network Conference in the Grampians.

Discussion sessions followed: I attended one on ecological burns and the role of fire in modifying the Australian landscape, and one called "Expanding your Membership", in which an idealistic young woman encouraged us to try to involve ethnic communities in the movement: the consensus seemed to be that with the struggle to get established, shyness, cultural and language barriers and so on, this was very difficult and perhaps the second generation, locally born, would be easier to reach.

Several excursions took place in the afternoon: only two of us signed up for the Wartook Dam trip but we were well rewarded. There is a huge earth wall holding back a large quantity of high-quality water in a natural pound: the wall, dating from the 19th century, is completely waterlogged and the stuff slowly soaks through and escapes – only a small flow though. Rocks have been piled on the downstream side so that if the dam ever is ruptured by an earthquake it will

collapse more slowly and give people time to flee; however the abovementioned geology effectively insulates the mountain range and makes such a disaster most unlikely to occur.

Like Cr Argall, our guide David Thompson was most enthusiastic about patiently educating contractors and other "lay" folk and getting them environmentally on-side for the best possible outcome.

In the evening there was an audio-visual presentation on the fauna and flora of the Grampians and I was powerfully reminded of the beauty and charm to be found on this planet. . .

There was no let-up next morning as volunteers' coordinator from S.A. Dene Cordes told how the Friends' movement west of the border had sprung up from nothing over the past quarter-century, covering diverse talents and tasks: manual work, fund-raising, cultural outreach and essential social activities to boost morale and recharge the batteries. Two things about the Victorian scene impressed him: the number of groups that are not associated with national parks, such as our group I suppose or the Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler; and the greater number of young people – not that this was very evident at the conference! However he valued the experience and availability of older citizens; and also warned us not to let key personnel suffer burnout.

Dene was the absolute personification of a positive attitude with his "Can Do" motto; he was happy to accept help from the Sporting Shooters (invaluable for culling feral animals), 4WD clubs, underwater historical societies and so on. Enjoy what you are doing, he urged us, have mutual respect and never give up.

Charlie Sherwin, VNPA Director, described the major extinction event now occurring worldwide and our role in fighting it with an intense lobbying and educational effort. There had been some successes: establishment of marine parks and on land, expansion of national parks from 1240sq. km in 1952 to more than 30,000 sq. km today; protection of migrating birds in NSW and Queensland (without which it would be futile to try to protect them here); the end of cattle grazing in Alpine national parks – which required a 20 year campaign! In fact our very success has generated hostility, he warned, and we have to be prepared to cope with that. On the other hand, once we get environmental guidelines and regulations in place, it's just a matter of patient enforcement. Never underestimate the power of a few committed individuals to change the world, he concluded.

And so, re-energised by our contact with all these other people equally passionate about the environment, we all departed to do just that.

Paul Prentice (FoMC Committee member and delegate to the Friends' Network Conference)

Friends' Life Members: Judy Bush

The ninth in a (broken) series of short histories of the Friends' Life Members

Judy Bush worked at Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) for almost 16 years, most recently in the role of Conservation Coordinator, before resigning on 9th August 2005. Because of her extensive involvement with Merri Creek, Judy was awarded Life Membership of FoMC in 2004.

Judy first became interested in the environment as a child, bushwalking with her mother on family holidays. She remembers walking from Inverloch to Eagles Nest and a number of walks around Marysville. At secondary school, she joined the walking club and went on walks through the Grampians and on the overland track in Tasmania.

She did a science degree at university at a time when there was no natural management course and found that she liked biology but was uncomfortable with dissecting animals. So she moved into botany and found that this combined her outdoor and environmental interests with study. She went on to do honours in botany and also joined the Wilderness Society, attending woodchipping protest camps in NSW south east forests. Through these experiences, she became interested in the political side of environmental protection.

In the late 80's Judy started a Masters in Hobart on weed invasion in urban bushland, which was a very new subject at the time. However, she left this uncompleted after six months and worked in a few short term jobs in the botany field before commencing at MCMC in December 1989. In doing so, she became a member of one of the first revegetation teams in Australia, with only the then manager, Sigrid Kraemers and two other employees, Tony Faithfull and Barb Miles.

At that time there was no training available for people in this field and MCMC was looking for gardeners or labourers. Judy was seen as being overqualified, but she was keen to learn the practical skills of revegetation work. She says, "Not only didn't I know how to use a mattock, I didn't even know what a mattock was." After convincing the manager to employ her, Judy was extremely pleased to find another woman, Barb Miles, on the team. It was then highly unusual to find women working in this field.

In her early years at MCMC, Judy remembers one hot day where she and the other team members were having lunch at Moomba Rocks, tucked in amongst the rocks trying to find some cool shade. After 45 minutes, they got up to get back to work and found that they had been sitting about one metre away from a Tiger Snake sunning itself amongst the rocks! Judy says: "It was hard to know who was more surprised, and who ran away the faster."

Judy learnt all the practical skills from scratch, such as using herbicides and brushcutters, and found that technique was more important than strength in such tasks as tying fencing knots. She also discovered that "if you believe



you can do something, you're more likely to achieve it." Perhaps it was this thinking that enabled her to go on to become Conservation Program Manager at MCMC and to complete her Masters of Environmental Science in 2002.

Together with Barb Miles at MCMC, Judy created and maintained a team culture of high standards in occupational health and safety, teamwork, accountability, expertise and site work techniques, such as initiating and undertaking ecological burns in urban areas. Her work has helped MCMC to become a leader in the field of grassland restoration.

Judy is proud of her major role in the creation of Merri Park wetland because "it provides good habitat, it is being used as a good example of urban revegetation and people love it." Her role included: helping overcome such obstacles as residents' fears, underground powerlines and Melbourne Water's flood structure; then obtaining funding for construction and planting, as well as gaining shared inputs from Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, City of Darebin and the Friends of Merri Creek.

Besides her work with the Merri Creek, Judy enjoys cycling and bushwalking, and has been learning trapeze for the last two years at Circus Oz, for fun and fitness. She finds that, once on the trapeze, she forgets everything else as she concentrates on the acrobatics. She also has a native garden, a vegetable garden and a herb garden at home.

We wish Judy well in her new job as Coordinator, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action with the Moreland Energy Foundation.

Ray Radford (Secretary)



Merri Park Wetlands, which Judy Bush helped establish.

Note: Since this was written, Judy's long-time co-worker, Barb Miles has also resigned from MCMC. We hope to have Barb's brief history in a newsletter soon.

Friends of Merri Creek events calendar

NOVEMBER

Sunday 6 — Litter Clean-Up

St Georges Rd, North Fitzroy, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 C10. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 6 — Streamteam water quality testing

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

Saturday 12 — Friends' Annual General Meeting

CERES Environment Room, Lee St East Brunswick, 2.00pm. Features a presentation on the endangered Growling Grass Frog by Geoff Heard, who is doing a survey on the habitat of the frogs. Don't miss this fantastic presentation.

Sunday 13 — Wild Discoveries — Flora and Fauna Walk

Cooper St Grasslands, Campbellfield. Either meet outside the MCMC office at Lee St East Brunswick at 10am or outside the Istra Social Club, Cooper St Campbellfield at 10.30am. Melway map 180 K11. The walk will be led by Brian Bainbridge, MCMC Technical Officer, and it will include wildflowers, birdwatching and possible early Golden Sun Moth sightings. Participants can also assist with accurate recording and reporting of flora and fauna. *(Funded by our Parks Victoria Voluntary Groups Grant.)*

Wednesday 23 — Friends' Planting Group Planning Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 6.00pm. Participate in the planning of our Planting and Hands-On Activities for 2005. With Brian Bainbridge, MCMC Technical Officer.

Saturday 26 — CERES Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival

CERES Environment Park, Lee St East Brunswick, 3pm-9pm. Don't miss this fabulous community festival. If you would like to help staff our stall at the festival, please ring Ray on 0422 989 166.

DECEMBER

Saturday 3 — Brunswick History Group Talk: 'Setting up MCMC'

Mayor's Room, 1st floor Brunswick Town Hall, cnr Sydney Rd & Dawson St Brunswick, 1.30pm. FoMC life member, Bruce McGregor, talks about how the Merri Creek Management Committee was established.

Sunday 4 — Litter Clean-Up

Keady St, North Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 17 J7. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 4 — Streamteam water quality testing

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

Sunday 11 — Endangered Golden Sun Moth Survey 1

Craigieburn Grasslands, 10.30am-12.30pm. Meet on site at 10.30 am or carpool outside the MCMC office, 2 Lee Street East Brunswick at 10.00am. Help map the distribution and habitat of these rare and amazing moths. For children and people who are less mobile, there will also be supervised seed collection and processing of the moth's food plant. Please register your intention to come with Ray Radford at MCMC on 9380 8199, by Thursday 8/12 and the on-site meeting place will be provided.

Sunday 18 — Endangered Golden Sun Moth Survey 2

The same details as for Sunday 11 above, except that registration is requested by Thursday 15/12.

Before Xmas — Possible release of the Merri Creek Draft Plan for comment.

For more details, see the article "Upper Merri Campaign Underway" on page 1.

Sunday 25 — Have a Merri Christmas!

Late Dec - early Jan Help collect Kangaroo Grass Seed

We need volunteers who are willing to be contacted from late December to early January to carry out Kangaroo Grass seed collection at Cooper Street Grassland. This will be a weekday activity and the date will depend on seasonal factors. If you can help, give your name and contact to Brian at MCMC on 9380 8199. *(This is a Parks Victoria Community Groups Grant funded activity.)*

FEBRUARY 2006

Sunday 5 — Litter Clean-Up

Bell St, Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A1. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 5 — Streamteam water quality testing

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

Sunday 26 — Darebin Community Festival

Darebin City Council event at All Nations Park, Dennis Street, Northcote.

MARCH 2006

Sunday 5 — Streamteam water quality testing

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

Sunday 12 — Litter Clean-Up

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

More Grant success

FoMC has had more success with our grant applications and we recently gained the following funding (not including GST): \$1818 from Landcare Australia for planting in lieu of SPI Powernet tree removal along Merri Creek (this is the third year of gaining this grant); \$8,400 from Parks Victoria for Cooper Street Grassland Restoration; plus another \$7,800 from Parks Victoria for Craigieburn Grassland Restoration.

Our video is rolling

Filmmaker, David Wardell, is progressing with the video of FoMC. He has reviewed the footage and is pleased with what he's got so far. Once he has shot more at upcoming events, he'll then interview more FoMC members. He intends to use the interviews, the oral histories and the action footage to create a rounded doco that leaves the viewer with a good sense of the history of the FoMC and its present activities, the issues facing the Merri Creek and an awareness of the diversity and fragile nature of the flora and fauna found along it.