

# Friends of Merri Creek

## NEWSLETTER

November 2006  
– January 2007



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## 2006 Annual General Meeting

2.00pm Saturday 11 November, 2006  
CERES Environment Room, Lee Street East Brunswick

### **AGENDA**

#### **Premiere of DVD about the Friends of Merri Creek**

Made by David Wardell, film maker and graduate of the Victoria College of the Arts.

#### **Election of the 2007 Committee**

*(Nominations needed – see below)*

#### **Election of six Friends' representatives to MCMC**

### ***All members are invited to attend the AGM***

**H**ave your say in running the Friends' group, elect our Committee and be among the first to see the DVD about the Friends. We aim to conclude the meeting by 3.30pm. Afterwards, join us for drinks, nibbles and a chat.

#### **The Committee needs new members**

All committee positions become vacant at the AGM, however usually we can rely on a number of office-bearers re-nominating for their positions. However, this year our Treasurer, Colin Abbott, and our Membership Secretary, Julie Mason, have both indicated that they will not be re-nominating. Colin and Julie have done excellent jobs while both having very busy lives. Now we definitely need people to fill those positions, which would suit someone who would like to do more in the group but perhaps isn't able to attend activities. Of course you can also nominate for one of the other positions too. An election will only be held if there are more nominations than vacancies.

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 contact Ray Radford by email: [admin@mcmc.org.au](mailto:admin@mcmc.org.au) or by phone: 0422 989 166. Also contact Ray for a Nomination Form, which must be received before 10 November. However, nominations for any vacancy will be welcomed at the AGM.

#### **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 8 November. Unfortunately, memberships cannot be approved at the AGM.

# Friends news

## Wurundjeri names

For some time now, the Friends of Merri Creek Committee has wanted to have Wurundjeri names for the various native grassland sites along Merri Creek. The Committee feels that Wurundjeri names would not only be more appropriate for these endangered sites, but that it would be a way to honour the Aboriginal custodians of the area.

Eventually, we made contact with Wurundjeri Elder Doreen Garvey-Wandin, and two Friends' members accompanied her on a tour of the grassland sites on 13<sup>th</sup> July. Doreen then proposed the following integrated names on 14<sup>th</sup> August:

- Cooper St Grasslands: Bababi marning (*mother's hand*)
- Craigieburn Grasslands: Galgi ngarrk (*backbone*)
- Jukes Road Grasslands: Bababi djinanang (*mother's foot*)
- Central Creek Grasslands: Ngarrri-djarrang (*thigh*)
- Merri Creek Park Name: Marran baba (n) (*body of mother*)

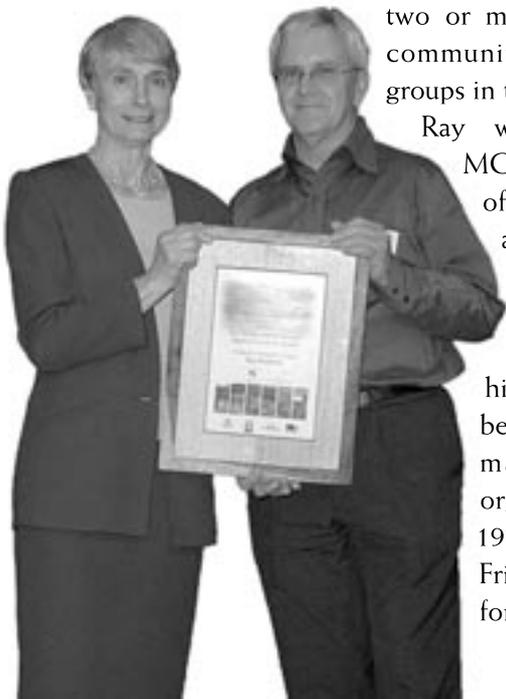
However, it will be some time before these names can find their ways through the various protocols and procedures of Parks Victoria and the two City Councils, Darebin and Moreland. When (or if) that eventually happens, remember that you heard it here first – a world exclusive!

## FoMC Secretary wins award

The FoMC Secretary, Ray Radford, won the 2006 Port Phillip & Western Port Landcare 'Caring for Community Groups' Award, for strengthening the capacity of the Friends of Merri Creek group and the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC). Ray was surprised and honoured to receive the award, presented by Jan de Kretser, the wife of the Governor of Victoria David de Kretser, at a special celebration of landcare achievements held in Zinc at Federation Square on Saturday 2nd September.

The 'Caring for Community Groups' award is made to a community member, coordinator or facilitator who is effectively providing support and capacity building for two or more volunteer-based community environment groups in the region.

Ray was nominated by MCMC, his employer of over 11 years, and the following details appeared on a slide show that accompanied his award: "Ray has been a volunteer with many community organisations since the 1970's. He's been with Friends of Merri Creek for more than 15 years



and an Honorary Life Member since 2000. Ray contributes to many planting days, seed collecting and weed removal working bees. He's an active campaigner for a range of issues that have resulted in the protection and enhancement of the environment for the community."

## More grant successes

FoMC has won two grants from Parks Victoria for works in native grasslands: \$7,700 for woody weed removal and replanting at Craigieburn grasslands (*Galgi ngarrk*); and \$3,700 for two Golden Sun Moth surveys at Craigieburn Grasslands—and a Wildflower Walk at Cooper Street Grasslands (*Bababi marning*). See the calendar on the back page for activity dates.

We also won a grant of \$6,326 from the Australian Government Envirofund to assess, protect and enhance a remnant of Creekline Grassy Woodland adjoining Aitken Creek in Craigieburn. This activity will be scheduled in next year's calendar.

## Successful benefit gig

A successful benefit gig was held at the Barbukka bar in Smith St Fitzroy on Thursday 3 August. It was attended by over 60 people and raised \$430 for the group.

Huge thanks to Lisa Zeeher for organising the gig; to the bands that played on the night: Skeleton Soup, Gold Gull, Contraption, Wrong Angles; and also to dj MikE, the Barbukka management and Ben North, who gave a short talk about FoMC on the night.

## No dam wall at Galada Tamboore

Melbourne Water has confirmed that the proposed dam wall at Galada Tamboore is not in their 20-year capital works program. They also admitted, what FoMC had long suspected, that they have not yet devised a way for fish to pass upstream of the proposed wall (although they added that they could do so if necessary). The FoMC Committee believes that this means it is highly unlikely that the dam wall will ever be built – which is good news!

## Upper Merri Campaign

The Upper Merri Campaign group is working to protect important native vegetation sites in the north of the catchment that are threatened by development in the Hume Growth Corridor. Currently, the group is hopeful of helping prevent development of Hernes Swamp in Wallan and is investigating a detailed flora survey of the Craigieburn East Grasslands.

Others involved in the campaign include the Friends of Wallan Creek, Environment Victoria and the Victorian National Parks Association, as well as some concerned individuals. If you would like to be added to the campaign email list of this vibrant group, please email Ray Radford at: [admin@mcmc.org.au](mailto:admin@mcmc.org.au)

## Congratulations to Melbourne Water

We wish to pass on an all too rare bouquet to Melbourne Water for their recent works in removing Willows and planting with indigenous shrubs and grasses south of the footbridge to Merri



Park Northcote. It's already looking good and the upstream area that was planted last year is coming on very well too.

## Students become creekwise

Teacher Cathy Nelson of Princes Hill Secondary College has once again organised a visit to the Merri Creek by her students. All six Year 7 classes came over in succession, three on June 13<sup>th</sup> and three on June 14<sup>th</sup>, to remove weeds from the wetland in Northcote and litter from the creek's banks under the supervision of MCMC staff and Friends. The students seemed to enjoy the experience, and some showed exceptional environmental awareness. Many thanks to Cathy and the accompanying teachers, and to the kids of course!

On 13<sup>th</sup> September, Grades 1 and 4 of Gold St Primary School, Clifton Hill, collected lots of rubbish and recyclables beside the creek near the footbridge at Roseneath St, leaving the place looking very tidy. Well done students, and organiser Dylan Thomas and other teachers.

## Keeping open space on Edgars Creek

FoMC supports the Merri & Edgars Creeks Parkland Group campaign to stop VicRoads selling public open space along Edgars Creek in Coburg and to instead grant the land to Moreland City Council. The Council has one of the lowest percentages of open space in metropolitan Melbourne and this site includes areas of remnant vegetation and about 280 trees. Moreland Council has been maintaining and improving this land, so their ratepayers should not have to buy the land to save it for open space, when they already own it.

**For more information see the website: [www.mecpg.com](http://www.mecpg.com)**

## Wendy's Nature Notes

### Bird's Showers

At my childhood family home in Geelong one of the delightful sights on showery days was the Red Wattle-birds 'bathing'. There were bird baths about, but they shunned these, preferring their own technique.

After a rain shower, while the leaves were still wet they would fly to the top of a Variegated Pittosporum that grew there. They would then slide or drop down through the outer foliage of the small tree, repeating this over and over, and so have a 'shower/bath'.

Along the front of my house in Coburg I have a number of gum trees — mostly indigenous: a Manna Gum, two Red Box and a Lemon Scented Gum. They are all reasonably tall, about 10 years old. The Rainbow Lorikeets love these tall trees — there aren't too many in my area. Most days you'll find some lorikeets resting, feeding and yelling in the upper branches. They tend to prefer the Manna Gum, except when it is too wet or windy when they'll move to the Brush Box in the nature strip.

On Saturday after the initial showers had passed I was out having a look at the garden. There was a great din in the Lemon Scented Gum caused by ten or so Rainbow Lorikeets in there 'bathing'. Their technique is highly acrobatic. They were in amongst clumps of foliage flopping about, right-way-up and upside-down (and everything in between) in the wet leaves having a wonderful time.

I wonder if their choice of bathing tree was due to a structural features of the tree, wetting properties of that foliage or do they like lemon bath oils?

### Rufous Fantail

I now live in Coburg, north of Bell Street, west of Sydney Road and more than a kilometre from the nearest creek or bushy remnant. Few of my neighbours have native plants in their gardens. The area's gardens are being increasingly over-run by white standard roses, instant turf, paving, box hedges and olive trees.

My front yard is a little different. For a start I have planted much of the nature strip with mostly indigenous and native plants — grasses, rushes, Kangaroo Apples, daisies etc. My small front yard has several indigenous eucalypts, *Allocasuarina verticulata*, wattles and other native trees, plus seven partially espaliered fruit trees. It's a bit crowded! Out back, there is less space. I only have a couple of citrus trees and a peach tree in the chook yard.

Sadly, living where numbers and White plumed and Little and regularly breed my front yard. daily visit the and fruit trees in Magpies, Mudlarks eyes visit.



I do, I have only limited types of native birds. Honeyeaters Red Wattlebirds in and around Rainbow Lorikeets tall eucalypts, season! Little Ravens, and occasionally Silver-eyes

You can imagine my delight the other morning to find a Rufous Fantail feeding in my yard, gaily displaying its glorious plumage. It remained for at least an hour, mostly feeding in the base of plants and on the ground. When the sun came out, from deep clouds, it moved up into the mid-canopy of the trees.

Sadly my oasis is too small for it to stay. I wish my little rufous visitor all the best in its search for a home.

**Wendy Moore** (Friends of Merri Grasslands)

# Secretary's Report: Friends Activities 2006

## 2006 Friends Committee

President: David Redfearn, Vice President: Ann McGregor; Secretary: Ray Radford; Treasurer: Colin Abbott; Membership Secretary: Julie Mason; Office Coordinator: Jack Svendsen. Also on the Committee were these representatives of Sub-Committees: Planting Group: Ruth Shiel, Litter Group: Paul Prentice, Streamteam: Irene Baker, Newsletter Layout: Dean Lombard. The Committee met monthly except January and August.

## 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 Paul Prentice, Harold Mackrell and Ruth Shiel.

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

The Substitute representatives were David Redfearn, Pascale Pitot, Ray McMahon and Kimberley Flanagan, most of whom attended various MCMC meetings.

## Planting & Hands-on Activities

Twelve people collected 24 bales of Kangaroo Grass seed on 5/1; Merri Park Wetlands, Northcote was handweeded by 16 people on 19/2, by 19 people on 19/3 and by 13 people on 9/4; 15 people cut and stacked Gorse at Craigieburn Grasslands on 26/3; four people mapped Serrated Tussock weeds at Craigieburn Grasslands on 30/4.

Ten people cut, stacked and mapped Gorse at Cooper St Grasslands on 14/5; 26 people planted 420 plants and treeguarded 220 of them at Imaroo St Fawkner on 21/5; 29 people planted 520 plants at Aitken Ck, by Axminster Dve Craigieburn on 28/5; 13 people cut and stacked more Gorse at Craigieburn Grasslands on 3/6; 34 people planted 1,500 plants, treeguarded 60 of them and spread mulch at Merri Park Wetland Northcote on 4/6; six people planted 1,450 plants at Craigieburn Grasslands on 18/6 (and claimed the record of planting the most plants by the least number of persons).

Eleven people planted 1,128 plants at Central Creek Grasslands on 16/7; 45 people planted 500 plants and

handweeded the Friends' site near Strettle Wetlands Thornbury with the Darebin Bushcrew, on 30/7; 16 people planted 480 plants at Robinson Reserve Preston on 13/8; 14 people planted 300 plants and treeguarded 60 of them at John Laffan Memorial Reserve Kalkallo on 20/8; 17 people planted 750 plants at Jukes Rd Grasslands, Fawkner on 9/9; 7 people planted 240 plants at Galada Tamboore on 24/9.

Altogether we put in 7,288 plants, which is 1,600 more than 2005. Lately, we have been using more 'speedlings' which are much quicker to plant than tubes.

Once again we had the support of the MCMC 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 Shiel.*

## Litter Clean-ups

Heaps of litter was once again cleaned up in every month except January: 12 people at St Georges Rd Nth Fitzroy on 6/11/05; 10 people at Keady St Nth Coburg on 4/12/05; six people at Bell St East Coburg on 5/2; four people at Murray Rd Coburg on 12/3; four people at Walker St East, Northcote on 2/4; four people at Moreland Rd East Brunswick on 7/5; two people at Alister St East Brunswick on 4/6; four people at Aitken Creek by Hexham Ct Craigieburn on 2/7; four people at St Georges Rd Nth Fitzroy on 6/8; three people at Edwardes Lake Reservoir on 3/9; six people near Rushall Railway Station Nth Fitzroy on 1/10.

*Coordinator: Paul Prentice.*

## Streamteam

This dedicated group again conducted water quality tests on the first Sunday of every month, except January, upstream of St Georges Rd Bridge Nth Fitzroy.

This year, Melbourne Water gave the group new monitoring equipment, saving them having to borrow it from MCMC.

Unfortunately, the group's results show no noticeable change in the generally poor quality of Merri Creek's water.

Attendances were: two, three, seven and eight people twice each and five, six and nine people once each.

*Coordinator: Irene Baker.*

## Walks Talks and Tours

6 people attended Paul Prentice's 'Twin Lakes Walk' from Coburg Lake to Edwardes Lake on 21/5.

Coming up is a tour of Cooper St Grasslands with Brian Bainbridge on 19/11 and two surveys of critically endangered Golden Sun Moths on 3/12 and on 17/12. (Attendances for last year's Wildflower Walk were 22, while the two surveys in 2005 were attended by 21 and 22 people.)

## Newsletter

Four Newsletters were distributed in February, May, August and November, with wonderful layouts by Dean. They were all printed and posted by FoMC.

*Layout: Dean Lombard.*

## Upper Merri Campaign Group

This active group met monthly from April at the MCMC office to protect important sites in the north of the catchment. Other groups and people besides FoMC are involved, including Claudia James, from the Friends of Wallan Creek.

Claudia is playing a major role in the group's campaign to help prevent development of Hernes Swamp in Wallan.

## Other Activities and News

An excellent video about the group has been produced by Victorian College of the Arts graduate, David Wardell.

A very successful benefit gig was held at Barbukka on 3/8. We obtained grants from Melbourne Water for fencing at Craigieburn Grasslands, and from Parks Victoria for woody weed control in native grasslands, two Golden Sun Moth surveys and a wildflower walk at Cooper St Grasslands.

An information stall was held at the Sydney Road Street Party on 5/3, and one is due at the Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival at CERES on 25/11.

We contacted Wurundjeri Elder Doreen Garvey-Wandin, who provided Wurundjeri names for the grasslands along Merri Creek, although it will be some time before these names are accepted.

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 Retallack for continuing as New Member Welcomer; and to Ruth Shiel who again maintained

*Continued opposite*

# Guaranteed sightings of Nationally Threatened Species

*How often could you be guaranteed a sighting of a Nationally Threatened Species virtually right in the Merri Creek's own backyard? Yet here we are extremely lucky to be able to view the colony of Grey-headed Flying-foxes from an observation platform at the Bellbird Picnic area, off the Yarra Bend Boulevard (Melway Map 2D K6). Recommended viewing is around sunset for the spectacular fly-out.*

## About Flying-foxes

Flying-foxes are large bats with eyes which are highly adapted for day and night vision and particularly suited to recognising colours at night. They are intelligent, social and nocturnal. They roost (rest hanging upside-down) together in large numbers at a 'camp' during the day and feed individually or in small groups at night, up to 50km from their roost site.

Around dusk each evening, adults and adolescents leave the camp to search for food. This evening fly-out is a spectacular sight, especially during the breeding season, when camp size is greatest. The timing of departure appears to be influenced by availability of food. If food is in short supply or a long distance away, they will leave before sundown. When food is plentiful or nearby, or when there is a full moon, they will leave well after dark.

They are placental mammals, giving birth to live young (one per year from about September to late November). The baby clings to the mother's belly for the first three weeks until it becomes too heavy to carry. At three weeks old, the young is left at a "crèche" in the centre of the camp at night while its mother flies out to feed. Mothers return just before dawn and can recognise their young by their smell.

## About Grey-headed Flying-foxes

There are four species of Flying-foxes native to mainland Australia, but the Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) is the only Flying-fox species permanent to southern Victoria. It is also the largest member of the family, its wingspan can reach one metre and it can weigh up to one kilogram.

They are vocal animals and more than 30 different calls have been recorded. The different calls are associated with

specific behaviours such as mating, finding young in the camp and in territorial disputes over food. Loud calls may be heard during mating and when defending their territory. Grey-headed Flying-foxes conceive in March and April, but mating activity can occur over many months.

Flying-foxes are migratory animals and the Grey-headed Flying-foxes have been coming to Melbourne for more than 100 years. However, numbers have been increasing due to a loss of their habitat in New South Wales and Queensland and the creation of a reliable food supply here. Increased plantings of native trees over the last 30 years and year-round irrigation have resulted in a continual source of food that has made Melbourne more attractive to these animals.

Grey-headed Flying-foxes roosted seasonally in the Royal Botanic Gardens before becoming permanent residents there in 1986. Their numbers fluctuate with the seasons – more in summer, less in winter. In the summer of 2003, the size of the colony peaked at around 30,000 and fell to 8,000 in winter. The presence of a large number of Flying-foxes roosting all year-round in a small and sensitive area of the Royal Botanic Gardens was damaging heritage-listed vegetation.

In March 2003, a large-scale dispersal program was successful in relocating the colony to a more suitable location at Yarra Bend Park, Kew.

[www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) – Plants and animals – Flying-foxes



## SECRETARY'S REPORT (continued from page 4)

our only updated sign at the footbridge near Roseneath St Clifton Hill.

Over 495 people attended about 35 Friends' events and we also had input to a number of policies, plans and strategies. These included the new Merri Creek Park, the Northern Sewerage Strategy and the proposed new Wholesale Fruit & Vegetable Market in Epping.

We continued talks about new wetland creation with Moreland Council and we opposed tree clearing of the Kodak site, plus developments at 44 Harrison St East Brunswick and at 1 Elizabeth St Northcote.

*This is my tenth Secretary's Report!*

**Ray Radford** (Secretary 2006)

## Participate in Grey-headed Flying-fox counts

*You can help monitor this Nationally Threatened Species by coming along to the counts that are conducted around sunset on the first Wednesday of each month at the Yarra Bend Golf Course car park (Melway 2DG7). The remaining counts for this year are on 8<sup>th</sup> November at 7.15pm and on 6<sup>th</sup> December at 7.45pm.*

*Those who are interested in coming to the counts can email Rod van der Ree (rvdr@unimelb.edu.au) who runs the counts, and he will add them to his email list.*

# Gardener's treat

*The Gardiner's Creek, the major waterway of Melbourne's inner east, is somewhat of a case of triumph over adversity: lumbered with a freeway and partly concreted, it is nevertheless well planted and populated.*

With its shared footway and adjoining sports grounds, as well as educational and other social institutions, it encourages healthy recreation; yet it seems to have just the one restaurant beside it to satisfy the appetites generated. That's the Iris Buffet in High St, next to pretty Muswell Bend Park and opposite a thickly wooded escarpment.

A plethora of letters persuaded Premier Jeffrey Kennett to make the connection to the Main Yarra Trail; a crowd of cyclists applauded Minister Bill Baxter when he promised it in March 1994. Among them was the charismatic Bicycle Victoria president Ted Parker – who however was tragically drowned in New Zealand in April 1995. Opened in October 1995, the bridge remains as a fitting tribute to his inspiring leadership.

Heading upstream from it, we come to the grandly titled Great Valley Road and some lovely linear parks. Further along near Darling station is the jewel of the area, the Hedgeley Dene Gardens: Victoria is still the Garden State, even if its number-plates have moved on to another place...

The main path continues along Scotchman's Creek to Mount Waverley, whence on-road routes lead to Jells Park; the Gardiner's one passes through the rustic simplicity of Jeffery St on its way to the idyllic Blackburn Lake, just north of "Bellbird Corner".

East Malvern station is quite a focal point: from it you can reach the Yarra Trail at Kew via the Anniversary and the Outer Circle; eastward, quiet roads take you to Shepherds Bush on the Dandenong Creek; southward, a footpath runs through the Urban Forest Reserve to Hughesdale.

And it could be a public transport node too if tram route No. 3 was extended to it as has been done in Box Hill; however P.T. is often shoved out of the way by the powerful VicRoads, which for example is still pushing for the useless, destructive Forest Hill to Lilydale "Healesville Freeway", as if world oil supplies weren't approaching crisis point. Things are easier on the environmental front, thus a large amount of indigenous vegetation has been planted alongside the Gardiner's Creek, which looks narrower and deeper-carved than the Merri, with yellowish clayey banks.

It's also enhanced by some elegant bridges, wetlands in Ashburton and Glen Iris, and the charmingly named Local History Park. There used to be a drive-in cinema near here – a strange social phenomenon whose day in the sun, or night under the moon, was quite brief, like our Golden Sun Moths'. One of the more harmless cases of automania, I guess, along with restoring classic cars.

An enduring neighbour, by contrast, is the iconic Kooyong, which saw many a Davis Cup and Australian Championship contested before the flash new place opened twenty years ago. As with cricket, football, etc., tennis has evolved a great deal since those days, both technologically and financially!

Well, professional sport is immensely absorbing – so skilful, dramatic, unpredictable; and then there are other forms of perfection which claim our admiration and allegiance... The Blackburn Lake, source of the Gardiner's Creek, is set in a magnificent wildlife sanctuary of about 30 hectares, with its own Visitor Education Centre, and its own station only a kilometre away. Regular ID lineups of all the usual suspects are conducted – blackbirds cormorants dusky moorhens, firetails galahs herons, kookaburras lorikeets mallards and other fowl types.

Nearby schools, churches and places for the elderly, and playgrounds and a picnic area cater for all ages; and from time to time the remarkable meandering Blackburn–Glen Waverley–Wantirna South–Mitcham bus 736 wanders past. Yet there's such a feeling of seclusion and tranquillity in this richly vegetated reserve: in few places around Melbourne can a person feel so much at one with nature.

**Paul Prentice** (Committee member)



Bicycle bridge over the Yarra to Gardiner's Creek path

# Friends' Life Members – Brian Bainbridge

## This is the thirteenth in a series of short histories of the Friends' Life Members

*Brian Bainbridge's interest in the environment began when he was only four. He was fascinated by his mother's collections of Tetley tea cards featuring Australian birds and he was bird-watching even before he started school. A children's book about environmental destruction in the early 70's also had a big impact on him.*

Brian also enjoyed gardening from very early on, taking cuttings and propagating flower seeds when he was about five. He remembers catching tadpoles with his older brothers and exploring around the Plenty River near the family home in Greensborough. He believes that the pathway alongside the river was very important in developing his environmental interests. As he grew older, he explored further north, past the end of the path and into the more natural areas.

Another talent that he exhibited from early on was drawing and he felt "driven" to draw birds and to follow-up bird calls to find the bird. Once he followed up a call for over a kilometre, taking over an hour to find the bird. The amount of time he has spent listening to calls has given him a good ear for identifying birds from their calls.

Brian's early love of nature led to his family giving him the affectionate nick-name "nature boy" and he clearly lived up to it by being able to recognise indigenous plants from weeds at age 12. During his teens he discovered an 1880's aqueduct in St Helena. Brian enjoyed taking photos and sketching around the aqueduct as the area had been regularly burnt, making it rich in wildflowers. However, while he was studying for his HSC, the area was destroyed. This affected him "like a physical kick in the guts" and he never wanted to see it repeated.

He attended Melbourne University and Creswick campus for four years, graduating as a Bachelor of Forest Science. During this time he continued drawing and he developed his observational skills by going on walks with a journal which included sketches. His studies included assisting with a botanical survey in East Gippsland.

After graduating, Brian worked in his parents' bookshop and in 1992 he was invited to do some illustrations for *Plants of the Merri Merri*. This was his first contact with Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC), which later employed him as an illustrator for *Creek Life*. This work launched his career as a spasmodic freelance wildlife illustrator. His artwork can be seen on some of the signs along Merri Creek, in the entrance to the Observatory at the Botanic Gardens, on promotions for Hume City Council's annual planting

festival; and in the new leaflet for the Merri Creek Walking Path.

In 1994, MCMC employed Brian in its Parkland Management Team, where he is currently Technical Officer. Soon after starting at MCMC, he joined the Friends of Merri Creek. He credits former MCMC employees Barb Miles and Judy Bush with fostering his professional development and a good understanding of the "human heart" behind revegetation work. He is inspired by the improvements to sites such as Central Creek Grasslands in Reservoir and he gets a real buzz from leading walks like the Wild Discovery Walk at Cooper St Grasslands.

Brian was the first person to rediscover Golden Sun Moths in Craigieburn Grasslands and in some other grassland sites. He gives much of credit for this to a leaflet on Golden Sun Moths at Mt Piper by the Broadford Environment Action Group: an example of the effectiveness of a good leaflet, as this one led to the Golden Sun Moth surveys and then to a whole chain of discoveries. Mainly in recognition of his discovery, but also of his many talks on plants and wildlife, he was awarded honorary Life Membership at the AGM in 2004.

He chose to live near Jukes Rd Grasslands in Fawkner and to not own a car, so he cycles to work in East Brunswick along the Merri path. He is also a keen photographer, an active member of the Upper Merri Campaign group and a committee member for

the local Fawkner Community House, as well as being on its gardening group. He is excited by the scope for raising environmental awareness amongst his neighbours.

**Ray Radford** (Secretary)



## Friends' Planting Group Planning Meeting

Wednesday 22nd November @ 6pm  
MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick

Participate in the planning of our Planting and Hands-On Activities for 2007. With Brian Bainbridge

# Friends of Merri Creek events calendar

## NOVEMBER

### Saturday 4 — MECCARG\* Hand Weeding

Follow the coloured flags from the footbridge between Bell St and Murray Rd, 1-3pm. Melway map 18 A12. Bring gloves.

### Sunday 5 — Litter Clean-Up

Harding St East 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.

### Saturday 11 — Friends' Annual General Meeting

CERES Environment Room, Lee St East Brunswick, 2.00pm. Vote for your 2007 Committee, have your say on activities. Features the premiere screening of a video/DVD about the Friends' group by filmmaker, David Wardell.

### Sunday 12 — Planting & BBQ

Downstream from Rushall Station North Fitzroy, 10am-1pm. Help plant sedges along the edges! Bring gumboots if you have them. Melway map 30 D12. Contact Brian at MCMC 9380 8199. (Funded by a Regional Catchment Investment Plan grant to MCMC.)

### Sunday 12 — Friends of Wallan Creek Working Bee & BBQ

Wallan Community Park, (behind Scout Hall) Watson Street, Wallan, 10am-1pm. Melways 249 F8. Contact John Robinson 5789 1411.

### Sunday 19 — 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 Istrian Australian 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. (This is a Parks Victoria Community Groups Grant funded activity.)

### Wednesday 22 — 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 2007. With Brian Bainbridge, MCMC Technical Officer.

### Saturday 25 — 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 2 — MECCARG\* End of Year Picnic

Follow the coloured flags from the footbridge between Bell St and Murray Rd, 1-3pm. Melway map 18 A12. Bring food and drink to share, blanket, etc.

### Sunday 3 — Litter Clean-Up

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

### Sunday 3 — 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 3 — 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 Brian Bainbridge at MCMC on 9380 8199 by Thursday 30/11, and the on-site meeting place will be provided.

(This is a Parks Victoria Community Groups Grant funded activity.)

### Sunday 10 — Friends of Wallan Creek Working Bee & BBQ

Wallan Community Park, (behind Scout Hall) Watson Street, Wallan, 10am-1pm. Melways 249 F8. Contact John Robinson 5789 1411.

### Sunday 17 — Endangered Golden Sun Moth Survey 2

The same details as for Sunday 3 above, except that registration is requested by Thursday 14/12.

### Monday 25 — Have a Merri Christmas!

## FEBRUARY 2007

### Sunday 4 — Litter Clean-Up

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

### Sunday 4 — Twin Creeks Ride

Starts at Rushall Crescent near Rushall Station 1.00pm. Melway map 30 D11. Ride from Merri Creek to Fairfield boathouse, via Miller and Dundas Streets, visiting wetlands and the remarkable Darebin Parklands. 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 18 — City of Yarra Community Day

Edinburgh Gardens, St Georges Rd North Fitzroy, 10am-5pm. Melway map 30 B12.

### Sunday 25 — Triple Treat

Meet at CERES café at 1.00pm. Melway map 30 B7. Ride to Studley Park boathouse (about 1.45pm), ramble on to Galatea Point and row row row your boat; or any two of the above. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

## MARCH 2007

### 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 — Litter Clean-Up

Walker St East, Northcote, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 F12. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

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

See all the Friends' activities on our website, which has been wonderfully revamped by our webmaster, Simon D'Alfonso: [www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc)