



NEWSLETTER

November 2007
– January 2008

2007 Annual General Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 28th November

CERES Environment Room, Lee Street East Brunswick

AGENDA

Presentation -The new Merri Creek Parklands

With Claire Evans, Team Leader Planning, Parks and Marine at Parks Victoria.

Find out the latest on the new park along Merri Creek from the Western Ring Rd to Craigieburn East Rd.

President's Report - David Redfearn

Election of the 2008 Committee

Nominations needed – see below

Election of six Friends Representatives to MCMC

End of year celebrations

Drinks and nibbles provided.

All members are invited to attend the AGM

This year, we are breaking with our long tradition by holding the AGM on a weeknight instead of on Saturday afternoon as we have done in the past. We trust that this will allow even more of you to have your say in running the Friends' group. So please come along, listen to the latest about the new Merri Creek Parklands, elect our Committee and help celebrate another successful year with drinks, nibbles and a chat.

The Committee needs new members

All committee positions become vacant at the AGM and at least one of our Committee members, Jack Svendsen, has indicated that he will not be re-nominating. So we definitely need to have some new blood next year. A role on the Committee would suit someone who would like to do more in the group but perhaps isn't able to attend activities.

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 or by phone: 0422 989 166. Also contact Ray for a Nomination Form, which must be received before 23rd November. Nominations for any vacancy will also be welcome at the AGM and an election will only be held if there are more nominations than vacancies. It is absolutely okay to nominate yourself and leave it open to be seconded by someone else.

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 14 November. Unfortunately, memberships cannot be approved at the AGM.

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Update on the new Merri Creek park

It has been a long time since we've heard anything from Parks Victoria (PV) about the new major park along the Merri near Craigieburn. However, on 16 August, two PV officers briefed a meeting of the Merri Creek Management Committee and the information below is based on what they said.

A total of 59 public submissions were received last year on the draft plan for the park. Most were from "passionate individuals" who strongly supported the park, and about 80% of submissions sought an extension of the boundary. Many respondents wanted increased width of the park to provide a buffer for the riparian strip as well as a habitat corridor; effective park management; on-going adequate resourcing; continuation of the trail; and land acquisition. (Thanks to all the Friends members who put in a submission.)

The new name for the park is *Merri Creek Parklands*, which will allow future extensions in length and width. However at this stage, the boundaries of the new park remain at the Ring Road and Craigieburn East Road. PV and the Department of Sustainability and Environment are aware of the important values outside this area and DSE is working with private landowners and other key stakeholders to protect areas of environmental significance outside the current boundary of the parklands. As opportunities arise, areas of significance to the north may be incorporated into the Merri Creek Parklands.

PV now sees the park as being primarily for nature conservation, partly because of the significant natural values and partly because it is difficult to provide good recreational access from nearby suburbs. Greenvale Reservoir will be further developed to provide recreation facilities in the Hume corridor.

PV will be working in partnership with the City of Whittlesea to upgrade the Whittlesea Public Gardens as an entry point to Galada Tamboore, and the Merri Creek Parklands. This will turn the community's face onto the new parklands and provide passive recreational opportunities through Barry Road and into Galada Tamboore with a shared trail linking to the broader Merri Creek Parklands.

Master planning for the Galada Tamboore area is also a high priority and Parks Victoria will continue discussions

about the future use and development of the area with Melbourne Water.

The State Government has committed \$2.8 million, over four years, to the new Merri Creek Parklands. This will be used to develop recreational facilities, extend the shared trail network and protect environmental values along the Merri Creek. Work on grassland protection has commenced and will continue with projects such as fencing, pest plant and animal control and protecting remnants.

PV has been working with consultants and councils to specify the required public land buffer width along the Creek to achieve a park-like experience for visitors as well as allow for management needs, environmental and habitat corridor and a shared trail. 40 metres outwards from the break of slope at the top edge of the Creek valley has been proposed as a minimum.

The plan for the Parklands will now be called the Merri Creek Parklands *Management Plan*, to maintain consistency with other PV plans. PV is working with VicRoads and DSE regarding the transfer of parcels of former freeway reservation land, including Barry Rd Grasslands, to become part of the new Parklands.

Release of the Management Plan is awaiting the completion of the land transfer. It is hoped that this will occur in the next couple of months and that the Management Plan can be released in November.

We look forward to continuing our involvement and support for the establishment and conservation management of the Merri Creek Parklands, and will continue to seek the protection of other highly significant areas in this rapidly-urbanising part of Melbourne's fringe.

ANN MCGREGOR (VICE PRESIDENT)

(Claire Evans from Parks Victoria will tell us the latest about the new park at our AGM on 28 November, 7.30pm at CERES.)

Friends of Malcolm Creek

Malcolm Creek begins its journey in farmland north of Mt Ridley Rd in Mickleham. As it winds its way south through Craigieburn, it passes by native grasslands and ancient red gums before eventually merging with Merri Creek.

Friends of Malcolm Creek began in January 2007, when a group of interested Craigieburn residents got together to discuss how to best preserve and enhance the natural environment of the creek. The group recently obtained membership in association with Friends of Merri Creek, which now enables it to hold events and apply for funding.

Activities undertaken this year include Clean Up Australia Day, the Melbourne Water Frog Census, Clean up the Creek day and Community Spring Planting Day. In addition to this, the group has been liaising with Scouts and local schools, looking at environmental projects to work on together.

The committee of Friends of Malcolm Creek meets once a month at 11am on Sundays to discuss activities, plan events and walk the creek. For more information, please contact the Coordinator, Ann Jessop on 9303 4914 Mob 0412 463 502 or email: ann.jessop@lendlease.com.au

After the article on FoMC's Organisation Members in the August Newsletter, the Friends of Malcolm Creek has become the ninth FoMC Organisation Member.



PHOTO THE FRIENDS OF MALCOLM CREEK RELAX AFTER COLLECTING LOTS OF RUBBISH ON ONE OF THEIR CLEAN UP THE CREEK DAYS.

Secretary's Report: Friends Activities 2007

2007 Friends Committee

President: David Redfearn

Vice President: Ann McGregor

Secretary: Ray Radford

Treasurer: Colin Abbott

Membership Secretary: Monica Williamson

Office Coordinator: Jack Svendsen

Committee member: Wendy Moore

Also on the Committee were these representatives of Sub-Committees:

Regeneration Group: Ruth Shiel

Litter Group: Paul Prentice

Streamteam: Irene Baker

Newsletter Layout: Dean Lombard

The Committee met monthly except January.

Friends Representation on MCMC

The same people represented FoMC on Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) as in 2006: Trevor Hausler as MCMC President, Ann McGregor as Secretary, Allie Dawe as Treasurer, Paul Prentice, Harold Mackrell and Ruth Shiel.

The Friends representatives are still the most consistent members at MCMC meetings, with most also attending some of the quarterly Sub-Committee meetings.

Most of the Substitute Representatives, David Redfearn, Pascale Pitot and Ray McMahon, attended various meetings.

Regeneration Group Activities

This active and popular group is now taking on more activities in the northern part of the catchment as well as more management-type activities.

This year, a total of 100 people were involved in these management activities: collecting Kangaroo Grass seed at Central Creek Grassland on 4/1; four sessions of Wetlands and Weed Awareness at Merri Park Wetlands Northcote on 21/1, 11/2, 4/3 & 6/5; Woody Weed Removal at Cooper St Grasslands Epping on 15/4 & 20/5, and at Craigieburn Grasslands Somerton on 29/4; and handweeding and mulching at our site, Strettle Wetland Thornbury on 14/10.

Of course, we still had lots of plantings with a total of 254 people attending: at Rushall Station North Fitzroy on 18/3; at Robinson Reserve Preston on 25/3; at Murray Rd Coburg on 1/4; at Strettle Wetland Thornbury on 3/6; at Aitken Creek Craigieburn on 8/7 & 26/8; at Hare St Fawkner on 17/6; at Cooper St Grasslands Epping on 15/7; at Rotunda Wetland Clifton Hill on 22/7; at Kirkdale St Brunswick on 5/8; at 'Manna Gum Escarpment' Fawkner on 12/8; and at

Merri Park Wetlands Northcote on 9/9.

Altogether we put in 7862 plants, which is 570 more than 2006. Often the plantings included treeguarding and occasionally spreading loads of mulch.

Once again the MCMC Parkland Management Team supported us at most of the plantings and usually also supplied barbeques later. Thanks also to the Darebin Bush Crew for resourcing our plot at Strettle Wetlands and to Parks Victoria's grassland Rangers.

Coordinator: Ruth Shiel.

Litter Clean-ups

A total of 44 people cleaned up heaps of litter monthly, except January: at Harding St Coburg on 5/11/06; at Bell St Coburg on 3/12/06; at Murray Rd Coburg on 4/2 & 1/4; at Walker St East, Northcote on 11/3; at Merri Park Northcote on 6/5; at Strettle Wetland Thornbury on 3/6; at St Georges Rd Nth Fitzroy on 1/7; at Keady St Nth Coburg on 5/8; near Rushall Railway Station Nth Fitzroy on 2/9; and at Bell St Coburg on 7/10.

Coordinator: Paul Prentice.

Streamteam

This dedicated group again conducted water quality tests on the first Sunday of every month, upstream of St Georges Rd Bridge Nth Fitzroy, with a total of 65 people attending from Nov. '06 to Oct. '07.

The discovery of mayflies in March was exciting as they tend to be more sensitive to pollution than many macroinvertebrates found in the creek. The observations for the following months were similar to 2006.

Coordinator: Irene Baker.

Campaigns

The Upper Merri Campaign Group, which includes others besides FoMC, met regularly at the MCMC office to protect important sites in the catchment's north.

Other campaign issues included: threats to a colony of Growling Grass Frogs in Kalkallo Creek by a Yarra Valley Water pipeline; VicRoads' proposal to sell off land along Edgars Creek Coburg; damage to Edgars Creek by Melbourne Water; and lobbying for a shared path on the proposed rail bridge from Westgarth to Clifton Hill.

Walks Talks and Tours

A large audience, including many FoMC members, attended the presentation on 20/6 by Yarra Riverkeeper, Ian Penrose, organised by Darebin Council and FoMC.

Seven people saw lots of Cunningham Skinks on Brendan Casey's wildlife tour of Galada Tamboore on 16/9.

However, only one person came to one of Paul Prentice's three interestingly themed tours: the *Twin Creeks Ride* on 4/2. As there were no takers, his *Triple Treat* and

Rio Trio walk were both cancelled.

Coming up is a Wildflower Walk at Cooper St Grasslands with Brian Bainbridge on 11/11. (In 2006, attendance for the Wildflower Walk and two Golden Sun Moth surveys was 47 people.)

Newsletter

Four high quality Newsletters were printed and posted by FoMC in February, May, August and November, with wonderful layouts by Dean Lombard. We can now also send the newsletter by email thanks to the expertise of Tony Faithfull.

Layout: Dean Lombard.

Other Activities and News

It was great to welcome new local interest groups: the Friends of Edgars Creek and the Friends of Malcolm Creek. Along with MECCARG, from 2006, they extend our range over the Merri catchment.

50 copies of the DVD about FoMC have been distributed to libraries, schools and interested people and groups.

We were very successful in obtaining grants from: Aust. Dept of Environment & Heritage Community Water Grants, Aust. Govt Envirofund, Landcare Australia/SPI Powernet, and two each from Melb. Water Community Grants and Parks Victoria.

An information stall was held at the Sydney Road Street Party on 4/3, and one is coming up at the Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival at CERES on 24/11.

We also participated in Green Wedge Coalition meetings with Planning Minister Justin Madden, and we had input to a number of policies, plans and strategies. These included: the Northern Sewerage Strategy, the Merri Creek Trail Review; Melbourne Water's plans for litter control in Merri Creek and also their Fawkner to Nth Coburg Improvement project; VicRoads proposal for road widening and a highway interchange at Donnybrook; and the State Government's White paper on Land and Biodiversity.

All together, over 520 people attended about 50 Friends' organised events, not including those who helped out at the many MCMC events and other events, such as Yarra City Council's National Tree Day.

Thanks to Jack Svendsen, Warren Cooper and Monica Williamson for regularly staffing the office; to Simon D'Alfonso for not only keeping our website looking great, but also for making it easier to update; to Angie Retallack for continuing as New Member Welcomer; and to Ruth Shiel who again updated our only sign at the footbridge near Roseneath St Clifton Hill.

RAY RADFORD
(SECRETARY 2007)

Wendy's Nature Notes

On Saturday 8 September, I went to Craigieburn Grassland Reserve and spent my time in and around a semi-fenced knoll where the Friends of Merri Creek and MCMC have done weed control and revegetation work.

I was greeted by a Pallid Cuckoo and a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo consuming a huge hairy caterpillar. Both birds were on the fence. Through the course of the afternoon I saw a pair of Pallid Cuckoos together and others, also up to four Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos together and mucking about in one shrub, plus lots of caterpillar eating.

Almost all afternoon there was LOTS of vocalisation and aerial displays, including pairs talon locking, from up to four Brown Falcons. Angry defence of certain River Red gum trees by magpies when the Falcons ventured too close. Cisticolas calling, Richards Pipits nesting everywhere, amazing aerial singing and flight displays from the Larks, Eastern Rosellas nesting/preparing.



WASP

Birds aside, there was a stunning display of sizes and colour variations in the hairy Anthelid caterpillars. Clearly there was lots of growing happening as there were lots of spent skins and plenty of the short haired yellowy fellas in all stages of development. I also found a lovely grass or onion 'grass'- eating looper.

Under the big old River Red gums on the knoll there was a wonderful display of territorial mating behaviour from a group of *Vanessa kershawi* (Australian Painted Lady) butterflies. Staking out territory and aerial 'dog-fights'. I also saw a large stunning Grassland Blue butterfly.



SMALL LOOPER

Late in the afternoon I found lots of what I am certain were *Plutella xylostella* (plutellidae) moths which the new moth book describes as: "a pest of cabbages. It is one of the most widely distributed moths found from Scandinavia to the subantarctic islands, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas" (p. 24). Finding

GRASSHOPPER



themselves a bit short on cabbages at the grasslands, they switched their attention to a large patch of another Brassica beneath one of the River Red gums in the

fenced area (probably an ex sheep camp).

Other findings included some half grown grasshoppers and a very lovely little Broconid wasp, which is mimicked by some moths and bugs.

At dusk small scarabidae beetles started to fly. Some I think were coming to feed in the sweet smelling flowering Bursarias on the south fence as I was leaving - some noctuid moths too.

Vegetation was getting dry and any rain will be much appreciated.

WENDY MOORE
(CONVENOR, FRIENDS OF MERRI GRASSLANDS)

Birds galore at Galada Tamboore

On Sunday August 19, keen birdwatchers and new FoMC members, Nicole Spillane and Paul Jacobson, went for a walk at Galada Tamboore where they saw the following native birds: Brown Goshawk, Little Eagle, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Crested Pigeon, Rainbow Lorikeet, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Richard's Pipit, Golden-headed Cisticola, Grey Fantail, Flame Robin, Superb Fairy-Wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote, Silvereye, White-plumed Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Magpie-lark, Australian Magpie, Little Raven, Red-browed Finch.

Although it's most unusual for the area, they also saw a Brown-headed Honeyeater in the tall gum trees in what is known as "Yellow-box Gully."

They were a little unlucky not to see any water birds or a Black-shouldered Kite, as these birds can often be seen in the area.

Eight fire-fighters for one little bird

I was leaving home one day and directly across the road I noticed a Noisy Miner (as opposed to the introduced common Mynah - note the different spelling), looking down at me kind of funny with outstretched neck. Then to the right of me in a small tree at about my chest level I noticed a nest and realised it must belong to the protective Noisy glaring at me from above.

What I witnessed was the harrowing event of a fledging Noisy Miner trying to make its flying debut from its nest. The problem was its leg was caught in a piece of some sort of string used in the nest's construction. The poor young bird just hung there upside down, flapping its wings as it tried to free itself from its "house arrest" - yet another example of



the potential dangers of badly discarded human rubbish.

I immediately went home and called the RSPCA, who on inspection decided it was a job for the fire-fighters with their long ladder. Naturally I was a keen observer and I recall counting eight fire-fighters trying to rescue this one little bird.

This made me think how there is loose rubbish strewn along the streets on garbage collection days. After seeing the horror that loose rubbish can do to wildlife, I now realise how necessary it is to securely tie rubbish bags. Come to think of it, I may even attend a few more litter clean-ups.

ANTHONY SZASZ-SAUNDERS
(ACTIVE REGENERATION GROUP MEMBER)

More Merri birds

On Wednesday 5 September, FoMC Vice President Ann McGregor took a pleasant stroll to Merri Park Northcote where she saw 16 native bird species. The best sighting was a Crested Shrike-tit (which was actually on the Brunswick bank of Merri Creek, in Kirkdale St park).

Brian Bainbridge, MCMC Technical Officer, says that Crested Shrike-tits have been a feature of the area from CERES to Merri Park for about ten years. He thinks they probably moved in when the trees reached sapling stage. Shrike-tits appear to breed successfully in the area, sometimes appearing around the MCMC depot with fledged young.

Ann's sightings also included Brown Thornbills, which appeared to be feeding nestlings or fledglings in a shrub covered in Clematis, in Merri Park wetland.

Brian says that the Brown Thornbills have been resident along the creek near the wetland for about ten years, but in the last two years they appear to have spread and can now be seen and up and down from the Merri Park at least as far as near the Robinson Reserve in Preston.

Brian says, "It is very pleasing to see this bush bird recolonising the revegetation. They particularly like the messy mid-storey which some residents seem to think that MCMC should clean up."

Brian himself has made some interesting sightings: on Saturday 1 September, he saw a male Brown Songlark displaying over the Jukes Rd grassland in Fawkner and a male White winged triller feeding on the abundant hairy caterpillars. These sightings surprised him as they are of species returning to the area perhaps six weeks earlier than usual (MCMC's records for these two species usually come from mid October to early November).

In addition, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos have been calling from the Jukes Rd area since 12th August which also seems at least a couple of weeks earlier than previous observations, most of which are in early to mid September.

Brian says that there is not enough data to determine the significance of such observations, however they are an example of what would be expected with drought and/or climate change effects.

Help plan our planting activities for 2008

Planning Meeting for Regeneration
Group Activities 2008

Tuesday 4 December, 6.00pm

MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick.

**All FoMC members are welcome
to help plan our planting and
weeding activities for 2008.**

Successful grants for 2007-08:

FoMC has made a successful application for \$4000.00 from Parks Victoria Community Grants for conducting our "Wild Discoveries" grassland walks, talks and bird surveys at Craigieburn grasslands on 28 October and at Cooper St grasslands on 11 November; plus Kangaroo Grass seed collection from Cooper St grassland in January 2008.

Next year is already looking like another great year for FoMC with a grant of \$21,219.00 from Australian Government Envirofund Round 9, 2007-08, to restore disturbed areas of Central Creek Grassland, Reservoir.

Merri Creek Trail as a Green Gym

Merri Creek is currently a host site for the Green Gym program, which engages volunteers in conservation and gardening style activities as a form of healthy exercise.

The program is supported by the Victorian government as part of its Go For Your Life campaign. Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is delivering the program in Victoria and has entered into a partnership with MCMC to facilitate sessions of Green Gym along the Merri Creek Trail. These volunteers are thus supporting the environmental conservation works undertaken by the MCMC Parklands Team.

On 26 September, a group of them celebrated ten weeks of involvement in this, the first ever Green Gym program in Melbourne. Since beginning on 24 July, 11 volunteers have participated at the weekly sessions to complete a variety of practical conservation tasks. Together they have hand weeded about 900 square metres, removed five square metres of litter, planted 50 Juncus species, propagated Wallaby Grass, watched birds, spread over 200 square metres of mulch, pruned shrubs to improve access for weed control, watered newly planted under-storey species, and walked a long and very scenic way.

All involved in the Green Gym project at Merri Creek are happy with its progress and sessions look set to continue. In supporting this wonderful initiative, MCMC is helping to keep people AND the environment healthy.

To find out more about Green Gym, please contact Heidi Fisher on 03 9326 8250.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE GREEN GYM PROGRAM CELEBRATE TEN WEEKS INVOLVEMENT AT COLLINGWOOD CHILDREN'S FARM

The crowning touch

If location, location and location are the most important factors in real estate, Craigieburn ticks all three boxes: closer in than Werribee, Lilydale, Cranbourne or Frankston, adjacent to the main north-east line, and set amid scenic surroundings topped by Mount Ridley at 289 metres above sea level.

There's the Curly Sedge Creek, flowing through the native grasslands beside the Merri, and the Malcolm and Aitken; the northern horizon is dominated by the Great Dividing Range; to the west lie the Greenvale Reservoir, Woodlands Historic Park and the picturesque hamlet of Bulla with its steam trains.

And with its recent inclusion in Melbourne's 340 km. electric rail network, it's pretty well got the lot. Hitherto served by V-Line trains, it will now have access to all stops on the Broadmeadows line and multiple train, tram, bus and bike route connections; the 27 km. to Flinders Street will take about 40 minutes.

Its upgraded station and the striking new one at Roxburgh Park (No. 200!) will be joined by another at Coolaroo in 2010, all three complemented with feeder buses covering extensive areas; Barry Rd will then link Coolaroo and Upfield as well as the Yuroke and Merlynston Creeks, the Broadmeadows Valley Park and Galada Tamboore on the Merri.

Public transport, bicycles and freight trains combat cars and trucks' more harmful effects, such as a sedentary lifestyle leading to unfit and obesity, the costs of oil imports and repairing road surfaces pounded by semi-trailers (the Westgate Bridge is also a worry), and the intimidation, crashes and deaths resulting from speeding, tailgating, drug use, fatigue, etc.

They alleviate congestion, noise and pollution, generating fewer emissions per capita or per tonne; and they don't create a demand for ever bigger motorways that shove creeks into concrete drains, or even a dungeon as with the Koonung in North Balwyn.

How unobtrusive, on the other hand, are the trains by the Diamond Creek, the trams in Royal Park, Adelaide's



TRAIN CROSSING AITKEN CREEK ON THE NEW ELECTRIC SERVICE TO CRAIGIEBURN ON 4/10/07

O-Bahn express buses in the Torrens valley or the ferries on the Brisbane River; likewise the paths by stream and lake and wetland and billabong and Bay. But what a turnaround, what a victory for the plants and animals, when it was the cars that got chased into burrows to save Yarran Dheran on the Mullum Mullum...

There's good news from everywhere: Sydney's \$450 million rail quadruplication, extensions to Adelaide's tram and Perth's train lines, the booming Warrigal Rd SmartBuses and the proposed third track to Springvale; the Auckland network to be electrified by 2013, and Wellington's fourth generation of trolleybuses – remarkable tram/bus hybrids also seen in China and Europe.

It's wonderfully diverse, the world of public transport, with hydrofoils and gondolas, jitneys (minibuses that leave only when full) and driverless light-rail vehicles, communal bikes, pedicabs and trishaws; funiculars and cable cars and ski lifts and sleighs, and monorails, ranging from Sydney and Singapore's toys to the suspended *Schwebebahn* in Germany and Shanghai's ultra-high-speed magnetic-levitation projectile.

With oil closing in on a hundred U.S. dollars a barrel, the drift towards P.T., bicycles and motor-scooters is becoming a stampede and overcrowding is reaching dangerous levels; making some early-morning travel free was a shrewd move, but further measures will be required, for example double-decker trains and articulated buses running on liquefied natural gas.

What about that rail line to the airport which could have wiped out seven level crossings and five handsome old stations such as Kensington? Thankfully abandoned; besides, after the oil peak plane travel will become increasingly unaffordable.

Contrast the straightforward Somerton Rd overpass job, and the electric trains' "completion" of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, already endowed with the Valley, Aitken and Malcolm reserves and a dozen ornamental lakes; a golf course and ovals and other sports facilities; provision for all ages from infancy to TAFE to retirement, and commercial, social, health and religious centres.

Bikepaths and public transport go to Broadmeadows, Epping and the city; down the road in Greenvale, it's the ultimate experience in personal transport – horses; while for comic fellows, drama queens and assorted thespians, there's the Cthouse Theatre! As for the local environment, it gets by with a little help from its Friends.

PAUL PRENTICE (COMMITTEE MEMBER)

Yarra Riverkeeper Association

Since its launch in January 2006, the Yarra Riverkeeper boat has been regularly cruising the Lower Yarra. The four-seat power boat is helping the Yarra Riverkeeper Association, a community organisation, to keep an eye on the health of Melbourne's major waterway and to engage directly with river users on their concerns for the river.

From the boat's moorings in Burnley Harbour, Riverkeeper Ian Penrose takes passengers on a memorable on-the-water tour along the Yarra, whilst explaining the many delights and plights of this remarkable river. The cruise upstream to Collingwood shows a quiet and green reach of the Yarra rarely visited by city dwellers, which is in sharp contrast to a journey downstream past bustling South Bank to the newly developed Victoria Harbour.

The Friends of Merri Creek is a member of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association and David Redfearn is President of both organisations. Any members of the Friends can arrange an outing on the boat by phoning Ian Penrose on 0448 927 720.

Friends' Life Members—Leslie Fraser

The sixteenth in a series of short histories of the Friends' Life Members

Leslie Fraser grew up in North Hampshire, north of Boston USA, an area of great natural beauty renowned for its lakes district, white mountains and autumn foliage. Her parents and a favourite aunt were interested in nature and wildlife and Leslie was further influenced by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the folk music of the late 60s and early 70s, which included Pete Seeger.

After completing a Music Education degree in New Hampshire, Leslie came to Australia in 1975 as an active feminist and helped to establish a women's refuge in the inner city. For a few years in the 70s she lived near Mahoneys Rd, Fawkner, where the nearby Merri Creek was regarded as a sinister, dangerous place haunted by deviants. She moved to the Sumner Estate, Northcote, in 1986 and soon noticed small groups of people planting indigenous vegetation near the Arthurton Rd bridge. At first, however, she wasn't impressed with them and thought that there were too few people to make any difference and the plants would never survive.

When the Merri path opened in 1985, the track was not completed through Whelan's Tip site (now Kirkdale St Park) in Brunswick. However, Leslie enjoyed pushing a stroller over the rough track with her daughter Aviva, born in 1990. Leslie recalls that the track had bits of metal, brick and glass and it was often slippery. Later, some gravel was added to the track and this caused the stroller to become stuck. When the concrete path was finally connected, Leslie went for longer walks and noticed lots more people using the trail.

She first attended FoMC planting days around the playground in Merri Park in 1992 with a neighbour, Allie Dawe. In the mid 90s she was working on her thesis about USA National Security Policy at Latrobe University and this led her to investigate aspects of our local political system that allowed such things as environmental degradation and inappropriate development to occur.

Leslie joined FoMC in 1995 and her more notable activities include: lobbying to try and prevent or improve the development proposed for 48 Harrison St, Brunswick, in 1998; helping keep a carpark out of the public area of Merri Park, Northcote; and a major role in the revegetation of the wetland in that park. She also did some work on collecting and archiving historic documents about community activism on Merri Creek. This included interviews with ten foundation members of the Merri Creek Coordination Committee, the forerunner to MCMC. (Some of those interviews were with later FoMC Life Members and these ones were used as the basis for their short histories in various editions of this newsletter.) For her contribution to FoMC, Leslie was awarded Life Membership in 2006.

In 2005, Leslie gained a Creative Fellowship with the State Library of Victoria to do additional research on environmental activism in the Merri catchment. This work gave rise to her writing an interesting article in the August 2005 newsletter entitled *Kinlochewe: lost village on the Merri*, about how the 'Black Thursday' fires of 1851 wiped out homes, properties and a village in the north of the catchment.

Leslie currently teaches History, Politics, Geography and English at Santa Maria College. Her other interests are an organic vegetable garden at home, history, historical novels, and Baroque opera; and she has been active in the Greens Party for the last few years.

RAY RADFORD (SECRETARY)

Merri Creek Benefit Gig

**Sunday 4 November, from 7pm
Edinburgh Castle Hotel
Cnr Sydney Rd & Albion St Brunswick**

A Night of great music: Lady Grey, Rose Turtle Ertler, Dance Contest, Fresh Grass, Cunning Stunts, Gold Gull, and DJs

Cover Charge: \$8/10 with \$2 pots 7-8pm.
All money raised goes to Friends of Merri Creek.



Help counting Frogs

Do you love hearing the sound of frog calls in early spring and have a fondness for our amphibian friends? Would you like to get up close and personal with frogs and gather important data on frog populations around Melbourne?

If so, you are invited to join volunteers across Melbourne to make sound recordings of frog calls in your local river, creek or wetland. Your recordings will be analysed by experts and the results will be posted on a frog census map on the Melbourne Water website. This information is a valuable indicator of variety of frog species present which is a good indicator of health of our waterways. The data also tracks the population of certain endangered species such as the Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*).

To learn more about participating in the Frog Census visit the Melbourne Water Frogs site www.melbournewater.com.au/frogs and click the participation button.

Melbourne water often runs free information sessions and frog identification training sessions – see: <http://frogs.melbournewater.com.au/content/training.asp>

For more information on the Frog Census call Melbourne Water on 131 722 or email frogs@melbournewater.com.au

It would be great if we could form a FoMC frogs group to conduct a frog census on a more regular basis. If you're interested, please contact Ray Radford on admin@mcmc.org.au or 0422 989 166.

Friends of Merri Creek Events Calendar 2007

OCTOBER

Sunday 28—Wildflower Walk & Talk

Craigieburn Grasslands, 10am-12 noon. Register for this event with Brian or Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 and say if you want to join a car pool. Light refreshments will be provided. Funded by a Parks Victoria Community Grant.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 3—MECCARG* Weeding

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a bucket or bag to collect weeds and a digging tool if you can.

Sunday 4—Litter Clean-Up

Harding St, Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A2. 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 4—Merri Creek Benefit Gig

Edinburgh Castle Hotel, Cnr Sydney Rd & Albion St Brunswick, 7pm onwards. A Night of great music with: Lady Grey, Rose Turtle Ertler, Dance Contest, Fresh Grass, Cunning Stunts, Gold Gull and DJS. Cover Charge: \$8/10 with \$2 pots 7-8pm. All money raised goes to Friends of Merri Creek.

Sunday 11—Wildflower walk and talk

Cooper St grasslands, 10am-12 noon. Register for this event with Brian or Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 and say if you want to join a car pool. Light refreshments will be provided. Funded by a Parks Victoria Community Grant.

Saturday 17—Outlook Road Water Monitors

Close to the confluence of Merri and Edgars creeks, Coburg North, 12-3pm. Melway map 18 A10. Phone Shelley 0425 832 128.

Saturday 24—CERES Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival

CERES Environment Park, Lee St East Brunswick, 2-10pm. Don't miss this fantastic community event. If you can help staff our stall at the festival, please ring Ray on 0422 989 166.

Wednesday 28—Annual General Meeting

CERES Environment Room, Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30pm. Have your say in running the Friends group, elect the new Committee, hear about the group's activities and party afterwards. Drinks and light refreshments supplied.

DECEMBER

Saturday 1—MECCARG* End of Year Picnic

At the old quarry (follow the flags from the foot bridge between Bell St and Murray Rd Coburg), 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Bring food and drink to share and a blanket to sit on.

Sunday 2—Litter Clean-Up

Broadhurst Ave, Reservoir, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 18 B3. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 2—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.

Tuesday 4—Planning Meeting for

Regeneration Group Activities 2008

MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 6.00pm. All FoMC members are welcome to help plan our planting and weeding activities for 2008.

JANUARY 2008

Early January—Kangaroo Grass Seed Collection

If you are available to collect seed in early January, please register your interest with Brian or Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199.

FEBRUARY 2008

Saturday 2—MECCARG* Weeding and planting site maintenance

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a bucket/bag and digging tool for weeding and a hammer for tree-guard repair if you can.

Sunday 3—Litter Clean-Up

Moreland Rd East Brunswick, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30A4. 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.

* MECCARG = Merri & Edgars Creek
Confluence Area Restoration Group

Don't forget to keep an eye on the Friends' website—www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc

You can now get newsletter by email

Thanks to the technical skills of Tony Faithfull, the membership database has now been re-done to allow the newsletter to be sent by email. The members who choose this option will not only help us to save on postage, printing and paper, but will also reduce the time and effort involved in the physical mail-out, as well as doing a little bit for the environment.

If you would like to receive the newsletter by email in future, please let us know by emailing merricreek@bigpond.com with your name and postal address.



Scientists from the RAND Corporation have created this model to illustrate how a "home computer" could look like in the year 2000. However the model illustrates will not be economically feasible for the average home. Also the scientists readily admit that the computer will require new yet invented technology to actually work, but in years from now scientific progress is expected to solve these problems. With a video interface and the Fortran language, the computer will be easy to use and only