

Friends of Merri Creek



NEWSLETTER

November 2009

– January 2010

2009 Annual General Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 25th November
CERES (rebuilt) Environment Room
Lee Street East Brunswick

Agenda

- 1. Presentation on the Growling Grass Frog**
(Geoff Heard)
Geoff will tell us about the results of his ground-breaking PhD research on the habitat of Growling Grass Frogs, the recommendations that stem from it and the plans for future work.
- 2. President's Report**
(David Redfearn)
- 3. Election of the 2010 Committee**
Nominations needed (see below)
- 4. Election of six Friends' Representatives to MCMC**
- 5. End of year celebrations**
Drinks and nibbles provided.

All members are invited to attend the AGM

Please come along to CERES' completely rebuilt Environment Room to find out about the results of Geoff Heard's PhD research on Growling Grass Frogs, elect our new Committee and help celebrate another successful year with drinks, nibbles and a chat.

How about joining the Committee?

All committee positions become vacant at the AGM and it would be great to have some more new people. A role on the Committee would suit someone who would like to do more in the group but isn't able to attend activities.

If you are even vaguely interested in being 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: merricreek@bigpond.com or by phone: 0422 989 166. Also contact Ray for a Nomination Form, or download it from our website under Membership. The forms must be received before 20th November, although nominations for any vacancy will also be welcome at the AGM. 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 not financial, your membership fee and application form will need to be received before Tuesday 17 November. Unfortunately, memberships cannot be approved at the AGM.

- 2** Secretary's report **3** Urban growth boundary update / Project updates **4** Birdwatch report
5 Alligator weed eradication / Volunteers needed **6** Merri Creek parklands update / News snippets
7 Onward to South Morang **8** Events calendar

Friends Activities 2009

2009 Friends Committee

President: David Redfearn;

Vice President: Ann McGregor;

Secretary: Ray Radford;

Treasurer: Colin Abbott;

Membership Sec: Monica Williamson;

Committee members: Simon O'Connor and Christabel McCarthy.

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

Regeneration Group: Ruth Shiel;

Litter Group: Paul Prentice;

Streamteam: Irene Baker;

Newsletter: Dean Lombard.

The Committee met bi-monthly until 30 September, which is the limit of this report.

Representation on MCMC

Trevor Hausler continued in his eleventh year as MCMC President, Ann McGregor as Secretary, Allie Dawe as Treasurer, with Paul Prentice, Ruth Shiel and Louise Grgat as Committee members.

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

Most of the Substitute Representatives, Harold Mackrell, Pascale Pitot, David Redfearn, Simon O'Connor and Carrie Deutsch made various contributions.

Regeneration Group Activities

Our most active group is continuing to take on more management-type activities with 60 people involved in the following:

☞ Collecting 18 bales of Kangaroo Grass seed at Bababi Marning (Cooper St G'land) on 20/1.

☞ Woody Weed Removals at Bababi Marning on 22/2 & 3/5; at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn G'land) on 21/3 & 19/4 (some unsupervised), and at the Wallan rail line on 28/6.

☞ Hand weeding at the Friends' site near Strettle Wetland on 8/2 & 20/9.

This increase in management activities meant fewer planting days, so attendance has declined (from 327 last year), to a total of 210 people: at Merri Park Northcote on 14/6; at Hall Reserve Clifton Hill on 21/6; at Ngarrk-djarrang (Central Creek G'land) Reservoir on 27/6; at Robinson Reserve Preston on 12/7; at Rushall Station Nth Fitzroy on 31/5 and for MCMC's 20th Anniversary on a very windy 16/8, when we also had rain at a planting for the first time in about ten years; at the Friends' site near Strettle Wetland on 23/8; and at Galada Tamboore Campbellfield on 5/9.

Altogether, 5221 plants (down from 7963 last year) went into the ground, plus

there was also lots of tree-guarding and occasional mulch-spreading.

Once again the MCMC Parkland Management Team supported us at most of the plantings and usually also supplied barbecues later. Thanks also to the Darebin Bush Crew for resourcing our steadily expanding site plus a few extra plots near Strettle Wetland, Thornbury.

Coordinator: Ruth Shiel.

Litter Clean-ups

Attendance has remained fairly consistent with a total of 36 people cleaning up heaps of litter monthly, except January: at Keady St Nth Coburg on 12/11/08; at Edgars Creek Reservoir on 7/12/08; at Bell St East Coburg on 1/2; at Aitken Creek Craigieburn on 8/3 & 2/8; at Arthurton Rd Northcote on 5/4; at Murray Rd Coburg on 3/5; at Clara St Brunswick on 7/6; near Rushall Railway Station Nth Fitzroy on 5/7; and at Ngarrk-djarrang (Central Creek G'land) Reservoir on 6/9.

Coordinator: Paul Prentice.

Merri Birdwatch

Our newest group has been very successful, right from the start, when over 100 people attended bird surveys at 10 sites in November 2008. We have since held three more sets of bird surveys, with another one scheduled in November. This year's attendances have averaged 40 for each quarterly survey. Our experienced leaders have helped many beginner-birders, and we have collected valuable records of a diversity of birds through the seasons. Reports on each Birdwatch survey have appeared in our newsletter.

Coordinator: Ann McGregor.

Newsletter

Four high quality Newsletters were printed and posted in February, May, August and November, with wonderful layouts by Dean Lombard. They are usually 8 pages, but the Nov. '08 and Feb. editions were 12 pages, while colour versions go on the website. More people now receive newsletters by email than as hard copies.

Layout: Dean Lombard.

Campaigns

The main ongoing campaign is on our biggest ever threat to Merri Creek: the proposed expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary. The Upper Merri Campaign Group, which includes others besides FoMC, met twice this year to discuss this.

We put in submissions on this issue to the State and Federal Governments and encouraged our supporters to do the same.

We are also continuing our quest for wetlands creation in Moreland and Darebin.

Walks Talks and Tours

46 people enjoyed the Magical Merri Bus Tour on 16/10/2008; 8 people enjoyed the Wildflower Walk at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grassland) with Dave and John from MCMC on 23/11/2008.

Three themed tours were organised by Paul Prentice: Four Creeks Ramble on 22/8, Northern Treasures Ride on 13/9, and Triple Treat on 27/9; while Bruce McGregor gave an enjoyable historical talk, Reclaiming the Merri in Brunswick on 17/9.

See the calendar for upcoming events.

Streamteam

The water monitoring group continued from previous years and conducted water quality tests on the first Sunday of every month, upstream of St Georges Rd Bridge Nth Fitzroy, with a total of 96 people attending from Nov. '08 to Sep. '09.

As has been seen in previous years the test results show a seasonal variation with the creek having more abundant and diverse life in summer, then falling to a low in winter. There have been some slight changes in the abundance of different types of macroinvertebrates, such as perhaps more common sightings of mayfly and dragonfly larvae and lower numbers of freshwater shrimp. However there is no dramatic and indisputable trend over the years that can be seen yet.

Coordinator: Irene Baker.

Other Activities and News

Grants came from: Landcare Australia/SPI Powernet, City of Yarra and two from Melbourne Water Community Grants.

We helped to staff Synergy Gallery for MCMC's 20th anniversary photo exhibition of Galada Tamboore, by David Tatnall.

Stalls were held at CERES Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival on 29/11/2008 and at the Sydney Rd Street Party on 1/3.

We made comments to the Water Supply Alliance for pipelines under Merri Creek at Bakers Rd Coburg North and over the creek (with a bridge on top) at Holden St Fitzroy.

Overall attendances were significantly boosted by Birdwatch to around 700 people at about 50 Friends' organised events; and this doesn't include those held by sub-groups: MECCARG or Friends of Edgars Creek. Thanks to Monica Williamson for regularly staffing the office; to Simon D'Alfonso for looking after our website, to Ruth Shiel for updating our only sign near Roseneath St Clifton Hill; to Julie Mason for taking over from Angie Retallack after four years as the New Member Welcomer.

Ray Radford (Secretary 2009)

Update on urban expansion plans

The State Government's hasty process to expedite a major expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary (mainly to the north and west of Melbourne) is on-track for the introduction of legislation into Parliament in November.

Several hundred submissions were received in the short time allowed for public comment on the draft Strategic Impact Assessment report. This report relates to matters of national environmental significance under the Commonwealth EPBC Act. A few revisions were made before the report was submitted to Canberra on 13 August, but there are still major deficiencies. These include an inadequate information base in terms of biodiversity values, weak prescriptions to protect endangered species and plant communities, and the proposed sacrifice of thousands of hectares of native vegetation for urban sprawl

– including over 5,000 hectares of native grasslands, listed as Critically Endangered.

The limited improvements since the draft report include a proposal for a northern grassy woodland reserve, and some clarification of the sub-regional species strategies, and biodiversity conservation strategies to be prepared for each growth area. We are counting on the Commonwealth Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, to insist on far more effective environmental safeguards and impact mitigation measures. Thanks to all those who wrote to him.

PROJECT UPDATES

Clifton Hill Rail Project

The works underneath the new rail bridge were completed in September.

Merri Creek Trail Sign System

New signs now show the way on the Merri shared path.

Melbourne Water's Merri Creek

Improvement Project — North Coburg Melbourne Water is continuing its major creek improvement works from Queens Pde Fawkner to Carr St North Coburg. Works include the staged removal of most willow trees and woody weeds, followed by plantings, including extensive aquatic vegetation; major work on the Merlynston Creek confluence; and erosion control.

Pipeline works at Bakers Rd Coburg North

A new water pipeline has been laid underneath Merri Creek from Bakers Rd to McMahons Rd Coburg North, and the access to the footbridge across the creek between the roads was completed on July 25, when there was a community planting at the site.

New path bridge on pipeline crossing

Another new water pipeline is being built starting under Holden St North Fitzroy, then across the creek replacing the current pipeline bridge and continuing under the parklands alongside Merri Parade Northcote. Although the works are disrupting the shared path in that area, there will be compensation by means of a new path bridge on top of the pipeline to connect with the Capital City Trail. The project should be completed by early 2010.

Leaving by the storming drain



*Where have all the tree leaves gone,
short time passing?*

*They were on the trees last week,
where did they go?*

Where have all the tree leaves gone?

Down drains to waterways every one:

When will the Councils learn?

When will they ever learn?

Deciduous trees drop large quantities of leaves over a short period (autumn), causing high levels of nutrients which strip the water of oxygen, resulting in the death of native aquatic animals and an increase in potentially toxic algal blooms. They also clog up stormwater drains and change the shading regime of the creek. (These are only some of the problems associated with exotic trees.)

New member from new members

Congratulations to our new Committee member, Simon O'Connor and his wife Rachel on the birth of their daughter Ada. Simon came on to the FoMC Committee only one week after joining up as a household.



Birds of early spring along the Merri

Thirty-nine intrepid leaders and participants ventured out in cold winds on 9 August (except for Galada Tamboore, on 30 August) for the fourth round of bird surveys at ten sites along the Merri and at Edwardes Lake.

A total of 74 species was seen, of which 12 are introduced. This is four more species than in the May-June surveys. The most common species were Common Starling, Rock Dove (both introduced), and Pacific Black Duck. The most widespread species were Australian Magpie and Little Raven, both recorded at all ten sites, followed by Spotted (Turtle) Dove, Dusky Moorhen and Common Blackbird which were recorded at nine sites.

Blyth Street-Moreland Road, East Brunswick was yet again the site with the largest tally of species (37), followed by Coburg Lake Reserve (34). Coburg Lake had the highest number of birds, with an estimated 357.

There was a good variety of raptors – Collared Sparrowhawk, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, and Peregrine Falcon. Brown Quail were recorded at Bababi Djinanang Fawkner and at Galada Tamboore.

There were two clear signs of spring: the Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoos at Galada, and the many New Holland Honeyeaters who were very active, "in full territorial-defence mode" to quote Brian Bainbridge.



Eastern Great Egret at CERES dam, Brunswick in August.

Summary of the first year of surveys

Here are some cumulative results from the four sets of surveys conducted since October 2008. A more detailed report will be available on the Friends' website.

	Oct-Nov '08	Feb-Mar '09*	May-Jun '09	Aug '09
Observers	108	36	43	39
No. species	83	76	70	74
No. birds	2763	2199	2139	1748

Cumulative total number of species recorded
98 (including 13 non-native).

Most widely-occurring species (ranked by no. of sites recorded)

Australian Magpie (at 38 of 39 sites)	Common Myna* (34)
Little Raven (37)	Common Starling* (32)
Pacific Black Duck (36)	Dusky Moorhen (31)
Red Wattlebird (35)	Magpie-lark (31)
Spotted (Turtle) Dove* (34)	Rainbow Lorikeet (30)
Common Blackbird* (34)	

Most numerous species (estimates of numbers)

Rock Dove* (850)	Common Myna* (489)
Rainbow Lorikeet (540)	Pacific Black Duck (437)
Common Starling* (532)	Red Wattlebird (423)

Total species recorded at each site

Galgi ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands)	55
East Brunswick: Blyth St – Moreland Rd	54
Galada Tamboore	51
Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Rd Fawkner)	47
Bababi Marning (Cooper St Somerton)	45
Edwardes Lake Reservoir	43
Coburg Lake Reserve	42
E Brunswick – Northcote: Kirkdale St – Merri Park	42
Clifton Hill: Hall Reserve – Yarra Bend Park	38
E Coburg – W Preston: Egan – Strettle Reserves	36

Ann McGregor (Merri Birdwatch Coordinator)

* Introduced (non-native) species

LAST MERRI BIRDWATCH SURVEY FOR 2009

There is one more bird survey this year at ten sites along Merri Creek. All surveys will be from 8.45-10.30am as below.

BYO binoculars if possible, but no dogs please, as they reduce the number and variety of birds to be seen.

The contact for all Birdwatch events is Ann McGregor 0429 386 102.

The following eight sites will have surveys on 8 November:

- ☘ Jukes Rd, Fawkner: Meet on Merri Path at end of Jukes Rd, Fawkner (Melway 18 A2).
- ☘ Egan Reserve – Harding St – Strettle Reserve – Normanby Ave: Meet at bluestone steps at end of The Grove, East Coburg (Melway 30 A3).
- ☘ Coburg Lake Reserve: Meet near the car park, Lake Grove Coburg (17 H10).
- ☘ Edwardes Lake: Meet at the playground adjacent to Griffiths St, Reservoir (Melway 18 E5).
- ☘ CERES to Moreland Rd: Meet at the seats on the path at rear of CERES, East Brunswick (Melway 30 B7).
- ☘ Merri Park, Phillips Reserve: Meet at the end of Victoria St, East Brunswick, at BBQ shelter (Melway 30 B8).
- ☘ Hall Reserve – Yarra Bend Park: Meet at the Rotunda, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill (Melway 2D D1).
- ☘ Galada Tamboore*: Meet at the end of Hatty Court, Campbellfield (Melway 7 K6).

The survey at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands)* will be on 1 November
Meet at the O'Herns Rd gate off Hume Highway (Melway 180 E6).

The survey at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grasslands)* will be on 22 November.
Meet near the Istrian Club, Cooper St, Epping (Melway 180 K10). This may also include a Golden Sun Moth survey afterwards, if the weather conditions are right.

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

Alligator Weed strategic eradication *past and future*

Alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) is a State prohibited weed and as such it is the responsibility of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to eradicate it from the state. This is managed by the DPI's Weed Alert program, which aims to prevent the introduction of serious new weeds to the State and eradicate State prohibited weeds.

Merri Creek is one of six creeks in the metropolitan Melbourne area that is infested with alligator weed. During 2008/09, DPI treatment works focused on Merri Creek and isolated regional infestations (Warragul and Bendigo). The treatment area will be broadened this season (09/10), with all sites across Victoria being treated. DPI's eradication strategy is to undertake treatment from the uppermost infestation and work downstream, which will reduce re-infestation of downstream areas.

Merri Creek treatment works

This season (09/10), treatment will continue on the Merri, re-treating any sites that have shown regrowth and treating all other infestations.

The 08/09 treatment season resulted in 66% of infestations on Merri Creek being treated, and this was done by removing the entire plant/s by hand. Such a time consuming and expensive method requires specialised skills, ie: the ability to identify and distinguish between alligator weed roots and other plants' roots. However, the results are very promising, with little to no regrowth, and hence this has been DPI's preferred treatment method.

There are also several research sites on the Merri Creek where DPI is trialling different ways of treating alligator weed. So far there are no definitive results; this research will continue into the future.



The State prohibited Alligator weed, which flowers from middle to late summer, peaking in Jan-Feb and can persist through to March. If you see it, ring DPI on 13 6186.

Backyard infestations

Another large part of the DPI's eradication program involves backyard infestations. Due to incorrect identification, alligator weed was mistaken for the herb mukuna-wenna (*Alternanthera sessilis*), and planted in approximately 800 backyards across metropolitan Melbourne. Of these 800 sites, it is thought that about 1/3 still require treatment. DPI is currently monitoring and treating all these sites with a view to preventing this weed's spread and eradicating it.

Eradication of alligator weed is the DPI's responsibility and must be undertaken under permit issued by the DPI. Therefore, the greatest input the community can give is by reporting infestations. Please report any sightings of alligator weed in Merri Creek above Gaffney Street Coburg, or in your backyards, to the DPI on 136186.

Erin Cox (Weed Alert Incursion Control Officer, DPI)

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR BUSHFIRE REVEGETATION

Volunteers are needed so we can fulfil our pledge to lend a hand at future revegetation projects in the areas affected by the February bushfires. If you would like to help do something useful for the survivors of this tragedy, please provide your name and contact details, so that we can add you to a list of potential volunteers. This would not mean a firm commitment, but only an indication of your willingness to help out if you can when the time comes – which would probably be sometime in next year's planting season. Please email merricreek@bigpond.com or phone Monica Williamson at MCMC on 9380 8199.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR FoMC OFFICE

Can you help out at the FoMC office in Brunswick Town Hall? This role would suit someone who wants to do more for the group, but is unable to participate in our events. It involves a couple of hours once a fortnight to check the mail and do the banking. Computer experience would be an advantage. If you're interested, Monica Williamson would be very happy to show you the ropes. Please email her at: merricreek@bigpond.com or phone her at MCMC on 9380 8199.

HELP PLAN OUR PLANTING ACTIVITIES FOR 2010

Planning Meeting for
Regeneration Group
Activities 2009

Tuesday 1 December, 6.30pm
MCMC office,
2 Lee St East Brunswick.

All FoMC members are welcome
to help plan our planting and
weeding activities for 2010.

Update No. 5 on the new Merri Creek Parklands (Marran Baba)*

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

Parks Victoria's plans for the Merri Creek Parklands (Marran Baba) continue to focus on Galada Tamboore, with the completion of community consultation on its draft master plan. The consultation period included an onsite display of the draft plan and the opportunity for a guided tour of the site. Thanks to everyone who filled in a "Have Your Say" form or provided comments via the website or telephone calls or letters. The consultation showed broad support for the plan but highlighted the need for further work to raise the level of knowledge about the park within the local Campbellfield community.

In essence the master plan seeks to position the main cycling and walking trail on the western side of the creek, above the creek escarpment, in order to avoid the areas of highest flora value in the eastern section of the park. The



Friends and MCMC have sought to ensure that existing flora values in the western section are not overlooked. A gravel track will be formalised on the alignment of the current maintenance track to form a walking loop through the eastern section of the park. In time a picnic area and car park will be developed in the area between Somerset Road and Hatty Court.

Construction of the first section of the cycling and walking trail, between Somerset Road and Malcolm Place, will be funded by Hume City Council, and the second section of the trail to link through to Whittlesea Public Gardens will be funded by Parks Victoria.

The master plan can be viewed at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au (search for Marran Baba)

**Naming: Marran Baba, which means "body of mother" in the Wurundjeri language, has been proposed for the whole of the new parklands*

News Snippets

New home for Growlers: Melbourne Water will allow water to be pumped from Merri Creek to a former quarry hole north of Cooper St, adjacent to the creek. In past years the former quarry was used to hold water to suppress dust from quarry activities and coincidentally provided good breeding habitat for Growling Grass Frogs. When the quarry closed a few years ago, pumping ceased, the water dried up and the frogs could no longer use this habitat. The pump is of a type which will prevent mosquito fish from entering the quarry hole and eating tadpoles. It is hoped that the frogs will return this season.

Sheep moved: The sheep have at last been taken off Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands). The problems were that the sheep: dispersed weeds through the reserve; ate new regrowth, preventing regeneration; preferred to eat certain rare species; and trampled the soil, especially

around the creek. They had been kept there to reduce biomass, but now this will be achieved by ecological burns, allowing more options for restoration.

Another grant: FoMC received \$3,850 from the City of Yarra, on behalf of the Rotary Club of Fitzroy, towards a photographic publication about Merri Creek. It is hoped that Rotary Clubs in other municipalities along the creek will also become interested in the project and that they can raise enough funding to make the project viable.

Wetlands in Moreland: Moreland City Council produced a report on the feasibility of wetlands, to which FoMC and others provided comment. Council has allocated \$100,000 in the 09/10 budget for further stages of wetland development, including geotechnical surveys of selected sites, cultural heritage assessments, and detailed wetland design.

MERRI CREEK GROUP NOW ON FACEBOOK

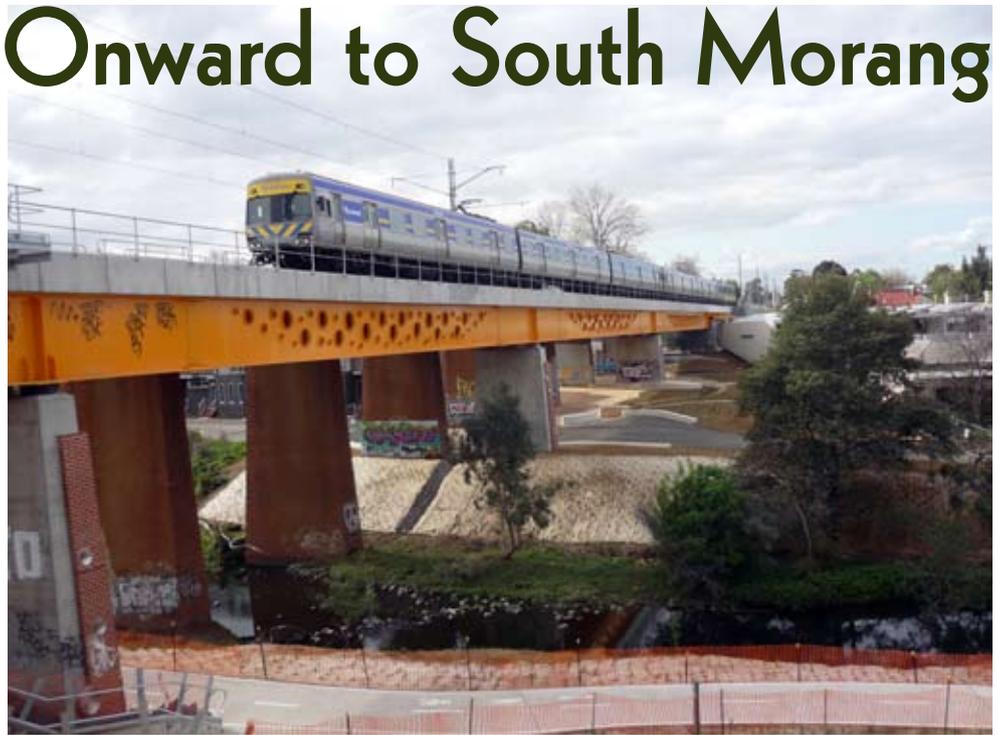
Photographer Elke Kerr has set up a new Facebook group: [I ♥ Merri Creek](https://www.facebook.com/IHeartMerriCreek).

Just go to the Facebook site www.facebook.com, sign up (if you haven't already done so), search for Merri Creek and then join the new group. You can admire Elke's great photos, make a posting and start up or join in a discussion.

This could be a good way to communicate with young, environmentally-inclined people.

Onward to South Morang

What a contrast between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries: even before cars, the Outer Circle Line was doomed by a lack of patrons, whereas now public transport can scarcely keep up with the crowds.



Only the Rushall to Fairfield and the Alamein sections survive; happily the Parkville to Hughesdale corridor hasn't been used for roads, apart from the Chandler Highway, but for urban forests and bikepaths. Mean-spirited attempts to sell bits of it, in Murrumbeena and Princes Hill, were thwarted by community action; a park commemorates the leadership of Norm Gallagher and Cr Bill Hardy.

There's been much recent P.T. development, like the safe and efficient tram superstops, Southern Cross's new terminal for coaches, the North Melbourne station refurbishment, and the Clifton Hill viaduct duplication.

The grand old brick-piered structure spanning the Merri Creek has been joined by a stylish companion, reducing delays on the Hurstbridge and even the Epping line. With a new mini-park established, indigenous plantings restored, and pedestrian and wheelchair access enhanced, they've really thought of everything.

Next, the twin tracks from Keon Park to Epping, and the extension to South Morang – first promised in 1999, then dumped in 2006, later scornfully forecast for 2021, while roads were given priority. Yet commuters are switching to bikes or P.T., which benefits both planet and people: making transit more viable and safer, cutting greenhouse emissions, oil imports and traffic congestion.

And Epping will make it five out of five in northern rail improvements, with the overhaul of brave little Upfield, then Sydenham and Craigieburn electrified, now a Hurstbridge bottleneck cleared (there's another at Heidelberg).

But the scandalous overpricing of public transport projects continues, as with the costing of the Caulfield to Westall rail triplication at a billion dollars as an excuse for slashing it by three-quarters; and the \$562 million quoted for the South Morang extension, obviously inflated by the three road overpasses which should come out of the roads budget, and the ridiculous four-year construction time – both comparing very unfavourably with the figures for Perth's South-West Railway.

Shadow Transport Minister Terry Mulder informed me that he had asked the Auditor-General to investigate the matter, but one doubts whether anything much will come of it: The Age reporter Mary-Anne Toy simply ran into bureaucratic smokescreens when she tried to get to the bottom of it...

On a more cheerful note, our lines often follow waterways: the Kananook, Gardiners, Diamond and Salt, Merri, Merlynston, Moonee Ponds, Kororoit and Jones. For the Edgars it's Preston to Epping, with the market and Town Hall at one end; Plaza, hospital and schools at the other, and the Donath Reserve in the middle.

There's a railway-side bike route to Northcote, east-west ones at Ruthven and Thomastown, and 44 lockers at stations. The old reservoirs near High St gave a suburb its name; the Edwardes Lake Park is graced by a classic steam loco, Lalor has its own piece of history in Westgarthtown.

The 4 km. run to South Morang will cross the Darebin Creek and the Hendersons Rd Drain, both complemented with footways, while a walking trail leads to three lookouts in Quarry Hills Park. The Wetlands and Civic Centre are equally sumptuous; further east are the wide open spaces by the Plenty Gorge.

Heavy-rail additions in Melbourne are quite a rare thing: light-rail ones have been more common – St Kilda, Port Melbourne and Docklands, Vermont South, Box Hill and Bundoora, Airport West and the City Circle. The trains got Altona to Laverton, Upper Ferntree Gully to Belgrave, and the Cranbourne branch from Dandenong; Puffing Billy went steaming from Lakeside to Cockatoo and Gembrook!

But they won't be going back to Whittlesea; maybe not even Mernda, since that would encourage the sprawl. Power, transport and water are big enough problems already; we don't want an oversized, unsustainable city.

Paul Prentice

Events...

NOVEMBER

Sunday 1 Litter Clean-Up

Alister St East Brunswick, 10am–12 noon. Melway 30 C9. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 1 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

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

Wednesday 4 Wetland Weeding Workshop

Merri Park Wetlands, near cnr of Sumner Ave & Winifred St Northcote, 6pm–8pm. Melway 30 C8. Funded by Landcare Australia/Citipower. Phone Brian at MCMC 9380 8199.

Saturday 7 MECCARG* Picnic & Murnong Harvest

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

Sunday 8 Fourth Bird Survey at most sites for 2009

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

Sunday 15 Friends of Edgars Creek Weeding: Aquatic weeds around gooseneck meander

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

Sunday 22 Fourth Bird survey at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grasslands)

8.45am–10.30am. Meet near the Istrian Club, Cooper St Epping. Melway 180 K10. There may also be a Golden Sun Moth survey afterwards, if the weather conditions are right. Phone Ann 0429 386 102.

Wednesday 25 FoMC Annual General Meeting

CERES Environment Room, Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30pm. Find out about Growling Grass Frog habitat from Geoff Heard, 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.

Saturday 28 CERES Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival

CERES Environment Park, Lee St East Brunswick, 3pm–9pm. Don't miss this fantastic community event. If you can help staff FoMC's stall at the festival, please ring Ray on 0422 989 166 (after 4/11).

Sunday 29 Wetland Weeding Workshop

Merri Park Wetlands, near cnr of Sumner Ave & Winifred St Northcote, 10am–1pm. Melway 30 C8. Funded by Landcare Australia/Citipower. Phone Brian at MCMC 9380 8199.

DECEMBER

Tuesday 1 Planning Meeting for FoMC Regeneration Group Activities 2010

MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 6.30pm. All FoMC members are welcome to help plan our planting and weeding activities for 2010.

Thursday 3 Friends of Edwardes Lake Frog Survey Night

Meet at Griffith St BBQ area, 8pm. Melway 18 E5. Come and hear Growling Grass Frogs; Pobblebonk Frogs; Spotted Marsh Frogs and Common Eastern Froglets. Phone Kate 0419 352 004.

Saturday 5 MECCARG* Site Maintenance

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

Sunday 6 Litter Clean-Up

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

Sunday 6 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

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

Date unknown Golden Sun Moth Survey

Surveys will only be conducted on sunny, hot, still days, so we will only be able to give short notice to those who register their interest with Brian at MCMC on 9380 8199 or email: brian@mcmc.org.au.

JANUARY 2010

Sunday 3 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2pm–3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Ph: 9354 9885.

Early Jan. Kangaroo Grass Seed Harvest & BBQ

Please register your interest with Brian at MCMC on 9380 8199 or email: brian@mcmc.org.au and we will notify you of the date.

FEBRUARY 2010

Sunday 7 Litter Clean-Up

Central Creek, Davidson St Reservoir, 10am–12 noon. Melway 8 B12. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 7 Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2pm–3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Ph: 9354 9885.

Sunday 14 First Bird Survey at most sites for 2010

8.45am–10.30am at most sites along the creek. See the FoMC website for details. Phone Ann 0429 386 102.

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

FRIENDS OF MERRI CREEK INC. PO Box 93 MORELAND VICTORIA 3058 (03) 9389 8633 MERRICREEK@BIGPOND.COM WWW.VICNET.NET.AU/~FOMC
MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER ARE MOST WELCOME. PLEASE SEND TO ADMIN@MCMC.ORG.AU BY FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2010

THIS NEWSLETTER WAS PRODUCED WITH SOFTWARE DONATED BY GIFTS IN KIND INTERNATIONAL

Editor: Ray Radford Assistant Editors: Paul Prentice, David Redfearn Layout & Design: Dean Lombard