



# Meanders

## Quarterly

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### WHY MEANDERS?

*The eroding bends of goose-neck meanders through the lower flood-plains of Edgars Creek are part of a natural process. Apparently, there are no other areas along the urban-ised sections of Merri and Edgars Creeks where this process can be preserved.*

## Creekside burble

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the very first FoEC newsletter. We hope you like it!

Since February this year, when a small group of local residents met to talk about forming The Friends of Edgars Creek, we have already achieved so much.

We have established a dedicated, hardworking committee, successfully won an **\$8,000 grant** from Melbourne Water and convinced Moreland Council to construct a **Community Noticeboard** down by the creek.

But the most satisfying achievement of all has been the level of participation in our monthly activities. Congratulations to each and every one of you for playing your part in making it all happen!

### WALKING TOGETHER ...

Another important aspect of our work has been establishing positive working relationships between our group and land managers responsible for the creek reserve.

The support we have received already from Melbourne Water, the Merri Creek Management Committee as well as Moreland and Darebin Councils is particularly encouraging.

We were particularly grateful to Brian and Alex from MCMC who hosted our first planting day held during May.

There is so much to share when we come together and walk in the same direction! With a little persistence, it is clear we CAN make a difference as a community.

In this issue we profile another stakeholder in the creek reserve: The City of Darebin Edgars Creek Bushland Crew.

You will also read about our Tree Custodian program, get to meet some of the local plants and animals and find out what others are doing along our Creek.

Stephen Northey, President

## Weather report

### FROM THE TREASURER

As a group, we may not have collected too many Yam Daisies yet, but we have successfully managed to establish a very healthy community bank account at the Bendigo Bank.

We currently have over \$200 from

membership fees and donations on top of the \$8,000 from the Melbourne Water Community Grants program.

During early July, we also expect to hear if our application for a Darebin Community Grant is successful.

Anita Morgan, Treasurer

Please send newsletter contributions to:  
17 Boyme Street, North Coburg 3058

# Sense of place



Young Water Watchers looking for bugs



Greg Woodward telling us how

*“We are all now looking forward to watching the results of our work and planning more rewarding activities over the upcoming months.”*



First FoEC planting Day was a huge success

## FROM THE SECRETARY

The footprint of the Friends has already been delicately and respectfully placed along the Creek.

## WATER QUALITY TESTING ...

In April, we held a Waterwatch activity down by the waterfall adjacent to Ronald Street in North Coburg. Patrick Bedford, one of our three Waterwatch Officers, organised a visit from Greg Woodward, MCMC Waterwatch Coordinator.

Resplendent in green waders, Greg instructed us in the art of water quality testing and bug identification. Armed with dip nets, our younger Friends ensured we all had plenty of mosquito fish to count.

## ESCARPMENT PLANTING ...

Our first planting day, kindly hosted by the MCMC, was a huge success. Over twenty keen locals helped plant a dry escarpment with saltbush and spear grass, which had been donated by SP AusNet, the company who manages the high voltage powerlines that traverse the creek corridor. These plants were provided as compensation for six eucalypts recently removed by the company.

## LOOSENING THE NOOSE ...

Early in April, a small group of Friends spent a sunny afternoon removing nylon weed matting from around the base of trees planted by Melbourne Water seven or so years ago. If we were all cursing blunt scissors and disturbed ants, the trees are at least happier for being spared the noose!

Aliey Ball, Secretary

# Nodding Saltbush

## FEATURED PLANT

During our recent planting day in May we planted two different types of salt bush as well as Slender Spear Grass *Austrostipa scabra* ssp. *Falcata*. One of the saltbush species we planted is this issues feature plant.

Nodding Saltbush *Einadia nutans* is a very hardy and drought tolerant perennial ground cover or low shrub growing 30cm high and up to 1m wide. In the home garden it grows best in an open, dry area receiving full sun.

It has fine silver green foliage with a sprawling, scrambling habit and produces clusters of inconspicuous small greenish

flowers from December to May.

Nodding Saltbush is known to attract butterflies and during summer and autumn it is often covered with succulent red, yellow or orange berries.

Edible berries on Nodding Saltbush during Summer and Autumn



These sweet berries are edible as bush tucker and provide food for birds. The leaves are also edible, although boiling is necessary to remove excess salt.

# In place of willows

## RESTORATION PROJECT

One of the first Melbourne Water funded restoration projects we plan to undertake is located downstream of the Kodak bridge where previous Melbourne Water contractors have removed several medium-sized willows from four bends along the creek banks.



Our aim is to plant these areas with fast-growing indigenous riparian species that

will eventually over-shade the stream. This will help improve water quality by providing shade to reduce water temperature, stabilise the stream bank and reduce the impact of aquatic weeds in the stream.

After brush-cutting and clearing debris in July, the site will be ready for planting some 280 sedges, shrubs and medium-sized trees. The planting is scheduled to occur during August this year.

In place of kikuyu and other noxious weeds currently thriving in the new open conditions, Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Common Rush, *Bulboschoenus medianus* and Club Rush *Juncus usitatus* will begin to colonise the lower edge of the creek bank.

Further up the bank, Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa* and River Bottlebrush *Callistemon sieberi* will form the overstorey above a tussock grassland of Spiny-headed Mat-rush *Lomandra longifolia* and Common Tussock Grass *Poa labillardierei*.

*In time, when you walk past these peaceful meanders you may spy a New Holland Honeyeater feasting in the Bottlebrush or a family of Fairy Wrens skipping about under a sleepy Bursaria ... and remember.*

# White-faced Heron



White-faced Heron wading in the shallows



Lonely Heron perched on a factory wall near Mahoneys Road in Thomastown

*“Was she lamenting the poor condition of creek in that part of its catchment?”*

## FEATURED BIRD

The White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* feeds along much of Edgars Creek, particularly south of Epping, and is the most commonly seen heron in Australia.

It is mostly light blue-grey in colour, with a characteristic white face; long, dull yellow legs; a long, slim neck and a pointed grey-black bill.

You will spy the White-faced Heron wading along the creek edge eagerly fishing for mosquito fish, native Galaxias, freshwater shrimp and other aquatic goodies floating by.

So expert is the White-faced Heron at fishing they are listed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment as a problem bird for fish hatcheries, fish farms, ornamental ponds and yabby farms.

Here in the creek, this healthy appetite is something we can admire, especially when it comes to mosquito fish.

When airborne, the White-faced Heron has a slow bouncing flight. It's dark flight feathers on the wing contrast with the paler grey plumage of the body, making him easy to identify when viewed from below.

In fact, there is little visible difference between Mr and Ms WF Heron. When breed-

ing, the birds have long feathers (nuptial plumes) on the head, neck and back.

A young White-faced Heron has a similar appearance to non-breeding adults, without the nuptial plumes, but are somewhat duller, with little or no white on the face. Often young birds have a reddish colour on the underparts.

The photo opposite shows a White-faced Heron perched on top of a concrete factory wall abutting the creek just north of Mahoneys Road in Thomastown. She looks a little lost. Was she lamenting the poor condition of creek in that part of its catchment? Or was she contemplating beginning a family?

White-faced Herons breed mainly between October and December, but may breed at other times in response to rainfall (if we ever get it again!).

Like a true modern couple, both the male and female Herons share nest-building duties, incubation of the eggs and care of the young.

Their nest is, however, an unruly structure of sticks placed in a tree 20 metres or so above the ground. Nesting trees are not necessarily near the water but typically contain a brood of three to four.

Look forward to the next issue of the newsletter when we will feature another resident of the creek.

Encourage a friend or neighbour to join the Friends of Edgars Creek

# City of Darebin Edgars Creek Bushland Crew

## MEET A STAKEHOLDER

Thanks to the dedicated work of the City of Darebin Bushland Management Team, significant revegetation works are continuing downstream of Edwardes Lake.

For the past six years, the Edgars Creek Bushland Management Team has facilitated and funded an extensive weed control program between Henty Street and the City of Moreland, in preparation for these revegetation works.

This program, funded by the City of Darebin and Melbourne Water's "Corridors of Green" program, has included the use of heavy machinery to remove woody weed infestations, such as African Boxthorn, Briar Rose, Willow and Ash, from the creek corridor and creek banks.

While the removal of woody weeds results in some short-term loss of habitat for native animals, according to Adam Shalekoff, Coordinator of Bushland Management at the City of Darebin, the use of a crane-like excavator & groomer is a safer, more cost-effective method than manual removal.



Mechanical removal of African Boxthorn

The articulated, crane-like arm of the machines chips/grooms the entire above-ground portion of the weeds. This minimises the occupational health & safety risk to staff/contractors. The regrowth of weeds is then controlled through targeted application of herbicides and this reduces the extent of reinfestation and the amount of herbicide required to control the weeds.

The Edgars Creek Bushland Management Team was originally established in 1995 to manage the newly constructed Edgars Creek Wetlands located between Leamington Street and Broad-

hurst Avenue in Reservoir.

Since then, the 2 person Edgars Creek Bushland Management Team, now led by Luke Sandham, has expanded its area of management along a much longer section of the creek reserve; from Glasgow Street in Reservoir to the City of Moreland municipal boundary adjacent to Jenkin Street in Newlands/North Coburg.

The remaining section of the creek north of Glasgow Street is owned and maintained by Melbourne Water. Here, houses back directly onto the creek, which comprises large sections of concrete channelling and is largely inaccessible to the public.

Adam Shalekoff believes issues relating to property ownership present significant challenges for land managers. Private property boundaries often end half way down steep creek-side escarpments/slopes. This makes accessing the steep areas for maintenance and restoration work particularly difficult. In some instances, engineer-certified anchor points, harnesses and ropes may be needed by workers in order to spray, remove weeds or replant these areas.

Property on the western escarpment south of Henty Street is largely industrial. This is particularly problematic given property owners are legally entitled to dump or disturb soil within their property boundary. Significant, uncontrolled weed growth along the top half of the creek escarpment at the back of industrial sites provides evidence of this practice and makes weed control in the adjacent publicly managed creek reserve all the more difficult.

In this respect, the Bushland Management Team plays an important educative and liaison role with private landowners along the creek. In recent times, the Bushland Management Team has provided support and advice to the Edwardes Lake Hotel in Reservoir, including Zagame Property Management Pty. Ltd. who is the company that manages the hotel and related property. This property is adjacent to the western edge of the Edgars Creek Reserve between Edwardes Street and Henty Street. The cooperation between Zagame, Melbourne Water, the Merri Creek Management Committee and Council has led to the

*“Creating a renewed sense of place, fostering a spirit of belonging and community cooperation.”*

implementation of a selective mowing strategy on a section of regenerated Red-gum woodland, as well as works to restore and maintain riparian habitat on this publicly accessible creekside verge between Edwardes Street and Henty Street.

Taken together, these cooperative partnerships will go a long way to restoring a sustainable bushland habitat along this section of the creek.

The Bushland Management Team is also playing a role outside its own municipal boundaries. Luke Sandham has involved St Josephs College (North Melbourne campus) in the growing of a fungus used by Bushland Management Team as bio-control agent for the control of Bridal Creeper.

The Bushland Management Team has also extended its current weed control contract a small distance inside the Moreland municipal

boundary, with funding contributions provided by the Moreland City Council.

The City of Darebin has spent approximately \$40 000 per annum on capital works along Edgars Creek within the Darebin municipality since 1998, excluding Edwardes Lake Park. Melbourne Water has contributed a further \$12 000 for the period June '06–December '07.

It is nevertheless important to recognise that without sustained funding over an extended period of time, especially for maintenance activities, much of the gains being made will be overrun with yet another infestation of weeds and vermin.

In future issues of our newsletter you will hear more about the achievements of the City of Darebin Bushland Management Team as part of our regular feature profiling land managers responsible for the management of our creek.

## Become a FoEC tree custodian

### RESTORATION PROJECT

**A**s a member of FoEC you are entitled to participate in our Riparian Habitat Tree Custodian Project.

As a participant in this project, you will be provided with a River Red-gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* to plant at an agreed point along a

3km stretch of the creek. Each planting site is chosen where the creek that is not currently shaded.

Red gums are indigenous to the area and are consistent with a Floodplain Riparian Woodland (Ecological Vegetation Class 56).

As a custodian you will be responsible for maintaining the tree, including mulching, hand weeding and watering during dry spells as well as recording quarterly growth rates

In time, as your tree matures, it will help improve water quality by providing shade to reduce water temperature, stabilise the stream bank and provide food for aquatic life.

Make sure you don't miss the launch the project on Sunday 22 July 2007.



Remnant  
River-red  
Gum,  
North  
Coburg

# Upcoming FoEC Events

**30 June 2007**

**TOUR:** The History of Edwardes Lake  
Edwardes Lake, Reservoir, 1-3pm (to be advised)

**22 July 2007**

Tree custodian project launch and planting  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm

**19 August 2007**

Annual General Meeting  
Newlands Community Centre, 1-2pm

**19 August 2007**

Planting  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 2-3pm

**31 August 2007**

**TOUR:** Weed Identification  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm

**16 September 2007**

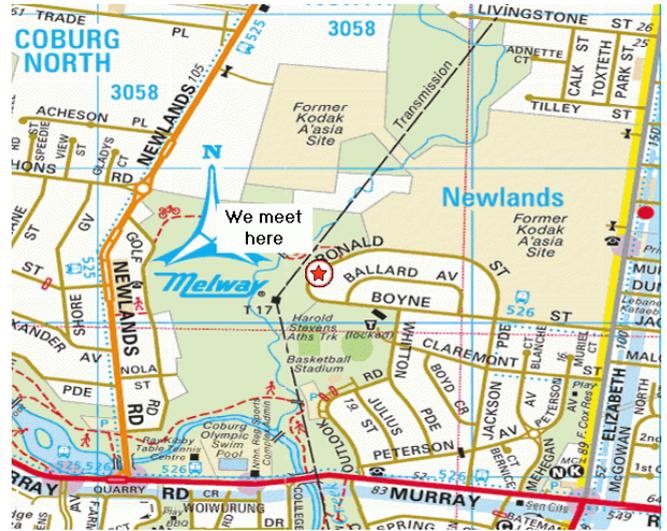
Weeding/watering  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm

**21 October 2007**

Cleanup Australia Day  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm

**31 October 2007**

**TOUR:** Community gardens and food foraging  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm



Most FoEC activities for 2007 are held near the waterfall adjacent to Ronald Street in North Coburg. (Melways Reference Map 18 A9.)

**18 November 2007**

Weeding/watering  
Meet at waterfall, North Coburg, 1-3pm

**16 December 2007**

**PARTY:** Christmas Picnic  
Edwardes Lake, Reservoir (to be advised)

**20 January 2008**

Planting site preparation  
Meet at waterfall, North

*“FoEC was recently accepted as an affiliate member of the Victorian Environmental Friends Network (VEFN). This will help us exchange ideas with other volunteers working in the community”*

## Looking for Fish ladders

**WATER WATCH REPORT**

Among the many aquatic fauna found during our monthly water quality testing, we recently recorded the Common Galaxias (*Galaxias maculatus*), which unlike many other small fish found in the creek, is a native to the area.

This marked the first sighting of this small migrating fish in Edgars Creek below the weir wall at Edwardes Lake for many years and strengthens the argument for the construction of a “fish lad-

der” adjacent to the weir to enable the fish to access the northern reaches of the creek.

Our regular water quality testing is made possible by the use of testing equipment provided by MCMC.

We have also applied for a grant to purchase our own kit to make it even easier for us to keep tabs on the water quality of our creek.

Patrick Bedford, Waterwatch Officer



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Supported by the Melbourne Water Community Grants Program



The Friends of Edgars Creek is a community group established in 2007 to help restore and protect Edgars Creek, the largest tributary of Merri Creek.

#### OUR MISSION

To help improve the environmental and recreational quality of Edgars Creek reserve by:

- advocating for the management of this important waterway as an entire freshwater ecosystem
- working with local Councils and Melbourne Water to ensure any maintenance and development works deliver a real and direct benefit to the creek corridor
- organising and facilitating events for the community to be involved in restoration works and environmental educational, and
- communicating with developers to ensure they understand how strongly the community values the creek reserve from both an environmental and recreational perspective.

## Merri & Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group

#### COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

**T**he Merri and Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group (MECCARG) are another group of dedicated locals working to improve the condition of our creek corridor.

MECCARG held their first planting day on Saturday 22nd July 2006. Since then, MECCARG have won another **Melbourne Water Community Grant** of about **\$5,000** to continue revegetation of the escarpment to the south east of the Murray Road bridge.



Nic and friends at a MECCARG Planting Day

Contact Dave or Nic on 9354 9664 or email [meccarg@hotmail.com](mailto:meccarg@hotmail.com) for more information.