



A plan to capitalise on the Goulburn - Broken River system in the heart of our city

Newsletter No. 8 - July 2010

Lower Goulburn River National Park

The Lower Goulburn River National Park was launched by Minister Gavin Jennings on 29 June 2010 at Reedy Swamp. This is one of four new red gum national parks along the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens Rivers. It is a significant stage in our recognition and understanding of this landscape and demonstrates a desire to protect and improve this place for future generations.

Its needs to be acknowledged, that there has been a significant amount of work done to get to this point, with many who have long championed this National Park. It must also be recognised that there is still work to do.

The creation of the park is largely about encouraging social interaction, participation and access to our parks, and the benefits in relation to community health and wellbeing are the foundation of the *Healthy Parks Healthy People* philosophy. In environmental terms, the Lower Goulburn National Park and the Shepparton Regional Park stretch along the Goulburn River creating an important wildlife corridor to the Murray River. The Goulburn River forests are popular for camping, fishing, canoeing, bushwalking and a variety of other recreational activities, particularly close to Shepparton. These activities will be supported and promoted. This new National Park will help protect the waterways that are so vital to the economy of the region and provide another attraction for visitors who come to enjoy all that greater Shepparton has to offer.

A partnership approach to protecting and enjoying this new Park will continue to be promoted. The approach and achievements of the RiverConnect project are a strong base on which to continue to care for this environment and draw social benefits for the local community. The benefits to the students, volunteers, and staff of the organisations involved in RiverConnect are widely apparent.

Bruce Wehner, Parks Victoria.

Photo: Lower Goulburn National Park signage located at the southern end of Reedy Swamp.



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Shepparton Regional Park

The Shepparton Regional Park (2786 hectares) is centred on the River Red Gum forests of the Goulburn River between Shepparton and Mooroopna. It incorporates part of the Lower Goulburn State Forest, the Shepparton Flora and Fauna Reserve, Mooroopna Recreation Reserve and public land water frontage. This area continues upstream from the Lower Goulburn River National Park to the north and follows the Goulburn River upstream of the National Park beginning at Wheller Rd and finishes at Toolamba Bridge.

The park offers a number of recreational activities including walking, fishing, canoeing, bike riding, horse riding, trail bike riding and nature observation. The Shepparton Regional Park provides increased opportunities for recreation activities that are not available in the Lower Goulburn River National Park, such as dog walking, camping with dogs and (in designated zones) domestic firewood collection.

The natural values of this park are similar to those of the adjoining Lower Goulburn River National Park, with Sedgy Riverine Forest, Riverine Grassy Woodland and Riverine Swamp Forest Ecological Vegetation Classes which provide habitat for significant species such as the endangered Squirrel Glider.

Many visitors to the park pursue long standing traditional pursuits such as camping with dogs, fishing, and firewood collection which will continue. Gemmill's Swamp retains its status as a nature conservation reserve with dog walking on lead. Fishing is not affected.

Bruce Wehner, Parks Victoria.

Feature Species: Tawny Frogmouth

The Tawny Frogmouth lives in open forest and eucalypt and acacia woodlands throughout Australia, and are often seen throughout the RiverConnect project area. With their nocturnal habit and owl-like appearance, Tawny Frogmouths are often confused with owls, but are actually more closely related to the nightjars. Tawny Frogmouths usually hunt by pouncing from a low perch or vantage point, while owls fly around at night hunting. Tawny Frogmouths feet are weak and lack the curved talons of owls. Their main prey is large nocturnal arthropods such as spiders, centipedes and cockroaches which they are able to spot with their large yellow eyes and catch with their beaks.

There are 14 different species of Tawny Frogmouth, with those in South Eastern Australia being much larger in size than their cousins in the north. Tawny Frogmouths are silent in flight, and camouflage extremely well when perched, making them hard to see.

References:

Sydenham, S. & Thomas, R. Tawny Frogmouth
[Online] www.kidcyber.com.au (2003)



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RiverConnect Plantings at Vic Park Lake

During May 2010, 135 students from 5 different RiverConnect schools participated in planting more than 1,600 wetland plants at Victoria Park Lake. Students from Wanganui Park Secondary College, McGuire Secondary College, Mooroopna Secondary College, St Brendan's Mooroopna and St Mary's Mooroopna, assisted Greater Shepparton City Council staff to plant a range of wetland species as part of phase 1 in the Victoria Park Lake wetland plantings.

Overall students enjoyed their time planting at the lake and learning about the overall ecology of wetlands. Due to this success, phase 2 of Victoria Park Lake Plantings will begin during July and August 2010.



Photo: Greater Shepparton City Council's Aquatic Team Leader, Sharon Terry, explains the ecology of wetlands to students.



Photo: Students at Vic Park Lake planting native wetland species.

Strategic Plan Update

As most readers would be aware, RiverConnect is in the process of developing its strategic plan. The RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee (CAC), who is guiding this process, has reviewed the range of suggestions and comments received as part of Phase 1 of RiverConnect Strategic Plan consultation, and have formed these into action programs. The CAC is now placing timelines around these actions, whilst addressing issues such as governance and resources.

The CAC has recently signed off on a timeline that will see the draft Strategic Plan out for public consultation during late 2010. Through a broad and diverse range of consultation methods, RiverConnect will seek the expertise of the Shepparton and Mooroopna communities to steer its strategic plan. Community groups, partner organisations and individuals will have the opportunity to provide important feedback regarding this draft plan.

Notre Dame VCAL projects

During semester 1 2010 efforts were made to introduce students from Notre Dame College to the concept of Landcare. At their schools designated reach, Reedy Swamp, the students learnt how volunteers can make a difference through small, hands on projects, that protect the environmental aspects of our region, and how degradation over time impacts on our environment.

Project 1: Students toured a site where exotic woody weeds had taken hold and were rapidly spreading toward Reedy Swamp. These weeds were likely dumped as garden clippings, as many people don't realise the effects this has on our native environment.

Students planned and conducted a stem injection exercise, (where chemical is injected into the weed) that will eradicate the woody weed.

Project 2: Students were introduced to the concept of soil erosion and its effect in water quality issues. They learnt the different types of erosion i.e. water, wind and traffic, and their effect on waterfront land. Control measures, such as revegetation, were studied and used in conjunction with commercial silt traps, rock and dead timber to slow water runoff. Students saw how fencing and bollards can be installed to manage foot and vehicle traffic.

Project 3: Students learnt concepts such as canopy, understory and ground cover and their important role to a waterway environment. The skills of successful tree planting including plant selection, soil preparation, plant protection and after care were studied and carried out.

Project 4: Students planned and assisted in the installation of two concrete bases for picnic tables to be placed in key bird observation sites. The measurement, concrete pouring and level finishing of the bases were good learning experiences.

Conclusion: As a Landcare volunteer, I felt these projects were useful in teaching important concepts regarding our environment to future generations. Most students showed some interest and respect for what they were presented with and as a result, achieved some positive outcomes that will help protect the health of our natural wetlands, rivers and environments.

Royce Dickson, President – Shepparton/Mooroopna Urban Landcare Group



Photo left:

SMULG President, Royce Dickson, shows erosion control measures Notre Dame VCAL students have constructed at Reedy Swamp.



Photo above right: Revegetation, fencing and bollarding works at Reedy Swamp.