



Bolin bolin wetlands Image credit: Elli MacDonald

Welcome to the Birrarung newsletter, your source of updates on Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo – the Yarra Strategic Plan – the plan to realise the communities’ vision of a healthy and diverse Birrarung (Yarra river).

Luk, is the Eel season (March) in the Kulin calendar. The weather cools, mornings are darker and misty and the eels are fat and ready to migrate. Binap, the Manna Gum, and name sake of the Wurundjeri people is flowering and Lo-An Tuka, the star Canopus can be seen to the south as the sunsets.

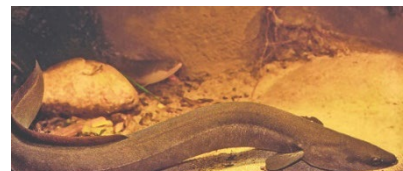


Photo credit: Melbourne Water

Cultural Awareness Training Strengthens Collaboration



Photo credit: Robert Molloy

On 17th March, members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee (YCC) participated in Cultural Awareness Training with Bunurong and Palawa Traditional Owners Jillian West and Alexandra Prouse. Bunurong Elder Uncle Shane Clarke welcomed attendees on Country before the training, and later, Uncle Mark Brown led a cultural walk through Westgate Park alongside Westgate Biodiversity. We are grateful for their generosity in sharing their knowledge.

Research on Feral Deer Management

Action 21 of *Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo* focuses on improving feral deer management in the Yarra catchment. Narrap Rangers and University of Melbourne researchers are monitoring deer density, vegetation impacts, and genetic connectedness. In autumn, Narrap Rangers will collect dingo scats in the Upper Yarra to assess whether dingoes play a role in moderating deer behaviour. Findings will be reported later this year.

Advancing the Land Use Framework

On 14 April we took a significant leap forward with the implementation of Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo with the gazettal of Planning Scheme Amendment VC281. The Scheme Amendment delivers on Stage 1 of implementation of the land use framework that is described in Part 2 of the Plan. The amendment supports enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, environmental health, cultural values and recreational opportunities of the Birrarung corridor.

Our thanks and congratulations to our Department of Transport and Planning colleagues on this milestone achievement.

We will continue to collaborate on further planning reforms and resources to help achieve the objectives of the Plan, including the development of practice notes and further reach-based directions for land use and development..

GREENING THE BIRRARUNG PROJECT

Greening the Birrarung (GtB) is one of the transformative projects under the Plan. The GtB Project brings together government organisations responsible for caring for Birrarung to work to increase habitat connectivity and resilience, ensure Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung cultural values and knowledge guide restoration efforts, and identify opportunities for whole-of-river net gain.

The GtB working group met at Pound Bend on the 20th February, bringing together bushland and biodiversity officers, Traditional Owner, and government agency representatives. Being close to the river was a good reminder of the importance of our collective work. The group discussed existing projects and programs and the opportunities for a whole-of-river approach to increase collective impact. A list of potential collaborative actions to strengthen biodiversity along the corridor was developed to inform next steps for this project. Watch this space!



MEET THE PEOPLE INVOLVED



Photo credit:
Alice Trumble

For Alice, the Birrarung is more than a river; she is a living entity, a constant presence that anchors and connects her to the Country where she lives. Growing up near the river, she has developed a profound respect for its role in sustaining life – “*she gives me a sense of purpose and reminds me of the interconnectedness of all living things.*”

Alice’s journey has been shaped by a deep passion for behavioural change and sustainability. Today, she thrives in a generalist role, Coordinator of Climate and Sustainability at Stonnington, applying her broad expertise to drive meaningful change.

Alice’s involvement in the Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo collaboration is an opportunity for her to be involved in something which inspires her – genuine collaboration. Representing her council, she has embraced the opportunity to contribute to waterway care and developing meaningful relationships with Traditional Custodians. The interdisciplinary collaboration excites her—bringing together diverse perspectives to support the river’s health. While embedding systemic change within an organisation is challenging, she remains committed to influencing long-term progress - “*I hope the collaboration’s legacy is one of change that is not able to be wound back... we can develop a way of caring for Birrarung and her parklands that meets her needs using a bicultural lens and the collective knowledge and drive we have.*”

PROJECT FOCUS: YRKA POLYSTYRENE PROJECT

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association (YRKA) held their final Polystyrene Roundtable in March to discuss next steps for Polystyrene Pollution in the Yarra River project – a priority project under the Yarra Strategic Plan. Anthony Despotelli of YRKA has produced a report summarising their project findings to date. Key takeaways were:

- improving practices on construction sites was the right place to concentrate efforts to eliminate polystyrene pollution in waterways
- a combination of better education and targeted enforcement would do most to improve practices in the construction industry
- eliminating polystyrene pollution from waterways is best undertaken not by one authority or industry leader, but by a network of committed people who organise for collective action

The full report will be accessible on the Yarra Riverkeepers Association website <https://yarrariver.org.au/reports/>



Images of polystyrene dumped at residential construction sites Photo credit: Anthony Despotelli

Events: Birrarung Council Yarning Circles for Executives of responsible public entities 7th May – 18th June