



WET and WILD

Tens of thousands of drivers on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway hurtle past each day, unaware they are passing within metres of one of the last natural billabongs along the Yarra River.

Less than a decade ago, the Burke Road billabong was choked with weeds, pocked with rubbish and little more than an off-road playground for dirt bike riders.

Today, thanks to Stanley Barker, the oasis is reborn. Weeds have been replaced with more than 1,000 trees and areas cleared of Wandering Tradescantia and Creeping Moth vine, allowing the dormant seed bed beneath to regenerate.

Barker came across the site while studying Conservation and Land Management at RMIT and involved his teacher, Helen Comey. Since then, students have conducted field trips and restoration work and authored a management plan.

The area is now being reinvaded by owls, parrots, possums and frogs, providing habitat for water birds when wet, and forming part of a corridor linking healthy vegetation along the Yarra.

- DAVID GLANZ



Helen Comey and Stanley Barker in the billabong they have helped rehabilitate.