

## The Life of the Yarra Audio Tour: Cremorne Rail Riverbank P2 Transcript

**Narration - Sarah:** Walk right down to the riverbank just upstream of the rail bridge, but watch out for the plovers! Especially if they are nesting! [Add something like “They are small, black and white birds” for people who don’t know? While down here, have a look along the banks of the river. The opposite side of the river is dominated by the Monash Freeway. The freeway was constructed in the 1960s and, in places, it changed the shape and width of the river. On this side of the river, can you see how the vegetation runs along the right bank for a distance upstream? This winding strip of vegetation is called a wildlife corridor and acts as ‘nature’s freeway’ for all sorts of species to move between pockets of habitat. This is extremely important in an urban environment where plants, animals and insects have to contend with roads, cars and for some of the little guys, even just our shoes, whenever they need to leave their ‘patch’. Mark Schneider, a gardener for City of Stonnington elaborates why this is important...

**Mark Schneider:** *So we need to set up a corridor. Say, start at Punt Rd heading up to Warrandyte, all those species create a passage for different fauna to move up and down, to get food. you’ll get too many blue wrens say in one area, the need to push their young out. A lot of small birds will only move through corridors. They evolved to be scared of things like hawks, so travel up these corridors.*

**Narration - Sarah:** All along this stretch of the Yarra, and upstream as far as Kew, the river marks an important geological boundary in urban Melbourne.

**Narration - Patrick:** The interesting thing about Melbourne is that to the west and north of Melbourne you have what’s termed basalt plains. These are soils formed by volcanic eruptions thousands of years ago, which erupted and brought basalt up from under the earth. Over time this has become the predominant soil type in the western and northern areas. To the east and south-east you have what’s known as the tertiary plains and coastal sand belt. These are soil types that have formed from sediment from coastal environments, so often they will be sandy or dark grey sand. There is a big divide in Melbourne, you can basically split the soil type in Melbourne in two. The Yarra functions almost as a distinct borderline between these two soil types.

**Narration – Patrick:** The vegetation communities that have evolved in these two distinctive soil types are different. These vegetation communities have evolved distinctly because of these soil types, to take advantage of what these soil types are. The Yarra functions as a border, so if you are to the west it’s more likely that your vegetation communities will be characterised by these sort of plants, whereas if you’re on the sand belt in the inner east. Then your plants of the coastal sand belt variety are more likely to occur there, and are more likely to thrive there if you want to try and grow them.

**Narration - Sarah:** In fact the lay of the land behind you would have looked quite different prior to European settlement. The soil here was rich in clay deposits due to thousands of

years of flooding. In the 1850s a number of brickworks were established just behind us at the northern end of Chapel street. The clay soil along this bank was quarried to be made into bricks, levelling the hill and clearing vegetation. Numerous floods, put many out of business. Imagine what this area looked like in the midst of all these brickworks. Compare this to the expanse of green hugging this side of the river today. It demonstrates how people can reverse the damage of the past, restoring both beauty and valuable habitat. If it's a sunny day, you may be able to spot a Grass skink laying in the sun or looking for food in some leaf litter (Grass skinks vary from dark brown to olive and have a small white stripe down their sides). Wildlife corridors provide shelter and food for these small reptiles as they move up and down the river.