

# Maree Ryan's Environmental Story



*Catchment Champion*

Rory Thornton, Sam Morrow, Imogen  
Cameron and Sarah Cameron

Berrigan Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. [www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html](http://www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html)

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## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. [www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)

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## *Murray Darling Association*

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. [www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. [www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

# Maree Ryan's Environmental Story

Authors: Rory Thornton, Sam Morrow, Imogen Cameron and Sarah Cameron

Teacher: Kathryn Tait and Simone Fox

School: Berrigan Public School

## *Catchment Champions*

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



**Catchment Management  
Authority**  
Murray



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



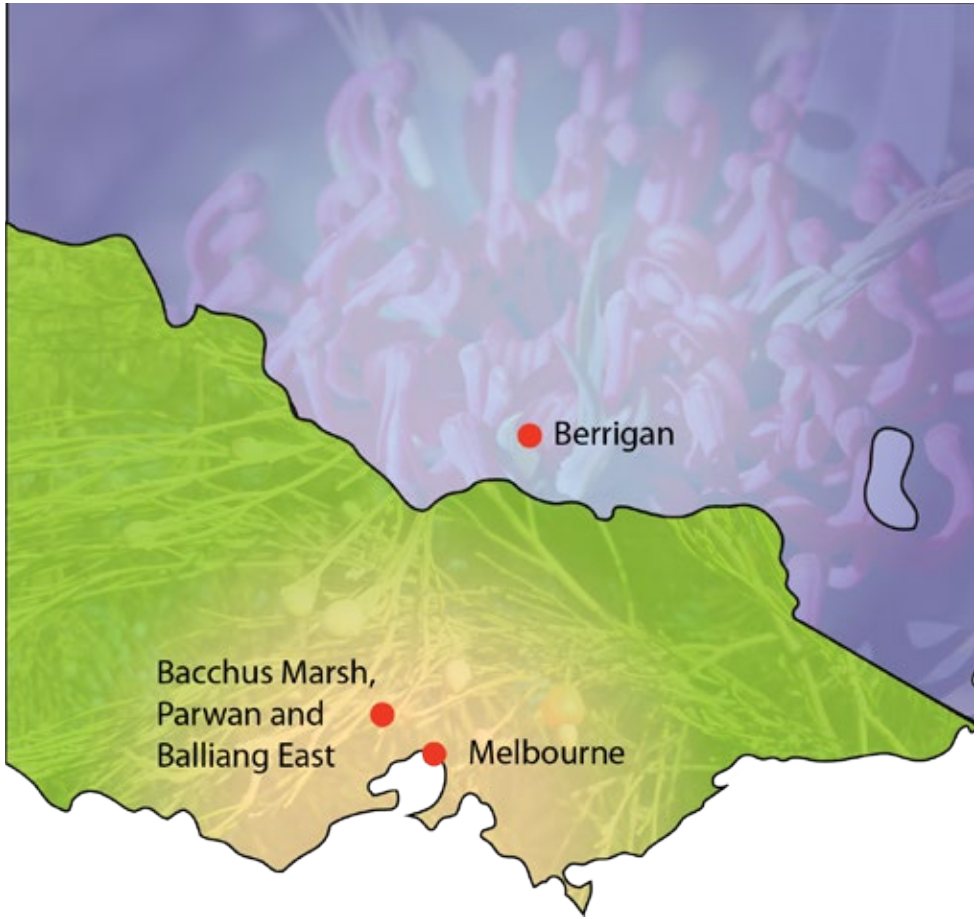
**Catchment Management  
Authority**  
Murrumbidgee

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For all of May Maree Ryan's life, Maree (as she prefers to be called) has been interested in the environment. Her environmental journey began by saving orphaned possums at the age of 15. Maree tells us about her family history, her working life and early childhood. She describes her interest and also her contributions to the sustainability of her local environments.



Maree's parents Jack and Gwen Smith lived in the area of Balliang East, Victoria, all their lives. Maree was born in Bacchus Marsh and grew up on the family farm at Parwan with her two sisters. She loved the outdoors and had a lot of pets to care for.



She spent many hours riding horses around the farm and local district. Maree would take care of injured wildlife until they were well enough to go back to the bush. She had a collection of pets chooks, goats, cats, birds and a pet possum reared with an eye dropper.





One of Maree's favourite past times was paddling in the nearby creek. She also loved walking along the high creek banks exploring, looking for seeds to resow and replant. From an early age Maree was aware that the trees near her home were dying and she understood the need to replant to keep trees going for the future.





She attended the small rural school of Balliang East Primary, the same school as her mother, then Bacchus Marsh High School. Her favourite day at primary school was “Arbour Day” when trees were planted on the roadside verge. Many trees she planted on the family property when a teenager, are the only trees in the paddock still growing.



Maree married Mark and eventually moved to Berrigan. At that time land was much cheaper than in the Western Districts and irrigation was also a bonus - as irrigation was an insurance against drought. They started their family in Berrigan and have five children, Sally, Rob, Amy, Jessica and Emily. They also have three grandchildren, Tully, Charlie and Ted.





Her working career was started at the State Bank Victoria at Bacchus Marsh. She also worked as a teachers' aide, rouseabout and in aged care.

Maree also worked at Murray Catchment Management Authority in Berrigan where she helped set up the seed bank program.

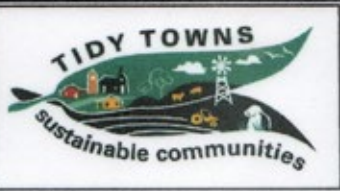






The Murray Catchment Management Authority Seed Bank has seeds collected from areas across the Murray catchment. It is important to plant seeds from your own indigenous area as these seeds have characteristics to help the plant grow for the conditions of that area. Maree is now a fulltime farmer.





# Tidy Towns Sustainable Communities Awards 2011

## Wildlife Corridors & Habitats Conservation Award

Highly Commended

# Berrigan

for

Tank Paddock & Walking Tracks

Population Category

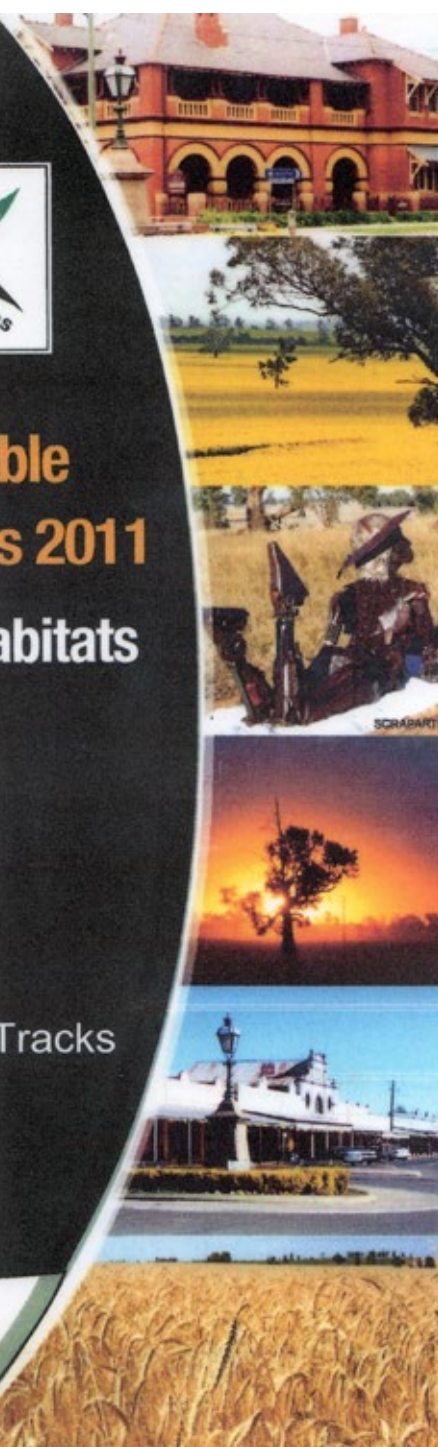
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Partnered by



Environment,  
Climate Change  
& Water

Conservation Partnerships





Maree volunteers at National Tree Planting Days, Red Cross Hands On, organising Government Tank Paddock and Tidy Town activities. Out on the farm Maree has many animals, dogs, cats, chooks and she also breeds guinea fowl.



Maree also loves cooking, especially bread and has a craving for dark chocolate. The call of the butcher bird intrigues Maree as its her favourite animal. The Yellow Box Gum tree is Maree's favourite tree because she loves the intricate patterns on the bark.



Maree has been rewarded for all her hard work in Tidy Towns and the Government Tank Paddock with the reappearance of the Superb Parrot. These parrots are once again using the Tank Paddock as a stop-over on their flight south to the Barmah Forest for breeding.



Maree is concerned about the sustainability of our area. She said she would love to keep doing what she's doing which is Tidy Towns, Tank Paddock Protection and of course replanting the seeds in our area. She wants to encourage and teach future generations to do the same.





Imogen Cameron, Sarah Cameron, Rory Thornton and Sam Morrow

2013 Year 5/6, Berrigan Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative Catchment Kids writing program was showcased at the Seventh World Environmental Education Congress, held in Morocco during June 2013.



Catchment Management Authority Murray



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Catchment Management Authority Murrumbidgee