

## The Life of the Yarra Audio Tour: Fishing Pontoon Transcript

**Narration - Sarah:** Let's make our way to the fishing platform that is just upstream of the Church Street bridge. Are there any birds basking in the sun on the rocks at the bottom of Herring Island? Little Black Cormorants often sun themselves here in between diving for fish. These dark coloured birds with long necks and long tails, dive completely underwater to catch fish, popping up again a few feet away. They usually make their nests out of sticks in trees overhanging waterways. Can you spot any nests? The area you're looking at, from the water level to the top of the river bank is what we call the riparian zone. There are many types of plants and animals who use this area. As Alice from Armadale Primary school discovered...

**Armadale Primary school – Alice:** *The other day I was walking near the Yarra, and I saw a lizard, and then later on I actually saw a possum.*

**Narration - Sarah:** The interesting thing about the plant and animal communities that live in these riparian spaces is that they are adapted to two worlds. River banks are often overlooked as a border, the natural divide between the land and the water. But a river bank is less of a border, than it is a bridge. It is the space which connects the aquatic world to the terrestrial, and is an incredibly valuable part of the river system.

**Narration – Pip:** This riparian zone supports an incredible variety of plant and animal communities, providing food, habitat and refuge. The vegetation which grows here, whether living or decaying, standing or fallen, supplies important energy in the form of leaf litter and woody debris, and this energy is the base supply of aquatic food webs, much like the plankton of the ocean.

**Narration – Pip:** Some animals may spend their entire life cycle within the riparian zone while others range further afield. The water rat, for example, will forage in the water for aquatic insects, crustaceans, freshwater mussels, fish and frogs. While native skinks hunt along the banks of streams, capturing surface-swimmers like water beetles and tadpoles. Many other animals are also dependent on riparian habitat, whether it's a daily visit for drinking, feeding or roosting, or seasonally to spawn or breed. If you watch for long enough, and with a sharp enough eye, you are bound to see one or another taking advantage of this rich habitat. Sunsets, in particular, are a busy time here, with a raucous chorus of birds, frogs and insects.

**Narration - Patrick:** One of the big values of indigenous plants is the value that they offer in terms of biodiversity, because they have evolved with communities of animals and insects over 1000s of years. They have a very finely tuned relationship with these animals and with every part of the ecosystem. So they play a really important role in so many ways in so many of the natural relationships that occur within ecosystems. Whether it's food, or habitat or nesting, there is an infinite amount of ways that indigenous plants fit into an environment, in an important primal way.