

Be watchful walking near creek

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DAREBIN residents have been warned to watch their step after a Preston resident almost trampled a snake at Merri Creek.

George Pettigrove was surprised when he saw the snake sunning itself near the footbridge at the end of Radford Rd in Reservoir while he was out walking.

He almost stepped on the 1m reptile, thought to have been a brown or tiger snake, when walking near the creek.

Merri Creek on The Parade convenor **Carolyn Lunt** said revegetation works over the past 20 years meant more snakes were breeding in the area.

Ms Lunt said people should take care to avoid disturbing snakes.

``We're trying to create a habitat for wildlife by revegetating Merri Creek," she said.

``Snakes are an important part of the ecosystem and they are a food source for kookaburras. People have to learn to respect them and live with them."

Snakes are common in Darebin between October and April, with a bumper season expected this year due to higher rainfall in recent months.

The snakes are mainly found around Merri and Darebin creeks.

Keeper-in-charge of reptiles at Melbourne Zoo and snake removalist Jon Birkett said if people saw snakes they should move away, but try to keep an eye on them.

``Often people see a snake and run inside and contact me, but when I get there we can't find where it went," Mr Birkett said. ``People should make sure they move away, but keep track of the location of the snake."

Mr Birkett said although brown and tiger snakes were highly dangerous, few deaths happened as a result of bites.

``We need to remember that there are only a couple of deaths from snake bites a year in Australia and it is highly unlikely if the correct procedures are followed," he said.

``If people are bitten they should not move and should apply a broad elastic pressure bandage to the limb.

``They should also call an ambulance or go to the hospital immediately."

Mr Birkett recommended people take precautions such as removing possible shelters and food sources, including nesting birds, mice and rats, from their properties.

For more information call Mr Birkett on 0411 638 787.