

THE CREEK

Volume 15 No 5, October 2011

 **Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group**
No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

THE BALCOMBE GRAMMAR BOX BUILDERS

Building fauna boxes and learning about the creatures they will house has fired the enthusiasm of Balcombe Grammar's two Year 6 classes. One class has built six boxes for Sugar Gliders, the other, six for Micro Bats.

The students have been working with fauna ecologist Paul Bertuch, together with their teacher James Whelan. As reported in previous newsletters, Paul is managing BERG's fauna box program.

As well as the box construction, Paul has taken the students into the reserve to look at boxes already in place, and they have learnt lots about the species the boxes are targeting, their needs and habitat.

The boxes come as flat packs prepared by Frank Nutjiuk, at The Briars. His help has been invaluable. Paul is installing the finished boxes in trees in the Balcombe and Hopeton Creek areas.



Photo Paul Bertuch

*Above: A Sugar Glider box completed!
Below: No vacancy! Sugar Gliders snuggle into a box near Warrigine Park, Hastings.
(Photo taken while monitoring)*



Photo David Hunt

It's vital work. Given the lack of old growth trees hollows, Sugar Gliders, Micro Bats and birds require boxes to survive.



Clockwise from above left: Building Micro Bat boxes (2 photos by the students); Entrance slit at the bottom of the box; Roughened interior to give a toe hold; First box installed in the Camb Ground (3 photos by Paul Bertuch)



Hear renowned naturalist

Leon Costermans

at the 2011 BERG
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER
Mt Martha House
Registration 9.30 am, meeting
10.00 am, speaker 11.00

Leon Costermans, naturalist, author, teacher, conservation leader and much more, has a vast knowledge of the native plants of south eastern Australia, and a particular interest in the Mornington Peninsula, his home territory.

He will speak on the geology of the Peninsula and its relationship to the vegetation

Nominations for office bearers & committee

Forms are available from the Secretary, Mary Stemp, ph 5974 3996, or at www.berg.org.au, under "Resources". Nominations in writing, signed by two BERG members & accompanied by the candidate's written consent, must be with the Secretary by Saturday 22nd October.

BERG welcomes new members:

Helen Johnston
Barbara Kibby
Sue Taylor
Alan Symington
Jacqui Scarborough
David & Bronwyn Street
John & Diana Dall
Charles & Virginia Beckwith
David & Sally Keystone
Mark Seymour & Jo Vautier

NEWS FROM THE BUNYIP

Mary Stemp reports

Our small but loyal band of women continues to battle weeds each Tuesday in the area known as the Bunyip, immediately below the Kindergarten. We hope to establish a weed-free zone between the kinder fence and the fire track, where a very small but precious patch where Hibertias bloom, prostrate Bossaias spread their tiny leaves and miniature Goodenias produce small yellow flowers amongst the reeds and grasses. *Kennedia* (Running Postman) is scrambling wildly along the ground and producing its cheerful red flowers. A small Grass Tree, *Xanthorea minor*, has managed to survive trucks and tree removals beside the fire track and produce two blooms, though one has been snapped off.

On the other hand, alongside the lower track there have been very few greenhood orchids this year. And below the kinder, where we have seen Sun Orchids, Chocolate Lilies and Milk Maids in other years, this year there has been nothing but grass and reeds, some indigenous. Could this be because there has been such a dearth of sunlight?

It has always been our hope that promoting indigenous plants will encourage native fauna. We are seeing the occasional blue-tongue lizard, almost surely more than one, and an ever-increasing number of birds including the delightful spinebills, fantails and blue wrens.



Photo Pam Hearn

Tuesday Group stalwarts Isabel Cook and Mary Stemp using the weed burner in the Bunyip

AN UNUSUAL VISITOR

Late in August, keen bird-watcher Pam Hearn took her camera to the Creek, hoping to see an Egret that had been there for a couple of days. Instead, she found a White-necked (or Pacific) Heron (see her photo below).

This large wading bird – 75cm to 1m tall – while widespread, is a rare visitor at Mt Martha. It prefers pasture, floodwaters and shallows of freshwater wetlands. Rohan Cuming, reporting in 2008 on his 12-month fauna survey of the reserve, writes:

‘On the Mornington Peninsula it is occasionally observed during winter feeding on open pasture but is usually rare within the greater area. During this survey one specimen was observed in July 2008 feeding in the shallows of the estuary amongst reeds.’



Photo Pam Hearn

THE ACACIA DEBATE RESOLVED

A decade-long debate about the naming of acacias was resolved at the XVIII International Botanical Congress held in Melbourne in July. Acacias are found in Africa, Australia and South America and until now they were regarded as one genus. Modern plant biology, however, has shown that they are not – they should be split into several genera.

A difficult decision was required as to whether the name *Acacia* should be used either for the very large group of species found

mainly in Australia – our wattles (including, of course, a number indigenous to Mt Martha), or for the smaller group found mainly in Africa and Central and South America, including the iconic thorn trees of the Serengeti.

Under the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature, the name would normally have remained with the African-American group, as this includes *Acacia nilotica*, which is the ‘type species,’ which fixes the use of the genus name. However, a special provision of the Code allows for the name of the type species to be changed in cases like this, where strict application of the rules would require the renaming of a large number of species, and would cause confusion or significant difficulties for taxonomists or the wider community.

Two Australian botanists applied under this provision to make an Australian species the type species for *Acacia*. This was agreed by the 2005 International Botanical Congress, then challenged, argued – and finally, in July in Melbourne, the decision was reconfirmed.

The Melbourne Congress agreed that African acacias (the first described by science) will be now be given a new genus, while Australia’s thousands of *Acacia* species will retain the genus name *Acacia*.



Photo Angela Kirsner

Still to be known as *Acacia*, Hedge Wattle, *A. paradoxa*, overhangs the path from the Uralla Bridge up to Citation Oval

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Sunday working bees

We have started sending out more detailed emailed working-bee reminders, telling members where we will be working and the range of activities planned, so those interested can decide ahead when and for how long they will come, and what they will do. We are offering a range of activities, some less strenuous than others, ranging from, for example, sawing and painting woody weeds in the bush, to removing weed seedlings along the creek, pulling forget-me-nots, or baking goodies for morning-tea.

In August, we worked in the Old Campground. Some cleaned out the storage shed and compiled an inventory of our tools, while others planted over 250 tubestock to enhance previous plantings. We had a great turn-up – 16 of us – and thoroughly enjoyed Meredith Horton's morning-tea.

We had good numbers again in September. Those who removed Boneseed on the slope below Citation Oval needed no gym workout the following week! Others cut and painted the *Solanum pseudocapsicum* seedlings near the Uralla stormwater pipe, to encour-



The important aspect of working bees – September morning tea with two cakes! age regrowth of ferns and delicate swamp-loving plants.

Our aim in weeding is to give the indigenous plants a chance to regenerate, and as we weeded the slope below Citation Oval we found a wealth of ground flora. Among other treasures are a rare patch of Blue Pincushion (*Brunonia australis*), the dainty blue Love Creeper (*Comosperma volubile*) winding its way through the native grasses and herbs (see photo), and the arching and sharp-edged leaves of the Thatch Saw-sedge (*Gabnia radula*).

Friday morning group

A regular crew of 4 to 6 people continues to weed and plant in the Uralla Bridge area each week. Naturelinks recently instructed us on weed burning to expand our arsenal of weed control tools. It will prove more useful as the quality of the vegetation improves

because, if used correctly and carefully, it can control a variety of weeds while causing less disturbance to the native plants.

Balcombe Grammar

The Year 7 students from Balcombe Grammar School recently extended a 'thank you' to the seven BERG members who supervised their community service activity in term 2 (revegetating the easement to Hopetoun Creek), in the form of an invitation to their Jette Café Expo. They provided a great afternoon tea and we much enjoyed their hospitality.

Weedbusters

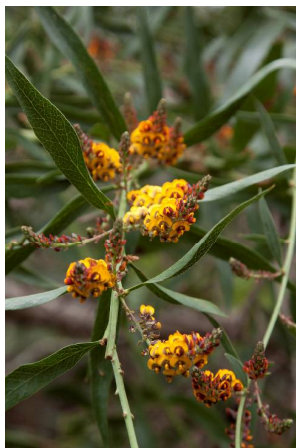
The Weedbuster Display at the Mt Martha shops roused lots of interest from passers-by. With a collection of environmental weeds on display, BERG and the Sunshine Conservation & Fireguard Group hoped to help locals recognise weeds that are a problem in our area, and advise on effective removal. We are committed under one of our grants to raise community awareness of local conservation issues, and Weedbusters is part of that.

Signage

BERG, Mt Martha Rotary and the Shire are working together to rationalise and improve the displays and directional signs along the boardwalk and tracks. We plan to include new maps and additional and more obvious directional plaques. Hopefully it will help the more occasional visitors to find their way and reduce frustration and the chance of getting lost.

Free indigenous plants

There is still a small range of plants left: Silver Banksias, Twiggy Daisies, Chocolate Lilies, Moonah, Sea Box, Silky Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia sericea*) – and just released and ready for planting are some Snow Gums. If interested, contact Liz on 0408 388 430.



Below Citation Oval
(clockwise from top left):
Comosperma volubile (Love Creeper) twining through *Billardiera scandens* (Apple Berry); *Drosera* sp. (Sunden); *Daviesia latifolia* (Hop Bitter-pea) overhanging the path; close up of the glandular tentacles and sticky secretions of the insectivorous *Drosera*; and *Thysanotus patersonii* (Twining Fringe-lily), among the grasses.

Photos A Kirsner



IN FLOWER

This specimen of Kangaroo Apple, *Solanum aviculare*, is beside the Uralla Bridge. It's a fast-growing, short-lived indigenous shrub with oval fruits that ripen to yellow-orange. It is an early coloniser of cleared or disturbed areas.



Photo Angela Kirsner

LINKS WE LIKE

Victorian Environmental Friends Network

This body exists to help represent the common interests of all Friends groups in Victoria. Their newsletter, which you can receive free by email, reports on a wide range of matters relevant to Friends' activities – email hayburn@bigpond.com to join the mailing list. The website includes past newsletters and lots else: home.vicnet.net.au/~friends/

EMAILING THE CREEK

If you would like to receive email notification of a link to *The Creek* on the BERG website, rather than receiving hard copy by post, please let us know at info@berg.org.au.

ERROR

In our article on the Membership Drive in the August newsletter, Barbara Thraves' phone number was incorrect. If you are able to help with the membership drive, please phone her on 5974 2185.

| BERG Working Bees | Other BERG Activities | Other Groups |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are 16th October & 20th November. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If arriving later, phone Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site. ❖ Tuesdays 9.00 to 12.00. Call Mary Stemp to confirm, 5974 3996. ❖ Friday mornings. For details call Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201 or Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430. ❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve. Contact Hazel Athey, 0419 899 560. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: 2nd Saturday, 9.00 am, meet at Augusta St Bridge. Next are 8th October and 12th November. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30am. Next meetings 8th October and 26th November. All members welcome. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees. Contact John Stoker, 5977 1397. ❖ Penboc birdwatching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries www.penboc.org.au or Max Burrows 9789 0224. ❖ SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org. |
| <p>BERG COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL SANDERS • SECRETARY MARY STEMPT • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP ANGELA KIRSNER • MINUTES SECRETARY PAM HEARN SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE • HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY CO-OPTED MEMBERS: DIANNE LEWIS • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRAVES • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p> | | |
| <p>PO Box 433, MT MARTHA 3934 • PHONE (SEC): 5974 3996 EMAIL: INFO@BERG.ORG.AU • WEBSITE: WWW.BERG.ORG.AU</p> | | |

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