



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 18 No 2, April 2014

YOU ARE INVITED
TO THE LAUNCH OF
**BIRDS OF THE
BALCOMBE ESTUARY
RESERVES**

**BERG MT MARTHA'S
NEW BIRD BROCHURE**

with artwork by BERG
Mt Martha member
Annie Dowd



Plus

Photographic exhibition of
birds of the reserves
and

Wood carvings of local birds by
Mt Martha artist Stewart Dawson
(both on display 24th April to 23rd May)

The brochure will be launched by
David Reid OAM,
Birdlife Australia board member

Launch date: Saturday 3rd May,
4.30 to 6.30

Venue: Morningside Library
Foyer & Meeting Room.

Light
refreshments
served



Artist and BERG Mt Martha member
Annie Dowd at work on a bird for the
bird brochure

BALCOMBE CREEK NATURE TRAIL

Are there frogs under this stone? Will lizards live under these logs? What plants do butterflies want? Students from local schools are finding answers to these and lots more questions as they create purpose-built habitat for indigenous fauna, including, bats, possums, birds and insects.

The Balcombe Creek Nature Trail project is the inspiration of BERG member Tony O'Connor, and the site is the grassy strip of reserve beside Balcombe Creek parallel to Century Drive (off Benton's Rd), and the Century Drive retarding basin. The project is supported by a Victorian Government Communities for Nature grant Tony has obtained through the Balcombe and Moorooduc Landcare Group.



Tony, the pied piper of Century Drive, with the St Macartan's students exploring the wetland he has created on his property

Most Tuesdays and Fridays for some months, up to 50 students have been exploring the many habitats Tony has created on his adjacent property, meeting all sorts of small creatures along the way, before working in groups with Tony and other mentors to create their own patch of custom-made habitat. The building materials, all local, include Morningside red rocks, tree stumps, and large logs. The students also plant selected tube stock to

provide the food and shelter that each targeted wildlife species needs. Some students are even building possum, sugar glider or bat boxes.



This is how bats fly!

Schools involved include St Macartan's Primary School, Bentons Junior College and Morningside Secondary College. There are also week-end working bees for the children and their parents.

WATERWATCH TESTING

John Inchley reports

In February, with no rain for months, the estuary entrance had been closed for three months, and at The Briars and nearby the creek was reduced to shallow pools.

With evaporation together with tidal influences, salinity was nearly at sea water levels at Augusta St and five times the usual figure at The Briars. Phosphate levels were also up in the ever-decreasing pools. More critical were the low dissolved oxygen levels, in part at least a result of the lack of water movement. Briars ranger Jarrod Ruch has been rescuing oxygen-starved fish surfacing for air in smaller pools, reviving them in fresh water and moving them to larger pools.

Waterbugs (macro-invertebrates) are the ultimate test of waterway health. We found relatively high numbers, as the bugs were concentrated in the small pools. Unlike the fish, they did not appear to be too affected by the low oxygen levels.

BERG MT MARTHA FAMILY DAY AT THE ESTUARY

Sunday 30th March: the sun shone and young families came to the Estuary in droves. They explored waterbugs with Waterwatch, or watched birds on the estuary. It was 'Kids only' for the magical drawing workshops with Terry Denton in the Old Camp Laundry.

You could have a close encounter with a python from the Moonlit Sanctuary, have your face painted,

explore the Yellow Robin Trail, get messy painting a picture, or pour a bucket over Melbourne Water's Lego village to see just how much water you can save with watergardens.

Story teller Ed Marshall had both kids and parents entranced, while local ecologist Gidja Walker made even the local stone of the toilet block tell a fascinating story.

The event was opened by Mayor Antonella Celi. And for the hungry, there was a quality BERG sausage sizzle. Most families took home a free plant, and we welcome a stack of new members (see back page)!

It took many months of work by the Community Awareness Group, spearheaded by Barbara Thraves, to make it all happen – not to mention the army of volunteers on the day. Many thanks to all involved!

Photos below by Richard Kirsner



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Grants

We have received a Victorian Government Communities for Nature grant of \$9,742 to help restore another section of the Grassy Woodland on Citation Hill below the ovals. The grant covers weed control, equipment, ecology workshops, and training and communication materials.

Working bees

We started work on this grant site at the year's first two Sunday working bees. We mainly hand weeded and cut and painted smaller Pittosporum and Boneseed, leaving the larger ones for drilling and filling or chain-sawing by the contractors. It was very satisfying to leave large piles of weeds neatly stacked!



Starting young! Liz works with grandsons Nikhil & Kiran to remove woody weeds Photo A Kirsner

The Friday Morning Group has concentrated on the Hyacinth Orchid area. We have meticulously hand weeded regenerating Boneseed, Pittosporum and Blackberry seedlings and removed fallen Teatree and woody weeds so we can get to the grassy weeds threatening indigenous ground cover species such as Blue-bottle Daisies, Greenhoods Orchid, Small Grass Trees, and Cranberry Heath.

Clean Up Australia Day

Mt Martha Rotary looked after registration and waste deposit in the Village carpark and helped BERG Mt Martha organize the clean-up of the surrounding beach, creek, estuary and roadsides. With at least 60 people, both adults and children, we collected over 45 bags of rubbish as well as a huge pile of mattresses, old doors, timber, metal, pipes and the like. Our work was 'bookended' by Sunshine Reserve Conservation & Fireguard Group, working near

Hearn Rd, and the Birdrock Ave residents and friends to the north.



Cameron, Emily, Rebecca and Luke Van Orsouw cleaning up on the estuary!

CAN YOU HELP?

**BALCOMBE GRAMMAR
COMMUNITY SERVICE
PROGRAM**

Once again, BERG Mt Martha will be working with the Balcombe Grammar Year 7s in the reserve over 4 days, 12.00 to 2.30, on May 2, 16 & 30, & June 13. Anyone who can help would be VERY welcome! Call Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430.

BAKING FOR BERG!

Many thanks to Judy Hubbard, Lynne Dell and Jan Jones, who have provided a delicious morning tea for past three Sunday working bees. We would welcome a few more people on the roster. If you can help occasionally, please call Kaye Young on 0407 804 659.

VALE TUESDAY GROUP

From Mary Stemp

It is with sadness that the Tuesday working group has decided to disband. It is hoped that some of us will work with the Friday group to continue to maintain the work done over the years in the Bunyip area.

Speaking personally, I want to say what a dedicated, hard-working and warm-spirited group it has been. While there have been many times when I've had to push myself to get started, I've invariably felt invigorated by the end of the morning. I do want to mention Isobel Cook, who has worked with me since the beginning of the group in 1998, only missing about three working bees in all that time. She could always be relied on, promptly at 9:30 on a Tuesday, to trundle a small wheelbarrow down Moore Street with the tools and morning tea and, if I was

late, to start pulling weeds around the kinder car park in Watson Road.

Many thanks to the people who have worked with us over the years. It is very satisfying to walk along the paths, see the many examples of regeneration, and find that tiny, self-sown banksia seedlings have survived the hot summer.



Mary and Isobel at work with the weed burner back in 2006 Photo Pam Hearn

THANKS MARY!

From Liz Barraclough

Mary's Bunyip Group will be greatly missed. Her dedicated, close band has done the most wonderful job Tuesday after Tuesday for many years. Under Mary's experienced, watchful and caring eye, they have transformed this diverse area, where Swamp Paperbark and Grassy Woodland meet, into a habitat haven for small birds, reptiles and Swamp Rats, as well as a secluded delightful walk for those privy to its existence.

I'd like to thank the present team, Mary Bell, Patricia Nelson, and Pam Hearn, recent past helpers Gwen Proposch and Verity Mapp, and of course Isobel Cook who, as Mary has always said, has been her greatest support and faithful friend since the beginning of the Bunyip project.

I could wax lyrical about Mary herself and her magnificent input into BERG Mt Martha, but she's not totally retiring, she will keep a regular eye on future works in her beloved patch. She has taken Sue Betheras and me on a detailed tour to help us as we extend the Friday group's work to include the Bunyip.

Tuesday Groupers will be most welcome on Friday mornings, with their invaluable knowledge of the Bunyip. Morning tea is a high priority on Fridays too!

ONE OF NATURE'S PHENOMENA

From Richard Hawkins

The December issue of The Creek awakened a memory from 1997 which illustrated the need to form an environmental group. Out for an early morning beach walk, I saw a shoal of small fish stemming the incoming tide, exposed in very shallow water under the bridge. A Parks Vic Ranger told me they were probably Short-finned Eels setting off on their extraordinary migrations (thousands of miles), as far as the Sargasso Sea. They are also known to travel across pad-docks adjoining our local creeks.

TREES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Peninsula Speaks Inc is creating a register of Significant Trees and Shrubs on the Mornington Peninsula. If you believe a tree (indigenous or non-indigenous) to have heritage value (eg rarity, habitat, cultural, age, history), go to info@peninsulaspeaks.org.au to download a nomination form. It is hoped the register will become part of the Shire's planning scheme and raise awareness of the need to protect and preserve our trees and old growth.

Deadline for the initial register is 30th April 2014.

Welcome to new members:

Helen Luxton & Ian Montgomery, Betty & Peter Rankin, Roger & Susan Skipsey, Tamara Keyte, Richard & Josephine Young, Betty & Peter Rankin, Rohani Bixler & family, Jarrod & Sophie Carman, Liana Cope & Lachlan Wakeling, Diann Crosling & family, Val de Lange & family, Anne Foster & David Murphy, Ken & Ruth Gaunt, Keith Greaves & family, Peter Groves & Sarah Harper, Bree Iredale, Mark Keane & Greta Thraves, Debra Mar & Paul Zycinski, Edwina McLean & family, Barry Pow & Ardena America, Allan Ronzon, Anne & John Routledge, Marni Simpson & family, Caroline Stapleton & family, Andrew Taber & family, April & Ross Wadsworth, Elana Welsh & family, Hannah & Ben Wolstencroft

BERG Mt Martha Working Bees	Other BERG Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 13th April (2nd Sunday to avoid Easter) and 18th May. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or call Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site. ❖ Friday mornings. Call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201. ❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve Call Hazel Athey on 0419 899 560 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: 4th Sunday at Augusta St Bridge. Call John Inchley, 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Committee meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am. Next are 12th April & 10th May. All members welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees, call Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker 5977 1397. ❖ BirdLife Mornington Peninsula bird-watching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows 9789 0224, mornington@birdlife.org.au or www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula. ❖ SPIFFA 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org.
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT POSITION NOT FILLED • SECRETARY DI LEWIS • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • WATERWATCH COORDINATOR JOHN INCHLEY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE • COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRAVES • JOHN TREVILLIAN • RICHIE BALL</p>		
<p>Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group Mt Martha Inc. No. A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623 Mail: PO Box 433 Mt Martha 3934 Email: info@berg.org.au Mob: 0447 160 288 Web: www.berg.org.au</p>		

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