



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 18 No 5, October 2014

YOU ARE INVITED
TO THE LAUNCH OF THE
**LIZ BARRACLOUGH
BIRD HIDE**

Saturday 11TH October, 11.00am, at
the Bird Hide (on the creek just
north of the Esplanade bridge),
then morning tea at
the Rotunda

RSVP (for catering) by
3rd October, 0447 160 288
or info@berg.org.au



CHRISTMAS GIVING CARDS

BERG Mt Martha's popular cards
are available again this year. Just like
Oxfam goats & chooks cards, you
decide how much to spend on each.



Ordering details in the December
newsletter & at www.berg.org.au

VALE MARY STEMP

*Born Canada 19-6-1931, died
Mornington 9-8-2014. With Mary's
death, BERG Mt Martha has lost one of
its stalwarts. Pam Hearn writes of her...*

Mary Stemp was a dear friend. I am hazy about dates, but when she and Tony ran the Health Food store in Mornington and I was a customer, they were friendly faces. Later I came to know Mary through an informal women's



group, then she moved to St Kilda and I lost contact.

Years later, when I was asked to be part of the recently formed BERG, potentially as secretary, Mary had also been approached. She took on the secretarial duties and I became minutes secretary, as Mary had hearing problems. The arrangement suited us just fine!

In BERG's early days Mary produced the newsletter and I sometimes helped with articles, proof-reading and drawings. As she enthusiastically embraced computer technology, our newsletters became more sophisticated.

Somehow in those years, Mary also established Friends of Harrap Creek (a tributary of Balcombe Creek). She got grants, rallied locals to help, and today, where they worked, trees prevail instead of weeds.

Mary initiated and designed many of the posters at the old camp ground. She was particularly proud of her Eels and Bats posters, and spent much time researching them and perfecting the layouts.

Early in BERG's life Mary established the Tuesday weeding group, which worked for most of its life in the Bunyip – a companionable group that I eventually joined. Mary knew and planned what needed to be done, having attended many workshops and Greening Australia's Habitat Conservation and Management course. She worked closely with Shire Officers and Liz to realise her vision for this lovely area.

When Mary and I quite independently decided to hand over our BERG secretarial roles, we had been doing the job for 14 years. We got so used to the routine of Saturday committee meetings, me handing the minutes to Mary, and discussions over details and jobs to be done, that the years had flown by.

Mary's last project was a history of BERG Mt Martha. She compiled photos, reminiscences and interviews, trawled BERG's papers, and began the hard slog of bringing it all together. I remember her bemoaning that she didn't seem to be making much progress, but everyone urged her on and being Mary, she did not give up. Proudly she announced its completion and handed it over for final editing. Sadly, she has not lived to see it published, but it will be a final legacy of Mary's dedication to the BERG cause.

With many others, I mourn the loss of Mary, a person of strength, wisdom, friendship and humour.

NOTICE OF MEETING & CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2014 BERG MT MARTHA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 25TH OCTOBER
at Mt Martha House

9.30 am registration for the meeting
at 10.00 am

Guest speaker, at 11.00, is

Owen Gooding
CFA Vegetation Management

...on the most recent & best research
on how fire behaves in bush & urban
areas, & gardens to minimise fire risk
but not denude the ground of plants

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2013 AGM
- Committee reports: President Graham Hubbard, Treasurer Richard Kirsner, Field Officer Liz Barraclough
- Election: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary & up to 10 ordinary committee members
- Appointment of Auditor
- Proposed rule change: That we correct a wording error by changing the name of BERG Mt Martha Public Gift Fund from 'Balcombe Estuary Reserves Mt Martha Group Inc. Public Gift Fund' to 'Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group Mt Martha Inc. Public Gift Fund'

Nominations for office bearers & committee
For nomination forms call 0447 160 208 or go to www.berg.org.au, under 'Resources'.

Nominations in writing, signed by two BERG Mt Martha members & accompanied by the candidate's written consent, must be with the Secretary by Saturday 18th October.

BEES, NATIVE & EXOTIC

Most people think of the European honeybee as Australia's only bee, but we have over 1,700 species of native bee, Dr Ken Walker, bee specialist and Senior Curator of Entomology and Arachnology, Museum Victoria, told a packed room of BERGers and friends on August 30th.

Ken spoke first, however, about European honeybees and the threat posed by colony collapse disorder (CCD). Australia remains the only continent without CCD, although it will almost inevitably get here, despite our strong quarantine measures.

Causes of colony collapse disorder

A number of factors contribute to CCD, but there are two main causes: pesticides, primarily neonicotinoids, and infections from the Varroa mite.

Varroa mites suck honeybees' blood and transmit a virus that weakens the colony. They spread between hives as bees visit flowers, but they don't affect native bees.

Neonicotinoids are systemic insecticides that are distributed to all parts of the plant, including nectar and pollen. They kill pollinators, but while Europe has banned their use, Australia has not.

When Varroa reaches Australia...

The greatest risk is to feral hives; managed hives can be treated and renewed. Only 25% of Australia's hives are managed; 75% are feral and could be wiped out, along with their free pollination services worth an estimated \$5 billion in 2013. The ultimate solution would be Varroa-resistant queens; researchers are working on it, but progress is slow.

Australia's native bees

Australian bees are small creatures, indeed we have the world's smallest bee, just 2mm long. Like European

Honeybees, many have branched hairs to carry pollen. They collect pollen with their front legs but carry it on back legs or abdomen, and use elaborate grooming behaviours to move it about – some have even developed combs on their front legs. The Blue-banded Bee is one that carries pollen on its hind legs – you may see these handsome bees on Dianellas.

Other native bees eat the pollen as they collect it, and store it in their crop.

between petals, into the nectary, capillary action draws nectar up 12 long hairs that are also on its mouth.

A place for eggs

Almost all Australian bees are solitary or semi-social. Solitary females dig a hole about 1cm deep in the ground, using their massive mandibles, or they find an old beetle hole in wood. They provision it with a 'pollen pudding' (pollen bound with nectar), lay an egg and seal it in. Males hover outside hoping to waylay a female.

Leaf-cutter bees use a serrated mandible to cut semicircles of leaf or petal (they love roses!) which they interleave in their nest to protect egg and pollen pudding. Resin bees collect resin from trees to build pots into which they seal an egg.

At night the males gather in a roost near the nesting site. Some species hang on with their legs, some – amazingly – just with their mandibles.

Semi-social bees work in groups of six or so to build a main tunnel, then each then builds its own lateral. One always remains to guard the entrance, butting away invaders.

Sugar-bag bees, only 3-mm long, are the one type of native bee that forms hives. They use wax and resin to form cells for their larvae and pots for pollen and honey. Sugarbag honey was prized by the Aborigines. Ken said it tastes 'like a blend of a quality honey and a mellow port'. The bees occur in Australia's north, down to just above Canberra.

'Bee homes'

Encourage native bees into your garden! Drill holes about 1cm deep in a block of wood, using a drill up 5mm, or bind together lots of hollow-ended bamboo. Hang it in the garden and wait for residents.

Ken's photos and videos of bees were all from citizen scientists who, he said, are 'gold' in helping to map our biodiversity.



Clockwise from above: Bee homes; Carrying pollen on a hind leg; A Sugar Bee hive; A bee bubbling; A bee grooming; Leaf-cutter bee in a nesting hole; A long-tongued bee; Roosting male Blue-banded Bee hanging by its mandible.

Photos courtesy Ken Walker, all taken by citizen scientists

If you see a bee with pairs of pollinia (parcels of pollen grains) on its back, it's been to an orchid, which entices male bees with nectar that smells like a female. As the male delves deep in the flower, the orchid thwacks it on the back with pollen, to carry to the next flower.

Bees collect nectar to fuel their flight, but first they need to reduce the water content to 30%. They do it by 'bubbling' – sitting in the sun and constantly moving a water droplet about with their legs as it reduces.

Of tongues, long and short

Bees may be long- or short-tongued, and, uniquely, Australia has largely short-tongued bees – 1400 species. They have evolved to sip from the shallow cup-shaped flowers of the Myrtaceae family (eg Eucalypts).

Yet two genera of short-tongued bees find their way into flowers with a long corolla. *Cladocrepis* rips the side of a *Persoonia* flower with its battering-ram head, while when *Filiglossa* pushes its short tongue

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Sunday working bees

In August ten of us planted 526 tubes directly below the Balcombe kindergarten and along about 100m of Hopetoun Creek. Since then, another 300+ tubes have been added to the planting. *[Liz at work! Ed]*

September saw a turn up of 14, mostly to tackle the small Boneseed below Citation Oval, while a small group worked on Maude St to remove flowering Flax Leaf Broom.

Friday Morning Group

We have weeded and planted in the Hyacinth Orchid area, and in the Old Quarry, have planted and guarded over 350 Poas, 100+ sedges and various shrubs and trees. The area will look terrific in a year or so, rabbit-permitting.

Grants

Green Army: Our two projects have been accepted and should start within the next few months. The projects are i) Tradescantia control on both sides of the creek west of Uralla Bridge and ii) woody weed control (Boneseed & Pittosporum) below Citation Oval.

Local Landscape Enhancement Grant: A new State Government grant, this is for locally based, practical projects. We have applied for funds for a clutch of projects: our planned Dragonfly Audio Trail, more interpretive signage (frogs, birds, an introduction to the estuary), more table and bench sets in the camp-ground, an updated BERG Mt Martha brochure, two 'Nature Explorer' boxes (on birds & on bugs) to use with groups of younger children, and a Geocache trail.

Schools

Four Balcombe Grammar year 9 boys did wonderful work over four Fridays. They mulched the Hopetoun Creek site for planting at the August working bee, and planted almost 100 indigenous plants near the new bird hide (grasses & sedges, & shrubs) and along the easement

(mainly Coast Banksias, Sweet Bursaria, Prickly Wattle). They also surveyed, sorted and collected masses of rubbish on the estuary near the Henley Ave outlet drain.



Gidja Walker leads the estuarine workshop (see below) through the area cleaned up earlier by Balcombe Grammar boys Photo Angela Kirsner

At Osborne Primary School Jenny Selby and I have liaised with Simone Broekman, engaged to set up a Stephanie Alexander garden and a Bush Tucker garden. We have provided about 50 indigenous plants and sourced others.

Deakin University

At very short notice, Sue Betheras filled in for me to run BERG Mt Martha's annual 'walk, talk & gawk' for Deakin's Conservation and Life Sciences students, explaining our involvement in coastal and catchment management. Sue did a great job, as always, and lecturer Kimberley James was delighted.

Graham Hubbard has also stepped in to give BERG Mt M's annual lecture on a similar topic at Deakin's Burwood campus on 25th September.

Workshops

Gidja Walker and Phillip Jenson ran a workshop on monitoring and GPS mapping on Friday 22nd August. The eight BERGers who attended learnt heaps, and we are planning a follow-up session soon.

Gidja returned on 12th September to talk about ecological processes and plant ID around the estuary. About a dozen of us learnt about the geology that shaped the estuary, the communities of plants that thrive in the



Gidja talking about salt marsh plants along the estuary near the bridge Photo Angela Kirsner

changing salinity levels, and the dire threat these plant communities face with rising sea levels and urban development. *And there was a swan on the estuary again, and again a week later!!*

Signage along boardwalk

The faded boardwalk signs need attention. The Shire's graphics department is designing new maps for new signs, to be printed with UV-resistant ink, laminated, and installed by Rotary & BERG Mt M.

Weedbuster week

Once again we combined with the Sunshine Reserve Group on Saturday 6th September for the annual Weedbuster information and display stand at the Mt Martha shops – a successful morning, though the shopping centre was not very busy.

SIZZLING, SAUCY SUCCESS!
...with \$1,245 profit at the Sausage Sizzle at Bunnings Mornington on Saturday 20th September. Thanks to organiser Kaye Young and her sizzling crew, Bunnings for their support, and Bell's Gourmet Meats for a discount on the sausages.

UP-DATE: PENINSULA LINK 'FREEWAY SERVICE CENTRES'

Graham Hubbard reports

Liz and I met with David Morris, State MP about these developments by Balcombe Creek near Baxter, approved by the State Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, over the objections of both the Shire and VCAT. We also spoke to the Shire Planning Department, Melbourne Water and most recently, to the new owner of the land, AA Holdings.

We are seeking revegetation of the creek area, which is not required by the approved plans. AA Holdings were cooperative and we believe funding exists within Melbourne Water, which is also keen to revegetate. AA Holdings also told us of their monitoring plans for any leakages. So we are optimistic that, although these developments should never have been built, we may get increased revegetation on the upper reaches of the Creek as a result. We will continue to liaise with AA Holdings over the next year or so to ensure this revegetation occurs.

AWARDS!

Mornington Peninsula Heritage Award 2014 for Sustainability of a Heritage Place

Awarded to BERG Mt Martha by Mornington Peninsula Shire and National Trust of Australia (Vic) Mornington Peninsula Branch, for our heritage conservation and associated environmental and educational work, particularly the Yellow Robin Trail.

Stormwater Victoria Awards for Excellence
Policy and Education category

-Awarded to a 'downpipe diversion' trial, a partnership between BERG Mt Martha, the Shire and Melbourne Water. The trial encouraged home owners to divert stormwater through a rain garden, cutting pollution to the estuary and bay while watering home gardens. The trial is now in the running for Stormwater Australia's national awards in October.



Di Lewis with the Heritage award, Dr Graeme Blackman OAM Chairman of National Trust Board, & Mayor Cr Antonella Celi.

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members Peter & Debbie McMahon, Ann & Bob Moir, Julie Willis & Declan Dennehy, Zoe & Armin Boehnke, Nane Szafranec & Scott Tisdell, Emma & James Doherty, Matthew Heron, Jan Wiggins

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 19th October and 16th November. 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"> ❖ BERG AGM 25th October, Mt Martha House ❖ 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 11th October & 8th November. 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. ❖ Sunshine Reserve working bee 9.30am, last Thursday of month. Call Pia Spreen, 5974 1096
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT <i>POSITION NOT FILLED</i> • 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</p>		
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