



**Berg**  
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

# THE CREEK

Volume 18 No 6, December 2014

## BIRD HIDE LAUNCHED

*Di Lewis reports,  
with photos by Verity Mapp*

About 40 people gathered on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014 for the opening of the Liz Barraclough Bird Hide, a fitting tribute to our fabulous Field Officer. The hide is tucked into the north bank of Estuary near the Esplanade bridge, and friends and members of BERG Mt Martha crowded into the tiny space for the opening.



*Liz (centre) with (L-R) Annie Dowd, John Trevillian, Graham Hubbard & Laura Crilly*

The project was spearheaded by BERG Mt Martha, designed by Geoff Kaye and project managed by John Trevillian. The hide was constructed off-site by Bruce Dawson and erected by members of Rotary and BERG Mt M. Art work by Annie Dowd, based on our recently released *Birds of the Balcombe Estuary Reserves* pamphlet, helps bird watchers to identify birds they see. Mornington Peninsula Shire assisted with permits and paving, and members of our Friday group did the planting with the help of Balcombe Grammar students. Thanks to all!



Laura Crilly, of the Shire's Natural Systems Team, officially opened the hide, deputising for Cr Bev Colomb who was unable to attend at the last minute. Then we gathered at the campground for yet another delicious BERG Mt M morning tea.



Liz has had enthusiastic feedback on the hide from lots of people not normally associated with BERG Mt Martha.

## FINALIST!

### PREMIER'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS

*Jenny Rolleston reports*

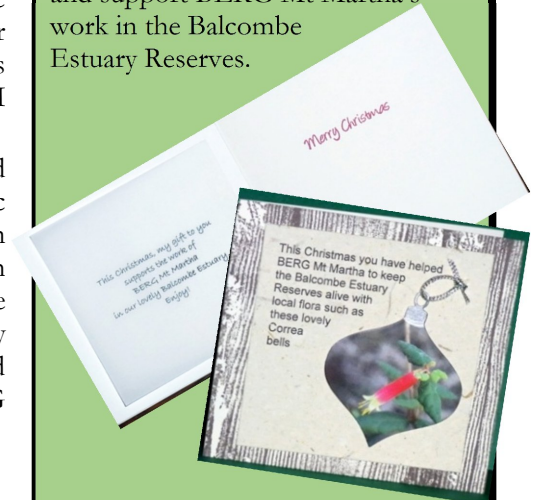
October 12<sup>th</sup> was a glorious spring day, perfect for a visit to the beautiful Cruden Farm, home of the late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, to hear winners of the 2014 Victorian Premier's Volunteer Awards announced. Liz Barraclough, BERG Mt Martha's Field Officer, was one of the four extraordinary Victorian volunteers who were the finalists for the main award, the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award for Victorian Volunteer of the Year. What a great individual achievement for Liz, and a wonderful acknowledgement of the work done by BERG Mt Martha.



*Liz with Jenny Rolleston & Graham Hubbard at Cruden Farm. Photo Di Lewis*

## OUR CHRISTMAS GIVING CARDS ARE BACK!

BUY A CARD for family or friends and support BERG Mt Martha's work in the Balcombe Estuary Reserves.



As with Oxfam's goat, chook & veggie garden donation cards, you decide how much to spend on each. For example:

- a \$24 card buys 18 indigenous plants
- a \$48 card helps with a bat box
- a \$99 card would help buy a post for the new Dragonfly Audio Trail.

### To order...

Email [info@berg.org.au](mailto:info@berg.org.au) or phone 0447 160 288 by **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December** to tell us how many cards you want and how much you will spend on each (\$24, \$48, \$99 or any other amount over \$20).

*Your donation is tax deductible.*

We will send you an invoice with payment options. When we receive payment, we will send your hand-crafted Giving Cards by December 17<sup>th</sup>, ready for you to pass on as Christmas gifts.

SO... instead of chocolates, perfume, jocks or socks this year, make lots of plants and birds in our Reserves very happy with a **BERG Mt Martha Giving Card!**

## MAUDE ST BURN SITE 18 MONTHS ON

Laura Crilly, Mornington Peninsula Shire Natural Systems Team, reports

It is over 18 months since the Maude Street site was burnt in April 2013 to reduce the fuel load and rejuvenate the ecology. The previous century had seen Coast Tea Tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*)

### The Burn Site Now

The blackened earth has vanished under a thick shrub layer, with the fast-growing Tree Everlasting (*Ozothamnus ferrugineus*) emerging above lower plants. There are lots of Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*) seedlings with interesting variations in leaf texture and shape, flower size and time of flowering. Showy Bossiaea (*Bossiaea cinerea*) has

are quick to compete for the light, nutrients and water. Regular hand weeding has helped many Grassy Woodland and Heathland species to re-establish, and we are also removing the many Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) seedlings.

A profusion of insects is making use of the changed landscape and many small skinks have been seen foraging in the leaf litter during



In flower in September – clockwise from top left: Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*); flowers & seed pods of Showy Bossiaea (*Bossiaea cinerea*); Sundew (*Drosera* sp.); Donkey Orchid (*Diuris* sp.); Silky Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia sericea*); pink & white Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*) Photos Angela Kirsner

colonise the area after the Eucalypts and She-oaks had been cleared for firewood, and their dense, highly flammable canopy had reduced diversity in the understorey largely to mosses and Sword Sedge (*Lepidisperma concavum*).

Soon after the burn, masses of Grassy Woodland and Heathland species germinated in the ash bed, with patterns of growth reflecting the location of the linear piles of burnt Tea Tree. Dense bands of Kopata (*Pelargonium inodorum*) sprang up in areas of moderate fire intensity and, where the fire burnt hottest, patches of Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) and *Acacia* sp. seedlings. Various coastal species also germinated including Climbing Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia appressa*) and Bower Spinach (*Tetragonia implexicoma*).

produced seed pods in abundance and more Silky Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia sericea*) seedlings have emerged.

The patterns formed by the burnt linear piles have merged, with a more even spread of species diversity and density. The abundant Kopata (*Pelargonium inodorum*) have died off, although there is a new flush of seedlings in any remaining areas of bare soil. Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) seedlings and mats of Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) are flourishing. More delicate plants include Love Creeper (*Comesperma volubile*), Hairy Centrolepis (*Centrolepis strigosa* ssp. *strigosa*), Sundews (*Drosera* sp.) and pink and white Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*).

### Managing the weeds

The Shire's Bushland Management Team and BERG Mount Martha are working hard to manage weeds that

October. There are also signs of indigenous Swamp Rats (*Rattus lutreolus*) moving into the area.

It will be fascinating to watch developments at the site and the rapid changes in structure and species diversity as the plants vie for resources. Ever-changing and often subtle interactions between soil biology, fauna and flora may produce unexpected and interesting results in the coming months and years. Watch this space!

### NEW COMMITTEE IN PLACE

The BERG Mt Martha AGM on October 25<sup>th</sup> voted in our new committee. All the old faces are back, and we are most grateful that John Inchley has agreed to accept the vice-presidency again. We welcome back Jenny Selby to the committee as Schools Liaison Officer, and welcome Bronwyn Street, with her considerable talents.

## FIELD NEWS

*Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports*

### Sunday Working Bees

Both October and November saw work on the north bank near the Uralla Rd footbridge. In October some whipper-snipped, weeded and mulched along the edge of the fire track while others hand-weeded and cut and painted the Winter Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*) from about 50m west of Uralla Bridge. In November John Inchley and our new Naturelinks supervisor Jason Guras led a group of seven, who braved the elements to remove more Winter Cherry and Tradescantia, continuing the work started by the Green Army (see below).



*November's morning tea out of the rain: Jan Wiggins, Eric Smalley, John Inchley, Christo Viljoen & Graham Hubbard tackle Lynette Dell's splendid fruit cake. Photo Angela Kirsner*

### Friday Morning Group

The group has weeded near Uralla Bridge ahead of mulching by the Sunday working-bee, and followed up the Green Army's work near the Uralla stormwater pipe with further weeding of Tradescantia and Winter Cherry. They also did the spring monitoring of the Maude St burn site. As not many projects of this kind have been monitored, especially on the Mornington Peninsula and in these EVCs, we have been told that the results may be valuable for a future research project.

### Green Army

Sue Betheras, John Inchley and I attended the breakfast launch, by Greg Hunt MP, of the Mornington Peninsula Green Army Project on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October.

After spending two weeks working at Chinaman's Creek with Norm McKinlay, the Green Army crew of nine plus their supervisor began their work with BERG Mt Martha on 20<sup>th</sup> October. They tackled the Trades-

cantia on the north bank of the creek a little west of the Uralla Road footbridge, raking and piling this tenacious weed to rot under black plastic. Indeed, they spent their seven days with us on this site alone in an attempt to get every fragment, as Tradescantia regenerates from the tiniest piece. It proved a much bigger and more painstaking job than we expected, one that will require careful and ongoing follow-up.

### Annual Planning Meeting

Each year we have a planning meeting to set the agenda for works in the reserves for the following twelve months. This year's was on 10<sup>th</sup> October. I was there along with John Inchley and Sue Betheras from BERG Mt M, plus Vyv Stryder from Naturelinks and Jo Tetteroo and Matt Stahmer from the Shire's Natural Systems Team.

We discussed present and future projects and grants, planning and management strategies, and work with stakeholders such as Melbourne Water, and we decided on a number of projects for future grant applications:

- Top (south end) of the Rabbit Paddock: target woody weeds and scramblers along on Hopetoun Creek. We have applied for a grant and are awaiting the outcome.
- Hopetoun Creek follow-up of weed control, particularly Pittosporum, plus more planting and possibly matting on steep bank areas to control erosion and weeds, below the Balcombe Kindergarten. Again, we have applied for a grant.
- Bushland east of the Maude St burn site: reduce biomass and woody and scrambling weeds to reduce the threat of them spreading into the clean burn site.
- La Trobe Drive easement: work here will coincide with installation of a new sediment basin.
- Removal of Pine trees and Pittosporums at the west (Augusta St) end of Citation Reserve.
- Coast and foreshore follow-up – ongoing weeding.
- Watson Rd tennis court area: collaborate with the Shire to install another sediment basin.

### Naturelinks

Vyv Stryder is returning as the our Naturelinks Project Manager and Jason Guras has replaced Bree Iredale (to lighten her load) as Naturelinks supervisor for our working-bees. John, Sue and I worked with Jason on the Green Army project and he will be ideal for 'managing' our Team. Thanks to Bree for all her work with us.

### Bush Tucker Gardens

... are springing up all over the place, at schools, kinders, universities and beyond. Never to be outdone, we are considering establishing an indigenous bush tucker garden not too far from the old Campground area. It would complement existing Boonerwung interpretive signage and give further recognition to the original inhabitants of the area and their uses of the land and water. Ideas and input will be gratefully and enthusiastically received!

## GET INVOLVED IN BAT BOX MONITORING

Paul Bertuch will be monitoring the BERG Mt Martha Bat Roost Boxes and would welcome helpers.

**When?** Sunday 7th December, 1.00pm for about 2 hours.

**Where?** meet at the Rotunda

You might see something like this!



*Gould's Wattled Bats Photo courtesy Robert Bender*

With few remaining old trees with hollows, the boxes provide roosts for our many microbats. Paul checks the boxes regularly to see whether bats are using them, make sure that invaders (ants, bees) don't move in, and check that the boxes are in good order. For enquiries, call Paul on 0438 681 946.

### We value your membership!

...but if you've not yet renewed, this may be your last newsletter.

### BALCOMBE CREEK NATURE TRAIL

This project, run by Tony O'Connor through the Balcombe & Moorooduc Land Care Group, has seen four schools create a range of wildlife habitats on the grassy reserve along Balcombe Creek bordering Century Drive.

While the funded project has officially finished, the schools are still involved and many students and families visit on weekends. At three family evenings in October the children showed their parents what they had achieved, with a working bee followed by a barbecue and storytelling round the big fire pits at each school site.

Tony says it has been amazing to see not only the children's great interest in the outdoors, but the families supporting their kids' passion for nature.


### THANKS FROM BALCOMBE GRAMMAR

Dear Liz [Barracrough] and Jenny [Selby],  
We are writing to send our thanks for hosting us this term for our 'Make a Difference' Project. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and got a lot out of it. We have learnt lots from this experience and have expanded our knowledge of the Mt Martha community. We appreciate you giving up your time for organising a schedule for us over the past weeks and we hope we have made a difference to you and the Mt Martha region.

Yours sincerely, Finn, Rob, Jacob and Seb

### BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Janet Copland, Lorraine Lamb

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<p>❖ <b>Monthly working bee:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, between 9am &amp; 12noon. Next is <b>18<sup>th</sup> January</b> (no December working bee). Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or call Liz Barracrough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site.</p> <p>❖ <b>Friday mornings.</b> Call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201.</p>	<p>❖ <b>Waterwatch testing:</b> 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at Augusta St Bridge. Call John Inchley, 5974 1095.</p> <p>❖ <b>BERG Mt Martha Committee</b> meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am on the second Saturday, all members welcome. However there is no meeting in December and in place of the January meeting the Committee is holding a Planning Meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January.</p>	<p>❖ <b>Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group</b> working bees, call Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker 5977 1397.</p> <p>❖ <b>BirdLife Mornington Peninsula</b> bird-watching 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows 9789 0224, mornington@birdlife.org.au or <a href="http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula">www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula</a>.</p> <p>❖ <b>SPIFFA</b> 1<sup>st</sup> Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or <a href="http://www.spiffa.org">www.spiffa.org</a>.</p> <p>❖ <b>Sunshine Reserve</b> working bee 9.30am, last Thursday of month. Call Pia Spreen, 5974 1096</p>
<p><b>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE</b>                      PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • SECRETARY DI LEWIS • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER                      FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE                      COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • JOHN TREVILLIAN • BRONWYN STREET</p>		
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### THE CREEK

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