

THE TUESDAY GROUP RIDES AGAIN

Mary Stemp, founder and driver for so many years of the Tuesday Group working bee, would be delighted to know that it is up and running again, on a monthly basis, under Jenny Selby's leadership.

At its first meeting, 10th March, it got to know 'its patch', the Bunyip, guided by Matt Stahmer (Shire), Pia Spreen and Sally McLeod (Naturelinks) and Pam Hearn, long-standing member of Mary's group and knowledgeable 'birdo'.

Matt suggested that the group take care of the sloping area above the top path, which David Street recalls being called the Upper Lagoon Path, leaving Naturelinks to tackle the large woody weeds below. He explained that the area is included in the Shire's seven-year Bushland Management Plan, with Naturelinks contracted to take care of the weeds.

Matt suggested the group compile a book of pressings or photos of common weeds, to help with ID. Bronwyn Street has already started photographing!

As always there was morning tea – Jenny apologised for her 'rather rubbery muffins', and she baked Anzacs at the last moment to compensate!

Film-maker Roger Threlfall took some action shots for the publicity movie he is making of BERG Mt Martha. And by chance, one of Mary's earliest Tuesday Groupers, Brian Pullman, passed by with his dog and pronounced the new Friday Group good!

*The Tuesday Group meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month between 9.15 and 12 noon. New members welcome!
Contact Jenny Selby 0432 719 288*

MARY'S SEAT



Photo Angela Kirsner

A seat in memory of Mary Stemp was installed at the entrance to The Bunyip in February by the Shire, at the suggestion of the old Tuesday Group members strongly backed by the Committee.



The new Tuesday Group at Mary's Seat. L to R: Bronwyn Street, Pam Hearn, Barbara Thraves, Jenny Selby, David Chalmers, David Street, Karen Chalmers, Eric Smalley, Pia Spreen & Sally McLeod

Photo Matt Stahmer

HABITAT CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT COURSE

This course is the gold standard in environmental training for volunteers. A number of BERGers have done it, sponsored by BERG Mt M, and it's on again this year. If you are interested, contact Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430.

Tamara Keyte & David & Bronwyn Street tell of their 2014 experiences

The three of us came to the course with differing environmental knowhow: Tamara was doing a Diploma in Conservation & Land Management at RMIT, joined BERG MtM and wanted to improve her

local knowledge and contacts. David and Bronwyn had been BERGers for some years, with David a regular at Friday working bees. We responded to the invitation in *The Creek* about the Peninsula Habitat Conservation & Management Course – maybe we would learn more about the overall strategy guiding BERG MtM's environmental management. The course was run by SPIFFA – the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association, a voluntary group that keeps overhead costs to an absolute minimum.

Liz sent us the details – 14 weekly evening sessions from late August to December plus fortnightly Saturday field trips. Quite a commitment!

Top-notch presenters

The faculty were top notch environmental scientists, including Dr Randall Robinson, Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Environmental Management at Victoria University, Darcy Duggan, an active conservation scientist who contributed the Regeneration, Revegetation and Restoration chapter in the epic book *Flora of Melbourne*, and Leon Costermans, author of the *Field Guide to Trees of South East Australia*. They were joined by other experts including Gidja Walker, an environmental consultant with in-depth knowledge of the Mornington Peninsula. The course is also presented in Melbourne by Greening Australia.

The twenty students were from various backgrounds: members of friends groups, students, recent graduates hoping to work in bush restoration, professional habitat staff, interested landowners – a great group of kindred spirits linked by the desire to make a difference to the local environment.

'Protect the best'

The evening sessions, held at The Briars, comprised four units:

Introduction, Bushland, Ecology, and Techniques for Management.

Field trips were a highlight as we saw, at various places on the Peninsula, the results of habitat management. The basic philosophy was *protect the best*, allow remaining indigenous flora to revegetate by clearing threats such as introduced weeds. We learned to use herbicides only when other options are unlikely to succeed, and to be careful about the provenance of seeds when planting – the best seeds are those sourced really locally.



A picnic lunch at The Briars during a field day Photo Bronwyn Street

We had sessions on plant ID, using online resources and field guides in both the classroom and the field. We photographed insects and then discovered their relationship to the surrounding vegetation, a valuable lesson in viewing any bushland site as a whole ecosystem.

A final barbecue at a member's parkland venue consolidated friendships and furthered networking with members of friends groups.

The course opened our eyes to what needs to be done and reinforced our shared commitment to making a difference in conserving this beautiful part of Victoria. We feel better equipped to identify plants and have a good grounding in techniques to rehabilitate bushland. We appreciate even more the fact that pockets of bushland like that around Balcombe estuary retain much of their original flora.

We look forward to applying the learnings both on-the-ground and in the other BERG MtM activities.

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members: Troy & Nikki Arnott, Daniel & Kirsty Idczak, Brian Randall & Elizabeth Foster, Andy Davis, Kevin & Jill Conlan, Louise & Andrew Davies

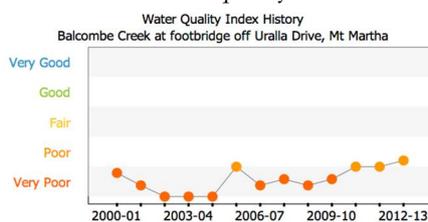
ACTION ON SEDIMENT Workshop with Melbourne Water and the Shire

Graham Hubbard reports

Over the past year the Sedimentation Action Group (SAG) has been meeting with the Shire to seek action on the sedimentation of the estuary. Our aim is to monitor, control and reduce the sediment flow into the creek and estuary to get a healthy estuary. Some of our members recall swimming in the estuary, clearly not possible now with the sediment build-up.

In February Shire Officer Jessica Wingad convened a workshop with Melbourne Water, Shire officers and seven BERG Mt Martha members, to share information and agree a joint plan of action.

Melbourne Water provided an Index of Water Quality for the Creek at Uralla Bridge for 2001-13 (see below) based on their measurements of nutrients, water clarity (turbidity), dissolved oxygen, salinity (electrical conductivity), pH levels and a range of metals. It clearly shows the Creek's low water quality.



This is consistent with data collected by BERG MtM's Waterwatch team at three sites over a similar period, although we are not able to measure metals and some aspects of nutrient load.

We learned that our Creek receives more run-off from unmade roads than any other on the Peninsula, but neither the Shire nor Melbourne Water has any evidence on the specific origin or the composition of the sediment in the estuary. Clearly we have a number of big problems to address.

The workshop agreed on priority actions. The two main ones were:

- Monitor water quality and sediment flow rates from all drains in the reserves over 12

months.

- Analyse samples of existing sediment in the estuary.

Coincidentally, these were the two requests BERG MtM made to the Shire Councillors at a Community Pre-Budget Submission meeting the previous week, so we are coming at this from two directions.

With the current financial uncertainty in government and the Shire's proposed restructuring under its new CEO, neither Melbourne Water nor the Shire, though supportive of the proposals, could commit to any spending in the short term. The BERG MtM team, with our technical expertise, thus decided to meet separately and, using modern technology and our usual financial innovativeness, to put further evidence in front of both organisations to speed things up. We'd appreciate any technical support, information or ideas to help us fix this enormous problem.

ANOTHER EVENING AT TONY O'CONNOR'S

Tony and Leeanne O'Connor again showed BERGers their inspirational adventure into sustainable living in Century Drive, on Saturday 21st March.



What's under this stone? Will waving peacock feathers over it help?! Photo Liz Barraclough

About 30 adults and 15 kids met Tony's sheep and chooks, worm farm and wetland, orchard, bee hives and veggie garden – and swung on his swing! As always, Tony's ability to engage kids was to the fore, notably in his habitat project in the adjacent reserve with local schools. Then, a tour of the house, built almost entirely of recycled materials, and a sausage sizzle.



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

At the **February Sunday working-bee** we once again mulched and weeded below the Balcombe Pre-school on Hopetoun Creek in preparation for extensive planting this autumn and winter. It is really looking good – a great effort.



Division of labour! The guys barrowed and the gals weeded at the February working bee
Photos Angela Kirsner



The **Friday Morning Group** is back in action, weeding the quarry and tackling the Winter Cherry on the north side of the creek below Uralla Rd. Winter Cherry is difficult to treat and control as not only does it seed, but sends up shoots from its roots. Naturelinks has been trying the weedicide Esteem in their dabbers on this recalcitrant weed; we will compare the results with our standard dabbers after some months.

The **March Sunday working bee** continued this work, amassing a vast pile of Winter Cherry and Tradescantia (see photo!), which we left rotting under black plastic.



Photo Angela Kirsner

A splinter group tackled a veritable jungle of Winter Cherry and large woody weeds deep in the bush further downstream.



John Trevillian considers the weed jungle at the March working bee Photo Angela Kirsner

Grants/Projects

Our Melbourne Water Community & Group Support Grant applications were successful though the funding to all groups was reduced by 20%:

- \$14,236.75 for follow-up weed control on the north bank between Uralla and Augusta St bridges. Community awareness funding, granted previous years, was cut.
- \$12,067 for follow-up weed control on Hopetoun Creek upstream of Bay Rd and upstream of Ferrero Recreation Reserve.
- A Support Grant of \$1,100 will put a BERGer through the Habitat Conservation & Management Course, plus insurance & materials.

Green Army

A second Round 1 team is working on the woody weeds on Citation Hill and progressing at a huge rate. The Landcare Network's application for Round 2 was also successful and a team will start in August for three weeks, tackling the sea of Tradescantia on the north bank.

Clean Up Australia Day

With Mt Martha Yacht Club at the helm, there were a healthy 40 volunteers, while the Birdrock Ave Group organised by Di Lewis, numbered 33 – just from one street!

Jenny Selby and I sorted the rubbish. It truly highlights our excessive consumerism, the rubbish from single-use items, and its devastating effects on waterways and wildlife.

There were nine bags of glass bottles, six of plastic bottles, five of cans and five of other recyclables,

plus a full bag of plastic bags, and another 40 of other rubbish. Plus the un-baggable stuff, including rubber matting, roof guttering, polystyrene boxes, a lounge chair, a car radiator, bits of wood, tin...



Environment Week at The Briars

BERG Mt M helped to help kick off Environment Week at the Festival on Sunday 15th March. Among the many children's activities, Jenny Selby and her team introduced kids to waterbugs – a prelude to helping with a week of Waterwatch activities.



Lily shows off a large tadpole with Jenny Selby watching, at the Environment Festival at The Briars Photo Angela Kirsner

COME BAT WITH US!

Paul Bertuch, our Bat expert, will be checking the fauna boxes in the Reserves and would love extra hands.

When Sunday 12th April, 1 pm, for 2-3 hours

Meet at the Rotunda.

Contact Paul Bertuch, 0488 762179.

Last time, we found that the Gould's Wattled Bats (below) had been breeding in the same boxes and were re-using a number of boxes. We also found a Large Forest Bat – a first in our fauna boxes!



'LITTLE BERGERS'

Article and photo by Zoe Boehnke

This relaxed group of local mums, dads and grandies meets with their babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers each week at the old campground by the Balcombe Estuary. We meet on Wednesday mornings around 11am (depending on schedules).

Three mums began Little BERGers last year because we treasure Mt Martha's natural environment and love



getting amongst it with our kids. We also thought this would be a great way to encourage young families to join BERG Mt Martha.

The kids run around, climb trees, jump in puddles, collect sticks and leaves that become part of their games... We might do a bit of nature-inspired craft, toast marshmallows on the fire or cook pikelets or sausages on the BBQ.

We'd love you to join us!
Call Zoe on 0401 842 439
or Nane on 0412 986 183.

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<p>❖ Sunday working bee: 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 19th April and 17th May. Call BERG MtM 0447 160 288 or Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430 to find the work site.</p> <p>❖ Tuesday working bee: 2nd Tuesday, between 9.15 & 12 noon, usually in the Bunyip. Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288.</p> <p>❖ Friday working bee, weekly between 9.30 and 12 noon . Call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201.</p>	<p>❖ Waterwatch testing: 4th Sunday at Augusta St Bridge. Call John Inchley, 5974 1095.</p> <p>❖ BERG Mt Martha Committee meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am on the 2nd Saturday. Next are 11th April and 9th May. All members welcome.</p>	<p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees, 10am to 2pm on these Sundays: 19th April, 17th May, 21st June, 19th July, 16th August, 20th Sept. Meet at the noticeboard near the playground. Call Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker 5977 1397.</p> <p>❖ 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.</p> <p>❖ SPIFFA 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org.</p> <p>❖ Sunshine Reserve working bee 9.30am, last Thursday of month. Call Pia Spreen, 5974 1096</p>
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE 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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