



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 19 No 4, August 2015

THANKS! TO LOCAL TRADERS

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PROPERTY SERVICES

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Bonaccorde,
owned by BERG MM
member Amanda
Haimona, has
sponsored our new
brochure and our logo
is in their newsletter.

Bendigo Bank Mt Martha Community Bank Branch

Manager Tom Brown presented
BERG MM President Graham
Hubbard with \$1000 towards our
2016 Family Estuary Day.



...AND MORE

Graham Hubbard reports

John Stirling has been working with Mt Martha's traders to let them know what BERG MM does, interest them in sponsoring a BERG MM project, and persuade them to put a BERG MM supporter sticker in their window (\$2 per sticker – is there one on your car?). As well as the two large donations above, we are delighted to be receiving a number of other donations – you will find details in the October edition of *The Creek*, and on our website and notice boards.

In return, we need to support our trader supporters. Use their services in return for their support and we will all be better off! That's how a good community works.

So look for our list of supporters, use them when you can, and mention you are from BERG MM so they know we appreciate their support. And perhaps you can tell us of other organisations that might be willing to support us in the future.

*You are invited
to the launch of*

Up the Creek

The story of the
Balcombe Estuary
Reserves Group
Mt Martha

By Mary Stemp
and Angela Kirsner

Where: Mt Martha House

When: Saturday 22nd August, 10 am
Cr Anne Shaw will launch the book,

followed by another excellent
BERG MM morning tea!

RSVP (for catering) by

14th August to info@berg.org.au
or 0447 160 288.

Buy your Copy!

Where? At the launch, the AGM
(7th Nov), Mt Martha Newsagency,
or Farrell's Bookshop, Mornington.

Or contact info@berg.org.au or
0447 160 288.

Cost: \$35 (+ \$5 if we post it to you).



– *Up the Creek* tells
BERG Mt Martha's story
in words & pictures,
from Richard Hawkins' outrage at an attempted
'grab' of reserves land
in 1997 to today's
strong and highly
respected organisation.

IT'S ON AGAIN!

Family Day at the Estuary Sunday 28th February 2016

Last year some 400 people, mostly young families, came for art workshops, face painting, storytelling, bird watching and lots more. Next year we plan to make it even better!

Can you help?

Can you offer an activity for kids?
Ideas? Contacts? A publicity sign in
your front garden/fence?

Call Barbara Thraves on 5974 2185.

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

The winter months, from May to August, are our main planting season. It is essential to get the plants in the ground to take advantage of any winter rain and the increasing warmth of spring – the earlier the better, so they get well established before the extremes of summer. We have found that if we plant beyond August, often fewer of the plants survive. Almost all our working-bees and programs at the moment are therefore directed at planting.

We are hoping for lots more prolonged and soaking rain. So far the moisture is only surface deep and our sandy soils remain hydrophobic, resisting water penetration.

Sunday working bees

In **June** we spread mulch along the edge of the vegetation on the west side of Hopetoun Creek below Balcombe Preschool and planted the banks on both sides near the footbridge, mainly with Poas. We also matted and planted two erosion-prone areas. Naturelinks had earlier sprayed the regenerating Angled Onion on the east bank.

In **July**, as we worked along the foreshore from the South Beach car

park to the shops, we were delighted to see lots of evidence of indigenous Swamp Rats – shallow tunnels in the soft, sandy soil. In gorgeous winter sun we planted dozens of Banksias then removed heaps of regenerating Poygala opposite the shops.

Friday Morning Group

We spent two weeks weeding beds in the old campground and reorganising the storage shed, and another two weeks planting at the old quarry, mainly Poas plus a few Bursarias, Tree Daisies, Indigofera, Goodenia, and Viminaria.

Tuesday Group

With twelve people on the books, the group is seeing a healthy turn-out at their monthly Bunyip working bees. They removed woody weeds (largely Polygala) along the top path, with Naturelinks taking care of the lower path, and in July, planted some canopy trees and removed grassy weeds (see Jenny's article this page).

Grants

We are still waiting to hear about our Coastcare grant application. All is on hold while a new state Coastcare coordinator is being appointed.

Green Army

Our Green Army corps has achieved lots. They have the Tradescantia on the north bank tongue under control, and started on a large patch of Angled Onion – work that will need to be completed in the next few weeks. They also spot-planted and guarded 50 trees on Citation Hill.

Many thanks to the BERG MM helpers who helped supervise them: Jenny Selby, David Street, John



Wheelbarrow as auto tray! Morning tea at the June working bee Photo Angela Kirsner

Stirling and Eric Smalley. It is great both to spread the load and responsibility, and to expose the young Green Army to more of the volunteers.

This Green Army group will be back for two weeks in August to plant, weed and take part in our propagation training at The Briars nursery.

Rabbit control

Local rabbit numbers have fluctuated over the years but they are around Mt Martha in force at the moment. Controlling them is made more difficult by the constraints imposed by being in a residential area. We hope to work with the Shire to establish an on-going integrated management program.

Offers of volunteer help

We have generous offers of help from two organisations. The **Peninsula School**, as part of their staff 'Hands for the Community' day in December, has offered a group to work in our reserves. And Petty Officer Boatswain Daniel (Jack) O'Neill, of **HMAS Cerberus** asked us if we could accommodate staff

volunteers each month for up to six months. We could! We are considering various projects for them.

Furnishing the old camp laundry

The Shire has kindly agreed to provide and install another green painted table and bench set, similar

to others in campground, in the old campground laundry in the next few weeks. It will be bolted to the floor and will provide an extra sheltered picnic spot.

EUCALYPT DIE-BACK – IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BUNYIP

Jenny Selby reports

In June Liz and I heard ecologist Jeff Yucovic speak on the local die-back of gums and other trees, with possums the main culprits. Once, he pointed out, the top predators kept possum numbers under control – quolls, powerful owls, eagles and the like. As these species dwindled in number or vanished entirely, foxes helped to fill the gap, but with fox numbers more controlled, rabbit and possums are thriving and our trees, grasses and more are suffering. Added to this are the pressures on indigenous plants from suburban sprawl.

Old maps of the Moorooduc Plains and early paintings around Mornington show open grassy woodland with scattered she-oaks as the main over-storey, and little middle storey vegetation. Possums, avoid coming to ground level; with no middle storey, they had no 'highway' to the taller trees.

A salutary lesson! In July in the Bunyip, the Tuesday Group planted some replacement trees where natural regeneration has failed. We took care to isolate the new trees from under-storey plants and guard them, and we will add possum guards as they grow. Over time, our weeding is returning the area to an open landscape typical of early days.

And a barrier of plantings such as Lomandras along Latrobe Drive will reduce the re-invasion of weed grasses that we've been removing.

QUARRY GRASS!

Sue Betheras reports

It is our own local form of *Poa labillardierei*, but some of us affectionately call it *Poa quarrii*, because that is where we find it growing – in the old Quarry near the Uralla Rd footbridge.



Sue Milton, Jenny Selby, Gaye Briggs and John Inchley head along the beach to the foreshore weeding patch at the July working bee Photo Verity Mapp



The Friday Group has been weeding and planting here for about four years and we have seen the area transformed. The jungle of blackberries (and hundreds of car tyres!) has given way to hundreds of thriving indigenous plants (see photo above) and the little birds are there in large numbers.

Our plantings have included hundreds of our Poa over the last two years, propagated at The Briars Nursery from seed collected in the Quarry. As Liz reported in the last newsletter, we have had Friday working bees at the nursery learning how to clean, prepare and sow seeds, prick out the seedlings, and prepare cuttings of lots of shrubs.

After four months our grasses are perfect for planting out. It is a slow task in the steep, rocky terrain, made slower still by having to put guards around all the new grasses to deter the rabbits.

It has been very satisfying seeing the progeny returned to their home patch. We have all enjoyed watching the progress of 'our' grasses.

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

Jenny Selby reports

Working with young people has always been a priority for BERG Mt Martha, and we are delighted by the level of interest being shown by our local schools and preschools.

Together, the Balcombe and Mt Martha preschools will launch our new Dragonfly Trail in August. This kids-only trail around the campground, a follow-on from the

Yellow Robin Audio Trail, will introduce the children to the magic of the estuary through five audio-posts: 'Feathered Friends', 'Monotreme Madness', 'Underwater World', 'Lazy Lizards' and 'Creatures of the Night'. The two preschool teachers will launch the trail, and the children will be the first to try it out. The Dragon Fly

badging the trail was painted by Anni Dowd (see image).

The **Balcombe Grammar** Year 6 fortnightly program with BERG MM started in July. After teaching the students how to give new plantings the best chance of success, the second session will have students 'buddy' with kids from both the local preschools to pass on to them their new planting skills.

Peninsula Specialist College in Dromana is a newcomer to our programs. The students, who have some level of intellectual and physical disability, will plant and remove woody weeds with us around the Ferrero Ovals for four sessions from late August.

CAN YOU HELP?

Help at any of our schools sessions would be VERY welcome! Contact Jenny Selby on 0432 719 288, 5974 2402, or jenselby22@gmail.com.

BALCOMBE GRAMMAR ACTIVE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

– working with students fortnightly for three more Fridays: 14th & 28th August, 11th September. Hours 11.45-1.00, and 1.45-3.00.

PENINSULA SPECIALIST COLLEGE

– weeding & planting with 10-12 students with a disability over 4 Thursdays, 20th & 27th August, 3rd & 10th September. Hours 9.30-12.30.

A group of **Mt Eliza Secondary College** students in years 7 and 8 recently spent time with Tony O'Connor (see next column). A group will also come to us as part of their 'Real Time Learning' program.

Excitingly, it will be a two-way exchange: while we teach them about environmental work, they will teach us how to use GPS on iPhone to track our work.

And finally, the 'murals' project, the idea of local artist Michael Leeworthy, who was part of the 2013 Family Day at the Estuary. He will work with students from Osborne Primary, Mt Martha Primary, Balcombe Grammar and Bentons Junior College, to paint pictures that will then hang permanently in the Rotunda. Our thanks to the Shire for providing a Place Making Grant to cover the costs.

REAL TIME LEARNING ON THE FARM

This project took place in June. The students wrote their article after the first week.

We are twelve Mount Eliza Secondary College Real Time Learning (RTL) students in 7C & 8C who are visiting Tony O'Connor's farm in Mt Martha, backing onto Balcombe Creek, each Thursday, contemplating potential environmental projects we may tackle as part of our RTL community volunteer placements, with help of our teacher Narelle Debenham.

Last Thursday we went on the bus and helped Tony harvest his olives and quinces, care for his farm animals, and sift and crush charcoal for the worm farm we made with keen environmentalist and proud BERG member Nick. There was even time for a spot of fishing.

We plan to construct a garden with indigenous plants that attract lizards, butterflies and birds, extend the fruit forest, grow non-genetically modified seeds, make bird, bat and possum boxes, 'Hobbit holes in the hills' for the bush rats, a frog bog and a native 'bee hotel'. It will be a very productive five weeks with our environmental mentors at Tony's farm! We are proud to be student ambassadors for our school and advocates for our natural environment.

Ashley, Jess, Matt M, Alex, Matt W, Oliver, Sebastian, Trinity, Tarek, Floyd, Bella and Flynn





Mt Eliza Secondary College students at Tony O'Connor's Century Dve property (see article previous page)

CONGRATULATIONS JAN

BERG Mt Martha member and former committee member Jan Oliver was awarded a very well deserved OAM in the Queen's Birthday list 'For service to conservation and the environment, and to the community of the Mornington Peninsula'. A long-standing mover and shaker for the environment, Jan is now President of the Mornington Environment Association.

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Dr Eric Gilford, Ross & Susan Betts, Helen Hughes & Soren Pedersen, Meg & Bill Peachey, Geoff & Denise Noble, Helen Coates & Stuart Kruse, Sharalyn & Anthony Marchant, Judy Kuehne & Walter Wassing, Grant Lawrie & Emma Smith

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 16th August and 20th September. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or call Liz Barracrough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site.</p> <p>❖ Tuesday working bee: 2nd Tuesday, between 9.00 & 12 noon, meet at the end of Latrobe Dve. 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 second Saturday. Next are 8th August and 12th September. All members welcome.</p> <p>❖ BERG Mt Martha AGM Saturday 7th November, 9.30 am, Mt Martha House</p>	<p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees, 10am to 2pm on Sunday 16th August & Sunday 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 THRAVES • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • JOHN TREVILLIAN • BRONWYN STREET</p>		
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THE CREEK

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