



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 20 No 3, June 2016

**YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED
TO THE
DEDICATION OF
KEITH'S SEAT**

The new seat on the estuary jetty is to be dedicated to the memory of **Keith Wilson**,

BERG Mt Martha's wonderful president from 1999 to 2009.

When: Saturday 18th June, 11.30 am

Where: Meet at the Rotunda. After dedication of the seat, we will move on to 13 Victoria Cres (Kirsners' place) for a simple lunch and a celebration of Keith.

RSVP: Email: info@berg.org.au or phone 0447 160 288.

Please let us know if you're coming so we can cater for you.

Many thanks to the Mt Martha Rotarians, who both provided and installed the seat.



Mt Martha Rotarians installing Keith's seat on a gorgeous April day Photo Roger Annear

**OUR FIRST
PHILANTHROPY PROJECT**

BERG Mt Martha is delighted to have received \$15,000 from the Sally Oatley Memorial Fund, a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation, as initial funding for our first philanthropy project.

Restoring an important EVC

The project is to restore the large area from Maude St down to the creek, between the burn site and Alice St. It is particularly important as it is our only patch of the Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC), Damp Sands Herb Rich Woodland – woodland with a grassy, heathy or bracken-dominated understorey and a ground layer rich in herbs, grasses, and orchids.

A three-year task

The grant will give us an excellent start on a task we expect to stretch over three years or so, as we remove the woody weeds and allow the indigenous woodland plants to germinate and thrive. We even plan to install two reflection seats where you can sit and enjoy the bushland scenery and the view.

Disappointingly, our application to the Ross Trust for funding to complete the project was rejected, but we will pursue funds from other sources. Our aim is to fund the project from outside our regular sources, to widen our funding base and help insulate BERG MM against the inevitable vagaries of funding.

**MARBLED GECKO
NEW ON OUR FAUNA LIST**

BERG MM member Kevin Conlan contacted us recently with pictures of a small lizard he and his family found in their firewood pile (they live above the Hopetoun Creek reserve). They identified it as a Marbled Gecko and moved it away from their firewood and potential incineration!

The Marbled Gecko, *Christinus marmoratus*, is not recorded in either of our two fauna surveys. Ecologist Gidja Walker has, however, confirmed the Conlans' identification, and that these elusive Geckos do occur on the Peninsula.



The Marbled Gecko found in the Conlans' woodpile Photo Jill Ford

The Museum Victoria website provides more facts. The Gecko has large finger and toe pads, a flattish body, often orange-coloured specks on its tail, and can be up to 70mm from snout to vent (base of tail).

These Geckos are quite common in parts of Melbourne (with a huge population in Melbourne Cemetery), but being nocturnal, are rarely seen. By day, they may hide under bark, fallen timber or logs, or even in roofs or indoors. In winter, they choose warm places – thin sun-baked rocks, roof tiles or north-facing tree bark. In summer they choose deeper retreats. Unlike many reptiles, they can be active at temperatures as low as 6°. You can often tell they're around by

CAN YOU HELP?

BALCOMBE GRAMMAR COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAM

BERG Mt Martha is again working with Balcombe Grammar Year 6s, weeding and mulching to restore wildlife corridors around Hopetoun Creek, plus Waterwatch activities. (At the same time, the other class will again be building nesting boxes with Paul Bertuch.)

The sessions will be fortnightly over four Fridays, from July 15th, 12.00-1.00, and 1.55-2.55. Help at any of these sessions would be VERY welcome! Contact Jenny Selby 0432 719 288 or Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430

the tiny black and white poos they leave on the surfaces they walk across (a lot like small bird poos). Unlike most reptiles, they eat the skins they shed. They also eat spiders and insects such as cockroaches. They mate in late summer to early autumn and produce one clutch of two eggs in late spring.

Marbled Geckos occur throughout western and northern Victoria. In Melbourne, they are the only geckos and may have been introduced to the city in firewood and garden rocks from other parts of Victoria.

museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/discover-y-centre-news/2008-archive/marbled-gecko/

ANYONE HOME? CHECKING OUR FAUNA BOXES

There were tiny bats at home, and evidence of Sugar Gliders, when seven BERGers (Tuesday Group and others) had a glimpse into some of the Reserves' fauna boxes. The occasion was a monitoring workshop run by Naturelinks on a wet May day.

To inspect the boxes, Dale Westwood and Ben Hallpike used a camera and light on a telescopic pole (see photo). The images are displayed and recorded in real time on a hand-held device, and the data uploaded to a Shire database.



The shadowy images showed the folded wings of tiny bats as they hung from the roughened interior of their box. Bronwyn Street reported 'one very restless bat which stuck its little foot out the bottom of the box'!

Monitoring also involves recording the boxes' condition and maintenance needed. One, for example, had sticks in it that needed removing (probably dragged in by a possum). Another needed its entry slit narrowed, to keep out larger creatures and allow just the tiny bats to enter.

Dale and Ben went on to check the rest of the reserves' boxes and found Sugar Gliders in two.

Photo Bronwyn Street

JOIN OUR NEW COAST GROUP!

All welcome! – BERGers, Yacht Club & Lifesaving Club members, anyone who loves our beaches, foreshore and coast

When: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 9am – 12 noon
with an excellent BERG MM morning tea at 10.30am

Where: Meet at Mount Martha Yacht Club car park (near Yacht Club gate)

Contact: Suzanne: Ryan 0418 387 604

Introducing Suzanne

We are thrilled that Suzanne Ryan has agreed to run this much-needed group. Suzanne and her partner Ian Gould moved to Mt Martha seven years ago and became interested in BERG MM through their involvement in the Yacht Club (where Ian is Vice Commodore).

Retirement left gaps in Suzanne's day, and she went along to a Tuesday working bee just last year. Then she mentioned an interest in the foreshore... The rest, as they say, is history.

Why does the foreshore matter?

- Our coastal bushland is integral to the character of Mt Martha.
- It helps to protect the coast from buffeting storms and erosion – particularly important in the face of the increasing extreme weather events that climate change is bringing.
- It is part of the wildlife corridor that links with the Balcombe Creek and reserves, up through The Briars, the tributaries of Hopetoun and Harrap Creeks, and on into one of the most extensive catchments of the Peninsula.
- It comprises a threatened vegetation class, and provides biodiversity and a unique habitat for our local indigenous birds and animals.



Suzanne Ryan with a tray of foreshore plants Photo Liz Barraclough

TUESDAY GROUP

Jenny Selby reports

In April and May we moved across Latrobe Dr to work opposite the Bunyip walking track. We removed dense jungles of Cape Ivy and English Ivy, probably spread from garden waste, as well as great piles of dumped rubbish (bottles, concrete chunks, carpet...). In May we tackled the re-emerging ivy and exposed Smilax (Bridal Creeper, which smothers other plants both above and below ground). We have made an excellent start to restoring this area, and we will be returning here throughout the year, as well as our regular follow-up in The Bunyip.



Before & after photos of the Tuesday group assault on Cape Ivy and dumped rubbish at the end of Latrobe Drive Photos Bronwyn Street

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Sunday working-bees

In April, with 13 energetic volunteers, we continued our assault on the woody weeds (mainly *Polygala* and *Pittosporum*) at the top of the Rabbit Paddock, just below Village Close. We have made great inroads into this mammoth weeding task.

We added greatly to the lengthy stack of weeds created by Naturelinks over previous days, and the next day, the now massive stack was driven over by a mulching machine, leaving a thin layer of mulch remaining. A most efficient means of dealing with huge quantities of green waste!

And the weeding has liberated some lovely remnant species including *Lomandra longifolia*, *Lomandra filiformis* and *Ghania radula*, as well as *Hibbertia scandens* and *Bossiaea cinerea* from earlier regeneration planting.

In May we planted 155 trees and middle storey plants along the foreshore from South Beach carpark to the Bay Rd path. I had previously distributed the tubestock plus stakes amongst the existing vegetation, over the often rough and uneven ground, and finding the small tubes and planting them was a little like a game of hide and seek!



Jenny Selby (right) shows Ruby Caruso and her mother, Lisa Gould, how to plant tubestock at the May working bee

Photo Angela Kirsner

While planting, we found a young, dead fox among the bushes. And when planting was finished, we turned our attention to an infestation of Madeira Vine, another garden escapee (see article this page).

We had a great turn-out of volunteers, the numbers swelled with some volunteers from the Yacht Club



Great view, great cake! – the joys of BERG MM working bees Photo Angela Kirsner

and others responding to the publicity about the formation of our new BERG MM Coast Group.

Thanks for delicious and bountiful morning-teas to Shirley Kerr (April) and Meredith Horton (May).

Friday morning group

Over recent weeks the Friday group has worked on woody weeding at the Maude St and Uralla Bridge sites, rationalising the piles of weeds left to rot down under black plastic, weeding round seedlings planted last Spring in the Jaw area, and monitoring the quadrats in the Maude St burn site. This monitoring, done each season over the last three years, involves listing the plants present and taking photos.

Mt Martha Yacht Club working-bee

By the time you read this, the recently formed BERG MM Coast Group will have joined the Yacht Club, on 29th May, to replant the old toilet block site, which will be fenced off to control access. (Previous planting was done too late in the year to survive the hot, dry summer). Planting will also extend into the areas immediately north and south of the Yacht and Lifesaving Clubs.

Deakin University

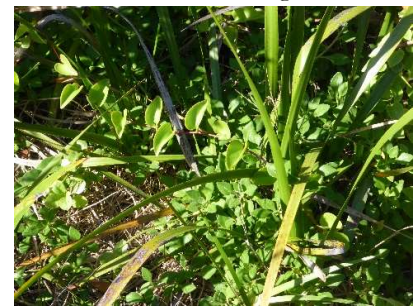
Each year for a number of years we have hosted students from Deakin University's School of Life and Environmental Sciences to see our reserves and our work, as part of their Environmental Management and Sustainability unit.

This year Sue Betheras did the honours, with 40 students on Friday

22nd April, whom she took on a guided walk up the creek and down to the beach. Appreciative staff sent back word that they had received lots of positive feedback from students. Many thanks to Sue.

MADEIRA VINE A SMOTHERING WEED

This tenacious South American weed is currently confined to a smallish area of the foreshore, but we need to tackle it before it goes further.



Tendrils of Madeira Vine over Lomandra in the foreshore reserve Photo Liz Barraclough

A Weeds Australia fact sheet records that it can grow a metre a week and climb up to 40m to smother and collapse mature trees, while on the ground, it forms thick mats that overwhelm low-lying vegetation and inhibit natural regeneration.

It produces prodigious numbers of tubers both above and below ground, and each one of these can form a new plant. It requires meticulous weeding, and follow up for years.

THANKS TO TRADER DONORS

Peninsula Travel,
Mt Martha Chiropractic & Sports
Injury Clinic

DOGS IN THE RESERVES

Dogs off lead in the reserves are an ongoing concern, as their pervasive scent disturbs and disrupts indigenous fauna. At risk are our Swamp Rats, lizards, Echidnas, and the small birds that frequent the ground and lower storey vegetation. Where dogs are present in bushland, research has shown that the numbers of both bird species and individual birds are substantially reduced. It's a particular concern given the loss throughout Mt Martha of the dense bush that provides small-bird habitat.



Having dogs on leads will not eliminate this impact, but it will reduce it. Given the high numbers of dogs through our reserves every day, it is critically important that they be on lead.

To this end, the Shire has provided two large, brightly coloured sandwich boards to encourage dog walkers to do the right thing. We will put them out at working bees, whenever Naturelinks is working in the reserves, and at other times as well.

At the same time, the Shire will trial regular visits to the reserves by a local laws ranger to encourage dog walkers to act responsibly. We will monitor the results of these actions.

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sunday working bee: monthly, 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 19th June and 17th July. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430. ❖ Tuesday working bee: monthly, 2nd Tuesday, between 9am & 12 noon, meet at the end of Latrobe Dve. Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288. ❖ Friday working bee: weekly between 9.30 and 12 noon. Call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201. ❖ Coast Group: monthly, 3rd Wednesday, between 9am & 12 noon, meet in car park beside the Yacht Club. Call Suzanne Ryan 0418 387 604. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: 4th Sunday 9.15, starting at Augusta St Bridge. Call John Inchley, 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Mt Martha Committee meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am, usually the second Saturday. Next are 4th June and 9th July. All members welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 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
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 JOHN TREVILLIAN COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • BRONWYN STREET		
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