



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 20 No 5, October 2016

A WALKING, TALKING, EATING, SMELLING ADVENTURE IN THE BUSH

Judy Hubbard reports

A sunny Wednesday on the Balcombe estuary in the September school holidays was the perfect setting for a guided talk for little BERGers by Gidja Walker – local ecologist, indigenous specialist and dream weaver.

Gidja was commissioned by BERG Mt Martha to take two groups of our members, kids and grandkids on a magical kids' discovery walk through the Balcombe Estuary bushland, just behind the Rotunda.

What did they find out?

That every plant has a story, lots are tasty, many are good medicine and all need to be treated with respect.

Gidja started her exploration with the Spiny-headed Mat Rush, which she said was a traditional basket-weaving plant of the Bunurong people. And over the next hour, she wove a delicate bracelet from her frond as she walked and talked through the bushland.

'Each plant will let you know which piece can be taken,' said Gidja, gently easing a reed from the mat rush clump and eating the soft white end. 'It tastes like peas,' she said, encouraging the kids to try it too. And it did!

Armed with giant magnifying glasses, Gidja's troop of Dora the Explorers followed her through the bush, stopping at trees and plants along the way to examine and learn.



'Who's got good eyes?' she challenged, holding up a half-eaten gum leaf.

With Gidja's help, the children experienced the

wonder of scales, holes made by leaf miners, tiny eggs and baby scale insects.

'What made these big holes in the ground?' Gidja asked. 'Swamp rats! Try not to tread on their houses.'

When eagle-eyed five year old Beatrice spotted a caterpillar on Swamp Paperbark flowers, Gidja was able to explain the simple relationship

KEEP THE DATE!

**2016 BERG MT MARTHA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**SATURDAY 22ND OCTOBER
Mt Martha House (Mtg Rm 5)**

**9.15am registration for the meeting
at 9.30am sharp**

Our speaker will be

Liz Barraclough OAM

In the lead-up to BERG Mt Martha's 20th anniversary of in 2017, Liz, our amazing Field Officer, will talk about the difference BERG volunteers have made to the reserves, and how it has been achieved.

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2015 AGM
- Committee reports: President, Treasurer, Field Officer,
- Election: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, & up to 10 ordinary committee members
- Appointment of Auditor

Nominations for office bearers & committee are open until Friday 14th October. For details call 0447 160 208 or see the August newsletter.

between flowers, seeds and bush regeneration.



Middle of page: Beatrice finds a caterpillar (Photo Judy Hubbard). Above left: What's up that tree? (Photo Verity Mapp).

Above right: You can see so much through a magnifying glass! (Photo Liz Barraclough)



Left: Gidja & the Magnifiers! (photo Liz Barraclough)



Right: Kiran with a piece of paperbark root (photo Judy Hubbard)

Our walk finished on the sandy beach under the bridge, where Gidja created a set of intriguing animal tracks with her fingers and thumbs. 'What's this?' she asked. 'A wallaby? A cat? A rabbit?'

'And what's sand made of?'

'Yellow atoms,' shouted an enthusiastic young explorer.

Some interesting things we learned from Gidja:

- Tea tree oil is good medicine and good for getting rid of head lice, but not the lice eggs.
- Swamp Paperbark was used to make baby 'nappies' when lined with moss, and was used to wrap food and wounds.
- Green Samphire tastes good and people on the Cornish coast grow it to eat with crabs.
- The common reed is an excellent water purifier and carbon fixer. If you put it in a vitamiser you can make paper. And it's becoming an endangered species.
- If you get an insect stuck in your skin, put sticky tape on it (or wax strips) and rip off.
- Saltbush is a very tasty plant and good for reviving you when you're tired.
- If you are looking for water in the desert, look for giant bulrushes – they grow in the freshest water.
- Bower Spinach is good to eat, but blanch it first to remove the oxalates.

Thanks Gidja for a fantastic introduction to the wonders of the

Balcombe Estuary. And thanks to Barbara Thraves, Di Lewis and the CAG team for organising the walks and providing a delicious sausage sizzle.

AN INVITATION:

WHAT BIRD IS THAT?

BirdLife Mornington Peninsula

invites you to a morning of
Bird and Habitat Displays

All Welcome

Bring the kids and they can learn about and see our beautiful Mornington Peninsula bird life.

When: Sunday 23rd October, from 9.00am

Where: The Briars Visitor Centre
Displays include:

- Theatre presentation
- Bird walks information table
- Free morning tea
- Display by Friends of the Hooded Plover
- A chance to speak to bird experts.

If you have binoculars, bring them.



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Sunday working-bees

In August we spread a veritable mountain of mulch in the old campground at the end of Henley Ave, where the old toilet block was recently removed, and on the edge of the Swamp Melaleuca at the end of Wattle Ave. We then planted out the two areas. A small group also weeded and planted around the bird hide, to protect and supplement past plantings.

In September, we had a great turn-up to remove woody weeds, mainly Italian Buckthorn and Flax-leaf Broom, and clean up after the Green Army, in the riparian area below Maude St. This work is our volunteer contribution to the Balcombe Creek Melbourne Water grant (more on this area next page).

Friday group

A cheerful, enthusiastic and reliable (when not off gallivanting elsewhere!) crew, the Friday group has been working again around Uralla Bridge and The Jaw (downstream on the north bank), with follow-up weeding (Panic Veldt Grass, Winter Cherry, Buttercup, Fumitory, Tradescantia) and enhancement planting. Over the last few weeks they have also removed woody weeds in the bushland area along Maude St.

TUESDAY GROUP

Jenny Selby reports

Seven resilient volunteers braved the inclement weather to remove masses of ivy and bridal creeper in the Latrobe Drive bushland opposite The Bunyip. This area has been a dump for household rubbish and garden waste, but over the year the Tuesday team has worked towards restoring the area. Thanks to Annette, Bronwyn, Lorraine, Karin, Patricia and David as well as Naturelinks supervisor Sue Wade, who has stepped in during Pia Spreen's absence.

Work along the foreshore

The new Coastal Group is nothing short of amazing, working under the guidance of Suzanne Ryan and Tamara (from Naturelinks). They have weeded, planted (to enhance

diversity and protect dunes), mended and replaced fencing, and collected rubbish, working along the foreshore in both directions from the Yacht Club and Lifesaving Club.

Not only have they drawn up a worksplan for the **2016 Coastcare Grant**, but also a 2016 plan for the group's monthly working-bees to complement grant and Shire works.

Funded by this grant, Naturelinks found a fine, sunny day (recently rare!) to spray the Madeira Vine, Periwinkle, Rambling Dock and Watsonia. And the 1st Green Army crew (see below) did a sweep through for woody weed seedlings, particularly targeting any in flower.

Work along Maude Street

This year is seeing a major assault on the reserve along Maude Street.

East of the burn site, work funded by the **Sally Oatley Memorial Fund** began in earnest in September when Naturelinks, helped by a Green Army crew, moved into the almost impenetrable tangle of woody weeds and *Pandorea* sp. Together they removed, dragged out and stacked for chipping a large pile of cut weeds. They then cut and painted the smaller remaining woody weeds and *Pandora* sp.



Above: Work underway in the Maude St thickets. Below: Woody weeds stacked for chipping. Photos Liz Barraclough



We have applied for another grant to enable us to extend this work further down the site towards the creek. Watch this space!

And immediately downstream, an assault on woody weeds and scramblers has also begun just west of the burn site, extending from Maude St to the creek, and continuing into the area between the bottom of the burn site and the creek. This is funded by a **Melbourne Water 2016** grant.

BIRDS IN THE BUSH

Jock MacMillan reports

At a Friday working bee in mid-October, when we were working in the Maude St burn site, Liz Barraclough asked us to identify birds seen in the new growth on the site and the adjoining scrub.

Some species are definitely repopulating the re-growth area in significant numbers, particularly Eastern Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters. The most unusual sighting (but not unexpected at this time of the year) was the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, which was calling repeatedly while we were supposed to be giving total attention to the burner we were using to singe weeds.

Other species seen included: Grey Shrike-thrush (with its beautiful bell-like call), Eastern Yellow Robin, Australian Magpie, Crimson Rosella, Little Raven, White Browed Scrubwren, and the introduced Common Blackbird. Seen flying through or overhead were: Australian White Ibis, Silver Gull and Rainbow Lorikeet. A total of 13 without even getting serious.

The re-growth will certainly attract an increasing number of birds and bird species as it goes through the revegetation process.

We plan to make this count a regular event, to be done at the same time as the seasonal flora survey. It will be interesting to find out which species are using the Tea Tree Scrub versus the burn site, and what impact our woody weeding might be having on birds.

Other grant sites

Work is also proceeding along Hopetoun Creek, both above Bay Road and in a section below Kotor Close, under **Melbourne Water 2016** funding. The focus is, again, woody and scrambling weed control.

And not far from the Kotor Close site, work at the top of the Rabbit Paddock, below Village Close, is well on the way to being completed, under a **Port Phillip & Western-port Catchment Management Authority** grant. *Polygala* seedlings are emerging *en masse* in the area we have weeded, and these will be selectively sprayed later in the year, when they are slightly larger.

On Sunday 4th September a few people joined me in a mini extra working-bee to plant out 90+ plants in the site, while we still had good planting weather. Many thanks to Sue Betheras, Helen & Eric Smalley and their friends Dorothy & John Randle for their help.

Weedbusters

BERG MM set up its annual Weedbusters stall outside the IGA, on Saturday 3rd September, and attracted lots of interest from passers-by. Thanks to Jenny Selby, Sue Betheras, David Street and Flo Gason for their help.

Green Army

We have benefited this year from two Green Army teams.

The first group worked a total of 32 hours over two weeks. First they planted with us along Hopetoun Creek, cut and painted Winter Cherry along Balcombe Creek's north bank downstream of Uralla Bridge, and rolled up the black plastic from our composted heaps of *Tradescantia* (left a year ago to rot). In their second week they moved to the foreshore, removing regenerating woody weed seedlings, and spent three days repairing the protective fencing around the dunes and along some of the access paths.

Special thanks to Ian Croker and Eric Smalley, who helped direct and organize the fencing. Eric did a wonderful job sourcing and scrounging (from a neighbouring builder), and recycling some of the materials (wire, shade cloth).

The second Green Army group spent four days in September working with Naturelinks on the Maude St site, as described above.

Balcombe Grammar

Thank you to the 50+ Grade 6 students who mulched and planted over 600 grasses, sedges and shrubs on either side of Hopetoun Creek upstream of Bay Rd.

And finally, the students removed 10 bags of flowering Oxalis (Soursob) at the Bay Rd end of the Hopetoun Creek and along the easement up to the school. While this does not remove the bulbs, it prevents the secondary propagating process

Many thanks too, to the BERG MM volunteers who helped Jenny Selby and me with the students: Lorraine Lamb, Flo Gason, David Glaspole, Annette Klein, Verity Mapp, Suzanne Ryan, Ian Gould, Jenny Wood, Debbie McMahon and of course, John Inchley who also took two sessions of Waterwatch, which the students always love.



Clockwise from top left: Liz briefs the Balcombe Grammar students; Doing some fencing; Planting instructions from John Inchley; Hi Ho, Hi Ho, it's off to work we go! (David Glaspole & John Inchley on right) Photos Verity Mapp. Teacher Andy Martin, John Inchley and a student Photo Natalie Kurelja



COAST TWIN LEAF

Angela Kirsner reports

This cheerful yellow-flowered ground cover (*Zygophyllum billardierei*), not uncommon in other areas, is a recent discovery in Mt Martha. It was found in the foreshore reserve near the end of Bay Road.

Cuttings were taken and struck, the plants planted out around the Bird Hide and in other places, and after looking in good health for a time, most died – maybe the victims of some over-zealous weed spraying.

Liz, however, gave me a couple to plant in my garden – insurance to

increase the chance of the plant thriving somewhere.

And thrive it did for me! Under Tea Tree but getting lots of north sun, its vigour has made it almost a nuisance! But it's lovely – a dense green mat covered in yellow flowers. My clump has become the source of many cuttings, and both The Briars Nursery and BERG MM's Sue Betheras now have plants thriving, that we are again planting out.

Below, L-R: Leaves & flower of Coast Twin Leaf, and my rampant patch of it. Photos Angela Kirsner



Coast Twinleaf's name comes from its pairs of succulent Y-shaped leaves. In late winter to early spring it produces a mass of small, four-petalled bright yellow flowers, which are followed by four-angled seed capsules in summer. It creates dense mats, often in exposed coastal sites.

FEATHER MAP PROJECT

The Feather Map of Australia project, run by ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science & Technology Organisation) and the University of NSW, is collecting waterbird feathers from wetlands around Australia. The feathers will be analysed using nuclear techniques (eg mass spectrometry, high resolution X-ray fluorescence) to identify stable isotopes and minerals that are incorporated into feathers through the ingestion of food. This will show differences in feathers from diverse parts of (see over) Australia, creating a Feather Map that will provide

information on which wetlands waterbirds use, how they use them, and wetland health. And this in turn will feed into wetland management.

Getting Mt Martha kids involved

'Natured Kids', run by Narelle Debenham, has had the kids in its outdoor play groups working as 'citizen scientists', to help create the Feather Map.

Says Narelle, 'We went on a wetlands wander at the catchment in Century Drive and along Balcombe Creek and found feathers from kookaburras, wood ducks, pelicans, ibis, owls, swamp hens, egrets and cockatoos.'

Join in!

You can join in by collecting local feathers when next on a wetlands wander. For details on this important research project and where to send your feather specimens, see feathermap.ansto.gov.au/. For Natured Kids, go to www.naturedkids.com.

SEA SHEPHERD

Mt Marth South Beach was swarming with people collecting rubbish on Sunday 21st August, for the first Sea Shepherd Marine Debris Campaign clean-up to be run on the Mornington Peninsula. It's planned to run the event monthly at sites across the Peninsula.

The 127 people included a number of BERGers. 'It was,' and Liz Barraclough, 'uplifting to see the involvement of so many under 40s and young families. A number of young ones were helping run the day and were obviously very involved with Sea Shepherd. They all seemed really passionate.'

The atmosphere, Liz said, was almost festive.

The day was organised by Sea Shepherd volunteer Trent Williams, and BERG MM's involvement helped him to get the support of the Shire in emptying the very full skip at the end of the day.

'Every tiny bit of rubbish was collected, dumped on a tarp and then sorted, counted and recorded', Liz reported. 'This made the point that while many larger items break down, they don't totally decompose; and even the smallest items are a danger to aquatic fauna.'

Trent reported that a total of 31 bags equalling 210 kg of rubbish and debris, were

removed from the beach and foreshore. This included: 263 straws, 299 lids and bottle tops, 970 pieces of plastic food wrapping, 30 metres of fishing line, 8 syringes, 102 pieces of polystyrene and foam, 280 beer and pre-mix bottles and cans, 40 balloons, and 445 pieces of foil.



The numbers would have been even larger had the impending rain not prevented sorting of the last lot before loading it in the skip.

Trent concluded, 'I am humbled by the numbers of people who came today and showed their love and support for the oceans and our local beaches.'

Above, L-R: Nina Springle (Greens MLC for SE Metropolitan Region), Trent Williams (white T-shirt), BERGer Roo Rawlins, and others at the start of the day. Below: BERGers Eric & Helen Smalley filling their bags; Workers sorting the rubbish. Photos Liz Barraclough



Jarrah Smith, critically injured in an alleged hit & run, is the son of Pia Spreen, Naturelinks contractor with BERG MM's Tuesday Group, and with the Sunshine Reserve Conservation & Fireguard Group. Sunshine's Paul Tucker has set up this fund.

Jarrah Smith Medical & Family Fund



A local Mount Martha family has been keeping a constant bedside vigil at The Alfred for three weeks, and now at the Epworth, next to 17-year-old son Jarrah Smith, who was critically injured on the 10th of August on his way home from school.

A "Go Fund Me" fund has been set up on line to try to raise funds to help with possible ongoing needs of Jarrah and his family.

Thank you for any help that may make his distraught family situation a little less complicated. * No donation too small. Thank you.

On line at: - www.gofundme.com/2ecwe958

OR

If you prefer a cash or card donation can be made in the village at the Bendigo Community Bank, or DD.

C/o Paul Geoffrey Tucker
BSB: 633-000
ACC: 158294173



For Jarrah Smith Medical & Family Fund

GOODIA LOTIFOLIA

This lovely, large shrub with its yellow pea flowers is blooming profusely in parts of the reserve at the moment. It also makes a wonderful garden plant.

Photos Angela Kirsner



BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Donna Morabito, Greg Hunt & family,
Lisa Gould & family, Kat & Jonathan Ricciardello

We value your membership!

If you've not yet paid your 2016-7 subscription, please send it in as soon as possible – or take the opportunity to pay at the AGM, on 22nd October.

Apologies from the editor for the lateness of this newsletter. I was away until late September, and circumstances conspired against me on my return.

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sunday working bee: monthly, 2nd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 9th October and 13th November. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430. ❖ Tuesday working bee: monthly, 2nd Tuesday, between 9am & 12 noon, meet end of Latrobe Dve. Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288. ❖ Friday working bee: weekly between 9.30 & 12 noon. Call Sue Betheras 0408 808 201. ❖ Coast Group: monthly, 3rd Wednesday, between 9am & 12 noon, meet in car park by 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 2nd Saturday. Next are 8th October & 12th November. All members welcome. ❖ BERG Mt Martha AGM: Saturday 22nd October 	<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.
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • SECRETARY DI LEWIS • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER • FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • ASSISTANT TREASURER JULIE ZAMMIT • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON JOHN TREVILLIAN • COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • BRONWYN STREET</p>		
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