



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

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FRIENDS NETWORK DAY

Di Lewis & Liz Barraclough report

Several BERGers joined members of other Peninsula Friends groups for a stimulating day of workshops by members of the Bunurong Land Council on Saturday 22nd April. The Shire's Natural Systems Team organised the day as a thank-you to the Friends groups.

We rotated through four workshops. Adam Magennis told us of the resources of Bunurong Country, both land and sea. Rob Ogden spoke on Bunurong history and mythology. Dan Turnbull showed us examples of stone and wood tools.

And Auntie Dyan Summers, from Flinders Island, showed us basket

making, weaving and shelling, and had us making string from one of the local rushes. Auntie Dyan and her sister Auntie Netty (who was also at the workshop) are direct descendants of one of the five Bunurong women kidnapped near Point Nepean in 1830 and sold to sealers, ending up on Victoria's southern coastal islands.

The event was held at Williams Road Beach, Mt Eliza, where the cliffs shelter extensive shell middens. Anne and John Scholes, of the Friends of Williams Road Beach, showed us structures they have put in to protect middens from erosion and damage.

Then as at all good friends events, food! – an excellent lunch.

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Friday morning group

Many weeks of weeding, in preparation for Sunday working bees! First, along the north bank between Uralla and Geoff Kaye bridges, we removed thick patches of Winter Cherry, Tobacco Plant and Forget-me-not. Then on the west side of Hopetoun Creek above Uralla Road, we took out two trailer loads of Panic Veldt Grass and Deadly Nightshade!

Sunday working-bees

In April we followed up the Friday Group's work downstream of the Geoff Kaye Bridge, removing more Winter Cherry, Tobacco Plant and Forget-me-nots.

And in May we planted. Despite the Mother's Day clash, we had nine volunteers who put in an impressive 22 trees, 72 shrubs and 200 grasses and sedges along Hopetoun Creek where the Friday Group had weeded. A main aim is to reduce sediment into the creek by binding the soil with roots and protecting it with leaf mass above.

Coastal group

Suzanne Ryan and her crew continue apace. April saw them planting along North Beach to Coolangatta Rd and up the paths, removing woody and grassy weeds as they went.

In May, they planted almost 200 grasses, shrubs and a few Banksias and Sheokes from South Beach BBQ area to the Dominion Road path.

Not satisfied with a single monthly working bee, Suzanne organised to plant near the Lifesaving and Yacht clubs, and to carry the pile of woody weeds at the far end of South Beach (removed at the March Sunday working bee) to South Beach carpark, for chipping. *(continued over)*



Clockwise from left: Dan Turnbull with Bunurong wooden tools; Structures to protect the Williams Rd Beach middens; Auntie Dyan Summers, who ran the string making workshop, and her sister Auntie Netty; Jenny Selby and Lorraine Lamb making string from indigenous rushes Photos Liz Barraclough



BIG BANKSIA PLANTING *Liz Barraclough reports*

In May Suzanne Ryan, Ian Gould, Andrew Jones and I planted twelve mature Coast Banksias south of the South Beach carpark.. We are indebted to Case Varkevissar (of boatshed maintenance business Sea Side Shacks) for carting heavy 40cm pots along the beach in his trailer – we needed him!

The trees were propagated by BERGER Richard Sellars-Jones. Some plantings were more exposed than we'd have preferred, but we needed if possible to avoid the burrowings of the delightful but rampant indigenous Swamp Rats, which can undermine root systems.

It was quite an undertaking!

Below: Andrew Jones, Suzanne Ryan & Sachin Jhamb (Liz's grandson). Right: Case Varkevissar's trailer with the trees. Photos Ian Gould



TUESDAY GROUP

Jenny Selby reports

In April this small group weeded the remaining Rock Rose below Hilton Court down to Ferrero Reserve, after Naturelinks had sprayed emerging seedlings. We will follow up this persistent weed again in 12 months.

In May we weeded grasses between Mt Martha Preschool and the tennis courts, and Polygala (mainly) from the lower Bunyip. With constant work over many years inspired and managed by the late Mary Stemp, the Bunyip has been converted from a weed-infested blackberry thicket to diverse, open bushland popular with walkers and native animals alike.

Tuesday Group would love more hands! Can you spare an hour or three, 2nd Tuesday of the month? Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288

Grants and projects

Work on the Maude Street site continues apace. We have submitted our final report on the strip restored under the Sally Oatley Memorial Fund. Work continues on nearby

strips funded by Melbourne Water and Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority, and work on the large area funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust begins in June, when our first Green Army crew starts.

We are waiting to hear on a number of other grant applications – watch this space!

Peninsula Conservation & Habitat Management Course

Three BERGers, supported by grant funding, will soon start this 'gold standard' training course for environmental volunteers: Suzanne Ryan, Debbie McMahon and Cate Clarke – a valuable addition to our team with this excellent training.

Deakin University visits again

On 28th April Sue Betheras and I hosted the annual visit of students from Deakin University's School of Life and Environmental Sciences. We briefed them on BERG MM's management processes and programs, and our relationship with the many stakeholders along the coast and into the catchment.

At home in our nest boxes

Dale Westwood, of Naturelinks, plus three BERGers checked the reserves' 20 nest boxes on 21st April. Two of the boxes hosted three sugar gliders, and bats were roosting in three more boxes: 12+ in one, 9+ in another, and 5+ in the third. Clearly our nesting boxes are serving a purpose!

Biodiversity Forum

Suzanne Ryan and I attended a Planning & Monitoring Forum at the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research in May.

The first event of the recently formed Victorian Biodiversity Managers' Network, the aim was to explore biodiversity management approaches and begin a discussion on ways to improve and standardise planning and monitoring.

Attendees came from many environmental bodies, both industry and allied groups such as Friends and Landcare; people who manage conservation projects and programs, and those who influence decisions on where and how conservation dollars are spent. There were presentations on monitoring methods and standards, data gathering techniques, and relevant software., followed by a workshop and discussion panel after lunch.

Presentations introduced us to the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, the use of GIS technology for reporting and monitoring, and the National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia, along with an overview of monitoring methods. Then after lunch, a workshop and a panel discussion on next steps for the Network.

MERMAID IN ACTION!

For scuba divers, Port Phillip Bay is up there with the best in the world, according to self-styled 'real life mermaid' PT Hirschfield.

This 'obsessive compulsive diver' (her words!), her stories, her passion, her stunning underwater photography, had her audience riveted when she spoke for BERG MM at Mt Martha House on 20th May.

She showed us brilliantly coloured nudibranchs – Sea Slugs – a highlight of diving below Blairgowrie pier. A Tasselled Angler Fish cunningly disguised as seaweed lured its dinner. There were vivid little fish with horns and delicious names – Cow Fish, Goblin Fish, Globe Fish; sea horses and dragons; iridescent squid and cuttlefish; and elegant and beautiful Sting Rays.



PT shows some of the publications she features in at her talk to BERG MM Photo Richard Kirsner

We watched tens of thousands of spider crabs swarming off Blairgowrie to moult, their newly soft bodies easy pickings for predators. There is safety in numbers – but not for all. We watched PT's footage of a crab slowly struggling from its shell while a huge Smooth Ray looked on. As the crab finally emerged, the Ray nudged PT gently aside to claim its dinner!

Once a ridiculously hard-working teacher and Year 12 coordinator, PT left it all behind in 2010 when she was diagnosed with advanced endometrial cancer. A daunting program of treatment followed, and palliative radiation began in 2014.

Through it all, her delight has been to dive. Only one of her 650 plus dives has been without cancer.

She has become a passionate advocate for protection of the marine environment. She told of the cruelty to Sting Rays and Banjo Sharks (AKA Fiddler Rays) by some recreational anglers. Caught on lines, too often they are mutilated, fins and tails cut off, mouths torn, then thrown back alive into the water. PT has set up Project Banjo Action Group, to lobby for action. It is

starting to see results. See <https://www.facebook.com/Rays-Awareness-168992960290905/>

She has also set up a Facebook page for sharing underwater images, a citizen science initiative that helps track what is in Port Phillip.

This magical underwater world is right here, PT said, waving towards the Bay, and age is no barrier (this to an audience with a fair sprinkling of 'oldies!'). PT has dived with all ages, from children to people in their 80s.

For more on the remarkable PT, go to her Blog: www.pinktankscuba.com; or find her on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pinktankscuba/>; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbHnAbr2WGFfo_7wSBUQrmA; and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pinktankscuba/?hl=en>

A GLIMPSE OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Wetland, vegetables, fruit trees, natural habitat, chooks, activated charcoal... Tony and Leeanne O'Connor's 5-acre property in Century Drive, Mt Martha is a model of sustainability. And yet again, they opened it for a BERG MM event in late March. With his extraordinary enthusiasm and knowledge, Tony did a comprehensive 'show and tell' around the property, finishing with a sausage sizzle and a tour of the O'Connor's mud-brick, solar-passive house.

And we were delighted to sign on six new family members and three individual members, who came along in response to an article in the *Mornington News*.



Tony's 'insect hotel' – breeding spots for native bees, wasps and the like. Photo Richard Kirsner

BERG MM AT E-WEEK

Jenny Selby reports

Some 3000 primary school kids were at the thirty-third annual Mornington Peninsula Schools Environment Week at The Briars in late March. The aim is to persuade the children that everyone can contribute to a sustainable future.

The children encountered the wetland world of frogs, birds, fish, insects, and water bugs. Indigenous educators pointed out bush tucker and medicinal plants in the woodland. On the sustainable living front, composting toilets were a hit! And the children could pot and take home herb and vegetable seedlings.

BERG MM volunteers were again there in force. John Inchley, Debbie McMahon, Sue Milton and David Street helped budding scientists to find water bugs in creek water. Tony O'Connor, Lorraine Lamb and Graeme Martin inspired kids to explore natural habitats and create creatures from bush materials.



John Inchley captivated his audience with water bugs Photo supplied by E-Week Committee

And Lorraine Lamb, Barb Martin, Debbie McMahon, Suzanne Ryan, & Jill Bonington helped make lunches for the volunteers and presenters.

FROM THE BRIARS TO CAMBODIA

Jenny Selby arranged for the \$800 paid by E-Week for this lunch preparation to go to the not-for-profit Life and Hope Association, which works in Cambodia to break the cycle of poverty by providing care and access to education to the poorest and most vulnerable, especially children and disadvantaged young women. This \$800 will help to build a house for a family who are educating their children. Jen will be in Cambodia soon to help it happen.

COUNCILLORS VISIT RESERVES



BERG MM President Graham Hubbard and Field Officer Liz Barraclough invited new Briars Ward Councillors Rosie Clark and Sam Hearn to the Reserves to tell them about BERG MM, our work and what is so special about our reserves. It was a very positive meeting – recorded for posterity on Liz’s camera by a friendly but anonymous fisherman on the jetty!


NEW BANKING DETAILS

BERG Mt Martha has moved all its banking to **Mount Martha Community Bank® Branch of Bendigo Bank**, where we have for some years had one account. The bank has already supported a number of our activities, for which we are most grateful.

*Please note new bank details for all payments to
BERG Mt Martha:
BSB 633000 Account 159 803 337.*

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Dorothy Sharp, Nikki Best, Melanie Cheers, Peter & Fran Dedrick, Bifty Dewhurst, Mark & Bernadine Maloney, Louise Page, May Read, Cat John, Jenni Wadsworth, Gillian Adam & James Anderson

BERG MM Working Bees	Other BERG MM Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sunday working bee: monthly, usually 2nd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 18 June (3rd Sunday to avoid long weekend) & 9 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 end of Latrobe Dve. Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288. ❖ Coast Group: monthly, 3rd Wednesday, between 9am & 12 noon, meet in car park by the Yacht Club. Call Suzanne Ryan 0418 387 604. ❖ Friday working bee: weekly between 9.30am & 12 noon. Call Sue Betheras 0408 808 201. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: monthly, 4th Sunday 9.15am, 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 meetings 17 June (3rd Saturday to avoid public holiday) & 8 July March. 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
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT PETER MCMAHON • SECRETARY DIANNE LEWIS • TREASURER JULIE ZAMMIT • FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRAVES • PHILANTHROPY BRONWYN STREET • WATERWATCH JOHN INCHLEY • FORESHORE GROUP SUZANNE RYAN • ASSISTANT TREASURER SUE MILTON</p>		
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