



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

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CLEAN, GREEN MT MARTHA

THE PLASTIC BAG PROJECT

By Liz Barraclough & Angela Kirsner

BERG MM is spearheading the campaign to see Mt Martha free of plastic bags.

An appalling global problem

Evidence is pouring in from around the world on the devastating effect of plastics on the environment.

For example, a study published in *Science* in January surveyed 159 coral reefs in the Asia-Pacific region and found billions of entangled plastic items. And the plastic debris causes a 20-fold increase in the risk of coral disease, as it blocks light and oxygen, and releases toxins, giving pathogens a foothold for invasion.¹

Current trends will see more plastics than fish in our oceans by 2050.² Of the 8.3bn tonnes of plastics produced between the 1950s and 2015, four-fifths lies in landfill or in our natural environment.³ And the problem is accelerating: since 2000 we have made as much plastic as in all the years before that.

Furthermore, recycling is under new pressure as China's ban on accepting foreign waste comes into force. In Australia alone, the ban affects an annual average of 619,000 tonnes of waste that were previously shipped to China for recycling.⁴

Action by the Victorian Government

The Victorian Government's announcement that single-use plastic bags will be banned (not yet law) is a

¹ science.sciencemag.org/content/359/6374/460

² europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5_en.htm

³ www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/07/170719140939.htm

⁴ www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-10/china-ban-on-foreign-rubbish-leaves-recycling-industry-in-a-mess/9243184

FAMILY DAY AT THE ESTUARY

WHEN? – SUNDAY 25TH MARCH, 10AM TO 2PM

**WHERE? – BY THE BALCOMBE ESTUARY ROTUNDA
(END OF MIRANG AVENUE)**

Cost? FREE!

**Bring family, friends & neighbours
—and especially the kids**

◆ Make a bush critter from wool and straw with the wonderful Baluk Arts



Image credit: City of Melbourne

- ◆ Swap cards and yarns with 'The Connies' – the tramways guys
- ◆ Make a mini nature book with Mt Martha artist Anni Dowd
 - ◆ Paint your world with Judi Singleton
 - ◆ Play water games with Melbourne Water
- ◆ Look for creek critters with BERG Mt Martha
 - ◆ Spot the bird with BirdLife Australia
- ◆ Get close and personal with ravishing reptiles from Moonlit Sanctuary
 - ◆ Face painting
 - ◆ Tai Chi
 - ◆ Sausage sizzle

...and more!

Thanks to Bendigo Bank and Bonaccorde for their support

step in the right direction. But lots more is needed. The ban does not include the small bags used to carry meat, fruit, vegetables and the rest.

Then there is the issue of plastic bottles. Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) providing a 10 cent refund for drink bottles has had a major effect in South Australia and is now in force in most other Australian jurisdictions – but not Victoria.

Email your photos of plastic waste to your local State MP to highlight the urgent need for effective action – including a CDL.

Locally

Coinciding with the ABC's powerful 'War on Waste' series and BERG MM's screening of *A Plastic Ocean*, the 2017 litter audits we conducted with local schools at the head of the estuary have made us acutely aware of the plastic waste problem.

We were cheered by the positive impact of these activities on the young people involved. Balcombe Grammar teachers reported more awareness, more discussion, and fewer plastic-wrapped lunches.



A tiny fraction of the rubbish, very largely plastic, at the top of the estuary and in the adjoining scrub in late January Photos Angela Kirsner



Clean, Green Mt Martha

BERG MM is now aiming to see the Mt Martha Village plastic-bag free. Among our local traders, a number already don't offer plastic bags, and/or they suggest alternatives.

The Shire's recently appointed Waste & Litter Officer, Amy Yang, is most supportive. She has already involved us in their War on Waste Forum & Expo last October, and a Source Reduction Workshop.

We started our campaign by looking at other supermarkets with plastic-bag-free programs in place, including Blairgowrie, Lorne and Apollo Bay, to discuss their successes and problems.

We emailed all the Mt Martha

Village traders with our aims and rationale, and organised a meeting in December at which we agreed on a plan of action. Of the traders, only Rod Allen (IGA), and Martyn Baker (Fine Foods) were able to attend, but many others were supportive. Also at the meeting were two Briars Ward Councillors (Bev Colomb and Rosie Clark), four Shire officers, including Amy Yang; a Boomerang Bags representative, and four BERGers.

Where to next?

The first step will be to introduce the program gradually to the community.

The Mt Martha traders have undertaken to instruct their employees **not** to offer or fill plastic bags automatically, but to ask customers, 'do you have your (eco) bag?'

There will be publicity in local newspapers, and signage, including the signs below, in the shop windows and car parks – 'Clean Green Mt Martha, Going Plastic Bag Free'; 'Got Your Eco Bag?'; 'You bring it, We'll fill it!' (this one at the butcher's, not the bank!).

We'll put notices and information round the shopping centre to highlight the waste problem, and how to help address it, and over a number of days, we'll man a display table with information about waste, plastic bags, eco bags and recycling.

We will reinforce the message at Clean-up Australia Day and Schools Environment Week at The Briars.

Clean, Green Day!

Coles and Woolworths have undertaken to have in place a total ban on single-use plastic bags at the checkouts by 1st July this year.

That is our target too. We plan to have Mt Martha Clean and Green, with single-use plastic bags banned by 1st July.

We trust that our traders will, by then, be offering and promoting alternatives: bring your own eco bag, buy a paper carry bag for a small fee. And maybe they will be providing an outlet for Boomerang Bags.

Looking ahead

We are closely watching Dromana's pilot program, 'The Last Straw', which aims to reduce and ultimately eliminate single-use plastic straws. If successful, we hope to introduce this too in Mt Martha.

TIPS FOR LIVING WITHOUT PLASTIC BAGS

- Separate your rubbish, learn what you can recycle.
- Compost your wet waste.
- Don't line your bin with plastic – just wash it, as we all used to do!
- Keep chooks to eat food scraps.
- Be a selective shopper – choose glass containers, buy food in bulk.
- Take plastic or green bags to the supermarket to re-use & recycle.
- Try to use biodegradable bags.



We're working with businesses and communities towards a plastic free Mt Martha

CAN YOU HELP?

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SCHOOLS' ENVIRONMENT WEEK AT THE BRIARS

MON 18-THURS 22 MARCH,

E'Week has provided environmental activities for primary and pre-primary students since 1983. We need volunteers to help with:

◆ **Catering for lunch** for presenters & volunteers: Can you help make bulk salads (eg coleslaw, rice, potato)? Recipes, ingredients & containers provided. Last year we were paid \$800 for this, which we donated to Rice For Cambodia. We'll do the same this year unless catering volunteers have another project they are passionate about.

◆ **Help at other displays & workshops** (eg Tony O'Connor's Natural Landscapes workshop).

Thanks to **BERGers** Sue Milton, Debbie McMahon & David Street, who will run the Wetland Health program - helping kids to find water-bugs in trays of creek water, to tell us lots about the creek's health.

If you can help, contact Jenny Selby: 0432 719 288, or jenselby22@gmail.com

WE NEED YOUR ARTISTIC EYE

Are you the BERGER to look after our great NOTICE-BOARD in the Old Campground?



You'll need to change the display about every 6 weeks. There's a bank of displays to draw on, and you'll be able to create some new ones. Di Lewis (0447 160 288) can answer your queries.

Clean Up Australia Day SUNDAY 4TH MARCH

We're hoping for a bumper turnout in this waste-focused year!

Join with BERG MM, the Yacht Club, the Life Saving Club & others to clean up beach, creek & surrounds. Register & pick up your rubbish bag at the car park, cnr Esplanade & Watson Road, anytime from 9.30 to 1.00.

Enquiries to Liz Barraclough: 0408 388 430.



BERGer Janet Copland went along to 'Clean up Bora Bora 2017' day in the Tabiti resort and brought home this tee-shirt.

Clean Up Australia Day is also on at:

- Fossil Beach – contact Ian Stevenson 0409 520 182
- Birdrock Beach – contact Di Lewis 0418 318 185
- Sunshine Reserve (& surrounds) – contact Pia Spreen 5974 1096.

HAVE YOU ANY WOOL?

Can you spare it for Family Day?

Inspired by Baluk Arts, kids will turn all sorts of wools and yarns into fabulous bush critters.



Image credit: City of Melbourne

Leave your wool (marked BERG MM) with Becca, main Office, Mt Martha House, Mon-Wed between 10am & 4pm.

WILDLIFE UPDATES

Koels and Kingfishers

Sue Brabender, Ranger at The Briars, tells us of reports of Common Koels in Frankston near Jubilee Park for the past three years, and another sighting in Frankston South.

The Sacred Kingfishers arrived at The Briars at the end of October, as usual. Sue has seen and heard them in several areas of the Wildlife Sanctuary, and expects they will be along the estuary as well.

Echidna

Jenny Selby snapped this one in early December, crossing Maude St west of Alice St.



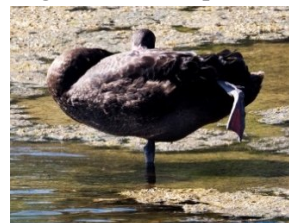
And a swan

One only – and it's been on the estuary for much of January, sometimes trawling the estuary floor for food, sometimes simply standing with its head tucked into its side.



Photos: Angela Kirsner (above), Richard Kirsner (below)

Why just one for so long? The swans at The Briars have raised a couple of broods last spring. Maybe, a ranger suggests, one of these young is looking for its own space?



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

2018 looks to be another full year with new projects and challenges. December and January, however, have been too hot and a bit 'snaky' for much on-ground work. In December:

- The Friday group removed Winter Cherry, Fumitory, thistles, Rambling Dock and Tradescantia near Uralla Bridge. And in and around the Bunyip, they weeded, and planted some 55 left-over *Stipa mollis*.
- The 'Coasters' removed Polygala and Boneseed above the Dominion Rd path. And they devoted the January working bee to assessing their grant sites (current and planned).
- The Tuesday Group weeded shrubs and grasses in the Bunyip and near the tennis courts, and collected old cubby rubbish below the bowling green.

Grant projects

Along Maude St, Naturelinks continues weeding under Melbourne Water grants. Work under the Helen Macpherson Trust grant is complete and the final report submitted.

On the foreshore, Naturelinks has sprayed weeds under our Coastcare Victoria Community grant, while at the southern end of the beach, work under the Sunshine Foundation grant is awaiting cooler, less snaky weather. The first task will be to remove the pines, then lots of woody weeding and – in cooler weather – planting.

Under our 2017 Port Phillip Bay Fund Grant, work in the bushland around the estuary is underway.

Detailed planning is underway for work under the large (\$46K) grant we've dubbed BOA 17 (Biodiversity On-ground Action – Community Volunteer Action grant). This will transform the area around and below Mt Martha Preschool and tennis courts and west of the Bunyip.

Nearly \$49K in new grants!

We have been awarded four new grants – three by Melbourne Water:

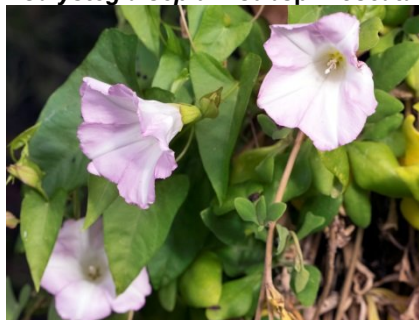
- a Support Grant of \$1,078 for insurance and education
- \$13,963 for riparian restoration on the north side of Balcombe Creek from Alice St to Augusta St Bridge
- \$15,851 for follow-up restoration of riparian vegetation in two sites along Hopetoun Creek: above Ferrero ovals and above Uralla Rd to Hopetoun Rd. Emphasis is on planting to control erosion and reduce sediment into the waterways.

And the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Authority has awarded us \$17,611 to restore the Grassy Woodland on the western part of the Citation Hill. The grant also includes some funding towards the newsletter, revegetation materials, on-ground training, and Bunurong interpretive signage.

ON SHOW IN THE RESERVES

Notes & photos by Angela Kirsner

Large Bindweed,
Calystegia sepium subsp. *Roseata*



This lovely twining indigenous herb is flowering at the moment alongside the footpath from the bridge to the shops, as well in swampy ground among the Melaleucas by the boardwalk. It's salt tolerant, and climbs and twines up a metre or two, maybe a little more. Its roots were an important food source for the Aborigines.

Seaberry Saltbush, *Rhagodia candolleana* subsp. *Candolleana*
Clusters of jewel-like, dimpled red berries are ripening now on Seaberry Saltbush, following its tiny, rather nondescript white flowers.

You'll find this vigorous, scrambling, salt-tolerant shrub in many places along and near the coast and the estuary. It's pest-resistant

and its moist, salty leaves are relatively fire-retardant, while the berries are very attractive to many native birds.



Seaberry Saltbush is also a great landscaping plant, and responds wonderfully to pruning and shaping, as in the photo below, where it forms a beautiful mat of foliage in the foreground beneath a Sheoke, and contrasting with Knobby Club Rush. It grows from cuttings, and from seeds dropped by birds!



Sea Celery,
Apium prostratum



Sea Celery is often a larger, sturdier plant that finds its way as a herb into some cooking. Our local form, however, is a tiny, delicate plant among the saltmarsh edges of the estuary. The one in the photo was surviving among the mass of plastic debris at the head of the estuary

BERG MT MARTHA – THE NEXT 5 YEARS

President Graham Hubbard reports

Happy New Year to all members and readers.

The end of 2017 marked the completion of the ambitious five year strategic plan we developed at the start of 2013. It's been a most successful exercise. We have completed all the major tasks we set ourselves, and more. Notably, we have all but completed major restoration works across the whole of the reserves. The challenge now is to maintain and protect our natural bush

land, estuary and creek, and to embed the value and importance of Mt Martha's green heart in the hearts of *all* its residents.

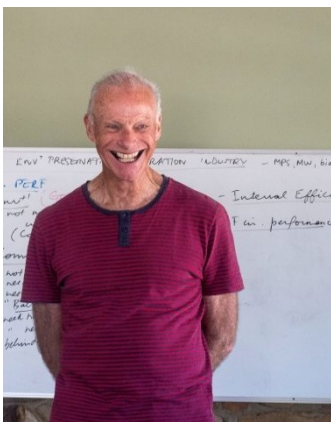
Our first task for 2018 has therefore been to develop a strategic plan for the next five years, to 2022.

The BERG MM Committee with the help of Jenny Rolleston, Jenny Selby, Barry Morris, David Street, Anni Dowd and Richard Kirsner, devoted two days in January to the task, and we now have the draft of a new strategic plan.

Our new plan is, again, ambitious. It is particularly focussed on increasing community awareness of and involvement in the work we do,

and its value to the whole community. As a strong local voice for the environment, we will expand our brief to address a wider range of environmental issues that concern the Mt Martha community, such as plastics pollution and the state of our coast. We are all excited by the ideas aired during the 2-day workshop and our plans for the future.

As soon as our draft plan is finalised and agreed by the Committee, I'll give you more specifics. But rest assured, BERG Mt Martha aims to continue to make Mt Martha a great place to live with our unique and wonderful estuary, reserves and biolink habitat corridor.



BERG MM strategic planning workshop: Left: President Graham Hubbard leading the workshop. Above (L-R) Di Lewis, Jenny Rolleston, Sue Milton, Barb Thraves, Barry Morris, David Street Photo Richard Kirsner



THE ROSE SERIES, P. 2632
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BALCOMB CREEK, MT. MARTHA, VICTORIA

As we were... This undated Rose Postcard image (held by the State Library, available at <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/61605>) must date from the early 20th century or before. Barely visible beyond the estuary are the windows of a house and some shaped garden trees, probably Osborne House (demolished 1975). No other sign of white settlement in this beautiful spot.

WATCH OUT FOR THIS WEED

An infestation of **Alligator Weed** has been identified some two kilometres upstream from the Briars on Tuerong Creek – a tributary of Balcombe Creek. Alligator weed is a declared noxious weed in all Australian States and Territories. It grows on land or water, and its vast mats can cause major blockages of waterways.




Photo from Agriculture Victoria website

The leaves are bright green, spear shaped, in opposite pairs along a hollow stem. Flowers are papery, silvery white and ball shaped. Roots grow from joints in the stem, which can break off and form new plants downstream.

If you think you've found Alligator Weed, contact DEDJTR immediately at weed.spotters@ecodev.vic.gov.au or call 136 186. Don't try to treat or remove it yourself – the department will do it safely at no cost to the land owner. For more information, visit:

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/state-prohibited-weeds/alligator-weed>

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members
 Ian & Jocelyn Russell, Barb Novotny, Deb Abbs

BERG MM Working Bees	Other BERG MM Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sunday working bee: monthly, 2nd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. 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 8am & 11am, 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 & Estuary Watch testing: monthly, 4th Sunday 9.15am, starting at Augusta St Bridge. Call Sue Milton 0407 350 175. ❖ BERG Mt Martha Committee meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am, usually the 2nd Saturday. Next meetings 10th February, 10th 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 Sunday 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 • COAST GROUP SUZANNE RYAN • WATERWATCH SUE MILTON • COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • PHILANTHROPY BRONWYN STREET • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER</p>		
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