



The Creek

Volume 26 No 3, June 2022

Caring for our local environment

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



BERG's volunteers are our lifeblood, and on two Fridays in May, we held barbecue lunches at the Old Campground to thank them along with our wonderful Nature-links contractors.

Eric and Helen Smalley organised a splendid spread, the sausages sizzled, and the table in the Camp Laundry groaned for two weeks running under a typical BERG MM spread. A fire burned cheerfully in the rotunda fireplace, the weather was kind to us, and we sent our happy volunteers home with a tube of a native grass.

Particular thanks to Bells Meats for their very generous discount on the sausages.

Left top: Helen & Eric Smalley setting up for lunch, and below, Bev Favolo & Jeanette Miller sizzling sausages Photo Angela Kirsner

OUT IN THE RESERVES CRANBERRY HEATH

Cranberry Heath *Styphelia humifusa* is in cheerful flower along the edge of the Maude Street reserve. A small ground-hugging shrub, it has sharp pointed blue-green leaves, red heath-like flowers and small green or reddish fruits.



Botanist J. H. Maiden, in his 1889 book entitled *Useful Native Plants*, tells us the plant was commonly called 'ground berry'. He continues:

In Tasmania the fruits are often called native cranberries. The fruits of these dwarf shrubs are much appreciated by school-boys and aboriginals. They have a viscid, sweetish pulp with a relatively large stone. The pulp is described by some as being apple-flavoured, though I have always failed to make out any distinct flavour.

Our early winter has brought some beautiful misty mornings. Look carefully for the Great Egret among the reeds. Photo Angela Kirsner



Thank you!
Mt Martha Community Bank
Sponsors of *The Creek* 2022.



ESTUARYWATCH

Bruce Ferres reports

Recent months have seen several heavy falls of rain raise the water level in the estuary basin, and storms have driven bay waters in over the berm. There has been both inflow and outflow in the winds of recent weeks, reducing turbidity levels.

Recent concerns about pH readings have been allayed. The 24-hour monitoring station has been

checked and recalibrated, and read-outs now reflect the estuary's good health and are consistent with long-term baseline data.

Sedimentation

Our sediment pin, installed in April 2021 in the sediment plume from the Henley Avenue outfall to measure sedimentation build-up, is accessible only when the estuary basin empties. This happened in early May, and the pin showed that the sediment level at least at this part of the plume has not changed



significantly over the past year.

Many more pins across the estuary would be needed to show estuary-wide change over time, but our experimental pin is a start, and we continue to compare drone images of the estuary sediment over time.

Left: Our stick in the mud! The sedimentation pin, May 2022



Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns, backs to the wind and waves



LIFE ON THE ESTUARY

Angela Kirsner

Over two days in April, 18-19th, our rain gauge (near the estuary) recorded about 30mm. On the 19th, the estuary was full and water was flowing over a very wide, long, high berm. A Great Egret and a White-faced Heron were revelling in the pickings along the edge of the water and, unusually, were feeding on the sea side of the bridge. Crested Terns and Pacific Gulls patrolled the edge of a rough sea beyond the berm, and a Pied Cormorant joined the fray.



Got it! Great Egret with a small breem for lunch



Little Pied Cormorant on the move



Left upper: Foraging among Phragmites – White-faced Heron
Left lower: Immature Pacific Gull with a promising mouthful (it's about 3 years before these gulls develop their mature plumage)

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Weed, plant, mulch, eat!

It's the pattern of so many of our working bees! Maybe the excellent turnout at our April and May Sunday working bees had more than a little to do with the excellent morning teas provided by Alison Hazledine. Thanks Alison!

April saw the Sunday workers removing Pittosporum, Polygala and Flaxleaf Broom seedlings and Agapanthus from the Maude St roadside reserve to prevent them seeding across to the reserve opposite. Then in May we removed a veritable wall of Polygala shrubs from the top of the Rabbit Paddock (below Balcombe Creek Close).

The Friday group have weeded round the bird hide, between Henley Avenue and the tennis courts. They spent two weeks tackling *Atriplex prostrata* (also known, among other things, as Fat Hen!) either side of the short boardwalk that runs from the Mirang Avenue carpark to the Esplanade bridge. Very rewarding, but it was in seed, so we'll aim to follow up earlier next year. We also weeded and planted in the Old Campground, and spread two mountains of mulch around relatively recent plantings near the end of Wattle Avenue.

Below: The wall of Polygala removed from the Rabbit Paddock. Photo Eric Smalley



More grant successes

We've been successful with two more grant applications:

- **Melbourne Water** is providing \$13, 591.38 under their 2022 Liveable Waterways Liveable Community grants, to continue work along Hopetoun Creek both above and below Uralla Road. As always, the aim is to increase habitat and biodiversity.
- **Mornington Peninsula Shire** has granted us \$10,000 in a Biolinks Support Grant 2022-2023, for works around the Pistol Club up to Nepean Highway.

Left: top: Friday groupers weeding Atriplex. Below: Bags of it waiting to be removed. Photos Liz Barraclough

Atriplex prostrata

- Annual weed in the Saltbush (Chenopodiaceae) family
- Native to Europe, Asia & North America
- Common in wet, saline sites, along creek margins and estuaries

Below: the arrow-shaped leaves & spent flower panicles of A. prostrata in autumn mode Photo Angela Kirsner



Above: Jeanette Miller, Bev Favolo & Kath Smalley moving mulch at a Friday working bee. Below, the two vast mulch piles spread among our plantings in the Campground. Photos Angela Kirsner



BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members Ian Matson & family, Judy Parker

FIELD NEWS continued

Gardens for Wildlife

Suzanne Ryan and I have both done a number of garden assessments under the Shire's G4W program. Tara Guddat, who previously ran the Shire Nursery, runs the program and is delighted with the uptake to date.

Australian Plants Society sale

Suzanne and I represented BERG MM at the Australian Plants Society Plant Sale at the Briars on 7th May. We shared a stall with the G4W group (of which we are also both part), and provided information on Friends Groups on the Peninsula. Despite the foul weather, a record number of plants were sold.

COASTAL NEWS

Suzanne Ryan reports

Through April and May the coastal team, with Naturelinks, worked on the cliffs between South Beach carpark and Mt Martha headland, under our current Coastcare grant. We've removed yet more Polygala, Bridal Creeper, small Genista plants.

We've also made great progress tackling the forests of Boneseed across the top of the slope, bush-bashing our way up to them. It is great to see indigenous plants regenerating here – Sea Box *Alyxia buxifolia*, Hop Goodenia *bifolia ovata*, and more.

Indeed, regenerating indigenous plants are helping to smother weed regrowth in the area. After years of control, Bridal Creeper, once ubiquitous, is now only in small areas.

Spraying is needed for the more vigorous scramblers, and in early May we targeted Blackberry, Cape Ivy, Rambling Dock (plenty of this!) and Dolichos Pea. We also cut and painted some small boxthorn behind the toilets, dug out tenacious Bridal Creeper roots (see photo below) and removed an area of the vigorous garden succulent Fairy Crassula.



HAVE YOU HEARD OR SEEN A POBBLEBONK?

Mal Legg, in his recent fauna surveys of our reserves, found none of these large, warty, personable frogs, also known as the Eastern Banjo Frog. But they've been heard often on the north side of the creek, and BERGer Fran Dedrick photographed a foamy mass that is probably Pobblebonk eggs.

If you hear or see these frogs, please let us know where and when. Check out their call and good looks at www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1RKCRjNaW4



Left: A foamy mass of eggs Photo Fran Dedrick Right, a Pobblebonk Photo Angela Kirsner

WHAT A WEB!

Golden Orb-weaving Spider

By Angela Kirsner

We found it on an April walk: a massive, complex web high above the Esplanade footpath near Coolangatta Road, with a few spoke-and-spiral orbs held by a vast network of silks glinting in the sun. It was there for at least a couple of days, but gone a week later.

Its architect and builder was a Golden Orb-weaver, *Nephila edulis*. Near one leg was her diminutive mate and around her, lots of debris.

Why debris?

The debris trails in these webs are made up of partly digested insects and plant material – smelly, rotting garbage. Why? Research suggests that flies are lured by the smell released by bacteria as they break down the debris. It seems that the spiders regularly replace the debris lure so it remains 'ripe' (see

www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2004/05/26/1114737.htm).

Another study suggests that debris trails may help to camouflage the spider when predators are about.

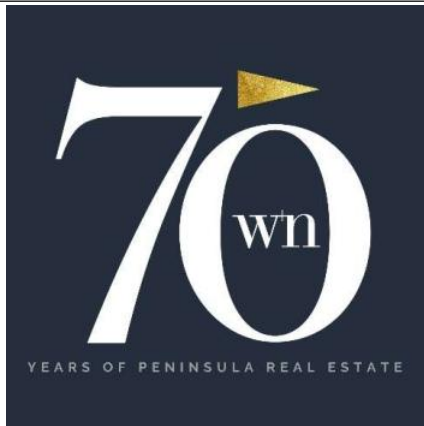
Nephila, 'from the Greek, means fond of spinning; *edulis* is Latin for edible. French naturalist Jacques Labillardiere bestowed the name in 1799 after seeing the spiders roasted and eaten in New Caledonia, and biologist and author Tim Low reports that the plump abdomen, baked, tastes remarkably like pâté!

The golden silk is incredibly strong; webs on occasion will snare small birds and bats. The silk has even been woven into garments; one, a gorgeous golden cape from Madagascar, which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, used the silk from 1.2 million spiders (later released alive)!



BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO TWO LONG-STANDING BUSINESS PARTNERS

WARLIMONT & NUTT



This year Warlimont & Nutt celebrates being part of our community for **70 years**.

A massive thank you to everyone who's contributed to our journey.

And YES!

After all this time, we still love helping people to achieve their real estate dreams.

If you'd like some local real estate advice on selling, leasing or commercial investments, please contact our team.

Call us on: 03 5974 1401
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COMPLETE COLOUR PRINTING



The Creek Printer Celebrates 30th Birthday!

Cheltenham-based Complete Colour has produced *The Creek* for 15 years since Mt Martha resident & Complete Colour Director Geoff Lawyer began supporting BERG MM in 2007.

Complete is Australia's leading environmentally responsible print company. All pulp & paper is from sustainable, well-managed plantations & paper mills. With on-site solar power and Green Power-sourced top-up energy, 100% of Complete's energy sources are renewable.

Complete's print presses are ecologically rated, using vegetable-based oils, 98% of materials entering the business are recycled, reused or responsibly delivered as recyclable products to clients across Australia.

'My family & I moved to Mount Martha in 2005,' says Geoff. 'We fell in love with its creeks, reserves, flora & fauna. There's great synergy between Complete Colour & *The Creek*; protecting the land through environmentally responsible communication

BERG MM NEEDS A NEW SECRETARY

Our long-standing Secretary Di Lewis is stepping down at the AGM.

Might this be your role?

- ♦ A couple of hours a week, on average, much of it in the warmth and comfort of home!
- ♦ Agendas and minutes, annual reports, maintaining records, fielding inquiries and the like.
- ♦ And working with a great team!

Want to know more?

Contact Di at secretary@berg.org.au or 0447 160 288.

A CALL FOR CAKES (AND OTHER GOOD THINGS)

People needed for the morning tea roster!

Would you be willing to provide the occasional morning tea for working bees, to keep our on-ground volunteers feeling cherished and well fed?

Call our morning teas coordinator Alison Hazled on 0422 724 948 or alihazle@hotmail.com.

MEADOW ARGUS BUTTERFLY

BERGER Marg Knight snapped this Meadow Argus Butterfly *Junonia villida calybe*, at a Friday working bee in May, resting among grasses near the Watson Road tennis courts, where the group was weeding.

It's a common butterfly (no less beautiful for that!), found throughout Australia and the south Pacific, even surviving sub-zero winter nights in the Flinders Ranges.

Its beautiful blue spots are more than just good looks. As with other 'eye-spotted' species, it seems these patterns either fool predators into thinking that they are part of a much larger creature, or persuade attackers to target the 'eye' rather than the butterfly's body.



From tiny pale yellow or green eggs, spikey black caterpillars emerge with blue-white spots and a touch of yellow. They munch herbaceous plants for a couple of weeks, and when about 4cm long, they wrap themselves in a knobbly, dangling pupa, looking just like a crumpled dead leaf. Another couple of weeks, and the butterfly emerges.

It's of ancient lineage, descended from similar butterflies in the Orient in the Late Miocene period (c.6 million years ago), themselves descendants of more ancient butterflies in Africa.

Come along to our Bushland Activities	Join us at Waterwatch & EstuaryWatch	Other Local Groups
<p>❖ Normally 2nd Sunday of the month (3rd Sunday in March & June to avoid long weekend): between 9am & noon. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430.</p> <p>❖ Coast Group: fortnightly on Wednesdays, between 9am & noon. Call Suzanne Ryan 0418 387 604. Details emailed a few days ahead.</p> <p>❖ Friday Group: weekly between 9.30am & noon. Call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430. Details emailed a few days ahead.</p>	<p>First Sunday of each month:</p> <p>❖ Waterwatch testing: meet 9.15am at Uralla Rd bridge. Enquiries to Franc Amendola 0433 626 007.</p> <p>❖ EstuaryWatch testing: meet 9.00am at the Rotunda. Enquiries to Bruce Ferres 0435 389 804.</p>	<p>❖ BirdLife Mornington Peninsula bird-watching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows mornington@birdlife.org.au or 0429 947 893, or visit www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula.</p> <p>❖ Sunshine Reserve working bee 9.30am, last Sunday of month. Call Pia Spreen 0437 299 847.</p>
<p>BERG MT MARTHA PATRON: TERRY DENTON</p> <p>COMMITTEE: PRESIDENT PETER MCMAHON • VICE PRESIDENT ERIC SMALLEY • SECRETARY DIANNE LEWIS • TREASURER & BUSINESS PARTNERS COORDINATOR JULIE ZAMMIT • FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • ESTUARYWATCH BRUCE FERRERES • WATERWATCH FRANC AMENDOLA • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • SUE MILTON • MARION ORCHISON</p>		
<p>Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group Mt Martha Inc. No. A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623 Mail: PO Box 433 Mt Martha 3934 Email: info@berg.org.au Mob: 0447 160 288 Web: www.berg.org.au</p>		

THE CREEK

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