



Berg
Mt Martha

21 years of Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

Volume 22 No 4, August 2018

TERRY DENTON OUR NEW PATRON

Graham Hubbard reports

We are delighted that Terry Denton, famed illustrator of the 'Treehouse' children's books, has accepted our invitation to be BERG Mt Martha's Patron.

A Mornington resident, Terry has also long owned a block of land that backs on to the estuary reserves. He has been an environmental supporter since the Lake Pedder and Franklin Dam environmental battles in the early '70s.

Terry decided to accept the role of Patron so that he could support BERG MM's efforts in more tangible ways. His father-in-law, Noel Harvey, was one of BERG's first working bee supporters (see p.14 of *Up the Creek*). Terry also came to early working bees, but has become too busy to stay actively involved on-ground since his Treehouse books became so popular.

Terry loves the reserves. 'It's rare to have an estuary in what is now a busy suburban area – an estuary that's fairly pristine and well managed', he said. 'It's great that BERG MM stopped development into the reserves all those years ago'.

'I particularly love the water birds, the blue wrens and the yellow robins. But it is the amazing diversity that is so wonderful.'

Terry sees BERG MM's approach – an environmental group working with the Shire, Rotary and other community organisations – as being a great model, with all involved continually negotiating to achieve better environmental outcomes, for the benefit of the whole community.

Already Terry has begun to think how he might incorporate environmental issues into his illustrations and books.

And he intends to be actively involved with BERG MM in our events. He would love to say hello to you – and sign your children's books – when you meet him.



Where better to find our new Patron, Terry Denton, than up an indigenous Teatree considering the invading branches of a weedy Pittosporum! Photo Barry Morris

MARKET PROFITS TO BERG MM!

When Peninsula Grammar Year 6 students held their annual fund-raising market, selling their own creative and environmentally friendly products, it was Will McClintock who talked them into giving one-third of the profits to BERG MM.

Will told how it came about in a letter to BERG MM:

I am writing... to let you know that you are one of three charities chosen to receive \$4,200. This is as a result of the

2018 Peninsula Grammar Year Market Day. We call it 'Think It Make It Market It'. All the Year 6 students created a stall and sold either an experience or food. Altogether we made \$12,600.

...My stall was called Sweet Victory. I sold delicious homemade food and offered games of chance, like a carnival. My partner, Indy Trigger, and I realised \$310.10 in total. We were ecstatic that we could contribute to making the environment a better place by donating our funds to BERG MM.

We chose BERG MM ... because I live in Mt Martha and we are determined to help the environment. A few of my neighbours are volunteers for BERG and they are also very passionate about the environment. ... I really hope you can make a difference with the money that we have raised for you.

The market proceeds each year are divided between three local groups. BERG MM, put forward by Will, was one of some 40 charities the students suggested. The other two selected were 'Mums Supporting Families in Need' (<http://2pairseach.com.au/>), and '2 Pairs Each' (<http://2pairseach.com.au/>),

founded at age 9 by the extraordinary Josh Berry.

Will's letter is one of the many we received from the stall holders, each telling us about their stall and why they chose BERG MM.

Liz Barraclough was at Middle School assembly on

31 July to accept the donation. She told the students we plan to use it for making the community more aware of our work and reserves, through new and up-dated signage and bird sculptures to lead the way to the boardwalk.



Will at his market stall (top) & Liz receiving the cheque at the School Assembly
Photos Mason Sugars

800 MILLION PLASTIC PIECES INTO THE BAY

BERG MM President Graham Hubbard was at the launch of the report on a study of microplastics in the Bay. He writes:

Australia's first study of microplastic pollution has estimated that *over 800 million* pieces of floating plastic litter enter Port Phillip Bay each year from just two urban rivers – the Yarra and the Maribyrnong. Over 74% of these were microplastics (less than 5mm).

The study, carried out by Port Phillip EcoCentre and the Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning, is Melbourne's first systematic measurement of the scale of the plastic litter problem. And disturbingly, it's a significant underestimate, as the study measured litter in only the top 20cm of water.

The report, *Pilot Study of Microplastics in the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers*, was launched in July by the Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change, Lily d'Ambrosio, and the Port Phillip EcoCentre.

Project Manager Fam Charko noted the role that citizen science had played and the collaboration of many organisations around the bay in monitoring plastic pollution.

Sixty regular trawls over three years showed an increase in the amount of litter in the Yarra over that time. Hard plastic remnants were the main items, followed by polystyrene and soft plastics (eg cellophane). The study did not attempt to determine where the litter went, but speculated that the bay, with its narrow opening to the sea, may be a sink where plastic builds up and remains in the long term.

The study highlighted a desperate need to improve the life-cycle stewardship of plastic, to increase manufacturers' responsibility for plastics they produce.

It recommended that unnecessary plastic use should be banned, as is starting to happen with the banning of single-use plastic bags – though this is the tip of the iceberg in plastic packaging use. It also recommended increasing the education and 'plastic literacy' of all plastics users.

BERG Mt Martha's role

As part of BERG MM's new role as an environmental watchdog for Mt Martha, particularly in promoting a plastic-free village,

BERGers Fran and Peter Dedrick are working with Port Phillip EcoCentre to survey Mt Martha beach monthly for microplastic nurdles, the lentil-sized pre-fabrication material for a wide range of plastic products. This is part of the EcoCentre's Clean Bay Blueprint project, which will continue for the next three years.

For more information, and a link to the study report, see www.ecocentre.com/cleanbayblueprint



Project Manager Pham Charko holding a copy of the report at its launch, by the Yarra below Federation Square Photo Graham Hubbard

CLEAN GREEN MT MARTHA

July was the month that most of Mt Martha Village gave up single-use plastic bags. Our display to celebrate this milestone and take it a few steps further was held outside the IGA on Saturday 14th July (put off from a fortnight earlier due to feral weather!).

We were joined by Boomerang Bags, where Robin Ruhl gave away 40 gorgeous bags made by BB Mt Martha from remnants and scraps.

Our display highlighted problems, issues and the alternatives. We gave away sample compostable poo bags to lots of dog owners as they walked past. The bags, made of corn, and plastic free, can be ordered at <https://compostapak.com.au/>.

There was lots of interest in reducing waste of all kinds – fabric shopping and fruit bags, washing out bins instead of lining with plastic bags.

And bubbles in place of balloons proved very popular with passing children!

You can collect a Boomerang Bag from White Vase, in Mt Martha Village, or The Briars office – free or for a donation. Or join Boomerang Bag sewing bees each Monday, 1-4pm at Mt Martha house. Enquiries to



At the Clean Green Mt Martha display, clockwise from below: Liam Waldie & Jamie Wallis with their new Boomerang bag and a compostable poo bag for Earl, the dog; Robyn Ruhl (right) gives a Boomerang bag to Megan; Liz Barraclough blows clean green bubbles for Nina Rubin and Isabella Hymans.

Photos Angela Kirsner



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

It takes a lot to put BERGers off, but truly foul weather saw us cancel the June Sunday working bee.

We made up for it in July with a huge turn-out of 22. This included a number of Rotarians, who helped with fencing (see below).

Between showers, we planted over 400 grasses and sedges and middle storey plants in the Watson Rd grant site between kinder and tennis courts. Before this, the **Friday Group** had removed and stacked the fallen Teatree, spread mulch and planted to contain BMXers and prepare for the Kinder to hold its planned Bush Cubby Making Day. Not far away, the **Tuesday Group** removed weed grasses, smilax and other weeds below the Bowling Club.

The Friday Group have also finished removing the 'garden escape' succulent at Victoria Cres/Maude St corner and covered it in black plastic to rot; and they planted shrubs and trees below Victoria Cres, and Drooping Sheokes and Coast Banksias in the Campground.

Rotary and rabbit proofing

Our grateful thanks to the Mt Martha Rotarians who came to Friday and Sunday working bees to help erect 225m of rabbit-proof fencing around the 'non-burn site'.

The site, below the tennis courts, was prepared for a burn in 2009, the Teatrees felled, but the burn never happened. The fallen trees were mulched and the mulch spread, but regeneration has been severely checked by rabbits. We confirmed this by preventing grazing on a small patch by laying wire mesh – and regeneration there has been dramatically more successful.

As always, thanks to our wonderful morning tea cooks – this time, Roo Rawlins, Sally Keystone & Cate Clarke.

Coastal Group

The Rotarians also helped repair fencing around sensitive areas on the coast, and the Coastal Group, particularly Suzanne Ryan, have planted

July Sunday working bee: Right: L-R: BERGers Graham Hubbard & Luke Van Orsouw (who is working towards a Duke of Edinburgh's Award), & Rotarians Paul Clark & Colin Stokes, fixing the rabbit proof fence. Below: Liz distributing tubes for planting; and the planting site
Photos Angela Kirsner



Below: Environmental science students & local residents Tasha James (left) & Franc Amendola (right) with Richie Ball, Naturelinks (centre) enjoy a cuppa at the July Sunday working bee. (Franc is also helping with Waterwatch and is about to do the Habitat Management Course, along with another BERGer, Jan Jones.) Photos Angela Kirsner



lots to improve diversity and prevent erosion and cliff exposure. But it's a race against time to get the rest in.

Extra hands to plant at the August 14th Coastal Group working bee would be most welcome!

Schools

Seventy-five Osborne Primary children spent a morning with us in late May, on four activities: mulching the Watson Rd site, Waterwatch and water bugs, collecting and counting litter, and weeding Forget-me-nots. Teacher Simone De Ruyter reported that 'they loved it and did a great presentation at assembly next day'.

And yet to come, Benton's Junior College Year 1s will do various activities with us in August, and Balcombe Grammar Year 6s will be with us fortnightly for four sessions.

Planning a year's on-ground work

Each year we meet with the Shire and Naturelinks to plan our on-ground work, grants and projects for the next 12 months. This year's meeting took place on 1st June, with Shire Conservation Officers Matt Stahmer & Hannah Brown, Tamara Keyte & Danielle Suffern from Naturelinks, and BERG Mt Martha's Suzanne Ryan, Cate Clarke, Jenny Selby, Sue Betheras, and myself.

BERG MM trailer

With Naturelinks now at every working bee and ferrying the tools needed, we no longer need the BERG MM trailer. Tony O'Connor is refurbishing it for use by Balcombe Moorooduc Landcare Group, and has offered to make it available to any other groups for their working-bees.

Rabbit control

Rabbit warrens have been fumigated in the western parts of the Reserves, including Campground, Rabbit Paddock, and above Ferrero Ovals. From here, we will move on to warrens in the eastern areas.

If you know of rabbits or their warrens in or near the reserves, please let us know.

Unfortunately, these dear little creatures are really damaging the indigenous vegetation, which is struggling to regenerate.

SUPPORT**OUR WONDERFUL
BUSINESS PARTNERS!**

Graham Hubbard

BERG Mt Martha currently has 12 Business Partners supporting us in the new financial year:

- Bonaccorde
- Bunnings Warehouse
- Complete Colour, print & digital communications
- Mornington Peninsula Gardening
- Mt Martha Community Bank
- Mt Martha Medical Centre
- Mt Martha Veterinary Clinic
- Rotary Club of Mt Martha
- Danckert Real Estate
- Sea Side Shacks, boat shed maintenance
- South Coast Foot Clinic
- Warlimont & Nutt, Real Estate

Their names are on our website and our Information Board (at the Campground) as well as in *The Creek*.

We continue to work to increase the number of Business Partners, to demonstrate that we have wide community support beyond our membership base.

'Partnership' means mutual support. So when you have a choice, we ask you to support our Business Partners when you can, as we ask them to support us. It would be great if every Village business supported us – that's our ultimate aim!

**JUNIOR LANDCARE UP
BALCOMBE CREEK**

Tony O'Connor reports

Most Friday mornings my 5-acre property on Balcombe Creek near Bentons Rd is open, free, to any students and their families who want to get involved in Landcare-related activities. We do things like making soil, growing food, building wildlife habitats and learning hand crafts.

The purpose is to give more kids an opportunity to enjoy and connect with the natural world, to support longer-term care of the environment.

Called 'Tony's Junior Landcare', the Fridays are great fun and very popular. And it's so rewarding, as an adult, to share and pass on your skills and interests to appreciative kids in a great learning environment.

We start around 10.30 am for a cuppa, then activities, until lunch from the big pizza oven by 1.00pm. It's on every Friday, but not in September (when I'm away).

Most who attend are home-schoolers but some parents arrange to take their kids out of school for it.

It's a great opportunity for kids to put what they've learnt, and their passions, into practice. I'm very interested in giving kids opportunities for project work in the environmental area, promoting biodiversity, carbon drawdown (big planting schemes, making biochar) and other sustainability life skills.

For me (and others say it too), it's the best day of the week, by far!

*Drop by & see it in practice: 9 Century Dr,
Mt Martha, Ph: 0404 951 500*

Email: loctoc@bigpond.net.au



Regarding flows from Kia Ora Ave and Walpole St, Mr Oz said an earlier design of flows from this area would be revisited and other funding sources be considered 'to make this special funding scheme more viable'.

*Left: This handsome White-faced Heron was fishing in the creek near one of the fishing platforms one day in mid July
Photo Angela Kirsner*

**SEDIMENT WORKS
FUNDED**

Mornington Peninsula Shire has allocated \$150,000 in its 2018-19 budget to address the problem of sediment from unmade roads clogging up Balcombe Estuary.

The funding comes after years of talks and meetings with the Shire and Melbourne Water. We are delighted to see the talks translated into action.

Recent scientific studies commissioned by the Shire showed that only in the past 80 years has sediment smothered seagrass beds and built the islands that are exposed at low water levels in this once deep and open estuary.

The Shire will investigate infrastructure options for sediment reduction for Seppelt Ave/Ferrero Reserve, where the Ferrero Reserve master plan is being prepared for Council. This includes the recommended option of sealing the car park.

There will also be further investigation of sediment reduction at the Henley St gross pollutant trap, which is the responsibility of Melbourne Water.

Shire financial controller Bulent Oz said a special charge scheme for road construction of Augusta St was being considered and would incorporate the environmental impact on the estuary.

Mr Oz said the Shire has already run owners' information nights with residents. The next stage is to interview residents 'to address the shift in the environmental impact on Balcombe Estuary, if the road is deemed suitable for being sealed'.

DRAMA UNDER THE WATTLE

Angela Kirsner reports

I have a largish Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) in my Victoria Crescent garden opposite the reserves. Under it, over recent weeks, there have been lots of empty pupa cases, beside holes from which I assume they have emerged to release their adult moth.

And through July, in the same area, there have also been lots of black, club-shaped fungi 30-80mm high. They are, I discover, *Cordyceps gunnii*, known as 'Dark Vegetable Caterpillar'.

Cordyceps, Fuhrer's *Field Guide to Australian Fungi* tells me, is a genus of highly specialised fungi that parasitise insects, usually in their larval stage. The thread-like spores from the mature clubs break into tiny part-spores 3-5mm long that penetrate the soil, infect the caterpillars, and consume their soft tissue. A column of fungal tissue then grows, usually from behind the dead caterpillar's head, appearing above ground as the small 'clubs' I found. Below ground the stem can be as long as 400mm, depending on the depth of the host caterpillar.



Cordyceps gunnii enlarged – the white fluff is the tiny thread-like spores, which will penetrate the ground and infect caterpillars Photo Angela Kirsner



Above, *Cordyceps gunnii* and below, the pupa cases, both under a under the Black

Wattle Photos Angela Kirsner



C. gunnii usually occurs under mature wattles. Why wattles? I've not found an answer, but local ecologist Gidja Walker has also seen them under Black Sheoak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) and Prickly Moses (*Acacia verticillata*) and she speculates maybe it is to do with the fact that both wattles and Sheoaks fix Nitrogen.

It would seem that the pupa cases I found are the discards of the fortunate moths that, as caterpillars, avoided this macabre process!

(And you'll find, on-line, extraordinary footage from David Attenborough, of another *Cordyceps* species growing its long, tentacle-like fruiting body from

the head of an ant it has colonised – search for '*Cordyceps* & ants'.)

TRACKING ECHIDNAS

The Atlas of Living Australia wants to learn more about echidnas – Where are they? What are they doing? Are they healthy?

The information will support work towards their conservation.

How can you help?

Take photos, collect scats, and go to <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/ala/project/index/8c3ae3b1-5342-40b4-9e72-e9820b7a9550> to find out how to submit your information.

Or download the app:

<http://grutznerlab.weebly.com/echidna-csi.html>

ESTUARYWATCH RECOGNISED IN VICTORIAN COASTAL AWARDS

Bruce Ferres reports

Each year the Victorian Coastal Council recognises community groups protecting and managing Victoria's marine areas, coast and catchments.

This year, EstuaryWatch Victoria won the Community Engagement Award for outstanding contribution to improving understanding and connection with coastal and marine environments through engagement with the wider community.

BERG MM is one of the 18 EstuaryWatch groups gathering data on estuary condition, to inform waterway management.

The award citation noted that EstuaryWatch Victoria is a citizen science program that supports community monitoring of estuary health. It is fast becoming a global leader in collecting, storing and communicating long-term data sets on estuary condition.

NOTICE OF MEETING AND CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2018 BERG MT MARTHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 27TH OCTOBER Mt Martha House

Registration 10.15am, meeting 10.30am

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2017 AGM
- Committee reports:
 - President, Graham Hubbard
 - Treasurer, Julie Zammit
 - Field Officer, Liz Barraclough
- Election: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, & up to 10 ordinary committee members.
- Appointment of Auditor

Come along and hear of BERG MM's achievements and plans - and stay on for a light lunch afterwards

Nominations for office bearers & committee

For nomination forms call 0447 160 208 or go to www.berg.org.au, under 'About/Forms & documents'. Nominations in writing, signed by two BERG Mt Martha members & accompanied by the candidate's written consent, must be with the Secretary by Friday 19th October

ESTUARYWATCH VOLUNTEER

Meet Helen Carroll, a new BERG MM volunteer who joined us via an advertisement on the Mornington Peninsula Volunteering website.

Helen is inputting all our EstuaryWatch data into the Melbourne Water portal. This will enable anyone to look at the results of our monthly testing of the Balcombe Estuary water, on the EstuaryWatch web site, www.estuarywatch.org.au/.


Before she had her children, Helen was a surveyor in the Royal Australian Navy and a photographic systems manager. Now a mother of two, she is in the Navy Reserve. The family recently moved to Crib Point, and though some distance from Mt Martha, our data entry is something she feels she can do from home around family commitments.

Thanks Helen!



Sue Milton, BERG MM EstuaryWatch coordinator, with Helen and children Lily (3 years old) and Thomas (6 months) Photo Di Lewis

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members
 Sarah Russell, Cheryl & Colin Wilkinson, Franc Amendola, Helen & Dennis Carroll, Naomi & Lauren Ryan, Peter & Ronnie McGinley, Ben Campbell, Susan & Steve Pate, Chris & Cathy Mitchell

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 Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430 or David Street 0418 342 298. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch & EstuaryWatch 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 11th August & 8th September. 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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THE CREEK

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