



The Creek

Volume 26 No 1, February 2022

Caring for our local environment

OUR EELS STAR AGAIN

By *Suzanne Ryan, BERG MM Coastal Coordinator*

One of the features of Coastcare's 'Summer by the Sea' program this summer was a video showcasing Balcombe Estuary and our eels.

Summer by the Sea – January 2022

Each January Coastcare Victoria, delivered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, coordinates the 'Summer by the Sea' program all along the Victorian coastline, with free activities exploring the rich natural and cultural values of Victoria's coastal and marine environments. This year's program featured a mix of online activities and guided coastal walks.

Late last year, Coastcare contacted Victorian Coastal Groups to seek interest in this year's program. Coastcare is one of the major grant funders of our coastal work – this was definitely something to pursue!

Our brief was to make a locally based video to be available on the Summer by the Sea website, and contribute to the program's aim to engage people in the rich natural and cultural values of Victoria's coastal and marine environments.

Focus on eels

What better than our fascinating eels! My idea was to target kids and young people, tell them the amazing story of the eels of Balcombe Creek, and talk about the importance of our creek and estuary, how we need to care for it, and why artificially opening of it could be damaging.

The video, entitled *The Mystery of the Eels of Balcombe Estuary*, also links with the eel research underway at Arthur Rylah Institute, in which BERG MM is a participant, and it discusses our new Water Monitor Portal.

Coastcare supplied filmmaker Michael Portway and his team, of Grassland Films, who helped whip the text into shape and got me – a reluctant actor! – through it.

Thanks to Wayne Koster from Arthur Rylah Institute, for his input, and Rhiannon Stevens from the ABC, for permission



Suzanne Ryan researched, wrote and presented the video. This is a screen shot from it.

to use footage from the Landline program, 'On the Tail of the Eel'.

We've had great feedback, people have really engaged with this fascinating creature. The video, which includes closed captions and translations into six other languages, has been shared to many other sites and has definitely raised awareness of the importance of Balcombe Estuary.

You can find the video on BERG MM's Facebook page and Youtube channel.

...AND AGAIN

It's been a long time coming, but our new poster on the Short-finned Eel is finally complete and installed in the Camp Laundry at the Old Campground. Check it out!



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



CAN YOU HELP?

Clean Up Australia Day

SUNDAY 6TH MARCH

Join with **BERG Mt Martha**, the Yacht Club & others to clean up beach, creek & surrounds, with a particular focus on Estuary and Creek - Yacht Club kayakers will be out there as well! Register & pick up a rubbish bag outside the IGA, any time between 9.30 to 1.00. Enquiries Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430

OR

Join the Birdrock crew. Register at Birdrock Beach carpark any time between 9.30 and 11.30. Masks required. Enquiries to Debbie McMahon 0403 866 160

All hands welcome!



NATURELINKS ON THE COAST

Suzanne Ryan introduces two key people in our Naturelinks coastal team

Welcome Justine

Justine Lund is the new Naturelinks supervisor for our coastal working bees – officially our Coastal Teams Friends Group Supervisor. She is familiar with our Coastal area, having worked with Tamara Keyte in the coastal bushland for a few years.

Justine writes: ‘With a background in administration and accounts, I became interested in Natural Resource Management after many lunch-break visits to Braeside Park. I began volunteering at the park in 2013 and it was clear that a career behind a desk was no longer for me!’

She enrolled for a Conservation & Land Management diploma, became a volunteer at Sweetwater Creek (Frankston), Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, and Earimil Creek (Mt Eliza), and in 2015, started her new career at the newly opened Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve. Two years later, she joined Naturelinks and worked closely with Tamara along the Mt Martha coast. Justine also project manages sites in Mt Eliza, and with Cardinia and Frankston Shire councils.

‘I am passionate about wildlife and understand the importance of my work for our fauna’s survival in their shrinking environment,’ she said.



Justine Lund with her new BERG bag and cup, presented by Suzanne Ryan (right) with Ben Hallpike watching on Photo Ian Gould

Brushcutter Ben

Ben Hallpike is Naturelinks’ brushcutter expert – so very necessary in our coastal reserve! Over recent years he has concentrated on the steep strip from Coolangatta Road to Alice Street,

using the brushcutter to remove and mulch down the masses of woody weeds, and paving the way for the very successful regeneration of indigenous flora we are seeing in this area.

Ben has recently run two training workshops with the Coastal Group on how to use our new electric brushcutter safely and effectively to control grassy and woody weeds.

The training has been a morale booster, allowing the volunteers to get on top of the substantial workload along the coast.

We’ve been fortunate to have continuous funding for Ben’s work under our Port Phillip Bay Fund 3 grant and our current 2021 Port Phillip Bay Fund grant. The training workshop was funded under the 2021 Port Phillip Bay Fund grant.

There are more training sessions to come, involving our bushland volunteers as well.



Ben directs Ian Croker in the art of brushcutting woody weed piles on Balcombe beachland, with Eric Smalley and Chris Sordello in the background. Photo Suzanne Ryan

OUT AND ABOUT IN THE RESERVES *Angela Kirsner reports*



White-faced Heron

On my morning walk through the reserves in January, this White-faced Heron was sitting on a branch near one of the fishing platforms, before moving into the water to trawl for food.

These herons are Australia's most commonly seen heron, but no less handsome for that. They can be found anywhere where there is water, from tidal mudflats and coastal reefs to moist grasslands and gardens, and they feed on things such as fish, insects, or amphibians.



The challenge of LBBs



I snapped this little bird one January morning in the reserves. But what was it? LBBs – little brown birds – are notoriously tricky to identify.

It took time, but eventually three talented birdos all declared it to be a juvenile Golden Whistler.

Adult male Golden Whistlers are easy to identify, garbed in bright yellow, black, white and olive-green. The more modest females are generally grey with an olive tinge above, and paler grey below, with a buff wash. Young Golden Whistlers, however, are rufous, and as they mature, come to resemble the female, other than rufous edges to some wing feathers, which are replaced as the bird matures.

Berries for breakfast

Coast Beard-heath, *Leucopogon parviflorus*, is a modest, tough and long-lived shrub or small tree that is widespread in coastal areas in all Australian states.

Generally slow-growing and often wind-pruned, it can grow to 4 metres high in sheltered sites. Its stiff, pointed leaves are dark green above and lighter below, but its new growth is a fresh acid-green.

The small white flowers appear in clusters in spring, and have a woolly beard inside – hence the plant's common name. They are followed by small white berries that are edible and sweet, but about 90% pip.

Many birds, however, love them. It wasn't until I looked at my photos later that I realised that this Red Wattle Bird had lined up four of them in its beak, ready for swallowing!



Ringtail Possum

Our daughter's big, gentle dog was found looking after this rather scared little Ringtail Possum. A Staffy cross, she's rescued other small creatures, nosing them with maternal concern. The possum was rescued in a towel and released into a nearby tree.



Large Bindweed
Calystegia sepium

If you've walked from the bridge to Mt Martha Village over summer, chances are you have seen these lovely flowers. The twining vine has been there many years in the damp bush between the footpath and Mirang Avenue, but last year's storms uprooted a Sheoke and let in the light, and the Bindweed has celebrated with a gorgeous display.

Despite its exotic appearance, it is indigenous, one of the suite of saltmarsh plants in our reserves.



Native Raspberry

This native scrambler (*Rubus parvifolius*) shares none of the aggressive tendencies of its introduced blackberry cousins. The light green leaves, white beneath, are rather wrinkled, and the small pink flowers are followed by these little jewel-like fruit – if you can find them before the birds.

It's the commonest of the native raspberries, widespread in higher rainfall areas of Victoria. (The other two are only found in eastern Gippsland.) You'll find it in moist but well-drained parts of the reserves, in semi-shade.



FROM OUR SNORKELLING CORRESPONDENT
SUE BRABENDER

Sue has been underwater again, off Mt Martha, with her camera.

Tasmanian Blenny



'Cute and very curious', Sue describes it. With a big head, blunt snout and a large frilled tentacle over each eye, it's common in tide pools and near jetties along the south coast. You might meet one poking its head from a hole or crevice, even an old can or bottle.

Growing to only 13 cm long, Tasmanian Blennies are pale brown to bluish grey in colour, with many fine spots covering the body. Algae are their favourite food. And they are assiduous parents: they attach their eggs to the sides of their rock crevices or holes and guard them until they hatch.

Lion's Mane Jellyfish
Cyanea annaskala

There are lots of these beautiful jellyfish around the bay at the moment, the result of plentiful food and warm weather. Various websites say they can grow to be one of the largest of all jellyfishes, but the ones Sue has been seeing are about the size of an orange or less, trailing very long, fine tentacles.

Lion's Mane Jellyfish are found in marine waters all round Australia. Their tentacles can form a fan-like trap that allows only the smallest of animals to pass through without being caught. Many small fish may live near the bell of these jellyfish, avoiding the tentacles and gaining protection from predators, as few animals will come near a large Lion's Mane Jellyfish.

Keep your distance

These jellyfish can deliver a painful sting. If you get stung, don't rub it. Remove any remaining tentacles (not



with bare hands!), and rinse the area with seawater (not fresh water) to remove any invisible sting cells. Put the stung area in hot water for 20 minutes to help deactivate the toxins and reduce pain. If you can't do this, apply a cold pack instead.

BERG MM'S
NEW VICE PRESIDENT

We delighted that long-standing BERGER Eric Smalley has agreed to be our new Vice President.

Eric has long been a hands-on volunteer, and through lockdown he enlisted wife Helen and sister Kath to declare a highly successful family war on the reserves' invasive Forget-me-nots!



We look forward to working with Eric on the Committee.

THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

FEATURING



**Celebrating
Australian native ingredients**



Alcohol-free sparkling beverages crafted from sustainably farmed native Australian fruits & herbs.

Mt Martha locals (& BERGers) Andy & Jason Quin founded ETC to provide sparkling choice to those who want to cut down on alcohol - or just want a delicious drink anytime.

ETC Sparkling beverages are all natural, with no artificial colours, sugars or sweeteners.

Every Time Choose Health

Available in Mt Martha at Ritchies IGA, Cibo, Mr Curtis, Angus & Rose, and Higher Ground, or online at www.etchsparkling.com.au for free local delivery.

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 - Mount Martha Village Clinic
 - Mount Martha Yacht Club
 - Mr Curtis Wine Bar
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 - Ritchies IGA
- Roberts Beckwith Partners
- Rotary Club of Mount Martha
 - Sea Side Shacks
- Terry Bateman Pharmacy
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FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Not much has happened in the field over summer, but working bees will be back from the start of February, dependant as always on the weather.

Occasional holiday weeders

Our occasional itinerant weeders have continued their excellent work, notably spot-weeding Forget-me-nots. A couple of us also removed a

lush bed of Cabbage Thistle downstream of Uralla bridge, before they seed yet again.

New signs nearly done!

A couple of longer term projects are nearly complete. The new interpretive signage throughout the reserves has finally gone to Progress Signs, to be printed by early February. The new signs should be in place very soon, and we're delighted by how they look. It's a long time since Angela Kirsner and I started working on them with

Clayton Fenech and Hannah Brown of the Shire's Natural Systems Team, with substantial Covid delays – but we hope the wait is worth it.

Gardens for Wildlife (G4W)

The Shire's program is up and running, but our first site visit had to be 'virtual'. The visiting team consisted of me, another trained G4W assessor, and Tara Guddat, the Shire's G4W Coordinator. It was deemed successful by the client, and it helped us complete our report format and fine-tune the 'virtual' process if it's needed again.

Hopetoun Fauna Survey

Mal Legg's draft report on his fauna survey of the reserves along Hopetoun Creek (Hopetoun Reserve and, upstream, Hopetoun-Norfolk Reserve) has been delivered. We're currently reviewing it. It will provide an excellent basis for ongoing management of the reserves' habitat.



*Cabbage thistles removed
– before (left) and after (right)*

A RECYCLING WIN

By Jeff Angel, Director, Boomerang Alliance

On 2 December, the Victorian Parliament passed a law to set up drink bottle and can refunds (CDS).

At last! It's taken decades of effort by many local and state groups, and the Boomerang Alliance has been proud to work with them for the last 15 years.

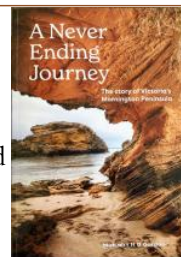
Industry ran a cashed up campaign to reverse the government's chosen approach, but we fought back and our recommended model ('split responsibility') has been enacted. Victoria will have a scheme that offers the best pathway to greatly increased recycling (including local processing into new products), preventing the flow of drinks containers into parks, waterways and ocean. The government has called for expressions of interest from potential CDS operators and the scheme should start in early 2023.

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Prue Holstein, Jason & Andy Quin & family (previous family membership changed to business partner)

A NEW HISTORY OF THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA

Mt Martha historian & BERG MM member Malcolm Gordon has just released his impressive new book, *A Never Ending Journey: The story of Victoria's Mornington Peninsula*. It's a fascinating ride through the Peninsula's rich natural and cultural history.



Special price for BERG MM members: \$45. Contact Malcolm on 0407 525 099 or edutourm@bigpond.net.au

Come along to our Bushland Activities	Other BERG MM Activities	Other Groups
<p>ALL COVID-DEPENDENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 2nd Sunday of the month: between 9am & noon. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430. ❖ Coast Group: fortnightly on Wednesdays, between 9am & noon. Call Suzanne Ryan 0418 387 604 for details. Location emailed a few days ahead. ❖ Friday Group: weekly between 9.30am & noon. Call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch & EstuaryWatch testing: monthly, 1st Sunday. WW, meet 9.15am at Augusta St bridge; call Sue Milton 0407 350 175. EW, meet 9.00am at the Rotunda; call Bruce Ferres 0435 389 804. ❖ BERG Mt Martha Committee meets at Mt Martha House (or via Zoom). Dates for 2022 to be finalised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ BirdLife Mornington Peninsula bird-watching normally 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows 0429 947 893, mornington@birdlife.org.au or www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula. ❖ SPIFFA 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Seawinds Community Hub, 11A Allambi Ave, Rosebud West. See www.spiffa.org. ❖ Sunshine Reserve working bee 9.30am, last Sunday of month. Call Pia Spreen, 0437 299 847.
<p align="center">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 SUE MILTON • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • FRANC AMENDOLA • MARION ORCHISON</p>		
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THE CREEK

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