

# THE CREEK

Volume 9 Issue 1

February 2005 - March 2005

BALCOMBE ESTUARY REHABILITATION GROUP Inc (BERG)

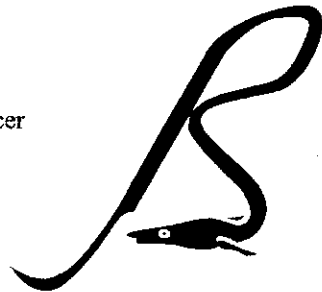
Reg No. A0034645Y

Formed March 1997

ABN 50 224 628 623

## Your Committee:

Keith Wilson - President  
Harry Harris - Vice-President  
Tony Hyde - Treasurer/Public Officer  
Mary Stemp - Hon Secretary  
Pam Hearn - Minutes Secretary  
Liz Barraclough - Field Officer  
Andy McGuigan - Rotary Club  
Angela Kirsner - Publicity  
Jenny Selby - Waterwatch  
Jan Oliver - Schools Liaison



BERG logo

## Our address for correspondence is:

The Hon Secretary, BERG Inc.  
PO Box 433, Mt Martha, 3934  
Telephone 5977 1089

## Website:

<http://berg.alphalink.com.au/>

BERG is a member of the Coast Action/Coastcare Program  
& of Greening Australia Victoria (GAV)

\* \* \* \* \*

## President's Message:

BERG has many friends and supporters and their contribution to our work - in various forms - is greatly appreciated.

The **Blashki family** of Mount Martha has been to the forefront in that support ever since our formation in 1997 and it was with a sense of loss that we learned of the death of Mr. Tony Blashki on 29th December, aged 91. That sadness was tempered by a feeling of joy and satisfaction at having known and shared even a little time with this delightful, generous, community-minded and family-loving gentle man.

\* \* \* \* \*

One can hardly write anything at this time without expressing heartfelt concern over the Tsunami tragedy. I think most of us are having difficulty in accepting the magnitude of this horrific event. It highlights the enormous power of Nature and how we human being are so insignificant in comparison.

To our "sickies" we wish you a speedy recovery and to all members and friends may 2005 be a year of good health and happiness.

Keith Wilson January 2005

*It is with some regret that we say farewell to Richard and Nancy Hawkins who, having moved to Rosebud last year, are moving again, this time to Northern Victoria! Those of us who thrive on the joys of grand-parenting readily recognise the call to be nearer those little ones while they remain little ones.*

*BERG was born in 1997 and Richard, our founder, has been involved ever since - a marvellous contribution to BERG and the Peninsula Community.*

*To Richard and Nancy we say a heartfelt 'thank you' for all you have both done for the Mornington Peninsula, specifically Mount Martha, and we wish you well in your new environment.*

*We will have a BBQ lunch at noon, immediately following our working bee on February 20th and all members are invited to share in this farewell occasion. Naturally we would like to have a good turnout and it would help our catering needs if you would call Mary or Keith.*

Keith

To all BERG members & friends  
an INVITATION TO A BBQ lunch  
WHY: to farewell Richard & Nancy Hawkins  
WHEN: Sunday February 20, 2005 after the  
working bee, about 12 noon  
WHERE: Rotunda BBQ area

To assist our catering committee, please let us know if you are coming by February 12th.

RSVP - MARY STEMPE at 5977 1089 or email  
[marystemp@dodo.com.au](mailto:marystemp@dodo.com.au)

**FROM THE EDITOR:**

Summer seems to be catching up with us at last, at least today, now that the children are back at school. Speaking of children, you may note that our one donation recently is from **Mt. Martha Primary School**. Tony, our treasurer, tells me that the children who visited the Bunyip in November actually collected the money themselves. This adds considerable value to the donation! Many thanks.

**Waterwatch** While BERG has been testing the water of Balcombe Creek for some years now, we became part of a larger monitoring program last year when the Council enlisted the services of **Waterwatch Coordinator, Anja Steiner**. Anja has organised a program of testing involving BERG, The Briars (above & below their wetlands), and Mt Eliza Association for Environmental Care (MEAFEC), 5 sites in all. Each quarter we test at about the same time; BERG and The Briars on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, starting February 15 at 1pm. Brian Pullman, Isobel Cook and I work with Anja at our Augusta Street Bridge site to do the **chemical/physical testing and check for macro-invertebrates**. We have found that, while the water quality is generally quite good chemically, there are almost no macro-invertebrates. We are convinced that this relates directly to the problem of silt as discussed in Liz's article on page 3.

**Enviroweek**. Many of you will be aware of the fact that each year the Council organises a week of activities for primary school children which is held on the grounds of **The Briars from March 7 - 10**. BERG was invited 5 or 6 years ago to conduct a **Waterwatch** activity. Last year Anja Steiner brought her special equipment, displays & a tent so BERG members took on the role of assistants along with students from Chisholm. Aside from the actual help we offer, we at BERG feel that it is important we continue our presence as volunteers of an environmental group. **If you are interested in participating for one of the sessions (2 hours either morning or afternoon) please don't hesitate to let me know.**

**Field Notes:** Some of us are interested in planting indigenous plants in our own gardens. Even I haven't been consistent in this but I must mention one success: **Sweet Bursaria**. I planted 3 of these tall bushes about 3 years ago in a row by a fence. This

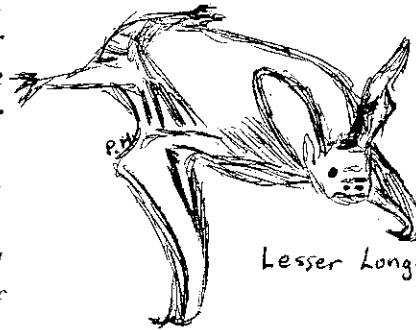
January I was delighted at the display of creamy, feathery flower heads and soft green leaves, somewhat similar in shape and size to our coastal tea tree. My *Bursaria* grew quickly and may get to 3 or 4 metres in height. Its delicate flower clusters are followed by bronze seed heads. It does have a few thorns which can provide some protection for small birds and, perhaps, their nests. A most desirable shrub/small tree to grow in a clump or row against a fence. Available at Mornington Peninsula Youth Enterprises.

Mary Stemp

\* \* \* \*

**INSECT-EATING BATS AND US** (cont'd)

The **Lesser Long-eared Bat** is common on the Peninsula. In fact, Lindy Lumsden (our AGM speaker who has devoted her life to bats) assures us that they fly over our houses in summer "shouting and calling out like mad, but we are oblivious to it". They use a sound



Lesser Long-eared Bat

frequency way above our hearing range! It is tiny (45-50 mm), and has broad but short wings that make it very manoeuvrable so it can flutter in amongst vegetation to pick off insects.

On the other hand, the **White-striped Free-tailed Bat** has long narrow wings built for speed and distance. It flies high above the canopy catching insects in open spaces. Lindy notes that a similar species in the US has been recorded as flying up to 3 km up and catching insects. She plans on going up in a hot air balloon see how far up our bats are going!!

In winter when there are not a lot of insects around, bats drop their body temperature and go into torpor - a mild form of hibernation, from 40 degrees down to 10 degrees. They also change their heart rate from the flying rate of 1000 beats/minute through sitting of 400/minute to 10/minute in torpor. And they can slow their breathing right down as low as 1 breath per minute!

Lindy let us hold a **Free-tail Bat** which she has had for 15 years and has been handled a lot. It was in torpor, lay still in my hand, its furry body cold as a stone. Amazing!

**BERG is grateful for donations received from the following:** from 9/12/04 to 20/1/05

Mt. Martha Primary School

**Field Officer's Report**

25th January 2005

Welcome back – a fresh new year!

**NHT Envirofund Grant**

I suppose you have all driven or walked past the estuary over the summer and noticed, when the mouth has been open, the amazing amount of silt build-up in the estuary, with the creek just a ribbon winding through the middle. Apparently you could once dive into this area from the bridge! The silt has suffocated much of the rich and diverse habitat of many of the once-abundant estuarine waterbird life. There are almost no seagrass beds and a serious lack of macroinvertebrates and other life in the water. You will also have noticed the brown plume of silt extending into the bay from the estuary and along the beach after a big storm.

**This year the emphasis of our NHT Envirofund grant is on the silt problems of the creek.** We will be working in conjunction with the Mornington Peninsula Shire to study and tackle the causative factors. Much of the silt from development, erosion and poor management in the upper stretches of the creek is filtered by the Briars wetlands. However heavy rains contribute to the problem downstream in the Reserve where runoff from stormwater and unmade roads are the major causative factors. We are told that the only ultimate solution is the sealing of the roads – a costly and often unpopular action.

**All options and alternatives need to be considered.**

Some of these are: controlling runoff from private driveways, construction of road swales and wetlands to filter runoff; installation of silt and rubbish traps; sealed roads (and perhaps we can be more imaginative here and not just consider black bitumen but a surface more aesthetically attractive and suitable to the local environment: eg the carpark surface in the Old Campground at the end of Mirang Av.); and reduction of stormwater at the source (ie increased collection and use of stormwater by landowners for their houses and gardens).

This year we are focusing on five of the large stormwater outlets emptying into the creek: the end of La Trobe Drive, the bottom of Augusta St, the end of Mirang Av., Victoria Cres. and the outlet of Hopetoun Creek below the cricket nets at Ferrero Ovals. These will be regularly

monitored, every two weeks and after storm events. Already the **Council has run swales** off the sides of some roads to divert the silt before it can reach the creek and it has excavated the deep layer of silt from the Augusta St outlet so the input from now on can be measured and studied.

**BERG's role** is to help in the monitoring, to weed to encourage regeneration, to revegetate where necessary and liaise with the council.

We will continue to follow-up the areas of earlier projects – weeding, enhancement planting and community education etc.

This is not just a problem for BERG but as you will have noticed, there has been a lot of concern in the press lately for all our waterways and the Bay.

**January working-bee**

We had good turn-up and achieved our objectives to spread a pile of mulch and to remove the weeds before they seeded from the Carpark area and along the Mirang Av. drainage line.

**The Annual planning meeting** to consider works and projects for the coming year will be held in February between BERG, Naturelinks and Simon Thorning from the Shire's Natural Systems Team. If anyone has any pressing issues, concerns or ideas about the Reserve please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the committee.

**Vermin Control Workshop** is to be held at The Briars on Saturday 19th February from 9.00am to approx 2.00pm. BBQ lunch provided. Control methods for particularly rabbits and foxes will be discussed and demonstrated.

If interested please contact me (0408 388 430) or Simon Thorning (5986 0326)

**Clean-up Australia Day** on Sunday 6th March (approx. from 9.00am to 12.30pm) – BERG is going to return to coordinating this activity around and in the Reserve this year as we feel it is important to the community as well as the environment. Please, anyone who can help even for just half an hour or so, you can register and pick up a bag at the Village Green carpark on the corner of Watson Rd and the Esplanade opposite the Mt Martha Yacht Club.

Liz Barraclough

**DIARY DATES:**

**Field Activities:**

**Sundays - 3rd Sunday of each month.** Next scheduled activities are **February 20 followed by BBQ & March 2**  
Meet at Rotunda BBQ (Mel: 144 K11)  
*Tuesdays - We are in recess until March 1st or 15th.*  
*Starting time for Field Activities - 9:00AM. Coffee break at 10:30 (provided) All queries: Mary - 5977 1089*  
*BYO gloves; other equipment provided.*  
**Waterwatch - February 15 at 1pm - Augusta St bridge**  
**Vermin Control Workshop - Sat February 19, 9am - 2pm**

**Special BBQ - farewell to Richard & Nancy Hawkins** - 12 noon on Sunday February 20th.

RSVP Mary or Keith 5974 4993

**Clean up Australia Day** - Sunday March 6th

**Enviroweek** - March 7 - 10 at The Briars

**Committee Meetings:**

Saturday March 5, 2005 at 9:30 AM at Mt Martha House. All members welcome.

**SPIFFA** - meets 1st Monday in the month at 7:30pm at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4)

Contact: Jan Dwyer, Secretary ph: 5986 6566

**Membership Application**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr.....  
 Address.....  
 Phone.....Fax.....  
 Mobile.....EMail.....

**I would like to become an Individual / Family Member of the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.**

**I enclose cheque (payable to "BERG") / cash**

**Date.....Signed.....**

Joining Fee \$1.00.....\$  
 Annual Individual Subscription \$4.00.....\$  
 Annual Family Subscription \$5.00.....\$

Donation.....\$  
 Total.....\$

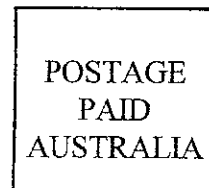
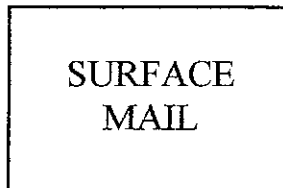
**Donations of \$2.00 & over are Tax Deductible**

**Please send to:**

**Membership Secretary,  
 BERG,  
 PO Box 433,  
 Mt Martha, 3934.**

If undelivered return to:  
 BERG  
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 Mt Martha Vic 3934

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# ◆ THE CREEK ◆

Volume 9 Issue 2

BALCOMBE ESTUARY REHABILITATION GROUP Inc (BERG)

Formed March 1997

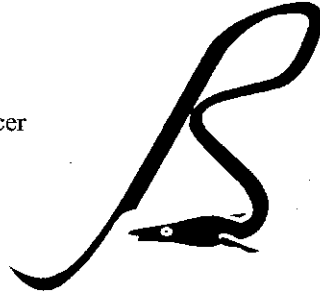
April 2005 - May 2005

Reg No. A0034645Y

ABN 50 224 628 623

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## President's Message:

First let me apologise for not attending the March working bee; it clashed with a family wedding and a Legacy commitment. I will have to work twice as hard at the April activity.

Since the burn in the Bunyip area, I have noticed more Kookaburras on my early morning walks than ever before and am trying to work out if the burn provided them with bonus food. I would be interested to hear from any or our birdwatchers on this subject. It is going to be very interesting to see what plants germinate once we get some rain.

The shipping channel deepening proposal continues apace and it was newsworthy that a group of Mount Martha doctors have expressed concern over potential health hazards from the operation.

Environment Week at The Briars was yet another outstanding success and a number of our members played an active part in the Waterwatch activity.

Keith Wilson

March 2005

To: The President, Committee and Members of  
Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.  
C/- Mrs Mary Stemp, Hon Secretary

Dear Mary,

Nancy and I want to thank you all for the lovely farewell BBQ on Sunday. Firstly, those who conceived and put the idea into action. Then those wonderful girls who attended to the catering in all its details and to yourself and Keith and Harry at the BBQ; those who thought of the beautiful pictures and who did the photography and framing; and those who chose the lovely card, collected and wrote the parting words which we shall treasure in the years ahead. So a big thank you to many people.

Over and above the friendly, happy and appreciative gathering, there is much more to be said - to all the members of BERG, active and/or supportive, a big thank you for your field work and financial support that has enabled the vision we all agreed upon eight years ago to be continued; particularly for including the schools in our work.

And to you Keith for taking over the baton and running with it strongly and to Liz, Mary, Tony, Harry, Pam and the others on the Committee who have cheerfully run with you to create a strong - indeed an outstanding - conservation group of volunteers which will ensure what we set out to achieve: a significant and vibrant natural area for future generations.

With best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,

Richard Hawkins

Richard, we BERGERS wish you and Nancy every happiness in Benalla! Thanks for getting us started.

ED

## Ecological and Fuel Reduction Burn at Balcombe Estuary Reserve

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute some information to the BERG Newsletter.

As I am sure most BERG members and local residents have noticed, a fuel reduction (prescribed) burn has been conducted behind the tennis courts off Watsons Road at Balcombe Estuary Reserve. **This burn was conducted under very carefully prescribed and monitored conditions for the dual purpose of achieving strategic fuel reduction and significant improvement in the species biodiversity and structure of the indigenous vegetation.**

### PRESCRIBED BURN

A prescribed burn means that the burn may only be conducted if the weather and fuel parameters lie within certain safe limits. There is also a lot of expertise in drafting the "burn plan" which completely plans out the strategy for lighting and conducting the burn and specifies the number and type of water tankers and other equipment required. **Almost all Mornington Peninsula Shire burns involve the CFA** except perhaps the very small ones. We are grateful for the assistance of the CFA and the opportunity to share ideas and learning.

**The parameters are:** fuel moisture content, air relative humidity, wind speed and direction, and air temperature. On the day of the burn the relative humidity was close to 60%, wind speed was less than 2km per hour from the South, and air temperature remained in the low twenties. There had even been some light drizzle in the morning. Even so the burn was uncomfortably hot for those managing it.

One of the requirements to conduct the burn was to fell the tea tree first. There are two reasons for this: one is to reduce flame heights and ensure control of the burn; another is to facilitate ignition in the early stages of the burn.

The Balcombe Estuary burn was very successful from a technical point of view in that it burnt very hot as

evidenced by the black smoke and heat sent directly upwards. The fire thus created its own wind drawn toward the fire so the flames leant inward rather than outward from the burn.

### STRATEGIC FUEL REDUCTION

**A Fire Management Plan for Balcombe Estuary Reserve** was written by **Peter Moulton** in March 2002. BERG members will know Peter as he gave a talk at a BERG meeting and also conducted some "walk and talks" as the fire management plan was being developed. **The management plan recommends fuel reduction burns in the area of the Maternal and Child Health Centre, the Bowling Club and the tennis courts. In other words pretty much the "Bunyip".**

**The reason for this is to strategically protect facilities and properties on a day of an extreme fire danger** in Summer with a hot northerly wind. A fire on such a day could easily become a canopy fire in the coastal tea tree and because of the nature of coastal tea tree this could be very dangerous. Typical flame heights in burning vegetation are around three times the height of the vegetation; the hot wind and approaching flames pre-cure the foliage and release the volatile oils; the tall flames are pushed over by the wind continuously igniting the vegetation. Because of this, it is properties on the south of bushland reserves that usually receive most attention.

With the work done by BERG already in the Bunyip, this burn, and another one immediately adjacent of about the same size planned soon, the fuel reduction requirements will be close to complete.

### ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

**The clear plan within Balcombe Estuary Reserve is to protect and enhance the indigenous vegetation.** Achieving this clear plan is fraught with wonderful conundrums and serious difficulties. The original vegetation community in the Bunyip was Manna Gum

Grassy Woodland. In other words, there would have been a great diversity of understorey species such as lilies, orchids, grasses, daisies etc with separated large trees as an overstorey. Disturbance has greatly altered this, reducing the understorey diversity and replacing the lost large trees with Coast Tea Tree.

**Coast Tea Tree is a problematic plant.** It is an indigenous species whose tenacity in seeding and growing on the coastal fringe makes it an ideal pioneer species following disturbance inland. It then grows so densely and tall away from the coast that it shuts out almost all other species until prolonged drought, fire or old age remove it. (High winds will do it too! ED) A robust discussion of Coast Tea Tree requires a strong pot of coffee or even a few beers and may go on for hours.....

**In terms of the prescribed burn it is important to understand that the indigenous species and fire have a very cosy relationship.** The heat of the burn and the smoked soil will have set the conditions for a very high percentage of remaining soil-stored seed to germinate with Autumn or Spring rains. Of course, all the weed species will germinate as well. This highlights **the importance of post-burn management.** We expect that an intense but very careful program of weeding will be required over the next two years. We have programmed and budgeted for this as with all our burns. During the two years **the structure should return to the burnt area and we should see a great diversity of species.**

The assistance of BERG members with grassy weed ID skills would be much appreciated particularly around the edge of the burn.

For the future, our only plan for further dramatic works is the burn of the adjacent area of similar size which I would expect within the year.

**SIMON THORNING**  
**TEAM LEADER NATURAL SYSTEMS**

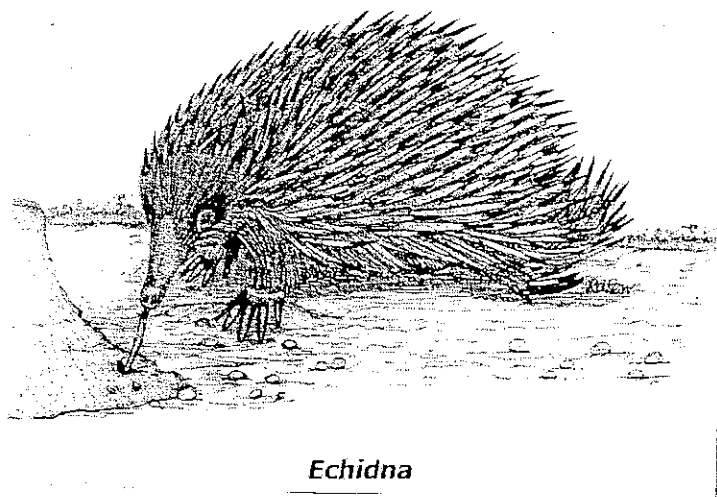
### Field Officer's Report

**Control Burn Site** – on the west side of the Bunyip.

*I hope you have all seen it as it will be fascinating to watch the amount, type and pace of the regeneration. This burn is part of a three stage process with the aim of reducing the fire risk to the kindergarten. We hope to get a copy of the DVD taken at the time of the fire. Unfortunately I was not there at the time, but for details and description refer to Simon's account and notes. BERG will be required under the direction of Naturelinks to assist in the intense follow-up required in the first few years.*

**March Working-bee** – Thank you to the members who helped on Sunday to tackle the Polygala, Boneseed, Pittosporum and Italian Buckthorn in the Cemetery area at the end of the campground on the edge of the estuary. We made a pretty good impression on these familiar woody weeds, though we could do with another burst in there before spot planting in the winter.

**Liz Barraclough**



**Echidna**

### **FROM THE EDITOR:**

The other hot topic at BERG (aside from the burn) is the **condition of the boardwalk.** The committee has had many comments on its state of disrepair and of concern as to its safety. We are happy to report that we have a letter, also from Simon Thorning saying, ***“Please be assured that works will commence shortly on repairs over an extensive length of the boardwalk.”***

As for the **Echidna**, I get the occasional mention of sightings and would appreciate hearing more including when, where, time. It would be interesting to know if one or more has taken up residence. Please ring me.

**Mary Stemp**

**DIARY DATES:**

**Field Activities:**

**Sundays - 3rd Sunday of each month.** Next scheduled activities are **April 17 & May 15**

Meet at Rotunda BBQ (Mel: 144 K11)

**Tuesdays - Every Tuesday**

Starting time for Field Activities - 9:00AM. Coffee break at 10:30 (provided) All queries: **Mary - 5977 1089**

**BYO gloves; other equipment provided.**

**Waterwatch** - Probably May 17 at 1pm, Augusta St Bridge

**Committee Meetings:**

Saturdays: April 16 & May 28, 2005 at 9:30 AM at Mt Martha House. All members welcome.

**SPIFFA** - meets 1st Monday in the month at 7:30pm at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4)

Contact: Jan Dwyer, Secretary ph: 5986 6566

**Friends of Harrap Creek Inc (FOHC)** - Field days 4th Sunday of each month 9:30am. Next: April 24th. We have large plantings to do this year & need lots of help. Note that Harrap Creek drains into Balcombe Creek.

**Contact: Mary 5977 1089**

**Membership Application**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr.....

Address.....

.....

Phone.....Fax.....

Mobile.....EMail.....

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Donation.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

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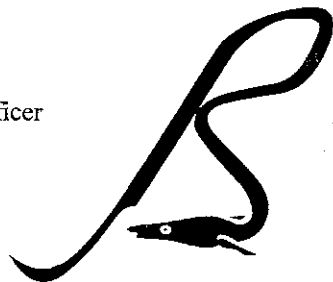
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## President's Message:

On Saturday 2nd April at 7am, yes 7am, a **Network Day organized by Mornington Peninsula Bushland Reserves Friends Group** was held at Wood Reserve, Tuerong. About 100 'friends' enjoyed the experience of walking through this valuable piece of bushland followed by a hearty outdoor breakfast.

Good friend and Probus colleague, **Allen Wood** kindly agreed to tell us the story of **Wood Reserve** and you will find that history in this issue. (see page 3)

Also at that gathering were good friends **John and Peg Stoker** (BERG members) and I learned that they, with some colleagues, have resurrected a friends group for the **Fairbairn Reserve** up in the Scenic Drive area. Well done and if BERG can help, especially in these formative days, we are only a phone call away. (Contact: John Stoker 5974-4726 or Tim Scott 5974-2990)

It is always pleasing to hear of residents eager to form working groups and we welcomed to our April

meeting Margaret Caldwell from the 'Kotor'/Seppelts Road area. Margaret is getting her group together and will work under the guidance of BERG.

The recent burn near the 'Bunyip' walk is producing some interesting new growth but guess what! The one absolutely flourishing is - yes, you guessed right - **Boneseed**. (See Jo Thyer's article below. Ed)

I will miss the May working bee as we will be away but I've had two working bees this month with our Mount Martha Rotary Club friends repairing and replacing twelve of the informative signs up and down the boardwalk. We value very much our close association with Mount Martha Rotary Club which has accomplished so much over many years.

Keith Wilson

May 23rd

\* \* \* \* \*

## POST BURN FOLLOW-UP:

*An Opportunity Not to be Missed!*

*This may sound like a sales pitch, but this statement is quite true when it comes to **maintaining a site following a prescribed burn**. Whilst the main aim of a prescribed burn is to reduce fuel loads (thus protecting property such as the Pre-school and Bowling Club - Ed), burns are also used to stimulate seed germination of both indigenous and weed species. It is this 'encouraged' germination of weed species that provides an excellent opportunity to improve the vegetation quality of a site post-fire.*

*Consider this: mature stands of Gorse can produce 10,000 seeds per square metre, these seeds have a viability of about 85% and can remain dormant in the soil for up to 30 years. That's a lot of cutting and painting of prickly bushes!*

*Whilst Gorse is one of the more extreme examples, the same is true for other woody weeds that have established themselves on the Peninsula such as Sallow Wattle*

**Boneseed and Brooms.** Before this all gets too depressing consider also that a fire can stimulate the germination of the majority of soil-stored seed of these species. Treating these seedlings prior to flowering will therefore exhaust the soil of many potential seedlings of future years.

Fire also affects the life cycle of grassy weeds which we can use to our advantage. A hot fire can destroy the seed and shallow rhizomes of Sweet Vernal Grass and will also destroy the seeds of Quaking Grass that are in the leaf litter layer. Then there is our old friend Panic Veldt Grass. Whilst the mature plants of this species are destroyed by a hot fire, seed germination is stimulated. Panic Veldt Grass can flower and seed within 10 weeks of germinating. Therefore, on burn sites with Panic Veldt Grass infestations, it is critical to control seedlings within 4-6 weeks of a burn.

These are just a few examples of how fire affects the ecology of weed species, but you can start to appreciate how intense follow up in the first one to two years after a fire can save many hours of work in the years to come and can dramatically improve vegetation quality.

Jo Thyer, Naturelinks

#### FROM THE EDITOR (including FIELD NOTES):

Thanks to Jo for allowing us to copy her excellent article. Just to add a comment or two on what can happen to indigenous plants following a control burn. There will certainly be seeds in the soil which haven't had a chance to germinate because of crowding and shading from the weeds or because they needed fire to stimulate germination. Thus we are hoping that we will see an increased number and variety of indigenous plants coming up.

The BERG Tuesday group spent a hour or so in the burned area about 4 weeks ago pulling out flowering Cats Ears (look like dandelions) and Panic Veldt Grass. We noticed thousands upon thousands of Acacia seedlings. We will watch them as some may well be desirable plants although we know most will turn out to be Sallow or Coastal Wattle and require removal. (Wattles all look alike when they first germinate!) We also saw a number of plants that looked to me like native lilies of some sort. And some of the scorched trees are, of course, resprouting.

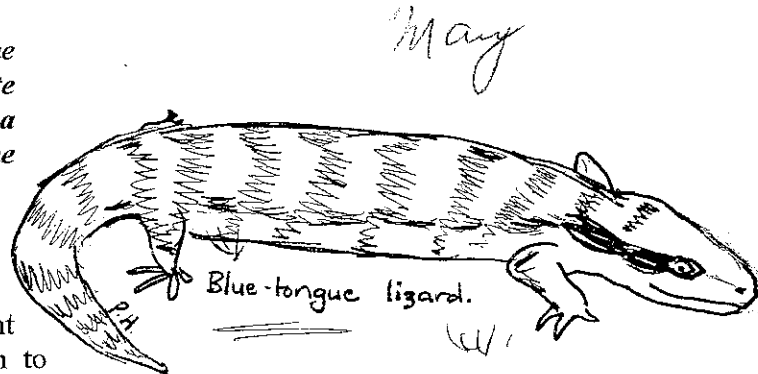
We hear stories of rare plants not seen for years appearing after wild fires. Perhaps we'll be lucky!

As for Jo, she works for the contractor, Naturelinks, & is assigned by the Shire to assist BERG (as well as other groups) in numerous ways. Those of you who come to working bees will have met her. She will also be working with the Tuesday group monitoring the Burn Area.

We conducted the quarterly Waterwatch activity last week. Thanks to Isobel Cook, Brian Pullman and Anja

Steiner (official Waterwatch rep) who turned up at short notice. Nothing much to report on the water scene but we did see 3 or 4 tiny Spotted Pardalotes which seemed to be searching the nearby trunks of Tea tree for insects.

Which brings me to the Blue-Tongue Lizard. Some weeks ago Harry Harris found one in amongst the long grass where he was weeding. Characteristically, it was motionless in the hopes of being unnoticed! This reminded people of stories of other, less happy, sightings of lizards which had been killed, presumably by dogs or cats. We hope this one and any others that are in the Bunyip area will find shelter in the many log runs Ian Daly has built for them. It feeds on snails, insects, some vegetable matter and native berries.



#### Field Officer's Report

**Envirofund Grant Second call for 2004/05 (Round 6) – 'Linking Remnants and Groups along Balcombe Creek', an application sponsored by the Mornington Peninsula Shire, has been successful and is worth \$27,727.27.**

**This project will complement weed control works within bushland remnants by extending the footprint of indigenous vegetation through planting of indigenous species within the riparian zone of Balcombe Creek. It will focus on revegetating the creek banks on public/reserve land as far up as the former land-fill sites on the upper reaches of the creek, where it will link sections of remnant swamp scrub. Works will involve groups and organizations such as Mount Eliza Association for Environmental Care, Friends of Moorooduc Quarry, and Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group.**

*The importance of this grant is that it encourages the involvement and cooperation of*

*all groups in reserves along the reaches of the creek. Basically, if the upper reaches of Balcombe Creek are 'stuffed up', BERG's 'reason for being' in the lower reaches and the estuary is worthless.*

***April and May Working-bees** concentrated on weed control round the stormwater outlet on the boardwalk at **the end of La Trobe St.** It was a great effort particularly as the conditions were not all that pleasant. We cut and painted **Ash, Pittosporum and Mirror Bush** seedlings and very prickly **Blackberries**, 'matted' out **Arum Lilies and Agapanthus**, and hand-weeded **Forget-me-nots and Wandering Jew.***

*\*Thanks especially to **Jill Stanszus' daughter Gabi**, and Naturelinks' **Emily Read's girls, Miffy & Cassie.** They made our work much lighter and more fun. **Jo Thyer and Emily** followed-up our work by spraying out the **Erharta**, remaining **Forget-me-nots and Wandering Jew** later in the week.*

*Excavation of the silt and clearing of a channel to allow the stormwater to flow and dissipate through the Swamp scrub is being planned by the MPSC (support for our Envirofund grant) to tackle the deposition of silt into the creek, estuary and ultimately the Bay. A **GPT (Gross Pollutant Trap)**, similar to the ones in the stormwater drains at Ferraro ovals and Mirang Ave, is also to be installed in the near future to prevent a repeat of the silt build-up.*

*The boardwalk is open again and the cyclone fencing has been removed! Repairs will continue for at least another month, but access is relatively unrestricted. It is hoped that funds will be made available to gradually upgrade it to meet the new standard regulations.*

*The **Tuesday group** is putting a lot of hard work into the eastern end of **The Bunyip.** **Ian Daly** has slaved cutting up the fallen Teatree brush and **Mary's** tireless crew have dragged it out and stacked it in huge piles at the end of La Trobe St. and on the firetrack near the 'burn'. **The aim is not to 'tidy up' the bush, but rather to reduce the fire hazard, allow easier access for weed control and encourage the regeneration of indigenous species, especially the Greenhood and Gnat orchids which have begun sprouting already.***

***June's working-bee** will hopefully see the beginning of the season's planting ie. if it ever rains again! So all those members who enjoy planting, we hope to see you there.*

*Liz Barraclough*

## WOOD RESERVE

From records held by Allen Wood, 27.04.05

Reginald Frederick John Wood transferred to the Mornington Shire Council two parcels of his land at Moorooduc prior to his death at the age of 88 in the year 1975. His nephew Mr Allen Wood together with his uncle Reg Wood went to great lengths to ensure that this land would never be built on and caveats are on title ensuring that the land remains always as a closed bird and animal sanctuary. The total area so transferred was 148 acres in all.

It is interesting to note that Mr Wood purchased from the White Estate 328 acres 3 roods and 20 perches on the 15/11/1937 for the sum of seven hundred and seventy one pounds and thirteen pence paying out the contract in full in October 1949.

Around 1960 the then State Rivers and Water Supply Commission acquired 80 acres of Mr Wood's land to establish the Devil Bend Reservoir. This was only part of the total land required to construct the scheme.

Early in the 1970's Mr Wood took the opportunity of subdividing 5 ten-acre blocks fronting Derril Road. All were sold before any advertising took place. \$20,000 per block was achieved. A short time after these blocks were sold along came the State Rivers (now Melbourne Water) to acquire these blocks as they intended to increase the capacity of the reservoir. As we now know this proposal did not go ahead and the blocks of land so acquired remained the property of the State Rivers. Now that the Devil Bend Reservoir has been decommissioned we understand four of the five blocks that we reacquired, 40 acres, will be returned to Council to enlarge the sanctuary thus making the area a total of 188 acres. This will be a good thing if it happens.

Mr Reg Wood was awarded a Diploma in Economics and Commerce at the University of Sydney in 1915. He attended Geelong Grammar and was also the winner of a gold medal issued by the Bankers Institute of Australia whilst he was a bank officer with the National Bank.

He became well known in Mornington for he was also a qualified accountant and did many business books for businessmen in the area.

Over the last 15 years or so of Mr Wood's life he seldom left his property at Moorooduc. In all the years that he lived there, he relied on a weekly delivery of groceries, had tank water, battery operated wireless and a 1923 Buick sedan which he never used for transport. He did not have a telephone but when he did need to go anywhere, he would call upon his neighbour for assistance. And, of course, you would also assume from this description, which would be correct, he did not have electricity connected.

An ardent reader, he lived alone but was never lonely. Incidentally, he sold his Buick sedan in running order for \$250.00 in 1974 and the purchaser drove it back to Frankston.

*Allen Wood*

**DIARY DATES:**

**Field Activities:**

**Sundays - 3rd Sunday of each month.** Next scheduled activities are **June 19 & July 17**

Meet at Rotunda BBQ (Mel: 144 K11)

***Tuesdays - Every Tuesday***

*Starting time for Field Activities - 9:00AM.*

*Coffee break at 10:30 (provided)*

**All queries: Mary - 5977 1089**

***BYO gloves; other equipment provided.***

**Waterwatch - August 16 at 1pm, Augusta St Bridge**

**Committee Meetings:**

Saturdays: **May 28 & July 9, 2005** at 9:30 AM at Mt Martha House. All members welcome.

**SPIFFA** - meets 1st Monday in the month at 7:30pm at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4)

Contact: Jan Dwyer, Secretary ph: 5986 6566

**Friends of Harrap Creek Inc (FOHC)** - Field days 4th Sunday of each month 9:30am. Next:

**June 26 & July 24** when we will be planting

**Contact: Mary 5977 1089**

**Membership Application**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr.....

Address.....

.....

Phone.....Fax.....

Mobile.....EMail.....

**I would like to become an Individual / Family Member of the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.**

**I enclose cheque (payable to "BERG") / cash**

Date.....Signed.....

Joining Fee \$1.00.....\$

Annual Individual Subscription \$4.00.....\$

Annual Family Subscription \$5.00.....\$

Donation.....\$

Total.....\$

**Donations of \$2.00 & over are Tax Deductible**

**Please send to:  
Membership Secretary,  
BERG,  
PO Box 433,  
Mt Martha, 3934.**

If undelivered return to:  
BERG  
PO Box 433  
Mt Martha Vic 3934



# ◆ THE CREEK ◆

Volume 9 Issue 4

August 2005 - September 2005

BALCOMBE ESTUARY REHABILITATION GROUP Inc (BERG)

Reg No. A0034645Y

Formed March 1997

ABN 50 224 628 623

## Your Committee:

Keith Wilson - President  
Harry Harris - Vice-President  
Tony Hyde - Treasurer/Public Officer  
Mary Stemp - Hon Secretary  
Pam Hearn - Minutes Secretary  
Liz Barraclough - Field Officer  
Andy McGuigan - Rotary Club  
Angela Kirsner - Publicity  
Jenny Selby - Waterwatch  
Jan Oliver - Schools Liaison  
Margaret Caldwell - Kotor Friends  
Richard Kirsner



BERG logo

## Our address for correspondence is:

The Hon Secretary, BERG Inc.  
PO Box 433, Mt Martha, 3934  
Telephone 5977 1089

## Website:

<http://berg.alphalink.com.au/>

*BERG is a member of the Coast Action/Coastcare Program  
& of Greening Australia Victoria (GAV)*

## President's Message:

Some of you may have read about a 'fish kill' that occurred in the Portland area recently. I had hoped to have sufficient information about this event to report on it here but editor's deadline has beaten me. However, I think the detailed report for the next edition will show pretty clearly why the Balcombe Estuary should not be artificially opened. More later.

Field activities are, of course, a very vital part of our existence and how pleasing it is when, despite cold wintry weather, attendances are maintained and even getting better, and include some new members. Keep it up, friends. Your active participation is greatly appreciated.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has sought our views on a long term strategy of sealing unmade streets and roads. We only need to look at the estuary to see just what silt accumulation has done to the creek and we have expressed our views to Council. Within the Shire there are 1083 unmade roads totalling 373

kilometres of which 165 kilometres are within the urban growth areas.

When we lived on an estuary of Deep Creek and the Pacific Ocean at Nambucca Heads (1988 - 1995), we enjoyed the company of a group or groups of **Nankeen Night Herons, sometimes called Rufus Herons**. We had not seen one since moving to Mount Martha in 1995 until last week so imagine our delight when, arriving home one night at about 11pm, our headlights picked one up on our front lawn! I hope I'm right in my identification but if any of our 'birdoes' think I'm wrong and could be confusing it with one of the bitterns, please let me know.

Thanks everyone for your support in so many ways. Until next time.

KEITH WILSON July 23, 2005

*(Ed: Nankeen Night Herons were certainly present in the area 5 years ago according to Nathan Litjens who knew where and when to find them. A picture of one is featured on BERG's first interpretive sign, still hanging in the Rotunda. As for members, remember that even if you can't do more that remain a financial member, your support is valuable. And we never ask anyone to do anything he/she doesn't want to do.)*

## Email or snail mail?

Would you prefer to receive your newsletter by email? Let us know - email Mary Stemp at [mstemp@iprimus.com.au](mailto:mstemp@iprimus.com.au), or phone her on 5977 1089.

Emailing would save trees and save BERG postage. It's been suggested, however, that a copy of the newsletter on the kitchen table is more likely to be read by family and visitors than one that is emailed and just sits on the computer. What do you think?

Emailing would entail a few changes in the newsletter production (including getting a more computer-literate editor. ED) which we will institute if enough people want it.

## FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT

June and July working-bees spread mulch and planted new revegetation areas on the Kotor Hill ie at the end of Seppelt Ave above Ferrero Oval 1. We were thrilled with the great turn-up and enthusiasm, especially from the newly formed resident's group in the immediate area - refer Margaret Caldwell's article. We spread over 70 cubic meters of mulch and added 560 middle and lower storey indigenous plants to this area.

I was asked why we were working in this area as it was not the immediate riparian area of the creek? There are a number of reasons:

- This area is part of the reserve and the **improvement in the quality, quantity and diversity of the vegetation and consequently fauna habitat, throughout has always been a priority.** The main aim is to **form linking corridors** from the perimeter and the neighbouring vegetation eg. residential or roadside, down to the riparian vegetation of Hopetoun Creek, a tributary of Balcombe Creek, and Balcombe Creek itself.
- Balcombe Creek Reserve being relatively narrow and linear suffers from a greater 'edge' effect ie. negative impact from for example, weed invasion, human interference, animal pests etc. than wider stretches of vegetation. **The wider the reserve the greater the protection for the creek.**
- **Weed species** which at present screen residents properties, in a couple of years **will be removed**, so it is important to get their **indigenous replacements** established as early as possible.
- As the reserve in this area is basically their 'backyard'/view, the Kotor residents are keen to upgrade and maintain it. **BERG welcomes this help in reducing its load for the management of their extensive area of responsibility.**

**Burn Area** – BERG and Naturelinks will communicate and coordinate the on-going management/maintenance of this area. You may have noticed how the weeds are springing up as quickly, or in some cases quicker than the regeneration of the indigenous species. We need to eradicate them before they flower/seed.

**Envirofund 2003/04 Final Report** has been sent off to Canberra now that the **Envirokit folders** have at last been printed. Once their contents have been collected and collated we can get down to their distribution.

BERG welcomes new members since May 28, 2005:  
Merril Blashki

**August working-bee (Sunday 21st)** will probably be spent concentrating on the **coastal strip from the shopping centre to just beyond the estuary**, preparing ie weeding, and then planting out at least 200 Coastal Banksias and some middlestorey species. Many people have noticed and expressed concern regarding the extensive dieback of the Banksias along the coast. Previous newsletters have discussed possible causes. We have applied for a small Coast Action/Coastcare grant to try to address this situation.

**Liz Barraclough**

### Kotor Friends Group

Adjoining neighbours in the Kotor Close and Seppelt Avenue area have formed the '**Kotor Friends Group**' to assist BERG with the rejuvenation and replanting of the Kotor Hill area. There have been two working bees to coincide with BERG's field activity days in June and July with great representation from both BERG and neighbours.

At the first meeting in June, **Simon Thorning, Conservation Officer for the Shire** outlined a possible planting program and answered general enquiries. The Shire, in the future, is to construct barriers to stop cars using the 'Hill'.

We are excited about 'the rehabilitation and ongoing nurturing' of the 'Hill'. Thanks to BERG. We will keep you informed of our progress.

**Margaret Caldwell**

#### BERG is grateful for donations received from the following: from 28/5/05 to 30/6/05

H Harris	E Barraclough	K Wilson
G Jones	R Cooper	J & R Rawlins
J Mitchell	P Donges	I R Jamieson
L & J Ciabotti	D Collins/D Dickson	M Blashki
P & R Eves	K & P James	A & M Weaver
G Littlelyke	B Murphy	Pen Pistol Club
D & R Ray	E Williams	B & F Weston
N & N Wilkinson	E & M deFries	G & J Kaye
J Patrick	K & G Proposch	J Stevens
G Hunt	A & M McPhate	N & H Harvey
B & G Benton	R & B Brett	B Pullman
S G Strom	D & P Tredinnick	D Curtis
I Joseph	L & B Pace	B a'Beckett
N & S Shelley	F Roberts & J Dwyer	G & B Wilson
J & A Neal	T Rutledge	M Bennett
I & S Henry	M&G Sanders-OConnor	D & B Robinson
J & P Stoker	J Bloom	S & D Dawson
C Forrester	J & L Thomas	J Wicks
M & R Brick	J Brook	J & I Cook
P & P Featherstone		R & H Turner

### Field Notes

There are delightful rewards for getting down and dirty removing and burning weeds on Tuesday mornings in the Bunyip area. A few weeks ago we cut out woody weeds like coastal tea tree, coastal wattle, etc. from the high ground below the bowling greens. We found a number of sheoaks that we planted some time ago were becoming visible. A surprise was a **Purple Flag**. Apparently there is a Long and a Short species on the Peninsula and I'm not sure which this is. It will have showy bluish purple flowers from October to January or even longer, possibly depending on the watering program for the bowling greens! We also found quite a few plants of **Cranberry Heath** with their red flowers tucked up in the foliage.

If you've gone walking in the Bunyip lately, you may have noticed we did quite a bit of clearing where the two footpaths meet. It's where you can find clumps of **Gnat Orchids** tucked in under several clumps of **Dianella**. But you'll need to get right down on your hands and knees to see the tiny flowers. A magnifying glass will help to see their exquisite shape. There is also at least one other patch beside the lower path. You can recognise **Gnat Orchids** by their kidney-shaped leaves which are dark red underneath. If you come by on a Tuesday morning, we will show them to you.



Gnat Orchid

The **Nodding Greenhoods** are now just coming into bloom as well. I have the idea there could be 2 species of Greenhoods in the area but need an expert's advice.

Patches of **Scented Sundew** may also be found, the largest just outside the 'burn' fence. The scented, five-petalled white flowers are already appearing amongst the hairy leaves which grow in clusters close to the ground. **Sundews are carnivorous.**

Scented Sundew  
an.

illustrations.

Many thanks to **Pam Hearn** once again for  
**Mary Stemp**

Nodding  
Greenhood

### Environmental musings from Spain and Portugal

We have recently returned from four weeks in the north of Spain and Portugal, while fellow BERG Committee member Jan Oliver has just returned from the south of Spain. Jan commented on the poor erosion control she saw there on over-used farming land. In the north, we were disturbed to see vast areas of eucalypt woodland. Many of the trees were in plantations, but many also appeared to be growing wild, adapted with ease to their new surroundings. We spent a week walking part of the Camino del Norte, the pilgrim trail taken by those who came to the northern coast of Spain rather than over the Pyrenees, and at various times we found ourselves in eucalypt forests with a form of bracken underfoot and a strong smell of

eucalypt in the air, and the odd Acacia – very confusing!

Our lack of Spanish and Portuguese severely limited what we could find out while there, but a quick search of the internet yielded the following:

- Introduced into Europe around the middle of the 19th century, *Eucalyptus globulus*, the Tasmanian Bluegum, is widespread along the western and northern coasts of the Iberian Peninsula. In Galicia, north-western Spain, it rivals the invasive *Pinus pinaster* as the most important commercial tree species. The majority of the plantations are coppiced and left to regrow, and the wood is used largely for paper and particle board. In addition Portugal and Spain together produce more than 50% of the world's supply of Eucalyptus oil. The other widespread species is *E. camaldulensis* Dehnh., the River Red Gum.
- The eucalypt groves are replacing native oak woodland, and are inhospitable to the local wildlife, which is not adapted to them. This is leading to the decline of wildlife populations and loss of biodiversity. It was unclear, from the information I could find, whether this was largely from plantations alone, or whether there was a significant problem from invasive eucalypts.
- In Australia, insects are responsible for the die-back that we so often see. In Spain, there are almost no herbivore insects feeding on *E. globulus*. This leads to high productivity. It also means that the plantations, like any monoculture, are very vulnerable should a pest appear; at the same time, there is no natural mechanism to control the spread of eucalypts.

In the coastal area northern Portugal where we stayed, where we also saw areas of *Pittosporum undulatum*, our local invasive *Pittosporum*, growing happily in company with Blackwoods (*Acacia melanoxylon*), Black Wattles (*A. mearnsii*) and what looked to me to be our local coastal wattles (*A. longifolia*) – though none of these appeared to be invasive in this area. But it made us wonder where we were!

On the other hand, it was a delight to walk through the brilliantly green Spanish countryside and enjoy so many of those flowers that in Australia are environmental weeds – cow parsley, forget-me-nots, columbines, briar roses, many wonderful varieties of dandelion, thistles, euphorbias, buttercups... Maybe some are also environmental weeds here in Spain, but in blessed ignorance, I could give my weeding arm a rest.

**Angela Kirsner**



**DIARY DATES:**

**BERG Field Activities:**

**Sundays - 3rd Sunday of each month.** Next scheduled activities are **August 21 & September 18**

Meet at Rotunda BBO (Mel: 144 K11) at 9:00am

**Tuesdays - Every Tuesday starting at 9:30am**

*Coffee break at 10:30 (provided for Sundays & Tuesdays)*

**All queries: Mary - 5977 1089**

*BYO gloves; other equipment provided.*

**Waterwatch - August 16 at 1pm, Augusta St Bridge**

**AGM - October 22nd - Interesting speaker**

**Committee Meetings:**

**Saturdays: August 20 & October 1, 2005 at 9:30 AM** at Mt Martha House. All members welcome.

**SPIFFA** - meets 1st Monday in the month at 7:30pm at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4)

Contact: Jan Dwyer, Secretary ph: 5986 6566

**Friends of Harrap Creek Inc (FOHC)** - Field days 4th Sunday of each month 9:30am. Next:

**Aug 28 & Sept 25. Contact: Mary 5977 1089**

**Friends of Fairbairn Park:** 4th Sunday of each month. **Contact: John Stoker 5974 4726**

**Membership Application**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr.....

Address.....

Phone..... Fax.....

Mobile..... EMail.....

I would like to become an Individual / Family Member of the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.

I enclose cheque (payable to "BERG") / cash

Date..... Signed.....

Joining Fee \$1.00.....\$

Annual Individual Subscription \$4.00.....\$

Annual Family Subscription \$5.00.....\$

Donation.....\$

Total.....\$

**Donations of \$2.00 & over are Tax Deductible**

Please send to:

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**PO Box 433,**

**Mt Martha, 3934.**

If undelivered return to:

BERG

PO Box 433

Mt Martha Vic 3934

THE CREEK

Print Post Approved pp339493/00001





# ◆ THE CREEK ◆

Volume 9 Issue 5

October 2005 - November 2005

BALCOMBE ESTUARY REHABILITATION GROUP Inc (BERG)

Reg No. A0034645Y

Formed March 1997

ABN 50 224 628 623

## Your Committee:

Keith Wilson - President  
Harry Harris - Vice-President  
Tony Hyde - Treasurer/Public Officer  
Mary Stemp - Hon Secretary  
Pam Hearn - Minutes Secretary  
Liz Barraclough - Field Officer  
Andy McGuigan - Rotary Club  
Angela Kirsner - Publicity  
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Richard Kirsner



BERG logo

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The Hon Secretary, BERG Inc.  
PO Box 433, Mt Martha, 3934  
Telephone 5977 1089

## Website:

<http://berg.alphalink.com.au/>

*BERG is a member of the Coast Action/Coastcare Program  
& of Greening Australia Victoria (GAV)*

## President's Message:

**The Surry River flows into Portland Bay near Narrawong, east of Portland and on Monday 11th July, the entrance to the sea was artificially opened without authority.**

Here now are relevant extracts from a report/press release issued by the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority: *"The devastating effects seen at the Surry have demonstrated that artificial river mouth openings are not something that can be undertaken without proper consideration of the risk to the health of the estuary. On opening the river mouth, the oxygenated surface water in the lower estuary rushed out to sea leaving behind an oxygen depleted body of water with most of the aquatic life suffocating within it. So far there have been tens of thousands fish killed with the entire black bream population wiped out. Bream, a popular angling fish, are extremely slow to recover due to the particular conditions they require for reproduction; it could be a decade before anglers are catching decent sized bream in any numbers. Even the hardiest of aquatic animals such as crabs and eels were dying which really brings home how devastating an event of this nature is. as both of these*

*creatures can move over land to find more favourable conditions. This event has had dire consequences for the entire food chain of the Surry which will be felt for years."*

CMA go on to state: *"Artificial mouth openings are considered when a specific water level is reached. A range of factors need to be assessed prior to an approval for an artificial opening. These factors include the impact of flooding on the local community, the amount of fresh*

(cont'd page 2)

## NOTICE & AGENDA

**NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BERG  
to be held on Saturday October 22, 2005  
in Room 5, Mt. Martha Community House**

**9:30 am - Registration, Tea & Coffee**

**10:00 am - Annual General Meeting**

### AGENDA:

- \* Welcome and apologies
- \* Minutes of Eighth Annual General Meeting
- \* Committee reports (copies available at meeting)  
from: President, Keith Wilson,  
Treasurer, Tony Hyde,  
Field Officer, Liz Barraclough
- \* Election of Office Bearers: President, Vice  
President, Treasurer, Secretary and six ordinary  
committee members. (Rule 23)
- \* Appointment of an Auditor

### Please Note:

*With respect to nominations for office bearers nomination forms may be obtained from the Secretary Mary Stemp (5977 1089). All nominations must be in writing, signed by 2 members, accompanied by written consent of the candidate and delivered to the Secretary by October 15 (ie - at least 7 days before the AGM)*

**Guest Speaker: Margaret Polmear**

**Topic: "After the Ash Wednesday Wildfire"**

(see page 3 for synopsis)

water inflow and water quality conditions within the estuary. Once the estuary water trigger level is reached, the authorities will determine whether conditions are favourable for an artificial opening under the 1989 Water Act. It is the CMA's duty to protect the economic, social and environmental interests of the whole community.

"It is noted that Police are taking witness statements to help in the investigation of the Surry unauthorized opening and that under section 295 of the 1989 Water Act, persons found liable face fines of up to \$20,000 and/or a maximum of 10 years imprisonment."

There is no reason to think that all of the above does not apply to the Balcombe Creek Estuary and our plea to every reader is to help us look after our precious asset in every respect.

Our sincere thanks to the Glenelg Hopkins CMA for providing this valuable information. During our inquiries we discovered that Deakin University (Dr. Helen Arundel) is currently studying estuaries and the way they work and we may become part of those studies.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of long-time member and friend, **John Boag**. John and Pat joined BERG from our start in 1997 and enthusiastically supported everything we did, especially in distributing our newsletter. It became apparent during John's funeral service just what this man achieved in life and, as I often find, we only learn of the great contributions to society of even the most humble after they have left us. **On behalf of all BERG members and friends I extend our sympathy to Pat and family and our thanks for a marvellous contribution to our work.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Treasurer Dr. Tony Hyde** has decided to call it a day and, as this will be the last newsletter before our AGM, I want to pay tribute to Tony for a superb contribution to BERG.

Tony has been Treasurer from day one in 1997 and, once we were incorporated, our Public Officer, both positions requiring meticulous attention to detail. Believe me we got that attention and more and Tony's wise counsel on the many issues discussed and debated over our lifetime has been outstanding. Every organisation has its "front of house" contributors and those who work just as diligently in the background and Tony is one of the latter. So Tony, thank you for your great assistance and guidance to me personally and on behalf of all BERG committee and members may I say again your contribution has been a major factor in the success of our group. I hope the time you will now have on your hands will do wonders with your golf handicap.

**KEITH WILSON** September 2005

**FIELD NOTES**

Spring in The Bunyip brings the gold of **Acacias** (*paradoxa* and *verticillata* which are replacing the out-of-place coastal species), the **Greenhood** and **Mayfly orchids** (which we incorrectly identified as Gnat orchids) and a few surprises. By the firetrack three small **Grass trees** (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) are bravely thrusting their flower spikes stiffly into the air; and we've now found and identified three shrubs as **Showy Bossiaea** (*Bossiaea cinerea*) with their bright yellow and red pea flowers, commonly called 'egg & bacon'.



Showy Bossiaea tree logs

I've sometimes scared a small **skink** or **lizard** out of hiding and our delightful **Yellow Robin** regularly checks us out.

Just when we were despairing of ever seeing large water birds on the estuary, a sighting of a pair of **Black Swans** was reported. While eating our BBQ lunch on Sunday we saw a lone **Egret** strutting about in the shallows. We wondered whether it still visits what used to be Richard Hawkins' upper deck!



Little Egret

*And now let me put on my editor's hat!*

BERG wants to thank Bruce Benton for GEMS of the BUSH, a magazine illustrating numerous Australian orchids and which prompted Pam and Richard to research the origins of both magazine and naturalist.

Only about 5 people actually stated they prefer their newsletters to be emailed. Therefore we continue as before!

BERG, firmly backed by the Dept of Primary Industries' **WEED WARRIORS** program, introduced a breeding cage of **Leaf Hoppers** to Joelle Rubinstein's grade 6 class at Mt Martha Primary School. After 8 weeks we released the wee creatures into a patch of **Bridal Creeper (Smilax)** near the Geoff Kaye bridge. We had the children dig up some of the weeds to give them an idea of the tuber mass below the surface of the soil. They took great satisfaction in the grubbing out of these huge masses.

Mary

<b>BERG is grateful for donations received from the following: from 1/7/05 to 19/8/05</b>			
T&K Denton	A Klein	M&J Lyon	T O'Connor
A Whitelaw	B Bourke	HB Taylor	H&B Barton
A Kirsner	C&S Bence	E&D Caldwell	M&M Collins
S Milton	R&B Egan	E Jagusiak	G&D Jordon
J Oliver	S Kelly	D&J Cumming	T&G Montgometry
B Plant	FW Rae	G Seager	D&S Hartley

### **After the Ash Wednesday Wildfire!**

**Margaret Polmear, Master of Science (Botany), University of Melbourne is to be guest speaker at BERG's AGM in October.** Her experience as Project Leader for a 10 year study of vegetation regeneration after the 1983 wildfire in the area of Anglesea is highly relevant to what we hope will happen in the 'control burn' adjacent to The Bunyip area and could help to answer some of your questions concerning the whys and wherefores of control burns generally.

#### **A Synopsis of her Talk:**

Following the devastating fires of February 1983, an environmental group at Anglesea and Aireys Inlet initiated a **unique, 10 year study of regeneration of the indigenous vegetation.** Some 150 volunteers were recruited to participate in the fieldwork and most of the findings have now been published. (Margaret herself is the author of five papers describing this work.) Margaret will describe how the project was organised, what progressive changes occurred in the six plant communities that were monitored, and discuss what has been learned from the study.

### **FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT**

**Spring Planting Festival** (September Working-bee) – It was a lovely sunny spring day for:

1) the rejuvenation works (weeding, mulching and planting of 400 plus plants) of the old campground in preparation for the Nature/Educational trail, hopefully to be installed before the end of the year.

A number of us stayed to enjoy a very pleasant BBQ lunch by the estuary.

2) the Kotor Hill group's mulching and planting above Ferrero Ovals. They had a great and enthusiastic turnout (10 adults and 4 children), planting over 200 plants in a buffer zone and along the main path.

**Work-For-The-Dole** – There has not been a great turn up of participants so far. However the 3 - 4 of us (ie. including their supervisor and myself) have still achieved a fair bit. i) moved 45m of mulch, ii) weeded (Coprosma, Pittosporum and Boneseed) from the foreshore area between the Lifesaving club and the estuary, iii) weeded both sides of Maude Street, iv) at last removed the Belladonna Lilies and worked on the Angled Onion patches (with Angela) in Zone 17 on the north bank, v) painted the panels of the rotunda with Keith, vi) removed and stacked fire hazard material along Greenfield Way in preparation for enhancement indigenous planting. They will be working

with us every Wednesday until Christmas so we are hoping to really catch up on a lot of 'chores'.

**Two new CDS** units have recently been installed in stormwater drains entering the estuary - one at the bottom of Henly St. and the other at the end of La Trobe St. The aim is to filter the water before it enters the creek and subsequently the Bay. It will be interesting to see how frequently they have to be emptied, as a huge amount of gravel and silt is scoured from especially Watson Rd and its side streets, and the huge storm last weekend lifted the lid of the La Trobe St one and filled it two thirds full of silt. It may necessitate an earlier sealing of some of the roads!

**Greenfield Way Group** - Hazel Athy has plunged herself enthusiastically into encouraging a few neighbours to help rehabilitate the riparian vegetation along Hopetoun Creek opposite Greenfield Way ie. above Uralla Rd. We are thrilled to have another sub-group of BERG to protect and enhance the corridors of vegetation along the tributaries of Balcombe Creek. This area is important as a link to **Hopetoun and Norfolk Reserves.** Simon Thorning has drawn up and discussed with Hazel a works plan which this spring includes fire hazard reduction, weed control and enhancement planting.

A few weeks ago **five La Trobe University Outdoor Education students** spent a whole day working for us in the reserve as part of their assignment, '**Environmental Worldviews in Reality**'. They were led by Esther Stanzus, a BERG member and in 10 hours they:

i) dug down 1.5 meters into the silt in the middle of the estuary (at low tide) to sample and hopefully **determine the soil/silt profile** – (You should have seen us all covered in black mud!!)

ii) **canoed** up the creek collecting rubbish and

iii) **planted** 50 Coastal Banksias in the foreshore reserve between the Lifesaving Club and the estuary. I only hope it was all worthwhile and helpful for their assignment. It certainly was fantastic for us!

**LIZ BARRACLOUGH**

**BERG welcomes new members from July 8 to August 19, 2005:**

Simone Kelly

David & Judy Cumming

Ken & Pam Donaldson

**DIARY DATES:**

**BERG Field Activities:**

**Sundays - 3rd Sunday of each month.** Next scheduled activities are **October 16 & November 20**

Meet at Rotunda BBQ (Mel: 144 K11) at 9:00am

**Tuesdays - Every Tuesday starting at 9:30am**

Coffee break at 10:30 (provided for Sundays & Tuesdays)

**All queries: Mary - 5977 1089**

*BYO gloves; other equipment provided.*

**Waterwatch - November 15**

**AGM - October 22nd** - an informal & interesting occasion. (You will not be co-opted for any task whatsoever, I promise)

**Committee Meetings:**

**Saturdays: October 1 & November 12, 2005** at 9:30 AM at Mt Martha House. All members welcome.

**SPIFFA** - meets 1st Monday in the month at 7:30pm at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4)

Contact: Jan Dwyer, Secretary ph: 5986 6566

**Friends of Harrap Creek Inc (FOHC)** - Field days 4th Sunday of each month 9:30am. Next:

**October 23. Contact: Mary 5977 1089**

**Friends of Fairbairn Park:** Sunday Oct 9 & Nov 13. **Contact: John Stoker 5974 4726**

**Membership Application**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr.....

Address.....

.....

Phone.....Fax.....

Mobile.....EMail.....

**I would like to become an Individual / Family Member of the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.**

**I enclose cheque (payable to "BERG") / cash**

Date.....Signed.....

Joining Fee \$1.00.....\$

Annual Individual Subscription \$4.00.....\$

Annual Family Subscription \$5.00.....\$

Donation.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations of \$2.00 & over are Tax Deductible**

**Please send to:**

**Membership Secretary,  
BERG,  
PO Box 433,  
Mt Martha, 3934.**

If undelivered return to:

BERG  
PO Box 433  
Mt Martha Vic 3934

THE CREEK

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# THE CREEK

Newsletter of BERG, the



Volume 9 Issue 6

December 2005

## From the President

Yet another year gone and whilst there are lots of achievements, there is still a lot to be done.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to our work during the past twelve months – committee members, working bee attenders, and the Mount Martha community generally.

Special mention is made of now retired Treasurer and Public Officer Tony Hyde, for his untiring work since BERG began in 1997. We will miss you, Tony, at our committee meetings but hope we will see you on the occasional third Sunday.

I take this opportunity to welcome our new Treasurer, Richard Kirsner, whom we have known for some time. Treasury is a vital part of our work, for keeping tab on every cent of our income and expenditure is an absolute must.

Another change in the hierarchy is that hard-working Mary has relinquished the post of editor of *The Creek* and equally hard-working Angela has volunteered in 'typical BERG style' to take over that role. Mary, your work for BERG is very much appreciated and the newsletter as our mouthpiece to the community is invaluable. Thank you.

I have no 'stories' this issue, preferring to leave space for snippets from our delightful AGM guest speaker, Margaret Polmear, and others.

Until next issue

**Keith Wilson, President**

## Weed Warriors Winning

*Smilax* (Bridal Creeper) is a particularly nasty weed. It smothers indigenous plants, the tubers prevent anything else from growing, and it seeds profusely.

But biological controls are starting to have an impact, with the help of the Mount Martha Primary School students in Joelle Rubenstein's Grade 6 class.

The children spent eight weeks breeding Leaf Hoppers, tiny, almost transparent insects, and in September they introduced the insects into a patch of *Smilax*. They also worked in teams to dig out some clumps of *Smilax*, and were amazed at the size of the tuber mass below the surface (see photo).



Biological controls such as Leaf Hoppers and particularly Rust, a type of fungus, are proving to be the safest and most effective methods of control. Greg Lefoe, from the Department of Primary Industries, spread large amounts of Rust at three sites in the huge infestation of *Smilax* between the Soccer Oval and the Geoff Kaye Bridge. He spread it

by wiping infested plants over healthy plants, then wrapping them in cling film for 24 hours.

Seven weeks later, we find that not only have both the Rust and Leaf Hoppers established and spread some distance from the release, but considerable Leaf Hopper damage is evident in a site where earlier releases over the past 5 or 6 years had had little effect. Furthermore, there was Rust on *Smilax* about 200 metres from the release sites.

Next year Greg proposes to make a spray using Rust from infested plants, and spray a much wider area.

### BERG website

BERG has a new – and easier to remember – website address – <http://www.berg.org.au/>

Our grateful thanks to **Imagineering Technology**, who are hosting the site at no cost to BERG. Our thanks also to BERG member Neil Shelley, who set up the website in the first place via his own ISP, approached Imagineering on BERG's behalf, and continues to manage BERG's website.

### Turn over for...

- Margaret Polmear's AGM talk on regeneration after fire at Anglesea
- Mary Stemp's Field Notes
- Highlights from Field Officer Liz Barraclough's AGM report
- Ibises Aloft! – from David Plant

### BERG Committee

*President* Keith Wilson  
*Vice President* Harry Harris  
*Secretary* Mary Stemp  
*Minutes Sec.* Pam Hearn

*Treasurer* Richard Kirsner  
*Field Officer* Liz Barraclough  
*Rotary Club Liaison* Andy McGuigan  
*Newsletter* Angela Kirsner

*Waterwatch* Jenny Selby  
*Schools Liaison* Jan Oliver  
*Kotor Friends* Margaret Caldwell  
*Greenfields Friends* Hazel Athey

**Address for correspondence:** Hon Secretary, BERG Inc, PO Box 433, Mt Martha 3934.

**Phone:** 5977 1089

**Website:** <http://berg.org.au>

BERG is a member of Coast Action/Coastcare Program and Greening Australia Victoria

## After Ash Wednesday 1983

*Margaret Polmear, guest speaker at the AGM on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, described the 10-year study of bushland regeneration that she instigated after the devastating 1983 Ash Wednesday fires. This is an edited version of her talk.*

It all started when a few people in a local conservation group called ANGAIR—Anglesea & Airey's Inlet—decided that we would use the disastrous wildfire to learn more about the vegetation of the area. It was a time when the local community was in conflict with development and we didn't have the scientific information about the Anglesea flora to mount a good case. We needed facts.

The fires burnt 40,000 hectares, from Lorne to just beyond Anglesea. The area was tinder dry and there hadn't been a wildfire for 20 years. A crown fire, it destroyed all the ground layer, the shrub layer, and many of the small trees.

It's a very species-rich area, with about 25% of the flora of Victoria found here – some 690 species of vascular plants, of which about 110 are orchids.

So we commenced a project to monitor the regeneration over 10 years. It started with four of us and ended up with 150 volunteers, who did all the field work. The only contractual work was soil analysis and some computer analysis to identify vegetation communities. (We'd thought we had three distinct heath-woodland communities. In fact, we found there were 10 subsets of these, all with slightly different vegetation composition and all on different soils.)

We set up 120 trial plots in what we believed were six different vegetation communities. Because *everything* had been burnt, we had to rely on what we knew of the past. There were sites on heath-woodland, sand-dunes, iron-bark forest slopes, a fern gully, and swamp with peaty soil.

We worked in groups – people who knew the plants were assisted by other peoples who were anxious to learn. The equipment was simple—paper, pencil, string to define the

plot boundaries, and a good book on plant identification.

From the ground to the canopy, we monitored each species for the number of plants, their size, how much space they covered, and how they had regenerated (sprout or seedling). We monitored tree height and the growth of the canopy. And we took soil samples at one and two years.

Before the major spring and autumn surveys, we held volunteer training field days, where everybody was given lists of the plants at the various sites and training sheets on how to identify the different plant families.

About three weeks after the fire, the Xanthorreas – the grass trees – were the first to sprout, although there wasn't a drop for rain for a month after the fires.

One needs to remember that some 75% of the plant community is underground, and the vegetation is adapted to fire. Of all the species we monitored—about 400 of the area's 690 indigenous species—we found about 37% had the capacity to resprout, while another 30% had the capacity not only to resprout but also to regenerate from seed. The large trees had prior knowledge of fire, and many Eucalypts have epicormic buds under their bark. The stunted coastal Mannas often sprouted from the root stock. Some species didn't sprout, but their cones opened and shed seed, resulting in a crop of seedlings.

The most magical thing was the first spring after the fire—a huge range of grasses and herbs, and a massive flowering, including small Grass Trees, Milk Maids, Fringe Lilies, Stackhousia, and lots and lots of daisies. The Bluebeard Caladenia orchid came up in huge clumps, of a very dark blue intensity—they say that the colour is often enhanced by the nutrients in the soil after fire. Some plants that we thought had disappeared from the area reappeared, and there were others we'd never seen before, like the Lizard Orchid.

Most of the species that were present before the fire reappeared in the first three years. Over the ten-year period, the total vascular plant

species decreased in number, while the non-vascular plants – things like mosses, liverworts and lichens – increased. By the year seven the canopy height and vegetation structure had been restored.

Of course there were weeds. Boneseed came up in crops from soil-stored seed, and Coastal Wattle (not indigenous to the area) could be very aggressive, outcompeting other plants.

In a fern gully, a ground fire had established in very dry peat and burnt to about a depth of two and a half metres, destroying all soil-borne seed and leaving red soil and absolute devastation. Trees fell and the creek washed away a lot of the peat and soil. There was a massive and permanent change in the vegetation, with surrounding Eucalypts seeding into what had been a tree-fern gully. The cool, damp enclosed vegetation never returned.

Most of the shrubs didn't flower and seed until at least three years or more after fire – a crucial factor important in knowing when the vegetation could stand a second burn.

We found some rarities along the way, and we learned a great deal about the vegetation of the area. We had aimed to produce scientific data, and we published five papers on the results.

## Mary's Field Notes

While walking on the path beside the soccer pitch I saw a couple of Red-browed Firetails flit past. These tiny bush birds were a common sight only twenty years ago. Now we consider ourselves lucky to see a couple.

And one Tuesday in October we heard the melodious piping of a Grey Butcherbird as he surveyed the ground for edibles from a low-hanging branch.

The best part of weeding for me is stumbling on indigenous plants and identifying them. *Bossiaea prostrata* was our latest find between the firetrack and the kindergarten.

**Mary Stemp**

## Highlights from the AGM Field Officer's Report

by Liz Barraclough

Over the last twelve months, with strong support and input from the Mornington Peninsula Shire, we have directed time and energy into addressing the silting and sedimentation of the estuary.

Evidence points to a major sediment build-up. Old photos show a deeper and wider creek, and thirty years ago, according to locals, you could jump from the old bridge into the water below—now you would break your neck. There are far fewer swans visiting the estuary, due perhaps to the reduced depth of water and/or deterioration of the seagrass beds, which have been smothered by silt.

Stock access to the creek upstream, urban development and unmade roads are three main contributors to sedimentation. The amount of sediment entering the creek from unmade roads has increased greatly over recent years, both directly and via stormwater drains. For example, over the past 12 months, at the end of La Trobe Street, gravel was deposited almost to the level of the board walk.

Development round the unmade roads has sky-rocketed, and instead of rain slowly seeping into the ground and being filtered as it gravitates to the creek, it now pours off roofs, paving and bitumen directly onto roads or into stormwater drains. The effect is sudden and scouring. It causes more erosion, carries more pollutants, is more turbulent, and dumps its increased sediment load on the ecology of the area.

Dredging the creek has been mooted, but it is not a long-term solution. We need to tackle the problem at source and find solutions that enable water to enter the creek from the catchment more naturally and gently. Maybe then the big storm events that send a plume of silt into the bay will flush the sediment from the estuary and it will not be replaced, as happens now.

Two of our recent and successful grant applications have concentrated

on this issue. We have a substantial **Envirofund Grant** to clear and monitor silt build up at stormwater outlets. We are also planning a geomorphological study as part of work to gain a better understanding of the processes at work in the estuary. This will be coupled with planting some 10,000 indigenous aquatic and riparian plants.

**The control burn site**, below the kindergarten, has aroused much interest, and we are thrilled by the diversity of plants that have regenerated. It requires ongoing intensive follow-up weed control, undertaken largely by Naturelinks, our main contractor. *[We plan to report on the regeneration in more detail in the next newsletter - ED]*

**The Envirokit** is now ready, after various hitches. It provides lots of information on how to be a 'good neighbour' to the Reserve, and we plan to deliver copies to all residents around the Reserve perimeter and anyone else interested. The kit will be up-dated from time to time and new material (eg. notes on local frogs, bats) added as it comes to hand. Kits are available from Liz (0408 388 430) or Keith (5974 4993).

**Educational Nature Trail**—We plan to install a number of signage posts throughout the Old Campground to interpret the most common of our indigenous plants.

**Boardwalk** has undergone major repairs through the year, as some of the older sections had deteriorated to such an extent that they were quite dangerous. Council spent \$70,000 last financial year and plans to do so again this year. We are hoping this will continue until all the boardwalk meets the new standard regulations.

**Work-for-the-Dole**—A team of three or four plus their hard-working supervisor have been working with us every Wednesday for three months (October to December), enabling us to catch up on lots of 'chores' that BERG would never otherwise have been able to get done.

**...and since the AGM...**  
Year 9s from Mt Eliza Secondary College have been helping us every

## Ibises Aloft !

by David Plant,  
Melbourne-based bird expert

Over recent months, huge flocks of Ibis have been seen regularly flying in magnificent V-formation over Mt Martha and other areas of the Peninsula.

Both the Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*, and the Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis* are very common Australia-wide except in the very dry western areas. They are often seen in large flocks, feeding in wet paddocks, mud flats, playing fields and wetlands generally. The two species are often seen together and nest in large communal breeding colonies.



They may feed many kilometres from their nests, circling in thermals to gain altitude before flying directly to a feeding site. The frequent sightings over the Peninsula are no doubt because the recent rains have provided excellent feeding conditions for them.

Both species probe in the water for food, but if grasshoppers and locusts are abundant, will feed on hard ground. In the Brisbane CBD the White Ibis has become an absolute pest, scavenging for cast-off food and indeed, if the opportunity arises, stealing food from inattentive lunch-timers.

The Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* is far less common, but has been seen at Coolart.

Tuesday (for 5 weeks) to mulch and weed, as part of their end-of-the-year community service program. The November working-bee planted over 300 plants into these beds.

A very happy Christmas and New Year. See you next year!

**Liz Barraclough, Field Officer**



Diary Dates

BERG Field Activities

All Welcome! Meet at the Rotunda BBQ (Mel 144 K11) for working bees on:
- 3rd Sunday of every month, from 9.00 to 12.00. Coffee and BERG-baked delicacies at 10.30.
- Tuesdays from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break at 10.30.
- Waterwatch testing: every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month.

Meetings

BERG Committee meetings every 6 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30.
SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) meets 1st Monday of the month, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton Street, Rosebud.
Friends of Harrap Creek field days 4th Sunday of the month, 9.30.
Friends of Fairbairn Park working bees—contact John Stoker 5974 472

Membership Application

I wish to become a family/individual member of BERG and enclose cash/a cheque payable to BERG for:

Table with 2 columns: Description and Amount. Rows include: Joining fee \$1, Individual subscription (per year) \$4, Family subscription (per year) \$5, Donation (tax deductible over \$2), and Total \$ .....

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BERG, PO Box 433
Mount Martha 3934

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