

THE CREEK

Volume 12 No1, January 2008

 **Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group**
No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

You may have noticed some new picnic tables and seats in the vicinity of the rotunda. We were able to purchase these from our public gift fund – the money you, our members, have donated – and they are already getting plenty of use. Again we thank you for your support.



Some of the new picnic tables in the Camp Ground area, paid for by donations to BERG

BERG is enjoying its 11th year and each member of our management committee is in the process of putting to paper their thoughts on what BERG may look like in five, ten and twenty years' time. These will be consolidated with a view to mapping our future. We would welcome any thoughts you have on our progress to date and how you see our future.

I imagine most of us object to what the Japanese whalers are doing in Antarctic waters in the name of 'whale research' but spare a thought for the millions of fish that we and the rest of the world

kill by suffocation. Are we guilty of a double standard?

Channel deepening. The ultimate would be for the operation to be accomplished without damage to the environment. That is difficult to imagine with the removal of so much toxic material from the Yarra to a dumping area further down the bay. It seems to me that the shipping container terminals should be relocated to the Webb Dock area, thus obviating any de-sludging of the river. How sure can anyone be that the spoil can be safely and positively be contained?

I hope 2008 is marvellous for you all. Until next issue.

Keith Wilson

KOALAS!

They are not common in Mt Martha, but koalas are about. In January, a large one was seen resting in a Manna Gum outside 70 Watson Rd. Also in January, across the creek there was an adult male on the corner of Mark St and Augusta St, and a female with baby near the Augusta St footbridge – maybe a family group. It's some months since we reported the koala that walked coolly down David Glaspole's Bay Road driveway and ambled across the road without looking left or right. And the splendid photo below was taken by Pat Long – the koala was in a Queensland Box in her garden on The Esplanade just north of Coolangatta Rd.



CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY Sunday 2nd March

Come and join BERG to help clean up Mount Martha!

Register and collect a bag for rubbish at the Village Green Car Park, corner of The Esplanade and Watson Road, between 9.30am and 12.30pm. Bring your own gloves and tongs if you require them.

Hope to see you there.

BERG welcomes new members:

Claire & Neil Swan
Mark Lane
Sellars-Jones family

BERG COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT KEITH WILSON • VICE PRESIDENT HARRY HARRIS • SECRETARY MARY STEMPE • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER
FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • MINUTES SECRETARY PAM HEARN
SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON ANDY MCGUIGAN
HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELDS GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR

ADDRESS: PO Box 433, Mt Martha 3934. PHONE: 5974 3996 WEBSITE: [HTTP://BERG.ORG.AU](http://BERG.ORG.AU)

BERG IS A MEMBER OF COAST ACTION/COASTCARE PROGRAM AND GREENING AUSTRALIA VICTORIA

FIELD NEWS

from Field Officer
Liz Barraclough

With a new year and four grants to use on the improvement of our local environment, we have been spending the first weeks of January planning our approach. We are becoming more familiar with operating in a drought frame of mind. Our forward planning is taking into account the drier seasons and how they affect the when, where and how of weed control as well as indigenous plant survival, regeneration and revegetation.

Our first working-bee for the year (January) was aimed at starting us off on the right foot. We spent the Sunday morning cleaning out and rationalising the equipment, junk and mess in our storage areas. It now looks magnificent, with everything hanging up and in its place. Much is owed to the expertise of Michael Sanders with his electric drills and tool kit.

Work on the foreshore

Our Envirofund grant of \$15,052 will be spent restoring the Coast Banksia Woodland on the foreshore from Coolangatta Rd to Bay Rd and the Reserve bordering the estuary. This is a very public, high-profile area and not only are we interested in its ecological rehabilitation, but we also realise its aesthetic appeal and its importance to the character of Mt Martha. As noted in the report by the Mt Martha Foreshore Advisory Committee, there is a danger that not only through natural attrition of the vegetation but also development, the area's essential natural bushland character can be destroyed and Mt Martha transformed into just another suburban coastal playground.

We welcome input and help from local residents, especially those in the immediate vicinity and concerned about the area. For anyone interested, we shall be offering free indigenous plants to plant in gardens and nature strips.

We are also offering, if requested, advice on the selection and use of plants in landscaping.

Melbourne Water grants

We have received Melbourne Water grants to continue work in three areas.

\$11,654 is to improve diversity and habitat on the north bank of the creek, opposite Uralla Rd and last year's grant area

We have \$9,390 for work along Hopetoun Creek and the wetland area between the end of Greenfield Way and Hopetoun Rd. The Greenfield Way Hopetoun Creek Group, assisted by Naturelinks, will expand their excellent weed control and planting into this area. At the moment it is an exotic weed paradise, not unattractive to a gardener's eye but a real challenge in terms of native vegetation and habitat value

Another \$2,000 will fund work on the retarding basin in the reserve along Century Drive. The Century Drive Habitat Link Group will work with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to transform this area into a functioning and valuable wetland.

There will be lots of great work to do this year. We really welcome any new members or volunteers at our working-bees, the 3rd Sunday of each month.

ALONG GREENFIELD WAY

with Hazel Athey

IF YOU have the time, turn south off Bay Road, along Greenfield Way, and you will find yourself travelling alongside a reserve. Below the road is Hopetoun Creek, a tributary to Balcombe Creek. Two years ago, the area was overgrown with weeds and a fire risk, and had President Keith Wilson not agreed that a tributary to the Estuary was worth improving, it would still be so.

For the past two years, many people have worked hard, under



New plantings are transforming the reserve along Greenfield Way into attractive indigenous bushland

the wise direction of Field Officer Liz, clearing tons of woody weeds out to the roadside to be taken away or mulched. A Melbourne Water Grant of \$1661 funded contractors to spray blackberries and weeds, and the purchase of lots of suitable plants, which were planted by volunteers. Thanks to Anders Lewis, working in his Uni holidays, and to Wendy Chadwick and her house guest, who watered the plants over their first very dry summer, with the result that a lot survived. This summer Mother Nature has done the watering, which has been marvellous.

We have been fortunate also to have had the help of Work for the Dole men with their supervisor Phil from Mornington Youth Enterprises. A lot is achieved in a short time, the camaraderie excellent, and morning tea is welcome. Thanks to Russell Ardley and his team at MYE.

The plants have been flowering, giving us a hint of what it will look like next spring and – dare I suggest – what it might have looked like when the first settlers arrived. The area has been farmland and, like most of the rest of the reserve, part of the huge camping ground for the armed forces during World War Two.

There is a lot more work to be done, and there always will be. So help and donations are needed. The Blue Wrens and their feathered friends will thank us – so will any humans who like to see creeks as near to natural as they can be. So do go and see for yourself, but watch out for snakes.

GOOD RATS AND BAD RATS

Paul Bertuch, of ECO-AGRI, reports

The Good Rats

SWAMP RATS are numerous around Balcombe Creek. A shy animal that stays in the thick undergrowth, the Swamp Rat lives on the ground, digging burrows and often turning up significant areas in search of tubers and roots.

The Swamp Rat is a vegetarian and does not carry the diseases carried by the introduced Black Rat. Its nature is very docile. By keeping your cats at home after dark and your dogs on a leash in the reserve, you will help to protect this delightful animal.

24 Swamp Rats were recorded in 2007 in the areas around the sports ovals, particularly to the west.



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Swamp Rat, Rattus lutreolus

...and the Bad Rats

The introduced Black Rat is a feral species. It carries diseases that affect people and pets. It invades hollows lived in by the Agile Antechinus, a native marsupial, and it raids bird nests, stealing eggs and killing young chicks. The Black Rat competes with the Swamp Rat for territory and some foods.

A bushland trapping program in 2007 resulted in **42 Black Rats** caught in the Reserve.



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Black Rat, Rattus Rattus.

Note the long scaly tail

Black Rats often move from the housing zone into bushland reserves. They breed up, supported by rubbish and pet food left out or discarded. Sheds and rubbish piles also give these animals shelter. Help protect the indigenous species of Balcombe Creek and the health and the wellbeing of your family by following good backyard cleanliness practices.

FRIENDS OF HARRAP CREEK

by Mary Stemp

YOU WON'T find it marked on your Melways except as a strip of green indicating a reserve. However, if you go east on Harrap Road from Dunns Road in East Mornington, you come to a cobblestone bridge. Underneath, a drain opens up into Harrap Creek. Actually, when that drain was cleared out, it turned out to include three outlet pipes! From the bridge you can see a narrow reserve containing five or six old growth Manna gums as well as many recent plantings alongside the creek.

Should you decide to walk along the track (which will be made into a footpath when the adjacent paddocks are subdivided), you can follow the creek across Hyperno Way, Veda Avenue and through the recently subdivided Sefton Grange to Craigie Road. From there it runs through The Briars and into Balcombe Creek.

A small group of us formed Friends of Harrap Creek (FOHC) about six years ago, with lots of

moral support from the Natural Systems Team of MPSC and some financial help, in order to remove weeds and put in some indigenous plants. Since that time, we have also received a couple of Envirofund grants.

When Melbourne Water assumed responsibility for the Mornington Peninsula waterways, Harrap Creek became one of their early projects because creeks with friends groups received priority. Aside from major works to stabilise the banks and clean out drains and the creek-bed, Melbourne Water has now organised a contractor to maintain the reserve as well as to do further planting.

As mentioned in the previous edition of *The Creek*, FOHC has recently joined BERG, and as a sub-group of BERG, it will continue to have some input into the ongoing management of the area, and this winter, plans to do some supplementary planting.

Recipes for the Workers!

Another scrummy working bee morning tea recipe, this time for

Orange Chocolate Chip Cake

Blend till smooth:

–1 large orange, cut into a few pieces (remove pips)

–250 grams butter

Add:

–1 cup sugar

–3 eggs, beating in one at a time

Stir in

–2 cups SR flour

–about 3/4 cup (dark) choc bits

Pour into a greased tin, bake in a moderate oven about an hour.

Dust with icing sugar.

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WORKING BEES	OTHER ACTIVITIES	MEETINGS
<p>❖ BERG monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00, with coffee and BERG-baked delicacies at 10.30. Next are Sunday 17th February and Sunday 16th March. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If you're running late, phone Liz's mobile (0408 388 430) to find where we are working.</p> <p>❖ Tuesdays (re-starting March) from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break at 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996.</p> <p>❖ Hopeton Creek Greenfield Reserve, first Monday of the month, 9.30 to 12.30. Contact Hazel Athey to confirm, on 5974 3034.</p>	<p>❖ Waterwatch testing: Tuesday 19th February (every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month)</p> <p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees: 10 am, Sunday 30th March, Sunday 22nd June. Meet at top of Marguerita Ave. Contact John Stoker on 5974 4726.</p>	<p>❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30. Next meeting 8th March. All members welcome.</p> <p>❖ SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) meets 1st Monday of the month, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton Street, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4). Contact Jan Dwyer on 5986 6566.</p>

Membership Application

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

Joining fee \$1	\$
Individual subscription (per year) \$4	\$
Family subscription (per year) \$5	\$
Donation (tax deductible over \$2)	\$
Total	\$

Please send to:

Membership Secretary
BERG, PO Box 433
Mount Martha 3934

Name

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