

THE CREEK

Volume 12 No2, April 2008

 Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group
No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

It is with great pleasure that I welcome to our management team long-time BERG member John Inchley. A regular at our working bees, John is a retired school teacher and well known Mt. Martha vigneron, concentrating on shiraz and merlot. Welcome John and we look forward to cementing our association.

People kindly send me all sorts of snippets about environmental matters and invariably I find them interesting. Let me quote from one recent contribution, Dr Tim Flannery writing in *The Age*. "Victorians are among the world's worst greenhouse polluters per capita because 95% of our electricity is fuelled by brown coal, releasing a whopping 40 million tonnes of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere every year."

The world's largest conservation group, WWF, says we can all do something about it. Essentially the message is: **Don't use power if you don't need to.**

Many companies and businesses have pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 5% annually. That should not be too difficult.

It is said that Australian households generate nearly one fifth of Australia's greenhouse gasses through our "normal" daily activities like transport, household energy use and the decay of household waste to landfill.

Yes, there is plenty we can do and in the process save ourselves money.

Thank you to my informants, please keep it coming. Until next issue, my regards to all.

Keith Wilson

HEAR ALL ABOUT WATER SENSITIVE URBAN DESIGN

When? Saturday 19th April, 10.00
(with a BERG Committee meeting)

Where? Mt Martha House

What? Two representatives from the Melbourne Water Stormwater Quality Team will tell us about Water Sensitive Urban Design, why it is important, and how it could be applied in Mt Martha.

BERG Members Welcome

Managing the water cycle entails managing drinking water, stormwater run-off, waterway health, sewage treatment, and recycling. These things are vitally important in urban development if our towns and cities are to be ecologically sustainable.

"Water Sensitive Urban Design" builds these considerations into urban design. Among other things, it works to protect natural systems and manage stormwater in ways that enhance the landscape and don't degrade the natural environment.

Find out more at

<http://wsud.melbournewater.com.au/>

A WETLAND FOR CENTURY DRIVE

Tony O'Connor reports

The storm-water retarding basin in Century Drive (off Benton's Rd in Mt Martha) has been devoid of permanent water or indigenous vegetation since its construction in 1998. With a small amount of soil excavation work and strategic plantings of indigenous flora, this basin could become a unique wetland habitat for native fauna.

Melbourne Water has provided a sizable grant to the Century Drive Habitat Link Group (through BERG) for supply of plants for the wetland, and Council has agreed in principle to fund the earthworks. With our plans and drawings submitted to the Shire engineering department (thanks to Simon Thorning), we are now eagerly awaiting formal approval for go-ahead later this year.

The wetland will complement the thriving plantings below the basin, along the banks of Balcombe Creek, which were so enthusiastically planted by BERG members and Century Drive residents over a year ago.



The retarding basin, looking towards Century Drive. The plantings along Balcombe Creek are behind the photographer

FIELD NEWS

from *Field Officer Liz Barraclough*

Working bees

It's been hot weather for working! Despite this, we had a great turn-out in February, including a number of recently joined members.

We tackled the woody weeds on the foreshore opposite the Mt Martha shops, removing stacks of Polygala, Boneseed and Flax-leaf Broom. This is part of strip of foreshore (Coolangatta Rd to Bay Rd) to be restored under our 2008 Envirofund grant. Thankfully our contractors, Naturelinks, had already cleaned out most of the more difficult areas.

In March, despite even hotter weather, we spread 23 metres of mulch around the perimeters of the revegetation 'beds' in campground, secured the four new picnic tables and benches, and removed woody weeds (Hakea and Cotoneaster) from opposite the South East Water pumping station.

Our March workers included three Caulfield Grammar students, as part of their community service, who were very handy for moving such a large quantity of mulch on a 35°+ day! They plan to attend further working-bees and bring others.

Clean Up Australia Day

TEN CHILDREN and 30 adults tackled the clean up of the beach, Reserve and surrounding roadsides. Thanks to Barbara Thrave's PR efforts, this was double last year's turn-out. Special thanks to the members of the Naturelinks team who turned out on their day off and collected 24 bags of rubbish from the almost inaccessible northern edge of the estuary and creek. Jo Thyer

commented that it showed their attachment to the Reserve after working in it for so long and regularly.

Along Hopetoun Creek

HOPETOUN CREEK is privately owned for a small portion of its length, between Uralla Drive and the start of the Balcombe Estuary Reserve. We're delighted that some of the landholders here are interested in rehabilitating their section of creek.

After an inspection by Melbourne Water, Faye and Peter Marshall (at 9 Uralla Rd) have applied for a Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grant, which are available to private landholders for such purposes.

Luckily the large pines and most of the major weeds – including Pittosporum, Cape Ivy and Blackberry – are within the 'bed and banks', which are the responsibility of Melbourne Water, but a Stream Frontage Grant will help pay for the landowners' weed control. In return, they must contract to help with the follow-up and maintenance.

The project will link up with BERG's grant projects upstream in Hopetoun Creek, and help to form a wildlife corridor down to Balcombe Creek.

Devilbend Friends

THE DEVILBEND Foundation is exploring the possibility of forming a Devilbend Friends Group. Anyone interested please contact Jan Oliver, phone 5977 0131, email oliverjs@bigpond.net.au.

Landcare Group Launch

THE BALCOMBE and Moorooduc Landcare Group is holding its inaugural event and public launch on Saturday 27 April, at Bertuch's farm, 305 Bungower Rd, Moorooduc. All are welcome



BERG versus the Woody Weeds on the foreshore, February working bee



The workers refuelling at the March working bee

to come along to hear the group's plans, see and hear about the President's property, hear a guest speaker on weeds, and enjoy the BBQ. RSVP to Isabelle and Hugh Robinson, phone 5974 2095 or 0418 326 578, or email penvine@bigpond.com.au

The area covered by the new Landcare group includes the Balcombe, Devil Bend and Tuerong creeks. The Group's work will complement the work of BERG in enhancing the environmental values of local remnant vegetation areas and natural waterways.

Currently, pest plants such as gorse are having a major impact, while the extensive removal of native vegetation is reducing land productivity and has dramatically reduced the local habitat and biodiversity.

Landcare is a grass roots movement that brings neighbours together to learn, identify, address and coordinate works that cannot be tackled or resolved alone. It encourages good land stewardship and aims to improve the

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BERG COMMITTEE

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 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

WATERWATCH UPDATE

A year ago, we published the results of BERG's Waterwatch monitoring back to 2004. Every three months, we take measurements at the Augusta St Bridge. Our test results are collated in the Waterwatch Victoria database, where community data are pooled, analysed and interpreted at the catchment level and beyond. We also record our results on our own database.

Most of our readings are within the levels that Waterwatch identifies as healthy. Oxygen saturation is slightly borderline.

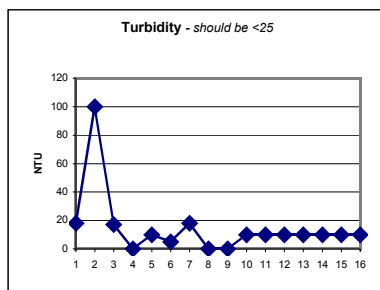
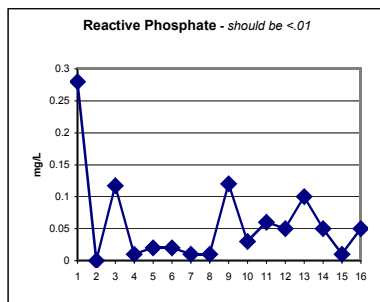
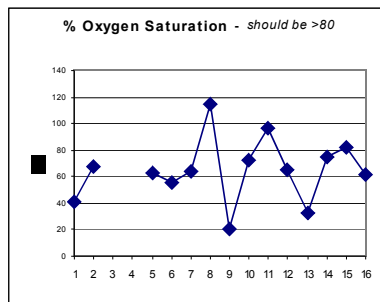
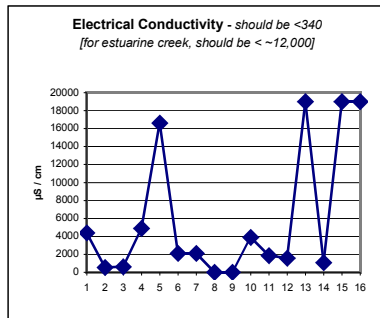
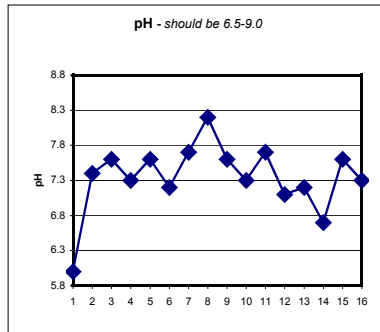
Electrical conductivity – a measure of salinity (dissolved salt increases water's conductivity) – is the one exception to this. However, the Augusta St testing site is within the creek's tidal zone, so readings here will be quite different to those further upstream, and the levels set by Waterwatch are probably not relevant here. Levels set for estuaries in other countries suggest our readings are within healthy limits.

Salinity will also vary in the estuary depending on whether or not the creek mouth is open, and how much water is flowing downstream. We have much to learn about these variations and what constitutes a healthy range of readings in our creek.

pH is a measure of acidity. The main potential influences in Balcombe Creek are run-off of agricultural and garden fertilisers, which increase acidity.

Turbidity (cloudiness) is caused by suspended particles, which may be soil (clay, silt, sand), algae, plankton, micro-organisms, and other substances. Major contributors include soil erosion and run-off from farm land, eroded or stock-trampled creek banks, and dirt roadways. High turbidity means less light for aquatic plants, frog spawn, and other living things. Turbid water also absorbs more heat than clear water.

*Quarterly readings, Augusta St bridge, May 2004 to Feb 2008**



**Numbers on the X axis are the dates the quarterly readings were taken, 3rd Tuesday of February, May, August & November:*

- Nos 1,2,3 (no reading Feb) 2004
- Nos 4,5,6,7 2005
- Nos 8,9,10,11 2006
- Nos 12,13,14,15 2007
- No 16 2008

ECHIDNAS – TELL US IF YOU SEE ONE



WE AIM to keep a systematic record of echidna sightings in the reserve, to get some idea of how many echidnas there are and the territory they cover (they tend to keep to their own patch).

If you see an echidna, take note of where, the date and time, and any details that could help to identify the echidna again – size, injury, special markings or the like. And let Mary Stemp know, mstemp@iprimus.com.au or on 5974 3996.

Reportings to date suggest at least a couple of animals – they have been seen and on the south bank and near Latrobe Drive, and in various places on the north bank from the Augusta Street footbridge along Victoria Crescent to the easement track.

Dissolved oxygen is essential for creatures with gills – fish and macroinvertebrates. The higher the water temperature, the lower the level of dissolved oxygen, so there is a link to turbidity.

Phosphorus is released by rotting organic matter and is essential for plant growth. Agricultural and garden fertilisers contain phosphorus, which can run off into waterways. High levels of phosphorus support toxic algal blooms.

Every six months, we also count **macroinvertebrates** in a sample of the creek water. These tiny but visible insects, worms, snails, shrimps, water fleas and the like are a key part of the food chain, and their diversity and abundance is an excellent indicator of stream health. Species are limited by salinity at our test site, but there are sufficient numbers and range of species to indicate a healthy environment.

Field News, continued from page 2:

productivity of the land now and in the future. The Landcare Group will provide landholders with greater access to support and resources. Group members will have the opportunity to increase skills and knowledge about land management, and undertake on-farm works.



BERG's storage shed transformed – thanks to Michael Sanders

BERG welcomes new member:
Sally Cleary

**GREENING AUSTRALIA COURSE
"RIVER FIRST AID"**

Where: Mornington Peninsula – location to be confirmed

When: Saturday 10th and Saturday 17th May, 9.00-4.30

Cost: Free

What: Understand the principles for protecting and restoring your local waterway. Classroom plus on-site learning will cover hydrology, water quality, ecology, riparian vegetation, geo-morphology, and rehabilitation.

Enquiries: Greening Australia Vic 9450 5300, general@gav.org.au

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 20th April and Sunday 18th May.</p> <p>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 from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996.</p> <p>❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve, first Monday of the month, 9.30 to 12.30. Contact Hazel Athey to confirm, on 5974 3034 or 0419 899 560.</p>	<p>❖ Waterwatch testing: Tuesday 20th May (every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month)</p> <p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bee: 10 am, 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 meetings 19th April, 14th June. 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 St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4). Contact Jan Dwyer on 5986 6566.</p>

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