

# THE CREEK

Volume 12 No3, June 2008

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

## WIDER AND SAFER! BOARDWALK UPGRADE

**B**ERG is delighted that work has begun on an ongoing, Council-funded upgrade of the boardwalk.

David Wood, who is running the project for Council, says that in the current stage, about 350 metres of boardwalk will be replaced, from the campground to the first fishing platform. There will also be an extra 30 metres of new walkway at the campground end.

The new boardwalk will be 1.5 metres wide, with wider passing areas at the interpretive signs. Concrete stumps and stainless steel fittings will mean a long life for the foundations. The timber superstructure will be treated with a less toxic alternative to standard treated pine, and as much as possible will be pre-fabricated off-site to reduce cutting and drilling of treated material on site. Protecting the existing trees is a high priority.

Work is likely to continue into August, and until then, the boardwalk will remain closed from the campground to the cricket nets at Ferrero ovals, and including the La Trobe Street entrance.

## FIELD NEWS

*from Field Officer Liz Barraclough*

### Working bees

**I**t's the time of year to prepare for planting, and this was the focus of the April and May working bees.

In April we tackled the woody weeds along the foreshore between the northern carpark and Coolangatta Rd, to clear spaces for



*At work removing the old board walk!*

spot-planting at the June working bee. Most of the area is covered in dense Polygala, and the intention is not to remove it all at this stage, as this would leave the sloping ground too exposed to the harsh conditions that can lash the foreshore. Mal Legg, the fauna ecologist who is doing our current fauna survey, tells us that this weedy vegetation does not provide much habitat for indigenous fauna except for a few Swamp Rat colonies. But it does protect the ground from wind, rain and erosion. Where possible we have left the fallen weeds. Though a bit unsightly, they offer shelter for any wildlife and will protect the soil surface and, later, the new plants.

In May we removed more woody weeds, this time from the island of vegetation on the north side of the campground path near the dilapidated old toilet block, between Wattle and Henley Avenues. We removed Boneseed, Polygala, Tea tree, Pittosporum and Coast Wattle, to prepare for

planting here over winter by about 70 Mount Martha Primary School students, working with Mary Stemp and her Tuesday team.

With this planting, we hope to restore the habitat of the smaller native birds such as Pardalotes, Wrens and Spine-bills. Neighbours tell us that both species and numbers of these small birds have dropped off dramatically in recent times. We hope some prickly vegetation will give them some protection from predators – foxes, and especially local cats, which have been spotted lately in the vicinity. A pest control program is being investigated for the latter half of this year.

### Another new seat

Thanks to the generous donations of BERG members, another seat made of recycled materials has been installed on the second platform along the boardwalk. To provide regular rest stops, we have moved the old wooden and metal seat to one of the platforms between Augusta St and Uralla Rd.

### River First Aid

I attended this two-day course in May, run by Greening Australia, sponsored by Melbourne Water, and held at the Briars.

The focus was on understanding river systems and their rehabilitation. We looked at human impacts such as desnagging, riparian clearing and changes in uses of catchment land, as well as physical water quality and other biological impacts. An introduction to stream assessment and management included revegetation, engineering solutions, stock exclusion, sediment and nutrient filtering, and erosion control.

## FLOWERING IN THE BUNYIP

*Correa reflexa*, the Native Fuchsia, is showing its colours. There are two local forms, both forming low shrubs – one with green flowers and a denser habit, the other more open, with red flowers. The pictures below were taken in late May in the Bunyip. These beautiful locals also make excellent garden plants. Plants will be available in spring from Mornington Peninsula Youth Enterprises.



## ECHIDNA WATCH

*from Mary Stemp*

Many thanks to Claire Swan and Fay Weston for reporting their sightings of echidnas. Claire's was foraging beside the path at the end of the old campground at 10 am on April 7. Fay reported two sightings, on April 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, near Hearn Road, and has provided two excellent photos. Perhaps photos are how we can differentiate one echidna from another! At present I'm wondering if they all look alike!

Please keep the reports & photos coming in. We need lots in order to build up a picture of the numbers and habits of the echidnas in the reserve.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT ON A LIGHTER NOTE!

Let me think I am always serious, I came across a snippet the other day, which attracted my odd sense of humour – here are some extracts from it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Congratulations to all the kids who were born in the 1930s, 40s, 50s, 60s !!

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they carried us. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn't get tested for diabetes.

Then after that trauma, our baby cribs were covered with bright coloured lead-based paints.

We had no child-proof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets, not to mention, the risks we took hitchhiking.

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of a pick up on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and no one actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank soda pop with sugar in it, but we weren't overweight because we were always outside playing. We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No-one was able to reach us all day. And we were OK.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendos, X-boxes, no video games at all, no 99 channels on cable, no video tape movies, no

surround sound, no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or Internet chat rooms. We had friends, and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes. We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just yelled for them!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever! The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all!

*Keith Wilson*

**BERG welcomes new members:**  
**Douglas & Maureen Watson**  
 Georgie Stubbs  
 Julie Hepburn

## Recipes for the Workers!

*Another scrummy working bee morning tea recipe – this time Liz Barraclough's*

### Large Moist Ginger Cake

Microwave to mix:

250 gms butter

250 gms sugar

250 gms treacle

Add:

375 gms plain flour

2 tsp arrowroot

2 tsp bicarb soda

2 eggs

2 tbls powdered ginger

Sift dry ingredients, mix and stir into melted mixture with beaten eggs. Then add:

1½ cups warmed milk

Pour the very runny mixture into 8-10 inch/20-25 cm round (or square) tin. Cook about 1½ hours at 310°F/150°C.

## OXALIS SPECIES: TENACIOUS WINTER WEEDS

It's oxalis time again. The acid green leaves and yellow flowers of Sour Sob, *Oxalis pes-caprae*, are springing up with gusto in patches throughout gardens and the reserve. The leaves have three heart-shaped leaflets, and groups of yellow flowers grow from a single flower stem, up to about 35 cm.

Its low growing cousin *Oxalis purpurea* (Large-flowered Wood Sorrel) hugs the ground with its larger leaves and five-petaled, trumpet-shaped flowers in pink, mauve or white with a yellow throat.

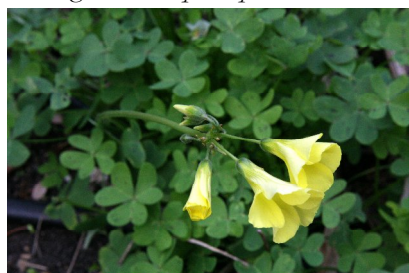
*Oxalis incarnata* is more delicate looking, with pale pink or whitish flowers on slender stalks, held clear of the foliage. Leaves arise in clusters where the stem branches, with small bulbils in the leaf axils.



All three species were introduced as garden ornamentals from South Africa. And all three form dense mats over the ground from autumn to spring, inhibiting the germination of native species and out competing native herbs for space, light and nutrients. They die down rapidly in spring warmth, and remain dormant over summer.

### Surviving and spreading

One can only admire the survival strategies of *O. pes-caprae*.



*Sour Sob, Oxalis pes-caprae*

Below ground, a rhizomatous underground stem joins the leaf crown to the deep-seated parent bulb, and below this the stem

tapers to a fine thread then swells into a fleshy tuber. Initially a food storage organ, in late spring the tuber shrinks as it loses moisture, contracting and pulling the new bulbils deeper into the ground. Bulbs have been found a metre down. New bulbils develop in the old bulb and on the tuber, and up to 20 or more bulbils grow on the rhizomatous stem above the bulb, and the plant spreads mainly through dispersal of these bulbils, though cut sections of the stem can also form new plants. Infestations spread by sending out the underground stem at an angle, allowing the contractile tuber to pull the new bulbils sideways. A bit of soil disturbance helps the spread enormously.

The large bulb of *O. purpurea* is only about 2.5 cm below the soil surface. After the flowers develop, bulbils form just below the soil surface on the rhizomatous stem. Horizontal rhizomes can also develop roots and shoots, forming new plants.

### Bulbs and/or bulbils are:

- easily introduced to bushland in soil and garden refuse, or on earthmoving machinery and tools;
- rapidly spread by soil disturbance or cultivation;
- carried by water – both bulbs and bulbils float;
- spread by birds – Oxalis patches have been found under roost sites.

### Control

Spraying with a herbicide is recommended in many resources, but Gidja Walker, environmental expert on the Peninsula, is concerned about too much spraying, its potential to damage soil fertility and its effect on the food chain and local fauna. If spraying Oxalis, the timing is critical. Spray just as flowers are emerging, when the old bulbs are shrivelled and new bulbils and bulbils not yet developed. Spraying after flowering will not kill the bulbs. Not all plants will be at the

## NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH INDIGENOUS OXALIS SPECIES



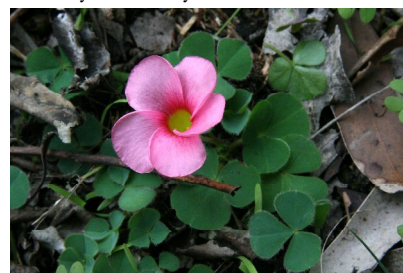
The delicate indigenous Oxalis has clover-like leaves, small yellow flowers (less than 1 cm), and slender hairy seed capsules. It is prostrate, with a trailing habit. It is not fleshy, and does not reproduce by bulbs. There are a number of different species, differentiated by the direction of fine hairs on stem and seed capsule. Some are rare, all are to be treasured.

same stage at the same time, so further control will be needed over the next years.

Where possible, Gidja recommends restricting growth by out-competing the Oxalis, using plants like *Rbagodia*, the Seaberry Salt Bush. This won't eliminate the Oxalis plants, but it will retard and contain them.

*O. incarnata* is severely checked by steaming with a burner, as the bulbils form above ground in the axils of the stems.

Grubbing out Oxalis is only practical for very small infestations. Dig out the whole plant early in the season before bulbils form, sifting soil to remove as many of the bulbs as possible, and dispose of it all very carefully.



*Oxalis purpurea, Large-flowered Wood Sorrel*

### HARRAP CREEK FRIENDS

Friends of Harrap Creek held the first of three winter working bees in late May. A good morning's work saw lots of planting achieved (see photo).

Two more working bees are planned, with more planting to be done from Hyperno Way to the Sefton Grange subdivision, on this tributary of Balcombe Creek.

The Harrap Creek Friends would welcome some help from BERG members at these working bees, even for an hour or so.



They will be held on Sunday June 22 and Sunday July 27. Meet in Veda Ave (off Dunns Rd) where the creek runs under the road, from 9 am to noon. Morning tea provided!

For enquiries, contact: Mary Stemp, on 5974 3996, or [mstemp@iprimus.com.au](mailto:mstemp@iprimus.com.au).

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Monthly working bee:</b> 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Coffee and BERG-baked delicacies at 10.30. Next are: <b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June</b> and <b>Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July</b>. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If running late, phone Liz (0408 388 430) to find the work site.</li> <li>❖ <b>Tuesdays</b> from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996.</li> <li>❖ <b>Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve</b>, first Monday of the month, 9.30 to 12.30. Contact Hazel Athey to confirm, on 5974 3034 or 0419 899 560.</li> <li>❖ <b>Harrap Creek Friends</b>, June 22<sup>nd</sup> and July, 27<sup>th</sup>, 9.00 to 12.00. Meet Veda Ave where the creek runs under the road. Contact Mary Stemp 5974 3996.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Waterwatch testing:</b> Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August (every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month)</li> <li>❖ <b>Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group</b> working bee: 10 am, Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Meet at top of Marguerita Ave. Contact John Stoker on 5974 4726.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>BERG Committee</b> meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30. Next meetings <b>14<sup>th</sup> June</b> and <b>9<sup>th</sup> August</b>. All members welcome.</li> <li>❖ <b>SPIFFA</b> (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) meets 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4). Contact Jan Dwyer on 5986 6566.</li> </ul>
<p><b>BERG COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>PRESIDENT</b> KEITH WILSON • <b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> HARRY HARRIS • <b>SECRETARY</b> MARY STEMPE • <b>TREASURER</b> RICHARD KIRSNER  <b>FIELD OFFICER</b> LIZ BARRACLOUGH • <b>NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP</b> ANGELA KIRSNER • <b>MINUTES SECRETARY</b> PAM HEARN  <b>SCHOOLS LIAISON</b> JENNY SELBY • <b>ROTARY CLUB LIAISON</b> ANDY MCGUIGAN  <b>HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELDS GROUP</b> HAZEL ATHEY • <b>CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP</b> TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
<p><b>PO BOX 433, MT MARTHA 3934 • PHONE (SEC): 5974 3996 • WEBSITE: <a href="http://BERG.ORG.AU">HTTP://BERG.ORG.AU</a></b></p>		

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