

THE CREEK

Volume 12 No4, August 2008

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

THE BURN SITE THREE YEARS ON

Jo Thyer reports

Jo Thyer is the Mornington area Supervisor with Naturelinks, the contractors who work with BERG to manage our Reserve. Jo has been closely involved with management of the burn site.

It is now three years since the controlled burn of the patch of ground to the west of the Bunyip, near the Kindergarten. Many of you have must have watched with interest as indigenous fireweeds (*Senecio* spp), grasses and wildflowers covered the black earth, followed by the now dense thicket of indigenous vegetation dominated by 10 foot high Black Wattles (*Acacia mearnsii*).

Although the larger Black Wattles have shaded out some small herbaceous understorey species (particularly in the top south east corner, where they are densest), there is still quite a lot of diversity present. On a recent walk through of the site I noticed that there are still patches of indigenous grasses, emerging Chocolate Lilies (*Arthropodium strictum*), Scented Sundews (*Drosera whittakeri*) and



A thicket of Black Wattles dominates along the burn site's southern edge

Onion Orchids (*Microtis* sp.). Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) still covers large areas of ground, and Flax-lilies (*Dianella* spp.) are by far the most dominant understorey life form. Two indigenous creepers, Dodder Laurel (*Cassytha* sp.) and Climbing Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia adpressa*, usually restricted to frontline coastal habitats), have also taken a strong hold within the site.

Beating the weeds

One of the more positive things about the site is that it is not dominated by weeds, as it was pre-fire! Naturelinks, funded by the Mornington Peninsula Shire and with the help of BERG volunteers, has been managing the weed control works on this site for the past three years. Over this time we have significantly reduced the population size of a number of aggressive weed species that threatened the site – most notably Panic Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta*) and Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia* subsp. *longifolia*), both of which recruited in extremely large numbers post-fire. If you have dealt with either of these weeds, you will realize that this is no mean feat! Now that we have most of the weed species in check, we can start to look at other aspects of managing the site. Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity is a major factor in deciding what comes next, so we may look at reducing some of

...continued next page



A clump of Flax-lily (Dianella) beside Running Postman (Kennedia prostrata)

DIARY DATE:

BERG AGM

SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER

9.30 am, Mt Martha House

Guest Speaker:

Phil Edwards

from Melbourne Water

speaking on

**"Raingardens for home
and open space"**

Phil spoke recently to the BERG Committee. We were so impressed that we asked him to speak at the our AGM.

His focus is on sustainable and water-sensitive urban design, managing water in an integrated way that addresses local needs and helps to protect the health of our creeks, rivers and bay.

Phil has 20 years' experience as a landscape architect with the development industry and local government. He was the principle Landscape Architect on Melbourne's CH2, the 6 star green building, as well as designing several city parks and innovative streetscape projects.

And he's a great speaker!

The Burn Site Three Years On

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the Black Wattles in the site, particularly in areas where ground flora diversity is notably higher.

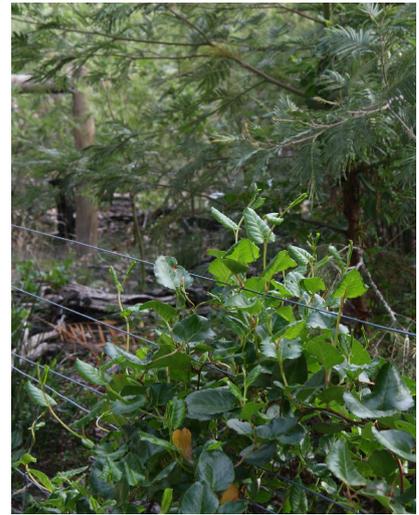


The delicate flower spike of the Onion Orchid, emerging from its long, slender leaf

A second burn planned

The Mornington Shire is planning a second controlled burn in the small patch of bush located on the beach side of the current burn site. Whilst some indigenous plants are present in this area, it is dominated by weed species such as Sweet Pittosporum

(*Pittosporum undulatum*), Polygala (*Polygala myrtifolia*), Coast Tea Tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), Quaking Grass (*Briza maxima*) and Panic Veldt Grass – much like the current burn site was before being burnt. If we get similar species germinating in this new area post burn, we may take a different management approach here – for example, removing Black Wattle seedlings in selected sections – and monitor the impact this has on biodiversity within the site. When this second controlled burn does go ahead, it will be interesting to compare the two sites side by side, with both at different stages of colonization.



Climbing Lignum (Muehlenbeckia adpressa) beneath Black Wattle on the southern fence of the burn site

FIELD NEWS

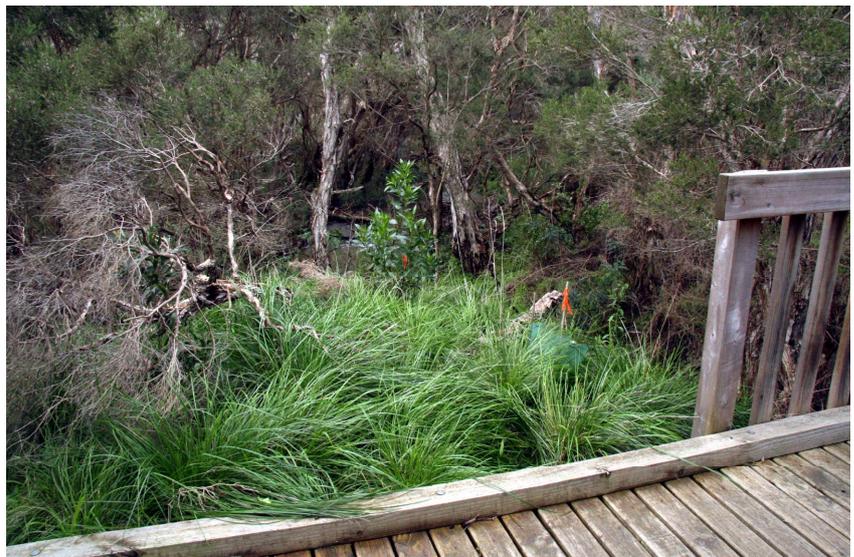
Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

It's raining at last! Still dry in some protected places and under some trees but it's great planting weather and we are making the most of it.

At the **June working-bee**, BERG members worked with Naturelinks to plant over 250 Coast Banksias, shrubs and a few groundcover species along the foreshore between Coolangatta Rd and Bay Rd. It is important that they have chance to get established if the dry conditions are to be repeated later this year.

The planting continued at the **July working-bee**, despite continuous light rain throughout the morning. A party of somewhat damp BERG members planted 300 shrubs along the boardwalk towards the area we have, for years, dubbed 'Horror Patch' – below Balcombe Creek Close. I think a name change will soon be in order for this area! These shrubs will help to shade out and out-compete the weeds as well as increasing diversity and improving the habitat. There are some great patches of *Poa labillardierei* resulting



2007 plantings of Poa labillardierei and a thriving Boobialla among the Melaleucas by the creek between Balcombe Creek Close and Uralla Road

from last year's planting (see photograph) and we hope to replicate this so there will be sweeps of this beautiful, bright green Poa through the Swamp Paperbarks and down to the creek.. At least 500 Poas are being propagated for planting at the August working-bee and the spraying has already been done in preparation.

“Caring for our Country” grant

This year the Envirofund grant has been rebadged, along with some changes in format and focus. We are applying for funding to

continue our rehabilitation of the Coast Banksia Woodland, with its suite of coastal vegetation, along the Mt Martha foreshore. We plan to take our work another 500 metres from Bay Rd towards the south end of the beach, with follow-up work on the 750 metres back towards to Coolangatta Rd and on either side of the estuary.

The scattered remnants of Coast Banksia Woodland are under threat all along the coast. Coast Banksia Woodland is classified as a vulnerable vegetation community on the Mornington Peninsula and throughout the Gippsland Plain

Bioregion. Not only is it ecologically important, but in Mt Martha, as in similar coastal villages, it gives the landscape its ambiance and atmosphere.

Planting with Mount Martha Primary School

Tuesday Group coordinator Mary Stemp reports

Mt Martha Primary School has been out in force to help us plant! The Tuesday morning group has played host to 75 students from grade 4, to plant over 500 indigenous grasses, sedges, herbs and a few shrubs over three Tuesdays in July.

Each week, about 25 children worked in small groups with a "BERGer" to plant a tray of indigenous plants.

Liz had prepared a site below Wattle Avenue, getting a Sunday working bee to remove the many woody weeds, and she also selected the plants and sprayed the remaining weeds.



Grade 4 students from Mt Martha Primary School planting grasses

Each group was encouraged to work as a team, spacing the plants, digging the holes, watering, and applying soil wetting agent. Even though we had had some decent rain over the previous week, the water hadn't penetrated below the top centimetre or so, not nearly deep enough to soak the roots. Hence the wetting agent, which I have found very successful in my own garden.

We will install a sign acknowledging the children's work and naming the school, grade and year.

An activity such as this requires quite a bit of organization and planning, but it is well worth it. Not only will the area be transformed, but the children will have had fun and learnt loads doing it.

IN AND AROUND THE RESERVE

Birds in Winter

Pam Hearn

IN JUNE and July, the weekly Tuesday working group has been entertained by Eastern Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters attracted by the flowering correas (*Correa reflexa*, red and green forms) and early Banksia flowers. Grey Fantails and Eastern Yellow Robins come to check out what we're doing, and there are constant chirpings from Superb Fairy Wrens and Brown Thornbills.

On the Estuary, a Little Pied Cormorant has been roosting in a tree just near the Camp Ground. A White-Faced Heron posed elegantly on the little jetty for me, and the odd Pelican has been seen flying overhead (one week there were five).

I'd be interested to hear of any interesting sightings



Little Pied Cormorant

along the Creek. Contact Pam on 5974 1176.

(An article by Pam on Balcombe Creek birds will appear soon in the tourist magazine *HOLIDAY*.)

"Old Man's Beard"

Angela Kirsner

MASSSES OF creamy white flowers cover the delicate vines of *Clematis aristata* that creep and climb over trees and shrubs in many parts of the reserve. This beautiful climber is found in woodland areas across much of eastern Australia. It has separate male and female plants, and after flowering, the females are covered for many weeks with feathery seed heads, the source of two of this Clematis's common names – Goat's Beard and Old Man's Beard. The leaves are usually trifoliate, and the young growth is purplish in colour

Clematis aristata also thrives in the garden, and seeds itself generously but never aggressively. It can also be grown from cuttings. It is happy in sun or semi-shade, and likes deep cool soil, preferably with a liberal



mulch of leaf litter. The natural inclination is to roam through trees or bushes, but *Clematis aristata* can easily be persuaded to cover a fence or trellis, or simply meander over the ground as a most attractive ground cover.



Clematis aristata: top, in flower; below, seed heads on a female plant

...and another Koala

PAM HEARN photographed this splendid chap on the morning of 25th May, in the Hopetoun-Norfolk Reserve.



“It sat in the tree just behind our place (I was alerted by a galah kicking up a fuss). It stayed there for a while, then climbed down, ambled along to another tree (not a food tree) behind my next door neighbour’s place, climbed to the top and slept all day.”

It was gone the next day.

BERG welcomes new members:

- Dianne Lewis & Jennifer Rolleston
- James Kirsner & Ming Fung
- Lee James
- Wendy Ebert
- Evelyn Hambros & family

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next: 17th August and 21st September. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If running late, phone Liz (0408 388 430) to find the work site. Coffee and BERG-baked delicacies at 10.30. ❖ Tuesdays from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996. ❖ 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: Tuesday 19th August (every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month) ❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bee: to be arranged – contact John Stoker for details on 5974 4726. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30. Next meetings 9th August and 27th September. All members welcome. ❖ BERG AGM Saturday 11th October, 9.30 ❖ 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>BERG COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT KEITH WILSON • VICE PRESIDENT HARRY HARRIS • SECRETARY MARY STEMPT • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP 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</p>		
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