

THE CREEK

Volume 12 No 6, December 2008



Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group

No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

FROM THE AGM

THANKS!

from President Keith Wilson

It is normal for the President to say thank you to a hard-working, dedicated committee and I do that with pleasure. Scores of issues are discussed with very genuine and positive enthusiasm. All are resolved and acted upon where necessary.

Every successful organisation has a group of helpers, seemingly unsung, often unknown but vital to that success. We have several in that category, including:

- Jim Thomas – auditor supreme
- Geoff Lawyer – newsletter printer
- Maurie & Rosemary Brick – who, after folding and distributing *The Creek* for many years, are handing over to others from the end of this year
- Isobel Cook – Waterwatch
- Brian Pullman – Waterwatch
- Judy Beckworth – Principal of Mt Martha Primary School & member of BERG Public Gift Fund Committee
- Gwen Proposch, Bryan Mather, and Peter Hackett – ever ready to help on special projects.

Thank you all for your generous contributions to our work.

BERG welcomes new members:

Jan & Bill White
Jenny Spiridis

WATER QUALITY ACTION from Councillor Anne Shaw

Mornington Peninsula Shire is undertaking a water quality project in partnership with Melbourne Water at the Balcombe Estuary. Council's Water and Waste Services Team Leader, Alison Leighton, and the Natural Systems Team Leader, Simon Thorning, met on site with Liz Barraclough, BERG Field Officer, and identified four locations as contributing significant volumes of sediment and other pollutants to the estuary: the stormwater outfalls at Henley Street, Augusta Street and Latrobe Drive, and the unsealed car park at Mt Martha kindergarten.

Melbourne Water is engaging a consultant to develop functional designs for different Water Sensitive Urban Design solutions at these outfalls, to reduce the sediment going into the estuary. The work will complement a number of other WSUD projects throughout the Shire. (*See also the article on Rain Gardens, page 3, another aspect of WSUD – Ed*)

The next step will be a site meeting with Melbourne Water, the consultant, Shire Officers and BERG. We hope to start work on the ground early in 2009. The projects will be monitored for their ability to reduce the amount of sediment deposited in the estuary.

JOIN BERG'S WATERWATCH TEAM!

Time commitment: 2-3 hours on one day every 3 months (day can be negotiated)

Qualifications: Enthusiasm!. You will also have the opportunity to attend a half-day Waterwatch training session later in the year.

Want to know more? Contact John Inchley on 5974 1095.

THE CENTURY DRIVE WETLAND

Tony O'Connor &
Glyn Rowlands report

The planned wetland in Century Drive was finally created in October, when a large excavator arrived to work its magic over a three day period.

Already the wetland, with its several pools, rock features and embedded tree stumps, is attracting many species of waders and water-birds. At the same time, it provides settling ponds for the stormwater run-off from Century Drive, before it enters Balcombe Creek. (*another Water Sensitive Urban Design project – Ed*)

The job ahead now is to plant out the pools with wetland plants, and the surrounding embankments with shrubs and other dryland vegetation.

Thanks to the Shire for their support and funding for the capital work. Thanks also to Melbourne Water for funding the purchase of water plants.

Early next year we will be organizing a "muddy feet" working bee to establish the water plants, with a second working bee in autumn to plant the dryland plants.



*An excavator with an audience! –
creating the new Century Drive Wetland*

NOTICE of MEETING

A Special General Meeting of BERG will be held at 9.30 am on Saturday 10th January 2009 at Mt Martha House

to consider the following change to the **Rules for the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group Inc.:**

Proposed change to Rule 4:

4. (1) The entrance fee is \$1 or as agreed at a duly authorised General Meeting.
 (2) The annual subscription is \$4 (Individual) and \$5 (Family) or as agreed at a duly authorised General Meeting, and is payable in advance on or before 1 July in each year .

to be changed to:

4. The annual subscription is \$5 (Individual) and \$10 (Family) or as agreed at a duly authorised General Meeting, and is payable in advance on or before 1 July in each year.

Proposed change to Rule 22

- 22.(1) Subject to section 23 of the Act, the Committee shall consist of
 (a) the officers of the Association; and
 (b) six ordinary members—
 each of whom shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Association each year.
 (2) Each ordinary member of the Committee shall, subject to these Rules, hold office until the annual general meeting next after the date of the election but is eligible for re-election.
 (3) In the event of a casual vacancy occurring in the office of an ordinary member of the Committee, the Committee may

appoint a member of the Association to fill the vacancy and the member so appointed shall hold office, subject to these Rules, until the conclusion of the annual general meeting next following the date of the appointment.

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(4) The Committee may, at its discretion, co-opt up to four additional members to the Committee
(5) Each co-opted member of the Committee shall, subject to these Rules, hold office until the conclusion of the annual general meeting next after the date of co-option, but may subsequently be re-coopted.
While striving to keep membership rates low, the BERG Committee believes an increase is necessary after 11 years, to cover rising postage and other costs.

FIELD NEWS

Liz Barraclough reports

From the Koorie Perspective

Each year the Shire's Natural Systems Team holds a Friends of Bushland Reserves Network Day for environmental volunteers. This year it was a Cultural Heritage Awareness Training Day at Balcombe Estuary, on Sunday 16th November, with over 100 volunteers from Friends and Landcare groups across the Peninsula.

Representatives of the Boonwuring peoples ran two workshops. Chris West and Rob Ogden gave a broad history of Aboriginal use of country, the type of cultural sites that we might find on the Peninsula, their significance, and how they might be identified and interpreted. Steve Compton and Adam Magennis did a "walk and talk" through the Reserve, interpreting landscape features and discussing Aboriginal life and culture, plant use and technology and the use of fire as a management tool.

Summarising the day, Simon Thorning noted its importance not only for understanding Aboriginal culture, but to provide us with a

new perspective on our own land management methods. Aboriginal land management over thousands of years maintained diversity of both flora and fauna and provided a sustainable food source and life style. Perhaps we should explore this perspective if we wish to preserve our unique fauna. For example, while we burnt the 'burn site' much as the Aborigines would, our follow-up management has been mostly weed control. Although there was an initial explosion in diversity of plant species in the first season, Black Wattle seedlings now dominate the site. The Aborigines would have culled some of these for spears, and some would have been pruned by wallabies and other fauna. It was also commented that ours was a very hot burn, which favoured Black Wattle regeneration at the expensive of some other species.

A burn of the adjoining site some time in the near future would provide a chance to trial a new burn and management style.

Working bees

The October working-bee planted another 500 Poa labillardieri in the previously hand-weeded area by the creek, at the stormwater outlet near Uralla bridge – though this

normally wet area, close to the creek, is already dry as a chip. If the Poas survive the dry, the area should look great next year. We were excited to see some regeneration of fern species among the earlier Poa plantings.

Grants for 2009

I have applied to Melbourne Water for grants for two projects:

- restoration work from the Uralla Rd bridge towards the soccer pitch, with follow-up for the earlier grant areas; an
- continued work in the wetland area of Hopetoun Creek between Greenfield Way and Hopetoun Drive.

Aggressive Magpie

An attacking male Magpie has been removed from the campground and relocated far away. The problem was not swooping but flying up from the ground into the faces of young children, targetting their eyes. This behaviour is unusual but has been observed before in Brisbane.

Simon Thorning has been monitoring the female and young, as the male plays an important role in raising the chicks. However a 'loose' male is likely to step in and take over the previous male's role.

RAIN GARDENS

Phil Edwards, leader of the Stormwater Quality Team at Melbourne Water, attracted great interest as our speaker at BERG's AGM in October. This article presents some highlights of his talk.

Down the drain and into the creek

In the natural environment, rainwater soaks into the ground and seeps gradually into streams and rivers.

In urban areas, with so many roofs and concrete surfaces, rainwater and other run-off flows into the nearest stormwater drain. It is then piped to the nearest creek or river and flows eventually into the bays. The water carries with it a range of pollutants such as heavy metals, phosphorus, litter and fine sediments – mostly the by-products of our day-to-day living and working, from cars, construction sites, garden fertilizers and others. Our cities are also pumping increasing quantities of nitrogen into the atmosphere, and this increases the nitrogen load in the rainwater that flows via stormwater into our waterways and bays.

The rate of flow is also an issue. Where natural seepage and flows are gentle and gradual, stormwater pours out of drains, rutting out small creeks, eroding and damaging stream structures and ecosystems.

How can we lighten this load and protect waterway health? In particular, how can we protect the smaller streams on Melbourne's urban fringes that have not yet been too damaged – like Balcombe Creek?

Harnessing garden power!

Phil Edwards and his colleagues at Melbourne Water are working with local government to manage the water system sustainably, through their Water Sensitive Urban Design approach. They are encouraging developers and builders not only to protect waterways from stormwater pollution, but to do so in ways that make our gardens, streets and parks more attractive.

Rain gardens are the way to achieve this – be they in private gardens, city buildings, suburban streets, or urban parklands.

What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens resemble a regular garden with one major difference – they have rainwater directed into them from a downpipe or gutter or paved area. The plants take up the nutrients in the water, while the soil filters out heavy metals and other pollutants. Some of the water remains in the ground or seeps through to ground water or base flows into streams. The excess – now cleaned and filtered – enters a drain below the garden, which connects to the stormwater system.

The aim is to mimic natural systems, allowing water to seep and filter through the ground rather than gushing into creeks via drains.

Everyone benefits. The garden is watered by water that would otherwise just run off, the plants extract and benefit from the nutrients in the water, and other pollutants are filtered out before the water is discharged to a creek.

Finding a spot for a rain garden

With the right slope, you can flow all your stormwater into a single garden or a series of descending gardens, close to or away from your house. You could put a single rain garden in a planter box below a downpipe; or divert water from a driveway into a rain garden bed.

Plants for a rain garden need to tolerate occasional water logging when it floods and periods of dryness when rain is scarce.



A thriving rain garden in a home garden. Photo: Melbourne Water

Local councils leading the way

Some local councils (including MPSC) have embraced the rain garden concept. There are rain

gardens alongside open car parks and traffic calming islands.

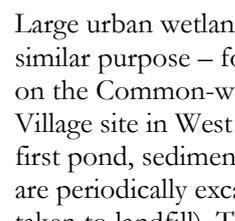


Carroll Crescent, Glen Iris has a series of newly constructed rain gardens, planted with reeds, and mulched with pebbles, and fed by water from the gutter.

At Federation Square, a lush rain garden fed by downpipes nestles unexpectedly between sections of the triple storey car park.

Individual street trees can each have their own rain garden. The rain water flows from the gutter through a grille into a pit below street level. It is filtered as it waters the tree, and rejoins the storm water system at the base of the garden.

Again, the trees thrive and the storm water is cleaned.



Trees in rain gardens in Little Collins St. Photo: Melbourne Water

Large urban wetlands can serve a similar purpose – for example, one on the Commonwealth Games Village site in West Brunswick. In a first pond, sediments settle (and are periodically excavated and taken to landfill). The water then moves slowly through an undulating wetland, where many different plant species essentially treat the water and take up the nitrogen. Water from the final storage pond is then used as needed throughout the local urban area, with the excess draining to Moonee Ponds Creek.

For more information, see:

- www.abc.net.au/gardening for a factsheet and video on building a rain garden, presented 5th July 2008
- <http://wsud.melbournewater.com.au>, Water Sensitive Urban Design website

VALE PETER HACKETT

Browsing recently through a book of verse, I came across a piece that reminded me of many BERG members who so dedicatedly contribute to our work. It seemed particularly relevant, at this time, to our late dear friend Peter Hackett, who passed away recently after battling illness for some time. Composed by Arthur Jose, it is called "The sum of things", and I quote a couple of verses:

This is the sum of things—that we
A moment live, a little use,
Do somewhat, and are gone, for so
The eternal currents ebb and flow....

This is the sum of things—that we
A lifetime live great heartedly,
See the whole best that life has meant.
Do our work and go content.

It was a joy to work with Peter, for he was capable, innovative, generous and so very pleasant. Many times I called on him to help fix things that had gone wrong or been vandalized. At times I may have been able to do the job myself (*may* have) but working with Peter was a great and enjoyable experience.

You have left us Peter but your involvement with BERG will not be forgotten. To Mal and family, we share your loss.

Keith Wilson

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next: 18th January. 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.</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 (3-monthly): February – day and time to be negotiated with the Waterwatch team</p> <p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees: 22nd March, 26th April, & 24th May – contact John Stoker for details on 5974 4726.</p>	<p>❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30. Next meeting 10th January. 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>
<p>BERG COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT KEITH WILSON • VICE PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • SECRETARY MARY STEMPE • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP ANGELA KIRSNER • MINUTES SECRETARY PAM HEARN SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON ANDY MCGUIGAN • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRIVES BERG SUBGROUPS: HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELDS GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
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THE CREEK

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