

THE CREEK

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Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This is Keith Wilson's last column as President, as he is stepping down from the position at the AGM. We will miss his musings, always interesting, often provocative. Ed.

It seems that not a day goes by without news reports, somewhere in Australia, of the water problems facing all of us.

Professor Geoffrey Blainey writes: "A knowledge of plants and animals guided Aboriginals towards water in places which, to European eyes, were waterless. Their ability to find water was one of their remarkable skills. Without that skill they could not have remained in occupation of most of that dry, oval-shaped region embracing more than one third of the continent."

As I write, Melbourne storages are at 28.6% (30% at this time last year), representing some 500 days' consumption. In time the desalination plant will produce 160,000 megalitres annually, equalling 160 days' consumption. The southern pipeline from the Goulburn is claimed to produce a further 75 days' consumption, in a good year.

Keep saving water and keep supporting BERG!

Keith Wilson

HELP NEEDED!

WE ALWAYS NEED EXTRA HANDS AT OUR REGULAR WORKING BEES, FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH, 9.00 TO 12.00. MEET AT THE ROTUNDA.

NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE NEEDED. COME, EVEN BRING A FRIEND, ENJOY EXCELLENT COMPANY AND A DELICIOUS MORNING TEA!

ENQUIRIES TO LIZ, 0408 388 430

JOIN US AT THE BERG AGM

SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER
Mt Martha House

9.30 am registration for
the meeting at 10.00 am
Guest speaker, at 11.00, is

Ben Cullen,
Port Phillip & Westernport
Conservation Officer, Trust for
Nature

Ben will talk about the Trust's work in preserving remnant natural bushland, with particular emphasis on the Mornington Peninsula, where it has been establishing conservation covenants and playing a major role in the preservation of parks and reserves for over thirty years.

We are also hoping to include a brief up-date on current fire control measures in Mt Martha.

A FRIEND IN NEED!



This guy loped across Bay Rd in front of Liz Barraclough one mid-September morning, and went scrambling up some Cherry Ballarts on the northern roadside – only to be bombarded by a Butcher Bird and a bullying group of very Noisy Miners. It just stared down desperately at Liz, who wasn't if she was being considered as another bully or maybe a prospective saviour!

BENTON JUNIOR COLLEGE LENDS A HAND

About forty Grade Two students from Benton Junior College have been involved recently in two working bees at the wetland in the stormwater retarding basin on Century Drive.

"The kids are doing a great job planting homes for all the insects and wildlife, and it won't be long before we see baby ducks, lizards and marsupials moving in to their new habitat," said Tony O'Connor, convenor of the Century Drive Habitat Link Group.

A bonus for the group was finding some frogs in Tony's dam.



Grade 2 students from Benton Junior College planting trees in the stormwater retarding basin flowing into Balcombe Creek at Century Drive

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

It has been a rush to get as many as possible of our indigenous plants in the ground before the weather changes and they must cope with the forecasted dry again this year. The challenge is to get their root systems established to withstand the lack of water over the summer and beyond.

Thanks to Balcombe Grammar

The help we've received from Balcombe Grammar School has been a terrific bonus this year. Every Wednesday for eight weeks, twenty-five Year 6 and 7 students, their teachers and a few parents have worked with BERG.

The school's attitude of 'come prepared' and work hard no matter what the conditions has seen them battle wind and rain, mulching and planting over 2500 plants.

We have worked in the old campground, around the perimeter of the Ferrero Ovals, along Hopetoun Creek in Greenfield Way, and down the easement leading from the school to Greenfield Way. This easement was a mammoth job, with many years' accumulation of rubbish to remove before planting – a great achievement! We hope to transform the easement into a habitat corridor linking the new planting in the school grounds to Hopetoun Creek and thus to Balcombe Creek.



The weed Rock Rose, Cistus psilosepalus, that we removed at the September working bee

A dedicated group of BERG volunteers has supervised and guided the activities. They have been just great. Thanks very much to Barb Thraves, Hazel Athey, Jenny Selby, Jean Severn, Roo Rawlins, Jannie Glaspole, Flo Gason and Wendy Chadwick.

Weeding and more weeding!

Despite weeding not being everyone's favourite activity, the August working-bee hand-weeded around the Uralla Road stormwater outlet and then planted upper and middle storey species along either side of the creek in this area.

In September, we concentrated on the area above and upstream of the Ferrero ovals, removing Flaxleaf Broom, Boneseed and Rock Rose (see picture) before they set seed. The Rock Rose is a particularly tenacious weed in the drier, open areas of our reserve, setting huge quantities of seed which seem to remain viable for many years.

BERG's sub-groups at work



Tony O'Connor, convenor of the Century Drive Habitat Link Group, plants along the fence line of one of the Century Drive houses abutting the creek reserve.

The **Century Drive Habitat Link Group** has been planting along the roadside and steadily adding to the revegetation of the retarding basin and its periphery. About 600 plants have gone in over the past few months, in the retarding basin, along the road, and along the creek reserve.

The **Harrap Creek Group** and BERG ran a working bee in early August. We had a great turnout and put in a mammoth effort, planting over 800 plants in three hours, at the end of Tolmie Way.

The **Hopetoun Creek and Greenfield Reserve Group** also ran a most productive working

bee, mulching and planting over 200 plants. The aim was to improve the diversity of indigenous vegetation in the riparian zone. Thanks to Andrew Ryan, a student in Conservation and Land Management at Chisolm Institute, Rosebud, who helped in organising the activities.

Students from Deakin University

The Deakin University Faculty of Environment and Life Sciences again asked us to guide and speak to two groups of students about the ecological processes of the estuary and creek and the impacts on them.

As in previous years, the visit tied in with an assignment on environmental impact assessment. This year, the students were asked to imagine that the Martha Cove Marina was not constructed at Safety Beach but has been proposed for the Balcombe Estuary. Their task was to assess and prepare a report on the environmental impacts of this hypothetical development.

They first visited Martha Cove, to look at the environmental, social and economic impacts (both negative and positive) of the development and any steps taken to minimise negative environmental impacts. They also considered the role of Council, and how the local community has been involved in the process.

At Balcombe Estuary, the focus was on why the creek is a significant waterway and conservation site, and how it is important to the local community.



Liz's grandson Cameron lent a hand at the September working bee.

[Do readers remember the actual marina proposal for the estuary that was defeated some decades ago, before the current bridge was built? - Ed]

Yacht Club AGM

We're delighted to welcome a raft of new BERG members from the Mt Martha Yacht Club (see New Members, page 4). This was a very positive and tangible outcome from the talk on BERG that I was invited to give to the Yacht Club AGM in August.

The talk focussed on our work supporting the health of the estuary and foreshore, and its contribution to the character of Mt Martha – areas of particular relevance to the Yacht Club as well as BERG.

Support from the Shire

We have again received funding from the Mornington Shire, under the Memorandum of Understanding for 2009-10. This year's amount, \$9750, will again support our projects and will help, in particular, with the follow-up work that is often not covered by grant funding. We are very grateful for the Shire's ongoing support.



Straw-necked Ibis over Mt Martha

IBIS OVERHEAD

While at work at the September working bee, we saw many huge flocks of Straw-necked Ibis passing overhead. These very common birds are much valued as predators of the larvae of all sorts of insect pests. The Egyptians know them as "Sacred Ibis" because of their particular fondness for locust larvae, and the birds seem to know before humans when a locust plague is imminent. They move long distances to where food is plentiful – huge numbers converged on Lake Eyre when it filled this year.

CARPOBROTUS ROSSII (KARKALLA)

Text by Warren Worboys

Illustration by John Armstrong

We are grateful to the author for permission to reprint this article, which first appeared in Narturelink (Winter 2009), the newsletter of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne Inc.

Carpobrotus rossii is in the pigface family, Aizoaceae, which is spread worldwide, with about 150 genera and 2000 species. In Australia the family has about 18 genera and about 60 species, of which 39 are native. There are about 25 species of *Carpobrotus*, mostly native to South Africa but also in Chile, California and New Zealand. In Australia there are four species that are native and two that have naturalised.

Carpobrotus is named from the Greek, *karpos* meaning fruit, and *brotos* meaning edible, referring to the edible fruit of some species; *rossii* is named after William Ross, a nineteenth-century botanical collector.

Carpobrotus rossii grows naturally on the dunes and cliffs along the southern Australian coastline from Western Australia to Victoria and parts of the Tasmanian coast. It is a prostrate growing perennial with very succulent leaves that can grow up to 100mm long and are almost

triangular shaped in cross section. It grows on the coast near Frankston and around Westernport (as well as in many places along and near the Mt Martha foreshore – Ed).

The flower is interesting; what appear to be 25mm-long petals around the edge, making it look like a daisy, are in fact 'petaloid staminodes', which are infertile stamens that have adapted to look like petals, like the inner petals of double flowered roses and camellias. These staminodes are generally pale purple in colour with white at the base, but may be completely white.

Karkalla is superficially like *C. edulis* and *C. aequilaterus*, the two introduced, weedy species, and can be distinguished most readily by using the flower: *C. edulis* has yellow staminodes that turn pink with age, and in *C. aequilaterus*, the staminodes shade to pale near the base, but are never white at the base like all of our Victorian natives.

In the 1840s it was recorded that Aborigines in Tasmania used the fleshy leaves of karkalla as a purgative, and the ripe red fruits were eaten by plucking them from the plant and sucking the flesh and seed from the tough, outer skin.



Karkalla grows well in reasonably well-drained soil and prefers full sun. Shade will make them straggly and weak and reduce flower production. It layers itself readily in good soil and is easy to grow from cuttings by just cutting or cleanly breaking off side shoots and placing them in pots of well-drained soil or sand, or by placing the pieces directly on the soil where they are destined to be grown. It is best to clean off any old dead foliage and flowers, without damaging the bark, so that the stem can be bedded partially into the soil surface. I have heard of botanists collecting and pressing specimens and actually finding roots developing in the plant press.

The plants are susceptible to various types of scale insects and root mealy-bug, so should be monitored for these pests —and they do not like too much fertiliser.

WILDLIFE CARE WORKSHOP

Sunday 27th September,
1:00 - 4:00 pm, at the Briars Park
Visitors Centre theatre

FREE

More volunteer wildlife carers are needed to help our wildlife survive the expected extreme weather conditions over summer.

Learn about wildlife rescue, transport and care – how to care for injured wildlife, make pouches and nest boxes, etc.

Enquiries: 0417-380-687.

BERG welcomes new members:

Sue Barber
Gary & Gail Barnett
Greg & Jenny Burkhalter
Kate & Marshall Clarke
Sue Betheras & Ros Crompton
Lynette Dell
Dianne & Peter Dyson
Stuart Facey
Jan & John Manders
Pamela & Joe Marich
Genevieve Radecki
Susan Reynolds
David Wilkinson

Unidentified membership renewal!

Have you renewed your a single membership but not received a receipt? Some time ago, \$5 arrived in the mail with the top half of a membership renewal letter but no identifying information.

Please contact me (on 9509 6116 or via BERG, PO Box 433, Mt Martha 3934) if this is you, so I can up-date the membership records and send your receipt.

Angela Kirsner, Membership Secretary

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are 18th October and 15th November. 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 9.00 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: next physical and chemical testing on Saturday 7th November, 9.00 am, at the Augusta St Bridge.</p> <p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees: 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 14th November. All members welcome.</p> <p>❖ BERG AGM, Mt Martha House, Saturday 10th October, 9.30.</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, 5986 6566.</p>
<p>BERG COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT KEITH WILSON • VICE PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • 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 • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRIVES CO-OPTED MEMBERS: HARRY HARRIS • MICHAEL SANDERS • HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELDS GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
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