

THE CREEK

Volume 14 No 2, April 2010

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

WATCH THOSE FUNGI!

BERG member Joan Patrick writes of her experiences fungimapping

I have been “fungimapping” in the Balcombe Estuary Reserve since 2005. I began because I love mushrooms on toast, and what is better than those locally grown? But within minutes of swallowing my third serving for the season I felt queasy and my stomach reflexes returned this lot faster than they went down. Time to find out more about mushrooms before I die, I thought.

The Australia-wide Fungimap project uses volunteers to help map the distribution of Australian fungi. No expertise is required – just interest and a little time. The project is based at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne, where the head mycologist is Dr Tom May.

I’m one of the volunteers who find and record fungi from a list of 115 that are readily recognisable to the naked eye. There are many more fungi than this of course, but our job is to record only the target species. I find many others and often include with my submissions a request for the identification of something different. Some, particularly in the boletes family, haven’t been studied and don’t even have names.

Fungi in the reserve

Usually, the fungi I gather grow in BERG territory and my forays require nothing more strenuous than a walk along the numerous pathways between the Nepean Highway and the Mt Martha Village. I carry my reference book, *Fungi Down Under*, a camera, and a small note book to record the date

and location of my finds. If I’m not sure of the identification, I sometimes break off a small piece of the cap and take it home, where I lay it on a sheet of paper overnight for a spore print to photograph the following day.

The most common of the target species in our area are Ghost Fungi, Rooting Shank (see photos) and Vermillion Grisette, known by some as *Omphalotus nidiformis*, *Oudemansialle radicata* and *Amanita xanthocephala* respectively.



Ghost fungus (top), Rooting Shank (centre) and Fly Agaric (below)

One of the nice things about fungimapping is that I learn using ordinary terms, not botanical

names, at a pace dictated by the seasons. I don’t have a GPS tracker to give map references for my finds. Melways references are the recommended alternative.

Fungi spores are carried into neighbourhoods in wood chips and other types of mulch. I found a scattering of Lawyer’s Wigs outside a neighbour’s fence after she had shovelled away a load of mulch. As these fungi age, the cap liquefies into black ink into which quill pens were once dipped for drawing and writing.

The fungi that poisoned me were Yellow Stainers. They look very like edible mushrooms until you scratch or rub the skin on the cap, when the bruised area turns yellow very quickly. The plentiful and beautiful Fly Agarics (see photo), red fairy toadstools with pale warty spots, are also poisonous.

New fungimappers needed!

The four years I’ve been fungimapping have been very rewarding. It is a delightful pastime and well supported by staff and volunteers at Fungimappers headquarters. But this has been my last year, I’m moving on to other things.

As I leave I hope someone else will take up the hobby, join Fungimappers, and record the target species in the Balcombe Creek estuary and Mt Martha generally.

Interested in Fungimapping?

Contact Fungimap Central at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, P/te Bag 2000, South Yarra, 3141, Ph 9252 2374 (Tuesdays only), or email fungimap@rbg.vic.gov.au.

For more information, visit www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap.

BIRD SURVEY

Pam Hearn reports

Bird Observation and Conservation Australia – BOCA – has been commissioned by Melbourne Water to survey some Bay estuaries. So, on March 2nd, Neil Shelley, Max Burrows, Val Ford and I set out to survey three sectors (100m x 200m) along the Creek and three along the coast.

The weather was overcast and still as we started around 10.30. The Estuary was shallow and we were rewarded with the serene scene of three Royal Spoonbills, a Pelican, Little Pied Cormorants, Little Black Cormorants, Dusky Moorhens and Masked Lapwings, with Silver Gulls, Black Ducks, and Chestnut Teal. We even spied a fox peering through the reeds and a Ringtail Possum in the fork of a tree.



A Silver Gull sails past a Royal Spoonbill on the estuary

In the next sector we heard and saw bush birds in the riparian zone – Brown Thornbills, White-browed Scrubwrens, Golden and Rufous Whistlers. There were many black-and-white beetles flying around, which we've since identified as White-Spotted Feather Horn beetles (see next column), and we flushed out a Swamp Rat. Renovation works closed off the top sector of the boardwalk, so we took to the north-side path. Here we saw brightly coloured Spotted Pardalotes, Silvereyes, Grey Fantail, Eastern Yellow Robin, and Wattlebirds. Two of our party were startled by a Brown Goshawk flying out in front of them.

After lunch, the beach sectors proved disappointing, with only

Silver Gulls. By then, the sun was hot, with a small breeze.

We will be surveying the area again in six months' time.

This delightful excerpt from a description of the White-Spotted Feather Horn beetle, *Rhipidocera mystacina*, is from *Insects Abroad*, by Rev. J.G. Wood, published 1883:

“The antennae of this insect are singularly beautiful. Each of the numerous flabella with which it is adorned is formed very much like a spear, supposing the shaft to be beaten flat and more or less bent. In consequence of this formation, and the extreme regularity with which they are set on the antenna, dark patches seem to play among them as the light shifts, exactly as we have all seen when walking in a diagonal direction to a row of iron palings. The specific name *mystacina* is Greek, and signifies ‘moustached’ – the latter word, indeed, being only a Gallicized form of the Greek, and from the French naturalized in English.”



White-Spotted Feather Horn beetle

PENBOC

...is the Mornington Peninsula branch of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia – BOCA. It runs regular outings and its activities include bird watching, conservation, education and bird monitoring.

For more information, visit www.penboc.org.au, contact Max Burrows (secretary) on (03) 9789-0224, or write to PO Box 2262, Rosebud Plaza VIC 3939.

Volunteers still needed for the MORNINGTON PENINSULA SCHOOLS' ENVIRONMENT WEEK AT THE BRIARS 19TH – 23RD APRIL 2010

to help with student environmental programs such as Waterwatch or Horticulture. No experience needed

Contact Jenny Selby, on 5974 2402 or selby.jennifer.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

TRAINING FOR BERGERS

We are delighted that SPIFFA – the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association – is sponsoring a locally based educational program very similar to the Habitat and Conservation Management course run for a number of years by Greening Australia, which is widely considered to be the best ecological restoration and management course available. SPIFFA's intensive version of the course is being held over five weekends from the middle of March.

Five BERG members are enrolled: Liz Barraclough, John Inchley, Michael Sanders, Tony O'Connor and Pam Hearn. Liz, who is doing the HCM course for a second time to hone her already considerable skills, is funded by the Shire. The other four are funded by BERG, through grant monies provided specifically for training.

The course covers soils & climate, plants, animals in bushland, bush ecology, invertebrates, weeds and fire ecology, site assessment, and regeneration and weed strategies. Speakers include such experts as Gidja Walker, Malcolm Legg, Darcy Duggan, Randall Robinson and Leon Costermans, and the course includes field trips to many bushland areas on the Peninsula.

SPIFFA is hoping to repeat the course soon. There is considerable interest, including from a number of other BERG members. The training will considerably increase the expertise within BERG, which is essential if we are continue to be effective well into the future.

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Restoring our Banksia woodlands

The Mornington Shire has brought together an exciting range of expertise and interest groups from across the Peninsula to work towards restoring the Peninsula's Banksia woodlands. Our initial meeting in March kick-started a "Coast Banksia Woodland Restoration Network".

Participants included Friends' groups, bushland contractors, Shire conservation officers (Frankston and Mornington), and representatives from Parks Vic and DSE.

The network will enable groups to share expertise, research, techniques, problems, solutions and ideas. The lively discussion at the meeting ranged from the effect of weeds, predators, pests and diseases, climatic and local conditions, to propagation, planting, mulching and controlled studies. We all left with expectations of further meetings and collaboration.

Working bees

In February, we slashed along the firetrack to the north of Uralla Bridge to prepare for spraying and later planting. We also weeded *Solanum pseudocapsicum* and Blackberry on the creek bank just north of the Geoff Kay Bridge. It was a prickly job, tackled with gusto by a large and willing team.



Solanum pseudocapsicum, weeded at the February working bee, is spread widely by birds

We continued the slashing and woody weeding in March, working between the creek and the firetrack heading downstream from Uralla

bridge. We also vanquished a large patch of ivy.

Can you help with weeding?

We have the core of a small hand-weeding team – our thanks to those who responded to the request in the last newsletter

But we need a few more people!

A regular two or three hours each week or fortnight would make such a difference. It would also save us spending heaps of precious grant money on contractors for weeding.

Friday mornings 10.00 – 12.00 look likely. No special expertise needed – just patience, willingness to learn, and a little time.

Phone Liz on 0408 388 430.

Grants

The application for revegetation of the Century Drive retarding basin wetland is on hold. Before they commit funds, Melbourne Water is seeking consultation on the water quality and particularly the analysis of a soak in the bank. Plantings have failed in this areas, and acid sulphate soils are suspected. The problem is being referred to the Shire, as the retarding basin is Shire infrastructure. Melbourne Water will remain involved, however, because of the potential impact on Balcombe Creek.

Two other grant applications are in the process of being assessed. Watch this space!

Silt in the estuary – finding a solution

John Inchley and I have now met twice with representatives from Melbourne Water, and from the Shire's Natural Systems Team and the Engineering and Maintenance departments, to discuss silt control in the estuary.

The most recent meeting was to consider plans resubmitted by Water Technology to control sediment in the run-off from four sites: Henley Street, La Trobe Street, Augusta Street and the Watson Road kindergarten car park. Each site requires a different

solution, and under consideration are wetland filtration systems, treatment of the gravel surface, swales, and rock lining of spoon drains.

A student visit

Paterson River Secondary College Outdoor Education students visited the Balcombe Estuary Reserve on Wednesday 10th March. I was asked to speak to them about BERG and its role as a Friends' group in the management of the Reserve.

Rabbit control

A contractor has been engaged for rabbit control in the reserve this year. Baiting began in March, and the take-up has been greatest in the 'rabbit paddock' (above the ovals), where baiting was less successful last year. Take-up was also good along Hopetoun Creek, which has seen an increase in rabbits over the past two years.

We plan to follow up with fumigation of burrows if we can find them.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

John Inchley reports

Twenty-seven people braved the elements on Sunday 6th March to clean up Mt Martha. Working along the foreshore and the south of the estuary, we collected and emptied over 30 bags of rubbish into the skip provided by the Shire.

Two cubbies in the foreshore reserve were dismantled, but the roofing and materials were too heavy for us to drag out. A third cubby, no longer in use, remains, along with a lot of rubble.



Thanks to Mary Stemp (centre) and Isobel Cook (left) for 'womanning' the Clean Up Australia marshalling point

WATERWATCH UPDATE

from John Inchley

On Saturday 20th February we welcomed a new water-watcher – past president Keith Wilson has joined our team.

Lisa Kordus, our new coordinator from the Waterwatch organisation, joined us for the morning, ‘shadowing’ our measurements to check their accuracy. We passed with flying colours.

Results of physical and chemical testing from the three sites tested –

Latrobe Drive, Augusta Street and Uralla Road – indicated a relatively healthy waterway. The macro-invertebrate count, however, while it was up a little on last time, still falls into the ‘poor’ category, although we were delighted to find a Mayfly nymph and a Caddisfly larva. Caddisfly larvae are very sensitive to water quality.

From May, we will stop testing at Latrobe Drive, as the results there are little different to those from Augusta Street. This suggests that water entering Balcombe Creek

from Hopetoun Creek and the stormwater drain below Augusta St is having little or no effect on the creek’s water quality (other than adding silt).

We hope, instead, to include sites within The Briars and further upstream at Harrap Creek, to monitor the water entering Balcombe Creek there.

BERG welcomes new members:
Henry & Jenny Burger
Helen Coates

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are 18th April and 16th May. 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 29th May, 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, Saturdays 9.30. Next meeting 15th May at The Briars (note change of venue, for this meeting only). 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 JOHN INCHLEY • VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL SANDERS • 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 • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O’CONNOR CO-OPTED MEMBERS: HARRY HARRIS • DIANNE LEWIS HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRAVES</p>		
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