

# THE CREEK

Volume 14 No 4, August 2010

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

## BLACK COCKIES!

by Pam Hearn

Working with the Tuesday group in the Bunyip area of the Reserve, we see many birds. Eastern Spinebills, Spotted Pardalotes, Yellow Robins, and Superb Fairy Wrens are frequent visitors. And at the start of June, the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos moved in. They were everywhere over the Reserve, noisily crunching and dropping pine cones, screeching continuously throughout our morning's work. The adults call is like a squeaky door, while the young beg food from their parents with a persistent rasping sound.



*photograph Bob Athey*

Near where I live, off Hopetoun Ave, hundreds have been roosting at night since early May. They arrive at dusk, settle in tall gums, and depart noisily at dawn. They will move on eventually, in search of more food trees – and I'll miss that squeaky door sound when they do!

## DIARY DATE: BERG AGM

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 9.30 am, at Mt Martha House.

**Dr Mick Lumb** will speak on 'Climate Change, Water and Nature'.

More details in the October newsletter

## TRAINING BERGERS

Five members of BERG's committee – Liz Barraclough, Pam Hearn, John Inchley, Tony O'Connor and Michael Sanders – recently completed the Habitat Conservation and Management course put on by SPIFFA, the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association.

Running over five very full weekends, this excellent course was based on similar Greening Australia courses, but focused particularly on the Peninsula.

Topics ranged from plant identification, bushland fauna and invertebrates, across bush and fire ecology, to bushland management, site assessment and planning, intervention techniques, and regeneration and weed strategies.

There was lots of time in the field talking about how to translate knowledge into effective action, looking at both degraded and well managed sites. Visits ranged from foreshore at Seaford and Point Nepean, inland from Langwarrin to Seawinds, Main Ridge and Greens Bush, to bush on private land at Flinders, Red Hill and Merricks – and more.

Also valuable were the contacts with participants from reserves and friends' groups across on the Peninsula, all facing similar challenges – eradicating weeds, getting funding, dealing with bureaucracies, and maintaining enthusiasm and energy.

'We came away from each session enthusiastically discussing how we could apply the knowledge to Balcombe Reserve, and direct our efforts most effectively', said Pam.

## Planning for best results

The importance of planning was one of the central messages of the course in Liz's view – working out the most efficient and effective methods to use, and putting these together in a realistic management plan.

'We need to respond rather than impose', said Liz. 'Management methods that are in tune with the ecosystems we are dealing will reduce costs.'

For example, planting Goodenia can shade out grassy weeds and preclude the need to spray or handweed continually. Controlling rabbits can enable plants to regenerate naturally.

Similarly, it's more effective in the long run to treat the cause than the symptom. For example, controlling high nutrient stormwater outflow onto a site may limit weed growth.



*Dary Duggan teaching in the field, with John Inchley listening*

Measuring the success and cost-effectiveness of what's done is vital. This requires baseline assessments and ongoing monitoring and re-assessment. With constant observation, we can intervene in a timely, informed and targeted way. And, said Liz, 'we need to experiment with different methods to see what works best and build on this, remembering

that things can change from season to season, year to year'.

It's tempting to move too fast. We need to recognize the limitations to how much can be done in a given time (though it's reported that, when Liz this put this forward as one of the important things learnt, other participants laughed!).

Participants came away with a host of insights. For example:

- Eucalypts generally allow at least 30% of light to penetrate and at midday, about 70%. In contrast, Sweet Pittosporum blocks 98% of light. No wonder the indigenous ecosystem is upset if they become a weed!
- If the diameter of a tree trunk at about breast height is around 70 cm, the tree is about 100–120 years old and has the potential to drop branches and form the hollows so necessary as habitat.
- Most of our biodiversity is in the ground layer, among the mosses, logs and leaf litter.

#### About our indigenous plants

- Not all wattles are short-lived. While Black Wattles live 15–20 years and Prickly Wattle 10–12 years, Blackwoods (*Acacia Melanoxydon*) live 200–300 years.
- Blackwoods also sucker, and a large patch of them may in fact all be the one plant. A patch of bracken, too, may all be one plant, connected underground.
- Bracken is a colonizer, or pioneer plant – that is, one that responds quickly to occupy an area that has been disturbed, providing protection for longer-lived species. We should not, therefore, slash it but let nature take its course.
- Similarly, Kangaroo Apple is a 'nurse' crop that lives only a few years and gives shade for other plants to regenerate.
- Teatree regenerates on bare sand, not on litter.
- Lots of plants are shaped by fauna grazing. We need to consider this in management, for example, pruning out apical dominance.

#### About indigenous fauna

- You can tell where a Powerful Owl has been by a white splash on the ground. The owls may also leave regurgitated pellets on the ground. Analysis of these can show what the owl has been eating and this, in turn, can show what other animals are present.

#### Controlling weeds

- Kikuyu grass hates shade, so shading it out with vegetation can be a much better control than spraying and less harmful to environment.
- The weed grass Sweet Vernal is shallow-rooted. Close mowing in late spring, before it flowers and sets seed, opens the area between the tussocks and in hot weather, the roots dry out, the plant dies and the deeper-rooted native grasses survive. The weed burner is also an effective control.
- To control Asparagus Fern – cut out the centre growth with a sharp knife. It will not grow back from remaining tubers. Spraying is no good.

#### Damage from introduced fauna

- Feral cats in Victoria alone could be responsible for killing up to 211 million native animals in one year.
- Hard-hoofed grazing animals, such as sheep and cattle, compact the soil. Water sheets over this hard ground instead of penetrating it, which favours introduced, shallow-rooted grasses. The compaction also prevents invertebrates from scratching and burrowing to form the 'bio-pores' that allow water to penetrate the soil.

#### Securing BERG's future

Most importantly, the Habitat Conservation and Management course has expanded and extended BERG's knowledge base and enabled more members to contribute to and share the on-ground planning and management. This is an excellent investment in BERG's future. We hope to have more members do the course in coming years.

### AUDITOR NEEDED

BERG is still looking for a new auditor – a qualified accountant with auditing experience, who is a current member of one of the professional accounting bodies.

Can you help? Contact  
John Inchley on 5974 1095.

### MT ROTHWELL TRIP

by Paul Bertuch

Mt Rothwell conservation sanctuary was the destination one April evening for a group from the Balcombe and Moorooduc Landcare Group, together with some members of BERG and the Friends of the Snow Gums.

Located at Little River, west of Geelong Mt Rothwell is a sanctuary for indigenous wildlife. It provides a haven for endangered marsupials, many of which are very rare or extinct in their natural environment. The 400-hectare property is enclosed by a predator-proof fence to keep out primarily foxes and cats. Together with loss of habitat, these are the main causes of decline and extinction of many smaller marsupials.

The trip gave us the opportunity to see rare and critically endangered Victorian marsupials in their natural state. We saw the Eastern Quoll, formerly extinct in mainland Australia, and the critically endangered Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby and Eastern Barred Bandicoot.



Thanks to Mornington Secondary College for lending their bus and Tony O'Connor for organizing and driving.

## FIELD NEWS

*Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports*

### Working bees

Planting has been in order throughout these wet winter working bees, along the north side of Uralla bridge, in the riparian zone and up into the old quarry.

Tracy from Naturelinks supervised the June working-bee, as I was away. In shocking weather, a few intrepid workers planted over 160 plants.

In July, by contrast, we had a great turn-up, and the soaking rain waited until we'd finished. Over 300 shrubs and trees went in. With rabbits in this area, all the plants have to be guarded – a slow job that greatly reduces the number of plants we can get in.



*Tyres dragged from the creek!*

We also dragged 54 old tyres from the creek and hauled them up the steep bank! Some, we think, harked back to army days, and we also found a few tags from ammunition boxes.

### Hopetoun Creek Greenfield reserve

At two Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Group working bees, a few dedicated workers planted 290 plants, predominantly shrubs, between the creek and Greenfield Way.

The area is looking so good, it's a credit to the hard work of the BERG members in this area, led by Hazel Athey. A new Melbourne Water grant will fund further planting and more weeding here.



*Bob Athey planting in the Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve*

### Grants

Two new Melbourne Water grants have provided BERG with \$30,844 to continue the work from Uralla Bridge towards The Briars, and Hopetoun Creek along Greenfield Way.

### The Friday Weeders

*We'd love more helpers, if you've an hour or two to spare on a Friday!*

We've been removing the Periwinkle from around the Cherry Ballarts and Poas along the new boardwalk. Cherry Ballarts are semi-parasitic and this makes them highly susceptible to spraying of surrounding weeds.

### Balcombe Grammar

The Year 6 and 8 students are working with BERG again this year for their term of community service. We are starting close to the school, mostly around Hopetoun Creek. This year we are introducing an integrated program, with Gidja Walker and Paul Bertuch introducing the students to the local ecology so they understand the reasons behind what we are doing together.

### Working together across the Peninsula

BERG is working with the Shire and Naturelinks to upgrade our management, maintenance and monitoring planning and reporting procedures.

In addition, A working group that includes BERG, the Shire, Melbourne Water and a consulting group, Water Technology, is working on the Integrated Stormwater Management Program to look at how to manage the problem of unmade roads and the resulting sedimentation of the creek.

And we are also involved, with local coastal groups and the Shire, in Workshops on Coast Banksia Restoration.

## MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

On a cold, damp Saturday in early July, BERG set up a stall outside the Mt Martha Supermarket in a membership drive, and handed out free indigenous plants for local gardens.

The result was beyond all expectations – 20 new family members and over 50 new individual members!

Our thanks to the IGA Supermarket management.



*Liz hands out free plants at the membership drive*

### BERG welcomes new members:

Michael & Diane Andrews ♦ George Arvanitakis ♦ Jim Arvanitakis ♦ Anastasia Arvanitakis ♦ Ron Bartlett ♦ Jill & Noel Barton ♦ Michael Betts ♦ Pamela & Neil Carder ♦ Glenys Carter ♦ Marcus, Kristie & Lewis Clarke ♦ Jennifer Clifton ♦ Eleanor Cotton ♦ Ian & Angi Croker ♦ Gabrielle Collins & family ♦ Mark Curtin ♦ Helen Davies ♦ Lea Dillon & family ♦ Catriona du Jardin ♦ John Featherstone ♦ Judith Glover ♦ Vivienne Golias ♦ Judith Graley MP ♦ Keith Gray ♦ Milton Green & family ♦ Beverly Greig & family ♦ Victoria Hayter ♦ Roger Hewitt & family ♦ Judith Hughes & family ♦ Maxine Jupp ♦ Ann-Marie Lynch & family ♦ Ilona Kenner & family ♦ Kate Mabin & family ♦ Robyn McAughtrie ♦ Gary & Gail Motteram ♦ Gail Nemece ♦ Jonathon O'Donohue & family ♦ Sarah & Richard Orsouw ♦ Josephine Pendlebery ♦ Dale Pizzey ♦ Janine Pickett ♦ Ray Prosser ♦ GR Richards ♦ Daniel Robinson ♦ Cath Shaw ♦ Jill & Rod Simm ♦ Ann Scally & Lucy Stegley ♦ Jim Tagell ♦ Russ Thorn ♦ Pam Sayers ♦ Lyoia Vass ♦ Julie van Schie & family ♦ Elisabeth Warneke ♦ Cathy Webb ♦ Alison Whitelaw & family ♦ Gordon Whiteside & family ♦ Sue White ♦ Robert Withers & family ♦ Kaye Young

*Note the new BERG banner in the background of the photo above. It's one of two which will be a boon for BERG publicity. Design is by Adworks Creative (Dromana) and BERG member Ros Crompton, with input from Barb Thraves, Di Lewis and Jenny Rolleston.*

## SPRING BABIES

*From an article from the DevilBend Landcare Group Newsletter, Spring 2009*

What do you do if you find a baby bird on the ground?

There are two main reasons why fledglings (young birds that have grown all or most of their feathers) will leave the nest: an overcrowded nest, or failed flying practice. If they end up on the ground, their parents will continue to feed them though they can't get back to the nest.

If you find an uninjured fledgling on the ground in an exposed

location, move it somewhere close by that is more protected, and the parents will continue to care for it. It is okay to handle a fledgling to move it, this won't make the parents reject it. Then leave it for at least two hours, as the parents are unlikely to return until you have gone.

If the bird is clearly injured, or has not been attended to by its parents or has been on the ground for more than a day, contact a local wildlife carer or your local vet. If you find an unfeathered bird that has fallen out of the nest and the nest is accessible, try to put it back.

If you can't find the nest, or it is inaccessible, contact a local wildlife carer. On the Peninsula there are at least a couple of options: Jenny Bryant, 5977 3321 or 0417 395 883; or AWARE, 0412 433 727, [www.awarewildlife.org.au/](http://www.awarewildlife.org.au/).

### INTERESTED IN FIRST AID TRAINING?

First Aid is important for BERG, particularly for working bees. There is funding available for a level 2 course to be held over 3 Thursday evenings, if we have 10 people. If you're interested, contact Jenny Selby on 5974 2402 or at [selby.jennifer.j@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:selby.jennifer.j@edumail.vic.gov.au)

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<p>❖ <b>Monthly working bee:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are <b>15<sup>th</sup> August</b> and <b>19<sup>th</sup> September</b>. 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>❖ <b>Tuesdays</b> 9.00 to 12.00, coffee break 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996.</p> <p>❖ <b>Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve.</b> Contact Hazel Athey for details, on 0419 899 560.</p>	<p>❖ <b>Waterwatch:</b> next BERG testing Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 9.00 am, Augusta St Bridge.</p> <p>❖ <b>Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group</b> working bee Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 10.00 – 12.00. Contact John Stoker, 5977 1397.</p> <p>❖ <b>Penboc</b> birdwatching 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, Contact <a href="http://www.penboc.org.au">www.penboc.org.au</a> or Max Burrows on 9789 0224.</p>	<p>❖ <b>BERG Committee</b> meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30 am. Next meeting 10<sup>th</sup> September. All members welcome.</p> <p>❖ <b>BERG AGM</b> Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 9.30 am</p> <p>❖ <b>SPIFFA</b> (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) 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.</p>
<p><b>BERG COMMITTEE</b></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>		
<p>PO Box 433, MT MARTHA 3934 • PHONE (SEC): 5974 3996                  EMAIL: <a href="mailto:INFO@BERG.ORG.AU">INFO@BERG.ORG.AU</a> • WEBSITE: <a href="http://WWW.BERG.ORG.AU">WWW.BERG.ORG.AU</a></p>		

### THE CREEK

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