

THE CREEK

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 Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group
No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

FUNGAL FEEDBACK

Angela Kirsner reports

The June article on the strange red fungus *Anthurus archeri*, the Seastar Stinkhorn, attracted lots of interest and a number of accounts of sightings around Mount Martha, most in the past 12 months.

In June, Sue Betheras talked of red “hands” (photo) emerging from mulch along her fenceline in Irvine Ave. She had others in her garden last year.



photo Sue Betheras

Di Dyson in Coolangatta Rd and Jock Macmillan in Walara Dve also found the Stinkhorn in their gardens, while Margaret Paten found one in woodchips in the small reserve opposite the Mt Martha shops. And John Stoker found many some years ago in mulch in his Banksia Gve garden.

Earthstars

Pam Hearn, on the other hand, sent photos of some Earthstar fungi in the Norfolk-Hopetoun Reserve. A keen observer, Pam writes, “It’s the first time I’ve seen them here in the 20 plus years I’ve lived here”.

Earthstars are related to puffballs – they look like puffballs on a star-like base. The vast majority of Earthstars are in the genus *Geastrum*, which is part of a sub-group of fungi known as gasteromycetes – literally “stomach fungus”, as they all produce their spores inside the fruiting body that is enclosed within an outer skin. Gasteromycetes are a diverse group, the name is descriptive rather than signifying close evolutionary relationships.



Earthstars in Norfolk-Hopetoun Reserve
photos Pam Hearn

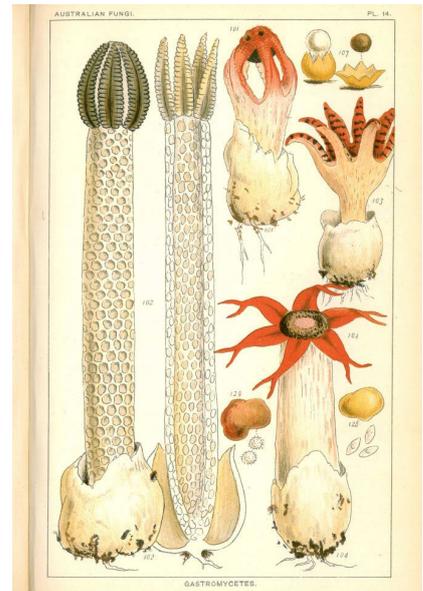
Mature puffballs and earthstars are simply bags of powdery spores with flexible walls and a small opening at the top. In a few, the spore sac is raised on a short stalk. The opening may be a simple hole, but some have more complex arrangements – for example, *Geastrum pectinatum* has a beautifully pleated conical opening. And while a *Geastrum* fruiting body has just one spore-releasing opening, other Earthstars may have several.

When something hits the spore sac – a raindrop, for example, or a foot – it momentarily compresses the air inside, forcing a puff of spores through the hole and some centimetres into the air. Flick a puffball with your finger and you can see it for yourself. The wind, or even the smallest air movement, then takes over and disperses the miniscule spores.

The first comprehensive account of Australian fungi was the *Handbook of Australian Fungi*, over 450 pages published in London in

1882 by a mycologist who rejoiced in the name of Mordecai Cubitt Cooke.

Its illustrations are beautiful but its accuracy is seriously suspect, despite Cooke’s access to the vast resources of the Kew herbarium and contacts with other mycologists who had worked in Australia. Cooke was forced to work with dried material that had to survive the sea voyage to England. Only about 10% of material despatched was in a useable condition when it reached him, and at best, the specimens usually came with only limited descriptions of their fresh appearance. Puffballs, however, were among those that survived the voyage best, and Plate 14 of his book, reproduced below from the Australian Fungi Website (see reference at end of article), shows his delightful, though probably inaccurate, representations of Earthstars and Stinkhorns.



This article draws heavily on the excellent Australian Fungi Website of the Australian National Botanic Gardens: www.anbg.gov.au/fungi/. Browse the website for lots more interesting information on fungi.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Barbara Thraves reports

BERG has received a Volunteer Action Grant of \$4,650 from the Victorian Landcare Program, to increase our membership. Our aim is 500 members, with more members active and involved in a range of different ways. We want to make BERG a household word in Mount Martha and beyond.

To achieve all this, we need to inform and educate the community about our work, create a strong and familiar presence, and match people's skills with support tasks as well as maintaining our 'on ground' work at the Estuary. We plan to build a data base of the skills that members can offer to support BERG – though whether or not you can be actively involved, we will always value your membership. We have formed a Membership Working Group to drive the process.

We will use personal contact as much as possible – for example, informal discussions with walkers on the boardwalk, a membership drive and plant giveaway at the Mt. Martha village and Bentons Square, and a booth at the Wednesday Mornington Market. We are also planning letterbox drops, and will place information at community facilities.

We need your help and ideas!

We start the membership drive in September.

Can you spare an hour or two to help with one of the activities?

Do you have any other ideas?

Call Barbara Thraves, 5974 1285.

TEAMWORK IN ACTION

Jo-Anne Tetteroo, Conservation Officer, Mornington Peninsula Shire, & Vyvyan Stryder, Naturelinks, report

Managing biodiversity in the Balcombe Estuary Reserve is a complex task that involves BERG, the Mornington Peninsula Shire and Melbourne Water. We work together to control the grassy, herbaceous, woody and

scrambling weeds and protect and enhance the existing indigenous vegetation. You are probably familiar with BERG's work, but you may be less aware of the role of BERG's partners in this work.

What the Shire does

The Shire's work includes both bushland and fire management. The Shire's contractor, Naturelinks Landscape Management, looks after the bushland management, working across about 4 hectares.

A priority is to maintain areas of the highest quality vegetation, where we aim to eliminate all weeds and allow natural regeneration. To complement this, Naturelinks also works to restore adjacent areas of medium quality – for example, patches of Swamp Scrub along the estuary below Victoria Crescent.

A further task is to tackle specific aggressive weeds across the entire reserve. Bridal Creeper, spread so effectively by birds, is currently at the top of this list, with various control measures in place. Then there is ongoing follow-up weed control after the 2005 prescription burn below the kindergarten and in the nearby area cleared but not burnt last spring.

The Shire's fire management contractor, Transfield, reduces fuel loads each year in the "fuel management zones" located around the perimeter of the reserve, to reduce any potential impact of fire on neighbouring houses. Much of the fuel load in these areas is, in fact, woody and scrambling weeds, so this work also helps to support biodiversity within the reserve. Naturelinks also does some fuel reduction within the reserve; for example, removing Coastal Tea Tree in the Bunyip.

Melbourne Water's role

Waterways on the Mornington Peninsula are managed by Melbourne Water, who are thus an integral part of biodiversity management in the Reserve. They fund monthly visits by Naturelinks to control weeds in the riparian zone. Recent work has

concentrated on large patches of intact Swamp Scrub and Estuarine Scrub near the end of La Trobe Drive and near the Augusta Street bridge. Saltmarsh communities have also been a target, though these need less protection as few weeds manage to thrive in their saline environment. Naturelinks has also done follow-up spraying of the aggressive *Tradescantia* downstream of the Uralla Road bridge.

With weed populations at these sites now well contained, Naturelinks is adding new, albeit smaller, Swamp Scrub sites to their workload, where removal of weed competition will allow the substantial remaining indigenous understorey to expand and diversity to increase.

NOTICE OF MEETING AND CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2011 BERG

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER

at Mt Martha House

9.30 am registration for the meeting at 10.00 am

Guest speaker, at 11.00, is renowned naturalist

Leon Costermans,

speaking on the geology of the Mornington Peninsula and its relationship to the vegetation

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2010 AGM
- Committee reports:
 - President, John Inchley;
 - Treasurer, Richard Kirsner;
 - Field Officer, Liz Barraclough
- Election: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, 6 ordinary committee members.
- Appointment of Auditor

Nominations for office bearers & committee

Forms are available from Mary Stemp, ph 5974 3996, or at www.berg.org.au, under "Resources". Nominations in writing, signed by two BERG members & accompanied by the candidate's written consent, must be with the Secretary by Saturday 22nd October.

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

The June working-bee saw us plant of 565 plants (including Poas, Lomandras, Ficinas, Bursarias, Manna Gums and Banksias) in the areas around the old campground that we prepared at the May working bee. Use of an auger instead of Hamilton planters made the hole-digging much easier and quicker in the hard, dry ground. The winter rains should establish the plants before summer.

In July we worked just north of the Uralla Road bridge. One team tackled the woody weeds – largely Boneseed, Pittosporum and Gorse – on the slope below Citation Oval. This is rewarding work, with lots of ground storey indigenous plants thriving.

Another group removed the Deadly Nightshade and grassy weeds along the north edge of the creek opposite the Uralla Road car park, replacing them with *Carex appressa*. They also followed up on the work of the Friday Group (see below). It's great to see our 2010 winter plantings thriving in this area.



The delicate twining Appleberry (Billardiera scandens) was in flower on the slope below Citation Oval. Photo A Kirsner

Friday morning group

The Friday group has concentrated on following up the weed control in the riparian area by the Uralla



This fine grub found a home and a meal in the hollow trunk of a dying Sallow Wattle (Acacia longifolia) which we were removing at the working bee. Photo A Kirsner

Road Bridge. Not only is this a main access track, but we have noted with pleasure the large number of little native birds using the shrubby and open grassy (*Poa* sp) vegetation in the area.

It has made us aware how important it is to study closely how the vegetation is utilised by wildlife before we, perhaps inappropriately, revegetate. We have tended to err towards planting an abundance of shrubs to out-compete the weed species, but this area in particular has shown us how essential open areas are, not only to the birdlife, but also to the smaller reptiles we often see sunning themselves on logs and stones.

This creek bank is also the refuge of the unexpected Gippsland Water Dragon reported in previous newsletters, and a number of snakes have been spotted along the firetrack.

Unfortunately the rabbits are still a problem, heavily pruning a number of our plantings despite the lush weed grasses nearby, which we'd much prefer they ate!

Balcombe Grammar School

This year's redesigned program with Balcombe Grammar worked well. The students have done a great job studying and planting the vegetation corridor along the easement from the school to Hopetoun Creek. With the better follow-up promised by the Shire, we hope to see a transformation of

this easement into an effective wildlife corridor. While this student community service program is quite a commitment for the BERG members involved, we feel it plays an important role in our community awareness and education program.

Local geology

I attended a fascinating, SPIFFA-sponsored workshop at The Briars in May. A lecture on the basics of the geology of the Mornington Peninsula was followed by a field trip which took us along Forest Drive, Brad Drive and The Esplanade to Fossil Beach, then on to Sunnyside Beach (at Morningside). You need simply to walk along the beach between Mt Martha and Mornington and observe the changes in colour, form, and structure of the cliffs to appreciate the diverse nature of the local geology.

We are hoping soon to bring to fruition our proposed geology interpretive signage of the local area. We would be glad of any input from geology 'buffs', amateur or professional. It makes Leon Costerman's talk at our AGM in October even more welcome and relevant.

Naturelinks

Tracy Westwood, who has done a sterling job leading our Naturelinks team, is moving on, for a well earned rest and change of scenery. We wish her well and



*Tracy at the June working bee
Photo A Kirsner*

thank her for all the work she has done for BERG, managing our grant works in both the Balcombe Estuary and Hopetoun Creek Greenfield reserves. I personally have found her a great support, always willing to help, advise and share her experience. A good sense of humour is probably a must when dealing with the eccentricities of friends groups, but we can't have been too trying, as she is going to join the Friday Group as a volunteer. We are delighted.

BERG IN PRINT

Melissa Semken's work on the Moral history of the Balcombe Estuary has been published in the *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*. Melissa's 2007 research gained her an Honours degree in Environmental Science from Deakin University.

In the project, she interviewed 22 locals to build up a valuable picture of changes in land use and the estuary's ecology since European settlement of the area, and to document community values. She followed this up with a survey. The study confirmed the

value of oral history to inform environmental management.

M. Semken, K.K. Miller & K. James (2011). The value of oral history in natural resource management: the Balcombe Estuary Reserve, Mount Martha, Victoria. Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, 18:2, 109-122.

BERG welcomes new members:
 Mark Patrick & family
 Tom & Michelle Beever
 Jackie Hartnell
 Michael Barraclough
 Barbara & Lawrie Oakes
 Richard Kornfield & Michael Robinson
 Neil, Iris & Daisy Shaw

PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHEQUE

A \$20 National Bank cheque to BERG (membership & donation, receipts sent) has bounced. It will cost us \$35 to request details, which even then may not be forthcoming.

If it was yours, could you please contact Angela Kirsner at info@berg.org.au. Until we can identify the cheque, our 2011 membership and donor lists are inaccurate, and we are required to provide government with an accurate list of donors.

BERG Working Bees	Other BERG Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are 21st August & 18th September. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If running late, phone Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site. ❖ Tuesdays 9.00 to 12.00. Call Mary Stemp to confirm, 5974 3996. ❖ Friday mornings. For details call Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201 or Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430. ❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve. Contact Hazel Athey, 0419 899 560. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: 2nd Saturday, 9.00 am, meet at Augusta St Bridge. Next are 13th August and 10th September. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30am. Next meetings 13th August and 8th October. All members welcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees. Contact John Stoker, 5977 1397. ❖ Penboc birdwatching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries www.penboc.org.au or Max Burrows 9789 0224. ❖ SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org.
<p>BERG COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL SANDERS • 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 GEOFF KAYE • HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY CO-OPTED MEMBERS: DIANNE LEWIS • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRIVES • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
<p>PO Box 433, MT MARTHA 3934 • PHONE (SEC): 5974 3996 EMAIL: INFO@BERG.ORG.AU • WEBSITE: WWW.BERG.ORG.AU</p>		

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