

THE CREEK

Volume 16 No 1, February 2012



Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group

No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

MEMORIES OF A MAP

from Peter Russell

As a small child I lived at The Vange (behind the WRAAC barracks), Mt Martha, and subsequently in the Army Camp. This was about 1950 to 1956. The creek was our major playground from the sea to the Briars. We swam in the Bream Hole, fished for bream and eels, and caught possums for short-term pets. By we, I mean a mob of army boys and girls around 4 to 9 years of age. We all had tomahawks and knives and did a fair bit of destruction I'm ashamed to say.

I thought you might be interested in an old map I remember at the Briars [the home of Peter's best friend at Osborne State School]. The map depicted Balcombe Creek as an emergency port for sailing ships caught in bad weather. It had a cartographic drawing of a ship in the area which is now the tidal mudflats above the bridge. This was amazing to me, even then, as I spent many an hour dragging my little dinghy through the mud from the sea to the navigable part of the creek.

Ed: Does anyone know of this map? We doubt the creek was ever deep enough for a sailing ship; maybe the drawing was just an artist's whimsy, but the map would be fascinating to track down.

Clean Up Australia Day

SUNDAY 4TH MARCH

Join with BERG and other local groups to clean up the beach, creek and surrounding areas

Register and collect a rubbish bag at the car park at the corner of The Esplanade & Watson Road anytime from 9.30am to 1.00pm.

PRESENTATION SKILLS WORKSHOP

BERG invites interest from people who wish to develop their skills for speaking in public.

We anticipate that some of these people will become ambassadors for BERG, speaking to community groups and organisations such as local schools, students of Deakin University, Mount Martha Yacht Club, Rotary etc.

Dates: The workshop runs over two sessions and participants must attend **both**:

- Sunday March 25th, 9.00am – 4.30pm (lunch provided)
- Thursday March 29th, 6.00pm – 9.00pm (light meal provided).

Charge: Free

Venue: TBA, but will be in the Mt Martha/Mornington area.

Interested? Contact Di Lewis by February 24th, info@berg.org.au or 0447 160 288

This project is supported by funding from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Landcare Volunteer Recruitment Initiative – Volunteer Action Project Grants program.

Volunteers are needed for the MORNINGTON PENINSULA SCHOOLS' ENVIRONMENT WEEK AT THE BRIARS MON 19TH TO FRI 23RD MARCH

BERG has been involved in this valuable event for many years, helping with student environmental programs such as Waterwatch, planting and plant identification. No experience needed. Lunch provided

Contact Jenny Selby: 0432 719 288, 5974 2402 or Jselby22@tpg.com.au

THE TRIALS OF SEED COLLECTION

Just north of the Uralla Rd Bridge, you may have seen some

Swamp Paperbark dressed elegantly in mesh bags. The Briars Nursery is responsible. In propagating *Melaleuca ericifolia* from seed, they keep getting hybrids, mostly crossed with *Melaleuca armillaris*. The bags are designed to exclude bees and prevent cross-pollination, allowing *M. ericifolia* to self-pollinate.



Photo A Kirsner

CALLING FOR DINNER

David and Janet Glaspole write:

For several nights we have had a most unusual noise emanating from high in a Eucalypt in our Bay Road garden. It occurs every two seconds and sounds a bit like the muted bark of a dog. By shining a torch towards the sound, we found the source – a baby Tawny Frogmouth.

The biological advantage in the youngster's call became clear when a parent bird flew in out of the darkness and returned about every five minutes to feed the chick. While we were watching, the young bird flew to a nearby tree and continued to call, directing the parent to the tree before it flew off into the dark again.

All this in our front garden night after night has been very exciting!

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer *Liz Barraclough reports*

Welcome back and happy new year, as we launch into another year's work on the reserve.

Working bees

Thanks to those who came in January to our first working-bee for 2012. Heat and holidays make it a difficult time to start, but we feel it is still worthwhile as it gets us going for the year. One group did a sweep through the Swamp Scrub north of the campground carpark, cutting and painting the remaining Pittosporum, Mirror Bush, Privet and Blackberry and digging out a carpet of Ivy. The second group weeded the central bed in the campground, while members of the Publicity Group handed out BERG pamphlets to walkers, providing information about the Reserve and BERG and encouraging them to join.

We also cut, painted and removed a number of rogue Banana Passionfruit vines in full fruit near the mulched patch below the tennis courts, and took away two full buckets of fruit.



Photo: www.dpiw.tas.gov.au

Banana Passionfruit, a threat to native vegetation, showing flower and fruit.

Banana Passionfruit climbs and scrambles up to 20 metres, smothering anything in its way, and each fruit carries up to 200 seeds. Though widely available in nurseries and markets, and often used as root stock for true passionfruit vines, it is becoming an increasing problem in bushland.

In mid December the **Friday Morning Group** did a final clean-

up of grassy weeds through the Uralla Bridge area. They left it looking good, but the rain and warmth over summer have awakened the dormant weed seeds, and we are back in action every Friday from late January. Newcomers welcome! For details, call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201.

DON'T FORGET – convivial and scintillating company and delicious morning-teas are the hallmark of our working-bees – do join us!

Grants

We were successful in our application for the **Caring for our Country Coast Action Coastcare Grant**, with \$18,180 for follow-up weed control along the foreshore between the Yacht Club carpark and the end of Victoria Crescent.

We were not so lucky with the second **Community Action Grant** application. Feedback was that my requests under the community awareness section for training workshops in IT and social media, First Aid, and Food Handler's Licence were not within their criteria. We were, however, encouraged to apply for the next round in February as our on-ground project was acceptable.

At the last minute we submitted an application for a **Communities for Nature Grant** to tackle the weed-infested area around the corner of Maude and Alice Streets. This will complement the already extensive work in the adjoining part of the Reserve between Maude Street and the creek.

A site assessment for the 2012 **Melbourne Water Community Grants** took place on 11th January, but as funds are limited this year, I have been led to expect that we may not receive all we requested.

Signage

A suite of up-dated signs should be in place very soon throughout the Reserve, providing walkers with information on the flora and fauna, and better information on directions and distances. It has been a collaborative effort between BERG, Rotary and the Shire – as always, a bigger job than first anticipated. But we hope that from

now on, there will be no excuse for getting lost.

We are, of course, indebted to Mount Martha Rotary for establishing signs and boardwalk through the reserve in the first place some twenty years ago.

ON THE RAILS...

Pam Hearn reported in the December edition of *The Creek* that she had seen Buff-banded Rails in her garden by Norfolk Reserve. It seems she is not alone. BERG members report these shy birds in many parts of Mt Martha.

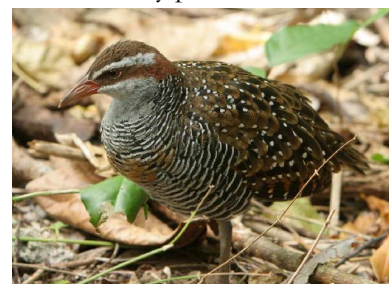


Photo © Keith Hindley

Ann Scally had a pair with two chicks on her farm in Range Road late last year. 'It took me about six weeks to identify them as they are so secretive and run away when they hear a noise, however faint', she emailed. The birds had bred in the long grass near a dam.

Through summer in Liz Barraclough's garden at the top of Watson Road, a male Buff-banded Rail has darted through the vegetables, indigenous plants and the thick bracken of the roadside reserve. They have been seen in Sunshine Reserve, and Judith Whittaker, near Fairbairn Bushland Reserve, reports 'a little family scurrying about in the area, an adult and four chicks'. They have been in and out of Fairbairn reserve and the gardens along Scenic Drive.

Neither Liz nor Judith has been able to photograph the rapidly moving birds. Our thanks to bird photographer Keith Hindley (www.twitcherscorner.com) for these wonderful images.



Photo © Keith Hindley

THRIVING IN SALT

Look closely as you pass through some of the low-lying areas of the Balcombe Estuary Reserve and you will find a wealth of low, salt-tolerant plants with tiny, delicate flowers.

You'll find them covering the ground beside parts of the boardwalk beneath the Swamp Paperbarks (*Melaleuca ericifolia*), and fringing the estuary, especially on the path through to the beach – indeed, anywhere that is intermittently flooded by salt water when the creek mouth is open and the tide is high. Then, when the creek mouth is closed, the plants

may be gradually inundated by the fresh water flowing downstream.

Water depth, sedimentation rate and salinity levels determine the plants in any given area, but you will find grasses, reeds (*Phragmites australis*), sedges, rushes (*Juncus* sp.), succulent herbs and small shrubs. Some of the creek's salt marsh has been destroyed by the effects of building the bridge, and more recently, by sediment in the estuary from run-off from roads and cleared land.

The salt marsh communities are integral to the estuarine ecosystem, providing spawning grounds for fish, shelter and food for the juveniles, and habitat and food for many of the estuary's waterbirds.

The flowers are generally small and wind-pollinated, their seeds dispersed by wind or water. It's a necessary strategy – nectars and perfumes to attract insect and bird pollinators would be washed away.

To cope with the salinity, some plants isolate salt in structures in their succulent leaf and stem tissue. Others excrete salt onto the leaf surfaces, while some simply tolerate high salt concentrations in their tissues. Plants that are periodically submerged mostly have ways to reduce their oxygen need during these times. Sedges and rushes in salt marsh have hollow vessels in their stems and leaves to carry oxygen to their roots.



Salt marsh species, largely low-growing, found in the Balcombe Estuary Reserve

Top: Salt marsh community beside the track leading under the bridge, with Common Reed, *Phragmites australis*, in the foreground and across the creek; *Creeping Brookweed*, *Samolus repens*; its uncommon pink form; *Scrambling salt marsh plants* among *Swamp Paperbark*, *Melaleuca ericifolia*, beside the boardwalk

Middle: *Sea Celery*, *Apium prostratum*; the tiny flowers of *Angled Lobelia*, *Lobelia alata*; the daisy-like flower of *Fleshy Cotula*, *Leptinella longipes*; the ground-hugging flowers and fleshy leaves of *Swampweed*, *Selliera radicans*

Bottom: *Large Bindweed*, *Calystegia sepium* subsp. *roseata*, twining up a dead *Swamp Paperbark*; a clump of *Beaded Glasswort*, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* (about life size); and a magnified single fleshy stalk showing the tiny flowers; bead-like fruits and narrow leaves of *Streaked Arrongrass* (*Triglochin striata*) behind more *Swampweed*; *Creeping Monkey flower* *Mimulus repens*; *Water Buttons*, *Cotula coronopifolia* – possibly introduced, the experts are undecided

Photos: *Swampweed*, Jo Tetteroo; all others, Angela Kirsner

NOTICE of MEETING

A Special General Meeting of BERG will be held at 9.00 am on Saturday 3rd March 2012 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. 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.

to be changed to:

4. The annual subscription is \$10 (Individual) and \$15 (Family) or as agreed at a duly authorised General Meeting, and is payable in advance on or before 1 July in each year.

While striving to keep membership rates low, the BERG Committee believes an increase is necessary to cover rising costs.

BERG welcomes new members:

Mary Bell, Emma Dolling, Paul Camilleri & family, Dick & Jayne Turner, Louise & Richard Mabin, Catherine Jones & family, Judy Siegel & family, Mrs J. Ahmling & family, S. J. Riley & family, Graeme & Peta McMillan,



Photo A Kirsner

Left: Common Reed (Phragmites australis), another plant of the estuary's salt marsh communities, is just coming into flower. Watch for the silky flower heads as they develop.

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 19th February and 18th March. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or phone Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site. ❖ Tuesdays 9.00 to 12.00 in cooler months. Contact Mary Stemp 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 11th February and 10th March. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-9 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30am. Next meeting 3rd March. All members welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees. Contact Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker, 5977 1397. ❖ Bird Life Mornington Peninsula birdwatching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries Max Burrows 9789 0224 or www.penboc.org.au. ❖ 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 DI LEWIS • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP ANGELA KIRSNER • MINUTES SECRETARY PAM HEARN SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRIVES CO-OPTED: HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR • PUBLICITY ROS CROMPTON • HISTORIAN MARY STEMPT</p>		
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THE CREEK

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