

THE CREEK

Volume 16 No 2, April 2012

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

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2012

The weather gods were kind to us on Sunday 4th March. After Friday's winds and Saturday's incessant rain, Sunday morning was overcast but still and dry.

At the Mt Martha site, 23 people registered to clean up the beach, foreshore and along Balcombe estuary. We filled the Shire's skip with rubbish and recyclables, and even found a bicycle, which we took to the police station.



At Birdrock Beach, Tess McLintock, aged 8, drew the morning's activities (above). 'On Clean Up Australia Day,' she wrote, 'eleven people came. It was a bit windy but we all kept going. Most of all, we should say thank you to Jenny [Rolleston] and Di [Lewis] for encouraging everyone to come.'

RISE IN MEMBERSHIP FEES

At the BERG special general meeting held on 4th March 2012, it was unanimously agreed to increase annual membership fees to \$10 for single members and \$15 for family members. The rise is needed to ensure we cover costs.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FOR BERG

We believe, in BERG, that preservation of our natural environment and species diversity is critically important. The more community awareness and support we have, the better we can do this.

The BERG Ambassador Program will train interested BERG members (at no charge) to help us gain this support more effectively. There are fifteen places in the course, which we want to fill to make it lively and worthwhile. We anticipate that six to eight of these people will become BERG Ambassadors, though attending the course does not necessarily require this commitment.

What's a BERG Ambassador?

Our recent Volunteer Action Project grant was focused on drawing a larger and more diverse membership to BERG. Amongst other things, we applied for money to train and establish a small group of Ambassadors who could speak to community groups and organisations such as schools, the Yacht Club, Deakin University

students, and service clubs.

This Ambassador Program will help to increase our public profile and thus extend our activities in the Balcombe Estuary Reserves.

To run the Program effectively, we need to share the load, pool our experiences, and support each other. Each Ambassador will develop knowledge for particular presentations – nobody will be expected to do everything.

A BERG Ambassador will:

- attend a presentation skills course of one day and an evening (see over)
- be prepared to give at least two presentations a year
- be prepared to attend a meeting every two months in the first year to share experiences, update and extend skills, and streamline how we work
- be alert to possible opportunities to inform the community.

The Presentation Skills course

Ros Crompton will present the course, which she has developed over more than fifteen years, to provide skills, short practice exercises and carefully structured feed-back. *(continued p.2)*

WATER WATCHERS WANTED

BERG's Waterwatch team (John Inchley & Chris Spencer) needs extra helpers.

What's Waterwatch?

Since the late 1990s, BERG has been keeping a check on the water quality of Balcombe Creek through the national Waterwatch program. We monitor six measures of water quality, and over time the results give a good indication of the health of the estuary, the creek, and the overall catchment. You can read more and see the monitoring results on the BERG website, www.berg.org.au, under 'Our Work'.

What's involved in helping?

Testing is straightforward and take a couple of hours a month, at a mutually convenient time. You don't need a science background, we will provide the necessary training. Come along one month to try it out before you decide.

Interested?

Contact John Inchley, 5974 1095 or info@berg.org.au.

- In the morning, we will attend to preparation and self-management, which is about confidence and preparing the content.
- After lunch we put this into practice, managing delivery, questions and a memorable ending.
- The evening session a few days later will complete the training with short BERG speeches which will integrate the strategies and attitudes learned.

The course creates a trusting environment in which to experiment and helps to shift the attitudes that make people reluctant to present to groups. We have fun, learning happens easily, and the day goes quickly.

Time and place

When: Saturday 12 May, 9.00am-4.30pm, and Thursday 17 May, 6.30pm-9.30pm.

Where: a venue in Mornington. Light meals and refreshments will be provided at each session.

Interested? Contact Di Lewis at info@berg.org.au or 0447 160 288.

THANKS PAM & MARY

Mary Stemp and Pam Hearn, two of our longest-standing members, have resigned from the BERG Committee.

When in late 1997 Mary was considering taking on the vacant job of Secretary, she wanted some back-up. Pam offered herself as Minutes Secretary, and the two worked as a team for 14 years.

Our thanks to them both for the enormous amount they have contributed to BERG. We are delighted that Mary will continue as BERG historian, and we look forward to more of Pam's excellent birding contributions to *The Creek*.

Learn about Bats!

Managing our Nocturnal Neighbours, Public Forum on managing micro-bats and flying-fox populations in urbanising landscapes.

Great speakers!

University of Melbourne, Wed 11 April 1.00-5.30pm, \$50. Details at ausbats.org.au/#/public-forum/4560237230.

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

In February, we removed lots of Polygala and a little Boneseed, Pittosporum and Broom from the Reserve and roadside near the corner of Victoria Cres and the easement to the Esplanade. It was strenuous but rewarding work on a relatively hot morning. (We will report on the March working bee in the next newsletter.)



One of the large piles of Polygala we removed at the February working bee Photo Angela Kirsner

The **Friday Morning Group** is back in action, enhancing and 'tidying up' previous projects and maintaining and protecting particularly significant areas.

Anyone interested in joining this small group, please contact Sue Betheras (0408 808 201) or Liz Barraclough (0408 388 430) or email info@berg.org.au.

Grants

Our application for a Caring for our Country Coastcare Grant of \$18,180 was successful. As we have only until the end of June to complete the works, we shall have to consider them a priority!

The next Community Action Grant application will be submitted by late March. With a few changes, we hope to be more successful this time. We are still awaiting the outcome of applications for a 2012 Melbourne Water Community Grant and a Communities for Nature Grant.

I am most grateful to new BERGer Ros King, a professional grant writer, who has offered her expert help. With her, we plan to explore other avenues and opportunities and make the process as easy and efficient as possible.

Signage

The up-dated and upgraded signage should be back in the Reserve very soon. We are sorry for the delay and hope those who have found themselves lost have managed to turn their predicament into an exciting exploratory adventure!

CAN YOU HELP?

Working with Balcombe Grammar

Again this year, Balcombe Grammar's community service program is involving BERG. The Year 4s will participate in a series of Waterwatch activities, while the Year 7s will again assist us in restoring the corridor from the school to Hopetoun Creek.

We would love some help supervising on Wednesdays through Term II, 11am-2.30pm (with a break for lunch). Dates: May 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13, 20, 27. Even if you are only available for one or two that would be great. Enquiries and offers to Liz on 0408 388 430, or email info@berg.org.au.

Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve working-bee

Saturday 19 May, 9.30am-12 noon, with the usual luscious morning tea! Meet in Greenfield Way. We'd love local residents to join us to help enhance this significant area. It is looking so good at the moment and functioning as an efficient wildlife corridor. The small bird population is thriving and is thrilling to watch. Enquiries to Hazel Athey, 0419 899 560.

Century Drive Habitat Link working bee

Saturday 21 April, 2.00 - 4.00pm. Balcombe & Moorooduc Landcare Group will be cleaning up the Century Drive retarding basin and re-planting out Century Dve. Enquiries to Tony O'Connor 5977 2810.

Indigenous gardening workshop

The Briars, Saturday 14 April, 10:00-11:30am, cost \$10. Covers the benefits of indigenous gardening, finding the right plants, and how to care for them. Bookings: 1800-804-009

THE ARMY AT MT MARTHA

This article draws on Winty Calder's book Mount Martha Lands and People, and material compiled by the Army for the Balcombe Military Heritage Site project. With the Shire's support, this project is redeveloping the area around the US Marine gates, old parade ground and Mace Oval as a historic precinct, with plaques commemorating the history of Balcombe and the units that served there. The site will be re-dedicated this year. Thanks to Kevin Noon, Australian Army Band Corps Association, for this material

Mount Martha, including our reserve, has a long history of military use. Many readers will remember the Balcombe Army Camp on the Highway just south of Balcombe Creek. Some may remember Mt Martha teeming with troops during World War II. But the history goes back well before that – over 200 units have used the area over the past 80 or 90 years.

As early as 1886 troops bivouacked here en route to training areas further south. By early last century, there were militia training camps in tents, with semi-permanent facilities such as water and latrines. Conscription boosted the numbers by the 1930s.

The Army describes the boundaries of its area as Balcombe Creek, Beach Road (now Esplanade), Nepean Highway and, to the south, Reservoir, Fairview and Ambulance roads (one of these is now Glenisla Dve). Thick concentrations of encamped troops often fringed Fairbairn and Buxton (now Dominion and Bay) roads. But field training took troops well beyond these bounds. According to Winty Calder (p.141), 'ultimately all the land between Craigie and Hearn roads would be absorbed into what became known as "Camp City"'.

In May 1940 the Army commandeered 209 acres and built huts at Balcombe for successive battalions of troops and recruits in training. Gravel and soil were stripped from Mt Martha Park for roads. A camp hospital, set up in 1940, remained through the war,



Top: 1909, troops crossing Mt Martha on route to Cape Schanck; Bottom left: 1939, rifle training at Mt Martha beach. Source: trove.nla.gov.au/ Right: 1957, Apprentices at range practice in the old quarry. Source: www.austarmyapprentice.org/bfotos/

while Maryport guesthouse was used for convalescence from 1941 (it remained a rehabilitation hospital into at least the 1960s). The old quarry below what is now Citation Oval became a rifle range. There was live firing of small arms and grenades, testing of Bren Gun carriers and amphibious craft, machine gun practice from the beaches, and advances over piled timber in Mt Martha Park, which also saw driving and maintenance courses for heavy motor vehicles. And locals remember trenches 'everywhere' (Calder p.147).

Troop numbers outstripped the capacity of the drains, and the creek became something of an open sewer. But Mornington was, fortunately, about to be sewered, and during 1941, the camp was hooked into the new system.

In 1942, the 13th Light Horse Regiment came to Mt Martha and stayed about 15 months. Late in the same year, large numbers of the US 1st Marines Division arrived, remaining for 12 months. They practised beach landings with HMAS Manoora near Dromana. And in 1943, a US Construction Brigade, the Seabees, spent six months at Balcombe. Some of the Americans arrived directly from the bay. Calder (p.146) quotes a memory of 'huge ships anchored off [Balcombe Point]. Then came all those landing craft... amphibious tanks had mowed through beach trees on the

foreshore, across the road where Mount Martha Village is now, mowed down the fences and come to rest at Mount Martha Camp'.

The area between the two Balcombe Creek bridges and Tassels Creek (now marina) was cordoned off and patrolled by soldiers with the right to shoot; locals needed a pass (Calder p.146).

For some months in 1944-45, Balcombe housed two secret training units. A Special Z unit known as Mount Martha Research Station provided training in signals, language and mock attacks with an RAN work boat, while the Eastern School of Interpreters was cover for a classified espionage unit.

There were RAAF units here towards the end of the war, and Italian POWs from December 1944 – records note escapees from the Mount Martha Detention Centre. Around the same time, there were camps for orphaned children and sons of POWs.

War ended, buildings were upgraded, and in 1948 the Army Apprentice School and the School of Military Survey moved in. The surveyors remained till 1965, and the Apprentices till 1982, having trained 3000 tradesmen. The Army School of Music was also at Mt Martha from about 1965.

Then, in 1983, Balcombe Camp closed and Mornington Shire assumed control of the land. The last Balcombe camp house was relocated in 1999.

MYRTLE RUST

The destructive plant disease myrtle rust is now in Victoria. It has been detected at 25 sites, mainly nurseries and wholesale outlets around Melbourne, including the Peninsula. Nurseries, gardens, reserves and native forests are all threatened. All plants in the Myrtaceae family are vulnerable, including gums, paperbark, tea tree, bottlebrush, and many others.

Eradication is not possible, so the focus is on management to minimise its spread and impact. Early identification is vital. If you see a plant you suspect is affected,

notify the Department of Primary Industries immediately on 1800 084 881, or email a photo, with a contact phone number, to plant.protection@dpi.vic.gov.au.

Do not touch, move or collect samples of the suspect plant material. For more information, go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/forestry/pests-diseases-weeds/diseases/myrtle-rust.



Myrtle rust on Melaleuca Source: DPI website

BERG welcomes new members:

Mary Bell, Richard Blake & family, Mrs Fran Millar, Dr Alex Wood, Graeme Alcorn & family, Victoria Smith & family, Judy Foreman & family, Ron Gilbert, the Lankri family, Fleur Elbourne & family, Mr & Mrs Garry Grossbard, Arbie & Ash Jhamb, Barrie Wilson & family, Alex & Susan McNiece, Rosemary Evans & family, Sally Barnes & family, Rosalind King & family, Browning Mummery & family, Beverly & Bob Greig, Tonja Raymond & family, David Caldecott & family

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 15th April and 20th May. 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. Enquiries to Mary Stemp, 5974 3996. ❖ Friday mornings. For details call Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201 or Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430. ❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve. 19th May, 9.30-12-30. Meet in Greenfield Way. Enquiries to Hazel Athey, 0419 899 560. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterwatch testing: Monthly at the Augusta St Bridge. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095. ❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-9 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30am. Next meeting 5th May. 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. ❖ BirdLife 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 • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE • PUBLICITY BARBARA THRAVES & ROS CROMPTON HOPETOON CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
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