

# THE CREEK

Volume 16 No 4, August 2012



**BERG** – Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

## FUNGAL SIGHTINGS

Angela Kirsner reports

If you were at the north end of the Uralla Rd bridge in early June, you may have noticed a large and spectacular clump of fungus, maybe 400mm wide, with overlapping layers of caps in cream merging to copper and darker centres.

It was *Omphalotus nidiformis*, the Ghost Fungus, so called because at night it is brightly luminescent. This is the result of a chemical reaction between a fungal enzyme and oxygen.

Ghost Fungus is common and widespread. It colonises stumps and logs and occasionally the base of living trees, native or exotic. The young caps are funnel shaped, flattening out with age, and they often form clusters. Colour ranges from white or cream with blue and black centre and yellow tinges, to tones of purple and pink.

Don't eat them. While not fatal, they will make you very unwell.

### Surviving the dry

Just beyond the end of the camp ground, on the creek side of the track, an old Boobialla log is covered with *Schizophyllum commune*, the fungus known as Split Gill.



Ghost Fungus near Uralla Bridge Photo A Kirsner

The name stems from its double-edged gills. When the fungus dries out, these split edges curl outwards to protect the spore-bearing surfaces of each gill. This can happen many times over a year's growing season, as the fan-shaped fruiting bodies are long-lasting.

The fruiting bodies are up to 400mm wide, with a dry upper surface covered in short, dense hairs. They range in colour from white through beige, light tan or grey. Old specimens may be tinged green with algae. The fungus colonises many kinds of dead wood. There is virtually no stem, just the overlapping fan-shaped tiers growing out from the host log.

This fungus comes with a warning – do *not* smell it, as the spores may take hold and grow in parts of the airways or sinuses.



Split Gill fungus growing on a Boobialla log, from above (left) and below (right), showing the longitudinally split gills Photo A Kirsner

## FREE INDIGENOUS PLANTS

Once again, BERG is offering free indigenous plants to local residents. Lots of species available! Contact Liz on 0408 388 430.

### NOTICE OF MEETING AND CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2012 BERG

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

at Mt Martha House

9.30 am registration for the meeting at 10.00 am

Guest speaker, at 11.00, is

**Dr Pina Milne**

Manager of Collections at the National Herbarium of Victoria, who will introduce us to the fascinating world of lichens, mosses, liverworts and hornworts

#### Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of 2011 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 the Secretary, Di Lewis (ph 5975 4268) or at [www.berg.org.au](http://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 13<sup>th</sup> October.

## FIELD NEWS

*Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports*

### The signs are in place!

It's been a long gestation, but the June working-bee saw a team of Mt Martha Rotarians plus some BERGers finally installing the new interpretative signs and maps throughout the reserve (see photos below). The positive comments started to roll in from walkers even before the final signs were up!

It's been a cooperative effort, spearheaded by Jo Tetteroo at the Shire, who has developed the signs, and Geoff Kaye, BERG member and Mt Martha Rotarian, who has organised the Rotarians, the timber and cement, the holes and the rest.

While the sign installers were at work, the rest of us planted another 310 plants in the old campground, including updating the planting round the plant identification posts.

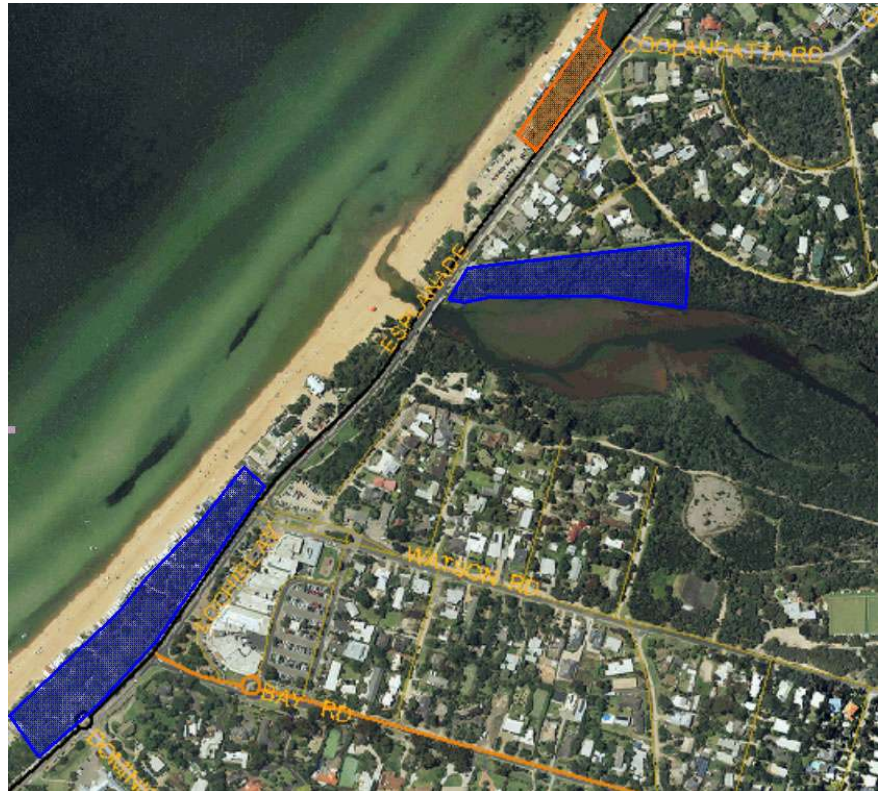
We must enlist Rotary's help more often, especially when, as on this occasion, they turn on a great BBQ lunch!

### Women at work

At the July working-bee, there was not a man in sight – a first for BERG! Seven women planted another 90 grasses and sedges, plus a number of Banksias, in the old campground. Then after morning-tea we did a mammoth job removing a thick infestation of large Polygala from a patch of Swamp Melaleuca near the start of the boardwalk.

### Fridays in the old quarry

The Friday Morning Group has removed weeds that were



*Map 1, showing work under BERG's 2012 Coastcare grants*

overwhelming plants within their plant guards in the quarry area. It's exciting to see the growth of indigenous plants in this area. The group also tackled some very large Boneseed on the Citation Oval bank near the Geoff Kaye Bridge, weeded some of the beds in the campground in preparation for the June working-bee, and planted an additional 80 plants.

Their planting is proceeding in earnest around and between the Uralla and Geoff Kaye bridges. They have also done some enhancement planting in front of the Mt Martha shops.

### Restoring the foreshore

The Mt Martha foreshore has been part of BERG's work program for a number of years now. This area

not only contributes significantly to Mt Martha's character; but it is also an important ecological link in the habitat corridor running from the Balcombe catchment to the sea. We have concentrated on the strip from the south beach carpark (just beyond Mt Martha House) to the end of Coolangatta Rd.

It is ongoing work because of the area's vulnerability to weed reinfestation and the impact of human and climatic processes.

We have received a number of Coastcare and Envirofund grants to work on the foreshore, including two Coastcare Community grants this year. Work under the first, completed over the first six months of the year, is shown in blue on Map 1. It covers two areas: from the south beach

carpark to the Yacht Club, and the riparian area of Swamp Scrub and Banksia Woodland along the north bank from the Esplanade to Victoria Crescent.

We have just been awarded another Caring for our

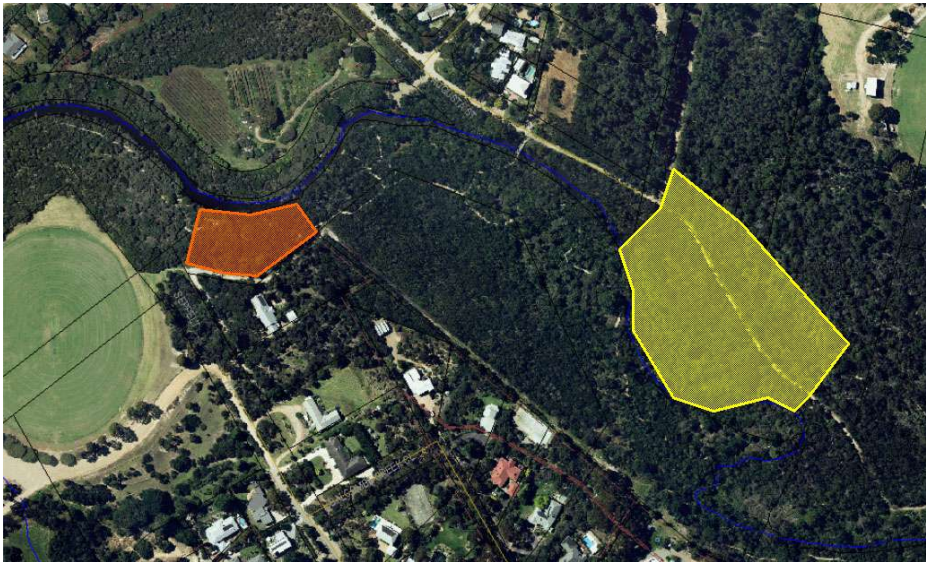


*It's in...*

*But is it level?...*

*Now, to make sure it doesn't budge...*

*John Trevillian (BERG, far left), Geoff Kaye (BERG & Mt Martha Rotary, with red shirt) and a crew of Rotarians installing one of the new signs in the reserve Photos Angela Kirsner*



Map 2, showing work under BERG's new Caring for our Country, Coastcare Community grant

Country, Coastcare Community Grant, providing \$9,410. This will enable us to follow up our weed control work between the northern carpark and the beach track opposite Victoria Cres, and extend this work to Coolangatta Rd – the orange area on Map 1.

This grant brings to \$27,590 the funds we have received for the foreshore for 2012, the bulk of which will be spent on contractors to control weeds. BERG will also contribute over 150 volunteer hours of weeding and planting, plus our administrative time.

**Funds to restore threatened areas**

We have also been awarded a Community Action Grant to restore two threatened riparian areas, shown on Map 2: the Swamp Melaleuca and adjoining grassy woodland vegetation on the north side of the creek between the Augusta St and Uralla Rd bridges (yellow on Map 2), and an area with extensive Hyacinth and Greenhood Orchid colonies at the eastern end of the Ferraro Ovals (orange).

**Working with Balcombe Grammar**

Once again, BERG has been part of Balcombe Grammar's Community Service Program. For the Year 7 students, we have provided two sessions including applied ecology with local ecologist Gidja Walker and plant ID, and weeding and planting with BERG. For the Year 4 students, we ran

another two sessions, this time focussing on Waterwatch activities.

**BERG at seminars and workshops**

I gave a short presentation at the Mornington Peninsula Land Management Expo on 'Pastures and Produce', and BERG member Tony O'Connor gave poster presentation. The Expo was put on by the Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority to help landowners manage their land more effectively.

Sue Betheras and Anne Scally came away from a workshop on 'Soils on the Mornington Peninsula' recommending that BERG organise a similar workshop. They found the content relevant not only to large landholders, but to groups such as BERG as well as gardeners.

Melbourne Water ran a workshop on their recently released draft 'Healthy Waterways and Stormwater Strategy' in May, which I attended. They sought comment on the strategy, including follow-up comment on-line.

**Annual Planning Meeting**

Our annual meeting with the Shire, our contractors and Melbourne Water, to plan and coordinate on-ground work in the Balcombe Estuary Reserves has proved its worth over recent years. This year, we met on 16<sup>th</sup> July at the Ecohouse, The Briars Park.

Jo Tetteroo, leader of the Natural Systems Team, represented

the Shire, and Dean White came from Melbourne Water. Our contractors, Naturelinks, sent three representatives and there were five BERGers. Together, this team is responsible for coordinating, managing and implementing our grants, programs and on-ground works.

The meeting enabled us to clarify each group's contribution to this process and to establish the best means of fulfilling our grant obligations and caring for the reserves.

**CAN YOU HELP?**

**MONITORING OUR FAUNA BOXES**

Paul Bertuch needs help in monitoring the reserve's fauna boxes, to be done quarterly on a Sunday or Monday.

Monitoring involves spying on the private life of micro-bats and other beasts via an inspection camera on a pole and/or from the top of a ladder (Paul will do this), and recording data. It needs to be done with great care to avoid disturbing the boxes' inhabitants, which might also include Sugar Gliders, Ring-tailed or Brush-tailed Possums, or birds.

If you'd like to be involved, phone Paul on 0488 762 179.



**In flower and almost in the reserve!**

The white form of the Common Heath, *Epacris impressa*, can be seen flowering along Maude St just opposite the Balcombe Estuary reserve in a beautiful patch of roadside reserve that is rich in biodiversity.

Photo Angela Kirsner

**THANKS, RUSSELL!**

After 19 years, Russell Ardley has left Mornington Peninsula Youth Enterprises, the organisation he founded to help disadvantaged young people and train them in a wide range of skills. Russell is a very special person, as anyone who has seen him working with his youthful crew will testify.

MPYE has expanded from a shed in Russell's backyard to its current site at Mornington's old Southeast Water sewerage site. Here, along with providing training in metal work and a host of other

skills, Russell has learnt about and set up a plant nursery, and trained his young people in propagating native and indigenous plants.

The nursery has also, for most of its life, provided the bulk of BERG's indigenous plants. MPYE and BERG started at almost the same time and we have learned together. Russell and Liz have found and collected local seeds, MPYE has propagated them, and we have planted them.

But that's not all. Russell has mended equipment for BERG, provided labour on occasion, and always been there to provide

help and advice. He has been a wonderful friend to BERG. We wish him all the best.



*Mornington Peninsula Youth Enterprises founder Russell Ardley in the nursery at MPYE. Photo, taken in March 2011, courtesy of the Mornington Leader*

BERG Working Bees	Other BERG Activities	Other Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Monthly working bee:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next are <b>19<sup>th</sup> August</b> and <b>16<sup>th</sup> September</b>. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or phone Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site.</li> <li>❖ <b>Tuesdays</b> 9.00 to 12.00. Enquiries to Mary Stemp, 5974 3996.</li> <li>❖ <b>Friday mornings.</b> For details call Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201 or Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430.</li> <li>❖ <b>Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve.</b> Contact Hazel Athey, 0419 899 560.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Waterwatch testing:</b> Monthly at the Augusta St Bridge. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095.</li> <li>❖ <b>BERG Committee</b> meets every 7-9 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30am. Next meeting 25<sup>th</sup> August. All members welcome.</li> <li>❖ <b>AGM</b> 9.30 for 10.00, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October, Mt Martha House</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group</b> working bees. Contact Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker, 5977 1397.</li> <li>❖ <b>BirdLife Mornington Peninsula</b> birdwatching 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. Enquiries Max Burrows 9789 0224, mornington@birdlife.org.au or www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula.</li> <li>❖ <b>SPIFFA</b> (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) 1<sup>st</sup> Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org.</li> </ul>
<p><b>BERG COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>PRESIDENT</b> JOHN INCHLEY • <b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> MICHAEL SANDERS • <b>SECRETARY</b> DI LEWIS • <b>TREASURER</b> RICHARD KIRSNER  <b>FIELD OFFICER</b> LIZ BARRACLOUGH • <b>NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP</b> ANGELA KIRSNER • <b>SCHOOLS LIAISON</b> JENNY SELBY                      • <b>ROTARY CLUB LIAISON</b> GEOFF KAYE • <b>PUBLICITY</b> BARBARA THRIVES &amp; ROS CROMPTON  <b>HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP</b> HAZEL ATHEY • <b>CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP</b> TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
<p><b>PO BOX 433, MT MARTHA 3934 • PHONE: 0447 160 288</b>  <b>EMAIL: INFO@BERG.ORG.AU • WEBSITE: WWW.BERG.ORG.AU</b></p>		

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