

THE CREEK

Volume 16 No 5, October 2012

 **ERG** – Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves
No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

LOOKING AHEAD

BERG member Graham Hubbard recently offered his services to help BERG develop a strategic plan to clarify our role and direction over the next five years, and enable us to grow in size and influence.

With Graham at the helm and his wife Judy as scribe, word-smith and much more, the committee took part in two very productive full-day workshops in September.

Graham is a very experienced business academic, consultant, facilitator, trainer and mentor. We are indeed privileged to have his involvement.

He helped us to ask the right questions about where we currently sit and where we are going. Guiding our thinking was the development of a slightly revised vision for BERG which we articulated as:

To be well-known and respected for preserving and restoring the precious ecology of the Balcombe Estuary and Reserves through its technical expertise, passionate volunteerism and community involvement. (cont next column)



Graham Hubbard conducting the Strategic Planning workshop, with Judy Hubbard and Richard Kirsner Photo Angela Kirsner

SPRINGTIME IN THE RESERVE!



Above: *Acacia verticillata* (Prickly Moses) and 2 photos of *Goodia lotifolia* (an excellent garden plant) near Uralla Bridge; Left: *Pimelia humilis* (Common Rice Flower) spilling over the pathway in the Bunyip
Photos Angela Kirsner

When the draft strategic plan has been finalised (in the near future), a summary will be available on the website.

The workshops were held at Balcombe Grammar School. Our thanks to the school for donating the use of their excellent facilities.

CAN YOU HELP?

TIP VOUCHERS

Do you have green or hard waste tip vouchers for the Mornington Peninsula Shire Waste Collection centre that you don't use? Why not donate them to BERG (PO Box 433, Mt Martha 3934).

MONITORING OUR FAUNA BOXES

Paul Bertuch still needs volunteers to help monitor the reserve's fauna boxes. For details, see the August newsletter or contact Paul on 0488 762 179.

We value your membership!

...but if you've not yet renewed, this may be your last newsletter.

Learn about the fascinating world of bryophytes (lichens, mosses, liverworts and hornworts) from

Dr Pina Milne

at the 2012 BERG

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 20TH OCTOBER

Mt Martha House

Registration 9.30 am, meeting 10.00 am, speaker 11.00

As Manager of Collections at the National Herbarium of Victoria, Pina Milne is responsible for the wide-ranging specimens in the collection and their documentation. Bryophytes are her particular interest. As well as her extensive research, she is a great teacher and communicator.

Nominations for office bearers & committee

Forms are available from the Secretary, Di Lewis, ph 5975 4268, 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 13th October.

BIRDING NOTES

Reproduced with permission from Mornington Peninsula Birdlife, June 2012

My unusual sightings

From Kevin Conlan, Mt Martha

I have been recording unusual sightings in my diary...

At and near Balcombe Estate, Mt Martha: White-necked Heron, Collared Sparrowhawk, Brown Goshawk, Australian Hobby, Tawny Frogmouth, Musk Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot.

I have seen Barn Owls at Mornington and Hastings. On the way to work one morning last August I observed nine Australian Shelduck in a field off Loders Rd Moorooduc (near road works). Striated Pardalotes have been back nesting in our eaves for the last three years.

In winter 2010 I saw a Grey Goshawk in Mt Martha. I read in Penboc News that it was reported by others later that year. I also had 20+ Swift Parrots in my backyard in June 2010.

Birding Tips

By David Ap-Thomas

Cormorants

- Pied Cormorant has long black trousers and a yellow face.
- Little Pied Cormorant has white shorts and yellow beak.
- Black-faced Cormorant is pied with black trousers and black face.
- Great Cormorant is all black with yellow face.
- Little Black Cormorant is all black with a black face.



Pied & Little Pied Cormorants
Photo Arthur Carew

Magpie Larks

- Males have black faces, females have white faces.
- Boys don't wash their faces, girls do.

Martins

- Tree Martins have dull white rumps.
- Fairy Martins have bright white rumps.
- Fairies have nice white bottoms.

Treecreepers

- White-throated Treecreeper: the female has a touch of rouge on her cheek.
- Red-browed Treecreeper: the female has a chestnut blush on her breast.

Ducks

- Male Hardhead has white eye-ring.
- Female Australian Shelduck has the white eye-ring.

THE RAIL RETURNS

BERG's Pam Hearn reported late last year on the appearance in her garden of a family of Buff-banded Rails. In August of this year, she emailed: 'the Rail has returned to our backyard, and appears to be resident in the Norfolk-Hopetoun Reserve. Seen in the Reserve this morning when he flushed and flew down to the gully. I photographed him yesterday foraging in our yard.'



RINGTAILS MOVE IN

Tony O'Connor reports

I took the two photos in this article on my place in August. The first was on my way back to the house with a torch after putting the bins out. The mother possum was up a tree in my driveway, and I could see showing the back of her joey in the pouch.



Two days later, a visiting friend went to put on his boots at my front verandah and yelled out there was a rat in his boot. Realising it was a baby possum, I carefully pulled it out, got a quick photo and let it go up a tree.



From bare block to habitat

My place is a five-acre block bordering Balcombe Creek in Century Drive just off Benton's Rd Mt Martha. Ten years ago, it was a bare block, which I have planted out to indigenous vegetation including a large wetland. The Balcombe Creek bush acts as a great wildlife corridor connecting my property to the Balcombe Estuary.

In the last three years, I've installed a number of nesting boxes and the wildlife has moved in. I love seeing these little animals making a home here. So far this has included numerous species of ducks and other birdlife, frogs (including a Growling Grass Frog), Blue Tongue Lizards, Swamp Rats, Sugar Gliders, and tortoises. These animals have all simply moved in from the Balcombe Creek bush.

Biolinks at work

At least some of the credit for this reservoir of wildlife along the Balcombe Creek must go to BERG. If it were not for all BERG's work restoring the bush-land and encouraging the wildlife downstream, together with the work at The Briars, the wildlife would not be there in sufficient numbers to connect onto other landscapes further afield such as my block.

So THANKYOU BERG and keep up the good work!

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Working bees

Rabbits and woody weeds occupied us at the August working-bee. We cut and painted woody weeds (mainly Polygala, Boneseed and Pittosporum) between the path and the creek just before the beginning of the boardwalk.

But our first task was to trawl through the bush from the campground to the Bunyip, searching for rabbit warrens. We have a contractor to fumigate warrens in this region, but finding the warrens takes time and we aimed to reduce costs by doing this ourselves.

We found lots of signs of scratching, but disappointingly only three definite warrens (though lots of the shallower and smaller burrows of our indigenous Swamp Rats). Apparently conditions in the area are mild enough for scrub rabbits – that is, for many of them to live in the undergrowth above ground, with maybe only the female making a burrow to have her young.



Entry to a rabbit warren near the disused toilet block in the campground bushland
Photo Angela Kirsner

Control options are limited in this built-up area – no shooting, baiting only in selected areas that can be fenced off, while ferrets are only of use for rabbits in burrows.

Keep your eyes peeled!

If you know of or find a rabbit warren in or near the reserve, please let us know.

The Friday Morning Group has concentrated on planting, especially in Uralla Bridge area, the nearby old quarry, the old campground and the Mt Martha village opposite the IGA.



The old quarry is bristling with new plantings! Photo Angela Kirsner

Onerous administration!

It has recently become clear that we now require Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance for activities we run or take part in that are *not* on Shire or DSE land – things such as our workshops or Weedbuster stalls. This requirement will apply to all groups such as BERG. After much research we now have our own cover.

Our on-ground activities in the reserves are covered under the insurance of either the Shire or DSE. All our on-ground works must be approved by the Shire. We must also carry out a 'job safety analysis' for each task; that is, we must list and tell our volunteers of any hazards and measures needed to minimise risk of injury.

Weedbuster

We held our annual weeds information and display at the Mt Martha shops at the start of September, to coincide with the flowering of most weed species. As always, it was a joint event with the Sunshine Conservation and Fireguard Group. We had a new Weedbuster sign, weed identification sheets and brochures,

many samples of weeds, and examples of indigenous plants that could be planted as alternatives. We were particularly pleased this year that many of our 'customers' were interested and more informed.

Keeping track of our achievements

Each time we apply for a grant, we have to assess the proposed work site, and draw up and cost a works plan. After carrying out the work, we are then required to submit a final report to show what we have achieved.

Sites are assessed both before and after the works by a team consisting of Jo Tetteroo from the Shire's Natural Systems Team, BERG's site assessors John Inchley, Sue Betheras and Liz Barraclough, and two team leaders from our contractors, Naturelinks. The assessment includes photographing each site before and after, from the same photo point.

Naturelinks' photos below give some idea of what has been achieved along the foreshore – work that is not obvious from the Esplanade.



Photos taken by Naturelinks in April (top) and September (below) showing work on the South Beach foreshore, particularly removal of invasive Polygala, making way for regeneration of indigenous vegetation

Education

I recently spoke to Deakin University students on our
(continued next page)

management of the Balcombe Estuary reserves. The students are studying the Catchment and Coastal Management unit within the School of Life and Environmental Sciences. They were particularly interested in how our work ties in with and is dependent on management of the whole catchment.

John Inchley had previously taken the students on a guided walk when they visited the reserves a few months ago as part of a round-the-Bay excursion to examine coastal systems and developments.

FINALISING WORKS AT DEVIL BEND

Over the past six months Parks Victoria and the Bunerong Land Council have worked within the Devil Bend reserve to preserve and protect sites of cultural significance. Work to date includes fencing, weeding, site burial and mulching. You are invited to take part in the final stage, revegetation.

When: 10am, 27th October

Where: Devil Bend Visitor Node

What: Planting Day

BBQ lunch & drinks provided

Devil Bend Creek is a tributary of Balcombe Creek and its health is critical to that of our creek and estuary. The Devil Bend Reserve, closed for some years, will open to the public again relatively soon. This is your opportunity to see it ahead of time and help with its regeneration.

BERG welcomes new members:
Diana Johns & Craig Lee
Hansi Wegner & family

Free Indigenous Plants
available to local residents— call
Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430.

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 October and 18th November. 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. ❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve. Contact 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 13th October. 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, mornington@birdlife.org.au or www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula. ❖ 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 THRIVES & ROS CROMPTON HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
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