

# THE CREEK

Volume 17 No 1, February 2013



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

No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

## An Invitation from BERG Mt Martha

Tony O'Connor, creative conservationist and enthusiastic BERG Mt Martha member, will talk about

### Sustainable Living in an Urban Environment

Friday 1 March, 5.30–7.30 pm, at 9 Century Drive, Mt Martha

Don't miss this special, members only opportunity to hear Tony talk about the amazing changes he and Leeanne have made to their 5 acre property since 1997. Enjoy a tour of the house and veggie plot, see the wetland and protected areas, amble to nearby Balcombe Creek, then join BERG members for a sparkling sausage sizzle.



You'll find out about:

- Building a passive solar house using mud-bricks and recycled materials, which keep the interior at a constant 20° or so year round (with almost no power bills!)
  - How to become a creative recycler of construction materials
  - Revegetating to create a wetland, supplemented by roof run-off
    - Creating protected habitats for wildlife
- Making a vegetable garden and chook house that operate symbiotically
- How Tony and Leeanne worked with neighbours to revegetate Century Drive's nature strips



*We hope you can join us!*

*Limited places—RSVP by Mon 25 Feb to: [info@berg.org.au](mailto:info@berg.org.au) or 0447 160 288*

## A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BERG MT MARTHA

*BERG Vice-president Graham Hubbard reports...and invites you to become more involved!*

Late last year BERG Mt Martha developed a new strategic plan for the next five years. While BERG has achieved an enormous amount since its inception in 1997,

the committee felt it important to develop a new sense of direction to focus our energy on the most important aspects of operations, given the competing demands for everyone's time and effort.

### A redefined purpose

To start with, we refined our purpose. It is now:

## CAN YOU HELP?

BERG Mt Martha is running Waterwatch activities at two events. Beside the Creek at The Briars, we will be looking for tiny water creatures in samples of creek water, to provide an indication of water quality.

### MORNINGTON PENINSULA SUSTAINABILITY FESTIVAL

Volunteers needed at The Briars, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March

### MORNINGTON PENINSULA SCHOOLS' ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Volunteers needed at The Briars

- Monday 18<sup>th</sup>, when BERG will be running its Waterwatch activities.
- Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> to Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>, for other environmental activities with the students.

**IF YOU CAN HELP AT EITHER EVENT, CONTACT JENNY SELBY: 0432 719 288, 5974 2402 OR [JSELBY22@GMAIL.COM](mailto:JSELBY22@GMAIL.COM)**

*No experience needed, all help appreciated!*

**BERG Mt Martha**

welcomes new members:

Dominique Coleman & family

Marilyn Koerner

*BERG Mt Martha aims to preserve and restore the precious ecology of the Balcombe Estuary and Reserves through its technical expertise, passionate volunteerism and community involvement.*

This fundamental aim of preserving and restoring the reserves is under great pressure as the Mt Martha population expands. We plan to find ways to work on

*Cont next page*

**A New Strategic Plan** *from page 1*

more of this precious 44 hectare reserve to preserve it from the impacts of urban run-off, non-indigenous plants, dogs, feral cats, rabbits and mynahs – just for starters!

The Balcombe Estuary is the largest intact estuary on the eastern side of the bay and it needs our active support if it is to survive and prosper.

**More active volunteers needed: how you can help**

The key to building our preservation work is, of course, increasing the number of our *active volunteers* – always a challenge in a volunteer organisation. While we are delighted to have the support of around 450 members, we currently rely very heavily on a small, dedicated group of around 30 people for the work we do.

And that's where we need your help. We would love to encourage

some of our other 420 members to become more involved, so that we can achieve more for the Reserves. We are always looking for members with skills like weeding (of course!) but also grant writing, contract administration, environmental skills and knowledge, website/IT, practical 'fix-it' skills, lobbying and administration.

**Raising community awareness**

Our strategic plan analysis also revealed that, in spite of our best efforts, BERG Mt Martha is not well known in the community for the fantastic work it currently does, has done in the past, and wants to do in the future.

We need to educate the Mt Martha and Mornington community about our work, and at the same time, increase awareness of the uniqueness of the estuary, the social value of the boardwalk, the creek and its tributaries, and the wonderful diversity of plants

and birds we all enjoy here. Our new Community Awareness and Education Group is working on a range of activities to address these issues right now.

**An invitation!**

The BERG Mt Martha committee invites you, our members, to become active contributors to our work, whatever your skills or interests. Many hands make light work! Together, as a group of passionate volunteers, we can make a difference in our local community by preserving, restoring and enhancing this precious local asset for everyone's long-term benefit.

Call Graham Hubbard (0408-740-270), Barbara Thraves (5974-2185) or Jenny Selby (5974-2402) if you have some talents that you would be prepared to contribute occasionally (or often!) to fit our needs



THE ROSE SERIES, P. 2642  
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PANORAMA AT MOUNT MARTHA, VICTORIA

**As we were...** This Rose Postcard image, held by the State Library of Victoria and available from its Trove website at <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/61605>, must have been taken fairly early last century. The land bordered by the clipped cypress hedges is the triangle between Victoria Cres, the Esplanade and the sewer easement. The building in the foreground is an outhouse of a larger house, out of the picture to the right, which was destroyed in a spectacular fire in, as I remember, the 1950s. Police horses once grazed here, and the core of the house was a n early station for police riding around the Peninsula. In the distance is Mt Martha House (left) and Melrose (right), which later became Maryport guesthouse. There is no sign of the campground - just bushland! **Angela Kirsner**

## FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Welcome back and thanks to the 13 enthusiasts who turned up on a hot, dry January day to our first Sunday working-bee for 2013. What a tough lot! We achieved so much. Some spread Saturaid and watered the recent plantings in the old campground them. Others removed woody weeds in the riparian zone between Henley Avenue and the start of the boardwalk.

This, like much of BERG's work, is hidden from general view, but we have converted almost impenetrable weedy thickets of Polygala and Boneseed to a thriving Swamp Paperbark woodland with an indigenous understorey of Hop Goodenia and Coast Beardheath now clearly discernible. The team found the work so satisfying that they were happy to return after morning-tea, even when, most uncharacteristically, I was ready to let everyone go early due to the heat! But it really was great to complete the follow-up weeding of this area.

The **Friday Morning Group** will reconvene after the school holidays. Check your emails or texts, as over the next few months our working-bees will be weather-dependant. We will start at Uralla Bridge, checking our earlier work and planning for the coming months. Our focus will be on monitoring and maintaining the two areas this group has been working on for some time: around Uralla Bridge, and the Hyacinth Orchid area. We will also keep an eye on sites that may need a bit of extra TLC, such as around the shops, and the campground.

### New workers welcome!

If you have a morning free, regularly or occasionally, join us!

**Fridays** 10.00–12.30 am, contact Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201 or sue@momentum-learning.com.

**Tuesdays** 9.30–11.30am, contact Mary Stemp on 5974 3996 or mstemp@iprimus.com.au.

## ALL WELCOME TO A FREE MONITORING AND SITE ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

Friday 1st March, 10am-12 noon

Meet at Ferrero Ovals

*Aim:* To equip us better to monitor the results of our work in the reserve. Topics will include:

- biodiversity and the need for monitoring
- rapid vegetation assessment and the tools required
- use of photo points to keep a photographic record of species.

*RSVP to:*

Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201,

sue@momentum-learning.com

Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430,

liz.barra50@gmail.com.

The **Tuesday Morning Group** will restart when the weather gets cooler. Mary Stemp will keep existing members informed.

### Grants

We recently received \$8,750 from the Mornington Peninsula Shire for maintenance works, rabbit and other pest control, and nesting box maintenance and monitoring. This annual funding is part of the Shire's ongoing commitment, in both cash and kind, to support BERG and maintain and restore the Balcombe Estuary Reserves.

We are waiting to hear about applications for three other grants, for on-ground works and administration. Watch this space!

### DEAR BERG...

Thanks for yet another great and informative issue of *The Creek*. I regret my inability to participate in working bees... but I still remove some of the weed species that I am sure are the enemy.

...I have seen numerous pairs of Rufous Whistlers over the last few weeks in addition to the many species spotted by Pam Hearn.

Best regards to all the hard-working members of BERG and congratulations on your magnificent achievements.

Sincerely, Brian Pullman, Dec 2012

*Brian is one of BERG's longest-standing members, joining in March 1998.*

## IN BLOOM

Angela Kirsner reports

Hyacinth Orchids, *Dipodium roseum*, have been blooming in the reserve over summer, as they do every year. Sue Betheras counted over 30 plants in recent weeks, over double the number seen in recent years, as well as quite a few bare brown stems that had either finished flowering or been eaten, perhaps by possums.

As usual, the orchids have been sprinkled around either side of the path below the Ferrero Ovals. There have also been a few in the reserve and the opposite nature strip along Maude St.

The photo shows a cluster of plants beside the path on the creek side, close to where greenhood orchids bloom in winter.



Photos: top, Sue Betheras, bottom, Angela Kirsner

The dark, green to reddish-black flower spike sprouts up to 90 cm high from a stout rhizome and produces 15-40 rose pink flowers with small dark red dots. With no leaves, it cannot produce its own food – it is a saprophytic orchid, which means that it gets its nourishment from dead and decaying organic matter, which it obtains via a mycorrhizal fungus.

## MT MARTHA QUARRY – WETLAND OR DEVELOPMENT SITE?

Concern about the fate of the old municipal quarry site on the Mt Martha Esplanade dates back to 2003, when the Shire Council proposed to rezone the land and sell it for residential development.

Quarrying stopped here in 1987 and the site became an authorised dumping ground for debris from local road projects. It remains, however, one of the few parcels of undeveloped land on the local coastline, and a Council-commissioned environmental report recommended that it be included in the Mount Martha foreshore reserve.

Despite its currently derelict and in parts weedy state, it has cultural and heritage value and it supports

indigenous flora and fauna of high regional and local significance.

BERG Mt Martha supports the Friends of Mt Martha Quarry in their quest to have this irreplaceable asset included in the Mount Martha foreshore reserve, and realise its potential as a wetland and flora and fauna reserve. To add your support, contact the Shire or the Councillors for Seawinds Ward, Councillors Celi, Gibb and Pittock.

For more information, see Peninsula Weekly's article ([www.peninsulaweekly.com.au/story/1161126/mt-martha-quarry-sell-off-plan-attacked/](http://www.peninsulaweekly.com.au/story/1161126/mt-martha-quarry-sell-off-plan-attacked/)) and the facebook page of Friends of Mt Martha Quarry ([www.facebook.com/SaveMountMarthaQuarry#!/SaveMountMarthaQuarry/info](http://www.facebook.com/SaveMountMarthaQuarry#!/SaveMountMarthaQuarry/info)).

BERG Mt Martha Working Bees	Other BERG Mt Martha Activities	Other Local 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>17<sup>th</sup> February</b> and <b>17<sup>th</sup> March</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 in the cooler months. all Mary Stemp, 5974 3996.</li> <li>❖ <b>Friday mornings</b> 10.00-12.30. For details call Sue Betheras, 0408 808 201.</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> 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at the Augusta St Bridge. Enquiries to John Inchley on 5974 1095.</li> <li>❖ <b>BERG Committee</b> meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday at Mt Martha House, 9.30am. Next are 9<sup>th</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> March. All members welcome.</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, <a href="mailto:mornington@birdlife.org.au">mornington@birdlife.org.au</a> or <a href="http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula">www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula</a>.</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 <a href="http://www.spiffa.org">www.spiffa.org</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE</b> PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • VICE PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • 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 • MICHAEL SANDERS HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELD RESERVE GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR		
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### THE CREEK

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