

## WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

**Botanical name:** *Persicaria decipiens*

**Common name:** Slender Knotweed

**Family:** Polygonaceae

**Flowering Period:** December to April.

**Sector:** Found in the Yarra Sector, (all of the Bend of Islands south of the powerline easement) and the Co-op Sector, (all of the Bend of Islands north of the powerline easement roughly equivalent to the land comprising the "Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative")

**Size:** Prostrate to 0.6 metres high to one metre wide.

**Habitat:** Widespread in riparian forest, gully woodland, swampy riparian and woodland valley forest. A semi-aquatic perennial or annual herb of freshwater environments, it grows in water or mud and on the edges of rivers, creeks, permanent water bodies and drainage lines.

**Description:** Upright at smaller sizes, becoming more vigorous & spreading as it grows higher. The long leafy stems recline on the ground, with the flowering stems pointing upwards at the ends. Many bright green leaves cover the prostrate stems. The plant is glabrous (smooth without hairs).

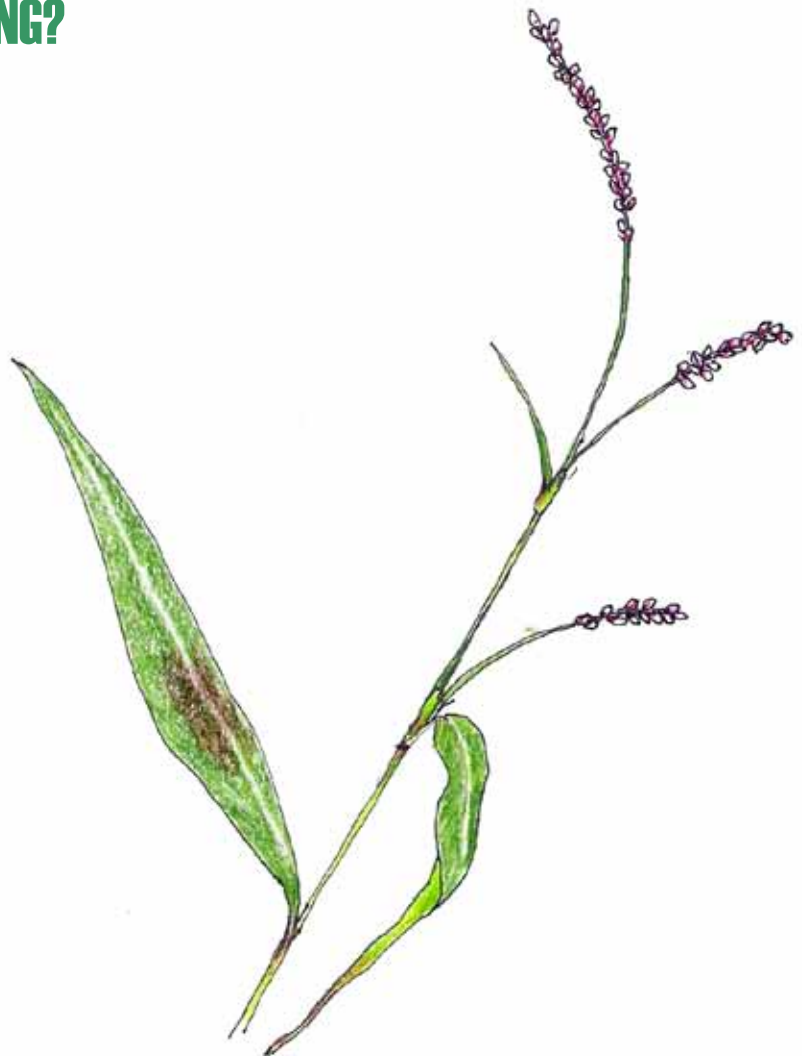
**Flowers:** In Summer and Autumn the leafy stalks are topped with small pink and white flowers in slender drooping spikes, to 50 mm long and 2-4 mm diameter. A spike is a flowering structure of sessile (stalkless) flowers on an unbranched axis.

**Leaves:** Lanceolate (lance shape tapering at each end) to 5-12 cm long with a red or purple blotch around the middle of the upper surface. Sheathing stipules (bracts) at base of the leaf stalk are fringed with bristles.

**Growth Habit:** Grows in full sun, to partial and complete shade. Has a high waterlogging tolerance. It dies back in winter and extended drought periods.

**Notes:** Provides good protection for frogs and the seeds of the flowers are an important food for waterbirds. Propagation is by seed or division.

**Cric Henry**





# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Firstly I would like to thank the community for their support and confidence in electing me as President of BICA. These are very large shoes to fill and I hope I can match the impressive list of past incumbents. With the help and support of our current and very capable committee I'm confident that the coming year will be a productive one for everyone.

I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank some outgoing committee members – Michael Pelling who has acted most recently as Treasurer and previously as President and committee member for countless years. Gavin Masters for his role as Secretary and general BICA representative to the outside world. Phil and Leanne Wierzbowski for their roles as committee members and great supporters of BICA and its relationship with the Wurundjeri. All these residents have spent a significant amount of their own time ensuring BICA runs smoothly and remains a viable organisation. We gratefully recognise and thank them for their efforts and hope they keep in close contact with BICA. Thanks also to Robyn Duff our immediate past President under whose guidance we now have the Bend of Islands Land Management Plan which will form the basis of our conservation work well into the future.

One of my goals for this year as President is to increase support not just for BICA but for the Bend of Islands generally. We have all chosen to live here because what is here is what we like. We have invested in the values of the area and our return on investment will largely depend on how we improve on those values. We will be working on implementing the Land Management Plan and will be asking and encouraging all residents to help out. We will be utilising our Landcare activities for this. Come along, it's a great way to help out and socialise at the same time.

The current committee have been busy on a number of fronts with a lot of effort going into the Conservation Corridors project, nest boxes, protection of endangered orchids, eradication of weeds, camera surveys, dunnart housing project and a number of social events.

We successfully obtained funding through the Conservation Corridors project to employ local contractors to conduct weeding on the escarpment. This project is ongoing and we will be looking to fund more conservation work. Of course much of the work we would like to carry out is on private land. We would encourage everyone to take the opportunity to improve their own property and the Bend of Islands generally. It's the environmental integrity that will ultimately add the most value to your land.

Many members have "won" a nest box. These were sourced from The Men's Shed in St Andrews and will be installed by a local contractor. BICA will monitor them to see who is moving in. Of course you as the winning resident can also be part of the monitoring process. It all goes to help document what makes up our local area.

Everyone who joined or renewed their membership to BICA received our 2015 calendar. This was coordinated by the publications sub-committee and contains 12 fantastic photographs from around our local area. I'm even pleased to say that they were better photos than my meagre submissions. This is our third calendar and we hope a fourth is not out of the question.

The BICA calendar is also full of social activities, from flora & fauna walks, to canoe runs, to kids' days, and the infamous Night Event. These are important elements in being a part of the community at large and we will continue to foster these events for everyone.

In closing I would like to say that we are looking forward to a very productive year with the help and support of as many residents as possible. If you have any comments or suggestions or you would like to participate further please feel free to contact me or any of the committee members.

Neill Kamminga

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# BICA MATTERS

## RECOGNITION OF THE BEND OF ISLANDS COMMUNITY



Since our last Newsletter, BICA was recognised by being awarded a Nillumbik Shire Sustainable Community Organisation Award 2014.

Mention was made of BICA's formation some 45 years ago, of the valued biodiversity of the area, of the special zoning achieved to protect it, of members' tireless work in understanding and enhancing the quality of the bush, of the organisation of the many social activities and the many practical conservation projects undertaken.

BICA is a great example of how a motivated and knowledgeable group of people can have a significant influence on environmental outcomes.



## WELCOME TO THE BEND

Welcome to NEW BICA MEMBERS, we hope you enjoy participating in our community.

Nadia Delai,  
Nashira Carr,  
Mike Cole,  
Jess Bull  
Cynthia Menon.

## Getting to Know your BICA COMMITTEE

The BICA Committee is a very active and dedicated group who meet monthly and need to be kept up-to-date with Agendas & Minutes. This is Felicity's role!

### Meet Felicity Rose



I have lived in the Bend of Islands with my sister, Emma, her 5yo son and 2 nephews aged 4 and 5, since December 2012. I have always been drawn to the landscape of this area, and in particular the Yarra

River. I grew up in Lower Templestowe and spent many hours at Finns Reserve, went to school in Eltham and visited friends in Kangaroo Ground. My first job was in Warrandyte, and in my late 20's I lived just over the river in Wonga Park. So the general area is very familiar and special to me.

After living in the warm and balmy NT for 5 years where I worked for Parks Australia at Kakadu National Park, I returned to Melbourne in 2012 determined to live somewhere peaceful in the bush, and soon afterwards came across our home which, as well as meeting all my criteria, suits our family situation perfectly. Because I am so grateful to live in this beautiful protected area, I joined the committee in December 2013 as a way to give back to it. I take the minutes and put together agendas for our monthly meetings. This enables me to contribute in a small way while learning from the other committee members who have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share. One of the many things I love about living in this area is bringing kids up here. Watching my nephews in their dressing gowns and gumboots following the path of a swamp wallaby up the hill in the early morning reminds me how lucky we are to be where we are right now.

## CONTACT BICA:

Secretary BICA Committee: [bicacomm@gmail.com](mailto:bicacomm@gmail.com)

BICA Website: <https://bendofislands.wordpress.com/>



# BICA WORKS



## Working with our Shire

### Nillumbik Conservation Corridors

#### Project Update

Since 2012, we have kept you informed of projects that BICA has been able to carry out thanks to funding received from the Nillumbik's Conservation Corridors project. The Bend of Islands is not the only community involved in this project: a total of 10 Landcare groups stretching from St Andrews to Osborne Peninsula (Warrandyte) are also participants

To date, across the Shire, many exciting projects have already been implemented, aiming to conserve and improve the habitats of our rare and threatened flora and fauna through the Kinglake – Warrandyte wildlife corridor.

We would like to give you an update on what BICA has been able to carry out recently thanks to the funding we have received from the NCC project.

#### Orchid Plots

We have recently received funding to erect small exclusion plots around some of our rare and threatened orchid populations. These fencing plots will vary in size and be installed on both private and public land, with the aim of protecting the orchids from disturbance and grazing.

The orchids targeted are;

- Mayfly Orchid (*Acianthus caudatus*)
- Slender Pink-fingers (*Caladenia vulgaris*)
- Fringed Helmet-orchid (*Corybas fimbriatus*)
- Parson's Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*)
- Cinnamon Bells (*Gastrodia sesamoides*)
- Large Autumn Greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp. aff. *revoluta*)
- Common Ruddyhood (*Pterostylis squamatus*)

The funding covers the supply and installation cost of the fencing plots, with Tserin being engaged to install them. BICA would like to thank Frank Peirce for taking on the role of project coordinator and for the cooperation of land owners, thereby allowing this project to take place.

## Orchid Calendar

BICA have 50 Orchid Calendars, funded by the Nillumbik Conservation Corridors project, available for community members. The calendar lists the flowering time for a number of native orchids found around the Bend of Islands and other parts of Nillumbik Shire. This is a great resource!

You can collect your poster at the next Cafe Benders. We also have a number of 'Frogs of the Northeast Green Wedge' posters too, so if you haven't received one, or would like another one, they will be available at Cafe Benders, too.



## NILLUMIK LANDCARE NETWORK

VISIT: LANDHOLDER EXPO

SUNDAY 3 MAY

Hurstbridge Community Hub

50 Graysharps Rd, Hurstbridge. Melway 185 J9

More info: Jackie Waring 9433 3214



# BICA WORKS

## Nest Boxes

30 fully installed nest boxes, funded from the Corridors project, were allocated from the BICA Membership Nest Box Draw.

The nest boxes were constructed and painted by St Andrews Men's Shed. The boxes are a mix of 500mm and 400mm in height and approx. 300mm deep. They are designed for Phascogales

Deidre made a minor modification by installing carpet inside the roof of the boxes to deter use by Bees. The Boxes will be installed by a local contractor.

BICA proposes to monitor these nest boxes on a six-monthly basis using the NSC nest box camera - a tiny camera on the end of a long pole. We also ask residents report any observations of use to us please.

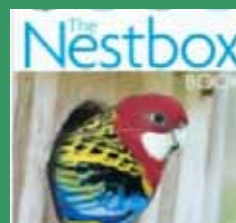
### BICA Winners

Congratulations to the following BICA members. They have won a fully-installed phascogale nest box for their property.

- Graham and Mia
- Marie and Wolfgang
- Tom and Carol Ann
- Andrew Mackie
- Nashira
- Lauren and Nathan
- Jeff and Mandy
- Syd Tunn
- Eleanor and Chris
- Neil and Jenny
- Barb and Alan
- Nick and Rae
- Flavia & Graham
- Marion and Alwyn
- Carol and Alan
- Rob Laughlin
- Ray and AB
- Luke and Mia
- Chris and Peitra
- Gavin and Mal
- James and Tobey
- Cric and Ross
- Wayne and Patricia

Six boxes were won by the Round the Bend Co-Operative members.

*Deirdre Lucas and Jo Henry*  
BICA Coordinators NCC Project



If you are interested in finding out more about Nest boxes, go to the Gould League Website [www.gould.org.au/](http://www.gould.org.au/)



# LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

## FEEDING ON THE WING

Birds fly. They are masters of it and are known for this skill.

Remarkably few birds in the Bend of Islands primarily use flight exclusively to feed. Some birds do use a method called “flycatching”. These birds sit on a perch and then fly out to catch insects on the wing. In the Bend, birds that you might see doing this include many of the small and medium birds that feed among the leaves. These include fantails, honeyeaters and, of course, flycatchers.

While there may be millions of insects in a cubic kilometre of air, flight is very energy intensive so a bird needs to catch a lot of insects to create a positive energy balance. The number of insects increases in the warmer months so many of the birds that feed on the wing are visitors to the Bend.

There are four groups of birds in the Bend that feed on the wing on flying insects. They are regularly seen together in mixed flocks allowing comparisons to be made between them. Although not closely related to one another, they can look similar when seen briefly.



*Welcome Swallow*

### Swallows and Martins

Of the birds that truly feed on the wing the most common in the Bend are Welcome Swallows. They are usually best seen flying over open areas such as Yanakie or above the Yarra although they also feed over the forested areas. They are not very strong flyers and are not usually very high with quite fluttering flight. Welcome Swallows are dark blue on the back and pale grey underneath so as you watch

them fly, you can see this alternation between dark and light. Very occasionally in the Bend, swallows have been seen accompanied by Martins. Both Tree and Fairy Martins look very similar to Swallows however, both have a prominent white rump. This can be seen as a white patch between their lower back and tail as they bank and twist. In addition, martins have square tails while swallows have a forked tail.

### Woodswallows

These mostly visit us during the warmer months with the Dusky Woodswallow breeding locally. Slightly larger than Swallows and Martins, Woodswallows are very differently coloured. Dusky Woodswallows are all dark with an obvious white tip on the tail. They are often seen in groups of 4-5 and can be very high overhead. They are noisy birds and can be heard calling (Cheu-Cheu) even when they are so high they are nearly impossible to see. Other species of woodswallows also visit the Bend through the warmer months (Oct – Mar). White-browed Woodswallows pass over sometimes in very large flocks. They are dark blue-grey on the back with chestnut underparts and if the light is good, their white brow can be very prominent. They are very noisy with a constant “Chat-Chat” call all the time they are in flight. With the White-brows, there are sometimes a few Masked Woodswallows,



*White Throated Nightjar*

which are a paler blue-grey with pale underparts and a black face. Just once a White-Breasted Woodswallow has been recorded in the Bend. These birds are common north of the Great Divide but are only rarely recorded to its south.

### Nightjars

Much harder to see are White-throated Nightjars. These night birds have long wings relative to their body size and feed in open areas such as over dams and roads, as well as above water bodies, to scoop up flying insects. However as they do this at night, they are not often spotted. During the day, they rest on the ground or along large branches well hidden by their plumage. They are present from October to April. While being hard to see, nightjars’ weird “laughing” calls are often heard on summer evenings in the dryer ridge areas of the Bend.

### Swifts

Swifts are total aeronauts. Two species visit the Bend through the summer from the Northern Hemisphere; White-Throated Needletails and Fork-tailed Swifts. They rarely, if ever, perch while they are in Australia (so much so that they are often depicted in field guides as dead birds as this the most likely way you will see them when they are not on the wing) and are usually seen in our area in late summer and early autumn. They are strong birds with swept-back wings. They fly rapidly with infrequent wing-beats from just above the trees to enormous heights where they are too small to see. They can form flocks many hundreds in size. They are overall a dark colour both with a paler white rump. In South Eastern Australia, Needletails are far more common than Forktails. They can be difficult to tell apart as Fork-tailed Swifts often fly with their tails closed making it hard to see the Fork, but when they stall at the top of an upward run, they open their tails before swooping away. While they can be seen at any time through the warm months, swifts are often spotted around summer thunderstorms when they feed on insects caught in the updrafts.

As you read this and we move into autumn, most of these birds will be leaving southern Victoria to chase insects in the warmer parts of Australia or even New Guinea and the Northern Hemisphere. Therefore, as we move into winter the most likely birds feeding high in the sky will be the Welcome Swallows.

**Gavin Masters**



# LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

## Stevenson Creek – An Environmental Hotspot in the ELZ



Stevenson Creek practically skirts the entire northern boundary of the ELZ from Ashmore Rd to where it joins Watsons Creek on Yanakie. It is an environmental hotspot and its value is demonstrated by the following outline of some of the records taken along the creek over the last few years.

**Birds:** The walk along the creek on Yanakie is the favourite of the bird group because it's the only place where we can consistently see more than 50 species. Regulars include Spotless Crake, Reed-Warbler, many ducks and raptors and sometimes the Lyrebird or the Powerful Owl. Lewin's Rail was a rare find, recorded on a couple of the dams in 2013 and 2014.



Lewin's Rail, Duggo's Dam

**Lyrebird:** Analysis of the records taken since 2000 clearly indicate that the Lyrebird utilises the Creek as its regular route into the ELZ. The route used by these birds is along the escarpment from the north (25 records near Gate 3 to Sugarloaf Dam on Skyline Rd), along Stevenson Creek (75 records) then into the main ELZ area (141 records)

**Butterflies:** The creek environs have good numbers and species diversity of butterflies (24 species recorded) including Banks Brown, Forest Brown, Shouldered Brown and Spotted Brown. It is the only reliable location to find Spotted Brown in the ELZ.

A developing population of Creeping Mistletoe *Muellerina eucalyptoides* has recently been discovered and it is hoped that this will attract the Dark Purple Azure *Ogyris abrota* which has not been recorded in the area for many years.

**Dragonflies:** Good dragonfly numbers and species diversity (24 species recorded) have been found on the creek. The Scarlet Percher, *Diplacodes haematodes*, Black-faced Percher, *Diplacodes melanopsis* and Wandering Percher, *Diplacodes bipunctata* are regularly recorded at the same location. The concurrent occurrence of these 3 species is most unusual. Some species,

such as the Swamp Darner, have not been found elsewhere in the ELZ



Spotted Brown *Heteronympha paradelpha*

**Jewel Beetle:** *Astraeus navarchis* was recorded at the creek this year. It is very rare, doesn't have a common name and one expert, who has not seen the species in 40 years, thinks that this may be first time a live specimen of the species has been photographed.

**Other Critters:** The creek is alive with a vast range of invertebrates, both along the banks and in the water. Like elsewhere, most of these are out of sight so out of mind, with an important but almost unknown inter-relationship with the overall health of the environment.

Other inhabitants include freshwater molluscs such as Mussels and Snails; and freshwater crustaceans such as Yabbies.

Continued on next page



## Stevenson Creek – An Environmental Hotspot in the ELZ

Continued



Scarlet Percher *Diplacodes haematodes*



Short-finned Eel



*Astraeus navarchis*

**Short-finned Eel:** A mature female Eel was monitored at a very small isolated waterhole on the creek, near the east end of the Aqueduct, for 19 days in February this year. The most likely scenario is that it had lived in one of the smaller upstream dams for about 20 years and is now making its way downstream to the sea. This is the start of the next phase of its amazing life cycle. Its stomach shrivels because it stops feeding, and then it makes a 4000km journey to lay thousands of eggs in a deep ocean canyon, somewhere near New Caledonia in the Coral Sea.

**Orchids:** Several locally rare and threatened Orchids are recorded on the slope next to the Aqueduct which runs adjacent to the Creek. These include Wine-lipped Spider-orchid, Twisted Sun Orchid and Plain-lipped Spider-orchid. None of these have been found elsewhere in the ELZ in recent years.

**Weed Control Works by Melbourne Water:** Melbourne Water does programmed weed control along the Creek, as part of its MW Healthy Waterway Strategy, and on the Aqueduct Reserve which it has nominated as a Conservation Area. BICA is appreciative of this; however we have made the case for an increase in the scope of these works due to the environmental significance of the creek, its location within the Warrandyte Kinglake Habitat Link and the high quality of the adjacent environment. We have had a positive hearing but to date there is no documented program of increased works. We remain hopeful!



*Wine-lipped Spider-orchid*

**Keep in touch with local Nillumbik environmental activities**

**Join the Nillumbik Environmental Network to receive Fringe Focus**

**Joining the NEN is easy; call 9433 3316 or email: [environmental.events@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:environmental.events@nillumbik.vic.gov.au) .**





## BIRD NOTES

The following can be reported since October 2014.

### Lyrebirds:-

14 new records in our area have been reported by Quentin Mattiske and F Pierce. 7 of these were from Stevenson Creek, the rest were from north east of the ELZ. The birds seem to be currently staying somewhere near the pumping station and not penetrating very far into the ELZ.

The details of all Lyrebird records reported since July 2000, with some data analysis, will soon be on the revised BICA Website.

Please pass on details of any 'encounters' you are lucky enough to have with these iconic birds. The records are valuable as they form concrete evidence that the Warrandyte-Kinglake Habitat Corridor is working and that Stevenson Creek is an important part of this link.

### Bird Survey Highlights:-



*White-throated Gerygone*

The October Bird Survey was a good one at Yanakie. 57 species were recorded, including a **White-throated Gerygone**, a survey first. (It was recorded in 1992 by Terry O'Brien at what is now the Skews' house)

On the February survey walk both **Fairy Martin** and

**Tree Martin** were recorded and good views were had of a pair of **Collared Sparrowhawks** at Yanakie.

The March survey total of 50, in the area north of Henley Rd, was a record total for surveys other than at Yanakie. An immature **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was observed being fed by an adult.



*The happy bird wanderers at Yanakie*

### Other Interesting Observations:-

The successful raising of a **White-throated Nightjar** chick in the ELZ over the previous summer was reported in the last newsletter. The birds were heard again this summer confirming their return to the area. Despite some serious searching, the breeding site of the birds were not located.

An Eastern Koel was heard on Gongflers Drive on the evening of 9/12/14. One was also heard about this time in 2013.

**Painted Button-quail** has been seen near B Track on the Co-op in February and March.

The Birds Section of the revised BICA Website will be available soon. It will have lots of information about the birds of our area, as well as an up to date summary of our on-going bird survey.

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings you make and pass them on to Frank Pierce, (97120237), or email – [jmandfp@bigpond.com](mailto:jmandfp@bigpond.com) - especially Lyrebirds.

All are welcome to join us on the bird survey walks on the second Sunday of each month. Times are as per the BICA Calendar.

**Frank Pierce**

## A New Butterfly Recorded in the Bend

Gavin Masters recently recorded a Varied Sword-grass Brown; the 38th butterfly species to be recorded in the Bend in recent years.

It was flying high in the canopy and was seen from his balcony which is close to the River.





## Doratifera quadriguttata strikes again

In an unprecedented attack on eucalypts in the Bend of Islands, the Four Spotted Cup Moth (*Doratifera quadriguttata*) has decimated a significant number of red box and Stringybark eucalypts. Along Henley and Skyline roads patches of trees have been thinned by the caterpillar of the moth, which is small (up to 35mm long), bright green, with black and white spots on its back and tiny raised red hairs that can sting when the caterpillar is disturbed. The caterpillars are gregarious and tend to hang around together. The other obvious feature that I have noticed is that their droppings rain down from the trees like poppy seeds.



The caterpillar pupates in a hard cocoon and when the adult moth emerges it is small and brown (about 3 cm across) with four small spots on its wings. The moth lays about 40 eggs.



The current outbreak of Four Spotted Cup Moths follows another lesser outbreak at about the same time in 2014. The good thing about the situation is that the caterpillars seem to attack only a few trees in a group and the trees will recover.

### References

Coupar P & Coupar M (1992) *Flying Colours*, Sydney, NewSouth Wales University Press  
Coffs Harbour Butterfly House (2015), <http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/lima/quadri.html>, date of access 24 March 2015

Robyn Duff



Defoliated Stringybark



Close up of Defoliated Stringybark (left)



## RAVENS FLOCKING

We have two species of raven in the Bend, the Australian Raven and the Little Raven. It is hard to distinguish between them but the Australian Raven has a higher pitch call that often ends with a slow descent, whereas the Little Raven has a less interesting mid range call. The Australian Raven also has more pronounced hackles, the fluffy bit on the front of the neck, than the Little Raven.

You may have noticed the large flocks of Ravens probably a mix of both, in the area, sometimes up to 50 birds, sometimes intermixed with a few Magpies. This seems unusual as the Australian Raven and the Little Raven are largely sedentary with adults having partnered for life and remaining as pairs with their brood in an area of about 120 hectares. These broods overlap but not to the extent of that which we are seeing at the moment.

The flocks we are now seeing are juvenile birds, having left their parents and formed flocks when they are four or five months old. Smaller flocks of 8–30 birds stay within an area of around 260 square kilometres, while larger flocks of up to 300 birds may travel hundreds of kilometres seeking food.

So it is not the start of a Hitchcock thriller. They will disperse eventually and things will return to normal.

Ross Henry



## Chimney Builders Inc.

A few weeks ago I discovered a tiny 20mm-ish diameter chimney on the ground in our backyard – made by ants. In all the years I've wandered around our property I had not seen one of these before. Holes in the ground a-plenty, some surrounded by mounds, but not with this exquisite architectural entrance lobby.

As the emerging ant (about 10mm long) went off to work I hastily snapped another photo of it but a leaf obscured much of its vital statistics, making identification difficult. Ajay Narendra, an ant expert in the Department of Biological Sciences at Macquarie University looked at my inferior portrait and was reasonably confident that it was from the genus *Camponotus*, but couldn't be certain about the species.

Regarding the entrance edifice, I consulted Frank Attenborough Pierce, who thought these were possibly built in anticipation of rain, and there were echoes of this idea on the internet. It makes sense that the raised structure would prevent ground run-off draining into the nest.

The day after I took the photo I found the chimney lying on its side, perhaps given a sideswipe by the beak of a foraging chough, or in the path of a passing possum. I watched the remaining hole in the ground for several days, but no chimney repair was undertaken, and no ants were about at the times I checked.

In the meantime I looked up some ant facts that we all learn at school then forget, and some years on we find them fascinating all over again. For instance, adult ants only feed on liquids, which they extract from their prey. Usually the solid food we see them laboriously carrying will be given to the larvae in the nest. The worker ants we see out and about are all females. Male ants (drones) are in the colony simply to fertilize a virgin queen, after which they die. Ants have an exoskeleton – armour on the outside – rather than an internal skeleton like humans do. Instead of lungs they have tiny valves in their exoskeleton for oxygen and other gasses to pass through. A perforated tube along the top of the body acts like a heart and pumps internal fluids around. Each of the antennae of an ant has an elbow, allowing it to bring the tips near its mouthparts when inspecting close objects.

Two weeks later I noticed some ants near the nest that had originally boasted the chimney. They seemed a little excited, and were aggressive towards other ants that were presumably from another colony. This time I was better prepared with the camera, but I suspect they are not my original stone masons. They have a distinctive shiny green gaster (the rear abdominal segment).

Elsewhere on our property some ants with the green gaster are currently busy building a large flattish mound only on the low side of their entrance, so that seems to support my belief that they are not the chimney builders. Smaller ants – perhaps 8mm – with a black gaster are digging out the sand around a pipe under our driveway during the mornings, clocking off around 10.30. Their construction is chimney-like, but more like a small plum pudding – not at all narrow and tall like the one that originally earned my admiration.

If anyone else has spotted narrow ant chimneys in the Bend of Islands and/or has some idea of what ant species builds them here, I'd be interested to hear.

I note the BICA website has information on plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies. Perhaps someday soon our collective observations will be enough to add a section on Bend of Islands ants.

Alan Bluhm  
fprints@netspace.net.au

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*Ants with green gaster on one-sided mound*



*Wider chimney, like a small plum pudding*



*Black gaster ant on the plum pudding chimney with quartz in its mandibles*



## BEND OF ISLANDS COMMUNITY

### LANDCARE NOTES

As we begin a new year, the BICA Landcare group is back to work. The focus of the first working bees of 2015 has been drawn from the Bend of Islands Management plan that Dylan Osler and his team produced for us.

Weeds have been selected for attention where they have been identified as species that can have a critical impact on the bush in our area by changing habitat balance. These plants can grow at extremely high rates and smother out the existing flora, in general, creepers and climbers! The other factor that has been considered in drawing up the "Plan of Attack" is how the weeds are spread. Again, attention has been on those, which are spread by birds and animals. Due to the mode of distribution, these plants can extend the area they affect very quickly. They also spread in a more random way making control a challenge.

With this as the starting point February had a team working in Henley Road Extension removing Bluebell Creeper (*Billardiera heterophylla*). The final pile from the group was about 2X3X4 metres and should make quite a bonfire when the weather cools down. The work was timed to remove the plants before the fruit had ripened to prevent it being spread through the neighbourhood by birds and foxes. The work was followed with homemade bread and cake and great coffee.



*Green mounds of Bluebell Creeper before removal from Henley Rd Property*

The March Working Bee was at the end of Ironbark Road. This time the focus was on the removal of Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), Winter Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*) and other weeds that happened to be in the line of fire. Clearly, work had already been carried out by Melbourne Water, so it was good to follow up and remove some of the plants that had resprouted or were higher up on the riverbank.

As we move into autumn and the ground starts to soften with the rain, we will continue the focus on these weeds. The next target will mostly likely be Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) as we work in conjunction with the Council funded works of the Conservation Corridors Grant.

We look forward to seeing every Bender at one working bee, at least, each year!

**Gavin Masters**

### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2015



On Sunday, 1 March, BICA once more sponsored our local participation in the annual nationwide Clean Up Australia Day program. This year we again extended our cooperative ventures with the Wurundjeri People and moved one centre of our operations to their bushland site at Keilor, along the Maribyrnong River below the Tullamarine airport. This site, known in Wurundjeri as Murrup Tamboore, is well known for the discovery of the Keilor Skull, which extended our understanding of the length of Aboriginal habitation in Victoria. Other archaeological and paleontological discoveries point in the direction of the possible co-existence of Aboriginals and the great mega fauna of Australia. The site is about a 45-minute drive from the Bend.

Wurundjeri Elder Dave Wandin offered some background information about the site, which has suffered significant erosion and weed infestation but gradually is being restored to some semblance of its natural state. Because of the erosion caused by the realignment of Dry Creek, artefacts are often found along the creek banks. A dead tree near where the skull was found exhibits a possible scar indicating a burial site.

The elite group of workers attending the site included Dave Wandin, Liz Mildenhall, Mal Chicksen, Gavin Masters and Tom Fisher. Phil and Leanne Wierzbowski had the best of intentions to join after attending a family function, but the clean-up group was simply too efficient and finished the work before they could arrive. About 10 clean-up bags and a healthy (unhealthy?) stack of rubbish were left at the site (see photo), which was at the end of a track too muddy to negotiate, for collection after the track had dried out.

Meanwhile, an even more elite Gang of Four toiled along Henley road on either side of Watsons Creek and collected several more bags of rubbish. This group consisted of three Paulis (Ned, Jarrah and Rudi). Pierre Noirjean and Peter Mildenhall joined in to gather up some leftover hard rubbish from Lower Catani to deposit in the skip provided by the Shire.

Thanks to all volunteers.



## BEND OF ISLANDS COMMUNITY

### Community Involvement



Since the last newsletter we've had: a Pub Walk through Pound Bend and Warrandyte, a brilliant Night Event of talent, fun and dancing under the stars, Christmas Benders with small and bigger kids carolling, a Canoe Run on our beautiful Yarra, Clean-Up Australia Day both here and on Wurundjeri Land in Keilor and another terrific Kids Event. Thank you to all the people who put their time and talents into making these events happen.

At times the calendar seems a bit too busy, but the different events cater for a variety of interests and so even if there's a small turn up it can be very enjoyable, informative and worthwhile. Let's know if you have thoughts about this and/or events or interests you'd like to pursue or offer in the future.

In the next few months, as well as the regular events, we have a bike ride and big walk planned and in June the flora walk will look at sensitive and effective ways to manage kunzea.

**Liz Mildenhall**

## PIGS IN THE BEND

Unfortunately it seems we have at least two (hopefully same sex!) pigs loose in the Bend over the last few weeks. The pigs were initially spotted by a friend and a family member of Shelli and Sven in Catani Blvd in late February and tell-tale scrapings were observed near the sharp bend in Catani near the Jessie Bull Reserve.

Deirdre and Michael were able to set up the wild life camera and obtained some great shots including this one! The camera shots were taken near the old dam in the gully above the Jessie Bull Reserve.

The Shire has been very supportive in trying to identify ownership of the pigs with a view to them being re-captured by the owners or eradicated.

It is very disappointing that these pigs were able to escape, we presume, and some considerable damage has already been done particularly on the damp watercourse areas. Pigs should not be in the Bend in any circumstances as they are not considered a grazing animal therefore not covered by any prior rights on properties.

At the time of writing the owners have not been located and plans are being made by the Ranger Services Unit at the Shire to eradicate the pigs.

Please let the Shire know if you see any feral and/or stray animals in the Bend. There is always a delicate balance to be maintained in the Bend and feral animals or straying domestics have no place in it.

**Peter Mildenhall**

# 2015 BICA CALENDAR

## May

- 9&10 Bol Artists Open Studios
- 10 Bird Walk, 8.30am
- 16 Café Benders
- 16 Firehouse Cinema
- 17 Landcare
- 31 The Big Walk

## June

- 7 Flora Walk
- 14 Bird Walk, 8.30 am
- 20 Café Benders
- 21 Landcare
- 28 BICA General Meeting

## July

- 4 Trivia Night
- 12 Bird Walk 8.30am
- 18 Café Benders
- 19 Landcare with Co-op

## August

- 2 Flora Walk
- 9 Bird Walk 8.30am
- 15 Café Benders
- 15 Firehouse Cinema
- 16 Landcare





## FROM THE FIRE BRIGADE



Our Christmas Hills Fire Brigade Captain, Dianne Simmons has this to say-

### START PLANNING FOR NEXT FIRE SEASON NOW!

We have been very lucky to have had a mild fire season with only a couple of significant fire days. With climate changing as we watch, we are not likely to get too many seasons like this one, so we need to keep planning every day to make our houses and properties better able to survive bushfire...so time to start thinking about next fire season now!

Research from a number of significant bushfires tells us that we can expect around 60% of houses in, or within 50m, of bushland to be destroyed by bushfire on extreme days, and over 78% of all bushfire fatalities have occurred within 30m, and 85% within 100m, of forest. So for those of us who choose to live in the bush because of the pleasure we get during most of the year, we need to take planning for bushfire very seriously. Basically, we need to focus on the 30m immediately around the house, and reduce vegetation and ground fuels as much as possible, to reduce the radiant heat, direct flame contact, and ember attack impinging on the house. The second focus is on the construction of our houses so they can withstand a period of exposure to high levels of radiant heat, and severe ember attack. However, with careful planning, houses can be made very resilient to bushfires.

Householder actions are a major factor in house survival, for example, a survey following Black Saturday 2009 indicated that 77% of houses that were actively defended by one or more people survived the fires. Active defence can involve high risk, so we can't be complacent about the attention to detail needed. "Wait and see", and sheltering passively, are very dangerous options. On days with a Fire Danger Rating of Catastrophic, it is safest to assume there is nowhere "safe" in the bush.

We have had Brigade elections, and we are now looking forward to our new Captain Pete Rae, well known to everyone in the Bend, to take the Brigade forward for the next two years.

Dianne Simmons

## To keep up with what's happening with your local Fire brigade-

Summer News is the Christmas Hills Brigade's email newsletter. If you would like to receive the newsletters regularly, and occasional email information, send your email address to: [robyn.adams@members.cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:robyn.adams@members.cfa.vic.gov.au)

### Find us on facebook

In addition to the Brigade's email newsletter summer news, and our website <http://www.chfb.info/>, we are also now on facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/ChristmasHillsFireBrigade>

If facebook is your social medium of choice, then find us on facebook and like our page. We aim to just keep you in touch with Brigade activity, but the page isn't monitored 24/7. For warnings and advice you still need to visit the CFA website or their facebook page.



## From the Editor

### Christmas Hills Fire Brigade Update

Dianne Simmons has retired as Captain of the CHFB and we would like to thank her on behalf of the Community for all the hard work she has done over her time as Captain

The Brigade met on Wednesday evening April 1st for their annual elections.

Congratulations to Peter Rae our new Captain.

## CAFE BENDERS

Come and join us for Coffee and Cake at Café Benders held every third Saturday , starting about 10.30 am at the South Fire Station, 6 Catani Bve, Bend of Islands.

All proceeds go to the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade





## CHILDREN'S CORNER

### Charlie's Quoll

Charlie really wants to see a quoll walking through his bush and this started him thinking about all the things he does enjoy in the Bend of Islands



I like living in the Bend of Islands because we have a river near us and we can go on the canoe run. We can play monopoly also the Night Event, the Movie Night, at the Christmas Hills Fire Shed. Also like the trees to climb, animals and running around the block.

*I like living in the Bend of Islands because we have a river near us and we can go on the canoe run. We can play monopoly Also the Night Event, the Movie Night, at the Christmas Hills Fire Shed. Also I like the trees to climb, animals and running around the block. Charlie Rae Aged 10 years*



### THE KID'S EVENT

The Kid's Event was very FUN! Some of the kid's got face painted. There were dragons, flowers, swans, crowns and peacocks.

Next we did Wurundjeri songs with Kurt. We stomped our feet and clapped our hands. We learned some Wurundjeri words like Wynundebul, which means "fire hills" and is the name of where we live.

Then we did games with Rodrigo like a wombat charging into us and we had to move to the side. Another game we played was "The virtual Forest", where we imagined running through the bush, jumping logs and ducking tree branches that hung over our path.

After that, we did a bush quiz where we had to name different species of trees and animals that live in the Bend. Then we did a "poo hunt" where we learned lots of different sorts of animal droppings, for example, a possum dropping, a wombat dropping, a river rat dropping and a kangaroo dropping.

Then we did something very fun and exciting! We got to go on a flying fox that stretched from one giant of a tree to another. Then we did ab-sailing. It was fun and scary!

BY KAMI. 9 YEARS OLD





## Sounds of the bush

Peter Dougherty

The day draws to a close  
I walk on the lengthening shadows  
Deep into the bush

Emerging from a tunnel  
Sculptured from overhanging Burgan  
I hesitate

Confronted by a golden orange glow  
Late sun on distant hills  
Nearby butterflies collect and dis-  
perse

Ambient sounds  
Of high swaying branches  
Of birds saying goodnight

Suggestion of insects  
These are the sounds  
The texture of night's silence

**Thank you** to all who contributed to this Newsletter. Keep writing and sending me your articles and photos of the Bend of Islands.

The Editor  
jmandfp@bigpond.com

## Junior Field Naturalists

The Junior Field Naturalists meet in their own hall in Blackburn on the last Friday of the month. They are a part of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. It has an awesome, precious archive collection with ancient books and has many display cases of specimens inside. There is a field trip every month visiting interesting places.

For more information on the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria see [www.fncv.org.au](http://www.fncv.org.au)



Ichneumon Wasp, *Theronia maculosa*



Banks' Brown, *Heteronympha banksii*



Badge Huntsman Spider, *Neosparassus diana*