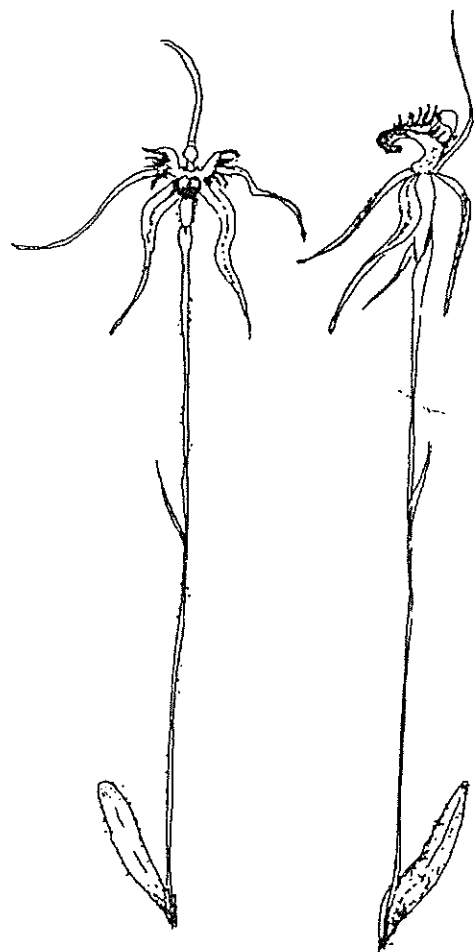


BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

President Alan Bonny 9712 0648 C/- Post Office Kangaroo Ground 3097 - Editor John McCallum 9712 0319

Number 37



WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING?

Botanical Name: *Caladenia dilatata*

Common Name: Green Comb Spider Orchid or Fringed Spider Orchid

Family: Orchidaceae

Flowering Period: Spring to summer

The Green Comb Spider Orchid is the most abundant of Victoria's nine different spider orchids. It is widespread throughout Australia and occurs in a variety of habitats from the grassy understorey of heathlands to the drier open forests. Single spectacular spider orchid flowers are borne on long stems, 15 - 45 cm high. At the base of the stem is a single oblong to lanceolate leaf, 5 - 10 cm long. Both the stem and basal leaf are hairy. The large flower is up to 10 cm across and is distinguished by 5 spidery segments up to 7 cm long, which are yellowish green with a red central stripe. In the centre of the flower is the labellum ('tongue' or 'lip') which is the modified front petal of an orchid. The large green tongue is curved backwards and has a glandular thickening on the surface, a crimson apex and the distinguishing long, erect, green, comb-like fringes on either side. The startling, colourful tongue attracts pollinating insects to the reproductive parts of the flower.

Cric Henry

President's Report

For our last newsletter for 1996 I will take the opportunity to review the year. This newsletter has continued with its usual high standard due to the diligent work of the editorial and production crew, together with the input of articles from you, the members. Keep the articles coming in. Any thing from a note of only a few lines to a longer article that might occupy a few pages are equally welcome. All make for an interesting and informative publication.

Our Community Involvement sub-committee has provided a diverse range of activities over the year. Talks on possums, orchids and flora, our annual night event, a trivia night and a walk to the pub have been part of a full calendar. Any new ideas for 1997? Let us know with your membership renewal.

The Planning sub-committee met regularly to challenge themselves with the ongoing issues of local government restructure, the proposed rural zones, the surfacing of Henley Road, local land sub-division and a host of other day to day matters that have a habit of cropping up.

The Landcare group organised working bee days and have set in motion a propagation program as well as representing our group on the Nillumbik Landcare Network Group. Emphasis on the Oxley Bridge area is getting results to enhance the gateway to the Bend. By the time you get this we should be ready to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Twenty years since ELZ became part of the Shire of Healesville's planning scheme. This is an opportunity to enjoy ourselves and demonstrate that the ELZ is viable, vibrant and essential to provide the lifestyle and, most importantly, the environment that we all enjoy. Make November 17th a special day for ourselves and our guests.

In this newsletter is a subscription renewal form for 1997. Your membership for 1996 will expire soon and BICA needs your support. Planning issues are still high on the agenda and we can only have an impact if we have solid community support. Please renew now and join us for annual general meeting on Sunday, Dec. 1st to close 1006 and prepare for 1997. Don't forget to return your BICA Dozen raffle tickets/butts for the AGM draw!

Alan Bonny

Possums

Talk by guest speaker at general meeting, Sunday 18 February 1996

On arriving at Jenny and Neil Taylor's home on a sunny, summer Sunday afternoon, members may have been confused that we were about to partake in some line-dancing or a barn dance, but it was the ever-generous Taylors letting us use their not-quite-a-livingroom-yet for our general meeting. The bales of comfy hay had been provided for extra seating.

We'd gathered to listen to Peter Brown, a lecturer at Deakin University, talk about the research he's involved with regarding issues of wildlife management, in particular with regard to brushtail possums in urban areas where they are considered pests.

What! Those lovable, sweet-faced, apple-, bread- and anything else that's not protected-eating, furry delights -- pests?! Well, it seems that there are around 16-20 licences handed out annually to wildlife controllers (pest controllers!) which are usually large companies. In the past no one knew how many possums were being handled under each licence; although the licensee was required to report to the then Department of Natural Resources, it just wasn't been done. It was assumed that these licensees trapped animals and then released them at another point such as a golf course, reserve or similar. It was also assumed by Peter and his research team that most of these relocated possums became fox-fodder or did badly in the nesting site and feed stakes as there were already resident possums in each relocation area.

The RSPCA then became involved and the licensees were required to drop each captured animal at the Burwood office of the RSPCA where officers would relocate the possums to preferred areas. This also gave both the RSPCA and Peter and his researchers a number of captures for the first time -- it was a staggering 4,000 possums per annum! However, this of course didn't include the illegal catches by members of the public and the relocations they achieved.

Peter then gave us some facts on the ecology of the brushtail possum. They are known to live up to 12 years in the wild, however 83% of males and 50% of females die in the first year of life; they have bimodal breeding with an average of 1.4 young per year (not all females breed twice); they are basically solitary animals and have both vocal and olfactory communication.

The research team at Deakin wanted to know what happened to relo-

cated possums so they designed a project similar to what the RSPCA was doing, but at Silvan Reservoir. They tracked 64 animals trapped in the eastern suburbs by attaching radio-collars to 12 and marking the others with ear-tags and reflective tape. After 70 days only two animals with radio collars were left alive and the bulk of the 64 animals were dead before ten days had passed. Peter commented that sometimes as a wildlife manager the projects he helps devise and take part in really upset him.

His conclusion regarding the way we were dealing with a perceived problem -- that of urban possum pests -- was inhumane.

At the time of the study the RSPCA didn't like the results at all, but now support Peter's on-going work which is to change the perception of the 'nuisance' urban possum. Often the problems around the suburban home are not caused by possums. 90% of the time noise in the roof will be a rat, not a possum; several cases of stains on the ceiling said to be caused by possums peeing in the roof have been proved to be storm damage only occurring when certain weather conditions prevail, and so on, It's not always that big, bad poss! (Although as Peter is the first to admit, often it is!)

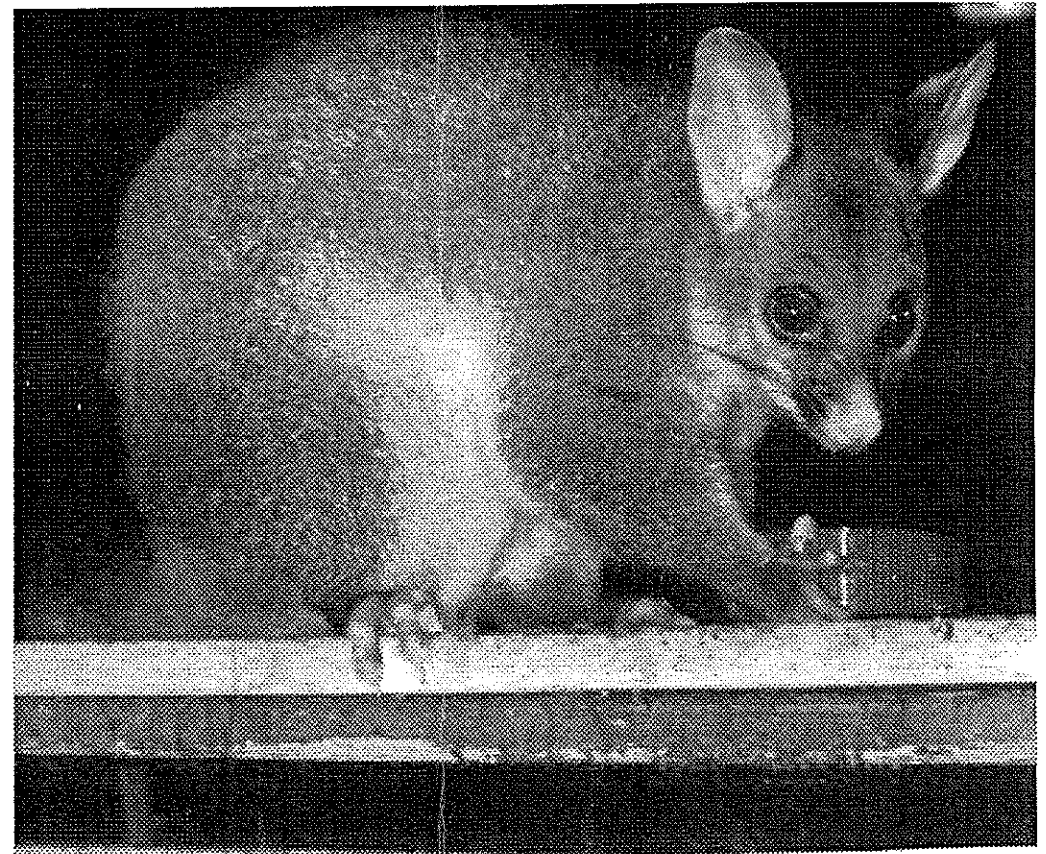
Peter's idea is that possum translocation be banned completely. This, of course, will mean that the wildlife controller industry would be out of work, but Peter's idea is that these people turn into wildlife excluders, by offering advice and the means for suburban homeowners to possum-proof their homes. Homeowners need to provide nest-boxes around the garden and then do some management around the home. Put up iron tree guards on precious trees and remove upper canopy branches which connect these trees to others and trees which overhang the house. This will hopefully exclude possum access to the house and roof space. It's a matter of learning to live with the possums, not treat them as something awful to get rid of!

We then saw a range of slides especially showing the possums in the Fitzroy Gardens which Peter has been studying regularly. While talking us through these, he mentioned that although what we know as common brushtail possums are OK in numbers in Victoria they are not as widespread as they used to be and Western Australia has just placed the species on the vulnerable list, mainly because of fox predation in that state. South Australia is concerned about numbers too, especially in rural areas but they

are still doing OK in Adelaide.

During Question Time Peter was asked whether feeding bread to possums is OK. He replied that they can be susceptible to lumpy jaw so huge amounts of bread would certainly not be a good idea, however, he made lots of good friends in the Fitzroy Gardens feeding them raisin bread! He did comment though that even in winter when the food source changes from elms and oaks in the Gardens, the possums then come down to the ground to eat grass and clover which is then in good supply, so they don't actually need to be fed at all in most areas, it just makes us humans really happy!

Barb Whiter



On the Wallaby

There are two kinds of people in the Bend of Islands! Those who live on the ridges and those who live on the slopes. But there is only one kind of wallaby and we loves the slopes; most of us at heart are retiring creatures. Catch us up on the main drag and we'll run a mile. Not uphill mind you; not on your nelly! Downslope's the way to go 'cos burgans our home. We and our cousins the roos are as different as chalk and cheese; for they're a gregarious mob who go big for numbers. But take a decko at your road statistics: definitely not the way to go. But for the motor car, the gun and the dog the hills would be alive with kangaroos. Better the quiet of the riverlands and the courage it takes to run away to fight another day. You can have the main drag. Besides it's a whole lot cooler down in the burgan with water laid on and no fear of the wind getting up to blow you away.

Course like everything else it's got its problems. Burgan's not the best of diets in anyone's cook-book One meal of burgan's as bad as the next. That's where you people come in. Nothing like a side-dish of *Indigofera Australis* and *Hardenburgia violacea* (Jeez, the names ya give our fancy salads). We get ours at the Woiwod's down Gongflers way (more of your wog lingo). By the way the blacks - those Wurundjeri chaps (hey, where the devil have they all gone) - they used to call us 'Wimbi' - like *Indigofera* (the plant, not the name), it's a whole lot easier to get your tongue around too. And I'll tell you what, you had to be on your toes them days or you ended up yourself on the main course. Anyhow, as I was saying we get ours at the Woiwod's. Sometimes up on their back porch after what them pesky rosellas leave behind. Course they don't like it much. Sometimes we see them looking at us through the window as we tuck into their indigenous stuff. Got into their vegetable garden just recently and had a right ball - now the fence around it goes right up to the sky.

Mind you we're nowhere near as solitary as some of you might think. We get together at times in our quiet little way when no one is looking. Talk about laugh! A year or two back the W's really caught us off-guard. Admittedly the sun was up and we were a bit late with our salad. But, anyhow, they caught us red-handed scoffing what's left of their *Indigofera*. There was me and the missus, who had young Joey in the pouch at the time, and Wimbi our teen-ager son, who's still the larrikin he was then, hopping around like a mad thing. Four of us in all not counting the *Indigofera* and there they were staring at us through the window wondering where the devil they'd hidden their camera. Course it's not the sort of image we like to project but then again I don't suppose any of you fellows or sheilas out there have ever tasted a side-dish of *Indigofera* first thing in the mornin'.

Mick Woiwod

Walk, Talk and Gawk

An enthusiastic crowd gathered at Janet Matisse's on C Track for the beginning of our field day on Sunday, September 15. Steve and Val had a great array of books on flora for us to browse through before our trek into the bush. Lots of discoveries of fungi and orchids were made as we set off up towards Skyline Road. A lesson in Acacia identification was given with encouraging results; Lynn can now say she has hedge wattles (*A. paradoxa*) growing near their abode.

Waxlips, greenhoods and pink fingers were among some of the orchids we came across on the Muir's beautiful property adjacent to the co-op. Handsome flat-pea (*Platylobium formosum*) and common hovea (*H. linearis*) were a couple of the not so commonly seen species. Birds nests were spotted, grasses discussed and spittfires marvelled at.

After a couple of most enjoyable hours we ended up back at Janet's for a cuppa and cake and then settled down to watch an old Forests Commission video. Very interesting. A great afternoon was rounded off with a BBQ which allow for much Talking about the Walking and Gawking.

Thanks to Steve and Val for organising the day and to Janet for the venue.

Carol Bonny



Working Bees - What's Been Going On.

We have had four BICA working bees this year. Three have been conducted under the auspices of the Landcare Group and there was also our National Clean-up Day contribution.

National Clean-up Day was held in March and we once again moved a huge quantity of rubbish from the bush around the Bend of Islands also stretching as far as the southern area of Christmas Hills. This year we managed to separate the recyclable rubbish from the junk. The Shire of Nillumbik collected the recyclables and their contractor collected the skip full of junk. I never cease to be amazed where all this stuff comes from. True, much of it has been lying around for years and years; but each year there is an amazing quantity of new litter. Trailer loads of stuff are still being dropped in the bush. Then there is the litter that is tossed out of cars driving along our roads. It's amazing that in this day and age people still toss rubbish out of cars, but they do.

The other working bees have concentrated on the control of weeds at Oxley Bridge. Our Landcare group have decided to put the effort into the area around the bridge as it is becoming very weed infested and because the bridge is really the "front door" to the ELZ. We have had three working bees this year following two working bees there in 1995. While we have followed-up on last year's effort which concentrated on the weed *Watsonia* (*Watsonia borbonica*), our main efforts in 1996 have been on Angled Onion Weed (*Allium triquetrum*) and removing a large invasive honeysuckle. Our work on the *Watsonia* and the honeysuckle have been very successful, but the bloody onion weed takes so much painstaking effort we have decided to also devote our efforts to its control in 1997.

The marvellous people who have donated their time and effort at the working bees have started to limit the spread of the onion weed in the area on the north east side of Oxley Bridge. We have removed many bulbs and plants and have started covering larger areas with carpet underlay and mulch. Using this method we plan to weed around the indigenous vegetation and to cover and then replant the more concentrated infestations of the

weed. I am optimistic that we can be successful in stopping the onion weed from spreading right through the beautiful bushland along Watsons Creek.

To this end and on behalf of the Landcare Group, Phil Vaughan has applied for a grant of about \$5,500.00 to help control the Angled Onion and other weeds at Oxley Bridge. The plan is to use the money to have a full weed and plant survey done, to develop a fully assessed plan to tackle the problem, to purchase requisites (weed mat, plant guards) and hopefully to have some funding for the work of a Save the Bush crew to supplement our working bees. Hopefully, that the application will be successful.

We need your help on these working bees. We promise you some painstaking and even frustrating work, a few little miracles (such as grass clumps covered in sapphire blue jewel beetles), good company and fine morning teas - billy tea of course. See you in 1997! Watch for the signs on the bridge.

Incidentally, I wonder who it is that pinches the signs from the bridge? It is worrying that someone could remove the various signs used to inform our community of social events and the work parties which help to maintain our marvellous bushland. The signs are only ever on the sign-tree for five days or so, and are always removed as soon as the event is over. I feel sure that stealing the signs will not stop or spoil the various events, nor the sense of community in the Bend of Islands.

Peter Gurney

HISStory

(Her Story) Snakes are out and about with a number of early sightings in the area. A large brown snake, about half a metre from my toes and a report of a tiger snake having a bathe in the Krause's pond, not far from their door.

Snakes (together with all reptiles) are protected by law and are a fascinating part of our ecosystem. They are unlikely to bite people; it is best to leave them alone. Please note any sightings of snakes and other reptiles for our wildlife records.

Carol Bonny

Our Aboriginal Heritage

Over the past twenty-five years the Bend of Islands, because of its unique location and remarkable attributes, has been a place wherein countless studies have been carried out yet, in all that paper-work, scarcely mention whatever is made of the district's Aboriginal heritage.


The reasons for this rather remarkable state of affairs appears to be twofold: the dearth of readily available material and the overall apathy of the times. Indigenous flora and fauna has been always seen as important, indigenous culture as of only peripheral concern. As a result we have almost unlimited information about the past twenty-five years yet little or nothing of the region's preceding 100,000. It's a bit like trying to unravel the mysteries of, say 1900, by an intensive study of its last 120 minutes. It is just not good enough!

Slowly however the imbalance is changing. Every year sees new material emerging with always attitudes changing for the better. For instance, recently it has been established that Australia has the oldest rock art in the world. It would seem our indigenous people have been playing their role in the making of this remarkable continent of ours far longer than any of us in our wildest dreams could have imagined.

The thing to remember, then, is that right here in the Bend of Islands all those years ago there were living, breathing people with the strategies in place that have seen it safely through to the present day. What we see around us today in the Bend of Islands is to some large extent the result of indigenous curation. Surely it's time we tried to see if we couldn't establish a better rapport with that world. For, after all, they were seeking to preserve practically the same fauna and flora we seek to preserve today. And here we are, all the time, trying to build the better mouse-trap without recourse whatever to a wonderful store-house of knowledge just waiting to be opened and reinterpreted.

The key to understanding, I believe, is to first unbuckle ourselves a little from present day constructs and allow ourselves to be drawn into the remarkable world of the indigene. Language is perhaps as good a place to start as any, since it, together with those other forms of communication - art, music, dance and song - are among the best carriers of identity and culture.

For example, the Wurundjeri names of all our present day flora and fauna survive yet, apart from burgan, ballart and tuan, we use the common names of their English look-alikes - tea tree and cherry, etc. Even tuan is a misnomer since

in Aboriginal times  term referred to one of our smallest gliders. Why not make an effort to popularise more of our indigenous names in our everyday speech. And why not, while we are about it, resurrect, in some form at least, the Wurundjeri name for the district - Wyenondabul - it rolls off the tongue just as smoothly as any of those other wonderful 'W' place names like Warrandyte, Warnambool, Waracknabeal, Wandin and Wannaroo.

Then there are the local myths and legends for our painters and musicians to work on - the myth of how 'Warrandyte' was created - of how the Yarra came to be - the legend of 'Bunjil' the Wedge-tailed Eagle who according to the Wurundjeri created the whole of this indigenous world of ours. Then there is the legend of 'Waa' the crow, who first brought fire to the land. And why not while we are about it look into the way these remarkable people once viewed the constellations of our southern skies.

And then there is the more tangible evidence these people left behind. For example just a few weeks back Aboriginal Affairs Victoria officially registered a 'scar tree' right here in the Bend of Islands - a four metre long canoe had apparently been cut from a young red-box some 150 years ago. The same day, a large stone scraper, unearthed on the river (Oxley Road), and a remarkable silcrete outcrop (Kangaroo Ground), was also registered. Then there are the three earthen mounds already recorded (yet not professionally investigated) also the tool production site as further reminders of their one time presence right here in the Bend of Islands. And at Kangaroo Ground there is a documented example of a landscape modified by fire-stick farming.

Reconciliation is in the air and one of the best ways for us to bridge the gap would be for us to develop a better understanding of how the Indigene saw his world. Perhaps a good starting point would be to get together a small discussion group to see where it all might lead. May 1996 marks the twentieth anniversary of the referendum that saw our indigenous people able to stand up and call themselves Australians. Perhaps the Bend of Islands could play its role too in making the big celebration a success. If there is any one out there interested in discussing the furtherance of understanding, or an event in May 1997 perhaps they might care to give me a call on 97120563.

Mick Woiwod

FIRE BRIGADE NEWS

The Fire Brigade is made up of members of the local community and hopefully reflects the values of the community. Our aim is to provide relevant information about effective fire prevention, maximum protection from bushfires for individuals and assets, and rapid response to other incidents in the area such as house fires and motor vehicle accidents.

HOUSE SURVIVAL DURING BUSHFIRES. There has been a lot of discussion over the past 15 years about the extent of clearing and fuel reduction required around houses to maximize their chances of survival during bushfires. The consensus is that if you want your house to survive a bushfire:

1. Stay at home and defend it - **DON'T EVACUATE**
2. Make sure that you have a source of water and a pump to access it
3. Make sure the house is well sealed to stop any entry of embers into the roof space or under the floor
4. Remove easily combustible materials near the house, e.g. woodpiles, mower fuel, front door mats
5. Make sure fuel levels for 20-30 m around the house are **LOW** to reduce fire intensity.

New research suggests that we need to think in terms of **OVERALL FUEL** for maximum fire safety. Low ground fuel ("litter levels") are not enough - we also need to reduce the levels of shrubs ("elevated fuels") and rough bark ("bark fuels") within 30 m of houses. Even with minimal ground and shrub fuels the overall fuel level can be rated as **EXTREME** if there are a significant number of stringybarks which have not been burned for about 10 years near houses.

So can we save our houses and keep the bush? We think so. We recommend that **WITHIN 30m of HOUSES** you minimize ground fuels, remove dense shrubs or leave scattered clumps, and also consider burning the bark off long unburnt stringybarks on days when surrounding bush is unlikely to burn. Burning bark can shower over a fairly large area so the bark burning needs to be done with care (and a good water supply !!). Better now than on a roaring summers day though! The brigade is prepared to assist with this new technique.

MIST - Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics. In the past, a common response to requests for a slight widening of tracks to allow improved access to properties for tankers has been to suggest that we should bet on not having any bushfires - so we aim to have minimal clearance and impact **NOW**, but accept that

in the (probably unlikely) event of a major fire, we do whatever we need to do to suppress the fire - chainsaws, helicopters, bulldozers, the lot!

A new concept is to plan acceptable and effective suppression now, to reduce the overall impacts on environmental values into the future. In many areas, the impact of suppression activities have been far reaching and much more damaging than any fire prevention work would have been. The basic idea is to avoid problems by planning well ahead. For example, fire retardants such as Phoscheck (basically high in nitrogen and phosphorus) may be worse than any septic outflow for healthy vegetation and with impacts lasting for decades. Also the impacts of heavy machinery will be hard to rehabilitate especially as the dry period associated with major fires is often followed by heavy rains, resulting in significant erosion. The brigade would welcome some discussion by BICA members about some strategies for ways we can ensure that our fire suppression activities are appropriate for the area, given our responsibility to actively put fires out.

PEOPLE. Many people live in the area because of its environmental values, and the brigade has a commitment to do its best to maintain those values, as well as a high level of fire safety. If you want the brigade to keep working in this direction, we need **YOU!** There are many things to do. You can be an active firefighter (we specially need more people who are home during the day), you can raise money by working with the Friends of the brigade (or just drink lots of coffee at the station on Saturday morning), you can make sure you protect your house and have a plan to survive bushfire, you can keep in touch with the local brigade "network" so you know what we will be trying to do in the event of a bushfire in the area. For example, the brigade encourages everyone to plan to stay at home during a bushfire, and for most people we don't recommend evacuation, and as far as possible, we will allow locals to return to their homes if they are out of the area. **BUT** we really need people to participate in the activities of the brigade to achieve any of this!

For further information contact any of the Officers or members of the brigade - you can catch a few at Cafe Benders!

Dianne Simmons

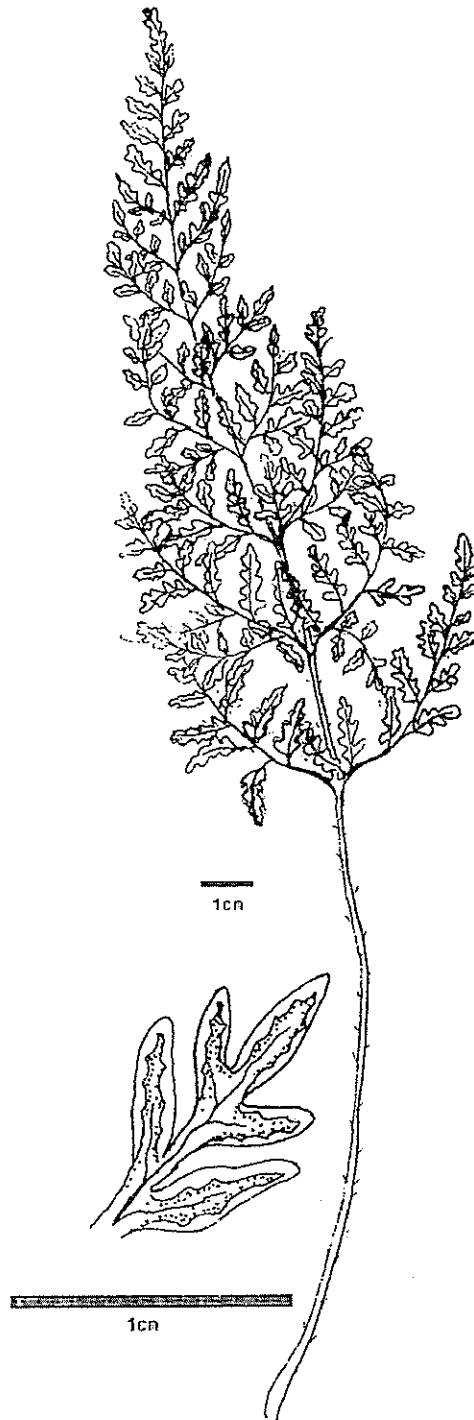
Local Ferns: Rock Fern

Ferns, like all other kinds of plants have a phase in their life cycle where an ovum (egg) has to be fertilised by a sperm cell. Sperm cells can only move in watery conditions. Flowering plants manage to get all of this done inside the flower where it is sufficiently wet. With ferns, however, this quite secretive process occurs outside the plant. The sperm cells need water to move in and this is why we usually associate ferns with moist environments, either warm or cool. The sexual phase in fern reproduction simply requires wet conditions.

There are, however, ways in which ferns (and other kinds of plants for that matter) can reproduce without any sexual process. This usually involves creeping underground stems (rhizomes) which send up periodic shoots which can eventually become new plants. Another non-sexual method of reproduction was mentioned in the previous newsletter. Necklace Fern (*Asplenium flabellifolium*) is able to create new plants where the naked end of the frond comes to rest on the ground. Such methods of asexual reproduction do not rely on a particularly moist environment. As long as the 'parent' plant can survive, asexual reproduction is usually possible.

The Rock Fern, *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*, is a member of a large genus which has been able to move into ecological niches which are not usually occupied by ferns. Many species of *Cheilanthes* are able to withstand reasonably dry conditions or, at least, situations where the rainfall is irregular. Economy of water use and reduction of water loss are essential to the survival of plants and animals in such conditions. Plants have strategies to minimise water loss and members of this genus employ a number of these.

- One is the possession of hairs on the leaf and stem surface. This is an adaptation widely encountered in plants that live in arid or semi-arid environments. The hairs tend to



trap close to its surface any water that has evaporated from the leaflet. This layer of water vapour inhibits further water loss through the openings in the surface of the leaflet.

- Another strategy is to have fairly small fronds with thin branches. This results in a low leaf surface area. The surface is of course the place where water is lost.

- Members of the genus *Cheilanthes* have leaf margins more or less rolled in and this is another way in which a layer of water vapour can be trapped, a third way of reducing water loss.

- In extreme conditions such as prolonged drought, *Cheilanthes* species can act as 'resurrection plants', that is they can shrivel and appear to be dead, only to recover when sufficient water becomes available. Most of the few species of ferns that can be found in the inland of Australia belong to this genus.

- Finally of course, many species of *Cheilanthes* are able to reproduce asexually, not relying on a continuously moist environment.

Our local species is *C. austrotenuifolia*. This species is found in the ELZ in moister locations such as creek and river banks. In such places it grows to about 300mm high and often forms lush carpets of bright green. The stems are a rich shiny reddish brown with scattered pale coloured scales. The frond is triangular in shape with the branchlets somewhat overlapping each other.

On drier hillsides the plants are much smaller but still show the other features.

Close examination of the pinnules (ultimate leaflets) will reveal the feature that gives the genus *Cheilanthes* its name. *Kheilos* means lip and *anthos*, a flower. Of course, ferns don't have flowers but the sori (bundles of sporecases) are hidden underneath the leaf margins which are curved under to form a lip like structure.

John McCallum

CERES

The Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies Never heard of it? Well I hadn't either - until I had notification from Environment Victoria Inc., of which I am a member, of a free open day on Sunday September 15 this year. The place is a real eye-opener. It is situated on a 4 ha reclaimed landfill site adjoining at Merri Creek at 8-10 Lee Street, Brunswick East. Ceres is a grassroots community organisation which is supported by annual subscription (\$40 per household, \$30 per individual, \$15 concession), by grants and by certain organisations. These include Citipower, The Victorian Government Greenhouse Unit, Melbourne Water and the Victorian Environment Council.

On entering the park, one's attention is drawn to the three-bladed wind generator whirling away on top of a tall tower, arrays of photo-voltaic panels, the Citipower low-energy house and moving along one sees farm animals, vegetable plots a dam, trees and shrubs and a large workshop the products of which are for sale. You can purchase composting worm farms (see Tim Ealy's article in the last issue of BICA Newsletter).

Citipower is one of Victoria's new electricity distributors. Their low-energy house looks like any older type weatherboard house at first glance but a close look shows that it is packed with all kinds of energy-saving features. These include

- photovoltaic panel
- heat collecting panels for solar air heating
- roof-top hot water panels, double glazed windows
- window-box air heaters
- a lobby or vestibule entrance
- a wall of water filled dark coloured bottles for a heat ban
- north-facing clerestory windows bringing in radiant heat onto a dark coloured brick wall at the back
- pelmeted long heavy curtains
- insulation in walls, roof and floors
- draught stoppers on windows and doors
- a north-facing greenhouse integral with the house.

The public toilets are of two types, the Clivus Mielstrum composting toilets seen in Victorian and Tasmanian national parks and a Ceres-designed one which

is claimed to be superior to the Clivus Mielstrum. Explanatory signs and pamphlets are available with explanations of how everything works. The large workshop building has its North-facing wall sloped to catch the sun. This wall consists of a double layer of opaque polycarbonate film which is claimed to be resistant to UV degradation. The wall is covered with deciduous vines which shade it in summer and let in light during the winter months.

I was accompanied by Denise Denyer and we had an excellent al-fresco lunch at the Ceres cafe where there is a stage. The farming of bush foods is another Ceres project and I can assure you that their wattle-seed muffins were delicious. In fact, on the succeeding Sunday, Ceres was to host a bush food festival which I was unable to attend. This was to include Ian Hunter, aboriginal interpreter of Wurundjeri cultures who may be known to readers.

I believe that this venue would be a very good one for a visit by BICA. Ceres welcomes visits by up to 150 people. Teachers are provided. A full day's visit costs \$6.00 per person, A half day costs \$3.50

Norm Linton-Smith

Friends of the Fire Brigade.

Thanks to BICA for the opportunity to use the Newsletter to report to the community. The friends have continued to conduct 'Cafe Benders' the 3rd Saturday of each month. Our volunteers provide coffee and cake (and an occasional cooked breakfast) as a fund raising activity for our Christmas Hills Fire Brigade. The average amount raised at each market is over \$100.00.

We wish to thank all who organised, helped, donated and patronised Cafe Benders. Please note that there will not be a Cafe Benders on Saturday November 16th. Our efforts will be directed into the celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of ELZ on the following day. The Cafe Benders crew will be involved with the catering on that day. We look forward to your continuing support.

Watch out for details of our annual Christmas market on the evening of Saturday December 21st.

Pamela Gurney

Pub Walk

Walking to the Pub What better way to spend a Sunday afternoon? It was an experiment of sorts: just how many people really felt like walking around 10 km of back roads just to get to Pantan Hill? Quite a few, twenty one to be precise.

The intrepid group set out into the wilds of Nicholas Lane at around 3.30. This is rough country, about as far removed from ELZ as you can get. The variety of weeds and other foreign matter is staggering.

A few walkers staggered here too. The first uphill trek hit almost immediately; it doesn't seem to be very hilly when you drive along there!

Rewards were around the corner, however, when slushing through some muddied horse paths some real bush emerged. And so it went on, with patches of pasture, long lost orchards, unloved paddocks and reconditioned Melbourne Water (ex MMBW) land interspersed with gems of undisturbed bush and stimulating conversation.

The walk took us along Long Gully Creek, a great reserve of angled onion amongst other things. By now, about half way, three, perhaps four distinct groups had spread themselves out along the way. Those in the lead were (later) adamant that they were just energetic walkers and were not driven by desire to

reach the watering hole as soon as possible., even though they had been very quickly lost sight of as we route-marched Alma Road.

Those in the rear were equally vocal about their desire to take in the scenery, investigate each plot of plants, observe closely the horses, cows, ostriches (yes, ostriches) or echidnas along the way. Their leisurely progress had nothing to do with the length of the walk or the nature of the terrain!

At around five, Syd and Ona found their car still where it had been strategically placed, and dashed off to yoga. (Was there anyone left to join them?) The rest, after a photo stop, leapt into the torrent of the Long Gully ford, pushed on past the car bodies ('Dumping of Rubbish Prohibited') and attacked the long climb to the pub with gusto.

There wasn't much gusto left by the summit but ample compensation with degustio. A few late arrivals (cheating by driving; their excuse was that they couldn't make the walk!) swelled the numbers. This included the Millington Mobile Omnibus which provided such excellent shuttle service at the beginning of the walk.

A suitably festive meal led to the proverbial all 'going home tired but happy' ending.

The question now arises, what do we do next? A longer walk? A more difficult walk? Abseiling? Skydiving? Stay tuned.

Tony Summers



Café Benders

It would seem a great pity that this remarkable initiative of community spontaneity be allowed to remain any longer unrecorded in the fine pages of these Bender Island Newsletters. For somehow the venture has developed into the very essence of what we believe the Bend of Islands to be, a happenstance that without fuss or bother provides local people a regular opportunity to gather an hour or two feeling a part of something worthwhile.

On the surface it is simplicity itself! Every third week of the month a colourful logo of 'cup o' coffee steaming', appears as if by magic on the gossip tree down by the bridge. Then, hail rain or shine, promptly at nine thirty on the Saturday morning the huge doors of the Fire Shed swing open and out trundles that sleeping red monster that otherwise wakens only at the mention of fire. Just as mysteriously, tables and chairs appear on the apron, then colourful table-cloths and as often as not, a copy or two of the latest Age for morning patrons to pass the time. And, before you can say Jack Robinson (or if you happen to be an aficionado of café society, Jacques Roberto), the aroma of coffee and, if the day is right, bacon and eggs, wafts out to draw the patrons in.

A van pulls up - it's Ona and Sid with their latest collection of colour to set up a stall - nearby, another sets up, stocked with marmalade or honey and Norm's home-baked bread - others are strolling in with their cakes and scones. Remarkably nobody seems to be orchestrating the affair, nor even so much as fussing about - just the sounds of laid back chit chat and warm repartee.

By 10am 'Café Benders' is up and running with neighbourhood friends who perhaps haven't seen each other since last it happened busily catching up on the latest gossip over their bacon and eggs. The atmosphere is infectious. No one get up to make any announcement warning that the Bend of Islands as we know it today is about to go under. It's not that such matters are not seen as important, it's just that it's seen neither the time nor place. A grass-roots community is happily communing and a sense of belonging is being good-naturedly fostered that in the fullness of time will see all the other issues the more easily negotiated.

For, after all, we have all moved out here into the Bend of Islands because of our love affair with the bush and the remarkable creatures it supports. Sure, the way we see it might sometimes differ but what better way of reaching a consensus than by leisurely whiling away an hour or two discussing the latest

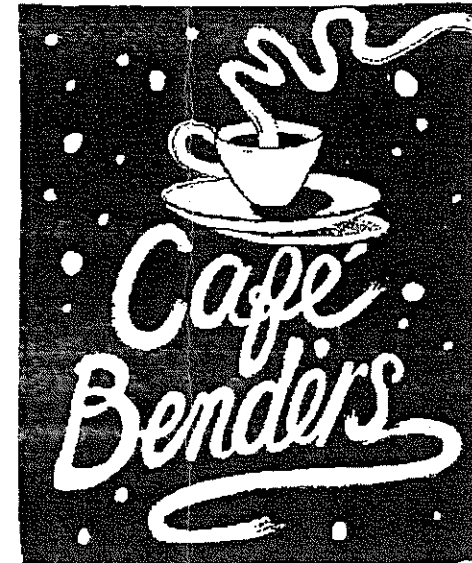
discovery made in this remarkable cosmos in time we call our Environmental Living Zone.

Each 'Café Benders' day at the Paris end of bushland sees new people drawn in by its coffee and cake to sharpen their sense of belonging. Always too there are a few of the oldies who having already played their role happily renew their acquaintance with a world they might have drifted a little away from - opportunity for old wounds to be healed and forgotten - new bonds happily forged.

By 12.30 the tables of 'Café Benders' are clearing. Time for home and the chores and pleasures that week-ends bring. Again the tables disappear; its monster machine crawls back into its stall ready for the Sunday morning gremlins of this thing we the Bend of Islands to take it through its paces or to roar into life whenever the shed's siren calls.

Well how is it all done? Asking around doesn't help one a lot. Something to do with commitment on the part of a few gremlins who understand just how community works. But why do they do it when as everybody knows if they didn't someone else would? Or would it just die? Happenstances just happen to happen when like minded souls happen to reap a reward from being a part of something worthwhile. Yes, that's the secret! But come along one morning and see if all this is true. 'Cos if it's not I'm as likely as not to turn into a Café Benders grenouille.

Mick Woiwod



Echidnas

I recently attended a training seminar organised by the Wildlife Care Network and held at the Melbourne Zoo (an appropriate venue!) The speaker was Sari Cuce, an acknowledged authority on the care and handling of injured echidnas. It was a fascinating day and I would like to share with you some of the information that I gained.

Echidnas are not territorial and do not fight amongst themselves. (I always knew that they were peaceful critters.) They have a range of 6 to 10 kilometres therefore if one is returned to the wild after rehabilitation it is not imperative to take it back to exactly the same spot. They are not endangered and are found throughout Australia.

Their biggest enemies (apart from - guess who) are foxes and goannas. Their most vulnerable spot is their snout so foxes roll them into dams and when they come up for air, grab them by the snout, thus injuring and eventually killing them. Goannas raid the nests and eat the eggs or young, furless 'puggles'. Unfortunately in their clash with modern life they come off second best. Being hit by a car doesn't do much for their mobility. Never take it for granted that they are dead, however, unless their tongue is hanging out. They can be very still for a long time. (Oh, to be an echidna mother!)

If you find and injured one of the road it can be handled, so I'm told, without injuring yourself. Put your hands underneath the animal and lift it gently. They can also be held without harm by the hind legs. The best way to transport them is in a plastic bucket or garbage bin as they cannot climb out and injure themselves. Don't put anything in the bin with the animal. Can you imagine extricating an echidna from a shredded cotton towel, or vice versa?

As they can go for up to ten days without food, they can be left to rest. This can be for up to four days as their metabolism is rather slow, like some of us! They can be kept for a couple of weeks before being returned to the bush. If they are 'stargazing' they are brain-injured and probably won't survive. Ring Wildlife Care Network on 016 373 931 at any time, day or night. There are shelters in the vicinity.

Echidnas can overheat very quickly in hot weather as they do not sweat. A thoroughly acceptable companion, it would seem!

Their spines have been known to regrow after being burnt in a bushfire. Never attempt to cut off a damaged spine; there can be considerable pressure behind them. There is the story of a vet somewhere in Victoria with an echidna spine stuck in his ceiling as a result of such an attempt.

A good diet for young echidnas, developed by Mervyn Griffiths of CSIRO is

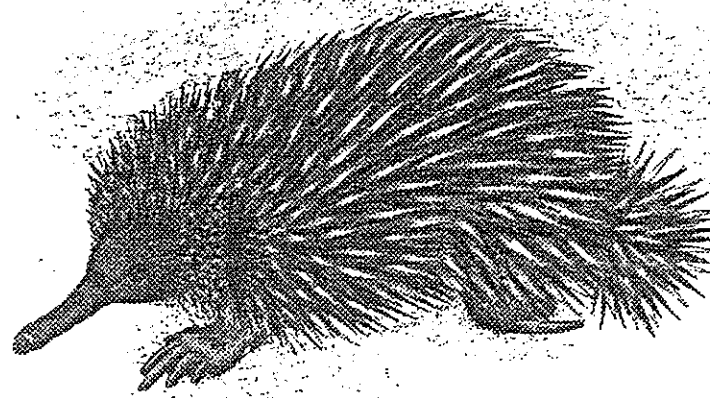
- 2 scoops of Digestilac (available from vets)
- 100 ml water
- 2 eggs

Mix them and then make into a custard in a double boiler. Allow to cool and serve in a heavy glass dish. (Here's a use for all of those old ashtrays!) If the animal is very young you will need to put the custard in the palm of your hand and allow the puggle to slurp it up. Echidnas do not have teats (sorry to get personal here), rather the milk oozes out of the skin inside the pouch at pressure from the puggle's snout. All echidnas are born in August and are usually ready to leave the pouch by December.

There's more; I could go on about echidnas ad infinitum. There is an excellent video put out by the ABC about research on Kangaroo Island. You may have seen it on television. It can be purchased at ABC shops. You may be able to borrow it from your local library. Perhaps when BICA gets its community resource centre (!) we can organise a copy for ourselves.

By the way, our new patron is Rob Gell - mmmmmm! It would be worth attending just in case he turned up!.

Denise Denyer



BICA AGM

The 1996 Annual General Meeting will be held at 2pm on Sunday December 1st at Pelling's home, 6 Ironbark Rd, Kangaroo Ground. Agenda items include

- election of office bearers
- reports from subcommittees and discussion of planning issues affecting the Environmental Living Zone
- Professor Donald Thompson's fascinating historic film footage of the Great Sandy Desert providing an insight into the environmental strategies employed by the indigenous people of the area (1957-63)



Bend of Islands Conservation Association inc.

I _____ nominate _____
for the position of _____ for the 1997 committee.

Signed

Seconded

Nominee's endorsement

To be forwarded to Robyn Duff no later than November 16th, 1996

The Secretary, BICA

c/- Post Office

Kangaroo Ground

Vic 3097

Membership Renewal

Please find enclosed remittance for BICA membership for 1997

Single membership \$10.00

Family membership \$20.00

Concession \$6.00

Name Address Phone

I would like to become involved on the committee. I am available to help with Suggestions for events Comments



SENDER, **B**end of **I**slands **C**onservation **A**ssociation
C/- Kangaroo Ground Post Office 3097

20th anniversary of the E.L.Z.
at Oxley Bridge
Sunday 17th 11am

