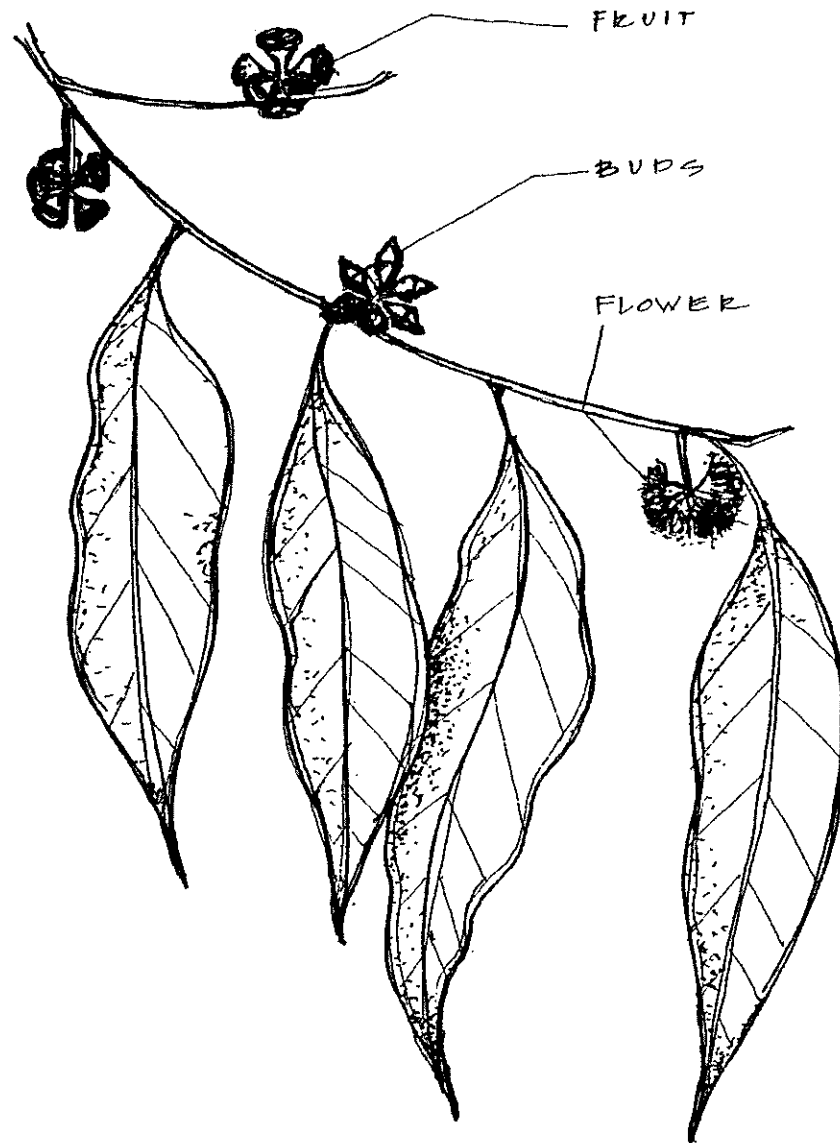


# BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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

BICA Newsletter No.38 April 97



## What Native's Flowering?

Botanical Name: *Eucalyptus ovata*  
Common Name: Swamp Gum  
Family: Myrtaceae  
Flowering Period: March to June

A medium-sized tree, 8-20 metres high x 5-10 metres wide, sometimes of crooked growth with scattered foliage at the ends of branches, or may be tall and straight with a dense crown of dark green glossy leaves.

A gum type eucalypt with hard, rough and greyish-brown bark at the base of the trunk with smooth bark on the upper trunk and branches. The smooth bark is deciduous, peeling off in long ribbons each year, revealing a greyish white trunk with shiny colourful yellow streaks.

Widespread and common on periodically swampy flats, poorly drained slopes and hollows, rivers, creeks and floodplains. Prefers poorly drained, wet winter/dry summer soil and full sun. Accepts seasonal waterlogging to 10 cm deep and moderate water pollution. Drought tolerant for a limited period.

The adult leaves are thick, dark green and glossy, with conspicuous veins, 8-14 cm long x 2-5 cm wide and broad, lance, egg or ovate shape, usually with wavy edges.

The buds are in clusters of 4-8 (though usually 7) on a slender stalk arising from the leaf axil. The buds are diamond in shape with a conical bud cap.

The eucalypt flowers are white and do not flower very profusely.

The fruit is a cone or funnel shaped with a flat top, 6-8mm. wide with 3-4 valves at the rim level. Propagation is from seeds collected from these mature fruit capsules.

A useful tree to plant at pond edges or in poorly drained areas to absorb the excess water. Provides valuable food for koalas, butterfly caterpillars and seed, nectar and insect-eating birds.

Cric Henry

## President's Report

Within Nillumbik there are other areas of a like mind to ours. On March 23 Carol and I attended the Dunmoochin Landcare Group Annual General Meeting and had the opportunity to relate to the group a potted history of the Environmental Living Zone and BICA. The parallels between our area and Dunmoochin start with the initiation of conservation awareness from artists; Clifton Pugh at Dunmoochin and our own Neil Douglas. The conservation ethic has prevailed but with different approaches. Dunmoochin has used conservation covenants as its sole method of ongoing security while the ELZ was created for the Bend of Islands. With the Nillumbik Landcare Network as a forum to keep in touch with other communities in the area we can look forward to ongoing constructive associations with Dunmoochin and other groups. Ona Henderson and Syd Tunn have nominated BICA for the 1997 Banksia Environmental Awards. These awards are presented to groups and individuals to recognise and promote environmental achievements and I feel that just being nominated is an award in itself. Thanks to Syd and Ona for their nomination and also to those special people who assisted with the nomination submission. The first quarter of '97 has seen lots of activity both within the area and in the Shire at large. On a social level the 'night event' and the canoe run at Easter provided great entertainment. Both are assured as annual events so join us next year if you missed out. Interest in what is happening has paid dividends in the recent 'remake' of Gongflers Drive. Residents worked with a council officer to define requirements for minimal impact works to achieve a useable road. Congratulations to all concerned. On a regional level we have seen the return of an elected council for Nillumbik. It remains to be seen how our new council, with our Sugarloaf ward councillor as Shire President, can manage a different structure of council bureaucracy and state government guidance. We wish them luck and give them our support.

See you at the May general meeting.

Alan Bonny

## Heritage Update

For those not residing in the general area of Henley Road and Catani Boulevard, the construction of the St John of God golf course is well under way with more earthmoving machinery putting in full days of work. For us neighbours to the development the background rumble of the machines reminds us of what is happening across the Yarra and what is planned for the Henley Farm property. There has been some activity at a planning level for our side of the river.



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The proponents of the resolution lodged an amendment for the Henley course with Nillumbik council to accept what we consider are major deviations from the concept that was originally approved. To keep the story short, Nillumbik rejected the amendment and the proponents lodged an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. At the same time application was made with the Minister for Planning, Mr Rob. McLellan, to become involved. BICA and affected residents wrote to the AAT and the Minister asking for due process to occur and for public input to be allowed. A directions hearing on March 19 at the AAT has determined that public input will be allowed at the next hearing to determine if the amendment complies with the approvals already granted.

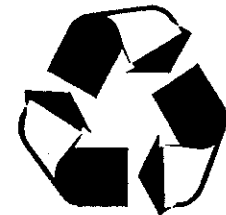
Informal discussions with the proponents of the golf course provided environmentally friendly answers to most concerns but the promises should be tied up in such planning approval as to ensure that the golf course suits everyone to a tee (!).

Alan Bonny

## Recycling Dates

The incidence of yellow-hatted Darth Vaders at different times suggests that some people have either lost their list of recycling dates for our area or are still a little confused about the whole thing. Ordinary household garbage is every Monday but the recyclables are on a four-week cycle as indicated on the paperwork that came with the bins in January. The whole of the Bend of Islands is in 'Watson's Creek' for the purposes of this exercise and the dates for the remainder of 1997 are appended below

- March 24
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 14
- August 11
- September 8
- October 6
- November 3
- December 1



## May General Meeting

The BICA general meeting for May 1997 will be held at Tim and Laura Ealy's house, 119 Skyline Road on Sunday, May 4. As usual, BYO chair, mug and plate of afternoon tea to share.

## Add this to your Bend of Islands Directory

- Nillumbik Shire enforcement officer is Ron Sandal, 9433 3305. Ring this number for any problems with non-compliance with the provisions of the Environmental Living Zone or council by-laws.
- Robert Marshall is the Sugarloaf ward Nillumbik Shire councillor and Shire President, 97182133 at work and 9710 1717 at home.

## Oxley Bridge, Gateway to the ELZ

We hope that you are all aware that we applied for a grant through DNRE in October last year, to undertake weeding and revegetation works at Oxley Bridge. I have the good news that we have been successful and will be provided with \$5440 to complete the works.

The work must start in May of this year and continue through until June 30, 1998. Our involvement has already begun with the propagation of plants, but your support throughout the next 12 months is extremely important if our planned work schedule is to be achieved. Working bees are listed on the BICA calendar. They are June 1 (World Environment Day), September 21 and November 16. Other days will be posted at Oxley Bridge. Keep a look out for our signs posted at Oxley Bridge for additional, impromptu working bees.

Phil Vaughan

## Sub-groups

At a recent BICA meeting it was suggested that sub-groups be created or reformed to work on issues of concern or interest. If you want to contribute or want more details, contact the relevant person from this list.

Landcare/plant propagation: Phil Vaughan 9730 1148

Flora/fauna sub-committee: Cric Henry 9712 0458

Waste Management: Jeph Neale: 9712 0458

## Time Lines

Australian Aborigines survived in Australia for tens of thousands of years as a result of the detailed knowledge they accumulated on the responses of different plants and animals to changing regional climate patterns. "Seasonal calendars" still exist in northern Australia where the indigenous people have maintained close links with their land. Sadly, however, most of this knowledge has been lost in our region along with the demise of the indigenous people following European occupation.

In an attempt to recover lost calendars in the south, one of Australia's best known naturalists Alan Reid, met with a group of local naturalists at Warrandyte in March 1994 to launch the first regional Timelines project. Six seasons have emerged for the Middle Yarra from the pooled data. The seasons are cyclic and determined by changes in climate and associated natural events, rather than strictly by dates.

Early summer (2nd week of November to 2nd week of January)  
Smooth barked Eucalypts are shedding their bark around the time fire restrictions come into force. "March Flies" arrive as young Brush-tailed Phascogales are dispersing and most Koalas are giving birth. Olive backed Orioles and Rufous Whistlers are feeding young. Common Brown Butterflies, Brown-shouldered Butterflies, Eastern Ringed Xenica, Klug's Xenica and Imperial White Butterflies are active and can be seen feeding on the flowers of Sweet Busaria which provide an important nectar source for a range of insects. The seeds of most local Acacias have dropped by mid-season and provide food for the Common Bronze-wing Pigeon. While many plants are in seed, others are in fruit including Prickly Coprosma which attract Silver Eyes, Red-browed Firetails and Blue Wrens. Along the river the ripening fruits of Tree Violets and Muttonwood are providing food for a variety of birds. In the evening, Southern Brown Tree Frogs, Spotted Marsh Frogs, Eastern Banjo Frogs and Southern Boobook Owls are calling. The bush is drying out as rain becomes less frequent.

Late summer (3rd week of January to 3rd week of March).  
Daily temperatures climb steadily into the high 30's and nights can be hot and humid, as the bush becomes tinder dry in the absence of rain. Hop Goodenia, Sweet Busaria, Kangaroo Apple, Pink Hyacinth Orchids and Long-leaved Box are in flower. Assorted Butterflies are in profusion and laying eggs on native grasses that have cured and shed their seeds. Flocks of White-throated needletails feed on winged termites and sugar ants. March flies present a constant source of annoyance during the heat of the day and the piercing chorus of cicadas persists long after sunset. Sawfly Wasp larvae or "Spitfires" and Gum Emperor Moth caterpillars feed on the new growth of Eucalypts while the calls of the Eastern Banjo Frog or "Pobblebonk" can be heard echoing from a distant gully. White-throated Nightjars call after sunset and young Platypus emerge from riverbank burrows. Strong winds associated with electrical storms cause heavy leaf fall.

Autumn (4th week of March to 4th week of May)

Nights are getting chilly and early morning mists form in the Yarra Valley as Late Summer moves into Autumn after the equinox in late March. This is the season of "smog alerts" with temperature inversions creating ideal conditions for "prescribed burning" in the forests of the Central Highlands. Summer migrants including White-throated Nightjars, Leaden and Satin Flycatchers move back north and White-throated Needletails begin their long journey back to the northern hemisphere to breed. Pied Currawongs and Flame Robins move down from the high country and most birds are moulting. Magpie bachelor groups form while juvenile White-winged Choughs are still begging food from their relatives. Powerful Owls are



heard calling more regularly now as they re-establish their territories prior to the breeding season in Deep Winter. Goat Swift Moths emerge following the first heavy showers and the fruiting bodies of

assorted fungi are a feature of wet gullies, as rainfall becomes more regular. The normally solitary Black Wallaby gives birth and the Brush-tailed Phascogale breeding season begins as Wedge-tailed Eagles commence nest building. Introduced house mice are "moving in doors" Deep winter (1st week of June to 2nd week of July)

Female Powerful Owls are sitting on eggs laid during the first two weeks in June. 100% of male Brush-tailed Phascogales die following their breeding season. Wedge-tailed Eagles mate within a few days of the Winter solstice and small groups of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos can be seen extracting Wood Moth larvae from the branches and trunks of Silver Wattles. The first flowers of Early Nancy, Common Beard Heath and Spreading Wattle are out and Maroonhood, Tiny Greenhood and Nodding Greenhood can also be found. The introduced Cootamundra Wattle and Early Black Wattle are in flower and Southern Brown Tree frogs, Common and Smooth Froglets call regularly from ponds and wet soaks.

Pre Spring (3rd week of July to 3rd week of August)

The flowering of Silver Wattle has passed its peak while the blossoms of Golden, Hedge and Spreading Wattles are beginning to dominate the bush. As the days begin to warm with the strengthening power of the sun, resident bush birds are in full song as they establish and vigorously defend breeding territories. Choughs are constructing or renovating nests as Fairy Martins, the first of the summer migrants arrive, followed soon after by Olive-backed Orioles, Rufous Whistlers, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes and

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Satin Flycatchers. Grey-headed Fruit Bats arrive in the Bend of Islands to feast on the nectar of flowering Ironbarks that are dominated by flocks of Red Wattle birds during the day. Male Echidnas can be seen following a single female around all intent on mating. Exotic grasses including Shell Grass and Sweet Vernal Grass grow vigorously during this season out-competing native grasses which need the extra warmth of True Spring before their growth phase commences. The Australian Painted Lady Butterfly, one of the first butterflies to emerge, can be seen hovering above native grasses. Flowering plants include, Golden Bush Pea, Early Nancy, Scented Sundew and a few Waxlips and Caladenias.

True spring (4th week of August to 1st week of November)

The weather is becoming more stable and days warmer as the return of the Sacred Kingfisher signals the onset of True Spring. Rainwater tanks are overflowing and fungi are in profusion as Platypus are laying eggs in their burrows deep within the river bank. Young Wedge-tailed Eagles are ready to leave the nest as Rufous Fantails return from New Guinea to join other summer migrants. Bush birds are very active, as the next generation becomes independent. This is the wildflower season and the normally sparse Box-Ironbark Woodlands are transformed with the colourful displays of Milkmaids, Pink Bells, Common Correa, Bundled Guinea Flower, Purple Coral-pea, Love Creeper, Clematis, Blue Pincushions, Chocolate Lily, Grass Trigger Plant, Austral Bears Ears and Small Grass Trees. Many of our orchids also reach their peak now including Wax-lips, Green Comb Spider Orchid, Pink Fingers, Tall and Nodding Greenhoods and Leopard Orchid. Mole crickets call on warm nights and Powerful Owl young fledge.

The next stage of the Timelines Project is the encouragement of regular monitoring by the public through the production of a CD-Rom data entry disk and compatible recording forms and through the development of a handbook of simple monitoring techniques. The Gould League wants enthusiasts to develop their own regional core committees, so that a Timelines network is established across Australia and a national database and linking regional databases are created.

This is a great way of becoming more attuned to the changes in our natural environment while contributing to a very worthwhile project. Ongoing, regular monitoring of our local environment will be invaluable in detecting changes in local wildlife populations and possible threats to the biodiversity of our region. If you would like to become involved register

your interest with the Gould League by phoning 9532 0909.

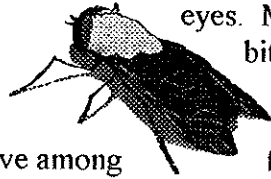
Steve Craig

### Further Reading:

Reid, A.J. (1995). *Banksias and Bilbies: Seasons of Australia: a weekly guide to natural events in Australia, with space for your own records.* Published by the Gould League of Victoria.

### Marchies

March Flies belong to the *Tabanidae* family of insects that includes horseflies. There are 243 species of these small to large (6-20mm in body length), stockily built flies. *Dasybasis*, with 75 species is the largest genus and all have hairy eyes. Males feed only on nectar, it's the females that do the biting and blood sucking through their well-developed proboscis. Fortunately for us they have a relatively short life span. The larvae live among floating vegetation or in other damp and muddy habitats. Have you noticed how March Flies are attracted to the colour blue? If you wear khaki clothing while working outside during the summer, you won't be annoyed by these pesky insects as much.



Steve Craig

### Community Training Program

Parks Victoria are sponsoring a series of one-day training sessions throughout the year. Below is a list of dates and topics:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Wed, April 9  | Protecting and managing remnant vegetation. |
| Tue, April 29 | Roadside conservation assesment.            |
| Tue, May 20   | Controlling weeds.                          |
| Wed, May 28   | Catchment management.                       |
| Tue, June 3   | Total community involvement.                |
| Sun, June 15  | Basic propagation skills.                   |
| Sat, July 19  | Expanding your propagation skills.          |
| Thur, July 24 | Project management.                         |
| Sun, Aug 3    | Interpreting fauna.                         |
| Thur, Aug 21  | Monitoring your revegetation project.       |
| Sun, Sep 21   | Basic plant identification.                 |
| Sat, Oct 18   | Improving your plant identification skills. |
| Thur, Oct 23  | Direct seeding; the story so far.           |

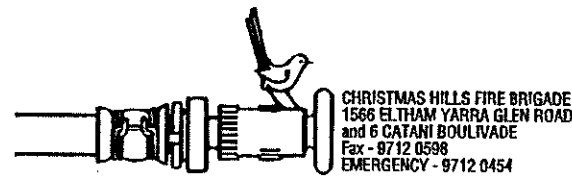
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- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Sun Nov 9   | Improving your plant identification; forests.           |
| Tue, Nov 18 | Creating an urban garden with indigenous plants.        |
| Sat, Nov 22 | Improving your plant identification; grasslands.        |
| Tue, Dec 2  | Improving your plant identification; wetlands.          |
| Sat, Dec 6  | Comparing and understanding the dynamics of grasslands. |
| Sat, Dec 13 | Collecting native plant seed.                           |

The cost for most of these sessions is \$10 and includes session manuals, notes, morning tea and afternoon tea.

If you are interested in any of these sessions, contact me after hours on 9730 1148

Phil Vaughan



### The Fire Season is Over!

Looks like the fire season is over for this year - fire restrictions will be lifted

soon after Easter. So its time to think back, put yourself in the frame of mind of a day with temperatures 42°C, relative humidity very low, and a screaming hot northerly wind and the fire siren wailing! What do you wish you had done around the house yesterday - because that is what you should be working on **NOW** to make sure you get it in place for **next** summer. Many people have talked about this summer as a "bad" fire season - in fact it is a pretty ordinary season following nearly a decade of mild summers. We should see this summer as likely to be the start of a dry cycle, and expect next summer to be pretty much like 1997. That probably means for most of us we need to do a bit more preparation around our houses. There were a couple of significant fires in the general area this year - one in grassland at Kangaroo Ground near Watsons Creek burned more than 30ha, and one in St Andrews burned 1ha in steep country on the edge of the Kinglake National Park. Both occurred on mild days - fires **do** occur in our area and both could have been much larger in different weather conditions.

So - What do we need to do for Next Year?

Firstly - **DON'T DESPAIR!** The good news is that as far as we can tell from the preliminary investigations of the Dandenong fires, *no actively defended house burned down*. We need to get all houses in a setting where it is safe to stay and defend houses.

### What you have to do

- \* Don't remove any trees unless they are very close to the house or make driveway access very difficult
- \* Don't remove native vegetation on your block apart from close to the house
- \* If you have a favourite bird perching tree or habitat patch - *compensate* - clean up a bit better to isolate fuel near that patch
- \* Fuel reduction isn't always environmentally negative. Carefully carried out burns are ecologically sound and in our area probably essential to maintain ecosystem processes and biodiversity values, so think about a fuel reduction burn on your property. You might even plan a burn with your neighbours, and the brigade might be able to help.

### Some Bottom Lines - Let's Do It!

No plants or flammable materials actually against the house *at all* so start planning removing, moving or restructuring your garden *now*

No flammable ground fuels within 10m of the house (1.5m is better, and 20m or more on steep slopes, or adjacent to heavy shrub layers) *so* start modifying, clearing or otherwise manipulating fuel loads close to your house. If you have Burgan along the edge of your driveway and close to the house - get rid of it *now*

All possible entry points for sparks in walls and roof space to be sealed so have a go at sealing these spaces and talk to a local handyperson if you are not sure how to do it ~ its a good job a bit at a time for winter so start *now*

Spouting need to be kept clean (we mean very clean!) so think about ladders and roof access *now*

A water source and a way to access it - this ranges from buckets, to small tanks, to large tanks and pumps so get some advice *now*

Most importantly you should be planning ahead for a range of potential fires from best case to worst case situations - household plans work so start putting one together *now*

BICA has a copy of the Australian Standard for Building in Bushfire Prone Areas - it makes some very interesting reading if you want to maximise the chances of your house surviving a bushfire

Captain Dianne Simmons

### The BICA 1996 AGM Entertainment

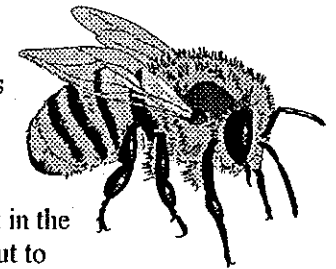
The 1996 AGM was held in the Pelling's spacious and comfortable owner-built muddie in Ironbark Road. Instead of a guest speaker we watched videos about the Bindibu aboriginal people. The late Dr Donald Thomson, Professor of Anthropology at Melbourne University, produced the videos from 16mm colour films.

The films were the result of expeditions into Bindibu country in 1957 and 1963. At about 500 miles (km) west of Alice Springs the Bindibu people were the last group of aborigines to be living an entirely traditional stone age lifestyle, without any of the tools or trappings of the white man. They were supreme environmentalists in that their hunting and gathering activities were carefully controlled in order to ensure the sustainability of their resources. Their nomadic lifestyle ensured that hunting grounds had 'fallow' periods. The films showed in detail such things as the making of spear shafts from tree roots, the fixing of stone spear points and barbs using spinifex resin and kangaroo tendons, the detection and digging out of lizards from three feet under ground where the reptiles seek refuge from predators and the blazing surface heat, the grinding of seeds into flour and the making of rope from vegetable fibres.

I first saw one of these films on early television, probably in 1960, and it made a powerful impression on me. Then, in 1963, I had a minor part in helping equip Professor Thomson's second expedition by lending him ex-US Navy down-filled sleeping bags from the Antarctic Division store. (I was then the Division field equipment and clothing officer).

In 1990 a friend and I were exploring Litchfield National Park in the Northern Territory in my 1973 Land Rover. We were just about to tuck into the evening meal at a small bush camping ground that we shared with several other 4WD groups when a young bloke jogged up to us panting. He said that he had run 10 km from his disabled vehicle, leaving his six months pregnant wife alone. His new Toyota Hi-lux was stuck in a creek along an unsealed track which had 'closed due to water' signs at each end and he was worried that they could be stranded there with no help in the offing. As dusk was imminent, I left my dinner and the two of us set off. He said that his name was Donald Thomson and that he and his wife were both geologists working for Newmont Mining. He was in fact Prof Thomson's son! The watery track did not stop the old Landy and we were soon at the scene of the mishap. The couple had laid down their swags by the creek.

The Hilux was in water up to its seats; the Landy soon towed it out of the creek. It was a diesel and the engine would have ingested water. We removed the glow plugs and attempted to expel the water by towing but without success. As it was



now dark we decided to stack all of their camping equipment in the Landy, leave the Toyota and return to my camp. The Landy, now heavily loaded, just made it up the steep and muddy bank of the creek, wiping off one of the outside rear- vision mirrors in a sideslip into a tree.

Back in camp I approached a British adventure group called 'Operation Raleigh' and asked them if they would tow the Thomsons' car to our camp next day. They jumped at the chance to do this; Operation Raleigh members are 18 to 25 year olds and they go to remote parts of the world where they do 'good deeds'. they are superbly equipped with quality 4WD vehicles fitted with all desirable bells and whistles. This expedition cost members £5000 each to join. and their aim was to help national park rangers exploring and constructing visitor facilities. Later on in our travels we met them at Gregory National Park and they were having a ball improvising their shelters and digging latrines.

Young Donald hitched a ride to Darwin and returned with a company car and trailer for carrying his Toyota.

Professor Thomson died in 1970. His wife Dorita and her daughter Rosemary live in Eltham. Dorita attended our AGM is now a member of BICA. She has a number of copies of her husband's book 'Bindibu Country'. I have a copy and believe me it makes fascinating reading. It costs \$10 and anyone wanting a copy can obtain one through me.

Norm Linton-Smith

## To Bee or Not to Bee

I have kept bees for nearly 40 years and at present have five hives. Therefore I can not claim to be completely objective. However I am also passionately devoted to the bush, especially in the Bend. Over the years I have picked up a few points about the impact of European bees on the bush and propose to share them. It is generally agreed that any extermination of a native species, if it indeed occurred, would have happened in the first 50 years after European bees were introduced. Nevertheless it is conceivable that under conditions of environmental stress a reduction of habitat, competition and other damage as described below may tip the balance in the future.

### Competition for hollows

There are about a dozen species of birds and mammals that use hollows in our area. All species that should be here are here despite feral bees. A study we did in the Wombat State Forest showed that use is generally intermittent, for example, during breeding seasons. Bees are unlikely to take over occupied hollows, as they are fussy. Also animals certainly could not evict a bee swarm. However, hives die out thus making hollows available as we have found old nesting material in nest boxes occupied by bees so it is not a static situation. A recent study showed

that bees occupy 11% of hollows, leaving 89% for other animals. Laura and I confirmed this figure when we checked 200 nest boxes in Westerfold Park and found that 20 had active hives in them. These were cleared out and the lids sealed with carpet, hopefully making them unsuitable for future bees to attach the honeycomb.

### Competition with Other Animals

The Victorian Museum confirmed that there never have been hives of native bees (*Trigona sp.*) south of about Sydney. People mistake dark strains of European bees for native ones. Nevertheless there are many species of solitary native bees, ants, moths and other nectar-eating insects, some of which may experience competition. Some are structurally specialised to pollinate specific native plants and so are important. Because of the great seasonal variation in production of nectar, it is very hard to design experiments and projects to measure competition.

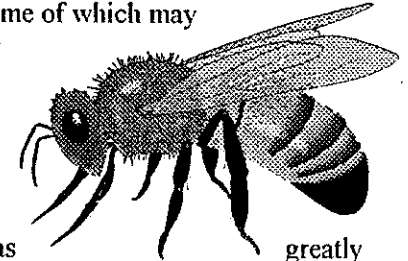
In one study, the number of European bees was increased artificially. However the number of native bees was consequently shown to increase also as predator pressure was diverted to the European bees. We all observe the increase in numbers of honeyeaters when there is abundant eucalypt blossom. Presumably there is enough nectar to go around, as the honeyeaters are nomadic. However in one study where honeyeaters were sedentary and dependant on bottlebrush blossom, competition with bees caused the birds to increase their feeding ranges. This presumably would have meant a decrease in honeyeater density.

### Impact on Plants

Bees play a role in pollinating plants (including weeds). They are important for pollination of fruit and other crops. However a native plant usually requires a specifically adapted native species of animal for its pollination. European bees can either damage the plant in their search for nectar, take the pollen to the wrong plant or, by getting to the plant first, leave no nectar to attract the appropriate native insect.

European bees are sometimes too large to enter narrow flowers such as heath (*Epacris sp.*). They therefore bite a hole at the base of the flower to gain access to the nectar and in so doing destroy the ovule so no seeds are produced; 30% of the flowers may be damaged but there seems to have been little danger to this group of plants.

The wild flowers at Dunmoochin are flourishing and greatly admired despite the fact that an apiarist has had several hundred hives nearby for about 20 years. European bees certainly have negative impacts on some native plants and animals. However I know of none that have been seriously threatened. I would



greatly



appreciate further information on bee problems. I believe that feral bees are not in the same class of pests as are cats and dogs.

A closing word for local beekeepers: Always check your hives in spring. Remove queen cells and give them plenty of space to ensure that they don't swarm and take up hollows that other native animals might use.

Tim Ealey

Effects of Introduced Honey Bees on  
Australia's Native Bee Fauna  
Michael P. Schwarz' and Pamela S. Hurst'

**Abstract**

The introduced honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, has been present in Australia as both a commercially managed and feral species for over 150 years and there is considerable concern that it may have negative impacts on Australian flora and fauna. We briefly describe several aspects of Australia's native bee fauna and then discuss the potential for resource competition between honeybees and native bees. Three factors which may augment the competitive ability of Honey Bees compared to native bees are outlined: the extended foraging periods and seasonal activity of Honey Bees, their ability to rapidly recruit foragers in the exploitation of food sources and their ability to forage over long distances. However, the few Australian investigations into resource competition between honeybees and native bees have been inconclusive. In some cases experimental designs were inadequate, and in all cases, study sites were in areas with relatively rich floral resources. It is proposed that competition for floral resources will be greater in areas of low floristic abundance and that future studies should examine the effects of honeybee presence in these areas. In addition, bee species with a restricted range of food resources, such as some short tongued bees, may be more susceptible to competition and therefore warrant investigation. Finally, the problem of controlling feral honeybee populations is discussed (*The Victorian Naturalist* 1997. 114, 7-12).

The Honey Bee Debate: a Critique of Scientific Studies of  
Honey Bees *Apis mellifera* and Their  
Alleged Impact on Australian Wildlife  
Rob Manning'

**Abstract**

Six factors - the nectar resource and use by Honey Bees, poor knowledge of the biology of native fauna, bee predation by birds, resource utilisation by commercial beehives on apiary sites, mutual exclusion of apiary sites where buffer zones exist and environment - are discussed in this paper which I believe could influence or cause the interactive effects between Honey Bees and wildlife which appear to have been demonstrated by published research results. The

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conclusion reached is that there is no conclusive proof that Honey Bees have a significant effect on wildlife and that any interaction which can be found could arguably be a normal reaction in a complex ecosystem that has its primary food source as nectar and pollen. After 170 years some form of equilibrium has probably been reached. (*The Victorian Naturalist* 114, 1997, 13-22).

Honey Bees *Apis mellifera* and  
the Disruption of Plant-pollinator Systems in Australia  
David C. Paton

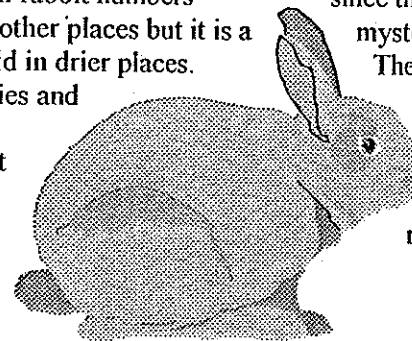
**Abstract**

Honey Bees *Apis mellifera* visit the flowers of a wide variety of Australian plants harvesting nectar, and pollen. Depending on the plant species they may consume 80-90% of the floral resources, displace native pollinators and alter rates of pollination. These interactions are illustrated for several predominantly bird-pollinated plants. For Scarlet Bottlebrush *Callistemon rugulosus*, seed production decreased when Honey Bees displaced birds from flowers, and the removal of pollen from the flowers of Common Correa *Correa reflexa* by Honey Bees reduced the quantities of pollen subsequently dispersed by birds. In Ngarkat Conservation Park natural rates of seed production by Desert Banksia *Banksia ornata* were severely pollinator limited. When Honey Bees were introduced to this reserve seed production for *Banksia ornata* was enhanced. These studies illustrate the dilemma in managing Honey Bees in areas set aside for conservation in that some plants and animals are likely to suffer if Honey Bees remain in a reserve while others are likely to suffer if Honey Bees are excluded. (*The Victorian Naturalist* 114, 1997, 23-29)

A Note on the Rabbit Calicivirus

ON November 21 1996 I was the CALP representative on a team which released the virus across the river from us on Mt Lofty. Rabbit numbers had been monitored for some time before this date and have been since. There has been no significant change in rabbit numbers since the release. This has been the pattern in some other places but it is a mystery why the disease has not taken off as it did in drier places. There have been plenty of bush flies, March flies and mosquitoes, all of which are supposed to be possible vectors. We can only hope that it will be like Myxo that was initially pronounced to be a flop but which then really took off in the right conditions

Tim Ealey





## Plant Propagation

A number of people are involved in our plant propagation project that kicked off in October last year. We have had mixed success; the few people that I have talked to have had low germination rates on most of the plants.

I have been having failures too, and believe that last seasons seed had low viability. Also, many of the plants will only germinate after a long dormancy. These species should start germination throughout autumn, so don't give up hope!

There is a lot to learn about propagating our indigenous plants and I am sure that the next year will be more successful. We are in contact with other Landcare and Friends groups who have been successfully propagating plants for many years and shall undoubtedly gain expertise from them.

We are currently considering the construction of a propagation frame on a property in the ELZ. This will provide a permanent nursery area in which to carry out our activities. However, we need your support an labour to care for the plants during the day. A roster of interested parties will be drawn up to ensure the plants are watered throughout the working week.

Before BICA will spend the money, we need a show of hands to seen how many people are interested.

Please give me a call, after hours on 9730 1148 to express your interest.

Phil Vaughan

## Indigenous Plants For Butterflies

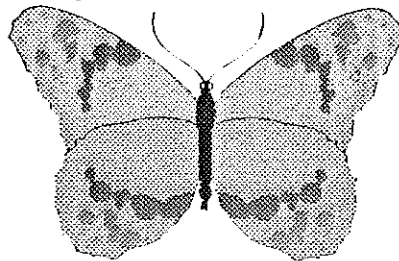
All of us have at different times admired the beautiful butterflies which visit our gardens but how many of us have actually realised we can encourage these lovely creatures to breed in our gardens and become a permanent part of the scene?

There are many reasons for keeping and growing indigenous plants in our gardens and around our local areas. They have evolved with fire, are adapted to local climate and soils and provide food and shelter for our insects, some of which feed exclusively on certain plants which in turn provide food for our birds, bats, possums, gliders, echidnas, antechinuses, lizards and spiders. Plants need insects to pollinate their flowers, and to return dead plant material to the soil to be reused by living plants.

Two very common plant genera that attract butterflies are sword grass (*Ghania spp.*) and Mat Rushes (*Lomandra spp.*); some species of these plants are the food plants of a number of different butterflies larvae.

Donnysa Skipper (*Hesperilla donnysa*) and Chaostola Skipper (*H. chaostola*) feed

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mainly on Thatch Saw-sedge (*Ghania radula*): Flame Skipper (*H. idothea*), Spotted Skipper (*Oreisplanus perornatus*) and Swordgrass Brown (*Tisiphone abconca*) feed mainly on Red-fruit Saw-sedge (*G. sieberiana*). During the daylight the caterpillar larvae shelter between two saw-sedge leaves joined with silk, only emerging after dark to feed. Symmomus Skipper (*Trapezites symmomus*) and Eliena Skipper (*T. eliena*) feed on Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) and Many-flower Mat-rush (*L. multiflora*). Phigalia Skipper (*T. phigalia*) and Phigaloides Skipper (*T. phigaloides*) feed on Wattle Mat-rush (*L. filiformis*). Although the Dispar Skipper (*Dispar compacta*) feeds on grasses (*Poa spp.*), it has also been recorded feeding on Mat rush.

A number of butterflies including Eastern Ringed Xenica (*Geitoneura acantha*), Klug's Xenica (*G. klugi*), Shouldered Brown (*Hetronymha penelop*) and Common Brown (*H. merope*) are active over the Summer months in the Bend of Islands and can be seen laying their eggs on native grasses (*Poa spp. and Danthonia spp.*). The Imperial White Butterfly (*Delias harpalyce*) prefers to lay her eggs on Native Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) and Mistletoe (*Amyema spp.*) which are important food plants for the caterpillars.

By planting species indigenous to the Bend of Islands, you will be helping to preserve our unique heritage of plants and insects.

Val Himmelreich

### Further reading:

1. Common, I.F.B. & Waterhouse, D.F.(1982). Butterflies of Australia. Angus and Robertson.
2. Coupar, Pat & Mike. (1992). Flying Colours. Common caterpillars, butterflies and moths of south-eastern Australia. New South Wales University Press.

### Wildlife Care Network

At the last BICA general meeting, after the usual reports from the president, treasurer and sub-committee coordinators, we were entertained and informed by Judy and Peter Tomlin from the Wildlife Care Network. Information overheads gave us details of the Network's structure and activities. Sustained by their own enthusiasm and public support (no government assistance) the groups provide advice and assistance on injured or orphaned wildlife. The contact number for the Wildlife Care Network is 106 373 931 (It is on the 1997 BICA directory)

### Willows in the Wet.....

A local resident was pleased with Melbourne Water's response to a willow problem. A phone call resulted in the prompt poisoning of the offending tree. Melbourne Water's responsibility is for the wet bits only so the trees must be in the river. You should provide accurate details of location and the scale of the problem. The contact at Melbourne Water is Alan Brazier on 018 552 831. Please let us know if you or anyone else has success (or other wise!) with this.

### Dieback in the Bend of Islands

Have you got it on your property? If so please let us know. – 9712 0648

Carol Bonny

### Welcome

A big BICA welcome to all the new babies in the Bend and congratulations to the parent benders.

Carol Bonny

### Directory Update

Nillumbik's new environment officer is Phil Jones Ph 94333216.

Wildlife rescue – ring Trish Millington on 97120 0402

### Coming events

- May 4            General meeting – Speaker on “the albatross”
- July 12        Trivia night – you will be required to book, please advise Trish on Ph 9712 0402
- June 18        World environment day Landcare group project launch at Oxley Bridge

Landcare “working group – every third Sunday of the month. Contact Phil Vaughan on 9730 1148

### Night Event Revisited

A large crowd of locals, friends and family gathered in the natural amphitheatre of the Rentos's dam on a perfect autumn night for the annual “night event” on March 22. A picnic dinner was the order of the day until the entertainment began. As darkness fell the candles around the dam were lit to provide a backdrop for the performers. Recitation, song, diverse music from flute, bagpipe and didgeridoo were followed by ongoing impromptu involvement that took us late

into the night. Congratulations to everyone who played their part to make another memorable night event.

Alan Bonny



Are you a financial member?

If your newsletter has a RED bullet then our records show you have not renewed your subscription for 1997 yet. If you have any queries contact Michael Pelling on 9712 0286.

Bend of Islands Conservation Association inc.

### Membership Renewal

Please find enclosed remittance for BICA membership for 1997

Single membership                 \$10.00

Family membership                 \$20.00

Concession                             \$6.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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All Phones \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to become involved on a/the committee.

I am available to help with Suggestions for events  
Comments





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