

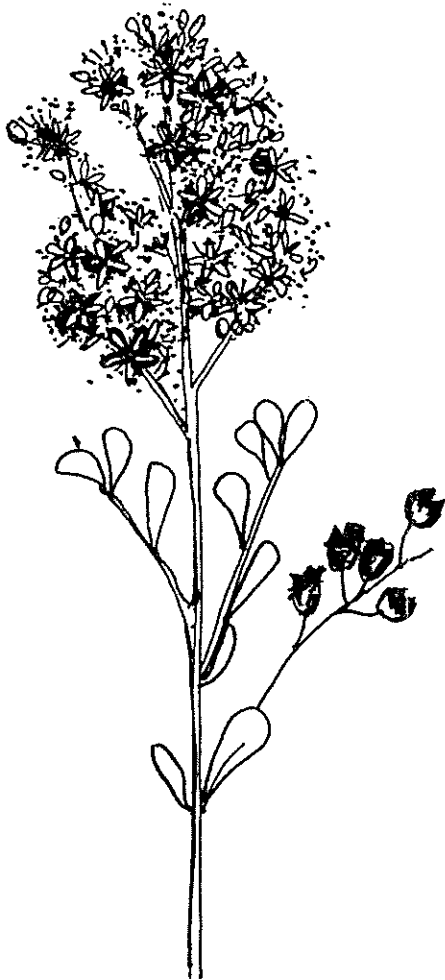
BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

President: Robyn Duff 9712 0507 C/- Post Office, Kangaroo Ground, Vic, 3097 - Editor, John McCallum 9712 0319

Inc. No. A11100A

Number 47 March 2000

WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING?



Botanical name: *Bursaria spinosa* var. *spinosa*
Common name: Sweet Bursaria
Family: Pittosporaceae
Flowering period: December - March

A variable woody shrub 2 metres tall, 1.5 metres wide, or a small tree to 5 metres (especially in gullies), with small dark green glossy leaves and thin spines clustered along stiff stems and with many tiny five petalled star-like flowers in large showy erect clusters (4 - 8 cm long) at the ends of branchlets. The flowers are creamy-white and sweetly scented. The leaves are variable in size from 8 - 30 mm long and quite thin, broadest at the apex. The fruit capsules which follow flowering are held erect in clusters and persist for many months. The capsules are 5 - 10 mm long, heart shaped, flat, thin, dry, brown in colour, and purse-like. The name Bursaria describes the purse-shaped fruit, bursa meaning purse.

Bursaria prefers an open sunny position and a well drained soil though it accepts a moist, shady position. It is generally a hardy plant tolerant of a range of situations except wet or poorly drained soils. It is found mainly along watercourses, on valley slopes, in woodlands and on rocky slopes. In drier situations the plant has few leaves and many spines whereas in moister habitats it is more leafy with relatively fewer spines.

Propagation of the plant is by seed or cuttings.

There is more information about Sweet Bursaria on page 3

CRIC HENRY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I've been away for much of the past month, and during my travels whenever I mentioned the Environmental Living Zone to people along the way, they were staggered that such a "Residential National Park" concept exists anywhere and envious of me living in it! On returning to the ELZ I was struck again by the beauty and fragility of the area and by the importance of the continuity with the surrounding bush areas including the National Parks at Warrandyte and Kinglake. Protection of the surrounding areas will ensure that the ELZ does not become an isolated island within a growing urban and agricultural/vineyard sea.

If you've taken part in the activities that BICA has organised over the past few months you would have heard a fascinating and informative talk on the reptiles of the area, including snakes, at the February General meeting; been on some terrific bird walks and bush walks; spent time weeding on common land and been to the lively night event where new and old residents entertained the masses. Thanks to Karyn Kamminga and company for making it such a successful night, thanks also to Jo Douglas and Gerard Banner who hosted the evening on their land, and for those who missed Ross Henry's famous rendition of "Gloria" - there's always next year.

A number of properties have been sold and bought over the summer, so please make the new residents welcome. See you at the next event.

ROBYN DUFF

BURGAN MAY BE BAD BUT

Alan Bonny

Further to Dianne Simmons article (Nov. 1999 Newsletter) regarding the potential fire danger of Burgan I would remind all that removal of ANY native vegetation requires a permit within the ELZ. Without contradicting anything Dianne has said I would add that small areas of non dense Burgan away from the dwelling may not constitute any real fire threat. Careful consideration of each situation will achieve the best results for fire safety and the environment. I am confident that the council will issue a permit if there is justification. Wholesale and unconsidered panic removal may leave areas devoid of important and limited middle storey habitat in our bushland. If removal is approved then consideration to a phased removal and replacement with appropriate local provenance plants would soon fill the holes created.

THE NIGHT EVENT

Karyn Kamminga

BICA and I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable help in putting on the recent Night Event: Jo Douglas & Gerrard Banner, Jeph Neale, Peter Kortchma, Alan James, Peter Gurney, Alan Bonny, Geoff Drummond, Wolfgang Kraus, Neill & Jenny Taylor, Neill Kamminga and Hilary Jackman. Not only did these people give of their time and energy, but many of them also generously supplied their own equipment that made it all possible.

And to all those involved in the performances - the Little Benders (William, Dustin, Rory, Jack, Amy, Paddy, Heather, Colleen, Spencer, Jaz and Lyulph), Joy Flannagan, Jenneke Korteweg, Sandy Harvie, Karen Payne, Steve Craig, Ross Henry, Melita Jansen, Norm Linton-Smith, Lynne Johnson, Carol Summers, Anitra Nelson, Neill Kamminga, Bruce Rogers, Tai Jordan, Pin Rada, Chris Carson & all the 'jammers' - wow! What a talented bunch of people! Thankyou so much for your generosity and enthusiasm. Thankyou also to Peter Gurney & Bob Millington (greatly missed on the night) for the millennium version of the Bend of Islands anthem, "Bend of Hope & Glory". (Please accept my apologies-if I've left anybody out.)

The Night Event is a tribute to the wealth of talent we have in the Bend of Islands, and to our community spirit. It was a co-operative effort par excellence, and I feel very privileged to have been a part of it. Thankyou. The Night Event will, I hope, continue - sadly it may not be at "Musso's" again, but we could look at this as yet another stage in the evolution of the event - an opportunity rather than a deathknell! As I have now organised two Night Events, I think it's time to give someone else a go, so please let the Community Involvement sub-committee (convenor: Trish Millington) know if you're interested in organising the next annual "night of nights" in the Bend of Islands.

THE NEXT EVENT

Of course you have your BICA calendar handy or, failing that, you check the BICA website frequently to keep up with the exciting events that are arranged by your committee for your entertainment and education. It is worth repeating here, however, that April's special event is the Field Day to be held on the 16th of that month. Meet at the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade south shed at 2.00 pm.

Also in April are the usual monthly events, Bird Walk (8.30 am) and Working Bee (2.00 pm) on the 9th as well as that annual spectacle, The BICA Easter Canoe Run on the 23rd!

MORE ABOUT SWEET BURSARIA

Cric Henry

Sweet Bursaria is a valuable and useful plant.

- It can be pruned regularly to form a more bushy shrub to provide screening or wind protection.
- In summer it makes a fine specimen providing fragrant showy flowers at a time when not much is flowering.
- The plant has been used commercially as the leaves contain aesculin, an oil used in sunscreens which absorbs ultra violet light.
- The caterpillars of the Eltham Copper butterfly rely on the leaves exclusively for their food so the plant is important for their survival.
- The plant also provides food for a wide range of insects and attracts the insect eating birds.
- The flowers are a source of nectar for honey production.
- The plant is a fire retarder in that the leaves of the plant are relatively slower to ignite and burn than the more flammable plants such as Kunzea ericoides (Burgan)
- Suitable for planting on slopes to control water erosion

CLEAN-UP DAY 2000

Peter Gurney

I don't know where the rubbish comes from. This year was the ninth year of our involvement in National Clean-up Day and once again we removed a huge amount of rubbish from the ELZ and surrounds. We had 31 workers, plus 11 more at our satellite site at the Watson's Creek reconciliation trail. Probably the biggest roll up in Nillumbik, which incidentally had 17 clean-up sites, possibly the largest number of sites for any council area in Victoria.

Thank you to every one who took part, especially to all our young helpers who did such a great job and also dragged their parents along. Special thanks to Phil and Sue Vaughan and Sue's father Bill who started cleaning up Skyline Rd at Muir Rd at about 8 am and continued along the road towards the Bend of Islands all morning. They collected two large trailer loads of junk.

We'll be at it again next year!

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2000

Steve Craig

World Environment Day will be celebrated this year on Sunday, June 4. We will be checking on the Tuan-sized nest boxes that were constructed during the field day last year and (it is hoped) put in place by Bend of Islands residents. Unfortunately, nobody has a record of where the boxes have been put! If you have put up a Tuan box could you please telephone or email Steve Craig or reply from the BICA website to let him know where it is?

9712 0029

stevecraigaus@netscape.net



Where's my nest box?

FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the BICA Newsletter. Hilary Jackman provided the pictures of the Tuan and the Pobblebonk. Don't forget that the next issue is to be in the mail by July 21; contributions are welcome from now on! You may submit items that are handwritten, typed, on floppy disc, on zip disk or by email. I don't think that I have forgotten any medium! If you are submitting articles in electronic format don't bother to format the text; this is done in PageMaker as I set it up. Just use single returns for paragraphs, single spaces after full stops, no italics or bold, no words in all capitals. If this is too much for you I can still fix it up at this end!

JOHN MCCALLUM

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!

Mick Woiwod

It's twenty years now since Marg and I first drove into the Bend of Islands and the magic lingers still. It was the spring of '79 and we'd been invited out to view the Mattiske's recently purchased block. No sooner were we across Oxley Bridge than we'd come to see the Bend of Islands as home. A world of its own among the gum trees, close to, yet in another way, a million miles from the suburbia we were keen to escape.

The contrast was remarkable. Instead of the fences, weeds and grass of the country we'd passed through, there were dwarf wattles in flower edging the then gravelled Henley Rd with the blue-grey of red box welcoming us in.

That afternoon we strolled the Mattiske block and knew the die had been cast coming up sixes all around. Six months later we had our own six acres of gum trees on the river and had begun building. What is this spell the Bend of Islands continues to have over us?

Part of it, I imagine, is the community it has drawn to it, growing in strength with every day of the year. Mostly though it is the land itself and how it presents to those lucky enough to have stumbled upon it. When next you drive in to the Bend, take special notice of the roadside verges between Kangaroo Ground and Oxley Bridge. In the main it's grass and weeds with barely a native shrub to break the confusion. Once across the bridge it all changes.

How can this be? Surely it's no accident of nature nor can it be the magic of the land. Things don't just happen. Instead, they're made to happen. Wherever we 'whiteys' have put down roots we have brought with us the exotics that have crowded out the less pushy plants that in many ways define us. Somehow out here in the Bend of Islands we're turning the tide.

Last month the ELZ's small band of dedicated workers were recognised by the State with the prestigious Victorian Bushcare Nature Conservation Award making them eligible to represent the State in the National 2000 Landcare Awards. It's an achievement that has taken years of work. It hasn't been easy! Take for example the immedi-



ate surrounds of Oxley Bridge. Two years ago it was a weed-field of Angled Onion and Watsonia, and who knows what else. This year it's been won over due to the concerted community effort of the handful of locals who have so industriously worked it.

They're called 'work parties' but more appropriately they might be dubbed 'fun parties'. A sign is hung on the bridge-tree of a Tuesday and they gather of a Sunday arvo — a mere three hours out of the 336 that go to make up the fortnights between. First comes the mandatory fire over which a cast-iron kettle is hung for the cuppas that follow for these are social affairs with tall tales and true from Millo and others the order of the day — good company and good opportunity to learn more of the wisdom of the land.

Just one day a year from each of the 120 odd households of the ELZ acting and working in unison locally would make a huge difference to the face we present to the world and our capacity to influence it for better outcomes. Next time you see the sign go up on the old tree make your commitment — your country needs you!

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OF THE ELZ

Phillip Edwards

Teri O'Brien's timely concept for a published handbook about the ELZ, featuring all aspects of its natural and cultural legacy, lead me to forward the idea of conducting the first ever thorough-going survey of the ELZ's Aboriginal archaeological heritage.

A meeting to explain the project will be held in the south shed of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade, cnr Catani Boulevard and Henley Road, at 8.00 pm on Monday, 1 May.

The plan would be to operate it in much the same way as some of the botanical and faunal surveys have been done, with broadscale community involvement as well as a formal sampling design - it's just that flaked stone tools like scrapers and Bondi points might initially be a bit more unfamiliar than orchids and koalas!

The survey would also provide a practical link with the reconciliation program run by Mick Woiwod with the Wurundjeri (Kulin Nations) Aboriginal Community who originally inhabited the ELZ and created its archaeological resources. Such a survey requires a permit from the responsible Government department (Aboriginal Affairs Victoria = AAV) and the blessing of the Wurundjeri community in order to proceed.

Just as in a faunal survey, we sample for archaeological finds in as many different settings as possible, such as Yarra-side, creeklines, river flats and ridge tops.

We take into account any associations with geology, vegetation type, raw stone materials and environment, and intensively scour particularly likely 'hotspots' for site preservation such as the large sediment masses contained in river terraces and river

flats. But the best way to go about it in the ELZ is to include the participation of the landowners. People get to know every nook and cranny of their own blocks intimately. Please volunteer!

Any artefacts such as stone flakes, or edge-ground axes that people have previously discovered could also be incorporated into the survey. We already know of a number of features such as scarred trees and possible earth mounds on record. Ironically though, the ELZ which has such a high component of natural bush has undergone far less archeological inspection than your average suburb such as Preston or Portsea, because heritage laws demand an archaeological impact statement be carried out for building developments. These are costly, and usually funded by the developer. An extensive survey of the ELZ would normally be prohibitively expensive, but hopefully we have the expertise and community enthusiasm to complete it for next to nothing.

Just as you wouldn't pull up an orchid on your botanical survey or collect birds' nests on a faunal one, we will leave all the artefacts (except in exceptional circumstances) in their positions and record all appropriate information in situ. Though not perhaps widely known, this is normally a legal requirement of the Aboriginal and Archaeological Relics Preservation Act of 1972. It's much better (and legal) to phone an AAV officer than pick up something yourself and cart it off. In contrast to the impression given by Indiana Jones who gleefully plucks crystal skulls and golden amulets from their resting places, an archaeological artefact wrenched from its context without documentation is pretty much useless as evidence (just like the careless copper who picks up the smoking gun in his bare hands). The survey will lead to a detailed report lodged with AAV (accessible by responsible researchers), turned into a report for the Wurundjeri community, and made into a more general version for the book. In that way the precise whereabouts of any sensitive sites, or those needing protection, can be safeguarded

ENQUIRIES: PHILLIP EDWARDS: 9712-0564.

REPTILES IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

John McCallum

Guest speaker at the February general meeting, held at Neil and Jenny Taylor's place, was Michael Taylor, a keeper at the Healesville Sanctuary who currently works with reptiles. He spoke about the biology of animals in this group and supported his comments with slides of reptiles, generally those that are likely to occur in the Bend of Islands area.

Although there do not appear to be many threatened species of reptile, native snakes, lizards and tortoises are susceptible to the same pressures from human activity, as are mammals, birds and other animals. Michael showed a picture of a Long-necked

Tortoise (*Emydura longicollis*) which had been brought to the zoo at Healesville. Its upper shell had been badly damaged when the animal was run over by a car. In this case it had been repaired with fibreglass and resin! The tortoise was apparently doing well and was expected to live out its normal forty or fifty year life span. Long-necked Tortoises are well established in the billabongs along the Yarra River near the Heritage development. Whether or not they are native to the Yarra valley or escapees that have bred here has been a matter of discussion; we'll never know. Unfortunately there is no repair job that will work on all of the blue tongue lizards that are killed on our local roads

Delma impar, the Striped Legless-lizard, is native to the grasslands to the west of Melbourne. Like many other animal and plant species in this part of the state it is threatened by loss or alteration of habitat. Much of the native grassland that covered the volcanic plains of western Victoria has been converted to pasture. Very few remnants remain and the Striped Legless-lizard is only able to survive in such localities.

Another habitat issue, one with an apparently happier outcome, concerns the Swamp Skink, *Egernia coventryi*. This species is widespread over areas of southern Victoria but not common. A proposal to construct a pipeline through an area that supported an important population of Swamp Skinks would probably have destroyed the habitat of these animals and wiped out the population. Negotiations with the pipeline construction authority resulted in a grant being obtained to save the lizards. A large number of them were captured and held at the Healesville zoo in specially designed and constructed enclosures. These skinks are very territorial and aggressive to the point of killing each other so only a few individuals could be kept in one enclosure. Some bred there while in captivity. After the pipeline was constructed the badly damaged swamp was rehabilitated and the lizards successfully released.

Michael showed a number of slides of larger skinks including blue tongues that had been injured or killed by dogs. He also noted that a major predator of Carpet Pythons in the Murray-Darling region was the feral fox. It's the same old story; predation by introduced pets or feral animals, destruction of habitat and road kills!

We were shown pictures of a few other interesting lizards that could be found here. The Weasel Skink, *Saproscincus mustelinus*, is a handsome small skink that is likely to be encountered in the garden. They are common in the Bend of Islands and are an important item in the food chain for snakes such as the Copperhead. Marbled geckos, with their velvety skin, big eyes and finger pads for gripping smooth surfaces, are likely to be encountered in wood heaps. They are active at night and feed on insects. Lace Monitors (goannas), *Varanus varius*, have been recorded only once in the ELZ, in about 1985, although there is anecdotal evidence of sightings in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They have been seen in Christmas Hills and are known to occur in St Andrews, Kinglake and near Healesville. Goannas are territorial and move around a

fair bit. It would be nice to know if they still survive here!

Michael then moved on to discuss the snakes that are likely to occur in the Bend of Islands. He emphasised that among Australian snakes, the proportion of venomous to non-venomous species was higher than for any other region in the world. Further, all five species that are in our area are venomous. To offset the fears of the ophiophobes it was pointed out that the likelihood of encountering a snake in the bush and of it biting you is very low indeed.

He went on to warn of the dangers of interfering with snakes, whether to move them or just out of curiosity. They are, he said, more interested in getting away from an encounter with humans than attacking them. If bitten the correct first aid is to have the victim rest, to immobilise the bitten limb (it is usually a limb!) and to apply a compression bandage, wrapping it away from the body. Don't wash the wound; venom can be identified at the hospital from traces left there. It is worth getting the correct procedure and more details from a first-aid source or from somebody qualified to instruct you.

The 'big four' species for here are Copperhead (*Austrelaps superbus*), Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*), Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*) and the Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*). Michael pointed out the difficulties of identifying snakes on colour alone; scale counting is the only way in some cases! Overall body shape is more important although the Copperhead does have a distinctly paler underside, usually with an orange coloured line dividing it from the darker upper surface. Copperheads are probably our commonest snake but least frequently seen. Like several other species they tend to move about at night during hot weather. For identification of other species a book on reptiles should be consulted.

Our fifth species is the Small-eyed Snake (*Rhinoplocephalus nigrescens*), again venomous but usually too small to inflict a dangerous bite. They are very handsome, all-over slaty-grey with a black head. In size they are about 10 mm thick and up to 600 mm in length. Small-eyed Snakes should be treated with the same respect as other snakes.

The popularity of Michael's talk was reflected in the number of questions asked during and after his presentation.

THE ARCHIVES ARE COMING!

Over the past 20 or more years BICA, because of its usual busy program of activity and events, has generated an immense and invaluable resource of uncatalogued documentation incorporating everything from its internal minutes and correspondence through to its involvement in wider Victoria. At present these are held in the homes of past office-bearers and, as such, cannot be guaranteed the continuity into the future they deserve.

Since the 1960s, conservation of the natural environment has moved from virtual anonymity to the buzz-word on everyone's lips. In many ways BICA's large paper trail over the years maps the progress of conservation in Victoria.

This year BICA will commence archiving under the direction of Meg McCallum and Mick Woiwod. This will of course require volunteers stepping forward for an afternoon a fortnight or for whatever other time they might be able to contribute.

As soon as sufficient volunteers are on board and the afternoon chosen that suits the project will be launched. Currently BICA has a four-drawer filing cabinet with hang-files in readiness at Mick and Marg's. In the meantime BICA asks that any currently holding portions of its collection to forward them to Alan or Carol Bonney for safe-keeping.

For further information please contact Mick on 97120563.

BICA ONLINE!

BICA is online, in fact it has been online for a while now but there has been no newsletter to publicize this. The address of our web site is

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica/index.shtml>

There are a number of pages that haven't been written yet and, in keeping with the medium, the whole site will be the subject of continuous review, alteration, updating and improvement. Have a look at the site and let us know what you think!

Fire Safe Planting Alan Bonny has commented elsewhere in this edition about the zoning rules and how they might apply in the case of landowners wanting to remove Burgan in a hasty response to Dianne Simmons article in the last Newsletter. Burgan close to a building is certainly not to be advised but replacing it with other 'fire resistant' species is not a solution. If you look at some of the houses burnt at Macedon in February 1983 you will see them clad in juicy, green ivy and surrounded by lush, well watered lawns! The whole notion of fire resistant species is generally discounted as a method of making properties fire safe. The reasons that buildings catch fire in bush fires is well documented and has more to do with construction method and finish than anything else. The Christmas Hills Fire Brigade web site (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~chfb.welcome.html>) examines these issues, particularly on <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~chfb.firescape.html>

WEEDS, WEEDS, WEEDS

Steve Craing

About three quarters of the plant species that grow wild in Victoria are considered to be native to this state. That is, they evolved here or invaded the state without interference or aid from people. As we don't know terribly much about this process before European settlement we have drawn an arbitrary line at that date and have assumed that everything that was here at the time of European settlement is native.

This is probably not strictly true, however, as some species may have become established since Aboriginal settlement. It is almost certain, for example, that a number of plant species have been brought here from outside Victoria, and perhaps outside the country, by movements of people over the past 40,000 years.

There are many thousands of species of plants which have been introduced into cultivation in Victoria since European settlement (for example there are more than 10,000 species in the Royal Botanic Gardens alone). Most of these have remained in gardens, orchards and fields, as they are not adapted to surviving, in this state, outside a cultivated environment.

A large number of species, however, have managed to escape from cultivation, and can reproduce and spread without human assistance. Once a species can do this, and has spread away from its place of introduction, it is regarded as a 'naturalised alien' and is coded with an asterisk (*) in any species list. That is, the species is not native to Victoria but it has become established here and is now part of our local flora.

About a quarter of the species of vascular plant which grow wild in Victoria are naturalised aliens. Some of these invade native vegetation but many simply grow along roadsides, in paddocks, in forest clearings or even in cracks in suburban pavements. Most have been introduced from Europe and North America as a result of agriculture and horticulture, however, there is an increasing number of species which are from other parts of Australia (due to the relatively recent fashion of planting 'native' plants in domestic gardens near bushland areas).

The Flora Information System (FIS) includes plant species that have been introduced since European settlement and are growing wild in Victoria. There are over 1200 non-native plant species in Victoria which are recognised as 'naturalised aliens'.

In addition to the naturalised aliens there are several species which are considered to be native to Victoria but may grow outside of their natural range within this state. Most examples of this kind of species are plants which are popular in cultivation and have unwittingly been introduced to new habitats that they are well able to exploit. Such species are designated as having dual origin status i.e. they may be considered native or introduced depending upon where they grow.

Environmental Weeds.

These are usually species which are not native to Victoria and have invaded native vegetation. It can also include species which are native to this state but have become established in areas outside of their natural range, usually through plantations or 'native' garden escapes.

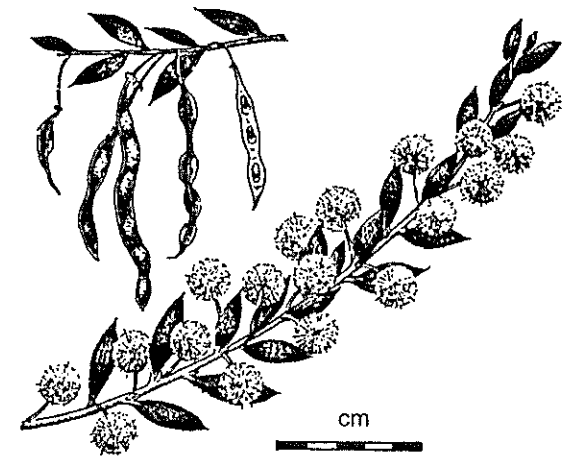
SOURCE : FLORA INFORMATION SYSTEM, VIRIDANS BIOLOGICAL DATABASES,

URL: <http://www.viridans.com.au>

SOME OF OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS

This is a list of some of the environmental weeds that are Australian native species and are known garden escapes. Some are from other parts of Victoria but have become established here and in surrounding districts and are actively invading native bush.

- Acacia baileyana
- Acacia decurrens
- Acacia elata
- Acacia floribunda
- Acacia howittii
- Acacia longifolia
- Acacia pravissima
- Acacia prominens
- Acacia retinodes
- Kennedia rubicunda
- Grevillea rosmarinifolia
- Melaleuca hypericifolia
- Pittosporum undulatum
- Sollya heterophylla



Sticky Wattle (*Acacia howittiana*)

FOUND

Some one left a mens large size green cord jacket at the fire station after the Christmas party. It is safely in my wardrobe and can be claimed from me.

PETER GURNEY

BONKING IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

A few months ago I was burying a dead Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) in my veggie garden (don't waste a good source of nitrogen!) when my shovel brushed against, but did not seem to injure, a rather large, plump looking frog about 6 cm long. A quick skip through the keys in the Frogwatch Field Guide to Victorian Frogs informed me that I had unearthed a specimen of the Pobblebonk (*Limnodynastes dumerili*), also known as the Banjo Frog.

The rather handsome creature was a rich brown colour overall, characteristically marked with a pale stripe down the middle of its back and a dark line extending back from its eyes. Underneath it was mottled grey and pale buff. Its digits lacked the terminal pads found in tree frogs and there was no membrane connecting them. A key feature in many frogs is the presence of swollen glands in certain areas and *L. dumerili* has such structures in the tibial (calf) region.

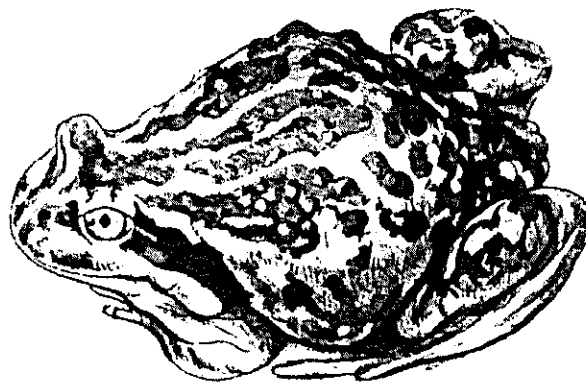
Only male frogs call. Females use this to find the right mate. So specific is the call that it is often the easiest (or only) way for humans to distinguish between closely related species. The call of the Pobblebonk is reflected in its two common names; it is a short musical 'bonk' repeated every few seconds.

It would be good to know what other species of amphibians there are in the Bend of Islands. Let us know if you come across any. We can have them identified and released in a very short time.

WHAT A CARING MOB!

Peter Gurney

What a mob of bush carers we are. The Bend of Islands Conservation Association won the 1999 BushCare Nature Conservation Award for our efforts over the last twenty years to live in and preserve our bush land environment. This is marvellous recognition of the huge effort made by all members of BICA, past and present, to preserve and improve the quality of our privately owned bush, and also for our collective work around the ELZ. We were nominated by Nillumbik Council and against strong nominations from other councils on behalf of other groups we were successful in gaining the award. Carol and Allan Bonny represented us at the Victorian Landcare Awards last November and gratefully accepted the very fine trophy on BICA's behalf. The trophy has been shown at the last couple of coffee mornings at the fire station, and will appear there again from time to time.



As Victorian state winners BICA then progressed to the National Landcare Awards presented early in March 2000. Carol Bonny and I represented BICA at this spectacular evening event at the World Congress Centre. Almost every federal and state minister for agriculture and for conservation was present, as well as hundreds of people representing sponsors and all the various state finalists in all landcare categories from around Australia.

Carol and I estimated that there were about 800 people present. Duncan Armstrong was the MC and the Federal Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson co-hosted the evening with the Chairman of Landcare Australia, John Claringbould.

Carol and I composed our acceptance speech while caught up in traffic for 25 minutes on City Link's Kings Way off ramp (it had only taken us 20 minutes to drive from the Greensborough bypass to the city) and we had a really neat speech worked out. We were to emphasise the great benefits in living with the environment rather than ripping the guts out of it and working to preserve biodiversity rather than destroying it, and we would acknowledge BICA members commitment to doing just that over the

last two decades or more, and for the future. However, our speech remained only heard in rehearsal in my car. We did not win the national community bushcare award. A group from Bellingen in northern NSW won for the great work they have done on restoring Bellingen Island in the Bellinger River which is home to a large colony of grey-headed flying foxes, and for their programs to develop awareness about bats. They were a very worthwhile winner; and their acceptance speech went almost exactly as Carol and I had planned ours! We left the evening with a warm fuzzy glow, not quite knowing whether that was the Banrock wines and the lovely dinner, or the fact that we know there are many hundreds of people all around this country working as hard as we do to look after our indigenous environment and to improve our landuse practices.

Here in the ELZ we have much to be grateful for. Keep on caring, you mob!

BEND BABY BOOM

Welcome to all the new babies and congratulations to all the families involved.

A son for Deon & Jane.

A daughter for Alwyn & Marion, Catherine Delores.

A daughter for Fabio & Liz, Natalia.

A Granddaughter for Carol & Alan, Annabella Rose.

FIREWOOD

Steve Craig

Following the very successful promotion of plantation grown Sugargum as an alternative firewood last season, the demand from Nillumbik residents is currently exceeding supply. Limited quantities of dried wood is still available through local fuel merchants at the time of writing (February) but if you haven't yet stocked up for Winter you had better get in quick to avoid disappointment.

Thomastown Firewood supply is currently offering a "summer special" of 3 tonne lots split to size and delivered for \$375 (\$125 per tonne). You can expect to pay up \$160 per tonne from July when the GST is introduced.

If properly stored, firewood should not present a fire hazard.

A LOCAL FERN

John McCallum

Tree-ferns

We are fortunate that tree-ferns are a relatively commonly encountered plant form in south-eastern Australia. Tree-ferns are a familiar sight to anyone who has visited the closed sclerophyll forests or rain-forests of our mountain gullies. They form an intermediate storey in the structure of such forests and their finely patterned crowns often form a lacy sub-canopy in such communities.

The much-divided fronds of these giants of the fern world sit atop a trunk, the height of which reflects the age of the plant. The matted fibrous material that clads the trunk is mostly small roots. As the fronds die they fall, leaving the base of the stem still attached to the trunk. As the fronds develop they uncurl in the familiar crozier formation that is peculiar to ferns and at certain times of the year form a spectacular display. The new croziers are protected by shiny brown hairs or scales.

Rough Tree-fern

Although the two most commonly encountered species of Victorian tree-ferns occur naturally in Happy Valley, not far away, only one, Rough Tree-fern (*Cyathea australis*), has been recorded in our area.

C. australis can grow to as tall as 15 metres and the fronds can reach 4 metres, giving an overall diameter of nearly 8 metres. Plants in the ELZ are not so large. The frond bases that clad the trunk are roughly pimpled, giving the species its common name. The scales that surround the newly developing fronds are ovate with pointed tips. Examina-

tion of these enables a quick determination of the two familiar tree-fern species. The other, Soft Tree-fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) has the croziers and frond bases coated with brown hairs rather than scales.

The fronds of *C. australis* are triangular and tripinnate (thrice divided), slightly paler green below and with a coarse, brown, shiny stem. The ultimate pinnac (leaflets) are somewhat sickle shaped. They bear sori (bundles of sporangia) in two rows not far from the midrib. The sori are roughly globular and lack the scaly indusium that most ferns have to protect the developing spore ejecting structures and which are often diagnostic features in fern identification.

Rough Tree-ferns are restricted in their distribution to the wetter gullies in the north of the ELZ, although many years ago one germinated in a heap of logs and debris below a newly constructed dam in Catani Boulevard. The plant failed to survive the dry conditions over the succeeding years. They can be grown in cultivation but are not a recommended garden plant in a water scarce area like the Bend of Islands.

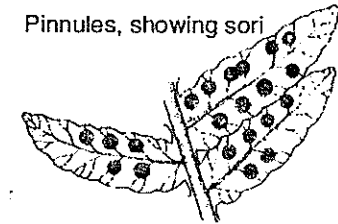
Primary pinna and part of rachis



scales



Pinnules, showing sori



Bend of Islands Conservation Association

If undeliverable, please return to:

BICA inc,
C/- P.O. Kangaroo Ground
Victoria 3097
AUSTRALIA

The next major event is the field day to be held on April 16
Don't forget the Working Bee at 2.00 pm and the Bird Survey at 8.30 am on April 9
Easter Canoe Run is on April 23
General Meeting : May 7
Bird Survey at 8.30 am on May 14
Working Bee at 2.00 pm on May 21
World Environment Day: June 14

Membership Renewal or Application

Name:

Address:

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Full membership	(\$10.00)
Concession membership	(\$8.00)
Family membership	(\$20.00)