

# BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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Number 52 November 2001



## WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Stackhousia monogyna*  
Common name: Candles  
Family: Stackhousiaceae  
Flowering period: August to January

An erect herbaceous perennial to 30 cm. high, with single stems often branched, arising from a tap root and often occurring in conspicuous clumps.

The small five pointed tubular sessile flowers are 10mm long, creamy white and branch off the stem in a cylindrical cluster at the end of the stem, forming a stiffly erect candle-like spike up to 3 to 10 cm long. The flowers have a sweet scent which is usually stronger at night and are pollinated by night flying moths.

The smooth, upward pointing, narrow leaves are 20- 40mm long and widely spaced along the lower part of the stem.

The plant dies back to the rootstock in summer. Propagate from cuttings from new leafy stems from the rootstock

Prefers moist well drained soils and semi shaded sites and grows in grassy wetlands, wet, damp and dry sclerophyll forests.

**CRIC HENRY**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring is here and the delights of living in the Bend just keep coming. Following a spectacular display by the *Acacia genistifolia* was the best flowering of the pea plant *Dillwynia phlicoides* that I have witnessed in the nine years of living here. The top sections of both Henley Rd and Catani Blvd were ablaze with the orange blooms. Over the past few months many plants have been planted around the area. We had a very successful Planet Ark National Tree Planting Day down at Oxley Bridge and our Wattle Day saw a host of plants go in at the Pine Project as part of the revegetation work. I watch with anticipation as my little babies grow. George and Felicity Hampel on the Henley Rd extension have had several large pines removed from their property after being inspired by the works being carried out by our Landcare group. Nillumbik Council is offering grants for environmental revegetation as part of their Environmental Biodiversity program. It's an offer too good to miss. Contact the council for details. The Insight Youth group that visited the area earlier this year had the viewing of their Video at the Eltham library. The impact of their visit to the Bend of Islands was noticeable by their many favorable comments in their program.

The Henley Farm Golf course project seems to be starting to bubble again. A large number of Pines have been removed which is complementary to our works in Henley Rd. We wait for notification from council or Heritage for further consultation as no resolution was achieved on changes to the original concept plan. Things are also on the move concerning Melbourne Water land in our area. It will be great one day to see this saga finalized.

Another tour of the Bend by Nillumbik planning and environmental staff is to occur. We believe that these tours are important to educate shire staff and I thank all our members who help to make them a success, especially Janet for the wonderful catering that she is renowned for.

As the year quickly draws to a close it is once again time for our annual general meeting. It's time to consider joining your fellow residents on one of our committees.

You can choose from the BICA committee and/or the various sub committees, Planning, Community Involvement, Flora and Fauna and Landcare. We have a great bunch of people doing their bit to protect our wonderful area and invite you to help in whatever way you can. Please don't leave it to the same few, come and join and lighten the load.

See you round, Carol Bonny

## PROGRESS ON THE PINES PROJECT

### Peter Garney

How is the Pines Project going? Really well, is the short answer. Bloody hard work, is the true answer. Most satisfactorily in terms of the outcome, is the long answer.

This project has really engendered a marvellous community response. We have had ten working bees at 670 Henley Road this year. We have spent almost \$3,500 of grant and BICA money and have to show for our efforts an acre and a half of land cleared of 330 pine trees, all the limbs and branches cleared and burnt, a large stack of pine firewood beside Henley Rd (free for the taking), lots more wood yet to be removed and the replanting of the site with local flora well underway.

Not only have we achieved all of the above but we have had lots of fun as we have gone along. So many people have come and pitched in, people who normally do not come to our other working bees, and of course there have been the stoic regulars, who like me prefer landcare working bees to golf!

We still have more work to do and there will be at least one more working bee on site this year and a few more in 2002. I guess that we will have to return at least once a year for the next ten years to check our plantings, put in a few more plants, weed out pine seedlings and other weeds, and to just plain enjoy the place.

Thank you to every one who has helped with this project. In 10 years time you will be able to proudly look on the beautifully growing acre plus of new box-ironbark woodland and think back to what a difference we all made.

BICA will be applying to Nillumbik Council for further landcare funding and we are quite prepared to take on other projects to revitalise our bushland. If you have pines on your property and would like them removed, or any other suggestions for landcare projects, please let me know. BICA will be very happy to consider any and all suggestions. Incidentally, any landowner can apply for landcare and other similar funding from Nillumbik Council. Don't hesitate to contact the Council environment section for advice.

### ARE YOU FIRE READY?

Have you a fire plan? Where is your protective clothing and other equipment? Does your pump work? These and other questions should be answered now. It could be too late in an emergency. If you need advice contact our Fire Brigade and involve yourself with a Fireguard group.

## A SANCTUARY IN A BEND IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

Mick Woivod

On Wednesday 26 September last, a small ceremony took place on a plot of land alongside the 'very sharp' bend in Lower Catani. Among those present for the occasion was Jessie Bull whose father, Ned Haughton, in the 1920s subdivided all land in the Bend of Islands with a river frontage (other than the Oxley and Tallwoods Estates) into thirty-five bush blocks.

Also in attendance for the occasion was Carol Bonney carrying a home-grown manna, Alan Bonney with his tools of trade, Marg Woivod with champagne and glasses, and myself and two of Jessie's Mt Martha neighbours carrying a fine-crafted sign of some length and a camera to record proceedings.

You see, a long time ago when the world was a little on the wild side a decision had been made by the owner of an adjacent five acre block to cut it up into four little pieces. The surveyor contracted to do the cutting - without apparent reference to anyone - cut also the corner, thereby excising a patch of orphan bush with no owner other than the resident wombat and a few itinerant bush critters.

Forty-four years later when Aileen Hickenbotham, the owner of the adjacent block died, the lawyers handling her estate discovered the orphan patch for which a transfer fee equal to the original sale price of the entire block was outstanding.

As next of kin and therefore owner, Jessie Bull had a dilemma. The land was too tiny to build upon and, when offered gratis to the Shire, it declared it had no interest in it. This saw Jessie, whose family had once owned all of the Bend of Islands, decide to declare the plot a sanctuary for the wildlife who, anyhow, seem always to have seen it as their own. This of course brought up the question of a name. For inspiration Jessie drew upon those of her family who one way or another over the previous hundred years had had a stake in it. Her mother's name was Jessie Agnes so that had to form a part of it; then there was her father, Ned Haughton, and he too had to have a guernsey; also her grandfather, E.H. Cameron, MLA, who just couldn't be left out; and lastly her own.

Alan fixed the sign to the tree, Carol planted the manna, Jessie pulled the cork, Marg poured the champagne and a toast was drunk to the sanctuary's continuing good health under the stylish banner: 'Jessie Agnes Cameron Haughton Bull Sanctuary'.

The sign, because of its length, was a wrap-around job which brings to mind an earlier local naming some seventy years earlier. You see, Ned Haughton back in the 1920s planned a golf course at the end of today's Gongflers Drive. Golfing and angling were all the go at the time for the gentry of Melbourne who Ned saw as his most likely purchasers. To promote his fine estate in the bush and the golf course he one day

hoped to build, he decided to call the road leading to it 'Golfers and Anglers Drive' - again a bit of a mouthful for a street sign you will all agree! To abridge it a little, he took the 'Go' from Golfers, the 'ng' from Anglers, the 'f' from Golfers, the 'le' from Anglers and the 'rs' from Golfers, which with the addition of the word 'Drive' gave us our inimitable 'Gongflers Drive'.

Some might say a rollicking yarn, but unfortunately not one with a happy ending. You see, a few days after being placed, Jessie's sign which had cost her a pretty dollar was taken!

Would the person who removed the sign please return it so as not to break an old lady's heart? In the event of it not being returned the police will be asked to investigate.

## DAM GOOD NEWS

Carol Bonny

Dotted around the Bend are quite a few man made dams and in the recent months some of these have been enhanced with indigenous wetland plants supplied and planted by Jo and Dylan. With great enthusiasm they launch themselves barefoot into the sometimes murky waters to plant their progeny. We have watched with fascination as the new plants emerge from the depths of our dam. If your dam has not been visited and you would like it to be, let me know and I will pass the message on.

## FROM THE EDITOR

It seems that the numerals 1 and 5 are destined never to appear together on the front cover of a Bend of Islands Conservation Association Newsletter, at least not during my tenure as editor. Nobody seems to be able to unearth a copy of Number 15 and general opinion has it that this was a 'ghost' edition that never actually materialized. The same phantom seems to have spirited away the numbers from the front cover of Number 51 as well as the information about month and year of publication.

If you lose track of this last information, however, it is on each page inside! My apologies for the omission. I hope that things go smoothly with this edition.

Thanks again to the regular contributors to this rather sparse newsletter.

Don't forget the BICA AGM which is to be held on Sunday 18 November at 2.00 PM. Guest speaker will be Laurie Rigg, talking about the Kinglake National Park lyrebird count. Look for a sign on the bridge for the venue.

**JOHN MCCALLUM:**

mccallum@minopher.net.au

## BICA SURVEY

Val Himmelreich has put together the results of the survey. Here they are. Even allowing for the fact that the respondents were probably a 'captive audience', it seems that we are doing most things right.

All of the suggestions have been passed on to appropriate BICA sub-committees.

## OTHER BICA BUSINESS

### New Benders

Welcome to Anna, Mark and Ella Zengraf.

Another grandson to Neil and Jenny Taylor; Kyle Graham.

Welcome back to the Nihill family

### BICA Dozen

Tickets were distributed with the last BICA Newsheet. Get your ticket butts and money in before the AGM so they are in the draw.

### Pat on the Back

As part of the Year of the Volunteer, BICA has received a certificate from the minister for the environment, Sheryl Garbutt for our conservation efforts. Give yourself a pat on the back if you have contributed in any way over the past twelve months!

QUESTION	RESPONSE										
1. Are you a Bend of Islands resident?	Yes: 80% No: 20%										
2. Are you a BICA member?	Yes: 95% No: 5%										
3. If YES, how long have you been a member?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1 year or less</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - 5 years</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 - 10 years</td> <td>28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 - 20 years</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 years or longer</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> </table>	1 year or less	8%	2 - 5 years	18%	6 - 10 years	28%	10 - 20 years	23%	20 years or longer	23%
1 year or less	8%										
2 - 5 years	18%										
6 - 10 years	28%										
10 - 20 years	23%										
20 years or longer	23%										
4. Do you think BICA plays a useful role in the Bend of Islands?	Yes: 97% No: 3%										
5. If NO, how do you think BICA could perform a more useful role?	There were only two comments on this Question. One was concerned about the dust issue. The other suggested that if BICA feels they have a problem with a residents view they need to understand their concerns and talk to them, bring them into their trust, otherwise the organisation will gradually disintegrate.										
6. Have you attended any activities organised by BICA in the past 12 months?	Yes: 86% No: 14%										
If NO, is there a particular reason?	A small percentage said they were too busy, but would like to attend.										
If YES, what activities appeal most?	Café Benders was the most popular, although this was mentioned as a Fire Brigade activity, followed by Annual Night Event, Newsletter, Field Days/Nights, Landcare Working Bees, Trivia Night and General Meetings (equal), Clean-up Australia Day Flora and Bird Walks, Boot Benders and Planning Issues in that order.										
7. Are there any additional activities/guest speakers you would like BICA to organise?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>YES 45%</td> <td>No 55%</td> </tr> </table> Additional activities/speakers suggested were on Frogs, Spiders, Moth, Butterflies, Fungi, Botany, Wallabies, Geology field trip, Aboriginal, Conservation issues generally. Other suggestions were Planning issues, Talks/slides on Outback, desert. One important comment asked for more activities aimed at children and to be both educational and fun.	YES 45%	No 55%								
YES 45%	No 55%										
8. Are there any other comments you would like to make?	Most comments were favourable and think that BICA is very important and doing a great job on the conservation, community and social front. A reminder to continue personal contact. One person was concerned about the dust and one commented on the fox problem. One comment suggested that BICA could be more conciliatory in its dealing with residents.										

## LOCAL HEROES!

Sheila Dixon

Never mind about awards from councils or the Order of Australia or if your country thinks that you deserve the Nobel Prize! Let's bring them back home among the Red Box and Candlebarks of our own country; that's what I say anyway! That great night when we all got our gongs from the council put me in mind of this article. I would like to write about a couple of good people and their deeds for the community and to allow us to get to know the mostly unknown work that they do before the rest of us can even start on our efforts. These things don't just happen, they have to be organized. And just to be politically correct I will do the right thing and tell you about a male and a female each time.

### PETER GURNEY, THE INSTIGATOR

There is a story, from one who shall be nameless, that one night a long time ago the Gurneys had some important guests for dinner. Then the fire bell rang!. Now the truck at this time was in the back of Dave Herds place (pre southern shed) and needed to go to Peter Oyston's house in a hurry for it was burning. Peter was Comms Officer at the time and just WENT from the table and disappeared, throwing the radio gear on the back seat of the old blue Holden. And so the dinner went on but whenever Peter came back in time for it was lost in the telling of the story.

I'm sure this sort of thing has happened many times but I would like to get down to the nuts and bolts of this Community organization and how much effort has to go into presenting the tasks we have to participate in. The Clean Up Australia day is a good example. Gloves and bags have to be ordered from the council along with sheets for names and insurance policies. Then there is the first Aid to be thought of and the skips put on a central site. The Fire Brigade is brought into the day for heavy duty hauling of cars out of creeks. All of this is painstakingly organized through council with probably many phone calls not forgetting notices for us the volunteers who help.

When Peter first thought about some sort of Landcare group it was ten years down the track. Not much was happening, so being Peter he decided a little expertise was needed so he did a course in bush regeneration and also one on how to use herbicides safely. This is Peter's way, to find out how to use these methods with safety and common sense. We all now know the wonderful work that has been done with weeds and have built up a nice tribe of people who enjoy the participation anyway. We might dig up the onion weed but the expertise is there along with the tools and afternoon tea bits and pieces complete with dry kindling.

Before we had the monthly recycling of rubbish from the council Peter organised it to be taken up to the Southern shed so it wasn't untidily blowing about the road. Then the council finally got the message and gave us those Darth Vader bins as Alan Bonney

calls them. A much better proposition and great to simplify matters.

Then there was that lovely night at the Community Centre when we got our certificates for being good little workers. All the digging and pulling weeds and muscles was summed up in being recognised. Peter put such a lot of hard work into that. Long phone calls with Robin Adams for Fire Brigade members names, making sure that the people in the weeding groups and any other voluntary workers were not missed. He had a few sleepless nights in case he missed out on someone.

Then there is the Water Watch. This had to be organised again from the council with kits to be picked up and given to the people who were going to undertake this job. This article hasn't taken long to write but the hours that Peter has put in to all this would be difficult to count. He has a life as well. Being Business Manager of Eltham High School isn't exactly a part time job. And then there is Daniel the intellectually disabled young man the Gurney family has cared for on weekends for at least ten years.

If this Community is a caring one as well as environmentally aware then we can all point the finger at Peter Gurney for it's all his fault. Thanks Pete.

### MARIE KRAUS. ANOTHER OF OUR LOCAL STARS.

Some people organise things very quietly so that you don't always notice they have been there before you. It took me a while but then I began to notice that the shed was always prepared on those Saturday mornings with it's perky little tablecloths and chairs all ready the kitchen ready for food and coffee to go and money in the cake tin. Then I began to notice that Marie was there with her usual welcoming smile. I realise there are other people too who get the morning going but she has been in on this since the beginning which I believe is about ten years now, give or take a year or two. Of course this was part of a money raiser called The Friends of the Fire Brigade of which she was one of the original members.

Marie spreads herself around quite a bit for she is also in the Friends of Warrandyte State Park. As if she didn't do enough weeding in our area! Perhaps she has a secret obsession with weeds. She also takes part in the monthly Sunday market over at Warrandyte and organises the roster for that as well. She doesn't just pull up weeds she plants things too. There is yet another place she does her Johnny Applesced with planting and that is the corridors of land up near Hindmarsh Shire. With huge areas under wheat the birds and wild life lose such a lot of bush and this is one way of keeping them there.

I guess that walking is one of her greatest pleasures and the group she has organised is called the Boot Benders. This is a 12/ 15 K walk once a month and some pretty interesting ones they are. Marie's knowledge of flora comes into the walks and adds that other dimension to make them more satisfying. Cric Henry organises Flora walks to which Marie can make a valuable contribution. *(continued next page)*

I would think by this time Marie is blushing like Princess Di did for she is one of those people who doesn't really like drawing attention to herself. I know she is much loved by all of us and as an unnamed source said to me (they always say that don't they) if we have any gathering at all and Marie is not there, there is the question 'Where's Marie?' From now on you won't be able to get out of ANYTHING will you Marie?

## **RAKING**

### **Peter Gurney**

It is about this time of the year that we all start to prepare for the forthcoming fire season. As well as checking our fire plan, briefing the household, checking the house and outbuildings, running the fire fighting pump, attending fire brigade community briefings and fire guard group activities, and sensibly reducing the fuel close to our homes we also tend to get out with a rake and have a bit of a burn off. I mean, the real lead up to the Christmas holidays to any resident of the Bend is the smell of burning gum leaves as the evenings get longer and the days get hotter. Trying to get the burning done prior to the declaration of the fire danger period is always a bit of a rush. One of the most memorable pre-fire season preparation periods I can remember was about five years ago when I was out scratching around with a rake and having a few little fires along our Catani Blvd property frontage. It was just getting dark and as I was raking I could hear piano accordion music and singing coming along the road down by McCallum's place. The music was getting closer and I was becoming more and more mystified. Through the smoke of my fires and the gathering gloom of the evening came Michael Daunt, who has a place down on Gongflers Drive. Michael was out enjoying the evening, walking up to the top of Catani Blvd, playing and singing as he went. Michael is a professional, talented musician and singer and he was kind enough to stop by me for a good while as I worked playing requests and letting me join in the choruses. What a place to live!!

I have another summer evening story involving a very hot night, the sound of bagpipes and a stark naked, skinny piper, but I will save that one for another time.

Anyway, I digress. This article is about the danger of over-raking an area and the long-term detrimental effect that it will have on the soil and the plants. I used to be a bit of a raking fanatic and each summer I concentrated a good bit of effort into raking around our tanks and south of our carport and wood-pile. This area is pretty flat, dropping very gently to the south. Every little leaf and twig would be raked up and burnt. After three or four pre-summers of this I realized that the soil in the raked area was becoming very soft and as the wind and rain was eroding the soil away over the entire area that I raked so conscientiously. I had caused a small but growing sheet-erosion area and I could see that after the years of raking the topsoil level was beginning to decrease. Nearby areas that I had not raked were becoming obviously elevated when

compared to the raked area, only by a centimetre or two but it was obvious. Not only that, but nothing would grow where I had raked.

I certainly did not intend to cause erosion and finally the penny dropped; I had overdone the raking. To prevent further damage I stopped such assiduous raking practice, I picked up some bush timber and small rocks from around the place and laid them across the gentle slope to catch leaves, twigs and soil blown by the wind and carried by water run-off. I also planted some indigenous grass tussocks across the slope, not densely but sufficient to help hold the soil together in the areas most eroding. I realized that sensible forest litter reduction is the aim - not fuel elimination. The preferred outcome is to reduce the intensity of any fire threatening our home, not to make a desert around the house. As a result of this blinding flash of the obvious my summer raking has now become very light and careful. I leave sticks larger than my little finger on the ground and I don't remove all the leaves, bark etc. I just thin them down to a sensible level where absolutely necessary. As a result mosses and lichens have returned and now cover the previously raked area binding the soil and providing the conditions for topsoil stability. I am careful about where I walk on this area and I ensure that weeds are gently pulled out during winter and spring. After a few years of this careful management of my "little desert" native plants are beginning to return and fungi can be found in winter. Various orchids and sundews are now seen, and my mini man-made desert is returning to how it should be. I guess over the next few centuries the centimetre or two of top soil that has been lost will be made up. In our fragile environment it sometimes takes nature a long while to completely heal our environmental stuff-ups.

## **WELCOME RETURNS**

### **Carol and Alan Bonny**

Our swallows have raised another three chicks and we have watched them successfully fledge. As they did last year they come back to rest several times throughout the day and spend the night in their cosy nest. At least one of the parent birds spent the whole year roosting each night in the old nest. When it came time to set up the nursery again it was very convenient that we were once again making mudbricks and a ready supply of render was available for their renovations. During the time the young ones were growing there were several visits by other swallows and we wondered if they may have been last years young paying their new siblings a visit. They unfortunately weren't very welcome!

## BOX-IRONBARK

**Peter Gurney**

As outlined in the last Newsletter a group of Bend of Islanders (is that Bollers?) were to go to Paddys Ranges near Maryborough on the weekend of 10/11 October to help celebrate with the Victorian National Parks Association the wonders of Box-Ironbark Forest. There were ten of us who braved the rather cold weather that weekend, and about 440 others from all over Victoria who gathered at Paddys Ranges for the weekend. A huge crowd, about two hundred more than the VNPA thought probable all gathered to learn and enjoy the diversity of the forest. And we had a really good time. On Saturday after checking in and having lunch (courtesy of Greenpeace) we had the opportunity to select a round robin of three different interest groups from ten available which ranged from botany and animals to geology. The presenters were experts in their field and led us through their specialist area and the direct relationship of it to box-ironbark forest. My family learnt about bryophytes (mosses and lichens), geology and bats. Others in the Bollers Group learnt about insects, flora and reptiles along with some common interests in the bryophytes and geology. Although there were frequent showers of rain and a very cold wind we were enthralled by the presenters and by their enthusiasm for their subjects.

That evening there were speeches, entertainment and a lovely curry dinner, or so we heard. Our steadfast campers, Norm L-S, Gerard and Jo had all that fun while the chicken-hearted Gurneys, Krauses and Taylors nicked into Maryborough and discovered the very welcome warmth, extensive wine selection and delicious cuisine of the Albion Hotel. We also stayed at the Junction Motel while the woodland commando group roughed it at the VNPA campground.

Next morning we slunk back to join the group for breakfast in the wild and then all our group opted not for the six hour walk, but for the two hour guided visit to a nearby private property with more intact box-ironbark woodland. This was quite a contrast to Paddys Ranges which has been very heavily exploited for timber until 20 years ago. We then returned to Paddy's for lunch and then departed back to the Bend.

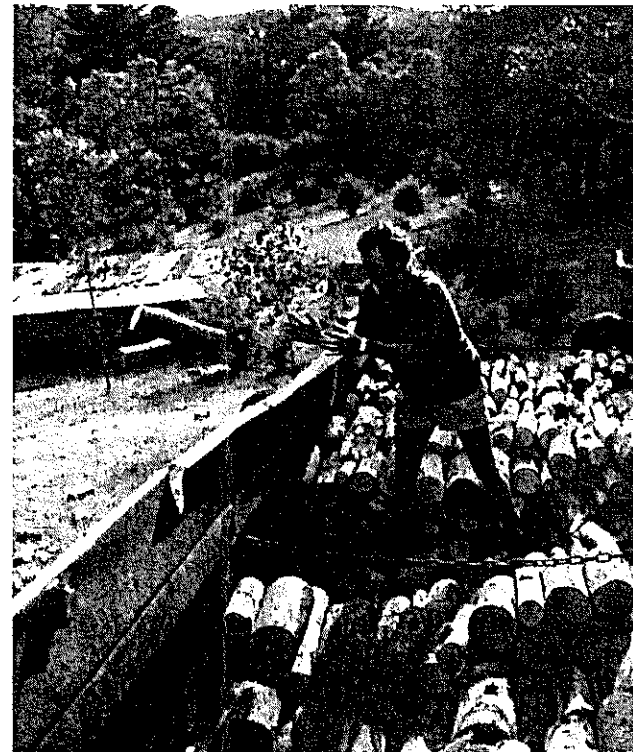
What did we learn of great interest? Firstly, we learnt that there are a wide range of people who are interested in box-ironbark woodland and quite a few experts on all aspects of its biodiversity. Secondly, we reinforced that our own patch of box-ironbark woodland is in relatively good condition. We also came to understand even more clearly that we who live here in the Bend are very fortunate indeed and that while all the remnant box-ironbark woodland of Victoria is precious and should be protected, our patch is even more special because we collectively and individually own it and we are gradually improving it back to something more like its original condition. It was clear to us that the Bend of Islands area is abundant in indigenous flora and fauna

much more so than the areas we visited, and it is very worth the ongoing work and vigilance to keep it that way. There is no need to go looking for a box-ironbark wonderland; we live in one!!

## SUGAR GUM SAGA

**Alan Bonny**

BICA has been promoting the use of farm grown sugar gum for firewood. To help residents the first bulk purchase of wood has been successfully achieved. Thirty tonne was delivered and distributed by a combined effort. Entertaining for the pub walk crew to watch two local 4 wheel drives chained in tandem tow out the bogged delivery semi. Congratulations to all who participated over the two days and special thanks to Steve Craig for coordinating the whole process. Another load may be organized if there is enough interest. Contact Steve Craig 9712 0029.



**PETE HELPING TO UNLOAD  
THE TRUCK**

**THE NEXT GLITTERING OCCASION WILL BE.....**

**The Annual General Meeting**

To be held on Sunday, November 25, 2001 at 2.00 PM

Watch the sign post at Oxley Bridge for particulars of location etc.

The speaker will be Laurie Rigg and he will be talking about

The Kinglake National Park lyrebird count

3095

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**BICA**

