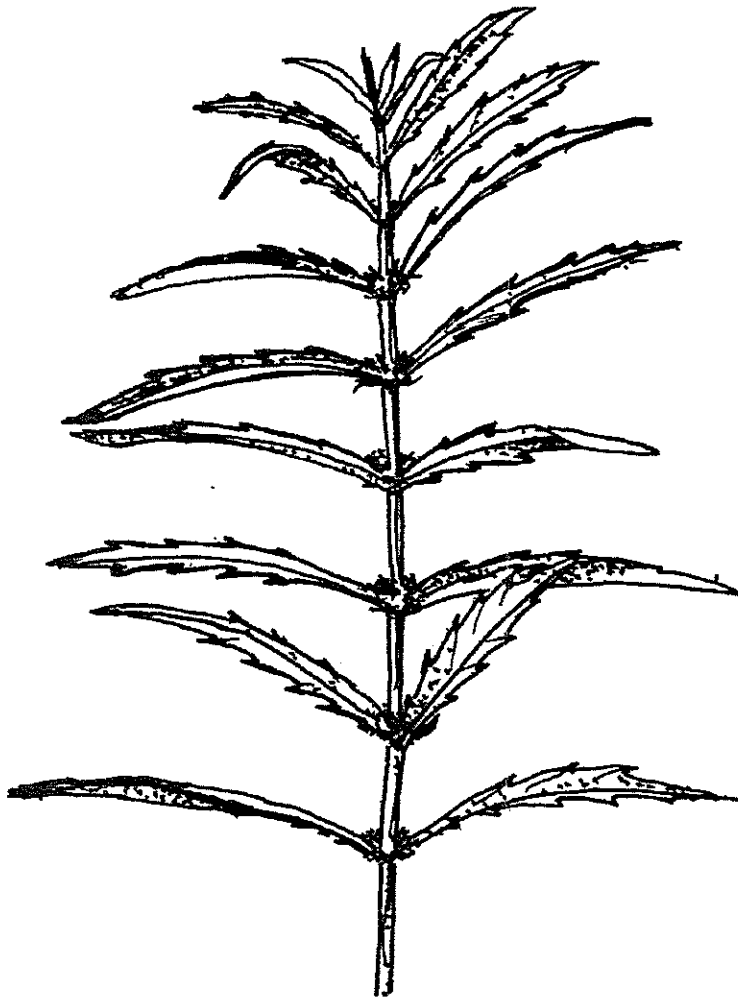


# BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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

Inc. No. A11100A

Number 56 March 2003



## WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Lycopus australis*  
Common name: Australian Gypsywort  
Family: Lamiaceae  
Flowering period: Summer to Autumn

A leafy herb up to 1 metre high of erect, mainly unbranched stems, which are quadrangular in cross section.

Stalkless leaves occur in pairs along the stem. The showy, bright green leaves are lance-shaped, 100mm long by 20mm wide, with indented veination and jagged edges. Short hairs on the leaf give it a slightly rough texture and when the leaves are crushed they exude a pungent smell.

Many tiny white flowers appear December to April in dense clusters in the leaf axils. The flowers are four lobed, typical of flowers of the mint family. The calyx, the outer envelope of the flower consisting of the sepals, consists of four green lobes about as long as the white four-lobed flower.

A herb of riparian scrub, preferring partial sun or full shade and tolerant of moist swampy soils. A semi-aquatic herb usually growing on the drier fringes of wetlands but tolerating water-logged or wet soils for most of the year. In ideal situations can form a dense thicket of undergrowth providing a safe habitat for small animals.

Propagation is by seed sown on wet soil or by division.

This species is a recent addition to the Bend of Islands Flora List, and was identified on the February 2003 Flora Survey, along the Yarra River at the Lower Catani Reserve.

CRIC HENRY

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Autumn is here thank goodness. The summer we have just experienced was a real challenge. The recycled shower water just wasn't enough to sustain the lives of several of my hand raised plants. Maybe they were planted in areas that were not suitable and I will use this as a learning experience. Indigenous plants in the correct situation will have the greatest chance of survival in drought situations and if, like all of us in the Bend, you have to survive on tank water every drop is precious. Survival of the fittest is what has happened. I have plenty of tube stock waiting for planting out after some good autumn rains.

No local fire events made it a good summer for our fire brigade and the active fire-guard groups provided access to information and support for all concerned.

We had our first General Meeting for 2003 in February and, if you haven't been to one, I invite you to come along to see how BICA runs and to enjoy the excellent guest speakers that we always have. The speakers are volunteers and they put so much time and effort into their presentation that it is disappointing not to get a good crowd for them. Check your BICA Calendar for meetings.

See you round. *Carol Bonny*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks again to all the contributors to this issue of BICA Newsletter. Thanks especially to Syd and Ona for the cartoons in BICA Newsletter 55.

Don't forget that we need your contribution and can accept it in any form, hand written or typed as well as electronically by email or disc.

Deadline for the next issue is mid-July.

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Vic., 3097

## HERITAGE GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENTS

*Alan Bonny*

The Henley course on our side of the Yarra is on hold at the moment. Environment Australia has become involved because of concerns raised by Friends of the Earth and the Native Fish Association. The issue is the impact on aquatic species by silting if there is runoff from the site during heavy rain. BICA made a submission to Environment Australia requesting that all environmental impacts should be fully considered and accommodated for the course construction.

The BICA nomination for the Environmental Monitoring Committee has been accepted and we congratulate Janet Mattiske on her appointment. Janet's experience and expertise will make her an asset to the committee.

As part of the assessment program an aquatic survey was conducted starting on Sunday the 9th March. The survey was conducted with an 'electrofishing' vessel which is a flat bottomed aluminium outboard powered boat with electronic booms out front with an onboard generator. The fish are stunned by the charge and netted for identification measuring and release. A 30 cm Macquarie Perch was among the catch.

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## HUNGRY MAGS

*Sheila Dixon*

Been watching something interesting these hungry days of the drought. The mag families are on hard times and the ones that live around here get a ration of cheese to help with the hunger pangs. They have a young one who I swear has a tin whistle that it blows constantly. I'm sure you know what I mean. Anyway, one thing we notice is that one the male mags is not eating all his share. He rushes away while the others are not looking and pushes it under a tussock of poa or bushes to keep it for later. He has a number of these and keeps a beady eye on them.

The other day Barb's son Luke was watching this performance and spotted a raven high up in a gum. It waited until Mag left and then swooped down. It burrowed in amongst the tussock and got the cheese. Poor Mag saw this and half rushed to see his larder being robbed. But the raven was too aggro and belted Mag one. 'We wuz robbed', said Mag. Then he saw a kooka take another of his bits and that was too much. Kooka got a right hook and Mag's dignity was saved. Maybe others have seen this but it's a first for us.

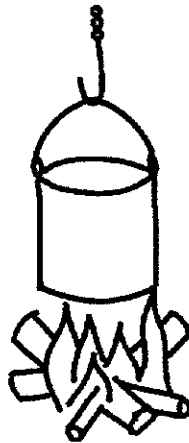
## WORKING BEES

Peter Gurney

BICA will be concentrating our working bee efforts this year on the continuing removing of pine trees as well as weeding on Watsons Creek. We have grant money from Nillumbik Council totalling \$5,000 to be spent this year, and we have plenty of work to do. We will be replacing pines with indigenous plants and removing weeds such as Tutsan, Watsonia and Angled Onion along the Creek so that naturally sown indigenous species can replace them. Four property owners have requested assistance to get rid of pines and there may be sufficient funds and volunteer effort to do each of these properties. That which is not completed in 2003 will be targeted for 2004. Funds will be spent tree felling and sawing up the logs remaining on the ground after usable timber is removed for milling. Working bees will remove and stack firewood for use by locals, and will also mulch and replant sites as necessary. The plants will come from indigenous stock grown by Carol Bonny and others.

The weeding at Watsons Creek will be completed in partnership by contracted specialists and working bees. This work will continue our work along the creek over past years, the benefits of which are becoming very evident. By removing weed species we are enhancing this valuable wildlife corridor which links the Yarra and Warrandyte State Park to Kinglake National Park. In fact, the creek area is stunningly beautiful and is a reminder of how all the creek valleys in the lower and middle Yarra must have looked 200 years ago. It is a pleasure and honour to be working to return the vegetation to its original state. Come along one third Sunday of the month and see for yourself! The sign tree will always have details.

Wanted: an Assistant Working Bee Coordinator. No experience necessary, on the job training provided, must have a sense of humour and the ability to light a camp fire to boil the billy when it is raining. Phone applications accepted. Phone 9712 0408 ASP.



## A DRY SUBJECT

Sheila Dixon

Driving to and fro almost daily I have noticed our lovely area taken over by the drought, though compared to the country up north ours isn't too bad yet. But as the dams get lower they seem to dry up on an ever decreasing scale don't they? I noticed a couple of notices at the store about KG gathering up bales of hay and organizing trucks to take it up where needed and I would like to give them some money towards it. The Newsletter won't be out in time I think so I will bring it up at the GM on Sunday. I can't forget the photo of that poor old farmer crying as he had just shot one of his breeding cows.

The dear old eucalypts though. Haven't turned a hair, been there done that but the odd exotic in the bush looks a bit sick. My vegie garden has gone from a garden of Eden in the spring to a dust bowl. Except for a few tomatoes, some basil and rhubarb its a mess. And I thought I was going to feed half of Melb. back then. We are on pump water from the river and had to stop using sprinklers like everyone else. Now its just for fire purposes. I'm lost without that pottering down there. Then the other day a bunch of choughs got in and proceeded to scratch all the mulch off the beds and all over the place. I sat down among the tomatoes and shed a tear.

Last winter I dug two little ponds for the birds. What a success! While I was having breakfast the other day I watched 3 crimsons, 2 galahs, 4 noisy miners, 1 peewit and one silly nodding dove all doing their thing. The miners love bathing and doing it together. They make this special churring noise as they bathe. I was given a few water plants from the Bonneys dam and they are keeping the water fresh.

A wombat and small child live under that little house on my property and my daughter has seen her and the baby drinking from there along with a huge one that comes up from the land near the river. The other morning there were 3 small kangas having a drink too. So it is all very worthwhile.

I have had to buy 2 loads of water in the last 2 months. I still had some pots on the decks that needed caring for but they have to go now. I'll just hope we get rain in the autumn. I wonder how others are faring?

## ASH WEDNESDAY, TWENTY YEARS ON

**Robyn Adams**

In Victoria, January and February 2003 will be remembered for the massive fires in the alpine areas and the NE of the State. In terms of area burnt, the fires are the largest since Black Friday 1939, but the losses are remarkably small. So far, there are no lives lost, about 40 houses destroyed and somewhere around 10,000 head of stock killed.

It would be easy for us, in the current circumstances, to forget that this month, February 16, is the 20th anniversary of the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires. In comparison to 2003, the area burnt in 1983 was very small, but the losses, about 70 lives and 2000 houses, and the extreme fire intensities recorded, have made Ash Wednesday a benchmark for bushfires.

However, our response to the 2003 fires shows us that the lessons we learned from the Ash Wednesday fires, we learned well ! That we can successfully defend our houses from bushfire, without endangering our lives, is probably the most significant step Victorians have made in learning to live with bushfires.

Time and again during these 2003 fires, residents have successfully put their fireplans into action. Who, in the urban fringe and rural towns in 1983, had ever even dreamed of a "fireplan", or of staying to defend their property from ember attack? Ash Wednesday has indeed left us with a profound and positive legacy.

Christmas Hills' involvement in the Ash Wednesday fires is captured in the radio log, kept by Hilary Jackman. It begins with an amended weather forecast about 11am on February 16 1983, where a Priority Fire Weather Warning was issued. The new forecast was for 38C, 10% relative humidity, and winds from the north and north west of 45 km/hr gusting to 80 km/hr. Christmas Hills Tanker 1 ( it was actually the Region 13 Spare, an Austin, complete with faulty radio and vaporizing fuel), turned out "to Berwick" at 6.40pm, and the rest is history !

The radio log pages show the planning for crews for both Tanker 1 and Tanker 2, and for local crew, until "no relief crews are needed" was logged at 5.14pm on Saturday 19 February.

During the four days, the Brigade fought fires throughout the Dandenong Ranges, at Warburton, and in the Kinglake National Park . Not bad for firefighters in overalls, threadbare hand-me-down MFB turnout coats, and little gray helmets! Not too long after that, the Tankers were fitted with heat shields, and now we even have seats on the back with seatbelts !

## LESS GAS PLEASE!

**Steve Craig**

Australian greenhouse gas emissions per capita are 35% above the US and the highest in the industrialised world, according to research by the Australia Institute (The Age August 10, 2002)

Conventional cars account for between 70 and 90 percent of Australia's air pollution and up to 20 per cent of green house gas emissions.

Action on greenhouse emissions was required to reduce Victoria's high incidence of respiratory disease and asthma, which is claimed to be caused by small particle pollution from car exhausts and coal fired power stations. Research by CSIRO has shown only recently that small-particle pollution is recognised as a cause of health problems. More people were dying each year because of the effects of small-particle pollution than in motor accidents. (The Age August 12, 2002).

On a Melbourne summers day, cars burning non-renewable fossil fuel create 44 per cent of emissions. In addition to the immediate pollution effects, cars are the fastest growing source of green house emissions (The Age Nov 22, 2002).

With no regular public transport in the Bend of Islands it's not easy to reduce our dependence on our cars, however there are a number of practical things that we can do to help reduce greenhouse emissions in our community.

- walk or ride a bike to local events
- put the children on the school bus
- if you're going to the city, drive to Eltham and catch the train instead
- shop once a week or on your way home from work
- car pool with a neighbour

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## WATERWATCH

**Carol Bonny**

Water watch is an ongoing activity by BICA members. The monthly monitoring checks water quality with a variety of scientific and visual tests. A good activity for all the family. Any one interested please contact our new coordinator Sam Crisi 9712 0060. Thanks to Ed Car for his past management of Waterwatch.

## TAWNY TANGO

Bob Millington

FIFTY years or so down the track, some learned publication or another will probably carry a research paper headed Notes on Uncharacteristic Behaviour Observed in Discrete Population of *Podargus strigoides*.

Melbourne's daily paper, the Herald-Sun-Age, will seize on the yarn and translate it into English:

"Scientists have found strange goings-on among a bunch of birds in the Bend of Islands, that rural enclave just upstream from the Yarra bridge on the mega ring road.

"Tawny frogmouths normally sit motionless, blending with the trees they use as perches. Not so in the Bonky Bend. There the cute little critters can be seen bobbing and weaving like Shane Tszyu, grandson of the legendary Kostya and Australia's latest hope of another world boxing title.

"Boffins are divided on whether this strange behaviour is a result of errant genes or some sort of cultural tradition: nature or nurture. But we don't care. We say, dance on you wacky chaps."

And I say, half a century ahead of the controversy, put your money on nurture over nature.

Since going into the wildlife shelter game some six years ago, Trish has had half a dozen tawnys (one found sheltering, by the way, in the back of Neil Kamminga's truck in a city high-rise car park). Sometimes I am roped in to help feed the zoo. I tolerate ringtails, avoid brushies and have been on almost amiable terms with kangaroos.

But for some reason tawnys entrance me. I think I love their attempts at camouflage and the way they more or less come out of a trance when they hear your voice and realise it means tucker. I volunteer to feed them when they go into the big cage out back. And I'm delighted when they sway from side to side for me.

I mentioned this tawny tango to Trish some time ago. "That shouldn't happen," she said. "We'd better look into this." We went back down the food chain to son Gareth, then a teenager and charged with dishing up the grub to indoor animals.

We found him standing in front of the cage, cooing to the latest frogmouth while shifting from leg to leg. And the bird responded. No fool it. It noted that whenever it danced it copped a blob of mincemeat in its beak.

Now, I figure that around the Bend there are at least a half a dozen released tawnys that might relate hopping from leg to leg with the idea of food. Perhaps they perform a rumba for a rat and a twist for a tuan. And their offspring, looking on, think, well, the oldies are bonkers but I'd better do it, too.

And if that scientific treatise comes to pass you now know the story behind it all.

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## NILLUMBIK MOVES ON WASTE MANAGEMENT

Steve Craig

Vern Steele, Waste and Energy Minimisation Officer with the Shire of Nillumbik advised this week that the new contracts for recycling and organics are in place. The recycling contract is for co-mingled paper and canisters and all resin codes are acceptable (this reduces the issue of contamination significantly).

Food and garden organics waste will be bulk halled to Soil Power in Epping. Soil power manufactures several lines of soils through to mulches by screening and blending the composted material with manures etc.

The Recycling and Recovery Centre will be constructed this year. Current recycling contracts are in place until mid 2003 and we can expect a new garbage collection and recycling system to be implemented shortly after that.

The following specific actions will be implemented.

1. RURAL RECYCLING ACTIONS: A 240 L MGB will be collected fortnightly for containers and paper/cardboard (Action 19).
2. GREEN AND FOOD ORGANICS ACTIONS: A collection for food and green organics will be introduced for the whole of Shire on a weekly basis. The current 120 L MGB will be utilised for this. A biannual bundled collection of green waste will also be provided for. (Action 26)
3. HARD WASTE: The opportunity for residents to dispose of larger household items will be provided for in the form of an annual drop-off period, and then revert to the form of year round Resource Recovery Centre. (Action 29).
4. RESIDUAL WASTE ACTIONS: Utilise current 120 L MGB weekly/fortnightly or an 80 L MGB weekly/fortnightly depending on services adopted. (Action 32) A lesser charge (to be determined) will be provided for residents choosing the 80 litre fortnightly Residual Waste Mobile Bin, as an incentive towards waste reduction. (Action 60)

SOURCE: SHIRE OF NILLUMBIK WASTE MINIMISATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2003-2005



## BIRDNOTES

Frank Pierce

The following events can be reported since last November:

1. Lyrebirds - On 13/02/03 Wolfgang Krause saw a male bird (and probably a female) on Skyline Rd near gate 3 at 6.45 am. Janet and I then heard the bird below the ridge opposite gate 3 at 7 pm. This is great news as there had been no sighting records for a year and we had assumed the birds had perished or had vacated the area due to the extremely dry conditions.
2. Powerful Owls - A pair have been observed several times at a daytime roost site near the Carr's house in Catani Boulevard.
3. Superb Parrot - This bird turned up at Jeph Neale's and Hilary Jackman's on 12/12/02. It had no claws on its left foot and no right foot at all. It was very hungry and unwell looking when it arrived but within a couple of days was bossing the Crimson Rosellas around. It perched under verandah of the house at night. Despite lack of claws on its only foot it did not seem to have any trouble perching in trees etc. It stayed around the C Track area for about 8 days and was probably an aviary escapee, as it was quite tame.
4. Cicadabird - Seen by Steve Craig once only near his house on 17/12/02.
5. White-throated Nightjar - Heard regularly at night around B & C Tracks on the Coop.
6. On our January walk 55 species were recorded along Watsons Creek including Mistletoebird (breeding), Clamorous Reed Warbler, Spotless Crake, Great & Little Pied Cormorants, Rufous Fantail, Crested Shrike-tit and Dusky Woodswallow.
7. On our February walk we recorded 42 species along Watsons Creek including Black Shouldered Kite and Clamorous Reed Warbler.

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings you make, especially of lyrebirds, and pass \_\_\_\_\_ them on to Frank Pierce (97120237),.

## NEWBENDERS

Another son for Sue and Phil Vaughan, Liam John, a carbon copy brother for Matthew. A very new and very little son Lynden for Jo Douglas and Gerard Banner. Born at thirty two weeks and only 4 lb 1 oz. All doing well. Congratulations to both families.

## BOOTBENDERS

Carol Bonny

The February walk was a local event with the usual group of six setting off from the fire station. It was held on one of the most humid days of this year and the walkers were feeling the effects of the conditions by the end of our six hour adventure.

Oxley Reserve. If you have never been off the road and explored these areas then you don't know what you are missing. Beautiful bushland gullies with diverse vegetation, mainly weed free. Down the track to the river to the Islands and a leisurely walk along the bank to a quiet spot for morning tea and a chat and some plant identification. Getting the crew started again is not easy but eventually we made our way back to the road and across the paddock to Watson's Creek past Stevenson's Oak. Magnificent Manna Gums and vast areas of *Lomandra* covering the forest floor as we followed the creek upstream to its convergence with Stevensons creek. Along Stevensons creek to the dam but we didn't spot the Spotless Crake. Sorry Frank, we did look. Further up the creek toward the back of the co-op with more hidden treasures. Deep gullies with tree ferns, candlebarks and *Pomaderris* forests. Lunch was enjoyed by this little babbling gem. In little crystal clear pools we spotted tiny fish which we were unable to identify due to our lack of expertise in this department. Wallaby and kangaroo kept a reserved distance from us and many birds watched as we trespassed on their usually private domain. We eventually made our way out onto Skyline Rd close to Wendy Way for the hot and dusty walk along the road back to the cars and home. Although we were close to residences for a lot of the walk it seemed as if we were a million miles from anywhere. A spring walk in the same area would be great to see the wildflowers on display. When walking in the Bend of Islands get permission for access to properties. Another delightful Boot Benders walk. You are welcome to join us. We have a great day.

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## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**Drumming.** This group meets Tuesday nights at participants' homes. A tutor attends monthly to introduce new challenges to the group. New and experienced drummers are invited to participate in this relaxed and noisy group. Contact Tom 9712 0451 or Carol 9712 0648.

**Leadlight For Beginners.** A workshop has started in which the basics of leadlight construction are introduced. Currently Wednesday evenings at the Vaughans in Skyline Rd. Limited spaces. Contact Alan or Carol 9712 0648

**Yoga.** Monday nights at the Taylors in Henley Rd. Ongoing tutor led group. All welcome. Contact Jenny 9712 0614

# THE DAY THE BEND OF ISLANDS LAST BURNT

**Mick Woivod**

Fire has played a significant role in the creation of the Bend of Islands. The Wurundjeri once knew it as Wyenondabul, - the 'Hills of Fire'. Throughout their long occupation they burnt it frequently to maximise its hunting & gathering potential. Their environmental living zone was a mosaic of burnt and unburnt country less vulnerable to wildfire.

The first recorded bushfire in the Bend of Islands was on Black Thursday, 6 February 1851 when a front of a much larger outbreak (encompassing much of Victoria) passed through both Kangaroo Ground and Mooroolbark. Next recorded were the February 1890 fires known to have destroyed a house-lot of building material stacked in a clearing at the end of a track today known as Gongflers Drive. Following it, after a 24 year break, came the 1914 fires described in the last issue of this newsletter.

Then came the Black Sunday fires of 14 February 1926 which had their local start in the Kinglake Ranges. In the Bend of Islands these destroyed the two-storey holiday home of James Page on lot 26 Gongflers that 36 years before had lost its building materials to a similar fire.

Other fires such as those on Black Friday, 13 January 1939, Black Sunday 1969 and Ash Wednesday 1983 fortunately did not impact on the Bend of Islands at all.

Its last major fire was on Sunday 15 January 1962. In total it burnt two-thirds of the then Shire of Eltham and all of today's Bend of Islands Environmental Living Zone.

It was started by boys smoking out a ferret in bushland off Osborne Road, Christmas Hills, on the Saturday, spreading later in the day to Yarra Glen, Steele's Creek and eventually into the Kinglake Ranges. The following morning, fanned by strong north and north-westerly winds, the fire passed through St Andrews, Panton Hill, Kangaroo Ground, the Bend of Islands, Wonga Park, Warrantyte and Park Orchards to be eventually halted on the Maroondah Highway outside Mitcham.

In those days there were only two permanent families resident in the Bend of Islands; one in Syd and Ona's present home beside Watsons Creek, the other the Essex family where Peter and Mary Burns now live. On most other blocks there were weekenders, the ruins of which could still be seen in bush clearings until recent times.

The nearest brigades were Christmas Hills and Kangaroo Ground. Neither had sufficient resources to extend operations into the Bend of Islands. The one brigade to do so was Research. On the afternoon of the outbreak its crew drove their World War II Blitz-wagon (fitted with modified ex-Army radio and water-tank) to Hurstbridge - later that evening completing back-burns along Buttermans Track.

Early the following morning its crew returned along the Eltham-Yarra Glen Road where they managed to save a home near today's Watsons Creek Antiques. From there, they drove into the Bend of Islands and, after checking out Oxley Road, made a stand on the K.G. side of the Oxley Bridge; with hose and truck for protection the front passed safely over them. Their next move was to Calwell Road for a refill from the Aqueduct, then on to the Middleton home on Henley Road which they also after a struggle managed to save.

Already, the word was out that truck and crew (unheard of since the previous evening) had been lost. Their return to the station later that afternoon was greeted with cheers of relief.

Previous to this, David Essex and his wife had taken their young family into the safety of Eltham and returned to their home above the present fire-station to retrieve whatever personal effects they could manage.

After yarding their cattle close to the house, they hosed everything down, aware that their 80 year-old weatherboard home stood little chance in such a fire. When kangaroo began passing through ahead of the front they chose the river as their best chance for survival.

While heading down Catani Boulevard in their 4WD, they decided to first check out a young family who'd been holidaying in the 'Three Bears', the stone cottage beyond where Ross & Crick Henry now live.

There they found their car without sign of the family. Their call however brought a frantic reply from the river where the young mother and two children, unable to start their car, sheltered. Quickly jump-starting the car, David and his wife led them up to Skyline Road for a dash to Yarra Glen and safety.

The Essex's having already decided to stay, chose the deserted Weaving property on Gongflers Drive (north of Mark and Sally Nihill's present home) as their safest route to the river. Parking their car in a clearing they grabbed bags and sped towards it, pausing a moment along the way to release the Weaving's chooks from their pen.

Immersed to their necks in water, with bags over their heads, they survived, describing the experience as harrowing, 'smoke and flames and the tremendous roar of the fire as it passed over.' When all was over they returned to their vehicle to find it safe - as also the Weaving's chook-house - but not so much as a feather of its occupants. As foreseen, their home above the fire station was totally destroyed.

All five of these early Bend of Islanders were extremely fortunate to have survived the 1962 bushfire. Had circumstances been different all could have perished! The lesson of course is to be better prepared. Choose to depart early or choose to remain but never in your wildest dreams contemplate a last minute dash for safety in any bushfire situation

## **ECHIDNA HAS A BATH**

**Steve Craig**

Like many residents in the Bend of Islands who have bird baths, I regularly observe Echidnas during the hotter months of the year bathing. I have a terracotta bird bath located about 400 mm above ground on a cut off stump and it's quite amusing to watch an Echidna do a "chin up" into the bath then plop down into the shallow water for a scratch and a good soak, much to the annoyance of their feathered friends who can't get a leg in anywhere.

On a particularly hot day recently, I was kept fairly busy replenishing the water while three Echidnas took it in turns to use the bath. Throughout the whole performance two waited patiently at the base of the stump tolerating one another's presence while the third took a bath. They appear to have become quite accepting of my presence and show no alarm while I top up the water level for them while they're in the bath.

I was quite surprised to see one very large, dark individual recently waddling around in the empty bowl apparently trying to detect some trace of water. I'd forgotten to fill the bath in the morning as I usually do.

The Echidna stayed in the bath while I filled the watering can from a nearby tap. I then carefully approached the bird bath not wanting to scare it away. The Echidna initially tried to burrow down in the bath when it sensed my presence but then relaxed as I approached the bird bath and filled the bath through the watering can rose while the Echidna splayed out all four legs, lapping up the attention. I've showered Echidnas on a couple of occasions since this first experience and I must say, they give every indication of thoroughly enjoying the experience, as indeed I did.

## **CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY**

**Peter Gurney**

Many thanks to all the people who came along this year and lent a hand on Sunday 2nd March with our National Clean-up Day effort. We had 25 registered cleaner-uppers and I reckon there were three or four more who did not register but joined in anyway. We cleaned up all the rubbish along Henley Rd (An annual task this one. Who are the dirty bathplugs who toss out their bottles, cans, fast food wrappers and who don't secure their loads properly?), and we cleared away lots more redundant fencing from our bush land. The skip at the fire station was over full after two hours of effort and the recycling bag and bin were each full to the top. Most people stopped for coffee and cake after the event (thanks for the cake, Marg Woiwod) and a chat. We Benders are really good at coffee and CHAT. All in all it was yet another great example of community support for our special place on the planet.

Many thanks to Tom Fisher for doing all the bureaucratic organising prior to, and after the event.

As an aside, if you ever see litter being tossed out of a car or some one dumping rubbish in the bush then contact EPA Victoria's Litter Report Line on 1800 352 555. You need vehicle registration number, time and place and also be prepared to give your own details. EPA Vic will take action which I believe ranges from reminding the offender of the offence committed and the fact that they may be prosecuted, up to prosecution and fines. I personally would really like to find the person that cruises down Henley Rd and tosses out his (presumably his) Jim Beam and coke cans. We have been picking up those cans for 10 - 12 years now. Even today, only three days after cleaning up the roadside, there was a neat, fresh pile of five beer stubbies near the little phone substation on Henley Rd in the Bend of Islands. They were not there yesterday, and I might add they are not there now!

Thanks again to everyone involved and if anyone has suggestions for next year's clean-up effort see Tom Fisher or me please.

## **SUZ2 AND YOU**

**Alan Bonny**

As residents in the Bend of Islands it is important that we all know and understand the planning scheme that defines what we can and cannot do on our properties. The planning scheme was created by residents and the Environmental Living Zone and was incorporated as part of the State Planning Scheme under the jurisdiction of the then Shire of Healesville. The zone was rewritten as part of the statewide review of planning schemes and is now Special Use Zone 2 of the Nillumbik Planning Scheme; Environmental Living - Bend of Islands. Usually referred to as SUZ2 or ELZ.

I intend to highlight a section of the scheme in future BICA publications. As part of the Clean Up Australia activities some of the Benders who participated spent the time removing some remnant fencing so in this issue we will look at fencing and the planning scheme.

SUZ2 Section 4.0 "FENCES. Fencing, including property boundary fencing is prohibited except for the protection of regenerating bush, protection of kitchen gardens, statutory fencing requirements and boundary fencing as defined below. Solid or substantially solid fencing styles (eg brick or paling fences) will generally not be permitted.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**



**SUZ2 AND YOU (CONTINUED)**

Existing boundary fences enclosing land for grazing purposes can be replaced if a permit is held. Additional internal fencing on land presently used for grazing purposes may be erected with a permit.”

Our zone is designed to provide for environment and our fauna requires habitat and free movement. If you do not have a prior use right for grazing then you have no need or right for boundary or fencing other than that provided by the scheme. Barbed wire is nasty stuff so please consider removing remnant fences to provide maximum movement and minimum danger for the native fauna.

**ONE NOVEMBER MORN**

**Sheila Dixon**

The snake was basking on Henley Rd, up past Calwell Rd and he stretched almost from the centre line to the road edge, like steel against the road black. He seemed oblivious to my car as I stopped just a few metres away, his head rising only to the deliberate hard stamp of my foot on the road surface as I tried to scare him away. But no other movement! A car may come along at any moment and crush him - this is only a quietpause in the traffic on this surprisingly busy little country road.

I stamp again and he slowly and languidly turns his lithe length and with little haste moves away to the road edge. More urgently now, I stamp and stamp again, and he finally senses a remote threat to his safety. But he still only half tries to lift his steel black length marked with a soft yellow band along his body up the small embankment beside the road. It seems difficult for him to get a grip with his smooth long body, and anyway the threat of danger is not too serious, and the road surface is so nice and warm.

I worry that he may turn and go back to bask on the road and a car will come around the bend and crush his lithesome beauty. So I pick up a thin stick and bang the ground nearby where his shoulders would be if snakes had shoulders. Immediately he makes a real effort and pushes himself up the bank, his body gripping on some small pebbles and a tuft of grass, and he disappears in the grass and other low foliage on the top of the embankment. But no further; he lies there looking out at me, waiting until I go away so that he can return to the warm surface of the road, and to certain death.

Frankly, some people drive too fast on Henley Road to avoid hitting any animal unfortunate enough to be on the road as they come along. Others drive without paying close attention to the road surface; crushed Blue Tongue Lizards and snakes and flattened Magpies in Spring and Summer attest to that. Others deliberately run their

car over basking snakes. “Oh yes, we stop for echidnas and wombats, but snakes are horrible and dangerous things. I would not stop for a snake. Better off without the bastards!” some would probably say, or at least think!

But this snake illustrates the lie in this statement. His movement is so effortless and poetic, his colour and markings subtle and in the low vegetation he is almost invisible. His demeanour is almost indolent and his attraction to the warmth of the road is probably fatal. Despite my close proximity he makes no threatening move towards me. I am far too large and dangerous. It is he who is vulnerable and threatened.

We regard each other for a few moments, his small eyes looking slightly up at me from the grass atop the embankment, the hint of his long body flattened and hidden by the vegetation. I know he wants to return to the road once I go. So I use the puny small stick and smack down twice, thrice near his head. He finally turns towards the paddock fence and the grass barely moves as he flows away from the road.

And for good measure I throw the twig after him and yell, “Get way from here beautiful creature - here is death,” knowing all along that snakes are deaf. The tension leaves me and I get back in my car glad to have saved this magnificent maligned creature. Then a four wheel drive comes quite fast around the corner, the driver peering at me as he passes.

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The next Bend of Islands Conservation Association activity will be the  
**2003 Night Event**

Saturday, March 22

Contact Ross Henry 9712 0547

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