

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 60 July 2004

WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?



Botanical name: *Veronica plebeia*
Common name: Creeping or Trailing Speedwell
Family: Scrophulariaceae
Flowering period: Spring to Summer

A ground covering, prostrate herb, spreading up to one metre in width. Found in moist, well drained positions in damp and valley sclerophyll forests, riparian woodland and grassy low open forest.

The oval to heart shaped dark green leaves are on short stalks, arranged in pairs, on opposite sides of the stem. The rounded toothed leaves, up to 25mm long, but usually 5 to 12 mm long, with inconspicuous short hairs.

Long stalked terminal clusters of 2 to 8 pale violet flowers, in the upper leaf axils appear from Spring to Summer. Each flower consists of four petals joined to form a tube at the base, not much larger than the surrounding 6mm calyx of four pointed green lobes.

The fruit is a flat topped capsule, 2 - 3.5mm long full of many seeds.

Propagation by division, cuttings or by seed.

CRIC HENRY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

In June Steve Craig lost his four-year battle with cancer with his usual courage and dignity. On Wednesday the 30th of June the family, friends and colleagues of Steve Craig gathered at the Fawkner chapel to say goodbye. Well in excess of two hundred people filled the chapel and foyer to hear of a man we all knew in one way or another and to learn a lot more about Steve and his achievements from the perspectives presented.

After the funeral most returned to the fire station shed in the Bend of Islands to be joined by other friends and neighbours to fill the station and celebrate the life of Steve. Many spoke with affection and respect for what Steve had achieved and for his influence on them and others. There was appropriate laughter and tears as we remembered our friend.

On the day we were told of the contribution to the environment made by Steve and at Fawkner it was announced that the Department of Sustainability and Environment would provide a Steve Craig Fellowship to be awarded to graduates every two years for the next 10 years. This reflects the respect that those who worked professionally with him felt.

Most of us here in the Bend of Islands met Steve as a neighbour, friend and solid contributor to our community. He was the one who was always there as a passionate and enthusiastic participant in environmental discussions. Steve didn't just have opinions, he actively pursued and contributed to highlight concerns and address them. Steve was active on BICA committees, participated in the Co-op management and on council advisory groups, usually with Val at his side and always with her support. Some of us knew Steve as the Powerful Owl enthusiast. His car was often seen parked at the known owl spots and locals met him during his nocturnal wanderings as he kept track of his precious owl families. Those that participated in the nest box surveys will remember Steve up a ladder retrieving a nest box to show us the inhabitants. The Orchids of the Co-op handbook was achieved with a large input of time and effort by Steve and our Newsletters will be a bit thinner without his regular contributions. Those of us with wood fires were reminded of our environmental responsibilities and urged to be involved in bulk purchases of plantation Sugar Gum firewood arranged and coordinated by Steve. His interest, contribution and involvement were diverse.

My own fondest memory. Our Blues enthusiasts gatherings with loud music blasting from the stereo accompanied by Steve on harp and Frank on Air Guitar.

On behalf of the BICA committee and members I extend to partner Val and to Steve's children Ben and Marnie and family our deepest sympathies.

Vale Steve Craig

Carol Bonny

VALE STEVE CRAIG 1953 - 2004

Neil Harvey

The loss of Steve Craig is a huge blow to the community in the Bend of Islands. Steve was a person who either directly or indirectly affected us all. He was involved in so many activities relating to environmental awareness and education through BICA and the Co-op. His passions for fauna surveys, plant identification, preventing erosion when planning regeneration burns, photographic evidence annually at predetermined quadrats, inviting experts into the area to conduct field days, nest box surveys, more nest boxes, weed identification and removal, night walks to observe the nocturnal, koala counts and many more that will be remembered by all of you who have attended.

Steve was a tough taskmaster and expected everyone to share his commitment to the same level. We often spoke of our different approaches and often had to agree to disagree.

Before his illness Steve was a man full of energy, who instigated and extended many of the activities listed above and even after falling ill used his good days to get involved.

Many residents and friends of the Bend attended his funeral and the wake where friends from the many facets of his life spoke of their love and appreciation of his efforts, when they were involved in his life. I learned so much more about the man and his endeavours.

On behalf of Val and Steve's family I would like to thank all the people in the community who responded to the request for help in organising the wake at the Fire Shed. The numbers were many and the catering and set-up was done to our usual excellent standard.

All who attended were treated to great hospitality and a true feeling for who Steve was and how the community and his friends will remember him.

NEXT MEETING

The next general meeting of BICA will be on Sunday August 8 at 2.00 pm at the Car's house, Catani Boulevard. Ian Abrahams was one of a group that attempted to walk the length of the River Yarra and he will tell us about his experiences. Bring the usual; a chair, a mug and a plate of afternoon tea to share

GO STEVE!

Sheila Dixon

It's 8.00am and I am having breakfast. I am gazing at this scene in front of me and thought I would share it around. Four kangas are enjoying breakfast time too. One has had it's breakie and is lying in a patch of sun just keeping an ear on things with it's radar, one is just under my window and big Mumma is having a drink in my small pond. There is a curious little head poking out of her pouch but you would swear there was someone else in there too. Some strange and long bits and pieces dangling out that don't seem to belong.

Barb and I have actually seen it hopping around but it is a bit small to keep up with everyone when they panic. They always rush over to the paddock on Henley so watch for them near our places as you go past.

I was thinking before about Steve's lovely wake last night and reckon he had something to do with these kangas this morning. He's still keeping an eye on things and I'm expecting to hear the owls this week. Go Steve!

STEVE REMEMBERED

Peter Gurney

"Steve, I've come to check your nest boxes for you", said I. "Good on you," replied Steve, "I'm just too crook to do it myself. By the way one of my two nest boxes has been knocked out of the tree by a falling branch."

"No worries, I'll see if we can fix it and put it back up and we'll check it during next year's nest box survey." Steve nodded, he looked pale and wan and his eyes showed just how ill he was. Just a week or so earlier I had called around to visit and Steve had been sitting up talking to a work colleague, but as soon as the visitor had gone Val had to help him back to bed. He had exhausted himself with just this short visit. He had told me sometime earlier that he really wanted to save his energy for himself, Val and visits from his children, Ben and Marnie. However, I knew that Steve really enjoyed checking nest boxes on World Environment Day and that he would want to know if anything was in residence in his boxes. That's why I called around on this brisk June day.

So I went out to my car and got my ladder and Val held the ladder while I climbed up to check the one surviving nest box which is in a tree just outside Steve's bedroom window. I could see him inside lying curled up under his doona but watching me climb the ladder and reaching up to the nest box. I blocked the opening of the box with my leather glove, just as I have seen Steve do many times

before, then I loosened the lid screw and opened the top of the box. A slight scuffling noise indicated that the box was occupied and I climbed up one more step of the ladder so that I could see inside. Deep down in the box was a perfect round nest of dried eucalypt leaves and nestled deep in the little nest two little faces looked up at me and snuggled up even closer to each other for reassurance as I peered in at them. I gently closed the lid and said to Val, "Two Sugar Gliders Val, beautifully snuggled up together and seemingly really healthy". She smiled. I tightened the screw again and removed my glove from the entry hole and quietly climbed down the ladder. I went over to Steve's window and said through the glass, "Two Sugar Gliders in residence Steve - just beautiful." He smiled, his eyes twinkled and he waved. Then he snuggled down a bit more under his doona and closed his eyes. This was the last time I saw Steve before he died - and it's a precious memory.

The nest box on the other side of the house was shattered, having been struck out of its tree by a large branch which broke off a nearby Long Leaf Box. I picked up the pieces and took them and the ladder to my car. Then I drove to Wolfgang's house, and within ten minutes the damaged nest box was professionally repaired. We both drove back to Steve's and without disturbing him I held the ladder while Wolfgang climbed high into the Ironbark and refixed the nest box to the tree. Next year we'll go and check both of Steve's nest boxes and remember that it was Steve Craig whose idea it was about eight years ago to have a community nest box building day and then to have people put up the nest boxes to provide nesting habitat for bushland hollow dwellers. Another of Steve's many legacies to us and our precious bush will live on.



BURGAN BENEFITS

Alan Bonny

Poor old Burgan (*Kunzia ericoides*) gets a bit of bad press with a nickname like Petrol Bush so it was good to see a few words in support of one of our primary waterway species. Glen Jameson has a long association with our area and he writes regularly for the Warrandyte Diary. His current series, Fellowship of the Forests, featured "Narr Meian: along Jumping Creek" in a recent edition. With Glen's permission I have reproduced part of the feature:

"Jumping Creek Reserve possesses thick forests of Burgan, the local tea-tree, under which some remarkable discoveries have been made. Bruce Fuhrer, a naturalist of exceptional ability, has studied the area over many years and recently found five *Hygrocybe* species of fungi, new to science, growing under the Burgan with other fungi that should only be found in Tasmanian cool temperate rainforests. One species has been named in honour of Jumping Creek, *Hygrocybe saltorivula*, in recognition of this unique habitat. Another, *Hygrocybe fuhreri* named in honour of Bruce's work in natural history.

The fungi assemblage is only there because the heavy Burgan growth has suppressed tree and other growth and created a micro-climate which induces a massive growth of a variety of Moss species. The thick layer of Mosses provides a bio-mulch that retains moisture when other habitats are drying out, and allows the germination of fungi spore that travel the winds. It is such an effective site that it is hosting species new to science. Bruce has recorded over 500 species of fungi in Warrandyte State Park, verifying its exceptional biodiversity richness.

Burgan is often looked upon in a negative way due to its fire prone nature, however its contribution to the protection of biodiversity is often overlooked. Presently, in many areas, it is keeping a lot of weeds from invading bushlands and providing important habitat."

Thanks to Glen Jameson. While I appreciate the concerns of residents with Burgan in the immediate proximity to their dwellings, the unique eco-system that it provides is an important and integral part of the Bend of Islands flora. I love a walk down to the river with the moss and fungi that the Burgan provides adjacent to our very dry sclerophyll forest. I wonder what treasures are hidden in our Burgan belt?

TOUR DE BEND

Alan Bonny

About 15 cyclists gathered at Wendy Way for a photograph to record the participants of the first Tour de Bend on May 8th.

A mix of ages and body styles were represented with Carol Bonny the only female and Neil Harvey looking splendid in his Lycra Superman costume. Neil looked great with flowing cape until the chain gathered in the loose end. Capeless he continued with the group along Skyline, down Henley and back to the fireshed via Catani. The young legs set the pace but with slow uphill grinds and screaming runs downhill we all arrived safe and ready for the cuppa and cake to refresh us.

Thanks to Tom Fisher for organising a great day and to our volunteer traffic marshals for their input. The best parts for me were that the bike tyres that had been in the shed deflated for about ten years stayed up and I could still walk the next day.

ROLLING ON

Alan Bonny

Some of you may be surprised to know that the Bonnys are still building. This is an ongoing project that we started in 1994 and will finish one day. We promise! When we started laying bricks for the house we inherited the "Community Cement Mixer".

It's an old Lightburn tumbler with a nice rust and cement colour scheme. It is a bit low to the ground and you need to balance it on planks and bricks to elevate it enough to allow the barrow underneath for unloading the mix. It was loaned to us by George Winter who told us it jointly belonged to himself, the Henrys, the Fishers and some others. It certainly contributed to the construction of their houses and probably to a lot of other domestic projects in the area. During our care taking of the device we have disassembled and reassembled it, rewired it after the switch blew, shimmed the main shaft and tried to adjust the bearings.

Over the years George and Norm Parris have 'borrowed' the clunker for jobs at their places but it has found its way back to toiling on our construction. As you will all appreciate cement mixing is a job for the female so Carol is the loader and operator of the beast. It is certainly showing its age and if it's loaded too much, or it just wants to be contrary, the gears jump and a bit of manual assistance is required to get it rotating again.

Maybe it needs another shim or bearing investigation, or maybe its just ready to retire. Does anyone have any fond memories or stories about this fine machine? Where and when did this piece of Bend of Islands history initiate from? Are there any suggestions as to where it should eventually be placed, (after we are finished with it), perhaps with a bronze plaque to acknowledge its contribution and to those who have built in the Bend.

NEST BOX PROGRAM

Alan Bonny

On World Environment Day 6th June residents were requested to check and report on nest box occupancy. We received the following results:-

Gurneys: One with recent Sugarglider nest, one with bee infestation, 3 unoccupied and a Ringtail in the watering can.

Krause: One occupied by Gliders, another with recent Sugarglider nest.

Craig: One occupied by Gliders, another vacant and damaged but now repaired.

Bluhm: Tuan box unoccupied, another with Ringtail resident.

Bonny: Tuan box with Sugargliders resident, two others with vacant glider nests, one with mum and junior Brushtail at home, two pardalote boxes, both unused and one with ants and an unused bat box.

What happened to all the other nest boxes that we've put together over the years? I remember two occasions that we have had nest box construction days with many boxes built and taken away to provide habitat for our furry and feathered residents. We want to register and monitor, on an annual basis, all the nest boxes in the area as part of our fauna data. Before next World Environment Day please monitor your nest boxes and we invite you to participate in the ongoing Nest Box Survey next year.

BABY BENDERS

Welcome to new benders. To Arthur and Brook a son Darcy Curl and to David and Esther Owens another daughter Fleur. Congratulations.

BICA PUBLICATION

We have seen the draft and it is now going through a tidy up before a final look see and then it is off to the printers. Launch date is planned for the October Café Benders and will be confirmed as soon as we can. This important and informative document will be provided to all owners and residents in the Bend and will provide an ongoing resource to inform and promote the area.

MAY GENERAL MEETING

About twenty met on 30th May at Rob and Tanya Laughlin residence. After the general business and reports we were entertained by Glen Jameson with a presentation on his recent participation as a representative of the Victorian Rangers Association at the World Ranger Association Conference in South Africa. Thanks to the Laughlins and Glen. Lots of discussion and interesting bits and pieces from Glen's trip to look at with a cuppa and generous afternoon tea

WATTLE DAY WALK

John McCallum

One of the many activities that Steve Craig inspired in The Bend of Islands community is our annual observance of Wattle Day. This year again we will be meeting at the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade South Shed at 9.30 on Sunday August 1 for a walk to enjoy the spring flowers, particularly the early flowering wattles. Incidentally, there appears to have been some confusion, not to say controversy, about the true date of Wattle Day. It seems that September 1 not August 1 takes the honours in this matter. See the web site on http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/wattle_d.html for more information.

Wattles (members of the genus *Acacia*) are, of course, a real feature of the Australian flora. There are Acacias to be found in most regions of the country and our national floral emblem is Golden Wattle (*A.pycnantha*) which is widely spread in Eastern Australia. More about the use of wattle as a symbol can be found on the website of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, www.anbg.gov.au/emblems/aust.emblem.html

An interesting feature of most species of wattle trees and shrubs is that they don't have true leaves on the mature plants. The juvenile plants have the pinnate (divided and feathery in appearance) leaves that some of our species retain but these are replaced by phyllodes which develop from the flattening of the leaf stem. They look like leaves and to all intents and purposes are leaves; they are flat green photosynthetic structures. Two *Acacia* species in the Bend of Islands have pinnate leaves; the rest have phyllodes when they are mature.

All Australian acacias have yellow or cream flowers. The golden balls or spikes are actually clusters of small flowers that have quite insignificant petals and sepals. The stamens are the prominent feature that give wattle blooms their fluffy yellow appearance. More on the structure and general botany of wattles can be found at Australian Plants online (Society for Growing Australian Plants, website by courtesy of Charles Sturt University)

<http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/APOL8/dec97-1.html>

This edition of BICA News carries an article on the common wattles to be encountered in the ELZ. A few more species have been recorded by the flora survey group. We have also included notes on some of the acacias that have become environmental weeds in the Bend of Islands.

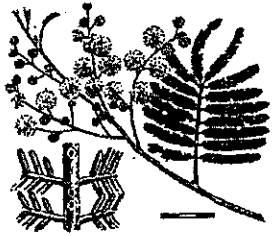
Join us on August 1 for the Wattle Day walk and learn more about our local acacias and perhaps to do a bit of work removing exotic acacias if we encounter any; bring your gloves.



WATTLES IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

Wattles With Real Leaves

In the Bend of Islands there are two indigenous wattles that have pinnate leaves.



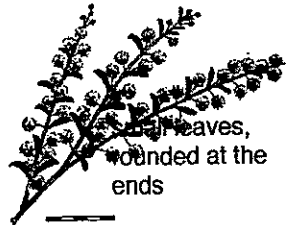
Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*)

These two look similar but check the glands on the leaf stem; also, they flower at different times and each has a distinctive appearance once you get to know them.



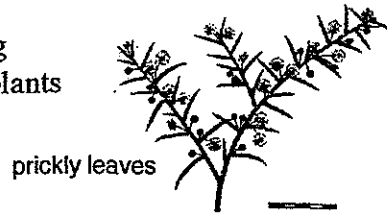
Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*)

Wattles With Phyllodes



Gold-dust Wattle (*Acacia acinacea*)

These two small shrubs are spring flowering and are real signature plants of our kind of bushland



Spreading Wattle (*Acacia genistifolia*)

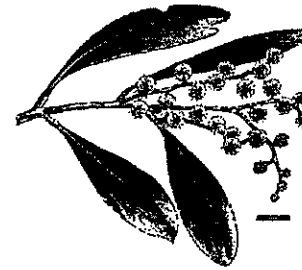


Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)

Two trees that have flat, curved phyllodes with several veins. Again, two species that are similar but different. *A. melanoxylon* is taller, phyllodes a little blunter; *A. implexa* has more curved phyllodes



Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)



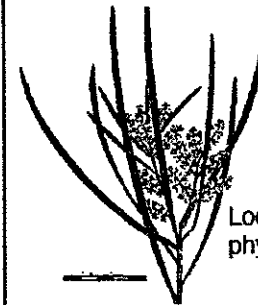
Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*)

Golden Wattle lives up to its name. Early spring; our national floral emblem. Broad, dark green phyllodes.

Prickly Moses is a gully shrub; phyllodes in whorls. Later spring.



Prickly Moses (*Acacia verticillata*)



Narrow-leaf Wattle (*Acacia mucronata*) is restricted to sandy soils in our area.

Loose flower heads, very narrow phyllodes with a pointy tip

Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*) lives up to its name and likes drier hillsides.

crinkly, dark green phyllodes, golden flowers, lots of sharp thorns on stem



WATTLES THAT ARE EXOTIC TO THE BEND OF ISLANDS

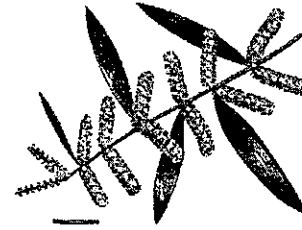
Acacias have long been popular garden plants and a number of different species have been planted in gardens in the Bend of Islands over the years. In many cases landowners have removed non-indigenous (to the local area) species from their garden and replaced them with local ones. Acacias, however, set a lot of seed, particularly in a good year and some of these seeds can remain dormant in the soil for many years. Every year some of these seeds germinate and when conditions are very good, such as those after a burn, large numbers of plants appear.

One of the on-going jobs for all landowners on their properties and for BICA working bees is the removal of these before they mature and set seed themselves. These are a few of the species that are indigenous to other parts of Australia that have been known to come up spontaneously in the Bend of Islands ELZ.



Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*)

Cootamundra is a well known and popular garden plant which spreads into undisturbed bushland very easily. It is characterised by pale, bluish grey leaves and bright golden flowers in July.



Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*)

A. longifolia has been widely planted because of its quick growth. It spreads rapidly and easily and has been a major environmental weed in the Bend of Islands. It is indigenous to parts of southern Victoria.



Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia botrycephala*)

Sunshine wattle is indigenous to East Gippsland and a few plants have been recorded in the ELZ. It has cream or pale yellow flowers and the leaflets are quite widely spaced on the leaf stem



Early Black Wattle (*Acacia decurrens*)

Early Black Wattle has attractive dark green leaves and flowers in late spring. It is indigenous to areas of New South Wales.

STEVE CRAIG

This note was written by Jean Edwards for Understorey magazine. Jean worked with Steve on Land For Wildlife and has made this available for us to include in this BICA Newsletter

May 23 this year marked the 15th birthday of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. The formation of the friends resulted from the determination of a young Flora and Fauna Officer working at HeQ'esville in the Dept of CFL. With support from Ian Smales, and Peter Menkhorst from the Arthur Rylah Institute who had begun to prepare a recovery plan for the bird, he convened a public meeting at the Lilydale Elderly Citizens Rooms. Bird Observers and conservation groups in the region were notified and the hall was filled.

After presentations and slides, nominations were called for a new Friends group.

During supper time, the CFL Resource Conservation Manager of the time expressed his concern that this was not an appropriate move for the Department to be fostering! The young officer, Steve Craig, had persisted with organising this meeting against the advice of the Department.

By initiating the Friends group, Steve had cleverly supported the recovery effort at a crucial time, creating political momentum and enabling it to be big and well-funded.

He was equally instrumental in finding the best leader the Friends could have wished for. Bob Anderson phoned Steve seeking a speaker for the MEG Co-op Winter Dinner, and casually asked Steve to let him know "if there was anything he could do"!!! As we all know, Bob has been an irrepressible, articulate President for all but a short break since.

The first time I met Steve Craig was out in the forests in the Noojee area. Through the Native Forests Action Council, a Forest Watch program was being developed "to document breaches of the regulations governing logging practices in Victoria", and David and I went along. Organized by Jamie Pittock, the leaders for the day were Peter Durkin, Steve Craig and Pauline Duncan. They showed us logging breaches at Russell Creek and then introduced us to the very beautiful and significant myrtle beech and ash forests of the Latrobe River.

Steve's knowledge and professional work in assessing logging plans and proposed logging coupes were not limited to office hours: he sought to enthuse others with his commitment and keenly informed and educated anyone who was interested. He has always been concerned as the input to logging plans and coupe assessments from Departmental Flora and Fauna officers has been more and more restricted.

Land for Wildlife was a program that Steve enjoyed. In contrast to his other Departmental work, it was such a positive program, meeting landholders on their properties

and suggesting practical ways that they could make a difference to biodiversity. Along with Alan Crouch, Gary Backhouse and a few others in the Dandenong region he implemented Land for Wildlife on the ground in the 1980's. In 1990 I was privileged to have Steve as my trainer and mentor when I started the best job I have ever had - Land for Wildlife extension officer. By then the Dandenong region had more registered properties than any other region in the state. Steve loved this program and continued re-visiting Land for Wildlife properties until this year.

In the 1990's his commitment underpinned a great deal of the work of the Upper Yarra and Dandenongs Environmental Council (UYDEC). He attended most meetings for many years and his personal knowledge of the Region enabled better understanding and decisions to be made about how planning should be carried out. Although there were many people in the department who were personally committed to good conservation outcomes, Steve was always prepared to stick his neck out for the guidelines and conditions which would ensure the environment got the best deal and many times this brought him into conflict with Managers.

The Yellow-bellied Glider and the Powerful Owl are two of Steve's favourite fauna. He, Ed McNab and Alan Webster probably know all the Powerful Owls east of Melbourne to the Central Highlands and spend countless hours monitoring them each year through the breeding and nesting season.

One of Steve's dreams was to live in a bit of bush with Yellow-bellied Gliders, but the Environmental Living Zone must come a pretty good second.

BRAIN BUSTERS

A smaller than usual group made up four tables to challenge the grey matter and each other at the Annual Trivia Night at the Millo's on Saturday 10th July.

It was a lively evening with very strong teams vying for premiership throughout the competition. Bob's unbiased umpiring ensured that the correct result was obtained at the end of the night. The dreaded Kamminga-Bonny axis made a few brave decisions and scored well but they were no match for the Steed-Fowler-Taylor McCallum combination. The Woiwod led team also offered stiff competition. The one to watch for next year, however, is the youth team, skippered this year by Matthew Steed. They pulled up from a bad position to finish very near the winner!

Bob and Trish are to be congratulated on devising some intriguing and utterly irrelevant questions and running a fair and square competition. We thank them once again for organising the event and throwing their home open.

STEVE CRAIG

Mick Woiwod

The Bend of Islands mourns the loss of its most committed stalwart and the bush an ally. With Steve's passing there has been a profound loss of precious knowledge essential for its survival. Steve's message, though, remains loud and clear: Don't use someone else's forest to warm your home; live light on the land; keep household waste to a minimum; enjoy life to the full and most importantly leave it a much better place than you found it.

Too late, I realize I spent far too little time in Steve's company. Our paths seldom crossed. Our first meeting was when he came out to assess our block for 'Land for Wildlife'. After chatting awhile we strolled down to the river then back up to the top of the hill where Steve paused to jot down further particulars. I'll never know now whether he'd noticed it first but in the tree behind him I spotted a koala just as he posed the question: 'Do you see many Koalas around here, Mick?', to which I was able to respond with delight 'Yes, as a matter of fact Steve there's one in the tree behind you!' At the time it seemed one of those serendipitous moments since Koalas are relatively rare on our block. Looking back though I believe it was Steve willing to share his observance of the bush in a way that he could be sure I'd remember.

On another occasion, Steve asked Norm and myself if we'd care to check out a pair of Powerful Owls? There was an air of certainty in the way he'd put it so we both eagerly agreed. Frail from ongoing battles for survival, he nevertheless drove us down to Lower Catani and with long legs was soon striding into the bush a couple of hundred metres to pause beneath a tall gum tree. By the time we'd caught up he'd picked up and broken apart an owl pellet to point out to us the tiny possum bones it contained, explaining that this was one of their favourite roosting trees. Sure enough, in the tree above, dozed the promised pair of Powerful Owls, one with its foot firmly planted on the remains of a ringtail possum.

Steve Craig, like no other, knew how to share his hard-won knowledge of the bush that he loved. The Bend of Islands has lost yet another fine Australian. Both Neil and Steve have left this remarkable spot where we live a far better place for their too brief sojourn within it.



THE PLANNER MEETS NEIL

Rod Roscholler

About 25 years ago a young engineer was appointed to the position of Planning Manager with the Shire of Eltham. He considered himself pretty green and was full of excitement, expectation and many other things. It was hosed down somewhat when his boss, the very important Shire Engineer informed him that the Planning Managers appointment was made over his dead body and then the internal unsuccessful applicant for the position refused to move out of his office. The new planner liked a challenge.

Neil decided to bide his time. He waited for almost a week before he invited the naive planner and his wife Wendy out to the Bend of Islands. The green (in two ways) planner realised that one of the greens was somewhat a lighter shade of green than he previously thought after the first meeting. This Neil Douglas, the planner decided, was a real greeny with a vision splendid. The planner took some time to realize that he was being lobbied big time. Neil not only wanted native plants and animals to have priority in the Bend of Islands but he wanted a buffer around the "Bend" to further protect it from suburbia. We discussed the need for this planning buffer over numerous meetings many cups of tea and tours of his wonderful productive property at the Bend. Neil gave the planner an interesting "Book of Earthly Delights" and drew inside the front cover a drawing to ensure the planner did not forget the important message. What a man, what an approach and what a vision. The planner never forgot.

Not sure that the planner went back to "Straight Jacket Street" and changed the world, he had allot on his plate, but he sure went back knowing who would be on his case if the "Suburbs" ever overlooked his special place.

Postscript.

The planner now works on the other side of the counter. He now realizes just how powerful the planners position is in Local Government. The current unrest within Nillumbik Council is basically around planning statutory and strategic. The Green Wedge and the Environmental Living Zone are good examples of what can be achieved with creative planning but the price of both is eternal vigilance.



WASP NEWS

Sheila Dixon

After last summer, when the black and yellow demons were at their worst Sheila Dixon has been ferreting around trying to find out if anyone is doing anything about the wasp problem. She received this letter from Greg Lefoe at DPI. It is very specific and includes some references for further reading. Basically it covers the (so far inconclusive) trials of parasitic wasps to combat the pest species as well as the news that a bait may well be available in a couple of years (!) It seems that the problem is not just a social one, preventing us from enjoying our outdoor meals. Some of the research seems to stem from the wine industry where money is at stake!

Because of the greater pest status of European wasps in Australia, most research has been directed towards this species (we have two introduced vespid wasps in Australia; European wasp *Vespula germanica* and English wasp *V. vulgaris*). It is often assumed that research directed towards controlling European wasps will also be applicable to English wasps. The impact of European wasps in urban areas, and their potential impact on natural and agricultural systems, prompted early research into the distribution and life history of European wasps in Australia by the CSIRO and others (Spradbery & Maywald 1992, Crosland 1991). This work included climate modelling which attempted to predict the potential distribution of European wasps in Australia. Spradbery & Maywald (1992) found that European wasps have the potential to establish from Rockhampton in northeastern Australia, along the southern coast to Carnarvon in Western Australia.

A biological control program commenced at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute (now Primary Industries Research Victoria), Frankston, in the late 1980's and early 1990's. A parasitic wasp, *Sphecophaga vesparum vesparum* (Curtis) (Hymenoptera: Ichneumonidae) was imported, tested for host-specificity, mass-reared, and released. Between 1989-1993 over 120 000 parasitoids were distributed as dormant cocoons in southeastern Australia. The parasite has not been recovered from release sites however and its establishment is not confirmed. Other biological control options, such as potential pathogens, have been examined at the University of Adelaide and in New Zealand, however an effective biological control agent still eludes researchers.

In September 1997 a European wasp strategy meeting was held in Melbourne and agreed to improve community awareness and establish a European wasp task force to prioritise ideas for future control and research. Responsibility for European wasp management was assigned to the Australian and New Zealand Environment and

Conservation Council (ANZECC) in 1998. ANZECC identified the most important issues for wasp management as:

- * improved community awareness,
- * coordinated and cooperative research,
- * continued assessment of biological control options,
- * assessment of the impacts of European wasps in urban, agricultural, and conservation areas
- * development of a baiting system to destroy nests without the need to locate them.

Since 1999, researchers from Australia and New Zealand have met to coordinate research into European and English wasps (these meetings were held in Canberra 1999, Hobart 2000, and Adelaide 2001). Development of a wasp baiting system has benefited from the collaboration between researchers in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, and at Aventis CropScience (now Bayer Environmental Science). Phil Morrow, Development Officer at Bayer Environmental Science, predicts an effective European wasp bait could be commercially available in Australia by 2006 (Hammond 2004)."

A copy of the final report on baiting trials conducted here in Victoria (Lefoe & Ward 2001) can be obtained from the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC, see link below). You'll need to quote project number DAV99/1 in your correspondence with GWRDC. GWRDC may also have information on wasp baiting trials conducted in Tasmania. I've provided links to the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and Landcare Research web-sites where you can find out more about their research. There is also a pdf file attached with a recent Herald Sun article about the development of wasp baits.

References

- Crosland, M. W. J. (1991) **The spread of the social wasp, *Vespula germanica*, in Australia**. New Zealand Journal of Zoology 18: 375-388
- Hammond, G. (2004) **Sting in chemists tail. End is near for a vicious wasp**. Herald Sun, Melbourne, 17 May, p12.
- Lefoe, G. & Ward, D. (2001) **Minimising the impact of European wasps on the grape and wine industry. Project DAV 99/1**. Final report to the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation. DNRE, Frankston
- Spradbery, J. P., & Maywald, G. F. (1992) **The distribution of the European or German wasp, *Vespula germanica* (F.) (Hymenoptera: Vespidae), in Australia: Past, present and future**. Australian Journal of Zoology 40: 495-510

40: 495-510

Links

Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC)

<http://www.gwrdc.com.au/>

South Australian Research and Development Institute

<http://www.sardi.sa.gov.au/dhtml/ss/section.php?sectID=21&tempID=8>

Landcare Research New Zealand

<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosecurity/stowaways/wasps.asp>

COMMUNITY WORKING BEES

Peter Gurney

Community working bees, also known as Landcare working bees, really enhance our bushland environment. Working bees are held on the third Sunday of each month, and every once in a while there is a 'special' event. Working bees are always advertised for a week beforehand by a sign on the sign tree at Oxley Bridge.

We have been joining together and working on community bushcare for over 25 years and, while the bush of the Bend is not perfect, it is much more intact than neighbouring areas. This is one reason why the Bend teems with wildlife; wildlife not often found in other bushland, residential or farming areas nearby. Our work to enhance our bush includes mainly weeding and planting. Weeding is both macro and micro. We get rid of big weeds such as pines, willows, various non indigenous acacia species and various other trees, creepers and shrubs such as Tutsan, Blue Bell Creeper and Blackberry. We also tackle smaller weeds - non indigenous grasses, bulb weeds (onionbloodyweed, Bridal Veil Creeper, Watsonia and Agapanthus are examples), and herbaceous plants. To replace the weeds we plant indigenous plants grown from local provenance stock. Work at the working bees is always varied with suitable jobs for all comers. Younger Benders and our Venerated Elders are always welcome. There is always lots of chatter and laughter, afternoon tea (in the cooler months from the Billy) with cake and biscuits. Donations of these latter items are always welcome and are scoffed by the hungry hordes.

Of historic interest, due to our community's hard work over many years we were awarded the Community Bushcare award in the 2000 Landcare Victoria awards. This was a great recognition of our ongoing commitment to maintain and improve this special area.

However, it is not all good news. The number of working bee attendees dropped severely over last summer and this autumn. On some days only two or three people

came to work. Thankfully, the May and June working bees have been much better attended; so I am optimistic again. In an endeavour to perhaps better fit in with weekend social activities future monthly working bees will be held on Sunday mornings (3rd Sunday of each month) during the daylight saving period of the year, with afternoon working bees held in the cooler months. The sign tree will have details (as usual), and if anyone has any other suggestions on how we might get the work done and involve as many Benders as we can please let me know.

P.S - As my work takes me away from home so often, I am very much needing an assistant to help me organise working bees and to apply for various grants. We do OK with local council grants but there is more money to be had if only someone would do a bit of the finger work!!

SPEED LIMITS

Councillor Bob Stubbings has been asked by a number of residents if a reduced speed limit can be applied to Henley Road. He is happy to pursue the issue if he has some consensus from us. If the upgraded Yarra Glen road has an 80 km/h limit then our narrower, more winding Henley Rd should be a bit slower to provide safety for road users and our wildlife. The length of Henley road from the CFA corner to the Yarra Glen Rd is 7 km. The difference between travelling at an average 70 km/h or an average 50 km/h is less than 2 1/2 minutes on the trip.

Your feedback will be collated and forwarded to Cr Stubbings for council consideration and referral to Vicroads.

Please say what you think is a suitable speed limit for the whole of Henley Rd or for sections such as Yarra Glen Road to Oxley Bridge, Oxley to Skyline, Skyline to Ashmore.

Email to bica@rabbit.com.au or mail to BICA c/o Post Office Kangaroo Ground 3097 or phone Alan Bonny 9712 0648.

CALENDAR REMINDERS

August 1 Wattle Walk

August 8 Bica General meeting

September 12 Garden Walk

October 31 Pub Walk

November 13 Night Walk

November 28 BICA AGM

December 18 Café Benders Christmas Evening

Wattle Walk: Sunday, August 1, 9.30 am
General Meeting: Sunday August 8, 2.00 pm

If undelivered return to: Bend of Islands Conservation Association Inc.
C/o Post Office. Kangaroo Ground 3097

BICA
NEWSLETTER

Print Post Approved
PP335468/0001

SURFACE
MAIL

Postage
Paid
AUSTRALIA