

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Carex breviculmis*

Common name: Short-stem Sedge

Family: Cyperaceae

Flowering period: Spring to Summer



A perennial grass-like sedge forming a small dense tuft, up to 15 cm. high with the leaves rising from the base. The base of the plant is covered with fibrous remains of old leaf sheaths.

Widespread in a broad range of habitats from grassy wetlands, to valley and dry sclerophyll forests, *Carex breviculmis* is a very adaptable plant growing in damp depressions and on exposed slopes.

The leaves are flat, grass-like, and longer than the flowering stems.

The flower spikes are hidden amongst the leaves, on short angled flowering stems with rough margins. Male flowers are separate from female flowers in the spikelet. The flowers are arranged in two to five cylindrical spikes. The end or terminal spike being male, 4-25 mm long, the other spikes are female to 20 mm long. The bract, the leaflike structure at the base of the spike, is very long. The fruit or nut is enclosed in a loose covering, which is often downy.

Spreads by short woody rhizomes or underground stems. Propagate by division of the rhizome or from seed.

CRIC HENRY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"SPRING" well it hasn't felt like it has it? A Total Fire Ban day on the 12th October with the highest temperature on record for that date, not a good start to the season. In total contrast to the hot day we also had ice on the roof one morning. Crazy!!!

The foliage on our Redbox (*Eucalyptus polyanthemus*) trees is amazing in the late afternoon sun with a larger than usual percentage of the big round blue leaves having turned red. With the light shining through them it's stunning. I suppose this means there will be a big leaf fall soon and that means work raking and gutter cleaning. "Woman's work" as Alan delights in saying.

Lots of activities since my last Newsletter report. Visits to the Bend by Eltham College students coordinated by Karyn Kamminga and this month two tours by Nillumbik council officers and councilors. A 20 seater bus ferried the guests around the Bend with Alan and Frank as our tour guides followed by afternoon tea provided by caterer extraordinaire Janet. Thanks to Alan, Frank Janet, Graham, Marie, Wolfgang, Meg, John and Barb for giving their time to make these days so successful.

With our Annual General Meeting looming now is the time to consider your involvement on the BICA committee for next year. The committee meets on the first Friday and if you can spare one evening a month WE NEED YOU. I urge you to nominate and make a contribution to the ongoing success of the Bend of Islands. You might also consider involvement with one of the sub-committees (Planning, Community Involvement, Property, Landcare and Flora and Fauna). Contact me if you want to know more.

See you 'round

CAROL BONNY

HOUSEKEEPING

Our e-mail addresses were all lost when the BICA computer died recently. We have resurrected as many as we can so if you are not getting any email information and you would like to, please e-mail bica@rabbit.com.au and we will add you to the list.

The BICA e-mail will be used to promote and advise on BICA and Bend of Islands items of interest. If you want to have an e-mail forwarded please keep your message concise and in text form only. By request I will not forward files with attachments.

With the demise of our old computer a call to Neil Harvey had us up and running with a new device as soon as he could manage it. Thanks to Neil for providing the computer and for his time in helping setting up.

BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following events can be reported since last March.

Lyrebirds- 9 further records have been reported. Pam Gurney heard one mimicking a telephone. I hope they don't become too domesticated!

Powerful Owls- Several sightings have been reported. At least one pair bred successfully in the ELZ this season raising two chicks.

Plucked wing feathers of a powerful owl were recently found on the Coop. Possibly the work of a fox.

Other Interesting Observations reported include:-

A large flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos hanging about the Coop (up to 20+ birds) from March onwards. Consistent recording of this species each month from autumn to spring has only occurred in '97, '98 & '05, since monthly recording started on the Coop in '95. Only individuals or small groups have been recorded in previous years, so this is an unusual event, perhaps caused by the drought.

Ern Mainka has had several more sightings of King Parrots near his house on the Coop. On one occasion there were 3 birds.

The Bonnys recently heard what they think may have been a Barking Owl. If anyone suspects that they hear a Barking Owl, please contact me, regardless of the time. They have not been positively identified in the area despite several suspected encounters.

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings you make and pass them on to Frank Pierce (97120237) or email me (fpandjm@netspace.net.au), especially about Lyrebirds and Powerful Owls.

All are welcome to join us on the bird walks on the second Sunday of each month. Times vary throughout the year; they are as shown in the BICA Calendar.

CHRIS CARSON

Chris Carson died peacefully at home on the 29th of September 2006 after a valiant fight against leukaemia. Chris was a member of the Christmas Hills and Bend of Islands communities and was Captain of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade for five years until he became too sick to carry on. He will be remembered for his enthusiastic participation in all community events, notably the BICA night event. BICA extends its condolences to Ruth, Kit Siobhan and Cath.

Proposed Constitution Changes at the 2006 AGM

The BICA AGM is on 26th November and this year we are having a special Co-op hosted AGM. If you haven't been to the Round the Bend Conservation Co-op or want to know how it works this is an opportunity to enjoy a comprehensive visit including lunch etc. Invitations will be sent out and we ask for a prompt RSVP to allow for catering etc.

As usual the election of President and Vice President and Committee will take place. Nominations in writing must be received prior to the meeting with each nomination proposed and seconded by a BICA member.

The other item of business is a proposed change to the constitution. These revisions are to the Constitution Objectives and are recommended by committee:

Currently:

2: OBJECTS:

- (a) To preserve by all means within its power and to the maximum extent consistent with essential needs including fire precautions, the native fauna and natural beauty of the area.
- (b) To associate and collaborate with other organizations whose objects are consistent with these objects and to support where appropriate, conservation activities in other areas.
- (c) To act for and on behalf of the membership individually or collectively in negotiations with public authorities, other organizations and individuals within the framework of these objectives.

To be changed to:

2: OBJECTIVES

- (a) To preserve, nurture and encourage the diversity of the native flora and fauna of the area and its natural beauty, consistent with essential community needs, including fire precaution.
- (b) To nurture and encourage the diversity of the local flora and fauna and to promote community understanding of the local ecology and how to live in harmony with it through sharing of knowledge and experiences
- (c) To associate and collaborate with other organizations whose aims are consistent with these objectives and to support, where appropriate, conservation activities in other areas
- (d) To act for and on behalf of the membership individually or collectively in negotiations with public authorities, other organizations and individuals within the framework of these objectives.

FIELD DAY AT STEVE'S FOREST

Carol Bonny

On the 14th October we gathered at the Fire Shed for the Field Day to visit the planting that had been done in remembrance of Steve Craig. With only four in attendance we elected Neil Harvey as chauffeur, Alan as navigator and Val Himmelreich and I relegated to the backseat. With Alans directions it was a longer than expected journey to Yellingbo. He blamed the photo-copy map, but from experience I know it was a bad choice of navigator. After a few kilometers of backtracking we were then led up the road by a passing motorist who insisted we follow him by his flashing and blinking lights. We realised that we were following the wrong car but it led us to where we wanted to go. (I wonder if our guide found who he was really looking for?)

We were greeted by Kieren Martin who led us to the commemorative sites. The first planting we looked at was for Bob Taylor, it was fenced and growing beautifully. On to Steves Forest with no fencing and it was sad to see all of the plants that had been lovingly planted were grazed to the top of the green bags. We put in some time resurrecting plant bags and weeding with a slight rain drizzle to keep us cool until we retired for a pleasant picnic lunch surrounded by the magnificent Yellingbo forest. After lunch we set off in search of the elusive Helmeted Honeyeater, a lovely walk but no sightings.

Coffee and cake was suggested so it was off to the Wandin café owned by Logie winning John Woods. Time to depart for home? No way! Our chauffeur was taking the day off so we were detoured to a couple of wineries. Not having to drive we passengers didn't have to spit the tastings but our driver diligently visited the bucket (except for selected choice wines). Well done Neil, and all this with a shoulder recovering from an operation.

It is obvious that Steves Forest needs protecting and in Yellingbo this means a substantial fence that keeps out deer. This was discussed with Keiren and BICA could make a contribution to the costs. We propose to initiate a fundraiser to achieve this. We look for your support.

SPECIAL CAFÉ BENDERS

Our October Café was a special fundraiser in remembrance of Chris Carson. Breakfast bacon and eggs toast and veggie burgers were provided by a very capable new chef Rory Kamminga who was thrown into the Benders kitchen at last minute due to his Dad ailing with a bad back. Great job Rory. Lots of cakes provided to enjoy with the usual coffee. Thanks to the generosity of those in attendance. A cheque will be sent to an appropriate cancer research foundation.

OUR RESPECTED ELDERS

Peter Gurney

I have asked some of the elders of the Bend of Islands if over the next year or so I can do a profile of each of them for the BICA Newsletter. We have such a marvellous and rare community in our environmental living zone, and our remarkable senior citizens are a fiercely independent and varied bunch with very interesting backgrounds. They all love living in Bend of Islands and have one common aim – to live within our community for as long as they possibly can.

This, the first article is about Joyce Harriss. Joyce lives at 5 Gongflers Drive and at the age of 86 manages with a little help from her family, Nillumbik Shire Council and our community to have a lovely life style. In recent years Joyce has largely kept to her home but over the decades she has been an active member of our community and she has owned property here since 1958.

Joyce Harriss

Joyce was born in Richmond on New Year's Eve 1919. Joyce lived with her mother, her step-father and her step-grandmother until she married Ernie Harriss in 1937. Joyce's strongest memories of her childhood are of the Great Depression which affected so many families and the national and world economies. Living in working class Richmond Joyce saw first hand the Depression's drastic effect on families: the hunger, the lack of money for the most basic needs such as firewood and clothing, and the lack of hope for many who were trying to keep their families together. Joyce's family suffered from time-to-time over the Depression years but in the main her step-father had employment and there was just enough money for the family's basic needs. Joyce recalls the depression years with sorrow and with humour too. She remarks on how people and families supported one another as much as possible, but the general hopelessness and drabness of life has left a strong impression on her. She feels very fortunate to nowadays have her own home, adequate food, firewood, and what we would call the basic comforts, as well as a loving family and a supportive community around her. It is the comparison with the Depression years that often makes Joyce remark that she is, "a lucky old girl".

Joyce married Ernie Harriss in 1937 (wasn't she young!). Ernie was a one-eyed Collingwood lad and Joyce was a fierce Richmond supporter. Despite this tribal difference Ernie charmed Joyce when they met at roller skating and he wooed her until she agreed to marry him. It is patently obvious when one talks to Joyce that they loved each other very much and I think that Joyce was equally besotted by young Mr Harriss from the moment they met. Ernie was a skilled tradesman, a fitter and turner and he worked for Vickers in Richmond all his working life. Joyce was a machinist and she worked for a

clothing manufacturer in Richmond. Later she had a milk bar in Richmond.

Over the years Ernie and Joyce had four children. The first was tragically still-born but then two daughters, Dawn and Lorraine, were born in quick succession, followed by a son John in 1961. Joyce has always been an independent character and in 1957 she decided it would be nice if the family had a weekender in the bush. Without much or possibly any consultation with Ernie, she headed off to Warrandyte which in those days was a bush village on the banks of the Yarra quite remote from Melbourne. A local estate agent brought Joyce out to Gongflers Drive to see a "lovely bush block on the river with a weekender". Joyce loved the place immediately and she and Ernie brought the place for 600 pounds. Over the next five years the Harriss family came to Gongflers Drive nearly every weekend. The kids loved the bush and the river and often friends came along too. There were frequent visitors as the Richmond mob descended on the Bend to visit the family. In 1962 daughter Dawn and her husband Wes bought land in Montmorency and were building a home. They stored their furniture at the Gongflers Drive weekender and fortuitously Wes took an insurance policy on the property for 1,000 pounds. He had a cover note and had not even paid the premium when the Bend of Islands, Warrandyte, Kangaroo Ground, Research and many surrounding localities were burnt out in the December 1962 bushfires. The weekender and all its contents were completely destroyed. Joyce put a claim into the insurance company on the following Monday and by Friday she received a cheque for 1,000 pounds.

Joyce remembers that after the bushfires the area was completely devastated. The bush was severely burnt and most of the trees had gone. Only big stumps and black/grey ash remained. It was even difficult to recognise familiar landmarks and virtually all the houses, most being weekenders, had been destroyed. She says it was a very sad place for a long while after the fires. However, Joyce and Ernie decided to rebuild and with the insurance payout they built the present house at 5 Gongflers Drive. In 1968 Joyce decided that she wanted to live up here so she suggested to (or told) Ernie that they were moving to the Bend of Islands. Apparently Ernie said that so long as he could bring his racing pigeons he would be happy to do so, and so the family shifted from Richmond to the bush. Dawn and Lorraine were both married by this time so along with Joyce and Ernie there was John and Joyce's mother then living at Gongflers Drive. For some years Lorraine, her husband Ray and children lived in Henley Rd, so there was a strong family connection in the Bend. For nearly twenty years Ernie drove each day to Vickers in Richmond to work, car pooling with another worker at Kangaroo Ground. John went to school at KG primary and then Hurstbridge High School and Joyce worked at Alfred's Homestead restaurant in Warrandyte and for Healesville Council as a 'home helper'. In particular Joyce used to help new mothers to settle their baby at home. I remember Joyce helping us just after Cara was born in 1980. Joyce did some of the heavier cleaning and also gave very good advice and assistance with the

new baby until Pamela had it all sorted for herself. Joyce's advice was personal and invaluable. We have been friends ever since.

In the early years Joyce remembers Henley Road being a "goat track". The road was unmade all the way from the Yarra Glen Road. It was rarely graded and one had to drive very carefully over, around and through the huge potholes and rocky outcrops along the road. In those days many cars broke down due to the rough road as suspensions and engine mounts gave away. Breaking down on Henley Road was an effective although unpleasant and invariably expensive way of meeting up with the few other locals. As there were no mobile phones it was sometimes a longish wait for someone to bump along the track and offer to help. Gradually more people were attracted to the Bend and it became an environmentally sensitive enclave. Typical of a few of the longer term residents Joyce and Ernie felt a little threatened by the newer 'greenie' residents of the 1960s and 1970s but they loved the place so much that they decided to stay put in Gongflers Drive.

The years passed quickly. John finished school and started work. Joyce's dear mother became very frail and went to live at Judge Book Village in Eltham where she passed away in 1991 just two years of leaving Gongflers Drive. John married and now has three children making eight grandchildren in total. Then in 1996, Ernie who had been quite well all his life, passed away peacefully and suddenly at home one night. Many neighbours attended Ernie's funeral and Joyce was thrilled that so many 'greenies' came along. Joyce misses Ernie terribly and she threatens "To give him a real tongue lashing for leaving her when she sees him next". Her sense of humour always shines through.

Fifty years after discovering our beautiful bushland area Joyce Harriss still loves the bush, her unpretentious little cottage and the Bend of Islands community. She often refers to herself as being from Richmond but she is really from the Bend of Islands. She has lived here for almost 40 years and as she often says she is 'A lucky old girl who loves looking at the trees and the sky.'

Thank you Joyce for being a precious member of our community! Your contentedness reminds us all to fully appreciate the simple things that life has to offer: the trees and the sky, and that plentiful food and being warm are (as Joyce often says) "...more precious than diamonds and fur coats".

The BICA committee has agreed to offer Electronic Funds Transfer details for members to pay fees direct (once the amount has been agreed at the A.G.M.). Details are as follows.

B.I.C.A. Commonwealth Bank - BSB 063-210 Acct. No. 1008 8648

KOALA COUNT

Often wondered what the Koala Benders population is? We get reports of sightings from time to time from all corners of the area but is it just one or two busy beasties? Lets find out.

We invite all to participate in the annual Koala Count to be held on Sunday 19 November 2006. On this day, all Nillumbik residents, particularly those living near waterways or bushland, are asked to check their properties for koalas. If you find one then please report on the survey form available from BICA or council and forward to council. Also advise BICA so we will have a Bend of Islands snapshot as well.

The aim of this annual count is to record the number of koalas living in the suburbs and adjoining rural areas. This information will then be used to monitor koala populations and assist in establishing a strategy for managing koalas in the local area. The count is an initiative of the Koala Shelter in Wonga Park, and has support from Parks Victoria and a number of municipalities including Nillumbik Shire Council.

If you would like further information or additional forms please contact Lisa Pittle, Council's Land Management Officer on 9433 3211.

TORTLE OR TURTOISE?

Carol Bonny

In the early nineties not long after we moved into the Bend I first sighted our long neck tortoise. A magpie was running along the track, wings horizontal and cursing loudly. I wondered what on earth he was carrying on about so I quietly followed to investigate. As I got closer I discovered to my delight that it was a turtle /tortoise and he was making his slow journey toward our lovely dam. I told Alan about my exciting discovery and I would see our new resident regularly basking in the quiet waters but it was some time before Alan observed the dam tortoise and believed me. Over the years the sightings have been few and far between but always exciting. He is back again this year and as we drive past we always pause to look for the shiny shell or the little nose poking unobtrusively out of the murky waters. Is it a tortoise or a turtle? I heard somewhere that the powers that be had standardized the description and our new book only has turtles. We will just call him/her *Chelodina longicollis*. We look forward to seeing our dam resident for a long time as Chel has a life expectancy of 36 years. Should be added to our BICA Fauna List.

(Although C. longicollis is certainly part of our local fauna, some may be disappointed to learn that this species is not indigenous to the area. It was introduced to the Yarra River system and othe parts of Victoria south of the Great Dividing Range. Ed.)

FIRE SEASON 2006-2007

Neill Kamminga (Captain: Christmas Hills Fire Brigade)

In case you hadn't noticed, this summer fire season is shaping up as, potentially, one of the worst since the Ash Wednesday fires. Serious rainfall deficiency over winter, record high temperatures in Spring, and humidity levels at such lows that the Bureau of Meteorology's instruments are failing in some regions. Take a walk outside through the bush and I'm sure you will notice how crunchy the leaves are already.

With the early onset of fire conducive weather, we should all be making our fire preparations correspondingly early. Now is the time to reassess whether you are going to STAY with your home during a bushfire and actively defend your property, or you will GO each time the weather conditions are such that a bushfire is highly possible (definitely on TFB days and most likely on days of high temperature & wind and low humidity).

For those of you that read the Age, you may have recently noticed a photo and an interview with one of our firefighters – Peter Gurney. He quite rightly pointed out that his preparations for this year were really no different than for any other year – the fire season approaches, we prepare, we follow our plan.

If your current thinking is to STAY and actively defend your property, just take a moment to review your fire plan and check that you are still able to do all the things required for this decision to be valid. Now is the safest time to make any minor modifications to your plan to suit your current circumstances.

If your current thinking is to GO, just take a moment to remind yourself of what this means, including the length of time you may need to be away. Late evacuations are a deadly option. Waiting to go when it "gets bad" is already too late. Consider having a plan of action for when you cannot leave.

There are a number of Community Fireguard groups (CFGs) in the Bend of Islands. These groups can help you decide what your best option is. Being aware of the risks, sharing good ideas and experiences, and supporting your neighbours are all part of what can be gained from CFGs.

Clearing leaves around your house can lead to the problem of what to do with them. Burning in small piles is an option for calm cool days only. Consider building a leaf composting area away from the house. Four star pickets and some chicken wire can be used to construct a small "cage" into which leaves can be deposited and compacted.

The most important message, however, is PREPARATION & PLANNING.

On behalf of all members of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade I wish all residents a safe passage through this fire season. We will be ready if we are called, I trust you will be too.

SUZ2 AND YOU

Alan Bonny

Our zoning specifies that only plants indigenous to Bend of Islands may be planted except for Kitchen Garden where non-invasive exotic plants may be used. This is not a recommendation but a requirement of the Planning Scheme, which states:

Planting of Vegetation

No vegetation, except vegetation indigenous to the area, is permitted to be planted. This does not apply in kitchen garden areas. For the purpose of this clause, a kitchen garden means a garden area, adjoining or close to a house, for vegetables, flowers and fruit for the household. The area of the kitchen garden should not exceed 150 square metres and should not extend along access ways or boundaries. Plants on the Shire of Nillumbik Environmental Weed List 2004 as incorporated in this Scheme shall not be planted.

The "Bend of Islands Environmental Living" folder contains a comprehensive list detailing 466 plants indigenous to the area. All owners and residents of the Bend have been provided with a folder.

If you have non-indigenous plants on your property it is recommended that they be removed and replaced with plants from the list. If you would like assistance with plant identification and selection please contact BICA.

OUR SIGN TREE

Commuting Benders will have seen the change from the Sign Tree to a new gallows style post. The new post was installed by council staff and relocated by them to its current position. Someone destroyed our Landcare sign this month but the post is available for community messages. It is required that signs be posted for a maximum of a week and removed as soon as possible after the event.

AGM

Don't forget the AGM on 26 November. see page two for details of a change to the BICA constitution. Membership subs fall due at this meeting and rates for the forthcoming year will be set at the AGM.

A LETTER TO BICA

Tuesday 1st August

Dear BICA Folk

As a, to date, shadowy member of BICA, I want to share how much I enjoyed the current Newsletter. (No 66 July 2006). I find it heartening to realize almost anew that there is such a vibrant and active community all around us, engaged in all sorts of things to do with this lovely place. I personally oscillate between wanting to be more involved and being pulled out of here by my fledgling career in music, not to mention family matters. However I was very inspired by all the entries included in the Newsletter.

I was inspired by Mick Woiwod's tale of his and Marg's new summer house and his newly somewhat restored fitness levels which have allowed him to rediscover the beauty and enrichment of daily trips to the banks and lowlands of our great Yarra River. In many ways I almost can't believe that I am lucky enough to live so close to this life-giving river and I know so little about it. I related very much to this story so thanks Mick.

Carol Bonny's moments with birds resonates with me also. I've had many pleasurable moments with all our birds, which I can't name many of, but with time I recognise more and more and the names come slowly as well. Thank you Carol.

As time passes I realize that it's the simplest things in life that offer the most pleasure, and it's too easy to take these things for granted. Sometimes I must admit I am personally frustrated by the weeding process I'm not the most physically active person, particularly at this time with a broken leg, which impedes my impulse to go straight down to the river and finally get rid of that large stand of blackberry we were horrified to find last spring. We had a good go at it but it was abandoned for other things at the time, so I hate to think of what it has become. I've found that taking a picnic lunch and several bottles of mineral water down there and making a party of it useful.

Our house is quietly trying to become one with earth in various ways. Termites, which we've had successfully treated by Tom Boschmer's team at Specialist Termite Control in Research, much to the despair of the termites. The top rail of our top deck has a fungus growing very rigorously through it. (Orange blob like thing - pardon the description). The rail does need replacing or painting soon, but after reading Dylan Osler's article on fungi, I'm almost loth to do either. Perhaps safety will win out in the end. I'm sure Dylan could name it before any action is taken.

The area around our house hasn't been landscaped in many years, due to alterations and plans that are not yet completed. We have many old exotics that were planted many years ago before the original house burned down in the 1962 fires. Some of the trees I would be very sad to lose, but of course there are many bulbs etc that we

slowly, lazily try to pull out each spring. My intention is to get some advice from Jo and or Crick Henry when the time comes to plant.

I'll leave this letter with a little story of our own. A common experience for many ELZ residents I'm sure. All activity came to a halt as the wallaby was spotted. Nothing else mattered, because a most fascinating and delightful event was taking place; the morning grazing of a young wallaby. We had a front row seat, as we gazed upon the wallaby eating various plants on the embankment outside the entrance to the house which is visible from the kitchen window. Wallaby nibbled at the Rosemary flowers on one of two bushes before sniffing the stunted Italian lavender bush that after eight years doesn't get any bigger than a foot tall or wide, due to being eaten regularly. Wallaby wasn't into the lavender this morning though, and found a fresh blade of couch, yum yum. Next to the steps that lead down a steep hill to the lower section of the house, lives a stunted, odd looking eucalypt that we need to coppice regularly or we wouldn't be able to use the steps. Wallaby managed to find a very tasty juvenile leaf here before moving onto unidentified grey foliage that reminds me of the leaves of a carnation flower? He/she loved this and all but demolished it leaving darker gnarlier bits behind. We left the scene when he/she decided to spend an extended moment grazing on more grass of various kinds on the steeper bank leading up to the car park. "I can't go to work", said Dave. "I can't interrupt my wallaby's breakfast!" He said with an indignant frown. I guess it's lucky he has flexible work hours. I do find it interesting that he referred to he/she as "his" wallaby. In conclusion I think the most wonderful thing about having wild animals so close to observe and enjoy, is that you do it at a distance, it remains special, a treat, always, and you don't have to feed them if you don't want to and probably shouldn't unless the food you offer is good. Not owning these creatures is the best thing to me, and of course looking after this lovely place provides the safe haven they need.

Much love and high regard

Melita Jansen

BICA NIGHT EVENT

Yes it is on again; 11 November!

Its time to suppress those inhibitions and share your hidden natural talents and bravado with your local community at the BICA Night Event. Whether you are 8 or 80 it would be great if you could step forward to sing, play, recite, dance, or other?

Please call us with details of your performance item.

Ilan 0425 761 185, 9712 0776

Ross 0409 242 303, 97120547

It will be a fun night; see you there!

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY (ALMOST)

Tom Fisher

As that revolutionary arsonist Chairman Mao once wrote, 'A single spark can ignite a prairie fire.' I was able to verify this piece of pyrotechnic wisdom by conducting an empirical experiment of my own last year, just before the fire restrictions came in.

On a rather cool but blustery morning, I got out early to do the last bit of fuel reduction burning I had planned for the season. I proceeded to burn only small, isolated patches, using a rake to control the edges of each. One of my neighbours stopped by to offer encouragement and then left for a day at the flicks.

I carefully halted the fire on a beautiful western line virtually following the boundary between the two properties and proceeded to let the uphill (and northerly) line to burn itself out after having carefully raked ahead so there was nothing left to burn. After checking there was no longer any smoke, I went in for lunch and a well-deserved siesta. Later, when Carol Ann returned home with the shopping along the adjacent path, I jokingly asked if the bush was alight (and got a negative response). Half an hour later, we received a guest who had taken the same path and sat down for a cuppa.

During the second cup of tea with the visitor, however, the phone rang, with a rather excited voice on the other end asking if I knew that we had a fire at our place that was heading toward his house across the road and stating that he had rung the Fire Brigade. We sprang into action, donning our protective clothing, started the petrol pump, and put out the fire on the downhill side but could not reach the front of it, which by then was chimneying up a hollow tree in a gush of flame and smoke. I believe we could have contained it by ourselves with rakes and a knapsack spray pump, but, perhaps fortunately, we didn't need to find out because the KG CFA arrived and quickly extinguished it. The captain remarked that only an hour or so before he had driven past the property himself and noticed nothing amiss. During the course of their action, he also checked with us for permission to cut down the fire damaged hollow tree, something we acceded to.

I felt embarrassed at not having checked periodically for flare ups where the fire travelled across ground I had cleared and for having bothered the CFA. At the same time, I also was relieved that I hadn't put the neighbours in danger and was impressed with the low-keyed but thorough action of the KG CFA.

So what did I learn from this Mao-like experience?

- Fires may continue to burn even when apparently out, particularly in dry conditions as the wind intensifies
- Vigilance must continue longer than you might think. Even though several people, including a brigade captain, passed the area without noticing anything wrong, the fire

resurfaced hours after it was apparently extinguished

- Dead trees do not have to be cut down, even if burning. Wolfgang, who arrived later with the northern Christmas Hills Brigade tanker, offered to patrol the area with the smouldering tree if we wished to leave it standing. I had thought he was merely being polite and didn't wish to bother anyone further and so declined. However, he later explained that the policy of the CH Brigade was to leave as much standing as possible, even if it means patrolling throughout the night. From an environmental point of view, it was a better option since it eventually could have provided animal habitat, and, in retrospect, I wished I had taken up the offer.

THE BICA DOZEN 2006

Neil Harvey has selected these bottles as prizes for this year's raffle to be drawn at the annual Christmas event at the Fire Station. Tickets are \$2.50 or five for \$10.00

First Prize – 1 Dozen bottles of wine – value \$250.00

2005 Coobara Shiraz – Adelaide Hills
2005 Pepperjack Shiraz Viognier
2003 Rosemount Hill of Gold Cab./Sauv.
2004 Water Wheel Shiraz – Gold Medal
2005 Terra Felix Shiraz Viognier
2003 Yarra Bum Shiraz Viognier – 1 Trophy, 4 Gold Medals
2005 Heggies Eden Valley Riesling
2001 Mc Williams Elizabeth Semillon – 7 Gold Medals
2004 Sticks Yarra Valley Chardonnay
2006 South Island Marlborough NZ Sauv. Blanc
2005 Moondah Brook W. A. Cabernet Rose
2006 Pizzini King Valley Pinot Grigio

Second Prize - 2 bottles – value \$40.00

2004 Henschke Henry's Seven – Shiraz/Grenache/Mouvedre.
2006 Henschke Eleanors Cottage – Sauv. Blanc/Semillon.

Third Prize – 1 bottle – value \$15.00

2004 Taylors Cab/Sauv. – Gold Medal.

Ticket Sellers Prize

2006 DeBortoli Windy Peak Pinot Noir.

ANOTHER LOCAL FERN

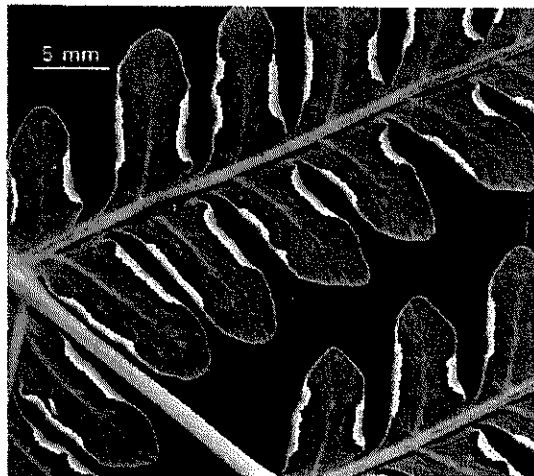
John McCallum

The spontaneous appearance of sporelings of Bat's Wing Fern (*Histiopteris incisa*) in a greenhouse in the Bend of Islands suggests that it should be included in our list of ferns. The spore would have blown in from mature plants nearby. Parts of the Bend of Islands provide suitable habitat for this species but a population of mature plants is yet to be located.

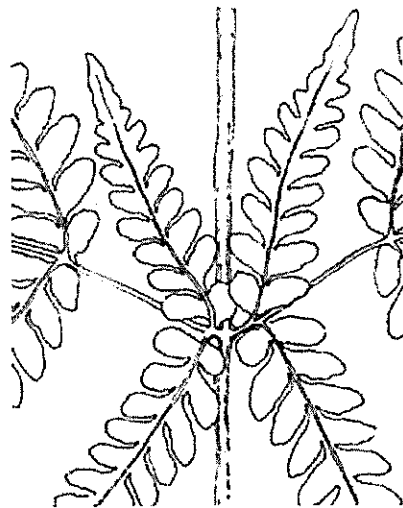
H. incisa is a ground fern with large (60-200 cm) erect triangular fronds and a thick, creeping underground rhizome. The young fronds are smooth and often blue-green in colour; the older fronds are a yellowish-green. The pinnae are paired and opposite, the lowermost pair giving the impression of wings from which, no doubt, the common name originates.

The sori are continuous along the under margin of the fronds and the species is reported to spore copiously and to germinate readily.

Bat's Wing favours moist habitats such as creek banks, swamps and forested gullies but not in deep shade. It is frequently seen along tracks and other openings in the bush canopy.



Underside of frond, showing the indusia, under which the spores are borne



General view of the bases of two primary pinnae, showing the "wing" formation

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Subscriptions fall due at the Annual General Meeting and the rates for next year will be determined at that meeting. If you want to renew (or join) please fill in the form and submit it, with your subscription, to the Treasurer, Bend of Islands Conservation Association, C/- PO, Kangaroo Ground, Vic. 3097. Direct electronic transfer is available now (see page 5).

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Full membership \$20.00 per year

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COMING EVENTS 2007

11th November: Night event

26th November: AGM

16th December: Xmas Café Benders

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