

# BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

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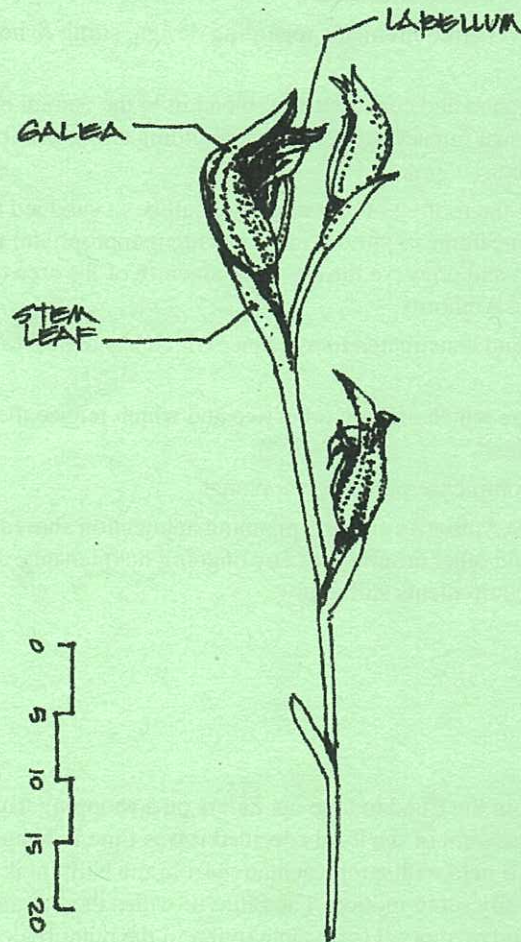
## WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Pterostylis* sp. aff. *parviflora*

Common name: Red-tip Greenhood

Family: Orchidaceae

Flowering Period: March to May



Scale in millimetres

Identified on the 13<sup>th</sup> May Bird Walk, adjacent to Round the Bend Co-Op near "C" track, in Valley Grassy Forest. This species is recorded as vulnerable in the Melbourne region and as a rare or threatened taxon in Victoria.

It is a small greenhood orchid with stems up to 20 cm high and it has been separated from *Pterostylis parviflora* (Tiny Greenhood). Red-tip Greenhood is distinguished by the reddish-brown tips on the petals and the shape of the labellum. The labellum is the modified lowest petal. The male and female parts are united in a fleshy structure known as the column and the labellum is attached to this. The labellum is a reddish and white colour, elliptic with the tip just visible, to sexually attract the males of small flies and fungus gnats, which then pollinate the flower. The fruit is a capsule which when ripe splits open releasing a large number of seeds.

As in all members of the greenhood genus, the dorsal sepal and petals are united into a hooded structure called the galea. The galea is white with green stripes, 12 mm long, facing inwards towards the stem, with a blunt brown tip. The galea encloses the winged column. The petals are brown, the lateral sepals are brown with white stripes. The lateral sepals are erect, free points very short, tapering to the top of the galea.

After flowering in early winter, small basal rosettes of leaves develop on the ground, on side shoots from the flowering stem. The leaves are grey-green, 20 mm x 10 mm, and pointed with wavy margins. Scattered up the length of the flowering stem there are 3 - 5 small, closely sheathing stem leaves.

Red Tip Greenhood prefers partial sun and a moist, well drained soil.

CRIC HENRY

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is our first Newsletter for 2007 as our editor has been on extended overseas grandparenting duties and we have been waiting impatiently for his return.

Am I glad to see the last of that summer, the longest hottest one that I have experienced living in the Bend. Total Fire Ban days started early October and went through till late March, we all survived but I'm afraid a lot of the flora in the area didn't. It will be interesting to see how it recovers and what changes occur.

The BICA AGM in November 2006 was an all day affair, organized, hosted and held on the Round the Bend Co-Operative. Those in attendance met at the beginning of A track for an introduction and then proceeded by foot or mini bus to the Parris home where a sumptuous morning tea was served. The meeting commenced and finished in record time and the crowd were then asked to make their way to C track for an excellent history talk about the Co-op before we were again subjected to a feast co-ordinated by Janet at Jeph and Hilary's home. Next was B Track and more food arvo tea at Vals and then a tour of houses under construction on C track. Thank you to all our neighbours on the Co-op for treating us to a very informative and enjoyable day. The challenge will be what to do for our next AGM.

In early December Alan and I were given a guided tour of the Henley Golf course at my request. Sam Myott was our chauffeur and guide and we enjoyed the drive around the entire course. Previous plantings of indigenous plants have taken well despite the long dry conditions and the nursery is full of local provenance seedlings ready for planting at the first sign of a break in the weather. The course is now fully operational and lots of buggies are to be seen putting around. I hope there is not too much of an impact on the neighbours closest to the course.

Lots of other activities attended over the months including Nillumbik Council events and Meetings. Also a BICA General Meeting and the many and varied BICA events. It's great to see all the familiar faces and I must say it is heartening to see other community members attending that are normally otherwise occupied. By attending BICA events it gives your committees the incentive to continue working toward providing educational entertainment and events to protect our Environmental Living Zone. Please join us at future activities.

See you 'round

**CAROL BONNY**

## SUZ2 AND YOU

### Alan Bonny

Included in the purposes of the Bend of Islands SUZ2 planning schedule are:

- To maintain and enhance the positive environmental qualities of the landscape.
- To ensure that the density, design, appearance and impact of the use or development reflects the native bushland qualities of the area.
- To maintain the high landscape quality in the zone.

To achieve these aims there are several requirements regarding design, siting & height control:

- All development shall be designed and constructed to blend in to the natural environment and have minimal visual impact with respect to building siting and form, roof slope materials and colours.
- The external fabric, including the roofing of all buildings shall be in subdued tones (unpainted galvanised iron, zincalume or similar materials are inappropriate) to blend in with the environment and preserve the aesthetic amenity of the area to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

All buildings should be designed and constructed in a manner which has regard to the following matters:

- Selecting materials and colours which are non reflective and which reduce the visual impact of the development.
- Minimising the height and prominence of the development.

Nillumbik Shire is the Responsible Authority and any planning application should be assessed with regard to these and other criteria. For any ongoing maintenance and painting of structures the SUZ2 requirements still apply.

## ELDERS ON WHEELS

### Carol Bonny

Once a month a small bus arrives in the Bend to take our elders on a shopping trip to one of the regional centres. After several of the locals decided it was time to hang up their driving licence a meeting was held with a representative from the Nillumbik Shire Council and the wheels were literally set in motion. The Shire provides the bus and driver and it is great to see this kind of support for people living in the outer regions where there is no public transport.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE VEGIE GARDEN

Sheila Dixon

Last year was a minor disaster for my vegie garden so I knew I had to do something different with it. I can't do heavy work in it any more, me being very elderly and wondering where my get up and go has gone. I had a great idea. That dear family of Muirs in KG who run an expert general gardening business have been called up. You know, Helen who worked in the PO.

Well, her husband Len is coming over and we are both going to stare at it and see what we can do. The only vegies I got last year were the heat loving ones for we had plenty of that. The toms, capsicums, eggplants, basil and a fine 2 buckets of spuds grown mainly in pea straw. The watering was hard but I worry about using the water from the washing machine, I just don't fancy it. But us oldies have been given a hand with watering. We can do it in the morning after 8.00a.m. One old dear at dialysis fell over in the dark and badly broke her elbow.

First of all it's all going to be thoroughly dug over and a few things removed like the passionfruit and the asparagras. These have all passed their prime now and have just about carked it. Then the bags of all sorts go in. Dolomite in most beds, cow manure, chook poo, wood ash for appropriate beds and a light covering of pea straw for winter. Make it too thick and the soil is kept too cold.

A few things that might get lost in this upheaval are precious herbs like tarragon, which disappear in the winter so they are being potted up and put safely on the deck. I'll put a few things in for winter like my indispensable garlic crop. Maybe a handful of the old carrots, peas and beans have something to love out there A lot of stuff that seeded has been collected and brought indoors including a very strange tomato.

Of course when spring is on the way and we are warm again on goes a bit more pea-straw and the old dynamic lifter gets its turn. One last thing is that sawdust from everybody's friend, Wolfgang. If you want grass and weed free paths that's what you use. Nothing nasty out of a bottle, just sawdust.

I know this has been all about my garden but with these rainless skies I thought I might spur someone along before they give up hope.

## FIREWOOD

Plantation-grown Sugar Gum from western Victoria is available from Max Henshall (9438 3135) at \$200.00 per tonne. He can bring 1 tonne, 2 tonne or 3 tonne loads. This South Australian species is used for windbreaks on farms and this wood comes from trees that have become too tall and "leggy". They are taken off at ground level and allowed to regrow into windbreaks again.

## AGAPANTHUS: A CREEPY & POISONOUS COMBINATION

Peter Gurney

I have written a number of times about the ills of Agapanthus – that South African blue or white flowering plant that adorns some Bend of Islands properties from years gone by.

I have just come across another really good reason to get rid of Aggies, as if their threat to our bushland is not motivation enough! According to an article in the November 2006 issue of the 'Warrandyte Diary' newspaper, snake handler and remover Sean McCarthy says agapanthus are "snake heaven". Sean is one of a few people around Melbourne authorised to remove snakes from private property and he is often called on to remove snakes hiding in clumps of agapanthus. So, by getting rid of your Agapanthus you will also reduce the risk of snakes making use of the splendid cover they provide.

Then I came across another article, this time in the Friends of Warrandyte State Park Newsletter, February 2007 edition. This article by Pat Coupar advises that Agapanthus is surprisingly toxic – something I did not know. The strappy leaves and thick rhizomes are apparently poisonous. They contain a substance called yuccagenin, a haemolytic saponin that can be especially toxic to children. The sticky sap that exudes from the leaves and stems when they are broken can cause severe ulceration of the mouth. Pat also laments that *Agapanthus* is derived from the Greek and means 'lovely flower'. Which, I guess is one way of describing a declared environmental weed that harbours snakes and is very poisonous.

If anyone wants help or advice on getting rid of the dreaded Aggies please let me know.

Oh, as a postscript please remember that snakes are indigenous and protected wildlife, and living in the Bend means you will inevitably have the odd slithery visitor from time to time. I am happy to also provide advice on snakes and if not too risky I am prepared to help encourage them away from homes.

'Ahs likes snakes and ahs hates Aggies!!'

## BABY BENDERS!

A big welcome to the new babes in the Bend and congratulations to the proud parents of these delightful little gems. A daughter to parents Tai and Lesley and Cam and Kasey and a boy to Karina and Simon.

## BIRD NOTES

### Frank Pierce

The following events can be reported since last October.

In November we had the 200<sup>th</sup> Birdwalk of the BICA Bird Survey. The survey commenced in May '89.

**Lyrebirds-** Except for 1 report in November there were no reports from August 06 till 19/3/07. I was worried that the extreme dry conditions may have forced the birds out of the area. Fortunately there have now been 5 reports in late March including 2 sightings of a male at water bowls close to houses and 2 reports to date in June..

**Powerful Owls-** Several sightings have been reported.

At one roost site, north of the Coop, a bird was seen clutching the remains of a ringtail. The next day the bird was still there, the ringtail was not in its claws - probably in its stomach.

Another time there were feathers under the roost site, probably from a Chough or Pied Currawong. Perhaps this explains why other birds give the owls such a hard time, making them prefer roost sites in dense foliage.

**Other Interesting Observations** reported include:-

The large flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos that were hanging about the Coop (up to 20+ birds) from March 06 onwards, left in October but were back in force by February 07.

Ern Mainka has had more sightings of King Parrots near his house on the Coop. They have also been seen by Fabio and Quentin on B Track. Colin Devenish, on A Track, observed a pair mating on his deck handrail.

Rob Laughlin has reported seeing a Sea Eagle flying above the river near his house on 23/03/07. This is a new record for the ELZ although the eagles have been resident on the river downstream of Yarra Glen for some years. They have also been previously recorded at Sugarloaf Reservoir.

Both Liz Vercoe and Rob Laughlin have reported seeing Pelicans fly over.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters arrived on the Coop in early March. Previously they have only been recorded in mid winter in '02,'99,'97 &'95. In each of these years there was an exceptionally prolific flowering of the Ironbarks at the time. They have probably forced south from the dry inland in anticipation of the flowering of the Ironbarks. They have been observed actively feeding on mistletoe and lerps, however a few ironbarks have begun to flower in the first week of April so soon they will be giving the wattle-birds a run for their money.

On 4/4/07 I saw a Swift Parrot. Flocks were seen flying over in 3/04 and 3/05 but this

time I saw a single bird in a tree and in flight, allowing a more positive identification. Swift Parrots are endangered; they breed only in Tassie then disperse to northern Victoria, NSW and s QLD for the winter.

Musk Lorikeets have been sighted regularly over the last few weeks, as occurred in the same period in '06.

Michael Skewes observed Little Lorikeets near his house. He also saw some a few years ago.

A number of people have mentioned that they would like to become better at bird identification but they find the range of birds in the field guides too confusing. If you are one of these see the article about getting started in this newsletter.

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings you make and pass them on to Frank Pierce, (97120237), or email – [fpandjm@netspace.net.au](mailto:fpandjm@netspace.net.au) -especially Lyre-birds.

All are welcome to join us on the bird walks on the second Sunday of each month. Times are as per the BICA Calendar.

## EASTER CANOE RUN

### Kirk Anderson

Easter Sunday saw 21 people complete the annual canoe run. New faces, ring-ins, locals and kids took on the challenge to walk the river bed from the properties of Rob and Tanya (Henley Extension) to Claire Watson (Oxley) whilst dragging a canoe. The many obstacles included a long wait, big puddles, rocks and a giant rope swing. The weather was perfect and the company even better.

A couple of totem poles from up stream were rescued on route and one appears to have taken residence along Skyline road. Wildlife was a-plenty and some close encounters saw the kids' vocabularies being extended when a duck frightened an experienced skipper.

The Harveys opened their home for the evening gathering and BBQ dinner. Here more people joined to hear stories of the days daring adventures.

Big thanks to Joyce and Neil for opening your home and to Cric and Art for recommending Canoes Plus, they really are great guys and the canoes were excellent.

A special thanks to Neil Harvey for the commitment to organise past years. You've created a great event, much appreciated.

## GREENHOUSE ACTION IN THE BEND

### A report on the April meeting by Barb Whiter

Unusually, we met at the fire station in Catani Boulevard for our April meeting. The venue was chosen because it had plenty of tables and chairs to set up for a workshop on greenhouse action conducted by our guest speaker – Paul Brown, Greenhouse Project Officer at Nillumbik Shire Council.

The Bend of Islands community has been a leader in residential conservation. One of the questions we were interested in asking was whether we could be a leader in community greenhouse action? What did we think we could do as individuals, families and as a community?

Paul began the afternoon by suggesting some areas of interest we could look at. They are water saving, energy, transport.

He suggested we think about using aerators to reduce water flow in our basins and sinks. Normal flow into a kitchen sink using mains water pressure is between 12-15 litres per minute, but with an aerator fitted it drops to 8 litres per minute. Of course, we are all using water from tanks without the mains pressure, but Paul insisted it was still worth doing, especially in areas such as bathroom basins where water flow doesn't need to be high.

Try visiting the website [www.waterwizz.com.au](http://www.waterwizz.com.au) for more info.

Many people were interested in the topic of Green Power versus Green Energy. What do these labels mean? Do the terms mean the same thing? Is there a register of what each should be? Well, the answers from Paul were really intriguing.

When you ask your retailer to be connected to Green Power, you must specify you want 100% accredited Green Power – this accreditation is through the Australian government. There is also a Green Power tick – this can be used if the power supplied is 20% or more generated from green sources. These providers are investing in new green power infrastructure.

Green Energy is the label for everything else – and providers will usually not be constructing any more infrastructure through their power provision.

There are many websites to discover further information about how to reduce energy use in the house. A good starting point is [www.sustainability.vic.gov.au](http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au).

This website has a section on using compact fluorescent lightbulbs in your home. Paul suggested Bunnings stock a good range of around 20 different types in the \$5-\$10 price range. Paul also debunked the theory that this style of lightbulb is only useful when you can turn it on once and leave it on a long time. This is the preferred mode of

use, however, even if they are installed in rooms where they will be turned on and off several times during each night, all that will happen is that they won't last as long as one which is turned on and off less frequently. Mirabella and Phillips were mentioned by several people as being good value brands.

Paul told us that in Nillumbik 30%-40% of all emissions come from our vehicles. Obviously this is a big one to think about here in the Bend because of our reliance on vehicles. Some ways of new thinking include using our cars less – either by organising car pooling with others or by doing more than one thing when you go out of the area; another idea is to switch to a more efficient vehicle (doesn't always have to be a new car either); try and get some component from renewable sources; and buying off-sets such as paying an organisation to plant trees to pay back for your car use (however, this takes a long time to reduce emissions – it's best to do other things first). Simple things to do include regularly servicing your car and keeping your tyres pumped up to the car's correct pressure – monthly checks are good.

We then broke into groups of three to discuss what we wanted to know more about, and, after probably half an hour we had many, many sticky notes to put together under the general headings of energy use, energy production, transport and information. Paul called for people who were interested in taking the lead in getting some actions happening in each area and the following people put up their hands:

Energy use	Kirk 0409 123 585 and Nick 9712 0703
Energy production	Liz and Peter Mildenhall 9712 0577
Information	Melissa 9712 0526, Val 9712 0029 and Tom 9712 0451
Transport	Michael 9712 0286

Please contact them if you want to be involved – and we all need to be involved! The final decision was made to report back on each of these areas at each BICA Committee Meeting (first Friday of each month except January) and to complete the actions within 12 months.

Let's go Benders – greenhouse action is happening here!

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Driving out of the Bend along Henley Road recently I pointed out to Alan that the bitumen looked as if it had been vacuumed, not a leaf in sight. Summer has gone and so has the time of leaf fall. Still amazing when you look at all that bush on either side and not a single leaf on that long stretch of road. It probably caught my eye as I am a Virgo and love neat and tidy!

Carol Bonny

## CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

### Tom Fisher

Twenty-four members of the Bend of Islands community celebrated 4 Mar 2007 by participating in the annual Clean Up Australia Day. The group managed to dismantle and dispose of upwards of 1.5 kms of fencing wire from properties at the foot of Ironbark Rd and along Henley Road, as well as fill up half a dozen or so bags with roadside rubbish from the verges of Henley and Skyline Roads. Perhaps the most unusual item found was a 60 km speed limit sign that apparently had become dislodged and was removed from a gully beside Henley Road

Although the youngest collectors were in the two-to-three year old age group, 'oldies' dominated the demographics, with the 55+ year-old category topping the charts with 15 participants (next highest was 25-40 year olds with four).

A pleasant surprise was the driver of the Shire ute sent to check us out: none other than home-grown conservationist Toby Henry!

## YOUR BICA COMMITTEE FOR THIS YEAR

President: Carol Bonny	9712 0648
Vice President: Janet Mattiske	9712 0237
Treasurer: Neil Harvey	9712 0462
Secretary: Alan Bonny	9712 0648
Committee members:	
Tom Fisher	9712 0451
Cric Henry	9712 0547
Val Himmelreich	9712 0029
Rudi Pauli	9712 0470
Michael Pelling	9712 0286
Graham Peterson	9712 0071
Greg Phillips	9712 0532
Barb Whiter	9712 0532
Also at work are:	
John McCallum (Editor)	9712 0319
Peter Gurney (Landcare)	9712 0408

## GETTING FAMILIAR WITH BIRDS IN THE BEND!

### Frank Pierce

A number of people have mentioned that they would like to become better at bird identification but they find the range of birds in the field guides too confusing.

The 'Frequency List' on the next page might help to overcome this problem. The birds have been listed in the order of their sighting frequency over the first 200 BICA Bird Survey walks. For example the Grey Shrike-thrush has been recorded on 178 of the 200 walks.

A recommended strategy to facilitate learning the birds is as follows.

1. Get one of the modern field guides, and highlight the listed birds in the guide with a highlight marker.

This will simplify the identification process as follows:-

- The number of birds to consider is reduced from about 800 to 128.
- More than half the pages don't need to be referred to at all.
- No time wasted on species that are confusingly similar but not likely to occur here.

There are 4 modern field guides; they all cost about \$35 and all have their strengths and weaknesses. I recommend the Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds due to its convenient size and user-friendly format. (The Frequency List includes the Slater page number for each species.)

2. Binoculars are essential to clearly see a bird's features in most situations. Adequate quality is available at a reasonable cost and a large outlay is not necessary. I recommend a trip to the Bird Observers Club of Australia in Springvale Road Nunawading, to enable you to conveniently find the pair that best suits your needs and your budget. They have a wide range that you can try. BOCA also sells all the field guides and you can browse these and decide if Slater is the one for you.

3. Study up the birds in say the top quarter of the Frequency List, for a start, then, armed with your marked-up field guide and binoculars, head outdoors and go for it, or just sit by the window if you prefer. (But make sure the window is open; it's much easier to hear many birds than it is to see them.)

The best way to learn is a combination of birding solo and birding with others - the BICA Birdwalks for example. The regulars on the Birdwalks will happily discuss the finer points of birding and species identification.

## FREQUENCY LIST OF BIRD SPECIES IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

The first column indicates the page in Slater's Field Guide to Australian Birds. The third column shows the number of times the species has been recorded during the first 200 BICA bird survey walks.

226	Shrike-Thrush, Grey	178	160	Galah	63	48	Darter, Australian	16	58	Ibis, Sacred	3
324	Magpie, Australian	176	172	Rosella, Eastern	63	160	Cockatoo, Gang-Gang	15	188	Kingfisher, Azure	3
243	Fantail, Grey	174	224	Whistler, Rufous	61	78	Eagle, Wedge-tailed	15	192	Owl, Southern Boobook	3
274	Wattlebird, Red	170	334	Raven, Australian	58	202	Ground-Thrush, Australian	15	168	Parrot, King	3
184	Kookaburra, Laughing	169	316	Magpie-Lark	56	196	Frogmouth, Tawny	13	60	Swan, Black	3
284	Honeyeater, White-eared	167	152	Bronzewing, Common	49	332	Lyrebird	13	152	Bronzewing, Brush	2
172	Rosella, Crimson	161	278	Miner, Noisy	44	72	Sparrow-Hawk, Collared	12	180	Cuckoo, Brush	2
268	Thornbill, Brown	160	164	Lorikeet, Rainbow	42	264	Weebill	12	52	Egret, Cattle	2
246	Fairy-Wren, Superb	157	314	Starling, Common	41	232	Flycatcher, Leaden	11	232	Flycatcher, Restless	2
272	Treecreeper, White throated	153	314	Oriole, Olive-Backed	40	182	Bronze-Cuckoo,	10	58	Ibis, Straw-necked	2
320	Butcher-Bird, Grey	148	300	Silvereye	40	48	Cormorant, Great	10	64	Mallard	2
280	Honeyeater, White-naped	135	266	Thornbill, Buff-rumped	40	264	Thornbill, Yellow	10		Pea Fowl	2
284	Honeyeater, Yellow-faced	132	186	Kingfisher, Sacred	37	243	Fantail, Rufous	9	214	Robin, Pink	2
222	Whistler, Golden	130	182	Bronze-Cuckoo, Shining	32	98	Lapwing, Masked	9	272	Treecreeper, Red-browed	2
304	Pardalote, Spotted	121	270	Sitella, Varied	31	266	Thornbill, Yellow-rumped	9	222	Whistler, Olive	2
278	Miner, Bell	120	306	Firetail, Red-browed	28	48	Cormorant, Little Pied	8	76	Kite, Whistling	1
160	Cockatoo, Sulfur-crested	118	180	Cuckoo, Pallid	27	198	Needletail, White-throated	8	166	Lorikeet, Musk	1
316	Chough, White-winged	116	290	Honeyeater, New Holland	26	192	Owl, Powerful	8	62	Hardhead	1
218	Robin, Eastern Yellow	112	234	Wagtail, Willie	26	242	Reed-Warbler Australian	8	88	Button-Quail, Painted	1
254	Scrub-Wren, White-browed	110	222	Shrike-Tit, Crested	25	160	Corella, Long-billed	7	288	Honeyeater, Fuscous	1
322	Currawong, Pied	103	154	Turtle-Dove, Spotted	25	238	Quail-Thrush, Spotted	7	220	Jacky Winter	1
322	Currawong, Grey	96	54	Heron, White-faced	23	160	Corella, Little	6	82	Kestrel, Australian	1
334	Raven, Little	89	92	Crake, Spotless	22	284	Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted	5	166	Lorikeet, Little	1
210	Cuckoo Shrike, Black-faced	86	232	Flycatcher, Satin	21	194	Owlet-Nightjar, Australian	5	96	Native-Hen, Black-tailed	1
304	Pardalote, Striated	83	210	Black Cockatoo, Yellow-tailed	20	214	Robin, Rose	5	312	Sparrow, House	1
264	Thornbill, Striated	80	288	Honeyeater, White-plumed	20	60	Shelduck, Australian	5	198	Swift, Forktailed	1
200	Swallow, Welcome	73	96	Moorhen, Dusky	20	66	Teal, Grey	5			
64	Duck, Pacific Black	72	316	Mynah, Common	20	96	Coot, Eurasian	4			
62	Duck, Wood (Maned)	71	290	Honeyeater, Crescent	19	48	Cormorant, Little Black	4			
162	Blackbird	68	318	Woodswallow, Dusky	19	52	Egret, Great	4			
294	Spinebill, Eastern	68	72	Goshawk, Brown	18	82	Falcon, Peregrine	4			
180	Cuckoo, Fan-tailed	67	280	Honeyeater, Brown-headed	18	80	Kite, Black-shouldered	4			
214	Robin, Scarlet	66	300	Mistletoe Bird	18	96	Swamphen, Purple	4			
						48	Cormorant, Pied	3			
						12	Grebe, Australasian	3			
						54	Heron, Pacific	3			



*This bird is in the top 20! What is it?*

## WHY YOUR BICA MEMBERSHIP IS SO IMPORTANT

Greg Phillips

**Presumably you were attracted to the Bend of Islands because of the type of place that it is... a wonderful, unique haven of extraordinary natural beauty. It's not by accident that the Bend of Islands has remained in its pristine condition. It has remained so due to the hard work of many of its caring residents, via BICA organised activities such as working bees. Your membership helps to sustain the Bend of Islands' natural beauty and assists in funding activities sympathetic to the ELZ ideals.**

**KEEPING IT NATURAL:** If BICA did not exist, the regular working bees required to keep weeds under control would not be organised, consequently non-native flora would be allowed to spread, some of it quite harmful to the environment, some of it plain unattractive and some of it highly flammable (such as the numerous pine trees that used to thrive in the Bend of Islands. The removal of these trees was made possible due to funding acquired from the council via lobbying from BICA committee members).

**THE WORLD'S ONLY ELZ:** As far as we know, the Bend of Islands is the 'only' legislated Environmental Living Zone in the entire world. We should all be proud of that fact and do our best to maintain the ideals originally proposed by Neil Douglas for the ELZ. Support BICA with your membership and ensure the Bend of Islands stays the way it is.

**UNIQUE AREA. UNIQUE ISSUES:** As we live in an extraordinarily unique part of the world, consequently unique issues affect us. We do live within a fascinating ecosystem which includes endangered fauna, rare flora and a beautiful river. We are not connected to town water or sewerage. In terms of access to public transport, we are quite remote. Our telephone and electricity facilities are not equal to that of our suburban neighbours. All of these factors raise their own unique issues, require constant monitoring and sometimes action. BICA assists in keeping residents up to date on all of these issues and when required represents you in taking action should it be required.

**SOCIAL EVENTS:** Without BICA there would be no signs on the sign tree, as there would be no social functions to promote. Regular social functions such as Cafe Benders, Bird and Flora walks, Pub walk, Canoe day, Film nights etc would not exist if it were not for BICA. All of these wonderful functions require administration to make them happen. Administration costs money. Your membership ensures these unique get-

togethers continue.

**ASSISTING THE ELDERLY:** BICA is actively involved in assisting the elderly in the community. Without membership support, BICA would not have anywhere near the capacity to arrange day trips for the elders, organise fire wood, help out with maintenance to their homes, and general transport assistance.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:** Not only does BICA work hard to preserve the beauty of the Bend of Islands area, it also espies the 'bigger picture', and supports (via work parties and sometimes funding) projects outside of the Bend of Islands that share similar ideals

**PUBLICATIONS:** As a BICA member, you qualify to receive the newsletter. Keep up to date with what's going on in your community with news about issues effecting you and your environment. Other BICA publications include a calendar of events, and materials on the Bend for newcomers to the area.

**NETWORKING:** The Bend of Islands contains people from all walks of life including a large arts community. Through BICA communication devices such as the newsletter, website and email data base, BICA members have the opportunity to inform the community about their special events.

**CFA LINK:** BICA is another all important link to the local CFA. BICA has a close working relationship with your local CFA. The fire station is regularly used as a venue for BICA events such as the monthly Cafe Benders, where funds raised are donated to the CFA. Living in such a fertile area, it is vital that the close working relationship with the CFA is supported.

**REPRESENTATION REGARDING VCAT ISSUES EFFECTING YOU & COMMUNICATION LINK TO LOCAL COUNCIL:** BICA has regular contact with local council on your behalf and members have also been actively involved in keeping an eye on VCAT issues effecting your Bend of Islands. Tom Fisher goes into more detail on this and other BICA initiatives in his informative article 'Multitasking at BICA: Beyond the Boundaries' in this newsletter.

**The majority of member benefits and related activities mentioned above are made possible due to the hard work and generosity of the BICA committee and members, however they also incur administration costs such as printing, photocopying, computer, telephone and fax expenses etc, which are funded by BICA membership fees. Your membership fee is a small price to pay for the huge advantages obtained in return. Subscribe now!**



## MULTITASKING AT BICA: BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

### Tom Fisher

Ever wondered what the dozen BICA Committeewomen and -men do beside take part in endless meetings at which many words and some wine are spilt? Certainly, BICA's presence is visible in the many activities within the community it organises or helps or sustains (see the article by Greg Phillips in this issues of the 'Newsletter'). In addition, as a Committee member since 2002, I have been impressed by the amount of work that takes place behind the scenes to safeguard and advance the accomplishments of this unique corner of the universe through contact with the wider world of environmental action.

When we first arrived in the Bend almost 30 years ago, the focus of BICA was to get the principles of environmental living encoded in legislation, a task that involved a great deal of empirical research and clever politicking. Hardly had that effort culminated in the proclamation of the Environmental Living Zone by the Minister for Planning, when our unique zoning status was threatened by a new government's push to simplify the multifarious Planning Schemes that existed at the time. After much additional work by BICA, the principles of environmental living were enshrined in the current Scheme as Schedule 2 to the Special Use Zone (SUZ2).

Vigilance is still called for, but the primary focus of BICA's work, outside of physically caring for the ELZ through various community-based activities, now is on protecting and enhancing the gains that have been made and on being proactive about future pressures that could compromise the integrity of the ELZ. So, BICA committee members and others put in literally hundreds of hours each year providing information about environmental living and lobbying decision-makers for outcomes that promote the values of the ELZ. Below follows an account of some – but not all – such activities from the last few years.

A major part of this effort involves providing BICA representation to and liaison with government and other organisations that make decisions affecting the ELZ. These include local government, the Henley Golf Course, power authorities which conduct regular vegetation clearing and trimming, and state statutory bodies with environmental and planning jurisdictions. For example:

#### Nillumbik Shire Council

- Planning Scheme (SUZ2) – drafting and amending
- Information Kit: Revision of 'Bend of Islands Environmental Living' (33 pp + information sheets on birds, weeds, landscaping, fauna, plants), published by Nillumbik Shire Council

- Information Kit: 'Vegetation Reduction for Fire Management in the ELZ'
- Ongoing liaison with Nillumbik Shire Council regarding implementation of Planning Scheme, e.g. the recent draft paper 'Threats to the Area'
- Ongoing representation on the:
  - Nillumbik Shire Council Environment Advisory Committee
  - Green Wedge Management Plan Advisory Committee, including development of master plan for Edendale Farm
  - Nillumbik Shire Council Landcare Network
  - Henley Golf Course Environmental Monitoring Committee (Heritage Golf and Country Club): community representative appointed by Minister for Planning

#### Other Bodies

- Power Authorities
  - High voltage powerlines: consultation with Nillumbik Shire Council and SP AusNet about three-yearly Environmental Management Plan and annual consultation inspection of cutting proposal
  - Local powerlines: consultation with Nillumbik Shire Council, Eastern Tree Service, Active Tree Service about trimming of vegetation under local lines
- Melbourne Water
  - Planning conditions on newly released land with ELZ
  - Creation of Neil Douglas Sanctuary
  - Weed control along river, creeks, and aqueduct
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
  - Management of Neil Douglas Sanctuary
  - Wildlife Corridor (linking Warrandyte State Park with Kinglake National Park)
  - Future use of excess Heritage Property

BICA committee members also spend a great deal of time preparing submissions on pressing and longer-term issues that may affect the values and integrity of the ELZ. Such work often demands a thorough grasp of technical matters, and we are fortunate to have people with professional environmental knowledge on the Committee, as well as those with vast local experience. A few examples follow:

- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Planning List
  - Construction of a helipad in Wonga Park
  - Proposal for a subdivision Skyline Road
  - Clifford Park Scout Activity Centre development

- Melbourne Water
  - Watson's Creek alum spill
- Nillumbik Shire Council
  - Rural Road Sealing Strategy
  - Planning applications

In addition to these formal activities relating to policy and implementation matters, BICA maintains close relations with politicians at several levels, including

- Local Member: regular discussions with Danielle Green and her predecessors
- Ward Councillor: regular discussion with Warwick Leeson, Nillumbik Shire Council Mayor, and his predecessors

It also writes letters, as needed, on broader conservation issues to government and statutory organisations.

To implement programs of environmental restoration and enhancement, income from membership subscription must be supplemented by outside grants. Because of astute and persistent action, BICA has been instrumental over the past few years in obtaining in the neighbourhood of \$15,000 from Nillumbik Shire Council's Landcare and Biodiversity Enhancement Grant Programs that has been used for weed eradication on local public land and on private land whose owners have been assisted by BICA expertise and resources. BICA also recently received a small equipment grant from Council for the purchase of a new computer. Recently, BICA committee members devoted dozens of person-hours to drafting applications for several grants that could amount to up to well over \$100,000. These include:

- Net Gain Offset Strategy: local planting to offset clearing in other areas
- Stream Frontage Management Program, Grants for Works on Waterways for protection of riparian zones along the Yarra and Watson's Creek
- Melbourne Water's Alternative Penalties program

Such projects often have to be completed within very short time spans, but at the same time BICA's regular activities must continue. Some of these are:

- Attendance at Council meetings
- Monitoring of land sales and 'welcome visits' to new residents
- Tours of Bend of Islands for Nillumbik Shire Council councillors and staff members, as well as other interested organisations and individuals (including politicians)
- Regular general meetings with guest speakers
- Newsletter and Newsheet

- Landcare working bees
- Clean Up Australia Day
- Open Gardens
- Bird walks
- Flora walks

Less regular functions carried out by BICA consist of:

- Assistance to residents on planning and land management issues
- Education: tours for discussion with high school and university students, e.g. Eltham College and RMIT
- Support for 'Steve's Forest' (portion of Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve memorialising deceased BICA member and conservationist Steve Craig)
- Attendance at local workshops, e.g.
  - Friends of Osborne Peninsula
  - Nillumbik Greenhouse Workshop

Much of BICA's work takes place through its subcommittees, membership of which extends beyond committee members to other interested residents. The subcommittees are:

- Community Involvement
- Fauna & Flora
- Land Sales
- Planning & Power Authorities
- Land Care
- Newsletter

Although BICA has a highly visible presence within the Bend of Islands community, like an iceberg, much of its presence exists below the surface of community life and depends on the good will, expertise and energy of its committee and other members.

### **Land Sales Report from Carol Bonny**

There was a flurry of activity in our area during April with six properties sold over ten days. Some of these have been on the market for quite a while, one almost two years. The selling prices have varied with some properties achieving very high amounts and others, including the Melbourne Water lands, not reaching the hoped for value. There are eight properties of different kinds still for sale in the Bend. Hopefully the higher prices won't have too much impact on our rate valuations and send our rates sky high. Best wishes to those who are moving out of the area, especially the wonderful Woiwods, and I would also like to say welcome to all the new owners in the Bend. I look forward to meeting you. Thank you to those who have already joined BICA.

## JANET'S LONG LUNCH

### Neil Harvey

What a day. 53 people (plus one take out) enjoyed a feast at Janet & Frank's on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April.

It was a fund-raiser to help build a fence around a small forest planted in honour of Steve Craig at Yellingbo State Forest.

The fence was needed to allow the planting to develop, as it was being continuously browsed by deer and wallabies, creating a bonsai effect.

The Lunch was a resounding success with food prepared by Janet, Kay, Barb W., Barb S., Joyce, Pam, Cric, Sheila, Dee, Helen, Meg, Teresa, Robina, Caroline, Karyn and Rory.

Frank, Pierre, Quentin, Wolfgang, Marie and I gathered and arranged the tables and chairs, people donated cutlery and we used Janets's unending resources of crockery and jugs to feed the masses. Kay's decorations set the scene for a country banquet with a vinous atmosphere.

Wines, with a bit of friendly persuasion, were donated by Balgownie (courtesy of Simon), Yering Station and Long Gully. I think the reds and the whites were well received.

Guests were greeted with an aperitif and tasty tit bits as they mingled and found their appointed places. The invitations, place names and menus were all designed by Barb Whiter and Barb also organised the printing of same. They were so well done people kept them as a keepsake to remember the day.

The attendees sat along the verandah stretching around 2 sides of the house and just undercover. This was appropriate as just as lunch was served, the heavens finally decided to open up and it rained for most of the afternoon. We loved the rain even though some got a bit damp and cool as the day progressed.

The food was superb and the sweet offerings were dominated by pies and tarts, all locally made to our usual high standard.

We raised a total of \$2375.00 with a few donations added to the lunch tariff and after food and printing costs were deducted we will be able to donate \$1850.00 towards the cost of the fence. BICA and the Co-op. have already donated \$1500.00 between us so our total contribution will be \$3350.00.

It's amazing what our small community can do if you give them a target and attach a social occasion with good food and wine. Congratulations and thanks to all who helped and those who participated.

## NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL GREEN WEDGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Janet Mattiske

Nillumbik Shire has begun the process of developing a Management Plan for the Shire's Green Wedge.

As "The Green Wedge Shire," protecting the local environment is the Council's top priority.

An Advisory Committee has been formed whose members cover the broad ranging interests of the wider community. A program of Community Consultation has also been developed.

The first stage of the process has been to produce an Issues Paper.

The Issues include

#### VISION

What do you value most about the Nillumbik Green Wedge?

What do you think should be the main themes of a GWMP?

#### CONSULTATION

How do you think future consultation should take place? Who do you think are the stakeholders who should be involved?

#### BIODIVERSITY

How important is Biodiversity in Nillumbik? Should this override all other concerns? Can you think of other actions that could be taken to conserve Biodiversity in the Green Wedge?

#### RURAL-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

How do you think rural-residential development can best be managed to protect the environment? Do you think there should be more or less r-r opportunities? What restrictions should be placed on new development?

#### PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Do you think Planning controls for the Green Wedge are too strict or could they be stronger? In what areas should changes be implemented?

#### LANDSCAPE PROTECTION

What sort of landscapes do you value and how can it be protected?

## GREEN WEDGE MANAGEMENT PLAN (continued)

### FARMING

What does economically usable and environmentally sustainable farming mean in the Nillumbik context and what are the implications for the Plan?

### PUBLIC LAND

How can publicly owned land in the Green Wedge be better used or managed?

What assistance is needed from State Government?

### SERVICES

What key services are needed? How should they be paid for?

### COMMUNITIES

Are there opportunities for local groups and communities to be better coordinated to work together and what support do they need?

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Green Wedge must be sustainable. What development opportunities are appropriate in the Green Wedge and at what scale should they be allowed?

### SOME THINGS FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT

Please share your ideas as this is YOUR SHIRE and it impacts on our area.

## ENERGY MATTERS

### Kirk Anderson

April saw the launch of a greenhouse action committee at the BICA general meeting. I have for years been very interested in energy efficiency technologies focusing particularly on electricity. Melanie, my lovely wife, has urged me to live my passion and somehow make a living from it. Together we are taking steps to do this and interested members of the Benders community may benefit whilst assisting us.

We are looking to provide energy auditing to the domestic market and demonstrate the environmental and monetary savings available to individual households.

In order to best meet the expectations of customers, apart from knowing our stuff, we need to determine what the key areas of interest may be. As a result of Sunday we are drafting an article for submission in the next newsletter, focusing on Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL's).

Please mail [melandkirk@gmail.com](mailto:melandkirk@gmail.com) should you have an item of interest to consider for future issues.

## YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

### Peter Gurney

The Bend of Islands is your home. Typical of most of us you and your family live here, you have your house here and your ties to the area and the community are strong. You join in with the community events to a larger or lesser degree. You enjoy the ambience of the area, its flora and fauna, the people and the uniqueness of the whole essence of the place. I do too, yet a couple of weeks ago I was quite frightened. This article is about why I was frightened and what YOU can do about it.

All of us who live here are aware of fire. Bushfires are our prime concern but house fires are also high in my consciousness. We have miraculously just gone through the driest and hottest fire season on record without a major local incident. Oh, there were many fire incidents over the summer but most readers are unaware of just how many fires within ten kilometres of the Bend were tackled by CFA crews and put out before they became conflagrations that would have destroyed our homes. Some of these expeditiously extinguished fires were in the Bend or very close by.

And, this is why I was frightened one Saturday afternoon in early April. My CFA pager alerted me to a fire in Christmas Hills. I dropped what I was doing at home and scurried up to the fire station, got changed into my fire gear and jumped in the cab of the truck, and I waited. In vain I waited, no-one else came to help me crew the fire truck. Thankfully over the truck radio I heard our other fire truck in Christmas Hills turn out to the incident as did a Pantom Hill fire truck. The incident was quickly and successfully resolved and I could relax. But I was troubled by this incident. In all my twenty years in the fire brigade this is the first time that I can recall only one person responding to a fire call ON A SATURDAY. What would have happened if this fire call was to a bushfire in the Bend of Islands, or to a local house fire? The answer is that contrary to CFA policy I alone would have taken the truck (I am qualified to drive it) and I would have done what I could until help arrived. That help would have been our sister fire truck from Christmas Hills and our brothers and sisters-in-arms from Kangaroo Ground - but both of those trucks would have taken almost 20 minutes to get here (given turn-out time and travel time) and a bush fire would have been well underway by then; a house on fire may have been almost destroyed and the rescue of anyone trapped inside impossible. We have had turnouts before when we haven't had a crew but they have been during the week: still not good but a bit more understandable than my recent experience.

So I reflected a while on our local component of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade. Here are my thoughts. We have a good fire truck and we are well equipped both with fire fighting equipment, radios and personal gear, but we need to have a crew of at least

two, preferably three, four or five to safely and successfully respond to any and every incident. We are well supported by the CFA and by surrounding brigades, but as a community we must look after ourselves in the initial attack on any local fire.

By my reckoning we have 13 local fire fighters (that's 13 from 110 households) and of those 13 about 10 are active fire fighters, well trained and capable of safely and competently fighting fires. I think that right now we need at least another 8 – 10 fire fighters to provide a cushion of personnel so that we can respond to local incidents at any time.

Why aren't people offering themselves for this type of community service? I and many others over the years have found it so rewarding and educational. I guess many people think "They" will do it for them. Well, I am one of "They" and I am telling all of you that there are not enough "Theys" currently available. Each person who is not a member of the fire brigade needs to reflect on this point because the ten or so "Theys" are people just like you!

Others will say that the family need them at home: there is just too much to do with job and family to spare time for fire fighting, and anyway someone has to protect the family home. Well, all of us in the fire brigade have had to cope with this too. It is not an unusual reaction and I can assure you that in terms of family safety, and given that bushfire is our most dire threat, I would rather go and fight a fire in Kinglake, St Andrews or Christmas Hills than let it spread to threaten the Bend of Islands, my home and my family; that's how I feel now and that's how I felt when our kids were toddlers too! Many of our fire fighting team are family members with children but have come to terms with their responsibility to their family and the wider community in a similar process to me. It is a good rule to put any local fire out quickly before it gets too large and, if it is not a local fire to put it out before it gets into our bit of bush! I must add that once you have been to a fire or two you have a much greater understanding of bushfire and how to handle it and this helps when preparing to protect your home and family each summer.

Some people may think that the fire brigade members are all macho action men who get a buzz out of the adrenalin rush of attending fires. Well, we are not all men, there are a number of women in our fire brigade and the excitement of attending fires is always real but gets a bit wearing over the years, and safety is paramount throughout the CFA and especially in the Christmas Hills fire brigade. Also, you don't have to be super fit. A basic level of fitness is all that is needed, but you do have to be thoroughly trained to CFA standards. This will take some time initially but the maintenance of the skills once obtained is not overly demanding. To allay some other myths: you don't have to go away to fight fires elsewhere in the state or interstate unless you wish too. Your opinion as a brigade member is always sought and respected. No-one bullies anyone else. All personal equipment is provided by the CFA or the brigade. Our officers

are elected by the members of the brigade, and if we are not confident that they can do the job, then we don't vote them in! Oh, and the pay is completely tax free (joke!!).

The summer just past was our most dangerous bushfire period due to the ongoing drought, the prevailing weather and the bushland fuel loads. However, the next couple of summers will be even more dangerous for our community because a number of our trained, experienced and most reliable fire fighters are reducing or ending their CFA commitment due to age and changes in personal circumstances. These people have served us well for many, many years and have stopped numerous fires from getting away and threatening our bushland homes. So it is to the community I now appeal to step up to the job of filling the breach and making up the numbers. The brigade has jobs for all ages, if you are young or old there is something you can do – but the real need is for adults aged between 18 and 50 to get stuck into active fire fighting. Men and women are needed; especially people who are home during the week and can get the truck out of the shed and to a local fire in just a few minutes. The CFA and our brigade will make sure you are trained and confident to do the job but we need YOU now so that there are enough people trained to crew our fire truck by next summer and for the years to come. If you live here you must seriously consider this way of serving your community. Someone has to do it – why does that not include YOU?

To join the fire brigade please contact the brigade Captain Neill Kamminga 9712 0621, or the secretary Kevin Heeley 9730 1704. Do it NOW so that a training program can commence before June.

*(Please note that the above is not an official fire brigade endorsed article. It is merely an appeal from a local bloke who sees a real need for more people to get involved NOW.)*

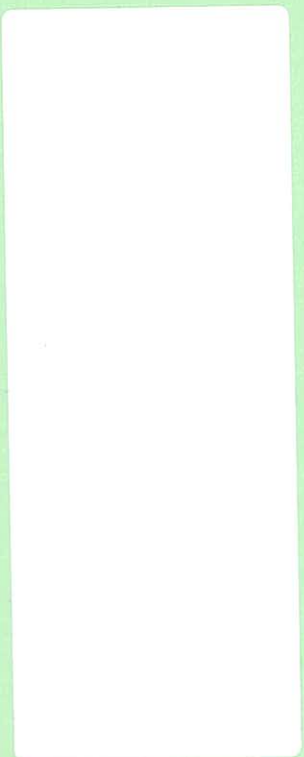
## FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to all who contributed to this rather serious issue of the BICA Newsletter. Let us hope that the next one is not quite so long in appearing as this has been. Contributions can be forwarded to us by any of the normal methods.

E-mail and postal addresses are on the cover. It saves me time if text is typed unformatted. Pictures are very welcome; send them as separate files or hard copy to be scanned.

Please make sure that names of people, places and organisations are spelled correctly!

**JOHN MCCALLUM**



If undelivered please return to:  
Bend of Islands Conservation Association Inc  
C/- PO Kangaroo Ground. Vic. 3097

**Greenhouse action  
SAVE THE GLOBE.  
TURN YOURS OFF!**

**Next Events:**  
**World Environment Day on the 3rd of June**  
**Trivia Night on the 14th July.**  
**General Meeting on 22nd July**

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