

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC NEWSLETTER

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

Number 70 December 2007

WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Poa morrisii*

Common name: Velvet Tussock Grass

Family: Poaceae

Flowering Period: October - January

A soft, graceful, tussock-forming grass, with fine, greyish green, velvety, hairy leaves. The dense tussocks are up to 30 cm high and 30 cm wide with the flowering stems reaching up to 0.9 metres tall. The leaf blades are slightly expanded and loosely inrolled with the lower sheaths pale. The many silver/green flower spikes are arranged at the ends of the flowering stems in panicles, a loosely branched flower structure, up to 25 cm long.

Poa morrisii grows in a wide range of plant communities including dry and valley sclerophyll forests, sclerophyll woodlands, grassy low open forests and escarpment shrubland. It tolerates a wide range of conditions including moist, dry, well drained soils in full sun or semi shade. It accepts wet winter and dry summer soils and is drought tolerant, though does not tolerate poor drainage. *P. morrisii* grows well under trees.

It is valuable source of food for small, seed eating birds and butterfly caterpillars.

CRIC HENRY



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

They are long gone now but our display of orchids this season was spectacular. We had fields of wax-lips (a slight exaggeration) and they were much better than last year when the plants dried up before they had a chance to flower. A timely downpour of rain made the difference this time.

Thanks to all involved in the 2007 committee for their energy and input and to all who participated and supported our Association. BICA is only as strong as its membership and if you have not renewed your subscription, our treasurer would love to hear from you.

The BICA elections re-instated 11 of last year's committee and have a vacancy to be filled. If you want to join in please contact me. Members are welcome to attend any committee meeting to see what we do.

Our Committee meets monthly throughout the year to address issues and generally make things happen for the Bend and also to partake in a pleasant supper to end the evening.

Not a BICA event but Café Benders has again prevailed over the year. The regular Friends of the Fire Brigade fundraiser continues to provide a great place to catch up with the latest news, and, with your support a great fund-raiser. Speaking of fund-raisers the BICA dozen will be drawn at the evening Café Benders on 15th December. Make sure you get your sold tickets returned in time and buy some more on the night if you feel lucky.

Café Benders Christmas gathering and Landcare will end the events for the year, then some well earned rest and recreation so we can all enjoy 2008 in the Bend of Islands.

See you 'round

CAROL BONNY

Don't forget your annual subscription to BICA. Rates are unchanged from last year and stand at \$20.00 pa single membership, \$30.00 for a family subscription and \$10.00 concession rate.

CONGRATULATIONS TERESA!

At the Nillumbik Sustainable Garden Awards presentation held at Edendale Farm, Teresa Bartram shared the award in the rural garden category. Well deserved.

FROM SHEIL'S GARDEN

Sheila Dixon

Sheila pumps from the river to water her garden. Under the current drought conditions she is subject to water restrictions in the same way as people on reticulated water.

Being known as elderly now I can water the garden from 8.00 till 10. Ha! All you young'uns have to do it by 6. A quick brekkie and out the door to be confronted by the river. What a sight! The sun was shining on it and the usual plume of steam was rising from the Bend of Isles part. The foreground was a line of small tree shadows on the damp grass and any leaves on the ground were shining with a speck of rain.

Into the garden and everything was growing in front of my eyes. All that work I told you about in Autumn has happened and the soil is like fluff. The green manure crop has broken down and I think the worms have gobbled up the cow manure so everybody is happy. Plants have been well covered in pea straw and it's all damp underneath there. So two waterings a week seems enough with a few extra buckets from the garbage bins if it's hot.

Ashleigh Muir came and rabbit proofed my fence, for it had a few dangerous holes. I have planted every vegie I could find including ones that came up with the compost. One of the useful things that came up from the compost was an onion plant with a lovely flower blooming. It has made a ball of seeds and the bees spent about three days on it so they will go into a jar. I love using my own seeds.

Then a couple of hours weeding the sort of clover stuff that is always there. I've also bought some kind of jelly beads that you put in a small hole beside the plants and they fill with water every time they get some. I'll see how it goes. Two lovely big grafted eggplants with flowers on them already. Don't bother with the seedlings, I don't think it is hot enough for them down here, I think the roots might be semi tropical.

One last thing. I bought was a big bag of blood and bone and each plant has had a dose of this near its roots to start it off. It seems to be working. This is along with rotted cow manure from Graeme Motschell's farm shed and that's their lot.

All this gardening was done in the beautiful silence of the bush just punctured by the birds. Mainly that Pallid Cuckoo also called the brain fever bird. I know why they called it that.

FALLEN TIMBER IN THE ELZ A RESOURCE FOR NATURE NOT THE FIREPLACE

Frank Pierce

Fallen trees form an integral part of the natural life cycle of our bush. As they decay they provide vital habitat for many links in the complex chain of life that has evolved to utilise every niche in the diverse natural ecosystem.

This was brought home to me ever so clearly as I monitored the activities of two juvenile echidnas for their first three months out of the burrow. Decaying logs were used for overnight shelter, protection from predators and a food resource, rich in termites, depending on the state of decay.

It is so easy to forget that fallen trees are part of the natural environment, the picture books we read as children usually depicted park like landscapes. The usual reaction in suburban areas, where most of us grew up, is to 'clean-up' any logs or branches to keep things tidy.

Appreciation of 'natural' environments that include fallen timber is often over-looked; however, once considered in the overall context of natural diversity, bushland with the fallen timber removed has that sense that there is something missing.

Any logs or branches at ground level that are of a diameter of more than 20mm do NOT contribute to the fine ground fuel that promotes the burning of bush fires. There is no reason to remove fallen trees or branches for fire safety, except for the removal of the very fine branches that have the leaves when these are within the local fuel reduction area close to the house. Any branches that are elevated and could act as 'fuel ladders' could be cut and left at ground level to maximise the benefits to the ecosystem.

The Planning Scheme recognises the benefits of fallen timber to the natural environment and requires a permit to be obtained to remove any fallen timber which has a diameter greater than 100mm.

Surprisingly an economic-rationalist analysis may well conclude that buying firewood is a better option when items such as cost of your time, consequences of an accident and the poor heat output of our local timber are considered.

So next time a tree comes down on your property, think about nurturing our environment for the critters and leave the chainsaw in the shed.

December 2007

THE PINES PROJECT: AN UPDATE

Peter Gurney

This year we have rid the Bend of Islands of another 14 pine trees, bringing the total of pines removed since 1991 to around 1,830. There remains approximately a further 130 pines to be removed before the Environmental Living Zone will be pine free.

Nillumbik Council, through its 2007 Landcare Grant, provided \$2,500 which enabled a contractor to fell three large trees at Barb Snell's 418 Henley Rd, a further two large trees at Jo and Gerrard Banner's property at the corner of Henley Rd and Skyline Rd, and two slightly smaller pines at Nic and Andy's place, 702 Henley Rd. In addition, this year we have poisoned seven pines down Ironbark Rd and the June working bee felled and cut up another pine at Jo and Gerrard's. The Landcare working bees in May and June managed to burn off all the pine limbs and tops and to either stack-up or remove all the pine for firewood. Great work indeed; thanks to everyone who took part.

In July I escorted Julie Edwards, an Environmental Officer from Nillumbik Council, around a number of our pine removal sites. It was heartening to note the regrowth of the bushland plants, much of which is natural regeneration. Despite the below average rainfall in recent years once the pines are removed a range of plant species naturally re-occupy the space.

I did point out to Julie that along with the pines the landcare working bees have also been involved in other worthwhile projects although the pines project is very well supported by volunteer workers and landowners. Let's hope this continues over the next few years as we finish the job!

2008 CALENDAR

Alan Bonny

The 2008 Calendar and directory will be distributed early 2008. Any suggestions for events and /or speakers OR would you like to help with events OR volunteer to be on the Community Involvement group that makes things happen? It would be great to have some input and involvement by some of our younger folk. Does the directory need to be revised or added to? Please contact me and we will try to include your ideas.

WHOSE POO IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS?

John McCallum

Have you ever wondered about the identity of those small greyish-white spots with a darker speck in the middle, that you sometimes find on surfaces inside and outside your home? They are probably spider poo. They are easy enough to clean up. A wet sponge will do the trick; no need for detergent or solvents.

Spider poo (it includes faeces as well as nitrogenous waste which we humans get rid of in our urine) is similar to that of birds and reptiles and represents a good adaptation to terrestrial life.

Organisms, both plants and animals, that moved during their evolutionary progress from the aquatic to the terrestrial environment faced a number of problems including the need for extra support (that's why beached whales can't breathe), some way to ensure that sperm can reach the egg cells and don't die in the open air (hence internal fertilisation whilst aquatic animals shed their sperm and eggs into the environment) and the need for extra protection of developing young. Many aquatic animals produce thousands of offspring, which are released into the environment at a very early stage. Enough survive predation to complete their development. Most terrestrial animals, especially vertebrates, however, produce a very small number of relatively well developed offspring and need to employ tactics such as egg brooding or placental gestation to maximise survival rates. Another challenge is the variable temperature on land compared with more stable conditions in the water and we see the development of homeothermy (constant body temperature) in birds and mammals, both of which evolved under terrestrial conditions.

Not the least problem for terrestrial animals is the shortage of water and the tendency to dry out very quickly in the air. A number of adaptations see to this in varying degrees. Waterproof skin (keeps water in, not out!) is pretty universal in well-adapted organisms. Our skin is not bad; we have a few holes to let sweat out when we need to cool ourselves. Gum leaves have a waxy coating but still need pores (stomata) to exchange gases during photosynthesis. Insects have a waterproof cuticle, which is part of their exoskeleton to which the muscles that are used in movement are attached. In extreme environments some animals employ behaviours to minimise dehydration (e.g., stay in shelter during the hottest driest times and emerge to feed at night).

One interesting set of adaptations that are neither structural (like waterproof skin) or behavioural (nocturnal feeding) concern the way animals deal with nitrogenous waste. We could call these functional adaptations. They are to do with the way their bodies work.

All animals whether aquatic or terrestrial eat protein and generally take in more nitrogen than they need for their basic physiology. Excess nitrogen usually ends up as ammonia and because it is soluble in water, this material is easily eliminated in the form of very dilute urine (if it were too strong the urine would be toxic to the animal that produces it). This is all very satisfactory if you have plenty of water; fish eliminate nitrogenous waste in this way.

Some terrestrial animals such as mammals produce more concentrated urine, which contains not toxic ammonia but nitrogen bearing wastes such as urea, which are less toxic. They still need water to remove them from the body and some energy is used to carry out the conversion from toxic materials such as ammonia. It works if you can keep up the water. In some other animals the nitrogenous waste is further converted into insoluble crystalline materials, which can be eliminated from the body without using much precious water at all. It is usually eliminated at the same time as the faeces and forms the white part of bird, reptile and spider droppings. The brown material is the faeces.

Spider poo represents a successful adaptation to living in a dry environment. If you don't know what it looks like, check the BICA website and look at "Whose Poo In The Bend Of Islands". This section of our website also provides reference photos for the faeces of a number of our local mammals, both indigenous and exotic.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT HERITAGE

Alan Bonny

Nillumbik Council has advised that an application to subdivide the Henley Golf property has been submitted. The intention is for Heritage to divest itself of unwanted land by creating 3 lots to sell and the balance to be transferred to DSE as conservation reserve. BICA Planning has had a look at the proposal and there are issues of concern that require clarification. Residents close to the course have received notification from the Shire and a meeting was scheduled by BICA for the affected residents to meet at the Fire Station at 8pm on Tuesday 4/12/07 to discuss the issues involved and the best way to respond.

Heritage must be confident as they are already advertising the properties to be created "subject to council approval".

The closing date for submissions to the Council regarding this Planning Application is 17/12/07 and if you want to know more please contact me on 9712 0648 or bica@rabbit.com.au

REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION

Rosemary West

Whether one believes or not that our climate is changing, or that our use of fossil fuels is affecting it, it still makes sense to conserve energy as much as possible.

We all know the obvious things such as buying energy efficient appliances, not having appliances on 'stand by', replacing incandescent globes with compact fluoros, having efficient insulation, reducing car & air travel, using fans instead of air conditioning etc.

I have made a few extra & obvious refinements e.g. I have a solar powered torch which I use when I move from one room to another rather than leaving the light on. I also have a solar powered/wind up radio & a solar powered lantern. I wear heaps of clothes in winter instead of relying on heaters, I have reduced the number of globes in the house & I only put enough water in my kettle for my immediate needs instead of filling it. I don't have a clothes dryer. I manage with a very small fridge. Mind you, all this is easy when you live alone; the system breaks down when I have visitors! I've had no success organising a car pool here but I never drive to the city (I go by train). Where it was not possible to change my light globes (I had a number of halogen globe fittings) I have placed standard lamps with fluoro globes in strategic areas. There are lots of other things one can do, & plenty of information about this (on the web & even from electricity suppliers).

There are two other things that are worth considering. I changed the large electric HWS (inefficient anyway for just one person) to a solar boosted instant gas one. I wasn't sure if it would work very well as I live on a south facing slope with many trees around but I have been delighted with the amount of sun it gets, at least since August. While bottled gas is more expensive than having piped gas I have found it still makes economic as well as energy efficient sense. I am always surprised at how few have solar HWS. I've had them for years in other houses & found them really worth while. I am now looking at getting photovoltaic cells to generate some of my own electricity.

I got very substantial subsidies (both State & Federal) for my HWS. Origin Energy is now offering a great offer on photovoltaic cells reducing the price to about \$5,000 for a 1 kWh supply. There is a Federal Govt subsidy of \$8000 (an election sweetener) & one from Origin itself of \$1000. You remain connected to the grid so always have a supply even if the sun does not shine. If you generate more electricity than you are using, the excess is fed back into the grid & is credited to you. If you don't want to go down this path, Origin also has 2 offers of 'Green Power' where they use renewable energy sources to match an extra payment that you make. I decided to use Origin Energy when I moved here because they appear to be more committed to renewable sources of energy than

other companies.

Information on the above deal can be obtained from Origin Energy though I did have some problems being connected to the correct person. I am being sent an information pack and I understand a consultant will also call if required. Another very helpful resource is 'Going Solar' 9348 1000 or www.goingsolar.com.au.

GREENHOODS GALORE

Peter Gurney

In August the Landcare working bee was on the river cliffs below our place, 35 Catani Blvd. Over a couple of hours a sure footed group of four workers weeded out a range of non-indigenous bulbous plants planted many years ago BE (before ELZ) by the previous owners. I have worked on these plants for years and the working bee nicely finished off the job. It will be easy to cope with any regrowth.

Those who took part in this venture were thrilled to see the steep south east facing slope covered in Greenhood orchids. There were hundreds of them and we recognised four varieties: Nodding Greenhood, Alpine Greenhood, Maroon Greenhood and Tall Greenhood. We had to pick our way between the orchids to get to the weeds. Unfortunately there was a bit of 'collateral damage' but after removal of the Snowdrops, Daffodils and Jonquils there will now be less competition for the orchids and future years will see even more of them.

We also noted how on these SE slopes the kunzea had grown tall and matured and that more light was now getting through to the understorey creating a more diverse plant community. The kunzea is doing its job of protecting the soil and providing humus for other plants to eventually re-colonise. The original plant community having been completely destroyed in the 1962 bushfire which burnt out much of the Bend of Islands and surrounding areas. So 45 years later we are part way through the regeneration process. It takes time but the bush has its own ways of recovering from disaster.

NEW BENDERS

Carol Bonny

There were a lot of properties changing hands in the Bend over the last year. It's sad to lose friends and neighbours but it's also great to have new and enthusiastic people in our community. Welcome to you all and thank you to those that have joined BICA. Adjacent to the ELZ new neighbours Wayne and Patricia Robinson are building their home and have also become BICA members. We look forward to catching up with all our new neighbours at community events and joining BICA to support our special area.

KOALA VISITS

Barb Whiter

Amazing sounds early on Cup Day – screeching cockies, upset choughs, hysterical parrots, chirruping LBJs (little brown jobs!) – ‘The birds are going crazy this morning,’ said Barb to Alan at breakfast (early) – ‘Maybe there’s a fox?’

‘Mmmm...’

Well, we did have a big day ahead of us travelling two hours to Gippsland to have lunch with his Mum, so we both were focused on the day ahead – until I said:

‘Al – there’s a koala running down our driveway on all fours!!!!’

‘Quick, get your camera.’

I did and here’s the result – a koala who was sure he was OK in his tree – but probably not this one for long!



KOALA EDUCATION

Barb Whiter

On Sunday 25 November the meeting part of the BICA AGM went according to plan with reports read and commented on, Committee members elected, more discussion on several General Business items and then, at around 3.30pm, a short break was taken to enable our speaker, Dr Desley Whisson, a koala expert from Deakin University, to set up.

Desley’s presentation was full of great information – taxonomy, biology, habitat and behaviours. Yes, it is true koalas sleep around 20 hours every day. Why? Because the 1kg or so of their preferred eucalypts (which vary between habitats) which they eat within that active four hour period, only provides them with around 2000 kilojoules of energy!

Other interesting facts included koalas have limited behaviours – they aren’t innovative! Desley mentioned anecdotal evidence telling that if a mother grabbed at leaves with her right arm, her child would do that too; equally, if the mother always picked her leaves with her left arm, the baby koala would go with their left arm!

Koalas have a range of around one to two hectares, but as Desley explained this can be linear hectares, so the koala Rudi and Sue hear down in Gongflers could well be the young male in the photo above which we saw on Cup Day. Many others mentioned they’d heard koalas recently, so again, it could be the same young male.

Possibly the most vocal part of the presentation was when Desley showed her audience several ways of telling males and females apart, and then proceeded to test us and reward those with correct answers with – what else?! – Caramello koalas! That was a good way of teaching Benders – food rewards!

Desley’s presentation could have been subtitled *Everything you’ve ever wanted to know about koalas...but didn’t know who to ask!* But now we did – and the last half hour or so of her time was spent answering question after question...we do like to grill our speakers!

The best thing though is of course we always treat them well with a great afternoon tea, hot drinks and wine afterwards – with even more questions! Thanks to Vikki and Mick at 777 Henley for hosting the afternoon – especially as Vikki had hurt her ankle the day before – she’s a trouper! Thanks also to the 35 or so Benders who attended – and a special thanks to Desley for an informative and entertaining talk.

ANOTHER GREAT NIGHT EVENT

A wonderful venue thanks to Jo and Gerard and pleasant weather made it another great event. This time coordinated by Simon Oates with a cast of thousands, well nearly. It was also good to see a lot of our younger residents participating or just enjoying the night. Looking forward to next year.

BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following can be reported since last April.

Lyrebirds- There have not been many reports recently, except from the Kammingas on the Coop, who have been hearing the birds consistently, sometimes with birds calling simultaneously from different directions. Neill also heard one near the fire station on 28/11/07 just after he had heard one at his house.

The reporting of records of birds being either seen or heard has enabled the monitoring of their continued presence and the probable increase in their numbers over the last couple of years. The data is important for proof of this significant example of how the Kinglake National Park/Warrandyte State Park habitat link works, and the role that the ELZ plays in this.

Please jot down any Lyrebird observations; *time, seen or heard, where, etc.* and pass them on to me when convenient.

Powerful Owls- Several sightings have been reported.

A pair of adults was recently seen with a downy juvenile, so at least one of the ELZ pairs has bred successfully.

Other Interesting Observations reported include:-

- The November bird walk was at the Neil Douglas Reserve at the end of Gongflers Drive. Robyn Duff reported as follows:-

Powerful owl family, boobook, sacred kingfisher, satin flycatcher (nesting), black & sulphur-crested cockatoos, corellas (nesting), galahs, eastern and crimson rosellas (nesting), horsfield's bronze-cuckoo, rufous whistler and on and on, not to mention the striated pardalotes courting. It was spring in full flight.

- Grey-headed Flying-foxes were feeding on flowering Ironbarks on the Coop at night in early May.

- A Fuscous Honeyeater was seen near start of C Track on 13/05/07; only previously seen 6/89 and 5/98.

- There were several sightings of King Parrots (m & f) on the Coop in May.

The large flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos that returned to the Coop in February 07, stayed all winter and left on 3/11/07; the day we received 40mm of rain.

- The Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters that arrived on the Coop in early March stayed at least

till the start of June.

- Honeyeater numbers are very low this year with some of the usual species, such as the White-faced, being conspicuous by their absence.

- On 28/11/07 I photographed a Spotless Crake at a dam just north of the Coop. I have been monitoring the presence of these birds for over 10 years and this is only the second time I've actually seen one. They skulk about in dense reed beds but have a distinctive call which I hear and record most months.

- Another rarely-seen bird that is regularly heard is the White-throated Nightjar. I hear its distinctive call between dusk and dawn in the summer months. This bird nests, and usually roosts during daylight, on the ground. It is so cryptic that it is almost impossible to see unless it flushes from almost under your feet. I have never seen it in daylight in the ELZ however I did spotlight it at dusk a couple of times about 10 years ago.

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 -especially Lyrebirds.

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

AGM

Alan Bonny

The BICA Annual General Meeting was hosted by Mick and Vikki at their home in Henley road and well attended.

The formal part of the meeting dealt with reports from our office bearers and coordinators with our treasurer reporting that we are in the black figures and recommending no increase in subscriptions. We all agreed.

The election of committee for the next 12 months was conducted and with 12 positions to fill and 11 nominations all were declared elected.

The constitutional amendment was discussed and concern was expressed that the proposed amendment was too general in its wording. It was determined to defer to the next general meeting to allow for a re-worded amendment to be drafted and advertised.

It was also proposed that a Community Web page could be created that is independent of BICA that would provide interactive access to information interests and activities. While independent of BICA it is envisaged that the forum should provide a complimentary role to the more environmentally focused BICA activities. We will see how it evolves.

TERMITE TROUBLES

John McCallum

Just looking out the window I can see a large echidna rooting around near an old stump. They are always around but have been particularly active around the house lately and their determination when they are on the scent (or is it electric field?) of their prey can result in some pretty spectacular destruction. Quite large rocks are often moved during their excavation works.

Seeing the echidnas so close to the house, however, brings with it a little uncertainty about their real purpose. Although their other name is Spiny Anteater, the preferred diet of these familiar animals is termites. Are they digging up ants or are they onto a nice little termite colony conveniently close to the house? Inspection of their earthworks so far has yielded only evidence of ants but the termites aren't far away.

While we were away about a year ago for an extended stay in Asia, our son informed us during a phone conversation that a number of timbers in the house were infested with the little beasts. Since then we have been on a program of eradication before carrying out any necessary repair work. Techniques of termite control have changed over the years and current methods reflect a good understanding of the biology of these interesting creatures.

Here in Victoria we have what are known as "wet wood termites". They are supposed only to invade and eat wood that is damp. We have all probably caught a few workers munching away on a piece of timber that has been left on the ground and forgotten. The moisture in the ground is enough to provide the humidity that they need. Dry wood is safe. Our experience, however, is that elevated (6 metres above ground level) timber in a building is still susceptible. Another organization to which I belong has clubrooms at the Auburn railway station. That whole building is infested, yet it is reasonably weatherproof. It would seem, then, that not much humidity is needed to allow termites to invade a structure and then of course they set up their own micro-environment which maintains the humidity and lets them get on with their work.

When termites chew up and ingest wood they are unable to digest it into useful molecules that they can absorb and use as a source of energy. In much the same way as a number of other herbivorous mammals keep a supply of microbes in their intestinal tracts to break down the cellulose that forms a large part of their diet (grass), termites have a symbiotic relationship with a tiny single celled organism. The protozoans, known as gregarines, have the ability to produce enzymes that can digest wood. The termite supplies the gregarine colony in its gut with an endless supply of pulped up wood, the gregarine then produces this enzyme which breaks the wood down into simple substances such as sugars. There is plenty to go around; the gregarines have enough for

themselves and the termites absorb the rest. Good for everybody.

Termites can be quite fussy but very determined about what they eat and will often pass over what would seem to be good tucker and settle in to destroy some other part of your house. It is intriguing to note that they are unerring in their quest. An old friend who used to work as a Way and Works foreman on the now defunct Victorian Railways told me of a telegraph pole he saw somewhere along the old Deniliquin line (yes, VR ran into NSW in a few places). The pole was the usual height, made of steel rail and had a wooden cross-arm about 5 metres above the ground. The wood was totally destroyed by termite action. They had constructed a tunnel shaped gallery of mud, spit and sawdust running right up the steel rail from underground to the wooded cross-arm. How did they know there was a supply of tucker right up there? I suppose they were able to detect in the water that ran down the pole when it rained some give-away chemical secreted by the timber. Whatever it was, it worked for them!

Termites are social or colonial animals like many kinds of bees and ants although they are not related to them other than being insects. Bees and ants belong to a completely different order to termites. The termite colony is made up of hundreds of thousands of individuals. Apart from the queen (one per colony) there are three main "castes". The ones that do the damage are the workers. As well as these there are soldiers that have enlarged jaws and their main job is to protect the colony against predators or other invaders. The third group are the alates or "winged reproductives". They are evident on a humid day in autumn or spring when they can be seen in their thousands flying from the colony to seek a mate and start a new colony. It is worth watching their behaviour. After a male and a female have "found each other" they can be seen running along, one behind the other and at some stage they will drop their wings. The pair are looking for a suitable damp place to set up a colony. If they are successful, and very few are, the male will inseminate the female. He will die and she will give birth to workers and soldiers for the rest of her life, which can be quite a long time. Her abdomen becomes bloated with eggs and she can't move; she is merely an "egg laying factory". At some stage she will give birth to some young that will develop into alates, they will swarm and the process starts all over again. Around here, termite colonies are usually partially underground at the base of a dead or old tree.

Your house can't "catch termites" in the same way as you can catch a disease, merely by contact or by accidentally bringing a live worker inside, say in a piece of firewood. The process that is described above is necessary in order for a colony to be established.

Control methods vary but the one employed by the company that is treating our infestation is an interesting process that exploits an aspect of the biology of these creatures. Like all insects, termites go through a moulting process as they grow. This is because they have a more or less rigid outer skeleton. As they develop they outgrow

this exoskeleton and have to shed it. A new, slightly larger one hardens on their body shortly after shedding their old exoskeleton. The eradication process involves feeding the workers at the site of infestation with a cellulose pulp laced with a substance that prevents termites from producing the main structural material of their exoskeletons. The colony slowly dies out.

Prevention is better than rebuilding. If you are in any doubt about infestation of your house, get onto a reputable termite eradication company.

OUR COMMITTEE FOR 2008

Carol Bonny

Elected at the AGM on 25th November the following are our new committee. All are carry over from 2007 with Greg Philips declining his nomination. Thanks to all for last years effort.

Carol Bonny President	9712 0648
Janet Mattiske Vice President	9712 0237
Neil Harvey Treasurer	9712 0462
Alan Bonny Secretary	9712 0648
Tom Fisher	9712 0451
Cric Henry	9712 0547
Val Himmelreich	9712 0029
Rudi Pauli	9712 0470
Michael Pelling	9712 0286
Graham Petersen	9712 0071
Barb Whiter	9712 0532
And also	
Editor: John McCallum	9712 0319

There is a vacancy on the Committee having received only 9 nominations for 10 positions. We also need a new Landcare Coordinator to continue Peter Gurneys great effort over the last 15 years.

Treasurer, Secretary and Minute Secretary are to be confirmed at the December Committee meeting.

We look forward to your participation for another great year in the Bend.

December 2007

SUZ2 AND YOU

Alan Bonny

How does it work and why do you live there are the questions that often follow when you tell someone that you live in the Bends of Islands Environmental Living Zone. I suppose we all have different priorities but the "purpose" section of our Special Use Zone 2 (SUZ2) provides some answers to "Why are we here and what are we trying to do?"

Some "purposes" are standard planning requirements but others provide the environmental considerations applied to create the provisions contained in the document which are also reflected in our BICA constitution:

NILLUMBIK PLANNING SCHEME SCHEDULE 2 TO THE SPECIAL USE ZONE

Shown on the planning scheme map as SUZ2
ENVIRONMENTAL LIVING - BEND OF ISLANDS

Purpose

To provide for residential use of the land consistent with the need for protection of the native bushland environment. To maintain and enhance the positive environmental qualities of the landscape, native flora, native fauna and to protect and thus prevent damage to natural systems.

To limit the site coverage of the development or use, (including kitchen gardens) to a single envelope so that the landscape and environmental qualities of the area are maintained and enhanced.

To prevent threats to flora and fauna and to the amenity of the zone which might be caused by domestic pets, feral animals or by the grazing of livestock.

To ensure that the density, design, appearance and impact of the use or development reflects the native bushland qualities of the area.

To conserve the quality of soil resources, water, watercourse capacity, so as not to prejudice the natural eco-system.

To maintain acceptable air quality and noise levels in the zone.

To maintain the high landscape quality in the zone.

To restrict and limit the removal of natural vegetation, fallen logs and dead trees.

To prevent subdivision and/or development of land which is flood prone or is subject to subsidence or landslip.

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

Are you financial?
BICA Dozen draw. Are your tickets in?
Café Benders Xmas gathering. Evening of Sat. 15th Dec.
Landcare. 9:30 am Sun.16th Dec.

If undelivered please return to:
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C/- PO Kangaroo Ground. Vic. 3097

BICA Newsletter

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