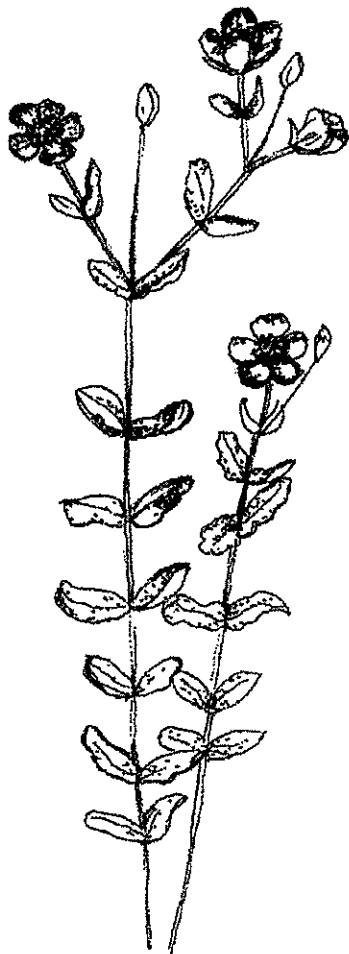


BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC NEWSLETTER

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

Number 71 March 2008



WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Hypericum gramineum*

Common name: Small St. John's Wort

Family: CLUSIACEAE (previously Hypericaceae)

Flowering Period: October - March

A small erect perennial herb, up to 20 cm high by 5 to 20 cm wide with several stems branching from the base. Has a taproot with creeping lateral roots giving rise to stems.

The stems have four ridges along their length as well as spreading pairs of 10-20 mm long, stem-clasping blue green leaves. The 5 - 13 mm long leaves are oblong with broad bases, wavy edges and rounded ends.

The orange-yellow five petalled flowers, to 8-12 mm across, are cupped with many stamens, arranged in terminal cymes with 3 or more flowers held erect above the leaves.

The fruit is a 3-valved capsule, 7 mm long, containing many tiny seeds.

Widespread, in a range of soil types, preferring a well drained soil, tolerating moisture and dryness in summer. Prefers full or partial sun.

Hypericum gramineum (Small St John's Wort) is one of the two indigenous species from the genus *Hypericum* occurring in the Bend of Islands and Australia. *Hypericum* is a world wide genus and there are two other *Hypericum* species in the Bend of Islands, which have been introduced into Australia from Europe and are prohibited weeds in Victoria and declared noxious weeds. Take care that the local species are not confused with these introduced weeds, St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*).

The indigenous *Hypericum* species are distinguished from the introduced *Hypericum* species:-

- absence of black gland dots on petals and leaves
- presence of 4 longitudinal ridges on stems
- stamens not fused into bundles but free

CRIC HENRY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Summer is over and what a mild February we experienced. Some of the days were positively autumnal much to my delight as autumn is my favorite season. Don't relax just yet though as March has had some unseasonably hot days so far including total fire bans. Maybe this strange weather is the reason that my foam box of Nodding Greenhood orchids (*Pteristylus nutans*) is sending up rosettes! It's the 12th of March what is going on, climate change or what?

It's been a very busy 2008 already with a number of NewsSheets distributed along with the Calendar and Directory. Submissions on various topics have been addressed as well as meetings with council and Parks Victoria, and our first General Meeting for the year was hosted by new residents and BICA members John and Henriette. It's great to see new residents being involved and embracing the area. In the last Newsletter I welcomed new owners and residents and I do so again as more have moved in. If I haven't caught up with you I look forward to doing so soon.

I mentioned the fire season earlier and it is proposed to end the fire danger period later this month. The conditions at the time will effect the decision and even if the restrictions are eased I ask everyone to use common sense with any fire.

See you 'round

CAROL BONNY

RIVERKEEPERS

Barb Whiter

Arthur and Jess Howard still live in Alphington – close to the Yarra they love. Arthur used to make canoes, and, in 1952 he and Jess lived in two rooms, their living room downstairs and their bedroom upstairs – this was the year of the big flood of the Yarra. They were able to move most of their belongings upstairs, but they couldn't get their couch upstairs and as the river rose, they looked at each other and confessed their dislike of the couch – so they opened the door gently and 'set it free'!

What they didn't count on was that friends saw the couch bobbing along, roped it in because they recognised it was Arthur and Jess's couch and they brought it back! Not long after the flood waters receded the couch was reduced to firewood.

Our speaker at the first BICA General Meeting of the year, on Sunday 24 February, was Ian Penrose, now a Yarra Riverkeeper, but who once, he confessed, worked for the 'dark side' – the petroleum, coal mining, natural gas and shipping industries. Of course his experiences in these industries have now given him an entrée to discussions many other green lobbyists would love to have.

With our meeting held high over the Yarra River at John and Henriette Strain's home in the lower part of Henley Road giving us a perfect view of part of the river being spoken about – we all soaked in Ian's presentation.

Over a pleasant 45 minutes or so, Ian regaled us with many tales of history of the Yarra, and took us, graphically, on a delightfully scenic journey from the source of the Yarra right down into Melbourne's CBD and beyond – to the buoy marking the entrance of the Yarra in Port Phillip Bay.

After relaxing us with this sojourn, which was a really powerful way of showing us how we all are connected with the river, he then hit us with a few facts and issues to think about.

The Yarra was the decisive factor in the siting of Melbourne and it holds a special place in the region's Indigenous heritage. Seventy per cent of Melbourne's drinking water comes from the river's upper reaches. The Yarra Valley is one of the region's major wildlife habitats. It contains Australia's largest metropolitan park and is an important part of the region's precious natural landscape.

In recent months, the state of the Yarra's water quality, its uncertain flows, and pressures from urbanisation have all attracted public attention.

We had plenty to talk about over a wonderful afternoon tea!

Further information can be obtained via Ian Penrose, Riverkeeper, Yarra Riverkeeper Association, PO Box 320, Fairfield Vic 3078; info@yarrariver.org.au; 0448 927 720; www.yarrariver.org.au.

FALLEN CHOUGH

Carol Bonny

Sitting inside one morning staring out the window over a cuppa I noticed a dark mass in a golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). I hadn't noticed it before and a closer look revealed it was a White-winged Chough that had come to the end of its life and was lodged upside down in the branches. Often wondered what happens to our feathered and furry neighbours when they meet their demise. With the high native population you would expect little graveyards everywhere. Our consensus was that it should remain in the tree and let nature (and gravity) take its course. Vale, Chough



BIRDS IN THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES

Sheila Dixon



As kids in those far-off days we loved the birds up here and I suspect there were many more than today. I remember the dawn chorus being very in your face but I was talking to Frank the other day and he said it really happens in the spring and that's something we wouldn't have realised. You see all parrots were rosellas, all small coloured birds were finches but at least we knew our blue wrens. They are still my favourites.

I look back in horror at the fact we used to collect nests and the occasional eggs. What's done is done but it was the norm on the whole in those days. I suppose at least, we were interested. Grandma Oxley was a great lover of birds and had swallows nests under the verandas all round the big house and here is another dreadful thing we did. We knocked one down one day to see if there were any eggs. Of course Grandma noticed and we really got into trouble.

Grandma was very excited at one time for she saw a pair of black swans sailing majestically up river just where I look down on it. I've never forgotten that and still hope I will see some one day. In the winter she used to put crumbs on the window sill in the big house for the scarlet robins. If she was a bit late they would tap on the window and hurry her up. I'd be tucked under a patchwork quilt in the warm waiting for them.

My cousin Bob and I loved fishing and of course needed bait. We had special spots along Oxley Rd. where it was quite damp. In those days it was called 'The Lower Track' and trailed through frog ponds and wattle groves until it reached the river down at Claire's. We always had a companion here. The eastern yellow robin turned up immediately looking for a handout. No fear at all and we could leave the spade dug into the soil and he would stand on the handle and check out the freshly dug dirt and grab his worms. It is amazing that so many years later I can see this scene as if it were yesterday.

The other quite common sighting was the platypus gliding up and down feeding near one of our fishing spots early in the morning. I remember we were terrified we would get one on a hook and were always very wary of this. The one thing we didn't see was kangaroos. I think the bush was thicker then but sometimes we swore we could hear them thumping away into the distance. Only this morning, my usual family were having a drink at my small pool so I suppose some things change.

March 2008

DOWN TO THE WIRE

Tom Fisher

Bend of Islanders celebrated the 2008 Clean Up Australia by continuing their assault on the fencing wire in the area. Fences are both unsightly and unnecessary where there are no animals to keep in. They also can prove dangerous to native wildlife panicked by oncoming cars, especially when they contain strands of barbed wire.

Rosemary West, Barb Snell and granddaughter Natasha patrolled Henley and Skyline Roads for roadside rubbish, the most striking of which was part of a car door. Meanwhile a hardy band consisting of Luke Doyle, Tarquin Moore, Art Curl, Ross Henry, and Neil Harvey methodically removed and rolled up an estimated 2.5 kilometres of fencing, most of it of the highly uncooperative and dangerous barbed variety, from three properties of the Catani-Gongflers area. Tom Fisher and Wolfgang Krause were kept busy transporting it to the Fire Shed and cramming it into a large skip there for removal by the Shire. Greg Phillips proved a cooperative draftee by working with Tom to free and remove an old and entrenched stash of barbed wire near the top of Henley road extension.

Demographically speaking, the dominance of the 55+ year olds was greatly reduced, as they only doubled the number of 25-40 year olds (six to three). Last year the elders outnumbered the youth about 4:1!

Many thanks to land owners including John Zervas, Luke Doyle and Mia Bullen who gave permission for the de-fencing. We hope they will find their properties visually enhanced and safer.

DO YOU CARE?

Carol Bonny

Bend of Islands Landcare is continuing without an official co-ordinator but with Wolfgang and Marie scouting the area looking for work sites for the future. The February working bee was in Henley Rd and the small group revisited the pine removal properties. All quadrat fencing has now been removed from the Parfitt land with the fencing relocated to protect regeneration plants, indigenous grasses and revegetation plants at the Mann/Tarpey site.

After morning tea refreshments we moved to the gully at Jo's and Gerard's to remove inkweed and thistle. Inkweed is a new weed to the area that only surfaced after the pines were removed.

It was great to have newcomers involved with Vikki, Mal and Gavin joining our small band of regulars. Thanks also to Mick for doing the housework so Vikki could attend.

We have a grant for more pines to be removed so there will be some heavy lifting and bonfires to clear up after the trees are felled. It would be great to have help from some more young fit folk for this activity.

MY GARDENS

Teresa Bartram

I am fortunate to have two gardens which contribute to a sustainable environment. There is a thriving bush garden which surrounds my house, as well as an enclosed organic kitchen garden nearby.

I live on 326 acres of dry sclerophyll forest, in the Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative in the ELZ. The land has been divided into 32 shares or house sites, in an effort to minimise the ecological footprint of the inhabitants in the area. The 'Co-op', which has been set up to act as a guardian of the environment, has strict rules for building and site management for all residents. It shows good governance and respect for the ecosystem and for the people living within it. The result is the achievement of joint human and ecosystem well-being, which to my mind is a very positive slant on the concept of sustainability.

For me 'sustainable' means the provision of the best outcomes for both human and natural environments for the present and for the future. As a resident of the Environmental Living Zone in the Bend of Islands, sustainable living means, the meeting of personal needs for a harmonious existence, in a natural environment, without compromising the biodiversity and the natural ecosystems of the area. It means planning and achieving the ability to maintain these ideals into the indefinite future.

Teresa's Courtyard Kitchen Garden is a small but highly productive, caged courtyard garden adjacent to the house, which is nestled in the forest. While rain-water is collected for household consumption, all grey water is directed into a transpiration bed on which our kitchen garden is maintained. There is an extra tank for collecting any overflow from the main tank and shed. This is connected to an underground watering system which we use mainly in the summertime. This system has prevented excess water incursion into the bush which could encourage the growth of exotic weeds.

The garden in many ways is based on permaculture techniques. Fruit trees, vines, berries, vegetables and herbs intermingle. We use composting and mulching and worm farming methods to make the garden more productive and water efficient.

The garden is caged out of necessity, because it is impossible to grow anything in the open because of predation by animals.

Whilst the kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, lyrebirds, possums and rabbits are excluded from the kitchen garden, they roam freely outside. The garden is alive with native bees, skinks, butterflies and little birds. The occasional blue-tongue and jacky lizard poke around the plants and sun themselves on the pathways. Some buff-rumped thornbills are happily nesting in a rosemary bush. The antichinus have also made a home in the garden.

The bush garden is weeded regularly to exclude all unwanted non-indigenous plants. Any disturbed areas have been mulched and replanted and the areas around the house regularly maintained.

Whilst we have a policy not to feed any birds or animals there are saucers of water around the outside of the house, which means we have lots of little, local visitors throughout the day and night.

Our lifestyle is not simple due to our wide-ranging interests. We like to live our life to the fullest, to entertain and keep in touch with our family and friends. But we have chosen to live more simply in the bush. We enjoy the benefits of sustainable living in an area we love and intend to maintain for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

CALWELL ROAD BLOCKADE

Alan Bluhm

We were traveling home along Henley Road on 13 January at 10.30pm when we encountered a blockade at the mouth of Calwell Road on Pooh Corner. Three adults and two children were spaced evenly in a straight line across the road like bollards at the start of a pedestrian mall. In fact we wondered if that's what they were campaigning for. We could do little more than wonder, as they carried no placards and were not chanting any slogan.

Their positioning was so precise that we wouldn't have been surprised to see them break into some synchronized gymnastics, cheerleading, or possibly some line dancing. But of course those would be frivolous activities for serious blockaders.

We stopped to watch, and shortly after our arrival they parted to let us pass, obviously not noticing that our left-hand indicator was not on, so we weren't going that way. The two teenagers took advantage of the break in the ranks for some time-out with a little playful sparring at the far end before getting back to the task at...um, paw.

Oh, did I mention that our blockaders were a mob of Eastern Grey kangaroos? But you knew that. Most of you will have seen this lot in various formations around the environs of Pooh Corner at dusk and dawn and during the night. Their neat line on that particular night was one of those rare and special occasions when life imitates art in a rather unlikely manner. We enjoyed the moment and lingered there in the car, providing floodlighting for their stage, willing them to entertain us some more, but the show was over and they politely waited for us to go home before beginning their blockader's meal break. At least the adults did. The teenagers were already off doing their own thing, the blockade forgotten. But we won't forget. We'll add it to many other magic memories from our ELZ.

CAN A TANK BE HOLISTIC?

Mike Pelling

Some years ago in a frenzy of unusual creativity, a statement was “written” on the CFA water tank at the start of Ironbark Rd. It, the author believed, provided a rare insight into the birth and source of Greenies. While it was useful information, many thought that its message could be improved, and as a result a mural was painted on the tank. It depicted the local environment, including Chloe, as I recall. Chloe, of course, is our local wallaby and like her namesake is totally uninhibited.

Last month the tank suffered another writing attack. This time the message was unclear but seemed to relate to the teaching profession and its capacity to absorb knowledge and as well, statements of real affection, not only for the profession, but for a mysterious lady. As before, the artists of Ironbark Rd, ably led by Peter Oyston, optimized the message by hiding it under the mural.

Such was the enthusiasm with which this was greeted by the author of the previous writings, that the splendor of message was returned, but in vibrant purples and implied psychedelia. Unfortunately the world was still not ready for these continual revelations, so in another creative frenzy the mural was returned.

I am pleased to see it still remains and that Chloe has been joined by some friends. It has been a remarkable demonstration on how to fight a fire without using water and for those who seek the inspiration of the actual words that were present over these events, they are available via subscription and can be posted to you in a plain brown envelope. And in a fitting tribute, negotiation has commenced with Nillumbik Council to include our tank in the Open Artists studio scheme.

SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE THERE ARE SIGNS

Alan Bonny

The song was a long time ago and I can't remember who sang it but there are a proliferation of road signs and a few domestic ones popping up here in the Bend. It would be good if our domestic signs were small and unobtrusive to keep our overall impact minimal and there are limitations on what you can have.

In the SUZ2 household signs are required to conform to Clause 52.05. Category 4 and the relevant bit states “Home occupation sign; only one to each premises. The area must not exceed 0.2 sq m.”

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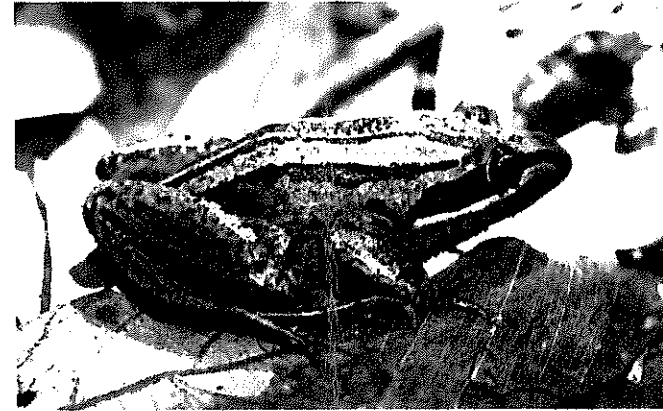
FROG VISIT

Carol Bonny

On Friday 21st December between 7:30 and 7:45pm we received 21mm of rain at our place. This caused a bit of flooding around one corner of the building that will be addressed with appropriate drainage ‘one day’.

As the waters subsided I took a look outside to do another inspection of the damage and on the brick paving about a metre from the door was a large frog. I grabbed the camera to record this sighting and then our Australians Reptiles and Amphibians field guide (by Leonard Cronin).

Our conclusion was that our visitor was a Brown-striped Grass Frog, *Limnodynastes peronii*. Has any one else seen this one around, and what other frogs do we have in the Bend?



Another common vernacular name for *L. peronii* is “Striped Marsh Frog”. It is widespread in the four eastern states as well as SE South Australia.

http://www.frogsaustralia.net.au/frogs/display.cfm?frog_id=40

Banjo Frog (Pobblebonk), *L. dumerilii* has also been recorded here. See BICA website. JMCC

BABY BENDERS BOY BOOM

Congratulations to all the new parents and welcome to our new Benders. Apologies if we have missed anyone. Lots of boys this time. Mia and Graham; Benjamin. Sue and Rudi; Jarrah. Jo and Gerard; Theo. Mia and Luke; Arlo.

SUZ2 AND YOU

Alan Bonny

In the last Newsletter I highlighted the 'purposes' of the Special Use Zone 2 (SUZ2) that applies to our area. I view our zone as a "residential national park; as in National Parks there is legislative support to enforce compliance with the zone provisions.

The SUZ2 is not an optional set of guidelines that you may use but State Planning Law that you must comply with. If you do not comply, you may incur a penalty. You may also find yourself off-side with other members of the community who are here because of the SUZ2 and what it provides.

BICA tries to inform everyone about the zoning requirements by providing the Information Folder and by notes such as this, but ultimately it is your responsibility as a resident or owner to know what you can and cannot do. If in doubt ASK, and make sure you get the correct information from someone who knows. A copy of the SUZ2 can be down-loaded or obtained from BICA or the council. (see below)

If you do something that is not allowed and you are approached, or you get caught, you should not complain or be offended. Living in this area comes with some responsibilities.

If you see something happening that is not permitted then you should do something about it. Approach those involved and try to resolve the problem. If this does not work then Nillumbik council is the appropriate authority.

When you contact council always note who you talked with and when you made contact. Also ask to be advised when action is taken and what result is achieved. Written confirmation of your request is a good record, email is fine. If you are not advised of a result, follow up and request that action be taken.

This area and the zoning in place were created by the residents of the day and if you believe it is worthwhile it is the responsibility of today's residents to ensure that it continues.

For the SUZ2 download: http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/nillumbik/ordinance/37_01s02_nill.pdf

Nillumbik: 9433 3111 OR email nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

BICA: 9712 0648 OR bica@rabbit.com.au OR BICA c/o Post Office Kangaroo Ground 3097

COVENANTS AND NET GAIN

Alan Bonny

The Victorian Government has adopted a policy of achieving a net gain of native vegetation. Developers are required to seek a suitable offset that will compensate for vegetation and habitat losses. The offset can be secured outside the impact site on land owned by a third party. Owners of land with a conservation covenant may qualify as a provider of the offset. Trust for Nature believe landowners of covenanted properties should have the opportunity to be rewarded for their conservation management by entering into offset agreements and has recently commenced offering a service to negotiate offset agreements between permit holders and landowners.

In an offset agreement, the landowner makes a commitment to protect and enhance the quality of native vegetation on their land. This obligation is likely to be similar to the commitments already made under a Trust for Nature Conservation Covenant and consistent with the Bend of Islands philosophy however, they may address specific maintenance issues such as weed and pest animal control and any specific obligations will be incorporated into the offset agreement.

In negotiating an offset agreement, Trust for Nature proposes that the developer pay an Offset Fee to the covenantor for entering into the arrangement. This payment recognises the value of the native vegetation achieved through the landowner's past management and protection as well as ongoing obligations to maintain and improve the land through the management plan. The payment amount is based on the quantity and quality of native vegetation used in the offset. Part of this fee will include a payment to Trust for Nature for ongoing management and stewardship of native vegetation. Trust for Nature may also levy other fees on the permit holder depending on the services they are seeking. Trust for Nature is a not-for-profit organisation and money collected from fees will be used to improve the protection and management of native vegetation in Victoria.

Trust for Nature (Victoria) is an independent body corporate created through an Act of the Victorian Parliament (the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*), which seeks to maximise conservation of remnant vegetation and critical habitat in Victoria. The first covenant was registered in 1987 and there are now over 850 covenants registered.

The covenants within the Port Phillip & Westernport region have increased steadily over the last 5 years. In response to this, Trust for Nature has decided to nominate several areas where a cluster of covenants exist to work toward encouraging covenant infill and the creation of group management plans.

An information session with Trust for Nature has been scheduled for 11th April in the Bend of Islands to provide:

An overview of Trust for Nature

Management information

Encourage group information sharing

Provide hands-on assistance

A chance to collect current information for management plans

Current grants and incentives

Discuss possible habitat linkages and corridors

Attempt to link up and work with existing plans and groups

Some residents have indicated an interest in being involved. If you want more information or are interested in attending please register with Cric Henry 9712 0547, Graham Petersen 9712 0071 or Alan Bonny 9712 0648

WHAT'S THAT IN THE POND, DAD?

Mike Pelling

Last month, while relaxing with my daughter on the verandah at home, eagerly looking forward to the next cold beer, I was aware of movement in the garden. It was dusk, the end of a hot day, and the birds had retired for the night so the growing rustling sound was not from them. Nor was it from any possums. I knew this because the Powerful Owl had solved any potential population problem in this area.

Soon we heard the unmistakable sound of motion out of control, “wheelines” in the gravel, but before we could guess what was causing this, a black hairy projectile passed us, fully airborne. With immaculate navigation it disappeared into my newly constructed fiberglass pond. This masterpiece of free form expression was obviously well known to this thing, in terms of the water depth and the absence of any snags or indeed weeds, because it just lay there alternatively swimming and drinking. I was quietly proud that nature knew, without any Occupational Health and Safety or Council guidance, that this was a safe environment.

Within five minutes the mission was complete, thirst satisfied and the body cooled, it was back to the bush again. It was of course, our friend, Chloe the wallaby.

March 2008

ELECTORAL DETERMINATION REVIEW

Alan Bonny

This process started in January and is ongoing. There have been information sessions and information has been distributed widely. Preliminary submissions have been made and the next steps are:

Tuesday April 1st 2008: Release of Preliminary Report.

This report will contain a series of different models for the electoral structure of the Shire of Nillumbik.

Wednesday 23rd April 2008

Closing date for response submissions on the Preliminary Report

Any person or group, including the Council, may make a response to the VEC about the Preliminary Report. This is your chance to present any additional arguments regarding which of the VEC's models you believe best represents the voters of the Shire of Nillumbik

Wednesday 30th April 2008. 6.30 pm.

Public hearing at Edendale Farm for submitters to speak in support of their submissions

Monday 19th May 2008.

Final Report

The VEC prepares a Final Report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government. The Minister for Local Government considers the VEC's recommendations and may make a determination. Any determination will take effect at the next Council election.

MANAGING FOR WILDFIRE ON A BUSH BLOCK

Part of the Nillumbik Environmental Events program this event will be in the Bend of Islands at our Fire Shed in Catani but you MUST book.

It's an information session and site tour looking at managing native vegetation for wildfire. This session is suitable for people interested in maintaining bushland as well as protecting their house and assets from wildfire. Please bring your own lunch; morning tea will be provided. Some bushwalking involved. Please wear suitable clothing and sturdy footwear.

Date: Sunday 20th April: Time: 10am-2pm

Cost: Free: Venue: CFA Christmas Hills South Fire Station.

Bookings: Megan Frye on 9433 3210

CAN YOU EVER ESCAPE?

Janet Mattiske

Since our retirement from full time work, Frank and I have had the luxury of taking an annual trip into our wonderful Australian outback for an extended period of time over the winter months. We claim that we are escaping the blues of the Melbourne Winter, the hassles of turning up to BICA meetings, of writing submissions, of going to Coop work parties and some of the demands of our other interests.

In our travels we do find much to stimulate our minds and our imagination. New birds to find, butterflies to photograph, wildflowers, different vegetation, new landscapes, wide expanses of gibber plains, the tropical forests, the mountains, the rocky outcrops, the outback people and their enormous station holdings, the distance, the clear skies, sunsets and just so much more.

A couple of trips ago we were driving on a fairly unexciting stretch of road, north of Wilcannia in North West New South Wales, somewhere close to the Queensland border. It was a slow roughish road, with a bit of scrubby vegetation here and there but with no sign of life, not even a bird or another car to break the feeling of distance and isolation. It was still too early to stop for lunch but we needed something to break a somewhat boring section of the drive. Conversation had lapsed. Perhaps some music? What about the radio for a change? Often we are out of range and cannot get a signal. We gave it a go and soon the crackle gave way to a cheery, husky woman's voice, just so warm and familiar. It was Sheila! It was Radio National and it was five minutes to twelve! Sheila was talking about the river, the sound of the birds, the local people, laughter, the children, the Fire Brigade coming to visit her, the Coffee mornings at the Fire Station, Wolfgang, the wonderful community, always ready to help if in need, what a wonderful place to live----the Bend of Islands!

We were spellbound. We glanced at each other; the tears were running down our faces!

Sheila had penetrated our isolation and our "escape".

Were we homesick, we asked?

Not really-just so moved by the voice of a remarkable woman, our dear friend Sheila, who, with simple words, could evoke so clearly in our minds- the sense of place, the place we both love and share with her as home.

For Sheila: a very special lady

BECOMING A SOLAR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Tom Fisher

Wondering what else we can do to reduce carbon emissions? The Solar Neighbourhoods Project may provide the opportunity to act as a community to do so, while saving money in the medium to long term.

BICA recently has become aware of the Solar Neighbourhoods Project and would like to gauge the level of interest in the Bend. The information below is taken directly from the Beyond Building website and would require checking and appraisal before we take any action. So, at this point BICA is not endorsing the scheme but just testing community reaction to see whether it is worth taking the next step.

The Solar Neighbourhoods Project 'supports neighbourhoods to go solar, by bringing dramatic cost savings when 50 homes within a couple of minutes of each other commit to installing solar power'. It is made possible by 'buying in large volumes, shipping by the container, installing a whole neighbourhood at once, and utilising the government rebate and the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)'. The government rebate is available only to owner occupiers. Further information on the scheme can be found at www.greenhouse.gov.au.

'Beyond Building Energy is a division of Beyond Building Systems Pty Ltd, which is an international team of engineers, environmental planners, architects and business people.' It has already raised its initial price from \$500 to \$895.

Beyond Building states that it 'cannot install on asbestos roofs, or south facing aspects' but offers 'other options such as wall or ground mounting'. It supplies

'1000 watts (e.g. five 200 kW or six 170kW) of panels ... mounted in an adjustable frame. The panels come with a 25 year performance warranty and have a life expectancy of 35 to 40 years. A grid tie inverter matched to the panels will be supplied and complies with the Australian standard AS4777. The inverter comes with a 5 year warranty.'

The 1kW system is said to produce 'approximately 1460 kWh of electricity over the year', and Beyond Building calculates that 'the system will deliver savings of over \$200 per year, about a 1/4 to a 1/3 of [average] household energy needs,' based on an estimated cost of 15c/kWh. Furthermore, it estimates that 'each neighbourhood saves 50 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year'.

For further information visit the website: www.beyondbuildingenergy.com.

If you are interested in learning more about the Solar Neighbourhood project, please contact Rudi Pauli at rumetpa@yahoo.com or by phone on 9712-0470.

BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following can be reported since last November.

Lyrebirds- The following records have been reported recently:-

10/02/08	R West	At 8am saw 2 birds cross Henley Rd near 606
10/02/08	S Parris	At 8.15pm saw 1 bird west of house
11/02/08	M Petersen	At 6am heard 1 bird north of house
11/02/08	M Petersen	At 8am heard 1 bird south of house
11/02/08	J McCallum	From 8.45am onwards heard 1 bird north of house
17/02/08	J McCallum	At 8.30am heard 1 bird north of house
17/02/08	J Taylor	In 'am heard 1 bird from house
23/02/08	M Krause	At 6.40am heard 1 bird from house
25/02/08	R Appleton	At 8.15am saw 1 bird (f) cross Henley Rd near Snell's
25/02/08	R Appleton	At 8.10pm heard 1 bird west of 606 Henley Rd
1/03/08	C Bonny	At 9.40am heard 1 bird north of house
5/03/08	F Pierce	At 8.30 to 9.30 am saw male at Stevensons Ck N of Coop
16/03/08	F Pierce	At 8.30 am saw male S of Sugarloaf Hill NE of Coop
21/03/08	J McCallum	At 9am heard 1 bird north of house

These are all valuable records. Rob Appleton's sighting on the road near Barb Snell's is the first record near Watsons Creek in the extreme west of the ELZ. A week later the Bonnys heard a bird at their house in the extreme South-east of the ELZ. These records indicate that the birds are spreading out (hopefully due to an increase in numbers) and this is worth monitoring.

On 5/03/08 I heard the bird making an Eastern Whipbird call.

Please pass on details of any 'encounters' you are lucky enough to have with these iconic birds.

Other Interesting Observations reported include:-

Peter Gurney has seen Crested Pigeons in Oxley Rd on a number of occasions in late 2007 and Gavin Masters recently recorded them in Gongflers Drive. These are the first records of this species in the ELZ. They have been moving into areas around Melbourne over the last 20 odd years and have been seen in Kangaroo Ground over the last few years.

King Parrots have been seen at numerous houses all around the area. The birds seem quite tame so they may be escapees or wild birds that have become used to being fed. It is best not to feed them.

On the January bird walk we saw a pair of Coots raising 2 small chicks on the big dam on Yanakie.

On the February bird walk we saw Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets and a Weebill at the east end of Henley Rd.

March 2008

Revised bird list for the ELZ:-

Attached to this Newsletter is a new ELZ Bird List. This has been revised for the new Australian List which was published in January 2008 (Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds by Christidis and Boles).

I've taken this opportunity to remove birds that have not been recorded in the last 25 years and to also add vagrants recorded in the ELZ in the last 25 years.

Vagrants (seen twice or less in last 25 years) are shown in Italics.

This list is useful for recording the birds seen each month at your house or throughout the area.

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings, especially Lyrebirds, that you make and pass them on to Frank Pierce (97120237, email fpandim@netspace.net.au) or Ross Henry (9712 0547).

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

YOUR COMMITTEE FOR 2008

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	
John McCallum (Editor)	9712 0319

There is a vacancy on the Committee and we also need a new Landcare Coordinator. if you are interested please contact any of the committee.

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

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