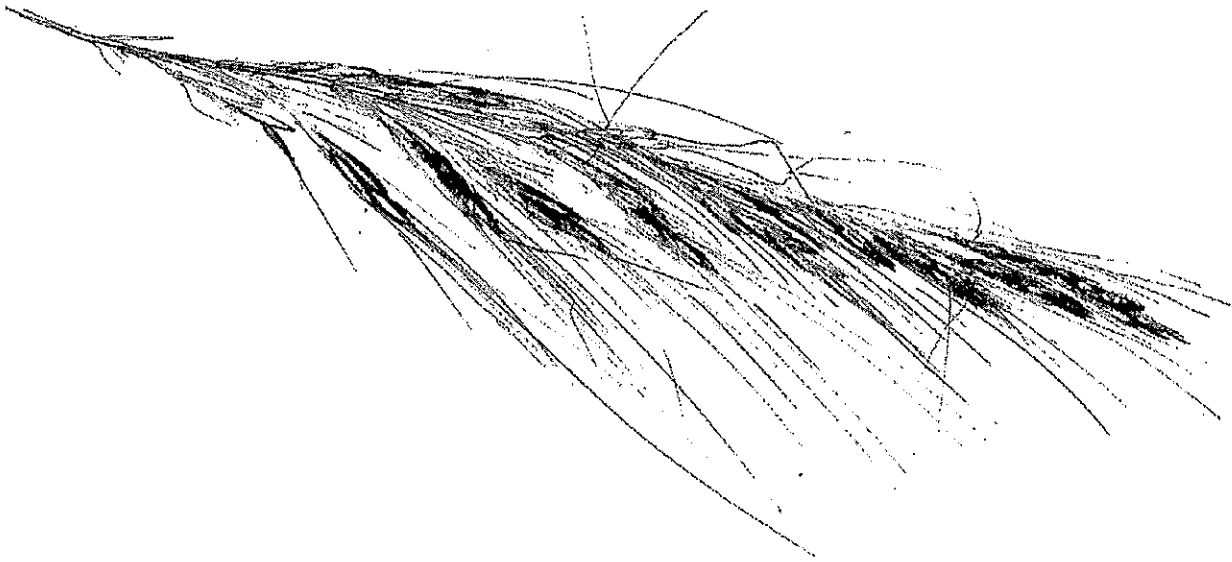


BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC NEWSLETTER

President: Neil Harvey 9712 0462, C/- PO Kangaroo Ground, Vic 3097 Editor: John McCallum 9712 0319

Number 73 December 2008

WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?



Botanical name: *Austrostipa rudis subsp. rudis*

Common name: Veined Spear Grass

Family: Poaceae

Flowering Period: December to February

A tufted perennial grass 40 cm high by 40 cm wide, with flowering stems to 1.2 m high. The erect, inrolled leaves are bright green, slightly woolly and rough on the outside.

The tall flowering stem bears a graceful panicle (a branched inflorescence) of many long-awned spikelets. The panicles are large and very ornamental, up to 50 cm long, graceful, loose, and shiny. The panicles are made up of many single stalked, one flowered spikelets, 8 – 15 mm long, consisting of 2 glume or bracts at the base with a terminal awn, 2 – 6 cm long. The awn is a bristle like appendage on the seed of the grass, which twists and is twice bent as the seed ripens.

Prefers moist, well drained soils and semi shade. Accepts poor drainage, summer dryness, full sun and full shade.

Provides food for grazing animals and seed eating birds.

Propagate by seed or division.

We have 4 species of spear grass in the Bend of Islands, with 200 species occurring in the Melbourne area. Be careful not to confuse them with the introduced Chilean Needle Grass, which appear very similar, being a tussock perennial grass in the spear grass group of grasses, and is a serious environmental weed. To confirm the grass identification contact Department of Primary Industry, the Shire of Nillumbik or look on their websites.

CRIC HENRY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Carol Bonny

This is the report that I gave at the BICA Annual General Meeting on 30th November 2008:

As I have advised in recent NewsSheets, I will not be participating in next year's BICA Committee. After 16 years on committee it's time to let others have a go. It sounds like we are going to disappear and not be involved in BICA but we will be here, and we look forward to joining in activities and events. We also intend to continue with Planning and Property sub-committees for a while.

This year there have been lots of new folk in the Bend and some sad losses. You will probably have heard that Joyce Harriss passed away earlier this Month. Joyce and her husband Ernie were very long term residents in the Bend.

With BICA it's always a busy year for us and this year has been no exception. Our Committee met monthly except for September, time off for good behavior. Mid year Liz Mildenhall was co-opted and Alan stood down as Secretary. We had lots of fun keeping BICA ticking with the bonus suppers after meetings.

Other reports will give more details but the 2008 year contained lots of diverse activity. We had two general meetings this year and this AGM. All were well attended with interesting guest speakers and accommodating hosts.

Monthly Landcare, Flora & Fauna surveys, Bird Walks and all the other Calendar events, along with the Fire Brigade Café Benders, always gave us something to do and a chance to catch up with friends and neighbours.

Our Neil Douglas Conservation Reserve plaque-unveiling was an extra event added to the Calendar and I must say a great day thanks to those who made it happen and those who participated.

I step down with a few ongoing issues.

- The introduction of horses to Yanakie on a trial basis. The debates continue and we look forward to the management statement and the opportunity to make comment.
- We have had discussions with Nillumbik Council regarding vegetation management for fire management and solar power installation.
- There are also unresolved enforcement and planning scheme issues.

I look back on some BICA achievements over the 16 years of our involvement.

- With the local government areas redefined by State Government and Healesville

disappearing we had to decide on which shire would best support the Bend of Islands. BICA made successful representations and we were included as part of Nillumbik. When the new format planning scheme was imposed during the Kennett era there was a lot of effort required by BICA to re-create our zone and have it accepted as the Special Use Zone 2.

- Mount Lofty was finally transferred to Parks Victoria as part of Warrandyte State Park.
- The new format Bend of Islands folder was designed and produced with input from many and support from Nillumbik.
- The Bend of Islands was formally accepted as an official place name at the instigation of BICA.
- Vegetation Management Agreements for the high-tension power line easement through the area were adopted.
- Melbourne Water lands were rationalized and the Yanakie Reserve and the Neil Douglas Conservation Reserve established. The Neil Douglas Conservation reserve took five years from concept to completion. You can't rush some things!
- The resolution of the Heritage golf lands. A long-term project dating back to 1995.
- BICA has also received Landcare Awards. In 1999 the Victorian Bushcare Nature Conservation Award and in 2008 the Port Phillip & Western Port Landcare Award 'Caring for Nature' category.

In 1993 as new residents we were co-opted onto the committee and have been involved in one way or another since then. In 1994 Alan was Vice President and from 1995 to 1998 he was President. In 1999 I was Secretary for a year and in 2001 I became President with Alan as Secretary. We have held these positions since then as well as participating on various sub-committees including Community Involvement, Flora & Fauna, Planning, Landcare and I have been monitoring Property since 1996.

For Alan and myself the BICA Committee has been a major part of our lives for the last 16 years. It is time for a change and time to finish our house and Kombis, and VW trike!

I have never been involved in committees before BICA and it has been a great learning experience as well as a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Finally. Thank you to all my fellow committee members over the past years.

See you 'round

CAROL BONNY

December 2008

GOANNA! Mia Stephens

In the first week of June, coming back from watering for Dylan and Jo (at the end of Henley), we had to stop the car and get out. Across half the road was a big, long, fat, dark goanna. First it moved slowly and then scrambled up a tree with its tongue licking in and out, in and out. It was slipping down, taking bark with it, from its sheer size.

We had the camera in the car. Battery flat. Ben crying. "Gotta get the baby to sleep."

Sometimes crying clouds your brain. In hindsight, I should have called Frank or John, or someone, straight away. After I rang, they went down, but it was gone. I don't think they've forgiven me yet, but the main thing is that goannas are here in our midst – those big dinosaurs of things.

MORE GOANNAS! John McCallum

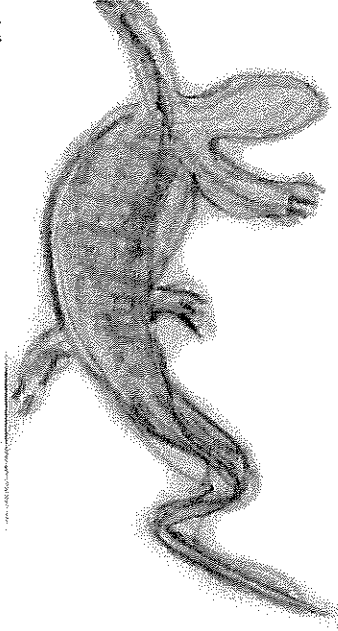
In the early 1970s when we first moved into the area a local resident told me he saw goannas on his property (now Wendy Donald's place). I was a little sceptical but he was a "bushy" and was unlikely to mistake something else for a goanna. A few years later Digby Gotts (Digby and Alison used to own Janet Mattiske's place) reported seeing a goanna, I think on the Warrandyte-KG Road. Digby is a zoologist so this was a good report.

In about 1982 I saw one of these fantastic reptiles on Henley Road, just near where Robyn and Noel now live, at about 4.00 PM. It was quite a large one and, as they do, scuttled up a tree as we approached. We (my kids and I) were able to get a good look at it but, alas, no photo. I wasn't in the habit of taking my camera on the school pick-up run!

At about that time (1980s) Harold Muir from Christmas Hills reported that they used to be quite common there "earlier on" and another acquaintance told me that they were quite common in St Andrews/Smith's Gully.

Adult goannas can travel long distances in short times and the young are arboreal, eating mainly invertebrates until they can fend for themselves on the ground. This might help to explain why they might not be seen that often, even though they are in the general area.

Thanks Mia and Graham! You have lent substance to a report at which some people have been known to raise an eyebrow!



SIGNS

Carol Bonny

Do you ever wonder about the BICA signs that magically appear on the post? Wolfgang is the one responsible. He keeps an eye on the calendar and makes sure that the sign appears a week before an event and then disappears as soon as possible afterwards.

Over the years we have had a variety of cleverly slapped together signs, texta on cardboard usually patched together at the last minute.

Our current system starts with Wolfgang preparing the boards, painting them white and handing them over to Jeff to do his eye-catching sign writing as required. This is usually done months in advance so there is no last minute rush and we now have a collection of permanent signs to choose from.

Occasionally in an emergency or for special events others spring into action. Thanks to Neil for the many signs for the Duggo day.

Thanks to Wolfgang and our past and present volunteer sign writers for keeping us well informed.

LAND CARE AWARD TO BICA!

On Saturday 6 September 2008 Port Phillip & Western Port Landcare Awards the 'Caring for Nature' category was won by BICA.

The 11 award winners were announced at the Awards Celebration at ZINC in Federation Square. Nillumbik was well represented with two winners from three nominations and by local celebrity Kerry Armstrong who officiated as Master of Ceremonies. The winners each received a framed certificate and a cash prize of \$400 and we will be looking for a suitable project to use the money constructively. Any ideas?

ARE YOU UP TO DATE?

Don't forget your BICA sub for the current year. We don't have a large income base apart from members annual subscriptions and we depend on this for most of our expenditure.

Your membership also keeps the organisation strong in its capacity as a voice for conservation, particularly in the maintenance of the ELZ.

Thank you to all contributors to this issue of BICA Newsletter. We ran out of space and had to hold one or two articles over until the next edition. That doesn't happen very often!

SOLAR POWER IN THE BEND: AN UPDATE

Liz and Peter Mildenhall

There has been intermittent progress in the quest by a number of households in the Bend to get into solar power. The \$8000 Federal rebate available to those under a \$100,000 combined income spurred a lot of interest however the recent financial crisis and drop in the value of the Australian dollar has meant some delays and increases in prices. It also became apparent that many households were either unsuitable or compromised because of their building design and/or significant shading issues. This meant that the system was not viable.

Some households are going with Rezeko and a Solar 'mini-neighbourhood' and others are going with Eco-Smart. Some are still interested if the shading issues can be resolved in such a way that retains the environmental values of the Bend, meets the current Shire Special Use Zone (SUZ) guidelines and provides sufficient sunlight to make the solar system viable...at times this will be a difficult juggling act!

A positive meeting has been held recently with the Shire of Nillumbik in regard to solar power and shading issues. Firstly it is apparent that the SUZ requirements mean that all those wanting to install a solar power system need to fill in a planning application to obtain permission to do so. Hopefully this process should be relatively straight forward and members of the solar power sub-c'tee of BICA are going to pilot this process as soon as possible.

Secondly for those properties with shading issues that need to be addressed, the Shire will organise, through the sub-c'tee, appointments for the shire arborist, and a shire planner to inspect each property. Either the owner or installer would be present to indicate which vegetation needed lopping/removal. Hopefully these visits will be co-ordinated over a couple of days. The arborist would make decisions according to significant impact on individual properties, the aesthetics & health of trees. It has been indicated that the shire will look toward a flexible and supportive approach.

In those cases with shading issues, the planning permit would also include a site plan to show extent of vegetation that would be affected (species to be named) & if appropriate compensatory planting. For properties where compensatory planting is inappropriate BICA would be involved in finding alternative planting sites.

We are hopeful of positive outcomes for all those involved and hopefully we will also pave the way for future solar power installations in the Bend. The sub-c'tee would like to acknowledge the hard work and support of Alan Bonny who co-ordinated a lot of the early work in putting our solar 'neighbourhood' together.

If you have any queries, suggestions and or follow up please contact one of the members.

BICA Solar Power Sub committee

Rudi Pauli rumetpa@yahoo.com or 9712 0470t

Liz and Peter Mildenhall or 9712 0577 mildenhall2@bigpond.com

Ross and Cric Henry r.c.henry@bigbond.com or 9712 0547

BICA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 30 NOVEMBER 2008

Alan Bonny

For those who didn't make it to the Curl residence, just a short summary of the event.

Pleasant weather, good food and company were enjoyed prior to the meeting at the BYO BBQ thanks to our hosts Brooke and Arthur.

The meeting commenced at about 2 pm with the usual formalities. These were followed by comprehensive reports from the office bearers and activity groups. President, Treasurer and subcommittees reviewed the 2008 year followed by the sub committees.

The main business of AGM is the election of committee for the next 12 months.

Retiring members were thanked, Carol Bonny, Janet Mattiske, Alan Bonny, Cric Henry and Barb Whiter, each with up to 16 consecutive years participation.

Neil Harvey has volunteered as President for next year with Liz Mildenhall as our Vice President. Committee members continuing from last year are Tom Fisher, Val Himmereich, Rudi Pauli, Michael Pelling and Graham Petersen who are joined by Gavin Masters, Luke Doyle and Peter Rae. Its great to see some new faces on the committee and also encouraging to have some of our newer residents participating. Congratulations to all on their election and thanks for volunteering.

Guest speaker was a return of Alan Webster from the Department of Sustainability and Environment who gave a presentation on Owls in the Christmas Hills region. His talk was illustrated with some great slides of owls including some of Steve Craig banding Powerful Owl chicks.

40 signed the attendance sheet with a host of children also present.

A copy of reports tabled at the AGM are available to BICA members on request 9712 0648 or email bica@rabbit.com.au

MARBLLED GECKO

Frank Pierce

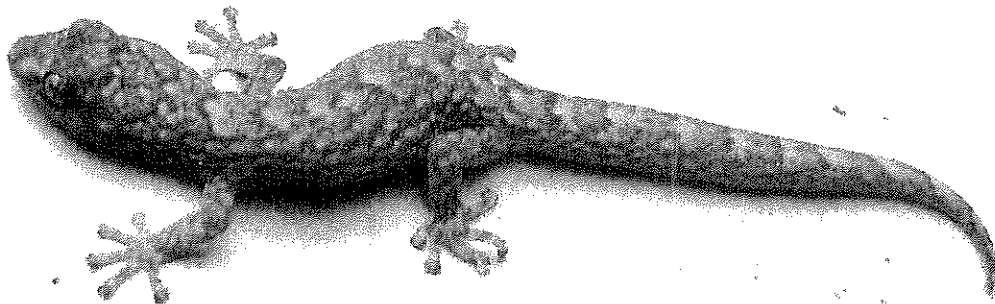
In early November, while cleaning up a stack of old bricks, I found a Marbled Gecko *Christinus marmoratus*. In fact I'd seen it a couple of weeks earlier at the brick pile, but it disappeared while I ran in to get my camera. This time I had my camera ready before moving the bricks.

The museumvictoria website (Google Marbled Gecko) gives a comprehensive rundown on them and advises as follows: Marbled Geckos are the only geckos that are found in Melbourne. It is unknown whether this species originally occurred in the area; it is possible that they were unintentionally introduced to the city by people bringing in firewood and garden rocks from other parts of Victoria.

These critters are not mentioned in the ELZ Publication Fauna lists and I didn't know if they had been recorded in the ELZ before. So I sent out an email, with some photos, asking for feedback.

This has done the rounds of the local cyberspace and there have been a number of previous encounters, often seemingly related to firewood.

In '82 Duggo found one in a pile of firewood that had been delivered from the Grampians. Ona Henderson has photos of this which has inspired a number of her paintings.



SUZ2 AND YOU

Alan Bonny

As a BICA committee member, residents have often contacted me with concerns about contraventions of the zone provisions including inappropriate planting, vegetation removal and domestic pets.

My advice is that if a resident is not conforming with the zone provisions the first option is a direct contact to request SUZ2 conformance.

If this is not appropriate, or does not achieve a satisfactory outcome, then the Nillumbik Council must be involved. The council is the responsible authority to enforce the planning scheme. When you make a report keep a record including time, date and with whom you spoke. Request to be advised of the outcome. Council must deal with your report in full confidentiality.

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 your neighbours who are here because of the zoning and what it provides.

Most of us chose to purchase our homes in the Bend of Islands long after the Zoning was introduced.

It is the purchaser's responsibility to ensure they buy what they want and if they make a mistake, they will have to live with it and comply with the requirements, or consider moving to an area that provides what they want.

BICA tries to inform everyone about the zoning requirements by providing the Information Folder and by information articles such as this, but ultimately it is your responsibility as a resident or owner to know what you can and can't 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 the council or BICA.

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

To contact Nillumbik Council: Phone 9433 3111 or for BICA. 9712 0648 or bica@rabbit.com.au

Thanks Frank Pierce, Carol and Alan Bonny for photos, Graham Peterson for the goanna drawing. Sorry the goanna article and pic were accidentally left out of BICA News 72!

JMcC

PUB WALK 2008

Carol Bonny

The weather was a bit warmer than anticipated so there were a few flushed faces during the Annual Pub Walk on 26th October.

After gathering at the Fire Shed the crew were car pooled to the beginning of Menzies Road where we met up with the Mildenhalls and Henrys who had walked from the Bend. The cars were ferried to the pub and Marie led the way to the KG Cemetery where we were joined by yet another couple of starters and the returning drivers. The walk then began in earnest.

With the annual hard rubbish collection happening a few treasures were collected along the way. Liz loaded her backpack with broken crockery for her mosaic projects and Rudi and Sue collected a vintage toy excavator to later be revamped for young Jarrah to play with.

Flora ID is always a highlight of the walk but while most of the surrounding country was rural in character there were pockets of very good indigenous vegetation along the roadside.

We were probably distracted by the warm weather and the thought of a nice cold beer as



one of our walkers sighted a snake after the rest of us had blindly walked right past it!

All 14 walkers plus one in a backpack safely arrived at the Panton Hill Pub and were joined by seven other Benders to recount the pleasures of the afternoon and partake of that long awaited cool drink and a pleasant dinner. See you on the walk next year?

LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF BICA

Alan Bonny

For Carol and me the memorable highlight of the AGM was receiving BICA Life Membership. Carol's report elsewhere in this edition details our involvement over the last 16 years and I can only repeat her words: "it has been a great learning experience as well as a thoroughly enjoyable time". Thanks to all for the honour and special thanks to Janet for her words and to Neil for presenting the gifts, both much appreciated.

We look forward to more participating and enjoying the Bend of Islands and all it provides.

BABY BENDERS

Carol Bonny

New arrivals for the year were:

Rama to Melissa and Rob

Joshua to Pietra and Chris

Kennedy and Carter to Jodie and Jason

Mackenzie Ivy to Nicole and Andy

Hope I didn't miss anyone, congratulations and welcome to all.

BUTTERFLIES IN THE ELZ

Frank Pierce

On the following two pages is a butterfly list that I have compiled for our area (ELZ Butterfly List).

This has been done with reference to the BICA Publication, the NEROC Report, communication with Fabian Douglas and advice from my old birding mate who is now close to being a butterfly 'expert'.

I have also communicated with all the locals I am aware of that have an interest in Butterflies. I'm sure there are others with an interest and I'd be glad to hear from them.

An excellent field guide was produced by Michael Braby in 2004 and is available from the Eltham Bookshop (an excellent Chrissie present!). This and the availability of long zoom digital cameras have made the world of butterflying accessible to anyone who has an interest in nature.

By optimising the camera settings, and some practice, reasonable photos can be achieved that can then be used to identify the species from the field guide. Just like learning to identify birds, this process becomes easier with experience.

Using this method the butterflies don't need to be captured in a net, the traditional method that can often seriously damage the specimen. There is a catch however; some butterflies spend most of their time high in the tree-tops and are not readily photographed.

This list is a living document and I would welcome feedback from anybody who thinks it can be improved.

It would be useful to build up a data bank of all local sightings each month. Perhaps those interested could use the sheet to record monthly sightings each year. I would be happy to collate these on an annual basis. Once again any feedback is welcome.

'TIS THE SEASON TO ... RECYCLE

Tom Fisher

If Santa brings new computer equipment, resulting in the need for funereal activities for older versions, you might wish to consider recycling the latter. Below is a list I pulled off the web (Author: K. Davies. Updated Sept 2007). I can attest to the Equipment Recycling Network Inc. (ERNI) as being very friendly since I just dropped off a laptop and printer there.

COMPUTERBANK VICTORIA INC

Recycles computers for individuals and community groups.

Located at 483 Victoria St, West Melbourne. Phone number is 9600 9161. Open Fri 10-5pm and Saturday 1-5pm. Other times as arranged. Website is at <http://vic.computerbank.org.au/>

B2C RECYCLERS

Recycles computers for community groups only.

B2C is located at Factory 19, 391 Settlement Rd, Thomastown. Phone number is 9465 6300. Website is at <http://www.b2crecyclers.com.au/>

THE EQUIPMENT RECYCLING NETWORK INC. (ERNI)

ERNI recycle computers and other equipment for people with disabilities. They are open 9am -1pm Tuesday and Thursday.

ERNI is located at 17 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood. Phone is 9879 5211. Website is at <http://www.erni.asn.au/>

ENHANCE IT

Enhance distribute computers to disadvantaged people in the Bendigo and surrounding regions.

Enhance IT is located at 12 Hall St, Eaglehawk. The phone number is 5446 3477. Website is at <http://www.enhanceit.org.au/>

GREEN PC

Green PC sells computers to concession card holders.

Green PC is located at 375 Johnston street in Abbotsford. Phone is 9418 7400. Website is at <http://www.greenpc.com.au/>

Merry consumption!

ELZ BUTTERFLY LIST

Compiled by Frank Pierce

Page	Common Name	Scientific Name	Ref		J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
188	Admiral, Yellow	<i>Vanessa itea</i>														
186	Argus, Meadow	<i>Junonia villida</i>	c													
236	Azure, Broad-margined	<i>Ogyris olane</i>														
240	Azure, Dark Purple	<i>Ogyris aborta</i>	c													
288	Blue, Saltbush	<i>Theclinesthes serpentata serpentata</i>	c													
170	Brown, Banks'	<i>Heteronympha banksii banksii</i>	c													
168	Brown, Common	<i>Heteronympha merope merope</i>	b													
166	Brown, Forest	<i>Argynnia cyrila</i>	c													
168	Brown, Shouldered	<i>Heteronympha penelope penelope</i>														
170	Brown, Spotted	<i>Heteronympha paradelpha</i>	c													
212	Copper, Firey (Eltham)	<i>Paralucia pyrodisens</i>	e													
212	Copper, Bright	<i>Paralucia aurifer</i>	f													
262	Dusky-blue, Varied	<i>Candalides hyacinthina hyacinthina</i>	c			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
174	Emperor, Tailed	<i>Polyura sempronius</i>	d/v													
300	Grass-blue, Common	<i>Zizina labradus labradus</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
94	Grass-dart, Greenish	<i>Ocybadistes walckeri sothis</i>	f		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
92	Grass-dart, White-banded	<i>Taractrotera papyria papyria</i>	f		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
62	Grass-skipper Lilac	<i>Toxidia doubledayi</i>	c					X	X	X	X	X	X			
132	Grass-yellow, Small	<i>Eurema similax</i>	c/v													
244	Hairstreak, Imperial	<i>Jalmenus evagorus evagorus</i>							X	X	X	X	X	X		
226	Jewel, Firey	<i>Hypochrysops ignita ignita</i>	e							X	X					
226	Jewel, Moonlight	<i>Hypochrysops delicia delicia</i>	c						X	X	X	X	X			
222	Jewel, Yellow	<i>Hypochrysops byzos</i>	f							X	X	X				
136	Jezabel, Imperial	<i>Delias harpalyce</i>	b		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
138	Jezebel, Spotted	<i>Delias aganippe</i>	b			X	X	X	X	X						
42	Ochre, Heath	<i>Trapezites phigalia</i>	b/c				X	X	X	X						
42	Ochre, Montane	<i>Trapezites phigalioides</i>	c					X	X	X						
52	Ochre, Orange	<i>Trapezites eliena</i>	b					X	X	X	X	X	X			
52	Ochre, Splendid	<i>Trapezites symmommis soma</i>									X	X	X			
50	Ochre, Yellow	<i>Trapezites lutea lewon</i>	e					X	X	X	X	X	X			

188	Painted Lady, Australian	<i>Vanessa kershawi</i>	b			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
80	Sand-skipper, Heath	<i>Antipodia chaostola chares</i>	b					X	X	X						
72	Sedge-skipper, Flame	<i>Hesperilla idothea idothea</i>	c					X	X	X	X	X	X			
68	Sedge-skipper, Spotted	<i>Hesperilla ornata ornata</i>	c					X	X	X	X					
72	Sedge-skipper, Varied	<i>Hesperilla donnysa donnysa</i>	b/c				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
60	Skipper, Barred	<i>Dispar compacta</i>	b								X	X	X	X		
120	Swallowtail, Chequered	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	c/v													
120	Swallowtail, Dainty	<i>Papilio anactus</i>							X	X	X	X	X	X		
148	White, Cabbage	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	i	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
142	White, Caper	<i>Belenois java</i>	b/v													
164	Xenica, Marbled	<i>Geitoneura klugii</i>								X	X	X	X	X		
164	Xenica, Ringed	<i>Geitoneura acantha</i>	b							X	X	X	X	X	X	
162	Xenica, Silver	<i>Oreixenica lathoniella herceus</i>	c									X	X	X	X	

Notes

Page=Page No. in Braby 2004

Bold=Seen and photo'ed since 2005

b-listed in ELZ Publication

c-listed in NEROC Report

d-reported by Fabian Douglas

e-possible endangered species worth looking for

f-Also likely - worth looking for

i-introduced

v-vagrant

X=Flight Period as per Braby 2004

TURTLE

Carol Bonny

Some time ago I wrote about the Longneck Turtle that was living in our dam, or as I like to call it, our wetland. Recently on a warm late arvo visit I was sitting and enjoying the chorus of frog calls when our resident turtle floated to the surface. Wonderful, he is still here I thought. I was enjoying the effortless way it was gliding slowly around the tannin stained water when another popped to the surface! Two, we have a pair!

I watched them for some minutes until both slowly disappeared into the depths. Soon after, up popped what I think was a smaller turtle. So now I can confirm two, and possibly even three, Longneck Turtles in our flourishing wetland.

Hope they don't eat all our frogs, I just love the Pobblebonk's bell-like song combined with the chatter of our other resident frogs.

Note: It is generally reckoned that populations of Eastern Long-necked turtles (*Chelodinia longicollis*) south of the Great Dividing Range (e.g., in the Yarra River system and at Tower Hill) have been introduced. JM



BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following can be reported since last March.

Lyrebirds- The following records have been reported recently:-

5/4/08	N Kamminga	At 5.43pm saw pair crossing near 1220 Skyline Rd Nth
14/4/08	M Zentgraf	At 4pm saw 1 bird crossing near Strain's on Henley Rd East
16/5/08	F Pierce	At 7am heard at Stevensons Ck n of Coop
22/7/08	E Mainka	At 4pm heard 1 ne of Gate 3 of Sugarloaf
29/10/08	T Millington	At evening saw 1 (f?) at house
30/10/08	F Pierce	At 11am heard s of Skyline Rd at Lightning Ridge
9/11/08	G Masters	At 9am heard 1 bird south of house

These are all valuable records.

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

Other Interesting Observations reported include:-

Two pairs of Powerful Owls were observed roosting with recently fledged young on September/October this year.

Flocks of White-browed Woodswallows were seen flying high over the Co-op by FP on 29 & 30/10/08. One flock had 50+ birds. (There were also 'suspected sightings' by Gavin and Mal on 11 & 12/10/08 at Gongflers Peninsula). This is a new bird record for the ELZ.

A pair of White-winged Trillers was seen by Gavin Masters and Mal Chickson at their house by the River on Gongflers Peninsula, early on 4/11/08. This is another new bird-record for the ELZ.

A pair of Peregrine Falcons has nested in the old Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest by the river at the base of the escarpment at Marie and Wolfgang Krause's. In late November they were feeding 3 chicks. It is quite common for Peregrines to use old Wedgie's nests. Peregrines were last observed nesting in the area in 2000, when one chick was raised in an old raven's nest on a transmission-line tower on Yanakie.

A pair of Dusky Moorhens has been observed nesting in reeds on the River at Garden Island Bend.

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.

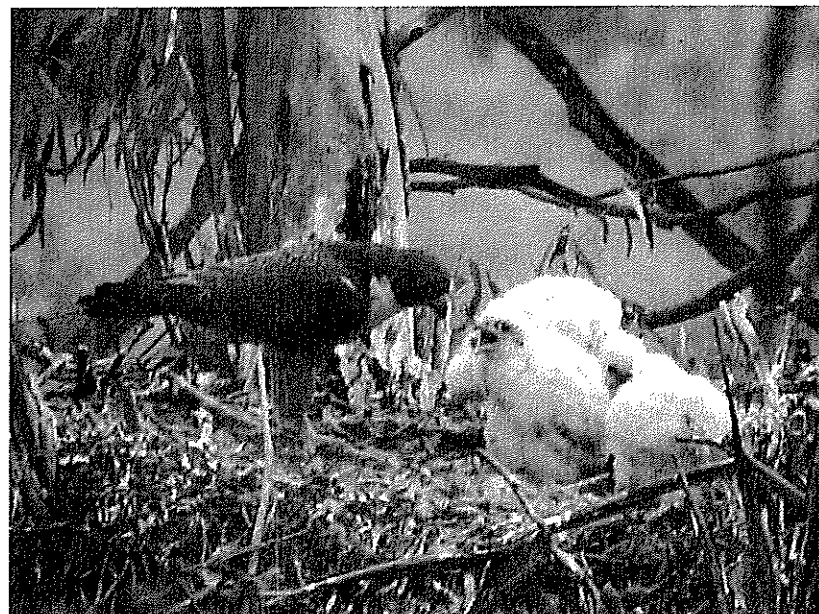
Eastern Rosellas are more numerous than ever this year on the Co-op. At least 2 pairs have hung around for the last 3 months. In previous years a few have turned up in September, looking at potential nest holes, but have apparently been sent on their way by the Crimson.

For the October Birdwalk the regular bird-walkers were joined by many other locals for a ramble down Gongflers, as part of the celebration of the Duggo Reserve. With so many it was pretty hard to stalk any birds but when we all stopped and quietly listened, many bird calls were identified and some good birds, such as a Pallid Cuckoo, showed themselves nicely.

On the November Birdwalk we found a dead White-throated Nightjar on a ridge just east of the Coop. Possibly killed by an owl or raptor (but could have been a fox or cat). The Nightjars have been particularly active and vocal at night this year and it is good to know that there are several in the area. The first calls were heard this year on 16/10/08 which is about the usual time for their return from the winter holidays up north. They usually stay around until late March. (We also heard a Lyrebird on this walk.)

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.



BICA COMMITTEE 2008 - 2009

Tom Fisher

Winds of Change and Rays of Sunshine: The New Look BICA Committee

The winds of change have been blowing in the Bend of Islands. The Committee is now in mourning, bereft of those who have done most of the hard slogging over the past decade and more. This year the following members have retired: Carol Bonny, President; Janet Mattiske, Vice-President; Alan Bonny, Secretary; Cric Henry, long-time co-coordinator of the Flora and Fauna Sub-Committee; and Barb Whiter, coordinator of the Community Involvement Sub-Committee.

Rays of sunshine, however, have appeared with the inclusion of new members Liz Mildenhall (who joined in mid-year), Luke Doyle, Gavin Masters, and Peter Rae. After hotly contested elections, Neil Harvey had his arm twisted to take on the onerous duties of President (second in power only to that other newly elected President, Barack Obama), and Liz Mildenhall assumes the office of Vice-President.

At the first meeting of the new Committee, Neil also agreed to carry on in the role of Treasurer (not unlike combining John Howard and Peter Costello in one, to switch metaphors). The post of Secretary is undergoing scrutiny and possible sub-division (in the spirit of what soon will be happening in Nillumbik under the new Council) since no one individual's feet are large enough to fill the boots previously worn by Alan Bonny. Tom Fisher will continue in his committee cat-herding duties as Minutes Secretary.

Much of the Committee's work is carried out by sub-committees. At the moment the initial rush to take up positions has resulted in the allocations below (some as yet unconfirmed). Further volunteers are encouraged from the membership and will be warmly welcomed.

Flora & Fauna: Graham Petersen, Gavin Masters, Cric Henry, Dylan Osler

Planning: Peter Rae, Alan Bonny, Janet Mattiske, Robyn Duff

Power lines: Frank Pierce, Neil Taylor

Community Involvement: Rudi Pauli, Val Himmelreich, Trish Millington

Land sales: Liz Mildenhall

Newsletter: John McCallum, Val Himmelreich, Michael Pelling

Landcare: Luke Doyle and Mia Bullen, Wolfgang Krause, Peter Gurney

Climate Change Action: Rudi Pauli, Liz Mildenhall, Peter Mildenhall, Ross Henry, Jessica Rae

Neil Douglas Reserve: BICA Comm, Cric Henry

Council groups

Environment Advisory Committee: Janet Mattiske

Green Wedge Management Advisory Group: Janet Mattiske

Recreational Trails Advisory Committee: Michael Pelling

If you're interested in helping out in any of these areas, please ring Tom Fisher on 9712-0451 (when the phone is working, which hasn't been often lately).

DUGGO DAY

Alan Bonny

In the November NewsSheet I touched on the event to unveil the commemorative plaque at the Neil Douglas Conservation Reserve. This concludes a long process to achieve the Neil Douglas Conservation Reserve.

The Reserve was officially proclaimed in November 2005 by the then Minister for the Environment, John Thwaites, as a conservation sanctuary to protect the indigenous flora and fauna. BICA has been appointed as the Committee of Management.

On Sunday 12 October 2008 about 100 members of the Bend of Islands community and friends were joined by the Member for Yan Yean, Danielle Green, and Nillumbik Mayor, Warwick Leeson, for a full mornings activities.

The early birds gathered at 8am for a "Breakfast with the Birds" arriving at the reserve for a breakfast of fresh fruit, croissants and coffee prepared and served by the Henrys. A few of us snuck in and enjoyed the breakfast until everyone arrived for the unveiling.

BICA President Carol Bonny introduced Warrick Leeson who presented the Nillumbik Shire Council Civic Statement acknowledging the Wurundjeri.

Carol then gave a brief outline of the inspiration and history of the reserve then introduced Danielle Green who complimented BICA on achieving the reserve. Danielle, Warwick and Carol then shared the task of cutting the ribbon and unveiling the long-awaited plaque.

We then all made our way back to the fire shed for the usual gourmet morning tea organized and coordinated by Janet Mattiske.

Thanks to all who participated, our special guests Danielle and Warwick, and congratulations to all who made it work so well. If you didn't get there you missed a great morning.

TWINS!

This story is a very brief summary of a detailed technical paper published in *The Victorian Naturalist* 124 (6), 2007, 332-340 by Frank Pierce, Janet Mattiske and Peter Menkhorst

Little did we realise that when we found an echidna nursery burrow close to our house in early November 2007 we would be treated to a totally unique experience over the following months.

We live off Skyline Road on the Round the Bend Conservation Cooperative where our wildlife is protected by an enlightened planning concept, Special Use, Environmental Living. The zoning prohibits the keeping of dogs, cats or any other domestic or farm animals. The eucalypt woodland with its understorey of native herbs, grasses and shrubs has no fences and echidna sightings are not uncommon; they are frequently seen on hot summer days drinking and bathing in our garden ponds.

Our echidna nursery burrow was just 4 metres from the house, tucked away behind a sleeper wall that retained the upper level of a 3-level terraced garden. The echidna Mum, whom we named 'M', would enter the burrow by digging under the sleeper wall from the second level.

But M's choice of sites wasn't ideal. Although the gravel surface above the burrow had formed a hard crust it wasn't all that stable and over the weeks there were a number of small cave-ins creating holes in the burrow. It was through one of these holes that Frank first sighted a juvenile echidna. He placed a sheet of chipboard over the hole to protect its inhabitant but more sheets had to be added as more holes appeared and eventually the covering was upgraded to a steel plate.

We set up our watch and observed M coming back to visit the nursery burrow every 4-5 days. She would take up to an hour to open up the burrow entrance and once inside distinctive 'snuffley' heavy breathing could be heard coming from within as the baby suckled.

Some weeks later, at the end of December, we saw the young echidna outside the burrow being suckled by Mum. Eight days later there was M again, suckling her baby outside the burrow - but on closer inspection we saw that it wasn't the same one! And to confirm what our eyes refused to believe we saw the first baby sheltering about 4 metres away.

M had twins!

A very rare occurrence indeed!. Except for one instance of two eggs being found in a pouch and another of two pouch young there are very few records of more than a single egg being laid by a Short-beaked Echidna let alone twins being raised to maturity.

But these two young echidnas were not identical twins. The first one, whom we named B1, was small with brown fur and had short, buff coloured, spines with dark tips, whereas B2, the second baby, was bigger and blacker and had more spines that were longer and lighter than B1's.

To identify the echidnas in the future, small coloured plastic rings were attached to their spines. Our aim was to minimize interference to the echidnas and to enable observation of natural unaffected behaviours. This was the only time the echidnas were handled.

Over the next couple of months the monotreme trio continued to astound us by breaking all the rules.

Scientists have long observed that young echidnas are abandoned by their mothers once they have had that first suckle outside the burrow. And yet M continued to suckle B1 and B2 up to 60 days after they had 'come out'. This was the first ever documentation of such an event.

B1 and B2 grew fast and became more adventurous with each day, travelling just that little bit further away from the garden. They were not early risers seeming to prefer to sleep in each morning until around 11.30 am (daylight saving). Their first activity would be a short 'sun-bath' followed by some active digging and foraging interspersed with an occasional doze under some cover. They were active climbers and very curious about their surroundings. But occasionally it all got too much and they wouldn't emerge from their beds for a couple of days.

The echidna is normally a solitary creature and B1 and B2 would go about their business alone and using different shelter sites at night. Although we did observe, earlier on, the pair share one shelter over several nights. But these serious little creatures never showed any signs of the play behaviour you see amongst most baby mammals. "Passive tolerance", was how we described B1 and B2's relationship.

Over the next two months M would come and go. Sometimes she would forage for hours in the bush around the house and then seemed to suddenly decide it was time to check on her kids and would systematically check the shelters they had used on her previous visit. If they weren't there she would proceed, with great purpose, as if picking up on their scent, until she found one of them. When M approached one of the youngsters it appeared to freeze. M would prod it with her nose until it realised there could be a meal in the offing, and started feeding. The feeding would usually take about 40 minutes after which M would rest for about 15 minutes and then head off. After a feed the youngsters would sometimes get a real burst of energy but at other times they would head for bed and put their feet up.

Young echidnas feed by sucking milk from one of two milk patches called areolae located inside the pouch - there are no teats. The milk is rich in fats and a young echidna can

imbibe up to 40% of its body weight in a single feeding session lasting up to one hour.

There did not seem to be any obvious feeding pattern with M and the length of time between each observed feeding event ranged from 4 to 22 days. However it is almost certain that other feeding events occurred that we didn't see. M could move incredibly swiftly and it would be reasonable to assume that we probably missed at least half of the feedings. M only appeared to feed one youngster per visit although on one rare occasion she was actually seen suckling both youngsters at once - quite a feat!

Then in March the feedings suddenly stopped and the threesome disappeared. But the following Spring all three were sighted foraging once again in the area.

Although we have no reason to believe otherwise we were unable to prove that the two young echidnas were siblings and cannot discount the possibility that one of the babies was adopted by the mother. Cases of adoption of pouch young are known to occur in marsupials although it would seem unlikely in a solitary animal like an echidna.

To have had the opportunity to observe these amazing events so close to our house is a testament to the success of the Shire of Nillumbik's Planning Scheme that prohibits domestic pets and maintains the environmental integrity of the area by prohibiting the removal of native vegetation without a permit and restricting the planting of non-indigenous plants to a contained kitchen garden area near each house.

A link to the article in the Victorian Naturalist is on the BICA website home page:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica>

THE TERRAWATT CHALLENGE!

This contribution from Charles Fodor is a summary of an article "Nanotechnology and the Energy Challenge" by Richard Smalley in a book "Nanotechnology" by Lynn E. Foster, Prentice Hall USA 2006.

In it we are urged to look at the "big picture" of ecology, conservation and the environment.

The Terawatt challenge: The use of trillions of watts of electricity is the most important challenge facing humanity. Oil and natural gas are non-renewable resources. The need is for some clean, sustainable, carbon-dioxide free source of energy. For world-wide peace and prosperity it must be cheap.

If the energy problem is solved, many of this list of other major world problems can be solved:

Energy
Water
Food
Environment
Poverty
Terrorism and war
Disease
Education
Democracy
Population

Water is a great problem if you do not have it; we need it in great amounts. We have more water than any other resource but most of it has salt in it and it is often a great distance from where it is needed. We can take the salt from water and pump it to where it is needed if we have the energy

Food availability is going to be an increasing problem. Solving the water problem will help with the food problem but we need energy to harvest and transport the food.

The well-being of the environment is directly related to the way we generate energy, where we get it and how we store it. If energy could be made cheap, abundant and accessible everywhere, its availability could have potentially the greatest impact in solving other problems. Coal, for example is a non-renewable resource and its use creates and perpetuates the problems of global heating and pollution.

Solution?

Everyday a great amount of energy from a nuclear source hits the earth. It is of course solar radiation. This represents a virtually unlimited source of energy but we don't yet know how to harness it cheaply. Why not concentrate our efforts on how to resolve this

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