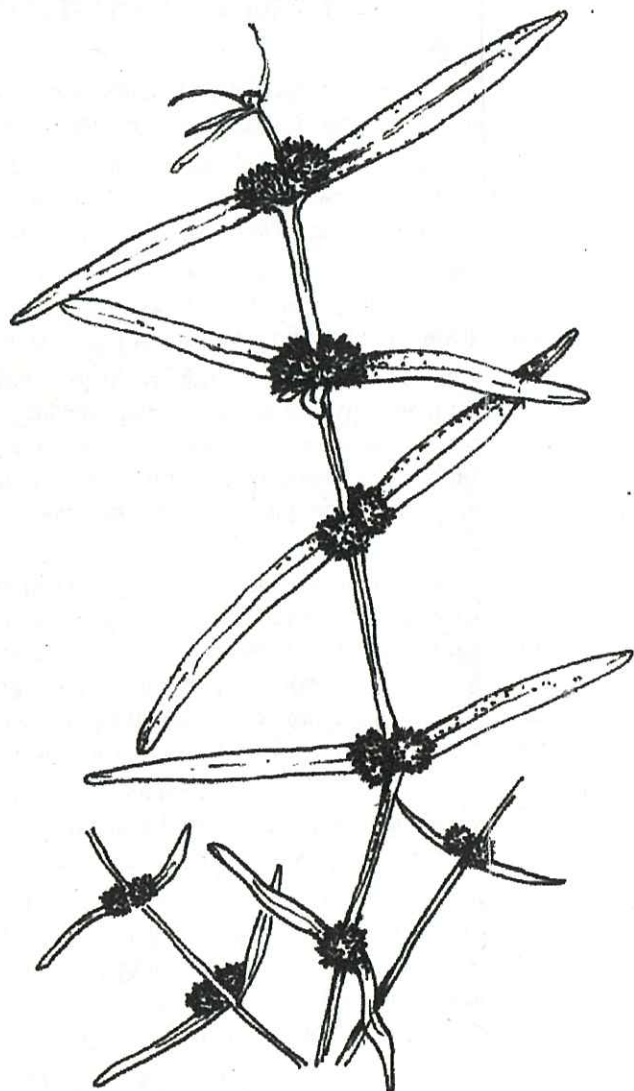


BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC NEWSLETTER

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

Number 74 May 2009



WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Alternanthera denticulata s.s.*

Common name: Lesser Joyweed

Family: Amaranthaceae

Flowering Period: Most of year

Found in moist depressions or on the margins of rivers or ponds in the Bend of Islands.

A cosmopolitan family of herbs and subshrubs with several exotic species especially from South America, potentially being Australia's worst weed of our waterways, e.g. *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (alligator weed). The indigenous species, *Alternanthera denticulata s.s.*, is similar though smaller and less vigorous than the introduced species and is a widespread and common plant found throughout most of Australia.

A trailing annual or perennial herb 15 - 30 cm high x 50 cm wide with stems to 40 cm long. The narrow to oblong leaves 2-6 cm long to 8 mm wide are arranged in pairs. The silvery white flowers, in 4 - 8 mm balls or ovals, consisting of clusters of up to five stalkless globular flowers, at the base of the leaves. The flowers have stiff pointed papery bracts, which are left after the flowers die off, enclosing the single seed

Prefers moist well drained soils in full sun or semi shade. Adaptable to a wide range of soils and climatic conditions, tolerating frost.

The leaves, seeds and flowers of *Alternanthera denticulata s.s.* are a source of food for both butterflies and their larvae.

Propagate from seed or cuttings.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Easter Canoe Regatta was a resounding success with 22 canoes on the river on a beautiful sunny day. Many children participated and all finished with a smile. The BBQ at Luke and Mia's was well attended and thanks go to all who organised the day.

Café Benders has had a steady attendance with the milder weather and the gossip has been at the high standard required to keep us all up to date.

It's sad to see the end of an era with the Gurney's placing their house on the market. It has one of the best views in the Bend. We hope it goes to a good family to continue the tradition. We will miss the evening drinkies on the balcony overlooking the Yarra Valley and the Gurneys with their enthusiastic contributions to the lifestyle and conservation of the Bend.

Our new Committee is now in full swing with members fitting in and contributing on the various sub committees. A submission is being drafted for the Bushfire Commission representing our views on the conservation of the bush with an awareness of fire danger and property protection.

We are in conversation with the Nillumbik Council re the horse access to Yanakie, the recreation trails along the aqueduct and the prior rights register. All are ongoing.

Frank Pierce has continued to negotiate with the SP-Ausnet people about the clearance under powerlines and from correspondence viewed, they seem to be in accord.

Cinema Pompier was attended by a reasonable crowd Sat. 2nd May and all seemed pleased with the movies presented.

NEIL HARVEY

LIFE AFTER THE BICA COMMITTEE

Carol Bonny

The Bonnys are building mud bricks again. Since our retirement from the BICA committee we seem to have a 'little' more time on our hands. Time for that long awaited kitchen me thinks!

Stage four of our abode is in planning and the stainless steel brick moulds have been dirtied with mud once again. With just a few weeks work and a little help from our rellies we have reached the grand total of 251 1/2 beautiful bricks, all

stacked and drying.

With our heads down and bums up it was nice to have a visit from the pair of King Parrots who checked out what we were doing very close up and then took off.

I was a bit apprehensive about how fit, or unfit, we were as it has been a long time since our last bout of brick making but no problems! Maybe it has been all that working out at the gym.

Not sure how many we need for this stage as the draftsman hasn't finalized the count. I figure we are probably 25% there. We are a FEW years behind schedule, but who's counting!

BUSH CREATURES IN THE HEAT

Rosemary West

I was interested in how my critters survived the extreme heat we have had. I coped by spending most of my time lolling about reading. Apart from the reading it seems most of the wild creatures did the same; just lolled about. A wallaby took up residence in the relatively cool area under my house. He seems to have decided this is a splendid spot as he hangs around all the time now. Huge numbers of birds used the two waterers I put out. The variety of birds, both small & large, was fascinating. However it wasn't only the birds that appreciated the water. One day I saw an echidna trundle down my drive and after drinking an amazing amount, he got right into the drinking bowl & had a good splash about. He only just fit and looked very comical. He reminded me of pictures I've seen of Welsh coal miners in hip baths in the past. He also seems to approve of the amenities provided as he too is hanging about. A ringtail possum decided the top of one of my veranda poles was cooler than a tree. However most intriguing was to see the sugar gliders. I have a nesting box with them in residence. One hung his tail out for some time then decided to reverse and poke his nose out, & then the rest of his body. Eventually when he still felt the heat he shot right out in a spectacular dive. Where he ended up I don't know but I suspect that like the wallaby he decided under the house provided some protection. The wild life here is endlessly interesting & I feel for the majority of folk who have to go to Zoos and sanctuaries to observe them.

HELP IMPROVE YANAKIE!

Parks Victoria Invites you to come and get your hands dirty with a tree planting event at Yanakie. Help with re-vegetation work on this section of the Warrandyte State Park on our side of the river. Details are as follows.

When: Sunday July 5th

Where: Yanakie - Confluence of Watsons and Stevenson's Creeks. Access is from the gate at Oxley Bridge.

Time: 10am till 3pm with a BBQ lunch provided

What to bring: Gloves, sturdy boots, drinking water and weather appropriate clothing.

Everyone welcome hope to see you there!

For more Information contact: 9844 2659

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2009

BICA will mark World Environment Day, Sunday 7 June, by offering a tour of local initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. Benders will be offered an opportunity to walk or ride in the comfort of a bus to several houses to see what some members of our community are doing to combat global warming. Possible topics include household power generation, hot water heating, household energy use auditing (which the federal government will be supporting in the second half of the year), sustainable gardening and passive energy-saving house design. The tour will be followed by a picnic at the fire shed

BICA COMMITTEE 2008-2009

Neil Harvey (President and Treasurer)

Gavin Masters (Secretary)

Luke Doyle

Tom Fisher

Val Himmelreich

Liz Mildenhall

Rudi Pauli

Michael Pelling

Graham Petersen

Peter Rae

FROM THE SCHOOL

Greg Bourne

Greg is a long-time supporter of BICA and has been a regular volunteer at ELZ Landcare work parties. He lost his house in Skyline Road on February 7 but had to take up duties as Principal of the Christmas Hills Primary School as the school year began. Here he brings us up-to-date with the activities of the students at this small rural school.

It's been a busy seven weeks at Christmas Hills Primary. We're learning about dinosaurs and the animal kingdom more broadly. The first thing you notice when you walk in the front door is Patty, our life-size 3D model of an apatosaurus. Although she's 15m long and barely fits in the classroom, she's only a baby. A fully grown apatosaurus would be twice as long and eight times as heavy.

There have been a lot of changes this year. We now have a website, electronic whiteboards in each classroom and one computer per student. Our theatre building is complete and the landscaping is beginning. We're putting solar panels on the roof and building a new, more composting toilet block. Our organic garden has survived the summer heat and will soon become part of a larger permaculture project. Our small, multi-age group makes this sort of practical learning ideal.

The fires have had a significant impact on our school with current and former Christmas Hills families losing friends, homes and possessions. The generosity of the Bend of Islands community has been amazing, with people donating everything from clothes to money to accommodation.

While the fires were on, we spent a day at the beach and visited the dinosaur sand sculptures at Dinostory. On Monday 16th we visited Lilydale High School to feed and handle reptiles.

Later this term we're visiting the Melbourne Aquarium. Life has existed in the oceans for much longer than on land so the variety of animals found underwater is phenomenal. We are also visiting Scienceworks and the Planetarium in our final week. We're finishing the term with a community team building day where children, parents and teachers get together in groups to tackle the giant obstacle course at Clifford Park Scout Activity Centre.

Our playgroup has begun in our new theatre building. It runs every Tuesday morning from 9:30 – 11:00. Toys for our playgroup were donated by Windmill Education.

A highlight of this term was our overnight trip to Sovereign Hill. Every child brought back a collection of gold we had found in the creek and we all got to hold the \$100,000 nugget we watched being smelted.

The talking and counselling we've done has certainly played its part in helping the children deal with the fires. However, sharing the fun and challenge of all these activities as a whole school has been the best protective factor against ongoing trauma. Children open up and find they are ready to talk when they feel part of a close, supportive group.

All of these excursions were donated by the organisations themselves or funded by donations from other generous individuals. We are truly grateful for the difference they have made in our children's lives.

We're now looking forward to a more settled second term when we can get properly stuck into our building and renewal projects.

BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following can be reported since last December.

Lyrebirds- The following records have been reported recently (* = corrections from last report):

30/10/08*	F Pierce	At 11am heard Nth of C Track*
9/11/08*	G Masters	9am heard one bird Sth of Lightning Ridge on Blca B'walk*
15/02/09	G Masters	9am heard one bird in gully Nth of Crake Dam on Blca B'walk
23/03/09	J Taylor	7am heard one bird near 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:-

A **Brown Quail** was seen by Ewen Gellie near his house on B Track of the Coop, on 25/01/09. This bird was on the initial 1989 ELZ Bird List, as being possible in the area, but was subsequently removed due to no sightings being recorded.

A **Brush Wattlebird** was seen by Gavin Masters and Mal Chicksen at their house by the River on Gongflers Peninsula, on 31/01/09. This bird was on the initial 1989 ELZ Bird List, as being possible in the area, but was subsequently removed due to no sightings being recorded.

Dylan Osler saw an **Eastern Koel** near the corner of Muir Rd and Skyline Rd (north of the ELZ) in 12/08. This is the 2nd sighting for the area. One was seen in Ashmore Rd in 12/01.

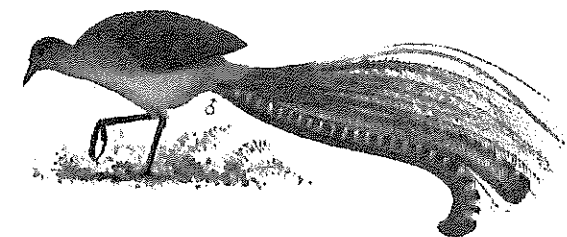
On the **January Birdwalk** we saw a pair of **Coots** raising 2 small chicks on the big dam on Yanakie (a pair raised 2 chicks there last year as well). We also had good prolonged views of a **Spotless Crake**. 51 species were recorded on this walk.

A **Yellow Thornbill** was seen by Gavin Masters and Mal Chicksen at their birdbath on 13/02/09. This bird has not been recorded in the ELZ since the key to identification of Thornbills was published in the BICA newsletter in the late '90s. Most of the previous records, before the ID key, were probably misidentifications, so it is good to have a more positive record for the area.

On 22/2/09 two **Magpies** were seen eating European Wasps at our birdbath - 1 bird took 5 wasps in about a minute.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters returned to the Coop in early May to feed on the flowering Ironbarks, along with 100's of Wattlebirds. A single **Noisy Miner** was also seen in the Ironbarks on the Coop in early May, these are usually only found in more open areas such as at Watsons Creek.

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.



OH, WHAT A NIGHT!

Carol Bonny

The morning of Saturday the 12th March, and our first long awaited rain since Black Saturday. The temperature dropped as the wind blew and it poured. But, the show must go on.

The ever-ready Benders crew sprung into action turning our Fire station into a concert hall. A stage was erected, lighting installed and tarps draped to protect the equipment and entertainers alike.

The evening approached and the weather did not abate as the hardy folk of our wonderful community gathered to be entertained

First up Squeeze box and tuba with shanty singing defied the gale force wind and pelting rain. Next our talented children's Chamber Orchestra delighting all with their growing skills.

In the following hours we were entertained by young and old sharing their talents. We had rock groups, a choir, didgeridoo and trumpet duets, guitar and singing ensembles, and violin ho downs, piano bar singing, blues and guitar, ukulele, bagpipes and poems. Some of us were dancing in the aisles.

Magnificent singing and playing by our local and visiting performers. To top it off an impromptu rendition of Gloria accompanied by all the usual groupies. A truly great Night Event. Thanks to Colin for the co-ordination and being the unwilling but very capable MC on the night A job well done.

TRUST FOR NATURE COVENANTS

Rosemary West

Recently I have obtained a Trust for Nature covenant over my property. We now have three such covenanted properties in this immediate area. Wouldn't it be great if we had more, especially if they were adjacent as at least two of the blocks are relatively small.

For those who don't know about Trust for Nature, it is an organisation which protects properties that have been inspected, deemed of environmental significance and adequately managed, preventing subdivision or anything that is prejudicial to their conservation. The destruction of indigenous vegetation and planting of non-indigenous species (apart from small controlled 'kitchen' gardens), the

keeping of dogs and cats, allowing livestock to enter etc. are specifically prohibited as are other environmental matters such as removal of timber, unrestricted access by the public, disturbance of soil, waterways etc. Provision can be made for dwellings and associated structures but other buildings are prohibited on the area designated.

As one can see, these provisions are very similar to those of the Environmental Living Zone. However the Covenant does provide extra protection in perpetuity. The provisions are included on the property title and as an extra bonus rates are reduced.

The aim of Trust for Nature is to protect areas of our environment in private hands. This is done by encouraging people to apply for covenants, by buying significant properties when they come on the market and subsequently selling them on to appropriately environmentally aware new owners with the Covenants intact, or coming to mutually satisfactory arrangements with Parks Victoria and similar organisations.

Further information can be obtained from www.tfn.org.au or phone 9670 9933. Our regional manager lives in Smiths Gully and is very approachable. From time to time she organises events such as field days to spread the word. How good it would be if all the ELZ was covenanted as this would provide extra and very strong protection for our unique environment.

FROM SKYSCRAPERS TO EUCS

Mal Chicksen

Mal and Gavin moved to the Bend of Islands after living for a number of years in Hong Kong. They are both enthusiastic participants in BICA activities and Mal talks about the steep learning curve on which he is perched!

It would be hard for a number of us to imagine living in an 800 square foot box, one stacked upon another about 30 to 50 times. The view from your living room window - your neighbour's laundry fluttering in the wind and the sound of running water - probably your neighbour taking a shower. This is the reality of living in a concrete tower. A remote and not so distant past that was swapped for the eucs that now surround us and the Yarra that murmurs away.

It is about a year since making the green change and so far no regrets. Having gone bush though, does come at a price. It's bloody hard work. All those weeds to pull out. Geez! We bought this block thinking that there'd be no gardening. For an ignoramus like me, all things that looked green were good. Little did I realize that what remnant bush we have left is under threat and that there is so much to do to maintain its integrity. Its been an interesting learning curve and joining in on the flora, fauna and Landcare days have been well worth the effort. Who wants to sleep in when you can learn about natives or wage war on agapanthus, pseudo-capsicum, bridal creeper... There I was driving along Henley thinking what a spectacular sight those mats of yellow were in the paddocks. Cape weed !!

It has been a bit of a Catch 22. Do I really want to be able to identify the weeds are or do I remain ignorant and "enjoy" those pretty plants. Needless to say, once you begin to recognize what belongs and what doesn't, one's appreciation of pristine bush multiplies. More often than not, whenever I see Marie and Wolfgang they are bucket in hand, on all fours, scouring the ground for unwanted aliens. I see now, that going bush doesn't just mean living amongst the eucs, but taking responsibility for the care of what has been gifted to us. They've been doing it for close on 30 years and we've only just moved in. I doubt we'll ever catch up, but we're sure as hell going to give it a try.

BENDERS BEND BACKS FOR CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY!

The largest group of Benders in recorded history bent their backs to the tasks of Clean Up Australia Day on 1 March this year, as we continued our assault on fencing wire in the bush and roadside rubbish. Twenty-eight ELZ residents ranging in age from those in their first decade to those in their seventh concentrated their efforts in the upper Gongflers Drive area, adding heavy metal, like the gate and gate posts from the old Scout property, galvanised iron, and an old car differential, to the usual kilometres of fencing. And, if you're wondering why your last year's Yellow Pages didn't arrive, a stack of them was found dumped in the bush (this year they got as far as the KG Post Office, where Ken King accepted delivery on behalf of all locals).

GO OUT WITH A FIRE FIGHTER!

John McCallum

Friends of the Fire Brigade is a group of volunteers affiliated with the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade. The function of the Friends is to provide support for the fire-fighters during emergencies as well as throughout the year.

During emergencies, such as the period in February when fire-fighters were on duty in the local area for extended periods, a small band of workers ensured that there was food, drink and other support available to them on a regular basis. As well, drivers were needed to transport volunteers to and from meeting points when they were required to join strike teams to carry out fire-fighting work in other parts of the state.

For the rest of the time, the Friends continue to support the Brigade with a number of social activities. Café Benders has been running for a number of years now and has provided a steady source of funding. Equally important is its social role. From about 10.00 AM on the third Saturday of each month, coffee and cake are available at nominal cost to provide a focus for a friendly gathering in the south shed in the Bend of Islands. Christmas Cafe Benders is a special evening event with music and kids activities.

The excellent facilities of the new main station in Ridge Road (opened in October 2008) now provide the venue for a new get-together, which has been running for a few months now. Friday Night Happy Hour is on the first Friday, starting at 5.30 PM and is another occasion to get to know your neighbours, unwind after the week, catch up with what is going on in the Brigade and keep in touch with what is happening in the area in general. Closing time depends on the stamina of the participants! At the moment, the format is BYO drink and nibbles. More informations from Jane Russ 9730 2398.

The Fire Brigade is a community-wide organization with participants from all parts of the Brigade area which stretches from the southern boundaries of the Kinglake National Park to Watson's Creek in the Bend of Islands.

Come along to Happy Hour and Café Benders to support your local fire brigade and have a good time!

INTERESTED IN SOLAR HOT WATER?

Rudi Pauli

BICA CAN (Climate Action Now) have negotiated with Nillumbik Shire Council to extend their registration period of the solar hot water bulk purchase program.

Register your interest by the end of May 2009 by emailing your name, address, phone number to eepadmin@manningham.vic.gov.au or call 9433 3214 to register your details if you don't have internet access.

Three types of systems are on offer:

- * Solar hot water with an electric booster.
- * Solar hot water with a gas booster.
- * Heat-pump.

The expected cost of an installed system is around \$1,500 - \$2,000.

The timeframe of the program is:

- * early June 2009: suppliers selected via tender process for bulk order.
- * mid June 2009: residents notified of systems and price.
- * June into July 2009: information sessions to be held for participants.
- * July 2009: \$100 admin fee due (to Manningham), if you are going to proceed with offer.
- * August 2009: commence installations.

This is a great way to reduce your home energy use and greenhouse emissions by 25%. Heat pumps can be used where shading or roof orientation would otherwise prevent good solar access.

GREEN LOANS

The Australian Government is about to launch a new program called the Green Loans Program. It basically provides:

- * A free household sustainability assessment (home audit undertaken by an accredited assessor).
- * An audit report with a range of recommendations.
- * An optional low interest Green Loan (up to \$10,000) to implement the recommendations.

The program is scheduled over 5 years and is expected to commence in mid 2009.

This will be a great way to obtain a free audit on your home and access to low interest finance to undertake the works. Note: You don't have to take out a loan to participate in the program.

It is always best to start with an audit of your home so you have a baseline to work from and a realistic way to measure savings. An audit also provides an opportunity to benchmark your home. A program can also be devised from the audit to transform your home into a sustainable home.

Further information on this program is available at: www.environment.gov.au/greenloans

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

A big thank you to all friends & neighbours in The Bend who supported us in The Melbourne Oxfam Trailwalker. As you've probably noticed we did make it and were surprised and delighted that we and all team members were remarkably unscathed by the experience! Not a blister amongst us! Mind you it was not an entirely pain free (or drug free for that matter) experience, and we were definitely challenged; some of us by the downhill on wonky, stiff knees, all of us by the cold Saturday morning when we had to resort to socks on top of gloves & even then the hands were bloodless.

We travelled through some beautiful landscapes in Lysterfield National Park, The Dandenong Ranges, a foggy morning along the Warburton Trail and magnificent, if not a little steep forest on Mt Little Joe at the end. It was quite serene walking for five hours in the dark on Friday night... We were at times a fairy trail of head lamps woven through the forest. We kept ourselves amused with songs, stories, food, footy and just putting one foot in front of the other. We met lots of interesting folk along the way, a few cranky bikers and heaps of helpful volunteers. A sense of achievement and relief built up as we descended Mt Little Joe and could hear the teams ahead being welcomed to the finish line. It was very exciting after 100kms to cross the red tape kindly provided by our support team (along with cold beers & champagne) in approximately 34 hours.

(continued on page 7)

A WEED TO WATCH

Mal Chicksen

Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

Now is the time to attack this weed.

Bridal Creeper is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness, potential for spread, and economic and environmental impacts. It entered the country as a garden plant around 1857 and is now a major weed of bushland in southern Australia, where its climbing stems and foliage smother native plants. It forms a thick mat of underground tubers which impedes the root growth of other plants and often prevents seedling establishment. It invades undisturbed habitats and is a major threat to most low shrubs and groundcover plants. Seeds germinate in autumn and winter in leaf litter and at soil depths of up to 100 mm.

Buried seeds that do not germinate rot within two years, while seeds on the soil surface may be viable for at least three years. Compared to many other weeds, Bridal Creeper has a short-lived seedbank.

Shoots of Bridal Creeper typically emerge from the soil in autumn with mature plants flowering along the length of the shoots in August and September. The green berries turn red in late spring to early summer.

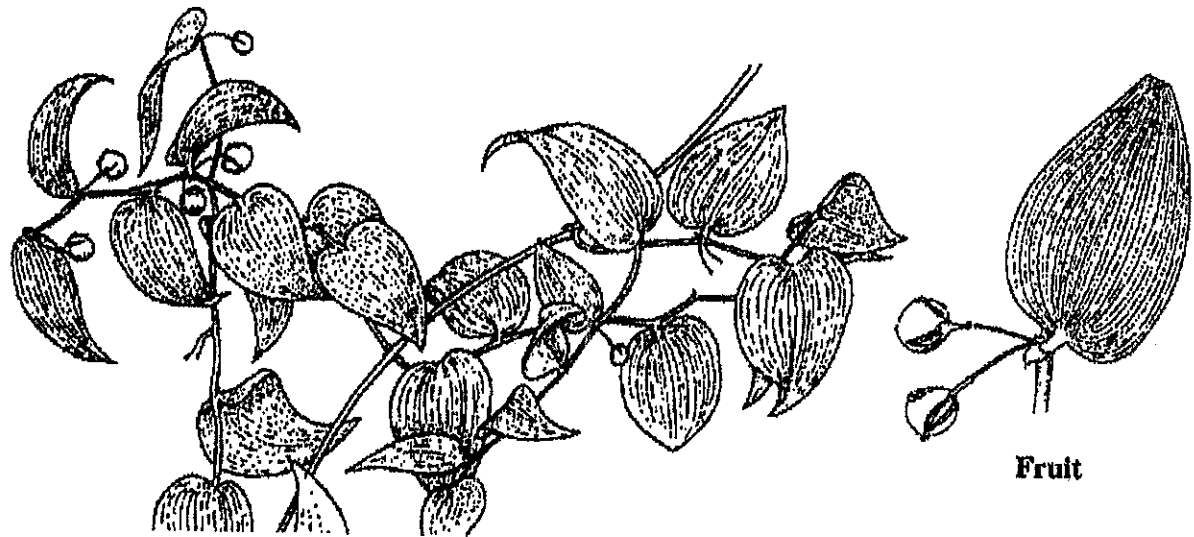
Plants can produce more than 1000 berries per square metre. Birds, rabbits and foxes feed on the berries dispersing the seeds by excretion. Because of this, the Menzies Road infestation is a serious concern for the Bend.

This weed has a number of features which make it difficult to control - its tuber reserves provide a buffer against adverse seasons, it has a wide germination range and, unlike some other weeds, it can invade undisturbed sites.

Physical removal is not effective unless all the rhizomes are dug up and destroyed. Slashing the stems and leaves may prevent fruit production and slowly deplete root reserves but it will not eradicate an infestation.

Those of you who have Bridal Creeper should implement a plan to eradicate it or inform our Landcare Co-ordinator for advice. If you don't know what's growing on your block, the Flora walk is a great way to learn about our bush.

See the BICA calendar for dates and times but generally the



Above and Below: *Asparagus asparagoides* Bridal Creeper



first Sunday of the Month, 8.30 AM, meet at Fire Station corner.

Ref : <http://www.weeds.gov.au/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/a-asparagoides.pdf>

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Our local Bend of Islands Landcare Group spends much of its time working on the weeds in the area. An incredible amount of good work has been done on the pines over the last few years with about 1800 trees being removed, disposed of and the area re-habilitated.

In other places, *Agapanthus* has been targeted and, despite the difficulties in working with this pest, significant inroads have been made on major infestations. This has only been possible by the combined efforts of volunteer labourers at Landcare working bees.

The only practical way to deal with infestations of exotic pests such as Bridal Creeper is a heavy attack. Landcare can tackle jobs like this but we do need more helpers.

Landcare working bees are held on the second Sunday of the month, morning or afternoon according to the season. By the way, there is always a morning or afternoon cuppa!

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Mike Pelling

The Nillumbik Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, RTAC, is a group of people representing most users of such trails in the Shire of Nillumbik. It advises the Shire on priorities for trail construction, future routes, preferred routes and other aspects of trail use and has been in operation for some 14 years. The Shire has standards in place for the types of trails, categories of minor and major trails and a trails maintenance program. This includes considering safety issues such as location identification so that in the event of a user requiring assistance, e.g. medical or security, a location number can be quoted and quick access optimized. The normal requirement of directions and distances via signage is constantly being worked on.

Overall the connection to other trails is considered. The new freeways such as Eastlink are now constructed with accompanying trails and these are also planned to connect to the Nillumbik system.

A simple example of connection is that between Diamond Creek and Southgate in Melbourne. It is possible to walk, run or cycle all this way safely with constant changes in environment and the opportunity to deviate along other trails such as the Merri Creek.

One of the main potential trails is the Maroondah pipeline and aqueduct system. The only part of this system in use by Melbourne Water is from Yering Gorge to the Maroondah reservoir; otherwise it consists of unused aqueduct or reserve above submerged pipeline. The aqueduct from Nicholas Lane to the base of the Sugarloaf dam wall has been safety fenced by Melbourne water and its use as a trail is awaiting a Heritage use enquiry decision.

Another is the route from Kangaroo Ground to Kinglake which is in the process of creation.

Current candidates for trail use are horse riders, cyclists, runners, walkers and mountain bike riders. Our activity is related to recreational trails not footpaths or urban access requirements.

In general the concept of shared use applies and the creation of loops is aimed for, so shorter trips can be accomplished without repetition from a starting point.

The environmental aspect is particularly important, many trails potentially access reserves which have been created for

passive enjoyment or even isolation, such as a wildlife corridor. Thus opportunism must not be the reason for trail creation and environmental impact and history must be considered. At some stage the number of actual users of these trails should be evaluated relative to the cost of their creation.

Most trails are indicated in directories such as the Melways, but Bicycles Victoria and Nillumbik have maps and brochures.

A MOVIEING EXPERIENCE!

Alan Bluhm

On the evening of 2 May as the theatre lights were slowly dimming, I crossed my fingers that the curtains wouldn't jam. They're heavy, authentic rich red velvet monsters whose history is a story on its own. They came from Drury Lane Theatre at Covent Garden in London, where they graced the set of *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. Cut down from giant curtains to make a number of simply very large ones, they were given to Barb after the final performance in about 1980 for her Victorian bay windows in Tooting Bec. To hem them she had to slide the sewing machine across the curtains instead of the other way around. Twice a year I give my biceps a workout when I hang these babies for Cinema Pompier and then take them down again afterwards. Twice a year helpful theatre-goers defy the odds at pack-up time by grappling with them to fold them neatly enough to fit into the box I store them in. If you volunteer for this task, be warned - if at first you don't succeed...

Anyway, thankfully the curtains opened and we got the show on the road. Even with heating the fire station can be a little draughty, so this time we provided some complimentary knee blankets, although most patrons very sensibly come rugged up. As usual, there was a lot of adult chuckling and guffawing during the screening - and this was just the kids' movie!

Ice-cream and chocolates sell like hot cakes (so perhaps we should just sell hot cakes!) during interval, and other delicious things just seem to materialise on the foyer table with the arrival of some of the regulars. After a nice amount of time for everyone to stand around munching and catching up with all the goss, I threaten to start the next movie by gonging the tone blocks. A few performances ago we started with two tones, but Joyce Harvey wasn't convinced that it sounded authentic. We then went to three tones, and more recently a combination of F,A,C,F# that should make people wonder if

they've come to the Melbourne Concert Hall by mistake. Two tones or four; it doesn't matter really, because people ignore them, finish their coffee, buy a chocolate bar, finish the story they're telling and wander in to the theatre in their own good time.

When you see Neil Harvey, Barb and myself manipulating the picture, sound, lights and curtains from our jerry-built control centre down the back, you might be tempted to think it's a three person show. In fact a lot of people make Cinema Pompier work. Of course Wolfgang can be found sweeping the floor while the rest of you are having breakfast. The Bonnys, and more recently, Rudi are on hand with planning and setting up. A plethora of willing hands turn the thing back into a fire station in an astonishingly short time at the end of the night. And then there are you, the people who come and donate your gold coin, buy ice creams, gasp and chuckle through the movie, and make it a thoroughly enjoyable night out with your neighbours. What? You haven't been to Cinema Pompier yet? Quick, write the next one in your diary now: 8 August.

(Continued from page 5)

Thanks to you and all our generous sponsors Round the Benders (Cric, Liz, Peter & Jenni) raised \$10,531 & Henry 4x60+ (Ross & his bros) raised \$15,855 for Oxfam. Many thanks to all of you for your interest & support in this fund raiser from us, our teams & Oxfam.

We had so much fun we are indeed now in training for The Sydney Oxfam Trailwalker. If you missed out sponsoring last time and would like to this time our team name is Deloitte-Legs 11.

You can speak to any of us or sponsor on line through : www2.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/Sydney/team/288. Many thanks again.

LIZ & PETER MILDENHALL & CRIC & ROSS HENRY

BUSHFIRES

Since the fires of 7 February this year there has been much public comment on topics such as evacuation policy, fuel reduction, clearing of bushland, house design and construction of fire shelters, to name a few.

Neither BICA nor the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade give specific advice to members of the public on any of these matters other than to refer to the public policy and advice by the CFA. If, in the wake of the Royal Commission into the fires, there is a change in such policy and advice, the views of BICA and the Brigade may be modified accordingly.

BICA did make a submission to the Royal Commission and part of it is reproduced below. (The rest of the submission was mainly a summary of the ELZ and BICA's role in the establishment and maintenance of the zone.)

The fire management information kit referred to is available as a PDF download from the BICA website <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica> as is the entire submission.

EXTRACT FROM BICA'S SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE FIRES OF 7 FEBRUARY 2009

"As a community, the ELZ is very active in supporting the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade, hosting at least one fund raising activity each month, and has one of the Brigade's two sheds and communication centres located in it. Relations between the CFA and BICA are excellent, with many residents active in both groups. There are seven Fire Guard groups active among our small population, which generally is well-informed about preparing for and coping with bush fires. The local Brigade has emphasised time and time again that it cannot ensure the safety of residents, who must learn to manage their properties, make informed decisions, and carry them out in a timely manner. There is only one rather narrow and winding continuous road providing access and egress to the ELZ, which serves to emphasise both the need to keep it cleared within the relevant CFA guidelines and the need to make any decision to evacuate well in advance. BICA believes that individual responsibility coupled with continued education about the danger of fires is the cornerstone of bushfire safety.

The Bend of Islands has recently experienced a 'baby boom', and many families with children, as well as others, opted to leave the area before Black Saturday and after subsequent

weather warnings. It is important to us that we teach our children the beauty of living in the bush and help them to understand the nature of a bushfire without being fearful of it. We feel fortunate to live in a close community where the risk of fire is well understood and where we continue to work to inform new residents and visitors to create a healthy awareness of those risks.

On the basis of current information, BICA does not think wholesale clearing around private properties located in the bush is desirable. Such clearance would destroy the essence of the ELZ, the very reason that residents were attracted to the area. BICA believes that vegetation clearance is only one part of fire safety management and notes the relative lack of publicity about minimising risks to dwellings by attending to their appropriate construction, reducing openings to ember blizzards, planting relatively fire-resistant plant species, and maintaining low levels of ground level vegetation combustibility.

At the same time, BICA recognises that it is possible to live in bush areas safely by having a well thought-out and documented Fire Management Plan for the property that includes managing the vegetation around each house so that it is defensible.

BICA, in conjunction with the local Council and the local CFA, has produced an information kit, (included as an appendix) to encourage new residents to develop site specific Fire Management Plans and have these approved by the Council prior to any removal of vegetation. These plans aim to ensure that houses are maintained as defensible spaces, whilst achieving an informed balance between minimising the risks of fire and minimising the effects of environmental modification on the diversity of flora and fauna habitat. Residents are advised to research available and speak with experts in determining the appropriate distances from the house for each zone.

The fire management plans are based on the following:

- * Trimming of trees immediately adjacent to the house
- * Management of the middle storey for a defined distance from the house
- * Reduction of ground fuel loads to specified levels for a defined distance from the house, which will vary depending on slope and aspect.

These principles are similar to those defined for new dwellings

in the Wild Fire Overlay of the Planning Scheme, as well as the scientific conclusions drawn from Ash Wednesday and subsequent fires. BICA looks forward to incorporating any new scientific findings that are derived from the Black Saturday fires.

Fuel reduction burning, whether on private or public lands, should be determined by flora and fauna experts in conjunction with experienced Fire Authorities to enable fuel levels to be reduced while not destroying the balanced life forces of the bush. Our bush requires fire to regenerate and maintain its diversity of species, and BICA recognises the need for a comprehensive approach to safeguarding property and life safety based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.

Our area has had a few environmental assessments conducted over the years that point to our ability to co-habit with native flora and fauna without destroying it. Over the past 30 years some members of BICA have had individual management plans in operation, with controlled burns conducted to reduce fuel loads and encourage flora regeneration. We also acknowledge grazing pressure, both by native and exotic fauna, is a serious issue to our regenerating flora after fire, in particular where only small areas are burnt. In the last few years we have been erecting and monitoring fauna exclusion plots to protect areas of high diversity and furthering our understanding of fire ecology. This is done with the co-operation of neighbours and the local CFA, providing evidence of success on both counts. There is recognition that such 'biodiversity burning' is different from simple fuel reduction burning for fire protection since it takes into consideration broader ecological processes.

Preparing for bushfires in the ELZ should be seen in the larger context of managing residential bushland for conservation purposes so as not to destroy the very basis that attracts informed people to reside in such areas. Because of the requirements of the SUZ2 Planning Scheme, currently obtaining a permit for tree removal is difficult, and so it should be. Any vegetation removal needs to be assessed in an ecologically sound manner and should be informed by the approach of broader net gain assessments and offsets used by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, which seeks to assess current vegetation quality against a scientifically determined benchmark.

BICA at present is looking into creating a management plan for the entire ELZ that would consider fuel reduction and fire hazards around dwellings within a wider framework of

maintaining the diversity of flora and ensuring the protection of habitat within guidelines such as those formulated by the DSE.

In short, BICA supports:

- * Vegetation removal governed by permit
- * Permit conditions based on broad and expert ecological assessment of the specific property and the general area
- * The clearing of roadside vegetation according to the CFA's 4m-by-4m Box Clearance Policy for roads and driveways.
- * Periodic fuel reduction burns informed by expert ecological assessment
- * Continued community education about bush fire management
- * Individual responsibility to formulate and execute bushfire plans

BICA is keenly aware of the need to balance its conservation values with the potential damage to persons, property and native flora and fauna by wildfires, particularly under the current conditions of drought and climate warming. We hope that much will be learned from the findings of the Commission and believe that some of the opinions currently on offer are based, often understandably, on emotion rather than scientific research.

BICA believes it is important that consideration of future bush fire management strategy acknowledges the voice of the people who love the bush for its flora and fauna and who live in it for that reason. We believe that there still is much to be learned to manage this type of bushland optimally and look forward to the reports of the Commission.

BICA is prepared to send a representative to address the Royal Commission on these issues if it is deemed helpful."

FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of BICA Newsletter. It has been a while since the last edition and there are various reasons for that; I hope the next one is a lot sooner! Don't forget your contributions are the only thing that keeps us afloat.

We publish articles pertaining generally to topics and activities that support BICA's aims but matters of wider community interest are also appropriate. If you aren't sure,

WHAT GOES IN THOSE BINS?

Jess Rae

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY GREEN WASTE?

The contents of the green bin are sent to a commercial composting operation where they are turned into a range of mulches and blended compost products.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY RECYCLING?

PAPER AND CARDBOARD

Paper and cardboard are bailed and sent to a paper mill for reprocessing. After screening for staples, string and other items, 85% is returned into packaging and industrial paper. The remainder is turned into writing paper, tissues and newspaper.

PLASTIC

At Nillumbik all hard plastics can be recycled. Plastics are sorted into different resin types, bailed and sent to factories to be shredded, chopped or ground and then washed and dried. They are then ready for moulding into new products such as signs, outdoor chairs & boardwalks.

ALUMINIUM

Aluminium can be recycled over and over without degrading. After sorting and being sent to a processing plant, aluminium is melted and turned into ingots. The ingots are sent to a rolling mill and turned back into cans, foil and other items. Approximately 1/20th of the energy used to manufacture a can from new materials is used if the aluminium is recycled.

send it in!

We accept any format, typed, handwritten, emailed, posted. We will even "ghost write" your article for you!

Note also that the BICA website is a source of information about the area and a number of new pages have been put up recently.

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

JMCC

GLASS

Glass is sorted into clear, amber and green glass. After contaminants are removed the glass is crushed (called cullet) and used to make new items. The use of recycled glass results in a 75% reduction in energy, compared to the use of raw materials.

STEEL

Steel cans and lids are compressed into bales and re-smelted at a steel works. Making steel from recycled cans uses 75% less energy than utilising raw materials.

MILK AND JUICE CARTONS

These items are bailed and sent to a reprocessing plant which recovers the paper component of the cartons. The pulp recovered is of high quality and is used to make office grade paper.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CONTENTS OF THE RED BIN?

The contents of the red bin end up in a landfill.

This means buying low packed foods, buying & donating second hand goods, reusing and recycling are very important to reduce your impact on the environment.

RED BIN – WHAT GOES IN?

- Disposable nappies
- Foam (polystyrene)
- Kitty litter
- Light globes
- Matchboxes
- Plastic bags
- Plastic wrap
- Pyrex and crockery
- Vinyl
- Waxed cardboard
- Window glass
- Mirrors

GREEN BIN - WHAT GOES IN?

- Egg shells
- Food scraps
- Meat scraps
- Garden material
- Tea bags
- Tissues

YELLOW BIN – WHAT GOES IN?

- Aerosol containers
- All hard plastic containers
- All moulded plastic
- Aluminium foil and cans
- Books
- Cardboard
- Cosmetic jars
- Glass bottles and jars
- Medicine bottles
- Milk/juice containers (& lids)
- Old plastic toothbrushes
- Paint tins (dry up to 4ltr)
- Paper (and magazines)
- Steel cans
- Wrapping paper

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

Are you financial? Subs can be sent to the Treasurer (address on front cover of Newsletter)

Don't miss the tree planting at Yanakia. See page 2 of BICA News 74

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BICA Newsletter

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