

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC NEWSLETTER

Secretary: Gavin Masters 9712 0168, C/- PO Kangaroo Ground, Vic 3097 Editor: John McCallum 9712 0319

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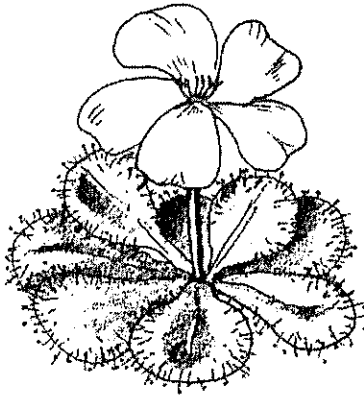
WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Drosera whittakeri*

Common name: Scented Sundew

Family: Droseraceae

Flowering Period: July to October



Droseras are small insectivorous perennial herbs. The plants absorb nutrients from insects trapped on the special sticky, gland-tipped hairs on their leaves.

Drosera whittakeri produces relatively large, short-stalked, white flowers above a flat, ground-hugging, basal rosette, of spoon-shaped leaves, about 4cm across. The six or more spatulate or spoon-shaped leaves are 13-25mm long, with glistening hairs covered in dew-drop like secretions. The colour of the leaves can vary due to the nature of the soil or other site conditions, to produce bronze, red or green leaved plants.

The white, single, sweet-scented, five-petaled flowers, up to 2 to 3cm across, are held directly above and at the centre of the rosette of leaves by a short, sturdy stem, about 20mm high. There may be several single stalked flowers growing from the one plant. The flowers open only on sunny days.

Drosera whittakeri requires damp soil during the main growing period from Autumn to Spring and may form large colonies in suitable conditions. The plants usually have a dormant period in summer when they die back to the tuberous root.

The fruit is a small capsule containing many tiny seeds.

Propagation is by seed sown in Spring or by leaf cuttings.

GRIC HENRY

ONCE AROUND THE SUGARLOAF

Barb Whiter

'Mick, our community is experiencing a wonderful influx of new people moving into the area – especially younger people – couples who are raising children here – what do you think they need to do to understand what the Bend of Islands is – where it's come from – the broader story?'

'Well, for a start they need to buy my book!'

Roars of laughter followed Mick Woiwod's honest reaction to this question delivered at the launch of his updated story of Christmas Hills, held in the fire shed at the monthly Café Benders on Saturday 19 June among 60 or so of his and Marg's friends and neighbours. The first edition was published in 1992 by Bend of Islands Press; this edition is published by Andrew Ross Museum, Kangaroo Ground.

But I'm ahead of myself.

The morning began with coffee and cake – many cakes – it was a special Café Benders after all!

Once the inner woman, man and child were happy local Bend of Islands artist Ona Henderson introduced us to the updated version of Mick's book which features her painting inspired by the Wurundjeri Dreamtime legend of Bunjil the Eagle. Ona guided Mick through a question and answer session which gave us an idea of the extra work which has gone into the new edition.

Then Ona asked for questions from the audience, which brought the question I began with.

Once the laughter died down, Mick addressed the question:

'They need to talk to us – the people who were here at the beginning – some of us have moved away but there are plenty still here who know why the Environmental Living Zone was established and how hard the fight was to do so.'

Mick went on to give us all a bit of a history lesson – filled with his humorous asides and the knowledge which comes from being the person who's written the book. Because he's interviewed so many of the people who remembered the stories told to them, or, in some cases, were part of the stories themselves, the coffee and cakes were forgotten for a while as

Mick gave us a summary of our story – the story of Christmas Hills.

Buy your copy of Mick's book from Andrew Ross Museum (publisher); Kangaroo Ground Store; or give Mick and Marg a call on 9439 5679 to find other outlets.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR NEWS?

There has been some discussion about the need for the BICA Newsletter to produced in hard copy. It is already available as a download from the BICA web site (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica>) but this won't suit everyone.

There are three obvious methods of distribution and we invite members and others to choose which they would prefer.

1. Receive a hard copy by post.
2. Download a PDF from the BICA website.
3. Receive a PDF by email.

Please contact the BICA Newsletter sub-committee to make your choice.

Michael Pelling: 9712 0286 mikepelling@bigpond.com
Val Himmelreich: 9712 0029 vhimmelr@bigpond.com.au
or use the contact details on the Newsletter front page.

If you don't respond you will continue to receive a hard copy by post, however consider the need for the use of paper.

PLATYPUS SIGHTINGS

Rosemary West

In late July I saw my first platypus for the season in the Bend of Islands. Platypus sightings are generally seasonal and should increase in the next two or three months. They are most commonly seen in the early morning or in the evening so keep a good look out. They are around even if seldom seen unless particularly looked for and are generally observed in still water rather than rapids.

THIS IS RUBBISH!

Most households produce items of rubbish that need to be disposed of in a more thoughtful way than they usually are.

The three-bin system that we use in Nillumbik serves well to enable us to dispose of most of our household waste, however some of what ends up as landfill via the red ("Other") bin should probably be disposed of in other ways. Unused paint and other chemicals, batteries, electronic equipment including unwanted computers and mobile phones, fluorescent lighting (tubes and compact lamps) can all be dealt with in better ways than burying them.

Unfortunately, most of these are items that are of no great monetary value to anyone in their "raw" state and to get rid of them you have to travel to a re-cycling centre and then pay money. This cost and inconvenience to the householder is unlikely to change.

At the last BICA general meeting there was brief discussion of this matter and it was agreed that we would try to find out if we could make the process of disposing of such items a little easier by community action. We would like anyone who has any ideas for a community plan or an interest in finding out more to contact either John McCallum or Tom Fisher. If we come up with a community plan for addressing the problem it will probably involve households keeping such items for a time until they can be disposed of but we await your ideas.

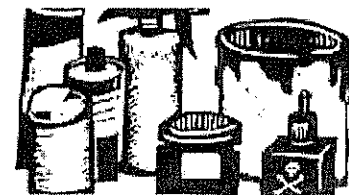
Contact details.

John: mccallum@minopher.net.au

9712 0319

Tom T.fisher@latrobe.edu.au

9712 0451



FROGS OF THE BEND OF ISLANDS – PART 1.

Michael Scroggie

Spotted Marsh Frog, *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*

The Spotted Marsh Frog occurs throughout eastern Australia, from Tasmania to the southeast of South Australia, throughout the Murray-Darling basin and along the east coast to north Queensland. It is a common species throughout its range and is not currently listed under any state or federal threatened species legislation. Due to its broad habitat preferences and its ability to utilise both natural and artificial waterbodies for breeding, Spotted Marsh Frogs are one of Victoria's most common and widespread frog species.

Spotted Marsh Frogs can be easily recognised by the presence of distinct olive-green spots and blotches on their backs. Many, but not all, individuals have a prominent stripe (which may be red, orange or pale yellow) extending down the mid-line of the head and back. Males and females are of similar size (females perhaps slightly larger) with full-grown adults being approximately 45mm long from snout to vent.

Breeding can occur at any time of the year but is most commonly observed during spring and summer. Males usually call while floating in the water and have a prominent vocal sac which is inflated when calling. The call consists of a single staccato "tock" which can be compared to the sound of two stones or blocks of wood being tapped together. In a chorus of calling males, individuals will respond repeatedly to each other's calls, leading to rapidly alternating duets between neighbours.

Like most members of the genus *Limnodynastes* (from Ancient Greek, meaning "marsh lord") Spotted Marsh Frogs produce foamy egg-masses that resemble spoonfuls of beaten egg whites. The egg-masses are usually around 5-6 cm in diameter and float on the surface of the water, with the black, developing embryos contained within them. Over the course of a few days the foam gradually breaks down and the tadpoles hatch to undergo further development in the water.

The calling male in the illustration was photographed while calling in a pond in front of our house in Catani Boulevard in November last year. Over the course of last spring and summer around a dozen egg-masses were observed in the pond

with most breeding occurring on warm, rainy nights. Frogs were usually observed floating in the water or sheltering under logs and rocks close to the pond.

Further information:

http://frogs.org.au/frogs_species/Limnodynastes_tasmaniensis.



Spotted Marsh Frog. Photo: Michael Scroggie.

WINTER WONDERLAND

Carol Bonny

Early spring and the first golden blossoms of the Acacias are popping into view.

Glancing out the upstairs bedroom window the other morning, I could see the muddy Yarra. This is not usually visible from this point. The recent rain had brought the level up, so it was time to go and investigate.

Our meandering track is dotted with the emerging leaves of wax-lip orchids, so there is a lot of side stepping to avoid trampling these little gems as we make our way to the river. As I get into the beautiful Burgan belt the ground is covered in thick green mosses and lichens. The bright white of the common heath is highlighted against this iridescent carpet, while clusters of Nodding Greenhoods catch my eye along the way. The fungi display has been the best I have seen for many years so the camera has been clicking to record some old and new discoveries.

Much to my delight there are still a few little species sticking their colourful heads up here and there.

Over the summer lots of Silver Wattles had grown on the little islands in the river and now they are surrounded by the fast flowing muddy water. It will be interesting to see if they survive the strong current.

If you haven't been for a walk by the river recently, you are missing something really special. Take my advice. Go and enjoy.

HOW SWEET IT IS

Carol Bonny

An email last year suggesting that plain old sugar has been trialled to eradicate annual weeds caught my eye. Next visit to the super market an unusual purchase of a kilogram of white sugar was made. On our driveway alongside the house we have a small infestation of the annual winter grass that I have been hand pulling. Last winter I sprinkled the area with the lovely white sugar and this year noticed the infestation was much reduced. Back to the super market for this years supply. A patch of chickweed was sprinkled and within weeks it died. We will give the winter grass another dose and monitor the results.

Details of the "sugar method" of weed control can be found in BICA Newsletter or on the Co-op website

<http://www.roundthebend.org.au>

PLANNING PROCESS

Alan Bonny

We are in the process of extending our house and have achieved the first step, obtaining planning approval. We thought it would be more challenging but we followed the guidelines and it worked well. There was a pre-planning meeting on site, we provided all details and requested a prompt response. We made sure the application (which includes some tree removal) complied with SUZ2 zoning provisions and the Conservation Covenant that applies to our block. Obtaining Building Application is the next step; this may be more of a challenge with 5-star and fire ratings, not to mention making the mud bricks to build the walls!

RABBITS AT THE BICA GENERAL MEETING

Russell Crosser

At our BICA AGM, we were treated to an outline of the large number of ways that a rabbit can be destroyed.

There's gas (exploding, or just burning), ferrets, poisons (1080, pindone), grain baits (don't use them!), carrot baits, baits in a furrow, baits inside a cage. There's digging out a warren, digging it in, or rip ploughing it.

Bryan Walters was our speaker. He introduced himself as chairman (for some years) of the Dunmoochin Landcare Group, and showed us a copy of Volume I of its recent publication: "Dunmoochin Biodiversity Study - Vol I - Flora", which we should all go out and buy. It is very nicely illustrated with local flora (not absolutely local to here, but not really so far away). Bryan talked of his long involvement with rabbit catching from his youth - "Theres nothing as much fun as a day out ferreting".

There was also some time spent discussing the other creatures that might succumb to the poison, the birds and small mammals, the dogs and foxes, and the visitors to your house who ignore the sign on the fridge saying "don't eat the carrots". Evidently the native wildlife is significantly less sensitive to the poisons than the rabbits and foxes (and dogs, cats and humans). Ploughing warrens leads to killing of some pythons, which is hard to avoid.

Pindone (the recommended poison) is bought at local suppliers, get details from local shire or yellow pages. Only buy what you need, don't store it (even in the fridge).

We heard about talked of the history of rabbits (evidently responsible for the name of Spain), and closer to home talked of a rabbit meat cannery and also felt makers in Whittlesea. He spoke of the rabbiters who went from farm to farm, catching rabbits for a bounty, but also making sure to release a breeding pair afterwards, to ensure the job would continue. There was really no impact on rabbit numbers until myxomatosis was released, now still working, and aided by rabbit flu or calici virus. Another book for us all to read is "They All Ran Wild" by Eric Rolls - an account of the rabbit plague prior to myxomatosis. Brian Coman's "Tooth and Nail - the Story of the Rabbit in Australia" is also a worthwhile read.

Another snippet of history is that in 1958 CSIRO scientist, R Mykytowycz, performed groundbreaking research ("Social behaviour of an experimental colony of wild rabbits, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*" - R Mykytowycz 1958) in which he observed the social organisation of a rabbit colony. The colony has a strict hierarchy, with a dominant male, who has first pick of the food and the mating. The rest of the colony is strictly ordered under him, with about 4/5 of the colony allowed to occupy the warren, the remainder having to skulk on the outskirts. The relevance of this to rabbit baiting is that if you put out a lot of bait the first night, most will not be eaten, as only the dominant pair will be allowed to eat it, until they die, when the next layer will move in and take the bait. In the wild a colony is about 180 - 200 m².

Also from that study is the physical layout of a colony, with a "buck's mound" where the dominant male sits and surveys his kingdom, and 5 - 6m away a "dining area" of cropped green grass. Trapping should be done near the buck's mound, but not on it. The buck's mound should have signs of occupation - fresh scratchings, black moist rabbit poo.

Bryan recommended cage baiting with pindone as the most effective method of rabbit control for a group like us. This involves a rectangular steel frame, high enough for a rabbit to sit comfortably under (perhaps 300 to 400 mm high?) and about 2m x 1.5m. This is wired over and around (no gaps) with bird mesh, to keep unwanted choughs and possums et al out. The cage is set on the ground on a flattish area, and two scrapes are made on opposite sides to allow entry and exit. Feeding is started outside the cage with unbaited carrot, then each evening it is sprinkled closer to an entry scrape, then inside, with a little in the entry hole. When the carrot is being taken, start with baited carrot, but only 6-9 pieces at first, increasing slowly after a few nights. Continue to increase until no more bait is taken. Remember that the rabbit has to return for another dose in about 3 nights for an effective kill. After the initial bait cycle up to 80% will be killed if you are lucky, but then the outliers will move in to take over, and a further cycle of baiting will be effective. It is also helpful to do the baiting in a number of adjacent colonies at the same time.

Attraction of the rabbits can be enhanced by digging a short trench near the cage, and also by bringing in a small amount of rabbit poo from an adjacent colony. It was unclear if this

last was beneficial because it helped trap the rabbits, or if it was just that Bryan loves watching the expression on the dominant male's face when he discovers evidence of an intruder.

It is advised to search around the poisoning area for carcasses: bury them to keep them from scavengers, although luckily most rabbits will die underground. Also good to search around for hollow logs and stops (short burrows), and destroy them or make them uninhabitable.

Thanks, Bryan, for an entertaining and informative talk.

RABBIT CONTROL IN THE BEND OF ISLANDS

Peter Mildenhall

Following the last BICA General Meeting with the very entertaining story of rabbit control at Dunmoochin from Bryan Walters, a few of us have discussed the possibility of an organized campaign against the rabbit in the Bend.

As a result a number of people from right across the Bend expressed interest in a proposed rabbit control program in the Bend and a group was able to meet on Tuesday evening 31 August with Jackie Waring from Nillumbik and Manningham Council who talked about Council support for coordinated community campaigns on rabbits.

Some of the main points that come from the meeting were:

1. There was widespread support for a coordinated campaign involving as many as possible right across the Bend.
2. The campaign will have a long time frame because control is the intention. Extermination is not possible.
3. There is a need to be as environmentally sensitive as possible and mindful of possible effects on the native fauna and flora of our area.

The main points from Jackie's presentation included the following.

- a) The importance of neighbours and neighbourhoods working together to be effective.
- b) A reduction in numbers based on a 3 year plan was the goal.

c) As there are both warren and bush bunnies (those that live under bushes and tree in more open and drier country) in the Bend, a number of different strategies should be used.

d) The importance of mapping the incidence of rabbits and warrens on each property and warren destruction should be part of the plan.

e) Baiting with Pindone poison with a metal shelter is an option. This is better if carried out in late summer but this can be an issue with native wildlife and may not be suitable.

f) Council will support up to a third of the cost of contractors used for rabbit control.

Following questions and discussion the following action was decided.

1. Peter Mildenhall to arrange a visit to the Bend from a contractor experienced in the use of nets/dogs and ferrets to look at our area and give advice on possible options/costs.
2. Those present were going to approach neighbours, raise the issue at Café Benders and other ways to get people interested and some neighbourhood groups formed.
3. All the documents will be placed on BICA website as background information.
4. We would try to map the rabbits on our properties using a self-assessment sheet that we will develop as well as a map of each small neighbourhood.

Further information gathering, investigation of various methods, consultation with neighbours etc will occur over the next month or so and a further meeting held in late October when Jackie has returned from leave. The group may then apply for Council funds depending on the advice of contractors and the methods decided on

Peter Mildenhall (mildenhall2@bigpond.com) 9712 0577 will act as contact point/coordinator of the group and happy to discuss with anyone interested. More information will be available on the BICA website and on the Bend's Facebook site (see next article).



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY HOUSE TOUR: SUNDAY JUNE 6

Peter Mildenhall

Over 20 enthusiastic Benders spent an enjoyable and informative Sunday looking at three different houses and their 'systems' in the second house tour organised by the BICA environment group.

Doug's bus took us to Neil and Jenni Taylors's house to look at their solar/wind and diesel generated independent power system 'off the grid' and appreciated the time work and effort needed to keep the system running and the ultimate satisfaction of being independent of the grid. Details are available of the system through any member of the environment group.

We then moved to Bruce and Lynne's place in 'B' Track in the Coop to look particularly at their worm based septic system and the group was most impressed as are Bruce and Lynn with the efficiency of the worms as they eat their way through human waste, food and green waste, paper and cardboard. Even organic cloth is not beyond them. This is a simple, fresh smelling system that worked well and apparently can be fitted retrospectively to older septic systems as well. Bruce and Lynne also have solar hot water and photo-voltaic cells.

We ended up at Cric and Ross Henry's place for a look at the new, evacuated tube hot water system but more particularly to hear from Kristian Hetyey of Go Green Design (www.gogreendesign.com.au) about the Federal Government Green Home Assessment Scheme and the supplementary report that Kristian can undertake that provides a comprehensive audit of your house and helps prioritise projects and spending to reduce your carbon foot print.

An enjoyable cuppa and cake was followed by a BYO BBQ lunch and a few bottles shared among the crew.

Many thanks to Rudi Pauli and the environment group for their work in organising the tour and especially to the families who allowed us to wander around their houses on a wintry Sunday morning.

BEND OF ISLANDS ON FACEBOOK

One of our newer residents, Heather Johnson has spent a little time thinking about communication in the Bend of Islands and has launched a community on-line discussion group. She is keen to get your feedback on the site.

I thought it was time for the Bend of islands to have a presence in social networking, so have set up a community Facebook group as an experiment. This is more than just BICA, I've also included the CFA events, Artists Open Studios and things that come through the Rabbit email that Alan and Carol send out. At this stage I only have myself as an Admin with anyone being able to join and post, with the view to celebrating and supporting the diversity we have in the community and allowing all voices to be heard.

The way Facebook works is that you set up a personal account then 'join' the Bend of Islands group (open Facebook and search for Bend of Islands once you have set up your account).

If you are new to Facebook, click here to set your account up first.

<http://www.facebook.com/v>

Here is a direct link to the group if you already have a Facebook account.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=143860785647338&v=wall>

I've also set up a bendersfb@gmail.com gmail address for people to use to send in questions, events or whatever else.

Please remember that this is a public space. Should there be a need to raise issues and concerns, I highly recommend that a constructive approach is to organise a one-on-one or community meeting like the Rabbit Control event at the fire station next week, rather than trying to 'have it out' on the boards. Some bulletin board discussions can get a little out of hand!

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

Don't forget the BICA Annual General Meeting on Sunday 28 November 2010
Election of Committee for 2010-2011

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BICA Newsletter

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