

BICA NEWSLETTER

Number 80 November 2012

Bend of Islands Conservation Association Inc., Bend of Islands, Victoria, 3097, Australia

C/- PO Kangaroo Ground, Vic 3097

President: Robyn Duff 9712 0507

Secretary: Gavin Masters 9712 0168,

Editor: John McCallum 9712 0319 mccallum@minopher.net.au



WHAT LOCAL PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Botanical name:	<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>
Common name:	Common Raspwort
Family:	Haloragaceae, (the Milfoil & Raspwort family)
Flowering Period:	November to February

A low bushy herb 10-30 cm high x 20-40 cm wide.

Widespread and common in most regions of Victoria, throughout a variety of habitats including valley and dry sclerophyll forest, grassy low open forest and tea tree heaths & scrubs.

The leaves are green to reddish, small oval to lance-shaped to 12 mm long with pairs decussate i.e. each successive pair of opposite leaves at right angles to the pair below. The leaves are serrated on the margins with 4-8 tiny teeth. The stems & leaves are covered in short appressed white hairs, i.e. hairs lie flat not erect.

Loose spikes of tiny, pinkish-reddish flowers appear in November to February. The spike is the flowering structure of the plant consisting of stalkless small flowers on an unbranched stem.

The small ovoid, silver grey 8 ribbed fruit to 1.5 mm long contains one seed.

Tolerates moist to dry, well drained soils.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2012

BICA has had a very active Committee this year with every member making an individual contribution which has made the work of the Association much easier for the collective group. I would like to thank each member of the Committee: Luke Doyle, Tom Fisher, Jo Henry, Neill Kaminga, Deirdre Lucas, Gavin Masters, Liz Mildenhall, Rudi Pauli, Mike Pelling and Phil and Leanne Wierzbowski. I am delighted that all Committee members are seeking re-election for next year – they are a great team.

By the end of this year we will have completed the Land Management Plan for the area. This plan will provide a blueprint for all our conservation work in the Bend of Islands into the future. Dylan Osler, the consultant working with us, has produced draft maps that identify the various ecological vegetation classes across the Bend of Islands, the condition of the vegetation and areas of major weed infestation. We are looking forward to receiving the final report before the end of the year and already the information has been useful in submitting for funds to tackle some of the more major and inaccessible weedy areas. BICA together with the Landcare groups in Nillumbik, some Friends Groups and Nillumbik Shire Council are also part of a large Regional Project, the Communities for Nature project, that focuses on management works to promote the protection and improvement of habitat for rare and threatened species.

Despite the devastation that occurred with wholesale clearing under the high voltage powerlines a couple of years ago, there have since been major improvements. For those of you who haven't seen the progress I urge you to take a look. Close liaison with SPAusnet has seen regular weeding of the area and the development of beautiful gardens of ground covering flowers and shrubs within revegetation enclosures that minimise grazing by feral animals. Thanks go to Graham Peterson who has continued to make an important contribution to the area by providing his expertise to this liaison with SPAusnet.

In a similar vein, discussion has continued with the contractors who work on reducing vegetation under the low voltage (local) powerlines, with Frank Pierce continuing his work ensuring that we have good results from an environmental as well as an aesthetic point of view.

A major project which is gaining momentum is our work in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. The project aims to protect endangered species in the Bend of Islands, bring indigenous and non-indigenous cultures together and build experience and capacity within the Wurundjeri team. The focus of the project is the Neil Douglas Reserve in Gongflers Dve. BICA also has a management Committee for the Neil Douglas Reserve which has met throughout the year to discuss this project as well as other issues affecting the Reserve.

As has occurred in the past, we recently hosted a tour of the area for 15 staff from the Shire of Nillumbik Planning Department. The tour covered an introduction to the area including its history, current issues, BICA and its role in the community, wildlife, Landcare, major projects and how the Planners can support this area and maintain its environmental integrity. We expect to continue these tours every two years.

BICA has continued providing Field Days, General Meetings, the BICA Newsletter, submissions on various issues such as the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy and the State Government's proposed changes to the Planning Scheme, liaison with Real Estate Agents, prospective and new residents, and this year adds a calendar with photos taken by local photographers to your membership package. So sign up – memberships are due in November, your support is needed and you will receive an inaugural BICA calendar when we receive your subscription.

ROBYN DUFF

HISTORY TOUR

Rosemary West

It was a rather bleak day for our history tour but the bus load of BICA members once again enjoyed a most interesting occasion. We remain astounded at Mick Woiwood's knowledge and memory; a non-stop chat as we drove all over the Bend of Islands and not once did he refer to his notes.

He led last year's tour but he gave us lots of new material this time. His talk embraced the geological history and the indigenous and early European settlement more or less up to and

just beyond the most recent severe bushfire in the immediate area (that of 1962) which changed the area so much. Mick pointed out the way the river has changed course over the millennia and how the land has risen and fallen so that we now live on one of the uplifted areas surrounded by plains.

Mick spoke of the Europeans of the 19th century who bought up the land, sometimes for grazing but just as often for an investment or a holiday 'get away from it all' weekend retreat. He spoke of the steady decline of the indigenous population due largely to disease and changes of diet associated with the changes in their hunting and gathering lifestyle caused by European settlement. He spoke about efforts to clear large parts of the land, mostly unsuccessful as our tough trees just sprouted back again in even greater numbers. He mentioned the loss the traditional roots that were an important part of their food. I have rarely seen a yam daisy here where once they covered hillsides with their bright yellow flowers.

We had a morning tea stop (thank you Rudi) at the end of Henley Rd overlooking the lagoons and river now much changed by the golf course though the kangaroos still graze here (probably in greater numbers than before thanks to us providing great swathes of pasture and plenty of dams etc. to drink from, though not necessarily in Bend of Islands itself). All in all it was another great activity from BICA.

So a big thank you to the committee, to our driver (not an easy area in which to drive a large bus!), to Rudi and above all to Mick. I am sure we all look forward to our next tour.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

This is the last issue of BICA Newsletter that will be posted unless you ask for it specifically.

It will be available for download (as it already is) from the BICA website (at URL) and you will receive an email to tell you when a new issue is available and how to download it. To make sure you are on BICA's email list contact the Secretary by email (bica-comm@gmail.com) or by post.

If you wish to continue to get the Newsletter by post, please contact BICA.

Contact details are on the front page.

WYENONDABUL WURUNDJERI BICA 'COMMUNITIES FOR NATURE' PROJECT

Tom Fisher

BICA is proud to announce that we have become partners of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation Cultural Heritage Council in a successful application for a 'Communities for Nature' grant in 2012-2013. These grants are funded by the Department of Environment and Sustainability and directed towards 'local community groups and organisations looking to improve their natural environment and conserve local biodiversity values'. The intention of the grants 'is to support local communities to address issues of environmental significance that will result in long term improvement to biodiversity and benefit the broader community'.

Project Description

Our project has multiple objectives, including:

to improve the local environment around the Bend of Islands and protect the existing endangered species

to build experience and capacity for the Wurundjeri Narrap (Country) team

to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together.

The improvement of existing habitat and engagement between traditional owners and local residents are the two main anticipated benefits from this project. Our project is notable, if not unique, in bringing together a current residential conservation group and traditional owners from the same area in collaborative land management. It thus provides an opportunity for important relationship building, with the Wurundjeri able to re-engage with their traditional lands and pass on some traditional knowledge to current residents.

This project involves a partnership between BICA, Wurundjeri and local community. It will provide on-ground training and education by local residents for the Wurundjeri Narrap Team, as they develop skills in a range of environments across traditional Wurundjeri Country. It will also increase understanding in the Bend of Islands community regarding indigenous values and history as presented by Wurund-

jeri community members. Hopefully, this project will lead to towards an ongoing relationship between the Bend of Islands community and the wider Wurundjeri community.

The project kicked off at the end of July with a site visit by several Wurundjeri and a short presentation and discussion at the BICA General Meeting involving Dave Wandin, a Healesville member of the Wurundjeri who is providing hands-on coordination of on-site work; Fiona McConachie of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council, Project Manager; and the BICA liaison people. Local historian and former resident Mick Woiwod also spoke movingly about the human dimension of environmental conservation.

Since then members of the Narrap Team have worked with local ecology experts Dylan Osler, Graham Petersen and Tserin Wright on mapping for conservation values, on species identification and hand weeding (targeting Madeira Winter Cherry and Bridal Creeper within the Neil Douglas Reserve on Gongflers Peninsula) and on tree hollow conservation. They also have visited known archaeological sites in the Bend. In the future there will be work on herbs, mid-storey management, propagation and water quality monitoring. In addition, Frank Pierce and others will provide an introduction to the local fauna. BICA members who would like to be part of such events are welcome to contact Tom Fisher (T.Fisher@latrobe.edu.au: 9712 0451).

The Wurundjeri will share aspects of their cultural heritage with our community, first at the BICA AGM in November, where it is planned that a Welcome to Country will be made and a smoking ceremony and dancing will take place. An Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program is scheduled for later on, as well as advice on management of sites of cultural significance

Historical Background

The name Wurundjeri is based on indigenous language words wurun for Manna Gum and djeri, a grub found in the tree. Technically, it refers to the people of the Woiwurrung language group. The place name 'Wyenondabul', as proposed by Mick Woiwod, has its origin in a sketch map drawn for the Assistant Protector of Aborigines William Thomas by an elderly Wurundjeri man

around 1842 and preserved in the State Library. It appears to mean 'Fiery Hills' and may refer the indigenous practice of hunting and land management by strategic burning. The map was drawn from a spot near today's Yarra Glen, close to the property then owned by William Ryrie, now Chateau Yering.

Wurundjeri elders were among the 'signatories' of 1835 Batman Treaty. This treaty was rejected by the British government since it did not accord with the doctrine of terra nullius, which refused recognition of previous land ownership by Aboriginal people, a concept overturned only in 1992 in the High Court's historic Mabo Decision. The Wurundjeri were granted 1,802 acres of land near Warrandyte in 1852 but had it revoked a decade later. In 1863, others moved to Coranderrk Station, near Healesville, which flourished for a while as a successful agricultural community before becoming the victim of vested political and financial interests. In 1924, all but seven of its occupants were forced to resettle at Lake Tyres in Gippsland, though some, particularly members of the Wandin family, managed to remain in the Healesville area. Left unoccupied, the land became part of the Soldier Settlement Scheme in 1950, and in 1998 a portion of the old Coranderrk Aboriginal Station was returned into Wurundjeri hands. For further information on historical matters, please refer in general to Richard Broome's comprehensive Aboriginal Victorians and for local information to Mick Woiwod's The Christmas Hills Story. Gary Presland's Aboriginal Melbourne is also very useful. The Wikipedia entry on the Wurundjeri is helpful, though not necessarily completely reliable.

Project Statement from the Wurundjeri

We are the direct descendants of the Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) men and women who lived in the region for many thousands of years. Today, our principal ancestor is Bebejan/Be-be-jern Jerum-Jerum, Ngurangaeta (head man) of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woiwurrung language group.

Wurundjeri Country extends from the Werribee River in the west, the Great Dividing Range to the north, across to Mount Baw Baw in the east, to Cranbourne and Mordialloc in the south, and the portions of Port Phillip Bay between the Mordialloc Creek to the mouth of the Werribee River. Wurundjeri Country therefore includes much of the metropolis of Melbourne and its immediate hinterland. Currently more than three million people, from many cultural backgrounds and histories, live in Wurundjeri Country.

Wurundjeri Country also includes a diverse range of landscapes, urban and rural landscapes including the grasslands of the volcanic plains, the ranges and forests that form the Port Phillip catchment, wetlands and waterways, the Sea Country of the Bay. This is a very complex, challenging and dynamic context in which to consider the care and management of natural resources, and the ways in which cultural knowledge and responsibilities can contribute to enhanced environmental qualities. Better outcomes for the natural environment and for the Traditional Owners will therefore provide long-lasting benefits for many people.

As Wurundjeri people and Traditional Owners of our Country, we have a particular cultural perspective on natural resource management. Our interests are enshrined in cultural rights and responsibilities that have been passed on over the millennia by our ancestors. We have strong spiritual ties to the Country of our ancestors. Oral information relating to customs and traditions (language, dance, ceremony, clothing, bush food collection) has been passed down through the generations and is taught to our children. We continue to access and care for cultural places across our Country. Country is central to our sense of belonging; the natural world is also a cultural world. We have a special connection to our Country, and the health of waterways and the land remains central to our cultural aspirations and the health and wellbeing of our people.

As we establish partnerships with others, we need to share and explain our understanding of our Country, our feelings, beliefs and memories, and the inter-connected cultural values that are embedded in Country. These form the basis for all we do and the way we want to work. We are pleased to have made a connection with the people of Bend of Islands (formally known as Wyenondabul) and acknowledge and appreciate the custodian role that you have taken on, caring for Wurundjeri Country that is also your own

Future Activities

BICA and Wurundjeri representatives are planning the following community events:

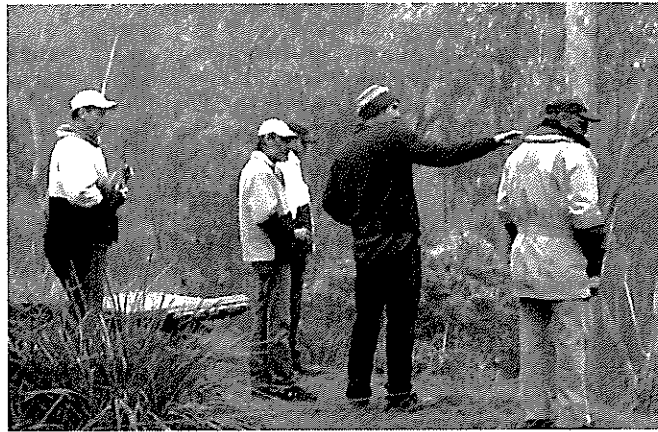
Nov 25 BICA AGM: Smoking ceremony, Welcome to Country, Wurundjeri background talk and dancers

March 24 Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program

April 20 Wurundjeri craft event

May 18 Wurundjeri craft event

July 20 or 28 Finish of Communities for Nature joint project: report, exhibits, land-holder plaques.



Dylan Osler briefing the Narrap team, 1 August 2012

LANDCARE REPORT

Hi all, the wet winter has guaranteed the weeds have done well and most of us are despairing as spring is here and those weeds that incubated over winter are now rampant with growth! Fear not! Your friendly Landcare group can help as you can see in the following report. Please call and report your weeds and I will be glad to come have a look and arrange a session at your place.

July was the traditional combined Co-op & Landcare day. On this day we usually do pine tree removal but this time we took advantage to help the new kids on the block, Kurt and Sharna at the end of Iron Bark; inheriting Agapanthus is no fun with a new home. About 20 people hooked in and filled the 4 metre skip in no time at all so we stacked another skips worth alongside. Such a good result with a lot of hands. Thanks to BICA for paying for the skips.

August then became our pine tree project. With the help of our local arborist (thanks Tserin) we managed to get the last of the trees off Jo and Gerrards block as well as another 15-20 smaller trees off Phil and Leanne's prior to the weekend. Then it was a good day for burning off the branches and a stack of ink-weed that we piled up the month before. A great effort by all involved.

September I was unfortunately on a visit to my mum in QLD but the crew of the day reported they split into two groups and worked on Angled Onion near Oxley Bridge and pulling vari-

BABY BENDERS

Since the last Newsletter Gabrielle & David Hatty @ 555 Henley Road (the strawbale house) brought home their newest addition.

Isaac David was born Sunday 15th July at 10:24am weighing 4.175kg!

A little brother for Oscar.

Luke Doyle

ous weeds from the Catani-Gongflers lower corner including the triangle island. There were at least 100 Maroon Greenhoods as well as some Nodding Greenhoods). Thanks to Marie and Wolfgang for taking over morning tea duties in my absence.

October saw us down on lower Catani at the Jessie Bull reserve where we found a large patch of Forget-me-nots flowering. Very pretty but we managed to get that and numerous other weeds such as thistles, blackberry, flat weed to name a few. Hopefully this will help Pete and Jess as this gully runs right through their place. It was a fun day with a lot of kids helping out. Most of our activities are reasonably kid friendly. Arlo my son hassles me every weekend "Is it landcare yet dad", and even if it is hard to weed with a 4 yr old jumping on your back, I love to bring him with me each month. Please bring your kids along now the weather is a bit friendlier and let them learn. They pick it up quickly and are fun to have around.

I haven't gone into much detail about the great turn-outs we have had recently, but a big thanks does go out to all the people who do make a difference every month. You know who you are. Don't be scared of just turning up now and then. You are welcome and it is a fun way to interact with your community and this beautiful place we live. So happy weeding and I hope to see you some third Sunday of the month in the future.

Luke 97120902/ 0409610934

FROGS OF THE BEND OF ISLANDS PART 4: BROWN TREE FROG

Michael Scroggie

The Brown (or Ewing's) Tree Frog, *Litoria ewingi*, is widespread and common in south-eastern Australia. In the Bend of Islands, Brown Tree Frogs are one of the commonest frog species, and can be heard calling from still water bodies such as dams and ponds during the cooler months of the year, or sheltering in damp places such as vegetable gardens and amongst pot plants. Brown Tree Frogs can be up to 45 mm in length (from snout to vent), with females being larger than males (as is the case for the majority of frog species).

Brown Tree Frogs are usually brown in colour, but there is wide variation in the shade of the colouration. Green individuals are occasionally encountered but are uncommon in the Melbourne area. The toe-pads, like those of most tree frog species, are wider than the toe itself and are disc-shaped giving Brown Tree Frogs the ability to climb proficiently. Contrary to their name, Brown Tree Frogs seldom climb trees but are often found climbing in vegetation such as reeds and bushes close to water.

Breeding occurs mainly in winter and spring, usually during or after heavy rain. Males call while floating in the water (often from a concealed location) or perched in vegetation at the water's edge. Eggs are contained in a mass of clear jelly attached to submerged vegetation, with the dark-coloured embryos clearly visible within. The tadpoles hatch after a few days and tend to swim near the surface and bask in the sunlight. Tadpoles have a greenish, iridescent colouration, with transparent, and finely pointed tail fins.

The closely related Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxi*) can also be found in the Bend of Islands but seems to be less common than the Brown Tree Frog. Whistling Tree Frogs can be difficult to distinguish from the Brown Tree Frog but several characteristics are helpful:

Whistling Tree Frogs often have dark coloured blotches on their sides in front of the hind legs, unlike Brown Tree Frogs whose flanks are evenly coloured.

Whistling Tree Frogs have toe-pads that are the same width or only slightly wider than their toes, while the toe-pads of Brown Tree Frogs are significantly wider than the toes.

The call of the Whistling Tree Frog has a clear, whistling quality, while that of the Brown Tree frog has a rougher, trilling, or cricket-like character. Reference to recordings of known individuals is helpful when trying to tell the difference and does take some experience. Careful listening at a pond where both species are present also helps.

Both Brown Tree Frogs and Whistling Tree Frogs are common and widespread in Victoria, and are not listed as threatened species. However a distinctive subspecies of *Litoria verreauxi*, the Alpine Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxi alpina*), is confined to alpine areas of Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT, and is considered to be threatened, having undergone extensive declines in abundance and distribution during recent decades, most likely as a consequence of epidemic disease caused by the amphibian chytrid fungus.

Further information:

<http://frogs.org.au/frogs/species/Litoria/ewingi>

<http://frogs.org.au/frogs/species/Litoria/verreauxi/>



Litoria ewingi. Photo: Dierdre Lucas

BIRD NOTES

Frank Pierce

The following can be reported since March 2012.

Lyrebirds

Four new records have been reported from John and Megan McCallum, Frank Pierce, Mia Stephens and Neill and Karyn Kamminga. Refer to the website for details of all Lyrebird records reported since July 2000 (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica/birds/Lyrebird.pdf>.)

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

Other Interesting Observations

Flocks of White-browed and Masked Woodswallow have recently been seen in the ELZ by a number of observers.

Nankeen Night-Heron has been recorded by Gavin Masters on the river near Gongflers Drive.

On a recent BICA Bird Survey Walk, on Yanakie near Watsons Creek, Little Eagle was recorded again and Crested Shrike-Tit was recorded.

The Birds Section of the BICA Website has lots of information about the birds of our area, as well as an up to date summary of our on-going bird survey. Take a look at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bica/birds.html>

Could you please record the details of any unusual sightings that you make, especially of Lyrebirds, and pass them on to Frank Pierce, (97120237), or email – jmandfp@bigpond.com

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

A few late bird notes that came in after Frank submitted his report.

Gavin Masters saw Tree Martins at his place in Gongflers Drive.

Michael Pelling reported a Scarlet Honeyeater in Ironbark Road

Tom McCallum flushed a couple of White-throated Nightjars and now steers clear of walking near that particular spot on his parents' property in Catani Boulevard.

NILLUMBIK'S CONSERVATION CORRIDORS

Jo Henry and Deirdre Lucas

Many residents may not be aware that Landcare groups throughout the Kinglake-Warrandyte Wildlife Corridor were the recipients of a significant grant awarded by the Department of Sustainability and Environment through the Communities for Nature scheme.

The grant, covering a period of four years, amounts to just under \$600 000 and will be administered by Nillumbik Shire Council and a Steering Committee, comprising representatives from the communities involved. These include Cottles Bridge, Arthurs Creek, Strathewen, St Andrews, Smiths Gully, Christmas Hills, North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula and Bend of Islands Landcare groups and the Queenstown Cemetery Friends Group.

The project has been named 'Nillumbik's Conservation Corridors' and will specifically focus on management works to promote the protection and improvement of habitat for rare and threatened species within the areas mentioned above. The objectives of the project are to:

- Improve monitoring, knowledge and information relating to significant species, communities and ecological processes
- Support the community to continue to take action to protect and enhance biodiversity and prevent the further loss of significant species and habitat, including assisting groups to approach and engage inexperienced landowners
- To improve the coordination between private and public land management by engaging and strengthening partnerships between Landcare groups, Friends groups, Nillumbik Shire Council, Parks Victoria and DSE
- Improve decision making and adopting an asset-based approach to management by protecting the highest value assets at the greatest risk

In Bend of Islands, a small group of local ecologists, using both their scientific and local knowledge and working within the framework of the grant application, came up with a list of key species and habitats that will be the focus within our area.

The projects for the coming years are:

Weed Control

Using information from our Land Management Plan, funding has been applied for to target key environmental weeds within Bend of Islands including Bridal Creeper, Boneseed, Bluebell Creeper, weedy Wattle species and Pittosporum among others. Initial works will begin on the steep escarpment areas along Catani Boulevard and Gongfler's Drive

Wildlife Monitoring

Motion-sensing cameras will be used to assess density and distribution of wildlife species known to be, or likely to be present in Bend of Islands. Species to be targeted include Tuan, Sminthopsis sp., Antechinus sp., Feather-tail Glider and Eastern Pygmy Possum

Biodiversity and Habitat Preservation

The aim is to increase population sizes of locally-threatened plant species within higher quality areas of habitat. This will be achieved through exclusion fencing and monitoring grazing pressure from both native and introduced animals (rabbits, deer etc) Suggested species to target include those from the Asteraceae and Proteaceae plant families.

Our initial funding application was for weed control. Due to the steepness of the escarpment, we have decided to employ local contractors to carry out the work. This should begin in the next few months.

Future projects will require community assistance, especially when we use motion-sensing cameras. Nillumbik Shire will be running a free training course on how to use the cameras early next year, so it would be great to get as many interested locals trained as possible. This would be an exciting project for children to work on, especially when looking at the images the camera has taken, as we will be able to see what critters also call Bend of Islands home!

As most of the work will be taking place on private land, written permission will be sought from landholders before any work begins. We hope many landholders will become part of the project.

If you need any further information or have any questions, please feel free to contact Jo Henry or Deirdre Lucas through the BICA secretary, or Julia Franco (Land Management Officer – Biodiversity) at Nillumbik Shire Council.

SNAKE VISIT

Liz Mildenhall

We have a small pond near the house that has recently attracted a 1.5 m copperhead for a visit. It was a bit jelly-legging at first having the snake so close to the house, and especially as our young granddaughter visits. At the same time it was quite exciting. The snake was very beautiful to observe from a distance and we tried to approach the area in a way to catch sight of it and not disturb it. We discovered that a number of people around the Bend with ponds or wetlands near their houses had shared summers with snakes and were reassured that copperheads were not aggressive when left alone.

We haven't seen the snake for a few days now and think that just as we were getting used to sharing the territory more comfortably it has moved on. We suspect that it has stayed long enough for the ripe pickings of frogs and skinks around the pond and then headed off to better pastures. Maybe it will return?



Liz's picture of her snake. Although indistinct in this photo the characteristic orange band along the animal's side, separating the upper and lower surfaces, is a good feature by which to identify copperheads. This specimen was a much lighter brown in contrast to the darker grey-brown more commonly seen.

FLORA AND FAUNA DATABASE

Deirdre Lucas

Did you know that Nillumbik Shire Council has recently set up a Flora and Fauna Database?

In order to update their aging records of flora and fauna sightings within the Shire, there is now a webpage the public can access to submit their own records of recently seen native and/or threatened flora and fauna.

Visit the Nillumbik Shire website at <http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au>

Select 'Environment' from the pull down menus at the top and then select 'Native Flora and Fauna'. NOW...scroll all the way to the bottom of the page and there's your link 'Calling for flora and fauna sightings'. Now fill in the form with as much information as you can. Easy, wasn't it!

For more information, contact Julia Franco at Nillumbik Shire Council on 9433 3328 or Julia.Franco@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

HELP FOR INJURED WILDLIFE

Rosemary West

Recently I was able to assist a young girl who was waving down cars travelling along the Eltham Kangaroo Ground road (apparently nobody else wanted to stop). She had found a joey with a broken leg lying on the verge. The mother, on the other side of the fence, was hovering anxiously. I had the phone number for one of the two wildlife rescue organisations keyed into my phone so was able to arrange someone to help. On three occasions since living here I have needed to get help for injured wildlife. I find the organisations helpful and grateful. They give quite a bit of information about what to do if an apparently injured creature is found and if a rescue needs to be done they arrange for this as soon as they can. I suggest we should all keep the phone number handy as we certainly have enough wildlife wandering around here both in the bush and on our roads.

The Help for Wildlife phone number is 1300 094 535

November 2012

A LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE BEND OF ISLANDS

Dylan Osler

While you may be aware that I have been working on a land management plan for the Bend of Islands, I thought I would take this opportunity to give you a bit of a picture of what has been involved and the overall intention of this project.

It is hoped that by putting this land management plan together it will provide the broader community a better understanding of;

what flora and fauna species have been recorded in the last thirty odd years

what are the different vegetation types within the Bend

what threatened species have been recorded in the Bend and do they still exist here

what are the key threatening processes to the flora and fauna within the Bend

what can be done on an individual level

what can be done within the broader context of the Bend and why.

As someone who has lived in the Bend for a number of years and spent a lot of time looking at different areas of the Bend I am keen to highlight some of the key ecological values of the area which are often overlooked but also identify the key threatening processes which are likely to undermine these values.

It is hoped that the land management plan will aid people (both old and new residents) in having a better understanding of what we actually have within the area but also the importance of the need to manage it to ensure its integrity into the future.

One aspect of the project has been the mapping of weed species, threatened species and vegetation types.

A number of the exotic species have been able to naturalise and have become serious environmental weeds throughout the Bend. While not all weeds have been mapped (as there are quite a few) or all areas (house sites have been excluded for instance) the majority of those mapped are species which are still in low numbers but also the potential to significantly alter the composition of the indigenous vegetation. The focus of those weed species mapped is on those that can be managed easily and are still small populations. Some like Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) is starting to establish a number of populations around the Bend on the sheltered slopes. If left unmanaged this species has the ability to cover large tracts of the Bend as it has done in areas like Plenty Gorge. Once this occurs it is incredibly difficult to manage and is likely to out compete some of the Bend's more locally threatened species. Currently the eradication of this species is still manageable but if untreated will have a massive impact.

The Bend has been lucky in that a number of naturalists (no, not those ones!) have been recording species within the Bend for many years. They recorded a tremendously rare orchid during the wet period of the 1970s, before weeds and rabbits had really hammered the last population. This has meant there is a wealth of records out there. As part of the project (but also out of interest for many years previously) I have tried to ascertain whether these species are still present within the Bend and if they are is the population still viable. To be honest some of these rarer, more threatened species haven't fared well, with some either not recorded since Dean Rouse was living here or some cases reduced to a few plants.

Yes, this may sound somewhat glum but it is also the intention of the land management plan to identify what the values are, what the threats are and try to reverse the trend.

While I haven't met any of those tremendously rare plants on my survey (I had really hoped!) it has identified a number of new species (no, not all weeds) including a beautiful daisy called Rayless Daisy (*Brachyscome perpusilla*) which stands about 1cm tall, occurs for a short period over spring and is known from one moss mat covered in other annual species. Who's excited!!

The steering committee will have a draft of the report in early December. It is hoped that the report will be available to those interested members of the community early in the New Year.

THE LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN IN ACTION

Peter Mildenhall

We have lived on the river in Lower Catani for 20 years now and are still trying to get a grip on 'managing' the two hectares we look after. Very early on we got rid of the pines on the block thanks to the erstwhile intervention and support of Peter Gurney and the Landcare group. Previous owners had planted various trees and shrubs, both indigenous but not to the local area, and exotic and over the last few years we have been culling them.

We have kept a vegie garden and planted fruit trees within the house surrounds as well as spending time trying to rid ourselves of various bulbs ... snowdrops, belladonnas, watsonia and those dreaded agapanthus and they still pop up from time to time! We have also waged a battle with the spread of young burgan and have had some success with a concerted campaign over a number of years on one section. We have seen the growth of lomandra, young acacia, grasses and heath. In this section there has been a gradual decline of the young burgan ... though it takes constant vigilance!

We have been selected as one of the sites for a visit from Dylan Osler as part of the development of a Land Management plan for the Bend and we have welcomed his insights and advice. In fact we have felt quite rejuvenated and excited about working on the block again.

His visit:

- reinforced our thoughts about the spread of burgan and our efforts to control it especially on the drier slopes. The mature burgan by the river now must be 50 years old (following the 60's fires) and is well established and thinning out on the ground, however young burgan is still seeding and spreading, colonising drier areas towards the road and we are attempting to cut and poison larger specimens, and hand pulling younger ones in order to maintain diversity, especially grasses, orchids and shrubs
- encouraged us to work on more weed eradication, both small and large, starting from the good spots and working out has proved psychologically helpful. We are planting in-

digenuous grasses and shrubs within the 'house block' and beyond into the bush and have found the FOWSP Nursery at Warrandyte State Park really useful for the purchase of indigenous shrubs and grasses

- helped to identify reasonably rare and, for us, unidentified grasses and herbs, and trees like the muttonwood by the river and a tree fern in our creekbed. We will encourage and support their growth and spread. While we seem to have got rid of most/all (?) of our rabbits as part of the Rabbit Control Program, we still have some fenced sections of bush that seem to encourage a wider diversity of plants ... perhaps the wallabies don't hassle them and visiting rabbits can't get in?
- gave us further food for thought about our 'wetland' areas: an old dam that was used as a pool by the scouts many years ago that has become a haven for birds and frogs and a more degraded rectangular yabbie dam that was excavated 25 years ago and still looks like it did then despite planting and some growth. We plan to look at possible re-design and site works to make it a more 'natural' wetland area and encourage a more diverse variety of flora and fauna around it.

It has taken us some time to really get stuck into our block and try to manage it for the future and restore it to a more natural state for the area. As many would be aware this raises the perennial arguments about what is the 'natural' state for our riverine, wooded area by the river?

- How prevalent was/is/should be the burgan?
- What is the best ratio of trees to grassland and shrubby area? What was it like in its pristine state before white settlement?
- What is the 'right' ratio of boxes to stringybarks to manna gums?
- We lost all of the wattles some time ago (and the sugar gliders) now they are coming back? Is that the effect of drought then a couple of good years?
- What is the right balance between active intervention, supervision of weeds and benign neglect?

Our involvement with the development of the Land Manage-

ment Plan in the Bend has helped us to think through some of these issues and reinforced in us the need to actively manage our land, working on the 'baddies' and encouraging the spread of the 'goodies'. We would encourage 'Benders' to learn from the Land Management Plan as it is developed and to work together to preserve this great environment. We are happy to talk about and show some of our progress and new discoveries to those interested.

WATTLE WALK

John McCallum

This year's Wattle Walk followed a familiar route and the group wended its way down Catani Boulevard from the fire station. A number of well known species were encountered including Black Wattle, Blackwood, Silver Wattle, Golden Wattle, God-dust Wattle, Spreading Wattle and Hedge Wattle. Not many escaped exotic species were seen but although we did remove one *A. podalyrifolia* and some Cootamundra still persists on private property and a few seedlings are scattered along the roadside. Vigilant walkers can weed them out!

Of special interest were the following two species.

Acacia terminalis (Sunshine Wattle)

This species has been known from a couple of plants seen over the past forty years but neither has survived. A search of one of these localities has been carried out frequently and this year a single plant at the two-leaf stage was found in Catani Boulevard. At the time of writing the plant is healthy and about 40 cm in height. There is some uncertainty as to whether this species is in fact indigenous to Bend of Islands. It is known to be native to parts of Victoria to our east.

Acacia ulicifolia (Juniper Wattle)

A. ulicifolia is present in surrounding areas such as the Warrandyte State Park and North Warrandyte, and it has long been thought that it would turn up in Bend of Islands eventually. It has. A single plant was spotted on a well drained South-east facing hillside in Catani Boulevard between Gongflers and Ironbark. Everyone should be on the lookout for more plants.

This open shrub has spiny leaves, shorter and more crowded than Spreading Wattle, the flowers are in single, cream coloured globular heads.

EUCALYPT WALK

This year's Eucalypt Walk with Graham Peterson was a continuation of the last one where the types covered then were reviewed and we were introduced to three more.

Graham reminded us of the characteristics that enabled us to identify, first of all, Red Box (*Euclayptus polyanthemos*) with its familiar bluish-green somewhat broad leaves and the flower heads with many individual flowers. Long-leaf Box (*E. gonio-calyx*) with rough bark like Red Box has longer, darker green leaves and the fruits and their stems have a distinctive angled appearance in cross section. This species grows fairly fast, can tend to have a drooping appearance and is quick to form hollows. The third species from our drier hillsides was Red Stringybark (*E. macroryncha*) with the fibrous bark that gives it its name.

On our stroll down the end section of Henley Road we were introduced to Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*). This species has unmistakable hard, dark, deeply furrowed bark. When it flowers the large blossoms attract a wide variety of honeyeaters and other birds as well as fruit bats. Ironbark is generally restricted to the higher drier areas of the Bend such as along Skyline Road.

Getting closer to the river we found Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*) that grows to a large attractive tree with fine foliage. The trunk is clothed with rough bark up as far as the lower parts of the branches. The upper branches shed their bark and are smooth. The oval shaped leaves have distinctive marginal veins.

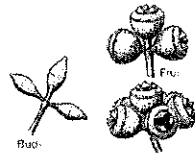
Next we encountered Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*). These state-ly white barked trees are generally restricted to stream sides in the Bend and have a distinctive arrangement of the buds, which are arranged in threes in the form of a cross (picture). The flowers and fruits of course have the same arrangement and is a good way to identify the species. The only possible confusion here is with Candlebark Gum (*E. rubida*) which also occurs in the Bend but is more likely to be found on the drier hillsides such as in Henley Road from the lower junction of Catani Boulevard to the top of the hill. Candlebark also has cross-shaped flower arrangement but the juvenile leaves are rounded in contrast to the thin ones of Manna Gum.

Graham then took us down to the river bank at John and Henriette Strain's place where had another interesting treat for us. He talked about and showed us the five species of *Pomaderris* that occur in the Bend of Islands. They are all shrubs and have characteristic raised veins on their leaves, the greyish undersides of which are clothed with fine, star-shaped hairs. The species that occur in the Bend are:

Hazel Pomaderris (*P. aspera*)
Rusty Pomaderris (*P. ferruginea*)
Woolly Pomaderris (*P. lanigera*)
Plum-leaf Pomaderris (*P. pruinifolia*)
Cluster Pomaderris (*P. racemosa*)

Reference to all of these can be found in Flora of Victoria (Australian Plants Society Maroondah), an invaluable reference to anyone interested in the plants of this area.

The morning ended with one of Mia's plant identification tests and a barbeque. Thank you to John and Henriette for their hospitality and to Graham for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with us.



Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*)

X 2/3

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Already mentioned in the Newsletter is our new pictorial calendar for 2013 which should be out soon.

There have been lots of fun and great events held this year. I would like to thank everyone who have given their time and helped with organizing and putting them together. Thank you also to those who have attended events throughout the year.

Some of the events that have been held this year have been Clean up Australia Day, History Tour, Eucalyptus Walk, Bike Ride, Firehouse Cinema, The Big Walk, Trivia Night, Wattle Walk, Weed Walk, Orchid Walk, Pub Walk and the Night Event.

Thanks, Rudi for co-ordinating this important aspect of BICA's activities

ADVERTISEMENT

BICA has been asked to place the following advertisement in the Newsletter. We don't normally advertise in the BICA Newsletter, but after much debate the BICA Committee agreed to include this information as an exception to the editorial policy. Inclusion doesn't represent an endorsement of the company nor of the Government's Net Gain Offset Policies.

Net Gain is still somewhat controversial as realistic outcomes are difficult to measure. BICA members interested in pursuing the matter may wish to inform themselves both about the Policy and this consultant, Abzeco (see below). However, as stated by Abzeco, there may be benefits for landholders seeking funding for specific works.

Note that below "EVC" refers to the Ecological Vegetation Community, in this case, Box Ironbark Forest

Abzeco is a local Ecological Consulting company based in Eltham – you may know of us. At the moment we are looking for native vegetation offsets for one of our clients – required under the Native Vegetation Management Framework. The particular offsets we need are in Box Ironbark Forest. We particularly need large old trees in Box Ironbark Forest. We would be keen to hear from members of Landcare groups in and around Nillumbik Shire who may have such trees or patches of Box Ironbark Forest on their properties and would be interested in trading native vegetation offset credits. Offset trading is a way that landowners can gain additional income through protecting and managing remnant vegetation on their properties. This may particularly suit people actively involved in Landcare as they are probably looking after the remnant vegetation already.

Abzeco is already working with a number of local landholders who are managing their bush blocks successfully for additional income through offset credit trading and biodiversity benefits.

If you are interested and have the correct EVC contact

David Fairbridge
Ecological Consultant

Abzeco Pty Ltd

ph: 03 9431 5444 fax: 03 9431 5443 mob: 0498743899



BICA Calendar 2013

January 2013

13 Bird walk 7.30am

February

10 Bird Walk (7:30 am)
14 Committee Meeting
16 Café Benders
17 Landcare
24 Canoe Run

March

3 Clean Up Australia Day
10 Bird Walk (8:00 am)
14 Committee Meeting
16 Café Benders
17 Landcare
24 Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program

April

7 Eucalyptus Walk
7 Daylight savings ends
11 Committee Meeting
14 Bird Walk (8:30 am)
14 General Meeting (afternoon)
20 Café Benders
20 Wurundjeri Craft Event
21 Landcare
28 Bike Ride

May

4 Open Artist Studios
9 Committee Meeting
12 Bird Walk (8:30 am)
18 Café Benders
18 Wurundjeri Craft Event
18 Firehouse Cinema
19 Landcare
26 The Big Walk

June

2 Moss/Fungi Walk
9 Bird Walk (8:30 am)
13 Committee Meeting
15 Café Benders
16 Landcare

July

6 Trivia Night
11 Committee Meeting
14 Bird Walk (8:30 am)
20 Café Benders
21 Landcare with Co-op
28 General Meeting

August

4 Wattle Walk
8 Committee Meeting
11 Bird Walk (8:30 am)
17 Café Benders
17 Firehouse Cinema
18 Landcare
25 Weed Walk

September

8 Bird Walk (8:00 am)
12 Committee Meeting
21 Café Benders
22 Landcare

October

6 Orchid Walk
6 Daylight savings start
10 Committee Meeting
13 Bird Walk (8:00 am)
19 Café Benders
20 Landcare
27 Pub Walk

November

10 Bird Walk (7:30 am)
14 Committee Meeting
16 Café Benders
17 Landcare
23 Open Artist Studios
23 Night Event
24 BICA AGM
24 BICA Subs Due

December

5 Committee Meeting
8 Bird Walk (7:30 am)
21 Café Benders Christmas
(evening)
22 Landcare