



WHAT PLANT IS FLOWERING?

Scientific Name: *Deyeuxia quadriseta*

Common Name: Reed Bent-grass

Family: Poaceae (Grasses)

Flowering Period: September to May.

Sector: Found in the Yarra Sector, (all of Bend of Islands south of the powerline easement) and the Co-op Sector, (all of Bend of Islands north of the powerline easement roughly equivalent to the land comprising the "Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative")

Deyeuxia quadriseta is the only species of the *Deyeuxia* genus recorded in the Bend of Islands.

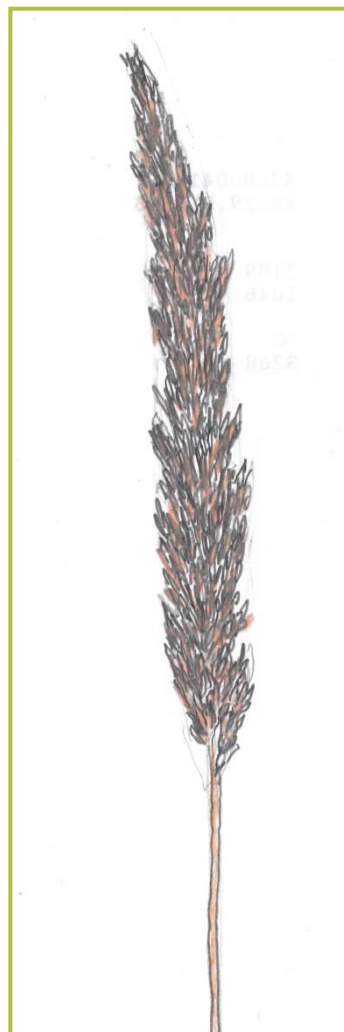
Description: A medium to tall perennial grass, forming an open, sparsely tufted grassy tussock, 30cm tall x 30cm wide with a tall flowering stalk up to 1.5 m tall.

Foliage: The grass-like leaves are 20-30 cm long and 2-7 mm wide, rough, flat, to slightly inrolled with the apex tapered to a point. The leaf sheath margins are pale & leaf nodes are purplish.

Flower: The flower is a pale green upright spike up to 15 cm long at the end of the slender stem.

Position: Prefers open position in moist, well-drained soil or full sun. Tolerates wet winter and dry summer soil, most soil types, poor drainage, partial shade and drought.

Large clumps are impressive in flower.



Cric Henry

Drawing by **Ross Henry**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There is the gentle patter of autumn rain as I write this, bringing life to the lichen and algae as well as seeping in and nourishing a gorgeous carpet of moss on the ridge where I love to regularly walk. I do hope this soft autumn rain continues a bit longer...

Now, I'm sure we all have our own collection of magic moments living in the BOI, and recently while doing the 'work from home' thing, I was having lunch outside in the sun, when a variety of our local birdlife decided to bathe and frantically splash themselves silly in our bird bath. This was one of those beautiful moments. There were our regular Buff Rumped and Yellow Rumped Thornbills, Grey Fantails and White Throated Tree Creeper along with an Eastern Spinebill, Scarlet Robin and stunning Golden Whistler. Absolutely delightful, and thanks to Val, Ona and Caleb for help in identifying them.

Well this got me thinking, and I took another look at the BICA Website and found some interesting facts in plain sight...

Did you know that BICA has been recording the birdlife in the BOI for over 3 decades now, and there's been 155 species recorded in the 378 monthly reports since they started back in 1989?

This is amazing, and there is more. There are over 700 species of Indigenous Plants listed for BOI, there are 67 orchid species listed for the ELZ, 37 Butterfly species recorded during the last 12 years, and 34 species of Dragonflies over the last 10 years.

This is Citizen Science way before Citizen Science became a thing. And of course many thanks goes to Frank Pierce who is the keeper and maintainer of these records.

What an honour to live in a community dedicated to studying, recording and looking after the natural environment decades before it has become mainstream. We are way ahead of the curve on this front.

Now, on to other concerns, both the BICA Committee and Planning Sub Committee have been active in meeting with a few of our NSC councilors as well as presenting at some of the recent NSC Council Meetings, and the support from you, our BICA Members has been heart-warming to say the least.

After the huge 21 page list of submissions were read out for the Local Laws one councilor said they wished that people in other suburbs would be as passionate as those within the BOI.

So, thank you so much for your support and please make sure you have your BICA Membership paid up, as having our membership over 70% of land owners really does have an impact on maintaining the protection of our SUZ2 Planning Scheme, and our beautiful natural home in the bush.

And if you wish to take things a step further and help out more, then we do need more members on the BICA Committee too, so reach out and let us know.

Michael
BICA President

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FROM THE SECRETARY

Currently we have an Acting Secretary so we're looking for someone who can take on the role of Secretary. Please be in touch if you would like to find out more about what's involved or feel you can help out in any way with this.

We're also seeking people who might like to join the Committee. Being on Committee is a great way to really understand what BICA does, both behind the scenes and upfront and to learn a whole lot about the Bend of Islands that you maybe never knew before.

Regeneration is important in the bush as well as for our committee. It would be great to see some new people shoots sprouting to ensure that our special Bend of Islands continues to be nurtured and protected into the future in line with our BICA Purposes.

Our Purposes

- (a) To preserve, nurture and encourage the diversity of the native flora and fauna of the area and its natural beauty, consistent with essential community needs, including fire precaution.
- (b) To nurture and encourage the diversity of the local flora and fauna and to promote community understanding of the local ecology and how to live in harmony with it through sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- (c) To associate and collaborate with other organizations whose aims are consistent with these objectives and to support, where appropriate, conservation activities in other areas.
- (d) To act for and on behalf of the membership individually or collectively in negotiations with public authorities, other organizations and individuals within the framework of these objectives.

There's other ways you can support BICA too – come along to our activities, get involved with the newsletter team, get your hands dirty at Landcare, put in personal submissions to council on important issues affecting the BOI and continue to renew your membership each year.

Save the Date! General Meeting in June

We'll be having a General Meeting on Sunday June 26 and are pleased to announce that our speaker will be Charlotte Sterrett, the newly appointed Yarra Riverkeeper.

Charlotte sees the Yarra/Birrarung as the lifeblood of Melbourne and a perfect place to connect to nature. Part of her motivation of working as the Yarra Riverkeeper is to encourage people to be more connected to the river and to respect it as a living entity with rights of its own.

BICA regularly forwards information from The Yarra Riverkeeper Association to our members and you can find out more about Charlotte at <https://yarrariver.org.au/about/team/charlotte-sterrett/>

Membership

We welcome eight new members since our last newsletter in June 2021. Six have recently bought houses in the Bend, one is a long time resident and one is from further afield.

A huge thankyou to all who have renewed membership this year.

The importance of a strong membership was shown during a recent council meeting, when one councilor commented that she was astonished at the depth of passion and commitment to conservation shown by residents in the Bend.

As if we didn't know that already!



To our new members in the Bend:

- Matt Jones
- Jamie McMahon & Joanne Stevens
- Nicky Dougherty
- Brendan Love
- Sid Philip-Owen & Julia Corinaldi
- Tim Baxter & Sangeetha Pillai
- Dan Cleaveley

And from further afield:

- Anitra Nelson

We hope you enjoy participating in our community.

BICA General Meeting

Sunday 26 June 2022

**Guest Speaker – Charlotte Sterrett,
Yarra Riverkeeper**

Venue: TBC



BICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What an extraordinary thing it is to make a calendar of events after Covid 19 2020 and 2021.

BIRD surveys, LANDCARE, CAFE BENDERS, COMMITTEE MEETINGS IN PERSON, not to mention Clean up Australia Day and it's only April!

In March six children of the Bend and four parents met me near the bridge on Henley Rd where we set up for a painting morning on a gently sloped clearing near the parking spot.

When I arrived there was much exploration and fun going on under the bridge, where the creek was audible but in gentle flow. I remember thinking that this was an excellent omen for a creative time teaching colour for the first time since a colour course for grown ups with Prue Acton at RMIT two years before.

We set up the gear and launched into the ever mesmerising mixing of primary colour pigment particles suspended in water on extra special coated paper. We all played until a level of control was evident for everyone and then explored the colours in the bush and the colour relationships within the whole environment.

The children then began the serious business of painting on some recycled timber stair runs that I had prepped for the day and WOW!

Five of the six children were new to the Bend, and this was the first time they had met other local kids, parents swapped phone numbers and passing cars stopped and came to see what was happening. COMMUNITY YIPPEE!!! Good feedback and interesting suggestions were given. I have a number of timber panels, so if anyone is interested please let BICA know and we will find different location. Yep, I'm crossing my fingers that we can make this delight happen again and have all 12 panels painted on both sides one day soon.

Christine

COUNCILOR VISITORS

For many years BICA has had a good working relationship with council which has resulted in meaningful dialogue and positive environmental outcomes. In February, after prolonged postponements due to Covid restrictions, we were finally able to host three of our recent councilors on a visit to the Bend. Committee members, Planning Sub-Committee members and the Roadside Vegetation team introduced them to "the jewel in the crown", this unique patch of land adjoining the Yarra river that sits within the broader landscape of Nillumbik Shire.





CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

The community did their bit for this annual event on the 6th March. An energetic band of Benders, organised by Tobey Henry, spread themselves far and wide to cleanse our environment.

We are all indebted to all the regular walkers in our area, continually picking up rubbish when doing their rounds. These routes are kept in a very clean condition as a result. So, on Clean Up Australia Day we concentrated on areas a bit beyond the “block”, off the track, like the river’s edge, the popular rubbish dumping spot up Skyline Rd near Yering Gorge, and we even drifted up Henley Road outside the ELZ collecting 2 bags of rubbish up as far as Calwell Road. We also got rid of some redundant barbed wire property fencing. This activity helps to keep the bush, the roadsides and the river in the best possible condition for us and the critters to enjoy.

Afterwards, we all celebrated at the ever-generous Liz n Floss’s for a delightful BBQ and chat. Our good friend, Ewen Gellie was there, enjoying the event, this time giving out bits and pieces from his workshop. It was the last time we saw him. He died unexpectedly a couple of days later. Afterwards we contemplated how lucky we were to share that very happy day with him. Ewen’s obituary can be found on p20.



Covid 2021 Easter Bears



SUGAR GLIDERS

We've watched sugar gliders farm the sap from wattles on our studio block... they cut a V notch with their teeth in the trunk and come back and lick the dripping sap. It tastes quite mild.

Some wattles have a stronger flavour than others. Silver wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) is the one we tried.

Also indigenous travelers used this wattle gum as a sustaining "chewing gum" on their long walks.

Ona Henderson & Syd Tunn



TREAD LIGHTLY

Lorraine and I moved up to the Bend as 30 plus year olds with 3 kids under 10 in tow. Wide eyed and bushy tailed with an aim to build a muddy with reclaimed timbers whilst working and living on site in bush. Without the community and the incredible lessons learnt from the environment we would not be here 30 years on. We had Ross Henry and Gary Patterson who happily taught me how to construct a vaulted mudbrick dome. We had Wolfgang and Marie who keep our valley so pristine it's a trip into gondwana.

We sadly left our dogs and cats behind, the upside was we all learnt and experienced so much more from the wildlife in our faces.

We have kangaroos, wombats, koalas, echidnas that happily drink and graze 5mts from our windows.

We know we have more than 30 types of birds that drink and feed around our house. Bluetongue lizards that bask in the sun 5mts from the front door and begrudgingly hide as you walk past then come straight back out. We have seen orchids, fungi and spiders that just amaze.

One of our highlights was nursing a wedgetail back to health, to watch it join its partner and young fledgling then fly off, which happened within 15 mts of our windows. Although we still miss not having a dog, none of these experiences would have happened for us, our children and our grandchildren if we'd had a dog on the block.

I feel we are learning all the time from the bend by being guardians not masters of this beautiful bush block.

Tread lightly and let this wonderful area massage the soul.

Rgds Lorraine and pete



Nursing our Wedgy



Happy to return to the wild



YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN



The Yarra Strategic Plan (YSP) was officially launched on 11/2/2022. Access the YSP at [here](#)

This is a very comprehensive document with the river considered as a whole, but also divided into 4 sections, to enable detailed analysis of the differing circumstances as the river makes its way from the mountains to the bay. This is the first of a series of 10-year plans to achieve the 50-year vision that has been developed for the Yarra.

The **Lower Rural Reach** is the section that stretches from Healesville to Warrandyte and includes the Bend of Islands. The 50-year Vision for this section includes: -

From Yering Gorge, our Yarra River, Birrarung is continuously replenished by plants and animals from Kinglake and beyond, joining the river on its journey to the city.

This clause highlights the importance of the Kinglake-Yarra Biodiversity Corridor and the high biodiversity of the Bend of Islands, Warrandyte State Park and adjacent areas.

The YSP specifically highlights the Kinglake-Yarra Biodiversity Corridor as an **'Area for Protection'**. This area includes the MW land in Christmas Hills and this will strengthen the case for high conservation outcomes from MW's disposal of this land.

The YSP should achieve much improved **'Whole of River Management'** and will hopefully provide opportunities for on-going environmental enhancement and protection of our area.

Frank Pierce





NILLUMBIK LANDCARE NETWORK

There have been two meetings of the Nillumbik Landcare Network this year (February and April), so here's a potted summary of the items/actions of most interest to BICA.

Caring for Rural Landscape

This information document is now online – <https://www.nillumbiklandcare.org> – and is a credit to Ash Densham (Network Facilitator) and several members of the network. It is designed to better connect the eleven Landcare groups, and to give the efforts of all an online presence.

The scope covers the broad landscape categories across the Shire:

- Waterways and Wetlands
- Wet and Damp Forests
- Dry forests and Woodlands, and
- Cleared Rural Land.

It also provides details on each local group and the information on our/BoI needs to be completed. There are categories for events and resources, so again a way to better connect the groups.

Anyhow, check it out, and anyone with a good history/participation in our group could contribute to filling in our section.

City Nature Challenge

This a scaled down version of the Great Southern Bioblitz, and appears to be city-centric, and Council focused. Nillumbik is participating, and is similarly a citizen-science, species' record event, running from 29 April to 2 May. It seems that iNaturalist is the go-to App to help with ID's.

Forest Health Monitoring Project

There's a possibility of philanthropic funding to see this project continue. As mentioned in the previous Newsletter, there are technical issues to overcome and complementary assessments (e.g.habitat) required to make this a scalable and cost-effective methodology. Doug Evans (Christmas Hills) and I are working on a project structure and possible institutions that are likely to meet the foundations criteria and other requirements. I'll keep you informed.

Grants

Melbourne Water grants are available for landowners for Streamside Management.

Warren Tomilson has been the MW contact for Nillumbik and from all reports he has been very helpful. I'm not across all the processes involved here, but clearly it is something worth pursuing if you have a project in mind.

Andy McMahon





WHAT WEED TO WATCH OUT FOR

Acacia floribunda

THE WEED

Acacia floribunda is also known as White Sallow, or Gossamer Wattle. It grows naturally in Qld, NSW and into East Gippsland. However, in Bend of Islands it is a weed that can form dense thickets that crowd out other species in the mid-storey as well as smaller ground covers and so modifies ecosystems and habitats. It is fast growing, with long-lived seeds.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Acacia floribunda grows into a large shrub or small tree. Like many wattles, it doesn't have true leaves but rather phyllodes that are narrow and straight or slightly curved, up to 15 cm long and 1 cm wide. During winter it has cylindrical, pale-yellow flowers. The spikes can be up to 8 cm long, produced in the leaf axils.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD

Acacia floribunda is a very popular ornamental and so is primarily in Bend of Islands due to being a garden escape. It produces many seeds which are dispersed by gravity and water.

HOW TO CONTROL

Physical management of *A. floribunda* includes cutting and painting herbicide on the stumps or ringbarking and then applying herbicide.

Small plants and seedlings can usually be hand pulled.

DON'T CONFUSE IT WITH

Acacia mucronata ssp. longifolia: Narrow-leaf Wattle: In Bend of Islands this plant has longer and narrower leaves (phyllodes), 20 cm long and 0.5 cm wide

Acacia stricta: Hop Wattle: The narrowpale green leaves tend to be more upright and the flowers are delicate yellow, fluffy globular balls.

At the February Landcare, BICA focused on *Acacia floribunda* that was growing along Henley Rd.



If you would like some help identifying and controlling any weeds on your block, please feel free to contact BICA.

bicacomm@mail.com

Here is Tim working hard cutting up the last of the big weedy wattles at his place!!





WEED ID RESOURCES

The following book is a pretty good identification source and can be used in conjunction with the Royal Botanic Gardens Vic Flora website.

Weeds of the South-East: An Identification Guide for Australia. 3rd ed. FJ Richardson, RG Richardson, RCH Shepherd.

<http://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/>

You can also find a comprehensive list of environmental weeds recorded in Bend of Islands (2015). There's a quick link to it on the BICA website under Plants

<http://bendofislands.wordpress.com/flora-and-fauna/plants/>

BOI LAND MANAGEMENT

Bend of Islands Land Management Plan and Implementation Strategy

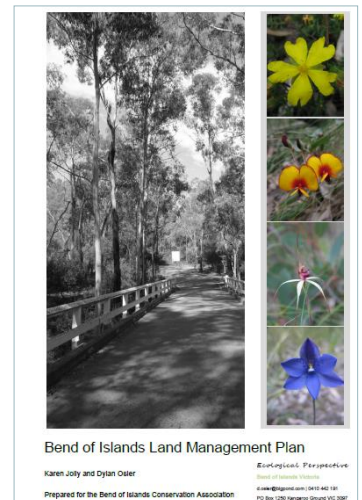
Did you know that the Bend of Islands has its own **Land Management Plan**?

This is a comprehensive overarching report commissioned by BICA in 2013. It details the extent and variety of all flora, fauna and vegetation types within the Bend, describes areas of high ecological importance and identifies environmental priorities for the future management of the area. It also contains some examples of individual property land management plans, which can be undertaken by owners.

The **Implementation Strategy** is a strategic summary of all the issues relevant to implementing the LMIP itself.

Both documents are invaluable tools

- most importantly for understanding the ecological significance of the Bend of Islands
- and for learning how to look after it ourselves.

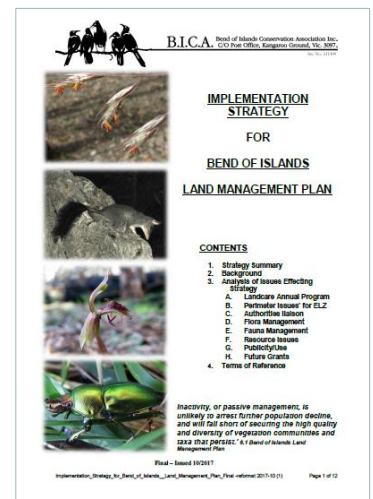


“Inactivity, or passive management, is unlikely to arrest further population decline and will fall short of securing the high quality and diversity of vegetation communities and taxa that persist.”

6.1 Bend of Islands Land Management Plan

Both the LMP and the Implementation Strategy are available to BICA members and property owners. The pdf is rather large to email, but can be provided to you on a USB.

Please contact us if you are interested in obtaining them.





FERAL CATS

This feral cat was recently seen roaming in Gongflers Peninsula. Council compliant cat traps were set to catch it. Regardless it was a relief to find it deceased before it could be caught.



BICA has two council compliant cat traps that are available for borrowing. They are available at the Mildenhalls with full instructions for use.

NEST BOXES AT SUGARLOAF DAM SOLAR FARM

Melbourne Water have commenced construction of a large Solar Farm on a peninsula on the northern side of Sugarloaf Dam, west of the Sailing club.

As part of the approvals process for this project, BICA and the Co-op made submissions requesting that MW take all practical steps to minimise the effects of the tree removal associated with the project. We then worked collaboratively with MW to achieve some minimization of tree removal and also agreement that MW would engage a suitably qualified expert to design, install and monitor a range of Nestboxes to assist with minimising the impact to nesting species due to the vegetation removal.

The Nestboxes have now been installed by Treetec and we were interested to inspect the variety of nestbox types as shown in these photos



Arboreal Chainsaw Hollow



Chainsaw Bat Slot



Bat Box



Large Parrot Box

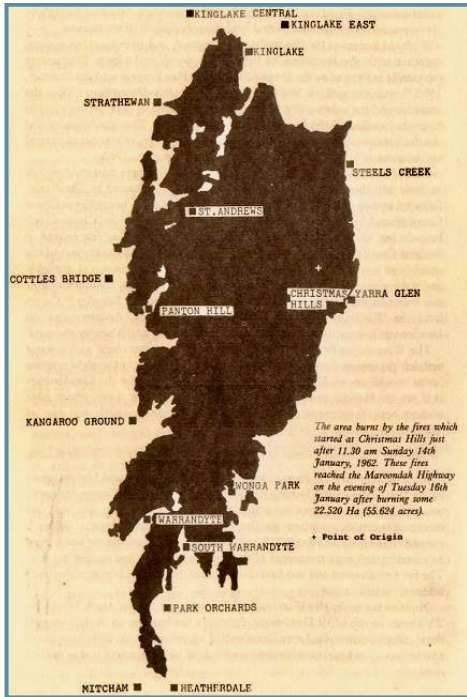
We thank MW for cooperating with us to achieve a better environmental outcome.

Frank Pierce



PLANNING FOR A BUSHFIRE IN THE BEND??

As many residents will be aware Bend of Islands has had a benign fire history since the devastating fires of 1962 which burned out the Bend and surrounding areas. The map below indicates the extent of that fire which began in Christmas Hills on Sunday January 14 1962. As I understand it the 1962 fire destroyed nearly all the buildings in the Bend.



We avoided the Black Saturday conflagration of 2009 that destroyed homes in nearby Christmas Hills and since then smaller grass and scrub fires have occasionally caused us some concerns however we have, through luck, avoided the worst that many others areas of Victoria have suffered.

How prepared are we for an inferno like the 1962 fire or Black Saturday or even for a local grass and scrub fire started accidentally by a campfire or burn off or even a mower or grinder?

The other very significant issue for us who have chosen to live in the Bend is how do we balance our love of the bush, our high conservation values and need to protect our local flora and fauna with prudent bushfire planning and preparation?

I would want to argue that we can do both but that each property is unique and the circumstance of each resident and/or family is also different and often changes from one season to the next.

There are great resources available, online and in print to help with both property and house preparation and with personal and family bushfire plans. I want to highlight the

work of Bushfire Resilience Inc (BRI) (I am a committee member) as away in to some of these issues.

BRI has run a number of Webinars in 2020 and 2021 and is planning another five for this year and they range across the issues of planning and preparation for bushfire with a 'Nillumbik' resonance. We have also developed nearly 30 short 'clips' that highlight aspects of planning and preparation that all residents would find useful.

Liz and I were lucky in that we inherited a block and building envelope that had been perhaps even overdeveloped and we have been able to plan and prepare with quite a clearance around the house.

Key issues for us over the years have been:

Maintaining a relatively cleared buffer around the house, which includes stone paving and trying to avoid any 'laddering' of trees and shrubs i.e. keeping the base of major nearby trees clear of vegetation;

Maintaining an existing track around the house that provides access for firefighting vehicles if ever needed and a cleared buffer for any slow moving grass and scrub fire;

Ensuring we have an adequate water supply including a 25,000 litre tank solely for firefighting purposes with a CFA external fitting and gravity feed to the house site;

Making sure our petrol fire pump and generator are used regularly and ready to go if and when needed.

Following a Justin Leonard BRI Webinar we have reinforced our protection around the pump and pipe fittings especially the external plastic ones to try and shield them from extreme heat and fire.



Repainted some of external timber work with fire resistant paint (from Grimes in Research)... very much a work in progress!



Still trying to ensure that external crevices and cracks more than 2mm are covered in and excluded from ember attack...an ongoing issue in a timber and mud brick house!!

Covering most of our windows with heavy duty stainless steel mesh on steel frames to protect them from ember attack.



Replaced first floor balconies which were timber with a fire treated eco-wood and a metal balustrade.



Trying to preserve nearby Burgan in 'patches' and trimming branches near to the ground to diminish the laddering effect.

Some of these steps have taken time and money to implement a well as the impetus of the BRI webinars and the good practice of neighbours in the Bend. We have also revisited our Plans as we think of Plan A, Plan B and C etc as circumstances may change.

Over the last couple of years we have had relatively quiet summers with hardly any sustained heat waves or many TFB days. Our 'moist' springs and early summers may have bred some complacency but as we know with climate change advancing the next hot spell/drought/EI Nino is only a matter of time. We have had a lot of bush growth, the effects of recent wind events leaving the bush littered with fallen timber and preparation and thinking through potential hazards is always useful. 'Now' is always a good time to take stock...

What trees or shrubs have 'got away'? What needs to be trimmed or eliminated to maintain your own balance between relative safety and retaining our bush environment?

What maintenance or work needs to be done to the residence or outbuildings to protect them from ember attack as much as is possible? Roof spaces, under floor spaces, external cladding, window frames, door jambs? What are the vulnerable parts of the house?

How is our water supply, our firefighting equipment...can we protect ourselves in the event of a local fire? Can a CFA tanker access our water if needed? Can a CFA tanker access our house?

Revisit your Bushfire plans and practise them! When will you leave? Where will you go? What do you take? Under what circumstances would you stay and defend? What are your triggers? What if there is only one of you? etc ... Have a Plan A,B, C and have the flexibility to adapt if needed.

Develop a 'to do' list...short term and long term and perhaps a yearly maintenance plan to revisit areas of concern.

Some properties in the Bend were filmed as part of the BRI Webinar series including window protection, barriers to ember attack, and other treatments. They and us would welcome visits or discussion on the various strategies that have been undertaken.

There are some great resources around ... to name a few

CFA online <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare>

BRI <https://bushfireresilience.org.au/>

Joan Webster: Essential Bushfire Safety Tips 3rd Edition

Peter and Liz Mildenhall





CICADAS IN THE BEND



On some hot summer days, the cicadas are so loud that they hurt your ears.

In spring of 2013 I decided to investigate the Cicadas in the Environmental Living Zone (ELZ). I obtained the 1990 reference – Australian Cicadas by M. S. Moulds. This had 202 species for Australia and, working through the distribution maps indicated that there were 14 possible species for the ELZ. That 2013 summer I recorded 7 species. Now, after 8 seasons, my current [ELZ Cicada List](#) has 10 species.

In 2016 I discovered the [Cicadas of Australia](#). This had expanded the Australian species tally to about 400, and it is now up to about 700 species. Some predict this total will rise to 1000+.

Each species has a distinctive call which facilitates reliable detection by sound, once these are learned. Tracking down the individual to photograph is the hard part.

Cicada Lifecycle

The life of adult cicadas is very short, lasting only a few weeks. After mating, the adult female cicada lays its eggs. It does this by piercing plant stems with its ovipositor (egg-laying spike at the tip of the abdomen) and inserting the eggs into the slits it has made. The eggs hatch into small wingless nymphs that fall to the ground and burrow below the surface. Here they live on the sap from plant roots for a period which may last several years. They shed their skin at intervals as they grow.

When the nymph reaches full size it digs its way to the surface with its front legs, which are specially adapted for digging. It generally surfaces about nightfall in late spring or early summer. The nymph then climbs on to a tree trunk or other object and sheds its skin for the last time. The fully-winged adult cicada which emerges leaves its old empty nymphal skin behind.



Clicking Ambertails mating



Cicada Facts:

- Only male cicadas sing. They do this in an attempt to find a mate.
- The sound produced by some communal species can act as a defence against predators.
- Different species have different songs to attract only their own kind.
- They often sing in chorus making it more difficult for predators to locate individuals.
- Adult cicadas have short lives, usually only a few weeks.
- Most of their lives are spent as nymphs underground for up to several years – 6 or 7 years for Greengrocers.
- Cicadas feed only on plant sap using their piercing, sucking mouthparts.
- Cicadas feed on a huge range of plants, including eucalypts and grasses.
- Birds, bats, spiders, wasps, ants, mantids and tree crickets all prey on cicadas.
- They are classified in the order Hemiptera, which includes all insects with piercing and sucking mouth-parts.
- Wing spans of the different species range from about 2.5 cm - 15 cm
- Cicadas have a pair of large compound eyes, and also three very small glistening simple eyes (ocelli) on the top of the head.



Red Scratcher emerging

Cicada Singing

Cicadas are notorious singers. The song is a mating call produced by the males only. Each species has its own distinctive call and only attracts females of its own kind even though rather similar species may co-exist.

Cicadas are the only insects to have developed such an effective and specialised means of producing sound. Some large species such as the Greengrocer/Yellow Monday and the Double Drummer produce a noise intensity that is approaching the pain threshold of the human ear. In contrast, some small species have songs so high in pitch that the noise is beyond the range of our hearing.

The organs which produce sound are the **tymbals**, a pair of ribbed membranes at the base of the abdomen. Contracting the internal tymbal muscles causes the tymbals to buckle inwards and produces a pulse of sound. By relaxing these muscles, the tymbals pop back to their original position.

For more details see [Australian Museum](#)

References

- [Cicadas of Australia](#)
- Moulds, M.S. 1990. *Australian Cicadas*. New South Wales University Press. 217 pp., 24 pls.

Note: To identify the cicadas in the photos go to the [Cicada page](#) on the BICA Website



Greengrocer with sound chamber

Frank Pierce



BIRD NOTES

The following can be reported since June 2021.

Lyrebird Records

The local lyrebirds were calling actively from mounds in at least 2 areas during the 2021 breeding season, however no nests were located, despite some strategic searching.

There have been 67 presence records since 6/2021 and we now have 495+ Lyrebird records reported since July 2000. Details and analysis can be found on the Birds Page of the BICA website.

Please pass on details of any 'encounters' you are lucky enough to have with these iconic birds. Our records form concrete evidence that the Warrandyte-Kinglake Habitat Corridor is working and that 'Stevenson Creek/Skyline escarpment' is an important part of this link.

Bird Survey Highlights

The outstanding sightings for the period were -

- **July:** **White phase Grey Goshawk** and **Eastern Whipbird** at Yanakie.
- **August:** **Eastern Whipbird** at Yanakie.
- **September:** 5 raptors at Yanakie – **Black & Whistling Kites; Collared Sparrowhawk; Brown Goshawk; Peregrine Falcon.**
- **October:** **Eastern Whipbird** at Yanakie.
- **November:** **Rufous Fantail** and **Crested Shrike-tit**, on Aqueduct near Co-op.
- **February:** **Lewin's Rail**, at Yanakie.

New Birds for the BICA List

Black Falcon, seen by Gavin, flying over his house on 22/2/22.

Stubble Quail was photo'd on 27/3/22 by Gavin & Mal near their house on Gongflers Peninsula.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike was photo'd on 28/3/22 by Frank at the high point of A Track on the Co-op. This bird was difficult to identify and was referred to experts. The consensus was that this **Stubble Quail** was a dark morph of the subspecies *robusta* and plumage was 'immature, transitioning to adult'.

This brings the Bol Bird List Total to **180** species

Other Interesting Observations

The **Eastern Whipbird** that was regularly recorded on Watsons Ck, north of the Bridge from 12/2020 to 10/2021, seems to have moved on unfortunately.

White-throated Nightjars have again been heard calling this season, but none have been seen.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike



Lewin's Rail
Photo Bindi Hellen



Stubble Quail
Photo Mal Chicksen



White Bellied Cuckoo-shrike
Photo fp



The Birds Page of the BICA Website has lots of links to information about the birds of our area, as well as a summary of our on-going bird survey. See <https://bendofislands.wordpress.com/flora-and-fauna/birds/>

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

All are welcome on the bird survey walks on the 2nd Sunday of each month, subject to Covid restrictions. See the BICA Calendar for start times; we meet at the upper corner of Henley and Catani.

Frank Pierce

AN EGGCELLENT DISCOVERY

While on one of my many walks to Neil Douglas Reserve during the pandemic last year, I stumbled upon a curious sighting. Two eggs, no bigger than that of a chicken's, were lying on the side of the road. They were broken, dirty and lacked any sign of why they were there. Naturally, I was curious about where these eggs had come from and what they were doing on the side of the road.

I got home and began flicking through the bird guide. I knew that the bird would have to be big to have an egg of that size, so I opened up the page of the birds of prey. The Collared Sparrowhawk caught my eye as they have bred near the site in the past and I was seeing them regularly. I decided that they must be Sparrowhawk eggs as they were a similar size and appeared speckled.

Happy with my findings, I sent an email to Frank explaining my sighting. He was not convinced and suggested I note the measurements of the eggs.

The following day, I wrote down the dimensions: 50mm by 30mm. This appeared too large and thick for even a Sparrowhawk. I also noted, by taking one of the eggs home and washing it, that what I had previously thought was a speckled pattern was actually dirt on the egg!



The egg that I took home to clean

It became clear that this was not a Sparrowhawk and I became hooked on the idea of what it could be.

Days went past and I kept finding more eggs. They were spread far and wide, suggesting an aerial predator. I was

still seeing Sparrowhawks every few days. This prompted the idea that this might not be the owner of the eggs, but rather the predator. The amount of eggs also ruled out the suggested possibility of domestic chicken eggs, dropped by someone as they went past.

With my newfound evidence, Frank suggested that they could be duck eggs; plain, white and very large. It was a great idea, as I never considered ducks. There was a hollow just like one a duck might use right above where I first found the eggs (I had not considered this previously because it was not a typical hollow).

Luckily, before I was able to attempt climbing up to the high hollow, Mum had a good idea. She suggested that I use a selfie stick to get my recording phone into the mouth of the hollow and look back over the footage to see what was inside. Doing just this, I made an extraordinary find.



View down the nest box so I knew there were still eggs

There were at least four eggs sitting in the bottom of the hollow, just waiting for a predator to take them. They were obviously not in incubation and it was likely that it was an abandoned clutch. I had recently found a deceased Pacific Black Duck nearby, posing a possibility of the parent but, as Frank pointed out, these eggs could be from the



previous breeding season. It was decided that there was only one way to discover what was preying on the eggs. That was to put a motion camera on the nest.

A motion camera uses a motion sensor to detect movement. When it does, it captures a picture or video of the desired length. They also have an infrared option so that footage can be captured during the night without having to disturb anything that might be nearby.

I did not have a motion camera myself, but luckily, BICA had a few spare that I was able to borrow. After a few practice runs outside, Dad and I decided to try our luck on the tree. More eggs were turning up every few days so there was no time to wait! It took some doing to hoist the camera up the tree but, using a ladder and some of the larger branches, we got there in the end.



Setting up the camera

About 24 hours later, Dad and I went to collect the camera. (We chose a 24 hours timeframe in case there were nocturnal predators such as owls or phascogales preying on the nest.)

I excitedly climbed up the tree to see what we had collected. Alas! Upon returning the camera to the ground, it was discovered that I forgot to switch it on! What a silly mistake! We put it back up the tree to try for the next 24 hours (This time I was extra careful to switch it on).

The following day, Dad and I went to pick up our information. Thankfully, it was turned on. I hoped that there would be footage of the predators as I had discovered a few additional eggs that day that had not been present previously. Upon reviewing the footage on the camera, I discovered what might have been the answer to both of my questions.

In the first few videos, both Crimson and Eastern Rosellas can be seen standing on and diving into the hollow. In the later videos, two Wood Ducks (one male and one female) can be seen sitting on the hollow, calling loudly.



Eastern rosella

Although no eggs can be seen actually being taken from the hollow, this was a very interesting find. I attempted to set up the camera in a few other positions pointing at the hollow from different angles but did not catch anything. I believe that, by that point, all of the eggs had been taken from the hollow.

The exact finding of this video footage can be left up to interpretation. I, personally, believe that the Rosellas were preying on the eggs and the Wood Ducks were the parents of them. I am not sure how old the eggs are though.

The fact that the Wood Ducks stepped in to defend them suggests that they were pretty new but that raises the question of why they were not being incubated. There were at least two ducks seen in the videos (one male and once female) so they should have been watched around the clock.

What do you think? Were the wood ducks eating their own eggs? Were they not Wood Duck eggs at all? If you would like to view the entire videos, please copy this link into your web browser:

https://elthamhsviceduau-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/pau0010_elthamhs_vic_edu_au/EIHC_Nmc4q1MmWKOAEfMdrIBwq73c7KZQmWiCl2Y7pa32A?e=AyEplG

Since my adventures with the eggs, I have used the motion camera for many more purposes. I have monitored possible nesting sites of Rosellas to see if there was any breeding activity going on. I have found a resident possum of some sort (it did not show its' tail) living in one of our nest boxes. I also discovered a rat eating the beetroot growing in our garden! There are so many uses of such a camera. If you would like to borrow one, please talk to someone from BICA.

Jarrah Pauli (age 14)



CAFE BENDERS

Two years of COVID put an abrupt end to our monthly community gathering and CFA fundraiser, Cafe Benders.

After almost 30 years the Krauses (Marie & Wolfgang) and the Bonnys (Alan & Carol) aka Friends of the Fire Brigade have decided to retire and pass on the running of Cafe Benders.

Since the early 1990s on the third Saturday of each month (except January) Cafe Benders, held in the Fire Station, has opened its doors and welcomed all comers to share a donated cake with a cuppa for just a few dollars. During this period over \$10,000 has been donated to Christmas Hills Fire Brigade.

Early on these mornings, Wolfgang would move the truck out and have the area shining like a new pin. Marie organised the supplies and managed the monies and kept the Cafe tablecloths cleaned and pressed. Alan was our coffee lady, constantly manning the plungers while dressed in his unusual hats and his special apron. I would help with the setting up and then flit from table to table collecting cups and plates while chit chatting. All would be involved in the clean-up.

Occasionally we would have a brekkie morning and bacon and eggs would be served up by a willing volunteer. A night Cafe was also a popular event. I must say coffee was not the beverage consumed on these nights! Every December was our Christmas Cafe starting in the early evening. BBQ sausages and vegie burgers were for sale and people bought yummy salads to share. Carols by candle light for the little ones was always special as was our unique Santa, "Jenny." Music was often blasted out on a portable machine and we danced into the night. There was also an occasional trash and treasure morning.

A big thankyou to all those who have donated delicious cakes and other such goodies over this long period.

What a special community we have and may Cafe Benders continue far into the future to make more wonderful memories.

Carol Bonny



Group Photo from 2002

A HUGE THANKYOU from us all to Alan and Carol, Wolfgang and Marie.

As Friends of the Fire Brigade you created, and then for 30 years, you quietly maintained, a fantastic, welcoming, fun space for our community to come together. Now it's up to the rest of us to keep that spirit happening.

PLEASE LEND A HAND - If you'd like to help by sharing some time on a roster to run Cafe Benders please contact

Ross Henry: rosscric@gmail.com or

John Roberts: johnwjroberts66@gmail.com.



VALE EWEN GELLIE

A Tribute from his Friends in 'The Bush'

On 9 March 2022 the Co-op (and the world) lost a great treasure. Ewen Gellie unexpectedly died at home.

Facebook followers will have seen the outpouring of tributes to Ewen, especially from the cycling community. Ewen's achievements in that world are legend; Australian Mountain Bike Champion who dominated the scene from 1988 to 1993.

Here we celebrate Ewen through the lens of his 'family' in the bush.

Ewen became a member of The Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative in 2005. He had a long-term love of the bush. Anyone who had knowledge of Ewen's development should not have been surprised. He had realised his dream of living in his own national park.

Ewen designed and built a nest box camera that allows the monitoring of tree-mounted nest boxes, without leaving the ground. And he adapted 'off-the-shelf' technology that allows real-time monitoring in other inaccessible places. His input has greatly expanded the Co-op's ability to monitor wildlife activity and to capture valuable visual images. He was also a valuable contributor to establishing the Co-op's own wi-fi network, far superior to what Telstra and other providers could offer, and more recently offering a reliable voice on renewable energy systems.

Ewen was a valued member of the Co-operative and the wider Bend of Islands community. He had an ability to inject balance, compassion and wisdom into discussions and processes. His philosophy was to recognise the commitment to a common goal. Where conflict arose, Ewen was thoughtful and listened to all views; offered humility, and where possible sought compromise.

In recent times Ewen had struggled with health issues. He was open about his battles and was unafraid to seek (and receive) counsel and help from friends and neighbours. And as always, it was with his sisters and father where he received much support, love and care during this time.

Ewen's house wasn't dominated by his many cycling awards or his many other achievements. It was a modest, functional, energy efficient house. His priorities were elsewhere.



Ewen c.2008

Vale Ewen Gellie. 15/10/1968 – 9/3/2022

The following is the link to the Co-op's facebook page where the complete obituary has been posted.

<https://www.roundthebend.org.au/single-post/ewen-gellie-a-tribute-from-his-friends-in-the-bush>



December in Bend of Islands 2020

There is a hover of butterflies
A gold and bronze dancing constellation of filmy beating wings
Twinkling
cascading through the grasses
chasing and cavorting
in air thick with the early summer morning
Insistent cicada hum
And errant March fly whirr
Wattle bird chortle
Sulphur crested cockatoo shrieking *It's not fair ... It's not fair!*
And all the noisy while a procession of non-complaining ants
Three abreast
Make their way across the spindly stick stuck over the bird bath
Unperturbed even by the flycatcher's sudden dips and darts
Sending up a wee rain storm about them.
Hover flies in the Prickly Moses
Flycatcher's reflection on the water
all the business of the morning
work to be done before the shadows are swallowed
up by the brazen naked noon.

Liz Mildenhall



NEWS FROM THE FIRE BRIGADE



It has been a relatively quiet fire season due to La Nina system dominant over Eastern Australia and a moderate summer. It did start to dry out in March and April as we endured almost a 'mini-drought'! In fact before this last rain event we had one of the highest soil dryness periods in years which accounted for some recent events. Another feature was the fact that the soil became 'unwettable' and made fires difficult to contain and extinguish. As fire restrictions lifted at the end of March the Brigade attended a number of very local and district burn offs that got out of control.

While each circumstance is always slightly different there are perhaps some common factors to beware of when thinking about burning off...

- Have you got good clearance around the heap or area away from other vegetation nearby or above?
- What are the weather conditions like...avoid windy or warm/hot days that will quickly stoke even 'dead' fires
- Ensure you have systems in place to deal with the unexpected...water/pump/knapsack at hand, rakehoe or similar and stay and watch !!
- Always make sure that any heap or burn off is completely extinguished before leaving, especially if you are not going to be around...it took over 18,000 litres of water (9 tanker loads) to extinguish a tree and blackberry patch recently in Christmas Hills
- In Catani Blvd a small heap that had been extinguished reignited after more than 48 hours.
- Start the heaps small and then add dry material ...try and avoid giant heaps of bush that will create a lot of heat and smoke
- Refer to burn off notifications at <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/contact/register-your-burn-off>

And...**Register Online** (Preferred) on the [Fire Permits Victoria](#) website. You can do so if your burn-off commences more than two hours ahead.

By Phone

If you wish to start your burn-off immediately, or do not wish to utilize the online form, you may register your burn-off by calling ESTA on [1800 668 511](tel:1800668511), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Café Benders

It's been great to see community members joining together for coffee and cake at Café Benders every third Saturday of the month from about 10.30 on at the South Station. A great chance for a catch up and the funds raised always help the brigade maintain our service.

Wine Raffle

Thanks to for the support from the community for our large wine raffle held over the last few weeks. We are well on the way to raising the necessary funds to replace our Ultralight after more than 10 years of fundraising. Many thanks again to Levantine Hill in Coldstream for their generosity.

New Members

We are always on the lookout for new members and we have some new ones starting from both the North and South end this year. There is a new recruiting system in place that means all the 'paperwork' is completed online before recruits can start and their patience and perseverance is appreciated!

Facebook page

If you are a Facebook user you can always keep up to date on the Fire Brigade Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ChristmasHillsFireBrigade/>

Cheers

Peter Mildenhall
Community Safety Coordinator



FROM THE NEW EDITORS

It is with great pleasure and in trepidation that this new team has taken on the production of this Newsletter.

This publication has been going for 43 years and has gradually become more and more sophisticated, professional and informative. Gone are the days when we used to physically cut and paste articles and drawings onto pages.

Back then the quality of our black and white copying equipment ruined any good photographs. We then gathered the pages into booklets by circulating around a table, stapled them together, stuck on names and addresses and posted them out.....thems was the days.

To our collective delight, John McCallum produced the first digital version in 2013 when he was editor. We have not looked back since!

Janet Mattiske took over the reins in 2014 and produced excellent issues for 8 years. She was assisted for 7 years

by Greg Phillips doing his amazing layouts and using state of the art computer programs.

With this edition you'll notice some changes in production style as we grapple with the intricacies of graphic design and working out how to do it in basic Word format.

As the new editors, we are very grateful for all the efforts members have gone to in providing articles for this our first newsletter. Julie has been tireless in helping pull it all together production wise and displaying skills we can only dream of.

Thankyou again and please keep sending in your articles and photos to rosscric@gmail.com as we look ahead to the next.

Cric and Ross Henry (Editors)

with Julie Martindale (Production)



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