



What Native Plant Is Flowering?

Refer: *Flora of Melbourne, 4th edition.*

Bend of Islands Plant List - Revised 2023-6

Scientific Name: *Senecio phelleus*

Common Name: Stony Fireweed

Family: The fireweeds are a very large genus of herbaceous plants from the **Asteraceae** family.

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

Size: 0.3 - 1.5 m high.

Description: Erect annual/biennial large herb branching along the upright stems.

The stems are light grey and finely hairy, becoming less hairy up towards the top of plant.

Foliage: Linear leaves, 6 - 17 cm long x 3.6 - 20 mm wide, tapering from a broad base, with narrow sparser leaves towards the top of the plant. Leaves are green, usually purplish on the underside.



Flowers: Clusters of 20 - 50 discoid flowerheads, i.e. flowerheads which only have central tubular disc florets (especially Asteraceae family).

The flowers are 6 - 7.5 mm long x 1.5 - 2 mm; 30 - 45 florets, 12-14 glabrous bracts i.e. without hairs.

After flowering fluffy seed heads appear, followed by the orange, brown *cypselas* (small dry one-seeded fruits, typical of Daisy family).

Flowering period: October to March

Cric Henry

Drawing by **Ross Henry**



Note From the President

Hello BICA Members,

Well done on reaching our 100th BICA Newsletter.

That's more than 2 newsletters every year over the last 44 years.

This is quite an accomplishment from anyone's point of view, and is a testament to the dedication of Bend of Islands residents who have forged the path over the decades, relentlessly playing a role in protecting this treasured area within the green wedge.

I thought it would be worthwhile to take a moment and reflect on where we have come from over the last 44 years.

The first BICA Newsletter we have on record is a "*Notice of Annual General Meeting*", back in March 1979.

While you can read this newsletter along with every other one from the BICA website, I wanted to share a few things mentioned that I find really interesting.

First up is the "*Sugarloaf Dam Road Proposals*", and this was successfully resolved to restrict traffic entering Skyline Road and then the ELZ.

And over 40 years later, we had a similar issue with too many trucks coming down Skyline Road, that is now resolved as well.

Next up from the first Newsletter is "*A warm welcome for new members of our community; Yoland Pelling born on 14th December, Congratulations Dee & Michael Pelling.*"

And isn't it beautiful that after 44 years, Mike is still living here and has recently been on the BICA Committee.

Lastly, there is a short piece titled "*A Sense of Community*", that went on to say, "*A really nice sense of community is developing in the Bend of Isles. Some of the community things people are joining together to do include...*"

And how cool is it that "*A Food Co-operative*" was formed and is still going today, as well as a few more, but you'll have to take a read yourself to get the full picture.

I really love having this history at our fingertips, as it shows us that there will always be something threatening the custodian relationship we have with this land, that we need to band together to oppose or change.

And having a strong sense of community, really does strengthen our ability to look after and protect what is precious to us.

So thanks are in order to the Planning Sub-Committee of Janet Mattiske, Ross Henry, John Roberts, Carol Bonny, Don Macrae and Julie Martindale, led by Robyn Duff, who have been relentlessly following up the Local Law issue.

Also to: Mal Chicksen (Landcare); Alana Duncan & Diana Gentu (Community Engagement), Liz Mildenhall (Roadside Vegetation);

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and the amazing Frank Pierce (Vegetation Management Under Powerlines, BICA Bird Survey, Melbourne Water Management, Exclusion Plots for Rare Orchids, Ecological Management of Oxley Reserve, BICA Website Flora and Fauna Pages AND NSC Orchid Reintroduction Project.

And lastly, thanks to the outgoing BICA Committee of Mia Bullen, Tserin Wright, Rudi Pauli, Mike Pelling, Eleanor Fowler, Janet Mattiske, Russell Crosser, Alana Duncan, Diana Gentu, with special thanks to Julie Martindale who will be stepping down as Secretary. She has been instrumental in



keeping the committee organised and up to date.

As many of you may already know, I'll be stepping down from the BICA Committee as I've moved out of the BOI. I want to thank you for your support, encouragement, education, challenges and friendship over the last 7 years...Go well, and all the best,

Michael Dempsey

From the Secretary

AGM Sunday 12 November 2023

Those who attended the AGM were captivated by our guest speakers Felicity Law and Aawa White who introduced us to the greater gliders inhabiting Toolangi forest. Felicity and Aawa are both members of Kinglake Friends of the Forest (KFF), which is part of the Victorian Forest Alliance.



Greater Glider near logging coupe near Narbethong.
Photo: Karena Goldfinch.

They were involved in detailed field survey work that accurately documented greater glider populations in the old growth Toolangi forest coupes, which were earmarked for logging by VicForests. Not surprisingly, good glider habitat tends to be in exactly the sort of forest that VicForests liked to log i.e. old growth.

Their Citizen Science research was instrumental in Supreme Court action taken by KFF, which eventually led to the end of native forest logging in Victoria by 2025 and an immediate end to old growth logging.

We were shown amazing footage of the greater gliders and learnt about the survey method used to detect and record their presence in particular forest coupes.

We also heard about the Supreme Court case and subsequent findings that VicForests had failed to

adequately survey, find, and properly protect greater gliders.

As Felicity and Aawa said, they "aren't scientists, or ecologists", just ordinary people with a desire to protect what we ultimately depend on.

BICA Purposes

BICA is first and foremost a **conservation association** with 4 key Purposes. Let's always keep these in mind when considering our goals for the future and our actions in the present.

- (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.*

Our AGM acknowledged the work done by the many hands of ordinary people during the last 12 months in line with our Purposes. A lot of this work is unseen, has been happening behind the scenes for years and is essential to prevent the Bend of Islands turning into just another degraded rural residential area.

You may have noticed the recent tree pruning work by AusNet contractors under local powerlines. But did you know that this essential safety work is carried out according to a set of criteria that have been progressively developed by BICA in consultation with AusNet since 2005?

For example, before any work begins, there is an assessment of each span to determine the number of trees to be cut to promote growth diversity under the lines, while others are trimmed to maintain the required clearances. This way we avoid a swathe of cut vegetation under powerlines that looks like a bad number 2 haircut.



Did you also know that negotiations have been on-going for many years with Melbourne Water, to ensure that environmental works along our northern boundary are as effective as possible? These include weed control, fox & deer control, protection of remnant populations of locally rare orchids, maintaining fire truck access and prevention of illegal trail bike access to the Aqueduct reserve.

We continue to work with council officers and contractors regarding management of our roadside vegetation for safety purposes without compromising conservation values e.g. identifying hazardous trees for pruning or removal, thinning of Burgan along roadsides.

The Bend of Islands is unique, but it also sits within the bigger picture of the Green Wedge Nillumbik Shire – things that happen outside our boundary have potential to adversely impact the Bend. We are fortunate to have a representative on both the NSC Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the Regional Trails Advisory Committee (RTAC).

At a community level we've run a number of educational events this year including 2 Weed ID Workshops, a Fungi walk, an Orchid walk, a Wattle walk and a World Environment Day event. There's also been some social events such as Trivia Night, Solstice Soiree and 2 cross-country local walks. Not to mention monthly Landcare and Bird Surveys.

These are just some of the ways BICA has contributed to the custodianship of the land this year and over the last 47 years.

If you have an idea of a conservation or educational activity you'd like to see, or better still help with organizing, then please let us know. We sometimes wonder what our membership is thinking so would like to encourage you all to actively get involved.

Your New Committee for 2023-2024

Rudi Pauli (Treasurer), Eleanor Fowler (Secretary), Tserin Wright, Mia Bullen, Diana Gentu, Alana Duncan, Russell Crosser, and newcomer Noni Turner. Heartfelt thanks from me (Julie) to the outgoing committee and a huge THANKYOU to the new. We wish you all the best.

Julie Martindale

A reminder that membership renewals for the 2023-2024 year are due now.

Thanks to those who have already renewed.

If you're not sure whether you've paid or not, please contact the Secretary at bicacomm@gmail.com

Your BICA Planning Sub-Committee at work

Throughout 2023, the Planning Committee has focused on the one issue – the Local Law (regarding domestic pets). The Planning Committee expanded and had some changes in membership. Thanks to all those who have contributed throughout this year: Carol and Alan Bonny, Michael Dempsey, Ross Henry, Don Macrae, Julie Martindale, Janet Mattiske and John Roberts.

A quick recap – In December 2022, Nillumbik Council passed the following Local Law within the Bend of Islands:

- 1) *An owner or occupier of Land must not keep a domestic pet or livestock on that Land.*
- 2) *A person must not:*
 - a. *bring on any Land ; or*
 - b. *have in their possession on any Land – any domestic pet or livestock.*

They did this to close a loophole that they believe exists in the Planning Scheme. However, they implemented this in such a way that it actually increased the number of pets within the Bend of Islands by allowing pets in some properties that did not previously have non-conforming use rights under the Planning Scheme.

We supported the Local Law initially because it was promised to be an improvement in the protection of the Bend of Islands. In fact, it has been implemented in such a manner as to take us backwards. We strongly disagree with the implementation of Nillumbik's Local Law (regarding domestic pets in the Bend of Islands), with respect to the current number of exempt properties and the proposed method of management into the future, as it is not in keeping with the clear intent of the planning provisions of SUZ2.

Throughout this year, the BICA Planning Committee has taken advice from a Town Planner regarding Nillumbik's actions; taken advice from Solicitors and Barristers specializing in planning matters regarding our options; written a number of letters to Nillumbik Council detailing our concerns; met with Nillumbik Council CEO and senior Planning officers about our concerns as well as had numerous internal meetings to plan our way through this matter.

The current situation is that we have been offered pro bono legal advice from a prominent planning law firm and have met with a Partner and other Solicitors on a number of occasions to discuss the best course of action.

We are still to decide what is the best action to mitigate the situation in respect to pet control. The Planning committee will continue to pursue the matter and will keep BICA informed.



Some Memories of the Bend

I can't believe that it's been three years since we left the Bend after 40 years of residence. There are so many memories with which I could probably fill the entire bumper issue of the Newsletter (hard to imagine it's the 100th issue). Many centre around our house at 44 Catani Blvd – the house with no right angles.

It was a credit to the flexibility of Ross, who redrew the plans after input from my mother's second husband. He was a Viennese architect who spent World War II in Palestine, where he became acquainted with the flexible opportunities associated with earth building and suggested the undulations and arches that were eventually incorporated.

The execution of the design, however, was very much the work of Carol Ann, the contractor and builder's right-hand lady, and the master builder himself, the much-loved Mick Woiwod.

The house provided the nurturing space in which to raise two boys with virtually seamless access to the bush and some of its notable inhabitants.



Endless BICA Committee meetings, coordinating Clean Up Australia Days, and sparkling early morning laps around Catani Blvd with friends and neighbours spring to mind as I reflect on the four decades we spent in the Bend. But foremost, I now think, was the planning and execution of the commemorative sign at the top of Catani Blvd which was the culmination of a joint effort in land management and historical inquiry between several Benders and members of the Wurundjeri.

Several years in the planning, with the support of BICA and the Wurundjeri Council, and especially Uncle Dave Wandin, culminated in the ceremonial unveiling of the sign, which acknowledges both the traditional custodians

and the current caretakers, in the presence of Uncle Dave and Aunty Di in 2016.



Of course, for us it all began with a visit to Neil Douglas that convinced us the Bend was where we wanted to live. Subsequent visits and yarns around the pot-belly stove only served to consolidate our sense that we had made the right choice. Among the many memories of Neil that stand out are his commitment to feeding the choughs only organic oats, weeding by blow torch, Abbie's home-made uniform, and, for some strange reason, learning that the plural of roof is 'roofs' not 'rooves'.

Tom Fisher

Wyēnondabul is the pre-contact Wurundjeri Woiwurung language name for the southern part of Christmas Hills, including the Bend of Islands.

It is understood that Wyēnondabul can be translated as "Hills of Fire".

An article "Womin-jeka Wyēnondabul" by Mick Woiwod appeared in Newsletter #49 Nov 2000.



One Hundred Good Reads

I arrived in the Bend of Islands just in time to get comfortable in my favourite armchair and read BICA Newsletter 18, which came by mail. After learning about Cranberry Heath from Cric Henry's description and illustration, my attention was drawn to a historical article from Mick Woiwod about the first selectors in the Bend of Islands, in 1870. It's an interesting tale with a historical perspective.

An entertaining article by Frank Pierce about a sugar glider locked in the house was followed by a very handy description of gliders and tuans. A conservation overview by Felicity Faris preceded an alarming report about the Council's draft strategy for a new tip on the corner of Henley and Eltham-Yarra Glen roads. I was reassured to see that Wally Franz and the Anti-Tip Group were on the job to move Council away from the 'everything landfill' mentality that prevailed at the time.

There was news of co-founding father of the Environmental Living Zone, Neil Douglas, who had moved to Point Smythe in a caravan; 'painting profusely' and intending to move around the Grampians, Little Desert and Wyperfeld National Park for a commission by the Horsham Gallery.

I could see from Newsletter 18 that I had moved into a rather special community. I tracked down copies of all preceding newsletters and set about working my way through them. As a newcomer there was a lot to learn about the unique zone on which I was now a participant.



Starting out as a partly-typed, partly handwritten publication, Newsletter 1 in March 1979 pondered the important issues of the time, including a plea for suggestions as to what to call the newsletter. I'm guessing that responses have been slow. I was reminded about the hard and ongoing slog it is to protect our relatively pristine bit of bush, in articles about a

successful consultation with the MMBW to stop tourist egress to and from Sugarloaf via Skyline Road, a campaign to safeguard the riverbank opposite the BOI against unsuitable subdivision, and a list of recycling depots in nearby towns.

But our newsletters have not limited themselves to the serious stuff. For starters there have been a few ripping yarns and amusing encounters over the years, such as Peter Dougherty's *How I Became a Share Farmer*, in Newsletter 10, *A hunter's Tale* by Bruce Rogers in Newsletter 57, *Barry* by Alan Bonny in Newsletter 88, and Richard Laurie's *It was Friday Night* in Newsletter 94.

The Newsletter archive is like our own little Wikipedia; albeit without a search engine. It has how-to articles on everything from first aid for snakebite, to treating stings from caterpillar spikes, propagating local native plants, calculations of water needs, guidelines for burning, septic systems, avoiding bees in your nestboxes, maintaining your kitchen garden, recognising and removing bluebell creeper, termite prevention and more.

Sheila Dixon, who grew up here and then came back in later years, has written delightful reminiscences over a number of newsletters. Several of these were also recorded by Sheila for Radio National's Country Viewpoint segment. Janet Mattiske wrote a touching tale about one of them from when she and Frank heard Sheila's voice from an isolated spot near the Queensland border. (*Can You Ever Escape?* – Newsletter 71.) Sheila recorded her final story the day before she died, and you can find it in Newsletter 72.

In every community people come and go, and people die – some of old age, and some way too soon. The newsletters contain tributes to our fallen environmental living zone soldiers, and although we wish they were still with us, their stories and contributions to the community live on poignantly in print and our memories.

By the time Newsletter 3 came around, we remembered that there were children in the Bend of Islands, so we began to include them. It was a modest start, with some of the kids being asked to comment on snakes. Jo Henry said "I want an orange one." Rupert Pelling said "Put it on Yo" (his baby sister). In Newsletter 4 there was a 'join the dots to find the native animal' puzzle, with dots extending between a duck-bill and beaver tail. Hmm...I wonder what that could be? In more recent times we've had young authors of articles, like (then) ten-year-old Jarrah Pauli's captivating account of his *Lace Monitor Sighting*, and then *Most Wanted* by Jarrah's younger brother, Ned



Pauli, about an intriguing Covid-19 lockdown phenomenon.

All this, and I haven't yet mentioned the *pièce de résistance*; the fabulous photos and descriptions of birds of the Bend of Islands by the likes of Frank Pierce, Gavin Masters, Mal Chicksen and others. And as if this wasn't enough, Frank has added dragonflies, lacewings, moths, butterflies, Peacock and related jumping spiders, and cicadas to his list of interesting species to observe and share with us.

Year-in-year-out since 1979, dedicated newsletter teams have beavered away behind the scenes to put together BICA newsletters full of interesting stuff. The articles in early editions were accompanied by the arty drawings of Hilary Jackman, Syd Tunn, Ross Henry and others. To this day, Hilary's inimitable choughs on a branch adorn our newsletters.

Advances in technology have enabled the production to undergo massive improvements, from a partly handwritten beginning, through a period that afforded fairly poor monochrome reproduction of interesting photos, hard copies sent through the mail, to our current digital online editions, with dazzling, coloured photos, and live links to other publications and references.

To be able to see Frank's 2022 Eastern Rosella chicks

developing in their tree hollow at five-day intervals in Newsletter 99 is priceless.

And through all of that, we've had Cric's *What Native Plant is Flowering?* (with recent illustrative help from Ross), Frank's *Bird Notes*, and, for a very long time, John McCallum's *Another Local Fern*. I hadn't realised there were that many ferns in the world, let alone the Bend of Islands.

As we live in a high-risk bushfire area, the newsletters have regularly carried reports and advice from our fire brigade. Dave Herd's 1980 Newsletter 3 article with tips for *Fire Prevention Around the House* is as pertinent today as it was then, with the exception of the reference to fire reporting system phone numbers, which of course have been replaced by 000.

Now that the monumental effort to place the entire newsletter archive online has been completed, it's so easy to access them. Just put the kettle on, open the BICA website at <https://bendofislands.wordpress.com/> and scroll down until you see them all listed.

Well done to all of you who have ever been on the production team or written an article for our informative and entertaining periodical. Here's to the next one-hundred editions!

Alan Bluhm

Love the Stories

The more I look back at past newsletter issues, the more I recognize the incredible social value of our archive. There's 44 years' worth of fascinating social history of the Bend of Islands recorded. Two stories that caught my attention today were recollections from those who experienced the devastation of the 1962 bushfires and wrote about it in the July 1983 issue.

"For the first time we were able to see the contours of this land which we had previously only known clothed with trees. As I scrunched round the still hot slopes I began to notice pieces of broken china and other household remnants. At first I was puzzled as there had been no dwelling on these spots. Then I began to realise I was looking at a very personal piece of social history if you like. Wherever we had built a cubby house the fire had cleared away the 30 year old debris – it was a strange feeling to see such tangible evidence of my childhood once again." Sheila Dixon

And again on the bushfires – *"Next came the 1962 bushfires with severe heat, high winds, fear, black soot, blowflies and the general black misery that followed and affected the next couple of years of our life. Out of it came a wonderful lesson in human kindness, warmth, compassion and generosity. 21 years later I still feel humble about it." Claire Watson*

I grew up in Templestowe, in a "house with a view" and one of my most vivid childhood memories is of watching the '62 fires one evening from the big landscape window in the living room which looked across to the north. The whole horizon was ablaze with an ominous red glow which was mesmerizing to me as a child.

60 odd years later and I'm living in the Bend, also discovering bits of household debris that emerge from the soil. A beautiful small glass bottle, pieces of broken crockery, a rusty bolt, an old axe head.



And of course, the remnants of human habitation stretch way back in time. People's stories and history, layer upon layer on this little piece of land that's now my home.

So thanks for the newsletter. I love the stories. Someone should write a book about it all, in time for our 50th anniversary in 2026 perhaps???

As I write this there's a downpour in the Bend – the thunder is rumbling, the gutters are overflowing, the water tanks are filling up and the driveway is probably washing away some more. No doubt I'll be getting all the runoff from upper Catani Blvd which collects at a low point in the

road then is funnelled onto my place via a drain close to my drive which is on the down side of the road. I dread to think of what roadside weed seeds are making their way down the hill.

After one such deluge a few years ago my dam actually filled up – it was a beautiful sight, briefly. Because of the labyrinth of rabbit holes within the dam wall, not to mention the wombat tunnel, the water, under pressure, burst through openings in the wall as if numerous gate valves had been opened. Next day it had all drained away. Sigh...

Julie Martindale



Are We All 'Round the Bend?'

A story of parallel histories - BICA and RTBCC (Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative).

It was an Autumn evening in the late 1970's, and we were visiting Cric and Ross for dinner. Arriving in the fading light we spied Cric, head down, bum up in the bush garden near the house.

What could she be doing?

Had she dropped her contact lenses?

Perhaps looking for some bush tucker to augment the dinner?

Maybe she was chasing an antechinus that had been feasting on our prospective dinner.

No!, to all of the above.

When all was revealed, it turned out that Cric was taking painstaking care to get accurate details of the plant to be featured in the next edition of the BICA newsletter.

This scene, or variations on it, has been repeated 100 times over the past 40(+) years, as Cric and Ross have kept this service and tradition alive. And it is one of the many illustrations of how the Bend of Islands community

'keeps the faith'. Over this period, the 100 editions of the BICA newsletter have not only been informative and a welcoming source of communication of our common cause, they have also been a cohesive force maintaining the essence of community.

The dedication and commitment shown by those who have continued to contribute to, and edit, the newsletter is a microcosm of BICA, which is itself approaching a significant milestone - BICA turns 50 in 2026.

From a Co-op perspective, this is one of parallel journeys. RTBCC and BICA's origins are from the same socio-political conservation battles of the late 1960's.

Whereas the Co-op has been more focussed on our intensive land management strategy, we have also been participants in, and beneficiaries of, the work of BICA.

The Co-op's parallel 'newsletter' story (until more recently) has been more internally focussed and communicating operational business to members. However, over the past couple of years, the Co-op too has realised the value of a dedicated newsletter produced to communicate with a wider audience and with a more entertaining content.



The inescapable parallel though is that these things are only achieved through the commitment of a dedicated few. And it is this milestone of BICA's 100th newsletter that we celebrate and give thanks to those dedicated individuals who make these things possible.

BICA members can receive the RTBCC Newsletter via request to RTBCC Secretary via secretary.roundthebendcoop@gmail.com

John Roberts



The Co-op's Hibbertia porcata (Christmas Guinea flower) is the major population of the two currently known in Victoria.

Platypus in the Bend

On one of my recent walks to Neil Douglas Reserve, I was pleasantly surprised to locate a platypus, an experience that is seemingly becoming rarer. It has been just over three years since my last sighting, which happened to be in the exact same spot.

This individual was behaving rather shy, using a fallen tree as cover, and not daring to venture too far from it. I didn't think much of it, yet it was starkly different to my previous encounter.

I soon realised the cause of this behaviour; just moments prior to spotting the platypus - two dogs were brought down to the water's edge on the other side of the river (which is Wittons Reserve, a leash-free area for dogs).

The platypus was hiding from them, trying to evade detection. The dogs were in no way aggressive, but their mere presence was enough to deter it. Once it was sure that the dogs had passed, the platypus left its cover and quickly moved upstream.

This poses an interesting reminder of the effect dogs can have on our wildlife, and highlights how we must strive to keep the Bend dog free.



I am currently undergoing discussions with Manningham Council and other conservation organisations as to how we can prevent this from happening in the future.

Jarrah Pauli



The Backward Step

This article was first published in the Manningham and Nillumbik Bulletin, Wedge Talk in June this year.

The purpose of Melbourne's green wedges is conservation of the rural character of metropolitan land beyond urban areas; but most green wedge blocks contain a house, which prima facie is not consistent with a conservation purpose. 'Dwellings' are allowed in the green wedge subject to a permit, and it is up to green wedge councils to decide in each case whether a proposed development is compatible with the conservation purpose. The consequence is a tension in the administration of green wedge zones between conservation on the one hand and potential development objectives of land owners on the other. This tension surfaces regularly at VCAT in connection with objections to council decisions.

But there is one zone where this tension was resolved: a zone in the Bend of Islands in the Nillumbik Green Wedge, established almost fifty years ago as the ELZ, or Environmental Living Zone, in the then Shire of Healesville. The residents of the area recognized its special nature and wanted to care for it and actively protect it, so advocated to government for the creation of this new zone with additional, specific provisions to protect the environment, while allowing residential living consistent with looking after the bush.

The concept was called 'Residential Conservation' in a 1975 report subtitled a 'Proposal for a New Zoning Category and Management Concept for Privately Owned Land.' Zone provisions included no fences, no removal of dead timber and most importantly for the indigenous fauna, no domestic animals. Quoting from the report: 'cats and dogs are most efficient predators and have no place in a conservation zone.'

Local government changes and planning scheme restructuring saw the Bend of Islands become a part of the new Shire of Nillumbik, and the ELZ became a special use zone, SUZ2. But the conditions of the zone remained

unchanged, and the Bend of Islands continued to thrive as a residential conservation zone for forty six years. But then, last year, Nillumbik Shire Council sent a letter to all residents of the zone whose houses were established prior to 1982, the year the ELZ was gazetted, inviting them to register pets! This was in the context of what they referred to as a 'legal interpretation' that the no animals regulation was ineffective in the face of a supposed 'ancillary right' to keep pets. The council accepted this advice without a fight, despite the fact that it effectively declared that a long-established provision of the planning scheme was invalid.

The action they took to close this supposed 'loophole' was to establish a local law to replace the planning scheme provision. This was strange in itself, since local laws are not supposed to overlap planning schemes, but that was not the problem. The problem was the manner of its introduction: the council issued an invitation to 66 SUZ2 residents to register new animals during a three month introductory period.

What triggered this unfortunate development has not been made public, but this response by the council was disappointing, to say the least. In these days of increased awareness of environmental threats it might have been hoped that a green wedge council would uphold the planning scheme, but this one did not: it set aside an important planning scheme provision, as far as is known without any consultation with the state government.

There were green wedge champions in government once, but they seem to have gone missing. Wedge talk has previously advocated for the creation of a green wedge commissioner within the Victorian government – there is a crying need for something like that to watch over our green wedges.

Don Macrae



Tawny Frogmouths



Bassian Thrush



Cats Don't Eat the Fur

They don't eat the guts either – but they eat everything else. Here's what's left of a possum – hard to tell what kind – found on my property this morning. Killed and almost entirely eaten, almost certainly by a cat. I haven't seen a cat around, but maybe you have.



"Feral cats are the opposite of adorable. They are walking, stalking, ruthless killers. If we don't act now, our native animals don't stand a chance." [So said](#) Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, as she launched a consultation program on the problem.

According to Dr Andy Sheppard, chief research scientist for biosecurity at CSIRO, "feral cats are Australia's most impactful invasive alien vertebrates in terms of biodiversity impacts".

It's estimated that feral cats kill two billion reptiles, birds and mammals every year in Australia.

Domestic cats are killers too, of course: they make the '100 of the World's worst invasive species' list.

They may be cute, but they need to be confined to quarters all of the time.

Of course, the Bend is something of an oasis for native animals, in part due to the prohibition on domestic animals imposed by the planning scheme these past forty years, although this restriction has been threatened by our local council recently. But that's another story.

We need to get rid of that cat.

Don Macrae

BICA has two council compliant cat traps that are available for borrowing.

Contact us at bicacomm@gmail.com





Recording the Biodiversity of the Bend of Islands

The Bend of Islands has two features that sets it apart from other areas and justifies its unique Environmental Living Planning Provisions:

- The high biodiversity of the natural environment of the Bol, and
- Bol residents' commitment to protect and enhance this biodiversity.

Claims of high biodiversity can be meaningless without documented evidence.



For the last 40+ years BICA has been collating the data to substantiate our high biodiversity, resulting in the articles and lists on the Flora and Fauna pages of the BICA Website. Much of this data comes from the observations of residents and consultants with expertise in the various aspects that make up our complex environment.

A major achievement in documenting this biodiversity was the development of the Bend of Islands Land Management Plan (LMP) in 2013. This powerful document comprehensively highlights the key features of the biodiversity of the area in detail.

The BICA Website lists are complimentary to the LMP. Many are comprehensive and are regularly updated to include more recent observations. All the lists were updated in 2023 and submitted to the Shire Council for use in its review of the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy.

Now We Can All Add to the Data

Most of the data in the lists has been collected by a few residents with special interests or expertise in the various aspects, however **iNaturalist** is now available as a convenient way for all residents to contribute to the flora and fauna records for the Bol.

iNaturalist is very user friendly and a great opportunity for us all to be active 'citizen scientists' and to help further build the data base that documents the wonderful diversity of our special Bol environment.

To track the Bol records in iNaturalist, I have established a 'Bend of Islands Project', based on an area map of the Bol including some relevant adjacent areas such as the river, Yanakie and other areas that we regularly survey as part of the Bol biological unit.

All the records from Bol, can be reviewed on this iNaturalist Project [here](#) .



Joining iNaturalist, and recording our local flora and fauna is a great way to 'get into nature' and support our wonderful patch of bush.

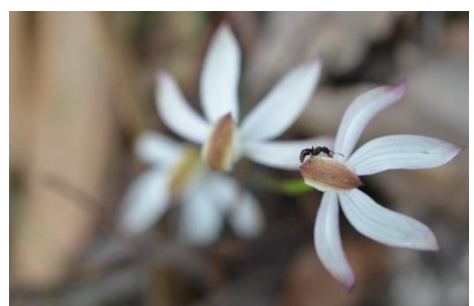
Frank Pierce

*An unexpected benefit of this iNaturalist Project occurred this month. An orchid enthusiast, from outside the area, loaded a record of the South African Weed Orchid, *Disa bracteata*, that he'd found in Skyline Rd.*

I checked the location, using the GPS data for the record on iNaturalist, and found a population of 20+ plants of this highly invasive weed. I sought advice from the Shire and have now arranged for Melbourne Water to remove the plants and monitor the area into the future to control any regrowth.



Beauty of the Bush



Photos: Row 1-4 **Pierre Noirjean**

Row 5 **Julie Martindale** and **Unknown**



What Weed to Watch Out For

SOUTH AFRICAN WEED ORCHID (*Disa bracteata*)

The Weed

Disa bracteata is also known as South African Weed Orchid. The species was first detected in Nillumbik in 1995 and is now found around Melbourne's outer north. It has been detected at five sites in Bend of Islands, including along Catani Boulevard, Skyline Road and Gongflers Drive. This is a highly invasive environmental weed that produces millions of dust-like seeds that spread easily to form dense colonies.

There is a very good council fact sheet which requests that if you find South African Weed Orchids in Nillumbik contact Nillumbik Shire Council on 9433 3111 for further advice.

[Nillumbik South African Weed Orchid \(*Disa bracteata*\) fact sheet](#)

Also, if you think you have found this species, please contact the BICA committee as some local residents are now well skilled in recognising and treating this plant.

So far it seems that this weed is relatively limited in occurrence in The Bend, so we do still have a chance to keep it under control if we are vigilant.

What Does It Look Like?

South African Weed Orchid is a perennial terrestrial orchid with underground tubers. It is dormant through the winter and sprouts in early spring with a rosette of leaves, followed by flower spikes that develop seeds as the weather warms up during summer.

The stems are erect and fleshy, usually 30–50 cm tall. The plant has green leaves with purple undersides. The leaves taper from a broad base to a pointy tip, about 5–15 cm long and form in a rosette.

Disa flowers from late October through to December. It usually has 15–30 flowers on a thick cylindrical spike, about 5–20 cm long. It looks a bit like a greenish-brown asparagus spear. Flowers are very dense and are mostly reddish-brown and yellow. The seeds are black, minute and dust-like. They are held within the capsular fruit. The plant is self-pollinating. *Disa* generally has 1–3 tubers about 20mm in size, that look like a small potato.

How Does It Spread

The main form of seed dispersal is wind. Seed can also be spread on shoes, clothing and vehicles, as well as in water and through animal and soil movement. The seeds can remain viable for years. This means that one seeding plant in a year means many weeds for years to come.

In Bend of Islands, most sites where this weed has been found are at water runoff points along the road. This suggests that the main transport of seeds here has been on vehicles and then in water off the road.

How To Control

Manual removal requires digging up and removing **all** parts of the plant, including the tuber, leaves and flowers. All plant material **must** be bagged securely (e.g., in a zip-lock plastic bag) and placed in your RED bin to prevent the fine dust-like seed from spreading further.





A lot of care needs to be taken when digging out plants as *Disa* often returns in greater numbers after the disturbance of digging to remove its tubers.

If you suspect you've found an infestation:

1. Do not disturb until you have discussed with BICA or the council. Remember, there is a high risk of spread.
2. Contact Nillumbik Shire Council, 9433 3111.
3. Council and BICA will support you with identification and control options.



Don't Confuse It With...Indigenous Onion Orchids (*Microtis* spp.)

Disa plants have a rosette of leaves, while the native Onion Orchids have one round leaf, often extending above the flower spike.

Gavin Masters

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

*Onion Orchid. Microtis spp.
Photo: Julia Franco.
Reproduced from NSC South African Weed Orchid Fact Sheet*





Landcare at Home - General Management Principles

This information is taken from our Bend of Islands Management Plan.

Property and Domestic Zone Management

Generally, individual property management can be divided into two broad categories: 1) Management around the domestic zone or house site; and 2) Management across the wider property.

Although requirements for management of properties within the Bend of Islands vary broadly in accordance with individual site characteristics, there are several management parameters, particularly in the context of managing the domestic zone or house site. Some of these considerations and potential management techniques are itemized below.

Does the garden contain species that are known environmental weeds, or species which have the capacity to become environmental weeds?

It is far easier to eradicate environmental weeds from around the home when populations are small and relatively manageable, rather than when they have spread beyond the kitchen garden and comprise much larger and more widespread populations. Additionally, minimizing the potential for new environmental weeds to establish will result in a lesser ongoing requirement for weed control.

Are site factors proximate to the house influencing the way weeds are able to establish and expand into the surrounding Bush?

Almost all houses within the Bend of Islands provide conditions that favour environmental weeds. Water tank overflows, grey water discharge, septic overflow, transpiration beds and vegetable gardens are just a few

of the sites around the home that promote or favour establishment of weeds.

Species such as *Ehrharta erecta* (Panic Veldt-grass) often first established at these locations and then expand over large areas. It is often not enough to simply control the weed infestation, there is also a need to control the cause, particularly if it is related to increased nutrients via household discharge. These may include planting species which are more tolerant of increased soil and nutrient levels and will help to reduce the opportunity for weeds to establish.

Is there an opportunity to use indigenous species for landscaping around the house?

Due to small population sizes (and thus lost genetic diversity), a number of species (particularly Asteraceae or Daisy taxa) produce low viability seed. Establishing localized populations around the domestic zone will provide for some exchange of genetic material and will therefore increase the likelihood of greater seed viability.

Monthly Landcare

Our monthly Landcare working bees have been well attended by our hard-working Landcarers. In June we planted sweet bursaria along Henley Road as a back-up population to the established ones that are growing too close to the road.

Over the subsequent months we targeted populations of *Cassinia sifton*, weedy acacias and bluebell creeper.

Mal Chicksen





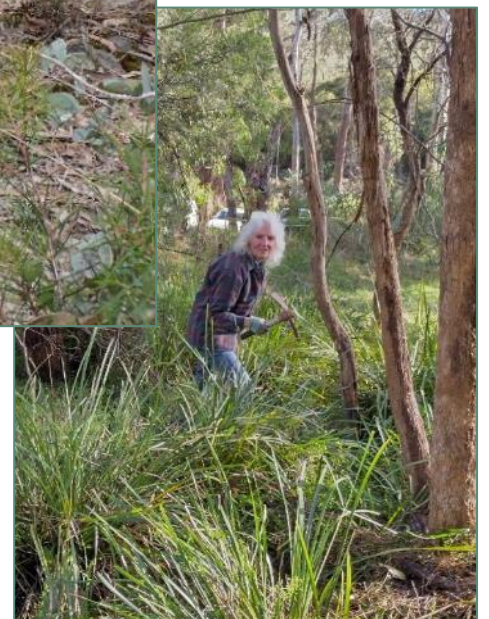
Thanks to all of our
Landcarers we can
prevent the Bend from
ending up like this....

Can you spot the weeds?



...and have more of this....

Can you spot Carol?





Bird Notes

The following can be reported since April 2023.

Lyrebird Records

With over 500 records, including local breeding; and the report **The Return of the Lyrebird to the Bend of Islands - [here](#)** ; the detailed recording of every time a bird is seen or heard is no longer needed. However, it is useful to record any unusual observations, such as multiple birds calling or any interaction of birds.

A few times this year I've heard 3 birds calling at the same time, a sure sign that numbers are increasing.

Please report any 'unusual encounters' you are lucky enough to have with these iconic birds.

Bird Survey Highlights

The outstanding sightings for the period were -

- **July:** **Whistling Kites Courting** at HGC
- **August:** **Shelduck** at Aqueduct near Co-op

New Bird for the BICA List.

Red-backed Kingfisher, juvenile, was an amazing vagrant recorded by Frank, on the Co-op near C Track on 7/10/23.

It was hopping around feeding at ground level and then flew high into the trees.

It was probably blown from its normal range, in northern Victoria, by the incredible northerlies of a few nights prior.

This brings the Bol Bird List Total to **182** species.



Red-backed Kingfisher

Other Interesting Observations

White-throated Nightjars have returned to the Co-op for the summer breeding season - 1st call heard 1/10/23.

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 [here](#)

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.

The bird survey walks are on the 2nd Sunday of each month. See the BICA Calendar for start times; we meet at the upper corner of Henley and Catani.

Upcoming Community Birdwalk - Saturday 25 November 2023

BICA would like to welcome all members to a Community Birdwalk, which will be led by Rudi Pauli on 25 November 2023. This will be an opportunity to have a more relaxed foray into the Bol birds, without the intensity associated with the Bird Survey.

Frank Pierce



Community Events

Trivia Night

For the first time in four to five years the Trivia Night took place in the deep recesses of the Bend of Islands. On a cold winters night three teams were pitted against each other to test their trivia skills, sense of humour, wit, ability to deceive others and talent to bribe the judge.

The Nightjars were the short-priced favourite with the bookies, followed by the Tuans and the Curried Eggs at the longest odds. It was very strong contest and the Nightjars shot off to an early lead. With the next round the Tuans were able to hit the lead but then lost some points with a couple of loose comments and insults directed towards the judge. The Curried Eggs were able to gain ground during the rounds of balderdash with some humorous answers and the ability to deceive others.

At the final round of questions, the Nightjars held a 1-point lead, with both the Tuans and Curried Eggs locked together in equal second place. The judge retired to consider the best bribe and the bribe was enough for the Curried Eggs to force a playoff against the Nightjars.

So, it came down to the final question. What a way to finish the night. The question was True or False - do male snakes have a penis? The Curried Eggs were able to able to answer correctly and answered True. There was wild jubilation and excitement from their table.

Just in case you wanted to know a snake has two penises known as hemipenes. You didn't need to know that, only answer True or correct.

So, what did they win?

The bragging rights to have their photo included in the Newsletter and take a good look at them because they are the champions and can walk around with their heads held high until next year when they get to defend their crown.

You may be interested to know what was the winning bribe was?

We'll I can't tell you the answer to that.

Rudi Pauli



The Mighty Curried Eggs

The Big Walk

We were lucky with this annual event as the sun shone on us...it was a delightful Sunday walk on 24 September with great company and an enjoyable end to the day at "A Boy named Sue" in St Andrews.

We started with 21 confirmed walkers at the KG Cemetery after a bit of car shuffling! The lanes and byways of KG and Panton Hill showed the positive effect of good winter and spring rain with lots of growth, wild flowers (and weeds!!)

At Kings Road we took a detour down the Felix Borsari Walk (Yirrip Reserve) off Koos Rd that is a pleasant ramble away from any traffic. Then up and down and around as we followed the many reserves and links before lunch in Bunjil reserve near Panton Hill again with a proliferation of orchids and yam daisies.



Big Walkers



Down to Long Gully Road where we lost five walkers who had planned to leave and gained five more to finish off the walk. Uphill and down dale into the back of Smith's Gully and down to the car park near Queenstown Cemetery. Another well-earned break as we were up to about 12 ks or so by then.

We finished off the lovely ramble up the historic goldfields trail into St Andrews to quench the thirst and rest!

Another five Benders joined us for pizza and drinks in a great room at the restaurant. It was great to see so many along. Looking forward to the next one!!

Peter Mildenhall

FIRE BRIGADE TREASURES



Look at the great view from the South Station which you could see when the site was cleared – early 1980's. Lots of tree regrowth since then.



Recognise anyone in the pics?





A Traditional Cool Burn



Frank, my neighbour, conducted a special cool burn, using a traditional Aboriginal Burn practice....



He took a small flame for a walk....



The fire is small....



it will change direction just with the twist of a rake....



and at his command....



Through the white smoke you can see Frank, in harmony....



and the result, under these conditions, gets rid of fuel load....



with hardly a degree in increased temperature.

Pierre Noirjean



More on Frank's Cool Burn

Conditions must be optimal in terms of temperature, wind, ground and vegetation moisture content, humidity, etc for any kind of burning on property. Don't do this unless you know what you're doing and have the necessary equipment to deal with anything unexpected.

And always remember to register your burn with CFA.

There is more information about cool burning on the Christmas Hills Landcare video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuPDSYmpNvw>



CHRISTMAS HILLS FIRE BRIGADE NEWS



Firstly congratulations to BICA on the 100th edition of the News: it has been a positive and productive relationship between the Brigade and BICA over many years and long may it continue!

This season coming:

After a couple of years of relatively damp and 'quiet' fire seasons we are heading into an El Nino cycle and with it increased fire danger. As you would be aware this season has already seen serious bushfires in NSW, the NT, Queensland and the east coast of Tasmania as well as in East Gippsland.

The grasslands and bush are beginning to dry out in central Victoria and forecasts indicate a higher level of risk in our area.

NOW is the time to:

- Review your Plan A, B and C for leaving or if you are caught at home,
 - Your individual trigger(s) for leaving early: a TFB? Extreme day based on the new AFDRS ratings? Knowing when to leave (and sticking to it) is CFA's number one message for folks in places like BOI this summer.
 - Official messaging on this planning is at: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-and-during-a-fire/leave-early>
 - There is lots of info about fire planning on the CFA website that can be used to help make better decisions
- Clean up around your property,
- Get rid of those overhanging branches, shrubs that are touching your house, that leaf litter and twigs that have accumulated, cut the grass, be careful of any mulch near the buildings
- Check all your water sources, pump, generator,
- Look at 'hardening' your buildings to withstand ember attack and check 'flaky' paint.
- Also check your street number so that it is visible to emergency vehicles. We recently attended a house fire that was hard to find due to obscure numbers (thank goodness for Google maps!!)

Incidents

We spent nearly 12 hours at a house fire in Westering Road recently which required a lot of support from neighbouring brigades and officers from the CFA.



There was some significant damage but the house was 'saved'. It seems an electrical fault in an exhaust fan and then compromised electrical cable caused the fire(s). As mentioned above, visible house numbers always help and clear access for fire trucks is also important. Can a fire truck get down your drive, how is clearance for the truck?

Earlier we had a couple of burn offs that we attended. Please ring them in or notify ESTA on [1800 668 511](tel:1800668511), or register online on the [Fire Permits Victoria](http://www.firepermits.vic.gov.au) website before you start!

Working bee at South Station

Many of you will have noticed that vegetation and overhanging branches have been cleared from around the South station and there is more work to do. While we can never make the station 'fire-proof' we can help minimize risk by clearing around buildings and making them less susceptible to smaller and slow-moving fires.

Ultralight Replacement

As you may know we have ordered our new Ultralight and again thank the **Warrandyte Community Bank** for their support, as well as all you locals over the last 12 years. We have raised and saved over \$160 k and hope to see the new light truck with us by the end of this year. Please go to your local Bank for any banking or insurance needs and give them the opportunity to quote for you... did you realise they have donated over \$5 million back to the local community over the last 20 years? That's \$5 million more than the big 4 banks!!



BRI

As you know Bushfire Resilience Inc provides an important source of planning and preparation advice for bushfires and their latest recordings are available.

[Pets and bushfires - what do we know? - Recording](#)

[Pets and bushfires - what do we know? - Feedback Survey](#)

[Getting ready for an El Niño summer - Recording](#)

[Getting ready for an El Niño summer - Feedback Survey](#)

[Reducing risks for people and houses - Recording](#)

[Reducing risks for people and houses - Feedback Survey](#)

[Grass fire and bushfire behavior - Recording](#)

[Grass fire and bushfire behavior - Feedback Survey](#)

[Safety actions for the fire season - Recording](#)

[Safety actions for the fire season - Feedback Survey](#)

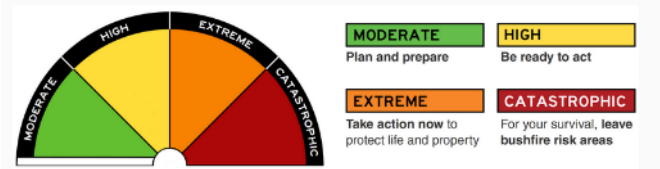
Each webinar recording includes a video of the full webinar as well individual videos for each of the segments. Captions are also available for your convenience. You can also register as a subscriber <https://br.org.au/webinar> or use the link to the Resource Hub for access to all recordings <https://br.org.au/hub>

Cheers

Peter Mildenhall

Community Safety Coordinator
Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

The new Fire Danger Ratings



There are four levels of fire danger in the new system:

- **Moderate** - Plan and prepare
- **High** - Be ready to act
- **Extreme** - Take action now to protect your life and property
- **Catastrophic** - For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Here it is – Number 1, March 1979.

Felicity Faris, who is currently a Life Member of BICA, was the inspiration behind the first newsletter, with Ray Howell, Jenny Bayly and Eilish Cooke being the first Editorial Committee. The Editors in 1979 were asking what should we call the newsletter? So creatively, for the second newsletter they added an extra word “Conservation” in between “Islands” and “Association” just to make it quite clear what they were about. Or perhaps they just forgot first time round?

By the way, this is one of the very few newsletters that doesn't have a “*What Native Plant is Flowering*” by Cric Henry. The first plant appears in Newsletter #2 August 1979 (*Acacia Genistifolia*) and by Cric's count she's done 97 all up!!!

Conservation

The Bend of Islands Association Newsletter

Vol 1 No 1
March 1979

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association will be held on Sunday March 25th at the home of Peter and Felicity Faris, Henley Road, at 2.00pm. Bring plate, mug and seat.

AGENDA:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last AGM and business arising.
3. Secretary/Treasurers Report.
4. Election of Office Bearers.
5. Subscriptions.
6. General Business:
 - a) MMBW Land Sales - Report on disposal of land within ELZ.
 - b) CFA - Report from the brigade.
 - c) ELZ - A talk by a guest speaker on what it means living day-to-day within the Zone.

NOMINATIONS:

The Offices of the President, Vice-President, and Committee are to be filled at this meeting. It would be preferred if anyone wishing to stand, could have nominations to the Secretary, Rod Shield (7120396) by March 18th 1979.

Editorial

We felt a newsletter would be a nice way to communicate to members about a wider range of community happenings and issues and hope you will find this both informative and educational. The present Editorial Committee, is: Ray Howell, Jenny Bayly, and Eilish Cooke. If you have skills or time to offer, and would like to join our committee, please ring Jenny 7120355. We welcome suggestions for future newsletters, eg. what should we call the newsletter? Please give us details of any meetings, or other local happenings, births, marriages, deaths, etc. The newsletter will appear quarterly.

Thanks and Goodluck

Mal McLure has purchased land in N.S.W. and will be giving our Association a considerable challenge in replacing his talents, which have been invaluable on many occasions. “Yarrabrake cesspool” a now famous song was written by Mal, & this was one of the turning points in the Campaign against the project.



FROM THE EDITORS

So here is the 100th!

A great effort from all our contributors to this and to past issues. Over the years we have burrowed in on a multitude of aspects of our special place, the flora, fauna, the threats, community news, and so on. There has always been something to say. We can be quietly proud of this Newsletter and the role it has played in the Bend of Islands. Computers have transformed the presentation from the charmingly quaint black and white, photocopied, packs of yesteryear. We are now colourful and paperless, but still lovable. Articles from the regulars have been getting better and better.

We do however struggle to attract new contributors. It would be good if, when you, out there, think of or observe something of interest, please send it our way. Don't wait until an issue is due. We will carefully store it away and include it in the next one.

Thanks again

C, R, & J

Please keep sending in your articles and photos to rosscric@gmail.com as we look ahead to the next newsletter in May 2024.

Cric and Ross Henry (Editors)

with Julie Martindale (Production)

