



## What Native Plant Is Flowering?

Refer: Flora of Melbourne, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by Marilyn Bull

Grassland Plants of South-Eastern Australia by Neil & Jane Marriott

Bend of Islands Plant List - Revised 2023-6

**Scientific Name:** *Glycine microphylla*

**Common Name:** Small-leaf Glycine

**Family:** FABACEAE

**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:** A stoloniferous twiner i.e. a twiner with stolons (a basal stem growing above or just below the ground surface) taking root at intervals along the stem nodes. The stem nodes are a place on the stem marked by the attachment of a leaf or bracts.

Food plant for caterpillars.

**Foliage:** Trifoliate leaves (a leaf with 3 leaflets) with the network of veins of the leaf at right-angles. Central of the 3 leaflets are on a short stalk, with a pair of small projections (stipels) at the stalk's base. The central leaf is slightly longer.

The obovate to elliptic leaf is hairy to sparsely bristly above, and densely bristly below, 5- 50mm x 2-9mm. Leaflets of upper leaves narrow-lanceolate shape 1.5-5 mm x 1-6mm.

**Flowers:** Racemes of 5-13 small violet flowers with a white spot, crowded towards end. After flowering narrow seed pod to 3cm long.

**Flowering period:** October to April.

**Cric Henry**



Photo credit: Marilyn Bull



Photo credit:  
<https://uk.inaturalist.org/taxa/356109-Glycine-microphylla>



## FROM THE NEW SECRETARY

To state the obvious, which has been said so many times before, we certainly live in a very special area, with so much to protect.

The number of people working to support the area is great. I would like to acknowledge some of them:

Mal Chicksen is coordinating Landcare with our monthly working bees, also providing education about weeds and indigenous species. This has been the committee's focus for the past year.

Frank Pierce has been doing an enormous amount of work, such as 30 years of local bird surveys and building species lists for birds, mammals, frogs, plants and now insects. For many years he liaised with Ausnet on vegetation management under power lines, but has now handed this over to Rudi Pauli.

Liz Mildenhall and Carol Bonny have been liaising with Nillumbik Shire Council about maintenance of the unsealed roads and roadside vegetation.

Andy McMahan and Janet Mattiske have represented us at council level on a range of committees.

Tobey Henry coordinates Clean Up Australia Day working bees.

For the past 2 years Cric and Ross Henry and Julie Martindale have been producing the newsletter.

The Planning Sub Committee of Robyn Duff, Janet Mattiske, Alan and Carol Bonny, have worked hard for years on policy issues at council and state government levels. They have lately been joined by John Roberts, Ross Henry and Don Macrae.

We also shouldn't forget the roles others outside BICA play, such as the group who are working on getting a local community hall, those volunteers in the fire brigade, fire guard groups, not to mention the artists who record so much of our area and the musos who keep us entertained.

## INDEX

1. What Native Plant is Flowering?
2. From the New Secretary
3. Life Membership - Mike Pelling
4. Planning Sub-Committee-Local Law
5. Syllepsis – Moths & Butterflies
7. Bird Notes
8. Our Night Event
9. Landcare – Management Principles
10. Landcare
10. What Weed to Watch Out For
11. Gellie Memorial Bike Ride
12. The Big Walk
13. Skinks
13. BOI Community Power Update
15. Yarra Brae Dam Proposal
17. AI Meets Trust for Nature
19. Lightning Messes with a Messmate
22. Fire Brigade News
24. From the Archives
24. From the Editors

Contact BICA  
[bicacomm@gmail.com](mailto:bicacomm@gmail.com)

## Coming Up - Saturday 25 May - GUM WALK

Learn how to identify eucalyptus trees. (Further info to follow)

## BICA GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 26 May, 2.30pm.

Venue TBC

Guest Speaker:

**Doug Hilton will be talking all things Lepidoptera**

*(See the article on Page 5)*





## Back to the Committee

We have a committee of fairly new members. The longest serving is Rudi Pauli as Treasurer. Rudi is also a regular attendee at the Sunday morning Bird Survey. He ran an informative 'Introduction to Bird Watching' walk recently along with his son Jarrah. Another session is scheduled for October.

Tserin Wright, Alana Ducan, Mia Bullen, Russell Crosser and Noni Turner are all active members of the committee. Eg developing the calendar, reminding people about events, visiting those new to the area with a copy of 'Living in the Bend of Islands' booklet. Tserin was involved in developing the Sugarloaf Link proposal over ten years ago and brings a knowledge of landcare projects, encouraging us all to be familiar with the Bend of Islands Land Management Plan (2014), developed by Dylan Osler.

Diana Gentu has recently resigned as she isn't living in the area, but is still assisting. She brought lots of enthusiasm to the group. She was involved in writing a submission to DEECA to run a 'Waterways Guardian' program. (This was unsuccessful). Diana has also assisted previous president, Michael Dempsey to orient local resident, Dan Cleaveley and Lee Speedy (from Eltham) to our website, which they plan to keep updated with events coming up and items of interest, including these newsletters.

Though not on the committee, Don Macrae has recently attended a meeting to work towards establishing a group to identify potential projects, tailor those projects with available grants, and write submissions.

## The Secretary Role

This year, I am the new BICA secretary. This has been a great opportunity to understand the background of how the organisation functions. Emails from all over come to the secretary on a daily basis - new member applications, the calendar, information about events and projects etc., along with the usual preparation of agendas and minutes.

I would particularly like to thank our previous secretary, Julie Martindale. She worked in this role for 5 years, updating and maintaining the system for minutes and record keeping, answering questions about BICA and projects, as well as participating in lots of activities – not the least, production for this newsletter. She has kept us up-to-date and efficient. Julie is still working to assist me with the intricacies of the role.

*Eleanor*

## Life Membership for Mike Pelling

We are very pleased to let you know that Mike Pelling was granted Life Membership of BICA in February this year. Mike has been a part of the BICA family since the beginning. He has served on committee in several roles over the decades, as President, Treasurer and Ordinary Member. His last stint was between 2018-2023 contributing to committee meeting discussions and importantly doing a lot of leg work encouraging new residents to join, as well as chasing up overdue members. He maintains that a personal approach is essential to enhance connections with people.

The committee was always keen to see his colour coded, large scale property maps which graphically showed just how much land in the BOI is represented by BICA members.

We appreciate Mike's incredible historical knowledge and colourful stories of living in the Bend, as well as his penchant for a glass of good red after a meeting.

Mike joins a few other esteemed Life Members – Felicity Faris, John & Meg McCallum, Janet Mattiske & Frank Pierce, and Alan & Carol Bonny.



BICA Treasurer Rudi Pauli presents Mike with his Life Membership certificate.



## Planning Sub-Committee Update on the Local Law

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 increased the number of pets within the Bend of Islands by allowing pets in some properties that did not 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, 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.

Prior to the Local Law there were 9 dogs legitimately registered under the Non- conforming Use Rights Register or under the Disability Discrimination Act. Two of the nine were Assistance Dogs. Following the implementation of the Local Law, there are 15 dogs and 2 cats registered – two of the dogs are Assistance Dogs. It is worth noting that no person is allowed to walk a dog on the roads within the Bend of Islands except if it is an Assistance Dog and all cats are housed within the house or within an enclosure.

Throughout last year, the BICA Planning Committee has:

- taken advice from Peter Tesdorpf, a Town Planner regarding Nillumbik’s actions;
- taken advice from Mark Bartley, Partner, HWL Ebsworth, Lawyers specializing in planning matters regarding our options;
- instructed Mark Bartley, who wrote a number of letters to Nillumbik Council detailing our concerns and demanding action;
- attended a meeting accompanied by Peter Tesdorpf to meet with Nillumbik Council CEO, the Mayor and senior Planning officers about our concerns;
- met with the Director of Planning, Environment and Strategy, the Mayor and Council officers;
- drafted letters for the Secretary of BICA to send to our local Member of Parliament, Members of the Upper House representing our area, the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Local Government;
- had numerous discussions with Ben Ramcharan, local Councilor and Mayor;
- met with Ian Munt, a prominent Planning Barrister;
- conducted numerous internal meetings to plan our way through this matter.

Throughout this process Council were also receiving legal advice about their position.

So far, we have been unsuccessful in having Council change their approach. The situation in the Bend of Islands is a very complex legal matter and there are no precedents for our case, so it not easily challenged. Currently we have been offered and accepted pro bono legal advice from HWL Ebsworth and have met with Mark Bartley and other Solicitors on a number of occasions to discuss the best course of action. We consider that the matter remains unresolved and we are continuing to take advice from the Solicitors and to meet with Council Officers to discuss the implementation of the Local Law.

**Robyn Duff**

13 April 2024



# SYLLEPSIS – Opening Your Eyes and Mind to Moths and Butterflies

AUTUMN 2024

Bend of Islands is a special place, not just because of the environmental attributes we are trying to protect, but because we have so many keen eyes and smart brains that are focussed on the natural world around us. With so much more in the world to discover and understand, our community is an amazing resource for science.

Syllepsis will alert members of the Co-Op and BICA to interesting moths for which to keep an eye out and Lepidoptera-related citizen science efforts to which they can contribute.

## The Case of the Misplaced Moth

Although we know very well how butterflies are related to one another – with skippers in the family Hesperidae, blues in the family Lycaenidae and swallowtails in the family Papilionidae, Australia has many moths that simply do not fit well into our current framework. One such group of moths are in the genus *Piestoceros*. (Photo left)

These moths are metallic, day-flying and small, with a wingspan of around 1 cm – about half the size of the Common Grass Blue butterflies you may see flying around most of the year.



Adult *Piestoceros conjunctella*  
(Photo credit: Nigel Main, iNaturalist.  
September 2023, Maryborough).



Larval case of *Piestoceros* species  
on broad-leafed Acacia  
(Photo credit: Axel Kallies,  
January 2024, Mornington Peninsula)

While the *Piestoceros* moths are hard to find, the cases their caterpillars carry around are curious and are more often seen. (Photo right)

These beautiful pieces of natural architecture are spiral shaped and are invariably associated with broad leaf Acacias. When the moths are ready to pupate, they attach their cases to their host plant by a thin thread. In general, moths are found flying in late summer when they mate and lay their eggs. The caterpillars feed from autumn through to spring and pupate in early summer, ready for the adults to emerge again. The cases can be found (either with a caterpillar, pupa or empty) all year round.

Because the *Piestoceros* caterpillars live in cases, until recently, scientists assumed the genus was part of the case-moth family Psychiidae, with which many of you will be familiar. By sequencing the DNA of the *Piestoceros* moth, we now know that it's not a Psychiidae and that both groups having cases is an example of convergent evolution.

What is interesting about *Piestoceros* is not so much that it doesn't fit in Psychiidae but that it doesn't fit in any known family of moths. Rather, it appears to be most closely related to some other odd moths currently in the genera



*Heliocosma*, the caterpillars of which also carry cases made of leaves or petals. A citizen science team in Melbourne is working to understand how many different species of *Piestoceros* there are and will then write a paper which describes the new family to which they belong.

We can help this project by keeping our eyes out for cases (or moths). In the Bend of Islands, a good starting point is the broad leaf acacias, such as *A. melanoxylon*, which provide food for the *Piestoceros* caterpillars.

If you find a case like the one in the photo please take a picture of it – note your location (or have your camera/phone record the GPS position) and send it to us by email at [sun.lovng.moths@gmail.com](mailto:sun.lovng.moths@gmail.com) and even better post the picture to iNaturalist – a global citizen science effort to record the natural world. If you are not sure that what you are seeing is a *Piestoceros*, don't stress, we would much prefer to have false alarms (which will be interesting and useful observations in themselves) than miss out.

## Whistling Moths

February saw a spectacular new addition to the Bend of Islands moth list – *Hecatesia fenestrata*, the Common Whistling Moth, which came to lights on Skyline Rd. This moth feeds on *Cassytha* (Dodder-Laurel) for which we have 3 species in the Bend of Islands. The moths are spectacular for two reasons. First, they are aposematic – having bright orange and black striped abdomen which they display if startled, and second the males whistle ... loudly ... and can be heard around dusk frenetically flying in the canopy. They do this by rubbing a ribbed window in their forewings. If you have dodder-laurel close to your house, keep your ears and eyes out for these amazing moths.

A recording of the male whistling is [here](#). (Best listened to with headphones, to hear the moth over the wind noise)

Information on the 3 Dodder Laurel species found in the Bol is [here](#). (Follow the link for each species then click on the photos to expand them.)



Male *Hecatesia fenestrata*, the Common Whistling Moth (left) with view of its ribbed window (right).  
(Photo credit: Donald Hobern - originally posted to Flickr)

**Doug Hilton and Frank Pierce**



# Bird Notes

The following has been reported since Nov 2023.

## Lyrebird Records

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:

**Feb: Spotless Crake** on Aqueduct in area previously damaged by bikes.

## New Bird for the BICA List.

**Purple-Crowned Lorikeet**, recorded by Jarrah, at the end of Gongflers Drive 20/11/23.

There have subsequently been a number of recordings of this bird so this may be a local mini-irruption of this species.

This brings the Bol Bird List Total to **183** species.



Photo credit: Jarrah Pauli

## Thank You Frank!

After many years of being the main contact point for all things BIRD in The Bend, **Frank Pierce** is stepping back from parts of this role. Frank has made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the birds that share this place with all of us. He has also put in a lot of work developing tools that we can all use to make identifying the birds we see that little bit easier.

I would like to thank Frank on behalf of the whole community, but feel free to pass on your own wishes directly when you see him around. He will still be available to answer any of our questions!!

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 BICA. If you have any birding queries, there are a number of people in the community who may be able to help you.

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

## Mal Chicksen



## “Our Night Event”

Soon after moving to the Bend, Felicity Faris, our then next door neighbour, coerced me to join the BICA Community Involvement Sub Committee. Having never done anything like this before, I was a bit hesitant, but Felicity wouldn't take no for an answer! This was to be the beginning of over 30 years of involvement in our wonderful Bend of Islands Conservation Association.

One of the first and most memorable events that we organised was an idea that Felicity came up with, for a "NIGHT EVENT!" Brains were put into gear and the plan was to have a gathering, before Easter, down in a gully in the area surrounded by Catani and Henley Roads, known as "Shonies Dam."

From the then McCallum property we gently cleared a long and windy path through the bush to the evening meeting spot. Alan and myself got down there early to set up a campfire. As the sun started to set, we looked up to see a long trail of hand-held twinkling lamps snaking their way slowly down the track. How magical it was, like forest fireflies.

The evening was spent eating, drinking, singing and lots of the usual chatting. We had a quiet period to lay on backs and stare up at the stars. We were then entertained in the stillness by a beautiful performance on the Japanese Flute. Pretty special!

The campfire was of course a hit with the kids, especially when Alan cooked up a pile of pikelets for all to enjoy, dripping with golden syrup. Sticky fingers galore.

Since that initial night, the event has been held annually at Jo and Gérard's special property with its amphi-theatre setting above the candle lit dam. During inclement weather the Fire Shed was transformed to accommodate an undercover stage for the performers.

It has been a joy to watch our younger generations do their first shaky stage performances and then over the years become so proficient in their favoured artistic endeavours. The diversity of talents in the Bend and surrounds is amazing. Each year brings out more surprises.

COVID put a hold on all BICA events, but during a break in Lockdown, I decided to ask the musicians if they would organise the event for the Community. They did and it was so wonderful to have our special musical gathering during that trying period.

From the early 1990s the " BICA NIGHT EVENT" has been a hit with residents and has been embraced over the years by many performers from surrounding areas.

Thank you to all those who have participated over the years and thank you to the audiences.

I'm sure this popular event will continue way into the future. **G-L-O-R-I-A!**

**Carol Bonny**







# Landcare – General Management Principles

Here are some General Management Principles to help with our bush upkeep. This information is taken from our Bend of Islands Management Plan.

## Management Techniques for broader property management:

A number of initiatives for the protection and enhancement of declining populations of significant flora, including the erection of herbivore exclusion fencing, the promotion of recruitment using fire, and the propagation and planting of new individuals. Continued review of the use of fire in stimulating recruitment is also proposed. The importance of selecting techniques in accordance with localised conditions cannot be over-emphasised and therefore the advice should be considered as of a general nature only.

### The protection of flora species which are heavily grazed by guarding or establishing exclusion plots.

Within most areas a range of species are still present but are heavily grazed. By protecting these, individuals will allow the on-site population to establish and set seed.

### The diversification of trees (non Eucalyptus) and shrubs

While much of the Bend of Islands has a good overall cover of shrubs and trees, there has been a decrease in the diversity of these species.

### The reintroduction of site appropriate species.

If aspects of the vegetation structure are absent and natural regeneration is not occurring, then the reintroduction of site appropriate species may be appropriate. Focus on structural elements that are characteristic of the on-site character.

## Significant and Threatened Flora Species

- Develop management plans tailored to protect the individual needs of locally significant taxa.
- Established exclusion plots to protect locally significant flora from grazing.
- Individually guard tree and shrub species which are vulnerable by grazing, including species such as *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle), *Acacia acinacea* (Gold Dust Wattle) and *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria)
- Increase the genetic variation by sourcing indigenous plants from nearby local populations of known provenance (for example, source plants from the Friends of Warrandyte State Park.)
- Consider manipulating leaf litter to provide habitat for threatened orchids such as *Ophioglossum lusitanicum* (Austral Adder's Tongue Orchid)
- Consider actively controlling Burgen populations, where localized expansion is deemed to be having a negative ecological impact and displacing other indigenous species.



Individually protecting Black Sheoak (*Allocasurina littoralis*) within a regeneration area



Individually protecting Rock Correa (*Correa Glabra var. glabra*)



## Landcare

We have had a great start to our Landcare efforts this year – attendance has been really good, however we do need more help and encourage more people to participate in this important community event.

Kicking off in February we targeted garden escapees at two properties in Henley Rd. Firstly, lemon balm, sweet violet and thistles at 526 Henley Road. Then in March, more escapees at 541 Henley Road, in particular arum lilies, blackberry, belladonna and other lilies. Follow up work will be needed to bring seed sources under control.

There will be a lot of work ahead as the wetter weather arrives and weeds such as bridal creeper, weedy acacias, sifton, vernal grass, veldt grass, angled onion and thistles (just to name a few) start becoming obvious.

## What Weed to Watch Out For

### ARUM LILY (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*)

#### The Weed

Arum lily is a long-lived plant that is 1-1.5 m tall. It is really well known for its large, white flowers and recognisable leaves.

It is originally from South Africa but came to Australia very early after European settlement as it was a widely used flower for funerals.

#### What Does It Look Like?

Arum Lily is a lush green, perennial, herbaceous plant that is mostly evergreen in The Bend where rainfall and temperatures are adequate. It mostly grows along creeks and gullies. It grows to 1 m tall, with large clumps of broad, arrow shaped dark green leaves up to 45 cm long. The flowers are large and are produced in spring, summer and autumn, with a pure white spathe (petal) up to 25 cm and a yellow spadix (central spike) up to 90 mm long. It produces a faint, sweet fragrance.

#### How Does It Spread

Arum lily spreads by plant parts and seed. It is also spread by gardeners as it is available in nurseries, plant markets and online.

Plants may take 3 to 4 years before producing viable seed. Seeds germinate in late autumn to winter. They can be spread by water, contaminated soil, animals including birds, foxes and livestock and by people dumping garden waste.

New plants can grow from roots, or root fragments. They spread out from original plants forming larger clumps. Long distance spread of roots can be by water, moving contaminated soil or by people dumping garden waste.

#### How To Control

Arum lily can be hard to control because of its large, hardy root system.

Manual removal requires digging up and removing as much of the root system as possible with follow up for a few years to make sure no roots remain.

Also keep looking for and killing regrowth or any new seedlings.





## Don't Confuse It With

Arum Lily really doesn't look very much like other plants in The Bend.

When it is at very early stages of growth the leaves can look like those of Australian Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum australe*).

*If you would like some help identifying and controlling this or any weeds on your block, please feel free to contact BICA. We're more than happy to help.*

*[bicacomm@gmail.com](mailto:bicacomm@gmail.com)*



## Gellie Memorial Bike Ride

Seven people climbed onto their bikes for the annual bike ride in memory of Co-op member Ewen Gellie who passed away on 9 March 2022. Two intrepid riders started at Yering for the ride along the bike trail to Lilydale and then to the start of the Lilydale to Warburton Trail, where another person joined for the climb up the hill to Mt Evelyn. Four others joined at Mt Evelyn and soon we were all enjoying the most beautiful day along the trail to Warburton. We stopped at Woori Yallock (pictured) for morning tea and raised a water bottle toast to Ewen.

Lunch was had sitting by the Yarra River in Warburton before the return journey, finishing with a relaxing drink and potato wedges back at the pub in Yarra Glen.

The bike ride is now an annual event and anyone can come. The full trail from Yering to Warburton and return is about 90km, but there are numerous options for joining the route depending on how far you want to ride. It's a well maintained rail trail so the uphill are okay, the downhill are fun and the flats are flat.

Thanks to Don for the unexpected blue cheese and bikkies along the way and to John for organizing it and to Floss, Liz, Karyn and Neill for the great company.

**Julie**

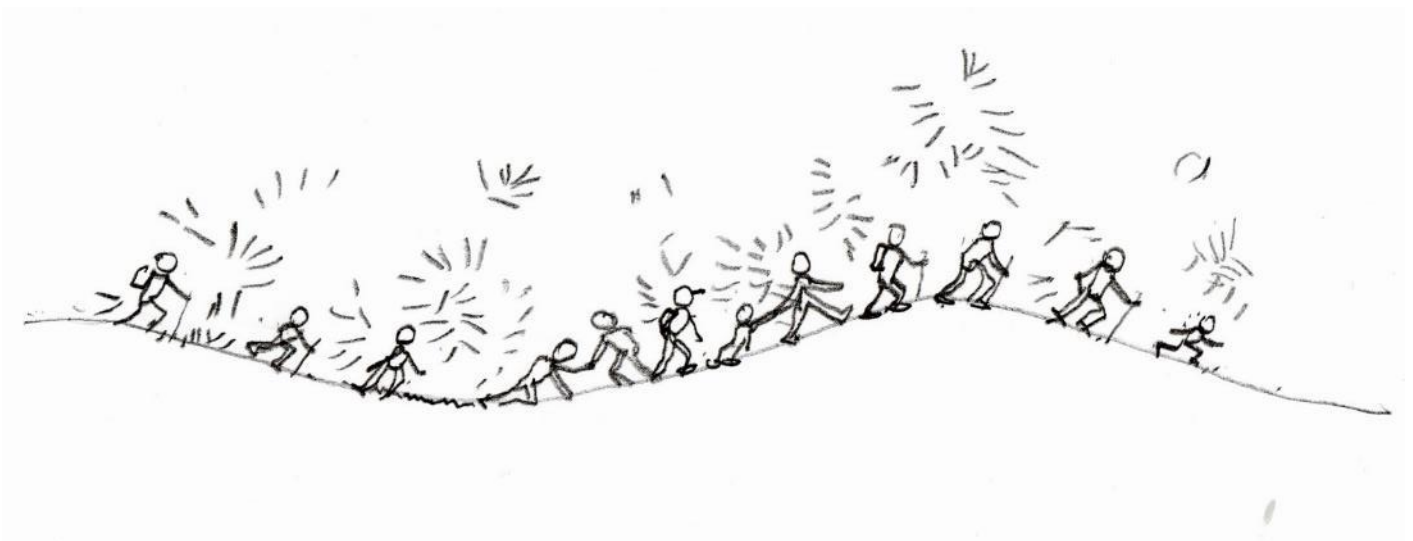




## The Big Walk

On Sunday 14 May 12 walkers headed out of the Bend for a walk through Wurrundjerie country. Along the way we gained a few, lost a few and after 15kms or so we ended up at the end with 18 people. It was a stunningly beautiful autumn day, the trails were soft underfoot after the rain and the bush was alive.

Leaving from the Bend...heading across Yanakie...up beside Calwell Rd...into Sugarloaf Reserve...across the Dam wall...down thru the reserve to Eltham Yarra Glen Rd...across into One Tree Hill reserve...up the Happy Valley track...along some tracks to Rob Roy Rd...down to Clintons Rd and to Nillumbik Estate for a well-earned drink and pizza!





## SKINKS



Freshly hatched baby skink in our garden brick sand...



The last 2 hatched...see how tiny next to a finger...



Having skinks around will help control crickets, moths, spiders and cockroaches. You can encourage skinks around your place by providing rocks, wood such as logs and sticks, and by leaving leaf litter around for them to hide amongst. All kinds of skinks love to sunbathe on rocks, pavers and logs in the garden.

Skinks create nests in moist soil under objects in the garden, with females laying around four eggs each, sometimes in communal nests which hold dozens of eggs.

### *Ona and Sid*

## Bend of Islands Community Power - Update

Some of you may be aware of our attempts to set up a not-for-profit local community power group. A few years ago there was an attempt to set up the "Bend of Islands Community Power", a local energy business of which several people have signed up to. The aim was to get cheaper, cleaner and greener power for locals including a cheap deal on solar panels and batteries and potentially set up a local microgrid.

Unfortunately, the project hit headwinds but there may be an opportunity to get things back on track. One of the problems was that we were limited to which energy company we could partner with. Whilst a good deal could be provided from this partner and the service we received was very poor and the business was very slow at responding to customer enquiries.

Whilst some people had positive experiences many others found that they did not get the service they were hoping for and ultimately did not go through with an upgrade or an install. The provider was very slow at getting back to people with quotations. In addition, our attempts to set up a green microgrid hit problems when SP Ausnet did not seem to understand the requirement for green energy and suggested the installation of diesel gensets as a solution.

It is now possible to approach a wider number of businesses which will hopefully enable us to negotiate a better deal. I am therefore keen to try to revive the idea. To understand what we could achieve it is worth trying to understand how the traditional power system works. Traditionally the power system consists of three components.

**Electricity wholesalers:** These businesses generate the energy and sell it on a spot market. The price of electricity on the spot market jumps up and down every 5 minutes and ranges from somewhere between \$1,000 per Megawatt hour to up to \$16,000 per Megawatt hour. More typically it hovers around a few cents per Kilowatt hour but the wholesale price fluctuates enormously as the price is updated every five minutes.



**Electricity retailers:** In order to shield the consumer from the chaos of the wholesale market, electricity retailers, the companies which send you your bill, will buy energy from the wholesale market and after smoothing the cost using hedging contracts, sell it to the consumer at the typically 30 cents per kilowatt rate we are familiar with.

**Electrical Networks Providers:** These businesses build the poles and wires to help carry the power from the generators to the consumer. The cost of the poles and wires is embedded in the consumers bill and typically constitutes about 70% of your power bill.

These traditional players are being rapidly disrupted by the new solar and battery technologies now available. As more consumers get solar and batteries and become prosumers, many of us might wonder why we still have to pay so much for our electricity bills? The short answer is that the traditional players are still trying to maintain their profit margins and so are charging us more despite the fact that we are less reliant on them. The situation is ripe for disruption.

A community such as ours is perfectly positioned to benefit from this disruption. The aim of the new relaunched Bend of Island Community Power Company would be to:

1. Help Benders reduce energy consumption by getting access to free or subsidised energy saving technology. The cheapest power is the power you don't use. There are many subsidies available which mean that some of these can be free or very nearly free.
2. Get a better deal on their retail electricity bill and raise money for the community. The idea here is to partner with Energy Locals to create our own Bend of Islands Retailer with profits going to the community.
3. Reduce or eliminate our carbon footprint by either generating or buying green energy.
4. Get a good bulk buy rate of solar and/or battery installations.
5. Take back some ownership of the local grid in an effort to reduce power bills and increase reliability and local grid resilience.
6. Consider purchasing an EV. Yes they are expensive but there are cheaper options available.

Community ownership of the grid could act as a model for a more sustainable community and put the Bend of islands on the map as a leader in energy innovation and possibly a model for other communities. If anyone is interested please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. A show of interest would help me greatly in negotiating with Energy Locals, Equipment suppliers and Ausnet. I can be contacted at [dr.sean.hutton@gmail.com](mailto:dr.sean.hutton@gmail.com)

**Sean Hutton**



Sean's solar set-up on the roof and his EV mini van in the garage.



# THE YARRA BRAE DAM PROPOSAL

The Bend of Islands of today exists for a number of reasons and one of these was a proposed dam for the Yarra River near Watsons Creek. The Dam would have inundated most of the Bend and incorporated the rest into the Dam catchment.

**The Yarra Brae Dam proposal was thwarted by community action which included Bend of Island residents represented by our Bend of Islands Conservation Association.**

*Bit of history from the timelines of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association Web Site:*

<https://bendofislands.wordpress.com/the-elz/history-of-the-elz/>

## Late Sixties

The MMBW proposed the Yarra Brae Dam and began compulsorily purchasing properties in the Bend of Islands. BICA became involved in anti-dam activity. The community realized that to successfully oppose the dam they must convince authorities of positive environmental qualities of the area.

## Early Seventies

The Yarra Brae Action Committee was formed in 1972 with wide community representation including BICA. Residential conservation ideas were formulated. A booklet "Residential Conservation" was published in 1975 under the auspices of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)

## April 1974

MMBW published an Environmental Impact Study on the proposed Yarra Brae, Sugarloaf and Watsons Creek dams to which the public was invited to make submissions. BICA made a large input to this.

## Later 1974

The proposed Yarra Brae dam was dropped.

## October 1976

Public meeting held in Kangaroo Ground. Residents and landowners voted in favour of a new zoning to protect the Bend of Islands.

## Late 1976

Proposals for "Environmental Living" incorporated into the Shire of Healesville's Planning Scheme and Interim Development Order (IDO).

**Also a few references to the dam proposal and its demise.**

*Small extract from Wonga Park web page:*

<https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/wonga-park>

*In 1972 Yarra Brae was the site of a proposed lower Yarra River reservoir, but residents of the nearby Bend of Isles bushland estate persuaded the Victorian Government to abandon the proposal. The allied Sugarloaf Reservoir at Christmas Hills went ahead.*

*From Warrandyte Heritage web page:*

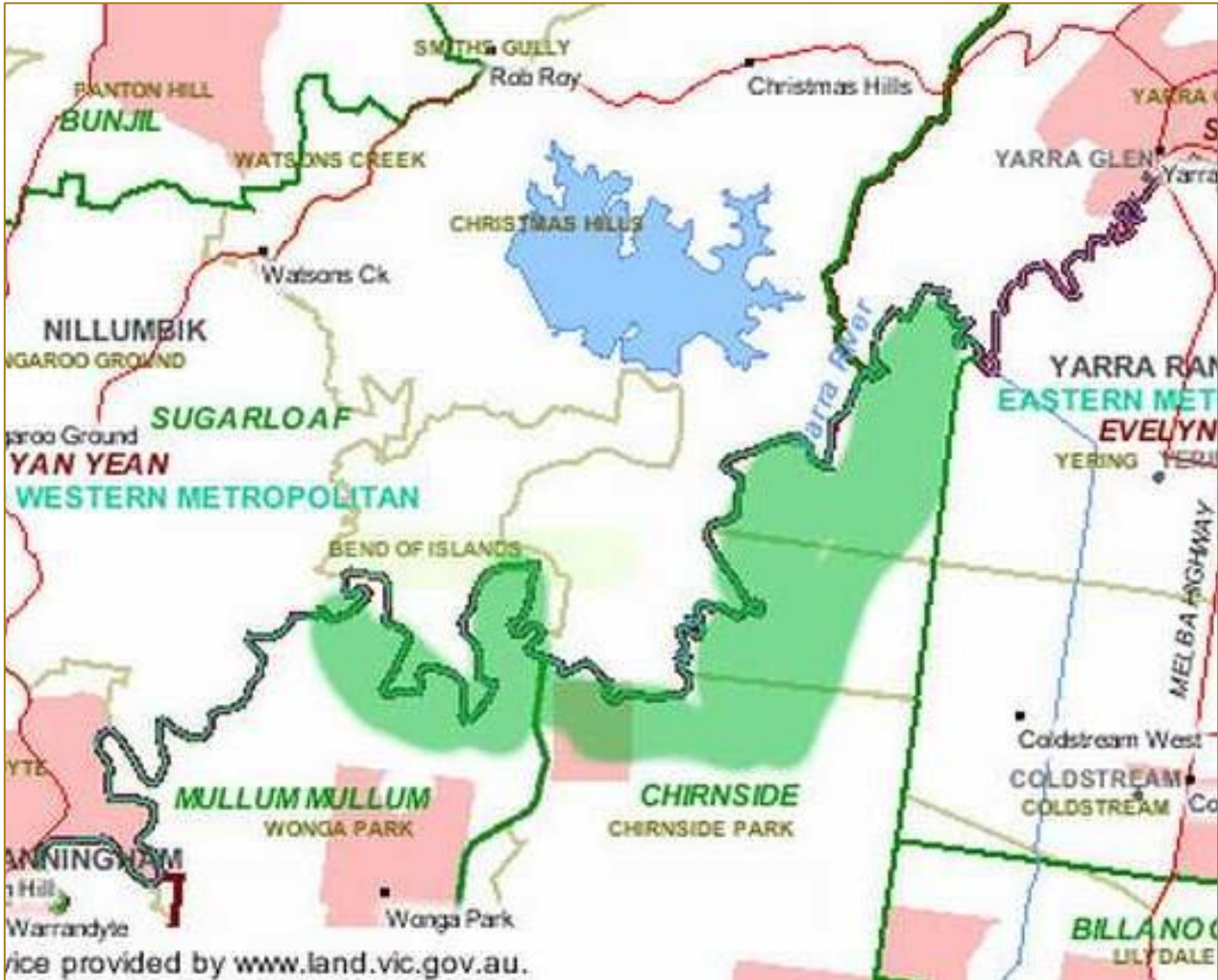
<https://warrandyteheritage.yolasite.com/yarra-brae-dam.php>

*Yarra Brae Dam (a non-event!)*



In 1973, the State Government announced plans for the new Sugarloaf Reservoir, to augment Melbourne's water supply. The proposal was to build two large dams, one of which was to be across the Yarra, with the dam wall across the gorge, extending from the Yarra Brae property in Wonga Park to the Bend of Isles.

This vast dam was to inundate the land extending some 20 km as far out as Yarra Glen, which would have flooded large numbers of properties, farms, and orchards, as well as destroy recreational access to the Yarra.



Note that the areas inundated in Bend of Islands includes the ends of Oxley Rd, Gongflers Drive, Ironbark Rd and the end of Henley Rd. Most of Bend of Islands would have been within the Dam catchment area.)

Extract from:

<https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00181b.htm>

The Yarra Brae Action Committee (formed 1972) successfully resisted Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works' plans for the Yarra Brae Dam, and the ELZ, established through an Interim Development Order under the then Shire of Healesville Planning Scheme in 1976, was officially opened in October 1982.

Extract from VNPA Newsletter 95. Nov 1973:

<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3011259315/view?sectionId=nla.obj-3026603869&partId=nla.obj-3011435153#page/n7/mode/1up>

THE YARRA BRAE DAM A CONTRASTING VIEWPOINT

A few pages of comment worth a read for the history and the politics of the day.





Somewhere in the information was a comment that some preliminary works and concrete pouring had occurred. Wonder where it happened?

Another consequence of the dam was that a proposal to continue Henley Rd with a bridge across the Yarra was shelved. That would have been a game changer for the Bend as we know it.

Thanks to those, many of whom are still here today, who worked to stop the dam and were integral to the implementation of our Environmental Living Zone.

**Alan Bonny**

## AI MEETS TRUST FOR NATURE

### ***“Preserving Nature's Legacy: The Importance of Trust for Nature Covenants in the Bend of Islands”***

*“Nestled within the tranquil beauty of the Bend of Islands lies a precious ecosystem teeming with biodiversity. For property owners in this idyllic region, the decision to seek a Trust for Nature covenant is not merely a choice, but a commitment to safeguarding the natural heritage for future generations.*

*By establishing a Trust for Nature covenant on one's property, individuals contribute to the conservation of native flora and fauna, ensuring the protection of vital habitats and ecosystems. These covenants provide legally binding agreements that restrict certain land uses, such as development or logging, thereby preserving the integrity of the landscape.*

*Moreover, participating in Trust for Nature initiatives fosters a sense of stewardship and environmental responsibility among landowners. It signifies a dedication to the broader community and the collective goal of preserving biodiversity and ecological balance.*

*Furthermore, securing a Trust for Nature covenant enhances the long-term value of the property, as it safeguards the intrinsic beauty and natural resources of the Bend of Islands. It also grants peace of mind, knowing that the land will remain protected from unsustainable practices.*

*In essence, embracing a Trust for Nature covenant is not just a decision for the present, but an investment in the future—a commitment to safeguarding the irreplaceable wonders of the Bend of Islands for generations to come.”*

### **Even Big Brother is Convinced about the Merits of Trust for Nature.**

Believe it or not, the above somewhat generic paragraphs were generated by AI as a bit of a fun experiment to see what happens when you ask AI to “Write 200 words about Trust for Nature Covenants in the Bend of Islands.”

But Big Brother aside, we think this organisation may be of interest to landowners in the Bend. The following is excerpted from their real website at <https://trustfornature.org.au>



### **What TFN Does**

*“Founded in 1972, Trust for Nature is one of Australia’s most established conservation charities. Our job is to permanently protect habitat on private land to give native plants and animals safe places to live forever. In Victoria, 62 per cent of the land is privately owned, and it holds some of the most intact vegetated areas of the state, therefore providing vital habitat for threatened species of plants and animals. The protection of private land is critical to secure the future of our unique ecosystems and species, and to help meet global and local targets to protect biodiversity.*



Together with conservation covenants and reserves, we have protected more than 110,000 ha across Victoria. Our work is guided by our Statewide Conservation Plan which provides a scientific framework to inform conservation on private land across Victoria.

## Conservation Covenants

There is no greater gesture a landowner can make to Victoria's nature than placing a conservation covenant on their property. With 62% of Victoria's land privately owned, permanently protecting private land is critical to secure the future of our unique ecosystems and species. A Trust for Nature conservation covenant permanently protects and conserves private land with natural, cultural or scientific values. It restricts activities that may damage native habitat on the land, such as clearing, intensive farming or subdivision. That's how covenants are helping to safeguard Victoria's threatened species such as Plains-wanderers, Helmeted Honeyeaters and Squirrel Gliders.

The best part? A conservation covenant lasts forever, providing landholders with peace of mind that the land will remain protected, even if the property changes hands.

Plus, from 1 January 2024, land protected by a conservation covenant is exempt from land tax.

## How does a conservation covenant work?

A conservation covenant is a voluntary legal agreement made between a private landholder and Trust for Nature to permanently protect and conserve private land with natural, cultural or scientific values. Conservation covenants are entered into under the Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972 and registered on title, making them legally binding forever – even when the property is sold or passed on to new owners. Trust for Nature is the only organisation in Victoria empowered by law to place conservation covenants on private land.

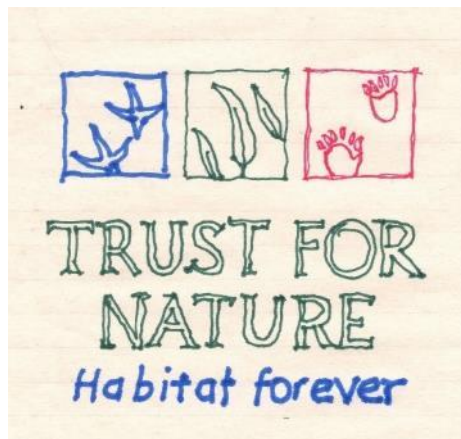
If your land is protected with a conservation covenant, you'll continue to own the land and be responsible for its management – and Trust for Nature will be available to provide ongoing support through our Stewardship Program. Our experienced conservation and land management experts will work with you to develop a land management plan, which will guide how you can maintain and improve your land for native animal and plant species."

## Trust For Nature Locally

TFN are presently in the advanced stage of negotiations with the Round the Bend Co-operative with the intention of establishing a conservation covenant on all 130ha. Also some people in the Bend established covenants on their land many years ago.

The nature of the Covenants for our situation would be to lock in the conservation values of each property, protecting the biodiversity whilst allowing for residential activities and expectations on the house site, sheds, future extensions, etc. The conditions would align with the conditions of the SUZ2 Planning scheme. Neighbouring properties could also consider covenants so as to create a larger area of protected land.

The Council should be able to provide further information about the implications for land tax savings.



**Ross (aka A.I.) Henry**



# Lightning Messes with a Messmate on the Co-op

Those at home on the Co-op all 'jumped out of their skin' at about 5.30pm on Easter Monday, 1/4/2024, when there was an almighty bolt of lightning and crack of thunder. My immediate reaction was to say "That was close - just out there to the west of us".

About an hour later we noticed a patch of white smoke in the gully to our west. I went to investigate and found a large Messmate with burning bark, which I managed to extinguish.

There is good overview on what lightning actually does to a tree [here](#) .

The tree would have been wet when it was struck as there had been at least 8mm of rain in the afternoon, before the lightning strike. This was the first decent rain for 9 weeks, after having an unprecedented 220mm in January.

I returned to the site the next day and my observations indicate that the following scenario may be how things unfolded: -

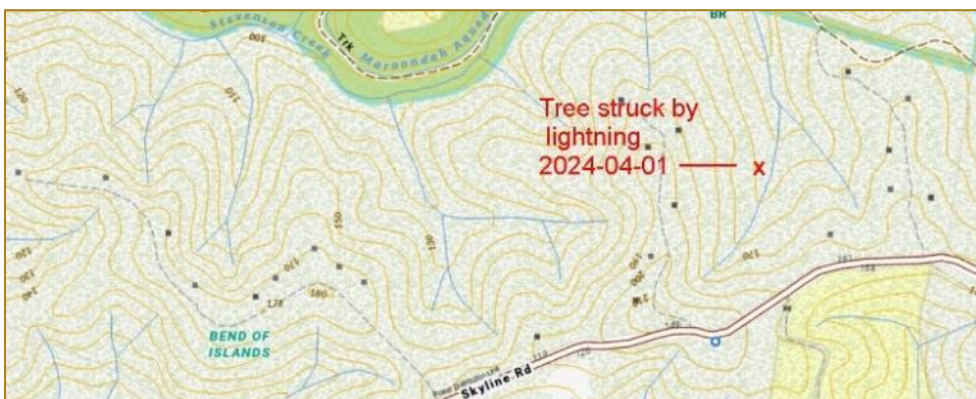
- the tree was struck at the top, causing some damage, but it did not burn.
- As the lightning travelled down the tree to where the bark was older, rougher and perhaps drier, it ignited the bark.
- When the lightning got to about 6m from the ground, it jumped to an adjacent Box tree and travelled down it to the ground, gouging a rut in the side of this tree but not igniting it.
- There was about 7m of trunk that burned, mostly before I got there.
- When I arrived the bark at the bottom of the burnt section was burning down the trunk, about 4m above ground. There was also a small section of bark about 2m higher, that was still burning. The trunk above that was no longer burning, so the bark above was obviously not flammable enough to sustain combustion, in the damp, still conditions.

I've seen lots of lightning effected trees on ridges around the Bend, but this one was in the base of a gully, confirming that they can occur anywhere.

We were fortunate that it rained before and after the lightning strike, and that it was not windy. Heavy rain set-in about 8.30, ensuring that there was no chance of a flare-up. **88mm of rain** was recorded in gauge at 9am on 2/4/24.

The chance of a lightning strike in hot, windy weather conditions is just one example of how a fire could start locally, without any prior warning.

This reinforces the need to make one's house as fire proof as possible, even if the intention is to leave the area on days of high fire danger.



Location Map – GPS 55h 350204 5827281



**Follow-up Photos and details recorded on 2024-04-02**

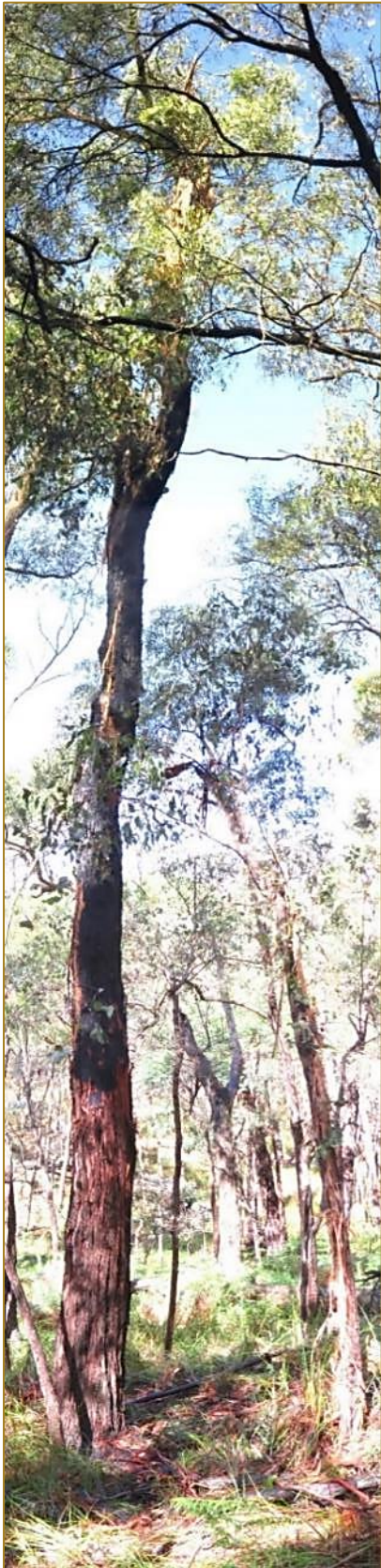


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

- **Photo 1:** The struck tree and the adjacent Box (120mm dia.) that was the lightning's path to ground.
- **Photo 2:** Lightning Damage to the adjacent Box 120mm dia.)
- **Photos 3 & 4:** Lightning **Damage** near top of tree



**Follow-up Photos and details recorded on 2024-04-02**



Strips of bark on ground, freshly stripped from tree, much of it unburnt



'Splinter' from trunk of big Messmate (~3m long and 100mm wide)



'Pole' used to remove higher sections of burning bark from Messmate. (~5.5m long)



# CHRISTMAS HILLS FIRE BRIGADE NEWS



## The season

The season seems to still have a little kick in it with above average temperatures well into March and the vegetation drying out with very little rain. Then the rain came in early April, 70mm and then 30mm which has allowed fire restrictions to lift. However, it will still pay to be careful when burning off as this is often our busiest time with the potential for burns to get out of control, even though it is quite damp as we write. Remember to have water with you or easily accessible to keep heaps under control.

It has been a relatively quiet summer for us with only small call outs locally and a crew on standby for the Dereel fire in early March. The bush has stayed relatively green in the Nillumbik area.

## New Ultralight

Our new Ultralight has just been delivered. We are planning a **LAUNCH/CELEBRATION AND 'THANKYOU'** to the community, our major supporter, the Warrandyte Community Bank and others who have helped us raise the \$150,000 cost of the new light tanker. Special thanks to the Community Bank for a \$35,000 grant that enabled us to close that gap in fund raising.

To celebrate this amazing achievement we are planning a major community event on Sunday June 2 at the North Station in Ridge Rd Christmas Hills and will also have an 'event' at the June 15 Café Benders. Details to follow.

As you know the Brigade does all its banking with Warrandyte Community Bank as do many members and we encourage all community members to seriously consider their banking needs and look local. The more business they do, the more they can provide support to local community organisations like the brigade.





## PAVS (Property Advice Service)

Five members of the brigade have been trained in offering a Property Advice Service (PAVS) an official CFA service which can enable us to visit households in our area to provide advice and support into preparation around the home and property, safety issues in fire, when to leave, plans for leaving and what to take etc.

If you are new to the area or even want to revisit your planning and preparation contact me (Peter Mildenhall 0400 120 577 and we will see when we can help.

## BRI (Bushfire Resilience Inc)

As you will be aware Bushfire Resilience Inc (BRI) a locally based volunteer organisation has been running a successful series of Webinars over the last few years. The 2023 Webinars have provided a host of great outcomes and good advice in terms of property preparation and planning. Links to the outcomes and Webpage are provided below...highly recommended.

<https://br.org.au/2023keyr>

<https://br.org.au/webguide>

<https://br.org.au/2023actions>

<https://br.org.au/2023inform>

Also provided is a link to a BRI Ember attack short video which contains great advice!

<https://br.org.au/eaintro>

## Possibility of a new fire station?

Some of you will be aware that there is some possibility of a new fire station at the South end. Our current tin shed, while adequate, is not up to current standards and may eventually be replaced. There are no current plans or timelines however some community members have been thinking about the possibility of a 'community-type hall/room(s)' that could be part of any new CFA facility.

A volunteer group jointly organised by Carol Bonny and me has been thinking about the possibilities, parameters and processes that should be considered if such a facility was to become a reality.

Some background work has begun and we will be involving as many members of the Bend community as possible to look at the needs of the Brigade and our locals in planning for this possibility.

Feel free to discuss with me or Carol (0429 786 470) and further updates will be provided as consultation begins.

Cheers

**Peter Mildenhall**

Community Safety Coordinator

Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

0400 120 577

mildenhall2@bigpond.com

**Café Benders 10am-12pm**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month  
at the South Fire Station.**

All proceeds go to supporting the brigade.

Café Benders has contributed over \$10,000 to the brigade since 2014 which is a fantastic community effort and significant contribution towards the brand new ultralight. So THANKS to EVERYONE!!!!!!



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

25 Years Ago - From Newsletter Number 31, April 1999

## SPEED!

It's something that dictates our lives every minute of every day.

Governments call for efficiency and speed in the workplace; we take speed reading courses to race through books at school or newspaper articles at work; we demand speed from our home computers, the checkouts at supermarkets, the tellers at banks or their automatic counterparts in the wall outside the bank. Distances locally, interstate, and internationally are diminished drastically because the increased speed of transport reduces the time to cover the distance making everything seem closer. Our successes (or failures) can be judged by how quickly we do things.

Speed is your friend! But is it? What do we really gain by all this speed. A second here, five minutes there. What does it really cost?

In the E.L.Z. we are all, ostensibly, conservation minded. For years there have been petitions to council to reduce the local speed limit. Signs have been placed (and replaced) to alert drivers to the fact that they are not the only users of the road. Kangaroos bound along and cross at all hours, wombats waddle across their own "crossings". Rabbits. Oh, all right, they may be pests but they too use the road. Apart from the freakish actions of some animals leaping suicidally under the wheels of a car, reducing speed certainly reduces the incidence of "road pizzas".

Most people care about the animals and their safety. Some blithely ignore the

warnings and plough on regardless in the hope that Lady Luck will be with them and they'll be able to react quickly enough to avoid the unavoidable.

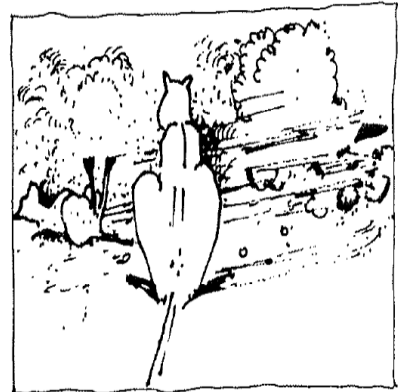
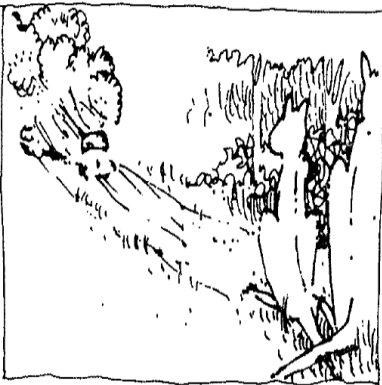
Over the past 12 months there appears to have been a reduction in the number of road deaths in the animal community, however I am prepared to stand corrected on that point. A re-introduction of the Road Toll sign near the bridge could assist there. In the same 12 months there has also been an increase in the number of cars using the local roads and so an increased risk in using the road. New residents in the area, existing residents, and the up-coming "P" plate generation - children of existing residents. Whilst considering the native fauna of the area and the effect a direct hit on them would have, there is one other native animal for whom I would like everyone to spare a thought.

It's usually nocturnal and travels in a small group. You don't see it every day but it's always in the area. It's instantly recognisable, and chances are - it knows you! It is, of course, a CFA Firefighter.

Whether you care for the animals or not. Whether you care for yourself and family or not. If you are speeding down the road and crash, someone you know and who cares for you will have to clean up the mess and get you out. When the siren goes off, I believe every volunteer secretly prays that it is not a car accident, I know I do.

So please, have a quick think about it.

Neill Kamminga



Page 10

# FROM THE EDITORS

Thanks everybody who have contributed to this Newsletter. Great articles from both regulars and new comers. We hope you enjoy the read.

In preparation for the next, 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