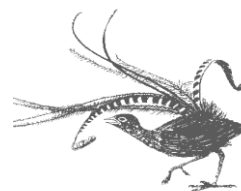


Newsletter

South Gippsland Conservation Society



No. 164
November 2009

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Day Out with President Dave At Ayr Creek, Inverloch

On Thursday Oct 22, President Dave Sutton spent a day with about 50 students from Wonthaggi Secondary School, and the Inverloch Primary School. The day was sponsored by Greening Australia, Bug Blitz, the RACV and our Society.

The students were split into four separate groups made up of a mix of secondary and primary school kids. Each group rotated into four different activities aimed at providing an example of biodiversity and culture and how we all depend on the diversity of all life forms for our own survival. Each group activities were:-

- ✓ **Planting** 200 plants around the creek at the back of the wetland – Part of this exercise involved all of us – (children included) taking on the role of an animal, plant, bug, reptile, fish frog etc. Peter from Greening Australia brought along a huge bag full of the most amazing cuddly and not so cuddly toys which had the entire above list included.

The kids then had to identify which species lived on what for its survival linking each species with a length of wool – the resulting web was highlighted by the common link going back to vegetation as the basis for all life.

Drew and Annie from Greening Australia explained the importance of having a healthy ecosystem and how indigenous plant life has uniquely adapted to support a wide diversity of plants and animals that are interdependent on each other.

- ✓ **John from Bug Blitz** had the kids finding and identifying insects, bugs and anything else that moved or swam from the surrounding vegetation and creek.
- ✓ **Our own Education Officer Rosemary Swart** demonstrated water quality issues and the vital role that good quality water has in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.
- ✓ **We were privileged to have Stephen Compton, and Darren** representing the local Bunurong Tribe who spoke about local aboriginal culture and some of the local bush foods that can be found in Ayr Creek and the wetland, and Darren was keen to show his skills with a yabby pot in the wetland – but actually didn't catch any. Both Stephen and Darren have an amazing in depth knowledge of country, what it can provide and its fragility.

All the children had a very enjoyable day learning many things about their environment and hopefully took away a message that will assist in assuring a better future for the environment.

Thanks to:- Peter Preuss – Greening Australia – Schools for the Environment Coordinator who organized the day.
Stephen and Darren – Bunurong Tribe elders/representatives
Drew Lieper – Greening Australia
Annie - Greening Australia
John – Bug Blitz Foundation
Rosemary Swart – South Gippsland Conservation Society - Education Officer
Staff from RACV Resort Inverloch who attended on the day
The teachers and students from Wonthaggi Secondary and Inverloch Primary schools
RACV Resort Inverloch who helped sponsor the day.

Newsletter Deadlines

165 7 February 2010
166 7 May 2010
167 7 August 2010

Bunurong Environment Centre

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The Far East

Away from the rat-race with bird watching, beaches, boats, botanical bounty, bliss...add fishing, numerous walks and short drives, a shutter-bug's paradise and you have marvellous Mallacoota.

We stayed in a charmingly eccentric adobe mudbrick construction built on four levels with superb views over the Inlet to Goodwin Sands and Gabo Island. It featured inset glass bottles, intricate mosaics and an outdoor setting studded with mirror shards. The garden housed bush rats, skinks and a wide variety of birdlife, including Whipbirds and Lyrebirds, merging into bushland and walking tracks on the property.

Friends of Mallacoota and Parks Victoria have excellent maps and notes of self-guided walks around the town and Inlet. We tried the Heathland and Casuarina walks to experience two different habitats. These revealed a treasure trove of plants, many familiar, but some new gems were revealed: exquisitely flowering grasses, Rush Fringe-lily, Many-flowered Mat-rush, Lilac Lily (with the great name *Schelhammera undulata*), Leafy Purple-flag, Branching Grass-lily, Wombat Berry, orchids, guineaflowers, peas, Erect Violet, Heath Milkwort and Hairy Fan-flower. Bird sightings included Mistletoe Bird, Sacred Kingfisher and a face-to-face encounter with a Southern Boobook Owl.

Short drives took us to orchid-studded Bastion Point and Betka River, before a more adventurous trip to Shipwreck Creek with a winding walk to the beach where waves crashed, soaring Wedgetails broke the solitude and the sea was like watered taffeta.

Dawn and dusk were special times, inspiring the camera enthusiasts. One such was a silver dawn, rippling silver sequins on the sea, the fringing mountains pearl grey, charcoal banks of clouds apricot-edged. As the sun rose, the whole was suffused with a gold mist, blinding in the east. The sky became incandescent gold with a layer of eggshell blue.

A highlight was the half-hour boat ride to Gabo Island, to be greeted by a pair of White-bellied Sea-eagles. We revelled in the vegetation as we crossed the island to the pink granite light-house, beautifully constructed. Below it was a bevy of golden-brown hussies – fur seals – lolling on the rocks. Whales then appeared, after which we visited a monument and cemetery and noted the rookeries of Little Penguins and Shearwaters.

Further expeditions to Genoa Peak and the Gipsy Point Cemetery rounded out our week of field studies, encapsulated in an epitaph: He loved birds and green places and the wind on the heath and saw the brightness of the skirts of God.

Terri Allen

FOSTER BRANCH REPORT

Foster group continues it's monthly working bees on the first Monday of each month but there will be no meeting on Nov 2nd. Our system of only having four meetings per year and communicating via a phone tree for essential efforts seems to still be working well. The latest working bee at Cement Hill was conducted as a plant identification exercise and Mary Ellis is confident that the list is completed.

I believe she has suggested that other branches do lists for walks in their area which can then be circulated and entered in the revised version of "Beach and Bush walks".

Our next meeting is on Nov 18th. and prior to that we have an excursion on Nov 8th to Wilson's Promontory, at which we hope to see members from other branches. The re-growth after the fires is amazing.

Marion Haupt

Xanthorrhoea: Gippsland's Arsenal

Visit a fire-ravaged stretch of sandy bush at present (September 2009) and you will be met with an army of grass-trees, spears raised and unfurling colour.

Xanthorrhoea (*xanthos* = yellow, *rhoea* = flowing, as in resin) has 28 species, all endemic to Australia, with three of the four Victorian species found in Gippsland.

Aborigines had a multitude of uses for them: they ate the soft white leaf bases, growing point at the top of the stem and the roots; they licked the flowers for nectar or put them into water to make a sweet drink; a type of mead was made by soaking grass-tree flowers in a bark vat; resin was collected and used as an adhesive in the manufacture of tools and weapons, to fix stone to wood; the dried flower stem made a light strong spear or fishing pole; the dried flower stalk was used as a base for making fire with a drilling stick; parrots became drunk from the flowers' nectar and could be easily caught; dried leaf bases were a ready tinder; and in some areas the yacca gum was used as chewing gum.

Early settlers also made use of the versatile grass-tree. John White, the first surgeon in Sydney in 1788 considered the gum to be of great value for chest complaints and the yellow balsam from the resin was administered for dysentery. Settlers found the centre of the crown fresh and palatable and the pith produced a saccharine juice that could be distilled into a proof spirit. Melted resin was used as a lacquer on furniture and floors, some being exported; it was also used as a coating on brass instruments, for preserving tins for meat canning, in a brand of stove polish, for sealing wax, yellow resin in church incense and small amounts in sizing paper, perfumery, soap making and gramophone records. The tough yellow wood could be turned and made into souvenirs. Yacca gum was chewed, but the effort needed to collect it is supposed to be the origin of the term for hard work: *hard yakka*. On the goldfields, stems were commandeered for makeshift waterpipes. Today the grass-tree is making a comeback in landscape gardening. Somewhat surprisingly, it has been found to produce poor quality honey.

Perhaps the most unusual use was for explosives: *On treatment with nitric acid the resin yields a considerable quantity of picric acid, up to 50% in the case of the yellow resin. In the three years immediately prior to World War I, Germany imported approximately 1500 tonnes of grass-tree resin and it was suspected at the time that the material was being converted to picric acid for explosives manufactures...*

Spear Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea resinifera* (=resinous)

Flowering from August to February, this grass-tree produces a yellowish resinous exudate at the base of the flowers, compared to the red-brown resin produced by *X. australis*.

The main stem (or trunk) is absent or only up to 0.6m long, the blue-green leaves held in an erect spreading tuft. The inflorescence consists of a non-flowering section 70-150cm topped by 60-120cm of

flowers i.e. non-flowering is longer than the flowering section. Found in NSW and Vic, it is common on sandy coastal East Gippsland grass-tree plains east of Marlo and the wet heaths of Gellions Run, Alberton, and at Giffard.

Small Grass-tree, Toolimerin, Bayonet Grass, Snake Charmer's *Xanthorrhoea minor* (=small)

Found in SA and Vic in sandy heathlands and heathy woodlands, this grass-tree is mainly in the southern part of Victoria. Early descriptions of the area between Wonthaggi and Inverloch noted *bayonet grass plains*. Could it have been a sea of Small Grass-trees? With a subterranean trunk and thick green leaves in a erect tuft, it has two subspecies: *X. minor* ssp *minor* in NSW with white to cream petals and *X. minor* ssp *lutea* with yellow petals. It flowers October to April, the yellowish flowers strongly scented, plants often having multiple spikes. The inflorescence has a non-flowering section 30-60cm, the flower-bearing part 5-30cm. This grass-tree appears to flower in response to smoke and to slashing.

Austral Grass-tree, Bukkup, Kawee, Baggup *Xanthorrhoea australis*



Common Grass Tree *Xanthorrhoea australis*

Profusely flowering after fire, Austral Grass-trees are magnificent this year after the February 2009 bushfires, specimens at Wilsons Promontory having up to eight flowering spikes. Abundant on sandy soils in heathlands and on rocky hillsides from NSW to SA and Tas, this grass-tree is found in most regions of Victoria. Its creamy white strongly scented flowers appear July to December, the non-flowering part of the inflorescence 0.3-0.5m long and the flower-bearing part 110-180cm long. The trunk can be up to 3m, often branched, the bluish glaucous leaves on erect tufts when young, but spread with age; old unburnt specimens have skirts of old leaves, food shelter for animals. Flowering spikes are a magnet for beetles, butterflies and birds.

Perhaps one of my most enjoyable field naturalist outings was at Gellions Run after a bushfire when all three grass-trees were in full bloom and Ellen Lyndon, leaning on a walking stick made from a grass-tree flower stalk, was expounding on the differences between leaves, blooms, stems and trunks.

Go out and visit a grass-tree patch today.

Reference: Cribb, A.B. & J.W. *Useful Wild Plants in Australia*, Collins, 1981, page 90.

Banksias: bush candelabra

Joseph Banks and David Solander collected the first banksia specimen in Australia in 1770 after landing at Botany Bay with Cook. Our part of Gippsland is fortunate to have five of the seven banksia species growing in Victoria, trees and shrubs which light up the bush with their candle-like blooms, provide food for birds, mammals and insects and are a welcome addition to any garden.

My associations with these plants are many: early memories of stripping the flower to its velvety inner spike, stories of *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, planting four types in my garden, harvesting banksia seed cones and being foiled by the *puce peril* (a brownly-maroon growth which infects whole colonies), monitoring seedlings in the 2005 fire-ravaged parts of Wilsons Prom and recently cursing the scourge of marauding Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos attacking my shrubs.

The Aborigines used the banksia for a sweet drink, swirling the cone in water to make a bush cordial; Western Australian tribes brewed a beer from the fermented nectar. Nectar was also used as a throat medicine, a soothing cough elixir. Cones on a campfire imparted a smoky flavour to meat, and smouldering cones could be used to carry fire from one campsite to the next. The thick bark of Saw Banksia was a source of large edible grubs.

Early settlers found many uses for the honeysuckle, as banksias were called; indeed, the early name for The Oaks (Inverloch-Cape Paterson Road) was Honeysuckle Hill. The tough wood could be cut into bullock yokes and knees (a piece of wood bent at an angle) of boats. Old cones could be smeared with fat and used as candles. A tanning solution for leather was made from banksia and wattle bark boiled in water. In the early 1840s the settlers camped at Old Port (Port Albert) scaled the banksias to gain height to watch for approaching ships as they were marooned and starving.

Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata* (leaf with thickened margin) - Warrock (Aboriginal name)

Found from NSW to SA and Tasmania, Silver Banksia is locally common throughout Victoria, except in the north-west, in a range of habitats. Either a shrub or a tree to 12m, it flowers February to July; our coastal form is generally a shrub, but in Tasmania it attains tree height and is the dominant banksia – they have only one other, a small patch of *B. serrata* on the north-west coast.

Seed cones remain on the plant until opened by fire or death of the tree, so are ideal for seed collecting by our seedbank; unfortunately the plant suffers from *puce peril*. Also very few flower spikes set seed. After fire when the cones open and seed falls on the ash bed, seeds germinate readily and the plant regenerates from a lignotuber and will sucker readily if the roots are disturbed by a slasher or grader.

Coast Banksia *Banksia integrifolia* (with entire leaves)

Extending eastwards of Port Phillip Bay (with one record from lower Glenelg River), Coast Banksia is also found in Qld, NSW and King Island.

It has been known to hybridise with *B. marginata* at Shallow Inlet. A stately tree attractive to the cockatoo family, it forms dense thickets in places such as Mouth of the Powlett, attracting insects and honeyeaters when it flowers from January to June.

When the seeds are mature, the cone opens and disperses them, so the seed collector must be on site. Monitoring of banksia groves at the Prom after the 2005 fire has shown Coast Banksia is slow to germinate; only now after four years are seedlings beginning to appear. This banksia is also susceptible to *puce peril* and a mysterious form of dieback. It will be interesting to see how Coast Banksia on the road to Tidal River will fare after dieback and this year's bushfire.

Hairpin Banksia *Banksia spinulosa* (spine-bearing)

An eastern Victorian banksia confined to foothill open forest and heathy woodlands on and south of the Great Dividing Range (such as at Wilsons Promontory, Foster, Cape Liptrap Coastal Park), it is also found at Portland and Point Lonsdale; two other varieties are found in Qld and NSW. Flowering April to July, it has a yellow cone with purplish-black toothbrush styles. The cone will open with or without fire.

Saw Banksia *Banksia serrata* (toothed)

Confined to coastal and hinterland areas east of Walkerville, the Saw Banksia is often locally common on sandy soils in open forest, such as Won Wron Forest and Gellions Run. It is also found in Qld, NSW and in a pocket in north-west Tasmania.

It can grow to a magnificent gnarly-trunked tree to 16m, the flower spikes lighting the stiff sombre foliage at Christmas (flowers December to June). Knobby seed cones are the famed *Big Bad Banksia Men*. The leaves truly are saws, sharp and prickly, especially when littering sand with in thick orange leaf mulch. It is in *Xanthorrhoea australis*/*Banksia serrata* terrain where many of our most delightful orchids are found: Flying Ducks, Pelicans, Little Ducks, Orange-tip Caladenias...

After fire the cones open, the seeds germinating in the ash bed in their millions. This has happened along Millers Landing Track at Wilsons Prom in 2009 after the bushfire.

Rock Banksia *Banksia saxicola*

A banksia restricted to the Grampians and Wilsons Promontory at Sealers Cove, this spreading shrub or erect tree to 13m flowers January to March. Its leaves are dark green and shiny above, white woolly with a midrib of rusty hairs below. Its seed cone opens spontaneously on ripening or over several years.

Once believed to be a variety of *Banksia integrifolia*, it differs in its thinner smoother bark, broader leaf, pale yellow flowers, summer flowering, its larger follicles which retain their seed longer and being not strictly coastal. It possibly hybridises with *Banksia marginata* in the Grampians.

Banksias are quintessentially Australian. Have you one in your garden?

Droseras – Exquisite Death

Winter is enlivened by the appearance on damp sandy soils of sundews which in spring put forth minute white or pink blooms, becoming dormant in late summer. These small carnivorous perennials usually grow in nitrogen deficient soil, so need to lure insects to supplement their diet.

Sundews with their sticky leaves and shining five-petalled flowers are among the most easily recognised plants of our Australian bushland. Their botanical name *Drosera* means dewy. The upper surfaces of their unusual leaves are covered with fine hairy tentacles tipped with sticky red glands. In sunshine they glisten like crowded ranks of miniature light poles on a platform. Climbing sundews are often called Rainbow Sundews, a very apt name, for these plants trail in delicate gleaming arcs amongst the bushes that support them.

The tentacles on sundews' leaves are active traps because they move to enfold their prey....A mosquito or gnat becomes entangled within a few seconds even if it touches only one tentacle. Its struggles not only bring it in contact with other tentacles, but each tentacle transmits a stimulus to others, and in response they too will bend through an angle of 100 degrees towards the centre to help enfold the victim. ...each tentacle secretes in the gland at its tip a digestive juice. Over a period of days the soluble matter of its prey is reduced to a fluid that is absorbed by the plant. The tentacles then assume their first position, fanned out and gluey tipped, ready to trap the unwary. The dry husks of the earlier victims drop lightly from the leaf and the table is set for another meal (Erickson, R, 1978).

Many droseras are believed to be poisonous to livestock, and most have tubers. Dyes and stains are obtained from the pressed plants or tubers; indeed, early settlers used these for ink. Worldwide there are 90 sundews, 56 of them in Australia; 80% of these are confined to south-western WA. We are fortunate in Victoria to have seven species.

Climbing Sundew *Drosera macrantha* (= large-flowered)
Widespread and found in all states but Queensland, the sweetly perfumed Climbing Sundew flowers June to October. Stems are up to 600mm, trailing over low shrubs and up into higher bushes, the leaves round and long-stalked. The large white flowers are showy, one of the first flowerers in the Wonthaggi Heathland at the end of winter.

Forked Sundew *Drosera binata*
(=leaf divided into two leaflets)

Found in all states and widespread, the Forked Sundew flowers spring though summer, mainly in wet places. It is found in the Wonthaggi Heathland and around streams and ponds in Wilsons Prom. Leaves are 50-450mm long, narrow pale green to reddish, erect and strap-shaped, the blade forked into a Y, the arms fringed with sensitive hairs. The erect flower stalk is often larger than the leaves, with a branched cluster of cupped white flowers.

Tiny Sundew *Drosera pygmaea* (=dwarf)
Occurring in S E Australia and New Zealand in damp sands and heathlands, this tiny jewel flowers in spring and summer, generally in coastal areas. It has a minute rosette of round or spoon-shaped leaves, usually pinkish. The tiny white single flowers are on stalks up to 45mm long. They grow in conjunction with Hundreds and Thousands *Stylidium inundatum* around trackside water in the Wonthaggi Heathland.



Pale Sundew *Drosera peltata* ssp *peltata* (=shield-like)
Found in all Australian states, Sri Lanka, S E Asia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, this sundew inhabits a variety of sites, including dry sand. It has a basal rosette of pale green round leaves and produces hairy flower buds and white/pale pink flowers August to January; these flowers rarely open until noon. This is a common sundew in our area, its seeds ovoid and less than 0.6mm long. It has a greener appearance and smaller flowers than its cousin, Tall Sundew, but it is difficult to distinguish them in the field.

Tall Sundew *Drosera peltata* ssp *auriculata*
(= ear-like lobe)

More prolific in Gippsland and found in S E Australia and New Zealand, it has similar habitats and seasons, but differs in that it can reach 300mm in height, its cup-like flowers are pink, it has smooth buds, the linear seeds are up to 1mm long and it often lacks a basal rosette.

Scented Sundew *Drosera whittakeri*

This sundew has a bronze-red or green rosette of spoon-shaped leaves, the rosette to 50mm wide, with several large white single flowers on stalks, the flowers larger than the leaves. After flowering, the stalks bend over to bury the dead bloom below the leaves. It is found in SA and Victoria, mainly west of Melbourne, but also around Westernport and Yarram in July to October.

Rosy Sundew *Drosera spatulata* (=spoon-shaped)

Found mainly in the Grampians and East Gippsland, as well as Qld, NSW, Tas and New Zealand on rich clays and sands overlaying clays, Rosy Sundew flowers December to March. It has

a 40mm rosette of red spoon-shaped leaves and erect leafless stem with little pink stalkless flowers.

Scarlet Sundew *Drosera glanduligera* (=gland-bearing)

Growing on sandy to heavy loam soils in heathland and open forest, Scarlet Sundew is found in

WA, SA, NSW, Tas and mainly in the west of Victoria. Its leaves form a convex to flat scarlet basal rosette, the leaves spoon-shaped. The 1-4 flower stems are up to 20mm, bearing 7-multi flowered stems of orange or red flowers in August to November.

These are fascinating little plants, much loved by children. Can you find *Drosera glanduligera*, *D. whittakeri* and/or *D. spatulata* to add to our records?

Reference: Erickson, Rica. Plants of Prey, UWAP, 1978, 13.

Activity – Nyora Dam and Wuchatsch Reserve

On Sunday the 13th of September we met at the Nyora Dam, led by Frank Hirst. The reserve is on the Poowong-Nyora Rd and is a hidden treasure of unspoilt forest. It is on the top of a hill and has a dam which apparently provided water for the steam trains at the nearby railway station. The reserve was burnt a few years ago, and has made a spectacular recovery with fresh new growth of understory. There are dire warnings of snakes scrawled on to the public information board but as it was a cold wet day they kept away from us. There was an animated discussion about what bird was making that peculiar call, until it was spotted and found to be a white throated tree creeper.

So the plant people kept their heads down (Terri made a list) and the bird people kept their heads up as we made our way around the track.

After a comfort stop in Nyora we headed out to the Wuchatsch Reserve in search of orchids. This reserve is along a valley with small lot subdivisions on either side so is subject to pressures such as clearing, bicycle tracks and weed infestation, however the orchids were terrific. People were lying down with their cameras clicking away so the progress was pretty slow. There was a north facing nature strip which has been slashed which had an amazing patch of orchids on it so now I've seen a gnat orchid, a mosquito orchid and the donkey orchid.

Wendy Davies

Hooded Plovers

Wendy Davies & Cheryl Tyler (dedicated Plover Lovers from Inverloch) have recently sighted in their patch a bird with 10 year old flags still intact. Well done girls! It was confirmed on 15.10.09 near Wreck Creek Inverloch. Dr Mike Weston who has done extensive studies into Hooded Plover, has advised he is delighted with the sighting because he himself banded the bird as a Juvenile in January 98/9 at Cutler's Beach Wonthaggi. Its bandings are; (LtGmt/LtGW) = Light Green over metal band Left Leg and Light Green over White Right Leg).

It has partnered up with a nil bands bird and its breeding capabilities will be interesting this summer.....stay tuned for this one!

The hooded plover field group has visited Wilsons Road Cape Paterson and located an elevated nest in the dune at the 2nd bay westward, currently with 2 eggs being sat on by Rmt/Bk = Red over metal band Left leg, Black right leg. This bird has lost its Yellow flag off the lower right leg. It was banded at Cape Woolamai on 22/2/99.

Wendy Davies

OUTSIDE SOUTH GIPPSLAND: OTHER SPECIAL PLACES.....

1. An introduction to Nyirрпи Community NT

Our arrival in Nyirрпи at the end of August came at the end of a 2800km road trip from Wonthaggi. A trip which gave us time to leave behind the South Gippsland Winter weather, the ties to family and friends, the coastal environment and most of all, our middle class, western expectations and values, to enter the world of indigenous Australia.

Nyirрпи is situated 420kms NW of Alice Springs. It is 150kms West of Yuendumu on the edge of the Tanami desert. The road in is unmade, corrugated and sandy and the trip takes about five hours.

Nyirрпи is one of four Warlpiri communities and was established in the early 80s when several families moved out from Yuendumu, after their traditional lands were handed back. The population is now around 300. The indigenous population is supported by a small white workforce of around 16 people who are involved in running education services, road maintenance, power, water and council services as well as a general store. Nyirрпи also has three policemen and two registered nurses in a modern medical clinic.



On occasions only two or three children turn up. We are rapidly being re-educated and learning first hand about the barriers and the windows of opportunity to improving life for everyone out here. English is very much a second, third or even fourth language for everyone here so teaching is very different and because of poor attendance many children struggle.



Ian and I are here to teach in the Nyirрпи school. The school has 55 children enrolled, ranging in age from 5 to 16. Part of our role is to convince the parents in the community that educating their children will make them and their community stronger. Attendance at the school is often very poor.



Although Nyirрпи is situated on the edge of the desert the vegetation around us is diverse. The dominant species is spinifex but there are many eucalypts, grevilleas, malealucas, hakeas as well as dozens of smaller plants. We are still exploring the local species on our daily walks. There is plenty of bush tucker which we are learning about also. There is also a wide variety of birds and reptiles.

Our next door neighbour is the Newhaven Station which is an ex cattle station now owned by Birds Australia and Australian Wildlife Conservancy. We are enjoying weekend excursions to this beautiful spot and thoroughly enjoying our 'desert change'.



Faye Arnold

2. How much is enough?? Africa

In July and August this year my Husband and I had a fantastic trip to Africa. We had a week in Kenya and a week in Tanzania and 2 weeks north of Johannesburg in South Africa, Botswana and Zambia.

We went to see the animals in their native state before it is too late. We saw the animals in abundance, more than we had hoped, and yes they were truly wonderful, but a special highlight of the trip was meeting the Maasai who live adjacent to the great Maasai-Mara reserve in Kenya, an area where the people maintain their traditional lifestyle of cattle herding, subsistence farming and game hunting. Kenya had been in the grip of drought for three years and was entering the 4th year. The crops were looking dismal, the stock starting to lose condition and yet the people welcomed us into their homes with pride. The typical Maasai village consists of 10 or 12 homes made of sticks and cow dung daub within a compound with a thorn bush barrier to keep the wild animals out at night and the domestic animals in safety. A Maasai warrior guards the village at night as added protection.

The home that we went into, consisted of 3 bedrooms, a central kitchen/living area with a small fireplace for cooking, a room for the baby animals and, at the entrance, a room for the young calves. The whole area about 8 square meters, and that was a large house.

The belongings consisted of a simple shelf in the kitchen and a couple of pots and a dish

and cup for each person, a big mattress in each bedroom and a couple of hooks for spare clothes. No big store cupboard, no electricity, no extensive wardrobes or ornamentation.

The children all went to school, some lucky ones by bus and others walking long distances, and were eager to practise their very good precise English with a smile and a flash of lovely white teeth. Their school uniforms were worn with pride and were clean and tidy despite the scarce water supply.

The women of the village had a 5 km each way trek to get water which they carried in bottles on their heads, wouldn't that make us water savvy?? The wealthy ones had a donkey cart, not many donkeys in the area we visited, the sparse vegetation was needed for the cattle and goats

The revenue generated from tourists such as us enabled these people to buy fruit and vegetables which were so scarce in the time of drought.

We couldn't help but wonder do we really need so much material stuff which often goes unused and pitched out. Our homes are huge, our power and water consumption excessive most of the time. We have wardrobes full of clothes hardly worn and yet with all the trappings I doubt whether our society is any happier than the proud dignified people of the Maasai Mara.

Cynthia Hensley



(Kitchen)

Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups Get Together

Saturday August 29th

Venue; Education Pod adjacent to the penguin parade.

Hosted by ; Phillip Island Conservation Society

Members from 16 environment groups were welcomed and after a cuppa and chat were treated to an explanation of the education pods activities which include fox and cat control on the Island, weed control and reintroduction of indigenous vegetation particularly in the old Summerlands estate, eradication of kikuyu a major challenge which is being undertaken in bands as to defoliate the whole area would cause erosion problems and problems for nesting birds.

Staff play a major role in rescue, rehabilitation and release of oiled penguins and other birdlife after oil spills which seem to be an inevitable occurrence in such close proximity to shipping lines. Plans for an up to date animal and birdlife hospital to replace the barely adequate sheds now being used were shown.

The attendees were split into two groups and had given a tour of the facilities. There is a house with self catering facilities and dormitories for students and or volunteers doing research and or recovery work. Indigenous plants are propagated on site with a large quantity of grasses etc ready for planting out.

We toured through the staff offices and saw how satellite imaging is helping to pinpoint fox numbers and activity in and around dens. (active dens are treated with carbon monoxide which humanely euthanizes the animals) "Dob in a fox" public campaign is being publicised as the numbers decrease.

After the tour we all gathered back at the Education Pod for groups to give a 5 minute report on their activities.

1. Land care group 3 creeks, has a grant to create a wetlands from the lagoon area just over the Kilcunda bridge.

2. Bass land care, cleaning up the gorge, clearing the Bass River of willows, tree planting along the river, assisting the Bass Primary school with mangrove planting, members planting wallaby grass for seed harvesting.

3. Corinella foreshore Management Committee; have a Caring for Country

Grant to try to counteract the dieback in banksias also have done a lot of maintenance work on the foreshore, infilling, mulching and low level planting. It was also reported that Coronet Bay Group has received a grant to tackle revegetation there.

4. Wonthaggi Urban Land care; this group deals with 39 pieces of Crown Land in and around Wonthaggi. The group works with SGCS, the Bass Coast Shire, Parks Victoria, Schools and other groups in Wonthaggi to achieve the aims to retain and restore vegetation, create wetlands and wildlife habitats.

5. Wonthaggi sustainability group (a branch of SGCS). Focusing on green energy efficiency, locally produced food; have set up a "grow lightly" local \$20 fruit/veg service and are supporting a Wonthaggi community garden with the Men's Shed at Mitchell House Several members are qualified to do energy audits of households.

6. Newhaven coast care; Have done some foreshore rehabilitation near the Newhaven Yacht club with the help of Green Corp.

7. Smiths Beachcomber Association; Focusing on improving the built environment with improved building standards, better roads and the South Coast walking trail.

8. Silverleaves conservation group; (has been active for 50 years), This year the group has been heavily involved in the Cowes structure plan which has added areas to the East and West of Cowes earmarked for urban development which the group considers to be inappropriate. The group received funding to help produce an illustrated book of memoirs "Growing History; Half a Century of History Growing in Silverleaves"

9. SGCS a combined report on the Foster, Inverloch and Wonthaggi branches, **Inverloch** continued plantings to develop the Ayr Creek wetlands.

Foster had a major work developing the Cement Hill walking track with plantings, seats and signs with funding via a Govt grant and the SGCS whose main source of funds is the Bunurong Environment shop, staffed by volunteers from all the branches.

Wonthaggi Branch members are heavily occupied with the desalination issue and the sustainability group.

10. Phillip Island Conservation Society; Involved in various planning issues such as the proposed extension of urban development I, the Silverleaves area and the race circuit area. World Environment day Expo and Sustainability Festival, Rubbish clean up at Red Rocks with Red Rocks coast action group and with Friends of Koalas at Five Ways.

11. Western port Bird observation and Conservation group; The group has produced a Birding Trails Brochure. Wesboc has been counting birds for 35 years, Currently very concerned about the effects of storm water with the large increase in development in the area along with increased boat use on the Rhyll wetlands.

12. Water shed; outlining where their activity is going following acceptance that the desal plant will most likely go ahead. Some gains were made with the design modified, the power and water lines to go under ground and 1 million plants are to go on site.

14. Ventnor Coast Action; The 200m long bluff below Aloha Drive has been cleared of weeds and is being replanted with indigenous vegetation. A new wheelchair access track to the beach has been put in

15. Friends of Koalas; Each month the group holds habitat days mainly in Oswin Roberts Reserve, Conservation Hill and Ventnor Koala Reserve.

16. Surf Beach Coast Action; This young group with 60 members operates within the Phillip Island Nature park coastal area and have recently procured a grant to put in a boardwalk.

They aim to concentrate on the severe erosion problem and the need for revegetation.

Following reports and a tasty finger food dinner the guest speaker Cecelia Witton, CEO of Mornington Peninsular and Western Port Biosphere, gave an interesting talk on 'Biospheres in a changing world' which was very thought provoking. She had been to an international conference on Biospheres in South Korea on JeJu Island which is classed as a biosphere and 85 % of the Island economy is dependent on tourism.

The challenge is the same world wide to have societies in economic, cultural and environmental balance and the means to best to achieve that outcome will be different in each community.

Lots of questions, no easy answers.

Cynthia Hensley

SHOP REPORT

This year's Australian Plant Show was held at Leongatha Showgrounds again, the weather was fine and our book display was appreciated by all even though our sales were slightly down on previous years. Thanks to those who worked in getting stock to Leongatha and back and those who manned the stall. Anthea Whitelaw, one of our Shop Committee members has moved to Leongatha and resigned from the committee. She will be sadly missed for her valuable input and we thank her for valuable input over the years and wish her and Jim well in their new environment. On this note, if there is anyone with a hankering to go on the Shop Committee (who meet when I remember – that is a few times a year over

coffee and cake) please give me a call on 5674 3738. Laurel and I have worked on a shop flyer, which Cynthia and Brian delivered around Inverloch – a copy of this is further on in this newsletter. Our thanks to Cynthia, Brian and John for their help with this task. We are having a "**world famous morning tea**" on Saturday 28th November, 10am at the BEC – so hope to see all volunteers there that morning, please remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch, so bring your diaries as school holidays in January are looming, and I would hate to think that you would miss out on working here because you were not sure of what you were doing in January.

Carlene Cartledge

COME & VISIT

Bunurong Environment Centre

Book & Gift Shop



Situated at 1 Ramsay Boulevard Inverloch - Phone: 5674 3738

We sell Australian made and produced merchandise wherever possible

- * Books on all aspects of nature
- * Children's Books, games and toys (wide collection of Steve Parish)
- * Gifts for all ages and occasions
- * CD's - meditation, relaxation and various groups
- * Natural cleaning products
- * Fair Trade tea and coffee
- * Inverloch Coastal Flora & Fauna CD Rom
- * Aboriginal artefacts
- * Books and pamphlets on Global warming/climate change, flora and fauna, environment - including the best available history of Inverloch - "Shifting Sands".

Also

- ** World class Shell Museum (Group enquiries welcome on 5674 3738)
- ** Nature DVD's - free continuous showing

We are a non-profit organization, staffed by volunteers. Monies raised supports our work of conserving our natural environment, and our environment education program with schools.

Projects undertaken include:

- * Screw Creek Nature Park and Walk
 - * Foster Green Walk
 - * Ayr Creek Wetlands & Walk
 - * George Bass Coastal Walk
- And many others

Open: FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY and MONDAY

From: 10am to 4pm

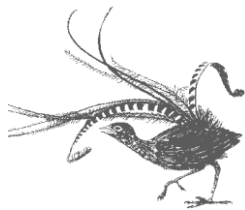
and everyday of school holidays

(Closed Good Friday, Christmas Day & Boxing Day)

I/We		
Of		
Email address (please print clearly)		
Wish to renew my/our membership		
Wish to apply for membership		
Wish to make a donation		
New members to be nominated and seconded by a member of the S.G.C.S.		
Membership subscription to March 2010	Amount	Send cheque or money order to: S.G.C.S. Membership Officer P O Box 60 Inverloch 3996
Family	\$27.00	
Single	\$20.00	
Concession - single	\$15.00	

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