



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society - Fourth Quarter, December 2004

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Newsletter

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 8th January: Children's Environment

Morning: "Dinosaurs", with Mike Cleeland, 11.00-12noon
(Phone Christine Grayden 5956 8501)

Saturday 15th January: PICS AGM, 8.00pm,
Heritage Centre, Cowes

Sunday 16th January, 10 am, Working Bee at Red
Rocks - yes, we will be weeding and picking up rubbish! BYO
lunch

Friday 21st January, 8 pm, Friends of Koalas AGM,
Ph Patsy Hunt 5952 2407

Thursday 27th and Friday 28th January, VCAT
Heliport hearing, Cowes (see article)

Saturday 12th February, Children's Environment
Morning: "Flying Insects"

Saturday 19th February, 2 pm, Seasonal Walk:
Phillip Island Cemetery, Coghlan Rd. Meet at car park, 2 pm, bring drink and insect repellent!

Saturday 9th April, Children's Environment Morning
◆Lizards◆

Saturday 9th April, 8.00 pm, General Meeting,
Heritage Centre, Cowes

Sunday 10th April, 10.00 am, . Working Bee

Saturday 14th May, Children's Environment Morning:
◆Rocks and Crystals◆

Saturday 21st May, 2.00pm, Seasonal Walk

Saturday 20th August, 2.00pm, Seasonal Walk

Saturday 24th September, 8.00pm, General Meeting,
Heritage Centre, Cowes

Sunday 25th September, 10.00am, Working Bee

Saturday 19th November, 2.00pm, Seasonal Walk

Saturday 21st January, 2006, 8.00pm, AGM,
Heritage Centre, Cowes

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

2004 is whirling to its end - and what a year it has been! Make sure you come to the Annual General Meeting on January 15th and hear all about it.

As usual at Annual Meetings, all positions are declared vacant. With this *Penguin* you will find a Nomination Form. Please consider if you would like to put up your hand to be an

Office Bearer or Committee Member - there is always room for a new pair of hands!

As many of you know, Gillian Collins has moved to Frankston. Gillian is remaining as our representative on the Port of Hastings Community Advisory Committee, but there are difficulties in her continuing as a long distance Treasurer. If you have bean counting skills, please would you contact Gillian, phone 9782 5116 and talk over the job description with her.

Elsewhere you will find the General Meeting dates for 2005. We have decided not to set the Committee meeting dates until the incoming committee has been elected.

The fate of the Seal Rocks Victoria Australia building at Point Grant remains a mystery. The reason the Victorian Government seemingly being unable to make a decision also remains a mystery! The text of a letter received from the Premier is included.

The amazing spring rain has continued, so our Island looks green and flourishing. There seems to have been a population explosion with the birds, and the baby magpies are loudly proclaiming their need for perpetual meals!

With best wishes for a holy and happy Christmas, and enthusiasm and energy for whatever 2005 may bring.

Margaret Hancock, President.

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TWO BIG NEW PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. A TOURIST ACCOMMODATION PARK, 211 Cabins, at 2124 Phillip Island Rd Cowes. This is the property opposite the Wildlife Park and is at the southern boundary of the Cowes Tourism Precinct.

The proposal was approved by Bass Coast Shire Council on December 1st. PICS gave in principal support to this proposal. An on site meeting was held with Shire Planning staff, the proponents, and representatives from PICS and Friends of the Koalas. Several of our environmental concerns have been met. We are working towards a Trust for Nature Covenant to protect the remaining indigenous vegetation.

2. Proposed HOUSING SUBDIVISION ON RURAL LAND bounded by Coghlan Rd, Cowes-Rhyll Rd, the Industrial Estate and Settlement Rd.

This land falls within the Cowes town boundary, as defined in the Design Framework. There are considerable drainage

problems, especially with polluted water from the Industrial Estate, which at present is not treated before heading towards the Rhyll Inlet.

PICS has been present at one preliminary meeting. We may be able to display the plans at the AGM.

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CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE MAYOR AND MAYORESS OF NILLUMBIK!

GREG & MARG JOHNSON

Yes, Greg Johnson, PICS Committee Member, was returned to Council - the ONLY previous Nillumbik Shire Councilor to be re-elected! And, yes, behind every successful campaign there is a skilled Campaign Manager - Marg Johnson, PICS Secretary, the Campaign Manager par excellence!

Greg and Marg were given a standing ovation at the December Committee Meeting. How lucky Nillumbik is to have a Mayor who is so highly skilled in Planning processes and thoroughly understands how Planning Schemes should work.

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VCAT HEARING AT COWES, 10 AM,

THURSDAY JAN 27TH & FRIDAY JAN 28TH

PICS was one of numerous objectors to a Planning Application for Helicopter Joy Flights to be expected out of the property adjacent to Swan Lake. Many of us are very well acquainted with this property, as the previous owners, Hank and Madeleine Vegter, allowed us to hold Committee Meetings at their home. Of course many of us are well acquainted with Swan Lake - a peaceful place for enjoying bird watching and other environmental pleasures.

All the Objectors were delighted when the Bass Coast Shire Council refused this Planning Application. We are going to VCAT TO SUPPORT THE SHIRE'S DECISION. Since this is during the school holidays and in Cowes, it would be good if some other members could come along to also show their support, for even part of one day.

Most of us are ignorant about helicopter operations (apart from the noise!) so it would be a great help if any of our members could share particular expertise in preparing the PICS submission. If you DO know something about helicopters - or if you know somebody else who could help us, please contact

Margaret Hancock (5952 2557) or Margaret Johnson (9439 9853).

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Barb Martin Bush Bank

Life continues to be busy at the Bushbank for Bec and the volunteers. During the month of November the following groups volunteered at the Bushbank:

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ Conservation Volunteers, Friends of the Koalas, Newhaven Coast Action, Phillip Island Landcare, PICS, Phillip Island Nature Park, Rhyll Coast Action, Cape Woolamai Coast Action, WESBOC and YCW.

This adds up to a total of 188 hours for the month. Volunteers are so important. Their tasks include doing tube stock, cuttings, direct seeding and seed sowing.

The two new hothouses funded by Endeavour Petroleum are in operation. Volunteers from Newhaven Coast Action are now busy on Wednesday mornings, constructing ◆growing on◆ tables.

Here's hoping everyone from the Bushbank has a joyful Christmas, especially Bec, our coordinator.

Anne Davie

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CONGRATULATIONS BIMBADEEN!

Barb Martin Bush Bank representative Anne Davie and husband Bob received an invitation to the 2004 Port Phillip & Westernport Landcare Awards at the Melbourne Museum and went along out of curiosity, especially to see who would win the Primary Producers CARING FOR THE LAND award. Little did they suspect it was THEM - until the person making the award started talking about caring for Saltwater Creek and using genetics, rather than growth hormones, to produce internationally recognised Brangus cattle. Whilst Bob was rendered virtually speechless, Anne gave a stirring acceptance speech about Indigenous people caring for the land and our responsibilities to do likewise.

Bimbadeen has also recently become an approved ◆Enviromeat◆ producer. To do so they had to fulfill many environmental farming criteria, including care of waterways on their land, using no fertilizers near waterways, no growth promoters on pasture, breeding better cattle through genetic

selection not chemicals, recycling plastic silage wrap, and observing strict chemical safety practices. Well done, Bob and Anne. Thank you for leading the way.

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PREMIER OF VICTORIA

RE: SEAL ROCKS

Text of the letter received from Hon Steve Bracks, dated 6.10.04:

◆ Thank you for your letter of 29 August 2004, in which you raise concerns about the Government's plans in relation to the Seal Rocks development.

◆ I thank you for writing to inform me of Phillip Island Conservation Society's views on this matter. I wish to emphasise that the community and its views are important to the Government.

◆ As you would appreciate, the delay in making a decision about the future of Seal Rocks is due to the complexity of the situation. There are a number of issues that need to be carefully deliberated.

◆ The Government has commissioned detailed reports on various options for the Sea Life Centre site. This material, along with community views, will be examined closely to inform our final position.

I thank you for your continuing patience in this matter. ◆

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CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT MORNINGS

These sessions continue to be very popular, attracting around 10-25 children plus their parents/grandparents per session, some of them 'regulars'. We have been very fortunate to have support from a number of people and organisations. Our thanks to: Ready, Set, Grow; Island Green; Patsy Hunt (FOK); Thierry Roland from Parks Victoria; Ron and Averil from Phillip Island Library; Koo Wee Rup Secondary College for microscopes; Maurice for photos; *PI & SR Advertiser* for putting some articles in FOC for us; local primary schools for including publicity in their newsletters; Bass Coast Shire Council and PICS members Sandy Shively and Ken Pound for funding; Gillian Armstrong for helping get the program going and helping with sessions up until David's sudden illness. Best wishes to them for Christmas and 2005.

Coming up on January 8 we have Michael Cleeland, PICS member, amongst whose many skills is Palaeontologist, talking to the children about dinosaurs of the Bass Coast Shire. On Feb 12th we'll be looking at various Flying Insects of Phillip Island, then on March 5th we'll have a local builder come and talk to the children about building materials and Buildings. On April 9th we'll look at PI Lizards, and finish the current series on May 14th looking at Rocks and Crystals. The second half of most sessions consists of an art/craft activity, and we are grateful to the Shire and several PICS members for donating to the CEM to help fund art materials and the room hire. We also try to ensure that books on each topic are available from the West Gippsland Regional Library service for the families to view at each session.

Members are most welcome to come along to the Meeting Room, Heritage Centre, Cowes, between 11 a.m. and 12 noon and see how the sessions are going. All enquiries for the CEM program can be directed to Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501, or email: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

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MARITIME SAFETY

For all sorts of information on maritime safety and health of the marine environment, visit the web site of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, www.amsa.gov.au. The Authority has an educational kit available for free to students: Protect Our Seas Educational Kit. You can also find out where best to report oil spills from the web site. Our thanks to PINP rangers for this site address.

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PICS' EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN SWAN LAKE

By Ken Pound

Original PICS Secretary and Life Member

Ken wrote to us recently following the article by Christine Grayden in the last edition of *The Penguin* with some extra information about the earliest tree planting done by PICS at Swan Lake. We quote part of his written memoir of that era (late 1960s) here:

I was elected a councilor on a conservation platform only and according to letters that state, the first person ever to have done so in Victoria. The blurb was Pound for Progress and Preservation. Attending a Works and Finance Meeting -

public excluded - I was privy to goings on. The matter of Council sandpit came up, possible area was Swan Lake proper. Shire Engineer to report back at next Works and Finance Meeting next month with feasibility. The existing roadside sand hill about finished and erosion started. I sat mute. Months before without consultation with PICS, as we had only just started and as Secretary I exceeded normal channels in my enthusiasm to keep up the momentum of the newborn society.... I had asked the Engineer if it was alright for PICS to plant trees there. I wanted a project besides only protesting important issues. Yes it wouldn't do any harm, but most likely not be productive because of fires.... For months nothing was done, i.e. planting of trees prior to this intending sand pit horror, but it did give us the push to act even if our plate was full of other conservation matters.

I saw Jack Oswin, related all the recent intended sand pit news. Jack was in the know with Dunbaven Butcher, Head of the Fisheries and Wildlife and Chairman of Koala Reserves Committee of Management; even so I did not expect the following speedy action. He had seen PICS President, Brooke Morgan-Payler, and must have seen Keith Grayden for he did most of the hard yakka. I don't know who paid for the materials - gate and fencing - but within the next two weekends they had erected a new fence. Geoff Clark was in the know, for by the second weekend he'd arranged for and delivered a truck of assorted trees and bush plants...

Word got about and some PICS members, who I hardly knew apart from by sight, planted them all that afternoon. Another truckload came weeks later and children came with their parents and planted. It was with great relief when I saw the Engineer and said "what about the trees that PICS had planted?" (but never mentioned about the fence). He must have visited Swan Lake before the next Works and Finance Meeting where he said re: sand pit that there was a hiccup with the Swan Lake area for the sand pit, as he'd OK'd for PICS to plant trees there months ago, but thought nothing had been done; but that PICS *had* planted the trees. Yeah! We planted the trees - all basically near the new front fence and along the track, around the sand hillock proper - no way room for a big truck to take out sand without damage to the young trees.

The end justifies the means!!

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WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH OUR OPEN SPACE?

From the Bass Coast Shire Council's Website
www.basscoast.vic.gov.au

Bass Coast Shire Council is calling for input from residents, clubs and community groups for a shire-wide Open Space Strategy to assess the equity of distribution of open space across the Shire, assess the value of open space to the community, create a vision for the provision of open space, determine if existing open space meets the diverse needs of the area it serves and identify sites of high conservation, cultural or heritage value.

Council has engaged consultants, @leisure, to develop a plan with the community to deal with these issues. Council is particularly interested in residents responding to:

- ◆ What local open space do residents value most and why?
- ◆ What key issues and priorities should Council be addressing on open space and in supporting leisure opportunities generally?
- ◆ How can open space be planned and managed more cost effectively?

If you have some pet open space you have strong opinions on, or general principals you would like attention drawn to, send your comments to:

Jenny Churchill, Arts & Leisure Coordinator, Bass Coast Shire Council, PO Box 118, WONTHAGGI, Vic, 3995 or email basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au

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And Cowes' own Civic Centre...

Council is currently in the process of drafting a master plan for the site of what was the Phillip Island Shire building, now the Cultural Centre, Civic Centre, Information Centre, Heritage Centre and associated gardens and rear car parking. Local resident, Roger Hansen, placed a sketch of his concept in the *PI&SR Advertiser*, 24.11.04, and Council is asking people to comment on Roger's plan if they have nothing else to suggest. If you would like to do this, or have suggestions of your own on how to improve this under-used area, please phone your ideas to Guy Wilson-Browne (BCSC Assets Manager) on 5671 2211.

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FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND

FOCIS has recently suffered a huge loss with the sudden

death of Working Horse Festival stalwart Ron Hocking. Ron worked tirelessly and will be greatly missed.

Toilets are being built in the historic precinct, and sunflowers and lavender have been planted under the Visitor Centre overlooking the Bass hills. FOCIS has been involved with discussions with administration over accommodation for volunteers only on Churchill Island. The Board has given an undertaking that no commercial accommodation will be built on the island. Meanwhile, Churchill Island is being used a lot for large groups of visitors, and various FOCIS members believe the current administration's emphasis on profit is placing too much pressure on the island.

Christine Grayden

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IN BRIEF...

Marine Park ban on gas, oil searches ... *The Age, 16.12.04*

Oil and gas exploration will be banned in Victoria's marine national parks - a move that has angered the industry but pleased conservationists. Environmental Minister John Thwaites will announce the ban today as the state's 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries turn two years old.... Oil and gas reserves are sought using seismic surveys, involving loud underwater shots. ❖ There is insufficient evidence that seismic testing has absolutely no impact on marine environments, ❖ Mr Thwaites said.

Choosing Seafood Wisely... *EVNews Sep-Oct 2004.*

Many species are being over fished. The article suggests these species NOT be bought:

Orange roughy (sea perch), Blue warehou (trevally, sea bream), Eastern gem fish (hake, silver kingfish), Silver trevally, Southern Blue fin Tuna, Big eye tuna (from the Indian Ocean). Also avoid sharks (flake), rays and deep-sea fish, which are slow growing and easily over fished.

Better choices are: whiting, oysters, tailor, mullet, bream.

The thirst for bottled water... *Habitat Australia, Oct 2004.*

The bottled water craze is pouring millions of dollars into the coffers of companies like Coca Cola and Cadbury-Schweppes, which now control about 60% of the local bottle water market in Australia.... (an example is) Learmonth Springs has plans to extract 500,000 litres of water a day when its factory is built. It pays just \$1.95 for a million litres of water for bottling. The same water is later retailed for over \$1 a litre. By comparison

tap water costs less than 0.1 cents. ...Only around 55 of the 80 thousand tonnes consumed by the domestic market are recycled.

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YOUR PICS COMMITTEE

The PICS Committee, elected at the last AGM, meets once a month to discuss issues of immediate concern to conservation on Phillip Island. These meetings are very informative and challenging. Members are welcome to attend at 8 pm on the first Friday of each month in either the Heritage Centre or Cultural Centre, Cowes.

The elected committee for 2004 is:

President	Margaret Hancock (Ph/Fax 5952-2557)
Senior Vice President	Bruce Howe
Junior Vice President	Penny Manning
Secretary	Margaret Johnson
Minutes Secretary	Bruce Howe
Treasurer	Gillian Collins (Ph 5956 8840)
Other Members	Anne Davie, Penny Manning, Greg Johnson, John Jansson, Julie Box
Other PICS Responsibilities:	
Newsletter	Christine Grayden/John Eddy (Ph 5956 8501; Fax 5956 8314; cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)
Meeting notices and publicity	Rose Thomas (on leave for several months)
Ventnor Public Land Committee	Gillian Collins
Red Rocks Coast Action Project	Gillian Collins
South Coast Walking Track	Penny Manning
Bike Paths	Penny Manning

Friends of Churchill Island Liaison	Christine Grayden
Children's Environmental Mornings	Christine Grayden
Barb Martin Bushbank Liaison	Anne Davie
Membership Officer; Committee	Morag Mackay (Ph 5678 2240)
Landcare Salinity Committee & PICS Planning Scheme Registrar	John Jansson
Website Manager	Diane Baird (dianebaird@yahoo.com)
Grant Investigation	Tim Patkin
Port of Hastings Committee	Gillian Collins

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