



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society Second
Quarter,
June 2006



Newsletter

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Dates for your Diary

Sat 24 June, PICS General Meeting, 8 p.m. Consultants for Phillip Island Nature Park Management Plan 2006-2011 will be our speakers and answer questions. Meeting Room, Heritage Centre, Cowes.

Sun 25 June, Working Bee, Red Rocks Coast Action Tree planting. Meet at car park 10 a.m. Tools provided.

Sat July 29, National Trust meeting, 1.30 p.m. Meet at Kilcunda Hotel. See article in newsletter.

Sat Aug 12, Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups Forum: Hosted this year by Inverloch Ratepayers and Residents Asscn. Inverloch Anglican Club Hall. All PICS members welcome. Details from Christine Grayden ph 5956 8501.

Sat 19 August, Seasonal Walk. Churchill Island Historic Precinct \$4 per head. Meet just inside Visitors' Centre at 2 p.m. Christine Grayden - leader; CI guide available at homestead.

Sat 23 September, PICS General Meeting

Sun 24 September, Working Bee, Red Rocks Coast Action Tree planting

Sat 7 Oct: Children's Environment Morning

Sat 14 Oct: NB: CHANGE OF DATE - Seasonal Walk Rhyll Cricket Ground for a carnivorous plant hunt! Details TBA.

Sat 4 Nov: Children's Environment Morning

Sat 2 Dec: Children's Environment Morning

Sat 13 January 2007, PICS AGM

Friends of Koalas (FOK)Habitat Days: First Sat of every month at 10 am. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Koala Count at the Koala Conservation Centre, second Thursday of every month at 10 am. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Biosphere - Bass Coast Round Table meets at San Remo on the third Friday of every month at 8 pm. Contact Neil Beddoe, ph 5952 1575.

Friends of Churchill Island (FOCIS): General Meetings: 28.1.06; 25.3.06; 27.5.06. 1 p.m., Conference Room, Visitors' Centre. Phone Sec Jill Fitzroy-Kelly: 5672 5235, or email: jillflk@dcsi.net.au

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

The most important matter needing our attention at present is the PINP DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN for 2006-2011. The wellbeing of the Nature Park is of importance to everyone who loves Phillip Island, and it is up to each one of us to take part in ensuring that the Nature Park continues to put the environment first, and does not become just a "Tourist Destination". Our colleagues from Wesboc and FOK are joining us at the General Meeting on June 24th when the consultants who are preparing the new Management Plan will be the Guest Speakers. Please try to read the Management Plan BEFORE the meeting. If you are a computer person it is on the Nature Park's web site: www.penguins.org.au (Scroll down on the right and open the "Management Plan" section. Available as PDF files. Ed.) There is also a copy in the Phillip Island Library, and if you would like a printed copy for yourself, go out to the Penguin Parade and you will be given one.

PICS has taken part in two recent VCAT Hearings. The first opposing a too high house in Penguin Avenue (Red Rocks). Our members Ross Lloyd and Marcus Tarrant also appeared as Objectors, and it is pleasing that the Tribunal decided in our

favour. Pleasing too, that the landscape of the Red Rocks area is being considered for classification by the National Trust.

The supermarket application for the "Boomerang Caravan Park" also was refused by VCAT, mainly on the grounds of traffic management and parking. I hope that the Tribunal's decision is read and understood by the Bass Coast Shire Councillors and staff. The decision clearly states the problems which have been caused by the Shire's inaction with Strategic Planning over the last ten years or so, and the problems which are a result of not dealing expeditiously with the incorporation of the Design Framework into the Planning Scheme.

The Editor has instructed me that there is NO MORE ROOM, so I'll stop! I hope to see you on June 24th.

With best wishes,

Margaret Hancock, President.

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NATIONAL TRUST

Meet at 1.30 p.m. on Saturday July 29 at the Kilcunda Hotel. Then we will explore the hinterland areas of Bass Coast Shire which already have National Trust landscape classification. We intend to be back at the Kilcunda Hotel by about 5.30 p.m. If you are able, please stay on for a meal and a chat; there's a warm fire and lots of sustaining food. Two more Landscape Assessment training days are 'in the pipeline', but the dates are not yet settled.

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"WEEDS OUT, TREES IN"

(From the PICS General Meeting, 18.3.06, with Mike Cleeland from "Southern Environmental Contractors".)

Mike began his contracting business on a part-time basis about 10 years ago, mainly directed towards revegetation work. However, the business is now concentrated on weed control (80%) with revegetation about 20%. Of the weed control work done, 90% is spraying with herbicide. Mike showed a number of excellent slides to illustrate the broad range of projects he has worked on.

1. **Candowie Reservoir:** one of his first projects, with 16,000 plants around the edge of the reservoir.
2. **Gorse on a property near Gap Road:** Burning of gorse got out of control. 80,000 litres of "Brushoff" spray used to control regrowth and germination.
3. **Farm at Foster North:** A failed plantation due to, first sheep and later wombats getting into plants, as well as ragwort.
4. **Kitty Miller Bay Rd Wetlands:** Plantings eaten by feral geese. A difficult, highly saline site
5. **Grantville Roadworks:** Hydroseeding of exposed bank - seeds mixed with water, paper mulch, resin and blue dye.
6. **Earth-covered home, Watts Rd:** Establishing Tussocky Poa. 30% survival.
7. **White Striped Lizard:** Encountered on the above job
8. **Kikuyu Control around round hay bales:** Used Glyphosate plus "Oust".
9. **Anzacs Carpark:** sand-dune planting during the few wet months of the year.
10. **Blackberry Control in Neerim South:** Blackberries are out of control in the hills of South East Australia, thanks to Baron von Mueller.
11. **Rust Fungus Being applied to Blackberry:** Rust does slow the plant down, and reduces fruit production, but doesn't kill the plant.
12. **Gorse Mites, Chinamans Estate:** Took off for a while, then the mites die off over winter and the gorse grows back.
13. **Mirror Bush:** Spraying not successful because of shiny leaves. Best to cut and paint stump, using Glyphosate.
14. **Boxthorn:** Often have failures with spraying. A mechanical grabber to rip large bushes out is useful.
15. **Introduced Grasses:** Invade native grasses. No selective sprays available.
16. **Patersons Curse:** An outbreak near Rhyll was nipped in the bud.
17. **Tenant Creek, near Candowie Reservoir:** Willows removed, replaced with native trees.
18. **Inverloch Sewerage Treatment Plant:** Sprayed meter square patches with residual herbicide, then planted trees in Weedmat and guards.
19. **Blackberry Spraying in a gully, Inverloch:** Now it is a good wildlife corridor.
20. **Revegetation at Grantville Recycling Centre:** An old quarry site. Planting on gravel banks, using jute matting held in place with steel pins was only partly successful.
21. **Revegetation on Bass Highway, GM Proving ground to St Heliers Rd:** 21,000 plants. A great success, all the factors were just right together.

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Autumn Seasonal Walk

Seven of us enjoyed the Mangrove Walk at Rhyll in fine, partly

sunny conditions, led by John Eddy. We started from the Conservation Hill carpark. Rhyll Inlet is a special place for PICS as the threat of a marina development here in the late 1960s was the instigation for the formation of PICS. The Society also initiated the crucial purchase of farm land in the 1970s that created the Conservation Hill reserve, with life members John and Ailsa Swan, Jack Oswin and Keith Grayden playing vital roles in the process of transferring the land to the government. The adjacent block, on which much of the present walk is situated, was then purchased by the government in the late 1970s and added to the reserve. Other land was donated to form parts of the rest of the walk. The sign at the Information Shelter at the commencement of the walk does not adequately acknowledge the role of PICS.

The enclosure to the right of the track down was established in the early 1980s to provide protection for injured wildlife, and to allow the introduction of magpie geese and Cape Barren geese. The latter bird is now well-established on PI, with about 100 recently surveyed.

A mature black wattle was noticed with several parasitic mistletoe plants hanging from its branches. The parasitic seeds are spread by mistletoe birds which are not that often seen, although one was recently seen in Cowes. Do any other birds spread mistletoe, we wondered? Mistletoe is quite common on PI wattles and eucalypts.

Beyond the enclosure, the presence of coast banksia, coast wattle and bracken indicates a ridge of sandy soil. A similar ridge exists across the seaward edge of Rhyll Swamp and provides clues to the geological history of Rhyll Inlet. In geological terms, the inlet is quite recent, having formed in what was a broad bay extending inland as far as the cemetery over the past 10,000 years. Over this period, the sand spit which now terminates in Observation Point gradually extended east to enclose the bay which then filled in with accumulated sediments from both sea and land.

We took the left hand branch of the track to the boardwalk, which passes through a rapid succession of coastal plant communities from Banksia Woodland, through Swamp Paperbark to Saltmarsh and finally Mangroves. Saltmarsh is quite colorful at this time of the year as the succulent herb Beaded glasswort takes on a deep red hue in response to colder weather. Other creeping succulents like Noonflower and Swampweed help to form a continuous groundcover, with the taller Shrubby glasswort and the grass-like saw-sedge and true grass Coast Spear-grass also common.

Our Westernport population of our one and only species of mangrove, *Avicennia marina*, is almost the southern most limit of mangrove, in contrast to the Western Australian mangrove communities which consist of many species. The boardwalk

extends through the mangroves as far as the tidal channel, which drains the southern edge of the Rhyll Inlet. It was several hours after low tide and the tide flow was heading back up the channel but had not started to cover the mangrove flats. The peg-like pneumatophores, which assist mangrove roots to obtain oxygen, were clearly visible, many with encrusting barnacles and the occasional conniwink shell. Everywhere between the mangroves crab holes perforated the mud, but on this occasion no crabs were seen to emerge from the safety of these holes to feed on the microscopic algae on the surface of the mud. Perhaps they had eaten their fill. The Mangroves were in flower, and last year's crop of seeds, which are unusual in germinating on the plant before they fall to the sea, were long gone.

Channels in the Inlet maintain their form and resist the accumulation of further sediment because of the strong tidal flow twice daily.

From the boardwalk, we took the track eastward, between the narrow saltmarsh fringe and grassy cliff. Patches of Tussocky Poa grassland occurs along the way. The track climbs to a vantage point, with a strong bench seat and an interpretive sign "Protecting Shorebirds", reminding us of the international significance of Rhyll Inlet (and Westernport generally) as a RAMSAR site. We paused to enjoy the beauty of this magical place, and with binoculars, to seek out the bird life. Migratory waders are all gone for now, heading back to the Northern Hemisphere, but the 'locals', swans and pelicans, were out on Observation Point.

Taking the track back towards the carpark we passed on our left a plantation of bluegum, manna gum and sheoaks established about 20 years ago. The uniformity of the trees, both in size and spacing, and the lack of understorey has given us an environment which is lacking in some diversity. In those days, we often failed to plant understorey species, and heavy grazing by wallabies has prevented a lot of natural regeneration.

On the seaward side of the track, remnant Bursaria and mature black wattles are in their declining years. Some bridal creeper is also evident. Returning to the sandy ridge, we saw numerous wallabies, some of which seemed quite used to the sight of humans. A large blue gum, planted perhaps 30 years ago, is a magnificent specimen, and is remarkable for its spreading habit and low branches. Seed collecting would be easy, but it may not be indigenous stock.

We returned to the carpark, having converted a 30-minute walk into a fascinating ramble over nearly two hours.

John Eddy.

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Children's Environment Mornings

We have had another successful three months of CEMs, with 8- 26 children attending each time. In April John Eddy ran a session about "Sand"; May we had Roger Kirkwood from the PINP give a wonderful talk on "Seals", including great slides, role playing and games; June we had Ranger Rebecca from PINP talk about "Mutton Birds", showing research tools. The children enjoy an art activity at each session. The adults (who have to stay) also enjoy the sessions and ask lots of really good questions. All PICS members are invited to drop in between 11 a.m. and 12 noon at the Meeting Room (Museum/Library building) Cowes on the dates on p.1. You don't have to be a child to come along! Enquiries ph: Christine Grayden 5956 8501.

The current CEM season is over and we recess until October. John and I would like to thank all of our speakers for this season: Peter Dann, Jack Austin, Mat Coburn, Roger Kirkwood and Rebecca Rovereem. Thanks also to Anne Oswin and the "Advertiser" for the monthly articles, and Ron the Librarian for his total co-operation!

Christine Grayden

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PICS HISTORY

Many thanks to new PICS member, Greg Fox, who is helping with History research tasks. So far Greg has checked through our newsletter files (including Ken Pound's tremendously valuable collection from No.1, May 1968 til the early 1980s; on loan) and recorded what we have and haven't. We have no editions at all for 1982, and editions missing for 1985, 86, 88, 89, 91, 93 and 96. Since the newsletters often contain information on activities that have not made it into the minutes, they are very valuable records of PICS achievements. If you have editions for the above years I would love to hear from you. Greg is now indexing the 20+ large newspaper cuttings scrap books, which is a huge job! Anyone else who wishes to help with PICS History tasks is welcome to contact me: ph. 5956 8501. email: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au📧

Christine Grayden.

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HOODED PLOVER WATCH

Thanks to Bob Baird for passing on this year's report:

This year's Hooded Plovers fledged 7 chicks on Phillip Island and used 11 beaches. There were 30 nests with 72 eggs of which 19 hatched. Fledged per clutch equaled 0.23 which is very close to the average of 0.24 for the last 14 seasons. Ten of the chicks were banded, color flagged, weighed and measured at around three weeks of age. The introduction of the Hooded Plover Watch volunteers in 1998 has resulted in improvement in chicks fledging. Remarkable was the fledging of 3 chicks from Surf Beach, the first success there for 20 years due to the dedication of Jan Flemming and other H.P.W. volunteers. Bob Baird trialed two small shelters for the chicks which were used on numerous occasions. (Bob's note: Birds Australia/Deakin University Honours projects have been funded to research use of artificial chick shelters 06/07. We completed a pilot trial using artificial shelters in Feb 06. An extraordinary effort by volunteers enabled three chicks from the trial site to fledge. The first success at this site in 15 years of breeding records.)

Although the birds did not have to endure the rough weather that was a feature last season, many nests and chicks were lost to unknown causes despite close monitoring and protection. Ranger Jarvis Weston has co-ordinated much of the on ground fencing, signage and monitoring and the success this season is due much to his and other ranger's efforts with this and fox, cat and Sea Spurge control. Dedicated ranger patrols have assisted volunteers throughout the season and kept the problems with dogs down and the introduction of infringement notices should further improve the situation.

The PINP has again worked closely with BCSC to impound roaming dogs. Birds Australia is co-ordinating a state wide program to better manage Hooded Plover across the state and Mike Weston and Grainne Maguire visited 18.01.06 to see all aspects of our management such as temporary beach closures, signage, volunteers, enforcement, research and monitoring and we look forward to working closely with them.

Jon Fallow, 15.03.06

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LANDCARE & BUSH BANK

Landcare Award

At the Annual Meeting, held at Glen Forbes, of the Bass Coast

Landcare Network, of which Phillip Island Landcare Group is a member, awards were announced for the year 2005-06.

Margaret Hancock (PICS President) was recognized for her commitment to the environment of Phillip Island.

Congratulations, Margaret!

Barb Martin Bush Bank

The Bushbank continues to be a hive of activity on Wednesday and Thursday mornings as a steady stream of volunteers arrive. At the monthly meeting of the Bush Bank, Bec, the co-ordinator, reported that in the 12-month period, 68,140 plants have been propagated. This is a fantastic effort! Conditions are presently ideal for putting them in the ground, as they are looking magnificent. A new refrigerator has been installed. Its purchase was assisted by a generous donation from the Rotary Club of Phillip Island. Collected seed is stored for direct seeding. The Bushbank is open the first Saturday of the month and every Wednesday morning. Happy planting!!

Anne Davie

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VALE - KEITH GRAYDEN

When my uncle, Keith Grayden, died on April 10, PICS and Phillip Island generally lost a great campaigner and a wonderful worker. Keith was involved with PICS from its inception, serving on the Committee from 1968 - 1985, including terms as Vice President from 1977 - 85. He was the main worker behind Swan Lake, donated a small parcel of buffer land between Conservation Hill and the Rhyll tip, worked in a paid and voluntary capacity as lead hand on the Cape Woolamai dune restoration project for 10 years, cleared massive amounts of boxthorn from the north and west coasts of Churchill Island, helped in replanting Ventnor Common and did much roadside weed clearing - amongst other things. He was very active in the Saltwater Creek campaign, and a member of the Foreshore Advisory Committee.

Keith had no hesitation in approaching the Shire Engineer, Jock McKechnie, when problems arose which were the Shire's responsibility - e.g. foreshore erosion, grazing on foreshores and incursion by private landowners onto Crown land. He advised PI Nature Park staff regarding fox control, and was a fund of information on historical matters. His knowledge of PI's mammalian history is soon to be published as part of an article by Mammal Biologist Roger Kirkwood.

Keith was a Life Member of both PICS and the Friends of Churchill Island, although he spent much of his life avoiding

recognition! Keith was dedicated to the environment in so many ways - both practical and theoretical - that one wonders if we will ever see his like again.

Christine Grayden

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NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

If you read the Minutes enclosed in this newsletter, you will see an updated Treasurer's Report which includes our projected budget for the remainder of 2006. You will see that the 'bottom line' is very shaky. At this point in time we have about 30 members who paid up last year but who have not paid this year. You can see clearly that we **NEED YOUR SUPPORT!** If you have not paid your subscription so far this year, you will have a RED DOT on your newsletter address label. If you have paid, perhaps you can think of someone to pass on the membership form to. I think you can all tell from your quarterly newsletter that PICS is a very active organisation, and we certainly make full use of everyone's subscription. If you have a red dot, we would appreciate your forwarding your subscription as soon as possible.

With thanks,
Christine Grayden, Treasurer.

TREASURER'S REPORT

1.1.06-31.05.06

Opening Balance \$6516.88

Receipts: Subscriptions \$946

Donations to general account \$265

Donations to Public Fund (transferred) \$595

Total Receipts \$1806

Expenditure: Red Rocks \$4854.19

Transfers to Public Fund \$595.00

Photocopying \$175.00

Advertising \$55.60

Incorporation \$36.70

Postage \$89.41

PO Box rental \$60.00

BCSC Room hire X 2 (c/ee mtgs) \$37.40

Subscriptions to other organisations \$35.00

BCSC CEM room hire \$66.00

CEM Art supplies \$22.80

Total Expenditure \$6027.10

CLOSING BALANCE \$2295.78

LESS Encumbered Funds

5 Ways \$80.00; PICS History \$962.60; Children's Envt

Mornings \$161.00 \$1203.60

NEW BALANCE \$1092.18

PROJECTED BUDGET FOR REMAINDER OF 2006:
Photocopying X 3 \$675; Postage X 3 \$255; Advertising X 4-5
\$230; Subs to other orgs \$120.
Total projected budget \$1280.00
Projected DEFICIT - \$188.00 DR

Download the [Membership Renewal Form](#) and send it in today if you have not renewed your subscription, or if you want to become a new member. The [Public Fund](#) donation form can be downloaded for your contribution to this fund. Feel free to share these with a friend or neighbour.

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PICS CONTACTS

President: Margaret Hancock ph/fax 5952 2557

Newsletter editors: Christine Grayden & John Eddy ph 5956 8501; Email: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

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