



# The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society Second  
Quarter,  
June 2011



Newsletter

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## Dates for Your Diary 2011

Sat July 9 - **General Meeting** Heritage Centre Meeting Room, Cowes, 7.30 p.m. Speaker: Alison Oates will speak about Red Rocks vegetation and we will celebrate the launch of her botanical survey of Red Rocks. Meet at 7 p.m. Bring nibbles to share that go with champagne! Speaker will follow general meeting.

Sun July 10 - **Red Rocks working bee:** planting morning. Meet at car park 10 a.m. Refreshments to follow working bee.

Sat Aug 20 – **SEASONAL WALK:** Churchill Island North Point loop track. Meet at Visitors' Ctre, 2 p.m.

Sat Oct 1 - **General Meeting** Heritage Centre Meeting room, Cowes, 7.30 p.m. Speaker TBA

Sun Oct 2 - **Red Rocks Working Bee:** planting and tidy up morning. Meet at car park 10 a.m. Refreshments to follow working bee.

Sat Nov 19 – **SEASONAL WALK:** Cowes Primary School

grounds and sanctuary (TBC). Meet at school car park 2 p.m.

Sat Jan 14 2012 – **PICS AGM**. Bring and share meal 6.30 p.m., speaker: Greg Hunt (Not the member for Flinders) Executive Officer at South East Councils *Climate Change Alliance* which includes Bass Coast, will speak on climate change and Western Port. GM & AGM to follow. Parish Hall, Cowes.

**Enquiries for all events:** Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501  
e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

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**Barb Martin Bush Bank:** Sales and volunteers - every Wednesday plus 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month 10 - 1. Phone Anne Davie 5956 8216.

**Friends of Koalas (FOK) Habitat Days:** First Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

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

**Biosphere - Bass Coast Round Table** meets at San Remo on the third Friday of every month at 8 p.m. Contact Jane Jobe, convenor, ph 0409 530 898.

**Friends of Churchill Island (FOCIS):** email: [focis2009@hotmail.com](mailto:focis2009@hotmail.com).

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**GENERAL MEETING: SAT 9th JULY STARTING 7.00 P.M.**

**HERITAGE CENTRE MEETING ROOM COWES**

Alison Oates, PICS member and botanist, will speak about the vegetation of the Red Rocks area and we will launch her new botanical survey of Red Rocks, which was funded from our Public Fund. Come along at 7.00 for a chat and please bring some finger food to share. Champagne provided! Alison's talk will be followed by a General Meeting and then by supper. All are welcome!

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Dear Members,**

At our General Meeting in April we had a real learning experience as Dr Catherin Bull introduced us to Landscape Architecture and its application on Phillip Island. As a result of the meeting, I have written to Cr Peter Paul and asked him to approach his Council colleagues for support in developing a CONCEPT MASTER PLAN for the Cowes foreshore from Mussel Rocks to Red Rocks. Such a plan would be an invaluable tool in any discussion about the location of the Vehicular Car Ferry Terminal.

Planning issues roll on! PICS has objected to the present proposals for subdivision of the Boys Home at Newhaven and the Rhyll Caravan Park. The current proposals for 'Whytesands' and 'Justice Farm' are not yet available for comment but we have received the plans for subdivision of the Grollo property at Cape Woolamai. These plans will be available to you at the July meeting.

The great news is that the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre at the Penguin Reserve is almost complete, and will be officially opened on August 9th!

With best wishes,  
Margaret Hancock.

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### PLANNING ISSUES

PICS has lodged objections to the current proposals for the re-development of the Rhyll Caravan Park and the Boys Home at Newhaven. The proposed intensive-built development for both sites will create numerous environmental problems. The inadequate provision of Public Open Space means that there is no room for the retention and treatment of storm water on site, no space for the retention of existing habitat, and no space for the growth of new canopy trees. PICS has also received the documentation relating to the proposed residential subdivision of the Woolamai House property. We are awaiting more information from Council before making a submission. *Margaret Hancock*

PICS AUTUMN SEASONAL WALK:  
VENTNOR BEACH TO GROSSARD POINT – SAT 14TH MAY  
2011

Not discouraged by cold winds and the threat of showers, four intrepid members enjoyed walking from Ventnor Beach to the shearwater colony south of Grossard Point. This is a scenic and historic section of coastline, and is well described as walks Nos. 12 & 13 in the book *Come for a Walk – Exploring Phillip Island*.

Large cypress trees in the carpark at the end of Ventnor Beach Rd were planted during World War I by the local community and paid for by local entrepreneur A K T Sambell. The trees, approaching 100 years old, are now in decline with several dying in recent years, and others have undergone substantial pruning to remove unsafe branches.

Officially known as *Elizabeth Cove*, the bay between Ventnor Beach Rd and Grossard Point was so named by Lt James Grant in 1801 after the daughter of the Governor of New South Wales. Three years earlier, George Bass had explored this section of coast during the important journey in which he named Western Port.

As with most of the Island, the geology here is volcanic in origin, with weathered basalt and tuff (solidified volcanic ash) originating from eruptions about 50 million years ago. Hardened outcrops of red tuff mark the northern end of Ventnor beach, and appear in places along it as low intertidal platforms. Earlier generations of residents recounted how whales used to come in close to Elizabeth Bay, apparently to scrape barnacles from their stomachs on the offshore rock platforms.

Boat Creek emerges through the foredunes just past the track down from the carpark. With only a small catchment and including a farm dam in its upper reaches, it flows out to Elizabeth Cove only intermittently. So named because the Island's first settlers, the McHaffies, kept a 30 foot whaleboat here in the mid-19th century, Boat Creek may have had a larger and more permanent mouth in those days. The protection offered to boats in the lee of Grossard Point made Elizabeth Cove a suitable site for the transport in and out of supplies and produce, and not too distant from the McHaffie homestead at Woolshed Bight.

Our walk continued south west towards Grossard Point. The foreshore vegetation is a healthy and dense assemblage of

coastal dune scrub, Banksia woodland and coastal dune grassland with a wide grassy terrace behind the beach, indicating sand accumulation over recent years. Main species are coastal teatree, coast wattle, coast Banksia, coastal beard heath, Spinifex and the introduced marram grass.

Over much of the coastline here, residential areas are well hidden, maintaining a sense of remoteness on the beach. In stark contrast, however, is the deplorable dense block-like housing that has arisen adjacent to Grossard Point, on the land previously owned by the late artist and potter, Eric Juckert. As we walk towards the point, they are a constant reminder of regrettable planning decisions of the past.

At Grossard Point, heavily weathered basalt has become erodible clay, which is constantly stripped by rainfall, run-off and wind above and undercut by wave action below. So, to the expressed glee of one of our companions, Grossard Point continues its landward retreat . . . towards those offending structures! Here and there, we noticed round black cobbles of un-weathered basalt embedded in the eroding clays. These so-called 'core-stones' will be released eventually to join the beach stones.

Rounding Grossard Point (don't try this at high tide!) we met the full force of the southwesterly wind we had previously been protected from. However, we came upon a spectacular section of cliffs, largely sheer, of light brown weathered basalt and a distinctive band of red tuff which arches up to a height of 5 or 6 metres in the centre of the small cove, and descends to sea level at each end. This pronounced domed feature suggests to geologists that the eruption point is close by, and is the reason for this geological site being declared of state significance. We also noted what appeared to be a fault line in the cliff, where some movement in the earth's crust has displaced the southern section of tuff downwards.

We returned to the cliff top via the first track which took us through the edge of the shearwater colony known locally as the "little Rookery". This is the northern-most colony on Phillip Island of these migratory birds, is home to many hundreds, and backs onto residential areas. Weed control, rabbit control and fencing works are evident to help protect the colony, this section of coast being managed by the Phillip Island Nature Park.

We paused at the Grossard Point Historic Precinct, notable for it Lonely Grave, the last resting place of Captain Grossard, who was accidentally shot at the McHaffie homestead in 1868. There are a number of signs to read covering that event, and also acknowledging the exploration of George Bass, the presence of the navigation light since 1862, and the need to

care for our coast. Fascinating information, but unfortunately the signage has deteriorated under the effects of the weather at this very exposed site, and needs replacing.

The amazing view from the lookout seaward of the light captivated us. From the Nobbies to the south west, the eye jumps across to Cape Schanck on the Mornington Peninsula and can follow that coastline northwards past the settlements of Flinders, Shoreham, Pt Leo, Merricks, Balnarring and Somers, ending at Sandy Pt. Beyond, Tortoise Head on French Island is visible. A handy brass plaque, incorporating a map and compass bearings, is inset in the seating and helps the visitor get oriented. From this elevated viewpoint, we can see the treacherous McHaffies Reef extending some hundreds of metres out from Grossard Point into the shipping channel. Just to the south lies the Hen and Chickens reef ( so called because it is a rounded reef with several smaller outcrops nearby), and further south again is Angelina reef (named after a ship wrecked there).

We left the Historic Precinct via the stairs on the north side of the car park, taking us across a weedy gully which carries the bulk of roadside runoff down to the beach, and appears to be resisting erosion. There are good views from here of the coastal vegetation bordering Elizabeth Cove, including the wide grassy terrace. Inland of the scrub-covered bluff, the foreshore reserve is a wide, mown expanse of grass. It could be good habitat if planted out, but local residents probably fear losing a view. Rabbits love it too!

A short distance along this grassy expanse we turned left onto the track leading to the large staircase that returns us to the beach. Halfway down is a viewing platform with seats offering delightful views across the Western Passage to the Peninsula, and surrounded by lush coastal vegetation. We then retraced our steps north east along the beach to the Ventnor Beach carpark, thoroughly satisfied with our one and a half hours of exploration.

***John Eddy***

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### ***“Chinamen’s Estate”- Damage***

*Here is the text from an article that appeared in the Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser on 25.5.11. following a letter I*

*put in the previous week on the subject, which is freely quoted here as being from an anonymous “concerned resident”! PICS has long been lobbying for some action on this ‘estate’, where no housing can be built and where the council is very slowly acquiring blocks.*

Dirt bike enthusiasts are trashing an abandoned estate on Phillip Island, it is claimed, and many local residents are fed up. The State Government declared the Scenic Estate, known locally as Chinamen’s Estate, outside Newhaven, an ‘inappropriate subdivision’ as the land is low-lying, swampy and not suitable for residential use. No one is allowed to build on the estate, which remains a mix of privately owned blocks and council owned land.

In the meantime dirt bike enthusiasts have discovered the spot, regularly enjoying their sport at the site. And local residents and conservationists believe this is a disaster for both local wildlife and the environment. One concerned resident said dirt bikers regularly use the estate for their sport after school, on weekends and during the school holidays.

“Not content with turning private land on Chinamen’s Estate into a denuded mud bath in wet weather and a dust bowl in dry weather, and deliberately rendering the roads there impassable by creating ruts and holes in them to increase the ‘fun’, the dirt bikers who use the estate illegally are now taking to leaving their rubbish strewn about the area,” said the resident.

The resident said the estate was recognised as an important area for birds and rare flora and was adjacent to a marine park. But constant use by the dirt bikers had created a wasteland. “Now they are riding out to the mud flats on a marine reserve...Perhaps the Bass Coast Shire, Phillip Island Nature Park who manage the foreshore and Parks Victoria who manage the adjacent Marine Park could join forces and approach the current government with a strong joint submission and see if they are amenable to a buy back,” said the concerned resident.

“Once purchased the land should be rezoned from residential, since it can never be built on, to become a flora and fauna reserve and part of the Phillip Island Nature Park. If the dirt bike riders want to continue this form of recreation they should form into an incorporated club, get proper insurance and go to a more appropriate and legal location if they can find someone who will have them. If that’s the deal for all the other forms of recreation on Phillip Island, it’s good enough for them too. Get off Chinamen’s before you completely destroy it.”

Phillip Island Conservation Society president, Margaret Hancock, echoes these sentiments. “This is an important place for birds, recognised by Western Port Bird Observation and Conservation Australia, and it has a foreshore area that goes on to a Ramsar site,” said Margaret. “It used to be a lovely place to go and have a walk, but it has become very popular for people on dirt bikes and they are wrecking the place. With the noise and racing bikes near nesting birds, it’s an absolute disaster. All the activities that are going on are strictly illegal; they are making a frightful mess. Public roads are being destroyed for private pleasure.”

Margaret Hancock said the dirt bike enthusiasts have been using the estate for their sport for many years. “If you want to run a particular sport, it is up to you to provide a sport facility such as those run by the pony club and the soccer club. Everyone has a place; it gives financial support to the maintenance of those facilities. If you can weather the cost of fuel and a bike, why can’t you pay fees to maintain club facilities? Personally I can’t see why they can’t go to the Phillip Island racetrack. It is a similar sport.”

Margaret Hancock said that small children were riding the bikes. “If I had a child that I loved on those sorts of bikes it would give me the horrors. It is an accident waiting to happen.” Ms Hancock said it was not practical to fence off the estate. “From my understanding those people that still pay rates in the estate own foreshore blocks,” she said. “As a landowner they are legally entitled to have access to their land.”

Ms Hancock said there needs to be some resolution for the estate. “It has been in the too hard basket for the Shire of Phillip Island and now the Shire of Bass Coast. In my opinion it should go to the Phillip Island Nature Park and all would be well.”

## **Council**

The Bass Coast Shire Council said the council currently owns about a third of the blocks at the estate. “Of the remaining blocks, about half are in private ownership and the rest are in the name of the original developer,” said a council spokesperson. “As many of the owners are based overseas or deceased (or both), the process of buying back the remaining blocks could be very complicated and costly. Council has a practice of purchasing the land back at the current market value. This is a voluntary buy-back scheme. The land does not automatically revert back and owners cannot be forced to sell.

“If and when Council can buy back all the blocks, the proposal is that the land will be transferred to the Crown.” In the meantime, the council said they were aware that trail bike



riders were using the estate.

“Council cannot fence in the site, as the private owners are entitled to access their blocks,” said the spokesperson. “Riders are allowed to ride on the roads within the estate; however if they are on private property, that is trespassing, which is a police matter.”

*So, since the riders ARE on private &/or council owned land, where are the police? Christine Grayden.*

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## **Sustainable Living Festival**

PICS once again held a Kids Art Activity stall at this year's Phillip Island Landcare Sustainable Living Festival held at the Cultural Centre, Sat June 18. We entertained lots of children, with 36 hand puppets and numerous butchers' paper drawings being done. Two of our happy clients are pictured right with their wonderful hand puppets. Thanks to Pauline Taylor and Elizabeth Shaw who helped with the stall on the day and to John Eddy for setting up and packing away.

*Christine Grayden*

**JOHN'S REPORT:** There was inspiration a-plenty at this year's Sustainable Living Festival, again so capably organised by Phillip Island Urban/Landcare. A large range of stalls were set up both inside and outside the Cowes Cultural Centre, representing the groups you would expect, and a few that would be new to you. Yes, there was Urban Landcare, Bass Coast Landcare Network, Sustainability Victoria, Bass Coast Shire, Western Port Water, Gippsland Regional Waste Management and Barb Martin Bushbank. Newer ventures into sustainability were also making their presence felt with ideas and advice. Transition Phillip Island looks at how people can get together to explore ways of responding to the challenges and opportunities emerging out of Peak Oil and Climate Change. Gippsland Computer Recycling provided people the chance to take unwanted computers and phones for recycling. Normally operating in Morwell, this group provides meaningful employment for local unemployed and disabled people, with profits supporting Lifeline. Wonthaggi Community Garden and Harvest Centre run a very full calendar of events, including monthly vegie and produce swaps.

There was of course a range of commercial groups displaying their eco-friendly wares. They included Chooktopia (ethical online eco store), Rainbow Bizarre (second hand wares), Solar Shop Australia, Wheel Heat (bicycles, insulation and pellet-burning Parkwood Fire Heaters), Arbonne-Silver Castle products, Patches and Pads, Enjo cleaning materials, Enviromeat, Green Balloon Environmental Solutions (where one can sign on for free energy efficient globes and switching devices), Bennett Building and Construction (promoting innovative designs for earth-covered buildings) and the man from Southern Arborists making novel natural brooms from palm tree flower stalks. An intriguing assemblage of ideas and products.

Throughout the day in the adjacent conference room, speakers presented their ideas on various aspects of Sustainability, and, in the kitchen, participants were treated to a hands-on cooking workshop “Cooking a 100 mile lunch”, using local produce. During the afternoon we were also entertained by the tasteful music offered by local duo, Little Oberon. The Sustainability Living Festival has firmly established its place on the annual calendar. It is an important occasion for people to meet and exchange ideas on how we can tread more carefully on poor old Planet Earth. *John Eddy.*

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### **Red rocks coast action Lots of action!**

It's a great year for planting! We should all be flat out getting those indigenous species in the ground. Sunday July 10th is our big planting day at Red Rocks. We have in excess of 300 coastal shrubs, grasses and Moonahs to put in. Come along and help our local volunteers. We meet at the Red Rocks car park at 10 a.m and finish at lunchtime with a cuppa and snacks.

RSVP: John Eddy, Red Rocks Coast Action Co-ordinator, ph 5956 8501

Red Rocks Coast Action operates under the auspices of PICS and in conjunction with the Bass Coast Shire Council and Department of Sustainability and Environment.

### **LAUNCH OF THE REPORT: “Red rocks botanical survey”**

We will launch this report at the general meeting on July 9th. Botanist Alison Oates, author of the report, will be our Guest Speaker.

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## **PICS MEMBER AND AUTHOR WITH NEW BOOK SUCCESS**

In her latest book, *Alaska*, published by Penguin and launched recently at Turn the Page bookshop in Cowes, award-winning author and PICS member Sue Saliba intertwines the relationship between two sisters with the need to protect a pristine forest from destruction by an oil company.

Sue includes those who work in the cause of conservation in Bass Coast in her acknowledgements. At her launch Sue spoke of the importance of Phillip Island in revealing the values of Nature to her. We wish Sue well with her latest publication.

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### **COMMITTEE FOR 2011:**

President/Public Officer: Margaret Hancock Vice  
President: Vacant  
Secretary: Vacant Minutes Secretary: Gaye  
Cleeland Treasurer: Christine Grayden  
C/ee: Anne Davie, Pauline Taylor, John Jansson, Penny  
Manning, Terry Nott

### **MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

Held at the Heritage Centre, Cowes Saturday April 16th 2011 at 7.30pm

President : Margaret Hancock opened the meeting and welcomed attendees

PRESENT : Margaret Hancock, Denis Cox, Alison Thomas, Anwyn Martin, Christine Grayden, Pauline Taylor, Penny Manning, Olga Bolitho, Mike Cleeland, Patsy Hunt, Maurice Schinkel, John Wright, Michaela Wright, Brigitte Nott, John Eddy, Anne Davie , Steven and Danielle Angel.

APOLOGIES : T Nott, G Collins, L Meredith

M Hancock welcomed the Guest Speaker. Catherin Bull spoke on Landscape and in particular, Phillip Island's landscape.

After the talk and following questions, Catherin was given a Vote of Thanks and presentation.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF 15.1.11 Motion : That the Minutes be accepted. Moved: O. Bolitho. Seconded : P Hunt. Carried

BUSINESS ARISING : Letter was sent to the BCS requesting meeting with Smiths Beach and PICS re -Transfer Station proposal. Re- noise from the oil rig off Rhyll. Action was taken following a visit from the Harbour Master

CORRESPONDENCE : In : BCS re- Redevelopment of Boys

Home, Newhaven. PICS will comment. Concern access is from Forrest Avenue. Whyte Sands new proposal PICS will study and comment. Considerable concern re- fire-track  
Out : Letter to Terry Wilcox suggesting attendance at Council Meeting to raise the issue re- Cape Barren Geese at round-about.

MOTION : that the correspondence be received. Moved : J Eddy. Seconded : P Taylor. Carried

TREASURER'S REPORT : see attached.

MOTION : that The Treasurer investigate the best rate for 6 months Moved P Taylor. Seconded P Manning. Carried

MOTION : that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Moved : C Grayden Seconded P Manning. Carried

#### GENERAL BUSINESS

Port of Hastings : Gillian Collins remains PICS rep

Car Ferry site seems to be on the drawing board

A Davie gave a Report on the Bushbank. Bushbank committee needs to purchase a special mat for the public entrance to the facility. This will clean foot wear of people entering.

MOTION : that PICS pay for the purchase of the mat, and if it is felt another is required, PICS will consider also assisting with that. Moved : P Manning Seconded P Taylor. Carried  
Western Port Waterways Information Forum was held at Pakenham. PICS committee was represented by T Nott, M Hancock and P Manning. M Hancock gave a report of the day's proceedings. It was a Review of the scientific information and what is still needed. All the papers are on line. Over 200 people attended.

J Eddy tabled the final draft version of the Red Rocks Survey by Alison Oates. Alison has made recommendations

MOTION : that a letter be sent to the local member, Ken Smith, expressing concern about reputed monies having not been spent on Marine Parks and concern about the integrity of Marine Parks under the new government Moved : M Cleeland. Seconded A Martin Carried.

Dennis Cox spoke of the Caring for Country Funding which finishes on May 31st. Projects must be completed. The \$5,000 grants are available after May 31st

Next GENERAL MEETING 9.7.11

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.40

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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

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