



The Penguin

Newsletter of the Phillip Island Conservation Society

First Quarter – March 2002

Post Office Box 548, Cowes 3922; Fax 5952 2557



Newsletter

Dates for your Diary

Sunday, April 7th. Working Bee at Five Ways. 10.00 — 12.00 am for weeding. BYO gloves and tools.

Saturday, May 18th. PICS Seasonal Walk. Cape Woolamai — meet at the carpark at 2.00 pm. Contact Rose Thomas for details, Ph. 56785804.

Other Green Opportunities:

Tuesday, April 9th: Koala Count. 10.00 – 12.00 am. Held the second Tuesday of each month, meet at the entrance to the Koala Conservation Centre building. This is a great way to meet the rangers and the koalas!

Habitat Days: Held in conjunction with Friends of the Koalas, these working bees are held the first Saturday of each month from 10.00 – 12.00 am. Contact Patsy Hunt for details: 5952-2407.

Barbara Martin Bushbank. Open Wednesdays 9.00 – 12.00 am and Sundays 9.00 – 5.00. Buy healthy indigenous plants and get expert gardening advice. Volunteers are sought to help with plant propagation Wednesday mornings. It's a friendly atmosphere combined with community service. Located at the Koala Conservation Centre. Just come along or contact Stephen Curwood for details: 0409 608 030.

Pride of Place Project

Draft Design Framework

Yes, progress is being made. Over the Easter school holidays, *you*

will have an opportunity to make comment on the next stage of the Design Framework.

Numerous comments were received during January when the first stage was on exhibition. The consultants and the Steering Committee have worked through all the comments.

Your next opportunity to comment begins on March 28th. The panels will be on display in the street at Cowes and San Remo, but if you want to study them in comfort, go to the Customer Service Centre in Cowes.

Please take time to go carefully through this stage of the Draft Design Framework, and *make your comment*. The end result will be a strengthened Municipal Strategic Statement and a Planning Scheme which reflects the long term hopes of the community.

Margaret Hancock

From the President

Dear Members,

This afternoon I had the good fortune to meet and hear Professor David Bellamy and Dr. Sylvia Earle, who were in Cowes to address a public meeting about the importance of Marine Parks. The meeting was hosted by Parks Victoria, the Bass Coast Shire Council, and the Phillip Island Nature Park. Unfortunately, the meeting began late, so there was no time for questions (the guest speakers arrived late because they had been taken on a rapid tour of the Bunurong and the south coast of Phillip Island!). Not that questions seem necessary – Marine Parks are so logical and their value already has been demonstrated in other countries.

Last week the Shire conducted two community meetings, one at Cowes, the other at Wonthaggi, about roads and road safety. The Cowes meeting concentrated on Phillip Island and was well attended by the public and the Emergency Services. The result? A unanimous wish for just *two speed limits* – 80 kph and 50 kph.

There has been *another* meeting about the closure/nonclosure of Blue Gum Alley. All parties are agreed that the Emergency Services should have access, and that it should be part of the walking/cycling network, and that it should *not* be used by commercial vehicles. The sticking point is *private vehicles*. The VicRoads representative at the meeting told us that if a couple of particular signs are erected, Blue Gum Alley will be legally open to Emergency Service vehicles, walkers and cyclists, and closed to every other vehicle (and drivers can be prosecuted). All so simple, but *still* no decision is made. Our thanks go to LandCare for preparing an assessment of the vegetation and a weed eradication program for Blue Gum Alley.

Patsy Hunt led the FOK/PICS clean up of Harbison Road, Five Ways, Coghlan Road from Settlement Road to Five Ways, and Blue Gum Alley. There seemed to be less rubbish than in previous years, though the same television set is in the same place in Harbison Road as it has been for the past three years! It is a *very heavy* object.

Our Working Bee on Sunday, April 7th will be at Fiveways at 10.00 am. We can't have a barbecue there, but bring some lunch and we can picnic at the Koala Conservation Centre or, if it's wet, go to the Barb Martin Bush Bank.

Special thanks to Sandy Shively who is standing in as Editor for Marg Johnson for this edition of *The Penguin*. Marg is having a busy time as campaign manager for Greg, who is standing for the Nillumbik Shire Council. So, *good luck, Greg!* Despite the calls of the campaign trail, Greg found time to attend the initial meeting of the Ventnor Public Land/Saltwater Creek Reserve Committee of Management, so *good luck with that too!*

Stop Press!! Greg WON the ward of Wingrove and is now a councillor on the Nillumbik Shire Council. Congratulations Greg!! Well done Marg!!

I hope to see you at our General Meeting on April 6th and the Working Bee on Sunday, April 7th. And, I look forward to reading *your* comments on the *Draft Design Framework* (see previous article).

With best wishes,

Margaret Hancock,

President

"We don't inherit the earth from our parents...we borrow it from our children. If like us, you love the enormous variety and splendour of life on Earth, you'll want to leave a Sustainable Australia for our children."

Australian
Conservation
Foundation
publication,
March, 2002

Launch into the Future

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~piconsoc>

PICS launched its new website at the AGM on 13 January 2002. Peter Atkins, manager of the Statutory Planning, Policy and Co-ordination section of the Department of Natural Resources and

Environment, launched the website. Peter emphasised the importance of using the Web to share knowledge and information to extend conservation work.

The site was developed by members of the PICS Committee and designed by Brad Shrimpton and Edmund Chiu. Anyone interested in conservation on Phillip Island is invited to contribute to the site.

If you haven't been to the site yet, go to <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~piconsoc>. Here you will find a range of online resources, including information about PICS, events, current conservation issues, the newsletter and archives, and a list of useful links to elected officials and relevant local, state and national groups. If you have visited the site, go back again. The site is updated on a regular basis so visit frequently to stay informed of current work by the Society.

If you have information or photos to contribute to the site, send these to Margaret Hancock (PO Box 548, Cowes, VIC 3922) or email Diane Baird at (dianeбайд@yahoo.com)

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A Request from the Treasurer

As well as having our own website, it has become necessary for PICS to further join the Information Technology Age and purchase a phone/fax machine. This has recently been done at the cost of \$280. Margaret Hancock, as President, is presently housing the machine (and learning how to use it!). The Committee decided that this would be a very useful tool in relation to more efficient communication about conservation issues.

This expenditure has somewhat depleted our uncommitted funds, so a plea for contributions is being made. If 14 members contributed \$20 each, or 28 members gave \$10, this expenditure would be covered. Should we receive donations in excess of what is required to cover this, be assured these additional contributions will go into consolidated funds for other worthwhile conservation projects for Phillip Island.

Please make cheques payable to the Phillip Island Conservation Society and post to P.O. Box 548, Cowes, Victoria 3922. Receipts will be given out at the General Meeting or posted upon request.

The PICS FAX number is the same as Margaret's telephone number: 5952 2557.

Hooded Plover Season 2001 – 2002

Breeding is very close to finished with a pretty good outcome of six fledged chicks plus two more due to fly this week. If all goes well this will mean eight fledged which compares with ten last season; 3.5 being the average over the last ten seasons. A good result.

The start to the season was disastrous with five nests in succession lost to ravens, foxes and storms. Woolamai Beach, usually the best site, was a total failure this season with all seven nests being lost.

The good news is that losses to dogs are now much reduced due to volunteers and greater public awareness and, at long last, fencing of all south coast beaches is practically completed with the constant worry of sheep trampling a thing of the past.

Thanks again to all "Hoodie" volunteers. Phillip Island and its Nature Park are indeed fortunate to have such dedicated people.

Bob Baird

Guest Speaker for General Meeting, April 6th

Scientists from the flora Ecology Research Section at the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research (NRE) recently completed an EVC mapping project of the Port Phillip and Westernport region. All remnant vegetation was modelled at 1:100,000. EVC mapping constitutes baseline data for planning decisions at all government levels and is invaluable for conservation and revegetation programs. This presentation will briefly outline the scope of this project, methods, major findings and access to data.

Our guest presenter, Alison Oates, grew up in the South Gippsland area. She will bring sample maps of Phillip Island and surrounds as well as a powerpoint presentation. This will be an informative night, not to be missed. Bring along your family and friends.

Marine National Parks

A friend of mine recently went cruising through Indonesia. She is a diving enthusiast, and said that she didn't have to worry about sharks. In fact, there were no fish at all in the waters where she swam except in Marine Parks. The waters are so fished out that Marine Parks are the only place where they can breed and survive. This rings warning bells for me!

Marine National Parks is a hot issue at the moment in Victoria, and we need to keep it "on the front burner". As conservationists, we need to write letters to lobby our state representatives and to the local press to inform the community of the reasons for protecting Victoria's marine life. For sample letters and addresses for Parliamentary Representatives, contact the Victorian National Parks Association 9650 8296 or email vnpa@vnpa.org.au. Background information about Marine National Parks is available in the [Issues](#) section of this website. Sandy Shively

Annual Report

The 34th Annual Report of the Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc was presented at the AGM in January 2002. An edited version of this [report](#) is located in the **About Us** section of this website.

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Western Port Biosphere Project

The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port are close to being nominated as UNESCO's first *biosphere* to contain suburbs or a major city. The Biosphere Program aims to preserve the environment as well as encourage the productive and sustainable use of natural resources.

Additional information about the Biosphere Program is printed in the paper copy of *The Penguin*.

Eastern Grey Nurse Shark on Critically Endangered List

An article published by the *Threatened Species Network* provides alarming information about declining numbers of the Eastern Grey Nurse Shark. Rebecca Brand, a campaigner for the Humane Society International, says,

'Scientists have estimated that there are fewer than 500 individuals on the East Coast of Australia. These animals form an integral part of our marine ecosystem and every effort must be made to ensure they recover to avoid extinction.'

Factors believed to be responsible for the sharks' decline include past exploitation, low reproductive rates, continuing threats from commercial and recreational fishing and shark control nets.

For more information, contact Rebecca Brand at rebecca@his.org.au

Landcare Updates

CONGRATULATIONS to the Phillip Island Landcare Group!
They have won the Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award.

Other information from LandCare, published in the *Southwest Gippsland Landcare News (Summer, 2002)* is summarised below:

Bridal Creeper Funding in the Region. Bridal creeper is a 'weed of national significance'. It is a major threat to biodiversity as it smothers everything in its wake and the thick tuberous mats it forms prevent seedlings from emerging. Birds eating the small red berries

move the seeds to new areas at an alarming rate.

Landcare and Coast Action groups across Bass Coast Shire have received \$53,900 from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust for bridal creeper control over 2001 – 2002. Trial sites on private and public land demonstrating alternative control techniques, such as fire, will aid in training purposes and monitoring. Comprehensive mapping will assist in determining the spread of this weed and the best method of control. Local schools will be involved in the rearing and release of the leafhopper, one of the bridal creeper's natural enemies. Bridal creeper can be controlled by spraying. If sprayed just prior to flowering over 90% of plants can be killed; however follow-up treatment is required.

Recording where bridal creeper is on your property and employing effective management strategies will help with this project. For further information contact Pest Plant and Animal Facilitator Kellie Nichols, Ph. 5952-5403; email: landcare@waterfront.net.au

Blue Gums Drinking Waste Water? Westernport Water is using reclaimed water to irrigate a number of blue gum plantations on Phillip Island. One plantation, established in April 2001, is at the Cowes sewerage treatment plant. About 1600 blue gums were planted on 1.7 hectares. The plantation is being watered by reclaimed water from the treatment plant. The gums were mixed with other indigenous species such as wattles and sheoaks to attract birds and other wildlife to act as a natural pest control. For example, ibis consume about 200 grams of insects every day. Bats can eat up to two-thirds of their body weight in insects each night. Using the same principle, another plantation has been established close to the P.I. wildlife corridor in Cowes.

If you would like further information on these blue gum trials, or if you are interested in using reclaimed water on your property, contact Diana Whittington, Ph/Fax 5952-5403, email: landcare@waterfront.net.au

Rural Rate Rebate Scheme. Bass Coast Shire, along with a number of other Victorian shires, has proposed a Land Management Biodiversity Incentive Scheme which proposes a rate rebate of 20% to landholders who meet particular land management goals through agreement with Council. Bass Coast Shire Council sees this scheme as assisting in controlling weeds and pest animals, protecting remnant vegetation, fighting salinity and erosion, improving the viability of farmers, and lifting the shire's aesthetic appeal.

Slowing the Flow into Western Port Bay. Accelerated rates of erosion deplete the soil store and damage downstream lands, habitats, roads, dams, ports, and estuaries. South Gippsland Landcare Network's *Hills to Ocean: Slow the Flow* project aims to encourage landcarers to undertake remediation works on areas degraded by erosion and landslips. "The amount of damage that these forces are causing to the land under question, and to the dams and streams below the damaged areas is quite scary," Project Officer David Cook stated. Thanks to funding through the National Heritage Trust, grants

will assist with earthwork remediation of eroded lands, fencing material, indigenous tubestock and assistance for direct seeding revegetation. David is working alongside other H2O Project staff and can be contacted on 5678-2335.

Coastal Ecology Course offered on Phillip Island April 18 – 22.
Contact Greening Australia, Ph. 9450-5302.

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YOUR PICS COMMITTEE

The PICS Committee, elected at the AGM, meets once a month to discuss issues of immediate concern to the conservation of wildlife on Phillip Island. These meetings are very informative and challenging. Members are welcome to attend at 8.00 pm on the first Friday of each month. Meetings are usually held at the home of Coral Wood.

Please consider nominating for a Committee position next year. The Committee can always use new members and ideas. A nomination form will be in the last newsletter of the year before the next AGM.

The positions for 2002 are as follows:

President	Margaret Hancock (Ph/Fax 5952-2557)
Senior Vice President	Rose Thomas
Junior Vice President	Sandra Shively
Secretary	Margaret Johnson (Ph. 9439-9853 or 5956-8327)
Minutes Secretary	Bruce Howe
Treasurer	Tim Patkin (Gillian Collins when Tim is away)
Newsletter	M. Johnson, S. Shively, B. Howe
Meeting notices and publicity	S. Shively, Rose Thomas
Ventnor Public Land Committee	Greg Johnson
Red Rocks Coast Action Project	Greg Johnson
South Coast Walking Track	Penny Manning
Friends of Churchill Island Liaison	Julie Box

Barb Martin Bushbank Liaison	Anne Davie
Westernport CMA	Graeme Burgan
Landcare Liaison	Morag Mackay
Landcare Salinity Committee	John Jansson
Website Manager	Diane Baird
Meeting Venue	Coral Wood

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