



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society - First Quarter, March 2004

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Newsletter

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 17th April: Discussion Day on Planning and Conservation, 10 am until 1.00 pm, then lunch, then 2.00 pm for a brief General Meeting for constitutional amendment proposal. Lunch provided. All free. All welcome!

Sunday, 18th April: Red Rocks Working Bee.
10.00am onwards. See item in newsletter.

Friday 7th May: Committee Meeting, 8.00 pm,
Cultural Centre, Cowes

Saturday 15th May: Seasonal Walk, enquiries to
Margaret Hancock, 5952 2557.

Friday 4th June: Committee Meeting, 8.00 pm,
Cultural Centre, Cowes

Saturday 3rd July: General Meeting

Sunday 4th July: Working Bee

Friday 6th August: Committee Meeting, 8.00 pm,
Cultural Centre, Cowes

Saturday 21st August: Seasonal Walk

Friday 3rd September: Landcare Dinner

Friday 10th September: Committee Meeting,
8.00 pm, Cultural Centre, Cowes

Saturday 25th September: General Meeting

Sunday 26th September: Working Bee

Friday 5th November: Committee Meeting, 8.00
pm, Cultural Centre, Cowes

Saturday 20th November: Seasonal Walk

Friday 3rd December: Committee Meeting, 8.00
pm, Cultural Centre, Cowes

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Just four weeks from now, on April 17th we are having a special 'get together' at the Rhyll Hall, beginning at 10 a.m. to discuss planning generally, planning issues and how they all relate to us as conservationists. Your input, and that of your friends and family, will be most welcome on the day. At 1 p.m. we will break for a free lunch, being organized by Penny Manning. Then at 2 p.m. members are asked to stay for a special General Meeting regarding an amendment to our constitution (see later in newsletter). This is a seemingly minor amendment, but an essential amendment if we are to achieve TAX DEDUCTIBILITY for the Public Fund.

This planning discussion day is timely as 2004 is the **Year of the Built Environment**. As Nicolas Markus, National Coordinator, wrote in a recent edition of *The Web*, the newsletter of the THREATENED SPECIES NETWORK:

"At a local level, we can mark the Year of the Built Environment by focusing on strategies to achieve ecologically sustainable development (ESD) in our respective neighbourhoods. Achieving ESD in the design of new developments means addressing its three cornerstones: economic, social and environmental values. Striking a balance between these three elements requires both commitment and innovation. As threatened species and ecological communities are often key indicators of general environmental health, it is vital that their consideration is at the forefront of town planning processes in order to arrest further environmental degradation."

Please do try to come to the Rhyll Hall on April 17th, do bring visitors — the more the merrier!

I look forward to seeing you then.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Hancock, President.

P.S. Please, please, please RSVP for April 17th by APRIL 10, so that Penny will know how many 'Scrumptions' she needs for the scrumptious lunch!

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BARB MARTIN BUSHBANK

Good things continue to happen at the Bush Bank. On March the 3rd, representatives from Endeavour Petroleum presented a cheque for \$2,000 for the purchase of a new Hothouse. About 30 volunteers and friends of the Bush Bank were present to hear Jeff Griffiths, Regional Manager of Endeavour Petroleum speak of the environmentally responsible measures that are now in place at the BP Service Station in Thompson Avenue, Cowes.

Jeff announced that a prominent space will be made available to place a Bush Bank Community notice board in the retail shop area of the enterprise. Information with regard to plant sales, hours of operation, etc, will be displayed. The other environmental groups involved with the Bush Bank are encouraged to use the board to advertise meeting times, events, etc.

The other good news is that Kirsty and Stephen are expecting a brother or sister for Kirra!

Meanwhile autumn propagation is on in earnest. There is a real need for more volunteers at this time. Please phone Anne Davie 5956 8216 if you can help (Wednesday or Thursday mornings are volunteer times). You will really enjoy it!

Anne Davie

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE

PICS PUBLIC FUND

PICS will hold a Special General Meeting at 2 p.m., April 17, 2004 at the Rhyll Mechanics Hall to approve the following change to its constitution:

Section 37.3(h)

In case of the winding-up of the Fund, any surplus assets of the Fund are to be transferred to another Fund with similar objectives that is on the Register of Environmental Organisations.

This item will be the only business to be conducted at the meeting, and it has become necessary because of changes to the Public Fund set-up procedures. They have been changed by the Environmental Register in order to include a 'winding up' clause for the Public Fund that is in addition to the 'winding up' clause for the Conservation Society. The meeting will be held close to the conclusion of the Planning Workshop day in order to attract the greatest number of participants. Participation in the workshop, however, is not necessary, and we welcome all financial members to attend the meeting and vote on this last (we can only hope!) step in the process before our Public Fund paperwork goes to the Minister for sign-off.

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PICS PLANNING WORKSHOP

APRIL 17TH 2004 — RHYLL MECHANICS HALL

Ever wondered why the Conservation Society has so many VCAT appeals? Ever heard anyone say we are just a group of 'objectors'? Ever wondered why we need to object to certain planning permit applications? Ever thought you would like to know how the planning process works, and would like to be involved?

If you have had these thoughts, or are curious about PICS' interest in the Bass Coast Planning Scheme and the Phillip Island and San Remo Design Framework, come along to our first ever Planning Workshop to be held on Saturday April 17th from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Rhyll Mechanics Hall. Lunch (free) will be provided, so a reservation is necessary. You can make one by calling me 5956 8840 (PI), email: gicron@waterfront.net.au or Margaret Johnson, ph 9439 9853 (Melb), email: margreg@bluep.com

We promise a stimulating, provocative and thought-provoking day that will include case studies, information, discussion and camaraderie!

Gillian Collins

RED ROCKS REPORT

The stair repair that was contracted under our last Coast

Action grant is under way. The design for the entire access replacement has been completed and approved, and Gillian Collins is working with Derek Hibbert from Bass Coast Shire and Dennis Cox from DSE to identify funding sources to complete the work. In the meantime, the most dangerous section of the track will be replaced.

Look for information on a Red Rocks working bee on Sunday the 18th of April to give you a chance to take your saw out of storage. Our efforts to poison the pittosporum were not effective, so we're going to cut them down! Bass Coast will supply a contractor to take the downed trees away, and we should be able to clear the area west of the beach parking in a short period of time.

Gillian Collins.

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A CONSUMPTION MANIFESTO

Article One

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Reduce. Avoid buying what you don't need, wring the last drop of usefulness out of everything you own, and recycle whenever possible — but remember that's the least efficient part of the triad — ultimately recycling simply results in the manufacture of more things!

Article Two

Stay close to home. Work close to home, eat food grown locally, patronize local businesses, join local organizations. All of these will improve the look, shape, smell and feel of your community.

Article Three

Internal combustion engines are polluting and their use should be minimal. Full stop.

Article Four

Watch what you eat. Use your dollars to vote against toxins in our bodies, land and water. Patronise local businesses that sell organic food.

Article Five

Private industries have very little incentive to improve their environmental practices. Our consumption choices must encourage and support good behaviour, our political choices must support government regulation.

Article Six

Support thoughtful innovations in manufacturing and production.

Article Seven

Prioritise: think hardest when buying large objects, such as energy-efficient refrigerators, rather than fretting over small things.

Article Eight

Vote. Political engagement enables the spread of environmentally conscious policies. Without public action, thoughtful individuals are swimming upstream.

Article Nine

Don't feel guilty. It only makes you sad.

Article Ten

Enjoy what you have — the things that are yours alone, and the things that belong to none of us. Those things that we cannot manufacture and should never own — water, air, birds, trees — are the foundation of life's pleasures. Without them, we're nothing. With us, there may be nothing left. It's our choice.

HABITAT, Vol 32, No.1, Feb 2004, adapted from an article on the Grist Magazine website at www.gristmagazine.com

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SEVEN BILLION BAGS A YEAR

The following information has been extracted from: HABITAT AUSTRALIA, October 2003, written by Suzie Brown.

Why are plastic bags considered such a problem? Each year in Australia we use nearly seven billion plastic shopping bags — that's around 365 per person every year. While the bulk of these bags end up in landfill, the most visible environmental problem associated with plastic bags is the litter problem. An estimated 50-80 million plastic bags go into our waterways, parks and other landscapes each year. This poses significant dangers for marine and terrestrial wildlife.

Apart from the litter problem, our mass consumption of plastic bags is filling our landfill sites where the bags won't break down for thousands of years. Ninety-six per cent of plastic bags end up in landfill, while only 3% are recycled, and the remaining 1% are littered. Environment Victoria and other

community groups have been campaigning for a national levy on shopping bags, (which) would see a 15-25c charge on plastic carry bags offered in ALL retail outlets in Australia. Such a levy was introduced in Ireland in 2002 and was successful in reducing their plastic bag consumption by 90%.

Unfortunately, in Australia, a regulatory solution to the plastic bag problem was recently sidelined by the federal government and major supermarket chains in favour of a voluntary Code of Practice, targeting a reduction in bag consumption (by 50% by 2005), a reduction in bag litter and an increase in recycling. Environment ministers have threatened to revisit a levy or even a ban on HDPE bags if the targets are not met.

So what choices should you be making as a shopper when confronted by the plastic bag question? A recent study by consultants Nolan ITU for Environment Australia compared the life cycle of a number of different shopping bag options, including the current supermarket HDPE plastic bags, paper bags, calico bags, and reusable plastic woven bags (such as the Green Bag sold at Coles). For a typical family, the study compared the use of 520 plastic or paper disposable bags per year versus nine calico bags versus four Green bags (larger than many calico bags). Based on materials consumed, greenhouse emissions produced and litter produced, the paper bag fared the worst, then the plastic bag then the calico bag. The best option was the Green Bag.

Most major supermarkets have a collection point at the store where you can leave plastic bags for recycling. Only lightweight HDPE supermarket bags are recycled (not boutique store bags) and are recycled into plastic piping, mostly overseas as there are few such facilities in Australia. However, only three per cent of plastic bags used in Australia are recycled, largely because people use the bags as bin liners before discarding them to landfill. Biodegradable plastic shopping bags — such as those made from cornstarch — have been proposed as another solution, and can take only 3 months to break down. They can be put in the compost bin, or will slowly breakdown in landfill if enough moisture and air is present. Degradable plastic bags in contrast only break down into tiny pieces of plastic — not an ideal solution. However, biodegradable bags will not reduce our *litter* problems since they take months to degrade, during which time they could kill plenty of birds and sea creatures. For example, 100,000 marine mammals are killed each year off the coast of Canada from ingesting or getting tangled in plastic bags. As well, people may be more likely to litter biodegradable bags thinking that they will break down in the environment.

What solution will YOU choose?

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Making Your House 'Bird Safe'

Some suggestions to help prevent bird collisions:

- Let your windows get a bit dirty so they're not so reflective
- Place pot plants in front of your external window surface
- Hang mobiles, wind chimes or solid shapes such as raptor silhouettes in front of windows
- Position attractants such as birdbaths and bird-attracting plants within half a metre of windows so that when birds leave they have not built up enough momentum to injure themselves.
- Place shade cloth around chain link fences, such as tennis courts
- Hang strips of material such as ribbons along chain link fences.

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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 2003 is:

President	Margaret Hancock (Ph/Fax 5952-2557)
Senior Vice President	Rose Thomas
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, Pauline Taylor
Other PICS Responsibilities:	
Newsletter	Christine Grayden/John Eddy (Ph 5956 8501; Fax 5956 8314;

	cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)
Meeting notices and publicity	Rose Thomas
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	Julie Box
Barb Martin Bushbank Liaison	Anne Davie
Membership Officer	Morag Mackay (Ph 5678 2240)
Landcare Salinity Committee	John Jansson
Website Manager	Diane Baird (dianebaird@yahoo.com)
Grant Investigation	Tim Patkin

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And also

The hard copy of our newsletter contains some items that may not be included in the online version. The PICS newsletter is available at the Phillip Island Library.

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