



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society First
Quarter,
March 2010



Newsletter

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Dates for Your Diary 2010

Fri April 9 - PICS CLIMATE CHANGE DAY: Speakers, displays, car pool excursion. 10 a.m - 4 p.m. Heritage Centre Meeting Room. Morning tea provided. BYO lunch, or buy in Cowes. Program is currently being finalised. Please contact Christine Grayden if you would like to attend. Ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Sat April 10 - Children's Environment Morning. "Microscope Morning". Heritage Centre meeting room, 11 a.m - 12 noon. Suits primary school children. Free. Adult is to stay with child and help with activities. Contact Christine as above for more information.

Sat April 10 - PICS General Meeting. URGENT! Come at 7 p.m. and view the plans for the Cowes - Stony Point Vehicular Ferry. Have your say. Followed by meeting at 8 p.m. Speaker: Sue Mason, Research Officer, Dolphin Research Institute, Heritage Centre Meeting Room.

Sun April 11 - Red Rocks Coast Action Working Bee: 10 a.m. Meet at car park. Rubbish/maintenance

Mon April 19 - Feedback forms for Stony Point - Cowes vehicular ferry due back. See box below

Sat May 8 - Children's Environment Morning. As above. "Sharks".

Sat May 15 - Seasonal Walk 2 p.m. Berry's Beach walking track. Meet at car park. (average walking)

Sat June 5 - World Environment Day. The Bass Coast Shire's WED Expo will be held around this time. PICS will once again mount an interactive display and Christine may be calling for volunteers to help set up.

Sat June 12 - Children's Environment Morning. As above. "Polar Bears" - the symbol of global warming; but what are they really like? The final CEM for this season. Starts again October.

Sat July 3 - PICS General Meeting. Speaker TBA. Heritage Centre Meeting Room, 8 p.m.

Sun July 4 - Red Rocks Coast Action Working Bee: 10 a.m. Meet at car park. Planting morning.

Sat. Aug 21 - Seasonal Walk 2p.m. Red Rocks to Cowes along the fire track. Come and see the biggest trees on Phillip Island! (small bit of clambering involved, otherwise easy walking) Meet at Red Rocks car park.

Sat Oct 2 - PICS General Meeting. Speaker TBA. Heritage Centre Meeting Room, 8 p.m.

Sun Oct 3 - Red Rocks Coast Action Working Bee: 10 a.m. Meet at car park. Weed control

Sat Oct 9 - Children's Environment Morning Program TBA

Sat Nov 13 - Children's Environment Morning Program TBA

Sat Nov 20 - Seasonal Walk 2 p.m. Forrest Caves to new Surf Beach viewing platform along the Esplanade. Meet at Forrest Caves car park. (easy walking)

Sat Dec 11 - Children's Environment Morning Program TBA

Sat Jan 15 2011 - PICS AGM.

Barb Martin Bush Bank: Sales and volunteers - every Wednesday plus 1st 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.

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STOP PRESS!!

Plans for the Vehicular Ferry have been released. Feedback forms and plans will be available at the G.M. on Sat April 10 at 7 p.m. Feedback forms are due back by Monday 19 April. Make sure you have your say!! For your copy of the plans and feedback form, contact the Bass Coast Shire Council phone 5671 2211 and ask for Vehicular Ferry Project Community Bulletin 2 March/April 2010.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Dear Members,
I'm writing this on the Sunday afternoon of the "Labour Day Weekend" - what, long ago, was the celebration of 'Eight hours work, eight hours rest, and eight hours recreation'. I wonder what happened to that GOOD IDEA!

During February I have spent a day at VCAT with Penny Manning, Terry Nott and Bessie Tyers, opposing the council's proposal to remove indigenous vegetation in Coghlan Road. We await the result, but it is alarming to learn that when vegetation is cleared from Public Land there is no requirement for the OFFSETS to be planted on PUBLIC LAND, so this is something we will have to pursue with the Departments of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).

I managed to attend four days of the five day hearing for Planning Panels Victoria of the two supermarket proposals for Cowes. Again, it's a question of tree removal, and the planting of OFFSETS. We await the result.

On my days in Melbourne, I discovered the splendid café on the ground floor of the DSE - an excellent choice of hot and cold food and splendid iced coffee! I commend it to you if you are looking for a lunch time spot in East Melbourne - on the corner of Nicholson and Victoria Streets, diagonally opposite the Exhibition Gardens.

Our next sortie to VCAT comes in June, when we are supporting the Shire Council's refusal of an over-development at the Boys' Home site in Newhaven - once again the big issue is VEGETATION.

Special thanks go to Keith head and his family for the splendid photographic exhibition held at the Newhaven Hall between Christmas and New Year, and for their very generous support of the Public Fund.

We are awaiting news of the next step of the Stony Point/Cowes vehicular ferry proposal, of the plans for the Summerlands Peninsula when the buy-back is finally completed, plans for part of the Ventnor Reserve now that the pine trees have gone, and the fate of the proposed Transfer Station in Gap Road.

In the meantime, the rain is wonderful, the tanks are full, and a very healthy koala was in Oswin Roberts Reserve this morning, keeping an eye on the "Clean Up Australia" activities.

With best wishes,

Margaret Hancock, President.

P.S. Don't forget the "Climate Change" day (Friday April 9), AND the General Meeting (Saturday April 10) during the coming school holidays.

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WANTED: Secretary for PICS.

We have a Minutes Secretary, but need a General Secretary. Main duties are dealing with correspondence and typing reports and submissions. (New laptop provided) Other committee members deal with duties such as meetings, walks, booking dates, arranging speakers, etc. If you know of someone who could be approached to be our Secretary - even if not a member at present - and who you know agrees with our aims, could you please let Margaret Hancock know as soon as possible. Phone: 5952 2557.

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PICS SEASONAL WALK: CONSERVATION HILL HEADING WEST TOWARDS THE TRANSFER STATION, RHYLL.

A hot day (20.2.10) called for a change of plans. While the walk was advertised as heading for Rowell's Swamp, the five hardy souls involved chose a shadier alternative including the top of Conservation Hill, the Lookout - Jack Oswin Viewing Platform - and the track south west to the road.

Firstly we assessed the FOK plantings of last year, in fenced enclosures or individually guarded. There has been considerable success. From there we walked to the top of Conservation Hill to admire the wide view across the extensive saltmarsh and mangroves of Rhyll Inlet to the freehold land behind Silverleaves. There, planned development was prevented or restricted by the recent Planning Panels Victoria hearing, and the Society can feel justifiably proud of its role in achieving that outcome.

From the Lookout we enjoyed a cooling breeze, and caught glimpses of the dry Rhyll Swamp to the immediate south. Trees along the road now all but obscure the areas that are open water in wet season and power lines intrude on the vista.

Leaving the Lookout we took the westerly pathway, down the dry hillside through the Eucalypt woodland. Many black wattles show signs of borer attack, their decline a consequence of providing food for numerous beetle larvae, a vital part of the food web. Here and there, we passed Sweet Bursaria trees heavily in seed, which is nearly ripe as the red brown color of the capsules indicates.

A boardwalk took us through the welcome shade of a Swamp Paperbark scrub. The understorey is fairly dense with Bower Spinach, Seaberry Saltbush and Variable Sword Sedge. Brown butterflies floated lazily in the patches of shade. But we dreamed of once again seeing this area flooded underneath our feet when good rains eventually come. We were pleased to notice few weeds, with only occasional Dolichos creeper and thistle.

Reaching the road, we decided to return to the carpark by retracing our steps. Christine opted to stay near the road and wait for a lift. In a testimony to what one can see sitting quietly and still, Christine reported being visited by a flock of 20-30 silvereyes, two immature wattle birds, a pair of grey currawongs, a pair of magpies, a grey fantail and a family of blue wrens including two males in dispute with each other. All in less than 20 minutes!

For the rest of us as we trekked back to our starting point, one more discovery remained. In the carpark at Conservation Hill a large limb had fallen from one of the Manna Gums. We noticed the appearance of white "manna" around the edges of leaves that recently suffered some insect damage, reminding us of why this particular species received its common name. The manna is sugary sap exudates which accumulate at the edge of damaged tissue as white, irregular and crumbly nodules, sometimes reaching pea-size. Several eucalypt species are known to produce it, but Manna Gums are the best source. Available in summer, the manna was regularly gathered by aboriginal people as a sweet food source.

John Eddy

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PARC Community Reporting 17th Dec 2009

Atlantis Resources Corporation, which operate the 'Nerius' tidal generator at Newhaven, gave its annual report to the community at a meeting at San Remo in December. While the Nerius (now known as an AN generator) is operated for research into materials and design, it does feed electricity into the grid.

The report reiterated previous results of the monitoring of water quality, marine biodiversity and noise and vibration at the Newhaven site, and concluded that effects were not significant. The company intends to continue research at this site for some years yet.

It was intended to install a different type of tidal generator, the AS or 'Solon', again for research purposes, offshore from Red Rocks early last year. However, the Global Financial Crisis and a shift in the company's research interest have resulted in a postponement of this project. It is hoped to install that generator within 18 months.

At present, ARC is most interested in developing a larger type of generator (AK type). These are like underwater wind generators set up as 'farms' deep underwater. One site that is particularly attractive is off the northern coast of Scotland.

John Eddy

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ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009

Members of PICS

It is my pleasure and my privilege to share in presenting the 42nd Annual Report of the Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc for the year ending 9.2.2010.

As you will hear, it's been another busy year and thanks must go to all the people who shared the work load. 2009 certainly ended on a high! With the fascinating Photographic Exhibition which Keith and Alison Head and family organised at the Newhaven Hall. This celebration of one family's love and enjoyment of Phillip Island gave great delight to the people who visited the Exhibition, and the generous donation of the financial proceeds gave a great boost to the PICS Public

Fund.

At the last Annual Meeting there was considerable discussion about the need for new members. One outcome of this was a Street Stall held in November, when we gave publicity to PICS and also handed out various conservation brochures prepared by the Shire and Landcare. There will be another stall next Thursday: so come along.

The Children's Environment Mornings have continued, and I will ask Christine to report on them:

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT MORNING

We started the year with the CERES energy trailer, funded by a \$780 community grant from Bass Coast Shire Council. This was set up outside the Heritage Centre and had lots of demonstration units and hands on activities for all ages. We had about 100 people through, including about 30 children. I also presented mornings on plastic bags, worms, insects, spiders, electronics and magnets, jellyfish, octopus and Roger Kirkwood from the PINP spoke about seals. We usually have 10-15 children, but occasionally when there's a bad clash I only have a few. This year PICS was also represented again at the Bass Coast Shire Council's World Environment Day schools expo, which takes place over two days in June and accommodated over 500 students this year. PICS put up a mini-forest with poster information inside it and lots of realistic plastic mini-beasts and soft toy forest animals for the children to find. We also had art tables and a tent and campsite for them to use. We left it up for the Sustainability Festival on the Saturday to give children something to do while their parents looked around the Festival. It worked really well. One child who had been there with his school told his father of the forest on the Saturday, "This was my favourite part when we were here on Thursday".

We have started 2010 with a bang, thanks to another community grant from Bass Coast Shire. "Roaming Reptiles" came along this morning with 6 lizards, 3 pythons, a green tree frog, 2 long-necked tortoises and a 2 year old saltwater crocodile. We had about 50 children who all had a ball, though their accompanying parents were definitely divided between wanting to be as involved as their children and sitting right down the back of the room! Several parents took the PICS brochure with a view to joining, so here's hoping. *Christine Grayden, 9.1.10*

In "The Penguin" newsletter you will have read John Eddy's descriptions of the four Seasonal Walks. John is also co-ordinator of the Red Rocks Coast Action Group.

RED ROCKS COAST ACTION

Our email list of volunteers continues to grow. February extreme weather caused deaths of many of the seedlings that had established after planting near the western staircase the

previous winter. This year's planting of 400 plants over a wide range of the Red Rocks coastal reserve has established well due to good spring rains. We managed two planting days in July. A successful clean-up working bee was held in January and valuable control of woody weeds was achieved in October's working bee. Following my attendance of at a DSE workshop on Safety Leadership Training in June, new procedures for risk management have been implemented for working bees. In conjunction with the Shire's Environment Officer, the planting needs for 2010 have been assessed, and an order placed with the Barb Martin Bush Bank. *John Eddy.*

While we're thinking of outdoor activities, let's hear from Friends of Koalas - about to celebrate their twentieth birthday:

FRIENDS OF THE KOALAS

We continued with the usual activities this year: habitat days, including ragwort removal at Oswin Roberts Reserve; koala counts at the KCC, and planning matters wherever and whenever habitat was in danger. We are involved in many hours on planning matters. As Margaret has said, we are about to turn twenty years old. At a PICS meeting on 19th January 1990, chaired by Kaye Setches, a motion was passed that a Friends of the Koalas group be formed, and an interim committee be elected. The move to form the group was over concern at the decline in the numbers of free roaming koalas on the Island. The FOK was to undertake fundraising to help preserve the koalas, work in the reserves, publicise the koalas' plight and educate people. Since that time we have had speakers, street stalls, koala picnics, raffles, concerts, donation boxes, etc. We held a Koala Summit in 1991 and set up Koala Watch to keep track of the remaining wild koalas on Phillip Island. We have also done lots of tree planting, and our volunteers help out in the Barb Martin Bush Bank.

Despite our best efforts the numbers of free roaming koalas has continued to decline. However, we continue to preserve and improve the indigenous vegetation on Phillip Island, and co-operate with the Nature Park to achieve this.

Patsy Hunt.

The Barb Martin Bush Bank continues to be a great and very productive project! Every time I go there I can hear Barb's voice saying: "It's wonderful, Margaret, it's wonderful!" And so it is. So let's hear from Anne Davie who is PICS representative on the Committee of Management:

BARB MARTIN BUSH BANK

The Bushbank volunteers and the Co-ordinator, Jenny Toy, are enjoying the welcome changes in the facility's shed. Much of the work has been done by Jenny's partner, David, and the committee is grateful for the contribution of his expertise and labour in bringing about the upgrade.

The changes have been possible as a result of a generous

grant from the Bendigo Band of \$3000, and \$5900 contributed by the Bushbank committee. People also donated some items. Some of the alterations to the shed were necessary because of occupational health and safety issues. The project was in two parts. The first was the installation of insulation in a roof cavity which had been constructed as part of the project. This has resulted in modifying the extremes of temperature in the shed; important for the volunteers and infrastructure. The changes have thankfully not resulted in changes to the character of the shed.

The other part of the project was the addition of shelves and work benches. This has enabled the shed to be divided into zones: office, storage, work area and volunteer space. Equipment is now safely stored. Donated materials and equipment have enabled an expansion of the original project with improvements to the kitchen and volunteers' areas. Recycled water is also now being used.

Bowens Hardware has become a new supporter of the Bushbank and presented a cheque for \$600 at the end of the year.

Despite the serious impact of drought, the Bushbank was able to continue to supply plants to its urban and rural customers. It has been another year of wonderful commitment to the tasks by enthusiastic Bushbank volunteers. One should especially mention the team from the Newhaven Coast Action who weekly work on the maintenance and improvement of the infrastructure.

Jenny Toy, the Co-ordinator, provides great leadership and enthusiasm in her role. As probably most of you know, Jenny comes across from her Peninsula home by ferry to get to her job! In the last 12 months the Bushbank has been cared for by Jan Fleming whilst Jenny has been on holidays. The committee of management is indebted to Jan whose knowledge and friendly manner has ensured the Bushbank is in capable hands during Jenny's absence. *Anne Davie*.

PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARK

As you will have read in "The Penguin", at our April meeting it was decided that letters should be sent to the Minister for Environment, and the Chairman and CEO of the PINP, questioning the keeping of wallabies/kangaroos in an enclosure at Churchill Island for the fleeting edification of tourists. This was not a question of cruelty, but a question of the principles of the PINP. In their replies, the Minister told us this was a business decision of the PINP Board, the CEO gave a detailed response, and the Chairman didn't reply at all! So that is an issue on which, for the moment, we are "agreeing to disagree".

On a positive note, as Patsy has described, the new Visitor Centre is open at the KCC, and the new Wildlife Rehabilitation

Hospital at the Penguin Parade is 'on the drawing board'. The much-needed toilets will be installed at Conservation Hill within the near future. And, of course, the 'Summerland Buy-Back' is almost complete - a real cause for celebration! And of congratulation to successive Victorian Governments who have carried on the policy initiated by Joan Kirner when she was Minister for Conservation. It is my understanding that the overall plans for the Summerlands Peninsular will soon be ready for public comment, so watch out for news of this and be ready to take part in the public consultation.

As was reported in "The Penguin", a very successful *Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups Get together* was held at the Education Pod at the Penguin Reserve. This was an opportunity for people from around the Shire to inspect the Research and Environment areas and to hear about what goes on 'behind the scenes' at the Nature Park.

PLANNING

Unfortunately Gillian Collins is not here to present a report on the proposals for the Port of Hastings - something which will have side effects on the WHOLE of Western Port.

Several of our members have taken part in various so-called 'consultations' which have been held about the proposed Cowes to Stony Point car ferry. Who knows what will become of it? Most of the people who have been at the sessions I've attended have been firmly against a ferry terminal either at, or adjacent to. The Cowes jetty - but nobody seems to listen. And the thought of ferry traffic added to the mix of bumper-to-bumper holiday time traffic is ludicrous. (I guess some of us think that it's this 'ludicrous' which appeals to the present State Government - the Desalination plant is being pushed ahead seemingly without thought to the need for it or its potential consequences.)

The big planning issue for 2009 was the C88: the Structure Plan for Silverleaves, Cowes and Ventnor, including the important setting of the town boundaries.

The Structure Plan was the end result of the *Phillip Island and San Remo Design Framework*. The Steering Committee for this Design Framework first met in the year 2000! So it's been a very long, slow and frustrating haul for those of us who've been involved the whole way! And so many trips to VCAT would not have been needed had the 'Councillors of the Day' (since 2000) understood and supported the principles of the Design Framework. Anyway, it's back to Planning Panels Victoria in February so that the fate of the proposed supermarkets can be decided.

So far the good things which have come out of the Structure Plan are the continuation of the existing residential boundary for Ventnor, and the refusal of some residential development at the *East end of Settlement Rd*. Terry Nott led the

preparation of the Rhyll Inlet part of the PICS submission to the Panel.

We've recently learnt that the proposal for a micro-brewery in Coghlan Road has been refused by VCAT because it cannot be characterised as a 'rural industry'. The future planning of Coghlan Rd is an essential issue. Some way will have to be found so that this tree and other vegetation corridor can be maintained and protected, as well as provision made for heavy transport - a very difficult problem.

Chinaman's Estate remains in the 'too hard' basket for the management bodies concerned. We, and others, have got nowhere this year in finding a solution to the problem of unauthorized and unsupervised use by motor bikes and four wheel drive vehicles of this valuable area which adjoins a Marine Park.

An anniversary which slipped by unnoticed was the twentieth anniversary of the "Battle for Saltwater Creek". How grateful we can be to the people who argued for PICS to be the third signatory to the S173 agreement between the landowner and the Shire Council to retain the three rural blocks. If that HADN'T HAPPENED, there would now be 'wall to wall' housing between Cowes and Ventnor.

In a fortnight we will have another Scottish Afternoon - so come along and enjoy it. Last year's celebration was a great delight.

So, roll on 2010! Let's have another great year of working co-operatively for Phillip Island - as the book title says, "An Island Worth Conserving".

Margaret Hancock,
President.
9.1.2010.

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PICS INFORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP FORM FOLLOWS.
THANKS TO ALL MEMBERS WHO HAVE RENEWED THEIR MEMBERSHIP SO FAR FOR 2010. THANKS ALSO TO THOSE WHO HAVE DONATED TO THE GENERAL AND PUBLIC FUNDS.

IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP YOU CAN PRINT OFF THE LAST PAGE AND SEND IT TO US: PO BOX 548, COWES, 3922, WITH YOUR CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER. WITH THANKS, Christine Grayden, Treasurer, Newsletter editor (with John Eddy)

Minutes for the General Meeting at the AGM are not available

at this point in time. They will be available at the General Meeting in April, and will appear in the next newsletter in June. (With apologies from our Minutes Secretary)

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WHAT DOES THE PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY DO?

1. Habitat restoration - e.g. Five Ways road reserve replanting, Coast Action at Red Rocks, etc;
2. Participate in the planning process in order to:
 - a) Help develop planning documents which include sound environmental principals
 - b) Scrutinize planning proposals to ensure that they comply with existing planning documents, and to make suggestions to improve the environmental emphasis of the original plans
 - c) Object to environmentally unacceptable planning proposals and, if necessary, attend VCAT hearings to try and have such proposals dropped or revised;
3. Assist with wildlife research;
4. Operate free environmental education for children through the monthly Children's Environment Mornings;
5. Provide opportunities for the community to learn about our environment by providing expert speakers at four public meetings throughout the year.
6. Take guided walks - one for each season of the year - around Phillip Island and other nearby parts of Bass Coast Shire.
7. Advocate for individuals and groups in the community who have environmental concerns they wish to convey to the authorities and need help to do it;
8. Maintain historical records of events of environmental &/or planning significance which occur on Phillip Island;
9. Participate on public committees concerning our local environment;
10. Comment in the media on local environmental issues to ensure that the needs of the environment are kept to the forefront when decisions are made;
11. Hold public meetings on major environmental issues as they arise.

12. Run "Meet the Candidates" forums for Council, State and Federal elections so that the public can hear each candidate and ask questions.

13. Produce an informative newsletter four times per year for our members and which is also available to the public on our web site, in the Phillip Island Library, or in print on request.

14. Host forums for all of the environmental groups in the Bass Coast Shire.

15. Bring experts to Phillip Island to conduct workshops for the public and employees of relevant organisations on a variety of topics of current interest.

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MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLIC FUND FORMS

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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