



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society Third
Quarter,
September 2011



Newsletter

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Dates for Your Diary 2011

Sat Oct 1 - **General Meeting** Heritage Centre Meeting room, Cowes, 7.00 p.m. for bring and share nibbles. 7.30 p.m. for meeting. Speaker from Western Port Water on Recycled Water and its application.

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

Sat Oct 8, 2 p.m. **Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups Get Together.** Hosted by Wonthaggi Urban Landcare. Wonthaggi Town Hall. Walks, afternoon tea, talk, groups' round-up. All Welcome. RSVP by 1/10/11 to: Carolyn Charles – carolyn@aanet.com.au Ph: 5672 5990 **OR** Liz Glynn – shagly@bigpond.com

Ph: 5672 2944. Please advise any special dietary requirements.

Sat Nov 19 – **SEASONAL WALK:** Change of walk due to building at Cowes Primary School. Now San Remo to Cleeland Bight and return. Meet at playground, San Remo foreshore near bridge, 2 p.m. Rug up if there's a wind!

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 impacts and adaptations, with particular reference to Western Port”. GM & AGM to follow. Parish Hall, Cowes.

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

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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GENERAL MEETING: SAT OCT 1, STARTING 7.00 P.M.

HERITAGE CENTRE MEETING ROOM COWES

Speaker: Benita Russell, Environment & Sustainability Co-ordinator, Western Port Water: “Recycled water and its application”

Come along at 7 p.m. with some finger food to share for a chat before the meeting. Talk will be followed by a General Meeting and then by supper.

All are welcome!

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Much is happening, and I hope that you will have time to devote to Phillip Island affairs during the coming weeks. Importantly, the PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARKS DRAFT STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2012-2017, is available for comment. The Draft Plan is available on line, www.penguins.org.au, or you can obtain a hard copy from the Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Centre, Churchill Island, the shire Office in Cowes, or the Phillip Island Library. The closing date for submissions is Tuesday October 4. Do have your say! So often we don't offer an opinion, and then become annoyed because we disagree with what is happening!

The most important recent 'happening' has been the opening of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre at the Penguin Hospital. This Centre will cater for all wildlife, but is especially equipped to cater for large numbers of wildlife injured in an oil spill. If you have ever been a volunteer helping out during an oil spill you will know how difficult it's been working in overcrowded conditions. I will try to get the plans of the Rehabilitation Centre to display at our next meeting, and you will be able to appreciate all the careful thinking which has gone into the design. At our last General Meeting we voted to donate \$1,000 from our Public Fund towards the equipment of the Rehabilitation Centre, and we are waiting to hear what is to be purchased with this donation.

Much has happened at the Summerlands Peninsula in recent weeks – all the power poles and wires have been removed, and the last house, "White Horses", has almost disappeared! Great work is being done, with the removal of exotic plants and an extensive re-vegetation program is underway.

In the midst of all these positive happenings, many of us were saddened to hear of the sudden death of Michael Gatehouse. I first met Michael during the preparation of the Phillip Island and San Remo Design Framework, and the various amendments that went with it. Subsequently I have worked with Michael on the Board of the Penguin Foundation. For the past year, Michael has been an excellent Chairman of this Board, and I have greatly appreciated his intellect and wide interests, and his fairness in debate. Michael's death is a great loss to his family and friends, as well as to the environment in general, and Phillip Island in particular.

Do come early to the General Meeting on October 1st: it's very pleasant to get together BEFORE the meeting and to have time to catch up on all the news. I hope to see you there.

With best wishes,
Margaret Hancock.

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Opening of Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre

From the Penguin Foundation Spring newsletter

On August 11, Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, opened Phillip Island's new Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. The new centre provides a major boost to Phillip Island Nature Parks' ability to deal with sick and injured wildlife, and is Victoria's only specialised seabird rehabilitation centre.

"Victoria has one of the largest little penguin colonies in the world so we must do our best to ensure these little creatures are cared for and protected," Minister Smith said.

In the event of an oil spill, the centre will be capable of dealing with 1500 penguins at a time. The last major oil spill to affect Phillip Island's little penguins was in 2001. 438 penguins were oiled but Nature Parks' staff and volunteers were able to save 97% of those birds.

The centre also cares for other sick and injured native wildlife such as possums, wallabies, echidnas and pelicans. Michael Gatehouse, Penguin Foundation chair, extended his gratitude to the generous assistance of Foundation members and supporters for making the new centre possible: "The Penguin Foundation contributed \$350 000 toward this \$1 million facility. We thank our very generous Penguin Foundation members and supporters for making that possible."

WILDLIFE REHAB CENTRE SNAPSHOT

The new centre has:

- Two outdoor pools controlled to mimic ocean temperatures
- A washing room in the event of an oil spill
- Separate intensive care and triage rooms
- One way observation viewing area for researchers, media and visitors
- Several large outdoor pens to allow movement of animals

In 2010-11:

- 365 animals were admitted to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre
- 131 of those animals were little penguins

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PICS AUTUMN SEASONAL WALK:

North Point Walk, Churchill Island

A magnificent afternoon, a charming location and nine good friends and true. What more could one desire for a walk?

Starting from the carpark at the Visitors' Centre at Churchill Island, we followed the North Point loop track in a clockwise direction and found much to delight us. The Yallog Bulluk clans of the Bunurong people held *Moonar'mia* (Churchill Island) as a sacred place. Certainly this exquisite island delighted Lt James Grant when he found it in 1801, prompting him to write in his journal: "I scarcely know a place I would rather call mine than this little island." As history reveals, Samuel and Winifred Pickersgill (great, great grandparents of PICS treasurer, Christine Grayden) were the first European to live here, in the 1850s, followed by John and Sarah Rogers in the 1860s. From 1872 Samuel Amess took ownership and built the now historic homestead, Amess House. Various other owners followed until 1976, when the Victorian Government acquired the island and it became open to the public.

The first stage of our walk, down the hill to the western shore, took us past a row of cypress trees planted by one of these early settlers. Then on to mature Manna Gums and Swamp Gums which were part of the community planting of the late 1970s. At this point we were surprised by the sudden arrival of Max, the Clydesdale stallion, who galloped down the paddock to greet us and stayed long enough for a pat and to ascertain that we didn't have any tasty morsels for him!

As we turned right to follow the coast, we encountered the monument to Grant, remembering in particular his planting of the first crop on Victorian soil. A plaque further along the track reminds us he also built the first dwelling, a blockhouse, on the island in 1801, but the exact location of both blockhouse and garden remain a mystery. At the plaque we were passed by two other PICS members out for a power walk!

From the track we had glimpses of the cobble beaches, covered with red brown stones of volcanic tuff. This rock underlies the rich red soils of Churchill Island, and outcrops on the headlands of little coves, and here and there on the grassy bluffs rising from the shoreline. Across the sheltered waters of Western Port, quite close, lies Renison Bight, the ochre cliffs of Chinamen's, and the houses of Surf Beach estate.

As a lad I used to look across to this western side of Churchill Island from Phillip Island, and notice how bare it looked. A few old moonahs still clung to the bluffs, and the planted shelterbelts and garden around the homestead stood out, but the rest was just paddocks. However, revegetation and pest control has been so successful in the past 30 years that we

were now wending our way through lush woodland, where graceful remnant moonahs, perhaps 500 years old, were joined by established younger moonahs and a variety of other indigenous shrubs and trees. A great habitat for birds, as we noted.

We paused to remember with sadness and fondness, Barb Martin, PICS member and activist and long-term volunteer on Churchill Island, whose ashes were scattered, according to her wishes, in this serene coastal landscape. Her memory lives on in the Barb Martin Bush Bank at the KCC.

At North Point, we enjoyed the view across the bay to French Island. A sign gives details of the 670 hectare marine park that surrounds this side of Churchill Island. Down at water's edge, black basalt outcrops contrast with red-browns of the rest of the shore.

We now turned towards the south, following the more sheltered eastern coast of the island. White shellgrit blends with the browns of tuff on the beaches, attesting to the abundance of marine life in the surrounding intertidal flats. Mrs Rogers carted this shellgrit to the cottage gardens to form pathways through the beds; a tradition that lives on, although the shellgrit now comes from Western Victoria.

The official brochure tells us that North East Cove was the place where building materials for construction of Amess House were transported ashore. If this was the case, these materials would have had to be hauled up the steep bluffs bordering the cove, bluffs that are now well re-vegetated.

We arrived at the "other" Observation Point. Similar to its namesake on Phillip Island, on a good day, a range of waders might be seen from this vantage point. Behind the cobble beaches, the soft blue green of coast saltbush gives a pleasing colour contrast. Inland, swamp paperbark has been planted with Coast Banksia, and, to our surprise, is flowering already in this unusual season. We returned to the Visitor Centre via the track past a dam, past lavender plantings and some very docile Scottish Highland and Jersey cattle. It had been a most enjoyable couple of hours. *John Eddy*

Birds we saw:

Welcome Swallows

Wattlebirds

Pied Oystercatchers

Pacific Gulls

Pardalotes

White-naped Honeyeater

Scrubwren

Willy Wagtail

Ibis

Little Pied Cormorant
Pied Cormorant
Cape Barren Geese & three goslings
Magpies
Galahs
Masked Lapwing
Turtle dove
Silver Gull
Starling
Eastern Rosellas
Wood Ducks
Chestnut Teal
Sparrows
Eastern Swamphen

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Red rocks coast action

Thanks to Daryl, Maria, Mark, Chloe, Caitlin, Sophie, Penny, Sue, Bruno, Ross, Mike, Christine, Robert and Gary for helping out at our two weekends of planting days in July.

About 300 indigenous plants were put in. We have a weed control and tidy-up day coming up on Sunday Oct 2. Meet at car park at 10 a.m. Refreshments and a convivial chat at the end of the working bee.

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

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HELP WANTED!

We have got seriously behind with our valuable scrap books of PI environment issues cuttings. If anyone has the time to paste in articles already cut out &/or cut out & paste others from the last 6 months of saved Advertisers, please call Christine.

Scrap books & glue sticks provided. Even a few hours will make a difference!

WILDLIFE FORUM

Several PICS members attended a very interesting Wildlife forum organised by Coast Action about our unique wildlife on Saturday 10th September at Wonthaggi. Speakers included Jim Reside, of “Wildlife Unlimited” who spoke about “Small Cryptic Mammal Fauna of South Gippsland”, Birgita Hansen of the Arthur Rylah Institute who spoke about her work on the “Westernport Welcomes Waterbirds” project, and Phil Westwood, local conservationist and wildlife carer, who spoke about wildlife shelters.

Jim showed a Power Point presentation including the Yellow footed Dunnart, Swamp Rat, Bush Rat, New Holland Mouse, Eastern Pygmy Possum, Feathertail Glider and Spotted tail Quoll, with lots of information on each animal. Many require old trees and fallen logs to survive. Others require heathland. Most have very small ranges and while a few are solitary, most of them are happy to have communal nests or burrows. They are all valuable in the ecosystem, performing jobs such as aerating the soil, promoting vegetation growth after fires, controlling fungi and invertebrates, and providing food for predatory birds such as butcher birds, Nankeen kestrels and white shouldered kites. Jim had some taxidermed specimens of several of the animals, some plaster casts of tracks, and an “Elliot trap” used to find out exactly what species are in a given area. This is preferable to just using modeling.

Birgita also gave a Power Point presentation, outlining her part in the “Westernport Welcomes Water Birds” study, which involved her in reviewing all the available data for population trends of species such as shorebirds, large wading birds, ducks and grebes, fishers, swans and gulls, most of which are showing declines over the years. Pied oystercatchers appear to be increasing. Birgita also mapped all the main roosting and feeding sites in Western Port, and identified threats such as human disturbance, predation (e.g. foxes and cats), habitat loss through coastal and port development, erosion, grazing, weed invasion (e.g. Spartina), storm surges and drought. Loss of seagrass may also be a factor. Birgita analysed bird numbers compared with reported fish catches and found that for many species years of poor fishing catches correlated with lower bird numbers.

Of the main Phillip Island roosting sites: Observation Point is the 13th most important site in the bay out of the 19 identified

sites. Newhaven and Churchill Island are no longer very important sites. On the basis of her studies, Birgita was able to make the following recommendations:

- Targeted data collection on intertidal areas is required
- Specific analysis of important factors for waterbirds, e.g. seagrass
- Ongoing monitoring of counts
- Initiate long-term monitoring of several new areas
- Important roost sites need protection from disturbance
- Improve public communication and education
- Hydrodynamic modeling for improving predictions about sea level rise impacts.

Parks Victoria are implementing a system of signage in many of the roosting and feeding areas as a result of the study.

Phil Westwood explained how wildlife carers work, how to handle injured wildlife, and gave the phone number of Wildlife Victoria 1300 094 535. Contact them if you find injured or orphaned wildlife. On Phillip Island you can also call the Phillip Island Nature Park 5951 2800. One woman present suggested that we write the numbers down and tape them to the inside of our car glove boxes.

Coast Action organisers of the day, Bruce Atkins from Gippsland and Denis Cox from Western Port were thanked. Following the formal proceedings the proactive community group from Venus Bay, who have implemented a fox program in their area, showed footage taken by their hidden camera of various marsupials, rats and a fox. The results from this camera were very impressive. The day was also good for networking and catching up. *Christine Grayden.*

Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc.

Minutes of General Meeting held July 7, 2011 at 7.30 pm.

Heritage Centre, Cowes

1. President Margaret Hancock opened the meeting at 7.40 pm and welcomed attendees.

2. **PRESENT** as per attendance book.
3. **APOLOGIES** as per attendance book.
4. M. Hancock welcomed the **GUEST SPEAKER**, Alison Oates, who gave a PowerPoint presentation on her recent publication, prepared for PICS, entitled *Red Rocks Botanical Survey*, which was then launched. Copies were available at the meeting.
5. Alison was thanked by John Eddy for such an authoritative work and a **VOTE OF THANKS** was passed by acclamation.
6. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING** of 16.4.11 as circulated.

MOTION : That the Minutes be accepted.

MOVED : Pauline Taylor. SECONDED : Anwyn Martin.

CARRIED.

7. **BUSINESS ARISING**

Bushbank. Anne Davie reported that purchase of a special mat is in progress. Those in attendance agreed that PICS should pay for one or two mats, however many are required.

8. **CORRESPONDENCE** as tabled :

In : from Dudley Nicol re Nobbies.

from J. Bazelmanns.

Out : to Port of Hastings Authority to arrange a speaker for the next meeting.

MOTION : that the correspondence be received.

MOVED : Anne Davie. SECONDED : Terry Nott. CARRIED.

9. **TREASURER'S REPORT** : tabled.

The Treasurer, having investigated term deposit rates with the Commonwealth Bank, has found that better rates can be had if PICS invests in an online account. Unfortunately two signatures are required for each PICS transaction, which would make online transactions impossible. A. Martin suggested that PICS invest half online.

As the ATO likes to see an active Public Fund, the Treasurer suggested that a sum of up to \$1,000 be used to support the work of the PINPs Wildlife Hospital, or a plaque funded by

PICS, or a board listing contributors. The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, is to open the Hospital on the 11th August.

MOTION : that PICS ask PINP what it preferred; the Committee then to action.

MOVED : John Eddy. SECONDED : Pauline Taylor.
CARRIED.

MOTION : that the Treasurer's Report be accepted.

MOVED : Christine Grayden. SECONDED : Gaye Cleeland.
CARRIED.

10. PLANNING ISSUES

BOYS' HOME – objections lodged re drainage and tree space.
WHYTE SANDS – objections lodged re drainage and apparent disconnections with Anderson Rd biolink.

RHYLL CARAVAN PARK – objections lodged re trees and drainage.

WOLLOMAI HOUSE – concerns include drainage, foreshore access, space for canopy trees, impact of street lighting on shearwaters. It was noted that the CFA will probably ask for an extra entrance.

MOTION : that PICS lodge an objection.

MOVED : Terry Nott. SECONDED : Patricia Hunt. CARRIED.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS.

FOCIS. Now that C. Grayden has taken the role of FOCIS Secretary, A. Davie will nominate to take her place as the PICS representative on FOCIS at their August AGM.

LINFOX. T. Nott raised the issue of whether their permit has lapsed or been renewed as it is two years since the VCAT appearance.

FRIENDS OF THE KOALAS. P. Hunt reported that there had been 80-90 submissions to the Senate inquiry into koalas.

RED ROCKS COAST ACTION WORKING BEE. J. Eddy reported that there are 300 plants awaiting volunteers at tomorrow's working bee, meeting at 10 am in the car park.

HANSARD. Maurice Schinkel is mentioned.

VEGETATION. T. Nott raised the issue with A. Oates of the status and laws relating to the sometimes degraded vegetation on both public and private land.

SETTLEMENT ROAD RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS. Sue Saliba raised the issue of clearing and the 10/30 rule. Advised to clarify with BCSC.

'CHINAMANS' ESTATE. Discussion arose about the ongoing use of the area by unlicensed and unregistered bikes and the consequent environmental damage and whether it was possible to clean and fence the area. C. Grayden reported that

PINP staff members Peter Dann and Roz Jessop were discussing the issue. A. Oates reported that the damage had destroyed her ability to map the EVC (Ecological Vegetation Class) and she was to supply detail to PICS.

MOTION : That a report be made to Parks Victoria regarding the damage being done to the adjacent Churchill Island Marine National Park.

MOVED : A. Martin. SECONDED : A. Davie. CARRIED.

CAMERA CLUB. Copies of their calendar are available from the Phillip Island Community Art & Craft Gallery for \$15.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING 1st October 2011.

MEETING CLOSED at 9.40 pm.

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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

RE: 2012 - Please Note: Margaret will be retiring as President at the Annual General Meeting. Also, legislation soon to come in requires that our Public Officer is our Secretary. We therefore need a President, Vice President and Secretary in order to keep functioning. **Please consider standing for one of the positions. Or perhaps you know of someone who would be interested?**

Nomination forms will go out to everyone with the December newsletter.

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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

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