

Fourth Quarter: December 2014

Dates for Your Diary 2014-2015

Sat 10 Jan 2015 **Animals of Oz** with Lee. Two sessions: 10-10.50 a.m. and 11-11.50 a.m. Supervised educational presentation with some Australian animals and birds. Free. An adult is to stay with child. No need to book – just turn up! Funded by Bass Coast Shire Council and PICS.

Sat 10 Jan 2015 **Annual General Meeting**. 6.30 p.m. Bring and share meal. 7.30 p.m. AGM (includes annual reports, election of office bearers, general business)

Sat 11 Jan 2015 **Red rocks Coastcare** General tidy up. All volunteers welcome. Meet at RR car park 10 a.m. Gloves and refreshments provided. John Eddy ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Sat 25th January 2015: Saltwater Creek Coastcare working bee, 10 a.m. – 12 noon. Meet at Anchorage Beach car park. General clean up. Gloves etc provided, or byo. Refreshments provided. See below for contact, Kevin Harris.

Sat 7th and Sun 8th February 2015: Sorting of PICS files at St Philip's Parish Hall Cowes. Volunteers welcome. We need to sort through 20+ archive boxes to decide what to keep to scan, and what to recycle. 10 a.m – 4 p.m. daily. Enqs: Christine Grayden h ph 5956 8501. E: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Enquiries: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 m 0400 900 612 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Sub-committees of PICS:

Preserve Western Port Action Group (against the Port of Hastings): preservewesternport@gmail.com Official phone number is: 0456 612 852 Facebook: Preserve Western Port Action Group. Media contact: Jeff Nottle nottle@bigpond.net.au Secretary: Kate 0409 692 425.

Red Rocks Coast Care: Co-ordinator is John Eddy, ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Saltwater Creek Coast Care: Co-ordinator is Kevin Harris kevin@grating.com.au

Other groups:

Barb Martin Bush Bank: Sales and volunteers – every Wednesday + 1st Saturday of each month 10 – 1. Phone Anne Davie ph 5956 8216

Friends of Koalas (FOK) Habitat Days: First Sat of every month at 10 a.m. **Koala Count** at the Koala Conservation Centre, second Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Friends of Churchill Island (FOCIS): email: webmaster@friendsofchurchillisland.org.au

Groundswell Bass Coast Climate Change action group: <http://groundswellbasscoast.com> Contact Ray Astbury: rugged@people.net.au phone 5952 1991.

Bird Life Bass Coast: Penny Manning, convener, penny@waterfront.net.au

PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, January 10, 6.30 p.m. for "Bring and Share" meal; 7.30 p.m. for meeting.

St Philip's Parish Hall, cnr Church St and Thompson Ave Cowes

Annual reports (including from sub-committees: Red Rocks and Saltwater Creek Coastcare groups and Preserve Western Port Action Group),
election of office bearers, general business.

Nominations for executive and committee positions
can be taken from the floor on the night.

All welcome. Enqs: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

PICS COMMITTEE 2014

President: Anne Davie (media contact 5956 8216) e: bimbadeen@nex.net.au

Vice President: Pauline Taylor ph 5952 5485

Secretary: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Minutes Secretary: Gillian Collins

Treasurer: Danielle Angel

Committee: Terry Nott, Steven Angel (webmaster), Penny Manning (Chair of c/ee and sub c/ee meetings), Margaret Hancock (planning), Lisa Schonberg

C/ee meets at 10.30 a.m. on 4th Sat of each month at Community Room, Parish Hall Cowes.

President's Letter to Members

As I write this, Victorians have learned that a Labor government will now lead the State for the next 4 years. It is hoped that environmental issues will be high on its Agenda and that Western Port is now safe.

Preserve Western Port Action Group [PWP], a PICS sub-committee, was formed at a Public Meeting in March this year. The Group has been very active in the months leading up to the election, informing voters in the Bass electorate and beyond of the potential negative impact of the expansion of the Port of Hastings as a Container Port.

PICS is very proud that PWP has consistently, thoughtfully and with persuasion, conveyed the message that Western Port is precious and must be preserved for its and our future. Their enthusiasm and commitment has been outstanding.

PICS has sent a submission to the EPA Noise SEPP Review with regard to the noise emanating from the Phillip Island Motor Circuit. PICS is aware that despite the fact that the track is more and more used, there has never been any attempt at noise attenuation. PICS believes that the constant noise nuisance has a detrimental effect on health and well-being and should be addressed.



The PICS Committee has recently learned that our esteemed Treasurer, Danni Angel, will be retiring from the position at the AGM in January. Her work for the Society has been very valued and regret, but understand, her decision. Steve Angel will also resign as a Committee member but has said he is willing to continue to assist if, and when required. We thank Danni and Steve for their great contribution to PICS during a very challenging time.

The Society held a very interesting Meet the Candidates Meeting in Cowes before the Election. The evening was once again chaired by the guru, Margaret Hancock !

On October 25th PWP presented a Public Forum on the Hastings Container ship development in the Parish Hall and 130 people attended. The outstanding Speaker was Hermione Parsons from Victoria University Institute for Supply and Logistics. She presented a very strong case as to why Hastings could not and would not work as proposed.

Rhyll Coastcare were hosts for the annual Bass Coast Environment Groups Get-Together at the Rhyll Hall. As always, it was invaluable to learn of the tremendous work committed groups are undertaking throughout the Shire. (See John Eddy's report this newsletter)

I wish all members a safe and joyous Christmas and look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Anne Davie

Planning Matters

1. We can rejoice that, for the present, the development of the Port of Hastings seems to have gone away! But let's just wait and see what happens next. Congratulations to the PRESERVE WESTERN PORT ACTION GROUP for running such an effective campaign.

2. . SALTWATER CREEK Early in the year, we held a very happy function to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Saltwater Creek Action Group's successful campaign to save Saltwater Creek from a marine and housing development. To the surprise of the PICS Committee, just as all the planning and funding arrangements for the track and bridge were about to become a reality, we learned of a proposal for relocating the bridge. The following motion was passed at the Bass Coast Shire Council meeting on 19.11.14:

"That work on the development of a walking track along Saltwater Creek is suspended until further community consultation is undertaken in relation to the proposed alignment of the path."

3. C82 - The hearing of Amendment C82 was held in Wonthaggi in October. This Amendment concerns land which is liable to inundation with rising sea levels. The Panel Report has recently been received by Bass Coast Shire Council and soon will be made public.

4. WOOLAMAI HOUSE - Penny Manning and I represented PICS at the successful VCAT Mediation about the housing subdivision of the land adjacent to Woolamai House. We - and the proponents - have learnt a lot about the planning controls now exercised by the Country Fire Authority. What we don't know is the ultimate use of Woolamai House; will it be a private residence or some sort of function centre?

5. BLUE GUM RESERVE - For many years the Blue Gum Reserve and "Blue Gum Alley" have been on the PICS planning agenda. We took part in the planning processes for the Jewry Court and Blue Gum housing estates. We campaigned - successfully - for the closure of Blue Gum Alley to all except Emergency Vehicles. The Bass Coast Shire agreed to the closure in 2001 - but it is not yet enforced.



Recently, to the surprise of many people who use the Blue Gum Reserve, a Frisbee course was established. Not only was a Frisbee Course established, but there was a groundswell of public outrage! As so often happens, the result of general annoyance can be positive. Early in 2015 the Friends of Blue Gum Reserve will be established, and auspiced by the Bass Coast Shire Council.

6. The "Isle of Wight" site continues to look unsightly, and there is no news of any proposed development - so PICS will continue to just "watch this space"!

Margaret Hancock.

Red Rocks Coast Care

1. There have been two Spurgebusters outings at Justice Rd since the last committee meeting, one on the 25th Oct and another last Sunday (30th Nov), both working on pulling up the thousands of sea spurge seedlings that have emerged since the major work of removing mature plants in seed last Feb and March. Volunteer numbers at 8 and 13 were down a little on earlier in the year, but still encouraging, and enough to almost cover the area to the point west of Justice Rd. No doubt there is a large seed reserve in the sandy terrace, and seedlings will continue to pop up after substantial rain for some years, though much reducing each year. Combating this requires persistent effort over a long period to remove plants before they set seed. The Spurgebusters program aims to involve the local community in an on-going and self-sustaining manner in this weed management, so I have suggested to our volunteers that instead of further working bees, we try a new approach whereby individuals commit to spending half an hour once a month pulling up sea spurge seedlings at the site. This would be done when it suits the individual, and I will send each a reminder email on the 3rd weekend each month. I already have 10 volunteers for this trial and we will assess its effectiveness in 6 months time. I hope the committee will support this trial.

We have been delighted to see the vigorous growth of the indigenous dune grass Hairy Spinifex at the site since the sea spurge has been cleared away, as well as the appearance of many Coast Teatree and Coast Banksia seedlings.

2. At Red Rocks, Blue Periwinkle seedlings continue to emerge in small numbers, but are easily removed when found.

3. I have asked Dave Martin to have the contractors spray a small but persistent patch of blackberry next to the Firetrack, just east of the carpark.

4. Schoolies week(s) has had some impact. Following a complaint from a local about a group camping on the beach at Penguin Rocks, Kevin Harris and I went down there and finished

cleaning up a quantity of broken glass, half-burnt firewood and a discarded tent. Council had been notified. *John Eddy*



Saltwater Creek Revegetation

1. The grant money of \$7480 (includes GST) was finally paid into the PICS account on 27th Nov. We had been waiting since July. The contractor has been paid for the earlier boxthorn removal and the heap of boxthorn has been burnt at the site. Our thanks to the Shire Council for their assistance with arranging and funding the disposal.

2. The next stage of the project, the control of Kikuyu at the site, should take place very soon, and the contractor Envirogain has already been engaged.

3. Council staff, Derek Hibbert and Dave Martin are consulting with the owner of the Aussie Golf Ranch which is adjacent to the project site. The owner has expressed some opposition to the revegetation phase of the project which is scheduled for May or June next year. We are also trying to negotiate access through the golf course to the project site for the spraying contractor.

4. Late November, Kevin Harris and I dug a series of test holes to investigate the soil profile at the site, to assist planning the revegetation. We found there is about a metre of grey sand over most of the site, with heavy clay underneath. The moisture content at depth was quite high. This should be OK for our Coast Banksia Woodland restoration.

5. In consultation with Dave Martin, I will soon put in an order to Bushbank for the 1000 plants we need next year (May-June) for the revegetation work. I have also started off several hundred Seaberry Saltbush and Bower Spinach cuttings in case they are needed to supplement what the Bushbank can provide.

For more information or queries, please contact:

Volunteer Co-ordinator

Kevin Harris

0418507355 kevin@grating.com.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!

Everyone will soon receive their subscription renewal for 2015, as subscriptions are due in January each year, not June. We would appreciate your paying your subscription as soon as possible, as this helps us with our budgeting for the year. Send a cheque or money order to PICS PO BOX 548 COWES 3922, or you can pay safely online using Paypal at our website:

<http://picsvictoria.org.au/get-involved/become-a-member/>

Thank you!

Facebook

Have you been on the PICS facebook page yet? Over 400 people a week visit to catch up with Phillip Island environment news, and all the PICS action, including Red Rocks and Saltwater Creek Coast Care photos and information. Find us at

<http://www.facebook.com/picsvictoria>

PICS WEBSITE & DONATIONS

Our website, put together by c/ee member Steve Angel, is always worth a visit. Remember, now you can make donations securely online on the PICS website with Paypal. Go to www.picsvictoria.org.au Donations of \$2 or more to the Public Fund are tax deductible. You will be sent a tax deductible receipt from one of the signatories to the Public Fund. Or you can mail a cheque or postal order to PICS Treasurer, PO Box 548, COWES, 3922.

JOINING THE PICS COMMITTEE!

According to our revised constitution you do not have to be nominated or seconded by other people to put yourself forward to be on our committee, so it couldn't be easier! We always welcome new committee members as everyone has skills to bring to the table. Just come along to our AGM and put up your hand!

PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING 4.10.2014.
MEETING ROOM, HERITAGE CENTRE COWES.

Welcome and acknowledgement of country. President Anne Davie later welcomed Jonathon Stephenson, guest speaker.

PRESENT: As per attendance book.

APOLOGIES: As per attendance book.

Minutes of previous meeting: Moved Margaret Hancock. Seconded Bob Baird *Carried.*

Business arising:

Margaret Hancock reported on the baffling of the lights at the Woolamai House sub division. Peter Dann was to negotiate with the Shire. It appears that it is too late to incorporate different lights.

Margaret also reported on the Mediation with the developers, DEPI, CFA, Bass Coast Shire, PICS and the developers re the final plans for the Woolamai House subdivision. Bushfire regulations have changed since the VCAT hearing and DEPI is the land manager for the Cleeland Road fire track even though the Shire maintains the track. DEPI will not allow for the removal of any vegetation on the public land so the "defendable space" for bushfires must be wholly within the development land. Margaret and Penny Manning attended the mediation and supported the DEPI argument. The developer and the Shire negotiated to amend the plans and the new plans were endorsed at the end of the Mediation session.

1. The Meet The Candidates Forum is set for Thursday 13 November, 7.30 p.m. at the Heritage Centre meeting room.
2. The date for the PINP Key Area Plan for the north and south coast Community Update is Wednesday 8 October from 6.30pm in the Newhaven Hall.

Correspondence: As tabled. Moved Michaela Wright Seconded Lisa Schonberg *Carried.*

General Business:

1. Preserve Western Port Action Group. Anne Davie reported on the success of the Picnic. A Sea Shepherd team attended and is giving support. A Forum is planned for 25 October in the Parish Hall.

Standing Orders were suspended for the presentation by Jonathon Stephenson on the Unique South. Anne Davie thanked the speaker and presented him with a copy of the PICS History. (See summary of talk elsewhere in this newsletter)

2. Blue Gum Reserve and Blue Gum Alley. Margaret is to meet Antoinette Mitchell from the Shire re planning for the Reserve. PICS is to fund a vegetation survey from our Public Fund by Alison Oates pending acceptance of her quote. BLBC to do a bird survey. Barb Martin Bushbank to propagate blue gums in November. Neil Rankin (Mayor) ensured that Shire staff would be directed to protect the mature trees in the Reserve.
3. Meeting with Greg Hunt on Thursday 16 October. Margaret Hancock and Penny Manning to attend. Issues to be considered: RET, Green Army, possible briquette export from Hastings, delegation of environmental legislation to Victoria, offset arrangements, ban on super trawlers. Mike Cleeland suggested an invitation be given to the Minister to walk through the mangroves to give him information and evidence on sea level rise.
4. Cr Phil Wright spoke briefly re the formation of an umbrella group for management of Phillip Island Reserves. Moved Mike Cleeland, seconded Sue Saliba that "PICS request that Shire staff initiate a support group for this purpose". *Carried.*
5. Noise at the PI Race Track. Anne Davie spoke to the issue. PICS is to submit to the current review and that an invitation be made to the EPA for hearing.
6. Port of Hastings Community Information Session on Tuesday 14 October from 4-7pm at the PI RSL.
7. Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups get together on Saturday 1st November. 1.30-5.00pm at the Rhyll Hall.

8. Mike Cleeland announced two sessions on Plant Identification at the Bunurong Centre on 16 and 23 October. Details on South Gippsland Conservation Society web page.
9. Margaret Hancock spoke about offsets from the Woolamai House development being sold to Baw Baw Shire. Mayor Rankin announced that the Shire now has sites where offsets can now be allocated locally as preferred.
10. Panel Hearing on C82 (potential inundation areas) begins in Wonthaggi next week.

Red Rocks and Saltwater Creek Coastcare Report given by John Eddy. (See written report elsewhere in this newsletter) John mentioned another Sea Spurge Busters Event on 26 October with the possibility of another day in November.

Meeting closed at 9.55pm.

“The Unique South”

Our guest speaker for the October General Meeting was Parks Victoria ranger, Jonathon Stephenson, who treated us to a wonderful presentation of slides and commentary illustrating the unique marine life of the southern coast of Australia, particularly the Victorian coast. About 90% of all our marine species are found nowhere else in the world. Jonathon’s vast experience as a diver, his knowledge of marine animals, his collection of exquisite photos, humour and enthusiasm for his subject made this presentation a memorable one.

The talk started with a stunning overview of the different types of marine environments. From rock platforms to sea grass meadows, from sandy beach and saltmarsh to the open ocean ‘blue’, we met some typical inhabitants like chiton, the sea elephant, cuttlefish, weedy sea dragon (Victoria’s marine emblem), sponges and zooanthids, blue devil fish, sentinel crabs, iridescent squid, stargazer fish, the comb jelly, the Hawaiian Humuhumunukunupna (Jonathon couldn’t stop saying it!) (photo dwijinker; Wikipedia) and its relative brown-striped leatherjacket (boring!)



Then followed a fascinating explanation of why the marine environment of southern Australia has such a high proportion of endemic species, leading on to the environmental influences that shape diversity across the Victorian coastline, from west to east. Jonathon then gave a concise survey of the Marine National Parks in Victoria, and the involvement of rangers in managing them. Western Port has three Marine National Park: Churchill Island, French Island and Yaringa.

The presentation finished with a glimpse of the diversity of activities which fill the busy life of a Parks Victoria ranger. To conclude, questions were answered and PICS president Anne Davie thanked Jonathon for his fascinating presentation, and gave him a copy of the PICS History to express our appreciation. *John Eddy.*

Environment Groups Get Together

This year’s Get Together was very capably hosted by Rhyll Coast Action. Participants gathered at Rhyll Hall at 2 p.m. and viewed several interesting displays of photos and pamphlets prepared by the host group, the Corinella Foreshore Committee and Preserve Wester Port. We were pleased to be joined by Philip Wierzbowski (Coastcare co-ordinator for our area), Rhiannon Grinham, Bass Coast Shire environment officer, and Crs Neil Rankine (Mayor) and Phil Wright.

After the official welcome, the able-bodied and energetic joined in a walk along the delightful north and east facing bluffs of the Rhyll coast, with its spectacular views into Rhyll Inlet and beyond to French Island and the Bass Coast. The walk showcased the extensive plantings done in recent years (mostly of Goodenia, Poa, Lomandra, Rhagodia and Boobialla) by Rhyll Coast Action, following their control of large areas of gorze and blackberry.

On our return to the Rhyll Hall, afternoon tea was enjoyed along with the chance to chat. Then followed the opportunity to hear first-hand what the various dedicated groups of volunteers have been occupied with in the past 12 months. We quickly realised how much great work is being done by our conservation-minded community. A brief summary of each is all we have space for:

- * John Eddy (Red Rocks Coastcare, PICS) used a Power Point presentation to outline recent projects at Red Rocks, particularly the weed control program targeting Blue Periwinkle and Sea Spurge (by “Spurbusters”)
- * Penny Manning (Birdlife Bass Coast) outlined the activities of the group, and demonstrated an excellent App for bird identification.
- * John Wright (Ventnor Coastcare) described the planting and weed control program south west of Aloha Dve, and the difficulties encountered with some local residents protective of their sea views.
- * Daryl Hook (Anderson Inlet Landcare) mentioned the tree planting projects, supported by about 50 families in the area, and now having a significant visual impact.
- * Anne Davie (PICS president) reminded us that PICS was formed in response to the threat of a marina development at Rhyll Inlet in 1968. Now a much greater threat, the Port of Hastings development, is galvanising action, with the formation of PICS sub-committee Preserve Western Port Action Group.
- * Carmen Bush (PWPAG) outlined the activities of the group since its formation in March. The recent forum in Cowes was very successful. A discussion paper produced by PWP explores the many issues.
- * Mike Cleeland (PI Landcare) expressed his regret at the recent \$400 million cut in Landcare funding by the Federal Govt and his disgust with Greg Hunt for his contrary comments prior to the last election. He also discussed the encroachment of mangroves onto saltmarsh as direct evidence of climate change, and asked for any old photos of mangrove/saltmarsh for comparison. Mike also entertained us with his poem “The Tasmanians”.
- * Phil Wright (Smiths Beach/Beachcomber Assocn) cited his area as an example where shearwaters and humans can co-exist. He also mentioned a new 8 acre reserve, created as an “offset”.
- * Dave Sutton (South Gippsland Conservation Society) detailed some of the recent projects of this very active group, which has 300 members. These included the Bunurong Coast Education Centre and programs, which has won the 2014 Victorian Coast Council Award for Excellence.
- * Anwyn Marin (Corinella Foreshore Committee of Management). This C/ee is supported by ample revenue from the launching ramp and the caravan park, so contractors and paid staff supplement the work of volunteers. Recent projects have been rebuilding of steps to the beach and the Corinella to Coronet Bay walking path.

The keynote speaker for the afternoon was Gayle Seddon (Surf Beach/Sunderland Bay Coastcare). Their group has been successful in obtaining a grant of \$7000 to run a Coastcare Leadership program in 2015. This would aim to increase volunteer participation, enhance skills and raise community awareness. The program will be supported by Phillip Island Nature Parks, and include a short training course at the PINP Education Centre. Well-known coastal ecologist Gidja Walker will be invited to lead the course and fieldwork, along with other presenters.

Gayle presented a draft budget for the project and sought input on what the course content might be. The fieldwork would most likely concentrate on techniques of planting and weed management. Hopefully a video of the project can be made as a record for later training of new volunteers.

Our thanks to Gabrielle, John and Carmen from Rhyll for organising this excellent gathering.

John Eddy.



Phillip Island Conservation Society, Inc.

The Penguin Newsletter

Fourth Quarter: December 2014

If undeliverable, return to:

PICS Inc.

PO Box 548

COWES, 3922

Saltwater Creek Coastcare Report

1. There was a working bee held on Sunday 23rd November. This was attended by 16 people which was a very pleasing turn out. It was good to see some new and enthusiastic faces
2. The focus of this working bee was removing thistles and other weeds, and a general clean-up of the area between Saltwater Creek and Settlement Rd. The area focused on was the recent planting of the boxthorn removal site on the banks of the creek. About 5 bags of weeds and rubbish was removed from the area. A good result.
3. Funding has been received now for the replanting of the area near the Aussie Golf Ranch. Thanks to John Eddy for all the work he has done and is still doing on this. (See John's report this newsletter)
4. There is another Working bee planned for Sunday 25th January 2015. We will meet at the Anchorage Rd Carpark at 10 a.m. for a clean-up and weeding of the area between the car park and saltwater creek.



This will also give us a chance to weed the recently planted area on the west side of the creek

Kevin Harris, coordinator SWCC