

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – ANNUAL REPORTS 2014

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

It is with pleasure and pride that I present the Annual Report of the Phillip Island Conservation Society.

2013 has been another busy for the Society. The committee is energetic and committed with each member active in many different roles. PICS is fortunate to have Gillian Collins watching and informing about what is happening or not happening on the other side of the Bay. Our thanks must go to Steve Angel for the PICS web-site and to Christine and John for the Facebook Page. Danni continues to be our excellent Treasurer and we appreciate this as she has a very busy life. The 4 editions of the Penguin Newsletter each year are as a result of John and Christine's efforts. As always, a big thank you for John's commitment to Red Rocks. He is definitely the area's guardian.

Earlier in 2013 PICS held a Sustainable Housing Forum which was well attended and our thanks to committee member, Terry Knott for organising this.

The Society supports Environment Victoria, the Environment Defenders Office, the Australian Conservation Society, Animal Rescue and the new Climate Council.

The big planning issue for the last 12 months was the Panel Hearing with regard to the rezoning Amendment 132. Margaret will speak about this later when she gives the Planning Report. PICS put together an outstanding team for the Hearing.

PICS representatives continue to meet every 2 months with a Bass Coast Shire Planning Officer. A successful Meet the Candidates was held in August and chaired by Pauline Taylor. It was very well attended.

PICS has sent submissions to the Victorian Coastal Strategy, the State Government Review of VCAT fees and the Bass Coast Council's Rural Land Strategy. It has representation on the Phillip Island Nature Parks Community Advisory Committee, its Scientific Animal Ethics Committee, the Penguin Foundation and the Environment Committee of the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority.

In November Mike Cleeland gave a Presentation in the Heritage Centre for PICS titled: Review of Data on Climate Change. It was held on the Climate Change Action Day.

A special general meeting was held in November which passed changes to the PICS Constitution and new Model Rules and requirements by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

PICS was invited to speak at one of the community meetings, held once a month in the Newhaven Information Centre, organised by Cr. Phil Wright and Mary Whelan, convenor of the South Coast Community Group. The topic of the meeting was the Port of Hastings. I spoke on behalf of PICS, informing of the commitment of the Conservation Society over many decades, to the welfare of Western Port. Once again Christine Grayden's, *An Island Worth Conserving* was a great reference document. Mike Lean, the CEO of Port of Hastings Development Corporation, was the Guest Speaker and said he would be available to speak at a PICS general meeting, early in the new year.

The committee has been busy today in Cowes promoting PICS and other environment groups. Our thanks for Pauline for organising this. Christine held her annual Animals of Oz in the Heritage Centre.



The Society remains extremely concerned about the damage by fires and the blatant disregard of the foreshore vegetation. Members raised this matter several times at Council Meetings during the year, and will continue to lobby for greater surveillance and penalties.

2014 is a state election year and the environment must be an important issue for all Victorians. There is much concern about the possible privatisation of some State parks and other proposed policies.

PICS is very aware that the Port of Hastings is well and truly on the local agenda. It is alert and will endeavour to make certain it is kept informed. As I said in the last Newsletter : this, I believe is the big one for Phillip Island and Western Port. *Anne Davie*

PLANNING:

We began 2013 with a celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of the “Battle of Saltwater Creek” – and what a happy occasion that was! Since then preparation work and tree planting has been done beside the creek. BUT – no bridge work yet! All planning matters have unexpected twists and turns and now, in consultation with the Shire and local people the site of the bridge is moving closer to the Foreshore. But before work proceeds we need to have the boundary between the Public Foreshore land and the privately owned adjacent land clearly delineated. We are urging the Shire to treat this as a matter of priority.

C312 – the Amendment to extend the eastern settlement boundary of Cowes – was strongly opposed by PICS. Our thanks go to the team of people who represented PICS at the three day Hearing held in Cowes. The Panel recommended in favour of the Amendment, but to our great relief the Shire Councillors voted to abandon the Amendment. In my opinion, this is a case of “Watch this space”. If the Cowes Golf Club proves to not be financially viable, what is the future of the existing Front Nine and Back Nine? Once planning issues are raised, they don’t just ‘go away’. If the first proposal fails another will eventually be tabled!

We also continue to ‘watch this space’ with the “Isle of Wight” site – this site is far too valuable to be just left derelict!

PICS has taken part in discussions about the Rural Land Use Strategy – a matter of great importance to Phillip Island. One idea which may gain momentum is the creation of a CERES-like proposal as has been developed in several places overseas.

Some of us took part in discussions about the newest version of the “Victorian Coastal Strategy”. This is a very attractive document – both in appearance and in content – and is of little use as it has no *Planning Teeth!*

The BIG ISSUE for 2014 and beyond is the proposal for the development of the Port of Hastings. We all have a great deal to learn about this issue and all its ramifications. I urge you all to come to the information session with Port of Hastings Development Corporation CEO Mike Lean will bring us up to date with current information and tell us what is happening from here on. Twenty years ago PICS vigorously opposed the development of the BP Refinery at Crib Point; some of you may remember the vigorous campaign, and the big Public Meeting in this Hall on a hot, hot, Saturday morning! Well, here we go again – we will not be bored in 2014. *Margaret Hancock.*

FRIENDS OF KOALAS

Free-ranging koalas on Phillip Island continue to battle on against the odds. Recent reports of koalas have come from Ventnor, Oswin Roberts Reserve and Rhyll. Please let us know if you see a koala, as such information is important to the Nature Parks and FOK. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407. Koalas at the KCC had their annual check-ups in early November. As 2013 draws to a close I would like to thank the committee members for their support during the year. I would also like to thank and

congratulate our small but dedicated group of volunteers who have taken part in Habitat Days and Koala Counts. This year has also seen FOK spend considerable time on submissions and letters on issues affecting koalas and their habitat on Phillip Island and further afield. While such lobbying is time-consuming and sometimes seems futile it does raise awareness, helps to educate people and is made worthwhile when gains are made.



BARB MARTIN BUSHBANK REPORT

The Bushbank celebrated its 15th birthday in September with a happy luncheon in the company of friends and volunteers.

When you visit the Bushbank you will find it looking extremely healthy. The plants are outstanding, as a result of the late Spring and early summer rains.

Landcare continues to place the largest order and there were significant farm plantings last winter. Coastcare and Phillip Island Nature Parks are also reliable purchasers. There has been a large increase in retail sales, and been sustained during the entire 12 months. Co-ordinator, Jenny Toy has the much appreciated assistance of some volunteers on the first Saturday of the month, when the public can come for information and to buy.

Volunteer numbers and hours continue to be excellent. There have been modifications and improvements in the work area of the Bushbank as a result of a generous grant from the Bendigo Bank of nearly \$9,000 for the work. The changes have addressed some occupational health issues that had been of concern. The Bendigo Bank also gave \$3,000 for sponsorship of the Bushbank and a sign on the Phillip Island Tourist Road, acknowledges this support.

The Bass Coast Foundation provided \$5,000 to assist with Jenny's wages, the Friends of the Koalas gave a donation of \$800 and Bowens have given the Bushbank a state of the art BBQ, which was put to good use at the Christmas BBQ. The members of the Friends of the Koalas continue to be great

supporters in many ways of the Bushbank. All this wonderful assistance is very much appreciated by the committee and ensures that the facility can continue to operate, we hope, for many years to come. It must be acknowledged, the dedication and commitment of the Bushbank Co-ordinator, Jenny Toy. She is an absolute gem. *Anne Davie*



FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND REPORT

PICS sits on the c/ee of FOCIS along with Friends of Koalas and the Phillip Island & District Historical Society representatives. The late Pat Baird's revised book *Churchill Island: History and Her Story*, reprint was funded by FOCIS. Bob Baird subsequently gifted all copies, royalties and copyright to FOCIS. C/ee member David Maunders delivered a tribute to Pat at the February G.M.

FOCIS had working bees on the farm machinery on Sat April 6th and the house and contents on Sat 7 Sep and Sat Nov 30. FOCIS has paid for pavers to lift outside historic farm machinery off the ground. Some have been done, but due to staff resigning we have to wait for the rest. PINP Open Day, 3.3.2013, Peter Paul had a FOCIS table at the Community Groups Expo and Curator Christine ran a guided tour and show and tell session.

New research sent to us on Harry Jenkins by aviation historian Kevin O'Reilly was written up for the FOCIS website by David Maunders. A major Churchill Island Key Area Plan has been completed and an information session will be held at the next FOCIS GM in Feb 2014.

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Serenade at Sunset was held on CI last Feb and was highly successful, but unfortunately numbers were insufficient, and sponsors not available, to continue these. Costumier Cheryl Stratford has donated many replica period costumes for our new

mannequins to wear, located in the eastern end of the dining room. They are very popular for photos. Road up to Visitors Centre was resurfaced. FOCIS did not participate in the Easter Festival due to lack of volunteers.

Speakers: February Christine spoke about her visit to Ambleside Park historic homestead in Ferntree Gully; May, 25 FOCIS members and other volunteers had a lively and productive workshop for the CI Key Area Plan. November PhD candidate Rebecca Sanders spoke about the relative importance of the first European garden in Victoria, planted on CI in 1801, and about the various types of settlement on Churchill Island.

Curator Christine and her volunteers worked very hard to get CI Reaccreditation under the Museums Australia Victoria Museums Accreditation Program and in the end after a very detailed site inspection and many policy rewrites, CI passed with flying colours. FOCIS President Stella Axarlis celebrated 10 years on the PINP Board with an unexpected visit from the Minister for morning tea during a Board meeting. C/ee is the same as last year except that Ruth O'Dea has taken over from Peter Paul as Vice President.

FOCIS was successful in getting a \$1500 Bass Coast Shire Community Grant to video the working horses on CI on Easter Sat 2014. Local videographer Paul Cooper will do the filming and edit to 10-15 min DVD.

Review of proposed new constitution and also members' preferences for receiving correspondence and notices was undertaken. Many more members opted to use email which will save FOCIS approximately \$1500 per annum. *Pauline Taylor.*

RED ROCKS COASTCARE

For Red Rocks Coastcare, 2013 has been a year of consolidating the gains we made in weed control in 2012. Blue Periwinkle was again the main target, with contractors Envirogain spraying the remnants of this very persistent creeper in June and November. While our application for a Communities for Nature grant to fund this work was unsuccessful, the Bass Coast Shire Council was able to support the project. In addition, at two working bees, our volunteers followed up with the application of herbicide to isolated emerging shoots using the dabbers. Fresh shoots continue to appear, and will require further control during early 2014. With patience and persistence, we will win in the end!

We also continued the hand-pulling of Sea Spurge, aiming eventually to clear it from the beach and foredunes of the main beach area and the Hooded Plover habitat to the east. During our April working bee, 10 bags of seed-laden plants of this weed were removed. Seedlings continue to emerge, attesting to the large seed reserve present, so this project is also on-going into 2014.

Survival rate of our 2012 planting was very disappointing, due to unusually dry conditions over Spring 2012 and Summer 2012 – 13. By contrast, in 2013, good rainfall continued from autumn to December, giving this year's planting of 350 plants over 8 sites an excellent start and the hope of a high survival rate.

As wallaby numbers increase in the foreshore and adjacent reserves, it is becoming increasingly difficult to establish some important tree species, especially Sweet Bursaria, due to selective grazing by wallabies. An allocation of \$500 from Cr Kimberley Brown's Discretionary Fund allowed us to purchase enough heavy-duty wire netting and stakes to assemble 50 tree guards, each 110 cm high, to protect plants from wallaby grazing. Some have been deployed already and the remainder will go into use next year, when more Bursaria are planted. We thank Cr Brown for her support.



The program of working bees during 2013 has been our most successful ever, with more than 10 participants on 4 occasions. Overall, during our 7 working bees, volunteers contributed a total of around 130 hours work in caring for Red Rocks. We thank all our volunteers most sincerely for their commitment. We also thank Dave Martin, Bass Coast Shire Council's Natural Resources Officer, who provides equipment and guidance, and enthusiastically supports our endeavours. The three year plan to control Blue Periwinkle continues in 2014, with the main planting phase in areas previously covered by the weed. Over 500 plants are scheduled to go in, over several planting days. We look forward to sharing these and other activities with all our volunteers at Red Rocks in the coming year. *John Eddy, Red Rocks Coastcare coordinator.*

BAYVIEW PARK PROJECT REPORT

A small area of parkland in Bayview Drive, Red Rocks (now known as Bayview Park) includes a patch of remnant Swamp Paperbark Scrub which has been heavily invaded by Pittosporum, a weed tree species. Late in 2012, a project led by nearby resident and PICS member Sue Saliba began to progressively remove the Pittosporum, some of which was present as large trees, and to revegetate the cleared patches. A group of volunteers began cutting out the Pittosporum and treating the stumps early in 2013, and an allocation of \$500 from Cr Kimberley Brown's Ward Discretionary Fund allowed the purchase of 270 tube stock of indigenous groundcover, shrub and tree species from the Barb Martin Bush Bank. Most of these were planted at working bees in June and September, with a number of local residents contributing. The remainder of the tube stock is being held at the Bush Bank for planting next autumn after further removal of Pittosporum. So far, establishment of the plants has been good.

Our thanks go to Mark Hill, BCSC, for carting away the cut Pittosporum, Dave Martin, BCSC, for advice on species selection and for arranging herbicide application on Bridal Creeper, and to Cr Brown for support with funding. *John Eddy.*

HOODED PLOVER WATCH AT RED ROCKS 2013 – 14



Some of our members have been actively involved in the Hooded Plover Watch program, coordinated for Phillip Island by Jon Fallaw of Phillip Island Nature Parks, and supported so capably at Red Rocks by the tireless efforts of Sue Saliba. While no chicks were hatched at Red Rocks over the summer of 2012-13, we welcomed the hatching of 3 chicks early in December at their chosen nesting site in front of a small creek east of the main swimming area. The chicks continued to thrive under the watchful eye of about 10 volunteers during the hectic holiday period, and we now look forward to them being fully fledged in the next day or so. Over the past week, we have observed them taking increasingly longer flights from just a metre or so to 200 metres.

Community interest and support for this project continues to grow, despite some unfortunate behaviour on New Years Eve resulting in damage to some of the signage at the refuge area. A very high tide and strong winds also washed away the signs last weekend, but they were quickly re-instated by Nature Park staff. In general, dog owners have been very cooperative and adhered to Council regulations consistently. Our special thanks to Sue for coordinating the volunteers. The successful rearing of all three chicks is a great achievement and a credit to all involved. *John Eddy.*

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES:

PICS participated in two children's activities in 2013. Last January we had Dr of Zoology Lee Webley and her Animals of Oz presentation give two sessions to 40 children and as many if not more adults. The total cost for Lee is \$420. Bass Coast Shire Council pays \$400 and PICS pays the extra \$20 and

approx \$40 for advertising. The children learn lots about the animals Lee brings and learn how to stroke them gently rather than actually handle them.

PICS also participated in Bass Coast Shire Council's World Environment Day Schools Environment Expo, which is held in November due to weather being better than in June when WED actually occurs. But we always use the WED theme, which this year was "Think, Eat, Save...Reduce your footprint". For our part in the expo I set up a display on traditional Aboriginal food. If you would like to see the display, it is currently on at the Phillip Island & District Historical Society museum for the holidays, open Thur and Sat 10-12 and Sun 2-4.30. It includes some bush tucker examples from Angel's Health Foods and the Rhyll Trout and Bush Tucker Farm. I had them for the expo and the children really enjoyed smelling them. The display was featured in the Advertiser with me and two children from the French Island school, which was nice publicity for PICS. *Christine Grayden.*