

NEWSLETTER OF PHILLIP ISLAND SCIETY

WEBSITE: picsvictoria.org.au

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/picsvictoria

EDITORS: Christine Grayden & John Eddy cgrayden@waterfront.net.au ph; 03 5956 8501

Fourth Quarter: December 2015

Dates for Your Diary 2016

Saturday 9th January 2016, 10 a.m. or 11 a.m. "Animals of Oz", educational sensitive sessions for children on Australian wildlife by a qualified zoologist. Heritage Centre meeting room. FREE – funded by BCSC & PICS. No need to book, just come along. All welcome.

Saturday 9th January 2016, 10 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. PICS stall. Look for our banner at the Cowes town square! Please come along and say "hello" to our stall attendants.

Saturday 9th January 2016, 6.30 p.m. AGM. Parish Hall Cowes. See box below.

Sunday 10th January 2016, 10 a.m. – 12 noon. Meet at Red Rocks car park. Rubbish clean up and Sea Spurge control. Enquiries John Eddy 5956 8501.

The rest of the dates for 2016 will appear in the March newsletter.

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

Sub-committees of PICS:

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

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

Other groups:

Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve (FOSER) Co-ordinator is John Eddy, ph 5956 8501. E: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au **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.

Barb Martin Bush Bank: Sales and volunteers – every Wednesday + 1^{st} 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: secretary@focis.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

Saturday 9 January 2016 6.30 p.m. for bring and share meal; 7.30 p.m. for meeting

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

Annual reports; election of office bearers; general business.

PICS COMMITTEE 2015

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: Garry Morgan

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

meetings) Terry Nott, Jeff Nottle, Lisa Schonberg.

C/ee meets at 9.30 a.m. on 4th Sat of each month at Community Emmaus Room, Parish Hall Cowes.

AGM ELECTIONS: Please note that the position of Treasurer will be vacant at the AGM. We thank Garry Morgan for all of his work in this role for 2015. Please consider applying as this is not a difficult role. At this stage we use record books, not a computer system, and cheques for our accounts. Enquiries contact Christine Grayden 5956 8501 m 0400 900 612 or just come along to our AGM – you can nominate yourself at the AGM for any of the c/ee positions!

President's Letter to Members

The year 2015 seems to have been a particularly active one for the Phillip Island community and now we will move into what is predicated to be a busier than ever holiday season. We are always conscious of the potential impact of negative human behaviour on the precious Island beaches and the fragile foreshore vegetation.

As always, the Barb Martin Bushbank volunteers have propagated the many plants for projects on rural properties and coastal areas. The Island rainfall is well below average this year so any summer rain will be most welcome to ensure the survival of the plantings.

Many PICS members joined others in the Walk for Climate Change Action, across the Bridge to San Remo. It was great to see the participation of people of all ages, particularly young families.

Committee members have been busy in the last few months and I know you will enjoy reading their Reports.

Committee member, Steve Angel, put his hand up when the conversation started about the need for a new PICS brochure. He has given many hours to this project and we are very grateful. It was felt that it was important that members of the community and visitors know the history PICS, what it does, what it has done and how it needs support to continue its work in the protection and enhancement of the Island's unique natural assets. Steve has worked with a brochure committee and as well as meetings, there have been emails circulating with suggestions, for months. I am sure you will be pleased with the final product.

The Bass Coast Council has currently a Draft Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy available for comment and PICS will respond to this.

During the Cup Week-end, the Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve invited people to come to their Official launch. What a joy to have new open space on Phillip Island and the restoration of an area that has been so neglected for so long. It is wonderful that John Eddy agreed to lead the Friends of the Scenic Estate Reserve (FOSER) and they are a hard-working, committed group.

At the present tine the Concept Plans for the redevelopment of the Cowes Cultural and Community Centre are being considered and work continues to proceed with the Tourism Strategy for Phillip Island till the year 2035. Yes, always a lot happening.

Looking forward to seeing you at the AGM on Saturday, January 9th in the Parish Hall.

Red Rocks Coastcare report

1. Nine volunteers attended our working bee, on 27th Sept. We concentrated on digging up Angled Onion which, being in flower, was very evident at that time. It has spread along the Fire Track and into other areas in recent years. We worked on isolated patches and low density infestations, leaving several dense patches for spraying later. I asked Dave Martin to get contractors in if possible, but am not sure of the outcome.

For the final 30 minutes of the working bee, we surveyed the beach for marine plastic debris, working along 4 transects following strand lines covering the 250 metres east of the carpark back to the carpark stairs. This included 20 random 1m x 1m quadrats (sampling areas) that were sieved to a depth of about 5cm, checking for "nurdles" and other fine marine plastic debris. We found virtually nothing. The beach was very clean, we are pleased to report, on that occasion.

- 2.In October, I replaced some broken stakes on some of our tall wallaby-resisting guards. Most of these guards seem to be performing OK. Survival rate of plants is generally satisfactory.
- 3. Dave Martin has asked that we start planning our planting activities for next year so that a timely order can be placed with the BushBank. It is hard to know what we should attempt in what could be a severe drought year.
- 4. Our 22 Nov working bee was a Spurgebusters event at Justice Rd, our first for the year. We had 7 volunteers, and plenty of sea spurge seedlings and regrowth to challenge us, but the presence of the Hooded Plover family with their one surviving chick, not quite fledged, restricted us in how far we could go to the west. We did cover about a third of our project site, however, before returning to the dunes east of Justice Rd, and clearing sea spurge from virtually all of that area. Great progress has been made since Feb 2014. We continued the task the next weekend with 5 volunteers. I aim to clean up all the sea spurge before the end of the year to ensure there is no seed set. Thereafter, any emerging seedlings, now much reduced in numbers, should be easy to control.

Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve

The Launch of FOSER on Sunday 1st Nov was a big day for us, and very well supported by the community, with almost 40 in attendance. Special thanks to Carmen Bush, Kate Mclaughlin and Christine Grayden for helping with the setting up and organising the morning tea. Thanks also to our PICS President, Anne Davie, and Bass Coast mayor, Cr Kimberley Brown for officiating, and to Steve Malone for taking photos. The PINP had printed off 30 copies of the launch day leaflet which were distributed to those present, and referred to on the walk. The guided tour was hampered a little by a cold wind change, but we avoided getting rained on, and enjoyed morning tea at the picnic shelter, and valuable discussion on ideas for the Reserves future. A few more names were added to our email list of volunteers. Carmen Bush, FOSER committee member, has worked on publicity through the local press, and produced a poster which has been distributed to Coastcare groups and others. Weed control continues – gorse, thistles, angled onion. Regular committee meetings are being held.

The Shire arranged a Wetlands Management Training afternoon for FOSER volunteers on 10th Nov. This was conducted by Graham Petersen from "Ecorepair", a company that is assisting Council in managing the establishment of the Wetlands at the new Reserve. Five of our volunteers took part in this training, and we were joined by the Shire's Diana Whittington. We undertook some planting, cutting and laying of Poa grass as thatching on bare soil around the main Wetlands, and discussion about priorities and methods for weed control.

Following on from this training, a working bee was held on Fri 20th Nov. Four of us laid more Poa thatching and worked on thistle control, covering about a third of the Reserve, including some of the worst areas. *John Eddy, Co-ordinator*.

Boardwalk through native grassland, Scenic Estate Reserve

Photo: John Eddy.



Plastics Pollution in the Marine Environment – Mike Cleeland

Marine Science postgraduate student Alice Forrest gave a hugely entertaining presentation to the BCE Community Education session on November 21st. Alice had been based on Henderson Island in the central South Pacific working on trapping and releasing feral rats as part of a population survey.

While there she was able to collect samples from local fish to assist in her study of plastic pollution.

A total of .28 billion tonnes of plastic is produced per year worldwide (2012 figure), of which only 5% is recycled. The quantity is increasing at a rapid 9% per year.

Plastic photodegrades into small pieces, eventually into molecular size, but does not break down completely in the marine environment. That's why some estimates have shown that there could be 5,250,000,000 pieces of plastic in the oceans.

Around 80% is land derived, from rivers and drains etc, while 20% is marine and fishing waste.

About 80% of ocean plastic sinks to the floor, so the figure of the floating plastic is only 20% of total plastic in the oceans. "Bioplastics" may break down quicker in certain conditions, but they still break down into small pieces of plastic.

Floating plastic in the marine environment tends to concentrate in gyres, huge swirling masses of water which accumulate the rubbish around their centres. Measurements have shown that there is more plastic than plankton in some locations in these gyres.

Entanglement of animals in ropes and nets is an obvious problem with marine plastic, but ingestion also causes significant problems.

Baby birds of some species get so full of plastic pieces, regurgitated by their parents, that they can't take in any more food, and therefore starve or suffer reduced growth. These chicks cannot digest or excrete the plastic so their stomachs fill to the point that they cannot ingest their food. This is becoming an increasing problem locally, including with shearwaters and penguins at the Phillip Island Penguin Parade.

Worldwide, 690 marine species are known to have ingested plastic, including humpback whales.

Generally around a quarter or half of species in a given area have plastics in the stomach

Nurdles, the small pre – manufacturing balls of plastic are a particular problem in the marine food chain. Plastics such as these already incorporate Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and absorb more from oceanic water. Then when they are ingested the POPs are released into the fatty tissue of the host, where they accumulate over the life of the animal. These include PBDE flame retardants and other chemicals which can cause problems such as endocrine disruption and low sperm counts. POPs such as these are also concentrated up the food chain, so the top order predators accumulate significant amounts in their tissue.

Alices project involves sampling food fish at several sites in the south west Pacific, and analysing their tissue for these Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Focusing on solutions, Alice strongly advocates against single use plastics eg water bottles and plastic bags. Australia uses 9 billion plastic bags per year, but this figure could be dramatically reduced if shoppers were charged for them. But vested interests in the industry, lobbying governments, have often stood in the way of progress on this front.

Microbeads (usually polyethylene) for exfoliation in cosmetics are also a problem as they end up in the ocean. Natural alternatives are available.

Cleaning up beaches of plastic rubbish helps, as much of this litter does return to the sea.

More information? Take a look at Alice's websites which include video presentations

http://www.aliceforrest.com/#!my-photos--videos/qg7fu

Or higher res on Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/144551599



Photo shows rainbow runner fish guts with the 17 pieces of plastic it had consumed. Photo: Algalita Marine Research Foundation

Churchill Island's Eastern Barred Bandicoots

Dr Duncan Sutherland, speaker at our GM, 26.9.2015

The release and subsequent study of the Eastern Barred Bandicoots onto Churchill Island is a joint venture between the Phillip Island Nature Parks research team and Zoos Victoria EBB team. The EBB, *Perameles gunnii*, live for about 2-3 years and weight 600-900 grams as adults. They are strictly nocturnal and omnivorous, finding their feed by scratching conical digs in the ground. They are marsupials and very opportunistic breeders, with only 12 ½ days' gestation period. They have 2-3 young which are weaned at 55 days of age and are able to breed at 3 months old.

EBB are indigenous to Western Victoria. They are only found in the eastern part of Australia, but are extinct in the wild in Victoria. Their introduction to Churchill Island is not a reintroduction. Their natural habitat is grasslands and bush. 1200 live in 3 locations, 2 of which are fenced to keep predators such as foxes out. Due to small numbers there is little genetic variation, so the teams are attempting to get the numbers above 2,500 at least and end up with three self-sustaining populations. About half of the EBB released on CI came from Mnt Rothwell and the other half from the zoos program.

The main threats to the EBB are lack of habitat, predation, especially by foxes, and the risk of disease. Drought and inbreeding are other threats. CI was chosen because it is suitable habitat and fox-free, rabbit-free, cat-free. It is therefore an excellent location to place an endangered species. It has also been a long-term aim to 'rewild' CI, and at 57 hectares CI is a suitable size to support an EBB population.

PINP and Zoos Victoria have had to go through a long and thorough process in order to release the EBB onto CI, with a four-stage approvals process. The population has been monitored from the time of their release, including a video being made of their release, which Duncan showed us.

The objectives include: Can the EBB establish on CI? Can they reproduce? What will be the mortality rate and causes of mortality? How will they use the CI habitat? What effect will they have on the endangered plants of CI and other vegetation? Research has shown that their maximum density is 4-5 per hectare. What will happen if they reach that number? Can they be released elsewhere on Phillip Island? For example, Summerlands Peninsula? The level of predation would have to be very low before any EBB were released there. Ironically, they seem compatible with rabbits, and even like rabbit burrows to hide in during the day.

Soon there will be 50 cameras operating on CI monitoring the EBB and any predators. So far the project has been far more successful than they could hope, with only one mortality – a zoo raised animal that did not adapt to the wild –

most EBB putting on weight, rearing young and mating. There has also been a lot of media interest, with regular updates from TV channels. PINP has a temporary full-time researcher trapping and monitoring the EBB constantly. They were released with radio-tracking collars on, but these were removed after one EBB got her paw caught in the collar. Now the monitoring is done by Anthony using traps with peanut butter baits.

Notes by Christine Grayden. Photo: Zoos Victoria, EBB in day nest.



PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC AGENDA FOR GENERAL MEETING 26.9.2015

Heritage Centre meeting room, COWES.

- 1. Present: As per attendance book
- 2. Apologies: As per attendance book
- 3. That standing orders be suspended to allow for a presentation by Anna Kilburn of E Cube on the options of Saltwater Creek pathways. John Eddy/Margaret Hancock *Carried*.
- 4. Anna Kilburn presented six options for possible routes for Saltwater Creek and adjacent foreshore area pathways. She is seeking input from individuals and organisations. Anna also answered many questions. The options were:
- 1. Leave the area as it is (no pathways)
- 2. Pathway as envisaged 12 months ago along the north side of the creek
- 3. From Anchorage Rd to Settlement Rd across the big dune system and through large Banksia woodland
- 4. A loop track
- 5. Coastal track with short accesses into the creek and a bird hide
- 6. Any of 1-5 and track along creek to Ventnor Rd.

Many issues were raised such as Latham's Snipe, danger of golf balls, value of established vegetation, private encroachment onto the reserve, bike access which doesn't involve Ventnor and Red Rocks Rd, a lot of informal tracks already, need to maintain access to WWB easement, effects of people walking dogs, not necessarily on leads, width of pathway – all seem to be wide shared pathways these days, but reserve is narrow, etc.

- 5. Speaker: Dr Duncan Sutherland, PINP spoke about Churchill Island's Eastern Barred Bandicoot project (see newsletter).
- 6. Resume agenda John Eddy/Penny Manning Carried.
- 7. Minutes of previous meeting 4.7.15 (as published in September newsletter) Margaret Hancock/Penny Manning *Carried*.

Matters arising:

Come for a Walk book: no further developments. Penny and Diane are meeting about the book tomorrow. Penny thanked PICS for the promise of \$2000 from the Public Fund.

- 8. Reports:
- 1. Blue Gum Reserve BCSC is negotiating with WWB for a tap for humans and dogs. As an off-leash area this reserve is a great success, but needs more publicity. There is also a need for an off-leash area at Ventnor, and consider asking for another one if there is to be an airfield development. Tomorrow fortnight botanist Alison Oates is coming to find indigenous herbs growing in the embankment of the Scout Hall. They have not been mown by request for some time. BCSC has numbered all the trees. There are 210. A few need to be removed for safety reasons.

Margaret also showed the meeting an award won by PICS from the Town and Country Planning Association in the 1970s for Murray Hilgendorf and Ailsa Swan's work on preventing Scenic Estate being developed. Margaret also showed a PICS newsletter from 7.6.1999 when June Watkins led a walk around the estate. She kept a bird list there for 65 years. Margaret suggested reprinting the article in our next newsletter.

Removal of S173 agreement at Silverleaves. This area should never have been subdivided.

- 9. Red Rocks Coastcare John Eddy
- 1. Garden refuse that had been dumped in the corner of the carpark has been removed by Dave Martin.
- 2. As a consequence of the dune erosion experienced during last winter(2014), the Council has had an extension built on the beach end of the stairway at Penguin Rocks. Strangely, I wasn't aware that this was even planned, and it was a surprise to find it in place just a week ago. As it turns out we have escaped any serious erosion episodes over this past winter, so work on the stairs had become less urgent. The extension incorporates a short sloping ramp which I am concerned may be a slipping hazard when covered in a thin layer of dry sand.
- 3. Our next working bee is tomorrow, 27^{th} Sept. We will concentrate on removal of Angled Onion, which is starting to invade in places along the edge of tracks. I hope we can also have time to survey marine plastic debris washed up on the beach.
- 10. Saltwater Creek Coastcare Kevin Harris, co-ordinator, thanked everyone who has participated especially those who come regularly.

Penny Manning/Sue Saliba: That this meeting gives a vote of thanks to John and Kevin as our excellent Coastcare coordinators. *Carried*.

- 11. Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve John Eddy, co-ordinator
- 1. At a public meeting in Cowes on 1st Sept, facilitated by BCSC, the Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve (referred to now as FOSER) was officially formed. The meeting was chaired by the Councils Sustainable Environment Manager, Deirdre Griepsma, and other Council staff present were Diana Whittington and Derek Hibbert. Cr Phil Wright was also present.

The meeting gratefully accepted the invitation (with conditions) from PICS to have the new group operate under its auspices, and nominated John Eddy as coordinator. A committee was also appointed to direct the activities of the group. The appointed members are:

John Eddy, coordinator and chairperson Carmen Bush Michael Whelan Cr Phil Wright Dave Martin, as BCSC nominee Samantha Coleman, as PINP nominee

- 2. Note: need to alter the original PICS conditions to include the PINP and Parks Victoria as entities, along with BCSC, that the new group will be working in conjunction with.
- 3. The committee met for the first time on 15th Sept at the home of Michael and Mary Whelan. We began sorting out how FOSER should operate, what activities it should embrace, and what the initial priorities should be.
- 4. A press release from BCSC regarding the formation of FOSER appeared in the P.I.& S.R. Advertiser on 16th Sept.
- 5. The first working bee was held last Wed., 23^{rd} Sept. to control gorse, mostly in the southern section of the Reserve, and stinging nettle in the foreshore section. Just 4 volunteers attended, but a fifth came late and couldn't find us. Unfortunately, we found more gorse than we could cope with. We may need to apply for a Council Community Grant to engage a contractor, unless Dave Martin can do so for us.
- 6. The FOSER committee is planning to hold a launch event for the new group on Sunday, 1st Nov, 10am to 12noon.We will celebrate by conducting a guided tour of the Reserve, and ask for ideas about future projects. I hope PICS will support this. I will also approach Council for some funds to provide morning tea, and to print a 1 page map with notes for the occasion.
- 7. The next FOSER committee meeting is 27th Oct.

Patsy Hunt addressed the meeting with a series of criticisms of the development of the Scenic Estate Reserve, which she passed to John Eddy in print form.

- 12. Preserve Western Port
- 13. Community Plus coming up will discuss the Tourism Strategy, Forrest Caves and PWP.

Minutes of GM 26.9.2015 continued....

14. August report available.

Treasurer's report was distributed in the treasurer's absence.

Penny Manning/Pauline Taylor that encumbered funds under Children's Environment Morning and VCAT be placed into general funds. *Carried*.

New members: That Dale and Celia Rogers be welcomed to the Society. Sue Saliba/John Eddy Carried.

15. General Business

- 1. Brian Paynter, member for Bass, had attended the PICS c/ee meeting this morning and was most receptive to our ideas and comments. He obviously has an interest in the environment and is accessible. A positive meeting.
- 2. Clare Le Serve has donated \$1000 to PWP.
- 3. Sue Saliba reported on the Hooded Plover situation at present: 2 at Ventnor, 1 Red Rocks, 1 Bella Vista. Scrapes at other sites. Hopefully the chicks will all be fledged by Christmas. HP Watch does not have enough volunteers. They held a busy stall outside Coles recently.
- 4. Saltwater Creek pathway options. After considerable discussion it was decided that as we were unable to reach a consensus about which pathway to support that we would encourage individual members to make their own submissions.
- 5. Pauline reported that a major Climate Change Rally was to be held in Melbourne on Friday 27th November. There are also plans afoot for the local march.
- 6. Noise from Phillip Island race track: Anne Davie described the process she has had to go through to get her message across about the industrial levels of noise emanating from the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit, not during event days, but during testing and club days. Anne stated strongly that there is a need for many people to complain about this noise, as she is the only one at present, although PICS did make a strong submission to the recent EPA review. We don't want to shut down the track, we just want something fair and reasonable. Currently what is happening is a social justice issue. Neil Rankine suggested that everyone affected needs to document when the noise worries them and send their records into the EPA. The track has never made any effort at noise attenuation.
- 7. Animals of Oz Jan 9 10 & 11 a.m. Heritage Centre meeting room. BCSC funded.

Correspondence:

Dealt with by committee this morning. Tabled for perusal.

Meeting closed 10.10 p.m.

The next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting to be held in the Parish Hall on Saturday January 9th, 2016, bring and share dinner 6.30 p.m., meeting 7.30 p.m.

PWP Report

PWP formally lodged a submission to the current Upper House Inquiry into the proposed lease of the Port of Melbourne. The submission was a copy of the PWP Discussion Paper released in 2014. Whilst the Discussion Paper did not specifically address the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry it has put the document and the issues it raises in the public domain. It can be read by all those interested in the future container port issue. A total of 82 submissions were lodged.

- PWP is continuing to work on summaries and implications of the Western Port Local Coastal Hazard Reports. When the information is finalized it will be distributed to local stakeholders and then more widely.
- I am presenting to the Bass Coast Shire Council next Wednesday together with Simon Branigan of The Nature
 Conservancy. The presentation will centre on shell fish reef restoration projects in the US and a trial planned for
 Port Phillip with a possibility of Western Port being considered in the future.
- Following the successful grant application PWP will be discussing the details of the proposed signage at the next meeting. The assistance of Christine has been communicated to PWP members. Anne & I will be attending the Council Grant presentation.
- PWP is in the process of receiving a \$1,000 donation from Clare Le Serve. Waiting further details and will then write to Clare thanking her very much.
- PWP are maintaining a watching brief on the imminent arrival of the West Telesco. Media release and other social media will issue when it arrives. Jeff Nottle