

Second Quarter: June 2015

Dates for Your Diary 2014-2015

Sunday 28th June, 10 a.m. Saltwater Creek Coastcare Working Bee. Planting

Saturday 4th July, 7.30 p.m. GENERAL MEETING. Heritage Centre meeting room.

Sunday 5th July, 10 a.m. Red Rocks Coastcare Working Bee. Planting

Saturday 26th September, 7.30 p.m., GENERAL MEETING. Heritage Centre meeting room. Details tba.

Sunday 27th September, 10 a.m. Red Rocks Coastcare working bee. Weed control.

Sunday 25th October, 10 a.m. Saltwater Creek Coastcare Working bee. Weeding/clean up

Sunday 22nd November, 10 a.m. Spurgebusters at Justice Rd.

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

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:

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 + 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: 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 July 4, 7.30 p.m. Heritage Centre Meeting room,
89 Thompson Ave Cowes.

GENERAL MEETING

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

Speaker: Aileen Vening: "Renewable Energy: Why Not?"



All welcome. Supper follows meeting.

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

PICS COMMITTEE 2015 CONTINUED...

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.

President's Letter to Members

The Phillip Island community has seen much happening in the last few weeks. There has been the release for comment of the Cowes Activity Plan, the evolving Cowes Cultural Precinct re-development and a Consultant brief prepared by Bass Coast Council for a Phillip Island, and including San Remo, Tourism Strategy 2035 Project Plan. The Strategy will establish a vision which recognises the region's significance based on its unique natural environment. There will be an opportunity for PICS and others to comment when the Draft goes out for comment.

It was with much sadness that we learned of the passing of Joan Kirner AM, earlier this month. Joan was an outstanding Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in the Cain government and initiated significant decisions and projects that influenced the protection and preservation of the Island's natural assets – including the buy-back of Summerlands Peninsula. Her establishment of Landcare with the then VFF President, Heather Mitchell, is her greatest legacy. Phillip Island Landcare, one of the most successful groups, was formed in 1987. Joan came with husband Ron to the 25th celebration of Landcare in the Bass Hall in 2012. Phillip Island has lost a treasured friend but Joan will always be remembered.



Heather Mitchell and Joan Kirner at the 10th birthday of Landcare.

The Shearwater Festival took out the top prize in the State Community Hart Awards. The 2015 Festival will be held in Cowes on November 21st and 22nd.

The PICS committee has been concerned for some time with its declining membership and is about to embark on an Awareness and Membership Drive. Steve Angel, a committee member, has prepared a 10 page strategy for the above exercise, which will be discussed and acted upon at the next PICS committee meeting.

Meanwhile existing members are encouraged to ask friends if they can consider supporting the ongoing involvement of PICS in the Island's environmental issues, by becoming a member now.

In 2018 PICS will celebrate 50 years since its formation. Much has been achieved in that time but there will always be more to be done.

Thank you for your continuing support. Your membership is valued.

Anne Davie

COASTCARE REPORTS

Busy Coastcare time! Coastcare groups on Phillip Island have been very busy in recent weeks, preparing for, and carrying out, their planting programs. The declaration of 2015 as a strong “El Nino” year by the Bureau of Meteorology and good rain in early May has encouraged planters to get in early, to try to get their plants established before the expected dry conditions of late spring.

1. Red Rocks:

Red Rocks Coastcare held a successful planting day on 7th June, and welcomed both local MP for Bass, Brian Paynter, and BCSC Mayor, Cr Kimberley Brown, to our volunteer crew of 16 for the day. Though conditions were windy, our nine planting sites, in areas previously cleared of the invasive weed Blue Periwinkle, were sheltered and quite pleasant in patchy sunshine. About 400 plants went in, including 15 Bursarias which had special tall wire guards installed around them to prevent damage from wallabies. Thanks to all who participated. Another small planting day is scheduled for July 5th.



2. Saltwater Creek:

For Saltwater Creek Coastcare, Sunday 14th June was the culmination of preparation and activity for well over a year, marking the final stages of the project “Restoration of Coast Banksia Woodland at Saltwater Creek”. This project, funded by a Victorian Coastcare Communities grant for \$7,000, included removal and burning of boxthorn from the bank of Saltwater Creek, control of kikuyu which had invaded the foreshore reserve from the adjacent golf course and propagation of hundreds of tube stock. It seeks to revegetate an area (pictured below) that had been kept mown for 10 years, adjacent to the Aussie Golf Ranch. The key species used was Coast Banksia, and other species followed the recommendations of a vegetation report completed by Alison Oates (botanist and PICS member) in 2014. This included Sweet Bursaria, and both the Banksias and Bursarias were guarded with high wire netting against wallabies.

The planting was structured in several ways. A densely planted 2m strip of the common coastal ground cover/shrubs Seaberry Saltbush and Bower Spinach was positioned 5m from the golf course boundary to act as a green barrier to the invasion of kikuyu which carpets most of the golf course. Several open grassy patches were planted out with Poa tussock, but no trees, to provide habitat diversity. A generous set-back of Banksia and Bursaria 20m from golf course greens and tees will prevent any future intrusion of roots.



We were delighted to have 24 volunteers take part in the planting which accomplished nearly 1000 plants going in, and installation of 86 high wire guards. It was a great achievement, and will be followed up with

several hundred more plants on the 28th June. All we need to do now is pray for rain!

3. Coastcare Leadership Program

The Coastcare Leadership Program, held at the KCC during the first weekend of May, proved to be very successful, though rather rushed. Some site visits in the afternoons had to be abandoned because of lack of time, but we did get to Saltwater Creek and to Red Rocks, the latter a very short visit. There were over 40 participants, and hopefully the contacts made will result in more collaboration between the various Island Coastcare groups.

Keynote speaker on both the Saturday and the Sunday was Gidja Walker, a well-known coastal ecologist, who gave excellent presentations on vegetation management. Other speakers covered a great variety of topics, from an overview of Coastcare in Victoria to risk assessment procedures for working bees. It was all very informative, and left us with a lot to think about. Each Island Coastcare group present had a chance to talk about their activities, and afternoon visits to their various project sites were a feature of the workshop.

Special thanks and congratulations must go to Gayle Seddon, from Surf Beach/Sunderland Bay Coastcare, for her organisation of the event, which was supported by a Coastcare Victoria grant, the Phillip Island Nature Parks, and Bass Coast Shire Council. Gayle's many months of preparation and promotion ensured we experienced a memorable and very worthwhile program.

John Eddy, Red Rocks Coastcare coordinator

Climate Change with Ray Astbury, Groundswell member

It amazes me that simple scientific facts are obviously not understood by the leaders around the world. If they took the time to familiarize themselves with some key facts I do think that many would then act out of common decency and consideration for those who follow.

What is the simple basis of the whole problem? It is this. During the development of human civilization the greenhouse effect remained relatively stable. It keeps the temperature at the surface of the earth about 50 degrees C warmer than up at the tropopause. The most influential of the greenhouse gases is carbon dioxide and the planet's atmosphere contained some 2,000 billion tons of it back just a couple of hundred years ago. This has now increased to a level exceeding 3,000 billion tons. How do we know man has caused this increase? A branch of science relating to isotopes of elements actually proves this beyond doubt and Climate Change deniers have no answer to this.

How does CO₂ have this unusual ability to keep us warm? Well, scientists discovered that unlike say oxygen and nitrogen which are far more prevalent, CO₂, to simplify things, prevents a certain amount of heat which we have received from the sun from escaping back into the outer atmosphere.

It is a scientific fact that the bulk of the additional CO₂ that we have pumped into the atmosphere since the industrial revolution will stay there for centuries. So we have a very serious problem on our hands when one considers these basic facts, particularly the affect CO₂ has on controlling our temperature.

When we look at physical results of warming and the effect it is now having all around the world, these simple aforementioned basic scientific facts become just so important. Yes, indeed commonsense must prevail and we must decide very quickly once and for all, that coal, gas and oil must stay in the ground. The rapidly melting Arctic alone tells us that it is very late in the day.

The combustion of carbon $C + O_2 = CO_2$ Of course for fossil fuels it is much more complicated than that but OK for the exercise you're about to see. Now if we apply the atomic weights to this simple formula we get $12 + 32 = 44$ This can be substituted for kilos or tons or whatever unit of weight i.e. 12 kilos of Carbon when burnt with 32 kilos of O₂ from the air produces 44 kilos of CO₂. So a tank full of petrol produces a very much greater weight of CO₂. Hmm. This may be common knowledge to many people but who stops to think about the power we use and the cars on the road around the world today?

Our July 4 Speaker

We are most fortunate to have Aileen Vening as our speaker on Saturday July 4. Aileen has been a resident of South Gippsland for 20 years and a former president of the South Gippsland Conservation Society. She is a secondary teacher of English and Geography at Wonthaggi Secondary College

During 2014, while on leave, Aileen developed coastal geography education programs for the SGCS, focusing on natural processes and climate change.

She also completed a 3 day training program with the Al Gore Climate Reality project. Aileen is keen to share the good news about what is happening and what is possible in order to address the issue of climate change, in a presentation titled 'Renewable Energy: Why Not?' So come along and catch up with all the latest trends in renewable energy, starting 7.30 p.m. at the Heritage Centre meeting room Cowes, 89 Thompson Ave.

It's WHALE season!

Our intrepid whale photographers Lisa and Alia Schonberg are back out on the Wildlife Cruises boat each weekend, hoping for the best whale photos and wearing their warmest wet weather gear. If you see whales or dolphins, you can report them to the Wildlife Cruises number as they keep a database of sightings. Phone 5952 3501. Orca (Killer Whale) sightings go to an Orca data base as they record all Western Port Orcas. Phone

Orca sighting 0401 011 022 or visit www.ozorcas.com If you are on Facebook, you can also view and comment on

Gippsland whale sightings at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Whalewatchgippsland/484337368323600>

There is also the "Whale Whisperer" Facebook site:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.321311934561509.95544.321290944563608&type=1>

Here is one of Lisa's wonderful whale photos, taken in Western Port:



Minutes of the General Meeting held 11.4.2015 at the Heritage Centre meeting room, Cowes, 7.30 p.m.

Present: As per the Attendance Book

Apologies: As per the Attendance Book

The meeting was preceded by a talk by Dr Duncan Sutherland, Senior Researcher with Phillip Island Nature Parks, about "Focusing on wildlife monitoring with camera traps on Phillip Island."

Minutes of previous meeting held Saturday January 10, 2015: Moved Margaret Hancock. Seconded Penny Manning *Carried*.

Business arising:

1. Blue Gum Reserve. Friends of Blue Gum Reserve are meeting tomorrow at Scout Hall 11 a.m. BCSC will be numbering trees, GPS readings for all trees. Numbers out of reach. Bird watchers will know which tree numbers birds are in. Embankment on north side of

Scout Hall of indigenous herbs identified by Alison Oates in the botanical report – thanks to PICS for funding this from Public Fund. BMBB may be able to propagate the herbs. Alison waiting for comment from tomorrow's meeting to complete the report.



Blue Gum Reserve. Photo Alison Oates.

2. Porticipate is in recess due to change of government and change of policy.

3. PWP is to continue as a sub-committee of PICS. Meeting each month. New pamphlet produced. Having discussions around Infrastructure Victoria, which will, once set up, make recommendations regarding the next container port for Victoria.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

Central Regional Coastal Plan 2015-2020 Draft for comment

Central Regional Coastal Board, acknowledging receipt of our submission

FOCIS newsletter

Outwards:

Submission on Central Regional Coastal Board plan draft.

General Business:

1. John Eddy gave a Coastcare report. Red Rocks CC has had two working bees for site maintenance and sea spurge. Need to keep at Blue Periwinkle as they emerge. Spurgebusters – main site west of Justice Rd, keeping ahead of seedlings and stopping seed from setting. Saltwater Creek CC working bee January on south west side of Saltwater Creek, Anchorage Beach to the creek. Mainly Pittosporum with 25+ volunteers. Most effort has been in the grant project – kikuyu sprayed and follow up done. Big planting in June-July with 1000+ plants to go in – just need rain. Need to make up lots of guards to keep wallabies off Bursaria etc. 26.4.15 SWCCC working bee Anchorage Beach car park for sea spurge. First Weekend in May there will be a big Coastcare conference at the KCC, put together by Surf Beach Sunderland Bay CC with a grant. Event, agenda and registration is up on PICS FB page.

2. Come for a Walk book. PICS is putting in for grants from Bendigo Bank and Bass Coast Shire Council community grants for the publication of a second edition, which will be completely revised from the first edition.

3. Patsy and Maurice alerted the meeting to the Federal government feral cat plan out for comment until July 2015. The plan can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/threat-abatement-plans/draft-feral-cats-2015>

4. John suggested that the Scenic Estate parklands be named the J & A Swan Reserve after John and Ailsa Swan. The estate will not be named until all of the blocks are acquired. Anne suggested that an indigenous name might be more appropriate.

5. Margaret informed the meeting that BCSC will meet in Cowes next Wednesday, which is a good opportunity for locals to ask questions.

6. Anne reported that she and Christine will be working on a publication for women in conservation on Phillip Island to be launched International Women's Day in 2018 for PICS's 50th birthday and the 150th celebrations of closer settlement on PI. Meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

VALE JOHN SWAN

PICS Life Member John Melvin Swan died, aged 91, on 15.6.15, peacefully at his home in South Yarra. John and his first wife Ailsa (dec) joined PICS in 1968 and were devoted to Phillip Island's environment, including the improvement of their 20 acre farm at Rhyll. John was active in the environment locally and nationally, was a foundation member of the Victorian Conservation Trust (now Trust for Nature), chair of the Crown of Thorns Starfish Research C/ee, chair of the Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory c/ee, and member of the Victorian Coastal Council, among many other activities. More locally he was involved in the Westernport Region Water Authority and Candowie-Lance Creek Catchment Management Group. For PICS, John was instrumental in the acquisition of Conservation Hill for the people of Victoria, seeking donations from throughout his wide network. John was Professor of Organic Chemistry at Monash University, and served as Dean and Pro Vice Chancellor. In later years he was involved heavily with the Seagrass Partnership. Our sympathy goes to his family at this sad time.

SHANE VEDAMUTTU AND SANDRA JOHNSON

PICS SPECIAL MEETING 19.6.15

Sandra Johnson

Sandra is the Environment Engineer for the Port, for 5 ½ years. While there is a low likelihood of a major oil spill, there would be high consequences. Low because:

1. Design of ships – how double hulled.
2. Pilots for getting ships safely into harbour.
3. Sandy and muddy environment in WP much safer than bays with rocky outcrops.
4. WP has a deep channel.

There is a designated national authority for Oil spill response (AMSA). National contingency plan; pre-positioned equipment; program of exercising and training; detailed plans; international co-operation.

International body = International Convention on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response (MARPOL) since 1990. Unfortunately oil spills know no boundaries. Fixed wing aerial dispersant spraying equipment; 9 stockpiles around Australia. National Response team to draw on. Use modelling, atlas, training, experts on hand 24/7. Within 2-3 hours the team can model where the oil spill is going. Possible to boom off areas e.g. seal colony. Maps are updated continuously. Hundreds of maps with many overlays are used.

Whether the oil stays on the surface depends on the composition of the oil. Diesel and hazardous substances are dealt with by a separate agency and a Chemical Contingency Plan.

More ships are moving to diesel, but bunker oil is used extensively for long-haul. All types of oils are covered by the plan WP operates under. Diesel has to be left to evaporate, as you can do more damage to the environment trying to clean it up. Can't skim off large spreads of oil, so use dispersants. Smaller globules of oil break down more easily.

There are stockpiles of equipment all around the Australian coast. Three tiers of oil spill emergency: Tier 1 less than 10 tonnes would use a boom or absorbents; Tier 2 – 10-1,000 tonnes; 3 greater than 1,000 tonnes. Equipment housed at Hastings includes wheel skimmer, bush skimmer. Equipment elsewhere includes vacuums, booms. Ship for large-scale emergency would take 1-2 hours to reach here.

No refuelling is permitted at PoH. All done at Geelong. Protection of the Sea levy applies to all ship carrying over 10 tonnes of oil. Polluter pays in event of an oil spill. Vic has a State Response Team of 130 highly trained people. PoH has 50 ships per year, Patricks would like to boost that up to 100. Roz Jessup as member of State Recovery Team spoke to the meeting saying that most oil that affects penguins is from ships washing their holds offshore



Cr Claire Le Serve, Sandra Johnson, Anne Davie, Shane Vedamuttu and Roz Jessup

after offloading. SRT and PINP are developing a course with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, who are responsible for wildlife under VICPLAN. PINP will be advertising this volunteer program to collect and clean wildlife, and will call for volunteers to participate in the training.

Phillip Island Conservation Society, Inc.
The Penguin Newsletter
Second Quarter: June 2015
If undeliverable, return to:
PICS Inc.
PO Box 548
COWES, 3922

Port Of Hastings Oil Spill and Exploration Rig talk contd....

Shane pointed out that it was very expensive to train volunteers for oil spill clean-up, but he would love to have a trained team on Phillip Island. Labour intensive: needs 5 people to operate a boom. Esso is well-resourced and would also help in an emergency. Composition of dispersant changes often. Need to get permission from EPA before it is used.

Shane Vedamuttu

Shane showed a Power Point of a large variety of ships and shipping-related photos for Western Port. The refinery operated from 1957-1986. PoH has 2 tugs. HMAS Cerberus has 3,000 staff and they would also help in an emergency. One photo showed the Cowes anchorage in the 1980s with many tankers waiting. At that stage there were 600 ships per year coming into the port.

Re: Oil exploration drilling platform. No need for it in Bass Strait presently due to US producing so much oil and the price is down. Rig owned by Origin Energy. Does create noise, but within EPA levels. Jacks down, so the noise carries through the water. Some reports that it interfered with some people's TV reception. Origin pays fees to have it in WP, but the amount is confidential. Costs \$500,000 per day to operate the rig. Before it can be 'parked' the seabed has to be surveyed, at a cost of \$300,000 to make sure it's safe to park it there. A risk assessment is carried out, and that concluded that the safest place is off Observation Point.

This rig explores for oil in up to 10,000 feet of water. Can't just leave it in Bass Strait as it is a shipping hazard. WP is 'the second best natural harbour on the planet' according to Shane. The rig could go to Geelong, but the shipping lane is narrow, so it would be a shipping hazard. The rig cost \$500m and 5 years to build and would cost the same and take the same time to dismantle, at huge environmental cost. Although the anchorage at Flinders is bigger, it is much more exposed than off Cowes. Also requires 25m of water. Rig is called West Telesto. Instead of the 100+ people on board last time it was in the bay, it will now have only 10-12 using a back-up generator instead of full power, and minimal lighting just for safety instead of all lights on.

Shane went to Observation Point with Bessie Tyers when WT was in port last time and could see the disturbance to the birds there. He is trying to have the rig moved a bit closer to French Island. The supply vessel takes the effluent away to Geelong. All complaints regarding the rig end up with Shane.

The contract currently held by Patrick for the port expires in 2017. Shane finished his PP presentation with photos of several species of sponges inhabiting the man-made structures below Crib Point jetty. Gillian Collins arranged to have Sandra and Shane come to speak with us. Gillian has been PICS representative on the port's community committee since 2002.

Photos this edition: Maurice Schenkel, Lisa Schonberg, SGSC.com.au, Christine Grayden, Alison Oates. With thanks.