

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

December 2013



President's Report

Bass Coast Shire Council votes against adopting C132 Amendment – 'Waterville @ Cowes' Following the proposal to rezone land on the corner of Coghlan and Rhyll Roads from Farming Zone to Special Use Zone by Tract Consultants on behalf of Waterville@Cowes, an Independent Planning Panel was held. As reported in Council minutes of the meeting on 20/11/13, a total of 79 submissions were received with 47 raising concerns. The SCA made a detailed submission against Amendment C132.

While supporters argued that an expanded golf course and integrated residential development would enhance the viability of the golf course and provide a new residential market currently not provided for on Phillip Island, objections included the impacts of climate change and sea level rise and the proposal for extensive landfill and earth works for the residential development focussed on land above 3.2m AHD, together with concerns about acid sulphate soils and amenity, and overall impacts on the Rhyll Inlet including impacts on migratory birds, vegetation and other wildlife.

The Panel concluded that the C132 Amendment was strategically justified! However, at the Bass Coast Shire Council meeting on 20/11/13, a number of questions were raised about sea level and salt marsh impact of the proposed development. Notably Bob Baird of Cowes asked if staff and Councillors were aware that an EPBC [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act] (Australian Government) was now in place to list for protection coastal salt marshes. He said: "This protective Act is very recent and was not mentioned at the Panel hearing. It would affect the subject land."

A vote was held to approve Amendment C132. It was lost 4:2 against. Council resolved to: "Abandon Amendment C132 to the Bass Coast Planning Scheme for the following reasons: Council is required to take a precautionary approach to the rezoning of land and considers that the rezoning will have a detrimental impact on the significant wetlands (Rhyll Inlet); ii. the rezoning of the land will not enable for flora and fauna migration as the changing climate impacts on sea levels in the significant wetlands; and iii. the rezoning will not result in an overall net community benefit."

SCA applauds the decision by Bass Coast Shire Council and its recognition on the environmental values of the Rhyll Inlet estuarine zone. The results is a vote FOR the fragile saltmarsh environment that is the unique Rhyll Inlet, for Silverleaves and for Island wildlife and vegetation – and the migratory birds who rely so much upon this important area.

As reported in the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser on 27/11/13 according to BCSC Planning Director Ms Duncan-Jones, Council's decision is final and cannot be overturned except directly by the State Minister for Planning.

Thank you to all who supported the campaign to save the land from development.

Port of Hastings - Proposed Port Development

The State Government has called for Expressions of Interest for its proposed container port at Hastings. If successful this will mean a Shanghai-sized container port in the mid 2020's in a highly sensitive marine environment – with an estimated 300 ship visits per week! Westernport is already under threat on a number of other fronts – one quantifiable impact being a decline in shorebirds estimated to be 30% down in the past 15 years.

It is notable that a campaign to 'Save Westernport' from similar development was fought in the 1970s with the then State Government eventually abandoning its plans. The concerns were the same: the vital need to protect the assets of Westernport including marine reserves, sea grasses, estuarine mangroves, flora and fauna from the effects of built Port infrastructure (including dredging) and potential environmental disasters such as oil tanker spills and ship effluent.

Today, the existing Port of Hastings is located within the Westernport Biosphere, abuts protected national park on French Island, and marine reserves, as well as being located opposite Cowes and Silverleaves beaches.

The Phillip Island Advertiser has already received letters of concern about impacts of dredging and increased shipping on marine life, water quality and shorebirds. We share those concerns.

SCA considers Port of Hastings extension as an inappropriate development and in coming weeks and months, we will be advising our members and other supporters of key ways in which you can help Save Westernport – again!

Tread Lightly in Silverleaves this season

The Hooded Plovers are again nesting at Silverleaves beach. We urge everyone visiting the beach to avoid the nesting areas and ensure dog rules are observed. While holiday time can be great for humans, our activities can cause great stress for wildlife. Please remember to 'tread lightly' in 2014.

I would like to wish all our members and others enjoying the unique beauty of Silverleaves a very happy festive season. Thank you to the fantastic SCA Committee for its support and commitment and to all who believe we can protect this wonderful area against the threat of inappropriate development – large and small.

M.A.Johnston - President

Summer has arrived at Silverleaves

We have had a very wet winter with torrential rains and high winds; 55 mm of rain fell in just one day in September. This caused extensive flooding and sadly many Banksias trees were blown over. Silverleaves has been prone to flooding in the past – notably in 1996.

Silverleaves is on a very low lying area. While most water flows away after time, tide levels can also affect the ability of water to drain. The increase in housing development and smaller garden areas are also factors as there is less area for the water to be absorbed. With changing climate conditions, increased sea levels and more storm surges it is predicted we will see an increase in flooding events.

Working Bee Report 22 Sept 2013

The Bass Coast Shire Council has recently employed contractors to remove Mirror bush and control other weeds such as English Ivy and Kikuyu grass along the Silverleaves foreshore reserve. SCA's contribution is to help revegetate the area to restore it to its natural state: a banksia woodland. The working bee was a success and many thanks to the seven volunteers who worked hard to revegetate this area with 170 plants. This included 20 Banksia, 60 Ficinia, 10 Boobialla, 40 Rhogodia, 20 Tetragonia and 20 Lomandra.

Fire safety at Silverleaves

Silverleaves is blessed with wonderful vegetation which attracts a wide variety of bird and animal life. It is why many of us have chosen to live and holiday in the area.

Silverleaves is a high bushfire risk area. Bushfire activity can also occur outside the Silverleaves area and can move quickly, come from many directions and be unpredictable. The C.F.A. held a meeting at the Silverleaves Store in October which was informative and specific to the area.

The most important message was that residents and visitors must be prepared and have a bushfire plan, especially for days when the fire rating is severe, extreme or Code Red. Leaving early is always the safest option; lives are lost when people make last minute decisions to flee a bushfire.

Due to the road network Silverleaves access is limited. Roads may become blocked by fire, fallen trees, emergency vehicles and visibility poor due to smoke. Power may be out, communications limited and you may not receive an official warning about fire in the area.

There is no Community Fire Refuge in Silverleaves, however there is a Neighbourhood Safer Place (Place of Last Resort) at Cowes Recreation Reserve, 10-14 Church St, Cowes. As a last resort, go to the Silverleaves beach if safe to do so.

You need to know:

Where you will go ahead of time

How you will get there

When you will leave

What you will take with you

Be prepared. Reduce your bushfire risk and prepare your house and property for the impact of burning embers and radiant heat. Be aware of the regulations about removing vegetation without a permit, for more details contact the Bass Coast Shire 1300 226 278
<http://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au>

If you see a fire in the area or fires on the foreshore, call 000. Fires are never permitted on the beach. Visit the CFA website at cfa.vic.gov.au or ring 1800 240 667 for more information on how to prepare for the bushfire season.

Hooded Plovers Update



Hooded Plover



Red Capped Plover

There is a Hoodie nest with three eggs at Silverleaves east which has been roped off and signs erected by Phillip Island Nature Park. It's our usual pair of orange over metal on the left leg, and black over light green on the right, while the other bird is unbanded. There are also three Red-capped Plover nests from Silverleaves to Observation Point.

There has also been success elsewhere around the island with two Hoodie chicks at Anchorage Road-Ventnor. This is a brand new pair this season nesting in an area that hasn't been Hooded Plover territory for over 20 years. We also have two chicks at Elizabeth Cove near Grossard Point. So fingers crossed we continue this good start to the season.

You can help them by:

Paying attention and abiding by all signage (breeding areas will be well signed)

Stay out of the sand dunes and walk quickly along the water's edge where there are signed breeding areas

Report any nests to PINP 5951 2800

4/12/2013- breaking news from PINP: the hoodie nest at Silverleaves has hatched but there is uncertainty about the number of chicks.

Dogs and Cats at Silverleaves

Help protect this unique area and keep control of your pets when they are outside. Bass Coast Shire and Phillip Island Nature Park have regulations about where and when dogs are allowed on the Silverleaves beach:

1 December to 30 April-

On leash only during restricted hours

7.00am – 10.00am and 5.00pm – 8.00 pm

Dogs are not permitted on the beach from the east end of Silverleaves Road to Observation Point at anytime. Inform others of threats to nesting Hooded Plovers as the breeding season will continue until March.

Snakes on Phillip Island



Lowlands copperhead (Austrelaps superbus)

Copperheads are the only snake native to Phillip Island. They are most active in warm weather and like to live in damp habitats like swamps as they eat frogs. Their colour varies: the body can be light grey to red brown/black and pale white yellow to pink orange underneath and usually a metre long.

Copperheads are shy and prefer to avoid humans. If cornered, they will hiss loudly, flatten their body and thrash about. With further provocation they may lash out, though they are slow to strike. It's always best to walk away and simply leave them alone. They are a protected species. And a sobering thought, for every one you see there are many you don't!

Although they are extremely venomous they have a small mouth and struggle to get their venom into a target. The venom is neurotoxic (damaging nerves), ruptures the blood cells, and damages the cells and muscles - but rarely causes fatalities.

If bitten on a limb, apply a pressure bandage and immobilise the limb. If bitten elsewhere, apply continual pressure to the bite site. Do not wash the wound as the venom can confirm identification.

Seek immediate medical assistance; for an Ambulance call 000 or 112 if you have no service on your mobile.

Weed of the month



Mirror Bush Coprosma repens

The Mirror bush is a New Zealand native and not indigenous to Australia. It is regarded as a significant environmental weed and there are many growing near the Cowes end of Silverleaves. Mirror bush has been a popular garden plant due to its hardy nature and salt tolerance but it out-competes native species and can form a monoculture, shading out native grasses and shrubs.

It derives its name from the mirror like sheen on the upper sides of the leaves and can grow up to four metres in height. Plants are either male or female and the flowers are small and white, followed by small fleshy orange berries on female plants.

Dispersal is commonly through the berries as they are a popular food for birds. Plants also strike from cuttings and garden refuse is a major source of infestation. Where limbs touch the ground new root systems often form.

Control: Hand removal is the best control method however removing more mature bushes can be hard work. Cutting and painting roots with poison is effective but re-treatment may be required. As the leaf is waxy spraying can be ineffective without the addition of a penetrant. Bushes can also be cut back and covered with black plastic. In areas where Mirror Bush is prolific, staged removal and revegetation to prevent loss of soil is the best approach. Priority should be given to female plants bearing fruit.

If you find any Mirror Bush, Polygala, Sea Spurge, Agapanthus, Ivy or any other weeds growing in the foreshore vegetation please notify the SCA Secretary Jarvis Weston 0413 386 049 (m) or email jarvis-kara@bigpond.com

NEXT S.C.A. MEETING

- Saturday 25 January 2014
- 3.00pm
- Meet at the Silverleaves Reserve

Please feel welcome to come to the meeting and hear more about SCA plans, propose ideas, and meet other residents of Silverleaves. We look forward to seeing you then.

SCA Membership

Memberships are due for 2014 and are for the calendar year. It's only \$10.00 and includes four issues of the SCA newsletter, which is also available by email. Donations are very welcome and help us complete valuable weed clearing and revegetation projects amongst other activities. Complete the membership form with your cheque and send to:

The Secretary Silverleaves Conservation Association Inc
P.O.Box 9037 Cowes, VIC 3922

Or make a direct deposit online:
Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000 Account 132 984 592.

SCA Diary for 2014

- **January 11 Nature Walk.**
10.00am – 12.00am meet at east end of Silverleaves Avenue.
- **January 25 Working Bee** to weed recently revegetated area on the foreshore. 2.00pm at the Silverleaves Store
- **January 25 SCA Committee meeting**
3.00pm at the Silverleaves Reserve
- **Easter SCA Plant Stall** at the Silverleaves Store
- **June/July Working Bee** Revegetation of the foreshore
- **August/ September Working Bee** Revegetation of the foreshore

If you have a story to tell about Silverleaves or would like to make a contribution to the newsletter please contact the SCA Newsletter Editor by email myra.holmes.000@gmail.com

Swan Hill Mo