

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

February 2013

President's Report

Call for Vigilance to Protect our Precious Natural Assets

Since I last wrote, SCA held its first event of the year, a walk along Silverleaves beach east towards Observation Point. The purpose of the walk, led by two expert rangers from Phillip Island Nature Parks, was to observe shorebirds, including the hooding plovers that nest on the edge of the dune. We were lucky enough to see two pairs and be able to observe them from a safe distance via high-powered telescope. A report on some exciting news about the 'hoodies' is included in this issue.

This is a crucial time in the fortunes of one of Victoria's most successful hooded plover colony. It highlights the need for vigilance in our activities – walking at water's edge if venturing in that area, and never taking a dog past the NO DOGS sign.

Dogs were a serious problem again over the Christmas break. Bass Coast Shire Council is now deploying Rangers who can be contacted on mobile to attend a breach of the dog rules at Silverleaves. For the area where dogs can be walked at certain times on the beach, the key rule is no dog is to be off leash ANYTIME.

While on our walk, we also noted the presence of two kayakers and one runner all of whom entered the Rhyll Inlet disturbing the birds that had landed on Observation Point. The birds fly great distances to rest at this protected location. Our guides explained that if disturbed by humans or dogs, especially at high tide they must rise up and fly to a safer location. As the tide rises, there is no beach where they can roost so this means a long trip across the channel to French Island.



Imagine flying 15,000 kilometres to rest at the Rhyll Inlet and then having to set off again! We are hoping to campaign for improved education about boating and walking behaviour at Observation Point. Meanwhile, we suggest walking near but not to the Point or into the Rhyll Inlet.

On the same theme, vigilance is also needed to report breaches of unlawful clearing of native vegetation. A number of bush blocks have recently changed hands and members have sighted illegal clearing of vegetation.

For 2013, we hope to protect, maintain and enhance the vegetation in the area and also hold weed removal working bees. SCA wants to ensure no more vegetation is removed inappropriately and that we are able to protect and enhance not just ***Banksia integrifolia***, (Coastal Banksia), the symbol of our organisation, but also other precious flora assets.

The fiercely hot weather is a reminder of the many threats to the natural environment – climate change and interference by people being two of the leaders. There is energy and commitment in SCA to work on these and other key issues.

I look forward to seeing our dedicated members, friends and visitors at the sea spurge removal working bee in March. Meanwhile, please direct any comments, concerns or ideas you have in response to this report to our Secretary Jarvis Weston.

M A Johnston

President

Nature Walk to Observation Point



On Sunday 13th January, over 30 members of the SCA joined Phillip Island Nature Parks' Jarvis Weston and Stuart Murphy on a walk to Observation Point to learn more about the local wildlife and conservation works which has been conducted to protect the area.

Special thanks to Jarvis and Stuart who gave up their Sunday morning and shared their wealth of knowledge about the area and generously answered our many questions. Jarvis lives in Silverleaves and we are very lucky to have him as the Secretary of the SCA.

We saw a new pair of Hooded Plovers identified by a leg band, and other migratory birds at Observation Point.

The group was also shown work conducted in the local area as part of the Ramsar Protection Project funded by Caring For our Country including weed control programs to remove Sea Spurge and Myrtle-leaf Milkwort (*Polygala myrtifolia*) from the beach and woodland areas, and the removal of threats such as feral cats and rabbits.

The Hoodies

In breaking news the nesting Hooded Plovers have hatched 2 chicks, which are now busy feeding on the beach east of Silverleaves Ave, and avoiding threats such as predators, weather, and disturbance from people (and dogs if they are there illegally). It takes 5-6 weeks for these chicks to fly and then avoid the threats mentioned above.

Illegal activities in Silverleaves, who to report to?

For any suspected illegal activities to the east of Silverleaves Avenue and Bruce Avenue, Phillip Island Nature Park has jurisdiction. This includes the reserve all the way to Rhyll Inlet and Conservation Hill. Illegal activities can include: Dogs on beach (no dogs are allowed anytime), camping, fires, vegetation removal etc. The best way to report suspected illegal activity is to ring the Nature Park on (03) 5951 2800 or email Jarvis at jweston@penguins.org.au.

For illegal activities in the remainder of Silverleaves, including the foreshore in front of the residential area, Bass Coast Shire Council has jurisdiction. Illegal activities may include dogs on beaches (dogs are allowed certain times of the day) and vegetation removal. Anyone with information about illegal foreshore vegetation removal are encouraged to contact Bass Coast Shire Council on 1300 BCOAST (226 278).

For emergency situations i.e. fires, criminal behaviour, call 000 immediately.

Foreshore vegetation Removal

Vegetation within the residential area of Silverleaves has a vegetation protection overlay (VPO) as part of the Bass Coast Planning Scheme. The objective of the VPO is: "To protect and enhance existing indigenous and larger native species within the urban area of Phillip Island".

A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop any tree or shrub with a girth greater than 30 centimetres (when measured above ground level) or a height of at least two metres. This does not include introduced species or to species identified as being weeds; or to pruning.

Vegetation within the foreshore reserve is protected through the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, and "a person must not, in the reserve, except in accordance with a written permit – remove, cut, damage, displace, deface or interfere with any rock, timber, tree, shrub, plant, wildflower or other vegetation."

Penalties range from fines: individual \$704, company \$1408 and go up to tens of thousands of dollars in the Magistrates Court.

Anyone with information about illegal foreshore vegetation removal are encouraged to contact Bass Coast Shire Council on 1300 BCOAST (226 278). If possible take a photo of the person responsible whilst in the act to assist with identification and as evidence.

Margaret Cox from BCSC Planning Enforcement has kindly offered to attend the next SCA meeting to shed some more light on this important issue.

Presidents note:

Mornington Shire appears to be more aggressive in its prosecution of illegal vegetation removal than our own Shire Council. In one year alone, it issued a maximum penalty – including reinstatement of vegetation – of \$120,000! The shire also prosecuted five people in the Magistrates Court where fines of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 were imposed.

We wonder why Bass Coast Shire Council does not put more seriously pursue the breaches such as those along Silverleaves Avenue – where bush blocks have been cleared of ALL vegetation illegally. Once native vegetation is gone it's gone for good and while it can be replanted the ecosystem and habitat it provides cannot be replaced in the same form.

Inappropriate Development in Silverleaves

Help protect your wonderful natural environment of Silverleaves and neighbourhood character. If you are aware of any new building plans that maybe inappropriate or notice trees being cut down on private property without planning permits or have any concerns please let the SCA know and we will follow these up.

Contact the SCA Against Inappropriate Development co-ordinator Jane Westworth jane.west@mac.com or ring her on 59521775

Weed of the month - Agapanthus.

Agapanthus is seen in many gardens in Silverleaves as its tough and has pretty blue flowers. Unfortunately the seed is spread by birds, wind and humans and can easily jump fences.

Control measures include digging it out including the roots, spraying or pulling off flower heads before the seeds can spread.

Consider replacing with *Lomandra Longifolia*, Spiny-headed Mat-rush.



Lomandra Longifolia

Lomandra Longifolia is a wonderful indigenous plant that grows well in sandy soils. They can grow from 40cm up to a metre and are easy to maintain. Moisture soil is required for growth of the plant and once established is very tolerant to dryness and does not have pest and disease problems.

Plant Stall

The SCA are planning to have a plant stall to be held at the Silverleaves General Store from 9am on Easter Saturday as a fundraiser and further promote its work. Plants for the stall will be obtained from Barb Martin Bush Bank and from Dave Martin BCSC. We will provide more information in our next SCA Newsletter.

Working Bee 2013

Come and help rid the foreshore of Sea Spurge, a very serious threat to Hooded Plover habitat.

When: Saturday 9th March at 10.00am

Meet at the end (Rhyll) end of Silverleaves Ave.

Please bring gloves, eye wear, and a good work ethic for 2 hours! We will aim to work from the end of Silverleaves Avenue back towards Cowes along the beach, pulling out Sea Spurge. We will also check the status of Hooded Plover breeding – hopefully the chicks have fledged!

NEXT S.C.A. MEETING

Annual General Meeting

- Sunday 10th March 2013
- 11.00am
- At the Silverleaves Reserve

Please feel welcome to come to the meeting and hear more about SCA plans, put forward your ideas and meet other residents of Silverleaves. The SCA committee will be meeting prior to the AGM at 10.00am.

We look forward to seeing you then.

SCA Membership

Remember to renew your membership for 2013.

Only \$10.00 subscription for the year and donations are very welcome. To save costs and save paper there are plans to make the newsletter also available by email so please include your email details. Complete the membership form with your cheque and send to;

Hon Secretary Silverleaves Conservation Association Inc
P.O.Box 9037 Cowes, VIC 3922
(Please note the new P.O.Box number.)

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

Laugh, kookaburra, laugh!



Photo by Richard Guy at the SCA Committee meeting held at the Reserve on the 12/1/13

Most of us in Silverleaves are familiar with the kookaburras' raucous cacophony at dawn and dusk. They are the most delightful sounding birds and it's very hard to suppress a smile when you hear one laughing.

Kookaburras require trees with nest hollows for breeding and most of the year they roost in family groups, snuggled up together on a branch. They eat a range of prey, including small reptiles such as lizards and snakes, insects, worms, snails and frogs.

What are they laughing about?

Kookaburras have a range of calls that are used at different times. The year-round **laugh song** advertises territorial ownership, as does the **chuckle**, which is also used to find missing family members. The laugh song is similar in the way family members join in at different times - making the song seem to rise and fall and sound very jovial.

The **chuck** is used in breeding, and the **squawk** is used to beg for food or is a sign of submission to aggressive family members, while the softer, more intimate **croon** or **soft squawk** is used in courtship and to calm the breeding female. The **cackle** signals aggression and an imminent attack, while the **kooaa** is used year round as a warning to the group.

At last, we know what the kookaburra is laughing about.

Source;
<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/10/14/2712935.htm> Article by Rachel Sullivan

