

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

May 2013



President's Report

Against considerable local opposition in the mid 2000s, farmland on Coghlan/Rhyll/Settlement Rd was rezoned resulting in the Shearwater Estate. Since being on-sold to another developer, this project is still incomplete and has required extensive engineering and other earthworks.

Now, Amendment C132 has been placed on exhibition by the Bass Coast Shire Council - seeking to rezone land from the Farming Zone (FZ) to a Special Use Zone (SUZ4) and introduce Schedule 4 to the Special Use Zone into the Bass Coast Planning Scheme.

A joint venture between Phillip Island Golf Club and Lechte Corporation, this Amendment would enable the so-called 'Waterville@Coves' – the creation of a large scale residential suburb of 122 houses at the corner of Rhyll and Coghlan Road on cleared farmland – and, like Shearwater Estate, developed on part of the Rhyll Inlet estuarine environment. Bass Coast Shire Council, with the exception of one opposing vote, got in behind this development at its August 2012 meeting effectively giving it the green light.

The proposal raises a number of very serious concerns, not just for its impacts on the Silverleaves area but for the broader Phillip Island environment.

Silverleaves Conservation Association (SCA) does not believe the proposed amendment has been correctly assessed. We believe 'Waterville@Coves' will create substantial problems including pollution risks through run off, deliver hard surfaces, roads, street lighting, and other unwanted and inappropriate urban impacts at the site.

It is also at odds with the community's stated preference for rural views and the retention of the unique Island amenity and character.

Furthermore, the effects of rising sea-level are still unknown and underestimated, together with the unknown impacts of the proposed earthworks and changes to drainage and natural water flows on the site (viz the Shearwater flood impacts on Silverleaves).

Save the Rhyll Inlet: At the centre of the Ramsar philosophy is the "wise use" concept. The wise use of wetlands is defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development". "Wise use" therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind. This development is neither wise use nor sustainable use of land adjoining Ramsar wetlands.

In its built form, this proposal would set a worrying precedent in effectively creating a new suburb on what is actually a highly sensitive environment in drastic need of proper restoration and management – not a housing development. It also ignores the more recent and highly visible effects of adjacent inappropriate development.

We should be building the resilience of wetlands to threats such as urban and resource development, particularly in the face of climate change and extended drought conditions. The recent rehabilitation of the Rhyll Transfer Station is a prime example of this, and Council should be building on such ecological gains.

There is already an oversupply of housing stock on Phillip Island. It simply does not need a new residential market. In light of the above, we wonder why this parcel of land, abutting Rhyll Inlet farmland has been given the rezoning green light by Bass Coast Shire Council. Like the adjacent Nicholls land it should not be included within the Coves and Silverleaves Settlement boundaries nor given 'Special Use Zone' approval.

Finally, SCA recently launched a key campaign 'Save the Rhyll Inlet'. The Rhyll Inlet (extending from Observation Point and as far west as the land now being covered by Shearwater Estate) existed long before humans 'mapped' their developments over it. It's been denuded, cleared and inappropriately developed. This trend should be urgently reversed. It is now vital that any further adjacent development is prevented to ensure its protection and enhancement.

Western Port Biosphere Reserve: Western Port has been chosen as a biosphere reserve because it has outstanding natural values, including a Ramsar wetland of international importance. The biosphere reserve covers approximately 2100 square kilometres, including the Mornington Peninsula, Western Port and the southern part of the Western Port water catchment. This area, known as Stage 1, was nominated to UNESCO in 2002. Phillip Island is included in the WPBR.

UNESCO biosphere reserves aim to keep special places—like Western Port—special by fostering conservation and sustainable development. They encourage the community to develop better ways to meet social and economic needs, while conserving natural processes and biodiversity. They support this through research, monitoring, education and information exchange. A key challenge for the WPBR is listed as: rapid urban expansion, causing loss of farmland, coastal landscapes and vegetation

Our Goal: World Wetlands Day is on 2 February every year. Our goal, by 2 February 2015, is to have protected and secured the estuarine environment that feeds into Western Port – the Rhyll Inlet –including the parcel earmarked for rezoning. SCA is committed to the fight to protect this unique area of Phillip Island.

ACT NOW - What you can do to help

By 17 May 2013 (but still noted after that date)

1. Write to Bass Coast Shire Council via email or post and submit arguments against the C 132 Rezoning. Your submission can be sent to: Strategic Planner, Bass Coast Shire Council, PO Box 118, Wonthaggi VIC 3995 or via email to strategicplanning@basscoast.vic.gov.au.
2. Contact Thompson Ward Bass Coast Shire Council Andrew Phillips and make your voice heard. Mobile 0448 082 953 or andrew.phillips@basscoast.vic.gov.au
3. Telephone the Bass Coast Shire Planning Department on 1300 226 278 and lodge your protest.
4. Contact Ryan Smith, the Victorian State Government Minister for Environment and Climate Change on 03 9637 8890 ryan.smith@parliament.vic.gov.au and Matthew Guy, Minister for Planning on 03 9938 5990 matthew.guy@parliament.vic.gov.au and tell them why the Rhyll Inlet must be protected against further development.
5. Contact Tony Burke, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities on (02) 6277 7640 or tony.burke.mp@environment.gov.au, and tell Tony why the Rhyll Inlet must be protected against further development.

Plant Stall report: It was great to see the number of plants sold and people who attended the SCA's Easter Plant Stall on Easter Saturday 30 March. Thanks to SCA Committee members/associates who gave up their morning to set up and sell plants – Don, Myra, Jane, Jarvis, Richard, Ros and Veronica, and Peter B– and to Bass Coast Shire and the Barb Martin Bush Bank for generously donating or providing discounted stock for sale.

The most positive outcome of the stall was the huge interest in native plants and the SCA too – and how to improve the unique local assets of Silverleaves by 'going native'.

We are hoping to hold another event later in the year. Watch this space for news.

M A Johnston

President

No Port for Western Port Bay-

The Plan is for an 8,750 Acre development of the Port of Hastings including a 4-6 klm expansion of the wharf in WesternPort for container imports and coal/woodchip exports:

SCA is very concerned about the Victorian Government's announcement to develop a container port at Port of Hastings. **We will be discussing a campaign against this at the next meeting and have already made contact with the Westerport and Peninsula Protection Council who have a great campaign going on their website:** <http://www.wppcinc.org/>

'The first week of April 2013 Dennis Naphthine said that a port in Westernport was preferred over the Bay West option because Bay West would need significant dredging. Westernport would need significant dredging too. This has terrible risks as suspended sediment can kill the plants and animals that are keeping Westernport healthy. Sea-grass loss, algal blooms and eutrophication can result.' - Karri Giles President Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council. Visit <http://www.wildaboutwesternport.org/>

Working Bee March 2013

It was an extremely hot day and there were only a handful of dedicated SCA members led by Jarvis Weston. But it was a success, as we only found two Sea Spurge plants thanks to the earlier, amazing efforts of SCA member John McGauran.

How one individual can make a difference

Many thanks to John McGauran and his wife who in February pulled out at least 10,000 Sea Spurge plants from the Silverleaves foreshore over 27 hours in February. This number was based on his calculations of one plant every ten seconds. There were two ute loads in total. An amazing effort.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Hooded Plover's Update by Jarvis Weston

SCA Secretary and Senior Environment Supervisor, Phillip Island Nature Parks (P.I.N.P.)



Not everyone may be aware of this, but the Hooded Plover pair that nests on Silverleaves is the same pair every year. Hoodies set up territories and will vigorously defend these areas from invasion from other Hoodies during the breeding season.

We definitely know one of the pair is the same one as it is banded - it has an orange flag over a metal band on the left leg and a black band over a light green band on the right. We abbreviate this, so that the bird is known as **Om/BkLg**.

The other bird is unbanded, so we are not 100% sure it is the same bird every year, but Hoodies are fairly monogamous, especially if they are successful breeders, which this pair surely is.

Om/BkLg established at Silverleaves in the 2006-07 breeding season. This was very good news as Hoodies hadn't been seen or bred there for many years. **Om/BkLg** was less than 12 months old when it first bred with its unbanded partner, and their first nest was recorded on 27/12/06 at Silverleaves east, on the same stretch of beach that they continue to nest on today. They have done extremely well, attempting to breed in all years, and PINP records show they have fledged 13 chicks since then.

The Silverleaves Hooded Plovers Breeding Record is:

- 2006-07 - fledged 3
- 2007-08 - fledged 0
- 2008-09 - fledged 2
- 2009-10 - fledged 2
- 2010-11 - fledged 0
- 2011-12 - fledged 4
- 2012-13 - fledged 2

To put this in perspective, Phillip Island has only had 51 chicks fledge during this period, meaning **Om/BkLg** has accounted for 25% of chicks fledging on Phillip Island in the last seven years.

This goes to show the importance of protecting good breeding pairs, such as **Om/BkLg** and its mate, by controlling introduced predators such as foxes and cats, and reducing disturbance by humans and dogs. This allows good breeders 'to do their thing', and keep the population sustainable.

Late Breaking News; The two fledglings from this season (yellow leg flags 02 and 03 were sighted at Forrest Caves on the 24/4/2013 amongst a flock of 18.

Grant applications - SCA recently applied for a Grant through the Department of Sustainability and Environment (now called Department of Environment and Primary Industries) Communities for Nature program. This grant application sought funds for weed control and revegetation along the Silverleaves foreshore, in conjunction with council, and also for the development of an SCA website. Unfortunately we were not successful.

Nonetheless, another opportunity has arisen through the Australian Government's Community Environment Grants program, and SCA has applied for funds for similar projects as above. Fingers crossed again, however federal funding is notoriously hard to get due to increased competition.

Regardless of these grant outcomes, SCA will continue to work on weed control and revegetation projects on the foreshore, in conjunction with council and PINP, and will look for other initiatives to fund the development of its website.

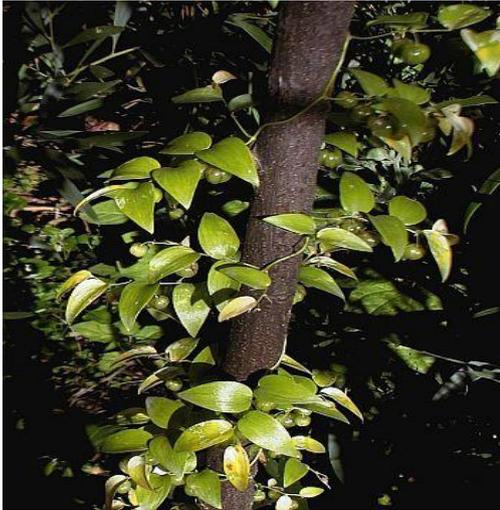
King Tide 26 to 30 May 2013

A King Tide is a term used to describe an especially high tide event occurring twice a year, when there is alignment of the gravitational pull between sun and moon. It will peak on the full moon on Saturday 25 May 2013

Sea level rise, climate change and king tides

King tides are a natural part of tidal cycles but they do give us a sneak preview of what higher sea levels could look like. The actual height reached by a king tide will depend on the local weather and ocean conditions on the day. It is possible that by 2060 to 2070 we could experience tides of the magnitude of summer's king tide events every month due to sea level rise induced by climate change. For further information about the potential effects of climate change on our coastal areas www.witnesskingtides.com

Weed of the month



Bridal Creeper (Asparagus Asparagoides)

Bridal Creeper is an environmental weed that was introduced to Australia from South Africa. It generally senesces in early summer, and re-shoots from its dense system of underground tubers in autumn and fruits in late spring. These tubers form 'mats' under the soil surface that prevent native seedling establishment. Birds eat the fruit and are responsible for seed spread.

Unlike many other weeds, bridal creeper is capable of colonising undisturbed ecosystems and conventional control methods can be problematic. For example, the use of herbicides can affect non-target species and infestations can be difficult to access. The most effective way to get rid of this weed is to dig up the underground tubers. Hard work but you will see results in the future where you have done this.

To dispose of removed tubers either burning or disposal at a green waste transfer station are the best options. The treated area will need to be monitored for re-growth, and indigenous plants such as *Lomandra*, *Poa*, *Dianella* and *Lepidosperma* can be planted in its place.

NEXT S.C.A. MEETING

- Sunday 2 June 2013
- 3.00pm
- At a venue yet to be announced

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

SCA Diary for 2013

Committee Meeting 2 June 2013

Committee Meeting 1 September 2013

SCA Membership: Only \$10.00 subscription for the year and donations are very welcome. The newsletter is now available by email. Complete the membership form with your cheque and send to;

Hon 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.

Dolphins at Silverleaves Beach

Barbara Wilkinson sent this brief note for the newsletter after seeing dolphins in the water at Silverleaves in February;

"In spectacular fashion, six dolphins chased fish just off the Silverleaves beach. Breaching, twisting and turning and working in unison to corral the fish. It was fantastic, and the 'show' continued for 20 minutes. They were only a few metres off the shore at high tide, on a February Sunday which was 35 degrees."

Editors Note-

These dolphins would most likely have been the Bottlenose dolphin, the "ever smiling" species of Dolphin found commonly around Port Phillip Bay and Westernport. Dolphins share with humans some common characteristics, they are warm blooded, they breathe air and produce milk for young. Source www.dolphinresearch.org.au

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