

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

March 2014



President's Report

Save Westernport – again!

In the 1970s, a sustained campaign was fought to save Western Port from development. BHP/Esso had plans to expand their operations at Hastings and the then State Government had a range of proposals including the development of French Island.

Since then, residential development and industrial expansion combined have increased the pressure on this fragile and shallow sea. Western Port has many unique and significant natural assets. Not only is it part of the Western Port Biosphere, but it is also host to migratory birds, some of which fly for thousands of kilometres from the Northern hemisphere to Observation Point. So too, is this important marine area home to significant mangrove assets – the spawning ground for many fish species and a very important part of the broader ecosystem.

Now the Naphine Government wants to green light the development of the Port of Hastings. In addition to the myriad access problems this proposal would cause (road and rail infrastructure akin to another Eastlink), we understand works would include the concreting of up to two kilometres of foreshore at Tyabb. Further, it is well documented that dredging causes silting and that historically, Western Port dredging has taken decades to subside.

Our concern isn't a 'Not In Our Back Yard' one. We see the proposal to enable 1000 ships a year to sail up to Hastings and dock as an inappropriate additional pressure on an already stressed marine and coastal environment. The argument put by the State Government is that Hastings is the only possible site for a second Port. This is simply wrong. Port of

Geelong and Port of Portland both offer existing facilities with room for expansions – and the opportunity to extend quality road and rail infrastructure and open up new markets. Hastings is situated on a tight corner of the Mornington Peninsula, an agricultural zone with tourist and residential assets.

Contrary to the communications from Port of Hastings Authority and the Naphine Government, the development has NOT been approved nor given the green light to proceed. There must be an Environmental Effects Study completed and Federal Government approval given for development in a Ramsar (the migratory bird's convention) site.

What can you do to stop this proposal?

Act now by writing to Greg Hunt, c/o Parliament House ACT 2600 the Federal Minister for the Environment and tell him we don't want Western Ports natural assets to be placed under threat from infrastructure development, potential oil spills threatening little penguins, bird and marine life, and the possible destruction of fishing grounds. Make the point that dredging causes silting and chokes life in the marine system. Ask him to say NO to Port of Hastings development. Write to your State Government member c/o 1 Spring Street Melbourne 3000.

Local issues

Silverleaves is protected by a vegetation overlay under Bass Coast Shire statute. This means a permit must be given before any vegetation may be removed. We ask all residents to note that foreshore vegetation removal is illegal. In instances where trees have been cut down to provide a sea view, a large billboard identifying the site may be erected where the vegetation was removed – and replanting completed behind.

SCA 2013 – Looking Back

Last year was the first full year of activities for the newly formed SCA. Early in the year, we established five key campaign areas each led by a committee member. All of the areas were active in 2013. Sea spurge removal was a highlight of the weed management group, and several awareness activities including a guided walk along the shore to observe and better understand hooded plovers and their protection was very well attended. Other valuable work in letter writing, lobbying Council, door knocking, leaflet drops, resident liaison, and photo archive research and collection were also completed by dedicated committee members and residents. Our Secretary prepared a second Grant submission for weed management and this time was successful.

Another key activity supported by many SCA members, was the hard work completed to prevent the development of 'Waterville at Cowes'. As flagged in our last issue, the Bass Coast Shire voted against the development proposal. We hope this parcel of land may one day be included in the Conservation Zone now covering the rest of the Rhyll Inlet Estuarine Zone.

We have hard work ahead of us in the fight against Port of Hastings. Many other groups are opposed and we hope to join with them - and stop the development saving Western Port forever.

This and other some key activities planned for SCA in 2014 are aimed at protecting and enhancing this beautiful natural corner of Phillip Island. I look forward with enthusiasm to working on our projects in 2014 with the dedicated SCA Committee, SCA members and also to meeting residents and visitors at our activities.

Thank you to all members and associated for your continued interest in protecting Silverleaves and in the SCA.

M A Johnston
President SCA

What's been happening around Silverleaves during summer?

John McGauran is an active SCA Committee member and had a wonderful experience whilst kayaking at low tide at Silverleaves. Here is his story:

"Little did I know what magical experience awaited me as I paddled my kayak at low tide in less than 2 meters of water. I was startled by a large dark shadow rising up to the left of my kayak within my arms reach. Naturally the movie 'Jaws' came to mind, but to my absolute joy realised it was a dolphin. It rose gently to the surface, not breaching, then dived underneath me and then rising again on my right side before gliding silently out of sight.

As I just sat there thinking how lucky I was, the dolphin returned and repeated its previous movements, as if to emphasize its majesty. I couldn't believe it"

Ed.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.

"Growing History, Half a century of history growing in Silverleaves" is a lovely booklet edited by the late Ethel Temby (our former Honorary Secretary) in 2009. There are still some copies left and they are available at the Silverleaves Store for a gold coin donation, while stock lasts.

Thank you Silverleaves General Store

For many years the Silverleaves Store have generously given space for the SCA notice board and distributed the SCA newsletters.

It was in the early 1950's when the first subdivision of Bob Sander's farmland occurred. Silverleaves Avenue was then just a narrow sandy track and many families camped on their blocks while building their houses, usually small unpretentious fibro-cement or wooden beach shacks. The wildlife was abundant; koalas in the trees, echidnas, wombats, an amazing variety of birdlife and plentiful fishing from the edge of the channel and from the shoreline.

In those early years, high tide was just over a metre from many foreshore block boundaries. Sand erosion was a big problem and in the 1960's, at the far eastern end of Silverleaves, the Council built long wooden groynes and many owners of foreshore blocks built brushwood groynes to slow the waves and catch the sand. Now, in some areas of Silverleaves, the foreshore has gained up to 30 to 40 meters of sand and self sown Ti Trees and Banksias have grown.

Silverleaves has changed enormously since those early years. But there are now some fourth generation families and many newer residents who still think Silverleaves is the best place in the world.

Hooded Plovers Update; Our resident Hooded Plover Om/BkLg (orange leg band over metal band on the left leg, and black leg band over light green on the right leg) and its unbanded partner have done it again and fledged another chick in January. This fledgling is banded with a yellow leg flag engraved '06 Om/BkLg. This pair now has a new nest with three eggs in the dunes towards Observation Point.

Hopefully they can have more success this season. There have been seven fledglings so far this season on the island, with a few chicks and nests still on the go. (Chicks are called fledglings when they learn how to fly). There are only 500 - 600 Hooded Plovers in Victoria and Phillip Island is one of the only places where the population is increasing.

Have you spotted the Buff-Banded Rail Bird?



These rarely seen birds have been sighted in the fringe area between the Rhyll wetlands and Settlement Road where there is indigenous vegetation and near the Cowes Golf Course at the corner of Coghlan Road and Settlement Road.

Successful grant to protect Silverleaves

Good news, the SCA were recently successful in applying for a grant to 'Protect and enhance Coast Banksia Woodland and Hooded Plover habitat at Silverleaves' through the Communities for Nature Program 2013/14. This grant will supply funding of nearly \$10,000 for woody weed control, spraying of weeds such as English and Cape Ivy and Bridal Creeper, and for revegetation along the foreshore reserve.

SCA will work with the Bass Coast Shire Council to appoint contractors to control the weeds, and will conduct working bees to complete the revegetation component of the grant over the coming winter months. The entire grant project is to be completed by June 2016.

Sandflies

Biting midges (locally know as 'sandflies) are common around Silverleaves in the summer months and can be a real nuisance as some people have a severe reaction to their bites. They are very small (1.0mm – 3.0mm) and sometimes referred to as 'no-see-ums'!

Sandflies are most active in calm weather and biting tends to occur around dawn and dusk, but may continue through the night and during overcast days. Only the females bite, using the blood they obtain as a source of protein for developing a batch of eggs. Biting sandflies are linked with the new and full moon phases and being aware of the lunar cycle may assist with planning outdoor activities or holiday times.

The severity of reaction to bites varies. Some people who live in the area and are continuously exposed to sandflies may become desensitised over time. Others may have severe reactions with red swollen bites which are usually painful and itchy and can persist for days or weeks. Some people may not be aware of being bitten and the itching may not start for some hours. The application of an ice pack or mild antihistamine may provide some relief, and in severe cases medical advice may be required.

How do you avoid being bitten?

Wearing long, loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing and avoid being outside around dawn and dusk and at other times if sandflies are active.

Windows and doors should be fitted with small mesh size insect screens as sandflies can fit through standard fly screens. Ceiling fans or other air circulation devices may also discourage sandflies from biting.

The use of insect repellents will provide some protection. The most effective repellents contain diethyl toluamide (DEET), with lotion formulations providing longer protection than liquid or aerosol sprays. As with all chemicals, repellents should be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Natural Repellent Recipes

Gillian Armstrong has had great success with this homemade insect spray for sandflies:

1 tablespoon oil
2 tablespoons Dettol
1 teaspoon Citronella oil
About 200 mls water
Put into a spray bottle and shake before use

SCA Calendar 2015

The SCA Committee are proposing to publish a Silverleaves calendar for 2015 as a fundraiser. We are collecting your photos of Silverleaves, of the beach, vegetation and wildlife. Send us your favourite photo and if selected you could have your photo included. There are only twelve months to a year so only the best twelve photos will be selected.

Send your photo as a JPG to the newsletter editor myra.holmes.000@gmail.com with your contact details.

Weed of the month - Cape Ivy



Delaisia odorata or Cape Ivy is a perennial plant that grows as a ground cover or climber and looks similar to English Ivy. Leaves are bright green, fleshy and ivy-shaped and the flowers are clusters of small, unpleasantly scented yellow, daisy-like flower heads and flower from July to September.

Cape Ivy quickly climbs trees and can form a thick mat on the ground smothering out native plants. Its seeds are spread by birds, wind and plant fragments will grow into new plants. Cape Ivy is poisonous to mammals, spiders and aquatic critters.

Removal options: start with small plants first and then target outer edges of larger infestations before seed is set. Fine roots form at nodes along the stems and during removal these easily break off, remaining in the ground to develop new plants.

Cut vine stems growing up trees to prevent flowering and leave to die. Immediately paint with a suitable herbicide any cut stump that is left in the soil. For large infestations spray foliage with a herbicide when the plant is actively growing from June to September. Lontrel is an effective registered chemical.

Disposal: Seal any leaves or stems in strong bags and take to the tip or if removal from the site is difficult, ensure stems are placed off the ground (on branches or a platform) to dry out and decompose. Monitor sites regularly for regrowth or new seedlings.

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 or email jarvis-kara@bigpond.com

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

Apologies

Our apologies for the lateness of this newsletter, there have been some technical problems with printing which meant we were unable to get the newsletter out before the AGM on the 9 March. At the AGM all committee members were reinstated and if you would like to read the minutes of the meeting or the presidents report please contact the SCA Secretary.

And apologies for those who may not have been receiving the newsletter, please remember to send a new membership form when you renew your membership so we can keep our mailing list up-to-date, especially those who renew online.

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 by mail or email. Donations are very welcome and thank you to those members who have recently made donations when renewing their membership. Every dollar counts as it helps 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

Next SCA meeting

- Sunday 25 May 2014
- 2.00pm
- Silverleaves Reserve

Please come to the meeting and hear more about SCA plans, propose ideas, and meet other residents of Silverleaves. SCA is a community group and we welcome newcomers and residents alike. We look forward to seeing you then.

- **SCA Plant Stall**
Sunday 8th June (long weekend)
9.00am to 12.00pm,
Silverleaves Store
- **June/July Working Bee**
Revegetation of the foreshore
- **August/ September Working Bee**
Revegetation of the foreshore.

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