

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

September 2014



President's Report

As many Silverleaves residents, SCA members and friends will be aware, our local environment is facing one of its biggest threats for many years. This takes the form of the Victorian State Government's proposal to vastly expand the Port of Hastings in Westernport Bay. As covered in our last issue, if approved, this would involve the building of a huge container port opposite. In this issue, I am highlighting the way in which local and global issues are linked. We only have one earth – lets make our actions sustainable and not kill off the place we depend upon for life!

At our doorstep is Silverleaves beach – an already eroding foreshore with more to come from predicted climate change impacts. Dredging is expected to make this much worse – and even destroy our beach.

Many readers of the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser will have noted Mike Lean CEO of the Port of Hastings Development Authority (POHDA) assuring the community everything will be okay. Yet SCA does not accept that. We believe the detrimental effects would be many. Pollution, sediments, erosion and serious if not catastrophic effects on our Silverleaves wildlife, especially bird and marine species are several predicted local impacts.

Already, drilling samples have been taken from the seabed as part of the push forward by POHDA. In itself this is an invasive procedure which has concerned local fishing and angling Islanders and others worried about disturbance to marine and bird life. If the project were to go ahead, significant dredging would be required just to create a wharf – let alone the effects of the planned channel deepening.

SCA supports the Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council Inc which opposes the Port of Hastings expansion and notes that Westernport is shallow, narrow and highly tidal. 'Approximately

40% of its area is inter-tidal mudflats which form the basis of a highly productive and diverse ecosystem. Twice a day the bottom of 40% of the Bay is in contact with the surface making any pollutant on the surface, such as oil, coat the benthic organisms (the plants and animals on the bottom) directly.' SCA also supports the work of Preserve Westernport Action Group officially launched to campaign against the proposed container terminal at Hastings.

These groups share the SCA mission: to save Westernport. PWP estimates that 3000 giant container ships per year will push their way up through Westernport's narrow channel to the Port of Hastings, greatly changing the amenity of the Bay for marine and bird life, recreational users, local business and home-owners.

PWP last week sent a representative to Switzerland to present to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and to have Westernport Bay listed on the Montreaux Record, the Ramsar register of internationally important wetlands in which changes are proposed to occur as a result of human interference. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, (called the Ramsar Convention after the Iranian city where it was adopted in 1971), is an intergovernmental treaty that covers all geographic regions on the planet. SCA supports the Ramsar Convention mission: "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world"

SCA is already concerned about shore and wader birds whose home is Silverleaves. The Hooded Plover many of us are fighting to save is one bird under grave threat. The Australasian Wader Studies Group has found increasing evidence that migratory shorebird populations throughout the world are declining. A local study of Westernport shorebirds suggests declines of 30% in the past 15 years alone!! Shorebirds using the flyways of the Asia Pacific are under threat from widespread habitat destruction, especially prevalent at staging areas in East Asia. Many of these birds fly to Observation Point in Silverleaves.

On 27 September, The Age reported that the construction of the world's longest sea wall in South Korea had led to the destruction of mud flats – a key stopover for migratory birds flying from Russia to the Southern Hemisphere – our visiting birds. The science shows that Port of Hastings development will have the same sort of disastrous effects as this.

SCA does not want these terrible outcomes for our environment. Its up to all of us to protect our wildlife and make what we do sustainable. We don't accept Port of Hastings is a foregone conclusion. As a group, we are taking action and in the lead up to the Victorian State Government election in November, we ask all supporters to act.

What can you do?

Write a letter to Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser expressing your opposition to Port of Hastings container port development as a threat to our local Silverleaves and Westernport environment.

Write/email/phone your politician and say you oppose Port of Hastings expansion.

- Ken Smith Member for Bass
ken.smith@parliament.vic.gov.au.
- Denis Napthine Government House 1
Spring St
- Greg Hunt Federal Minister for
Environment c/o Parliament House ACT.

Thank you

M A Johnston
SCA President

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AROUND SILVERLEAVES?

Winter saw periods of heavy rain and flooding in mid July and a couple of big storms and high tides swept away large areas of the foreshore beach, in some areas over one metre of sand was swept away, another reminder of the power of nature.

TEMBY MEMORIAL



A special unveiling ceremony was held on Sunday 21 September at the Silverleaves Reserve. A plaque and timber park seat was installed and a Red River Gum planted in honour of Ethel and Alan Temby, long-term residents of Silverleaves and conservationists. It was wonderful to see a group of more than forty attend the ceremony with many long term residents as well as young visitors – including a baby and toddler. The plaque reads:

“Tread Lightly”

In memory of Ethel Temby 1914-2012 and Alan Temby 1921-1983 who fought tirelessly to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of Silverleaves and provide a haven for its native flora and fauna in this reserve and elsewhere.

SCA warmly thanks the Bass Coast Shire Council for its support of this important memorial and for funding the project. A special thank you to Barbara Wilkinson for seeding the idea of a Reserve memorial and to Jarvis Western, SCA Secretary who liaised with BCSC and worked hard to organise the placement of the seat and tree and the morning ceremony.

AN UNUSUAL VISITOR



An unusual visitor from New Zealand arrived on our shore at the end of June. It was a NZ fur seal with a large wound on its back, probably from a shark or propeller. It stayed around Cowes and the jetty for a while and was monitored closely by P.I.N.P but died a couple of weeks later.

Why so unusual? NZ fur seals are usually found in South Australia, south coast of WA and south west coast of Tassie, and NZ, whereas Australian fur seals are usually found in Bass Strait. NZ fur seals have been implicated in the reduction and extinction of some small penguin colonies in SA as they eat penguins, whereas Australian fur seals do not. NZ fur seals are increasing in numbers and range and appear to be encroaching on Australian fur seal territory.

More research needs to be done on this and the interactions with other species such as penguins, however they are a potential threat to the penguins here on Phillip Island.

SPRING WEEDING

Spring has arrived and this is a good time to get into the garden and remove weeds while the soil is moist. You can also remove dead vegetation in preparation for the coming summer and fire season.

SCA WORKING BEE - 19 July and 20 September at Woodlands

A handful of dedicated Silverleaves residents volunteered their time for two successful working bees. The weather was kind and it was a pleasant way to meet neighbours and catch up with the latest news around Silverleaves. In total, over 350 small seedlings have been planted, including Banksia's, Poa tussock grasses and knobbly club-rush. This is in an area near the beach track at Woodland Avenue which had been infested with Mirror Bush and removed by contractors last year.

There are more working bees planned so come along and do your bit to rid the foreshore of invasive weeds and revegetate with indigenous plants. This is important work, our foreshore needs to be looked after as it provides a home to birds and wild life and protects us from further future erosion.

THE TIDES AT SILVERLEAVES

Many Silverleaves residents will check the tide chart before planning their day, such as when to have a walk or a swim. But have you wondered why we have high tide and low tide at different times of the day?

As the moon travels around the earth and as they both travel around the sun, the combined gravitational forces cause the world's oceans to rise and fall. Since the earth is rotating while this is happening, two tides occur each day and there is about 12 hours and 25 minutes between the two high tides or about 6.5 hours between high and low tide.

The tide is usually an hour and ten minutes later each day and there is a small period at the end of a high tide and the end of the low tide called slack tide.

The current also changes direction at Silverleaves as the tide changes, as the sea comes in from a westerly direction and then the current changes as the tide goes out in an easterly direction towards Cowes.

What are the different types of Tides

When the sun and moon are aligned, there are exceptionally strong gravitational forces, causing very high and very low tides which are called spring tides, though they have nothing to do with the season. When the sun and moon are not aligned, the gravitational forces cancel each other out, and the tides are not as dramatically high and low. These are called neap tides.

Spring Tides occur during the full moon and the new moon. They occur when the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon are in a line and the gravitational pull of the moon and sun are combined. At these times, the high tides are very high and the low tides are very low.

Neap tides occur during quarter moons.

During the moon's quarter phases the sun and moon work at right angles and the gravitational forces of the Moon and the Sun are perpendicular to one another (with respect to the Earth). The result is a smaller difference between high and low tides.

To calculate the tide times, find Tidal Charts for Stony Point which is the closest and subtract ten minutes to then calculate tides at Cowes Pier.

“When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hang on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.” - Harriet Beecher Stowe

SAVE A LIFE BY CLEANING UP THE 'THROW AWAY'

Remember next time you go for a walk take a couple of plastic bags with you. On your way back pick up rubbish and take it home to be disposed of properly. Plastic bait bags, balloons, food wrappers can end up inside birds and marine life. Pick up cans and bottles on the beach and occasionally you might even find a treasure!

Did you know:

- Plastic water bottles take 450 years to decompose
- Fishing lines and nets can take up to 600 years to decompose
- Plastic bags or balloons in the ocean are dangerous (they can look like a jellyfish meal to a sea turtle).

According to International Bird Rescue:

Especially lethal is discarded fishing gear. Millions of tons of cut line, lines with hooks, and nets litter our oceans causing slow, painful deaths to everything from tiny seabirds to whales.



Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*

Silverleaves beach is home to the Red-capped Plover, and there are about five pairs currently nesting up near the east end of Silverleaves. One pair has eggs and another pair has a chick. Their speckled eggs are laid in a shallow depression in the ground, often beneath a low shrub, or out in the open if near water. They are small and often mistaken for the endangered Hooded Plovers.

They forage by using their characteristic 'stop-run-peck' method, taking small invertebrates from the surface. The adult male Red-capped Plover has a bright reddish chestnut crown and nape, and grey brown mantle. The female is duller in colour, missing the dark breast patches.

WEED OF THE MONTH



Dolichos Pea (*Dipogon lignosus*)

Dolichos Pea is a perennial vine with slender, twining stems becoming rope like with age which can climb to 4m. The long stalked leaves are smooth, medium green and have 3 tapering leaflets. Pea shaped flowers are pink, purple or white and occur in spring-summer. Seeds are contained in pods and can be ejected many metres from the parent plant. Dolichos Pea is also known as Dunny Creeper or Chookhouse Vine as it was frequently grown to hide these structures!

Dolichos Pea can be highly invasive in bushland and dune systems as it forms a thick mat smothering out native plants. It spreads by dumped garden waste and seeds which can lie in the soil for many years and still germinate.

To Remove: Small Plants - Hand pull or dig out trailing vines, carefully removing all roots, and

minimising soil disturbance. Spray young seedlings with suitable herbicide, if appropriate.

Large Infestations - Cut climbing stems from roots with secateurs. Dig out root stumps. Alternatively, paint cut stumps of large plants with herbicide being careful not to kill the species that it is climbing. Spraying can be done in spring-summer when actively growing. Monitor site regularly for regrowth or new seedlings. Hand pull or dig out.

If you would like more information on problem weeds in Bass Coast, please visit www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/weeds, or contact Council's Natural Resource Officer, David Martin, on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211, or email d.martin@basscoast.vic.gov.au.

RENEW YOUR SCA MEMBERSHIP

It's only \$10.00 per calendar year 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 2014

Next SCA meeting

- Sunday 23 November 2014
- 11.00am
- Silverleaves Store

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.

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

