

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

December 2015



President's Report

Visitors to and residents of Silverleaves alike know this area is a unique and magical place. We share this sheltered corner with many other species who are, more than ever before, in need of protection. Unfortunately, they are often in need of that protection from the human footprint – i.e. US, especially from all too common activities such as unleashed dogs, and plastic and other refuse left on the beach. Both of these can be devastating to the marine life of Western Port. These include the shorebirds and other winged creatures especially the endangered Hooded Plover, but also other marine species, the short-beaked echidna whose home is throughout Silverleaves, wallabies, lizards, snakes, bush rats and water rats along with many insects. These species also need protection from the more hidden impacts i.e. climate change.

I'd like to remind everyone that 2015 is shaping up to be the hottest year on Planet Earth since records began. It follows record hot years in 2013 and 2014. In Paris this December, world leaders are meeting to hold the vital COP21 talks with the aim of reaching agreement about how the world can regulate its collective behaviour to prevent temperatures rising more than 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Let's hope they act globally towards that. Meanwhile at a local level, it's worrying that in October 2015, Victoria's temperatures were +6 degrees above the average maximum temperature!

What can you do? Limit your consumption and use of energy and say NO to packaging; these two behaviours can make a big difference. And there are many small steps you can take in your own house and garden.

In my Silverleaves garden, I've planted boobialla, a tree that is a natural haven for birds, and also has heat retardant foliage. It is a fast growing bushy species. I've also made our house a plastic free zone and set up compost and water capture for grey water recycling onto the garden. You may already be doing this yourself. If not, I hope you will join me!

APOLOGY - In the September 2015 edition of the Newsletter, the President M. A. Johnston wrote an article published on the first page of the Newsletter titled "No 'suburbanisation' for Silverleaves". The article referred to several applications for "significant developments in Silverleaves" and, specifically, "these include: at 127 Silverleaves Avenue where a number of significant and mature coastal banksias were illegally removed a while back". The article also contained a statement that the Association was "unaware of the permit application for a large dwelling with a swimming pool and removal of significant trees and understory vegetation until the eleventh hour", in relation to 127 Silverleaves Avenue.

Insofar as the article implies that the owner of the property at 127 Silverleaves Avenue acted illegally; and that a swimming pool was sought for the property in the permit application and that the Association was unaware "until the eleventh hour" of the application for a permit, the Silverleaves Conservation Association Inc. and its President and author of the article M. A. Johnston unreservedly retract those statements as untrue and without foundation and unreservedly apologise to Dr Leonardo Congiu and Teresa Congiu, the owners of the property at 127 Silverleaves Avenue.

SAY NO TO PLASTIC AND OTHER POLLUTANTS

Australians have a pretty bad record on plastic. Just consider the following facts taken from Clean Up Australia:

- Australians use more than **4 BILLION** plastic checkout style bags each year.
- We throw out more than **7000** plastic bags a minute.

- Lightweight plastic bags are used for **ONLY 12 MINUTES** on average.
- About **50 MILLION** don't make it into landfill and enter the environment (e.g. waterways). They never leave it!
- Plastic bags can take up to **1000 YEARS** to break down.
- As litter, discarded plastic bags kills **TENS OF THOUSANDS** of birds, whales, fish, seals and turtles every year.
- Plastic bags are made from fossil fuels that are precious and **NON-RENEWABLE**.

These are the reasons I say no to plastic bags and have made my house a plastic free zone.

It's also why I pick up plastic wherever I see it. I spend a lot of time on my walks bending over to pick it up. Perhaps you do too? I feel every bit counts but it would be better if we didn't generate plastic bags and other packaging at all. The modern world lived quite effectively without plastic for centuries. We can again! And please, if you're on the water, don't throw your unwanted fishing line into the sea!

M A Johnston - SCA President

SUPPORT THE SCA – JOIN OR RENEW NOW!

SCA relies on membership subscriptions and generous donations from local residents and associates to continue its vital work. The funds we receive are put to very good use with much thought invested in the highest impact campaigns to protect and enhance Silverleaves.

We want to ensure this work can continue and so we encourage you to renew your membership at the beginning of 2016. Of course you are able to renew anytime during the 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.

Email address for any queries
silverleavesconservation@outlook.com

Hooded Plovers and Red-capped Plovers at Silverleaves

There have been 16 recorded Hooded Plover nests around Phillip Island so far this season. 2 chicks recently fledged from Elizabeth Cove in Ventnor and 1 chick is about to fledge from Red Rocks. There are currently chicks at Forrest Caves, and quite possibly at Silverleaves east. There are active nests at Ventnor, Surfies Point, Hutchison Beach, Magiclands, Anzacs and at the Anderson St boat ramp. Six nests have failed so far.

A pair of Red Capped Plovers have again nested at the east end of Silverleaves Ave, at the entrance to an access track, an unfortunate nesting spot due to human traffic over the coming month.



Red capped Plover



Hooded Plover

You can help:

- Please keep to paths at all times
- No dogs at any time unless otherwise signed
- Stay out of sand dunes and, where possible, walk close to the water's edge
- Keep clear of nest areas – hooded and red capped plovers will abandon their nest if you get too close, leaving chicks vulnerable to predators or starvation
- Become a Hooded Plover Watch volunteer

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

No dogs anytime past the last access track at the east end of Silverleaves Ave.

Fire safety at Silverleaves

Silverleaves is rated as an EXTREME bushfire risk area. Bushfire activity can also occur outside the Silverleaves area and can move quickly, come from many directions and be unpredictable.

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.

Due to the road network Silverleaves access is limited. Roads may become blocked 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 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, www.basscoast.vic.gov.au 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. If you see a fire in the area, call 000.

Beach Fires

There have been a number of fires on the beach during the year and are of grave concern as embers travel and can start a fire in the foreshore. If you see a fire on the beach ring 000, they will then notify the Cowes Police.

Silverleaves Nature Walk

Jarvis Weston, Ranger in Charge, Phillip Island Nature Park has kindly offered to take us on a Nature Walk to Observation Point.

Sunday 17 January 2015

10.00am, 2km walk and approx. 2 hours.

Learn about the coastal environment of Silverleaves, including nesting shorebirds, migratory birds, weeds that threaten their habitat, and what we can do to help. Meet at the very end of Silverleaves Ave (the east end closest to Observation Point.) Car parking is limited.

Bring your binoculars, a hat and water to drink. It will be a great opportunity to meet other Silverleaves residents, and have fun. Bring your neighbours, friends and children; everyone is welcome. This is a free event.

Amendment C140

Bass Coast Planning Scheme

The *Bass Coast Shire Review of Rhyll Wetland 2015* assessed the environmental values and threats on land west of the Rhyll wetland. The Review recommended that the land be rezoned from Farming Zone to the Rural Conservation Zone, complemented by the Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedule 1).

The amendment was open for comment until 9 November. SCA put in a submission in support of the Amendment. A panel is now assessing the submissions and amendment, and we are hopeful it will be approved by Council early next year.

The tentative dates for the hearings for this Amendment are:

Directions Hearing – to commence in the week beginning 14 March 2016.

Panel Hearing – to commence in the week beginning 4 April 2016.

Volunteers wanted!

SCA has been very active in preserving the foreshore from erosion, by protecting and rebuilding the natural vegetation which is vital to keep the sand from eroding as a result of tide, wind, and storm surges. Grant money of over \$5,000 from Communities for Nature has been used to remove more Mirror bush and selective spraying of weeds in the foreshore since 2014 including more recently from Coghlan's Road through to Cowes East up to the Scotch College building.

One volunteer champion weed buster is SCA member John McGauran. In his own time he has been removing polygala and sea spurge from the foreshore from the west end of Silverleaves at Uringah Court and working his way along the foreshore. In addition to this mammoth effort, in John's 'spare time', he recently put in 80 new guards around the banksias planted in earlier working bees to protect them from browsing wallabies.

SCA holds regular Working Bees and welcomes you to join us. You don't have to be an SCA member. Tools, gloves and safety gear are provided. Please consider coming along and planting a few plants and doing your bit to preserve this unique area of Silverleaves for the future.

If you would like to join us, contact the SCA by email and we will advise you of the next working bee planned for 2016, which will be in the cooler months after summer. And if you notice any weed infestations along the foreshore please let us know:

silverleavesconservation@outlook.com

NEXT S.C.A. Committee MEETING

- Sunday 17 January 2016
- 2.00pm
- 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.

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

Red-necked Stint, *Calidris ruficollis*



Imaged Source; Rohan Clarke, www.museum.victoria.com.au

Every spring these amazing tiny birds manage to fly all the way from their Siberian breeding grounds to our Rhyll Inlet and wetlands, sometimes going 3,000km without a single stop. No wonder they are hungry when they arrive and all summer they will feed and can be seen foraging in flocks, feverishly probing and picking at the surface of the mud and sand as they look for worms, snails and insects. They must gorge themselves on food to build up fat stores to fuel their annual migration.

They are about the same size as a small wren and weigh between 25 – 41 g. Males and females have the same plumage, which changes between breeding and non-breeding seasons. Non-breeding plumage is generally mottled grey-brown and white. Just before migrating, the birds moult into their breeding plumage in which the feathers are a reddish brown along their neck and part of their back, giving them their name. Their bills, legs and feet are black. They will fly off to the north in March or April and return again to our southern shores in August or September.

SCA is now on Face book!

Thanks to Lucas McGauran, SCA has a new face book page. Be one of the first to add a photo, leave a comment and find out what's going on. We plan to add links to newsletters and other articles of interest in the future.

<https://www.facebook.com/silverleavesca>

