

# SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

## NEWSLETTER

March 2015



### President's Report

#### Not in our Silverleaves Back Yard thank you

Land levelling and a large dwelling on the highest point of the land east of the fire access track and a sewerage treatment plant could soon be coming to the Rhyll Inlet. We'll be able to see them from our back yards where currently there is no housing and where the mangroves are slowly regenerating west towards Cowes. There is also the possibility of new attempts to rezone adjacent farm parcels for housing subdivision. All this land should be protected; many people believe it is already part of the Nature Parks zone but the fact is - it isn't.

As we have signaled in recent months, SCA has been intensifying its focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of the Rhyll Inlet. Unfortunately, part of the Inlet was subdivided for farming in the 1950s and cleared for pasture. Cattle have been grazed on what remains a farm use zoned parcel of some 23ha which abuts the boundaries of the properties running from the eastern end of Bruce Rd to the west end of Honeysuckle near the fire track. This is the subject land we're hoping to have transferred to PINP.

This land parcel has the address 2 Settlement Rd and is now on the market. In 2014, the landowner was successful in an application to build a dwelling on the highest point of the farm parcel. We understand the plans show significant earthworks to level a high point of land where a large house will be built –views to the east - and the construction of a sewerage treatment plant together with landscaping.

We continue to speak to Council about the problems we see associated with the proposed works which include the question of levelling in a wetland zone already the subject of Council's own Inundation overlay and the issue of constructing buildings so close - effectively on - the estuary.

In visits to the wetland off the southern boundary of Bruce Rd properties we note the very fragile vegetation ground cover, the regeneration that has occurred since hard hoofed animal grazing ceased, and the improvement in mangrove assets. The mangroves are in a fragile state and finally regenerating. The significant value of wetlands to many species of life, together with their role in mitigation as a carbon offset asset are well known.

However, this parcel remains in private hands and the sale campaign has advertised it as an opportunity to 'own your own private wetland'. We see this as a furphy. The Rhyll Inlet is part of a migratory bird site protected under Federal law. We are in the process of planning the next steps needed to enable the purchase of this and the other farm parcels on the Rhyll Inlet possibly through a structure similar to that undertaken when the Government acquired private houses adjacent to the Penguin Reserve.

Meanwhile, we'd like to ask Silverleaves residents concerned about development in the Rhyll Inlet to contact Bass Coast Shire and ask the Planning Director Jodi Kennedy what Council is doing to protect these precious assets. Please also write to the local paper and express your concern, speak to your Member for Parliament, write to Greg Hunt the Federal Minister for Environment who has said he is a champion and protector of mangroves on Western Port.

Development and a return to cattle grazing are examples of what we don't want to see - literally in our backyards. When it comes to the Rhyll Inlet and any development proposal, I'm a NIMBY!

#### Read and enjoy the new SCA brochure

The wonderful SCA brochure is ready and in the coming weeks will be distributed to all Silverleaves residents. Copies are also available at the Store. Please read and support our campaigns to protect Silverleaves.

## **Come to the SCA Annual General Meeting**

SCA is made up of volunteers who do vital work to look after the magical Silverleaves area. We rely on and appreciate community support. Please come to our Annual General Meeting on Sunday 8 March 2015 and find out more about the area, its wildlife, environment values and how you might play a valuable role in looking after the area. We do appreciate the support we receive. **I look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM.**

**M A Johnston**

**SCA President**

## **Silverleaves Beach over summer**

Silverleaves was buzzing with people over the holiday season and we hope you had an enjoyable time. There were many locals and visitors to be seen and appreciating this special and unique place. And the bonus this year was there seems to have been fewer sandflies!

Unfortunately, there were a number of beach fires on the beach and illegal fireworks during the holiday season. These events 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 and the local CFA.

## **Nature Walk report**

On 10 January thirteen local residents and holiday makers joined Jarvis Western, Ranger in Charge with Phillip Island Nature Park, local resident and Secretary of the SCA, for a walk from Silverleaves to Observation Point. The aim of the walk was to learn about the coastal environment of the area, including nesting shorebirds, migratory birds, weeds that threaten their habitat, and what we can do to help.

Two adult Hooded Plovers were observed and their very cryptic chick, thanks to the eagle eyes of young Bailey. Also sighted were migratory birds at Rhyll Inlet and Jarvis spoke about the threat of weeds such as Sea Spurge. It was a very successful and pleasant morning stroll with great company.

Many thanks Jarvis for sharing your knowledge and time.

## **Arrival of migratory shorebirds**

Over summer thousands of Australian migratory shorebirds arrive at Rhyll Inlet having completed one of the world's greatest migrations, flying thousands of kilometres south along the East Asian Australasian Flyway from their food rich Arctic summer nesting grounds.

Western Port's tidal mudflats provide a much needed feeding ground before these birds begin their journey back to the Arctic. These migratory birds include eastern curlews, bar tailed godwits, red capped plovers, and red necked stints.

Scientists have found many of these birds are disappearing due to habitat loss, industrial development, invasive grasses and pollutants at staging grounds in south East Asia, where the birds refuel along the migratory route. With feeding areas lost, they fly on to die exhausted.



**Eastern Curlew**

Eastern curlew numbers have collapsed by 75 per cent in Tasmania, the southern end of the flyway route. This dramatic decrease may result in the eastern curlews being next on the Australian threatened species list.

Western Port and Rhyll Inlet are crucial to their success as a safe feeding sanctuary and Rhyll Inlet is a declared Ramsar wetlands of international significance, it is therefore urgent we protect it or the result maybe these extraordinary migratory birds will become extinct.

As good neighbours you can help, when walking along the beach avoid disturbing them when they are feeding or roosting (resting) especially at Observation Point and the Rhyll Inlet.

Read more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/great-shorebird-migration-under-threat-2014>

## Hooded Plovers Update

Unfortunately the pair of Hooded Plovers that have nested at Silverleaves east this year have been unsuccessful. The chick they hatched earlier in the season disappeared after a couple of weeks with fate unknown.

Our usual, extremely successful hoodie that nests at Silverleaves, with leg bands orange/metal, black/light green, was not present this year and has not been sighted around the island. A new banded bird with orange leg flag 'PW' has taken up residence at Silverleaves. So maybe this new bird's inexperience has contributed to the limited success this year.

It goes to show the fickle nature of the Hooded Plover world; a long term breeding pair can be very successful, but if this partnership is broken success can quickly turn to failure. These birds will always need our care and protection to continue to survive as a species.

Report any nests to PINP 5951 2800

## Foreign Visitor at Silverleaves



A large jack up rig was moored off the east end of Silverleaves in early February. The rig was lit up like a Xmas tree at night, so bright you could almost read a book! There was a constant hum of machinery, an intermittent loud speaker, even heard at 3.00am on a Saturday night, helicopters arriving and leaving and the smell of fumes from the tug boats moored nearby on a northerly breeze.

A reminder of what could happen if the Port of Hastings development were to go ahead and what it might be like to have a number of large container ships moored in the channel at Silverleaves beach.



Another foreign visitor sighted around Silverleaves in recent weeks has been a pheasant! It is not known where it comes from but most likely it's an escapee from someone's property.

## Echidnas at Silverleaves

If you are lucky you may have seen the short beaked Echidnas around Silverleaves. They are active day and night and when threatened will roll up into a tight ball with just their spines protruding – very effective! Echidnas use their strong claws to dig and find ants, termites, grub larvae, worms, mites and insect pupae using their sticky tongue which comes out from its snout to eat

Echidnas are **monotremes** which mean they are egg laying mammals, like the platypus. They breed during the winter months (how they do this will be left up to your imagination!) and then twenty two days after mating the female lays a single egg and deposits it in her pouch which will hatch after ten days. A baby Echidna is called a "puggle" and it sucks milk from milk patches in the pouch where it grows for about fifty days. As spines start to develop the mother digs a burrow and leaves the puggle there, coming back every five days to nurse it until weaning at seven months.



## Echidna Puggle

Image from Perth Zoo 2012

Echidnas live to a ripe old age, in the wild about 45 years and even up to 50 years in captivity, so some of the echidnas at Silverleaves may have been alive before the area became developed.

## Invasive Weeds at Silverleaves

Many exotic plants were planted in gardens in Silverleaves with good intent before we had any idea of the devastating consequences. They have now escaped from many gardens into the foreshore, Rhyll Inlet and Observation Point and are tenacious, difficult to eradicate and stop indigenous vegetation from growing.

The remaining remnant vegetation found at Silverleaves is highly valued for wildlife habitat and for its contribution to the distinctive coastal landscape of the area. Therefore, it is extremely important that what vegetation remains is protected from indiscriminate clearing, maintained and enhanced to form part of wildlife corridors to ensure biodiversity of locally indigenous species, and to be able to be enjoyed and appreciated by future generations.



***Agapanthus can grow anywhere, even in the gutter of a house at Silverleaves.***

(Photo- Gillian Armstrong)



***Another garden escapee - cactus growing in the bush on the edge of the Rhyll Inlet behind houses in Bruce Road.***

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 (m) or email [silverleavesconservation@outlook.com](mailto:silverleavesconservation@outlook.com)

## NEXT S.C.A. MEETING

- AGM
- 11.00am Sunday 8 March 2015
- 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.

## SCA Membership

Memberships are due for 2015 and are for the calendar 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.

New Email address for any queries  
[silverleavesconservation@outlook.com](mailto:silverleavesconservation@outlook.com)

## SCA Diary 2015

### SCA AGM 2015

11.00am Sunday 8 March  
Silverleaves Reserve

### SCA Plant Stall 2015

9.00 – 12.00pm Sunday 7 June (Queens Birthday weekend) at the Silverleaves Store

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](mailto:myra.holmes.000@gmail.com)



