

# SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

## NEWSLETTER

September 2015



### President's Report

#### No 'suburbanisation' for Silverleaves

In recent months, we have seen several applications for significant developments in Silverleaves. These include: at 127 Silverleaves Avenue, (where a number of significant and mature coastal banksias were illegally removed a while back; no action from Council within the required period of 12-months following removal even though reports were made); more recently at 131 – 133 Silverleaves Avenue, two of the Temby family blocks where native vegetation and wildlife have been protected for more than 50 years.

Earlier this year, and in spite of objections from local residents, Bass Coast Shire Council provided approval for a very large house to be constructed at 127 Silverleaves Avenue. The design includes a height of more than 9.0 metres to enable a 'viewing platform' as an effective third storey. This, and the large footprint of the house, are at odds with the neighbourhood character of Silverleaves and set a dangerous precedent. There has been a very small beach house on this site for more than four decades. Because of what we believed to be a detrimental impact on the unique environment that is Silverleaves, SCA took the decision to go to VCAT to oppose the development. The hearing is scheduled for 2.15pm on 9 November at VCAT in Melbourne 55 King Street (near corner of Collins).

We encourage any concerned residents who can attend to come along for a show of local strength and support our presentation. We will have an experienced architect as our pro bono expert witness at the hearing and I will also present our arguments opposing this development on behalf of SCA.

SCA was unaware of the permit application for a large dwelling with a swimming pool and removal of significant trees and understorey vegetation until the eleventh hour. Concerned Silverleaves residents submitted a number of objections, including from members of the Temby family. We will provide an update about this development application in our next newsletter but we encourage concerned residents to write to the local paper and Bass Coast Shire expressing concerns about the lack of protection for native vegetation and wildlife and calling for the strengthening of protection. A further worrying example was seen in the boundary-to-boundary removal of all but two trees and all vegetation in Honeysuckle Avenue on what was formerly a vacant block.

#### Why dead wood should stay

The removal of dead wood and dead trees is a key threatening process as listed in some States. In NSW, the Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, found the accelerated and ongoing removal of standing dead trees and woody debris on the ground caused by human activity is a factor contributing to loss of biological diversity. Examples of the process include illegal or poorly regulated firewood collection from forests and woodlands, and unsustainable loss of fallen woody debris, which may be stacked, burnt, mulched or otherwise removed from the site.

According to tree expert, David Lindenmayer, in Australia about 290 vertebrate species rely on tree hollows (Smith & Lindenmayer 1988). Fallen dead wood provides important habitat species dependent on decaying wood for their survival. These species play an important role in recycling nutrients in forest and woodland ecosystems, including those that feed, breed, or shelter in dead wood or may be predators - or parasitoids dependent on species that live on dead wood. Removal of dead old trees (either standing or on the ground) thus results in the loss of important habitat such as hollows and decaying wood for a wide variety of vertebrates, invertebrates and microbial species.

Hence, the increasing wholesale clearing of house blocks, which we have seen in Silverleaves, especially in recent years, is a most worrying trend. It may seriously affect the long-term availability and viability of the habitat. And that brings us to the cockroach...see our next issue for why native cockroaches are 'good guys'.

**M A Johnston – SCA President**

## Winter at Silverleaves

It has been a cold, wet winter this year and Pam McHenry took this photo in the middle of July on a very cold morning. It was a most unusual sight to see frost on the beach.



*Frost on the beach at Silverleaves Beach*

Spring has arrived at Silverleaves, heralded by the noisy Wattle Birds and the yellow blooms of the wattle flowers. It's a wonderful time for all species!

## Hooded Plovers and Red-capped Plovers at Silverleaves

The breeding season has begun with three hoodie nests recorded so far at: Elizabeth Cove, Ventnor; Anchorage Rd, Ventnor; and Woolamai Beach west of the Surf Lifesaving Club. No nests or breeding activity have yet been recorded at Silverleaves. It was also Plover Appreciation Day on 16 September. Displays were set up at the Phillip Island Library to raise awareness of this important shorebird.

A portal has been set up by Birdlife Australia to record all monitoring and breeding success of nesting shorebirds. This is a fantastic way to create a single repository for important data to help coordinate management and support and protect this vital species.

SCA would like to call upon any interested volunteers to assist with monitoring of shorebirds in Silverleaves on a regular basis.

Volunteers will receive training on monitoring and access to the MyBeachBird Portal to record observations. If you are interested please contact Jarvis on 0428 187 278 or at [silverleavesconservation@outlook.com](mailto:silverleavesconservation@outlook.com)

## El Niño event predicted for 2015

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting an El Niño event for 2015. Typically, El Niño peaks during the late spring or early summer, and weakens during late summer to autumn.

El Niño is usually associated with below-average winter–spring rainfall over eastern Australia, and above-average daytime temperatures over the southern half of the country. Individual daily heat extremes tend to be of greater intensity (hotter) but there is a reduced frequency of prolonged warm spells.

In general, decreased cloud cover results in warmer-than-average daytime temperatures, particularly in the spring and summer months. Higher temperatures exacerbate the effect of lower rainfall by increasing evaporative demand. The warmth of recent El Niño events has been amplified by background warming trends which means that El Niño years have been tending to get warmer since the 1950s.

## Whales at Silverleaves

The newsletter editor off Silverleaves beach spotted two humpback whales on 12 September with one large adult and one sub adult heading west towards Cowes. What a wonderful sight.

It has been a record year for whale sightings in and around Western Port Bay. Nearly 80 sightings of mostly humpback whales have been reported in the Bay, from near Crib Point, Phillip Island and Sea Rocks.

Humpbacks are renowned for their breaching behaviour i.e. breaking out of the water. This is possibly a communication method, or a display of energy and vitality - researchers are not entirely sure.

Whales visit our shores any time from April to September and it can be difficult to tell whether you are seeing a Humpy or a Righty. According to the experts, you should look for the dorsal fin and a slim and smaller body to identify a humpback. The humpback sports the more uniform dark grey body and white underbelly. Rights can best be identified by their smooth back, as they lack a dorsal fin. Then look for their blazoned white patches.

***Whale sightings are published on the 'Two Bays Whale Project's' Face book page.***

## Protecting the foreshore

SCA has been weed mapping along the foreshore at Silverleaves this year. This helps to prioritise and plan weed control activities, in conjunction with Bass Coast Shire Council. About half of the foreshore is now mapped, and future working bees will complete the data base.

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.

Mirror Bush, Agapanthus, Cotoneaster and Pittosporum are all noxious weeds being targeted. Most are found bordering residential properties from where they have escaped. This highlights the importance of property owners bordering the foreshore to be vigilant about non-indigenous vegetation growing in their gardens spreading into the foreshore. No escapees please!

### A breakdown of SCA expenditure over the last year:

\$1,820	weed spraying
\$3,700	woody weed removal
\$1,508	indigenous plants
\$1,000	newsletter dissemination
\$1,789	brochure design and printing
\$986	VCAT application

### Foreshore Erosion

Cowes East Foreshore Erosion Committee (CEFPAG) formed to try and get the Bass Coast Shire Council to apply for funding to protect the foreshore from Erehwon Point to the east of Silverleaves.

This work has started in the Dunsmore Road area east of Cowes recently with the construction of three new 24-metre long timber groynes and strengthening of the existing boulders to protect the foreshore from further erosion. This repair work is a result of \$150,000.00 funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Coastal Environment Program.

### 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. Removing weeds and indigenous replanting by SCA volunteers who help to mitigate the erosion. The volunteers generously donate their time and energy with ongoing working-bees which occur during the year. For only a few hours, usually in the morning this fun activity for everyone is a great way to meet others in the community and very rewarding when one revisits revegetated areas to see the growth and change. SCA welcomes you to join us. You don't have to be 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.

### Watch this space for next working bee.

SCA is planning its next working bee for later in 2015. If you would like to join, contact us by email and we will advise the next date – or see our next newsletter

[silverleavesconservation@outlook.com](mailto:silverleavesconservation@outlook.com)

### Amendment C82

Bass Coast Shire councillors voted to adopt the controversial Planning Scheme Amendment C82 in August with a 0.8 m sea level rise prediction by 2100. The purpose is to address the risk of inundation from riverine flooding and coastal inundation which includes low lying areas. The identified areas include all properties east of Coghlan's Road in the Silverleaves area.

Amendment C82 will introduce new planning permit requirements for buildings and development works in areas identified as at risk. Council planning officers argue the amendment was required to ensure the social, environmental and economic priorities of council are not compromised by flooding and coastal inundation and to warn people of the consequences of building in areas under threat of inundation through introduction of relevant regulations.

There has been much debate over the predicted sea level rise predicted of 0.8m and some people are concerned the Amendment C82 will affect the value of properties and the possibility of an increase in home insurance premiums. Yet others believe the amendment will regulate inappropriate development for the future.

## Proposed Rhyll Inlet Signage Strategy

Phillip Island Nature Parks is proposing to install a series of signs and marker buoys around the Rhyll Special Management Area as per the map. This signage strategy aims to educate and raise awareness of the area's special values and how we can all help to protect this significant area. The strategy involves the development and installation of four different types of signage, as follows:

1. Marker buoys – PI Nature Parks is investigating the installation of marker buoys to be placed on the seaward boundary of the Rhyll Special Management Area. These are advisory buoys only and do not restrict or change access to the area. These buoys are to advise waterway users to be mindful that they are entering a sensitive conservation area and to consider going slow or reducing noise.
2. Information shelter signs at Conservation Hill and McIlwraith Road. These signs will provide walking trail maps, a general introduction to wetlands, and information on shorebird conservation and resident/migratory shorebirds.
3. Interpretation signage – current signage will be refreshed and placed strategically along the walking track. These signs will provide information on wetland and estuary vegetation, resident and migratory shorebirds, estuarine ecosystems and the significance of Rhyll Inlet.
4. Special Shorebird signs – to be placed at entry points to Observation Point and Rhyll Inlet to educate and raise awareness of the special shorebirds that use the area.

There will be no restriction to access. The project aims to raise awareness of the area's special values and how we can help protect it for the long term for the benefit of all.



## A clean beach initiative

'Take 3' is a not-for-profit organisation formed in Australia in 2009 that aims to raise awareness of plastic pollution (marine debris) by encouraging each visitor to the beach, waterway or...anywhere to simply take three pieces of rubbish with them when they leave. Dispose of it thoughtfully! They also encourage everyone to reduce unnecessary plastic consumption and make our lives a little less plastic!

Take 3's mission is to significantly reduce global plastic pollution through education and participation and to encourage people *everywhere* to educate and inspire others; participate in clean up activities, and to share their story.

**The 'Take 3' message is simple: take three pieces of rubbish with you when you leave the beach, waterway or... anywhere and you have made a difference.**

Marine debris, particularly plastic, has a disastrous impact in our oceans on marine life and, ultimately, us. We can greatly reduce the amount of marine debris in our oceans by preventing it from getting there in the first place! We encourage people to Refuse disposable plastic, Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle and Respond by picking up rubbish.

**Remember: Pick it up. Bin it and you will make a difference!**

For further information- <http://www.take3.org.au>

## Concern over Drilling Rig off Silverleaves

The jack-up drill rig "West Telesto" will be moored off Silverleaves and Observation Point for an indefinite time period. There are concerns about the effect of the rigs noise, the bright lights all night, and noise from accompanying vessels and helicopters arriving and leaving will have on the migratory birds that arrive at this Ramsar site in spring and roost at Observation Point. This time last year, when this rig was here, it was observed the birds at one stage left the area and moved north across Rhyll Inlet to the base of the cliffs.

As well, the peace and quiet of the Silverleaves beach which we all love is disturbed; let's hope it doesn't stay for too long.

### Weed of the Month



Onion weed (*Nothoscordum inodorum*) is a perennial weed. It stores nutrients and carbohydrates in its bulbs to generate growth in the following season. To get rid of it, pulling out can be the quickest method, but requires a great deal of care not to spread the bulbils which detach themselves from the main bulb on the way out. Use a garden fork to loosen the ground under the bulb and slowly ease it out as you wiggle the fork up and down to further loosen the soil. Any bulbils left behind are usually nearer the surface and will be easy to remove when they sprout, either in this or the next season.

Onion weed can also produce seed. Cutting off the foliage at ground level will prevent the plants making carbohydrates in their leaves, and also prevent seed forming. You can do this by hand, or mowing. You may have to cut back foliage several times as soon as it appears. If you do this consistently, bulb growth will become progressively weaker, and you will eliminate the problem without disturbing the soil and stimulating the growth of more bulbs

### Vegetation management works in Silverleaves reserve

Phillip Island Nature Parks is conducting ongoing vegetation management works in the Silverleaves Reserve as part of the Nature Parks' Rhyll Inlet Vegetation Management Plan and the Bass Coast Municipal Fire Management Plan.

**Where:** Silverleaves Reserve adjacent to Silverleaves Avenue and Bruce Road

**When:** September to November 2015

**Why:** To enhance biodiversity values and reduce fuel loads

**How:** By thinning vegetation and removing weeds and dead vegetation

When the work is in progress you can expect to see smoke in the area, and vehicle activity on Silverleaves Avenue and Bruce Road. The work area will be well signed, and the burning off carried out by trained staff according to strict procedures and protocols.

All stakeholders, including neighbours, DELWP, CFA and the Bass Coast Shire Council will be notified before the works take place.

After the burn, staff will monitor the area for a number of days. Revegetation and any required weed control will be completed as part of the annual works program. For further information please contact PINP Jarvis Weston, Ranger in Charge Phone: 0428 187 278 or visit the Nature Parks' website at [www.penguins.org.au](http://www.penguins.org.au) for the current Fire Operations Plan.

### NEXT S.C.A. Committee MEETING

- Sunday 22 November 2015
- 11.00 am
- 106 Silverleaves Avenue

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

It was decided at the last SCA committee meeting to trial memberships for calendar year vs financial year, the current approach. Memberships will thus fall due in December / January. We will send out reminders in the newsletter and encourage you to renew your subscription during this time period. 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)

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



