

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

February 2016



News Update

It has been a warm and occasionally very hot and dry summer in Silverleaves with extreme heat of over 40 degrees Celsius on 13 January. Rainfall has also been well down on 2015.

These climate conditions affect vegetation and wildlife in the area and highlight the importance of retaining cover – ground cover, low and medium shrubs and trees – as protection. The dry has also affected marine life and the foreshore as noted in our Hooded Plovers update in this issue.

Sadly, Silverleaves has seen a heightened trend to wholesale clearing of properties prior to rebuilding – typically on concrete slab. It's not environmentally friendly and it causes long-term problems. Hard surfaced areas are at odds with the wonderful sand-dune on which Silverleaves rests. Some people seem to forget this is a particularly fragile coastal zone with sea on the north boundary and estuary on the south boundary.

The question is frequently raised as to why the Bass Coast Shire Council doesn't implement its own vegetation protection and neighbourhood character overlays and oppose applications for houses seeking to cover large mass on a block and/or clear vegetation.

SCA is extending its campaign to better protect Silverleaves from inappropriate development. More news on that effort in the coming months.

Joan Jones Honorary Life Membership

A number of SCA members have devoted significant time to protecting the natural assets of Silverleaves. At the last SCA meeting held in January, it was proposed to award Honorary Lifetime Membership of the organisation to a past President of long-standing, Joan Jones. This was

passed at the meeting and the award has been made to Mrs Jones who is now in her nineties and continues to be an active member. Similar awards are planned to recognise the efforts of others Members and will be announced as they occur this year.

SCA on Facebook

Find SCA online and 'Like' the organisation via the new Facebook page launched earlier this year. The SCA is indebted to Lucas McGauran who created the page and posted the lovely photographs of flora and fauna. We need more images and these can be sent directly to Lucas – preferably with subject and date information. Please email him: mcgauran@hotmail.com. Both current and historical photos are welcome.

Native cockroaches

An effect of vegetation clearing/house demolition can be a migration of cockroaches into neighbouring dwellings.

Museum Victoria notes that there are hundreds of species of cockroach found in Australia, ranging from very small species to brilliantly coloured species. Only a handful of cockroaches are recognised as pest species - all introduced species. The native species of cockroaches shouldn't cause any problems. If it's shiny black and wingless with a white stripe around the edge of the top half of the body you probably have a species from the genus *Drymaplaneta* – an Australian native.

Remember that insecticides are themselves 'nasties' that can enter the environment and the food chain. Removing sources of attraction – food left out, piles of newspapers, dripping taps – is safer than spraying.

Silverleaves Nature Walk

Jarvis Weston, Ranger in Charge, Phillip Island Nature Park and Silverleaves resident generously gave his time and expertise to the annual Nature Walk held on Sunday 17 January 2016

It was fantastic to have 18 Silverleaves residents join Jarvis for a short stroll along the beach to check out what the Red-capped Plovers and Hooded Plovers have been up to. The Red-caps still had 2 eggs in their nest, however unfortunately the Hoodies weren't as lucky as we found two dead chicks in the abandoned nest. Barbara Wilkinson, Silverleaves resident, had reported the chicks hatched on a 40 degree day and not survived the heat. Such is the perils of beach nesting birds.

We were also given a demonstration of how to control two major weeds that threaten the foreshore vegetation and shorebird habitat by weed buster expert John McGuaran - Sea Spurge and Polygala. All in all it was a great morning to catch up and chat to fellow residents whilst at the same time learning a bit more about the precious flora and fauna that we share Silverleaves with.

Weed of the Month



Sea Spurge (Euphorbia Paralias).

Hooded Plovers and Red-capped Plovers at Silverleaves

Whilst it hasn't been a great season for Hoodies at Silverleaves (see Nature Walk report) it has been very successful around the rest of Phillip Island as a whole.

Twelve chicks have fledged so far this season (2 Elizabeth Cove, 1 Red Rocks, 2 Anchorage, 1 Forrest Caves west, 2 Hutchison Beach, 2 Berrys Beach, 2 Colonnades). There have been 39 nests with 90 eggs. There have been 40 chicks, 22 have perished, 6 are runners (2 Flynn's Reef, 2 Smiths Beach, and 3 Woolshed Bight). There are still at least 4 active nests (Surf Beach 3 eggs, Elizabeth Cove 3 eggs, Anzacs 1 egg, Berrys 3 eggs) with probably more to come.

The best season ever recorded is 12 chicks fledged, so we are well on track to surpass this. This is a fantastic result. After many years of hard work to control threats we are finally seeing the hoodies survival rate increase.



Hooded Plover nest seen on the SCA Nature Walk in January. It just shows how vulnerable the nest is to disturbance by people as well as predators, four legged and two...Photo by Gillian Armstrong

Sea spurge is heavy along the foreshore again, particularly the west end of Silverleaves. SCA Weed buster extraordinaire John McGauran has been removing them by hand over previous months but one area that is out of control is at the Scotch College site.

Don't let them get away! Invasive weeds such as Sea Spurge in the foreshore are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come.

It is a transformer weed, which means that it substantially alters environments that it invades. Sea spurge can invade patches of bare sand, and create sand dunes where previously none existed. It can form dense populations that deprive coastal birds of nesting habitat, as well as colonising sand dunes.

Mature sea spurge is best controlled by hand pulling, or by digging them out if they are large – it's important that the stems are removed to a depth of at least 20 cm below the sand, otherwise they'll just resprout. Sea spurge maintains a persistent soil seed bank for at least five to ten years – sites will need to be checked twice a year to prevent seeding, and any new seedlings removed for effective control.

Beware – take care! Sea spurge releases a toxic sap when stems are broken. Always wear sturdy plastic gloves to prevent the sap from contacting your skin. And be very careful not to rub it into your eyes – it can cause painful, temporary blindness. Non-seeding sea spurge can be simply pulled and left where it is. Plants bearing seeds or flowers should be securely bagged and removed from the foreshore. And if you notice any weed infestations along the foreshore please let us know.

Silverleaves/Rhyll Inlet Study

Melbourne Water commissioned a study of Western Port coastal erosion hazards and related environmental patterns with a large section looking at Silverleaves and the Rhyll Inlet - extending from Erehwon Point to Observation Point and South into the Inlet. The study looked at the characteristics and susceptibility of this shoreline to coastal hazard impacts.

A key finding of the study is that: “the relatively extensive expanse of mangrove and saltmarsh fringed shorelines of Rhyll Inlet could be expected to be significantly impacted by changes in inundation regime and depths due to sea level rise.” It notes the rates of change on the coastal wetland fringed shorelines are uncertain however, the study recognises the very serious issue of coastal erosion along Silverleaves beach. It considers the hazards on these shorelines including sea level rise, along the coastal wetland fringed shorelines.

According to the study, the western end of Rhyll Inlet is unique in the context of Western Port as the mangrove and saltmarsh are not backed by bluffs or Cranbourne Sands. “This potentially provides the ability for these vegetation communities to migrate landward in response to sea level rise.”

Recommendations include carrying out further detailed studies of Rhyll Inlet and Silverleaves to improve understanding of sand movements as well as a monitoring program to refine knowledge of the predicted erosion hazards along the sandy shorelines. A further key recommendation is the “collation of further local information, such as oblique photographs, community history and recollections that could inform an understanding of how these sand lobes have varied.”

This important study suggests that specific measures to manage coastal hazards due to sea level rise could include:

- A strategic approach to the management and future adaptation of the existing shoreline protection works
- Planning measures to provide adaptation space for the landward migration of saltmarsh and mangrove fringed shorelines in Rhyll Inlet
- Planning measures to minimise the risks within the hazard overlays developed in this study.
- Refer future proposed development along the bluffed backed shorelines that lie within the erosion hazard overlays developed in this study for specialist geotechnical assessment.

Blue Tongued Lizard

Tiliqua scincoides



Image sourced from www.museumvictoria.com.au

Have you ever wondered why a Blue-tongue Lizard has such a bright blue tongue? They use their tongue as a defence tool to scare off predators and are also known to hiss when threatened. They are not venomous, but may try to bite if handled. If you come across one around your home, it's best to leave it alone.

Blue-tongued Lizards can grow up to 60cm in length and feed on a variety of insects, beetles, snails, wildflowers, native fruits and berries. Blue Tongue Lizards don't just smell by using their nose. They also have an organ, called a 'Jacobson's Organ', on the roof of their mouth, which they use to sense chemicals that are emitted by their prey (e.g. insects)

Like all lizards, Blue-tongues cannot maintain a constant body temperature without help from the sun and can often be seen warming themselves in sunny areas. They are active during the daytime and shelter at night under large objects such as logs or leaf litter and debris. During the colder months Blue-tongued Lizards stay mostly inactive, often taking shelter until the warmer weather arrives. They may spend many years living in the same area.

Blue-tongues live alone for most of the year, but between September and November, males leave their territory in search of a mate and can travel up to a couple of kilometres and may have several families. Females give birth to as many as 25 live young (but usually 10) in a litter, which are born between December and January. The young are born self-sufficient and disperse a few days after birth.

There used to be many Blue Tongued Lizards around Silverleaves but it is rare to see them now. Have you seen one recently?

- **Fire safety at Silverleaves**
- It has been a dry summer and we are still vulnerable to bush fires even as autumn is around the corner. Bushfire activity can also occur outside the Silverleaves area and can move quickly and come from many directions.
- **Be prepared.**
- 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.

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**
- **If you see a fire in the area call 000.**

Volunteers wanted!

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 remove invasive weeds, plant 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 in June and August. Dates will be confirmed at the AGM meeting in March.

SCA AGM MEETING

- **SUNDAY 13 MARCH 2016**
- **11.00am**
- **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.



*SCA Meeting January 2016
Photo by Gillian Armstrong*

**PLANT STALL
QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND
SATURDAY 11 JUNE 2016
SILVERLEAVES STORE**

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. Donations are very welcome and help us complete valuable weed clearing and revegetation projects amongst other activities.

Have you renewed your 2016 membership?

We want to ensure this work can continue and so we encourage you to renew your membership for 2016 if you haven't already done so. Of course you are able to renew anytime during the year. It's only \$10.00 and includes four issues of the SCA newsletter. Due to rising costs of postage we encourage you to receive the newsletter by email.

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 or a membership form

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