

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

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NEWSLETTER

June 2016



News Update

Key Direction SCA AGM March 2016

In a key initiative it was decided at the SCA AGM held in the Reserve on Labour Day weekend that it was of great importance for one of the major campaigns this year to be focused on making Silverleaves a residential conservation area, with an environmental significance and conservation overlay. This conservation overlay would also restrict blocks to single rather than dual occupancy. We are seeking outside guidance on this campaigning with one of our members reporting that the Whitehorse Council has instituted such overlays in the Laburnum/ Blackburn bush land areas resulting in restrictions on what residents can do, e.g. lopping trees. Each individual property has its own overlay depending on the trees of significance on that block.

SCA is planning to meet with Bass Coast Shire Council to discuss the strategy for implementation and we will also be seeking community inputs. As the threats of climate change become ever more real with incidents such as the bleaching of coral on the Great Barrier Reef and warming waters adversely impacting marine life to name just two examples, the focus in Silverleaves needs more than ever to be on protecting native values and habitat.

New committee members

We also welcomed new Committee members Judith Bond and Janine Briscoe, and Lukas McGauran as Vice President. It is great to have new blood and ideas to help support this and many other future initiatives.

Returning committee members are Marjorie Johnston (President), Jarvis Western (Secretary), Don Cox (Treasurer) and general members Gillian Armstrong, Richard Guy, Myra Holmes, Judy Horacek, Claerwen Jones and John McGauran. We warmly thank retiring committee members Veronica and Ros Trayford and Joan Joans for all their years of service.

Thank you Carol

Carol the CEO of Jentra Secretarial has been a tireless worker for over 20 years producing the SCA Newsletter and overseeing its mail out to members and friends. It's been a huge job well executed and so we extend a warm vote of thanks to Carol and wish her well as she now moves on to other interests.

We still plan to send Carol a copy of the newsletter to keep her in touch with SCA doings.

Eating Plastic? – yes you are - and it's not fantastic!

Yes - we are all eating it. If you buy plastic in the first instance and then throw it away, in the majority of cases it comes back to you. Unlike naturally-based paper or glass, it never truly goes away but breaks down into smaller pieces. These often end up ingested in the marine environment and when we eat seafood, come back to us in our food. **In fact every piece of plastic you and I have ever used is still around today.** The vast majority of the plastics in our seas come from our urban areas, from our streets. For this reason, last year, I gave up accepting, buying and consuming water and other drinks in plastic bottles. If there's no glass alternative at point of sale, I don't buy the drink.

- Almost 90% of the marine waste is plastic, mostly bottles, caps and straws. All unnecessary and avoidable.
- Australians buy 600 million litres of bottled water a year.
- We use 10 million plastic bags a day (that's 3.9 billion plastic bags a year)!

Plastic packaging is a recent craze and it's been embraced widely. It's unnecessary, unsustainable and must become unacceptable. We must change our habits and break the deadly cycle. On that theme, it was encouraging to see that Qantas has replaced its plastic wraps for on board headphones with a small paper wrap made from FSC recycled paper. If the whole market followed this route, the problem would be massively diminished.

Act local - What are you going to do about eliminating plastic?

Black Swans at Silverleaves

A small group of Black Swans has recently moved to the east end of Silverleaves and can be seen grazing at low tide on the new sea grass beds and swimming about at high tide. They are usually only seen at Observation Point.

The Black Swan is the only entirely black-coloured swan in the world. The body is mostly black, with the exception of the broad white wing tips which are visible in flight. The bill is a deep orange-red, paler at the tip, with a distinct narrow white band towards the end. They range in size from 120 cm to 142 cm and the Adult females are smaller than the males.

The Black Swan is a vegetarian. Food consists of algae and weeds, which the bird obtains by plunging its long neck into water up to 1 m deep. They require 40 m or more of clear water to take off and outside the breeding season, travel quite large distances. Birds fly at night and rest during the day with other swans.

Black Swans form isolated pairs or small colonies in shallow wetlands. They pair for life, with both adults raising one brood per season. Breeding season is June to September and up to 10 eggs are laid in an untidy nest made of reeds and grasses. The nest is placed either on a small island or floated in deeper water. The chicks (cygnets) are covered in grey down and are able to swim and feed themselves as soon as they hatch.

See more at: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/black-swan#sthash.zkaz292d.dpuf>



Photographer: Cassandra Thumwood April 2016



Photo Bruce McHenry, May 2016

Autumn has arrived and winter is coming. The autumn equinox in March resulted in some very high tides occurring at Silverleaves, and high winds and storms in early May resulted in further foreshore erosion. These are a reminder of how fragile the foreshore is to changing tides, wind and storm surges and climate change in the future.

Autumn Equinox (AEDT) 20 March 2016

The Earth's poles are the same distance from the Sun. The Sun rises due east, sets due west and reaches 52° above the horizon at noon. There are roughly 12 hrs of day and 12 hrs of night.

Winter Solstice (AEST) 21 June 2016

Earth's South Pole is tilted away from the Sun. The Sun rises north of east, sets north of west and reaches 28 1/2° above the horizon at noon. This is, usually, the shortest day of the year.

Spring Equinox (AEST) 23 September 2016

The Earth's poles are the same distance from the Sun. In Melbourne, the Sun rises due east, sets due west and gets to 52° above the horizon at noon. On this day there are roughly 12 hrs of day and 12 hrs of night.

Summer Solstice (AEDT) 21 December 2016

The Earth's South Pole is tilted towards the Sun. The Sun rises south of east, sets south of west and reaches 75 1/2° above the horizon at noon. This is, usually, the longest day of the year.

Foreshore Protection

SCA Committee members Don Cox and Jarvis Western met with Patrick Bowen, Vice President of the Cowes East Foreshore Preventative Action Group (CEFPAG), to discuss each group's activities and how we align. Both groups have the basic underlying principle that we are trying to protect the foreshore from threats so to preserve environmental and recreational values.

CEFPAG has been very busy lobbying local, state and federal governments to act to provide better protection of the foreshore from erosion. SCA will continue to liaise with Pat and CEFPAG to see if we can assist each other in achieving our goals.

Cats and native fauna

Feral cats are a serious pest and have severe effects on native fauna. Adult feral cats weigh three to five kilograms on average and can survive with limited access to drinking water because they can consume adequate moisture from their prey: small and medium-sized mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates.

Feral cats in Australia are recognised as a potential threat to 74 mammal species and sub-species, 40 birds, 21 reptiles and four amphibians.

Feral cats are solitary and predominantly nocturnal spending most of the day in burrows, logs or rock piles. They occupy home ranges that vary from less than one square kilometre up to 20–30 square kilometres in areas of scarce resources. Mature (one year or older) feral cats can breed in any season and may produce two litters per year, each of about four kittens.

Cats can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Feral cats** are those that live and reproduce in the wild (e.g. forests, woodlands, grasslands, deserts) and survive by hunting or scavenging; none of their needs are satisfied intentionally by humans.
- **Stray cats** are those found in and around cities, towns and rural properties; they may depend on some resources provided by humans.
- **Domestic cats** are those owned by an individual or a household; most or all of their needs are supplied by their owners. The category of a domestic cat may need to be divided to confined and unconfined cats because the potential for these two groups to impact on native fauna is different.

Feral cats in Australia are hosts to a number of disease-causing agents. Some of these can be transmitted to native species, particularly mammals, and also humans. *Toxoplasma gondii* is one significant protozoan species that uses the cat as the definitive host and is particularly concerning for native Australian mammals, and immunocompromised people and pregnant women.

The threat of cats can be managed in a number of ways: trapping, shooting, baiting, exclusion fences and through community education. On Phillip Island, the Phillip Island Nature Park traps feral cats in conservation reserves and removes approximately 150 cats from the park each year. However this trapping is only conducted on a very small portion of the park and island, and is not making a major inroad into the feral population.

The Nature Park is currently working on a research and control program with other agencies to determine the best methods to conduct greater control on feral cats on the island. The Bass Coast Shire Council is also looking at introducing new cat control laws to better manage domestic cats. These laws will reduce the transition of domestic cats to stray cats that can eventually become feral cats. These laws will also provide better protection of domestic cats from diseases carried by feral cats.

If domestic cats are kept within their owner's property and are desexed, thereby eliminating their transition to feral, there will be a much greater chance of conducting effective control on the feral population. This would be very good thing for our native fauna, which needs all the help it can get to continue to survive.

Edited from Threat Abatement Plan for predation by feral cats, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015.

Weed of the month



Images: www.environment.gov.au

Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus Asparagoides*) is an environmental weed that was introduced to Australia from South Africa. It grows from its dense system of underground tubers in autumn. These tubers form 'mats' under the soil surface that prevent native seedling establishment. Birds eat the fruit and are responsible for seed spread. Conventional control methods can be problematic, for example, the use of herbicides can affect non-target species and infestations can be difficult to access.

The most effective way to get rid of this weed is to dig up the underground tubers. Hard work but you will see results in the future where you have done this. The best option to dispose of removed tubers are either burning or disposal at a green waste transfer station. The treated area will need to be monitored for re-growth.

SCA MEETING

- **Saturday 11 June 2016**
- **3.00pm**
- **Silverleaves Store**

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 dates for 2016

- Saturday 10 September
- Sunday 22 November

Working Bees for 2016

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. It is also a great way to meet your neighbours and be part of the community.

Working Bees Dates

- Sunday 19 June 2016
- Sunday 11 September 2016
- 10.00am meet at the Silverleaves Store

Working bees usually run for approximately two hours and if you would like more information, contact the SCA by email and we can give you further details about specific locations and activities.

silverleavesconservation@outlook.com

PLANT STALL

SUNDAY 12 JUNE 2016

QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND

9.00AM – 1.00PM

SILVERLEAVES STORE

A range of local indigenous plants will be available and it is a great time to be planting

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

SCA is now on Face book!

Thanks to Lucas McGauran, SCA has a new face book page; you can add a photo, leave a comment and find out what's going on. We hope you will have a look and we plan to add links to newsletters and other articles of interest in the future.

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

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