

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

December 2021



SCA PRESIDENT REPORT

After months of rolling lockdowns impacting the ability of many SCA members to spend time in Silverleaves, we were finally able to hold our first meeting in many months in the Silverleaves Reserve on the 21 November.

A focus of the meeting was on the number of blocks that have recently been cleared boundary-to-boundary. The meeting also discussed the recent weather events which brought down many trees, including our beautiful banksias, throughout Silverleaves. The Silverleaves Reserve was similarly affected in these storms and SCA is liaising with Council for the removal of fallen trees and for ongoing weed control, as well as better planting of more appropriate trees, including planting new banksias as old banksias reach the end of their lives.

Protecting Silverleaves for the future

Many native species depend on the Silverleaves ecosystem – not only echidnas, wallabies, possums and a range of birds including Hooded plovers and other seabirds, kookaburras, wrens, and ravens but the less 'visible' wildlife species. They include moths and butterflies, ants, lizards and snakes microbats, wood lice and even the Australian cockroach. Each and all of these is vital to maintaining the health of the system - the woodland and coastal vegetation assets that make up Silverleaves, including the wetland and mangrove estuary and the sand dunes which depend on grasses and shrubs to protect against erosion.

Silverleaves Conservation Association Against Inappropriate Development- SCAID.

It's upsetting to witness the recent clearing of blocks where every tree, plant and shrub has been removed to make way for new building. In an area like Silverleaves, and indeed on Phillip Island more broadly, (where only 5% of original vegetation remains!) the loss of even one plant or tree is a critical loss. It means the habitat of all wildlife shrinks; homes and food sources disappear. We continue to lobby Council to strengthen vegetation protections as they don't go far enough – and fines are either not levied or are too small to be effective.

However, we are looking ahead to 2022 and to strengthening and reinforcing action in the SCAID campaign area and continuing the great and important work of weed control, revegetation and protection of native fauna and flora assets.

We hope next year will be a positive turning point for protecting Silverleaves:

- Achieving clarity on protections for Silverleaves under the Distinctive Areas legislation.
- Greater success in protecting native vegetation and wildlife and the prevention of the clearing of house blocks, including lobbying Council to ensure appropriate revegetation proposals on building developments are adhered to.
- Protecting vegetation on roadside verges and rehabilitating these areas.
- Improved protections through positive liaison with Bass Coast Shire Council.
- Improve the Silverleaves Reserve and Beach access tracks, including weed and dead tree removal and development of a strategic plan for revegetation and maintenance.
- Develop a broad strategic plan for Silverleaves and surrounding areas for the future.

SCA invites and welcomes anyone who would like to assist in achieving the above objectives.

Silverleaves is at a tipping point and we together with the birds, animals, reptiles, insects, plants and trees of our area need your help!

M.A. Johnston - SCA President

SEASONS GREETINGS



Photo Gillian Armstrong

The SCA committee members and friends would like to wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy New Year and thank you for your ongoing support protecting this unique and special place at Silverleaves for future generations to enjoy as we do.

NATURE WALK SATURDAY 22 JANUARY 10AM – 12PM 2022

The annual Silverleaves Nature Walk along Silverleaves beach is an opportunity to learn more about Silverleaves, including information about nesting shorebirds, migratory birds, weeds that threaten their habitat, and what you 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, sun protection and water to drink, plus your neighbours, friends and children - everyone is very welcome.

SCA COMMITTEE MEETING 2022

- **Sunday 23 January 2022 at 11.00am**
Silverleaves Reserve

WORKING BEE 2022

- **Sunday 23 January 2022 at 10am** - remove thistles and weeds from the Silverleaves Reserve. If possible, bring a tool for chipping thistles and gardening gloves.

WORKING BEE WITH LANDCARE

The Phillip Island Landcare Group led a working bee at the Silverleaves foreshore in front of 17 Silverleaves Avenue (where the pine trees were removed) on Saturday 6th November. Present were Landcare volunteers, some SCA people and a group of 10 geocache volunteers. 150 plants were put in and sturdy cages were constructed around existing plants put in from last year— an impressive result.

WILD WEATHER AT SILVERLEAVES

During this winter and spring there has been some wild weather, strong winds and lots of rain. In September, 78.4 mm fell on Phillip Island, followed by 104.8mm in October, and 53.2mm in November according to the Bureau of Meteorology. Gippsland exceeded the expected median rainfall by at least 60 per cent.

NEW HOMES FOR HOODED PLOVERS



Image Source Glenn Ehmke, Sheddars

The Hooded Plovers have begun their August–March breeding season. They lay their eggs on exposed sand just above the high-tide mark. Sadly, the odds are stacked against them – human disturbance, predation and climate change are all taking their toll.

The Bass Coast had the worst breeding season on record in 2020–2021, when only 5 chicks fledged successfully out of the 34 breeding pairs monitored. But a study led by Birdlife Australia's own Coastal Birds Program Leader, Grainne Maguire, found that a simple A-frame wooden shelter can increase Hoodie's fledging rate by up to 71%. These shelters provide vital protection from predators and harsh temperatures and are a safe refuge for vulnerable chicks.

Volunteers from the Wonthaggi Men's Shed have built over 50 wooden shelters – which will be placed on the open sand within Hoodie breeding sites on the Bass Coast. Hopefully we'll see a successful breeding season!

EROSION WORKS FOR COWES EAST

Works to construct the new timber groynes at the Cowes East foreshore in the area between Rose Avenue and Coghlan Road are in progress. Works to construct the new 300 metre rock seawall and to replace the existing deteriorated vertical timber and timber/rock are planned to commence in February 2022 and be completed before early December 2022. Sand renourishment to fill the new groyne fields will be conducted when conditions are best suited.

FIRE PREPARATION AT SILVERLEAVES

Now is the time to start preparing, cleaning up around your property and preparing your fire plan. 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.

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.

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

Beach Fires

Campfires on the beach are PROHIBITED as embers travel and can start a fire in the foreshore. If you see a fire on the beach ring 000, or the Cowes Police 59522037.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

A report released in August 2021 by the U.N.'s climate panel of world leading climate scientists warns that limiting global warming to close to 1.5 degrees Celsius or even 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels "will be beyond reach" in the next two decades without immediate and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The report shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for roughly 1.1 degrees Celsius of warming since 1850-1900, and finds that averaged over the next 20 years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming.

These climate changes will result in more extreme weather events, intense rainfall and associated flooding, more intense drought in many regions, and coastal areas to see continued sea level rise throughout the 21st century.

WHAT YOU CAN YOU DO TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT IN YOUR HOME AT SILVERLEAVES

You can minimise your carbon footprint and help the environment in many ways. Small changes can add up and reduce your carbon footprint – things like reducing the amount of energy you use, eating fewer animal products, shopping locally, travelling smart, and reducing your waste.

Insulate your home. By insulating your house, your home will retain heat during the winter and stay cool in summer. You will use less energy, reducing your carbon footprint and your household bills.

Switch to renewables. By switching to an energy provider that provides electricity from solar or wind, you can reduce your household emissions and save money on your energy bills. Consider installing solar panels.

Buy energy efficient. Whether it's buying energy-saving light bulbs or choosing appliances with a high energy star rating, you can make your home more eco-friendly. And remember to turn off and unplug anything you're not using.

Use less water. It takes energy and resources to process and deliver water to our homes and water is energy intensive to heat. Try using less water, turn off the taps when brushing your teeth, have short showers rather than baths, and only boiling the water you need.

Change your diet. Try eating fewer animal products, such as meat and dairy products which require a lot of land, water, and energy to produce and create a lot of methane, a greenhouse gas. Shop for locally sourced food and minimise the carbon emissions required to deliver the product to the end consumer.

Reduce, reuse, recycle. Whether it's things like paper, electronic devices, or packaging, it all has a carbon footprint. By reducing the amount of waste you generate and by recycling waste, you can make a real difference.

Eliminate single-use plastic. Reduce your single use plastic in the home. Not only do they pollute our waterways and oceans, but they also require energy to produce and recycle.

BE GREENER AND COOLER

It is predicted that climate change will result in more intense heatwaves. This July has been the hottest on record. Trees can reduce temperatures by as much as 5 degrees and with canopy loss due to property development it is even more important to protect our banksias and vegetation at Silverleaves. Consider how you can provide shade for your household and surrounding area, as well as shelter for our local wildlife.

TREES SUITABLE FOR SILVERLEAVES

Coast Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*)

about 10 m tall and a magnet to birds

Coast Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus pryoriana*)

about 15 m tall – koalas love eating the leaves

Coast Tea-tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*)

About 3m tall

Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*)

About 5m tall with drooping foliage

Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*)

About 3 m tall. Birds are attracted to the nectar of small white flowers.

GRASSES

Article by Keith McDougall, Silverleaves resident.

Silverleaves has a wide range of grasses, some native, some introduced. Grasses have very dense, fine roots or long underground stems, which are good at keeping the soil in place and preventing erosion on the foreshore. At the eastern end of the Silverleaves beach you will see low sand dunes covered in grass. There are two grass species here: Hairy Spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*) and Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*).



Hairy Spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*)

Hairy Spinifex is a native. It is low growing with long creeping stems, silvery leaves covered in small soft hairs, and very distinctive large star-shaped seed heads that appear in summer.



Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*)

Marram Grass is not native – it comes from western Europe and forms large tussocks connected by underground stems. Its leaves are smooth green on the outside and blue green with prominent ridges on the inside, and its seed heads are long and narrow. Some decades ago, Marram Grass was planted along the southern Australian coast to stabilise dune systems and is now dominant in places.

While beach processes are influenced by many factors, steep sand faces will tend to be more susceptible to erosion than gently sloping dunes. The future of the foreshore at the western end of Silverleaves beach is therefore not rosy. Spinifex is very good at creating dunes with gentle slopes that withstand erosion. It doesn't mind being inundated or buried. Marram Grass also doesn't mind being buried but, by itself, tends to create dunes with steep faces that are prone to erosion.

There is no point in removing Marram Grass from our dunes – when growing with Spinifex, it is helping to hold them in place – but it won't hurt to encourage Spinifex wherever possible so that it creates stable dunes. Spinifex could be used to fix the erosion at the western end of Silverleaves beach but not easily, given the slope of the beach and the steep sand face that confronts the tides. But there may be places where dune restoration with Spinifex can help create the future beach for that area. It's worth taking a look at this booklet describing Spinifex establishment in New Zealand to see how it's done:

https://www.coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz/site/assets/files/1064/7.2_spinifex_establishment.pdf.

SCA MEMBERSHIP DUE FOR 2022

Your annual subscriptions make a vital contribution to the conservation activities of our organisation. We encourage you to renew or join and support the preservation of our beautiful area, its wildlife, and vegetation by joining the SCA.

Make a direct deposit online:

Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000 Account 132 984 592.

Please include your name on your transfer for our records, otherwise we cannot identify payments made.

Or complete a membership form with your cheque and send to: The Secretary Silverleaves Conservation Association Inc
P.O. Box 9037 Cowes, VIC 3922

To request a membership form, or to let us know your email address, or if you have a query about your membership contact the SCA Secretary.
silverleavesconservation@outlook.com