

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

June 2022



SCA AND THE FUTURE

It has been a busy few months for the SCA since the last newsletter. At the AGM in March, it was agreed to form a committee without a President and Vice President for now, as there were no nominations and to hold an EGM at some stage to change the constitution and reconsider the executive roles.

Fourteen people, new and old, were nominated to the SCA committee, indicating real enthusiasm for the work being done by the SCA and who will work on the organisational structure and review and develop strategic planning for the SCA for the future.

The new committee met again later in March to begin this process with the purpose of developing a vision for the future of the SCA and to discuss strategies to achieve this. After much general discussion it was decided to identify and vote on the issues considered most important. The top four priorities are:

1. Silverleaves Foreshore management
2. Protection of the Rhyll Inlet
3. SCA Community and community education
4. Silverleaves Reserve and road reserves.

The SCA committee will meet again to continue work on strategic plan development (date yet to be decided) and we will keep you informed in the next newsletter.

It is an exciting time for the SCA and Silverleaves; there are many challenges ahead and much work to be done. We welcome your suggestions and encourage you to become involved.

THE SILVERLEAVES RESERVE

At Easter a small group of Silverleaves people braved the rain to begin the transformation of the Silverleaves Reserve. We successfully spread about six cubic meters of mulch at the east end of the reserve. An enormous effort and rewarding to see what a difference it has already made.



Before - The mulch pile



After - Job done

The strategic plan to revitalize the reserve will include landscaping and revegetation, with the aim of maintaining the natural environment and providing a habitat for wildlife and birdlife, as well as access for community use. Initial works will be to mulch around groupings of trees to protect existing tree roots from mowing, decrease the need for spraying weeds and then revegetate with indigenous trees and shrubs and grasses.

With the recent heavy rain, the Silverleaves Reserve is flooded, and further works may be delayed until the weather improves. Maybe we should re-name the reserve to the Silverleaves lake!



Photo Denise Rogers

COMMITTEE MEETING 2022

Saturday 17 September at 3.00pm

Koala Conservation Centre meeting room

WORKING BEES 2022

Sunday 18 September 10am – 12pm

Meet at Silverleaves Store at 10 am

PLANT STALL 12 JUNE

The SCA plant stall at the Silverleaves store was a great success with most of the indigenous plants and grasses going to new gardens around Silverleaves. As well as raising vital funds for our Silverleaves working bee plantings, the plant stall is important in educating people about the importance of planting natives and encouraging biodiversity.

Many thanks to Richard and Barbara Guy for their enthusiasm and hard work, organizing the event and setting up the stall and signs. And thanks to the other SCA members who helped out, and to Dave Syme for the contribution of many beautiful banksia trees.

If you missed the plant stall and would like some Banksias for your garden, there are some still available for sale for \$5.00 each. If you are interested, send an email to SCA Committee member Gillian Armstrong and she will be able to give details about where and how to pick them up from her place in Silverleaves Avenue. Available until the end of September or until all sold. Gillian's email address is gillian2@aapt.net.au

WORKING BEE TO REMOVE SEA SPURGE

The June working bee to remove sea spurge was a washout with terrible weather but again, a few dedicated people turned out and pulled out sea spurge along the foreshore from Erin Rd beach access track to the Silverleaves Reserve beach access track.



Image source [Sea Spurge – Weeds of Melbourne](#)

SILVERLEAVES BANKSIA RESEARCH

Silverleaves is named after the Banksia integrifolia and gives the area much of its distinctive character. They are in decline, becoming more prone to wind damage and borer attack and no new seedlings are growing. The big question in Silverleaves is: Will there be a next generation? Keith McDougall is keen to find out and is looking for volunteers to count and measure Banksia trees in the foreshore. For more information contact keithmcdougall804@gmail.com

DISTINCTIVE AREA LANDSCAPE PROJECT

The SCA submitted a detailed report to the Distinctive Area Landscape Project (DAL) which has significant implications for Silverleaves and Rhyll Inlet planning controls. In summary the submission supported the proposed boundaries at the southern and eastern edge of Silverleaves as critical to protect the Rhyll Inlet. The submission also addressed the key objectives of the DAL such as Climate change mitigation and adaptation, Environment and biodiversity, Landscape, Strategic infrastructure, Settlements, Building height restrictions, Town character and Landscape.

If you would like to read the complete SCA submission, please contact us and we will forward a full copy of the document to you. silverleavesconservation@outlook.com

PHILLIP ISLAND LAND ALLIANCE

The SCA is pleased to be involved in the newly formed Phillip Island Land Alliance (PILA), a new group which gathers together representatives from the many small coastal groups across the Bass Coast Shire, with the aim to collectively advocate to protect and restore the biodiversity values of Phillip Island and this region. This will provide opportunities to network and communicate with a unified voice and common objectives and a platform for a coordinated approach for funding applications and island wide environmental issues. The inaugural PILA member organisations include: Phillip Island Conservation Society, Ventnor Coast Care Association, Surf Beach Sunderland Bay Coastcare Group, Cowes Coastcare Group, Red Rocks Saltwater Creek Coastcare, Silverleaves Conservation Association, Cape Woolamai Coast Action, Rhyll Coast Action, Friends of Scenic Estate, Phillip Island Landcare Group and Newhaven Coast Action Group. For all enquiries on PILA contact by email phillipislandlandalliance@gmail.com

The SCA will be attending further PILAR meetings and will keep you informed as the group develops its strategic planning for the future.

ISLAND ARKS SYMPOSIUM

The Island Arks Symposium will be held on Phillip Island from the 5th - 9th of September. Island Arks is an international conference held every two years that focuses on island management and conservation. <https://islandarks.com.au>

RABBIT CONTROL

Have you noticed an increase in rabbits on Phillip Island and around Silverleaves? With a few wet summers rabbit numbers have rapidly increased. On May 12, Phillip Island Land Alliance (PILA) shared its launch with the release of the new Phillip Island Rabbit Strategy.

The Bass Coast Landcare Network have been successful in receiving 2 years' worth of funding to manage rabbit control on Phillip Island, which includes a part-time Rabbit Officer. Our local Council has supported this by establishing a Phillip Island Rabbit Strategy. This work is being done now and by mid-year they will begin implementing actions from the strategy. If you are interested in getting involved in this project contact Aaron Stephens, Invasive Species Officer, 0456 390 423, aaron.stephens@basscoastlandcare.org.au.

One interesting initiative will be the development of a Rabbit Scan phone app to record rabbit activity quickly and easily. A map of rabbit activity will greatly assist in rabbit control over the next two years.

DRONES FOR EROSION RESEARCH

A three-year research project led by Melbourne University has been working with volunteer island resident citizen scientists using drones to collect images to monitor sand movement and erosion from Erewhon Point to Observation Point.

Every second month since mid-2018 drones have been flown over a 2.1km stretch of beach, taking about 800 photos, at 100 metres altitude, to measure sand movement, which is part of the Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program.

Preliminary findings indicate sand is moving in an easterly direction, with 4000 cubic metres of sand accumulating and extending Observation Point at the east end of Silverleaves, by 1.4 metres.

The findings also reported that the beach at the end of Dunsmore Road had seen 0.9 metres of erosion since 1988. This will likely increase with climate change but, overall, the beach itself is relatively stable. There were clear hotspots of erosion, particularly where the current rock wall is being built between Rose Avenue and Coghlan Road.

EROSION WORKS FOR COWES EAST

Construction work is well under way with the new 300 metre rock seawall starting at Coghlan Rd and moving west to Rose Avenue in Cowes East, due to be completed by December. There is a pathway built at the rear of the wall connecting Cowes with Silverleaves in a coastal walk.

The new rock wall will be effective to protect property boundaries but not necessarily protect the beach. There is a concern the waves will sweep past the wall and cause further erosion effect at the end of the wall and reduce the beach's natural ability to adjust to natural sand movement.

WINTER HAS ARRIVED AT SILVERLEAVES

Have you noticed with the recent rains the emergence of a variety of strange and wonderful fungi, and lovely green mosses and lichens?

MOSS

Moss are small flowerless plants and have rhizoids, which are anchoring structures, that look root-like, but don't have the absorptive functions of true roots. Mosses don't have seeds, but instead grow sporophytes (a spore-containing capsule, possibly sitting atop a stalk) with single capsules containing spores. If you look closely, they are like a magical miniature wonderland.



Photo Myra Holmes



Photo Myra Holmes

LICHENS



Photo Myra Holmes

Lichen (*Usnea* sp.) are typically found on dead branches of trees. Lichens are weird creatures, half alga and half fungus but they can be useful - species that grow on soils can help keep out weeds and those growing on rock have helped date old buildings.

FOX SIGHTING ON THE ISLAND

Phillip Island Nature Parks has taken swift action in response to evidence of a fox on the island for the first time in seven years – and is asking for the community's help by reporting any sightings.

Foxes are the greatest landbased threat to little penguins on Phillip Island and are one of the primary causes of extinction for many of our native species and pose a threat to livestock and domestic pets. If you see a fox, please report it to PINP on 0419 369 365.

LAMP SHELL



Photo Myra Holmes

The editor found one of these shells on the Silverleaves beach recently. This highly unusual and rare 'living fossil' lampshell or brachiopod *Magellania flavescens* is found on the subtidal sediments in the Churchill Island Marine Park. They are filter feeders and are a small two-shelled creature with non-identical shells (valves) with a hole for a peduncle at the hinge.

NATURAL VEGETATION OF SILVERLEAVES

Article by Keith McDougall

Vegetation in Victoria has been classified into Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs). Each EVC occurs in a particular habitat type and contains a consistent group of plant species. Mapping EVCs and assessing how much has been cleared or degraded since European settlement has enabled the identification of those that are rare or threatened.

Across Bass Coast Shire there are about 27 EVCs while in Silverleaves alone, there are eight. Six of these are regarded as being of least conservation concern or depleted: Coastal Saltmarsh, Estuarine Wetland, Mangrove Shrubland, Coastal Dune Scrub, Coastal Dune Grassland, Estuarine Scrub.

Two EVCs in Silverleaves are regarded as being threatened. EVC2 Coast Banksia Woodland – the tall vegetation along the foreshore, in the nature park towards Observation Point and what once would have been present in the area now occupied by houses is recognised as vulnerable, i.e. only 10 – 30% remains.

EVC914 Estuarine Flats Grassland is regarded as endangered, meaning that < 10% remains of what would have been present in 1750. Most residents won't have seen this EVC although it is quite common in Silverleaves. It occurs between the saltmarsh of Rhyll Inlet and our Banksia woodlands, especially adjoining the nature park. It is represented by chest-high tussocks of *Poa poiformis* (Coast Tussock Grass). It is not very easy to walk through (and perhaps not advisable in snake season or at high tide) but quite an imposing plant community, and worth a look.

Poa poiformis (Coast Tussock Grass) at Rhyll Inlet



Photo Keith McDougall 2022

A list with descriptions of EVCs in our area can be found at: https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/48696/GipP_EVCs_combined.pdf