

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

March 2021



SCA PRESIDENT REPORT

We are back after a COVID break. Whatever is happening, the SCA is committed to protecting the wonderful Silverleaves environment, its wildlife and distinctive landscapes from negative impacts.

Bass coast distinctive areas and landscapes (DAL)

In 2020, Bass Coast was declared a distinctive area and landscape (DAL) under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, to better protect its unique cultural, environmental, social, and economic values - and to guide the growth and development of local communities. DAL provides a vision for how we want the Bass Coast to develop and be protected over the next 50 years.

We are hopeful that the Distinctive Areas Landscape strategy will support strengthening of vegetation protections – in particular, vegetation destruction where the so-called '10-30 Rule' is invoked. In addition, we want to lock in our town boundaries under State Legislation. The Victorian Government is to provide a first draft of the DAL project for our Shire mid-year.

Rhyll Inlet C149 Proposed Amendment Update

As part of our Silverleaves Conservation Association Against Inappropriate Development (SCAID) strategy we have been monitoring applications for development. C149 was a proposal to rezone farmland at the east end of Settlement Road to enable a housing subdivision. SCA had provided feedback to Bass Coast Shire Council expressing concerns about the impact of any development on the fragile Rhyll Inlet – a significant wetland asset.

Late in 2019 and into early 2020 the application was reviewed and rejected by Council. In addition, Council recorded a strategy of seeking strengthened protection for the Inlet. We will continue to monitor progress towards the objective of achieving in perpetuity protection for the Rhyll Inlet freehold land parcel currently holding a Conservation Zone Overlay.

Ongoing Campaigns

Since our last newsletter over a year ago, we are still working and monitoring key issues and driving important campaigns and activities. These include concerns about concrete driveways – a practice we hope will be discontinued in favour of soft, porous surfaces; height limits and supporting applications that reflect Silverleaves neighbourhood character and wildlife and vegetation protections. If you have any concerns you would like to raise, please come along to the AGM meeting on the 7 March.

AGL Terminal Proposed in Western Port Bay

AGL wants to permanently moor a 290m vessel to process gas at Crib Point. Bass Coast Shire Council together with many other groups do not support this project and the SCA made a 15-minute submission at the review hearing on 6 December 2020 attending via Zoom. The Reviews recommendations will be sent to Richard Wynne Victoria's planning minister in early 2021, who will decide on the project in March.

Our arguments included detrimental impacts on sea grasses, erosion from dredging, shorebird impacts and negative affects on the Rhyll Inlet Ramsar assets. Many of the opponents highlighted risks from chlorinated, chilled seawater discharged by the floating storage and regasification unit that will be parked at Crib Point saying that it could hurt tourism and harm sea life in internationally recognised wetlands.

Opponents of the project said the terminal is not needed as gas demand has fallen since AGL first proposed the project. AGL's lawyers claimed that opponents' submissions were largely driven by opposition to fossil fuels rather than the ecological impact of the project at Crib Point. Notably, Australia's health minister Greg Hunt, who represents the area where Crib Point is located, said in a submission to the inquiry that Crib Point was the wrong location for this kind of large-scale industrial facility.

We hope the Victorian Government says NO to the AGL Crib Point development proposal and we will continue to monitor and oppose it.

Challenging Times

As we faced the challenges of COVID social isolation in 2020, I reflected on the beauty of the natural environment we are so lucky to enjoy in Silverleaves. Only this morning, a kookaburra laughed from a banksia branch - a cheerful sound indeed. I hope others can draw solace and comfort from the activities of the wildlife around us and enjoy the changing season. The SCA will continue to work hard to preserve it and will continue to monitor progress towards achieving in perpetuity protection for the Rhyll Inlet freehold land parcel currently holding a Conservation Zone Overlay amongst other campaigns. I look forward to seeing members, friends, and associates at the SCA AGM on the 7 March.

M.A. Johnston - SCA President

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2021

SCA COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021

- **AGM - Sunday 7 March at 11.00am**
Silverleaves Reserve
- **Saturday 5 June at 3.00pm**
Koala Conservation Centre meeting room
- **Saturday 18 September at 3.00pm**
Koala Conservation Centre meeting room
- **Sunday 21 November at 11.00am**
Silverleaves Reserve

PLANT STALL 2021

- **Sunday 6 June 10 am – 2 pm**
Silverleaves Store

SCA WORKING BEES

- **Saturday 6 March at 10.00am**
Tidy up of Silverleaves Reserve. Meet at Silverleaves Reserve
- **Saturday 5 June at 10am**
Weeding/planting along foreshore. Meet at Silverleaves Reserve
- **Saturday 10 July at 10am**
Weeding/planting along foreshore. Meet at Silverleaves Store
- **Saturday 15 August at 10am**
Tidy up of Silverleaves Reserve. Meet at Silverleaves Reserve

SCA MEMBERSHIP ARE NOW DUE FOR 2021

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.

Complete a 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.

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

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

THE SCA NEEDS YOUR HELP

Apologies to those who tried renewing their membership last year through our website. We are looking for assistance with our website and Facebook and membership database which all need updating, if you have the skills, we would love to hear from you.

GRANT FOR FORESHORE WEEDING AND REVEGETATION

The Phillip Island Landcare Group has been successful in applying for a Coastcare grant in conjunction with five Coastcare/community groups. SCA is a partner and will receive \$3,500 for weed control and revegetation works along the Silverleaves foreshore. Thank you to the Phillip Island Landcare Group!

HEALTH WARNING ON MOSQUITOES AND ROSS RIVER VIRUS

Recently a couple of Island residents have contracted Ross River virus, which can cause joint swelling and pain, fatigue and muscle aches which can persist for many months. A rash and fever may also develop. It takes three to nine days for symptoms to occur after exposure, and occasionally up to 21 days. While everyone recovers from the initial onset, symptoms may recur in some individuals for over a year or more. Protect yourself by covering up or wearing repellent when outside.

HOODED PLOVER SILVERLEAVES UPDATE

Hooded Plovers nested on the beach in front of Woodland Avenue in December with two chicks hatching out of 3 eggs in mid-January. The chicks faced several threats from off lead dogs before moving 1.5km east to the Nature Parks managed no dogs' beach.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Incidents or observations of dogs attacking or chasing Hooded Plovers (or any other wildlife) are breaches of the Wildlife Act and can now be reported on the Crime Stoppers platform (<https://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au/>). DELWP are gathering evidence of these breaches in a state-wide portal to be used in identifying non-compliance hotspots. If possible, provide supporting evidence of your observation such as photos, descriptions of people and dogs and include the date, time, and location.

EROSIAN VICTORY FOR COWES EAST

There is good news for the foreshore at Cowes east. The Dept of Environment, Land, Water and Planning commissioned a report to investigate foreshore erosion at the Cowes East foreshore in the area between Rose Avenue and Coghlan Road. The report recommended:

Remove existing timber groynes – numbers 16, 17 and 18. These groynes are ineffective and deteriorating.

Remove existing timber seawall – wall is ineffective and deteriorating. Rock rubble behind the wall may be suitable for reuse in the revetment.

Construct new rock revetment – to replace timber seawall, approximately 330m, tied into existing rock walls at either end. Provide pedestrian access over revetment to align with existing beach access points.

Construct six new timber groynes – length 30m and spacing approximately 64m.

Fill groyne compartment – use beach scraping to establish a 'fillet' beach on the western side of each groyne.

Repair timber groynes – numbers 14 and 15 at Rose Ave and Scotch College.

BCSC has \$1.1 million from the Federal Government Environment Restoration Fund 2019 to contribute to the delivery of some of the report recommendations, set to be completed by midyear. Council will apply for funding to continue the study further east along the beach adjacent to Silverleaves.

SILVERLEAVES IN AUTUMN

It is a busy time at Silverleaves over autumn, the Banksia's are coming into flower and there are many birds and critters attracted to the nectar. This includes the noisy Wattle birds and Rainbow Lorikeets, as well as bats and possums and insects. The coming months are an ideal time to start planting in your garden, and a reminder the SCA Plant Stall on Sunday 6 June is a great chance to buy plants suitable for Silverleaves.

WHAT GROWS WELL IN SILVERLEAVES

Low Shrubs (up to 2 m)

Coastal Saltbush- *Atriplex Cinerea*

White Correa- *Correa Alba*

Cushion Bush- *Leacopogon Brownii*

Tall Shrubs 2-5 m

Coastal Wattle- *Acacia Sophorae*

Sweet Bursaria- *Bursaria Spinose*

Coast Tea Tree- *Leptospermum Laevigatum*

Grasses/Sedges

Knobby Club-sedge- *Ficina Nodose*

Spiny Headed Mat-rush- *Lomandra Longifolia*

WHAT LIVES IN YOUR BACKYARD?

You may be surprised what is hiding in your garden. The editor has begun keeping a list of wildlife seen on her property at Silverleaves this year and includes the surprise of nearly stepping on a copperhead snake (followed by a scream!), a blue tongue lizard and an echidna regularly drinking from a bowl of water on the ground, micro bats flying in the evening hopefully catching pesky mosquitoes, and ten wallabies passing through in one evening. The list of birds includes the Eastern Spinebill, Rufus Whistler, New Holland Honey Eater, Brown Thornbills, Rainbow Lorikeets, Eastern Rosella, Little Honey Wattlebird, Eastern Yellow Robin, Firetails, Kookaburra, Ravens, Currawongs and Magpies, Start your own list and let us know, the SCA would love to collect more information about our local wildlife and birdlife.

Rabbits have been increasing in numbers around Silverleaves recently and can cause damage to the natural environment and to native vegetation, Bass Coast Shire have been notified.

WHAT IS IT?



Image: Myra Holmes

What is about 10 mm in length, has eight eyes, six spines, a set of fangs, and look like a pretty jewel? A Jewel spider of course! These beautiful little spiders can be found around Silverleaves and Rhyll Inlet especially in the summer months. It is a member of the orb-weavers, approximately 5 mm to 10 mm in size. Their abdomen has six distinctive projections ("spines") and they are predominantly a shiny black, with variable white, yellow, and orange patterns. Look for their tell-tale intricate webs.

INSECTS ARE IMPORTANT TOO



Image Denise Rogers

Another little jewel found recently in the editor's garden was this little Jewel bug, commonly found around the eastern coast of Australia. Insects play an important function in our ecosystems, such as pollination, or recycling nutrients and are also an essential element in the food chain that supports life on our planet. When the insects go, the frogs, birds and mammals do not have food.

These little critters are yet another reason to protect the natural environment of Silverleaves and the SCA encourage you to consider planting native plants in your garden to provide a home for our local insect population.

SWIMMING WALLABIES



David and Barbara Wilkinson spotted something that looked like a dog on the sand bars. With binoculars, they realised it was a wallaby, and then it swam hundreds of metres offshore, almost out to a fishing boat in the channel, then did a large circuit, swimming, and then leaping, back to the beach. Amazing sight.

MIGRATING SHOREBIRDS WILL BE LEAVING US SOON

Shorebirds such as eastern curlews, bar-tailed godwits and red-necked stints complete one of the world's greatest migrations, flying thousands of kilometres south along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway from their Arctic breeding grounds. The birds arrive to feed at Rhyll Inlet between October and December and are due to begin this extraordinary non-stop journey back to the Arctic between March and April. Rhyll Inlet is a declared Ramsar wetland of international significance to protect the habitat of migratory birds.

AMAZING RED NECKED STINTS



Image Source <https://museums victoria.com.au>

Red-necked stints are small as a sparrow yet every year they migrate from their breeding grounds in the tundra of Siberia and Alaska, a journey of as much as 12,500 km, and they can fly more than 3200 km non-stop. They feed in groups on the mudflats of Rhyll Inlet and must gorge themselves on food to build up fat stores to fuel their annual migration. It is vital they are not disturbed as they use up much of the stored energy to escape and can become depleted for the flight home.

WEED OF THE MONTH



Image Source <https://keys.lucidcentral.org>

Madeira Vine is a vigorous perennial vine climbing to 30 m high and recently has been found growing near the access track at the corner of Sanders Road and Silverleaves Ave. The vine spreads from its tubers and even if you pull it out by hand, it can continue to spread from these tubers. It grows rapidly and can smother native vegetation. SCA committee members Gillian Armstrong and Don Cox have been regularly visiting the site and removing the vine by hand. Be vigilant and if you find Madeira Vine in your garden or anywhere at Silverleaves please contact the SCA of its location and advice on its removal and control methods.

silverleavesconservation@outlook.com

TO FENCE OR NOT?

Increasingly, Silverleaves residents are building fences around their properties to keep the wallabies out. If you have a fence or are considering building a fence remember to leave a few low holes large enough for echidnas to pass through, or as an alternative, fence off specific areas or garden beds and leave the rest open.