

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg.no 0015325J

NEWSLETTER

March 2024



We all love Silverleaves and the SCA has been working hard to protect the natural environment, vegetation, and wildlife for the future as we face the multiple threats of foreshore erosion, habitat loss and the impact of climate change. The SCA hope you will join us in 2024 to continue this important work.

Although a small group of dedicated members the SCA has had a very successful year in 2023 and looks forward to further achievements in 2024. We will continue to advocate for the protection of the foreshore from further erosion and are liaising with Bass Coast Shire Council, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the consultants undertaking the Coastal Processes study which is due to be completed mid-year.

We are also working with Bass Coast Shire Council to improve the Silverleaves Reserve, and the beach access tracks and nature strips. Please join us for the working bee at Easter and the Plant Stall in June. Later in the year we will organise a public meeting with the Phillip Island Fire Brigade to review bushfire plans and preparedness for Silverleaves residents.

THE SCA AGM

The AGM was held on the 10 March at the Silverleaves Reserve. The SCA is very pleased to announce Louise Hill as our new president who will bring her professional expertise and skills to the SCA and be a great asset.

Jenny Kinder has taken on a new role as the membership co-ordinator and you will have received a membership fee reminder recently. Membership is \$20 per year per household. Will Dwyer has generously offered his I.T. skills to update the membership data base and the SCA website. And a big thank you to those on the committee for their assistance and support organising working bees, the plant stall, managing finances, administrative duties and attending meetings.

SCA WORKING BEE

Saturday 30 March 10.00am – 12pm

Meet at the Silverleaves Reserve.

Sea Spurge removal on the foreshore

BYO garden gloves, appropriate footwear, and eye protection such as sunglasses as the milky sap is toxic. Tea and cake will be provided afterwards.

PLANT STALL

Saturday 8 June 9.00am – 12.00pm

Held at the Silverleaves Café

Indigenous plants suitable for Silverleaves will be available. As well as raising vital funds for our Silverleaves working bee plantings, the plant stall plays a valuable role in educating people about the importance of planting natives and encouraging biodiversity.

SCA COMMITTEE MEETING

Saturday 22 June at 1.30pm – 4.00pm

Berninnet Cultural Centre

Please come to the meeting and hear more about SCA plans, propose ideas, and meet other residents of Silverleaves. We are keen to hear from you about any issues or concerns regarding the Silverleaves environment.

EROSION UPDATE

The study to examine beach erosion in Cowes and Silverleaves has begun and is due to be completed in June 2024. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) has engaged qualified consultants to undertake a whole of West Gippsland study, including Silverleaves and Cowes, as well as other sites along the West Gippsland coast, focussed on coastal protection structures. DEECA has identified Silverleaves and Cowes as a priority site.

Representatives of SCA attended an initial fact-finding meeting on the 15 February with the consultants undertaking the study, as well as representatives from DEECA and Bass Coast Shire Council.

This meeting was to enable the consultants and DEECA to learn about the values of our area, some history of the site, observations of the coastal erosion issues and community concerns. The SCA was able to provide the consultants with several pertinent historical records as well as photos of the Silverleaves beach over the decades.

SEA LEVEL RISE AND STORM SURGE

A Melbourne University study last year found about 1660 properties on Phillip Island will be at risk of flooding from the sea by 2100. The “Economic Impacts from Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge in Victoria over the 21st Century” study examined coastal inundation risk for Victorian residential and commercial property – as well as critical infrastructure. The study suggested properties in seven of Phillip Island’s 13 suburbs would be exposed to coastal inundation by 2100, including Newhaven, Cape Woolamai, Churchill Island, Cowes, Rhyll, Silverleaves and Ventnor.

HIGH TIDES AT SILVERLEAVES

A ‘king tide’ is used to describe any remarkably high tide. The strength of tidal forces varies with the alignment of the earth, sun and moon. Spring tides (as in ‘springing forth’) typically occur every 15 days or so. Spring high tides cause the surface water level to be a little higher than average, and spring low tides to be a little lower than average. The more moderate tides around the time of quarter moons are called neap tides. There will be a very high tide on Friday 12 April at approx. 3.42pm of 3.22 metres. You can download the 2024 tide chart for Cowes Jetty.

<https://www.ausmarinescience.com/tide-times/2024-victoria-tide-times/>

BEACH PHOTOS

The response to a request for old photos of the Silverleaves beach was wonderful, many sent in photos from the 1970’s onwards. It bought back many happy childhood memories, playing on the six groynes built in the 1980, s at the east end of Silverleaves.



Holmes family near the Dolphin Road beach access track 1967 before the groynes were built.



Sanders Road beach access track 1988

WEATHER REPORT

Phillip Island has had a very dry February and March, after a very wet December and January. The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) recently released modelling for long-range forecasts predicting a high chance of below average rainfall in autumn, as well as above average temperatures. The BoM said Australia was on track for its third hottest summer. The report states in recent decades there has been a trend in the region to higher temperatures and more hot days, reductions in rainfall during the cooler months, and increases in extreme, short duration rainfall in some locations.

BE PREPARED FOR BUSHFIRES

Silverleaves offers a beautiful environment in which to live and enjoy, however there is always the risk of bushfires.



Stay informed by using the Vic Emergency app which provides emergency information and warnings to help you make informed decisions about your safety. You can download it from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). In order to receive location specific app alerts when warnings are issued or incidents occur, you must **create a watch zone**.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY

Bass Coast Shire Council are preparing a Neighbourhood Character study for the municipality. The Study will reflect Bass Coast's existing and preferred neighbourhood character and outline how new development should appropriately respond and contribute to the valued characteristics of the Shire's established residential areas.

Neighbourhood Character encompasses the way a neighbourhood looks and feels and is created by a combination of landscape, vegetation, the built environment, history and culture.

Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether great or small. We have chosen to live in Silverleaves because of its unique vegetation and natural environment.

Many residents are concerned about some new house developments which have had an impact on the neighbourhood character. In particular, new buildings with little space for gardens around the house, a dominant built form not in keeping with the natural landscape, shadowing and overlooking issues, and not being sensitive to wildlife with tree removal/vegetation loss.

We hope this study will develop clear planning policy and guidelines for future development and the importance of retaining the local neighbourhood character of Silverleaves. There is a comprehensive document available about this study and is well worth reading together with a short survey for community feedback.

<https://engage.basscoast.vic.gov.au/neighbourhoodcharacterhousing>

YOUR NATIVE GARDEN

Your garden can be a haven for birds and wildlife. Many Silverleaves residents are choosing to plant their gardens with native plants and grasses which grow well in coastal areas, require less water, are easier to maintain and add to the natural neighbourhood character.

HOODED PLOVERS

The 2022/23 hooded plover breeding season saw 14 pairs successfully raise eight fledglings around Phillip Island beaches, resulting in a fledged per pair rate of 0.57, which is lower than previous trends. There were no nests recorded at Silverleaves. Since active management of the hooded plover population began in 1998, the population has increased from around 20 individuals to a stable plateau of 44 (± 2) between 2010 and 2019.

SNAKES AT SILVERLEAVES



Image source
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowland_copperhead

This summer there have been many snake sightings around Silverleaves, probably due to the wet December and January and the availability of food such as frogs. Copperheads are the only snake native to Phillip Island and vary in colour from light grey to red brown/black and pale white yellow to pink, orange underneath and are usually a metre long and are a protected species.

Copperheads are shy of humans. It's best to walk away and simply leave them alone. Although venomous, they have a small mouth and struggle to get their venom into a target. If bitten on a limb, apply a pressure bandage and immobilise the limb. If bitten elsewhere, apply continual pressure to the bite site. Do not wash the wound as the venom can confirm identification. Seek immediate medical assistance and call 000 for an ambulance.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Wildlife Plan by Phillip Island Nature Parks includes measures aimed at balancing populations of Cape Barren geese, wallabies and possums. Possum populations are higher here than other parts of Victoria. A possum survey in 2023 in Oswin Roberts Reserve found estimated densities of 7.98 possums per hectare for brushtail possums and 7.59 possums per hectare for ringtail possums, which are significantly higher than other parts of Victoria. In Silverleaves it seems there is a possum in every tree!

The plan will explore the potential to introduce native predators such as powerful owls as the main apex predator for possums on Phillip Island. There have been sightings of powerful owls already recorded at night in woodland reserves on Phillip Island.

RABBITS AT SILVERLEAVES

The bunnies are breeding at Silverleaves! Due to the possibility of bandicoots moving into the Rhyll Inlet, baiting is no longer an option. There is still some Myxomatosis and Calicivirus in some populations. Check around your house for signs of digging, use wire mesh around any access points to under the house to prevent them from making a burrow.

THE EASTERN CURLEW



Image Source.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_Eastern_curlew

As part of the Phillip Island Nature Park 'Hooded plover & Gull counts' 20 Eastern curlews were seen at Observation Point in February 2023 after two years of no sightings. The Eastern curlew is mostly brown in colour and quite large at 60–66 cm in length with a very long bill, at 12.8–20.1 cm in length. The Eastern curlew spends its breeding season in northeastern Asia, and then flies all the way to spend the non-breeding season in coastal Australia, including Observation Point.

PROTECT MARINE LIFE AND BIRDS

When you walk along the beach you can help protect marine life and birds by collecting pieces of plastic, plastic bags, fishing line, bits of rope and many other careless discards. Take them home for disposal in your rubbish bin.