

SILVERLEAVES CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC.

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NEWSLETTER

September 2022



SPRING AT SILVERLEAVES

After a long and very wet winter, Spring has finally arrived, and warmer weather is ahead. This is a wonderful time in Silverleaves, plants are in flower attracting the birds and wildlife and it's time for us humans to venture outdoors again, either in the garden, walking along the beach and maybe, if you are brave enough, to have the first swim for the season.

Spring is a wonderful time for nature, with a lot of wildlife in their breeding season. Keep an eye out for echidnas and if one visits your garden, keep quiet and give the echidna time to move on in its own time. They may even have baby puggles nearby.

Reptiles such as copperhead snakes, skinks and lizards emerge from hibernation and bask in the sun. If you see a snake, keep your pets inside and allow time for it to move on, or call a qualified snake handler if you are concerned.

The recent rain has also turned the reserve bordering Honeysuckle Rd into a wetland, attracting numerous birds, including ducks and purple swamphens and a cacophony of frogs. A resident on Honeysuckle Rd described it as the "Frogger". Some frogs on Phillip Island are the Southern Brown Tree Frog, Eastern Banjo Frog (commonly called a Pobblebonk), Whistling tree frog and the Eastern common froglet.

Springtime also sees the arrival of migratory birds to the Rhyll Inlet after a long journey of over 12,000 kilometres from Arctic breeding areas. sandpipers, curlews, godwits, knots, stints and Pied Oyster Catchers, as well as the Hooded Plovers and Red Capped Plovers return to our beach to breed.

Spring is a great time to be in the garden and plant some native plants; they are attractive, better for the environment, low maintenance, drought tolerant and require little water. They also provide habitat for native birds, butterflies, bees, lizards, and other insects. With habitat disappearing at an alarming rate across the Island, you can provide a wildlife oasis for them to thrive in.

You can buy indigenous plants suitable for the sandy soils of Silverleaves at the Barb Martin Bushbank Nursery, 1810 Phillip Island Road. Open Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 9am – 3pm.

THE SILVERLEAVES RESERVE



The SCA are very pleased to have a new noticeboard up in the Silverleaves Reserve. The SCA received a grant from Coast Care to build it with the aim of providing information and education about Silverleaves for the local community and for visitors.

The SCA is very grateful to those people who volunteered their time and energy to make this happen. A very big thank you to Geoff Hall who generously donated his time and building expertise to build it, Jude Doyle who cleverly designed it and drew up the plans for construction, Jarvis Weston for managing the grant and liaising with BCS and Keith McDougall who helped with construction on site. It was a huge effort from everyone involved and a wonderful example of how a small group of people can work together and achieve great things. We welcome your suggestions for further topics to be included in the noticeboard.

The revitalization of the Silverleaves Reserve continues slowly due to the wet winter, with further mulching by Bass Coast Shire near Bayview Road, to protect existing tree roots from mowing and decrease the need for spraying weeds and then revegetate with indigenous trees and shrubs and grasses.

COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

Sunday 20 November, 10.00am
Koala Conservation Centre meeting room

WORKING BEE AT THE SILVERLEAVES RESERVE

Saturday 29 October 10am – 12 pm
Bring garden gloves and gardening tools.
Please consider coming along and doing your bit to continue the revitalisation of the Silverleaves Reserve.

PLANT STALL

Sunday 30 October 8.00am – 12.00pm
Silverleaves Store
Banksias and indigenous plants suitable for Silverleaves will be available.

SCA AND THE FUTURE

The SCA committee continues to develop a strategic plan with the purpose of developing a vision of the future for the SCA and strategies to achieve this. The current 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.

We welcome your suggestions and encourage you to become involved.

SILVERLEAVES BANKSIA RESEARCH

Silverleaves is named after the Banksia integrifolia and gives the area much of its distinctive character. They are in decline, and no new seedlings are growing, and they have become more prone to wind damage and borer attack. Keith McDougall is looking for volunteers to count and measure Banksia trees in the foreshore. For more information contact Keith keithmcdougall804@gmail.com

RE-SILVERING SILVERLEAVES

Consider planting a Banksia in your garden. The SCA have Banksia trees in pots available for sale for \$5.00 each. Contact SCA Committee member Gillian Armstrong gillian2@aapt.net.au and she will be able to give details about where and how to pick them up from her place in Silverleaves Avenue.

SAVE THE RHYLL INLET



Image: Courtesy PINP

Conservationists on the Island are lobbying the state government to buy a private farm abutting the Rhyll Inlet for public ownership, ahead of the November state election. The Save Rhyll Inlet campaign would like to see the 32ha land currently for sale on the Cowes-Rhyll Road protected from development. The land is environmentally sensitive and flood prone and could be acquired by the state and then managed by the Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP).

This is a unique opportunity for this land to be placed into government ownership and returned to its pre-farming natural wetland condition as part of the Rhyll wetlands. The recent state government Distinctive Area and Landscape legislation highlighted the environmental and landscape importance of the Rhyll Inlet, adding it was a vital blue carbon ecosystem, which is a carbon-storing “powerhouse”.

The campaign for government ownership is also based on the land’s complex zoning, currently rural conservation, which requires a permit for a dwelling. However, the zoning allows most earthworks to be carried out without a permit, which could be carried out around the elevated part of the land “to increase the size of the land suitable to build on”. The land to the east and the south of the site is zoned Public Conservation and Resource Zone, part of the Rhyll Inlet wetlands and managed by PINP.

In 2020 the landowner was willing to gift about 40 hectares of the property to the PINP, in exchange for planning approval of a low-density home on a separate 2.3 hectares. Bass Coast Shire councillors rejected the offer, arguing it would effectively expand Cowes’ town boundaries and would allow development in an environmentally sensitive and flood-prone area. The offer came after years of negotiations between the shire, conservation groups, PINP and the landowner.

Source PISRA 10/8/2022

THE RHYLL INLET IN FLOOD



Photo: Pam Abell

This photo of a flooded Rhyll Inlet was taken from Pams Abell's back garden in Bruce Road during a king tide and heavy rains. Pam said "I feel the Rhyll Inlet is very important to protect. The bird life that live out in the scrub is amazing. Also, water birds come and feed here. The echidnas also inhabit this area. It is very fragile and needs protecting. The sooner it is in Nature Park hands the better, as agapanthus and pittosporum are taking hold, hopefully these invasive plants can be stopped from spreading further into the Inlet."

You can view the Rhyll Inlet along the Conservation Hill and Rhyll Inlet Walks where boardwalks loop through mangroves, saltmarsh and mudflats. The track starts at the Conservation Hill car park off the Cowes-Rhyll Rd and continues along Rhyll Inlet to Rhyll. It is a lovely walk and accessible for a pram or wheelchair.

CUSTODIANS OF SILVERLEAVES

The terms 'custodianship' and 'stewardship' encompass **a sense of responsibility towards land and the landscape**. This embraces the concepts of sustainable natural resource management and managing natural resources within their capabilities (to meet local and broader community values), both now and in the future.

Although we own property in Silverleaves we must also consider this land is held in trust and will be passed on to future generations, as a gift to be shared and celebrated. So, let's ask ourselves, what am I doing to be a better custodian of this land and this world? What am I passing on to the next generation?

Changing our thinking and our habits now can make a big difference. It's time to start thinking about how we restore and improve our environment rather than use it without thought. Our challenge as individuals, and as a community, is to be responsible for our actions and leave this land in a better state than we found it.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SILVERLEAVES

Some Phillip Island properties will be effectively uninsurable by 2030, due to rising risks of extreme weather and climate change, a detailed analysis from the Climate Council has found. The analysis found about 16 per cent of Silverleaves properties (61 homes) would be vulnerable to coastal inundation by 2030, rising to 93 per cent (523) by 2100, under a high emission scenario. Other climate impacts on Phillip Island – under a high emission scenario – would include surface water flooding and bushfires

Dr Karl Mallon, CEO of Climate Valuation, said insurers and banks were already quantifying risks from climate change. "It's essential that Australians inform themselves about these risks to their safety and financial wellbeing, which are well known to financial institutions and governments," Dr Mallon said. "It's striking how the number of affected properties grows under higher emissions scenarios. Reducing emissions would potentially save thousands of homes from worsening damage.

WEED OF THE MONTH



Image source; [Sweet Pittosporum Yarra Ranges Council](#)

Sweet Pittosporum has a dense canopy that shades the ground and drops lots of leaves. A chemical inhibitor in the leaves prevents indigenous plants from growing beneath. It has contributed to changes in lizard and bird populations by reducing habitat for these species. It is also fire sensitive and the leaves are very flammable. Sweet Pittosporum establishes very quickly and starves surrounding plants of nutrients, water, and sunlight.

How to remove it

Hand removal is only recommended for very small plants, ensure the root system is removed.

Cut and paint

Cut plants off at ground level and immediately paint the stump with an undiluted glyphosate-based product. This is useful for larger seedlings that are too hard to hand pull but should not be attempted on trees with trunks greater than 50 mm as they are likely to resprout.

SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

The Bass Coast Shire's has created a new Local Law 2022., the significant tree register to protect the region's most precious vegetation. BCS officers will be working over the coming months to develop systems and processes for significant and protected trees. The process will set out the guidelines for what trees will be included on the register, how the register will be formed and the different stakeholders who will be involved in the process

After years of constant tree felling by ratepayers, in 2019 the Bass Coast Branch of the National Trust and the Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS) proposed the island's first ever Significant Tree Register. Their proposed register focused on significant, "A grade" trees on public land with private landholders able to nominate trees on their own land. Criteria was to be modelled on the approach followed by the National Trust and other councils, with factors such as landscape context, aesthetic value, rarity, age, outstanding size and shape or for cultural or heritage connections.

Following community feedback to the draft local law in May, the finalised law now includes other changes. Previously the draft stated homeowners could not cut, trim, lop, prune on any private property less than 5000 square metres any significant tree or protected tree. The finalised law now removes that 5000 square metre provision. As detailed in the draft, the new rules are also tough on residents planting any vegetation on nature strips and enforce regulations on keeping grass trimmed. Landholders also cannot carry out any other works within the tree protection zone of a significant tree or protected tree, in order to protect roots.

FAN MUSSEL



Photo: Myra Holmes

An unusual find on Silverleaves beach in August after strong winds. It is a Fan Mussel and is 16 cm in length. The Fan Mussel is the largest bivalve in Victoria and can grow up to 35.5 cm and is found in Bass Strait and occasionally in Western Port Bay and around the heads of Port Phillip Bay.

THE PURPLE SWAMPHEN



Image source: [Purple Swamphen | Birdlife Australia](#)

With the recent wet season there have been many Purple Swamphens around Silverleaves, particularly near roadside verges and wetlands. And when a Swamphen runs away, it does a very funny "silly walk", flicking its tail up and down to reveal a white rump, which contrasts with the bird's black upperparts.

If you see sick or injured wildlife, you can contact Phillip Island Nature Parks on 5951 2800 between 7.30am – 4pm daily or after hours contact Wildlife Victoria on 8400 7300.

FIRE PREPARATION AT SILVERLEAVES

Now is the time to start 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. If you see a fire in the area, call 000.

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.

THE SCA MEMBERSHIP

Apologies to those who may be trying to subscribe or renew their membership via the SCA website, which is currently not working. We are investigating alternative options and will let you know. If you have any queries about the SCA or membership, please contact the SCA secretary silverleavesconservation@outlook.com