



# NEPEAN CONSERVATION NEWS

DECEMBER 2015



Above: *Strolling along Mud Islands.* Photo: Rob Varney.  
Cover: *Roosting Terns, Mud islands, Nov 2015.* Photo: Rob Varney

Below: *Erosion of Western Sister.* Photo: Julie Corridon.



## From the president

Welcome to the December summer edition of the NCG Newsletter. How quickly the end of the year is coming upon us. And how much we have to do on the planning front – some details in the newsletter, but we cannot document all: so apart from Sorrento, we are dealing with Tootgarook Swamp, the Tucky Track, drainage blocks, individual dwelling proposals and working with our Councillors, Shire officers, and our colleagues on the Nepean Historical Society, among others. The work does not cease over the busy holiday period. Both our natural and cultural environments are under continual pressure from development. The NCG scrutinises permit applications to ensure that built form is in keeping with the environmental and vegetative overlays; and contributes positively to neighbourhood character and sense of place. This remains a difficult task: we struggle to keep up with the volume of applications and rely on you, our members, to alert us to what is happening in your street, precinct and neighbourhood.

The severe weather patterns are putting great stress on our local environment: as a result habitat and biodiversity are under threat. Fire safety is at the forefront of our concerns: with low rainfall, the early onset of summer, and very dry conditions already evident. The NCG asks that you clean up around your homes and prepare your fire plans; be aware of your neighbours (often visitors over the summer); water strategically so that your indigenous gardens survive, to not only give you pleasure, but to protect our birds and fauna. The Mornington Peninsula Shire has prepared Community Information Guides for Blairgowrie, Sorrento/

Portsea, Rye/St Andrew's Beach and McCrae/Arthur's Seat which cover the nepean Peninsula. You can download these at [http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Services\\_For\\_You/Fire\\_Emergency\\_Management/Fire\\_Management\\_Plans](http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Services_For_You/Fire_Emergency_Management/Fire_Management_Plans)

There are only a few weeks of 2015 left – how are you going with the 2015 NCG challenge? Each member was asked to recruit one new member. If you have achieved this – congratulations. If you are struggling – how about a Christmas /New year gift to your neighbour? This would give them some excellent reading for the year, inform and educate them in local issues and inspire them to get on board with preserving and caring for our local habitats!

Our 2016 NCG calendar is available from Antipodes Bookshop (Sorrento) and the Newsagent in Blairgowrie.

I thank the NCG committee for their work this past year; I thank all Friends' Group volunteers for their contribution on the ground; I thank all our members for their continuing support. As custodians of the Nepean Peninsula we are all accountable and responsible for caring for our small place on this planet earth.

Wishing you all season's blessings: enjoy this incredibly beautiful Nepean Peninsula with your families and friends over the summer. Keep safe and continue to advocate for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of this life giving place.

As always thank you to all our contributors. Enjoy the read!

*Dr Ursula de Jong*



Above left: Bridal Creeper leaves and tubers. Above right: Bridal creeper leaves and berries. Photos: Sarah Patterson and Julie Corridon.

## Weed of the month – Bridal Creeper – Smilax - the “iceberg” weed

Bridal Creeper is part of the asparagus family (*Asparagus asparagoides*). It is one of southern Australia’s worst weeds and a Weed of National Significance. Native of southern Africa it is wide spread in Victoria occurring in open woodlands, closed forests, urban bushland, roadsides, waterways and coastal habitats. This includes most areas of the Nepean Peninsula.

The significant impact of this climbing weed is both above and below the surface – like an iceberg. The foliage smothers native plants and can completely dominate the

lower layers of vegetation. Below the surface the extensive underground tubers form a dense and lasting mat. This mat impedes the root growth of other plants, reduces the soil moisture infiltration to root systems and prevents seedling establishment.

It can be identified by its oval-shaped leathery and flattened leaves (10-70 mm long and 4-30 mm wide) that are glossy in appearance, and alternately arranged. It has white or greenish-white flowers that form small round berries that turn red as they mature. It must not be confused with our native small leaved clematis (*Clematis microphylla*) Old Mans Beard with divided paler green leaves.

Bridal creeper reproduces by seed.

These are dispersed by birds and other animals when eaten; by the dumping of garden waste (including soil ) and by underground stems (i.e. rhizomes) and tubers.

### **Bridal creeper control.**

The recommended controls are:

(i) Spraying with herbicide – great care (with spray mix, type and over spray) is required to avoid damage to surrounding valuable vegetation and soil biodiversity.

(ii) Dispersion of the Rust Fungus *Puccinia myrsiphylli* released by CSIRO in 2002 is a biological control. Cases of the impact of the fungus can be seen widely across the Nepean Peninsula with the leaves of the bridal creeper being dotted with the brown fungus. This reduces the growth and spreading of the vine. The fungus can be spread through washing affected leaves in water and then spraying the wash water on unaffected vines.

(iii) Digging out tubers. Wherever there is a vine there will be a tuber up to 5cm deep in the soil. The tuber must be removed to stop the plant reshooting. The tubers take many years to break down so in heavily infested areas creating openings in the mat will allow water access to the neighbouring plant roots.

*Sarah Patterson*

## **Your NCG Committee**

President: Ursula de Jong  
Vice-President: Mechelle Cheers  
Secretary: Jill Robinson  
Treasurer: Edward Cohen

Committee: Ruth Belfrage; Rebecca Cohen; Julie Corridon (Friends Group Support); Eddy de Jong (Webmaster); John Franklin (Membership); Ian Haskins; Lisa Howard (Newsletter); Sarah Patterson (Friends Group Support); Danielle Suffern (Friends Group Support); John Trewarne (Friends Group Support).

## **SeaChange ARC Linkage Project**

The project is on track for completion by 31 December 2015, with the final report due with the Australia Research Council on 30 June 2016. Community information meetings will be scheduled in the first half of 2016, where findings and recommendations will be reported.

The planning review of recommendations is underway by a professional planner. As the analysis of all source material and data draws to completion, the researchers will bring all to bear on the final recommendations. These will be available to the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the Borough of Queenscliff, and the wider community to ensure a better way forward with regards to managing change in Sorrento and Queenscliff.



Above: 'Wisdom' the Albatros. Photo: John Klavitter/US Fish and Wildlife Service

## 'Wisdom' The Albatros

The world's oldest known banded wild bird, a Laysan Albatros named Wisdom, has been spotted again at the remote breeding grounds of Midway Atoll about 2000 km north-west of Hawaii. Thought to be at least 64 years old and first tagged by an ornithologist in 1956, Wisdom has likely clocked up at least 9 million-ocean km of flight time in her life.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/worlds-oldest-seabird-laysan-albatross-returns-hawaii-lay-37th-egg-1530537>

## Collins Settlement Working Group – Integrated Trail

Members of the Working Group have made progress on this trail over the winter months. It is hoped the bollards will be installed early in the new year.

The Integrated Trail is located between the 1803 Landing site of David Collins' ship, Calcutta, at Cameron's Bight Jetty and St Paul's Lookout at Bass Strait.

This Trail aims to provide greater public access to the Collins Precinct

and Tuckey Track using directional and interpretive signage along existing tracks. Some walks will take twenty minutes while the entire area can be explored comfortably in three to four hours.

Low impact bollards with engraved plates provide distances of all walks within the precinct. Interpretive information has been kept to a minimum, yet it has been carefully selected to enhance the walking experience of this place.

### **Trail Explained**

Starting at the 1803 Landing Site, the Trail will direct walkers by bollards bearing a ship motif, towards the commemorative monument.

From this central location, a number of historic and scenic walks will be suggested. A beach circuit to the landing site and back to the monument is one option. The nearby Early Settlers Graves walk to the Eastern Sister viewing platform is another, where one can appreciate the historic view line across to the Western Sister. This location served as an important signal station during the Collins Settlement. Signage at the Lookout also explains the fascinating geological past, some of which is shared in Boon Wurrung mythology. This is also a terrific place to watch Gannets plummet at speed, into the sea, late in the afternoon. This walk can also be enjoyed as a circuit.

Back at the monument, bollards will direct walkers in a westerly direction

to Sullivan Bay. Here the Trail rises through a picturesque area under the care of Friends of Sullivan Bay and Western Sister.

Following the original Point Nepean Road, the walk passes the historic landmark home 'Nee Morna' as it descends to the picnic ground at the base of The Western Sister Headland. It is here that Tuckey Track integrates with the Trail and passes alongside Lavender Hill and the Sorrento Sailing Club.

The Track then swings due south as it crosses Point Nepean Road and continues for 2 km across the narrow Peninsula and into the Mornington Peninsula National Park. After the final climb to St Paul's Lookout, the Integrated Trail concludes. An interpretive sign explains how this key site was used to monitor shipping in Bass Strait and Port Phillip and was one of three signal stations used to convey messages across to the Western Sister, where signals could then be relayed to base camp at the Eastern Sister.

The return trip from the commemorative monument or Landing site is little more than five kilometres. Car parking is provided at all locations and toilet facilities are available at a midpoint in the Tuckey Track Reserve.

*Julie Corridon*

## Erosion watch

### **Cameron's Bight, Eastern and Western Sister headlands**

The long awaited restoration of the eroded cliff face at Cameron's Bight is nearing completion: the stonework is in place, the stabilising and replanting of the cliff interfacing with this is awaiting funding and a friends' working bee. While this work will ensure safe access to the beach via the steps and preserve our cultural and natural landscape into the future, much more work is required to stabilise the cliff to the right of the staircase. This continues to be undermined by the sea. Likewise the Eastern Sister from Cameron's Bight to Sullivan Bay requires urgent work to halt the severe erosion which is undermining the stability of the entire headland.

The simple fact that the cliff is eroding, unstable and continues to be compromised by natural forces and human interference has been known for a long time. This was documented by Peter Coutts when he undertook the first archaeological survey of the site in 1982. Coutts notes that even as far back as 1900, extensive erosion of the cliff required jarrah bolstering [Coutts, J. F. (1982) An archaeological survey of Sullivan Bay, Sorrento. Victoria Archaeological Survey, Ministry for Cons. p18]. The geotechnical survey carried out on the site in 2013, by GeoAustralia (requested by the Mornington Peninsula Shire) assessed the cliff/escarpment as high-risk. The

geotechnical report highlights the necessity of taking urgent steps to protect the fragile cliff/escarpment. The revetment work [a difficult and expensive proposition], promised since 2010, is still not in place.

One of the difficulties has been the fragmented ownership this site, which has resulted in a lack of responsibility and little accountability of the whole site. Regardless of ownership (private/Shire/Parks) the escarpment of the Eastern Sister is a high-risk site. Whatever is done to it, needs to be done with much care. But if urgent measures are not put in place to protect the fragile cliff of the Eastern Sister, then one of the significant headlands of Sullivan Bay will disappear.

The second headland, the Western Sister, fares little better with major sand slips and extensive erosion. Major preventive and remedial works combined with a sound restoration programme need to be implemented urgently if the headlands of Sullivan Bay are to be preserved into the future.

*Ursula de Jong*



*Above: Eastern Sister Landslip. Photo Julie Corridon*

## Sorrento - planning updates

The historic Coastal Town of Sorrento is under threat from proposed large-scale new development. This historic coastal town's main street - Ocean Beach Road - is an integral part of our community's past, a vibrant part of the present, and a significant resource to preserve and promote for the future.

From the new Mayor

*"... may I suggest that our policies ought to provide for the adaptation of Shire functions to the environment rather than adapting our environment to the Shire functions?"*

*Acknowledgment Speech by the Mayor, Councillor Graham Pittock, at the Annual Meeting of Council on 9 November, 2015*

### Ozmosis Updates

VCAT heard the Ozmosis case (57-59 Ocean Beach Road) on 10 and 11 November 2015. On 19 November VCAT's decision to grant a permit with conditions was released. The Shire had refused the permit application. VCAT determined to overturn Council's refusal and direct the issue of a planning permit, subject to 21 Conditions, including relatively minor changes to the design of the building. The NCG supported the Council refusal to grant the permit on the grounds of inappropriateness of the development in the historic coastal town of Sorrento (refer to

previous Newsletters), the proposal being contrary to Clause 22.17 - Sorrento Historic Policy.

At its 23 November meeting the MPS Council noted

*"The VCAT decision raises questions as to whether sufficient weight was given to Council's Ocean Beach Road Commercial Precinct Sorrento Heritage Policy, adopted in October 2015, and the broader issue of VCAT's approach to the consideration of planning applications on the Mornington Peninsula."*

The NCG also considers that VCAT in its deliberations did not adequately take into account Sorrento township's classification in the hierarchy developed for Victoria under the State Planning Scheme. Under our State planning policy - and Melbourne 2030 and PLAN MELBOURNE - all centres, no matter how small, are regarded as "activity centres". Under MPS's policy on activity centres, Sorrento is defined as a "Small township", in contrast to Major Activity Centres (Rosebud, Hastings, Mornington) and Larger Townships (Dromana, Rye, Somerville, Mount Eliza), and at the other end of the scale, Convenience Centres (Flinders, Balnarring etc).

The policy indicates that the majority of new development should be consolidated in Major Activity Centres and, to some extent, in the Larger Townships, rather than in Small Townships and smaller centres. The provisions of the Mornington

Peninsula Planning Statement states, *inter alia*:

18. The hierarchy of settlements on the Mornington Peninsula will be recognised and maintained, with provisions to reinforce the distinction between major activity centres and other townships through appropriate density, height and built form controls and provisions to avoid out of centre commercial development. For the purposes of commercial centre planning the Mornington Peninsula will be considered separate from metropolitan Melbourne.

So, while the Sorrento commercial area is an “activity centre”, the metropolitan planning policies of consolidation and densification, which are often applied to activity centres should not be applied indiscriminately to the “Small township” of Sorrento, where considerations such as township character and heritage must be given priority.

These considerations apply to all planning permit applications in Sorrento (refer to Carmel). **On Monday 23 November at the MPS Council meeting, under urgent business the following matters were raised:**

1. That Council seek urgent legal advice in relation to an application to the Supreme Court for a review of the VCAT decision (ref 2240 - 2014) relating to 57-59 Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento.
2. In the event that legal advice confirms a basis for appeal

that council proceed with an application to the Supreme Court for a review of the VCAT decision.

3. That Council support the Manager Strategic Planning seeking authorisation under delegation to prepare and exhibit a Planning Scheme amendment to include the Ocean Beach Road Commercial Precinct Sorrento Heritage Policy as a reference document in the Planning Scheme.

The procedural motion was put by Cr Fraser and Cr Rodgers. The NCG agrees with our Councilors, that “It is important to uphold the principle that the Mornington Peninsula Planning Statement must be given weight by the Tribunal and therefore this matter may be regarded as a ‘test case’. On this basis an appeal should be pursued”. The NCG will work with our Councilors as well as the Nepean Historical Society to follow this up, to seek better outcomes for our small historic township.

### **Carmel**

On Monday 23 November the MPSC dealt with the development proposal at 142-146 Ocean Beach Road. This proposal was for retail in the historic house Carmel, with access from Ocean Beach Road, seven apartments, basement car parking, and a medical suite off Morce Ave. The Shire planners recommended Council approve the permit. As objectors to this proposal, the NCG and NHS were allowed to make a short presentation to Council.



Above: Carmel of Sorrento. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Ursula de Jong and Frank Hindley, respectively, were given five minutes each, and answered many questions from Councilors seeking information and clarification. We were not allowed to use a Powerpoint or to show any images.

Ursula de Jong stated that Sorrento is NOT classified at the level of Mornington or Rosebud or Rye for growth and development on the MP. So why the push to develop Sorrento at the scale and density demonstrated by the Carmel proposal?

**The precedents** (e.g. Clavin Pharmacy, Ozmosis, Salt, apartments in Constitution Hill Road etc) being quoted by the architect in the submission are not in this particular precinct and are therefore not appropriate.

**The quality of design:** any development proposed for Sorrento must contribute something of quality to the township going forwards. It must contribute to a sustainable future for the town: economically, socially and environmentally.

## Major issues remain for the NCG:

The density of development (that is the plot ratio) is out of keeping with the overlays in this area. The proposed development contemplates complete site coverage (boundary to boundary), using the nature strip on Morce Ave as the “landscaping”; the impact of the proposed footprint would be significant;

The form, mass and building volume is totally unsympathetic with the character of this heritage precinct. In other words this gross overdevelopment threatens the integrity of this historic coastal town. The Shire has put in place a heritage overlay which clearly articulates the values. These must guide the future development of Sorrento, and should be adhered to by Shire Planners and developers alike.

There are also specific concerns with the Carmel proposal, including:

The re-establishment of the ground line (from which the new heights are calculated) is conjecture;

Permeability – visually from the streetscape, and environmentally in regards to drainage are of concern;

The drawings and CAD perspectives give no accurate sense of the building bulk; the interface with the neighbouring property lacks clarity; the presentation modelling is inaccurate giving the impression of a smaller overall form; the sight lines are taken from a gable point and height is quite inappropriately calculated from the one chimney; the

solid mass of the building remains, as the volume is not articulated, in spite of attempts to breakdown surfaces with a diversity of materials (generally not sympathetic with the heritage values of the site).

The proposed building shape is sharp-edged and angular, and represents “city commercial” architecture. The appeal of Sorrento lies in what is already there – not in transposing urban commercial sensibilities onto a coastal town.

The provisions of the Mornington Peninsula Planning Statement states, *inter alia*:

20. Development within the Urban growth Boundary, whether within residential, commercial or other areas, be of a type and scale that maintains the existing values character of each town or settlement, or supports a change to a preferred future character that is clearly established through community consultation to a preferred future character that is clearly established through community consultation and the adoption of a relevant local area plan. In the assessment of any planning permit application, priority will be given to any local character statement or policy adopted by the responsible authority.

Poor processes and inconsistencies within the Planners report to Council were highlighted.

Cr Hugh Fraser added two amendments to the conditions to grant a permit. These were “E The western glazed entrance to Shop

Space 2 (level 3) and Bed4/study and terrace (level 4) be set back to align with the rear limestone wall of Carmel; and F the deletion of Apartment 7 and appropriate changes made to the roof.”

Crs Fraser and Rodgers moved that the permit be granted as per conditions reported in the MPSC minutes. The resolution was carried.

The NCG, NHS and NRA will meet with Crs Fraser and Rodgers and senior management of the MPS in mid-December to discuss issues and concerns, and to consider a way forward that would allow Sorrento to “age gracefully”, and for development on the Nepean Peninsula to respect this place.

*Ursula de Jong*

## Postage rate rise

As of 1 January 2016 the cost of postage will rise from 70c to \$1.00 per standard letter. This means it will cost the NCG \$2.00 per printed Newsletter to post to each of our members. Many of our local groups are now sending their newsletters by email.

The larger conservation groups in Australia are only sending electronic copies of their newsletters. We are asking you if you could please advise our membership officer, John Franklin ([jmfrank1@westnet.com.au](mailto:jmfrank1@westnet.com.au)) if you wish to receive a printed copy. Depending on numbers we may have to review our membership rates at the AGM in February 2016.



*Above: Arriving at Mud Islands. Photo: Rob Varney.*

## **Trip to Mud Islands**

On Sat 14 November 2015 twenty-five people took the trip from Blairgowrie jetty to the Mud Islands, organised by the Friends of the Hooded Plover MP group. We had some excitement on the way when we located an abandoned sailboard well out in the bay. After radioing in, the captain was asked to do a scan of the area in case someone was in trouble. This took us on a Cook's tour of the southern part of the bay; we passed close to The Hovel Pile Light, the South Channel Fort and the Chinaman's Hat seal colony, finally arriving at Mud Islands where we took a long time to locate a safe landing area where we could step off into relatively shallow waters. As we landed the Police Rescue helicopter circled overhead looking for the lost sailboard rider (no one was reported missing so we assumed the sailboard had washed out to sea from shore).

Once there we had about 4 hours to wander around at our leisure, before being picked at two for the return journey.

We chose to walk clockwise, others anticlockwise, and yet others ventured inland. The vegetation reflects the harsh environmental conditions here, with extensive areas of blue/grey Saltbush on the lower areas and prickly Spear-grass tussocks covering the elevated sandy areas.

There were masses of old shells around the beach, including some heavily encrusted areas where they had built up over many years. Silver gulls were screeching overhead, defending their territory and nesting areas just inland near the Saltbush. There was a large inland lagoon which was topped up with each high tide; thankfully we were there at low tide!



Above: *Encrusted Shells, Mud Islands.*  
Photo: Rob Varney

The first big nesting area we saw was for the smaller Crested Terns, there were numerous birds presumably sitting on nests/eggs about 60 metres inland in the sandy area; gulls were stationed around the edges of the group looking for any eggs to steal.

A little further on were the larger Terns who were more aggressive and dive bombed us if they considered we were too close to their nesting area - I managed to get some action photos of these attacks. Amongst these larger birds we also noticed some much smaller Sandpipers.

We continued on to an estuary that looked harmless enough to cross but some walkers sunk to well above their ankles in their attempt to cross it. Thankfully we all survived, although the odd shoe was lost.

The next area of interest was the Pelican nursery, close to the beach but more inland near the Saltbush. It was amazing to be so close to these magnificent birds that stood as high as most of us in a tight circle protecting their young who

were approximately 30 to 40 cm in height. They were not threatening and allowed us the photograph them at relatively close range.

Further on we came across the Ibis nesting area, again there were many birds with young in a more open grassy area than most other species. Another extraordinary spectacle.

At this stage we were wondering how much further we had to walk to get back to the rendezvous area, hoping not to miss the Portsea/Queenscliff dive boat, but to our surprise we were suddenly there.

The trip was most enjoyable and a fantastic photo opportunity for budding photographers. While the boat ride was relatively calm, the departure gave us more excitement. As the boat tried to get closer to shore to collect passengers, it apparently got too close and several able bodied trippers joined the deckhand in the water in an attempt to push the boat into deeper waters to enable the engine propellers to turn without hitting the sand. Now that was an adventure not to be missed in future.

*Rob Varney*



*Mud Islands landscape, with seagulls.*  
Photo: Rob Varney.

## **VALE Wilton Eady**

**21.09.1916 - 5.10.2015 (NCG life member)**

Sue Samuel wrote to the NCG: "Wilton Eady died in early October[2015]. Both my parents had many happy memories of their active retirement years involved in various groups at Sorrento. Could you please pass on to any that still remembered him that he reached the grand age of 99 a few weeks before his death, still had all his faculties and was managing his affairs, and died peacefully in his sleep". Wilton Eady was one of the NCG's early members; he joined the committee in 1980; became Chair (1984 – 85) and was subsequently Treasurer from 1988 – 1996. During his time as Chair he was actively involved in monitoring development, objecting where proposals and subdivisions would seriously detract from the character of the area.

## **SPIFFA course**

Sunday 29 November 2015 marks the finish of a 4 month habitat management course, organised by the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (SPIFFA).

The course content has ranged from the geological rock structures and plants from the origins of the Australian continent, through to the modern day environment of indigenous plants and animals mixed with introduced species.

Habitat management involves careful strategies to maintaining a

balance between how best to deal with introduced flora and fauna, by classifying them from contained species to red alert threatening species.

For example a small area of Cape Ivy can be dealt with quickly, whereas if it is let go, it can become a major problem in a relatively short time, and become almost impossible to remove in a few years.

We should also act quickly to remove noxious plants such as blackberries. Yet if totally removed in one sweep, this action could take away habitat for birds and small animals and open up the ground for thistles or other equally undesirable weeds, thus replacing one pest weed with another. The blackberry may be able to be pruned and contained until something else can be established to take its place.

A full assessment of a site, with a long term plan to change the balance from pest plants to local indigenous plants without affecting the animals and birds that may live there is the best way forward. The importance of recognising cultural sites of the original owners of our lands and protecting them must be included in any site assessment and future planning. I am fortunate to have such a site next to my property. I have now covered it with branches so contractors cannot mow over and destroy the flora which makes up this habitat.

The course has also provided the opportunity to meet people working

in Friends Groups from other parts of the Mornington Peninsula. For example on the Nepean Peninsula, we have our problems with fire breaks swathing through our bushland reserves. Hastings had a 10-year project of revegetating their foreshore with local indigenous plants (with an estimated total cost of \$200,000). Some neighbours complained to the CFA about the fire risk and without consultation contractors cleared the lot.

I also attended the recent Devil Bend AGM, at the invitation of a co-attendee of this SPIFFA course. We had an address from Adam McGuinness (MPS Aboriginal Support and Development team) who looks after Indigenous affairs on the Mornington Peninsula. Adam gave a talk about the Bunurong people who lived and travelled on the peninsula for thousands of years before white settlement. This was followed by an address on Habitat management at Devil Bend and an instructive field walk led by Gidja Walker.

It has been interesting to share experiences with so many people who share similar goals to ourselves.

*John Trewarne*

### **NCG AGM 2016**

**A note for your diaries: the NCG 2016 AGM will be held on Saturday 20 February 2016, at PPNP.**

**Put this date into your diaries now. Further details will follow and will also be on our website. The committee looks forward to meeting many of you on the day.**

## **Talking Up The Track**

The Tuckey Track walk tells the colourful story of patterns of settlement in this heritage location of Sorrento. Its botanical riches are of equal value in providing a sense of place and meaning to locals and visitors. The Shire and local groups are continuing their efforts to integrate Tuckey Track with other trails along the bay and ocean for the enjoyment of the community.

This time last year, Mornington Peninsula Shire recognised the community value of four magnificent Southern Blue gums on Tuckey Track, and refused a permit to remove the iconic Sorrento eucalypts.

These trees, known locally as 'The Cathedral' are in fact part of a wider localised-community of Southern Blue gums in the Kinneil Street area. Their position within a broader remnant of Coastal Moonah Woodland, strengthens the overall biodiversity of this part of the two kilometre ecological corridor. Due to their special qualities, these much loved trees are now listed on a Mornington Peninsula 'Significant Tree Register'.

However, recent development pressures along the Track, including subdivision plans for the block abutting the Blue gums and discussion of plans for a heliport and extensive dwelling adjacent to the Mornington Peninsula National Park have understandably raised community concerns.



*Above: Part of the Tucky Track, showing the inappropriate fencing, impacting physically and visually on the amenity of the area. Photo: Julie Corridon*

It is hoped that The Shire's Draft Biodiversity Strategy, Heritage Review and Carbon Neutral Policy will translate into real protection and sound management of this Track and all of our natural assets. In recognition of the combined pressures of climate change and population growth, the City of Melbourne's 'Urban Forest Strategy' notes the protection of existing trees is more vital than ever before. Tuckey Track is a perfect example of a 'Forest Precinct within a township' which needs greater protection.

To this end, Mornington Peninsula Shire is supporting Tuckey Track Friends Group in developing a Management Plan to progress a Cultural Landscape Overlay to help protect the heritage values of the Historic Track. Consultation with Nepean Conservation Group, Nepean Historical Society, Nepean

Ratepayers and other Friends' Groups in the Collins Settlement Review Working Group, are providing valuable expertise for this project.

The Management Plan recognises six distinct landscape areas of the Track, from Port Phillip to Bass Strait. These include areas of Urban Forest which are predominantly Coastal Moonah Woodland. The habitat values of the Mornington Peninsula National Park area are recognised by Parks Victoria as particularly high, due to the low level of exotic weeds.

Two of the six areas are quiet roadside locations which provide vital habitat links of indigenous vegetation at the interface of public and private land. The importance of retaining this vegetation cannot be overstated.

Whilst the aesthetic appeal of the coastal vistas from Lavender Hill and St Paul's is clear, walkers are also

rewarded with the calls of woodland and sea birds in these areas. If birds are your passion, the interior tranquillity of the rehabilitated CMW of Tuckey Track Reserve, also offers birdwatching opportunities.

Tuckey Track Friends Group is particularly pleased to announce that Birdlife Australia has agreed to include Tuckey Track in its monitoring programme on the Mornington Peninsula, over a two year period.

Attenborough protégée, Marieta, recently filmed a remarkable display by a flock of hundreds of Straw-Necked Ibis and Australian White Ibis above her home, next to the Reserve. Sightings of resident Jacky Dragons and Blue Tongue Lizards have also become more frequent.

At their last Working Bee for 2015, the Tuckey Group focused their efforts on Polygala removal on the high ground of 'Area Three', otherwise known as Tuckey Track Reserve. An arranged visit from Nepean Conservation Group committee member, Sarah Patterson, was most welcome as she introduced the citizen Science 'Bowerbird' programme to the volunteers. The discovery of an empty and exquisite Blue Wren nest by the intrepid and observant Sarah, had the onlookers enthralled.

Tuckey Track Friends Group thanks everyone who has taken a passive or active interest in the Track this year. We all need to play our part in 'Talking Up' the places we love.

*Julie Corridon*

## **Breakfast with the Birds 25 October 2015**

The Natural Systems Team invited friends group volunteers to a Breakfast with the Birds event to say thanks for their input into protecting the biodiversity in their patch. The day was oversubscribed! Lots of Volunteers met at 8:00 am, to start the day with an early morning walk in Main Ridge Equestrian Grounds with local bird experts, followed by a delicious BBQ breakfast at 9:30 am and finishing up around 11:00 am. The purpose of the friends network day was to get together with numerous different groups in an informal way and share in each other's experiences and success stories. This year some outstanding achievements for contributions to biodiversity conservation were celebrated: including the Friends of Dimmock's in our local area! John Trewarne, Ursula and Eddy de Jong attended on NCG behalf.

## **Indigenous Plant Brochure**

The work on re-creating the Indigenous Plant and Environmental Problem Weeds Brochure for the Nepean Peninsula has progressed slowly over the last twelve months, with the emphasis on sourcing high definition photographic images for over 20 plants. The brochure will have over 70 colour photographs of plants and landscapes. Our overall objective is to have the printed Brochures available for the NCG AGM in February 2016.

*John Franklin*

# NCG FRIENDS GROUPS CONTACTS LIST

## FRIENDS GROUPS SUPPORT SUBCOMMITTEE

LIAISON OFFICERS: Sarah Patterson Julie Corridon  
FIELD OFFICER: John Trewarne OFFICER: Danielle Suffern  
Contact: friends@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

## AUTHORITIES

Mornington Peninsula Shire – Matt Stahmer: Friends Groups Volunteer Coordinator  
matthew.stahmer@mornpen.vic.gov.au  
(Nature Links) – Danielle Suffern daniellesuffern@naturelinks.com.au  
Parks Victoria – Kris Rowe: Mornington Peninsula Area Officer kris.rowe@parks.vic.gov.au

## FRIENDS GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH NCG

### FRIENDS OF BRIDGEWATER BAY

Blairgowrie (Melway 167 D4) SHIRE  
CONTACT: Kate Wright-Smith 0431 341 217; katews@tpg.com.au

### FRIENDS OF DIAMOND BAY Sorrento

(Melway 157 B11) PARKS  
2nd Friday each month at 9.30 am  
CONTACT: Richard Holland 0412 429 160

### FRIENDS OF DIMMICKS BUSHLAND

**RESERVE** Blairgowrie (Melway 167 G7) SHIRE

1st Sunday each month at 10am  
CONTACT: Keith Murley 5988 9124

### FRIENDS OF E.G. RITCHIE MEMORIAL

**BUSHLAND RESERVE** Blairgowrie (Melway167 D5) SHIRE

1st Sunday every month 9:00-11:00 am  
CONTACT: Margaret Finger 59888 882; Ursula de Jong info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

### FRIENDS OF HOODED PLOVER

Mornington Peninsula PARKS  
CONTACT: Diane Lewis 0419 320 205; email: hploversmornpen@gmail.com

### FRIENDS OF SID BAKER BUSHLAND

**RESERVE** Blairgowrie (Melway 167 E4) SHIRE  
3rd Sunday alternate months 10-12pm  
CONTACT: Suzie Mac Farlane 9817 5139

### FRIENDS OF SPRAY POINT WILD COAST CONSERVATION GROUP INC.

Blairgowrie (Melway 167 B2) SHIRE AND PARKS  
Annual plantings and Working Bees  
CONTACT: Ann Hayman 0402 049 797

### FRIENDS OF SULLIVAN BAY AND

**WESTERN SISTER** Sorrento (Melway 157 F1) SHIRE  
4th Friday each month at 2.00pm  
CONTACT: Richard Holland 0412 429 160; John Franklin 0437 350 061

### TUCKEY TRACK FRIENDS GROUP

Sorrento (Melway 157 D10) SHIRE AND PARKS  
CONTACT: Julie Corridon juliecorridon@hotmail.com

### FRIENDS OF SLIPS RESERVE Blairgowrie

(Melway 167 CD1) SHIRE  
NEW GROUP: TIMES TO BE ADVISED  
CONTACT (interim): matthew.stahmer@mornpen.vic.gov.au

### OTHER FRIENDS GROUPS:

#### FRIENDS OF TYRONE FORESHORE

White Cliffs and Camerons Bight Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management  
Once a month alternating Saturdays and Sundays  
CONTACT: Terese Dalman: 0413 234 130  
EMAIL: teresedalman@gmail.com



## NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC

ABN 44 531 738 131 Reg. No. AOO 2079IU

PO Box 157, Sorrento, 3943

[www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au](http://www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au) [info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au](mailto:info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au)