

SUMMER 2007 NEWSLETTER

THE CARDINIA ENVIRONMENT COALITION INC (CEC) is an umbrella group comprising 25 local Friends, Landcare and conservation groups. In this edition of our newsletter you will find lots of information about our work and our local groups.

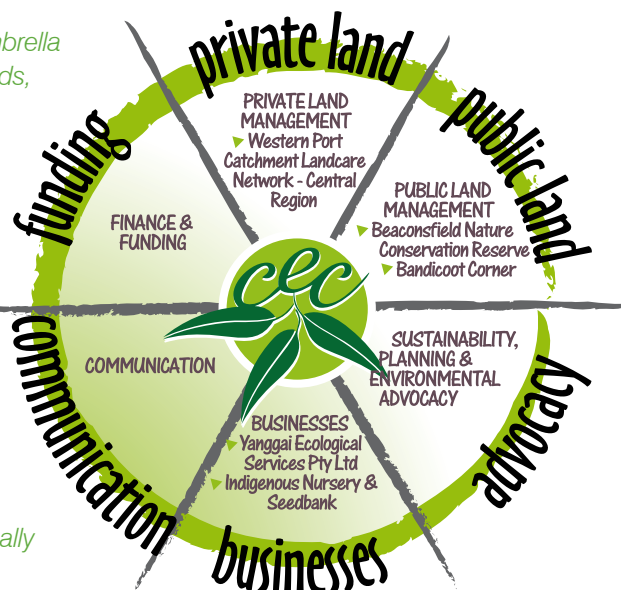
The CEC works across the Central Western Port and part of the Southern Yarra Ranges catchments.

OUR VISION

By 2020 our catchment is an area where people live ecologically sustainably, aware that they are connected to their environment which is protected and enhanced by their action.

OUR MISSION

Leading significant positive environmental change through community based awareness and action



OUR STRUCTURE

We have recently adopted a new structure to better reflect our work. The work has been split into six portfolio areas as shown in the diagram above.

Search For A Threatened Species in the Walker Track Logging Coupe

On Friday October 26th, intrepid members of Gembrook Flora & Fauna Group, Upper Bunyip Action Group, and Fishers Loop Action & Awareness Group set out in the mist through amazingly dense, wet bush to begin to try and locate unknown colonies of the rainforest species *Astelia australiana* ('Tall Astelia') in a logging coupe.

The Walker Track Coupe in the Walker Creek Catchment, Baw Baw Shire was on the list to be logged previously but latest news is it will be logged this summer. The coupe is next to a Special Protection Zone to protect rainforest and its values. Should Tall Astelia be found within the coupe, 100m wide buffer zones would be required to attempt to protect endangered colonies, but as papers on rainforest show it is not likely to protect them from their greatest threat – bushfire. Rainforest does not burn as easily as Eucalypt forest, but adjacent logging makes rainforest areas more prone to bushfire, as well as other threats including disease.

Tall Astelia is listed as 'vulnerable' under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 and the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. It has been a requirement under the EPBC Act since the early 1990's that a protection plan

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Left to Right: Mr Russell Broadbent MHR Member for McMillan addresses the meeting. Gerard Cunningham reciting a bush ballad. Meryl Waterhouse receives her Landcare sign. Bruce Shenfield receives Certificate of Appreciation from Anthony Hooper.

CEC AGM Highlights

The Annual General Meeting of the CEC was held in August at the Pakenham Public Hall. Over 100 representatives of our member groups, landholders and partner organizations attended the evening. Landholders received their Landcare signs from the Mr Russell Broadbent, MHR Member for McMillan and a number of dedicated volunteers received certificates of appreciation for their hard work for the local environment.

All staff and a number of committee members provided an overview of the year's work. Some of the highlights noted by President, Anthony Hooper included the following

- Implementation of a new structure to reflect the expansion in our work that has enabled the organisation to more effectively integrate its activities.
- Increase in staff associated with new funding grants.
- Implementation of communication strategy.
- Consolidation of our social enterprises returning dividends to the CEC to extend our work.
- Improving links with local councils- Baw Baw, Casey and Cardinia.
- Committed committee, staff, volunteers and local member groups have undertaken important environmental work in the catchment through a difficult period of drought.
- The environment and the issue of sustainability in particular have hit centre stage of public opinion.

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Creating Landscape Resilience for the Long Haul

Three CEC staff members and four committee members traveled by train on November 22 to attend an informative evening beginning with a pleasant nibbles and drinks gathering in the foyer of Museum Victoria. The event was advertised by the organizers, the Norman Wettenhall Foundation, as being carbon neutral and public transport was encouraged. The speakers for the evening were introduced by the founder's son who explained that the Foundation seeks communities who are prepared to unite to shift their farming and development culture to enable landscape scale change. The aim is to develop long term resilience in landscape restoration. Ref. www.nwf.org.au.

Assoc. Prof. Andrew Bennett at Deakin University spoke about the features of resilient landscapes (those that bounce back after disturbance). Some of his points were:

- Landscapes are dynamic with good seed years and bad years. Sometimes if disturbance is too great the system crosses a threshold of change where it enters into another regime. Even if attempts are made to arrest the degradation of, for example woodland, the bird population may have reached a vulnerability which cannot be reversed.
- What confers resilience? The speaker emphasized that natural systems are remarkably resilient to natural changes. Vegetation refuges and vegetation connectivity such as stream systems confer resilience.
- The larger the scale of the system the more resilient it is... both in size and time without disturbance.
- The challenge is to recognize when a system is stressed. It is too late when the stress becomes obvious. Monitoring is essential. The decrease in diversity of species is an indicator of stress.
- Concentrating on agricultural landscapes and assisting farmers to work collaboratively is one way to enhance large scale landscape resilience.

Ted Lefroy, Director of Centre for Environment, University of Tasmania spoke positively about changing values of populations and their relationship with the natural environment. He emphasized the need to create resilience against human disturbance. His interest stemmed from the UN project of the 1980s Man and Biosphere which aimed to break down the barriers between agriculture and conservation. Much of his work has been

done on saline degraded farms in West Australia and he shared some disastrous results when the partnerships in landscape restitution had failed. Amongst other things he said that partnership arrangements need a strong sharing of Knowledge, Values, Markets, Institutions, Enthusiasm, Technology and Fire Ecology. He felt it was unrealistic in those vast distances to expect that agriculture can fund its own restitution.

Mr Lefroy suggested we acknowledge that there are values other than food production for landscapes. He urged a change in values from thinking only of human rights to thinking of the rights of plants and animals/environment.

The third speaker was Keith Bradby, Director of Gondwana Link where a collaborative effort is being made to achieve a 1000km band of connected and resilient country across south western Australia. He described Western Australia as a biodiversity hotspot with large numbers of plants still being discovered and named. But there has been huge fragmentation of the landscape and all in the last 50 years. It is not too late to enable connectivity between the wet forests in the far south to the desert plains of the Nullarbor by partnerships across Gondwana Link. Previous Trust for Nature biologist Barry Traill is working on 40 million hectares around Kalgoorlie with diverse vegetation.

Mr Bradby predicted that with climate change and baby boomer's aging in the next ten years, 50% of farms will be sold... it is an opportunity for more ecological farming. Perhaps we need to accept major land use change and look at dry land species rather than planting back the previous species.

Finally Mr Bradby put in a plea to recognize the very close affinity with the land of the indigenous people and to change our culture to embody this aspect of balance with our environment.

This was a thought provoking evening but was also affirming for the directions that the CEC is undertaking through its Biolinks mapping project which aims to achieve broad landscape and multifaceted conservation change across and in partnership with the Shires of Baw Baw, Cardinia and Casey. You can read more about the Biolinks project elsewhere in this newsletter.

[Elizabeth Fraser Committee Member, CEC]

Search For A Threatened Species in the Walker Track Logging Coupe

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be drawn up for Tall Astelia. A plan was begun at least four years ago and is still not completed. Once started, a plan is to be completed within two years on Commonwealth land, and for other land within "a practical time frame". Under the Revised Recovery Plan Guidelines for Nationally Listed Threatened Species and Ecological Communities, out of approximately 350 floral species listed for recovery-plan preparation, around 10 are scheduled for completion each year! (A similar situation applies to threatened fauna species and threatened communities.)

Only 12 colonies of Tall Astelia are known to remain, with three in the Otways zoned for rainforest conservation and nine around the general Powelltown/Upper Bunyip area of the Central Highlands in which hardwood production is a major land use. The species is endemic

to Victoria. It does not occur anywhere else in the world. It is associated with Myrtle Beech and is a remnant from Cool Temperate Rainforest of Gondwana. Conservation of Tall Astelia has significant implications for the conservation of both mature and regrowth Cool Temperate Rainforest, old-growth eucalypt rainforest, rocky outcrop vegetation on Seven Acre Rock and Leadbeater's Possum, as well as landscape and education values.

The trio of groups has the desperate question "Why is so little being done to protect this and other threatened species, and how is the additional threat of global warming being factored in?"

Thanks particularly to Bob Thompson, Jasper Hails, and David Lockwood for his botanical skills.

Written by K. Brooks-MacMillan. Principal reference: DSE Flora & Fauna Guarantee Action Statement for Tall Astelia (1991).



PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

Bandicoot Corner

Another task keeping our Biodiversity Project Officer, Sarah MacLagan, busy is writing the management plan for



Bandicoot Corner Reserve at Bayles. Sarah was delighted to see her first Southern Brown Bandicoot last week, and is looking forward to seeing a lot more of them as they become re-established at the Reserve. Construction of the predator-proof fence is complete and letters have been sent to local residents informing them of the Bandicoot Corner Management Plan. So the next tasks will be controlling foxes, cats and rabbits and doing surveys to assess the current status of the resident bandicoot population. Ecologist Craig Seamer and students from Swinburne University of Technology TAFE will be assisting with this by doing hair-tube analysis and footprint surveys throughout November.

Beaconsfield Conservation Nature Reserve

The main priority with the BNCR has been the completion of the management plan. The majority of the chapters have now been completed and it is intended to release the plan for public comment in January 2008.



The vision for the BNCR is for it to be "a first class nature conservation reserve that is managed by the Cardinia Environment Coalition to provide permanent protection and enhancement of the unique natural, cultural and industrial heritage values of the site".

Studies completed to date as part of the management plan have highlighted the cultural significance of the Haunted Gully gold diggings that occur on the site and on adjacent private land. There is also a good diversity of indigenous plants on the site including a number of rare and vulnerable species,

A very successful neighbours information day was held on September 9. The day included three bus tours of the BNCR to explain our plans for the site and to enable our neighbours to view the reserve for possibly the first time. There was also an indigenous plant giveaway as part of our community education on invasive weeds in the reserve.

A follow up meeting held on December 6 at the home of Liz Davis, a convenor of the BNCR Supporters Group (along with Kerrie Thorpe) was attended by over 20 local residents. Kym Murphy, a consultant employed by the CEC to coordinate the production of the management plan presented a summary of work undertaken to date. After supper the group discussed a number of activities that the supporters group could be involved in during 2008. The meeting was extremely positive and our thanks go to Liz for allowing us to meet at her house.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Indigenous Nursery & Seedbank

Adele Richardson, Nursery and Seedbank Coordinator reported at our recent AGM on the year's activities at the Nursery and Seedbank.. Adele presented a summary of the achievements this year

- 296 Volunteer hours recorded
- Volunteer Input included collection, cleaning and recording seed, seed sowing, potting, and the compilation of a botanical identification kit
- 104 Different species successfully propagated
- 250 Separate sowings
- 45,685 Potted plants produced and used primarily in Landcare plantings
- 67 different species were used in our direct seeding program in the Beef and Dairy and Salinity Alert projects with 44,798 grams of Seed sown

Yanggai Ecological Services Pty Ltd

Yanggai Ecological Services has had a very successful first 18 months of operation. The enterprise has been established to provide another income stream for the CEC and assist private landholders and councils to undertake weed control, revegetation and related works.

To date it has won over 30 contracts and we are grateful to our customers for their support for this fledgling enterprise. We have recently advertised for extra casual staff to cover some of the latest contracts. Daniel Robertson and Tara Bryant both staff members employed by Yanggai Ecological Services reported at the AGM on the successful year with particular highlights being the extensive direct seeding undertaken at Bunyip Sanctuary.



MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Cardinia Catchment Landcare

Our group operates within the catchment of the Cardinia Creek from the foothills of Harkaway and Upper Beaconsfield to Westernport Bay at Cardinia and Clyde.

Cardinia Creek begins at Cardinia Dam and changes considerably along its length from an almost pristine young creek in the foothills to a drain as it approaches Westernport Bay.

There is currently a program operated by the Platypus Conservancy which is releasing platypus into the upper reaches of the Cardinia Creek with great success. The platypus are thriving, producing off-spring and moving down the creek as far as Guys Hill. This is a great incentive for us to help improve the condition of the riparian vegetation through Beaconsfield. We are currently working on an 18 month project at Beaconsfield Park, Beaconsfield with a grant

obtained from Melbourne Water to put back riparian species and widen the creek corridor.

We are excited by the possibility of helping to create habitat corridors through the Bio-links project now being developed through the CEC which will link the Cardinia Creek to Upper Beaconsfield and Harkaway along other smaller waterways. We are already working with Casey Council on Warlsdorf Creek at Harkaway. Casey Council owns a large corridor along this waterway which they are committed to weeding and revegetating.

The properties we work on vary enormously from broad acre farming properties on the Kooweerup Swamp at Cardinia and Clyde to small life style properties in the foothills. We operate at the urban fringe at Berwick, Beaconsfield and Officer and are becoming interested in encouraging urban households to plant

indigenous plants in their gardens and convert their nature strips to just that – "nature strips".

This last planting season found us doing 9 plantings through autumn and winter, the majority of these being wind breaks in the flat, open land near Westernport Bay. Many of these properties are salt affected and completely without tree cover and therefore a hazard to animal health, particularly during summer. Surprisingly many also have small populations of bandicoots surviving in drains and under houses for which the plantings will provide habitat.

The Upper Beaconsfield Indigenous Nursery is operated by Margaret Cromb with a committed group of volunteers on behalf of the group. It has had a very busy year and provided plants for our purposes, for Melbourne Water, Friends

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Cardinia Catchment Landcare

groups, the local councils as well as local residents.

The Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve located in Upper Beaconsfield is another exciting project which many of our members are involved with. It is gratifying to know that the management plans are due for completion in the next couple of months after an enormous amount of hard work by many people.

We value being a member of the wider Landcare network and are encouraged by the commitment and hard work of all member groups as well as the CEC officers and staff who are a great support in all we do.

[Margaret Crompton]

Westernport Swamp Landcare

With the election of co-presidents Max Grigg and John Boekel to spread the workload, plus a new format of fewer meetings and some good on-ground projects, our group of 60 members has enjoyed a successful 2007.

Bandicoot project

Our main project has been the creation of bandicoot habitat at Greg Dunkley and Janet Shelton's property in Manks Road, Tooradin North. Two working bees were held to make shelters and to plant almost 1,000 poa, goodenia, solanum and gahnia. Since then Greg and Janet have reported sightings of baby bandicoots and are enthusiastically planting more grasses.

We have also joined the MPW Biosphere in applying for funds to enable further works on this bandicoot project and another at Linda and Tim English's property in Bayles.

Fox grant

We have received a threatened species grant that will target foxes. It is aimed at the greater Koo Wee Rup area where there is a known concentration of bandicoots.

Radio interview: John Boekel presented an excellent local radio interview last month about the swamp waterways, vegetation and distribution of bandicoots.

Lang Lang Primary School Arboretum

We participated in the restoration of the arboretum. It's a lovely piece of "bush" close to the township at 370 Westernport Road. The working bee in October had a fantastic turnout of 30 who enthusiastically cut tracks, sanded the shelter shed and removed environmental weeds. Students are already visiting the arboretum, and have begun logging plants, taking photos and making charts of the flora and fauna, which will prove a valuable resource in their environmental education.

Saturday 1 December will further see us paint the shelter shed, clear more pittosporum, create another track, plus have some christmas cheer with our midday sausage sizzle.

Water monitoring

Our water monitoring continues for Cardinia Creek, the Main Drain and No 5 Drain. These waterways are quite healthy with the exception of No 5 Drain which sometimes has elevated salt levels.

Message to members

Landcare aims to improve our environment and the sustainability of our land. It also performs an important social role in connecting people from diverse walks of life. We urge all our members to join in the activities that landcare offers.

[Sue Davies]

*Friends of Gembrook Park***Do I really want to do this?**

It started with a phone call –

Would I like a group of corporate volunteers from the ANZ bank?

Well, -----haven't we been looking for Volunteer help!

The mental check list of 'things to do started': Emails, confirmation, contact mobile, meeting time, morning tea, Council approval, supply of tools, photographer, invite local newspaper, permission to photo graph, site check, OH&S, 1st Aid kit, volunteer registration, lunch booking, late arrivals, tools, wire for tree guards, extra gloves, label poison dabbers, protective footwear, put together a Gembrook Hand out – Puffing Billy timetable/Gembrook Brochure/Gembrook Market business card with dates.

Help! Will ring Vicki Boyle, she's an old hand at working with Corporate Volunteers – Vicki...

"Well, you've got 4 Gembrook volunteers on the ground + a photographer you should manage it OK. Can't knock back 16 volunteers!"

After the event... I am happy to say the day was fine and all went very well.

Just received another letter!

Office of Correction teams available next year, book your Volunteer Teams now.

'HELP'!

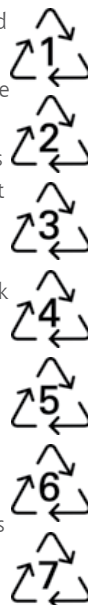
Do I really want to do this???

[Merle Mathisen Secretary, Friends of Gembrook Park]

**Kerbside Recycling Guide**

Cardinia Shire's Waste Education Officer Tammy has kindly provided suggestions based on frequently asked question about kerbside recycling.

1. Cardinia accepts all coded plastic bottles and containers (with resealable lids) i.e. PICs (Plastic Identification Codes) 1- 7 (see diagrams)
2. Plastics with no code are not accepted (these are considered disposable)
3. Plastic bottles and containers can have lids left on
4. Glass jars and bottles should have lids off (as they are made from a different material) metal lids can go in the recycling
5. Liquid paperboard cartons (juice, milk etc) should have lids off (different material again)
6. Aluminium and steel containers are accepted (including spray cans - with nozzles and lids off!!)
7. Staples are ok as are envelopes with windows (which probably also means we don't have to be too concerned about sticky tape!)
8. Plastic bags can not be recycled in the kerbside collection, Plastic bags represent the main contaminate of kerbside recycling.



[Tammy Sherar Waste Education Officer, Cardinia Shire Council. Phone: 03 5945 4304 / 0448 717 560]

CEC STAFF UPDATE**Rebecca Rose**

Rebecca Rose has recently joined the CEC as the Salinity Projects Officer. Her responsibilities include the assessment and monitoring priority salinity sites, implement on-ground salinity management works on private land and raise community interest.

Since graduating from the Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Science) Rebecca has completed her honours degree in biosolid management and commenced her PhD that focuses on the implications of reuse water towards soil physical and chemical properties. Rebecca looks forward to working with Landcare and assisting landowners with Landcare projects on properties affected by salinity.

Lucy Harding

The CEC committee and staff would like to acknowledge the work of Lucy Harding who resigned as Office and Communications Coordinator in November 2007. We would like to thank Lucy for her contribution to the CEC and we wish her all the best for the future.