



SWAN BAY ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 80 – December 2018

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**Wishing everyone a Happy
Christmas and New Year**

NURSERY NEWS

Damping down in the hothouse

A new fan is making life much more comfortable for the plants – and volunteers – in the nursery hothouse. Thank you to Swan Bay Environment Association (SBEA) Committee members Roel and Greg, who installed the fan to reduce moisture build up inside the hothouse.

Street trees potted

SBEA Nursery Coordinator, Jill Warneke, spent a morning working with two Borough officers transferring tree seedlings (mainly moonahs and banksias) into large pots for future street-plantings. Approximately 50 trees were potted and are being stored at the nursery.

Look, no-hands watering

Thanks goes to Bruce Sherriff for installing an extra watering system along the nursery's southern boundary to reduce the need for hand watering.

Shooting star of *SeaChange*

Popular TV show, *SeaChange*, is about to be relaunched on Melbourne TV. You might not know, but the SBEA Nursery briefly starred in the original series. In May 2000, when the nursery was in the old, run-down Borough depot near the current Marine Science Buildings, we were approached by a passing ABC crew looking for a 'dump' to be used as the home of the local town eccentric. Trying not to feel insulted, we accepted \$400 for their three days' work – one to arrange the scene, one to film and one to dismantle the set. They brought in truckloads of old stuff – a broken car, a Hills hoist, chairs, bottles, a dinghy and dirty hanging sheets – to make the area look even more derelict. Even a bath full of yabbies was hauled into the kitchen.

In the episode Bob Jelly, the scheming mayor, was trying to buy the property for development but the owner refused to sell. He wasn't interested in money, he had the lifestyle!

Two outcomes – the scene lasted less than 60 seconds in the broadcast (blink and you'd miss it) and we were left to dispose of the yabbies!

Community award semi-finalist

In honour of her exceptional efforts running the SBEA Nursery, Jill reached the semi-finals of the Victorian Regional Achievement and Community Awards. Congratulations Jill.

MONITORING WATER QUALITY AT 'THE POINT'

Marine science consultancy, Marine Ecological Solutions, is monitoring water quality in the vicinity of 'The Point' residential development at Point Lonsdale. This development will eventually contain approximately 600 houses arranged around a seawater canal. The canal will be connected to Lake Victoria and Lakers Cutting, but most water exchange will occur with the Cutting, a shallow (1-1.5 m deep) artificial extension of Swan Bay Marine National Park.

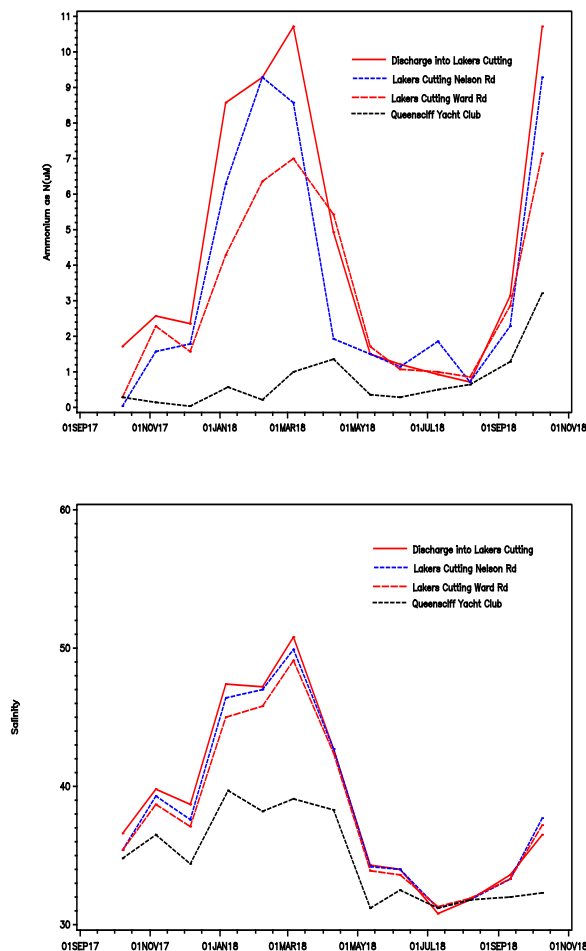


Volunteers at work in the SBEA Nursery (Photo: Liz Martin)

Water will be passively circulated within the canal by tides, using intake and discharge gates that are timed to open and close with incoming and outgoing tides. These gates will be connected to Lakers Cutting.

SBEA is concerned that ‘The Point’ may increase nutrient concentrations in Lakers Cutting, due to likely increases in nutrients released from the housing development and the limited tidal exchange between Lakers Cutting and Swan Bay. This could result in a loss of natural processes within Lakers Cutting and, if algal blooms or de-oxygenation were to occur, cause a loss of amenity to nearby residents. Consequently, SBEA contracted Marine Ecological Solutions to analyse nutrient concentrations at Lake Victoria, at three sites within Lakers Cutting, and near Queenscliff Yacht Club.

Figure 1: Concentrations of ammonium and salinity in Lakers Cutting (Source: Marine Ecological Solutions)



A report has now been prepared on the concentrations of nutrients at these five sites, which were sampled monthly between October 2017 and October 2018. These data form a baseline against which concentrations of nutrients may be compared as the number of houses on ‘The Point’ increases.

The concentrations of ammonium and salinity within Lakers Cutting (Figure 1) show that water quality in Lakers Cutting is often different from that in the remainder of Swan Bay, indicating that the shallow sill at the eastern end of Lakers Cutting limits tidal exchange and increases the risk of nutrient build up in Lakers Cutting.

Copies of the report can be obtained from Greg Parry at greg.parry@marecol.net.au

GARDENS FOR WILDLIFE

A targeted approach

The Gardens for Wildlife Program targeted three residential areas in the Borough in 2018. These were close to where the Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN) had been carrying out revegetation at Queenscliffe Cemetery, the Narrows and Swan Bay. The BCN work aims to reduce the chance of weeds spreading from nearby residential areas into the these three targeted areas, while also establishing a wildlife corridor linking them with the gardens.

In June 2018, the Borough supported the project by sending out letters to 250 residents telling them about the project and inviting them to register for a garden visit. Two trained volunteers visited 23 gardens from June to November 2018. As part of the visit, residents were offered 10 indigenous plants grown at the SBEA Nursery (214 plants being distributed to residents over this time).

In addition to the Borough’s letters, which had a 10% response rate, the Gardens for Wildlife Program printed postcards inviting people to register for the program. These will be distributed to households in the targeted areas in autumn 2019 to encourage more residents to register.

Feedback from residents

Some of the residents were sent a survey following their visit and 12 responded. Survey highlights included:

- 92% learnt how the existing features of their garden and the changes they could make could attract wildlife
- 83% learnt the names of some of the plants in their garden and about the indigenous vegetation that grows in the area.

For the gardeners, the visits worked well:

“It was great to have Felicity come to our house and advise us on making a garden of local indigenous plants and one which will attract birds and wildlife.”

“The walk and talk style made it easy to understand different plant species names while being able to see them. We were also able to see some of the BOQ areas across the road from our property to extend our understanding. It was very ‘hands on’. The inclusion of indigenous plants provided to us ensured we were able to follow up immediately. Similarly, the provision of a folder including pamphlets and other resources will enable us to follow up other options further down the track.”

“Felicity and Robyn were very respectful about the existing garden and were really knowledgeable about what I could plant in the future.”

Another resident (not part of the survey group) was relieved that the assessors were so friendly – she had expected to be told off for what she had in her garden.

What we have learnt

- Setting up a booking system on Eventbrite allowed us to manage the resident’s expectations. We were able to offer appointments at times suited to them and us.
- Three visits of one hour each in succession works well.
- Taking a tray of plants to a visit meant that we could work with the resident on the day to offer them appropriate plants.

Recommendations

1. Further visits to be offered in autumn and again in spring in 2019.
2. Gardens for Wildlife postcards to be delivered to residents in the targeted areas.

3. A cap placed on 20 visits per season (40 for the year) would be manageable.
4. Further volunteers from the SBEA nursery to be recruited to spread the work load.
5. That the people whose gardens have been visited are notified of any events, such as the SBEA AGM, to foster a community of people who have a garden for wildlife.

Thanks to Felicity Thyer for the Gardens for Wildlife report.

BELLARINE CATCHMENT NETWORK

SBEA is a member of the Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN), which has a number of local projects. Thanks to Matt Crawley, Angeline Poole, Naomi Wells and Lachlan Forbes for the updates.

Point Lonsdale Sand Monitoring Program

This citizen science project is monitoring sand movement at Point Lonsdale Front Beach, where erosion is causing concern. The project is a collaboration between Bellarine Catchment Network, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, the Borough of Queenscliffe and SBEA.

Fifteen volunteers are ready to start collecting data, having recently been involved in a training session at the beach (see photo below).



Volunteers at the sand monitoring training day (Photo: Bellarine Catchment Network)

Litter hotspots

Recent litter collections at Burnt Point and the Queenscliff Ferry terminal have revealed very different results.

Burnt Point is an isolated stretch of saltmarsh and beach found on the northern side of the entrance to Lakers Cutting. In total, 125 items were collected there between December 2017 and June 2018, including 50 'other metal' items such as ring pulls, and 37 cigarette butts. More litter was collected from December to February due to increased visitor numbers over summer.

In contrast, the Queenscliff Ferry terminal has high amounts of foot and car traffic, with cigarette butts the main item collected (711 out of a total of 1231 items). There were also 151 cardboard items and 143 soft plastic items in the mix. Increased litter during January can be linked to Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations.

The Point Community Day

Two BCN staff, 30 volunteers, 'The Point' and Moremac Property Group came together in September for the third annual community planting. They planted 400 indigenous plants at a site previously overrun by African boxthorn. Post planting, volunteers enjoyed a complimentary barbeque and coffee followed by a guided walk and talk on coastal moonah woodland.

Cemetery improvements

BCN has undertaken works in the Queenscliff and Leopold cemeteries in the past 12 months, including:

- clearing of vegetation to make paths through the moonah woodland at Queenscliff Cemetery
- woody weed control
- herbaceous weed control
- community days to engage and educate community members of the natural assets found within the cemeteries.

August environment days for local schools

St Aloysius Primary School students and teachers and BCN enjoyed a morning of planting, propagation and learning about their local ecosystem, coastal moonah woodland.

Point Lonsdale Primary School students visited the local foreshore for a beachcomb with Parks

Victoria, a coastal moonah woodland flora and fauna walk guided by SBEA, and a Coastcare Environment Challenge Course hosted by BCN. Students learnt about Point Lonsdale's natural areas and how to reduce their impacts on them.

Queenscliff Music Festival not a waste

The Queenscliff Music Festival (QMF) wasn't just about the music. There was a major effort to reduce waste going to landfill. Bin hubs featuring Caring for Our Bay Hero species and festival Green Team monitors, supplemented by BCN and Geelong Sustainability volunteers, were positioned to ensure rubbish was placed in the correct waste stream. The majority of waste was diverted from landfill due to the QMF model, the use of compostable crockery, cutlery and cups at all vendors, and no availability of single-use plastic items. In addition, BCN had a stand in the family area of the festival where many great environmental conversations and discoveries were made by children and their parents.

IN OTHER NEWS

Looking into nest boxes

SBEA recently funded the purchase of a camera to help people get a closer look at wildlife using nesting boxes across the Bellarine Peninsula. The camera will be available for groups/schools to borrow and temporarily install at a nest box to photograph the birds, possums etc. For more information, contact Sophie, the Bellarine Landcare Facilitator, at facilitator@bellarinelandcare.org.au

Borough tree plantings (and removal) 2017-2018

184 street trees planted; 12 street trees removed; 5350 native trees/ground covers planted in the Borough's caravan parks, reserves and foreshores.



**HAPPY
CHRISTMAS
AND
NEW YEAR**