

No 100 June 2024

Eagle-eyed readers may have noticed this is our 100th edition of the SBEA newsletter. To mark the occasion, we have taken a trip down memory lane. It's a bit of a journey but if you are interested it's the last of our articles — so you get all the current news first!

## A big thank you to all SBEA volunteers



*cream at morning tea. SBEA super-volunteer, Eva Mutton, made sure all SBEA volunteer groups received a similar treat to mark Volunteer Week and say thank you.*

The last week of May marked National Volunteer Week. We would like to thank all of our wonderful SBEA volunteers who give so generously of time and effort to make our work possible – and that is from each and every one of us!



SBEA has only two part-time paid coordinator positions and both these people contribute many additional hours on a volunteer basis. Like so many thousands of organisations around the country, SBEA simply would not exist without you and all who provide financial support through membership subscriptions and donations throughout the year.

Thank you everyone.

## Welcome to new members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the many Members who are new to SBEA in 2024!



Annette Cooper, Sally Watson, Trish Allen, Michael O'Byrne, Brigitte & Mark Whinfield, Sue Anderson & Family, Elizabeth & Hugh Scales, Paul van Veenendaal, Frances Jamieson, Jeanette Kinahan, Monica & Paul Sifonios, Sally Hawkins, Lynne Knight, Kate Smallwood, Gigi Hancock & Family, David & Teresa Prior, David & Xenia Williamson, Catherine Nagle, Jenny Williams, Katrina, Peter & Max Sheppard, Andrew Brookes & Liz McGrath.

We are very pleased to have you on board and greatly appreciate your support of the SBEA.

### BUY LOCAL INDIGENOUS PLANTS FOR YOUR GARDEN

If you are after some new plants to pop in your garden, you can buy them from our nursery.

Location: 79 Nelson Road, Point Lonsdale

Price: just \$2.50 each

Opening times:

Wednesday from 9.00am-12noon and the 3rd Sunday of each month from 10.00am-12noon.

## Upcoming SBEA events

### Habitat restoration (woody weed removal)

Sunday 5 July, 9:30 – 11:30am

Environment Trail near Queenscliff Railway Station.

Sunday 4 August, 9.30 – 11.30am

Rip View Carpark, Pt Lonsdale.

Sunday 1 September, 9.30 – 11.30am

Environment Trail near Queenscliff Railway Station.

### SBEA Nature Art Series

The next event is due in Spring and will focus on Heathland plants with artist/art teacher Julie Ryan  
Details to be advised.

### Monthly Borough Coastcarers

Tuesday morning weeding and habitat restoration at two locations: Rip View, Point Lonsdale and The Narrows, Queenscliff, 10am -12 midday. See BCN events calendar for more details: [https://bgevc.com/our\\_events/](https://bgevc.com/our_events/)

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## SBEA AGM speaker highlights private land's important role in habitat preservation

Over 40 people gathered for this year's SBEA AGM and to hear guest speaker Dr Doug Robinson's outstanding presentation on The Importance of Private Land for Nature Conservation on the Bellarine.

Doug has been visiting Swan Bay with binoculars in hand for over 50 years. He now works at Trust for Nature, an independent, statutory conservation organisation that has been working to permanently protect habitat on private land since 1972.

He began by reflecting on the birds of his childhood on the Mornington and Bellarine peninsulas, presented some rather sad detail about the decline in many formerly abundant species of birds over the past 100 years, and spoke of the critical work Trust for Nature has undertaken to protect over 120,000 hectares of precious habitat in Victoria forever.

Doug gave examples of the work being done to expand habitat for critically endangered species such as the Plains Wanderer and the Helmeted Honeyeater. He also presented the findings of Trust for Nature's Bellarine Priority Zone Plan published in 2017. We learnt that on the Bellarine, 12% of freehold land (5400 ha) is remnant native vegetation, and that 93% of that remnant vegetation is under-represented in our national reserve system.

He provided us with hope for the future through the work of organisations like Trust for Nature and SBEA. He also offered a clear direction in that we can all do our bit to "keep the common things common" by observing what our favourite local birds and animals need to survive and ensuring we provide habitat for them.



Left: SBEA members await the start of this year's AGM. Right: AGM guest speaker, Doug Robinson (left), with SBEA President, Greg Parry.

## Ingenia seeks change to Swan Bay Holiday Park permit

SBEA submitted an objection to the City of Greater Geelong in March regarding a proposed amendment by the owners of the Swan Bay Holiday Park, Ingenia Communities, to its current Camping and Caravan Park Permit. The Holiday Park is immediately adjacent to the Ramsar listed wetland of Swan Bay.

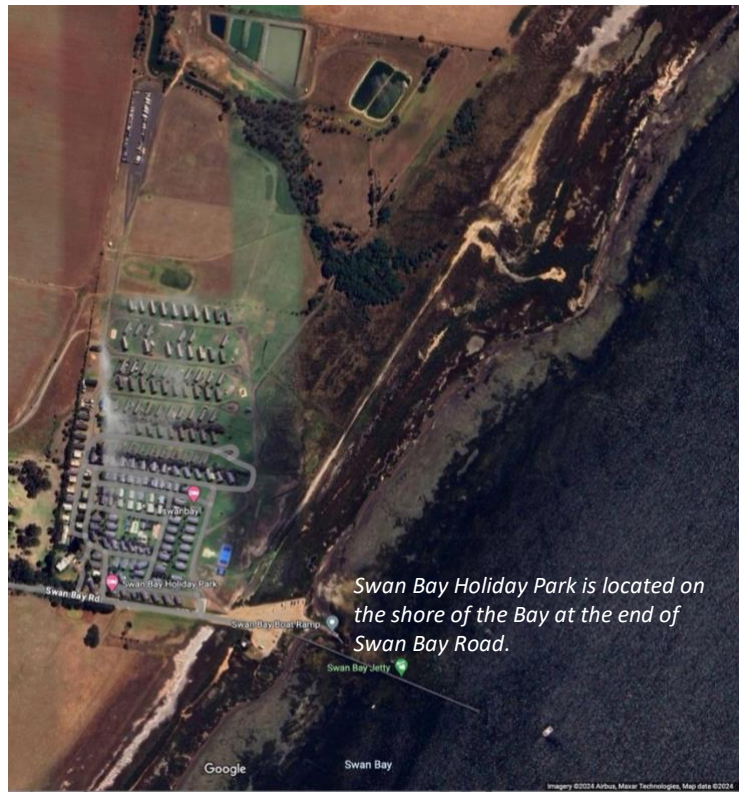
Ingenia is requesting that a third of the 200-plus cabins across the site become permanent dwellings.

At a meeting with three SBEA members on the site, Ingenia's Operations Manager indicated they would like to further develop the site with further cabins/glamping over time.

The amendment request would result in a new permanent village of residents evolving without appropriate infrastructure. Increasing permanent and holiday use (recreational fishing, boating, walking) will increase disturbance to the migratory seabirds, orange-bellied parrots, fish nurseries and seagrass ecosystems.

It is of great concern that Ingenia has not made progress with the Landscape Management Plan that was a requirement of their endorsed Planning Permit in 2014. It appears that Ingenia is not fulfilling its obligations to protect the ecological integrity of this site.

Thank you to those members who also submitted objections. This matter is still with the City of Greater Geelong. We would welcome any input from members who have expertise in the fields of planning, legal, advocacy and the like. Please contact Greg Parry if you think you can assist.



Remnant vegetation on the Ballara property.

## Save Ballara update

SBEA has joined many others in the effort to ensure *Ballara*, an exceptional 1.68-hectare parcel of land in the heart of Point Lonsdale, is protected permanently from subdivision. *Ballara* is owned by a number of descendants of Australian's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. A proposal has been put forward for the establishment of a Trust that would own and manage the unique heritage and ecological values of the property. This remnant of precious local bushland includes Ecological Vegetation Classes of Heathy Woodland, endangered Alkaline Scrub (including Moonah Woodland), and unique elements of Sand Heath.

Past plant surveys (Trenegrove 1992) and recent informal surveys of *Ballara* have identified locally significant orchid species including *Lyperanthus suaveolens*, the Brown Beak orchid (the only known colony on the Bellarine, along with the colony at the adjoining property, *Arilpa*), donkey orchids, maroon orchids, greenhood orchids, sun orchids and others.

Together, *Ballara* and the Trust for Nature covenanted property *Arilpa*, are a biodiversity hotspot and the largest remnant heathland on the Bellarine Peninsula. They provide habitat and food for a wide diversity of native animals and play an essential role in supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health. *Arilpa* currently provides a unique seed collection source for our SBEA Indigenous Plant Nursery. Many of the same plants (shrubs, grasses, austral grass trees, sedges, ground covers, climbers and wildflowers) are naturally occurring in *Ballara*.

It is extraordinary that these time-capsule properties have remained relatively intact and are able to give us some understanding of the pre-colonial landscape of this area. To find out more about *Ballara* and to support the wider campaign go to <https://saveballara.godaddysites.com>

## Nursery News

The nursery has some exciting new infrastructure upgrades, including a snazzy new and heated cutting structure designed and built by Jim Caldwell. The structure is a mini hothouse with misting irrigation that keeps the humidity high and evaporation from developing plants low. A heat element is built into the base of the structure, which will be set at a temperature of low to mid 20 degrees. This new growing space will allow more cuttings to be successfully propagated, particularly throughout the winter.



There is also a new fridge and new weed mat in the nursery. The fridge was purchased (with the help of a BoQ community grant) to store the nursery seedbank. The fridge gives extra storage space, which will allow for proper cataloguing of seeds and for expansion of the seedbank.

Weed matting has been totally replaced during two extra nursery working bees.

The old weed mat had been torn when trees fell in the big storm a couple of years ago and it was harbouring weeds. So, it is fantastic to clean it up and create a cleaner and safer space.



Top right: New heated cutting structure. Far left: New seedbank fridge. Above left: Weed mat replacement in progress. Above right: Sales area weed mat finished.



Left and right: Nursery and Garden for Wildlife volunteers among saltmarsh plants on Elizabeth Lee's property.

Nursery and Garden for Wildlife volunteers went on an interesting excursion to a property on Burnt Point on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May. Property owner Elizabeth Lee and her partner purchased the land 25 years ago when it was a degraded and weed-infested horse paddock. They have been rehabilitating it ever since. It was a great chance to see what can be achieved in a couple of decades and refreshing to see some large, dense areas of pristine saltmarsh. Although it was a windy day, it was very relaxing walking the property with its spectacular views of Swan Bay.



## Vale Mary-Ann Joynson

We were saddened to hear of the death of one of our long-term Wednesday Nursery volunteers, Mary-Ann Joynson, on 28<sup>th</sup> May. Mary-Ann, together with husband George, joined the Nursery Volunteers before 2012 and both have been regular weekly volunteers until April this year. In years past they could always be relied on to volunteer in many SBEA activities. Mary-Ann was a gentle soul who made a wonderful contribution to the Nursery and SBEA. It was always lovely working alongside Mary-Ann each week. She will be greatly missed by the Wednesday crew, and we extend our sincere sympathy to George and to her family.



## Gardens for Wildlife goes to Bunny Woods

Gardens For Wildlife collaborated with the Bellarine Catchment Network recently to create activities for 33 students from Point Lonsdale Primary School for their Environmental Education Day.

SBEA committee member, Will Johnston, and G4W co-ordinator, Sandra Nowland-Foreman, ran the sessions and enjoyed engaging with students and teachers in a leafy part of Bunny Woods. It was a perfect day for being outdoors, and the students, from years three and four, brought their energy and curiosity to the range of activities presented. They enjoyed hunting for habitat, observing wildlife, drawing and sharing stories about their own gardens and wildlife they had seen, and finally creating a 3D visual of the key features of a wildlife friendly garden.



*Pt Lonsdale Primary students show their creations at the end of an engaging Gardens for Wildlife session.*



## Jacqueline Court gets a pocket park make-over

Thanks to all the enthusiastic volunteers who recently gave the pocket park at Jacqueline Court a real spruce up. The beautiful sunny morning made the hard work that much easier, plus efforts were rewarded by a special scones and jam and cream morning tea in recognition of Volunteers Week. The park looked so much happier for the planting.

*Volunteers planting and mulching in Jacqueline Court*

## Nature Art series inspires

There have been two more successful Nature Art events since the last newsletter.

At the end of April, we soaked up some of the expertise and passion of Dr Kate Buchanan from Deakin Uni on the topic of Black Swans. We had wonderful views of many swans roosting and feeding near the Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre. Following this short talk, we moved to the St George's Anglican church Old School Hall where the fire was crackling. Christine Wrest-Smith led an inspiring drawing and water colour workshop, sharing many tips and insights.



Seagrass inspirations take shape.

In May, our Nature Art focus moved to Seagrass Meadows back at the Queenscliff/Lonsdale Yacht Club. Greg Parry, our president, provided us with many interesting seagrass facts and stories in a too-short timeframe. Abstract artist Deb Taylor then encouraged us to free our imaginations and explore the mediums of ink, water colour and collage. None of us quite knew where we were going but we were all extremely happy with this immersive art experience and the outcomes.

Deb Taylor is one of the 30 artists currently exhibiting in *Flow – stories from the Wetlands* – which is on until June 30 at The Hive Gallery in Ocean Grove. We highly recommend a visit.

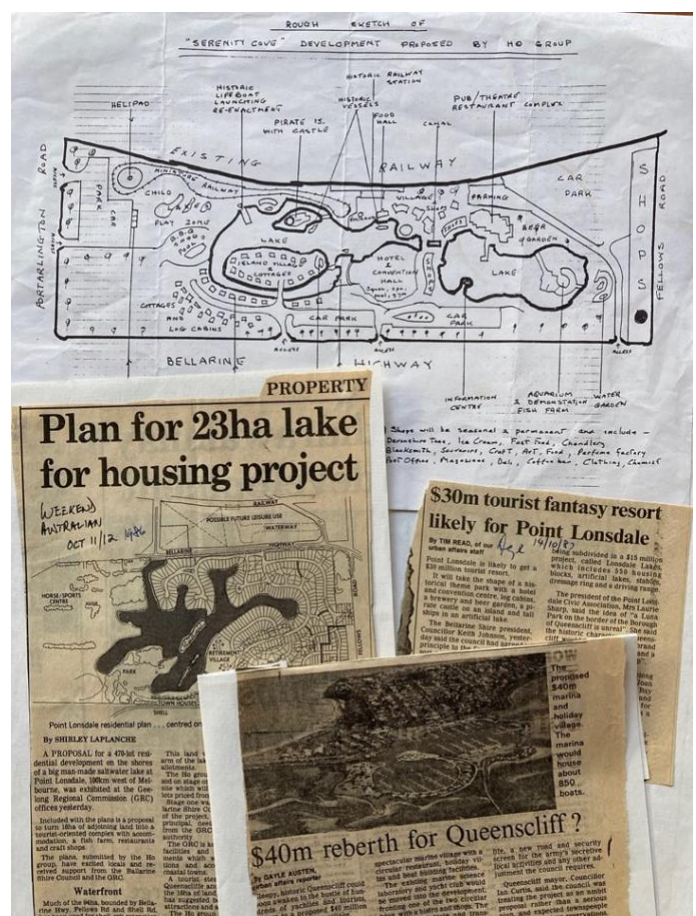
<https://thehiveoceangrove.com.au>

## 100<sup>th</sup> newsletter sparks reflection

SBEA came into being 36 years ago in 1988. It was a time of big hair, big shoulder pads and even bigger development projects all around Australia. And the Borough of Queenscliffe was no exception. In just the two years prior to SBEA's formation there were:

- October 1986: the Lonsdale Lakes project was proposed. This was later taken up by Stockland and finally became The Point, the canal estate along the Bellarine Highway
- May 1987: a proposal for a marina and holiday village at Queenscliff Harbour, with mooring for up to 850 boats
- September 1987: the Queenscliff-Sorrento car ferry commenced operations
- October 1987: Serenity Cove, a tourist resort at the entrance to Point Lonsdale, was proposed. This was to include a historical theme park with a hotel and convention centre, a brewery and beer garden, log cabins, a pirate castle on an island and tall ships on an artificial lake.

These developments and proposals were to be in or right alongside Swan Bay. There was increasing alarm about the possible impact such large-scale projects may have on the water quality and habitat values of this Ramsar-listed wetland.

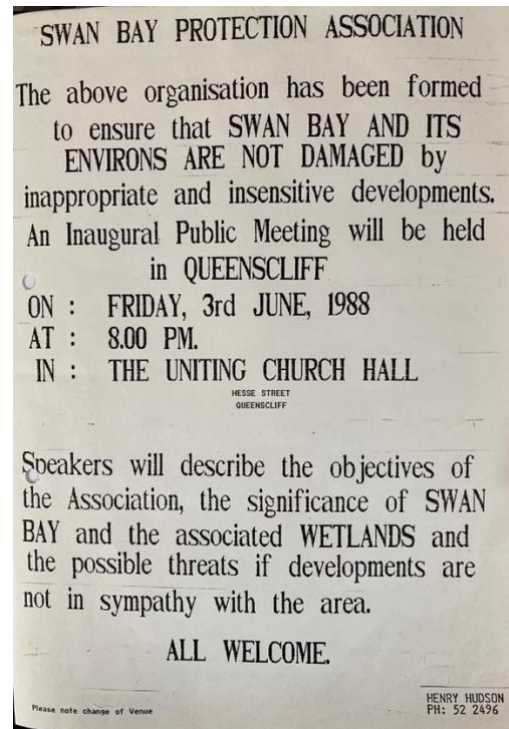
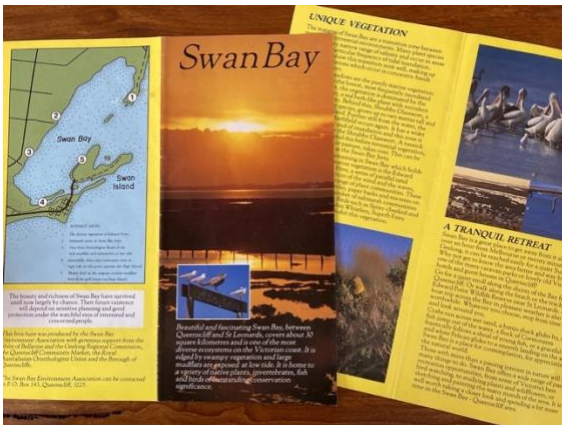


Headlines from the 1980s.

So, in June 1988 a notice was issued advising of an Inaugural Public Meeting for what was to become the Swan Bay Environment Association, with the specific remit of protecting the environmental values of Swan Bay. Dr John Birrell was SBEA's inaugural President and Henry Hudson its first Secretary.

The original statement of purposes stated the primary objective was for Swan Bay and the adjacent land and saltmarsh to remain in its natural state, thus protecting the seagrass meadows and maintaining the bay's recognised international significance as a wetland, bird sanctuary and fish nursery. A quick check of our website today shows this primary objective has not changed.

Between 1988-1991, SBEA advocated for the protection of Swan Bay and was successful in persuading the Victorian Government to produce a management plan for it. This plan was released in 1991 and remains a useful summary of the bay's natural resources. In 1989 a public education brochure was launched (see below) highlighting the beauty and significance of Swan Bay.



In March 1992, having established SBEA as a credible and respected voice, the original committee resigned, and new committee recruits brought with them a broader community focus. From this time on, while SBEA was still having plenty to say about the issues of the day, including the Marina, Lonsdale Lakes, Serenity Cove, a Ferry Terminal expansion proposal, and successfully seeing off an idea to establish an oyster farm in Swan Bay, our newsletters began promoting market stalls, raffles and membership drives as the committee sought to bring the community on board.

## The SBEA timeline from 1993

The following is a brief snapshot of SBEA's evolution as seen through the pages of our Newsletters.

**1993** Regular SBEA newsletters began and newsletter #5 was the first to feature the familiar black swan logo originally designed by Marieke Wasterval. SBEA received its first revegetation permit from the Council and called for volunteer help (NL#6).

**1995** (NL#11) SBEA announced it would auspice the development of the Swan Bay Environmental Trail.

**1997** (NL#17) An arrangement was made with Queenscliffe Council to allow community environmental groups access to the nursery area of the Council depot at the Narrows. Jill Warneke and Laurie Sharp set to work establishing a propagation program. Soon after in August 1998 (NL#22), Council gave the Nursery volunteer group full use of the site.

**1999** (NL#24) SBEA took a major role in educating people about the importance of saltmarsh by installing fencing and an access path to interpretive signs at the end of Ward Road. Funding was later obtained from Coast Action/Coastcare to build a boardwalk over the saltmarsh for which SBEA organised construction. The boardwalk officially opened in December 2003.

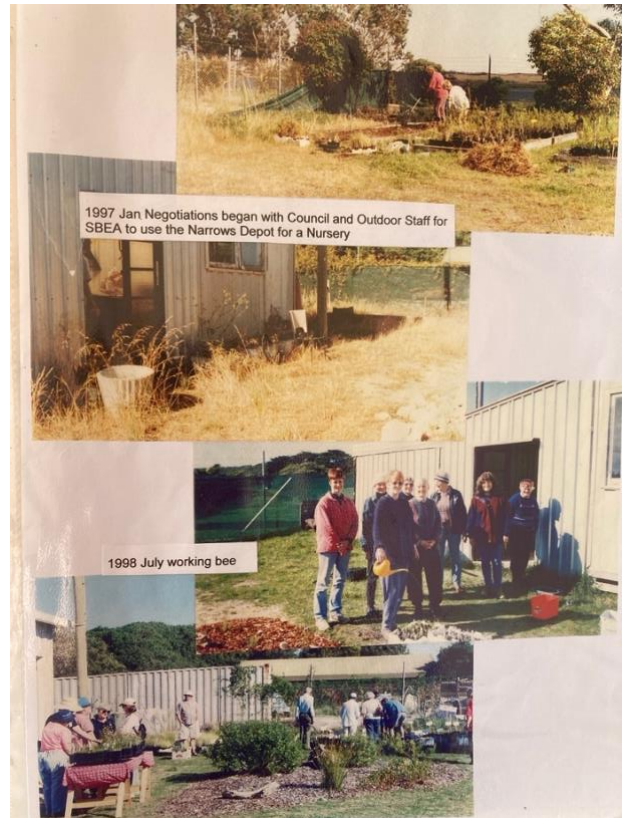
**2000** (NL#29) The Nursery held its first full-blown plant sale in April selling over 1000 plants and raising \$850. As the Nursery's capacity grew, the Council began using many of the Nursery's plants to revegetate areas of the Borough. This newsletter also noted our Nursery's 15 seconds of fame as the shed was transformed into a rustic abode for Griff, a character in the hugely popular *Seachange* series on the ABC.

**2003** (NL#36), the Nursery received a State Government grant to move from the Narrows to the current Nelson Road site as the old Narrows site made way for the new MAFRI building. Also in 2003, State Governor, John Landy visited the nursery while celebrating Queenscliffe's 150<sup>th</sup> year and congratulated SBEA members on the important work being done to protect and promote Swan Bay.

**2004** A busy year for advocacy with successive newsletters reporting expressions of concern regarding a proposal from Stockland for 1000 home development, an 18-hole golf course and a network of waterside parks and also regarding the possible effects on Swan Bay and surrounds of a project to deepen the passage through the Rip. Meanwhile there was good news for the Nursery when a grant was obtained to collect seeds for propagation from the *Ballara* property, where the grounds have remained relatively undisturbed and rare local plants could still be found.

**2005** (NL#42) Stockland modified its previous proposal to 660 homes, a retirement village and no golf course. Over the next four years, SBEA would continue to voice concern regarding the impact on Swan Bay and the adequacy of water discharge monitoring.

**2006** (NL#43) SBEA committee members participated in BoQ's Coastal Management Plan, which listed 'possible impacts of climate change' as a threat. That year SBEA also supported the Blue Wedges Coalition's action against dredging in Port Phillip Bay. In November, SBEA's website was launched (NL#44).



Above: Nascent nursery in a council depot shed at the Narrows. Below: SBEA has a proud history of working cooperatively with the community partners like Bellarine Catchment Network to achieve great environmental outcomes. Here SBEA helps celebrate a decade of revegetation in the Borough.





**2007** (NL#47) SBEA made a submission to the Port of Melbourne re channel deepening, emphasising seagrass protection from sediments and pollution.

**2008** (NL#49) An updated Swan Bay brochure was launched. A Victorian parliamentary committee recommends against Stockland (NL#51)

**2009** (NL#54) Stockland received an approval, with conditions, for what is now The Point. Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, gave a permit for a section of the proposal at the eastern end (120 houses). Additional stage approval was subject to stringent controls and dependent upon further monitoring and modelling.

**2010** (NL#55) SBEA supports a campaign to include Lakers Cutting in Ramsar agreement.

**2012** (NL#61) SBEA expresses concern re the adequacy of Stockland modelling and monitoring at Lakers Cutting as required by permit.

**2013** SBEA celebrates 25 years its 25<sup>th</sup> year with over 100 attendees at the Queenscliff-Lonsdale Yacht Club.



## Quiet achievers continue the battle

Most locals still have no idea just how significant our local wetlands are, not just locally, but also on a national and international scale, according to Jill Warnecke.

So much so that when a group of around 80 leading researchers from across the world met in Queenscliff for an international Ramsar conference last month, it barely rated a mention.

"There were people there from all over the world and I didn't see anything about it. In this day and age it should have been a major focus given the climate and all."

Jill is one of the original members of the Swan Bay Environment Association – a dedicated group of around 60 people who spend much of their time quietly going about the business of protecting one of our most significant environmental assets, our wetlands.

The Association has just marked its 25<sup>th</sup> year – a milestone greeted by members with both "congratulatory and..."

surrounding catchment.

"Then we realized that one of the main activities would be revegetation, because of its importance to the whole eco-system, so we started growing our own plants because there weren't enough of those around."

An indigenous nursery has become one of the Association's major activities.

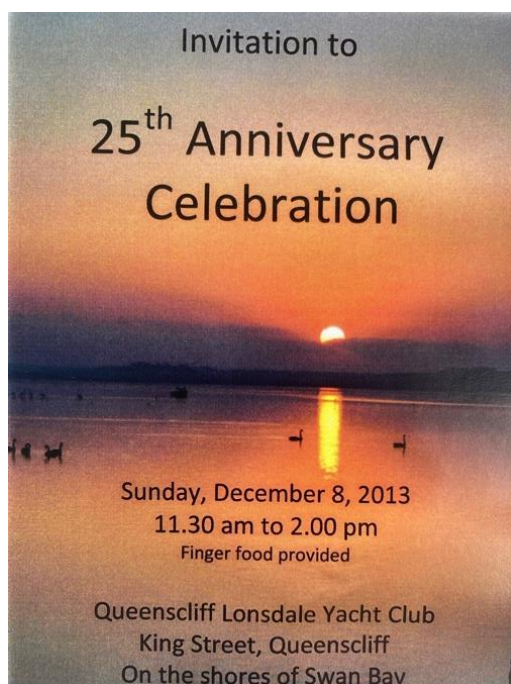
Swan Bay covers around 30 square kilometres and boasts one of the most diverse eco-systems on the Victorian coast.

The area attracts nearly 200 species of bird and is listed under the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance.

Despite its significance, Mrs Warnecke says the same dangers, pressures and aims that lead to the Association's formation remain 2 years on.

"We've tried to explain what Ramsar is, ... we've tried to raise public awareness.

"The major threat to Swan Bay remains run-off from the catchment. The better...



**2014** (NL#66) Plants (climbing lignum) supplied by our Nursery thrive on a multi-level building façade in Docklands (NL#67).

**2015** (NL#69) Jill Warnecke is awarded the first SBEA life membership. A grant is received to establish the Gardens for Wildlife program (NL#71). The Nursery supplies 9000 plants to the rail trail, cemetery and golf club. The Federal Department of the Environment approves the next stage of building at The Point, despite no release of monitoring of discharge from stage 1.

**2016** (NL#72) SBEA lodges an objection with BoQ to a proposal to develop a stingray feeding stadium on Queenscliff Harbour. Nursery sales hit 10,000 units, raising \$10,000 in revenue. Extensive revegetation is carried out on the Bellarine Rail Trail. Gardens for Wildlife launched at the SBEA AGM. The Moonah Walk at Queenscliff Cemetery is launched with the Nursery supplying all indigenous plant seedlings (NL#73).

**2017** (NL#75) Moremac's water quality management plan finally obtained through FOI but BoQ copyright prevented its release to ratepayers! The Cemetery Trust wins the Premier's 2016 sustainability award for environmental protection for the Moonah Walk project. Stingray feeding stadium cancelled (NL#76).

*So many people have contributed to the SBEA story over the years that it is difficult to single anyone out, but SBEA's three life members need a very special mention. Jill Warneke (centre in the above photo) was the driving force behind the nursery for 22 years, reviving stocks of rare local species and propagating 1000s of plants now growing in the Borough and beyond. At left and right are Sue and Roel Wasterval, who were part of a small group who joined Swan Bay Environment Association in 1992. Sue has been active on the committee ever since, except for a short time when she was a Councillor of BoQ, and Roel has just recently retired from committee work.*



**2018** (NL#79) Submission to CCMA to include Lakers Cutting in Swan Bay Ramsar area.

**2019** (NL#82) Jill Warneke retires from her honorary role as Nursery Coordinator - a moment of existential crisis for the SBEA. Her role was converted to a paid position and the price of plants doubled to \$2. But providence shone brightly on SBEA as Sarah Roberts arrives in Queenscliff and is welcomed to the Nursery as its new manager.

**2020** (NL#86) A new SBEA logo and website launches.



**2021** (NL#87) Nursery wins the BoQ Community Environment Project of the year award. SBEA and the Marine Discovery Centre win a grant to develop an ecocultural garden at the Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre NL#88). SBEA plays key role in BoQ Climate Emergency Response Plan in areas of tree coverage, carbon drawdown, weed control and revegetation, and saltmarsh and wetland protection. Letter sent to BoQ re responsible cat ownership and impact on local wildlife (NL#89). Nursery damaged by severe storm (NL#90).

**2022** (NL#91) Weed mapping project in Borough completed. Nursery volunteer numbers up with new Thursday morning group established. SBEA-BoQ Pocket Park program begins with replanting program after storm damage. A monthly attack on environmental weeds was launched by Weed Warriors at the Narrows. SBEA launches on Facebook and Instagram (NL#92). Borough Coastcarers (SBEA + Bellarine catchment Network) celebrated their two-year anniversary (NL#94).

**2023** (NL#97) Nature Art workshops introduced.

## Looking ahead

And there is plenty more to be done! Currently on the advocacy radar is the expansion and changed use at Swan Bay Holiday Park, the fate of *Ballara*, responsible cat ownership, the continuing difficulty obtaining water monitoring data at Lakers Crossing, Moremac's upcoming handover of The Point to the City of Greater Geelong, and the continuing need to mitigate the potential effects of climate change. While at community level there is a project to update the Swan Bay Environment Trail, our ongoing Nature Art workshops, walk and talk events, the Gardens for Wildlife program, the work at our Nursery and habitat restoration projects around the Borough.

And we are always in need of more help. If you have some time, we'd love to welcome more people to our committee, subcommittees or at our many events activities. And for the time poor, you can also help build our capacity by spreading the word about our Nursery and activities to others you know who may be interested.