



Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network News

August 2018 Edition



Volunteers from across the peninsula brave the wet forecast at Planet Ark’s ‘National Tree Day’ hosted by the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network & Mornington Toyota at a GB2AS property

Greetings Landcare members & associates,

I’m over the moon this week after learning that not one but three of our Landcare group’s ‘Victorian Landcare’ grant applications have been successful. Congratulations to Main Creek Catchment, SW Mornington Peninsula and Red Hill South Landcare Groups. I’d like to formally welcome Chantal Kelly, who has taken on the role of Project Coordinator of the GB2AS biolink project. She is doing a fabulous job organising the tree planting events with many different schools (see p. 2 for more details). I hope you enjoy this newsletter, with its articles on kangaroos and blue ants! Many thanks to Greg Holland for his content and editing. His assistance is very much appreciated.

Warm Regards,
 Jacqui Salter, Landcare Facilitator for MPLN Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au

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1. Opportunities & News

Update from Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (MPLN)

The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (MPLN) held its AGM on 1st August. Each of the 11 member Landcare groups were invited to be represented by two Member Representatives. The following Member Reps were elected to the committee: David Maddocks, Michelle Stacey, Melissa Zerbe, Geoff Coghill, Ron Tyrrell, Peter Scott. A number of topics were addressed including the MPLN Weed Calendar, and the trailer. Sally Harle from the Boundary Road project gave some background into the proposed new quarry in Dromana. For the full minutes, please contact MPLN Secretary Peter Scott, email secretary@mplandcare.org.au

Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink

This newsletter sees the changeover in coordination of the biolink activities, with Jacqui Salter stepping down to concentrate on her other Landcare Facilitator duties, and Chantal Kelly stepping into the new role.

Please join me in thanking Jacqui for the outstanding effort she has made in establishing the biolink process - and to welcome Chantal to the position. I have worked with Chantal on the plantings for my property and I am sure she will carry us forward to grand accomplishments.

Indeed, Chantal is assured of success. The gods have spoken! As I was typing this note, a huge double rainbow appeared over the GB2AS. I suspect there is even a huge pot of gold waiting somewhere in that forest of corflute guards!

- Greg Holland



GB2AS Report

As the freshly appointed Project Coordinator for the 'Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink', I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the wider Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network community. My name is Chantal Kelly, and I am pleased to report to have truly hit the ground running. It has been an extremely busy month for GB2AS, with a mammoth ten revegetation days having been held, and nearly 4,000 plants installed on biolink properties. Despite the foreboding weather forecast, 'National Tree Day' was a huge success, as was the 'Scouts and Guides Tree Planting day' with a wonderful turnout of enthusiastic members of all ages, eager to do their part to help our native wildlife.

A big thank you to everyone involved. Thanks are also extended to students from Chisholm and Holmesglen TAFEs, as well as Flinders Christian Community College and Balcombe Grammar students who have also attended planting days with their schools. The project is definitely well on track to finalising all revegetation by the end of August.

As the planting season draws to a close, next on the project agenda is spring fox control and nest box installations as well as having the GB2AS webpage up and running. It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know many of the participating landholders and the project's Steering Committee, who have

given me such a warm welcome in my new role. I look forward to working with everyone involved and seeing the next stage of the project come together.



Photo: Scouts and Guides Tree Planting Day, Saturday 4th August, with Rosebud Sea Scouts, 1st Mornington, Rosebud and Tootgarook Scouts and Guides

- Chantal Kelly, Project Coordinator, GB2AS chantalkelly77@gmail.com phone: 0410 764 732.

Reminder! Like @mplandcare Facebook page

Please 'Like' the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network Facebook page (@mplandcare) and choose to receive notifications to keep up to date with Landcare-related news.

<https://www.facebook.com/Mornington-Peninsula-Landcare-Network-958968857459004/>

Attaching Nest Boxes to Trees – a note of caution from Jim Greenwood

Jim Greenwood highlights the problems he has witnessed associated with screw-mounted nest boxes in the short article below.

In the 1980s, I installed four possum boxes in Mt Waverley. The screw-mounted boxes fell off the trees, the bases fell out of boxes, and bees invaded. It only took two to three years for all boxes to fail. Recently, I had a look at the Lemon-scented gums and Spotted gums that were used. They have weeping black holes that are slowly enlarging. My counter measures to prevent these failures were developed as a result.

Problem 1: Using galvanized nails in trees

The photo on the left shows the problems encountered when nailing trees. These tags are 5 years old.



Most nails break or fall out of live trees within 5 to 10 years. The nails are loose and the stain is iron oxide (rust). The wood around the nails is rotting and damaged. Nails corrode and get thinner and wood rots away from the nail.

Nails and screws should only be used on dead trees, poles or buildings. When the nail or screw corrodes, the dissolved metals (Zn and Fe) are toxic. The wood around the nail or screw turns black and dies and the toxic metals are distributed through the tree. This can weaken the tree and may even kill a small tree. Zinc and Iron are only safe as trace elements. Stainless steel screws and nails will not corrode.

A nail or screw in a tree produces an open wound. This can allow the entry of fungi and bacteria. Compartmentalization may occur if the tree overgrows and seals off the diseased area. When this occurs corrosion stops and the metal becomes a serious hidden future danger if hit with a chain saw.

Rate of corrosion will vary with different types of trees.

Problem 2: Using galvanized nails and mudguard washers

The washers and backboard hold the nail securely. Growth occurs just under the bark increasing the diameter. This will pull the nails out of the tree. The nails will become loose as the tree grows. After 1 to 5 years the weight of the box will pull the nails out. The time taken for the nest box to fall will vary with the rate of growth, age and type of tree.

Problem 3: Installing nest boxes using screws

Screws are held securely in a backboard with a washer. Tree growth will apply strong force on a screw. Growth occurs just under the bark increasing the diameter. This outward pressure will strip the hole, loosen the screw and pull it out. If the thread grips, then the screw will break. Either way, the screws will not last long in a live tree unless loosened on an annual service.

When installing screw mounted nest boxes, the screws must not be done up tight to allow for growth. Leave them a little loose, they will tighten with growth. Back them off annually.

“They should never be attached to the tree using bolts or screws of any kind. This will cause damage and native trees corrode metal bolts in a very short space of time.” (An extract from “Nest Boxes for Wildlife - A Practical Guide” by Alan and Stacey Franks)

“Nest boxes have a limited lifespan and often fail after only a couple of years. The two most common reasons for installed nest box failure are:

1. Lids falling off.

Many designs have screws into end grain of ply. Cut edges on the ply, the weakest part, decay around screws so becomes loose. Non-durable metal or rubber hinges - peeling and lifting ply.

2. Attachment failure:

Sap can eat through roofing, screws and metal strapping. Attachment does not allow for tree growth.

The weakest point of attachment breaks when tree grows.

(“Nest Box Design Structure and Attachment” Narawan Williams, fauna ecologist specialising in nest boxes and microbats narawanwilliams@gmail.com

From Redland City Council:

“It was once considered best practice to secure nest boxes with a bolt directly into the tree; however, it has been found that the reaction from the tree to this ‘foreign body’ exacerbates the rusting process, shortening the life of the nest box and creating a safety issue.

Natural hollows have microorganisms which play an important housekeeping role by helping to break down leaf and waste matter. Nest boxes do not have this and as such, their bases tend to rot out. It has been found that on average, nest boxes will require replacement every 5yrs. Nest boxes can also be prone to invasion by feral species which will have to be removed before the boxes are usable by our native fauna”.

Jim recommends a different system of mounting nest boxes which will be presented in the following newsletter!

2. State of the Environment

A recent court decision in India is interesting. As reported by the Times of India, the high court in the far northern state of Uttarakhand recently decreed that:

- *“All members of the animal kingdom including birds and aquatic life have similar rights as humans”*
- *Animals throughout the state should be treated as “legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.”*
- *“Citizens throughout Uttarakhand (are) persons in loco parentis as the human face for the welfare/protection of the animals.”*

That certainly raises all sorts of interesting scenarios and possibilities from conservation to transport of live animals.

Read more at:

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/64860996.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

- Greg Holland

3. Monthly Features

Article of the Month: Kangaroos: Love em, Hate em.

This is an evolution of the Book of the Month to provide a more diverse set of topics on topics/books/movies of interest to members.

How many kangaroos do you think there are on the Peninsula (say south and west of Frankston)? Read on for the answer.

Late in May, the Green's Bush Association screened a special showing of the documentary "Kangaroo: A Love-Hate Story" at the Main Ridge Hall - preceded by a presentation from Mal Brown on the status of Peninsula kangaroos.

The documentary considers kangaroos from a wide range of perspectives. Interviews on the arguments for and against harvesting and culling are interspersed with live footage of spotlight shooting and a particularly harrowing documentation of a couple who moved to an idyllic country retreat only to find themselves under nightly harassment by illegal shooters. The way that it presents spotlighting from the perspective of the kangaroo is particularly memorable.



The movie is deliberately confrontational. Unfortunately, this approach typically leads to a hardening of existing views rather than a solution to the underlying issue. And sadly kangaroo management is one issue that generates strong views for and against.

Personally, I have no problem with hunting for sound reasons like feral removal or food, and given the way we have rearranged the ecological landscape, culling can be an essential component of maintaining a healthy system.

However, the documentary does make strong points on whether the massive approved cull of millions of kangaroos a year is either beneficial or even based on valid evidence. There also are (human) health issues and lack of evidence of a real commercial benefit from culling.

Watching the movie thus led me to question quite a few perceptions that I have held for much of my life on things like the abundance of kangaroos and their impact on pastures and livestock.

So what is the hard evidence for and against kangaroos on the Peninsula? Here is what I gleaned from a short analysis of the scientific literature and documented population surveys.

Numbers of Peninsula kangaroos: Formal surveys indicate that there are around 2,500-3,000 eastern grey kangaroos remaining on the Peninsula. How did you go with your estimate? I have to admit that I



had another zero on the end. The reality is that kangaroos are now essentially extinct across much of our region. Those that remain are concentrated in two localised regions around Greens Bush and up in the Devilbend/Merricks area. Since I live in one of these areas, I plead guilty of the scientific sin of extrapolating from an unrepresentative sample.

These low numbers mean that the eastern grey kangaroo is in the vicinity of becoming a threatened species on the Peninsula.

Impact on livestock: Kangaroos and livestock *only graze on the same herbage when the total grazing exceeds dry matter production*. This is common in dryland farming, but rare on the Peninsula. Let's take the extreme case where stock and kangaroos are directly competing against each other. Then one horse, steer, or sheep consumes about the same as 22, 15, or 2.5 kangaroos, respectively (Dawson and Nunn 2007). Other, unpublished estimates vary between 1.5 and 5 kangaroos per sheep with cattle and horses scaled accordingly.

Put another way, 120 horses eat as much as the entire population of Peninsula kangaroos!

Beef production example: There are 15-20 thousand head of cattle on the Peninsula (MPB 2016), so if all the kangaroos lived exclusively on beef properties and ate only prime grass, they would cause less than a 1% loss in production.

Normally on the Peninsula there is little to no fodder competition in good pastureland. Further, kangaroos are spread across un-stocked properties and the 40% of the Peninsula covered by parks and reserves. Thus, the above estimates are on the upper extreme and the logical conclusion is that there is negligible real loss to beef production from kangaroos. These general findings are similar for other stock.

Other impacts: There is no doubt that kangaroo habits of using the same tracks up and down the hills in going to and from water/food can result in some erosion. But this is minor compared to the degradation of pastures due to compaction and erosion from cattle and sheep (O'Brien 2001). They also push through and under fences, with resulting damage – a problem that can easily be fixed by providing access points along fences.

Kangaroo vs rabbit: A kangaroo eats about the same as 5-6 rabbits. However, rabbits are in far greater numbers, are widespread, and preferentially eat high value pasture (especially legumes), leading to them having a substantially greater real impact than kangaroos.

Kangaroo as meat: Let's consider the alternative – remove all beef and sheep and exclusively cultivate kangaroos. Unfortunately, that will not work as they produce too little meat too slowly. To replace Australian beef production with kangaroos, for example, would require us killing the entire Australian population 40 times over every year (e.g. O'Brien 2001).

Net value to the Peninsula: The economic value of Peninsula tourism is greater than that for agriculture (in 2015-16, tourism derived \$262m vs \$210 m for agriculture forestry and fishing – MPB 2016). A web search for 'Kangaroo, Mornington Peninsula' provides page after page advertising kangaroos as a major attraction. Every visitor to our place also wants to see a mob of kangaroos. Thus, although there appears to be no published information, it is reasonable to assume that the value of our small population of kangaroos to Peninsula tourism industry is far greater than their small negative impact on agriculture.

For myself? Even after all these years I still get a thrill when I see kangaroos from the window in the early morning, or a swampy browsing down in the bushland.

Want to see the Movie? It can be obtained from <http://kangaroothemovie.com/>. A copy also is available for Landcare members - please contact me at gholland@carranya.net and I will pass on your interest.



References:

Dawson, T. J., and A.J. Munn, 2007: How much do kangaroos of differing age and size eat relative to domestic stock?: implications for the arid rangelands. In C. Dickman, D. Lunney & S. Burgin (Eds.), *Animals of Arid Australia: Out on Their Own?* (pp. 96-101). Australia: Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3186&context=smhpapers>

O'Brien, P., 2001: Kangaroos and land degradation. *Greenleft Weekly issue 472*. Available at: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/kangaroos-and-land-degradation>

MPB 2016: http://www.mpbusiness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2014-Agricultural-Audit_FINAL.pdf

- Article and images by Greg Holland; movie flyer from the above URL; thanks to Virginia Carter for coordinating the showing of the movie.

4. Newsletter Feedback

Do you have a story to tell? Is there a weed, plant, fungus, slime mould, or animal that you want to know about? Have you identified a new, rare, or interesting species? Or a good book? Please contact greg@carranya.net for it to be featured in the newsletter.

Indigenous plant of the Month: Messmates

This month we take a change of pace to consider the humble messmate. Yes, it is one of the most common plants found on the Peninsula, but it has a story to tell, one that perhaps many of us have overlooked simply because it is always there.

Species name: *Eucalyptus obliqua*

Family: Myrtaceae

Origin: Australian endemic species

Status: Common across subtropical southeastern Australia in areas with good rainfall and well-drained soil. Common on the Peninsula in damp sands and foothill forest ecosystems.



Growth Habit: Varied. In perfect conditions messmates have been observed to reach nearly 100 m with a trunk diameter of 3 m and the trunk extending about two thirds of their height. In poor soil or conditions, they may grow as a many branched small tree. After a fire or similar disaster, messmates also can regrow as a many-trunked mallee from their lignotuber. Their stringy bark also is resistant to fire, so many old messmates bear the black scars of fires long past.

Reproduction: By seed, which is produced in copious amounts. They may hybridise with the Mountain Ash (*E. regnans*), a close cousin despite their considerable visual differences.

Dispersal: In the vicinity of the parent plant.

Similar Plants: A number of other stringy barks are similar. One distinguishing feature of messmates is their asymmetrical leaf that broadens at the base (hence the name *obliqua*).

Interesting facts:

- *Eucalyptus obliqua* was the first eucalypt species ever described - in 1788 by French botanist L'Heritier from specimens in Tasmania during Cook's third Pacific expedition.
- Messmates are one of the eucalypts preferred by Koalas, ranking in our area beside Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*) in importance.
- Nectar-eating birds and insects flock to the flowers, and rosellas snack on the fruit. Old messmates have plenty of good hollows for nesting birds, gliders, possums and microbats. One old messmate at Carranya has a tribe of sugar gliders residing in a hole – these gliders also have been observed eating sap oozing from large burls on the trunk.

Further reading: https://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/cd-keys/euclid3/euclidsample/html/Eucalyptus_obliqua.htm

- Article and image by Greg Holland.

5. Upcoming Events

Description	Time & Date	Location	RSVP date	Contact
Merricks Coolart Catchment Landcare Group (MCCLG) weeding day in Merricks	Sat 11 Aug 9.30am til 12pmish	3455 Frankston-Flinders Road, Merricks (opposite Merricks General Store)	n/a	Malcolm Allchin chatsworthgrp@optusnet.com.au
Habitat Restoration Fund property tour	Sat 19 Aug 9:45am til 12pm	162 Point Leo Rd	N/A	info@hrfund.org
MCCLG AGM – includes BBQ lunch & wine tasting!	Sat 25 Aug 10am	323 Myers Road Merricks Nth	22/8/18	Bookings essential Alan 0412 549 994 aldian1@bigpond.com
Tour of Tony's property – tips to create a self-sufficient backyard. Includes arvo tea	Sun 26 Aug 11am-1pm.	9 Century Drive Mt. Martha	23/8/18	Laura Huish lhuish@bigpond.com or 0429 806 888
MCCLG Working Bee Somers FOLKLAW	Saturday September 8th	Details TBC	n/a	Malcolm Allchin chatsworthgrp@optusnet.com.au



6. Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network Grants Guide August 2018

Name of Grant	Date due	Amount	Details
Morn Pen Shire Flexigrants	16 August 2018	\$5000	Click on this Link
Norman Wettenhall Foundation	Open: 18 Sept, 11 Dec	\$5,000 or \$5,000-\$25,000.	https://wettenhall.org.au/grants/small-environmental-grants/
Australian ethical community grants	TBA upon registration	TBA upon registration	https://www.australianethical.com.au/community-grants/
MP Shire Flexigrant	All year	Up to \$1000	http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/our_shire/community_grants
FNCV Environment Fund	TBA upon registration	Up to \$1000	http://www.fncv.org.au/environment-fund/
RACV	All year	Up to \$2000	https://www.racv.com.au/about-racv/our-business/community-involvement/community-support.html
Ross Trust	All year	Up to \$20,000	http://www.rosstrust.org.au/grants/apply-for-a-grant/
EPA Inspiring Environmental Solutions community funding program	All year	Around \$25,000 to \$100,000.	http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/inspiring-environmental-solutions
John T Reid Charitable Trust	All year	Not specified	http://www.johntreidtrusts.com.au/whatwefund
Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grant	All year	Variable	https://www.melbournewater.com.au/
Canon Oceana Environmental Grants	Ongoing	\$11,000	https://www.canon.com.au/about-canon/community/environmental-grants
Sidney Myer Foundation	Ongoing	Not specified	http://myerfoundation.org.au/grants/sustainability-environment/
Colonial Foundation	Ongoing	Not specified	http://www.colonialfoundation.org.au/4330926/colonial-foundation-trust-grant-program.htm
Greenfleet	Ongoing	Can be substantial	https://www.greenfleet.com.au/

7. Local Information

Shire Nursery

Open Wed/Thurs/Fri 9.00am – 3.00pm and first Saturday each month 9.00am-1.00pm. The Shire Nursery specialises in indigenous and native plants. Ph: 5974-8417, email nursery@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Eco Living Display Centre

Open: Fridays 1-4pm & first Saturday each month 9.00am-1.00pm. For activities and workshops visit www.mornpen.vic.gov.au or contact the Renewable Resources department on 5950-1259.

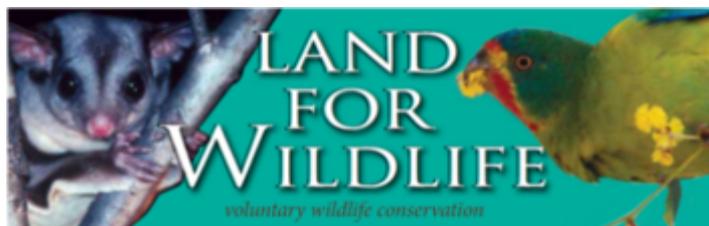
Home Harvest exchange

Too many lemons and not enough parsley? Why not take part in a Home Harvest Exchange? This community initiative allows people to bring their own excess produce and go home with someone else's for free! Bring home grown edibles, eggs, preserved produce, honey, seeds and seedlings. No minimum amount and no money changes hands.

Land for Wildlife

Mornington 3 rd Sat of the month; 2pm - 3pm Dig It, Mornington Community Garden, Mitchell St, Mornington. (Melways Reference: 145 D3)	Rosebud Last Saturday of the month; 2-3pm Rosebud Community Garden, Lawson Park, Leon Av, Rosebud. (Melways Reference: 170 F2)	Mount Martha First Saturday each month 3-4pm The Briars, 450 Nepean Hwy, Mt Martha.
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If you wish to create or protect wildlife habitats on your property, then the Land for Wildlife scheme can offer advice and assistance no matter whether you manage a farm, a bush block, a council park or school ground.



Landholder participation is free and membership doesn't alter the legal status of your property in any way. A Land for Wildlife sign is provided free of charge to acknowledge the efforts being made for wildlife conservation

More info, contact: Peter Johnson Statewide Coordinator and Newsletter Editor Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Box 3100, Bendigo Delivery Centre Bendigo, 3554 Victoria, Australia Tel: (03) 5430 4358 Fax: (03) 5448 4982 peter.johnson@delwp.vic.gov.au
<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/protecting-wildlife/land-for-wildlife>

Advice on Removing Native Vegetation

For assistance and advice in relation to the removal of native vegetation, please contact nativevegetation.support@delwp.vic.gov.au

8. Contacts

- **Jacqui Salter**, Landcare Facilitator, MPLN
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- **Greg Holland:** Newsletter Editor greg@carranya.net
- **David Maddocks**, President of MPLN
david.maddocks@bigpond.com ph: 0429 990 518
- **Michele Sabto**, Project Coordinator for 'Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape' project
linkingmplandscape@yahoo.com.au
- **Chantal Kelly**, project coordinator for 'Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink' project:
chantalkelly77@gmail.com
- **Sarah Saxton**, MP Shire Agribusiness & Food Industry Officer, sarah.saxton@mornpen.vic.gov.au
- **Paul Hodgson**, Melbourne Water River Health Officer, paul.hodgson@melbournewater.com.au ph: 9679 7054
- **Briars Nursery**, Nepean Hwy Mt. Martha, Tel. 5974 8417 Email nursery@mornpen.vic.gov.au
- **Wildlife Help on the Mornington Peninsula (WHOMP)** All hours 0417 380 687 0417 395 883



- Animalia Shelter, 0435 822 699 All hours www.animaliawildlife.org.au
- Crystal Ocean Wildlife Shelter (Rye) - crystal_ocean2003@yahoo.com.au 0407 787 770

9. Image at the end

A large blue ‘ant’ scampers through a young eucalypt.



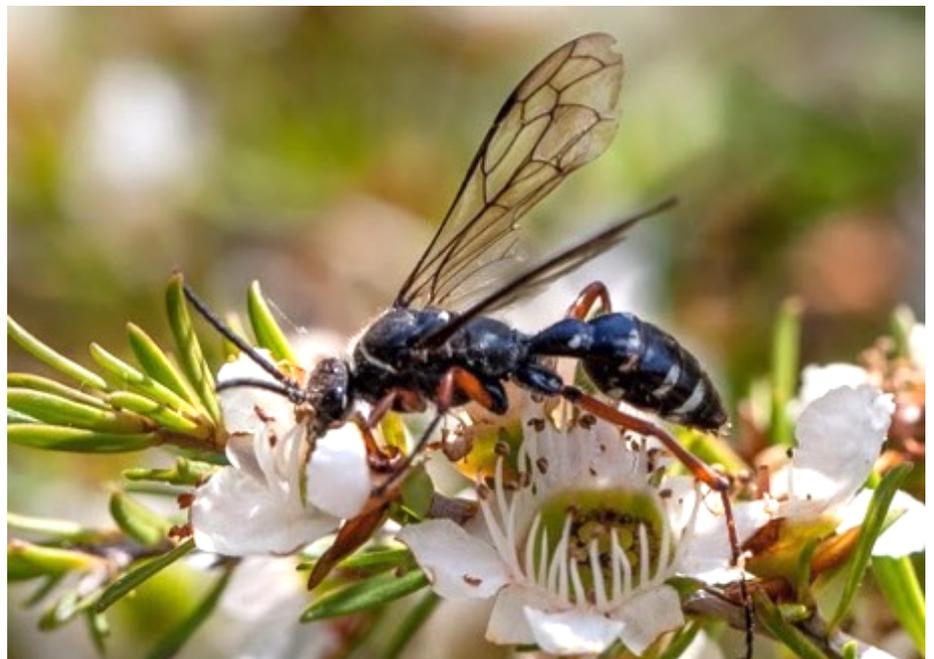
Except it is not an ant - it is an excellent example of mimicry in the form of a female blue-ant wasp (*Diamma bicolor*).

These belong to the Tiphidae family, which comprises ~600 species endemic to Australia and South America, most of which have flightless females. But the blue-ant wasps are the sole species in the genus *Diamma* and subfamily Diamminae.

As can be seen in the images, the male and female are very different. She is large (25 mm), bright blue with red legs, and flightless. He is small (15 mm), drably-coloured and has wings.

Both sexes feed on the nectar of flowers, leading to their alternative name of ‘Flower Wasps’. The female also preys on mole crickets to provide food for her young. She injects the cricket with a paralysing venom and lays a single egg, which hatches to a free feed of live insect to get it started in life.

As with all wasp species in the Tiphidae family, mating is accomplished on the wing. The male also may carry the female to other locations where conditions are better.



Unless annoyed, blue-ant wasps are relatively harmless. However, their sting can cause anaphylaxis in some people, especially in those who are prone to an allergic reaction to bee stings.

- Article and images by Greg Holland.