



Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network News

October 2018 Edition



Congratulations to Main Creek Catchment Landcare (represented by Michelle Stacey & Bernie Schedvin) & SW Mornington Peninsula Landcare (represented by Mal Legg and Rob Nigro) for being listed as finalists in the 'Tidy Towns Award 2018' in the 'Protection of the Environment' category.

Greetings Landcare members & associates from Anglesea Caravan Park!

September has been a great month for the wrapping up of MPLN projects, including 'Getting the Dirt on your Soil' project (funded by 'Ripe for Change') and the completion of our trailer (funded by Esso). As two of our Landcare groups head to Beechworth this weekend as finalists in the 'Tidy Town' awards, I'd like to recognise the hard work of all Landcare groups who work tirelessly to improve habitat diversity and promote sustainable land management on the peninsula. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and hope to see many of you at the VFF/Landcare dinner later in the month. 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
ph: 5950 1279 or 0408 213 079. Please note I work Mon-Wed 9am – 3pm.

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1. Opportunities & News

Update from J. Salter, Landcare Facilitator

Over the past month, it's been great to see so many Landcare and Friends committee members attending our community skills workshops. The next workshop is 'Running a conservation project & reporting' by Cam O'Mara from Naturelinks on Wed 17th Oct (see Events p. 10 for details). I hope to see many of you at the biennial VFF/Landcare dinner on Sat 27th Oct. In addition to applying for a Volunteer Grant for the MPLN for equipment, I've been enjoying tackling a few jobs that have been on the back burner for a while, including:

Common Ground Fact Sheets

I've been working with the MP Shire's Sarah Saxton to create a Common Ground fact sheet about Landcare on the peninsula. The 'Common Ground' fact sheets were developed a few years ago by Gillian Stewart, former Agribusiness Officer at the MP Shire and include information on soils, pasture management and livestock production. They can be found at <https://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Business-Economy/Agricultural-Matters#section-2>

Small Rural Property Guide

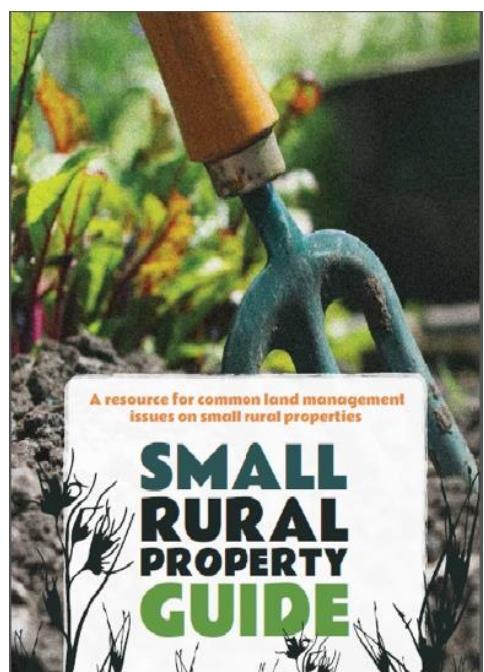
MP Shire staff have been kindly assisting me in a mailout of our 'Small Rural Property Guide' to around 500 landholders who have purchased properties on the peninsula greater than 2 ha since our last mailout in 2015.

This guide is a valuable resource for new landholders and can also be accessed at:

<https://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Your-Property/Environment/Get-Involved/Landcare-on-the-Mornington-Peninsula>

and:

<https://mplandcare.org.au/resources/>





And ... Great news! The MPLN trailer (funded by ESSO) has been custom-built and will be available for groups to hire soon. Contact Jacqui Salter Jacqueline.salter@monrpen.vic.gov.au if you'd like to borrow it.

New PPWCMA Regional Landcare Coordinator

We look forward to welcoming Barry Kennedy in his new role as Regional Landcare Coordinator at the PPWCMA (contact: Barry.kennedy@ppwcma.vic.gov.au) and Lizzie Younger in her new role as River Health Officer for the Mornington Peninsula (contact: lizzie.younger@melbournewater.com.au).

- Jacqui Salter, Landcare Facilitator Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Opportunity to be part of an Integrated Pest Management trial

Regional Landcare Facilitator Karen Thomas is applying for a project demonstrating good Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in pasture systems and is looking for 10 grazing farms interested in being involved. An IPM approach considers key pasture pests and their management options such as monitoring for beneficial insects and cultural control options such as controlling broadleaf weeds (a harbour for pests such as RLEM) and providing a nectar source for the beneficial insects.

- Please contact Karen ASAP if you're interested: Karen.Thomas@ppwcma.vic.gov.au

Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink – update from Chantal Kelly

During the past month, the Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat project completed its spring fox control program. The control of introduced predators is an important inclusion to the project, helping to reduce predatory stress and better support populations of indigenous wildlife already under extreme pressure to just survive.

In addition, many of our participating landholders have had their 'Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink' participating landholder signage installed in prominent locations, which will help to promote this wonderful project at street level.

Nest boxes will soon be installed on a selection of biolink properties that have an absence of hollow-bearing trees to provide valuable habitat for hollow dependent species. Different species have different requirements, so we will be installing a variety of boxes specifically designed to attract a various species including owls, antechinus, sugar gliders and microbats to name a few. Each box will be made from environmentally sensitive EcoPly, incorporating smart designs to deter introduced feral species such as the Common Mynah and introduced bees from taking up residence in the boxes.



The 'Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink' is delivered by the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority through funding provided by the Victorian State Government's 'Our Catchments Our Communities' initiative.

- Chantal Kelly, Project Coordinator, GB2AS gb2as@mplandcare.org.au phone: 0410 764 732.

Clear out your chemicals with Agsafe

Agsafe's national ChemClear service is a safe and effective solution for disposing of unwanted, inherited or unknown chemicals currently stored on farm properties. Illegal chemicals booked with ChemClear will not incur a penalty whilst in storage pending the next Victorian collection. Register chemicals with ChemClear 1800 008 182 or www.chemclear.org.au

Stay on top of livestock drought feed requirements

Agriculture Victoria's drought feeding cattle or sheep resources clearly outline the feed requirements of livestock and can assist in determining if the feed being supplied to stock will meet their needs. Books are available from Agriculture Victoria. Visit www.agriculture.vic.gov.au or Caroline Love 5152 0603

Fox and wild dog bounty resumes

The collection period for the fox bounty runs until the end of October. Eligible participants can submit entire fox scalps for a \$10 reward during scheduled collection times. For details on collection times and locations, terms and conditions, visit www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/bounty, or phone Agriculture Victoria on 136 186

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/>

2. State of the Environment

Echidna Allergy

Those with food allergies know just how difficult it can be to navigate the multiple additions to our modern processed foods.

So spare a thought for Matilda the echidna, who was found to be allergic to ants!

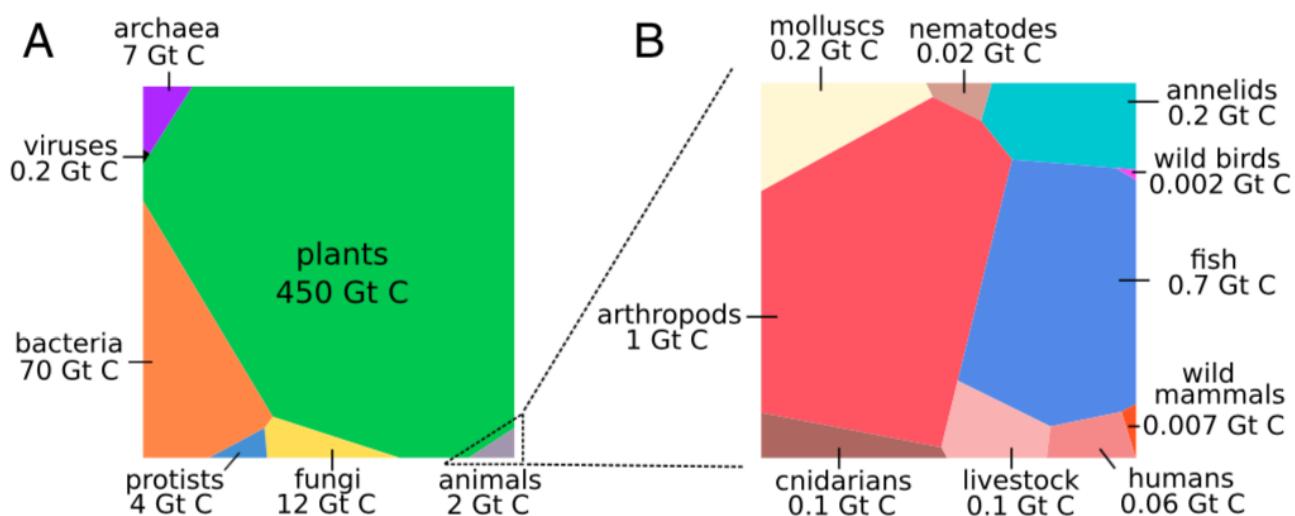
Matilda was brought to Healesville Sanctuary as a puddle and became quite ill when weaned off milk. A series of tests revealed the ant allergy and a couple of years of careful work has largely cured the problem. Sadly, she cannot be released into the wild, so pay her a visit next time you are up that way.

- Note by Greg Holland based on an article in The Age (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/how-healesville-helped-an-ailing-echidna-lick-its-ant-allergy-20181001-p5075g.html>)

Changing Distribution of the World's Biomass

The biomass of the world represents the total carbon sequestered in all taxa – plants, animals, insects, fungi, viruses, bacteria, etc. A recent study by Bar-On et al (2018) has provided a comprehensive analysis of how the biomass is distributed using available data and a review of previous publications. What it finds is both fascinating and scary.

It will come as no surprise that the bulk of the carbon is locked up in plants, but consider the tiny amount that is contributed by animals? Here, it is well known that most of the carbon is in the arthropods (insects, spiders, crustaceans and such). But the enormous footprint of humans and domestic animals may come as a surprise, as may the relatively tiny contribution by wild mammals. Said another way, if we leave out fish, then our livestock (primarily cattle and pigs) weighs more than all other vertebrates combined!

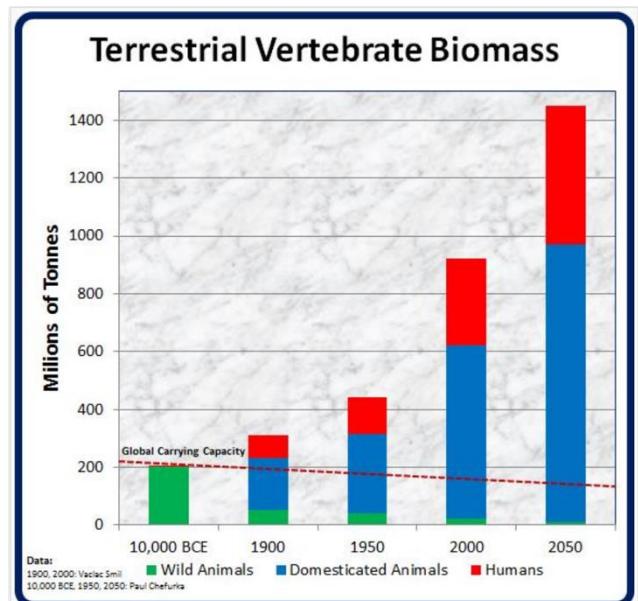


There are significant uncertainties with these estimates (as described in detail in the article), but these uncertainties do not change the overall picture.

It was not always so, as is illustrated in the second figure (developed by Paul Chefurka from data in Smil 2011, and which agrees closely with the more comprehensive assessments by Bar-On et al), the mass of both terrestrial and marine wild mammals has decreased by a factor of around six since around the last ice age. The mass of plants also has decreased by a factor of around two. As a result:

The total biomass of the planet is now about half what it was before humans began having an impact.

Interestingly, the massively increasing biomass of humans and their livestock has resulted in the total biomass of all mammals *increasing* fourfold!



The dashed line in the second figure is an estimation of the carrying capacity of the planet's natural ecosystems. By this estimate, the capacity has decreased steadily by around 25% since the ice age to the stage where we are seriously in deficit on our use of planetary resources. This is in agreement with independent assessments by the World Wildlife Federation (WWF 2012).

- Summarised by Greg Holland from the following references:
 - o Bar-On, Y.M., R. Phillips, and R. Milo, 2018: The Biomass Distribution on Earth. www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1711842115
 - o Smil, V., 2011: Harvesting the Biosphere: The Human Impact. <http://vaclavsmil.com/wp-content/uploads/PDR37-4.Smil .pgs613-636.pdf>
 - o WWF, 2012: Living Planet Report. <https://www.slideshare.net/ymontepara/wwf-living-planet-report-2012-biodiversity-biocapacity-and-better-choices>

Stop Extinction! Write a submission for the Senate Enquiry

The Senate Environment Committee wants to hear personal stories about Australia's extinction crisis. The Australian Conservation Foundation has created an online template to assist:

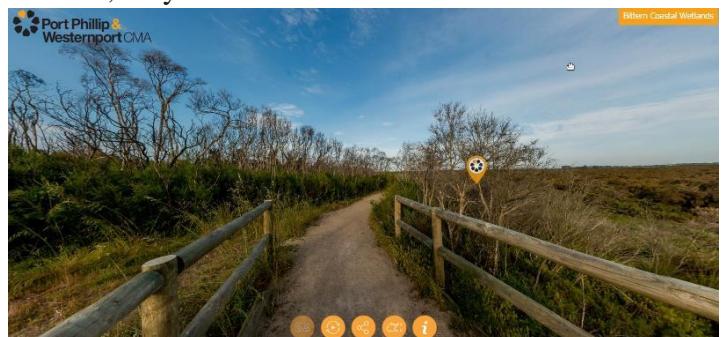
https://www.acf.org.au/extinction_inquiry

Take a virtual tour of the Bittern Coastal Wetlands

The PPWCMA have developed a great tool for showcasing project sites. Your Landcare group might like to consider incorporating this into their next project!

Have you ever visited the Bittern Coastal Wetlands? If not, why not take our virtual tour first and learn about the unique environmental features of this segment of the Western Port Ramsar Site.

This is the first in a series of virtual tours as part of the Ramsar Protection Program, which will offer a first-hand insight into these internationally-recognised wetlands. Start your adventure at virtual-tours.com.au/ppwcma/



Aussie Backyard Bird Count

Monday 22 October - Sunday 28 October

Celebrate National Bird Week by taking part in Australia's biggest citizen-science project. The Aussie Bird Count is a great way to connect with birds in your backyard no matter where your backyard happens to be – a suburb, local park, patch of bushland, the beach, creek or a street in your neighbourhood. Last year 72,000 people took part across the country, counting almost 2 million birds.



You can count as many times as you like over the week (in 20 minute periods). The data helps Birdlife Australia understand more about our bird population, particularly in urban areas.

Talking of birds, if you love identifying and learning about them, check out the bird count website for ideas to get you chirping.

- <https://aussiebirdcount.org.au/>. Cartoon from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG0MxhkQ67w>.

Solar Homes Package- 50% rebates now available

The Victorian Government wants to help Victorian households cut their electricity bills through the Solar Homes Package. Eligible households can claim a 50% rebate on the cost of a home solar PV system, up to a maximum rebate of \$2,225 (the value of half the cost of an average 4kW solar system).

The offer is available **until 30 June 2019**. Also on offer is an ‘early adopters’ rebate for households who installed solar PV systems before 1 November 2009 and solar hot water rebates of \$1,000 for six thousand Victorian households.

To be eligible for the solar PV rebate, applicants need to:

- have a combined household income of less than \$180,000 per year before tax
- be an owner-occupier of a home valued at under \$3 million
- not already have a solar PV system installed on your property (unless an early adopter)
- use a Clean Energy Council (CEC) Accredited Installer and only use CEC approved products

For help choosing a solar system that is right for you, check out the information and free guide to installing solar PV for households on the Clean Energy Council website

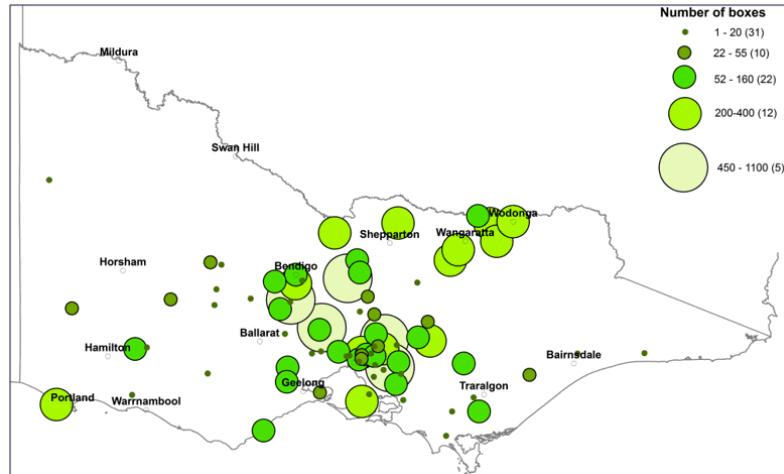
(<http://www.solaraccreditation.com.au/consumers/purchasing-your-solar-pv-system/solar-pv-guide-for-households.html>).

Use of Nest Boxes Across Victoria

While we are on Bird Counts, the Arthur Rylah Institute at DELWP has recently completed a comprehensive summary of nest box deployment and use across Victoria. They received information on nearly 9,845 nest boxes, of which community groups had installed 57%, including 20 Landcare-affiliated groups.

Summary:

- Motivations for installing nest boxes included: lack of local tree hollows, contributing to habitat connectivity, support for specific threatened species and for wildlife in general, community engagement and education, species monitoring
- Thirty-one ‘target’ species from 12 broad groups were identified, including both threatened and common species. Most frequent were Brush-tailed Phascogales, microbats and Sugar Gliders, with the Laughing Kookaburra the most common bird species targeted.
- Thirty-three native mammal and bird species were recorded using nest boxes, with sugar gliders being the most common.



Details:

Thirty-three native mammals and bird species, plus microbats were found to be using nest boxes as described below with the brackets indicating the number of programs out of a total of 94:

- Native Species:** Sugar Glider (49), Brushtail possum (Common and Mountain, 32), Brush-tailed Phascogale (26), Common Ringtail Possum (26), Antechinus (Agile and Yellow-footed, 23), Microbats (17), Squirrel Glider (10), Leadbeater’s Possum (4), Feathertail Glider (3), Rosella (Crimson and Eastern, 19), Australian Owlet-nightjar (17), Duck (Wood, Chestnut Teal, teal and Pacific Black, 13), Laughing Kookaburra (9), Treecreeper (White-throated, 7), Galah (5), Lorikeet (Rainbow, Musk and Scaly-breasted, 5), Parrot (Red-rumped and Turquoise, 4), Striated Pardalote (2), Eastern Barn Owl (1), Southern Boobook (1), Welcome Swallow (1), Australian Magpie (1), Long-billed Corella (1), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (1), Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (1), Major Mitchell’s Cockatoo (1)
- Introduced Species:** Honey bee (31), Common Myna (6), Black Rat (5), Common Starling (4), House Mouse (1), Common Blackbird (1)
- No Occupants or Boxes Not Used** (5 each).

Two resulting **case studies** have been produced (components of PhDs at La Trobe Uni):

- Bat boxes were found to be dominated by one species of bat: the common Gould’s Wattle Bat. Harp trapping suggests that this has resulted in other species becoming less abundant - Steve Griffiths
- Valuable records of the distribution and occurrence of Brush-tailed Phascogales were obtained. Site variables were found to influence their use of nest boxes (details not provided) - Jess Lawton

Resulting **facts sheets** include:

- A general guide to using nest boxes - https://www.ari.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/328191/Nest-box-fact-sheet-general-guide.pdf
- Monitoring and storing nest box data - https://www.ari.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/328193/Nest-box-fact-sheet-monitoring-data.pdf
- Abstracted by Greg Holland from information provided by Phoebe Macak www.ari.vic.gov.au

3. Monthly Features

Plant of the Month: Purple Loosestrife

Reports are in that purple loosestrife are beginning to flower along our waterways.

Species name: *Lythrum salicaria*; **Family:** Lythraceae.

Origin: Globally spread, being native to southeastern Australia, Europe, and Asia. It is a significant weed in North America and New Zealand.

Their long association with humans in the Old World has led to some interesting uses of the purple loosestrife: in medieval times as an astringent and cure for diarrhoea; as a tanning agent; and in Greek and early Chinese times as a means of stopping blood from battle wounds (hence *Lythrum*: Greek for blood lost in battle). Nowadays, its main use is as an ornamental garden plant. The leaves also provide a valuable food source for several insect species.



Status: See figure - common on the Peninsula, near-threatened in South Australia, and endangered in Tasmania.

Growth Habit: Purple loosestrife prefers moist conditions and is usually found around marshes, lake and stream sides, and ditches. Here, it forms clumps occasionally reaching to 2 m but normally 1-1.5 m high. Flowering occurs from spring through summer.

Reproduction: By seed or root propagation. Pollination is achieved with the help of a number of long-tongued insects, particularly butterflies and bees. The plants have an interesting adaptation in that each has different groups flowers suited to particular insect types – an adaptation that helps promote cross fertilisation as the insects are forced to move around.

Weed Status: Although purple loosestrifes are native to our area, they also can become problem weeds. Each plant may produce over 2.5 million seeds that overwinter then sprout in spring.

Dispersal: Typically, by wind or water - in disturbed areas regrowth from root pieces also readily occurs.

Toxicity: No known toxic effects

Control Methods: Several methods of biological control using beetles have proven to be successful - however, artificial control does not appear to be required on the Peninsula. The natural cycle appears to be that they spread out in wet years then die back during droughts.

Similar Plants: Other *Lythrum* species, such as hyssop loosestrife (*Lythrum hyssopifolia*).

Further reading: www.anbg.gov.au/gnp/gnp2/lythrum-salicaria.html

- Article by Greg Holland; plant image from austplants.com.au; distribution from Atlas of Living Australia.

4. Upcoming Events

*See following fliers

Description	Time & Date	Location	RSVP date	Contact
SPIFFA speaker <u>Gidja Walker - weed prioritisation</u>	Mon 8 Oct 7.30 pm – 8.30pm followed by meeting	Seawinds Community Hub, 11a Allambi Ave, Capel Sound	n/a	Spiffa.secretary@gmail.com
Workshop: protecting beach-nesting birds *	Tues 16 Oct 11.30am - 3.30pm	Point Leo Surf Life Saving Club, 55 Western Pde, Point Leo	5 th Oct (sorry for late notice - JS)	Bnb.events@birdlife.org.au or 9347 0757 and advise of dietary requirements
Running projects & writing ripper reports – for Landcare & Friends committee members	Wed 17 Oct 9am – 12pm	Seawinds Community Hub, 11a Allambi Ave, Capel Sound	Fri 12 Oct	Register here or email Jacqui Salter
VFF/Landcare Dinner \$45 members, \$50 non-members *	Sat 27 Oct 6pm onwards	The New Atrium, Safety Beach	24 Oct	To RSVP: vffpen@vff.org.au
Main Ridge Sustainable Community Day *	Sun 28 Oct 10am – 3pm	Main Ridge Rec Reserve	n/a	Red Hill District Lions Club Lyn Connor: lionsnewsletter1@gmail.com

Get involved in protecting your local beach-nesting birds

Interested in helping wildlife?

Do you like spending time on the beach?

If the answer is yes, then come along and join BirdLife Australia for a free workshop to learn about your local beach-nesters the Red-capped Plover and the Fairy Tern. A field trip will help you identify Red-capped plovers and interpret their quirky behaviours.

Where: Point Leo Surf Life Saving Club
55 Western Parade, Point Leo

Date: Tuesday 16th October

Time: 11.30am – 3.30pm (lunch will be provided)

RSVP: by 5th October to bnb.events@birdlife.org.au or 9347 0757 (advise us of dietary req's)

This workshop includes a field trip – please bring appropriate weather protection (raincoat, sunhat, etc.), water bottle, and binoculars if you own them.





VFF Annual Dinner

The President and Committee of the *VFF Peninsula Branch* invite you to attend the Annual Dinner at the



Atrium Restaurant

10 Country Club Drive, Safety Beach

Saturday 27th October 2018

6pm - Drinks in the Atrium

6:45pm - Three course dinner

Special guest entertainment by **Terry Daniher**
Farmer, footballer & entertainer from the Daniher Dynasty.

Proudly supported by Major Sponsors:



Brendan 0409 026 164



Ray, Kim & Adam 0418 599 825

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOURS AND CELEBRATE VIBRANT AGRICULTURE ON THE PENINSULA.

RSVP 24th October 2018 Email: vffpen@vff.org.au

\$45 VFF Members, \$45 Landcare Members, \$50 Non-Members

All drinks at cash prices

Payments: BSB - 633 000 Account - 160 740 965

Important: Include your name in "Reference"

Dress: Jacket and Tie for men.

All enquiries, dietary requirements, and names within group seating for place cards -please advise
vffpen@vff.org.au

PROMOTING AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS' INTERESTS IN VICTORIA

Main Ridge Sustainable Community Day

sponsored by the Red Hill District Lions Club inc

Sunday 28 October

10am - 3pm

Main Ridge Recreational Reserve

**DISCOVER YOUR COMMUNITY
FAMILY FUN & ACTIVITIES**

Garage sale · Australia's Biggest BBQ

Cake stall · Coffee cart · Devonshire teas

Tennis activities · Try bowls and petanque

CFA equipment displays and fire season info sessions

**BRING YOUR OWN KEEP CUPS, DRINK BOTTLES,
AND TAKE YOUR RUBBISH HOME!**

Participating clubs:

Main Ridge Bowls and Petanque Club, Main Ridge Tennis Club
Main Ridge Cricket Club, Main Ridge CFA, Red Hill District Lions Club



Arthurs Seat July 2017

6. Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network Grants Guide Oct 2018

Name of Grant	Date due	Amount	Details
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

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

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

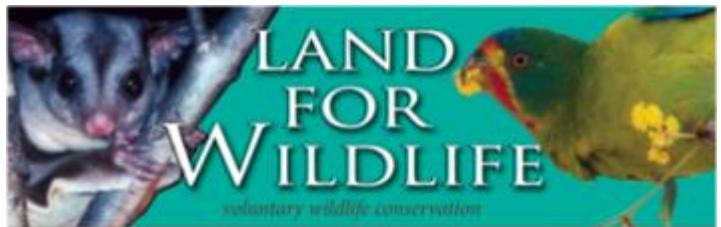
Too many lemons and not enough parsley? Why not take part in a Home Harvest Exchange? This community initiative allows people to bring their own excess produce and go home with someone else's for free! Bring home grown edibles, eggs, preserved produce, honey, seeds and seedlings. No minimum amount and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

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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Land for Wildlife

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>

8. Contacts

- **Jacqui Salter**, Landcare Facilitator, MPLN Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au ph: 0408 213 079
- **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
- **Lizzie Younger**, Melbourne Water River Health Officer, lizzie.younger@melbournewater.com.au
- **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. Newsletter Feedbac

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.

10. Image at the end: Robber Flies

With spring come the insects and I have seen the first robber fly (*Alsidae sp*) of the season. These large, predatory flies are quite common across the globe, with 7,000 known species, of which Australia has around 340, most of which are endemic.

The adults are aggressive predators of other flying insects, which they typically catch by hanging on the side of, or underneath grass stems, etc, then darting suddenly out to ambush any unfortunate insect flying by. They are not selective – anything that is smaller than them and edible is fair game. Once the prey is caught, their strong proboscis is inserted to inject an immobilising anaesthetic. The fly then injects another fluid to pre-digest the internals for sucking out.

The consumption cycle takes a while and they can be observed up close quite easily during this period. The dark robber fly (*Cerdistus fuscipennis* - shown in the image with its captured bee) made a couple of half-hearted flights to nearby grasses when I approached, then simply sat there and let me get within 50 cm or so to capture the picture.

Notice the distinctive, robber-fly characteristics: hanging style for perching; large head covered in bristles; hunch back; spiny legs; and tapering body. Not all robber flies have this latter feature, some are even bee mimics.

On the Peninsula, robber flies are most commonly observed in long grass, sedge, or bracken across open fields and glens on sunny, warm to hot days. When these conditions are satisfied, walking through the area will often scare up tens of flies, each of which flits a few metres away before settling down again.

Robber fly lifecycles extend up to 3-y and follow the normal path of egg, larva, cocoon, and adult. The female typically lays her eggs in the soil or rotting wood. The larvae are yet another of those off-white grubs with small heads that appear whenever we are digging the soil – and I find to be nearly impossible to differentiate. They typically feed off both vegetation and other insects. The cocoon stage extends over winter and the new adults appear in spring.

These flies are generally harmless to humans, but their proboscis is quite capable of piercing skin and holding them may result in an extremely painful sting.

- Article and image by Greg Holland.

