

# coastline

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spring update 2009

## State Coordinator's Message

By Matthew Fox, Statewide Program Coordinator

A warm welcome to *Coastline* readers. Indeed, now that spring has arrived, things are starting to warm up and the days are getting longer. As usual, we bring you news from around Victoria's coast. We'll learn more about the management of our state's Ramsar wetlands, take a closer look at your local port, and head west to investigate remains of some ancient whales.

I'm happy to announce that DSE has successfully secured funding to boost our support to coastal volunteers. Many readers will be familiar with the Australian Government's natural resource management investment program *Caring for our Country*. Funding from the 2009/2010 Business Plan has just been announced, and the DSE has received an allocation to establish a statewide Coastcare Grants program which will run for the next two years.

Groups will soon be able to apply for funding for local projects that contribute to *Caring for our Country* program outcomes on the Victorian coast. These include the control of rabbits and weeds, the protection of key environmental assets including Ramsar wetlands, and new partnerships with Indigenous communities on the coast. More information will be made available to groups very soon. Stay in touch with your local facilitator to find out more.

### Staff movements

Welcome to Joanne Ludbrook who has stepped into the position of facilitator for Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula for the next year. Joanne brings a wealth of coastal experience and will be on hand to support volunteers and groups for the next 12 months. Joanne may be contacted at the Geelong DSE office on phone (03) 5226 4669.



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## Snapped! The 2010 Seaweed Photo Competition

The Marine Education Society of Australasia (MESA) invites primary and secondary students to create artworks with clear messages about our marine environment. The theme of the work should tie in with the 2010 MESA Seaweed theme: "Oceans of life; oceans to explore, ours to restore".

MESA is a national organisation that promotes the sustainable use of marine and coastal environments through education. Seaweed is one of MESA's annual community education initiatives to develop community awareness, and participation in the protection and sustainable use of Australia's coastal and marine environments.

Each year a different theme is chosen for Seaweed. In 2010 the theme focuses on the amazing biodiversity we have in our oceans and the fragility of our ecosystems. Students are encouraged to think creatively about their artwork and to make a message that will appeal to the public. It should highlight the impacts that humans have on the marine environment.

The competition will be officially launched during Seaweed 2010 (1–7 March) but eager participants can start planning their work now. Entrants can



choose to upload an original image for the Ecard category or to draw, paint, glue, splash or sketch a full sized banner for the banner category. For each piece of art, entrants will be required to provide a 100 word description explaining the work. Interested schools or community groups can also submit banners.

More details can be found on the MESA website [www.mesa.edu.au](http://www.mesa.edu.au). Registrations will open during Coastcare week in December 2009. Good Luck!



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# Breaking the waves – a Western Port erosion control project

By Denis Cox, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Box Hill

The daily rhythm of the sun causes the constant heating and cooling of the atmosphere that produces winds of various energy levels – from gentle zephyrs to powerful storms that blow across waters of oceans and sea creating waves and currents. Where sea meets the land the coastal erosion is as constant as the waves that beat against it. Resistance is greatest where hard rocky shores occur such as the granite of Wilsons Promontory that plunges directly into the sea, or where large stores of sand is available in sand dunes that are cut into and moved off shore during storms to form sand bars but restored by lower energy waves and wind in calmer periods.

Vegetation that grows both underwater and at the coastal fringe in many areas is an effective barrier to taming the energy of the sea and the erosion it can cause. Dense beds of sea grass can shield the sea floor from sediment movement and in tropical areas extensive mangrove forests shelter the coast. One mangrove species, *Avicennia marina*, even manages to survive the cold conditions in Victoria. As sea waves move through mangroves at high tides and daily flood across saltmarshes their energy dissipates. But in areas naturally protected by mangroves, their loss can result in increased shoreline erosion.

A dramatic retreat of the shoreline at Grantville on the eastern coast of Western Port is a direct result of mangrove removal. The Sea Grass Partnership, led by Dr Tim Ealey, has been successful in gaining a *Caring for our Country* grant to implement an erosion protection trial that will assist in the recovery of mangroves and gradually restore a natural on-going erosion control barrier adding valuable knowledge to coastal protection methods.

The urgency to provide protection in this area was evident after a single storm in April this year that scoured away remaining saltmarsh opening the shore to accelerated erosion. The project involves the installing of a 60 metre long low geo-textile bag barrier that will break the energy of waves near the shore. The geo-textile bags are



*Grantville shoreline with saltmarsh, March 2009*



*Grantville Shoreline, April 2009.*



*Geobags at Grantville.*

filled with sand from local quarries as there is no adequate natural supply of suitable material from the nearby sea bed. The

barrier will protect hundreds of mangrove seedlings that are being established immediately behind it.

# Indigenous connections to the coast – past, present and future

By Tracey Pennington, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Anglesea

Two new projects in South West Victoria are set to link present generations with local Indigenous heritage and offer Indigenous youth opportunities for their future, thanks to funding from Coast Action/Coastcare and the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* grants program.

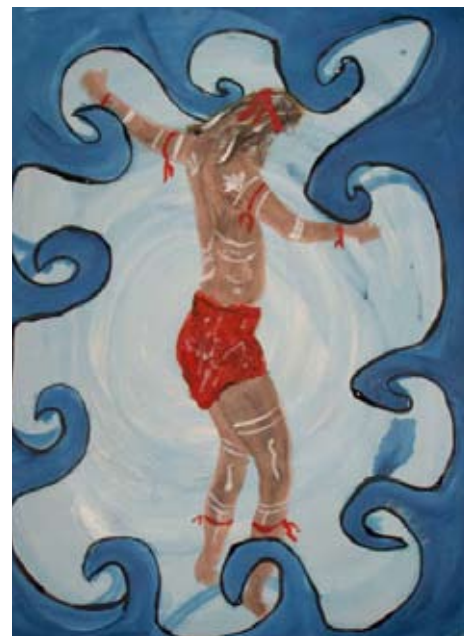
Stories of the Wathaurong people and their connection to the coast will be conveyed across the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast via a new series of 'Connies' collectable cards. A joint project of the Wathaurong Cooperative, Coast Action/Coastcare, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and the Connies, the first three new stories will focus on estuaries, coastal middens and the use of ochre by the Wathaurong people.

Beautifully illustrated by Indigenous artist Kerrie Black, the story cards are vibrant and sure to catch the eye of young and

old alike. The cards will be distributed at annual events and other activities across the central South West from September.

The second project is set to connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to the coast by combining accredited training programs in natural and cultural heritage resource management techniques, with a variety of on-ground environmental projects along the Corangamite coastline.

Coastal committees and state government departments across the region joined forces with Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative in Geelong to secure the two-year *Caring for our Country* funding, which will deliver much-need opportunities for young people whilst assisting coastal land managers in the protection and restoration of natural, cultural and recreational assets.



The new Connie's card featuring the ochre illustration by Kerrie Black.

## Better safe than sorry!

By Matthew Fox, Coast Action/Coastcare Statewide Program Coordinator

The past few months have seen more than 100 coastal volunteers receive training in 'Safety Management for Volunteers'. The training has been specifically designed for community groups to help them plan for safer volunteering experiences on coastal Crown land. While injuries among

volunteers are uncommon, risks do exist for those working on coastal reserves. The most likely risks are those we encounter everyday, including trips and slips, sunburn, insect bites and injury from hand tools. Taking a risk management approach can ensure that all risks are understood and prevented

before they arise. Taking safety seriously is everybody's responsibility.

The courses have been developed to inform volunteers of their rights and responsibilities in plain language, while teaching straightforward and practical ways of assessing and minimising risk in volunteering activities. The course was designed and delivered by Caple and Associates and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The response to the training has been overwhelmingly positive. For those who haven't yet done this training, please register your interest with your local facilitator and we'll let you know when the next course is happening.



Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator Phillip Wierzbowski and Hobsons Bay volunteers who participated in OH&S training.

# 12 up – 8 to go

By John Amor, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Warrnambool

One of the great things about being a Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator is the surprise projects that you stumble across. A few months ago, long-time South West resident, former Deakin University lecturer and book author, Paul Jennings contacted me for some revegetation advice. As you would imagine, we facilitators get a lot of similar requests. It usually involves a site visit and the provision of a plant list.

Nothing could have prepared me for that visit to Paul's 21-hectare property on Logan's Beach Road, overlooking Warrnambool's Southern Right Whale Nursery. I knew Paul lived on that property as the house he built some years ago had drawn a lot of media interest. That house was built into a hill and had a coastal vegetation community planted on its roof, making it nearly invisible in the coastal landscape.

Paul is now building another house out of recycled materials but it is his amazing revegetation project that is the story here.

Beginning in 2004, Paul decided to revegetate his entire 21 hectares. He viewed his property which is situated between the Hopkins River and the Southern Ocean as a vital wildlife corridor. He researched species and sought out information on methods. Starting with direct seeding, he followed-up with hand planting in areas where there was limited success. This was no easy task as the property was dominated by kikuyu grass and once sprayed, was quickly invaded by Apple of Sodom and other aggressive weeds.

In such a short timeframe, he has already revegetated 30 hectares of coastal woodland; an area alive with birdlife and even possums and swamp wallabies. The recovery is amazing.

Paul's property – together with most of Logan's Beach Road properties – is freehold to the high water mark. There is a small percentage of such land in Victoria and most of it is in the South West of the State. Generally speaking, the properties surrounding Paul's are bare of any native vegetation and grazed heavily by dairy cattle.

I have since revisited the property with Glenelg Hopkins CMA Project Officer Tanya Parker who saw the great potential to show to others what can be achieved and Paul was very supportive of this. The big challenge lies ahead however, as the remaining land is a mixture of weeds and kangaroo grass which will require some delicate revegetation techniques. But now that we know about his amazing project there will be no shortage of helpers.

## We're in this together – DSE and Coastal Committees Partnerships Project

By Hayley Hollis, DSE Coastal Policy and Planning Officer

As the delegated manager of more than half of the state's coastal reserves, Committees of Management (CoMs) are placed under increased pressure to effectively and efficiently address coastal management issues, including climate change and population growth.

In 2008, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) started up the Coastal Committees of Management Partnerships Project to explore current management arrangements and issues. Following on from the 1998 and 2003 reviews, the project identified ways to improve support mechanisms for coastal CoMs, better enabling them to continue managing one of Victoria's most significant natural assets – the coast.

A series of regional engagement workshops and a project survey provided coastal CoMs with an opportunity to discuss key management issues and identify strategies to address them in the future. The consultation process proved successful as comprehensive feedback was received and provided DSE with a clearer indication of how to strengthen support mechanisms for coastal CoMs.

Using feedback from the consultation process DSE has developed a final

recommendations report summarising key management issues across the state. Recommendations are grouped under six broad headings; efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, communication and engagement, sustainable planning, training and development, and resource allocation. As part of the project's next steps, the project team will develop a detailed implementation plan outlining recommendation priorities and timeframes. Without coastal CoMs sharing their knowledge and ideas, and actively

participating in this project, DSE would not have been able to produce the final report. The report identifies strong recommendations for systems, governance and opportunities to improve the management of coastal Crown land reserves. So thank you to all participants!

Copies of the final report have been sent to all coastal CoMs. If you have any questions about the project, or would like a copy of the final report, please contact Nicola Waldron, DSE Coastal Policy and Planning Group, on phone (03) 9637 9241 or [nicola.waldron@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:nicola.waldron@dse.vic.gov.au)

*The Barwon Coast Committee  
of Management*



# Corporate volunteers on the coast

By Phillip Wierzbowski, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Box Hill

Corporate Social Responsibility is good business and corporate volunteering is an expression of this. It is basically a commitment to encourage and support staff to volunteer in the not-for-profit sector. It ranges from individual volunteer effort through to team or whole-of-company involvement. This business practice, which is gaining momentum in Australia, presents both an opportunity and a challenge.

There are many forms of support for not-for-profit groups or volunteering for community work from the business sector including:

- support staff to volunteer
- join company in a planned event
- memberships of a community group
- staff secondment.

Corporate volunteering has many benefits for business employees, non-profit community groups, government and the wider community.

Recently, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator Phillip Wierzbowski from the Box Hill office coordinated 10 activities for employees of the Swiss-based pharmaceutical company Novartis.

The participants, who were in Melbourne for a five-day conference, work predominantly in the development of vaccines and treatments for conditions such as leprosy, tuberculosis, dengue fever, malaria and macular degeneration.

The company contacted the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) through Volunteering Victoria, seeking to show support for Victoria after the February fires.

Phillip's brief was to give the participants some serious work. And work they did – putting more than 8000 plants into the

ground, laying a ton of mulch and removing an estimated three-quarters of a cubic metre of weeds including serrated tussock.

"The managers wanted these guys to come away with blisters, and we were told no task would be too menial," Phillip said.

"It's great to see an international company making a genuine effort to make a positive lasting impression on their staff and influence behavioural change."

With assistance from public land management colleagues, Phillip sent the participants far and wide. Their program included: mulching and planting to restore riparian habitat at the Melbourne Aquarium and Westgate Park; and assisting rangers with penguin and mutton bird habitat rehabilitation and with wetland revegetation at Phillip Island Nature Park.

"Some of the participants were so motivated they asked me about how they can do more environment-related voluntary work when they get home.

DSE's efforts earned high praise from the company's Learning and Development Manager John Compton.

"A great initiative with resounding success, a real feeling amongst staff at Novartis of helping the community and inspiring the staff for further volunteering efforts." Mr Compton said.

In many situations, corporate volunteering can deliver tangible and lasting benefits to community groups and to business. Community groups or businesses with an interest in corporate volunteer opportunities should contact their local Coast Action/Coastcare facilitator to learn more.



*Novartis staff members enjoyed a sense of achievement (and relief) at completing their coastal volunteering activities.*

# A year in the life of a new Friends Group

Jawbone Marine Sanctuary

By Ryan Bath, volunteer Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care

In May 2008, 25 curious people attended an evening meeting at the Parks Victoria office in Williamstown. On the back of a local media blitz, word had spread through the community that Jawbone Marine Sanctuary was looking for some friends.

With enthusiastic support from the community and Parks Victoria, Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care Inc (JMSC) was established soon after this first public meeting. The group now consists of a dedicated group of volunteers who are committed to the protection of the Sanctuary's unique environment and engaging the public about the significant value of the Sanctuary.

Located in Williamstown, the Jawbone Marine Sanctuary is one of Victoria's 11 marine sanctuaries (along with 13 marine national parks). While the 'Jawbone' covers only 30 hectares, the Sanctuary offers a wide diversity of habitats from mangroves to seagrass to rocky shores. Given this diversity, it should be no surprise that the Sanctuary also supports an abundant array of coastal and marine life. And all this is just a short journey from the centre of Melbourne!

While the group has spent significant amount of time and energy formalising the new organisation and establishing the group's strategic direction, we have been busy making some significant progress on the ground.

With strong support from Parks Victoria and the Environment Protection Agency, the group was successful in receiving a significant grant to kick-start a number of projects. With the assistance of the grant, the group has purchased a Zodiac inflatable boat, an underwater camera, reference books and snorkelling equipment to assist in developing an ecological and education monitoring program. To increase the community's awareness of the Sanctuary, the grant also includes funding to install some new interpretive signage around the Sanctuary.

A quick snapshot of some of the other highlights from the first 12 months of the Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care group:

- A mix of JMSC members and enthusiastic snorkellers braved the testing conditions to participate in the 2008 Great Victorian Fish Count.
- With the support of Sea Search program, the group has participated in a seasonal seagrass monitoring sessions at the Sanctuary.
- Over 20 bags of rubbish were collected from in and around the Sanctuary during Clean Up Australia Day.
- Established a temporary website was developed to keep the community up-to-date with the group (<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/jmsc>). Keep an eye out for a new website in the future.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the group, visit the website or drop us a line at [jawbonemarinesanctuary@gmail.com](mailto:jawbonemarinesanctuary@gmail.com)



A Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care member hard at work involved in intertidal monitoring



Jawbone Marine Sanctuary

# Protecting Ramsar wetlands in Port Phillip Bay

By Stephen Tuohy, Parks Victoria

The Port Phillip Bay (western shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site is one of 11 wetlands of international significance in Victoria listed under the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar 1971). This site regularly supports more than 20,000 water birds and more than 1% of the global population of the number of listed species including Curlew Sandpipers, Double-banded Plovers, Red-necked Stints, and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

This Ramsar site is one the most complex in Australia and extends along the western shore of Port Phillip Bay from Altona South to Limeburners Bay near Geelong, and contains parts of the Bellarine Peninsula including the Swan Bay and Lake Connewarre State Game Reserve, as well as the Mud Islands section of Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park. Key locations along the western shoreline include Point Cook Coastal Park and Cheetham Wetlands, Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant, The Spit Wildlife Reserve, Point Wilson, and Limeburners Lagoon in Corio Bay.

Over the past six months Parks Victoria has worked closely with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to establish a coordination group for this highly

complex site, and to provide investment for a range of projects aimed at protecting or enhancing the values of the site particularly as they relate to shorebirds. Other members of the Steering Committee include the Corangamite CMA, Marine Discovery Centre, Department of Defence, Birds Australia, Cities of Greater Geelong, Wyndham and Hobsons Bay, and the Australian Government.

Key initiatives for the program include creating effective partnerships with stakeholders adjoining the Ramsar site, delivering effective and integrated pest plant and animal control programs, mapping vegetation and site use by shorebirds, and developing community engagement programs for building stewardship for the Ramsar site within local communities.

A strategic management plan guides work for the site and takes in both public and private land where there is a direct benefit to Ramsar values. Many of the target areas consist primarily of coastal saltmarsh habitats which provide food and roosting habitat for many native and migratory avifauna and assist to protect the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot.

Land managers have identified target sites for restorative works and

enhancement with funding provided by the Channel Deepening Project, Port Phillip Westernport CMA, and through the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* program. Works currently being undertaken include major fox control programs along the western shoreline at Swan Bay and Lake Connewarre; Spartina eradication in Lake Connewarre; Spiny Rush control in Swan Bay; noxious weed removal right across the site; and upgrades to water control structures within the Cheetham Wetlands.

Being so close to Melbourne and Geelong, it is not surprising that over the years considerable degradation has occurred on the Ramsar site and adjoining lands. Inappropriate stock grazing, rubbish dumping, drainage, and infestation by pest plants and animals such as boxthorn or rabbits, have all taken their toll on the region's vegetation communities. Coupled with increased use of the site for recreation and demands for public open space by rapidly expanding urban communities adjacent to the site, it is clear that well-planned and integrated approaches are needed for managing the unique values of our Ramsar wetlands and the globally important species they support.

For more information, contact Parks Victoria Information centre on 1319 63.



Urban encroachment

Left: Parks Victoria staff on the ground at Point Cook

# Improving the environmental performance of Victoria's local ports

By Ryan Bath, Coastal Policy Officer, DSE

While the Victoria's local port network provides important commercial and recreational opportunities along the coast, these ports also play an important role in the management of Victoria's coastal and marine environment.

Since 2005, local port managers have been developing Safety & Environment Management Plans which have been a key factor for establishing their environmental responsibilities. Now, a range of environmental initiatives can be seen across the entire local port network.

A number of local port managers are beginning to use alternative building materials when undertaking upgrade and maintenance works within the port. Across the Gippsland region and in Port Fairy, the port managers have used recycled plastic products as alternatives to traditional timber decking. The recycled product is made from waste plastic and is re-engineered into new building products. While diverting plastic away from landfill, the product is long lasting, requires minimal maintenance and performs well in the marine environment.

When the Lorne Pier was reconstructed in 2007, a number of the old timber pieces from the original pier were retained and given a second life. If you take a look at the maritime-themed Lorne Foreshore Adventure Playground, you will notice some of the timber piles from the old pier now supporting the main playground platform.

It is important to note that local port managers are not limited to managing piers, wharves and jetties on the coast. Port managers are also responsible for the management of activities in the marine environment.

While public swing moorings provide an important facility for boat owners, old mooring systems often cause damage to the surrounding marine environment. Typically comprising a weight and chain, mooring chains drag along the seabed as the vessel moves with the wind and tide, disturbing marine life such as seagrass. In environmentally sensitive locations such as the Gippsland Lakes, Sorrento and Cowes, port managers have been trialling a new type of mooring design that is more sensitive to the surrounding environment. The improved design has no moving parts in contact with the sea bed; minimising the immediate impact to the marine environment.

Local port managers are also responsible for the management of slipway and boatyards. To minimise the release of oils and contaminants entering our waterways, waste treatment systems have been installed at boat yards in Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and Port Fairy. The facilities capture and treat wash-down waste, before returning the purified product back into the marine environment.



*Gippsland Lakes Wattle Point recycled plastic decking*

# Looking for answers about our remaining whales

Whale DNA Sampling

PHOTO: WARRNAMBOOL STANDARD

By John Amor, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Warrnambool

This winter, the Southern Right Whales were a few weeks late in arriving. But arrive they did with their calves. Not only does their presence near the shore at Warrnambool delight locals and visitors alike, it is also an opportunity for much-needed scientific research.

Our whale visitors are the last remaining descendants of a much larger population that was almost hunted to extinction in the 1830s and 1840s. Whales at Warrnambool move between Port Campbell and Bridgewater Bay each year during their near shore visits. Genetic sampling may reveal if the Warrnambool whales are part of the much larger population off South Australia, or are a unique remnant from a separate stock or family.

During July, Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Senior Sustainability Officer Mandy Watson led a project of researchers who took tissue samples from two Southern Right Whales off the main whale viewing area at Logan's Beach.

Associate Professor Rob Harcourt, Macquarie University's Director of Marine Science joined Mandy and other DSE staff on board an inflatable vessel as part of the biopsy project. The DNA sampling was carried out as part of a larger project aimed at looking at

which whales are related to each other; the genetic connections and lineage of the East Coast Southern Right Whales population. It is known from previous genetic research that populations from New Zealand and Australia differ genetically.

The samples are collected by firing a small dart either by crossbow or modified rifle in a method approved under strictly controlled conditions according to ethics and research permits. The dart drops off and floats and is collected for later analysis. According to the team, the whales barely respond to the 5 mm scrap of skin caused by the dart.

It is believed that the east coast population is not recovering as quickly as other Southern Right Whale populations off New Zealand and Western Australia. This DNA sampling will hopefully lead to some answers as to why this is occurring. The information obtained could also be used to evaluate threats posed by human activities and to map critical habitat for species in Australian waters.

For further information contact Mandy Watson, DSE, phone (03) 5561 9961, mobile 0408 302 421

## South West teacher joins the Climate Project

South West teacher, Rebecca Phyland, has been selected from more than 2000 Australasian applicants to complete a three-day intensive course where she will learn to deliver a slide show version of the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.

It is the first time people from the Asia Pacific region have been specifically included in the program which builds on the work of The Climate Project – Australia.

The three-day Summit brings together 300 people representing a broad selection of people from a diverse cross-section of industry, advocacy and broad social groupings from Australasia and the Asia Pacific region. They will benefit from the depth of Al Gore's passion and the expertise of a panel of international scientists.

Once trained, Rebecca commits to completing 10 activities involving presentations to an audience of her choice. Five of those activities need be completed by the end of November 2009. The activities might be speaking to work colleagues about climate

change, delivering a climate change presentation or talking to the media about her role.

Rebecca somehow manages to fit in running some Summer by the Sea activities for Coast Action/Coastcare in the South West. "We are extremely proud of Rebecca's achievement," said Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, John Amor. "The climate crisis is a challenge for all of us," he added.

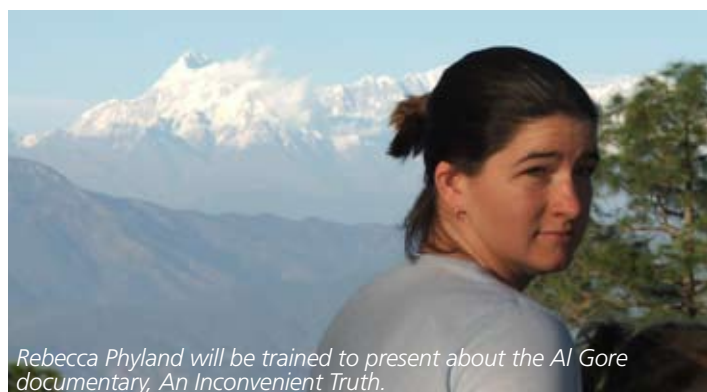
As a delegate, Rebecca will have the chance to help focus and re-invigorate the Asia Pacific's regional response to climate change in the lead into the critical UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

"I hope my role at the Asia Pacific Summit will mean I can work to inspire and create positive actions in order to avoid catastrophic climate change here in Australia. I plan to be an advocate for this work in the important five-month lead-up to the Copenhagen climate change negotiations," Rebecca said.

"The Asia Pacific Summit has a specific focus on the unique window of time to act on climate change, particularly with the Copenhagen negotiations at the end of this year. Together, Asia Pacific delegates will inspire people from the region to make a difference at global level," said Angela Rutter, Manager of The Climate Project – Australia.

In Australia, one in 75 Australians has now seen a presentation delivered by one of the 250 Climate Project presenters trained by Al Gore who are working throughout communities in Australia.

For more information about The Climate Project – Australia and its international partners, go to [www.acfonline.org.au/climateproject](http://www.acfonline.org.au/climateproject)



Rebecca Phyland will be trained to present about the Al Gore documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

# The rare benefits of beach erosion

By Michael Noelker, Department of Sustainability and Environment

Late on a Friday afternoon in winter, members of the Bells Beach Advisory Committee and the Department of Sustainability and Environment inspected erosion near the world famous beach. Dodging hail and rain storms and steering clear of dangerous cliffs, one committee member pointed to a bunch of rocks, exclaiming "in 30 years of surfing here, I've never seen those rocks exposed".

But this was a gross underestimate – these rocks may have been buried for up to 25 million years!

One of the rocks included fossil vertebrate and other scattered bones. Museum Victoria was informed and researchers arrived on site within days to

verify the find, collect the fossil and any other nearby fossils.

In his preliminary report, David Pickering, Collection Manager Vertebrate Palaeontology Department said "The slab containing the fossil is approximately 75 x 65 x 20 cm. The rock is limestone from the Jan Juc Formation which is of Late Oligocene age (approximately 25 million years old). The specimen comprises nine articulated posterior thoracic and lumbar vertebrae (lower back and hip region) with associated ribs.

"Of particular scientific interest is the possible presence of bones from the hip or upper leg which are previously unknown."

The Jan Juc Formation, between the Bells Headland and Torquay, is well known in fossil hunter circles, where fossil Bivalves, Bryozoans, Gastropods and Echinoids have been found. Significantly, in the 1990s, *Janjucetus hunderi*, a 25 million year-old whale skull

was discovered nearby and identified a new family of small, highly predatory, toothed baleen whales with enormous eyes. This find forced a major rethink of what baleen whales are and how they evolved.

Whether this new find is linked to *Janjucetus* or another species will be determined once the fossil is properly analysed.

So whilst we grapple with the impacts of climate change and erosion of our beaches, the coast can reveal some surprising finds.

Note: The Bells Beach area includes the Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve and Point Addis Marine National Park. All forms of extraction, including fossil collection, fishing and collection of shellfish, are prohibited in the Bells Beach area. Should you find a suspected fossil, report this to the relevant land manager immediately (Surf Coast Shire or Parks Victoria) and do not disturb your find.



Left: The 25 million year-old whale fossil.

An illustration of the *janjucetus hunderi*



# Changes in coastal management along the Otway coastline

By Frances Northeast, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Angelsea

In July, the Otway Coast Committee commenced operation replacing two smaller committees that managed public-owned coastal (Crown) land in the Colac Otway Shire.

The Otway Coast Committee's jurisdiction is the predominantly a narrow coastal strip of Crown land 35 km long between Separation Creek and Shelly Beach just west of Marengo. The area includes the foreshore reserves of Separation Creek, Wye River, Kennett River, Wongarra, Skenes Creek, Apollo Bay and Marengo, the public reserves at Apollo Bay and streamside reserves at Wye River and Kennett River.

The formation of the larger committee is part of the ongoing coastal reform process along the Victorian coastline that the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has been conducting over the past decade.

What is driving the change in coastal management arrangements along the Victorian coast is DSE's commitment to ensuring Victoria's coastal resources are managed in the best possible way on behalf of the Victorian community for the benefit of the coastal environment, residents and visitors.

Reviews of coastal management arrangements in Victoria show small committees are no longer appropriate to deliver coastal management due to increasing community and visitor demands for access and facilities, inequitable resources and inconsistent management standards. The committee of management model was found to be an effective mechanism to enable public participation and provide a local voice in coastal management decision-making, yet the increasing demands being placed on volunteer committees

tested their resources, time and skills. Committee reform, restructure and selection of committee membership on the basis of skill were recommended. DSE supports these findings and has implemented recommendations across the state.

The nine members of the Otway Coast Committee are now set to take on the rigorous task of coastal management along sections of the Victorian coastline that are visited and used by many people. The Committee wants to achieve a consistent level of coastal management across the region whilst still recognising individual community character. Becoming part of a larger, more viable business unit will contribute significantly in achieving this and meeting the government and community expectations for the coast.



Members of the new, larger Otway Coast Committee are (left to right) Gendall Atkinson, Jennifer Johnson, Mark Kininmoth, Robyn Adams, Chris White, Sherryl Smith, Malcolm Cockerell. Absent from the photo were Andrew Buchanan and Jack Green.



## Regional Updates Port Phillip Update

By Denis Cox

### 2009 Mornington Peninsula Coastal Processes Forum

More than 50 people from community groups and Committees of Management attended a coastal processes forum organised by Coast Action/Coastcare with the White Cliffs to Cameron's Bight Foreshore Committee of Management. Held at Sorrento, the guest speakers were Dr Jim Peterson, Associate Professor, Centre for GIS, School of Geography and Environmental Science at Monash University and Dr Peter Reidel, a very experienced coastal engineer with consulting firm Coastal Engineering Solutions.

The forum topics covered information that related to the dynamic natural activities on the coast that result in both subtle and often quite dramatic changes. The origins and weathering of various rock types, the source of sea bed deposits and transportation of material by ocean waves and currents, accretion and erosion

of sand along beaches, the impact of storms, energy transfer from winds to the sea, the protection coastal structures and other assets were all discussed thoroughly by these two experts in their fields to the great interest and benefit of all who attended. Jim and Peter had long known of each other through their written scientific articles but had never met in person and had much to discuss during breaks in the forum.

### National Tree Day

The 2nd of August was National Tree Day and several Coast Action groups were involved with tree planting projects. The West Woolamai Coast Action Group was supported by the Phillip Island Nature Park staff to plant and protect the cliff tops from erosion at the Colonnades near Cape Woolamai. At Mount Martha, the Sunshine Reserve Conservation and Fireguard Group planted about 5000 tube stock at their reserve and at Rosebud, the Friends of Chinaman's Creek planted 4000 along the Drum Drum Yallock Creek.

On the other hand, the Seawinds Nursery Volunteers Inc, consider every week from autumn to spring to be tree planting time. This season volunteers and students from Padua Secondary college have planted an estimated 2000 plants from their nursery in Seawinds Park (Arthurs Seat State Park). Many of the volunteers also assist other groups, such as Devilbend Reserve, Endeavour Fern Gully, Friends of Diamond Bay and Point Nepean. The nursery has grown a total of around 25,000 indigenous plants this year, which have been planted by Parks Victoria and various friends groups and volunteers across the Mornington Peninsula.

### Mangrove protection

The People and Parks Foundation is preparing a protocol for the monitoring of mangroves in Western Port to gain a long-term picture of how mangroves are faring and any possible trends. Volunteers in the area will be given the opportunity to become involved in this project in the near future.

## Western Update

By John Amor

The days are finally getting longer and there is a promise of the coming summer in the breeze. It was July this year before the Southern Right Whales arrived for their annual visit to raise their calves. The Humpback migration arrived earlier than the Southern Rights so people could watch both species offshore together. Twenty-eight Southern Right Whales were spotted by air survey and there was even some Southern Right mating behaviour observed off Port Fairy.



A couple of the projects funded by the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* grants have been started in the past few months. The groups starting these projects are new to coastal environmental work which is something facilitators like a lot!

There was another release day for the Warrnambool Weed Warriors, a coalition of local schools growing environmental agents that attack Australia's worst environmental weed, Bridal Creeper. The weed, which was threatening Orange-bellied Parrot feeding areas in the Warrnambool Wetlands has been reduced to less than 20% of its former range by this project. The Weed Warrior project has been financially supported by the Warrnambool Coastcare Group, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Warrnambool City Council for the past four years.

Finally, to celebrate 15 years of Coastcare, a two-day coast and marine forum and dinner was held in June to thank and recognise the amazing work of coastal volunteers in the South West.

*Council representatives thank the schools for growing the biological agents that are attacking the weeds.*

# South Gippsland Update

By Bruce Atkin

## Port Welshpool foreshore cleanup

In a textbook example of co-operation between government and volunteers, a degraded area of foreshore at Port Welshpool has received some TLC from a new neighbouring landowner.

Sandy Bucello recently purchased a house on the foreshore, facing a backwater of Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park. She contacted Department of Sustainability and Environment staff to ask for assistance to remove a large amount of hard rubbish that had been dumped – over an extensive period – on the foreshore reserve, in a misguided effort to prevent erosion of the bank.

Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator Bruce Atkin arranged 'Coastal Risk' funding for a cleanup and engaged a contractor who removed seven large tip-truck loads of wire, glass, car parts, stumps and machinery and carted it away.

Sandy had offered to replant the area, but during the cleanup it became obvious that the supply of rubbish was never-ending. The practical solution

seemed to be to level the surface and cover it with clean fill. By chance, at the time, Gippsland Ports had available some sand from nearby foreshore works and this was spread over the site.

A selection of coastal plants that grow nearby were purchased and the Bucellos held a family working bee during the recent school holidays, planting grasses, shrubs and trees, native to the area, with Coastal Tussock-grass (*Poa poiformis*) in the front line.

## Snake Island: wetland protection

Earlier this year, members of the Snake Island Cattlemen's Association successfully applied to Coast Action for a small grant to purchase fencing materials to exclude stock access from 'Bullock Waterhole', a wetland area on the island. Apart from the obvious benefit to the wetland, excluding stock access also eliminates the risk of cattle becoming stuck during wet conditions.

Parks Victoria (PV) manages Snake Island and Ranger Steve Voros assisted the Association with planning and

provided logistical support and transport. Association members donated their labour for the project, constructing over 1 km of fencing to enclose about 1.5 ha. The group has assisted PV by providing labour to plant Coastal Manna Gums which were seriously depleted after years of over-browsing by koalas. Flushed with success, members are now seeking funds to fence a large area of saltmarsh.

## Victorian Subtidal Monitoring Kit & Upcoming Workshops

The Victorian Marine Identification Kit is ready and available for use!

The kit was developed by Sea Search, Reef Watch Victoria, Coast Action/Coastcare and Parks Victoria with funding through NHT Envirofund. It is designed to assist volunteers and community groups in identifying some of the invertebrates, fish and algae of Victorian subtidal waters whilst they are participating in the Reef Watch and Sea Search monitoring programs. The kit includes a manual with information and resources to assist those participating in these subtidal monitoring programs and four waterproof identification charts.

The Victorian Subtidal Monitoring Kit will be launched at workshops held at the following locations:

- Queenscliff, 29 August 2009
- Williamstown, 30 August 2009
- Inverloch, 5 September 2009

These one-day workshops will be very hands-on with sessions led by marine professionals. The skills learnt on this day will greatly benefit those participating in subtidal monitoring programs.

A registration form to attend a workshop can be obtained by contacting Jacqui Pocklington, email [jpocklin@peopleandparks.org.au](mailto:jpocklin@peopleandparks.org.au) or Frances Northeast, email [frances.northeast@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:frances.northeast@dse.vic.gov.au).

*Left: Parks Victoria Ranger Steve Voros with volunteers Mick Allman, Helen Lockie and Jenny Bland hard at work on Snake Island.*



*Oh what a mess! Neighbouring landowner Sandy Bucello and DSE's Paul Boskma survey the rubbish that had been dumped at the site.*

A New Apostle? Earlier this year, Port Campbell's London Bridge collapsed, dramatically altering this familiar section of coastline.



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To receive Coastline in the future contact your local Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator or phone (03) 9637 9742.

## Coming Events

<b>5 September</b>	Victorian Subtidal Monitoring Kit Workshop, Inverloch
<b>7-9 October</b>	WA State Coastal Conference, Perth
<b>3-6 November</b>	NSW Coastal Conference, Ballina More info at <a href="http://www.coastalconference.com">www.coastalconference.com</a>
<b>27-29 November</b>	Queenscliff Music Festival More info at <a href="http://www.qmf.net.au/">www.qmf.net.au/</a>

