



ANNUAL REPORT 2014

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of these lands and waters, their spirits and ancestors.

Management Committee 2013-2014

President: Janet Carey

Vice-President: Mae Adams

Secretary: Lorraine Norden

Treasurer: Ken Walker

Committee members: Marion Kavanagh, Heather Shimmen, Dorota Gertig, Lisa Hatfield, Kylie Laing, Will Norden



Common Rice Flower *Pimelea humilis*. First record for Venus Bay. Found during site audit First Estate

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula inc gratefully acknowledge the support of our project partners:



Coastcare
Victoria



Australian Government



Projects and Activities 2013-2014

The Committee and membership have been active this year delivering many ongoing projects and other activities that foster our objective of protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the Venus Bay peninsula. The success of our projects is due to the huge volunteer effort of our members and the support of our project partners. Thank you to all.

Co-operative Fox Control Program

Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Sites A&B

Hooded Plover monitoring and protection

Bridal Creeper control program

Seal the Loop

FVBP website

Grant application SGSC Councillors' Discretionary Funds

Plant of the month – Matter of Fact

Pipi Research

Salt marsh revegetation at bird hide and jetty, Anderson Inlet

Save our Reserves: Community land stewardship at Venus Bay

Site audits of Council owned land, Venus Bay

Submission to SGSC re Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Community Infrastructure Plan

Submission to SGSC re evaluation matrix for Council owned reserves

Combined FVBP, TLVBA and VBCC stall at Tour de Tarwin, Easter

Campaign to save vegetation along the route of the Bald Hills Wind Farm transmission line



Gnat-orchid *Cyrstostylis reniformis* Venus Bay

Fox Control 2013 – 14

The Venus Bay Co-operative Fox Control Program was initiated in 2007 by Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula with the support of private landholders, public land managers, South Gippsland Landcare Network and the community. It has succeeded in its purpose to establish a landscape-scale control program along our coast to reduce the devastating impact of foxes on native wildlife. Particularly threatened are ground nesting birds, including the Flora and Fauna Guarantee listed Hooded Plover that breeds within Cape Liptrap Coastal Park. Also at risk are small native mammals in the 'critical weight' range, 35 gms – 5 ½ kgs, such as bandicoots, dunnarts and antechinus.

The program has been ongoing for six years and continues to achieve good results. From July 2013 to June 2014, eleven monthly trapping pulses were conducted yielding a catch of 37 foxes. This brings the total caught since October 2007 to 336 foxes and 10 feral cats. Ongoing control has been effective in disrupting the fox breeding cycle and keeping the population on the peninsula at a low level.

Community reporting of fox sightings or signs via our FoxWatch program has helped to target remaining animals and new ones that move in to claim territory.

The Fox Control Program is improving the chances of Hooded Plovers breeding successfully. This year no nests were reported predated by foxes, as was the case in the previous three breeding seasons.

Monitoring for the recovery of small native mammals is conducted on the peninsula by infra-red cameras operating on private properties and by landowner observations. Swamp Antechinus was discovered here in 2011 by Marion Kavanagh (confirmed by Museum Victoria). These small ground-dwelling animals are very vulnerable to fox predation and are listed as threatened under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Last year as reported two specimens were found by Marion Kavanagh and Heather Shimmen This year, one further specimen was found by Ken Walker.



Residents also report less incidence of the disease Sarcoptic Mange, spread by foxes, in our local wombat population.

During the year we have continued to work in partnership with South Gippsland Landcare Network, Tarwin Landcare Group and Parks Victoria to extend the control program along the coast south of Venus Bay to Walkerville and the farmland adjoining Cape Liptrap Coastal Park. The majority of farmers now conduct ongoing control. Methods used include baiting, shooting, den fumigation and trapping.

We thank Peter Wright, our trapping contractor, for his professionalism and commitment to the program and gratefully acknowledge funding support from Parks Victoria, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and South Gippsland Shire Council.

Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Site A, VBCC

After a series of severe storms early in the year the Kennedia track behind the Community Centre became impassable due to fallen vegetation. Working bees were held in April, May and another in June to clear the path and continue with the weeding. The track is now welcoming and putting on an attractive display of indigenous plants. Thanks to all those who attended these very worthwhile and rewarding events.

The viewing platform has been vandalised and is now unsafe for use, but it is hoped that it will be repaired in the near future.



Track entry much improved after work



Janet removing weeds

Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Site B Coast Banksia Woodland

This site is maturing each year, with a number of indigenous species, including orchids reappearing. A working bee to clear the corner Kangaroo Grass area of weedy grasses was held on 16 February. It was well attended by 10 members and the results are very gratifying. The area of Kikuyu has since been sprayed but will need ongoing follow-up.





Thanks Mae for your selection of happy snaps of the day

Hooded Plover monitoring and protection 2013-14

The Hooded Plover (eastern) *Thinornis rubricollis rubricollis* has recently been nominated for inclusion on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) threatened species list. Currently in Victoria the Hooded Plover is listed as Threatened under the DSE Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria 2007 supplementing the Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988. There are currently only around 550 birds remaining in Victoria.

Volunteers from the Friends continued to work closely with BirdLife Australia staff and Parks Victoria over the Hooded Plover summer breeding period to monitor and protect the birds from many threats including disturbance by holiday crowds and non-compliance of dog regulations. Unfortunately there were no reports of chicks surviving on Venus Bay beaches last season, although monitoring activity was down. However six chicks fledged at Waratah Bay against the odds.

Mae Adams attended the 'Peninsula to Prom' Hoodie meeting in May and spoke of the impact of recreational pipi harvesting on the birds.

November 15-16th is the weekend for the BIENNIAL COUNT to survey ocean beach habitats across South Australia, Victoria and Southern NSW. Volunteers from FVBP will help collect data for Venus Bay beaches.

Weed Control - Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

The Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides* biological control Rust fungus *Puccinea myrsiphylli* is performing well this year in the main control area, with many plants showing the rust established to the point of preventing flower and seed production. It can take three or more years before this stage is reached and the rust becomes visible around July each year. This is a welcome advancement in the on-ground management of this damaging environmental weed, as plants in dense vegetation that are difficult to reach will now be mostly depleted by the biological control.

It is still important to remove as many plants as possible early in the season; especially emerging plants that are not severely rust affected and will therefore set seed if left in the landscape. The main control methods now used are to monitor the spread and stages of the rust control, tag heavily infected plants so they are left in the landscape to spread the rust, and hand remove any non-infected plants before seed set. Underground rhizomes are manually removed and stored for burning on site, and the foliage of the plants is left on the ground near the removal site so that any rust spores present will remain there to re-infect the plants that emerge the following season.

There is still a significant problem with landowners who are not controlling Bridal Creeper, as unattended plants are setting seed and re-infecting previously cleared bushland. Biological controls are most effective when used in conjunction with other control methods and are not a single solution to managing this Weed of National Significance (WoNS).

Further information is available at www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bridalcreeper/



Bridal Creeper with rust spores.

Seal the Loop

FVBP committee member Mae Adams is continuing to remove fishing line and hooks from the Seal the Loop bin at Anderson Inlet foreshore, Fisherman's Jetty. Seal the Loop is a program managed by Melbourne Zoo and aims to remove fishing line and hooks from the environment to protect wildlife from entanglement.



Seal the Loop bin on Anderson Inlet, Venus Bay.

Grant application - South Gippsland Shire Council Councillors Discretionary Fund

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula have submitted a grant application to purchase three purpose built Wildlife rescue cages. The amount sought is \$1,000.

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula website

This excellent site has been maintained and updated regularly by FVBP treasurer Ken Walker throughout the year. Thanks Ken for all your work.

Plant of the month

Since November 2013 Lorraine has been writing a 'Plant of the Month' segment on behalf of FVBP about one of the indigenous plants of Venus Bay, for inclusion in *Matter of Fact*, the monthly community newsletter. A description of the species, its uses in the landscape, habitat value, requirements and propagation method is included, along with Aboriginal uses if relevant and other details on how the species was named. The article is then placed on the FVBP website.

Pipi Research

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc. would like to sincerely thank everyone who donated to support the December 2013 Pipi stock count by Marine Ecological Solutions Pty Ltd. 50% of the financial cost of this research was funded from community donations; the other 50% was funded by Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula. The community response indicates there is still considerable public concern about the cumulative effects of intensive recreational pipi harvesting at Venus Bay.

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc. received valuable in-kind assistance from the Victorian National Parks Association to undertake the pipi stock count, and Dr Greg Parry, Director of Marine Ecological Solutions generously volunteered his time for this much needed study. The December 2013 stock count revealed that the most accessible area of Venus Bay beach, which is more than 10km of the beach, is overfished and growth overfished.

We are concerned that harvesters will now begin to move further along the beach searching for pipis, with the potential for more unintentional damage to the beach ecosystem and sand dunes, and further depletion of the already significantly impacted pipi population. Dr Greg Parry was so concerned about the results of the 2013 stock count that he met personally with senior Fisheries officers to discuss the findings. This meeting resulted in no commitment to a change of management from Fisheries Victoria; however, we did receive a support letter for a grant application seeking funding for monitoring.

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc., assisted by Dr. Greg Parry, submitted a well-researched grant application to the February 2014 Recreational Fishing License funding round; our application included support letters from Parks Victoria and Fisheries Victoria and sought funding to monitor the pipi population over three years, with the intention of providing this information to Fisheries Victoria, Parks Victoria and the Venus Bay community. Unfortunately the grant application was not successful.



Dr Greg Parry (right), Director, Marine Ecological Solutions and assistant John Barry at Venus Bay beach, December 2013

Salt Marsh Revegetation of bird hide and jetty area, Anderson Inlet, 2014

The revegetation of the site continues, culminating in approximately 1000 plants being planted by the end of spring this year. This project has come about from a grant provided by Coast Care in 2012. The plants in the revegetation range from some trees, shrubs, many grasses, sedges, and saltmarsh plants. It is a difficult area with a number of pressures the revegetation has to contend with, including human movement through the site, grazing by kangaroos and rabbits, and environmental factors with periods of both river and rainfall inundation, continuing dry spells and high winds.

Despite all this with a lot of hard work the revegetation is coming along well and within a few years there should be abundant vegetation providing shelter for the creatures that inhabit this place as was the original intention of the grant. The use of stronger protection of plants, using wire and stakes, has paid off with a better survival of those from the previous plantings. In recent weeks beautiful flame robins and a number of other bird species have been seen hopping in and out of the developing vegetation!

We have planted very gradually throughout this year; this has been dependant on weather conditions and our energy levels. Paths through the area are also becoming more defined. I would like to thank all those who have helped over the last few years and although the grant funds are approaching an end there will be a continuing FVBP presence planting and maintaining the site.
Heather Shimmen



Heather in revegetation area showing defined path to bird hide



Variable Groundsel
Senecio pinnatifolius
regenerating near jetty



Revegetation area near bird hide
showing harsh conditions



Save Our Reserves - Community Land Stewardship in Venus Bay

Following the 2013 South Gippsland Shire Council 'Strategic Review of Land Holdings' that proposed the sale of seven council owned lots at Venus Bay, a joint submission was prepared by Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula, Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Association (TLVBA) and Venus Bay Community Centre (VBCC) in opposition to the sales. Following a successful motion at the council meeting in September 2013 allowing the sale of two lots while preserving the remainder as Public Open Space, notice of motion to rescind the previous motion was lodged, deferring the decision. At the following Council meeting in October, two reports were called for before a decision would be made. The first report called for Council to undertake a Social Community Infrastructure Project to determine surplus council owned land; the second report would evaluate council's vacant land for public use, community and environmental value and other matters and called for public consultation on a council review of land holdings. At Council's February 2014 meeting the its Evaluation Matrix strategic land review, designed to assess open space for its value as an asset, based on criteria including marketability, zoning, memorials, playgrounds and barbeque facilities, native vegetation, conservation status and public recreational use, was accepted and called for public comment. In early May FVBP wrote a submission criticising the proposed sale of any of the reserves at Venus Bay, critiquing the weightings proposed in the Evaluation Matrix, and pointing out some obvious design errors.

As part of the consultation process agreed to at the October Council meeting, a meeting was held at VBCC with Ned Dennis, Manager, Community Strengthening, SGSC, Dana Hughes, Volunteer Coordinator and Steve Missen Parks and Gardens to discuss community involvement in management of the Venus Bay public open space reserves as a further way to inform the Shire of the value placed on these pocket parks by the community. The aim of the meeting was to make the process of stewardship as simple as possible while conforming to the Shire insurance and liability requirements. Shire approval was obtained for stewardship of the Fishermans Road reserve. Advice from FVBP regarding appropriate planting and weed control is to be sought by applicants who wish to manage a Council owned reserve near them.

Following this the Shire put out for public consultation the 98 page Draft Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Community Infrastructure Plan, with submissions due on Friday 16 May. A community meeting was held at VBCC on Thursday 8 May. Lorraine met with Planner Vicki Bradley and discussed the Open Space section of the Plan, which once again proposed the selling and amalgamation of public open space at Venus Bay. Another submission was prepared that rejected that proposal and reiterated the community support for stewardship of these reserves. Amazingly it seems that our voices were heard because the final plan submitted to Council on 25 June included recommendations of the submissions and made no mention of selling our precious reserves, unlike the draft plan.

Recommendations reproduced below: Some good news at last!

Venus Bay Parks Continued focus on the higher level parks with play equipment and barbeques should consider the potential to expand to neighbouring blocks as they become available for sale. Encourage ongoing community maintenance for unstructured parks via the community stewardship initiative. Ensure an ongoing education program to accompany this initiative to make sure community members can effectively monitor the encouragement of native plants and the removal of weeds. There may be an opportunity for a partnership between the Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula, Landcare and the community to schedule regular education.

Site audits of Council owned land, Venus Bay

Lorraine, Will, Janet and Marion have completed the work commenced in 2013, to revise the previous 2007 audits of Council reserves in the first and second estates, following SGSC moves to sell off some of these reserves. Once final documentation is complete the revised report will be placed on the website. Thirty-four reserves have been audited with a total of 110 indigenous species identified, including some not previously listed for Venus Bay. This list is not comprehensive as most of the audits were done over winter, when many species, particularly grasses, are not easily identified. The list may be added to in future as further visits are managed.

Tour de Tarwin stall. Koala Tree Project

FVBP, TLVBA and VBCC held a joint stall at the Tour de Tarwin on Easter Saturday to promote the Koala Tree Project and distribute 500 Gippsland Manna Gums to the local residents for a gold coin donation. It was very well received and is likely to be repeated next year. Thanks to Ken for his FVBP sign and flyers at such short notice – 40 were included, along with other information, in ‘show bags’ with the trees. A map was provided so that residents could mark where the trees were to be planted. Thanks to members and committee who assisted on the day. The project will be ongoing. Future aim is to create corridors and include public land.

Campaign to save vegetation along the route of the Bald Hills Wind Farm transmission line

In August this year Mitsui (Japan/Australia) operators of the Bald Hills Wind Farm and AusNet began bulldozing significant roadside vegetation on the Tarwin –Walkerville Road and the Inverloch – Tarwin Road for the placement of transmission poles, in contravention of their permit allowing for vegetation to be removed at the site of the poles only. This vegetation provided habitat for koalas, wombats, echidnas, reptiles and birds and is irreplaceable with some trees containing hollows that only develop once trees are 80-100 years old. A protest meeting was held on site, attended by several FVBP members and this was followed by letter writing and press coverage.

Following receipt of concerns from local residents along the Inverloch – Venus Bay Road a meeting was held on Wednesday 13 August between concerned residents, the wind farm proponent, Council staff and the Department of Environment and Primary Industry. At the conclusion of this meeting the wind farm proponent made a number of commitments to further investigate options to avoid or minimise the amount of native vegetation required to be removed in this area which includes the Tarwin Lower Cemetery.

The wind farm proponent also made a commitment not to recommence works in this area until the agreed actions were investigated and reported back to Council and the community representatives in attendance at the meeting. However at a further meeting convened at 24hrs notice on 27th Aug to outline actions that would save the trees, the community was told because of time and cost considerations Bald Hills Wind Farm would not be changing the route.



Vegetation removed for poles on Tarwin –Waratah Road

All eucalypts were to be removed between the cemetery and the substation. The community then mounted a daily onsite protest at the Tarwin Lower Cemetery to save the understorey vegetation from the bulldozers, signs and banners were attached to trees. Marion was very active in this campaign. Efforts to save the trees through political involvement were unsuccessful. Most of the trees have been removed, some of the understory was saved for the present and one magpie nest remains in a gum which will be removed at a later date. Infringements of the permits are still being investigated with 'secondary consent' (an amendment to the original permit to cover any variations) being considered by Council. (Interestingly Bald Hills were not willing to apply for 'secondary consent' to have the pylons moved into the paddocks instead of removing all trees along the new roadside route.)

