



## ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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

### Management Committee 2014-2015

President: Mae Adams

Vice-President: vacant

Secretary: Lorraine Norden

Treasurer: Kenneth Walker

Committee members: Marion Kavanagh, Heather Shimmen, Will Norden, Janet Carey, Dorota Gertig, Lisa Hatfield, Debbie Birkett, Sue Flere, Kevin Cox.



Creeping Monkey-flower *Thyridia repens* Anderson Inlet

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



**Coastcare**  
Victoria



**Australian Government**



## Projects and Activities 2014-2015

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.

### Projects

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  
Plant of the month – Matter of Fact  
Pipi advocacy  
Salt marsh revegetation at bird hide and jetty, Anderson Inlet  
Save our Reserves: Community land stewardship at Venus Bay

### Activities

FVBP led Anderson Inlet walk with Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club  
Combined FVBP, TLVBA and VBCC stall at Tour de Tarwin, Easter  
Planting of Venus Bay Tarwin Lower bike path with TLVBA  
Wind-up of TLVBA with remainder of funds directed to FVBP  
Christmas break-up and BBQ at Anderson Inlet jetty



Veined Helmet-orchid *Corybas diemenicus* Venus Bay

## Fox Control 2014 – 15

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 seven years and continues to achieve good results. From July 2014 to June 2015, six trapping pulses were conducted yielding a catch of 27 foxes. This brings the total caught since October 2007 to 363 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 by reducing the risk of predation on eggs and chicks during the breeding season, August to April.

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. Since 2011 five specimens have been found though none were reported this year.

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, Parks Victoria and South Gippsland Landcare Network to maintain ongoing control along the coast south of Venus Bay to Walkerville and the farmland adjoining Cape Liptrap Coastal Park. Methods used include baiting, shooting 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, Land, Water and Planning and South Gippsland Shire Council.



Adult Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*



## Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Site A, Venus Bay Community Centre

Working bees were held in the indigenous garden behind the VBCC to weed and maintain the track.



Clockwise from top left: Gudrun, Sharon,  
Kevin, Sue, Jan & Leon,



The wombat appreciates the habitat garden

## Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Site B Coast Banksia Woodland

This site is maturing each year, with a number of indigenous species, including orchids reappearing.

## Hooded Plover monitoring and protection 2013-14

November 15-16<sup>th</sup> 2014 was the weekend for the BIENNIAL COUNT to survey ocean beach habitats across South Australia, Victoria and Southern NSW. Volunteers from FVBP helped to collect data for Venus Bay beaches.

The Hooded Plover (eastern) *Thinornis rubricollis rubricollis* has recently been included 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.

There were a tentative 3 fledglings from Point Smythe (from the one nest, which is great). The nest was found during the biennial count, and then 4 weeks later, Jono found 4 week old chicks! Unfortunately, there were no other fledglings recorded for the rest of South Gippsland (including Wilsons Prom).

There is an urgent need for more people to come and volunteer for the next season, to get more data on these pairs, and see how they go in the upcoming season.







Above is an image of the diversity of invertebrate morphotaxa that were collected in pitfall traps at Venus Bay Victoria. An Honours student, Lucy Carracher, spent hours upon hours identifying and counting invertebrates as part of her study investigating the impacts of human trampling on invertebrates, co-supervised by Dr Mike Weston and Dr Nick Porch at Deakin University Burwood. When asked for permission to reproduce this image, there was strict instruction from Dr Porch, an invertebrate specialist, not to “refer to them as bird food (only)”!

This example of biodiversity shows the importance of protecting the Venus Bay beaches.

## Weed Control - Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

2015 has seen an encouraging advancement in the control of this invasive weed of national significance. Bridal Creeper is a serious threat to native bushland across the south and east of the Australian continent, and can be extremely difficult to control as it invades remote areas of native bushland.

FVBP members Heather Shimmen and Ian Mooney began hand removing Bridal Creeper at Venus Bay around 2004, followed by a landscape-scale program by the Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula supported by community volunteers, private landowners, public land managers and the National Asparagus Weeds Committee working through the Weeds of National Significance or WoNS program.

FVBP weed management from 2005 to 2015 has included:

- Chemical spraying of large infestations - initial knock down to reduce seed spread.
- Gradual change to mostly hand removal techniques to improve bush land recovery and reduction of Bridal Creeper biomass.
- Release of Bridal Creeper rust fungus *Puccinea myrsiphylli* biological control.
- Spore water spraying of Bridal Creeper rust fungus to hasten distribution.
- Continuation of hand removal, biological control monitoring and public information.
- On-going monitoring to prevent re-invasion, some tube stock planting to improve bush land recovery and continuation of hand removal techniques.
- In 2015 the biological controls are well established and Bridal Creeper biomass and seed production are significantly reduced. This has relieved the onerous volunteer efforts previously required to manage Bridal Creeper and improved regeneration of native bush land, both very welcome outcomes. Monitoring and weed removal are ongoing to ensure that any new infestations are removed before seed set, and to ensure the continuing effectiveness of the biological controls through varying conditions.

FVBP would like to thank the following organisations who have assisted this control program, along with the dedicated volunteers and private land owners. Coastcare Victoria; South Gippsland Landcare Network; National Asparagus Weeds Committee; CSIRO Frankston and Parks Victoria.



Bridal Creeper with rust spores and biological control marker, Venus Bay, 2014.



## Seal the Loop

Since 2010 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.

This year four new Seal the Loop bins have been received and are awaiting installation along the Tarwin River fishing platforms. FVBP committee members Sue Flere and Debbie Birkett will monitor the new bins.



Seal the Loop bin on Anderson Inlet, Venus Bay and some of the fishing lines and hooks removed.

## 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

FVBP, along with other community representatives, kept up strong advocacy this year seeking monitoring of pipi harvesting at Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, Venus Bay.

The community galvanised on this issue when commercial harvesting was introduced to the southernmost stretch of Venus Bay beach in late 2014. This contradicted information previously provided by Fisheries Victoria, and increased harvesting pressures on apparently already depleted pipi populations.

FVBP and other community representatives met twice with Danny O'Brien, MLA for Gippsland South, and Danny twice raised the issue of monitoring in state parliament. Several community groups wrote to the new state Minister Jaala Pulford, continuing the public pressure for monitoring. Active groups were the (now closed) Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Association through the Pipi Community Reference Group, Venus Bay Angling Club, Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula, individual community members and the Venus Bay Community Centre. FVBP would especially like to thank Colin Suggett and Alyson Skinner for their support this year.

Fortunately an application for 3 years monitoring was successful through the Recreational Fishing License grants 2015. Dr John Morongiello from Melbourne University School of Biosciences will oversee the three year study, which includes on-ground monitoring of pipi populations and examination of harvesting impacts. Dr Morongiello will visit Venus Bay in November/ December this year to meet with interested community representatives, and field work is expected to begin in late 2015.



Pipis are important food for shorebirds such as the Pied Oystercatcher.

Photo: Venus Bay beach 2014.

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

The grant has been provided by Coast Care and it was awarded three years ago. During 2014 and 2015 (at this time) a number of plantings have been completed on the site and more work done defining paths. Achieving revegetation at this site has been a challenge with some unexpected dry spells as in 2012, halting planting. It is an area where kangaroos and probably rabbits graze regularly and has human visitation mostly recreational; fishing, walking and bird watching. It is also a very windswept environment where some areas are inundated during high tides and rainfall.

After a disappointing start after the initial plantings there has been an upscale in protection of the plants and bamboo stakes and paper tree guards have been discarded for tomato stakes and wire guards (and some plastic). This is already proving to be a positive with many plants growing strongly. There has been a greater definition of paths and plant beds and we are laying down more rough mulch to help with this and to provide protection for the plants during the summer period. Most of last year's branches placed in the central revegetation bed have been taken (presumably) for kindling. There will be more planting sessions and general maintenance during this year. I anticipate this project will continue for a number of years with more strategic planting and developing etc. Due to the difficult nature of the site it will be a long term project. I would like to thank everyone who has helped so far with this project. Heather Shimmen



Jetty area showing  
saltmarsh revegetation  
despite the odds





## Save Our Reserves - Community Land Stewardship in Venus Bay

Despite continued resistance from the Venus Bay community, South Gippsland Shire Council continues to advocate for the sale of council owned public land at Venus Bay. Cr. Kieran Kennedy proposed that a joint letter from him, FVBP, VBCC and TLVBA be sent to Deputy Premier James Merlino with the following request:

*We welcome the proposed development by the State Government of the Marine and Coastal Act to bring together the management and protection of coastal areas. Acknowledging that all coastal environments are linked and in view of the adverse effects of climate change on low lying coastal townships we ask that the State Government consider a temporary hold on the sale of all council owned public open space in vulnerable areas subject to potential future inundation. We request to meet with you to propose establishing Venus Bay as a case study or pilot, creating planning and environmental recommendations that will preserve a fragile ecosystem and provide a template for good management of coastal communities in Victoria.*

A response was received stating that the Minister was unable to meet on this occasion, however has referred the request to the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Local Government, as the relevant portfolio Minister, for consideration. It is hoped that a meeting can be arranged.

## Tour de Tarwin stall. Koala Tree Project

For the second year VBCC, FVBP and TLVBA held a joint stall at the Tour de Tarwin on Easter Saturday to promote the Koala Tree Project and distribute another 400 Gippsland Manna Gums to the local residents for a gold coin donation. It was once again very well received. Thanks to Ken for his FVBP sign and flyers that 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. The project is planned to be ongoing. Future aim is to create corridors and include public land. Reports were received of the excellent growth of trees from Easter 2014.

