



# Earthcare News

*we do what we can, where we are*

October / November 2005

October 27  
**Antarctic Adventure**  
Paul Rees

October 29  
**Rakali Symposium**

November 10  
**Blue Wedges**  
Dinner/Fund Raiser

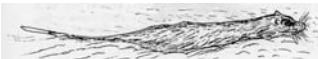
November 6 and 20  
December 4 and 18  
**Penguin Research**

December 4  
**Plants of the Sandbelt**  
Book Launch  
Growing Local  
Knowledge Video

## A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

**Observe Rakali**  
on  
**St Kilda breakwater**

**8.00pm**  
**Saturday**  
**October 29**



Phone Bob or Alyson 03  
9531 5001

## Antarctic Adventure

Paul Rees went on an expedition to the Southernmost Continent early in 2005. He will be talking about the diverse Antarctic continent and illustrating the amazing Flora and Fauna. He will also discuss some of the threats to this unique environment.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 11**  
**8.00 pm at the Ecocentre.**  
Corner Herbert and Blessington Streets St Kilda

## MORE THAN JUST A RAT

**A Symposium on the Australian Water Rat (Rakali)**  
**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October 10am-2pm**  
**Port Phillip Eco Centre**  
Free Event Morning tea and lunch provided.

Come and learn more from Rakali researchers about these fantastic creatures. Find out where they live, what they eat, how to tell a rakali from an ordinary rat and the problems of keeping Rakali in captivity.

**Sue Pennicuik** President Earthcare will MC the Symposium

**Bob Tammik** Earthcare Rakali Watch

**Michelle Smith** Research and Development Manager Applied Biotechnologies (ABT)  
Animal Control Technologies (ACTA)

**Amy Weir** Environment Research Officer Bayside City Council

**Adrian Nifsud** Platypus and Rakali Keeper Healesville Sanctuary

**Tiana Preston** Earthcare Rakali Watch

**Andrew McCutcheon** Earthcare Rakali Watch

**Kristin Connell** from NSW will talk about her Rakali research



Phone Bob or Alyson on 03 9531 5001

## BEST FRIEND

The "Best Friend" award was established at the 5th Friends Network Conference in 1991. The criterion for the award is: An outstanding contribution through exceptional dedication as a Friend. This will usually involve constant honorary involvement in the work of the group over a period of at least ten years. The award is particularly special because recipients are nominated by their peers in the local group and nominations are assessed by an independent panel. The Victorian Friends Network exists to help represent the common interests of all Friends groups in Victoria. It is coordinated by a committee elected at the biennial conference.

For more information, go to <http://home.vicnet.net.au/%7Efriends/>

Zoe Hogg, who is a founding member of Earthcare, has held the position of either President or Secretary every year since 1988.

As a tireless and long time worker Zoe set up the Penguin Survey Group, and has actively been involved as a volunteer in numerous fore shore re-vegetation projects. The St Kilda "Little Penguin" study has always taken first place in her heart and she has spent many hours on projects associated with these wonderful birds.

Some of Zoe's other projects in the City of Port Phillip are the West Beach Nature reserve: (Zoe and her helpers have pulled out tons of thistles and juncus acutus), the St Kilda breakwater and the Corroboree tree grassland area.

Her van full of tools and crates of "yummies", has and still keeps volunteers well equipped, fed and happy.

One of Zoe's talents is drawing and painting. She has displayed her art in numerous exhibitions and has recently helped to illustrate a book, 'Indigenous Plants of the Sandbelt', now about to be republished after the first edition was completely sold out.

Zoe's great qualities of friendliness, quick thinking, practicality, reliability and humour make her a most worthy recipient of a Best Friend Award



## Port Phillip Nature Watch

Since writing the last Nature Watch article, I have had more reported sightings of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos from other people via Michael Norris, and from Geoff Parr-Smith, who has seen them repeatedly on his rounds of golf at Albert Park. Despite this I have still not spotted them myself in City of Port Phillip, or in other parts of inner Melbourne.

Neil Blake emailed me a reported observation of a **Kookaburra** laughing from a TV antenna near Gasworks Park on August 26 by Judy Slattery (Friends of Port Melbourne's Foreshore). He also submitted his recent fauna observations, which include:

- August 5: **Barn Owl**. In She-oak at Perce White Reserve (reported by Natalie Moore).
- August 27: c. 40 **Australasian Gannets** (500m offshore of Middle Park and Albert Park beach) some resting in groups on the water and others were flying back and forth, diving.
- August 27: 3 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** in Spotted Gum, corner of Acland St and Shakespeare grove.
- August 30: 1 **Grey Fantail** in peppercorn tree near Robe St, St Kilda Hill. 8am.

- Sept 2: 4 **Pied Currawongs** in St Kilda Botanical Gardens.
- Sept 3: 1 **long-necked turtle** (hatchling) found on Herbert St footpath. Possibly dug out of leaf litter by fossicking blackbirds.
- Sept 5: **Australian Admiral butterfly** (1<sup>st</sup> sight for the season) corner Dickens & Mitford St.
- Sept 5: **Barn Owl** (dead) found at Westgate Park by George Fotheringham.

Hopefully it was not the same Barn Owl that was found dead, and that these birds are doing well in the Port Melbourne area.

You may have noticed that the City of Port Phillip and the rest of Melbourne for that matter has been inundated by lots of white butterflies. They are **Caper Whites**, which are regular spring visitors south of the Dividing Range in their migration south from inland Australia. Why they migrate to areas beyond their normal breeding range is unknown according to an expert on butterflies Michael Braby, author of the book *The Complete Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia*. This recent photo of a male Caper White feeding on Cape Weed nectar shows the intricate black and white markings with blotches of yellow on the under wings.



On Friday 14 October I had a very pleasant experience listening to and taking photos of a female **Rufous Whistler** in the large She-oaks just south of Elwood Canal. Accompanying the bird and most likely being attracted by its loud and beautiful call was a single **Grey Fantail**, **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **Silvereyes** and of course the local **Superb Fairy-wrens**. While on the topic of the blue wrens all the males in the family group are now bright blue! The Rufous Whistler was still there calling when I left the area an hour later. Hopefully a mate will find her and she will stay in the general area along with the blue wrens.

Andrew McCutcheon

### BLUE WEDGES FUND RAISER

Dinner at the Vietnamese Gate Restaurant 545 Church St Richmond, November 10 at 7.30pm Cost \$45  
It promises to be an excellent night, with a high probability that you or your friends will go home with a great value item from the Auction. (That's if you come primed with the money and the skills to bid!)

Could you please do everything you can to advertise it amongst your contacts? The flyer has all the details (download from website). If you could manage to circulate it either by mail or by printing out a few copies, that would be very helpful.

NOW IS THE TIME TO FOCUS ALL OUR ENERGIES ON MAKING THIS A HUGE SUCCESS.  
THE BAY NEEDS THE BOOTY!

*DON'T MISS OUT -- AND CONTACT YOUR MILLIONAIRE FRIENDS TODAY!!*

Visit the WEB site <http://www.bluewedges.org/> for more details and flyer downloads

*Best wishes, Patsy Crotty, Blue Wedges*

Earthcare Committee will meet on 24<sup>th</sup> November you are all welcome to share the planning for 2006.  
Our final event for 2005 will be the Book Launch on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

# Indigenous Plants of the Sandbelt Book Launch

The Second Edition of this very popular book  
Indigenous Plants of the Sand Belt  
has been printed and will be launched on  
Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2005  
1-3pm

Port Phillip Ecocentre

During the launch a video funded by the City of Port Phillip Community Grants Scheme  
'Growing Local Knowledge' will be shown.

'Growing Local Knowledge' is a short documentary directed by Bronwyn Weingott about local City of Port Phillip identity, Dr Beth Gott and her work as an ethnobotanist. Dr Beth Gott is a research associate at Monash University, and is also an active member of Earthcare St Kilda.

As family legend has it, Dr Beth Gott's first words were in Latin. She tells a story about her early beginnings as a botanist growing up in Mentone: "My father was a pharmacist and in those days, back in 1922, pharmacists learnt a lot about plants because there were still quite a number of herbal remedies which were sold by pharmacists. The family story goes that when I was a toddler and just learning to talk, my father used to take me around the garden and tell me the Latin names of the plants".

This video focuses on her research into Koorie plants and their uses in Southeastern Australia, and her intimate knowledge and understanding of the plants in Port Phillip. More broadly, it is a portrait of Dr Beth Gott as an inspiring environmentalist in the local area.

## Care of City of Port Phillip's Natural Heritage Areas

In recent times some members of Earthcare have been concerned about the increasing weed problem in our highly valued Natural Heritage Areas, especially in the spring months when weed growth is vigorous, closely followed flowering and setting of seed. These concerns have been expressed to City of Port Phillip.

In response Michelle Ritchie, Parks & Open Space Technical Officer with CoPP has organised a program of weeding days with Conservation Volunteers in conjunction with Spotless, the contractors.

The dates and locations of weeding activities commencing at 9.00 am and finishing at approximately 2.00 pm are:

- Wednesday 26th October- HR Johnson Reserve meet cnr of Canterbury Road and Cowderoy Street
- Wednesday 2nd November- Fraser Street Dunes- meet at the dunes
- Wednesday 9 November- Elwood Foreshore, meet at Beach House Café
- Wednesday 16 November- Lagoon Reserve- meet at Liardet Street
- Wednesday 23 November- Perce White Reserve- meet in carpark
- Wednesday 30 November- Port Melbourne Light Rail - meet under Graham St light rail.

It would be good if Earthcare members have the time to appear and assist with weeding on some of these days, especially where it is happening on your favourite patch of NHA. I spent a couple of hours at Point Ormond on Wednesday 5 October, when lots of weeds met their fate.

Andrew McCutcheon

**Penguins** are alive and well and have been raising young since June. The colony size is increasing rapidly. All is well on St Kilda Breakwater. Zoe Hogg

