



# EARTHCARE NEWS

*we do what we can, where we are*

August  
September  
2005

- Earthcare Meeting  
The Sepik River and Beyond  
25<sup>th</sup> August 8.00pm
- Planting Canterbury Rd.  
11<sup>th</sup> September 11am-1pm
- Rakali Symposium  
October, Sat/Sun 29-30
- Penguin update
- Port Phillip Nature  
Watch
- Trial Dredge Monitoring  
Zoe Hogg  
Andrew McCutcheon
- Trial Dredging  
Dr. Jo Samuel King

Port Phillip Ecocentre  
Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August 8.00PM

## *THE SEPIK RIVER AND BEYOND*

ANDREW MCCUTCHEON

*WILD LIFE PHOTOS FROM  
NEW GUINEA*

## PLANTING AT Canterbury Road Urban Forest

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September

11 am – 1 pm

South Melbourne Council established this road and railway reserve as an experimental Australian Native plantation during the 70s. During the 90s the City of Port Phillip tried to establish a series of Victorian groups of vegetation along the length of the plantation. The plants from the Mallee in the section between Harold St and Middle Park Station were the most successful. The plants between Langridge St and Fraser St are truly indigenous and represent the original swamp, which unfortunately dried up when the South Melbourne Soccer club was demolished and the drainage overflow was cut off.

This is a plantation with a history. Be part of it.  
Meet at Canterbury Road Middle Park opposite Wright St.

# Rakali Symposium

The Rakali Symposium and Public Awareness day will be held on the last weekend in October at the Port Phillip Ecocentre corner Blessington and Herbert Streets, St Kilda.

So far we have several speakers on the Saturday.

A rough outline of the two days :

## **Saturday 29 October - 10.00 am to 3.00 pm**

Several very experienced Rakali people to present information (and promote discussion) on Rakali populations. Various topics will include;

- Keeping: The Problems with keeping Rakali in Captivity
- Rakali Research in St Kilda and Elwood: Where are the Rakali now?
- Other topics to be confirmed.

A light lunch and dinner will be provided for participants.

## **Starting around 8.00 pm**

An opportunity to see Rakali and Rakali Middens on the St Kilda breakwater.

## **Sunday 30 October – Public Awareness Day – St Kilda Pier Shelter.**

Starting around 11.00 am we will have a display of Rakali photos, people on hand to meet and talk with the general public, handouts and a visit from our special guest, Riki Rakali!

**Registration:** Our intention is to make this Symposium free.

If you would like more information on how to register then please email us at [bob.alyson@aapt.net.au](mailto:bob.alyson@aapt.net.au) or phone 9531 5001.

## Penguin Update

Breeding had started early this year. There are eggs, chicks from just hatched to 7 weeks old and a generally healthy looking colony. A few interesting things are happening in the colony. Peg Leg 103924 (the one with only one leg next to the steps) has eggs again but somehow we seem to have never caught his partner. We must make an effort to identify her. He could be choosing a new partner each year for all we know.

The pair at P.O.1 are back again and have built a nice cosy nest over the small rocks that were deposited in their burrow during the February storm. 108506 is big and healthy 1500 grams, he is back with his partner 621552D but he did have a brief fling with 635F88A in May.

6353987 (Male) has been caught three times with 670A00B (Female) but in three completely different places: S, H and J. They seem to be very choosy about Real Estate.

## Port Phillip Nature Watch

In what seems to be a poor winter for wildlife sightings, I have had only two reports from Earthcare members. I do not know if anyone else has seen anything and tried sending me a message on my old email address, which was mistakenly published in the last Earthcare Newsletter. Please note my email address is now [amccutcheon@aapt.net.au](mailto:amccutcheon@aapt.net.au)

The most notable of the reports I received last week was from Geoff Parr-Smith after enjoying a round of golf at Albert Park on Tuesday 9 August. He saw about 10 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos on Albert Park Golf Course, feeding on pinecones and enjoying them thoroughly in what appear to be Ponderosa Pines. Neil Blake also saw a similarly sized group at Fairfield about 2 months ago, again feeding on pinecones. Although I have seen many of these birds in most parts of southern Victoria I have never seen them anywhere near the City of Port Phillip.

The Bird Observers Club have taken an interest in the occurrence of these birds in the Melbourne metropolitan area, and publish sightings by members in its 'Melbirdian' supplement (BOCA's Melbourne Branch Newsletter) on a regular basis in 'The Bird Observer' magazine. It seems that these cockatoos are now well established in Melbourne's eastern suburbs with 20 reported sightings listed in the August Edition of up to 50 birds in a single sighting. The closest sighting to CoPP and CBD was of 12 birds in Richmond on 26 June 05.

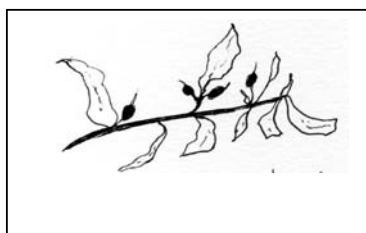
The other report was from Zoe Hogg. She saw a Royal Spoonbill on Albert Park Lake in mid July and a raft of about 20 Hoary-headed grebes in St Kilda Harbour in early August. Zoe has also taken note of the seaweed species washed up on St Kilda's beaches by the early August storms. Masses of seaweed (Algae) *Jeanerettia lobarta* (red algae) were washed up, but in the previous week it was *Caulerpa brownii* (green Algae) and *Sargassum paradoxus* (Brown Algae). It is assumed wind direction created these differences.

I have nothing noteworthy to report from my own observations other than to say that the Superb Fairy Wrens are doing very well on the Elwood foreshore at the moment. I estimate that there are at least three family groups between Elwood Canal and Pt Ormond with at least four birds in each group.

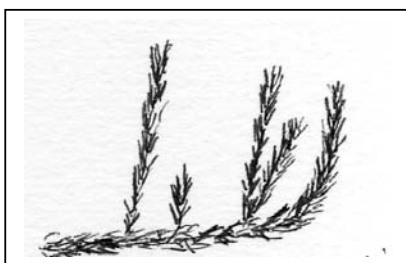
As you will be aware after reading the last Earthcare News there is now a Superb Fairy-wren Coastal Survey Group for which the PP EcoCentre is the supporting 'umbrella' group. The survey group intends to get together again to plan for spring surveys. For anyone interested the next meeting will be at Truganina Explosives Reserve, Altona. The order of the day will be a BBQ lunch followed by a tour of the Reserve (in which we can road test the blue wren survey sheets), and finally the meeting/discussion time.

Date: Saturday, August 27; Time: noon to 3pm;  
Location: Entry to Truganina Explosives Reserve is on Queen Street, Altona (Melways 209 B1).

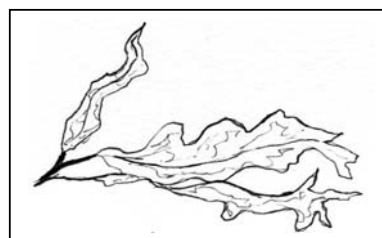
The Reserve is a fascinating place to visit for anyone interested in natural, industrial and maritime heritage. I do hope you can all make it. Food will be provided. Just bring your appetite and binoculars. Please let Neil Blake know, phone 9534 0413, if you are able to be there to ensure everyone is well fed.



*Sargassum paradoxus*



*Caulerpa brownii*



*Jeanerrettia sp.*

## Trial Dredge Monitoring

Zoe Hogg and Andrew McCutcheon

Zoe and Andrew were invited by the Port of Melbourne Corporation to a meeting on performance standards for the trial dredging program. The PoMC provided details about the locations subject to trial dredging, safeguards against potential environmental damage and monitoring methods to be used to assess disturbance caused by the dredge. For now these assurances appear to be adequate in regard to risks posed by trial dredging in the northern part of the bay. But this is largely due to the fact that they are operating in a relatively benign area at the south end of the Port Melbourne Channel, where no toxic substances have been identified in the sediments.

We are still however very concerned about the Yarra dredging and its toxic substrate, but as this is not subject to the present trial dredge agenda it was not discussed in detail with PoMC. Indeed if this trial dredging process was considered successful in causing minimal disturbance it cannot be concluded as safe for a final dredging project to go ahead over the Hobsons Bay and Lower Yarra seabeds, where toxic substances and possibly algal cysts are known to exist.

We have been invited to go out on the monitoring vessel to observe the trial dredging process. Thereafter we hope to continue this relationship with the PoMC, and provide further input into any processes to minimise any potential environmental damage if the government pushes ahead with this project. To gain a better understanding about the Little Penguins in Port Phillip Bay, representatives from PoMC and Boskalis accompanied us on the last penguin research night. Birds Australia and Phillip Island Penguin Research have also been engaged in discussions on performance standards with PoMC.

# TRIAL DREDGING

Dr. Jo Samuel King

The 'trial' has been characterised as a 'small' dredging project by comparing it to the Mega dredge that the entire project entails. In fact, based on the National Ocean Disposal Guidelines (NODG), which represent the current best practice in Australia, this project is considered as big. NODG considers a small dredge project as less than 50,000 m<sup>3</sup> and a medium as less than 500,000 m<sup>3</sup> - this project is 1,700,000 m<sup>3</sup> - not small by any standards. In addition it will dredge rock on the boundary of Marine National Park, will establish an entirely new sediment dump ground in the bay and will potentially release toxic substances into the environment.

## 1) The rock dredging in the heads.

The proposed dredge site is probably the worst that could be picked to try an untested technology. The site is right up against the Lonsdale Marine National Park boundary. Rock from the dredging operation could be moved by the high currents in this area both into the park and over the edge of the canyon where it can be swept by the incoming tide into the sponge gardens on Lonsdale Wall (within the park). Many of these sponges are estimated to be hundreds of years old and are highly vulnerable to physical disturbance. The current information on the dredge head cannot predict the size of the rubble it will produce or the effectiveness of the suction head in removing the rubble. There could be a large debris field generated and in this part of the heads any medium size storm will lead to a cessation of dredging and the increased wave and current power which can move rocks of considerable size. There appears to be no justification for choosing this area as a test site, it presents the worst possible risk in terms of the dredge, its potential ecological effect and the deployment of monitoring gear to assess damage. The fact that a world acclaimed marine park will be at high risk both in the short and long term should be sufficient to stop the trial in this area.

## 2) The establishment of a new spoil ground in the bay.

The panel recommended serious reconsideration of the establishment of this ground based on effects on fisheries (snapper), water quality at nearby beaches and the generation of turbid plumes that would alter the biology of bottom dwelling organisms. The establishment of a new spoil ground should occur only if no reasonable alternatives exist. The panel considered that dumping in Bass Strait would be a potential alternative and should be investigated as part of the new EES. The establishment of the new spoil ground pre-empts the new EES process. It is telling that an expert scientific panel that was also recommended by the panel to assist the Port of Melbourne to review these type of decisions is yet to be established. This spoil ground appears to be necessary to contain the huge amount of material being dredged in the south as part of the 'trial'. There has been no rational justification given for this volume of sediment to be removed either here or in the north of the bay.

**3) The dredging in the North presents the possibility of toxic sediment** being resuspended and moved around the bay. It is clear again that the dredging here is a big project on its own. The sediment toxicant sampling presented to the panel was seriously deficient in this area of the bay. Significantly smaller numbers of samples were obtained than required under the NODG. The toxicants measured did not cover the range of contaminants known to be present in the area and the quality control around the testing was shown to be highly suspect. The panel recommended that all these results should be viewed with suspicion! The Port of Melbourne and the Government have consistently refused to release any results from subsequent testing that occurred late last year and early this year. It is hard to understand how this part of the project could have passed the requirement of best practice management controls given the paucity of data obtained. If toxicants are in this material a significant proportion will be released to the environment in the turbid plumes generated during dredging activity. Once this material is released it cannot be contained or managed. Overall the trial seems ill conceived and contains high levels of risk. Ironical given that its primary purpose is to inform the proper environmental management of the full dredge project.

## MEMBERSHIP

I wish to Join / Renew Membership of Earthcare St Kilda Inc.

\$10 Student concession \$20 Individual \$30 Family I wish to make a donation\$.....

Name.....New Renewal.....

Address.....

Suburb/city.....P/Code.....

Phone number.....email.....

I would like to receive my newsletter by email      yes / no      My Special Interest is.....