

# banksia

bulletin

winter 2020

**Our extraordinary  
fossils**

**Tulip Street  
Pond critters**

**Council's  
indigenous  
garden**



# From the Mayor

**Welcome to the** Winter edition of *Banksia Bulletin*, where once again we find ourselves alongside our metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire neighbours in a lockdown as Victoria continues the fight against COVID-19.

This is no doubt a difficult winter for our volunteers and broader community.

Separated from loved ones living outside our home and unable to continue enjoying the many activities we do socially, we are lucky to be surrounded by the beautiful environment in which we live.

While there is a long list of what we can't do, what we can do is take a short time out from our homes and stretch our legs by taking a walk in our local reserves or breathing in some fresh air along the foreshore and beach, maybe even stop for a quick chilly winter dip.

For now, our Friends groups are not meeting in formal groups

or undertaking working bees as a measure to protect their health and that of our community.

This second hiatus is a reminder of the significant work you all do to maintain our reserves and heathlands. Hopefully, we have all done enough to reduce restrictions at the end of August so we can get back into nature by spring.

On behalf of my fellow Councillors, staff and our community, I extend my condolences to the family and friends of Mr Ian Parsons who recently passed away at the age of 93. Mr Parsons was a committed environmentalist who contributed his time as a volunteer and was always willing to share his wealth of knowledge, particularly about birds.

Val Tarrant and Lesley Falloon, two of Bayside's most recognisable women in our community, celebrated milestone birthdays in recent months. Thank you both for the tireless work you undertake to ensure Bayside's local flora and fauna are protected,



and for continuing your active volunteerism in our community.

Please stay safe and healthy and keep looking after one another.

**Cr Clarke Martin**  
Mayor  
Bayside City Council



Cover image: Nargan's bonnet (*Mycena nargan*) photographed at Long Hollow Heathland Reserve by John Eichler



## In this issue

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#### BAY ROAD HEATHLAND SANCTUARY PROJECT ON INATURALIST



#### THE LOST WORLD OF BAYSIDE FOSSILS



#### UNRAVELLING THE CORREA MYSTERY



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## Plants of Bayside

With Aaron Hurrell of Citywide Parks and Gardens

### Austral Bracken

The Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) is a very common fern found in all states of Australia, New Zealand and several South Pacific islands.

It lives in many types of environments, growing between 0.3m and 2.5m high from a branching rhizome.

The fronds are dark green on top and are paler on the underside. Its spore cases are visible along the curves of the fronds.

Austral Bracken is a pioneering plant that can be strongly invasive and highly responsive to fire but is difficult to propagate otherwise. Aboriginals roasted the starchy rhizome then made it into a paste.

The sap from both young fronds and the rhizome can be used as an antidote for insect bites, though it contains a nerve toxin that is deadly to both humans and livestock.

**Source Bull, Marilyn (1991)** *Flora of Melbourne: A guide to the indigenous plants of the greater Melbourne area* Carlton Vic: Hyland House Publishing



### Local Law Review

Council is inviting the community to comment on the draft Governance Rules that appear in the new *Local Government Act 2020*.

The *Local Government Act 2020* is an ambitious reform to the local government sector and is designed to improve democracy, accountability and service delivery.

Section 60 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires each council to adopt and apply governance rules that describe the way they will conduct council meetings and make decisions.

Bayside City Council will transition from Local Law No 1 – 2013 (Governance Local Law) to the format of Governance Rules, as required by the Act by 1 September 2020.

Visit [yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/governance-rules](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/governance-rules) and follow the links below for a summary of the key changes.

You can also download a copy of the draft document in the Document Library, and provide feedback by clicking the 'make a submission' button.

**This consultation closes on Sunday 10 September 2020.**



**A new indigenous display garden at the entrance to Council's Corporate Centre in Sandringham was completed at the end of June.**

**An action from** the *Bayside Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-2027*, the aim of the display garden is to create a display of indigenous plants to promote the beauty of various plant species native to Bayside.

Each species in the display garden has been selected to showcase its flowers and colour. All species on display will be available to purchase from the **Bayside Community Nursery** when it reopens.

The garden will demonstrate how spectacular indigenous plants can look in their natural environment within Bayside's remnant heathland reserves and in a formal landscaped garden setting.

Works included spraying out and removing the formal lawn area immediately adjacent to the Bayside Room. New soil was brought in and the garden landscape sculpted with raised mounds, and a central granitic pathway.

New plants have been planted and interpretative signage will be installed on site shortly.

Following the success of this planting, Council is considering extending this display garden further into an additional lawn area in front of the Corporate Centre with concept plans underway.







# Vale Ian Parsons

**Friends pay tribute in remembering Mr Ian Parsons, who passed away on 7 July 2020, aged 93.**

Very sadly, our long-time friend and environmentalist Ian Parsons has passed away, aged 93. Ian was a lovely person and a great and valued contributor to the protection of the Sandringham/Bayside natural environment. He was one of the original volunteers at George Street Reserve before the Friends group had been thought of, a staunch Friend of Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary, a founding member of Friends of Native Wildlife Inc., co-author of the Bayside Council produced book *Local Birds of Bayside* (1995), and a constant observer of the birds, animals and vegetation particularly along the Hampton and Sandringham foreshore.

He was a most gifted teacher. He always maintained his interest and delight in the natural world and his cynicism with the world order and his wonderful ability to educate without seeming to teach but simply by sharing his experiences. He was always patient.

We'll miss him and his wonderful stories and astute observations.

**Pauline Reynolds**



Oh so sad to hear this. I remember vividly when Ian took part in the foreshore walks at the Summer by the Sea program. He always captured his audience. Children and adults were fascinated by what he had to say. I hope there is a get-together to remember his life when it is allowed.

**Barbara Jakob**

Ian was also a valued member of the Edithvale Seaford Wetlands group and contributed many, many hours on hide duty, teaching visitors about wetland birds. He will be sadly missed. Vale Ian, sorry to hear this news. He gave life a pretty good run though.

**Kaye Proudly**



(L-R) Ian Parsons and Michael Norris

Ian willingly and graciously shared his enthusiasm and wide knowledge with friends and with the wider public. Every time he and I were together as guides in our heathlands and woodlands I learned something new. He will be greatly missed and we need to celebrate his life as soon as that is possible.

**Valerie Tarrant**

A lovely man with lots of knowledge about birds and other local wildlife. I have fond memories of him assisting with our very first Rakali surveys in Bayside. Very sad to hear.

**Amy Weir**  
**Bayside City Council**

We were privileged to know Ian, with his acute observations and memory, and scientific curiosity. He would use his microscope to identify algae to warn Council, find more snakes and Blue-tongue Lizards than anyone, explain the blue flashes in the red tides, gently tell his doctors what was wrong with their diagnoses, and phone me about interesting sights in the sky. A good companion.

**Michael Norris**

Rest in peace Ian. I would have loved to hear about your teaching and passions. Thanks for your work with FONW and the community.

**Chelsie Middleton**



Ian is in the midst of these young people sharing his knowledge of the local bird life with them at Summer by the Sea 2013. I will miss him.

**Sue Raverty**

His knowledge of bird life was incredible, he was so helpful when I was studying. Whenever I needed help with any wildlife information in Bayside he was always willing to help. Sorry to hear of his passing.

**Frances Goninan**

It is with great sadness that we heard that Ian Parsons passed away last Tuesday. He was a member of BAYBOCA, now BirdLife Bayside, since its inception in 1996, as well as being a member of a number of other environmental and conservation organisations. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

**Tania Ireton**  
**President BirdLife Bayside**





Orb-weaver spider (*Araneus* species) in Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary by John Eichler.

# BRHS iNaturalist project

Story by Sue Foster

Convenor Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary

Photos by John Eichler

I recently took on the role of convenor for Friends of Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary (BRHS).

This small (two-hectare) pocket of remnant sand heathland (Ecological Vegetation Class 6) with some tree canopy is a local haven, surrounded by building development, a major road and school playing fields.

In April 2018, a controlled burn in approximately one-third of the sanctuary produced excellent regeneration of heathland diversity.

The Friends group is currently working on publicly accessible data about the flora, fauna and fungi that can be found at BRHS.

Building on the success of Field Naturalist Club of Victoria projects on the iNaturalist website, we have started an iNaturalist project for BRHS.

I was fortunate to have assistance from iNaturalist curator Reiner Richter and local naturalist John Eichler, who is a regular visitor to BRHS and has contributed many observations and images to the project.

His beautiful green Orb-weaver (*Araneus* genus, pictured) is a sample of what you might see on it.

The BRHS project is open to any iNaturalist members taking images at this location. At the end of its first month, in the first week of May, it achieved 153 observations of 127 species from four observers.

I am delighted that people across the world can now learn about Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary through this project.

Through this website our records will also be shared with international and national scientific communities and databases such as the Atlas of Living Australia.

Visit **iNaturalist** for more.



Masked Bee (*Hylaeus philoleucus*) in Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary



## Huge walls of Black Rock House

By Pauline Reynolds

The huge stone walls partially surrounding Black Rock House in Ebdon Avenue Black Rock will be familiar to all, and the story about Sir Charles Ebdon mining the sandstone to construct the wall from the closest reef opposite on Black Rock Beach is well known.

A few cut blocks remain abandoned on the reef and can be seen from the sea wall at low tide.

Fortunately, the reef is not so easily accessible now which has protected it from much of the trampling which occurs on reefs close by.

The marine life on the rocks and in the pools is more apparent here.

However, the damage caused by the quarrying in the 1850s is still clearly visible.

The bullock drays used to cart the rock must have been large, and many heavy loads would have been taken using the same track to have left the ruts in the stone which have still not disappeared 170 years later.



"No one knows why Ebdon built the walls or why rock wasn't used for the whole building. Nevertheless, the walls which were completed are imposing and unique in our district," Disney and Tarrant *Bayside Reflections* 1988

"It is 86 years since the masons worked there, and the waters of Port Phillip have trashed that little cove with unfailing regularity twice each day, but the two deep wheel ruts cut into the soft stone by the passing to and fro of the bullock drays are still plainly discernible. They wind round the foot of the cliff at water level, so that the blocks of stone must have been hauled out at low tide. At high water the rusty coloured reef is submerged." 14 Rayment, T. 10th December 1924 "Black Rock Castle." *The Advertiser*



# Fascinating Fungi

Fungi are a vital part of our ecosystem, decomposing dead plant material and returning nutrients to the soil. Pictured are recent observations from around Bayside by John Eichler.



## Nargan's bonnet (*Mycena nargan*)

This species of fungus is from the Mycenaceae family. It is distinguished by its dark, bell-shaped bonnet and speckling white scales that appear on the caps and stems of younger specimens. Pictured at Long Hollow Heathland Reserve.



## Smooth cage (*Ileodictyon gracile*)

This stinkhorn fungus resembles a lattice structure and is sometimes referred to as a basket fungus. Pictured at Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary.



## Bird's Nest Fungi (*Cyathus olla*)

This species of saprobic fungus is one of several species of bird's nest fungi, that has fruit bodies resembling tiny bird's nests filled with 'eggs'. Pictured at Black Rock foreshore.



## Fly death fungus (*Entomophthora muscae*)

This species of pathogenic fungus causes a fatal disease in flies. Pictured at Black Rock Heathland Sanctuary.

# Birthday milestones

## Dr Valerie Tarrant OAM

Val Tarrant, one of our favourite volunteers, celebrated her 90th birthday on 22 May.

Val has been an active conservationist since at least the 1960s.

She has battled against dumped rubbish over our foreshore cliffs and on Little Beach, the removal of indigenous vegetation in Heather Grove, Black Rock and became a foundation member of the Black Rock and Sandringham Conservation Association, 51 years ago.

Val is still an active volunteer. She is the co-convenor of the Friends of George Street Reserve, a member of the Friends of Highbury Grassy Woodland (which will soon be handed over to Bayside City Council at last), a member of the Bayside Community Nursery Steering Committee and a regular contributor to *Banksia Bulletin*.

She co-authored *Bayside Reflections*, a historic book with pictures of the



old City of Sandringham with Graeme Disney, and completed her doctoral thesis on *Melbourne's indigenous plants movement: return of the natives*.

Congratulations, Val. On behalf of

Bayside's Friends groups, we are very glad that you were one of the pioneers of the movement that helped save so much of our natural environment at Bayside and beyond. Thank you.

## Lesley Falloon OAM

Lesley Falloon celebrated the wonderful milestone of turning 100 years old on 20 June. Lesley has been a very active member of our community for many years and in many ways.

With husband Ted, Lesley was instrumental in saving the Mahogany Gums in the infamous battle of Linacre Road in 1971. This was a catalyst for her to stand for Council in the City of Sandringham and she was elected in 1978.

For the next 13 years, Lesley served our community and was twice elected Mayor.

Not only a conservationist, Lesley was very involved in the welfare of the whole community even outside of her official role as Councillor.

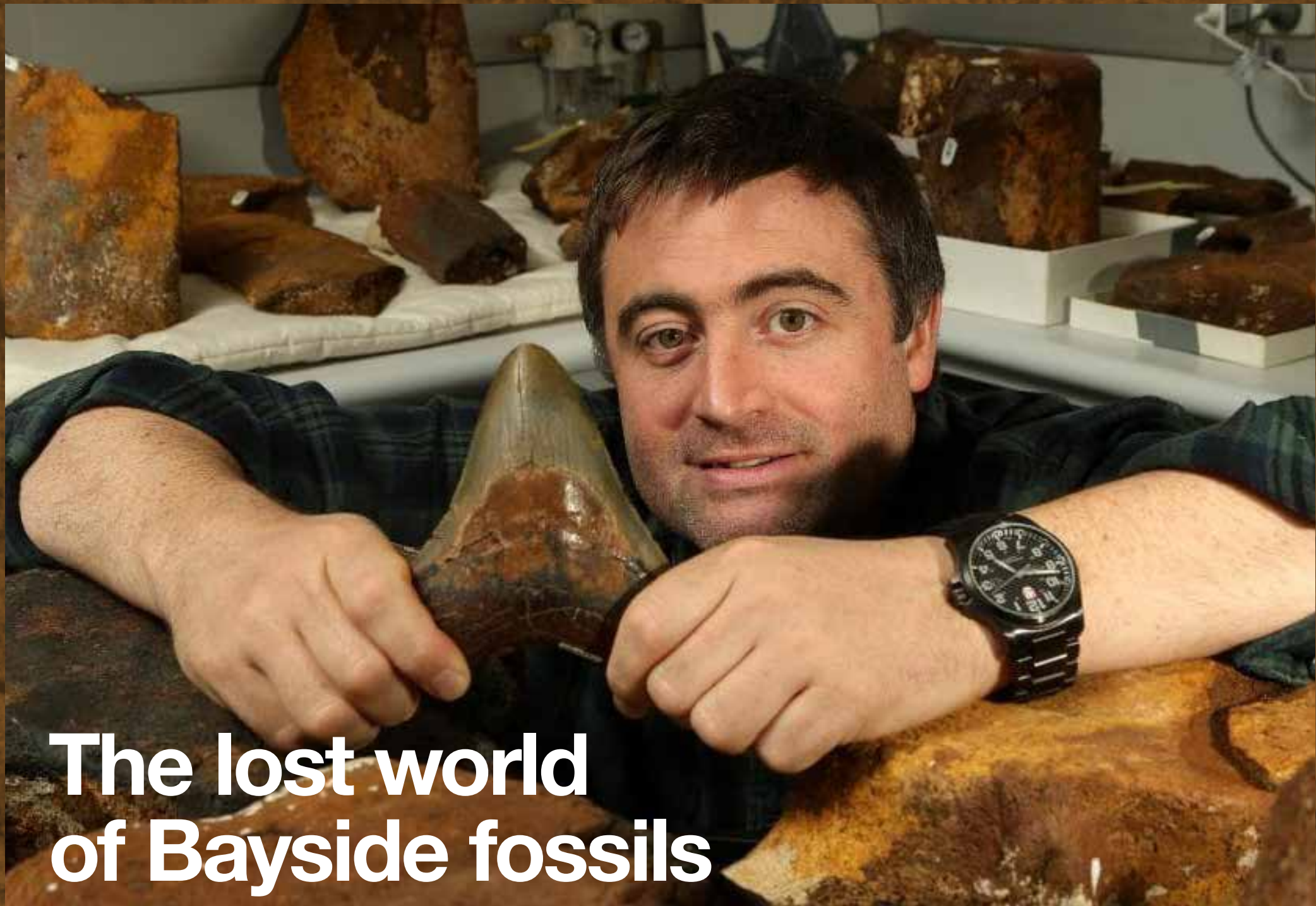
She was instrumental in the establishment of Fairway Hostel where she was the first president of the board from its opening in 1995. She was also on the committee of management of Hampton Community Centre; a founding member, president, then life member of Sandringham and District Historical



Society; president of Sandringham Aged Care Association; inaugural member of the Friends of Black Rock House; on the Sandy Beach Community Centre Board of Management; and many others.

She also loves her garden. Congratulations and thanks Lesley for your great contribution to the health and wellbeing of the environment and people of Bayside.





# The lost world of Bayside fossils



**By Dr Vicki Karalis AM**  
President, Sandringham Foreshore Association

**The Bayside community** is extremely grateful to senior curator and palaeontologist Dr Erich Fitzgerald, palaeontology technician Ben Francischelli and PhD student James Rule of Museums Victoria for their ongoing enthusiasm and interest in

the Bayside fossils, and the continued support they receive from Museums Victoria.

Due to their tremendous efforts, we are learning more and bringing life to the Bayside fossils for the wider community.

Bayside fossils are about five to six million years old, which is rare to have such a significant fossil site in an urban environment. We have only scratched the surface of their scientific potential.

The work by Dr Fitzgerald and his team was generously funded by grants received from Bayside City Council and community groups at last year's fundraiser held in May at the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron.

## FOSSIL FRIDAY

Ben and James have teamed up to present some of their remarkable fossil discoveries found in Bayside. These findings have been captured in a free lecture available online. View **The Deadliest Ocean of All Time**.

## Donations help support ongoing research

Thank you to the many individuals and local groups who have generously donated funds to Museums Victoria to focus on research of the fossil sites in Bayside.

These include Sandringham Foreshore Association, Bayside Earth Sciences Society Inc., Sandringham Bendigo Bank, Future Fish Foundation, Marine Care Ricketts Point, Sandringham and District Historical Society Inc., Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc., and local Rotary clubs such as Sandringham, Brighton, Brighton North and Beaumaris.

Donations help support the ongoing research of Bayside's fossil sites. Donate at the Museums Victoria Bayside Fossil Fundraiser (donations are 100 per cent tax deductible).

## Stay in touch

The palaeontology teams at Museums Victoria keep the community up-to-date with their latest findings on Facebook and Instagram.

[groups/BaysideFossils/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/BaysideFossils/)

[lostworldofbayside/](https://www.instagram.com/lostworldofbayside/)



# Unravelling the Correa mystery

By Rob Saunders

Convenor Rare Plants Group

In the Spring 2018 issue of *Banksia Bulletin*, I raised the issue of unusual Correas appearing and proliferating in our bushland reserves.

White Correa (*Correa alba*) and Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*) are indigenous to Bayside, however new and unusual forms started turning up in bushland reserves after ecological burns.

It seemed likely that the pink variants were hybrids, possibly due to birds bringing pollen from cultivars in surrounding gardens. There was also a mystery about the identity of our red Cheltenham Park form.

The coastal *Correa alba* is distinctive because of its white, star-shaped flowers and rounded, greyish leaves pictured right.

But other Correas in our reserves have a range of growth forms, flower colours, leaf shapes and the morphology of the floral tube and the calyx above it.

Paul G. Wilson's key to the Correa species (*Nuytsia*, 1998, 12(1): 89-105) indicates the green, bell-shaped form from Long Hollow pictured opposite page, top left is *Correa reflexa* var. *reflexa*.

It is generally accepted as original to Bayside. A similar form occurs west of Melbourne at places like Port Campbell National Park.

Using Wilson's key, the red Cheltenham Park form pictured opposite page, bottom right could be *Correa reflexa* var. *speciosa*, which occurs naturally to the east of Port Phillip Bay including at Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Also using Wilson's key, the green-tipped cream George Street form pictured opposite page, bottom left might be a natural variant of the *Correa reflexa* var. *reflexa* from Long Hollow. It is very difficult to be sure.

Morphological characteristics seem to vary between individual plants, even those with the same flower colour and



*Correa alba*. Photo: Creative Commons

growth habit. We wondered if there was another way to check the identity of these plants.

More than 40 years ago, research by Trevor Whiffin using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GCMS) was published in the *Australian Journal of Botany* (1977, 25(3): 291 – 298). It suggested that each Correa species has a unique profile of volatile oils, a kind of chemical fingerprint.

Whiffin concluded that the volatile oil profile of a Correa hybrid is intermediate between those of its parent species. The potential of this research for identification purposes was obvious but has been limited by the scale and complexity of the GCMS equipment, which even now is the size of a room and not transportable.

Fortunately, technology in other fields has advanced more dramatically. The oils in leaves can also be studied using spectroscopy, where some interesting

new equipment is now being developed.

Last year an opportunity arose to have a group of six chemistry students, supervised by Dr Philip Heraud from Monash University's Centre for Biospectroscopy, undertake some research on our Correas.

Three different spectrometers were used, including two portable machines.

Students investigated the leaf surface, the full leaf cross-section, and oils extracted using a high-grade solvent.

GCMS was used to replicate Whiffin's early work. Students then undertook an analysis of the large dataset produced, applying principal component analysis (PCA) using Unscrambler software.

As Whiffin found in 1977, the volatile oil profiles of true Correa species were well differentiated and unique.

The Long Hollow *Correa reflexa* var. *reflexa*, Ricketts Point *Correa alba*, and a South Australian species from Kurunga Native Nursery in Mount Evelyn (*Correa*



*Correa reflexa* var. *reflexa*



*Correa reflexa* var. *speciosa*



*Correa reflexa* var. *reflexa*



*Correa* Skye Bells

*pulchella*) all gave clearly separate clusters of data in the PCA plots.

Other samples that were investigated produced well-clustered volatile oil profiles that indicated they were hybrids.

Plot clusters for two samples were extremely close; in fact in some experiments they overlapped. Those two samples were our red Cheltenham Park form, and a commercial cultivar called

Skye Bells pictured bottom right. Skye Bells is known to be a hybrid between *Correa reflexa* and *Correa pulchella*. The similarity between their profiles is evidence that our red form is not indigenous to Bayside.

In the future, Dr Heraud hopes to have students investigate other Correas, including our green-tipped cream George Street form. We are also curious about the

Gramatan Avenue form, which seems to have the growth habit of our local *Correa reflexa* but the flower colour of the popular garden cultivar Dusky Bells.

One unexpected prospect emerging from this work relates to the portability of the spectrometers. This could allow immediate and accurate identification by chemical fingerprinting in situ, without damaging plants.



# Stunning Sea Stars

These incredible creatures were photographed by Bayside City Council's Biodiversity and Conservation Planning Officer Amy Weir who ventured out on a recent rock-pool ramble at Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and made these discoveries under an exposed reef near Table Rock.



## Velvet Sea Star (*Petricia vernicina*)

This large sea star is rarely seen, living literally under a rock (and algae).  
Preferring to live sub-tidally, to a depth of about 60m, means there is little known about its biology.  
It is likely to have got its name though from its smooth, velvet-like surface.

[Source and more information](#)



## Eleven-armed Sea Star (*Coscinasterias muricata*)

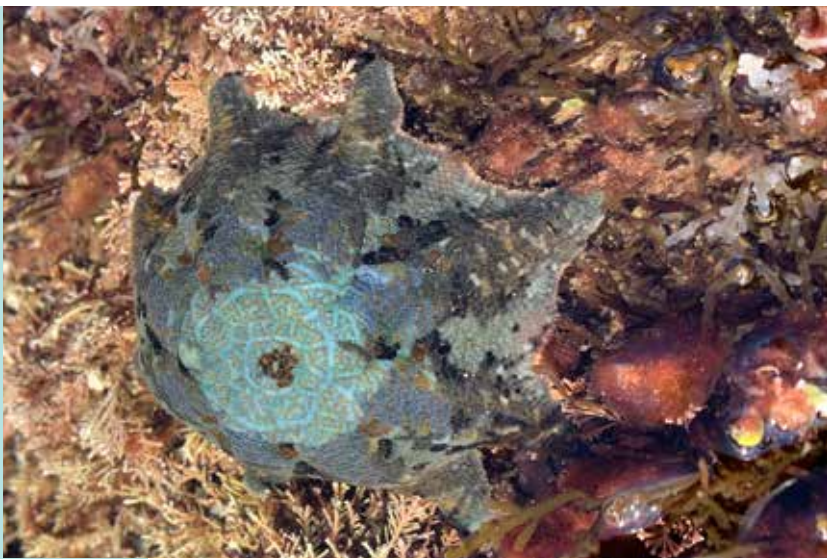
The Eleven-armed Sea Star is commonly seen at low-tide levels, either on the rocky shore or in sandy bays.  
Its upper surface is covered in small spines and the number of arms varies from seven to 14 but, as the name suggests, it is usually found with 11 arms.  
The Eleven-armed Sea Star lives in inter-tidal rocky shores of coastal waters to a depth of 150m and feeds on small crabs or marine worms.  
If you use a hand lens, you can see small protuberances called pedicellariae, which are like miniature jaws around the spines on its body. These have two benefits - defending the sea star from predators and moving up and down to catch food like small crabs or worms. These tiny jaws hang on until the prey is dead or until it can be reached by an arm or tube feet and passed to the mouth.

[Source and more information](#)

## Carpet Sea Star (*Meridiastra calcar*)

The colour and pattern of individual Carpet Sea Stars vary greatly. They usually have a grey-green background with splotches of orange, yellow or red. You may also notice several tiny sea stars surrounding a larger one.  
Carpet Sea Stars live on inter-tidal rocky shores to a depth of 3m.  
It has well-defined arms giving these sea stars a pentagonal or hexagonal shape.

[Source and more information](#)



## Biscuit Sea Star (*Tosia australis*)

This distinctive, bright orange-red, sea star is called the Biscuit Sea Star because it is about the size of a large biscuit.  
Its upper surface is covered with many interlocking small plates and six to eight larger plates along the edge of each of their short arms.  
The Biscuit Sea Star lives on inter-tidal rocky shores and in coastal waters to a depth of 40m, feeding on sea squirts, sponges, bryzoans and algae.

[Source and more information](#)





# Smoking ban on beaches

By Dr Vicki Karalis AM  
President, Sandringham Foreshore Association

Smoke-free zones on Bayside beaches are here to stay thanks to efforts of our community who raised the item at Council's Ordinary Meeting on 23 April 2019.

A year later, after community consultation by Council received extensive positive feedback, the smoking ban was endorsed by Council on 28 April and came into effect on 1 June 2020.

It extends to all Bayside beaches including Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and surrounds, and Brighton Dunes.

## Resolutions at the Ordinary Meeting (28 April 2020):

1. Noted positive support from the community to declare sand areas of all Bayside beaches including Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, the Brighton Dunes and surrounds smoke-free.
2. Declared sand areas of all Bayside beaches including Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, the Brighton Dunes and surrounds smoke-free under Clause 68 of Council's Local Law No.2 'Neighbourhood Amenity' in accordance with Attachment 1.
3. Organised for signs to be erected and maintained for the areas declared as smoke-free. Informed the community of the new smoke-free areas.
4. Referred for consideration (as part of the complete review of Local Law No: 2) the possible extension of the smoke-free zones to include all foreshore reserve areas west of Beach Road, between Charman Road, Beaumaris and Head Street, Brighton. (It remains to be considered whether car parks will be included or excluded).

## Benefits of smoking bans on beaches

The community and the environment benefit from smoke-free beaches.

Some smokers leave behind their cigarette butts on our beaches. Beach cleaning contractors and volunteers collect hundreds of

thousands of cigarette butts (along with other rubbish) each year. If not collected, butts pollute the sand and water, fouling the natural environment for beach goers and swimmers, and threatening sea life who mistake them for food.

The decision to ban smoking on Bayside beaches means:

- All beach goers can now avoid health risks associated with passively inhaling cigarette smoke (children are at highest risk, as lung development continues until early 20s).
- The health of the Bay is protected. Cigarette butts entering the bay negatively impact marine life and are toxic to the environment.
- Our beaches are kept clean for everyone.

## Read the signs

No smoking signs have been installed at all Bayside beaches. This includes at Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and surrounds, and at the Brighton Dunes.

Anyone smoking on a Bayside beach can face a \$200 Infringement Notice penalty, or a fine of up to \$1,000 if prosecuted in court. Fines will be enforced from 1 September 2020, following a three-month community awareness campaign.

## Possible smoke-free extension

Possible future extension of the smoke-free zones to include all foreshore reserves is being considered, including car parking zones.

Council will consult further with the community in early 2021.

# Tulip Street Pond Critters

Story and photos by John Eichler

During a visit to Tulip Street pond in late April, four months after it was filled with water from the Leisure Centre pool (see *Banksia Bulletin* article in Autumn edition) I found a number of species I hadn't come across there before, including some that were new species to me.

Interesting finds included:



Freshwater limpets



Stick Caddisfly Larvae



Freshwater leech

An alga with a complex form similar to a flowering plant

## Book review

### *The Enchantment of the Long-haired Rat* by Tim Bonyhady

By Elizabeth Walsh

If you enjoy reading and particularly about nature and history, this is a most enlightening book.

A little-known rodent, the Mayeroo, stick rat or long-haired rat, mostly of the channel country of Queensland and arid surrounds as far as NSW to the Victorian border, is described beautifully by one of Australia's foremost environmental historians.

A 'plague' rodent known to early settlers for its immense irruptions after big rains, was a delicacy gourmandised on by the Aborigines. After droughts such easy protein was of great importance to the Indigenous population, but totally misconstrued by the white settlers of the 1800s.

European settlers thought our beautiful rodent was probably the black or brown rat, notorious from England and Norway (although originally from Asia) that brought contagion. However,

it took a number of local naturalists to finally define the stick rat as one of Australia's seven endemic rodents, early on called *Mus longipilis*, but now *Rattus villosissimus* – named for its long guard hairs.

I can imagine the trauma of white settlers experiencing every material household article nibbled or eaten during the months of irruptions as the settlers already lived under often harsh conditions. Explorers such as Bourke and Wills experienced their leather saddles being gnawed even when hung up in trees. If only they had been willing to eat them they may well have survived their ordeal in the outback. There are stories of all tracks being obliterated by the swarms of rats as they passed each night and could have been the reason that there were no tracks evident from Bourke and Wills when their party returned for them.

There is also the intriguing shared story of the letter-winged kite, a night



feeding kite and the long-haired rat.

The demise of the long-haired rat to very small pockets is most likely due to the introduced cat and climate change.

As Tim Bonyhady describes, "It is a story about ignorance of the past, the richness of amateur observations and the limitations of professional science; a story about how hard it is to learn about any species, how long it takes and how little we know. And it is a story about the stories told about rats".



## Friends Groups

### Friends of Balcombe Park

**Convenor:** Ian O'Loughlin  
**Mobile:** 0412 432 618 **Email:** ianoloughlin@optusnet.com.au

### Friends of Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary

**Convenor:** Sue Forster  
**Phone:** 0431 688 606 **Email:** sue.forster@optusnet.com.au

### Friends of Bayside Roads

**Contact:** Derek Jones  
**Phone:** 0417 360 747 **Email:** derekhjones36@gmail.com

### Bayside Environmental Friends Network

**Convenor:** Erica Breedon  
**Phone:** 9583 8408 **Email:** friends@bayside.vic.gov.au

### Friends of Beaumaris Reserve

**Convenor:** Chris Sutton  
**Phone:** 0438 327 924 **Email:** sutc@bigpond.com

### Friends of Brighton Dunes

**Convenor:** Jenny Talbot  
**Phone:** 0499 592 233

### Friends of Cheltenham Park

**Convenor:** Valerie Tyers  
**Phone:** (03) 9588 0107 **Email:** valerietyers@hotmail.com

### Friends of Donald MacDonald Reserve

**Convenor:** Kim Croker  
**Phone:** (03) 9589 2443 **Email:** kcroker@bigpond.net.au

### Friends of George Street Reserve

**Convenors:** Pauline Reynolds & Val Tarrant  
**Phone:** (03) 9598 6368 **Email:** pauline.reynolds.au@gmail.com

### Friends of Gramatan Avenue Heathland

**Convenor:** Ken Rendell  
**Phone:** (03) 9589 4452

### Friends of Long Hollow Heathland

**Convenor:** Rob Saunders  
**Phone:** (03) 9515 3383 **Email:** srednuas@hotmail.com

### Friends of Merindah Park & Urban Forest

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### Friends of Mother Stock Areas

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### Friends of Native Wildlife

**Convenors:** Anne Jessel & Elizabeth Walsh  
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**Website:** www.bayfonw.org.au

### Friend of Picnic Point Sandringham

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### Friends of Ricketts Point

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### Friends of Ricketts Point Landside

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### Friends of Table Rock

**Convenor:** Ken Rendell  
**Phone:** (03) 9589 4452

### Friends of Elster Creek

**Convenor:** Karen Jone  
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**Meeting point:** Elwood Canal, Glen Huntly Road Bridge

## Environment Groups

### Bayside Earth Sciences Society Inc.

**President:** Murray Orr  
**Email:** baysidefossils@gmail.com  
**Website:** www.beaumarisfossils.org

### Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc

**President:** Greg Mier  
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### Black Rock and Sandringham Conservation Association Inc

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**Secretary:** John Neve  
**Phone:** 0479 196 260 **Email:** jneve@ozemail.com.au

### Elsternwick Park Association

**Email:** ElsternwickParkAssociation@gmail.com

### Marine Care Ricketts Point Inc

**President:** Elizabeth Jensen  
**Phone:** 0419 354 998 **Email:** elizabethjjensen@outlook.com  
**Website:** www.marinecare.org.au

### Sandringham Foreshore Association

**President:** Dr Vicki Karalis  
**Email:** sandyforeshore@optusnet.com.au  
**Website:** sandringhamforeshore.tumblr.com

## School Groups

### Firbank Girls Grammar

**Contact:** Mary-Ellen Johnson  
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### St Leonard's College Conservation Group

**Contact:** Simon Daniels  
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**Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, all working bees and events have been temporarily suspended or postponed until further notice.**

**Please visit [bayside.vic.gov.au](http://bayside.vic.gov.au) or your Friends group Facebook page for updates.**



# banksia

bulletin

### Editorial Policy

The purpose of publishing the Banksia Bulletin is to circulate information, report on events, and to profile relevant environmental issues important to our community. The Bulletin is also published to support the network of people involved in enjoying and protecting our local environment.

Bayside City Council encourages people from our local community groups to submit articles of interest, share experiences and news about any upcoming events. All articles are reviewed prior to publication and Council reserves the right to omit or edit submissions.

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the people who have contributed to this issue of Banksia Bulletin.

### Disclaimer

The views expressed in the Banksia Bulletin are not necessarily those of Bayside City Council nor its representatives.

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### Copy deadlines

**Spring 2020**  
Friday, 28 August, 2020

Banksia Bulletin is published quarterly by Bayside City Council to service people interested in enjoying and protecting the local environment.

If you would like to be added to the Banksia Bulletin mailing list, please contact Bayside City Council on 9599 4444 or email: banksia@bayside.vic.gov.au Please indicate whether you would prefer to receive your Banksia Bulletin by email or via post.

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Do you want to know more  
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Please refer to our website  
[www.bayside.vic.gov.au](http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au)



White-faced Heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)  
Photo by Pauline Reynolds