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***Westernport & Peninsula
Protection Council Inc***



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Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council Inc.

Founded in 1971, the programs of the Council are aimed at preserving and restoring what remains of our precious natural environment in Westernport Bay and its hinterland. An important part of our activities to that end is to ensure that proper planning processes are observed by Government at all three levels and that community consultation is a fundamental component of planning. We have achieved a high reputation for approaching such matters through careful study of principles and attention to detail.

Prompting community awareness of important conservation issues has also been high on our agenda for the past 30 years. We continue to explore ways of informing the public of their natural assets and of the current and ongoing threats opposed to them by inappropriate and destructive developments.

The activities of Council are managed by an executive committee of nine, elected at the annual General Meeting, which is held on a Sunday early in January. Membership is by application and subscription and confers voting rights and a say in the Council's activities. The Committee has the power to co-opt additional members during the year.

Additional help on Committee and in a range of other ways is always welcome. Please indicate on the subscription form if you have any special skills or interests which may be helpful in our campaigns.

For further information about our activities please contact:

Karri Giles (President /editor) 59 832 072 Sheila Kerr (Treasurer) 59 786889 Annabel Richards (Acting Secretary)- 59831294

Other members of Committee are: Liz Sarraillhe, Ruth Marriot, Linda Drewitt, Ted Warden, Kathie Strickland, Meg McMillan.

I would like to support the work of Westernport Peninsula Protection Council Inc.

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The Westernport Peninsula Protection Council Inc Trust is a gift fund listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations under Section 78(1) (a) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936.

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Please return to: Hon Treasurer, WPPC, Box 9, Hastings, Vic 3915

Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council Inc

Incorporated Association Reg. No. A15886H ABN 984 610 14730 PO Box 9 Hastings Vic 3915

Newsletter July 2011

Proudly Announcing Our Website www.wppcinc.org



Best news to date The Western Port Scientific Review, commissioned by Melbourne Water and conducted by a panel of experts from various universities and authorities headed by Professor Mick Keogh of the University of Melbourne, is soon to be finalised. Dr Jeff Ross Research fellow University of Tasmania, talked to his paper Ecosystem Processes and Soft Sediments at the MW hosted Seminar in Pakenham. He emphasised the importance of keeping the molluscs alive in the soft sediments. They provide an oxygenated environment that allows nitrogen in the water to turn into harmless gas. They are vital to keep Westernport Bay a healthy functioning bay. A build up of nitrogen can trigger algae blooms and eutrophication.

This means that any environmental effects study for The Proposed Port of Hastings would have to recognise that the sort of relatively small oil spills, associated with ports, that coats the intertidal benthos, would threatened not just a few species, but the healthy functioning of The Bay.

Labor Backs Port Plan By Jo Winterbottom Courtesy of the Weekly Newspaper –July 6th 2011.

The expansion of the Port Of Hastings into a second container port for Melbourne is a step closer, with the Labour Party signalling it will support the new port of Hastings Development Authority,

A bill to establish the authority was debated in the state upper house last week, with Labor MPs questioning the financing, time frame, transport planning and environmental effects of the port expansion but conceding “common ground” with the Coalition on the need for a container port at Hastings. Eastern Metropolitan MP Brian Tee said the coalition took its position to the election “and for this reason we do not oppose this legislation”. But Mr Tee said Labor MPs supported a 30-year time frame for the \$9 billion development of the port over the Coalition’s fast-track estimates of between eight and 15 years.

If passed, the bill will re-establish an independent port Authority for Hastings, following the dissolution of the Port of Hastings Corporation in September last year, when the port of Melbourne took over responsibility for the port. An important difference in the new authority is signalled by its title; a key role of the Port of Hastings Development would be to plan for the development of the port.

Liberal MP Inga Peulich said the development would create “thousands of new jobs and economic opportunities in the Western Port region” but Mr Tee queried how communities would cope with the anticipated 3000 trucks each day transporting goods to and from the port.

Greens MP Sue Pennicuik questioned the government's economic projections and emphasised the work of mangrove wetlands in sustaining healthy marine ecosystems.

Westernport is listed on the international Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and two international agreements protecting migratory birds from Japan and China. It is also part of the United Nations Man and the Biosphere program and contains three marine national parks. A coalition of 16 environment and community groups last week promised to fight further industrial development in Western Port.

Jenny Warfe of Blue Wedges Coalition called for a halt on discussion until the completion of a new report on Western Port. The Western Port Scientific Review, commissioned by Melbourne Water and conducted by a panel of experts from various universities and authorities headed by Professor Mick Keogh of the University of Melbourne, is in its final stages. One of the stated aims of the review is to consolidate knowledge of Westernport "to inform current and projected planning and management, including the development of the port of Hastings". Ms Warfe also questioned the economic case for the expansion of the port. Ports Minister Dennis Napthine, who toured the Port of Hastings in March, quoted Port of Melbourne Authority estimates that container traffic to Melbourne will quadruple over the next 25 years to more than 8.8 million containers per year. Ms Warfe said that economic case needed a lot further analysis; "We are planning all our infrastructure around somebody's estimations that haven't been independently justified".

Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council president Karri Giles said the environmental effects statement which would be required for any proposed development may put paid to a container port at Hastings. "Are they wasting taxpayers' money doing a whole lot of work around developing the port of Hastings prematurely?"

Debate will continue when Parliament resumes in one month. Jo Winterbottom

The loss of native fauna on the Mornington Peninsula.

from Hans Brunner

Original fauna

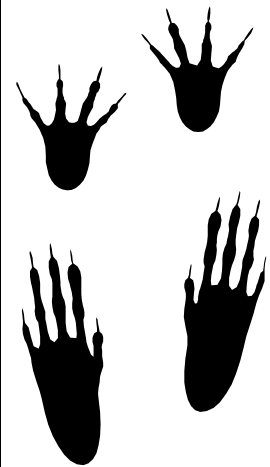
Wheelwright and Hobson in 1850's wrote:

" the Peninsula was thick with wildlife, with herds of kangaroos, wombats, wallabies, many echidnas and koalas and glorious birds, all unused to man and quite tame and inquisitive. He described the wonderful trees and abundance of silver wattles which, when in blossom, made the whole country golden and the whole atmosphere filled deliciously with their sweetness."

Henry Tuck and others also stated that Kangaroos were like herds of sheep and could never be shot out, and bandicoots and possums were in hundreds and that the native cat was one of the commonest animals.

Ms. Cavill, who lives next to the Moorooduc Quarry Reserve commented in her Master's Thesis: "In the 1930's we found bush around us, a whole wonderland of animals, wild flowers, birds, hollow trees, gullies and ground water ways. Koalas grunted all night, wombats, kangaroos, wallabies, possums, echidnas, bush- and water rats, flying foxes and bandicoots were abundant and tame. At night the frogs roared in the darkness. In the evening, swarms of birds arrived in v-shaped formations and landed on the swamp. Black – and tiger snakes were common around the huge Moorooduc swamp that lay below our property and brown snakes and copperhead were a nuisance around the house. Our delight in exploring the swamp with its sheets of water, covered with swans and ducks, and its spongy islands of moss and tee-tree was always tempered by fear of these snakes.

On our horse rides there was a never failing source of interest in the discovering new wild flowers, gullies of maiden ferns, orchids, minute wild strawberries, egg and bacon bushes and swathes pink and white heath.



Continued..Loss of Native Species On The Mornington Peninsula by Hans Brunner

There were several other similar reports made by Wheelwright and Hobson, mentioning many other species and all describing the Mornington Peninsula as teeming with wild life.

Based on historical and recent records there were at least 40 native species of mammals on the Peninsula in those early days.

Much the same could have also been said about the many species of birds, reptiles and amphibians. Hobson in 1837 observed the gigantic crane or brolga and the native turkey (Australian Bustard). They are now listed as threatened fauna in Victoria.

With the arrival of pioneers and settlers, timber cutters removed nearly all the mature trees on the Peninsula and shipped them to Melbourne or used them to build railway lines or as fuel to drive stone crushers etc. or to clear land for grazing.

Kangaroos were slaughtered in their thousands on single drives and some of the meat, together with koalas and possums were sent to Melbourne for food. Animals were also destroyed because of competition with sheep and cattle grazing

Much of the land was then used for farming and for fruit orchards. The clearing of land caused subsequently massive soil erosion and mega- tons of good soil was washed into the sea especially along Balcombe Creek.

With the ever increasing number of people arriving on the Peninsula, the remaining natural bush was gradually destroyed and fragmented.

Chris Tzaros recently worked out that for every 100 hectares of woodland cleared; between 1000-2000 woodland dependent birds are lost. These figures could be even higher for mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

With this drastic decrease of suitable habitat for most native birds and mammals, many species have now become locally extinct.

Doug Robinson has estimated that about 50% of birds which originally existed on the Peninsula are now either locally extinct or are threatened. Ground nesting birds have suffered most, especially because of predation by foxes and cats.

A Mr. Woolley and others also used to shoot ducks in the 1880's for a living until they were almost shot out.

Later, larrikins delighted in the shooting of wild life when the pubs were closed after 6 O'clock.

In the quarry area bandicoots and kangaroos lasted till about 1940 and wombats and the eastern quoll till about 1960. By 1970 koalas, sugar gliders and antechinuses were still present but have since declined drastically and have become extremely rare and the antechinuses are now close to extinction in the Frankston area.

There is also a growing concern over a serious decline of invertebrates. Subsequently, there are concerns for the future of many species of bird, mammals and amphibians that feed on them. Habitat loss and habitat fragmentation as well as the over use of pesticides has to be the main reason.

In summary, we have taken over all the prime land on the Mornington Peninsula and the Frankston area. The rest of nature is forced to make do with what is left which amounts to less than 5 % of a much- reduced quality of habitat, especially because of weed invasion and too small and isolated bushland blocks. Plainly, this is the major factor resulting in the ongoing, local species extinction and in an increase in ecosystem stress.

Loss of native mammalian species on the Peninsula:

From 40 original native species = locally extinct and endangered 25 species = 63%

Loss of native mammalian species in the Frankston area:

From 40 original native species = locally extinct and endangered 31 species = 77 %

Survey results from 15 bushland reserves in the Frankston area showed that there were an average of 4 native mammalian species and an average of 5 introduced species. (Dog, cat, fox, house mouse, black rat, brown rat and rabbit).

Survey results from 80 bushland reserves by Malcolm Legg, on the Mornington Peninsula, showed that an average of 5.9 mammalian species were native and 5.6 were introduced.

We therefore have now, in a large number of reserves, more introduced mammalian species such as the foxes, cats,

dogs, rabbits, black rats, brown rats and house mice, than native species. (This does not include all the farm animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and deer etc. that take up land originally used by native mammals.)

The Graph (data from Malcolm Legg) shows the loss of mammals on the Mornington Peninsula. Since then, two more species had to be shifted to the “extinct” section, namely, the Wombat and the Southern Brown Bandicoot.

The recent, local loss of the Southern Brown Bandicoot is one of the latest examples. In spite of all the lobbying and by-partisan political support, no sufficient efforts have been made to save this species. This Bandicoot has been in great numbers all over the Peninsula and its disappearance during the last thirty years has been well recognised and documented. This is yet another frustrating, shameful, local extinction story of an iconic Australian species.

The biggest concern is that Parks Victoria is bluntly refusing to look after our fauna, including the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Hans Brunner

Formation of a regional bandicoot recovery group

The Mornington Peninsula and Westernport Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd hosted a [public meeting](#) on 23 June 2011 to review progress and discuss the way forward to build on conservation efforts to date. Two motions were passed.

- The first motion formally requested the Biosphere Foundation to convene a Southern Brown Bandicoot regional recovery group (see above) broadly following the [draft terms of reference](#) provided at the meeting.
- The second motion requested the formation of Southern Brown Bandicoot corridors linking the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, with the other key bandicoot habitats within the Western Port Biosphere Reserve region.

A regional bandicoot recovery group, which will include representatives of the Biosphere Foundation, government agencies, local landholders and environmental organisations, is being formed. The recovery group will take a landscape-scale approach and enable key stakeholders to better coordinate their bandicoot conservation efforts. Comments are welcome on the [draft recovery group terms of reference](#). **Applications for membership of the Southern Brown Bandicoot Regional Recovery Group close on 15 August '11.**



[Margaret Hancock](#), [Dr Brian Cuming](#) -Photos from our AGM January 2010-[Liz Sarraihle](#), [Julie Edgerton](#), [Nanette Cuming](#)

We continue to seek groups to sign on to the Westernport Protection statement. Send your groups logo with a clear agreement, to Simon Branigan at VNPA SimonB@vnpa.org.au. Any other campaign ideas phone or email to gilesea@surf.net

Stand by for WPPC and Ramsar Convention Celebration and Seminar Late October.

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Friends of Frankston

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Catchment Group Inc.

**Western Region
Environment Centre**

Friends of Bass Valley Bush

The above was a joint effort by environmental groups.



