Specimen of a Small-leaf Clematis – BHLG Herbarium prepared by Gordon Students.

Barrabool Hills Landcare Newsletter
February 2018

What’s On.

February 19th, 22nd, 26th – Rabbit Baiting- Information inside

March 14th – Film night. Note change from the previous date of 21st February.

April 18th – Collecting seed from our native flora, what you need to know with Mike Robinson-Koss. Mike is a respected nurseryman from Otway Greening at Deans Marsh who has extensive experience in the collection and propagation of native plants.

Mid June – Field Day to explore ways to control rabbits – McCormacks Road site. More details in next newsletter.

15th August – AGM and presentation from Stephen Murphy. Stephen will expand on his fascinating articles featured in our newsletters on how the Barrabool Hills Landscape became what it is today.

Newsletter Editor Wanted

After 5 years as Newsletter Editor Geoff Anson is looking to hand over the reins to someone else in the group. During Geoff’s stewardship the Newsletter for the group has grown from a two page black and white information sheet to a glorious bimonthly circular looked forward to eagerly by not only our landcare members but the wider community.

Geoff assures me the job is not an onerous one, requiring around 2 days ever two months. Most of the copy is provided by others and the role is really just collating this, adding some images and formatting it.

If you would like to be part of our vibrant team, please email me or Geoff to have a chat.

Many thanks.

Kaye Rodden
The vegetation of the Barrabool Hills part 4.

**Plant species** – ‘Drooping Sheoaks adorned the Hills’

Before the first white settlers began clearing trees and shrubs around Geelong, it appears from historic records that the Drooping Sheoak, *Allocasuarina verticillata* was a widespread and distinctive feature of the Barrabool Hills and the Geelong region.

Drooping Sheoaks were the first tree that Surveyor John Helder Wedge recorded in his diary in 1835 as he crossed the Barrabool Hills near Pollocksford. Artists Charles Norton painted a landscape of grasslands and Drooping Sheoaks near Ceres in the Barrabool Hills in 1846 and Eugene von Guerard sketched the harvesting of Drooping Sheoak on the banks of the Barwon River in 1854.

These early records suggest that a significant part of the Barrabool Hills landscape was open grasslands under scattered Drooping Sheoaks.

An open grassy woodland of Drooping Sheoaks.

Yet we know from recent vegetation studies done in 1997 (Trengove, Molten & Grey) and 2017 (Gordon TAFE final year students and teachers), that there is a diverse community of plant species remaining on roadsides and on private properties in the Barrabool Hills.

Because the Hills has been cleared and farmed since 1836, it is very likely that there was much greater plant diversity in the Hills before Geelong was first settled, so why was the pre settlement landscape dominated by one species of tree?

**Vegetation tables list**

This prospect is particularly unexpected when we consider that many of the remnant plants found in the Barrabool Hills today are pioneer species, able to spread naturally and quickly into an open grassy landscapes. Trees like Black Wattle, Lightwood, White Cypress Pine, Silver Banksia and Manna Gum grow easily from seed dispersed by wind, water and animals. Yet in major areas of the Hills and around Geelong this didn’t happen and Drooping sheoaks dominated.

The other unexpected feature of these early woodlands of Drooping Sheoak is their wide spacing as described by Wedge; “Crossed the Barrabull Hills….for the first 3 miles are of the same description, grass rather light and thinly wooded with sheoak”.

**Drooping Sheoaks grow naturally as a thicket.**

Wedge’s description and artists depictions are at odds with the natural habit of Drooping Sheoaks. Female Sheoaks produce large cones with lots of fertile winged seeds. Most of these seeds will grow into a young trees where the wind blows them. The result is usually a thicket of willowy young sheoaks growing just beyond the canopy of the mother tree. A thicket so dense that bush walkers have to find a way around rather than attempt to push through.

Drooping sheoaks were so thick on a roadside at Mt Duneed near Geelong in the early 1900’s, that a climber could scramble a whole block in the trees’ canopy without touching the ground (Graeme Anderson pers. com).


Stephen Murphy
New Barrabool Hills Landcare Signage

The Barrabool Hills Landcare Group is over 20 years old, and we are proud of what we as a community have achieved to eradicate weeds and pests and increase the native vegetation across our special landscape. Unlike our revegetation sites, which continue to grow and create an amazing harbor for birds and animals, the signs which we erected with pride when we had completed the projects have been slowly deteriorating.

The group decided earlier this year to commission new signage to replace the old and thanks to two of the executive members, Jim Seager and Ian Kelly, these have now been erected. A special thanks also to the landholders who permitted the signs to be replaced and sometimes repositioned away from the sheep and cattle who enjoy using the posts for rubbing!

Please take note also of our new double sided sign near the church, which is updated regularly, thanks to Ian Kelly, with the next meeting dates.

Identifying Birds by Call

By David Nichols, Glenelg Hopkins CMA

Many people become interested in bird watching because of the sheer beauty and variety of the birds in our region. For a small proportion, the next step they take along the ‘twitcher’ path, is to start recording their bird sightings from time to time, and from place to place. At this point, many bird watchers find it useful to start learning some of the calls of the birds they are watching.

Learning bird calls is the most useful method of identifying birds for several reasons, mainly because you can often hear a lot more birds than you can see. This is especially the case for bush land settings where birds are often obscured by the surrounding vegetation. You can often only see in one direction until the first blockage of line of sight. It can also be difficult to see birds on cloudy and windy days. However you can always hear the birds that are calling in the bush despite which way you are looking and blockages to your line of sight.

Learning bird calls can seem daunting at first, however there are a few strategies to help the process. Firstly, it is easier to try and learn a handful of calls at first rather than a lot. Once you have mastered a few, you can move onto others. Whether the birds are common or rare, some calls are a lot easier to learn than others. Spent your time trying to learn some of the calls of more common birds that are more distinctive or easier to pick. Some of the more common but harder calls (eg Superb Fairywren and New Holland Honeyeater) will come to you over time.

The trick when trying to learn a call is to find a ‘connection’ to the call, find something that resonates with you either the rhythm, pitch, sound or word. Some calls you can associate with normal words, for example the Spotted Pardalote – “miss piggy, miss piggy”, White-plumed honeyeater – chick-a wee, chick-a-nee” or the White-eared Honeyeater – “pretty boy, pretty boy”. If you can find some connection it will be easier to remember.

With this in mind, and with spring upon us, there are a number of birds that will be calling in our farmland and bush land areas in the coming months and have a distinctive call. These I believe are a good place to start for learning calls, and include the following birds:

- Spotted and Striated Pardalotes
- Horsefield’s and Shining Bronze Cuckoos
- White-eared and White-plumed Honeyeaters
- Rufous and Golden Whistlers
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Restless Flycatcher

You can practice learning some of these calls by referring to freely available apps and online sites.

Good bird apps to purchase are the following;

- Guide to Birds of Australia – Michael Morcombe and David Stewart
- Birds of Australia – Pizzey and Knight

The ‘website www.xenocanto.org has thousands of recordings to listen to free of charge.

(Reprinted from the Upper Hopkins Land Management Newsletter)
Equipment for loan to members

MISSING
POTTI PUTKI TREE PLANTER AND KIDNEY TREE BUCKET.
CONTACT TREVOR JONES 0407009855

The Barrabool Hills Landcare spray unit, tree planters, rabbit smoker and other equipment is available for use by members:

- 400 litre spray unit trailer mounted
- 2 Kidney tree buckets
- 2 Potti Putki Tree planters
- 2 Georges Tree planters
- 1 60 litre motorbike mounted spray unit
- 1 Rabbit Smoker

Members are requested to return all equipment to Trevor promptly after use.

Contact Trevor Jones on 5265 6126 or Jim Seager on 0409 935 700.

Executive meeting

At our meeting on the 11th January the executive covered:

- Web site. We are very happy with the new web site and have identified a number of minor changes to improve its appearance and usefulness for members. More information will be circulated as changes are made. Suggestions from members on improvements to the site are welcomed.
- Child Safe Standards. In alignment with government policy the group will develop incidence policy and procedures for when children attend Landcare events.
- Newsletter. Geoff wishes to focus on developing of the group’s GIS system and has requested that a new newsletter editor be appointed.
- Signage. A number of Landcare signs have been replaced. See report in this newsletter.
- Rabbit baiting. Orders are coming in. This year Geelong Council has agreed to letterbox the Waurn Ponds area that has previously missed out on information on the baiting. Additional information is in the newsletter.
- Mapping project. Geoff has received training in QGIS and has entered data for a couple of properties. He will start entering property information for members in late February.

RABBIT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Pindone Baiting Program - 2018

Our 2018 Rabbit Baiting program will mark the 14th annual community rabbit baiting program in the Barrabool Hills, assisted by the Landcare Group. The traditional YELLOW baiting order form to participate in this program was distributed in the last newsletter and is also available to be downloaded from our website www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au.

The baiting dates for next year are 19th, 22nd and 26th February

If you have missed out on ordering rabbit bait through the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group’s program (which closes on 7th February), or if you need to follow up with additional bait, do not despair!!! There are also later programs in adjoining landcare areas.

For the program run by the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network, contact Murray Johns on 0455 500 542 murray.scipn@gmail.com
For the program run by the Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network, contact Simon Falkiner, 0407319967 falkiner.ag@bigpond.com

In Victoria feral or wild populations of European rabbits (Orytolagus cuniculus) are declared as established pest animals under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

The Barrabool Hills rabbit baiting program is just one of a number of control measures that are recommended to help landholders fulfil their legal responsibility “to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate, established pest animals from their land”, as outlined in this Act.

Rabbit Management Field day

Later in the year, we will be co-hosting a Rabbit Management Field Day in Gnarwarre. This will be an opportunity to hear the latest from the experts, see how to manage warren destruction and learn about rabbit management more generally. Watch the group’s website and the newsletter for the date and venue for this event.
Mapping the Barrabool Hills

In late February we will start the process of mapping both private and public land across the Barrabool Hills. Members will be able to record natural features (eg. remnant vegetation, replanted areas, shelter belts), farm infrastructure (eg. water features, power lines, underground water lines, fences), pests and weeds, photographs, copies of reports and many other types of useful information. We will incorporate the information on remnant indigenous vegetation found during development of the flora booklet.

This database will assist owners/managers in whole farm planning and will greatly assist the our group in planning future activities and funding applications.

All member landowners/managers in the Barrabool Hills can receive assistance in putting together the information. The steps are:

- let us know that you are interested in being involved
- we will provide a list of descriptors so that information is collected consistently
- on a map mark up the different features that you want recorded and fill out whatever information you have to go with each feature. (We will provide a plan of your property if you do not have one.)
- send what information you have back to the Group
- we will enter your information into the GIS system
- we will then visit you and sit down to check the data and make any necessary changes

we will then provide you with a copy of your information
if there are changes in the future eg. new plantings, send the information back to the Group
if you download QGIS you will be able to update the information yourself

All detailed information will be held by the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group. It will not be shared with other groups unless individual landowner approval is obtained.

Geoff Anson, GIS coordinator.

Contact us.

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Instagram: barraboolhillslandcaregroup
Web site: www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au
Let your fellow members know what is happening in the Barrabool Hills. Contributions to the newsletter are welcomed. Send articles and photos to geoffanson@mac.com.

Members are able to advertise their Barrabool Hills business in the newsletter @ $30 per issue (space allowing). Adds are approximately 50 mm x 70 mm, and will be printed provided there is space.

A special thanks goes to the Leigh family for distributing the newsletter.