



# F . O . L . K . L . A . W .

## NEWSLETTER *Spring 2008*

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*Hi all,*

*Welcome to our new look FOLKLAW Newsletter! We have decided to change to cater for all the members who now receive our newsletters by email. We have included a 'Goodie' for you too.*

### ***Koala Enclosure and Aviary Completed!***



*FOLKLAW volunteers have finally finished Jennie Bryant's Koala enclosure and Aviary! For those that do not know, Jennie is our local wild life carer who specialises in koalas. On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, Phil Birchall, Steve Ainsworth, Allan Lim Joon, Peter and Karin Cooper, Jennie Bryant, Hugh and Jennie's family all chipped in to complete the enclosures. About 60 hours worth of work was donated on this Sunday. FOLKLAW also paid for all the materials. Luckily the weather was dry but warm and the forecast thunderstorms did not eventuate.*

*In total over 3 Sunday working bee days about 190 hours of voluntary labour and \$2,891.95 of donated money were used to complete the Koala enclosure/bird aviary. The money came from Ritchie's Community Benefits card, membership fees and other donations received. Remember to ask friends and relatives to sign up or change their Community Benefits card to CB 92591 or phone Peter on 9690 1774 and he will happily send you key tags and cards. Without this donated money, we could not have carried out this worthwhile venture.*

### ***New Koala Enclosure Residents!***

*Jennie had a blind koala with baby in one of the cages on her property. The mother will never be able to be released into the wild. An orphaned baby koala was also taken into Jennie's care and luckily it was able to be fed by the blind mother. So now she has 2 young ones to look after. On the day that we had our working bee she had 7 koalas in residence - not to mention numerous other injured and sick birds and other wild life. The mother koala and her 2 babies (pictured on the left) were moved into the new Koala enclosure on the day after we completed it and are all doing well.*



*FOLKLAW volunteers have also been working in the Somers Koala Reserve. We have recycled some shade cloth and placed it over the fence separating the Reserve from an adjoining farm.*

This we hope will result in fewer weeds (especially Scotch Thistles) from being blown into the Reserve. We have also been hand weeding some areas and have a regular weed management plan in place to reduce the number of weeds in the Reserve. FOLKLAW applies for and is given an annual budget from the Mornington Peninsula Shire to manage the Koala Reserve with. We employ contractors to spray weeds regularly. FOLKLAW also contributes financially to the upkeep of the Somers Koala Reserve.

Below is an article by Anne Hillerman-Ainsworth. Many thanks, Anne for your contribution. If anyone else would like to write an article for our newsletter, I would love to hear from you. Please send any articles to our email address at [karincooper@dodo.com.au](mailto:karincooper@dodo.com.au).

### **Blue Banded Bee (Goodie):** (*Amegilla*)

In Australia there are over 1,500 species of native bees, as well as the better known European honey bee (*Apis Mellifera*). Some native bees are social, forming complex hives, however most are solitary. Some of the more common native bees found in Victorian gardens include the Teddy Bear bee, Leafcutter bees, Resin bees, Masked bees and Blue banded bees.



One of the most easily identified native bees is the beautiful Blue banded bee (*Amegilla*). These bees are approximately 8 - 15 mm long with distinctive fluorescent, pale blue stripes on their black abdomens, males have five bands and females have four. They have golden hairs on their heads and thoraxes. Compared to the common honey bee the movements of blue banded bees appear very fast and erratic. They do sting but are not aggressive; they will only attack if trodden on or threatened.

Blue banded bees start appearing in early summer. They develop from immature pupae which have been dormant in nest burrows during the winter before developing into adults and emerging with the warmer weather. All adult bees die with the onset of cold weather. Blue banded bees are generally solitary but females will often build their nests near others usually by burrowing underground branching tunnels but they also favour the walls of mud brick houses. Males cluster at night by clinging to the stems of grasses or leaves by their jaws.

Native bees perform an invaluable pollination service in our gardens and Blue banded bees are especially useful for pollinating tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. They are known as buzz pollinators, they hold the flowers and vibrate with a loud buzzing sound, and this causes the flower to drop the pollen onto the bee's body. Recent research has shown that Blue banded bees perform well as pollinators in commercial tomato glasshouses and may negate the need for the proposed importation of the European bumble bee into mainland Australia. They are also beautiful and a delight to watch.

You can help to protect the native bees that visit your garden by providing water, growing food plants and avoiding the use of pesticides. Favourite plants of Blue banded bees are blue and purple flowers like lavender, Westringia, Brachyscome and Dianella but they will also visit flowers of other colours, both native and exotic, including Abelia, bottle brushes, Melaleucas, Eucalyptus, Grevillias and Hibbertia. You can find more information on these fascinating insects at the Australian Native Bee Research Centre's website [www.aussiebee.com.au](http://www.aussiebee.com.au)

Any relevant articles from our readers for our next newsletter would be most welcome.