

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

MALLACOOTA & DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

VOL: 14 NO: 1 JANUARY 2022

FROM YOUR U3A COMMITTEE

Greetings to you from all of us ... we are healthy and hope you are too.

We trust you all enjoyed family and/or friends at Christmas even though the weather was inclement. And it was SUCH a quiet **New Year** ... it was a beautiful night.

Here we are and it's already February. We all hope that 2022 will be a new beginning ... a different year, hopefully without the disease and tensions that we've lived with these past two years. COVID has altered much of the bigger picture but our beautiful Mallacoota has continued to be a breathtaking delight and we have been incredibly lucky. The safety we have mostly enjoyed cannot be taken for granted. The ease with which we can continue to stay mentally & physically strong is worth its weight in gold.

The postponement of our first program for 2022 was a difficult decision. Uppermost was everyone's health. That continues to be. Coupars preferred a live audience and we could not assure total safety. We all long to meet face to face, enjoy a cuppa, chat and catch up.

Our program for this year is taking shape. We continue to look for interesting, educational and picturesque topics and people to share with us their experience, information, passions and visual treasures. If you would like to share your experience with us, we would be delighted.

Stay well. See you soon,

Robyn Hunziker

DIARY DATES

*If an event involves Zoom,
Members will receive links by email.
Non-members must request email link.*

MARCH 4

International Women's Day

APRIL 1

Round Table Discussion
"Peoples and Cultures of Africa"

In the PIPELINE

- *Pat and Mike Coupar*—Citizen Scientists to the Great Barrier Reef
- *Cazz Jones*—Myanmar

An Armchair Tour of S.E. Asia

with Michael Beedle

On the 5th November last year, Michael came to show us the diversity that is inherent in such a wide sweep of countries and cultures. He showed us a collation of sights culled from many trips.

We started in Singapore, a place most of us know, but not of great interest to Michael. Was it too like another developed western country? The airport was inspiring with its décor of water droplets.

Michael whisked us away to see Lake Toba in Sumatra which occupies a huge crater much too big to walk around in a flash. As we would all expect, as the islands of Indonesia are in the Pacific Ring of Fire, there are many remaining examples of tectonic upheaval. In the state of Kedah in Malaysia there is an exposed complete Paleozoic Sedimentary sequence from the Cambrian to the Permian Period now protected and preserved from those who may wish to develop

it. It is dated as being 200 million years old. I believe it the only such preserved sequence in the world.

Most of us know about the evidence of Bronze & Iron Age Settlements in the United Kingdom but few may be aware that in 1957 similar evidence was found in the Thailand in the village of Ban Chiang. As Michael said, fragments of rice among the offerings of Bronze Age gifts indicate that these were permanent agricultural holdings.

We moved to the Temple of Angkor Wat. Building was started in 1100 still beautifully striking and speaking of past opulence. Initially it reflected the glory of the Kymer Empire while it was dedicated to Hinduism. Later still it became a Buddhist Temple. As the Empire crumbled so did the temple but the craftsmanship needed was sophisticated.

Finally we went to more modern structures such as the Friendship Bridge, opened in 1994, as a gift from the Australian Government, to the people of Laos, to acknowledge Australian influence in Laos at the time of the Vietnam War.

The Victory Gate finished in 1968 celebrates the defeat of the French in Vietnam and honours those who died in World War Two.

These words do not do justice to Michael's evocative photography but may give you a glimpse of the beauty and diversity of parts of S.E. Asia. There are so many aspects worth a second look!

Glinda Major



Report on Spanish Night



October 2021

OLA! After many months of on-again-off-again lockdowns we managed to hold a night to celebrate Spanish food, wine and music thanks to our very talented local caterer the late Vanessa Janss and musicians Henry and Rachel Holt supported by Rachel Severs, and John and Joycelyn Grunden. Don Ashby as usual managed to pull together necessary equipment to enable us to go ahead on the night despite last minute bad weather.

We were all devastated by Vanessa's tragic death soon after our event, and like many other groups around town, will take time to recover.

The event was a collaboration between U3A and the Mallacoota Seniors, and also was strongly supported by non-members. We learnt a lot about liquor licensing, Covid regulations, and acquiring exotic food, wine and beer here in Mallacoota.

As you will have noticed from our presenters over the course of the year, we have many well-travelled locals who are happy to share with us their experiences of other places and cultures.

We have also been looking at various alternative venues around town and feel that we are well placed to plan similar events in the future under better circumstances. Perhaps those people who expressed interest in eg German food, wine and beer might come forward to talk about possibilities for the coming year?



George Raitt

EDITORS NOTE: Congratulations to George and Fiona who not only single-handedly organised this very enjoyable night of entertainment, but also insisted on serving both food and wine. This left the rest of us with only one thing to do - enjoy the offerings - which we all did with great gusto.

Our U3A committee is considering staging similar events on a yearly basis with varying themes. So. . . thank you Fiona and George for doing such a wonderful job and be mindful that having revealed such talent and willingness to organize, we may look to you to take on this event each year.

Heather Morris—Online Author Talk

Hear about the new novel *Three Sisters* from internationally best-selling author Heather Morris.

Three Sisters, the new novel from best-selling author Heather Morris is rich in vivid detail - and beautifully told. It will break your heart, but leave you amazed and uplifted by the courage and fierce love of three sisters, whose promise to each other kept them alive.

Heather Morris is an international best-selling author. Her debut novel, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, has sold more than 6 million copies



around the world and its sequel, *Cilka's Journey* is also incredibly popular. Heather's first non-fiction book, *Stories of Hope*, was published last year.

Wednesday 23 February
Online via Zoom
6.30 pm – 7.30 pm

Phone 5152 4225 to book your place.

Brought to you by East Gippsland Shire Libraries, Latrobe City Libraries, Wellington Shire Libraries and Myli (West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation).



Stargazing 2022



We plan to begin star gazing sessions after the holiday season, dates and details to be announced. As suitable dates around the new moon are weather dependent, we have tended to use the community Facebook page to advise last minute changes. Anyone who does not have access to that should contact Fiona to keep informed about dates.

Last year we found that our older members don't go out much at night, particularly over winter. Nevertheless, younger families have attended our sessions in the warmer months and have experienced the simple pleasures of star gazing using binoculars, and younger attendees seem very handy at photographing the stars with smart phones. Some of our more experienced photographers can take wonderful photos with the



Samsung 12, which is even favoured by professional photographers.

Fiona's new 10inch Dobsonian reflector telescope arrived late last

year and has already enabled her to view the rings of Saturn, and Saturn's moons, and to observe the phases of Venus, where it appears as a crescent, much like the earth's crescent moon. And, of course, you can see the larger (Gallilean) moons of Jupiter through binoculars.

We are in discussions with the Mallacoota P12 College about running some sessions using the school telescope equipment and are still to determine where we will run such sessions.



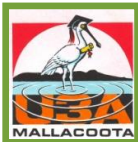
Last year we found the Betka picnic shelter handy for winter viewing, especially being able to use the picnic shelter to make a cup of tea to keep warm. The Tip Beach car park, and adjacent fairway, was very good in the warmer months. **George & Fiona**

"No coarse hand of progress will ever tear from Mallacoota and its surroundings the mystic beauty that still clings to it like an enchanted veil, showing under the soft transparency of sky and air a loveliness amongst the rarest in picturesque Australia."

E.J. Brady.



➡ *Wise words to ponder and reassess our home, Mallacoota.*



THE BANANA CLUMP

... a reflection

The banana clump at the bottom of our garden was my place of retreat. There were plump lady fingers and mangoes in season for refreshment: my escape from my bossy, older sisters.

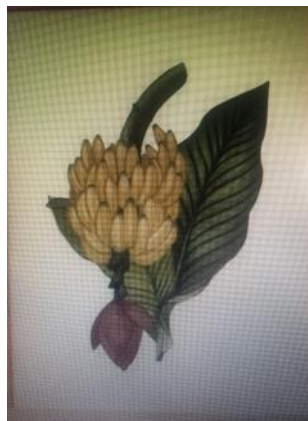
For my mother the clump was a status symbol. The banana clump was connected somehow to the septic system. The urban myth circulated by the autocratic Brisbane City Council was that the geology of Brisbane did not permit sewerage. In any event every other house in the immediate area had a sentry box. We did too; ours stored the chook food. As a very junior member of the household, one of my chores was to mix the bran and pollard for the fowls. They were not free range but certainly not caged and certainly not fed with any antibiotics. Stories are legend about the



time the Christmas turkey was stored in the sentry box accepted by a very grateful dunny man. Everyone in our area kept fowls not so much for the chicken but for the fresh eggs. A necessity, by the way

once the American locust plague arrived. Generally, fowls were only killed once they stopped laying and gave rise to a pleasant chicken casserole. The preferred breed was Black Leghorn, thought to be more resilient to infection. A recent visit to the Bega Show reminded me about the importance of poultry breeds.

A young chicken was killed only for special occasions such as Christmas and Birthdays My job was to remove the pin feathers and my mother would carefully singe the remaining body hairs. The giblets were removed and incorporated into the stuffing. I wonder where all the giblets go now? I have not seen a chicken replete with giblets for years. I wonder how many folk even know what they are. The preferred method of cooking was in a brown paper bag in the oven of the fuel stove. The result was both tasty and succulent. My reward for handling the pin feathers, not that I could avoid the chore as I was the least experienced in getting out of work, was the wish bone. I could decide on my sharing partner.



Nobody in our immediate area had anything but a fuel stove. The first time I saw an electric stove was when my mother visited her sisters who lived at Bondi Beach. I was about four.

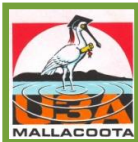
Our house like most others in the area was on high stumps with twenty odd steps to the back door. The under the

house was nearly as important as the house itself. Here was where the car fitted in and my swing and the copper. It was state of the art built in with concrete for quicker boiling. I had to put the wood chips in and get it going for mum. Being a housewife required a lot of physical activity especially as my father was away a lot. Next in this elaborate procedure was my job of sorting the "coloureds" from the "whites". Once boiled and rinsed, the whites were blued. Why? I do not know. Finally hung out long before Hills Hoist were on the market. If one of the bush props failed, all the washing fell on the ground. Washing day was always on Mondays and that night's dinner was cold meat, from Sunday's roast, and salad with a quick dessert like junket.

This backward look will give a glimpse of what life was like for most people in the early 1940's. Perhaps I show how much change has taken place in one person's lifetime almost without anyone noticing.



Glinda Major



Stargazing Report and Plan for 2022



George & Fiona Raitt started a lunar, monthly Stargazing session around April/May 2021, on the new moon (i.e. dark skies).

Their report:

Initial meetings were at Betka picnic area for a few months until construction works there made the move to Tip Beach car park necessary, (ie golf course fairway), which is an excellent site.

Equipment consisted of binoculars, which give good views of the planets and major star clusters/nebula.

Winter is cold, and only a few hardy people joined in. However, gradually numbers have increased after being contacted including families with their children.

With daylight saving, and longer days in summer, twilight is later and while nights are not as cold, it is harder to get people out after 10pm when it is dark enough for star gazing. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that families are coming out to show kids the night.

We have promoted the activity in this U3A newsletter, on the Notice Board in the PO lane, on social media and in the new "What's On".

Fiona's 10 inch telescope has arrived, and we have made contact with another resident (Ian Shepherd) with similar gear, so anticipating being able to see more detail in the night sky in 2022.

Destination Gippsland

—'astrotourism' project.

This was written up in a recent "Whats On", and is a marketing initiative to support 8 towns in Wellington and East Gippsland shires. We have been liaising with Destination Gippsland and MDBTA (which U3A has joined as a Not-for-Profit member).

The project aims to produce a website promoting the region and participating towns, and intends to install local signage promoting a possible location (selected in our case by MBTA). This project is intended to produce outcomes around February 2022.

It is unclear yet whether the project budget will support e.g. a night sky calendar, events around International Dark Sky Week, in April 2022 also promoting Mallacoota. It is also unclear whether the project has sufficient funding to acquire more sophisticated equipment for Mallacoota, and who would manage that equipment.

We will stay in the loop as we think there could be a role for U3A in raising interest and awareness in the town.

Plans for 2022

We will continue to publicise star gazing in "What's On", to give advance notice of what can be seen in the night sky around the new moon.

We will resume in February, either at Tip Beach or Karbeethong Avenue, depending on how easy it is to move Fiona's telescope, availability of other equipment, etc.

If the **Destination Gippsland** project does not fund equipment for Mallacoota, there are inexpensive options to explore later e.g. 12 x 50 monoculars cost about \$90 and give good viewing of the moon, planets and star clusters.

There are also possible visiting speakers from e.g. U3A Bayside, various authors who have written works on indigenous astronomy (including the Yuin or South-coast peoples), who might present in person or via Zoom and could be slotted in to our regular program. These could be explored for autumn or later in 2022.

Fiona and George





It's the effort that's important

It is well known that Mallacoota and District are excellent area for seeing and studying birds (and other wildlife). Some 300 species of birds have been recorded in the area. The eBird system (operated by the Cornell Lab for Ornithology at Cornell University in New York State) includes reports by some 338 observers covering 763 sites (the latter ranging from a generic site simply labelled 'Mallacoota' to 2ha sites in the forests and woodland). While eBird first started to cover the whole world in 2010 it only began to be widely used in this area from 2014.

I have used data from the eBird system to try to find what factors lead to more species being reported at some times rather than others. Details of this analysis are available on request. In summary, I used multiple regression analysis to examine a number of factors for which I had data and that I thought might be important in explaining variation in the number of species recorded, and concluded with two models showing some factors which explain much of the variation.

The first model showed that a high number of species in a month is likely when there are a high number of lists submitted; it's the warmer months;



and the Howe Flat area is visited. It could be noted that while the Howe has a high level of diversity it is relatively difficult to access. Thus, it tends to be the haunt of the more serious birders and possibly a report from that area also indicates a higher level of expertise in bird

identification is being employed in those months. The second model replaced the variable for the Howe by a variable indicating the recent months when the fire or Covid caused visitation to Mallacoota to be reduced. Unlike the first model, the total number of sites surveyed became significant. It also showed – not surprisingly - that when something causes Mallacoota to close up the number of species recorded declines. A possible outcome of this is that the impact of the COVID close downs in 2020 and 2021 will affect the analysis of eBird records if trying to show the recovery of bird life from the fires.

Martin Butterfield

Another pretty good month for birding in Mallacoota. From reviewing the eBird records for species MIA from my sightings there have been a good number of birders visiting the area and seeing some good birds. (There is only 1 list from Birddata for the area in this month - see below.)

A full list of the species recorded is at [this sheet](#). We have recorded 153 species in the month, a little above 2021. Note that species not validated by eBird or Birddata are not included in this report.

