



## THE LAUNCH OF *SUMMER ON THE SWAN*

Around forty guests of the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group crowded into the Swan Room in the Heathcote Cultural Precinct to launch *The Overwintering Project: Summer on the Swan*.

*The Overwintering Project* provides a nation-wide focus for printmakers on the plight of trans-equatorial migratory birds. Through *Summer of the Swan* emphasis will be given to the importance of protecting migratory shorebirds and their habitats here: the mudflats, sandbars, coastal saltmarsh and fringing vegetation that form the Swan Estuary Marine Park. During the course of the year activities will be organized to enhance community understanding of and appreciation for these remaining areas of natural value in the Swan River Estuary, and the urgent need to reverse pressures of disturbance and habitat loss.

Among those who attended the launch were artists, community volunteers and representatives from various groups and organisations associated with the care of the Swan River Estuary.

*Summer on the Swan* will conclude on World Migratory Bird Day 2020 with an exhibition of works by printmakers at Nyisztor Studio in Melville.

## THEY'VE ARRIVED!

Trans-equatorial migratory waders had arrived on the Swan River Estuary by mid-September, having travelled approximately 12,000kms from their breeding grounds in Siberia to spend summer here.

Among those sighted at Pelican Point one afternoon were Red-necked Stints, a Curlew Sandpiper still in some of its rusty-coloured breeding plumage, and both Common and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

Since September other species have been noted including, unusually, a Whimbrel and Greater Sand Plover.

In October our monthly bird-count along the Marine Park foreshore at Alfred Cove coincided with World Migratory Bird Day. Forty-seven species of birds were identified by the team, among them four species of trans-equatorial wading birds: Great Knot, Grey Plover, Red-necked Stint and Common Greenshank.

Over forthcoming months they and others will forage in the Estuary's mudflats and shallows to restore their energy levels. As migration time approaches again, feeding will become more intense, with birds 'fuelling up' for their long flight back across the globe - hopefully surviving to breed once more.



A Curlew Sandpiper & Red-necked Stints at Pelican Point  
Photograph courtesy T Graham-Taylor

## FLOCKS OF RED-NECKED AVOCETS AT ALFRED COVE

Participants have also been delighted to include flocks of Red-necked Avocet (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*) in recent bird-counts at Alfred Cove.

Endemic to Australia and highly nomadic, twenty of this elegant species of wading bird were included in SERAG's October survey - and a month later, people using the small viewing platform off Burke Drive were privileged to observe ten spend the whole day foraging in one of the larger lagoons in the Cove's expanse of coastal saltmarsh.

Simply lovely!

Photograph courtesy M Matassa



# NESTING SEASON ON THE ESTUARY

At the same time as migratory shorebirds from the Arctic were arriving, other migratory, nomadic and local birds commenced their mating and nesting rituals for breeding here during our southern summer.



A nesting swan, an egret in breeding plumage and an oyster-catcher warming its eggs  
*Photographs courtesy T Graham-Taylor & C Ingledew*

## RAINBOW BEE-EATERS RETURN TO BREED

Rainbow Bee-eaters have returned from northern reaches to Bush Forever Site 331, with at least one pair preparing their nesting burrow on an exposed area on Attadale foreshore.

Despite there being an enormous dog-exercise area adjacent and clear signage indicating this limited site is a 'no-go' area for dogs, unfortunately the birds are at great risk from people who still allow their dogs freedom to chase birds and to snuffle out other native fauna there.

Heavy grass-mowers and rubbish trucks pose additional threats to Bee-eater burrows.

Therefore, during nesting season, this part of BFS331 has been sectioned off with bunting and signage alerting people to the needs of the birds and encouraging minimum disturbance.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the City of Melville to protect these bushland jewels.

*Photograph courtesy J Kelly*



## MISTLETOE & ORCHIDS IN FLOWER



Spring saw Mistletoe once again in flower on *Casuarina obesa* trees at Pelican Point.

As well, a number of orchids were spotted in restoration sites where we have undertaken weed-management.

They included Mignonette, Sun and Snail orchids.

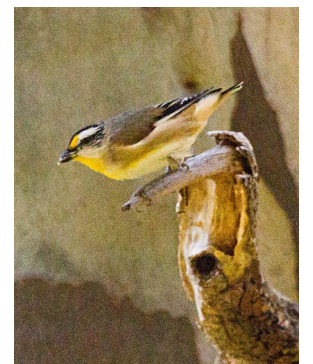
Flowering Mistletoe, Mignonette Orchid & Snail Orchid *Photographs courtesy T Graham-Taylor, C O'Neill & E Murphy*

## UWA@PP CONCLUDES FOR THE YEAR

Coordinated by Yvonne Fong from the Guild Volunteering Hub, students from UWA have supported SERAG's bushcare efforts at Pelican Point for most of the year.

Their commitment was acknowledged and celebrated with the installation of two more artificial nesting boxes for Striated Pardalotes - adding to the outstandingly successful boxes erected there in previous years.

Tiny birds, Pardalotes contribute to the health of the bushland environment by removing pest insects from trees such as *Eucalyptus rudis*, and to our aesthetic pleasure through their exquisite plumage and soft calls.



*Photographs courtesy Y Fong & T Graham Taylor*

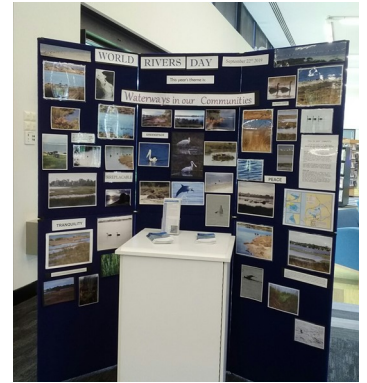
# WORLD RIVERS DAY 2019

World Rivers Day is a global celebration of our rivers and is held always on the fourth Sunday in September.

The Day strives to increase public awareness of the values of our waterways while also promoting the need for sound river stewardship. Thousands of events were held around the world, in six continents and in more than seventy countries.

As this year's theme was *Waterways in our Communities*, SERAG mounted a display at Bracks Library in Melville.

It highlighted some of the remaining natural values of the Swan River Estuary, the various pressures upon them and how our group of community volunteers contributes to their conservation and protection.



Photograph courtesy R Napier

## CURTIN VOLUNTEERS! ON THE ATTADALE FORESHORE

SERAG has been fortunate to have students from Curtin University support its *Community Rivercare Project* at Alfred Cove. Led by Foyin Adesanya, twelve energetic and capable people have arrived fortnightly during each semester for a morning's work on the very narrow margin of A-Class Nature Reserve along the Attadale foreshore of the Swan Estuary Marine Park.

Important sections of the Reserve are under increasing pressures of erosion associated with climate change. As well, the Reserve's extreme narrowness, the quality of the river spoil that has been dumped on the foreshore in earlier years and some nearby residents seeking 'views' by destroying vegetation add to conservation and recovery challenges.

However it is essential to preserve and strengthen this riparian margin. It is part of one of the last-remaining areas of the coastal saltmarsh (a Threatened Ecological Community) in the Region; it provides vital habitat for native fauna; it filters pollutants from the adjacent dog-exercise area and storm-water drains entering the Marine Park - important for the health of benthic organisms and seagrasses that underpin food chains; it serves as a buffer to human disturbance, stabilizes embankments and mitigates storm damage.

In the course of the year the students have removed many dozens of bags of seasonal weeds and planted many hundreds of seedlings and large bags of mature sedges, using best-practice techniques.

Their care and commitment have been greatly appreciated and we look forward to this relationship continuing next year.



Weeding and planting on the Attadale foreshore

Photographs courtesy C O'Neill

## STRENGTHENING & MAINTAINING RESILIENCE

As well as interminable weeding, our *Saturday Morning at the Cove* team has been busy installing coir rolls and planting sedges in breaches in the Attadale shoreline, continuing a focus on soft erosion-mitigation and habitat recovery. We are pleased with the steady gains being made.

Following a session of hard work, the volunteers find a beautiful shady spot on the foreshore at which to enjoy a restorative cup of tea and cake.



Photographs courtesy C O'Neill & N Peters

We are very fortunate to have a generous member cater for many of these events. The far right photo is an example of the enticing home-baked treats made to strengthen and reward the team's resilience!

# EROSION TAKING A TOLL ON A-CLASS NATURE RESERVE

Some concentrated work in erosion-mitigation has been completed on an important but vulnerable section of the riparian margin of the Swan Estuary Marine Park at Attadale.

Coir rolls have been installed and large hedge-bags and pots of *Juncus kraussii* planted as buffers to the increasing intensity of storms and to reduce scouring along the foreshore.

Unfortunately the protective ribbon of A-Class Reserve is *extremely* narrow here, with a pathway constructed far too close to the water's edge to be sustainable into the future.

With a beautiful alternative route nearby for people to enjoy, SERAG recommends this short length of pathway is removed and its footprint re-vegetated to stabilize the embankment and help preserve the ecological integrity of the site.

Photograph courtesy C O'Neill



## TOUGH & BEAUTIFUL

*Scaevola crassifolia* (Coastal Fan-flower) and *Conostylis candicans* are among the few plants tough enough to survive in parts of the A-Class Nature Reserve along Attadale foreshore, where wetland infill policies of previous generations have created artificially high embankments.

Here, dumped river-spoil, hydrophobic soils, lack of moisture and unmitigated exposure to the sun have created unnaturally harsh conditions for native riparian species. Even *Ficinia nodosa* fails to thrive!

*Scaevola* and *Conostylis* in flower along the Attadale foreshore  
Photographs courtesy C O'Neill



## BEFORE & AFTER AT TOMPKINS PARK

These photographs clearly illustrate the enormous difference a couple of hours hand-weeding makes!

During summer our *TREEmendous Tuesday* team begins work at 6.30am and concludes at 8.30am to enjoy a home-brewed coffee and chat - taking advantage of the cool of the morning and leaving the rest of the day for other things. It is a pleasant and positive way to engage with the River each week.

You may like to join this terrific group of volunteers.



Photographs courtesy M Matassa & C O'Neill

## HEALING THE RIVER - A GUIDED TOUR OF ALFRED COVE

Alfred Cove is one the most crucial parts of the Swan River Estuary. Its health is vital to the well-being of the whole river ecosystem - and it is outstandingly beautiful.

Through Glyde-In Community Centre SERAG organised a morning in late November to host a guided walk along Alfred Cove, during which participants could learn about and experience elements of the River that are essential for its fish, crabs, dolphins, swans and other water birds - including migratory waders - to thrive.

The event was part of our *Summer on the Swan* initiative and rapidly and fully subscribed.

Along the way the tour group paused in their explorations to enjoy morning tea with a team of community volunteers completing hands-on conservation work, as part of SERAG's on-going efforts in healing degraded areas of this precious part of the River.

# AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE PRESENTED TO SERAG

SERAG's efforts and achievements on the Swan River Estuary were recently recognised through the 2019 *Western Australian Coastal Awards for Excellence*.

These Awards are coordinated by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on behalf of the Western Australian Planning Commission's *Coastwest Program*.

SERAG's Award was for ***Outstanding on-ground coastal management contributing to the improvement of Western Australia's coastal environment and preservation of its natural values.***

Chairperson Margaret Matassa accepted the Award on behalf of our many members and friends who have so very generously contributed time and energy to Estuary care.



Photograph courtesy S Napier

## CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF RIVER-CARE

Ten years of devoted Estuary care were celebrated at SERAG's 2019 Annual General Meeting.

The AGM was well-attended and successful: Caitlyn O'Dea from Edith Cowan University proved a thought-provoking guest speaker, summarising her research into the effects of swan herbivory and climate change on seagrasses in the Estuary; reports on the past year's activities were delivered and approved, special plans for 2020 outlined and volunteer contributions acknowledged; and a new energetic Management Committee was formed to lead our work in direct conservation, advocacy and community liaison.

In her Chairperson's Report, Margaret Matassa included a review of some of SERAG's longer-term achievements - before-and-after photographs powerfully illustrating the positive outcomes of persistent volunteer effort.

The support of members and friends remains fundamental to our capacity to improve the well-being of the River, ensuring that its nature is valued, protected and thrives.

**Thank you** to the hundreds of people who have contributed to SERAG's operations over the past ten years.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

SERAG also acknowledges and extends sincere thanks to managing authorities, funding bodies and other organisations with which we have collaborated this year, including:



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



SWAN CANNING  
RIVERPARK



natural resource  
management program



Let's Go



birdlife  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Natural Area  
CONSULTING MANAGEMENT SERVICES



Wirambi Landcare



### FOR YOUR DECEMBER CALENDAR

- TREEmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 6.30am - 8.30am
- 03 (Tues) Bushcare Alfred Cove 8.30am - 2.30pm
- 28 Saturday Morning at the Cove 7.30am - 9.30am
- Watering at Alfred Cove & Pelican Point

Please contact SERAG to register your interest and for further details.



With warmest wishes to all  
our members and friends  
for the Christmas Season



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