



## A SURF-PARK AT ALFRED COVE ?

Over recent years, significant areas of bushland and open space along the Swan Canning River System have been lost to various forms of urban development. There is now very little left of the original foreshore vegetation, while the vision of maintaining a graceful ribbon of green along the River's margins seems all but forgotten.

As population and housing densities increase, however, the community's desire to access the River foreshore for passive recreation grows, as does an appreciation of the rich biodiversity of local flora and fauna and cultural heritage values of the 'marli riverpark'. One has only to look at the crowds of local families and tourists that flock to Point Walter, Point Heathcote and Kings Park each day. Kings Park alone has over six million visitors each year!

Hence the City of Melville's receipt of a proposal from a private business venture to lease foreshore land in and around the current Melville Bowling Club site for the purpose of building and operating an artificial surfing facility raises considerable apprehension. If approved, not only will public open space be lost, but the short- and long-term impacts on Alfred Cove A-Class Nature Reserve and the Swan Estuary Marine Park are highly likely to be detrimental.

Should the bowls club be relocated, Council would enjoy a unique opportunity to return that part of the foreshore to public use. The area could be carefully landscaped to strengthen, complement and support not only the superb and internationally celebrated natural values of the Swan River at that location, but also its Aboriginal and other heritage values, the creative energies of Atwell House Arts Centre, existing sports fields and the desire of young and old alike to access beautiful and freely available places along the River for quiet reflection, relaxation and gentle exercise.



Perhaps a nature play area could be considered, similar to that set in Melbourne's historic Royal Park (see ABC's *Gardening Australia* 27.08.2016), and the surf-park built at a more appropriate site.

A nature play area would enhance community life without spoiling the foreshore - facilitating the well-being of young families while at the same time building on the rapidly developing and financially attractive eco-tourism opportunities within the State.

Artists impression of the proposed surf facility Source: *Urbnsurf media release*

## BREEDING SEASON FOR BEACH-NESTING BIRDS

On the Swan River Estuary the breeding season for Red-capped Plovers (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) is generally between July and January.

These beautiful little shorebirds nest in simple shallow scrapings of sand on the beach, just past the high-water mark. Both nest and bird are very difficult to see and their eggs are highly camouflaged.

Especially at Milyu and Pelican Point, where unfortunately access to the beach is relatively easy, they are *extremely* vulnerable to trampling and disturbance by beach walkers and their dogs.

If you look carefully at this photograph, you will spot a tiny chick and an adult Red-capped Plover taking cover in the samphire at Pelican Point.



Red-capped Plover and Chick  
Photograph courtesy: T Graham-Taylor

# IMPORTANT POCKETS AND CORRIDORS OF BUSHLAND

National Threatened Species Day is held each year on 7 September, providing a time to reflect on what has happened to our native flora and fauna in the past and how we can protect threatened species in the future.

This year our volunteers celebrated the Day by hand-removing winter weeds smothering vegetation in part of the Alfred Cove foreshore.

Together with other small pockets of native vegetation surviving along the River and across suburban Perth, the A-Class Nature Reserve forms part of a tenuous system of bush corridors and linkages that preserves essential habitat for our unique native flora and fauna, including threatened species.



Hand-weeding at Troy Park  
Photograph courtesy: M Matassa

Opening the hyper-link [hotspots for threatened species](#) gives access to a very interesting article by Sarah DeWeerd that illustrates the vital importance of conserving such places.

It commences: *The average Australian city is home to 32 threatened species, according to a study recently published in the journal Global Ecology and Biogeography.*

*The researchers compiled data on the distribution of Australia's 1,643 land-dwelling threatened species, including 1,215 plants and 428 animals. They compared these maps to the locations of Australia's 99 cities that have more than 10,000 residents.*

*They found that 503 threatened species, or 30 percent of the total, have distributions that overlap with urban areas. This includes 25 percent of listed plants and 46 percent of listed animals – species like the koala, grey-headed flying fox, swift parrot, Carnaby's black cockatoo, green and gold bell frog, and lots of orchids.*

It goes on to encourage us thus: *... the findings also suggest that with a little more care and consideration cities could make a major contribution to conservation. Urban areas commonly contain patches of native habitat interspersed with development, after all. Moreover, landscapes planted and maintained by humans can help certain species through lean times of the year.*

## EARTH ASSIST AT PELICAN POINT

In mid-September a group of secondary school students was treated to an exploration of Pelican Point as part of *Rio Tinto Earth Assist* - an award-winning environmental education and student volunteering program initiated by Conservation Volunteers Australia.

On this occasion, an evening bird-watching and light clean-up activity was organized by SERAG.

Careful not to disturb the birds, participants very quickly counted around a dozen different species of water or wading bird foraging, nesting or resting in the shallows, mudflats and beaches of the Marine Park. Among them, Osprey scanned the water for fish, Black-winged Stilts warmed their eggs in the samphire beds, hundreds of Little Black (and a few Little Pied) Cormorants rested on the beach, while Pied Oyster-catchers, Australian Shelducks and Black Swans protected varying numbers of their offspring.



Watching the birds at Pelican Point  
Photograph courtesy: M Matassa

Then there were the numerous bush birds spotted!

SERAG was pleased to support this project, which proved an enjoyable and rich learning experience for all involved.



# JOHN CURTIN WEEKEND

*John Curtin Weekend* is an annual event organized by the student-driven volunteering hub *Curtin Volunteers!*. It is the group's largest project through which volunteers work on community projects at regional and metropolitan sites.

SERAG was very fortunate to have a dozen students from Curtin University volunteer to assist in a variety of bush-care tasks at Pelican Point: spreading two enormous piles of mulch; planting some sedges and dry-land seedlings, and hand-weeding veldt grass and other major weeds from the site.

It was a superb contribution - and greatly appreciated.



Curtin University students at Pelican Point Photographs courtesy: C O'Neill

## DISCARDED NETS REMOVED FROM MARINE PARK

The fishing net shown below was extricated from the sedge-banks of the Swan Estuary Marine Park at Tompkins Park recently. It is the second pile of netting found in the space of a few months. This time, fortunately, no native fauna were entangled.

Recreational and other pressures on the Estuary Marine Parks and associated A-Class Nature Reserves - small areas specifically set aside for the protection of flora and fauna - continue to escalate.

Through incrementally destroying habitat and causing recurring disturbance to native fauna, the cumulative impact of various recreational activities is taking a terrible toll on the ecological diversity and resilience of these fragile places.



The development of a robust set of protections to arrest these deteriorating circumstances is critical and **urgently required**, with appropriate strategies implemented to ensure the unique natural values of the Swan River Estuary are preserved, not only for their intrinsic values, but for the enjoyment of future generations of the Perth community.

Fishing net removed from sedges bordering the Marine Park at Tompkins Park

Photograph courtesy: C O'Neill

## PEST PLANTS

In support of DPaw's management objectives, SERAG has received Swan Alcoa Land-care Program funding with which to remove cotton palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) being dangerously undermined by erosion along the Marine Park foreshore at Pelican Point. The palms are exotic to Australia and considered pest plant species. They also provide homes to colonies of feral Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) and Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*), both of which are highly detrimental to local native fauna.

They will be replaced with a diversity of indigenous vegetation, as part of on-going bush regeneration efforts at the site. Erosion-control work where the palms have been removed will complement these efforts and support conservation goals for this important bird habitat area.



Cotton Palms

Photograph courtesy: C O'Neill

# WORLD RIVERS DAY



Forty energetic people participated in this year's World Rivers Day Walk organised by the *Friends of Shenton Bushland*, both for their own members and interested others.

The weather was perfect: clear blue skies, a cool wind at one's back and a pleasant 17° temperature. The route meandered along the southern bank of the Swan River Estuary, from Fremantle to Canning Bridge, passing through pockets of exquisite remnant bushland and panoramic vistas and pausing at Atwell House Arts Centre, where SERAG provided refreshments.



Sightings of river dolphin, blossoming wattle, nesting osprey and dozens upon dozens of waterbirds resting on the sandbars off-shore were among the many natural delights encountered along the way.

The walk clearly illustrated the numerous and disparate values of our iconic River and reminded participants of the importance of careful and holistic stewardship.

Osprey chick in nest at Point Walter & Refreshments at Atwell House *Photographs courtesy: H Lawrenz and C O'Neill*

## UWA@PP

We held our last UWA@PP event for the year in early November, allowing students to concentrate on their impending examinations and final assessments during December.

Weeds were removed from a re-vegetation plot in Bush Forever Site 402, which has been an area of focus for the past couple of years.

The monthly event at Pelican Point - a collaboration between SERAG and the UWA Guild Volunteering Hub - has been extremely successful, with students devoting part of a Saturday morning each month to various bush-care tasks. This year their volunteer hours totalled around 250. Well done all!



Students hand-weeding at Pelican Point  
*Photograph courtesy: C O'Neill*

We will resume on Clean-up Australia Day in March 2017.

## WEEDING WIZARDS

On Tuesdays, around nine or ten volunteers meet in the early morning to devote a couple of hours to conservation work somewhere along the foreshore of the Marine Park at Alfred Cove.

For much of October and early November members of our *TREEmendous* Tuesday team concentrated their efforts in carefully hand-weeding the A-Class Nature Reserve between the Lentona Street drain and the entry to Troy Park.

It was a very challenging but satisfying task - their endeavours transforming the foreshore.



New members are welcome to join this or any of our regular teams. (There is always delicious coffee and cake to share afterwards!)

Before and after weeding  
*Photographs courtesy: M Matassa*

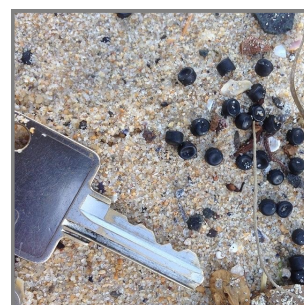


# PLASTIC PELLET DISASTER

Armed with sieves and trowels, a small group of SERAG volunteers recently joined the Swan River Trust and *River Guardians* in an attempt to clean-up a spill of many thousands of tiny black plastic pellets, which have washed up onto the foreshore in North Fremantle, Minum Cove and East Fremantle.

Called 'nurdles' and used in the manufacture of various plastic products, the pellets pose a significant risk to wildlife, both now as they can be inadvertently ingested, and in the future, when they break down further.

Plastics make up about 60% of marine debris. Entanglement and ingestion are the primary types of direct damage to wildlife caused by marine litter; however, it can also smother sea beds and it is a source of toxic substances in the marine environment.



Little black plastic pellets  
Photograph source: Swan River Trust

## A SIGN OF THE TIMES

The Department of Parks and Wildlife has developed a new sign to alert members of the community to incidences of vandalism of riparian vegetation within the Swan Canning River Park.

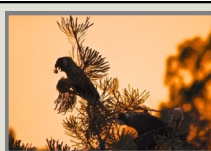
The sign has been designed to be used in different types of publically-owned locations, including recreational parks established for people, and reserves set aside for the protection of native flora and fauna. It also aims to educate people on the vital importance to overall river health of maintaining plant communities and habitats along river margins, and to encourage them in their care.



## SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A large group of members and friends attended our Annual General Meeting to hear about the latest research into the condition of seagrasses in the Swan River Estuary, to review the year's operations and to elect a new committee for 2017.

Planning will take place over forthcoming weeks in preparation for another productive and enjoyable year.



M Owen

Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain have been listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the EPBC Act.

For more information, please visit the link:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/131-conservation-advice.pdf>



## FOR YOUR DECEMBER CALENDAR

- *TREEmendous Tuesdays* 7.00am - 9.00am
- 06 (Tues) Bushcare Alfred Cove 8.45am - 2.30pm
- 07 (Wed) Riverine Debris Survey
- 12 Monthly Monday at Milyu 7.00am - 9.00am
- Watering at Pelican Point and Alfred Cove

Please refer to our website calendar for further information and register your interest with us if you would like to participate in any event.

Best wishes for a very merry Christmas  
and a healthy and happy New Year.



Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group Inc.

Mail: PO Box 73 North Fremantle WA

Phone: 08 9339 2439

Email: [swanestuaryreserves@gmail.com](mailto:swanestuaryreserves@gmail.com)

Website: [www.swanestuaryreserves.org.au](http://www.swanestuaryreserves.org.au)