



WHISKERED TERN VISITS PELICAN POINT

Seabirds of the tern family *Sternidae* are often seen at Pelican Point, including Caspian Tern, Crested Tern and the threatened Fairy Tern.

However recently the Pelican Point Group - which has conducted weekly bird-counts at the site since the early 1970s - was delighted to add a Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*) to its sighting data.

A small tubby bird with a slightly forked tail, the Whiskered Tern is also known as the Marsh Tern or Black-fronted Tern. It inhabits various freshwater and brackish wetlands in inland and coastal regions and eats small fish, amphibians, insects and crustaceans.

The Whiskered Tern has never before been recorded at the site.



Whiskered Tern

Photograph courtesy: Birdlife Australia

MIGNONETTES AND PINK FAIRIES FOUND



Volunteers have discovered Mignonette Orchids (*Microtis media*) and Pink Fairy Orchids (*Caladenia latifolia*) while hand-weeding in two small pockets of Bush Forever Site 331 - a restored triangle of bushland at the entry to Troy Park and remnant vegetation we call the Blue Wren Site.

Mignonette Orchids have numerous tiny flowers that are mostly green in colour and are so small that magnification is needed to see them in any detail. On the other hand, the Pink Fairy Orchid (as its name suggests) forms delicate but rather confident pink flowers.

The plants are a wonderful discovery, particularly as they have appeared in areas that were once heavily degraded and recently subject to vandalism.

We are hopeful that, with our continued care of the sites, the orchids will steadily multiply.

Pink Fairy Orchid Photograph courtesy: Margaret Matassa

THANK YOU!

The work of SERAG's Green Army Team concluded in mid-October.

We extend our sincere thanks to the hard-working members of the team, to Conservation Volunteers Australia for preparing them each day, and to the other organizations and people who contributed to the success of the program by facilitating hands-on learning experiences: staff from the Department of Parks and Wildlife; environment teams from the local governments of Melville, South Perth and Subiaco; Eddy Wajon from Friends of Ken Hurst Park; Peter Neesham from Bicton Environmental Action Group, and Denise Crosbie from Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre.

During the twenty-two week program, team members developed environmental management skills and understandings, while some pockets of remnant vegetation in and around the Estuary benefitted greatly from their efforts.

Hopefully, participants' interest in and appreciation of our natural environment will continue to grow, and some will go on to build successful careers in this important field.

SEAHORSE WASHED UP AT PELICAN POINT

A small dead seahorse and a two-cent coin were among the unusual items found by volunteers at Pelican Point during a Saturday morning event held to celebrate BushCare's Major Day Out.

The Western Australian Seahorse (*Hippocampus subelongatus*) is found in Cockburn Sound and the Swan Estuary, although it also occurs in oceanic seagrass beds in lower numbers. This species has a high coronet and tiger stripes on the snout (which are just visible in the photo) and a prominent spine between the eyes.

Individuals congregate in the lower reaches of the Swan River during early summer when many crustaceans are spawning, providing food for their offspring.

The beautiful little creature uses its prehensile tail to hold on to seagrass or on to pylons or ropes around jetties, while feeding on small crustaceans and zooplankton drifting past.

Under pressure from various trades and habitat degeneration, it is feared that this species may be particularly susceptible to decline. For conservation purposes it listed under the EPBC Act 1999; and in May 2004, it was listed under Appendix II of the United Nations Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

Unfortunately, appropriate data on distribution and abundance in the wild, and on fishing mortality, are not yet available, so further research is needed in order to evaluate the status of the species.

THE LURES OF MILYU

A recent few hours of litter collection at Milyu once again demonstrated the negative impact of recreational fishing on the Nature Reserve and Marine Park.

Two lures with rusty fishhooks attached were found discarded at different locations along the short stretch of beach. Lengths of fishing line and six plastic bait bags were also collected. These articles can cause terrible injury to wildlife.

Given that there are many less ecologically sensitive places along the River where fishing can be enjoyed, and that such items are collected every time we collect litter there, surely fishing is an inappropriate activity in this sanctuary.

MILYU PLANTING

The A-Class Nature Reserve at Milyu falls short of the shoreline of the Marine Park, thus limiting the positive effect that riparian vegetation can contribute to river water quality and erosion-mitigation, as well as the protective habitat that it can afford resting and breeding birdlife.

Hence, in consultation with the environment staff from the City of South Perth we have completed the planting of hundreds of sedges - a mixture of *Juncus kraussii* and *Cyperus gymnocaulos* - in front of the existing *Casuarina obesa* trees, just to the south of the Reserve. If survival rates are positive in this exposed spot, in-fill planting will continue next year.

The project has been facilitated through funding disbursed by SERCUL from the Two Rivers Catchment Group, and the efforts of our Green Army workers.



Western Australian Seahorse
Photograph courtesy: Denisse Fierro



Discarded fishing lures
Photograph courtesy: Aimee Forster



Planting at Milyu
Photograph courtesy: Aimee Forster

TYPHA AND TYRES REMOVED AT TOMPKINS PARK

SERAG has focussed much of its attention over the last few years on restoring a section of the narrow strip of foreshore at Tompkins Park in Melville - between the dual-use pathway and the Swan Estuary Marine Park at Alfred Cove.

Seasonal weeds such as wild radish have been rigorously targeted; and where once a rapidly expanding monoculture of tall, thick banks of *Typha orientalis* dominated, plantings of *Juncus kraussii*, *Schoenoplectus validus* and other native trees, shrubs and herbs will soon mature and return the place to a beautiful and diverse estuarine habitat for wildlife.

As well, now that the typha has been removed, a rich abundance of naturally regenerating samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora* and *Suaeda australis*) and native sea celery (*Apium prostratum*) has emerged.

We have also taken away enormous amounts of rubbish from the mudflats and shallows, including dozens of old tyres, some of which probably originated from the early 1960s, when the area was used as a refuse site.



Tyres retrieved from the shallows
Photograph courtesy: Mathew Oliver

Naturally regenerating samphire
Photograph courtesy: Margaret Matassa

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

During November SERAG participated in the Conservation Council of Western Australia's *Spring EcoFest* in Northbridge and the *Blessing of the River*, which is an annual event co-hosted by the City of Canning and the Department of Parks and Wildlife, held at the Shelley Beach Foreshore Park.

Such events provide us with an opportunity to talk about the River with other members of the community, to share information on the unique but fragile ecological values of its conservation reserves and marine parks and to exchange views on how everyone can contribute to its on-going protection and care.



Spring Festival Display
Photograph courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane

COOJONG IN FLOWER AT ALFRED COVE

This year, the spring flowering of Coojong (*Acacia saligna*) was particularly splendid in the nature reserve at Alfred Cove.

Not only is it a beautiful wattle, but it plays a very important part in maintaining the ecological health of the reserve by stabilizing and improving the soil, providing shelter for small native birds and lizards, giving shade to other plants and hosting many beneficial insects. Indeed, the Coojong is known to support approximately 40 species of bug, 55 species of beetle and 36 species of butterfly and moth!

The pretty pocket of Attadale foreshore where this photograph was taken is also proving to be an important source of food for threatened black cockatoos, including Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo (*Clyprorhynchus latirostris*), which will peel away wattle bark in search of protein-rich Jewel Beetle and Old Lady Moth larvae, and feast on seeds from the casuarinas nearby.



Acacia saligna and *Casuarina obesa*
Photograph courtesy: Margaret Matassa

A THREATENED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

As part of efforts to have Pelican Point registered as a federally listed threatened ecological community, we have established and assessed two flora survey plots in this important area of Coastal Saltmarsh.

Under the careful guidance of Julia Cullity from the Department of Parks and Wildlife, our Green Army team put one plot in the *Juncus kraussii* and *Ficinia nodosa* sedgeland and the other in the *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* and *Suaeda australis* herbland.

Julia also taught the team how to take soil samples for *MicroBlitz* - a citizen science project building a state-wide map using DNA sequencing to identify the biodiversity of microbes in our soils. The baseline map will be used to monitor, manage and protect the health of our environment into the future.



Green Army members establish a flora survey plot
Photograph courtesy: Julia Cullity

THE MIRACLE OF METAMORPHOSIS

The beautiful furry caterpillar you see in this photograph, crawling up the base of a sapling growing on the Tompkins Park foreshore, is commonly called a *Hairy Mary*. It is the larval stage of the Variable Anthelid (*Anthela varia*) - a species of moth found in coastal areas of southern Western Australia and parts of eastern Australia.

Once one of a row of eggs laid by its mother, this harmless caterpillar will feed on eucalypt leaves, then pupate in a buff papery double-walled cocoon nestled among dead leaves or under a log, finally to emerge as a wonderful large brown moth.

It is another example of the rich diversity of life in natural areas along the Swan River.

Photographs courtesy: Margaret Matassa & Wikipedia



OUR POSTCARD TO PARIS

As a community group concerned about the impacts of climate change in and around the Swan Canning river system, SERAG was invited by a journalist from Germany's international broadcaster, *Deutsche Welle*, to participate in its environment program *Living Planet* (www.dw.com/livingplanet).

In a "Postcard to Paris" some of our regular volunteers spoke of the noticeable and irreversible changes already taking place in our local environment, and of their hopes for good decision-making at the 2015 Climate Change Conference.

The program is broadcast on SBS radio in Australia.

FOR YOUR DECEMBER CALENDAR

- TREmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 7.00am - 9.00am
- 02 (Wed) Bushcare at Alfred Cove 8.30am - 3.00pm
- 10 (Thur) Bushcare at Alfred Cove 8.30am - 3.00pm
- 14 Monthly Monday at Milyu 7.30am - 9.30am
- 18 (Fri) Bushcare at Pelican Point 8.30am - 3.00pm
- Watering at Pelican Point & Alfred Cove

Please register your interest if you would like to participate in any event.



Best wishes for a very happy
Christmas and New Year.



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