



## SWALLOWS ARE VERY WELCOME AT PELICAN POINT

At various times of the year the lagoon at Pelican Point hosts a particularly rich diversity of insect life, which in turn attracts flocks of Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*).

Rather dashing in both appearance and manner, the Welcome Swallow is a small bird, with a metallic blue-black back, light grey colouring on its underside, and a beautiful reddish-brown on its forehead, throat and upper breast. It has a long forked tail, with a row of white spots on the individual feathers. Immature birds are buffy-white on the forehead and throat, and their outer tail feathers (streamers) are shorter than in adults.

Welcome Swallows are extremely agile fliers and feed on a variety of insects, which they catch during flight. Short bristles bordering their bill help direct insects into their open mouths, while at the same time protecting their eyes. Their call is a delightful mixture of twittering and soft warbling notes, with a sharp whistle in alarm.

They generally breed from August to March. Both male and female contribute to the building of the nest, which is an open cup constructed from mud and grass, lined with feathers and fur and attached to a shaded, suitably stable structure. Three to five eggs are laid and incubated by the female.

Welcome Swallows can be found in a variety of habitats throughout Australia, mostly in open areas, including man made clearings and urban environments. We are very pleased to find them at Pelican Point.



Welcome Swallows in the late afternoon light at Pelican Point

Photographs courtesy: Tim Graham-Taylor



## TACKLING OLIVES AT POINT WALTER

Believed to be first domesticated in the Eastern Mediterranean over 6,000 years ago, the olive (*Olea europaea* - meaning 'oil of Europe') has become popular here both as a garden tree and supporting a thriving industry. At the same time, olive plants are rapidly emerging as one of Australia's major woody weeds, having an increasingly negative impact on our natural environment. The problem is clearly evident in the beautiful bush land at Point Walter.



Olive fruit left un-harvested on trees is eaten by birds and animals (including foxes), which then spread the seeds. Or it simply drops to the ground to germinate. Able to thrive in harsh conditions, feral olive plants rapidly compete with native vegetation; and once established, grow into large trees that live for centuries, shading out native species.

SERAG's Green Army team recently spent a few days carefully pulling out hundreds of olive tree saplings and seedlings from Point Walter's eastern ridge - quite a task as this pile attests!

Photograph courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane

# THE LAST STRAW

It is estimated that around 500,000 plastic straws are used each day. Placed end to end they would circle the Earth two-and-a-half times.

As with many other small plastic items, most are thoughtlessly tossed away because we think they won't matter. Unfortunately they accumulate, littering our natural areas and causing great harm to wildlife.

In cleanups of our Reserves we focus on collecting small items that can be ingested by or entangle water birds. Along with plastic bottle caps, bait bags and individual lolly wrappers we find dozens of straws - hoping in vain that each straw we find will be the last!



Collecting litter at Pelican Point  
*Photograph courtesy: Katie White*

# VANDALISM AT ALFRED COVE

With urban bush land being rapidly cleared for various developments and large back-yard trees being lost to a desire for big houses, there is growing pressure on remaining habitat for our birdlife. Research conducted by Birdlife Australia indicates concern even for the future of species we have considered common, such as the magpie, pardalote and willie-wagtail; and the situation is dire for species such as the iconic black cockatoo, already on the endangered list.

If that were not sufficient to convince us, research also indicates that trees have a significant impact on human health including "...cognitive and psychological benefits similar to a \$13,500 pay rise - or being seven years younger", and "people who live on tree-lined blocks [are] less likely to report high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease and diabetes". (Gemmell, Nikki. "Trees of Life." *Weekend Australian Magazine* 22-23 August 2015 p10)

Hence the recent willful damage to remnant vegetation and recent plantings in Bush Forever Site 331 caused outrage among both local residents and the many people who each day deliberately seek out this beautiful stretch of foreshore to enjoy.

Not only were dozens of mature eucalypt saplings poisoned, but healthy sedges and groundcovers that provide refuge for frogs and lizards were either pulled out or poisoned too. At least forty *Gahnia trifida* were lost, as well as long strips of *Juncus kraussii* - both of which also filter nutrients and contaminants from water run-off entering the River.

The vandalism extends along Burke Drive from Lentona Street to west of Haig Road.

It is difficult to comprehend the mindlessness of such deliberate criminal action, especially since 'views' were not an issue! However, community support has encouraged efforts to steadily restore the damaged areas.

# THE TREEMENDOUS TUESDAY TEAM

Early mornings are the best time to be on the foreshore - at least according to the regulars who meet every Tuesday morning in Alfred Cove to contribute a couple of hours effort in much-needed bush-care work.

Over the winter months their 7.00am start has corresponded with sunrise, producing inspirational photographs such as this.

For those who have found it hard to get up on cold mornings, Spring is on its way, making it even more delightful to be on the River.

Please contact Margaret should you wish to join this friendly team.



Early Morning at Alfred Cove  
*Photograph courtesy: Margaret Matassa*



# WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SEABIRD RESCUE

Every year around the West Australian coast large numbers of birds are hooked or entangled in fishing gear.

By far the most common cause of injury is accidental hooking when birds forage near recreational fisheries, or around unattended lines or tackle. The injuries which result can be severe and often fatal, when not attended to.

The Western Australian Seabird Rescue is a not-for profit volunteer group that rescues and rehabilitates waterbirds and seabirds across the south-west of WA - including in our area.

It specialises in birds that can fly but can be lured by food (especially pelicans and swans), and it has invited anyone to call them for assistance if they see birds in distress.

Their **emergency number is 0418 952 683**.

For more information about the group, please see its website: <http://www.waseabirdrescue.com>.

## OSPREY UPDATE

Soon after our nesting platform was installed at Pelican Point in March, a pair of osprey laid claim and began nest-building activities, regularly adding sticks and twigs to the structure.

Since these photographs were taken in late June, however, there seems to have been little development in their grand design. Hopefully construction will recommence soon.



*Photographs courtesy: Tim Graham-Taylor*

## FAUNA-FILMING FINDS FOXES!

Thanks to the assistance of volunteer Nigel Lamb, our fauna-monitoring camera has been in operation periodically for a few months now, secured at various locations in the A-Class Reserve at Alfred Cove to record wildlife activity.

While we have not yet succeeded in photographing the rare and elusive *Rakali*, evidence of a pair of foxes hunting along the foreshore has regularly emerged. In the lower left corner of this night-time shot, for example, you will see a fox on the water's edge, near where we have undertaken some erosion-control.



## GREEN ARMY AT WORK

Each week from Monday to Thursday - come rain or shine - SERAG's Green Army team has engaged in a wide variety of essential bush-care tasks in different locations in and around the Swan River Estuary.

The team has been fortunate to work in some of the most beautiful of our remaining natural areas, and to have shared the wisdom of many community and professional experts in environmental management. It has supported a number of managing authorities and community groups in weed-management, maintenance and re-vegetation activities, thereby building its members' knowledge, understandings and skills through hands-on experience.

With Conservation Volunteers Australia as Service Provider, the team has proven to be hard-working and careful - and its efforts have been greatly appreciated by all.



*Photograph courtesy:  
Aimee Forster*

# TAWNY FROGMOUTHS CAUSE A STIR

If you enlarge and look very closely at this photograph you will hopefully see three species of birds: four or five of the introduced Rainbow Lorikeet, a Mudlark and two Tawny Frogmouth!

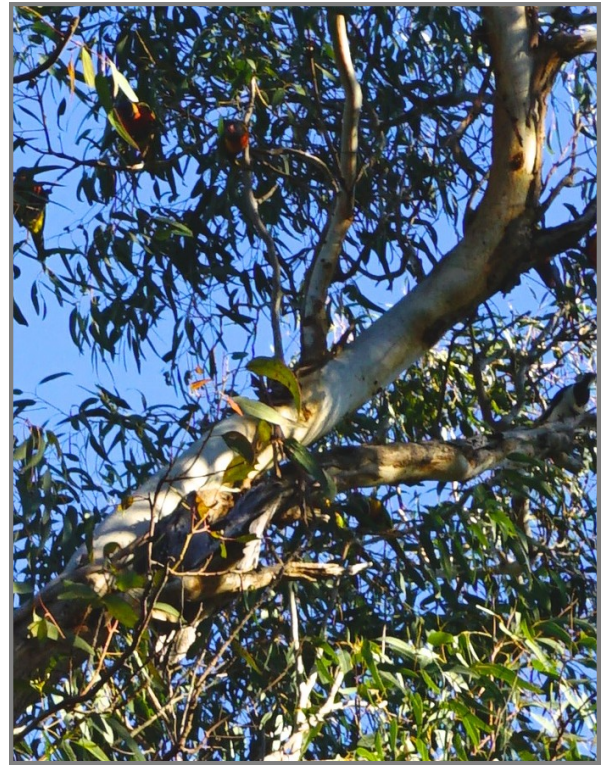
Selecting a roosting spot for the day in a small area of precious remnant woodland in Alfred Cove, the Tawny Frogmouth couple recently caused a great stir among other resident birdlife.

The screaming lorikeets and flapping mudlarks did little to dislodge the pair, however, which - after a long night's hunting for insects, worms, slugs and snails - had assumed statuesque poses resembling broken branches.

Our Green Army team was alerted to the spectacle by Joe Tonga, who was surveying the site for suitable trees in which to install micro-bat nesting boxes.

As you can imagine, there was even greater excitement (albeit more muted) among the human population.

Current research indicates a significant overall decline for the Tawny Frogmouth population across all but one of the regions in which they occur, so it is becoming a rare privilege to see this wonderful bird.



Tawny Frogmouths camouflaged as part of the tree.  
*Photograph courtesy: Joe Tonga*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS

Members and friends are reminded to pencil SERAG's Annual General Meeting on **Thursday 15 October at 6:00pm** into their diaries. The meeting will be a celebration of five years of our caring for the Swan River Estuary - an event not to be missed!

We are delighted to have Dr Jane Chambers, Senior Lecturer in Aquatic Ecology, Murdoch University, as guest speaker. Dr Chambers has served on the Swan River Trust; and her research interests focus on wetlands, rivers and estuaries.

During the meeting we will farewell Professor Robert Harvey, who leaves SERAG after having contributed enormously since its inception, both through his role as Deputy Chairperson and in his volunteering activities at Pelican Point.

The meeting will provide an opportunity to catch up with friends and to welcome new people into our group - so please keep the evening free.



### FOR YOUR SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

#### National Biodiversity Month

- TREEmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 7.00am - 9.00am
- 12 (Sat) UWA@PP *Bushcare's Big Day Out* 9.00am - 11.00am
- 14 Monthly Monday at Milyu
- *World Rivers Day*
- 26 Saturday Morning at the Cove 8.30am - 10.30am

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



**Remember!**

**AGM 15 October 6.00pm**



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