



OSPREY NESTING PLATFORM

The Eastern Osprey (*Pandion cristatus*) is a medium-sized raptor often seen fishing in the Swan River Estuary.

It feeds mainly on live fish, which it does not swallow whole, but rips apart to eat. It folds its wings, then drops head-long to the water, with its feet forward to snatch a fish with its talons.

Normally nesting in high places such as cliffs or tall trees, Osprey have suffered from the loss of original riparian vegetation, and in an effort to adapt, have been known to construct nests on radio masts and even tall cranes. After many years of repeated use their nests become huge piles of sticks and driftwood.

Thanks to the generous support of Tony Jones (sculptor), Martin Searle (engineer), Rob Williams (transport), the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Swan Alcoa Landcare Program, and members and friends of SERAG, a stunning nesting platform is being constructed and erected at Pelican Point, as part of a habitat restoration project. It has been a truly collaborative effort, embraced by numerous people and organizations from across the Perth community.

Former Chief Scientist of Western Australia and Western Australia's Australian of the Year for 2015, Professor Lyn Beazley AO FTSE will speak, and the Hon. Bill Marmion MLA for Nedlands will officially open the platform, at a community celebration in the afternoon of Friday 20th March; and we hope that a nesting pair of osprey will soon take vacant possession of this prime piece of real estate!



Tony Jones at his workshop; erecting the nesting platform; in-situ at Pelican Point. (Photographs courtesy: Margaret Matassa & Julia Cullity)

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY - SUNDAY MARCH 1st

Once again a Clean Up Australia Day event is being organized by SERAG at Pelican Point, for people happy to devote part of their Sunday morning between 9.00am and 10.30am to collecting litter at this important reserve.

This year's event celebrates 25 years of volunteer action to clean up Australia. Since the national event started in 1990, Australians have donated more than 27.2 million hours removing an estimated 288,650 tonnes of rubbish from 145,754 sites across the country.

Please contact SERAG or register on the Cleanup Australia Day website if you are interested in participating. For those south of the River, there will be a similar event at Point Walter being run by the City of Melville.

NATIVE FAUNA SURVEY FOR ALFRED COVE

Exciting News! Very promising indications of some very special native animals surviving in Alfred Cove A-Class Nature Reserve have been discovered!

The footprints photographed and scats collected by SERAG members have been carefully analysed by experts at the University of Western Australia, the Department of Parks and Wildlife and the World Wildlife Fund; and they indicate the presence of both quenda and rakali. Thus encouraged, and with the help of a small grant from the Perth Region NRM, SERAG has purchased two monitoring cameras which will be installed at various sites within the Reserve in an effort to confirm the findings.

Rakali are known as *Moytj* or *Ngurju* to the Southwest Australia Noongar people, while the scientific name for Australia's only native water-rat is *Hydromys chrysogaster*, meaning "water-mouse with golden belly". It lives in burrows on the banks of rivers, lakes and estuaries and feeds on a wide range of prey including insects, frogs, fish, crustaceans, mussels and even small mammals and birds. Food is often carried to a feeding platform on the bank for consumption. The small piles of shell and crayfish fragments form characteristic 'feeding middens'. It has partially webbed hind feet, small ears, fur with a dense water-repellent under-layer, many whiskers and a long tail with a prominent white tip that acts like a rudder when swimming or diving for food. This delightful species is black to brown in colour with an orange to white belly. Because rakali rely on a good supply of invertebrate prey, their presence is considered to be an indicator of good riverine and wetland health.

Because little is known about the distribution of this illusive animal, the World Wildlife Fund is conducting a Rakali Survey which runs till **31 March**. You can read more on how to participate in this survey at www.wwf.org.au/rakali.

The *Quenda* (*Isoodon obesulus fusciventer*) is a subspecies of southern brown bandicoot that is only found in south-west Western Australia. It has a long snout, rounded ears and small, bright black eyes. Its coat is a blend of brown, black and buff fur while its feet and under-parts are cream coloured. Its tail is relatively short at a length of 8–13 cm. Quenda are omnivores, digging in soil to find arthropods, earthworms, tubers and fungi and are under threat from habitat loss, vehicle strike, predation from cats, dogs and foxes, drowning in swimming pools and garden ponds and poisoning from snail and rat baits.



Such discoveries confirm the vital importance of protecting this unique and ecologically rich nature reserve.

Quenda and Rakali
(Photographs courtesy: Mike Griffiths
and Karen Bettink)

LIBRARY DISPLAY

Throughout January, AH Bracks Library hosted a wonderful exhibition of photographs and other material highlighting the natural values of Alfred Cove A-Class Nature Reserve and adjacent Marine Park, their importance to our community and our efforts to protect them.

Library staff commented on the great interest shown by numerous library users in the display.

Photographs courtesy: Tony Kane



HE BOUGHT A JEEP!

Probably influenced by the television advertisements promising freedom and excitement through owning a Jeep, the driver of this particular vehicle careered his way along the shores of Pelican Point recently, destroying plantings in re-vegetation areas, disturbing birdlife and, after becoming bogged, leaving a mattress and other debris for other people to remove.

The incident took place in the season when migratory birds rest and recuperate on the Point, and when Fairy Terns breed.

Four wheel drives and dogs on beaches frighten birds, leaving exposed eggs and chicks vulnerable to predators such as dogs, and trampling by people and vehicles. For migratory species, they interrupt limited foraging periods, preventing them from building up sufficient reserves for their return flight. Disturbance can also affect roosting birds and cause them to waste energy stored for migration.

With television advertising encouraging four-wheel drivers to find remote beaches and speed along their pristine shores for the joy of it, it is becoming extremely difficult to monitor let alone manage their impacts on our birdlife.

Hopefully this particular driver can be deterred from future escapades of this nature.



Four-wheel drive bogged after joy-riding at Pelican Point; mattress and other debris used to retrieve car left on foreshore, and new plantings destroyed.

SPOTTED CRAKE SPOTTED

In December last year, bird-watchers were delighted to spot a pair of Australian Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*) and young on the mudflats at Alfred Cove.

It is a member of the Rallidae family, dependent on wetlands for habitat: dense reed-beds, shallow open water and mudflats or floating vegetation in fresh or salt water wetlands, including lakes, swamps and salt-marsh.

An average 21cm in size and weighing around 60g, Spotted Crake feed early or late in the day on molluscs, insects, crustaceans and spiders. It breeds from around August to January.

The Australian Spotted Crake was first scientifically described by John Gould in 1843.



Australian Spotted Crake
Photograph courtesy: Wikipedia

As we continue to lose other wetland areas to development and a drying climate, we are pleased that our restoration efforts at Alfred Cove are providing alternative habitat for these birds. However, unfortunately, it is highly likely that the young of this particular family was taken by a local fox or cat, as it was not to be seen during subsequent sightings.

THE LONG HOT SUMMER...

It has been a long, hot summer with very little rainfall - indicative of a warming and drying climate - and thus it has been very challenging to maintain our previous winter plantings.

Thankfully we have had a team of dedicated supporters willing to regularly engage in early morning watering duties at Pelican Point, and the City of Melville has kindly made available a watering trailer to support our efforts at Alfred Cove, so our losses have been kept to a minimum. Their assistance has been greatly appreciated.

Hopefully the 2015 winter season will bring good falls of rain.

TOMPKINS PARK PROJECT

The final step of Stage 1 of our Tompkins Park Project has been completed, with the removal of large stands of *Typha orientalis* - identified as one of the five most invasive weed species on the Swan and Canning rivers.

Being heavily degraded with weeds and litter and on the margin of an old refuse tip now covered in playing fields, tackling the area has been an essential step in improving both the health of Alfred Cove Marine Park and the amenity of a section of foreshore popular with both walkers and cyclists.

Restoration has been challenging, requiring hundreds of hours of voluntary labour to address the plethora of weed species tenaciously holding on and requiring repeated attention; and we are very aware of the continuing problem we will have with *typha* re-emerging, due to the existing seed-bank and wind-borne dispersal from nearby sources.

Although continued work will be necessary to consolidate the gains, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the many members of the wider community and to the State NRM for their wonderful support of SERAG's efforts thus far.



FOR YOUR MARCH CALENDAR

- TREEmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 7.00am - 9.00am
- 01 (Sun) Clean Up Australia Day Pelican Point - 9.00am -10.30am
- 05 (Thurs) Display at Murdoch University
- 09 Monthly Monday at Milyu: 8.30am - 10.30am
- 11 (Wed) Watering at Pelican Point: 6.30am
- 13 (Fri) *Casuarina glauca* management at Pelican Point
- 20 (Fri) Opening of Osprey Nesting Platform
- 28 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.

Typha orientalis has been slashed and the area replanted with a diversity of native sedges. (Photographs courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane)



Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group Inc.

Mail: PO Box 73 North Fremantle WA

Phone: 08 9339 2439

Email: swanestuaryreserves@gmail.com

Website: www.swanestuaryreserves.org.au