



300 TREES PROJECT

Established in 2009, *Fifteen Trees* describes itself as 'a small organisation with one woman at the helm and a host of native nurseries and community groups behind her'. It facilitates the distribution of trees to community groups and landholders to offset carbon emissions; and recently its Director, Colleen Filippa, kindly organized a donation of 300 seedling shrubs and trees for SERAG's use in restoration efforts at Pelican Point.

The seedlings have been used in the transformation of a heavily degraded artificial wetland area within Bush Forever Site 402. Over the years to come, the diversity of upper-, middle- and lower-storey Vasse species planted will provide a rich habitat for many bush birds, including the threatened Carnaby's Black-cockatoo.

Swan Alcoa Landcare Project (SALP) funding assisted with weed-management at the site; G.J Gardner Homes Perth provided \$600 for the seedlings, and the City of Subiaco donated three truck loads of mulch. The work was completed over two major sessions - September's *Bush Care's Major Day Out* and our October *UWA@PP* event - with volunteers from SERAG, UWA and GJ Gardner Homes. Although it was rather late in the season, fortunately heavy rainfall followed both events, settling the seedlings into the soil and giving them a very good chance of survival.



Volunteers at work at Pelican Point.
(Photographs courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane)



SEAPLANE VENTURE NEAR MILYU

Cormorants drying their wings on the skeletal remains of melaleucas, oyster-catchers probing the shallows, ospreys swooping for cobbler, a pelican or two snoozing high on top of light poles, and groups of swans exploring the sea grasses further from shore are just some of the wonderful sights commuters to and from the city enjoy witnessing in and around the protected waters of Milyu. Unfortunately, change is on its way.

The Swan River Trust has approved a 12 month trial of a commercial seaplane operation on the Swan River. The trial will allow the airline to land a Cessna 208 Caravan between the South Perth jet-ski freestyle area and Milyu Marine Park twice a day between 8am and 5pm seven days a week.

In addition to the general disturbance aircraft takeoff and landing will cause water birds, data outlined in ABC TV's science program *Catalyst* (Thursday 30th October) indicate that bird-strikes may also take a significant toll.

SERAG is seeking details from the Trust on the assessment and monitoring processes to be used to gauge the impact of the venture on river dolphin and birdlife, and measures (if any) that will be implemented to prevent bird-strikes. Colliding with an osprey may be noticeable, but will anyone detect the plane killing a tiny Red-necked Stint or Fairy Tern?

The River's natural values not only have enormous intrinsic worth, but also significant tourism potential, as travellers increasingly seek unique natural experiences. That such experiences can be enjoyed so close to the City is very special.

Decisions that compromise these values seem ill-considered and careless.

A TREEMENDOUS TEAM!



Weeding along the foreshore at Tompkins Park.
(Photographs courtesy: Nola Woodward)

Over the past couple of months, our *TREEmendous Tuesdays* team has been steadily hand-weeding the foreshore bordering the Swan Estuary Marine Park at Tompkins Park. It has been a challenging task, as the diversity of weeds and the duration of their seed-banks are considerable. Each time it rains more weeds magically appear!

The team meets at 7.00am each Tuesday morning for a couple of hours work. The river is at its most beautiful at that time and the many messages of appreciation from people cycling to work or on their morning strolls are encouraging. Together with a freshly brewed cup of coffee and chat after the event, it makes for a very enjoyable experience.

State NRM funding has enabled the removal of running grasses, woody weeds (such as Brazilian pepper, castor-oil plant and giant reed), and the purchase of replacement vegetation indigenous to this stretch of the foreshore. Grant conditions require that for every dollar received, we must contribute a dollar's worth of voluntary labour, so we are very grateful to our regular helpers for their support.

Thanks to both the grant and the efforts of this very dedicated group of volunteers, the Marine Park foreshore is starting to return to a beautiful and healthy habitat for wildlife and for people to enjoy.

SPRING FESTIVAL DISPLAY

This year SERAG took part in the Conservation Council of WA's Spring Festival held in Forrest Place on a Sunday in late October.

Our display outlining some of the natural values and social history associated with the Swan River Estuary attracted interest from many visitors; while colouring activities and the stickers and activity book provided by the Department of Parks and Wildlife proved very popular with children.



Forrest Place Display
(Photograph courtesy: Margaret Matassa)

YET ANOTHER MARINA?

A weekend newspaper recently included an article on the foreshore development proposals of the City of South Perth. The adjacent concept diagram forms part of the section of redevelopment in the vicinity of the Old Mill.

While it was pleasing to note the possible rehabilitation of a wetland area on the eastern side of the Narrows Bridge to support the breeding of swans, it was alarming to see the plans for an artificial marina and other high-impact development on the western side, in place of a more natural reflection of Kings Park.

Together with the approved seaplane landing strip nearby, this seems to indicate a growing trend of transferring significant areas of the Swan River (a highly valued and much loved public asset) into exclusive private use, to the detriment of the River's natural values and their availability to future generations.



Artist's rendering of the Old Mill Redevelopment.
(Courtesy: City of South Perth)

PLASTIC TOPS LITTER PROBLEM

Our Monthly Monday at Milyu has commenced, and we were very fortunate to have some volunteers from Curtin University join us for the September session.

On average, in this exposed location, two people can together collect three large bags of litter in the space of two hours - a rather awful statistic.

It is amazing what can be found, but unfortunately small plastic bottle tops and wrappers, plastic straws, pieces of polystyrene and lengths of rope and fishing line - items that can be ingested by or entangle native fauna - have featured consistently among more bulky debris.

With two reports of dolphin entanglements within recent weeks, we hope to secure enough volunteers each month to persevere with this initiative, so if you have a couple of hours to spare please come along!

If there were ever any doubts as to whether such cleanup efforts are necessary or worthwhile, this short film certainly quashes them: <http://www.midwayfilm.com/>; as will this news article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-15/plastic-pollution-choking-australian-waters-study/5744398>.



Milyu

Left: Curtin volunteers prepare on a stormy morning;

Right: Collecting litter at low tide.

(Photographs courtesy:
Jane Leahy-Kane)



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PLAN FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES

For millennia, a diversity of trans-equatorial wading birds have completed their arduous annual migration to and from our shores. Their journey is one of the greatest wonders of nature; and we have been privileged to witness it.

However, over the last thirty years there has been a massive decline in shorebird populations. The multiple threats to their future survival is outlined in [factsheet highlighting local threats](#), prepared by BirdLife Australia.

We know of the fundamental mismatch between unfettered human activity and the conservation and protection of the world's remaining natural habitats for wildlife - and we don't need to look overseas to apportion blame for species loss.

Habitat for shorebirds provided by Australia's coastal and freshwater wetlands is being destroyed at a rapid rate across the nation.

Indeed, we see the conflict play out daily even in our Swan Estuary A-Class Nature Reserves and adjacent Marine Parks - areas specifically set aside for the protection of flora and fauna, including migratory species! Recreational pursuits and business ventures are steadily taking precedence over the welfare of other species in these small but vital sanctuaries.

The Federal Government has recently released a draft *Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds* which is open for public comment on the [Department of the Environment website](#) until **3 December 2014**. While the Plan reflects some progress towards properly appreciating and fulfilling our responsibility for shorebird protection, it has some significant weaknesses that will thwart its conservation objectives.

With only a few days left for comment, Birdlife Australia has provided a sample letter to assist those who wish to request a further strengthening of the Plan: [download the letter](#).

EROSION~CONTROL

As a community we have wrought significant change to the Swan River Estuary over many decades: filling natural wetland areas for buildings and playing-fields; clearing vegetation for roads and freeways and housing; building bridges and dredging channels for transport systems, and building jetties and marinas for boating enthusiasts.

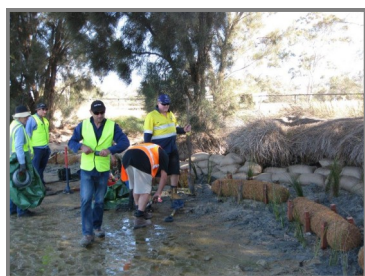
Now, with the River always seeking to flow along its ancient course, the increasing frequency of intense storms and the impacts of various construction projects flowing downstream, remaining areas of natural riparian vegetation are under threat. Losses seem to be in the vicinity of a few feet each year, which is extremely concerning as we have left such a narrow margin.

As we do not want to see the entire river edge become a limestone wall, we were very grateful when one of our supporters offered to arrange the assistance of volunteers from ALCOA in constructing some "soft" infrastructure as an experimental solution to erosion in particularly vulnerable spots.

After considerable planning with DPaW and the Swan River Trust, the project design involves using hessian bags filled with specially screened river sand and dense plantings of mature sedges among coir logs and fallen branches.

The ALCOA team, along with two DPaW staff and SERAG volunteers, worked hard over a hot afternoon; and a few days later, a small team from Oracle spent a day with us to further drive the project towards completion.

If successful, it may be that we will need to regularly support our Reserves in this way.



Volunteers from ALCOA and Oracle support erosion-mitigation at Alfred Cove. (Photographs courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane)

SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting was once again an enjoyable event, well-supported by our membership.

The various operational and financial reports presented were accepted, the contributions of our volunteers warmly acknowledged, and plans for the future shared. Toni Webster's thought-provoking presentation on the birdlife of the Estuary engaged us all, and a new committee was elected to lead our efforts in supporting the natural values of the Swan River Estuary in 2015.



FOR YOUR SUMMER CALENDAR

- TREEmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 7.00am - 9.00am
- 05 December (Fri): International Volunteer Day
- Monthly Monday at Milyu: second Monday 8.30am - 10.30am
- 11 December (Thurs): BirdLife WA Pelican Point Excursion 8.00am
- 16 December (Tues): Corporate Day Alfred Cove 9.00am - 2.30pm
- Fortnightly watering at Pelican Point: 6.30am - 8.30am
- Saturday Morning at the Cove: fourth Saturday 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.



Warmest wishes are extended to all
members and friends for the
Christmas & New Year Season.



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