



PAPERBARKS AND PARDALOTES

Recently, the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group (SERAG) organized a very successful community education event focusing on the ecological and social values of Alfred Cove.

The morning began at *Glyde-In* - a vibrant community learning centre in East Fremantle - with our Deputy-Chairperson, Robert Harvey, describing the unique natural beauty and importance of Alfred Cove's remnant vegetation: mudflats covered in samphire; sedge-banks of *Juncus kraussii*, and small pockets of melaleuca and eucalypt woodland along the foreshore. Robert also outlined aspects of the Cove's social history, including that which has brought irreversible change to the landscape, such as its use for rubbish disposal in the 1950s and '60s and for the dumping of river spoil from dredging.

Around a dozen people came down to the River and were taken on a guided walk along the foreshore and through adjacent bushland areas to see the progress of some of the restoration currently being undertaken. The importance of remnant vegetation to the area's diversity of bush and water birds, including the tiny *Striated Pardalote*, was seen firsthand. (If you look carefully at the photo you will see one high up in its nesting hollow in a very old *Eucalyptus rudis*.)

'Before and after' photographs helped to tell an encouraging story - but there remains much to do.



Photograph courtesy:
Jane Leahy-Kane

BLACK-TAILED NATIVE-HEN

A number of our members have been delighted to spy some shy Black-tailed Native-hens (*Gallinula ventralis*) foraging in recently restored areas of Alfred Cove.

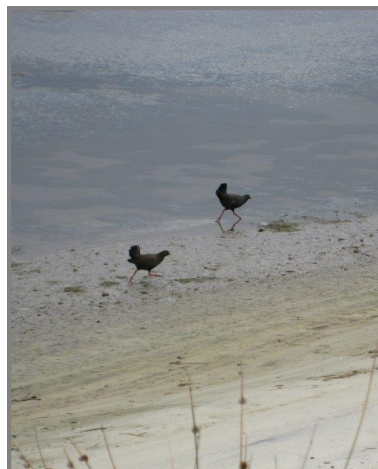
The Black-tailed Native-hen is a nomadic bird found throughout much of Australia. It follows seasonal water sources - although it may be seen year-round near permanent fresh and brackish water.

A member of the *Rallidae* Family, it is medium-sized with long orange-pink legs, dark green-brown upper parts, a few white flecks on its flanks and a prominent black tail held erect and flattened side-on.

The hen is a quiet, communal and non-territorial bird which seldom flies, preferring to run quickly across a landscape. It emits a "kak"-sound when alarmed, and feeds on the edge of water on vegetable matter, augmented with snails, insects and seeds.

Its population is suspected to be a fluctuating one, depending on the condition and availability of wetland habitats. Although it probably breeds at any suitable time, generally the Black-tailed Native-hen breeds between August and December, building a cup-shaped nest on or near the ground in vegetation close to water and laying five to seven pale green eggs with brownish blotches, which are incubated for around twenty days.

We hope it is breeding at Alfred Cove!



Photographs courtesy:
Jane Leahy-Kane

AQUINAS COLLEGE BOYS AT ALFRED COVE

We are very pleased that a positive relationship is steadily developing between SERAG and middle-school students from Aquinas College in Salter Point.

For the last two “boarders weekends” groups of boys have volunteered some of their spare time to support significant re-vegetation projects at Alfred Cove. In return, they have learnt a little about their natural environment - such as the importance of preserving remnant vegetation for river health; what and how to plant to best ensure successful re-vegetation, and the nature and habitat needs of estuarine birdlife.

Much of the work undertaken so far has been very strenuous, with hard compacted soils requiring the use of mattocks to construct holes large enough to take 90litre-sized trees. However, it seems the energetic boys have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge.



Photographs courtesy: Margaret Matassa

AUGUST WAS A VERY BUSY MONTH!

During August we completed the bulk of this year’s plantings both at Pelican Point and Alfred Cove, as well as tackling the winter weeds that have once again flourished.

We received terrific support from Conservation Volunteers and corporate volunteers from Chevron, Ernst & Young and Mars-Wrigley - as well as from our own members. Approximately 640 hours were contributed to bush-care activities.

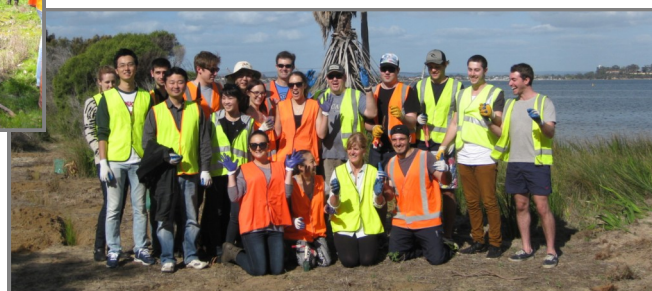
We are now hoping for good follow-up rains in spring to provide the plantings with the best chance of survival over our increasingly hot and dry summers.

In September we will have a final planting at Pelican Point; while in October two more corporate groups will be sending teams to help us - this time assisting with erosion-control, which is an on-going and major challenge at Alfred Cove.



Clockwise from top: volunteers from Chevron, Ernst & Young and Mars-Wrigley.

Photographs courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane



HELP NEEDED FOR OUR MONTHLY MONDAY AT MILYU

After a number of false starts, due either to work on the dual-use pathway access or very stormy weather, at last our monthly effort at Milyu Reserve in South Perth has commenced, with a fledgling group of volunteers tackling the clean-up task.

The exposed position of Milyu makes it very susceptible to litter washed up from Melville Water or tossed in from freeway traffic - including ropes and lines that can entangle water birds and river dolphin, and plastics that can be ingested, causing terrible deaths.



A team of our members and friends will meet at 9.00am on the second Monday of each month for a couple of hours of collecting litter - a gentle task in a beautiful spot. Students from Curtin University will be supporting this project.

Please consider joining this team.

UWA@PP

To celebrate the conclusion of *Keep Australia Beautiful Week*, fifteen students from the University of Western Australia joined SERAG volunteers in collecting marine debris and other litter at Pelican Point. Twelve bags of recyclable and other rubbish were removed.

The occasion provided an opportunity to farewell Denisse Fierro, who as a community volunteer at a similar event two years ago, offered to encourage the involvement of other UWA students in the restoration and protection of this special Bush Forever Site and Marine Park. Since then her enthusiasm has facilitated the success of many bush-care events organised by SERAG.

Denisse is leaving to further her studies in Marine Biology in Southampton; so, as an acknowledgment of her wonderful contribution, we presented her with a micro-bat nesting box.

The box has been installed in a large eucalypt on the foreshore in the hope of supporting a community of Gould's wattled bats, which has taken up residence in a nesting box at nearby JH Abrahams Reserve. The abundance of mosquitoes in the area will ensure they are well-fed!



Joe Tonga and Cathie O'Neill present Denisse Fierro with a nesting box.

Photograph courtesy: Jane Leahy-Kane

PLEASE DON'T DUMP AQUARIUM & POND CONTENTS

People who have tired of their aquarium or backyard pond are strongly urged not to dump the contents into waterways, as this thoughtless action could threaten our natural environment and the State's agricultural industries.

Exotic plant species can rapidly become weeds, choking native species and devastating aquatic ecosystems. Once established, they are extremely difficult to eradicate and cost the state and local governments many thousands of dollars annually. The Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) has recently worked with local councils to remove the devastating weed *Salvinia molesta* from ponds in Melville and High Wycombe; while water hyacinth is currently being cleared from drains in Serpentine-Jarrahdale and Baldivis. The drains will have to be closely monitored for years now, as the water hyacinth plants have flowered and their seeds can lay dormant for 20 years.



Water Hyacinth
(*Eichhornia crassipes*)

Similarly, people are often unaware that releasing their unwanted pet fish and crustaceans into nearby water bodies can introduce self-sustaining pest populations and diseases that have the potential to wipe out native species. Indeed, the Department of Fisheries was called upon to remove diseased catfish from the same Melville pond in which the salvinia was found.

The **Department of Fisheries *Don't dump that fish* brochure** has more advice on managing unwanted pet fish on its website fish.wa.gov.au/biosecurity. For more information about disposing of aquarium and pond plants contact **DAFWA's Pest and Disease Information Service** on freecall 1800 084 881 or email info@agric.wa.gov.au.



FOR YOUR SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

- National Biodiversity Month
- *TREmendous* Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 7.00am - 9.00am
- 07 National Threatened Species Day
- 08 Monthly Monday at Milyu 9.00am - 11.00am
- 12 (Fri) UWA @PP: Pelican Point 9.00am - 11.00am
- 20 (Sat) Bush Care's Major Day Out: Pelican Point 9.00am - 11.30am
- 27 Saturday Morning at Alfred Cove: 8.30am - 10.30am
- 28 World Rivers Day

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are warmly invited to our Annual General Meeting, to be held on **Wednesday 22nd October** commencing at 6.00pm at Atwell House, Melville.

Nominations for Committee membership are now open.



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