



WRITER ROBERT DREWE - PATRON

SERAG has invited highly-acclaimed writer, Robert Drewe, to be its Patron.

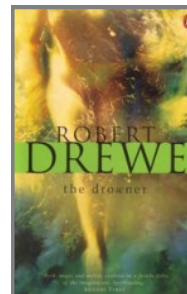
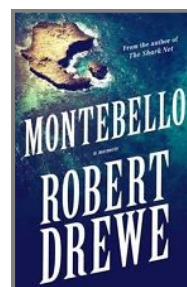
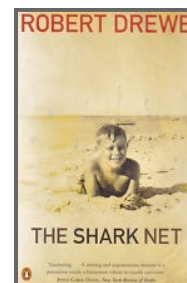
Robert was born in Melbourne in 1943 and, when he was six, moved with his family to Perth Western Australia. Living in Dalkeith, he grew up exploring the Swan River, local beaches and Rottnest Island - places which form the natural and cultural landscapes of much of his later writing. In 1961 Robert became a cadet reporter for *The West Australian* newspaper, and thereafter followed a rich literary career.

Some of you will be familiar with his memoir *The Shark Net* and its sequel *Montebello*, which relate elements of these formative years.

Many of his novels, poetry, short stories, drama and critical material have been adapted for film, radio, theatre and television and won national and international awards. *The Drowner* made Australian literary history by becoming the first novel to win the Premier's Literary Prize in every state, and also won the Australian Book of the Year Prize, the Adelaide Festival Prize for literature and was voted one of the ten best international novels of the decade. A line of his poetry zigzags its way through the granite pavement of Forrest Place in Perth, from the Murray Street end to Wellington Street.

Recently, in his popular weekly column *the other side* in Saturday's *West Weekend* magazine, he wrote about the importance of the River in his life, concluding: *I was proud to be asked to be the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group's first patron, and to support its work in preserving this city's unique and magnificent backdrop. Since most of us have a personal history of the Swan River and its shores, I'm sure you feel the same.* (29th September 2013, page 22.)

We greatly appreciate Robert Drewe's endorsement and encouragement.



SPECIAL VISITORS TO PELICAN POINT

Each Tuesday afternoon at 4.30pm, the Pelican Point Group (PPG) gathers at the pavilion at the end of Australia II Drive to commence their weekly survey of the birdlife in the Reserve. PPG members have been doing this for over forty years, gathering essential data both for the careful management of the Reserve and for sharing with international organisations involved in securing the future of trans-equatorial and other migratory birds.

There is a rich diversity of local, nomadic and migratory birdlife at Pelican Point, with over 110 species recorded.

This season the PPG was excited to observe the Terek Sandpiper on three consecutive days in October, as its last recorded sighting at Pelican Point was in 2009. Regrettably it was frightened off by a kite-surfer! Also, the Ruddy Turnstone - not recorded at Pelican Point in the last ten years - was seen over two weeks on the river beach. Other very special visitors have included the Red-kneed Dotterel, Great Knot, Common Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint.

Currently the special little Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*) is nesting on the beach at Pelican Point. There are fewer than 1,600 pairs in Western Australia, and data indicates a decline trend of 23% due principally to disturbance by human activity and predation.



PPG's Charles Merriam will be leading a community walk through the Reserve on Thursday 12th December. If you wish to participate, please **meet at 8:00am** at the pavilion at the end of Australia II Drive, Crawley.

Red-kneed Dotterel (*Erythronyx cinctus*) at Pelican Point
(Photos courtesy Margaret Matassa)

DISCARDED FISHING GEAR

Recreational fishers are encouraged to responsibly dispose of unwanted fishing gear to protect seabirds and other fauna from serious injury or death.

Each year, the careless disposal of fishing gear causes terrible problems for Estuary wildlife. Seabirds can suffer shocking injuries or death when fishing lines are caught on limbs and wings, or when hooks and other tackle are swallowed; and you will be familiar with stories of dolphin entanglements.

Recently, a discarded fishing net was discovered entwined along a 15metre length of sedge-banks in Alfred Cove Nature Reserve. Tragically, so too were the bodies of a swan and a cormorant. A Caspian Tern was also found dead at Point Walter, after swallowing a fishing line. It is very sad to see such beautiful birds die in this way.

People visiting the Riverpark are urged to be vigilant about picking up their (and perhaps others'?) rubbish, particularly discarded fishing line, while anglers are asked to consider using *Bioline* - a biodegradable fishing line which has a limited life in the environment - to help protect river wildlife.

If you see an injured or entangled seabird please call the WILDCARE Helpline on 94749055.



Caspian Tern (above). Fishing net entangled along the sedge-bank; cormorant remains, and the pile of retrieved fine fishing net (left). (Photos courtesy Toni Webster Margaret Matassa & Stephen Goodlich)



LITTLE HANDS FESTIVAL DISPLAY

Kadidjiny Park in Melville provides a wonderful exploratory play experience for young children, so SERAG was pleased to be invited to set up a stall there for the annual *Little Hands Festival* in October.

Visitors loved our photographic display of the Estuary's unique flora and fauna and were delighted to accept our brochure on its birdlife, for future reference on family outings to the foreshore. Colouring-in outlines of water-birds was popular with young children, while others loved the stickers!

It was a very successful Festival.

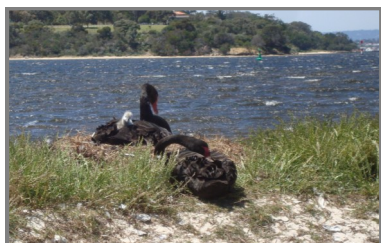


A young boy collects stickers from the display (left), while Paige, Annabelle and Jessica (above) enjoy colouring-in. (Photos courtesy Jane Leahy-Kane)

POINT WALTER SPIT

The outstanding natural beauty of Point Walter has made it a popular place for generations of families wanting to spend a leisurely day in gentle pursuits: picnicking on a rug under shady trees; spotting passing dolphin; splashing with mum in the shallows; jumping off the jetty; playing continuous cricket on the grass with dad, with grandparents enjoying it all from their fold-up chairs!

However, change is on its way, with active sports such as kite-surfing and sail-boarding rapidly encroaching on its serenity.



Nesting swans & cygnet on the spit. (Photo courtesy Toni Webster)

At the same time, due to changing patterns of river erosion and deposition an island has formed at the end of the spit. This island is now vegetated, and has become an important resting and breeding area for water-birds (including the threatened Fairy Tern and Red-necked Stint), replacing other areas in the Swan Estuary that have been lost to urban development. While the local birdlife has always been a source of great enjoyment to visitors to Point Walter, disturbance of nesting birds is becoming a problem.

SERAG hopes that managing authorities will find a sustainable balance between the conflicting values of Point Walter, and that this will include a place for the birds.

SERAG was delighted to receive equal First Prize in the Dom Serra Open Category of the **City of Subiaco Local History Awards** for our 50th Anniversary Celebrations of HRH Prince Philip's visit to Pelican Point.

Events and activities during this anniversary year have highlighted the rich environmental and cultural heritage values of this special place.

During 2013, State NRM and Caring for Our Country funding has supported significant bush-care activities at Pelican Point, as well as the restoration of the viewing pavilion.



Mayor Heather Henderson (centre) joins SERAG members Cathie O'Neill, Sue Graham-Taylor, Jane Leahy-Kane, Fiona Crossan & Margaret Matassa at the presentation.
(Photo courtesy Marnie Bligh)

ORACLE ASSISTANCE

A productive day of weeding and erosion-control took place recently on the foreshore of Troy Park with the assistance of volunteers from *Oracle*.

Initiated by SERAG committee member Jenny Safstrom, this is the second event with that corporation, and more are planned for the future at this challenging site.

Those who had participated in activities earlier in the year were delighted with the progress of their efforts to date and look forward to future successes.



Volunteers from *Oracle* working at Troy Park
(Photos courtesy Jane Leahy-Kane)



UWA VOLUNTEERS

Once a month on a Friday morning, students from UWA have been spending a couple of hours participating in bush-care activities at Pelican Point. Dozens of different students have been involved and a total of over 150 hours of volunteer time has been contributed.

With exams scheduled for November, the last event for 2013 took place in October. However plans have been made to resume work in February next year.



October's volunteers (Photo courtesy Stephanie Goodlad)

MELVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY VISIT

The natural heritage values of Alfred Cove were greatly appreciated by the group of people from SERAG and the Melville Historical Society who gathered for a walk around Point Waylen and Alfred Cove recently.

The tide was very low, and amazing numbers of water-birds rested on the River's exposed sandbanks or foraged in the mudflats and shallow waters. Sandbanks were crowded with birds such as cormorants, pelicans, swans, terns and gulls; numerous Pied Oystercatchers foraged in the mudflats, and a hunting Osprey flew above. Participants were also privileged to see a few of the migratory birds which arrive at around this time each year from as far away as Siberia.

Some very interesting reminiscences about prior uses of the foreshore were shared, as well as discussions about its future care.



Melville Historical Society members at Alfred Cove
(Photos courtesy Margaret Matassa)

TREEMENDOUS TUESDAYS

Come rain, hail or shine, a very loyal and capable team of up to eight volunteers rises early each Tuesday morning to spend a couple of hours weeding, watering new plantings or removing marine debris and litter from along the foreshore around Alfred Cove.

A delicious cup of freshly-brewed coffee, home-made cake and a friendly chat follow.

Although it is a constant battle to control weed infestations, the steady regularity of their efforts has resulted in increasingly healthy foreshore vegetation.

You are very welcome to join in either regularly or occasionally!



Marine Ranger Stephen Goodlich (centre) joins some of the *TREEmendous Tuesday* team for a well-earned coffee.

(Photo courtesy Margaret Matassa)

EUPHORBIA TERRACINA REMOVED FROM FORESHORE

Just before it seeded, a large outbreak of *Euphorbia terracina* was carefully removed by SERAG volunteers from a large area along the Troy Park foreshore.

Commonly called "Geraldton Carnation Weed", it is a highly invasive and an increasingly problematic weed in southwestern Australia. Consequently, it is one of the Swan NRM Region's top priority environmental weeds for management.

It derives its names from the Italian coastal town of Terracina, where it occurs in surrounding sand-hills, and to both its growth in the Geraldton region of WA and the similarity of its leaves to those of the carnation.

Its sap is poisonous and an irritant, while its seed-bank persists for between three to five years - so we will monitor the site regularly.



Euphorbia terracina removed from Troy Park
(Photos courtesy Jane Leahy-Kane)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Again this year, a full program of hands-on restoration and community education initiatives has been very generously and enthusiastically supported by our members, and by other individuals, various funding bodies and groups from the wider community. Our *sincere thanks* are extended to all who have contributed.

We acknowledge especially the assistance of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Conservation Volunteers Australia, the City of Melville and BirdLife Western Australia; and we look forward to working together once again in 2014.



Department of
Parks and Wildlife



2014 COMMITTEE

Our Annual General Meeting at Atwell House was very well-attended, with the following members elected to the 2014 Committee:

Christine Cresswell, Julie Ginbey, Robert Harvey, Colin Heinzman, Jane Leahy-Kane, Margaret Matassa, Catherine O'Neill and Jenny Safstrom.



Warmest wishes are
extended to all members and
friends for a very happy
Christmas and New Year.



FOR YOUR DECEMBER CALENDAR

- TREEmendous Tuesdays: Alfred Cove 6.30am - 8.30am
- 05 Thank a Volunteer Day
- 12 Guided walk at Pelican Point with Charles Merriam.

Please refer to the calendar on our website for further information and contact us for details if you would like to participate in any event.



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