



CLOSE CALL FOR NESTING RED-CAPPED PLOVER

The *extreme* vulnerability of water birds to human disturbance, and the care that must be taken when entering their habitat, was brought home strongly to one of our teams of volunteers working on habitat-restoration at Milyu recently.

A tiny bird beautifully disguised with plumage that blends it into the sandy, sea-weedy beach, the Red-capped Plover (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) simply scrapes a shallow depression for its nest, just beyond the high water mark. Its egg is well disguised too.

Despite our usual vigilance and very good intentions, we failed to notice the small creature and her nest until almost too late. The poor little mother bird did all she could to lead us from her single egg, pretending a broken wing; but how easily it would have been for one of us to accidentally destroy her only chance of raising a chick this season! Indeed it was simply good luck that prevented any one of us from stepping on her nest, or burying her egg under a mountain of sand as we planted our sedges.

Fortunately for our consciences, mother plover and her egg lived on another day to fight other battles: against natural predators, diminishing food sources, extreme storms and the like.

If SERAG, with all its care, can be part of such a near-disaster, how much more destruction can unwary users (such as joggers, walkers and their dogs, people picnicking) perpetrate?

There are only three small sites set aside by Act of Parliament as protected habitat (A Class Reserves) in the whole of the Swan River Estuary; and SERAG believes we must do all that we can to preserve for future generations the wonderful birdlife we are privileged to enjoy—even if it means imposing tighter controls on public access to these Reserves.



Photos courtesy:
Jane Leahy-Kane

EXPLORERS SUCCESS

Twenty year 9 students selected from schools in the City of Melville spent three days' intense investigation of the Swan River Estuary during their third-term holidays. Called the *Explorers Project*, the course took them on an intricate journey from Fremantle Harbour up-stream on the Canning River to Kent Street Weir, and then along the Swan River to Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary in Bayswater.

Students were immersed in the social, cultural and environmental dimensions of the river system, learning of its Dreamtime creation with Aboriginal Elder Professor Noel Nannup, its past uses and issues with Dr Sue Graham-Taylor and its current health and management with Joselyn Fissoli from the Swan River Trust and Steve Goodlich from DEC. Local artist Angela Rossen also engaged them in an artistic response to their learning with the students transforming their investigations of macro-invertebrates and birdlife into wonderful paintings.

The Project was initiated by SERAG as part of a commitment to an NRM Grant we have received, coordinated by the 'Sense of Place' Network (Regional Centre of Expertise Western Australia), and part-sponsored through the Melville City Community Grants Program. Collaborating partners in the project included the Swan River Trust, the Department of Environment and Conservation, Millennium Kids, and the University of Western Australia.

Given its success, we hope to offer the program to other year 9 students in future years.



Freya and Aditi at
Kent Street Weir

HELP FROM THE MINISTER

Recently, a busy-bee was held at Pelican Point to tidy the area surrounding the viewing pavilion, newly painted through funding from *Coastwest* and *Caring for Our Country*.

With an understanding that, when things look cared-for, they are highly likely to be cared for more, volunteers from the City of Subiaco - including the Local Member, Hon Bill Marmion MLA - came down to help SERAG remove weeds, sweep, collect litter, paint bollards and spread some mulch.

In March next year we plan to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the visit by the Duke of Edinburgh to Pelican Point, as the Duke was influential in encouraging our community to set aside and protect this and other Reserves.

WIRELESS HILL CENTENARY DISPLAY

As part of our efforts to draw people's attention to - and enhance their appreciation of - the few remaining natural areas of the Swan River Estuary, a display of photographs and information was mounted at the recent Wireless Hill Centenary celebration.

Many people paused to browse over the material covering Milyu, Pelican Point and Alfred Cove A-Class Reserves, to ask questions and to share their own experiences.

Before- and after- shots of re-vegetation projects were included, along with some general observations about the beauty of the river by writers and historians. Superb photographs of the variety of birdlife found in the Reserves stimulated discussion; and numerous children enjoyed colouring-in outlines of some of the local species.

SERAG was widely commended on the work being done by our members and friends to restore and protect these very special sites.

2013 COMMITTEE

Our recent Annual General Meeting was well-attended, with the Chairperson's, Treasurer's and Auditor's reports being accepted.

This year the meeting was held at the historic Atwell House (now an Arts Centre), which proved a very pleasant venue, allowing us to take interested members on a short tour of nearby re-vegetation sites prior to the formal proceedings, and to spend more time after the meeting socialising over a delicious supper!

The 2012 members of the Committee were re-elected for another term in 2013: Robert Harvey, Colin Heinzman, Jane Leahy-Kane, Margaret Matassa, Catherine O'Neill and Jenny Safstrom. Roles will be allocated at the next Committee Meeting.

Thank you to all who supported the event.

The SERAG Inc. Committee wishes all members and friends a
safe and happy Christmas and New Year.



FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

- Weeding Wednesdays in Alfred Cove
- 5th December: Grand Opening of Alfred Cove Viewing Platform
- 13th December: Weeding/Clean-up Pelican Point

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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