

# .... about the Estuary



Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group Inc.

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We acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar People as the Traditional Owners of the Derbal Yerrigan and surrounding country in which we are privileged to work. We pay our respects to their Elders who have handed down and continue to hand down their deep connection to country to future generations.

## Success !

It is heartening to be able to start this newsletter with a story of success. Many of you will be aware that in late 2021 SERAG applied for a grant, part of which was to complete the rehabilitation of the Tompkins Park foreshore by the removal of *Typha orientalis* and its replacement with several species of sedges and a diverse range of other plants native to the area. As the “before” and “after” pictures below show, after two years of planting wet land species and one winter’s planting of dry land plants, the area has been transformed.

Dense *Typha* on Tompkins Park foreshore - February 2023



Dry land vegetation flourishing - March 2024



Below, a view in amongst the sedges. In the foreground Samphire is naturally regrowing next to sedges planted in summer 2023.



To the right, another view amongst the sedges showing plantings from February and March 2023, November 2023 and February 2024.





This represents success on many different levels:

- Completion of the rehabilitation of almost 1 kilometre of foreshore at Tompkins Park. The 170 metre area tackled over the last two years is sandwiched between two sections of the foreshore that SERAG had previously revegetated under other grants. Our founder, Cathie O'Neill, had applied for a further grant to finish the project but the application was not successful. The fact that SERAG was able to secure a grant under the Community Rivercare Grant program to finish the work was a successful demonstration that the wonderful work commenced by Cathie and now led by Margaret Matassa and the SERAG Committee would continue.
- Support from DBCA has been crucial. Initially, discussing the project with Stephen Lloyd from the Riverbanks section of DBCA ensured that we were on the right track with what we wanted to achieve. This was followed up with annual reviews by the Community Rivercare Program to assess the results of money being spent under the grant. We are pleased to report that Michelle Crow from the Community Rivercare Program undertook her most recent review in April and considered what had been achieved a resounding success.
- In dealing with the *Typha* we were able to call on the immense knowledge of our herbicide contractor, Tim Heckler from Nexxial Ecology. Tim has been involved in the removal of *Typha* from other sites where it has established itself due to the presence of fresh water in areas which would normally be more saline (a number of storm water drains flow into the river at Tompkins Park changing the salinity of the water in the area and enabling *Typha* to flourish where it would not normally be present). At his suggestion we changed the way in which the *Typha* was removed. On previous occasions it had been slashed and then herbicide applied to regrowth. This time the herbicide was applied to healthy, quick-growing *Typha* in summer so it would be more effective in eliminating it. The *Typha* stalks were then left to provide protection to replacement sedges and to hopefully lessen the likelihood of erosion during winter storms. This was certainly a success although it did involve several of our volunteers having to beat down the *Typha* where planting was to occur.

*Planting into the midst of Typha stalks*





- DBCA also supported our efforts when it came to planting. On many occasions over the last two summers, DBCA officers have met SERAG volunteers on the foreshore early on summer mornings to auger holes through the *Typha* roots into which the sedges could be planted. The heat and humidity made this a particularly gruelling task but nearly 1,000 sedges have been planted over the two summers.

*Auguring made planting possible*



- Winter 2023 saw over 990 tubes being planted by volunteers, including a corporate group from GHD, between the High-Water mark and the dual use path that runs along Tompkins Park. Many of those plants were supplied by the City of Melville adding to the tubes purchased under the grant. This was essential as between applying for the grant and commencing the rehabilitation work, the *Typha* section had expanded beyond the initial estimate of 150 metres. And with Spring came the never-ending job of weeding! Not just once but three or four times.



*Getting down on the job - weeding!*

- Ingenuity came to the fore in Spring 2023 when, despite creating large bowls around the plants to collect water, it was realised that the bowls were collapsing down the slope as they dried out. The successful solution can be seen below.

*Mini terraces*



- City of Melville came to the party again over the long hot summer we have just endured by assisting us with the watering of the dry land plants. It is a difficult area for our volunteers to use a watering trailer because of cyclists travelling at speed along the dual use pathway. With the City's help, success was achieved in keeping over 95% of the plants alive.
- The high survival rate of plants is also due to the care taken by SERAG in plant selection. Apart from ensuring that plants are native to the foreshore, the success or otherwise of different species needs to be monitored and adjustments made each year as conditions change. Our knowledge is increasing yearly especially with the sharing of information by the City of Melville's foreshore officers.
- And last but by no means least, our SERAG volunteers who have helped in numerous ways:
  - collecting plants to avoid high delivery fees;
  - making delicious morning teas, including the best homemade cakes, to reward our hard-working volunteers;
  - driving the ute with all the equipment to the planting site;
  - planting, watering and weeding in all sorts of terrain and conditions; and
  - doing whatever it takes to just get the job done!



*Always voted the best part of the morning!*

Above all, the success of this environmental project has been due to the co-operation and hard work of so many people who have adopted a positive, energetic approach to improving the foreshore habitat for flora and fauna otherwise at the mercy of what we humans do (or don't do).



## Djinang Djidimya – Place of many birds!

Now graced with the beautiful seating area 'Djinang Djidimya' – 'Look! A place of many birds', the area of the Melville Bird Sanctuary east of the pathway from the Haig Rd carpark is about to begin its transformation to native vegetation, beginning with replacement of the weedy grassed area between the path and the fence lines.



This revegetation is made more challenging by the level of heat in the area due to the lack of tree cover and the hydrophobic nature of the sandy soil, which is a mix of dredging spoil from the river floor and other infill, brought in to cover over what was originally wetland and dumped rubbish in some places.



Sadly these actions in the 50's and 60's also covered over any latent seed bank of the local native Vasse complex of plants, so its recovery will rely on the planting of as many of these species as will survive in these changed conditions and dumped soil, boosted by local native plants found to be surviving in the surrounding drier natural areas.

Since this is the first of the long-term plan of revegetation as laid out in the Attadale Alfred Cove Foreshore Master Plan (AACFMP), two different methods of planting are being trialled: one is by direct seeding on ripped land, the other is by planting seedlings into pre-dug bowls or basins. In both cases, the success of the planting will depend on rainfall and watering being trapped by the bowl or ripped soil such that it has time to soak in and encourage the root systems of the plants to grow deeply, away from the scorching sun of the following summers.

Members of the public are invited to take part in planting tubestock seedlings on Tuesday 21st May from 8.00am to 12:00 noon, with a break for morning tea which will be provided by the City of Melville. Those interested in taking part are asked to register for catering and management purposes -

<https://www.melvillecity.com.au/things-to-do/events/whats-on/djinang-djidimya-community-planting-day>



A secondary support for the plantings will be the fencing with shade cloth that will be erected around the area and serve to reduce drying winds and provide some relief from the sun in its shadowed areas.

This first planting is seen as a trial of these different modes of planting and of management and will be closely monitored for outcomes.

Sadly there will also be a need for dealing with vandalism, where already a newly-planted sapling was removed and graffiti scrawled on the seats.

Long term plans of the AACFMP see the native plant infill reach all the way to the Troy Park playing fields, truly creating Djidimya – a place of many birds. It will allow the Buff-banded Rails, Shelducks with their ducklings in winter and White-faced Herons to roam uninhibited, and for Rainbow Bee-eaters and their young to fill the air with their trilling. Who knows but that the Splendid Fairy-wren might return and give locals and visitors to the Melville Bird Sanctuary an exciting glimpse of one of our most beautifully adorned birds, as they meander through or sit quietly to enjoy the tranquillity of Djidimya.



Article - M Matassa

Photographs - R Weir & M Matassa

## Pelican Point to benefit from SALP 2024 Grant

SERAG was very grateful to receive a 2024 Swan Alcoa Landcare Grant to continue our foreshore restoration activities at Pelican Point. The grant will allow further plantings of sedges in the terrestrial section of the Marine Park, to replace weed species such as Veldt grass and Pelargonium, thereby extending the range of the Saltmarsh community that grows there.

Other works made possible by the grant will be weed management by an experienced herbicide contractor as well as replacement native plantings in the adjacent Bush Forever Site 402.

The waters and mudflats of the surrounding Marine Park are kept healthier by the trapping of nutrients and pollutants in the deep root systems of these sedges and native plants, thus benefitting the birdlife and river creatures that depend on these waters and shores for their food and habitat.

SERAG members and long-term Pelican Point volunteers, Sue & Tim Graham-Taylor and Michael Paterson enjoyed the Grant Presentation Ceremony at University House in Crawley and Sue gratefully accepted the SALP 2024 Grant on SERAG's behalf.



SERAG member Sue Graham-Taylor (5th from left) with other SALP 2024 Grant Recipients

Article - M Matassa Photograph - Courtesy Perth NRM

# A special place for birds

On Sunday morning, 21 April 2024, Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group was pleased to host, with the City of Perth, an event that formed part of the Lotterywest Boorloo Heritage Festival. On another relentlessly rainless day, about 40 members and others sat in a grove of Melaleucas and Casuarinas at Pelican Point to listen to Nyoongar Elder Dr Noel Nannup.



What a treat was in store for us! Noel spoke from the heart on themes of community and environment, including bird life. He explained aspects of Nyoongar culture such as totems and caring for country, and stressed how everything is connected. Noel called for love, hope, care for community and the environment, and less focus on the individual. Noel's speech was a much-appreciated message of hope, in uncertain times.

Noel answered several questions and we then all walked across to a spot where we had a clear view of the lagoon at Pelican Point. Two ospreys were waiting for us, along with stilts, ducks and swans – a feast for the many photographers present! We used binoculars to see the bird life on the water and around the banks.



Sue outlined the importance of Pelican Point for birds and the past uses and treatment of the area by settlers. She stressed the loss of samphire – and birds – with the dredging and reclamation of the area in 1936 and the declaration of a permanent reserve for birds in 1964.

Margaret told of the importance of seagrass and samphire in storing carbon, protecting the river and providing habitat for birds. The importance of SERAG's work in strengthening and restoring vegetation was clearly seen. A typical SERAG morning tea was enjoyed by all – thanks to all involved particularly to Susanna Iuliano, the City's Culture Project Officer for her presence and to the City of Perth for its support of our event.



# Volunteering for Their Future World

Trudging back after a hot morning's work at Pelican Point carrying heavy loads of Pigface weed, the student volunteers from both Curtin Volunteers and St Catherine's College Curtin were nevertheless highly satisfied to have helped improve the foreshore on the Point.

They had certainly earned the delicious morning tea prepared for them by SERAG organisers.

Their other significant reward was in knowing that they had contributed to improving the environmental health of the Point, it being the only remaining sandy stretch on the north side of the lower river for flocks of birds to stop and rest. The students were delighted to carefully view just such a large aggregation of Little Black Cormorants from a distant rise.

Looking downstream and upstream from the rise, they saw riverside places set aside for yachts, for canoe clubs, for swimmers, for sailing boats, for restaurants, for dogs, for housing, for water skiers, for kite surfers, for walkers ....

But just this one and only place that birds can rest in groups on this side of the river - Pelican Point - is yet not set aside for them.

Walkers coming around the Point on a daily basis, maybe unaware that this causes the birds to fly up or fly away. They might wonder why there are only a couple of birds to be seen, not realizing that they are part of the problem, along with fishers, kite surfers and canoeists who come too close to the shore, or even land there.

The temporary fence with a sign warns walkers that they are walking into an area that birds rely on in the breeding season, but it is not enough to deter some people.

Yet the full-size fence that used to jut into the water to demarcate this area, long regarded as the Pelican Point Bird Sanctuary, has been partially removed, and since then, disturbance to birdlife has dramatically increased.



If it is not to be replaced, then alternatives (such as a 'people movement plan' incorporating pathways and viewing points) that allow people to appreciate this special place without having to walk through the bird sanctuary are urgently needed.

SERAG will continue working towards a healthier environment on the Point and trust that the wonderful bird life it supports will be given the protection it deserves as a matter of urgency, to ensure it will still be there for future generations to enjoy.

*Article - M Matassa*

*Photographs - M Matassa*



# Point Walter Fairy Terns and Perth Foxes

In a world where people panic at a cockroach in their house, spare a thought for the Fairy Terns who raise their young on open ground, at the mercy of predators 100 times their own weight. The Fairy Tern colony at Point Walter island came under attack from such a predator in late January when a fox attacked 150 nests. Fortunately the remaining birds were saved when members of the Perth community joined together each night to block its access to the island. The episode highlighted the fragility of mainland fairy tern nesting colonies and how important it is for people to be vigilant of wildlife wellbeing. It also brought attention to the fox population in Perth, their impact on wildlife, and how this impact is managed.

## Fairy Terns at Point Walter

Fairy Terns have been nesting each summer on the island at the end of Point Walter sand spit since 2015/16, with numbers increasing each year. The island is attractive for nesting due to the high numbers of baitfish in such close proximity. However this regular return to a nesting site is out of the ordinary, given another fox attack there 5 years ago, human disturbances on land and water, and the Fairy Terns own tendency to move colonies so their location does not become predictable to predators.<sup>1,2</sup>

Fairy Tern colonies contain breeding pairs at many different reproductive stages, from egg laying to feeding chicks and fledging. Birds often visit multiple colony locations to assess the potential of each site, and are more likely to nest at a site where others are raising chicks successfully. Conversely, a site which is unsafe from human and animal threats will likely be avoided the following year, as happened in Mandurah when a domestic cat wiped out the colony in late 2018. The same outcome nearly occurred at Point Walter this last summer.<sup>1,2</sup>



Photo: Claire Greenwell

## Community Responds to Fox Attack

On 25th January at 5:30am a well-timed walk by a caring community member led them to scare away a fox from the sand spit and alert Claire Greenwell about its presence. Dr Claire Greenwell is an ornithologist, marine ecologist and convener of the WA Fairy Tern Network. The fox was seen again early the following morning, and closer investigation found its footprints on the island and the destruction of 150 nests. To protect the remaining 100 nests word was sent out through various wildlife groups for volunteers willing to spend 3 hour shifts on the sandbar during the low tide at night, blocking any foxes attempting to reach the island.<sup>3</sup>

Between 26 January and 28 February over 90 volunteers spent 338 hours on fox watch, enabling the successful fledging of most of the remaining young and saving the lives of many parent birds. Dr Greenwell said "We have been floored by the response. It highlights the strong stewardship within the community and the passion to protect this threatened species! My sincere thanks to the volunteers who have come out in full support of the birds!"<sup>4</sup>



ABC Radio Perth: Kale Leaver

Point Walter sand spit



## Perth's Urban Fox Population

Following the publicity of the protection effort at Point Walter many people have become concerned about how to protect the nesting colony in future years. Can foxes be stopped at Point Walter by the agencies responsible? What types of methods exist for controlling them? How much of a problem are foxes in Perth as a whole? Before considering these questions however, it's worth getting to know the fox in its own right, as a creature doing what it's always done, in a circumstance created by humans.

Foxes are solitary and territorial, but pair up monogamously for breeding in winter. Part of fox's success is due their wide and adaptable diet, including insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, small mammals, carrion, worms from your compost, fruit and vegetables from your garden, and human food found in rubbish. They are said to know where all the chickens are kept and to check them regularly. This prevalence of human waste food means there are 2-3 times more foxes in urban areas than in rural. <sup>5, 6, 8</sup>

In 2019/20 an environmental consultancy and wildlife research company (Terrestrial Ecosystems) conducted a study in southern Perth tracking 17 foxes using GPS collars. They found foxes have an average territory size of 1-5km<sup>2</sup>, suggesting about 330 territories in Perth. However there is overlap and movement. For example during the study one fox travelled 45km between Jandakot, Point Walter and Woodman Point looking for a new territory. This case confirmed other research showing that foxes can quickly repopulate areas made vacant by culling. <sup>7</sup>

Some of the reasons they so quickly repopulate the landscape is that parents produce 4-6 offspring per year who are able to leave their parents territory and start breeding from only 10 months old. In addition a study found that after landowners have killed foxes through a successful poison baiting program the nearby surviving females will increase their ovulation rate in response to the new territorial availability, to produce larger litters. <sup>6, 7</sup>

## Fox Population Control

These are just some of the pressures faced by wildlife in Perth from foxes, and the outcome, in terms of animals killed, is devastating. While there is no data for the quantity of native animals killed by foxes in Perth each year, across Australia research estimates they eat 88 million reptiles, 111 million birds, and 367 million mammals, covering 350 different species. These estimates are based on samples from gut and scat, and do not include animals killed and not eaten, or animals killed in the form of eggs (which comprise a large proportion) because egg contents cannot be detected in the gut. These numbers are a quarter of the wildlife killed by cats. <sup>8, 9</sup>



It begs the question what is being done to control fox populations in Perth, how can fragile wildlife populations like the fairy terns at Point Walter be protected, and what improvements are needed?

On a broad level the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act places a legal duty on landowners and managers to control declared pest species on their land. It also imposes penalties for non-compliance. The Act covers state government entities such as DBCA, WaterCorp, Development WA, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation who manage large areas of land in Perth, as well as City Councils and large private entities. The level of control required for foxes is classed as C3 – “...alleviate the harmful impact of the organism, reduce the numbers or distribution of the organism or prevent or contain the spread of the organism.” In addition DBCA has an obligation to protect native animals under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. <sup>10,11,12</sup>





The control methods used in Perth's urban areas need to fit in with the close proximity of people and their pets. They include: soft jaw traps; poison baiting with 1080; den fumigation/destruction; and cage trapping. Poison baiting is considered the most cost effective, although issues exist with causing suffering to the fox, while cage trapping is the most labour intensive. Foxes must be acclimatised to cage traps with free food over many nights, and this process monitored with trail cameras to determine when to set the trap. Foxes learn very quickly so any errors with cage and soft jaw trapping causes 'trap shy' foxes which are difficult to catch.<sup>6,13,14</sup> In order to counteract the labour intensive nature of cage trapping researchers suggest shooting foxes and using sniffer dogs. They believe it would be safe to shoot foxes in some bushland areas using night vision and thermal scopes, in conjunction with high-quality telescopic sights.<sup>7</sup> Detection dogs are used very successfully in Queensland to locate foxes and dens in bushland, doing so much more effectively than people. Local Councils, government Parks and Wildlife Services and government water catchment authorities all use sniffer dogs regularly.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

Data obtained by the Terrestrial Ecosystems study found that between 2015 and 2020 DBCA and the City Councils of Canning, Cockburn, Kwinana, Melville and Rockingham caught and euthanised 245 foxes across 38 reserves, averaging 40 foxes per year. However the numbers were not evenly distributed as most reserves were only trapped once or twice in the 6 year period. In the Blackwall Reach/Point Walter area 11 foxes were euthanised, 6 of these in 2016. This, and similar data from other reserves, shows that multiple trappings in the same year effectively counteract foxes tendency to explore outside their home range and move into vacated territories. However, while some Councils such as City of Melville have annual fox abatement programs, these are weakened by the lack of programs in some neighbouring Councils, where they only trap foxes on an ad hoc basis in response to public reported sightings.<sup>7</sup>

The above study showed that City Councils, DBCA and other government departments are not fulfilling their duty under the BAM Act to control foxes on the land they manage. The authors state that DPIRD, who administers the Act, told them "it had an unwritten policy of not prosecuting other government agencies" for failing to control foxes.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, an Auditor General's Report from 2020 also found that DPIRD has not been enforcing the BAM Act or penalising non-compliance.<sup>18</sup>



This presents a serious problem for wildlife in Perth because it means there large areas of land which are not being regularly trapped or baited, acting as safe havens foxes to breed and then repopulate the smaller areas that are managed. For example, the many local and migratory birds which rest amongst the river and lakeside vegetation around Perth are under constant threat. To minimise this, research suggests culling (using the variety of methods described above) needs to take place 2-4 times per year and be an integrated process, with integrated data, between the diverse land managers.<sup>7, 15</sup>

### What Can Local Residents Do?

Our cities are places of intensive, territorial dominance by humans, where native wildlife is usually left to its own devices to fit in where it can. This 'it's all about us' mindset is reinforced by its very normality, yet constitutes an unseen discrimination against wildlife. Introduced pest species like foxes also risk being seen as normal and acceptable if they don't cause trouble to people. However the rights of native wildlife to live in a balanced ecosystem needs greater attention and support from people. Following are some actions we can take to protect wildlife from foxes:<sup>5,19</sup>

- Pressure authorities to fulfil their legal obligations under the BAM Act
- Enquire about local fox eradication programs
- Don't leave pet food outside overnight
- Use enclosed compost bins
- Remove fallen fruit around fruit trees



- Keep garbage bins covered
- Close off access to drains and underneath buildings
- Use fox-proof enclosures for poultry
- Record sightings in *FoxScan* app.

Learn to identify fox footprints and droppings, and report fox sightings and dens to local councils. Fox scats are a similar size to small dogs, but are thinner with a 'curved whip tail' at the end. They will contain hair, vegetation, seeds and bone.



Red Fox scats (Source: "Track, Scats and Other Traces")

(<https://www.abc.net.au/science/scribblygum/september2004/gallery.htm>)

Article - P Seebeck

<sup>1</sup> The Bird Emergency podcast. Claire Greenwell - Studying the ecology of the Australian Fairy Tern. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJYE-Nl4ya8>

<sup>2</sup> The secret life of Fairy Terns: Breeding chronology and life history observations of *Sternula nereis nereis* in south-western Australia . [https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Life-history-ecology-and-population-dynamics/991005543999507891?institution=61MUN\\_INST](https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Life-history-ecology-and-population-dynamics/991005543999507891?institution=61MUN_INST)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/perth-breakfast/fairy-terns-fox-watch/103512248>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/claire-greenwell-b7a298148\\_early-morning-volunteers-have-saved-a-colony-activity-7167838802621743104-yyv7](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/claire-greenwell-b7a298148_early-morning-volunteers-have-saved-a-colony-activity-7167838802621743104-yyv7)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-21/great-southern-fox-cull-feral-predator-diet-research/103490682>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/pest-mammals/red-fox>

<sup>7</sup> Movement of urban and peri-urban foxes in the south western metropolitan region of Perth, Western Australia. 2020.

<https://terrestrialecosystems.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2018-0013-006-gt-V5-reduced.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Counting the bodies: Estimating the numbers and spatial variation of Australian reptiles, birds and mammals killed by two invasive mesopredators. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ddi.13497>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cdu.edu.au/news/killed-eaten-disappearing-26-billion-reasons-better-fox-and-cat-control>

<sup>10</sup> Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. <https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/organisms/119657>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/about-us/legislation/biodiversity-conservation-act-and-regulations>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/perth-breakfast/urban-foxes/12868228>

<sup>14</sup> A guide to cage trapping foxes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybYJlhFOek&t=269s>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-11/conservation-dogs-helping-save-endangered-species/101299568>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/news/conservation-dog-takes-the-lead-in-sniffing-out-pests-080921>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.seqwater.com.au/news/fox-sniffing-spaniels-used-protect-south-east-queensland-wildlife>

<sup>18</sup> Western Australian Auditor General's Report. Managing the Impact of Plant and Animal Pests: Follow-up. [https://audit.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Report-4\\_-\\_Managing-the-Impact-of-Plant-and-Animal-Pests-Followup.pdf](https://audit.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Report-4_-_Managing-the-Impact-of-Plant-and-Animal-Pests-Followup.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.feralscan.org.au/foxscan/>

# Golden Surprise

Whilst some shudder and rapidly retreat, others delight on finding a shimmering, gossamer network that gleams golden as it catches the sunlight. Such is the web of the golden orb-weaving spider, frequently found stretched across a gap between shrubs on the foreshore as our group makes its way to a revegetation site.

But whether attracted or fearful, everyone is respectful of the very large spider in its centre, and takes great care to duck under or around the web. This is the female, up to 4 cm large, while the male is a mere 6mm and several can often be seen hovering around the perimeter of the web hoping for a chance to mate.



The bite of golden orb-weaving spider (*Nephila edulis*) is harmless to humans, but very effective in overcoming its prey, often larger than itself – wasps, butterflies, beetles ... Once trapped, these are wrapped inside a cocoon of silk and left for later consumption. It is quite a sight to see the line-up of bundled insects making up the spider's larder.

Golden Orb-weaving spiders spend all their time in their golden 'palace' which can be up to one metre in diameter. They will often protect themselves from becoming bird's prey by creating a network of threads on one or both sides of their orb web, and even join up with others of their kind in an aggregation of webs.

They add an extra dimension of awe and wonder to our natural areas.

*Article - M Matassa*

*Photograph - Pauline Lecocq*

**Season of Djeran - Makuru - April to end July**

**This Noongar Season is represented by the colours green/dark blue.  
It is the time that the weather cools and the rain and cold weather begin.**



# Thanks to the Summer Watering Crews

A huge thank you to all those volunteers who have helped to water all last year's plantings throughout the long, hot summer.

South of the river at Attadale and Tompkins Park, we have achieved a good survival rate overall. A walk around the bush area near Haig Road, including the area known as Swale 2, is encouraging. Many plants put in over the last two years have grown significantly. Whilst there have been some losses, it is particularly good to see that a number of ***Rhagodia baccata*** have self-seeded and are surviving without any watering - exactly the result we want. Several new species we trialled last winter are also doing well notably ***Acacia pulchella*** and ***Melaleuca huegelii*** so we will take that into account when ordering plants for winter 2026.

On the Attadale foreshore, a particularly tough area considering the "soil", we have been able to keep alive all but one of the trees planted by DBCA last summer. The ***Casuarina obesa*** look as though they have tapped into underground water and so are growing quite rapidly. The same applies to the ***Melaleuca cuticularis*** planted with the Bankwest group last winter – the deep holes and careful planting have certainly paid off. Here again we have noted that ***Acacia cyclops*** has been an outstanding survivor in the tough conditions and as it gets a little bigger it is able to shade some of the other plants.



*Rhagodia baccata* - Berry Saltbush



*Acacia pulchella* - Prickly Moses



*Melaleuca huegelii* - Chenille Honeymyrtle



Kim Robinson, SERAG (on left), watering with Brian Walker, City of Melville, Tompkins Park

Finally, Tompkins Park is looking outstanding. Thank you to Brian Walker at the City of Melville for all his assistance to ensure the 990 plants carefully put in last winter were watered over their first summer. We think we can claim a 95% survival rate!

Straight across from here as the birds fly (literally), the watering team at Pelican Point re-set the reticulation poly-pipe to cover the newly planted areas ahead of summer, only to be met with the news of a broken bore at the start. Not to be daunted, the olive barrels of water were towed over from Melville to come to the rescue, with volunteers carrying buckets of water to each of the hundreds of dryland plants, and again on a second occasion whilst the bore was still being fixed. We were thankful of DBCA Parks Maintenance Officer Bill, who brought his 100ltr water tank over to assist us as well.

The sedges planted on the Point had to manage without watering all this time and it is a credit to our volunteers who had planted so carefully and deeply into trenches that there were very few losses. But another month later the water failed to flow out to the Point again, and it took some sleuthing along the 400m length (mostly buried) to discover that it had burnt through underground where someone had lit a fire above it!

There was nevertheless an excellent survival rate of the sedges and a very good survival of most of the dryland plants in Lot 4, considering the challenges. We discerned that mulching assisted these latter and we'll aim to mulch earlier this coming winter.



*Robert Harvey watering in the sedges on Pelican Point*



*Juncus kraussii* Sea Rush



*Ficinia nodosa* Knotted Club Rush

*Article - R Peek & M Matassa*

*Photographs - M Matassa*

*Flora images - APACE Nursery WA - Website*



# The interesting lives of our Volunteers

Hello everyone! My name is Kim Robinson.

I started volunteering with SERAG around 15 months ago. While taking one of my morning walks with my wife and dog along the Attadale foreshore, I noticed a group of enthusiastic people getting their hands dirty, weeding the area that I now know as Swale 2!! I approached and asked how I could become involved with the group and, as they say, the rest is history!!!

Having recently retired, I was looking for a way to spend some of my time in a meaningful way and, for me, SERAG fits the job description perfectly. I have spent many hours on the river – fishing, crabbing and just enjoying time on the water. SERAG works very hard to maintain the foreshore in the area from Bicton right through to Applecross. I guess I see this as a way of giving back to the river which gives me so much pleasure. I have come to appreciate more intensely, the birdlife and the marine life of the Swan River and factors that require consideration in keeping the river healthy into the future.

I spent much of my childhood in Bicton and Attadale, and in fact, shared the same classroom as our Rosemary Peek, in grades 6 and 7 at Attadale Primary School.

I trained as a physiotherapist, in the late 1970's, and spent many years in private practice in Perth as well as a few years in Geraldton. While still in practice, I did my Masters and some more specialized training, and taught on the Masters in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy program at Curtin University for around 15 years. In the early 1990's I also started a private business with a colleague, teaching post graduate musculoskeletal courses. For the last 30 years of my career, this business took me to many locations around Australia and also to around 35 different countries internationally. I've been very fortunate in my professional life being able to travel to so many wonderful and interesting places and having the privilege of meeting inspirational, kind and generous people along the way.

I am married to Heather and we live with our dog, Woodley, in Attadale. We really love living where we do, with the river around the corner, the parks and open public spaces and the local bushland.

I have really enjoyed spending time with like-minded people at "Treemendous Tuesdays". I have spent time with Trevor, (in particular), modifying our new trailer, and I share driving responsibilities on Tuesdays and on our watering weekends. The friendships and comradery are great – and the morning teas aren't half bad either!!!! I truly admire the time and effort that people in our group are willing to commit.

*Article - K Robinson*

*Photograph - M Matassa*



## Treemendous Tuesday Reward

From our planting and weeding we'd just sought respite

Then noticed a bird hover above us

with eyes on a meal, a Black-shouldered Kite.

To restore our river and wetlands

A sight such as this, makes the effort so worth it

And our need to persist



*Poem - J Ginbey*

*Photograph - T Graham-Taylor*

# City of Melville - Foreshore Strategy Review - Survey

(survey closes 9 May 2024)



We draw members' attention to a City of Melville survey seeking responses on what people wish to see happening along the foreshore. It would be helpful if as many members as possible could complete the survey. The survey covers issues directly relevant to SERAG's work which is aimed at:

Rehabilitating the foreshore area of the Alfred Cove Marine Park by the planting of native trees and understorey and increasing the foreshore buffer by planting sedges wherever possible. We also support rehabilitating the river foreshore beyond our own areas of operation and are grateful for and encourage the contribution of government and volunteer groups working on different sections of the river.

Increasing habitat for native flora and fauna in as many foreshore areas as possible.

We are concerned about the impacts of climate change, erosion of the river banks and the impact of human disturbance in these precious foreshore areas, issues canvassed by the survey. So much of the river foreshore is already taken up with sports grounds, clubs and commercial enterprises meaning there is very little of the natural environment left.

Have your say – go to:

<https://www.melvillecity.com.au/our-city/connect-with-us/melville-talks/community-engagements/foreshore-strategy>

## Mark the Date !

**Tuesday 21st May 2024**

Members of the public are invited to take part in planting tubestock seedlings on Tuesday 21st May from 8.00am to 12:00 noon, with a break for morning tea which will be provided by the City of Melville. Those interested in taking part are asked to register for catering and management purposes -

<https://www.melvillecity.com.au/things-to-do/events/whats-on/djinang-djidimya-community-planting-day>

## Regular Events for Your Calendar

May-August 2024

- **TREEmendous Tuesdays** - Alfred Cove - Planting & Weeding 7:30am - 9:30am
- **Monthly Mondays at Milyu** - Foreshore Rubbish Clean-Up 7:30am - 9:30am
- **Monthly Saturday at Pelican Point** - Planting & Weeding 8:30am—10:30am
- **Monthly Saturday Bird Count** - please contact SERAG for times
- **Watering - Alfred Cove and Pelican Point** - dependent on arrival of rain

**Please contact SERAG to register your interest in any of our events.**

## Contact SERAG -

**Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group  
Inc.**

**Mail:** PO Box 258 MELVILLE WA 6956  
**Email:** [admin@swanestuaryreserves.org](mailto:admin@swanestuaryreserves.org)  
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