



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.

Director-General of DBCA Visits the Marine Park

On a beautiful afternoon with the backdrop of river, sky and birdlife, SERAG recently hosted a visit by the Director-General of the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions to the Pelican Point section of the Swan Estuary Marine Park.



Photograph - M Evans DBCA

Also attending (L to R) were Kim Eckert (Conservation and Parks Commission), alongside D-G Stuart Smith, Margaret Matassa, Sue Graham -Taylor & Tim Graham-Taylor (SERAG), Rod Clark (Conservation and Parks Commission), Robert Harvey (SERAG), Melissa Evans (DBCA) , with Vaughan Chapple (DBCA - taking the photo).



Photograph - V Chapple

SERAG members accompanied the visitors walking along a bush trail through the Bush Forever Site 402, leading from the Trails Node on its south-western edge, to the groyne overlooking the Pelican Point Marine Park on the north-eastern river front, the route containing highlights of natural & historical heritage.

SERAG took this opportunity to explain the pressing need for greater protection of the Marine Park especially for its vital importance to birdlife, as reinforced in a recent report commissioned by DBCA with their consultant Mike Bamford.

The disturbance of the birdlife by fishers, walkers, kitesurfers, photographers ... is seriously affecting the breeding success of local birds, as is the loss of this last resting and feeding area for shorebirds and migratory birds along the whole of the northern lower estuary.

Swans could already be seen building their nests, but unfortunately one pair were unwittingly on the route commonly taken by fishers, so their chances of success are very low indeed, unless something is done urgently about restricting access. This was sadly the case at Alfred Cove, where the first attempt at nesting by swans in decades was defeated by one fisher who alarmed the swan by walking next to its nest in the samphire flat to fish in the Cove. Protecting these nesting sites in natural areas ought to take priority over building artificial ones.

In an earlier incident that afternoon, a jet skier entered the Marine Park waters close to the Point, causing 200–300 Little Black Cormorants to depart in fright from the sandy stretch where they rest. They flew down the river in the hope of finding refuge on the mud flats of Alfred Cove Marine Park, or Pt Walter Island, again dependant on the absence of fishers. These birds use aggregation as a means of protection from predators, so we need to give them undisturbed stretches of sand if we wish to continue seeing their beautiful undulating wave of flight along the river.

Hence SERAG is asking for a *People Movement Plan* to be developed for Pelican Point that will avoid intrusion into the Bird Sanctuary but that provides a walking trail incorporating the natural highlights. One urgent request is for the re-instatement of the protective fence-line bordering the sanctuary to its original extent beyond the summer low-water mark, with signage explaining the need for Restricted Entry.

The other urgent need is for the Marine Park as a whole to be declared a *No-Take Sanctuary Zone*, for the sake of all the fauna of the Swan River. This request will also involve the Minister for Fisheries, but already has precedents, one being the Kingston Reef at Rottnest Island and another at the Marmion Marine Park.

Thanks to a very generous donor, SERAG was able to offer financial support towards their suggestion to move an Osprey Nesting Tower and Perch from its current site alongside the kitesurfing area where it hasn't been occupied, to a new site inside the protected area of the Marine Park itself. The proposed site would be in clear sight of the historical bird-watching Gazebo, and could become an exciting feature of the proposed *People Movement Plan*.

The group ended their visit by seeing for themselves how the Point itself is slowly but surely becoming successfully revegetated with sedges and samphire in what was previously a wasteland of veldt grass and other weeds. This extension of native habitat is a result of SERAG's implementation of the Pelican Point Management Plan over many years, with the assistance of SALP grants and thousands of hours of volunteer help from University students of UWA and Curtin, working alongside SERAG volunteers.



Pelican point looking east April 2019 Photograph - C O'Neill



Pelican point looking east January 2024 Photograph - M Matassa

In a far-reaching vision, SERAG believes that with full restoration and protection of the Swan Estuary Marine Park, and through the implementation of the Marli Riverpark Final Report (2014), that DBCA should seek World Heritage Listing for the Swan-Canning Riverpark, re-named as the Marli Riverpark, as the celebratory focal point of the 2029 Bicentennial Year.

Recognition for the Matassas

A morning tea was held recently at Fraser's Restaurant when recipients from all over the State were presented with Certificates of Appreciation for long years of service volunteering on DBCA Reserves. Robin Napier and Julie Ginbey were delighted to be present when SERAG's Chairperson, Margaret, and husband, Mario Matassa were recognised for their 20 years of valuable service.

Margaret and Mario had worked on the Attadale foreshore with "Friends of Attadale Foreshore" before forming, with others, the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group. It was acknowledged that DBCA can only manage to protect and restore our environment because of the community's involvement and dedication.

In her unique style, Margaret seized this opportunity to address DBCA Director-General Stuart Smith regarding the issues at Pelican Point and the pressing need to protect bird life. He agreed to set up a meeting. Some members of the SERAG committee have been preparing for this meeting including looking at the development of a pathway system that avoids people disturbing birds while they are resting, roosting and breeding.



Director-General Stuart Smith and the legendary Matassas!

Article and photograph - J Ginbey

Season of Djilba-Kambarang - September-November (1st and 2nd Spring)
These Noongar Seasons are represented by the colour yellow. They symbolise the seasons of conception and birth and the beginning of the hot weather.

Oh What A Beautiful Morning!

Early on a Tuesday morning in July, seven staff from COMO hospitality group arrived at the Attadale foreshore and were delighted with the sight of the shimmering river through the old growth trees.



Photograph - T Glover

They were greeted by the regular group of SERAG volunteers who already know the joys of very early morning starts down by the river in the crispy cold with the sun just rising.

For two solid hours, everyone worked at digging basins in the soil and planting each seedling into the lowest point to achieve the best chance of directing any rain or water down to its roots. However, it did end up looking like the area had been overtaken by quendas!



Photograph - A Bullock

Such was the terrific effort that it resulted in 450 seedlings being planted in this way during the 2 hour session.

A delicious morning tea with hot drinks, cakes, scones and fruit rounded out a very successful morning, with the visitors looking forward to doing it all again another time.

A Rogue Sedge

The gentle tapping of trowels on plastic tube stock pots tells me that I am down on the Attadale foreshore on an early Tuesday morning for some winter planting with SERAG. Tremendous Tuesday, or TT for those in the know, is where I meet and volunteer with this group of committed environmental warriors. It's a wonderful supportive group of people who have made such a difference to the foreshore environment and in turn the health of the river.

My name is Alison Bullock and after a long career in education as a primary teacher and teacher educator in WA, the NT and overseas, I now have time to do some volunteering. I heard about SERAG from a friend who was already a volunteer and a few weeks in it was clear this was what I had been looking for. I have long had an interest in the natural environment and revegetation and here was a group who had been doing a fantastic job and made such a difference to the Alfred Cove foreshore over the 12 years they have been working there. The before and after photos of the improved foreshore environment are very compelling.

There is such joy working in the early morning along the river foreshore with the added benefit of being able to take a pause from weeding or planting, to take in the view of the river and the birds that call it home or stop off on the foreshore on their long migratory flight paths.

As well as working with the TT group I have also taken up the role of Secretary with SERAG. This has given me an insight into the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to organise the weeding, planting and advocacy work that SERAG carries out.

The coffee and homemade cake at the end of a hard morning's work is legendary and often jokingly cited as the only reason people come to TT. It is also a time to sit around and chat with fellow volunteers and catch up with what is happening in the world of environmental regeneration.

One of the other things I do post my career in education is make baskets. So, one day when the TT team were working down in the muddy sedge area of the foreshore digging out a rogue sedge *Cyperus laevigatus*, I couldn't resist.



Long sedge leaves are perfect raw materials for making coiled baskets. After taking just one bag of the muddy sedges home I could see their potential so, the next TT saw Margaret helping me load five bags of the smelly rogue sedges into the back of my car.

After hauling them home and out to my back yard they then needed to be washed, all the non-sedge materials and grasses discarded and the roots cut off. It took about a week to dry the sedges and hang them ready to use to make baskets.

I use a basket making technique where bundles or coils of the sedge leaves are stitched together with raffia. It is a slow meditative process that produces small but sturdy baskets.

Basket making for me is an enjoyable activity that combines working with SERAG, my art practice and transforming what is considered a rogue sedge and a weed into a functional object.



Sad end for a special family

Those of us who love the vistas and birdlife of Pelican Point and work hard to conserve and restore its many values are today saddened. Special favourites, two Pied Oystercatchers died together this week. With their feet tightly entangled in fishing line, one can only imagine how they struggled to free themselves, only to die of starvation.



These not-so-shy birds are often to be seen at Pelican Point and along the whole Matilda Bay foreshore. They are easily recognised with their long orange-red bills, slender pink legs and black and white plumage.

At Pelican Point we have watched this little family nest each year, laying eggs in a shallow scrape in the sand and producing one or two young which are then taught life skills. We have watched as they train their young to extract mussels from shells and to be wary of intruders.



You might well ask how could these two Pied Oystercatchers die in a Bird Sanctuary located in a Marine Park? The harsh reality is that our government is more concerned with the “rights” of recreational fishers than with wildlife. Surely it is time to say ‘No More’.

Pelican Point is the only roosting area for waterbirds along the whole of the northern side of the Lower Swan Estuary. It is also a bird breeding area. Black swans, Black-winged Stilts, Red-capped Plovers as well as these Pied Oystercatchers are known to breed at Pelican Point. It is a small area yet one under immense pressure.

The Bird Sanctuaries at Pelican Point and also at Alfred Cove include extensive seagrass beds which are critical feeding grounds for waders, water birds and our iconic Osprey, as well as being the estuary's nursery grounds where small fry, prawns and crustaceans should find protection as they grow to size. Instead they are highly vulnerable to human disturbance and our bird life suffers from discarded and broken tackle in these shallows.



Science tells us that fish stocks will improve in the Swan Estuary if the negative impact of people in these vital areas is stopped. So why are our birds and river creatures losing their lives and losing their precious breeding, feeding, and resting area to fishers, who have plenty of other options along the river, and indeed who stand to gain by such protective measures?

We ask the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Fisheries to act urgently to fully protect these sanctuaries of our Swan Estuary for the sake of all the creatures that depend on it, and for the sake of the community who dearly love our birds and wildlife.

Cygnus atratus

De Vlamingh thought his eyes were playing tricks
When he arrived here in 1696
And spied our Swans, not mute nor white
In flocks of thousands, a most impressive sight
So named these waters the 'Black Swan River'

Commonly found on fresh and saline lakes and rivers
across most of Australia except in the North
Cob Black Swan, up to 7 kg he weighs
much more than a Pen, though finding her, forever he stays
Making large nest of reeds and grasses on waters edge
where she lays up to 10 greenish white eggs.
Both parents incubate them for 6 weeks till they hatch
And vigorously defend their grey cygnets in a big batch
As herbivores they're soon swimming and plunging to feed
on aquatic grasses and algae that's just what they need.
Cared for by parents for about 9 months, then taking 3 years to mature
To a wing span of up to 2 metres with a very long neck

Between September and February (after breeding) adults moult
the white tipped flight feathers when of course they can't fly
After a month with new feathers they're ready, to give it a try
needing 40 metres of flight path, oft flying with others in a wedge,
The eyes are red and so is the bill, with a little white on the tip
and it's often we see them when fresh water they sip, as it floats on heavier salt water
flowing from the drains and fresh water streams outlets into the river.



Poem - J Ginbey

Photograph - M Matassa



TREEmendous Tuesday - Come Rain or Shine

Our remarkable TREEmendous Tuesday crew were undeterred by the solid rain one morning, despite this being quite an unusual occurrence at their early morning starts.

Indeed, weeding around the seedlings planted on the slopes of the Typha site at Tompkins Park was a joy, as they have grown into extraordinarily strong and healthy plants, over-topping the volunteers as they bent to weed the winter grasses. It is hard to believe they are only one year old, such is their size.



A hot cuppa and delicious cake were further reward for their efforts, and just what was needed before heading off home.



Look! A Place of Many Seedlings!

It is exciting times at Djinang Djidimya (Look! A place of many birds), with new vegetation responding positively to the winter rains that have finally arrived.

Aside from the 1,038 tube stock that SERAG and the community planted in May this year, our 500 square metre patch of direct seeding is starting to yield results. The direct seeded area is a trial to see if we can improve the survival rate of new plants. The theory is that plants that grow in direct seeded sites are more resilient than their tube stock counterparts.



Rottnest Island Daisy - (*Trachymene coerulea*)



Casuarina obesa

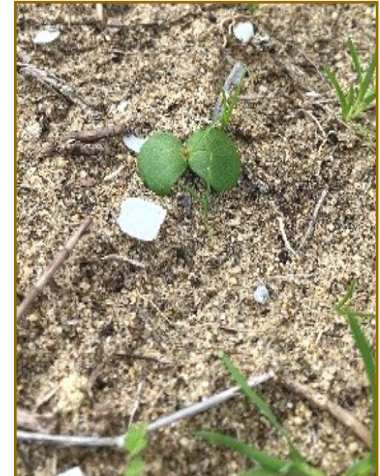
The first seedlings are starting to come through and include Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Hakeas, Sheoak (*Casuarina obesa*) and some annuals such as Rottnest Island daisy (*Trachymene coerulea*). As the photos show, some of these are very, very tiny!



Rottnest Island Daisy - (*Trachymene coerulea*)



Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*)



Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*)

For now, it is going to be a balancing act as to how the City manages the weed growth around the plants and protects the seedlings. There are some benefits to having the weeds growing around the seedlings right now. They can provide some protection from hungry insects and from the wind. However, there will come a time where the weeds will need to be removed so the natives can have better access to water and nutrients. The City's foreshore team of Jem Stirling and Jamie Davies will be keeping a very close eye on the site to ensure that the right balance is struck. For now, Jamie will focus on reducing the larger weeds. There will be more extensive hand weeding and herbicide painting of weeds in late Spring when the seedlings are more established.



SERAG and the community can help by staying out of the direct seeded area so we can avoid trampling on any natives that come through. An aerial image shows Djidimya with the direct seeded section outlined in yellow.

We look forward to providing another update on the seedling success in SERAG's next newsletter!

Article and photographs – J Stirling, Acting Natural Areas Coordinator, City of Melville

Mark this Date ! World Migratory Bird Day

Come to welcome our world travellers to Attadale foreshore on World Migratory Bird Day,

• Saturday October 12th, 8am - 10am

Enjoy a birdwalk with experienced birdwatchers - binoculars & telescopes available - with the chance to see the earliest arriving trans-equatorial birds.

Informative displays by SERAG and Friends of Melville Bird Sanctuary highlight their journey, and families will enjoy activities organised by City of Melville and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, including a dog booth.

Please meet us at the Djidimya seating area, that is alongside the path leading from the Haig Rd carpark.

Image - Pixabay

TOGETHER

Waxing, waning,
Arising, falling away,
Life renews through cycles,
Through turns of night and day.

Inspire, expire,
Conserve, expand,
With these rhythms,
Bird migrations dance.

Wings stroke upwards into blue,
From an old home below,
Time to onward move,
Wedding past to futures glow.

Sun warmed feathers flicker,
Shimmer, glide in cold air.
It's so quiet up here,
Where the tapestry is shared -

The fabric of woven rhythms,
Twine dyed by earth, water, air and fire.
Its pattern of birds emerge,
As they wade within a mire,

Plunge upon fleeting fish,
Skirt the wind's motion,
Let feathers dry by sun,
While its warmth swells the ocean.

As fire lets water levitate into air,
Billows of white veil the sun's face.
Hidden from fire, earth's pull waxes,
And water gives back into its embrace.

Fire widened water,
Enlivens hardened clay,
Awakening biota,
Transmuting earth into green bouquet.

Wing beats entwine north and south,
Itinerant birds follow life's fabric.
What purpose, what plan, this garment,
Including all as if by magic?

Be still. Listen to the cycles,
Of all the beings in the world.
By life's circulation,
A wiser way unfurls.

In restless grasping, when stillness lacks,
We hear nothing of this beauty,
Though its simplicity lies deep within our being,
We die to superficiality.

Once an old way nourishes not,
Avian wings are spread to fly,
Relinquishment becomes the way,
To stay would be to die.

They rise unto the sphere of light,
Where separations cease,
Where through the garment of rhythm and change,
Shines an all sustaining peace.

Its rays reveal a new way forward,
A passage to sustenance,
Ground for a feathered coterie,
Where mountain and valley find balance.

Headed towards remembered lands,
Their hearts renewed with joy,
Together they weave the way ahead,
Together as life's envoy.

Mark these Dates !



SERAG AGM - 16th October 2024

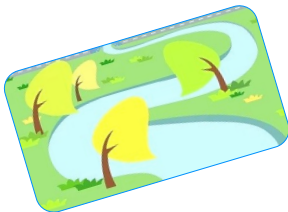
Members and friends are warmly invited to our Annual General Meeting on
Wednesday 16th October 6:00pm at Bracks Library, Melville.

Of great interest will be the address by Brett Dal Pozzo who is WA Seascapes Coordinator for Nature Conservancy. In 2023 Nature Conservancy received a grant from the Federal Government to restore vital habitats along the Swan Estuary's foreshore and shallows by establishing "living shorelines", including fringing vegetation, seagrass, and potentially, shallow reefs. Restoring these habitats is intended to benefit precious native species including the Fairy Tern, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black Swan, and the secretive native 'otter', the Rakali.

Brett will give an update on the project.

Following this there will be reports and the election of office bearers as well as a special resolution to adopt a new constitution. You are then warmly invited to stay and mingle over a delicious supper.

All welcome!



Celebrate World Rivers Day !

at Point Walter on Thursday 26th September 9:30-2:30pm

Share science and conservation efforts that are occurring in and around the river

- Inspire young minds to appreciate and protect the environment
- Six activities aimed at students 12+ years

Activity Topics -

- * Seagrass (DBCA) * Fish (DBCA, MU) * Water Quality (DBCA) + catchment demonstration (NTN)
 - * Birds (Claire Greenwell + Birdlife Australia) * Dolphins (River Guardians)
- \$5.00 per participant

Images - Pixabay

We encourage you to take a look at our *Facebook* page as well as our *LinkedIn* page—

<https://www.facebook.com/swanestuaryreservesactiongroupserag/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/swanestuaryreservesactiongroupserag/> and follow them if you are active on either platform. You may need an account to view *LinkedIn*.

Regular Events for Your Calendar



- **TREEmendous Tuesdays** - Bush Care Activities - Alfred Cove 7:00am - 9:00am
- **Saturday at Pelican Point** - Bush Care Activities 8:30am - 10:30am
- **Monthly Saturday Bird Count** - please contact SERAG for dates & times
- **Monthly Mondays at Milyu** - Foreshore Rubbish Clean-Up 7:00am - 9:00am

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