



# Earthcare Newsletter

July  
August  
2009

*We do what we can, where we are*

## WHAT'S ON

Planting at Johnson Reserve  
Corner Cowderoy St and Canterbury Rd St Kilda West  
Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 10 am.  
Lot of work to do here it needs to be rescued

### "Wildlife in City of Port Phillip"

Port Phillip Ecocentre Corner Blessington/Herbert Sts St Kilda  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 7.30 pm.

Andrew McCutcheon will talk and show photos mostly about birds, but will include some mammals, reptiles, amphibians and anything else of interest that walks, crawls, runs, hops, swims or flies.  
There are plenty of them!

Planting at Elwood Foreshore Near Point Ormond

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 10 am.

SeaStar Removal Dive and Paddle  
Land Crew welcome  
St Kilda Pier from 9am  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August

**ALL WELCOME**

Earthcare St Kilda PO Box 287 Elwood 3184

[www.earthcarestkilda.org.au](http://www.earthcarestkilda.org.au)

[earthcarestkilda@gmail.com](mailto:earthcarestkilda@gmail.com)

# Port Phillip Nature Watch

July 2009

Again it is along time between reports. Apart from two significant sightings, a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in St Kilda Botanic Gardens, a young Australian Fur Seal in Elwood and very few interesting bird sightings, not a great deal has been happening in regard to wildlife in our area.

## Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos

On a fine afternoon on the 7<sup>th</sup> May I got a phone call from Neil Blake reporting the presence of some Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos calling loudly (I could hear them on the phone!) in the St Kilda Botanic Gardens. I rushed to the gardens to witness the presence of a flock of approximately 100 birds flying over and briefly settling on the tops of the larger trees in the south west corner. The big flock of cockatoos only stayed around for about 15 to 20 minutes before flying off south towards Elwood.

On the next day at 8.45am Neil saw a couple of the yellow-tailed black cockies over the gardens. This time they were heading north. And a few days later on 11 May Jill sokol reported a flock of black cockatoos estimated at about 30 in number flying over her home in Mitford St. They were heading south, maybe towards Elsternwick Park.



Forty of the 100+ birds over St Kilda Botanic Gardens



Chewing wood off a black wattle in search for a tasty grub inside

There have been many reports to Birds Australia of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in Melbourne's suburbs including areas in City of Port Phillip (Albert Park, Middle Park) in recent months, but this is the first time for the St Kilda Botanic Gardens and over Elwood that I know of. I strongly suspect the increased presence of these birds in Melbourne has a lot to do with the recent wildfires causing displacement of the birds from the burnt forests to the north and east.

## Australian Fur Seal

I first saw the young Australian Fur Seal on the afternoon of Friday 29 May floating about 50 metres offshore between Point Ormond and the mouth of Elwood Canal. As there was little movement I thought it may be dead, but it did lift its head to breath and raise a flipper to prove it was alive. After watching it for about 15 minutes I moved on.



The following day I went for a late afternoon walk (over 24 hours later) and casually glanced at the rocks around the entrance to the canal and saw movement on a rock on the northern point. It was our seal which had come ashore to rest. On closer inspection it appeared to be sluggish, not very alert to my presence and had trouble keeping its eyes open. The animal appeared to be sick with some seepage from the eyes, but otherwise looked to be of good weight for its size indicating that it was well fed, not starving. I estimate that it was just under a metre in length with an approximate body weight of 25 kg, and old enough to fend for itself rather than having been so young that it may have been prematurely separated from its mother.

I contacted Wildlife Victoria and they suggested I inspect the site the following morning to see if the seal was still there, and to my relief it wasn't. I can only assume that it recovered sufficiently to go back into the water to catch its next meal.

So far only two reports of sightings have been received from Earthcare members. They include:

- A **Powerful Owl** with a possum high up in a Cypress tree behind St Kilda Park Primary school in Albert Park sometime in May. This was reported to Neil Blake by an Eco volunteer working in Albert Park at the time.
- A pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** was observed on the wires opposite Clarke Reserve, Elwood by Jill Sokol on Sunday 21 June. Hopefully this pair will breed later this year. Jill also reported an **Australian Hobby** (Little Falcon) in Elwood on 19 June.

Please let me if you see any interesting wildlife. I can be contacted by email [awmccutcheon1@bigpond.com](mailto:awmccutcheon1@bigpond.com) or phone 9531 2270.

Andrew McCutcheon

## North Pacific Seastar collection

Another very successful collection day was held in May, during which 3,114 North Pacific seastars (give or take...) were removed from the St Kilda shoreline near the pier, and from the water near the boardwalk.

Thanks to our brave volunteers who venture into the bay in winter, our friends from Dive Headquarters in Prahran, and to the land crew who count and sort the smelly haul, we have been able to minimise the impact of these pests on the habitat around the St Kilda pier.

A quick inspection of the shoreline last Sunday showed little evidence of these seastars, lending support to the notion that regular removal does have an impact.

For any Earthcare members and their friends who are interested in helping with our efforts to contain the damage which can be done by these creatures, our next scheduled removal will be on the morning of Saturday August 8th.

## Rakali Watch is in Winter recess

**Penguin Monitoring** goes on as usual. Some of the penguins have satellite trackers on them to give us an idea of their winter feeding patterns. Quite a few pairs have laid eggs. We have not experienced our usual June, July phenomenon of almost no penguins on the breakwater although they have been occupying burrows in patterns other than usual.

## Planting session at West St Kilda Beach

Not many people came to help but a valiant few planted the area near the Banksia and Allocasuarina trees with a variety of reeds and flowering creepers.

### Earthcare St Kilda

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