



Earthcare News

August
September
2006

We do what we can, where we are

**Earthcare
Meeting
August 17th
7.30pm for
8.00pm**

**Joanne
Greenwood
IMPROVING OUR
WATERWAYS FOR
FLORA AND FAUNA**

**SWIMMING KOALAS?
PAGE 2**

**MINISTRONE SOUP
PAGE 3**

**PORT PHILLIP
NATURE WATCH
PAGE 4**

**Planting
at
West Beach
Sunday August
20th
11am-1pm**

**WE NEED YOU
TO COME**

WEST BEACH ST KILDA

Corner Pier Road and Beaconsfield Pde.

Opposite the end of Cowderoy St.

SUNDAY AUGUST 20TH

11AM-1PM

THE EASIEST PLANTING AND WEEDING YOU WILL EVER DO

(Only two people turned up to the previous planting).

Please make a special effort for the
last planting this year

West St Kilda Beach Salt Marsh is the only totally planted
salt marsh in Victoria. It was once just thistles and weeds but
Earthcare turned it into the beautiful wild landscape it is
today. Let's keep it that way.

THURSDAY 17TH OF AUGUST, 7.30 FOR 8.00 PM

Ecocentre, Cnr Blessington and Herbert Streets, St Kilda
(St Kilda Botanic Gardens)

JOANNE GREENWOOD from MELBOURNE WATER

IMPROVING OUR WATERWAYS FOR FLORA AND FAUNA

Habitat for Rakali and Birdlife above the flood line
Refuges for breeding waterfowl,
Vegetation management in the Golf Course

RAKALI

Bayside Rakali Survey May 2006

The month long survey was the most successful one held so far with 39 Rakali caught at 4 locations.

RAKALI SYMPOSIUM 2007

We can now confirm that the next Rakali Symposium will be a joint venture with Bayside City Council.

AROUND THE LOCATIONS

Our most successful Rakali observations are at the St Kilda Breakwater. Large numbers are often to be spotted around the lower jetty. Small numbers have been observed in Elwood Canal and Albert Park Lake. On a recent visit to Webb Dock no sightings were made.

The Rakali Watch team are putting together an educational resource pack to be sent to schools around Port Philip and Bayside. The resource pack will include photos, a booklet and a DVD. So far we have some great Rakali photos and film footage. Parks Victoria have granted us \$1,000 towards the project.

Lost in translation or the tale of the Swimming Koala?!

On a recent penguin night the writer was surrounded by six or eight extremely enthusiastic Japanese tourists furiously clicking away with their digital cameras. Needless to say it wasn't me they were interested in but the penguin being carried back to its hidey hole. One of our group spotted a Rakali swimming near the jetty and began telling our Japanese youngsters all about them. With blank expressions they

listened patiently but without seemingly to understand our experts words. However, with the phrase "Rakali are as Australian as the Koala" our tourists suddenly burst into life and began running to the edge of the jetty pointing and calling out "Koala! Koala!". For the next few hours all I could do was smile imagin-

ing all the emails flying around
saying
"I never knew Koala's could swim!".

The new Rakali web page is up on the Bayside website, including footage from the radio tracking trial.

http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/environment_rakalis.htm

Rakali photographs on the page are by Dirk Petzold and Andrew McCutcheon



One very big, fat, male Rakali

**Bonded Thermal Fleece Jackets
and satchels are now available with
Rakali Logo.**



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EARTHCARE PENGUIN SYMPOSIUM 2006

On the 11th of June this year, Earthcare held a Penguin Symposium to commemorate 20 years of penguin study on the St Kilda breakwater. The Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron generously donated their function room for the day, which provided a beautiful backdrop to look out over the St Kilda breakwater - the sight of many hours of hard yakka by countless volunteers.

The day was introduced by M.C. Sue Pennicuick and the Mayor of Port Phillip, Cr. Janet Bolitho. This was followed by a talk from Neil Blake who gave a wonderful account of the history of the breakwater, the penguins, and the involvement of the late Prof. Mike Cullen.

Over the course of the day around 50 attendees, many of them former or current penguin study group volunteers, were addressed on a number of topics covering past, present and future research and conservation efforts.

Presentations included the current status of the St Kilda penguin population, foraging and feeding ecology of little penguins, DNA sampling in little penguins, penguin vocalisation, little penguins at the Melbourne Zoo and observations of little penguins in Port Phillip Bay made during the trial channel deepening.

The day finished up with a walk out to the breakwater to view penguins arriving for the evening, followed by a well-earned celebratory cake and champagne provided by Little Blue, the aptly named restaurant on the pier.

Many thanks must go to all involved in organising this terrific day, in particular Zoe Hogg who spent an enormous amount of time and energy making it a great success.

Tiana Preston

For those of you who enjoyed the
MINISTRONE SOUP
at the penguin symposium,
here is the recipe

Makes 5 litres

Olive oil

1.5 large onions

2 cloves garlic

500gm carrots

2 big celery sticks with leaves

2 large desiree potatoes

200gms Cabbage

1 large tin tomatoes

375ml. Campbells Real vegetable stock

1 large tin Canelli beans

Handful of Italian Parsley
sage, oregano and thyme.

3 litres water

salt and pepper to taste

Fry the onions and garlic in oil

add diced carrots, potatoes and celery and fry, then
add tomatoes, stock and water.

Boil for 30 minutes

Put everything else in and boil till it tastes good.



New Breakwater Sign



night heron

PORT PHILLIP NATURE WATCH

June - July 2006

After an eventful late autumn with the Powerful Owl, things have since been comparatively quiet but still interesting. I have had some good reports from Earthcare members and others over the last two months, which have provided most of the interesting sightings for this Newsletter.

In the last week of June Jill Sokol reported an Eastern Spinebill feeding on pineapple sage in her backyard. I always like to hear about birds such as Eastern Spinebills, just to know that they still inhabit this part of Melbourne. I have not seen one for several years in the CoPP.

Jill also reported two interesting sightings on her walks along Elwood Canal. The first was a Rakali at 6.15pm on Sunday 16th July swimming in the canal on the bend near John St. At the time of writing this newsletter article, this would be the most recent sighting of these animals I am aware of for the canal. The second and more significant was a Nankeen Night Heron which flew over the Shelley Street bridge. They seem to be becoming less frequently seen in Elwood Canal and elsewhere in the CoPP. My last sighting was in February this year, also in Elwood Canal.

While doing a survey of nesting penguins on the morning of Friday 14 July, Tiana Preston was lucky enough to witness a pod of about six dolphins swimming just off St Kilda breakwater,



obviously following some school of fish as there were gannets diving in around them. She also discovered a population of Southern Tree Frogs in a wetland at the southeast corner of Alma Park, which do not seem to be perturbed by the cold weather. This must be the one of the best habitat areas for this frog species in the CoPP.

Tony Flude and George Fotheringham at Westgate Park reported a Pink-eared Duck near the timber viewing platform on Sunday 30 July. Although these ducks can be readily seen in large numbers in the Werribee Treatment Plant this is the first time I have heard of this species at Westgate Park.

And now to my sightings:

On 6 June a small flock of at least 10 Spotted Pardalotes were feeding in my backyard eucalypt. They stayed for half hour before being driven off by the local White-plumed Honeyeaters, which aggressively guard their territory. Since then pardalotes have been frequent visitors, but only one or two at a time. They are regular visitors to Melbourne's suburbs during the winter months.

From May to July there have been a lot of gannets feeding in the northern half of Port Phillip Bay on large shoals of anchovy or other species of small fish present at the time. On one afternoon (Friday 9 June) I went for a walk to Point Ormond to witness hundreds of gannets along with the usual crested terns, cormorants and gulls in a feeding frenzy as close as 100 metres off shore. The feeding birds kept moving around the general area sometimes almost a kilometre offshore as the fish shoals appeared in different locations. This was all quite normal, but for the fact there were hundreds of smaller birds joining the gannets when they came close to Point Ormond a 2nd time at around 3.30. They were identified as Fluttering Shearwaters, which are closely related to the well known Short-tailed Shearwater, but are much smaller with a white breast and underwing, have a rapid wing beat and typically appear in large flocks. They nest and breed on New Zealand coastal islands during the summer months and visit Australia's southern inshore waters from April to October.

If you see any interesting wildlife no matter how insignificant they may appear to you, and it may well be in your back yard please send me a report. I can be contacted on 9531 2270, or email amccutcheon@aapt.net.au

Andrew McCutcheon