



PROGRESS AT ALFRED COVE

In support of the Department of Environment and Conservation's Riverbanks Project, SERAG Inc. has been assisting in the removal of major weed infestations and has commenced re-vegetation in the Alfred Cove A-Class Reserve.

We have received fabulous support, not only from our own members, but from the wider community, with Conservation Volunteers Australia allocating some of their teams to help us. These teams have included travelers from places such as Korea, Somalia and the United Kingdom, members of the local Sikh commu-

nity, employees from the National Australia Bank, businessmen and women and retirees, as well as a number of school students and their parents.

Large stands of Japanese pepper and giant reed have been cut down and their stumps poisoned, the Swan River Trust removing five large truckloads of biomass.

Replacement vegetation indigenous to the foreshore has been carefully planted to provide fauna habitat, and using lime and best practice to diminish a risk of exposing acid sulfate soils in susceptible places.

An unexpected challenge has been the interest shown by resident Purple Swamphens, who have delighted in uprooting newly planted sedges to taste their juicy roots.

DEC continues to tackle the swathes of *Typha orientalis* that have covered the eastern end of the Reserve, but have encountered difficulty in slashing one section due to the waterlogged soils and extremely high tides.

Overall, it has been a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding task, and we thank all who have generously contributed their time and efforts to its success.



Volunteer Laura Van Roie comes face to face with two of the weeds choking Alfred Cove: Japanese pepper and *Typha orientalis*

PURPLE SWAMPHENS

Three beautifully attired local residents took a close interest in the re-vegetation efforts of our hard-working volunteers in an eastern section of Alfred Cove.

Known scientifically as *Porphyrio porphyrio*, the Purple Swamphen is a large bird in the family of Rallidae (rails). At around 45cm they are strong swimmers and fliers, but prefer to wander on the edges of marshes and freshwater streams.



It is understood that the Romans kept them as decorative birds at large villas and expensive houses, regarding them as noble birds. They were among the few birds that Romans did not eat.

Their diet includes the soft shoots of reeds and rushes — hence they wrecked havoc on our plantings, enjoying a new “fast-food” experience and forcing us to replant many seedlings

each following day! They also eat small animals such as frogs and snails, and are known to occasionally enjoy feasting on other birds' eggs too.

Our three were very gregarious and their striking plumage, stunning red beaks and orange legs - and the little flicks of their tail feathers to reveal a white petticoat - enchanted us. As Carolyn Thompson-Dans and Stuart Halse say in their book *Waterbirds of south-west wetlands*. “Swamphens are full of character and have an interesting lifestyle.”! (CALM 2001, pg 54).

SERAG Inc. is pleased to announce that its application for LotteryWest funding to support the purchase of office and other equipment has been successful. We extend our sincere thanks to LotteryWest.

GIANT REED

We often mistakenly call *Arundo donax* “bamboo” as it looks quite similar.

This weed is an aggressive competitor, establishing easily in wetland or riparian areas, and growing (as you can see in the photograph) to 6 meters or more. Underground it produces an extensive network of large, but short rhizomes and fibrous tap roots, and it spreads mainly from these as the seed heads are rarely fertile.

Not only does giant reed destroy native riparian habitat, but it is highly adapted to extreme fire events and can increase fire intensity.

In our efforts to control and eventually completely remove this weed from the Alfred Cove A-Class Reserve we have cut down the stems in two large outbreaks, removed the biomass and immediately painted the open cuts with an aquatic-approved herbicide. Re-growth will be similarly treated.



School student Brianna Lawrence and her mother Sharon tackle giant reed on a hot Saturday at Alfred Cove.

PELICAN POINT PROJECT APPROVAL

We are delighted to announce that SERAG Inc. has been successful in its application for State NRM funding to commence restoration work in the Pelican Point A-Class Reserve in Crawley.

Over thirty-thousand dollars has been received, allowing SERAG Inc., in consultation with DEC, to develop and commence a long-term management strategy. This will involve the replacement of endemic weeds with native vegetation, installing matting planted with sedges to manage erosion from boat-wash and winter storms, and signage to better inform the wider community of the enormous importance of the Reserve.

Pelican Point has been established to serve as a sanctuary for the protection of local and migratory birds, a number of which are now on the endangered list. The Fairy tern and the Red-necked stint are among the many bird species that rely heavily on this small area for habitat.

Apart from its small size and general degradation, increasing human disturbance has a concerning impact on the well-being of this Reserve.

There has recently been a large increase in the number of people, often with their dogs, walking along the beach and up into the vegetation. Unfortunately they are not only disturbing resting and foraging birds, but are also accidentally treading on their nests, which may be simple shallows in the beach sand. Kite-surfers too, who inadvertently stray into the Reserve have significantly discouraged use of the beach by waders, who confuse them with large predatory birds.

As we feel sure much of the disturbance is not deliberate and many would be appalled to think they were inadvertently destroying that which they love, improved signage and other community education strategies will be employed to alert people to the problem.

To commence restoration of the Reserve, two weeks' work has been planned in July. Please feel free to join us, even if it is only for a few hours.

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FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

- Wednesday 22.06.2011 to Friday 24.06.2011: Planting at Milyu
- Monday 04.07.2011 to Friday 15.07.2011: Planting at Pelican Point

**Please contact us for details if you would like to participate.
Your assistance will be warmly welcomed!**



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