

Edithvale
Seaford
Wetlands

Community
Liaison
Committee

Newsletter

WINTER 2006



Welcome to this the first edition of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Community Liaison Committee Newsletter.

Melbourne Water established the community liaison committee in 2004 to encourage community involvement in managing this important environment.

This newsletter aims to provide you with information and updates about the work of the committee and the developments at this wonderful community asset.



A view of the Edithvale South wetlands taken from the bird hide

Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Community Liaison Committee Members

Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands
Les Williams

Frankston City Council
Jenny Symons

Kingston City Council Environment & Planning
David Digby

Aspendale Gardens Residents Association Inc.
Ken Carney

Seaford Community Group
Alison Kuitert

Kingston Conservation and Environment
Coalition
Bill Hampel

Birds Australia
Sean Dooley

Bird Observers Club of Australia
Charles Smith

Melbourne Water
Greg Bain (Chair)
Team Leader, Habitats - 9235 2543

Elli Hunt (Secretary)
Waterway Planner - 9235 2586

Will Steele (Observer)
Wildlife and Wetland Scientist

Damian Magner (Observer)
Natural Resources Management Specialist

Our next meeting is 30 August 2006



About the Wetlands

The Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands are remnant wetlands of the once extensive Carrum Carrum Swamp that covered about 10,000 acres, stretching from Mordialloc in the north to Frankston in the south.

The area is part of the geomorphological feature known as the Carrum Lowlands. At the time of European settlement, these freshwater and brackish wetlands were reported to support a diverse and abundant flora and fauna, including Brolga and Magpie Goose.

The wetland areas are the largest remaining natural wetlands of their type in the Port Phillip and Westernport catchments. The Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands have been registered under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance.

A Place of Discovery

Preparations are continuing for a Discovery Centre at the Edithvale Seaford Wetlands. Following community requests for a dedicated site from which to appreciate the wetlands, plans are being prepared with the input of a community reference group.

The centre will focus on creating educational opportunities for visitors to the wetlands, with a special focus on children from local schools.

Profile: Sean Dooley, Liaison Committee member.

The Watcher, The Writer



Sean Dooley looked forward to his maths class at Seaford North Primary. The reason for this enthusiasm was not related to his love of multiplication tables however. On arriving at the class, Sean and his classmates were issued with a pair of binoculars by their teacher and taken to watch birds in the nearby wetlands.

The formative years by the wetland sowed the seeds for Sean's passion in later life: bird watching, or, in the parlance of those who reach the heights of the pursuit, 'twitching'. "Those years really set the scene", explains Sean, "From '94 I've taken part in the monthly census and the relationship continues. Since 2004 I've been involved with the community liaison committee".

Sean believes that the liaison committee has been an important way in which to understand the needs of



other wetland users. “It’s been really interesting to get the perspective of other user groups. My own initial contact is obviously based on my passion for birds, but we’ve got to be clear that the area is not pristine wilderness and there are a wide range of interactions between people and the wetland.”

“There is a lot of knowledge about the wetland, but this knowledge is locked up in a lot of people’s heads. There’s a real risk that if it’s not shared it will not get passed on. So the liaison committee is a means by which the information can be shared and a real institutional memory can be created to support the wetland’s continued health and improvement.”



“An obvious example is the fact that we’ve experienced a seven year drought. There needs to be an understanding of how the wetlands are when there’s been good rain; an experience of the cycle of vegetation that occurs.”

“My experience of Melbourne Water’s wetland managers has been a positive one. I’ve found them to be open to my suggestions – not that all these suggestions have been acted on. I understand that there are competing demands, so it’s an ongoing process. The thing is that I’m optimistic; the water

quality’s improving, things are improving in general.”

Sean’s early experiences at Seaford continue to play a central role in his life. He has recently written a book detailing his twitching adventures across Australia (‘The Big Twitch’, Allen and Unwin) but Seaford clearly remains his spiritual home. “The book contains a chapter on Seaford and I had no shame in including it as a prime bird site; you can certainly discuss it in the same breath as Broome or Kakadu. It all started at Seaford, I love the place and will always make the time to get back there.”



Purple Swamphen



Plants and Animals of the Wetlands

In each edition of this newsletter we hope to profile a plant or animal that is native to the wetland. We conclude this our first edition with a few words from wetland ecologist Damien Cook about the Creeping Monkey Flower (*Mimulus repens*):

“The Creeping Monkey Flower is one of the most attractive plants which flowers abundantly in Edithvale wetlands during late summer and autumn. Over winter and spring this plant can grow as an aquatic with long trailing stems in up to a meter of water.

As water levels recede over summer it becomes a creeping herb, producing sweet-smelling purple flowers with a yellow centre.

This plant has become rare around Melbourne due to the destruction of its wetland habitat, but it is still quite common at Edithvale Wetlands.”



Creeping Monkey Flower

What we're talking about in the Community Liaison Committee

At our regular meetings we talk about a range of topics affecting the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands.

Issues discussed include:

Management issues relating to the wetland, including vegetation, recreational and fauna values

Planning issues of relevance to the wetlands and its buffer zones

Exchanging ideas about how to inform the general community about the environmental, conservation and wildlife values of the wetlands, especially regarding its Ramsar status.

We welcome your feedback and questions. Please contact us on 131 722 or by email at: inquiry@melbournewater.com.au

Further information on the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands is available from Melbourne Water's website at: www.melbournewater.com.au

Melbourne Water manages Melbourne's water supply catchments, removes and treats most of Melbourne's sewage and manages rivers, creeks and drainage systems throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region.