



# Deputation

E23/9 Melville Bird Sanctuary Boundaries

**Mr T Lubin & Ms M Matassa, Attadale**

# Current & Future Generations



Osprey family



Tawny Frogmouth



Avocets





MBS Boundary Stage 2

MBS Boundary Stage 1

**Quarantine Park**





## **Deputation by Tom Lubin – Approval of Melville Bird Sanctuary and its Boundaries – Agenda Briefing Forum 13/6/23**

In December 2018, when we put our Melville Bird Sanctuary proposal to an AGM of several hundred electors, we believed in its potential to be a significant environmental, community and tourism initiative for current and future generations.

Today, some 4 ½ years later, as unsettling, world changing events are happening all around us, we believe more than ever that the Melville Bird Sanctuary has great potential to provide significant benefits not only for birds, nature and the environment but also for the mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

Paul Sullivan, Chief Executive of Birdlife Australia writes “birds are terrific indicators of environmental health and sadly for birds and nature – the data tells us that the populations of some birds are declining fast. The good news is that people have the power to drive change and Australia should be well placed to protect and recover our unique birds and nature.”

Nature has the capacity to restore and heal – to revitalize and renew our spirits. Today, it is more important than ever in our busy world, to find the time to reconnect with nature and with birds who are the most obvious members of the natural world.

We have witnessed at first hand the positive reactions of people who attend our regular Birdwatching Walks. On our most recent Walk, 27 people of all ages joined us including children. At the conclusion of our Walks, people tell us they feel better, that they forget their worries during the Walk and feel inspired by the beautiful views and the birdlife.

Closely observing the behaviour of birds allows for some amazing revelations! Observing birds taking care of their young, their behaviour mirrors the best of human parents. Our Alfred Cove Osprey family comes to mind! Another bird family which is often a highlight of our Walks are the Tawny Frogmouths. People love spotting them as they huddle together in the Paperbark trees in perfect camouflage. And of course, the migratory birds who spend summer with us are awe-inspiring for so many reasons, not the least of which is how they get here and back to Siberia and the high Arctic, at times flying some 13,000+ kms non-stop.

We recently accompanied volunteers from WA Seabirds Rescue who released a rehabilitated native Avocet at Alfred Cove. It was quite beautiful and emotional to see the Avocet take those few tentative steps out of its confinement before flying back into the outside world.

We can't speak highly enough about just how much the Melville Bird Sanctuary has the potential to interest, inspire and lift people's spirits.

### **Melville Bird Sanctuary Boundaries – Stages 1 and 2 (See Boundaries Map Powerpoint)**

The Melville Bird Sanctuary Stages 1 and 2 boundaries, bring together a number of areas renowned for their birdlife at Attadale, Alfred Cove and Applecross (in Stage 1) and Pt Walter and the Bicton foreshore up to Quarantine Park (in Stage 2). The current bird count according to eBird figures is 148 bird species for Alfred Cove/Attadale and 87 for the Pt Walter Reserve.

Rehabilitation and revegetation of Stage 1 areas - Pt Waylen and the Bushbird Habitat (Blue Wren site) will make an amazing difference to these currently grassed areas. Certainly, when revegetation takes place, bird numbers and species will greatly increase. We recently heard that over the space of some 8 years of revegetation at Lake Claremont, bird species there jumped from 80 to 120.

Unlike Stage 1, the areas in Stage 2 do not require any additional revegetation other than ongoing work by the City and DBCA according to existing Plans for those areas. Just the installation of Melville Bird Sanctuary signage, in some instances to replace faded signage.

In relation to Stage 2 boundaries, after considerable thought, we recommend that Quarantine Park is taken out of the boundaries altogether. Our reasons for this are that the Park is principally a recreational area as well as a designated dogs off-leash exercise area. We recommend that Council removes Quarantine Park from Stage 2 boundaries.

### **Design of Melville Bird Sanctuary**

Overall, we would like the design of the Melville Bird Sanctuary to be 'uncomplicated' with little infrastructure apart from educational signage, walking paths and a few more Bird Viewing Platforms. We have beautiful vistas and great natural beauty within the Melville Bird Sanctuary boundaries which will provide places of tranquillity and sanctuary for birds and for people.

### **Approval of Melville Bird Sanctuary**

We have spent the past 3 ½ years developing and advocating the Melville Bird Sanctuary proposal to State Government, DBCA, Melville Council, the City of Melville as well as being in regular communication with our 2000 +supporters through Newsletters and our Facebook page.

The Melville Bird Sanctuary and its boundaries are supported by the Swan River Trust and the Conservation Parks Commission of DBCA. It will not be just a symbolic initiative. Its proposed boundaries are unique for their birdlife for reasons Margaret Matassa has just described and deserving of priority management as a 'Bird Sanctuary'. DBCA recognised at the commencement of our discussions, that even though some of the boundaries were already classified as "A Class Nature Reserve", being part of a Melville Bird Sanctuary was a

good way to convey how these areas could be collectively managed for important conservation outcomes.

When the Melville Bird Sanctuary is approved, Friends of Melville Bird Sanctuary will establish itself as an incorporated group in order to apply for and manage grant funding.

An Action Plan has already been prepared through the City of Melville in consultation with key stakeholders and includes the establishment of a Steering Committee.

We thank the City of Melville and DBCA and in particular Mick McCarthy and Mark Cugley for their great support and guidance throughout. And we greatly appreciate the support and encouragement given by the Mayor and Councillors.

Together with the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group, the Bicton Environmental Action Group and Friends of the Attadale Foreshore, Friends of Melville Bird Sanctuary hope that Melville Council will approve the establishment of the Melville Bird Sanctuary and its boundaries at its Ordinary Meeting on 20 June 2023.



## Margaret Matassa on behalf of SERAG - Presentation to City of Melville for the Approval of the Melville Bird Sanctuary.

I will start with a question: 'Why designate a bird sanctuary in Melville when birds are free to fly wherever they want?'

Yes, birds are free to fly anywhere but they choose to come to Alfred Cove / Attadale / Pt Walter to find resting and nesting places where food is also available, and have been doing so for thousands of years.

The reason that makes this area so special for birds is the same reason it was proclaimed by legislation as a Marine Park in the 80's – because they are the only remaining parts of the whole of the Swan River Estuary where there are significant shallows, and where there is the largest remaining stretch of samphire & Saltmarsh community of plants on the foreshore.

But how do shallows and Saltmarsh make a place special for birds and marine animals?

The shallows are the only place in the Swan River estuary where Seagrasses can grow: these need sufficient sunlight, so they only grow in clear, shallow water that allows sunlight through to drive their power to convert CO<sub>2</sub> to oxygen at 40 times the capacity of Rainforest – they are like the lungs of the Swan River, pumping oxygen into the mudflats, into the waters and into the air. A Blue Carbon plant. Their fronds shelter small fry, and crabs and prawns rely on them to lay their eggs – so this area is the nursery for the whole of the Swan River Estuary.

No wonder that some birds fly each year from around the world to our north all the way to Alfred Cove, to feast on the biota that live in the mud flats so that they can regain their strength to fly all the way back and nest, some as far away as the lower Arctic, before returning again in a wondrous cycle of life that occurs right here in our midst.

The Saltmarsh that lines the shore has an equally powerful role – it is another Blue Carbon plant, capturing CO<sub>2</sub> and sequestering it for a thousands of years. It cleanses the tidal flow, trapping suspended particles and deters erosion as it dampens the waves and contains the shoreline.

So protecting the health of the Swan River Estuary and protecting its birdlife is one and the same, and it is why SERAG works to strengthen the health of the foreshore vegetation and fully supports the designation of it as a Bird Sanctuary.

We trust this will bring better understanding of the vital significance of these areas, and people will want them protected for the benefit of their children and children's children.