



Intro

Water use (and wetlands) are big news in Australia and have been for the past couple of years. If it is not the drawnout debate of the Murray-Darling Basin it's the Queensland/NSW battle over water rights (and subsequent detrimental effect on the privately owned Ramsar listed wetlands in the Gwydir), or the recent announcement by renowned scientist, Tim Flannery, that Perth is likely to become a "ghost metropolis" with south west WA catchments falling from 340 ggalitres to 160 ggalitres. Or it is Victoria and NSW now requiring new houses to be water efficient to get building approval.

So where does the AWA fit into all this and what relevance does it have? Admittedly the AWA has been a little quiet, since the September 2003 meeting. This has been largely due to the handover of AWA Secretariat Hosting arrangements from The Wetlands Centre (TWC) to Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). TWC, CVA and AWA Reference Group members have been busy behind the scenes developing a communications format that does not rely on real-time responses from individual contacts within each conservation group, when there is a call for our (NGO) thoughts on the big wetland picture. This newsletter is one aspect of that strategy. Others are discussed below. All feedback is welcome.

AWA Update

AWA is approaching its 10th year as a network of wetland NGO interest groups. It was formed to give voice to the many wetlands organisation around Australia be they large or small. Over 50 such groups are now considered members/affiliates of the Alliance.

The AWA is not an incorporated entity. No dues, fees or subscriptions are collected for membership, though some organisations have generously made donations to keep the Alliance going. One of AWA's key functions is to provide community based feedback to the federal government on wetland policy and particularly to comment on issues relating to Australian obligations under the international Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Such feedback is normally sought before an upcoming Conference of Contracting Parties (COP), which are held every three years. The next COP will be held in Kamapla, Uganda, during 8-15 Nov 2005.

Something else happens each three years — the AWA Secretariat passes to another host organisation and Conservation Volunteers Australia is pleased to

Why should I read this?

Because your organisation is an affiliate or member of the Australian Wetland Alliance and you can get up-to-date with what your fellow AWA affiliate organisations have been doing around the country. You can call on them to enhance the work your own group is undertaking.

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have been selected as the new host. I would like to introduce myself, Libby McIntyre, and the organisation I work for, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). I will be the new contact for the AWA Secretariat and am taking over from Angela Brady. I look forward to working with, and learning from you all, over the next three years.

I would like to thank the previous AWA Secretariat Host, The Wetlands Centre, Angela Brady, Chris Prietto and Tara Ure for their tireless energy in ensuring the regular flow of important information, in particular in the lead up to COP8 and delivering reports and information after the conference along with a range of other issues.

A very hard working team has been part of the AWA Reference Group for some years and now it's time for some new blood. You will be emailed shortly and if you are interested in being a RG member you will be forwarded the terms of reference and other details.

Regards, Libby McIntyre, Incoming Secretariat (CVA)
revive@conservationvolunteers.com.au

AWA's Recent Background

At a meeting in Melbourne last September much thought was given to identifying an operational niche for AWA. Discussion focused on the activities of AWA over almost a decade, how they compared against the original AWA objectives, and how AWA might refocus its role in linking conservation groups.

It was commented that early energy generated by AWA's high profile presence at the Ramsar Convention in Brisbane in 1996 had to adapt to a more 'normal' situation of conservation groups struggling to maintain their own campaigns on key issues, with little time to contribute to higher level policy matters.

If AWA is to work effectively, it must complement existing NGOs' workloads and be seen as a tool for addressing strategic issues. A redrafted set of Objectives was developed (see box below) which reflected original AWA objectives such as a communications conduit between NGOs, whilst looking to develop a framework that would enable groups to contribute to a strategic response when AWA affiliated groups were presented with opportunities to raise concerns regarding wetlands. Of course, the development of a framework document recording issues from across the nation would take time, commitment and resources – a major limiting factor to all conservation groups. With these challenges in mind, a small team developed a grant proposal to build an interactive online database which would act as a portal for groups and individuals to post or search for information on wetlands issues.

This is not a new idea, as it was first proposed by AWA back in 1996. Unfortunately we were as unsuccessful this time around and we're back to the

drawing board on the conundrum on how to effectively link people and groups with a range of involvement and interests in wetlands, accommodating the dynamics of conservation groups and be funded to do the work.

It's the major challenge for AWA. If you know of any budding IT boffin with a penchant for the environment – keen to design such a tool – I'd love to talk to them!

The last two Ramsar cycles in the AWA Secretariat position have been an interesting, valuable and educative time for myself and the people at TWC. It has certainly made the Centre more aware of the opportunities, with the Shortland Wetlands being included in the Hunter Ramsar site and team members delivering elements of the Hunter Ramsar Strategy designed to improve awareness and 'wise use' of wetlands in the region.

Hopefully once again AWA can swing into action and maximise the opportunities of the next Ramsar Conference for conservation groups to put forward a case for wetlands conservation. (Representatives of a number of Australian conservation groups attended COP No.8 at Valencia, in Spain in November 2002. Amongst delegates were AWA affiliates and members. A Position Paper developed prior to the COP provided a documentary basis for the concerns of non-governmental organisations from all areas of Australia. Chris Prietto, the NGO representative on the Australian Delegation, provided feedback to conservation groups shortly after the COP.)

So let's get behind Libby and the CVA team as they work with you to make AWA a vital Wetland NGO voice

*Regards, Angela Brady, Immediate Past Secretariat (TWC)
abrady@wetlands.org.au*

AWA Objectives

Vision

The wise use of the wetlands of Australia

Goal

To promote implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Australia, enabling NGO leadership, communication and the development of alliances for the wise use of wetlands

Objectives

- To identify and respond to key wetland issues and priorities in relation to the Ramsar Strategic Plan*
- To provide a coordinated NGO voice in the preparation of Australia's National Report and other Australian input to Ramsar Conferences of Parties*
- To enhance communication between wetland conservation groups*
- To foster, support and participate in alliances and networks between regional, States and National NGO's for wetland conservation*
- To encourage government agencies to meet their obligations under the Ramsar Convention*

International News

Shorebird expeditions to China in 2004

By Sandra Harding, AWSG

The Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) aims to ensure the future of waders and their habitats in Australia and to do this requires wader studies to occur not only in Australia but also in the rest of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Expeditions undertaken in Australia to band and colour flag waders have helped to discover the routes and staging areas in the flyway used by waders while on migration. The AWSG has actively sought to expand expeditions to include visits to Asia. This year AWSG members participated in fieldwork in China during the northward migration. A recent report from China follows.

This report gives details of the final banding results from the Chinese activities at Chongming Island in the Yangtze estuary near Shanghai and Yalu Jiang near Dandong, in the Yellow Sea during this northward migration.

Overall, the Chongming Island team caught about 1600 waders in just over two weeks (30th March to 14th April). There were 21 recaptures of Australian-banded birds, 17 from North-West Australia and four from Victoria. The North-West Australia birds were 12 Great Knot and five Bar-tailed Godwits. It was interesting that the Bar-tailed Godwits were caught later than Great Knot, corresponding to their different departure dates from Broome (late March for Great Knot, early April for Bar-tailed Godwit). The four birds from Victoria were four different species - Grey Plover, Great Knot, Red Knot and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

Many of the above birds were of known age when banded and therefore we now know their specific age. Two of the recoveries were of Great Knot just two years old, which is an unexpectedly early age for them to have migrated north. Several more were three years old, including the Red Knot from Victoria. This is a more normal age for northward migration to start.

The Chinese have recorded the weight at capture of all of the above birds. In all cases the weight was below that recorded when the birds were banded in Australia. In one case, the weight was 30% lower. As almost all these birds had been banded outside the migration season and were therefore close to their 'fat-free' weight it seems that most of the birds captured in China were probably migrants, which had just arrived there, some having eaten into their muscle and other reserves having presumably consumed all their pre-migratory fat deposits.

The Chinese have been putting leg flags on all new birds caught. Therefore, on and after the return southward migration we should be looking very strongly for white over black double leg-flagged waders.

Banding activities have now ceased at Chongming, apparently because they ran out of money to pay the ex-hunters who were catching the birds for them, in clap-nets. However, it was obviously a very productive exercise.

Fieldwork activities in China transferred to the northern end of the Yellow Sea, where AWSG members, Peter Collins and David Melville (led by Director Chu Guozhong, Director of the National Bird Banding Center of China) were present until the end of April.

NB: A sightings list for Australia was also provided with this story. Contact Sandra if you are interested. sandra.harding@env.qld.gov.au

Australian Scientist recognised

Max Finlayson, the Darwin based Director of the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist, was recognised for his contribution to wetlands conservation at the Valencia COP in 2002.

He won a Recognition of Excellence in the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards for 2002. Max has been involved in many areas of wetlands conservation, being a longstanding member of the Ramsar Bureau's Scientific and Technical Research Panel (STRP). He has also 'played' outside of a purely scientific role, being a key proponent and participant in the Australian Wetlands Forum, and being involved in AWA over many years as the contact point for the Australian Society for Limnology Inc., a network for freshwater wetlands scientists.

Max has not been shy to argue for better communications between scientists, government and other wetland managers, and is keen to see the conservation movement maximise their voice in the wetlands agenda. He encourages maximum involvement of local communities in wetland programs

The Ramsar Manual, 3rd Edition. Announced 1 June 2004 as "Now Available."

This 100-page overview of the Ramsar Convention is now ready (actually, it was ready this time last year, but publication difficulties arose; never mind, it's been updated) -- the Convention's history and present structures, the services it provides, the workings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and the Secretariat, along with a brief guide to further information, the guidance documents, and the Resolutions and Recommendations of the COP.

*The first edition was compiled by Tim Davis in 1993, and the 2nd edition came out in 1997; **this 3rd edition is current as of April 2004** and includes the significant results of COPs 7 and 8.*

A PDF version will be included in English, French, and Spanish on the forthcoming CD-ROM publication of the 2nd edition of the Ramsar Toolkit and it's already available in both HTML and PDF versions on the web site www.ramsar.org/w.n.html

'Postcard' from Valencia

By **Christine Prietto**

(An edited extract, in case you missed the original)

Hello all, our AWA Position Paper made it to **COP 8** in the form of a hard copy in my bag, to be printed out by the photocopying office on Monday morning. My distribution team included Roy Sonneburg representing many organisations and Justine Graham on Wetland Care Australia. Across the Government delegation, the NGO's and those individuals connected to international organisations there are around 20 Australians here. Everyone is flat out.

We are at Day 5 of a 9 day event to consider over 40 new resolutions and it is now possible to get a picture of how things are moving along. Although the resolutions are many and you can review these (if you are desperate and really cannot find anything better to do) on the Ramsar webpage at www.ramsar.org under COP8 documents.

The key ones that are causing grief are Draft resolutions 3 (Climate change), 18 (Invasive species), 19 (Cultural aspects of wetlands), 32 (Mangroves), DR 34 (Agriculture) and DR 35 (Drought). Australia has strong positions on all of these and so do many other nations; a few of them as written could open the door to trade issues and extremely unsustainable uses of wetlands. There are others which are particularly relevant to Australia and which were noted in our Position Paper have not been as contentious but hopefully deliver some good guidelines. Those are DR 1 (Water Sharing), DR 40 (Groundwater) and DR 33 (Temporary pools).

The two resolutions sponsored by Australia, DR 37 on the Flyway work and DR 31 on Communication, are both sitting nicely and should survive Mondays fine-tuning. The Communication one was my focus for the first 4 days.

Overall the Convention is faring well and the discussions about 'where to next?' are tempered by the need to keep an eye on the budget, which is only a small percentage of the budget of other conventions. The newest global issues for wetlands at this conference are improving monitoring and inventory, poverty alleviation and sustainable use and finding a way to formally recognise and manage for the cultural aspects of wetlands.

This website will feature the daily newspaper that is being produced for the COP, a bit more light reading.
<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/ramsar/cop8>

And, yes, indeed, Valencia is beautiful, lively and rich, (although noisy and a bit smelly), overall very grand and they certainly go all out in advertising their wetlands.

Hasta luego, Chris Prietto, COP 8 • November 2002

Editor's Note: If you want to get a peek at what will be considered at the next Conference of Contracting Parties (COP) in Uganda in November 2005 then the National Planning Tool / National Report Format for **COP9** is available at www.ramsar.org/cop9_nrform_ready_e.htm

National News

Third Australian Wetland Forum

by **Justine Graham, Wetlandcare Australia**

AWFIII, focussing on the opportunities and limitations of implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia, was hosted by Wetlandcare Australia at Banrock Station in the South Australia's Riverland in June 2003.

The forum brought together delegates representing all sectors of wetland management from landholders to government and International NGO's. Representatives from the New Zealand Dept. of Conservation were also present, though unfortunately, the Australian Government contingent, as the lead agency in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Australia, was unable to attend.

The day began with a series of presentations giving the international, national, scientific, business and landholder perspectives on the Ramsar convention. Speakers included Dr Max Finlayson, current Chair of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel, who delivered an address on behalf of the Australian Government dealing with the outcomes of the most recent Ramsar Conference of Parties (COP9) held in Valencia in 2002. In a second presentation, Dr Finlayson brought to the table extensive experience of the implementation of the Convention across the Oceania region through his involvement with International NGO's and technical working groups. Ramsar wetlandholder Eric Fisher presented the realities and challenges of managing a private Ramsar wetland in NSW, a constantly evolving

experience for himself and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Tony Sharley, as manager of Australia's most recent Ramsar listing at Banrock Station, gave a perspective of the benefits and limitations of the convention when used as a component of private enterprise. Mike Harper from the South Australian Dept for Environment and Heritage discussed the management and nomination of a jointly owned trans-boundary Wetland in the SA/Victorian Riverland.

Delegates were surprised by the scope of the Ramsar Convention, and the lack of awareness of tools and applications available to the wider wetland community. This feeling was taken through to the afternoons focussed discussion groups, which aimed to deliver ideas on how to improve the dissemination of the Convention. Four groups were convened to look at the broader question of "What can Ramsar do to help us and how can we help Ramsar?" in relation to wetland protection, practical wise use of wetlands, obligations for action in Australia and communication about wetlands – the topics reflecting the three pillars of the Ramsar Convention. Outcomes of the discussions will be summarised in the Proceedings of the Forum to be circulated in July 2004.

The Forum was a success in identifying the potential of, and limitations to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Australia. The challenge of Wise Use of all Australia's wetlands lies ahead, with organisations such as AWA a lead contributor in effective communications within and beyond the wetland community to help this happen. Contact: justinegraham@wetlandcare.com.au

Delivery of the Ramsar Convention in Australia

By Alison Beard, CEPA, Inland Waters, Dept of Environment and Heritage.

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) was the first modern inter-governmental treaty between nations that addresses the conservation and wise use of natural resources. The signing of the Convention took place in 1971 in the small Iranian town of Ramsar (since then, it is commonly known as the Ramsar Convention).

Australia was the first nation to become a Contracting Party to the Convention and designated the world's first Ramsar site, the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Wildlife Sanctuary in the Northern Territory. There are currently 138 Contracting Parties with 1367 Ramsar sites totalling 120.5 million hectares. As at May 2004, Australia has 64 Ramsar sites covering approximately 7.3 million hectares.

The Convention's broad aims are to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain. This requires international cooperation, policy making, capacity building and technology transfer.

In Australia, the Inland Waters Section of the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage is the Administrative Authority for the Convention on Wetlands. The Section is the focal point for communication with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and is responsible for coordinating the implementation of

the Convention across Australia. The implementation of the Convention is done in cooperation with other Australian Government agencies, State/Territory agencies, Non-Government Organisations, community groups, private landholders and Natural Resource Management (NRM) State/Regional facilitators.

Ramsar implementation is achieved through policy, program and legislation interventions (refer to Table below) and is overseen by the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce. The Taskforce is composed of officers from Australian and New Zealand Administrative Authorities and Australian State/Territory governments and reports to the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC). The NRMMC considers broad natural resource management issues in Australia and New Zealand, such as salinity, deteriorating water quality and biodiversity.

Ramsar site managers (this includes the Australian Government, State/Territory governments and private landholders/organisations) are responsible for the management and conservation of Ramsar sites that fall within their jurisdiction/land tenure. Responsibilities include the preparation of a management plan, maintaining the special ecological values for which the sites have been recognised, monitoring to determine any changes to ecological character, and reporting on Ramsar site management and wetland management more generally to Ramsar Conferences of Parties (the next CoP is scheduled for November 2005).

Contact: alison.beard@deh.gov.au

Ramsar Implementation in Australia

	Activities
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National framework of wetlands policy (Australian Government and most States/Territories) International policy agreed upon at Ramsar Conferences of Parties (CoPs) Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 was adopted at Ramsar CoP8 November 2002 and guides national implementation within an international context.
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland conservation and management objectives are pursued through NHT2 (1) and NAP (2) at local regional, State/Territory and national levels.
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EPBC Act came into effect on 16 July 2000, and focuses on seven matters of national environmental significance (3), including Ramsar wetlands Under the Act, the ecological character of a Ramsar wetland is protected from actions that have a significant impact on these values. This includes consideration of actions outside the site boundary. The Act establishes new standards for managing Ramsar wetlands through the Australian Ramsar Management Principles.

(1). Further information on the second phase of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT2) can be accessed at www.nht.gov.au/index.html

(2). Further information on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality can be accessed at www.napswq.gov.au/

(3). Further information on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) can be accessed at www.deh.gov.au/epbc/index.html

National News (continued)

The Wetlands Centre Series: Innovations, Obligations and Incentives

A Call for Presentations

By Kylie Yeend, Project Officer, TWC

The Wetlands Centre Australia is launching the first national forum in an annual series on innovations in wetland management. Titled *Innovations, Obligations and Incentives* the forum will be held on **Tuesday 21st September 2004** and will focus on:

- Providing access to cutting edge approaches to managing activities in wetland catchments.
- Interpretation and update on all significant legislation and reforms affecting wetlands in NSW.
- Economic implications and incentives for sustainable management approaches.

The forum is designed to **challenge current thinking and practice**. It will provide direct access to new and fresh knowledge, tools and technology, and contact with specialists from across Australia.

The forum is targeted at individuals & organisations that manage or potentially impact upon wetlands, including:

- Local government officers - Planners, Engineers, Environmental Managers, DA Assessors, Ecologists and Compliance Officers;
- State and Federal agency Natural Resource Managers and Wetland Specialists;
- Development industry representatives.

A national call for leading initiatives

Organisations and individuals are invited to submit a proposal for presentation at the inaugural wetland forum. A range of exemplary projects/techniques/tools/research will be selected. Each would have a 30 min time slot with an additional 10 minutes question time. These would fit within one of three categories addressing management of activities in wetland catchments:

- Ground-breaking solutions in wetland rehabilitation, management or maintenance from research;
- Innovative incentives and economic tools;
- Cutting edge approaches to urban design and planning.

The deadline for submissions is **Wednesday 30th June 2004**. For more information about the forum and the call for presentations go to The Wetlands Centre's website: <http://www.wetlands.org.au/forum.htm>

New AWA Host Conservation Volunteers Australia

You make a difference



Conservation Volunteers Australia

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is Australia's largest practical conservation organisation. Founded in 1982 CVA has more than 20 offices across Australia. CVA facilitates more than 200 conservation projects across Australia each day.

Revive our Wetlands 1 (2001-2003) was a landmark partnership between CVA and BHP Billiton and remains one of the largest national practical wetland revitalisation programs in Australia. Its aim is to address the degraded state of 100 of Australia's high priority wetlands by providing each site with practical project conservation assistance from teams of CVA volunteers.

Revive assisted in building community capacity by coordinating more 17,000 volunteer days on Revive projects. (Full results on website - see below)

Revive our Wetlands 2 was launched in November 2003. The program will continue to make a major impact on wetlands, this time focussing on 10 priority sites across Australia, combined with resources available for 1-2 wks of volunteer teams on additional priority wetlands for the period 2004-2006.

Libby McIntyre, Revive our Wetlands Manager
revive@conservationvolunteers.com.au
www.reviveourwetlands.net

State News - NSW

Volunteers wanted to help threatened waders

By Phil Straw

The NSW Wader Study Group in association with many other bird groups, individuals and NPWS will conduct two major surveys in NSW this summer.

The first a survey will be carried out over the weekend of 6/7 November 2004 and covers every beach in NSW. This biennial count was initiated in 1994 as an extension of the national Hooded Plover Survey. The main objective is to count Hooded Plovers, Beach Stone-curlew, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Little Terns and Red-capped Plovers and record any nesting activities. However as part of a day at the beach volunteers are encouraged to record other birds of interest including birds of prey and any beach washed birds.

The second survey is longer term and covers all species of shorebirds (waders) at all of the NSW estuaries. One-off counts are very useful but regular counts are better.

The data from both surveys will be plotted onto maps and used for conservation and management plans by state and local government.

If you are interested in taking part in either of these surveys and learning about shorebirds please contact the state coordinator: Phil Straw, NSW Wader Study Group, P.O. Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216. 02 9597 7765 or email: wadersnsw@optusnet.com.au

State News - NSW (Continued)

Progressing Ramsar Communication in the Hunter

By Kylie Yeend, Project Officer, TWC

The Wetlands Centre Australia is the gateway to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands, a Ramsar site that includes the Shortland Wetlands and Kooragang Nature Reserve. Covering almost 3000 hectares, it is the largest single estuarine reserve in NSW.

To support Ramsar nomination the Hunter Ramsar Communication Strategy (HRCS) was prepared alongside other key documents. The Strategy focuses on initiatives, services and products to be delivered by The Wetlands Centre (TWC) both on-site and catchment-wide in partnership with other organisations and agencies. Log onto TWC's website to find out more about the HRCS (www.wetlands.org.au).

The Wetlands Centre received Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding to start carrying out the Strategy in January 2004. The first year will focus on implementing thirty-four priority actions of the Strategy. These actions reflect a wide-ranging approach to wetland communication, education and public awareness.

A team of three are working collaboratively on carrying out the HRCS – Kylie Yeend (Project Officer), Tara Ure (TWC Chief Executive Officer), and Lesley Regnis (Project Support Officer). Outcomes of the project so far have included:

- Free World Wetlands Day activities on 1st February '04 at The Wetlands Centre.

- Distribution of the *Wetlands, Discover the Magic!* brochure (an initiative of the Australian Wetlands Information Network), which is now available at 57 wetland education and ecotourism nodes nationally.

- Preparation of a pamphlet – *Wetland Plants of the Hunter Region* – which will be distributed to participating nurseries and made available through local Councils and community events.

- Promotion of TWC services, facilities and programs through direct contact with potential clients, and information stalls community events.

- Organisation for a Wetlands Centre staff and volunteer training day (June 2004) and a Wetland Innovations Forum (September 2004).

- Development of a contact database of those who have a responsibility or interest in wetland management across the Hunter region.

- Ramsar-related articles prepared for TWC newsletters and local and regional media outlets.

- Participation in the NSW Ramsar Managers Network

- Review of catchment blueprints that make up the new Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority region. This was done to assess how well Ramsar objectives were covered within the current Blueprints and opportunities for these to be better recognised within the new Catchment

- Action Plan developed for the CMA region.

For more information contact Kylie on (02) 49516466 or ramsar@wetlands.org.au

Update on Lake Wollumboola

By President, LWPA

The Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc aims to protect Lake Wollumboola and its catchment, and to achieve community understanding and appreciation of the Lake environment. We are affiliated with the NCC and the Jervis Bay Regional Alliance Inc.

Our efforts to protect Lake Wollumboola continue to be successful. Our small community group played a significant role in the NSW Government's decision in November 2002 to gazette the bed and sandbar of Lake Wollumboola as part of the Jervis Bay National Park.

During 2003-4 we participated in the Community Reference Group established to assist NPWS to develop a draft plan of management for Lake Wollumboola. This plan advances the listing of Lake Wollumboola as a Ramsar Wetland in accordance with the commitment made by the NSW Minister for the Environment to progress Ramsar listing.

The future of development expansion in the Lake catchment is under review. Pending the outcome of a Sustainability Assessment and a review of planning controls, the Association took action in 2003-4 to prevent the approval of two environmentally damaging developments in the catchment. These involved an attempt to revive a 1979 DA for a caravan park

immediately adjacent to the Lake's northern wetland and a proposed Industrial sub-division.

The Association also developed our website and the interactive "Understanding Lake Wollumboola" teaching resources which can be downloaded from the website. This project was funded via our voluntary contributions and a Coastcare/Natural Heritage Trust grant.

The Lake Wollumboola Bushcare Group which Association members convene, has been successful in receiving an Envirofund grant together with Shoalhaven City Council for a project to survey and restore the wetland along the northern shore of Lake Wollumboola.

Our members are also active as NPWS shorebird volunteers, monitoring the Little Tern nesting site and generally assisting with observations of shore and waterbird numbers and species.

We changed our name from the longstanding unincorporated Lake Wollumboola Support Group to "Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc." in 2002 when another group, hostile to protection of Lake Wollumboola, incorporated using the LWSG name. This group inspired by pro-development political interests has campaigned against the Lake's protection, including a motion to the NSW Upper House to disallow the national park gazettal, fortunately unsuccessful. We have maintained our commitment in the face of this disinformation.

lakewoll@shoalhaven.net.au & www.wollumboola.org.au

State News - TAS

An inappropriate coastal development

By Eric Woehler, Chair, Birds Tasmania

A major battle is brewing in southeast Tasmania over an inappropriate coastal development proposed for Lauderdale, 20km southeast of Hobart.

Walker Corporation, a NSW-based developer, is proposing to build a 400-berth marina and 800 home community at the coastal township. Local community opposition is high, and one of the foci for opposing the development is the shorebirds using the area year round.

As many as 3-4% of the Australian (and global) population of the pied oystercatcher roosts at Lauderdale, while other resident species such as sooty oystercatchers and red-capped plovers roost and feed regularly at the site. Pied oystercatchers and red-capped plovers breed here too.

In addition, numerous migratory shorebirds use the area - the most abundant migrant being red-necked stints, with eastern curlew and greenshank also present during the summer. Double-banded plovers migrate annually from New Zealand, and spend the winter months at Lauderdale.

Almost all of the low-tide feeding area and most of the

roosting areas would be destroyed by the development. The developer has proposed to 'create' habitat for the shorebirds at the southern end of the bay, an area rarely presently used by the shorebirds.

Birds Tasmania, a regional group of Birds Australia, have collected census and survey data in the Lauderdale area for 40 years. These long term data clearly show an increase in the number of pied oystercatchers using the area. The data also show a decrease in shorebird species diversity over the same time period. The increase in pied oystercatchers reflects the high value of the area as an important roosting and feeding area to pre-breeding and non-breeding birds. At present, the decrease in species diversity can not be explained.

Lauderdale is one of a network of coastal shorebird sites in southeast Tasmania. Southeast Tasmania is at the end of the migratory route for many palaeartic shorebirds, with some species migrating annually to and from northern Asia. This migratory route is known as the East-Asian Australasian Flyway, and is one of the major shorebird flyways in the world.

A three month public consultation period began in late April but it is expected the battle to protect this important shorebird site will continue well beyond this period.

For further information and offers of assistance (!) contact Eric Woehler: eric_woe@iprimus.com.au

State News - VIC

Successful Wetland Workshops

Both stories by Wally Evans, Secretary, Watermark

The Watermark Committee in Gippsland were delighted with the success of recent wetlands workshops. The gathering of Landcare and supportive government agency representatives together with regional farmers has resulted in many positive ongoing initiatives.

The inaugural Workshop provided training in the methods of assessing wetland vegetation, including using transects and quadrants, soil sampling for seedbank studying and vegetation identification and classifications.

Wetland Botanist, Michelle Casanova together with the expertise of Keith Turnbull Research Institute expert Nigel Ainsworth, featured a farm walk focussing on the management of farm lagoons, billabongs and wetlands plus an emphasis on riparian zone management.

The objectives to provide landholders with an opportunity to learn more about managing billabong type environments for environmental and production outcomes and to raise awareness of their values were well achieved.

Wellington Shire Council and Department of Primary Industries will be sponsoring an information brochure that will contain technical information on lagoon and billabong management and provide a useful guide for landholders.

Another Workshop drew together regional secondary school representatives to share projects and courses of

studies already included in school curriculums as well as a sharing of ideas as to how the importance and relevance of wetland areas can be best managed within the education system. The joint initiative was the forerunner to the provision of supportive funding to enable the secondary schools participating to expand their current study programs. Sponsorship for these workshops was provided by Esso and BHP Billiton plus AWA

Puppets Take Wetlands Message Into Schools System

Watermark Inc, who since August 1999 has been working industriously in pursuit of its mission statement, "to foster community action to conserve and enhance the catchment, shores, and waters of the Gippsland Lakes plus associated wetlands and the myriad of impacts on such," is currently focussing its wetland education messages in both the primary and secondary schools systems.

Puppetry and music is a major component of the primary school Arts Programs with the learning experiences and hand-on projects being aligned to the habits of and roles played by the Ibis and Echidna.

Funding has been provided to regional secondary colleges to enable them to extend current programs on offer or provide technology not otherwise able to be made available for student studies. The Hugh D.T. Williamson Foundation and the Bruce & Jane Dyson Foundation have provided Watermark with funding for both these educational opportunities.

Contact: watermark@i-o.net.au

State News - WA

National Heritage Wetlands Threatened at Perth Airport

By Urban Bushland Council

Words "jewel in a crown" have been used to describe how local conservationists treasure the wetlands and bushland at Perth Airport. The significance of the area has been recognised by the Australian Heritage Commission, listing it on the Interim Register of the National Estate and also by the Western Australian Government that identified 629.5 ha of the area as regionally significant and listed it in its *Bush Forever* strategy, of 2000. The area also includes a large area of the highest conservation value wetlands.

Its importance is that it is one of the relatively few areas on the Swan Coastal Plain where wetlands, damplands, and woodlands are linked and sustain uncommon processes. In addition, there are two Endangered and two Vulnerable Ecological Communities and a list of Declared Rare Flora and Priority Flora under the Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1951.

The vegetation provides habitat to a rich faunal assemblage. Two species of migratory birds, protected by international agreements JAMBA, 1981 and CAMBA, 1988, have been recorded at the airport; the Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) and the Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). They are protected under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, which also protects the endangered Carnaby's Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus funereus latirostris*). Other fauna include the Southern Brown bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*) and the only known population of the Crowned Snake (*Elapognathus coronatus*) within the Perth area.

Yet, all the above does not guarantee appropriate protection and management. Many opposed and raised major concerns, when the Commonwealth Government of Australia sold a 50 year lease, plus a 49 year option, to manage and develop Perth Airport, including the significant bushland and wetlands, to Westralia Airports Corporation (WAC) in 1997.

It seems the time to raise an alarm has arrived. The Urban Bushland Council WA (UBC) and other community groups, concerned with conservation of the wetlands and bushland at the airport, have contacted the WAC many times raising their concerns over management practices and development proposals. In 2003, WAC went ahead with major drainage upgrade works, completely ignoring the Memorandum of Understanding, signed in December 2000 by the Premier of Western Australia and WAC which requires WAC to consult the relevant state agencies on major works at the airport. The UBC believes that the Preliminary Draft Master Plan 2004 for Perth Airport, released for public comment in January, seriously understates the outstanding environmental values of the airport's bushland and wetlands.

It is hard not to be sceptical, when recent experience – the clearing and modification of around 44ha of bushland/wetland being a substantial part of the Priority 1 area., clearly demonstrates that development and economic gain is the WAC's priority with conservation only an afterthought. Western Australian conservation groups are urging the Federal Government to intervene and rule that all Perth Airport conservation value wetlands and bushland come under the control of the Western Australian State conservation agency and managed accordingly.

Contact: ubc@iinet.net.au

Ramsar Manager's Network NSW

By Dr Robyn Molsher, Conservation Ecologist,
Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW)

In the past, Ramsar nominations were primarily focussed on National Parks & Wildlife Service estate but increasing awareness of the need for cross-tenure nominations, has led to a range of tenures (private land, National Park, Nature reserve, Crown land, State Forests) with NSW now leading Australia with its number of private Ramsar sites, having five of its 11 sites occurring wholly or partly on private or community managed land. However, it has become increasingly apparent that private Ramsar managers do not have the same scientific, funding or promotional support that government Ramsar managers have despite both providing the same important environmental service. The RMN will provide ongoing management support and coordination for all NSW Ramsar managers with NPWS funding the RMN for the first two years. A meeting was held in Dubbo in June 2004.

Goals of the Ramsar Manager's Network (RMN)

- Identification of the needs of landholders responsible for the management of Ramsar sites.
- Provide the link to relevant resources for managers of Ramsar sites, such as conservation management

advice, funding opportunities, management planning, catchment management boards, other state government agencies and Environment Australia.

- Increased recognition of Ramsar sites by government and non-government agencies and the community.
- Provide a network for Ramsar managers to discuss emerging issues.
- Ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach is adopted in relation to wetland management, in particular in the provision of advice to landholders.
- Inform Catchment Management Authorities of the importance of Ramsar wetlands and the needs of Ramsar managers so as to ensure that planning at the catchment level is sufficiently capable of managing needs of wetlands of international importance.

Ramsar sites

1. Macquarie Marshes
 2. Lower Gwydir wetlands
 3. Fivebough and Tuckerbil Swamps
 4. NSW Central Murray State Forests
 5. Hunter Estuary Wetlands
- 4 of the 5 private Ramsar sites are in NPWS Western Directorate.

For more information: robyn.molsher@npws.nsw.gov.au

Useful Websites

Australian Wetland Information Network (AWIN)

www.wetlandsaustralia.com.au

Ramsar

www.ramsar.org

Revive Our Wetlands

www.reviveourwetlands.net

The Wetlands Centre Australia

www.wetlands.org.au

Wetlandcare Australia

www.wetlandcare.com.au

Wetland Centres in Australia

www.ramsar.org/outreach_wli-australia2_e.htm

Wetlands Help Line

www.wetlandshelp-line.com

Wetlands International

www.wetlands.org

Wetlands NSW

www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/wetlands/index.html

Earth Bulletin (summary of Ramsar COPs)

www.iisd.ca/vol17/

Outro

As this is the first newsletter under a very new hosting arrangement for the AWA there are bound to have been errors, omissions, or oversights. Please forgive us as you alert us to their presence. As with all volunteer based organisations, the AWA is dependent on the energy of yourselves for its continued survival. Your group's input is what makes the AWA greater than the sum of its individual member or affiliate organisations.

Importantly if anyone becomes aware of a funding opportunity to further the national scope of the AWA's operation, please drop us a line, forward an email or point out a website.

We hope you will contact those who have contributed articles should you need further information. A list of AWA affiliates provided below - if you would like to make contact with any of these, please contact myself. We would like to include all email address of AWA'ers in the next newsletter. Please let us know if there are any objections to such a move.

You make a difference

Regards, Libby McIntyre

revive@conservationvolunteers.com.au



Federal Department of Environment and Heritage's Wetlands team

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Alison Beard	(Ramsar and CEPA)	02 6274 2555	Inland Waters
Wendy Harris	(Ramsar and EPBC)	02 6274 1517	Inland Waters
Veronica Blazely	Director	02 6274 2255	Coastal Policy (Coastal Wetlands)

Further information can be accessed from the Department's website www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands

Australian Wetland Association (AWA)

Member & Affiliate organisations

Australasian Wader Study Group of RAOU

Australian Conservation Foundation

Australian Marine Conservation Society

Australian Society for Limnology

Bird Observers Club of Australia

Birds Australia: Conservation & Liaison

Birds Australia: Southern NSW and ACT Group

Blundell's Swamp Co-operative

Bundock Street Project Group

Central Coast Community Environment Network (CCCEEN)

Coast and Wetlands Society

Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre

Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation Inc

Conservation Council of South Australia

Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra (Inc)

Conservation Council of Western Australia

Conservation Volunteers Australia

Cumberland Bird Observers Club

Environment Victoria

Friends of Edithvale - Seaford Wetlands Inc.

Friends of Forrestdale

Friends of the Earth Australia

Inland Rivers Network

Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc

Marine and Coastal Community Network

Moreton Bay Waterways and Catchments Partnership

Murray Wetlands Working Group Inc

National Parks Association of ACT

National Parks Association of NSW

National Parks Association of QLD

Nature Conservation Council of NSW

New South Wales Ornithologists Club Ltd

New South Wales Wader Study Group

Northern Land Council

Port Phillip Conservation Council

Queensland Conservation Council

Queensland Ornithological Society

Queensland Wader Study Group

Shorebird Study Group of BOAT

Tasmanian Conservation Trust

The Environment Centre of the Northern Territory

The Wetlands Centre - Australia

Tuggerah Biodiversity Committee

Tuross Lakes Preservation Group Inc.

Victorian National Parks Association

Watermark Inc

Wetland Care - Australia

Wetlands Conservation Society

Wetlands International- Oceania

Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council

Wildlife Preservation Society

World Wide Fund for Nature- Australia