

# Wetlands

## What are wetlands?

Wetlands are areas of land where water covers the soil all year or just at certain times of the year. They include rivers, swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, lagoons, oases, saltmarshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, bogs, fens, and peatlands. Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment, providing important benefits:

- Filter waste and pollutants and improve the quality of water.
- Provide habitat for a great diversity of plant and animal species.
- Control flooding and help protect our coastal areas by slowing down the movement of waters.
- Provide important economic and recreation value from commercial and recreational fishing to tourism.
- Hold important social and cultural values.

## Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an intergovernmental treaty that aims to protect and promote the wise use of wetlands throughout the world. Australia currently has 65 Ramsar wetlands that cover more than 8.3 million hectares. Ramsar wetlands are those that are representative, rare or unique wetlands, or are important for conserving biological diversity.

The Peel-Harvey Estuary – come under the Peel – Yalgorup System which is part of the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance. This system also includes Lake McLarty System, Lake Mealup and a number of conservation reserves. It also includes the waters and lands of Yalorup National Park, which incorporates 10 lakes including Lake Clifton and Lake Preston.



# Wetlands in Mandurah

## Creery Wetlands

The Creery Wetlands consist of a number of low profile islands inhabited by a great diversity of plants, invertebrate, reptiles, fish, birds and other mammals, and is surrounded by shallow waters. These wetlands are of international importance as this wetland area supports more than 80 species of birds, including over 20 Species of migratory shorebirds which visit our wetlands between October and March each year. The migratory birds that visit these wetlands come from all over the world, including from as far away as Siberia. It is these shorebirds that bird enthusiasts from all over Australia and the world come to see and so there are boardwalks, viewing platforms and information panels at the Creery Wetlands site. Some of the birds fly up to 25,000kms each year to breed in the northern hemisphere. They fly here in their thousands in spring and leave again in autumn. The estuary is a vital site for them to rest and feed, here they can recuperate from their long flight and replenish their reserves so they are ready for the return trip. To attract these shorebirds there has to be an abundance of food and the estuary and peel inlet excels in providing this. It's a breeding ground and nursery, and so large numbers of fish, prawns, crabs, reptiles, birds and other mammals thrive on the small shellfish, snails, worms and insects that inhabit and breed around the shoreline and throughout the estuary, as well as the variety of plants.

The Creery wetlands are also home to a population of Quendas, a native marsupial. They are also known as the Southern brown bandicoot, have long snouts, rounded ears and small, bright black eyes. Their coat is a blend of brown, black and buff fur while its feet and underparts are cream coloured.

## Samphire Cove

Samphire Cove is a bird and aquatic life sanctuary. Samphire cove takes its name from the fleshy orange and green samphire plants which grow on the reserve. Samphires are small but important plants to the estuarine ecosystem. They stabilise the shore and absorb nutrients that wash from the land towards the water. They also provide food and shelter for many small animals which in turn feed birds, as well as the fish and crabs that people catch in our waterways. Located closely in amongst the trees in this sanctuary are two little huts. These huts are bird hides and they are connected by a timber walkway. People are able to walk around and watch the bird activity from the seclusion of the huts. In addition to the migratory shorebirds, Mandurah's wetland areas also have a large population of resident shorebirds. Resident shorebirds require particular habitat and food requirements to survive and are particularly vulnerable during their nesting period. The migratory and resident shorebirds often co-exist and so it is important that these areas are protected to ensure their survival. The entire Samphire Cove Wetland area is fenced off right down into the water. The idea of that is to discourage animals such as dogs, cats and foxes from gaining entry into that sanctuary area and disturbing the bird life.





## Threats

The biggest threats to long term sustainability of these Wetland areas and in turn the birds and other wildlife is habitat loss, human activity, disturbance, pollution, industry and agriculture runoff, introduced pests, climate change and development. It has been estimated that 80 per cent of wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain have been cleared, filled, drained or otherwise destroyed since European settlement. By minimising our impact on these wetland areas and on the birds and other wildlife and by increasing awareness of the importance of wetlands we can sustainably manage wetlands for the long-term.

