

5th Western Australian State

COASTAL CONFERENCE 2009

*Whose Coast Is It?
adapting for the future*

10C:
Community and
the Coast:
2.25–2.55pm
Friday 9th
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Sirius Room

Birds of the Peel-Yalgorup

PRESENTER:

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Introduction

While most people are sleeping, Mandurah's internationally significant Peel-Yalgorup System wetlands are a flurry of activity. Local volunteers take to the night as undercover investigators; monitoring the health and migratory patterns of the birds that inhabit the system.

Weak from their long migration, the tiny migratory birds arrive each summer to enjoy the warm weather and abundant food. Following a pathway of wetland stepping-stones—from the far northern hemisphere to our southern shores—these birds chase an endless summer in a round journey of 25,000 km.

But as the world's human population continues to grow many species are being affected. The wetlands, which once formed part of the migratory route, face growing threats. Some have been destroyed.

The Peel-Yalgorup System wetlands are internationally significant and form a part of the annual migration pathway known as the East Asian Australasian Flyway. These wetlands are also important on a local scale, providing for rich ecological and socio-cultural values identified by the region's local community. Yet in spite of the important role of the wetlands in underpinning the lifestyle and culture of local people, the level of awareness of the need to protect the wetlands from growing threats is low.


The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council set out to improve local awareness by producing a short documentary film, as part of a broader awareness raising program.

Background

The Peel-Yalgorup System Ramsar site comprises a series of ecologically diverse wetlands located approximately 100km south of Perth, Western Australia. The wetland system is the most important site for shorebirds in south-west Australia and provides habitat for a raft of ecologically significant species and communities.

Over the last 2 years, the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council has worked closely with community and government stakeholders to prepare a management plan for the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site. The success of this process hinged upon the collaboration of more than 26 stakeholders with direct management roles or responsibilities. There is also broad community support for the plan, with community-based conservation action a key part of the Peel-Yalgorup management program.

A feature of our local community's conservation effort is in shorebird monitoring. Just recently, two birds tagged in the Peel-Yalgorup were later spotted near Beijing, China. This is a remarkable finding for both scientists and local community members involved in investigating the migratory patterns of the birds



within the East Asian Australasian Flyway and provides testament to the important role of local volunteers in international-scale conservation programs. This success provides the storyline for our short documentary film, *Birds of the Peel-Yalgorup*.

The Peel-Yalgorup System Ramsar Site Management Plan (PHCC, in prep) prescribes that by 2014, 50% of the local community will be aware of the internationally important values of the Peel-Yalgorup System. In order to achieve this goal, the plan provides for a strategic awareness raising program for which the *Birds of the Peel-Yalgorup*, will form an important part.

The documentary was officially launched on World Environment Day, June 5, 2009 with more than 500 copies distributed since the launch. As the documentary forms part of a broader, ongoing, awareness raising program, the results of this project are not yet available. It is envisaged that a repeat surveys of community awareness will be regularly conducted where resources allow.