



## SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION PROTECTING SHOREBIRDS FROM HUMAN DISTURBANCE: The Friends of Attadale Foreshore and Dog Control.



Birds Australia  
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



Natural  
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### Where

Attadale is located in the southern suburbs of Perth alongside the Swan River. The Attadale foreshore is a popular venue for a number of recreational activities ranging from walking to watersports. The coastline provides one of the most important feeding and roosting areas for shorebirds in the Swan Estuary. The conservation values of the coastline of Alfred Cove are particularly important and the area is protected by the Swan Estuary Marine Park.



### Problems and challenges

As well as being an important site for shorebirds, the Attadale foreshore is popular for recreational use and tourism. This is likely to increase as Perth's population continues to expand. Unfortunately, disturbances associated with many recreational activities can reduce the numbers of shorebirds that use the area as a roosting and feeding site.

Some of the activities of particular concern that occurred in the area included people walking their dogs along the water's edge, anglers, windsurfers, kitesurfers and the incursions of jet-skis into the marine park. FOAF were faced with the major challenge of resolving these conflicting uses of the area and reducing their impacts on shorebirds. Certain sectors of the community, such as dog walkers, were initially opposed to the group's proposals. In order to be successful, the group had to make the local community aware of the significance of the birds on their doorstep and of the important role that the habitat of the Attadale foreshore plays in shorebird conservation. This had to be achieved in a diplomatic manner whereby the community was assured that they would still have access and full amenity of the majority of the foreshore.

### The birds

Every summer, the Attadale foreshore hosts up to 10,000 migratory shorebirds. Some of the most common species include red-necked stint, grey plover and curlew sandpiper. The area is also home to a number of resident species including the pied oystercatcher, red-capped plover and black-winged stilt. In total, 31 migratory and 10 resident shorebird species have been recorded in the area.

### Who

The Friends of Attadale Foreshore (FOAF) are a small community group who are passionate about the local environment. The group has approximately 90 members, most of who live in the local area. The group aims to ensure that the foreshore provides a safe haven for shorebirds to roost and feed. FOAF have established strong links and partnerships with local government (City of Melville) and natural resource management bodies such as the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) as well as other conservation groups including Birds Australia.



Red-necked stint flock.



## Solutions

FOAF have built up a strong relationship with CALM. The initiative and enthusiasm of the local community, coupled with the knowledge, scientific input and support of the state agency has enabled a wide range of successful conservation works to be carried out. A strong relationship has also been established between FOAF and the City of Melville, which allowed the group to undertake on ground works on the foreshore.

The City of Melville and CALM were committed to finding solutions to the conservation challenges at the Attadale foreshore, but had limited time and resources to devote to the project. Therefore, FOAF provided the impetus for works to be carried out by mobilising the local community to undertake conservation work. FOAF was also successful in their application for a number of grants from sources including the Swan Alcoa Landcare Programme, Coastwest Coastcare, Lottery West and the Ministry for the Environment.

CALM and the City of Melville helped FOAF raise public awareness of conservation issues by mailing information to local residents. Awareness raising and communication with local residents was especially important in resolving the issue of disturbance by dogs. Coupled with the construction of a low, unobtrusive fence to keep dogs away from important shorebird habitat, this managed to virtually eliminate this source of disturbance. The way the issue of dog disturbance was handled is one of the cornerstones of the success of this group.

Collaboration with other groups has strengthened FOAF's potential to achieve successful conservation outcomes. The involvement of Birds Australia and other 'Friends' groups has given FOAF access to a wide range of expertise and knowledge. The involvement of the Attadale Primary School, not only provides an army of young volunteers to help out with activities such as planting, but also serves a vital function in raising community awareness with children relaying information about the area to their families.

## Outcomes for the environment

- Prevention of the installation of a dog training facility on the foreshore adjacent to an area of high conservation value.
- The passing of a by law stating that all dogs within the reserve (excluding the exercise area) are to be on leads to reduce the disturbance to fauna.
- Installation of a low, unobtrusive barrier fence to separate pedestrians and dog walkers from roosting and feeding shorebirds.
- Successful lobbying to have an inappropriately sited jet ski area moved further away from the marine park. This occurred after two years of lobbying the Western Australian Department of Transport.
- Habitat rehabilitation including the planting of over 4000 native plants along one and a half kilometres of the foreshore.
- Ongoing weed control work in conjunction with the City of Melville.
- Implementation of a regular monitoring program of bird numbers by experienced observers.
- The project has greatly enhanced the public's awareness of shorebirds and shorebird conservation issues. It is located in a prominent area and people notice the large numbers of shorebirds using the site.



Grey plover

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## Outcomes for the participants

- The group has obtained the support and confidence of its partner organisations and the majority of the local community.
- The bird and plant identification skills and communication, negotiation and planning skills of members have been greatly enhanced through attending workshops and networking with groups skilled in these areas.
- The group has gained valuable experience in successfully applying for grants.
- FOAF was awarded the Outstanding Coastal Project in the Metropolitan Region Award in April 2003.

## Measures of success

Although waterbird counts have been conducted in the area since the 1970s, it is difficult to make direct comparisons as the counts covered the whole foreshore and not just Attadale. Nevertheless, the following observations have been made;

- Larger numbers of birds are using the area since the threats of disturbance by jet skis, dogs and walkers have been virtually eliminated.
- Compliance with new dog control regulations appears to be high.
- The area of existing native sedges and vegetation has recovered and increased following the control of pedestrian traffic and a reduction in trampling.

The continuation of the existing bird monitoring program will be of key importance in revealing the benefits of conservation work carried out by the FOAF in the long term. Monitoring of people's activities and behaviour at the site would be desirable, as would regular reporting of performance against targets.



Area to be fenced along Attadale foreshore separating pedestrians and dogs from shorebird habitat.

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## Future strategies and directions

- The establishment of a Black Swan breeding area has been planned.
- Commencement of monitoring of marine invertebrates on the mudflats in conjunction with CALM.
- Establishing a native vegetation corridor along the foreshore to provide resources for all birds.
- Restoration of the ecological integrity of the Attadale foreshore for a wide range of organisms as well as shorebirds.
- Ensuring that the area remains well used by the public and retains its high amenity and recreational values to showcase that conservation and recreation can co-exist.





## Summary

The FOAF have made an important contribution to conservation by;

Establishing a group of local, passionate and concerned volunteers with a strong interest in the area

Successfully collaborating with professional and scientific organisations and individuals and incorporating their advice

Raising awareness through local media of shorebirds and demonstrating that the area can maintain its conservation values and be still enjoyed by the public

Important objectives for the group in future will include;

Maintaining the excellent relationship with other organisations and the public

Continuing to gather quantitative data on project outcomes in the long term

## Key groups and contact

### Birds Australia

Tel (03) 9882 2622

Email: [mail@birdsaustralia.com](mailto:mail@birdsaustralia.com) Website: [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

### WWF Australia (Shorebird Conservation Project and Threatened Species Network)

Freecall 1800 032 551

Website: [www.wwf.org.au](http://www.wwf.org.au)

### City of Melville

Website: [www.melville.wa.gov.au](http://www.melville.wa.gov.au)

### Department of Conservation and Land Management

Website: [www.calm.wa.gov.au](http://www.calm.wa.gov.au)

### Friends of Attadale Foreshore

### Australasian Wader Studies Group

Website: [www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/](http://www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/)



Shorebird awareness sign.

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Fence along Attadale foreshore separating pedestrians and dogs from shorebird habitat.

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The shorebird case studies were developed by Birds Australia as part of the Shorebirds Conservation Project which is funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and managed by WWF Australia

