

# Stockyard Point – Jam Jerrup



## Shorebird Conservation

### Project

2004 – 2005

Final report

May 2005



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## Summary

A preliminary report on the causes and frequency of disturbance to shorebirds at Stockyard Point, Western Port, Victoria, was written in May 2004 based on observations of the interactions between shorebirds and visitors to the site (BOCA 2004). The most prevalent types of activities that caused disturbance were fishing, people walking with dogs and walking alone, other birds and several unknown causes. A total of 78 disturbance events were recorded, of which 49 involved international shorebirds and 29 involved local shorebirds and other coastal birds. The study concentrated on the disturbance types and their effects on international shorebirds. The report presented the findings and included a communication plan which recommended several areas for action to reduce the effects of disturbance on shorebirds.

Monitoring of disturbance began at Stockyard Point and Jam Jerrup in January 2004 after preliminary observations and consultations with local bird observers had determined the optimal times to observe roosting and feeding birds at both sites. Large numbers of fishers after Elephant Fish, accessing the Point during a peak season of March to May, was considered by local people and bird observers familiar with the site, to be the main potential source of disturbance. Monitoring continued until April with the last observations undertaken on Easter Saturday (10<sup>th</sup> April 2004).

The findings of the study confirmed the view that large numbers of people engaged in recreational activities, primarily shore based fishing and dog walking, were causing shorebirds to leave the Stockyard Point roost site. There was, however, little evidence to suggest that shorebirds feeding along Jam Jerrup Beach were being negatively affected by recreational activities conducted along the foreshore. As a result of these findings it was recommended that a conservation area around Stockyard Point be created, centred on high tide cycles. Several interpretive and communication tools were recommended in the Communication Plan to aid in the implementation of this strategy during the Summer and Autumn of 2005.

The Communication Plan included recommendations within the following areas, which were aimed at reducing disturbance to shorebirds by visitors:

- Contact with Interest and User Groups
- Conservation zoning restricting access to Stockyard Point during high tide cycles
- Restricting dog walking to within a dog walking zone
- Interpretive signage – two signs at Jam Jerrup car park and regulatory signage along the beach
- Interpretive materials – a postcard
- Voluntary Warden System
- Media contact – press releases to the web, radio and newspaper
- Guided walks and activities
- Educational activities with local schools

## Introduction

Stockyard Point is one of ten priority shorebird sites selected around Australia for a Shorebird Conservation Project. These sites were selected for inclusion in the Shorebird Conservation Project that is managed by the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF-Australia) and funded by the Natural Heritage Trust.

The Shorebird Conservation Project aims to increase community involvement in the conservation and management of shorebird habitat through increased awareness and understanding. The Stockyard Point Project was contracted to the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) by the

WWF - Australia and the work was undertaken by the consultants, Riverbend Ecological Services, under the supervision of a co-ordinating committee.

Stockyard Point is one of 15 main roost sites for shorebirds in Western Port, Victoria (Loyn et al 1994, 2001, BOCA 2003). The bird count data from a 30 year study, called the BOCA Western Port Survey, have demonstrated the importance of this site as a high tide roost for many local and migratory shorebirds. The counts have shown significant numbers of several species of international shorebirds use the roost site. Particularly abundant are Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, Red Knot *C. canutus*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* and Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*. Significant local species using the site include Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*, Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* and Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*.

Various web sites and talkback radio programs have promoted Stockyard Point as the best spot around Western Port to catch Elephant Fish *Calorbincus milii*, because there is shoreline access to a deep channel that runs off the end of the point. Unfortunately the period during which people come to fish for Elephant Fish (February to April) coincides with the pre-migration period of the Palaearctic migratory shorebirds. The period January to April is a critical time of weight gain and energy conservation that ensures shorebirds are in good condition to travel the 10,000 to 20,000 km to their breeding grounds.

## **Aims and Objectives of the project**

The Australia-wide Shorebird Conservation Project is co-ordinated by the World Wild Fund for Nature Australia, which determined the aims of the Stockyard Point Project. These aims are as follows:

- To improve community awareness, particularly amongst the recreational user groups in Western Port, of the significance of Stockyard Point as an important Shorebird site.
- To minimise the effects of disturbance on shorebirds and to enhance and protect shorebird habitat at Stockyard Point and.
- To change and manage the disturbance of shorebirds by the various users of Stockyard Point through the promotion of the values of Shorebirds and their habitat.

To facilitate the realisation of these aims, a work plan was developed which was designed to meet the following objectives;

- To identify, in consultation with local stakeholders, the type and frequency of key threatening processes to shorebird habitat at Stockyard Point, with special attention to human disturbance.
- To identify existing educational materials currently or recently used to promote shorebird conservation in Western Port.
- To prepare a communication plan that identifies key messages to promote and preferred media for influencing the behaviours of target audiences to minimise disturbance to shorebirds at Stockyard Point.
- To produce communication materials and/or activities that will manage (change) the behaviour of target audiences to minimise disturbances to Shorebirds.
- To identify options for the long term management for access to Stockyard Point.
- To initiate an ongoing partnership project between key stakeholders to protect Stockyard Point from disturbing users/behaviours.

The implementation of the work plan proceeded by firstly establishing the causes and frequency of disturbance to shorebirds. The development of the interpretive materials as described in the Communication Plan took place during August to December 2004 and the implementation of this plan took place during November 2004 to April 2005. The following information is an evaluation of the components of the Communication Plan.

## Evaluation of the Communication Plan

### What were the issues?

- Stockyard Point is an important shorebird roost for several significant shorebird species. It is one of 15 main roosts that are monitored by the BOCA Western Port Survey.
- Recreational activities undertaken at Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point were reportedly causing disturbance to roosting and feeding birds and
- Monitoring results from the field work undertaken during January to April 2004 showed the main sources of disturbance were people coming to fish and walk with and without dogs.

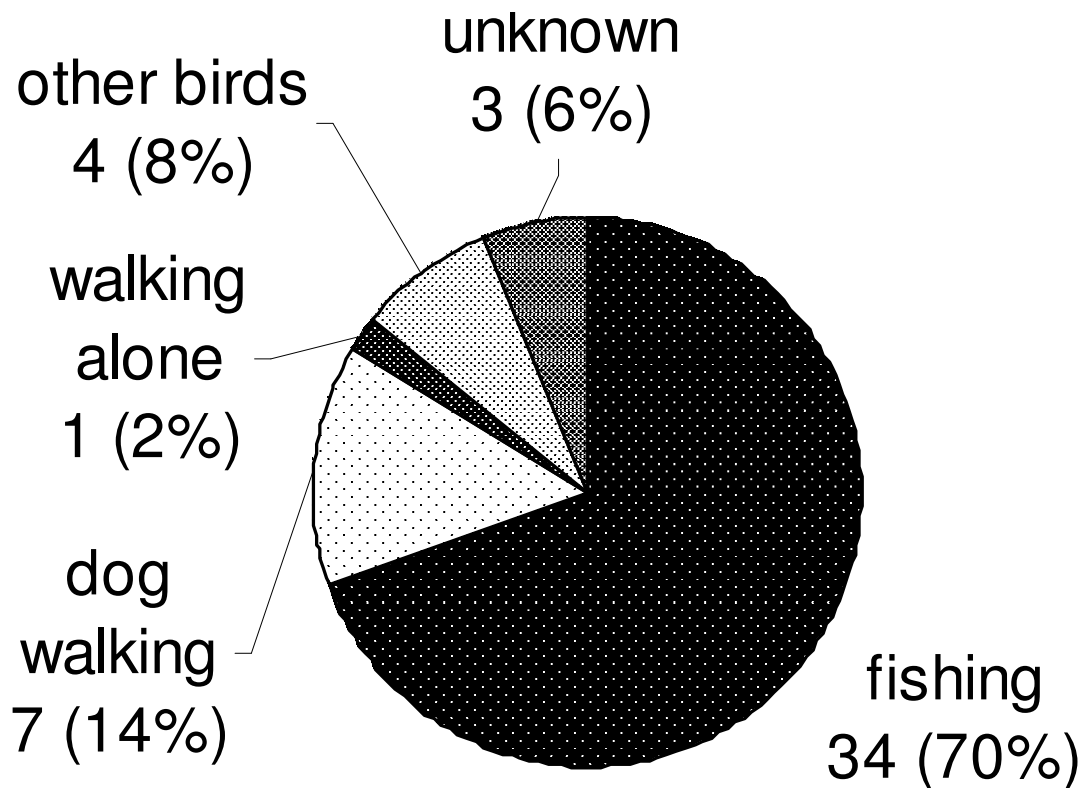


Figure 1. Frequencies of each type of disturbance to international shorebirds observed during the study

### How were the issues addressed?

- Consultation with bird observers, residents & Lang Lang Foreshore Committee determined the main conflict time was the Elephant Fish season - January to April
- Monitoring of disturbance began in January 2004 and continued until April with the last monitoring undertaken on Easter Saturday (10th April).
- A monitoring form was developed comparable to studies elsewhere (Smit & Visser 1993, Kirby et al 1993, Goss-Custard & Verboven 1993).
- The following information was recorded at the study site;
  - date, time of high tide and height, wind direction and speed, hours of observation and site,

- the species and numbers of shorebirds present,
- percentage of each species feeding or roosting,
- what potential and actual sources of disturbance were present,
- activities and behaviour of actual disturbers
- reaction types of the shorebirds (using a code system)
- distance between disturber and shorebirds
- duration of disturbance to shorebirds and,
- where at the site the disturbers went.

The results of the field observations showed that fishing and dog walking related activities were responsible for the most incidents of disturbance. The Communication Plan recommendations focussed on addressing how these activities were managed at the site. Methods of managing these activities included:

### **Zoning**

- Dog Walking Zone extends the length of Jam Jerrup Beach but stops some 200 metres north of Stockyard Point.
- High tide Shorebird Conservation Zone around Stockyard Point restricting access to anyone during high tide when the shorebirds are roosting. Indicated by the incoming and outgoing tides lapping the marker pole, situated at the southern end of the Dog Walking Zone.
- Beach Fishing Zone extends the full length of Jam Jerrup Beach but stops just 50 metres north of Stockyard Point. People wanting to fish during high tide or wait out the high tide are asked to stay within this zone until the tide retreats and the shorebirds leave the roost site.

### **Signage and Interpretive materials**

- Two large signs (1000 mm x 550 mm) were designed and installed at the Jam Jerrup car park, the only entry point by visitors to Stockyard Point. These signs cover several messages about shorebirds, their life cycles and environmental needs, Western Port and the state of the environment and the changes to access visitors have been asked to observe. An aerial photograph forms the centrepiece of one of the signs and displays the coast and the fishing channels. The high tide roost and the dog walking and beach fishing zones were colour coded on the aerial map to clearly delineate the zone areas (Appendix 1).
- Three minor regulatory signs have been installed along the beach and mark the perimeters of the dog walking zone, the beach fishing zone and the shorebird conservation zone. These signs use colour coding to match the zones outlined on the main car park signs (Appendix 1).
- A postcard was developed as an extension tool to give to visitors, to distribute at fishing stores (two stores carry the cards) and sent to residents. Messages on the postcard are a summary of the essential information on the signs outlining the bird's needs and how people can help protect them (Appendix 1).

### **Voluntary Warden System**

- Principally based on the programs used by the Hooded Plover Watch and NSW South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program
- To date volunteers have helped with handing out postcards and talking with people on the beach. Ideally this will continue over the coming years to consistently re-enforce the messages.
- Volunteers will undertake monitoring in the coming seasons using the field observation form used during the initial field work.

### **Media contact**

- Articles were submitted to several community newsletters during the development of the project (Appendix 3).
- Press releases were sent and published on radio and newspapers upon introduction of the signage, including ABC 774 Radio Saturday morning Show and *The Sentinel Times*
- Fishing Victoria & Rex Hunt web sites have received information about the project. Fishing Victoria have published the material and committed to ongoing promotion of the project.

#### **Guided walks and activities**

- An interpretive walk and beach combing activity was conducted as part of the Coastcare Summer holiday program (Appendix 4)
- Local residents attended some monitoring sessions and were given some instruction with bird identification and shorebird use of the site.

#### **Educational activities**

- Publication of a bird identification brochure – sent to the participants of the guided walk. Available for use by schools and future guided walks.
- Seagrass, Mangrove and bird watching activities have been run in the local Bass Valley Primary School as part of an ongoing program of environmental education and better connecting local residents with the environment they live in.
- Bass Valley Primary School have also become involved in the Children’s Shorebird Network and participated in a visit of Chinese delegates from a shorebird area in Yalu Jiang, on the Yellow Sea. This contact will hopefully evolve into a sister school arrangement.
- Funding has been sought to enable the Bass Valley School to participate in the BOCA Sticky Beak Program which will further the education around shorebirds that live in Western Port.

### **Who was involved?**

A Steering Committee was formed to guide the study and implementation of the Communication Plan and the consultants, ‘Riverbend Ecological Services’ were engaged to undertake the study and report and contribute to the implementation of the Communication Plan.

#### **Steering Committee Members**

Don Saunders, Annette Cook – Bird Observers Club Australia,  
Richard Loyn – Arthur Rylah Institute,  
Bessie Tyers – Western Port Bird Observers Club

Key user and interest groups were identified and significant groups such as the Western Port Bird Observers Club, Lang Lang Foreshore Committee of Management and the Coastal Unit of the Department of Sustainability and Environment were consulted over the issues and involved in the development of the Communications Plan and interpretive materials. A broader range of interest groups were consulted over the draft report and recommendations in the Communication Plan to gauge responses to the proposals before materials and changes to access were complete. Feedback at this stage was supportive and responses to the proposed changes in access positive.

#### **Interest and user groups**

Bass Coast Shire Council  
Department of Sustainability and Environment, Coastal Unit  
Parks Victoria  
Fishcare  
Lang Lang Fishing Club  
Lang Lang Anglers Club  
Lang Lang Foreshore Committee of Management  
Victorian Coastal Board  
Victorian Wader Study Group

## Successes of the project

- Working with the Steering Committee and Lang Lang Foreshore Committee of Management. The local knowledge and expertise contributed by these two groups were invaluable and ensured a comprehensive assessment of the site and its issues were undertaken. Involvement of the LL Foreshore CoM also served to test the viability of the recommendations in the Communication Plan from a local resident perspective, before it was circulated more widely.
- The Zoning and Interpretive materials have been well received by local residents and visitors/users of the site. No vandalism has occurred to date and only three of more than 200 postcards given out at the site have been found discarded.
- Talking with local people and visitors - Over 200 people were personally introduced to the project and changes to access during conversations at the site. Every person reacted positively and thought the restriction of access during high tide was not an unreasonable request. Most people who use the site and know it well want access during low tide because that is when the deep fishing channel is most accessible. The restrictions of access during high tide are therefore not incompatible with fishing activities.

## Limitations of the project

- Diverse profile of visitors – people using the site were from many different nationalities and origins around Melbourne and Victoria. Visitors were not from one or two discrete communities or clubs, which made it difficult and time consuming to reach them and ensure they were consistently receiving the information.
- Attempting to facilitate changes in behaviour within one season is ambitious to say the least.
- Isolation of the site influenced volunteer's ability to contribute – many volunteers are women who are uncomfortable with being involved in the Voluntary Warden Program when they are alone.
- Hold up with permits – DSE experienced a severe shortage in staff during the processing of the project permits, leading to a delay of eight months before the permits were issued.
- Seasonal constraints with monitoring – during the second season of monitoring the high tide cycles coincided less frequently with weekends, public holidays and school holidays at times of the day when visitors were likely to be using the site. Poor weather also affected monitoring field trips.

## Outcomes

- Positive reception from everyone spoken with (>200 people)
- Field observations have shown mixed results but some observance of the new access has been demonstrated by individuals. People have been observed walking dogs on leads within the Dog Walking Zone and others leaving the Shorebird Conservation Zone prior to high tide and setting up within the Beach Fishing Zone or leaving the area altogether. At other times, competition for access to the fishing channel has been high, with more than 40 people set up to fish and staying through a high tide cycle.
- Dog walking to Stockyard Point does appear to have decreased with less dog foot prints observed around the Point than in the previous season.

## Maintenance

- Monitoring of visitor use needs to be ongoing. Members of WesBOC and the BOCA Western Port Survey have committed to monitoring the site during their scheduled visits (WesBOC once per year, BOCA three times per year). Other volunteers are being recruited and will use the same monitoring form as used during field work to date.
- Increase volunteer warden base and timetable regular visits to the site to talk with people who use the area, handing out postcards and promoting the messages. Volunteer induction needs to take place on a seasonal basis, using the BOCA Volunteer protocol. A volunteer registration form has been designed for this project (Appendix 2)
- Improved and on-going communication with 774 radio and web sites to post updates on the project and remind people of the restrictions to access during high tide cycles.

## Conclusions

The Communication Plan was broad based and used a diverse range of methods and materials because the visitor profile indicated this approach was necessary to reach the types of people using the site. Whilst the methods and materials have been well received by visitors, the amount of time since the Communication Plan was implemented has been insufficient to determine its success or otherwise. Further monitoring of disturbance by those groups mentioned and other volunteers will help determine whether the communication methods are successful.

Future success of the project will depend upon ongoing and consistent delivery of the messages developed through this project for several years yet. The most relevant and successful methods for reaching the diverse range of visitors will be:

- Posting periodic updates on the web sites listed – Fishing Victoria and Rex Hunt
- Providing press releases to 774 Radio Fishing report and local papers
- Volunteer Wardens talking with people on the beach
- Giving out post cards to visitors and distributing them through the fishing and tackle shops
- Ongoing involvement with the local school in bird watching and seagrass and mangrove planting activities.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Interpretive signage and materials

Two signs installed at the Jam Jerrup car park.

### From Siberia to Western Port



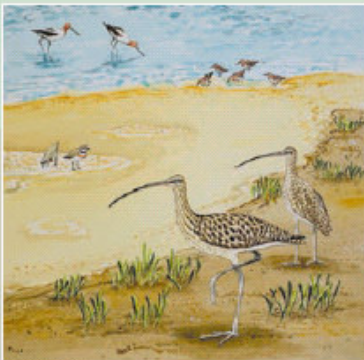
The East Asian Australasian Flyway

Birds that feed on the mudflats must live by the tides.

Shorebirds gather together at high tide roosts on sandy spits, rocky shores or salt marshes. Stockyard Point is one of the most important shorebird roosts around Western Port. Here they rest until the water recedes and their feeding grounds are exposed. Twice a day they fly out to the mudflats to feed during low tide until they can't fit another crab or worm in. Then it's back to the high tide roost to digest their food, rest and gather energy - all in preparation for an amazing journey across the world!

Many birds that spend the summer around Jam Jerrup breed in Siberia.

Some migratory shorebirds the half of each year in the northern hemisphere, where they breed, and the other half around Western Port - creating a never ending spring and summer! They fly up to 12,500 km each way and some can fly 6,000 km without stopping - and yes they can sleep on the wing! One species, the Double-banded Plover, migrates to New Zealand to breed during spring and summer and returns to spend the winter in Western Port.



The waters and mudflats of Western Port support an amazing collection of birds and fish along with many other animals and plants.

Seagrass supports algae, insects and crustaceans that in turn feed the fish, birds and other animals. Mangroves and seagrass are the nurseries where marine creatures breed and seek refuge. Scientific studies have documented the plants and animals that live here and how they depend upon each other for survival. The Bird Observers Club of Australia - Western Port Survey has recorded the birds around Western Port for more than 30 years.

Changes in Western Port during the 20th century have been quite drastic.

The land around Western Port was drained and cleared of native vegetation, leading to soil and sediments entering the bay. The muddy water blocked out the light smothering the seagrass, preventing growth and causing it to die off. Mangroves once fringed the shores of Western Port but they were grazed or cut for burning. Since the seagrass and mangroves have declined, fish stocks and bird numbers have changed because their food source is less abundant. How many times do you hear people reminiscing about a great catch of whiting?


**Lang Lang**  
Australia  
Conservation

**WWF**

**Green**  
Australia  
Trust

Click here from top left:  
Red-necked Avocet, Australian Cormorant, Red-capped Storm Petrel, Curlew, Eastern Curlew, Western curlew, godwits, Double-banded Plover, Curlew of the Bittern

### From Siberia to Western Port



What we are asking you to do!

We hope you will help protect our birds whilst still having access to a great fishing and walking spot. Please observe the zoning on this beach.

**Dog Walking Zone** - Dogs scare birds - please walk dogs only within the dog walking zone.

**Beach Fishing Zone** - During High tide you can fish anywhere along the beach except within the Shorebird Conservation Zone.

**Shorebird Conservation Zone** - Please leave the Point for the shorebirds during high tide when the incoming tide reaches the bottom of the marker pole. You may re-enter when the outgoing tide recedes past the marker pole.

Hopefully, one day soon, Western Port will be healthy and teeming with fish and birds again.

Hundreds of people are trying to slow the flow of soil and sediment by planting trees along rivers and creeks that flow into Western Port. Others are building wetlands to trap soil flowing in streams before it gets to the bay. And still others are growing seagrass and mangroves to hold the mud so the water might clear. People from Landcare, Coast Action, local schools, bird observers clubs, fishing groups, local, state and federal governments are working to improve the health of the bay. If you would like to help or join a local group, please contact the Bird Observers Club of Australia Ph: 03 987 75342 E: [information@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:information@birdobservers.org.au)

This project has been managed and supported by:

**Lang Lang**  
Australia  
Conservation

**WWF**


**Green**  
Australia  
Trust

When you have fished the waters off Stockyard Point you get to know the good spots.

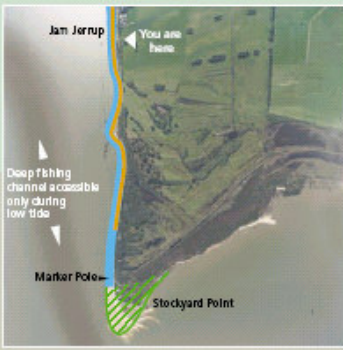
These are the deep channels, only accessible during low tide. Elephant fish run here but fishing from Jam Jerrup beach can also yield mullet or whiting.  
*(Please remember to observe the catch size and bag limits for all fish species.)*

We share the shoreline with international shorebirds.....

Birds fly in response to danger or to move between feeding grounds to roosting sites. But their survival is threatened by some human activities. Just by walking, sitting too close or bringing dogs near the roost area we prevent the shorebirds from landing and resting.



Some shorebirds of Western Port and their prey



Dog walking zone  
Beach Fishing  
Shorebird high tide roost and conservation area



Postcard (back and front)

# Stockyard Point

## Shorebird Conservation Site

Clockwise from top left: Red Necked Avocet, Red Necked Stint, Eastern Curlew, Double Banded Plover

# Stockyard Point

## Shorebird Conservation Site

Each year, thousands of shorebirds fly to Western Port from Russia and New Zealand. The journey from Russia is over 10,000km each way. They come to feed on the rich mudflats and many birds roost at sites such as Stockyard Point. These birds are protected by international treaties. Disturbing them can threaten their survival.

What we are asking you to do ...

We hope you will help protect our birds whilst still having access to a great fishing and walking spot - Please observe the zoning at Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point..

- **Dog Walking Zone** - Dogs scare birds - please walk dogs only within the dog walking zone.
- **Shorebird Conservation Zone** - Please leave the point for the shorebirds during times of high tide (fishing channel inaccessible at these times)
- **Beach Fishing Zone** - During high tide you can fish anywhere along the beach except within the Shorebird Conservation Zone

Please report any disturbances to the birds to -  
 Bird Observers Club of Australia, Ph: 9877 5342, PO Box 185 Nunawadding 3131

## Appendix 2 Volunteer Agreement

### AGREEMENT FOR SHOREBIRD VOLUNTEERS

#### Stockyard Point Shorebird Conservation Project



This agreement is made between the Bird Observers Club of Australia (referred to hereinafter as BOCA)

And (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Referred to hereinafter as the volunteer)

Of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

This agreement commences on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and remains valid for 12 months from that date.

#### **In signing this agreement, the Volunteer understands:**

1. that the work required will be in accordance with the needs of the Stockyard Point Shorebird Conservation Project and may be of a physical nature.
2. that guidance will be provided by the [Conservation Coordinator](#) and that advice must be sought from the Coordinator if any directions are unclear
3. that voluntary service will be undertaken recognising health and safety requirements and following risk management procedures
4. that voluntary service will be undertaken in support of a non-discriminatory and harassment-free work environment
5. that no salary or allowances of any kind are payable
6. that the agreement may be cancelled at any time by the Volunteer or by BOCA

#### **BOCA understands that:**

1. it will provide some suitable orientation activity
2. it will provide technical advice, guidance and assistance to volunteer efforts
3. it will provide necessary safety equipment for volunteer tasks and resources where appropriate
4. it will provide information on new policy decisions relevant to volunteers
5. it will provide an avenue where volunteers can raise questions, concerns and/or complaints
6. it will encourage, recognise and provide feedback on volunteer efforts and achievements
7. the agreement may be cancelled at any time by the Volunteer or by the Service
8. volunteers under this agreement are covered for insurance purposes in case of injury

#### **DECLARATION**

I, (*insert name*) \_\_\_\_\_, the  
Volunteer, Undertake to abide by this agreement.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I, (*insert name*) \_\_\_\_\_, sign for and on behalf  
of the Bird Observers Club of Australia.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to BOCA PO Box 185, Nunawading, Victoria, 3131, Australia

### Appendix 3(a) List of media outlets contacted.

- ABC 774 Radio Saturday morning Show,
- FishVictoria web site [www.fishvictoria.com](http://www.fishvictoria.com)
- Rex Hunt web site [www.rexhunt.com.au](http://www.rexhunt.com.au) follow the links to fishing pages
- Local papers – The Sentinel Times, The Southern Star,
- Community newsletters - Lang Lang Community News, Bass Valley Community News, Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve News Sheet. *The Bird Observer*, *The Current*, *Wetlands Australia – National Wetlands Update*, and a news sheet to local residents.

### Appendix 3(b) Media release and background information.

183-185 Springvale Road, Nunawading  
PO Box 185, Nunawading,  
Victoria, 3131, Australia  
ABN 24 005 068 842



Tel: 03 9877 5342 Fax: 03 9894 4048  
[www.birdobservers.org.au](http://www.birdobservers.org.au)  
Email: [information@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:information@birdobservers.org.au)

#### Media Release

#### Stockyard Point High Tide Arrangements

Stockyard Point near Jam Jerrup on the eastern side of Western Port is a popular fishing spot.

There is a deep channel which can be fished from the beach at low tide and it is well known for Elephant Fish.

Stockyard Point is also one of Western Port's most important sites for roosting shorebirds, especially migratory waders which, each year, travel huge distances to their breeding grounds in Russia, China or New Zealand.

People and dogs disturb the roosting birds and this can be a major problem for the migratory birds which must build up energy for their long flights.

With the support of the local community, arrangements are now in place to avoid the conflict between beach users and birdlife at Stockyard Point.

Signs have been erected asking that people not visit or stay at the sand spit on the Point at high tide. This will not affect fishing because the channel cannot be fished from the beach at high tide.

The Bird Observers Club of Australia, who manage this project, have asked that all beach users, including fishers, respect the new arrangements and share the shoreline with these amazing birds.

Contact: Don Saunders  
Date: 16 March, 2005



***Helping today's birds survive tomorrow***

# Background Information

## Stockyard Point Shorebird Conservation

### Project Western Port, Victoria

In recent years Stockyard Point, a sandy spit on the eastern shores of Western Port, has become a very popular shore based fishing spot. One attractive aspect of this location, from a fishing viewpoint, is the low tide access to a deep channel that passes close to the Point on the western side. It has been promoted as a particularly good spot to catch Elephant Fish, but fishing from the beach can also yield mullet and whiting.

A study to observe and record the interactions between visitors to Stockyard Point and the migratory shorebirds that also use this area was conducted during 2004. This study and report was commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Natural Heritage Trust and was undertaken by the Bird Observers Club of Australia. The birds in the study are protected by international treaties and local legislation.

The information gathered during the field work noted that many of the visitors to Stockyard Point had travelled from Melbourne and were visiting for the first or second time. They were therefore not aware of exactly where the deep channel is and when it is accessible. It is for this reason that a clash evolved between the roosting shorebirds and people who have come to fish.

People would often arrive during high tide and, seeing they could not access the deep channel, would sit out the high tide right on the spot where shorebirds like to roost. New people were also observed trying to fish close to the roosting areas on the eastern side of the Point where a catch was rarely made. People who came to walk, both with and without dogs were also observed disturbing shorebirds, but these incidents were less than those involving people fishing.

Recommendations from the report included **a compromise in times of access** to Stockyard Point that could protect the needs of all visitors to the area – people and birds. A beach fishing zone, a shorebird conservation zone and a dog walking zone have been established to do just that. The best time to access Stockyard Point, both for fishing and beach walking, is during low tide. The best time for shorebirds to access the Point is during high tide. The zoning has been designed to incorporate these factors.

The Beach fishing zone starts 100 metres north of Stockyard Point and stretches all the way along Jam Jerrup Beach. The Shorebird Conservation Zone includes all of Stockyard Point. People are being asked to use the Beach Fishing Zone only during high tide, when Stockyard Point has restricted access, to protect the roosting shorebirds.

People can access Stockyard Point during low tide as this is when the shorebirds are feeding elsewhere. Dogs on a leash are permitted on the beach from the Lang Lang Jetty to Jam Jerrup Beach. **Dogs scare birds**, so the dog walking zone ends about 200 metres north of Stockyard Point.

Signage has been installed at Jam Jerrup car park and along the beach to illustrate the importance of the site and explain the zoning. It is hoped that visitors will help protect the birds whilst still having access to a great fishing and walking spot. Please observe the zoning at Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point and remember; **we share the shoreline with these amazing shorebirds!**

#### Migratory Shorebirds

Each year, thousands of migratory shorebirds fly to Western Port from Russia, China and New Zealand. The journey from Russia is over 10,000km each way. These shorebirds breed on the beaches of the Arctic Ocean, the tundra of Siberia and Alaska and as far south as the Gobi Desert of Mongolia. They come to Australia for the non-breeding season – usually the northern winter, or our summer.

They come to feed on the rich mudflats and seagrass meadows around Western Port. During high tide, when the feeding grounds are covered by water, they roost on rocky shores and sand spits from Flinders to San Remo and all around Phillip and French Islands.

Whilst they are here, the shorebirds spend most of their time feeding to build up enough body weight to make the return journey to the breeding grounds. Whilst they are resting on the roost sites **it is critically important not to disturb them**. If the shorebirds are disturbed and spend time flying about using up energy, it is very difficult for them to recoup that energy, particularly the smaller species, as they already spend all the available low tide time feeding. Undernourished birds will not make the journey back to the breeding grounds which will ultimately affect survival of individuals and population numbers.

Western Port is a Ramsar listed Wetland of Significance and shorebirds living there are protected by the International Treaties, JAMBA and CAMBA and by Victorian and Federal legislation. Western Port is one of the five most important shorebird sites in Australia.

Stockyard Point, Jam Jerrup is one of 20 major roost sites around Western Port that are monitored through the BOCA Western Port Survey, the longest running survey of its kind in Australia. Three seasonal shorebird counts have been undertaken every year for the past 32 years, by volunteers from the Bird Observers Club of Australia.

For more information please contact;

Don Saunders, Conservation Co-ordinator,  
Bird Observers Club of Australia, PO Box 185 Nunawading 3131  
Ph: 9877 5342, E-mail Address: [conservation@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:conservation@birdobservers.org.au)

#### **Further reading:**

BOCA (2003), **Wings over Western Port**, Three Decades Surveying Wetland Birds 1973-2003, Bird Observers Club of Australia, Nunawading, Australia.

Priest, B., Straw, P. & Weston, M. (2002) Shorebird Conservation in Australia, Supplement to *Wingspan*, vol. 12, no. 4, December 2002.

## Appendix 4 Plan for Guided walk and promotional flier

# Finding Nemo's Birds

## Guided Bird Walk at Jam Jerrup/Stockyard Point

### Audience

Families holidaying around Westernport

### Objectives

- Show people the birds
- Discuss bird's ecology
- Explain ways we can minimise disturbance

### Method

Interpretive walk with some use of role play. An identification/record card will be supplied some binoculars will be available.

### Themes

- We share the beach with some remarkable travelers.
- Our actions can disturb birds and impact on their survival.
- We can change our behaviour to help the birds.

### Walk/Talk Plan

#### Introduction

Finding Nemo – what birds appear in the movie, Nemo's dad, Marlin, goes on a long journey to find Nemo. It is possible that Marlin would have seen many other birds in his travels as there are some special birds that also travel long distances.

#### About the birds

- Who's who amongst the birds – shorebirds vs others, migratory vs non-migratory?
- How big are they? Red-necked Stint vs Eastern Curlew
- Where do they travel to and from?
- How do they find their way?
- How do they prepare to travel? What do they eat?

#### Human Impact

Role Play – imagine you are a bird.

#### Let's Identify some birds

Walk to point and view birds

#### Conclusion

Answer any last questions, hand out information material.  
Return to car park.



# Finding Nemo's Birds

Bird Observers Club of Australia presents a Guided  
Bird Walk at Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point

## Who is welcome?

Local residents, holiday home owners, Families holidaying around Westernport

## What will we do on the day?

We will take you for a guided walk on Jam Jerrup Beach to Stockyard Point and play some games along the way. An identification/record card will be supplied and some binoculars will be available.

## What will we see?

We will see all sorts of birds that call Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point home. Some of these birds live all year around in Western Port but some travel from the other side of the world - Japan, China and Russia! We will also see mangroves and mudflats and probably some interesting things that have washed up on the beach.

## Themes for the day

- We share the beach with some remarkable travelers.
- What we can do to help the birds survive.
- How to enjoy the beach without disturbing the birds.

## Where and When to meet?

- Jam Jerrup Carp Park – drive to the end of Bay Road (off Bass Hwy) and turn left – 500m to car park.
- Wednesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, 9.30 – 11.30 am.

## What to bring

- Hat, sunscreen, water bottle and morning tea snack
- Binoculars if you have some and pencil for recording birds

Sponsored and supported by;

## Further Information

To enquire further about this activity or to make a booking please call the Bird Observers Club of Australia on 9877 5342



Appendix 5 Letter to land managers

Paul Smith  
Environment Manager  
Bass Coast Council  
PO Box 118  
Wonthaggi 3995

Dear Paul,

Consultants, Moragh Mackay and Peter Dann are undertaking a project at Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point to help protect shorebirds that use the area. The project was commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund and is being managed by the Bird Observers Club of Australia. BOCA have set up a committee that will oversee this consultancy.

As a land manager or interested party involved in the area we would like to inform you of the project and invite your involvement at any stage. The aim is to determine any causes of disturbance to the birds feeding and roosting along Jam Jerrup and Stockyard Point by users of the beach and then create a Communication Plan to reduce the impacts of this disturbance.

Preliminary observation work has been conducted throughout January and will continue until Easter. Brief interactions have also been had with visitors to determine their interest in the area, frequency of visitation and where they come from. This is important so that any educational material developed can be pitched at the right audience.

We are aiming to have the draft Communication Plan developed by May 2004. Prior to this draft stage we would welcome the opportunity to present our ideas to you and include any thoughts or ideas you have to contribute to the project. You will also have the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy and sighting of signage if you would like to - please let us know.

Please find attached a letter written for local residents and holiday makers that gives a bit more detail on the project. If you want further information or would like to discuss the project with regard to your responsibilities as a local land manager or interested party, please contact Moragh Mackay at 'Riverbend, Bass Hwy, Bass 3991 or email [mfm@nex.net.au](mailto:mfm@nex.net.au)

Yours sincerely,

Don Saunders  
Conservation Co-ordinator  
Bird Observers Club of Australia

## Appendix 6 Letter to local residents

### Stockyard Point Shorebird Project

Dear Resident or Ratepayer,

**The Bird Observers Club of Australia** in conjunction with the **World Wildlife Fund** is conducting a project along the Jam Jerrup foreshore to Stockyard Point to help protect the shorebirds that feed and roost in the area. We would like to tell you a bit about the project and what we are trying to do and would welcome any discussion or feedback from you.

The birds we are interested in, some of which migrate between Japan, China and Siberia each year choose the habitat at Jam Jerrup for several reasons, namely because the mud flats provide good feeding grounds and the sandy spit at Stockyard Point offers an isolated and semi-protected area to roost during high tide (or non-feeding time).

There have been over 35 different types of shorebirds and waterbirds recorded at Stockyard Point during a long term study of birds in Western Port undertaken seasonally since 1973. Local birds using the area include Pied Oystercatchers, Pacific Gulls, White Ibis, Australian Pelicans and four species of Terns. The migratory birds are less conspicuous and range in size from the tiny Red-necked Stint which is not much bigger than a sparrow to the Eastern Curlew which has a long curved bill and is about domestic hen sized. They arrive around September after breeding in the northern hemisphere and spend the summers feeding around the edges of Western Port. They build up their body weight and take off for their breeding grounds again during late March and April. When this time approaches some of these birds can be seen changing colour (best through binoculars or telescope), as they develop their breeding plumage.

We are particularly interested in assessing and (if necessary) reducing the effects of disturbance to the birds that feed along Jam Jerrup beach and rest during high tide at Stockyard Point. It is critically important that the migratory birds reach their optimum body weight because of this incredibly long journey they undertake each year. If they are underweight they may not make the entire journey north and therefore not breed for that season.

During January and through to the Easter holidays we will be conducting observation work to determine any causes of disturbance to the birds. We are also talking with visitors to the area to discover why they like to come to Jam Jerrup, what they do when they are there and what information would be useful to them about the natural values of the area.

The aim of this project is to design appropriate education and information materials to minimize the impacts to shorebirds. We intend to aim this project directly at people who already use the area rather than encouraging increased visitation.

As local residents or holiday home owners you may also be interested in contributing to this project. Have you watched the birds feeding along the beach, roosting or observed any

disturbance at Stockyard Point? If you would like to be involved please contact us.

Contact Person : Moragh Mackay, By mail : 'Riverbend',  
Bass Hwy, Bass 3991  
Email : mfm@nex.net.au