



# EARTHCARE NEWS

January  
February  
2010

*We do what we can, where we are*

## MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE FOR ANYONE WHO HAS NOT PAID A MEMBERSHIP FEE IN THE LAST 2 MONTHS

**MEMBERSHIP FEES COVER YOUR INSURANCE WHEN ON EARTHCARE ACTIVITIES**

Student \$10, Individual \$20  
Family \$30 Donation.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Email.....

.....

Post to PO Box 287 Elwood 3184  
Pay to Earthcare of St Kilda Bank of Bendigo  
101369809  
( but please fill in the form and send to Earthcare.)

## ACTIVITIES

### SEA STAR REMOVAL

Sun 14 March, Sat 1 May, Sun 13 June  
Sun 25 July, Sat 11 Sept

### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

West St Kilda beach Sunday March 7th 9.00am

### PLANTING SESSIONS

West Beach 30th May  
HR Johnson Reserve 27th June  
Balaclava Rail 25th July  
Elwood Foreshore 1st August

### RAKALI WATCHING

17-February St Kilda Breakwater  
3-March Elwood Canal -St Kilda Bridge  
17-March Albert Park-- Point Restaurant  
31-March St Kilda Breakwater

### NEXT EARTHCARE MEETING WITH SPEAKER

25th February Port Phillip EcoCentre 7.45pm

## NORTH PACIFIC SEASTARS

North Pacific Seastars have made an early appearance this year in the seagrasses near the St Kilda Pier cafe. First sightings were made mid January, raising concerns about the number of these exotic pests which may breed in our local marine environment this year. More than 200 tiny sea stars were collected off the beach next to the boardwalk in less than 10 minutes.

In order to help control the numbers of these creatures and assist in reducing the impact on our ecosystem, North Pacific Seastar 'thinning days' have been arranged for the following mornings:

Sun 14 March, Sat 1 May, Sun 13 June, Sun 25 July, Sat 11 Sept

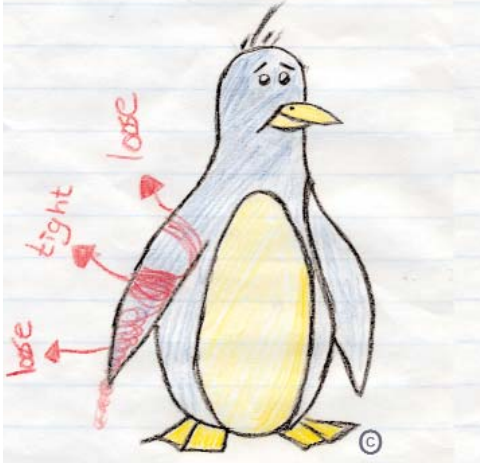
This year we will again be receiving support from our friends at Dive Headquarters, a dive shop in High St Parahan, who will be sending a team of divers to assist in the thinnings. Earthcare St Kilda will be asking for volunteers from our members to assist both in the water (snorkling or wading) and on land (counting, measuring and bagging) on these mornings.

Further details will be emailed to members closer to the dates, but please mark these dates in your diary now.



## PENGUIN GUIDES AT ST KILDA PIER

Since the beginning of October last year, a team of around 48 volunteers has been providing a Penguin Guide service to the large number of visitors who arrive each night to view the penguin colony which lives on the breakwater between the cafe and the 'penguin fence'.



Visitor numbers have increased substantially since last summer, and as a result this service will continue until the end of the daylight savings period.

Each night between two and four guides work from 8.00 pm to around 10.30 pm, answering questions about the penguins and also the rakali who often make an appearance prior to dusk.

The purpose of this valuable work is to allow visitors to fully appreciate the wonder of our local wildlife, and to minimise the impact that the visitors have on their habitat through education on the problems which can result through the use of 'white light', climbing near the nesting sites, and bringing dogs onto the break water. The guides have spotted 2 penguins with plastic bags wrapped around them, 1 with a six pack holder, 1 with an aluminium ring pull and 3 with fishing line.

This picture was drawn by Annemieke, one of the penguin guides. It was used when the penguin had a visit to the the Zoo vets.

## RAKALI

Over the past year or so we have received much valuable rakali data sent to us through the Rakali.Com website. In particular from Elwood canal and Albert Park Lake. Our last four visits to the Lake have been frustrating and worrying as on each occasion we had not sightings. However data sent to us clearly shows they are around. Most of the other sightings we have received have been during daylight hours – a real surprise.

If you happen to see a rakali then please log onto [www.rakali.com](http://www.rakali.com) and fill out and send us the data sheet. Your sightings are valuable!

Some future Rakali Watch Dates

17-February St Kilda Breakwater

3-March Elwood Canal -St Kilda Bridge

17-March Albert Park-- Point Restaurant

31-March St Kilda Breakwater

14-Apr St Kilda Breakwater

28-Apr Elwood Canal- Addison St

5-May Albert park--the Powerhouse

2-Jun St Kilda Breakwater

7-Jul Elwood Canal St Kilda bridge

4-Aug Albert park— Point Restaurant

1-Sep St Kilda Breakwater

15-Sep Elwood Canal - Addison St

Have you seen the baby rakali next to the boardwalk?

## PENGUINS

All seems well in the penguin world at the moment. We have had a lot of successful chick breeding. There are still some downy chicks on the breakwater but the older penguins are well into their moulting season and there are feathers everywhere.

We are still removing bands from flippers, some of these older penguins are well used to the penguin team and obviously have been evading us for years.

Some work will be done on the breakwater during May and June to improve the mooring of yachts. Besides making a quieter harbour for the boats it will also make a calm landing area for penguins at the far end of the breakwater.



## AUSTRALIA DAY S.U.P. BOARDING AND KITE BOARDING CHAMPIONSHIPS

On 26th January a day of Stand-up Paddle Boarding and Kite Boarding events was held next to St Kilda pier. This annual event was organised by our colleagues at Stand-up Paddle Boarding St Kilda and Kite Republic, and provided great displays of skill from the SUP and Kite boarding competitors.

Promotional 'plugs' from the commentator to help raise our profile.. Members of Earthcare St Kilda organised a display in a marquee on the day, and we received many promotional 'plugs' from the commentator to help raise our profile. All entry fees paid by competitors who took part in this event were donated to the St Kilda Life Saving Club and Earthcare St Kilda, providing us with an additional \$350 for funding of future Earthcare St Kilda projects.

We thank very much the guys at both Stand-up Paddle Boarding St Kilda and Kite Republic for their generous support, and for a great day on the beach!

[www.supb.com.au](http://www.supb.com.au)

[www.kiterepublic.com.au](http://www.kiterepublic.com.au)

## HI EVERYBODY,

I'm inviting you to subscribe to [www.bay-keeper.com](http://www.bay-keeper.com) (by following this link clicking on the link on top right hand of the home page). This will set you up (TOTALLY FREE OF CHARGE) to be notified whenever a new post goes on-line.

I've been developing the Baykeeper site for the past year. Being tad technologically challenged, it's been a steep learning curve, but I've found it to be a great way to stimulate debate and generate action to protect the Bay... also to synthesise my own thoughts!

The one thing I've been wrestling with is how to get people to log on when the news is fresh.

Now we have it!! I'd really appreciate it if you subscribe and tell all you friends!

Working with  
schools, government,  
researchers, business  
and community  
to protect Port Phillip Bay



Cheers and all the best for 2010.  
Neil Blake Port Phillip Ecocentre.

### Port Phillip Nature Watch February 2010

I don't have much to report on wildlife observations in City of Port Phillip to report other than the continuing story about the Tawny Frogmouths. At the time of completing my previous article for Earthcare News I had just discovered a pair of Tawny Frogmouths foraging and calling each other in the St Kilda Botanic Gardens on the evening of Monday 9 November. The story continues:

On the evening of Monday 9 November I went for a walk St Kilda BG, actually looking to see if there were any bats. I saw no bats but to my pleasant surprise a pair of Tawny Frogmouths instead - great news, but it was only going to get better. This is despite no one seeing any tawnys in the gardens since late July, when a pair was roosting in one of the large eucalypts no doubt getting ready to breed.

For a number of reasons, going away etc I could not get out to the gardens again until the evening on 19 November. This time in trying to determine how many birds there were (more than two indicates possible breeding) I saw three birds in one sighting but strongly suspected there were four. After hearing the soft growling sounds coming from the birds I knew there were young calling to be fed.

After telling Neil about the birds on the next day we decided to watch them that evening and to our surprise not four but five birds were counted. Two were chicks calling to be fed and frequently attended to by the pair of parent birds. The fifth bird was another adult, possibly the offspring from the previous year remaining with its parents. Despite being easy to find at dusk we are still puzzled as to where the tawnys are roosting during the day.

I eventually found all 5 roosting in an old pine tree on the 21 November. This is very encouraging after the death of one of the pair of birds at Clarke Reserve, and that there has been no successful breeding observed in the St Kilda Botanic Gardens since 2006. The pair of adults were last seen on 4 January.

