



## Swan Estuary Marine Park

The sparkling waters of the Swan River are an iconic Perth attraction. People walk and cycle the many paths that line its banks, picnic upon its shores, canoe, kayak, sail and boat on its waters. But what of the plants and animals that rely on it, not merely for admiration and recreation, but for survival?

**Above** Alfred Cove, one of the three sites that make up Swan Estuary Marine Park.  
*Photo - Marie Lochman*

Swan Estuary Marine Park protects three different areas within the Swan River. It is made up of 190 hectares at Alfred Cove, adjacent to Attadale and Applecross, a 40-hectare parcel at Pelican Point in Crawley and 95 hectares at Milyu, adjacent to the Como foreshore and Kwinana Freeway.

Traditionally, Nyoongar people who camped along the Swan River were drawn to areas which combined freshwater, terrestrial and estuarine environments. Pelican Point was a popular camping, fishing and hunting site for the Mooro tribe at the time of colonial settlement. Remains of traditional fish traps have also been found at Milyu.

### Natural attractions

Milyu is the Aboriginal name for samphire—a small native plant that once dominated this shoreline. Today, only small pockets of samphire remain because of the introduction of foreign grasses and other plants as well as degradation from past land uses and development. Samphires have evolved

over thousands of years to survive harsh and ever changing environmental conditions. Milyu and Alfred Cove now support the only two significant areas of essential samphire flat habitat within the Swan River Estuary.

Along with samphires, many endemic plant species have been lost from these areas, damaging their ecological integrity. Ongoing restoration programs in the nature reserves are ensuring gradual rehabilitation and will help provide improved habitat for birds and the other species that frequent these areas.

In particular, the areas provide a haven for migratory birds. These feathered visitors travel from as far afield as Siberia and Mongolia to reach the Swan River's shores. Up to 10,000 migratory wading birds visit each summer. Of these birds, 33 species of wader are protected under international treaties. Most birds are seen from August to the following March.

Life below the water's surface is also biologically important. The river is home to numerous seagrass species,





**Top** Large egret (*Egretta alba*).  
Photo – Jiri Lochman

**Above** Wetland area near Applecross.  
Photo – Marie Lochman

**Below right** Purple-tipped tube anemone.  
Photo – John Butler/Lochman Transarencies

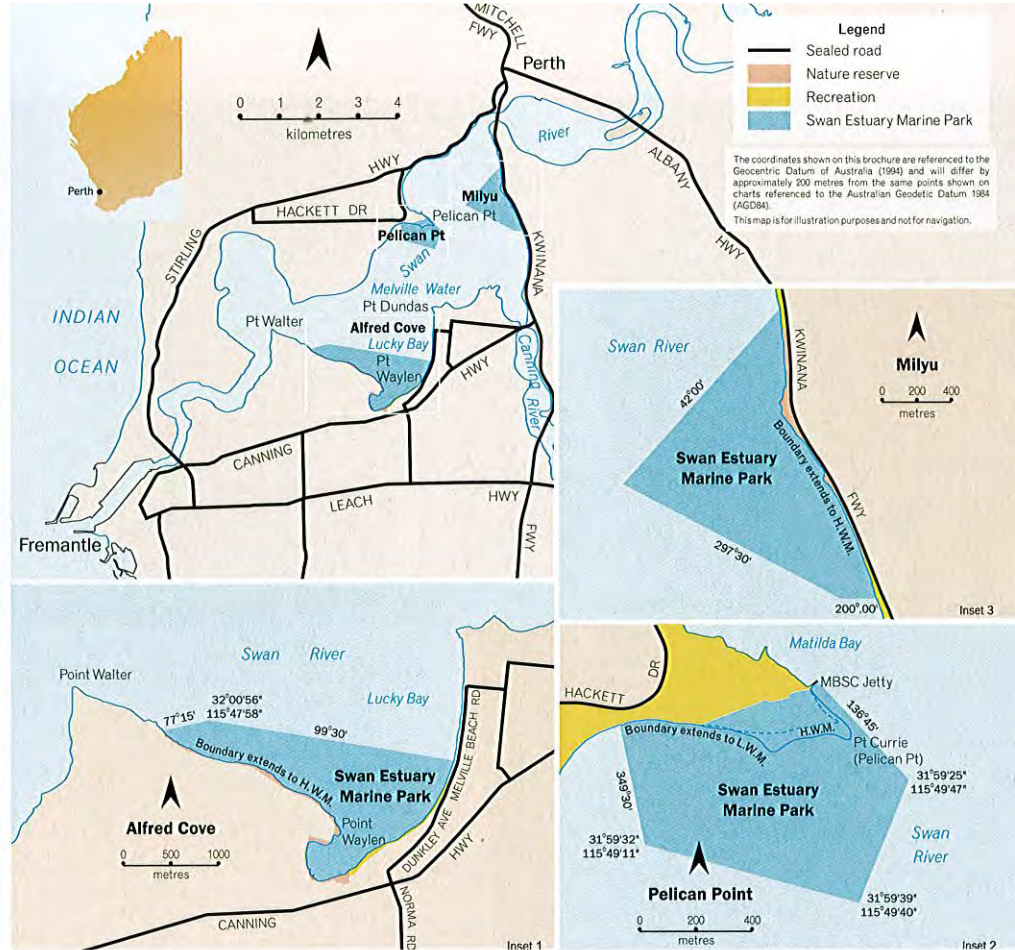
anemones, tubeworms, nudibranchs, octopus, crabs, prawns, catfish, mussels, seahorses and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*).

### Exploring the park

Alfred Cove is the largest and most important of the three areas that make up the marine park and has vantage points for viewing more than 140 species of bird. The southern end of Troy Park provides a boardwalk and accessible viewing of a multitude of bird life including black swans (*Cygnus atratus*), pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*),

There are many ways to get involved with ensuring the continued health of Swan Estuary Marine Park, its adjacent nature reserves and their wide diversity of inhabitants. Birds Australia conducts a twilight birdwatching walk and other activities weekly, while community members, government agencies, university students and other volunteers are involved in rehabilitation works along each section of the reserve foreshore.

For more information on these programs, to get involved or for any information on the area contact Department of Environment and Conservation Marine Ranger Caroline Haynes on 0412 893 801.



many species of duck and the majestic osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) which nest here. Many more species also frequent the shallow, well-vegetated river basin in this area and roost on the sandbars. An interpretive trail at this site may be followed to learn more about the area and its inhabitants. Enjoy wandering along the foreshore but remember to minimise disturbance to nesting birds by leaving your dog at home and treading lightly.

Seagrass beds adjacent to the mudflats support many of the animals which the waders depend on for food, and they are an important nursery area for fish and prawns. Alfred Cove is also a hunting ground for ibises, egrets and other rarer waterbirds such as spoonbills. Due to the stunning vistas and proliferation of birdlife in the reserve, photography is a popular pastime with visitors to the area.

You can also see the birds and take in views of the mudflats from Australia II Drive at Pelican Point and from the beach or foreshore path at Milyu, also a popular cycling route. Windsurfers can head to the popular launch point of Melville Beach Road on the foreshore at Applecross.

Swan Estuary Marine Park is zoned for general use, which means that people are allowed to fish anywhere in the marine park as long as they comply with Department of Fisheries rules and regulations such as bag limits.

### park facts

**Where is it?** Swan Estuary Marine Park is made up of 190 hectares at Alfred Cove, adjacent to Attadale and Applecross, 40 hectares at Pelican Point in Crawley and 95 hectares at Milyu, adjacent to the Como foreshore and Kwinana Freeway.

**Total area:** 325 hectares.

**What to do:** Birdwatching, fishing, windsurfing, kayaking, photography, volunteering.

**Park fees:** No entry fees apply.

**Relevant DEC office:** Hillarys Office, 2/45 Northside Drive, Hillarys Boat Harbour, phone (08) 9405 0780.





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