

Media Release – 8 May 2019



Western Port Biosphere Ramsar Awareness Project Commences

The Western Port Biosphere, in conjunction with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, has launched their latest project *Protecting Ramsar Values*. The project, funded by the Victorian Government, is aimed at conserving the internationally significant Ramsar listed wetlands of Western Port. “We have birds that make an annual migration over thousands of kilometres to come to Western Port as this place is so special,” said Project Officer Casey Lee.

“Many people don’t realise that most of Western Port Bay has been listed as an internationally significant wetland under the intergovernmental Ramsar convention – a treaty aimed at the conservation and wise use of wetlands,” said Project Officer Casey Lee.

The project will engage with recreational watercraft users across the Ramsar site to raise awareness of the vitally important wetlands and how to limit impacts on them.

“The wetland consists of seagrass meadows, mudflats, mangroves and saltmarshes which fringe the bay. These start the food chains that sustain the fishery and provide for our international migratory shorebirds. These birds rely on the wetland for food prior to their epic migrations to the Arctic Circle.”

“Our local fish like the King George Whiting grow to adults in the seagrass meadows of Western Port. Whiting from our bay then migrate along the Victorian coast to spawning sites far along the coast to the west,” Casey said.

“Western Port faces challenges, as do most natural systems, in balancing conservation with recreation. However, these factors can be reconciled as responses to pressures on conservation can overlap with recreation. For example, damage to seagrass can lead to less fish for us to catch and can deny birds the nutrients that they need for migration,” Casey explained.

“The project will bring together bay users to collaborate in looking after this special place so that future generations are able to enjoy it like we have”.

“We are particularly looking for interested boat users (those people who spend significant time on the bay) to contact the Biosphere if they’d like more information and perhaps to attend an upcoming field day,” Casey continued.

Interested community members and those with specific project enquiries can contact Project Officer Casey Lee at po@biosphere.org.au or (03) 5979 2167.

General enquiries: Greg Hunt, Executive Officer Western Port Biosphere Foundation, on 0400 948 546

