

Seaford Wetlands Reserve

Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands is an internationally significant habitat for a diversity of birdlife, including a number of rare and endangered migratory water birds from as far afield as Siberia. The remnant wetland areas are the largest remaining natural wetlands of their type in the Port Phillip and Westernport basins.

Geology

Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands are remnants of the Carrum Carrum Swamp which was a shallow marine estuary until the sea level fell around 7000 years ago. The abundance of fossil shells under the silt provides evidence of the recent change from sea to swamp. Originally the swamp stretched from Mordialloc to Frankston, covering over 4000 hectares. However it was drained in the late 1880s to reclaim land for agriculture and housing.

The remaining wetlands perform a vital function in filtering and purifying water from Boggy Creek, Eel Race Creek and stormwater runoff before flowing into Port Phillip Bay.

History

Archaeological evidence suggests Carrum Carrum Swamp was an important site for the local Boon Wurrung people. The swamps were a rich source of food, including fish and eels, and were used for a ceremonial and meeting place. Some experts believe the former Carrum Carrum Swamp was comparable to the Northern Territory's famous Kakadu wetlands in its rich diversity of wildlife.

Over a century after the swamps were drained, the area was set aside as the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Environmental Area. It was listed on the 1990 Register of the National Estate due to its importance as the main remnant

of the former Carrum Carrum Swamp. In 2001 it was declared a Ramsar* site to conserve habitat for migratory water birds. The Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands have worked tirelessly with Frankston City Council on weed control and replanting the woodland areas.

Today the wetlands are used for recreation by the public, environmental education by the local schools and rangers, and for scientific research. *Ramsar site – see glossary at back of book

Things to see

Indigenous plants

Some of the plant communities found in the wetlands are threatened in Victoria, including Brackish Aquatic Hermland, Tall Marsh and Plains Sedgy Wetland. Some areas of the wetlands are brackish as they were part of a sea floor whilst other areas have mainly fresh water. The variation in salinity of the wetlands leads to a diversity of plants with over 50 indigenous species. Common Reed, rushes, sedges and aquatic herbs such as Water Ribbons provide excellent habitat for the birds. The surrounding woodland areas have beautiful 300 year old River Red Gums, which are very rare in the Frankston area.

Native animals

Approximately 190 bird species have been recorded in the wetlands, 16 of which are classed as threatened by the State and Federal Australian governments. There

are over 100 types of water birds, many of which are totally reliant on the wetlands for their habitat.

This includes 18 migratory waders covered by international treaties,



including the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Usually seen in flocks, they arrive from September to feed in the wetlands during the Australian summer and return to Siberia in April to breed.

Some of the water birds are easy to spot as they feed either in the open water (e.g. grebes and cormorants) or on the muddy shores, (e.g. Double - Banded Plover).

Others prefer the cover of the dense reed beds and rushes such as the threatened Australasian Bittern and Latham's Snipe, which is protected by the Japan Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (JAMBA). Swamp Harriers can be seen flying low over the reeds hunting small animals.

The wetlands are also home to reptiles, frogs, eels and indigenous fish, along with resident possums in the surrounding eucalypt trees.

Things to do

The wetlands are well known for superb birdwatching opportunities. There is a viewing platform near Austin Road and a good viewing point at the end of Mona Street.

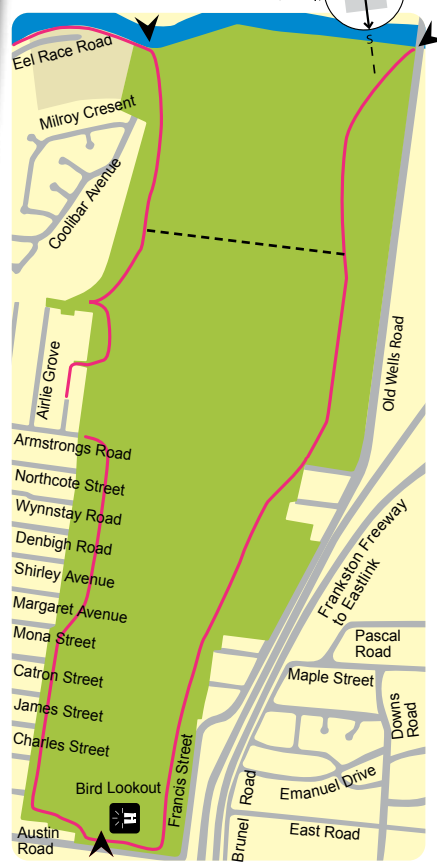
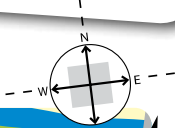
A bird hide is located on Edithvale Road as is Melbourne Water's Edithvale-Seaford Wetland Education Centre melbournewater.com.au

A cycle/walking trail extends around most of the perimeter of the wetlands. Picnic tables are available at various locations. To extend your walk, Kananook Creek Reserve and Seaford Foreshore are about one kilometre and 1.5 kilometres, respectively, west of the reserve.

It is important to protect the indigenous vegetation at Seaford Wetlands to provide a safe haven for the internationally significant birdlife, protect the water quality and provide a drought refuge for native animals.

FACT BOX

- Location: Seaford
- Melway Ref: 97 G12, 99 G1
- Area: 180 ha
- Special features: Birdlife, wetlands, River Red Gums
- Best birdwatching period: October to March
- Birds: 190+ species
- Walking tracks: 5 km
- Walking time: 1¼ hours
- Pets: Dogs on lead permitted
- Managed by: Frankston City Council and Melbourne Water
- Information: ☎1300 322 322



- Public transport
- Lookout
- Entrance
- Walking Trail
- Shared user pathway

Seaford Station
20 min walk