

Tim Winton brings environmental message to Queenscliff

Tim Winton's recent talk at the Queenscliff Literary Festival drew a sell-out crowd at the Town Hall and it was wonderful to be invited along with QCAN to set up a shared information booth in the foyer. We were especially thrilled to meet with Tim after the event and felt truly inspired by his interest in our work and continuing passion for the environment.

Winton has always been actively involved in environmental causes and mourns the loss of biodiverse habitats across our country and the wider world. His latest book brings these threads together and is the culmination of over 20 years' work. *Juice* is a fictional story, set in Australia in 200 years' time. Climactic conditions have led to social and civic breakdown, completely changing the way of life for all but a very fortunate few. Those with ample financial resources have built protective, self-sustaining compounds to shield their families from widespread unrest and climate disasters. It is a story about justice and a compelling read to say the least.

Winton talked passionately at the Literary Festival about the power of art to change hearts and minds because art generates feelings. Winton firmly believes that many people can no longer engage with anxiety inducing non-fiction reports about the climate. They are overwhelmed and exhausted. He is determined to reach Australians on an emotional level with this new book and encourage committed action rather than complacency or submission to greater forces that seem outside of our control.

Tim closed the session with a message of thoughtful urgency. *"We must reclaim our agency through realising that we have some"* Winton said, *"corporations may seem omnipotent but they're not - they're firmly focused on their own interests and the interests of shareholders and our submission must end or nothing will change"*. It was a powerful call to action and here at Swan Bay Environment Association, we urge you to get involved in the care and ongoing protection of this fragile ecosystem we all call home. We investigate, educate and act to build community awareness and active support for protecting this very special part of the world. Please join us!



Author Tim Winton shares his passion for our environment with Nursery Coordinator, Sarah Roberts, SBEA member, Ann Linsten and Ewa Filipiak from QCAN.

SBEA at QMF!



Recognising indigenous plants and invasive weeds was a popular SBEA activity at the QMF

We were very pleased to be asked to be part of the Sustainable Social Hub at the recent Queenscliff Music Festival.

SBEA joined SOEL (Southern Ocean Environment Link), Farm My School and QCAN, to present a range of activities over the three days to create a greater awareness among festival attendees of our impact on the environment and how we might reduce it.



SBEA's Indigenous Plant/Invasive Weed recognition activity, 'Can you tell the good guys from the bad guys?' created a lot of

interest, as did our *Gardens for Wildlife* and *Indigenous Nursery* Displays. Great feedback was also received from Lucy, a festivalgoer, who did the plant recognition activity on Friday, and was then thrilled to be able to recognize some Indigenous plants on the foreshore at Torquay on the Saturday morning! She came back to us on Sunday to show us some photos of the many indigenous plants she could now recognize, and to thank us for running such a great activity!

A big thank you to those members who were rostered on over the weekend and also assisted with set up and pack up.

A message from the SBEA President

It's hard to believe it is almost the end of another year. There's been a lot happening and we have plenty of exciting plans for 2025. As we head into the festive season, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all SBEA members, committee members, sub-committee members, and our many volunteers, for your passion, dedication and hard work.

Best wishes to all for Christmas and the new year.

Welcome to new members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Swan Bay Environment Association Members Sara Randell, Mary and Ian Cocks, Lilli Johnston, Colin Kent and Leonie Swift, Fiona Conroy and Liddy Nevile.



SBEA Membership has been growing steadily and we now have over 200 members! We greatly value your support which enables us to advocate more effectively to protect our local environment. The contribution of many members who actively volunteer in the various SBEA programs is also greatly appreciated.

If you have any Membership queries, please get in touch at evamutton@bigpond.com

Nursery News



Nursery volunteers John, Robyn, Barb and Kate at our rainy end of year sale.

It's been another fun and successful year at the Nursery. Thank you to all our dedicated volunteers for their hard work throughout the year including taking on extra tasks and responsibilities whilst the Nursery Coordinator was away.

Plant sale

The nursery had a final busy plant sale on Sat 30th November. It rained constantly throughout the sale, but it was still a success, topping off another great year.

Wanted!

The nursery needs seed for the plants *Themada triandra* (Kangaroo Grass) and *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia). If you have either of these plants in your garden and would like to collect some and bring it into the nursery in a paper bag that would be fantastic. Kangaroo Grass will be ready in Dec-Jan when the seed head becomes a rusty colour and any green in it has gone. It needs to be collected before the black awn falls out. You can snip the whole seed heads into a paper bag. *Banksia marginata* will be ready for collecting around Feb/March. It will be ready when the cones dry out and the follicles within the cones start to open. Before the seed falls out you can remove the cones and put them in a paper bag to dry out. Note it is important that you only collect from your house yard as a permit is required to collect elsewhere.

Christmas giving sorted!

A gift voucher for plants is a thoughtful and lasting gift for family and friends. They are available now from our nursery in denominations of your choosing. Contact Sarah Roberts for more details by phone on 0401 281 448 or email at

queenscliffeindigenournursery@yahoo.com



Nursery location, price and times

79 Nelson Road, Point Lonsdale. Price of plants: \$3.00 each. Wednesday 9.00am-12noon and the 3rd Sunday of each month 10.00am-12noon. Enquiries to Sarah Roberts, Nursery Coordinator: 0401 281 448.

Why is caring for little things in your garden so important?

..... because insects and tiny creatures play vital roles in the food web and sustain our life on this planet, and they are under pressure, with populations in decline worldwide. That's why campaigns such as 'No spray Spring' and Pollinators Week have been initiated, calling for our attention and our actions.

The world of marketing would have us fear even the smallest insects and condition our immediate response to 'reach for a spray can'. How do we change our mindsets and behaviours, and reorient the narrative? Invertebrates Australia have put together some great resources to help build the conversation around alternative ways of being with the insects, beetles and bugs in our gardens. Take a look at the YouTube presentation <https://youtu.be/j20S1RjK0ek?feature=shared> or download the 10 Tips for Invertebrate Friendly Gardening Info Sheet <https://invertebratesaustralia.org/merchandise/p/top-10-tips-for-invertebrate-friendly-gardens>



Blue Banded Bee

During Australian Pollinator Week earlier this month I went online to participate in a citizen science count, much like the Bird Life Australia Great Aussie Backyard Bird Count, but for pollinators. You can read up on insects, beetles and bugs in the learner's video/guide

<https://www.australianpollinatorweek.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WBF051-2024-APC-Learner-Guide-Resource-1.pdf> While Pollinators Week has come and gone, there's always more to learn so why not take a look, and get

yourself primed for next year's Pollinator Count <https://www.australianpollinatorweek.org.au/count/quiz/> Who knew that there were 14 varieties of Blue Banded Bee!

The holiday season is a great time to delve deeper. You'll find some great reading suggestions listed on the Resources page - find a field guide and follow the fascinating journey, or make a list of children's story book to seek out for the young ones in the family. Also see:

<https://invertebratesaustralia.org/further-reading>



INVERTEBRATES AUSTRALIA

Wren project report

Earlier this year we launched the **Bring Wrens back to our Gardens**, a project which has at its heart:

- Developing a more intimate understanding of our place and its living things
- Learning about the habitat requirements of just one species of bird
- Keeping the common things common.

We have invited anyone and everyone to let us know when, and exactly where, they have spotted our much-loved superb fairy-wrens anywhere around Swan Bay.

So far, 28 records of sightings have been emailed to us. In the large gardens and farms of the northern end of Swan Bay wrens are common. This is good. At the southern end where more people live, there is less habitat and the wrens are living on the margins of the towns: Murray Road, the Narrows, Gill Road, Lake Victoria, the golf courses, the dunes, the Springs carpark and beach. Sightings in people's gardens have been very rare.

With breeding season well underway – wrens breed from June to February and often raise two broods in a season – it is most likely that if you see a wren at this time of the year, there will be a nest nearby. Nests tend to be hidden in the thickest of thickets and the wrens tend to behave very discretely when they have young to protect. The easiest way to spot wrens is to learn their distinctive calls and listen for them as you wander in places where there is dense vegetation near open clearings.

Visit Birdlife Australia website <https://birdlife.org.au/bird-profiles/superb-fairy-wren/#>

Our next steps will be to start recording our sightings on iNaturalist, and to create more wren friendly habitat in our gardens. Imagine the potential impact if every member of SBEA (there are 200 of us) were to start planting for wrens in their gardens!



Photo: Robyn Curtis

In the meantime, thanks to all who have sent their WREN SIGHTINGS to johnstonwill5@gmail.com and we encourage you all to participate!

Looking ahead for 2025

We have already started planning our 2025 activities! Here is a taste of what is in store.

Walk and Talk series

This series of talks will highlight different aspects of our special environment guided by one of our resident experts. Will Johnston will lead two sessions introducing the extraordinary migratory wading birds that travel around the globe each year to visit our Borough: **Jan 26 Migratory Waders at Lake Victoria**, and on **Feb 9 Migratory Waders at Lake Victoria**. In March Greg Parry will reveal the ecology and inhabitants of our local rockpools: **March 8 Rockpool Ramble**.

Details will be released closer to the date by SBEA email and social media.

Nature Art

Our popular Nature Art events will also return in 2025. Details to come.

New Swan Bay and Swan Island exhibition



The Queenscliffe Historical Museum has a new Swan Bay and Swan Island exhibition. The Museum is in the Queenscliffe Hub, 49-55 Hesse Street. Open daily 11.00am-3.00pm. Free entry.

Swan Bay Soirees – an opportunity to mix with fellow members

Watching the sun set over Swan Bay from the deck of the QLYC is one of Queenscliff's best kept secrets!

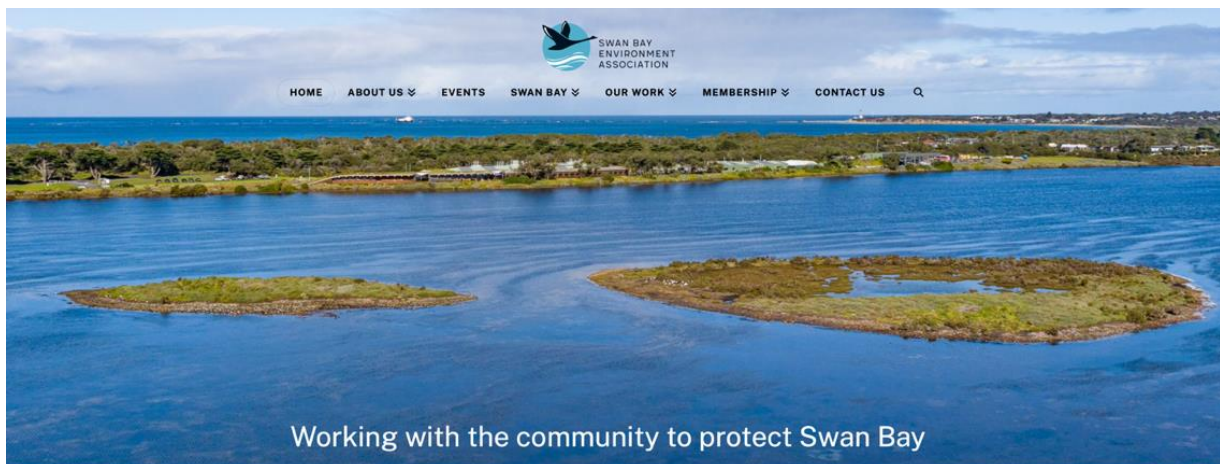
Our friends at QLYC have kindly allowed SBEA to invite our members to join them for **Swan Bay soirees** at their Gaff and Oar Bar. It will be a great opportunity for us all to meet and socialise with fellow SBEA members in a relaxed and informal setting.

Our first event is scheduled for **Friday January 31 2025**. Details will be circulated by email and social media early next year.



Need help keeping up? Our Events calendar is for you!

Visit the SBEA website and front and centre you will find our new EVENTS button. One click will take you to a one-stop wrap up of upcoming events which you can view as a monthly calendar or series of tile links. Here you will find information Nursery opening and sales times, habitat restoration activities, SBEA Nature Art and Walk and Talk events, Gardens for Wildlife activities, Pocket Park project plantings, meetings and special events, plus our Swan Bay Soiree social gatherings.



Upcoming Events



Latest News

Seagrasses of Swan Bay and surrounds

Looking at Swan Bay we tend to think of it as an expanse of water when in fact there's another world of vegetation below. The most important are the seagrasses and the ecology and marine of Swan Bay is highly dependent upon them.

Seagrasses are flowering plants that, unlike marine algae, have leaves, roots, shoots and flowers. In places such as Swan Bay, they sequester carbon, which reduces our greenhouse footprint, and play at least four vital ecological roles:

- being a main source of primary production
- providing habitat for juvenile fishes
- holding sediment with their roots which in turn reduces water turbidity
- as a source of nitrogen via microbes on their roots.

There are only five seagrass species found in Swan Bay and three more in other Victorian waters.

Zostera is the most abundant seagrass species in Swan Bay. It is the dominant species in the exposed intertidal zone where it has a grass-like appearance with long thin (5mm) leaves, seldom more than 20 cm long. **Heterozostera** occurs in the subtidal region of Swan Bay. The leaves of young *Heterozostera* plants are very similar to those of *Zostera*, although once mature, the plants are easily distinguished from *Zostera* by their longer leaves (up to about 1m) and the wiry black stems at their base. **Halophila** has a more leaf-like appearance. It occurs in deeper water, so you are unlikely to see it unless you dive in the subtidal areas of Swan Bay.

Another seagrass common in our locality is **Amphibolis antarctica**. You may be familiar with it as it's widespread in Lonsdale Bight area of Port Phillip Bay where it forms a dense band at a depth around 2-5m. Its branches of curly leaves are often washed up on the beach. It can also provide excellent habitat for Weedy Sea Dragons, whose "appendages" resemble its leaves.



Zostera muelleri.



Heterozostera nigricaulis.



Halophila ovatis.



Amphibolis antarctica.

Finally, there are a further two species that are higher plants but not always considered seagrasses because they also occur in freshwater and/or hypersaline lakes.



The two that occur in Swan Bay are **Ruppia megacarpa** (left) and **Althenia** (formerly *Lepilaena marina*) (right). *Ruppia* is abundant in the canals of The Point, while *Althenia* is occasionally found in the intertidal zone where freshwater is seeping into Swan Bay, where it can be mistaken for *Zostera*, but *Althenia* has much narrower leaves.



And a final seagrassy fact

Seagrasses are not always delicate and can grow to extraordinary sizes. **Posidonia australis** (right) only occurs in Corner Inlet in Victoria and has much wider leaves (up to 1 cm) than all other local seagrasses. And a clone of this species, with an extra set of chromosomes, occupies most of Shark Bay WA, where it is believed to be the world's largest plant, 180 km long! Find out more at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/worlds-largest-plant-is-a-seagrass-that-clones-itself-180980189>

