



# Education

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Don Saunders, Pat Bingham, Janet Hand and Jarred Cook at Fivebough Wetlands. Photo: A. Cook

## Education for sustainability

We are living in the United Nations proclaimed Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014. What is meant by Education for Sustainable Development, which is also known as Education for Sustainability or EfS?

You probably know of, and been involved with, environmental education. I remember when I went to Primary School, back in the '60s, we did Nature Study. This was often a wander through the paddock next to the school where we might see ibis and sheep grazing, mushrooms growing in autumn and the odd skull bleached by the sun. Is Education for Sustainability just another way of describing environmental education, or its predecessor, nature study?

Traditionally, Environmental Education has been defined as education *about*, *in* and *for* the environment. *About* the environment provides information and knowledge, *in* the environment provides direct experiences and *for* the environment provides opportunities to take action.

EfS stretches these concepts further by recognising the need for multi-disciplinary understandings of environmental issues. EfS encourages considering environmental issues from all angles, in other words to see the whole system. This requires understanding the scientific, social, economic and technological aspects of managing our environment sustainably. The principles behind EfS set it apart from environmental education, as it seeks to provide skills and knowledge to enable the whole community to act in more sustainable ways.

As quoted in *A National Review of Environmental Education and its contribution to sustainability in Australia – Key Findings* (ARIES 2005):

“Learning for sustainability motivates, equips and involves both individuals and communities in reflecting on how they currently live and work. This assists them in making informed decisions and creating ways to work towards a more sustainable world.”

EfS approaches involve the learner, are participatory and require learners to engage in reflection and critical thinking – not to simply absorb knowledge or participate in pre-determined projects. “Action learning is offered as a suitable method for engaging volunteers in learning for sustainability.”

EfS principles need to permeate many areas of BOCA operation – not only, but including, our education programs. This could include consideration of the environmental impacts caused during a field trip, participation in planning for conservation of bird habitat or gaining training as an environmental educator.

A good example of the positive outcomes of training volunteers as environmental educators, is The Watershed Volunteer education program in Newtown, NSW. The Watershed is a sustainability resource centre that is dedicated to growing the culture of environmental sustainability within the urban community.

Like BOCA members, their volunteers are involved in many ways including research, planning, implementing and reporting on projects, distributing resources, answering enquiries and representing The Watershed at community events. It is the volunteer involvement in design and delivery of education activities with staff that is of most interest here. Encouraging volunteers to share their own learning experiences has resulted in innovative and energised education programs that have a far greater reach than their permanent staff.

It is this last point that has the greatest implications for the BOCA education program. The Education Committee and I are currently exploring the needs and opportunities for increasing the involvement of BOCA members in environmental education for the sustainability of birds and their habitat.

More information about EfS and BOCA education programs will appear in future editions of *The Bird Observer*. If you would like to read more about it yourself and see some of the resources available visit: [www.environment.gov.au/education/index](http://www.environment.gov.au/education/index)



# Wetland Habitat – Wetland Birds

BOCA Bird Week 2009 25 - 31 October

Fivebough Wetlands. Photo: A. Cook  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Photo: J. Barkla

## BOCA Bird Week 2009

Yes, it will be on again! BOCA Bird Week offers all BOCA members the opportunity to be involved in promoting birds and BOCA. The theme for 2009 is *Wetland Habitat– Wetland Birds*. This theme aims to highlight:

- The types of wetland habitats in Australia
- The cycles wetlands experience - wet and dry, night and day, summer and winter
- The variety of birds supported by different wetland habitats

The wetland focus provides opportunities to learn about which birds are doing well, which ones need help and how we can be involved.

Although it is a little difficult to determine exactly when BIRD WEEK began it seems that it grew from National Bird Day which was initially set up by the Gould League in conjunction with the Victorian Education Department in 1909 for school children. A quick flip through old copies of *The Bird Observer*, formerly *Birding Notes*, reveals many a National Bird Day list.

I have been looking back on previous Bird Weeks to check out how BOCA branches celebrated in the past – the themes and the activities. A wide range of themes have included honeyeaters, parrots, garden birds, threatened species, owls, ground-dwelling birds and raptors. Many have been revisited as has this year’s focus on wetlands.

In 1986, Ellen McCulloch promoted Bird Week through an activity called ‘Melbourne City Bird Watch’. She asked participants to “check out those sophisticated city honeyeaters and kookaburras” and offered bird song tapes as prizes for five lucky participants. An open day at BOCA was a feature of 1987, as it has been in other years.

An exhibition, shown at Yarran Dheran and the State Bank Galleria, Melbourne, was a major activity for Bird Week 1989. *Goodies* star Bill Oddie gave it an international flavour by officially launching the event and showing his true passion as a birder.

In 1990 and 1991, Bird Week featured on the front page of *The Bird Observer*. David Ap-Thomas was president in 1991 and he urged members to “use Bird Week as a

focus to tell people in your local community about birds and their environment”.

In 2009, this is still our challenge, so start planning for your local Bird Week activities now. There is no need to confine your events to the last week in October – displays, outings and presentations could take place any time in October and still be linked to BOCA Bird Week 2009 *Wetland Habitat–Wetland Birds*.



### The Stickybeak Club is the junior wing of BOCA

- Open to all young birders under 14
  - 4 colourful, fun and informative newsletters each year
  - Cute bird badge to wear
  - Discounts from the BOCA Blue Wren Gift Shop
- There are three ways to be involved with Stickybeaks

- Individual membership** \$20.00 (a great gift from grandparents)
- Family membership** \$114.00 (one free Stickybeak in a BOCA family membership)
- School membership** \$120.00 (enquire about special rates for small schools)

**Join now and learn more about our winged neighbours!**