



World Wetlands Day - Feb 2nd 2010

Wetlands are permanent or temporary fresh, brackish or saline water that is shallow, slow moving and reasonably well vegetated. They include lakes, marshes, rivers, estuaries and marine areas from the high water mark to 6m in depth at low tide. Their classification of significance internationally, nationally and regionally is based on the number of species of birds, fish and other life forms they support. World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on February 2nd. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention). Since then, government agencies, non-government organizations and community groups have celebrated World Wetlands Day by undertaking actions to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The theme for 2010 is “Wetlands, Biodiversity, and Climate Change”.

The Elanora Wetlands Restoration Project on the Gold Coast has been operating for many years under Gecko’s Walk with Wildlife team, with volunteer Tom Fletcher leading the project, with the support of the Gold Coast City Council.

The horseshoe-shaped Elanora Wetlands Habitat is actually a section of Schuster Park and is separated from the main park by Tallebudgera Creek. It also partly surrounds the Elanora Water Treatment Plant. To view: <http://wikimapia.org/6652418/Elanora-Wetlands-Habitat>

“Wetlands are vital to Australia,” said Mr Fletcher. “They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and provide habitat for animals and plants and are some of the world’s most beautiful places. Unfortunately, there are very few wetlands left in the Gold Coast, with just the Coombabah wetland at Helensvale and the coastal areas of the Moreton Bay Marine Park down to South Stradbroke Island being Ramsar listed. The Elanora wetlands area was previously used as a dump by Council, but we’ve cleaned it up and restored it over the years.”

“Wetlands are important in other ways as well, they purify our water and are important for recreational activities,” said Mr Fletcher. “They form nurseries for fish and other freshwater and marine life and, because of this, they are critical to Australia’s commercial and recreational fishing industries. They are also essential resting places for migratory birds from around the world.”

Since the inception of the Elanora Wetlands Bushcare Group, the following has occurred:

- Exotic weeds and trees have been removed or are in the process of being removed/controlled
- A path has been constructed within the bushcare site
- Most areas have been revegetated with the planting of over 2000 native trees/shrubs
- Seed from the native trees is regularly collected by Gecko Regen
- Fox control is being pursued in conjunction with Gold Coast City Council
- Gecko’s Walk with Wildlife team regularly monitors the birdlife by conducting survey walks
- NatureSearch has been involved in monitoring the wildlife in the area

Further reading: “Wetlands Australia: annual update for Australia’s wetland community” REP 333.9180994 WET, available now in Gecko’s library.

**As a community service, these fact sheets are compiled by
Gecko – Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Ass Inc.**