

## 'i sea, i care' Ambassadors in Action...

Balyang Sanctuary is Frog and Bird Heaven!

In the middle of Newtown, Geelong, lies a fantastic reserve called Balyang Sanctuary. On a beautiful August day, marine Ambassadors from St Robert's, St Anthony's, St Margaret's, St Therese's, Holy Spirit and Our Lady Star of the Sea gathered for a day all about litter and pollution and how it affects the waterways.

The Ambassadors spent the morning testing water for oxygen, phosphate, nitrite and pH and also investigating the range of freshwater invertebrates living in the wetlands. These wetlands are constructed to harvest and filter storm

water before it makes its way into the Barwon River and ultimately the sea. In the afternoon, it was hands-on weeding of soursob and identifying native frogs and the amazing number of bird species found at the sanctuary.

To finish the day off, the Ambassadors conducted a litter survey before collecting it and disposing of it responsibly.

A healthy and diverse wetland helps to protect the marine environment from the pollution further up the catchment.

Many thanks to Di Luscombe from City of Greater Geelong, Tony and Jarrah from Buildscape, and Kristin and Jess for making the day possible.



## WINTER WHALES

Winters in our bays and surrounding coastal waters have become a busy time for whale activity. Humpback and southern right whales are being seen regularly in our waters.

Hunted to the edge of extinction during the industrial whaling era, humpback and southern right whales are making a comeback, though the latter still have a long way to go. The east coast population of humpback whales is expected to reach around 26,000 animals this season.

The news is not so good for the slow-to-reproduce southern right whale, with their southeast Australian numbers estimated to be between just 224 and 251.

The Dolphin Research Institute has joined with Wildlife Coast Cruises and Killer Whales Australia to form the citizen science initiative; Two Bays Whale Project. We invite people and organisations to report sightings

and contribute images of whales to a collaborative database. This forms the basis of an annual summary that is available to wildlife managers and other government organisations to assist with management decisions and conservation measures.

Data collected over the years can be used to compare sighting rates and monitor changes in behaviour. It gives an overall understanding to trends in numbers of animals visiting our waters.



dolphinresearch.org.au/sightings  
or facebook.com/twobayswhales/



DRI Image, Phillip Island 2016

Victoria's whale watching regulations prevent boats from approaching whales closer than 200 metres. For PWCs (jetskis and the like) the minimum distance is 300 metres. Serious penalties apply for breaches of this regulation.

