

## RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY BARRY LINGHAM - GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS

Hi Noel

I have attempted to answer the questions to the best of my knowledge but some of the questions would require experts to give a more definitive answer.

Regards from

Barry

### ***What impact would an increased human presence in the Lake Victoria environs have on these bird species?***

The impacts are mostly from disturbance to the feeding and roosting cycle of the migratory waders. The birds need to feed voraciously to build up enough fat to allow them to store the energy needed to undertake the huge flight all the way to the Arctic Circle to breed. The general disturbance to flight distance is about 70 metres but fast moving objects (like someone on a bike) have impact over greater distances. There are a limited number of dog walkers that currently use part of the Lake Victoria path near the golf course. An extended path would create more dog traffic and allow them easy access to the south western section of the lake where most birds congregate to feed.

Construction of the access pathways would invariably lead to some destruction of Coastal Moonah Woodland and Saltmarsh habitat. At every other Ramsar site with easy access pathways, such as the Barwon Estuary, people wander off-path and allow dogs to roam freely.

### ***What predator controls are in place around Lake Victoria?***

I believe Parks Victoria have undertaken regular fox baiting programs but that question is best addressed to them.

### ***Wouldn't it be a bonus for bird watchers, recreational cyclists and walkers to have access to this lake to see these birds?***

The problem would be that disturbance could well lead to the decline or extinction of the local migratory waders, so there would be few birds left to look at!

Bird watchers can already access the area and do not require new pathways. Serious birdwatchers use telescopes and binoculars to avoid getting too close to the birds.

***Are there issues with foxes and feral cats living in the bush?***

Foxes and feral cats are probably responsible (along with habitat clearing and habitat fragmentation) for the extinction of every species of small terrestrial native mammal from the Bellarine Peninsula (Bandicoots, Phascogales, Antechinus, Dunnarts, Native Rats).

***Where are they mining the shell grit for the works near Lake Victoria from now?***

To my knowledge shell grit is no longer mined anywhere on the Bellarine Peninsula. I do not know where McMahons source their shell grit.

***Could the EPBC be used to stop the trail from being built? To protect the birds.***

The EPBC Act is designed to protect threatened species from becoming extinct. If any proposal could effect a species listed in the EPBC Act, the Federal Minister may call for further investigation of the proposal.

The Minister may refer the matter to a panel hearing where a panel of experts hears evidence from wildlife/conservation experts, legal representatives and community members before making recommendations.

The EPBC Act uses three main approaches to any proposal that could impact on threatened species:

1. The first option is to avoid the impact. Can the project be located elsewhere? Is the project vital to the community or simply useful to some sections of the community?
2. If the impact is unavoidable and the project is vital, the next approach is to limit the impact. Can important habitat or species be shielded from the impact (boardwalks, wildlife underpasses, high fences etc)
3. Offset. Any impacted habitat is assessed to gain a score related to the importance of the habitat, the area and the species present. To offset the impact, extra land containing high value habitat must be purchased or placed into a trust to ensure that habitat is kept and managed for its ecological value.

Long term plan.....100 years so leave it be as natural perhaps

It would be remarkable conservation outcome if the migratory waders are still using Lake Victoria and local Ramsar sites in 100 years. These birds have suffered significant population declines in the past 20 years and a world-wide effort is needed to ensure their survival. We can do our bit by making sure that they have access to good habitat with little disturbance