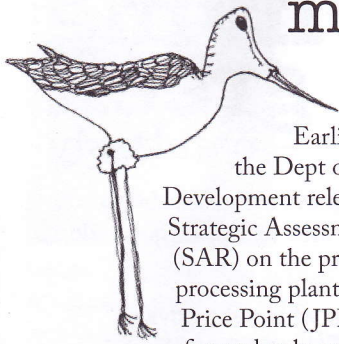


Will the gas hub affect migratory shorebirds using Roebuck Bay?



Earlier this year the Dept of State Development released its Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) on the proposed LNG processing plant at James Price Point (JPP). The SAR focused only on the immediate

vicinity of James Price Point. However, in the opinion of the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG), a special interest group of Birds Australia, the project could prove detrimental to shorebird survival in Roebuck Bay, a Ramsar wetlands site.

Three specific matters were raised in the AWSG's response to the SAR:

1. **The SAR did not consider the potential impact of hydrocarbon spills on shorebird habitat.** Several of the hydrocarbon spill models presented in Appendix G3 predict that, although spills are not expected to enter Roebuck Bay itself, they will clip the southern edge of the bay. This is Bush Point, the most important single roost of shorebirds in the bay, with historical counts of about 100,000 and, more recently, up to 70,000 shorebirds. Typically, 50-70% of the shorebirds in Roebuck Bay roost there and contamination of this site could have disastrous consequences for the shorebird population. Also, despite the SAR noting that '*Modelling of the potential sediment transport rates showed ... during the cyclone season there are often large southerly sediment transport events*', the SAR does not include hydrocarbon spill modelling during cyclonic/severe storm conditions, when there is an increased risk of such a spill.

2. **The SAR has not considered the potential effect of lighting and gas flares on shorebirds during their migration.** Despite considerable evidence that lighting, including gas flares, can distract and interfere with migrating birds, and Woodside recognising it as a risk for its Pluto LNG Project, the SAR does not include any investigation of the flight paths of shorebirds migrating to and from

Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach, or the possible impact of the precinct light emissions on their migratory journeys.

3. Construction and operation of the proposed LNG Processing Plant depend on a range of new infrastructure developments, designated Category B in the SAR, including expansion of Broome Port and possible expansion and/or relocation of Broome Airport. **The AWSG considered Category B infrastructure developments to be of great concern for their potential for serious impact on the environmental integrity of Roebuck Bay.** Risks include:

- Increased stormwater runoff into Roebuck Bay (with an associated increase in Lyngbya blooms and resultant reduction in benthic invertebrates, the primary food for birds)
- Increased vessel movements at Broome Port with risks of pollution and contamination from bilge water;
- Disturbance to birds from low-flying aircraft and helicopters.

In sum, the AWSG did not consider the legal responsibilities to protect migratory shorebirds held by both the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments were adequately fulfilled by the SAR.

Recent news that the Crown Land coastal strip from Willie Creek to Point Coulomb may become freehold land as part of the gas hub benefits package for traditional owners heightens concern for the future of shorebirds in Roebuck Bay. If people who now use that strip for recreation go to the Bay instead, disturbance of birds on high tide roosts, already a worry, will increase. Given the challenges that shorebirds face in the Yellow Sea on their migratory journey to and from their Arctic breeding grounds (see EK News 2010), it is crucial that birds commence migration in the best possible condition. The SAR (pg ES-79) states: '*numerous site management measures are already in place including a program to minimise disturbance to northern shores*'. No such program exists.

Jan Lewis

GROWING YOUR OWN

by HORRIE G. SNAGG

If I knew the world was going to end tomorrow, I'd plant a tree today.

Horrie attributes this quote to a Russian beauty queen and remarks: 'Regardless of her reasoning, you've got to love her.' However, the beauty queen appears to have borrowed her reasoning from Martin Luther, 1483-1546, who said the same about planting an apple tree.

This time of year the garden is in holding mode, says Horrie. By September the weather is getting hotter, and the gardener should pay attention to shading vulnerable plants and keeping up the water.

As those cool-weather vegetables get dug up, eaten and shared with friends, leaving space in the veggie patch, it's time to start planning the wet season crop. October is our hottest month, and not a good one to get things started, Horrie tells me. However, it's not too soon to prepare the beds for the next season. Time to scatter Dynamic Lifter and mulch the ground quite thickly. Laterite, a sediment formed in the tropics by the leaching of various rocks, and rich in clay and minerals, can be crushed and added to the soil, to build it up. The clay in laterite improves the water-holding qualities of our local pandan, which can drain too easily. There's plenty of Laterite in the old Fitzroy River bed, according to Horrie, around Nillibubba. Main Roads use it as a gravel along the shoulders of the roads.

Good wet season staples include sweet corn, cucumbers, butternut pumpkins, snake beans, butter beans and sweet potatoes, all of which can handle the full sun. Capsicums will grow but need protecting, as do parsley and other herbs, under dappled shade. You can provide this through the judicious use of palm fronds, arranged over a simple trellis or mesh.

Once the first storms come, we can usually rely on water — a good wet like last year saves hugely on watering, in both effort and consumption.

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