

## Hawksbury Lagoon update May 2020

What challenging times we are all living in at present. Just prior to the lockdown the main concern was in relation to the number of dead birds being found near the lagoon. We already had a meeting arranged with DOC officers so were able to express our concern and have them remove some of the birds for an autopsy. Unfortunately, because of the lockdown the autopsy hasn't yet taken place, however there is some thought that the deaths may be a result of botulism, although not confirmed. Hot, dry weather causes the botulism toxin-producing bacteria naturally present in wetlands to grow and when the water levels are low it makes it easier for birds to come in contact with the sediment/algae or bugs containing the botulinum toxin. There was a major incident in the Coromandel at the beginning of this year when over 200 birds died. The botulism toxin can also grow on rotting bread, hence the importance of not feeding bread to aquatic birds. The recent high seas and rainfall, resulting in high water levels led to the mechanical opening of the outlet, which flushed the lagoon, hopefully discharging all the dying algae and toxins out to sea.

We are so fortunate living here, I have never seen so many people (and dogs) out walking the streets, along the beach and the lagoon causeways. Just a reminder that dogs on the causeways **MUST** be on a leash, it is a rare privilege that dogs are permitted in a wildlife reserve, and this privilege could be taken away if we don't abide by the regulation.

I do hope people are enjoying their interaction with the lagoon, did you see the recent late hatching of three black swan cygnets. There were also eels seen in the outlet when it was open. It is an everchanging environment.

Because our AGM this year had to be held via computer, we have discussed the possibility of holding an "Open Day" at the lagoon, probably in early spring, for anyone interested to hear about what has been achieved and also what is being planned for the future. It looks as though our usual planting days (Ki Uta Ki Tai) won't be happening this year, but we might look at holding our own planting day if there is some local interest. The annual report written for the AGM is available to read on our website.

Stay safe and make the most of these lovely autumnal days.

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Hawksbury Lagoon Soc.