

Personal Watercraft in the Coorong National Park
Bird Care & Conservation Society of South Australia
June 2004

BCCS's position is that, in the Coorong National Park, PWCs should be prohibited.

The characteristic manoeuvrability of PWCs in shallow water is likely to afford increasing numbers of watercraft operators (and their cargo) with the opportunity to access sites used by significant groups of waterbirds for breeding, feeding and roosting.

There is evidence to suggest that levels of disturbance which could be expected to be associated with an increasing level of public access pose both an unacceptable and an avoidable risk to major Pelican nurseries as well as to foraging migratory waders and vulnerable or rare waterbird species.

Chapman's (1963) review of what was then known of the history and status of the Pelican in South Australia drew from the historical records of the South Australian Ornithological Association and provided numerous accounts of the devastation caused by disturbance at Pelican nurseries in the Coorong. These accounts (together with the fact that forty years ago he also attributed the perceived decline in the species' abundance to human depredation combined with reduced environmental flows in the Murray and the construction of barrages and locks (with the consequent loss of shallow water habitats) make for sobering reading.

The level of local, historical and international recognition of the significance of the Coorong wetlands as a waterbird habitat and predictions of increasing frequency and intensity of droughts due to global warming which highlight the importance of the area as a drought refuge (Flannery, 2004, pers. comm.), suggest that when considering management options and prioritising management objectives in the National Park, the Department of Environment has a critical obligation to ensure protection (including protection from disturbance) of waterbird breeding, feeding and roosting habitat.

The Bird Care and Conservation Society fully supports the views put forward in submissions by the Conservation Council of South Australia and the views expressed by Richard Owen in Appendix 8 to the Personal Watercraft Discussion Paper of April 2004.

Alex Randell (rand0053@flinders.edu.au).
(submitted via email on behalf of the Conservation Committee of the Bird Care & Conservation Society of SA. 30 June 2004)

Reference List

Chapman, F.R.H. (1963) The Pelican in South Australia, with special reference to the Coorong Islands. The S.A. Ornithologist (24): 6-14.

Flannery, T. (11 June 2004) Personal comment made in an address to the Biology Association of the Flinders University of SA.

Personal Watercraft Discussion Paper (April 2004), online. Available (link) URL: http://www.ccsa.asn.au/campaigns/Ban_PWCs.htm. Accessed 29 June 2004.