



SILVERWATER

Seal shore to impress

Rare sighting of marine mammal
testament to waterway's health

Stacy Thomas

PARRAMATTA River has been given the seal of approval.

A seal was spotted sunbaking on a Silverwater jetty, metres from homes in the western Sydney suburb last week.

It is a rare sighting that has excited experts that have worked hard to get the river's water quality swimmable by 2025.

The seal was five metres away from a home for a good 10 minutes before swimming off last Wednesday at about 2pm.

"I can't believe there's a seal in Silverwater, how can this be," one resident told media. "Seeing a seal didn't enter my mind."

Parramatta River experts say the sighting is testament to the river's improved water quality.

There are now three swimming locations on the river's edge — Cabarita, Dawn Fraser baths, Chiswick baths with the addition of Lake Parramatta in the freshwater section. But their aim is to have all of Parramatta River swimmable by 2025.

Reports have found an in-

creasing number of wildlife spotted in Parramatta River — from dolphins to seals — animals not noticed before.

Parramatta River is a complete estuary, meaning it is saltwater to Charles St Weir. Everything upstream from there is freshwater.

Parramatta River Catchment Group chair Mark Drury said it was great to see seals that far up the river.

"It's great the water quality is improving and we're getting more wildlife into the waterways," he said.

An Office of Environment spokeswoman said people were urged to take care around seals and give them space.

"Seals are wild animals and can be unpredictable. They move fast on land and may bite if frightened," she said.

There are 10 species of seals and sea lions that live in Australian waters but much of the population declined in the 18th and 19th centuries due to them being hunted for their meat, oil and fur. Today, all seals are protected.

The unusual sighting comes after a New Zealand fur seal was spotted at the mouth of the Parramatta River back in July 2015.



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A seal suns itself on a Silverwater jetty on the Parramatta River.