

Wetland Conservation in WA: Past, Present and Future

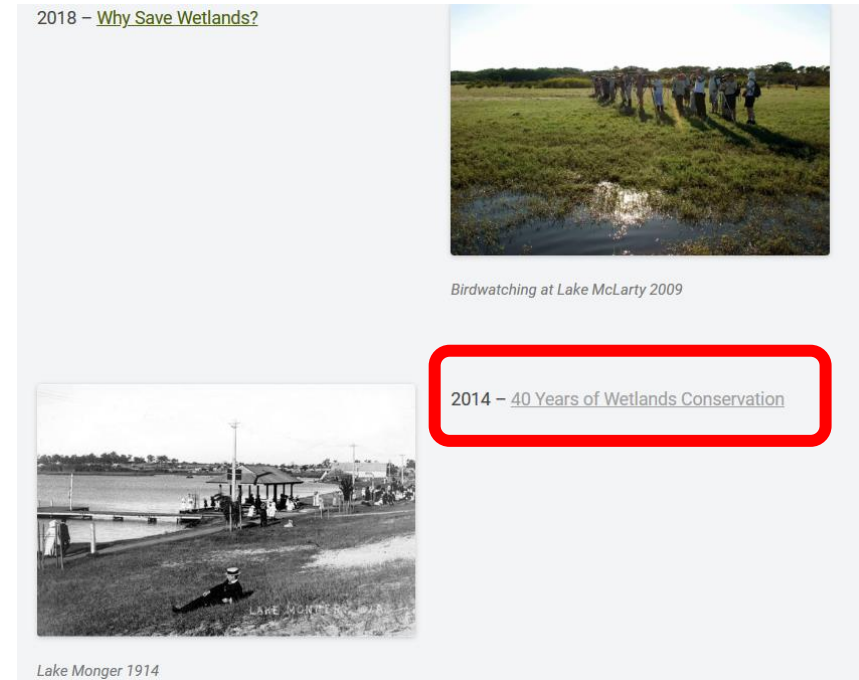
Robyn Pickering and Philip Jennings



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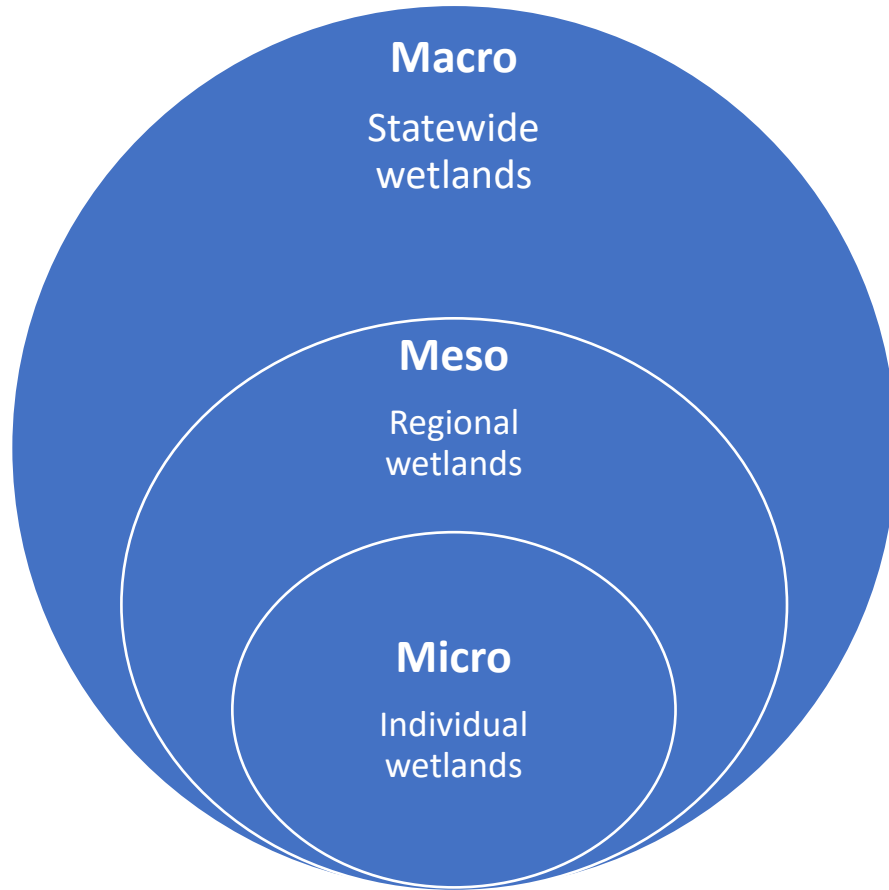
Acknowledgements

- Whadjuk Noongar
- Co-author Professor Philip Jennings & 2014 paper “40 years of Wetlands Conservation”



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Consider the impact of wetland conservation actions within the state



All levels of conservation action are important but macro actions have a wider area of positive impact than micro actions.

In the following slides the actions that are classified as Macro are in bold, Meso are regular and micro are in italic.

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- **1829 settlement/invasion**
- **The early European settlers – clearance and drainage**
- **Post-War expansion – “A Million Acres A Year”**
- The rise of environmental concern in WA – Rischbieth, Serventy, Seddon, Len Howard
- *Bessie Rischbieth – Freeway interchange protest 1964*
- ✓ **Conservation Council WA formed 1967**

Key: Macro, meso and *micro*

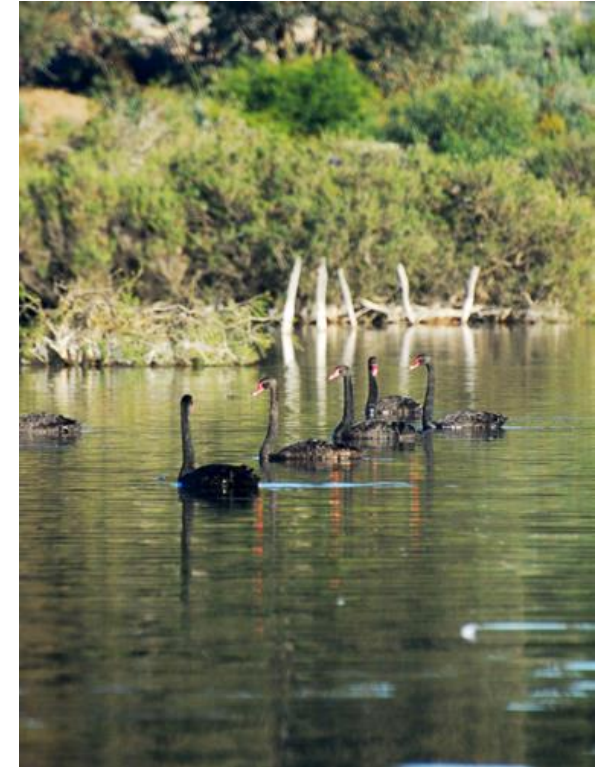


Bessie Rischbieth at Mounts Bay Road in 1964

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- ✓ Conservation rally 1969
- ✓ **Environmental Protection Act 1971 passed**
- ✓ **Environmental Protection Authority formed 1971**
- ✓ **Conservation Through Reserves Committee 1972-1980**
- ✓ **Wetlands Advisory Committee 1972-1980**
- ✓ **Ramsar Convention came into force 1975**
- ✓ Cockburn Wetlands Study 1976
- ✓ Peel Preservation Group formed 1977

Key: Macro, meso and *micro*



Swans at Kogolup Swamp

Past Case Study: Kogolup Lake

- 1971 Notice of Claim, permit to enter private land and offer of 10c per cubic yard of material removed. Letter of objection to proponent.
- 1973 Telegram of objection to proponent
- 1974 letter to Warden, letter to Minister Env. Protection. Letter from Dept of Mines. Daily News full page “Lake of Dreams”
- 1975 letter from Env. Protection in support of mine. Letter to Commissioner of Administrative Investigations (Government Ombudsman) re ineptitude of Dept Env. Protection
- 1976 letters to Warden one referring to research of site by Murdoch Uni
- 1977 Letter of support from City of Cockburn who refused signing Mining Agreement & Daily News article
- 1978 Wardens Court hearing not to approve mining
- Now part of Beeliar Regional Park

FIGHT TO SAVE THE LAKE OF DREAMS

By Philip Bodeker

Part of the boyhood world of Mr Jeff Spencer (33) is a jewel of a lake hidden among paperbarks and tuarts near his home in Yangebup Road, Jandakot.

Today Lake Kogolup is pegged for mining and Mr Spencer is one of a tiny band of residents fighting against what seem overwhelming odds.

Departments and local authorities are sympathetic.

But they cannot see why the lake should not be mined for diatomaceous earth and bentonite, substances used in filters and mine drilling.

Mr Spencer and his neighbours say Lake Kogolup is the last lake in the metropolitan area untouched by development.

They want to see it stay that way.

Over the past year the Perth Warden's Court has deferred two applications for the lake and all the swampy area and low-lying ground around it to be mined.

Billions of diatoms

Diatomaceous earth is the black, squelchy mud in the bed of the lake.

Yangebup, thought to be dying from industrial seepages.

To the south is Lake Thompson, already an A-class reserve.

Cockburn Shire has told Mr Spencer it cannot afford the privilege of turning Lake Kogolup into another reserve.

The Fisheries and Fauna Department has been sympathetic, but Mr Spencer believes the department will be forced to compromise and allow mining in the centre of the lake, provided the banks are left intact.

If this happens, scores of acres of lush reed is

lands and shallows will disappear.

The Department of Environmental Protection has also been asked to help.

Unlikely to stay

But an EPA officer said this week it was unlikely the lake would stay in its state of pristine beauty for long, regardless of whether mining was allowed.

High land around the lake, the official said, was already earmarked by State Housing Commission and private land developers.

Once housing was established, the lake would be forced to change by pressures of the community.

Mr Spencer argues that this should not be a reason for mining to be allowed.

Since he was a boy he has watched shy waterbirds breeding on the lake's islands. Recently he has seen a flock of rare white ibis.

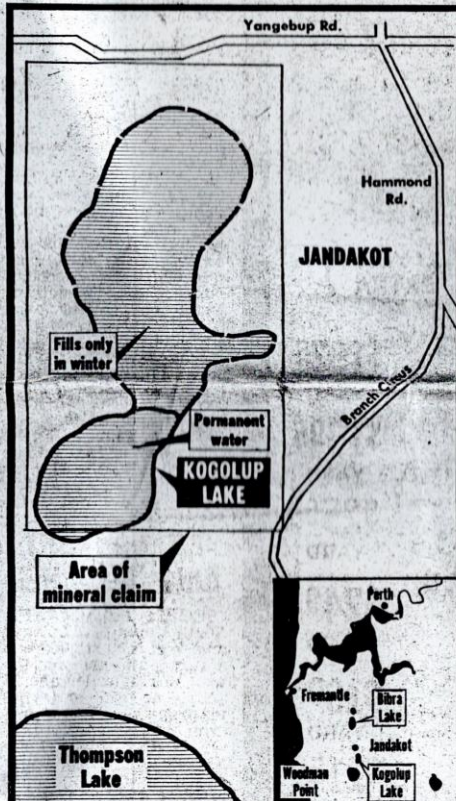
He says there are other substitute materials that could be used instead of diatomaceous earth, and other areas where it could be mined.

He also doubts the environmental economics of spoiling beauty for a non-essential product.

Those who argue against Mr Spencer say that after mining the lake would still be a haven for water birds.

Its banks would be easier to reach and would provide better recreation.

Either way, Lake Kogolup is unlikely to stay the way it was when Mr Spencer was a boy.



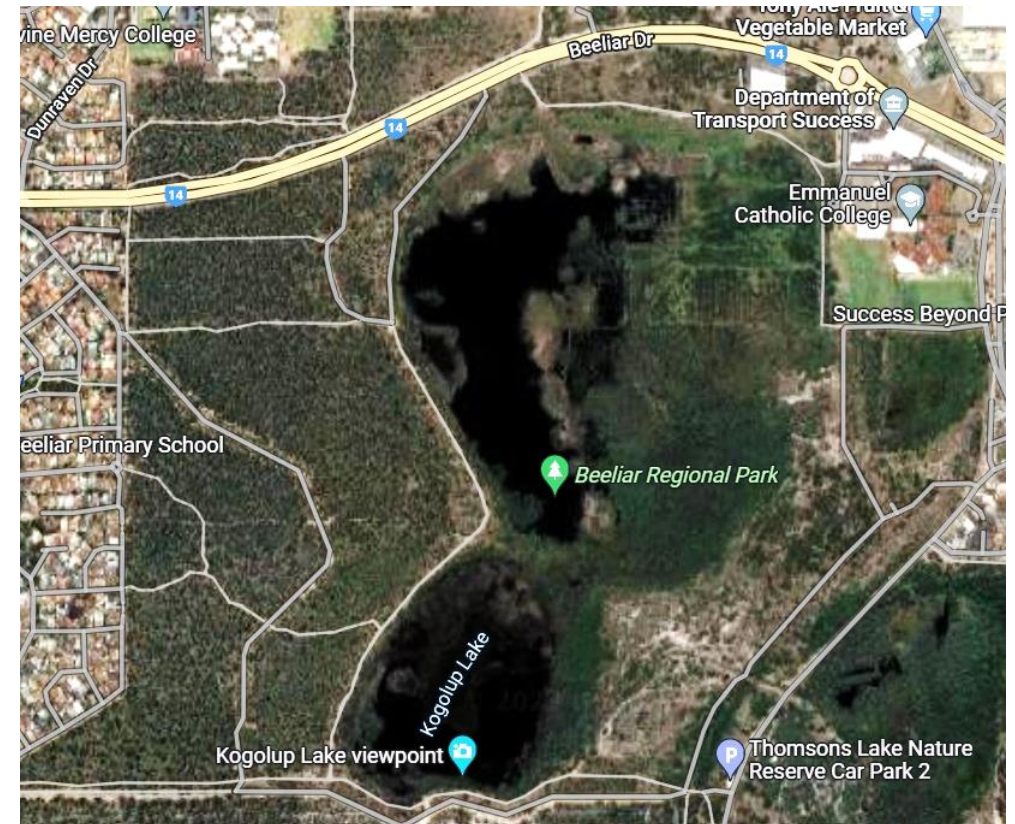
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Daily News
7 May 1974



Kogolup Swamp and Lake (Google Maps Image)

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- ✓ **System 6 Green Book 1980**
- ✓ **System 6 Red Book 1983**
- ✓ *Star Swamp campaign 1982 - 1985*
- ✓ **Waterbird Conservation Group formed 1984**
 - *Farrington Road protest 1984*
- ✓ **Wetlands Conservation Society formed 1985**
- ✓ **Herdsman Wildlife Centre 1985**

Key: Macro, meso and *micro*



Farrington Road Blockade

Past Case Study: Lake Mealup

- 1985-86 a few people trying to raise funds to purchase farm property – important waterbird site
 - Newsletters of WA Naturalist's Club, BirdLife Australia and Oxfam
 - Article in The West Australian
- Offer to purchase by Jan Knight and Jock McLaren with LMPS as nominee, with condition that LMPS becomes incorporated by a set date
- Constitution setup
- LMPS membership classes – Full members “purchasers” & associate members
- Purchased 1988 1990 Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site
- 1988-2023 Management, restoration & partnerships



Lake Mealup (Google Maps Image)

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- *Watts Road Lake protest 1989*
- *Port Kennedy and Secret Harbour 1988-1992*
- ✓ **Duck Shooting campaign 1989 – 1992**
- ✓ **First WA Ramsar Listings June 1990 – 9 listed**
- ✓ **WA first state to ban duck shooting June 1992**
- *Jandakot wetlands campaign 1992*
- ✓ **Swan Coastal Plain Lakes Policy 1992 (revoked 2015)**
- ✓ **Peel Inlet – Harvey Estuary Policy 1992**

Key: **Macro**, meso and *micro*



Lake Clifton in the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site listed in 1990

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- ✓ Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre opens 1993
- ✓ *Port Kennedy Scientific Park* 1993
- ✓ *Big Swamp saved* 1995
- ✓ **State Wetlands Conservation Policy 1997**
- ✓ Regional Parks System 1997 – 8 established
- ✓ **Wetlands Coordinating Committee established 1998**
- ✓ Naragebup established 1998
- ✓ Roe Highway campaign 2000 – 2017

Key: **Macro**, meso and *micro*



Roe Highway Protesters at Federal Court

Wetland Conservation: The Past

- ✓ Yarragadee campaign 2001 – 2006
- ✓ Second WA Ramsar listings 2001 – 3 listed
- ✓ Denmark Sustainability Centre 2005
- ✓ *FRAGYL formed 2006 – Yalgorup campaign*
- ✓ Canning River Eco-Centre established 2006
- ✓ *Western Swamp Tortoise EPP 2003/2010*
- State Env Report: 80% SCP wetlands lost 2007, 4 ha/day still being lost
- South West Wetland Monitoring Program ended 2018 (DBCA)



Byenup Lagoon part of the Muir-Byenup System Ramsar listed in 2001

Wetland Conservation: The Present

- ✓ Kalgulup Regional Park established 2021
- ✓ *Attadale/Alfred Cove foreshore plan 2021/22*
- ✓ *EPA advise on Brixton St Wetlands 2022*
- ✓ Albany Sandplain and Wetlands Forum 2022
- **DBCA wetlands branch of 22 staff in 2013 & now only 2 staff**
- **35 wetlands that met Ramsar criteria in 1999 not nominated by WA gov. Documentation done for 6**
- **Wetlands are still being destroyed for development**



Lake MacLeod has documentation for Ramsar nomination (Google Maps Image)

Present Case Study: Eungedup Wetlands

<https://www.wicc.org.au/eungedup-wetlands.html>

- South coast wetlands farmed for decades
- Collaboration between Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee, Georgina Steytler, Wetlands Conservation Society WA, Gondwana Link, Denmark Birdwatching Group, and BirdLife WA
- **Currently seeking donations to buy and conserve these important wetlands**
- Ownership by WICC but with a management group to improve conservation values



Eungedup Wetlands

HOME

WHATS ON?

WICC NEWS

ABOUT

OPPORTUNITIES

DONATE

LEARNING CENTRE



Eungedup Wetlands photo courtesy of Georgina Steytler

The Future: Our vision for Wetlands Conservation

To restore and conserve the remaining WA wetlands through a cooperative and continuing effort by government, industry and the community.



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Recommended steps to Wetlands Conservation

1. Update and implement the 1997 Wetlands Conservation Policy for WA
 - drafted by Wetlands Coordinating Committee in 2007
2. Complete State Planning Policy 2.9 and the associated Wetland Buffer Guidelines
 - SPP2.9 Planning for Water drafted by WAPC & public review done 2021. Buffer Guidelines are part of the 1998 Wetlands Conservation Policy – drafted in 1997 and public review in 2006
3. Develop a state wide Environmental Protection Policy for Wetlands
 - EPP for SCP Lakes 1992-2015, draft EPP for SCP wetlands public review in 2003
 - 2022 “adequate protection of lakes provided through other statutory, policy and planning mechanisms”
 - WA Parliament statement quoting 2015 EPA report to revoke EPP

4. Complete the nominations for all eligible Ramsar wetlands in WA

- 1971 Ramsar Convention signed, 1975 came into force
- 1990 WA lists 9 – Eighty Mile Beach, Forrestdale and Thomson's Lakes, Lake Argyle and Kununurra, Lake Warden System, Ord River Floodplain, Peel-Yalgorup, Roebuck Bay, Toolibin Lake, & Vasse-Wonnerup
- 1999 Another 38 WA wetlands identified as meeting Ramsar Criteria and recommended 8 for immediate nomination
- 2001 WA lists 3 wetlands – Becher Point and Wetlands, Lake Gore, & Muir-Byenup System.
- Documentation for nomination of 6 ready: Lake MacLeod, Tributaries of the Blackwood Basin, Greater Brixton Street Wetlands, Fortescue Marsh, Lake Carnegie, Cape Range Subterranean Wetlands

5. Expand the Regional Parks System

- EPA planned in 1984,
- 8 Regional Parks established 1997 in Perth,
- 1 in 2021 in Bunbury - Kalgulup
- Planning done for Gnangara, lower Serpentine, Swan and Helena Rivers, Peel and Yule Brook RPs
- The Greater Geraldton Council has established its own unofficial regional park in the Chapman Valley



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Recommended steps to Wetlands Conservation

6. Establish a Wetlands Research Institute.

- Research for conservation and to monitor, investigate and report on the condition of our wetlands.
- This was recognised in the Wetlands Conservation Policy for WA (1997) and a program of research was outlined in the policy.
- Cooperative research that draws on the capabilities of universities, local government, industry and community groups in addition to DBCA and which consults with aboriginal elders



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Recommended steps to Wetlands Conservation

7. Develop partnership arrangements for ongoing management, research and education about wetlands.

- The Wetlands Centre Cockburn and Roe 8 revegetation program are a good examples of an effective cooperative effort between the state government, local government, universities and the community.



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Plan of Action

Raise awareness in the general community to push political appetite for conservation

Join the Wetlands Conservation Society

Review the EPA notices and make submissions to protect wetlands

Donate to help conserve Eungedup Wetlands at <https://www.wicc.org.au/eungedup-wetlands.html>

Lobby for

- The Wetlands Conservation Policy to be updated and implemented
- SPP2.9 Planning for Water and associated Wetland Buffer Guidelines to be completed and implemented
- An EPP for Wetlands (statewide)
- Nomination of the wetlands that meet the criteria & have documentation completed: [Lake MacLeod, Tributaries of the Blackwood Basin, Greater Brixton Street Wetlands, Fortescue Marsh, Lake Carnegie, Cape Range Subterranean Wetlands](#)
- Expansion of the Regional Park system: [Gnangara, lower Serpentine, Swan and Helena Rivers, Peel and Yule Brook RPs](#)

Questions or comments?



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