



WICCNews

WICC Newsletter August - September 2025



Djilba

Season of conception

Transitional time of year, flowers starting



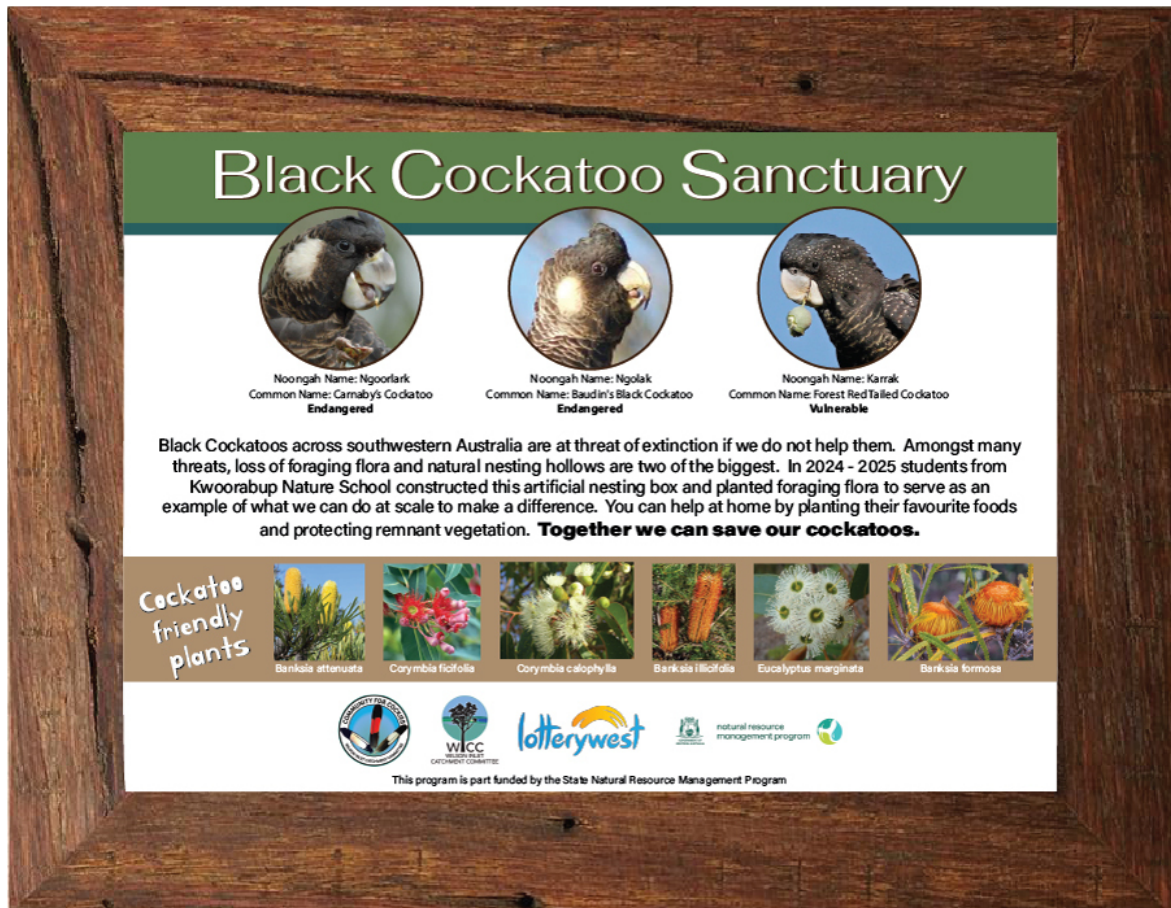
Photo by Tim Gamblin

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- Farmers in Focus - "It was a muddy mess" - Renovating Harris Block
- Uncovering truffle secrets
- The chronicles of Abby the Carnaby

- Rainfall update
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- What defines a weed?

Community for cookies update



The planting of cockatoo-friendly plants has begun!

Earlier this year, students joined WICC staff to collect native seed, propagate plants, and establish cockatoo gardens beneath newly installed nesting boxes. Each site is now a sanctuary featuring creative signage to help current and future students understand—and take pride in—their contribution to local conservation. These school-based sanctuaries stand as lasting examples of how young people can take meaningful action to support the survival of these iconic species.





Students from the Denmark Primary School

Planting cockatoo food trees—such as marri, banksia, and hakea—alongside nest box installation is vital to keeping these birds fed and breeding successfully. While red-tailed black cockatoos tend to remain near their breeding sites, white-tailed species like Carnaby's and Baudin's migrate seasonally across the region, travelling from foraging areas such as Bremer Bay or Collie to nesting in tall karri or marri hollows in Denmark and Mt Hallowell.

This project complements our broader Cockies for Cockies program. Both began in February 2024 and will continue through to the end of 2026. It launched in four local schools across Mount Barker and Denmark, with guest presenter Simon Cherriman—whose passion for cockatoos proved truly infectious. Students first learned about these remarkable birds before building nest boxes from recycled materials. Simon then installed one of the boxes high in a tree at each school, creating a memorable, hands-on experience.

So far, our *cockatoo* programs have achieved:

- Built and installed 44 cockatoo nesting boxes in strategic locations across the catchment.
- Protected priority bushland with 20 km of livestock-exclusion fencing.

- Collected local native seed in collaboration with an Aboriginal Ranger group.
- Grown multi-species native seedlings.
- Planted cockatoo-friendly species.
- Commenced revegetation of 20 hectares of bushland (to be completed by mid-2026).





Nest box installed in Denmark Primary's sanctuary

Farmers in focus



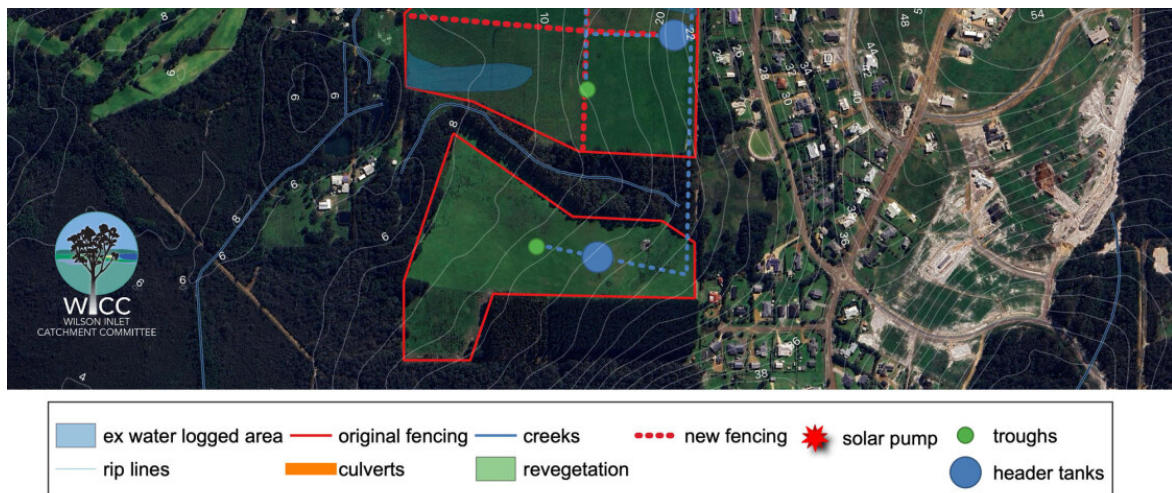
Kevin Marshall & Terry DeVos from the WA College of Agriculture

WICC caught up with Kevin Marshall, farm manager at the WA College of Agriculture in Denmark to talk about how they managed to transform their least productive block into one of their best in just five years, all while achieving exceptional environmental outcomes for Wilson Inlet. This project is an excellent example of how good environmental outcomes can go hand in hand with farm productivity.

WICC: Kevin, can you tell us a bit about Harris Block before the works?

Kevin: It was a large 40-hectare block with a couple of tree lines and small pine plantation. Total arable hectares is 33. The block was broken into three big paddocks which were predominately kikuyu grass and high native weed burden. It was severely waterlogged in areas due to high water runoff from adjacent land. Stock had unrestricted access to the dam which flowed on to the adjacent wetland. The block was used for livestock grazing with minimal production due to the vegetation and waterlogging.





Harris Block after the works completed

WICC: What issues did this layout pose for your farm and the wetland environment?

Kevin: Due to the waterlogging the pastures were flooded and had very low production. Accessing the block with farm vehicles was limited during winter months and paddock erosion was moderate due to machinery tyre tracks. Very wet soils.

Livestock pasture pugging was high, once again due to very soft soils. Around the high livestock traffic areas such as the dam, soil erosion was quite high. The stock water was often muddied due to their access of the dam.

WICC: What changes did you make and how were the students involved?

Kevin: We were approached by the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee (WICC) to try and limit the erosion and dirty water runoff into the Wilson Inlet. This meant fencing off the high erosion areas and getting the stock out of the dam. With the support of WICC and some funding available from Healthy Estuaries WA we fenced off the waterways and planted a diversity of several thousand native trees supplied by WICC. The funding allowed the College to purchase a water tank, piping and a solar powered pump. The solar pump delivered clean water from the now cattle excluded dam, to a header tank at the top of the block. The college then invested funds in subdividing the large block in the middle into several smaller paddocks. The header tanks now deliver water to individual troughs in each paddock. This allows us to rotationally graze the stock which has improved productivity and livestock health. We also invested in redirecting the water into the natural waterways using a series of culverts and roadworks. We utilised nutrient mapping results so we could make evidence-based fertiliser decisions to rectify soil constraints. We then seeded high quality pasture species to replace the kikuyu.

Students at the College have been involved in this entire project from start to finish. This involved preparation of the site for the trees, planting of trees and ongoing weed control. Students were involved in installing the water supplies and fencing, along with all the machinery operations and grazing strategies. Students have also studied the project in the classroom, analysing the environmental reasons for the livestock exclusion and drainage. Groups have looked at the site and produced assignments relating to water run off and contamination of the local estuary.





Students at work

WICC: What benefits have you noticed since the works have been completed?

Kevin: The changes have been dramatic. Firstly, the exclusion of the dam and waterway has eliminated livestock pugging and dirty water run-off in this area. Stock have access to clean drinking water. The trees are growing well and are reducing waterlogging. The drainage across the whole block has had extensive benefits to the paddock structure and productivity. The re-direction of run off into natural waterways has dried out paddocks. The roads and fences have improved access and management of livestock. Overall, the project has been a huge success both in the protection of the local environment and the increase of agricultural productivity. It is a great resource for our students to study best practice and carry this on into their future careers.

Uncovering truffle secrets





Soil fungal sampling with Professor Teena Burgess (the Executive Director of the Harry Butler Institute at Murdoch University); Dr Bill Dunstan (Centre for Phytophthora Science & Management at Murdoch University); Adam Wilson (Silverplace and Great Southern Truffles); and Dr Mark McHenry (Silverplace and Mt Lindesay, Denmark).

WICC was invited to a two-day celebration in Denmark of new technology that gives farmers confidence in planting trees with significant economic returns. Kylie Cook and Shaun Ossinger from WICC, along with Luke Bayley from South Coast Natural Resource Management (SCNRM) participated in the two-day event with the research team collaborating with Silverplace; a Denmark-based truffle nursery and experimental truffle orchard committed to science-led truffle cultivation. Silverplace collaborates with researchers from Murdoch University, the University of Bologna, and Future Food Systems Cooperative Research Centre.

Historically, farmers establishing a truffle orchard as a large plantation has been a high-risk venture. This is because the fungal biome's subterranean microscopic nature makes choosing quality truffle tree seedlings and their management in the paddock essentially no better than guesswork. The solution is advanced molecular techniques used on truffles developed in collaboration with Silverplace in Denmark. These transform truffle farming from a speculative endeavour into a science-backed enterprise. For example, environmental DNA (eDNA) offers a non-invasive way to monitor truffle health year-round. By analysing soil and root samples, farmers can confirm that their host trees and mature truffle orchards are properly colonised by the target truffle species and are free from competing contaminants and fungi. This technology is critical for ensuring that inoculated seedlings are of the highest quality, reducing risk and protecting the significant investment involved in establishing and maintaining a productive truffle orchard. It is a globally unprecedented level of insight into how to better manage a truffle producing forest to sustainably produce truffles.



Dr Mark McHenry explaining how the new technologies developed provide an unprecedented level of seedling testing capabilities to ensure high quality seedlings grown with high levels of biosecurity at the molecular level

Reducing risks for farmers to establish truffle forests is an even stronger commercial incentive to plant more trees on farms. Kylie, Shaun, and Luke discussed with Murdoch University researchers, including Professor Treena Burgess, that it is now possible to reliably grow multiple species of culinary truffles on a greater diversity of host trees. There are more than 10 species of trees

confirmed to successfully host new-to-WA truffle species in Denmark, including oaks and importantly, two species of pines: *Pinus radiata* and *Pinus pinaster*. Both pines are high quality construction timber species commonly used in Western Australia to build homes. New truffle species to WA include the White Spring Truffle (*Tuber borchii*), and Black Summer Truffle (*Tuber aestivum*), in addition to the existing production of the Winter Black Truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*). As the truffle names imply, these truffles are harvested in winter, spring, and summer. This means many months of fresh truffle availability, in contrast to the very limited harvest season of the present black winter truffle.



Invitees interested in how new technologies simplifies establishment and management of a two-year old truffle orchard with eDNA testing showing multi-year successful truffle growth of black summer and white spring species on multiple oak and pine trees.

For local farmers, this scientific approach makes high-value sustainable farm forestry an accessible option. Instead of planting trees solely for environmental benefits, we can establish a commercially viable farm forest that produces a high-value irrigated horticultural crop. This diversification offers another viable alternative to livestock-only production with only a few hectares of suitable land. The benefits of these farm forests extend far beyond the expensive truffles themselves, offering all the traditional advantages of revegetation, such as enhanced biodiversity, shade, windbreaks, and improved soil and water quality in riparian zones.

Farmers around the Wilson Inlet and the South Coast can now confidently grow a diverse forest producing high-value truffles with support from Silverplace's collaborative researchers. Interested folks can get in touch with Silverplace at <https://www.silverplace.com.au/contact>

The Chronicles of Abby Carnaby



Cartoon by Claudia Simpson

Conserving our remnants

Conserving our remnants

Black cockatoos – and many other wildlife species – depend on old eucalyptus trees like marri, jarrah and karri for nesting hollows. It takes at least 100-200 years for these trees to form suitable hollows. Since we have cleared approximately 60% of our native vegetation across the Wilson Inlet Catchment area, our remaining old eucalypt forests are very precious. In addition to wildlife habitat, protecting this vegetation provides many whole-farm benefits, including erosion control, and healthier drinking water.

Unfortunately, we are still losing remnant vegetation from cattle and sheep overgrazing. When we overgraze the remnant vegetation we lose the next generation of mature nesting trees. You can see the effects of overgrazing on remnant vegetation driving from Denmark to Albany. Remnant vegetation that is not fenced off will be lost within our lifetimes.

Fencing doesn't come cheap. With many farms running on very slim margins, it can be a major commitment to fence off bushland. But it's important. Maintaining healthy remnant vegetation provides a habitat for small birds which provide natural insect control that protect pastures. Many farmers have planted additional shelter belt trees which provide improved stock and waterway protection, as well as summer green fodder for stock in the dry.

WICC has assisted hundreds of farmers since the mid 90's to fence off their remnant vegetation and revegetate. In the last year alone, we have 86 fencing projects completed, underway or under consideration, protecting more than 500 hectares of remnant bushland. A little over 100 hectares is riparian bushland protecting water quality – of which is a major influence on the health of our livestock.

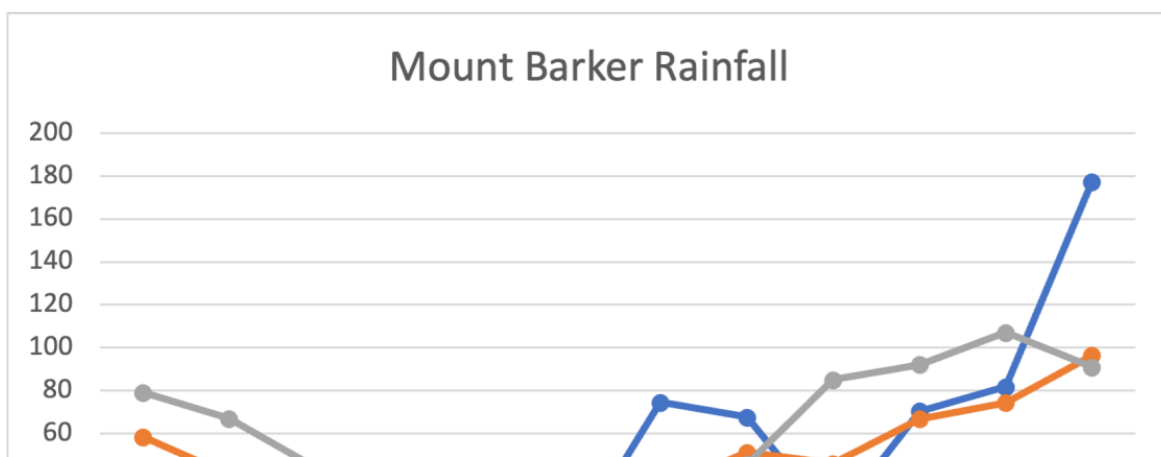
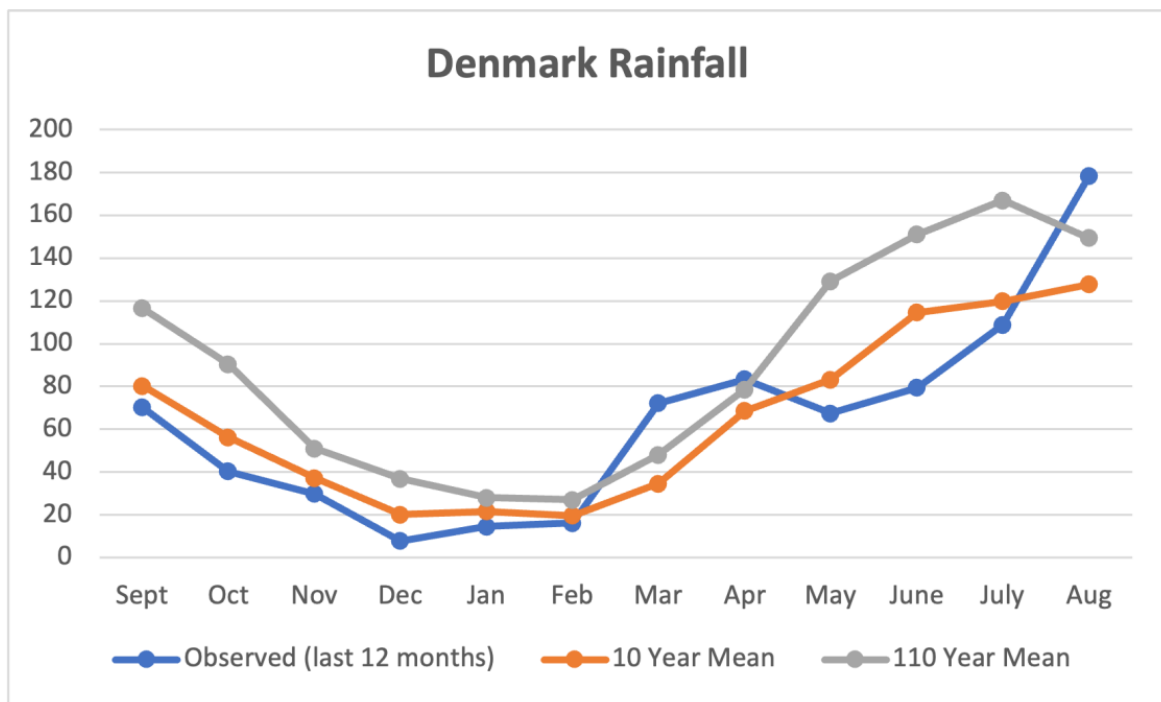
We all need to do what we can. Many farmers have undertaken this work off their own bat for decades, and have seen huge benefits. If this is you – we can also help with replacing old fences protecting remnant vegetation, as they reach the end of their functional life. Others need a hand to fence new patches – even with our current financial subsidies, farmers are contributing more than

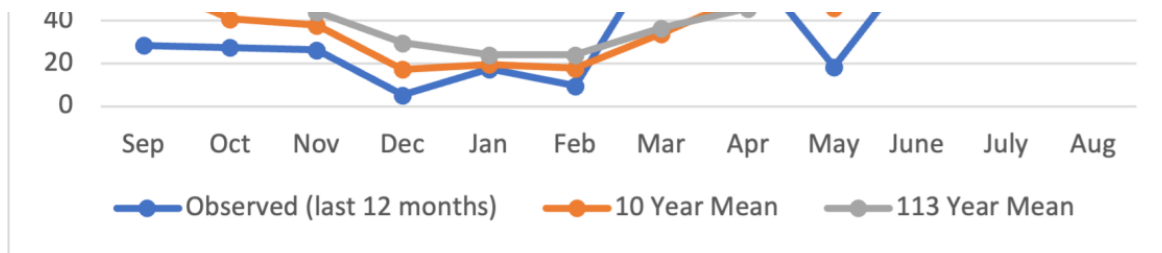
fence new patches – even with our current financial subsidies, farmers are contributing more than half the cost of fencing in their time & labour to build the fence.

WICC is now compiling a list of farmers seeking assistance to protect their remnant vegetation with the intention of seeking additional funding through a grant application in early 2026. Please complete the expression of interest at the link below if you would like to join other farmers protecting our patch together.

Fencing and Revegetation EOI

Rainfall update





We had a corker of an August following a rather lacklustre July. A series of cold fronts tapped into moisture laden air which built up from warm waters off northwest WA which has pushed the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) into negative territory. According to the Bureau the IOD will continue to trend negative tilting spring odds of further wet times to come across southern WA. Bursts of positive Southern Annular Mode may briefly suppress cold fronts and dry things out—so expect a changeable, but overall wetter-leaning, late winter–spring. To spice up the graphs this episode we included a 110-year mean alongside a 10-year mean. An astute eye will see how the shoulders of winter rainfall have decreased over time.

Inlet update



Black bream, image credit: Department of Water and Environment Regulation

The inlet opened on the 6 August at 1.3m above sea level. This opening was much higher and earlier than last years with lots of water still moving down from the upper catchment. This will hopefully help clear much of the accumulated sandbar over the coming months. There are numerous social and environmental benefits achieved when the bar opens. Interestingly, nutrient management is fairly low on that list. Many believe that opening the inlet flushes out the excess nutrients. While some nutrients are in fact lost, in actual fact most have already been taken up in the system long

before the bar is open by the seagrass in the eastern end of the inlet. The long term solution for nutrient management is best achieved by keeping nutrients on farms with targeted fertiliser applications and stream restoration. Lesser known benefits of a bar opening are the positive impacts on biodiversity.

Most of our fish that reside within the inlet actually recruit at sea and move into the inlet when the bar is open. A notable exception is black bream which recruits within the rivers that feed Wilson Inlet. Estuaries which become estranged from the sea due to less frequent bar openings tend to become black bream dominated in southern WA. With few to no recruits moving into the system from the sea, black bream fill this vacuum. A classic example of this can be seen as you travel further east on our coast. Many of these estuaries seldom open. The Pallinup River which feeds Beaufort Inlet had a spell of around 30 years with no openings. The Beaufort now supports some of the biggest and most abundant black bream in WA. Wilson Inlet by contrast has a diversity of finfish due to more regular openings. You can view the 2025 opening [here](#).

[Inlet opening](#)

[Click HERE for Inlet height at 'old railway bridge'](#)

[Click HERE for the latest inlet monitoring data](#)

What defines a weed?

By Nat Wallen

Traditionally, a weed is perceived as an undesirable plant that thrives without deliberate cultivation. However, this definition was challenged when my daughter insightfully remarked, *“Nothing is a weed, Mum; it only becomes a weed if it grows where it is not wanted.”* Upon reflection, I found her perspective to be remarkably accurate.

Many plants introduced into Australia over the past 200 years are now classified as weeds. In the Great Southern region, numerous species are considered “*environmental weeds*”, not only because they are unwanted in specific areas, but also due to their aggressive nature and the difficulty of controlling them.





Environmental weeds pose a serious threat to native ecosystems. They spread rapidly into bushland, outcompete native species for vital resources, lack natural predators, and disrupt soil chemistry and microclimates through leaf litter and shading. Some even release allelopathic chemicals that suppress the germination of other plants.

The consequences ripple outward. As native plants decline, so too do the animals, birds, insects, and other organisms that depend on them. This loss of biodiversity weakens the resilience of our natural systems.

Certain weeds also increase fire risk by burning hotter than native grasses. In a region where vegetation is closely tied to specific fire regimes, this shift can be devastating. Native plants that rely on cooler, patchier burns may not survive the intense heat these weeds bring.

Weeds reshape waterways as well. Invasive species can alter creek courses, disrupt water flow, and destabilise banks, leading to erosion and habitat loss for aquatic life.

Effective weed management is a complex process requiring strategic planning, consistent action, and long-term care. Early identification and removal of invasive species, *before* they have the opportunity to flower and set seed, is critical to preventing new growth cycles.

Because environmental weeds thrive in disturbed environments, it is essential to minimise disruption. This includes staying on designated tracks, limiting heavy machinery near bushland, avoiding overgrazing and excessive burning, and using low-impact removal techniques such as cutting or targeted poisoning rather than bulldozing. Ongoing monitoring and timely intervention are vital to controlling regrowth and reducing spread across our vulnerable landscapes.

Restoration efforts should prioritise locally native species for revegetation, as these plants are best adapted to the regional environment and support biodiversity. Seeds should be sourced from reputable suppliers with a proven commitment to provenance and quality. In heavily infested areas or where regeneration is complex, expert guidance can significantly improve outcomes.

Managing environmental weeds is not a one-time fix, it's an ongoing commitment. By working together, staying informed, and making thoughtful choices, we can protect the biodiversity of the Great Southern and ensure our remnant vegetation continues to thrive.

Useful resources available for information about weed management, identification and control –

Moore, J. & Wheeler, J. (2008). *Southern weeds and their control* (2nd ed.). Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia. Bulletin 4744.

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. (n.d.). *Florabase: The Western Australian flora*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from <http://florabase.dec.wa.gov.au>

Whats on?

Got Black Cockatoos? We Need **YOUR** Help This Spring & Summer!



Please tell us if you have:

- Groups of Black Cockatoos arriving at dusk to drink and roost (i.e. resting in trees overnight and leaving each morning) on your property.
- A pair of Black Cockatoos entering and exiting a tree hollow on your property.
- Groups coming in to drink around dusk on your property (e.g. water trough, pond, dam).
- Groups regularly feeding on trees/plants on your property (e.g. marri, banksia, hakea, she-oak, radiata pine).
- Observed any of the above behaviours on adjacent properties.

Please contact: enquiries@denmarkbirdgroup.org with information, photos, or videos.

Note: We are not looking for 'fly-overs'— only regular visitors who stay overnight!

Photographic evidence is ideal, but we can also visit your property around dusk to help identify the species and confirm numbers, both on private properties and public land.

This data will be entered into BirdLife Australia's Birddata database to help identify crucial roosting, nesting, and feeding sites for our critically endangered Black

education, meeting, and feeding sites for our critically endangered Black
Cockatoos in and around Denmark.



We love what we do, and hope you do too! 

As a not-for-profit organisation, every donation helps us to grow, give back and keep securing a healthier future for our catchment.

Your donation is tax-deductible and goes directly to the project you care about. It really does make a difference.

Last financial year, WICC didn't spend a single donated dollar on admin or wages. Every cent supported on-ground work—seedlings, dung beetle colonies, cockatoo nesting box materials, weed and feral animal control, native seed collection, and more.

Thank you.

Team WICC



SCAN TO DONATE



OR VISIT
wicc.org.au/donate.html



DONATE TODAY

You're ,

Invited

Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee AGM

**Join us at the Denmark Riverside Club on
Wednesday, 10th September!**

AGM: 5:00 pm – 5:45 pm

Followed by a special guest speaker, **Simon Cherriman**.



Simon Cherriman is an award-winning environmental scientist, educator and wildlife filmmaker and an enthusiastic advocate for the unique Australian bush and its creatures.

The bar will be open for those who wish to purchase drinks.
For catering purposes, please RSVP by the 1st September.

WICC MEMBER RSVP

Birds on Farms

Birdlife WA is accepting expressions of interest from birders and landholders in the south-west region, to join the



HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

Survey as a 'birdwatcher'

- We are seeking skilled birdwatchers to participate in seasonal '20-minute, 2-hectare' bird surveys. Volunteers are asked to commit to conducting surveys four times per year.
- Landholders are also encouraged to survey their own properties.
- All observations are recorded in Birdata.

Register your rural property as a 'landholder'

- We are also seeking new properties (with or without agricultural activities) to monitor for threatened and declining woodland bird species.
- Not only do you receive information about the birds on your property, you also contribute valuable data to Birdlife Australia.



LOCATION



CONTACT

shannon.creaney@birdlife.org.au
birdsonfarms@birdlife.org.au

Or visit the Birdlife Australia website for more information:

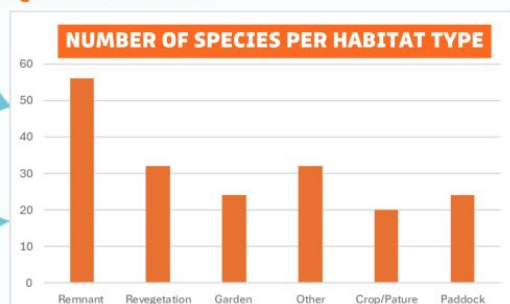
birdlife.org.au/programs/birds-on-farms/



Birds on Farms - WA

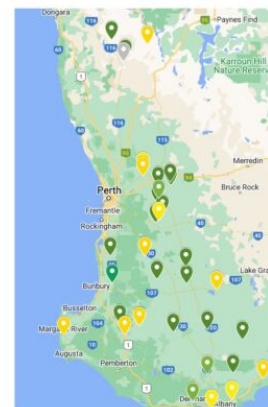
WINTER SURVEY - 2025

Quick numbers

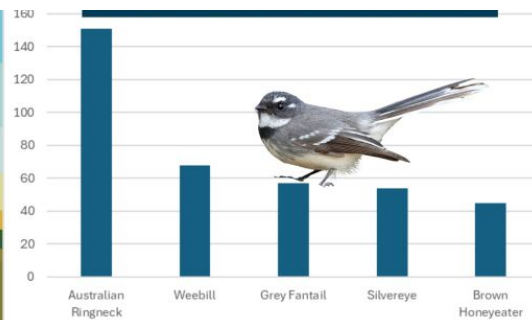


THE STEPS

- 1 Join**
Join as a surveyor or landholder or both
- 2 Connect**
We connect landholders to surveyors
- 3 Habitats & sites**
Sites at a given property have to be registered too following a habitat assessment.
- 4 Survey**
Birdata 2ha20 min 4 times a year



MOST COMMONLY OBSERVED SPECIES



This email was sent to you by Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee Inc.

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