



WICCNews

WICC Newsletter February/March 2024



Bunuru

Second summer February - March

Season of adolescence - hottest part of the year



Photo credit Pia Gamblin

In this edition:

- First photo of twin Baudin Cockatoos

- Abby the Carnaby chronicles
- Improving soils and protecting waterways
- Kwoorabup Nursery update
- Rainfall and inlet update
- Weeds in Focus - Fleabane
- WICC subsidised fencing

Rare photo of twin Baudin Cockatoos

Our Biodiversity Officer Tim and his daughter Pia took a very rare photo of twin Baudin's Cockatoos. It is even more rare to have photos of them in a nest hollow. In fact there hasn't been before now.

Most twin photos are of Carnaby's Cockatoos after they have fledged and are sitting in a tree. Baudin's Cockatoos usually nest much higher in karri trees.

Ron Johnstone, a leading cockatoo expert and researcher at the Western Australian Museum, has commented on this remarkable discovery. While it was suspected that all cockatoos might occasionally have twins, and it is known to occur in Carnaby's Cockatoos, only two eggs had previously been recorded for Baudin's Cockatoos. This recent finding marks the first-ever record of twins in Baudin's Cockatoos, along with the first-ever photographs of them.

Tim was alerted to possible nesting behaviours being displayed by Denmark FMs very own Pete Dingey. Pete had attended a recent training session by Birdlife WA's Tegan Douglas as part of WICC's Lotterywest funded Community for Cockies program. Tegan trained several volunteers to recognise and record black cockatoo activity throughout our catchments so WICC can identify nesting sites. WICC prioritises its cockatoo conservation efforts around known nesting sites because most cockatoos return to where they were born when it comes time for them to breed. Adding nest boxes and cockatoo flora adjacent to these sites provides the best outcomes for our threatened cockatoos.





Photo credit Pia Gamblin

Abby Carnaby Chronicles



Cartoon by Claudia Simpson

After the hen sits on the egg for a month it hatches. Newly hatched chicks are covered in pale yellow down, blind and can sit up but are otherwise helpless. The second chick usually dies within the first two days, and only a small number survive to fledge. Surviving twins are rare. By the third week, its eyes begin to open, and greyish feathers start to appear beneath the down. Once the chick grows large enough and the hollow becomes cramped for the two of them, the female will spend more time outside of the nest and can often be seen feeding with the male. By week five, most of the down has disappeared, and the black feathers and pale cheek patch become more prominent.

Both parents usually feed the nestling. The chick fledges (when a young bird is able to leave the nest and fly) at about ten weeks and remains with its parents until at least the next breeding season, sometimes even longer. The family leaves the nest area once the chick has fledged but returns the following season to breed.

If a pair successfully raises a chick in a hollow, they will typically use the same hollow for nesting in subsequent years. If the chick does not survive, however, they will usually find a nearby hollow for the next attempt.

Improving soils & protecting waterways

Healthy Estuaries WA Fertiliser Management Program

This week our local farmers met up at the Riverside Club to receive this year's soil testing, refresh their knowledge on interpreting soil test results and start work on their fertiliser management plans to keep nutrients on farms and out of waterways. From 2016-2023, we have saved over 829,000 kg of phosphorus from being applied to paddocks, and farmers have reduced the amount of phosphorus applied by 46%. By applying according to soil test recommendations, participating farmers can save an average of \$12,000 per year on phosphorus fertiliser.



Local farmers Mark Bailey and Ian Healy

Local farmer Mark Bailey spoke to facilitator Andrew Huffer at the workshop about his farm and his involvement in our soil testing program.

Andrew: Mark, can you give us a sense about your operation, and why you joined the soil testing program? What are some of the things you've seen happen and what are the big benefits for you?

Mark: Okay. We'll start with where I am, I'm out at the end of Spencer Road, bordering Narrikup and Denbarker. I've got 120 hectares out there, about 50 breeders (cattle), a few sheep, and a couple of horses floating around. The catalyst was, I was working in Perth, driving down regularly, trying to farm two farms. None of it was really working. So, I had a bit of a hiatus and leased the farm out for a while.

Part of that lease process was fertilizer was supposed to be put on - and it wasn't. You could see all the pastures going backwards and weeds appearing. You sit there looking at it and you think, well, it's getting this certain fertiliser, and the grass is not growing. There's something in our way, something's not quite right.

We spent a fair bit of money exploring different avenues and different fertilisers and mineral supplements and all sorts of weird, wonderful stuff, but it still didn't make any difference. And then you get your older brother or next-door neighbour telling you - "you just need to put on 150 kilos every year." I said "What?" And you look at the bill and you think - there's too much money and not enough grass. And this program came up - so I joined up.

Andrew: What, what are some of the changes you've seen? What are some of the changes first you made and changes you've seen and some of the results?

Mark: Well, when I first got my test results, I looked at it and thought, what the hell's a PBI? And what's a PERI? Is it sort of like peri-peri chicken? And there's all the different terms that you've gotta get your head around. But you get your base results, and you get help from an agronomist. Help from the department (DPIRD) doesn't cost you a lot of money and you can target what you're putting on, you can see what you actually need to add to get grass to grow.

At one stage I was down to about 15 head of cattle and still buying hay. I was thinking, "this is not good." And now I'm running 50 breeders, and most of the time it's about 70 head of cattle on the place.

I've also changed application times as well, I'm not putting it all on in March. I put a little bit [of fertiliser], when I put a hay crop in. About 50 kilos goes down the tube at seeding, and then the rest waits for a bit of rain. And we put a bit on here and there, we split the applications and generally I put the fertiliser on in little increments. A little amount, lots of times.

Andrew: So, how's the bank balance gone? I love that comment you made about too much money, not enough grass. Has that sort of come back?

Mark: Yeah, big time. Now I'm cutting hay, running a lot more stock. And with that, it sort of opens your eyes to a whole different world, you know, rotational grazing comes into it because you've got this extra grass so you can run more livestock. The paddocks have got smaller. They were all 10 hectares plus to begin with, but now we're knocking some of them down to two, two and a half hectares. Some of the areas that you can see grow really good grass so you can work them a bit harder. So financially it's been huge - I'm earning more income, so I don't have to be off farm as much.

Andrew: thanks Mark for your time today.



Local farmer Sarah Taylor

Sarah Taylor, beef cattle farmer in the Wilson Inlet catchment area, also spoke to WICC's Kylie Cook about her experience in our soil testing program:

Sarah: Well, there's not many things in farming that you get that are really valuable, you can get a lot out of it, and it's not too expensive, like this soil testing program.

Kylie: Thanks Sarah, and you've been in the program a few times now, so you must really like it.

Sarah: I think it's fabulous. It's a very good service and you get a lot of information out every year. I think I've learned something different and taken a lot more on board every time.

Kylie: Thanks, Sarah, for joining us and being part of the program. See you next workshop!

Our group of farmers will meet again on the 1st April for a new, free workshop with soil health expert David Hardwick. Farmers will receive results of extra analysis on their soil samples, advice on how to interpret these soil tests as indicators of soil health, get a soil health assessment kit to take home and help developing a plan to measure, monitor and manage soil health on their own property.

Nursery update

In their January meeting, the Denmark Shire Council approved to enter into lease negotiations with WICC for land to build a community native tree nursery. The Kwoorabup Native Tree Nursery will grow up to 300,000 seedlings a year for native revegetation. The nursery will be located across from Denmark Senior High School, TAFE the Ag College so students can be involved in all aspects of plant production. Universal access design will cater to all. The nursery will be a volunteer hub, education centre and a one stop shop for your native tree needs. WICC has been in discussions with potential funding providers who love our concept. In 2025 WICC is looking to raise at least \$100,000 through donations which will demonstrate to our funding providers that we have the backing of our community.





Kwoorabup Native Tree Nursery plans

Weeds in focus



Photo credit: DPIRD

Common Name: Paterson's Curse

Scientific Name: *Ecium nplantagineum*

Family: Boraginaceae

A course bristly annual herb which can grow just over 1 metre in height. The whole plant is covered with tiny stiff bristles that may cause skin irritation when handled.

The branched and leafy flowering stems produce 2-3cm long flowers, mostly blue to purple but occasionally pink or white, shaped like a broad funnel.

Introduced to Australia from Europe in the 1840's via mail order gardening catalogues, it soon became a highly competitive rapid invader. Paterson's curse is a declared pest in Western Australia which is commonly found on agricultural land, disturbed land and roadsides.

Paterson's curse contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are toxic to livestock, particularly horses, though sheep can graze it for a time.

Control - Optimal time for manual removal of this weed is between May and August. Manual removal of isolated plants should be burnt if flowering or seeding.

Heavy sheep grazing over spring can reduce seed production. Shear sheep and allow 7 days for seed to pass through the gut before introducing to other clean pastured areas. Winter grazing tends to increase infestations.

Glyphosate at 75 ml - 100 ml/15 L or metsulfuron methyl 5 g/ 100 L applied at early flowering provide good control of existing plants.

Grazing pasture can be sprayed with 500 mL/ha Tigrex in early winter before the weed has reached the 6-leaf stage and repeat as needed.

For isolated plants, spray leaves until just wet plus a 10 m buffer area, with a mixture of 100 mL Tordon75-D in 10 L of water. This will kill most broad leaf plants, but not grasses, and will leave residual herbicide in the soil that controls seedlings for approximately 1 year.

Whenever using chemicals, ALWAYS read the label of instructions prior to use and use only as directed. For further detailed information about the safe use of a chemical, seek manufacturer advice or refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS)

For more information

J,Moore and J,Wheeler. (2020). Southern Weeds and their control. Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/biological-control/patersons-curse-what-you-should-know>

WICC subsidised fencing





Farmer Scott Wolfe

Youngs Siding farmer Scott Wolfe is among the first to finish fencing remnant bushland on his property, subsidised by WICC's Community for Cockies program. According to Scott - "it's a lot easier to run cattle when you can find them!"

WICC asked Scott how he found the process of receiving a fencing subsidy from WICC?

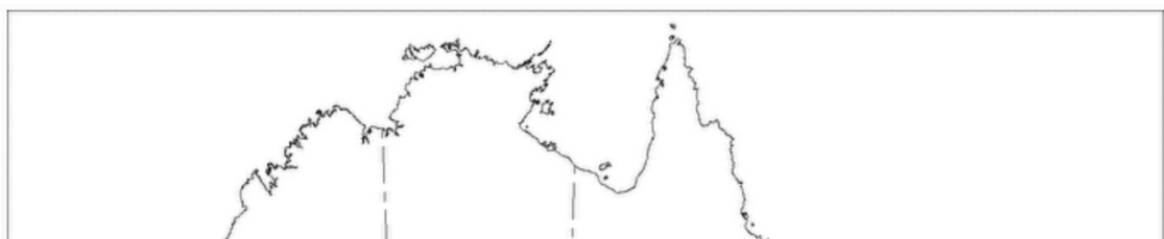
Scott: "Good - you came, took photos, we agreed on the plan, we built it, then you came and took photos again." Pretty straight forward really!

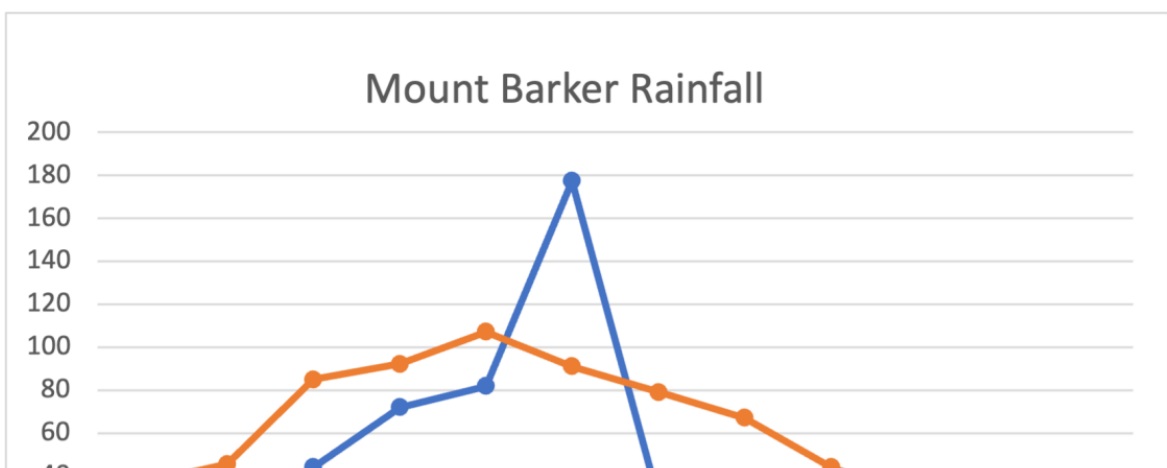
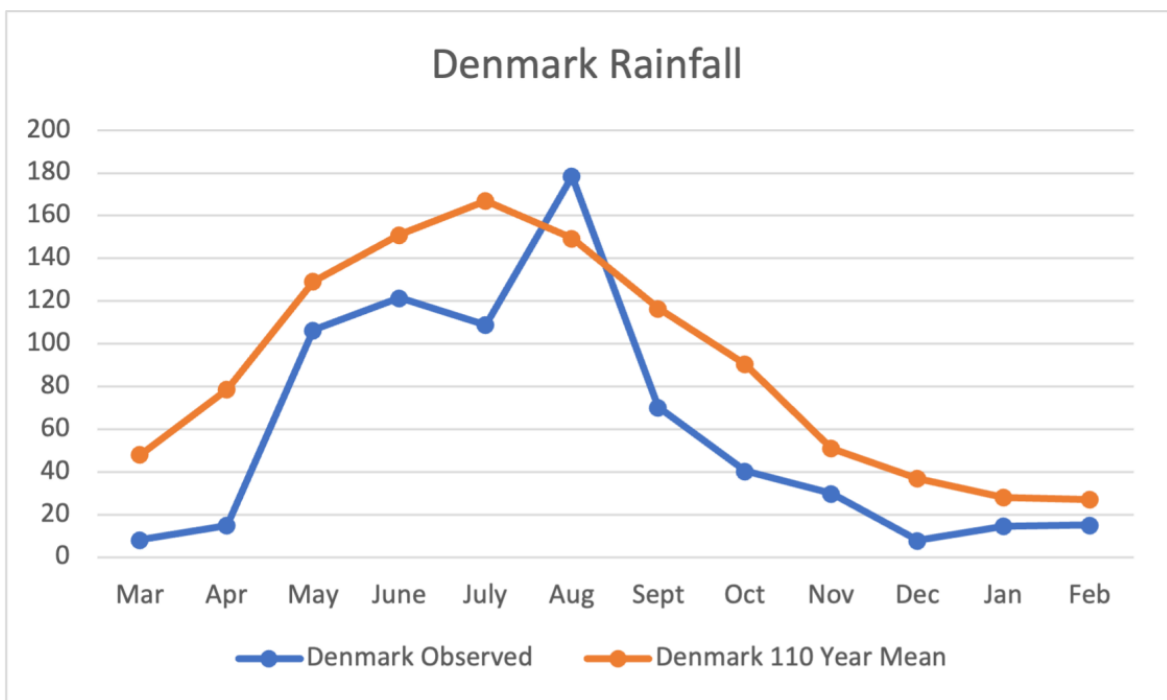
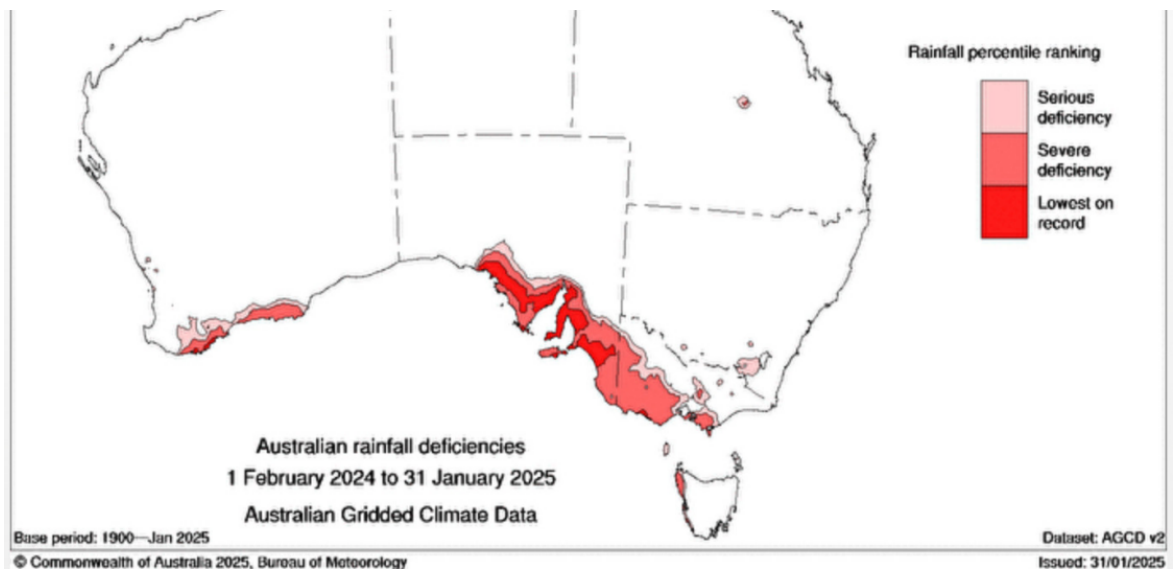
Certain criteria apply regarding type of fence, etc. [You can learn more about our Fencing Subsidy and fill in an EOI - click below](#)

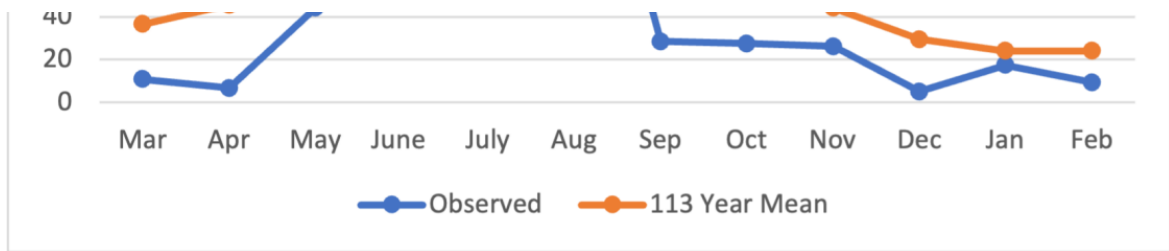
Fencing EOI

Rainfall Update

It has been another hot dry summer across our catchments. The last two summers have been the driest back-to-back on record without much respite in sight according to the Bureau. Our main climate driver, the Southern Annular Mode remains neutral. A negative SAM allows Southern Ocean rains to reach our patch. The Indian Ocean Dipole is trending negative which typically means more rains however this driver has little impact until the winter months.

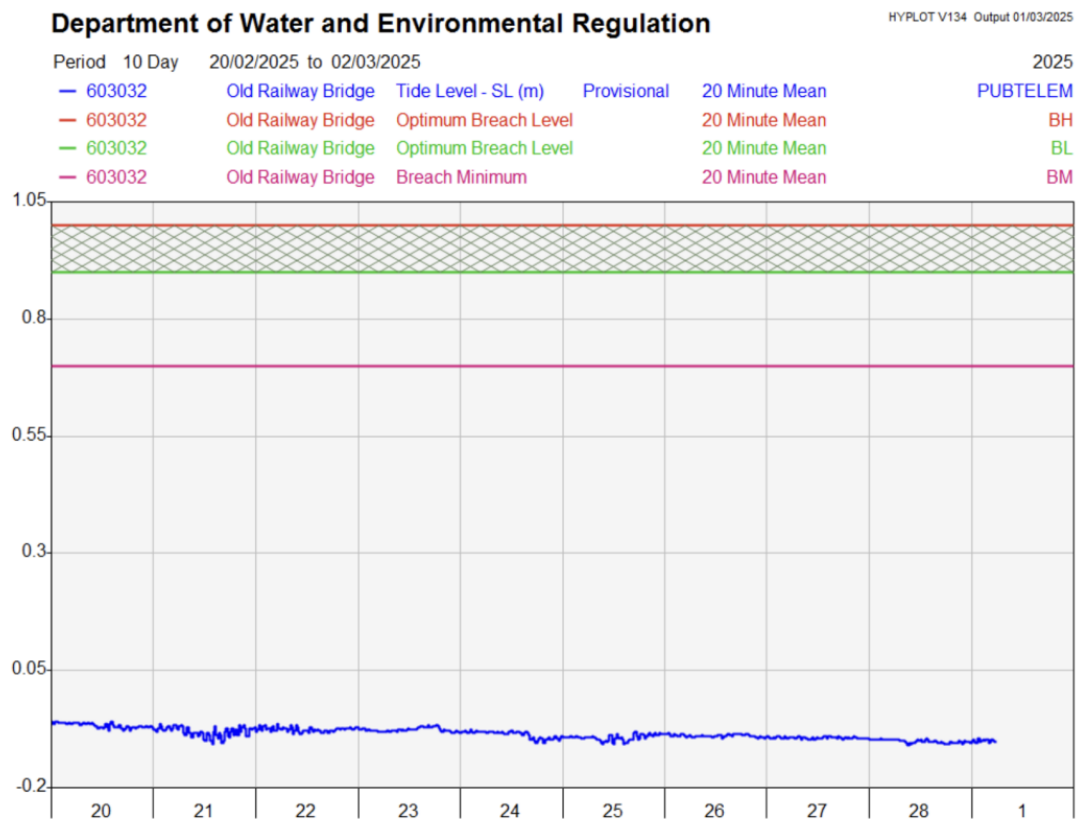






Inlet Update

The inlet level continues to drop throughout summer now that the bar is closed and there is minimal discharge from our rivers. Follow the links below for the latest updates from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.



[Latest inlet level from old railway bridge](#)

[Click here for latest inlet monitoring data](#)

Support WICC

Our collaboration between farmers, scientists, volunteers, graduates, students and community groups enables us to achieve amazing things.

Donate to support our initiatives

WICC needs your support to continue working on our initiatives.

Your generosity will support a range of programs.

Make a tax deductible donation via our website, scan QR code or through our campaign link below.



SCAN TO DONATE



Wetlands Initiative

WICC has raised funds to purchase & manage Eungedup Wetlands. Nestled between Denmark and Albany on the south coast of Western Australia, these remarkable wetlands provide a unique opportunity to preserve endangered wildlife.



Biodiversity Initiative

Work with landowners to restore and maintain the natural biodiversity in the catchment through invasive species controls, preservation of remnant native revegetation and weed control.



Waterways Initiative

We implement work programs in coastal waterways to further establish native vegetation, minimise erosion and strip nutrients.



Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

We source and distribute funds and expertise to assist landowners to implement environmentally sustainable practices that reduce nutrient loads in the catchment.

DONATE

Whats on?

HEALTHY
FOOTPRINTS

Accu-Spread



Is your spreader wasting fertiliser?

Join Australia's leading Accu-Spread specialist Russell Nichol for a hands-on workshop demonstrating how to test and calibrate your own fertiliser spreading equipment. A calibrated spreader can help you get the most from your fertiliser investment and reduce nutrient loss to waterways.

Join our host Brendan Laing at William Bay Farms,
Thursday 6th March, 9am to 3pm.
65 Rice Road, Denmark WA 6333

**Let us know if you'd
like your spreader
tested for free
(limited numbers!)**

**Please RSVP and
specify dietary
requirements.**

RSVP here:

<https://www.wicc.org.au/accu-spread-demonstration-2025.html>



This project is part of Healthy Estuaries WA, a State Government initiative to improve the health of our South West estuaries.

A second option is now available for Friday 7th March– 66 Teddington Rd, Forest Hill. Hosted by Kieran Wilkinson.

Register [HERE](#)



Farmers in south-west Western Australia's high rainfall (>600 mm) areas are invited to a free one-on-one session using the nutrient calculator.

During the session you will be able to

- Work with a DPIRD representative or an agronomist to enter your own soil test data into the calculator
- Understand your soil's nutrient status and fertiliser requirements
- Get advice on nutrient management including fertiliser types and application rates

Bookings essential via your local catchment group

1hr timeslots available at 8.30am, 9.30am, 10.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 2.30pm or 3.30pm

Tues 4 March	Leschenault catchment	reception@leschenaultcc.org.au
Weds 5 March	Peel-Harvey catchment	georgina.warden@peel-harvey.org.au
Thurs 6 March	Geographe catchment	geocatch@dwer.wa.gov.au
Fri 7 March	Geographe catchment	geocatch@dwer.wa.gov.au
Thurs 13 March	Torbay catchment	nrmo@torbaycatchment.org.au
Fri 14 March	Wilson Inlet catchment	ag@wicc.org.au
Mon 17 March	Oyster Harbour catchment	bruce.radys@ohcg.org.au
Weds 19 March	Lower Blackwood catchment	jourdyn.wells@lowerblackwood.com.au



Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

[#WAestuaries](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/hashtags/#WAestuaries)
estuaries.dwer.wa.gov.au

This project is part of Healthy Estuaries WA, a State Government initiative to improve the health of our South West estuaries.

Register [HERE](#)