



WICCNews

WICC Newsletter December 2020 - January 2021



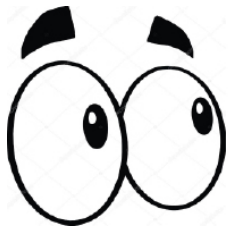
Birak

First summer dry and hot, burning time
Season of the Young



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Farmer in focus



Looking after our Lagoons

Prior to European arrival, swampland extended from Wilson Inlet to Torbay Inlet. An extensive network of paperbarks, wattie and rushes filtered the water from the catchment and provided valuable habitat to our native animals. The Noongar people referred to these areas in language which translates to 'moving waters'. Extensive clearing over the years has removed much of this vegetation however pockets still exist on farms. Several patches were not cleared (during the wetter climates of yesteryear) as they were deemed too swampy to be productive. With the drying landscape and further pressures on improving yield and productivity farmers can be tempted to clear their last remaining remnants of swamps and lagoons.

Recently while carrying out tissue sampling on Les and Anna Wolfe's property in the Youngs area we observed an excellent example of lagoon protection. The Wolfe's began fencing off their lagoons starting in the mid 90's. The paperbarks and other flora continued to thrive.

This has provided valuable habitat for birds, frogs and other fauna.

Maintaining lagoons also helps to prevent water logging across the adjacent pasture by maintaining deep rooted perennials. The fenced trees not only provide valuable windbreaks for stock but also help to keep water and nutrients in the soils for longer into the season. There is growing evidence that maintaining remnant vegetation improves the microbial communities in the soil which allows pasture to benefit from these regenerative benefits.



Thriving fenced lagoon

Besides the tangible benefits to production there is the emotional attachment farmers get when

protecting these lagoons. WICC had a chat with Anna Wolfe to talk about their lagoons...

WICC: What motivated you to fence off your waterways?

Anna: We wanted to preserve the excellent stands of trees & vegetation we had as they provided good shelter for the cattle and to us it also beautified our property. Most of our remanent bush, the Sleeman River, which runs through our property, and several Lagoons around the farm have been fenced off. Without fencing off from the cattle they would have destroyed it over the years. By fencing the Sleeman River, not only were we helping the Wilson Inlet environment, it made management of paddocks and cattle movement so much easier.

WICC: You mentioned 'Spooky Lagoon'. What is that about?

Anna: We have one fantastic lagoon fenced off which we call "Spooky Lagoon". It has huge twisted old paperbark trees and tall watties, with some growing from the paperbarks. There is vegetation surrounding the lagoon so you have to venture in to find the hidden treasures. For many years we have camped by the river and this lagoon every Easter. Family & friends would bring the caravans and campers and camp for the weekend. Les originally set the lagoon up for spooky night tours for our guest, with cow skulls with glowing eyes high in the trees, spider webs and other scary things, the adults & kids alike loved it. In later years the kids took over the setting it up to scare the adults. It also makes an excellent place for Easter egg hunt. In the dry it has a sandy bottom that is easy to walk around and take in the wonders of this lagoon, and in the wet the reflections of the trees is stunning.

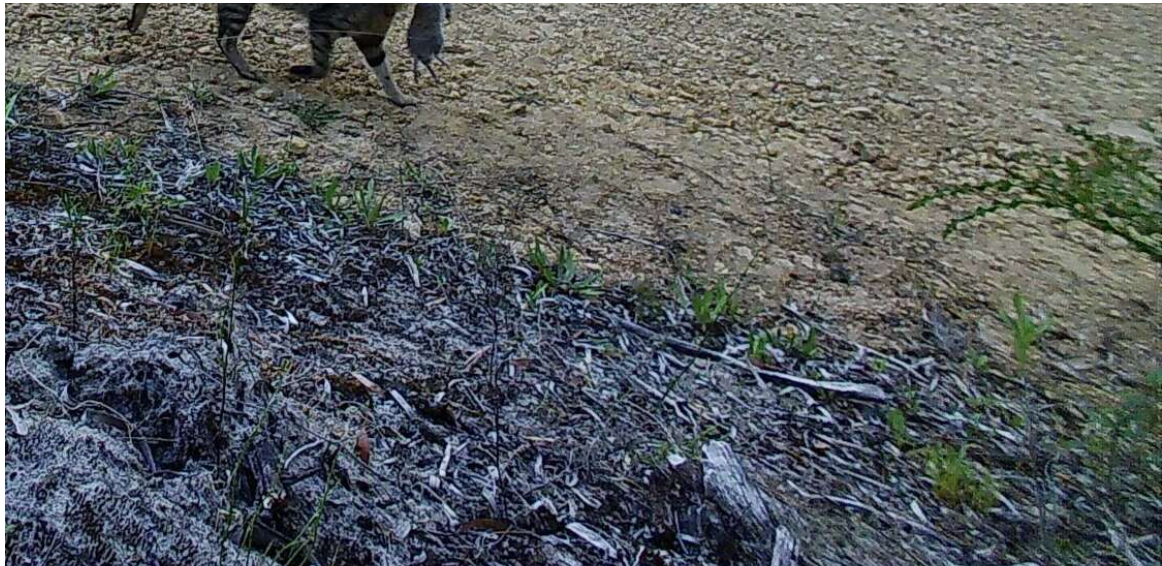
We are so glad we fenced this lagoon off so everyone can enjoy it for the years to come.

The inevitable fate of an unfenced lagoon



Nullaki Update





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Feral cat with native caught on camera trap

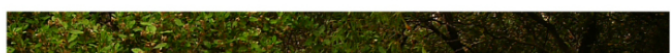
Monitoring Nullaki Fauna

How many foxes do we have roaming the Nullaki? Are the feral cats widespread, or confined to certain areas? Do we have bandicoots wandering around at night? Are the rabbits really worse than in previous years?

To answer these and other questions, WICC and Nullaki Conservation Initiative have implemented a plan to provide a consistent methodology for monitoring native and feral fauna on the Nullaki. The plan is also a requirement of grants we have received to carry out our sustainable biodiversity efforts. The tools of the plan are technical (camera traps and computer analysis), and human (WICC staff, NCI volunteers, landowners, and Aboriginal Rangers).

We have overlaid a grid onto the Nullaki map, dividing it into 18 sectors. Each of these sectors will (or already does) house a camera trap. The specific site is based on access, owner permission, and location to provide an even spatial coverage of the Nullaki. Some areas (the Wilson Inlet sandbar, along the feral management fence) may be given special attention.

Once a site has been selected for a camera trap, it must be prepared. Since the cameras are motion-activated, excess vegetation is trimmed to reduce 'false triggers'. The camera is mounted securely about 40 cm from the ground, facing South where possible to reduce the effect of moving shadows as the sun passes. The cameras have an infra-red flash, to allow capturing images at night without disturbing the target animals.





Nullaki fauna caught on cameras

About every 30 days, the cameras will be serviced. This involves swapping out and labelling the memory cards, changing the batteries, inspecting the site and camera for any needed attention, and making sure the date is correct! The cameras have a pesky habit of reverting the date back to default settings.

Now that we have data (digital images with date and location), it is time to make sense of it! The first task is to cull out the false alarms. There is a trade-off between being able to detect small mammals (mardos, bushrats), and accepting that windblown branches will trigger the camera too. This job is efficiently and gratefully performed by the Southern Aboriginal Corporation's Moorditj Noongar & Yorgas Ranger Team, who also do some of the camera servicing.

After the unwanted images are deleted, the 'good stuff' is uploaded to the WICC server, where it is imported into a database, CPW Photo Warehouse, a widely used program which is distributed free by Colorado Parks & Wildlife in the US. The images are loaded by site and visit date, then reviewed by WICC staff, who identify any native or feral animals seen. This is done twice by two different operators for accuracy. Once this data is collated, it is time to run reports, eg:

- how many fox images over a time span at all sites?
- at which sites do cats appear?
- is there a trend over time in feral sightings?
- are there different results in baited versus non-baited areas?
- which native fauna are present, what areas do they frequent?

With answers to these types of questions, we will be better able to assess the magnitude of our feral problem, possible trends (or cycles) in their numbers, and inform our feral management controls/efforts. In 2017, NCI (then NCG), obtained 3 camera traps as part of our successful State NRM Grant. From those humble beginnings, we hope to greatly improve our understanding of just who we are sharing this peninsula with.

Thanks to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for providing initial and ongoing review of this monitoring plan.



Inlet Update



Around 65 people turned out at the Annual Wilson Inlet Estuary Forum at the Denmark Boating and Angling Club on 26 November to discuss the current health of the estuary. Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's (DWER) Senior Environmental Officer, Dr Elke Reichwaldt compared this year's sandbar opening with previous years, discussed water quality of the last 4 years and gave us a sneak peek at the new computer model which will be used to help manage the inlet's health. The model is aligning very closely with what is being observed on the water. In the future, the model will assist DWER to make decisions and prioritise works in the catchment to help better manage the inlet. DWER's Manager of Aquatic Science, Malcolm Robb, discussed the next 4 years of funding under the Healthy Estuaries WA program, to lower nutrient export to the inlet. Malcolm answered some of the communities concerns around the sand bar, shorebirds and more. DWER's Regional Manager, Brett Ward laid out the process for the review of the bar opening protocol which is now underway. WICC shared how people can get involved planting the 39,989 seedlings they just ordered which will be planted on 7 farms which are in sub-catchments which DWER modelling indicates are the primary point sources for nutrient export into our inlet.



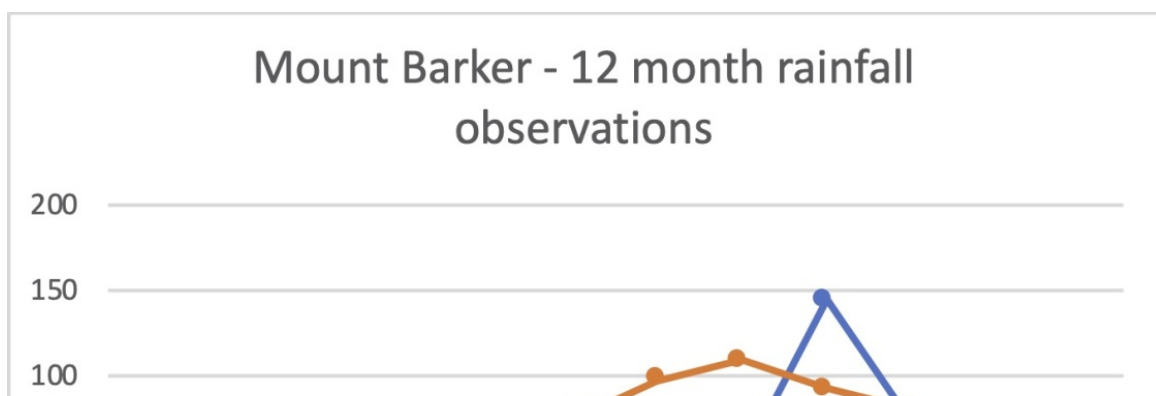
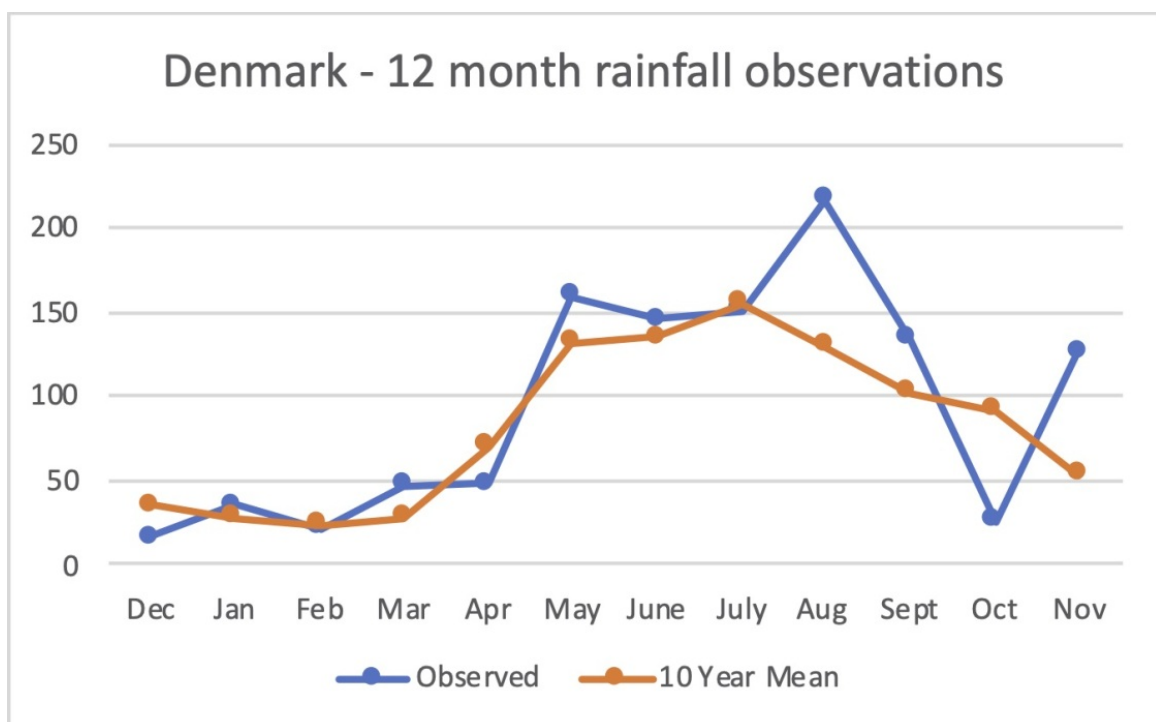


A special thanks to Mineng Elder, Lester Coyne who welcomed the community to the forum and discussed the importance of waterways to the Noongar people.

This event is supported by the Healthy Estuaries WA program funded by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

Rainfall Update

Despite Denmark receiving over 1 metre of rain so far this year, October was the 7th driest on record for SW WA and the driest since 2012. This allowed many farmers to make hay while the sun showed itself. Drier than average conditions are expected for December with a return to average rainfall in January. The Eastern states and the North of WA are predicted to benefit from the La Nina event which is now in full swing.





AGM Update



WICC recently held its Annual General Meeting at the Riverside in Denmark. 38 WICC Members listened to Keith Bradby, CEO of Gondwana Link provide an excellent talk on the power of community. We were fortunate to attract 4 new fantastic additions to our Board of Directors. Greg Sounness, Mark McHenry, Scott Wolfe and Terry Duke will provide an excellent agricultural base to help ensure WICC continues to represent production farmers throughout the catchment.

Did you know?

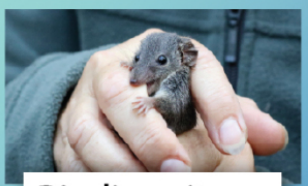
..that Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee is now a **deductible gift recipient (DGR)**, we have shovel ready projects that need your support!

*Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee is now
a deductible gift recipient (DGR)
All donations of \$2 or more to WICC are tax deductible*

DONATE

& SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS

Your donation will help support these vital projects



Biodiversity Initiative

We 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.

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Weeds in Focus



***Watsonia* spp**

W.borbonica hybrid *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus*

Many *Watsonia* species are cultivated in gardens across Australia, the weedy forms are all believed to be garden escapees. *Watsonias* are erect, perennial herbs forming large clumps similar to gladiolus up to 2 m high with pink, orange or red flowers. The stems arise from underground corms

(swollen underground plant stem) and clusters of small corms, these corms are carried along natural watercourses and in roadside drains. Leaves and flowering heads are produced annually, with the plants dying off over winter.

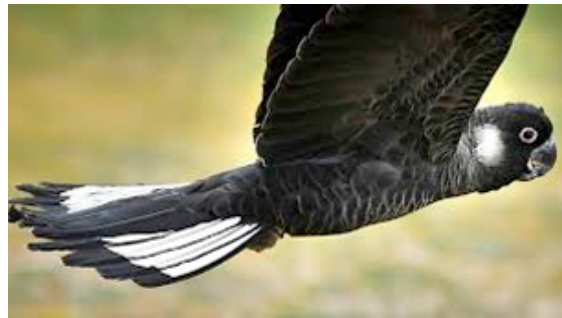
The production of very large numbers of stem cormils has enabled it to become a very successful weed, forming dense stands which exclude other vegetation. Corms and cormils can remain dormant in the soil for a considerable period.

Selective grazing by stock results in desirable pasture species being replaced by Bulbil *Watsonia* with a consequent decrease in stocking capacity. Wild *Watsonia* impoverishes soil and crowds out desirable pasture plants. It can cause serious loss of production.

Erradication methods: Remove seed heads. In heavy soil, cut roots with a knife and pull out. Spray or wipe during July/August with Glyphosate or Metsulfuron Methyl.

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2030

WICC recently updated its ten year strategic plan. Highly respected Landcare Consultant, Paula Deegan, worked with the WICC Board, its membership and the broader community to layout a strategy to deal with challenges and opportunities throughout our catchment. With a focus on waterways, biodiversity and sustainable ag, our strategic plan now aligns with our 'shovel ready' projects which the community and corporations can support with tax deductible donations.



[VIEW STRATEGIC PLAN](#)

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