

Abstract: “Tuart Woodland Restoration - a community-led, partnership approach” a case study in the importance and effectiveness of partnerships to revegetating the Peel-Harvey Region.

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) is an incorporated, not-for-profit, community based Natural Resource Management organisation that, led by a skills-based Board, promotes an integrated approach to catchment management and the way we protect and restore the environment within the Peel-Harvey catchment. We see ourselves as key agents for change towards a healthier Peel-Harvey catchment. As environmental stewards we encourage and enable effective catchment management to create a healthier natural environment in the Peel-Harvey by:

- Building community education and capacity
- Influencing and leading critical thought and environmental pride
- Exemplifying and implementing best practice.

Binjareb Boodja, (Peel-Harvey) catchment, is one of seven NRM regions (management units) in Western Australia recognised by the Australian and WA governments. It covers 1. 17 million hectares and is managed within four landscape subsystems – the inland Hotham and Williams (headwaters of the Murray River), the Jarrah Forest and Scarp, Coastal Plain and Ramsar Wetlands, Coastal and Near Shore.

The Ramsar-listed Peel- Yalgorup System covers 26, 530 hectares. It meets seven of the nine criteria by which a site may be listed as a Wetland of International Importance; four criteria are met multiple times. The Ramsar Initiative, and related Lake Clifton Recovery Program are two of PHCC’s flagship programs. The lands and coastal saline lakes of Yalgorup National Park form part of the Ramsar Site. Lake Clifton, the northern-most and second largest of the lakes, is home to the critically endangered Thrombolites.

The National Park is dominated by Tuart Woodlands, that suffered such severe decline in the late 1990s and early 2000s, that the State Government’s Tuart Health Response Group declared it to be a “collapsed ecosystem” with >90% in decline or dead. Areas of the Park were also historically grazed and hence have suffered severe disturbance and weed invasion. Contemporary threats include illegal four- wheel driving and motor-bikes.

DBCA manages the National Park; standard operating budgets support maintenance of visitor services (e.g. Thrombolite board walk; camping sites) but budgets don’t extend to restoration activities. PHCC partners with DBCA and others to attract Commonwealth and State funds to support restoration of conservation reserves.

The 2009 EPBC Act listing of the Thrombolites as critically endangered was the catalyst for wider recognition that these internationally valued assets are in real threat of becoming extinct, and that the ad hoc, uncoordinated efforts to that point were not adequate to provide resilience against threats. This recognition enabled PHCC to bring partners together with a common goal & commitment: DBCA (DEC), Lake Clifton Herron Landcare Group, Noongar community, Murdoch University, City of Mandurah, SWCC. (Note Tuart Woodlands currently being assessed for EPBC act listing).

We had a group of concerned partners, and a good understanding of what needed to be done but we needed to attract funds to take action to address threats and habitat loss.

Key message for revegetating the regions: these partnerships are as equally important as the technical knowledge for the actual restoration of our publicly managed natural areas; crucial for attracting funds and the collaborative effort that is required to achieve on-ground outcomes.

The Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program presented an opportunity for PHCC to work with partners to address threats to the National Park, Lake Clifton and the Thrombolites on a landscape scale. Our 2010 application which focused on the highest priority recommendations of the Lake Clifton Thrombolites Interim Recovery Plan was unsuccessful. The next round we adjusted the application to match National Park, Lake Clifton and Thrombolite values and threats with the CFoC Targets: *Increasing native habitat*, reduce critical threats to biodiversity (EPBC Act listed species & communities), improve the condition and connectivity of habitat; *Improving knowledge and skills*.

Success: *Lake Clifton Recovery Project: Restore habitat and manage threats to Lake Clifton's listed Thrombolites and species* (endangered Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, vulnerable Western Ringtail Possum) attracted \$699,000 funds – 2012-2013:

Project Officer: Christine Comer – inducted by DBCA to manage contractors within YNP

Support Officer: Colleen Archibald

Technical information for this presentation:

- **Restoring 21ha** Tuart Woodland in two degraded patches of Yalgorup National Park, improved connectivity between Boundary Lake, Duck Pond and Lake Clifton (3 of 10 Yalgorup Lakes)

Other Project activities:

- *Cable-fencing to control illegal access* - protecting >1829ha of tuart forest
- *Weed control* within YNP targeting Cotton Bush, Apple of Sodom
- Increasing and restoring the *buffer* around Lake Clifton
 - *Mapping the 150m buffer* and undertaking private property audits (Local Government)
 - Engaging private land managers - 105 Club "Living on the Edge of Ancient History"
- *Community engagement/Awareness/Education program* – including Aboriginal Story card.

Technical detail to be presented in regard to the Restoration of 21ha of Tuart Forest in Yalgorup National Park

- Challenges:
 - access
 - PHCC Project Officer inducted by DBCA to manage contractors within YNP
- Engaged technical services of Dr Katinka Ruthrof, Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Murdoch University (revegetation strategies for the Ludlow Tuart Forest; State Centre of Excellence for Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health,) to guide Tuart Woodland Restoration
- Site:
 - Selection & preparation
 - Seeding & planting

- Video of Ash-bed creation
- Monitoring – including role of volunteers

Lake Clifton Herron Landcare Group (LCHLG) have continued restoration efforts with support of PHCC and previously SWCC to obtain funding to undertake ongoing restoration in YNP and the eastern buffer of Lake Clifton – resulting in nine consecutive years of works in the buffer.

- Jenny Rose and Nancy Fardin's (LCHLG) recipe for seedling survival