

DISSOLVING BRYDE'S MARRIAGE TO SALINITY

The Lake Bryde wetland complex, south-east of Lake Grace, has been nominated as a recovery catchment for natural diversity under the State Salinity Action Plan.

The National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority (NPNCA) and the State Salinity Council (SSC) have endorsed the nomination, following a proposal from CALM.

The move brings the number of recovery catchments for natural diversity under the Salinity Action Plan to four. (The others are the Lake Warden complex near Esperance, Toolibin Lake east of Narrogin and the Muir-Uncup complex between Manjimup and Mount Barker.)

Under the Salinity Action Plan, CALM is able to develop and implement a coordinated Natural Diversity Recovery Program, to ensure that critical and regionally significant natural areas, particularly wetlands, are conserved in perpetuity.

It is expected that effective management in partnership with the local community will see natural assets protected, while integrating with other land uses, such as agriculture and recreation, and providing an important means of developing techniques to combat salinity.

The Lake Bryde complex consists of a chain of freshwater and naturally saline lakes in the headwaters of the Lochardt catchment, which is a subcatchment of the Swan-Avon basin. The catchment is about 110,770 hectares, of which 40 per cent is in reserves.



Lake Bryde and East Lake Bryde act as drainage sinks, collecting salt and other sediments. They are habitat for a threatened ecological community, comprising unwooded freshwater swamps of the southern Wheatbelt, dominated by lignum and samphire species. This community is listed as critically endangered and extends over 145 hectares (see 'Endangered', *LANDSCOPE*, Autumn 1999).

The wetlands and their associated vegetation are an important sample of woodlands with species more typical of further north, and to the south. They also have quite different characteristics from other wetlands, such as Lake Toolibin, 120 kilometres to the west-north-west.

The lakes contain more than 80 species of aquatic invertebrates—a relatively high level of diversity. Monitoring by CALM has also revealed up to 69 species of birds, including the threatened malleefowl

and 19 species of waterbird, 10 reptile, three frog and four native mammal species.

Dominant tree species include salmon gum, red morrel, gimlet, Kondinin blackbutt, flat-topped yate, tall sand mallee and paperbark.

Until the early 1980s, Lake Bryde was a popular recreation area and provided the local community with water during droughts.

By the early 1990s, salinity was becoming more evident. This led to significant changes in the wetlands' vegetation.

Degradation of natural bushland and surrounding cleared farmland appeared to be the result of surface water flooding and saline groundwater rising.

There is strong local community support for the area to become a recovery catchment, with most landholders aware of the issues and keen to be actively involved. This interest has led to local landholder Anne Rick being appointed a Land for Wildlife Officer in CALM's

Above: Esperance Lakes area

Photo – Dennis Sarson/Lochman Transparencies

Land for Wildlife Scheme, which helps landowners manage remnant bushland for conservation.

National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority chairman Tom Day has welcomed the adoption of the wetlands as a recovery catchment.

"Conservation of our natural biodiversity requires cooperative effort between State and local government agencies, landholders and local community groups," he said.

"The nomination of Lake Bryde and surrounding lakes as a recovery catchment will also help restore an area that will have important recreation and potential nature-based tourism impacts. The viability of agricultural production will also be improved," he said.

Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME FOURTEEN NUMBER 4, WINTER 1999



What does the future hold for our karri forest? Research provides some interesting insights. See page 18.



The photographic excellence of WA team Babs and Bert Wells was driven by a love of the job. See page 10.



Many WA women have played important roles in the conservation of our natural resources. Some of them feature in our story on page 41.



'Growing Gnangara Park', on page 35, continues the story of WA's largest proposed outer suburban native parkland.



Partnerships are important. Many private sector businesses and individuals are active partners in protecting our natural heritage. See page 47.

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## COVER

The Dampier collection returns briefly to Western Australia for an exhibition at the WA Museum. The specimens' scientific interest is limited, but their historical significance is immense. The illustration is of the *Sturt-pea*, and Dampier was the first person to collect this unusual but magnificent plant. (See page 28)

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



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