

FAUNA

A Fish Ladder

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Alan Danks (Regional Leader Nature Conservation, CALM) and Steve Janicke (Rivercare Officer, Department of Environment) standing on the fish ladder with the weir in the background

I was so glad to have read the article Freshwater Fishes of South Western Australia in the last Western Wildlife issue. By chance I attended a half day Department of Environment Wetlands Workshop in Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve. One of the sites we visited was the new Vertical Slot Fish Ladder on the Goodga River mentioned in the article.

The Goodga River is the only known waterway in WA where the trout minnow (*Galaxias truttaceus*) is found. The trout minnow (10cm long) and other indigenous fish species normally migrate upstream each autumn to spawn but a gauging weir installed across the river in 1964 blocks their pathway. Surveys of the upstream waterway indicated that the trout minnow have been unable to get past the weir to reach valuable habitat and breeding areas.

After searching Australia-wide for engineering ideas that might possibly assist with this issue (most projects examined didn't seem to have a very high success rate) the



Schematic diagram of the fish ladder design

Department of Environment found a consultant in Queensland. The result has been the construction of a series of pools, separated by vertical slots allowing water flow for 'jumping' fish which gradually climbs the 1.5 metre weir wall.

Monitoring sessions recorded 1500 fish moving up through the ladder over a period of a few days and breeding adults have been found upstream. It is heartwarming to find a project that incorporates wildlife needs and has still allows the ongoing operation of the gauging weir.