

A JOINT CELEBRATION! 10 YEARS OF LAND FOR WILDLIFE, 100 YEARS OF FARMING

A Land for Wildlife 10th anniversary event

One of the good things about being a *LFWer* is having the opportunity to meet like-minded people. Local field trips are a great way to do this, but a joint celebration of 10 years of *LFW* and 100 years of farming called for more - something a little different.

LFWers from the 'urban fringe' of Perth and Drummond Recovery Catchment or thereabouts, were invited to spend a weekend away in the northern wheatbelt. The destination was "Koobabbie", a 7,173 hectare broadacre wheat and sheep property belonging to John and Alison Doley. The property overlaps the Marchagee-Buntine and Waddy Forest Catchments, 260 kilometres from Perth. The invitation was enthusiastically received, with thirty five people participating (more wanted to come but logistics of catering, transport and accommodation meant some had to be turned away).

"Koobabbie" was first settled in 1906 and over the years the owners have successfully combined a commercial farming enterprise with nature conservation endeavours. Primary salinity covers an area

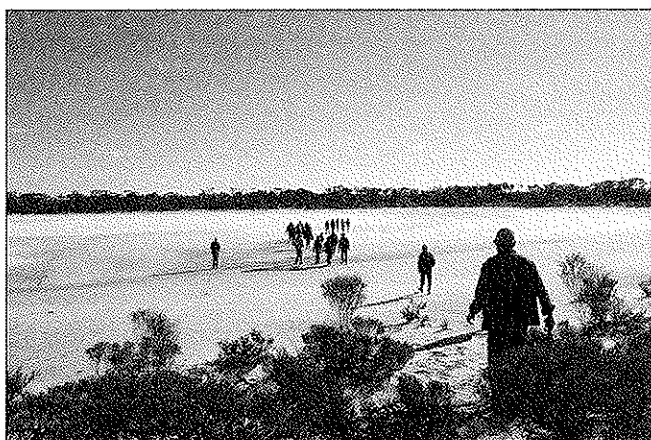
of 1,864 hectares of the property and has high conservation value but low grazing productivity. In contrast, the area of secondary salinity that adjoins the lake system is productive grazing land. A key focus for conservation has been on fencing of remnant vegetation and management to enhance habitat for the endangered Carnaby's Cockatoo. Approximately 2,903 hectares, or 40% of the remnant vegetation on the farm is fenced off. Salmon Gums have been planted since 1987 to provide future nest sites for Carnaby's. In the short term, some artificial nest hollows have been erected to augment existing nesting trees.

John and Alison joined *Land for Wildlife* in 1997. It has been a case of *LFW* learning and sharing from their experience at field days and excursions hosted on the property and articles they have provided to *Western Wildlife*.

The weekend offered a fascinating glimpse of the special places, plants and animals that can still be found in fragments of the WA wheatbelt. Participants were able to explore a natural salt lake system, see rare

plants and birds and hear about the activities of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Buntine-Marchagee Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment and the work to restore biodiversity assets threatened by salinity. Of particular interest were the two lakes visited; the gypsum lake with its fascinating gypsum crystals and the lake where the first record in Australia of the Hexarthrid rotifer *Hexarthra propinqua* was made - its occurrence at the site being due possibly to an introduction by migratory birds. In addition, there was a chance to learn about what farming used to be like, going back a century, with a meander amongst the historic buildings and a look at farm machinery spanning the years. And, of course, there was plenty of opportunity for socialising, especially around the campfire on Saturday evening.

A great weekend and a big thank you to all those that made it happen, Fiona Falconer, Zara Kivell, Bob Huston and, of course, the Doleys.



Exploring the gypsum lake.



The group. Front row: Fiona Falconer, Alison Doley, Bob Huston and Zara Kivell.