

Getting full bottle on invertebrates

by Kirsty Quinlan

In January this year a small group of enthusiastic individuals embarked on a new volunteer project offered by Parks and Wildlife, to curate aquatic fauna specimens for the Wetlands Conservation Program. The new project has been an instant hit, with volunteers fascinated by what they are discovering.

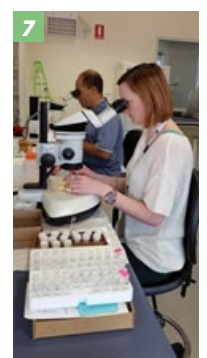
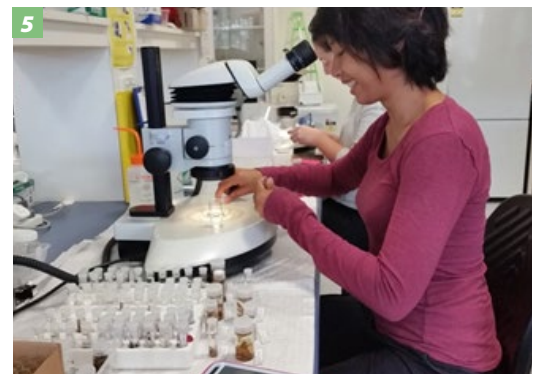
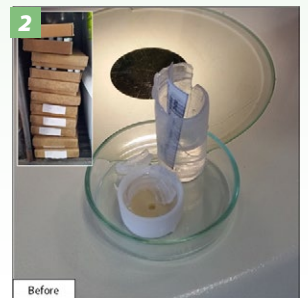
For more than 20 years, the program has collected aquatic fauna specimens from all over Western Australia by way of its biodiversity survey work and long-term monitoring projects. All of this material has historically been stored in plastic vials, but now most of these old vials are severely degraded and the highly valuable specimens inside are starting to deteriorate. This curation project was developed with the aim of engaging volunteers to assist with the large task of transferring all of the existing material to glass. This means that the collection will be available for scientific purposes, such as species descriptions and comparisons with new specimens, long into the future.

Volunteers work in the laboratory to move specimens from the degraded plastic vials into newly labelled glass storage vials. All of the material from each complete survey/project is placed together in a larger glass jar and then labelled for long-term storage. Volunteers get the chance to develop new skills as well as having the unique opportunity to view aquatic fauna from across the State, from a wide range of groups including insects, mites, snails, worms and crustaceans.

In the first six months, this outstanding group has contributed 400 hours in the laboratory, and has preserved over 2,000 vials. The group is diverse and includes young students starting careers as well as those just wanting to make a contribution to wetland science. While there is still a long way to go for the project, it is certainly off to a fantastic start, and having continued support will ensure that this valuable collection will be preserved well into the future.

This work could not be achieved without volunteers, so I thank this wonderful group of individuals who each week, bring enthusiasm, curiosity, dedication and a smile to our laboratory.

If you would also like to be involved in this ongoing curation project and notified of future opportunities, please register your interest with Kirsty Quinlan via email: kirsty.quinlan@dpaw.wa.gov.au or phone: 9219 9445.



Above right: **1** Louise Ridgeway. **2** Before – specimens in plastic vials. **3** After – specimens in glass vials. **4 – 7** Volunteers curating specimens.
Photos – Kirsty Quinlan