



PRACTITIONER PRESENTATION

Shorebirds are counting on us: Reflecting on more than a decade of building community citizen science capability in the Peel-Yalgorup System

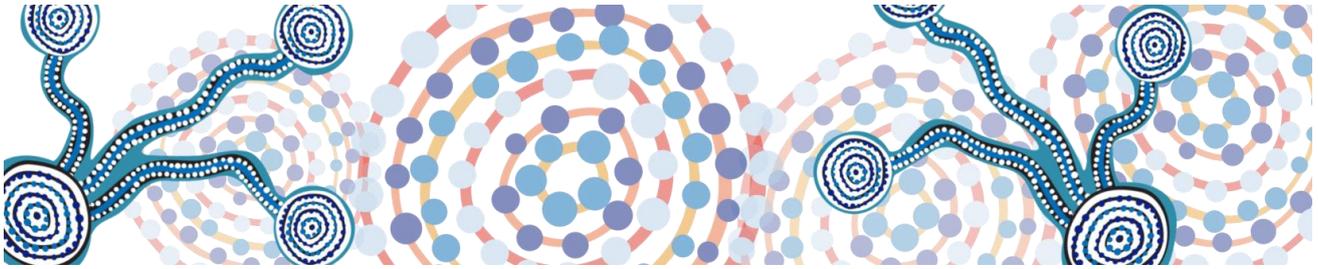
Charlie Jones, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

Abstract

The 26,530 ha Peel-Yalgorup System is one of the largest and most diverse Ramsar-listed wetland systems in Australia, incorporating the Peel-Harvey Estuary, the hypersaline Yalgorup Lakes, the relatively freshwater lakes McLarty and Mealup, and National Parks and reserves surrounding these water bodies. Also known as Ramsar Site 482, the wetland system meets at seven of the nine criteria for listing according to the Ramsar Convention as a 'wetland of international importance'. Several criteria relate to the importance of the wetlands as habitat for waterbirds, including migratory shorebirds that spend the summer months feeding in the wetlands of the Peel-Yalgorup System before their migration north to breed in areas like Alaska and Siberia. Lead natural resource management agency for the region the Peel Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) has been working with partner organisations and community members to coordinate annual citizen science waterbird counts to monitor these special birds and inform management actions. Since 2009 PHCC has delivered at least one intensive education workshop each year to train community members in waterbird identification to enable their participation in the count. Over time, these workshops have evolved in their structure, content and participant targeting in response to observations, participant feedback, changes in the gaps and needs to enable the implementation of the annual counts, and changes to funding availability and requirements. This presentation will detail and reflect on this evolution over more than a decade and what the drivers for change were. It will outline the key successes and challenges of working to build long term and sustainable community capacity for ongoing waterbird monitoring. Finally, it will reflect on future needs and opportunities to continue the evolution of education offerings to enable a diverse and capable community of stewards for the waterbirds and wetlands of the Peel-Yalgorup System and beyond.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet and pays respects to their Elders past and present.



Other Acknowledgements: PHCC's key partners in delivering capacity building relating to shorebirds and waterbirds have included: Bill Rutherford and the team at Ornithological Technical Services who have worked with PHCC since 2009 to develop and deliver introductory shorebird identification courses; BirdLife Australia WA Branch and Mandurah Bird Observers Group who have played an active role in coordinating citizen science counts and capacity-building activities. PHCC's activities relating to shorebirds and waterbirds have been funded by various sources over the years. Currently, this initiative is supported by the PHCC through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program / Regional Land Partnerships.

Speaker Profile

Charlie Jones is Peel-Harvey Catchment Council's Community Engagement Coordinator – Wetlands and People. Her role involves working with community members, groups and other stakeholders to capture the hearts and minds of our local community to motivate the wise use of wetlands at Ramsar Site 482. Charlie holds a Master's degree in Environmental Management as well as a Bachelor of Arts. After starting her career in consulting relating to sustainable economic development, her professional roles have included coordination of education programs focusing on lifelong learning and preparedness for the future of work

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