

COMMUNITY *approach* TO PROTECTING KEPWARI (LAKE WARDEN)

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Kepwari, also *known* as the Lake Warden Ramsar wetlands, is located near Esperance on the South Coast of Western Australia. Kepwari is the Wudjari Noongar word for 'place of moving water'.

The wetlands are listed under the Ramsar convention because they support 1% of the population thresholds of both Hooded Plover and Chestnut Teal, as well as consistently high numbers of waterbirds. Habitat values have been significantly impacted by altered hydrology and catchment impacts. Change from perennial vegetation to annual farming systems has resulted in excess water, which has discharged in the wetlands, leading to the drowning of valuable habitat for both local and migratory shorebird species.



Scan the QR codes to view papers on the waterbirds of Lake Warden



Over the past 20 years, the community has worked together to attempt to reverse this issue through revegetation, direct seeding with native seed, perennial pasture and fencing incentives. Workshops and field days have built community knowledge and skill underpinned by behaviour change philosophy. Collectively we have transformed Kepwari from a flooded, drowning wetland to one displaying a shoreline.

While water levels have substantially decreased, other key threats have become apparent such as increasing salinity levels resulting in pink blooms of algae impacting food availability to wading birds. To help tackle emerging threats, tools like the Bayesian Belief Network and an action plan has been developed supported by the Regional Land Partnerships Project.

Our project *partners*

Birdlife Australia, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Esperance Bird Observer's Group, Esperance Regional Forum, Esperance Shire, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, Esperance Weeds Action Group, farmer groups, small landholders groups, local schools and the wider community.

Regional Land *Partnerships* Project

South Coast NRM are working with the community to deliver a Regional Land Partnerships Project which builds on past investments, ensuring actions are informed by science. Actions and activities in Kepwari are guided by a collaborative Technical Advisory Group with members from government, community, and scientists, who use their local scientific knowledge to best inform South Coast NRM project officers.



IMAGE CREDIT: D. Weller 2019

The *future* of Kepwari

South Coast NRM hope to continue

1. To build connections with the community to protect the ecological character of the wetlands at Kepwari.
2. To maintain and improve the habitat for thousands of birds.
3. To have a beautiful environment to enjoy and be proud of.