

FRIENDS OF PERRY LAKES NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026



Photo courtesy of Ian Stewart

Message from the Chair

Since writing for the last newsletter, I have spent time in the UK where I was disappointed to see that the lakes in a park/wildlife reserve in my home town, which I have visited regularly since my childhood, were heavily infested with cyanobacteria ('blue-green algae') and feral carp. The exceptionally warm weather in Europe this year was probably a contributing factor. It was so pleasing to walk around Perry Lakes on my return to Perth and see our lakes looking much healthier. However, we know that they are also at-risk of similar changes occurring, particularly as the climate warms, and it is reassuring to know that our members are working with the Town of Cambridge to monitor the health of the lakes – prevention is better than cure!

Shortly after returning from Europe, I attended a Youth Engagement Workshop organised by Cameron McDiven from Friends of Bold Park. In this workshop we explored ways in which organised involvement of children and teenagers in the appreciation and protection of the natural environment might be achieved. One theme that came through strongly to me was the desire to establish an organisation like those that provide sporting activities and development programs for young people. Encouraging young people to become involved is so important for the future of FoPL and I was encouraged to see that several children joined us for the planting activities earlier this winter. They clearly had fun (seeing how high they could stack the seedling containers!) but they also had the opportunity to engage with other children and adults in an activity that was beneficial to the local community, as well as to their health. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of Cameron's endeavours.



Martyn French
Chair

STRATEGIC PLAN

Our reserve is managed by the Town of Cambridge under the Town of Cambridge's Perry Lakes Management Plan 2021-31. To read this plan visit [this link](#).

GET IN TOUCH

Follow or join all our sites and like, comment and share our posts. As always your questions and comments on any post are welcome. See page 10 of this newsletter to have your say on our future communications.



Membership renewal time

We've had a great response to our 26/27 membership renewal programme. If you haven't had time to rejoin, we'd greatly appreciate your continuing support. Membership offers many benefits, including free attendance at member only events but there is so much more coming. To renew yours [click here](#) now.



26/27
Memberships
Now open

Message from the Chair (cont)

Finally, most of you will be aware that the highly pathogenic (disease-causing) strain of H5N1 avian influenza virus has reached Australia and infected numerous species of native birds and a small number of native and feral mammal species. Infections with this virus have had a devastating effect on birds and mammals (including humans on rare occasions) around the world. While there are concerns about the effect that this virus might have on the poultry industry, the potential effect on native birds and mammals is of particular concern for us. Black swans are potentially very susceptible to H5N1 avian influenza because their immune systems differ, in several ways, from other swans and ducks. Little is known about the susceptibility of marsupials, but lethal infections have been reported in North American opossums. Our members play an important role in monitoring within the Reserve and we should therefore be on the look-out for unusual occurrences of sickness or death amongst birds and possibly mammals. Sick or dead animals must not be touched; the location, with a photo if possible, should be reported to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Martyn French - chair@friendsofperrylakes.org

SAVE THE DATE

Annual General Meeting

Date: Wednesday 28th October

Time: From 6pm

Location: Cambridge Bowling Club

Nominations now open — could this be you?

Our committee for 2026–27 will be elected at the AGM, and all positions become vacant. Most of the current committee expect to restand, but the Events and Education Co-ordinator roles are likely to be open.

If you've ever enjoyed one of FoPL's planting days, workshops or community events, this is your chance to help shape what comes next. Whether you're drawn to organising get-togethers and working bees, or to helping others learn about and connect with Perry Lakes, there's a role here for you. You'll be joining a small, friendly committee that shares the load, and it's a great way to get to know Perry Lakes and its community more deeply and make a real difference to the wetlands we all love.

Nominations should be sent to the **Secretary** or **Chair** by **30th September**, along with a statement of support from another member.

Curious about what the role involves? Reach out to Martyn French - chair@friendsofperrylakes.org

Further details and reminders will follow closer to the date.

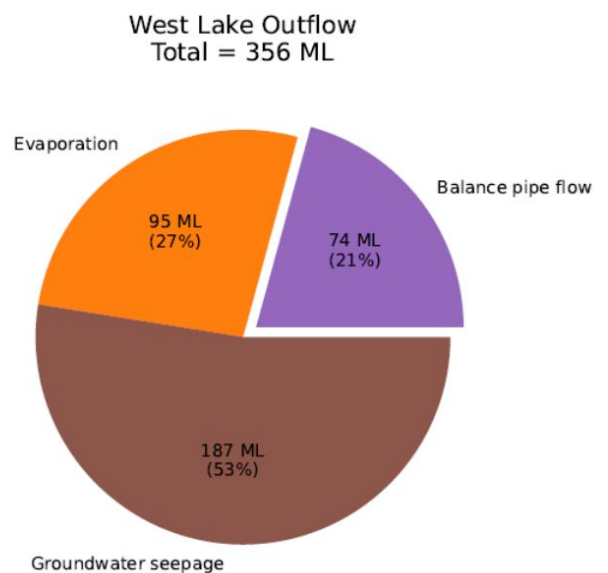
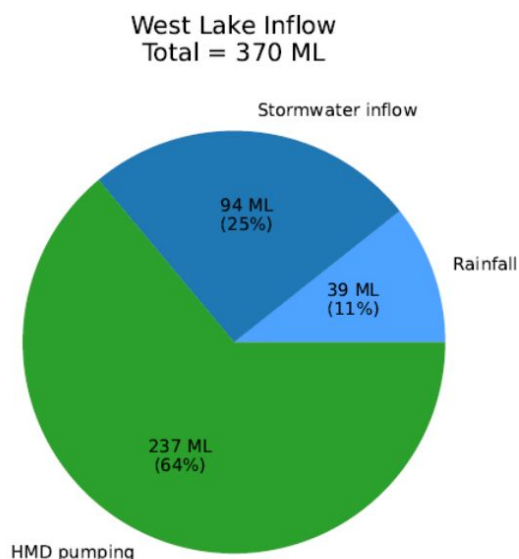


Message from the Science Officer

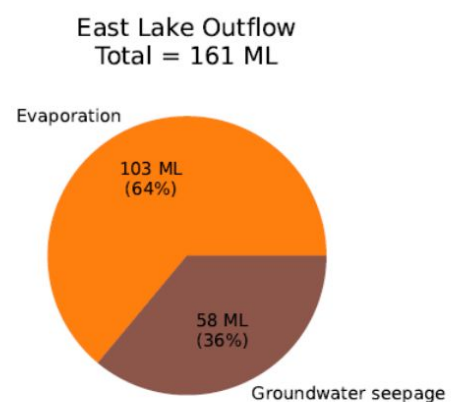
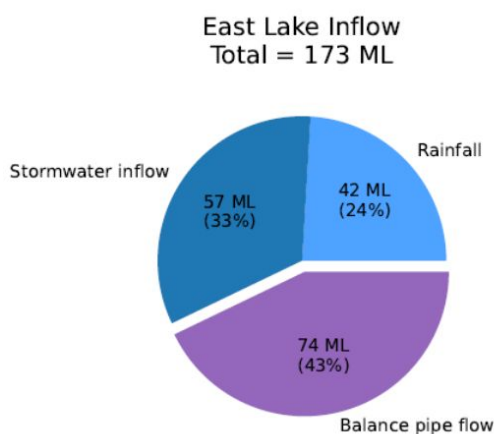
The Citizen Scientists have collected enough data to estimate the amount of water and phosphorus (responsible for algal blooms) entering and leaving the lakes between July 2025 and March 2026.

The diagram below shows that water from the Herdsman Main Drain (HMD) contributes almost two-thirds of the water entering West Lake, about a quarter is from road runoff (stormwater) and the rest is rain falling directly onto the lake. More than half of the losses are leakage into the underlying aquifer, over quarter is evaporation and the remainder is flow into East Lake via a connecting balance pipe.

East Lake's water balance volumes are smaller, as shown by the smaller circles at the bottom of the diagram. Inflow from West Lake is the largest component followed by road runoff and direct rainfall. Leakage losses into the underlying aquifer are less in this large shallow lake, while rainfall additions and evaporation losses are a higher percentage than in West Lake.



Perry Lakes water balance from 2025-07-01 to 2026-03-01

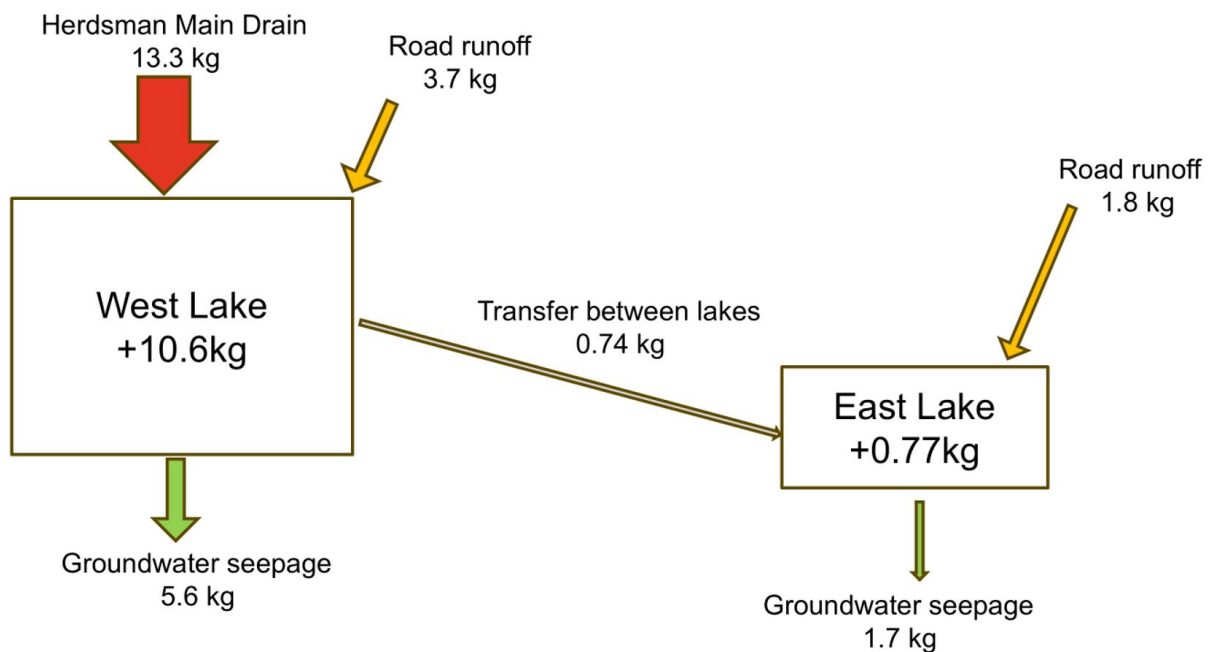


Message from the Science Officer (cont)

Citizen Scientists and consultants for the Town have measured the phosphorus (P) concentrations in the flows in the water balance to estimate the amounts in each flow (diagram below).

Over the 243-day period more than 13kg of phosphorus was added to West Lake from the HMD and it is estimated over 10kg accumulated in the water and underlying sediments. Road runoff added over 3kg and more than 5kg was lost to seepage.

The amount of P transferred to East Lake through the connecting pipe was less than that added from road runoff into that lake. The amount accumulating in the lake is estimated to be much smaller than in West Lake, which reflects its lower concentrations of P in its water and its lower eutrophication risk as assessed by macroinvertebrates.



These are early estimates of nutrient flows and accumulations which will be improved with additional readings. FoPL has funding from the NRM Community Stewardship Grant scheme to greatly increase the amount of water testing in 2026 and 2027.

The numbers will be used to estimate management needs such as removing Typha (bulrush) and Azolla (water fern) vegetation with an equivalent amount of P in their tissues.

BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST

Volunteering with Friends of Perry Lakes is one of the most rewarding ways to make an impact in our community and our **Citizen Science Initiative** is a great way to get even more involved.

Joining the **CSI** gives members the chance to learn fundamental skills, deepen their understanding of our environment, and collect survey data that directly informs our conservation and protection work.



There are many ways you can be involved, from water quality, animal surveys and data analysis. So, If that sounds like something you'd like to be a part of, please register your interest on [this link](#).

Perry Lakes Water Report

September 2026

By Rod Banyard

Historically the settlement and urbanisation of Perth involved draining extensive wetlands to provide land suitable for market gardening, industry and housing. Ironically, the clearing of vegetation and importing of water from the Hills dams exacerbated flooding problems, as groundwater recharge increased and wetland water levels rose.



East Lake at a consistent high water mark this year

At Perry Lakes, storm water drains were constructed into the lakes in the 1950s, with major re-contouring and vegetation clearing carried out for "beautification" of the area associated with the construction of the stadium for the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games. To manage the flooding during the wet winters of the 1960s, a pumping station was constructed on the southern bank of East Lake to pump water to the Indian Ocean should the lake water level rise too high.

Declining rainfall in South-West Australia during and since the 1970s solved the problem of flooding in the Lakes. As low water levels became the problem to be solved instead, the drainage pump station was decommissioned.

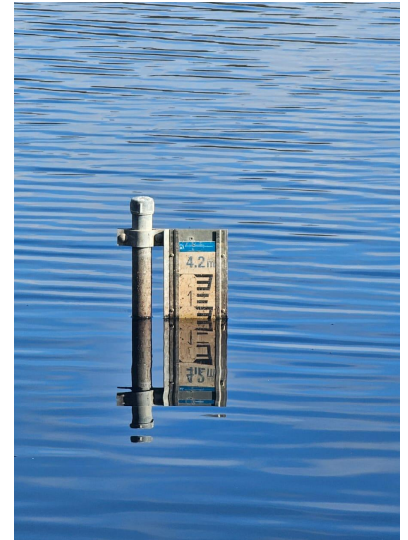
The low water levels in East Lake were addressed by pumping groundwater into the lake, but this did not help West Lake. The Town of Cambridge then implemented the 2023 Perry Lakes Replenishment Scheme, diverting water from the Herdsman Main Drain into West Lake and, via a connecting pipe, into East Lake.



January 2025: Both lakes dried considerably with East Lake (seen here) drying completely

Perry Lakes Water Report September 2026 (cont)

Despite operational problems with the pumping equipment, the replenishment scheme was able to raise the Lakes' water levels to within half a metre of the top of the banks, and flooding once again became a possibility. The Town of Cambridge and the Water Corporation responded by developing a pump management protocol to mitigate the flooding risk. If the lake water levels get to within 0.7 m of the top of the banks (a water level above 4.3 metres AHD) during winter, the pumps are to be shut down and not restarted until the level drops by 0.3 metres, to a metre below the top of bank. During the dry season these trigger levels are relaxed by 0.2 metres, allowing the lakes to sit closer to bank height before the pumps are stopped.



The pumps were shut down during June 2026 when the water levels rose to the winter trigger level. At the time the pumps had been operating continuously, and the levels of both Lakes were rising rapidly. This was the first time continuous pump operation had occurred since August 2024, when the Friends of Perry Lakes commenced monitoring the flows. Over those two years the pumps had often run for just half of the time, as inflow to the pumps from the Herdsman Drain was restricted by trash clogging the inlet screens.

The pumps were switched on again in the middle of July when the levels dropped to 1 metre below the banks. However, monitoring showed the pump operating hours quickly reduced, until they were running just a quarter of the time and had only been able to raise the levels by a tenth of a metre. Whether this reduced running reflects easing winter inflows or a recurrence of the screen-clogging problem is something worth watching over the coming months.

Of course there are many other matters to consider in managing the Lakes' hydrology sustainably. The Friends of Perry Lakes continue to collect wildlife, water level, flow and quality information to help ensure the needs of the aquatic and riparian flora and fauna can be met.

Join Us for Our Monthly Events

On the third Sunday of each month, come out to the Reserve for a morning of hands-on care for the bush — weeding, planting, whatever the season calls for. Stay for ten minutes or the whole morning; every bit helps, and there's no minimum to belong.

Afterwards, everyone gathers for morning tea — a proper spread, good conversation, and a chance to catch up with familiar faces or meet new ones. It's free for members and participants alike. And if digging in the dirt isn't your thing that day, that's fine too — turn up for the tea and the company. No obligation to have lifted a single weed.

Start times and meeting points are posted ahead of each event [here](#) on our website. We'd love to see you there.

NEXT EVENT: Sunday 20 September from 8.30 at the Shed..



Message from the Communications Officer

Apologies for a slightly thinner newsletter this issue. We've spent the last two months heads-down on a better website and digital experience for you, funded through our NRM grant and we're excited to share where things stand.

The new platform is on track for release in Q4 2026.

It will bring content that's currently hidden or hard to find out into the open and go well beyond that. We'll be able to tell richer stories about our lakes, something our current GoDaddy site simply can't support.

For the first time, you'll be able to manage your membership details directly through the website, making life easier for both you and us, and helping us get accurate information to you faster. There are a few nice surprises in store too.

The build itself is nearly done. Next comes the equally important job of loading in our content and migrating everything across. Spare a thought for your FoPL minions burning the midnight oil over the coming weeks.

Like to know more - email comms@friendsofperrylakes.org



Brett Heil
Communications

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR A TROVE OF INFORMATION

The FoPL website is a valuable resource for information on events, membership, our vision, flora and fauna around the lakes as well as educational videos.

Visit:

friendsofperrylakes.org

Member photo feature

This edition, we're celebrating the work of Clive Addison. Clive is one of our founding members and you'll spot him at most events — usually with a trowel in hand. What you might not know is that Clive spent years working as a professional photographer, and just recently two photos he captured at Perry lakes (shown below) were featured on ABC TV.

Have a photo of your own you'd like to see in the newsletter or on our new website? We'd love to feature it — send it through to comms@friendsofperrylakes.org.

