

FRIENDS OF PERRY LAKES NEWSLETTER

July 2025



The beauty of Perry Lakes stunningly captured by Ian Stewart. Can you name the bird species?

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The onset of winter rains has been very welcome and provided ideal conditions for PlantFest25, which proved to be both highly productive and enjoyable. Many thanks to Brett Heil, Tony Harding and Nolan Penning for the time and effort they donated to organising the event, and to all committee members for their contributions. The efforts of FoPL members and non-members who undertook planting are also greatly appreciated.

The rain has also resulted in a welcome improvement of water levels in the lakes, particularly East Lake, but uncertainty remains about the effectiveness of the lake water replenishment programme in maintaining ideal water levels throughout the year. An independent review of the system that diverts water from the Herdsman Main Drain to West Lake is under consideration by the Town of Cambridge (ToC) and we encourage FoPL members to take any opportunity that arises to ask councillors to support this.

I recently had the opportunity to act as an observer at a meeting of the Lake Claremont Advisory Council and gained valuable information from the meeting and from speaking with the Committee Chair and representative members of Friends of Lake Claremont. One particularly important conclusion I came to was that community contributions to the management and development of natural areas, such as Lake Claremont, are optimised when sympathetic councillors promote community views at council meetings and to council staff. The upcoming local government elections in October this year provide an opportunity for FoPL members to promote the management and development of Perry Lakes Reserve by supporting sympathetic councillors or possibly by standing for Council themselves.

Martyn French - chair@friendsofperrylakes.org



By Martyn French
Chair

STRATEGIC PLAN

As we enter our fourth year, we will continue benchmarking our performance working towards our 2030 Vision statement. To find out more, please visit our website [here](#).

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.



RENEW OR BECOME A MEMBER

Memberships expired on 30 June—now's the perfect time to renew your support for Friends of Perry Lakes. Your membership funds vital conservation work, citizen science, and community events that protect this unique ecosystem. Not a member yet? Join today and help shape the future of Perry Lakes.

Members enjoy free entry to educational talks and nature walks, complimentary catering at weeding and planting events (including morning teas and sausage sizzles), and discounted FoPL workshirts. It's great value from just \$30 a year, and it helps build a strong, active community for Perry Lakes.

2025 is our most important year yet, so please support us via [this link](#).



MESSAGE FROM THE EDUCATION OFFICER

State of the Lakes: An Update on Water Quality

By Dr Don McFarlane, Education Officer (Hydrogeologist)

Perry Lakes, like all wetlands, naturally collect nutrients over time. However, when nutrient levels become too high—a condition known as eutrophication—it can lead to harmful algal blooms and reduced oxygen levels in the water, threatening aquatic life and making the habitat less suitable for birds.



By Dr Don McFarlane

We've seen that when there's water in Perry Lakes, birdlife returns in promising numbers. In contrast, Galup–Lake Monger often suffers from toxic blue-green algae in summer, keeping bird numbers low. At Perry Lakes, we're keeping a close watch on nutrient levels—particularly since February 2023, when the Town of Cambridge began diverting stormwater from the Herdsman Main Drain into West Lake. This water, along with runoff from roads and fertilisers, has increased nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the lake.

While nitrogen tends to decrease when the lake dries out, phosphorus lingers in the sediment—and carp activity can stir it up again. Meanwhile, some native plant species like bulrush, spiny rush, and the floating fern *Azolla* have proliferated. Although native, these species can outcompete other plants and reduce food and habitat for birds. *Azolla*, in particular, adds nitrogen to the lake, fuelling further reed growth.

To help restore balance, periodic harvesting of reeds and *Azolla* is required. The council removed typha from West Lake in late 2023 and early 2024, and is actively monitoring to guide future management.

The photo below shows *Azolla* covering West Lake in early 2024. Its red hue appears under sunlight, and while it plays a role in nitrogen fixation, it also signals that nutrient levels are continuing to rise—favouring reed expansion at the expense of open water habitats.

Looking Ahead

As Perry Lakes continues to evolve, ongoing monitoring and proactive management are essential to protect water quality and maintain a healthy environment for birdlife and other native species.

Our first group of citizen scientists have begun water quality monitoring. These trained community members will be helping us collect key data on nutrient levels, algal presence, and other indicators across both lakes. Their contribution marks an important step forward in our long-term efforts to understand and care for this unique wetland system.



Azolla covering West Lake in early 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE (ACTING) WORKS COORDINATOR

After a successful PlantFest25, our illustrious Works leader Tony, is taking a well-earned break. Nolan will be stepping in to run the works program in his absence, starting with our next weeding day.

Sunday 20 July - First Winter Weeding Day

Please meet at the "Scouts link" planting area between East and West lakes at 8.30am. [Click here](#) for google map location.

This area was planted last year by the Floreat scouts and is growing very well but needs some serious TLC to control the grass and weeds that are also flourishing.

Bring a trowel and kneeling pad and we'll tidy this area up, then please join us afterwards as we head back to the shed for Morning tea at approximately 9.30am.

Please visit our website for full details.



Nolan Penning

LOOK THE PART AND PROTECT YOURSELF



Perfect for any rugged outdoor activity, we have new stock of our high-quality and rather stylish work shirts, available in mens and womens sizes. Each shirt features a beautifully embroidered FoPL logo and plenty of zippered pockets.

Order via our website or the form on this [link](#).

THEY'RE NOT JUST FOR GARDENING

The quality and utility of our workshirts is well known to members who spend hours each month pulling weeds, but the shirts are not just seen in Perry Lakes.

Regular Weed Warrior and star volunteer Juliana (below), was recently in Borneo and sent this pic. Juliana found the shirt to be perfect for trekking in the jungle. Maybe it's the number of secure pockets, the quick drying fabric or just the stylish cut, but we think our work shirts get the job done, no matter where..



CAN'T MAKE SUNDAYS? JOIN WEED WARRIORS

Weed Warriors plugs the gap between our monthly weeding sessions and is an ideal event if you can't join the monthly Sunday sessions. The group meets Tuesday mornings at The Shed starting at 8am.

After weeding, join us at Cup & Co. for a coffee catchup. For more information contact Tony at works@friendsofperrylakes.org or visit our website [here](#).



MESSAGE FROM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Since joining the Committee in 2024, I've made it a priority to strengthen how we communicate with our community. This has included expanding our digital presence - launching Instagram, Threads, and an official Facebook Business page, publishing regular blog updates to complement our social media posts all with the aim of keeping our community informed.



By Brett Heil

One thing that has stood out to me is the extraordinary commitment of our committee members. Beyond fulfilling their statutory responsibilities under our Articles of Association, many take on leadership roles in key portfolios such as education, on-ground works, wildlife, and communications. The committee meets monthly to oversee ongoing projects, plan new initiatives, and respond swiftly to emerging issues. At the heart of everything we do is our shared mission: to conserve and enhance the natural environment of Perry Lakes and ensure the long-term sustainability of its ecosystems.

This year has brought particular challenges. The drying of the lakes, due to the failure of the Perry Lakes Replenishment Project to meet expectations, is of concern to the community. The committee is actively investigating the causes, identifying potential solutions, and addressing other critical threats such as nutrient loading and invasive carp. We continue to present our findings to the Town of Cambridge, advocating for timely and effective responses, while also keeping our community informed through our website and social media.

We're also proud to be launching an exciting new programme — the **Citizen Science Initiative**. Our first group of volunteers has completed training in bird surveys and water quality monitoring, and they've already begun field work. The data collected through this program will be invaluable in shaping evidence-based conservation strategies. You can follow their progress via the 'Citizen Science' section on our website—and if you're interested in taking part, we'd love to hear from you. We're also currently seeking a Citizen Science Coordinator, so please reach out if you think this could be you.

Finally, as we enter the new financial year, we warmly encourage you to renew your membership and invite others to join. Membership is vital to the ongoing success of Friends of Perry Lakes, helping us fund conservation projects, community engagement, and ecological research. Thank you for your support—I look forward to seeing you out in the field soon.

CITIZEN SCIENCE IN ACTION

Our inaugural water quality team conducted their first field trial at the end of June, with the kit provided by Town of Cambridge. While the work might sound serious, there were lots of opportunities for jokes and giggles as they donned their waders and learned how to read the data from the new system. Mentor Dr Don McFarlane delivered the learning experience around the science and son, Chris, was impressed with the speed at which the group grasped the science behind their venture.



PLANTFEST 25

PlantFest25 was a resounding success, bringing together passionate volunteers to regenerate Perry Lakes. Over the course of the event, 4,000 native plants were carefully placed into the ground — each one helping to bring new life to the wetland ecosystem and enhancing the ecology of Perry Lakes

But PlantFest25 wasn't just about planting. It was a celebration of community, a demonstration of what's possible when people come together with a shared purpose. The energy was infectious - from the youngest planters to our senior volunteers and the event has already sparked renewed interest in conservation volunteering and citizen science at the lakes.

For Friends of Perry Lakes, PlantFest25 marks a turning point. As we increase our restoration efforts, we're also laying the foundation for long-term stewardship. More plants mean more maintenance, more monitoring, and more opportunities to learn, care, and contribute. The momentum from this event is vital and ongoing support through volunteering and membership will help ensure that Perry Lakes continues to thrive for generations to come.

PlantFest26, here we come.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR THE COMPLETE PLANTFEST25 RESOURCE PAGE

Learn the science, experience the community involvement.

<https://friendsofperrylakes.org/plantfest25>

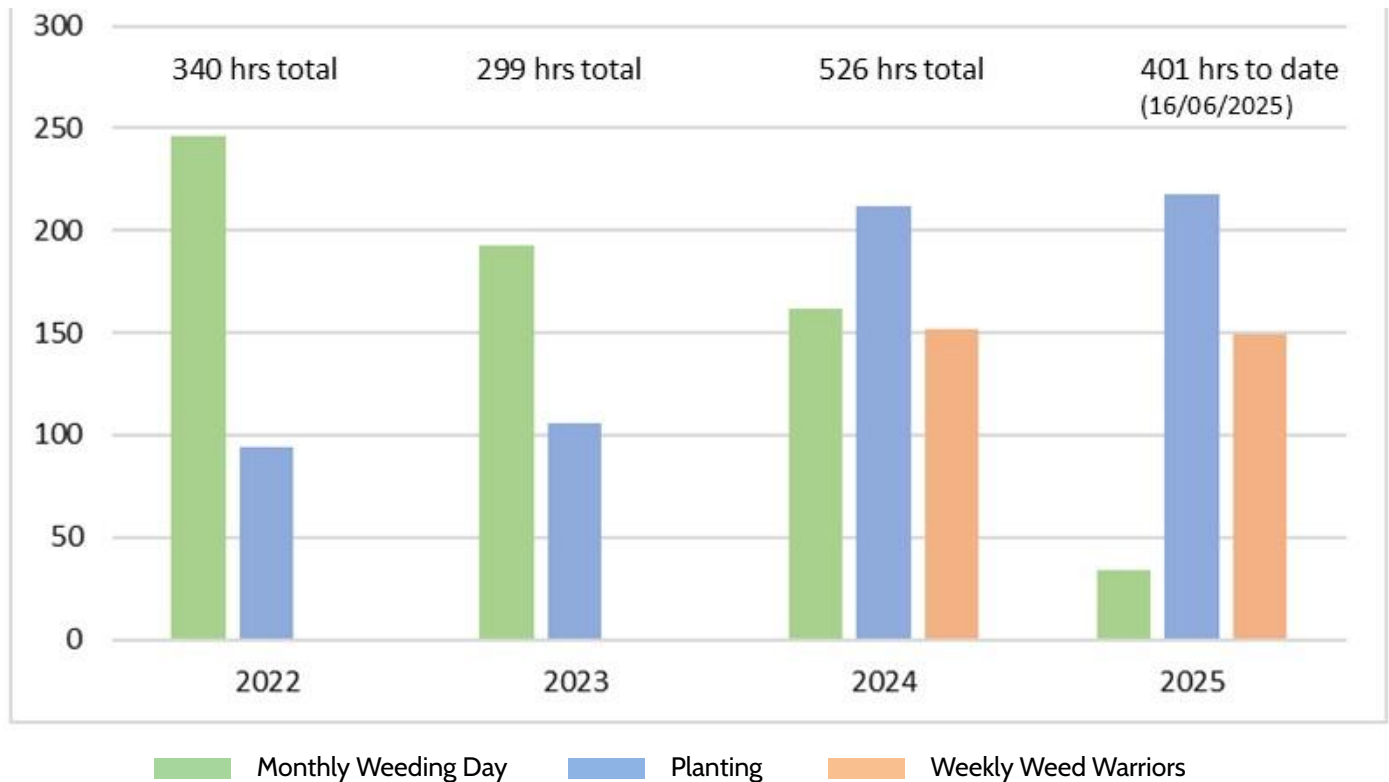


VOLUNTEERING

Friends of Perry Lakes was recognised by Town of Cambridge during National Volunteers week in May. Attending the event were a handful of members representing our incredible community. The big honour of the night went to our friends over at Bold Park and Friends of Bold Park Bushlands Chair (and also and FoPL member) Steve, accepted the award.

Following is our latest volunteer data.

Volunteer Weeding & Planting Effort - 2022 to date



In 2025, we're on track to break our record for volunteer contributions - a powerful sign that our impact in Perry Lakes is growing. As we plant more native species and restore more of the park, our future efforts will increasingly rely on ongoing care, like weeding and maintenance. That's why building our membership base is more important than ever. Members are the backbone of Friends of Perry Lakes, and as our conservation work expands, so too does the need for more hands, more support, and more people committed to protecting this special place.

Member benefits include:

- Regular updates on news, events, and volunteer opportunities
- Access to all fieldwork, education sessions, and social activities
- Free entry to most catered events and discounts on merchandise and paid programs
- Voting rights at general meetings and the AGM (for members aged 16+)
- Eligibility to nominate for committee and subcommittee roles
- Exclusive discount on our high-quality work shirts
- The satisfaction of actively supporting the conservation of Perry Lakes



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**CLICK
HERE TO
JOIN**