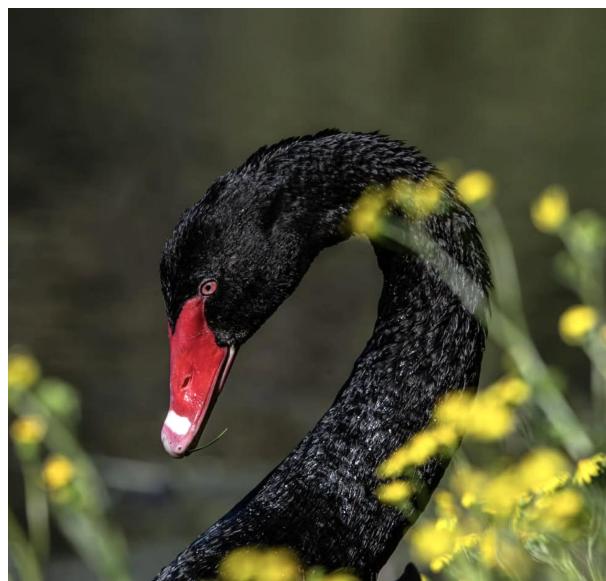


FRIENDS OF PERRY LAKES NEWSLETTER

October 2025



Renewal at
Perry Lakes
stunningly
captured by Ian
Stewart.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Just like the natural environment, evolution and renewal are major contributors to the success of an organisation. Friends of Perry Lakes has certainly evolved since the establishment of the group about 4 years ago, with the addition of lake water quantity and quality monitoring and wildlife surveillance to the initial, and highly successful, programme of native plant revegetation and weed control. The establishment of a citizen science programme has been a major part of this. In addition, the recent election of one of our members (Brett Heil) to the Town of Cambridge Council should facilitate our involvement in management and planning activities for Perry Lakes Reserve in the future.

To maintain a process of renewal, we encourage members to think about nominating for the FoPL committee at our AGM, which will be held on 27th November at the Cambridge Bowling Club. We are hoping to recruit a new secretary and possibly Education Coordinator at that meeting. Responsibilities are not arduous and committee membership can be very rewarding. I have learnt a lot about care of the natural environmental and environmental science since I joined the committee. Please contact me if you would like more information. Importantly, the expertise of people leaving the committee will not be lost to our group as leaving members will continue to provide help and advice where needed.

Martyn French - chair@friendsofperrylakes.org



By Martyn French
Chair

AGM SAVE THE DATE

This year's AGM will be held at the Cambridge Bowling Club at 7pm on Thursday 27th November. Please consider getting involved by nominating to become a committee member. Further details will be sent closer to the date.

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Memberships expired on 30 June—if life's been a bit hectic and you haven't had a chance to renew, now's the perfect time to jump back in and show 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 every renewal helps keep our community strong, active, and making a real difference for Perry Lakes.



Please support us via [this link](#).

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.



MESSAGE FROM THE EDUCATION OFFICER

By Dr Don McFarlane, Education Officer (Hydrogeologist)

Citizen Scientists have now collected sufficient water quality data to observe seasonal patterns.

In **summer and autumn**, lake waters typically exhibit low dissolved oxygen levels and become reducing as water levels decrease. When lake beds dry, peat may oxidise, transforming organic phosphorus and nitrogen into more plant-accessible inorganic forms; especially in the northern part of East Lake. Reeds such as *Typha* and *Schoenoplectus* regenerate following their winter dormancy. Carp may be restricted to deeper areas of West Lake, especially in the northern section where inflow from the Herdsman Main Drain (HMD) increases oxygenation.

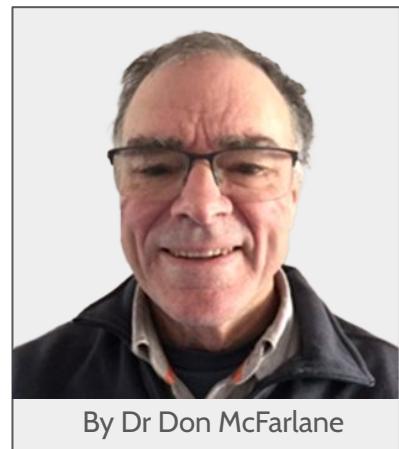
During **winter and spring**, inflow of cold, fresh road runoff—characteristically low in phosphorus—raises dissolved oxygen and inundates low-lying areas of the lakes. Salinity decreases, though the lakes are only ever slightly brackish in late summer. Waters maintain a slightly alkaline pH throughout the year. Phosphorus levels tend to be more consistent across the lakes during summer, occasionally resulting in red blooms of the water fern *Azolla* in western parts of West Lake.

Substantial road runoff, observed in 2023 and 2025, allows water to pass through the balance pipe from West to East Lake. An *Azolla* bloom occurred in winter in eastern West Lake alongside elevated phosphorus and reduced dissolved oxygen. The highest phosphorus concentrations were in western East Lake following inundation of previously dry beds, an area that exhibited low redox readings and a sulphurous odour.

Without significant rain during summer or autumn, East Lake is expected to experience considerable drying in 2025/26, while West Lake will retain water due to inflow from the HMD. Its water levels will depend on pump performance, with only shallow levels if the pumps continue to produce only 20-30% of their design capacity.

Phosphorus levels, the principal cause of algal blooms are close to trigger levels in West Lake. The HMD diversion adds about 70 kg of P each year. Reeds need to be harvested and/or chemicals added to remove the excess P. Treatments could include hydro-talcite, Phoslock™ or alum.

Citizen Scientists plan to continue four-weekly monitoring to further improve understanding of seasonal water quality variations and how management practices might influence these patterns.



By Dr Don McFarlane



Measuring water quality under an *Azolla* bloom, West Lake, September 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE WORKS COORDINATOR

After good winter rains and now with warmer weather arriving, our revegetation areas are looking in great shape!

Plants put in at PlantFest '25 in June have taken well while previous years' plantings are advancing nicely to provide cover and habitat for birds, turtles and the increasing number of quendas now being seen within Perry Lakes.

All this growth, however, means plenty of weeds and on 21st September we held our routine third-Sunday-of-the-month weeding session. There was plenty of enthusiasm and good cheer from those who came along and after bagging a good number of pesky weeds all enjoyed an excellent morning tea. Our next Sunday session is October 26th meeting at the FoPL Shed at 08.00hrs then morning tea around 09.00hrs – plenty of weeds to tackle so please come along to help keep the revegetation looking good and meet up and socialise with other members and volunteers!

Allied to the monthly weeding, the Weekly Weed Warriors have been busy making a difference on most Tuesday mornings before ending up over coffee at Cup & Co. A big shout-out to this hardy bunch of volunteers who kept battling the weeds and the elements throughout winter!!

Though planting in 2026 seems far off, we've already had discussion with Cambridge Council over choice of plants and proposed planting areas. To give the nursery enough lead time to prepare plants the 2026 order has already been placed by ToC.

Frog Walk

Our intrepid frog spotters were recently treated to another engaging field trip organised by Andrew Burbidge and expertly led by Nicki Mitchell with assistance from Olly Berry.

Throughout the evening, calls from only two frog species were consistently heard, while a third species was detected briefly by some participants. The elevated water level in West Lake may have reduced calling activity among species that typically prefer the shallow areas near the lake's edge. We are keen to do another walk, when conditions are right. Please be sure to register your interest when the date is announced.



By Tony Harding



LOOK THE PART AND PROTECT YOURSELF



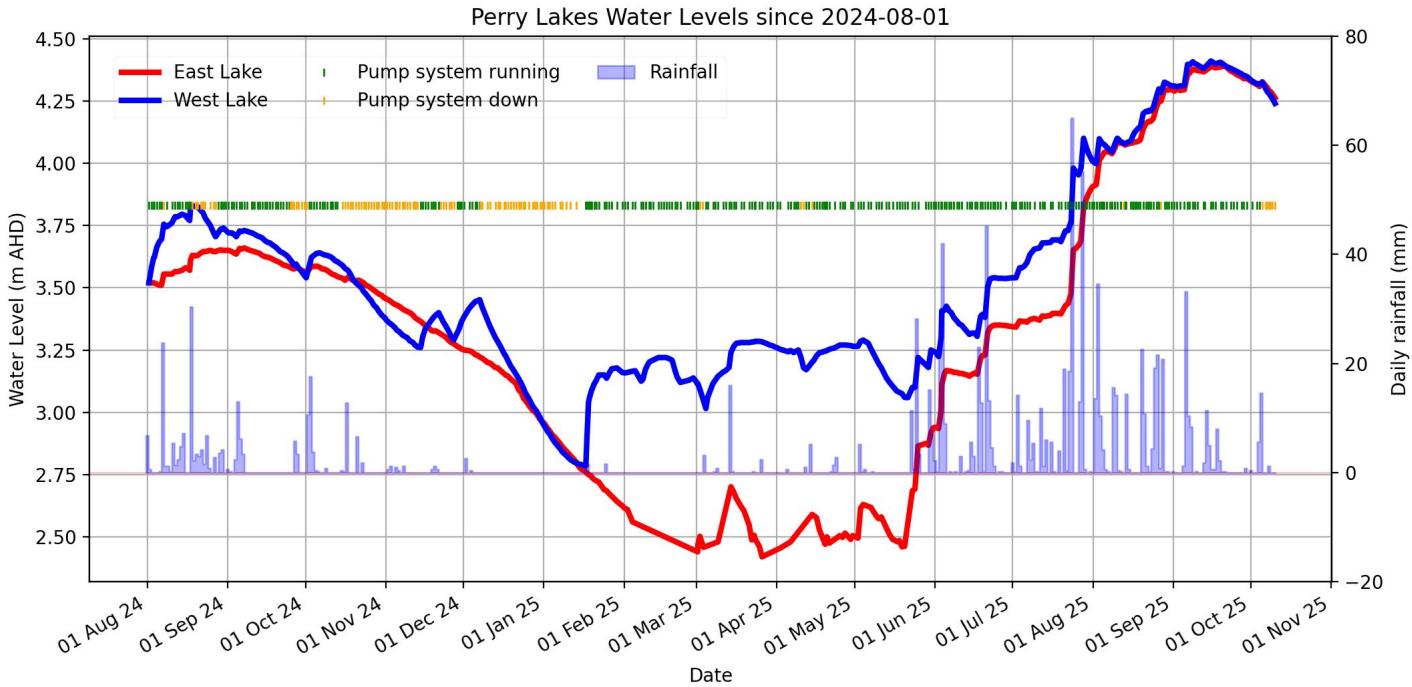
Perfect for any rugged outdoor activity, we have new stock of our high-quality and rather stylish work shirts, available in mens and womens sizes. Each shirt features a beautifully embroidered FoPL logo and plenty of zippered pockets.

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

Perry Lakes Hydrology

By Rod Banyard

Lake water levels

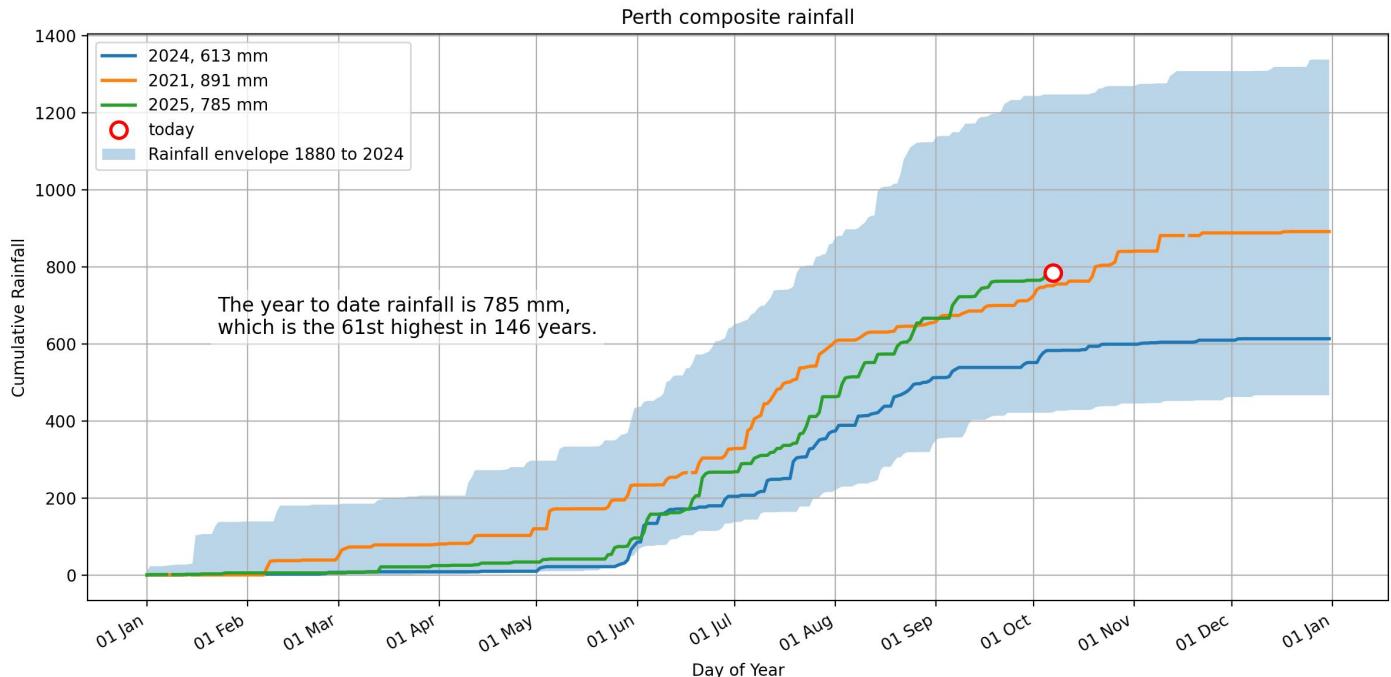


This spring, the Perry Lakes have reached their highest levels since the 1970s, peaking at 4.4 metres above sea level—just 0.6 metres below the top of the banks and holding about two-thirds of their maximum water volume.

These levels are substantially higher than last year's, largely due to good rainfall



Rainfall



The 2025 winter was exceptionally kind. Perth has already recorded 30% more rain than the total for 2024, and rainfall is tracking close to 2021, our most recent “good rainfall year.”

The Lakes benefit from rainfall in three main ways:

- Direct rainfall falling on the lake surface, which contributes the most water;
- Stormwater runoff from surrounding roads, delivered through the drainage system, which can also be substantial, and
- Groundwater recharge that raises the groundwater level and reduces seepage from the lakes

However, while this year feels wet, it's worth remembering that rainfall still hasn't reached the long-term average of about 800 mm since records began in 1880.

Herdsman Lake Drain Pumping

The story of pumping from the Herdsman Drain to West Lake has been a difficult one.

The pumps were out of action for long periods during the spring and summer of 2024. Although the issue was fixed in mid-February, the Lakes had already dropped to very low levels. Pumping resumed, adding water to West Lake, but East Lake remained virtually empty until winter began. Even when operating, the pumps have run only about half the time and at half the design flow rate, resulting in daily volumes of around one megalitre—less than a quarter of the intended 4.8 megalitres per day.

The Town of Cambridge is investigating the causes of the intermittent and low pumping rates. Unfortunately, the pumps went offline again on 4 October for six days later when a component in the control system failed.

Balance Pipe

A 225 mm diameter balance pipe connects the two lakes, allowing water to flow between them when the water level of either Lake exceeds 3.83 m AHD.

Flow from West Lake to East Lake began in late July, continuing until West Lake fell below East Lake after the pumps went offline.

Water is now flowing in the opposite direction—from East to West Lake—which is unfortunate, as East Lake can only be recharged during summer when West Lake remains above the pipe level. Time will tell if restoration of the pumping can reverse the flow again.

MESSAGE FROM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

A New Chapter for Perry Lakes and Our Community

From Brett Heil – Councillor for Coastal Ward, Town of Cambridge

Many of you know me through my involvement with Friends of Perry Lakes, where I've had the privilege of working alongside others who care deeply about our local environment. I'm writing to share that I've recently been elected unopposed as a Councillor for the Coastal Ward of the Town of Cambridge.



By Brett Heil

My decision to run came from a desire to strengthen the bridge between community and council. I've seen how local knowledge and citizen science can shape better outcomes for Perry Lakes and beyond – but only when they're genuinely heard and supported. As councillor, I want to ensure that listening, evidence, and transparency guide every decision that affects our parks, wetlands, and open spaces.

The Friends of Perry Lakes experience has shown me the value of practical stewardship and the importance of protecting what makes our area unique. From water-quality monitoring and lake management to meaningful support for all of Cambridge's Friends groups, I'll continue to advocate for a council that respects both science and community voice.

This new role is an opportunity to take the same principles that guide FoPL – Listening • Protecting • Achieving – and apply them across the Town. My commitment remains the same: to protect our natural assets, strengthen community connections, and ensure Cambridge's environment thrives for generations to come.

Brett Heil, Councillor (Coastal Ward)

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR AMAZING PHOTOGRAPHERS

High-quality photos are key to keeping our community engaged, and we're fortunate to have contributions from participants at our events as well as our two amazing "hero" photographers, Harrison Osgarby and Ian Stewart. Their stunning images regularly feature in our posts and newsletter, and many of you have asked how to see more – you can support their work by visiting their social media channels through the links provided.

We'd also love to showcase more talent from our community! If you're a photographer and would like to share your shots from Friends of Perry Lakes events, please get in touch – your work could be featured in our next newsletter or social post.



Follow Harrison



Follow Ian



Above: Black Cockatoos by Harrison Osgarby and Left: New Holland Honeyeater by Ian Stewart

EVENTS

Alongside our important conservation work, Friends of Perry Lakes offers a variety of events to inspire, connect, and celebrate our community. From hands-on weeding and planting days, to educational walks and talks, and relaxed social gatherings — there's something for everyone.

Choose your level of involvement.

MONTHLY WEEDING

Our monthly weeding event is typically held the third Sunday of each month but this month it falls on **26 October**. As the weather warms, this is an ideal way to start your Sunday, with exercise and a chance to interact with your community.

After each weeding, we host a morning tea back at The Shed which is free for all participants and members.



CAN'T MAKE SUNDAYS? TRY THIS.

Weed Warriors fills the gap between our monthly weeding sessions with weekly weeding session on Tuesday. Weed Warriors meet Tuesday mornings at The Shed starting at 8am. After weeding, join them at Cup & Co. for a coffee catchup.

For more information contact [Tony](#) or visit our website [here](#).



EDUCATION EVENTS

Discover the wonder of nature with our engaging educational events that bring science and community together! Recently, participants leapt into learning on our **Frog Walk**, exploring local wetlands under the guidance of expert ecologists who shared fascinating insights into the lives of these remarkable amphibians. Next, join us for **Restoring Native Vegetation to Perry Lakes and the Bold Park Corridor**, where we'll dive into practical conservation efforts and learn from leading restoration specialists about how to nurture our native ecosystems back to health. Each event is designed to connect you with passionate experts and the latest ecological knowledge—so you can experience, understand, and help protect our unique natural heritage.



SOCIAL EVENTS

You don't have to pull a single weed to be part of the fun! Friends of Perry Lakes isn't just about hands-on conservation — it's also about community. Our social events are a great way to connect with other members, share stories, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings we all care about. While we offer catering at our weeding, planting, and education sessions for those who take part, everyone is welcome to come along and join the conversation. Keep an eye on our website for upcoming gatherings — and remember, most events are free for members!



Keep up to date on all events by [visiting our website](#).