

Lake McLarty Shorebird Project

Watch for updates as the work goes on into 2007

"Lake McLarty added to national shorebird project" by Josephine Te Puni *

It's on! Lake McLarty has been accepted into the Shorebird Project, contracts have been signed, and Bill Rutherford has agreed to take on the role of Project Officer and has started the rounds. Unfortunately, the lake has already dried out and the birds have departed, but the Birds Australia count this year exceeded 29,500 - how's that for coverage of a body of water approximately only 2.1km (N-S) and 1.25km (E-W) 29,500 birds!

After being advised in December that Lake McLarty had been accepted into the shorebird conservation project, the PPG went into overdrive to get the official paperwork underway and to look into employing a researcher part-time for this important national project. About six months ago, the PPG submitted Lake McLarty and Nairns, Goegrup and Black Lakes as areas worthy of inclusion into the project to protect shorebirds. PPG members Griselda Hitchcock, Marion Timms and I met with James Duggie, the WA project officer, Damian Postma, from the Peel Catchment Council, Kim Wilson, Landcare Development Officer and Murray Love and Tanya Jackson from CALM, in early January for an on-site visit.

It was decided that Lake McLarty was indeed important and in need of protection from existing and planned development especially once the Peel Deviation goes through. This was the first stage in action to alert authorities, both national and regional, of the need to protect the migratory and local birds that visit every year. A month later, I returned at 6 am to experience, in almost silent surroundings, the gentle murmur of the birds, which to me was electrifying: a most magical place. The birds' survival is paramount. I also took Bianca Priest, the National Coordinator for the Shorebird Project, out to Lake McLarty for a whirlwind visit when she flew in to Perth for a few days in February.

The lake's special attributes for the bird world were not wasted on her because Bianca was very impressed.

Work now starts in earnest to publicise and inform all and sundry of the importance and beauty of Lake McLarty and the protection the lake and birds need. The Shorebird Conservation Project, funded by the National Heritage Trust and managed by the World Wildlife Fund, aims to increase awareness, understanding and involvement by communities in conservation of shorebird habitat. Where possible, it will also enable communities to conserve and wisely manage important shorebird sites.

* Our Lake McLarty segment is dedicated to Josephine Te Puni who passed away November 2005