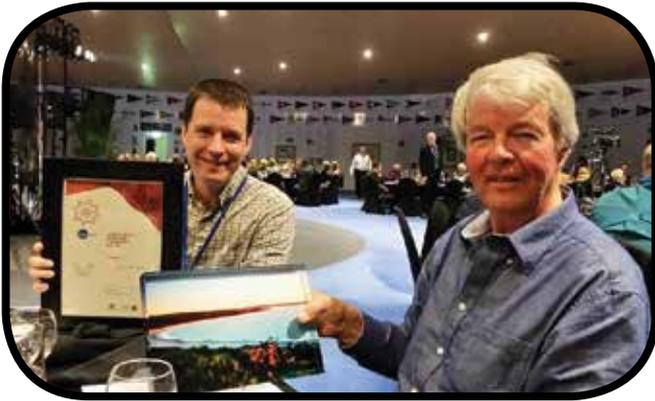




The Blackwood Basin Group (BBG) is a non-profit community landcare organisation. We work closely with our local community and a wide range of stakeholders to deliver natural resource management (NRM) across the diverse Blackwood River catchment, which covers 23 million hectares from Dumbleyung in the east to where the river meets the ocean at Hardy Inlet, Augusta. Our services range from ground-breaking wetland rehabilitation and sustainable agriculture trial programs, to on-ground project support and hands-on education programs.

With such a wide area to manage, the BBG relies heavily on input from landholders, volunteers and other stakeholders who generously donate their time and resource work together in conserving, enhancing and protecting our environment.



Vision:

A Blackwood Basin that is flourishing and connected, preserved and improving, valued by our community, and productive for every landholder

Mission:

Inspiring landholders and our community to sustainably manage and improve the Blackwood Basin's natural environment and its productivity for the benefit of future generations.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The BBG can look back on another successful year of delivering landcare and conservation outcomes across the region.

Staff changes half way through the year created some challenges when our Project Coordinator and the Project Manager of our key Priority Bittern and Waterbird project had to leave us. We wish them both well and we very much hope to see them again in the future. Their positions have now been taken by three excellent new staff who are working hard to fill some very big shoes.

Despite the upheavals, we have been able to achieve all of our project outcomes for the year and we were also finally able to commence the process of updating our Strategic plan, a task which has been on the drawing board for some time.

For any NRM group to continue achieving results on the ground it requires stability and continuity as well as experienced and well qualified staff. This has been difficult to maintain in the face of dwindling resources from State and Federal Governments. It has now become imperative that we supplement government financial support with private funding in order to continue assisting land holders with their land management and salinity problems, creating linkages of natural bushland and creating new wetland habitats.

This year the BBG took a first step in this direction by successfully negotiating significant extra income from the non-government sector. We intend to further increase our efforts in this area during the coming year.

Community involvement continues to be one of our highest priorities, it is communities and people who make things happen. We see our task as stimulating landholders and communities to take action and be involved in NRM.

This year we can be proud of our achievements in this area which have resulted in the BBG being nominated to represent Western Australia at the National Landcare Awards in September in the Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group Award.

For the coming year our priorities include finalising our new Strategy as well as continuing to secure funding from alternative sources. The stability of the BBG into the future is essential for us to continue our work with landholders and communities, improving sustainability and protecting and improving the natural environment of the Blackwood basin for future generations.

I wish to thank the BBG Committee again for their unflagging support and guidance throughout the year and all the volunteers who have so generously given their time and expertise. One of the joys of being on the BBG Committee is the cheerful and positive attitude of the team who continue to produce quite amazing results with very few resources.

Dr Per Christensen, Chairman, Blackwood Basin Group



Productive & Profitable Farming – Jul 2015 ~ BBG Annual General Meeting – Oct 2015
 Redfin fishing competition – Oct 2015 ~ Dinninup Show – November 2015
 Waterbird Project Open Day – Nov 2015
 Biodiversity Photo competition – November 2015
 Bridgetown Show – November 2015 ~ Black cockatoo workshop – Feb 2016
 WA Wetland Management conference – Feb 2016 ~ Woolorama – March 2016

EVENTS & FIELD DAYS

 Blackwood Basin Group

Fish Emulsion & Soil Restoration workshop - March 2016
 Balingup Greenbushes Fox Shoot - March 2016 ~ Kids Macro holiday program – April 2016
 Balingup Small Farm Field Day – April 2016 ~ Vertebrate Pest control workshop – April 2016
 Rabbit Control Roadshow – May 2016 ~ Strategy Development workshops – May 2016
 Katanning Landcare Forum–June 2016 ~ Bridgetown Landcare Forum –June 2016
 Drainage, water rebate and broadacre composting – June 2016

1. PRIORITY BITTERN & WATERBIRD BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

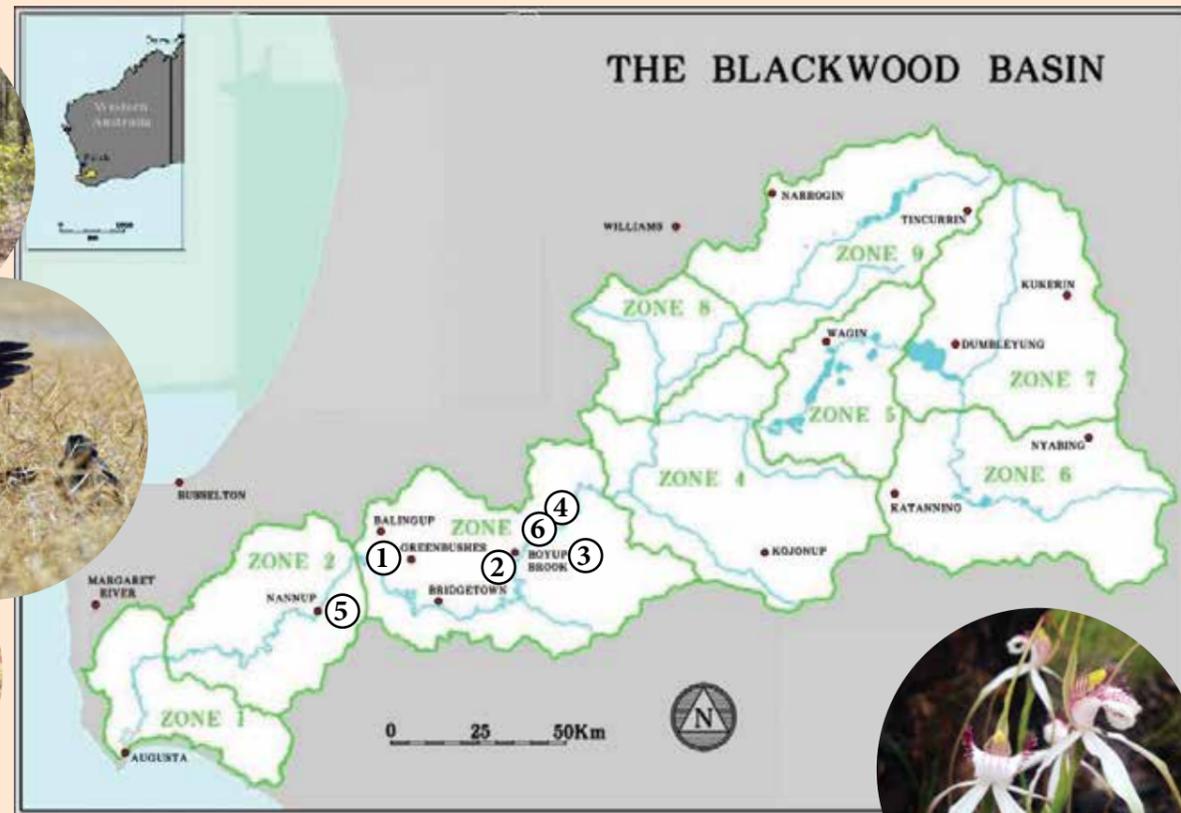
Known as the Waterbird Project, this program has designed and established a mosaic of freshwater wetlands from historical mining pits at Greenbushes, located 75 km south of Bunbury in the South West of Western Australia. Coordinated by the BBG, this project is supported through funding from the Australian Government, and is one of the BBG's most successful and highest impact projects.

The project aims to create a habitat for over 42 species of waterbirds, including three endangered bittern species and six migratory birds of international significance. Bitterns are a group of birds whose habitat has been reduced drastically since European settlement, and it is still shrinking.

Now in its third year, the Waterbird Project continues to foster partnerships with industry, local and State Government agencies, Murdoch University, four schools and nine community groups. Over eleven hectares of past mining dams have been modified to create interconnected beaches, mud flats and habitat areas which have been planted with over 32,000 seedlings by community and international volunteers. A further 5,200 seedlings and 4.7kg of native seed have been planted in the last 12 months. Ongoing monitoring of the thirty cockatoo nestboxes built by local school students and installed on the site has been carried out, along with ongoing control and baiting of feral animals to increase populations of native animals. Weed mapping and control has been extended to new areas to add to the flora, weed and aquatic fauna surveys already undertaken.

Community education workshops and events in the past year have focused on Black Cockatoo species, macro-invertebrate sampling and identification, feral pest control, and cockatoo nestbox construction. A red-fin fishing competition and photo competition created much interest and a children's holiday program has engaged new people and generations in the project.

The project is continuing to achieve outcomes to improve the natural area for the long-term which could not be done without strong community support and engagement. Whether it is through data collection, tree planting or input into future planning, the community is central to the activities of the BBG. Your involvement at any level is welcome.



2. MAXIMISING BENEFIT FROM CROP RESIDUES

Supported by BBG, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, this project focuses on stubble retention and management practices to improve soil condition in mixed farming systems. Demonstration sites on a Boyup Brook property have undergone weed monitoring, soil sampling and crop yield sampling and will be looking at an oat crop this growing season. A field day at the property, held in conjunction with guest speaker Nicole Masters from New Zealand, was well attended in March and looked at the results of the trials to date as well as the practical aspects of application.

3. ON-GROUND WORKS (SWCC)

With funding through the South West Catchments Council, this project runs until 2018 and works with the local community to reduce the degradation, loss and fragmentation of natural habitats for nationally significant species in the Blackwood Catchment. In the last 12 months, this project assisted landholders across neighbouring properties in Chowerup to erect almost 11km of fencing to protect creekline areas. In addition, 4 ha of creekline in Kulikup were infill planted with native species to enhance habitat and biodiversity values.



4. TRIGWELL BRIDGE

Working with a landholder in the Trigwell Bridge area, the BBG developed a property plan to protect and improve 22ha of high value native habitat, with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. This remnant vegetation was protected using 3.5km of fencing and more than 4,200 native seedlings planted over 10ha along a degraded creekline to enhance and connect the remnant bush. Motion activated cameras at the site captured a variety of native and feral animals over the last 12 months. These photos are now part of an interactive, online Info Hub on our website with examples of sightings and resources.

5. PROTECTING, RESTORING AND REGENERATING THE BLACKWOOD RIVER

Funded under the State NRM Program, the BBG worked with five landholders from West Arthur, Boyup Brook and Winneup as well as a 'Friends of Group' in Nannup to construct 6.8 km of riparian fencing and protect 73ha of Blackwood River frontage. The project addressed degraded creeklines at the junction of the Blackwood, Balgarup and Arthur Rivers, and over 3200 seedlings were planted, in addition to a first attempt of direct seeding more than 400 000 seeds. This project contributes towards the goal of protecting the South West's iconic Blackwood River against salinity and erosion problems and builds on decades of landholder and community awareness on improved land management practices for river restoration.



BBG Staff from left: Kristen Mappin, Karrie Williamson, Sara Weir, Trudy Philips, Margaret Jakobson, Helen O'Connell, Brian Chambers

6. SALINITY MANAGEMENT IN THE DINNINUP CATCHMENT

Building upon ongoing salinity management work in the Dinninup Brook this project addressed salinity issues on prime agricultural land by working with five properties, three of which neighbour each other. 12km of fencing helped to protect 126ha of creeklines and remnant vegetation which are habitat for priority fauna species. A workshop on drainage, clearing and water legalities, in partnership with relevant Government Departments, raised awareness about land management impacts on the environment and regulatory frameworks.

BLACKWOOD CATCHMENT STRATEGY

The updated BBG Strategy reflects input from stakeholders across the region, and focusses on the core priorities for landcare action and our organisation. As part of this project, the BBG worked with active local landcare groups to ensure that projects across the entire catchment contribute effectively towards the common goal of a healthy Blackwood River and surrounding landscape. Training was also provided to ensure we have the skills to review and update the strategy into the future.

RIPPER MOUNDER

The BBG received funding from Friends of the SouthWest to purchase a Ripper Moulder for use in preparation of revegetation sites for local landholders. The equipment includes a planting function which can plant seedlings of various sizes or direct seed. Several properties have made use of this new resource which has potential to reduce costs and time for on-ground works, and will be available for use well into the future.

PROJECT SUPPORTERS:

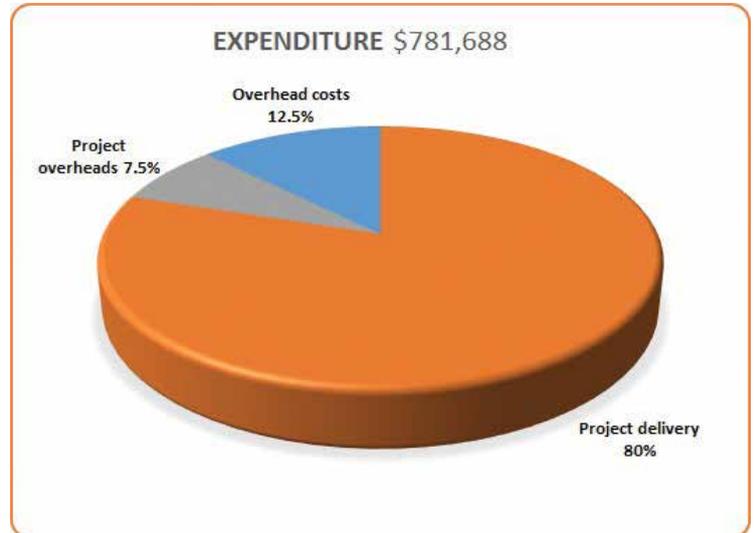
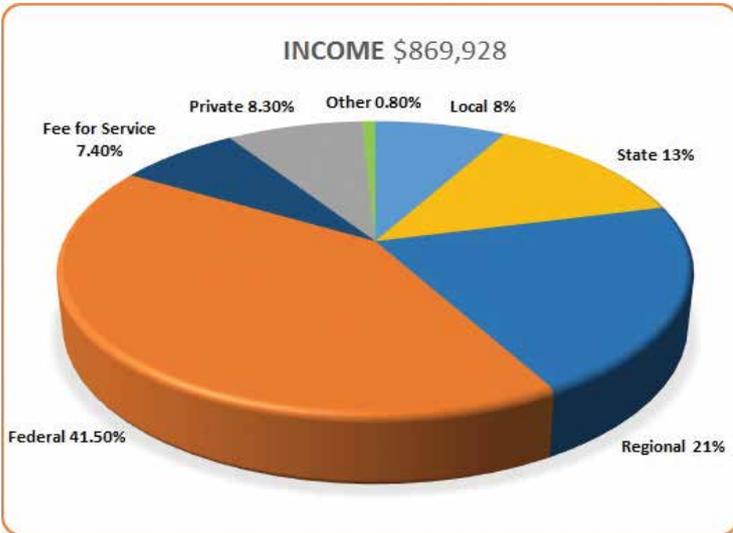


AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Winner of the 2016 National Landcare Awards for Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group Award
 Winner of the 2015 WA Landcare Award, Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group



2015-2016 FINANCIALS



BBG TEAM:

- Brian Chambers - Program Manager
- Trudy Philips - Executive Officer
- Margaret Jakobson - Waterbird Project Officer
- Kristen Mappin - Sustainable Agriculture Project Officer
- Sara Weir - Sustainable Agriculture Project Officer
- Karrie Williams - Project officer
- Helen O'Connell - Administration Officer

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Chair: Dr Per Christensen
- Vice Chair: Derek Dilkes
- Treasurer: Philippe Kaltenreider
- Secretary: Janette Liddelow
- Members: Mick Quartermaine, Clark Ward, Kirsten Skraha, Nick Dodson, Jill Richardson, Bob Longmore, Doreen Mackman, Bruce Hamilton, DAFWA Representative Stephen Tunbridge and DPAW Representative Greg Durell.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

In the coming year, the BBG will continue to run a range of diverse NRM projects across the catchment in coordination with other local landcare groups including our stubble breakdown demonstration, on-ground works and our WaterBird project.

New projects include a series of Governance workshops aimed at improving skills in non-profit organisations; on-ground revegetation projects



“Bringing back the Boyup Brook” and works across the Shire of West Arthur; and the building of an all-access boardwalk at the Waterbird project site.

