



# Media Statement

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**Tuesday, 7 April 2020**

## **Little discovery proves a huge reward for river science team**

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) has just completed its annual dry-season assessments of river health across the southwest and south coast of Western Australia, as part of the Healthy Rivers program.

And one of the many positive findings was the discovery of two Little Eagles near Mill Brook, tributary of the King River near Albany.

DWER River Science Division Principal Scientist Tim Storer said the discovery of the birds was an excellent indicator that the river system was healthy.

“The presence of a pair of Little Eagles is evidence of a strong ecosystem,” Dr Storer said.

“These eagles prefer to nest in areas with mature trees within an intact corridor of vegetation.

“Being at the top of the food chain it shows that the complex food webs below them are well supported.”

Landholders, Geoff and Di Lodge, who own one of the properties visited on the Mill Brook, have spent more than a decade protecting and restoring the river corridor.

Not only have they preserved and fostered mature trees, but they have encouraged growth of understory through planting and fencing to prevent disturbance from livestock.

“We are very fond of these eagles, and have noticed that since the vegetation through the river corridor has recovered there has been a steady return of numerous birds and mammals,” Mr Lodge said.

The Mill Brook site, along with others in the Healthy Rivers program network, will be revisited every three years under the program.

The 2019-20 annual Healthy Rivers program included assessments through rivers and creeks of the Warren, Donnelly, Collie, Preston, Avon, Gingin, Walpole, Denmark, Goodga and Kalgan systems.

River health assessments help the department manage the State’s waterways and includes determining the ecological requirements of river systems to help manage water use.

“This is particularly important given the impact climate change is having through Western Australia,” Dr Storer said.

“The work of these landholders, which is being mirrored by others across the State, showcases the reward for effort that can be obtained even at the local scale.

“It also demonstrates that by working together we can get significant change at a regional and State level.”

DWER Senior Natural Resource Management Officer Karen McKeough said that there has, and continues to be, a considerable amount of effort put into waterways management.

“We are starting to see some great outcomes,” Ms McKeough said.



“An important focus has been on maintaining natural vegetation layers, which are critical in protecting overall river ecosystems.

“Stream vegetation stabilises banks, preventing erosion, and shades water which mitigates rising temperatures and less water entering the system due to climate change.

“It also controls the shape of rivers, buffers overland flow of sediment and potential contaminants, and provides food and habitat to the river in the form of detritus and large wood.”

**DWER media contact – [media@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:media@dwer.wa.gov.au)**