

Hawksbury Lagoon update

It is good to see the weather warming up as we move towards summer (we can only hope it isn't as wet as last year). The lagoon is generally at its worst through the summer months with Post Office Creek often turning bright green from algal bloom; this is due to the assumed high nitrate/phosphate levels, the warmer water temperature and lower water levels. Algal blooms are a common problem in these types of wetland environments. I see in the ODT that Tomahawk lagoon is experiencing an algal bloom at present, which can be deadly to animals. As you'll know we have kept the culvert gates open for the past two years to increase the flushing of the wider lagoon, in the hope that this will remove some of the sediment load and increase the oxygen levels in the water, in the expectation that this might reduce the amount of algal bloom. It is difficult to know if this has made any difference, as we don't have any regular water monitoring (something we are keen to do). There was monitoring carried out by Professor Stewart in the 1980's, he was trying to ascertain what effect swan numbers had on the water quality, the Water Management Report by Dougal McTavish completed in 2011 for which Dougal also undertook some testing and now we have Nicole Foote's Master's thesis which included water monitoring. It is my intention to carry out a comparison between these studies to ascertain what, if any, changes have occurred over the past 30 plus years.

We replaced the culvert covers a couple of weeks ago in order to maintain a good level of water in the lagoon over the summer in the hope that the fresher water will reduce the likelihood of algal blooms and enable fish numbers to be maintained (we are seeing higher numbers of shags which indicates the presence of fish, first time in a long time). The covers would also keep out the more polluted water from Post Office Creek. Unfortunately someone in the community has other ideas and has removed the cover from the culvert near Stewart Street. I am at a loss to understand their rationale for this action and would ask that they return the rubber seal and board, it would appear that we are going to have to resort to using padlocks and consider taking legal action if there is any future interference, an unwanted expense for our volunteer group.

Shirley McKewen
Chairperson