



Perth Urban Wetland, Western Australia
Photo Credits: Tim Beatley



The Perth Cultural Centre Wetland

By Tim Beatley

Completed in 2010, the [Wetland at the Perth Cultural Centre](#) demonstrates that it is possible to convert a standard sterile urban water feature (energy-intensive, heavily chlorinated) into something that can support native flora and fauna in the heart of the downtown of the city. The redesign is the work of [Josh Byrne and his firm](#). Byrne is well known as the presenter for the national television show “Gardening Australia” and is the author of *The Green Gardener*. Byrne speaks about and shows us the wetland in a [recent documentary film](#): “The idea really was to provide an

opportunity for reintroducing the types of plants and animals that were once common through this part of Perth before it was drained and became the city.”

From a biodiversity point of view, the wetland has been quite successful, with flora and fauna thriving on the site. A lot of care went into plant and faunal selection. There are Pygmy Perch chosen to control mosquitos. Plants are thriving here, with varieties chosen in part to ensure they don’t obscure views of an amphitheater stage. The wetland lies in the center of the

amphitheater, with the stage in the background, and helps to soften and draw people to these public spaces. The wetland itself sits on top of a museum storage facility.

The project addresses several goals at once. There are now a variety of events that take place at the wetland, including concerts, and sometimes a light show is projected on the adjacent museum wall. The wetland adds an unusual dimension and Josh describes the setting of these performances as “quite magical.” The wetland also adds a

wonderful, cooling, biophilic element to the city’s downtown. There are stepping platforms that allow kids to walk into the wetland. The wetland also has an important stormwater management function, collecting and filtering stormwater from surrounding buildings before it makes its way into the Swan River. According to Byrne: “It’s a great example of where a bit of inner urban biophilia and civic space can go hand in hand.”

Resources:

Biophilic Cities. Urban Wetland, Perth, Western Australia [video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGJhc-MdQyY8>.

Byrne, Josh (2006). *The Green Gardener: Sustainable Gardening in Your Own Backyard*. Viking.

Josh Byrne & Associates. Perth Cultural Centre. <http://joshbyrne.com.au/project/perth-cultural-centre-2>.

The Perth Cultural Centre. The Wetland. <https://www.mra.wa.gov.au/projects-and-places/perth-cultural-centre/organise-an-event/wetland>.



The Wetland
Photo Credits: Perth Cultural Centre