

The Bushland Whistler

Friends of Forrestdale Newsletter ♦ 1st Edition ♦ December 2013

WELCOME FROM FRIENDS OF FORRESTDALE

Welcome to the first edition of *The Bushland Whistler*, produced by the Friends of Forrestdale. In this opening issue, we would like to begin by telling you a little about our group. The Friends of Forrestdale (FoF) – currently comprising about 12



members – was launched in April 1990 following a recommendation in the *Forrestdale Lake Nature Reserve Management Plan*. Since that time, the group has played an active role assisting the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) in the care and management of the Bush Forever sites and conservation reserves in the Forrestdale area. These bushland and wetland sites include Anstey-Keane Dampland, Piara Nature Reserve and Gibbs Road Swamp – all within the Jandakot Regional Park – and Lake Forrestdale Nature Reserve.

The ever-increasing housing and industrial development in the Perth region continues to destroy native bushland and wetland habitats. The Forrestdale area is undergoing massive development, and the subsequent loss of natural ecosystems makes the few such areas that remain all the more significant. These species-rich sanctuaries, set aside years ago for conservation,

encompass a remarkable variety of plants and wildlife – some of which have been found nowhere else – and in order to retain the diversity of these extraordinary bushland and wetland areas, it is critical that they remain intact, are not fragmented, and are managed correctly. These reserves are important for so many reasons; not least of which is the fact that they enable humans to connect with nature – a key ingredient in promoting health and wellbeing of people of all ages.

In this and future issues, we will talk about matters of interest relating to these special places: flora and fauna observations, projects, activities and issues in which the Friends of Forrestdale are involved. ✧

BUSHLAND REGENERATION PROJECT



Friends of Forrestdale bush regeneration achievement

In 1993, the Friends of Forrestdale began a regeneration project on land owned by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) in Commercial Road, Forrestdale, which was cleared long ago by early settlers. Twenty years on, this ~ 1.5ha area is a thriving woodland of species native to the district – hardy species well adapted to growing in impoverished white sand: Menzies, Candlestick and Slender Banksias; Prickly Bark;

Jacksonia; Sheoak and Tree Smokebush, with a scattering of understory plants including Blueboy and Mangles Kangaroo Paws, now fill this sandy space that for years bore nothing but weeds. Indeed, some of these reintroduced species are doing so well that they have begun to self-propagate: the Tree Smokebushes in particular, yield an abundance of healthy seedlings that grow into large robust shrubs, which, in Spring produce magnificent clouds of smoke-like blooms.

While the initial planting (completed in several stages) was a group effort, the long-term care and maintainance of the plants has been accomplished by FoF members, Stan and Margaret, whose dedication and commitment to this project has been truly amazing. Congratulations Stan and Margaret on the tremendous job you have done over the years!



Tree Smokebush (*Conospermum triplinervium*)

Another encouraging feature, is that all sorts of wildlife have begun to use this regenerated bushland for feeding, nesting and shelter. Several species of honeyeater feed on the flowers of the banksias and other species, and many insectivorous birds come for the insects that are drawn to the plants and flowers. Reptile and Bandicoot tracks and



diggings are regularly seen and beneficial native insects and spiders abound. These factors further endorse the value of such projects: where land denuded by humans can, with effort, passion and commitment, be made to thrive once more. ✧

DAMPLAND FLOWERS

The dampland flowers at Anstey-Keane responded well to this year's better than usual August and September rains. Pink Petticoats (*Utricularia*



multifida) put on a captivating display; and it's always a treat to find the tiny Red Coats (*Utricularia menziesii*) dotted here and there where the ground is damp. Another special aquatic species at the reserve, *Ornduffia submersa*, is a small waterlily-like plant with hairy white flowers and oval, glossy leaves that float flat on the surface of the shallow water. This Priority 4 species, endemic to southwest WA, is found south from the Perth region (Kenwick and Forrestdale) to Busselton and Albany. Once the surface water recedes on the clay flats, Marsh Flower (*Liparophyllum capitatum*) bursts into bloom. This small eye-catching dampland plant with golden yellow flowers is also a WA native and occurs from approximately Dongara to Rocky Gully and east to about Narrogin. ✧



Clockwise from top left: Pink Petticoats; Red Coats; *Ornduffia submersa*; *Liparophyllum capitatum*

JEWEL BEETLES - Anstey-Keane Dampland

Bright colours, attractive sculpturing, short antennae and large eyes are characteristics of the most beautiful of beetles, the jewel beetles. These striking insects (belonging to the beetle superfamily, Buprestidae) vary in size from quite small beetles, to 60mm or more in length. Most adult jewel beetles feed on nectar (some feed on foliage), while the larvae of all jewel beetles are wood borers and live within the trunks and branches of living and fallen timber where they feed on the wood. Some species remain in this larval stage for a number of years, which contrasts with the relatively short adult stage of their lives.

Another interesting jewel beetle, though not commonly seen in the reserve (probably because of its small size and cryptic colouring) is *Diphucrania stigmata*. This attractive dark green beetle with white spots and a metallic sheen is found on Grass Trees where it feeds on the leaves.

The beautiful *Themognatha conspicillata* is a large jewel beetle (about 40mm in length) and has been observed in January at Anstey-Keane on the blossoms of *Eucalyptus todtiana*. The beetle pictured is a female (the male is smaller and lacks the two blue bars across the back).

Since European settlement jewel beetles have declined significantly and it is sad that they are no longer seen in their former numbers. Recurrent

fires, competition with the introduced European honeybee and, in certain cases, pressure from over-zealous collectors are factors contributing to their decline. However, without a doubt, the most critical threat to their survival is destruction of their habitat.

It is always a pleasure to encounter these lovely beetles and observe them going about their business on the bushland flowers they inhabit,

and it would indeed be a tragedy if they were to disappear. In order to stem further decline of jewel beetles and to secure their survival well into the future, we need to protect their bushland habitats and address additional issues that threaten them. This will ensure that future generations can experience the joy of seeing these amazing insects in their natural environment and be enriched and inspired by their beauty. ✧

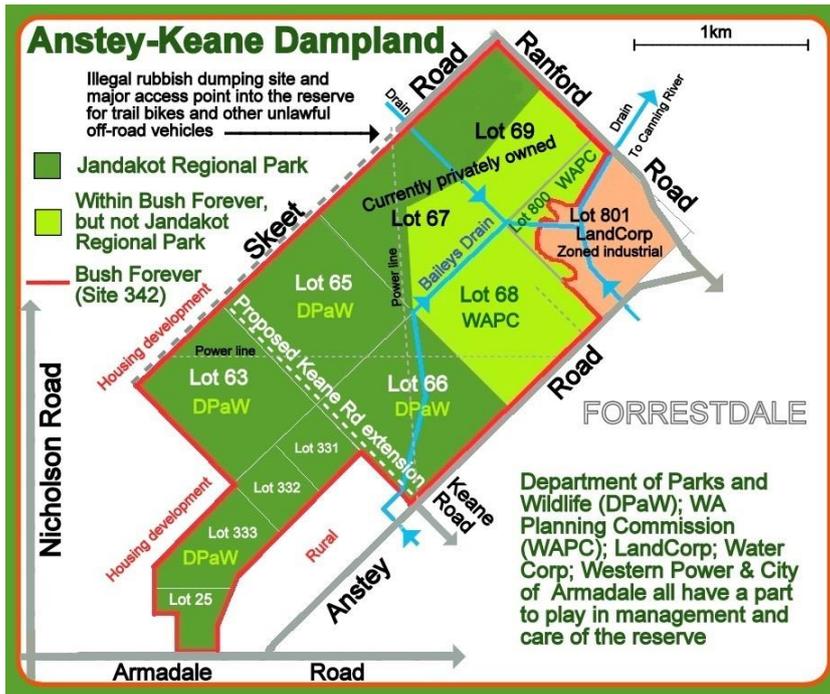
Photos (all taken at Anstey-Keane Dampland). Top row, l-r: Castiarina sp. on Melaleuca preissiana; Themognatha conspicillata on Eucalyptus todtiana blossom; Castiarina pallidiventris on Scholtzia involucrata. Bottom row, l-r: Castiarina aureola on Regelia ciliata; Diphucrania stigmata on a Xanthorrhoea leaf; Castiarina sp. on Lechenaultia floribunda.



Several species of jewel beetle occur in Anstey-Keane Dampland where they are seen feeding on the blossoms and foliage of various types of native plants.

Perhaps the most common jewel beetle in the reserve is *Castiarina aureola*, a small but beautiful beetle (approximately 1.5cm in length), which has bright red elytra with variable dark green iridescent markings. This beetle is very much associated here with Fringed Regelia *Regelia ciliata*, and the appearance of the adults in November seems to coincide with the flowering of this plant. The beetles are observed on the *Regelia* flowers through to late February.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF KEANE ROAD



Earlier this year, the City of Armadale (CoA) released for public comment their proposal to extend Keane Road through Anstey-Keane Dampland (Bush Forever site 342 and part of Jandakot Regional Park). This proposal was released under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. More than 50 submissions (most of which oppose the road) were received by the CoA, who are currently evaluating them before referring them to the Federal Government to be assessed by SEWPAC, the department responsible for “implementing the Australian Government’s policies to protect our environment and heritage, and to promote a sustainable way of life”.

The process also requires assessment at State level by the Environment Protection Authority. The CoA is expected to release the Public Environmental Review (PER) for the formal 8 week public comment period either in late 2013 or early 2014. The CoA will notify DPaW as soon as the public submissions period commences. The PER documentation and details for submissions will be available for viewing and downloading from the City’s website and a number of locations.

The Friends of Forrestdale, in conjunction with local residents and other conservation groups are strongly resisting this road. Given the many roads already built or (in the case of Skeet Road) still to be built in the immediate vicinity, we consider the extension of Keane Road to be entirely unnecessary. The consequences of this road on Anstey-Keane

Dampland will be devastating. Roads contribute to what many conservation biologists consider the major threat to biological diversity: habitat fragmentation. Fragmentation of the reserve will result in a chain of harmful processes, which include: ongoing wildlife deaths from vehicle strikes and obstruction of crucial wildlife movement through the reserve; the inevitable introduction of invasive weed species and the resultant degradation in an area of the reserve which is in excellent condition and practically weed-free; increased fire risk; litter; rubbish dumping and pollution.

Rosenberg’s Goanna

The impact the road would have on the fauna of Anstey-Keane Dampland is extremely concerning. This reserve supports a large and diverse range of native animal life: mammals (such as kangaroos and bandicoots), numerous species of birds, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. A case in point is the Rosenberg’s Goanna (*Varanus rosenbergi*), which has a viable population living in the reserve. This distinctive reptile has become scarce in the Perth region because of destruction and fragmentation of its habitat: it needs large, unbroken areas of quality bushland to survive. Anstey-Keane is one of the goanna’s few remaining strongholds in the Perth metropolitan area and now possibly the northernmost limit of its range in WA. Fragmentation caused by the extension of Keane Road and the inevitable deaths from vehicle strikes, would almost certainly lead to the demise in the reserve of this very special reptile. ✧



Rosenberg’s Goanna

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