

Australasian Darters

Australasian Darters: (*Anhinga novaehollandiae*) are found mainly in the tropics and subtropics where they frequent wetlands and sheltered coastal waters. Darters prefer smooth open waters for feeding, with branches and stumps for resting and drying their wings along the shore. They are not affected by salinity or murky waters but do prefer waters with little vegetation which allows them to swim and dive easily.



Darters are sometimes called the snakebird because of their long slender necks and the way they swim with their bodies submerged beneath the water with only their necks showing, making them look like serpents.

They feed by diving to depths of around 60cm and impaling fish with their sharp beaks. While swallowing small fish underwater, Darters bring the larger ones to the surface, flick them off their bill and then swallow head-first. Insects and other aquatic animals including tortoises are part of their diet along with some vegetable matter.

Generally solitary birds, Darters pair up only when breeding. Breeding is erratic and happens only when water levels and food supply are suitable – mostly spring and summer. Their nests are usually solitary but they may nest in colonies with other water birds such as cormorants and spoonbills.

The Darters' feathers aren't waterproof which is why you will see them with their wings spread out drying in the sun. This also helps control skin parasites.

Next time you are having a wander along the foreshore, look out to the convict fence or on the beach at Wadjup Point where you will normally see them drying their wings.



Lotterywest Grant

In 2015/2016 CRREPA applied successfully for a Lotterywest grant for tools, banners and a hot water dispenser. We recently purchased the tools and hot water dispenser. The banners are well under way with the script and photos being supplied to the designer in mid-August.

The tools are ergonomic and of high quality so will last well into the future. The hot water dispenser will allow CRREPA members to enjoy a nice hot cuppa after all their hard work. It will be especially useful when we have our major planting and weeding days as it stays hot for up to nine hours and is more stable and safer than the current system.



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

River Guardians

<http://www.riverguardians.com> (inc Dolphin Watch)

Birds of the Canning River

<http://www.canningriverbirds.com>

“...Such terrific, generous people” – Diane Matthews and Colma Keating look back on 20 years of service

At the May AGM two of CRREPA's longest serving committee members – Diane Matthews and Colma Keating – stepped down. Between them they have served as president of the Association for half of its 22 years.

Diane was initially involved in 1995 in the opposition to proposed developments in Yagan which included a boardwalk and lookout. She was elected vice president in 1995, president for six years from 1998-99 until 2003-04 then stepped down to serve as vice president for the next two years. She subsequently served on the committee for another three terms. Diane's husband, Gary, also gave CRREPA great service as honorary auditor for 10 years until 2013-14.

Colma Keating was president from 1997-98 to 1998-99, then treasurer for five years before serving as president again last year.

Diane Matthews recalls.....



“I took over as President in 1999 when Margo Ross died from cancer. Margo and Cam Ross started CRREPA in 1994. Tragically both she and Cam were diagnosed with cancers in the same week, and Margo died quite quickly. We were very fortunate to have Cam until 2009.

They were heady days when action for the environment attracted scorn and open antagonism. But it made us determined and resilient with a strong scientific basis for work and our advocacy.

I originally got involved because Vera Colley and Rosetta Clark, who were in contact with the Rosses, had noticed me weeding along the foreshore. The hundreds of Dock waving in the wind above the sedges had offended me. Because of the involvement of my husband, Gary and myself with the Wildflower Society of WA we helped with plant lists and

finding out names of species. Gary and I also took an interest in regular water testing and the changes happening in land management policies.

As pioneers of community action on environmental issues I went along with the drive and dedication of the Rosses. We had many site visits with Council officers - Margo insisted on site visits – and some of those officers, like Steve Atwell and Mary Ross, are still friends. Margo, Cam and I became community representatives on some City of Canning consultative committees to do with creating management plans for both Yagan Wetland Reserve and also the river foreshore. We assisted with policy issues and corrected drafts before they were presented to Council. Imagine that happening today!

There were other likeminded groups forming across the metropolitan area. The State Government, with the encouragement of the Conservation Council of WA, created the Environment Protection Authority and a support Department. The Department employed the inspiring Margot O'Byrne to run their informative networking newsletter and countless training and information sessions. Books, studies, flora lists and other resources developed around the needs of the community groups. We all attended regular and full-on seminars which were great for learning and creating networks.

The Department also organised funding for Bushland Care Days. CRREPA held a couple of these over the early years. The native plant nursery APACE in Fremantle provided thousands of plants for CRREPA, both for these events and others organised privately by CRREPA. I remember all of the Bushland Care Days as tiring, very full days with lots of preparatory work, but so rewarding. We faced many unknowns such as what plants to put in, how far apart they should be and when was high or low tide to allow access? They were little things but we didn't have the experience so had to learn as we went along. The personal development was terrific.

It was always for the environment and the people along the way made it all possible, such terrific, generous people.”

Colma Keating remembers.....



“As a botanist and geographer I was working in landcare and was already doing some weeding along the Canning foreshore when I joined CRREPA around 1995-96. I’d heard about the group from Grecian [Sandwell] and through the publicity in the local papers for the Association’s successful opposition to the proposed boardwalk in Yagan reserve.

It was something of a halcyon period for landcare. In WA since 1991 we’d had Ecoplan, a community-based program under the Department of Environmental Protection that was aimed at raising local awareness and involvement in bushland conservation. This agency contributed to a burgeoning of new groups with training, funding programs and events like bushcare days. Nationally we were in the middle of the Decade of Landcare, conceived by Phillip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation and Rick Farley from the National Farmers’ Federation and supported strongly by the Hawke Government. All of this meant that there was a tremendous amount of learning and sharing of knowledge and experiences within WA and across the country.

We inevitably made mistakes from which we learnt a lot. For example, we extended ourselves over too many sites and then had more weeding than we could cope with. Then there was the Beryl Avenue site which was replenished

with sand to combat erosion but the sand was sourced from under the South of Perth Yacht Club and impregnated with anti-fouling agent so all the plants we put in there died.

But we had many more successful initiatives like the plant propagation nursery established and run by Max Risbey and his wife Connie and CRREPA’s lobbying of the Canning Council which brought the installation of bollards along Riverton Drive and the establishment of the first council Bush Crew in Perth. Luck sometimes played a part as when in 2004 Grecian started looking at protecting the Beatrice Avenue sand spit because it was such an important roosting site for waterbirds. She found that the Water Corporation was looking to remove the spit because they thought it was blocking the drainage pipe. When they were persuaded to recognise that there was still a channel letting water out they were happy not to have to do any work on it so it was a win-win.

That exemplified the benefits we have gained from having positive, trusting relationships with other organisations, particularly the Council but also other local conservation groups like the Wilson Wetlands Action Group, Canning Regional Park Volunteers, Friends of Queens Park Bushland and the South Eastern Regional Centre for Urban Landcare. Other things that have worked to our benefit have been the splitting up of the foreshore into sections and encouraging local residents to focus on the section closest to them; the one hour-tools down approach and concentrating our revegetation work on groundcovers, sedges and shrubs. Leaving tree planting to the Council has largely enabled us to avoid the backlash from riverfront residents who presume to have exclusive rights over what can be planted on public land if they think it will affect “their views”.

As I reflect back on my 20 years with the CRREPA committee and/or active on the foreshore, I realise it can be easy for many (including myself) to take the current state of the foreshore for granted. It’s often only when you compare it with photographs taken 10 and 20 years ago that the extent and success of our revegetation becomes fully apparent. That’s part of our reward for the effort we put in. The other parts are the friendships along the way and the increasing number of waterbirds we see along the Lower Canning that are protected from dog attacks by the sedges, and use the vegetation for nesting, roosting and feeding.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and THANK YOUs

We are very grateful for the support provided by the City of Canning and SERCUL.

The best of endeavours hit by the lowest of acts

A combination of dedicated planning and organisation by CRREPA Foreshore Groups Coordinator, Grecian Sandwell and Vice President, Sallie Bryant, strong support from the City of Canning Bushcrew and an enthusiastic response by CRREPA volunteers, all contributed to dense new plantings of more than 3000 local provenance shrubs, grounds covers and sedges on four sites along the Canning foreshore.

About two thirds of the plants were the Bare Twig Rush (*Baumea juncea*). The remainder were *Conostylis juncea*, *Conostylis candicans*, *Hemiandra pungens*, *Hibbertia racemosa*, *Gompholobium tomentosum*, *Astartea scoparia*, *Dianella revoluta* and *Gahnia trifida*.

Purchase of the plants was made possible with a \$6300 grant which was submitted on CRREPA's behalf by South East Regional Centre of Urban Landcare (SERCUL). The grant money came from the Swan Canning River Recovery Programme which is managed by Perth Natural Resource Management (NRM) and is part of the National Landcare programme.



Volunteers arrived on the first planting day to find holes already dug by the Bushcrew with augers. The Bushcrew had previously poisoned the grasses and other weeds on the sites to remove, at least in the short term, competition with the new seedlings. As they signed in, volunteers were briefed on a simple, very helpful diagram drawn by Grecian of the profile of each planting – two thirds of a teaspoon of Terracottem in the bottom of the hole, covered with a layer of soil then the seedling inserted on top and filled in with soil. An important instruction was to leave a bowl of about 5 centimetres depth around each plant to provide a small reservoir for water. It also recognised that the Terracottem crystals expand so much when wet that they would push the seedling out of the ground if its soil base was flush with the surrounding soil or if too much Terracottem was used. When all the seedlings were planted the Bushcrew watered them in with Eco-wet which is a wetting agent that enables the water to penetrate the soil down to the plants roots.

The first three sites between Corinthian Avenue and Second Avenue were planted on June 2nd and 3rd. The Central Road sites were planted on June 9th. Colma Keating estimated that 28 volunteers put in 116 hours for planting and re-planting only, or one person working for three full weeks planting. But this estimate did not include the many volunteer hours invested in project design, writing the funding application and plant organisation.



The only negative in this whole exercise - and unfortunately it was a major one - was four separate thefts of more than 300 plants at the four sites and the uprooting of many of last year's plantings at the Central Road site. These selfish, contemptuous acts have been met with a mix of anger, frustration and incredulity among CRREPA members and the broader community who saw reports on the thefts in the Canning Times and Examiner newspapers. These sentiments were also reflected in the questions by 6PR Drivetime presenter, Adam Shand, put to CRREPA president, Stephen Johnston during a follow-up interview.

Each incident was brought to the attention of the Council and initiatives that could reduce the theft risk are being considered by the Committee.

On a brighter concluding note, the good rain that followed immediately after the plantings and at various times in July and August has given the new plants the best start that could be hoped for.



OUT AND ABOUT

World Environment Day on Shelley Foreshore



Stanley

Feeding frenzy at Wadjup Point



Stanley



May 2016 storm
(opp Linkwater St)

Keating

Weeding crew—Central Ave



Keating

Volunteers planting up new site



Keating

YOUR CRREPA COMMITTEE 2016 - 2017



President: Stephen Johnston
Vice President: Sallie Bryant
Secretary: Elsie Fisher
Treasurer: Bill Lambe

Committee Members
Grecian Sandwell, Roslyn Bartholomaeus,
Sue Stanley, Dick Bolton and David Thwaites