

The Bushland Whistler

Friends of Forrestdale Newsletter ♦ 2nd Edition ♦ January 2014

ANSTEY-KEANE DAMPLAND - biodiversity hotspot of the Swan Coastal Plain

In Perth's south-eastern suburb of Forrestdale is a rare and fragile nature reserve known as Anstey-Keane Dampland – a 311 hectare oasis of heathland, dampland and banksia woodland surrounded by ever-encroaching housing and industrial development. Anstey-Keane's diverse habitats support a rich and unique variety of plant and animal species, and accordingly, is the most significant dampland on the Swan Coastal Plain. Anstey-Keane Dampland is part of the Jandakot Regional Park and is one of WA's Bush Forever sites (<http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/publications/5911.asp>), which are representative regional ecosystems and habitats that play a central role in Perth's biodiversity.



A small sample of the range of plant and animal life to be found in Anstey-Keane Dampland – many species found here are endemic to the Swan Coastal Plain. Having taken aeons to evolve, each fills a special niche in nature's miraculous design.

A white flower spider with striking gold markings waits expectantly on a *Regelia* flower for an insect to land close by; a Red-capped Robin tilts his head to watch a high-flying Wedge-tailed Eagle; a blue-banded bee buzz pollinates a *Dianella* flower, the swift action over in the blink of an eye; a wasp assumes a menacing stance as it feeds on the nectar of a *Scholtzia* flower; a tiny banksia peacock spider employs bizarre postures and lustrous colours to try to seduce a female; a monarch butterfly unfurls her long thin proboscis and sips nectar from a pink *Verticordia* flower; a spiky-backed Christmas spider methodically builds her web to prepare for the evening's catch; a fly, adapted to resemble a stinging wasp, has wings that glisten rainbow colours in the sunshine; a bandicoot pauses to sniff the air, a baby kicks in her swollen pouch...



Sand Bottlebrush (*Beaufortia squarrosa*) – Anstey-Keane Dampland

Qualities

Anstey-Keane Dampland has many special qualities:

- It is one of the last intact large nature reserves in the Perth region.
- It is one of the last remaining examples of a now threatened flora community once common throughout the Swan Coastal Plain (SCP).
- It has over 35 species of plants listed under WA law as being either priority species, end of range, or declared rare flora.
- It is home to end of range fauna species including Rosenberg's monitor (*Varanus rosenbergi*).
- With over 380 flora species, Anstey-Keane is the most floristically rich part of the Jandakot Regional Park and second most floristically rich Bush Forever site on the SCP.
- It contains two of Western Australia's threatened ecological communities: shrublands on dry clay flats (endangered), and herb-rich shrublands on clay pans (vulnerable).
- Over 75 per cent of Anstey-Keane's vegetation is in excellent to pristine condition.
- It is the only known location of the Megamouth bee *Leioproctus (Ottocolletes) muelleri*, a unique ground-nesting species of solitary bee, which until its discovery there in 2010 was unknown to science.



Wildflowers of Anstey-Keane Dampland



Anstey-Keane Dampland scenery

Threats

As with most metropolitan nature reserves, Anstey-Keane Dampland faces various threats associated with urban encroachment. But the immediate and most acute threat to Anstey-Keane is the proposed extension of Keane Road. The road will not only destroy prime bushland but will also fragment the reserve, causing severe ongoing degradation. In addition, it will harm the wildlife that live in this important Bush Forever site. Animals such as kangaroos, bandicoots, many species of reptiles and birds, including nocturnal birds such as owls, frogmouths and nightjars will be seriously affected by the proposed road.



Around 80% of original native vegetation on the Swan Coastal Plain has been destroyed; 80% of SCP wetlands have been drained and filled. Projected population increases – 3.2 million by 2030 – means that this trend is likely to continue, with thousands more hectares of unprotected bushland destroyed and further natural wetlands wiped out.

In light of this, it is crucial that bushland and wetland reserves are treated with the highest level of care and sensitivity so that they remain sustainable, viable ecosystems well into the future. It is, after all, the wildlife, the natural landscapes, the bushland and forests that set a place apart and give a locality its unique quality.



The two collages above show vegetation in Anstey-Keane Dampland along the Keane Road alignment. This bushland, which will be destroyed if the Keane Road extension is built, is in particularly good condition.

In contrast, the image below shows part of Anstey-Keane Dampland adjacent to Anstey Road and it demonstrates how degradation and weed invasion occurs along roadsides – and then encroaches inexorably into bushland.



Roadside degradation

Regrettably, this is the view of Anstey-Keane Dampland from Anstey Road. The weeds and degradation (typically associated with roadsides) detract from the natural treasures that lie beyond.

Ongoing protection

A large proportion of Anstey-Keane Dampland was once earmarked for industry. It was through awareness of the conservation values of the area by concerned community members (and enlightened government ministers of the day) that this precious reserve was saved.

Bushland of the quality found at Anstey-Keane is becoming scarce on the Swan Coastal Plain, and will become even more so with population increases and continued urban sprawl. This highlights the need to take special care of reserves such as Anstey-Keane by ensuring they remain intact and do not become fragmented.

Few large intact metropolitan reserves exist today of the quality and richness of biodiversity of Anstey-Keane Dampland. It is therefore critical that we value and protect this reserve and ones like it, for the benefit not only of the environment but present and future generations. ✧

Public Environment Review

The Public Environmental Review (PER) document (prepared by the proponent) for the proposed extension of Keane Road (referred to as the Keane Road Strategic Link) is now available for public comment. The PER is also available for download from the proponent's website at www.armadale.wa.gov.au.

This document is available for public review for 8 weeks and commenced on Monday 9 December 2013. **The closing date for submissions is Monday, 3 February 2014.**

The EPA prefers submissions to be made electronically on its consultation hub at <http://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au>.

Submissions may also be:

Posted to: Chairman, Environmental Protection Authority, Locked Bag 10, East Perth WA 6892

Delivered to: The Environmental Protection Authority, Level 4, The Atrium, 168 St George's Tce, PERTH WA 6000, Attention: Ms Amy Sgherza

All submissions received by the EPA will be acknowledged. Electronic submissions will be acknowledged electronically. The proponent will be required to provide adequate responses to points raised in submissions. In preparing its assessment report for the Minister for Environment, the EPA will consider the information in submissions, the proponent's responses and other relevant information. Submissions will be treated as public documents unless provided and received in confidence subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 1992, and may be quoted in full or in part in each report.

The OEPA contact officer for this project is Amy Sgherza whose direct number is (08) 6145 0818.

In early January, the Friends of Forrestdale will provide a list of points to help with submissions.



Bushland on Keane Road alignment – Anstey-Keane Dampland (Christmas Tree *Nuytsia floribunda*)

CYGNET RESCUE – Lake Forrestdale

Thirteen Black Swan cygnets not old enough to fly, stranded on a lake that would be dry within days, meant that action had to be taken to rescue the young birds or they would surely die from exposure or fall prey to the numerous foxes that roam the drying lake. Forty degree heat forecast for the following few days, meant the cygnets stood even less chance of survival. In addition, most of the adult swans had by now been forced to fly away because of the lake's dwindling water. Without the adults to protect them, the cygnets were all the more vulnerable to fox attack.

Consequently, on December 11, Friends of Forrestdale and Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) officers agreed that a rescue operation should take place at Lake Forrestdale as soon as possible and Friday December 13 was the chosen date. Despite just two days' notice, 31 people – Friends of Forrestdale and other volunteers, and DPaW staff – assembled to conduct the operation. After meeting and signing in at the Forrestdale Hall at 6am, we made our way out onto the lake where we split into three groups and, with walkie-talkies to

facilitate communication between us, we all spread out in a wide circle across the northern end of the lake and gradually closed in on the cygnets. Rescuers used hand nets to catch the birds, a few of which managed to breach the human circle, but being unable to fly, they were relatively easy to chase and catch. The thirteen captured cygnets were then transferred to individual crates for transport.

Ten cygnets were considered old enough to fend for themselves, and DPaW staff took them directly to Lake Joondalup, which was deemed the most suitable wetland for relocation as it is favoured by Black Swans and has plenty of water. (Almost all the local wetlands are now either dry or in the process of drying.) A wildlife carer took the three remaining, smaller cygnets into care. When old enough, they too will be released at a suitable wetland.

The rescue operation, which took just an hour and a half to complete, was considered a great success and was accomplished with the least possible stress to the birds. This is the fourth cygnet rescue to take place at Lake Forrestdale, the first was in 2009. ✧



Black Swans



Lake Forrestdale

Top left: Volunteers closing in on cygnets prior to capture.

Bottom left: Volunteer, Graeme Hart, with a rescued cygnet.

Friends of Forrestdale

www.forrestdalefriends.com.au

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