

CRREPA NEWS

Newsletter of the Canning River Residents Environment Protection Association (Inc)

Editors: Stephen Johnston and Sue Stanley

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www.sercul.org.au/crrepa

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Training wheels on, and off we go by Sue Stanley

It's been an interesting 6 months introduction to my role as Foreshore Coordinator. Luckily I'm being eased into the role with no major projects in our plans until 2020. We will still have our usual donation of 500 plants from the City of Canning (CoC) which we will use to increase our sites opp 187 Riverton Drive and Wadjup Point.

The annual planning meeting with City of Canning Staff Merise Blackburn (Parks Conservation) and Max Box (Natural Areas Team) went well with COC agreeing to continued support of 12 man hours per week on the foreshore, barrier spraying to prevent grasses getting into the sedges and summer fusilade spraying of our sites to help contain couch and kikuyu grass. There will be a meeting in October/November to work out the watering roster. We are in the process of having 'wildlife crossing' signs designed so we can place them in any location that we deem necessary to warn the public of increased bird activity. This is due to the unfortunate death of one of our Buff-banded Rails just near Grecian's Spit late last year.

The task of keeping the vegetation along the foreshore alive and thriving is one of our biggest tasks so the City of Canning is trialing a kelp tonic and a soil penetrator in their fortnightly watering cycle. We have also been given a spray gun and pellets for the soil penetrator which we will use at our Central Rd 7a, Rob Bruce and Wadjup Point sites. This product unblocks the water repellent soil, assists moisture to penetrate for deeper root growth and reduces runoff. The signs have so far been positive at our Central Rd 7b site which is our most challenging site in relation to poor soil and plant growth.

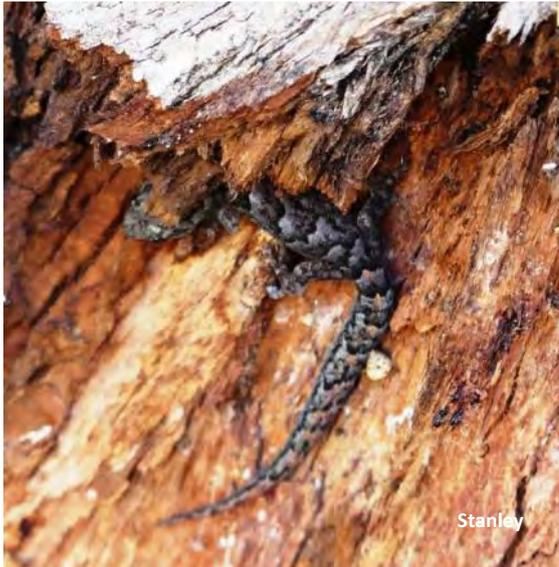
Unfortunately, the remediation of the eastern shoreline of Wadjup Point by the City two years ago had deteriorated in recent times due to the public moving the stones, walking down the slope and dislodging the soil. Our great relationship with the City was exemplified by a very quick response to an e-mail I sent to David Mort (Natural Areas Team Supervisor). The site was improved and fenced off to preserve the area.

On a brighter note Stephen Johnston and myself will be meeting with staff from Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) in June to show off the two areas we planted last year with the grant funds from the department's Community Rivercare Program. These two sites, Beatrice Ave and Wadjup Point have done really well over the summer with minimal plant loss due to the great efforts of our watering crew. The meeting is to share our ideas on what has worked and why to help other groups involved with DBCA in the future.



Giving Geckos a new home among the gum trees

by Colma Keating and Grecian Sandwell



Stanley



Keating

Early in 2014 a passer-by alerted us to the split in the Flooded Gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*) opposite 185 Riverton Drive in Shelley. The tree certainly groaned in the wind.

The City of Canning was notified and in April that year an arborist with Bowden Tree Consultancy conducted an ultrasound on the tree. As bark was peeled away to allow for probes to be inserted into the trunk 10 Marbled Geckos were disturbed.

In the meantime the health of the tree continued to decline. A fall arrest system was installed in the upper canopy to prevent the split widening. Finally it was deemed unsafe and the branches were removed.

Ozfish Unlimited decided it was just the right tree to become a large woody habitat (LWH) in the river. Ozfish, the peak national body representing recreational fishers in Australia, had received grant funding to trial the installation of large woody habitats in the Swan Canning River system. The best introduced LWHs are trees with the canopy trimmed and the rootball intact. They are placed in the river, away from the navigation channels.

These habitats provide shelter and protection for juvenile fish and aquatic invertebrates. They are also feeding sites for adult fish including Black Bream and nesting sites for fish such as the Swan River Cobbler. For water birds, they provide roosting sites.

We decided to relocate as many geckos as possible from the tree before it went into the river. In total, 44 geckos were shifted to nearby eucalypts. The bark that was peeled from the tree was then used as mulch on an

adjacent revegetation site. As we removed bark from the tree and uncovered many insects, geckos, their eggs and skins it brought to mind an article by Neville Passmore (Perth NRM, 2017) who noted that there was a very strong case for protecting existing native trees in urban areas. A study of one old jarrah tree in Kings Park revealed a level of visitation that is almost incredible. This one mature jarrah tree supported 83 species of native animals, birds, reptiles and insects. Not a tree but a condominium. By way of contrast wind pollinated European trees don't have to attract wildlife to achieve pollination.

Due to the uncertainty in timing for the delivery of the LWH project and the poor structural condition of the Flooded Gum the City was due to remove the tree by the end of March. The timber will now be re-used as large woody habitat behind the sedges opposite 187 Riverton Drive, Shelley. Meanwhile logs and branches from other Council prunings will be used at the Central Road site for the same purpose.



Stanley



Radestock

Delays and changes for large woody habitat project



A project which we reported on in the last CRREPA newsletter by Ozfish Unlimited and Recfishwest to install large woody habitat (LWH) in the Canning River opposite the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore has been much delayed.

If it is not completed before 30 June, the proponents will need to seek an extension from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) which is funding the project and the installation will have to be deferred until the end of the coming winter.

In June last year the proponents had identified two sites – out from the stormwater drain opposite 189 Riverton Drive and upstream, opposite the drain near Beatrice Avenue that forms Grecian's Spit. The project was planned to be implemented in

spring last year. As well as the cracked Flooded Gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*) (see story on page 2), felled trees have been stockpiled by the City of Canning near Park Beach Close, Shelley, to be possibly used at the Beatrice Avenue site.

The City's Senior Environment Advisor, Jenni Andrews advised CRREPA recently that OzFish had told the City that their preferred site for placing the LWH was now limited to the one out from Beatrice Avenue. Engineering assessments have been undertaken at this site.

CRREPA remains concerned that installation of LWH at the Beatrice Avenue site might result in more detrimental environmental impacts than benefits. It is a very important place for birds, providing fresh water, foraging and resting areas which could be under much greater pressure if the LWH is in the fishermen's casting range from the river bank or shallows.

Grant and donation enhance CRREPA capability

CRREPA has acquired some valuable new equipment, fertilizer and wetting agent thanks to a Small Community Grant from the City of Canning and a donation from Bunnings Willetton store in High Road.

The grant, for nearly \$500, has enabled the Association to purchase a manual auger for drilling holes in the foreshore for new plants. The auger will first be used in June when CRREPA undertakes supplementary planting at existing revegetation sites with the annual allocation of 500 native plants from the City.

The other major acquisition from the grant is a large portable hose reel and three heavy duty hoses totalling 90 metres in length which have already been put to work watering the revegetation site near Rob Bruce Park, Shelley.

CRREPA's foreshore coordinator, Sue Stanley, said the auger, hoses and hose reel would significantly strengthen the Association's capability to undertake planting and maintain revegetation sites.

"We are really grateful to the City of Canning for their generosity which is another example of the close partnership we enjoy with them."



Bunnings Riverton gave CRREPA 2.4 litres of Seasol, a 10 kg bag of soil wetting granules and 15 pairs of gloves. Ms Stanley said Bunnings Willetton had always been ready to provide CRREPA with much-needed materials for which the Association was most appreciative.

You don't want these ants in your pants!

Along with the risk of getting the pointy edge of a sedge in your eye when working on the foreshore, the biggest occupational health and safety risk we seem to face is ant bite. There's a very simple but effective protection against it – wear long pants and roll them under your socks before you start work. If you forget to do that you could soon feel a sting on your leg which can be followed by a small itchy lump.

So, what are these aggressive little residents of the foreshore? CRREPA treasurer Bill Lambe made some inquiries with one of his former colleagues, ant expert Marc Widmer in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Marc was quick to identify them as *Iridomyrmex purpureus*, otherwise commonly known as meat ants. While they are native, Marc confirmed what many of us have unfortunately found out – they are “a somewhat pugnacious species.”

“Meat ants have obvious nesting mounds, usually cleared areas like small helipads, with lots of entrance holes that they aggressively defend (who can blame them – each hole is a separate colony with its own queen and brood),” Marc said. “They just bite, they do not possess a stinger.”

The Australian Museum says that on farms they can be a nuisance, biting orchardists and wildflower growers as they pick their produce, while cattle and sheep are irritated by the ants climbing up their legs and snouts and biting them.

If you see a few meat ants, you can be sure there are many more not far away. A single nest may contain 64,000 ants and super, interconnecting colonies may stretch more than 500 metres.

But aggression and abundance are not their only distinctions. They are also, says the Australian Museum, the most “ecologically important group of ants in Australia.” According to Wikipedia, a dead animal placed on a nest would be reduced to bones over a period of weeks so farmers may use these ants to remove animal carcasses from their land.

Marc Widmer says control methods are only effective when insecticide is sprayed down each hole of the ants' nest. He says there's no softer option and “like all chemicals, care needs to be taken near waterways.” So, as we will be sharing the foreshore with *Iridomyrmex purpureus* forever we may as well get used to wearing long pants rolled into our socks when working down there.



Courtesy of Australian Museum

Another distressing sight on our river system



Courtesy of DBCA

A few weeks ago we were celebrating the birth of several dolphin calves in the Swan Canning river system over the past year. But yet again we are mourning the death of one of those calves due to careless fishing practices.

The press release put out by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) stated:

“The calf was found deceased in Claremont Bay after becoming entangled in a crab pot. Mother Moon was swimming alongside the calf when the pair was located by the Parks and Wildlife Service on Monday after being reported by a member of the public.

The dead calf has since been freed from the crab pot, but remains in the water with the mother dolphin as she grieves. Dolphins are highly intelligent creatures and are known to stay with their young for a period of time following a death.

We will continue to monitor the pair and remove the calf when appropriate to do so. We ask the public to stay well away from the dolphin and her dead calf during this time.”

A 1.3 metre male calf with visible signs of suspected rope burn around the rostrum (beak) has since been removed from the river and taken to Murdoch University for an autopsy.

A timely reminder to dispose of all fishing lines, ropes and pots safely.

Natural debris as mulch

by Colma Keating

As I am sure you are well aware, our hot, windy summers dry out the surface of our soils as well as increase the transpiration or loss of moisture from both foreshore and garden plants.

Reducing exposure to both sun and wind is one way to help retain moisture in the soil, thus making it available to the plants for longer. On many occasions CRREPA and the City of Canning have had activities to increase the mulch around our plantings. This year as the large old gum trees along the foreshore parkland strip have shed their bark, we collected it and used it in the new planting opposite 185-189 Riverton Drive, Shelley. If this bark is not collected, it just gets chipped up and scattered over the lawn next time the area is mowed by the council. In addition, we were able to use the bark that was removed in the 'gecko muster' (refer article page 2). The mulch also serves to protect plants from accidental trampling.



Slow but steady progress on foreshore plans

The City of Canning's two major planning exercises for the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore are still weeks away from drafts going out for public comment. But if stealth rather than speed in the planning process contributes to good, long term environmental outcomes for the foreshore, no one is likely to be too exercised about any delays.

Meeting with Urbaqua team Shelley and Halinka



The request for quotes to prepare the draft alternative Shelley Beach master plans was released by the City in early March – a month later than scheduled - to selected consultant landscape architects. The delay was caused by a request from the Annual Electors Meeting in January for a traffic study on the different development options and subsequent report to the February Council meeting for endorsement. It is unlikely that the consultant landscape architect's final draft plans reflecting the different options will be presented to the City's internal project board before mid-June. Feedback from the project board will determine future dates from thereon.

Meanwhile the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore management plan has been out for comment from members of the City's Sustainability and Environment Advisory Group and City staff.

These comments have been sent to the consultants, Urbaqua, who were to have an amended draft to the City by the end of March. The draft plan will then be the subject of a Strategic Issues Briefing to the Council in early May before it is released in mid-May for a period of six weeks for public comment.

A Rebel who found a cause

For a person whose future voluntary role required empathy with the natural environment around the Canning River and close collaboration with staff from the City of Canning, Sue Stanley's upbringing could not have been more appropriate. Sue's family home in what was then Wharf Street and is now Civic Gardens Drive, was across the road from the current site of the City offices and she spent a lot of time playing in the surrounding bush and paddling home made rafts on the Canning River.



Living on a half hectare block in a house her father helped build – one of only a dozen on what was then a single road that ended up a track along the river with an open drain down the middle – Sue had an idyllic bush lifestyle making her own fun with structures built from wood her father had stockpiled. The only challenges were snakes in the summer and the swampy ground flooding in winter.

Decades on, the dugites and tiger snakes are still around but the bush has given way to suburban houses, the swampy ground transformed into the Civic Gardens and Sue has taken on the pivotal position of CRREPA foreshore coordinator. Apart from her bush upbringing, her interest in nature had varied foundations – a father who believed in self-sufficiency and grew his own vegetables, a mother who loved gardening and a grandmother who was studying to become a botanist before the early death of her father required her, as the eldest daughter, to become the family breadwinner. Sue recalls that an experience during her 38 years working with the WA railways also fostered that interest – visiting Alcoa's rehabilitation of its bauxite mining leases and hearing about the impact of dieback.

"I was always for nature – whatever nature does is right and you follow its guidelines. One of my bosses used to say to me that I was a rebel without a cause because whatever the subject I would always argue for the underdog. But now I've found my cause which is working to protect our remnant natural environment."

Sue says she had a basic knowledge of how plants grow and what makes good soil but that knowledge has increased greatly as spare time on her hands following redundancy from the Railways prompted her to investigate volunteering, firstly at a Bannister Creek planting day and then in 2014 With CRREPA.

After joining CRREPA she took a keen interest in looking after the riverine vegetation at Wadjup point, joined the committee in 2015 and then took over from former vice president, Sally Bryant as the principal carer for the much-challenged Central Road section of the foreshore. Then on Grecian Sandwell's retirement from the committee last year, Sue was elected as foreshore coordinator. "My job is to make sure that we are doing the right thing on the foreshore and to try to get more people involved and we need to maintain our close working relationship with the City of Canning because without them we could not have achieved as much...and vice versa."

Hardhead Ducks visit the foreshore



Hardhead Duck (*Aythya australis*) is a new visitor to our foreshore and was seen by our 'Shorebird Count' volunteers at both Grecian's spit and Wadjup Point in February this year.

Formally known as the 'white-eyed duck' the name has nothing to do with the duck's cranium but comes from early taxidermists who found the head the most difficult part to process. They are endemic to Australia but have been seen in New Guinea and other islands.

Hardheads can be found in wetlands and fresh water swamps and sometimes in sheltered estuaries. They roost on low branches and stumps near the water and prefer fresh open water and densely vegetated wetlands for breeding. They feed on aquatic plants and animals especially freshwater shellfish and mussels and nest in trampled reeds where the female builds the nest from sticks and vegetation. She alone incubates the eggs.

NatureLink Perth



Linking people, perspectives and knowledge to enable nature-sensitive urban design in Perth.

NatureLinkPerth is an initiative out of Murdoch University to create a network of people, to sustain our world class biodiversity, wetlands and bushlands and engage nature sensitive urban design across Perth to the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

Why do we need NatureLink Perth?

There is currently no holistic strategy or plan informed by ecological understanding to conserve our natural estate or integrate nature into our city. Currently our world class biodiversity is being lost through individual planning decisions –“death by a thousand cuts”. This is not sustainable and will result in our remaining bushland and wetlands becoming less viable and threatened species becoming extinct.

Contact with nature has been scientifically proven to improve people’s physical and mental health – we need to find a way to sustain nature in our city for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

Our city is arranged as discrete blocks of land, largely considered independent of one another. Ecosystems are not independent but an interaction of components (air, land, water, plants, animals). Both the components and their links are equally important. Ecosystems (wetlands, bushland etc) also need to be linked in this way. If you take out one component or one link the whole gets weaker, the more you take the less resilient the ecosystems become until they collapse.

How are we going to do this?

NatureLink Perth will be reaching out to all stakeholders over the next few months to engage them in finding out “*What needs to be done to get a sustainable network of natural assets across Perth?*”

Everyone: scientists, managers, government, indigenous people, policy and planning, developers, industry, NRM and “Friends of’ groups, community, and many more.

Our team will integrate knowledge and perspectives from all stakeholders over the next few months. This data will be collated and synthesised into an accessible form, provided to you on this website. The website will continue to build over the next few months until a Symposium and Workshop on the 4-5th July 2019, when participants will review the state of our understanding and prioritise actions to enable successful integration of wetland and bushland ecosystems and biodiversity into our city.

EXTRACT from www.naturelinkperth.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and THANK YOU

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



YOUR CRREPA COMMITTEE 2018—2019

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Foreshore Coordinator	Sue Stanley

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