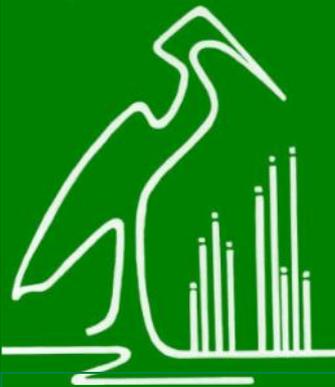


# CRREPA NEWS

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

Editors: Stephen Johnston and Sue Stanley

**ENJOY YOUR FORESHORE RESPONSIBLY**



Members please contact us by phone (0422 590 029) or email (CRREPA@gmail.com) or postal address (CRREPA Members Officer: 16 Nearwater Way, Shelley 6148) To see your CRREPA Newsletter in COLOUR view or download it from the SERCUL website.

[www.sercul.org.au/crrepa](http://www.sercul.org.au/crrepa)

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### **VOLUNTEERS EXTEND FORESHORE REVEGETATION NEAR CORINTHIAN ROAD**

**One of the longest stretches of foreshore revegetation is almost complete after CRREPA volunteers planted a section of about 50 metres from near the junction of Corinthian Road and Riverton Drive, Rossmoyne to 121 Riverton Drive.**

A total of 31 volunteers, including one of our two local councillors, Amanda Spencer-Teo, planted the 1390 seedlings over two sessions on 25th June and 2nd July. The project was funded by a Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Community Rivercare grant.

The City of Canning provided good support for our work with letters notifying nearby residents of the conversion of the grassed site into an area of local groundcovers, small plants and shrubs. The City's Natural Areas Team (NAT) poisoned the grass, augured the planting holes, watered the seedlings in with a wetting agent and constructed the fence which will protect the young plants from trampling until they are sufficiently well established in about three years' time.

When the last 10-metre section is planted next year after a swale is dug to mitigate the erosion caused by water flowing down Corinthian Road and off Riverton Drive, the revegetated section will extend from south-west of Corinthian Road for about 250 metres. It will encompass what is now mature growth but was one of CRREPA's first projects in the mid 1990s, this year's planting and the 2016 revegetation plot from 123-129 Riverton Drive with a section in the middle of Swan River myrtle (*Hypocalymma angustifolium*) planted by the City of Canning.





Foreshore coordinator Sue Stanley and volunteers also undertook infill planting at the Rob Bruce revegetation plot, at Beatrice Avenue and Wadjup Point using the City's annual donation of 500 local plants and 560 excess seedlings from the Community Rivercare Grant. This year we included some mid-level plantings of *Melaleuca lateritia* (robin red-breast bush) and *Acacia puchella* (prickly moses) which grow up to two metres tall. We have re-introduced *Rhagodia baccata* (berry saltbush) to our plant list. Although it has an insignificant flower it produces masses of deep red berries which are eaten by both birds and lizards. A good specimen of *Rhagodia baccata* can be seen along the path at Yagan Reserve.

After another winter of below average rainfall, a major focus will now be on watering all the new plants through the months of November though to April. The task will be greatly assisted by a grant of \$4950 from Perth NRM to enable CRREPA to contract additional watering capacity and reduce the requirement for volunteers to use the water tank and trailer that we borrow from the South-East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL). However, volunteers will still play a critical role in watering various other sites along the foreshore.

In Yagan Wetland Reserve there will be weed treatment in spring for *Fumaria*, *Gladioli* and *Arum Lilies* with the selective herbicide Metsulfuron as part of the City's geophyte program. Geophytes are perennial plants which in spring propagate from an underground organ such as a bulb, tuber, corm or rhizome. The City will also be using a contractor to treat other priority weeds, including woody exotic trees, with retreatment next year.

Meanwhile, CRREPA has welcomed construction of the fence at Wadjup Point that will provide some protection for resting and feeding water birds from interference by people and dogs at what is recognised in the foreshore management plan as a significant habitat area. The fence, which includes two lockable gates, surrounds all the revegetated areas but allows access to the beach on the western side. A sign will be erected on the western side fence requesting the public refrain from accessing the beach especially if the Fairy Terns are using the eastern node.



## Another extension for Canning large woody debris project

**The extremely protracted bid by OzFish Unlimited to establish large woody debris (LWD) to provide fish habitat in the Canning River will stretch into another year as the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has extended its Rivercare Community grant until 30 June 2021.**

OzFish is applying for a Commonwealth Government grant through Perth NRM to do mapping and community consultation to identify areas within the River that would be suitable for the LWD. It is regrettable this was not done from the outset. OzFish had identified and recommended two sites it thought best for the LWD – off the drain near Rob Bruce Park and particularly off Grecian's Spit near Beatrice Avenue. But these were opposed strongly by CRREPA because they were also important places for birdlife that would have been disturbed repeatedly by a likely influx of anglers.

CRREPA had proposed a site downstream from the Rob Bruce drain but OzFish determined that there would have been a significant amount of the LWD above the water level which would not be well received by the community. OzFish had unfortunately not shown the same level of concern about the potential birdlife disturbance and were still pushing for the Beatrice Avenue site this year despite our repeated objections over a two-year period.

# Where once there were trees and a swampy swale now is a building site

by Murray Radestock

I had always admired the remnant swampy swale at 309 Riverton Drive, Shelley with some eight to ten paperbarks and two very large Flooded gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*). The previous owner, an Irishman and collector of antique Rolls Royces, said they were quite mature when he moved in some 46 years ago.

I thought the trees might have blocked his view across the Canning River but the two dormer bedroom windows had a great view down the middle of the driveway, superbly framed by the big gums. After each storm the driveway was often covered by about 15 cms of water that would soak in over the next couple days. Excavation of the swale exposed a deep rich dark loamy soil from generations of accumulated organic debris.

The tide of residential redevelopment sadly caught up with this property in July and these natural remnants were clearly under threat. I wrote to our two Bannister ward councillors, Ben Kunze and Amanda Spencer-Teo, seeking some reprieve for the trees but because they were on private land there was little they could do. Sue Stanley and I agreed it would be a shame and insult to these old trees if they were taken to the tip or chipped and Sue suggested having some large cut sections distributed along the sedge line of the foreshore.

Implementation of the idea took a lot of consultation. I developed a key relationship with Te, the New Zealand excavator operator, who agreed to set the large logs aside for transport to the foreshore. Getting onside with the demolition supervisor was important to ascertain when the trees would be felled, stacked and moved, because unless someone attended the site daily the tree trunks would have been carted off to the tip with all the rubbish.

Then there were emails to Dion Johnson, Executive Director of Parks and Place Improvement at the City of Canning (CoC) and David Mort, Passive Spaces Supervisor, to ensure they were okay with temporarily locating the logs on the foreshore grass and agreeable to Parks staff moving the logs along the sedge line. David's advice that the bobcat could only handle logs up to four metres prompted contact with the arborist who was to climb the tree to chainsaw limbs and branches. After cutting the tree the arborist had to return to chop a limb that contained a large beehive early next morning when it was cool and the bees were least active.

David also liaised with the demolition company, copying authorisations to them and at short notice getting the council workers to dismantle the green railing fence adjacent to the road to enable truck access.



The trees were cut down over a few days at the end of June and start of July. The largest trunk piece was estimated to weigh three to four tonnes. The next day David arranged for a pest controller to attend to a beehive in the stack of logs. It was quite sad to see bees flying in a day later looking for their hive amongst the logs with no home to go to.

At least the logs will be a solid reminder of the remnant swale across the road and their thick bark will provide a home for a new array of insects and lizards. Thanks go to the CoC, to Dion and David for their quick works approvals and to the demolition company, Sycamore Civil Group, and their workers for their cooperation.

## COMMONWEALTH GRANT HELPS CRREPA REDUCE RIVER POLLUTION

After several significant delays – particularly the 14 weeks taken by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to grant the necessary permit - the modification of two drains near Pleasant Place, Shelley finally took place on 16th and 17th July 2020 to help reduce the flow of pollutants into the Canning River.



Thanks to the skill of a City of Canning contracted bobcat operator, Nick, an unsightly headwall of the main drain and a length of pipe were removed very quickly. Nick then dug a filtration swale running parallel to the riverbank into which water from the cutback drain now flows on its way towards the adjacent small Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh Threatened Ecological Community (TEC). A considerably larger number of limestone rocks than we had expected from the site plan were deposited into the swale to dissipate the water flow and ensure there is no erosion.

Work on the smaller drain was undertaken on 17th July with removal of the broken pipe end and excavation of a shallow swale at the end of the new outlet point, below which limestone rocks were again deposited. The swales were first tested with some heavy falls of rain three weeks later.

An important part of CRREPA's commitment under the Communities Environment Programme (CEP) \$11,626 grant for the project from the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science was community education. On 4th August, a group of 32 Shelley Primary School River Rangers with vice principal, Chris Leeuwangh and other teachers, came to the site for a short explanatory talk by Liz Moore on what had been done and why. One group of students planted sedges along the side of the swale while Liz took the other group along the path to Murray's Ditch. With the aid of a series of photos, Liz told them about the different stages in the modification of that drain from excavation to planting, watering and weeding. The two groups of students then swapped over.

On 19th August, a group of 30 Rossmoyne Primary School River Rangers with vice principal, Greg Wilson and three other teachers, undertook the same eco-education and planting session.

The final step in the Pleasant Place project will be the erection of a sign, with words drafted and photo selected by CRREPA, that explains the significance of the Coastal Saltmarsh site and the purpose of the filtration swales. The Federal member for Tangney, the Hon Ben Morton MP, whose office supported CRREPA's grant application, will be invited to then visit the completed project.



# From eco-activist to City conservation officer – Merise’s continuing passion

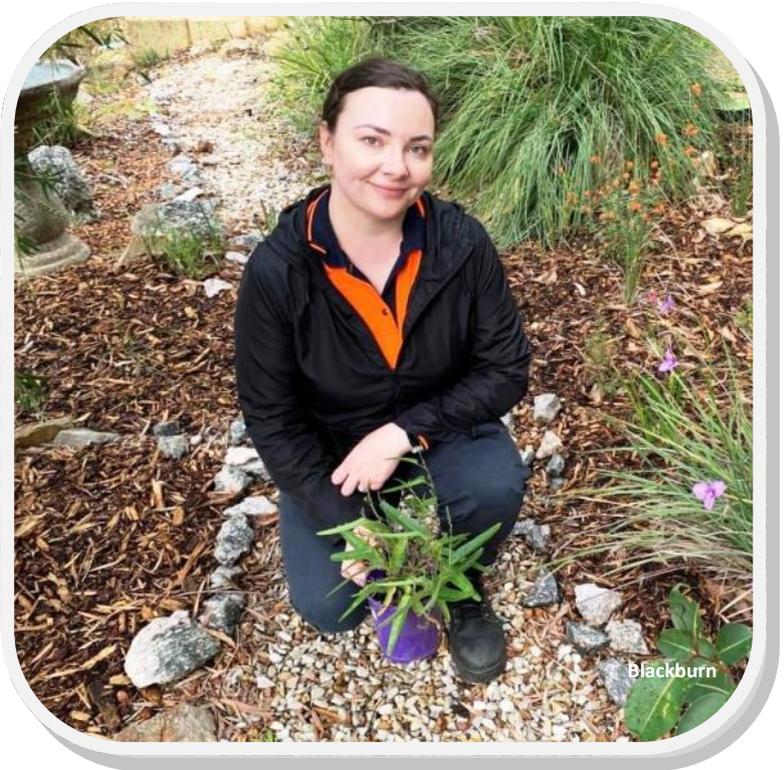
by Stephen Johnston

**Merise Blackburn’s deep commitment to nature conservation began at an early age. While still a student at Shelley Primary School, Merise wrote to the City of Canning to complain about the noise impact on nearby waterbirds of the New Year’s Day fireworks at Shelley Beach.**

The City responded by assuring her that they tried to be environmentally sensitive and used noise-reducing fireworks. The show carried on but Merise was not impressed: “Every 1<sup>st</sup> of January I was in a bad mood thinking of those poor birds at Grecian’s Spit”.

As a third generation Shelley resident whose family home was not far from the river, the foreshore and the Canning shallows formed a wonderful natural adventure playground for Merise and instilled a strong interest in studying the environment. “The river is something I’ve always cared about and I grew up being taught that this was extremely important.”

That vocation led her to study Conservation Biology and Management at the University of Western Australia with first class honours in plant translocation. In a highly competitive field, she also managed to get part-time work with Mattiske environmental consultancy, conducting botanical surveys all over WA. After graduation she worked full-time and was writing botanical reports for mining proposals, for local government and community groups. “I could have continued in that role but I really wanted to make a difference in maintaining urban biodiversity on my home ground,” Merise said.



So, in 2013 she applied for the position of Parks Conservation Officer with the City of Canning. Her application almost ended in tears as she misconstrued the interview schedule and failed to turn up at the allotted time. Fortunately, the chair of the panel, former Coordinator of Conservation and Environment, Kathleen Ridgwell, gave her another interview time and Merise’s new career direction began.

Her job has evolved over the past seven and a half years from supervising the Natural Areas Team to taking on a more strategic role, particularly in revegetation. “I’d really like to change my job title to revegetation officer because that seems where things are going; large projects are getting good restoration outcomes, they are the most rewarding experiences. Now that we are expanding our revegetation program there are more opportunities – projects like Ferndale Flats West and the Maniana bushland in Queen’s Park. They come with many challenges with small to relatively large sites which are in varying conditions and have different levels of community interest, requirements and expectations.”

Merise said it was most satisfying when the City could work with community groups to follow-up the initial planting and achieve good survival rates. These can sometimes be hard to achieve with even a major investment of resources. “That’s where adaptive management is key – establishing trials and learning what works and what doesn’t work – maybe not going for diversity at first but going for plants that survive and building on that, weed spraying based on priorities identified by weed mapping rather than blanket spraying based on a hectare rate or wiping leaves with weedicide rather than spraying, particularly in waterlogged, seasonally inundated areas and patches of particularly susceptible native plants.”

Along with work and family commitments, Merise has taken on a new role in her limited spare time by establishing a friends group for Banyowla Regional Park Clifton Hills, east of Kelmscott. It’s a long-neglected area where rubbish dumping, huge *Watsonia* infestations and deteriorating fence lines are some of the problems that would deter many, but not Merise. “I love it, it’s my passion and it helps me improve the way I liaise with community volunteers because I have been on the other side. What I learn in one role I can apply to the other and vice versa.”

## JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL SUNDOWNER AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!

The annual CRREPA sundowner will be held as usual on the **first Sunday of December – 6th December from 5.30 pm** at a shady spot with a beautiful river view at the Shelley Beach Park near the Beatrice Avenue roundabout.

CRREPA will provide roast chickens and glasses while everyone attending brings food to share and their own drinks, picnic utensils, chairs, rugs etc.

Because of the extension of COVID-related restrictions on the number of people that can be accommodated at the Canning River Eco Education Centre (CRREC), our annual general meeting will be held during the sundowner. There will be no guest speaker, just brief reports on the year by the President, Stephen Johnston and Treasurer, Bill Lambe. The full versions of their reports along with the reports by the Foreshore Coordinator, Sue Stanley and Membership Officer, Liz Moore, will be distributed to all members as part of the November-December newsletter.

After Stephen and Bill have finished speaking, there will be an election for the 2020-2021 committee. All positions become vacant at the AGM and members are encouraged to consider nominating for the committee. With only four meetings a year and some assistance in helping with CRREPA activities between meetings, it is an interesting and very satisfying role.

**RSVP for the Sundowner and AGM by Friday 27th November : Madeline 0402 646 595 or [CRREPA@gmail.com](mailto:CRREPA@gmail.com)**



### In Memoriam - Allen and Stephanie McNamara

**CRREPA sadly regrets the passing earlier this year of two valued members, Allen and Stephanie McNamara. As Rossmoyne residents they joined the foreshore working group under the leadership of Max Risbey taking care of a section of 'their' foreshore.**

Max recalls that Allen was a regular member of his planting and weeding group for at least 16 years. In addition to his CRREPA activities Allen was proud of maintaining original native plants in his back garden.

Max knew Allen from the early 1960s when they both worked at the East Perth power station where Allen was an electrical maintenance engineer.

"He used to give me a lift to work in his company vehicle after I moved to Rossmoyne in January 1965," Max said. "He had a dry sense of humour. One day we were going to work over the Causeway and there was a traffic survey before the Narrows Bridge construction. Each vehicle was stopped and given a form to fill in, this caused quite a delay. I became agitated saying 'We will be late, my boss will go crook!' Allen was checking the form and came to *How many people in the vehicle?* He said 'Three, a driver and a passenger beside himself.'

"I will remember Allen as a friend who gave more than he received."

CRREPA will remember Allen and Stephanie for the time they gave to caring for our foreshore environment.

## AN ICONIC TREE IS IN A SAD DECLINE

Among the many recommendations in the City of Canning's award-winning *Urban Forest Strategy* is the nomination of a native species of the Canning region as a mascot tree that the community can identify with and the City can use to raise the awareness of the importance of increasing tree canopy cover.

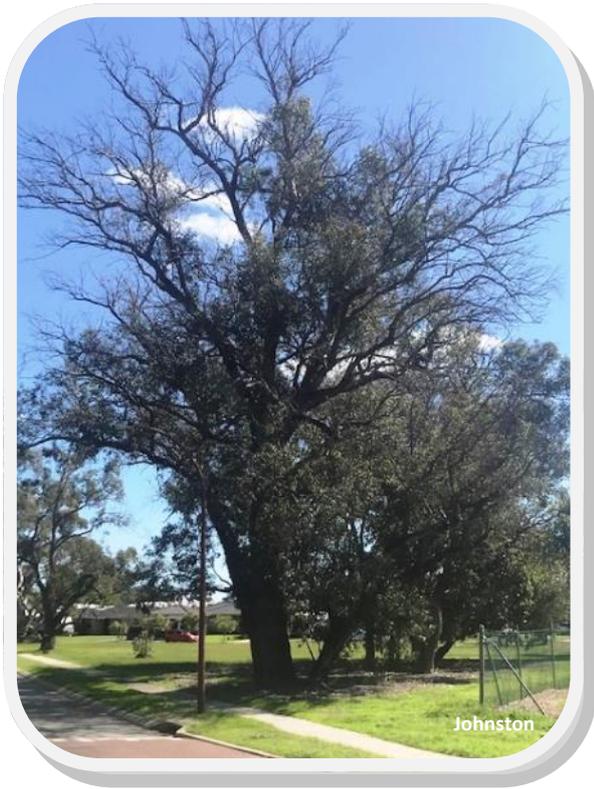
A most appropriate nominee would be the Flooded or Swamp gum, or to use its Noongar name, moitch (*Eucalyptus rudis*) which is the main remnant local Eucalypt along the Canning River.

But sadly, this wonderful tree is in decline throughout much of its range in south-west Western Australia on moist sites, swamps and the surrounds of lakes, riverbanks and floodplains.

A team of tree health experts at Murdoch University, Professor Giles Hardy, Associate Professor Treena Burgess and Dr Katinka Ruthrof, who are studying the *Eucalyptus rudis* decline have found a worrying combination of what they describe as predisposing, inciting and contributing factors. The long-term predisposing factors include climate change, poor soil drainage, soil compaction, air pollution, salinity and increased nutrients. These may not lead to obvious problems for the trees but predispose them to the inciting, short term stress factors including drought, frost and defoliating insects like psyllids.

Psyllid attack has been particularly evident in Canning over recent spring periods in *Eucalyptus rudis* in the Canning River Regional Park, in Cannington, Ferndale, Lynwood, Riverton and Wilson where trees around Riverton bridge and along Fern Road where it borders the Wilson wetlands, have been badly affected. Psyllid feeding results in the obvious symptoms of decline: discolouration of leaves and defoliation. If it were not for the predisposing factors, most trees would cope with seasonal high psyllid numbers for a couple of seasons and recover quickly after the insect population reductions. The insect is food for many predatory insects and insect feeding birds. But with repeated defoliation – and the other inciting factors, on top of the predisposing factors, the trees are vulnerable to contributing, long-term stress factors of root-decay pathogens particularly *Phytophthora*, fine root deterioration, wood and bark borers and canker fungi. As the Murdoch team puts it: "These administer the coup de grace."

They conclude that *Eucalyptus rudis*, as a critical component of the southwestern Australia ecosystem, "is suffering from almost continuous cycles of dieback. Although treatments trialled include injections, nutrient implants and revegetation, few treatments have been very successful and little is known about the underlying drivers of dieback." As the decline is caused by a 'complex-disease' syndrome, "it needs a coordinated approach to determine the ultimate and proximate causes and to develop robust cost-effective mitigation and restoration activities." To that end, the team is applying to the Australian Research Council for a grant under its *Linkage Projects* scheme which provides funding of \$50,000 to \$300,000 per year for two to five years.



## CRREPA host foreshore tour for CR Spencer-Teo



On 10th June 2020 we provided the new Bannister ward councillor, Amanda Spencer-Teo, with a briefing on the history of CRREPA and our work over the past 26 years.

Cr Spencer-Teo was very interested in seeing and hearing about some of the older and newer revegetation sites including 123–129 Riverton Drive, Rossmoyne and Beatrice Avenue. Cr Spencer-Teo backed her enthusiastic expression of support for CRREPA's work by joining us for two of the Community Rivercare Grant planting sessions at Corinthian Road.

## New report finds causes and future remedies for erosion at Wadjup Point

**The western side of Wadjup Point faces the broadest open expanse of the Canning River and therefore regularly cops a hammering from strong westerly winds during winter.**

This winter was no exception and there was substantial erosion to a section of the western side of Wadjup resulting in the loss of mature sedges, lowering of the beach area and loss of sediment from the western node at the tip of the point. The City of Canning engaged a coastal engineer to prepare a report on the immediate and longer-term erosion mitigation options for the site, including an assessment of the changes to Wadjup since the foreshore reclamation work in the early 1960s.

The report found that before the reclamation, shoreline stability was supported by extensive, well-established vegetation. The shape of Wadjup Point was changed by the reclamation works which included the removal of vegetation. Subsequently erosion occurred on both sides of the Point, while a small accumulation of sand at its tip formed two sediment nodes. The reclamation works provided a substantial supply of sediment which was transferred northward along the point towards the western sediment node, with a significant portion ultimately ending up in the river.



The report found since the mid-2000s the western node has eroded with vegetation buffers reduced from 10-15 metres to three to four metres. The erosion is likely to have been enhanced by periods of high-water levels, westerly winds, and loss of sediment supply. It has also been exacerbated, but not caused, by the transfer of erosion stress from previous stabilisation works. Based on the rates of erosion from 2008, there is a potential for continuing shoreline erosion of about 1.5 to 2.5 metres per year.

The report recommends a number of stabilisation techniques which are due to commence before December:

- Renourishing the beach with river sand every year to offset the lack of sediment supply and to improve amenity of the beach area. Pedestrian access to the beach will be maintained.
- Installing a section of low brush wall above the existing gabions towards the Point to reinforce and protect existing vegetation. Brush walling has been used successfully along the foreshore near Beryl Avenue, Shelley.
- Additional planting of low growing local native rushes and sedges behind the brush walling.

These techniques will be monitored regularly and adapted if required.

### WEBSITES OF INTEREST

**River Guardians**  
**Birds of the Canning River**  
**Friends of Queens Park Bushland**  
**Urban Bush Council**

<http://www.riverguardians.com> (inc Dolphin Watch)  
<http://www.canningriverbirds.com>  
<https://www.friendsofqueensparkbushland.org.au>  
<https://www.bushlandperth.org.au>

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and THANK YOUs

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