



CRREPA NEWS

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

Editors: Stephen Johnston and Sue Stanley

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Members please contact us by phone (0422 590 029) or email (CRREPA@gmail.com)
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MILESTONE BIRTHDAY PROMPTS MANY REFLECTIONS

In 2024 CRREPA turns 30.

As well as cause for celebration and future resolutions, birthdays are also a good time for retrospection. In the CRREPA newsletters leading up to May next year – the month when CRREPA's founding community meeting was held in 1994 – we will reflect firstly on the evolution of the Shelley-Rossmoyne area over the past nearly 200 years, the major changes to our foreshore and then the circumstances that resulted in the birth of CRREPA. In subsequent newsletters we will recount the frenetic level of activity of CRREPA's founders in the Association's first few years which laid the foundations for our current operations and management of the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore for its conservation values.

We will also bring you the recollections of the early efforts to protect and enhance the foreshore from some of our life members and current and former City of Canning staff.

On page four of this edition, you can read about the very early years of the Shelley-Rossmoyne area.

Mild summer, a blessing for our foreshore by Sue Stanley

After last year's horror of a summer I'm sure our foreshore plants enjoyed the milder weather we received this year. There has been very little plant loss over all the sites which shows that, selecting sites with some sub-surface water, good soil preparation and weekly watering over the first two years have improved the plant survival rate. I'd like to thank the 18 volunteers who participated in the summer water roster for their great effort and the City of Canning (CoC) for organising the fortnightly watering contractor.

Our only lowlight of the summer was vandalism to our tank at Yagan Reserve. It had been drained and pushed over which punctured it. Thanks to CoC for replacing it so promptly.



Attracting Black Pygmy mussels back to the Canning

Early on a March morning, five CRREPA volunteers joined staff from The Nature Conservancy Australia and Murdoch University plus OzFish volunteers to construct and install in the Canning River what is hoped will become new habitat for Black Pygmy mussels.

Black Pygmy mussels help maintain the health of the estuaries by filtering water and creating additional habitat for small crustaceans while also providing a key food source for important recreational fish species, like the Black Bream. They used to cover snags and form large beds in Australia's waterways from Perth around the southern and eastern coastline to Noosa in Queensland.

In the Swan-Canning estuary they were once so plentiful that from the early 1900s to the 1970s the mussel beds were systematically dredged to provide mortar for the building industry. This mechanical extraction was adversely complemented by increased levels of sediment and nutrients in the rivers with domestic and agricultural run-off that have resulted in more algae growth. As OzFish says, the algae "crowds out the hard surfaces in the river where Black Pygmy mussels would normally grow." Black Pygmy mussels now occur naturally in only a few bays in Tasmania and NSW and their decline has been one of negative impacts on estuarine health.

The Nature Conservancy is working with Perth Natural Resource Management, Murdoch University and OzFish to create additional habitat for mussels at 20 sites in the Swan and Canning supported by more than \$2 million in funding from the Minderoo Foundation, Lotterywest, the State and Commonwealth Governments and various Western Australian donors.

Andrew Bossie is leading the project for The Nature Conservancy and supervised the artificial reef installations on 2 March near Park Beach Close, Shelley and on both sides of the river near Shelley Bridge. The first job for the volunteers and staff was to unload and partly unroll lengths of tough but biodegradable coir matting. After positioning the matting next to the river bank, they secured it with wooden stakes and coir rope. In time it is hoped that the Black Pygmy mussels will be attracted to the hard, rough surface of the matting to settle.

Monitoring of the artificial reefs that have been laid in the Swan River has found them to be very successful with large numbers of mussels encrusted on the matting.

Andrew Bossie is also looking for volunteers to help with monthly monitoring of the reefs to measure the proportion covered by the mussels, sediment cover and presence of other species. If you are interested in doing this monitoring, please contact Stephen Johnston through CRREPA@gmail.com.

CRREPA will also be interested to see if one of the principal potential beneficiaries of the project, anglers, are tempted to harvest the very accessible reefs for bait at low tide. This concern is a reflection on the once not uncommon sight of clumps of foreshore sedges that had been dug up to expose mussels clustered at their base.



OUT AND ABOUT

This year our annual Shorebird Count was held on 19 February. We had 12 volunteers helping and counted over 360 shore and bush birds including more than 100 swans. Although we didn't have any rare or unusual sightings it was a great chance to get together and share our knowledge.



Keating

As usual, our 'End Of Year' Sundowner on 27 November was well attended.



Keating

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and THANK YOUS

We are very grateful for the support provided by DBCA, State NRM, Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources and:



History part 1

PLACE OF ABUNDANCE FOR WHADJUK NOONGAR

WORTHLESS BUSH FOR EARLY SETTLERS

If you take a short drive down Bull Creek Drive to Ron Carroll Reserve you will get some idea of the original appearance of Shelley-Rossmoyne before suburban development. It was originally a mix of Banksia woodland, open areas of low growing plants, paperbark in wetter areas - Modong (*Melaleuca preissiana*) and Swamp paperbark (*Melaleuca raphiophylla*), stands of Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) and along the water-courses, Flooded gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*). And there were many, many swamps, particularly in what is now Shelley.

Rossmoyne and Shelley were part of the land of the Beeliar clan of the Whadjuk Noongar people. There were said to be about 60 Beeliar people at the time of European settlement; their most prominent members were Midgegooroo and his son Yagan, after whom the wetland reserve is named. The land of the Beeliar clan extended from south of the Swan River, or what the original inhabitants called Derbal Yerrigan - west to the coast from the Canning River or Djarlgarra Beeliar.

The swamps, the river and Gabbiljee, which we know as Bull Creek, provided abundant food for the original inhabitants. Djarlgarra Beeliar is said to mean "place of abundance." But that was not the experience of European settlers.

In January 1827 Captain and later Lieutenant- Governor James Stirling sailed from Sydney for WA in the *Success* and on his arrival in March took a boat up the Swan River to assess the suitability of the district for land settlement. On his return to *Success* he sent his third lieutenant, Peter Belches, to explore a branch river which he named after George Canning, who was about to become Britain's second shortest serving Prime Minister from April until his death in August 1827.

In 1830 a retired naval lieutenant, Henry Bull, became probably the first person to sail down the inlet that is now named after him and took up a block of 120 hectares, shown on an 1839 map as location 26. Bull and neighboring settlers, John Adams and Thomas Middleton, established a small farming community at the bottom of the inlet with a jetty and boat-house they hoped would be the start of a river port. But the settlement was short-lived. John Adams left for Tasmania in 1831 never to return and the following year Bull moved to the fertile lands of Ellens Brook, now the suburb of Ellenbrook.

What is now Riverton, Shelley and part of Rossmoyne was location 25, 809 hectares of land owned by Bull's absent neighbour, John Morgan. According to Canning historian Fred Carden, Morgan described it as "one tenth very fair, but the remainder not worth walking over," so he also left for Tasmania in 1834 never to return.

Morgan's blunt, rueful comment underlined why any future farming initiatives in the area were doomed. Rossmoyne, Shelley and Riverton are in the middle of a long band of Bassendean sand that extends north-south between the limestone bands towards the coast and the rocky, gravelly soils of the Darling escarpment.

As environmental planner, Dr Gary Middle writes, the undulating Bassendean white-grey sand dunes were formed around 800,000 to 125,000 years ago and because of their age, any chemicals have been leached out and washed away. Dr Middle says they are commonly called 'gutless' sands – they do not retain vital elements of phosphorus and potassium and are hydrophobic (water repellent) which helps explain why much of the area was originally swampy. The WA Department of Agriculture says that generally the soils of the Swan Coastal Plain are some of the most infertile in the world.

YOUR CRREPA COMMITTEE 2022—2023



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|------------------------------|--------------------|
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