

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

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Shape of Things to Come

Another long hot and dry spring to autumn period with only 21.8 mm of rain which is the driest since records began. This has again highlighted the challenges of trying to revegetate the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore and the distinct likelihood that we may in future have to reduce the size of plots to maintain adequate plant survival rates.

In the first few years after planting everything is against the small seedlings: their limited root structure, the very poor foreshore soils, almost constant heat and no rain. We plant them in early June to give them as much winter rain as possible but if, like last year, winters continue to be shorter and drier, there is less time for initial establishment.

The only three variables CRREPA can influence are the plant species we put in, the amount of water they get and the quality of the soil. We are constantly reviewing how different plants perform. We, for instance, no longer plant *Hemiandra pungens* (Snakebush) because it can be short lived and *Patersonia occidentalis* (Native Iris) does not handle the conditions anymore and is one of the first plants to suffer in our reoccurring heatwaves. Plants that have done well are *Astartea scoporia*, *Banksia nivea*, *Calothamnus sanguineus* and *Rhagodia baccata*.

In recent years we have chosen revegetation sites – like Corinthian Road and west of Beatrice Avenue - where the original green turf all-year round had indicated a sub-surface water supply. This, plus regular watering, had brought good growth and survival rates. But over the last five months there has been a significant loss of plants at Beatrice Avenue, possibly due to inadequate watering.

How much and how often new plants should be watered – or indeed, if at all - is the subject of some debate. CRREPA's approach has been to water weekly for the first two to three years, ensuring that at least a litre of water is directed to each plant. If done properly, watering is time consuming, is therefore costly and absorbs the largest part of our grant funds. Because of the rising watering costs within our fixed Community Rivercare grant from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, CRREPA has had to reduce the number of plants we intended for this year's revegetation at Halophila Bay. And we can be thankful this grant even covers watering as the State Government's Natural Resource Management (NRM) Program has now removed it from the eligible grant funding activities.



CRREPA is also squeezed by other factors including the lack of watering contractors and our relatively very small plantings which are well below the profitable level for our former contractor to continue bidding for the work. Cont....



Along the foreshore there are very few outlets for hoses and while IBC 1000-litre water tanks refilled by the City of Canning – now located near Central Road Rossmoyne; Beryl Avenue, Shelley and Yagan Reserve – are excellent options for filling watering cans for small numbers of plants, they are not the answer for larger revegetation plots. Aside from contractors the best and probably only option for larger revegetation plots – which we used successfully for some years - is a large tank on a trailer with a water pump and hoses.

We also need to try and partly overcome the soil deficiencies. CRREPA's foreshore coordinator, Sue Stanley, in consultation with the City has done a lot of trialling of soil additives. The Community Rivercare Grant site at Corinthian Road was the first place we added clay and humic acid, which is a soil conditioner. The combination of the two improves the water holding capacity and stimulates soil microbes. The result after the first year was outstanding plant growth and survival rate. Unfortunately, we lost a few plants the second year due to lack of water. The surviving plants are in their fourth year and still thriving even without being watered.

OUT AND ABOUT



IN MEMORY OF OUR FOUNDERS

By Diane Matthews

Next to the wooden balcony off Bull Creek Drive, Rossmoyne that looks across to Yagan Wetland Reserve, are two memorial stones and plaques that commemorate the remarkable couple who were the driving force behind the establishment of CRREPA – Margot and Cam Ross.

Margot was a Canning councillor from 1987 until 1990, an independent candidate for Riverton in the 1996 State election and a teacher who worked in the prison system for 14 years teaching reading and writing. She had huge tenacity and energy. Cam said that it never occurred to her she couldn't do anything. For example, in 1996 she arranged with Perth Zoo horticulturalists to remove from Yagan some of the banana palms that were garden runaways from Sherwin Lodge (now Rossmoyne Waters) and re-plant them at the Zoo to provide a continuing, much loved food source for the elephants. Margot sadly never got to see the fruits of all her work for CRREPA as she died of cancer in June 1998 at the age of only 61. Cam lived on until May 2009.

On 1 October 2010 members of Cam and Margot's families and of CRREPA gathered at the memorials to remember the couple's contributions to the management of the foreshore and its surrounds. Founding and life member and then president of CRREPA, Diane Matthews gave the eulogy:

It is especially fitting that this memorial plaque to Cam be placed here next to Margot's; this was very much their beloved river foreshore. These plaques will be reminders to all of us of the special qualities of Cam and Margot that saw them make such positive contributions to their local community. Together they made a formidable team and those of us who knew them well have many memories of their determination and their passion for driving the change that was necessary for better environmental management of the Bull Creek and Canning River catchments.

Many of us remember those vigorous site meetings where Margot and Cam thrashed out with the City and Swan River Trust representatives the outline of revegetation projects and practical management issues; the many equally vigorous roundtable meetings on policy documents such as management plans; and presentations to councillors and others to sell the message of sympathetic foreshore management. Also, of those exhausting but invigorating project days when Margot and Cam's energy drove us ever onwards and set the example for all those planting days that have followed.

We can forget very quickly what things were like in the past. Back then these issues were almost totally community driven. For example, from having no environmental officers within the City of Canning we encouraged the appointment of the first. CRREPA also was closely involved in the drafting of the City's foreshore management policy and associated management plans.

Cam's focus during the later years was to encourage policy and budget commitment by the responsible agencies to ongoing sustainable catchment management. This would see foreshore management into the future with an aesthetic and a healthy natural community asset supported by a partnership approach between all the stakeholders including CRREPA, thus relieving the management pressures on volunteers. The staff and councillors of the City of Canning are to be congratulated on their cooperative approach over the years and the improved management along the Rossmoyne and Shelley foreshores. Cam's vision is now our responsibility.

Therefore, this site will serve as a worthy reminder to us of what can be achieved by those who have a strong sense of community service and respect for the environment. We thank the City of Canning for their understanding and support in creating this lasting memorial place for these two special people.



30 years of

The Canning River Residents
Environment Protection
Association (CRREPA)



You are invited to an afternoon tea
sponsored by the City of Canning

WHEN: FRIDAY MAY 31ST AT 3PM

WHERE: CANNING RIVER ECO EDUCATION CENTRE
CORNER OF KENT STREET & QUEENS PARK ROAD, WILSON

To recognise the work that CRREPA has
done on the Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore
since 1994 in partnership with the City

RSVP BY: MONDAY MAY 27TH TO
CRREPA@GMAIL.COM

LOCAL NATIVE TWINE NEEDS SOME OCCASIONAL CONTROL

It's tough, it's tangled, it's parasitic and it's festooned across some foreshore shrubs and trees.

Commonly called Dodder laurel and also apparently devil's vine, love twine because of the alleged aphrodisiac effects and in Florida, USA, woe vine. *Cassytha racemosa* grows naturally in the Canning region. But as an aggressive parasite in the narrow corridor of foreshore trees and shrubs, it now sometimes needs to be managed. A number of CRREPA working bees have targeted some of the worst infestations where it has been smothering the *Melaleuca raphiophyllas* (Swamp Paperbarks). Armed with rakes and hoes, the volunteers have hauled down large mats of the creeper and will continue to do so where the *Melaleucas* are being compromised.

Wikipedia says the effects on host plants of *Cassytha* vary: "They are not very selective and they parasitise hosts from many plant families, often overwhelming a host so drastically as to kill it. Even when host plants survive, a heavy infestation commonly causes drastic reduction in vigour and reproductive capacity. Accordingly some species of *Cassytha* have been examined as potential weed control agents, and others are regarded as agricultural pests in their own right."

Cassytha is a member of the *Lauraceae* plant family which mainly comprises woody shrubs or trees. It very closely resembles the unrelated genus, *Cuscuta*, which also has the common name of dodder but is classified as a weed in WA. Dodder laurel has tiny white flowers and fruits that birds eat. According to an Albany naturalist, Sheila Murray, Noongars used it for decorative and ceremonial purposes, as a source of binding cord and most importantly in fish traps because it could form an impenetrable net.



Firey start to new year

A man has been charged after allegedly lighting seven fires along the Shelley foreshore on New Year's Day. We were very lucky the deliberately lit fires were extinguished swiftly by the fire brigade and it didn't get into the tree canopy.

Three months on and mother nature is repairing itself quite well at one of the sites (see below). The other two larger areas might have to be replanted.



NEW NAME PROPOSED TO BETTER IDENTIFY THE ASSOCIATION

by Stephen Johnston

Sparked by the launch of a volunteer recruitment and retention guide for bushcare friends groups, the CRREPA committee earlier this year resolved that we should seek comment from members about a change to the Association's name – the name only, *not* the logo. It wasn't the first time this has been discussed – we last gave it passing consideration when we revised the constitution five years ago.

Notwithstanding the length of time we've had the one name, the committee recognised that:

- because it is a bit of a mouthful, we are best known by a somewhat strange acronym that gets two pronunciations – “creepa” or “creppa”; and
- our name does not refer to the particular area that we are focused on so does not connote a local identity which we should be striving for in promoting the Association and seeking new members.

While we are open to members' suggestion for the exact wording, we want to adopt the “Friends of” nomenclature that originated in the early 1970s and has since been embraced by many local community conservation/bushcare/landcare groups across Australia. CRREPA's new name then could be:

Friends of Shelley Rossmoyne Foreshore (Inc); or

Friends of Rossmoyne Shelley Foreshore (Inc)

While neither of these produce a phonetic acronym, they are simpler, less formal, more welcoming and identify the Association clearly with both the foreshore and our local area where our members predominantly come from.

We are not considering holding a formal referendum among members on the proposed name change, rather just floating the idea informally to get members' views. If we sense there is overall support and/or lack of strong opposition, we will put the proposed new name to the next annual general meeting in September 2024 as a special resolution to change our constitution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and THANK YOUs

We are very grateful for the support provided by DBCA, State NRM and:



YOUR CRREPA COMMITTEE 2023—2024



President:
Secretary:
Treasurer:
Foreshore Coordinator
Membership Officer

Stephen Johnston
Madeline Radestock
Sonia Langford
Sue Stanley
Liz Moore

Committee Members
Murray Radestock Lea Hadley

ALL NATURAL FROTH AND BUBBLE ON THE SHORES OF THE CANNING

With the protracted and lengthening dry periods, the Canning River quite often falls victim to algal blooms and pollution becomes more evident with the very low water levels.

In this context, CRREPA member Diane Matthews was fearing the worst when she noticed long lines of foam on a beach near Watersby Crescent, Shelley and alerted the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). The foam had dissipated by the time a DBCA officer arrived at the site but they made a thorough check of the River upstream and downstream as well as the road drainage outlets but could not find any dead fish or inflows of pollutants. Their water sample was put through laboratory testing and fortunately for once, it was good news:

“We expect this was the result of phytoplankton (algae) activity combined with wind. With the warmer weather, phytoplankton activity increases and will result in higher concentrations of dissolved organic matter in the water. Additionally, some of the phytoplankton detected in our recent water sampling are known to produce large amounts of polysaccharides which are also a type of dissolved organic matter. When wind moves over water it creates turbulence, which ‘beats’ the organic matter into a foam in the same manner as beating egg whites. The event you reported was certainly more foam than usual for these events, but we attribute this to a consistent south-westerly wind for the previous 24 hours, churning the water over a long fetch directly onto the beach.



“The water sample did not show phytoplankton of concern, but there was a large amount of fine organic matter present in the sample which was also visible on site, both in the shallows and along the shore. This adds weight to our initial hypothesis, so we are confident that it was just a natural event, though quite a spectacular one.”

Riverbank projects

City of Canning contractors have completed construction on the latest round of erosion control sites funded by the State Government Riverbank program. Planting will be commencing in the coming weeks.

Sadly more and more sites are having to be remediated each year due to rising tides and storm damage.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Diane Matthews

As an inaugural member of CRREPA, and as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Association, I felt it should be recorded why its name was chosen. A great deal of serious thought was given to this as it was crucial to our credibility and identity. In 1994 the only organisations recognised as representing general ratepayers in the City of Canning were ratepayers associations.

Some members of the Riverton Rossmoyne Ratepayers Association were opposed to the formation of a specialist, conservation, rivercare group in the area which looked to have separate access to Council and relevant State Government departments. Margo Ross, husband Cam and their committed supporters believed that the group's title needed to be inclusive of 'Canning River Residents' who all owned and had a responsibility for the river; the words 'Environment Protection' formed the key phrase; and 'Association' was essential to raise it above being a 'group' or 'club'.

They were different times – many new supporters now involved in environment conservation know that it is often frustrating to work through the different planning and grants processes to get meaningful results. In the 1990s the obstruction could be one-on-one personal, physical and verbal abuse was a reality!! Also, without the present-day social media, the then local and state newspapers were vigorously used on a weekly basis for personal abuse and to discredit others. They were the 1990s source of 'fake news' and fear mongering.

Therefore, the choice of the name, the Canning River Residents Environment Protection Association, was critical at the time for announcing the credentials and purpose of the Association. The acronym CRREPA followed and was considered acceptable, if not meaningful.

Of course, I will be disappointed if the original name is changed. However, as long as the wonderful generosity and commitment of members continues to motivate all and to champion rivercare under whatever title, I will be proud to be associated with it.

Vale David Thwaites

We regret the passing of David Thwaites, a longstanding member of CRREPA and committee member from 2016-2018. David and his wife, Yoka, were regular participants in CRREPA fore-shore working bees and annual sundowners.

David's daughter, Moira Long, said her father was a proud Northumbrian who lived in the United Kingdom, Holland, Switzerland and France.

"He was very keen on the outdoors and in his younger years was a rock climber and a hiker. In Australia he enjoyed the climate, blue skies and friendly people. He enjoyed the Canning River and the special birds which he spotted off the jetties as well as seeing dolphins swimming.

David was a long-time member of CRREPA and a special memory is when he organised a wildflower hike at Paruna Sanctuary where the guide also shared his incredible knowledge of Eagles!

A highlight of his year was always the chicken feast sundowner in December with his CRREPA friends"



History Part 3

FROM A BITTER BATTLE OVER A BOARDWALK, CRREPA IS BORN

In 1994 after three decades of suburban development in Rossmoyne and Shelley, the Swan River Trust bluntly summarised its impact on the foreshore in a *Lower Canning River Management Plan*: “paperbarks and sheoaks are ageing and there is little evidence of regeneration”.....“grass invasion into rushes and sedges reducing diversity of understorey vegetation”.....“lack of shade trees”.....“local residents have taken no interest in the foreshore and have inadvertently introduced exotic plants to the reserve”.....“degradation of native foreshore vegetation through lack of regeneration, uncontrolled pedestrian access, mowing etc facilitating excessive weed invasion”.



This 5.4 hectare Yagan Wetland Reserve, reserved for conservation in 1984, had also been severely degraded. The drylands area by Leach Highway had been used for storage of road materials and spoil during construction of Leach Highway (the Carrington Street, Palmyra to High Road Willetton section opened in 1972) and as a dump for builders' rubble. The wetland area was choked with a mass of weeds of all sizes and descriptions from blackberry and papyrus to figs trees and banana palms that had escaped the back gardens of Sherwin Lodge (now Rossmoyne Waters).

Another report, launched at All Saints College in 1994, was the *Bull Creek Wetlands Study* prepared by the City of Melville in conjunction with the City of Canning. It looked at the whole remnant natural area from Bateman Park in Melville to Yagan Wetland Reserve in Canning. Both this and the Swan River Trust report recognised the discontinuity of a dual-use path between Melville and Canning and recommended the establishment of a boardwalk around the foreshore through the paperbark groves connecting both sides of Bull Creek. The *Wetlands Management Plan* wanted to encourage more public access with community art installations, funded by the Australia Council, paradoxically as a means of helping protect the area's natural values.

These recommendations triggered a storm of controversy reported extensively in the local papers. The opposition was principally based on concerns that enabling and encouraging public access would instead compromise and further degrade Yagan Reserve. Sherwin Lodge residents were concerned about public safety – that “criminals and vandals” would frequent the path.

A public meeting held on 18 May was attended by about 30 people who formed CRREPA. Apart from opposing the proposed boardwalk and a dual use path, CRREPA also opposed the suggestion of bird hides being established in the middle of bird breeding and feeding area at Yagan and a recommendation by the Swan River Trust for a boat ramp at the end of Fifth Avenue.

The battle over the Yagan Reserve boardwalks came to a conclusion in December when the Canning Council received a petition with 440 signatures calling for a rejection of the man-made trails and approved (with three dissenting votes) a motion moved by Cr Bruce Mason to withdraw from the Bull Creek Wetlands Management Plan. In June the following year Council appointed a Yagan/Bull Creek Wetland Advisory Committee which produced a Management Plan incorporating CRREPA's own management plan for the area.

While CRREPA members were focused on the battle over the future of Yagan, they were also concerned about the state of the whole Shelley-Rossmoyne foreshore and made a frenetic start to the Association's mission of conserving and restoring the foreshore natural environment.