

# THE GECKO



Edition 11  
April 2016

Welcome to the April 2016 edition of The Gecko.

This quarter was, quite literally, a load of rubbish. We had three rubbish collecting activities and there is still more to pick up. We also had sediment, Typha, European wasps and a cat removed.

We need your input. Have you taken a photo or seen something in the bush that you'd like to share with the group? Perhaps you have a question to ask. Send it in to [fqpbushland@gmail.com](mailto:fqpbushland@gmail.com) and we'll include it in the next newsletter.

## January to March 2016

### **31 January 2016**

We were lucky with the weather for this activity. It had rained for most of the previous day but, although still overcast, we didn't need to dodge any showers.

The temperature was quite pleasant – in the low 20s – but the humidity was high, which made the work a bit harder than it could have been.

Nevertheless, nine people filled nine bags with rubbish. Most of this came from behind the newly built apartments and we're hopeful that now that building has finished, the rubbish will ease off too.



You are never too young to help clean up the bushland.

One of the highlights of the morning was to look at the seedlings we had planted during last winter. Although a great number have died, there were still many alive, and most of those looked like they intended to stay that way.

### **28 February 2016**

Our annual general meeting was attended by seven members. The chairperson's report and financial statements were read and all positions were declared vacant.

Electing a new committee was a quick affair with all positions only receiving one nomination and that nominee being elected unopposed. The committee until next year is:

Chairperson – Sian  
Vice chairperson – Collette  
Secretary – Jelena  
Treasurer – Sian

Three ordinary committee members were also elected – Barbara, Ronnie and Ash.

### **6 March 2016**

Fourteen people attended our first Clean Up Australia Day activity. Everyone put in a huge effort and removed two mountains of rubbish from the area of bushland near the corner of Gibbs Street and Elizabeth Street.



Trying to move the parking meter. Photo by Jelena.

There was a huge range in the types of rubbish found, from the smallest scrap of paper to house doors and everything in between. Car parts made a significant contribution to the pile but the oddest piece was a City of Perth parking meter.

The work, although not glamorous, was very satisfying; with several people going back at it after morning tea.



One of the rubbish piles. Photo by Sara.



The second rubbish pile.

A special thank you goes to Jelena for bringing her Dad to help out, and to Jelena's Mum for providing some yummy morning tea.

### **20 March 2016**

Having gained so much satisfaction on Clean Up Australia Day, eight of us decided to do it again. This time we removed rubbish from the stretch of bushland along Welshpool Road between the Scout Hall on Gibbs Street and the fenced bushland on Station Street.



Hard at work finding every last scrap of rubbish.

Again, we were left with two mountains of rubbish. There were the usual car tyres and various car parts, but interesting finds from this area included a wall oven and a leaf blower.



Rubbish pile 3.



Rubbish pile 4.

A big THANK YOU goes to Adrian Alex, Ash, Barbara M, Collette, Florian, Ikhlās, Jelena, Lee, Megan, Nikole, Omar, Ronnie, Robin, Rosemary, Sara, Sian, Stephanie and Sue for helping out with these activities.

## Upcoming events

24 April 2016 - Weeding  
29 May 2016 – Weeding  
June – To be advised

Details of some activities are yet to be finalised but will be distributed by email and advertised on our website.

## Also this quarter

We started this quarter on 1 January with finding a **European wasp** nest in the bushland next to the Welshpool fire station.



European wasps at the nest entrance.

It was reported to the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) who came out and destroyed it.



Destroying the nest.

As you can see from the way Marc is kitted up in the photo, it is not a job you would want to do yourself. Luckily DAFWA will come out and destroy this pest for free.

**Cat trapping** happened again this quarter and, just like last time, lots of bobtails were caught. Cat traps seem to be sought after refuges. A safe place to spend the night with an all-you-can-eat dish of food laid on.



Bobtail in a cat trap.

The bobtails seem so at home that they can get quite upset with an early morning wake-up call and being tipped out to make their own way in world.



This bobtail was upset at being evicted from a cat trap.

Unlike last time, a cat was also caught. The cat wasn't wearing a collar with registration tags, a requirement of the *Cat Act 2011*, and was in a Cat Prohibited Area.

The cat was taken to the Cat Haven to be scanned to see if it has a microchip. If the owner can be found, the cat will be returned, after paying a fine. If the cat's owner can't be identified it will be assessed for rehoming or destroyed.



Cat caught in trap. Photo by Tehlia.

Cat trapping will happen again soon as there is evidence of more cats in the reserves. Footprints have been seen and three photos of cats, below, were taken while monitoring for foxes.

If you own a cat, ensure it is microchipped, sterilised, registered and wearing a collar with identification tags. Also, be aware that many bushland areas in the City of Canning are now designated as Cat Prohibited Areas under the City's local laws. Cats found to be in Cat Prohibited Areas will earn their owner a \$200 penalty.



Cat photographed by a remote camera.



2nd cat photographed by a remote camera on a different night.



3rd photo of possibly the same cat on a 3rd night.

**A new bird species** was added to our fauna list this quarter. Four crested pigeons were sighted using the bushland as shelter after being disturbed while feeding on the grassed area near the oval.

This brings the number of bird species seen in the bushland to 102.

Crested pigeons make a distinctive whistling sound with their wings as they are flying. This makes them easy to identify even if you don't get a clear view.

They can be found over much of mainland Australia but tend to be close to water as they need to drink every day. Once they have found a good spot they usually don't leave the area unless drought forces them to look for water elsewhere. Hopefully they will decide to stay here for a while.



Crested pigeons feeding near the bushland.

**The basins either side** of the lake near Station Street had their sediment and vegetation removed during February. This is a necessary part of the regular maintenance of this man-made system.

The basins take rain run-off from Welshpool Road and hold the water to allow sediment and pollutants to drop out. Nutrients are used by the vegetation to grow while sediment and pollutants are trapped by the plant's roots and stems.

This means that the water overflowing into the main lake is cleaner than when it left the road and doesn't add to the pollution levels of the Canning River.

An excavator was used by A Bobcat Service to scrape the basins clean, with the waste being loaded onto trucks by a posi-track and a front-end loader. This was all taken to a recycling facility to be turned into composted garden products.



An excavator scrapes the basin clean.



The basin is now clean and ready to collect more sediment.

There is no need to worry about pollutants being spread all over Perth's gardens. The sediment was tested prior to removal and found to have very low levels of anything nasty. In fact, the levels were so low that it could have been placed straight on to an organic farm without any problems.

We'll be planting more vegetation around the basins this coming winter to ensure that the water that passes through our patch is as clean as can be.

**Work then started on the main lake** where the entry and exit channels had the encroaching vegetation removed. This will help the water flow into and out of the lake.

The team from Landcare Weed Control took to this task with great gusto. Despite the trying conditions of heat and humidity, they donned waders and pulled out vegetation while up to their chests in sludge.



Clearing vegetation from the channel by hand was a wet and muddy job.

They then tackled what was left with a brushcutter before spraying the stumps with herbicide. All of the vegetation starting to encroach from the edge of the lake also received a spray of herbicide.



The brushcutter made cutting the Typha back easier.

Keeping the vegetation around the lake under control is vital as it can quickly cover the water surface and reduce the habitat available for birds like ducks and swans.

An overgrowth of vegetation also reduces the lake's ability to perform its main role as a compensating basin. This can lead to flooding upstream if the water can't easily enter our lake.

**Honeybees were removed** from an artificial bird nest box. The box was brought down from the tree and the smell of honey was overpowering when the lid was prised open.

The bees had completely filled the nest box with honeycomb and were extending the comb outside through the entrance hole. This makes the box useless to native birds – the intended residents.



Nest box full of honeycomb. The white powder is the insecticide.

The nest box will undergo a thorough cleaning process before being hung in a tree again. If there is any scent of the old honeycomb left in the nest box it will be invaded by another swarm of bees and we'll be back where we started.

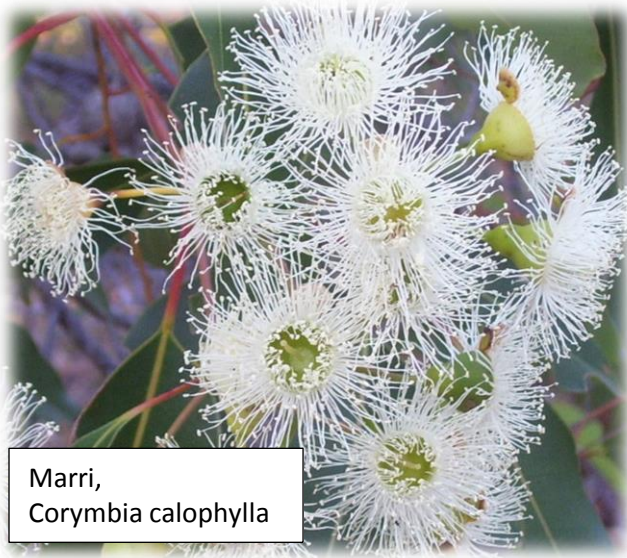
### **Tuesday group**

You are welcome to join the Tuesday group on a casual basis or as a regular commitment. Contact Sian at [fqpbushland@gmail.com](mailto:fqpbushland@gmail.com) to find out where and when to meet.

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## Summer flowers

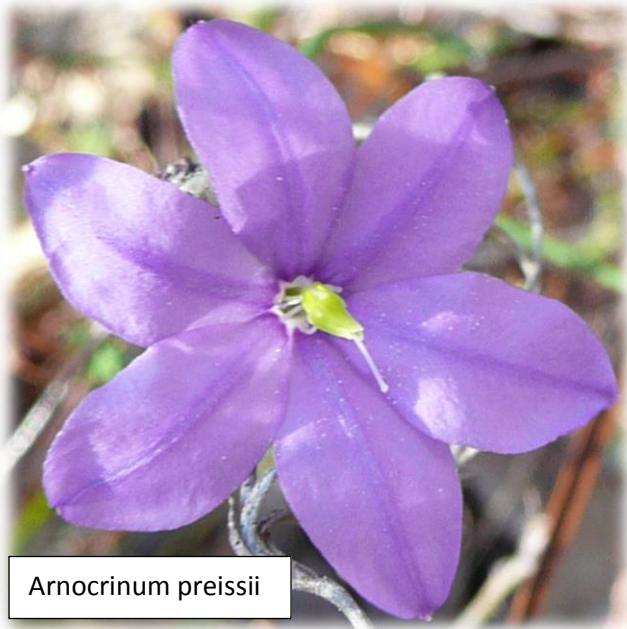
It is far too common to hear that the bush is lifeless with nothing flowering during summer. The following page shows a few of the plants we have flowering in the hottest months of the year. Add to this the abundant insect life and the bush is hardly lifeless.



Marri,  
*Corymbia calophylla*



Pink summer star flower,  
*Calytrix fraserii*



*Arnocrinum preissii*



*Babingtonia camphorosmae*



Holly leaf Banksia,  
*Banksia ilicifolia*



WA Christmas tree,  
*Nuytsia floribunda*

All of these plants can be found flowering during the summer months, plus many more.