

THE GECKO



Edition 23
April 2019

Welcome to the April 2019 edition of The Gecko.

The lack of rain over summer and autumn has been hard on the plants so we have been watering our revegetation area as often as we can.

The one positive to come from having no rain is that there are fewer weeds to tackle. If only there was a way to have one without the other.

We'll keep our fingers crossed for an early break to the season and those plants still alive get a reprieve. They deserve it.

During the dry conditions the City of Canning has removed piles of bricks that were illegally dumped on the edge of the bushland decades ago. Nobody imagined there were quite as many bricks as were found. See page 2 for details.

January to March 2019

27 January 2019

Five volunteers met on a fine and warm morning to water our seedlings and do some seed collecting. As this summer has had a few 40C days already, the seedlings really appreciated a bit of TLC.

The hot weather has seen the seeds mature quickly and we found that most of the plants with pea pods had already released their seeds. However, we found plenty of seed to keep us going on the Banksias and Hakeas.



Watering the seedlings.

There was a surprise as we all gathered around a shrub picking the seed capsules from its branches. Surrounded on all sides by oblivious humans, a

Western Bearded Dragon, sitting on top of the shrub, relied on its camouflage to remain undetected.

However, after a few minutes the lizard was spotted and made a hasty escape once it was clear its cover was blown.



A Western Bearded Dragon, *Pogona minor*.

24 February 2019

Nine members attended the Annual General Meeting and eight of them became committee members.

The committee for 2019-20 is:

Chair: Sian

Vice chair: Kade

Secretary: Jelena

Treasurer: Sian

Ordinary committee members: Collette, Katrina, Jackie, Barbara, Ian

31 March 2019

Eight volunteers helped water our revegetation area and do a spot of weeding in the dry lake. We were rewarded by finding one of our planted *Banksia menziesii* in flower and another with a flower bud. These plants were amongst the first planted in the area in 2015.

Weeding the dry lake bed was quick and easy. The City's Natural Areas Team had sprayed the area two weeks prior and our job was to pull up the weeds that were growing too close to the natives to be treated. With the soil so dry it was like powder, the plants gave up with little resistance.



Watering the seedlings again.

A big THANK YOU goes to Addy, Barbara M, Collette, Ian, Jackie, Jelena, Kade, Katrina, Koda, Ronnie, Rosemary, Sian, and the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team for helping out with these, and other, activities in the bushland.

Upcoming events

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

Also this quarter

Piles of bricks that were dumped in the bushland decades ago have been removed. The area with the bricks is adjacent to an area that will be revegetated this coming winter, so now was the perfect time to do the job.

After the bricks were scraped up into two heaps, the plan was that the trucks would be able to enter the bushland from Welshpool Road, drive on the fire access tracks to the bricks, be loaded up and exit onto the grassed area along Luyer Avenue.



One of the piles of bricks.

Unfortunately, our tracks were not as tough as hoped and a truck got bogged on its first run. Plan B had the trucks being loaded on the grassed area. This meant the bricks couldn't all be removed in one day. But that

gave us more time to move bricks that were deeper in the bushland out onto the piles.

The bricks stopped plants being able to grow in the area. It is hoped that having them removed will allow native species to recolonise the area.



Loading the bricks onto a truck.

About 20 truck-loads (with each truck holding 12 tonnes or 9m³) of bricks were taken to a facility where they were crushed to be recycled as paving material or road base.

A few weeks after the bricks were taken away, we received a truck-load of logs. The logs came from a tree that had to be removed. The logs were laid on the bare area where the bricks had once been. The logs have several functions: they will provide habitat for wildlife, trap leaf litter and seeds, return nutrients to the soil as they decay, and offer protection as seedlings grow around them.

Our heart-felt thanks goes to the City of Canning for making this happen and to Shaun, from A Bobcat Service, for working so skilfully around the existing trees.



Before the bricks were removed. The piles of bricks had been there so long that they had been covered by leaf litter, weeds and dead branches. Photo: Shaun from A Bobcat Service.



A loader was used to get the bricks onto the trucks.



After the logs had been placed on the cleared ground.

Last quarter we reported that European Wasps had been sighted on 1 January 2019.

The nest was tracked down a few days later and treated by the good folk at DPIRD.



A European Wasp nest being destroyed.

DPIRD told us that a wasp nest along McDowell St, Welshpool, had been missed last year and had released hundreds of queens.

On 29 January 2019 more European Wasps were sighted in the same area and reported. A second nest was found nearby and it, too, was destroyed.



A European Wasp cutting some steak to take back to the nest.

After sighting signs of cats in the bushland, the City's Natural Areas Team put out some traps. A cat was caught on the very first night.



The trapped cat. Photo courtesy of Max.

The cat was impounded and efforts made to contact the owner. If the owner couldn't be contacted the cat will be assessed for rehoming or destroyed.

Our reserves have been declared cat prohibited areas by the City of Canning in order to help protect

the wildlife. This means cat owners should ensure that their cat doesn't go into the reserves. Any cat in the reserves is at risk of being trapped and impounded.

Also, if you have cats visiting your property you can borrow a cat trap from the City of Canning. Once caught, the City's rangers will visit you and impound the cat. To save your cat from the trauma of being trapped make sure it doesn't stray from your home.

We also had fox trapping done after seeing and smelling signs of there being one in our area. After five nights of trapping a young male fox was caught and destroyed.

Foxes leave a distinctive smell as they wander through their territory which is easily recognised once learned. They also leave behind evidence after digging up turtle nests and dismembering waterbirds.

Insects in the bushland

Despite the hot and dry conditions (or perhaps because of them) insects are plentiful in the bushland. Here are a few that stayed still long enough to have their photo taken.



Blue-banded Bee, *Amegilla (Notomegilla) chlorocyanea*



Jewel beetle, *Castiarina gardnerae*



Longtailed Blue, *Lampides boeticus*



Green Treehopper, *Sextius virescens*



Mating wasps from the Thynnidae family. The winged male is on the left, wingless female on the right.