

THE GECKO



Edition 43
April 2024

Welcome to the April 2024 edition of The Gecko.

Sadly, our area is looking the worst we've ever seen it. So many plants, including some established trees, have died over summer. And those that are still alive have been dropping branches. Sometimes very big branches!

Now that April has arrived we're hoping for a real change in the weather. A good drop of rain would be nice. Or is that too much to ask?

Winter cannot come soon enough as far as we're concerned.

January to March 2024

28 January 2024

Five members helped water our seedlings this month. We must be getting better at doing the watering as it took less than an hour to get around to all of the plants. The alternative reason as to why we may be getting quicker (that some of the plants have died) doesn't bear thinking about.



There was an interesting sighting made in this reserve a few days prior to watering. Several native wasps were zigzagging around just above the ground. They would occasionally land for a few seconds (just long enough to get the camera in position but not long enough to

take a decent photo) and then start zooming around again.

One individual did stop for a bit longer than the others and has been identified as a yellow flower wasp, *Radumeris tasmaniensis*. This individual appears to have stuck the end of its abdomen into the sand. You could be forgiven for thinking that it was ovipositing (laying eggs), except this species digs a tunnel when it wants to lay eggs – and this individual is male!

So, what is it doing? We don't know. Please contact us if you have any ideas.



25 February 2024

Ex-tropical cyclone Lincoln brought some much needed relief from summer's heat for the nine members who attended our AGM on an overcast and unusually cool morning.

Our committee for the next 12 months is:

Chair: Sian

Vice chair: Kade

Secretary: Jackie

Treasurer: Sian

Ordinary committee members: Ronnie, Katrina, Catherine and Ian

After the meeting we were discussing black cockatoos when two Carnaby's Cockatoos flew past. We lamented the fact that we no longer see the flocks of hundreds that were common only 10 years ago. The photo below was taken in our reserves in 2012 and shows more than 150 Carnaby's Cockatoos.



31 March 2024

Although being Easter Sunday, three members came along to watering seedlings on a fine and still morning. The seedlings are doing well, with their growth commented on by one of the neighbours.

The neighbour told us that he regularly has a bobtail wander around his garden and even had a snake visit him at one time. These are both animals we are yet to see in this reserve.



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

Also this quarter

Following the sighting of a cat in our bushland, the City of Canning conducted some cat trapping. Over four nights, one cat was caught and impounded.

The cat was taken to the Cat Management Facility to be scanned for a microchip. If the owner can be contacted, the cat will be returned, after a fine has been paid. If the cat's owner can't be identified it will be assessed for rehoming or destroyed.



Many bushland areas in the City of Canning are 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 plus costs associated with the keeping and returning of their pet.

As the cat impounded was not the cat in the photograph it is hoped that more trapping will occur in coming weeks. If you own a cat, ensure it is microchipped, sterilised, registered and wearing a collar with identification tags. And keep it out of Cat Prohibited Areas.

As mention in the introduction, many plants have died over this summer, including some we find puzzling. W.A. Christmas Trees, *Nuytsia floribunda*, are semi-parasitic – attaching to the root system of their neighbours, so you would expect that they would be able to get food and water from the surrounding, living vegetation. However, that doesn't appear to be the case. Many of our Christmas Trees, over all of our reserves, appear severely stressed or actually dying while there are seemingly healthy hosts nearby. It would be interesting to know if others have noticed this and can explain why they are succumbing. Is it just that this summer has been too relentless and the Christmas Trees can't steal life-sustaining moisture fast enough? Are the host trees, although apparently healthy, also stressed so much that they have stopped the circulation of sap? Whatever the reason, this summer, following a dry winter, has been the hardest on the vegetation we've seen.



A dead Christmas Tree surrounded by living vegetation.