THE GECKO

Edition 22
January 2019

Welcome to the January 2019 edition of The Gecko. It is hoped that you had a happy and safe Christmas and enjoy the New Year.

The last three months of 2018 were exciting for us with new species popping up all over the place. We added three native plant species to our flora list and a variety of new invertebrates presented themselves at our December night stalk.

The bushland is a wonderful place to spend some time and, as we're finding out time and time again, there is always something new to discover.

October to December 2018

28 October 2018
Eight volunteers and two members from the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team spread the mulch donated to us by EMRC (see below for more about the donation).

The mulch was placed around the seedlings we planted in one of our revegetation areas. It will help to keep the plants' roots cool, conserve water and add organic matter to the soil.

There were tasks for everyone - clearing the weeds from the areas to be mulched, loading and pushing the wheelbarrows, and spreading the mulch after it had been put in the right spot.

Some jobs were more challenging than others but everyone found their place and we operated like a well-oiled machine. We all felt a great deal of satisfaction when, after 90 minutes of effort, all of the work was done.


The well-oiled machine in motion.

It was agreed that the job was worthwhile and we will look at getting more mulch next year to cover the areas we couldn't get to this time.

25 November 2018
Thirteen volunteers began the morning's activities with watering our seedlings and everyone was very pleased with how good they looked now that they were mulched.


Watering the seedlings.

We then had a discussion with a special guest. Sam lives in New Zealand but is in Perth to work for a few months. Fortunately for us, he is staying nearby and has a particular interest in weevils.

Sam told us that weevils are most readily identified by their elongated rostrum (or nose). Also, weevils can have quite specific dietary requirements. A particular species may only eat the seeds of a particular plant, while another species of weevil may only eat the leaves of that same plant.

Red-legged Weevil, *Catasarcus impressipennis*.

The next part of the morning was spent on a dual-purpose hunt. We looked for seeds and weevils. While we found a few plants with seeds ready to be collected, more interest was generated by the weevil hunt and the other insects we came across.

Weevils were collected by beating a plant with a stick while holding a white collecting sheet underneath. Insects are dislodged by the beating and can be seen quite easily on the white sheet. As well as weevils, there were springtails, leaf hoppers, spiders and other beetles to be examined.

Checking the collection sheet for weevils.

There were many interesting insects to be seen away from the beating sheet, too. Small beetles were congregating in mating frenzies with many males trying to win the favours of a female. Some of the beetles, having fallen to the ground, were being attacked by ants.

Blue-banded bees were seen at several flowering plants and many out of focus and blurred photos were taken. However, there were some very good photos, too.

Blue-banded Bee, *Amegilla* sp. Photo: Kade

It was a great morning where a bit of work was followed by some exploring and a lot of learning. All of this was followed up with morning tea, kindly provided by Rosemary and Kade.

21 December 2018

With a nearly full moon shining brightly, 14 volunteers met on a very warm evening for a night stalk. As seven of the volunteers had not been to one of our night stalks before, we hoped the wildlife would cooperate. We weren't disappointed.

Orb-weaving spiders were being spot-lighted before we'd even left the meeting place. A lovely native cockroach was seen before we rounded the first corner. Sightings just kept coming – grasshoppers, beetles, crickets, a frog and more spiders.

Western Smoky Calolampra, *Calolampra marginalis*.

A silk-lined, circular hole in the ground drew our attention. A large Black Wishbone Spider, *Aname mainae*, erupted from the hole when we used a stick to pretend to be dinner. Only some of the group saw the spectacle and the spider wouldn't play the game anymore when we tried to entice it out again.

Half the group had raced ahead, but when the call of 'scorpion' rang out they hurried back. The Sand Scorpion, *Urodacus novaehollandiae*, was on the track, but near the edge, and those who had to turn back couldn't believe they had missed seeing it.


Sand Scorpion, *Urodacus novaehollandiae*.

Many, many flying insects were attracted to the light trap. So many, that you had to keep your mouth closed while observing them lest they flew in.

For those not interested in eating bugs for supper, Siew, Rosemary, Katrina and Kade provided us with a delightful Christmas-themed feast.

LATE NEWS
A confirmed sighting of a European Wasp in our bushland was made on 1 January 2019. Keep your eyes peeled for them and their nests. A report has been made to DPIRD. See more about the wasps here - https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/european-wasp/european-wasp-identification-guide

A big THANK YOU goes to Addy, Barbara M, Bev, Emerson, Holly, Ian, Isaac, Jackie, Jelena, Julie, Kade, Katrina, Kelvin, Koda, Mavis, Mia, Ronnie, Rosemary, Sam, Sian, Siew, William and the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team for helping out with these, and other, activities in the bushland.

Also this quarter

The Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (EMRC) had a stall at the Waste and Recycling conference held in early September. They gave a prize of 6 tonnes of mulch to an attendee at the conference. The winner of this prize, Neil, very generously donated it to us.

Neil chose us to receive the mulch due to a family connection with the area. Neil's grandparents lived in a house located in what is now our bushland reserve.


Accepting delivery of the mulch. Photograph courtesy of EMRC.

Sian and Rosemary, with Max from the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team, accepted delivery of the mulch from EMRC's CEO, Peter Schneider, and Elena Soltanpour, their Coordinator of Sales and Market Development.

Due to the mulch arriving in a truck too large to navigate our bushland tracks, it was delivered outside of the bush. The City of Canning very kindly arranged for the mulch to be moved to next to our revegetation area the following day. We spread it around the seedlings two days after that.


Before.


After.

October was a special month with three previously unrecorded native plant species being found in our bushland.

While each species was found in a different patch of bush, they were all in areas that are not often visited. It was probably a matter of being in the right place at the right time to see them flowering.

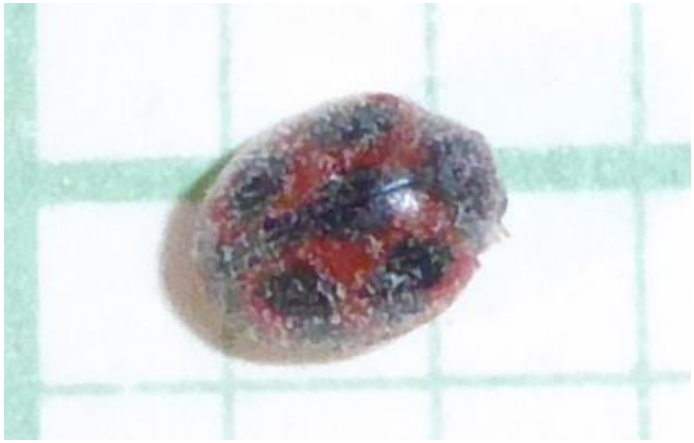
There were only one or two plants of each species found so more searching will be needed next October to see if more specimens can be located.

Aotus gracillima – two plants were found.

Calandrinia liniflora, Parakeelya – one plant found.

Stylidium hispidum, White Butterfly Triggerplant – one plant .

December saw the discovery of a little beetle with a fascinating story. The beetle is a ladybird called *Rodolia cardinalis*, Cardinal Rodolia, and is only about 3 millimetres long.



The story starts in California, US, in the northern winter of 1888-89. Citrus growers there were suffering an infestation of the introduced Cottony Cushion Scale, *Icerya purchase* (introduced from Australia). The infestation was so bad orchardists were pulling up their trees and burning them.

The growers took it upon themselves to find the natural predators of Cottony Cushion Scale and so introduced 514 Cardinal Rodolia beetles to combat the problem. Within months of the introduction, the scale had been destroyed and the trees were recovering.

Cardinal Rodolia breeds prolifically and 10,000 individuals were able to be sent to orchardists around California within six months of the introduction. Descendants of the original 514 beetles can now be found around the world.

The introduction of this beetle to California is considered to be the beginning of classical biological control.

More photos from the night stalk