

THE GECKO



Edition 26
January 2020

Welcome to the January 2020 edition of The Gecko.

We hope you had a Merry Christmas and have a happy New Year planned.

November and December 2019 brought a brutal end to spring and start to summer. The weather was so hot and dry that many of our plants have given up

already. It wouldn't be so bad if it were only our seedlings, but we've already seen naturally occurring, mature plants keel over.

However, the warmer weather made it perfect conditions to conduct night stalks. We held two in November and saw some beauties.

October to December 2019

27 October 2019

We managed to pick a hot day for this activity with a maximum of 36.5C recorded. Despite the temperature, seven volunteers came to our first busy bee on this new site.

This site has several large Marri trees and they protected us from the worst of the heat. However, there is very little natural understorey remaining. The City of Canning plans to remove the weeds before revegetating the block with plant species that would have naturally occurred there.

It appears that this block may have grazed animals at some stage in the past as chicken wire was wrapped around many of the trees' trunks. In some places, the wire had become embedded in the tree but we carefully removed as much as we could.



Removing Watsonia while shaded by the Marris.

Although we removed the Watsonia and Geraldton Carnation Weed from the land, there is much more weeding to be done before revegetation can begin.

8 November 2019

What a marvellous night stalk this turned out to be. Sixteen pairs of eyes spotted so many critters that we only managed to walk half the distance we normally cover.

There were Spiny-tailed Geckos, Moaning Frogs, native cockroaches and pie-dish beetles galore along the paths. A trap-door spider showed us its front legs after being tickled from its burrow and a huntsman spider made us jump with its lightning fast moves.



South-western Spiny-tailed Gecko, *Strophurus spinigerus*.

Back at the light trap big beetles, about 3cm long, were flying and walking around everywhere. Moths, lacewings, caddisflies and myriad other beetles made it hard to know where to start looking.



People jumped when the 3cm long *Colpochila* sp. beetles accidentally crashed into them.

Thanks must go to Rosemary, Siew, Katrina and Kade for bringing supper. It was one of the best nights we've had in ages.

29 November 2019

Another patch of bushland and another marvellous night stalk. Fifteen people came to this night stalk, including several members of the WA Insect Study Society.

We didn't see any vertebrates on this night, but there were plenty of insects – and different to the ones seen a few weeks earlier. The pie-dish beetles were everywhere, as before, but we also came across an impressive katydid, earwigs and native cockroaches of different species.



Andrea's Balloon-winged Katydid, *Tympanophora andreae*.

The insects attracted to the light trap were different, too. There were plenty of moths but also some wasps and a fly that attracted a great deal of attention.



Studying the mystery fly.

Thanks to everyone who came along and helped spot so many different critters.

22 December 2019

Our end of year barbecue breakfast went off without a hitch thanks to Collette's organisation and cooking skills. Held in the gazebo at Maniana Park, we were able to have perfectly cooked sausage, bacon and eggs while being entertained by the game of cricket on the oval.

With breakfast over we held a raffle to win one of two complimentary vouchers to Lo Quay Café for a free coffee and muffin. These were presented to us at the recent 'Thankyou' event for volunteers in the City of Canning. Congratulations Shirley and Kade.



Enjoying each other's company.

29 December 2019

Eight of us watered our seedlings and went for a bit of a wander. Those of us who hadn't seen the seedlings for a while were amazed at how much the area had matured. In five years it has gone from a sand patch, where even the weeds wouldn't grow, to a site with some plants 3 metres tall (see more about this site in the 'Also this quarter' section).

We then had a look at another revegetation site. This area had some direct seeding done in 2017 but, although we found a few seedlings, it wasn't very successful. This year we planted some tubestock and, thanks to the hottest start to December on record, these too are struggling, even though they are watered fortnightly. Next winter we'll be planting more tubestock and hoping for a long winter followed by a cool, wet summer.

Although these two sites are proving challenging to revegetate, a third site, situated between these two, is doing very well with no extra water at all. Why

does one site do better than another? If only we knew!

A big THANK YOU goes to Addy, Alan, Barbara M, Bill, Daniel, Doug, Florian, Frank, Ian, Ila, Jackie, Janelle, Jelena, Julia, Julie, Kade, Kath, Katrina, Katy, Koda, Lucca, Ollie, Ronnie, Rosemary, Sam, Sara, Shirley, Sian, Siew, Stephanie, Steve, William and the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team for helping out with these, and other, activities in the bushland.

Upcoming events

January – To be advised
February – Annual general meeting
March – To be advised

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

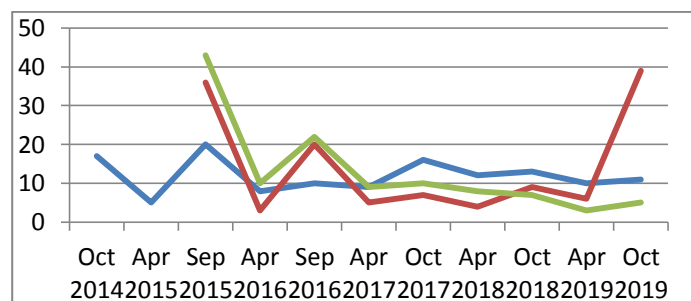
Also this quarter

In 2014 we were awarded a grant by DPaW (now DBCA) to revegetate a highly degraded area. One of the conditions of the grant was to establish and survey quadrats twice per year (spring and autumn) to monitor the success (or otherwise) of our planting efforts.

We have three permanent quadrats in the revegetation area, each measuring 5m x 5m. Surveying them involves counting the number of native plants growing in the quadrat. The quadrats typically show an increase in the number of plants in spring, following our winter planting, and a marked decrease in autumn as plants fail to survive the summer.

This winter, due to large planting commitments elsewhere in our area, we didn't add any more plants to this site. With no seedlings planted, it was expected that the spring survey of the quadrats would show similar numbers to those recorded in the autumn survey.

It is very pleasing to report, however, that we recorded an increase in numbers in every site due to natural regeneration – our seedlings from previous years' planting efforts have had babies! One site in particular had exceptional results, going from six plants in autumn to 39 plants in spring (the red line, above right).



The quadrat survey results show an increase in plant numbers following winter planting and a decrease after summer.

All of the new plants are seedlings of Prickly Moses, *Acacia pulchella*. This species is known to be a coloniser plant, and would typically be one of the first plants to grow in a disturbed area, so it shouldn't be a surprise that it is doing what nature intended.



Acacia pulchella seedlings growing in the revegetation site.

However, given that this site failed to support any vegetation at all when we started (even the weeds wouldn't grow), having natural regeneration happening is a significant achievement.

We are still providing a lot of support to this site. We are adding fertiliser regularly and it is watered weekly for about eight months of the year. This new life is just the encouragement we need to keep up the effort.

Cat trapping occurred in our bushland in December and three cats were caught. They were all taken to the City of Canning's cat management facility where it was found that none of them had a collar or microchip implant. Without a microchip their owner/s can't be identified. Their photographs were displayed on the City of Canning's [website](#) but, if nobody claimed them, they will have been rehomed 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 being trapped, make sure it doesn't stray from your home.



One of the three cats trapped. Photo courtesy of Janelle.

Fox trapping also occurred in December and two juveniles were caught and destroyed. These foxes had been wandering throughout and between our reserves, snacking on our native wildlife as they did so.

Being largely nocturnal, and quick to avoid humans, foxes are not readily seen. However, the remains of dead birds, as well as holes in the ground where they'd been digging for invertebrates and old fox dens having been recently dug out, were tell-tale signs giving away their presence. Plus, we'd received a report from a jogger that he'd seen one crossing Welshpool Road.

If you see a fox in our area, please let us know so that we can get it dealt with before it does too much damage.

More night stalk sightings



Ground beetle, *Scaraphites* sp.



Moaning Frog, *Heleioporus eyrei*.



Pie-dish beetle, *Pterohelaeus* sp.



Variable Neo,
Neotemnopteryx fulva.



Rove beetle, *Paederus* sp.



The mystery fly.