

THE GECKO



Edition 38
January 2023

Welcome to the January 2023 edition of The Gecko.

We hope you had a Merry Christmas and wish you all the best for the New Year.

October to December 2022

30 October 2022

The sun was out but the breeze was cold so, while six volunteers started rugged up, we quickly shrugged off our jackets as we moved to sheltered areas, started working and warmed up.

We felt like we accomplished a lot yet it was difficult to see where we had weeded due to there being so many of the blighters around. But we know we made a difference by the number of full bags we had at the end.



27 November 2022

Four volunteers weeded the Geraldton Carnation Weed, *Euphorbia terracina*, from our smallest patch of bushland. The activity was very satisfying as you could see the difference our effort made.

Despite the area of bushland being so small, the birdlife was varied and kept us company. A Willie Wagtail followed us closely as we disturbed insects while Galahs and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos ate seeds in the trees above us.



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

Summer surprises

As the weather heats up over summer and the weeds die off you'd be forgiven for thinking that we could rest until the rains start. Unfortunately we have some invaders that love the heat so, as we finish with the winter weeds we start with the summer ones.

While you may not know the name of Caltrop, *Tribulus terrestris*, you undoubtedly have felt its

effects. With spines on the seed pods tough enough to puncture a bicycle tyre or go straight through your thongs there are few who have not been touched by it.

These prostrate, herbaceous plants germinate after any precipitation in summer. The merest hint of drizzle is enough to get them going. Then, as far as they're concerned, the hotter the weather, the better.

We can keep them under control by pulling them up and disposing of them in the bin as soon as they're seen (don't just throw them to one side or put them in the compost). Also, try to collect up as many of the fallen seed pods as possible to stop the next generation.



Skeleton Weed, *Chondrilla juncea*, is another plant that thrives in the hot weather. It is a declared plant so, by law, land owners and managers must control it if the plant is found growing on their land.

This weed has slender stems with relatively few, linear leaves. A milky sap oozes from the stems or leaves if they are broken off. It has yellow flowers during summer and they can be the tell-tale sign when everything else around it is dead or dormant.

Effective removal of this plant requires special chemicals (Roundup isn't strong enough to kill the roots) so contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) if you think you've seen it. They will arrange for the plant/s to be treated and check the site for a few years to ensure it has gone for good.

https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/skeletonweed/skeleton-weed-declared-pest?page=0%2C0#smartpaging_toc_p0_s4_h3



European Wasps, *Vespula germanica*, are a summer insect pest that tries to invade Western Australia each year. DPIRD has an eradication program that has been successful so far but they also need us to be on the lookout.

European Wasps look very similar to paper wasps but their behaviour usually gives them away. European Wasps fly with their legs up close to their bodies (paper wasp legs hang down), they fly directly to where they want to go (paper wasps hover and sway back and forth before landing) and European Wasps usually nest underground (paper wasps hang their nest from branches, eaves or other structures).

European Wasps will be attracted to sugar and protein so can be problems around picnics and barbecues. Report any suspicious sightings to DPIRD, take photos if you can, but don't try to kill the wasp nest yourself. The wasps can get very angry and will sting repeatedly.

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/biosecurity-biosecurity-quarantineeuropean-wasp-declared-pest>



A European Wasp eating a piece of fish. Note the black antennae (paper wasps have yellow antennae).