

THE GECKO



Edition 4
July 2014

Welcome to the July 2014 edition of the FQPB News.

The rain has started, the weeds are growing and we're about to start our planting sessions for the year. What more could there be? Well, fame and riches of course! Read on to find out more.

We would also like your input. Have you taken a photo or seen something in our bush that you'd like to share with the group? Send it in to fqpbushland@gmail.com and we'll include it in the next newsletter.

April to June 2014

12 April 2014

The scouts joined us in repairing a riffle. Riffles are the rock lined channels that take water flowing from one water body to another.

Karl, who designed our riffles, explained that riffles protect the ground from erosion, aerate the water as it moves through the rocks, provide habitat to small critters in the crevices between rocks and provide reptiles with a place to sunbake.

The riffle needed repair because rocks had become displaced and it was no longer functioning as well as it could. In winter the rocks are an irresistible attraction – just the right size to throw into the water and make a big splash. And the local kids can't help themselves!

The City of Canning bush crew were a big help the week before we got there. They had gathered up wayward rocks that had strayed away from the riffle and would have been too big for us to manage on our own. All we had to do on the day was roll the rocks into place.



27 April 2014

We had the first decent rain of the year – 12mm – overnight, which made watering the seedlings challenging. Usually we look for water droplets on the leaf litter surrounding the seedlings to tell if they had been watered or not. But on this day everything had water droplets on it.

Even though the seedlings had received a drink of rain overnight, we still watered them. Our water contained Ecowet, a soil wetting product. This means that any rain falling from now will have a better chance of being available to the seedlings.

After watering, we moved on to weeding. This area was covered in mulch and topsoil that had come from a nearby site. As well as germinating a lot of native seed contained in the topsoil, a lot of flat-weeds, *Hypochaeris glabra*, were growing too. But these weeds were no match for our team and we had them dug up and bagged in no time.

Our third job of the morning was to move branches to discourage walkers from using an informal shortcut through the bush. The branches came from a tree that had fallen on the boundary of the new housing area on Whitlock Road; we weren't taking branches out of the bush for this task.

We also had a look at logs that had been brought into the reserve to protect future planting areas and

define the tracks. The logs were from trees that had been felled at one of our McDowell Street sites.

The trees were introduced species that were growing too close to a boundary fence. In the interests of removing non-natives and reducing the potential for damage to the neighbouring business (fire and falling branches) the trees were removed. It was agreed by all that the logs were an improvement to the area that would provide vital habitat for wildlife as they decayed.

25 May 2014

Story by Rose Mildenhall

On Sunday 25 May 2014 the group met for a weeding session at Maniana Reserve. It was in the middle of a rainy spell but seven people came along anyway. Despite dark clouds it hardly rained while we worked, then the clouds blew away and the sun came out. We left a trail of raincoats and jumpers across the site as we got hotter and hotter.

We were working in an area where seedlings germinated about 12 months ago. They were getting swamped by clumps of grass, fleabane and flatweed, so we concentrated on clearing these weeds from around the seedlings.

We used kitchen knives to remove the grass. Max from the City of Canning's Bush Crew showed us this technique. It kills clumping grass without unduly disturbing the soil. You cut horizontally through the soil just underneath the bottom of the clump, slicing the roots from the crown. The crown goes into a rubbish bag so that seeds can't spread and the clump doesn't regrow, while the roots wither in the ground. A serrated knife works best. One with a rounded tip is better than a pointed knife as you are less likely to jab yourself or get snagged.



Photograph courtesy of Larry Moss.

African love grass, *Eragrostis curvula*, and perennial veldt grass, *Ehrharta calycina*, grow in large, strong clumps. They can be several feet across, in which

case our special two-prong lever is the better tool to use. Smaller clumps can be tackled with a knife, although it is still hard work. The crowns fill a bag quickly with the group filling 13 bags during the morning. The City of Canning's Bush Crew kindly took these bags away later in the week.

The group worked for a couple of hours and made a good impact on the site, removing a lot of weed competition from the seedling area. We finished with a cuppa and biscuits.



Photograph courtesy of Ash.

29 June 2014

Twelve of us met on a chilly morning to prepare an area for planting. This will be planted out by staff from New Town Toyota in early July.

As the planting area is some distance away from the parking area, we started with a bit of weeding around last year's seedlings. We were very pleased to see that the running postman, *Kennedia prostrata*, had started flowering.

We then cleared a fallen tree away from the path on the way to the planting area. This was a dead *Acacia saligna* that had been blown over in strong winds a couple of weeks ago.

Once at the planting area, some of us cut our way through African love grass while others collected up the skeletons of weeds long since dead. After an hour or so we were left with an area ready for planting.



These are the lengths we'll go to when weeding African love grass.



Talk about dedication!

A big THANK YOU goes to Ash, Barbara M, Collette, Florian, Jelena, Karen, Karl, Larry, Laurie, Peter, Ronnie, Rose, Rosemary, Sara, Sian, Sonja, Stephanie, Sue, the City of Canning Bush Crew and the scouts for helping out with these activities.

Upcoming events

July 10 (Thursday) – Planting with New Town Toyota

July 19 (date to be confirmed) - Planting

July 25 (Friday) – Planting with Queens Park Primary School

July 26 (Saturday) – Finishing off the planting from the previous day. This will possibly be with the First Forrestdfield Scouts (to be confirmed)

August 17 – Community Science Expo at CREEC

September 7 – Bird watching with BirdLife Australia

September 28 – Nature walk

Also this quarter

We were awarded a grant of \$10,979.10 from the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW). This will be used to purchase signs advising of Phytophthora dieback, a sign to go with the boot cleaning station (the City is installing a boot cleaning station near the noticeboard along Wharf St) and allow us to revegetate an area in Maniana Reserve. The grant will also pay for 2,000 plants, Ecowet, fertiliser and a contractor to water them over their first summer.

We were also awarded \$100 from Grill'd. This was awarded after Grill'd customers voted for their favourite community group.

Three groups are up for voting each month and we were up against a dance studio and a group supporting Orang Utans. We didn't get the most votes, but in this competition even the runners-up get something – everyone wins!

The development of the playing field in Queens Park is progressing (slowly, but progressing all the same) and there will be opportunities for us to put forward

our ideas and suggestions for the area. We've been thinking about the inclusion of public art in the area. Following is an example of art we've seen and we'd like to hear what you think.

Do you want to see artwork introduced to the area around the playing fields? Do you think it will improve the area? Should the artwork link the playing fields to the bushland? Do you know of any examples of public artwork?



In this piece turtles are climbing onto a tree that has fallen into water. The turtles and tree are in rusted steel while the water is made of mosaic tiles.

A Guide to the Cockroaches of Australia

A book called A Guide to the Cockroaches of Australia was published in May. Normally a guide book wouldn't rate a mention, but this one is more relevant to us than the average book. It contains photographs of seven cockroaches that were found in the Queens Park Regional Open Space.

Several years ago, the author, David Rentz, asked members of the WA Insect Study Society to send him photos of cockroaches for use in the book. Sian sent a couple of dozen photos to David and was very pleased to have nine published – seven of which were taken in the bushland.

The book, which contains most of the 550 cockroaches described from Australia, is available from CSIRO for \$49.95 plus \$9.00 postage - <http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/20/pid/6710.htm> .

The following are some details from the book relating to our cockroaches; those photos marked with (B) are in the book.

We have at least three species of Euzosteria in our bushland. Euzosteria species are often seen wandering by day and have been known to spray a pungent fluid at aggressors.



(B) Euzosteria lata.



(B) Euzosteria sordida.



Euzosteria femoralis.

The only thing we can be certain of regarding our Calolampra species is that it is male. It is only the males of the genus Calolampra that have wings.



(B) Calolampra sp.

Ellipsidion humerale is active during the day and can be found in the foliage of plants – they don't hang around in the leaf litter on the ground. It is also quite variable in its colouring. We have seen one with a wide solid brown stripe down the middle of its back.



Ellipsidion humerale.

Zonioploca bicolor only occurs in the south-west of WA. It is very similar in appearance to Z. pallida. Z. bicolor has pale markings on the first three segments which are not present in Z. pallida.



(B) Zonioploca bicolor.

The colour pattern of Balta hebaridi makes it one of the most distinctive cockroaches in Australia.



(B) Balta hebaridi.

None of the Drymaplaneta species have wings. D. semivitta sometimes enters houses but under natural conditions it lives under bark and is nocturnal.



Drymaplaneta semivitta.



(B) Drymaplaneta shelfordi.

Robshelfordia simplex is found on both sides of the Nullarbor Plain but has not been found in central Australia.



(B) Robshelfordia simplex.

There are 33 described species of Platyzosteria. They are all to be found in the southern areas of Australia.



Platyzosteria sp.

P.S. David's next book will probably be about crickets so start taking photographs now.