

THE GECKO



Edition 20
July 2018

Welcome to the July 2018 edition of The Gecko.

Winter is planting season and that is exactly what we did. Three sessions saw us plant over 1,000 seedlings and broadcast 5kg of seed in a direct seeding project.

We also received results from the dead boobook we submitted to a study on rodenticides, saw the Local Biodiversity Strategy endorsed by Council and had bollards installed to help protect our area.

Read all the details below.

April to June 2018

29 April 2018

Only two members were able to get to this activity and, as one of them was carrying an injury that made bending difficult, weeding was soon changed to seed collecting.

It wasn't long after we wandered away from the weeding area that a third member arrived. A quick phone call to find out where we were and the three of us were united in our new task.

Being late in the season, seeds were not abundant but still relatively easily found. *Banksia menziesii* seeds were still on the tree, just on the brink of falling, and *Corymbia calophylla* seeds could be seen scattered on the paths amongst the honkey nuts skilfully opened by the cockatoos.

These seeds will be used in future revegetation projects.

30 May 2018

After being rained out and postponed from the original date, nine members made it to the night stalk. The light trap attracted very little but the ground was crawling with spiders and frogs.

Two species of frog, Banjo Frog and Moaning Frog, were seen and a third could be heard. The Moaning Frogs could also be heard near a damp area and it was good to be able to put a voice to the species.



A Moaning Frog, *Heleioporus eyrei*, looks out from its burrow.

There was one particular Marri tree that had at least five individual frogs around its base. There were also a lot of ants under this tree so we surmised that the frogs were there for dinner.



A Banjo Frog, *Limnodynastes dorsalis*, found under a Marri.

A couple of cockroaches were found on logs and there was discussion about the difference between native and introduced cockroaches.

Thanks must go to Kade who baked a brownie for supper.



A huntsman spider, *Holconia westralia*, seen on the nightstalk.

10 June 2018

Despite the forecast for heavy showers, seven volunteers and the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team planted 531 seedlings with only the lightest of sprinkles making people look skyward.



Planting around the swale.

Conditions took a turn for the worse, however, when the morning tea was brought out. We hastily poured a cuppa and grabbed something to eat before covering everything and taking shelter behind trees. And I say 'behind trees' rather than 'under trees' because the rain was coming at us from the side.

The rain brought us a bonus, though, as we were able to see the swale we had just planted up in action. The swale, you'll recall from the October 2017 newsletter, takes stormwater run-off from Welshpool Road and directs it into a depression. After the rain we were able to watch as the water discharged from the drain, flowed the length of the swale before adding to a growing pool.

The seedlings we planted line the swale and pool and will help to limit erosion while providing habitat

for the wildlife. The frogs were already croaking their approval.



Watching the water flow along the swale.

17 June 2018

Three members came planting on this perfect planting day. Despite the low turnout, we had 100 plants in the ground, watered and staked in 90 minutes.

After a quick morning tea we were all home well before lunch.



A Marri seedling, *Corymbia calophylla*.

24 June 2018

It was another perfect day for planting and twelve volunteers, including three councillors, enjoyed getting their hands dirty. We were ably assisted by the City of Canning's Natural Area Team.

This time we started with something different and did some direct seeding. This involved throwing handful after handful of a seed/sand mixture over prepared soil. The plan is that the seed will germinate and grow with minimal intervention. If successful, it is certainly a quicker way of getting lots of plants growing over a large area.



Distributing the seed and sand mix across the prepared ground.

Once the seed was spread we put 450 seedlings in the ground nearby. These were staked and watered before morning tea was provided by the City.



Planting in the sunshine.

A big THANK YOU goes to Addy, Barbara M, Cat, Florian, Graham, Jelena, Kade, Katrina, Koda, Ronnie, Rosemary, Sara, Sian, Siew, Stephanie, Yaso and the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team for helping out with these, and other, activities in the bushland.

Upcoming events

29 July – Rubbish collecting
19 August – Bird watching
September – To be advised

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

Also this quarter

The City of Canning installed bollards along Gibbs Street from Maniana Park up to Gibbs Street Reserve. This should slow down the dumping of rubbish in the area and the ramming of fences into the bushland.



Bollards along Gibbs St adding to the protection of the bushland.

Boobook update: You'll recall from the April 2017 edition of this newsletter that Mike Lohr was studying rodenticides in Southern Boobooks and we submitted a dead bird for testing. Mike has recently completed

his study and produced a paper detailing his findings- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969718322836> .



Southern Boobook, *Ninox boobook*.

Testing revealed our bird to have five different rodenticides in its liver – only two of the 73 Boobooks tested had five different rodenticides in them (the highest number found). Of great concern is that one of these rodenticides is generally only used by pest controller professionals.

This suggests that limiting access to potent rodenticides to pest controllers will not guarantee the safety of our wildlife.

And it is not only birds that eat rats and mice directly that are at risk.

Reptiles are not as susceptible to rodenticides as birds. A reptile that eats poisoned rodents won't necessarily die or even become sick. However, if that reptile is then eaten by a bird of prey, that bird will potentially ingest a lethal dose of rodenticide.

Mike is now testing Chuditch, or Western Quoll, to measure their exposure to rodenticides. If you find a dead Chuditch contact Mike on 0407 147 901.

Local Biodiversity Strategy: In November 2014 we were invited to help with the development of a draft Local Biodiversity Strategy. The aim of the strategy was to protect and enhance biodiversity with a key

focus being to identify opportunities to increase the viability of biodiversity in the area.

It has been a long time coming, but on Tuesday, 19 June 2018, this strategy was endorsed by the City of Canning's councillors.

The strategy will see 250 hectares of cleared land revegetated, wildlife corridors developed to link isolated patches of bushland and increase community awareness and support for biodiversity, amongst other worthwhile objectives.

It all bodes very well for the flora and fauna in the City of Canning.

Direct seeding

In its simplest form, direct seeding involves putting seed on the ground and letting nature take its course. But, as we know, nature sometimes needs a hand to overcome the hurdles that years of interference has done to the land.

And so it is with some of the cleared patches in our area. The direct seeding project we helped with on 24 June (see above) had a lot of preparation work before we got there with the seed.

This area had been a grass and weed covered expanse for a very long time. Aerial photos from 1953 (65 years ago) show this area as being cleared and we have no idea how long it has been since it was natural bushland.

To give the seed the best chance the soil was prepared before we got there. Firstly, the grass and weeds were killed. At least, it was attempted to kill them. They were sprayed at least three times but are still showing some signs of life. But that's the way it is with weeds!

Then a Harley Rake was used to break up the soil.



A Harley Rake in action.

Breaking up the soil combats years of compaction and makes it easier for seedlings to get their roots into the soil. This also had to be done a couple of times to get a good result.

Then a compound called Bactivate was spread on the soil. According to the manufacturers, "Bactivate is a Microbial Soil Conditioner composed of 5 specific bacillus species that enhance plant growth and protection."



Spreading the Bactivate.

Like mycorrhizal fungi, the bacteria should make the growing conditions better and kick-start the natural processes in the soil that have been compromised. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

And you recall the 250 hectares that will be revegetated through the Local Biodiversity strategy? This is hectare number 1!