

THE GECKO



Edition 28
July 2020

Welcome to the July 2020 edition of The Gecko.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to most of our group activities this quarter. The gathering restrictions lifted in time for our June activity but bad weather made us postpone that event to July. However, we did get to help out with the City of Canning's big revegetation project in our area.

Big news for us is that the State Football Centre, the headquarters for Football West and high-performance training facilities, will be built between our patches of bushland. The first round of community consultation is open until July 10 so make your voice heard – see page 3 for details.

Also out for comment are the City of Canning's Local Laws, which includes the Cat Local Law. Provide your comments by 25 August.

April to June 2020

No group activities were held during this period due to social gathering restrictions in place due to COVID-19. However, we thank the City of Canning's

Natural Areas Team for their regular visits to reduce both the number of weeds and the amount of rubbish in our bushland.

Upcoming events

5 July 2020 – Planting. We'll be meeting at 9.00am when we'll be planting about 80 seedlings and discussing the new football training facility to be built in our area. Meet at the "log garden" in the centre of the bushland near the corner of Welshpool Rd & Wharf St. Parking is in the carpark of the Neighbourhood Centre on Whitlock Rd, opposite Reginald St. Contact us if you want to come along and we can send you a map for details. Plants, gloves, trowels and morning tea will be provided but bring your own equipment, drinks and food if you have concerns about germs being spread.

26 July 2020 – To be advised.

23 August 2020 – To be advised.

27 September 2020 – Bird watching. Meet at 8.00am just inside the gate opposite 261 Station St, East Cannington. We'll walk for about 2½ hours through the bushland and note the birds we see along the way. After the walk we'll sit for morning tea and tally up the morning's total. Bring your own binoculars (we have 3 pairs that can be borrowed – email us), fold-up chair and morning tea.

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

Also this quarter

Trees have been dying throughout our bushland during April and May as the very long summer became a bit too long for some.

Regrettably, it has become commonplace for us to see the understorey plants die off in autumn but this is the first time we've seen the established trees suffering to such an extent. The deaths have involved several species and have occurred in patches rather than a single tree here and there. This suggests that the ground under the dead patches has changed more than the surrounding area. What has changed is not known but it could be that the soil has dried out more than the surrounding area or that the groundwater level has dropped further.



Dead and dying trees.

With no meaningful rainfall between August and April, and temperatures hitting the high 30s in every month from October to April it is not surprising that some plants have reached their limits.

If we receive good rainfall throughout winter we should see new plants germinate. But we also need regular rain through summer to get the seedlings established. Failing to replace the canopy will lead to sunlight reaching the ground and drying it out more than if it were shaded by trees. This drier ground will, in turn, make it harder for the remaining plants to survive, leading to more deaths that lead to even drier ground.

A storm passed through Perth on the 24th & 25th of May and left its mark in several places. While there was much needed rain, the wind was severe at times and resulted in some damage.

Branches were broken from many plants in the bushland and at least three trees were toppled. One, an introduced species, was pulled from the ground. As it fell across a firebreak it will need to be cut up with the logs being retained for habitat purposes.



This introduced eucalypt was uprooted and fell across an access track.

Another tree, a Marri, *Corymbia calophylla*, was snapped off at about 2.5 metres above the ground. At this height the tree is 50 centimetres in diameter. This tree is in the middle of a reserve with no public access so will be left as it fell. We will need to wait to see if the trunk survives and sends out new branches.



This Marri had its trunk snapped about 2.5 metres above the ground.

Water monitoring bores were established around the bushland in May. These will measure the groundwater levels in various places at different times of the year and help determine how much water can be extracted before the bushland is affected.

This information will be used to plan the yet-to-be-constructed nearby playing fields. If there is insufficient water to irrigate the turf without affecting the bushland, decisions need to be made as to whether there should be a reduction in the turfed area or if an artificial surface should be installed.



Digging a water monitoring bore.

A huge revegetation activity took place in our area over eight days from 15 to 25 June. Our thanks go to the City of Canning's Natural Areas Team, SERCUL staff and plenty of volunteers for their combined efforts to get 24,000 plants in the ground.

On the first day around a dozen Canning River Regional Park Volunteers joined us and we had all of the day's plants planted by 11.00am. Some of the CRRPV volunteers helped out on subsequent days which, along with our own volunteers and three City of Canning councillors, saw all of the plants in the ground three days ahead of schedule.



Volunteers from the Canning River Regional Park Volunteers helped out during the planting effort.

It wasn't just the humans helping with the planting – a couple of spiders and a West Coast Long-tailed Ctenotus, *Ctenotus australis*, kept us entertained along the way.

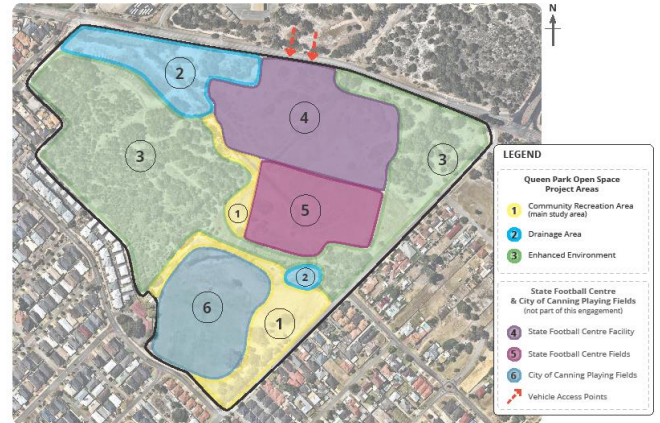


A cold and sleepy West Coast Long-tailed Ctenotus brightened the day.

The State Football Centre is to be built in our area. It will be the headquarters for Football West and also house high-performance training facilities.

While there are no detailed plans available at the moment, it is earmarked to be built in the poorer quality areas of Bush Forever site 283, between Gibbs and Wharf streets.

Community consultation has just begun so now is the time to make your voice heard. Go to <https://www.yoursaycanning.com.au/queens-park-open-space> to see what other people are saying and to add your comments by 10 July.



Queens Park Open Space Masterplan Project Areas

Also out for comment are the City of Canning's Local Laws, which includes the Cat Local Law. This law is important to us as it declares our bushland, and many other bushland areas in the City, as cat prohibited areas.

Being declared a cat prohibited area allows the City to trap cats that are found in the bushland. Residents are also allowed to trap cats that wander onto their private property. Traps can be borrowed from the City and, once caught, a ranger will visit you to impound the cat.

You can see the local laws and provide your comments by 20 August at <https://www.yoursaycanning.com.au/local-law-review>



A trapped cat.