THE GECKO

Edition 44
Jul 2024

Welcome to the July 2024 edition of The Gecko.

The winter rains are now with us and we hope they continue throughout spring. Instead of watering, we can turn our thoughts to the other perennial activity of landcare - weeding!

Unfortunately, the long, hot summer hampered our plant growing efforts and so we have very few seedlings to plant this winter. But our thoughts go out to all the other landcarers. We hope your soil is wettable, your weeds are few and your growth is strong.

April to June 2024

21 April 2024
It was a perfect morning to water our seedlings and seven members agreed. With so many helpers the work was done very quickly and gave us a chance to see how well our plants are growing. They have not yet been in the ground for a year but many are already over 40cm tall. It is hoped that they will soon be filling the area.



26 May 2024
In what turned out to be our last watering session for the season, seven members met on a fine and still morning.

A new addition to the reserve was a freshly planted zamia palm, *Macrozamia fraseri*. A nearby property was subdivided and this plant was donated to the City of Canning. The City arranged for it to be transplanted in our reserve.



Our thanks go to the donor/s and the City of Canning for this most welcome gift.

30 June 2024
Nineteen people attended a BirdLife WA bird watching walk through our bushland. Thirtyfive species were seen over two hours with several people (visitors to WA) seeing particular birds

for the first time. The first sighting of a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was a highlight for an overseas visitor. Being able to put a name to the Yellow-rumped Thornbill was an accomplishment for a bird watcher who has recently moved from the eastern states.

At one point in the walk we had a discussion about the beak markings left behind by Cockatoos on chewed Marri nuts. We then had the privilege to see a Red-tailed Black-cockatoo making said markings.

Although a birdwatching walk, there was great interest in the revegetation efforts in the vicinity of the Sam Kerr Football Centre. It shows promise of being great bird habitat in the future. There were also thanks given to those involved in keeping the bushland looking so good.



Birdwatching.

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

Also this quarter

In 2014 we received a grant from the Department of Parks and Wildlife to help with revegetating a bare area in our bushland. This particular area was completely degraded with aerial photographs showing that it had been bare since at least the 1950s. After having no vegetation on it for at least 60 years, the soil was particularly impoverished with many nutrients not registering at all when the soil was tested. The soil was so poor that not even the weeds would grow!

As the area is in the middle of good quality remnant vegetation, we wanted to ensure that we didn't introduce foreign genetics to the area. So we collected seed from nearby plants, grew it on and planted the resulting seedlings. Compost was added prior to planting, with mycorrhizal fungi and fertiliser being added at the time of planting. The plants were watered for several summers; more plants were added, as was more fungi and fertiliser.

Despite this, survival rates were not good. Some plants still survive but it is a small fraction of the number planted. On the bright side, however, the weeds now grow in abundance so we must have done something right.

The grant came with the condition that we conduct 6-monthy quadrat surveys to measure success. Although no longer required by the grant, surveys continue to be conducted every spring and autumn.

The latest survey, conducted in April 2024, brought something unexpected. In the middle of a quadrat was a shallow hole. It had been dug with a spade, so was not of natural origins, but what had been dug up? Had someone buried their ill-gotten gains there and had now retrieved it? As it was in the middle of a quadrat the earlier photographs would provide a clue.

After all of the work put into bringing the soil back to life, ensuring the plants were made of the right stuff and the work involved in caring for them, it was very disappointing to discover that someone had dug up one of our Firewood Banksia trees, *Banksia menziesii*. This tree had been planted in 2020 and was now over 1m tall. It would have stood little chance of surviving the transplantation process.



Above - 1 November 2023
Below - 11 April 2024

