

THE GECKO



Edition 13
October 2016

Welcome to the October 2016 edition of The Gecko.

Thank you for keeping your fingers crossed as requested in the previous issue. The rains have been consistent throughout winter and the plants are looking wonderful – the orchids especially so.

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

July to September 2016

2 July 2016

Another 500 seedlings were planted on this fine but chilly morning. The 22 members and visitors, plus two members of the City of Canning's Natural Area Team, had all of the plants in the ground, staked and watered in a little less than two hours.

While being cold left us not being able to feel our fingers, it also meant that the ants were not active. This was fortunate as we were able to plant close to their nests and trails without being attacked.



Planting sedges at the edge of a lake.

24 July 2016

Despite the near freezing minimum overnight, seven members enjoyed a sunny day to weed African lovegrass.



Weeding African lovegrass.

The day turned out to be very pleasant and, as we were working in the sun, it wasn't long before we started peeling off the layers.

We found a skink while weeding which, unbeknownst to us at the time, was a new species for the reserves. It is very similar to one previously found so it wasn't until the photos were downloaded that the skink's true identity was revealed.



A new species for our reserves, *Lerista elegans*, West coast four-toed lerista.

There were two species of orchids found near to where we were working, but the best sighting was on the other side of the track.

Underneath a Marri tree a drooping branch cleared a small area as it swayed back and forth in the wind. Growing in this cleared area was a group of snail orchids. The orchids were about 8cm tall and almost exclusively found in the cleared area.



Short-eared snail orchids.

21 August 2016

Although overcast, showers weren't forecast until the afternoon. That gave the 18 BirdLife Australia members and visitors hope for a good morning of bird watching.

Due to there being full lakes across Perth, the waterbird numbers were low. Nevertheless we spotted Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Australian Wood Duck, Australian Shelduck and Australasian Grebe. The raptors arrived early in the day with a pair of Brown Goshawks and an Australian Hobby.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoos were the most numerous of the six species of parrots seen with groups of three to 15 seen regularly throughout the morning. However the skeins of 50 or more Straw-necked Ibis took out the prize for largest individual flocks. As is usual in our bushland, Brown Honeyeaters won the 'most incessant call' competition.



Everyone stops for the Eastern great egret (just out of shot).

While not watching birds we were looking at the wildflowers. Four species of orchid were seen flowering; with a few more species sending up flowering stems to be open in another week or two. We also flushed three boys having a quiet smoke of certain substances in the bushes. Unfortunately for them, they settled down again along our route and so were flushed for a second time.

The count at morning tea started at 43 species, but was then adjusted to 44 as another bird flew overhead. A noise behind us led us on a search for a White-browed Scrubwren, which led us to an Australian Reed-warbler and a Little Pied Cormorant. The final count was 47 bird species for the morning.

28 August 2016

Seven members weeded African lovegrass on an overcast but fine day. After all of our hard work, the area we started weeding in April is almost cleared. It is hoped that the native plants will recolonise the area now the weeds have been removed.

We checked out the orchids seen in July and found they were starting to look a little past their best. However, we saw a further three species that weren't flowering in July – donkey orchids, pink fairy orchids and cowslip orchids.



Weeding African lovegrass (again).

18 September 2016

A beautiful spring morning welcomed 11 guests to our nature walk. Capably led by Sara, we were taken on a tour of the wonderful things found in our bushland.

Orchids, a favourite of many, were abundant, but it was some of the smaller things that captivated the audience. For example, we used a magnifying glass to see the true leaves of casuarina trees.

We also heard the finer details of how zamia palms are fertilised and how their seeds used to be spread throughout the landscape. Sadly, we no longer have emus in the bushland and so the seeds are not spread as efficiently as they once were.



Examining the leaves of *Allocasuarina fraseriana*.

The end of the walk held some difficult decisions to be made. Fortunately everyone was able to establish their own balance between having morning tea and photographing more orchids.

A big THANK YOU goes to Aliyya, Angus, Ash, Barbara M, Bev, Caleb, Claire, Collette, Ed, Eileen, Emily, Florian, Frank, Ikhlās, Janelle, Jelena, Jessica, Joseph, Kade, Locky, Nikole, Omar, Ronnie, Rosemary, Sara, Shirley, Sian, Stephanie, Sue, Ubaydah and Zaid for helping out with these activities.

Upcoming events

October – Weeding
November – To be decided
December – Seed collecting and propagation

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

Also this quarter

Thirty staff members from the City of Belmont had a planting session in our bushland as their Corporate Day activity on 7 July. The Belmont staff plus five staff members of the City of Canning planted approximately 1,300 seedlings before the coffee van arrived.

As it hadn't rained for a week prior to this day, the water levels of the main lake were low and we could plant sedges in areas that are under water during wet weather. Rain fell for the following three days and submerged the newly planted sedges. Luckily, that is just what this type of plant wants.

Thanks go to the City of Canning for organising this day.



Planting with the City of Melville staff.

Dieback treatment was undertaken in the bushland at the corner of Station Street and Luyer Avenue, East Cannington. There are some areas of *Phytophthora* infection (dieback) in the bushland but

it doesn't appear to have spread since the last assessment and treatment three years ago.

The trees in the dieback infected areas were injected with phosphite and the understorey vegetation was sprayed. With any luck this will keep the disease at bay until the next treatment.



Injecting a tree with phosphite.

You can help stop the spread of dieback by keeping to the paths and making sure your shoes are clean of dirt as you move in and out of the diseased areas. The disease can be spread via the soil picked up in the tread of your shoes – so try to keep them as clean as possible.

Dieback is not only damaging to the natural bushland. It can also infect your garden and kill your treasured plants, including many fruit trees, camellias and roses.

Weed spraying has also happened throughout the bushland this winter. Bulbs like Watsonia, Freesia and pink gladioli, through to weedy grasses and Fumaria have all taken a hit.

Each different group of weeds needs a different type of spray to kill it. The contractors have been through our bushland three times, each time with a different chemical, to ensure that every targeted weed received the right treatment at the right time.

The contractors have been careful to use as little chemical as needed to do the job. The chemicals used are quite selective as to which weeds they will kill, however care still needs to be taken that neighbouring plants are not exposed too much. The contractors walk through the bushland and spot spray each weed as they come to it. That way they can minimise any damage that may be caused to the surrounding vegetation.

And it looks like the weeding program is working. We now see far fewer of the targeted weeds than we used to. Let's hope the program is maintained and the weeds are sent packing.

Banksia woodlands on the Swan Coastal Plain were declared a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) on 16 September 2016 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. That is a most welcome development and provides some federal legislation protecting bushland like ours.

Tuesday group

You are welcome to join the Tuesday group on a casual basis or as a regular commitment. This quarter the Tuesday group has been busy planting and weeding.

Contact Sian at fqpbushland@gmail.com to find out where and when to meet.

Orchid extravaganza

The early and consistent rains this year have led to a wonderful orchid display. These are some of the species we've seen this quarter.



Caladenia pectinata
King spider orchid



Pterostylis sanguinea
Dark banded greenhood



Caladenia flava
Cowslip orchid



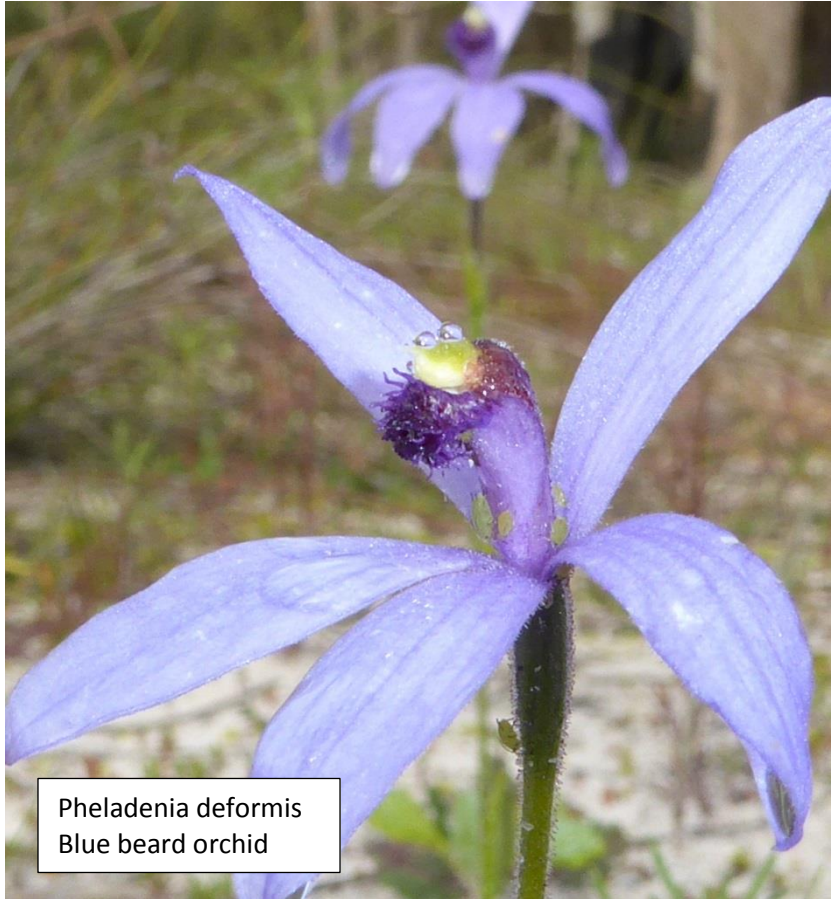
Caladenia flava x latifolia
Cowslip x pink fairy orchid



Caladenia latifolia
Pink fairy orchid



Diuris magnifica
Magnificent donkey orchid



Pheladenia deformis
Blue beard orchid



Caladenia falcata
Green spider orchid



Caladenia splendens
Splendid spider orchid