

THE GECKO



Edition 5
October 2014

Welcome to the October 2014 edition of the Gecko.

This quarter saw us mixing with the public at the Science Expo, bird watching and our nature walk. We also had planting days with little kids, middle sized kids and big kids. Read all about it here.

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 2014

4 July 2014

Sian helped some of the children from the East Cannington Early Learning Centre plant seedlings in their corner of the bushland. We planted *Acacia pulchella*, *Dampiera linearis*, *Eremaea pauciflora*, *Gastrobium capitatum* and *Melaleuca seriata*.

The weather stayed fine for the planting and the seedlings were well watered by rain in the afternoon.

The seedlings planted last year are doing very well and some of them should be flowering this year. It won't be too long before that corner becomes self-sustaining.



Teamwork was needed to lift a heavy watering can.

10 July 2014

Staff from New Town Toyota came along to help us and the City of Canning staff plant 500 seedlings in

Black Creek Reserve. These were planted in the bare area near the corner of Welshpool Rd and Station St.

Species included *Anigozanthos humilis*, *Anigozanthos manglesii*, *Anigozanthos viridis*, *Banksia dallanneyi*, *Banksia grandis*, *Banksia littoralis*, *Beaufortia squarrosa*, *Callitris pyramidalis*, *Dianella revoluta*, *Melaleuca huegelii*, *Melaleuca lateritia*, *Patersonia occidentalis*, *Pericalymma ellipticum*, *Thysanotus multiflorus* and *Viminea juncea*.

These species should ensure that there will be a fine display of wildflowers to be seen from Welshpool Rd in years to come.



Everyone is hard at work.

A big thank you goes to New Town Toyota for helping out and for bringing afternoon tea. Your help was much appreciated by everyone.

19 July 2014

More planting, this time in Fire Station Reserve. This is a small reserve next to the Welshpool Fire Station (hence the name) on Welshpool Rd. It is not open to the public, so this was a very good opportunity to see a reserve we rarely visit.

We were planting with staff from the City of Canning and really appreciate their help. Approximately 400 seedlings were planted, staked and watered in about 2 hours.

Visiting us with their parents were three younger environmentalists. We look forward to them visiting in the future and being able to say 'I planted that tree'.



Hard at work.

During morning tea we were treated to a display by the fire fighters. They were practicing rolling a vehicle from its side on to its wheels. It sounds easy, but they were trying to do it without causing further injury to the passengers inside. For training they don't use real people in the vehicle, but it is good to know that they are well trained if you ever need them.

The practice vehicle had just been righted when the fire fighters received a real call to action. Within seconds of the call coming through they had loaded their truck and were on the road.

Also at this activity was the discovery of a cockroach species (*Calolampra marginalis*) that had not previously been recorded in the Queens Park Regional Open Space. Look for it on our website.



Teaching the youngsters the art of planting.

25 July 2014

About 90 students from Queens Park Primary School joined the City of Canning's Natural Area Team (the Bush Crew) to plant 1,400 plants. Unfortunately it rained as the students were getting ready to walk to Maniana Reserve and so the start of planting was delayed.

Nevertheless, about half the seedlings were planted and the children had a great time. Some even wanted to come back the following day to help plant the rest.

The remaining plants were put in by the Bush Crew and the plants were well watered by the following rain.



Queens Park Primary School students revegetate a bare area.

26 July 2014

We couldn't have picked a day with a worse weather forecast than this for a group activity. Heavy showers and strong winds were forecast to start at the same time we would be planting.

Prepared for the worst, 10 friends and six scouts arrived ready to plant seedlings in one of our revegetation sites. Together we put in about 150 seedlings in one hour and had it finished just as the heavy showers started.

To celebrate we had morning tea under the shelter. And we were indeed grateful for the shelter with some of those showers quite heavy. Had they arrived any earlier we may have had to stop work without getting all of the plants in the ground. As it was, the seedlings got a very good watering in.



Enjoying the reward after the work.

17 August 2014

We had been watching the weather forecast all week and fearing strong winds and rain – just what you don't need for an outdoor event. But the Science Expo outside the Canning River Eco Education Centre went off without a hitch.

Our stall was well attended by young and old alike. The children were especially taken with the question and answer games we had devised. For answering three questions, participants were able to take one of our greeting cards for free. But the kids didn't want to stop at answering three questions. They stayed until they had tried all 14!

Some of these children were very knowledgeable, too. They were correctly answering some of the questions while their parents were looking on dumbfounded.

We ended up giving away 163 cards, selling a further 59 and adding five names to our mailing list. While not as easily quantified, I'm sure we also educated, amazed and increased appreciation of our natural areas.



Rose and Sara entertain the crowd at the Science Expo.

7 September 2014

The bird watching walk held in conjunction with BirdLife Australia was attended by 12 bird watchers.

One of the highlights was watching a willie wagtail that followed us as we walked across a grassed area, waiting for us to disturb insects. At one point we flushed an Australian painted lady butterfly. The willie wagtail caught it, beat it to death and swallowed it as we stood watching from only three metres away.

We also saw a Pacific black duck with nine ducklings and saw several nests of yellow-rumped thornbills. A striated pardalote allowed us good views as it welcomed us for morning tea.

Together we saw 43 bird species, although not everyone saw every species.



Bird watching from the viewing platform.

28 September 2014

Collette, with a bit of help from Sian, led about 20 people on our nature walk. Collette engaged the group with an interesting talk about the plants and animals found in our bushland.

There were a couple of showers of rain and the walk went longer than the advertised 90 minutes, but nobody took the opportunity to leave early. In fact, many people were still chatting away and looking at the exhibits an hour after the walk ended.

And why wouldn't they? We had the ever-popular insects in resin, photographs of the bushland plants and animals, and before and after photos of the lake construction. Then there were the binoculars to use from the viewing platform to see the baby grey teal and nesting black winged stilt.



Collette points out features of interest.

A big THANK YOU goes to Ash, Barbara M, Caleb, Chas, Cheryl, Claire, Clint, Collette, Emily, Florian, Jelena, Laurie, Merise, Olivia, Pia, Ronnie, Rose, Rosemary, Sara, Sian, Simon, Sonja, Stephanie, Sue, the City of Canning Bush Crew and the scouts for helping out with these activities.

Thanks also go to Queens Park Pharmacy for the kind donation of a first aid kit. We can all feel safer knowing that we are better equipped to deal with accidents. However, we hope we never have to use it.

Upcoming events

12 October – Weeding pink gladioli
November – Watering and weeding
December – Watering and seed collecting

Also this quarter

Fox trapping happened in the Queens Park Regional Open space in July and an adult female was caught. Trapping was ordered after evidence of fox activity (foot prints, den digging) was noted.

There were a few fires in Maniana Reserve on 5 July. Fortunately they didn't spread far before being extinguished by the fire brigade.



A burnt patch in Maniana Reserve.

Spraying for grass and bulbous weeds has been completed. Reports from the contractors are encouraging as they were not finding as many of the target species as they had previously.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) hold seminars every two months which the public can attend. The seminar in August was about seedling recruitment in a drying climate.

Ana Muler is a PhD student at Edith Cowan University and is studying how seedlings survive their first summer. Part of her talk revealed an interesting phenomenon which has relevance to our revegetation work.

We have noticed that seedlings seem to do better when they are planted next to an established plant.

We had surmised that it could be due to the seedling being protected from the elements. Ana's talk put forward a different and compelling explanation for this observation.

Established deep-rooted plants draw up water from the water-table via their roots. In order to extract nutrients from the soil, the plant must allow some of that water to leak out of its roots. The water dissolves the nutrients in the soil that are then absorbed by the roots.

Plants in the vicinity of the deep-rooted plant take advantage of the water leaking out of the roots by absorbing it themselves. In this way, plants that can't reach the water-table are able to access water and stay alive through a dry summer.

Ana is part-way through her studies at the moment, so doesn't have proof that this is what is happening. However, she has injected her deep-rooted study plants with deuterium and will analyse the nearby seedlings to see if they have absorbed any of the chemical. Should the seedlings have deuterium in their systems this will show conclusively that the plants have been sharing (or stealing) water.

The next DPaW seminar will be held on 29 October from 12 noon at their head office, 17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington. The speaker will be Brett Beecham (Regional Ecologist, Wheatbelt, Parks and Wildlife) discussing a Burn Optimisation Planning Tool – Deciding When and Where to Burn for Biodiversity Conservation.

We received \$200 from Bankwest to purchase equipment. Thanks to Bankwest and everyone who voted for us in the Happy Communities competition.

Persistence pays

Several years ago, the City of Canning started an annual spraying program to rid the bushland of winter grasses and bulbous weeds. Looking at the bushland one year to the next you could be forgiven for thinking that it wasn't having much effect. However, when comparing the present situation to several years earlier, the improvement is obvious.

The photographs below were taken from the same spot and on the same day of the year, 22 September,

but 7 years apart, 2007 and 2014. In the early photo there is a sea of pink gladioli and a red haze from the perennial veldt grass. These have all but disappeared in the later photo.

Congratulations go to the City of Canning and its staff for setting up the program and ensuring it was carried out every year. Persistence really does pay dividends.

