

Anstey-Keane botanical jewel

by Rod Giblett and
David James



A seemingly unremarkable parcel of land in Forrestdale harbours a profusion of flora species if you know where and how to look.



An area's biological importance is not always immediately apparent. This is certainly the case at Anstey-Keane dampland—a small parcel of uncleared land in the heart of semi-rural and semi-urban Forrestdale. This is not a jarrah forest with its leafy canopy, nor a karri forest with its stately giants. Yet this patch of bush harbours a remarkable diversity of plant species amid an ever-encroaching urban environment.

Dampland, heathland and wetland

Many of the flora species in the Anstey-Keane area are found in lower and wetter land known as 'dampland'. Here, moisture is diffused through the land and not usually visible on the surface. The wetness of the land is usually inferred only from the types



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Main Anstey-Keane dampland.

Inset Green kangaroo paw.

Left Purple flag is common in the reserve.

Below Starflower.

Photos – Sallyanne Cousans

of plants it supports. Dampland is thus unlike other wetlands, such as the nearby internationally significant Forrestdale Lake with its large body of open shallow water in winter and spring that usually dries out in summer. Damplands are moist basins covered with plants. The types of plants found in damplands depend on moisture close to the surface of the land. As many of these plants are short and ground-hugging, the area is often called heathland, though there are also sedgelands and herblands in the area.

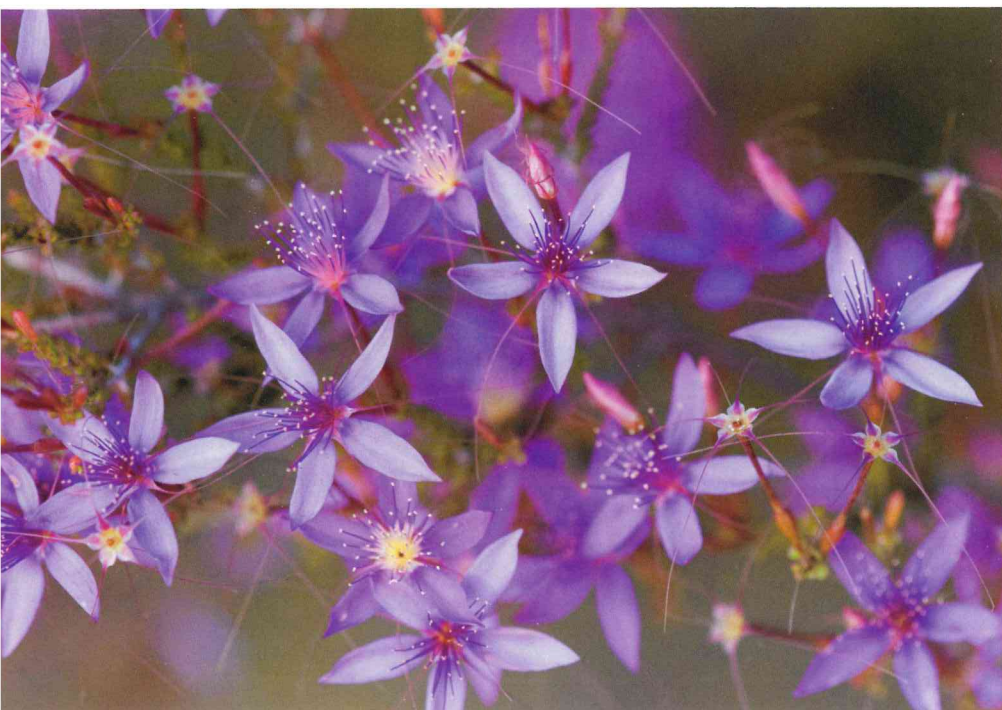
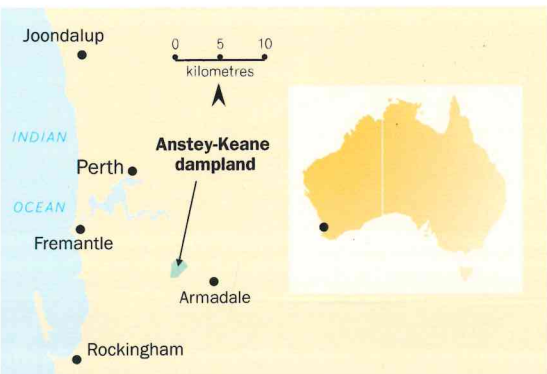
Before European settlement, these once floristically rich damplands occurred from Pinjarra to the southern Perth metropolitan area. The sandy, clay soils of these flat damplands called the Pinjarra Plain have resulted in the evolution of their unique vegetation

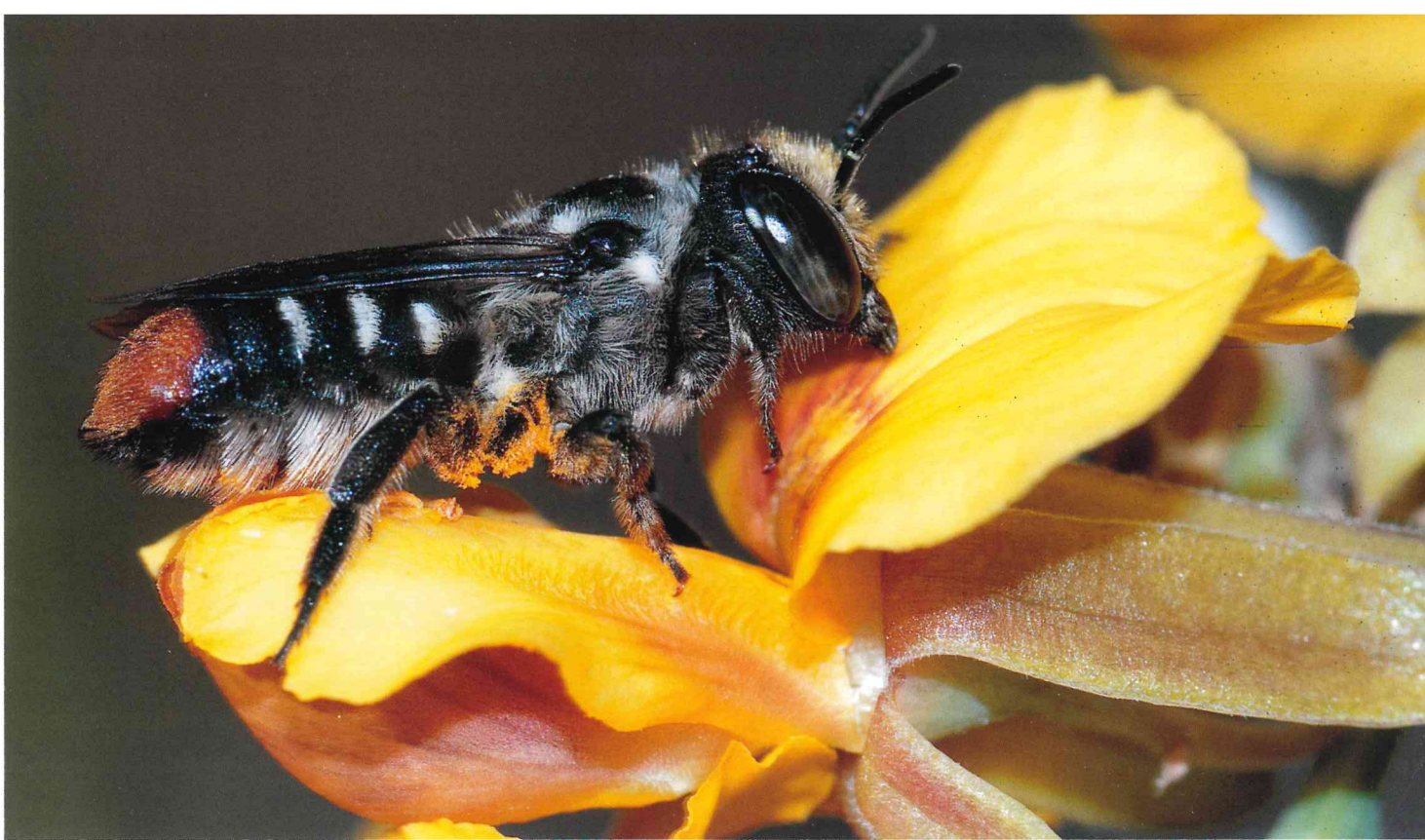
over thousands of years. The northernmost tip of the Pinjarra Plain is wedged between the Bassendean Dune complex to the west and the Wungong River to the east. Confined almost solely to the east side of the Swan Coastal Plain, the Pinjarra Plain was highly suitable as good agricultural land and so has been almost entirely cleared. With the removal of almost all the native vegetation for farming, the only places it can be found today are along the Perth-Bunbury railway line, road verges (such as Mundijong Road), nature reserves, remnants on private property, and two large areas in Forrestdale, including the east side of Forrestdale Lake Nature Reserve and the Anstey-Keane damplands.

Anstey-Keane

The Anstey-Keane dampland is made up of three parcels of land: most is vested in the Western Australian Planning Commission and is part of Jandakot Regional Park, managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation. Another parcel is vested in Landcorp (Western Australian Land Authority) and not part of the regional park and a third parcel of two lots is in private hands.

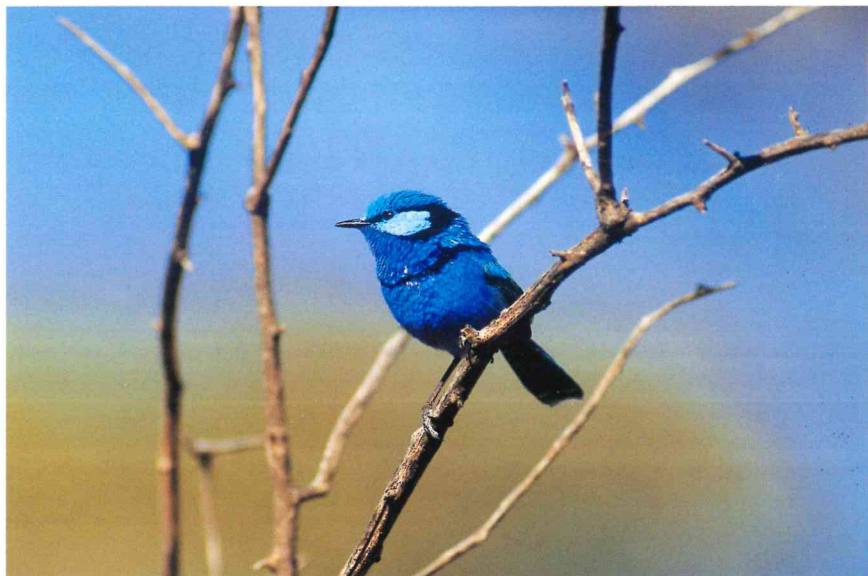
From Anstey Road, the dampland is flat and the vegetation is low. It stretches from Armadale Road in the south to Ranford Road to the north. The land is flat with barely a rise or fall. The trees are short and the bushes and other vegetation are low. One nearby resident calls the area "scrub", implying that its vegetation is low, ugly and worthless—fit only for clearing for roads and housing. Much of its vegetation is small and exquisite, but intrinsically valuable in its own right.





Above Native bee on stinkwood.
Photo – Ann Storrie

Right Male splendid wren.
Photo – Rob Drummond/Lochman
Transparencies



The fact that Anstey Road is straight doesn't help in people's appreciation of it as they drive past. Despite its austere appearance, this site, known as Bush Forever Site 342, is the second most floristically diverse Bush Forever site on the Swan Coastal Plain. It has 381 species, second to Greater Brixton Street (Site 387) with 518. Compare this with the iconic Kings Park (Site 317) in central Perth that has 293 native taxa (plus a whopping 172 weed taxa). What's more, the Anstey-Keane dampland has more than 75 per cent of its vegetation in an excellent to pristine condition, while Kings Park has 15 per cent rated as in excellent condition.

Natural refuge

While unremarkable to the uninformed observer, the bush here harbours a kaleidoscope of species, such as the swamp fox banksia (*Banksia telmatiaea*), one-sided bottlebrush (*Calothamnus hirsutus*), swamp cypress (*Actinostrobus pyramidalis*), sand bottlebrush (*Beaufortia squarrosa*), and *Regelia ciliata*, which provides important habitat for the southern-

brown bandicoot, or quenda (*Isoodon obesulus*).

Several species of melaleucas are also found in the dampland, including robin red breast bush (*Melaleuca lateritia*) and saltwater paperbark (*Melaleuca cuticularis*), more commonly found closer to the coast. Lower ground-cover plants are icons of the area with exceptional colour in spring. Some highlights found in the dampland include the woolly dragon (*Pityrodia uncinata*)—the southern-most population of this species according to the Bush Forever site description—*Petrophile seminuda*, basket flower (*Adenanthos obovatus*), swamp pea (*Euchilopsis linearis*) and stinkwood (*Jacksonia sternbergiana*).

Many herbaceous species found here show themselves each spring. Many species of orchids occur here including Purdie's donkey orchid (*Diuris purdiei*), a declared rare flora species, and many more species of orchids. Green kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthos viridis*) are endemic to the damp areas. Carpets of pink petticoats (*Utricularia multifida*) also appear here, brushing the landscape with an extra blaze of colour. Many sundews (*Drosera* spp.) are also pink and give an exceptional splash of colour when in flower.

In spring 2008, acres of red and green kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthos manglesii*) surrounded this low dampland. Fresh new flowers along the

A walk in nature at Anstey-Keane by Bryony Fremlin

Tiny white everlastings daisies spread at my feet like little drifts of hailstones. I look up and see a willie wagtail chasing a goshawk, nipping at its tail. Behind them, swirls of chiffon clouds are scattered across the sky. As I walk I hear little clicking insect noises coming from the bushes. A lone wanderer butterfly floats by and settles on a drumstick-like dasypogon flower. Airborne again, its exquisite orange and black wings are like stained-glass windows, illuminated by the morning sun. Everywhere, small spritely blue-grey butterflies flit from bush to bush; and on a bare patch of ground sit three little orange-legged grasshoppers. A bright green katydid, almost invisible, crawls along a matching green leaf; its presence betrayed only by its movement. In the distance I see a mass of mauve and, taking care not to tread on the myriad of tiny delicate flowers that cover the ground, I follow a kangaroo trail towards a profusion of purple flags. As I walk along, moths, grasshoppers and flies flit up from around my feet. I hear wrens nearby. I see a bright blue wren and hear it trilling lustily from the top of a bare twig. He glides to the ground where he joins a modestly clad female and two more males, just as bright blue as himself. I watch a colony of stick-nest ants at work. A march fly nips my hand. A dragonfly zooms past. At my feet is the imprint of a large kangaroo's foot in the dried-up mud.

Bryony Fremlin is a noted wildlife artist and a resident of Forrestdale.

Left background Anstey-Keane dampland.
Photo – Marie Lochman

Below left Black-faced woodswallows.
Photo – Sallyanne Cousans

Below right Basket flower.
Photo – Jiri Lochman

Bottom Sand bottlebrush and swamp cypress.
Photo – Sallyanne Cousans

vulnerable type 8, 'herb-rich shrublands in clay pans'.

Because of its size, this area supports a rich representation of birds and mammals including the western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) or quenda. Several species of bird are attracted to the flowering heathland shrubs such as the white-cheeked and tawny crowned honeyeaters, along with insectivorous birds such as the splendid blue wren, white-winged triller, and black-faced wood swallow. Raptors include the little eagle, wedge-tailed eagle and nankeen kestrel.

A protected future

DEC is preparing a management plan for Jandakot Regional Park which will guide the protection and management of most of the dampland well into the future. The Friends of Forrestdale are proposing that the Anstey-Keane dampland be protected, named 'Regelia Reserve' and nominated for the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. With ongoing protection, people for many years to come will have the opportunity to learn about the hidden riches of such biologically important areas.



tall trunks of the balgas (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) were covered in insects feeding on nectar. Red bugle (*Blancoa canescens*) is found in the Landcorp land. This is an orange-red coloured plant now rare in the Perth metropolitan area and generally only found to the north.

Two threatened ecological communities have been described in the area. They are associated with seasonal wetlands. One of these is endangered type 10a, described by Bush Forever, as 'shrublands on dry clay flats' and the other is



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