

Ecoplan NEWS

Issue 45 Autumn 2003



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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Community insurance – where to next?

IN THE wake of the insurance crisis, there have been new developments to assist community organisations to obtain affordable policies and cover.

These have included the establishment of the private Community Care Underwriting Agency, the State Government Community Insurance Fund and the Community Insurance Centre of the resource network, *Our Community*.

In addition, existing businesses such as Aradlay that provided affordable insurance to community environment and landcare groups are also still offering such cover – though premiums may have increased and offshore underwriting may be utilised.

Community Care Underwriting Agency

Allianz Australia, NRMA Insurance and QBE have formed a joint venture called Community Care Underwriting Agency (CCUA) in response to the need for public liability insurance for not-for-profit organisations.

The primary purpose of the CCUA is to help not-for-profit organisations in NSW, ACT and WA get access to Public Liability insurance for activities including community events, community centres and home care.

The CCUA liability policy contains a number of exclusions, the main being:

- injury to volunteers, employees and/or participants;
- professional liability;
- second hand and used goods;
- molestation;
- terrorism; and
- actions brought under the Trade Practices Act.

New Community Insurance Fund

The State Government has established a new Community Insurance Fund (CIF) to help eligible not-for-profit community groups that have been hit hard by the spiralling costs of insurance premiums, in particular public liability insurance. The CIF will be underwritten by the State and managed by the Insurance Commission of Western Australia.

Under the CIF, eligible 'community organisations' are defined as: an association



Bushland Care Day. Left: Allen Park, July 2001. Right: Wilson Wetlands, August 2000. Photo: Bridget Hyder-Griffiths

incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987 (WA)* and/or a company limited by guarantee that is registered as a not-for-profit corporation under Section 150 of the Commonwealth's *Corporations Act 2001*.

The classes of insurance cover to be provided to 'eligible community organisations', include:

- public and professional liability;
- medical treatment liability;
- workers' compensation;
- property;
- motor vehicle; and
- personal accident.

To gain insurance under the CIF, 'eligible organisations' will need to demonstrate that they are unable to find relevant, affordable or any cover from the market place. They will also need to demonstrate that they have tried to obtain insurance, including through approaches to the CCUA.

The eligibility of an incorporated not-for-profit 'community organisation' to participate in the CIF, will be ultimately determined by the Treasurer.

Our Community – Community Insurance Centre

Our Community is a not-for-profit support organisation, based in Melbourne that offers community organisations many of the practical things they need to operate sustainably [Refer also to Resources, *Ecoplan News Autumn 2002*]. *Our Community* recently developed a Community Insurance Centre that:

- provides assistance and resources;
- is developing a pooled insurance scheme to minimise the cost of insurance and reap the benefits of an aggregated market; and

- produces 'how to' guides and newsletters such as 'Top ten tips for securing a better insurance deal' and 'Analysing risks in your organisation'.

Aradlay landcare group insurance

A number of years ago, Aradlay developed a special landcare insurance in association with Landcare Australia Limited that meets many of the needs of community groups including landcare, bush regeneration, river restoration, bushcare, coastcare, rivercare, catchment management and dunecare.

The package consists of public/products liability insurance and accident insurance for volunteer workers.

As with other insurers in the market place, Aradlay has recently increased its premiums and been unable to secure an authorised Australian insurer. As such, the landcare insurance arranged by Aradlay through Triton Underwriting Insurance Agency is now being underwritten by Transpacific Insurance Corporation, an 'unauthorised foreign insurer'. Aradlay's documentation includes that Transpacific is in the process of applying to become licensed in Australia.

Further information

CCUA – 1800 023 456 or visit www.community-care.com.au.

CIF Insurance Commission of WA – 9264 3333 or visit www.icwa.wa.gov.au/cif/.

CIF host agencies – for details contact the Insurance Commission of WA (see above).

Our Community – 03 9320 6800 or visit www.ourcommunity.com.au.

Aradlay – 02 9908 0173 or narelle.grosser@aradlay.com.

Process for seeking cover from CIF –page 3



It seems to have been a very busy time planning for the coming Skills for Nature Conservation training program and the launch of the wonderful new book, *Bushland Weeds* – a practical guide to their management.



The SFNC training program is very exciting. We have taken the suggestions drawn from the focus groups at the end of last year, plus the information from evaluations, which were filled out after each course. We have built the program, as much as possible, on practical learning experiences. Participants will be able to leave the course with clear guidelines of how to complete tasks in a confident way. The Weeding out Weeds course will be run over three sessions in August, September and October and the Facilitation and Group skills course over four weeks in July. Copies of the calendar are available from Ecoplan



We are all feeling very excited about the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Aboriginal Cross Cultural Awareness course, also in July and I feel sure this will be a rich and rewarding learning experience for all who participate. Once again the co-operation between agencies Ecoplan, Greening Australia (WA) and the Swan Catchment Centre – has been tremendous and we hope this is reflected back to participants who attend the courses. Calendars will be sent out to all groups, and are also available from the Swan Catchment Centre web site on www.wrc.wa.gov.au/swanavon. Remember that places in the courses must be booked. All members of community conservation and catchment groups are welcome to attend.



The environmental Weeds Action Network invited Richard Diggins from Friends of Gingin Brook to launch their weed book, *Bushland Weeds* – a Practical Guide to their Management, which was written by Kate Brown and Kris Brooks.



This excellent publication is a great source of information for all bushland managers, with chapters on the control and management of all types of weeds and various case studies from trial sites. The tables and comprehensive list of references will be a tremendous asset to anyone who is trying to understand the issues of bushland management. After the launch in Perth, Kate Brown and myself attended workshops in Bridgetown and Albany. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet so many community group members, agency staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management and Department of Agriculture as well as staff from local government. The efforts of community weeding groups in the south-west of WA are to be commended and the support which is being offered to groups by agency staff is a model for good communication. Sixty people attended the Bridgetown workshop and some 25 at Albany.



At the time of going to print, we have not been able to secure any further funding for the Bushland Care Day program for 2003. I am happy to work with groups to build strategies to try and secure local funding, which may be another option.



Hopefully the rains will come early and help the bushland recover from the extreme heat of the summer.

Margo O'Byrne

Winter Ecoplan News

Forward your news, activities and regional reports for the Winter Ecoplan News by 1st June 2003. Please keep your regional reports under 250 words and articles as brief as possible. Send us your photos! Fax, e-mail or write to Margo (see Ecoplan contacts panel on this page).

Thanks to all contributors.

Newsletter compiled and edited by Colma Keating with assistance from Lesley Dean.

Thinking of you

Special wishes to Andrew Thomson, his family, friends and colleagues as he undergoes treatment for cancer.



Next edition

- Update on *Biodiversity Conservation Act*.
- Part 2 – Renae Stenhouse's research findings.

Contacts

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Greening Australia (WA)

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APACE

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Swan Catchment Centre

Alison Nesbit ☎ 9374 3333

Urban Bushland Council

Andrew Thomson ☎ 9420 7207

Bushcare facilitator

Jon Kaub ☎ 9474 7052

Perth Biodiversity Project (WALGA)

Carla Miles ☎ 9213 2048

Andrew Del Marco ☎ 9213,2047

Ecoplan News is a quarterly newsletter of Ecoplan, a Department of Conservation and Land Management program to support community involvement in bushland conservation.



Bushland Weeds manual available

On Wednesday, 5 March more than 80 people celebrated the launch of the Environmental Weeds Action Network's manual *Bushland Weeds* – a practical guide to their management by Kate Brown and Kris Brooks. [Refer cover story, *Ecoplan News Summer 2003*]. As he officially launched this important publication, Richard Diggins, chair of the Friends of Gingin Brook, provided a community perspective on the value of this manual, which is grounded in scientific rigour and practical knowledge.

The launch was preceded by a workshop on the manual and its use and was attended by 120 people. The manual retails for \$35 (+GST) and copies are available from the Wildflower Society on www.ozemail.com.au/~wildflowers or e-mail to wildflowers@ozemail.com.au



Authors, Editors and Project Management Team. (Back row) Neil Gibson (editor), Richard Diggins (Friends of Gingin Brook), Bob Dixon, Rod Randall, Gary Matthews (Project management team), (Front row) Kate Brown (author), Margo O'Byrne (project management team), Janice Marshall (editor).

Draft Bushland Protection Strategy

The City of Mandurah's Draft Bushland Protection Strategy with a goal 'to protect 150 hectares of privately owned bushland that will otherwise be developed' has been released for public comment. Elements for consideration include:

- a Bushland Acquisition Reserve Fund (through increases in rates);
- a voluntary tax deductible system for the collection of monies for bushland conservation; and
- subsidised rate relief and differential rating systems that can allow reduced rates as a condition on land managers demonstrating a commitment to ongoing native vegetation management.

Local residents and others are encouraged to have their say on the protection of Mandurah's bushland (submissions close 10 April). Copies can be obtained from Mandurah's Administration Centre, Library, Senior Citizens Centre and Aquatic & Recreation Centre. For more details call 9550 3777.



Process for seeking cover with the CIF

Following a community group's inability to find relevant, affordable or any cover from the market place, including an approach to the CCUA (refer cover story). The key steps for seeking cover within the Community Insurance Fund are:

1. 'Community organisation' approaches a State Government (host) agency requesting insurance cover (refer to Admission Guidelines Questionnaire)
2. The agency then assesses the 'organisation' and determines if the organisation is able to find relevant, affordable or any cover from the market.
3. The agency, once it has deemed the 'organisation' is eligible to seek cover, refers the organisation to the Insurance Commission of Western Australia (ICWA) for consideration.
4. The 'community organisation' completes the proposal form from which ICWA will determine preliminary quotes for cover. The 'organisation' is to submit the proposal along with details of prior insurance coverage to ICWA.
5. ICWA seeks the Treasurer's approval to provide insurance.
6. The Treasurer will then determine 'eligibility' and advise ICWA.
7. ICWA will then determine a final premium on a commercial basis, and (if accepted) will issue a policy of insurance. If the Treasurer's approval is not forthcoming, ICWA will advise the referring agency and the 'organisation' of the decision.

Bushland Care Days

Despite efforts on the part of both Ecoplan and Conservation Volunteers Australia to gain corporate support for the Bushland Care days program, we have to date been unable to secure any funding. While we will continue to look for ways to proceed with this program, at this stage the program as it has existed for the past five years will not go ahead in 2003. Ecoplan is very willing to work with groups, or a collection of groups to try and seek funding at a regional or local level. Over the years we have evolved a checklist of what groups need to know if you are undertaking a significant day. Copies of this list are available from Ecoplan. Conservation Volunteers Australia continues to provide a service for local groups and a cost is incurred for this. Please contact Ken Beasley at CVA 9336 6911 if you wish to discuss this option. If you would like to discuss your ideas about a bushland care day, or anything else regarding activities in your reserve, please contact the Ecoplan co-ordinator on 9474 7040 or email on ecoplan@calm.wa.gov.au

Apologies - missed opportunity

Ecoplan News extends apologies to Naragebup - for failing to advertise the 5th WA Environment Festival which was held 22-23 March.

Congratulations

- The Urban Bushland Council and the Friends of Shenton Bushland are both 10 years strong.
- Joan Payne was recently appointed to the Environmental Protection Authority.
- A strong commitment to setting and achieving goals, many in relation to the environment, has earned Conrad Slee the 'Baden Powell Scout Award', which usually goes to only one or two rover scouts per year. Many *Ecoplan* readers would know Conrad for his role with Conservation Volunteers Australia and Bushland Care Days.
- Greening Australia (WA) honoured Joanna Seabrook with an inaugural life membership.
- John Moore was awarded the Council of Australian Weed Science Societies 'Medal for Leadership'. John is co-author of the recently released *Southern weeds and their control*. [Refer to Resources, *Ecoplan News Summer 2003*].

Community Sustainability Agenda

The WA Collaboration is developing a 'Community Sustainability Agenda' with the non government and community sectors that will help guide the state government's Sustainability Strategy. Nicole Hodgson, the coordinator, has used network mailing lists, media interviews, regional workshops and a two day sustainability summit to harness community knowledge and guidance.

The Lotteries Commission funds the WA Collaboration and although based with the Conservation Council, members include social justice, community, indigenous, religious, environment and union sectors. For more information call Nicole on 9420 7295 or visit www.wacollaboration.org.au. The development of the Community Sustainability Agenda can be also be viewed on this website.

Attributes of Community Bushland Management Groups – Part 1

by Renae Stenhouse, PhD candidate University of WA

This research has been undertaken through a PhD at the University of WA and I extend particular thanks to *Ecoplan* and all questionnaire respondents for making it possible.

In late 2002, a questionnaire was completed by 76 members of community groups that help manage local government vested bushland in the metropolitan areas of Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Over half of the respondents were from Perth. The questionnaire focused on the relationship between community bushland management groups and their local governments, as well as investigating group attributes and the values members obtain from volunteering in bushland management. This article reviews group characteristics and benefits members gain from volunteering.

Groups ranged in membership numbers, from one to 1,000 total 'signed-up' members and from one to 100 active members (those who participate in management activities). On average, groups had been active for seven years and members were contributing personal finances and many hours of labour to their management group (Figure 1). Over half of the volunteers that responded were between 40 and 60 years of age, and in Perth, 70 per cent were female. The attributes of management groups in Perth differed little from groups in other capital cities.

It has become a part of my life

Volunteers were investing an average of \$180 per year and 22 hours per month into

bushland management. They were also gaining from the experience. Commonly cited benefits included bushland knowledge and skills in management; satisfaction in improving the bushland ecology; satisfaction in helping the environment; soul satisfaction (from doing something 'good') and forming friendships.

A number of issues raised from the questionnaire include:

- friends groups may benefit from trying to get more young people and males involved in management, to create greater diversity in the group;
- volunteers spending hundreds of dollars of their personal income for bushland management on local government land; and
- with an average of 50 per cent of total members involved in management activities, can we encourage a higher rate of participation by expounding the benefits gained by volunteering?

Volunteers have had a huge input into bushland management in urban Australia and community drive has been a leading factor in local governments initiating bushland management. Many community bushland management groups are coordinating with their local governments, and respondents' views on this are reviewed in the next edition of *Ecoplan News*.

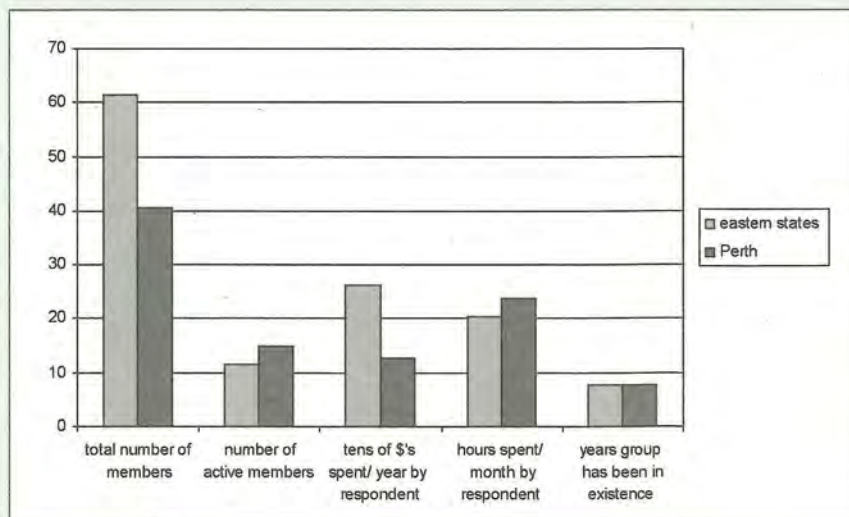


Figure 1: Attributes of Community Bushland Management Groups (averages used)

Funding Opportunities

Community Fix Up Grants is a partnership between Coles and Clean Up Australia where each Coles supermarket will fund \$5,000 in grants to their local community for projects targeting waste, waterways, bush planting, composting, community gardens and litter prevention. For application forms contact Clean Up Australia (02) 9552 6177 or visit www.cleanup.com.au.

The Green Corps Program offers a team of 10 volunteers and a leader to work on a range of environmental and cultural heritage activities. Expressions of interest for Round 32 will be invited (3-16 May) for projects commencing in September. To discuss potential projects call Trevor Don at Greening Australia (WA) on 9335 0105.

2003 Trails Funding Program is a joint initiative of the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) and the Lotteries Commission. \$500,000 is available for grants to a maximum of \$50,000 each. Potential projects include preparation of individual, local and regional plans, publicity brochures, trail guides and maps. Contact DSR on 9387 9700 or visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au/programs/trailwest.

Refreshing WA Water is a practical sponsorship initiative of the Water Corporation that provides bottled water for community group activities (eg bush regeneration day, expo). For guidelines contact John Steyntjes on 9424 8435.

Through **Westpac Operation Backyard**, staff and in-store operators apply for funding of environmental projects in which they are involved as volunteers. This a collaboration with Landcare Australia. Westpac will fund up to 50 per cent of the costs of the environmental materials required for approved projects. For guidelines call Pip Kent on 9426 2483.

The Federal Government's **Volunteer Small Equipment Grants** will provide \$3 million worth of funds to community groups this year via one-off grants of up to \$5,000. The grants are intended to help local volunteers purchase new equipment and will focus on organisations that provide family support and strengthen local communities. Contact the Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2003 hotline on 1800 018 312 or visit www.facs.gov.au/sfcs/funding/sml_equip_grants.htm.



Econotes: Don't mix cats and wildlife

THE CAT (*Felis catus*) is a common but elusive introduced predator that occurs throughout Australia including on many offshore islands.

What's in a name?

Cats may be categorised as domestic, stray or feral and they can shift between categories in their lifetimes. Domestic cats are pet or house cats living with people, who intentionally provide their ecological requirements. Stray cats rely partly on humans, and include cats in urban fringe situations, dumped pets and cats kept on farms for rodent control. Feral cats are free-living; they have minimal or no reliance on humans, and survive and reproduce in self-perpetuating populations.

Impacts on wildlife

Predation by feral cats has been implicated in the extinction and decline of many species of mammals and birds. Not only do they consume prey, they compete directly with marsupial carnivores. They are also known to carry and spread disease such as toxoplasmosis which can be fatal for several native species, as well as causing sickness in other natives, livestock and humans.

Impact of domestic cats

For his masters thesis in 1998, ecologist David Barratt recruited 214 cats and 143 cat-owners from 61 Canberra suburbs to help him study the effects of felines on the surrounding environment. He radio-tracked 10 house cats and seven farm cats over nine months and found that four of the 10 house cats ventured into the forest/woodland, and that most cats journeyed furthest under cover of darkness. The largest day-time home range was 17 hectares, the largest night range was 28 hectares.

For a 12 month period, the owners of all 214 cats helped Barratt collect and record assorted items of prey. Some 2,000 vertebrate prey items, representing at least 67 species were reported. House mice comprised 56 per cent of the catch, birds 27 per cent (including 47 species, 41 of which were native), reptiles seven per cent and amphibians one per cent.

An important finding was that 62 per cent of mammals and all amphibians were taken by night and 70 per cent of the birds and 90 per cent of reptiles by day.



Both domestic and feral cats hunt native fauna. Photo courtesy Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Barratt's findings have implications for urban planning.

In urban areas, the number of domestic cats that regularly visit neighbouring bushland areas can outnumber feral cats and therefore may have a greater impact. In one national park located in Sydney, it is estimated that there are 25 resident feral cats compared to approximately 680 domestic cats living within 100 metres of the park boundary. These figures are based on previous trapping of feral cats and surveys that indicate 37 percent of households keep at least one cat.

Local actions

Local councils such as Cockburn have developed and distributed information pamphlets that inform cat owners of the impact of cats, as well as provide guidance on how best to manage their pet.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has a number of successful programs that involve feral cat research and control, including Project Eden and Western Shield.

A 'cat free zone' has been established in the City of Armadale (CoA) at Churchmans Estate. CoA has also obtained funding from the Perth Biodiversity Project to measure the effectiveness of proposed local cat laws, particularly in reducing predation on fauna. This research will be in collaboration with Murdoch University and the Department.

The WA Parliament has been considering cat legislation introduced by Greens MLC, Giz Watson. The legislation is being reviewed.

Making a difference

Well cared for domestic cats can be wonderful pets. However, cats and wildlife don't mix!

All of us can help make a difference whether we own a cat or not:

- Become informed.
- Provide cat-free environments in your garden.
- Support feral cat control programs.
- Never feed a stray cat unless you intend to care for it as a pet.

Responsible cat owners can certainly assist in protecting our unique wildlife. Even well-fed domestic cats will prey on native wildlife because of their natural hunting instincts:

- Keep your cat at home, either inside or in an enclosed outside 'cattery'. Don't allow it to roam.
- Provide sufficient food and shelter.
- Put three large bells on its collar as a warning to wildlife.
- Desex it to prevent unwanted litters.
- Build a cat-proof boundary fence in your yard.

Further information

- Barratt D.G. (1998) Predation by house cats, *Felis catus* (L.), in Canberra, Australia. II. Factors affecting amount of prey caught and estimates of the impact on wildlife. *Wildlife Research* 25:475-487.
- Cat Haven - 9381 1644.
- Cat Sterilisation Society Inc - 9397 5062.
- City of Armadale cat project, Ron Van Delft - 9399 0111.
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service - www.npws.nsw.gov.au.
- *The Cat Bill* (in prep.). WA Greens MLC, Giz Watson - 9201 0582 or www.wa.greens.org.au.

SOURCE: NSW NP&WS

Including contributions from David Barratt, City of Armadale, City of Cockburn, Department of Conservation and Land Management and NSW Parks and Wildlife Service.



THAT FERAL CAT by Kaye Kessing.

Special thanks to Kay Kessing for permission to include her artwork in *Ecoplan News*.

REGIONAL REPORTS

All groups welcome visitors
and new members.

Across the Regions

Celebrating the Urban Bushland Council by Renata Zelinova

On 21 March, 1993 a coalition of community groups concerned about the threats to many urban bushland areas was formed, heralding the birth of the Urban Bushland Council (UBC). Ten years on, the UBC continues to grow as a peak body with credibility among community groups, politicians and agencies. The focus of UBC continues to be:

- creating a greater public awareness of natural heritage;
- ensuring community participation in decision making; and
- advocating for government policy and action to recognise and protect urban bushland.

The tenth anniversary will be a celebration of the enormous contribution by many individuals to the UBC and the major achievements over the past ten years. The UBC hopes you can join them for these celebrations.

Contact Renata on 9420 7207
or ubc@inet.net.au.



EWAN on national body by Bob Dixon & Hazel Dempster

Bob Dixon recently represented the Environmental Weeds Action Network (EWAN) in Canberra at the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Australian Weed Management.

There are a number of specialist groups within the CRC, each given specific 'tasks'. The 'tasks' of the 'Targeted End-user Group (TEG) Landscape Management' include integrated management of weed habitats, integrated management of representative weeds and improved biological control. The agenda included an overview of three research programs, 'Invasive rangeland shrubs', 'Bird dispersed weeds' and 'Host specificity testing'. Networking with leading figures in agricultural/ environmental weed control and meeting other members of the TEG was most valuable.

EWAN committee member and Department of Agriculture officer Rod Randall represented WA as the leader of the CRC 'Exotic species database program'.

Call Hazel on 9405 3266.



Dieback forums by Paul Zuvella

The Dieback Information Group (DIG) formed in 2001 to bring people of varying backgrounds together to discuss the latest research, thoughts and management of *Phytophthora dieback*. To this end, DIG has organised two successful forums which have attracted more than 70 and 90 people respectively, with attendees including landholders, community group representatives, researchers, industry, private business and government (state and local). A strength of DIG is in the diversity of people it attracts.

Preparation for the next DIG forum (20 June) has already commenced. If you have suggestions of topics or speakers or would like to be on the DIG e-mail list, please let us know.

Call Paul on 9257 9938 or
paul.zuvella@kalamunda.wa.gov.au.

North East Region

Bush Links active by Alice Stubber

After a short break over Christmas, planning has begun for a big year for the Bush Links project. David Pike's extensive knowledge of the local flora and fauna has again been invaluable in completing the initial site visits and vegetation condition mapping for the eight reserves and will provide the basis for prioritising on-ground works by professional bush regeneration.

Monitoring sites are being set up in each reserve to evaluate the success of the bush regeneration work and to provide a picture over time of these remaining urban bushland pockets. Hopefully, with active management and community participation the pictures will show a positive outcome for all the unique flora and fauna in these areas.

Join Bush Links for a bushwalk to discover these areas, to assist with monitoring, or to get your hands dirty? Don't hesitate to call.

Contact Bush Links on 9487 0632.

North West Region

Joondalup commitment to coastal management by Mike Norman

The Joondalup Community Coast Care Forum (JCCCCF) is a community reference group for monitoring issues and initiating action relating

to the Joondalup coastal strip, particularly in relation to conservation, recreation, development, education and culture.

In September 2001, on the dunes at Kallaroo, the JCCCCF met with the Mayor and officers of the City of Joondalup to discuss the



Barmadette Fee, Mike Norman, Joondalup Mayor, John Bombak and Wendy Herbert

need for an action plan for all coastal dune areas managed by the City, from Marmion to Burns Beach. The Mayor gave a commitment to have a study carried out by qualified professionals. Subsequently the City contracted Ecoscape (Australia) Pty Ltd which has produced a comprehensive management plan entitled Joondalup Coastal Foreshore Natural Areas Management Plan.

The plan has 29 recommendations relating to dune restoration, weed control, fire management, disease management, feral animals, and access and recreation. It also demonstrates that the estimated \$5 million to fully rehabilitate the coastal strip could be substantially reduced with a combination of volunteers, unskilled workers (eg work for the dole) and skilled professional contractors – while still achieving a high standard of rehabilitation.

Contact Mike on 94481978.

Snakes galore at Hertsman Lake! by Roger Harris

The WA Gould League, at Hertsman Lake Wildlife Centre, is celebrating the International Year of Freshwater with a range of nature-based education activities including, bird walks, FrogFests, Swamp Safaris and a Freshwater Festival.



Local residents getting to know snakes. Photo: Roger Harris

Recently locals bravely ventured out to learn how to cope with an encounter with a tiger snake, an incident that is quite common in back-yards at this time of the year. The 'Living with Tiger-Snakes' information night, held in February, was hosted at the request of the local community.

The fantastic response is an indication of how peoples' attitudes are changing. In the past the answer to a snake was to take a shovel to it, but now the community wants to learn about nature and learn how to live in harmony with it.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Herdsmen Lake is a world-class wetland, and acts as an oasis for a wide range of wildlife, including frogs, the staple diet of the tiger snake, which account for the abundance of tiger snakes in the area.

Contact Roger on 9389 6079 or visit www.wagouldleague.com.au.

Central

Shenton Bushland celebrates

by Dani Boase-Jelinek

The Friends of Shenton Bushland (FoSB) turns 10 in April. FoSB formed in 1993 after a number of members of the Wildflower Society discovered to their horror that the Government planned to sell the bushland to build an industrial estate. A picture of Joan Biddle appeared in The Post Newspaper, and more people 'discovered' the existence of this hidden pocket of bushland.

Over the past 10 years, the FoSB has evolved from campaigning for saving the bushland towards a long-term focus on managing the bushland. Our evolution towards a management focus has been reflected in changes in membership in our group and changes in our style of operation. These changes are continuing to occur.

Contact Dani on 9381 3470.

Hills Region

Summer activities and SCULP grants collected by Jenny Johnson

The long dry summer continues without the relief of rain from a stray cyclone or two! The bush in the hills is dry and brittle and at the time of writing we have had no major bushfires due to the diligence of local volunteer fire brigades that have suppressed many minor spot fires. Activities that groups have carried out during the summer have centred on woody and summer weed control. Those engaged in raising bush plants, are busy with germination and propagation programs.

Brookside Park – Parkerville: Surveying of the brook has been completed and the data is being compiled for the Waters and Rivers Commission to assess for remedial works. Swan TAFE will carry out further erosion control measures before the winter flows.

Village Reserves and Jane Brook – Parkerville: Parkerville Primary School will again be active with Ribbons of Blue once the rain returns. The students will also undertake fieldwork identifying species of local environmental weeds and hand weeding some sites. Planting of endemic species will follow.

Kintore Road – Parkerville: Summer was seed picking and plant propagation time, both of which are showing good results. The trees, shrubs and ground covers will be ready for planting in reserves and other areas identified for revegetation. All we need is the rain. With the loss of the coordinator, the group will continue, and are trying to find a way to carry on with the dieback control.



Left: Corporate bushcare day volunteers injecting *Banksia* trees in Ken Hurst Park, to protect them from *Phytophthora* disease. Centre & Right: Volunteers in Ken Hurst Park with some of the 50 giant bags of rubbish collected during a corporate bushcare day. (Photos: Alcoa)

Lion Mill Creek and Rocky Gully – Mt Helena: SCULP grants for weed control and planting have been received. Workdays will commence towards the end of April.

Kensitt Street – Stoneville: A SCULP grant to assist in weed control before planting of rushes and sedges along Jane Brook has been received.

If groups in Mundaring Shire need mulch for winter plantings, contact Bushcare Coordinator Linda who can organise free loads.

Contact Jenny on 9295 4467 or Linda on 9290 6666.

NHT funds for Kalamunda

by Victoria Laurie

The Nature Reserves Preservation Group in Kalamunda is thrilled to have won a \$22,682 grant from the Natural Heritage Trust Community Projects round in 2003! We will be working with the Shire of Kalamunda and bushcare officer Loreita Bean to spend it in our reserves.

Call Victoria on 9454 4828.

South East Region

Seeds, tree guards and volunteers at Cockburn

by Rex Sallur

During the summer period, volunteers have been assisting the Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre (CWEC) with seed collection.

The seed has been propagated and potted-on, and when at a suitable size will be planted into the seed orchard. It is hoped the orchard will eventually reduce the need for ongoing seed collection from bushland and it is encouraging that the plants established during the first year of operation have grown vigorously, with some species already producing seed.

An alternative tree guard was trialed on rush and sedge plantings at Bibra Lake foreshore where plants are prone to removal by waterbirds, in particular swamphens and swans. Although it appears unlikely it will provide an effective barrier, we will continue to monitor the trials as the guards currently used are as not cost-effective and require more storage space.

Contact CWEC on 9417 9460.

Corporate care at Ken Hurst

by Alcoa and Paul Zuvela

Recently, a corporate Bushcare Day organised by Alcoa and the Dieback Working Group saw more than 60 volunteers working at Ken Hurst Park in Leeming to protect the 50 hectare Bush Forever site from the ravages of *Phytophthora* dieback and illegal rubbish dumping. Alcoa, a long time supporter of community conservation groups, provided more than just funds for the work this time – they provided some of their dieback management expertise as well as company volunteers. Joining them were the Roleystone Dieback Action Group, City of Melville, Murdoch University, Conservation Volunteers Australia and many others.

Management of this large urban reserve offers a significant challenge for the small, dedicated Friends group to battle against the many forces threatening the survival of the reserve. This Bushcare Day achieved outcomes that would have taken the Friends many days of work – over 1,000 trees injected and 50 giant bags of rubbish collected!

REGIONAL REPORTS

Ian Colquhoun, the chairman of the Dieback Working Group, said "This was a stunningly successful day. We are now on the lookout for other corporate sponsors who can work with us to organise more Bushcare Days."

Call Eddy on 9310 2936 or Paul on 9257 9938.



Bushrangers from Rossmoyne High removing seed heads from bull-rushes

Summer watering along the Canning

by Dick Stone

With the summer's almost lack of rain, the Canning River Regional Park Volunteers (CRRPV) have been watering five of our recently planted sites. The City of Canning (CoC), 'bless them', have laid water on at two sites while their water truck fills up our containers at the others. The seedlings are all looking great. My wife Jo is looking forward to more weekly visits from the students of the Rehoboth Primary School. The children will be planting, mulching and weeding their piece of the regional park and increasing their knowledge of the environment.

The group has an exciting project, helped by the CoC, coming up in early June. Hundreds of sedges, currently on a development site in Cannington, will be relocated into the regional park on the well prepared wetland site, so it will be all hands on deck in June. There are also five guided walks programmed for the year in different areas of the park.

Contact Dick on 9458 3669.

Fishing platforms to protect foreshore

by Diane Matthews

Each February a Canning River Residents Environmental Protection Association (CRREPA) team removes the seed-heads from *Typha orientalis* (bulrushes). The goal is to control the spread of this highly invasive plant that vigorously displaces the more desirable sedge-beds. This year we had the assistance of a team of DCLM Bushrangers from Rossmoyne Senior High School, who proceeded to get excitably wet and muddy while achieving total de-heading of their patch.

This proved to be a very successful way to bond a new group at the start of the school year.

CRREPA continues to lobby for greater assistance from local and state governments to find a solution to the problem of continual trampling of the foreshore vegetation. Thanks to the initiative of Anna-Marie Penna from the City of Canning (CoC), it is hoped that funding will be secured to trial fishing platforms. These would be provided as dedicated access points for anglers and others so that erosion sites can be controlled and rejuvenated. The project will be a partnership between the CoC, Swan River Trust, RecFish West and CRREPA. We are very pleased with the potential of this project to provide positive outcomes for the foreshore environment and the local community.

Contact Diane on 9457 2896.

{We look forward to hearing the results of this trial. Editor}

South West Region

The birth of a new generation

by Francis Marchant

From visiting Seal Island every day at dawn, no matter what the weather, I have witnessed some extraordinary events, from seven metre rogue waves to dolphins and sealions being chased by sharks. However, on the recent solar eclipse day (4 December, 2002), these events were eclipsed by a more extraordinary natural phenomenon – an impressive landslide. Three tonnes of rock had crumbled and collapsed into the sea, bringing with it dozens of nests of cormorants, bridled terns and, yes, pigeons, as well as destroying part of the reef.

Life can change in an instant, but from disaster comes triumphs. Although the massive boulder destroyed many nests and a portion of the reef, the reef area has in fact doubled, creating ample opportunities for a myriad of aquatic fauna. Within 24 hours of the fall, two crayfish had made the new reef their home.



Part of Seal Island cliffs that have collapsed into the sea (Photo: Francis Marchant)

Such phenomena creates a wonderful opportunity to watch a reef system in the making and a good argument for the island to be given sanctuary status.

Contact Naragebup on 9591 3077.

Mammoth effort in Peel-Harvey

by Colleen Rankin

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) was formed in 2000 to tackle the problem of nutrients polluting the Serpentine, Harvey, Murray, Dandalup, Hotham and Williams river systems and eventually the Peel-Harvey Inlet. The catchment covers 11,700sq km from Cockburn to Harvey and as far to the east as Cuballing.

In developing a catchment plan, all the landcare projects across the region are looking at how they fit into that plan. The PHCC has a vision of 'people working together for a healthy environment' and that is the best way to sum up the landcare activities taking place right across the Peel-Harvey region.

Call Ian Wight-Picken 93393516, or Cathy Lyons on 95260012.



Baldvis Primary School planting day

Meelup Moonrise Walk

by Bernie Masters

Our first activity for 2003 was the 'Meelup Moonrise Walk' on Sunday, 19 January.

Leaving at 5.30pm, 110 people walked from Dunsborough to Meelup along the coastal track through Meelup Regional Park, with most climbing the new trail to the Whale Lookout near Castle Rock (no whales were seen but Castle Bay was the site of a whaling station only a few decades ago). On arrival at Meelup Beach, another 200 or so people were waiting for the walkers and, together at 8.30pm, we had our own 'Stairway to the Moon' experience to rival that of Broome!

Contact Bernie on 9727 2474.



Group Profile : Friends of Star Swamp Bushland

LOCATED in Perth's northern suburbs, the Star Swamp Bushland Reserve is a 96 hectare A-class reserve which comprises a four hectare semi-permanent freshwater lake and 92 hectares of banksia, tuart, jarrah and marri woodlands with areas of low heath.

Representing the community

The Friends of Star Swamp Bushland (FoSSB) represents the community in the management of the Reserve. FoSSB formed in 1985, following an eight year campaign by a committed group of local residents, spearheaded by the Trigg/North Beach/Waterman Ratepayers Association, to save the area from becoming a housing development. Today there are about 80 members.

"As representatives of the community, we work closely with the City of Stirling, the vested management authority. We sit on the management committee for wetland and bushland areas within the City and organise monthly guided walks, clean-ups and weeding activities," explained Christine Curry, the secretary.

Important habitats surrounded by suburbia

Star Swamp Bushland provides important habitats for over 65 species of woodland and water birds, and many species of reptiles, frogs, insects and spiders. Around 200 species of flora are found within its boundaries, including banksia, tuart, jarrah and marri, large stands of grass trees and over a dozen species of orchid.

A sign-posted Heritage Trail, identifying sites of local historical importance runs for 1.4km through the Reserve, and many limestone tracks dissect the area, making it easily accessible for walkers.

The power of 'lupathons'

"Many Ecoplan readers will know about the renowned 'Star Swamp Lupin Pull', undoubtedly our most successful regular activity," explained Christine.

When a group of local residents took up the cause to save the bushland in 1976 the area was thick with lupins that were stifling the growth of native vegetation. "Early 'lupathons', as they came to be called, saw hundreds of volunteers from all over Perth, pulling truckloads of lupins in support of the bushland cause," reflected Christine.



Walks Coordinator Phylis Robertson (left), leads a guided walk from the Henderson Environmental Centre

Over the years, the annual event has seen the eradication of around 90 per cent of lupins and the emphasis is now on containing and attacking small patches that still spring up annually.



Resource Centre doubles as home-base

With the opening in April 2001 of the Henderson Environmental Centre, located on the Reserve's south-west boundary, the FoSSB gained a home-base.

"The Centre is the culmination of 15 years' planning and hoping. It was made possible by the very generous donation of a long-time North Beach resident, matched by both financial assistance and enthusiasm from the City of Stirling, Lotteries WA and Karrinyup Rotary," enthused Christine.

Having the Centre helps with the organisation of longer range activities like weed mapping and the development and implementation of a weed eradication plan. "It will also help the Friends continue to expand our role of informing and educating the public about our unique piece of bushland," said Christine.

Regular open days, including lectures and 'hands-on' activities are planned. The first open day, held in May 2002, attracted over

150 people who learnt about the history of the campaign to save the reserve as well as the flora and fauna living within it.

Key role in bushland management



"We consider our role as a grass-roots community group to be vital in the management of the remnant bushland area that is the Star Swamp Bushland Reserve," explained Christine.

"The principle lessons we have learnt from both the campaign to save the area and our resulting management contribution, are the importance of working together, being non-partisan and including a wide range of scientists, politicians and other relevant people in the information and lobbying loop. The Reserve would not exist without the bi-partisan support of all political parties and all levels of government. Also, without the ongoing support of a variety of scientists and voluntary environmentalists we would not have such a high level of knowledge about the unique aspects of the Reserve."

Regular and varied activities

The FoSSB has a regular guided walk at 8am on the fourth Saturday of each month, nocturnal walks in May and October and a Spring wildflower walk in September. The lupin pulls are held in August and September and other activities are organised during the year. The Henderson Environmental Centre is open for visitors on all activity days. *[Editor's note – see What's On centre pages for this season's activities.]*

Contact Christine Curry on 9447 2983 a/h.

Resources

New Publications

- The Perth Biodiversity Project (PBP) – Councils Caring for their Natural Communities booklet provides an introduction to the PBP and highlights key aspects of biodiversity, the role of local government, threats and solutions for Perth's biodiversity, the PBP funding program, local biodiversity plans and references. Available from PBP on 9213 2050 or visit www.walga.asn.au.
- Establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Terrestrial Conservation Reserve System in Western Australia is a report prepared by the Department of Conservation and Land Management on the current status of the terrestrial conservation reserve system (a similar process will be undertaken for marine reserves). It highlights the extent of the reserves and the areas in which the system is not meeting internationally accepted conservation reserve criteria, commonly known as CAR – comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness. State Cabinet has noted the report and endorsed a policy to establish a CAR conservation reserve system in WA. Available at www.naturebase.net/projects/conservation_res_snapshot.html.
- Two new Bush Books have been published by the Department – Fungi of the South-West Forests by Richard Robinson and Frogs of WA by Carolyn Thomson-Dans and Grant Wardell-Johnson. They are available from the Department and many bookshops and newsagencies.
- A new pamphlet has been produced to accompany the Coastal Plain Walk Trail Stage 1 – Yanchep National Park to Melaleuca Conservation Park. Stage 1 of this long distance walking trail takes you on a 2.5 day journey traversing the many natural wonders of the Swan Coastal Plain. For copies and further information contact the Department 9405 1222 or Yanchep National Park 9561 1004.
- Guide for the Assessment of Environmental Factors (in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1986) is now available from the Department of Environmental Protection on 9222 7000. The guide is intended to ensure that proponents planning and designing proposals, which could impact on bushland within Bush Forever sites and regionally significant natural areas within the System 6 region and Swan Coastal Plain portion of System 1 region, are guided as to the likely manner in which the EPA will assess their proposals. It also aims at ensuring developments are compatible with the conservation value of these areas.
- A free information brochure on declared aquatic plants is available from the Department of Agriculture on 9368 3710.
- World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) position paper on Weeds and Pests: eradicating the invasive threat is now available. For copies or a full list of WWF Australia publications contact (02) 9281 5515 or publications@wwf.org.au.

'Dr Cool It' is here

Want to know how to save money on your energy bills? Want to know how much energy your house is using and where it is really coming from? 'Dr Cool It' can help you!

This unique and individualised service is a partnership project between the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (EMRC) and the Australian Greenhouse Office Cool Communities Project. It is available to residents living in the Councils of Bassendean, Bayswater, Belmont, Swan, Kalamunda and Mundaring. If you would like to have a friendly greenhouse/energy adviser visit your home, please contact Sandi Evans at the EMRC on 9479 4808. The service will be limited, so please register early to avoid disappointment.

Free e-mail networks

- For national bush regeneration issues, send a blank e-mail to: Bushcare-subscribe@yahoo.com.au. For more technical information send a blank e-mail to: Bushregeneration-subscribe@yahoo.com.au.
- To receive WA's NRM News with updates on natural resource management issues affecting WA send an e-mail to: [Dianne Robinson, diarobinson@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:Dianne.Robinson@agric.wa.gov.au).



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