

Flora, fauna and fungi

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Perth
Urban
Bushland
Fungi

Although often overlooked, fungi are an integral part of long-term bushland management. The Perth Urban Bushland Fungi (PUBF) Project has been increasing awareness and knowledge about local fungi since 2004. The project is an outstanding example of engaging the public, scientists and skilled volunteers. Results are also providing a fascinating and significant contribution to our poorly documented urban fungi.

Free public PUBF fungi forays and workshops during winter have attracted more than 2,100 community participants at 109 public events in 58 different bushlands around Perth. Led by trained volunteer fungi leaders, members of the public search for fungi and help photograph, record and geo-reference. After the foray, the groups meet to discuss and identify the day's finds.

The forays have a strong scientific basis as many specimens are prepared and stored as part of the WA Herbarium's State collections. An exciting aspect of the project is the unveiling of the taxonomic secrets of many species new to science, and the discovery of new fungi records for Western Australia.

This year, PUBF began regular surveys at long-term monitoring sites in Kings Park to build an inventory of the fungi there for the first time. Many new discoveries were made, including some amazing bright orange and violet disc fungi in areas severely burnt by a major fire in January 2009. These fungi, along with the emergence of plants that partner fungi such as orchids, are a significant sign of post-fire recovery of the bushland in Kings Park.

Detailed fungi reports for every bushland surveyed are available on the PUBF website which was



A 2009 PUBF foray at Locke Reserve, Busselton. Crouching is one of PUBF's volunteer fungi leaders Kevin Griffiths. Photo – Roz Hart

designed by volunteers and web expert Brett Glossop. *Fungi of the Perth Region and Beyond* (2009) is a guide to local fungi and is available as a bound book or for download from www.fungiperth.org.au.

The demand for PUBF surveys increases yearly from bushland friends groups and local government bodies who invite PUBF to survey their bushlands. PUBF does not have the resources to satisfy all requests; however community groups are encouraged to continue to survey the fungi in their bushlands, using the fungi fieldbook and PUBF's resources for support.



The orange disc fungus *Pulvinula archeri* at Kings Park provided a stark contrast to the blackened burnt earth. Photo – Neale Bougher

PUBF is a collaborative effort with the Urban Bushland Council in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) WA Herbarium, with financial support from Lotterywest. Overall leadership is provided by Dr Neale Bougher from the WA Herbarium.

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