bushland news

urban nature

Issue 137 **Autumn** 2026 *Time of Bunuru and Djeran in the Noongar calendar.*

Regional conservation plans – conservation in action

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bushland News *is a quarterly newsletter of the Urban Nature program to support community involvement in bushland conservation.*

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This publication is available in alternative formats on request. Current and archived issues of *Bushland News* are available at https://dbca.wa.gov.au/bushlandnews.

Next issue

Autumn *Bushland News*

Autumn *Bushland News* contributions should be sent to Urban Nature by **Monday 11 May 2026**. *Bushland News* seeks original contributions. If your submission has been or may be published elsewhere please let us know. Compiled and edited by Renee Evans, Jaimee Nobbs, Louise Kaestner and Diana Biondini.

Regional conservation plans – conservation in action

*Sunray everlastings (*Rodanthe manglesii*) in full flower at Wandoo National Park, one of the priority reserves and landscapes of the Swan Region. Landscape actions in the regional conservation plans mitigate threatening processes to benefit multiple conservation values. Photo – Marnie Mallie.*

By Renee Evans

The Biodiversity Conservation Framework outlines the overarching conservation strategies that the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) undertakes to conserve biodiversity and natural areas. Released in December 2025, the framework provides a high-level overview of the broad range of activities, plans, systems and initiatives that contribute to delivering the department's biodiversity conservation function and contribute to State, national and international biodiversity conservation legislative and policy requirements and commitments.

In addition, the department released regional conservation plans for each of the nine regions to deliver the overarching conservation strategies outlined in the Biodiversity Conservation Framework.

DBCA's nine regions have responsibility for on-ground delivery of biodiversity conservation with a focus on department-managed land. The department also liaises, provides advice and undertakes some management activities on other lands, particularly where these relate to Ramsar wetlands, and threatened and Priority species and ecological communities.

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*Front cover: Forest red-tailed cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksia naso*) have been identified for priority action and collaboration opportunities in the regional conservation plans for DBCA Warren, Wheatbelt, Swan, South Coast and South West regions covering their entire distribution. Photo – Mark Davidson.*

The plans were developed using structured decision-support processes conducted between 2021–2023 to identify and prioritise conservation actions for:

- landscape-scale threat mitigation in priority reserves and landscapes
- addressing specific threats to threatened and Priority species and ecological communities
- addressing information requirements to support the management of threatened and Priority species and ecological communities.

Experts from within and external to the department contributed to the decision-support and prioritisation processes that informed the development of priority actions outlined in the plans.

The plans use a state-wide consistent process to allow regions to prioritise their resources to deliver conservation actions that have been estimated to provide the greatest benefit relative to costs and risks.

Regional conservation plans are comprised of the Regional Conservation Planning Approach document that outlines the approach taken to develop the regional conservation plans, as well as the outputs for conservation action in each of the nine regional conservation plans.

The priority actions outlined in each regional conservation plan will be implemented through regional and district works programs. Actions are prioritised for implementation within existing resources to maximise conservation benefits.

Each region will engage and collaborate with other regions, other business areas of the department, joint and cooperative management Traditional Owner partners, and other stakeholders in community conservation groups, volunteers, industry or research institutions to deliver the conservation actions.

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*Left: Biodiversity benchmarking is still required to increase knowledge and underpin good decision-making for many threatened species and ecological communities. The Pilbara and Kimberley regions identified research priorities for the northern quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) to liaise with Traditional Owners to monitor distribution and population trends, to undertake genetic research and population viability analysis to inform fire management and to survey for the management of feral predators. Photo – Babs and Bert Wells.*

Top: The northern Queen of Sheba orchid is endemic to the Midwest Region and is listed as a Priority 2 species which is a poorly known species only known from a few locations (generally five or less) some on conservation lands. The Midwest Regional Conservation Plan identifies actions addressing Phytophthora *dieback disease and prescribed burning to manage known populations of the orchid and research priorities regarding wasp and artificial pollination. Photo – Fred and Jean Hort.*

Left: The critically endangered western swamp tortoise is endemic to the Swan Region. The regional conservation plan includes a number of high priority actions focusing on habitat management, captive breeding, land acquisition, translocation, threat mitigation of predators, fire and weeds, community education and liaison. Research into home ranges, predation and comparing captive bred and wild tortoise survival and growth was also prioritised. Photo – Nick Rodriguez.

... continued

Conservation activities are funded from the department's recurrent budget, as well as through specific government appropriations and external funding arrangements. Partnership opportunities are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure that resources are being targeted towards achieving high value conservation outcomes.

Ultimately, there are more conservation actions than there are resources to deliver them, requiring this transparent, repeatable and defendable prioritised approach. As well as prioritising existing resources, the plans provide a basis for future strategic business planning and to align potential funding opportunities, including through collaboration and partnerships to extend the department's capacity to deliver more or complementary priority conservation actions outlined in regional conservation plans both on and off department-managed land.

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Eucalypt woodlands in the Helena and Aurora Ranges, a priority reserve and landscape of the Goldfields Region under joint management with the Malinyu Ghoorlie Traditional Owners and DBCA. Joint management incorporates traditional knowledge to strengthen land management practises, improves protection of cultural and heritage values, and supports Aboriginal people to access and connect with Country. Photo – Taylor Frahamer.

Urban Nature update

Back at my desk *By Julia Cullity*

I'd like to say a huge thank you to Renee Evans and Jaimee, Louise, Rebecca and Diana, the team of volunteer editors who have put in so much work in my absence to keep producing *Bushland News*. We are thinking about ways to streamline our publication whilst still celebrating the work of conservation volunteers, giving a voice to community bush care ideas and innovations and providing technical information relating to bushland management and local biodiversity values. Drop me an email to share your thoughts about what you value in *Bushland News*.

Fires threaten the Greater Brixton Street Wetlands *By Cat Williams*

Recovery actions after the fires at Greater Brixton Street wetlands will include fence repair, weed management, monitoring natural regeneration and removing rubbish now exposed by the burns. Photo – Cat Williams.

Emergency services response to the fire was very rapid but even with aerial support the December bushfire at Greater Brixton Street Wetlands burnt 118ha, being fanned by a strong sea breeze. Photo – Cat Williams.

The Greater Brixton Street Wetlands experienced two significant bushfires in 2025, threatening one of Perth's most biodiverse bushland reserves. The first fire, on 1 March, burnt approximately 47ha of DBCA and freehold land to the north. A second, larger fire on 11 December burnt a further 118ha, including the UWA-owned Alison Baird bushland. Fire frequency at the wetlands is high, with multiple accidental or deliberate ignitions recorded over the past two decades. Around 17.5ha of DBCA and freehold land were affected in both events, meaning some areas have now burnt twice within a 12-month period.

Careful fire management is essential in this fragile landscape. The clay pan soils are easily damaged, and recovery from vehicle compaction or the construction of emergency firebreaks can take many years - often far longer than the vegetation itself needs to regenerate.

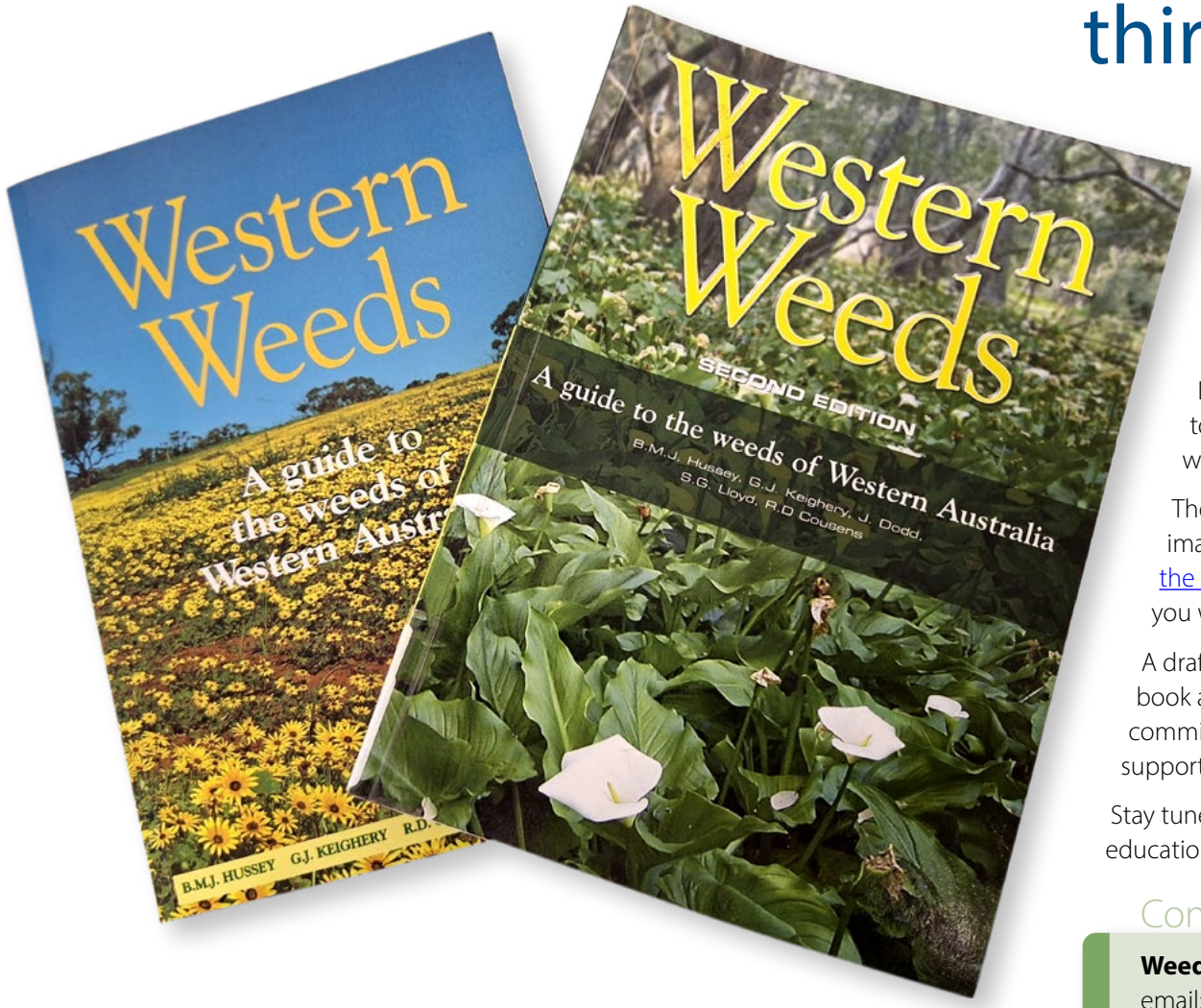
To support natural recovery, planned actions include repairing boundary fencing, implementing a targeted weed management program, monitoring natural regeneration, including known populations of threatened flora and ecological communities, and removing long accumulated rubbish now exposed by the burns. These efforts aim to stabilise the wetlands and protect their exceptional biodiversity.

In the height of summer in early January, less than one month after the fire, resprouting species like this paperbark start to reshoot. Photo – Cat Williams.

A monitor lizard survived the fire deep in its burrow underground. Photo – Cat Williams.

Western Weeds third edition

By Kathryn Batchelor



Good news! The Weed Society of Western Australia has started preparing the third edition of Western Weeds! This long-awaited review is in the editing stage and will represent a substantial review on previous editions. The first edition was published in 1997, followed by the second edition in 2007. Both have been out of print for several years. The authors of the first and second editions Dr Jon Dodd, Greg Keighery and Penny Hussey have come out of retirement to help with the third edition, and since the previous editions were written in their own time, it won't feel like work.

The Society is interested in contributions of photos and if you have good images of weeds in the landscape, please consider sharing them with the society. If your photo is included (perhaps even used for the cover) you will be acknowledged within the text.

A draft suitable for a publisher is expected in March 2026, with the finished book available for purchase later in the year. As always, the Society is committed to offering this publication at minimal cost, with any proceeds supporting travel grants or future weed related publications.

Stay tuned—this edition actually promises to disappoint, but not for its education value or quality, but to learn that we have more weeds than ever!

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How do fungi fit in your plans?

By Sapphire McMullan-Fisher, Roz Hart and Kevin Glidden

Ecosystems (and how to manage them) are a great big jigsaw puzzle. We can see the big picture on the outside of the box, but we're still hunting for and fitting in all the pieces. And a great big chunk of the puzzle has just dropped into place.

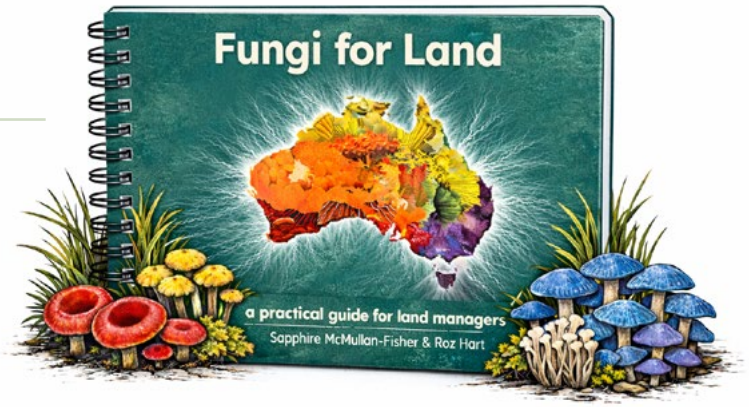
Fungi are often lumped in one big bucket with other pathogens, but the reality is far more complex. Australian fungi are unique and essential for local ecosystem resilience. They break down and recycle nutrients, they connect plants to share resources, they feed our fauna, they even help clean freshwater. And yes, some fungi present a serious risk to many of our precious native species.

Fungi for Land is a science-based, practical guide to help incorporate fungi into stewardship practices across the full spectrum of land management. The project was initiated by mycologists Sapphire McMullan-Fisher and Roz Hart and developed collaboratively for years with findings from more than 25 scientists and local experts.

From the ground up, this 200-page guide is built around Australian examples and species to highlight the roles fungi play in our unique ecosystems' health, restoration and conservation. It's chock-a-block with photos, illustrations, helpful tips and heaps of research presented in engaging plain English. It's even spiral bound, so you can lay it flat on your bench, desk or ute to reference while you're working out annual plans for your restoration project, fire regime, sustainable plantation or even your home garden.

Dark spores on this Inkcap (Parasola sp) contrast with the pale fungal tissue that produces them. Photo – Paul Vallier.

Sadly, this weevil isn't wearing adorable little disco boots. The fluffy balls on its legs are the signs of entomopathogenic fungi that have consumed the weevil from the inside out. Photo – Ian Bell.



Have a quick squiz at some of the topics covered in Fungi for Land:

- how fungi help create nesting spaces for Australian birds and mammals
- the specialised associations between orchids and fungi
- First Nations edible fungi knowledge
- fungi's capacity to rebuild damaged soil after bushfires
- using fungi to control weeds like bridle-creeper and other pests
- biosafety measures to block out fungal diseases
- new, environmentally sustainable fungi products

Understanding fungi is critical to the success of our land management practices. Focussing on using local fungi that are adapted to specific environmental conditions enables better-informed decisions regarding biodiversity management.

The more we fill in the puzzle of Australian ecosystems, the closer we get to preserving the legacy of this land. With greater fungal knowledge, we'll know when to encourage them or try to prevent them spreading if they are harmful.

Fungi for Land is available for pre-order now from University of Western Australia Press.

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Looking beneath the shell: genetics and conservation of the western swamp turtle

The western swamp turtle is one of Australia's rarest reptiles, presumed extinct for more than 100 years until it was rediscovered in 1953. This critically endangered species has an unusual lifestyle, surviving the dry summer months by aestivating underground when the seasonal clay swamps it inhabits dry out.

Thanks to decades of dedicated effort, the western swamp turtle has persisted through captive breeding and carefully managed releases. These actions have played a crucial role in preventing extinction, however, an important question remains: **How genetically healthy is the population we are working so hard to protect?** Conservation of a species isn't just about keeping individuals alive. It also involves safeguarding the genetic diversity that helps populations survive and thrive into the future.

Genetics plays a vital role in conservation. Populations with higher genetic diversity are generally considered to have improved "fitness", including the ability to resist disease, and adapt to environmental change, such as in an increasingly drying climate. For species like the western swamp turtle, which is long-lived, slow-breeding and reduced to just hundreds of individuals, genetic health becomes especially important. While genetics is recognised as a valuable tool in wildlife management, its use was historically limited by available technology.

Only in the past decade have advances in DNA sequencing made it possible to conduct powerful, whole-genome analyses for understudied species like the western swamp turtle, opening the door to questions that were previously out of reach. Utilising these tools, we have developed a complete reference genome for the western swamp turtle, which acts like a detailed instruction manual for the species' DNA. With the reference genome we have been able to sequence the genomes of an additional 45 individuals spanning multiple generations, including turtles alive in the 1970s and 1980s. These individuals provide a valuable snapshot of the species' genetic baseline following its rediscovery. Together, this dataset allows us to assess how individuals are related, examine levels of genetic diversity and inbreeding, and identify potentially harmful genetic changes that may affect long-term health. It also helps us understand how the original founders of the captive breeding program continue to shape today's population.

One particularly exciting aspect of this project has been our success in extracting DNA from a wide range of sample types collected as far back as the 1970s, including eggs, shell/scute samples, and blood. These materials allow us to link past and present generations and evaluate studbooks currently used to guide captive breeding decisions at Perth Zoo, an important step for the species where females can store sperm for several years, making paternity difficult to determine. This is a powerful approach, but it is also a time-consuming and computationally intensive one.

DBCA Research Scientist Dr. Kate Rick with a western swamp turtle at Scott National Park. Photo – Kate Rick.

Whole genome datasets are large (> 1.5 terabytes), and even a single stage of analysis can take several days to run. While this work is underway, the direction is clear: to provide robust, evidence-based information that can guide future management decisions. It's an important step to help secure a resilient future for this remarkable species.

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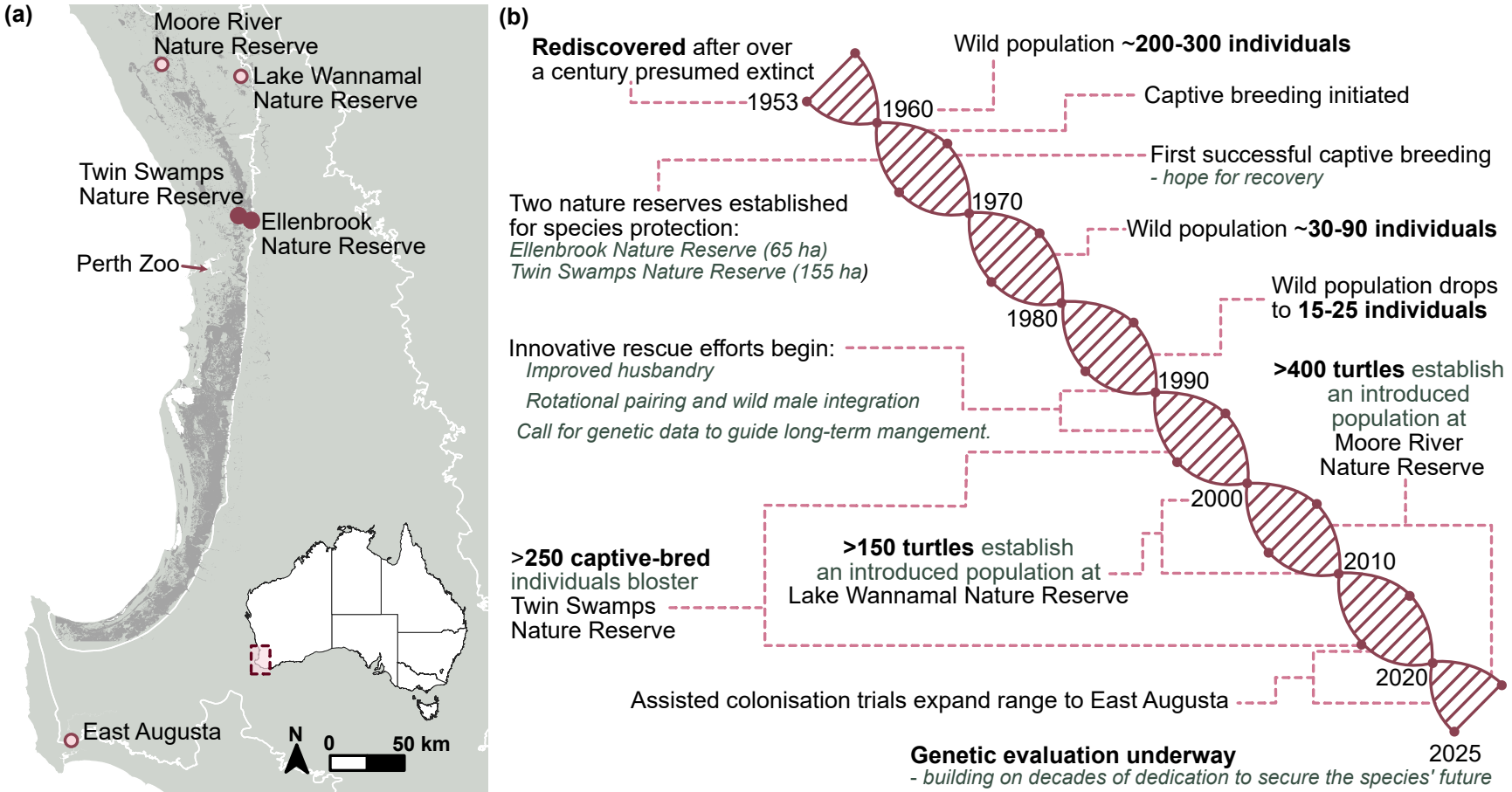

Overview of the conservation history and genomic research of the western swamp turtle. (a) Map illustrating the potential historical geographic range (dark grey), with filled circles indicating natural populations and open circles indicating managed translocation sites. (b) Summary timeline highlighting key milestones in the conservation history of the species. (c) Overview of key conservation questions that genomic data can help address to manage long-term population health. Image – Kate Rick.

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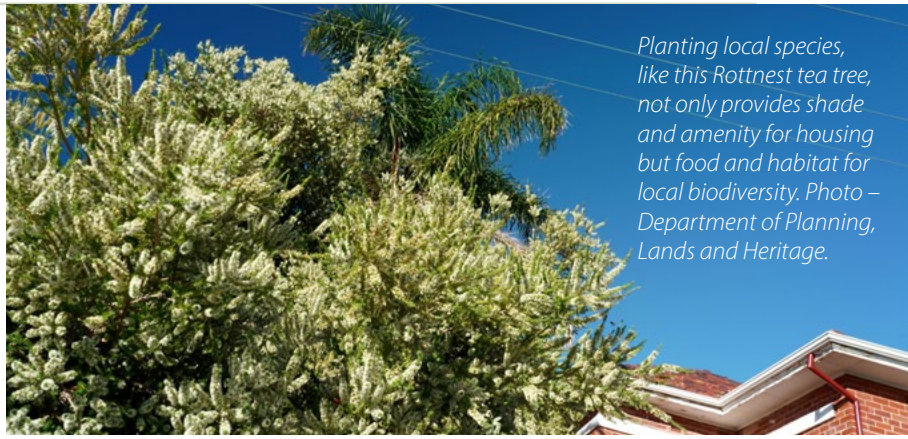
Urban Greening Strategy and Let's Grow *By Shenade Unicomb*

The first Urban Greening Strategy is a whole-of-government approach that sets a clear, long-term direction for boosting tree canopy, low-level vegetation and green spaces across public and private land in the Whadjuk (Perth) and Bindjareb (Peel) regions. Informed by community feedback and leading practice, the Strategy outlines a range of measures to promote sustainable development, combat urban heat, strengthen climate resilience, improve community health and wellbeing, and enhance biodiversity and access to nature.

The Strategy is supported by the Let's Grow Action Plan 2026-2030 which sets out priority initiatives and practical steps that will build strong foundations for the future. It aligns with the State Government's commitments to:

- increase Perth's tree canopy cover to 30 per cent by 2040
- plant one million trees by 2035
- deliver a $10 million Let's Grow Grants program and a $6.9 million Treebate incentive scheme.



Planting local species, like this Rottnest tea tree, not only provides shade and amenity for housing but food and habitat for local biodiversity. Photo – Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

South Padbury Primary School planting a pocket forest. The Let's Grow grants recognise the role schools and community groups can play in leading urban greening . Photo – Harry Butler Institute, Murdoch University.

Let's Grow Grants now open

The first major initiative under the Action Plan is the Let's Grow Grants Program. Round One is now open, inviting schools and community groups within the Whadjuk and Bindjareb regions to apply for a grant to support their next urban greening project. Projects must be in urban places such as school grounds, community spaces, street verges, parks, carparks, neighbourhood hubs, public transport stops, and walking and cycling routes. The State Government has committed $10 million over four years to deliver the program, with $2.5 million allocated each financial year.

Round One closes 30 June 2026 and is offered through two streams:

- Stream 1: small projects ($500 – $10,000)
- Stream 2: large projects ($10,001 – $100,000).

Grants are administered by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on behalf of the Western Australian Planning Commission.

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Please send us your regional report (400 words) and one or two photos by Monday 11 May 2026. Text may be edited in response to volume of submitted reports.

Joondalup Coast Care celebrates 25 years *By Don Poynton*

Joondalup Community Coast Care Forum (JCCCF) celebrated its 25-year anniversary by holding a dinner for current and past committee members, contractors and staff from the City of Joondalup's Natural Areas team.

The creation of the City of Joondalup in 1998 resulted in the city inheriting a 17km coastal strip consisting of foreshore reserves with minimal infrastructure but a rapidly increasing population along its length.

The following year, the City invited the community to form a Community Action Group to meet, discuss and make decisions on all relevant issues affecting the coast.

This led to the formation of JCCCF which adopted as its main objective:

> ***To act as 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.***

Initially, volunteers working under the JCCCF banner spread their time between on-ground restoration work at Sorrento, Mullaloo and Iluka but as numbers grew, each of these geographical areas formed its own friends group with the help of the City of Joondalup. JCCCF became the umbrella organisation concentrating on larger issues such as submissions on major developments along the coast and common issues such as creating a coastal management plan, and feral animal control.

Committee members also became major contributors to the Community Reference Groups for the Burns Beach Estate development and the Ocean Reef Marina development.

A fourth friends group was formed in 2022 to help with restoration between Hillarys and Kallaroo while a fifth group is planned for Ocean Reef once a new community is established around the current marina development.

The friends groups between them have been successful applicants for nearly one million dollars in grant funding which has been used primarily to employ contractors to supplement the work of volunteers and to hand weed in less accessible areas.

Grant funding has also been used to assist with dune stabilisation projects, to conduct comprehensive invertebrate and herpetofauna surveys and to hold community events.

While competing for recognition has never been a goal, the organisation and individuals have received numerous awards including winning the State Landcare award in 2007/08.

Today, the organisation and its group members face the same challenges as many of its peers, the effects of climate change, an aging volunteer workforce, feral animal control and a smaller pool of funding.

Volunteer friends rehabilitating the dunes at the southern end of Sorrento Beach looking north in 2003. Photo – Mike Norman.

The same view of the Southern end of Sorrento beach looking north with thriving flora across the dune 12 years after the first image. Photo – Friends of Sorrento Beach–Marmion Foreshore.

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Friends of Paganoni Swamp goals for 2026

By Leonie Stubbs

Thanks to funding through Perth NRM's Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain ecological community Project our Friends of Paganoni group, along with a couple of fantastic staff from SERCUL (who even found another species of *Desmocladus* for us to add to our herbarium), spent several days over the past month checking *Acacia iteaphylla* sites for weed seedlings. Unfortunately, there were seedlings present at most of the sites we visited even though the mature trees were treated in 2021. It is a species that keeps on giving!

In 2024, an area to the west of the existing reserve and the Mandurah-Perth railway (Paganoni West) was added to Paganoni Swamp Reserve. This year, through the Swan Alcoa Landcare Program (SALP) funding, we plan to work hard to considerably reduce the incidence of dune onion weed (*Trachyandra divaricata*) which, from reading previous reports, appears to have increased exponentially across the site in a very short period of time. A portion of the area contains the *Melaleuca huegelii–M. systena* shrublands of limestone ridges threatened ecological community which was identified and confirmed last year so our work will focus on this patch.

The majority of vegetation in Paganoni West contrasts significantly with that of the main reserve, which is predominantly tuart and banksia woodland with a winter-wet *M. rhaphiophylla* wetland through the centre of the reserve. Such a range of vegetation types increases the value of this wonderful reserve.

Another focus for the year will be to continue plantings around the reserve boundary in order to reduce the incidence of weeds. This has been a three-year program made possible through State NRM funding the Championing Community Landcare in Perth's Urban Bushlands project. We plant in fenced areas (exclosures) which have been very successful in excluding grazing kangaroos and, along with adding a fertiliser tablet and planting the seedlings deep in the soil, has resulted in a very acceptable survival rate.

The northwest block of the main reserve underwent a spring burn in 2024, and we have already noticed annual weeds popping up throughout the patch together with an increased density of *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus* and *Moraea flaccida*. Our goal is to significantly reduce the density of these pesky weeds over the next couple of years.

SERCUL staff follow-up weeding Acacia iteaphylla seedlings germinating at sites where mature plants had previously been controlled. Photo –Wendy van der Togt.

Wurmbia monantha, *one of the species found in the* Melaleuca huegelii–M. systena *shrublands of limestone ridges threatened ecological community. Photo – Wendy van der Togt.*

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BirdLife Wheatbelt Bird Surveys: tracking birds to understand bushland health

By Maris Lauva

The BirdLife Wheatbelt Bird Surveys project is undertaking a long-term study of bird populations in remnant native bush across twelve nature reserves. By monitoring both the birds and the condition of the surrounding vegetation, the project aims to understand how habitat quality influences which species persist — and which disappear.

A central premise guides the work: adaptable bird species tend to occur widely, even in modified landscapes, while species with specialised requirements for food, shelter, or breeding are found only where native bush remains relatively intact. Their presence, or absence, provides a sensitive measure of habitat condition.

Many bird species once common throughout the Wheatbelt have now vanished from large areas. Others survive only in small, scattered reserves, with numbers continuing to decline. The amount and quality of remaining native vegetation is clearly critical. One of the project's goals is to describe what "good condition habitat" looks like from a bird's perspective, so that land managers and community groups can better understand how clearing, fire regimes, and other activities affect biodiversity.

Eighteen fixed woodland survey sites are visited several times each year by citizen scientists who conduct structured bird surveys. These results

*The once common Redthroat (*Pyrrholaemus brunneus*) is a species now declining in numbers in the Wheatbelt region. The reason for this remains unclear making it an important species to continue to monitor and investigate. Photo – Maris Lauva.*

can then be compared across sites and reserves and linked with detailed habitat assessments previously completed at each location. Over time, this will build a powerful dataset showing how bird communities respond to changes in their environment.

One of the species of particular interest is the redthroat (*Pyrrholaemus brunneus*). Although widespread across Australia's arid interior and regularly recorded during BirdLife's Great Western Woodlands surveys from 2012 to 2024, it has declined markedly in the Wheatbelt. Once common, it is now officially listed as "declining", with its range contracting rapidly to the east and north. The reasons remain unclear, making it an important focus for ongoing investigation.

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Arum Lily Blitz - *another record breaker*

By Trevor Paddenburg

Nature Conservation Margaret River Region's Arum Lily Blitz has wrapped up for 2025, and it's been another record-breaking year, with major new inroads made against one of the region's worst invasive weeds.

The Blitz team set out to identify and reach new high-priority landholders in key areas across the Margaret River region, particularly those adjacent to the national park, remnant bushland and neighbouring properties where significant investment has already been made. They pulled out all the stops from cold calling and letter mail outs to door knocking.

As a result, twenty new landholders were supported through the cost-share control program, many of whom had never controlled arum lily before, helping to close crucial gaps in the landscape and expand the impact of the program.

Collaboration remained at the heart of the program, with targeted work in Boranup Forest undertaken alongside DBCA, the Shire of Augusta Margaret River and private landholders. The effort built on data from a 2024 mapping project to ensure on-ground control was directed where it would make the greatest impact.

"We have the data to show what is possible when landholders, volunteers and public land managers pull together. We owe it to our environment and to the community who have dedicated 6000 hours to arum lily control since 2019. Now we need to target those areas that are holding us back. We'll be throwing everything at this over the next two years," said Arum Lily Blitz Coordinator, Obelia Walker. Landholders and contractors came together recently at Fair Harvest Permaculture to celebrate another successful Blitz. Photo – Obelia Walker.

Youth education also played a role. Through Nature Conservation's Our Patch program, Year 3 students at Rapids Landing Primary School learned about arum lily, mapped infestations in the Wooditjup National Park trail network using the citizen science Fieldbook app, and took the message home to their families.

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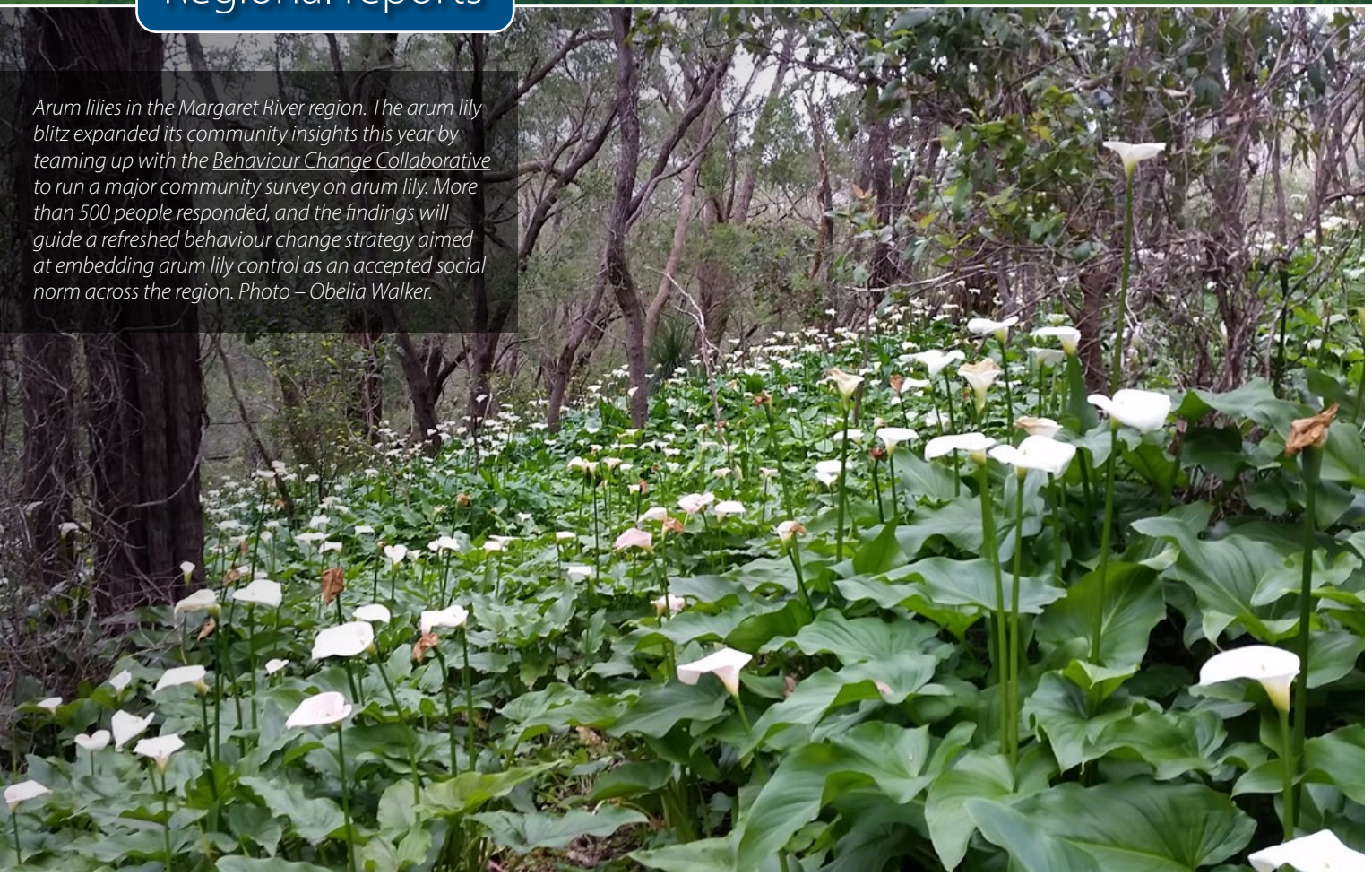

Arum lilies in the Margaret River region. The arum lily blitz expanded its community insights this year by teaming up with the Behaviour Change Collaborative to run a major community survey on arum lily. More than 500 people responded, and the findings will guide a refreshed behaviour change strategy aimed at embedding arum lily control as an accepted social norm across the region. Photo – Obelia Walker.

Nature Conservation CEO Aaron Jaggar said collaboration continued to be central to the Blitz's momentum. "Partnerships with the Friends of the Cape-to-Cape Track, Capes Foundation, Yallingup LCDC, Lower Blackwood Landcare, neighbouring shires and DBCA ensure arum lily remains front-and-centre as a regional priority," he said. "It's a collective effort that's now being used as a model for weed control programs in four surrounding shires."

Looking ahead to 2026, the Blitz will aim to ramp up its impact and:

- campaign for greater State Government support to target gaps and high-priority properties where control isn't yet happening
- embed arum lily control as a social norm by implementing the revised behaviour change strategy
- boost engagement with wineries and growers, including organic operators
- run community blitzes and busy-bee style events to increase on-ground participation.

Since launching in 2019, the Arum Lily Blitz has now achieved:

- **2600 people registered** with the Blitz across over 30,000 hectares, with hundreds of new landholders joining each year.
- **Almost 2000 people collected free herbicide**, with eight businesses from Busselton to Augusta helping with distribution.
- **760 reports submitted by landholders** accounting for almost 6000 hours of arum lily control.
- At $50 per hour, that represents almost **$300,000 of landholder effort**. However, since we only receive 10 per cent of landholder spray records back each year – we know that's only a fraction of the work that occurs.
- **150 landholders supported** on a cost-share basis in high-priority areas, involving **6200 hours** of contractor work.

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The Living Soil Project with the Gidgegannup Primary School and community

By Angela Rossen

In October 2025 the students at Gidgegannup Primary undertook a biodiversity survey of the soil of their escarpment and the leaf litter on the woodland floor. The staff and every learning level in the school took part in a range of multimedia science/art workshops to study and record the wonder and beauty of soil biota and learn about the importance of healthy soil.

As an artist and biodiversity educator, I work with scientists and research institutions to create learning experiences for children and their communities throughout WA. Together we observed and documented the plants and animals of the nearby woodland. We studied soil under magnification to learn about the micro-organisms, macro invertebrates and other communities of tiny creatures that live in the soil.

3D models of invertebrates with Year 2 students. Photo – Angela Rossen.

The collaborative biodiversity painting the students at Gidgegannup Primary School created discovering and documenting the endemic plants and animals of the escarpment soil and leaf litter environments. Photo – Angela Rossen.

The soil is a busy place where detritovores work away under our feet turning plant material into fertile soil. As these communities of animals are out of sight, they are mostly out of mind. So, for the students it was like a treasure hunt to discover and document soil and its secrets.

The project took place over four weeks and was supported by the Creative Learning program. UWA emeritus Professor Lyn Abbott generously supported the project with soil science advice and visited the school to talk with the students about her journey from the family veggie garden into the world of soil science where she is still very active.

The students created a large biodiversity painting showcasing endemic species of the escarpment soil and woodland floor. Year 6 students made short documentary videos on aspects of soil science. Others made 3D models of soil and terrestrial invertebrates and a stunning soundscape with a soil narrative. Zonation and adaption workshops took place to understand who lives where and why in the complex ecosystem.

We set up the Soil Pavilion at the Gidgegannup Agricultural Show with a stunning display of the students' work and interactive educational soil activities for everyone. We had a wonderful time, discovering the wonder of sub soil life and made lots of

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Celebrating recognition of community conservation volunteers and groups

By Colma Keating & Christine Richardson

Congratulations to community conservation volunteers who were recognised at their local government's Active Community Citizenship awards ceremony. The Community Citizen of the Year Awards are coordinated by Auspire, The Australia Day Council of Western Australia, which has partnered with local governments across the State to deliver the program since 2003. The awards celebrate individuals and organisations that demonstrate outstanding service and a sustained positive impact within their communities.

It is refreshing to see conservation groups or their leaders being recognised by their communities. Added to this, each award provided an opportunity for their efforts and achievements to be profiled at the event, on their local government websites, groups' own social media as well as through the local community papers – and now here!

Congratulations to:

- Berringa Park Friends Group (City of Bayswater)
- Friends of Kings Park (City of Perth)
- Friends of the Shelley Rossmoyne Foreshore (FoSRF) – formerly CRREPA (City of Canning)
- Darren Hamley for contributions to local wildlife and schools (City of Canning)
- Stephen Johnson for contributions to and through SERCUL and FoSRF (City of Canning)
- Sue Conlan for contributions to and through Friends of Mosman Park Bushland (FoMPB)(Town of Mosman Park).

They were recognised for a mix of contributions including:

- combining hands-on restoration with advocacy that has helped shape local policy and protect biodiversity through the creation of vital wildlife corridors
- countless hours to weeding, planting, watering local native plantings in their patches
- dedication and generosity of time, knowledge and experience
- engaging with students through environmental education and mentorship
- invaluable contributions to their local communities
- long-standing commitment to environmental conservation
- preserving wetlands and helping educate local primary school students on the local natural environment
- providing scholarships to further support professional development
- rescuing and rehabilitating local wildlife, and/or
- sustained leadership in environmental conservation and education, with region-wide impact.

We are also aware that these recognitions are just the tip of the iceberg – and all groups and leaders should enjoy the glow from our collective community conservation efforts being profiled across our communities.

Grecian Sandwell (FoSRF), Sue Conlan (FoMPB), Stephen Johnston (SERCUL & FoSRF) and Colma Keating (FoSRF) at City of Canning celebrations, Shelley Beach Foreshore. Photo – Zoe Johnston.

Perhaps we should all make sure we nominate our local Friends group for 2027 awards. Apologies if we missed some others acknowledged in 2026 –– please let us know.

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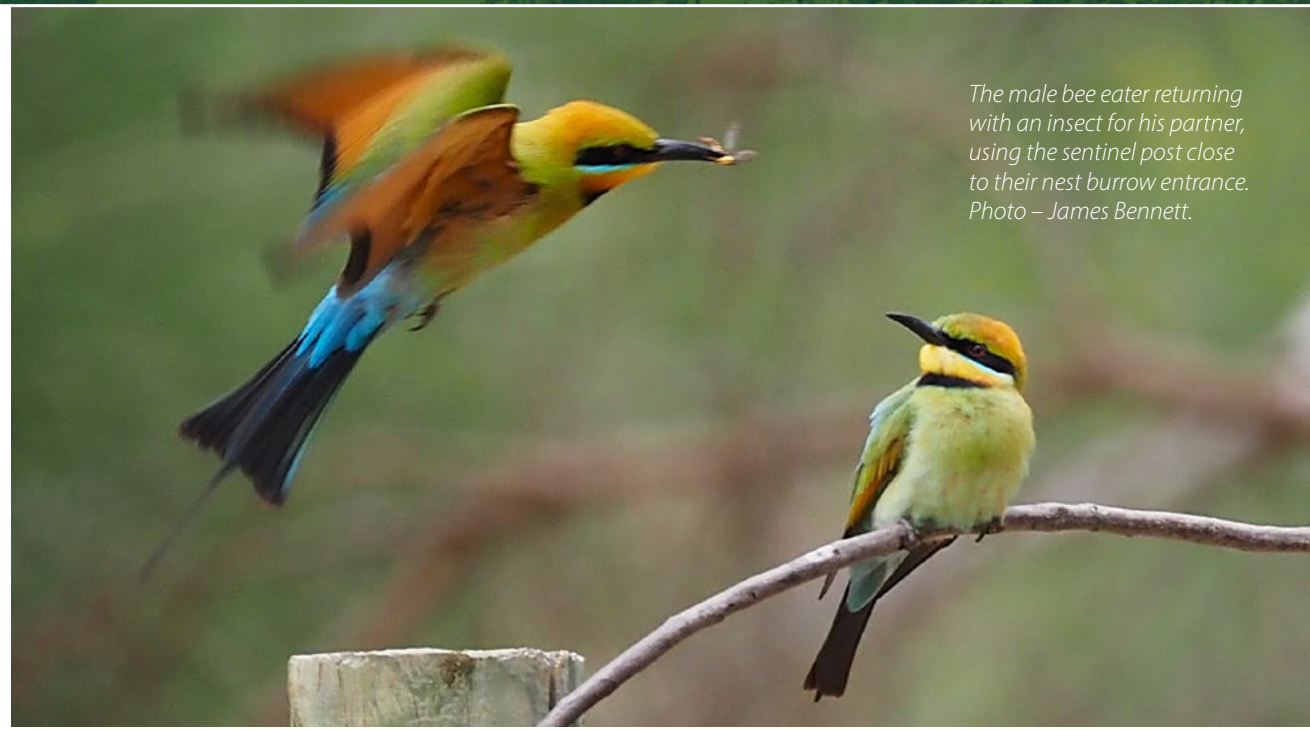
Rainbow Bee-eaters in Mosman Park

By James Bennett



The male bee eater returning with an insect for his partner, using the sentinel post close to their nest burrow entrance. Photo – James Bennett.

Every October we look forward to the arrival of the rainbow bee eaters to the Mosman Park area. The first clues are the sound of their 'pi r-r-r pi r-r-r' calls as they fly high overhead. It is a delightful call, and heralds the start of warmer weather and a new nesting season.

In previous years bee eaters have nested in the Minim Cove area, so it was here that I started looking for the birds. I found a pair flying to and from an old peppermint tree.

I noticed the bee eaters were occasionally alighting on a tree post, before flying low over the ground, and returning to the same post. After several of these flights the female bird landed on the ground and using her bill and feet started digging sending up a shower of soil behind her. While this was happening, the male was sitting on a post keeping watch.

I read that the female can excavate around 50-80mm each day, using her bill to loosen the soil and her feet to kick it out of the burrow. The burrow is typically 0.8-1.0 metres in length and slopes gently into the ground with an unlined nest chamber at the far end.

Lake Gwelup has a large colony of bee eaters, and on a visit, I realised that the City of Stirling are proactive in ensuring the nest burrows were protected, using a combination of signage, taping off areas of the park land and using steel mesh laid flat on the ground over the burrow to prevent the burrow being dug up by foxes, feral cats, and dogs.

I was very keen that the Minim Cove burrow was protected in a similar manner, especially as the burrow was in an off-lead dog exercise area. I contacted Sue Conlan, the convener of the Friends of Mosman Park Bushland, and between us we asked the Town of Mosman Park to set up a taped off area around the burrow. We were extremely pleased with the quick response from the council and in a short time this first nest and two subsequent nests were taped off. We supplied the signage and mesh a few days later.

It was very pleasing to note that the tape and later the mesh had no obvious effect on the birds' behaviour. The male was always nearby on guard duty, when the female was in the burrow, leaving occasionally for a short flight in pursuit of an unfortunate insect. Back on the post he would frequently call out to the female. Usually Between five and seven eggs are laid with incubation lasting 21–24 days.

Once the eggs had hatched both birds fed the young. The adult birds would land on the post and check the area for danger, before landing and quickly disappearing into the burrow. On emerging the adult birds literally exploded into flight from the burrow entrance, presumably to minimise any chance of being ambushed by a predator. The nestlings need around 28 days before they are fledged and ready to leave the burrow.

Early one morning as I approached the clearing, I was aware of a group of seven bee eaters flying overhead, the early morning sunlight catching the colours in their wings. At the risk of being anthropomorphic the birds appeared to be exuberant with their new found flying skills, and were calling continuously to each other. The young birds appeared to be chasing insects themselves, though I am not certain how successfully, but I was struck by their independence at such a young age.

It was such a privilege to follow these bee eaters from courtship and finally seeing a family of seven birds hawking for insects in the skies above Mosman Park.

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Small is beautiful at Duncraig Library Bushland

By Robyn Murphy

In 2021 I was shocked to see that a car had driven through a small patch of bushland on the corner of Marmion Avenue and Warwick Road causing considerable damage. On reporting this to the City of Joondalup, we discovered that although the 2015 Duncraig Library Bushland Action Plan recognised the importance of this species rich remnant 0.3ha banksia woodland, it was under threat, with plans being considered by council for it to be cleared for shops and car parking.

We quickly formed a Friends of Duncraig Library Bushland and in partnership with the Natural Environment Team at the city, set to work to protect the bushland. I am pleased to report that the development plans have not proceeded. However, the bushland remains vulnerable as "Civic and Community" reserved land and recent efforts to have it reclassified to an "Environmental Conservation" reservation was unsuccessful.

The Duncraig Library Bushland Action Plan identifies 64 native flora species and two vegetation communities in excellent to pristine condition in the bushland, a high number for an area its size. Some of the flora species are tuart trees (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*); three Banksia species *Banksia attenuata*, *B.sessilis* (Parrot Bush) and *B. lindleyana*; two species of *Allocasuarina*; and four species of *Acacia*. Also common in the bushland are *Daviesia, Grevillea, Hibbertia, Hovea, Jacksonia, Hardenbergia* and many fine examples of *Xanthorrhoea preissii*.

The Friends of Duncraig Library Bushland are a young group but have already had several successes including working with the City of Joondalup to have conservation fencing installed to protect this tiny (0.3ha) bushland in excellent condition from uncontrolled pedestrian access and damaging vehicle incursions. Photo – Robyn Murphy.

This limestone path has been installed to separate the bushland from an adjacent park and the bench has been installed for a moment's contemplation of the bushland. The Friends of Duncraig Library Bushland would welcome anyone who would like to join their small enthusiastic band of bush regenerators. Photo – Robyn Murphy.

The Friends of Duncraig Library Bushland is a small, active group of mainly local residents, determined to ensure the survival of this bushland. We have had several successes in the goal of protecting the bushland from damaging incursions, uncontrolled pedestrian access and the edge effect exacerbated by its location on a busy intersection with car parks on its boundaries. We worked with the City of Joondalup to have a conservation fence installed with signs attached to the fence raising public awareness of its environmental values. A limestone path has been installed to separate the bushland from the adjacent park and a bench has been installed along the path for a moment's contemplation in this beautiful natural area.

If you would like to join our small enthusiastic band of bush regenerators please contact us.

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2025 osprey breeding census for the Peel Harvey Estuary

By Marcus Singor and Lisa Wray

The Peel Harvey Estuary has the highest concentration of breeding ospreys *Pandion haliaetus cristatus* in the south-west of Western Australia. For the past two years the Mandurah Environment and Heritage Group's Peel Harvey Osprey Monitoring program and a group of dedicated volunteers have been monitoring nesting sites. Monitoring begins in May when ospreys return to their nesting sites bringing back nesting material and occurs monthly with the breeding season at the Peel-Harvey Estuary extending from July – December 2025. In 2025 a total of 37 nests were identified and monitored with only 14 nests, or 38 per cent, successfully fledging 25 juveniles. Productivity was found to average 1.78 young fledged per active nest. This was an increase from 2024 when nine pairs successfully raised 13 juveniles.

A drone was used to monitor the nests. The model, a DJI Mavic 3 Pro, has quiet blades and a camera with 28 times zoom lens which allowed unobtrusive nest monitoring from a safe distance and access to remote and difficult sites. We were able to monitor events as they unfolded in the nest such as occupancy, feeding behaviour, the mortality of chicks and number of abandoned eggs.

Four nests were lost in 2025, due to trees or tree limbs falling. But in two cases the breeding pairs started a new nest with one being successful. We also counted seven eggs that did not hatch including three from one of the fallen nests. We documented the mortality of three chicks. There was also one juvenile who was taken into care after being found on the ground being harassed by Australian ravens that was successfully rehabilitated by Seabird Rescue.

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During the 2025 season ospreys seemed to be catching fish larger than their usual size like this large mullet. Photo – John Clark.

During the 2025 season ospreys seemed to be catching fish larger than their usual size such as very large mullet and flounder. One observer who lived opposite a nest checked on the number of fish the ospreys caught and brought back to the nest. This was a non-breeding pair who ate in a tree next to the nest. The tally was three fish each a day.

Osprey nestlings that had recently fledged were observed to practise their fish catching and fish diving skills on schools of blowfish in shallow waters. This behaviour has been observed over several years at different sites such as Leschenault Estuary, Swan River Estuary, along the coast at Hillarys and now at Dawesville foreshore.

We noticed that Ospreys start building new nests in December and January much earlier than work on existing nests. We don't know if these are new breeding pairs or existing pairs that are changing nest sites.

This is Pink. He was rescued, rehabilitated, banded and released in 2019 –– now starting his own nest and territory with a new female. Photo – Keith Steadman.

Drone technology with quiet blades and a camera with 28 times zoom lens allows for unobtrusive nest monitoring from a safe distance and access to remote and difficult sites. This is an Island Point nest on a pole. She had three chicks last year and three this year. All successfully fledged and the juveniles have been seen fishing. Photo – Lisa Wray.

Then we have "phantom" breeders. These are Ospreys that imitate breeding behaviour but do not actually breed. They were present at the nest throughout the breeding season, the female sat but did not lay eggs and the male brought her fish while sitting. We had ten pairs that followed this pattern. We had three pairs that started the breeding season promisingly and then disappeared not to return.

One final success story was Pink, a young osprey rescued, rehabilitated, banded and released in 2019, identified by band in 2025, starting to build a nest 100 meters from his natal nest site.

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Large flounder were also on the menu. Photo – Paul Kay.

Manning the park: Friends of Manning Park Ridge

By Jenny Archibald and Robyn Colledge

Manning Park, part of Beeliar Regional Park, is a registered Bush Forever site (number 247) which recognises that it is regionally significant bushland. Manning Park is part of one of the few remaining Pleistocene limestone ridges on the western side of the Swan Coastal Plain and extends down to the wetland area of Manning Lake (Davilak Lake) in the eastern part of the park.

The Friends of Manning Park Ridge formed in 2020 in response to a proposal of the City of Cockburn to construct 22kms of mountain bike trails throughout the ridge of Manning Park. Impromptu meetings were held, locals campaigned under the 'banner' of SAVE MANNING RIDGE and a petition of more than 400 signatures were gathered and presented to the Mayor of the City of Cockburn in July 2020. With rapidly growing interest, the Friends of Manning Park Ridge Inc was formed. It remains a small group of around 12 dedicated advocates for the park, with skills ranging across botany, bush regeneration, horticulture, geology and others. In addition, we have a network of interested locals and others who are quick to support our cause when needed. Our core aim is to promote the conservation of the environment of Manning Park Ridge, to build awareness within the wider community of its biodiversity, to nurture its flora and fauna and to ensure the Whadjuk and European cultural heritage of the park is protected and respected.

The sun casts rays of shimmering light across Manning Lake. Photo – Robyn Colledge.

Prior to European arrival, the region was inhabited by the Whadjuk people for some 45,000 years. Over that time, Manning Park was a significant source of food, with the Beeliar region of the Swan Coastal Plain once providing a network of lakes rich in food species. In more recent archaeological and ethnographic surveys carried out in 2024 by Archae-Aus, on behalf of the City of Cockburn, Archae-Aus recognised that Manning Park is an important cultural landscape for the Whadjuk people 'to which they are connected culturally and spiritually. 'To date, six individual Aboriginal heritage sites have been recorded within Manning Park. These sites are protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972.

Continued next page ...

Flora occurring within the park comprises six vegetation communities and includes 156 flora species. These communities are the:

- *Acacia cyclops* shrubland
- *Banksia sessilis* scrub
- *A. rostellifera* scrub
- *Eucalyptus decipiens* woodland
- *E. gomphocephala* woodland
- *Melaleuca huegelii* open heath
- *M. systena* group open heath
- *M. rhapiphylla* low open forest.

In addition, two priority flora species, *Dodonaea hackettiana* and *Pimelea calcicola*, occur in the park.

The park supports a healthy assemblage of faunal species, with a high diversity of reptiles, frogs, birds and microbats. Four conservation significant species occur in the park. These are namely the Perth slider, quenda (a significant soil nurturing marsupial), Carnaby's cockatoo and red-tailed cockatoo. The lake was once surrounded by *Melaleuca* and other swamp flora and still hosts many swamp species of flora and fauna including the southern snake necked turtle. It is also an important location for the breeding of many local and migratory bird species, some coming from as far as the northern hemisphere.

Two threatened ecological communities occur in the park which are both recognised in state and federal legislation.

Tuart Woodland

The Tuart Woodlands and Forests of the Swan Coastal Plain threatened ecological community is listed as critically endangered. Three patches occur within the park, predominantly on the leeward side of the ridge on the foot slopes. The woodlands within the park are considered to range from degraded to very good condition.

The limestone ridge is home to a diverse range of unique Western Australian flora. Photo – Robyn Colledge.

Honeymyrtle Shrublands

In November 2023, the Australian Government formally recognised the significance of parts of the remnant vegetation on Manning Ridge as the Honeymyrtle shrubland on limestone ridges of the Swan Coastal Plain Bioregion which are also listed as critically endangered.

Honeymyrtle shrublands only occur on the slopes and tops of limestone ridges. It is a shrub dominated ecological community, forming thickets or heaths above a diverse ground layer of herbs, sedges and grasses. Some areas of Manning Park are in very good condition while other areas are poor. Flora on the ridge was severely impacted by the die-off event of the 2023-24 summer/autumn. Species such as parrotbush (*Banksia sessilis*), cockies tongues (*Templetonia retusa*) and basket bush (*Spyridium globulosum*) were particularly impacted.

Two shrublands of *Acacia rostellifera/Acacia cyclops* and *B. sessilis* are found on and around the limestone ridges and in disturbed areas, such as within the powerline corridor. All three species can grow in high densities and *A. rostellifera* can form dense thickets given its capacity to reproduce clonally through root suckers. *B sessilis* is also a fast grower, with many seedlings visible within the park. Both species of acacias are important dune stabilisers, while parrot bush is a significant fodder species for the threatened Carnaby's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostrus*).

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*The tawny frog mouth (*Podargus strigoides*), often mistaken for an owl, is a common nocturnal resident of Western Australia. Photo – Sophie Xiang.*

It is important to emphasise the park as a critical roosting and foraging site for Carnaby's cockatoos, with fodder plants including *Banksia*, *Hakea* and *Eucalyptus*, as well as pine and nut trees. Estimates are that up to 500 birds roost within and around the park and large numbers visit local households where concerned residents provide birdbaths and a Cockitrough provides safe and reliable water. Given the ongoing clearing of bushland on the Swan Coastal Plain, annual planting of fast-growing fodder species by council and local communities is increasingly important to the survival of the local population of this species.

Since colonisation, Manning Park was used for farming. Stock grazed on the ridge and around the wetlands, substantially degrading much of the limestone ridge and lake area. In 1960, management was taken up by the City of Cockburn. In the period since we have also seen continued degradation of parts of the park with unsanctioned trail construction for walking and biking – a major problem for weed infestation, erosion and fauna disturbance. Despite all of this, we have since seen a wonderful regeneration of the flora of Manning Park for more than 60 years.

Members invest time in weekly weeding sessions, some are involved with the turtle tracking program and others have been recording GPS locations of feral weeds including Japanese pepper, white broom and agave so that these may be progressively removed when funding permits. The group also holds annual planting days in association with the City of Cockburn and has hosted events including public meetings and a tour of the conservation areas for members of the Urban Bushland Council to further showcase the value of this exceptional park.

*Cockies tongues (*Templetonia retusa*) are found on limestone and decorate Manning Park Ridge with profusion in winter. Photo – Robyn Colledge.*

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Unique plant-animal relationships in Southwestern Australia *By Professor Byron Lamont*

As a professor emeritus in Plant Ecology at Curtin University, I am offering a five-week course through the Mature Adults Learning Association covering the unique and complex relationships between plants, animals and fungi in Southwestern Australia. This course is loosely based on the Serventy Memorial Lecture I delivered in 2025.

This course takes you through the development of the concepts of natural history, environment, ecology, ecosystem, and symbiosis as background to the topic.

It then discusses four examples of plant-animal relations that have been well-studied in Western Australia:

- hakeas and cockatoos
- peas, fungi and woylies
- carnivorous plants and arthropods, and
- orchids and insects.

Other topics might include mistletoes, birds and butterflies if there is time. We close by noting that biotic interactions are the essence of conservation and how we can help.

The weekly course runs Mondays 11.45am–12.45pm, 1 May – 29 May at the George Burnett Leisure Centre, Manning Rd, (opposite Elderfield Road) Karawara. The cost of this five-week course is $60.

Course outline:

Week 1: History of natural history, ecology, ecosystem, and symbiosis
Week 2: Hakeas and cockatoos
Week 3: Peas, fungi and woylies
Week 4: Carnivorous plants and arthropods
Week 5: Orchids and insects; implications for conservation

Learn more and enrol or email.

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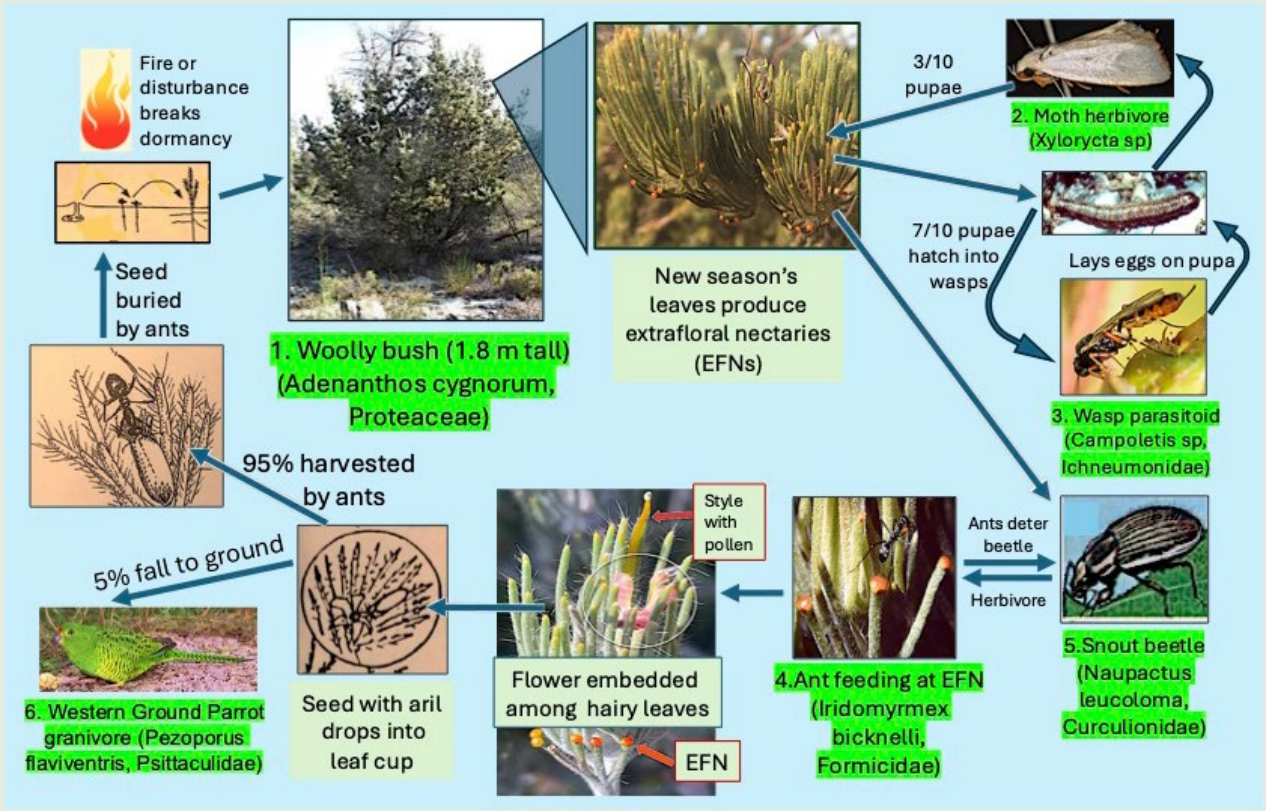

Perth welcomes the world to get Nearer to Nature *By Michelle Sharp*

Western Australia's Nearer to Nature program continues to expand, offering a rich mix of excursions, community activities and school holiday adventures across Perth, the south-west and iconic locations such as the Tree Top Walk. Delivered by the DBCA, the program helps people of all ages connect with Western Australia's unique natural environment through hands-on learning.

Programs for schools

The Nearer to Nature schools program provides:

- curriculum-linked excursions across Perth, Dwellingup and the south-west
- school incursions in metro and regional areas
- hands-on activities in natural spaces, often involving real conservation action.

Learn more about the schools program and how to book on the DBCA website.

Conservation in action

A highlight of the school's program is Dieback – bulldozing our biodiversity, an excursion focused on Phytophthora dieback—one of the greatest threats to WA's native plants. Students engage in:

- hands-on investigations into how dieback spreads
- STEM-based problem-solving using real scientific tools and techniques
- practical conservation skills, including stem injection to help protect vulnerable trees.

These experiences empower students to become environmental stewards while linking classroom learning with real-world conservation.

*High school students **above** completing flora field works studies for their ATAR course at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre and **top right** protecting trees using a dieback preventative solution. Photos – DBCA.*

Programs for the community

The community program includes:

- Zippy's Bush Kindy for early learners aged 3–5
- seasonal school holiday activities
- nature-based experiences at major Perth events.

Many activities are based at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre in Beelu National Park, an all-abilities environmental education hub offering immersive overnight camps, forest walks, bush trails and nocturnal wildlife encounters.

With the autumn school holidays approaching, families can look forward to a fresh program of activities introducing children to local wildlife, habitats and practical conservation skills.

Schedules are released ahead of each school break via our website and the Nearer to Nature Facebook page. "Our goal is to create meaningful, hands-on experiences that help young people build a lifelong connection with Western Australia's natural landscapes" says Nearer to Nature Education Officer Michelle Sharp.

Looking ahead: WEEC 2026

Perth will host the 13th World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC) from 21–25 September 2026 at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. Held during Kambarang, the Noongar season of wildflowers, the congress will bring together global educators, researchers and environmental leaders.

DBCA's education programs, including Nearer to Nature, will be showcased, and international delegates will be invited to take part in on-country activities across Perth.

Together, Nearer to Nature and WEEC 2026 highlight the growing momentum for environmental education in Western Australia—connecting communities, celebrating biodiversity and inspiring a more sustainable future.

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Funding opportunities

Swan Alcoa Landcare Program to protect, restore and manage natural assets in the Swan Region. Applications **close 30 April**.

State NRM Community Stewardship Grants between $1000–$50,000 for 18 months or $50,001–$450,000 for up to 36 months for projects that care for the state's natural assets. Applications **close 29 April**.

Let's Grow round one is providing $2.5 million for schools and community groups to deliver urban greening projects that boost tree canopy in Whadjuk (Perth) and Bindjareb (Peel). Applications **are open** for small projects up to $10,000 and large projects up to $100,000. Applications are non-competitive and projects that meet the eligibility and assessment criteria are funded until funds are exhausted or the **round closes 30 June**.

Coastwest Grants 2026-27 support coastal land managers and community organisations to undertake rehabilitation, restoration and enhancement of coastal areas. Applications **close 15 April.**

Treebates open to Western Australians to claim up to $150 rebate on the purchase of native trees that will reach at least three meters in height when mature. Up to 10,000 rebates per year for **next four years.**

Riverbank provides funding to public land managers in the Swan Canning Riverpark to implement foreshore restoration and protection projects. Approach
your public land manager to partner in projects. Applications **close 21 April**.

Coastal Adaptation and Protection Grants provides financial assistance for local governments and coastal managers to manage coastal hazards and enhance resilience. Applications **close 15 April**.

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation funds land acquisition or management projects that deliver benefits to Indigenous Australians through the **Our Country Our Future Program**. This includes on-ground activities to maintain or improve the condition of Country (land, water, biodiversity, and cultural heritage). Applications **open year-round**.

Birdlife Community Conservation Grants funding up to $10,000 for bird conservation. Applications **open in March**

Australian Wildlife Society Conservation Group grants fund up to three groups yearly, specialising in wildlife conservation and the preservation of wildlife habitats. Applications **open year-round**.

Elders Community Giving investing in Australian rural, regional and remote communities including environmental consciousness. Applications **close 21 May**.

Feral Cat Management Grants support community-based projects for feral cat management and improve conservation outcomes for native fauna. Applications **close 24 March.**

The Hamer Sprout Fund supports projects and organisations that promote innovation in evnironmental education, facilitate engagement in environmental action, advocate for environmental sustainability, and foster collaboration between young people engaged in environmental leadership. Applications **close 30 September.**

IGA Community Chest raises funds to support local communities, charities and other worthwhile causes. Approach your local store **year-round with a pitch**.

Santos funds funds Pilbara/Gascoyne projects to support and protect biodiversity. Applications open year-round.

Keep Australia Beautiful **Community Litter Grants** support projects to reduce litter and change littering behaviour in Western Australia. Applications **close 2 June**.

NACC Biodiversity Community Grants provide resources to assist land managers and community groups undertaking on-ground land management and adaptation activities. Applications **open year-round on a first-served basis**.

Feeling stuck? Check out this **Grants and Program Finder** tool brought to you by the Australian Government. This refinable search engine allows you to hunt down a grant for your land and wildlife conservation project or goal.

The **Linkwest** Open Grants Opportunities website is another resource to assist you in finding a grant. **New grants are opening all the time.**

Lotterywest Grassroots Community-Led Grants fund community efforts to care for, sustain and enhance local biodiversity. Applications **open year-round**.

Local government and place-based community grants. These local governments and groups provide small grants to their communities which may fund environmental management and restoration projects. Eligibility varies. Armadale **close 20 April**, Broome **close 20 March**. Cockburn **close 20 March**, Derby/West Kimberley **open year-round**, Fremantle **close 31 March**, Gosnells **open year-round**, Harvey Water supporting the communities of Harvey, Waroona, Dardanup, and Collie are **open year-roun**d, South Perth **open year-round**, Toodyay **close 4 April** and Vincent **open year-round**.

Red-headed mouse spiders

ballooning over Australia

Photo – Belinda Copland CC-BY-ND 4.0

By Louise Kaestner

Look! Up in the sky! It's a funnel-web! It's a trapdoor! It's a *Missulena occatoria* and it's mating season!

Found across Australia, especially Western Australia's shrublands, gardens and woodlands, these shy, clever spiders are gearing up for spider Tinder. Mouse spiders craft large, silk-lined burrows 20–55 cm deep, living in style with a side-chamber off the main shaft, concealed by a clever single or double trapdoor. This setup shields them from predators and offers a secure spot for the egg sac and raising spiderlings.

The uniformly dark brown or black females stay put in their burrows, while the bright red-headed males with gun-metal blue or black bodies venture out to find mates. Males mature around four years old and hunt by day during cooler months, often post-rain, to evade heat and predators, aiding species survival.

The *jet-setting males* are the real adventurers, ballooning on silk threads across the wind after hatching, hence those 'flying' mouse spiders zipping over Perth gardens and shrublands. Spot them strutting post-rain on the tail-end of their mating frenzy. Females, queens of the castle, lay over 60 eggs in their silk sacs, guarding their babies until spiderlings bust out ready to fly. Shy but stunning, they rarely bite unless provoked, just admire them from afar.

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