

bushlandnews



Issue 139 **Spring** 2026 *Time of Djilba and Kambarang in the Noongar calendar.*

Baigup Wetlands finally secured for conservation

Photo – Penny Lee.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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

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Page 17 Look out for ... Red capped robin



In Noongar language they are called minidjidang in the dialect spoken in the north and east of Perth, koobadjijat in the southwest and bini-bintj east of Albany. Photo – Dawn Borchardt.

Next issue

Summer Bushland News

Summer *Bushland News* contributions should be sent to [Urban Nature](#) by **Wednesday 13 November 2026**. *Bushland News* seeks original contributions. If your submission has been or may be published elsewhere please let us know. Compiled and edited by Jaimee Nobbs and Diana Biondini.



Baigup Wetlands

finally secured for conservation

By Penny Lee

Baigup Wetlands sedgeland, a federally listed threatened ecological community with a view of Garratt Road Bridge in the background. Photo – Penny Lee.

Persistent advocacy by successive community environment groups over several decades has finally succeeded in unifying the two sides of [Baigup Wetlands](#) and transferring management of the whole to the [City of Bayswater](#). This precious crescent of remnant Swan River floodplain is now destined for class A nature reserve status. Members of [Baigup Wetland Interest Group \(BWIG\)](#) feel not only relief but also excitement about what may lie ahead, now that the pressure to fight for improved protection is finally over.

In July 2026 Minister John Carey announced that the eastern portion of Baigup currently owned by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) will be established as a crown reserve and placed under the care and management of the City of Bayswater. This announcement marks a historic step forward for Baigup Wetlands with the City set to manage the entire site as a whole. To support the transfer, the State Government will provide the City of Bayswater with approximately \$1 million to deliver key infrastructure renewal and for the first five years of unified management.

Continued next page ...

Front cover: View of the Primary Lake from the back track looking towards the river and hills. Photo – Penny Lee.



Green Army participants working at Baigup in November 2016. This area is now completely revegetated with native trees and shrubs. Photo – Penny Lee.

Bringing the reserve under a single land manager allows the City to take a more coordinated approach to conservation and planning, beginning with the preparation of a management plan for the area that will consider ecological outcomes and community benefits.

The journey to get to this point has been a long time in the making involving staff over many years from Department Planning Lands and Heritage and WAPC, Members for Maylands both past and present, City councillors and staff past and present, members of Baigup Wetlands Interest Group, Urban Bushland Council and the Conservation Council of WA. We can't name everyone individually– it's a long list!

The best partnerships between communities and governments at any level are sustained over time with locally accrued knowledge acknowledged and respected. Such knowledge is fundamental to realistic long-term trajectories and continuity.

Since its formation in late 2012, BWIG has obtained grants of approximately \$200,000 to deliver projects focused on exotic vine and typha control, revegetation, a fauna survey, culvert modification, a trial drain rehabilitation project and, since 2020, a range of celebratory activities. These include two highly successful art exhibitions at nearby Ellis House and well attended workshops and educational events.

Baigup's largely healthy [*Juncus kraussii*](#) sedgeland is a nationally recognised example of a [Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh Threatened Ecological Community](#). An extensive paperbark, eucalypt and sheoak open woodland has been enhanced by revegetation efforts that have reduced weedy annuals. While some natural regeneration can also be seen as reserve managers and volunteers work together, the challenge of adding complexity to the understory vegetation and improving biodiversity remains. Ongoing

attention to major perennial weeds is necessary as monitoring and control activities can easily flag when local government or community group personnel or priorities change.

Over the years [Baigup Wetlands](#) has become an increasingly interesting novel network of interdependent freshwater and saline ecosystems that continue to evolve as natural processes assert themselves across the reserve. Returning to an imagined pre-Europeanised state is unrealistic. Longstanding Noongar management techniques were ignored and suppressed nearly two centuries ago, very soon after Europeans arrived and appropriated the fertile river flats for their early farming ventures. Market gardening and use of some sections for pasture followed into the mid twentieth century.

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The Gathering Place, Baigup Wetlands. A universal access facility in a peaceful location. Photo – Penny Lee.



Members of the Baigup Wetlands Interest Group leadership team and representatives of the City of Bayswater came together to mark the announcement of the unification of the two sides of Baigup Wetlands in July (from left) Tom England (Coordinator Natural Area Management), Luke Botica (Director Infrastructure and Assets), Luke Chapman (BWIG), Penny Lee (Former BWIG Coordinator), Mike Clarke (BWIG), Rosemary Lynch (BWIG Coordinator), Jeremy Edwards (Chief Executive Officer), Elli Petersen-Pik (Acting Mayor), Judy Slehofer (BWIG), Sue Smith (BWIG) and Alex Devine (Environment Manager). Photo – Kirsten Hyam, City of Bayswater.

More radical disruptions began in 1986 when a gas pipeline was installed through the saltmarsh, and its service track was converted to a sealed walkway/cycle path. This causeway interrupted natural tidal flows across the river flats resulting in weedy species taking over and saline scalds forming in some parts. These effects were significantly reversed by a grant-funded BWIG project in 2018/19 when culverts were modified to hold fresh water over former scalds and reduce ingress and trapping of saline river water at high tide.

Two lakes constructed in 2000 and 2001 further modified hydrology. The primary objective was to reduce extensive stands of weedy bullrushes and grass which reduce biodiversity and create fire

risks for adjacent housing. The 'Primary Lake' to the east was designed to redirect polluted stormwater through an 'S bend' into the lake, filtering through vegetation before reaching the river. The 'Secondary Lake' was constructed without an outlet. The freshwater lake now extends close to the edge of the sealed path through naturally shaded shallows frequented by frogs, waterbirds, [native water rats](#), south-western long-necked turtles, and aquatic arthropods. Quenda were also returned to Baigup in 2025. Their bioengineering efforts promise to bring improved soil health and biodiversity to the area.

It is fascinating to see how natural hydrological and other processes create changes over time that may be missed by observers unfamiliar with a site. It is

here that community groups come into their own. Members are often long-term residents with intimate knowledge of their area. Decades-old photos can alert people to older baseline knowledge and discourage too ready acceptance of the 'new normal'.

City of Bayswater and other partners have made significant contributions, primarily including a trial scald rehabilitation project near Garratt Road Bridge, weeding and revegetation, advice and ongoing support. In 2016 BWIG secured funds for a universal-access boardwalk away from the busy sealed path. The Gathering Place was finally constructed by CoB in 2023 in a peaceful location with a view to the Secondary Lake.

Baigup was recognised as regionally significant bushland in 2000 as part of [Bush Forever site 313](#). The transfer of the section of Baigup Wetlands purchased by WAPC to reservation and environmental management by the City of Bayswater is a great achievement for the environment and the community.

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Dieback detector dog, Kelly, sitting with Megan Barnes, CEO at Detection for Good. Photo – Haggie Snaps Photography.

Conservation detection dogs

helping WA biodiversity
one sniff at a time

By Megan Barnes

Western Australia is home to extraordinary plants and animals, but finding the species and threats that matter most is not always easy. Conservation detection dogs use their remarkable sense of smell to help find what human eyes may miss. Dogs have 120–200 million scent receptors, compared with our 6–20 million, and a sense of smell up to 100,000 times more sensitive. They can also sniff and breathe simultaneously, retaining scent as they exhale.

From cryptic threatened species and invisible pathogens to underground species, wildlife mortality and invasive species, conservation detection dogs are helping conserve our flora, fauna and wild places—one sniff at a time.

Kelly sniffs out an invisible threat

Dieback disease is caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, an incurable soil-borne water mould that severely affects more than 40 per cent of native plant species. Kelly (pictured) is one of [WA's first dieback detector dogs](#).

Mapping is crucial to stopping this devastating disease, protecting plant communities and the fauna that relies on susceptible plants. Current approaches interpret visible symptoms, but climate change, modified landscapes and other diseases can make these difficult to assess. Because [Kelly](#) sniffs out the pathogen itself, she can assist with sampling and mapping where conventional assessment is difficult.



Dieback detector dogs like Kelly can search where no symptoms of dieback are present, such as nurseries, and pre-screen soil, substrates and plants before they're introduced into other environments such as orchards or rehabilitation sites. Photo –Haggie Snaps Photography.

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Dieback detector dog, Merlin, is trained to find specific reptiles and spiders, and can locate bird and bat carcasses for mortality surveys. Photo – Detection for Good.



Dogs can also search where there are no symptoms to interpret—including vehicles, nurseries, soil and other raw materials. Kelly can pre-screen soil, substrates and plants before they are introduced to orchards, backyards, nurseries, rehabilitation sites or dieback-free areas to help prevent spread.

You can help prevent dieback spreading through local bushland by:

- Removing all soil and plant material from boots, tools, bicycles and vehicles before moving between sites, and using cleaning stations where provided. Contrary to a common misconception, brushing does help as much of the benefit comes from removing potentially infected soil. Ethanol or methylated spirits should also be used in sensitive areas.
- Staying on designated tracks, respect closures and avoid entering bushland when wet soil is likely to stick to footwear, tyres or equipment.

Merlin takes on a subterranean challenge

Our detection dogs are also trained to find great desert skink latrines, western swamp tortoises, Pilbara leaf-nosed bat roosts and earless dragons (in Queensland) and assist in locating bird and bat carcasses for mortality surveys—and we continue to develop new projects. We are currently partnering with DBCA's animal science program on a pilot investigating whether dogs can locate trapdoor spiders. These remarkable spiders can live for over 40 years, spending most of their lives in carefully constructed burrows that can be extremely difficult to distinguish from the surrounding ground.



Meg sniffing out dieback on a vehicle.
Photo – Haggie Snaps Photography.

When you see us working

You may see us [working around the state](#), including in national parks or nature reserves under permit. Our dogs and handlers undergo extensive safety and biosecurity training and follow strict protocols.

If you see us working, slow down if driving or cycling, put your dog on leash, give us space, avoid calling, touching or distracting the working dog, and follow any signage or handler instructions. Once the search is finished, please feel free to say hello—the dogs would love to meet you after their important work is complete.

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New landcare website connecting people and projects

By Rupert Aylward

supporting waterways and bushland across Perth's east

The Upper Mandoon Bilya (Helena River) which flows from Ballardong and Gnaala Karla Booja near York and Beverley, through to Mundaring and Kalamunda in the Perth Hills. Photo – Francesca Flynn, BoorYul-Bah-Bilya.

New landcare website connecting people and projects

By Rupert Aylward

supporting waterways and bushland across Perth's east

The newly launched [Eastern Region Landcare \(ERL\) website](#) provides a central online home for information about local catchment groups, landcare projects, community news and upcoming events. Rather than replacing the local knowledge held by long-standing volunteers, the website helps make that knowledge easier to find, particularly for residents, landholders and new volunteers who want to understand what is happening in their area and who to contact.

The eastern region has a strong history of community-led natural resource management. The ERL program supports six catchment groups and a wide network of smaller friends groups. These dedicated volunteers work along creek lines, foreshore reserves, wetlands and bushland, planting local native species, removing weeds, monitoring sites, collecting rubbish and sharing observations. Their care and persistence help make the Perth Hills the beautiful place that so many of us value and enjoy visiting.

The new website gives this network a more visible front door. Visitors can learn about catchment groups, current and past projects, relevant landcare news, and how local restoration efforts connect across the landscape. This is especially useful in waterway management, where small sites are part of much larger systems. A patch of sedges along a drain, a revegetated creek bank, a restored foreshore or a remnant bushland reserve may all contribute to the wider health of the catchment.

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*Members of the Helena River Catchment Group working along the riverside.
Photo – Mark Thornley, DBCA.*

The site also supports connection. Many people are interested in helping their local environment but are unsure where to begin. They may not know which catchment they live in, whether there is an active group nearby, or what work is already underway. By bringing this information into one place, the ERL website makes it easier for people to take the first step from interest to involvement.

There are also practical ways for community members to find planting days, workshops, volunteer activities and other opportunities to get involved. For existing volunteers, it offers a simple way to keep track of what is happening across the region. For new participants, it helps remove one of the common barriers to involvement: not knowing when or where to turn up.

The [news section](#) helps share the story of landcare as it unfolds. Project updates, group achievements and seasonal observations can show steady progress that is sometimes difficult to see from a single working bee or site visit. This is valuable because landcare is long-term work. Restoration depends on repeated effort, local relationships and the willingness of people to return to the same places over many seasons.

This focus on people and projects is important. Landcare is often described through the visible results of planting days, weed control, erosion works and monitoring, but the long-term success of these activities depends on relationships. Catchment groups hold local memory. They know which sites flood, where weeds return after disturbance, which plantings have survived dry years and which partnerships have helped keep projects going. A website that records and shares this activity can help strengthen continuity as new volunteers join and projects evolve.



*Members of the Sussanah.
Wooroloo Catchment Group.
Photo – Mark Thornley, DBCA.*

Although the website is not designed as a detailed technical manual, it sits within a broader culture of practical, place-based learning. Waterway restoration depends on understanding local conditions, protecting physical form and ecological processes, restoring riparian vegetation and monitoring change over time. The ERL website supports this by showing what is happening on the ground and helping people connect with the groups and projects where that knowledge is being applied.

There is a biodiversity story behind this work too. Healthy waterways support more than flowing water. Fringing vegetation provides habitat for birds, frogs, reptiles, macroinvertebrates and native fish, while roots bind banks and vegetation buffers slow runoff and trap sediment. Many local projects contribute to these values by improving the structure and resilience of riparian vegetation and caring for the bushland connected to waterways.

As winter flows return to creeks and spring growth begins to appear, the [new website launch](#) is a timely invitation to look more closely at the waterways of Perth's eastern region. The website celebrates the many volunteers and groups already caring for these places and makes it easier for others to join them. In doing so, it reminds us that catchment care is built through many local actions, shared across many hands, over many seasons.

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Successful black flag hand removal in Samson Park (2021-2026)

By Carol Dooley

edited reprint thanks to the [Friends of Samson Park](#)

I joined the Friends of Samson Park (FOSP) in July 2020 and at that time had no knowledge of [black flag](#) (*Ferraria crispa*). In 2021 whilst weeding in 'block three' I noticed a flowering plant tucked in behind a cluster of shrubs and put a photo on the group Whatsapp page. There was disappointment when it was identified as black flag, a weed in the Iris family. I went back the next day and removed the plant and any corms I could find. Since that time no black flags have been able to mature and flower in [Samson Park](#).

[Black flag](#) is a highly invasive weed that can be identified by its fleshy, overlapping sword-shaped leaves and its highly distinctive stinky, dark brown to black flowers that resemble a six-pointed starfish. The leaves of mature black flag are relatively thick, succulent and distinctly sword-shaped. Juvenile plants begin with a single, upright leaf. As the plant matures the leaves overlap tightly and conceal the central stem, becoming highly crowded, thick and fleshy. The plant produces branched stems bearing distinctive, ruffled star-shaped dark flowers from August to November. If dug up, a mature plant reveals a heavy, vertical chain of multiple stacked corms underground, adding a new corm each year.

The presence of a black flag population in Samson Park was first recognised in 1998. Several methods were employed to remove the weed, including the [use of herbicides and digging over large areas with a shovel](#).

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The photo that started it all! The flowering black flag tucked between an array of shrubs at Samson Park was posted to the group's Whatsapp page, identified as a weed, and the hand weeding began. The flower features six distinct petals that spread outward, closely resembling a six-pointed starfish. Perhaps the most defining trait is the remarkably crinkled, fringed margins along the borders of every petal. Photo – Carol Dooley.



A flowering black flag. Notice the overlapping thick and succulent leaves that are very different to the juvenile leaves. The flower appears at the very top of the plant. Photo – Kate Brown.

The former method does not seem to kill off the corms below the top corm, and the latter method is not focused enough for maximum corm collection. It also badly affects the whole area and opens it up to easier weed invasion.

In 2021 two members of FOSP began the [project of removing the weed using hand tools](#). That year we spent many hours weekly, digging over and hand sifting a large area of ground, approximately 30-40m². The coverage of corms was prolific and included many columns of stacked corms, especially around the base of grass trees. Once all visible corm sprouts were removed, it was necessary to keep revisiting the site and removing any later sprouts and other invasive weeds.

Since 2022, with consistent attendance, the area affected has reduced to approximately 25m² and the density is much lower each year. There were two very small outbreaks in the adjacent area across a pathway and once removed these have not returned.

In 2023 early March rains started the sprouting and by April some strong underground root networking had commenced. This had to be followed up with tracing the root lines and removing the corms at the ends and along the way.

Late rains in 2025 resulted in no sprouts observed until June and the site was maintained with less than one hour per week.



Typical corms showing the stacked column and young sprouts. The multiple, stacked underground corms, allow the plant to die back over summer and reshoot the following season. Juvenile plants most often sprout from underground corms, as small clusters of fleshy, pale green leaves. They are strappy with distinct parallel veins. Photo – Carol Dooley.



Carol weeding black flag in early days. Photo – Jean McKay, Friends of Samson Park.

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My observations are:

1. Start checking for sprouting in March, especially following rain. As soon as any are sighted, commence regular and consistent removals. This reduces underground root networking and additional workload later.
2. When digging for the corms you learn to look for stacking with columns of up to eight or 10. Be careful to catch all or as many as you can. When sighted, promptly begin regular and consistent removals to reduce underground networking and minimize additional workload. The corms separate easily. A long narrow tool and hand sifting is handy. Beware, if it is a large corm, often there will be a few other loose ones nearby, mostly I have found this type at the base of the grass trees. If there is root networking, a long white thread going out sideways underground, try to trace it out and remove any corms or sprouts at the end. Sometimes there will be a separate corm or corm nearby in a hole which has not yet sprouted – I always run my hand around a hole to check and do some careful sifting of the soil. I have found corms up to 30 cm deep and some just lying on the surface. Carefully examine the soil and work to avoid missing any corms.
3. In Samson Park I have found that sprouting slows down about October. However, it is necessary to continue checking and removing other weeds until around early December.
4. Consistency and perseverance have resulted in a massive reduction in hours required. There are less corms and sprouting each year, the density is much reduced, and the ground is recovering from the larger scale digging. The affected overall area has reduced greatly.
5. All sprouts and corms are sealed in plastic bags and disposed of in the red bin.

I feel certain that if we continue the work we have been doing, we can keep the black flag totally minimised and under control, if not eradicated in Samson Park. It will take a few more years but the work hours involved decrease each year.



Close up shot of the corm of black flag. Photo – Carol Dooley.



Some new little black flag sprouts – the weeding tool is pointing at them. They are individual grass-like strands coming out of the ground. Photo – Carol Dooley.

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30 years of working together to protect Western Australia's bushland

By Pip Soulsby



For the past three decades, the [Dieback Working Group Inc. \(DWG\)](#) has brought people together to better understand, manage and reduce the impacts of *Phytophthora Dieback* across Australia. *Phytophthora Dieback*, caused primarily by the introduced pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, remains one of the most significant threats to biodiversity in many parts of Western Australia. Managing its spread requires cooperation across land tenures, organisations and industries. DWG's strength lies in bringing these different perspectives together and creating opportunities for people to share knowledge, experience and solutions. What better occasion than DWG's 30th birthday to celebrate the group and reflect on the milestones in the dieback management space since its inception.

About DWG

DWG is a not-for-profit community group founded in 1996 by Dr Ian Colquhoun along with local government authorities, community groups and state government land management agencies concerned with the management of *Phytophthora Dieback* in Western Australia. The key purpose of the group was, and continues to be, "To increase awareness and management of *Phytophthora Dieback* to protect environmental values".

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Binalup Aboriginal Corporation Rangers and DWG delivering the Discovering Dieback Schools Program to primary school students. Photo – Annie Leitch.

The DWG is composed of an Executive Committee, a Management Committee, general members, and several part-time and full-time employees depending on projects underway. The role of project staff is to give their expertise to projects that result in the training, education and increased awareness of Phytophthora Dieback by stakeholders. They also support on-ground works to improve and increase management and treatment of the disease. Over the years there have been so many passionate volunteers who continue to dedicate their time and expertise to keep the DWG moving forward; their generosity is definitely something to recognise and be thankful for.

Connecting the dieback community

One of DWG's major achievements over the past 30 years has been creating a strong and connected dieback community. The annual [Dieback Information Group \(DIG\) Conference](#) is a key part of this work, providing an opportunity for researchers, practitioners, natural resource management professionals, government representatives, Traditional Owners and industry to come together. The conference showcases new research, practical management approaches, and emerging issues, while providing a valuable forum for discussion and collaboration. This year's conference 8–9 September combines options for Green Card™ Training and an in person or online conference day of presentations.

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DIG 2025 attendees and detector dogs at the Dieback Management Field trip led by Bruno Rikli and Liam Brown. Photo – Alexander Haygarth.

Building knowledge and skills

Training and education continues to be a key driver of DWG's work. The group delivers Dieback biosecurity awareness training ([DWG Green Card™](#)) to improve understanding of Phytophthora Dieback and support consistent and effective management practices across Western Australia. DWG Green Card™ Training is recognised by WA government authorities to gain the skills and knowledge you need to manage your risk of spreading Phytophthora Dieback on ground.

The [FitzStirling priority protection region](#) has long been important to DWG. Green Card Training™ began 20 years ago in response to a need for practical dieback hygiene training in Fitzgerald River National Park and continues today, alongside partnerships with local First Nations ranger groups to build skills, awareness, and help protect this remarkable landscape.



Spot the trees! Great Southern Biologic environmental consultancy delivering DWG's Green Card Training Program. Photo – Jeremy Spencer.



Tree injections as part of a Nearer to Nature Dieback Busting event with Amy Preimus and Dr Peter Scott. Photo – DWG Group member.

Educating Australia's youth is a focus for the group through [The Discovering Dieback Education program](#), an award-winning environmental conservation theme package that teaches about Western Australian ecosystems and invasive species that threaten them with a focus on the plant disease Phytophthora Dieback.

Tackling new challenges

With support from the Australian Commonwealth's Saving Native Species Program and several project partners, DWG recently undertook a large-scale field trial to assess metham sodium treatment as a practical risk-management option for lateritic gravel used in civil and infrastructure projects. The project builds on more than twenty years of research and operational development, including foundational work by Dr Elaine Davison, previous Curtin University and Main Roads WA investigations, and field trials conducted in 2012, 2019, and 2024. The project establishes a strong operational proof of concept for metham sodium treatment as a risk-management tool for lateritic gravel.

Looking ahead to the next 30 years

Thirty years of experience has demonstrated that tackling Phytophthora Dieback cannot be achieved by one organisation or sector alone. It requires collaboration, knowledge sharing, and working together with all sectors to continually improve the way we manage the threat.

As DWG looks towards the next 30 years, its commitment remains clear: to connect people, build capability, support innovation and advocate for effective management of Phytophthora Dieback and other environmental threats, helping protect Western Australia's precious bushland for generations to come.

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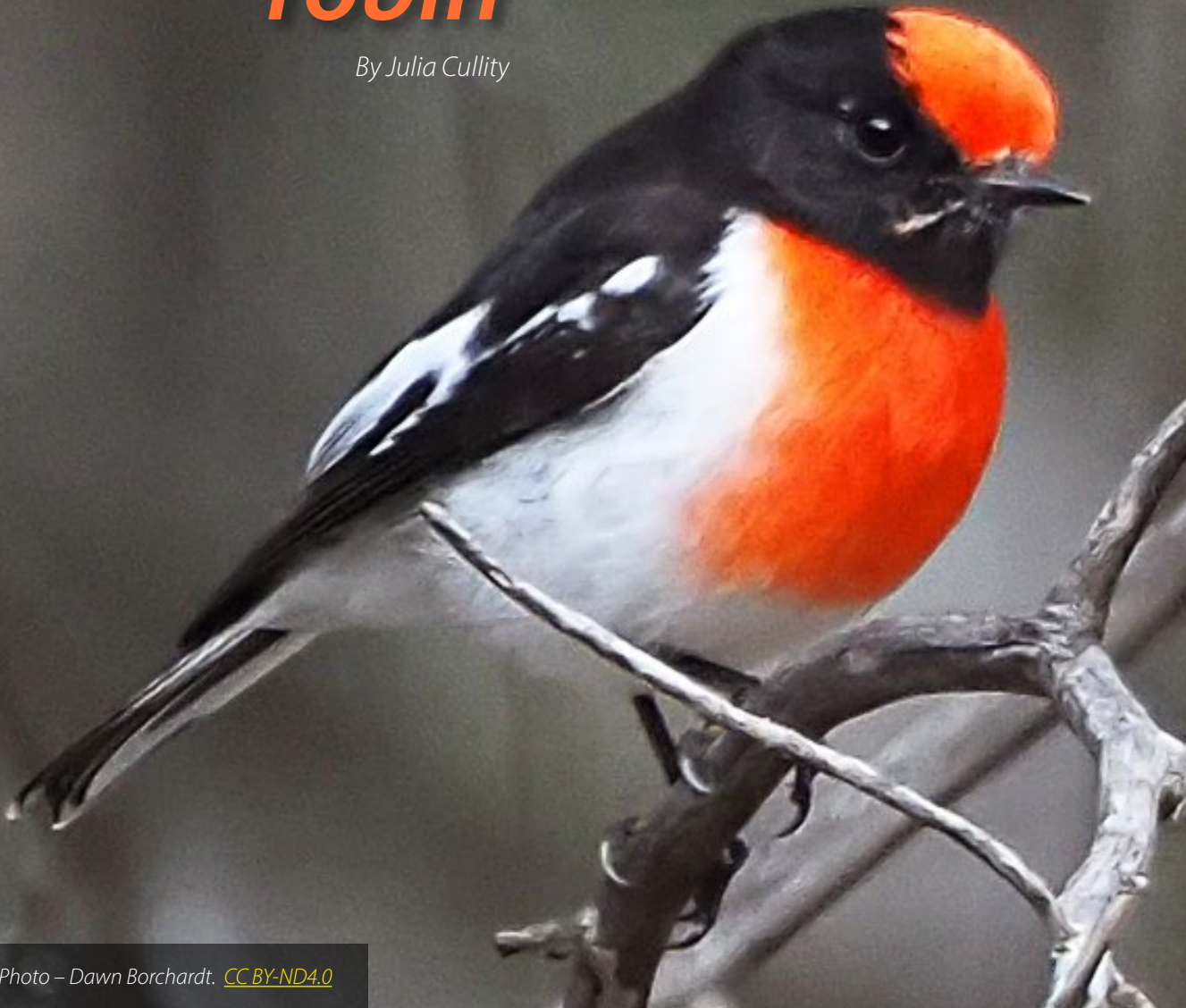
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Red capped robin

By Julia Cullity



Red-capped robins (*Petroica goodenovii*) are found throughout most of mainland Australia preferring woodlands in arid and semi-arid areas. In Western Australia they are found in inland regions north towards the Pilbara and are rarely seen on the south coast or far south-west however, there is a population on Rottnest Island. In Noongar language they are called minidjidang in the dialect spoken in the north and east of Perth, koobadjijat in the southwest and bini-bintj east of Albany.

The male is black above and white below and easily distinguished by his bright red cap and breast, black throat with white in the tail and shoulders of the wing. Females are grey-brown above and off-white below with a faint reddish cap (and sometimes breast), white throat and white bars to the wings. They are both a similar size between 10.5–12.5cm long.

Two red keto-carotenoid pigments need to be consumed from food to colour their feathers. However, carotenoids are also required for immune function and are costly to metabolise. The male's red feathers are showing prospective mates that he is in such good condition he has enough left over to use in his plumage display.

In late winter to early summer, they breed in pairs in a breeding territory defended by the male who **calls** to deter other robins. The female builds her cup-shaped **nest** of bark, grass and spiderwebs, lined with soft materials and camouflaged with lichen in a tree fork. The clutch of 2–4 spotted green or blue-green eggs are incubated by the female and she is fed by the male during nest building and incubating, but both parents feed the young. Fledglings remain with their parents for one to six weeks before dispersing.

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