



MELON HILL BUSHLAND GROUP

SWANBOURNE EST. 1996
Think Global. Act Local.

BIRAK 2024 2025



December January



“Protecting the natural environment, where ever it is found, helps everyone. Plants, people, animals” – Dr Neville Hills (local legend)

Red-tail feather

Birak (Dec/Jan) is the first summer and season of the young, represented by the colours red and brown. Traditionally this was the fire season when country was cool burnt in mosaic patterns whilst there were predictable easterly winds in the morning and sea breezes in the afternoon. **Fledglings** venture out of their nests, **reptiles** are shedding their skin for a new one, **frogs** are reaching adulthood.

In our Melon Hill (Allen Park) bushland you can expect to see glossy bobtails and skinks, and fledgling magpies, boobook owls, rainbow bee-eaters, black cockatoos (both Carnaby’s and Red-tails), galahs and parrots. You will hear the calls of the **brown goshawk** young in the big old Tuarts in the Heritage precinct.

Bobtails (yorn) don’t usually drink and instead rely on moisture from leaves, berries, slugs and snails. The bush is unusually dry this year, so some have been struggling. Luckily for the bobtails, *Hemiandra pungens* (snakebush) still has some of the delicate purple flowers Bobtails love.

Black cockatoos are having noisy, messy meals. You may even be lucky enough to find a beautiful red tail feather.

Please be patient with the noise and mess. After Perth’s hottest-ever summer and delayed winter rainfall, our black cockatoos have been facing mass starvation with a record number of emancipated birds handed into Perth Zoo and Wildlife Centres. Some emergency funding has been given for rehabilitation, but as Environmental Law and Policy expert Dr Hugh Finn has said, the real issue is protecting and providing habitat, and Perth faces a choice: either “manage the species to extinction” or build landscapes that help them recover.

Building more food, water and roosting resources into our urban environment is a win for everyone, and we will be focussing on this in 2025.

It’s also nesting season for the spectacular **rainbow bee-eaters**. More on them later – but for a very accessible view you can watch the acrobatics of these iridescent visitors from the popular temporary bench overlooking the nesting burrow at the end of Sayer Street.

Enjoy !

Lesley Shaw and Eliza Clapin

At a glance:

Highlights and Spotlights

Notes and reminders

Buggy buggy night

Heritage Cottage seeks match

Watering - help!

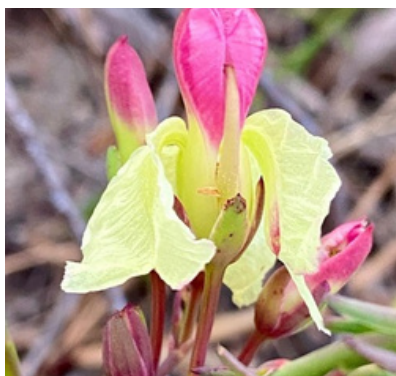
Rainbow bee-eaters race against time

Highlights and Spotlights



Christmas Spider

If you have a keen eye, you may spot one of these tiny decorative beasts straddling its web. This Christmas spider was very elusive when photographed and ducked for cover. These amazing creatures have 6 spines, and you are most likely to see them at this time of year.



Lechenaultia Linarioides

There are not many flowers during the hot months. A notable exception is the beautiful Lechenaultia linarioides. Lechenaultias are usually associated with blue tones, but this coastal variety is soft yellow and pink and looks far too delicate for the harsh conditions of Birak.



Photo - Di Downie

Notes & Reminders



Quandong

Our small cluster of Quandong (best known for their bright red fruit) are currently covered in lovely discrete flowers. Quandong are partially parasitic and tap into a host using a specialised root (haustoria) to draw nutrients and water. Here the hosts are acacia.



Unusual Visitors

We have also had some other unusual, feathered visitors. A shy Bronzewing pigeon was spotted at the Cocky-trough and an unassuming LLB (little brown bird) spotted near the hospice site turned out to be a juvenile yellow-rumped thornbill, increasingly rare in this area.

- Please put **water out** for wildlife if you can. **Thank you to the WA Bridge Club** for providing water for parched bobtails and dusty birds.
 - **Our fledgling owls** (Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouths and Barn) will be learning to hunt. Please minimise rodenticides and stick to owl friendly ones if you must. For more information visit youthactionforwildlife.com
 - **Snakes** are out! Please keep your dog on leash in the bush areas.
 - **Please pick up!** Lots of dogs + small patches of bush = 🐾
 - **We meet** on Tuesdays and the first Saturday of each month behind Mattie Furphy's House (near the main car park for the ovals). 8am start in summer. 9am winter. Morning tea and gloves provided. **All Welcome!**
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Buggy buggy night by Elliot and Liam Chak

On a dark rainy night, a group gathered with local bug expert, Daniel. Straight away we spotted something exciting - an eucalypt covered in small greenish reddish balls – galls! Galls lay eggs inside a leaf. After they hatch the females stay inside the leaf, while the males leave to find a mate. Daniel said the tree had way more galls this year!

Next, Daniel had set up two tarps, each with a UV light. It looked like 1,000,000 moths had come to the light! There were lots of common moths, but also some geometric moths that Daniel had not seen. The best moth was the southern old lady moth, also known as the

father Christmas moth or the hairy footed moon lover. There was also a green lacewing. This fascinating insect has larvae that suck the bodily fluid from its prey and carry their carcasses on its back!

Suddenly we spotted something - “a wolf spider!” cried Liam. Then a cricket hopped too close! The spider injected its venomous sting and sent digestive enzymes through the cricket’s body, liquifying its insides. We were thrilled, and so was Daniel.

We can’t wait for next year’s bug hunt, rain or shine!



The Heritage Cottage

After 9 years of limbo, we understand that the City of Nedlands will be seeking Expressions of Interest in the Allen Park Heritage Cottage.

This is the only remaining original building in the area. It looks a bit neglected (it’s the one you can see with the fence around it) but this 112-year-old cottage will be a lovely space once it has been restored. It is in a great location overlooking the ovals with the Cocky-trough, Heritage Precinct and bushland behind it.

If you are a community group looking for a place to meet, or a commercial venture looking for a truly unique space, we would love to hear from you.

Eliza - 0402 890 252.



‘Bird’ - by Anne Casson

We would love your help !

Our volunteers contributed 864 hours of their time in 2024!

Watering thirsty new plants is the focus for the next few months.

Upcoming Watering days :

- Tues 4 February 2025
- Tues 18 February 2025
- Tues 4 March 2025

You can also adopt a patch near you to water in your own time if that works better.

If this sounds like you, or you have any questions, please message **Eliza - 0402 890 252.**



Photo - Di Downie

Rainbow bee - eater chicks in a race against groundworks

In October the migratory Rainbow bee-eaters returned to find most of their usual nesting spot inside the fenced hospice site. Undaunted, the birds began excavating inside the fence. We notified the developers so that they could take steps to protect these spectacular short stay visitors. Disappointingly, the response was to cover the entire site with matting. Forced to start again, one pair excavated a nest burrow close to the WA Bridge Club, whilst the other pair chose a spot close to the site fence.

The City of Nedlands placed bunting around the burrows to protect them from dogs and pedestrians. We provided some signage, and the spectacle provided by these birds has been enjoyed by many over the summer.

Best practice is **no ground vibrations at all within 50 metres of an active burrow**. This was the approach taken during the Metronet rail project, and we hope for similar leadership from the hospice developers.

Just before Christmas we were told that the developers planned to 'minimise' impact by starting deep piling on the furthest corner of the site. Unfortunately, this is much closer than the best practice buffer of 50 metres.

The eggs have now hatched, and the parents are feeding chicks in the burrow. Hot, thirsty work.

Earthworks close by pose a significant risk to the chicks, and we are hoping that the developers will hold off for just a few weeks to allow the chicks to safely fledge and gain the strength to join the flock which is starting to gather for the northern migration.

With luck they will then reward us by returning again in October.

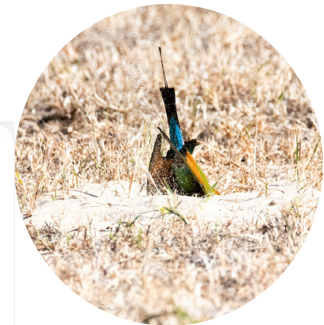
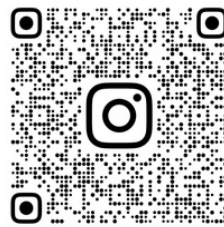


Photo - Di Downie



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Thank you for reading!

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| <p>https://www.bushlandperth.org.au/groups/friends-of-allen-park-bushland</p> | <p>Melonhillbg@gmail.com</p> <p>Please email to join, donate or sign up for email updates</p> |