



NEWSLETTER

November 2024

EHB NO LONGER HAS A POSTAL ADDRESS

Use the email, please.

Meet: Octagonal Hall, 52, McGlew Rd., Glen Forrest.
4th Friday of the month. Doors open 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Committee 2024

President: Pam Riordan

Vice President: Maxine Tyler

Treasurer: Peter Day

Secretary: Janet Atkins

Committee Members:

June Barkman

Sarah Dudley

Penny Hussey

Robyn Rudeforth

Email:

**For all contacts, please use the
WSWA's generic email:**

eastern.hills.branch@wildflowersocietywa.org.au

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/easternhillswildflowersoc/>

COMING EVENTS: Nov.

CUTTING PROPAGATION WORKSHOP SUNDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 1-4pm

Report later in this Newsletter

Thursday 7th November

Committee Meeting

3pm Octagonal Hall

GUILDFORD GARDEN FESTIVAL

Sat and Sun November 9/10

Guildford is hosting an inaugural Open Gardens weekend on November 9th and 10th. The event will include open gardens in Guildford, a day of talks by a few guest speakers including Sophie Thompson from

the ABC's Gardening Australia. Also, there will be tours of Stirling Square.

On Saturday 9th, there will be a collection of garden-related stalls and talks and Eastern Hills is having a stall to promote gardening with WA natives. We are sharing the stall with the Guildford Verge Gardeners. The ABC will be broadcasting from Stirling Square from 6-10am.

If you would like to assist in manning the stall, send us an email; otherwise, why not come down to the lowlands and see what it's all about?

Seed Cleaning

In recess.

Propagation Group

Monday 25th November

12 noon Octagonal Hall. Bring lunch.

Evening Meeting

Friday 22nd November

AGM

All Committee positions will be declared vacant.

"Travel along the Tanami Track"

Penny Hussey

The talk will show some of the landscapes you can see on a trip from Alice Springs to Kununurra.

COMING EVENTS: Dec.

Thursday 5th December

Committee meeting

3.00pm Octagonal Hall

**Wednesday 4th December
10.30am Octagonal Hall**

Join us for a morning tea to celebrate the past year, and look forward to the next.

Bring a plate to share.

Hope to see as many of you as possible!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

**EHB will become active again
in February 2025**

REPORTS

**Evening meeting, Friday 25th October
“The power of Conservation Dogs for
Threatened Flora conservation”
Megan Barnes**

Megan spoke with energy and enthusiasm of how dogs, with their magnificent sense of smell (10 times better than humans), can be of great assistance in conservation management of land and waterways.

As an example, they can be trained to detect *Phytophthora* – or any plant disease for that matter – and can not only do this work in the field, but could detect contamination in soil delivered to plant nurseries, or even on car tyres. “Could they detect Shothole Borer?” a member of the audience asked. “Yes, if trained” she replied. The audience murmured in astonishment and appreciation.

She explained that any dog can smell things, but some breeds have been bred to do this, such as retrievers and spaniels. It takes 2 years to train a puppy but once trained, additional odours can be learnt in 2-3 months.

Results can be astonishing. In Sweden, a dog detects apple canker in commercial orchards; in Hawaii, one can

detect even seedlings of ‘Devil Weed’ [*Chromolaena odorata*, called Siam Weed in Australia, important to keep out of Kimberley irrigation area. Ed.]; and, most astonishing of all, in Ireland can detect one specific moss species out of the many in Ireland’s boggy landscape

As a private project, she is training one of her dogs to detect the Underground Orchid, but a major problem is the lack of material from which the dog can learn to recognise the odour!

This was a fascinating talk, leading us all to think ‘outside the box’ in wondering how cooperation with these special dogs and their handlers can lead to benefits for biodiversity conservation.

The meeting was also informed that the roof has now been closed to possum incursion, and two possum boxes have been installed in the grounds. During the evening possums could be heard having a disagreement outside!

Penny Hussey

**CUTTING PROPAGATION WORKSHOP
SUNDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 1-4pm**



Photo: Pam Riordan

This was a fun event, attended by both young and old and may well be repeated next year. There was also a scrumptious afternoon tea!

Seed Collecting - EHB

The seed cleaning group recently did an audit of our seed bank and found that many of the seeds were getting old (like some of the seed cleaners!) and so we are appealing to our members for assistance. Our branch is the only one with a seed bank but we do rely on members to collect for us. Even small amounts of seed from common plants is of use.

If you have WA plants on your property, we would be most appreciative if you were able to collect some seed for us. Some, like Grevilleas and many of the peas, shed their seed before we realise that it is ripe, so unless we tie a bag or a stocking over the ripening seed, we will probably miss it. Others hold seed for many years and we can collect them whenever we have a spare 5 minutes. Many of the Myrtaceae family, such as Melaleucas, take a good 12 months to produce mature seed, so if you are pruning your plants back, you may find that older seed is accessible

If you are unsure of the species, please include a specimen with the seed pods (and flowers if available), place them in a paper bag and leave them at the Hall. If that is not possible, please send us an email and someone will arrange for another drop-off point, or collection.

Many thank in anticipation

June Bark man

Extinction is forever – or is it here in the Hills?

Perhaps uppermost in our minds as a wildflower conservationist is one question: “What can I do to prevent the iconic WA Carnaby’s Cockatoo from becoming extinct?”

Carnabys face threats on multiple fronts, such as climate change and loss of hollow-bearing trees, together with the loss of both feeding and roosting habitats.

According to the Great Cocky Count this equates to a loss of 15% of the Carnaby population per annum. Due to the domination of one species - humans.

What can I do? Here are some thoughts....

- Plant appropriate species which will promote Carnaby feeding – seems a partial answer. 95% of the Carnaby’s diet is from the Proteaceae family. So, *Banksia attenuata*, *B. menziesii*, *B. prionotes*, *B. undata* and *B sessilis* are their preferences in this part of the world. Followed by Hakeas: eg *H. trifurcata* and *H. lissocarpa* and a Grevillea or two, eg *G. bipinnatifida*. Together with trees such as Marri and Jarrah if you are able!
- “BUT” I hear you say these plants could take up to 10-15 years to provide substantial foraging for the Carnaby’s, so whilst a good idea in the long term, this isn’t going to be a solution in the short term Let’s leave a valuable inheritance for the future!
- One shortish term measure might be to plant pecans, almonds, macadamias for Carnaby consumption! They love nuts, as well as nectar and wood-boring grubs.
- **Cockatubes:** If you live in a breeding area and have tall trees on your property, there is always the possibility of an artificial nesting box such as a Cockatube. This invention is meeting with some success. However, what the surviving young Carnabys face in the nutritional future is debatable..... As these birds are semi-migratory and have a low reproductive rate, they attempt to breed in the Wheatbelt from July to January. They spend February to June feeding on the Swan Coastal Plain, mid-west and south coast. If they fall below a critical weight (approximately 520gm) they are unable to breed, as has been reported recently from Wildlife shelters at Kaarakin and Perth Zoo. Natural hollows can take up to 130 years to form and the

Carnabys face competition for any remaining real estate from other parrots and feral bees. So artificial hollows designed for Carnaby's specific nesting needs might contribute to the species survival into the future.

- **Water:** Carnaby's will only breed if water and food are within a 6-7km radius of the nesting site. The birds of all species appreciate water in the hotter months, wherever they may be.

And finally, there's the contentious **Gnangara Pine Plantation** – apparently for 'recreational and habitat use'. Carnabys are fairly resilient and have adapted to eating seeds of *Pinus pinaster*. 23,000ha of this species was originally planted for the logging industry in the 1940s. The WA Govt has just announced it will harvest all but the last 1800ha of the pines. This remnant will be insufficient for Carnaby nutritional survival. The Banksia woodlands on the Swan Coastal Plain have already been largely cleared to make way for housing and other developments. Yet Gnangara currently supports 70% of the Perth Carnabys population nutritionally. With the EPA's authority recently diluted and political will seemingly lacking, the future in terms of preventing extinctions seems to lie with us gardening folks: with appropriate backyard plantings, knowledge about the inter-relatedness of biodiversity, municipal wisdom and revegetation initiatives which are appropriate to the species of the region. Only then is there a glimmer of hope that this species is going to be saved from extinction.

Sarah Dudley

[Editorial comment: -

It is a long time since we have had an "Opinion Piece" in this Newsletter. Sarah raises concerns that should get us all thinking – what can I do? Has anyone else got a point they would like to raise? What do **you** think we should be doing for the future of our biodiversity?

Carnabys certainly love pines! They annually ripped apart every cone on the tree at my place in Helena Valley, until I was ordered to remove it, as a tree in the ex-CSIRO property across the road was found to be harbouring European House Borer.



Penny Hussey]

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Calothamnus quadrifidus
ssp homalophyllus



Photo: Geographe Community Nursery

This plant can be a metre-high spreading shrub or grow to 5m tall. These taller varieties make a good screening plant. The leaves differ markedly from other forms of *C. quadrifidus* because they are flattened. The flowers are orange and are produced between September and November.

It occurs naturally from Mingenew to Serpentine, preferring sandy soil and full sun but it will grow in heavier soils. It is bird attracting and drought tolerant.

See it locally along the railway heritage trail in Boya.

Robyn Rudeforth.

The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this Newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Wildflower Society of Western Austral

