

Geographe Network News

The communities voice in the catchment... Edition 30, Winter '09



Looking Forward, Looking back

Looking forward, looking back is a fitting theme for this quarter's edition of the Network News as at the time of writing, the South West is eagerly anticipating the arrival of the first major front for the winter. The welcome rains will soak our parched soils and allow pastures to grow and renew life in the bush. But while most huddle inside by the fire, winter is the time when GeoCatch gears into action and starts our planting while the earth is moist.

Inside this edition of the Network News, there are many opportunities for you to get involved in one of GeoCatch's planting days, or perhaps head along to the Buayanyup Catchment Tour to learn about native fish and waterway management. On the topic of planting, read inside about how the Geographe Community Nursery came to be, and the bright future ahead with their new nursery coordinator.



This edition we look back and celebrate some of the successes of GeoCatch's projects that are coming to an end including Water Quality in the Vasse Wonnerup Catchment, Biodiversity Hotspot and Weed and Feral management.

A special mention must go to the Ribbons of Blue programme that is celebrating 20 years of success – we hope that there will be many more.

Check inside from updates from our community groups. DCALC gives an overview of their evolving activities, including the opportunity for community members to assist with whale monitoring. See page 5 for an update on the Wonnerup Residents Association's rehabilitation project on the Layman Road foreshore.

We are also looking forward to new opportunities with two new Community Coastcare projects focusing on Urban Drainage and Coastal Habitats.

In this edition we introduce one of our new GeoCatch members Les Mutton.

Happy reading!

Sally Clifton-Parks

GeoCatch Coordinator

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*Produced by the Geographe Catchment Council,
Proudly supported by the Department of Water*

GeoCatch project wins State Engineering Excellence Award

GeoCatch's 2007-2008 project 'Improving Water Quality in the Vasse Wonnerup System 'Urban Drainage' recently received the 'G.K. Watters Local Government Engineering Excellence Award' for the storm water management works undertaken in the Busselton LIA. The award was presented to Bethwyn Hastie (GeoCatch member and Busselton Shire Councillor) and James



Cowden (Department of Water) on the 13th of March 2009 at the annual Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia Western Australian (IPWEA) division State Conference. The award recognises 'Excellence in Local Government Engineering' and is one of the few opportunities local Government Engineering has to achieve peer recognition.

Following on from this winning project, GeoCatch has recently been successful in its submission for Community Coastcare funding. The project Improving water quality in the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands and Geographe Bay – 'Clean Green Suburbs', will be rolled out over the 24 months aligning with recommendations of the 'Draft Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands and Geographe Bay.'

The project will focus on reducing nutrients and other pollutants entering stormwater from urban areas in the Geographe Catchment and Busselton Light Industrial Area (LIA) improving water quality entering the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands System and Geographe Bay.

GeoCatch and project partners including the Department of Water and the Shire of Busselton will deliver this project by focusing on three key areas:

- The Cleaner Production and Bay OK program. GeoCatch will work one on one with businesses in the LIA implementing a range of water quality improvement measures. An expert technical consultant will be available to undertake an audit of business premises and activities, developing individually tailored Water Quality Management Plans. Businesses that take part will be promoted through the Bay OK program, which will provide them with a water quality 'tick of approval' for their efforts in reducing run off and being water efficient.
- The Clean Green Suburbs program aims to work with local residential and businesses to increase awareness on how we all can make a difference to improve water quality and reduce our water use. The project will run a variety of activities such as workshops on topics including; correct fertiliser use for coastal gardens, water wise gardening and gardening with local indigenous species .
- The Urban Drainage Retrofit program will continue with GeoCatch's successful stormwater upgrade plan from 2007. The project will re-profile and plant stormwater drainage channels and construct six rain gardens that filter run off before it reaches to Lower Vasse river.

Currently one rain garden is being designed for the corner of Barlee St and Bunbury St in the LIA to be installed in May 2009. This system will be monitored to investigate how well it is removing nutrients and other pollutants.

Coastal Habitats - Peppies for Possums Planting Days

By John McKinney

As part of GeoCatch's new coastal habitats and wetlands project, a series of community planting days to provide habitat for local fauna are planned for the coming winter season.

These 'Peppies for Possums' planting projects will help provide important habitat for the vulnerable Western Ringtail Possum.

One of the projects will occur on a Shire of Busselton Reserve near the Busselton Bypass and will link the DEC managed Broadwater Wetland to the Possum Highway planted over the last few years by GeoCatch in conjunction with the Shire of Busselton and Main Roads.

GeoCatch and the Western Ringtail Action Group successfully applied to the Threatened Species Network for funds to plant approximately 1500 local native seedlings, including peppermint trees and appropriate understorey species in this reserve this coming winter.

In addition, a local marketing company, Jack in the Box, approached GeoCatch to be involved in a planting project with other local businesses. So far, five businesses have agreed to fully fund the costs associated with site preparation and another 1500 local native seedlings to increase the area revegetated. Staff from these local businesses will be getting down and dirty to get these plants in the ground, alongside community volunteers and GeoCatch staff on Saturday June 27th, 2009.

Thanks to the following business involved in the planting project :

Jack In The Box
Doral Mineral Sands
Shore Landscapes
Challenge Dairy
Harley Survey Group
Globe Signs
Shire of Busselton

For business wanting to be involved similar projects, more information or to register for the planting day, please call GeoCatch NRM Gene Hardy on 9781 0108 or visit <http://eco.thebox.com.au>

The Meelup Regional Park Goes Live!

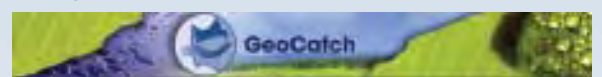
By Mandy Polley

Meelup Regional Park has a new website: www.meeluppark.com, which includes information on the Park and its environmental values and threats, recreational opportunities, upcoming events and much more. You can also subscribe to the Committee's quarterly newsletter on the website

Check Out the GeoCatch website!

By Gene Hardy

GeoCatch's new and improved website has recently gone live. For information on any of our past and present projects, events, training opportunities, previous Network News editions and much much more, check out www.geocatch.asn.au.



GeoCatch, DEC and the Shire of Busselton join to protect Yoongarillup Reserve.

By Matilde Breton

The Shire of Busselton recently received funding from the South-West Biodiversity Project to protect the ecological values of Yoongarillup Reserve. Yoongarillup Reserve is a 26 ha patch of bushland, located on the corner of Vasse Highway and Yoongarillup Road. It contains rare and endangered vegetation in an area of extensively cleared agricultural land. It also provides an important stronghold for endangered fauna, such as the Western Ringtail Possum. Due to its high ecological significance, the reserve is managed in partnership

with the Department of Environment and Conservation, GeoCatch and Community.

The main threat to the biodiversity values of the reserve was the increasing illegal vehicle access which was destroying vegetation, spreading dieback, propagating weeds and increasing incidences of rubbish dumping. The funding has been used to install bollards and a gate to prevent unauthorised vehicles from entering the reserve. An interpretative sign was also erected at the car park near the Yoongarillup Hall to inform residents and visitors of the importance of the reserve and the threats it faces. Support from the Yoongarillup Hall Committee was a key component of the project.

Woody weed control, with support from the Green Corps Team, is the next project on the agenda at Yoongarillup Reserve.

Improving Water Quality in the Vasse Wonnerup Catchment

By Sally Clifton-Parks

GeoCatch's Water Quality project has been running in the Vasse Wonnerup catchment since July 2006, but what have we done, and what have we learnt in this time? And where is GeoCatch heading from here?

The Water Quality project had many components that approached catchment management at various levels.

The project went out into the catchment to encourage landholders to take a best practice approach to managing their wetlands, waterways and drains. Landholders enthusiastically participated in wetland and waterway protection, but work on rural drains proved to be a hard sell. This required some creative thinking from GeoCatch to engage landholders, but in the end a targeted approach encouraged many landholders to come on board and the final stretch of the Lower Sabina was fenced.

Managing nutrients in urban areas has been a recent line of attack for GeoCatch, with this project moving into the urban catchment and focussing on a different source of nutrients. The idea was to engage urban residents and businesses and increase awareness of their impact on water quality. This was highly successful, with

13 LIA businesses making their operations 'cleaner' and many urban gardeners becoming aware of how they can reduce the nutrients coming off their property. Urban drainage also retrofitted several highly visible stormwater management and filtration systems in the Busselton LIA, as can be seen on Strelly Street.

In an attempt to improve the water quality and aesthetics of the Lower Vasse the Lower Vasse River cleanup program has traditionally received a large investment from GeoCatch. This project conducted several trials to evaluate various techniques to improve water quality. These included reed rafts, goldfish control, erosion control and revegetation. Although the techniques had some success, the scale needed to see significant water quality improvement was too large and costly for wider uptake.

So where to from here?

The Water Quality project undertook catchment wide water quality monitoring at 20 sites across the catchment, which has given GeoCatch a benchmark of solid monitoring data. This data, in partnership with the Department of Water, has provided modelling that has led to the development of the Draft Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP). The WQIP gives us the ability to determine where we should invest to get 'the most bang for our buck' in terms of nutrient management, and provides detailed information at the sub catchment level. GeoCatch have recently applied for funding under the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country scheme to implement the WQIP. If successful, the project will work closely with urban and rural landholders on nutrient, effluent and riparian management in priority areas of the catchment.

For more information on improving water quality, contact GeoCatch on 9781 0111.

Ribbons of Blue - Celebrating twenty years!

By Jen Mitchell

This year Ribbons of Blue is celebrating 20 years of community education, action and engagement around local creeks, rivers, estuaries and wetlands.

Ribbons of Blue began in 1989 as a school water monitoring project in the Swan and Avon catchments. The original program encouraged school students to monitor water quality in their local area throughout the Swan/Avon River system and 57 schools took part in the pilot program. By the mid-90s Ribbons of Blue had regional coordinators from East Kimberley to the South Coast and most places in between.

Over the years the focus of the program has changed to include a broad range of topics related to environmental water quality and waterway ecosystems, and it continues to evolve in order to foster behaviour that supports sustainable catchments and waterways. Since 1989 around 160,000 students, 6000 teachers and 230 community groups have monitored water quality at more than 700 sites and have been involved in activities to protect the environment.

For Ribbons of Blue in the Geographe Catchment there have been some memorable and lasting activities including the art projects 'Banners for Biodiversity' and 'Dreams of the Stream' and the many thousands of seedlings planted by school and community groups to protect water quality and enhance biodiversity.

The funding for Ribbons of Blue after September 2009 is uncertain so I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the school students and their teachers for their commitment to assimilate environmental education into their very busy curriculum. The outcomes from your efforts will greatly benefit the environment and all of us in the long term.



Les Mutton - New GeoCatch Member Profile

By Gene Hardy

Les Mutton is one of the new GeoCatch members and is more than qualified for the role, with a great general knowledge of environmental issues built up over 30 years living in the South West. He currently resides on small farm bordering local tuart forest in Capel and owns a block of land in the Stirling Wetlands. I recently caught up with Les and found that his interest in the natural environment stretches right back to his roots and has only become stronger with age.

"I grew up in Bicton and at that stage it really wasn't developed, so I spent lots of time on the river", says Les. "We would go out gidgeeing (Noongar word for spearing) the cobblers and paddling with canoes we had made of corrugated iron and wood, sealed with tar off the road!"

"I also love free diving, which I've been doing since I was about 15 when I made my own spear gun out of wood and bicycle tyre rubber."

"These days my depth limit is about 10 metres, but I still get great enjoyment out of diving to the bottom and watching the fish develop the curiosity to come in close."

Apart from diving, Les enjoys hiking, kayaking and bushwalking and he recently joined his wife Bronwyn in a trip to Alaska, which he simply described as 'brilliant'.

"At the moment I am also engrossed in preparing my horse for endurance riding", says Les enthusiastically.

Quite a scholar, Les has tertiary qualifications related to natural resource management including Master of Science (Zoology UWA), BA (Anthropology UWA) and Dip Ed specialising in fish. Les has also been a teacher in the South West for over 25 years including Bunbury S.H.S as a Biology T.E.E Teacher for 15 years.

"When I quit teaching in WA, I went to China and taught for several years", says Les. "That's where I learnt about the amazing quality granite stonework being made there."

"Since then I've been creating granite bench tops for a living, over about the last 6 years."

Les is also passionate about the Stirling wetlands and has been experimenting with his own wetland block.

"I have been completing some trialling by letting the wetlands dry in the summer (as opposed to having water from the Capel River Weir feed into wetlands)", says Les. "I've witnessed the effects of the land drying out; with most things now able to grow without the water logging year round."

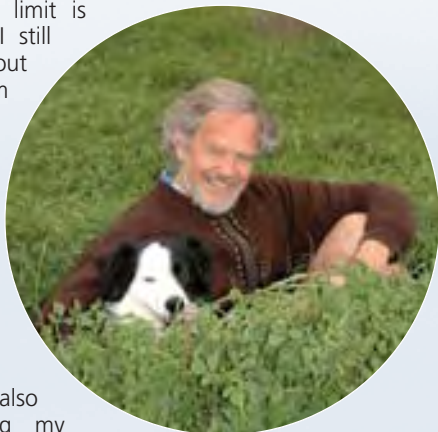
"I've also been trialling about 12 species of reeds and rushes and been subscribed to 'Wetlands for Wildlife' program, which is a DEC initiative."

"The program involves keeping native bird counts and also fox baiting."

As far as his role within GeoCatch, Les maintains that his focus is on the Capel River and Stirling wetlands.

"Good natural resource management (NRM) is absolutely crucial on the Stirling wetlands, because it is made up of scores of private landholdings", he says. "My interest is in how to engage the private enterprises in NRM as part of their commercial ventures and also management of other associated issues within the system."

Asked about what he enjoyed about being a GeoCatch member, Les replies "I'm impressed with the proactive approach and good humour shown in our meetings and also the degree of efficiencies and expertise of the staff."



Busselton - Augusta Biodiversity Hotspot Recovery Project "Looking Back"

By Jenelle Carter

The South West of Western Australia is recognised as one of only 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world – and the only one in Australia. Looking at our local patch, the Busselton-Augusta area was recognised in 2003 as one of 15 National biodiversity hotspots.



So, what is a 'hotspot'? It is a region that has exceptionally high levels of plant diversity and significant habitat loss. Two criteria must be met before a region is classified as an international biodiversity hotspot:

The region must contain over 1500 endemic plant species (plants found nowhere else in the world); and

Over 70% of vegetation from the region must be lost.

The aim of the Busselton – Augusta Biodiversity Hotspot Recovery Project was to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the area through the protection of priority vegetation complexes and the protection of threatened flora, fauna and ecological communities. The project was supported by the Cape Catchment Group, Local Shires and DEC, and funded through the South West Catchment Council by the State and Australian Government.

Since the project began in 2006 over 240 ha of priority vegetation has been protected by fencing with a further 200 ha protected through strategic weed control. The project also helped fund over 20ha of revegetation projects to enhance and create threatened fauna habitat. The Peppies for Possums plantings were a real highlight with huge community involvement to protect a threatened species in our own backyards.

Penny Young, a landholder near Metricup, had been undertaking revegetation on her property for a number of years before being involved in the Biodiversity Hotspot Project. The project helped Penny fence remnant bushland, plant several thousand local native plants and assisted with weed control, including removing an old Pittosporum tree that was releasing hundreds of seedlings into the roadside vegetation. With all of Penny's tireless work, she has inspired her neighbours into action.

"The biggest benefit here has been the spin-off around the neighbourhood, with all the adjoining properties working on fencing and regeneration", says Penny. "I would never have believed it possible five years ago".

The project has engaged many landholders, like Penny Young, from Busselton to Augusta and supported them in undertaking some fantastic work in our region. Funding has been provided to landholders for weed and feral animal control, fencing and revegetation, although their time and efforts very often outweigh the incentives available. Thankyou to all involved and congratulations on your achievements.

After three productive and successful years, the Biodiversity Hotspot Project will be ending on June 30 this year. Until then, you can contact Jenelle Carter on 97810 114 for technical information and incentives currently available.

The Geographe Community Landcare Nursery - From little things big things grow

By Robyn Paice

The GCLN all started with quite a few volunteers walking into the GeoCatch Office wanting to help out, but not usually at the best time. A nursery seemed like a good idea for allowing these volunteers to get involved at any time that suited them, and they would then also be easy to find when help was needed for other projects. It would also be a way of increasing the availability of local native species and promoting their use.



We started off over the 2001-02 season by growing about 10,000 plants for the Lower Vasse River Cleanup Program, using a few benches at Iluka's Capel Wetlands Centre Nursery. A small number of very knowledgeable volunteers, in particular Dennis Cooper and Dick Shore, assisted Robyn Paice from GeoCatch in these early days, and we also learned a lot from Iluka's staff.

The Water Corporation were a huge help in establishing our own site in Busselton, providing space on their land near the new wastewater treatment plant and a grant through the Environmental Improvement Initiative. It was hard to foresee just how successful the nursery would become and we built the bare essentials, with a major effort from GeoCatch's GreenCorps team and our volunteers, especially Gilbert Stockman. When it was all together we had room for about 40,000 plants at a push and we managed to get some advance payments on orders, so we could then afford the materials to grow them, and most importantly, an underpaid coordinator to make sure they grew...and they did. And so did the nursery.



We were very lucky to find a wonderful and very dedicated coordinator – Lynne Boladeras – and we attracted many very talented volunteers with a huge range of skills. These people have continued to improve all facets of the nursery, from the amount of locally collected seed and range of species through to the entire infrastructure and the number of volunteers. During 2007-08, 72 volunteers assisted us in growing nearly 70,000 plants.

Grants, donations of materials and other support from many organisations have helped us continue to grow. Special thanks to GeoCatch, the Vasse-Wonnerup LCDC, the Busselton-Dunsborough Environment Centre and the Shire of Busselton for their ongoing support.

The Nursery is now in for some change. Lynne is retiring as our coordinator at the end of June, and though we will miss her greatly in this role, her dedication means we will still get to see her. We look forward to welcoming our new coordinator, Ann Bentley. Ann was working in the Capel Wetlands Centre when the nursery first began and has a passion for working with our local flora and with people.

The future of the Nursery remains to be seen. We still have many ideas on ways to improve the Nursery, both as a rewarding place for volunteers and as an important part of environmental restoration in the region. For now the future looks bright, green and productive.

Residents tackle revegetation & rehabilitation project at Wonnerup

By Judy Clarke

The Wonnerup Residents Association (WRA) has undertaken a large revegetation and rehabilitation project along the Layman Road Foreshore in Wonnerup that covers approx 4000 square metres of beachfront. The area has suffered a very significant amount of erosion and this project aims to plant local native species to restore vegetation and habitats in order to promote the stabilisation and building up of the dune system.

The first section consisted of removing weeds, installing reticulation, planting low level species and applying more brushwork and mulch. The second component of the project will involve installing more public access walkways, limestone boulders and bollards with more planting to be completed in this section as soon as possible.



The WRA consulted with The Geographe Community Nursery, The Leschenault Community Nursery, and Peel Men of Trees as to the best method for revegetation for the project. Planting lists were then established with input from the Shire of Busselton and DEC. Deep dune planting was identified as the best method for planting vegetation in dunes and has been used as much as possible.

This project would not have been possible without the Coastcare; Caring for our Country Federal Grant, along with generous contributions from the Port Geographe Joint Venture, Bay Signs, Shire of Busselton, Westpac and Landcare Australia. Assistance was also received from Busselton Water, Total Eden, (Hon) Adele Farina MLC., GeoCatch, SWCC and Greencorps. The WRA would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each of these people/groups.

Dunsborough Coast and Land Care (DCALC) focuses on biodiversity

By DCALC President Ron Glencross

Winter is the time when the great whales, mainly the Humpback and Southern Right, start to move north to calve and breed. Late May – June they arrive to the South West of Australia. The Humpbacks go well offshore to tropical waters off the North West of WA, while most of the Rights stay on the South Coast.

It is time also for us to start to prepare for another season of monitoring the annual whale migration through Geographe Bay. This migration occurs from August to December, as the whales round Cape Naturaliste on the way back to Antarctica, their main feeding place. WWR (Western Whale Research) initiated the project from boat observations and decided to test shore based monitoring with DCALC input and planning, which has proved very successful. This will be the 6th year of survey by DCALC from the land based site located at Point Picquet, near Meelup Beach. Each year about 20 form a team and are rostered to monitor and record the migration. All helpers are trained to identify whale types and record movements, location and behaviour of whale pods and individuals. Last year's team recorded 1069 whales of which 108 were the endangered Blue Whale. The rest were Humpbacks and only 12 Right whales were seen.

With 5 years data, it is now scheduled that an evaluation and analysis be made. This work will be completed by Chris Burton of Western Whale Research and Curtin University (funds depending).

If you are interested to help in whale monitoring or any biodiversity activities contact Ron Glencross 97553718 or d_calc@westnet.com.au as awareness and training workshops are planned for the next few months.

Feature Plant

Leucopogon sp.

There are over 80 *Leucopogon* species, most with very small white flowers and each petal is fringed. They vary in size from quite small to large shrubs and with so many species one will be flowering at any time of the year!

Dennis Cooper



Hal's Weed Spot Brazilian Pepper

Schinus terebinthifolius

Did you know that Brazilian Pepper can reach reproductive age within three years of germination? Or that established Brazilian Pepper trees are not usually killed by fire? Or that Brazilian Pepper seedlings can grow in dense shade?

So what is Brazilian Pepper? Also known as Japanese Pepper, it is widely planted as an ornamental and is native to Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina. It is a large shrub to small evergreen tree that produces small cream coloured flowers, but only the female tree produces the distinctive clusters of small red berries. The dark green leathery leaves emit a strong turpentine or peppery smell when crushed.

The weed can form dense thickets which shade out and smother native plants and can block access to creeks. The unripe fruit can be fatal to horses, the crushed ripe fruit is known to cause respiratory difficulties in humans and contact with the sap and leaf resin can cause skin irritation.

Brazilian Pepper produces suckers from damaged roots and regrows vigorously from the stump when cut. Therefore the stem injection or basal bark treatment methods are recommended.

For further information check out *Bushland Weeds* by Kate Brown and Kris Brooks or contact Jenelle Carter at GeoCatch on 97810 114.



Fighting the Feral Fox

Through the Weeds and Ferals project, GeoCatch now has a fox trap available for loan. The trap is an ideal option for those in residential areas who cannot bait, or as part of an integrated pest management plan in areas where baiting is permitted. To register your interest to loan the fox trap contact GeoCatch on 97810 111.



Funding Calendar

Litter Prevention Grants – closes September 2009

For more see: kabc@dec.wa.gov.au

Sustainable Energy Development Office Grants Program

For more see: sgc@energy.wa.gov.au

Strategic Waste Initiatives Scheme

For more see: www.zerowastewa.com.au

Renewable Energy Water Pumping Program

For more see: sedo@energy.wa.gov.au

For more information, or assistance with these grants, contact GeoCatch on 9781 0111.

Events Calendar

Busselton Wildflower & Local Landscape or Seascape Photo Competition 2009

Take your wildflower photos this season for a change at some great prizes! Competition ends early September. For more information and an entry form please email Brenton Prigge; Prigge@westnet.com.au

Reserve 5021 Community Planting

Planting near the Busselton Bypass to improve habitat conductivity for the Western Ringtail Possum. Lunch included FOC.

Date : Saturday 27th June 2009.

Time : 9.30 – 1pm

Venue : Reserve 5021, western end of Busselton Bypass

For more information call GeoCatch on 97 810 111

Willow Grove Community Planting Day

Planting in Willow Grove Reserve with GeoCatch staff members and community.

Date : Friday 1st July 2009.

Time : 10am

Venue : Blum Boulevard, off Vasse Hwy.

For more information call GeoCatch on 97 810 111

Whale Monitoring and Training

Whale awareness and training workshops are planned for volunteers interested in whale monitoring and will take place in the later winter months. Please contact Ron Glencross 97553718 or d_calc@westnet.com.au for more information.

GeoCatch Contact Details

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GeoCatch



Government of Western Australia
Department of Water

