

NARPULUNGUP NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

FEBRUARY 2023, VOLUME 1



Photo: Libby Sandiford

2023 AGM AND EXCURSIONS

This year the AGM and activities weekend will be held in **Hopetoun** over the long weekend of **4th & 5th March**. The AGM and guest speaker event will be held at Mary Anne Haven next to the Police Station in the main street.

Saturday 4th March:

9.00-10.00 am Arrive at Mary Anne Haven morning tea

10.00-12.00 pm Annual General Meeting

12.00-1.00 pm Lunch (bring your own)

1.00-2.00 pm Guest speaker **Tasmin Lancaster**, Honours student at Notre Dame University, will give a talk on "Population and seed bank dynamics of the serotinous shrub, *Hakea victoria*". [see abstract next page]

2.30 – 5.00 pm No Tree Hill walk trail – 6 km return. A moderately easy, Class 3 walk requiring sturdy shoes. Bring water, hat, sunscreen. Car pool at Mary Anne Haven for 4WD access to walk trail.



For dinner on Saturday night we will have use of both a kitchen and an outdoor barbecue at Mary Anne Haven, so bring food for the option which suits you, or dine out in Hopetoun.

Sunday 5th March:

Morning walk of about 9 km (allow 3-4 hrs) along a section of the Hakea Trail in the park. It is a Class 4 trail that requires a good level of fitness and sturdy walking boots/ shoes. Bring water, snacks, hat and sunscreen.



7.45 am Meet at FRNP's West Beach parking area (allow 30 min drive from Hopetoun).
8.00 am Bus leaves from West Beach to start walk on Edwards Point Track. Walk to Edwards Point along sandy 4WD track, then eastwards along walk trail through coastal heath and eucalypt woodland to West Beach. Spectacular views of coastal cliffs and headlands.

Those staying overnight in Hopetoun will need to make their own accommodation arrangements. Some may opt to camp overnight in the park at the Four Mile campsite – prior booking of sites is required
<https://exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au/site/four-mile-campground>. Commercial accommodation options are B&Bs plus:

Hopetoun Caravan Park	9838 3096
Hopetoun Motel & Chalet Village	9838 3219
Port Hotel	9838 3053
Wavecrest Caravan Park	9838 3888

POPULATION AND SEED BANK DYNAMICS OF *HAKEA VICTORIA* – ABSTRACT

by Tasmin Lancaster

Fire is a natural component of global landscapes, with recent studies confirming fire as an important major disturbance in shaping traits of the World's flora. Much of the Australian flora has evolved to be fire-adapted, forming traits such as protection of sensitive tissues and resprouting, serotiny, heat and smoke-cued germination and fire stimulated flowering.

The size and vigour of plant populations, are dependent on the biological attributes associated with a species's life stages, including time to maturation, seed production, and seed viability. These attributes have been shaped through evolution by fire events and fundamentally influence the probability of a population's survival of fire and subsequent recruitment. In this regard, the more we understand about each life stage of fire-sensitive vegetation (e.g. species where plant death occurs by fire before re-establishing from a seed bank) the better we are able to predict a species response to changing fire regimes and guide fire management practices to protect our native flora.

Hakea victoria (royal hakea), endemic to the Fitzgerald River National Park in south-west Australia, is a serotinous non-resprouter, that regenerates from seeds stored within woody fruits and released after fire. Most woody-

fruited Proteaceae retain their seed for an average of five or more years, progressively accumulating seed with successive reproductive events. High seed production is particularly important for non-resprouters, which rely solely on the survival of their seed for post-fire recovery. Seed-release is often caused by fire that results in plant death, with subsequent recruitment maximised when seed release follows fire. Consequently, fire frequency is likely to be a critical factor in determining the survival of *Hakea victoria*. Too frequent fire prevents plant maturation and therefore seed production, and very low fire frequency potentially limits recruitment opportunities and increases the risk of seed bank degradation (e.g. granivory, fungal infection, reduced seed viability).

Relatively little is published on *Hakea victoria*, which reduces the likelihood that current fire management practices will be appropriate for the species. This project aims to identify the age, reproductive maturity and rate of inter-fire recruitment of *Hakea victoria* to help determine the highest probability of population persistence following fire, by analysing life stages including seed production and seed viability over time. In my presentation I will discuss the approaches used, progress to date and offer an overview of early findings.



[Editor's note: Tasmin's research is supported by a Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park research grant.]

THANK YOU to all our members who have participated in our recent survey! Thanks to your feedback, we will be able to tailor our activities to your preferences, which are walks, plants and cultural activities. Also, most of you prefer to receive the Narpulungup News by email, so we adjusted the format of the newsletter to screen reading. We look forward to welcoming you (and particularly those of you who would like to join the committee) at the AGM!

BLACK COCKATOO CRISIS

by Rosemary Jasper

Around Hopetoun, at this time of the year, it is common to see large flocks of Carnaby's black-cockatoo. Many locals relate closely to these birds and are excited when in early summer, the first groups of breeding birds with newly fledged young arrive in town from their inland breeding-areas. However, it is not obvious even to the interested observer that this species is threatened with extinction.

WA film maker, Jane Hammond became aware of the plight of the three SW black-cockatoo species and has produced an award-winning documentary about them and their perilous situation. The documentary, *Black Cockatoo Crisis*, has been screening in Perth and recently was taken to Albany, Denmark and Hopetoun, with the Director and Producer, Jane Hammond in attendance.

The Hopetoun screening was very successful with 60 people in attendance. The film has delightful footage of these engaging birds and it presents the threats they face in a powerful and informative way. It is a very moving if not a devastating documentary.

The message is clear – these beautiful birds are in population crisis. They face loss of feeding, breeding and roosting places; death on roads; shooting by orchardists; and unintentional poisoning. As was said in the documentary by Kris Warren from Murdoch University: 'People see black-cockatoos on a regular basis and they think they are fine, but they're not. We are watching these species slip into extinction'. Twenty years to extinction is the prediction for Carnaby's black-cockatoo, if nothing is done differently.

The documentary has significant footage from the Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun districts. This includes Chris Biddulph, local West River farmer and naturalist, standing amongst the Cocanarup salmon gums, speaking about the importance of the area for breeding Carnaby's black-cockatoo and decrying the threat mining poses to the woodland and the cockatoos.

Cocanarup (near Ravensthorpe) and Julimar (near Toodyay) are the two most important breeding areas for Carnaby's black-cockatoo, and they need to be protected urgently if this species is to survive.

The locally based organisation, Cocanarup Conservation Alliance Inc., has been campaigning for several years to have the Cocanarup Timber Reserve made an A class reserve. The current threat is from a mining company, Bulletin Resources Ltd., which is interested in exploring for lithium. The company has applied to the Department of Mines to clear 6 km of tracks and drill pads within the salmon gum woodland and this application is currently being considered. For documentation see: [Index of /permit/9749 \(dwer.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.dwer.wa.gov.au/permit/9749)

The Cocanarup woodland consists of very old, very large salmon gums, a rarity anywhere in the agricultural area. Carnaby's black-cockatoos use hollows in these ancient trees to breed, making this area vital for the future of this endangered bird.

- Breeding surveys have been conducted in the area for over 15 years.
- More than 200 viable nest trees have been located.
- Annual surveys have recorded up to 70 breeding pairs.

The Cocanarup Conservation Alliance produced a banner for the documentary screening in Hopetoun and after watching the documentary there was the opportunity for a group photo. The audience stood behind the banner with the documentary screen behind us, to indicate our concern for these iconic and endangered birds, and the need to protect their breeding area at Cocanarup.



The audience, showing their support for the black-cockatoos after watching the documentary, *Black Cockatoo Crisis*. Courtesy Jane Hammond

<https://documentaryaustralia.com.au/project/black-cockatoo-crisis/>

Want to take action for the Carnaby's black-cockatoo?

If you are concerned about the plight of the black-cockatoos and the Cocanarup situation, you can email or phone a politician. Demand they act to block the Bulletin Resources application and have Cocanarup and its surrounds set aside for conservation. The following contacts are relevant for Ravensthorpe/Hopetoun area.

- Email the Premier: wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au
- Email WA Minister for the Environment: Minister.Whitby@dpc.wa.gov.au
- Call or email your local State MLA: 08 9071 6555 or peter.rundle@mp.wa.gov.au
- Call or email your local State MLC: 08 9072 1786 or shelley.payne@mp.wa.gov.au
- Call or email your Federal member: 08 9071 4846 or rick.wilson.mp@aph.gov.au
- Email the Federal Minister for the Environment: Minister.Plibersek@dcceew.gov.au

Or you can:

- Volunteer for the Great Cocky Count, 2 April 2023, and register for a training workshop (late February) <https://birdlife.org.au/events/great-cocky-count/>
- Volunteer for nest monitoring in Cocanarup, mid-October 2023 info@cca.asn.au
- Join and/or donate to the Cocanarup Conservation Alliance: <https://cca.asn.au/>

CAMPAIGN TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE TO PRESCRIBED BURNING PRACTICES

by Bart Lebbing, Committee of the Denmark Environment Centre

In 2020, the **Friends of the Fitzgerald River NP Inc** endorsed a Statement to request a review of the practice of prescribed burning in the south-west of Western Australia. This Statement was endorsed by 37 organisations and was delivered to the Premier, the Minister for Environment, 16 politicians and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) in September 2020. No action was undertaken by government in response. The request to endorse the above Statement was made by the Denmark Fire Study Group (DFSG) which in January 2021 changed its name to Fire and Biodiversity WA (FaBWA) <https://www.fabwa.org.au/>

Since then FaBWA have lobbied and had meetings and fieldtrips with politicians, instigated meetings with DBCA managers, monitored burns and areas to be burned, tabled 2 petitions with government, completed a study funded by Humane Society International to investigate the impact of prescribed burns on fauna, hosted a Facebook group with 2600 members, and much more.

The tabling of Petition 029 calling for an independent review into DBCA's practices of prescribed burning resulted in a hearing by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. Three representatives of FaBWA, four professors of the Leeuwin Group of scientists, one officer of the Department of Emergency Services and two representatives of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions were witnesses at the hearing on the 21st of August 2022. The outcome of this hearing is still pending.

The ABC has been supportive of our concerns about losing our precious ecosystems and have aired many of our reports on the issue: [numbat loss of habitat through burn](#) , [Are we burning in ignorance?](#) , [Scientist's concern](#) , [Landline on burns](#) , [Citizen scientist concern](#) , [Escaped burn December 2022](#)

Prior to the 2022-2023 fire season, we met with DBCA personnel in the Frankland and Perup regions and showed them direct evidence of environmental damage from their prescribed burns in the field. They acknowledged they could do better, and we were hopeful that we may have had some influence on the reduction of severity of forthcoming burns. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as in all areas of the south-west the size and severity of prescribed burning has been no different to previous years and we continue to witness extensive ecological damage.

The photos below are of the prescribed burn FRK_092 covering 3 forest blocks in the Walpole Wilderness Area (Mt. Roe National Park). The burn escaped the planned 14,801ha fire area resulting in a total burnt area of 25,000ha of core wilderness, including known mainland quokka habitat.

The total amount of burns planned in WA for 2022-2023 burn season can be seen <https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/fire/prescribed-burning/burns/burn-options-program>.

To date, regrettably our collective concerns and actions have fallen on deaf ears.

FaBWA is affiliated with the Denmark Environment Centre Inc. (DEC) and at the last Committee meeting DEC agreed to play a bigger role in the campaign as DEC believes this is the single most negative impact facing our environment and biodiversity and is occurring at an alarming rate and scale. So far, all of this work has been done by volunteers.

The DEC committee and FaBWA have concluded that to bring about change we need to step up the campaign and increase our activities.

After discussions with other organisations, we feel the only way to do this is to employ more staff and to start this process we are seeking funds to employ an Environmental Campaign Coordinator. DEC has commenced a fund-raising campaign, starting with our membership and an internet-based crowd funding drive: see [pozible](#).

This will add a higher level of professionalism to our campaign, enable us to have a continual presence to inform and educate the public, allow us to maintain strong connections with affiliated groups and more strongly progress our lobbying of government to recognise and act on this issue.

The main aim of this campaign is and will be to convince government to implement **an independent review** into current practices and to increase public awareness about the negative impacts to biodiversity as a result of the severity, the frequency and the scale of the current prescribed burn policy.

We are writing to organisations within Western Australia and beyond who we think may have concerns about the effectiveness and outcomes of prescribed burns. We would greatly appreciate any support your organisation may be able to provide, either financially or in kind. We hope you will align and collaborate with us in this campaign to bring about change to the current policy and to give the last remaining wilderness a better future.

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible through the [Denmark Environment Centre](#) website.
info@denviron.org.au <https://www.denmarkenvironmentcentre.org.au>



Photos: Prescribed burn FRK_092 covering 3 forest blocks in the Walpole Wilderness Area (Mt. Roe National Park).

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