

Friends of Lake Claremont NEWSLETTER



We hope you have been keeping warm throughout chilly August! We have plenty to talk about this month:

- David Free discusses **Our Birds** and results of the **Winter Bird Survey** (p2)
- Heidi Hardisty has suggested a fun new idea for this month's newsletter – **Our Frogs** (p3) if you'd like to contribute in a similar way let us know!
- **Greta Carroll** discussed happenings on Scott Reef when we screened "**Coral's Last Stand**" in last month's **Night Chats Review** by Hilary Heptinstall (p4)
- Peter Creighton's **Guided Walks** provide numerous benefits while sharing local knowledge (p5)
 - Tony Barr lets you know about the current **Activities and News** (p6)
 - The upcoming Night Chats (Tuesday September 16) talk about the rare **Night Parrot** with ornithologist **Neil Hamilton** (p7)

OUR BIRDS

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* NO KNOWN INDIGENOUS NAME
By David Free



Caspian Tern with an impressive catch. Photo credit: David Free

This tern, the largest local species, is globally widespread. It is mainly a bird of coasts and tidal rivers and can often be seen at Freshwater Bay, however we have sighted it at our lake.

In the breeding season, the bill is bright crimson and the crown black. Out of breeding season the bill is dull red, and the crown is more grey than black.

Caspian Tern feed on fish, which explains why they rarely come to the lake. This photo was taken on Rottnest Island golf course. After a long struggle, the bird was eventually successful in swallowing its catch.

Winter Bird Survey Results

On August 22nd my daughter Sacha and I conducted a survey of the birds at Lake Claremont. The morning was cool, overcast and still. Good winter rainfall has pretty much filled the lake. The gauge by the jetty showed the depth at approximately 1.95m.

We recorded 459 individuals of 38 species, which was slightly above normal for our winter surveys. Breeding activity was noted for Black Swan, Swampheaven, Coot, Galah, Red Wattlebird, Singing Honeyeater, and Welcome Swallow.

Duck numbers were mostly below average, coots above normal. Large numbers of Brown Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds were enjoying the flowering eucalypts.

It is worth noting that, after we had completed the survey, Sacha spotted an Inland Thornbill, which is rarely seen in the metropolitan area, on the edge of the Ballaruk bush.

OUR FROGS

Pobblebonk *Limnodynastes dorsalis* KYOOYA
By Heidi Hardisty



Photo credit: B. Maryan/WA Museum

Have you heard a strange noise in Lake Claremont recently?

Is it someone plucking a banjo? No. It's the male Western Banjo frog calling, aka the pobblebonk frog. The frogs are quite active in July and August. They are usually found near swamps and wetlands, but they are great burrowers so can be found some distance from water.

The photo below shows the same species that was accidentally unearthed by our editor while planting at their bush block north of Perth.



Bonk! Bonk!

“Frogs are great indicator species – if you have frogs around you know your environment is healthy as they will not tolerate pollution!”

HELP NEEDED: do you like frogs (and other little creatures)? We would love for you to join our wonderful contributors and take on the challenge of researching and submitting an article on a local creature of your choice each month. Please contact folc.wa@gmail.com if you are interested.

NIGHT CHATS

Greta Carroll screened “Corals’ Last Stand”
By Hilary Heptinstall



Greta Carroll and Heidi Hardisty

Our presenter this month was Greta Carroll who spoke about saving Scott Reef, which is 170km offshore from mainland Western Australia in the Browse Basin. We watched the film, “Corals’ Last Stand,” before Greta did her presentation.

Scott Reef is Australia's largest offshore coral reef, supporting over 1000 species, including endangered turtles, sea snakes and migratory pygmy blue whales. Sandy Islet on South Scott Reef, provides critical nesting habitat for green turtles that swim hundreds of kilometres to lay their eggs here.

Fossil fuel giant Woodside want to drill more than 50 gas wells around Australia’s magnificent Scott Reef.

This is unacceptable. As well as posing major risks to marine wildlife, it will also be a major contributor to Woodside’s proposed Burrup Hub project, a climate disaster that will produce billions of tonnes of emissions. The reef has been subject to coral bleaching. Standing up for Scott Reef and our climate has never been more important.

Extracting large amounts of gas from under the seabed threatens to sink nesting areas for endangered turtles. Noise pollution from drilling gas wells in and around Scott Reef would impact Blue Pygmy Whales that migrate through and forage for food at Scott Reef. The Federal Government has to make an important decision on the future of Scott Reef. They will decide whether to approve Woodside’s Browse gas project. This is one of the most important climate and environmental decisions that the government will make.

Greta is on a mission to save Scott Reef. The first thing she asked us to do was to urge our local MPs to watch a special screening of ‘Corals’ Last Stand’ at Parliament House in Canberra on September 3, so that they can make an informed decision. Go to Corals Last Stand website: <https://www.coralslaststand.com.au/take-action> to find a helpful template to write your local MP.

GUIDED WALKS

Thursday September 4, Saturday September 13 and Monday September 22 at 10am
Meet at the Tree of Life sculpture

Have you seen the Zebras at Lake Claremont?



Pink-eared Duck. David Free

Among the many water birds currently nesting at Lake Claremont are the visually striking pink-eared ducks, which are also known as zebra ducks.

From a distance, it can be difficult to see the small spot of pink feathers just behind the bird's eye for which the duck is named. It is much easier to recognise the bird by the black-and-white stripes on its neck and breast, and by its wide, flat bill.

Pink-eared ducks use their bills to filter microscopic plants and animals from the water, and a pair might be seen swimming head to tail in a circle to create a small whirlpool, drawing the desired food to the surface.

The first recorded breeding of pink-eared ducks in the Perth metropolitan area was at Lake Claremont in 1962. The ducks usually nest in a tree stump or hollow over water, and at Lake Claremont some pairs take advantage of suitably located nesting boxes. To hear more about life on the lake and the surrounding parkland, you can join one of three walks offered in September by the

Friends of Lake Claremont (FOLC). Shorter walks of about 45 minutes along the eastern side of the lake will take place on Thursday 4 September and Monday 22 September. A longer walk around the whole lake, lasting about 75 to 90 minutes, will be held on Saturday 13 September. All walks are free of charge and commence at 10 am at the Tree of Wonder statue, on the northern side of Tee Box Cafe, Lapsley Road, Claremont. There is no need to book- just turn up.

For more details, email FOLC at folc.wa@gmail.com.

Zebra duck in a nesting box at Lake Claremont.
Photo credit: David Free



ACTIVITIES AND NEWS

By Tony Barr



At the **August Busy Bee** we divided into three groups due to the large number of volunteers, with groups from Scotch College and PLC taking part. One group planted more trees on the grass to the east of the lake to provide future shade in the area as well as some arboreal habitat; one group weeding around the new plantings in the eastern buffer followed by planting some flooded gums on the eastern parkland; and one group weeding around the shed.



I recently read a short article about the **evolution of the soil** from cultivation (farm), equivalent to the prior golf course to a boreal forest from the Organic Consumers Association. It was based on the northern hemisphere but indicated that the soil changes from a bacteria dominated soil to a fungi-dominated soil whilst the vegetation develops from annual weeds to perennial weeds then to shrubs followed by fast growing trees and then a healthy and mature forest ecosystem. It estimated that such a transition takes around 40 years. It may take longer in our semi-arid climate and sandy soil, but I think we are well along the path to a mature forest ecosystem.



As at the evening of 26th August, the **cumulative annual rainfall** at the Town of Claremont's gauge at Lake Claremont was 657mm, with over 200mm since the July reading. This has been an excellent winter for rain, with the Bureau of Meteorology's Perth station reporting above average rainfall already for each month of winter.



We have a space at the **Town of Claremont's Celebrate Lake Claremont** event. It will be on Sunday 14 September between 10am and 1pm on the eastern parkland near the Tee Box Cafe. I'll be asking for volunteers for the day soon.



We are also after volunteers to partake in **turtle protection** during the nesting season – roughly September to early December. This involves patrolling around the lake or responding to calls from the public and trying to protect nesting turtles and their eggs. If you are interested, please also send an email to FOLC, and indicate whether you have previously attended a training session on turtle tracking.



We also remain members of the **Containers for Change** scheme in WA. Our membership number is C10906559.



I will be attending the **Lake Claremont Advisory Committee** meeting on 11th September with Town of Claremont and other community members. If members of FOLC wish for an issue to be raised, please email me at folc.wa@gmail.com.

SEPTEMBER NIGHT CHATS

The Ghost Bird of the Australian Desert with Neil Hamilton Tuesday 16th September
By Heidi Hardisty



Night Parrot. *Image credit: Arianna Urso/Western Australian Museum*

Neil Hamilton has devoted much of his time in recent years to finding and studying the elusive Night Parrot, one of Australia's rarest birds. Listed as a Critically Endangered species, there may be fewer than 200 individuals left in the spinifex plains of Western Australia. Neil has spent more than 30 years as an ornithologist working to understand and protect birds.

Night Chats will be held on Tuesday 16th September at Claremont Lawn Tennis Club, on Shenton Place in Claremont. Doors open at 5:30 pm for refreshments, with a 6:00 PM start. No bookings are required, but a gold coin donation is appreciated. Everyone is welcome.

CONTACT

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If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, please write to us or join us for our busy bee on the second Sunday of every month – this month's is Sunday 14th September.



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