

CREEK LINES

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 15 JUN 2025

We care for the falls



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From the Chair

It's with great pleasure that I introduce you to the next edition of FOULF's regular Creeklines newsletter. FOULF's volunteers have presented yet another vibrant and informative update for you about the goings-on at Upper Lesmurdie Falls, and I'd like to thank everyone for their time and contributions putting this newsletter together. In the following pages you will get a glimpse of what's been happening around the Falls and hopefully be inspired to visit the Falls, see it for yourself and maybe be inspired to join in on some of our upcoming activities.



A sumptuous morning tea each Busy Bee is a great time to make new friends and have a natter about our common interests.



2019 winners of the Australian Community Media Landcare Community Group Award.



2024 Winner of the Kalamunda Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Not For profit.



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The seasons have now turned towards the cooler months, and although we weren't blessed with any substantial rain until late May, this has provided some good opportunities for FOULF to undertake more maintenance work along the brook - including regular annual rock work, weed management and planting preparation.

Our propagation team has been busy cultivating the seed our volunteers collected in past months and we now have some 3,000 seedlings growing in our greenhouse and propagation shelters at the Kalamunda Men's Shed, some of which are already ready to plant in the coming weeks.

FOULF continues to promote our work at local events, on our website and through social media, and we are proud to have gained several more new members amongst our ranks. We hope to see you all out with us at our regular monthly Sunday busy-bees at some point - not just for your much appreciated hard work and support, but also because we truly love to see you out at the Falls, chat to you and your friends/family, relax afterwards over morning tea and gain an appreciation of what we can all achieve together.

Speaking about working together, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our regular supporters including the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, the Kalamunda Men's Shed, The State Natural Resource Management Office, SG Environmental, Tree and Palm Solutions, Magic Garden Supplies and the FOULF Committee for their ongoing support of our group. We truly couldn't do it without you.

Looking forwards I am excited to think the seedlings from last year's plantings have now received a substantial drink, helping them to sink their roots deep into the rich soils around the Brook - and this will set the scene for this year's plantings to thrive. Every year our fabulous volunteers plant and weed parts of the Falls, watch them over summer as the landscape dries, hope for their plants to survive the dry weather (and risk of fires!) and then rejoice as the rains come again. Over many years now we have managed to transform the Falls back into a semblance of the natural beauty that was here many years ago - and it's clear we are making a big difference.

There are so many thing to do, so many people giving up their time for others to enjoy the Falls and so many more things for us to achieve - but with a strong sense of community and such a great place to work in, I am confident we will see the Falls continue to thrive - not just in an environmental sense, but also in our own hearts, as a place we can all enjoy into the future.

I hope you enjoy Creeklines as much as I do - and hope to meet you along the trails one day soon!

Mick Davis,
FOULF Chairperson

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Busy Bee - 9 March

Report from Nick Underwood

With Autumn officially here, but no discernible moisture yet in the air, (unless you live in Queensland) we took advantage of Sunday's mild temperatures to ramp up our maintenance down on Lesmurdie Brook.

Unlike last year when the creek dried up completely, this year has seen a reasonable Summer flow, delivering moisture to thirsty riparian residents along its length.

To buffer against expected good Winter rains, a small team of eager beavers made up of Mark, Claudia, Maya and Nick worked on armouring up three riffles in the creek near the Weir Car Park and reinforcing the adjacent banks to minimise erosion.



Mark, Maya and Claudia pack a good riffle.



Caroline and Adri do their bit in the plant nursery. Coralee tends re-potted natives in one of our shadehouses.

Meanwhile up at the shade houses our propagation team of Carmel, Terry, Coralee, Nanette, Marie, Caroline and Adri re-potted some 500 plants to bring our season's stock close to 3000 and not a single one purchased. This crucial aspect of FOULF's activities has saved precious funds for the group and provides great satisfaction in the knowledge seed stock has been locally sourced.





Further downstream from the riffle action, the Weed Warriors comprising Steph, Mike R and John attacked outbursts of blackberry with welder's gloves on hand and repellent liberally sprayed to deter any thirsty ticks. As is usual with blackberry, the harder you look, the more you find and in the end they filled three bins with the rampant pest.

A truck load of blackberry

Our last team of Dick, Mike M and Paul took on the task of unearthing two sets of steps heading down towards the creek from Falls Road, then packing roadbase (kindly donated by Magic Garden Supplies at the bottom of the scarp on Welshpool Road.) in between the risers to offer safe, trafficable access down to the creek. They even had enough material to dress the steps previously created on the north side of the main weir. All three are now impressive-looking structures and we expect they will be well utilised into the future.



Paul, Mike M and Dick step up to pathway repairs.

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From this.....



.....to this..



.....to this.

As for the independents, First Aid Officer and fort holder, Joanna, had no calls for the former and a few to chat to under the latter. Without her in that role we would be found seriously wanting in a medical emergency.

Way up in the backblocks of the Erosion Gully, weed whisperer, Andrew Mitchell continued his patrol seeking out ferals for uprooting and a large lantana was found on the gully's perimeter that will need a team effort to eradicate.



Andrew looms over a vagrant stinkwort.



Joanna informs a couple of visitors.

With two to three hours of effort behind us, all reconvened back at the marquee for that delightful social intercourse so enjoyed by volunteers everywhere. Literally and metaphorically 'on common ground' and well lubricated by Angie's amazing munchies. Just one of many good reasons to put aside a couple of hours of your time to join us down the creek on the second Sunday of each month. We look forward to your company. In a postscript, later that week a major storm front blew through depositing a huge amount of rain on the catchment which charged down the creek filling the dams and weirs to overflowing. The perfect full stop to Summer.



A well earned cuppa.

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On The Wing

Bird News and Views

By Rachel Green

We haven't done as many surveys as we hoped in the last three months because life got in the way unexpectedly, but we are back on the job and looking forward to finding out what birds are here in Autumn and Winter.

There has been a highlight in our surveying, though, and that is seeing a robin we didn't expect to see here. A word or two about robins first.

Some people think our robins are like the "Robin Redbreasts" in Britain, (which appear so often on Christmas cards). They aren't. Our robins, so called in Western Australia, are actually members of the flycatcher family, in Britain they are part of the thrush family. They are simply called robins because the early British colonists thought they looked similar to the British ones.

We have at least five species of robin in Western Australia, and only two have red breasts.

The one we most expect to see in Upper Lesmurdie Falls and the surrounding area is the Scarlet Robin, with its red breast, white area on its head and black in its wings. One Noongar name for the Scarlet Robin is Karlimoot and Noongar legend tells us it got its red chest because it fought with the feisty little Willie Wagtail, (called Chitty Chitty or Djitti Djitti) got injured and the blood running out of its beak stained its chest red. Such legends make the birds even more interesting, especially as we also have Willie Wagtails in Upper Lesmurdie Falls.



Female red-capped robin. Upper Lesmurdie Falls Brook by Rachel Green April 2025.

So which other robins are there in south-west WA and which would we expect to see in Upper Lesmurdie Falls? There is the:

1. Scarlet Robin - with its red breast and white patch on the head.
2. Red-capped Robin - with a redbreast and red on its head.
3. Western Yellow Robin - with a yellow breast.
4. White-Breasted Robin - with a white breast.
5. Hooded Robin - with a black hood over its head and a whitish grey chest.

These descriptions mainly apply to the males as the females are often less brightly coloured.

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The ones we'd expect to see at Upper Lesmurdie falls are the Scarlet Robin, Western Yellow Robin and the White-Breasted Robin. We know they are elsewhere in the City of Kalamunda, and we have seen them within the Lesmurdie area recently.

Have we seen the Scarlet Robin here? No. The White Breasted Robin? No. The Western Yellow Robin? No. However, much to our surprise and enjoyment in April we saw a Red-capped Robin. We were so surprised especially as we have not seen the others here and this one is far more common east of Perth in more inland areas such as the Wheatbelt. This beautiful little robin (see photographs 1 and 2) was sitting on some branches just over the brook from the top carpark. What a delight. We only saw the female Red-capped Robin and not the male. The female Red-capped Robin can be confusing as her red cap is more a faint terracotta colour and she has little or no red on her chest, just sometimes a small patch of peachy red colour. It would be easy to dismiss her as another little brown bird, of which, of course, there are many.



Male red-capped robin. Wallis Park Lesmurdie 2025 by Rachel Green.



Male scarlet robin. Carmel 2025 by Rachel Green.

Please keep an eye open for any robins, red, white or yellow when you are working away or visiting Upper Lesmurdie Falls. And keep a look out for the male Red-capped Robin, (see photograph 3 taken in Wallis Park) as we are still wondering why the female was on her own. We still hope to see the other robins. Surely they are here somewhere? Here is a picture (photograph 4 taken in Carmel) of the Scarlet Robin to help you identify it, as it can be confused with the Red-capped Robin, but it doesn't have a red head!

If the robins are not here, we wonder why not. Our bird counts have been low nearly every time we visit. For example, out of our last eight visits the number of species seen have ranged from 8-14. Yet in other localities nearby we have consistently seen more. We saw 23 at our most recent visit to Wallis Park in Lesmurdie, for example.

The low numbers are a mystery to us especially as there are plants flowering here all through summer, including *Grevillea bipinnatifida* (*Fuschia Grevillea*) which is usually a favourite with honeyeaters. Is there a problem with cats? dogs? foxes? Or Kookaburras which raid nests and eat baby birds? Or is it a lack of insects which many birds rely on for the protein in their diet? Of course, global warming or human interference (not the Friends group, I mean tourists and dog walkers) could be having an impact. We don't know and find it disturbing given that the work the Friends group has done has created what looks like ideal bird habitat. We will keep surveying. Please keep a look out too. Spring is the easiest time to spot birds because they usually call then, whereas out of breeding season they can just move quietly and hide in the foliage. Maybe we just can't see for looking!

Happy bird watching.

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Busy Bee - 13 April

Report from Mark Simpson

"For the April Busy Bee, we took on two main jobs – further preparing our seedlings for planting out this winter and improving the water flow at Guy's Crossing. Although there was the potential for a shower to fall, the rain held off and we had fine weather conditions for our tasks.



Young kangaroo paws enjoy a drink.



New recruit Susie sinks some seeds.

Terry and Carmel Ballinger were accompanied by Susie Underwood, Kathy Twine, Caroline Brooke and young Adri Chetri in attending to the propagation tasks at Kalamunda Men's Shed. There are now well over 3000 seedlings ready for planting out once the weather conditions permit, which is likely to be June and July, although some Warrine (native yams) may be planted out in May in the area adjacent to related signage.

Note: The rain came late and the initial planting didn't take place until the June BB.



Adri gets his hands dirty.



The reeds at Guy's Crossing needed a good haircut.

Reed beds are nature's filtration system, oxygenating and purifying the water whilst providing important habitat to a range of flora and fauna, which is why FOULF planted these reeds in the first place. However, the reeds may occasionally need to be cut if they are exacerbating erosion, by diverting the main flow onto vulnerable banks, and to improve the flow of water. The cut reeds were placed to provide mulch for the upper portions of the riverbank.

John Greenwood, Sally Ballinger, Mark and Zoe Simpson, and Ben Clennell took the plunge to clear a pathway through the reeds either side of Guy's Crossing, a bridge largely constructed by a guy called Guy, so that at those times when the water flow is at its greatest, the reeds don't seriously impede the rate of water flow, thereby causing the brook to flood.



Mark and Sally take a breather.



A task for everyone.

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Also at Guy's Crossing, Mike Robinson, Paul Fisher, Carl Danzi and new volunteer, Jared Harvey (welcome to the team, Jared), fetched and placed some particularly large and heavy rocks at key strategic locations to divert potential floodwater flow back into the brook without eroding its banks. At the same location, Nick Underwood, when not collecting photographic evidence of our activities, pruned many tree branches that were dead or damaged by some recent gusty winds. These were moved to various locations to improve the habitat for indigenous fauna. Also on the scene was Chris Harwood, who is conducting a GIS mapping project and has just recruited John Greenwood to help set up an online mapping home for FOULF which will include the ability to show the distribution of multiple species of weed on a map with geological features, the brook and the paths. This will facilitate third parties in conducting weed eradication measures at the correct location, for example. Andrew Mitchell, meanwhile, went off on a solo mission to root out exotic flora. Joanna Anderson took on her usual role of First Aid Officer ready to administer any first aid if needed, whilst looking after our marquee and chatting to any passing visitors.



The overflow buffer takes shape.



After these tasks we all made our way back to base camp for some nosh which was put together by Margaret Sorah with several others chipping in some food they had prepared to make up for Angie's absence, and real yummy it was too. A big 'Thankyou' to everyone who turned up and we hope to see you on future busy bees when fresh challenges will arise.

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Featured this issue -

Fabaceae Wattle Family

This issue we are celebrating the wattle family. These three species are in bud now and will flower shortly. Look out for them as you walk through the site.

There are 200 species of Wattle (Acacia) in Western Australian Jarrah forests alone. Wattles start life as a seedling with leaves, but most species quickly discard them and they are replaced by phyllodes (modified leaf-stalks) which retain plant moisture more efficiently. Prickly Moses (*A. pulchella*) is one of the notable exceptions. Mostly trees and shrubs have many tiny white, yellow or gold coloured flowers which form into tight fluffy spherical or cylindrical (sausage-shape) heads. The fruit is a legume (pod).

Acacia alata Winged Wattle (alata meaning 'winged')

An upright, spreading small shrub, 0.3-2.1 metres high with flattened phyllodes that are continuous with the zig zag branches and a profusion of white-cream flowers from April to December. It grows in a variety of soils, near water, on rocky hills, breakaways, salt pans, and clay flats. There are four varieties of *Acacia alata* and three of them are listed as 'not threatened' by DBCA, but there is a var. *platyptera* that is listed as "Priority Four" meaning it is rare or near threatened. However, only *Acacia alata* var. *alata* is known to occur in our area.



Acacia pulchella Prickly Moses



Acacia pulchella

Photos: M. Kealley & J. Stevens

A small shrub, 0.3-3m high with abundant golden yellow flowers from May to December. Fully grown, dwarf - like variants also grow to only 20-30cm high. It grows in sandy soils, clay loam over laterite in low-lying areas, near swamps and watercourses. It is one of the most common plants found in bushland around the southwest and is one of only a small number of Acacia species with true leaves. The prickly nature of this shrub means that it is ideal as a barrier to shield areas from human and animal intrusion and is a good nesting shrub for small birds. It is one of very few plants thought to inhibit Dieback (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*).

The name "prickly moses" is said to be a corruption of "prickly mimosa". One of the most popular flowers used in symbolic poetry and messaging, the bright yellow mimosa flower typically portrays the sun. On the 8th March each year, for la Festa della Donna or International Womens Day, Australian mimosa/wattles are given to women in Italy to symbolise love and appreciation (*Susan Chenery, Sydney Morning Herald*).

Acacia teretifolia

This pungent shrub grows 0.2 to 0.5m with an open and erect habit and has multiple stems. It has green to grey, erect, cylindrical to occasionally flat phyllodes (modified leaf stems which are leaf-like in appearance and function). It flowers between May and July forming simple spherical flower-heads in bright, light golden coloured flowers. The curved seed pods form later.



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Busy Bee - 6 May

Report from Mark Simpson

"For the May Busy Bee, we celebrated Mother Earth's Day by taking on two main tasks – further preparing our seedlings for planting out this winter and removing some invasive exotics from an area around the upper flow dam. We had fine weather conditions for our tasks.

Liam Whiting, Elijah Taylor, Mark and Zoe Simpson, Nick Underwood, Jackie Anderson and Coralie Tester braved ground that is permanently boggy, even after the long summer drought, again clearing a pathway through the reeds to tackle in particular two invasive exotics that will outcompete the native vegetation in these conditions - Chinese tallow and taro, but also some nightshade, bleeding heart and others. Chinese tallow trees are problematic due to their rapid growth, prolific seeding ability to outcompete native vegetation, alter ecosystems and reduce biodiversity. We had to hack our way through reeds to get as close to the base as possible, then after sawing through the tree, an application of herbicide was applied to prevent future growth sprouting up from the roots.



The team in the rush jungle of the upper flow dam.

Taro (also known as Elephant Ears) on the other hand is a root vegetable widely grown in south eastern Asia, the Pacific and Africa, where the corms are a food staple. It is poisonous raw but, after cooking which destroys the acrid Calcium Oxalate, it becomes a nutritional food. More to the point it has no place at Upper Lesmurdie Falls. If grabbed near the base these can be pulled up easily in such moist soil, after which we separated the roots from the leaves and stalks, and disposed of them elsewhere to prevent proliferation.



Liam wrestles a big taro root.

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Jackie and Coralee wrench out a bleeding heart.

Another activity that took place was a geological assessment conducted by Mike Robinson and geologist Glenn Simon, who wandered around the site targeting any outcropping rocks along the way. Of particular note, there are many types of granite, the appearance of which is a reflection of the speed at which the rock cooled from its molten state. Very rapid cooling produced very fine-grained granite but slower cooling resulted in larger crystals and hence a coarser appearance. Also, of particular interest were the dolerite dykes which form when magma is forced up through cracks in the granite and are therefore often very narrow. Interestingly, dolerite breaks down more rapidly than granite when the agent is chemical decomposition but is more resistant than granite to physical weathering - such as occurs in streams.



.....here just part of their efforts.

Carmel and Terry Ballinger, Kathy Twine, Carolyn Brook and young Adri set about re-potting over six hundred kangaroo paws at the propagation units, further adding to the stock of seedlings ready for planting out once the weather conditions permit, which is likely to be June and July.



Next year's crop already under way in one of two new glass houses.

Holding fort at our base camp was Joanna Anderson on first aid duty and public liaison. After our tasks we settled down for a delicious morning tea masterminded by Susie Underwood, with contributions from Carmel, Margaret Sorah and Ruth Greenwood.

It was a great turnout for Mother Earth's day and a good time was had by all.



Cheers for a great effort. Geologist Glenn (third from right.) drilled down on the landscape with Mike R.

Bits 'n' Bobs

A Committee of Three

By Nick Underwood

On a recent creek-side conference to plan upcoming busy bee activities, Mike Robinson and I were surprised to be joined by a local who seemed quite intent on giving us his two bob's worth.

We were standing beside the upper weir when he approached, intending, we surmised, to slake his thirst. But no. He hopped right up and tilted his head forward, inviting a scratch which we assumed was the marsupial equivalent of a handshake.

Formalities over, he poked his nose into Mike's business to make sure he was properly positioned in the pecker order then wedged himself between us to survey the scene.

I could almost hear the request, "My family and I would appreciate a small paw bridge to the water so we can have a drink without getting our claws wet".

From there as a committee of three we moved down to the main weir stopping occasionally to look at things and each time the local stopped with us. Following twice over the bridge at the weir he managed to slip a leg down a large crack and struggled to get out, as if to say, "And while you're at it, get this hole fixed!"

An approach by a lady with a large dog brought the meeting to an abrupt end and our new committee member beat a hasty retreat into the bush.

We suspect he/she may have been hand-reared and hope any future close encounters of the herd kind with our mob don't wreck the trust he currently displays.



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KEEP GOING

To keep ahead of the stricter rules introduced by the ATO for environmental Not-For-Profits organisations, FOULF decided to apply to become a charity.

This was awarded to FOULF, by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), on 30 Jan 2025 and was back dated to 2023.

Our experienced maintenance, propagation and weeding teams keep our costs remarkably low, but our income is very insecure and adhoc - we are currently reviewing our fundraising options. Our first move has been to apply to DMIRS for a Fundraising (Charitable Collections) licence, which was awarded on 14 Apr 2025.



LICENCE NO. CC23860

This is to certify that, in accordance with the provisions of the Charitable Collections Act 1946 (CC Act), a licence has been granted to **Friends of Upper Lesmurdie Falls Inc.** to collect money or goods for a charitable purpose.

Date of issue: 14 APRIL 2025

APPLICATION

All licences issued under the CC Act are subject to Standard Conditions imposed by the Commissioner in accordance with section 12(2) of the CC Act. These are in addition to, and do not derogate from, any additional specific conditions that may be imposed on a licence under that section.

A breach of the conditions may result in revocation of the licence, or prosecution for an offence under any applicable offence provision in the CC Act.

WEED WARRIORS

By Steph Bewick and Mike Robinson

This edition will focus on three weeds, Chinese tallow tree, bleeding heart tree, and mint. These have established themselves to varying degrees within the creek itself and along the banks, and have the potential to proliferate there and beyond.

Mint - LAMIACEAE

There are many varieties of mint: *Mentha aquatica*, *Mentha X spicata* (Spearmint), *Mentha X suaveolens* (Apple Mint), *Mentha X piperita* (Eau-De-Cologne Mint) that are garden escapes, all of which are difficult to control. Mint grows by sending out rhizomes, effectively spreading and expanding the plant. We are not certain which specific variety has a stranglehold in our patch but it has become so abundant that it carpets many shady locations east of the Terraces Car Park and primarily south of the creek where the soil is moist for most of the year. We are very concerned about the rate and area of spread and we are on the search for an effective approach to large scale eradication, as hand weeding would prove to be impractical at this stage. Its very location along and in the creek, renders any herbicide untenable. (Greg Keighery, 'Wetland Weeds And Their Control' 1993.)



Sapium sebiferum (syn.Triadica sebifera) Chinese tallow tree

This tree is native to eastern Asia and its other common names are: Florida aspen, chicken tree, grey popcorn tree, and candleberry tree. It is a small to medium deciduous tree which is fast growing, often spreading by root sprouts and seed. In autumn the mid-green leaves turn crimson, with some yellow, orange and ruby-red foliage. In November and December greenish yellow flower spikes appear on the tips of the branches, followed by 3-celled capsules. The fruit ripens and turns brown in autumn, then splits open to reveal three seeds which are covered with a layer of pure white wax. A substantial industry once revolved around the harvesting and processing of these waxy seeds. The wax was used for candles, soap, cloth dressing and fuel. The kernels produce an oil called stillingia oil that is used in machine oils, as a crude lamp oil, and in making varnishes and paints. The leaf of the Chinese tallow tree (CTT, *Sapium sebiferum* (L.) Roxb) has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to treat eczema, shingles, edema, swelling, ascites, scabs, and snakebites.

Chinese tallow trees have a milky sap that is toxic to people (and cattle). Ingestion can cause nausea and vomiting. Skin contact can cause irritation. Always wear protective clothing when treating plants

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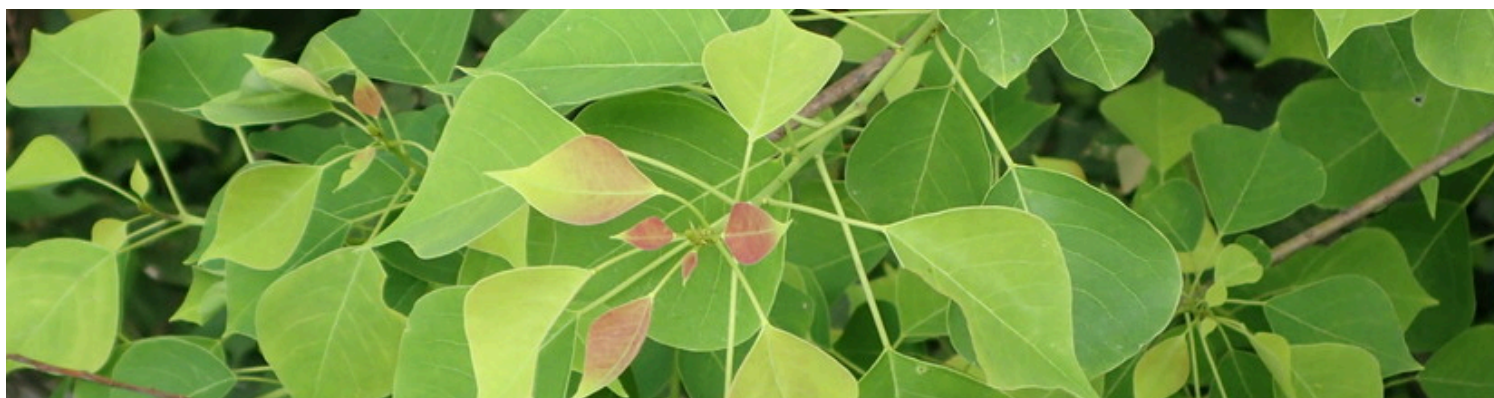
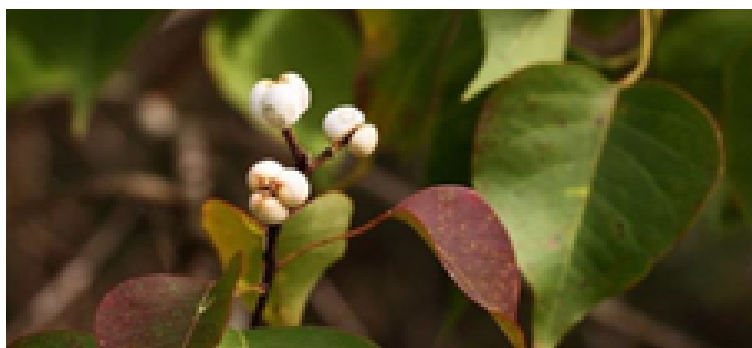


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***Homalanthus populifolius*, bleeding heart tree, Queensland poplar or native poplar.**

The 'bleeding heart tree' is a fast-growing shrub or small tree to 4m with grey-green triangular, heart or diamond-shaped stalked leaves that have an elongated tip; some older leaves turn red, hence the name "bleeding heart". It produces long terminal spikes of small greenish-yellow flowers in spring followed by bluish capsule fruits. There are two species of *Homalanthus* in Australia (*H. nove-guineensis* and *H. populifolius*) and both are very similar in appearance. *H. nove-guineensis* is native to the Kimberly region and other parts of tropical Australia. *H. populifolius* is native to NSW, Queensland, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Both are considered weeds in certain areas - particularly in wetlands and along creeks - but *H. populifolius* is the one that is a problem for us. It is spread by water and, possibly, birds. It's ability to grow quickly, spread rapidly, and outcompete native plants by blanketing and smothering, means we need to be vigilant in spotting and removing seedlings. Large plants can be manually removed but care needs to be taken to prevent contact with the milky sap as the latex is poisonous and harmful to the eyes.

Bleeding heart has been used in landscape rehabilitation projects. The bark and leaves yield black dye which is used for staining baskets and other similar items. The plant is toxic to humans and animals as it contains isoquinoline alkaloids. These toxins can cause liver damage and seizures in humans when ingested in large quantities.



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Volunteer Profile

Relatively new to FOULF, Nick Underwood applied his talents to production of the newsletter and oversaw the establishment of a display set-up to take our story to the public. He currently holds the position of Vice Chair on our executive committee.

BACKGROUND: lived mostly in WA or elsewhere?

I was born and raised in Canterbury, New Zealand and moved to Australia in 1979. In 1983 after 'Australia 2' snatched the Americas Cup in Newport, I migrated to Western Australia, my home for the last 42 years.

Q: What attracted you to the Darling Scarp lifestyle?

A: Living in the bush and a slower-paced lifestyle attracted me to the scarp. Not enough trees for me down in the burbs.

Q: How long have you lived in the Hills?

A: I've been enjoying the rarified air of the Scarp now for 39 years.

Q: How did your affinity for the bush start?

A: Up to the age of eight I lived on a farm next to a creek in North Canterbury. I loved nothing better than spending all day wandering along that creek until dinnertime. In later years I hunted wild pigs and possums in the foothills of the Southern Alps. In the early 80s I spent a year or so in outback Queensland building cattle dips and concrete tanks so got a good taste for the Aussie bush. And now, having spent my earliest years roaming up and down a creek, here I am at the latter part of my life back down the creek.



Up to my ankles in mint and taro.

Q: Have you had any work/personal milestones with your involvement with nature, flora and fauna etc?

A: The last 30 years of my working life were taken up producing a 4WD magazine and trip books for 4W Drivers and running 4WD tagalong tours, so work has given me the opportunity to explore a lot of Western Australia and beyond.

My favourite destinations are remote station country in the ancient Pilbara and the even more remote, trackless landscape of the Great Victoria Desert.

In 1996 with others, I created Track Care WA, an organisation dedicated to maintaining tracks and campsites throughout WA. With a motto of 'Access for the future' we conducted clean-ups from the Canning Stock Route to coastal tracks in the Southwest. Today, nearly 30 years later, TCWA is a significant influence representing public stewardship for the bush and does a lot of work with DBCA, indigenous communities and bush-wise NGOs.

Q: When did you join FOULF and what was your motivation?

A: When I first experienced Lesmurdie Brook it ran (not that you could see much of it) through a solid infestation of feathergrass, blackberry and various non-indigenous trees.

About four years ago I found FOULF with a display at the Kalamunda Men's Shed open day and was impressed by their enthusiasm and commitment. And even more impressed by the transformation they'd effected down at the creek. I wanted to be part of them.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your connection with FOULF?

A: The camaraderie, the community spirit, the genuine and effortless enthusiasm of the volunteers, the knowledge they share and their unwavering commitment to the cause.



My eight year old's adventure playground complete with frogs and eels.

Editor note:

In 2022, Nick was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) "For service to the community, and to travel writing".

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THEN AND NOW

A stunning contrast



2016 Lower flow dam. After a few years of hard work clearing invasive weeds, laying pathways and constructing flow dams, (note the upper flow dam in the background.) the space is ready for the return of native flora.



Wow! Eight years later and re-introduced native vegetation has reclaimed the landscape. Ain't nature grand! That said, our weed warriors must be ever vigilant - note the bulrushes on the left due for eradication.

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Looking Forward

From Mike Robinson

As we enter winter, our traditional summer maintenance activities give way to the need to get plants in the ground as early as possible. The Propagation Group have been working very hard since the end of the last planting season and have raised in excess of 3,000 perky little plants for us to get in the ground. That is a really great effort, and with over 150 mls of rain since the 30th of May, it is now time to get started. Planting this season will be split between our volunteers at Busy Bees and a group of Alcoa employees who joined us for a corporate day on Friday the 13 of June. The Alcoans planted out 600 seedlings, leaving us with about 2,500 to do - and we started with our Busy Bee on the 8 of June. This was our first foray into engaging with companies for a corporate day outing. We will use it as a learning experience and see whether it is something we can use to both get more done than we could on our own and to promote our work. There are a lot of companies who are keen to put back into the community in this way and the range of activities that they are prepared to undertake vary widely. We will need to try and create a mutual benefit situation by matching up the activities that are important to us with the capabilities of the candidate companies. So it will be interesting to see how it all pans out.

The old weather patterns seem to be a thing of the past now. We had the severe summer drought last year and this year has again been very dry – just 65 mls since the beginning of November until late May, which is just half of the average over the last 30 years. Fortunately the bush has coped surprisingly well this year, which is in stark contrast to last year, and the brook has flowed right through summer and autumn this year. Although we have lost some of the plants we put in over the last couple of years, we have good numbers of survivors – particularly on the flat, streamside areas near the Falls. There are still spaces in that area that need planting and that will therefore likely be the main target for this year's planting program. Another target was to plant native yams (*Dioscorea hastifolia*) near the Aboriginal interpretive sign on the hill at the far eastern end of the site. This was completed at the June Busy Bee.

Although the planting program will take priority until it is completed, we expect to reach that point fairly quickly. We will therefore have time to continue with our other high priority tasks. The Propagation Group has already started growing next years' crop and that will continue throughout the year. Our weed control program is making great progress, especially with our eradication targets. Watsonia is emerging now and can be tackled with hand weeding as the rain has now softened the ground in most areas. By spring this year we are aiming to reach eradication stage for watsonia on the entire block south of Falls Road and from the eastern boundary right down to the Weir Car Park on the north side. Many other species have reached the stage where the only plants are new seedlings and we will continue to ensure that no new seed is added while we patiently work through the seedlings that pop up from the residual seed bank in the soil. Burns promote germination in many of our weedy species and that can be a good thing. In areas where the seed bank is getting low, it is an advantage to get a good germination from the remaining seed and remove them. Hopefully leaving us with an almost completely depleted woody weed seed bank. A DBCA controlled burn is imminent south of Falls Road and it is likely they will follow with a burn on the north side in the next year or two. Riffle repairs will continue where and when required and we will address the erosion problem at Guy's Crossing. Although we would normally do most work in the brook over the summer, we want to utilise the water flow to assist in redirecting the bulk of the flow at Guy's Crossing further to the right as you face downstream.

Path refurbishment work is planned but will depend on having time, equipment and funds available. However we are hopeful that this high priority work can proceed. The paths are now 10 years old and are showing considerable wear. We need to top up the aggregate and create robust run off channels to slow down erosion. Once again Magic Garden Supplies has stepped up to help us with aggregate supplies, for which we are extremely grateful. If we can get rock down to the site, we still have work to do on both the flow dams. We have sources for the rock but are still trying to sort out transporting the rock to the site. Once we have solved that problem we will be keen to start those repairs. So you can see that there is more to do than we will probably have the time and resources to undertake over the winter. However it is good to have our targets and we can carry over into the next period if we don't complete them in this one. Whatever transpires, with your continued support we will move mountains.



Good winter rains will replenish the bush and soften the ground to allow easier removal of weeds like watsonia.



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Dieback Project Wraps Up

Recently we completed the final step in our Dieback project which was funded by the State Natural Resource Management Program (State NRM). This final step was the spraying of sections of vegetation with a 0.3% phosphite solution to provide temporary protection from the *Phytophthora* fungi that cause dieback. We didn't have the human resources or the funds to spray the entire area so we chose an area where we considered we could have the most impact with the resources available. We also had to take into consideration the accessibility of any prospective area. With those constraints in mind we chose mainly high ground on the northern side of our project area. The block south of Falls Road had already been ruled out because a DBCA controlled burn is due there any day now.

Dick Parker set up a 1000 litre IBC on the back of his ute with a pump and two hoses connected to it. One was 40 metres and the other slightly shorter at 30 metres. Each hose was fitted with an adjustable spray nozzle and Nick and I walked our way through the bush giving the vegetation a thorough wetting with the solution. All low vegetation was covered and taller species such as parrot bush (*Banksia sessilis*), young jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and young sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseri*) were sprayed to a height that the spray could reach (about 5 metres). The long hoses allowed us to reach up to 50 metres into the bush.

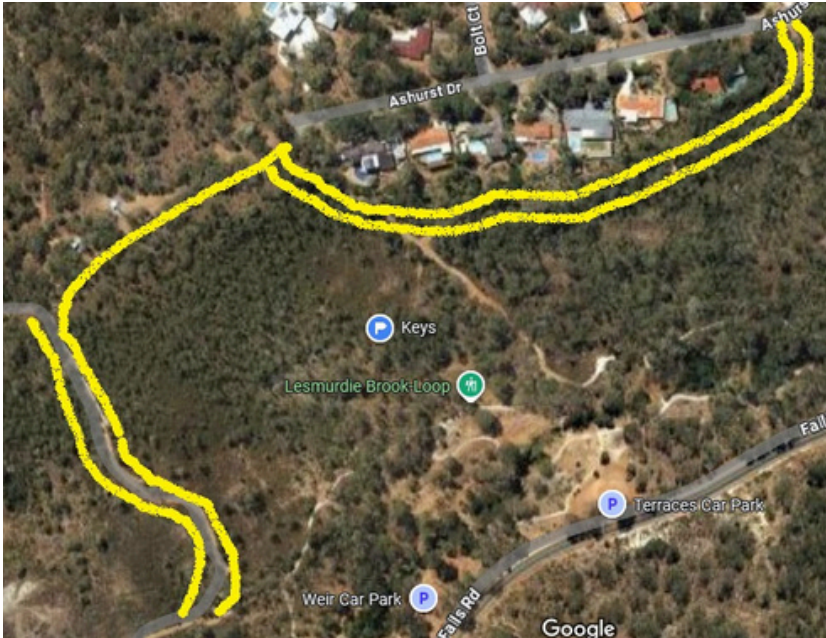
Working off Ashurst Drive at the top of the ridge north of the creek we sprayed from access tracks downhill towards the creek for a total distance of approximately 850 metres and we estimate that the area treated was approximately five hectares.



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This work had been planned for a long time but the weather conditions we needed just didn't present themselves any earlier than this. Ideally we needed at least a day of dry weather before and after spraying and, of course, a dry day to spray. We also needed temperatures below 25 degrees with either no wind or at least very little wind. It took us over five months to get those conditions. Having completed this exercise, we have a good understanding of what can be done with the equipment that we have. That will enable us to consider further dieback spraying work if we consider it to be a high priority. With the ability to reach up to 50 metres into the bush and the distribution of tracks in the project area, we believe we can cover the great majority of the site. The limitations we face are the cost of the phosphite (the cost for this exercise was \$800) and the people to do it. This time we did it with just three people and it took about nine hours. Having an extra couple of people would make the operation better and that would mean needing about \$1,000, and five people for a full day, for every kilometre or so of spraying. In addition, spraying is best done on a week day, when visitor numbers are lower, and that limits the pool of people who would be available. For a group our size that is a huge effort.



Other than spraying for dieback control, we will also need to look at phosphite injection. This is only suitable for trees with a diameter at chest height in excess of 100 mm. So just the bigger trees but the advantage is that the injection treatment lasts up to five years whereas the spraying will give protection for a maximum of only two. Thus a serious control program would need to consider using both methods together. In addition to dieback, we are also facing a serious threat from another fungal disease – marri canker. Recent research indicates that phosphite treatment can also help protect marris from canker. If canker was to cause substantial losses of marri, the ecological impact would be massive.

SPONSORS

Once again we would like to express our deep gratitude to our major sponsors, State NRM, Perth Region NRM, the Rivers and Estuaries section of DBCA, the Rotary Club of Kalamunda, the City of Kalamunda, Lotterywest, Community Bank, Forrestfield and High Wycombe (Bendigo Bank), SG Enviro, Tree and Palm Solutions and Magic Garden Supplies.

Our project is located within the Lesmurdie National Park and Mundy Regional Park, which come under the control of the Parks and Wildlife section of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The Department was the catalyst for our formation in 2012 and has strongly supported us ever since. We really value that support and particularly the trust that they have shown in us for the last 12 years.

The Lesmurdie and Districts Community Association (LDCA) was a wonderful partner for many years and enabled us to raise considerable funding for improvements that weren't covered by the NRM grants. Paths, bridges, earthworks, car parks, children's climbing frames and more – the Up the Creek (UTC) project.

The Kalamunda Men's Shed partnered with us to build shade houses where we could raise our own plants and where we could hold plants grown for us by nurseries – prior to planting out. We greatly value our association with KMS and hope it will continue and deepen for many years. More recently they have also helped us acquire two green houses to further enhance our plant propagation work. Recently, we formed a partnership with the Kalamunda Youth Swing Band, sharing our premises to foster collaboration and community engagement.



*If you are keen to know more about
Kalamunda Mens Shed phone 08 9291 7172
on weekdays between 8am and noon.*

ABOUT US

Formed in Dec 2012 by a few like-minded people, the Friends of Upper Lesmurdie Falls Inc. have committed themselves to helping to rehabilitate, improve the amenity and record the history of the area – which initially was badly degraded by large infestations of weeds that had taken over and suffocated the native flora.

BUSY BEES

Busy bees mornings are held on the 2nd Sunday of every month - tackling weeding, stone work, propagating, planting, rubbish clearing, exotic tree removal and maintenance work. We make sure there is always something for all ages and abilities.

Everyone is always very welcome to join in - no experience or tools needed.

Want a fun morning at a busy bee for you or your family? Contact us to find out the details.



And we always finish with a well catered morning tea thanks to Angie Parker!

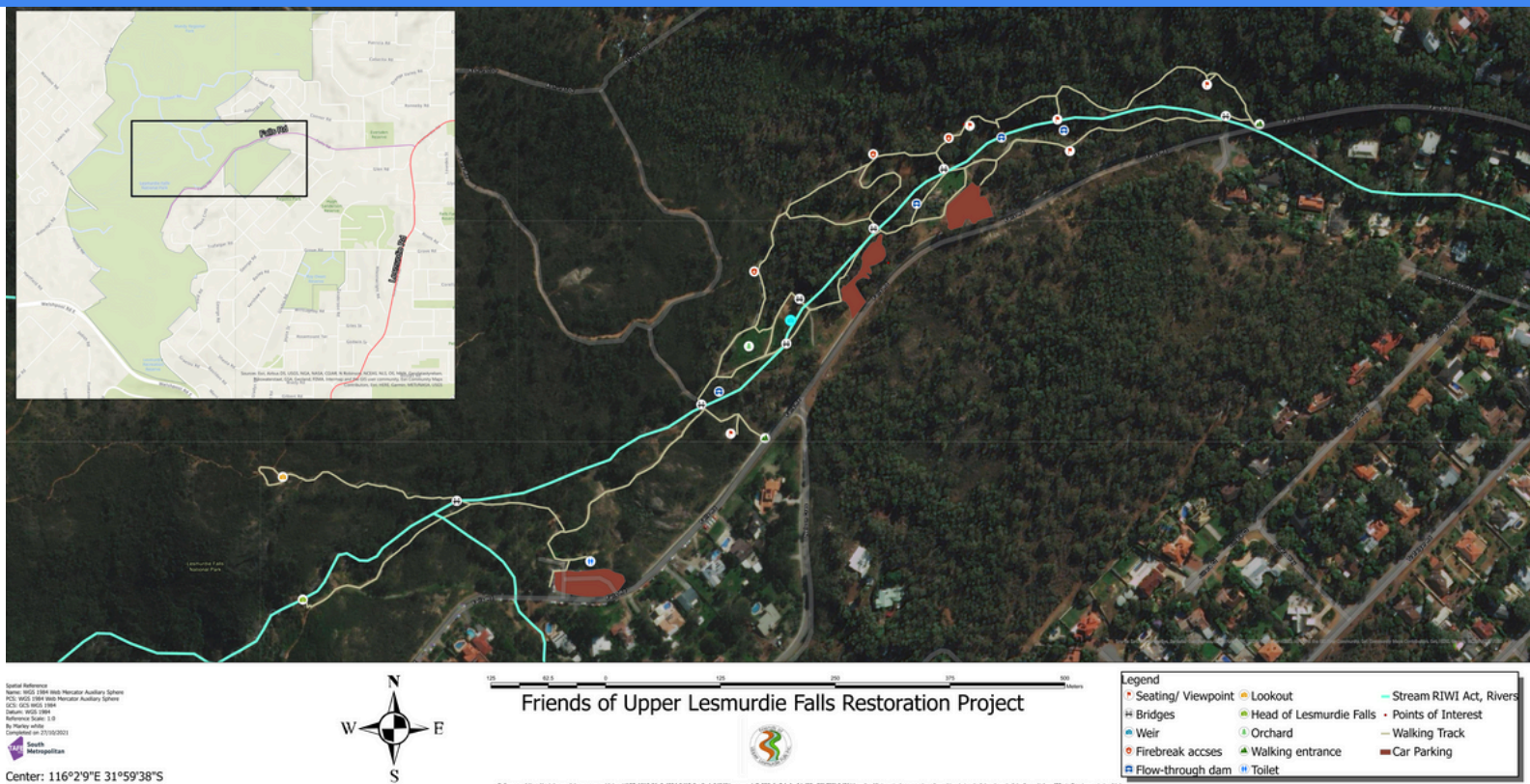
CONTACT US



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More info visit our website: www.friendsofupperlesmurdiefalls.com.au

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