



Newsletter 3/26

July 2026

Welcome to the July Newsletter. This edition features coming events, a selection of campaigns and advocacy supported by WCS, including the ecologically significant Eungedup Wetlands; threats to wetlands in the Perth region and Australia-wide and how these threats are being addressed, and a wealth of turtle news. Happy reading!

COMING EVENTS

Turtle Discovery Weekends at Bibra Lake – Community Pop-Ups to Kick Off Nesting Season

As the 2026 turtle nesting season approaches, the Wetlands Conservation Society and Walliabup Wildlife Warriors are partnering with the City of Cockburn to deliver a series of Turtle Discovery Weekends at Bibra Lake - a chance for the community to learn about our Southwestern Snake-necked Turtles, meet local volunteers, and find out how to get involved in the Turtle Tracker program.

Two pop-up sessions will be held lakeside:

- **Sunday 26 July, 9 - 11 am**
- **Saturday 1 August, 12 - 3 pm**

Friendly WWW volunteers will be on hand to chat about turtles, share Bibra Lake's TurtleSAT hotspot maps, explain the challenges nesting females face, and show how grassroots community action is helping to prevent local extinction. Visitors can scan the QR code to sign up for training (see next page), learn how to report sightings through TurtleSAT, and discover simple ways to protect turtles in their own neighbourhoods.

This season marks a strengthened partnership between WCS/WWW and the City of Cockburn through the SOSNT Turtle Tracking Program. Volunteers will be distributing flyers to residents, placing posters at local shops and community hubs, and delivering training sessions for new Turtle Trackers and Spotters. These pop-ups are an important first step in building awareness and welcoming new community members into the program. With nesting season just around the corner, these Turtle Discovery Weekends are a perfect opportunity for residents to learn, connect, and join a growing movement dedicated to protecting Bibra Lake's turtles.

SOSNT poster with QR code	Blue Gum Lake Turtle Poster courtesy of Program Coordinator Carleen James	Jeff Mengler - Inaugural Lake Coordinator signing up two turtle detectives to solve the Blue Gum Lake Mystery at a recent Eco Hub networking event.

Become a Turtle Detective! Help Solve the Mystery at Blue Gum Lake

Volunteer Call-Out: 2026 Blue Gum Turtle Trackers Program

The Wetlands Conservation Society (WCS), together with the Walliabup Wildlife Warriors (WWW) and the City of Melville, is launching the **2026 Blue Gum Turtle Trackers Program** - and you're invited to step into the role of **Turtle Detectives** to help solve the unfolding mystery of the disappearing turtles at Blue Gum Lake.

For years, Blue Gum Lake has been home to the Southwestern Snake-Necked Turtle, but recent monitoring shows worrying signs: fewer basking turtles, reduced nesting activity, and a decline in sightings. Something has changed and we need community scientists to help uncover the clues.

As a Turtle Detective, you'll help:

- Track turtle movements and nesting behaviour
- Protect nesting females and their nests
- Log sightings and evidence using TurtleSAT
- Identify predator hotspots and road-mortality risks
- Support conservation science on the ground

Training begins in **August**, with Turtle Spotter and Turtle Tracker inductions, field orientation at Blue Gum Lake, and hands-on sessions led by experienced WWW/WCS volunteers. Whether you can patrol regularly or assist occasionally, your contribution will help solve the mystery and safeguard the future of Blue Gum Lake's turtles.

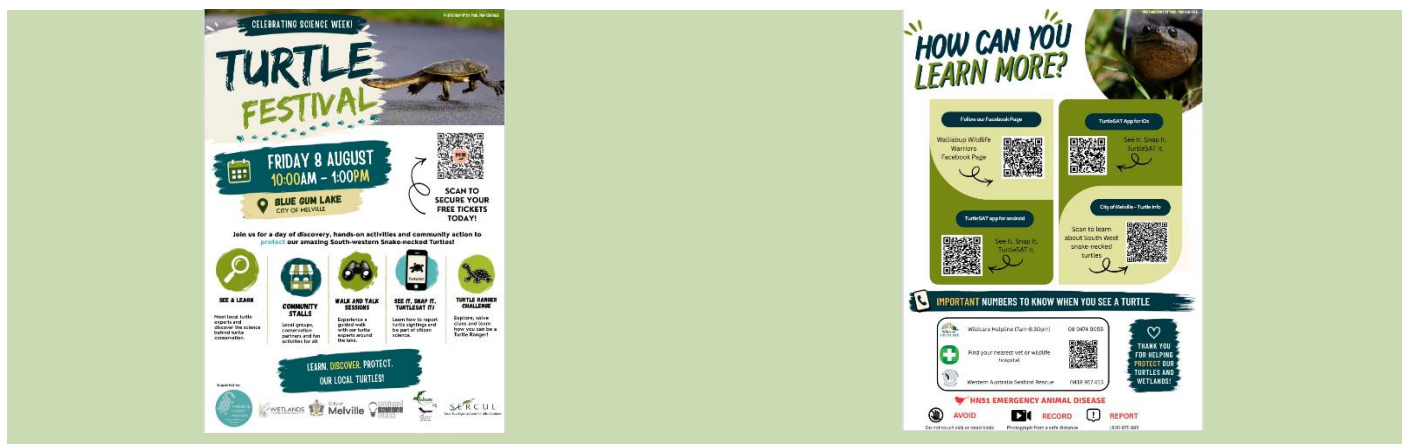
Ready to join the investigation?

Register your interest by emailing Program Coordinator, Carleen James, at cpjames@our.ecu.edu.au and become part of the team uncovering the truth behind the disappearing turtles. Poster pictured on previous page.

Turtle Festival at Blue Gum Lake!

WCS members — it's time to celebrate our favourite shelled locals! Join us on Friday 8 August, 10am–1pm at Blue Gum Lake for the Turtle Festival, part of National Science Week. Expect turtle experts, guided walks, citizen science demos, kids' activities, community stalls and the Turtle Ranger Challenge. It's fun, free and all about protecting our South-western Snake-necked Turtles.

Scan the flyer, grab your ticket, and come enjoy a morning of learning, exploring and turtle spotting. You can also register here - <https://events.humanitix.com/blue-gum-turtle-festival-science-in-action> See you at the lake!



Spring Excursion to Paganoni Swamp 11 October 2026

Our Spring Excursion this year will be to Paganoni Swamp Reserve in Golden Bay. This large reserve contains a mixture of wetlands and banksia woodland. It is a diverse and high quality reserve in the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park. The WCS and the Waterbird Group had a major role in saving it from being cleared and developed into a golf course estate in 1992. These days it is looked after by DBCA and the Friends of Paganoni. The Friends Group has invited us to visit the reserve on Sunday 11 October from 10am until noon. They will show us some of the features of the reserve and explain what they are doing to conserve it. Please come and bring family and friends. We will gather at the Powerlines entrance on Paganoni Rd which runs east off Mandurah Rd in Golden Bay. Allow about 40 minutes to drive there from Bibra Lake. Please bring drinking water, sturdy walking shoes and wet weather gear if necessary. Afterwards we will have a picnic lunch at the Golden Bay Foreshore Reserve which may be reached via Dampier Drive (next lights north of Paganoni Rd on Mandurah Rd). There are picnic tables, barbecues and toilets in the Golden Bay Foreshore Reserve. Please bring your own food and drinks and picnic chairs or rugs. This should be a great opportunity to see one of the outstanding reserves in the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park. If you have any questions about this excursion, please contact Philip Jennings at philipjennings2274@gmail.com.

CAMPAIGNS & ADVOCACY

WCS Campaign Update: Eungedup Wetlands Secured for Conservation

The Eungedup Wetlands campaign has reached an important new milestone, with the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee (WICC) securing significant conservation grants over the past six months to accelerate on-ground restoration and threat-management works. The properties were purchased by WICC in 2023; the most substantial progress has occurred recently through dedicated funding for Felixer predator-control technology and a major water-level management project designed to restore natural hydrology across the site. Construction of a new bird hide (funded through community donations) is also underway, providing an important facility for wildlife monitoring and public engagement. As reported by the ABC, this transformation highlights the extraordinary resilience of wetland systems when given the opportunity to regenerate.

This outcome is particularly meaningful for WCS, which contributed early during the campaign through seed funding, letters of support and direct advocacy. WCS provided a formal endorsement letter to potential sponsors and contributed financially to the initial fundraising effort. These early commitments helped WICC establish credibility with major donors — including the McCusker Foundation — demonstrating strong community backing for the project at a critical stage. Private conservation initiatives like this are becoming increasingly important as government funding for environmental protection remains limited, and WCS is proud to have played a role in enabling this success.

A key component of WICC's early work has been the rapid implementation of a comprehensive threat-management program targeting feral foxes and cats — the two most significant predators impacting wetland wildlife across Western Australia. The first monitoring images captured on the property showed foxes carrying waterbirds in their mouths, underscoring the urgency of intervention. WICC moved quickly, deploying control measures including shooting, trapping, baiting and the use of Felixer laser-triggered traps. These efforts have reduced fox numbers by an estimated 85 per cent, a remarkable achievement in such a short time.

With fox numbers suppressed, the focus has now shifted to feral cats. As WICC's project lead noted, removing foxes often creates a vacuum that cats rapidly fill - a well-documented ecological pattern. Cat control is now the priority to ensure the gains made for waterbirds and other native species are not undone. This decisive, science-based approach to predator management is essential for the long-term success of the wetland restoration program and demonstrates the level of commitment required to protect vulnerable species.

WCS congratulates WICC on this significant achievement and looks forward to following the ongoing restoration of the Eungedup Wetlands as a model for community-led wetland conservation across Western Australia.

For more information go to wicc.org.au/eungedup-

[Former WA potato farm transformed into wetland sanctuary for rare and endangered birds - ABC News](#)



The Eungedup Wetlands were once a potato farm. (ABC Great Southern: Mark Bennett)

Community Stands Up for Scott Reef – WCS Joins Call for Protection

Greenpeace activists disrupted Woodside's Annual General Meeting on Thursday 23 April 2026, with a clear message echoed by conservation groups across WA: "Hands off Scott Reef." The protest challenged Woodside's proposed Browse project, which includes drilling 57 new gas wells near one of WA's most pristine and biodiverse reef systems. Outside the AGM, community groups gathered in solidarity, including the Conservation Council of WA (CCWA). Among them was WCS member Steve Shaw, who joined the peaceful demonstration to show support for protecting endangered species, migrating whales, and the fragile reef ecosystem.

Environmental organisations have raised concerns that large-scale gas expansion could worsen climate impacts and threaten marine life, while companies continue to benefit from rising global gas prices. For Steve and many others, Scott Reef is too important to risk. WCS will continue to follow developments and keep members updated as the proposal moves through government assessment.

Find out more about how you can protect Scott Reef here - [Save Scott Reef - Conservation Council of WA](#)

		
Steve Shaw (WWW member), Milly O'Brien (CCWA Fossil Fuels Community Organiser) and Joyce Gadalón (WCS Secretary)	WCS member Steve Shaw with one of the First Nation's speakers at the Woodside protest	"Protestors stood out in the rain to send a clear message to Woodside: the community is ready for a future powered by the sun and the wind."

WCS was proud to support the Conservation Council of WA's (CCWA) **Save Scott Reef** campaign, an important statewide effort calling for the protection of one of Australia's most significant and biodiverse reef systems. Scott Reef is a remote, pristine marine ecosystem under increasing pressure, and CCWA's campaign highlights why safeguarding it is vital for the health of Western Australia's oceans.

This campaign sits alongside CCWA's broader advocacy work, including **Corals' Last Stand**, a social-impact documentary by filmmaker Jane Hammond. The film follows prominent Australians - including Tim Winton, John Butler and marine biologist Brinkley Davies - as they travel to Scott Reef to highlight the risks posed by Woodside's drilling plans. Watch it here - [Corals' Last Stand](#). Want your own **Save Scott Reef** sign? Email - greta.carroll@ccwa.org.au

Wally Hagan Stadium – Key Update for the Wildlife Corridor

The Wally Hagan redevelopment could pose a significant threat to the **Cockburn Community Wildlife Corridor** which links North Lake, Bibra Lake and Manning Lake. If the current design proceeds, the corridor will be effectively severed.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 9 June 2026, the motion to progress the 10-court, \$60M stadium passed - but this is **not** a fatal setback for community or environmental advocates. What the deputations made clear is that the basketball lobby is operating as a highly organised, well-resourced advocacy group. To protect the corridor, community and conservation groups will need stronger coordination, clearer messaging and a more strategic presence in upcoming decision-making.

Major concerns remain unresolved: the absence of genuine community consultation, no transparent traffic studies, and non-compliance with the 2025 Council Resolution requiring investigation of alternative sites. The scale and design of the proposal - including 314 parking bays and new road access - would significantly compromise wildlife movement across the Beeliar wetlands.

This is a timely reminder that environmental and neighbourhood values will only be heard if we organise early, speak consistently, and show up. A coordinated advocacy plan, direct engagement with decision makers, and mobilisation of local residents - is essential to ensure the wildlife corridor remains protected in future deliberations.

To learn more or to get involved contact <https://www.cockburnwild.org/>

Swan Groundwater Forum Calls for Continued Vigilance

Recent reporting in Midland's *Echo Newspaper* highlights growing concern across the Swan region regarding rising groundwater levels, flooding, and the cumulative impacts of rapid urban development. At the Swan Groundwater Forum held at Caversham Memorial Hall on Friday 19 June 2026, residents, academics and environmental groups presented compelling evidence that groundwater changes predicted decades ago are now being experienced across parts of the northeastern growth corridor.

UWA ecohydrologist Professor Sally Thompson outlined how groundwater behaves differently in the Swan Valley than in other regions of Perth, due to its shallow water tables and clay-rich soils. Long-term monitoring data collected by local residents Harry Gratte and Cheryl Rogers show groundwater levels on their property have risen by around one metre, coinciding with nearby urban development. Professor Thompson described the increase as equivalent to two Olympic-sized swimming pools of additional water per year moving through the site - changes not detected by the official monitoring network but clearly felt by landholders.

Speakers emphasised that impacts are shifting eastward, **away** from long-term monitoring bores, so that official data may not reflect the real-time conditions residents are experiencing. The forum reinforced the need for continued vigilance, accurate baseline monitoring, and more transparent planning processes as development expands into high-groundwater areas.

For WCS members, this forum underscores a familiar message: wetlands, waterways and groundwater systems are under increasing pressure, and community-driven monitoring remains essential. As development intensifies across the Swan Coastal Plain, understanding how groundwater moves - and how it responds to land-use change - will be critical to protecting wetland ecosystems.

If members are interested in attending future groundwater or hydrology forums, please contact Simone Finlay at memberships.wcs@gmail.com for details.

Read the full article here - [Swan groundwater forum calls for continued vigilance - Echo Newspaper](#)



Swan Valley resident Harry Gratte presenting data he collected over a decade, illustrating the changes in groundwater over time.

Picture: Guanhao Cheng

Environmental and Water Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres - Senate Environment & Communications Committee

WCS has lodged a submission for the Senate Environment & Communications Committee's inquiry into the environmental and water impacts of AI data-centre development, drawing on lessons from the withdrawn Hazelmere proposal, which *"exposed critical weaknesses in planning frameworks and the vulnerability of riparian and wetland systems when high-demand industrial uses are proposed in sensitive locations"*.

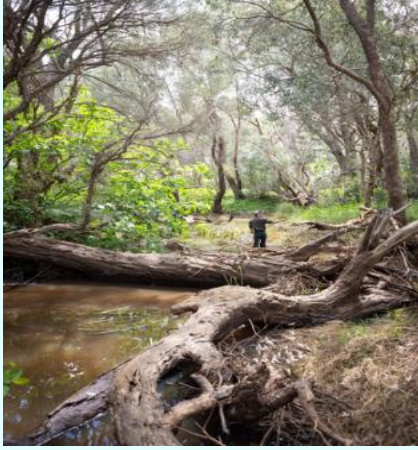
The submission highlights the inconsistent application of **State Planning Policy 2.9 – Water**, noting that *"data centres are among the most water-intensive industrial land uses in Australia"* with significant implications for groundwater and wetland health. Key recommendations include embedding SPP 2.9 principles into national guidance, establishing mandatory wetland buffer zones and hydrological assessments, prioritising degraded land for development, requiring non-potable water sources, and ensuring transparent community consultation. It concludes, *"Australia can support technological growth while safeguarding the ecological systems that sustain us"* through stronger national planning frameworks.

For further information click on the following links:

[Artificial intelligence and data centres – Parliament of Australia](#)

[Locals save Mandoon Bilya from massive AI data cent... | National Indigenous Times](#)

[Hazelmere data centre: \\$600 million GreenSquareDC project withdrawn after community pushback](#)



Mandoon Bilya (Helena River) in Hazelmere where recent surveys recorded turtles, gilgies, and threatened Carter's freshwater mussels, highlighting its high conservation value was under threat where GreenSquare wanted to build a giant hyperscale data centre - 40m from the river, a conservation wetland and on two Aboriginal heritage sites. The application has since been removed due to pressure from the community.

Photo Credit: Bibbul Ngarma Aboriginal Association.

Back from the Brink – A Protection Agenda for Nature

The Conservation Council of Western Australia's (CCWA) report released on World Environment Day 2026 - [Back from the Brink: A Protection Agenda for Nature](#) - sets out the opportunities in WA to strengthen biodiversity protection and recovery. The theme for World Environment Day (Friday 5 June 2026) was climate action, with a focus on preserving nature and reducing climate impacts. For WA, that message couldn't be more critical.

WA is facing a biodiversity crisis. There are currently over 700 species listed as critically endangered, with more being added to that list each year. Shockingly, in the first five months of 2026, the WA Government has already approved the clearing of 51,000 hectares of native vegetation, with a further 128,000 hectares in new applications for native vegetation clearing. The clearing of habitat cannot continue at this rate and scale if we hope to prevent further extinctions in WA.

To release [Back from the Brink](#), Conservation Council of WA held a media presser alongside Ruby Hamilton from the Environmental Defenders Office and Heidi Hardisty from the Urban Bushland Council, to share their perspectives on [Back from the Brink](#) and the reforms needed to address the scale and urgency this biodiversity crisis demands (photo below).



To bring nature back from the brink, the State Government needs to respond to the biodiversity crisis and ensure there are no future extinctions. Across WA, communities are fighting to protect local places, species and ecosystems. But community action alone cannot keep up with the scale of destruction. Vast areas of critical habitat are still being bulldozed, extinction rates are rising, and Australia's environmental laws are failing us. Collective advocacy by the environmental movement is urgently needed. Back from the Brink unites community efforts and provides a framework to support the shared voice needed to make these reforms possible.

Foxes and Cats: A Leading Cause of Mammal Extinctions in Australia

Australia holds the unfortunate title of world leader in mammal extinctions, with around 40 species lost since European settlement and nearly 80 more species now threatened. A major new analysis published earlier this year has reaffirmed what decades of field evidence have shown: introduced foxes and feral cats are key drivers of these declines.

Our native mammals evolved over millions of years alongside predators like wedge-tailed eagles and (more recently) dingoes - but foxes and cats are far more adaptable, efficient and wide-ranging hunters. The research highlights several clear lines of evidence:

- Extinct species were overwhelmingly small-to-medium mammals, the preferred prey size for foxes and cats.
- Many species that vanished on the mainland survived only on islands where foxes and cats had never established.

- When threatened mammals are reintroduced into fenced, predator-free sanctuaries, their populations almost always rebound.
- Conversely, where foxes and cats remain abundant, native mammals continue to decline.

The study also warns against the growing narrative that introduced predators are simply “part of the ecosystem now”. **The evidence shows the opposite: without active, ongoing fox and cat control, many native species will continue sliding toward extinction.**

For WCS, this reinforces the importance of effective fox-management programs across the Beeliar Wetlands. Our own monitoring continues to show high fox activity, and the science is clear - without reducing fox numbers, native wildlife such as turtles, quenda and ground-nesting birds remain at serious risk.

You can read more about the research here:

- UNSW summary: [Yes, feral cats and foxes really have driven many Australian mammals to extinction](#)
- The Conversation article: [Yes, feral cats and foxes really have driven many Australian mammals to extinction](#)

You can also read about the 2024 mass fox predation event here:

Volunteers found over 100 dead turtles at Bibra Lake on the dry lakebed predated by foxes - [Perth's hot, dry conditions blamed for 100 turtle deaths at Bibra Lake wetlands - ABC News](#)



Foxes digging up aestivating turtles April 2024 7.30am Bibra Lake - Susan George



Fox captured on volunteer camera monitor at Yangebup Lake - eating a turtle that had been nesting in late 2025



A large cat captured prowling at Little Rush Lake on a volunteer camera monitor in April 2026

Australia's Water Crisis is Killing Turtles, and STILL the System isn't Changing!

Australia's wetlands are in crisis, and the latest disasters across the Murray-Darling Basin are yet another warning that governments are failing to protect the ecosystems that sustain our freshwater wildlife. Recent reporting by *Yahoo News* and *The Guardian* has revealed turtles dying in bone-dry waterholes - places that should have been full of water, vegetation and life which have now become dust bowls.

In one case, a single landholder complaint triggered a water diversion decision, leaving a wetland without the environmental flows it needed. The result was predictable and devastating: turtles stranded, dehydrated and dying in a habitat that had been allowed to collapse.

The Guardian's investigation into the Gwydir wetlands (8 May 2026) paints the same picture: environmental water that was meant to sustain internationally significant wetlands was withheld, diverted or delayed, leaving ecosystems to bake in extreme heat. Experts described the situation as “a disaster of our own making,” with turtles and other wildlife paying the price for political decisions that prioritise irrigation interests over ecological survival.

These are not isolated incidents. They are part of a pattern of systemic failure in water management across the Murray-Darling Basin; decades of broken promises, billions spent on ineffective or politically compromised projects, and a system where large corporate irrigators continue to wield disproportionate influence over water policy. As one expert put it, “A certain amount of water needs to stay in the river to reach wetlands and meet environmental and cultural needs - and that's not happening.”

A National Problem with Local Parallels

For Western Australians, these failures are disturbingly familiar. In 2024, Bibra Lake suffered a mass mortality event, with adult Snake-Necked Turtles dying in a lakebed that had been allowed to dry out completely. The lake should have been supported by hydrological offsets under Ministerial Statement 688 - offsets that were never delivered.

Dr Ricky Spencer's preliminary report on Bibra Lake confirmed what community monitors had already witnessed:

- turtles dying from dehydration and predation in a dry lakebed,
- nests exposed and destroyed,

- a wetland system collapsing due to inadequate water management.

The drying of the Beelir Wetlands is being driven by a combination of climate change and excessive groundwater extraction by the Water Corporation and private bore owners. DWER is currently reassessing the sustainable extraction limits for the Jandakot Mound, but this alone will not be enough to sustain wetland ecosystems already pushed beyond their thresholds. Unfortunately, turtles may already be locally extinct at Forrestdale Lake due to years of water mismanagement.

These findings formed a key part of WCS/WWW's submission to the Office of the Auditor General, which highlighted systemic non-compliance, poor governance, and the absence of transparent, science-based water planning in WA's urban wetlands. The Murray-Darling disasters show that this is not just a WA problem - it is a national one.

Why Turtles Matter

Freshwater turtles are long-lived, slow-breeding species that act as early-warning indicators of ecosystem decline. When turtles begin dying in large numbers, it signals that the entire wetland system is failing - water quality, hydrology, vegetation, food webs and predator balance. When governments fail to deliver environmental water, turtles are among the first to suffer.

Experts are Calling for Change

The online forum attended by Joyce Gadalon and Carleen James in late May brought together leading voices in water management, including Dr Deb Bower (who led the Gwydir turtle rescue) and Bill Johnson, former director of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Their message was clear:

- Environmental water is **not reaching wetlands** in the volumes required.
- Water policy remains **politically compromised**.
- Wetlands and wildlife are being sacrificed to maintain unsustainable extraction.
- Communities must become informed, vocal and active to drive reform.

The Guardian's reporting reinforces this: even when environmental water is allocated on paper, it often fails to reach the wetlands it was intended to protect.

A Wake-Up Call — If Governments Choose to Hear It

Turtles dying in a dry waterhole should be a wake-up call for the NSW Government. Turtles dying in a dry lakebed at Bibra Lake should have been a wake-up call for WA.

Despite these disastrous outcomes, the same patterns continue:

- inadequate water delivery,
- poor oversight,
- political pressure from irrigators and developers,
- and a lack of accountability.

Australia's wetlands - from the Murray-Darling to the Beelir Wetlands - cannot survive without transparent, science-driven water management. If we want wetlands, turtles and river systems to survive, **we must speak up for water**. For WCS/WWW, this means continuing to:

- advocate for compliance with hydrological offsets,
- push for transparent water-level reporting,
- support citizen-science monitoring (including TurtleSAT),
- and hold regulators accountable for the ecological outcomes they are responsible for.

The Murray-Darling disaster is not just a story from the east. It is more than a mirror - it is an echo - of what is already happening in Western Australia.

[Desperate rescue operation after single complaint results in 'devastation' at Aussie wetlands - Yahoo News Australia](#)
[Water flows to parched NSW wetlands could be turned back on within weeks as drought fears loom | Murray-Darling Basin | The Guardian](#)
[preliminary-expert-report-on-the-impact-of-fox-predation-on-southwestern-snake-necked-turtles-at-bibra-lake-wa-1.pdf](#)



Joyce Gadalon speaking with Hyde Park Walk & Talk attendees about turtles. Other Turtle Team members — Carrie Russell, Ainsley Goldsack and Elly Niestchke — also supported the event (not pictured).



Ian Barlow leading a group of turtle enthusiasts around Hyde Park, helping them spot "hiding" turtles and explaining how they can make the local population more data-visible through TurtleSAT.

Coal Dam Park Turtle Spotting & Community Science Day

The Woodbridge *Turtles in Celebration, Turtles in Love* citizen-science event at Coal Dam Park on 2 May 2026, brought together local residents, conservation groups and City of Swan councillors for a morning of turtle spotting, wetland education and hands-on community action. Hosted by citizen scientist Ian Barlow in partnership with Walliabup Wildlife Warriors, Emerald Acres and Wildlife Allies, the session highlighted the importance of Coal Dam Park as a small but significant urban wetland supporting freshwater turtles and other native wildlife.

Participants were taught how to use TurtleSAT and learnt how the recording of sightings contributes to statewide conservation efforts by mapping turtle activity, identifying nesting hotspots and filling critical data gaps across the Swan region. Citizen-science data is essential for understanding turtle distribution and improving survival rates, especially in areas where wetlands are fragmented or on private land.

A huge thank you to Carleen James, Joyce Gadalon, Ainsley Goldsack and Elly Nitschke for attending and providing on-ground support. Carleen presented Coal Dam Park's turtle statistics, showing that fewer than 20 sightings per year have been logged over the past five years - a number that does *not* reflect the many turtles living in the dam, underscoring why community reporting is vital.

The event also aligned with the broader Save the Mandoon Bilya community movement, which has seen more than 1,700 objections lodged against the proposed Hazelmere data centre due to risks to the Helena River, wetlands and wildlife, including Snake-Necked Turtles. The strong turnout at Coal Dam Park demonstrated that local residents are increasingly engaged in protecting their waterways and biodiversity. Find out how you can help here: - [Save the Mandoon Bilya Campaign](#) -

We extend our appreciation to City of Swan Councillors Sarah Howlett and Ian Johnson, who attended the event and were open, engaged and genuinely interested in understanding how the community can help address local environmental issues - from improving fox-control programs to protecting turtle habitat and responding to development pressures. Their willingness to listen and involve their community was inspiring. It was, as always, a *turtley* great day at Coal Dam Park!



Carleen James poster for the 2026 Turtle Walk and Talks - See IT, Snap IT, TurtleSAT IT!



City of Swan Councillor Ian Johnson, Joyce Gadalon, Carleen James and City of Swan Councillor Sarah Howlett enjoying the weather and bountiful turtles at Coal Dam Park.

Turtles After the Rain – NAIDOC Week Community Event at Yangebup Family Centre

Walliabup Wildlife Warriors (WWW) were delighted to join the Yangebup Family Centre for their NAIDOC Week celebrations on Thursday 9 July, delivering our *Turtles After the Rain* experience - a hands-on, child-friendly workshop introducing families to local wetlands, Noongar Seasons and the importance of turtle conservation.

The rock-turtle activity was a runaway hit, with more than 37 children designing their own “turtle”, decorating blue river-rocks and carefully placing them into real hatchling transport containers, complete with air-holes, so they could pretend to release their rock-turtles safely back to the lake. This simple activity sparked wonderful conversations about wetlands, hatchlings and how Turtle Trackers help turtles get home after the rain.

Throughout the morning, volunteers shared TurtleSAT statistics for Yangebup and Little Rush Lakes, explaining why data collection matters and how community reporting helps protect nesting females, reduce road-strike risk and guide conservation decisions. Families were genuinely engaged, asking thoughtful questions and showing strong interest in becoming part of the Turtle Tracker and Turtle Spotter volunteer teams.

We are very grateful the Yangebup Family Centre extended a warm invitation for WWW to return for future family events, including their community dinner nights, to support ongoing volunteer recruitment and wetland education. It was a fun, friendly and deeply engaging morning, filled with creativity, curiosity and plenty of proud young “Turtle Detectives” heading home with their handmade turtles and a new understanding of how to care for Country.



Joyce Gadalon (not pictured), Carleen James (Turtle Tracker Program Coordinator), Charlie (Junior Turtle Detective), Lisa Wackett (Yangebup & Little Rush Lake Coordinator) and Makayla Wackett (Junior Lake Coordinator) at the Yangebup Family Centre.

Turtle Celebration at G.O. Edwards Park: Community Partnership in Action

On 2 June 2026, G.O. Edwards Park came alive with curiosity, excitement and turtle-themed learning as Ian Barlow, in partnership with the Walliabup Wildlife Warriors (WWW), Emma from Bottle Top Hill, and Emerald Acres Wildlife Rescue, delivered a full-day Walk & Talk Turtle Celebration for students from Vic Park Montessori School. G.O. Edwards Park is a peaceful lakeside green space in Burswood, just east of the Perth CBD, featuring shady paths, open lawns, and abundant birdlife around its central lake.

This event was inspired by student Orlando, whose passion for turtles sparked the idea of bringing a hands-on learning experience to his classmates. Supported by teacher Jimi, Orlando helped shape a program that blended science, storytelling and stewardship - showing how young people can lead meaningful conservation action. Across five sessions, students explored turtle ecology, nesting behaviour, biodiversity, food webs and the challenges turtles face in urban environments. Younger classes enjoyed play-based activities, while older students participated in guided walks around the lake, learning how wetlands function and why turtles are vital to ecosystem health.

TurtleSAT data for G.O. Edwards Park shows just two confirmed live turtles in the past decade, highlighting the need for community monitoring. Students learnt about TurtleSAT and how even one sighting can make a difference.

Throughout the day, Ian, Emma and the WWW team reinforced simple, powerful actions students can take:

- Report sightings in TurtleSAT – every record builds the scientific picture
- Watch for nesting females during spring and early summer
- Keep dogs away from nesting areas
- Pick up rubbish to protect wetland habitats
- Stay on paths to avoid trampling nests
- Share what they learn with family and friends
- Become Turtle Trackers or Turtle Spotters as the school explores future involvement

Together, they created a memorable, meaningful experience that connected students to their local wetland and inspired the next generation of turtle guardians.

WCS extends heartfelt thanks to **Orlando, Jimi**, and the entire Montessori community for their enthusiasm and initiative, and to Ian, WWW, Emma and Emerald Acres for bringing this vision to life. This Walk & Talk is a powerful example of how communities, schools and volunteers can work together to protect Western Australia's Snake-Necked Turtles and the wetlands they call home.



Fig 1: Montessori School Mural of nature - including birds and turtles of GO Edwards Park



Fig 2: Orlando - speaking about turtles and the wetlands they call home



Fig 3: Resident Nankeen Night Heron a.k.a. Rufous Night Heron and basking turtle at GO Edwards Park.

NEW POLICY

City of Cockburn's Tree Protection Policy

The City of Cockburn's **Local Planning Policy 5.23 – Tree Protection Policy (LPP 5.23)**, advertised for public comment last year, is now in effect. This has introduced the requirement for Development Approval prior to the removal and certain types of pruning of *Regulated Trees* on privately owned land.

The policy focuses on larger trees (generally 8 metres or taller), recognising the important role mature trees play in cooling our suburbs, supporting wildlife and enhancing liveability. Routine pruning and general garden maintenance can continue as normal in most cases, and exemptions apply for situations such as hazardous trees and bushfire management requirements.

The strong level of community support during consultation, including Cockburn Tree Canopy Advocates, has been an important part of bringing this policy forward.

To find out more, visit the City's website: <https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Building-Planning-and-Roads/Town-Planning-and-Development/Tree-Protection-Policy>

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Carleen James – Project Coordinator, Turtle Detective & Community Champion

If you've been following the development of the Blue Gum Turtle Tracking Program, you've likely heard the name **Carleen James**. Carleen joined WCS while completing her final Work Integrated Learning unit for her Project Management degree at Edith Cowan University, with plans to graduate in September. What began as a student placement has quickly grown into a deep passion for turtle conservation, community science and strengthening the connection between families and their local wetlands. As a mum of two currently on maternity leave, Carleen describes the program as the perfect way to stay engaged and ease her transition back to work in July. Her love for the South-western Snake-necked Turtle began after seeing one at Neil Hawkins Park, and experimenting with TurtleSAT sparked her interest in helping families get involved more easily. She's grateful for the warm welcome from WCS and WWW and has embraced every opportunity to learn, contribute and connect with like-minded volunteers.

Carleen now serves as the **Program Coordinator for the Blue Gum Turtle Tracking Program**, working closely with the City of Melville, Friends of Booragoon & Blue Gum Lakes, and Lake Coordinator Jeff Mengler. She plays a central role in volunteer coordination, program planning, data management and community engagement. Her work ensures that Blue Gum's turtles have greater visibility and that TurtleSAT data is used to protect and enhance their habitat. What stands out most about Carleen is her enthusiasm for people and puzzles. She loves the detective component of turtle conservation - spotting clues, tracking patterns, and piecing together the story of how turtles use the landscape. And now she's inviting others to join the fun.

Do you like puzzles? Solving a mystery? Then you'll want to join Carleen, Jeff and the Turtle Detective team!

To get involved, send Carleen an email at cpjames@our.ecu.edu.au

Carleen's blend of project-management skill, community spirit and genuine care for wildlife has already made her an invaluable part of the WCS family. We're excited to see her continue shaping the future of the Blue Gum program and inspiring the next generation of Turtle Detectives along the way!



Carleen's first encounter up-close with a turtle.



Carleen James and Joyce Gadalon in a recent Eco Hub networking event.

🦎 This newsletter was compiled and edited by WCS Membership Officer, Simone Finlay, with assistance from Joyce Gadalon and Philip Jennings. Kindly email feedback to memberships.wcs@gmail.com