

SIX SEASONS

Environment and Sustainability News from Shire of Mundaring

Bird baths save lives in summer



Providing water for native birds in summer can increase their chances of survival. Image courtesy of Karen White.

Birdwatching can be great for physical and mental health - getting out into our parks or trails can provide exercise in nature, which has multiple health benefits. Adding a birdbath in your backyard will provide even more opportunities to see birds, but there are a few things to keep in mind.

Many residents already provide water for wildlife through the warmer months or have birdbaths in their gardens. In a warming, drying climate this will really help our local native birds survive through the hotter and drier summers. If you are looking to install or relocate a birdbath, be sure to think about how you will change the water once or twice a week to keep it clean and stop mosquitoes from breeding.

If the water is too deep or the sides too steep, this can result in lizards, bees and other small animals drowning. If you are looking for a bird bath or container, look for gently sloping edges, or use sticks and rocks to provide opportunities to climb out.

Adding perches at different heights near the birdbath can also help different species approach safely.

Shire of
MUNDARING

Oct 2022 • Issue 5

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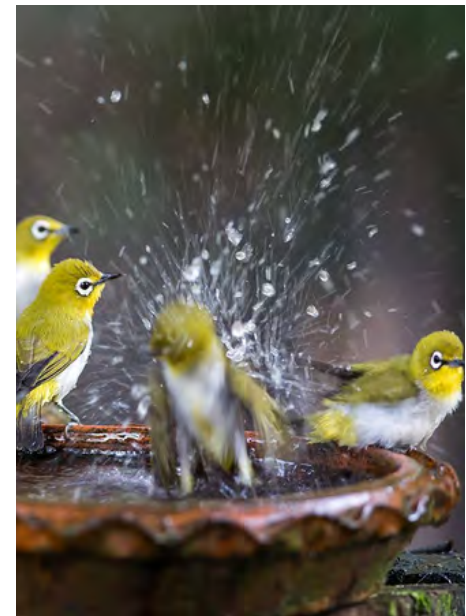
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For great tips on how you can provide birds with a safe, clean bird bath or pond visit Birdlife Australia's website www.birdsinbackyards.net/Bird-Baths

Kambarang - October to November

The Noongar seasonal calendar includes six different seasons in a yearly cycle. During Kambarang, rains are ending and days are warming. Bobtail lizards and snakes emerge to find sunny spots. Wildflowers such as Blue Leschenaultias bloom in colourful displays.





Recycling Pool Covers

An uncovered pool can lose up to 45,000 litres of water each year through evaporation - that's equivalent to flushing a toilet 7,500 times!

The Switch your Thinking (SYT) Program encourages Perth residents to invest in a pool cover to save water (and money!) in the long run.

Shire of Mundaring is a partner council in SYT Program which means Mundaring residents are eligible to receive a 10% discount on a new pool cover. For more details, visit www.switchyourthinking.com (rewards for residents).

But what happens when it comes time to replace a pool cover? Even the best quality pool covers will usually last no longer than 12 years due to ultraviolet radiation, pool chemicals and heat.

Fortunately, instead of going to landfill, there is now a way to recycle pool covers, thanks to a partnership between SYT Program, Daisy Pool Covers and 4Recycling.

If you wish to recycle your pool cover, contact Daisy Pool Covers (located in Welshpool) on 1300 55 18 11.

Products to make at home

Why waste money on buying expensive products if you can make them yourself using everyday ingredients from your bathroom, kitchen and laundry cupboards? Making your own products not only saves money, it boosts your self-sufficiency and reduces use of plastic packaging, artificial fragrances, colours and chemicals. Here's a few examples of products that can be easily and cheaply made at home.

Deodorant

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 1/4 cup corn starch
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- Optional: 10 drops of essential oil

Directions

1. Combine baking soda and corn starch in a small, wide-mouth glass jar
2. Stir in coconut oil and essential oil
3. If the coconut oil is solid, melt it over low heat for easier mixing
4. If you are sensitive to baking soda, swap it out for arrowroot powder.

Dishwashing Soap

Ingredients (makes about 2 cups)

- 3 tablespoons shredded bar soap (leftover bathroom soap is ideal)
- 1 teaspoon washing soda (note: washing soda is not the same as baking soda! Washing soda is available from the supermarket)
- 15 drops of essential oil
- 2 cups water

Directions

1. Use a cheese grater to grate soap
2. Heat water in a pot and add shredded soap (once soap has melted, remove from heat)
3. Stir in washing soda until dissolved
4. Cover and set mixture aside for several hours or overnight
5. If your soap becomes too solid, blend it with a hand blender or in a blender. It will liquefy in seconds
6. Add essential oil and stir until combined
7. Transfer dish soap to a glass container (to be spooned out as needed).



Coconut oil, essential oils and leftover household soap are just some of the everyday items that can be re-purposed for home made products.

Cool places for fauna



Long neck tortoises are vulnerable to heat and drought and need cool places to shelter

As climate change raises average temperatures and makes heatwaves more frequent, a 2022 study has found that 'ectotherms' may be significantly affected.

An ectotherm is an organism which derives the heat it requires from the environment. They make up more than 99% of animals on Earth and include fish, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

Instead of relying almost solely on the energy in their food for heat, ectotherms absorb radiant heat from the environment.

The study found that some species of young ectotherms, in particular, are struggling to keep up with rising temperatures, likely making them more vulnerable to climate change than adults of their species. During heat waves, some animals may die as they are unable to adapt quickly enough to cope with increased temperatures. Even if they survive, the damage done may affect their ability to grow and reproduce. This can have a detrimental impact on biodiversity as we experience increasing number and severity of hot weather.

What can we do? We can provide and retain cool spaces in our gardens to help animals navigate a warmer future. We can also conserve natural habitats that allow animals to find shade and shelter during heatwaves. Such habitats include trees, shrubs, burrows, ponds, caves, logs and rocks. These places will be crucial in helping animals cope and hopefully thrive in a warming world. To read the article, search for 'Developmental plasticity in thermal tolerance: Ontogenetic variation, persistence, and future directions'.



Backyard gardens can provide vital cool refuges for native fauna during hot weather



Get into the Great Aussie Bird Count

Run by Australia's national bird conservation charity, BirdLife Australia, the annual Aussie Bird Count is Australia's largest citizen science event, held during Bird Week from October 17 to 23.

The Aussie Bird Count invites everyday Aussies across the country to count the birds they see within a 20-minute period in their backyard, park or any other play area, and record this data using the Aussie Bird Count app or website.

This provides a population snapshot of Australian birds at the same time each year, allowing us to look at emerging trends in our bird communities over time.

To complete the Aussie Bird Count, spend 20 minutes standing or sitting in one spot and noting down the birds that you see. You will need to count the number of each species you spot within the 20 minute period.

Anyone can participate! If you aren't confident identifying lots of local birds, you can download the Aussie Bird Count app which has a great field guide function for identifying birds based on their size, colour and key features.

To register for the count, visit the Aussie Bird Count website at www.aussiebirdcount.org.au/

Fire and Biodiversity Workshop



Shire of Mundaring recently held a Bushfire and Biodiversity Workshop at Boya Community Centre.

The workshop was attended by Shire staff, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Fire Brigade volunteers and Friends Group environmental volunteers.

The Shire of Mundaring is currently responsible for managing over 500 reserves within its boundaries. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the Shire's obligations and approach to the difficult task of managing fire risk while protecting biodiversity in nature reserves.

Speakers included a Fire Ecologist and Bushfire Risk Mitigation Officer from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Cultural Fire Coordinator from the Bushfire Centre of Excellence, Shire of Mundaring fire officers and Black Cockatoo Friends Group.

Managing fire risk and biodiversity is complex and more research is needed in many areas where species have different needs. A patchwork of different fire frequencies, burn seasons and intensities throughout the landscape will be required to reduce fire risk whilst at the same time preserving our natural heritage.

Landcare Calendar - Tips for Kambarang



- Plant sedges and rushes as water levels in waterlogged areas recede. These plants provide excellent habitat and help control erosion
- Control weeds to prevent more weeds next year
- Get your property ready for the fire season (the Shire's Firebreak and Fuel Load Notice details requirements for all residents and ratepayers in preparing and maintaining their properties)

- Burning leaf litter and ground level fuels, mainly sticks and twigs less than 6mm in diameter, can be an effective way of managing fire hazards on your property.

Six Seasons has been prepared by the Environment and Sustainability team at Shire of Mundaring. For comments or to subscribe email the team at shire@mundaring.wa.gov.au

Sustainable House Day Online Events Tue 4 Oct to 30 Wed 30 Nov

This series of eight online events is intended as an introduction to the fundamentals of sustainable design, perfect for those who are in the planning stages of a build or curious about improving their existing home. For more information and registration details, visit www.sustainablehouseday.com.

The Forest Festival

Sat 8 October, 12pm to 4pm
Jorgensen Park, Kalamunda

All are welcome to attend this free community event presented by the Nature Reserves Preservation Group.

The Forest Festival is a family oriented folk-style event aimed at celebrating the importance of our forests and providing a market setting nestled in the forest surrounding the Kalamunda Community Centre at Jorgensen Park.

Enhancing Land Stewardship of Small Properties Workshop

Sat 15 Oct, 12.30pm to 4.30pm
Kalamunda Performing Arts Centre

Hosted by Perth Natural Resource Management and the Shire of Mundaring. The workshop focuses on helping small landholders to manage their properties sustainably. Presented by Chris Ferreira from the Forever Project. To book visit www.trybooking.com (search for 'Enhancing Land Stewardship of Small Properties').

Earth Carers Course
Wed 19 Oct, 6pm to 8.30pm
226 Great Eastern Hwy, Ascot

Presented by the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (EMRC), the course consists of five sessions over three weeks and includes practical tips and examples on how to avoid, reduce and reuse waste. Free for Mundaring residents. To book visit www.eventbrite.com (search for 'EMRC Earth Carers Course').