



PERTH'S BUSH FOREVER REPORT CARD

Proceedings of a one-day conference
exploring Bush Forever, the
WA Government's commitment to its
implementation and site management
issues, 7 December 2012

Robertson Lecture Theatre
Murdoch University

Published May 2013 by:
Urban Bushland Council (WA) Inc.
PO Box 326, West Perth
Western Australia 6872

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Urban Bushland Council (WA) team:

Sue Radford (Editor) with assistance from Kim Sarti and Mary Gray.

Proceedings compiled by Kim Sarti.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Perth's Bush Forever Report Card (2012: Perth, WA) Proceedings of a one-day conference exploring Bush Forever, the WA Government's commitment to its implementation and site management issues, 7 December 2012.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-646-59379-1 (paperback)

1. Nature conservation – Western Australia – Perth – Congresses
2. Natural areas – Western Australia – Perth – Congresses
3. Forests and forestry – Western Australia – Perth – Congresses
4. City planning – Western Australia – Perth – Congresses

- I. Radford, Sue (Editor)
- II. Urban Bushland Council (WA) Inc.
- III. Title

333.782099411

Front cover: Menzies' Banksia (or Mungyt) *Banksia menziesii*. Photo Tony Kirkby.

Rear cover: Banksia woodland and mixed low shrubland at Kensington Bushland (Bush Forever Site 048). Photo and cover design by Kim Sarti.

The Urban Bushland Council acknowledges generous funding assistance from the following organisations for the symposium and production of the proceedings.



Department of
Environment and Conservation



The conservation values of the area are beautifully presented in an article published in 'Landscape' magazine (Winter 2009) published by the Department of Environment and Conservation. Copies of this are available as a reprint.

Dr John Ryan of Edith Cowan University selected the Anstey-Keane Bush Forever site as one of his case studies for his recently completed PhD thesis on the cultural botany of south west Australian flora. His paper is presented below in these proceedings.

THE HERITAGE VALUES OF ANSTEY-KEANE BUSH FOREVER SITE: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

John Ryan, Edith Cowan University

Botanically diverse places, such as Anstey-Keane Damplands in the southern suburbs of Perth, have diverse natural and cultural heritage values. My hope is that we can identify and leverage these different heritage values in our conservation efforts, as proponents of the Bush Forever program and as advocates of Western Australian flora and fauna. Since coming to Perth in 2008, I've developed a keen interest in the cultural significance of South-West flora, inspired initially by reading George Seddon's books 'Sense of Place', 'Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape' and 'The Old Country'. As a plant enthusiast (rather than a botanist), I came from the north-eastern United States where I was involved in rare and endangered flora conservation. My interest is in the occurrence of South-West plant species in literature, art, explorers' accounts, settler diaries, community memories and other expressions of the past and present.

Anstey-Keane has been part of my heritage research, along with other key biodiversity enclaves in the greater South-West hotspot: Fitzgerald River National Park between Albany and Esperance, Lesueur National Park between Perth and Geraldton, and more recently Kings Park and Botanic Garden. Why is Anstey-Keane significant for our State's heritage? The first reason is its botanical diversity: 381 total plant species, second only in the metropolitan area to the Greater Brixton Street Wetlands. The second is its endangered status: I feel a sense of urgency for Anstey-Keane, as a repository of biodiversity in the northern Pinjarra Plain and within the rapidly expanding southern suburbs.

The third is its suburban location: between Armadale and Cockburn, Anstey-Keane is more accessible to a growing urban and suburban population centre than the regional national parks. It can be a place to educate people about plant diversity and the importance of protecting bushland. The fourth is its potential for conservation visibility: progress made at Anstey-Keane can serve as an example of best practice in Western Australia. Again, the proximity of the site to Perth, in this regard, can be an asset. The fifth is cultural heritage value: along with biodiversity and proximity to a growing population, comes a host of cultural values or what I'd like to refer to as botanical heritage.

Botanical heritage, also known in the literature as plant-based cultural heritage, is a living heritage relating the past, present and future to plants, people and place. When it comes to heritage, we tend to think of the past. I prefer to think in terms of our inheritance of the past and its ripple effect in the present, ensuring a vital, just and multi-species future. We've inherited places like Anstey-Keane and are charged to care for them in a variety of ways, including conserving their cultural legacies. For me, botanical heritage includes the living plants and their ecological and genetic values as well as the cultural heritage associated with the plants. There are three categories of botanical heritage that I have been researching: (a) plants as materials for food, ornamentation, medicine and fibre; (b) plants as subjects of literary, artistic or historical representation; and (c) plants as catalysts of community memory, cultural identity and personal well-being.

Amongst the 381 plant species at Anstey-Keane, there are those that distinguish the botanical character of the place. Consider the Swamp Fox Banksia, Sand Bottlebrush, Woolly Dragon, Purdie's Donkey Orchid, Green Kangaroo Paw and *Regelia ciliata*, from where proposed name 'Regelia Reserve' comes. When I first visited Anstey-Keane in 2008, there was a profusion of Red and Green Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthos manglesii*), a species with a remarkable cultural legacy. *Anigozanthos manglesii* is in the Haemodoraceae family, a word derived from *haima* for blood and *doron* for gift. It is literally a gift of blood. *Anisos* denotes 'unequal' and *anthos* 'flower', alluding

to unequal lobes of the perianth. Its species name refers to Captain James Mangles (1786–1867), botanical enthusiast and cousin of Lady Stirling, who visited the Swan River Colony in 1831. The plant has several common names, including Mangles Kangaroo Paw and Common Green Kangaroo Paw, as well as numerous Nyoongar names, including Kuttych, Kurulbrang, Krulbrang, Nollamara and Yonga Marra. Nyoongar people consumed the tender, starchy rhizomes before the emergence of the flower. In 1834, botanist David Don published in *The British Flower Garden*, the first formal description of a cultivated Mangles Kangaroo Paw: 'This singularly beautiful species of *Anigozanthos* was raised in the garden at Whitmore Lodge, Berks, the seat of Robert Mangles, Esq. from seeds brought from Swan River by Sir James Stirling, the enterprising governor of that colony, by whom they had been presented to Mr. Mangles'. The flower now frames the crown of the Western Australian Coat of Arms. The blazon reads: 'And for Crest: On a Wreath Or and Sable The Royal Crown between two Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos* [sic] *Manglesii*) flowers slipped proper'. Later in the history of Western Australia, it was selected as State Floral Emblem in 1960, in a proclamation made by then Premier of Western Australia, David Brand. These are just a few examples indicating how the heritage of this species can be approached from different historical moments and cultural traditions.

Another prominent example of a plant with strong heritage value is Balga, a species most readers will be familiar with. Its genus name *Xanthorrhoea* comes from *xanthos* for 'yellow' and *rheo* for 'flow', indicating its resin. The epithet *preissii* recalls Johann August Ludwig Preiss (1811–1883), a German-born British botanist and zoologist. Balgas are also known as Grass Trees or especially in colonial times, Blackboys. Numerous Nyoongar names are known: Baaluk, Balag, Balka, Barro, Kooryoop, Paaluc, Palga and Yarrlok. The species has strong Nyoongar cultural legacy. The long, thin fronds of the Balga, called mindarie, were used

as bedding and to protect the roof of a miama. When it rained, the water flowed along the underside of the fronds, keeping those inside dry. Colonists used the mindarie in a similar way for thatch. Nyoongar people used the resin as a binding agent, after crushing it in a heated stone pot with charcoal and kangaroo droppings. The molten resin produced by this process became a cement to fasten objects together, such as stone spearheads and wooden shafts. Moreover, Nyoongar people used Balga resin for tanning hides. Resin was dissolved in water in a rock hole heated by hot stones. The hides of yonga (kangaroo) and koomal (possum) were scraped, softened and then put in the rock hole for a period of soaking. The skins were then used as bookha (clothes), wogga (blankets) or coorda (carry-bags). Colonists processed the resin in a similar way to yield varnish. Additionally, Nyoongar people used the long stem of the flower as a torch, particularly useful when shifting campsites. The shaft of Balga was used for igniting fires. As the 'refrigerator' of the bush, Balga housed bardi grubs, which were collected from the trunks of dying trees as a nutritious and sustaining bush food.

Finally, I would like to stress that biodiversity is closely connected to cultural heritage. Thus, we can think of both conserving and creating heritage values. In conserving the plants, we conserve their cultural heritage values for future generations. However, I feel we also have to help create heritage. This means, for example, bringing artists, poets, novelists, documentary film makers, performers, cooks and others to places like Anstey-Keane to create new cultural expressions of the biodiversity. The arts and sciences can contribute collaboratively to conservation through their respective strengths. My initiative FloraCultures, funded by Edith Cowan University and in partnership with Kings Park, is an online archive and guide to Perth's plant-based cultural heritage. It is in production in 2013. Anstey-Keane is one of the sites that will eventually be included because it is integral to Perth's botanical heritage.