



Feral Animal Control in Cockburn – striving forward as a team

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City of Cockburn



- 92 bushland reserves (1,189Ha), majority actively managed
- Woodlands, coastal and wetland environments
- Many reserves fragmented, surrounded by residential, commercial or industrial areas
- *Natural Area Management Strategy (2012-2022) – **Objective 3: To control and, where possible, eradicate feral animals and minimise the impact of roaming cats within City managed natural areas.***

Cockburn's control program



- Dedicated annual budget
- High priority reserves (i.e. Bibra Lake, Yangebup Lake, Denis De Young, Little Rush Lake, Coogee Beach, Manning Park, Redemptora)
- Integrated approach – fencing, trapping, virus release, fumigation, den/warren destruction, hive removal
- Species targeted
 - Foxes
 - Cats
 - Rabbits
 - Bees
- Some residents eligible for funding through the CoC Landowner Biodiversity Conservation Grants Program – fox/rabbit control on private property

Keeping the community informed

- Advertisements in local newspapers
- Cockburn website
- Facebook
- Letter drops
- On-site signage
- Education campaigns

CAUTION



Feral Animal Control will be undertaken in this reserve for the preservation of native wildlife.

All domestic animals must be restrained while in the reserve.

For more information contact the City of Cockburn on 9411 3444.

**City of Cockburn** is  feeling hopeful.
Just now · 🌐

To protect our disappearing female turtle population, our fox 🦊 soft leg-trapping program will run until Sept throughout reserves in [#BibraLake](#), Yangebup and Little Rush Lakes, and [#ManningPark](#). Please restrain your dog 🐾 when visiting these areas.





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Foxes

- Annual program – Autumn & Spring (breeding cycles) in high priority reserves with fox activity
- Additional program in wetland areas prior to turtle nesting season
- Soft leg traps (and sometimes cages)
- Recent success aligning programs with adjacent landholders i.e. DBCA, other LGs
- South-West Group Fox Collar Program Study



Fox Control in Urban Areas – Challenges

- Coordinating control in adjacent reserves – private property, DBCA, Water Corp, etc.
- Managing anti-social behaviour (damaged signs, stolen traps)
- Managing risks – dog off leads/off-target captures
- Working with internal departments – Ranger Services
- Absence of Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines
- Engaging professional and certified contractors



Rangers now targeting dogs off lead

Find dog off lead exercise areas at:
cockburn.wa.gov.au/dogs

Enquiries: 9411 3444

South West Group – fox collar tracking program

- SW Group- Cockburn, Canning, East Fremantle, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville and Rockingham
- GPS Collar 20 healthy adult foxes (10 female, 10 male)
- GPS transmitters to record location at frequent intervals
- Each GPS collar has a UHF transmitter - remotely activated. The receiver will be used to locate the fox so it can be caught and euthanised
- Objective: to gather additional information about how these animals move across the urban environment, which will be used to develop more effective control programs.



GPS collar fitted to trapped fox at Yangebup Lake in April 2019.

Bibra Lake Turtle Study



- Anthony Santoro – Murdoch PhD Researcher
- Southwestern snake-necked turtle population - Bibra Lake (CoC), South Lake (DBCA) and Murdoch wetland (Murdoch University)
- Bibra Lake Adult mortality and nest predation very high
- Extremely unsustainable, risk of local extinction
- Located 135 predated nests at Bibra Lake in 2018 – predominately foxes
- Male to female ratio – not balanced
- Bibra Lake is not unique – many Perth wetland are facing similar threats...

RESEARCH SITE



Photo credit: Anthony Santoro

What is Cockburn doing?

- Media – ABC news, local newspaper, Fb, Instagram
- Increased fox control (working with DBCA North/South Lake)
- Increased ranger patrols – dogs on lead
- Design and installation of ‘turtle nesting enclosures’
- On site signage - turtle research and fox trapping

Other:

- Variable Message Boards – “slow down turtle crossing”
- Volunteer turtle tracking program/community engagement



Turtle nesting enclosure installation at Bibra Lake

Cats



- Scheduled for Autumn and Spring as well as ad-hoc (community reports), budget permitting
- Only within City managed conservation reserves (i.e. not on private property – handled by Ranger Services) and public open spaces if site specifics allow
- Protocol:
 - Cat Microchip/registered: owner is contacted, cat to be collected from Cockburn Operations Centre and pays minimal housing fee, no infringement
 - No microchip: taken to Cat Haven to be potentially rehomed
 - Feral: euthanised at Henderson Waste Facility

Cats – challenges

- Irresponsible cat owners/naive local residents
- Cat laws are difficult to implement (individual LG by-laws) and funding/resources
- Budgets – trapping programs are costly (>\$700 to trap and hold a single cat).
- Anti-social behaviour (tampering with/stealing traps)
- Cats on private property/other stakeholder lands
- Working with internal departments (I.e. Ranger Services)
- Conjecture among animal welfare organisations -TNR programs/releasing lactating cats



Domestic cats caught in conservation reserves during cat programs.

Responsible Cat Ownership



- Encourage “responsible cat ownership” in the community – sterilisation and microchipping (subsidised), register, wear collar/bells, not allowing night-time roaming
- South-West Group/Murdoch University cat video study
 - Three videos
 - ‘cat welfare focused’
 - Tested with focus group before promoted to community
 - Studies indicate that negative connotations towards cats are largely ineffective
- Cat Whisperer Workshops
- Cat bib giveaways

Rabbits

- Autumn and Spring programs– warren management, fumigation and virus release
- Some reserves/reveg sites have rabbit-proof fencing
- Veg condition mapping shows fencing has been successful in reducing impact of rabbits
- Tree guards also used in areas prone to rabbits
- Challenges:
 - K5 Strain of virus available over last couple of years hasn't been very effective
 - Rabbit warrens on private property
 - Native species utilising disused warrens/burrows



Feral Bees

- Bees are a problem across the City – Bibra Lake, Yangebup Lake, Banksia Eucalypt Woodlands
- Take over nesting hollows for birds/possums
- Program is not scheduled – ‘as and when required’
- Rely on community/internal reports
- Contractor fumigates hives
- Nesting boxes installed in trees within reserves to compensate for the hollows that have been taken over by pest species, incl. bees
- Public perception of honey bees



The way forward



- Alliances/coordination – Federal, State, Local gov, local residents, cat owners, other.
- Ongoing commitment – budgets
- State government grants/support at a higher level
- Community education (particularly around responsible cat ownership)
- Continued data collection
- Trials and innovations
- Rolling out SOP's/guidelines for urban fox control
- Persistence
- Sense of humour

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