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Acknowledgment of Country

As an organisation, South Coast NRM recognises and respects that we live and work on the traditional lands of First Nations people. We acknowledge and honour First Nations people as the spiritual and cultural custodians of this land, and we recognise the ongoing importance of their values, languages, beliefs, and knowledge.

We are committed to working in partnership with First Nations peoples to support and promote respectful cultural and ecological practices, and to ensure that their land, culture, and knowledge is respected and protected. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, and extend this respect to all First Nations peoples.

CEO update

Dear Partners,

As we near the festive season, I hope this message finds you well and that you are looking forward to the well-deserved rest that Christmas and the New Year bring.

This past year has been one of significant progress at South Coast NRM, and I am proud of the dedication and hard work demonstrated by our staff and all our collaborators across the South Coast region. Our strengthened partnerships with catchment and Landcare groups, Aboriginal Corporations, regional industries, and government partners have paved the way for meaningful and impactful initiatives. However, we recognise that our journey is far from complete.

In 2023, our core projects gained substantial momentum, thanks in part to the Australian Government's Regional Delivery Partner Panel (RDPP), which was launched in late 2023. These initiatives focus on climate-smart agriculture, wetland conservation, and the protection of threatened species and their habitats. Guided by conservation science, we are concentrating on three key threatened species in our region: the Western Ground Parrot, the Noisy Scrub Bird, and Gilbert's Potoroo. We are also committed to improving the management of the Esperance RAMSAR wetlands and advancing integrated landscape management within the Fitz-Stirling priority area. These vital projects are being implemented in close partnership with landowners, community groups, and government entities, and I am pleased to report positive outcomes across all areas of investment. Additionally, the recent reforms to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act aim to enhance environmental protections and streamline processes, providing a more favourable framework for our ongoing conservation efforts. South Coast NRM looks forward to collaborating with the Australian Government to improve program delivery across the region and enhance the National Heritage Trust for the benefit of our communities and industries.

While the RDPP initiatives currently serve as the backbone of our operations, we are also dedicating resources to

strengthening our business model and empowering stakeholders throughout the South Coast region to engage in natural resource management (NRM) activities. This effort reflects our ambition to foster excellence, drive innovation, and demonstrate effective leadership within our region. South Coast NRM is committed to evolving to establish the highest long-term standards in program development and delivery. Over the past three years, we have diligently built relationships with both longstanding and new partners, including private sector interests, philanthropic organisations, and various levels of government. We will continue this path, striving to attract additional investment in our region as markets for natural capital grow and demand for NRM products increases.

And finally, I recently had the pleasure of attending the Great Southern Grammar Backyard Possum Encounter play, a fantastic community event. I want to congratulate all the staff and students who contributed to this high-quality community engagement and educational initiative. Albany is one of the few places where this nocturnal possum can still be found, although its numbers have been reduced by 90% since colonial settlement due to habitat loss, predators (such as cats and foxes), climate change, and roadkill. Fortunately, these remarkable creatures are adapting well to living in our backyards. The play was created in collaboration with Michael Barlow, the artistic director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, along with several theatre designers and puppeteers. It was funded through the Creativity in Schools Grant from the Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries—truly a wonderful example of collaboration.

As we enter the holiday season, I want to extend my best wishes for a safe and joyous Christmas. I look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts and achieving great success together in 2026.

Warm regards,

Luke

South Coast NRM has commenced work on the Protecting Peatland Ecosystems and Addressing Threats in Southwestern Australia (PEAT Southwest) Project

South Coast NRM has begun work on the Protecting Peatland Ecosystems and Addressing Threats in Southwestern Australia (PEAT Southwest) Project. Our contribution is supported through funding from Lotterywest and builds upon an existing project designed to advance the understanding and sustainable management of peatland ecosystems within the Walpole Wilderness Area.

Working alongside South West NRM, we will help implement practical conservation actions across the broader South West and South Coast regions, contributing to a collaborative approach to the future management of peatlands across southwestern Australia.

In October, Tom Nagle and Emma Sommerville attended a two-day workshop in Walpole, which brought together more than 30 members of the PEAT Southwest team. Each day began with inspiring yarnning sessions led by the Undalup Cultural Conservationists. The group was introduced to Wadandi–Pibbulmun connections to Country while gathered around a fire, walking through woodland, and following the Frankland River.

Participants visited two field sites within the Walpole Wilderness Area where researchers shared findings to date and facilitated broad discussions. The geodiversity team demonstrated a multi-spectral survey flight and explained how this technology helps inform peat mapping and landscape assessment. The biodiversity team introduced us to the remarkable Sunset Frog—did you know it belongs to a single-genus lineage around 30 million years old?

The afternoon of day two focused on evaluation and breakout sessions centered on project goals and how the project will transition from research into management and on-ground implementation.

<https://peatproject.com.au/>

All Photos: Credit – Holly Winkle





Kambarang (October–November): A Season of New Beginnings

Kambarang, the Noongar season of ‘birth,’ has brought exciting sightings along the south coast, with volunteers witnessing Southern Right Whale calves building strength before their long migration south.

Our survey season is now complete, with 204 surveys carried out by 24 volunteers and 8 Indigenous rangers between May and October 2025— capturing an incredible range of whale images from 251 sightings that included 81 mother and calf pairs. We’re now processing and identifying individuals before uploading them to ARWPIC, the Australasian Right Whale Photo Identification Catalogue.

We also connected with the community at the Albany Harborside Symposium and Albany Show, raising awareness about keeping safe and respectful distances from Southern Right Whales and their calves to ensure they can conserve precious energy before their long journey south to their feeding grounds.

A huge thank you to our dedicated volunteers — your efforts are helping protect these iconic species.

This project is delivered by South Coast Cetaceans, South Coast NRM, Oceans Blueprint, and Edith Cowan

University, with support from government partners, citizen scientists, Albany tour operators, and Albany's Historic Whaling Station.

 **Get involved:** Laurab@southcoastnrm.com.au

 **Learn more:** southcoastnrm.com.au/southern-right-whale

Fitz-Stirling Priority Place

This spring, our team has been hard at work in the field, monitoring Black Cockatoo breeding success in our artificial nesting hollows and collecting data from our remote camera array. Fifty wildlife cameras are operating around the clock across reserves and farms in the Fitz-Stirling corridor.

These cameras provide vital information to assess the effectiveness of the *Fitz-Stirling Priority Place* project's large-scale, integrated pest control program. Last financial year, this program covered more than 90,000 hectares—from Cranbrook to Bremer Bay—targeting feral cats, foxes, and rabbits. The project is delivered in partnership with Bush Heritage Australia, DBCA, North Stirlings Pallinup Natural Resources, Gillamii, Fitzgerald Biosphere Group, and Oyster Harbour Catchment Group, and will continue throughout the 2025–2026 financial year.

Early signs of success are emerging, with species such as the Chuditch (Western Quoll) reappearing on Bush Heritage reserves—captured here on camera as it hops away!



Telling the Gilbert's Potoroo/Ngilkat story in print and film

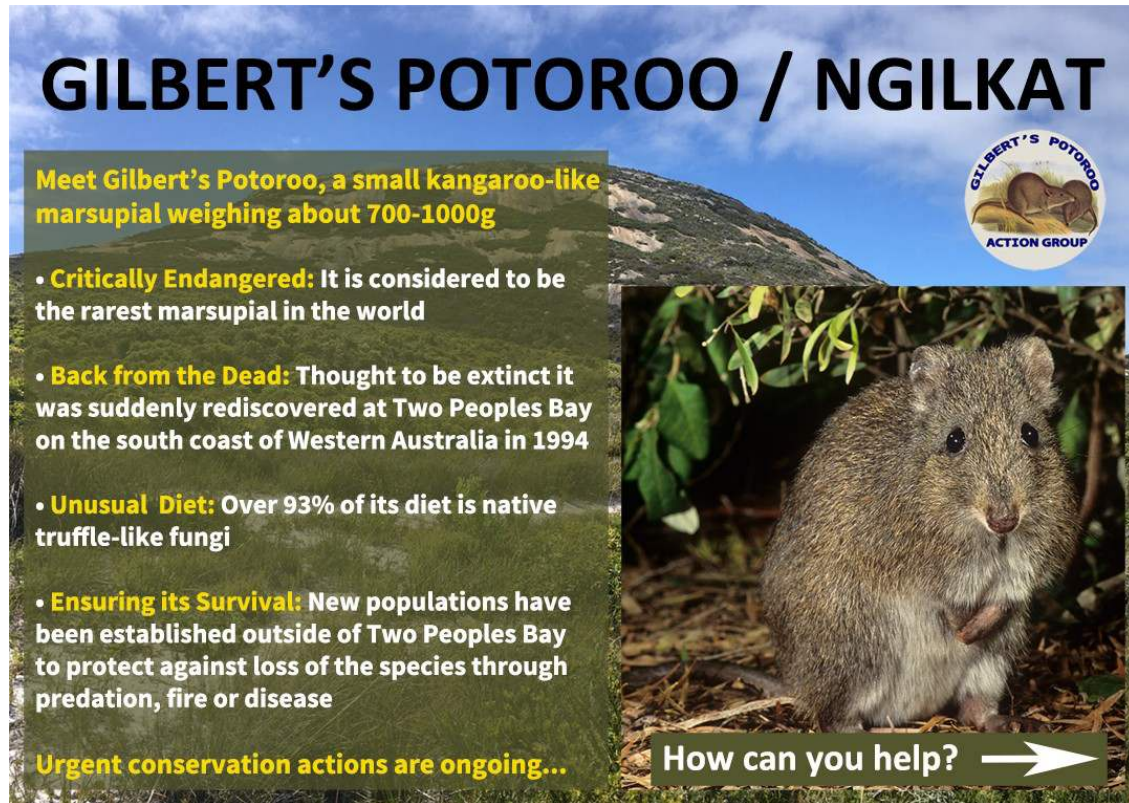
Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG) have launched an exciting integrated awareness campaign telling the story of Gilbert's Potoroo/Ngilkat in both videos and a postcard style brochure. The brochure (front pictured above), designed by Jackie Courtenay, replaces the old GPAG brochure that had become very out of date. The new brochure highlights four key facts about the Potoroos and includes a call to action for how people can help. The back of the brochure (see <https://shorturl.at/uA3LZ>) lists the many ways people can get involved and a QR code links to the GPAG website (www.potoroo.org) to ensure ongoing access to up-to-date information.

The Gilbert's Potoroo photo is by Jiri Lochman.

The video series, filmed and produced by Javier Delgado Esteban from SpaceWhale Studio, including the composition of original music scores, consists of 5 chapters that can be viewed as stand-alone short videos or as a single 3-minute video that combines all the chapters. Each chapter expands on one of the four facts listed on

the front of the brochure and provides more information about the world's rarest marsupial that most people have never heard of, the species' presumed extinction and exciting rediscovery, its ecological role as a specialist native truffle-eater and ecosystem engineer, and the threats it faces. The fifth chapter is a more detailed call to action encouraging people to get involved and help GPAG in its efforts to help save Gilbert's Potoroo/Ngilkat in partnership with South Coast NRM and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

The videos can be viewed on GPAG's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@PotorooOrg>. The brochures and videos were funded by the Australian Government through South Coast NRM, a member of the Regional Delivery Partners Panel, and Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.



GILBERT'S POTOROO / NGILKAT

Meet Gilbert's Potoroo, a small kangaroo-like marsupial weighing about 700-1000g

- **Critically Endangered:** It is considered to be the rarest marsupial in the world
- **Back from the Dead:** Thought to be extinct it was suddenly rediscovered at Two Peoples Bay on the south coast of Western Australia in 1994
- **Unusual Diet:** Over 93% of its diet is native truffle-like fungi
- **Ensuring its Survival:** New populations have been established outside of Two Peoples Bay to protect against loss of the species through predation, fire or disease

Urgent conservation actions are ongoing...

How can you help? →



Urban Possum Project

The urban possum project has been busy improving urban environments to support the Western ringtail possum.

We are excited to announce that in collaboration with local residents we have successfully planted 3,100 native plants throughout the Albany region! These plants are species known to be used by possums, for shelter and/or food. As these seedlings grow, they will increase habitat connectivity throughout our urban and peri-urban areas of Albany, facilitating safe passage between gardens for our little possum friends. We can't wait to watch these seedlings grow and see what little creatures call them home!

Our next phase of possum conservation is dog fence rebates! We have 20 rebates valued at \$550 each to install or upgrade fences on residential properties around Albany to reduce possum-dog conflict. The rebate is available for individuals who want to raise the height of existing fences to 1.8m or those wishing to install new fences to create a dog-free section of garden. This simple but effective modification allows wildlife, particularly the critically endangered Western ringtail possum, to safely travel between properties without the threat of dog attacks.

Fences need to be installed by the 31st December 2025. If you are interested in a rebate, please get in contact with Renae (renaev@southcoastnrm.com.au).





Construction Commences at Whidby Street Basin

This month marked an exciting milestone for the Urban Rivers Yakamia Creek restoration project, with earthworks now underway at the Whidby Street Basin - our most upstream site in the catchment. In partnership with the City of Albany, we are using some of our Australian Government grant funds to transform this basin into a living wetland by enhancing its biodiversity value and improving the amenity of the surrounding area for the community.

Prior to the start of construction, we undertook point intercept monitoring of the vegetation to establish baseline measures of vegetation cover and weed presence. We also completed baseline water quality monitoring. These measurements will be repeated annually after the on-ground works are completed, allowing us to track ecological change and assess how the site responds to restoration efforts over time. At this site, the basin will be enlarged to hold more water, slow flows, and better detain sediments moving through the system to protect waterways and the estuary downstream.

Once the earthworks are completed, the area will be planted with a variety of local native plant species to help filter nutrients from the waterway and provide habitat for wildlife, including threatened species such as black cockatoos and western ringtail possums. Earthworks are expected to finish later this month. Early in the new year, we will begin controlling weeds and laying weed matting in preparation for revegetation. Around 10,000 local native plants will be planted at the site during winter 2026, marking a significant step toward establishing a functioning wetland.

A highlight during the monitoring was seeing a flock of Carnaby's cockatoos using the site! We hope that once the environmental restoration works are complete, the basin will offer even more suitable habitat for these threatened birds and other native wildlife.

We look forward to sharing further updates as the project progresses.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust under the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program, with support from the City of Albany. This project is a part of Healthy Estuaries WA – a State Government program that aims to improve the health of our South West estuaries.



Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators

Jayme and Rosie have been busy strengthening connections across the region, working with catchment and grower groups, farmers, and fellow extension officers. Their focus is on sharing practical, up-to-date information on sustainable agriculture and best practice natural resource management across the region.

Recent highlights include:

- “Getting Your Hands Dirty with Soil Testing” lesson and workshop with WA College of Agriculture students in Denmark.
- “Healthy Soils = Healthy Estuaries” display at the Albany Harbour Symposium, engaging local students and teachers.
- A Stock Smart workshop in Torbay with the renowned grazer, Bruce Maynard.

The one-day Livestock Essentials for Small Properties event attracted an enthusiastic group of landholders keen to boost their animal handling and grazing knowledge. Bruce’s down-to-earth approach, practical demonstrations, and low-stress stock handling session left participants keen to trial the principles on their own properties.

This was a collaboration with Torbay Catchment Group and RegenWA, and hosted at farmer Nick O’Hallorans property. The workshop was supported by funding from the State Government’s NRM Program and the Australian Government through the Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators.



Soil Snippets on the South Coast

Denmark Ag College students in the field assessing soil texture

Photo by R Boyhan



World Soils Day, 5th December

Every year this is the one day where we can celebrate one of the worlds most relied upon natural resources. Whether you are a farmer who depends upon it every day, an avid gardener who loves nothing more than having your hands dirty, or someone who eats food (all of us!), soils underpin nature, agriculture and our survival.

This year, the message of World Soils Day is 'Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities.' With 95% of our food coming from soils, and 90% of Australia's population living in urban areas, it has never been more important to focus on the health and sustainability of this natural resource.

National Soils Monitoring Program

The National Soils Monitoring Project is officially underway in Western Australia, with the first sites being sampled around Northam last week. On the South Coast, 54 sampling locations have been selected based upon soil, climate, environmental and land use data sets. Esperance based SAF, Jayme, will be reaching out to landholders if their property has been selected for sampling.

If a site is selected on your farm, you will receive a full report from CSIRO which includes biological testing to evaluate microbial activity, various assessments to identify soil chemical properties with some sites including

physical calculations such as bulk density. This data will be a valuable contribution to the Australian National Soils Information System (ANSIS), support research and inform decision-making nationwide. If you would like to know more, please contact our Sustainable Agricultural team on ag@southcoastnrm.com.au.

Know your Southern Soils

As this project has been taking shape, it has been a busy time for all the partners involved, with DPIRD out and about soil testing in the Salmon Gums and Wellstead areas. A highlight in November was the soils display at the Albany Show, featured as part of the South Coast NRM stall and introducing soils concepts to the wider community.

This included matching soils to their land uses, identifying what is a 'healthy soil' and pH testing. It was a great opportunity to engage with so many interested people and to hopefully inspire the next generation of soil scientists.

Photo: Rosie Boyhan at the soils display at the Albany Ag Show



A great season for Grazing Matcher

Since May, eight local producers in the Albany/Denmark/Mt Barker region have been meeting every 4-6 weeks as part of Grazing Matcher, a year-long program focusing on upskilling producers in improving grazing management, feed utilisation, hay and silage making, and more.

A few weeks ago the last meeting for the year was hosted by our Sustainable Agriculture Program Lead, Suzannah. With spring grass in full flush at the property she & her partner lease for their sheep grazing enterprise, Banjine Grazing, it was a chance to have a close look at the growth stages of the pasture, talk about the best options for hay cutting, and condition score ewes at weaning.

"In a year like we've had, grazing decisions probably seem easier," Suzannah says, "but even in a wet year, grazing management makes a big difference to the quality of the feed and how well stock are utilising it.

"It's even more critical in a dry year or if you're running at the upper limits of your carrying capacity. The decisions we make as producers about when to move stock between paddocks, what to feed and whether to cut hay and silage are incredibly consequential and have a big impact on the business, the livestock, and on the land.

"It's often said that if you farm livestock, you're really farming grass – it is the basis of the production system. Ultimately, our pastures are an absolutely key asset to any livestock business, and good management leads to better sustainability of that natural asset.

"For producers, it's so valuable to have the opportunity to meet with others in our area every few weeks to talk through these decisions and learn about the latest science in animal health and pasture management."

Grazing Matcher is a Meat and Livestock Australia Profitable Grazing Systems program facilitated by Jeisane Accioly-McIlree of Western Beef Association. South Coast NRM is pleased to support the workshops in our region through the Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators. The next workshop begins in autumn 2026 – please get in touch if you are interested in participating next year.



Lake Gore Film Launch Huge Success!

On the evening of Tuesday 2nd December, South Coast NRM premiered the Lake Gore Film, produced by local videographer Rosie Henderson, at the Lucky Bay Brewery. We were blown away by the sheer number of people who came to support the event – at least seventy Esperance locals, farmers, NRM legends, youth and other interested people were present.

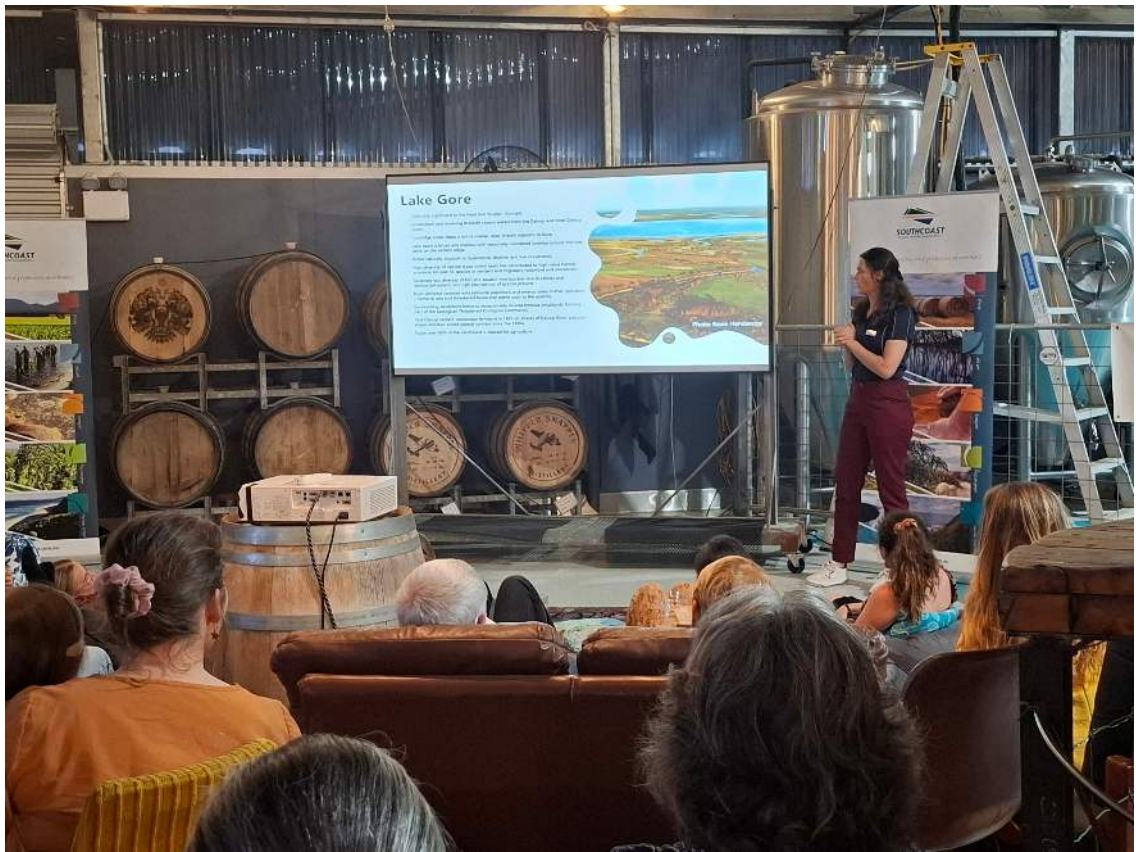
After commencing the night with the screening of the short film, attendees enjoyed relaxing on the beanbags with the brewery's famed pizzas, hot chips and a beverage. The Lake Gore Project Coordinator, Kahree, launched the project with a presentation highlighting the ecological values and characteristics of the Lake Gore system, the objectives of the project in restoring the Lake Gore catchment and surrounding Kwongkan TEC for people and biodiversity, challenges and opportunities, and project accomplishments to date. Tom Nagle, Program Lead for the Priority Landscapes Team at South Coast NRM, acted as MC for the night.

John Simons, the DPIRD Senior Water Scientist, was the final star of the evening with an overview of the hydrological cycle, catchment processes, and a discussion on managing water resources. A lively Q&A session wrapped up the event, reflecting the high level of interest and engagement amongst those present.

South Coast NRM would like to thank everyone who attended for their support, as well as the Lucky Bay Brewery for the excellent venue and catering, and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development for their support.

Film by Rosie Henderson

The Lake Gore Project is funded by the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust Program, and is delivered by South Coast Natural Resource Management as a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners Panel.





Balijup Eco Camp Event

Bandicoots, Birds, Bats & Eco-Surveying:

Your Invitation to Participate in the Balijup Citizen Science Eco-Camp near Cranbrook, WA

1pm Thurs 15 January to 12 noon Monday 19 January 2026

Venue; Balijup Sanctuary - access opposite from 704 Nunijup Road, Tenterden, near Cranbrook. Camping at homestead/camping venue will be a farm house on neighbouring Eltekon Farm, at 282 Martgallup Tenterden Road, Further Info to be provided to registrants.

This is a four-day event of surveying and other environmental monitoring on Balijup, a special property forming part of the Gondwana Link conservation program.

\$55 to be paid on arrival(this helps cover use of facilities/resources for the eco camp. Concessions negotiable)

Participants will need to supply own food/camping equipment No dogs allowed on this site. **Camping at homestead/camping venue near Tenterden. Info to be provided to registrants. Info to be provided to registrants.**

Come for all or part of the event. Please discuss part attendance with Basil Schur) 0429481019)

Participants will work with wildlife ecologist Joe Porter, Basil Schur of Green Skills Denmark, Kelly Sheldrick, CCWA Citizen Science coordinator, and bird specialists, Andrew and Angela Dickinson. The event will provide a range of interesting citizen science monitoring activities at and near Balijup farm including bandicoot re-trapping, phascogale monitoring, bird, bat & bushland surveying.

A detailed program and information sheet will be sent out in the two weeks prior to the event.

Green Skills, partnering with the Hordacre family, has established a 111ha fenced fauna conservation sanctuary in Wandoo & Jarrah forest at Balijup (<https://heartlandjourneys.com.au/places/balijup-farm-and-fauna-sanctuary/>)

For further information and to apply to join in contact Basil Schur at Green Skills Denmark 0429481019 Email bschur@greenskills.org.au

BALIJUP ECO-CAMP

Bandicoots, Birds, Bats & Eco-Surveying

15TH-19TH JANUARY
THURSDAY TO SUNDAY
CRANBROOK, WA



BOOKING & MORE INFORMATION

SCAN ME!



Humanitix.com
or Contact Basil Schur:
bschur@greenskills.org.au
T 0429481019



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natural resource
management program



This project is supported by the Conservation Council of WA, and funding from the WA State Government's NRM program, Southern Ports, and the Koorabup Trust.



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