

# The GREAT SOUTHERN GREAT SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

*are we discounting the future?*

25TH OCTOBER 2023

RETRAVISION STADIUM  
CENTENNIAL PARK, ALBANY

8.30AM - 5.00PM

CREDIT: Ebony Barker

# The GREAT SOUTHERN GREAT SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

25th October	Retravisson Stadium, 156 Lockyer Avenue, Albany
From 9:00 am	Session 1: Where are we now?
Lester Coyne Noongar Elder	Welcome to Country Opening Address
Catherine Spaggiari Fire and Biodiversity WA	Prescribed burning — why change is needed
Brad Kneebone Denmark Bird Group	Rodenticide and wildlife, booming bitterns, and birth of a bird sanctuary
Matthew Bowman Water Corporation	Water for Albany - where from next?
Morning tea, then at 11:00 am	Session 2: Are we making a difference?
Keith Bradby Gondwana Link	The state of the Link
Shaun Ossinger Wilson Inlet Catchment Group Committee	Thinking big by acting locally
Jim Underwood Gondwana Link	Clarifying intentions of cultural fire in the Great Southern
Adam Cross Restoration Ecologist, Mineral Resources	KEYNOTE: Achieving quality restoration - a critical imperative
Lunch.. then at 12.45 pm	Session 3: Custodians of the future
Peter Twigg, South Coast NRM and Roxanne Woods, GAC	Thinking about custodianship after the hard No
Laura Bird, South Coast NRM Catherine Johnston, South Coast NRM	Promoting natural capital through environmental volunteering
Hardy Croucher, Community member Yazmin Ryan, Community member	A youth perspective
Wiebke Ebeling UWA Marine Energy Research Australia	Can Albany lead Australia's innovation in renewables?
Afternoon tea.. then at 3.45 pm	Panel Discussion: Are we discounting the future? Followed by closing remarks
Sundowner from 5:00 pm	Canapes provided. Drinks available at the bar



CREDIT: Ebony Barker

# Session 1: Where are we now?

Welcome to Country:

Lester Coyne: Noongar Elder



**Abstract:** Following the vote, I have found that my thoughts are clear and I have space for what can be new, what can come from this. We can focus at a local level. I want to look at working on a local concept and model for our people to grow in this area. Let's look at a new path. Noongar people have a caring and sharing ethic to take forward. There is the future to care for and consider.

**Biographical Details:** Lester Coyne is a respected Elder in our Noongar community and highly regarded in the wider community. Lester is the eldest of six children and when he was about three years old, his family came to Albany from Katanning to be with their extended family. From going to Albany Senior High School, to his first job as greenskeeper at the Albany golf course, working in transport and a local musician playing in Albany for many years, Lester has been part of this community. Currently, Lester is Chairperson of the Albany Heritage Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation, the Albany Aboriginal Corporation and South Coast NRM's Aboriginal Reference Group. Previously, Lester has held many positions that have provided much needed services to the Aboriginal community in the Health sector along with being National Chairperson of the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. Lester offers the community a deep knowledge of Cultural Heritage, sound understanding of natural resource management, knowledge of social issues and community development practices along with strongly promoting collaboration within the Aboriginal community



# Session 1: Where are we now?

## Prescribed burning — why change is needed Catherine Spaggiari, Fire and Biodiversity WA



**Abstract:** After the devastating 1961 fires, which burned large areas of forest and destroyed the town of Dwellingup, the practice of prescribed burning was developed as a means to minimize flammable organic material (termed fuel) to prevent large wildfires impacting regional communities. Through its Forest Management Plan, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions works to ensure that at least 45% of about 2.4 million hectares of national parks, state forest, reserves, and unallocated crown lands have been burned in the last six years, based on the premise that time since last fire equates to fuel loading. This means a 4 to 12-year burn rotation requiring large-scale individual burns of up to 150 km<sup>2</sup> to meet those targets.

Monitoring of these burns reveals cumulative detrimental impacts on flora and fauna due to burn severity and in some cases, loss of control. In the south, granite outcrops are numerous and form the dominant underlying bedrock covered by irregular and highly variable layers of regolith and soil that have evolved for millions of years. This fragile landscape supports a complex system of diverse forests, woodlands and wetlands including peats that are thousands of years old. Individual prescribed burns conducted at scales of thousands of hectares cannot exclude specific ecosystems resulting in damage and losses of threatened and fire-sensitive species. The rates of ignition, scale and intensity of most burns suggests many fauna perish, or do not survive afterwards. It is time to consider whether prescribed burning in its current form is doing more harm than good and to look at alternative, more locally relevant ways to mitigate the effects of wildfire. With climate change upon us, we also need to consider emissions from prescribed burns, the effects of sequestration loss, and warming effects due to exposure of bare ground after burns.

**Biographical Details:** Dr Catherine Spaggiari is a member of the management committee of the Denmark Environment Centre and active member of Fire and Biodiversity Western Australia (FaBWA). She is a geologist by profession with an interest in landscape evolution, cultural heritage and conservation, and is also a volunteer fire fighter.



# Session 1: Where are we now?

Rodenticide and wildlife, booming bitterns, and  
birth of a bird sanctuary

Brad Kneebone, Denmark Bird Group



Abstract: Denmark Bird Talks 7 in July 2023 produced a series of stimulating talks covering :

Research into the damaging impacts of rodenticides upon wildlife, particularly owls and other raptors together with insight into the characteristics and range of rodenticides and those to avoid ( Author: Dr Mike Lohr, Edith Cowan University}.

The declining distribution and populations of the Endangered Australasian Bittern in WA, its ecology and wetland habitat requirements (Author: Robyn Pickering, Birdlife Australia).

and

Studies of the birdlife of Wilson Inlet over 35 years by Birdlife Australia established its primary shorebird sites at the eastern and western extremities of the Inlet, leading to a proposal for a bird sanctuary at the Inlet's mouth to protect vulnerable migratory and resident shorebirds ultimately established in 2022 (Authors: Kirsty and John Anderson, Denmark Bird Group Inc).

The talk today provides a very brief outline of each of the above with apologies to the authors for the brevity.

WHERE ARE WE NOW ?

These talks are all linked by a common theme of the conservation of wildlife, primarily avifauna, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for their future and of their habitats. Ongoing research and practical on-ground activities will help to ensure the success of these projects.

Biographical Details: Brad Kneebone has undertaken waterbird and terrestrial bird surveys and studies over the last 40 years as part of Birdlife Australia's citizen science projects with special interest in migratory shorebirds. Member of Birdlife Australia and Australasian Wader Study Group for similar period. City of Albany community member for South Coast Management Group (2004-2016). Convenor of Lowlands Coastcare Group (2003-2016). Winner individual contribution State coastal awards for excellence 2011. Founder and past Convenor of Denmark Bird Group (Associate Group of Birdlife WA). Currently committee member for Denmark Bird Group and Eungedup Management Group.

# Session 1: Where are we now?



## Water for Albany - where from next?

Matthew Bowman, Water Corporation

**Abstract:** The Lower Great Southern Towns Water Supply Scheme supplies more than 40,000 people in Albany, Mt Barker, Kendenup and Denmark. Reduced rainfall driven by climate change and growing demand are placing pressure on the existing groundwater sources in Albany that supply over 90 per cent of drinking water to the scheme. On current projections, annual demand will outstrip supply by 2030, with an additional 1.8 billion litres of drinking water needed by 2050. Modelling predicts aquifer recharge in the existing groundwater abstraction areas west of Albany will fall by up to 18 per cent by 2050, driven by an 19 per cent decline in winter rainfall over the same period. Winter rainfall in the Great Southern has already decreased 13 per cent since 1968. Previous investigations and community engagement have shown the most feasible water source options are new, sustainable groundwater sources north-east of Albany or a future seawater desalination plant. A combination of the two options is also being investigated. Thorough modelling and investigations are underway to understand how water source options can be delivered in the required timeframe, with the lowest environmental impact, and with the greatest long-term benefit to the community.

**Biographical Details:** Matthew Bowman is an environmental engineer with over 25 years experience in the water industry, in a variety of Perth and regional based roles, including leading specialist engineering, scientific and asset management teams with Water Corporation. Matthew currently manages the Corporation's Integrated Water Cycle Planning South team responsible for water source and treatment, and wastewater treatment, disposal and reuse asset investment planning for the Great Southern and South West.

# Session 2: Gondwana Link: are we making a difference?

## State of the Link

Keith Bradby, Gondwana Link



**Abstract:** The Gondwana Link program was established in 2002 to make a difference — a big difference — to the health and resilience of ecosystems across south-western Australia. Considerable focused work by a wide range of affiliated individuals, groups and businesses has been underway since then, alongside a range of environmental projects by other organisations and the inevitable changes in government programs and commercial market conditions. So let's explore what is changing on the ground, how useful the Gondwana Link effort may have been, and the effectiveness of today's science is in supporting both the on-ground effort and our understanding of the global changes affecting us. What can be learnt from our successes and failures, and how could we do better? And can this talk really live up to such an ambitious abstract?

**Biographical Details:** Keith is a long-time advocate for the ecological values of south-western Australia and for the power of local communities. He helped establish some of Australia's earliest landcare groups, has run building, beekeeping and native seed businesses, consulted to the mining sector, worked in local enterprise development and at a policy level in government. Keith is a big believer in the power of open and honest communication and has authored or co-authored over 75 reports, articles and peer reviewed papers. He has served as Chair of the WA Landcare Network and Deputy Chair of the National Landcare Network. Currently CEO of Gondwana Link, which he was part of establishing in 2002.

## How to buy a wetland

Shaun Ossinger, Wilson Inlet Catchment Group  
Committee



**Abstract:** In 2023, Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee purchased Eungedup Wetlands to conserve critically endangered Australasian Bitterns. Hear how an idea in an Albany coffee shop went on to raise nearly \$600,000 in less than 12 months and elicit an outpouring of support from community, government and non government organisations.

**Biographical Details:** Shaun served 15 years with a variety of government departments in marine natural resource management, including Fisheries WA, Australian Fisheries Management Authority (International capacity building and fisheries management) and later for Parks and Wildlife as the Marine Park Coordinator for the Walpole Nornalup Inlets Marine Park. He joined WICC in 2015 seeking a more efficient means of balancing human impacts on the natural environment.





# Session 2: Gondwana Link: are we making a difference?

## Clarifying intentions of cultural fire in the Great Southern

### Jim Underwood, Gondwana Link

**Abstract:** “Fire gives a sense of life and death and brings people together” Uncle Ezzard Flowers.

Recently Gondwana Link, UWA and other partners have been facilitating the remembering of Cultural burning on Noongar land. Solid relationships have been built, cross-cultural learning is underway, and the confidence of Noongar people to use fire again has boosted. There are many more hurdles to overcome. So let's take a step back, and inquire about the intentions underlying the use of fire in the Great Southern landscape. We as scientists and land managers often hear about using cultural burning to enhance processes of regeneration, or meeting objectives of fuel reduction or biodiversity conservation. But are these modern projections onto an old way, are they at odds, or are they important basis for including cultural fire in contemporary times?

In this talk, I will share my observations as a whitefellow yarning and burning with Noongar Elder and Rangers in the FitzStirling region. Understanding the powerful and nuanced links between health of Country and health of People is key. It appears that traditionally, burns were undertaken to increase food resources for health of all life. Within this primary intention of bio-cultural regeneration, the particular situation of the Country is then allowed to guide the process towards unique outcomes appropriate for the time and place.

“Western people have been trying to tame the land but keep coming runner up. We need to listen to the land... let the Country lead again”. Uncle Eugene Eades

**Biographical Details:** After a 17-year career of conservation research into the resilience of coral reefs, Jim has recently moved his focus back onto the land to apply his understanding of connectivity and ecosystem health with the Gondwana Link team. Jim spent much of his early life growing up Mt Gibson Station and managed its transition from a pastoral operation to a wildlife sanctuary, so this love and care for Country is has been re-ignited.

Jim has so far authored 20 peer reviewed papers (with 1,070 citations) and has presented at more than 20 national and international conferences. His best contribution working for the Australian Institute of Marine Science, however, involved development of collaborations with state, federal and Indigenous management agencies to design marine sanctuaries that provide the best chance of survival of coral reefs in a rapidly warming ocean. Through these collaborations, the two-way learning with Traditional Custodians inspired a deep respect for the ecological truth that healthy people depend on healthy country. Therefore, Jim is now committed to supporting traditional ways of looking after country through genuine partnerships with Indigenous communities.

In his role as Connecting Country Coordinator, Jim is looking to build capacity and enable access and healing of Menang and Goreng people on their Country. He is currently involved with supporting Nowanup Enterprises towards self-sufficiency and Yarramouf Corporation to achieve their cultural aspirations.

# Session 2: Gondwana Link: are we making a difference?

KEYNOTE: Achieving Quality Restoration — a  
critical imperative

Adam Cross, Mineral Resources Limited



**Abstract:** Ecological restoration is an intrinsically challenging endeavour. Recreating the incredible complexity and interconnectedness of ecosystems is difficult, in some situations impossible, and success is so often limited by the amount we simply don't know or understand about the ecosystems before they were disturbed. But we live in an era where the scale and urgency of restoration needed to avert biodiversity and climate catastrophe mean we no longer have the luxury of spending decades learning from research trials — while research and innovation will always remain crucial, we need practical approaches based on science and lived experience that can be rolled out now. That is not to say we should compromise on quality or ignore the knowledge gaps, far from it; we need to come together, share experiences of success and failure, and learn from these experiences to do the very best restoration we can based on our current knowledge. We need action. This is the challenge of the next decade, and this is where the importance and value of standards, guidelines, and practical methodology lies.

**Biographical Details:** Adam is a restoration ecologist and botanist working to improve the recovery of ecosystems impacted by human activities such as mining, particularly in dryland ecosystems. He is particularly interested in seed-based restoration and the determinants of how plant communities assemble after disturbance. He has published many peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, as well as two books. After completing his PhD Adam held several postdoctoral positions including being recipient of a Research Fellowship in Restoration Ecology at Curtin University, co-funded by the Ecological Health Network (EHN). Adam left academia in 2023 to practically apply restoration and ecological science in the mining industry and is Principal Biodiversity at Mineral Resources Limited. Adam is also EHN's Science Director and joined the EHN Steering Committee in March 2023.

# Session 3: Custodians of the Future



Thinking about Custodianship  
After the Hard No  
Peter Twigg, Southcoast NRM  
Roxanne Woods, Gnowangerup  
Aboriginal Corporation

**Abstract:** Custodianship is an expression most often heard or encountered in a First Nations context. For example, we might hear an Aboriginal person say 'We don't own the land, the land owns us'. And they might follow this with, 'So we are but custodians of the land, in our time it is our turn to look after Country so it can look after us'. As such 'custodianship' is a deep and complex concept that touches on and speaks to the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land. Those outside the system can, if we are lucky, glimpse this complexity, although claims to fully fathom such relationships are suspicious, or more precisely, unfounded. And yet the need to understand, support and if possible, enhance this complex relationship of people to Country has never been more important or more pressing. For me, the pathway to an honorable engagement with this complex relationship has been made much more difficult and less clear by the hard No result in the recent referendum. Over the last year, for many, a pathway with integrity into and perhaps through the complex issues of Indigenous engagement, Indigenous disadvantage and colonial legacies seemed to be emerging. But now as a nation we have come across a sign bluntly saying: 'Wrong way-Go Back'. Despite feelings of sadness, despair, confusion, embarrassment, frustration and the rest, I suggest that thinking about custodianship is more important and more widely relevant than ever in the aftermath of that hard No.

**Biographical Details:** Dr Peter Twigg has extensive experience living and working in remote Aboriginal communities having spent 20 years managing and facilitating community, land, and cultural projects within the Western Desert region. Dr Twigg has led a number of projects towards the long-term social, economic and cultural sustainability of remote communities, including through the development of targeted Cultural, land management and heritage research projects. As the Principal Research Leader of the Spinifex Mapping and Archive Project within the CRC for Remote Area Participation, he facilitated the mapping and documentation of more than 250 cultural sites and worked on a digital archive and business model for community management of traditional information. As Jigalong Ranger Coordinator Dr Twigg worked closely alongside Martu People in the re-integration of traditional decision-making processes as the guiding framework for heritage and land management activities, including site mapping, threatened species management and traditional cool burn cycles. Peter is a Program Manager at South Coast NRM working within the Culture and Heritage team on a range of engagement, landscape renewal and cultural connection projects with the Noongar Community.

**Roxanne Woods:** Roxanne lives in Gnowangerup and has become an important staff member at the Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation's landcare nursery coordinating seed collecting, growing and planting native seedlings on-Country. Roxanne also presents to school and tour groups visiting the nursery. Through her work as Strong and Proud coordinator for South Coast NRM, Roxanne successfully delivered a pilot program in Gnowangerup, providing out of school activities and Cultural awareness for local Aboriginal high school students.





## Promoting Natural Capital through Environmental Volunteering Laura Bird, Catherine Johnston, Southcoast NRM

**Abstract:** In witnessing the many natural disasters happening around the world, do you feel disconnected to how you can make a difference? The future can seem bleak and leave us feeling anxious, distressed, powerless and out of control. But we can make a difference to our own lives and to our local environment by being the change we want to see in the world around us. We cannot force others to change, but we can role model the change we would like to see. As humans we are hardwired to connect — this may be with other people or other living things. Connecting with nature through environmental volunteering is one avenue to start making a positive impact on your own wellbeing as well as in the world around you. Volunteering alongside people who are passionate about achieving environmental outcomes with the aim to create a more resilient world for our future generations has many benefits. It allows for the transmission of knowledge between generations and communities, it enables life-long learning as we build on the foundations with new knowledge as it becomes available, it builds relationships and connections creating a network to foster solutions as we break free from the traditional organisational silos that have stifled our growth in the past. If any of this piques your interest, join me to explore the South Coast Enviro-Experiences and find out how you can be part of the solution and grow our natural capital.

**Biographical Details:** Laura Bird: Exploring and adventuring with a sustainability focus drives Laura, she has a keen interest in other cultures which has taken her overseas to many places including Nepal, Peru, Japan, Botswana and Borneo. She completed a Bachelor of Arts at UWA Albany (Environmental Anthropology) and headed to the Kimberley to manage APT's Ungolan Safari camp, guiding tourists through the Michelle Falls. Drawn back to the amazing south coast to raise her family, she completed a Diploma in Sustainability and Graduate Certificate in Education for Sustainability while delivering Cert 4 Sustainable Business units at TAFE. Laura sat on the Regional Capacity Reference group for SCNRM, was the State Manager of the not-for-profit organisation Green Skills for 3 years, overseeing projects on revegetation, weed management, waste reduction and sustainable skills. She volunteers with her local community association, sports clubs, P&C and was part of the inaugural Great Southern Sustainable School network. Her personal goal is to raise awareness of sustainable living to increase her community's resilience and enable future generations to continue to enjoy our spectacular environment. Her current project is with South Coast NRM leading the South Coast Enviro-Experiences project with the goal of creating community connections through environmental volunteering.

**Biographical Details:** Catherine Johnston: Catherine studied for a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Human Geography and two Diplomas for Geography and Environmental Policy with the Open University while working full time for a global organisation in London, utilising her event management skills and running large-scale conferences. Travelling got the better of her as she moved across the world here to Australia to embark on a number of roles including; a Project Officer for the Department of Agriculture in Canberra, running the Environmental Assessment Panels and helping to write policy on Scattered Trees to help boost biodiversity and diversify ecosystem services in wood-pastures, supporting constituents' Environment and Immigration issues for a Federal MP and a very interesting role in a nursery learning about rose propagation.

Settling in Albany has brought her love for engaging with the local community in various volunteer roles at the Red Cross and the Albany Hospice. Her current role is with South Coast Natural Resource Management as the South Coast Enviro-Experiences Project Officer. This project is demonstrating the significant role that volunteering plays in bringing the community together, emphasising the critical link between our environment and the well-being of all species and highlighting that we can all make a difference.

# Session 3: Custodians of the Future



## A Youth Perspective Hardy Croucher and Yazmin Ryan Community members

**Abstract:** I have grown up in the Great Southern and I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about what I think of the future. I would like to share how I thought the future would look when I was little and reflect on how I think the future will be now facing the challenges of climate change. In my presentation I will talk about how I hope we can change this and what a ideal future could be like.

**Biographical Details: Hardy Croucher:** Hi, I'm Hardy. I lived in the Great Southern all my life, making the trip to Albany from the Porogurups most days either to attend school at Great Southern Grammar, or just hang around town with friends. My major interest and hobby is stand-up comedy. I entered the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's "Class Clown" competition and was national finalist in 2022 and 2023. I have also performed in Perth and Albany and tickets are still available for my first full solo show "The Good, The Bad and The Hardy" at the Spectrum Theatre on 19 Nov through Paperbark. I'm really excited to see all the great talks today and share my youth perspective.

**Biographical Details: Yazmin Ryan:** Yazmin Ryan is a Wajarri Yamatji young creative born in Manjimup and now residing on the beautiful coastline of Kinjarling, Noongar Boodjar. An active community member with a passion for performing, she is currently studying a Diploma in Contemporary Performance through WAAPA and has gone from a student at Southern Edge Arts to Assistant Aerial Circus Trainer. A lover of the arts and an avid supporter of mental health, having done a years study toward a Bachelors Degree in Psychology at Murdoch University, Yaz hopes to move forward in her career and life, inspiring, empowering and encouraging others through community performing arts.

# Session 3: Custodians of the Future

Can Albany lead Australia's innovation in renewables?

Wiebke Ebeling, UWA Marine Energy Research Australia



**Abstract:** The University of Western Australia (UWA) has decades' of ocean engineering expertise, working with offshore oil and gas industry in WA. This expertise is now transitioning, and assisting industry to transition their operations, towards offshore ocean renewables. Supported by the WA Government, UWA established a new knowledge hub in ocean energy with headquarters in Albany in 2018 — the Wave Energy Research Centre. A partnership between UWA, the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre and the WA Government is now funding an innovation project for a prototype wave energy converter in Albany's outer harbour, King George Sound. The project involves the full lifecycle of design, manufacture, deployment, operation and decommissioning of a reduced-scale M4 ('Moored MultiModal Multibody') device. It seeks to test and validate the infrastructure and supply chain necessary for emerging renewable energy markets in coastal communities, including the aquaculture industry in the region. The M4 is Australia's only wave energy project.

Wave energy deployments are typically commercially sensitive and therefore difficult to build research and engagement programs around. In contrast, M4 data will be publicly available, and benefits will include demonstration of local and national capability, interaction across sectors, advancement of the technology and community engagement. "Lessons Learnt" from the M4 will be pivotal to attracting other wave energy technology developers to the region and to working with potential funding agencies, including Government, on positioning Albany as a leader in ocean renewable energy and coastal microgrid innovation

**Biographical Details:** Wiebke has a background in the biological sciences and completed a PhD in Neuroscience at the Australian National University in Canberra. She is also a qualified workshop facilitator for career development. Since 2010, she has worked in communication, education, outreach, and stakeholder engagement in various science areas at several Australian universities. In 2018, she became Centre Manager for Marine Energy Research Australia (MERA) — then known as the Wave Energy Research Centre — based at the UWA Albany Campus, and of the Great Southern Marine Research Facility in the historic railway station. She has been a Board Director at the Southern Ports Authority since 2020, the Albany Hub leader of the United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development (WA) since 2021, the Secretary of the Albany Family & Domestic Violence Action Group since 2022, and is the current Chair of the Great Southern Science Council.



# Posters

## The Bottom-Up Approach to Sustainable Development in a Small Regional Community

Wiebke Ebeling<sup>1</sup>, Kate McGee<sup>2</sup>, Katie Arbuckle<sup>3</sup>, Paul Mackey<sup>4</sup>, Andrea Smithson<sup>5</sup>

1. Marine Energy Research Australia, University of Western Australia
2. United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development,
3. WorklinkWA (Business Development)
4. Southern Ports Authority
5. City of Albany (Sustainability)

**Abstract:** In recent years, the urgent need for climate action has shone a spotlight on the broader need for sustainability across a range of human activity. The UN Sustainable Development Goals encourage governments and corporations globally to review their practices in environmental management, urban planning, human resources, logistics, governance etc. — basically: to see the inter-connectivity of values, services and people. Simultaneously, there is a plethora of grassroots programs that offer a complementary approach to implementing the SDGs. We present here an example of a small regional community that already embraces and champions the spirit of the SDGs in a tight collaborative network. Albany on the south coast of Western Australia is an urban centre with a population of 40,000 people. The closest capital city Perth is 420km away, 5hrs by car, with limited public transport. This regional setting has positioned Albany as an immediate hub to drive the Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development through The University of Western Australia secretariat. Collaborative and transdisciplinary initiatives involving the University and other education institutions, local government, not-for-profit organisations and local industries are organically networked into the fabric of the small economy that is more than the sum of its parts.

# Posters

Great Southern Science Council and South Coast Enviro-experiences  
Mentoring Scheme

Katy Evans,<sup>1</sup> Laura Bird,<sup>2</sup> Catherine Johnston,<sup>2</sup> Natalie Reeves<sup>2</sup>

1. Great Southern Science Council, Curtin University

2. South Coast Natural Resource Management

Abstract: Science in the Great Southern is undertaken and supported by a wide range of professionals. Many of them have learned on the job. Much of what they know is not part of any formal learning experience.

The purpose of this program is to introduce emerging to experienced professional scientists in an informal setting to share knowledge, enthusiasm, experience, and advice.

# Posters

Looks can be deceiving, lets change the definition

Jenni Loveland

Albany and Surrounds Feral Cat Working Group Supported by Oyster  
Harbour Catchment Group and State NRM

Abstract: One of the biggest challenges we have for roaming cat control in Western Australia is the current definition which define cats as Feral, Stray, and Pet cats. This needs to change. As you may, know, cats are all the same species, and all do immense damage to native animals. Currently we have all been invited to comment on the draft threat abatement plans of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). We can all make a difference. This is an important step as along with many long overdue changes the draft shows changes to the definition to Feral and Pet cats only, this will in theory make it easier to control roaming cats.

# Posters

Where do Australian southern right whales go to feed?

Kate Sprogis,<sup>1,2</sup> Rob Harcourt,<sup>2</sup> Leena Riekkola,<sup>3</sup> Virginia Andrews-Goff,<sup>4</sup> Els Vermeulen,<sup>5</sup> Alexandre Zerbini,<sup>6,7</sup> Amy Kennedy,<sup>6</sup> Nick Gales,<sup>8</sup> Emma Carroll<sup>3</sup>

1. The UWA Oceans Institute and School of Agriculture and Environment, University of Western Australia, Great Southern Marine Research Facility, Albany, WA, Australia

2. School of Natural Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

3. School of Biological Sciences, Te Kura Matauranga Koiora, University of Auckland Waipapa Taumata Rau, Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand

4. Australian Antarctic Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Kingston,

5. Mammal Research Institute Whale Unit, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

6. Co-operative Institute for Climate, Ocean, and Ecosystem Studies (CICOES), University of Washington and Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries, Seattle, WA, USA

7. Marine Ecology and Telemetry Research, Seabeack, WA, USA

8. International Whaling Commission, Australia

Abstract: Southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*; SRWs) migrate from winter breeding grounds into the Southern Ocean to feed during the warmer months. However, where modern-day SRWs from the Australian wintering grounds feed, and their migratory paths, remain poorly understood. The aim of this research project, entitled Mirnong Maat (Whale Journeys) was to track movements and genetic connectivity of SRWs from Western Australia (WA) by satellite tagging and biopsy sampling. Tracks from 2022 and 2023 have provided new insights into migration routes and foraging locations. Potential foraging areas were the Subtropical Front, the Kerguelen Islands, the Crozet Islands and Antarctica. The tracks can be viewed live online at [www.tohoravoyages.ac.nz/track-the-2023-australian-whales/](http://www.tohoravoyages.ac.nz/track-the-2023-australian-whales/). Additionally, there was spatial and temporal overlap with right whales from the Aotearoa New Zealand and the South African breeding populations. This research highlights a high degree of variability in where WA SRWs forage. Future analyses of genetic and tagging data will help provide insights into a large whale species utilising offshore waters and how their foraging may be affected by oceanic conditions in a warming ocean.



# Posters

Survey for roaming cats: The role of private landowners in cat management in Albany and the surrounding region

Rochelle Steven, Jenni Loveland

1. Murdoch University

2. Albany and Surrounds Feral Cat Working Group

This research has approval from Murdoch University Research Ethics Committee

Abstract: The ASFCWG has been working on a project in the Manypeaks/Waychinicup and Two Peoples Bay region that aims to reduce the impact that feral cats have on native animals and livestock. The region in focus is a threatened species hotspot with Gilbert's Potoroo, Noisy Scrub Bird, Western Ground Parrot, among others, all facing the impacts of feral and roaming cats. This project will tackle cat management as a matter of urgency. In a holistic and inclusive approach, managing foxes and rabbits is also important for addressing any flow on effects of cat management.

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