

The Bushland Whistler

Friends of Forrestdale Newsletter ♦ Edition 16 ♦ October 2017

BALANNUP WASTEWATER PRESSURE MAIN

ON SEPTEMBER 4, we were notified by the Office of the Appeals Convenor that the Minister for Environment has determined the appeal regarding the Balannup wastewater pressure main.

The Minister advised that he has dismissed the appeals in objection to the Report and Recommendations of the Environmental Protection Authority and believes the EPA adequately considered the environmental impacts of the proposal by the Water Corporation to install a 450mm diameter wastewater pipeline through Anstey-Keane Dampland.

The proposal is to install 1.5 kilometres of pipeline through Bush Forever site 342 following an existing track between Keane and Anstey Roads. Using the plough method rather than the more environmentally damaging open cut trench, the high-density polyethylene pipe will be installed at a depth of 1.2 metres. Installation will involve welding together sections of the pipe which the proponent claims will be free of weak points such as air and scour valves to lower the risk of leaks and spills in the reserve.

While we appreciate that the methods of construction are designed to lessen environmental damage, we do not believe that quality conservation areas should be used as corridors for infrastructure when it can be avoided. In this instance the pipeline could have been laid along Nicholson and Armadale Roads, avoiding Anstey-Keane and inevitable environmental harm altogether.

Now that the proposal has been approved, all we can hope for is that damage to the environment is kept to a minimum: that due care is taken during the two-week installation period and that the proponent's subsequent management measures to control the spread of weeds and Phytophthora dieback disease will be adhered to. ✧



Sections of the route the proposed pipeline will take.

EUROPEAN WASP (*Vespula germanica*)

NATIVE TO EUROPE, NORTHERN AFRICA and parts of Asia, the European wasp has become established in many countries beyond its natural range and has firmly established itself in the eastern states of Australia, recorded first in Tasmania in the late 1950s.

A prohibited pest in WA under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act, the European wasp was first reported in this state in 1977. However, because of an ongoing eradication program carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA), this pest has not as yet made serious inroads in WA—the only place in the world to have kept European wasps from establishing over so many years.

But there is no room for complacency. European wasp nests are continually being discovered in Perth suburbs, particularly industrial areas, and isolated colonies have been found from Kalbarri to Eucla. Without constant vigilance, the European wasp—considered the world's worst social wasp—has, according to DAFWA, “the potential to become a greater pest in Western Australia than anywhere else in the world.”



Entirely black antennae, distinctive orange and black abdominal markings, and body similar in size and shape to that of the European honeybee are distinguishing features of the European wasp. It could be mistaken for one of the frequently seen paper wasps (also introduced but less problematic: *Polistes dominula* from Europe, *P. humilis* from Eastern Australia), but these wasps are more slender.

Attracted to meat and sugary liquids, European wasps can be a menace and a threat around the home and in public places, and so can have a negative impact on the Australian outdoor lifestyle.

Beyond its original range, away from its natural predators and parasites, the European wasp is also a serious agricultural and environmental pest. An aggressive and prolific predator—one colony can contain up to 100,000 individuals, the nest (made of chewed wood fibres) can grow to the size of a soccer ball or larger—the European wasp can have a devastating effect on native ecosystems by depleting the environment of native insects and spiders. This in turn exhausts the food supply of insect- and spider-eating animals such as birds, reptiles and frogs.



Persistent surveillance trapping and public reporting are key to stopping the spread of European wasps in this state. Wasps can be found around birdbaths, pet food, BBQs, rubbish bins etc. Their nests—usually located in the ground, but could be in a tree, wall cavity and the like—should be avoided, as wasps will attack en masse and sting repeatedly. Nests of European wasps should be reported immediately to DAFWA, with a photo if possible.

Positive sightings of individual European wasps should also be reported so that a Bio-security Officer can visit the site to determine the whereabouts of the nest. To achieve this, wooden stakes, each topped with a piece of fish to attract the wasps are placed some distance apart in the vicinity of the sighting.

The wasps quickly home in on the fish (illustrated) and bite off pieces to take to their nest. The direction of the nest, which could be up to a kilometre away, is established by noting which baits attract the most wasps, observing the flight path and by repositioning the baits along the line of flight until the nest is finally located.

In March this year, European wasps were seen visiting a birdbath in our garden in Forrestdale. DAFWA was notified and two nests (approximately 500 metres from the garden) were found and destroyed. This was the first recording of these wasps in Forrestdale. ✧

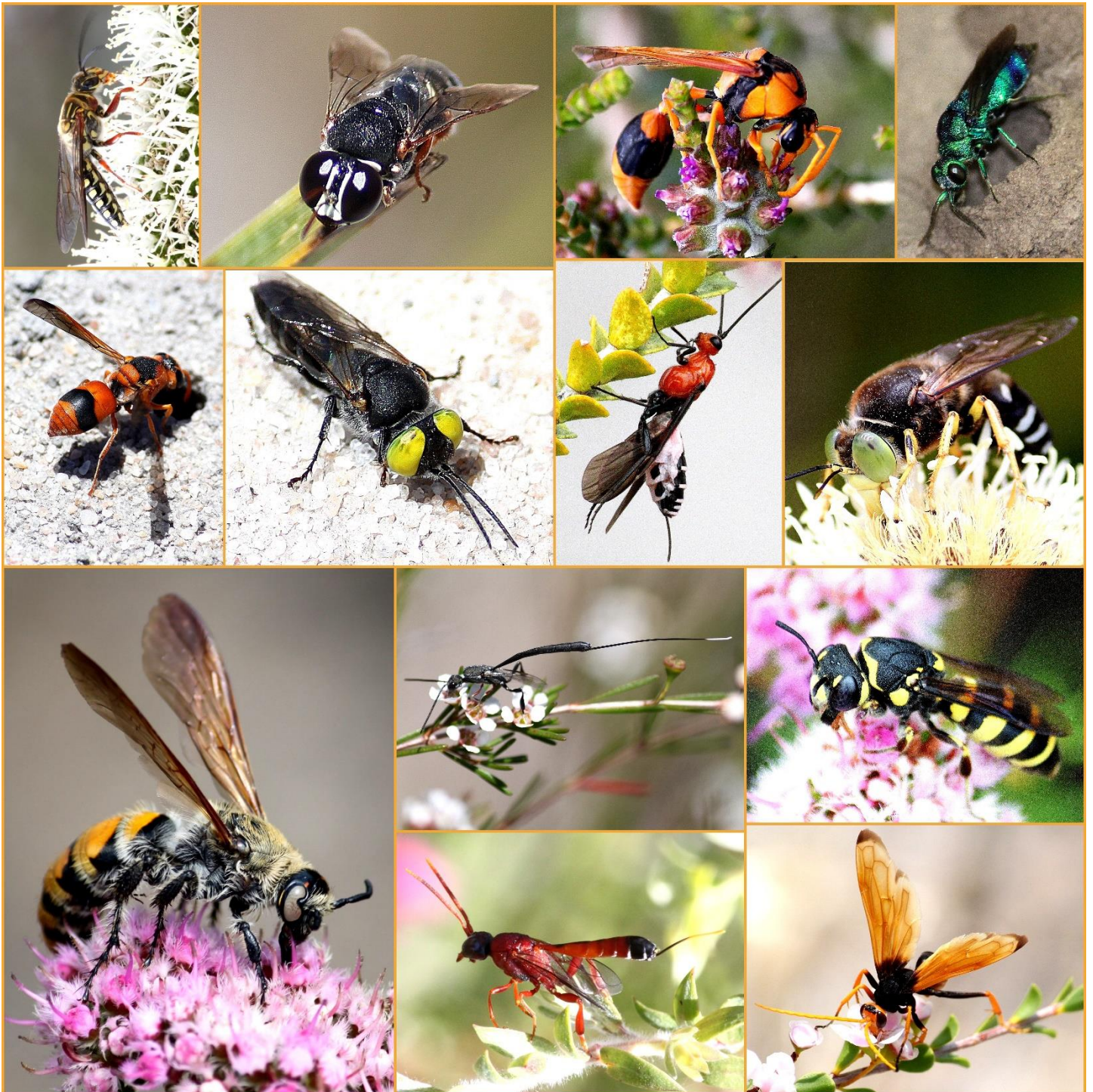
NATIVE WASPS - order Hymenoptera

HAVING TOUCHED ON INTRODUCED WASPS, which tend to give all wasps a bad name, let's now focus briefly on the infinitely diverse and fascinating array of local native wasps that cause few if any problems to humans.

Indeed their effectiveness as plant pollinators and their ability to control populations of other arthropods, means that native wasps are highly beneficial in helping maintain an ecological balance. Native wasps (along with native bees and ants, also included in the order Hymenoptera) are important components of biodiversity and play a crucial role in the functioning of the ecosystem.

Native wasps come in myriad colours, shapes and sizes and have diverse and remarkable behaviours. Below is a pictorial sample of native wasps found locally.

Included in the collage are flower wasps, potter wasps, sand wasps and the glorious iridescent cuckoo wasp (top right).





A species of sphex wasp with a grasshopper she has captured and paralysed. Despite the prey being much larger than herself, she finds the strength to drag it some distance across rough terrain to her underground nest where it will serve as food for her young.



The insects in the collage above resemble ants but they are actually various local species of female wasps (family Mutillidae), commonly called velvet ants. These female wasps are wingless (the males have wings) and can be seen in hot weather scurrying along open sandy areas in search of underground nests of native bees and other species of wasps. Having found a nest, the velvet ant lays her egg on the prey of the unwary host. The egg of the velvet ant hatches before that of the host insect, also laid on the prey, and so the velvet ant larva is able to consume the food supply without competition. ✨

ACQUISITION OF PRIVATELY OWNED LAND—for inclusion in the Jandakot Regional Park

FOLLOWING PROTRACTED NEGOTIATIONS the southern section of Harrisdale Swamp previously in private ownership has been acquired by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) for inclusion in the reserve.

This is an excellent outcome. For too long, inadequate fencing and general neglect in this section of Harrisdale Swamp resulted in relentless abuse from joyriders and rubbish dumpers, but this latest acquisition means that Harrisdale Swamp (Bush Forever site 253) can now be managed effectively.

The WAPC has removed the rubbish, including the many car bodies dumped in the swamp; begun weed control; constructed fencing and installed signage. The result has been a marked decrease in mistreatment of the reserve.



Views of the recently acquired southern section of Harrisdale Swamp.

Anstey-Keane Dampland (Bush Forever site 342)

We applaud the WAPC for its resolve in securing the southern block in Harrisdale Swamp, and we are confident that with the care and proper management now possible, the reserve has a positive future.

But at present the same cannot be said for Anstey-Keane Dampland in Forrestdale.

Two large Anstey-Keane blocks—Lots 67 and 69 Skeet Road, zoned for inclusion in the Jandakot Regional Park—remain in private hands.

Similar to the southern section of Harrisdale Swamp before government acquisition, these two blocks are unfenced and unmanaged and suffer from constant incursions by off-road vehicles and people dumping rubbish.

The situation is particularly regrettable as the blocks in question are of high conservation value, Lot 69 particularly.

Until the WAPC can acquire these two blocks, Anstey-Keane as a whole will remain difficult to manage—and while the abuse continues, so does the degradation. ✧