

NULLAKI NEWS



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Nullaki Conservation Initiative

www.nullakiconservation.org

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The Nullaki Conservation Initiative is a sub-committee of Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee made up of landholders who reside within the fenced off section of the Nullaki Peninsula. The main focus of the group is to protect native fauna and flora and enhance biodiversity through ongoing management efforts.



Moving Forward with the Feral Management Fence

The Nullaki Fence runs approximately 8 km from the cliffs overhanging the Southern Ocean to the foreshore of the Wilson Inlet. The 2 metre high mesh fence features electric wires and a subterranean skirt to deter feral animals burrowing under the fence. Over the years the fence has taken a battering from the salt off the ocean and oddly enough, territorial male kangaroos that box and kick each other through the fence. While the fence has been patched and replaced in places, it is no longer fully effective at keeping foxes, cats and rabbits out of 2,400 hectares of the Nullaki Conservation Area. The Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee (WICC) has secured funding through South Coast Natural Resource Management and local Nullaki landholders to carry out 1080 baiting and repairs to the fence, which will see approximately 3.5 kilometres of the fence mesh replaced. WICC has also applied to the State Natural Resource Management



Office to add a 'floppy top' design to the fence, thus doing away with the temperamental electric wires. If successful in our application, it is hoped that all works will be completed by June 2020.

While a more impregnable fence could fully prevent feral animals from entering the 2400 hectares on the eastern end of the Nullaki Peninsula, the Nullaki residents and WICC are aware that foxes and cats can enter the conservation area from the west end when the Wilson Inlet bar is closed. To quantify this risk we are positioning camera traps at key access points and implementing strategic 1080 baiting and cat trapping. The baiting is done in accordance with strict government regulations by a licensed pest control technician. Most people know that 1080 is poisonous to non native animals, however some may be surprised that it can also be lethal to our native animals as well (they just have a better tolerance for 1080). This is why we carefully control the density of the baiting so non native animals can not consume enough baits based on their range to incur a lethal dose.

The long term aim of this program is to make the 2400 hectares on the western side of the fence predominantly feral free for our native fauna. The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (CALM for those of us that have been here a while) has been advising WICC and they see great potential for translocation or relocation of threatened native WA fauna into the area once the threat of foxes and cats has been significantly reduced. The fact that the Nullaki features such a diversity of vegetation communities means there is suitable habitat for a very broad range of native fauna. This potential is heightened by the fact that cats, boundary fences and fuel reduction burns are precluded within the reserve. This means that native fauna can disperse to their natural range and the flora can reclaim its natural biodiversity. The Nullaki has the potential to be the largest feral free habitat on the south coast of WA.

This whole program will be complemented by a rigorous monitoring program, reviewed by DBCA and SCNRM, to ensure we are making progress and inform our baiting efforts. Two fauna surveys were conducted by Great Southern ecologists in 2018 and 2019 to help establish baseline data through the Nullaki.

For further information please contact Shaun Ossinger of the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee on info@wicc.org.au.

April Fauna Survey Reveals Mardo

A second fauna survey has now been completed! Once again, the conservation spirits were kind to us, providing gorgeous bush tromping weather and fascinating findings of various critters. Over four consecutive nights in April, four of the eight original trapping sites were resurveyed. All up 98 traps were checked each morning for a grand total of 392 trap nights! April was chosen because surveys are most valuable when performed in different seasons. The sites were reduced to four due to the availability of only one ecologist.

Overall, we found more mammals than skinks in this survey, though bush rats were still the most common mammal. One site that yielded 20% mammals in the first survey had 100% this time around. Another site that had only 4 animals (all reptiles) trapped in the first survey, had 13 this time (all mammals). Honey possums were found at only one site which wasn't either of the sites where they were found in the first survey. Maybe these nectar lovers move to where the flowers are?

Once again, the karri forest won top prize for both numbers and diversity. And it was here we found four mardos, a mammal not found at all in the first survey. We don't really know why, but we do know that the mardo mates in August/September (after which most males die). The young are born a month later and weaned 3-4 months after that. It's interesting that the ones we found all had tail lengths in the shorter part of the usual range suggesting they may have been quite young. So, perhaps breeding times explain the differences?

The biggest take home message from both surveys is that there is heaps we don't know about the creatures that live in this beautiful bush. The surveys are a moment-in-time snapshot of the full length feature film that's playing out there. Hopefully, future surveys will help fill in some of the blanks. Check the website for the full survey report!

A big shout out to ecologist Kirsty Vogel for donating her time and many thanks to WICC for funding the addendum fauna survey report. Hopefully in spring this year we will conduct a third survey.



A Feisty Mardo Greets Ecologist Kirsty Vogel - Photo Craig Carter

NCG joins WICC – Now known as 'Nullaki Conservation Initiative'

In March 2019 Nullaki Conservation Group (NCG) officially became a sub-committee of Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee (WICC). As a result the group has changed its name to 'Nullaki Conservation Initiative' (NCI) and conservation efforts undertaken on the Nullaki will now be managed and administered as one of WICC's many projects.

With WICC having many years of experience as one of the leading community groups in the region, NCI sees this as logical and positive step going forward. Our goals remain the same, and we hope our new relationship with WICC will enable us to build on our record of accomplishments.

After forming in April 2017, the local land owners who make up the NCI, have achieved many milestones including a successful State NRM grant application and the completion of two fauna surveys. Efforts over the past two years have laid the path for what lays ahead such as the fence upgrade and continued feral animal management.



I Don't Live on my Nullaki Block – How do I get Involved?

There are several ways non-resident Nullaki landowners can support ongoing conservation efforts taking place on the Peninsula. Firstly, **1080 Baiting** for foxes is currently underway on several Nullaki properties, including 2 with absentee owners. It is cost-free and WICC can facilitate getting it set up. Monitoring feral predators with **Trail Cameras** is another way to contribute. This does require a periodic small time commitment, but adds valuable data to the cause. WICC has cameras available to borrow, including rechargeable batteries and SD cards to record the images. You won't believe who is wandering around your patch. We have conducted about a dozen **Spotlighting** sessions, looking for Western Ringtail Possums. You may want to borrow our headlamps to check out your own forest, or join us on an organised search. Finally, Nullaki is unfortunately home to **Feral Plants** as well as animals, notably the Arum Lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) and the Purple Groundsel (*Senecio elegans*). Owners are encouraged to manage their properties of these floral pests, as pretty as they might be. More information on Arum Lily (Declared pest in WA) can be found here <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/declared-plants/arum-lily-declared-pest>

For information on any of these activities and how to get involved please contact us at info@nullakiconservation.org

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