

# Kepa Kurl Community Conservation Forum

## Esperance, March 25, 2023

**Esperance Civic Centre (8:30am to 3:30pm)**  
**Lucky Bay Brewery (5:00pm to 8:00pm)**



Photo courtesy ETNTAC

This event is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program through a Community Stewardship Grant to the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and from the South Coast Enviro-Experiences Project supported by Lotterywest. The event is delivered in collaboration with Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation



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## WELCOME

Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG), in collaboration with the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC), is pleased to host this one-day forum and social gathering to celebrate community conservation in Esperance and to participate in an Earth Hour day event beyond just turning the lights off for an hour in the evening.

We have an exciting day of talks lined up for this event with a mixture of presentations from community groups (including GPAG, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot and Esperance LEAF), the ETNTAC Healthy Country team, DBCA and South Coast NRM scientists, film maker Jennene Riggs of Riggs Australia and many others showcasing their wide range of important conservation work and awareness raising. We also have a collaborative artwork with Esperance Community Arts being launched at the Forum to create a giant mural on calico to raise awareness of the danger plastics pose to seabirds. There will also be plenty of time for networking and participating in the collaborative artwork between the talks. Our evening event at the Lucky Bay Brewery will continue the networking opportunities with the addition of some extra videos on marine mapping and local culturally inspired food tastings.

Looking forward to a really relaxed, interesting, inspiring and creative day. Thank you to all our speakers and the collaborative art team for all their preparation work and to everyone who has come along to join us for the day.

Today's events are generously sponsored by the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program through a Large Community Stewardship Grant to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group, with additional funding from the South Coast Enviro-Experiences Program supported by Lotterywest.

Thank you everyone for making today's events possible.

### Steering Committee

Jackie Courtenay and Leigh Whisson from Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and David Guilfoyle from Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. Thank you also to Alan Needham and Jen Merritt from GPAG, the Tjaltjraak rangers and all the other volunteers who are assisting with the art project and helping out on the day.

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## SATURDAY – FORUM: ESPERANCE CIVIC CENTRE

Time	Speakers - Title
<b>8.00-8.30</b>	<b>Registrations</b>
<b>8.45-8.50</b>	<b>Alan Needham</b> Welcome and Housekeeping
<b>8.50-8.55</b>	<b>Welcome to Country</b> Aunty Donna Beach
<b>8.55-9.00</b>	<b>Dr Fiona Fraser</b> (Video presentation) Threatened Species Commissioner Official opening message
<b>9.00-9.20</b>	<b>Tony Friend</b> (Video presentation) Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions <b>Bringing Gilbert’s potoroo back from the brink – and why are they on Middle Island now?</b>
<b>9.20-9.40</b>	<b>Hayleigh Graham, Doc Reynolds, Donna Bullen, Henry Dabb, Jeremy Smith, David Guilfoyle &amp; Dr. Jenn Lavers</b> Healthy Country Program, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation <b>The Tjaltjraak Healthy Country Program: A Dynamic Snapshot!</b>
<b>9.40-10.00</b>	<b>Jennene Riggs</b> Riggs Australia <b>Wildlife Filmmaking and the challenges involved in trying to help raise awareness of threatened species through film!</b>
<b>10.00-10.30</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>
<b>10.30-10.50</b>	<b>Deon Utber</b> Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions <b>Restoring Kyloring</b>
<b>10.50-11.00</b>	<b>Paul Wettin</b> (Zoom presentation) Chair, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot <b>Helping to Save Kyloring</b>
<b>11.00-11.20</b>	<b>Jackie Courtenay and Leigh Whisson</b> Gilbert’s Potoroo Action Group <b>Checking Camera Images for Conservation: Opportunities for volunteers to be involved with DBCA’s South Coast Threatened Fauna Zooniverse project</b>
<b>11.20-11.40</b>	<b>Kate Grarock</b> Parks Australia <b>Bush Blitz – the species discovery program</b>
<b>11.40-12.00</b>	<b>Jenn Lavers</b> (Video presentation) Healthy Country Program, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
<b>12.00-1.30</b>	Lunch, collaborative art project and information stalls
<b>1.30-1.50</b>	<b>Thilo Krueger</b> (Zoom presentation) Curtin University <b>The carnivorous plants of Kepa Kurl</b>

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Time	Speakers - Title
1.50-2.10	<b>Claudia Magana</b> South Coast Natural Resource Management <b>Protecting Ramsar values through rehabilitation, restoration and reducing threats to the ecological character of the Kepwari (Lake Warden) and Qualliup (Lake Gore) wetlands</b>
2.10-2.30	<b>Terry Blakeley</b> Wongutha CAPS <b>Introducing the Wongutha CAPS conservation and work readiness programme</b>
2.30-2.50	<b>Jen Morcombe</b> Esperance LEAF (Local Environment Action Forum) <b>Valuing our Verges and Reserves</b>
2.50-3.10	<b>Jackie Courtenay<sup>1</sup> and Jessica Moseley<sup>2</sup></b> <sup>1</sup> Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group <sup>2</sup> Duke of Edinburgh's International Awards <b>Encouraging youth participation in conservation volunteering: A new partnership between Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Programme</b>
3.10-3.30	<b>Afternoon Tea and collaborative art</b>

## SATURDAY – EVENING: Social Event – Lucky Bay Brewery

Time	Dinner Programme
5.00-8.00	An evening of networking, some additional videos and local culturally inspired food tastings at the Lucky Bay Brewery to continue conversations (or start new ones) following the day's Forum! NOTE: Dinner and drinks are at attendees' own expense

## ABSTRACTS

**Tony Friend** (Pre-recorded presentation)

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

### **Bringing Gilbert's potoroo back from the brink – and why are they on Middle Island now?**

The rediscovery of Gilbert's potoroo in 1994 in a single tiny colony at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve was an exciting event that brought with it the responsibility to prevent the species from slipping into extinction and to make its persistence more secure.

Over the first ten years, much effort was dedicated to captive breeding and other reproductive technologies in an attempt to increase total numbers. Breeding was irregular and it was clear that captivity does not suit this species. The breakthrough occurred between 2005 and 2007, when ten potoroos from Two Peoples Bay were transferred to predator-free Bald Island, near Albany. Today that colony numbers around 100 animals. From 2010 a second insurance population of 25-30 potoroos was created inside a fenced area of 380 hectares in Waychinicup National Park, using animals from both Two Peoples Bay and Bald Island.

In 2015 a lightning storm started a catastrophic bushfire that raced through Two Peoples Bay and took out 90% of the long-unburnt habitat and most of the potoroos perished. The handful of animals that escaped the fire did not persist long and the population was effectively extinct. Without the insurance populations, the species would be gone.

With the loss of the original population, there was an urgent need to establish another insurance population in a predator-free safe haven. An island was the obvious choice, but other than Bald Island there were no large island nature reserves within the previous known range of the potoroo. Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago was identified as a possibility although 500 kilometres east of the nearest potoroo location. A plan for trial translocations using pioneer animals was designed and put into action in 2017, funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG). These trials indicated that the island possessed suitable habitat and a full translocation of 10 animals followed in 2018. Trapping and sensor camera deployments confirmed that the potoroos were surviving and breeding. An ongoing camera monitoring program commenced in 2022, as a collaboration between DBCA, the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation and GPAG.

**Hayleigh Graham, Doc Reynolds, Donna Bullen, Henry Dabb, Jeremy Smith, David Guilfoyle & Dr. Jenn Lavers**

Healthy Country Program, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation  
**The Tjaltjraak Healthy Country Program: A Dynamic Snapshot!**

We present an overview of the Tjaltjraak Healthy Country Program (HCP) that delivers a model of cultural leadership in landscape-scale conservation action, linked to strategic partnerships, innovative and impactful research programs, and collaborative land and sea planning; all led by the too deadly (!) Tjaltjraak HCP Team.

**Jennene Riggs**

Riggs Australia

**Wildlife Filmmaking and the challenges involved in trying to help raise awareness of threatened species through film!**

I will talk about my background in filmmaking, and passion for filming threatened species to raise awareness and capture footage of rare creatures for posterity. I will then discuss the origin of the Island Arks series, how Ron Dorn (former Chairperson of GPAG) saw my *Secrets at Sunrise* film about the Western Ground Parrot and approached me to do something similar for the Gilbert's Potoroo. This first idea to film a documentary morphed into the development of a documentary series which was fleshed out into a broader story of how islands are being used as a sort of insurance against extinction. I will follow the journey I have taken trying to raise funds, first by pitching it to ABC and other broadcasters, but not having much luck there, then applying for grants, to crowdfunding and philanthropy, and the trials and tribulations of all that through to the current re-focussing on getting a broadcaster interested and the current state of play. I will finish by playing the trailer for the documentary series *Island Arks*.

**Deon Utber**

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

**Restoring Kyloring**

The western ground parrot, Kyloring to the Noongar people, was once known to occur across the south-west, with records from Eneabba in the north through to Nuytsland Nature Reserve in the east of the south coast. Multiple threats such as land clearing, fragmentation, altered fire regimes and introduced predators have led to a severe reduction in the extent of this cryptic ground dwelling bird species with the only extant wild population now occurring in Cape Arid National Park/Nuytsland Nature Reserve. After realising the decline of Kyloring was accelerating in 2003, with local extinction occurring of a population east of Albany, translocation plans were put on hold to better understand and address key threats. Improved knowledge of fire regimes requirements, novel approaches to integrated predator management and

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ground parrot monitoring have arrested the precipitous decline in the single remaining population. Under the guidance of the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions along with partners including South Coast NRM / Australian Government, BirdLife Australia and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot are now embarking on the third year of ground parrot translocation and the future for Kyloring is looking bright.

### **Paul Wettin**

Chair, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot

#### **Helping to Save Kyloring**

For the past 20+ years the Friends have supported the Recovery Plan and the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation to help save Kyloring from extinction. We have contributed over \$500,000, undertaken lobbying and a wide range of awareness activities for the Recovery Plan. The recent translocation of birds is a major achievement for the Plan, and toward avoiding the extinction crisis.

### **Jackie Courtenay and Leigh Whisson**

Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG)

#### **Checking Camera Images for Conservation: Opportunities for volunteers to be involved with DBCA's South Coast Threatened Fauna Zooniverse project**

Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group is a small not-for-profit community group that was established in November 2001 and incorporated in March 2002. GPAG's three key objectives are fundraising, awareness raising and encouraging volunteering to help DBCA save Gilbert's Potoroo. Over 21 years, GPAG have raised over \$1.25m from grants (\$850,000 since 2019), fundraising appeals and donations, and merchandise sales as well as contributed tens of thousands of hours of volunteer time. This presentation will concentrate on GPAG's collaboration with DBCA in their recently launched South Coast Threatened Fauna Zooniverse project which provides opportunities for volunteers to analyse camera trap images from Two Peoples Bay and Waychinicup National Park through an online portal. Through Western Australian State NRM grant funding and funds raised from community donations and merchandise sales GPAG have funded 30 cameras at Two Peoples Bay and 10 on Middle Island and will shortly purchase another 3 for Two Peoples Bay and 10 for Bald Island to further assist with monitoring of Gilbert's Potoroo on Bald Island and feral predators and Potoroos at Two Peoples Bay. So far only images from Two Peoples Bay have been uploaded to Zooniverse but it is expected that those from Middle Island will be added after the April 2023 camera servicing and Bald Island images will eventually be added as well. Zooniverse is a fantastic volunteering opportunity for people from around the world to participate from home in helping with important conservation management work to help save Gilbert's Potoroo and other threatened species.

**Kate Grarock**

Bush Blitz

**Bush blitz – species discovery program**

Dr Kate Grarock will give a brief overview of the Bush Blitz Species discovery program. Bush Blitz is Australia’s largest nature discovery program. Around three-quarters of Australia’s biodiversity is still waiting to be discovered by science. Bush Blitz is a unique cross-sector partnership that organises expeditions to document plants and animals across Australia. We are working in the Esperance area over the next 2 weeks and have a community day at the Scout Hall in Esperance on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 10am-12noon to provide an update on our results.

**Jenn Lavers** (Video presentation)

Healthy Country Program, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation

**Breaking the wall of ocean pollution: How marine ecology reveals the collapse of an ecosystem.**

When synthetic plastics were developed in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was a true breakthrough that revolutionised the world of materials. Over the long term, however, more than 350 tonnes of plastics produced every day might turn out to be a curse for humanity and the planet itself. Considering these astounding masses, it is important to keep in mind that plastic never entirely breaks down – it just breaks up into ever-smaller pieces. Jennifer Lavers, an ecotoxicologist, has set out to investigate how the 20 million items of plastic waste that enter the world’s oceans each day affect marine ecosystems, especially ocean seabird populations. The results of her work are nothing short of alarming. The extreme levels of plastic pollution she has discovered on the world’s remotest islands and the dramatic effects on aquatic life are ultimate warning signs that the current way humanity is handling its “plastics addiction” cannot be sustained any further without doing deep and lasting damage to the oceans. In this video of a presentation at Falling Wells, Jennifer explains the ruined natural paradises she has found on uninhabited islands and calls for a global wake-up to prevent the further destruction of the oceans.

**Thilo Krueger** (Zoom presentation)

Curtin University

**The carnivorous plants of Kepa Kurl**

The presentation will provide an overview of the carnivorous plant species found in the area around Kepa Kurl, which is an important diversity centre for these unique plants. The genus *Utricularia* (bladderworts), which is known for its distinctive suction traps that capture prey animals in a fraction of a second, is particularly diverse in the freshwater swamp systems of the area. Two species, *Utricularia helix* and *Utricularia westonii*, exclusively occur in a small area near Kepa Kurl. As part

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of his PhD project, Thilo sampled traps of these *Utricularia* species and used a new DNA metabarcoding method to determine what animals these plants eat. Some preliminary results of this work, which was conducted in collaboration with the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC), will be presented. The presentation will include many pictures of all carnivorous plant species found near Kepa Kurl as well as information on how to find and identify them.

### **Claudia Magana**

South Coast Natural Resource Management

#### **Protecting Ramsar values through rehabilitation, restoration and reducing threats to the ecological character of the Kepwari (Lake Warden) and Qualliup (Lake Gore) wetlands.**

The protecting Kepwari (Lake Warden) project has a long history, with on ground works spanning more than 20 years. South Coast NRM and partners have been working to address threats to the ecological character. Altered hydrology is one of the main issues, threatening critical habitat for local bird species and migratory shorebirds which travel from the northern hemisphere to spend summers in Australia. Our collective works have transformed Lake Warden from a flooded and drowning wetland to one displaying a shoreline and supporting 1% of WA population of Chestnut Teal and Hooded Plover ([Pinder, A et al page 10-12](#)).

Works are supported by a collaborative Technical Advisory Group whose members comprise of government, community, scientists, and representation from traditional owners. Through funding from the Australian Government through the Regional Land Partnerships program, we have strived to carry out activities that have a strong basis in science and community support.

What does the future hold for the Kepwari wetlands? While water levels have substantially decreased, other key threats have become apparent. The next stage of this program will use what has been learnt in working together to continue to combat the threat of altered hydrology and prioritise actions to tackle threats.

### **Terry Blakeley**

Wongutha CAPS

#### **Introducing the Wongutha CAPS conservation and work readiness programme**

The talk will briefly explain the basic history of Wongutha and about the current curriculum and mention and describe the work readiness program work at Wongutha. I will also talk about my experience and history teaching conservation for the last ten years and who in the community has helped including a very brief outline of the units I deliver, and our current project trying to restore a Kwongkan block of land.

## **Jen Morcombe**

Esperance LEAF (Local Environment Action Forum)

### **Valuing our Verges and Reserves**

LEAF is concerned about the continual decline in natural habitat around our district. There are large remnants of native vegetation being very regularly burnt as part of a fire prevention plan. However, the natural vegetation in the low rainfall mallee woodlands takes decades to reach flowering and seeding maturity, and in some cases, it will live for centuries. With too frequent broad scale burning of large bush reserves, the natural vegetation cannot recover. The coastal reserves also are burnt regularly, resulting in broad scale devastation. Banksia stands and species that support native animals and birds, need to be protected.

Another threat to habitat that LEAF is addressing, is the roadside verge clearing which has been allowed to proceed since the bush fires in the Scaddan, Grass Patch and Cascade area. The road verges contained some of the last remnants of native species endemic to the area which have now been lost.

Jen has a remnant of high value native vegetation on her semi-rural property and the adjoining road reserve. This is providing a valuable habitat for native species. It also serves as an example of sustainable development that can be used as an educational resource.

## **Jackie Courtenay<sup>1</sup> and Jessica Moseley<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and <sup>2</sup>Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

### **Encouraging youth participation in conservation volunteering: A new partnership between Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award**

Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group is a small, volunteer-based community group primarily based in Albany, Western Australia, but with some members in both other parts of Australia and internationally. While the group has been "punching above its weight" in terms of awareness raising and fundraising, it suffers from many of the same problems faced by volunteer groups throughout regional Western Australia - burnout and aging of long-term volunteers and limited recruitment of younger members is occurring at the same time as there is increasing demand on community groups to provide both funds and volunteer support for threatened species recovery. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award challenges young people aged 14-25 to dream big, celebrate their achievements and make a difference in their world with a particular focus on encouraging long term volunteering in their communities. In the 1960s the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh helped campaign to save Two Peoples Bay from development in order to protect the recently rediscovered Noisy Scrub-bird, thereby indirectly contributing to the survival of Gilbert's Potoroo to be

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rediscovered there itself in 1994. This connection between the late Duke of Edinburgh and Two Peoples Bay together with the focus of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award on encouraging youth participation in volunteering make a partnership between our two organisations particularly appropriate. We are excited to announce this new partnership and look forward to supporting and encouraging more conservation-based volunteering among Duke of Edinburgh's Award Participants (and hopefully recruiting some long-term young volunteers to the cause of saving Gilbert's Potoroo!).

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