



# Media Release

5 July 2022

## **Lotterywest grant helps statewide expansion of successful City of Cockburn and Murdoch Uni Turtle Tracker preservation program**

The City of Cockburn's Turtle Tracker program co-created with Murdoch University to monitor and protect the near-threatened southwestern snake-necked turtle will be expanded across WA.

The program trains volunteers to record turtle and nest sightings including mortality and predation, and to protect nesting females on the move by guarding their egg-filled nests with temporary mesh coverings.

The Turtle Tracker citizen science program has been operating in Cockburn's wetlands for three years over the 2019, 2020 and 2021 nesting seasons.

In 2021, the program potentially saved hundreds of native freshwater turtles from death:

- More than 100 eggs salvaged from dead turtles were safely incubated at Murdoch University
- 140 eggs, found in nests or recovered from injured turtles, were protected by inground cages
- 56 injured turtles were admitted to WA Wildlife, some via Turtle Tracker volunteers, with a 70 per cent survival rate.

Ahead of the 2022 nesting season, Lotterywest has announced a grant of \$131,000 to the South West Corridor Development Foundation to help roll out the program in other local government areas across the state.

The South West Group, an alliance of six local governments in the Perth south west metropolitan region, will help lead the project with ecologists from Murdoch University's Harry Butler Institute, collaborating with a national consortium.

City of Cockburn Environmental Education Officer, Rafeena Boyle, said it was exciting to see a program the City had founded expand statewide.

"With the declining number of native turtles in Western Australia, it is critical that efforts to protect them grow. We are thrilled to see the Turtle Tracker program adopted across other areas," Mrs Boyle said.



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“The program is the brainchild of the City and Murdoch University with PhD student Anthony Santoro,” Mrs Boyle said.

“The initial pilot program was developed with the help of WA Wildlife and The Wetlands Centre Cockburn in 2019.”

Cockburn’s program is running again in 2022. The City is currently accepting applications from volunteers to participate.

To get involved, see [the City’s website](#) or email [environmentaleducation@cockburn.wa.gov.au](mailto:environmentaleducation@cockburn.wa.gov.au)

## **City actions to help protect nesting females during the 2022 nesting season:**

- Conducting feral animal control in and around turtle nesting areas in conjunction with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- Installing temporary educational signage – ‘turtles on the move’, ‘keep dogs on-leash’ and ‘slow down for turtles’
- Implementing the Turtle Tracker program to help protect turtle nests at Walliabup-Bibra Lake
- Maintaining 12 lakeside nesting refuges at Walliabup-Bibra Lake
- Installing traffic education message boards.

## **What should you do if you see a turtle on the move:**

- They are not lost – if they need help, assist them in the direction they were heading
- Drive slowly around wetlands
- Protect them from predators. It is best to keep your distance, but wave off ravens and other birds if they are attacking
- Take any injured or dead turtles to WA Wildlife (formerly Native ARC), 172 Hope Road, Bibra Lake. Eggs can be retrieved for incubation
- Turtle hatchlings can be taken straight to the water
- Keep a box and towel in your car for turtle season
- Log sightings on the [TurtleSAT](#) website.

ENDS



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