

Blue-tongued skinks present a fierce face.
 Pictures: David Ford and Jon Solmundson



A bittern in flight.

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native animals by keeping them off the road.

"But in my view one of the main reasons for having wildlife corridors and patches of bush in an urban landscape is to help people reach greater appreciation for the biodiversity usually lacking in our cities," he says

There is certainly plenty of biodiversity here. Even the plants are sprouting bright colours.

David offers another piece of surprising advice: "Don't eat the prickly pears, though, they're not like the prickly pears in Chile, beautiful, sweet fruits — no, these taste bad and are just purple all the way through."

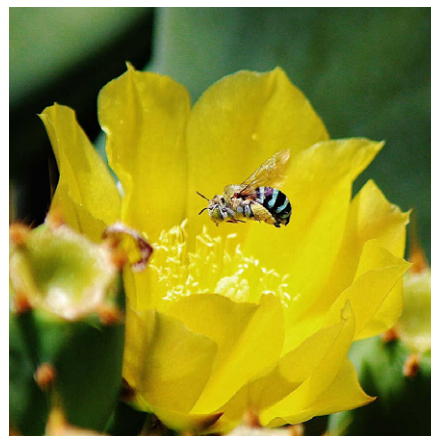
I hadn't considered eating the random wild fruit growing in the park, but David seems to be a bit more of an outdoorsman.

After a couple of hours, David and I walk past a familiar-looking tree. I realise we must be getting close to the end of our circuit.

David pulls me up to a halt again. "There!" he says, pointing at a shrub a couple of metres from us.

"Oh, yes!" I say. I'm not sure what is so remarkable about the shrub, but follow his enthusiasm to be sociable. "You see the lizard?" He continues to point to the shrub.

It takes me 30 seconds of solid



Native blue-banded bees thrive.



Swallows can often be seen in pairs.

staring before I make out the shape of a blue-tongue lying in the shade, underneath the shrub.

Here I realise finding Geraldton's hidden animals has two important components.

The first is one David can teach me easily, to find the corridors and bushlands buried in our suburbs. The second is something that takes much longer to learn — a kind of patience and keen-eyed awareness that lets you see the native critters tucked away in their hidey-holes.

As our walk comes to an end, David stops by a bend in the river. Fish swim in the stream, popping up to the surface every now and then and opening their mouths wide.

"They do that because the water is so still," David says. "There's no

oxygen in it, so they have to come up top to breathe."

I ask him how he knows this, and he tells me he reads a lot.

"I just love nature," he says.

"I could just sit here for an hour or two. If you want to see the animals, that's what you have to do — sit here with the camera, watching and waiting. Sometimes I wait for half an hour and still miss the shot. It's not a problem, I just love it out here."

He drinks in the sight of fish a little more, pointing out which of the fish are native, and which are introduced.

"But it's much more beautiful in winter. You should come back with me again then," he says, and confidently strides off towards the car park.



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