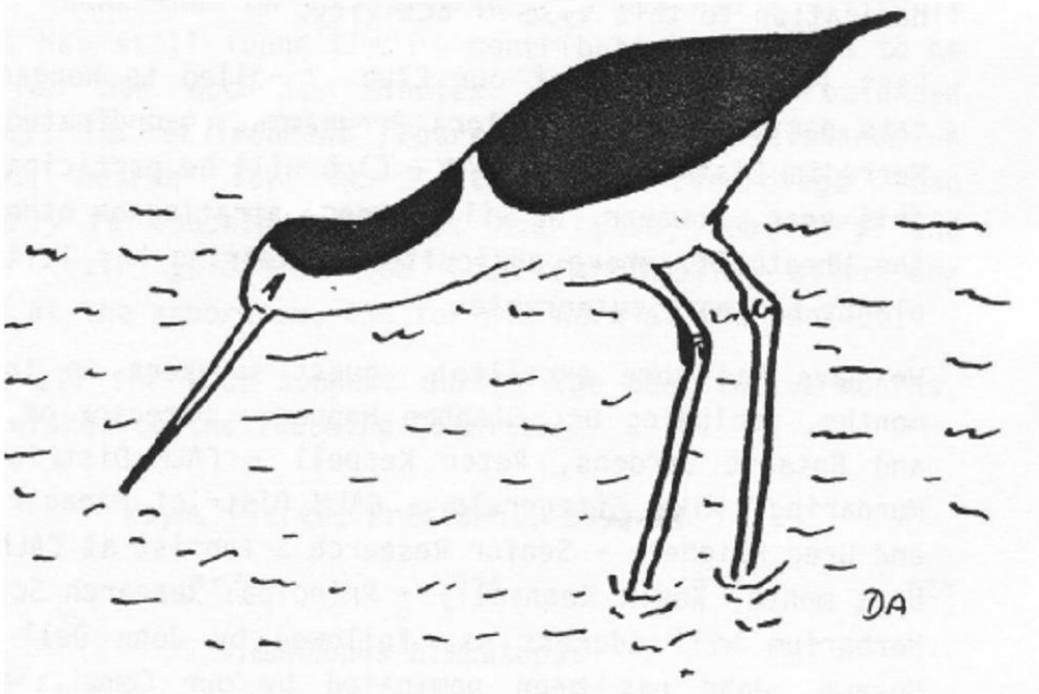




The Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.

Number 2

August 2010



Above: The Pied Stilt drawn by Dawn Atwell, one of the four founding members of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club in 1968. With her foresight of the importance of recording observations, Dawn was the original 'Keeper of the Club's Records'.

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**GRATITUDE IS EXTENDED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER, NORTHAM, FOR
THE PRINTING OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

CLUB HISTORY BOOK LAUNCHED by Beth Frayne

The Club launched its history book on 17 July 2010 at its AGM at the CWA Hall, Stirling Terrace, Toodyay. Entitled *The Toodyay Naturalists' Club: 40 years of observation and education (1968-2008)*, the book chronicles the events and achievements of the Club's members since its founding. It also documents the environmental history of the Shire of Toodyay, so the work of the Shire and the general public is also presented.

Ray Paynter was present at the ceremony. One of the original four founding members (Albie North, Hazel Hastie, Dawn Atwell and Ray), and the only one remaining, Ray was a significant creator of the Club's written records, and of course, a contributor to the stories in the book. The Club was also privileged in having the three Patrons present: Prof. Stephen Davies, John Dell and Dr Neville Marchant (also an Hon. Life Member). All three gentlemen spoke of their relationship with the Club and its important environmental role in the community and the State.

The genesis of this book was the Club's 40th Anniversary in 2008. It has taken two years to collect, collate and compose the Club's history. At various times, this history had been briefly told, and often there were good intentions to produce a book, but none of these efforts achieved a detailed record. At the Anniversary planning meeting in January 2008, it was agreed to produce a history, along the lines of a recent Toodyay Historical Society publication. Robyn Taylor, Beth Frayne and Desrae Clarke formed the Sub-Committee overseeing the Club History Book Project. The aim was to produce a simple record of facts and achievements, rather than a detailed historical analysis. Beth Frayne with help from Robyn Taylor did the initial research, from which Beth created a detailed Chronology. Desrae Clarke researched and wrote most of the Profiles on the Honorary Life Members and the Honorary Patrons.

Lee Francis, Greg Warburton, Wayne Clarke and Jacquie Lucas joined the Sub-Committee members to form the TNC History Writing Group. Each agreed to create a summary of activities and events of a number of years using the information collected to date. Robyn Taylor edited the text with help from Beth Frayne. Members read various drafts of the book and contributed information and photographs. Beth Frayne then undertook more detailed editing, incorporating information from the Club's minutes (borrowed from the Battye Library) and various other sources. Meanwhile, Wayne Clarke and Beth Frayne undertook the formatting of the page profiles and the draft document, and the addition of the images. Wayne scanned slides, negatives, text and photographs. The index was the last important job undertaken.

The book contains a double-page spread of text and images for each of the Club's 40 years. There are profiles of the Honorary Life Members and Patrons and essays on the Club's Observation Records and Herbarium. Tables are included listing holders of the various elected and Honorary Club positions. An extensive bibliography and a detailed index of names of all types enhances the usefulness of the work. So you can easily check if you are mentioned!



TNC 2010
AGM
L to R Back:
David Fox-
Spencer, Beth
Boase, Robert
Boase, Desrae
Clarke, Sarah
Dudley,
Wayne Clarke,
Stephen Da-
vies, Greg
Warburton,
Don Smith.
Centre: Beth
Frayne, Jaquie

Lucas, Gisla Szoke, Lyn Johnson, Bob Frayne, Eva Smith, Vicki Warburton, Frank Carr. Front: Robyn Taylor, Beryl Boase, John Dell, Ray Paynter, Denise Marchant, Neville Marchant, Frank Turnbull, Lee Francis (President).

MEMBER PROFILE - WILD LIFE CARER, GISELA

Gisela Szoke (pronounced SERKAH), a member of many years, cares for injured, orphaned and hand-reared animals needing a home. How did she begin this lifetime love? Here is her story.

Gisela was born in Stuttgart, Germany, the second of three children with the other two being her elder brother, Peter, and younger brother, Berndt. The three children loved to take walks with their mother who showed them the wonders of nature of birds, little lizards, etc that was obviously the beginnings of the great love of animals. Peter, not interested in scholastic study, left school at the age of fifteen and worked in the Wilhelma Zoo in Stuttgart for a short time before leaving home to work in the zoo in Munich, Bavaria. His great ambition was to live in Australia. He was able to emigrate in 1956 to firstly work in the Taronga Park Zoo to then move to the Gosford Reptile Park as manager under the guidance of the well-known late Eric Worrell. Peter now has his own home of reptiles on the Queensland Atherton Tablelands at Mareeba.

Gisela left her homeland, together with her husband and three year old daughter, in 1986 to originally live with Peter and to help him with his reptiles and the care of many other animals at the Park including a great number of the beautiful Tree Kangaroos.

The next stop for this little family was Western Australia to settle on fourteen acres of bushland in Toodyay to develop the beautiful property known as 'Kangaroo Kingdom'.

Until she retired Gisela worked in a video outlet in suburban Perth. She also cared for animals brought to her that were either injured or sightless, furless little orphans the result of road-killed mothers. These tiny creatures would be taken to the video outlet for her to monitor the warmth of their beds—SO important—to be fed their frequent meals of formula and to be toileted. With having these little creatures at her work Gisela had so many customers ask 'what have you got with you today?'

There is so much to learn with the care of wild life. The main aim is to return the creatures to their natural habitat and original area; This is not always possible as some rehabilitated wild life would find it impossible to hunt for food, protect themselves from predators, fly because of extensive damage to wings, and a variety of other reasons.

Gisela has many interesting stories of her years of caring. Some stories are extremely humorous, some very sad like the loss this past May of her twenty-six year old Euro, Suzie, that she is still mourning and missing terribly. She is also feeling the loss of a tiny, furless and blind Joey that she had fought so hard to save: the little boy was found in his dead mother's pouch following a road-kill.

Gisela has a small family that cannot be released. April, a Western Grey Kangaroo, who was born with twisted legs, Mandy and Imelda, small Red Kangaroos and the impish Columbine who can be released but prefers the luxury of 'Kangaroo Kingdom'. Gisela did have a few problems with Columbine! With attempting to let her explore the big wide world, Columbine decided she would assist in the pruning of a neighbour's garden—it wasn't appreciated! Gisela was told by the neighbour that he would shoot Columbine if she came near his garden again!

There are also a number of rescued birds including two kookaburras. One had a very badly damaged wing that now prevents it flying and the second is a young bird that had fallen into a water bath and now calls 'Kangaroo Kingdom' home.

An absolutely wonderful success story must be related. Late one evening a distraught young lass phoned Gisela to say she had found a possum in the vicinity of Duidgee Park with a badly lacerated mouth. Gisela immediately drove into Toodyay to rescue the adult animal and for a number of days attempted to give it tiny amounts of nourishment. Persistence paid off - it slowly began to respond. The happy ending was that a lovable, healthy animal was released back into his territory twelve months later!

There is so much to learn in the care of orphan or injured wild creatures. However, the common thread with all 'wildlife caring' is patience and commitment—Gisela has tons of both!!!

THE BLUE PIGEON by Vincent Serventy

Blue pigeon is what the boys call it, with a cheerful disregard of the fact that it is neither a pigeon or blue. Naturalists refer to it as the Black Faced Cuckoo-Shrike which, while virtue of greater accuracy, certainly is something of a mouthful. Grey Bird has been suggested as a possible alternative name, but until some agreement is reached on the matter we had better keep to Cuckoo-Shrike.

It is one of the commonest of birds and is often mistaken for a cuckoo. The characteristic up and down flight, calling as it flies, is an easy guide to recognition. It also has a very irritating habit of sitting on a dead tree and calling softly and persistently for hours on end. I well remember sitting near the river



bank at Boyanup and listening to a bird calling all morning. A small boy who was my companion stood the monotony nobly until in the end he shrieked insults at the bird. With an outraged look the Cuckoo-Shrike took off in search of a more appreciative audience.

In appearance the bird resembles the Pallid Cuckoo in shape and size. The grey colour of the feathers appears blue from a distance and this gives the bird one of its common names. Around the head, the throat and upper breast are black feathers. Young birds have less black than older ones and this leads to confusion.

The nest is amazingly small and its shallowness is remarkable. The birds themselves are sensitive about nest building and if disturbed tend to build a new nest elsewhere, though material from the old nest will be used on the new site. It is always well to learn something of the habits of a bird before interfering unduly with it while it is incubating the eggs. As a general rule the closer to hatching, the less the parents are likely to desert if disturbed, a very useful rule for photographers.

Vincent Serventy

The above article was published in THE WESTERN MAIL, May 22 1952.

Kind permission was given by Mrs Carol Serventy, wife of the late Vincent Serventy, to reproduce this article in the Toodyay Naturalists' Newsletter for which we are most grateful.

Profile of Dr Vincent Serventy 1916-2007

Dr Serventy was honoured in 1996 for having fought for the environment for 50 years and was still fighting in his 91st year when he wrote to the Sydney Morning Herald on the horrors of whaling.

Over his lifetime, Dr Serventy fought many battles to save precious areas of the Australian environment one such area in Western Australia being our Dryandra Forest. The Government had given mining rights to a company headed by Rupert Murdoch. 'If you destroy Dryandra, it will be an act of sacrilege' wrote Dr Serventy—the lease was relinquished!

He fought to save so many of our valuable resources. The battles included the blocking of the plan to issue oil leases on the Great Barrier Reef, the knowledge of the Federal Government's ability to over-ride a State's decision, in some cases, as with the saving of the Tasmanian Franklin River from damming, and he campaigned relentlessly for the protection of the koala, wombat and shark.

In 1946 Dr Serventy signed up for life membership of the Wildlife Preservation Society, founded in Australia in 1909, to mainly protect the koala from the skin trade and the lyrebird from being killed for feathers for the fashion trade.

Nature Walkabout was Australia's first television environment program following Dr Serventy's purchase of a movie camera and the making of the popular documentary. During Malcolm Fraser's term of office, Dr Serventy encouraged the Prime Minister to establish an Australian branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). He wrote, and co-wrote, more than 70 books including some of his most acclaimed writings, '*AUSTRALIA; A CONTINENT IN DANGER*,' '*Dryandra*' and '*Easy Guide to Green Living*' (1996).

Dr Serventy's wife, Carol, a fellow conservationist, accompanied him on his trips and was his principal ally.

Publications of Interest to Naturalists

'*AUSTRALIA; A CONTINENT IN DANGER*' by Vincent Serventy. CALL NO 591.994 SER Request from our Library

'*BIRDS OF THE GREATER SOUTH WEST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA*' by Simon J Nevill— cost \$34.95.

Revised '*A Guide to the REPTILES AND FROGS OF THE PERTH REGION*' by Brian Bush, et al.— cost \$35.. (Delayed printing—expect September)

'*THE TOODYAY NATURALISTS'S CLUB — 40 YEARS OF OBSERVATION AND EDUCATION (1968—2008)*'. Compiled by Members of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc. Edited by Beth Frayne and Robyn Taylor— cost \$20.

It is an A4 comb-bound self-published work of 142 pages, with coloured covers. The text is illustrated with black and white images. Contact Secretary/Treasurer Wayne Clarke (6364 3609), President Lee Francis (9574 2560), email (toodyaynats@westnet.com.au) or (PO Box 328, Toodyay WA 6566) to find out how buy a copy of this book.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT - by Desrae Clarke

With the aims and objectives of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club (TNC) to look after our environment we observe and report misuse to the appropriate authorities. In early May it was noted that clearing of understory along the road verge of Forest Road was excessive - only the larger trees were left in situ destroying a vital fauna and flora corridor. Very soon after this report it was noted that stubble burning had destroyed many farm trees plus road verge area along Woodendale Road. On both occasions the damage was reported appropriately and, hopefully, those persons concerned would be educated in the importance of protection of the damaged areas.

Monitoring work on the Mavis Jeffery's 'A' Class Nature Reserve has begun with plant identification and collection by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Flora and Fauna Officer. TNC's involvement will be to continue the flora monitoring with plant collection; this is to be three-fold, ie. a specimen each for the TNC, DEC and the State Herbarium. To date, the funding application for the involvement of Curtin University students, under the guidance of Professor Will Stock, is still in the application process. The TNC has also been requested to monitor both native and feral animal activity with bird observations guided by Dr Geoff Barrett.

The Toodyay Land Conservation District Committee has received notification from LandCorp, stating 'in 2003 LandCorp managed removal of wood tar affected soils from three lots on Morangup Road'. After the lots were cleaned up in September 2003, several years of regular groundwater testing was undertaken. The work is now complete; a final report relating to the cleanup is made available to the public and can be accessed at the State Library and the Shire of Toodyay Library.

On May 27th a draft of the Cliffs Mining Landscape and Geological Features Protection Plan was sent to the TNC committee representative for comment. The draft plan of protection of plants, revegetation, etc, was noted. However, a beautiful rock feature labelled 'D5' is in direct line of future mining. Suggestions, at two previous meetings, were to shift the 6m high, by 4m by 1m rock formation to the township of Southern Cross or, to KINGS PARK! Any such feature should stay in its landscape of the Windarling Range - it would have no significance in any other landscape!

Discussion has occurred over the revegetation of the fire-affected areas of the December 29th 2009. Advice by our members has been to protect the soil to hinder erosion and to provide shelter and habitat to native creatures, plant only indigenous plants and also to try and be patient, and 'see what comes up'. Collecting and propagating seed from one's property is also recommended.

On July 9th the TNC representative attended the Avon Nature Conservation Advisory Committee (ANCAC) meeting and excursion to a member's property in the York Shire and demonstrated the devastating effects of land clearing above his property. Within six years a large area has become water-logged and salt-affected with run-off into the flora rich Mokine Nature Reserve. Although the current landowner of the offending property will not revegetate his land the member has a programme of fencing and planting to, hopefully, alleviate the flow into the Reserve. It was also reported that the second year of feral pig research is progressing well.

THE DIRTY DOZEN by Sarah Dudley

To those of us who drive between Toodyay and Midland on a regular basis, arrival at the Morangup Nature Reserve has been a wonderful point to capitalize on the 110kph speed limit, zoom past this eyesore so that it becomes but a fleeting moment in our consciousness, yet simultaneously sigh and ponder: why doesn't somebody (else) clean up all this litter on the roadside verge? Little time for thought perhaps for the magical biodiversity just beyond the highway fence in the Reserve, for wondering how far the litter would drift or make time to contemplate what effect this would have on the wildlife unfortunate enough to cross its path.....

Keep Australia Beautiful (KAB) Day arrived a couple of months early for the Toodyay Naturalists' Club when they met in June. Seven Stalwarts took on the Dirty Dozen. Armed with orange bags, safety vests, traffic warning signs, lots of courage and the blessing of a sunny day, the 3 km of highway bordering the Morangup Reserve was divided into three 1 km lengths. Each section was manned by a team of two or three... and so the clean-up began. Hours later and close to 100 bulging orange bags lining the highway for Council pick-up, an exhausted crew took a break in the Reserve for a welcome picnic lunch. Congratulations to the 'younger' Club members who had the stamina to return to the scene and complete the 3 km stretch after lunch!

Were you aware that according to KAB data, WA is not only the most littered state in Australia but it is also the only state registering an increase in annual litter rather than a reduction as found in the other states and territories? Were you also aware that Highways have the most volume of litter per 1000 square metres? An average volume of 12 litres or 87 items per 1000 square metres in fact. (Industrial Sites rank second, Shopping Centres third). So why did the Nats Club take on this herculean task when the ever present "somebody else" could have been paid to do it? Well, the reality is that funding for this task is confined to urban and near-urban areas. The apparent logic goes something like this: The more people there are, the more litter you can expect..... so spend the money where the greatest likelihood of litter being deposited occurs. Morangup is hardly near-urban yet Toodyay Road is a State responsibility.

We understand that not only does litter roam but in so doing it has detrimental effects on both plant and animal life. Species, plant and animal, are smothered, poisoned, cut and choked. Plastic bags, bottles, polystyrene can end up in our waterways. Is there a connection between a plastic bag thrown from a speeding car and the death of a turtle in warmer waters? Sadly, the answer is 'yes' as research has shown. Plastic bags are not jellyfish..... Some plastics ultimately shatter into tiny splinters and are known to form a layer below the surface of the sea which marine life mistakes for plankton..... Those of us working with sick wildlife at Kanyana Wildlife Hospital at Lesmurdie see the consequences of botulism, other forms of poisoning and injuries sometimes linked to the affluent habit of litterbugging.

So, who are the Dirty Dozen the Seven Stalwarts pitted themselves against on June 19th? The 'DD's are the 12 categories of litter most commonly encountered in WA. As cigarette butts are negligible in volume (41/1000 m² they do not register as specific items in data of this nature, despite their national frequency as a litter item.).

REDUCE, RECYCLE, RE-USE?

Our Morangup litter collection certainly reflected the frequency of plastic objects (coffee cartons, fast food containers, used disposable nappies, plant labels, ice cream containers, polystyrene - to mention just a few) as well as plenty of glass (mostly broken beer bottles), metal car parts and food wrapping papers/packaging. Surprisingly, the incidence of cigarette butts and cigarette packets was low – a trend not reflected in national statistics. However travellers driving towards Toodyay were found to spread more litter than those heading for Midland. Would there be a correlation between fast food outlets being available in urban areas and their absence in rural towns such as Toodyay?

So, to conclude, if the “Reduce, Recycle, Re-use” message is having difficulty being heard in WA, perhaps we should look to Switzerland’s example where 93% of household waste is recycled, to remind us that “where there is a will there is a way” and that all species share the need for a litter-free environment. Change begins with me.....

(Below) Litter collection at the Morangup Nature Reserve. Photo by Vicki Warburton



KARAAKIN - Lee Francis

The club's excursion on May 15th was to Karaakin (the old Cohuna wildlife Park in Gosnells) which is now a rehabilitation centre for Black Cockatoos. We were very glad to welcome two families who joined us for the day. Altogether there were twenty of us, and a number of members of the WA Wildflower Society, who divided into smaller groups and were shown through the centre, which is not yet open to the public.

We saw white and red-tailed cockatoos, some of which will be released and some which are unable to be (they are officially declared to be 'derelict'), so have become habituated to humans and appear to love having visitors!

The centre has also inherited a collection of Gouldian Finches, some dingoes and a number of kangaroo species. Care of these animals, and the cleaning up and revegetation of the entire complex, is done by a handful of dedicated volunteers.

We had our lunch at Karaakin then proceeded to the Armadale Reptile Centre. We thanked the Karaakin volunteers who welcomed and guided us, as well as provided a lovely morning tea.



(L) A female White-tailed Black Cockatoo.

Top (R) A Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

Photographs by
Wayne Clarke



ARMADALE REPTILE CENTRE—Desrae Clarke

On arrival at the Centre, following the Club members' visit to Karaakin, we were told there was a Queensland Carpet Python at the rear of the main building enjoying attention by visitors while resting on the lawn in the sunshine. What a magnificent creature! It had recently 'sloughed' resulting in a gloriously shiny, iridescent skin. The two metre long animal was investigating the onlookers with its tiny tongue. Many reptiles use the flicking of its tongue to gather particles from the surrounding air. The tongue then touches the Jacobson's organ, a sensory structure situated in the roof of its mouth, to identify the collected particles.

Australian pythons, except the genus *Aspidites* (the Woma and the Black-headed Python) have heat-sensitive pits on the lip scales which can be seen on the sides of the

mouth; the pits assist in the location of warm-blooded prey both during the day and at night. The handler asked that no-one touch the Python's head or its tail. Large predating birds, such as the Wedge-tail Eagle, use either the head or the tail of a reptile as its aiming point so the python is very sensitive to its extremities. The adult Carpet Python is normally placid, except if threatened like any other animal (humans included!), but the very young can be more wary of intruders.

The group enjoyed wandering about the Centre looking at the different species of herpetofauna—and also found several surprises. The Boa Constrictor hid beneath its electric blanket! By patiently watching one would see its tongue begin to flick in and out from beneath its blanket.—very slowly the nose would appear followed by the head with the eyes visible. It did not want to leave the comfort of its electric blanket!

Other pythons included the Stimsons Python, the Brown, who shares a home with a white one marked with ginger-coloured bands (the same species) the Childrens Python, the very large Olive Python, and the spectacularly marked Woma and its relative, the Black-headed Python.

Snakes found at the Centre included Mulgas, Dugites of different colourings and markings, Death Adders, found in both the north and south of the state. Skinks included the King's Skink, Bobtail, Blue-tongue and the very rare Western Spiny-tailed Skink; there were many Dragons. Beautifully patterned frogs of different species, a large Water-dragon and turtles were also great drawcards.

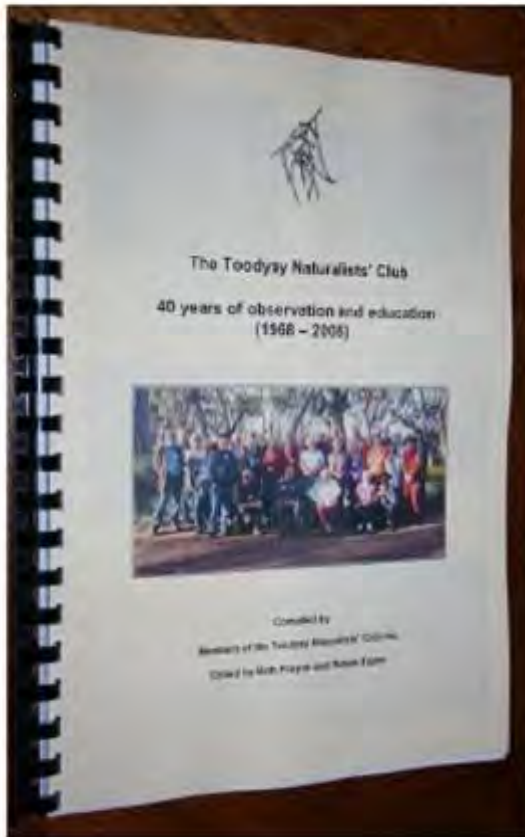
Most of the Monitors were in the midst of 'sloughing'. One large fellow had had an amputated lower back leg as he had been caught in a dingo trap. When found, he was extremely emaciated and his mangled lower leg severely infected. He was brought to the Centre where it was decided that the damaged area would have to be removed for his survival. And, survive he has!! He is now in a very healthy condition and can climb trees as well as any of his brothers!

The time spent at the volunteer-run Centre was a great learning experience and a visit is strongly recommended!



Left and right: Reptile excursion to Armadale Reptile Centre. Photographs of children with a carpet python by Lee Francis.





CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TOODYAY NATURALISTS' CLUB ON THE PRODUCTION OF AN EXCELLENT 40 YEARS OF CLUB HISTORY.

As the President's Report, for the 2010 Annual General Meeting, was too large to include in this Newsletter, a copy may be obtained by contacting Lee as below.

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