



Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.
THE TNC NEWSLETTER
Number 8 August 2012



Above: Wildlife Artist Philippa Nikulinsky at work in her studio

Photo by Robyn Taylor

The Toodyay Naturalists' Club is indebted to the Toodyay Community Resource Centre for their support in producing the August newsletter



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Report	Page 2
Philippa Nikulinsky - wildlife artist	Page 3
Living and working with reptiles	Page 4
The Millennium Kids in Toodyay	Page 5
Members and Friends Fotography	Page 6
Working Bee Fotography	Page 8
AGM Walk in Dawn Atwell Reserve	Page 10
Nature Sounds - SW Bird calls	Page 11
Environment Matters	Page 12

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

With the stimulated interest in 'sensor cameras' from the March workshop at the Chattering Landcare Centre, given by Mike Griffiths and Phil Lewis, a further evening of entertainment and education was given demonstrating the wonderful results obtained with the use of this type of camera. Nat's member, Lyn Johnson, had the great experience of seeing eight Button Quails scurrying across her property and was subsequently lent a 'sensor camera' to find out what else she had of interest on her acreage.

The Bendigo Bank has kindly sponsored and funded the development of an independent website for the Naturalists' Club and, at this point in time it is progressing very well with the company, Web's Creative Studios, providing the expertise. Wayne Clarke is working with the company to relay the progressive design to the members for their approval.

Over the June long weekend, twelve Nats had a few days away in Nannup with past members, Val and Neville Tanner. This pair of wonderful conservationists has used their energy to stimulate the Nannup community to rehabilitate various degraded areas around the town with removal of weeds and revegetation projects resulting in very impressive work. A highlight of the visit was the sighting of a White-breasted Robin!

Later in the month on a beautiful sunny day a litter cleanup was held along the Toodyay/Perth Road on the 'Naturalists' Club - Adopt-a-spot', in the vicinity of the Morangup Reserve that was severely burnt in December of 2010. The area is regenerating well and is one worth exploring.

A successful application to the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Small Grants Incentive Scheme for funding to develop plans for a bird hide to be placed at Millard Pool was exciting news! The Pool is a wonderful feeding area for a great variety of water birds together with the land birds that abound in the nearby river vegetation. The bird hide is to be placed beside the proposed river walk track giving it a priority of interest to naturalists and the wider community.

Members and friends were fortunate to enjoy two periods of fine weather to plant endemic plants in a former gravel pit and a degraded sandy area of the Dawn Atwell Reserve and the severely burnt and degraded areas of the Malkup Brook Reserve. All areas had been prepared with ripping and with the cool, damp conditions, and with further rains expected, it is hoped the plants will do well.

It was a most enjoyable day to have one of our Patrons and Honorary Life Members, Neville Marchant and his wife, Denise, take members on a walk through the Dawn Atwell Reserve prior to the Annual General Meeting. Neville held the group's interest, as he always does, with his animated and very interesting observations of plants and the bush surrounds. We were also very pleased to have foundation and Honorary Life Member, Ray Paynter, together with Pam Masters. Pam has lived away from Toodyay for many years but is also an Honorary Life Member of the Club.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the beautiful home and property of member, Sarah Dudley, for which we were indeed grateful. With the bush surrounds and the many birds enjoying the fine weather it was an ideal area to have the meeting which resulted in the following returning officers: Vice-president, Robyn Taylor, Secretary, Wayne Clarke, Treasurer, Beth Frayne, Project Officer, Greg Warburton, Committee members, Sarah Dudley (Sightings Officer), David Fox-Spencer, Vicki Warburton and Jacquie Lucas. It is fitting to thank Eva and Don Smith for their committee commitment over the past years and thank you to Don for taking on the sightings records now generously taken over by Sarah.

The August meeting guest was the noted natural history artist and water colourist, Philippa Nikulinsky, together with husband, Alex, whose exquisite work is in black and white tones. The couple brought a series of their beautiful books and delightful cards that illustrated both plants and wildlife. Two precious five metre long scrolls were on show which depicted the glorious regeneration of plants following a fire. Members who assisted with holding the scrolls to be viewed wore protective cotton gloves.

Philippa Nikulinsky - wildlife artist

'I feel I need to do justice to the life of that plant and show how it has endured and survived.'

The above quote comes from Philippa and Alex Nikulinsky's beautiful, and hot-off-the-press book, *Cape Arid*. The book is the result of 11 field trips taken over four years into the remote south coastal region of Cape Arid. This was to be the third book in the series about the ecology of harsh, arid environments in WA undertaken in collaboration with Professor Stephen Hopper, former Director of Kings Park and Botanic Garden. The first two books are *Life on the Rocks –the Art of Survival*, and *Soul of the Desert*. However the abundance of the Cape Arid material was such it was agreed to create two complementary publications, an artist's book by Philippa and Alex, and one still to be published based on Stephen's scientific studies in the region.

Philippa used the paintings from the Cape Arid project in her power-point presentation about her work as a natural history artist. Of particular interest for those Nats who go exploring in the wilderness, was how she and Alex work in the field - provisioning themselves for a long stay in a remote area far from any shop or reliable water supply. So we were highly impressed with the dedication that goes into the creation of these exquisite paintings, and the patience and physical endurance required to work under tough conditions - 'when the wind is howling, blowing gritty sand, or, in another season, sleeting rain.' Then there are the field trips in summer when temperatures can be over 40 degrees and flies in abundance. 'Please remind me of how much fun we are having', was a regular comment between the two!¹

The talk was a real treat as many Nats' members were already familiar with Philippa's work for the covers of *Landscape*. Also, for some of those present (we had a record attendance that night), her work resonated with those who have been monitoring the regeneration of the bush after the December 2009 fires in Toodyay. When Philippa and Alex first visited Cape Arid in March 2008, a bushfire had wiped out the heathland. They were met by a black and grey landscape. Over many subsequent visits Philippa recorded the regeneration of Cape Arid, and, to capture the endurance and survival of the plants, she included the blackened remnants - a foil to the brilliance and beauty of the cluster of new growth. This reminder of the life cycle within nature is also captured in Alex's black and white landscapes. These beautiful and moving tonal drawings capture the macrocosm of the place, taking the viewer into a place of profound isolation and solitude. They are complementary to Philippa's paintings, which revel in the intimacy of detail of the flora and fauna found on the land and coastal shores.

Back in 2010, Philippa generously offered Toodyay the loan of two 5 metre long scrolls of botanical drawings based on the regeneration of the bush after the fires in Eneabba. She thought they could be used as a fund-raiser, but the safety of these rice-paper scrolls was a daunting prospect. We were thrilled that Philippa brought these along with her, and with the aid of volunteers wearing white gloves they were unravelled for all to see.

It was a tremendous privilege to have Philippa share her thoughts about what she does. Her paintings, and Alex's drawings, capture what many of us feel but never quite able to articulate - the joy of wandering through wild places, on one's own simply enjoying the experience of being there.

¹ These comments, also made during the talk, are taken from the Introduction in, Philippa and Alex Nikulinsky, *Cape Arid*, Fremantle Press, 2012.



Above : Philippa's scrolls being held with white gloves

LIVING AND WORKING WITH REPTILES

by Desraé Clarke

On Sunday August 5th Toodyay had a visit from the Millennium Kids, an organisation that began December 14th 1999 when the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth recommended that August 12th be officially declared as International Youth Day. Since that time the Millennium Kids has developed as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation run by youth of ten to twenty five years of age.

The Millennium Kids organisation was established to give youth a greater say in *their* environment and *their* world and they are committed to improving the environment through constructive action. With this in mind, young people learn about sustainability and environmental leadership, risk management, team work, communication and problem solving. Projects have been established that raise awareness about *air, trees, waste, native animals, energy, peace, lifestyle and leadership*. The visit to Toodyay, for the third successive year, was to follow up on the care of the river under the leadership of the Toodyay Friends of the River.

There are established groups of Millennium Kids in South Africa, Canada, Indonesia and Singapore and it was special to have seven young people from Java, visit Toodyay; they have an interest in the Kalimas River on the island of Surabaya.

Among the group of visitors were two members that had grown up with the Millennium Kids; they are now supervisors of the younger people and also, there were four recent arrivals from the United Kingdom who had come to assist on the day.

A special guest present was Vanessa Paget. Vanessa is an educator of reptiles, a 'snake buster' (Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Registered Reptile Remover) and organises programmes she has named 'bush wisdom'. She had a number of species of reptiles with her and it was beautiful to watch the expressions on the children's faces as they nursed Blue Tongue Skinks, Bobtails, Stimson's and Carpet Pythons and babies of each of the species. It will be a day to remember for those young people as a 'very special day'!

Vanessa has a pledge for the young people entitled:

'MY PLEDGE TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT'

I will:

Dispose of rubbish correctly to prevent tin cans becoming death traps.

- b) Let my teacher or parents know if an injured or sick animal needs help.
- c) Remember the Wildcare Help Line number 9474 9055.
- d) Prevent reptiles drowning by providing a safe and easy way out of swimming pools or ponds.
- e) Let my parents know to safely remove animal carcasses off the road to stop more animals being killed.
- f) Teach my cat and dog to leave reptiles and other native animals alone.
- g) Bring dry pet food or bird seed inside at night as these attract mice, which attract snakes.
- h) Help in keeping my yard clean and tidy.
- i) Know the three steps for snake bite management:
 - Stay calm.
 - Pressure bandage.
 - Call for help.
- j) Let my family know that baits and pesticides kill native animals that eat what has been baited.
- k) Let my teacher, family and friends know that they can be a volunteer on the 'Wildcare Helpline'.
- l) Tell others what I have learnt!

To contact Vanessa's *Bush Wisdom SURVIVAL* her mobile: 0427 810 085 and her email: vanessabushwisdom@hotmail.com to organise talks, school visits, etc.

Editor

The Millennium Kids in Toodyay



Above: Wayne Clarke explaining the Avon River, and the Avon River Training Scheme, and the subsequent damage.



Above: Roz Bowman entertaining a python.



Above: The Millennium Kids looking at birds, weeds, and the macro-invertebrates in the Avon River

Left: The bird observers on the banks of the Avon River
Photos: Viv Street



Friends Photography



Left: Three juvenile Black-shouldered Kites on the old telegraph line in Cobbler Pool Road.

Below: Spotted Burrowing-frog waiting for rain, Cobbler Pool Road.

Photos by Viv Street



Above: photograph of a Caladenia magniclavata orchid in the Wongamine - taken by Lyn Phillips of Wongan Hills.



Right: Banded Gwardar - photo by Brian Salmond.

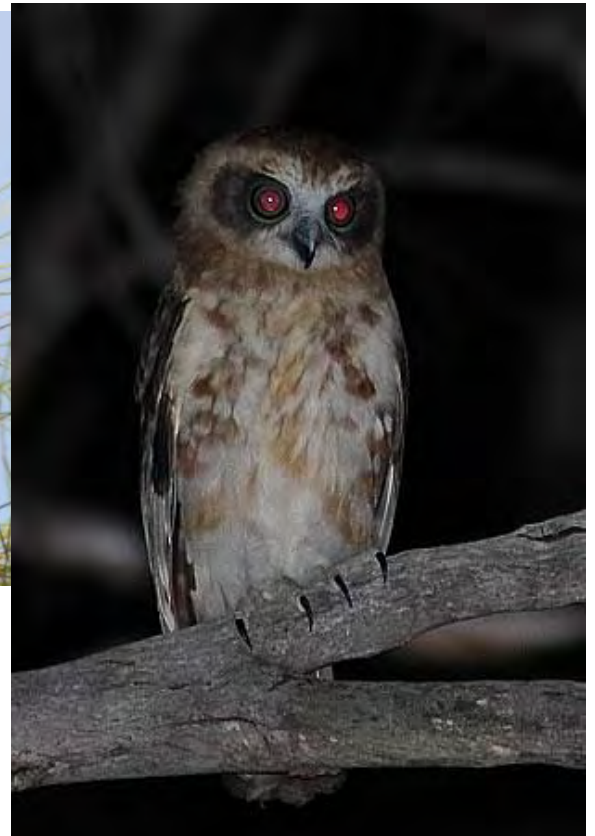


Members & Friends Photography

Below: Male Carnaby's White-tailed Black Cockatoo feeding on Allocasuarina sp., Majestic Heights - taken by Wayne Clarke



Below: Juvenile Boobook Owl - photo by Wayne Clarke



*Left: Sam's friend.
Sam Bowman with juvenile Stimson's Python*

*Right: Splendid Fairy
-Wren male (l) and
female (r)
on the window sill*

*Photo by Dawn
Fitzgerald*



Working-bee Fotography



Left and below: Members tree planting in the Dawn Atwell Reserve.

The picks indicate the hardness of the soil.

Photos by Desraé Clarke



Above and right: More photos of the tree planting day at the Dawn Atwell Reserve

Photos by Desraé Clarke



Working-bee Fotography



Photos of the Club tree planting at the Malkup Brook Reserve, very ably assisted by Reserve neighbours, young and old.



Annual General Meeting walk with Patron - Dr Neville Marchant in the Dawn Atwell Reserve



Left: Patron Dr Neville Marchant addressing Club members in the Dawn Atwell Reserve.

Below: Members (and guests) taking in the exuberance of Neville towards the flora of the reserve.



Left: A casual walk in the Dawn Atwell Reserve, with Neville describing the intricacies of our native flora

Below: Neville in a different vegetation type - again - freely imparting his knowledge of our flora



SOUTH WEST AUSTRALIAN BIRD CALLS

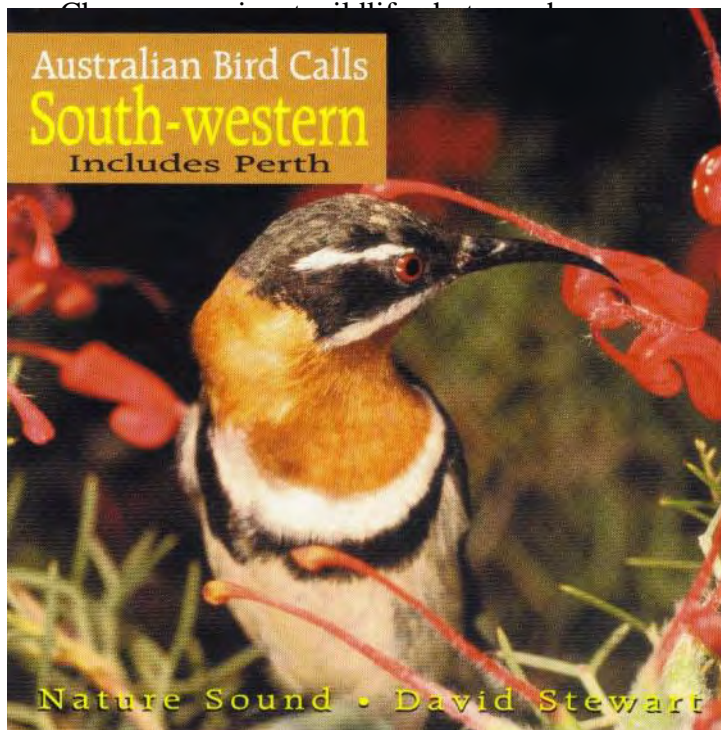
NATURE SOUND *by David Stewart*

David Stewart is a renowned wildlife sound recordist who has produced, among his many recordings of birds and frogs throughout Australia, a beautiful compact disc of bird calls of the south west of Western Australian.

The CD is very well presented with a listing of 79 birds. The individual birds have the call of the AM (adult male), AF (adult female). David has descriptions throughout the recording such as 'squeak of begging juvenile' or 'song, rich and variable – several birds interacting' or 'alarm at nearby predator'.

David is from northern New South Wales but he has worked with a number of well-known West Australians in the production of this CD with the beautiful cover bird photography of a Western Spinebill by Michael Morcombe. David was pleased to have his delightful CD presented in our Toodyay Nat's Club Newsletter.

The explanatory data on the CD has 'DS' mentioned many times; these initials refer to David Secomb who is a naturalist from Katanning. David also mentions, in his acknowledgements, Cheryl and Martin Gole, well-known 'birdos' with Birdlife Australia, together with Michael Morcombe and Graeme



request the use of his cover photo of the Western Spinebill. Very many thanks for that permission, Michael! Michael Morcombe's 'eGuide to Australian Birds' containing calls of many birds. Those interested in learning more of the endemic birds

Desraé Clarke

DID YOU KNOW...

The *Cat Act 2011* received Parliamentary assent on 9 November 2011? This Act will be implemented through a two phase approach; Phase One by 1 November 2012 and Phase Two 1 November 2013. Public consultation for the development of the legislation occurred in 2010, and 590 submissions were received. 84% of the submissions supported the introduction of all three key elements which are:

- Compulsory identification through microchipping;
- Compulsory registration; and
- Compulsory sterilisation.

Although the legislation will not resolve all the problems associated with cats, it will help encourage responsible cat ownership, reduce the number of unwanted cats being bred, allow for cats found on public places or private land to be seized, and allow for lost cats to be re-united with their owners.

To view more details of this, go to www.dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/Legislation/ProposedCatAct.aspx

(Thankyou to both David and Michael for allowing us to use their cover photo)

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

Nats working towards a Tidier and More Sustainable Toodyay

With the support of the Shire of Toodyay, the Toodyay community formed a Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee (TTTC) on 18 July, and plans to enter the 2012-2013 Tidy Towns - Sustainable Communities competition.

The Toodyay Naturalists Club (TNC) Treasurer Beth Frayne is our official representative on the inaugural Committee, as well as being the Committee Chairperson. TNC is also well supported by Desrae Clarke as Acting Secretary, with Wayne Clarke and Greg Warburton, all representing other Toodyay community groups. Although we generally think of picking up litter and beautifying the town when Tidy Towns is mentioned, the competition is much broader these days with eight categories, including 'Natural Environment Conservation'. TNC's revegetation, reserve survey, birdhide and observations database projects all sit nicely under this umbrella, as does our redeveloped website.

Projects do not have to be town-based nor do they have to be new! Existing work being done or planned throughout the Shire can be included. The idea is to celebrate all the community and Shire activities of the town and district. Working with other groups and involving youth (such as involving our junior family members and holding quizzes at the Show, for example) are big winners in the Tidy Towns environment.



Above left: Bobbie Jones (l) and Beth Frayne (r) in their fluoro jackets near the Visitor Centre promoting Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee

Above Right: Bob Frayne uses a 'helping-hand' to pick up litter near the Visitor Centre.

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