



*Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.*

## **THE TNC NEWSLETTER**

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*by Sharon Richards*

THE last three months of 2021 has really flown by, and we were fortunate enough to have some great meetings and interesting excursions. In September we enjoyed a wonderful guided walk with Neville Marchant around the Rica Erickson Nature Reserve in the Shire of Victoria Plain. The walk rewarded us with a marvellous array of wildflowers including a great show of orchids amongst others, multiple white spiders (*Caladenia longicauda*), cowslips (*Caladenia flava*) and a couple of glorious pink enamels (*Elythranthera emarginata*). It was a fabulous day with a great turn out of members.

In October, of course the Toodyay Agricultural Show saw the TNC Members join with Mammas and Pappas and Toodyay Friends of the River in the Environment Matters marquee. Another wonderful day with some interesting visitors sharing their stories about close encounters with our local wildlife and a multitude of children and adults enjoying the opportunity to learn about and cuddle the rescued animals.

Later in the month we were visited by the inspirational Talitha Huston who has published her first book, by age 17, *Birds of the Perth Hills*. An amazing achievement and a beautifully presented local bird guide.

November we heard the great news that our friends and colleagues in Toodyay Friends of the River had been nominated as finalists in the 2021 WA Landcare Awards, in the Community Group Award category. An amazing achievement paying tribute to the great work the group undertakes.

Our final meeting of the year was a night safari at the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Karakamia Sanctuary in Gidgegannup. We had two very knowledgeable guides in Amy and Christine and after a brief overview of Karakamia and its history were led off into the evening. There are 2 walk options, a shorter flatter walk or a longer more hilly option, both with equal opportunity to view the wildlife. It was a very successful evening with sightings of Tamar Wallabies, multiple brushtail possums, quendas, wyolies and an echidna, all with the ever present calling of motor bike and pobblebonk frogs and within a beautiful natural woodland setting.

As 2021 draws to a close we are looking forward to planning another year of excursions and inspirational guest presenters. I would like to thank all the members for their wonderful support in 2021 and to wish everybody a very safe and happy Christmas.



Above: *Catspaw (Anigozanthus humilis)* in the Rica Erickson Reserve Photo: Sharon Richards (2021-09-18)

Cover Photograph: *Pelham Reserve Splendour*

Photo: Greg Warburton (2021-09-14)

## Passing of former TNC member, Frank Turnbull *by Desrae Clarke*

FRANK Turnbull lived with his friend, Frank Carr for many years in Julimar, opposite what was formerly known as 'Reserve 5273'. The 'Two Franks', as they were known to the Nat's members, loved the area and spent many hours learning of the flora and fauna found in the reserve.

They had a particular interest in the 59ha reserve - now known as the Dawn Atwell Reserve - discovering an unusual orchid that was identified as being rare. Frank T was instrumental in highlighting the significance of the conservation values of this reserve and having the vesting changed from 'Camping and Cooking' to the more appropriate 'Conservation of Flora and Fauna'.

The two Franks were staunch members of the Toodyay Nat's Club with Frank T developing a passion in the study of land snails.

Unfortunately both Frank T's and Frank C's health deteriorated significantly to the point of having to make the decision to leave Toodyay to live in Cooloongup, an area closer to family support.

My husband, Wayne, and I kept in touch with the Two Franks; they both really enjoyed hearing news of their Nat's friends and the Club's happenings.

RIP



*Above: The Opening of the Dawn Atwell Reserve on Julimar Road.*

*Pictured are from left: Bethan Lloyd, Desrae Clarke, TNC President; and Frank Turnbull*

*Photo: Wayne Clarke (2011-09-17)*

[A lovely memory of Frank T is that of being given a book of the beautiful art works of English ornithologist, Charles Tunnicliffe, 'Sketches of Birdlife', (Illustrations The Estate of Charles Frederick Tunnicliffe 1981) – it is a treasure.]

# *Karakamia Wildlife Conservancy Sanctuary*

*by Desraé Clarke*

THE end of the year get-together for the Toodyay Nat's members was a visit to the Karakamia Wildlife Sanctuary within the Shire of Mundaring. Opened in 1991, Karakamia was the first of a number of sanctuaries around Australia, owned and managed by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. The sanctuary is surrounded by vermin-proof fencing that excludes feral animals such as the fox and cat and protecting vulnerable species of endangered native wildlife in a predator-free environment.

The area holds magnificent, majestic Jarrah and Marri trees with many of them hundreds of years of age. These ancient sentinels hold perfect homes for so many species of birds, fauna and invertebrates.

It was a perfect evening with members enjoying the solitude of the sanctuary while awaiting the natural light to darken and the little nocturnal critters to begin their foraging.

The group, divided into two, was given the choice of being led on a relatively flat terrain or to be taken into a somewhat steeper area. The leaders carried infrared torches that allowed us to see the animals without disturbance.

With the different types of soil and terrain there was a slight variation in what animals were heard or sighted. We listened for the slight sounds of 'crunching' dry leaves as the creatures went about their foraging business or movement through the bush. Two of the species, both very small but with slight differences in build, have distinctly different rates of hopping giving observers some indication as to what species they may be hearing.

It was an evening of learning. There was an emphasis on the value of listening and differentiating the important, but practically inaudible, sounds of movement of our special native creatures.



*Left: An Echidna - taken with an ordinary Digital Camera but with an Infra-red torch shining on the animal; infra-red was used to look at the animals rather than the white-light that can scare or panic them.*

*Photo: Lyn Phillips (2021-11-26)*

# Karakamia Wildlife Conservancy Sanctuary



*Above: Members assemble. From left: Louise Carbone, Viv Read, Lynn Phillips, Peter Macgill, Andrew St John, Lyn Johnson (front), Eva & Don Smith, Sharon Richards, Lyn Phillips, Bethan Lloyd, Charmian St John, Ian Phillips. Photo: Desraé Clarke (2021-11-26)*



*Right: Members gather to listen to Christine from Karakamia explain the status of the various animals that are in Karakamia*

*Photo: Desraé Clarke (2021-11-26)*

# Project Officer's Report

by Greg Warburton

There are two places in Toodyay that are particularly close to the heart of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club. I'm sure members would agree they are Pelham Reserve and the John Masters Bird Hide at Red Banks Pool.

Although separated by many years both these projects are both the result of ideas and hard work from the Club. These special locations have provided information and amenity to the local community and visitors alike and will continue to do so into the future.

The high rainfall experienced during July and August this year provided a particular focus on both these locales. Concerns were raised during the flood event of February 2017 when water was lapping at the foundations of the bird hide. Fortunately no destabilisation of the structure was identified.

However, this year the extended flow saw huge chunks of the high river bank washed away and many large trees fall at Red Banks Pool. Fortuitously, the placement of the bird hide seems to be on a solid shelf of calcrete that has been so far unaffected by the swirling torrent.

A much smaller flow event but no less significant is that of Pelham Brook which very rarely runs for its entire course but has done so this year. The reservoir that the Pelham Brook flows into overflowed and water cascaded down the spillway providing a sight not seen for years.

This infrastructure was constructed in 1900 to supplement Newcastle's dwindling well water supply and now provides a point of interest along the Pelham Walk Trail. Similarly, a walk along the marked trail from the Look Out to the pink everlasting area and has promises to provide an exceptional spring display this year. It is an easy walk from the Lookout or you can drive to Pelham Brook culvert.

The best way, though, is a walk along the south western trail or better still - the complete circuit - *it is world class!*

(See photos front Page 1 & opposite)



Left: *Zamia Cycad (Macrozamia riedlii)* from Karakamia.

Photo: Lyn Phillips (2021-11-26)

## Did You Know...

...that *Macrozamia riedlii* is one of the only cycads native to a Mediterranean climate; it is endemic to southwest Australia. It grows to a height of half a metre or it may form a trunk of up to two metres.

# *Pelham Reserve and Pelham Brook Spillway*



*Top: Pelham Reserve, Duke Street Toodyay (2021-09-14)  
Bottom: Pelham Brook Spillway (2021-08-10)*

*Photos: Greg Warburton*

## Members Page



Above: A pink Enamel Orchid (*Elythranthera emarginata*)

Photo: Jacqueline Lucas (2021-09-18)

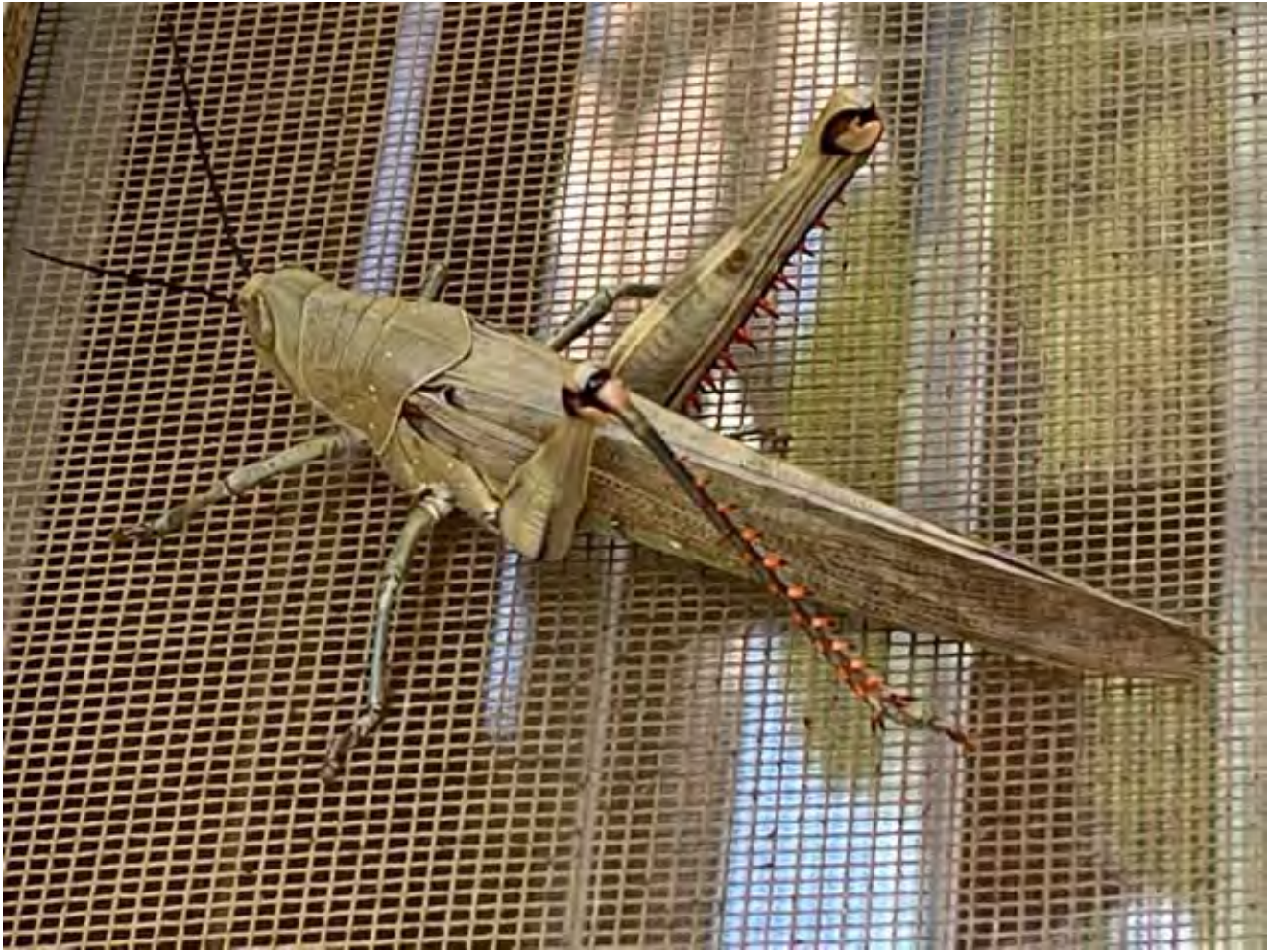


Above: A fledgling Singing Honeyeater after its first flight.

Photo: Wayne Clarke (2021-10-21)



## *Giant Australian Grasshopper*



Above: Giant Australian Grasshopper or Hedge Grasshopper (*Valanga irregularis*)

*Photo: Robyn Taylor (2011-11-17)*

On the 17th of November TNC member, Robyn Taylor, found this 9cm long insect on a flyscreen in her home. It appeared to have a leg caught but when touched it withdrew the leg – it was very much alive!

Images were emailed to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) with the query of identity given by Senior Biosecurity Officers, Dave Cousins and Darryl Hardie, with the following information.

This species is the Giant Australian Grasshopper or Hedge Grasshopper, *Valanga irregularis* (Orthoptera: Acrididae) and is fairly common across Northern Australia from Carnarvon to Northern NSW.

It can be an occasional pest in nurseries and plantations and also in home gardens. During the last few years there are more and more observations in the south west. The species can exhibit a wide range of colour and pattern variations but consistently has black antenna and the red spines with black tips on the hind tibia.

Despite being native **they do love citrus** so I would expect that it is the same species (or possibly specimen) that are being found. These creatures love Orange fruit leaves and have big appetites. As insecticides and chemicals are not effective, control methods are limited to hand removal. It is best to wear strong gardening gloves as the spines on the tibia can be sharp and the insect can also bite; place the creatures in the freezer to kill them.

If you can encourage insect eating birds into the garden, such as Wattle Birds, Willie Wagtails, Magpie-lark, they can help control numbers when the grasshoppers are very small and vulnerable.

Using the MyPestGuide reporter app, either online or a mobile device is, an excellent method of more interesting material of invertebrates <https://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au/reporter/#/>

## School Girl Photographer and Author of 'Birds of the Perth Hills'

by Desraé Clarke

IN her final years of secondary school Talitha Huston has had published a book of her photography of birds around her family bush property and further afield of her home range in the Perth hills.

The venture was commenced when she was 14 years of age and completed ready for printing at age 16. As Talitha is extremely conscious of the care of the environment she was pleased to use a Western Australian printing firm, Environmental Printing Company, utilising recycled paper and vegetable-based inks. It was at this time that she surprised her parents with the book - they had no idea of her project!

Talitha has had an interest in photography since a small girl. Her ex-school teacher parents, Janette and Bob, are very involved with the environment and conservation and are excellent role models for Talitha's interest. She has now given presentations to many groups and it was pleasing to have her speak, and have her books for sale and signing, at the Toodyay Nat's October 2021 meeting. It was also noted that 10% of her sales revenue is donated to the Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Lesmurdie, Western Australia.

The accompanying diction to each photographed bird is a little different to the usual information and her hints on wildlife photography given are simple but extremely meaningful. One suggestion is not to wear footwear in leaf litter as the 'crackling' sound of dry leaves disturbs the subject. Another hint is of any necessary photographer movement to be made *very, very* slowly. These are simple, but intelligent, suggestions.

Talitha is extremely interested in documentary photography and shared two film clips of her work – they were interesting, thought- provoking and extremely well-done!



The Toodyay Nat's members enjoyed Talitha's excellent presentation and congratulate her on her wonderful achievement. Best wishes are given in her career pursuits of environmental film.

Talitha was awarded a Steadfast Young Landcare Leader Highly Commended Certificate at the recent 2021 Western Australian Landcare Awards for the nomination of her book

Above: Talitha with her book

Photo: Janette Huston

## Vale Frank Turnbull



Above: Desraé Clarke; Frank Turnbull and Greg Warburton at the opening of the Dawn Atwell Reserve (2011-09-17)

Photos: Wayne Clarke

Below: The 'Two Franks' - Frank Carr (left) and Frank Turnbull at the 2012 TNC Christmas Party at Bethan's home

(2012-11-17)



# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



Above: *The Evidence* - we do have Quenda in Toodyay.  
Found on the side of the road near Springbank. The sighting has been further verified by a near neighbour.  
Photo: Greg Warburton (2021-10-19)

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