



*Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.*

## **THE TNC NEWSLETTER**

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*We gratefully acknowledge the Ballardong, Yued and Whadjuk Peoples as the traditional custodians of this land and duly respect a deep and unbroken connection to their cultural, physical and spiritual existence. We pay respect to their Elders, both past and present, and emerging.*

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Sharon Richards

AS the year of 2022 draws to a close we can take a moment to reflect on the last few months and what the Toodyay Naturalists' Club members have achieved.

The July AGM was delayed to August and included a Members night. Greg Warburton shared the delightful footage of a Pygmy Possum on his property really demonstrating the benefits of living close to the Julimar Forest and having a wildlife camera available to capture the antics of these cute nocturnal characters.

September was a particularly busy month. Toodyay Naturalists' Club members were honoured to be included in the launch of the 'Gnulla Karnany Waagkiny, Our Truth Telling Celebration'. The display is ongoing at the Old Newcastle Museum in Toodyay for those who haven't had a chance to see it yet. The display captures the European settlement of Toodyay and its surrounds and, whilst confronting in some aspects, provides us with a much-needed accuracy of those times. Later in the month we enjoyed a visit to a member's property close to the Panorama Reserve in Toodyay; it had a dazzling display of wildflowers including some late flowering orchids and a stunning display of Blue Leschenaultia.

The month also saw the installation of the new display cabinets at the Toodyay Environment and History Centre, Drummond House. Thank you to the Toodyay Op Shop for its wonderful donation helping to make this upgrade possible, the Shire for funding the paint and members of the Toodyay Friends of the River and the Toodyay Historical Society for the installation. Now there are four cabinets available for the different environmental groups in Toodyay helping to get our messages out.

October, of course, is always the Toodyay Agricultural Show and our opportunity to promote how much the environment matters. This year the focus was on the Julimar Forest and its value to our community and beyond. Our upfront attractions were the Carnaby display aviary provided by Carnaby Crusader, Dean Atherton, and our Black-glove Wallaby cut-out photo opportunity designed and constructed by Greg Warburton. Once inside the marquee there was a photographic display and a wonderful hand-drawn map of the water-ways of Julimar Forest by Bridget Leggett.

The day of the Toodyay Show was our first opportunity to start gathering community support *to sign our petition* for our proposal to Government that the Julimar Forest be recognised for its wonderful biodiversity and be upgraded to National Park status. The strong community support was evident with very few visitors to the marquee declining to sign the petition. We will be looking for volunteers starting next February/March to develop next year's display for the Toodyay Nats Club at the Show. If you have some ideas, hold onto that thought and don't forget to put your hand up!

Our end of year meeting was held at the home of member's, Don and Eva, owners of a beautiful bush property which abuts the Julimar Forest. We undertook a lovely guided walk by Don and, in front of the walking group, a few of us were lucky enough to have a fleeting glimpse of a young Black-glove Wallaby! There were still a few wildflowers in bloom, specifically small pink trigger plants and an assortment of the yellow hibbertias brightening up the forest floor. The section of the forest we walked through had been previously logged for charcoal with only straight trees harvested so we had the opportunity to see some delightfully unusual shapes and leans particularly amongst the Jarrah trees.

At this year's Christmas Street Party the Toodyay Nat's, for the first time ever I think, had an information table outside Drummond House, promoting the value of the Julimar Forest with a few keen members walking the street and gaining signatures for the petition. Catching up with other stall holders meant we may even have a future speaker for the Club for 2023 - watch this space for that one!

The end of 2022 has seen great progress by the Club in its effort to raise the profile of the wonderful biodiversity within the Toodyay Shire, especially Julimar Forest. Our strong relationship with the members of the Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance (JCAFA) will make us a more formidable force for the future. JCAFA members and additional volunteers have now developed added resources enabling members to share vital information about Julimar on the JCAFA Facebook page and the Julimar Forest information flyer which is available at Drummond House. The first version of the 'Values of Julimar' flyer is to be widely distributed to decision-makers and influences such as politicians and will be available online and Drummond House.

Thank you all for supporting our wonderful Club and its activities - I look forward to an even busier, fun year in 2023.

*Cover photo: Julimar Brook in winter, September 2022*

*Photo: Sharon Richards*

# Toodyay Op Shop Ladies' Drummond House Display Cabinet Project

by Desraé Clarke

THE replacement of the display cabinets at the Toodyay Environment and History Centre, at Drummond House, was a major project for the three Toodyay Community groups, the Toodyay Naturalists' Club (TNC), Toodyay Historical Society (THS) and Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR). To see the task come to fruition is absolutely wonderful!!

The members share the beautiful Shire-owned premises adjoining the Bendigo Bank, situated in the main street of Stirling Terrace – a prime position!

This historic building (c. 1897/98) was originally the premises used by the Bank Manager. However, it is not a large building and certainly not suitable for a family so, over the years it has had a variety of users including a haberdashery store, a mining office and a real estate premises.

One of the latter businesses had erected four chipboard display cabinets on outside walls facing the elements that, ultimately, resulted in severe deterioration to the point of becoming dangerous and requiring replacement. The Shire was approached and agreed to allow the request of the replacement with members of the three groups assisting with repainting the areas concerned with the heritage colour toning as required and the installation of the four new display cabinets.

Businesses within the district were approached to provide the display cabinets but to no avail. Wily Committee member of each of the three groups, Wayne Clarke, searched further afield and discovered a Queensland firm had just what was required – a sturdy structure, lockup facilities and magnetic back boards. However, the cost was considerable!!

The Toodyay Op Shop ladies were approached to ask if they could contribute to the cost. It was decided at their meeting they would donate the full amount – of \$3,000!!!!

Why four cabinets for three community groups? There are sub-groups of the TNC, TFOR and THS who can utilise use of the fourth display area to great advantage.

The photo below follows a 'thank you' morning tea held for the Op Shop ladies, with the Shire CEO, Shire President and the Bendigo Bank Manager invited, along with members of the three community groups who helped with painting the building and erection of the cabinets.



Above: [L. to R.]Maurie Jackson [TFOR], Jenny White [TFOR], Robyn Taylor [THS-TFOR-TNC], John White [TFOR], Suzie Haslehurst [Shire CEO], Kirsten Barrack [Bendigo Bank Manager], Rosemary Madasci [Shire President], and Toodyay Op Shop ladies Jenny Hildred, Jan Reeve, Bel Rowe and Linda Kerlake.

Photo: Desraé Clarke [TNC-THS-TFOR]

## *Gnulla Karnany Waangkiny 'Our Truth Telling'*

It was both a privilege and a pleasure for Nat's Club representation to be part of the 'Gnulla Karnany Waangkiny – Our Truth Telling' Celebration launch on the morning of September 8th. The Toodyay Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation (NKAC) has worked in partnership with the Shire of Toodyay as a part of the Shire's Reconciliation Action Plan.

There was a wonderful cross-section of Toodyay community representation including Year 6 Toodyay District High School students. Western Australian Government members, Hon. Sandra Carr MLC and Darren West MLC, Toodyay CEO, Suzie Haslehurst, and several councillors were among the guests.

NKAC chair, Robert Miles, ably ran a most interesting celebration commencing with Welcome to Country by Elders, Uncle Ben Taylor and Mrs Sharmaine Miles, and concluding with Trevor Stack's Noongar Dance Troup, Gya Ngoop Keeninyara Dancers.

The Newcastle Gaol Museum houses a major display of Aboriginal life, since European colonisation, where one can view the 'Gnulla Karnany Waangkiny – Our Truth Telling' Celebration project installation.

*[Note: Take advantage of the 'Free Entry' for Toodyay residents to our Toodyay Museums ]*



*Gnulla Karnany Waangkiny ...  
at 'Our Truth Telling' Celebration*





# COVENANTING for CONSERVATION

by Greg Warburton

OCCASIONALLY, in life the stars line up and something exceptional happens. This was very much the case with the recently gazetted Shire Conservation Covenant.

In my role with the Shire of Toodyay I am responsible for the management of a range of different land tenures including Shire owned free hold land. This land consists mainly of smaller vacant blocks within the town area such as that adjoining River Hills Estate and the Sports & Recreation Centre.

The Shire owned Lot 108 Hibbertia Place however is over 120 hectares and covers the rugged terrain between the Golf Course and the boundaries of Majestic Height properties (see map page 6).

Historically, this lot was owned by a brick making company who had acquired it for its clay extraction prospectively. At some point this company relinquished ownership and it was acquired by the Shire as a free hold title.

The terrain restricted access and prohibited any subdivision or building development. The only visitors it seemed were intrepid bush walkers and nature enthusiasts.

Then in 2009, on a catastrophic fire rating day the infamous "Toodyay Bushfire" tore through much of this land. Lot 108 was a scene of intensive fire response and protracted suppression and mop up operations.

With the loss of vegetation on the upper slopes subsequent rainfall events caused severe water erosion. This unimpeded water run off cut through the golf course fairways creating huge ruts and causing serious safety hazards.

These high velocity flows carried sediment loads off the hills, across private land into Harper Brook and the Avon River. Gradually, re-growth stabilized the slopes but rain water still sheds from these slopes.

One of the effects of this erosion was to widen and expose a remarkable gully of Toodyay Stone. Although trekking in is difficult the beautiful colours, sheer rock walls and waterholes make a visit well worth the effort.

The erosion required the re-establishment and extension of fire breaks and accesses of Lot 108. It was no easy task, necessitating deft bulldozer operation precise erosion control work. Thanks to Fire Mitigation Services Ltd. this work was expertly completed.

I had become increasingly familiar with Lot 108 during my on-foot surveys. I'd gaze out in wonder at the stately Powder bark Wandoo's that covered the Laterite breakaways and think, "This place should be a Nature Reserve"

Then, a couple of years ago during an application process for clearing permits intended for Shire road widening works, I discovered that Lot 108 qualified to be a conservation covenant!

I put forward a proposal which was supported by the Environmental Advisory Committee and Council. Hugo deVos the Shire Planner was able to engage a specialist legal firm and the wheels were put in motion.

It was an extensive process requiring wide-ranging communication, correspondence and consultation but ultimately resulted in Lot 108 converting to a:

*"Covenant to retain and protect native vegetation in perpetuity, being set aside for the protection and management of vegetation under section 30B of the Soil and Conservation Act 1945"*

Personally, it has been a proud accomplishment to achieve such an enduring benefit for the environment and community. Certainly, it is a feather in the cap for the Shire as few local governments could boast such an outstanding conservation asset. For here, ancient landforms, spectacular views and wildflower blooms abound. Most importantly, critical habitat for wildlife will be preserved and protected forever.

# *Blue China Orchid - Cyaninacula gemmata*

*by Ric Newman, Member from Doodlakine*

THE first plant was found then three others in two separate locations; it had not been located before. Rainfall of 360mm, year to date, compared to our annual average of 312mm. One of the most prolific seasons I can ever remember! I was through Toodyay yesterday and cannot recall seeing the river that high at this time of the year. Our spring here is running 3-4 weeks longer than in our drier years.





# *"DON'T FENCE ME IN" - Memories of Sue Eldridge*

*by Greg Warburton*



*At left:  
Sue (at right) with her daughter,  
Ilana (centre) at a celebration  
for C.Y. O'Connor, one of Sue's  
forebears.*

TO say Sue lived life to the full is an understatement. I thought I knew most of her story from knowing her for over 20 years but much more was revealed during the eulogies at her funeral on the 16th of December 2022. A contingent of Toodyay people were there representing the many local organisations Sue had been an active member of; the Julimar Fire Brigade, Toodyay Council, RSL, Ambulance and of course the Toodyay Naturalists' Club.

It was through the "Nats" that Vicki and I first met Sue and from that point we became friends. Sue was secretary of the group when I was President. She was very forthright, and I often had to tread carefully. As Charlie Wroth said at the wake for Sue at the Julimar Fire Station, "Sue didn't like being told what to do". I took over from Sue as the Club's representative on the Community Reference Group for the Windarling Mine in the Yilgarn. I once flew to Southern Cross for a meeting with Sue in a light aircraft piloted by her son Andrew.

I recall one TNC meeting at Hamersley Street when a discussion ensued about Kookaburras being a feral bird in South West WA. Sue commented that she liked Kookaburras much to the chagrin of the meeting. Sue then retorted with, "I meant, in a Pie".

Sue's contribution to our community was extensive as a volunteer and she served 4 years on council during a tempestuous period of local politics. But her true passion was for wild life caring and protection of the natural environment. She lived on a bush block at Julimar that was also the home of a huge mob of kangaroos. The sight of Sue surrounded by dozens of kangaroos including huge, alpha bucks is something I will never forget. The spectacle would draw visitors to what would become known as "Roos at Sue's".

Sue was also licensed by DBCA to euthanize injured kangaroos and in my Shire role I called on her help many times in that capacity. She would immediately drive to wherever in the Shire she was needed.

You could say Sue had not been lucky in her relationships but she herself had an impressive pedigree being related to C.Y. O'Connor and niece to the famous artist Kathleen O'Connor. She invited us to an event in Fremantle commemorating her famous ancestor.

On the morning of December 14th '21 I visited Sue at her property to say good bye. A furniture truck was coming that day and she was moving to a small house on the coast to be closer to her son. Sadly, this time would be mostly hospital stays and cancer treatment. But, in October she bravely made a trip to Toodyay for the Agricultural Show. The cancer that would take her life two months later was very advanced but Sue was her usual upbeat, cheeky self. I thought it was such a courageous thing to do and so typical of her spirit and character. I know now she had come to say goodbye to old friends.

Sue Eldridge was undoubtedly one of the most colourful people I have ever met. Her zest for life and her humour made her very entertaining company and I will never forget her.

Sue was laid to rest in a bush site at Pinaroo where kangaroos graze and jump around. A more appropriate place I can't imagine. RIP Sue.

# *Images from Julimar Conservation Park*



*Above: An old jarrah tree - still providing life.*

*Photo: Sharon Richards*

*Below: Julimar - a magical Place*

*Photo: Desraé Clarke*



# Observations

*by the late Lindsay Milhinch, Vice-President, 1969—1979  
Honorary Life Member 1986*

HAVE you ever thought about the difference there is between observing something - or just seeing it? To me, observing often leads to questioning what is happening, why is it happening and is it influenced by other things which are also happening around it.

When observing nature and all the creatures and plants which go to make up the ecology, I am often amazed with the dependency of one upon the other, or how the loss of one will affect the other. The destruction of habitats is an obvious example as to why some creatures are on the decline. Yet we have to look further for a reason why some have declined in numbers, while others in the same family have increased.

For instance why has the Common Bronzewing Pigeon declined while the Crested Pigeon has increased and expanded its range?

I understand that the Common Bronzewing Pigeon feeds on the seeds of native bushes, many of which have been removed, especially in the wheatbelt.

The Crested Pigeon also feeds on these seeds but it has been reported that, unlike the Common Bronzewing Pigeon, the Crested Pigeon has been able to adapt to feeding on the seeds of the introduced plant called Paterson's Curse, so the spread of this plant has helped this bird increase in numbers. Yet, another small, seed-eating bird, the Zebra Finch, which was common in my area a few years ago, has now disappeared from here.

I have noticed in recent times that, in my area, there has been a definite decrease in the number of small birds like the Yellow-rumped Thornbills and other warblers. The Wrens disappeared some time ago after bushes and other undergrowth had been cleared by the owner of the land where the Wrens had fed and nested. Even some of the small birds that build open cup-shaped nests are not as plentiful as before. This last year it was remarked upon how few Cuckoos were reported as having been seen or heard. Could it be that the absence of suitable nests deterred the Cuckoos?

The Bronze Cuckoos are well known for parasitizing the nests of small insect-eating birds. Birds like the Yellow-rumped Thornbills which build a dome-shaped nest and also the Wrens, which build a smaller nest with a side entrance as a rule, while the Pallid Cuckoo mostly lays its eggs in open cup-shaped nests made by Willie Wagtails, Honeyeaters, Wood Swallows, etc. Is it just possible that with fewer such nests, the Cuckoos are not attracted to this area?

I have often wondered about some of the bush areas left on farms which are necessary for erosion control, windbreaks and shelter for stock, etc, and it is often that the large trees are left to encourage birds. This is all very well for some larger seed-eating birds such as Galahs, corellas and Port Lincoln Parrots which can feed out on crops and pastures during the day and come to the trees to roost and nest, and also insect-eating birds like the Tree-creepers and other birds that find their food on limbs or the leaves of trees.

However, where stock had continual access to the bush often the small bushes and undergrowth have been destroyed, so that the feeding areas of many small birds depending on the insects, small lizards, etc, found the undergrowth and leaf litter on the ground, are no longer available to them – so while this changing type of habitat is suitable for some, it is unsuitable for others.

On a visit to the mining town of Goldsworthy some years ago, I was surprised to see some of the most beautiful birds I have ever seen. They were like Butcher Birds and were black and the most glorious shade of pink. I watched these birds for some time before being convinced that they were ordinary Pied Butcher Birds. Goldsworthy was noted for its peculiar shade of iron ore dust, and apparently this dust had shaded the white parts of the birds to give them this unusual colour. I remember almost being tricked in a similar way with Wood Swallows at the Wilgiemia ochre mine with birds showing red ochre on their feathers.

We do need to be sure of what we are looking at, don't we?

*AMATEUR naturalist, the late Lindsay Millhinch, and his late wife, Ruth, were Seabrook farmers who contributed with a great interest in both birds and reptiles.*

## Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike



TWO community members responded to the contribution of the Bird of the Month to the monthly community newspaper, the Toodyay Herald, with interesting observations of the Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike.

One person stated that he has a small Mulberry Tree, of approximately two metres in height, and a prolific bearer. This year all the fruit is being eaten by a small flock of at least half a dozen Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes. What surprised him was the number of birds. He usually only sees them in ones or pairs; he counted six one day and all seemed mature. While away for a week his wife, Kerry, noted the birds had left on 22nd September; they had been around for approximately two weeks. Suddenly the family had lots of ripe mulberries as previously the Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes ate all the fruit. The birds had not been observed in previous years.

A second Community member stated, “We can confirm that Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes eat mulberries because we’ve had them in our little tree, too, of at least half a dozen. They are here quite often.”

This is really interesting information and pleasing to have the reports made !!!

I hadn’t heard of this before and checked on the many books in the home library with several stating ‘occasionally fruit is taken’. However, Dom Serventy’s 1948 publication states ‘*This species is often seen about orchards and has a penchant for fruits like mulberries*’.

[Erroneously called the ‘*Blue Pigeon*’ by young boys. (Dom’s brother, Vincent Serventy, *Western Mail*, May 22, 1952). Vincent went on to say “It is one of the commonest of birds and is often mistaken for a cuckoo”.

If Vincent were here today he would surely retract that statement as I’m sure he would agree now that no bird should wear the title ‘*common*’. For the full text of this article see Volume 2, August 2010; available on our website]

## Peacock Spider-*Maratus melindae*



Photo: Sandy Wessley

### SANDY'S STORY

'This was the first time I have seen this spider. The following day I saw the female spider in the same spot on its own.

I had previously joined the Facebook Page of '*Insects of Perth and South West of Western Australia*'. People had been posting the Peacock Spider sightings in the south west with photos and that is why I recognised it when I saw it here; I didn't realise it was so small.

We were sitting on the paving outside the house when Yani spotted it as it was jumping which was unusual for a spider. On closer inspection, with magnifying glasses, I recognised the blue colouring at the back and got my camera.'

Sandy Wessley photographed this tiny Peacock Spider to share. It is 'rice-sized' of between 2.5mm and 5mm. The male is very colourful on the upper surface of the abdomen.

From the data on Google it has only recently been discovered and to date has been found across southern Australia including Tasmania.

## Visit to Steve's

It was an ideal day to visit the beautiful property of Steve McCormick with members of both the Historical Society and Toodyay Friend's members sharing the experience.

Steve's property abuts the Panorama Reserve. It has glorious views across valleys in front of his home and a wonderful Powderbark and Wandoo forest with magnificent specimens on the higher aspect of his property.

Steve's home was also of immense interest. The building is a thermo-dynamic structure with Steve a very happy owner with all the promises of its attributes.

Following a sumptuous afternoon tea visitors were led by Steve to the forested area to fully appreciate the beauty of the area. Wildflowers were scattered through the forest but the surprise was the glorious display of *Leschenaultia* in very solid soil that resembled concrete – amazing.

The second surprise was that of finding a tiny group of *Pterostylis nana* in an incredibly deep chasm in deep leaf litter. Most were in seed as it was very late in the season for these tiny, delicate orchid species. However, two or three flower heads were surviving sufficiently to be identified.

All participants thoroughly enjoyed the day



*Above: Steve McCormick's passively designed home.*

*Photo: Desrae Clarke*

## Visit to Steve's ... cont.



*Above: Members set off exploring Steve McCormick's property*

*Photo: Desrae Clarke*

## DID YOU KNOW...?

... you can record your sightings on-line?

Member's can request a password through the 'Observations Officer', currently Wayne Clarke. A Member ID and Password will be provided to new members on request, and you would log-in through the 'Member LOGIN' menu on the home page to enter your 'sighting'.

Non-members may also enter sightings, simply by going to the 'Sightings' menu choice on the home page. Simply follow the instructions to log your sighting.

Sightings will be verified before they appear on the website in the sightings listing (you will need an email address to enter a sighting).

# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



*Left:  
Powder bark wandoo, sheer rock walls and waterholes with views to the east above the golf course can be had from this newly covenanted Shire reserve.*

*The covenant is 'to retain and protect native vegetation in perpetuity'*

*If you are agile and are used to bushwalking then this may interest you.*

*[see page 7 for article]*

*Photo: Greg Warburton*

## MAJOR SPONSORS

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(next to the Bendigo Bank ATM).

**Opening hours:** Saturday 10am - 12noon

**WILDCARE HELPLINE 9474 9055**

*Member of the WA Landcare Network*