



Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.

THE TNC NEWSLETTER

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We sincerely 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

A belated Happy New Year to everybody. After a nice Christmas break our meetings commenced again in February with a fabulous presentation from Dr. Hugh Finn who shared his expertise about the Environmental Protection Agency. Hugh's presentation was incredibly illuminating, who would have thought the EPA didn't have a mandate to protect but were in place to facilitate the commencement of all sorts of activities in the environment such as mining and clearing of the bush. It was a great turn out with both members and guests attending.

I was away in March but members were very busy with our usual clean up on Julimar Road around the area of the Dawn Atwell reserve. A total of 12 bags of rubbish were collected, well done everybody for a great effort. Our March meeting saw member Dr. Andrew St John share the progress of the Safe and Scenic Toodyay Road campaign (SASTR). As you know, the petition presented by SASTR to the WA State Environmental Committee was rejected but the campaign continues, raising awareness to Toodyay residents and visitors about the proposed changes to Toodyay Road, I really can't call them improvements. If you haven't signed a postcard to be sent to your local MP then please contact SASTR to get one.

Our April meeting saw Wayne and Desrae Clarke give us a wonderful account of their trip to Antarctica and the Falkland Islands, amongst other places. Their beautiful photographs showed an abundance of diverse wildlife, from gorgeous Adele penguins to enormous elephant seals, it was clearly the trip of a life time. Well done and thank you to you both.

Also in April the Toodyay Naturalists club supported the Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance to host the Black Cockatoo Crisis documentary which was directed and produced by award winning film maker, Jane Hammond. There was a great turn out with approximately 120 people attending from Toodyay, thus indicating there is a genuine interest and concern for these beautiful birds that share our lives and gardens for much of the year. I would like to say a very big thank you to the different JCAFA clubs who supported the event, Birdlife Australia, the Avon Valley branch, Toodyay Friends of the River, Toodyay Historical Society and Toodyay Naturalists Club, without their backing and support the evening would never have been such a success.

We still have lots of amazing things planned for the rest of 2023 and I'm looking forward to them all.

A reminder to everybody that this newsletter relies on articles from our members so all contributions are welcomed.

Cover Photo: Black Cockatoo Crisis Documentary, Memorial Hall, Toodyay 2023-04-25

Photo: Dr. Liz Kington

Return of the Moyitj

by Desraé Clarke

CURRENTLY there is considerable research into finding a small creature that inhabits river and swamp areas with the Noongar name of the Moyitj and the scientific name of *Hydromys chrysogaster*. It has a body length of 29 to 31cm and a tail practically the length of the body and is found across Australia. In the eastern states it has the Aboriginal name of Rakali.

The Moyitj upper-body colouring may be slate grey, black to brown with a white to orange underbelly. It has a broad face, small ears and its thick tail is well-covered with dark fur and has a noticeable white tip; the tail is not as long as its body length. A second identifying factor is that of the hind feet being partially webbed. Together with the stream-lined body and webbed feet it has a similarity to the otter. Individual animals are territorial and males will fight to maintain ownership often resulting in a damaged tail.

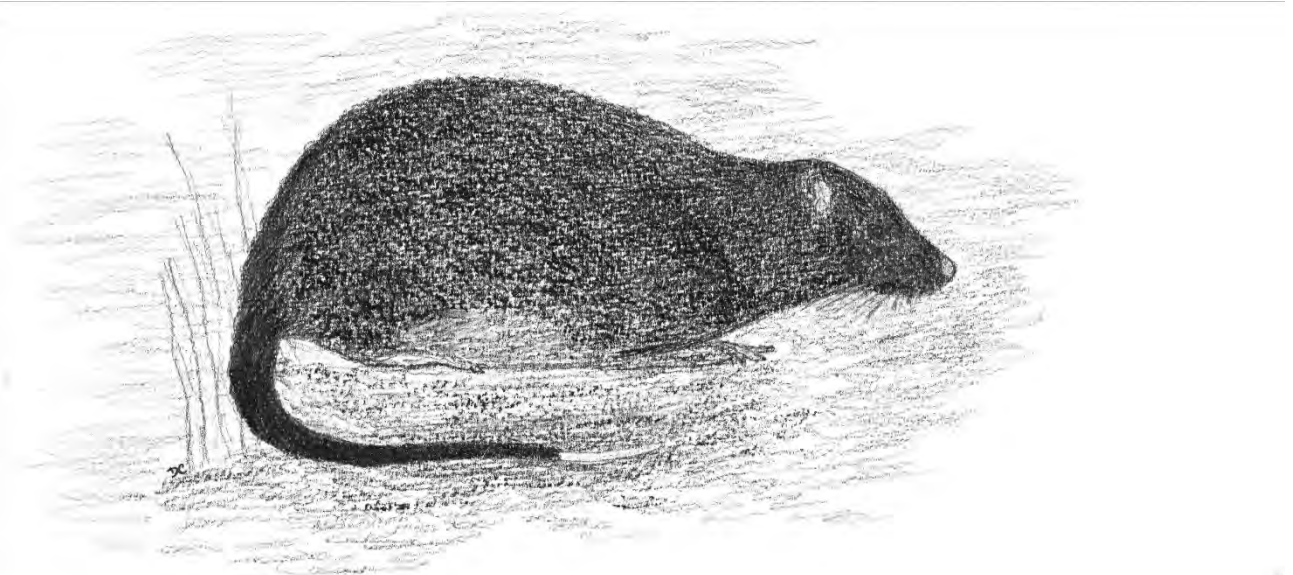
Unfortunately, the Moyitj has been mistakenly called a Water Rat and thought to be the introduced feral animal. However, the introduced Black Rat has a slender head, large ears and a long, furless tail. Although it is known as the Black Rat, amongst other common names of Fruit, Tree, Roof and Alexandrine Rat, it is a misnomer as the species is rarely of black colouring.

The Moyitj can breed throughout the year with rainfall influencing favourable conditions. A nest is made at the end of a tunnel into a river bank and occasionally in logs. Gestation is approximately 34 days resulting in a litter of three to four young. The off-spring are suckled for about four weeks and the young will stay with the female for a further four weeks gradually gaining independence.

This species prefers fresh or brackish water in which its prey of fish, large aquatic insects, crustaceans and mussels are found. It will also take frogs, lizards, small mammals and water birds. It is active along river areas at dusk and dawn and its catch is often taken to a feeding platform leaving behind small piles of shells called middens. It is the midden that may indicate signs of a resident Moyitj.

Predation of the Moyitj can be from snakes, feral cats, large birds and fish traps. In days gone by and the tough times of the Depression, the Moyitj was exploited for its waterproof dense, soft and lustrous pelt.

To report illegal (closed) fish traps contact FISHWATCH on 1800 815 507. If you see a Moyitj, please email the location and date of sighting to Parks and Wildlife on fauna@dpaw.wa.gov.au



Above: *The elusive Moyitj*

by Desraé Clarke

JCAFA Display, Black Cockatoo Crisis



Above: JCAFA supporter, Elaine Hall, developed this display of native animals known to live in the Julimar Forest area. Especially noted is the very busy night scene of activity.

Photo: Sharon Richards



Left: The 'Welcome to Country' was given by our proud artist friend Rod Garlett, a Noongar man with Yued, Ballardong and Wadjuk heritage.

Photo: Dr. Liz Kington



Above: Carnival cut-out

By Greg Warburton

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance

Update by Sharon Richards

IT'S been a busy first third of 2023 for the JCAFA group.

We now have over 1000 signatures on our petition which is fabulous in just 6 months with it being paper based, we plan to go online in the next couple of months.

Hugh Finns' presentation to the group gave some invaluable perspectives in what lies ahead and he shared some very useful resources/links which will help us as we proceed on our journey. His insight into the work of the EPA was both a little shocking and very helpful, understanding now that the EPA mandate is not about environmental protection clarifies why decisions are made which may at times be baffling.

The JCAFA group (and families) have been working very hard pulling together the presentation of the Black Cockatoo Crisis in Toodyay on 22 April. The Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management agreed to sponsor the event which really helped. Max and Elaine provided a wonderful Wildlife of Julimar display, Lynn and Nikkola developed the great promotional posters and with assistance from Beth and Liz, had them placed from York to Chittering, what a great effort!

To help promote the event, Don and Eva accompanied the best possible ambassador for a lunchtime visit to the Memorial Hall, Bob the Red tailed black cockatoo greeted a number of interested individuals who might be persuaded to help protect his home in Julimar. Paddy Cullen of Save the Black Cockatoo group and Jane Hammond the documentary maker, arrived late afternoon and we had a short photoshoot near the river.

Toodyay Locals Care put on a great spread which was much appreciated by all who partook. Jane Hammond said she loved the variety and never ceased to be amazed by how wonderful the regional hospitality was.

We were incredibly fortunate to have Traditional Land Custodian and Yued Elder, Rod Garlett attending and agreeing to provide a beautiful Welcome to Country.

As expected, the documentary itself was confronting and at times upsetting but offered hope that we can all play a part in improving the lot of the Black Cockatoos, many in the audience were asking questions about what they could do on their properties which is very encouraging. Having Paddy Cullen and Jane Hammond as such passionate ambassadors for the Black Cockatoos and raising the profile of Julimar Forest can only strengthen our cause.

We've been building relationships with a number of groups including the West Australian Forest Alliance, Hike West, Save the Black Cockatoos and WA Naturalists Club.

12 April - Presentation to WA Nats in Nedlands

22 April - Save the Black Cockatoos group attended the Toodyay presentation of the documentary Black Cockatoo Crisis

29 April - Attending the Hike West event and sharing a stall with Wafa

Bridget has been working hard developing the proposal document which will eventually accompany the petition when it is presented and will be calling on others to provide data as required.

... cont. Page 6

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance Update

... cont

Please send in any pictures which might be used in the document - a good picture is worth a thousand words.

We are hoping to liaise with the Wilderness Society in the continuing development of the document and need to have something to present with the petition in November/December.

We've had a lot of interest in Julimar from fungi enthusiasts and many have now joined the JCAFA FB page which now has 145 members.

The first set of motion wildlife cameras supplied by Wheatbelt NRM has been placed in Flat Rocks Gully Nature Reserve. Thank you Jacquie for running with this so far and arranging for Phil Lewis to provide expertise to the group. Another four cameras will be placed in other parts of Julimar over the next months with the help of Mark Hamilton. All data collected will be utilised to inform our proposal as well as be shared with both Wheatbelt NRM and DRBC.

What's happening in the next few months? We need to continue developing the proposal and keep sharing our message, influencing the community and getting the petition signed.

The plan includes:

- Being present at the Moondyne Festival - May

- Presentation to Darling Range Naturalists Group (Kalamunda) – May

- Being present at the Fibre Festival – June

- Letters to federal MPs are already being drafted to be sent in May

- Meetings with local MPs

- Articles for the Toodyay Herald, monthly

- Further data collection – fungi expedition date to be confirmed

- A night time expedition to record nocturnal creatures/owls etc

- More research around the waterways of Julimar

We are continually looking for people who would be interested to be involved, please get in touch if that's you.

Orchard Swallowtail Butterfly by Beth Frayne



Left: Orchard Swallowtail Butterfly (male) (*Papilio aegeus*). It is sitting on a red Eremophila (*Eremophila decipiens* or Slender Fuchsia).

See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papilio_aegeus

Mainly eastern Australia but does range to southern Western Australia.

Photo: Beth Frayne

The Brush-tail Possum

by Desraé Clarke

TOODYAY is fortunate to have this beautiful nocturnal creature found within our Shire. It is from 35cm to 55cm in length; the female's smaller than the male.

The Brushtail Possum has an extensive Australian range including a pocket of animals in the interior of the country. It has a variety of colorations with those found in our lower south west of the state light grey with a whitish under-belly and a black tail. Those living in the eastern states in the York Peninsular area and down the eastern coast and South Australia have a short brown fur while those in Tasmania have a dark-colored to black woolly coat.

However, the photographed animal from Coondle area has a cream-colored tail. while on a survey a reserve within our Shire Nat's members were able to photograph an animal with a golden-colored tail and ears.

The female Brushtail breeds mainly in autumn with a single birth. The pouched young attaches itself to one of the two teats to stay in situ for 4 to 5 months. It will spend the following one to two months riding on its mum's back and suckling till it is weaned.

The diet of the Brushtail Possum consists of fruit, flowers, buds and bark and a very limited intake diet of Eucalypt leaves; the liver of the animal can detoxify the eucalypt toxins to a certain extent only.

The life of the Brushtail Possum is also fraught with danger. Road-kills, predation by cats, foxes, monitors and Carpet Pythons take the animals but also snail pellets from gardens render a dreadful death to this species.

Unfortunately, the Australian Possum was introduced to New Zealand by the Acclimatization Society in the 1840's and has become a significant pest in the country.



Photo: Colin and Pat Randall

Members Gallery



Above: *Western Netted Dragon Lizard (Ctenophorus reticulatus)*
Below: *Striated Pardalote*

Photos: Lyn Johnson



Members Gallery cont.



Above: An echidna hiding in the rocks at Dowerin

Photo: Lyn Phillips

*Below: Western Australian Ghost moth, or Swift moth on my back screen door. Photo: Sharon Richards
[See Page 10]*



Members Gallery cont.



This little chap may have flown into our sliding glass door this afternoon. He just sat there with his tail splayed, I think to help his balance as I suspect it had injured its left leg and claw which was folded over. It looks very young and maybe a white-breasted whistler. Its chest is much whiter than in the photo that makes it look pink. It stayed perfectly still when I came up close to examine its leg. He was still there when I came back with a shoe box to take it to the vets but flew away into the shrubbery when I tried to pick it up. It has quite a strong beak.

Photo and story: Robyn Taylor

[Editor: A Rufous Whistler fledgling]

Did you know..

... that there are 10,000 described species and upward of 10,000 undescribed species of moths in Australia? Pictured at the bottom of Page 9 is the Western Australian Ghost moth, or Swift moth, an *Abantiades* species, most likely the Western Rain Moth (*Abantiades hydrographus* - from the *Hepialidae* Family of the *Lepidopteran* Order) [unfortunately the specimen has lost a bit of pattern on the wing hence the uncertainty].

The caterpillars live in underground tunnels and feed on the root system of various native plants. The adults live for less than a week, just long enough to mate and lay eggs for the next generation.

See <http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/hepi/hydrographus.html>

Identification by
Mr Andras (Andy) Szito | Taxonomist/Curator
DPIRD Diagnostic and Laboratory Services
Sustainability and Biosecurity
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Parkrun and Reserve Walking

by Greg Warburton

FROM a shaky start last year Toodyay Parkrun is now a resounding success with scores of people coming from far and wide to participate every Saturday morning.

Part of the course includes a track along the riverbank which was developed by the Shire in consultation with TFOR. It is wonderful to see a cavalcade of serious runners, dog walkers, pram pushers. etc., enjoying camaraderie and the river environment while improving their wellbeing. Even the Project Officer has been spotted puffing his way along the 5-kilometre course.

A spin off from Parkrun is “Toodyay Take a Hike” which consists of a group of 10 to 20 people who every month walk and explore one of the many wonderful reserves in the Shire including, of course, the river.



Move from seeing to beholding

Photo: Greg Warburton

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

Environmental Offsets

ENVIRONMENTAL offsets are meant to be designed to counterbalance the significant residual impacts of a development (e.g. mining) or activity (e.g. road widening) on or over valuable species and ecosystems.

Where there are unavoidable impacts on the environment at a particular site an offset is made by acquiring land at another site and then managing that land in the long-term.

The WA Government released their Environmental Offsets Policy in 2011 and Guidelines in 2014 (and reviewed in 2019).

The six Principles of Environmental Offsets are that they:

- 1 - will only be considered after avoidance and mitigation options have been pursued:
- 2 - are not appropriate for all projects and in all circumstances:
- 3 - will be cost-effective, as well as relevant and proportionate to the significance of the environmental value being impacted:
- 4 - will be based on sound environmental information and knowledge:
- 5 - will be applied within a framework of adaptive management: and
- 6 - will be focused on longer term strategic outcomes

The TNC are of the opinion that it should be mandated that for any offset on projects that are within the Shire, the offset should also be within the Shire; and that the offset should be, at a minimum, significantly greater than the area of that which it is proposed to offset.

The offset should demonstrate a 'net environmental benefit' rather than a 'no net loss' approach.

Read the WA Government Environmental Offsets Policy on the link below:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/service/environment/environmental-impact-assessment/environmental-offsets>

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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