



Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc.

THE TNC NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Sharon Richards

AT the end of another very busy year it's always good to look back and think about what we have achieved as a club.

End of winter into spring saw some lovely weather and the opportunity for some walks amongst the wildflowers. Even though we had to cancel a visit to see trapdoor spiders in Minivale we had an opportunity for a very pleasant day in Wongan Hills on the Wildflower Walk in September. There was also a very successful fund raising weekend outside IGA. Thanks to the members who gave of their time to make this happen, the club relies on our fundraising to be able to pay the basics like insurance and website costs, without which the Club could not function.

Lots of work by a number of the club members In October meant we had a very successful day at the Toodyay Show. Our marquee shared with TFOR was jam-packed full of displays, photographs and wildflowers and proved very popular with young and old alike. The opportunity for children to write a message about why trees are so important was very well received and really gave an insight to what the younger population are thinking about climate change.

A quiet end of year celebration on a very warm November day was a relaxed and enjoyable way to finish our year. Thankyou to everybody who came along to share lunch and have a chat.

Our final planning meeting in December has a long list of great ideas as the beginning of an exciting and interesting schedule for 2024. It also saw the members who were present support the idea to become a member of the End Forest Mining Expansion Alliance, which will help the campaign to have Julimar Forest classified as a National Park. This is a huge step and sees us linking with some large, well-known and influential environmentally focused groups.

I believe that 2024 will continue to be exceptionally busy and increasingly interesting. We are always looking for people to join the committee and would welcome members stepping forward to start taking on key roles to support and ensure the longevity of what is a very successful Toodyay Naturalist Club. Have a safe and very happy Christmas and I look forward to seeing you all in 2024.

Cover: Twin female Magpie-larks or Mudlarks.

Photo: Lyn Phillips

169th Toodyay Agricultural Show 2023



Above: Part of the wonderful Julimar display put together by Elaine Hall and Max Howard. Photo: Desraé Clarke



Above : Scene from inside the marquee. Photo: Lyn Phillips

Below: Sharon (right) and Elaine discuss the Julimar National Park campaign with a member of the public.

Photo: Wayne Clarke



How it was



Above: Ground water seepage at the Laurie Chitty Project on Toodyay Road, 26th March 1991

Photos: Wayne Clarke

Below: Toodyay District High School students planting trees at the Project, 7th June 1991.

What will result from removal of substantial clearing of vegetation for major road works?



From the Archives...



Above: Club Annual Excursion on 16 September 1971 to the Chittering Valley, with lunch in Julimar Forest. Photo from TNC Archives

Below: Marri (Corymbia calophylla) flowering in the Julimar Forest, in 1978. Photo taken by the late Sam Cook, TNC Honorary Life Member. Sam was a bee-keeper and relied on the marri for honey. Sam's photo shows how prolific it can flower.



Overview of 'Birds of the Avon River Basin'

by Desraé Clarke

THE Wheatbelt 2018 publication, 'Birds of the Avon River Basin', was written and designed by the Northam office of Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management (Wheatbelt NRM). The 'not-for-profit' organisation is one of nine natural resource management groups within Western Australia and has the responsibility of 12,000,000ha of the Avon River Basin.

The 228 page publication covers birds of prey, land and water birds and includes the Noongar names of birds.

'Birds of the Avon River Basin' commences with a map of the vast area. Included in the map are the waterways, both fresh and saline, that demonstrate the reason for such a diversity of both water and land birds.



Birds of the Avon River Basin



As an introduction to the book there is a general description of the history of clearing of the land for agricultural advancement of the basin commencing 1830's/1840's to accelerate in the 1890's. The historical aspect is followed by that of geology, land forms, soils, vegetation and habitat types.

The final area of this introduction are the threats that the birds of the Avon River Basin have faced in the past, and are facing, in the future.

The book with its excellent photography has been developed for the person who has a love of birds. The features of the birds, and the described call of each species, are captured and assist in identification.

The back pages hold a checklist of birds observed. It has an area on which to enlarge information on a sighting such as the number of birds, whether photographed, weather, activity, etc. An extensive bibliography is included and further reading on 'Noongar Knowledge in the South West' together with websites of interest.

The Wheatbelt NRM staff are to be congratulated on the production of an excellent publication. It is available from the Northam office: 269 Fitzgerald Street, Northam Western Australia 6401, email: info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au or by telephoning 08 9670 3100. The cost is \$40 plus pp ISBN 978-0-6483306-5-3.



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The Reticulated Velvet Gecko

by Wayne Clarke

LIVING in the bush for over thirty years we have come across a variety of other creatures living in harmony with or about us. One such animal is the Reticulated Velvet Gecko (*Hesperoedura reticulata*).

Reticulated Velvet Geckos are up to 6.5cm Snout-Vent Length (SVL), with a total length of 13cm. It is greyish-brown in colour with a dark stripe extending from its nostril through its eye then along its body to its tail. The reticulated pattern relates to the net or net-like markings on its body. It is normally found on smooth-barked trees such as wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) or powder bark wandoo (*E. accedens*) but quite often takes advantage of human habitation. A number hide behind photos and paintings hanging on the walls in our house and will often accompany us while we are watching television in the evening clinging to and walking easily across our walls. They are also found on the outside of windows at night where the insects that come to the light provide a ready meal.

Toodyay Naturalists' Club Patron John Dell PSM was researching a population at Konnongorring, near Wongan Hills, for over twenty years until decimated by a wildfire. It was noted some individuals live up to nineteen years.

[WA Museum records note it was first named as *Oedura reticulata* in 1969 by H. Robert Bustard from a specimen collected near Wagin, and described in *The Western Australian Naturalist Volume 11 Pages 82-85*. The genus has since undergone a couple of name changes with it being revised in 2012 to *Hesperoedura reticulata* by Paul Oliver et.al.

Oedura is a genus of medium to large geckos - referred to as velvet geckos - and are endemic to Australia. The origin (or etymology) of the genus *Hesperoedura* relates to its restricted distribution in the south-west Australian Biodiversity Hotspot [Greek *hesperos* (western) *oed* (swollen) and *dura* (tail)]; the species name *reticulata* relates to the reticulate pattern of the species.]

What interesting animals do you have about your house? If you are you willing to share a story please contact the Editor.

Footnotes:

See 'a guide to exploring Toodyay... naturally by the Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc., 2018 - Page 111

See 'The Reptile Database <https://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Hesperoedura&species=reticulata>'



Above: Two reticulated Velvet Geckos - male on the left female on the right. The male can be distinguished by the noticeable gonad glands on the body just above the rear legs

Photo: Wayne Clarke

Wongan Hills Excursion & Meeting

by Sharon Richards

ON a beautiful spring day 16 of the Toodyay Nats Club (including 3 guests) made a journey out to Wongan Hills and took a leisurely stroll around the Wongan Wildflower Walk, located just outside of the townsite.

Initially greeted by a pair of grey butcherbirds, our guides, Judd Davis, Rowan du Boulay and Lynn Phillips led us around the walk where we saw a multitude of flowers including a number of different orchids, leptospermums, hakea and some beautiful fringed lilies bush tomatoes, hibbertias, and various members of the Proteaceae family. We were lucky to see a number of native bees gathering nectar from a grevillea.

After the walk we met up in town and enjoyed the hospitality of the *Cafe of Note* for lunch and a short meeting. To close the meeting Judd gave us an update of the Indigenous Ranger program he is working in with Wheatbelt NRM and a project engaging with schools teaching children about the importance of the environment and uses of native plants.



Above: Fringed Lily (Thysanotus sp.) at Wongan Hills

Photo: Sharon Richards

Wongan Hills Excursion & Meeting (cont)



Above: Sholtzia drummondii with moth

Photo: Lyn Phillips

Members Gallery



Above: JCAFA banner at Parliament House rally.

Photo: Bridgett Leggett



Left: A Solanum from Wongan Hills

Photo: Eva Smith

The solanum are from the Solonaceae Family of herbs, shrubs or small trees, rarely (not in Australia)) woody vines. Leaves alternate, sometimes almost opposite.

It is a family of about 90 genera and over 2,600 species. Represented in Australia by 23 genera and about 200 species.

The family contains important food plants such as potato, eggplant, tomato, chilli peppers and capsicums and Cape Gooseberry..

Some species have a high alkaloid content and are poisonous, or are drug plants used medicinally or as narcotics e.g. tobacco.

Deadly Nightshade, thornapple and Black Henbane come from this family, as does the weed 'Blackberry Nightshade' (found locally).

Source: Flora of Australia Volume 29, Solanaceae; Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1982

ISBN 0 642 070154 8 (Case Bound)

Members Gallery



Top left: Possum suckling a young domestic cat

Top right: Asleep on her foster-mother
Left: Going on an outing

Photos: Wayne Clarke

At Dandaragan, November 1993

Did you know...

... that a motherly-instinct often goes beyond the bounds of an animal species?

In the images above a young female farm cat took on the role of foster mother to a baby Brush-tailed Possum after its mother had been accidentally killed. The mother cat had recently begun raising her first set of kittens when this tiny possum was added to the litter. She immediately began mothering it, even defending it against her own boisterous kittens.

Her milk needed to be supplemented with a specially prepared mixture administered through a bottle and teat. The possum was doing very well until a scratch from a kitten became fly-blown, unbeknown to its human carers, and it succumbed.

Perhaps Rudyard Kipling's 'Mowgli' could have been a real-life venture after all!

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



Left: Focus on Ferals:

A project of the TNC for the forthcoming year is a 'Focus on Feral animals'.

What a selection of food awaited this Red Fox - now all it had to do was to work out a 'plan of attack'.

Pictured are: Yellow-billed Spoonbills, White-faced Herons and Grey Teal that can be easily seen, with other species hidden from view.

In the background is Duidgee Park.

That could be a huge loss of native wildlife.

Photo: Courtesy Bethan Lloyd

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