



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 Greg Warburton

IT is a pleasure to provide a wrap up of recent Club activities for the last newsletter for 2024. Thank you to our indefatigable Secretary for reminding me of all the events and achievements that have occurred over the past two or three months.

Members came from far and wide with myself and Vicki on our way home from Esperance, Honorary Life Member, Pam, and Kathryn travelling from Perth, to gather at the historic site of Minnivale near Dowerin. Here, the search for trap door spiders was made successful by the able leadership of our Patron, Rob, who had previously surveyed the sites. Keen searching located a number of burrows including one where the surprised occupant was recorded on video with the aid of miniature camera probe. We held a meeting in the old tennis club shed after which there was a wildflower walk.

Toodyay's ever popular Agricultural Show drew a crowd of over 5,000 people on a day of perfect weather. The Environment Matters marquee was a real hub for our like-minded groups with the Nat's Club, Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation, (NKAC), Save and Scenic Toodyay Roads Alliance, (SASTRA), Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance, (JCAFA) and Toodyay Friends of the River, (TFOR) all having displays. The 'message tree' was a great drawcard for children and collected many heartfelt thoughts about their love of nature and the need to protect it. Thank you to Lynn and Wendy and those that made themselves available to help on the day.

Appreciation, also, for the outstanding result achieved by our fundraiser crew and to the generous community member who donated an exquisitely embroidered child's quilt to the Club. It will be raffled at a future date!

I was very pleased to be present at the WA Landcare Network (WALN) gathering at the Cockburn Wetlands Centre in November. It was a very full and informative day which culminated with a special evening award event. Two of our members were inducted into the WALN Hall of Fame! Congratulations to Wayne Clarke and Rob Boase for being awarded this prestigious and well deserved recognition.

The last formal Nat's meeting of the year saw various members give illustrated natural history presentations of their recent travels. These nights are always great value with the impressive photographic skills and knowledge of our members truly inspiring. On the same night Toodyay Historical Society (THS) President, Beth Frayne, acknowledged the 50th year since the publication of '*Old Toodyay and Newcastle*' by Dr Rica Erickson. As we know Rica was a prodigious author, researcher, botanical artist and naturalist. A celebration display can be viewed at the Toodyay Old Gaol Museum.

Cover Photo: Jewell Beetle (*Castiarina species*) at Minnivale on *Calytrix leschenaultia*

Photo: Jennifer Donegan

President's Report (cont.)

Continuing the milestone celebrations, TFOR has invited Nat's members to join them on Saturday 7th December to celebrate its 30 years - 1994-2024. This is combined with the 'Thank-a-Volunteer' event.

Our secretary has been busy writing letters of support for NKAC funding applications appertaining to exciting proposed art and signage projects at Pelham Reserve.

Sadly, we bid farewell to well-known members Robyn and Brian Foley of Marsupial Mammals and Pappas. They have dedicated their many years in Toodyay to the rescue and rehabilitation of native wildlife. Brian is a former President of the TNC and members will recall our 50th anniversary event was held at their Dewar's Pool bush property. We thank them and wish them well for their caravanning travels before they settle into retirement in Mandurah. Marsupial Mammals and Pappas is well established in Toodyay and will continue to provide voluntary wildlife rescue and care services.

Many would be aware the Western Australian Naturalists' Club celebrates its centennial this year. There have been a number of events and reunions as a part of the 100 year commemoration program. As a junior and inaugural member of the Intermediate Sections of the Club I was invited to a reunion event at the Herdsman Lake Environment Centre last month. It was wonderful to see familiar, although much older, faces and to hear recollections and see photos and film from 50 years ago. What really struck me was how much people treasured their experiences and memories of the activities and excursions back then. Many went on to pursue careers and life time interests in nature and conservation. It highlighted the value and importance of Naturalists' Clubs.

Wishing all members a safe and happy Christmas and another good Nat's year in 2025!

Greg.



Minnivale Excursion Report

by Pamela Masters

TWENTY members gathered at the tennis courts at Minnivale siding east of Dowerin on a sunny but brisk morning. After a welcome cuppa and lovely cakes supplied by Beth Boase and Desrae Clarke we were welcomed by President Greg and handed to our very able guide and Nat's life member, Robert Boase.

After carpooling we headed to a spot to look for the Tree Stemmed Trap Door Spider *Idiosomia* (formerly *Aganippe*) *castellum*. Rob of course had one he had prepared earlier! He told us the spider was endangered like many wheatbelt species due to habitat loss, fire, drying climate, stocking, salinity and changes in the soil hydrology. The spider needs a humid environment in a burrow that may be up to 30cm deep. They can live up to forty odd years and do not stray far from their burrow. The burrow is lined with a silk membrane with a very camouflaged lid with moustache like sticks or allocasuarina leaves radiating from the sides. It is built a few centimetres up the trunk of small trees and uses the bark and leaves of the type of tree to which it is attached.

The ones we saw were mainly on allocasuarina species in heavy clay soil subject to brief inundation when it rains. The bigger the door on the burrow and the longer moustaches the larger and older the spider is inside.

Armed with the sight of the burrow Rob had found as the example the group set off to find more. And indeed they did! In total at this site seven active burrows were found and two with no lids indicating they may not be viable. In addition three of a ground burrowing variety called Shield Back Trap Door Spiders (*Idiosoma nigrum*) were found.

Also the birders in the group recorded twenty-one species including some of the seasonal migrants such as the Rufous Songlark and Pied Honeyeater. The latter was quite south and west in its range. They and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were enjoying the beautiful *Grevillea excelsior* in flower.

Lunch and the monthly meeting was held back at the tennis courts with more cakes contributed !! Many thanks to the bakers.

This was followed by a walk in the adjacent shrub land which included many flowering shrubs including yellow verticordias, purple calytrix, grevilleas, trigger plants and everlastings. Rob explained how you can grow allocasuarina from cuttings from what we would term a leaf but is actually a stem! A very interesting walk by a very knowledgeable man.

[*Editor:* Pamela had to leave us at this point to travel back to Perth.]

After Pam left members continued to search for spiders before gathering at the tennis courts to have afternoon tea. They then headed back to their respective homes in Toodyay and Dowerin.]

See Pages 5&10 for photos of this fascinating excursion

Minnivale Excursion Report



Above: Tree stem strapdoor spider with Sheoak needles

Photos: Jennifer Donegan

Below: Shield back trapdoor spider



WA Landcare Network - Annual Gathering by Desraé Clarke

On Friday November 1st the WA Landcare Network Annual Gathering was held at the Cockburn Wetlands Centre. Toodyay was well represented with Rob and Beth, Greg and Vicki, Wayne and me. Wayne and I wore our Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance (JCAFA) tops resulting in lots of interest and conversation. The tops introduced us to two ladies from the Mandurah Environment and Heritage Group; their group had been lobbying for Julimar. With the challenging political landscape this gathering will result in what it is all about - networking!

The day began with Chair, Dr Louise Duxbury, (National Landcare Facilitator) posing as Mick Davis (Chair WA Landcare Network) welcoming the participants; Mick was still to arrive as his plane was late!

The Welcome to Country was given by Auntie Marie Taylor.

With so much wonderful work to be shared a brief of the program is as follows.

Keynote - Speaking from the Eastern States Dr Gretchen Miller, 'Award Winning Journalist and Science and Environment Communicator', emphasised the importance of 'Homeground - The critical role of storytelling about places that matter'.

Dean Arthurall, Carnaby Crusaders, who is known by TNC members, spoke passionately of his bid to protect and save the Black Cockatoos from extinction. Much work has been done on the research of artificial nests for the large birds and he travels widely with his educating and the potential homes. Dean brought four beautiful birds with him - a great drawcard to the visitors.

Dr Nic Dunlop of the WA Seabird Conservation Network presented the 'Seabird Recovery on Rat Island, Abrolhos Islands' following the successful removal of rats and cats from the island.

'Tides of Change - Collaborative Marine Debris Removal of Abrolhos Islands' presented by Casey Woodward, Tangaroa Blue Foundation, was mind-blowing! Photos were shown of the tonnes of man-made debris of fishing gear in the sea and washed up on beaches resulting in the harm and trapping of sea creatures.

Rachell Allen, Leschenault Catchment Council, spoke on the incredible 'Community Engagement in Quenda Habitat Restoration'.

Bruce Ivors, of Trees Australia, gave wonderful examples of working and teaching children the love and importance of our trees with his presentation, 'Stories from our Future Environmental Stewards'. Two groups of children from different schools, four senior and two young people, gave excellent presentations on their topics. One could feel the enthusiasm given by Bruce to these young carers of the future.

Pat Hart, Armadale Gosnells Landcare Group, spoke of the amazing 'Landcare Partnership with Local Government'. Her words were encouraging with the neighbouring local governments working together for the health of our environment.

Roz Hart has a great passion for our fungi with the title of her presentation, 'Australian Fungi in Land Restoration'. Roz gives presentations to groups, schools, etc, and would like to visit Toodyay to give a talk on her favourite topic.

The day ended with Dr Louise Duxbury and Keith Bradby OAM inducting land carers into the WA Landcare Hall of Fame at a Celebratory Sundowner.

BUT WAIT!!

A wonderful surprise was in store to have Keith's induction following his work as 'inductor!!!'

2024 Landcare Hall of Fame inductees:

Les Schultz, Barbara Morrell, Dr Denis Saunders AM, Mike Norman, Rosanna Hindmarsh, Rob Boase, Mary Gray OAM, Bronte Rundle, Harry Whittington (Post-humous), Claudia Hadlow, Wayne Clarke and Keith Bradby OAM.

WA Landcare Network - Annual Gathering



Above: WALN Members at the Gathering

Below: The Wheatbelt contingent (left to right) Beth and Rob Boase, Wayne and Desraé Clarke and Renata Paliskis, CEO of Wheatbelt NRM

Photos: Aimee Ray, Wheatbelt NRM



Members Gallery



Above: Gould's monitor (Varanus gouldii)

Below: Dugite (Pseudonaja affinis)

Photos: David Maifredi, Morangup



Members Gallery



Above: An *Amegilla* bee (Hymenoptera: Apidae), covered with pollen. *Amegilla* are generally medium-sized to very large bees, about 10-12mm of robust form. The body and legs are hairy, and the tongue and proboscis are long. All *Amegilla* species burrow to make nests and they are commonly referred to as 'digger bees'. Several species have blue metallic bands on the abdomen and are referred to as 'blue-banded bees'. Bands may differ with the sex, with males having more bands than females.

Data on the Amegilla bee (above), the Jewell Beetle (Castiarina sp.) on cover and the Rutalia sp. on pp. 11 was supplied by Mr Andras (Andy) Szito | Senior Scientist, Taxonomist/Curator, Dept Primary Industries & Rural Development (DPIRD).



Left: Cila the Carnaby, panting on a hot day (30 deg C.).

Her partner Rod was searching for food, leaving her on guard.

Photo: Lyn Phillips

Members Gallery



An endoscope photo of possibly a female armoured trapdoor spider (*Gaius villosus*). What appears to be eyes are more likely mouth parts because two fangs can be seen raised threateningly to the right.

These species of trapdoor spiders are found in Western Australia in a variety of different habitats. It is the only species in the genus.

Photo: Rob Boase on our Minnivale Excursion

DID YOU KNOW...

... that John Landy AC CVO MBE FTSE, the Australian middle-distance runner and former state governor of Victoria, was the second man to break the four-minute mile barrier in the mile run, held the world records for the 1,500-metre run and the mile race, and was also the Governor of Victoria from 2001-2006.

He was also a wonderful **Naturalist**, observer and insect collector. His butterfly collection, an exhaustive collection over a period of 75 years of study and collection, was donated to the Australian Museum in 2018 (see link below).

John was from a farming family and also had a career as an **Agricultural researcher and Scientist**. He had a great concern about introduced weeds, and was a Patron of the Invasive Species Council. He was also a foundation member of the Land Conservation Council in Victoria, Chairman of the Meat Research Corporation, and Chairman of the Wool Research and Development Corporation.

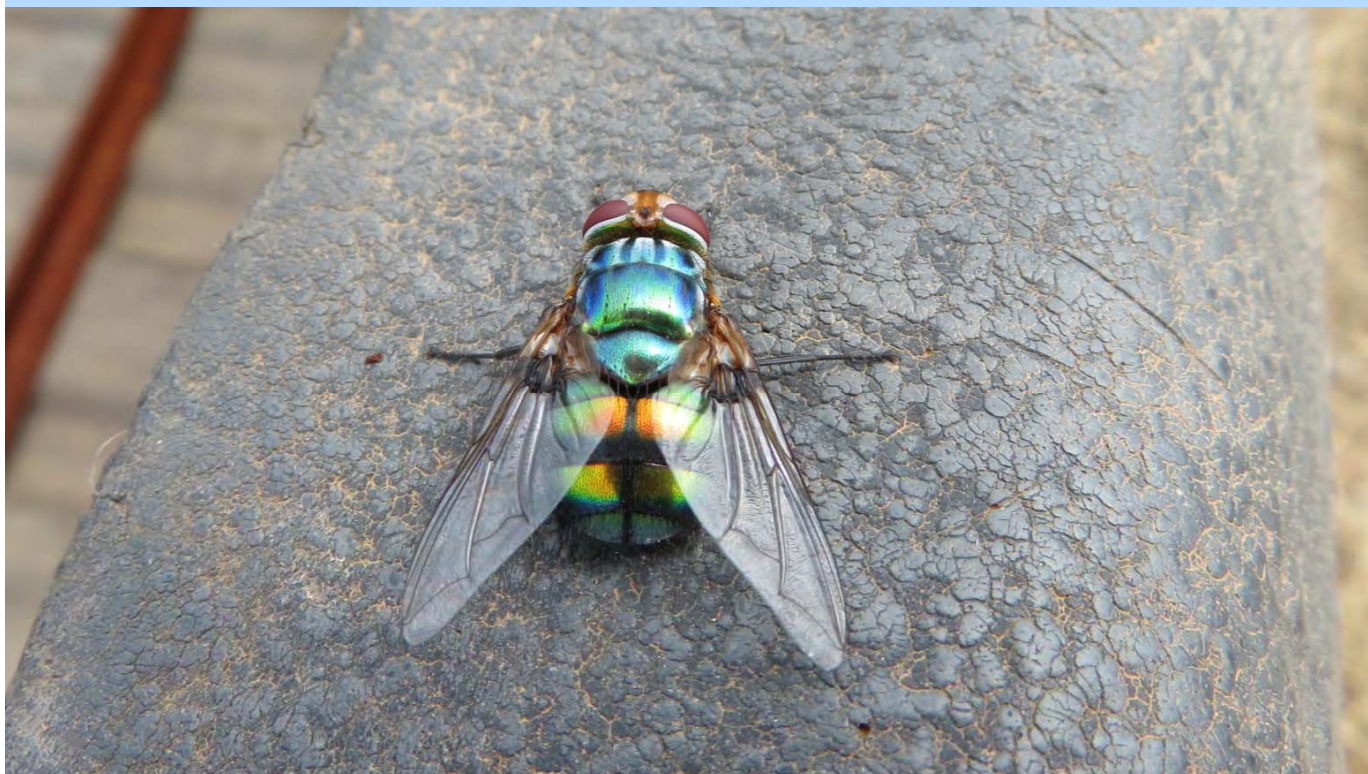
Check out his butterfly collection at the Australian Museum on the link below.

<https://australian.museum/learn/collections/natural-science/entomology/john-landy/landy-memories/>

(you may need to paste this link into your browser)

He was also the author of two excellent books on natural history - 'Close to Nature' and 'A Coastal Diary'

Members Gallery



Above: A *Rutilia* species *Diptera: Tachinidae* (for species level identification a specimen is required). Tachinid flies are almost without exception parasites or parasitoids of other insects primarily caterpillars but quite a few of beetles, bugs or even centipedes.

Photo: Lyn Phillips



Above: Julimar Conservation And Forest Alliance display at the Toodyay Show.

Photo: Max & Elaine Howard

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



Above: A scene of devastation in the riparian zone of the Avon River from a bush fire, started by a brush-cutter in a Western Power substation, on Toodyay West Road . Luckily no homes were impacted or injuries reported.
Photo: Jennifer Donegan

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