



*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

Greg Warburton

The time since our last newsletter has passed quickly and as to be expected it has been another period of happenings and high activity for the Club. Looking at the program for the last four months our “super secretary” Desrae has had her time cut out doing some nimble foot work. Due to unforeseen circumstances there were many last-minute changes and date adjustments required. All worked out well though with members stepping up to fill the gaps. We were treated to presentations on subjects from garden insects, animal tracking, an African wildlife safari and 50-year-old movie footage of WA Naturalists Club conservation work. Our excursion to Bolgart and Wattening Nature Reserve in June went to plan, despite the wet and windy conditions. Vicki and myself were interstate for the July AGM and by all accounts the election of officer bearers went smoothly. Wayne phoned to inform me, that I'd been duly elected as co-patron which was a total surprise. Thank you to members for their vote of confidence in me and what an honour it is to be in such esteemed company. I look forward to representing the club in this capacity.

There was sad news when we learned of the passing of Doug Blandford in July. He had been an expert contributor and ally to our various conservation campaigns in Toodyay over the years. There is an obituary to Doug elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Club was contacted by a representative of the WA branch of “Kiwanis” informing us that they had nominated us for a \$250 donation. Kiwanis is an international charity organisation that contribute funds to worldwide child literacy, health and environmental programs. They requested a brief history of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club. For interest it appears in this newsletter as a reminder of the Club's rich history of activity and achievements.

Many would be aware of the recently published survey by the WA Feral Cat Working Group. It makes for informative reading and hopefully it is a positive step towards effective cat control in our state. Sadly, there has been little or no enforcement of the 2011 Cat Act. I'm constantly dismayed at the number of domestic cats I see wandering freely around the place.

I had the pleasure of joining Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation (NKAC) for a cultural walking tour on Saturday the 16th of August. The event was part of National Science Week hosted by the Community Resource Centre. A bus took participants from Duidgee Park to Lloyd Reserve where a welcome and introduction and was conducted by Robert and Charmaine Miles at Red Banks Pool. This was followed by a smoking ceremony at our bird hide with Patrick on fire duties. We then walked the Bilya Track talking about the various plants, animals, bush tucker and the spiritual and cultural significance of the *Goguljar Bilya* for Aboriginal people. It was a glorious morning with the river flowing swiftly by. After the walk Helen Shanks gave me an update on the bird hide signage project as TNC recently donated a \$1,000 towards it. Helen is continuing to raise the remaining money required to complete the project. This undertaking along with the raft of other NKAC projects and activities have been submitted in the Culture and Heritage category of this year's Tidy Towns and Sustainable Community awards. We wish them luck and look forward to a winning announcement later this year.

Member Bethan Lloyd and her volunteers have been busy propagating seedlings as usual. In addition, she has been leading Landcare activities with the school in the Boyagerring environmental and heritage zone. This has included killing woody weeds, namely feral Olive trees *Olea europaea*.

Cover: Storm or rain moth (*Abantiades atripalpis*)

Rob Boase

## *President's Report ...cont.*

Thanks to the efforts of Amber Balfour-Cunningham from the Northam Environmental Hub a meeting of Conserving the Avon River Environment (CARE) members and representatives took place on the 6th of August. The meeting was held Northam and was set up primarily to discuss the future of CARE. The consensus was that it will be wound up and members notified of the upcoming meeting required to conduct the formalities. Thank you to Desrae representing the Toodyay Naturalists' Club at the gathering.

With Toodyay's legendary Agricultural Show fast approaching it is time to think about how we can effectively present Toodyay Naturalists' Club to the public. We will be in good company with our friends in the Environment Matters Marquee again. If anyone has creative ideas for a display theme this year please put them forward.

The big environmental event for the year is of course the Julimar Forest Bio-Blitz which may have happened by the time the newsletter is distributed. Our sub-group, Julimar Forest Conservation and Forest Alliance (JCAFA) of which I and other "Nats" are members of have been working hard for many months to support the Conservation Council of WA in organising this event.

The weekend prior to the BioBlitz members joined the Armadale Wildflower Society excursion to Toodyay which included visits to Julimar Forest, Dawn Atwell and Morangup Nature Reserves.

I was dismayed to hear the Shire Reserve Management Officer has resigned after 12 months in the position. I'm hoping the position will continue as I believe it is crucial for the protection of our environmental assets.

In the meantime, enjoy this newsletter and after some good rains Spring in our special part of the world should be a bumper.

In closing thank you all for your ongoing support for the Club. The fund raising, the Herald articles, manning Drummond House, recording sightings, maintaining our lovely new website etc. etc. We wouldn't exist without you.

### *Bolgart & Wattening Nature Reserve*

*Desrae Clarke*

The **JUNE GENERAL MEETING** was held on an extremely wet day with fourteen stout members braving the elements. A general meeting was held over lunch in a recreational area shelter in the small country town of Bolgart. Bolgart is situated 38 kilometres north of Toodyay.

Following the meeting and lunch we left to travel back towards Toodyay to visit a very special environmental area, the DBCA 'A' Class **Wattening Nature Reserve**. It is a unique environmental area of 40.5 ha located around seven kilometres south of Bolgart on the perimeter of our Shire. This special small reserve, surrounded by farmland, is noted for its freshwater springs and its magnificent, ancient Paperbark Trees. The area is also quite unique in the fact that the York Gum is also found in the area in sandy soils. This Eucalypt is normally found in heavier soils but it has well adapted to the area.

Other species of vegetation are the Flooded Gum, Swamp Sheoak, Jam Tree, Swamp Paperbark and various grasses and sedges. The reserve holds many species of birds together with several reptiles, freshwater crayfish and tree frogs.

Despite the extremely wet beginning all members enjoyed the visit to this very special small area.

*Photos: Page 14*

## Storm or rain moth (*Abantiades atripalpis*)

Rob Boase

Each year when the first winter rains arrive you might notice some very large moths like the one in the photo, fluttering around outside lights at night. The noise they make sounds more like a small bird or bat rather than a moth. These are most likely a moth named *Abantiades atripalpis*, commonly called Storm or Rain Moths because they often appear in late autumn just before the first rain of the season. They are a large heavy moth and have a wingspan of up to 170mm for females and 120mm for males. The moths have three sets of comb like teeth along their antennae known as tripectinate antennae. They belong to the Hepialidae family and are found all along the southern part of Australia. This species is one of 37 described in this genus and all are exclusively Australian.

When we encounter the moths it is actually at the end of their rather long, fascinating and puzzling life cycle! These moths have just emerged from their pupal cases where they have been waiting below ground for the unknown signal that prompts them and all their associates to break out of their cases at the same time. The photo shows some empty pupal cases of this moth similar to the ones that are often seen protruding out of the soil after rain.

It is also not known what triggers the caterpillars to pupate or not to pupate in late autumn. They can continue for up to two years before pupating if conditions are not right. Once the moths emerge their sole purpose is to mate and for the female to distribute up to 40,000 fertilised eggs, which she does while flying. These moths only live for 1 to 2 days so there is no time to waste on feeding, therefore they have no mouth parts.

There are two main theories why all the moths emerge to mate at the same time just before rain. It is possible the rain washes the eggs into cracks in the soil where they have some protection from predators and the weather. It is also possible the tiny emerging caterpillars need the fine roots of seeds germinated by the rain for their initial food.

Once the caterpillars hatch they start their life of living in underground tunnels and feeding on plant roots. One of their favourite foods is the roots of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gums). This can be their home for up to two years before they get the urge to pupate and the life cycle starts again.



Left: Pupal cases of the Storm or rain moths)

Photo: Rob Boase

# The Red Fox

Wayne Clarke

THE Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is found right across the Northern Hemisphere. There is only one species of Red Fox but around 45 sub-species are now recognised.

The European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes crueigera*) was unsuccessfully introduced into Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in the early 1830s then into the Port Phillip District of New South Wales in the 1840s for the traditional English sport of 'Fox Hunting'. Tasmania was fox-free until around 1999 when a number were accidentally released. These hopefully have been rounded up and eradicated since.

The new settlers to Australia were homesick for Britain; the fauna and even the flora they found did not fit into their idea of a new homeland. They wanted to see again the animals they had grown up with. Acclimatisation Societies were formed in the 1860s to '*transfer plants and animals from one country to another*' for this purpose. The men who formed these societies were governors, doctors, professors, newspaper editors, politicians, wealthy landowners - all important men or men who thought they were.<sup>1</sup>

The red fox originated in Eurasia during the Middle Pleistocene at least 400,000 years ago and later colonised North America sometime prior to 130,000 years ago. Among the true foxes, the red fox represents a more progressive form in the direction of carnivory. Apart from its large size, the red fox is distinguished from other fox species by its ability to adapt quickly to new environments.<sup>2</sup>

Red foxes are usually found in pairs or small groups consisting of families such as a mated male (a *Tod or Dog*) and female (*Vixen*) and their offspring (known as *Kits*). The young of mated pairs remain with the parents to assist in caring for new kits. Vixens mate after one year and pregnancy lasts 51-53 days.

The red fox has an elongated body and relatively short limbs with a tail as long as 70% of the head and body length, reaching the ground when standing position. Tods measure up to 35-50cm high at the shoulder and 45-90 in body length with tail measuring 30-55.5cm. Ears measure 7.7-12.5cm and the hind feet 12-18.5cm. Weights range from 2.2-14kg, with vixens typically weighing 15-20% less than males. They are reddish-brown in colour with white-grey under the chin and on the chest and belly; they have a white tip to the tail

The forefoot print measures 60mm in length and 45mm in width, while the hind foot print measures 55mm long and 38mm wide. They trot at a speed of 6-13km/h, and have a maximum running speed of 50km/h. They have a stride of 25-35cm when walking at a normal pace.<sup>3</sup> Their pupils are oval and vertically orientated. The forepaws have five digits while the hind feet have four and lack of dew claws; they are very agile being able to scale a 2 metre high fence.

Foxes are mainly nocturnal but can be seen often in the day (as the accompanying photo shows). They are territorial but will move up to 15km/night. Rabbits form the bulk of their diet and they cache food for later. They also eat carrion along with mice, reptiles and amphibians, birds, grain, crops and fruit. They often kill more prey than is needed - many poultry owners can attest to that.

Current population numbers are 1.7 million ranging across most of the mainland and they also occupy many of the offshore islands. A concerted effort has begun to eradicate them from these islands a number of which are home to critically endangered fauna. Foxes have played a major role in the extinction of many of our ground-dwelling native fauna since their arrival.

The '*Red Card for the Red Fox*' programme is a community based feral animal management program that operates across the agricultural regions of Western Australia. This programme has been extended to '*Red Card for Rabbits and Foxes*'. Rabbits are one of the foxes main prey species so it's important to control them both at the same time. If the fox was eliminated then rabbit numbers would rebound.

## In suburbia

Red foxes have colonised built-up environments, especially lower-density suburbs, although many have also been sighted in dense urban areas far from the countryside. Throughout the 20th century, they have established themselves in many Australian towns. One early recording was at Coorinja Winery in 1925.

There are recordings of them burrowing on Mt. Anderson and they have been seen in Mt. Anderson Street. It is likely that they scavenge in the town of Toodyay. [See Page 13 for image of the red fox.]

<sup>1</sup> Rolls, Eric. *Running Wild*. (1973) ISBN 0 207 12438 8 [First published 1969 as *They All Ran Wild*. This edition entirely rewritten for young readers]. Published by Angus and Robertson publishers Pty Ltd, Sydney

<sup>2</sup>Wikipedia contributors. Red fox. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. April 4, 2025, 04:31 UTC

<sup>3</sup> ibid.

# *Expedition to Antarctica*

*Sharon Richards*

In November 2024 I took a holiday of a lifetime (for me anyway) to go on an expedition ship to the Antarctic, via the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands and South Georgia. The trip embarked from Ushuaia Argentina and over the first two days we sailed to the Malvinas. It looks desolate on first glance but then you start to notice the amazing birdlife. West Island revealed a beautiful colony of Rockhopper Penguins, co-located with Black Browed Albatross, all seemingly, living happily together. Many of the Rockhoppers had eggs whilst the Albatross were courting, murmuring to one another as they touched their beaks together. The next day we were at Port Stanley then a short taxi ride to Gypsy Cove and we were soon enjoying the company of Black Vultures, Siskins, Upland Geese and the very curious Magellanic Penguins. They wandered up the beach, strolled through the low fern growth and nested under the ground!

One of the most interesting and pleasing aspects of the trip was the close attention paid by the expedition crew for the safety of both the environment and the travellers. There were a number of presentations about how we would conduct our excursions on land. Our equipment, including rucksacks, scarves, hats were all carefully examined for any seeds, dirt etc so we did not contaminate the land. We wore special boots provided by the crew which we cleaned before and after every trip, nothing was allowed to be placed on the ground at any time, except for on a small tarpaulin laid by the crew at each site. No animals were to be intentionally disturbed, touched or scared by us and all the trails were marked out to guide us to the best and safest places for great wildlife viewing.

South Georgia is an incredible place, teeming with Elephant Seals, Antarctic Fur Seals and at least four types of penguins. After two days at sea, our first landing was at Grytviken, an old whaling community, only shutdown in December 1966. On land the Elephant Seals lolled about, taking very little notice of their visitors, the same cannot be said for the Antarctic Fur Seals who were always grumpy, nearly all young males (need I say more) and given half a chance, they would chase us if there was a perceived encroachment of their territory; we had been forewarned by the crew and armed with a walking pole which was for waving at the seals should they get too close, a sharp word and a wave of the stick always kept them at bay, but you did need to have eyes in the back of your head at times. Many of the original community buildings still exist, there is a pretty church, a shop still open and many huge sheds still full of disused equipment as well as rusting whaling vessels on the beach. Sadly, the evidence of the terrible trade is still seen with many huge whale vertebrae bones evident on the beaches.

Over the next three days we visited many of the islands of South Georgia and visited penguin and seal colonies. The King Penguins were delightful and huge, the youngsters with their fluffy brown coats mixed in with the serene and shining black and white of the adults. The weather was cold, but often sunny and the scenery was spectacular. Sharp mountains, covered in snow and glaciers slowly creeping down the sides. An occasional glimpse of both fin and humpback whales was always cause for a cheer, but they were fast moving, on their way to feed in the cool clear waters of Southern Antarctica.

It was a sad goodbye to South Georgia, but one filled with excitement, next stop Antarctica! The two-day journey was a memorable one; we travelled with a Force 9 Gale, the ship did well, for the most it was comfortable, but we had to stay inside with only the viewing deck open for short times. All our balcony furniture was removed and the upstairs dining room closed down, being on the top deck it experienced the worst of the ships pitching and rolling and was not conducive to comfortable eating. Our time was not wasted though, lots of lectures about Antarctica, the geology, glaciology and history. Presentations about Ernest Shackleton and his various expeditions, there wasn't time to be bored.

Our first glimpse of Antarctica was at Elephant Island, Point Wild, which hosts a statue of Captain Louis Pardot, the skipper of the vessel which saved many of Shackleton's men from that cold inhospitable bay. We saw the statue as well as a massive colony of Chinstrap penguins on the rocks. The next morning, we woke to blue skies, a calm sea and a beautiful snowy mountainous landscape. As we approached Brown Bluff, despite the sunshine, it was very cold outside.

## *Expedition to Antarctica... cont.*

All eager to disembark and start exploring we were getting ready in our cabins and then heard the call to stop and wait, the Skipper had spotted signs of a katabatic wind high on the landscape, which proceeded to roar down the mountainside at about 70 kms per hour. We were lucky, the boat up-anchored and quickly moved to another sheltered spot and only catching a slight push from the wind. Had we been out in the bay on our zodiac boats it would have been quite another story.

There is always another place to be experienced and we made landfall in the afternoon, and enjoyed watching the enigmatic Gentoo penguins as they ran along the beach, stole rocks from their neighbours' nests and happily mated for all the world to see. The Macaroni penguins, with their amazing yellow eyebrows, were gathered and busy preening, the Adelie's appeared to be playing "chicken" trying to encourage each other to jump in the water first, before there was the safety of numbers.

The main focus for us in Antarctica was experiencing the ice - in comparison to South Georgia, there was much less wildlife. It often snowed, was windy and of course there were ice-bergs everywhere. Our rides in the zodiacs took us between huge mountains of ice, at times they were definitely more blue than white and the most amazing shapes, eroded by the wind and sea.

In a blink of an eye, it was almost over and time to turn for home, just one more thing to do, the Polar Plunge of course, a brief dip in the water, harnessed to a zodiac just in case you decided to swim away, two doctors on site and a nice warm bathrobe on your exit. If anybody tells you the water really isn't that cold they aren't telling you the truth; we had to push the pancake ice away before we could jump in.

A two-day sail back up the Drake Passage was relatively calm; we certainly didn't get the sort of weather it is famed for. The further north we sailed, the more albatross joined us and up until Ushuaia they guided us home to port and our disembarking.



*Above: A King Penguin pauses close to a female southern elephant seal while contemplating a move around a male elephant seal. Male southern elephant seals from South Georgia weigh up to 3,700kg (females weigh up to 900kg), making the males in South Georgia the heaviest of the species.*

*Photo: Sharon Richards  
(further photos pages 12 & 16 )*

# *The fantastic Flooded Gums*

*Beth Walker*

I love my property! It was chosen partly for the four large, ancient flooded gums. This beautiful two-acre property reaches down to the river!!

I called my husband, David, who was working away, and told him I had found the property we were searching for. He, too, was excited but asked me to wait until he came home in two weeks' time. I could not wait! I put in an offer that was successful and, thankfully, he approved when he walked over our wonderful piece of paradise.

The fantastic Flooded Gums meant that I would not have to start a garden from the beginning as there was mottled shade. Birds could be heard in the smaller trees such as the Mistletoe Bird with its bright red front, Blue Wrens, Weebills and three species of honeyeaters. Water-birds seen on the river are Yellow Spoonbill, Pelicans and Pied Cormorants. A summer visitor is the spectacular Sacred Kingfisher. A pair of Stints complain about me walking along the river's edge as, I guess, they are not used to humans - who could blame them!

I regularly walk over the property and think about the people and animals that have lived here through the ages and used the Flooded Gums for shelter, food, nesting and rest. Nestled in these trees I see family groups of birds like Red-capped Parrots, with its bright red front, Ring Neck Parrots, Pink and Grey Galahs and one of my husband's favourites, the Magpies. I sometimes watch and listen to squabbles, smile, and wonder what started it. I have even been lucky enough to see the odd Nankeen Kestrel. It's usually the summer when the hunters come back.

Now that I have established that my favourite tree is the Flooded Gum I need to say that their sheer size is amazing. These trees achieve a life span over several hundred years! How much could they share with us. I often stop by one, look up and ask what it has seen over hundreds of years.

I wish the world would value trees so much more than they do. I wish there was a price on trees separate from the price of land.

I am working on a children's book about a magic Flooded Gum that befriends a nine-year-old boy who loves the bush and discovers that this Flooded Gum makes a face from her bark. The flooded Gum I have based the story on lives in Toodyay.



# *Share Your natural history sightings with the world on i-Naturalist*

*Wayne Clarke*

iNaturalist (iNat) is an online social network through the internet of people sharing biodiversity experiences and sightings to help each other learn about natural history.

You can use it to record your own observations, to get help with identifications, collaborate with others to collect this kind of information for a common purpose, or access the observational data collected by iNaturalist users.

iNat's **vision** is a world where everyone can understand and sustain biodiversity through the practice of observing wild organisms and sharing information about them. Its **mission** is to build a global community of 100 million naturalists by 2030 in order to connect people to nature and advance biodiversity science and conservation.

iNat's working to achieve this mission by continuing to improve iNaturalist as a social network for engaging the public with nature, generating high quality biodiversity data, and synthesizing that data into tools such as the computer vision model that help the iNaturalist community do their work. They're also working to help ensure that iNaturalist's technical and social infrastructure can operate at larger scales required to support our mission.

iNat's approach towards advancing science and conservation is to focus on supporting a large healthy community using the platform to generate, share, explore and curate data (rather than focusing on accruing data directly - iNat is not a data repository).

iNat resizes and reprocess all the photos directly uploaded to iNaturalist but it doesn't keep the original tags or information (properties) in photos you add rather than focusing on accruing data directly - iNat is not a data repository).

iNat is for recording observations of individual **living** things, particularly things that can be tied to a species name. iNat performs some limited obfuscation of coordinates where threatened species are concerned.

## **Atlas of Living Australia (ALA)**

You contribute to the **Atlas of Living Australia (ALA)** with your iNaturalist reports. The ALA is a collaborative, digital, open infrastructure that pulls together Australian biodiversity data from multiple sources including iNaturalist. This makes it accessible and reusable.

The ALA helps to create a more detailed picture of Australia's biodiversity for scientists, policy makers, environmental planners and land managers, industry and the general public, and enables them to work more efficiently.

The ALA is the Australian node and a full voting member of GBIF - the Global Biodiversity Information Facility - an international network and data infrastructure funded by the world's governments and aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth.

Lyn Phillips' cousin Glenda Walter is about to turn 80 years of age. Glenda is a member of the Toowoomba Field Naturalists' Club and – together with fellow member Jean – was recently interviewed on ABC radio by David Iliffe. It's worth listening to Glenda's iNaturalist story which can be found on the following URL

<https://youtu.be/sYAd4UOuZxs>

[n.b. If the above link doesn't work type it into your search engine (Google, etc.)]

# JCAFA Update August 2025

Sharon Richards

In the last few months the JCAFA team has been focusing on a number of things.

Firstly, the Glossy proposal document has been printed, Mel Adams has made a fabulous job of this, with the original input from various members of the group who contributed to our larger resource document. The glossy is a 40 paged proposal explaining why Julimar Forest is so important and should be protected and conserved; it is full of wonderful photographs contributed by members of the Toodyay Nats Club, Avon Valley Birds group and many others. The printing was funded by a very generous donation from the Toodyay Op Shop. There is a copy at Drummond House in the Nats Club library section for everybody to browse. You will also find a copy at the Toodyay Library and soon to be in the Perth Library. Going forward we will use it to support our aim for Julimar National Park when we meet with politicians etc.

Recently, we were fortunate enough to be approached by the Conservation Council of WA (CCWA) with the offer of them organising a Bioblitz in Julimar Forest, supported by the environmental groups in Toodyay. Of course, we jumped at the chance and this is to be held on the weekend of Friday 5th – Sunday 7th September. There are a number of experts and specialists coming to participate and lead groups recording what they find, looking at birds, reptiles, fungi, wildflowers and bats amongst others. We hope many of the Toodyay Nats members are able to attend. It will be a great opportunity to spend some time in Julimar; you don't need to be an expert at anything, just come along and enjoy walking amongst the trees, looking at the spring wild flowers and the creeks running after all the lovely rain we have had. You can come along for as long or a short as period as you'd like. You can register to attend at [www.ccwa.org.au/julimar\\_forest\\_bioblitz\\_2025](http://www.ccwa.org.au/julimar_forest_bioblitz_2025)

To continue to raise awareness about Julimar and its fabulous birds, Melissa and Max Howard have developed a tri-fold brochure which has a comprehensive bird list of the species we have recorded to date. This will be available at the Bioblitz and then at the various events and the Toodyay Visitors Centre ongoing. Much thanks and appreciation to Mel and Max for developing this and also great thanks to the Toodyay Naturalists Club for agreeing to fund the printing of it.

The wildlife camera project has recommenced within Julimar, with a number of cameras placed in July/August in various locations in the Forest. We had several new cameras donated from a couple of different sources who wished to remain anonymous, thank you, you know who you are! The first months data has shown a great variety of critters, including possums and chuditch, check out the footage on the JCAFA FB page. Thank you to Mark Hamilton for his enthusiasm and dedication to keeping this going.

Sadly, in July the group said goodbye to one of its major contributors with Doug Blandford passing on 11th July. Doug was a strong supporter of the group, his knowledge of the evolution of the Julimar Forest environment and how it supported the current wonderful biodiversity has provided us with a depth of knowledge second to none. His passion for his work, travelling in the forest and indomitable dry wit will be sorely missed.

In future months the JCAFA team will be revisiting its strategy for raising the awareness of Julimar Forest and how special it is. A whole new plan is being mapped out and if you would like to be a part of it, please join the group and share your ideas, all are welcome.



*Right: Doug Blandford examines the geology of the Wongamine Nature Reserve during a club excursion in 2015.*

*Photo: Desraé Clarke*

# Lone travels in the Wheatbelt

Jacqueline Lucas

This year I have been most fortunate to be able to tie in two wildflower tours either side of a weekend.

The first was at Mukinbudin and surrounds on Friday 22nd of August, starting at 1pm. Half the tour group was dropped at Dandanning Brewery whilst my half was dropped at a granitic reserve along Stockton Road. There we were shown a gnamma, containing the fattest of tadpoles! Many Borya dotted the mossy swards of the granite and the surrounding clay soil. Despite being very weedy, there were numerous orchids in flower including the Granite Donkey (*Diuris hazeliae*), Glistening Spider Orchids (*Caladenia incensum*), Pink fairies (*Caladenia hirta subsp rosea*) in all shades of pink, Ant Orchids (*Caladenia roeii*), the Chameleon Orchid (*Caladenia dimidia*), and a magnificent hybrid between *Caladenia roeii x incensum*. There were two plants of this delightful cross, and I was lucky enough to get photographs.

The overstorey of the orchids comprised the very resilient Needle leaf Hakea (*Hakea recurva*), *Acacia colletioides*, interspersed with Vanilla Bushes (*Grevillea paniculata*) and Honey Bushes (*Hakea lissocarpha*). Of course, there was the obligatory display of pink everlastings (*Schoenia cassiniana*) and the promise of a bright yellow daisy display to come.

After a delectable afternoon tea, we swapped places with the group who went to the brewery. Suffice to say, the brewery was a wonderful example of a local farmer doing paddock to plate (or glass!) using barley and wheat from his family's farm, whilst the hops came from down south. The day wrapped up with a grazing platter at the Mukinbudin pub. I would recommend anyone keeping an eye out for the tour next year, it was relatively easy walking for me with my stick, and the trickiest bit was getting on and off the bus.

In between the torrential rain the region desperately needed, I explored around Mukinbudin on Saturday and along the route to Beacon on Sunday. I found many Chameleon Orchids in Wiera Nature Reserve. In Quantacutting Reserve I found a most unusual plant growing in very heavy clay soil that I had never seen before - *Stenopetalum filifolium*.

Sunday was an adventure unto itself. It began benignly with a visit to Lake McDermott followed by Marshall Rocks. I arrived too early in Beacon to check into my accommodation, and went to the local CRC which doubles as a visitor centre. There I found brochure on local attractions, and I picked Mt Collier Dam for visiting as it seemed to be an unlikely choice for Monday's Beacon tour. Well, the road was a tad wet, and I feel the brochure should warn not for wet days! Luckily due to my work I have had plenty of experience driving on wet slippery roads but let's just say my car hadn't. It decided to stop. Some sort of safety mechanism to do with traction, or lack thereof! After resetting the traction button, the car was persuaded to continue onwards. I had no desire to go back the way I had come as I would have had to pass through the slippery bit again! Needless to say, I made it eventually back to my accommodation in torrential rain, which helped clean the mud off my car!

The Beacon Tour began on Monday morning, without much promise of being fine, but we were very lucky, it didn't really rain until on the way home. Our knowledgeable tour leader Mouse, and our trusty bus driver Megsy, took us to three rocks around the Beacon region. The first was at the Beacon Cleary tank site, and much to my surprise I found myself clambering up a rock! There were numerous pink candy orchids, lots of wispy spiders, and beautiful mossy swards to explore. At the base of this rock within feet of each other were three different types of Eremophila. After morning tea we headed off to Billiburning Rock. This rock is quite large, and once again, the tour went around and over. I was very happy to find my first Dainty Blue Orchids, (*Cyanicula amplexans*) and numerous spider orchids, ant orchids and hairy snails. By the time we reached the other side of the rock, to our lunch destination, the weather was becoming quite threatening, the wind picked up but aside from a slight drizzle the rain held off. The final destination of the day was Camel Soak, a rarely visited site, and I found myself surprising myself by clambering over the third rock of the day in the rain.

[The Beacon and Mukinbudin Community Resource Centres run wildflower tours annually, and at a cost of \$60 each this year, which included food, transport and knowledgeable guides is in my opinion, a worthwhile investment.]

## Members Gallery

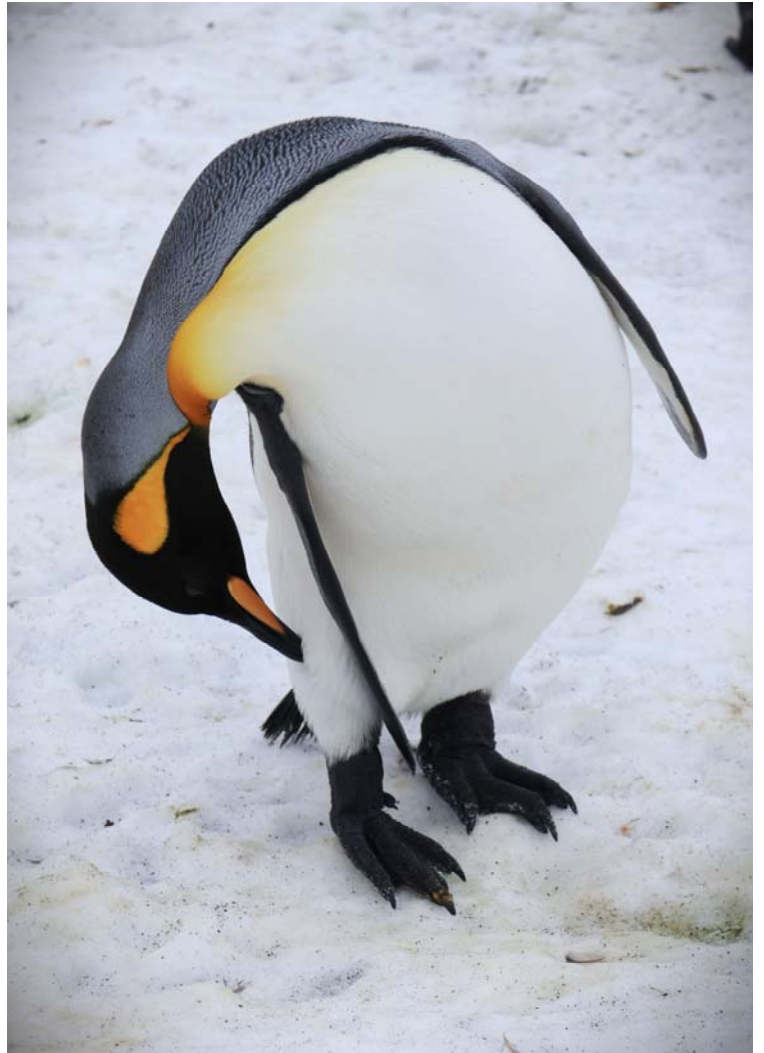


*Above: Caladenia roeii x incensum*  
*Photo: Jacqueline Lucas*

*Right: A King Penguin attending to its personal hygiene, seen here preening its feathers.*

*Below: A group of king penguins waiting to board the 'Ocean Explorer'*

*Photos: Sharon Richards*



## Members Gallery



*Above: Cyanicula amplexans*



*Above: Stnatopetalum filifolium*

*Photo: Jacqueline Lucas*

*Below left: A red fox on a bird bath at 7.30am, in March 2025. Photo: Wayne & Desraé Clarke's sensor camera.*



*Below right: Murray Walkway holds up well after the heavy rains during August, seen here with water topping over it.*

*Photo: Beth Frayne*



## Members Gallery



*Not to be deterred by a drop of rain...*

*Left: Club meeting in Bolgart.*

*From left: Greg Warburton, Beth Walker, Eva & Don Smith, Desraé & Wayne Clarke, Charmian & Andrew St John, Beth & Rob Boase, Wendy Giaimo*

*Below: Wattening Nature Reserve on a wet day.*

*From left: Julie Griffen, Eva Smith, George Lines, Wendy Giaimo, Beth Walker, Greg Warburton, Don Smith, Wayne & Desraé Clarke, Robert & Beth Boase*

*Photos: Beth Frayne*



## DID YOU KNOW...

... that King penguin feathers form a dense, oily waterproof outer layer and three inner layers of down, providing insulation against the cold and a streamlined shape for swimming. Juvenile king penguins are covered in dark brown down, while adult plumage is gained after a moult, with chicks acquiring their adult feathers around the age of twelve months.

# *Toodyay Naturalists Club Inc. Bio*

*Greg Warburton*

The Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc. (TNC) was inaugurated 1968 and has been continuously active, with an ever-increasing membership base. From its beginnings the Club has pursued and promoted the study and appreciation of the natural assets and environmental values of the Toodyay Shire, the wider Avon Valley region and beyond. It is governed by a management committee operating under a constitution and has three elected Patrons.

Conservation is integral to the Club's ethos. Early successful campaigns include the creation of the Avon Valley National Park, the Morangup Nature Reserve and a major extension of Wongamine Nature Reserve. The club provided the first ever Toodyay Shire roadside flora survey and submitted management recommendations that remain a reference for council works.

TNC were instrumental in the creation of the James Drummond memorial gardens and lookout at Pelham Reserve, which for over 50 years has been an attraction for visitors and locals. The Club also planted the Toodyay Arboretum within the town area. Flora and fauna surveys conducted by Club members and subsequent consultations have resulted in the gazetting of the 65-hectare Dawn Atwell Nature Reserve as high conservation value.

For many years the Club provided representation on the Cliffs Mining Windarling Peak environmental reference group in the Yilgarn Shire. This was a ministerial appointment to protect declared rare flora there. It is also a campaigning member of Helena and Aurora Advocates Inc. This organisation has worked for many years towards creating a National Park in the same region. Local group, the Julimar Forest Conservation Alliance is a subcommittee of TNC and is advocating for the increased management and protection of the 29,000-hectare Julimar State Forest by conversion to National Park status.

Recently the Club's input and recommendations have been accepted by the Shire Council for the adoption of a Local Bio-diversity strategy. The Club continues to engage with local and state government departments, natural resource management groups and the public on environmental and conservation issues. It is a member of Conserving the Avon River Environment (CARE).

The Club's monthly meetings feature an invited expert key note speaker, who is often pre-eminent in their field. Excursions are regularly conducted to various bushland and reserve areas in the Shire and further afield, often connecting with other like-minded community organisations. Working bees and tree planting activities are conducted seasonally.

The Club actively engages with the community in a number of ways. It offers a "drop-in" venue in the main street, Toodyay known as Drummond House Heritage Centre. Here, the public can seek information and advice. The Club has an important and high-profile presence at Toodyay's annual Agricultural Show and a number of other events through the course of the year. It publishes monthly articles in the local newspaper and produces a regular newsletter which is widely distributed.

Over the years the Club has produced a number of books about the bio-diversity of the Avon Valley including its 50<sup>th</sup> year celebration publication "Exploring Toodyay Naturally". A new website provides updated information about meetings, events etc. and allows users to record wildlife sightings. The Club maintains thousands wildlife records dating back a century, providing an invaluable historical environmental data base.

The Club has sourced external funding for a number of projects including the construction of an architect designed bird hide at Red Banks Pool on the Avon River. This structure provides a focal point for water bird observation and information while enhancing the experience for users of the Bilya River Walk Track. TNC continues to engage with and support the local Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation in a range of interpretive signage and walk track projects.

[This Bio was created by Greg and presented to the Kiwanis Club in response to their nomination of TNC for a possible monetary award]

# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



*Above: The number of ice bergs breaking away from Antarctica (and the Arctic) is alarming. The impact on our environment (and climate change) is most evident; the photo above was taken on 20th November 2024 - in Antarctica*

*Photo: Sharon Richards*

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The Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc. is grateful to Wheatbelt NRM for their on-going support in producing the TNC Newsletter

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### ***THE TOODYAY NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.***

**PRESIDENT:** Greg Warburton      0429 009 425      **VICE-PRESIDENT:** Lynn Phillips  
**SECRETARY:** Desraé Clarke      9574 5574      **TREASURER:** Charmian St John

**PROJECT OFFICER:** Greg Warburton      0429 009 425

**ADDRESS:** Post Office Box 328, Toodyay. 6566

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Desraé Clarke [Format by Wayne Clarke]

**email:** [secretary@toodyaynats.org.au](mailto:secretary@toodyaynats.org.au)

**Website** [www.toodyaynats.org.au](http://www.toodyaynats.org.au)

**Drummond House - Toodyay Environment & History Centre: 108B Stirling Terrace, Toodyay  
(next to the Bendigo Bank ATM).      Opening hours: Saturdays 10am - 12noon**

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