



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 Lynn Phillips

AT OUR club meeting on Saturday August 22, the Toodyay Naturalists' were treated to a visit by two renowned mycologists Laurton McGurk and Roz Hart. They both confess their interest in all things fungi has become an obsession and it showed in their enthusiastic and detailed presentations. Ros talked about biosecurity, the importance of keeping foreign diseases out of Australia and in particular Western Australia. She implored us not to buy foreign out-of-season fruit and vegetables which may carry disease. Roz cited the example of a serious fungal disease affecting grape vines in the US which, if spread to our own vineyards, could be devastating for local viticulture. Myrtle Rust is another example which, originally from SE Asia, has made its way into the eastern states of Australia. It can affect many species of native plants including Eucalypts and is a disease we definitely do not want in WA. Roz highlighted the actions we can all take to limit transportation of local fungal diseases such as Dieback. She advised us to clean and disinfect our vehicles, boots and even our clothes if we have been in the bush particularly in wet muddy areas since fungi such as Dieback is often dispersed by water. Another crucial fact is to avoid transporting soil from potentially infected sites.

On numerous occasions we were reminded of the benefits of iNaturalist which is a world-wide organisation aiding the identification of plants, animals and fungi. iNaturalist is particularly important in Australia due to the fact there is inadequate funding allocated to environmental sciences including mycology. Disappointingly our professional scientists are highly reliant on citizen scientists like us to find and record specimens.

Laurton went to great lengths to describe the different types of fungi, their different rolls, unique structures or traits, different colours and smells and how they reproduce. Laurton also explained the difficulties in classifying fungi before and since recent advances in microscopy and DNA technology.

The biggest take-home message for the day was DO NOT EAT FUNGI COLLECTED FROM THE FIELD. Always buy your mushrooms from the supermarket.

On Sunday August 23, Ros and Laurton joined us in Julimar Forest to forage for fungi and see them with our own eyes in their natural habitat. It was a brilliant experience and opened up a whole new world for many of us.

Upcoming club events include an excursion to Old Plains Road Nature Reserve, Bewmalling and Drummond Nature Reserves on Saturday September 19. Our highly regarded Patron, Rob Boase will lead the excursion.

We will be holding a fundraiser outside the IGA on August 28 and 29. The funds raised will go towards our display at the upcoming Agricultural Show.

Julimar Conservation And Forest Alliance

by Melissa Adams

JCAFA has been busy with meetings and discussions concerning the Gonneville project. Chalice confirmed their Environmental Review Document (ERD) is delayed by a year, targeting EPA submission in late 2026 and public release for comments by mid-2027. We are also chatting with AHMAG and Protect Our Valley group to oppose the proposed 100m-wide utility corridor to Alkimos.

We are pleased to announce that we won a Toodyay Shire Community Grant to produce a Wildflowers of Julimar State Forest brochure, launching at the Toodyay Show.

While camera traps recorded no woylies this past year, we captured chuditch, black-gloved wallabies, possums and various other wildlife. You can help us discover more by joining our forest survey on Saturday the 26th. Contact us at julimarforest@gmail.com to register your interest and for more info.

New Bird Artwork Enhances the John Masters Bird Hide at Redbank Pool

by Helen Shanks

Visitors to the John Masters Bird Hide, just 2 kilometres from Toodyay along the Bilya Walk Track, will notice a striking new addition to it.

Installed in June 2026, the new artwork celebrates the rich birdlife of Redbank Pool (Gnilgil) and complements the existing Noongar cultural display already housed within the hide. The installation occupies the right-hand wall of the structure and tells the story of the local *Djirda* (birds) that frequent this important *Kep Wari* (water place).

The Bird Hide, developed by the Toodyay Naturalists' Club (TNC), was officially opened in 2013 and has become a popular destination for birdwatchers, walkers, school groups, photographers, and visitors exploring the area.

The new display features high-quality bird imagery generously donated by renowned wildlife photographer Georgina Steytler. Many of the photographs were taken at Redbank itself, showcasing species regularly seen around the pool and surrounding wetlands. Birds are identified using Noongar, common, and scientific names, creating an engaging educational experience for visitors of all ages.

The artwork project was coordinated by Helen Shanks (Milimili Wadjela) on behalf of the Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation (NKAC), working closely with long-time TNC member, Greg Warburton. Together, they sought to create an installation that celebrates both the natural and cultural significance of this special place.

Redbank Pool is a key feature of both the Bilya Walk Track and the Noongar Trail. The new artwork strengthens the bird hide as a place of learning, reflection, and connection to Country, while highlighting the diversity of birdlife that depends on the waterways and wetlands of the Avon Valley.

TNC is proud to share this space with Traditional Owners, recognising their enduring connection to Country and the cultural significance of Gnilgil (Redbank) and the surrounding waterways.

The project was made possible through the support and contributions of many individuals and organisations. TNC gratefully acknowledges NKAC, Avon Yard and Maintenance Services (AYMS), Dudja Dreaming, the Shire of Toodyay, Toodyay Friends of the River, the Toodyay Op Shop, Georgina Steytler Nature Photography, and all those who contributed their time, knowledge, and support to bring the project to life.

Cover: New artwork at the John Masters Bird Hide at Red Banks Pool

Photo: Helen Shanks

The Australian Magpie

by Desraé Clarke

AUSTRALIAN Magpie – Biology and Behaviour of an Unusual Songbird’ was authored by Gisella Kaplan and published by CSIRO Publishing. The first edition was published in 2008 with a second edition 2018. Gisella has spent over 20 years studying the Australian Magpie.

The book is easy to read with Gisella constantly referring to her own experiences and that of her colleagues resulting in lots of wonderful stories and observations. As has been said with Australians living overseas – “the beautiful carolling of the Magpies makes for homesickness.”

A question to Gisella was to the longevity of a bird living in the wild; it can be from 20 to 25 years. This answer related to a magnificent, one-legged male bird that lived in an area of Toodyay for a very long period; he certainly demanded respect from the underlings!

A personal experience. In 2012 *Cheilospiriera gymnorhina*, or throat worm, was found in young Magpies around Perth. The creature burrows into the soft tissue of the Magpies’s mouth and throat to build a cyst that eventually prevents feeding and breathing to ultimately result in death. Treatment is with *Cydexctin (Moxystectin)*.

The Lesmurdie Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Kanyana, was inundated with affected birds from around suburban Perth and, once free of the worm required release. As a bird cannot return to its

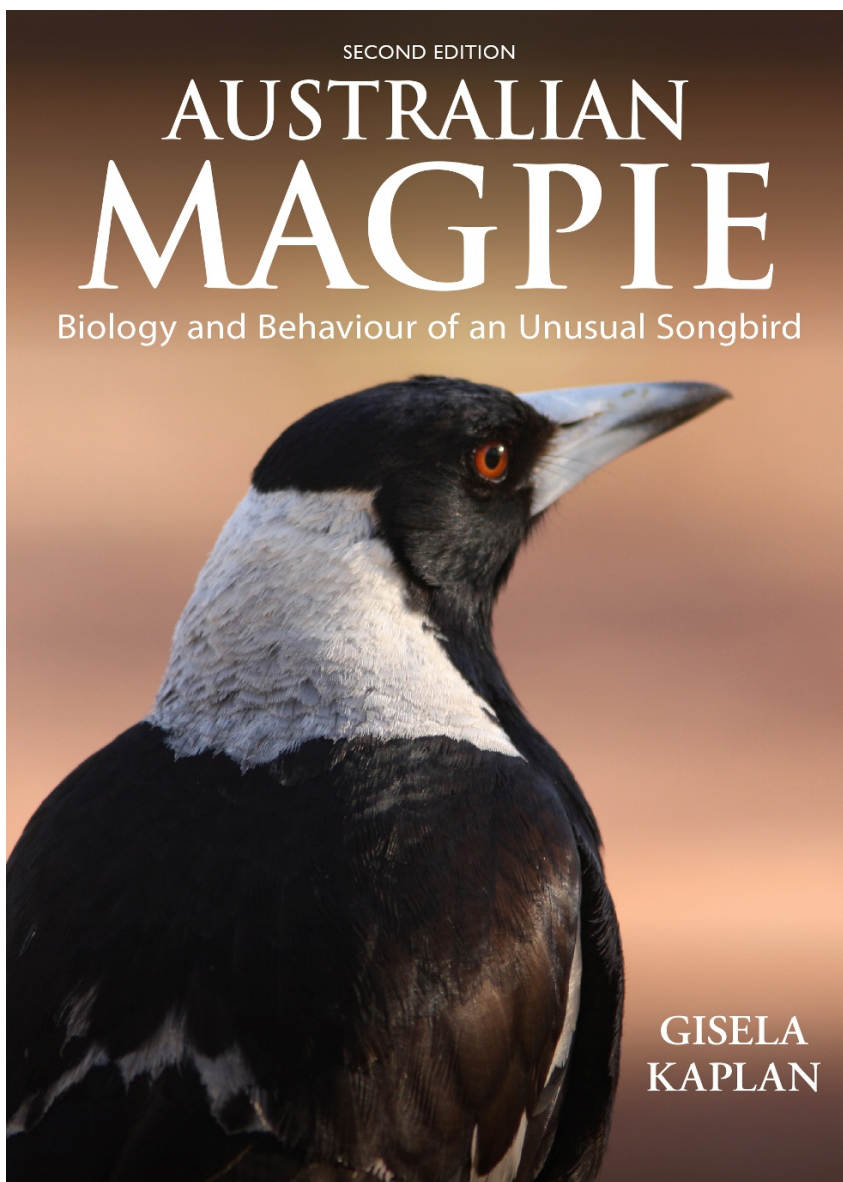
natal area, as it will be killed, a trial was to release rehabilitated birds as a new mob. A large, fully enclosed bantam yard was offered to greet 13 young birds. Special mince was fed four times daily using plastic forceps to place the mince at the very back of the throat as a parent would feed youngsters.

The young birds progressed well. They graduated to forage in leaf litter, to venture out of the confines of the yard, to gradually roost in nearby tall eucalypts and ultimately to leave home as a small flock.

18 months later a mob of Magpies met us at the backdoor of the house, striding about our feet and calling excitedly. The little mob had returned!

We are checked several times each day by the mob for about four months, the birds leave for three to four months then return. There is water in bird baths and they enjoy a small handful of dried rolled oats following lusty, demanding calls.

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Konnongorring excursion

by Eva Smith Photos: Desraé Clarke

On Saturday the 20th June, we set out for the lovely town of Konnongorring; it was first gazetted in 1897. The name was derived from “Konno”, an aboriginal term for a dark coloured bulbous root that was roasted and eaten by the Ballardong people. It was also known as ‘the place of the smoker parrot’

according to a book called ‘A Backward Glance’ by B Sewell. The general community know Smoker parrots as Regent Parrots.

Sadly, those parrots have not been seen in the area since about 1948.

Our tour leaders for Saturday were Maitland Davey and his son Nathan. We met up with them (and their lovely dog Rex) at their 10,000 acre farm. Maitland’s lifelong passion has been revegetating the property as well as retaining as much original native vegetation as possible.



We left the farm to view the nearby Gabby Quoi Quoi Lookout, adjacent to a large soak of that name. Gabby Quoi Quoi means “plenty of water” in the local aboriginal language.

Above: The Gabby Quoi Quoi lookout shelter showing the recovery

The lookout was built by the local catchment group as it provides an excellent view of the surrounding district, including vast areas of native re-vegetation the group has carried out. The Catchment Group has received excellent commendation by the local (Goomalling) Shire. The Shire website gives the following statement:



“Thousands of trees get planted each year in the Shire of Goomalling and there are groups working to improve and protect our soil, farms and natural environment; the Gabby Quoi Quoi Catchment Group’s past achievements are a shining example of this work.”

Above: View from the lookout of some of the revegetation across the catchment.

Konnongorring excursion... cont.



Left: Monk's Well

It was on the road again. First stop was Monks' Well. Its name came from supervision given by the monks from New Norcia during their construction. Sandalwood cutters also dug wells in the area. The sandalwood cut in all areas of WA was exported to India in the early days of the settlement.

The area is now predominantly used for grain handling. Huge new silos built by CBH collect wheat from surrounding areas to transport it by train to Kwinana port for export. Rail transport is important as it saves a good deal of road use. A stockpile of 360,000 tonnes of grain is on site at the handling facility which is still under construction.

A short TNC meeting was then held while we devoured our lunches in the local hall.

After lunch we viewed the Church of the Transfiguration. It was an Anglican-Methodist Church built in 1961. A feature in the Church is a magnificent painting by a local artist across the wall behind the pulpit. The church now has only one service a year.

It was very exciting to hear they have Woylies (Brush-tailed Bettongs) on their property which of course are very rare. With the help of funding of \$30,000 from Greening Australia, they installed a feral proof fence enclosing 40ha of land. They hoped that would encourage the Woylie population to grow.

They also hoped the fence would help encourage a breeding program for Boodies (Burrowing Bettongs) but sadly, that has not happened. Burrowing Bettongs were once widespread on the mainland but now only found on offshore islands.

The only way of entry to that fenced area is through a kangaroo gate. It should allow kangaroos out but not in. However, some smart kangaroos had succeeded in entering. Our group were let in to the area and we all managed to escape!



Left: The fence surrounding the enclosure. Note the Wedge-tailed Eagles nest in the centre of the photo.

Note all the beautiful bush surrounding the enclosure!

Another feature of interest was the trig point created in 1879 by C D Price. It originally had a cross on a pile of rocks. Unfortunately, the rocks were re-arranged in more recent times by NASA who placed a cross covered with plastic for photographing

by their satellite on the original cairn and the rocks were all dishevelled as a result. The trig point is still obvious if pointed out. It is on Byberding Hill. From there, we could see Udenberry Hill, the highest peak in the district.

C D Price was employed by the Survey Dept as a staff surveyor. He was the pioneer responsible for installing the telegraph system through the Western Australian outback to at least as far as Roebourne in the north and Eucla in the far south-east.

Viewing the trig point completed a very enjoyable first day of Konnongorring sight-seeing 'before we adjourned to an enjoyable meal at the Wongan Hills hotel.

Konnongorring excursion... cont.

We started out early Sunday for a great day with Lindsay White and his son Matthew. Their property has plenty of remnant bushland and surface water control and there are several good lookout points. As well as maintaining as much native vegetation as possible, they have added much more to increase the natural environment.



Left: Members chatting about the revegetation and oil mallees on Lindsay's property. Lindsay is right of centre in the dark pants, Maitland is centre photo stepping forward with the red/blue top on.

Photo: Desraé Clarke

Melaleuca uncinata (Broom honeymyrtle) and *Wurmbia tenella* (Eight Nancy) were flowering for our visit. The flowers in the area will obviously be brilliant in Spring.

Lindsay had also planted Oil Mallee trees. They grow quickly and were originally used for producing oil, then a valuable product. Although oil production is no longer viable, they have become an attractive part of the landscape. Water they use is from the many soaks that are nearby and help prevent salt invasion.



One of the soaks is large enough to make an enjoyable swimming area for the family's young children.

Photo: Desraé Clarke

Many of us were captivated by the numerous *Fungi* during the day. Banksia and many Woody pear trees were among the very attractive trees. On one hill, five different eucalyptus species were growing closely together - Wandoo, Salmon Gum, Gimlet, York Gum and Mallee were all growing a small distance apart.

Konnongorring excursion... cont.



We enjoyed picnic lunches at a beautiful lookout in a magnificent rocky outcrop near an old well dating back to the 1920s. The well provided water for horses used on the property at that time.

The rocks were truly spectacular and worthy of our visit on their own!



Here we have Lindsay's young grandson Hartley enjoying a peep at us from one of the attractions!

During the two days of our visit, a total of 56 birds were spotted on the two properties. In addition, Jen and Avon were lucky enough to spot a *Southern Boobook Owl* as they were leaving the hotel in Wongan after dinner Saturday night. And a couple of wedgetail eagle nests were keenly observed.

The beautifully maintained and revegetated natural bushland surrounding the properties of the Davey and White families is indeed a credit to both families.

*Right:
Afternoon tea
on the veranda
at Matt and
Sarah's lovely
home, with their
dog keeping
guard.*



Fungi Weekend

by Desraé Clarke

On Saturday and Sunday, 22nd and 23rd August, our guest speakers, Roz Hart and Dr Laurton McGurk, gave Nat's members a wonderful insight into the interesting world of fungi

On the first afternoon members enjoyed the story of fungi, with beautiful descriptive footage, at the Anglican Church Hall. Sunday saw members searching for specimens in the Julimar forest following the turnoff track of Heine Road. It was exciting to find tiny species, two to three centimetres in height, to those that are quite large.

Roz is an ecologist with a range of working experience from teaching Microbiology at the University of WA to running an Environmental Consulting Business with her husband Ray and then she was the Community Education officer on the Perth Urban Bushland Fungi project in WA. This project raised awareness of the importance of fungi in bushlands and opened many people's eyes to the wonders of fungi.

Roz lives in Perth, close to Kings Park which is Perth's iconic bushland park. Since retirement Roz enjoys being an active grandparent and volunteer Guide at Kings Park, where she encourages and educates other guides, and the public, about the importance of fungi in the bushland.

The publication '*Fungi for Land – a practical guide for land managers*' was launched July 1st, 2026 and is co-authored with Sapphire McMullan-Fisher; it is at a cost of \$45 plus p&p.

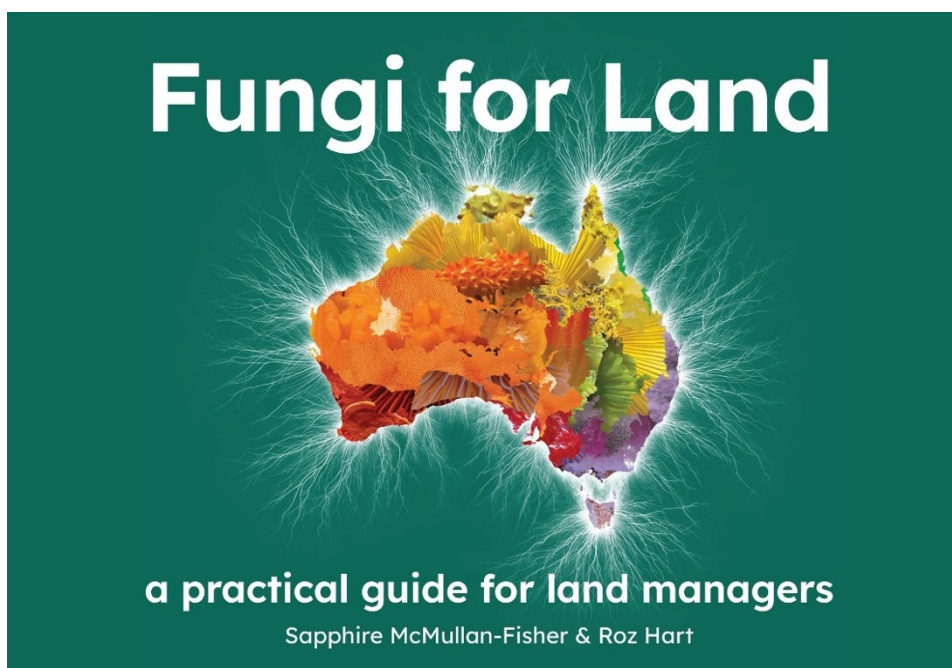
Laurton was a cook when she decided to pursue a degree in Environmental Science intending to focus on the study of bats.

This resolve died when she enrolled in the mycology unit in her second year at Curtin. She became the junior mycological tutor in her third year and was the senior tutor for rest of her time at Curtin. Laurton's PhD research was into *Amanita* species of South Western Australia.

She now works as the University of Western Australia's Chemical Safety Officer. A job that is varied and interesting but lacking in macrofungi.

Laurton raises awareness of fungi wherever she goes; typically by assuming the 'mycologist crouch' which evokes concern and puzzlement as to what she's doing. When informed most people respond with "But there's no fungi around here!"she is more than happy to show that them how wrong they are!

It was a happy, informative weekend with much learning of the world of fungi. Always remember to have a mirror handy to look, and photograph, beneath the specimens for correct identification when sending images to iNaturalist.



Fungi Weekend (cont)



Above: Dr Laurton McGurk (right) explaining fungi identification. Members watching (from left) are Desraé Clarke, Bridget Leggett, Charmian StJohn (part hidden) and Don Smith.

Below: A large bracket fungi hidden beneath a fallen and decaying log,

Photos: Roz Hart



Tracking and Trailing

by Michael Cook

SATURDAY 25th July was a beautiful sunny day allowing the Toodyay Naturalists' Club members an afternoon in the Julimar forest with member and leader, Michael Cook.

Michael was to share his great knowledge of identifying animal tracks within the forest and furthering the skill as to what the animal may have been doing at that time, was it carrying prey, was it male or female and how old were the tracks, etc.

Mike's passion of bushcraft and tracking began as a youngster in Dianella bushland.

He did his apprenticeship at King's Park and has operated with trainees and volunteers all his working life.

He spent several years with the City of Swan as natural areas supervisor and trainee mentor and has since moved on to Aboriginal Ranger Coordinator as manager of the Tjiwarl Aboriginal Ranger program located in the goldfields.

Mike has his own business, 'Bushcraft WA'. He runs workshops on bushcraft and tracking skills and is currently writing his first book on tracking and trailing in WA.

ECHIDNAs leave quite distinctive tracks.

If it's in dry, loose, deep sand then there will be an alternating zig zag pattern of dents in the ground. Finer track detail is lost as the loose sand collapses once the foot leaves the ground.

Good track detail can sometimes be seen in moist sand or substrates with a shallow fine layer over harder ground. The front feet and their prints angle inwards at an angle and the claw marks of the middle 3 toes are often the most distinctive feature. The hind feet face backwards and leave prints with curved claw marks.

They commonly walk in a direct register or partial register - this is where the hind foot lands on the same spot as the front foot. Sometimes they walk with an under-step - where the hind foot lands behind the front foot...or...an over-step - where the hind foot lands in front of where the front foot was.



Above: Echidna tracks



Above: Echidna foot prints

Photos: Michael Cook

WA Landcare Network Annual Gathering

The first of the three-day gathering, Sunday August 30th till Tuesday September 1st, began at the Ray Paynter Reserve in beautiful Wandoo bushland approximately fifteen kilometres from Toodyay town. Jacqueline (Jacquie) welcomed the large group prior to a wander in the woodland lead by Toodyay Naturalists' Club member, patron and also member of the Landcare Hall of Fame, Rob Boase.

At the conclusion of the walk the participants returned to Toodyay town to the beautiful Memorial Hall to mingle with guests and to enjoy gentle singing and music from a young people group.

Monday August 31st was an early start with registration at 9am and an introduction from the WA Landcare Network Chief Executive Officer, Jacqueline Lahane.

Elder, Robert Miles, gave a Welcome to Country followed by Toodyay Shire representation from the Shire President, Mick McKeown.

The Keynote speakers were Francesca Flynn and Bibbul Negarma. The light-hearted presentation on Catchment Planning was a very welcome interlude with both giving humour to their joint contribution.

Dr Sue Trinidad spoke of sustaining a group into the future, a topic that is of constant concern in any working group.

On Tuesday September 1st the Toodyay group of Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation (NKAC) leader, Robert Miles, walked with participants from Toodyay to the Yarning Circle providing story telling of the Avon River and its riverside sites.

Participants then returned to their vehicles to drive to an area of interest behind the St Stephen's Anglican Church. Severe erosion at the Pelham Brook outlet has been restored by members of the Toodyay Friends of the River and supported by the Shire of Toodyay.

Finally visits were made to Justin von Perger's property to a midday closure of the three day event.

The WA Landcare Network 2026 Annual Gathering drew to a 1pm closure following a most successful, friendly and educational three days and obviously enjoyed by all participants. The Gathering was well-planned and, with the delightful weather, a most successful three days.



Left: Rob Boase (cheque shirt, fourth from right) led a walk through the Ray Paynter Reserve on the Sunday. The reserve was once a Shire of Toodyay gravel pit that has been rehabilitated and enhanced by TNC member and former Reserves Management Officer, Greg Warburton

*Photo: Desraé Clarke
(Further photo page14)*

Members Gallery



Above: *Caladenia dimidia*

Photo: Lyn Phillips

Member's Gallery



Above: A Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*), also known as the Australian Otter or native water rat, seen close to Toodyay townsite. It is lunching on a South-western snake necked Turtle after doing battle for some time - both in and out of the water.

Photo: David Koch

Below: WA Landcare Network Annual Gathering - Rob Miles (second from right) of the Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation (NKAC) at the NKAC Yarning Circle. Participants listened to Storytelling about the Avon River and sites along the river from Rob.

Photo: Desraé Clarke



Observer's Gallery



Left: A Western Bearded Dragon lizard in what appears to be an eremophila.

It was taken by Andy & Linda Reavell from Wanneroo and sent to the Club for identification

DID YOU KNOW...

By Desraé Clarke

... that the weed Narrow-leafed cottonbush - also known as the swan plant, the cat-headed or puncture-vine and swan plant (with the scientific name *Gomphocarpus fruticosus*) is an escaped garden plant; in Western Australia it is an officially declared 'pest plant.' A native of South Africa it favours disturbed, moist areas and has been found within the Shire of Toodyay.

This species grows up to two metres in height and is capable of forming dense thickets. Germination peaks in early autumn or late spring with its first flowering in two years. The tiny white to cream-coloured flowers, of 16 to 18mm across, are formed in clusters to blossom in summer. The interesting seed pods are thin-walled and covered in soft spines; they are four to six centimetres in length.

This plant has a shallow root system that can be removed by hand with all plant matter either burnt or placed in a sealed black plastic bag and left in the sun; ensure removal of all root pieces to reduce suckering of the plant.

If the plants are large machinery grubbing or the use of insecticides may be required with chemical information found on the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Authority chemical information <http://www.apvma.gov.au>

The Narrowleaf cottonbush is toxic to stock and a skin irritant so ensure gloves are worn and hands well-washed if coming in contact with the plant sap. As can be seen in the photo on the back page the seed pod tapers to a point thus its fascination as a garden plant. *Photo on back page by Wayne Clarke*

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



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wheatbelt
natural resource
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Member of the WA Landcare Network