

December 2016



# ***Biddip***



Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 10, Issue 3



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*The Toodyay Friends of the River are grateful to the Wheatbelt NRM for their support in producing the December 2016 newsletter*



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## *Presidents thoughts by Sarah Dudley*

RECENTLY I WAS PRIVILEGED to be asked to accompany an Aboriginal family and support group visiting one of the saddest places on this planet: Mogumber Aboriginal Mission (remember “Rabbit Proof Fence”?). This is where hundreds of *Stolen Generation* children were taken to in WA - and where many of them died.

Why mention this? As your newly appointed President I would like to share with you a couple of my thoughts and aspirations for TFOR - particularly my belief in the need to recognise, respect and affirm the contribution each individual makes in his/her unique way in contributing creatively to the local Toodyay community. The visit to Mogumber was planned to enable a dying, inspirational Stolen Generation lady to bid farewell to her childhood memories. How did she and other Stolen Generation children survive those bitter years yet evolve into a laughing, forgiving, empowered grandmother? Surely her community’s support, together with her instinctive deep, deep love for and reverence for country, would have been major contributors. For me she will always remain as a role model for TFOR members to aspire to: actively caring about the welfare of the entire (TFOR) community as well as loving, respecting, communicating with and caring for the land.

Secondly I believe that in order to create a sustainable future together we need to refresh the group with new ideas and pathways. To achieve this the reality of listening to the hopes of the current membership has become an important launching point. As a response to this challenge and in conjunction with the hard working Management Committee, we are in the process of developing and adjusting programmes which are hopefully both flexible and achievable in the context of members’ busy and committed lives. Consequently we are changing the Sunday working bees from the third Sunday of the month to the first Sunday of the month as from February 2017. We are also in the process of creating opportunities for ‘non-Sunday’ working bees to allow members who have other commitments on a Sunday to be able to contribute to implementing TFOR’s goals. Additionally all members are becoming more proactive in our task of attracting new membership - and I am pleased to report that thanks to their efforts our numbers have already begun to grow.

As a new year dawns and the months begin to roll by once again, may I encourage all members to continue to communicate their creative thoughts and to demonstrate active support for one another. Paths are made by walking. Our community will become what our members decide it will be.

May TFOR continue to reflect our love and care for country ever more deeply - and a heartfelt thank you for each and every contribution made in 2016.

*Cover Astrid contemplating at the Canning River: Photo by Tanami*

# *TFOR meets CRREPA* by Lance Bennett

TFOR HELD ITS ANNUAL EXCURSION this year at Shelley Beach in Riverton, Perth. The plan was for TFOR to hold a riverside General Meeting, then meet with the good people of the Canning River Residents' Environment Protection Association (CRREPA) for an informal explanation of what they do along their stretch of the Canning River.

Twelve TFOR members from Toodyay arrived at Shelley Beach mid-morning and were met by Club Patron, Viv Read, on the foreshore. We were then greeted by CRREPA President, Stephen Johnston, who welcomed the TFOR members and gave an explanatory talk about the activities of CRREPA. TFOR President, Sarah Dudley, thanked Stephen for his warm welcome and expressed our collective appreciation for the invitation to Riverton.

TFOR then held its General Meeting on the foreshore which, by the way, took no more than 30 minutes to conduct. All members were duly pleased with the lightening speed progress of formal events.

We were then met by CRREPA volunteers, Colma Keating and Grecian Sandwell, who gave a detailed explanation of the group's conservation efforts and showed us CRREPA published materials. We were then greeted by Susan Harris, another CRREPA member, who gave a detailed explanation of the group's establishment and maintenance of the interpretive signage along the foreshore. Susan proceeded to give us a guided tour along the Wadjup Gabbilju Track and explained her role as an artist in the creation of the interpretive signs. The TFOR members were very impressed with her knowledge and enthusiasm for the project. It was a matter of coincidence that Susan was once a student of Robyn Taylor at university.

The group walked the track with Susan and parted ways just before the Shelley Bridge. The TFOR group then re-grouped for lunch at the Kent Street Weir where we met Perth-based TFOR members, Ric and Rebecca. After an enjoyable lunch we headed back to our little country hidey-holes after a BIG DAY in the city.

Many thanks to all who participated in this interesting and enjoyable excursion!



*Above: Susan Harris cleaning bird droppings from CREEPA signage .  
Left: CRREPA President Stephen Johnston greeting members of TFOR at the Shelley Beach foreshore.*

# HISTORIC 'ELLENSBROOK' REVEGETATION PROJECT

*by Meg and Grahame Malone*

WHEN WE HEARD about a tree-planting project in early August on an historic property in Margaret River we decided to take couple of days off and help out. The property is called 'Ellensbrook', c1857, and looked after by the National Trust. A young family living nearby on the property is employed as the custodian of the beautiful old home.

We left Toodyay Friday afternoon to drive through to Margaret River and stayed that night in a place in town. For tea we enjoyed a delicious bowl of soup at the Settlers pub which we'd been told was a good place.

The next morning a guy, Brooke, arrived with a four level trailer containing the 3,000 plants that were planned to be planted over the Saturday only.

About 30 people turned up but so did the very heavy rain - it poured! Most of the people only stayed for about an hour; it left only eight of us. We got saturated - boots and all!!

A young guy was diving around with an auger drill - a hole here, a hole there, another here - he worked really fast!

It was great watching Brooke showing a small group of disabled young people how to put the plants into a hole then carefully fill it in with soil.

We planted lots of sedges but also 'group planted' Peppermint trees which will look a lot more natural. We finished all the planting by 3pm which was much earlier than expected.

That night we decided to eat at the Settlers pub again. It was packed with people, mainly locals, which proved how good it is. We were asked why we had come all the way from Toodyay to plant trees and we said we just wanted to help and get the trees planted.

We can't wait to go back to check out the plantings as there should be a good success rate with the rain we had.



*Meg and Grahame at Ellensbrook.*

[Further photos see Page 9

# My CRREPA Visit

by Tanami Boggs

ON SUNDAY 20th November at Canning River I experienced a lovely tour with Toodyay Friends of the River, I had lots of fun seeing what CRREPA had done. Our lovely tour guides from CRREPA showed us pictures of all their progress (which was a lot giving the time period they did it in.)

They turned a bare spot of land into something beautiful planting sedges and other native plants along the riverside. It was unbelievable all the land they had covered. They showed us a spot of land in which they had also planted sedges along the riverside but they had left a small beach for all the birds that come to Canning river. I have never seen so many pelicans in my life and there were also some birds I've never even seen before! I was pretty impressed.

Great work CRREPA! 😊

[Tanami is 11 years of age]



*Above: Pelicans, Sacred Ibis, Silver Gulls and other water-birds enjoying the mud-flats of the Canning River at Shelley Beach.*

*Photo: Tanami Boggs*

# CONSERVATION OF THE AVON RIVER ENVIRONMENT - (CARE)

THE EIGHTH MEETING of this group was held in the Community Resource Centre in York on Friday 9th December. There was excellent representation from environment groups of the Avon Valley together with Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW), Food and Agriculture, Noongar KEEDAC, Department of Water and DFES.

The main meeting was followed by a presentation of Noongar fire regimes by Kerry Collard of KEEDAC. Kerry began with stating she was not an expert in this area but, as a Noongar woman, she is well aware of the values of fire and the many aspects of fire regimes.

A Noongar perspective on '*Karla Wongi – Fire Talk*' and authored by Glen Kelly, was given out to members present which has the Aboriginal reasons for the various types of fire, times of the year to burn, what to burn, how to burn and the ultimate reason of why to burn.

Glen has stated that until recent times the views of the Noongar people have not been heard or valued. But, he states, '*We are of this land and this land is of us. It has been that way for many tens of thousands of years. Our knowledge base and cultural identity is closely intertwined with the land and our people....*'

Kerry showed an amusing, but very well put together, short video of the interaction that could be used by the Aboriginal peoples and the wider Australian community in the use of fire and its benefits on the landscape.

It is extremely interesting to understand the various fire uses and the reasons from the 'caring for country' perspective. Generally there are two types of fire being a cool fire, which is of low intensity and the most common type of fire, and a high intensity fire.

The cool fire is to clear thick undergrowth to promote ease of movement of the peoples and also to promote new growth on the trees and shrubbery. The vegetation in these areas requires a high germination rate which will begin to fall away after 10 to 15 years.

At this point the area will need a boost from a hot fire to restart the cycle and promote new growth from a seed bed held in the soil. It is imperative that the area doesn't have cool burns at this time as the new growth will be destroyed. A cool fire can also be used to solely promote grass regrowth. Glen states that the latter fire plan is usually on a two year rotation.

The full article of '*Karla Wongi – Fire Talk*' is available, on loan, from the Editor.

About the author.

Glen Kelly is a Noongar man and served as CEO of the South West Land and Sea Council from April 2006 till April 2015. In this capacity he was the chief negotiator of the Noongar Native Title Settlement and oversaw the authorisation by all the Noongar native title claim groups in early 2015. He has 21 years of experience in Native Title and Indigenous Land related issues and has held a number of senior positions in community organisations and within government agencies. Glen sits on a number of committees and statutory authorities at a State and Commonwealth level.

# INTRODUCING the WA BIODIVERSITY SCIENCE INSTITUTE

by Guy Boggs



Western Australia is renowned for its remarkable biodiversity. Eight of Australia's fifteen declared biodiversity hotspots are in WA, with the South West of WA an internationally-recognised biodiversity hotspot...and new species are being discovered all the time.

A key goal for Western Australia is protecting this rich biodiversity while enabling economic development. This raises a number of questions that are easy to form opinions over, but harder to answer with robust facts. With sound, objective and readily accessible information, we, as a society, can move towards obtaining good answers to these questions.



*Above: WA's Faunal Emblem, Numbats - Lochman Transparencies*

*Continued Page 8*

## *The WA Biodiversity Science Institute (cont)*

The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) has been formed to help address these questions by enabling end-user relevant research collaboration and delivering shared, high quality biodiversity knowledge that can be accessed by industry, government and community across the state, nationally and internationally to better manage biodiversity issues.

A key goal of WABSI is to better connect the research and end user community, in order to explore and bridge the nexus between on-ground management or end-user needs and the research required to advance the scientific understanding of biodiversity and improve decision making.

WABSI is an independent entity that has been formed as a partnership between industry, government and research bodies. WABSI is overseen by a representative board and administered by a small executive team and has received 5 years of start-up funds from the state government, through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Foundation partners in the collaborative venture are The University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Murdoch University, Department of Parks and Wildlife, CSIRO, Environmental Protection Authority, Department of Mines and Petroleum, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority and WA Museum.

For more information about WABSI or to sign up for our newsletter, go to: <http://www.wabsi.org.au/>



*Left: The riparian vegetation along Toodyay West Road, opposite some well established homes, after a fire on Christmas Eve, 2006.*

*The cause of the fire is unknown.. Our brigades had to work hard to stop the fire from crossing the road, and into homes; this mature paperbark and jam forest has never fully recovered.*

*As a community we have a role to play in having fires extinguished with utmost haste, We are all fire brigade members at these times.*

*If you see what appears to be a fire then immediately call 000 with the details.*

*Photo: Wayne Clarke*

[N.B. Greg Warburton has written an excellent article (Page 11) for those residing by the river. Being prepared is vital for your family, your pets, your homes and for yourself]



## ELLENSBROOK TREE PLANTING (cont)



*Above, Tree planters sheltering on the verandah of Ellensbrook homestead.. What miserable weather it was for the weekend.*



*Left: The trees have arrived, ready to be planted*



*Photo courtesy Kyra Lomas of the National Trust Historic property, 'Ellensbrook'*

## *NEW HOME FOR OUR WORK TRAILER*



*Left: The Toodyay Friends of the River's trailer has a home at last. Here it sits, out of the weather, in the shed at the Seed Orchard.*

*Photo: Greg Warburton*

## *MILLARDS POOL ACCOMMODATION*



*Above: Millards Pool trees are often the resting place for birds. Up to four pelicans, a number of yellow-billed spoonbills, various cormorants and possibly other waterbirds use this fallen tree - opposite Donkey Crossing - as a regular roosting area.*

*The long grass in the foreground is of particular concern this summer - it can also be seen on the far bank.*

*Photo by Wayne Clarke*

# *RESIDING BY THE RIVER*

*by Greg Warburton*

My connection with the Avon River has become multi-faceted over the years. I guess it really started when I joined TFOR in the early 2,000's and began learning about the environmental history of the River from people like Wayne Clarke and Gavin Donegan. My interest to know more, especially about the impact of the River Training Scheme, saw me walk along the River from Yenyenning Lakes to the West Toodyay Bridge, a distance of 170kms, over 10 days.

I then was fortunate enough to work for the Department of Water in Northam for three years which provided me with an insight to the issues throughout the catchment. This led to a role with Wheatbelt NRM whereby I was once again traipsing along the length of the Avon this time in pursuit of Weeds of National Significance, namely Bridal Creeper and Tamarisk. However, my main focus and passion over the years has been supporting and maintaining the river work conducted by the Toodyay Friends of the River. I'm now employed by the Toodyay Shire as a Reserve Management Officer which fortunately has increased my ability and capacity to on-ground work in the Riparian zone, especially in the section of River from Nardie downstream to Weatherall Reserve on River Road. This section is a distance of some 15 kms and, of course, includes the important town section.

Most of the riparian zone is Unallocated Crown Land or Department of Water Reserves and as such are not directly the responsibility of the Shire to manage but there are a number of reserves such as Lloyd Reserve, Weatherall Reserve and Milliards Pool that are directly under Shire control or management order arrangements. My role allows for environmental restoration activities and the Milliards Pool re-vegetation project and Bilya Walk Track maintenance.

However, it is reducing the fire risk along the river that is of over-riding importance and I am grateful for the support and resources funded by DFES to conduct work such as mulching, slashing, chemical weed control, fire break and access construction and maintenance. We are indeed fortunate to have dedicated, local contractors to efficiently and sensitively carry out this work. The task is enormous and the resources are limited so the input and assistance from groups such as TFOR is greatly valued.

Residents that have chosen to live in properties along the river, of which there are many extending from Glen Coe Estate to West Toodyay, need to be especially vigilant with ensuring their homes are fire safe with compliant fire breaks and well maintained building protection zones. Having auxiliary fire pumps and water storage is highly recommended along with a fire plan that includes an intimate knowledge of escape routes. The Friends of the River and the Shire are keen to talk to any riverside resident about things that can be done to mitigate fire risk. It seems often the case that a person will fall in love with a property, purchase it then realize down the track that riverside dwelling comes with inherent risks.

The environmental issues and fire dangers associated with the river, especially annual weed invasion, have been created since European Settlement. We now have the task as a community to address these problems. Enquiries? phone Reserve Management 9574 9360.

**Newsletter of the  
Toodyay Fiends of the River (Inc.)**

**Post Office Box 1266  
Toodyay 6566  
Western Australia**

**President: Sarah Dudley (08) 9574 5118  
Secretary: Lance Bennett (08) 9574 4467  
Treasurer: Wayne Clarke (08) 9574 5574  
Editor: Desraé Clarke (08) 9574 5574  
Editorial to : editor@toodyayfor.org.au**

**Contact us at: info@toodyayfor.org.au**

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*Above: Susan Harris from CRREPA with some of the excellent signage along the Canning River foreshore.*