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Biddip



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Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 11, Issue 2



Inside this issue:

<i>President's Message</i>	2
<i>Dinner time</i>	3
<i>Palms & pelicans, Booti Booti</i>	4
<i>Reflections on the Avon</i>	5
<i>Submission by the TNC, 1991</i>	6 - 7
<i>The 2017 Avon Descent</i>	8
<i>Rubbish from the river</i>	9
<i>Photographer's pages</i>	10-11
<i>The Back Page</i>	12

*The Toodyay Friends of the River
are grateful to the Wheatbelt NRM
for their support in producing the
August 2017 newsletter*



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

Presidents message

by Sarah Dudley

BY MY calculations the number of hours contributed by both the TFOR volunteers and the Seed Orchard volunteers, all working to enhance the welfare of the Avon River in the last 12 months, is totalling well over the 450 hours mark and reflects many hours of dedicated commitment when volunteers choose to make TFOR business their priority at a particular point in time. This is truly commendable and I thank each and every one of you!

These contributions cover an interesting range of diverse, evolving niches which TFOR members have selected and which now provide an interesting mirror on our role diversifications in order to achieve our goals as a group. Gone are the days when members simply contributed to Sunday morning working bees. Would Gavin recognise us? We now have ‘alternative’ working bees in addition to Sunday mornings which allow members to have a choice as to when they can contribute to physical tasks. Additionally we now have Drummond House as our shared ‘home’ – and this too has led to members contributing to developing the surrounds with natives and drainage, manning the “open” days, attending Drummond House committee meetings and updating the external TFOR notice board for the public.

Talking of meetings – the hard working, behind-the-scenes TFOR Management Committee has been exemplary in debating current and future issues so productively and harmoniously. Special mention must be made of our redoubtable Treasurer who has guided us wisely so that we are currently in the black. A big thankyou to all those who have contributed so generously to our various fund-raising efforts often necessitating early morning, chilly rises... Also invaluable has been our hospitable, dedicated Secretary who has been such a resolute, precise and humorous tonic (especially to me!) through the ups and downs of the year! He will be sorely missed as he leaves Toodyay for a temporary sojourn in the Gasgoyne. We wish him well and look forward to his return.

Roles evolve with time – and recently a new TFOR role was introduced – that of Works Officer, who is now responsible for the management of the working bees. Also new is the establishment of our 10 river monitoring posts which can be found between Grandfather’s Pool and Dumbarton Bridge. Those members who would like to adopt a spot (or two!) and observe and record changes to flora, fauna and river quality over periods of time are encouraged to express their interest. Our “musical chemists” duo has been rigorous in establishing its water quality monitoring points and is faithfully testing for quantities of unwanted chemicals and then highlighting trends.

We are still looking for a Web Manager – and appreciate the work done to date not only on our TFOR website but in the creation of our updated Rules of Association and Bylaws which can be found there. Adequate communication and accountability is a challenge to all of us – and nowhere is this achieved as well as in the high standard provided in our Biddip newsletter, in our draft Welcome Pack for new members and in our monthly Herald TFOR article. The Project Officer’s role has evolved incrementally as he has become an ever valued and pivotal hub between TFOR, the Shire, CARE, Tidy Towns, the Agricultural Show and the Main Roads Community Management Committee. The Seed Orchard Team has moved to new, improved premises at the Junction and has expanded into a Compost making enterprise as well as providing thousands of wonderful native plants used for rehabilitation work.

As we work so generously, so do we age..... Five of our TFOR members (see below) have entered new decades recently and we made time in July to share their joy and trepidation! To all members who have had/will have birthdays – many happy returns! As the years roll by, we can all look backwards and remind ourselves that each in his/her own way, has contributed in a truly unique way to the evolution of the current spirit and longevity of the Toodyay Friends of the River. What the future plans might be will be a topic of discussion in our ‘new year’.

Cover Photo: *Moonlight over the Avon River*

Photo by *Dimity Boggs*

Dinner time

by Robyn Taylor

Early one evening in late May I was gazing downstream from the school footbridge. A crescent moon was shining in the darkening sky and all was still and peaceful. Then out of the dusk came a large pelican flying upstream, just a couple of metres above the surface of the Avon.

It was flying with obvious intent. It was dinner time. It knew exactly where it wanted to go and down it came alongside the left bank and immediately plunged its head under the water, tail up, and kept paddling while it foraged along the grassy bank. Up came the head to swallow the catch, and immediately down again. It was obviously a good feeding spot.

Amazingly this procedure was repeated every couple of metres, each time bringing up a catch, until it went under the bridge and upstream for about 20-30 metres. It then paddled across the river to the other side and began moving downstream, feeding all the time, to about the same distance from where it started. It was then back across the river to the starting point and the whole process was repeated.

It's reassuring to find there is an abundance of pelican tucker in the Avon, and to find out why they are regular visitors to this stretch of water.



Above: Australian pelican feeding - upstream of the Newcastle Bridge.

Photo: Beth Frayne

Palms and Pelicans in Booti Booti, NSW

by Beth Frayne

My husband Bob and I were fortunate to visit a small National Park on the New South Wales coast last April. We drove up The Lakes Way to stay near Pacific Palms, a small locality south of Forster Tuncurry, at the home of Bob's old friend David Turner and his wife Ann. David, now retired, was once the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Ranger of Booti Booti National Park which includes NSW's largest breeding colony of the Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*).

Created in 1992, the 1,566ha Booti Booti National Park is located some 282kms north of Sydney and approximately 8km south of the town of Forster. The name comes from 'butibuti,' the local Worimi Aboriginal word meaning 'plenty of honey.'

The park encompasses additional areas of Yahoo, Shepherd, Little Snake, Snake, Pelican, Earps and Booti Islands located in Wallis Lake. It is a small but delightful place comprised of an 8km peninsula between the Pacific Ocean and Wallis Lake. We had views of both pristine white sandy beaches and amazing rare littoral, on sand dunes, rainforest with 11km of estuarine foreshore next to the town of Forster.

I thought Pacific Palms as a place name was a bit touristy, but, no, there are actually a protected species, Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistonia australis*), growing right alongside the Pacific Ocean beach!

More than 200 species of birds may be found in the park including the endangered Little Tern and the Masked Owl. David showed us mature and young pelicans on Snake Island. We also had views from headlands up and down the craggy coast and, visiting Elizabeth Beach within the Park, saw an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nesting on a power pole.



*Left: Snake Island -
Booti Booti National Park
New South Wales*

Photo: Beth Frayne

[More photos Page 10]

Reflections on the Avon

by Rebecca Meegan-Lowe

We share our property at Toodyay with many creatures, most welcome, some not. We see foxes patrolling the water's edge both day and night and wish the Shire would undertake a program of eradication. I photographed the burrowing frog shown here at the same spot that a fox was captured on our night vision camera just an hour or so later. Sitting some 6cm tall, the frog was a beautiful creature and one can only hope it is still out and about.

Revegetation efforts on our land have focused on prickly species this year. This follows our observation of a pair of splendid fairy wrens nesting 30cm off the ground in a young *Labichea lanceolata* that Ric planted a while ago. Although the bush is somewhat prickly, a thicket of *Labichea* would offer better protection than an isolated one. Digging substantial holes for planting these and other prickly species has been a labour of love with many hours spent wielding the mattock through the surface loam and into clay and rocks. Rhapsodic birdsong at the worksite provides constant motivation and many different species have flown by to check on progress. Of late, these have included the birds such as a female Red-capped Robin with lunch for her chicks, a Barn Owl and a juvenile Black-shouldered Kite; also visiting was a Spotted Burrowing Frog.

On Avon Descent morning I lay aside the mattock in order to enjoy a cuppa by the river. The competition underway in the skies easily rivalled that playing out in the race from Northam as a Brown Goshawk and Black-shouldered Kite engaged in a spectacular territorial dispute.

We are very fortunate to be able to enjoy and nurture the Avon landscape. Being up early to watch dawn break over the river is inspiring and energizing. Each day brings both discovery and reward.

Below: Female Red-capped Robin



Below: Burrowing frog



Photos: Rebecca Meegan-Lowe

Submission by the Toodyay Naturalists' Club Inc. To the Avon River System Management Committee, 1991

THE AVON RIVER SYSTEM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (ARSMC) was a representative body of local government authorities along the Avon River and of the wider catchment. It was formed in 1984 with the aim of managing the Avon River and its catchment for social, economic and environmental purposes, and it continually pressed government for a better approach to management of the Avon River System. The ARSMC was supported by the Western Australian Waterways Commission (WWC).

In August 1991 a Draft Avon River System Management Strategy was released for six-months public comment by the WWC on behalf of the ARSMC. This was to allow the community to consider the recommendations in the draft, and put forward comments and submissions to be considered when preparing the final Strategy.

Submissions were open until 31 January 1992. Thirty five submissions were received and deliberated in preparation of the final strategy report, this being one of those considered.

The following '*Matters of Special Interest to the Toodyay Naturalists' Club*' form part of the submission to the ARSMC that was presented by the Toodyay Naturalists' Club, and prepared by the late Jim Masters OAM.

(The main object of these measures is to reduce discharge of water and possible pollutants from subsidiary streams. It does not mean that the total volume of discharge is in fact reduced. The period of seasonal flow into the main rivers may be, and quite often is, lengthened by such measures.)

1. Plant trees on appropriate areas of the catchment.
2. Re-vegetate with permanent plant species the main subsidiary streams, together with their often attendant lakes and marshes. There are extensive areas requiring this.
3. Develop a system of grant subsidy for landowners for the fencing out of these areas, to make possible regeneration, usually with salt tolerant species, many suitable for controlled grazing. These also slow down water speed during floods, reducing the rate of discharge into the lower Avon.
4. Wherever possible, establish limited grazing within the flood zone of swamps, streams and marshes.
5. The conditions established for grant money eligibility, together with procedures for controlled grazing in flood zone areas, should be administered through local LCDC¹ groups.
6. An overall plan for the wheatbelt portions of the basin could be developed to establish linked corridors' of permanent trees and shrubs to enable wildlife movement. Existing wildlife reserves, both dryland and wetland, could be linked by the retention of roadside vegetation and close connection with woodlots developed across private land.
7. No open drainage of a flood-prone area or a hillside seepage should proceed unless an

adequate compensating basin, lake, swamp or dam exists or is provided immediately downstream.

Such compensating basins can provide increased wildlife and/or recreation areas. All need bottom outlets for salinity control. Unrestricted open drainage adds to potential flooding downstream, as well as adding to stream bed erosion.

8. Any land tax on rural land imposed for conservation purposes may only be arranged by members of a LCDC owning all the land jointly included within a catchment plan of clearly defined area. Such a tax should apply to this area only. All other funding, including additional support for LCDC committees should be provided from the general revenue of Shires and State and Federal governments by grant money allocated for developed plans of action.

This is to ensure that all members of the community of this State contribute at least in some degree to environmental protection and accept responsibility for it.

9. The problem of excess nutrient discharge into streams could be investigated along with methods of control, to restrict any form of pollution entering the rivers and lakes. The economics of slow-release phosphate may be worth investigating in this regard.

¹. LCDC - Land Conservation District Committee

In 1993 the Avon River System Management Strategy was released. As a result of the Management Strategy process the Avon River Management Authority (ARMA) was established. The Strategy was used as a guide by ARMA in developing its policies and operations over the next six years.

It led to the development of the Avon River Management Program and River Recovery Plans for eighteen sections of the river, from the Avon Valley National Park through to the Brookton townsite. Sections 1, 2, 3 and part of section 4 (up to the Shire of Northam boundary) were in the Shire of Toodyay.

ARMA developed a 'Vision' through to the year 2020; however with the changing focus of funding management authorities throughout Western Australia it was dissolved before it could realise that vision.

Following the demise of ARMA in 2001 the Avon Waterways Committee (AWC) was formed. The AWC was a committee of the Board of the Water and Rivers Commission (and subsequently the Department of Water); it was also incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act. Again after a few short years the AWC lost its funding and alliance with government, and was dissolved in December 2009. A history of the management of the river can be found in Biddip Volume 6 Number 2 (August 2012) under the title 'Who Cares Wins'.

The Toodyay Naturalists' Club were our local voice for river conservation prior to the formation of the Toodyay Friends of the River.

2017 Avon Descent - The Toodyay Buoys



Above: Guy Boggs, with friends Josh Ferguson, Kitt Byfield and Matt Williams, took to the Avon Descent as two teams and to raise funds for the Toodyay District High School P and C. They enjoyed seeing parts of the river not seen before.

Photos: Dimity Boggs

2017 Avon Descent

TFOR - Working for the Environment



Above: Meg and Grahame Malone with their grandchildren Mary and Rosie at Extracts Weir. They raised nearly \$180 for the Toodyay Friends of the River

Photo by Meg and Grahame's daughter, Sarah

Rubbish from the river and a lid in a tree

By Rebecca Meegan-Lowe

Rubbish collected from the river, and debris lodged in the trees from the high river in January 2017



Photographer's pages



Above: Juvenile Black-shouldered kite
Photo: Rebecca Meegan-Lowe



Right: Robyn Taylor, Wayne Clarke, Meg Malone and Greg Warburton on the steps at Drummond House

Photo: Sarah Dudley

Right: Guy Boggs close planting Anamaeka Salt Bush

Below right: Astrid helping with the plantings with Guy in the portable sheep yards.



ANAMAEKA SALT BUSH

We bought a tray of Anamaeka Salt Bush from Chatfields this year to add to our re-vegetation and production efforts on the saline and waterlogged area that runs through our block into St Johns Brook on Salt Valley Rd.

We didn't want to buy tree guards but the 'roos love our salt bush seedlings so we're experimenting with high density plantings in some of our portable sheep yards. Hopefully we'll feed some sheep instead of kangaroos this summer.

Notes and photos: Dimity Boggs



Photographer's pages



Above: Donkey orchid (*Diuris* sp.)

Right: Leaping Spider Orchid (*Caladenia macrostylis*)



On Sunday 20th August we went walking in the bush along St John's Creek which flows into Jimperding Brook along Salt Valley Road. What a wonderful surprise to find seven species of orchids in a square kilometre of bush.

Text and photos Dimity Boggs



Left: Pink fairy orchids (*Caladenia reptans* ssp. *Reptans*)

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Toodyay Friends of the River (Inc.)

WORKING FOR THE HEALTH OF THE
AVON RIVER

Post Office Box 1266
(108b Stirling Terrace)
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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The Back Page

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Volume 11, Issue 2

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) has released a Discussion Paper on a proposed container deposit scheme (CDS) in Western Australia. The State Government is committed to the implementation of a CDS, with plans to start in January 2019.

DWER is seeking feedback on the CDS, and will compile and analyse submissions before making recommendations to the Minister for Environment. The submission period is open for an eight week comment period closing on 23 October 2017.

You can download the discussion paper at www.dwer.wa.gov.au/cds.

It is proposed that the scheme will compliment the Waste Authority's *Waste Strategy: Creating the right environment* and the Keep Australia Beautiful WA (KABWA): *Litter Prevention Strategy for Western Australia 2015-2020*

The Toodyay Friends of the River has been involved in litter collection for many years, having registering an *Adopt-a-Spot* with KABWA in 2009; they will be developing a submission.

Written submissions can be lodged by email (at [cgs@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:cds@dwer.wa.gov.au)) or online submissions can be made through the website above.