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# ***Biddip***



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Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

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*The Toodyay Friends of the River are grateful to the Wheatbelt NRM for their on-going support in producing the Biddip newsletter*



**wheatbelt**  
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## *Presidents message by Rev. Peggy Ludlow*

What a land this is - Western Australia.

I get up each day and discover something new I've not seen or understood. A new plant, creature or geography. Good to observe; better to conserve?

What I love about TFOR is we get stuck in, not just looking or talking but making a difference to the Avon river and its environment. In this year ahead, I hope, our desire to restore the Pelham outlet area will turn from dream to a reality - and be for us and the wider community a chance to make a difference.

The big environmental challenges of our time seem always beyond our grasp but by working project by project, groups like ours can make something happen for the benefit of our place.

In the last year 45 Volunteers have spent 242 hours in tasks along the riverside. The seed orchard group of 4-6 folk have worked tirelessly each fortnight to grow native plants for replenishing areas. Thank you to them and to all who, behind the scenes, work on managing our committee, our special projects and our grant applications, these hours have been a great number week by week.

After a wonderful AGM over BBQ breakfast we now have some more great ideas for the year to come.

Do please write our monthly work party dates into your diary or fridge calendar or where ever you store your 'to do' dates - and get involved!

Lastly, let's continue to use our voice to speak and act for the environment and for the land we all care about.

## Riparian restoration - a long term project: Part 2

IN the last edition of BIDDIP (August 2019) we reported that Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) had started a long term project in the centre of Toodyay, behind the Anglican Church. This project aims to re-establish a healthy, diverse and evolving ecosystem alongside the river – the riparian zone.

TFOR has received a grant of \$5000 from the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management *Healthy Soils, Healthy Rivers* small grant scheme to get started on the project. This money is being used on consultation and planning. Urbaqua has been appointed as the consultant to help with this phase. Hydrologist and Director, Helen Brookes, is taking carriage of the project. Helen made an initial visit to Toodyay on 14 October 2019, undertaking a site assessment and meeting with the project Steering Group whilst she was here. Her next visit will be to meet with members of the Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation.

Helen will be the guest speaker at a joint meeting of the Toodyay Naturalists Club and the Toodyay Friends of the River. At this meeting she will talk about the hydrology of the area and the challenges of the restoration project. The meeting will be on Saturday, 15 February 2020 at 7.00 pm in the CWA Hall. This is an open meeting and we encourage members of the community to come along to hear from and interact with Helen.

Meanwhile, the TFOR Seed Orchard Group is growing plants for the replanting phase, which we hope will occur in the winter of 2020



### Community Partnerships for River Health

### Tackling water quality through Revegetation

[www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au](http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au)



Department of Biodiversity,  
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## *Be careful what you wish for...*

BENEATH the umbrella of the Toodyay Friends of the River is a group of enthusiastic volunteers of the Toodyay Seed Orchard Group (TSOG) who propagate endemic seed for local revegetation projects. The following Main Roads improvement works is one such revegetation project.

The Toodyay/Perth Road has long been a topic of concern for residents. Safety concerns have been expressed and apparently the number of accidents makes it a priority for improvements. There have been public meetings starting many years ago where people requested more overtaking lanes and improvements to some intersections and some stopping-off places along this major country road.

There is no funding allocated for any projects on Toodyay Road next financial year but this year the seed group grew around 1300 plants towards the revegetation of the widened area just out of Toodyay town. There were a few issues with species selection of some of the other species main roads used as many seemed more suitable to soils types up-slope from Clackline Road. Hopefully it will succeed but with less than perfect preparation, poor species selection combined with late planting, low rainfall and frosts we shall have to see what happens.

Apparently in total there are 6000 plants in that section with Main Roads sourcing plants from a variety of wheatbelt nurseries. In anticipation the seed group members are growing some infill plants for the 2020 season.

Many now realise that what is happening on Toodyay Road is a lot more than those modest improvements that were envisaged and campaigned for. When the existing road configuration is put through the main roads computer-generated design system then the computer says NO.

In answer to the question why it has to be done in this devastating fashion with now five overtaking lanes with almost the whole road being widened and 54 ha of vegetation removed, the answer has always been 'it has to be done to stop people losing their lives'. According to Main Roads data there has been one fatal and seven hospitalisations and a dozen major incidents of property damage between 2014 and 2018.

Well, apparently that is not the whole story and according to a report commissioned by RoadWise if safety was the only justification for the investment of \$100 million then it would not stack up and neither would an improvement in efficiency.

According to a draft RoadWise commissioned report it's the economic argument which pulls this project over the line with the planned improvements of the tourists coming to visit Toodyay can get here 10 minutes quicker and get home quicker, too. The same thoughts are with the garbage trucks going down Salt Valley Road - a 10 minute saving on their journey.

## *Be careful what you wish for... (cont)*

Gravel coming from Dowerin to Perth another 10 minutes saved by these improvements. The community and general public are losing a lot for this *small* economic gain. Comments are: “there’s nothing that wrong with Toodyay Road that widening in few places won’t fix”. Or “Julimar Road is far worse than Toodyay Road.” or “Why on earth has the current section, just after Northam turn-off, been done first - it was hardly the problem area.”

All these comments seem fair but Toodyay Road improvements seem to have an unstoppable momentum and the only brakes on the project at the moment is the lack of funding. Main Roads WA was allocated a few million dollars just before the federal election but it was not enough to do one of the priority areas, so that’s why the section currently under construction was done. There are still no ‘passing lanes’ in the critical areas where people get frustrated when held up behind big trucks with accidents bound to happen.

The RoadWise Commissioned Report doesn’t appear to give consideration to the fact that people may drive to Toodyay for the enjoyment of the journey as well as the destination. Tourism WA is promoting the road trip for 2019 with the message ‘Take your time to enjoy your trip’.

People say that if you open up the road then drivers will go faster. The faster you go the more likely you are to have an accident especially if you are a younger or inexperienced driver or not accustomed to country driving.

What is happening now has come as a shock to many but it is nothing compared to what is about to happen. The vegetation that has been already cleared was not significant from a species point of view although the visual impact is devastating; the community needs to steel itself as the work progresses. The next section to be worked on is Fernie Road intersection. Main Roads WA have acquired land adjacent to Clackline Reserve as an offset but there is no net gain for the environment as this could never be approved to be cleared anyway under current clearing regulations.

Toodyay is a strange place. There was such an uproar in Toodyay about the removal of two lemon scented gums trees near the Shire offices which were estimated at only 60 years old and not native species and clearly within the road and making a section of road dangerous, whereas the pending clearing of Toodyay Road has hardly raised a whimper. My experience is if objections are raised you are accused of choosing trees over people. All data I have found states that speed and country-driving inexperience is the main reason for country accidents

Toodyay Road will be one of those ‘fast’ country roads when all the road work has been completed.

(See image of cleared road verge on the ‘Back Page’)

## Perth bushwalkers enjoy a weekend in Toodyay

by Bridget Leggett

MEMBERS of the Perth Bushwalkers Club (PBWC) enjoyed a social and walking weekend in Toodyay in October. The walkers had such a good time that they are already of talking of coming back next year, perhaps a bit earlier in the wildflower season. Not only that, but some volunteered to come and do some work on the Bilya walk track and in particular, the Pelham Brook Outlet Restoration Project.

The first walk for the weekend was round Pelham Reserve. It was still possible to see evidence of the everlastings, and there was much interest in the geology, the rifle range and the revetment structure. At morning tea they were met by Jenny Edgecombe and Jane Taylor from the Toodyay Historical Society, who talked about the history of the reserve and what is known of its war-time use.

Walkers continued talking about what they'd seen and learned at Pelham Reserve as they headed out to the Dawn Atwell Reserve for their afternoon walk. There were plenty of wildflowers to see, with one member even spotting a Leopard Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra benthamiana*) in bloom. The Rose-tipped Mulla Mulla (*Ptilotus manglesii*) was particularly pretty.





## *Perth bushwalkers (cont).*

Sunday's walk was a short one - 5.6 km along the Bilya walk track from Duidgee Park, past the Farmers Market for a quick introduction to the track by Greg Warburton, to Nardie Cemetery. Commentary along the track was provided by TFOR member Vicki Warburton and PBWC/TFOR member Bridget Leggett. The walkers enjoyed a break at the Bird Hide. There was plenty of birdlife to see, including the Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck, Black Cormorant and Spoonbills. A flock of Pelicans took off as we arrived, leaving two of their number to entertain the visitors. Gerygones were heard but not seen. The Farmers Market won out over the temptation to walk the return trip!

Other highlights included gourmet breakfasts and a swim at Pecan Hill BnB, a meal and dancing at the Victoria Hotel and visits to various coffee shops and retail outlets – of course including Christmas 360 and the Old Post Office.



*Left: Walkers get a 'birds hide view' of Red Banks Pool from the John Masters Bird Hide*

*Photos Page 6 & 7: by Bridget Leggett*

*Right: The relocated picnic table in the John Masters Bird Hide is a great setting for a picnic as well as providing additional seating within the bird hide for hikers on the Bilya Walk Track.*



# *Humming Frogs*

*by Rebecca Meegan-Lowe*

As in 2018, Humming Frogs emerged from their burrows with the first solid winter rains on our property and were soon mating in the dam and filling the air with their trilling calls. Since then, we have seen fewer of them around the dam but have encountered them venturing further afield in the grass and on the fire-breaks. When I approached this robust individual, it inflated itself in defence and I left quickly after taking a photo. Dr Jodi Rowley from the Australian Museum was kind enough to confirm that it is almost certainly the Humming Frog (*Neobatrachus pelobatooides*), although she also noted that these frogs look very similar to other species in the genus and can occur together.

The Australian Museum has a wonderful nationwide natural citizen science project called FrogID. People who have smartphones can record frog calls and this information is then used to track species, including endangered native frogs and Cane Toads. Matched with weather data, the information provides insights into the distribution and behaviour of frogs in our changing environment.



We have several frog species on our property and it is interesting to learn more about them from year to year. This winter we planted reeds around a natural soak and hope this provides extra refuge for the Bleating Froglets (*Crinia pseudinsignifera*) and Western Spotted Burrowing Frogs (*Heleioporus albopunctatus*) which favour this location.

Jodi was a guest on the ABC Radio National program *Conversations with Richard Fidler*. The conversation about her life and work was rebroadcast on 1 May 2019 and can still be heard online. I can heartily recommend it as a compelling interview.



# TOODYAY PROVIDES A RIVER HEALTH RESEARCH SITE

by Greg Warburton

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) heard that Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management was delivering “Clean Waterways” projects in the Avon. The Department requested Wheatbelt NRM to suggest sites where they could do River Health Assessments. Four sites were selected of which two were in Toodyay; one on Boyagerring Brook and the other at the outlet of the Pelham Brook on the Avon River just upstream from the Newcastle Bridge.

This opportunity promised to deliver valuable information on the water quality and ecological health of the river. The Pelham Brook site is of particular interest to the Toodyay Friends of the River as it is the location of their Wheatbelt NRM funded Healthy River site. The proposal there is to mitigate erosion and improve water quality and riparian health through engineering and revegetation.

On Tuesday the 26th of November a well-equipped team from the DWER Science Branch came to Toodyay and immediately got to work setting nets, traps and water quality monitors. The following day the haul was examined and a mass of small fish and invertebrates, identified.



Left: DWER Science Branch Team ‘bringing in the catch’. TFOR members Dimity Boggs and John Hansen waiting to examine the contents.

Among the catch were larger animals such a baby Long-necked Turtle *Chelodina colliei* and a Gilgie *Cherax quinquecarinatus*. The dominant fish species was the introduced Mosquito Fish *Gambusia affinis* but some Swan River Goby *Pseudogobius olorum* and Western Hardyhead *Letatherina wallacei* were also found.

... Continued Page 10

## RIVER HEALTH RESEARCH SITE (...cont).

Despite the low water level and lack of flow all were surprised at the large quantity of organisms living in the river water. Both sites will be revegetated in the next few years and DWER will do a follow-up survey in 3-5 years to see how the health of the waterway has changed.

Many Thanks to Dominic and the DWER team and to Dr. Dimity Boggs from Wheatbelt NRM. Also to Toodyay Friends of the River and other community members for their support and interest.



*Left:* A baby long-necked turtle '*Chelodina colliei*' is collected from opposite the Pelham Brook outlet.

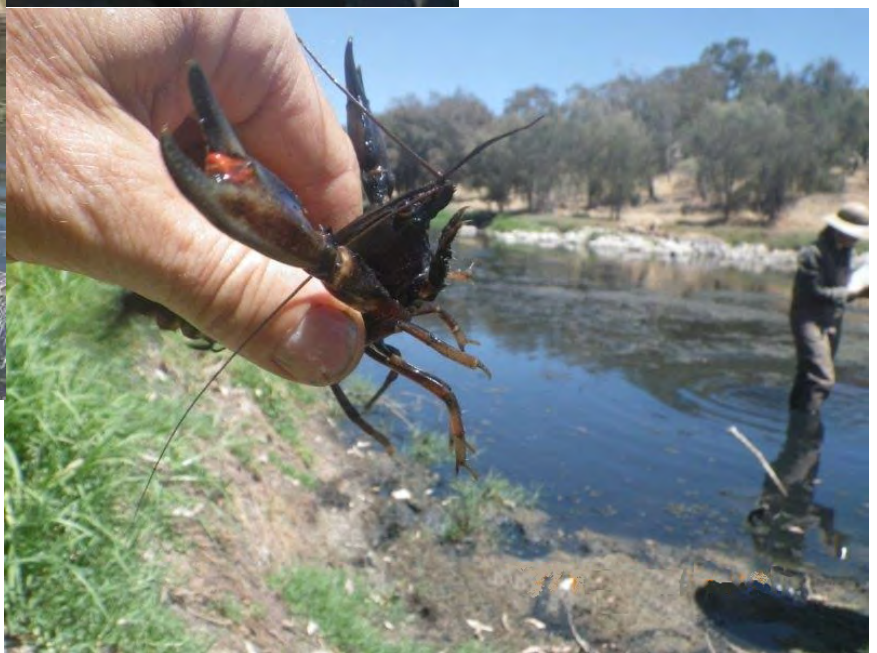
*Photos This page and top of Page 11 by Greg Warburton*

*Below:*

*A gilgie *Cherax quinquecarinatus**



*Above:* Department of Water and Environmental Regulation staff collecting samples from the Avon River opposite the Pelham Brook Outlet.







*Above: The fish traps set in the Avon River*



*Above: (?) A Hardy Head from the traps...*

## **FRIENDS OF THE RIVER RAMP IT UP AT MILLARDS POOL**

*by Greg Warburton*

WITH the increasing popularity of the Millard’s Pool as a walking, picnic and kayaking location it was suggested better access to the water would be appreciated by visitors.

The TFOR project crew thought about how best to do this and came up with a design that negated the need to have a permanent structure such as a jetty as this would be hard to obtain approval for. The design needed to make it easier and safer for people, especially kayakers and canoeists, but it also had to protect the fragile river bank from erosion damage. Thanks to Graham, Maurie, Bill, Corri and Greg the ramp was completed recently.

Within the first day it was being utilised by members of the public. The improved access should also encourage more people to paddle on Millard’s Pool which remains deep enough to paddle on right throughout summer.

The Toodyay Friends of the River intend to install a similar ramp at Weatherall Reserve on River Road where intense activity during Avon Descent has caused significant bank erosion there.

## *Photo Gallery*



Above: Kayak launch ramp by Greg Warburton



Above: Kayaking on the Avon River, Toodyay by: Cherie Harrington



**Newsletter of the  
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**WORKING FOR THE HEALTH OF THE  
AVON RIVER**



Toodyay & Districts  
Community Bank Branch



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*Photo: Bethan Lloyd*



*Above: The 'modest' clearing that has taken place along the Toodyay Road upgrade.  
See article by Bethan Lloyd on Pages 4 & 5*