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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
natural resource
management

Presidents message by Rev. Peggy Ludlow

Another newsletter and hasn't time moved on? I just want to bring a bit of cheer and some reminder of all the great projects we are involved in.

The TFOR group had great fun working together with the Toodyay Nat's to paint the bird hide over the March busy bee. Spread out and focussed on the painting; the shelter looks fresh and interesting. Definitely, a place for walkers to stop and enjoy any information about their surroundings, in a place that is cared for. We did that! Well done crew! Watch for news of what happens at our busy bees, as the virus makes us change what we do day by day.

I live close to the Pelham Brook outlet so it was with great interest that I went out (getting wet) on the 27th February to see for myself what the heavy rain was doing to the area. A waterfall from the outlet saw quantities of water sweeping past both sides of the large tree, making extra channels and a meandering stream down to the river. The path again disappeared under water. I got good pictures to help us understand how we can create a new and vibrant area here given the infrequent but powerful water incidences. The course of the water is still evident now. I hope we can make a difference to this part of the Bilya track and create a better space for native wildlife and plants.

TFOR also is developing launching ramps for the river Avon so that canoes can enter without the damage to the banks. With Greg Warburton's help and advice a number should be in place for this winter.

TFOR makes a difference to the place we all love. Thank you to every member: those who get out and involved; and those too who offer their support and encouragement.

Gabidine's Last Gasp

by Greg Warburton

Travellers along Toodyay Road would have been familiar with a picnic area at about the 12 km peg. It was contained within an 8 hectare crown reserve (No 2876) which has the purpose of "Public Recreation" and is managed by the Toodyay Shire. Access to this location is the Old Toodyay Road which now continues on as Strahan Road to Salt Valley Road.

About 30 years ago this area was developed as two separate picnic sites with tables, rubbish bins, bollarded parking areas and concrete fire places with hot plates. Although history indicates Main Roads did this work it is not listed on the Department's asset list.

One can only assume that the site was chosen because the spot was very pleasant with the Gabidine Brook flowing past over huge water smoothed granite boulders. This spring fed creek would flow most of the year on its way to enter Jimperding Brook a few hundred metres downstream. Gabidine Brook has also been a water quality monitoring site with regular data collected by the Toodyay Landcare Officer during the early 2000's.

Over the years the picnic tables became degraded with the wooden planks rotted and broken and some vandalism occurred to the fire places. The Shire removed four of the six picnic tables and refurbished them. These tables have been installed at other reserve picnic spots in the Shire such as Weatherall Reserve and West Toodyay Bridge (since stolen).

Cover Photo: Water from the Pelham Brook outlet making its way to the Avon River heavy rain in the catchment on 27th February 2020 (see 'President's message')

Photo: Rev. Peggy Ludlow

BOYAGERRING BROOK BENEFITS *from Mitigation Activity Fund*

by Greg Warburton

DESPITE the unexpected challenges that we have been presented with this year Toodyay Friends of the River have a number of exciting projects on the go.

A good example of this are the opportunities created by extensive work carried out recently at the Boyagerring and Drummond Street West locations.

This 8 hectare area was a diabolical mix of rock piles, spoil dumps, severe erosion, weed infestation and overgrown access/fire tracks.

Not surprisingly it presented a serious fire hazard as the terrain made it impossible to carry out fuel reduction or environmental management.

Now, thanks to the State Government's Mitigation Activity Fund (MAF) of which Toodyay has been a major recipient it has allowed for the undertaking of desperately needed work along the lower part of Boyagerring Brook.

The Shire and the dedicated, skilled contractors, Fire Mitigation Services have worked together to transform the site to allow not only bushfire risk reduction but scope for strategic revegetation, public open space and passive recreation.

Further, with improved access to Boyagerring Brook itself the Shire, Toodyay Friends of the River and Wheatbelt NRM are planning revegetation and other restoration work along this degraded waterway which is an important tributary of the Avon River.

Ripping for winter planting is already completed and there will be a new walk track to link into the existing and popular Murray Walkway which will include interpretive signage for the historical bridge that spans the Brook.

These improvements in amenity and environmental management will add far reaching, additional benefits to a precinct that already has vital community value with the proximity of the High School, River Hills Estate and of course our new Sports and Recreation Centre.



Left: Fire Mitigation Services (FMS) grader working along Boyagerring Brook. Works are not only reducing the fire hazard but allow scope for revegetation, public open space and passive recreation, including an extension to the popular 'Murray Walkway'.

Riparian restoration - a long term project: Part 3

THE year got off to a great start for the Pelham Brook Restoration project.

In February, Helen Brookes the Urbaqua Consultant for the project, made two trips to Toodyay to meet with members of the local community. On her first trip she made a presentation to Shire Councillors and Staff at their regular forum, and took questions from the floor. She was able to outline her suggestions for slowing the water at the outlet, and ensuring it has an appropriate pathway to the river.

Then on Saturday 15 February 2020, Helen returned to Toodyay for two meetings. The first was with Noongar Elders, Rodney Garlett, Allen Garlett and John Ryder. Wayne Clarke, Robyn Taylor and Bridget Leggett from TFOR joined Helen at that meeting, which was held on the banks of the Avon near the outlet. We exchanged greetings and stories about the river and reminisced a bit. Rodney and Wayne have known each other since 2004 – an association that started when Rodney worked for the Avon Catchment Council and Wayne was Chair of the Board. Both could remember the time when Auntie Kath Yarran presented the Board with a message stick to acknowledge the partnership between the Ballardong People and the Avon Catchment Council. Helen talked about her ideas for slowing the water and also ways of ensuring the needs of the various users were met.



Above: Robyn Taylor and Wayne Clarke (second and third from left) meeting with Noongar Elders Allen Garlett, Rodney Garlett and Uncle John Ryder; consultant Helen Brookes right.

Photo: Bridget Leggett

Riparian restoration - a long term project: Part 3 cont...

In the evening, the Toodyay Naturalists Club hosted a community consultation event. It was well attended, with 33 people present. Helen presented very valuable background to the project, explaining her ideas as to how to slow the water, and the pros and cons of the different possible strategies. She also talked about possible culvert designs to ensure that the water from the outlet could go under the fire access track and not wash it away. There were lots of questions and comments from the floor and considerable interest in the presentation.

The end of February saw a short sharp rain event that provided the opportunity to assess the pathway from the outlet to the river. Revs Peggy and Bryan Ludlow were onsite to take pictures of this event.

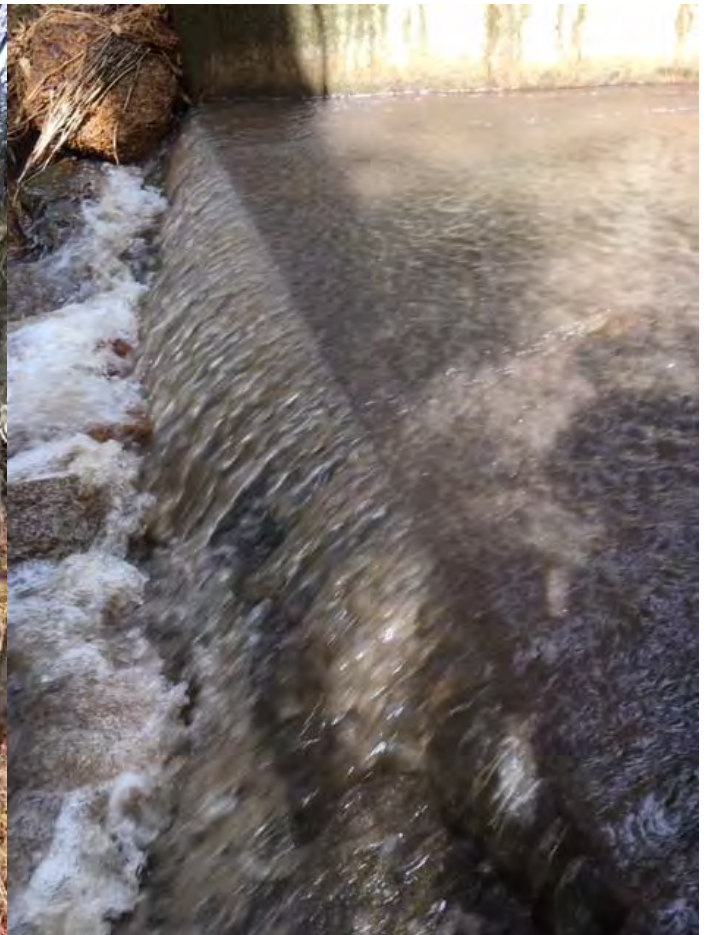
Urbaqua's report and recommendations will be with us shortly, and some of the more interesting findings will be summarised in Part 4 of this series.

Twelve days after the meetings heavy rain in the Pelham Brook catchment gave the outlet's neighbours a chance to capture some action.

Photos: Rev. Peggy Ludlow

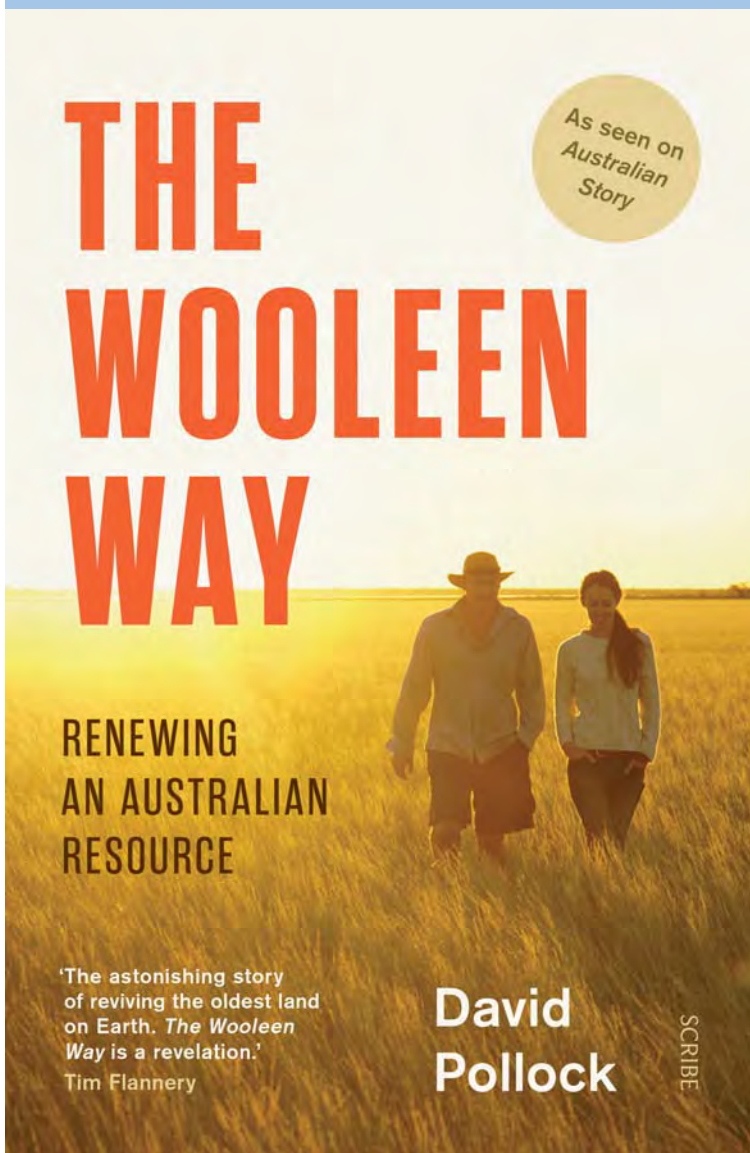


Above: Water cascading over the rocks below the outlet and spillway.



Above: Water spills over the spillway

Review by Bob and Beth Frayne of 'The Wooleen way: renewing an Australian resource', written by David Pollock.



Above: David Pollock and Bob Frayne looking at Wooleen Lake grasses

Below: David and Bob on granite rock on sunset tour Wooleen

Photos: Beth Frayne, 20 April 2012



DAVID Pollock and his wife, Frances, hold the lease of the 153,000-hectare pastoral property, Wooleen, in the Southern Rangelands of the Murchison Shire. The property embraces the confluence of the Murchison and Roderick Rivers. On Wooleen, the Roderick River flows through the nationally important wetland, Wooleen Lake.

The early European explorers described this area as being well grassed and suitable for grazing. Subsequent lease holders eagerly embraced the opportunity to stock this vast area with sheep and cattle. By the time the Pollock family came to Wooleen as lease-holders in 1989, the best perennial grasses were long gone. Naive or ignorant pastoralists had grossly overstocked their properties with no thought for the environment.

When David (then aged 27) took over the lease in 2007 from his father Brett Pollock, he took the unorthodox and unpopular decision to de-stock, and to attempt to survive on a fledgling tourist enterprise. To discourage kangaroos, he turned off the water supplies at the windmills, and to reduce the goats, he encouraged the presence of dingoes.

These measures enraged some of his neighbours and brought disapproval from the authorities who gave him no help. Botanists from the Dept. of Agriculture, who came regularly to report on the state of

Review of 'The Wooleen way: renewing an Australian resource', written by David Pollock. (cont.)

the land, made no recommendations for improvement. Lease holders had a free hand to run sheep or cattle; and dingoes were culled. Many pastoralists farmed goats as a lucrative sideline. Kangaroos thrived and multiplied.

David explains how the native perennial grasses are a resource belonging to the Australian people. He believes that pastoralists should manage their leases in such a way that the grasses can remain and regenerate in perpetuity. He has shown that, by re-introducing limited numbers of cattle for short periods in rotated paddocks, he can allow the grasses to survive and increase.

On the Roderick River, David has constructed baffles to encourage flood waters to spread out and irrigate the land instead of eroding channels. He has a comprehensive photographic record of the improvements he has achieved. In particular, the heritage listed 5,500 hectare Wooleen Lake is now covered in lush perennial pasture. This intermittent lake is sometimes replenished by backflows when the Murchison River floods.

Many people have seen David and Frances on the ABC programme 'Australian Story' and, as a result, more people are taking advantage of the tourist facilities and participating in David's guided tours.

We recommend this book as an essential guide to anyone concerned about the over exploitation of land. David writes excellent prose with no concession to modern trends in grammar. His facts are carefully marshalled and easy to follow. This book is explosive in the condemnation of past follies and timely in its advocacy of future practice.

We stayed at Wooleen in April 2012, booking just before the appearance of the first 'Australian Story' programme about Wooleen in March, and arriving just after, so we knew what to expect! We weren't disappointed. Why don't you go there too, after this enforced 'stay-at-home' period in 2020?

Published in 2019 by Scribe Publications, Melbourne, Vic. Paperback, 376p. Illustrated. \$35.00.

Kind permission to reproduce the cover of the 'The Wooleen Way' given by David's publicist, Tace Kelly, of Scribe Publications.

Gabidine's Last Gasp

(cont. from Page 2)

In addition, many incidents of inappropriate activity have been recorded at Gabidine Brook Reserve from illegal fires and camping to dumping of rubbish and abandoning of cars. Of particular concern was the stripping of bark from hundreds of Jam trees *Acacia acuminata* in the reserve. This has resulted in ongoing legal investigations.

The Shire upgraded fire breaks and created a rocked vehicle crossing to allow fire access and protect the waterway from erosion.

Then, on the afternoon of the 8th of January this year a fire started on the roadside adjacent to the reserve and was soon out of control fanned by strong, erratic winds. Water bombers and a full fire brigade response brought the blaze under control and protected homes in Wandoo Circle that were under threat. However, by then over 90 hectares had been scorched. The entire reserve had been burnt out and sadly one of Toodyay's most important historic structures had been destroyed.

All that remains now of the convict built bridge over Gabidine Brook are the beautifully constructed, angled and bevelled stone pillars. The wooden beams are charred remains and the top deck completely collapsed.

As we drive past now one can see that regeneration is occurring along the creek line and eventually the bush will return to a healthy condition. Unfortunately, a piece of our heritage has gone forever.

(See the Page 12 for a photo of the devastation)

Paradise Now

John and Jennifer White

AS TFOR members for a number of years, it seems to be *'our turn'* to write something of our experience - both with care of the Avon River, and our wider, lifelong love of, and attempts to care for, the beautiful local environment wherever we've found ourselves.

Born in Ballardong Country (Beverley) John, at the age of 3, moved with family to Pwakkenbak (Mount Barker) in Wagyl Kaip country, where he spent his first 20 years more in the Jarrah and Marri bushland on a small, family farm, than indoors, and developed an affinity with, and great love for, 'things natural'; the bush!



Jenny was born in Whadjuk country (Perth) and her early years were spent near the Djarlgarro Beeliar (Canning River) in Applecross enjoying life on and in (mostly in!) the river. It's where she learned to swim, dodging the big, brown jellyfish. Hot summer nights were spent with the family on the beach until bedtime. Fish and birds abounded.

Fast forward, Jenny and John met and married and, 20 years later, with a dream of developing a retreat for anyone who needed healing from life's struggles, they bought some degraded farmland on beautiful Julimar Road, built a straw-bale house using lots of recycled materials and, by hand and with help from friends, planted and

husbanded 1100 olive trees, and about 10,000 eucalypts to successfully reverse the effects of salinity. This place became 'Magpie Ridge' for reasons obvious to anyone lucky enough to visit! The whole farm was certified organic, and the olives were non-irrigated, resulting in premium quality oil that people are still talking about! Registered as 'Land for Wildlife', remnant patches of bush were linked by planted bush corridors enabling creatures to access the entire property with protective cover.

With a few other locals, they were foundation members of Anglican Eco-Care, part of the church's commitment (and command) to *"care for the earth and delight in it"*. As a nation we are still a long way from doing that to any effective extent - a sad function of our lower, pleasure-seeking human nature.

We haven't been well taught that we are inextricably part of the environment and, when we damage nature, we damage ourselves and all life on earth. But I digress! (Often the case when I start reflecting on the bigger picture that many of us neglect for our entire lives).



Paradise Now cont...

John and Jennifer White

Actually, 'river' is not a bad metaphor for life. And we're all 'in the flow', moving inexorably to the *source* - the sea; the fountain of moisture from which comes the rain that creates the river which flows back again to the sea in a self-sustaining cycle. The sea - that great expanse of *water* which, itself, is an often-used metaphor for *spirit*, our truest nature according to Wisdom. Perhaps that's why we are drawn to water - apart from the biological fact that we're also pretty-much *physically* made of the stuff! (60% +?) Perhaps it would be good for us to reflect on these *mystical matters* from time to time. We get so busy *doing stuff* that distract ourselves from *being stuff*; being present to the 'what is' of every moment of time and of who we are! Ah, the river can teach us!

We have always loved and been drawn to water. As kids it was oceans, rivers, creeks, boronia swamps, tadpoles, wet, muddy clothes and happy smiles! They were our adventures then. As adults, still seeking adventure and loving water, in 2015 we bought a ketch - a beautiful, 39- foot, Welsh-built, Maurice Griffiths timber 'ship' lying in magnificent Oyster Cove Marina, Kettering, South of Hobart! Our plan was to sell Magpie Ridge and go 'live-aboard cruising' while we were still fit enough to manage that. But, vicissitudes of the regional property market denied the sale and, after only 4 years of waiting for a sale and part-time living aboard Emily Jane - and not cruising very far at all - economics and 'creeping-decrepitude' forced common sense upon us and, with much grief, we sold the boat in 2018. BUT...each year we did spend several wonderful months aboard exploring some of Tasmania's mighty Huon River, D'entrecasteaux Channel, Bruny, Maria and Schouten Islands, Cole's Bay, and Freycinet Peninsula. One of our many memorable evenings, we were escorted into the East Coastal town of Orford by a dozen dolphins, who saw us safely onto our mooring, 'waved', and headed back into the bay!

Maybe the Avon is not such a grand river, but it's a far-reaching and important waterway. And it's the one given into the care and enjoyment of all of us who live here. Toodyay Friends of the River do our best to do just that with weed control, bank preservation, winter plantings to revegetate, and walk-track maintenance so locals and visitors can enjoy the bird and animal life, and walk in tune with the river environs. We are all very fortunate to have access to, and partnership with, committed and knowledgeable, 'experts' who generously share their gifts, enabling us to become a more effective 'community of care' for the river. And we are all very fortunate to be able to live in this beautiful place called 'Dudja'. Let's be grateful and 'care-full' of the gift!

Right: Emily Jane, coated with fresh anti-foul, at her moorings in March 2015.

Previous Page.

Top: 'Magpie Ridge' in Julimar, a registered 'Land for Wildlife' property.

Bottom: A view through the 1,100 olive trees planted on Magpie Ridge.

Photos: John and Jennifer White



Focus on Weeds

Guest presenter *Jacqueline Lucas* - article by *Bridget Leggett*

A WEED? 'A plant in the wrong place' was the working definition which Jacquie Lucas accepted from the audience at the start of her interesting and well organised talk to TFOR members in February. Jacquie was talking as botanist and nature lover, but in her professional role works as Project Delivery Officer with the Wheatbelt NRM.

We had decided to schedule an indoor gathering, rather than an outdoor working bee to start the TFOR's 2020 programme, and it proved an excellent move. Jacquie gave us a great overview of weeds and their impact. She pointed the finger at a few of the really troublesome riparian weeds such as Bridal Creeper and Tamarisk. Then Jacquie gave us something we could really take to heart - the Bradley Method.

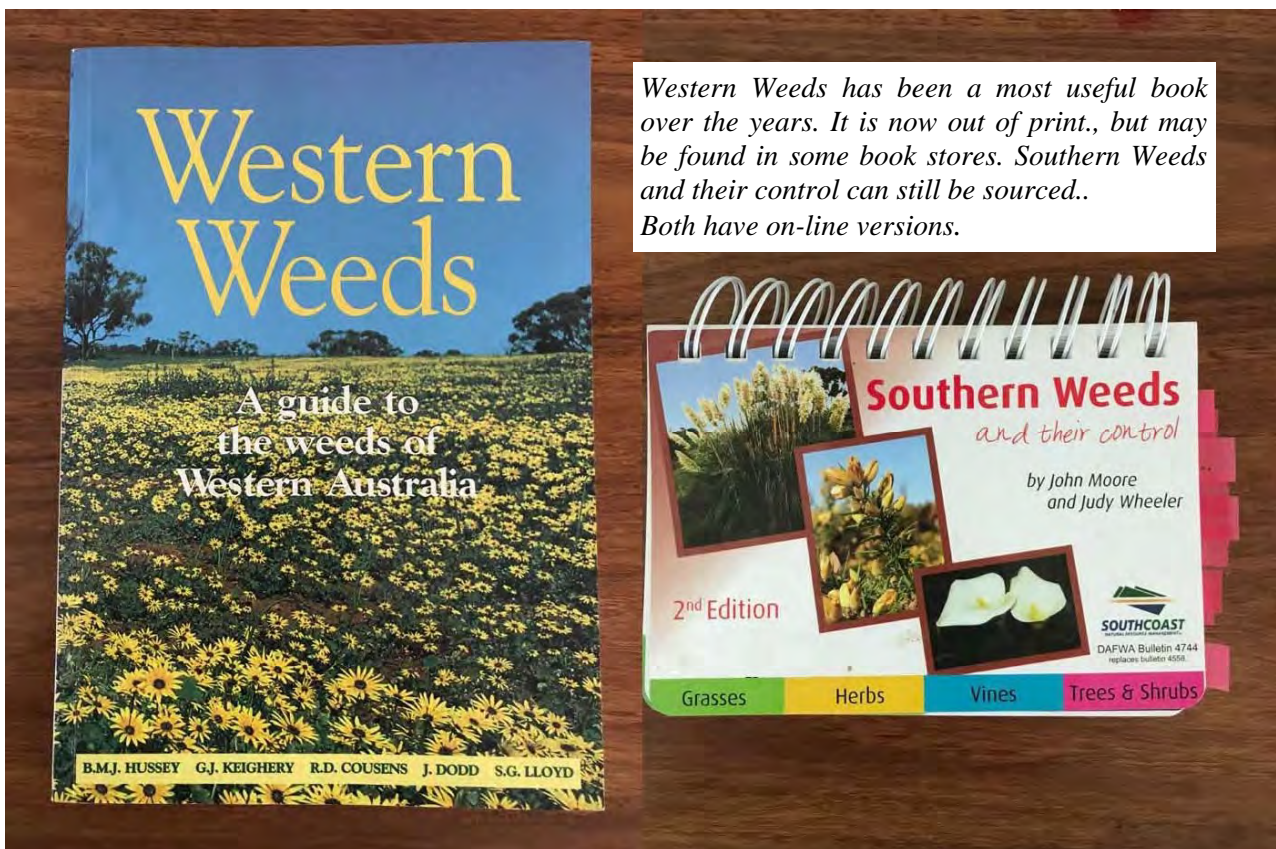
The Bradley Method is named after Eileen and Joan Bradley, who were NSW pioneers in bush regeneration. The main principles of the method are:

- Work out from the least weed infected area to areas of higher infestation. This means that weeds are removed in areas where native plants are most likely to recolonise the area.
- Minimise soil disturbance and keep the soil mulched.
- Allow native plant regeneration to dictate the rate of weed removal. Otherwise the weeds are likely to win the recolonisation process and the work has to be done again – and again.

As the Australian Native Plants Society notes in its *Plant Guide: Environmental Weeds in Australia* "its main drawback is that it requires patience; immediate gratification cannot be expected".

Perhaps the Bradley Method can probably be adapted to inform the way we look after our re-plantings as well as inform the way we select and manage areas of riparian vegetation to nurture along 'our' stretch of the river.

It is so tempting to remove large weed infestations, and sometimes that is necessary – as in the case of weeds like Bridal Creeper, Tamarisk, and one that has recently been targeted in York – The African Boxthorn. But there other times when leaving particular weeds can be better than eradicating them, better than leaving bare soil. So there is a place for a nuanced approach.



Western Weeds has been a most useful book over the years. It is now out of print., but may be found in some book stores. Southern Weeds and their control can still be sourced.. Both have on-line versions.

Insects Attack Flooded Gums

by Sarah Dudley

If you have driven along Toodyay Road, Julimar Road or Chittering Road recently you may have noticed what looks like dying, defoliated eucalypts bordering watercourses such as the Brockman River or alongside tributaries emptying into the Avon.

Did you ask yourself “what’s happening?” or maybe, in your weary wisdom, exclaim – “not again”.

Whatever is happening seems to occur on an annual basis, with one specific eucalypt being attacked. This is the Flooded Gum, *Eucalyptus rudis*.

It is attacked by an army of insects which seem to be host specific, the majority of the damage being inflicted by 4mm long insect reminiscent of a tiny cicada called a psyllid (creiissp).

This leads to increased tree stress, canopy loss, defoliation – and so the cycle continues until the tree dies.

Numerous psyllid eggs are laid on healthy regrowth leaves in late summer, hatch and pass through a number of nymph stages.

The larvae form horn-shaped lerps in spring, each one secreting a sweet, waxy covering that forms a form of protection from lerp-loving predating insects and birds.

As the leaf sap is sucked out, the leaf dies. Premature leaf drop occurs, leaving a twiggy canopy – which is what travellers are noticing at this time of year.

Once the larvae pupate and drop into the soil below, the tree grows new leaves – all ready for the new generation of psyllid eggs to be laid around Easter.

While *Eucalyptus rudis* can sustain attack by high psyllid numbers for a few seasons and seemingly recover, repeated defoliation to a tree already under stress from lack of water, lack of natural predators due to mankind’s love of insecticides, rising salinity, soil compaction and lack of understory, may lead to the eventual death of a tree.

Hopefully the eucalypt’s ability to sprout new coppice growth from epicorms will allow this species to continue its valiant annual battle against the psyllid army for many generations to come.



Above: Leaf during lerp attack

Left: Lerps on a flooded gum leaf.

Photos courtesy Rosanna Hindmarsh
(per Sarah Dudley)

**Newsletter of the
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Above: The remains of the convict-built Gabidine Brook bridge following the January 2020 bush fire in the reserve..

Ironically, the bridge featured in an article by Beth Frayne in the April 2019 Biddip (Vol. 13 No. 1).