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# ***Biddip***



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Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 17, Issue 3



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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.*

# *Presidents message by Jennifer White*

OUR 2022 AGM was only just past, when TFOR members were called upon to urgently write a submission to the Draft Forest Management Plan 2024 - 2033. This was a huge task, achieved in the hectic December period, in collaboration with like-minded groups and individuals – notably Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance (JCAFA), Toodyay Naturalist’s Club (TNC) and Toodyay Historical Society (THS).

In her 2022 Annual Report, outgoing TFOR President, Dr Robyn Taylor, spoke of TFOR’s greater focus on engagement with the wider community, and this first coming together on a shared task was an instance of the way TFOR has functioned throughout 2023.

Our February event brought together current and new TFOR members in a Meet and Greet, and was open to others from the community to attend. It was a very pertinent introduction to our year, with our two presenters, Nikkola and Wayne, refreshing our focus on the importance of the river and environs and our need to be vigilant in our care for them.

An open invitation to the community to the March Forum “Catchments, Carnabies and Chuditch of the Julimar Forest” saw more than 50 people attend with at least 15 being TFOR members and 31 visitors. Our three speakers, Ron Johnson, OAM, from the WA Museum and renowned expert on black cockatoos, and TFOR members, Greg Warburton (Chuditch) and Dr. Liz Kington (Catchments) brought together a wonderful mix of national and local expertise

Carnabies featured again in an April community event, “The Cockatoo Crisis” documentary film, organized by JCAFA with help from TFOR and others. Held in the Toodyay Town Hall, this was a huge success, with approximately 120 people attending. Attendees had the opportunity to talk with producers, sign support for the “Save the Black Cockatoo” coalition, as well as the JCAFA petition to government to designate Julimar Forest as a National Park.

The Catchments, Carnabies and Chuditch and the Julimar Forest for National Park themes were promoted once again at the Avon Descent / International Food Festival in August. TFOR, JCAFA, THS and TNC were co-located and worked together encouraging passers-by to sign the petition for Julimar Forest to become a National Park. With detailed maps and photo’s, TFOR’s display focussed on the enormous Avon River catchment and moods of the river. JCAFA’s wandering giant chuditch brought attention to the fauna and flora of the Julimar Forest. And who could miss the large banner installed on the river bank by TFOR’s Project Officer, Greg Warburton, proclaiming “Julimar Forest for National Park”!

## **Julimar Forest.**

TFOR’s participation in JCAFA in advocating for Julimar Forest to be declared a national park, was a very important focus this year, and will be for the foreseeable future. A new TFOR project that started this year is the monitoring of water quality and studying the condition of the Julimar Brook. The brook flows through the Julimar Forest and farmland to enter the Avon River on the eastern edge of the Avon Valley National Park. TFOR has partnered with the Chittering Land Care Centre and Ellen Brockman Integrated Catchment Group to measure pH and salinity at two sites along the brook. The first samples were recently collected for analysis (nutrients and metals) by the Chem Centre with results to be entered on to the DWER data-base. Positive land-holder engagement enabled a small group of Friends to walk along the brook photographing and studying its condition.

## **Wheatbelt NRM Signage Project.**

It’s always wonderful to have a project come to fruition after months or years of dedicated work that preceded it. Ten interpretive signs were designed and recently installed at key points of interest along the sealed section of the Bilya Walk Track near Millard’s Pool. TFOR Project Officer, Greg Warburton, played a pivotal role, in consultation with Robyn Taylor and other Friends to finalise the project which was supported by a grant from NRM and the Shire of Toodyay.

## *Presidents's Message (cont.)*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, some Friends gathered at the site for a celebratory morning tea and a wander to view the signs which provide walkers with information on flora and fauna, history and significance of the area and revegetation work undertaken there.

### **Working Bees:**

We started our season of working bees with an unusual task: sorting and culling redundant resources from the Department of Water's Library of Resources – maps, historical records, posters and other 'treasures'. Friends worked throughout the year, not just on working bee days, to complete the task in September.

During the cooler months, seedlings raised by the Seed Group and sedges sourced from Boola Boonup were planted around the Pelham Brook Outlet and along the Boyagerring Brook. Boola Boonup is operated by a Noongar Land Enterprise group. At and between working bees, Friends have weeded and pruned and generally maintained these sites and along the walk tracks.

### **Toodyay Agricultural Show:**

TFOR shared space in the Environment Matters marquee at the Show in October. The fabulous JCAFA display created by Max Howard and Elaine Hall was a major attraction to the "Environment Matters" tent where people were also able to sign the petition for Julimar Forest to be designated a national park.

### **TFOR Annual Raffle:**

TFOR had a very successful raffle in June. Eleven members helped across the two days, raising a record \$746.60 from a wonderful set of frog-themed prizes donated by artist, Mary Woodward.

At this and each TFOR event this year, we have been pleased to welcome new members; at the moment, in total, we have 47 individual members and 7 families.

### **Planning Ahead:**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2024 will be the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of TFOR's inaugural meeting at Duidgee Park. Planning on how to mark this milestone has begun.

A major focus, in collaboration with JCAFA, will continue to be advocacy for Julimar Forest to become a National Park.

Maintaining and developing walk tracks, including the "Hub"; continuing revegetation and care of the river and its environs remain core business. Writing of submissions, mostly relating to environmental matters, is likely to feature again in 2024, taking up many volunteer hours.

### **Thanks and Congratulations:**

I want to express my heart-felt thanks to all our members who have contributed in so many ways. Apart from what has already been mentioned, members have contributed articles to Biddip and Herald, 'monitored the monitoring points' (special thanks to Dimity), helped at events, and raised seedlings for revegetation (special thanks to Bethan and team).

I am personally-indebted to our Management Committee for their support in my first year as President and, in particular, to our Secretary, Bridget, for her encouragement and guidance.

Finally, on behalf of all of us, I want to thank Desrae and Wayne Clarke for their work over many years compiling and editing our magazine, Biddip. Wayne started Biddip in 1999, producing 4 editions before Desrae began as Editor in 2008, with Wayne's assistance with production ever since. Desrae has diligently organized and produced Biddip on a regular basis, now 3 editions per year. Biddip is now in the National Library Archives and recorded at the State Library. Desrae has decided it is time for her to retire from this role. We are very pleased that Biddip will continue with a new editor, Nikkola Palmer.

So, we thank you, Desrae and Wayne, for your unstinting commitment to TFOR since its inception and, particularly, for the many, many hours spent editing and producing Biddip.

# *BIDDIP Editor in focus*

*Desraé Clarke with Bridget Leggett*

DESRAE Clarke was one of three founding members of TFOR, nearly 30 years ago and was awarded Honorary Life Membership in 2011. She has been active in the organisation ever since its first meeting, has worked on BIDDIP since its inception, and took over from Wayne as its editor after the first few editions.

With the publication of this edition of BIDDIP, Desraé retires from her role as its dedicated and determined editor. So what better way to celebrate her contribution than by publishing some of her reflections about TFOR.

We talked in October this year, in Drummond House. Desraé was very happy to talk about TFOR's greatest achievements and forthcoming about the challenges it faces in the future. But it took a bit more prompting to get her talking about her own contribution to TFOR. However, as this is partly a celebration of her work as Editor of BIDDIP, that's where I am going to start.

Desraé did volunteer that being involved with the newsletter and its continuation was her proudest contribution. In her words...

“Now it's in the National Library Archives and we have it recorded at the State Library, I think that's a great achievement. The first newsletter I started was March 2008 but Wayne had actually organised about four newsletters over a period of years. But I started in March 2008. And I started to do it on a regular basis to the point now where there are three editions per year. I think that is actually adequate. I know there are a lot of organisations that will produce a newsletter every month. I think that is a tremendous ask of a volunteer and I just feel that the three per year, they are looked forward to by the members, and I'm sure they are looked forward to by other people, and our Toodyay library.

“Wayne has done the formatting – he's absolutely amazing – I just chase people with a big whip to get articles and photographs and observations and I chase them and Wayne is the one that puts it all into order. He has given me invaluable support – initially, by encouraging the continuation of the newsletter, and secondly with his ability to give suggestions, ideas, enhance photos, etc, - and his patience with me!

“At the present time we have to thank WNRM at the Northam office for their assistance in printing and putting the newsletters together with the stapling. They come out in an A4 size which is readable. There are a lot of people now that still like to read a hard copy, so we have a few extra copies for them and other than that it is very widely distributed by email to all members and all supporters. I think to have that continuation is really great.

Desraé's favourite edition?

“There are a few different ones that come to mind. One of the funniest ones, I think, was the front cover around six or seven years ago when there was so little water for the Avon Descent that people were carting their kayaks and walking along the river bed. And that photo was put on the front cover of the newsletter, and that was marvellous. But I think they are all great. I think there are so many achievements with plantings and weed eradication and all sorts of things like that, it just shows we are a very vibrant membership.

*Cont. Page 5*

*As to TFOR's most important achievements?*

“TFOR was mooted in 1994 and the greatest thing about this organisation is that it is still going very strongly and the education that has been given over that time has been paramount. I think it is a very, very successful organisation. I think the greatest achievement is its continuation in a small town, that it is now so well known.

“I put its success down to enthusiasm. But I think there are a lot more people that are interested in the environment than actually is visible. When you talk to people and you emphasise how you feel and you find they feel the same way. They don't belong to an organisation, they don't come out saying a lot of stuff, but they still are very conscious that we have to look after our environment.

“I think the Friends of the River will go on and on and on and keep achieving. There are lots of new projects that have come up. It's not just weeding and reveg, there are so many other projects that are coming forward that TFOR are involved in especially with the Noongar people of the area. That relationship is absolutely excellent – and that's what it's all about – the Noongar people love their river and their country and to have that relationship with the Noongar people is just fantastic.

“And I think there's so much more appreciation of the Noongar people and their incredible knowledge and their wonderful attachment to their Mother – their attachment to Country – and we are learning. It's a great educational area for us people that are not Noongar. So I think that association is something that has been well established now. I think we have to be very grateful that they accept us – they appreciate us and we appreciate them. I think that interaction is just marvellous. There's so much respect.

“We're so fortunate. And we are fortunate too in that the voluntary groups here that are all to do with conservation, and their sub-groups – I think that is absolutely wonderful how everyone works in together. You've got the Historical Society and the Naturalists' Club and Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads, and the Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance, and the Wheatbelt Avon Bird Group, and Seed Group. They all interlock, and I think that's one of our strengths. All that interaction and no jealousies, and that's the big thing, and I think that is fantastic.

“The people involved, they are not interested in jealousies. Ultimately at the peak is the environment and we are all working to what we can do to protect our environment and we are all working from different angles – we are working from historical angles, we are working from birds and plants and from the river, and the pinnacle is looking after our conservation, is looking after our whole environment – that's what we are looking at.

*Looking ahead, the biggest challenges for the Friends of the River?*

“I think we've got to keep emphasising the importance of it. And I think the Bilya Walk Track, that is one of the best things that's been done. I just hope that some way or other that can be extended, because I think that mentally, one of our greatest challenges in life is mental care. One of the things that is wonderful walking along the river is that you don't have to look out for cars or anything – you might have to look out for snakes, but you don't have to think, so you just wander along there – and some people will race along there because they want to lose weight, others ride their bikes, others that just walk.

I think that is so necessary – that people have that ‘me time’ and that can be enjoyed along the river. Hearing water bubbling along is so relaxing, and I think that track is of paramount importance.

*Desraé’s advice for the future?*

“I just think to maintain the presence. Don’t relax the presence. That is what it is. Because how many years has it been going – 30 years. Over the years I’ve noticed with other organisations, they can wax and wane. And I don’t think that should happen with TFOR because I think it still has to be very important. The Shire councillors have to appreciate it, and appreciate how much work is done and what that brings in for tourism. We are active, we are doing things that people can see have been done. And I think that’s where reveg comes in. It’s got the revegetation purpose, but also there is evidence of things happening. It’s like the raffle in a way – it’s a public communication as well as a purpose in its own right.

“My hope is it will keep going. And it’s up to the younger members – the older members, yes, they work along. I think it’s like anything – they can learn from the older people and we can learn from the younger people. And I think that is very important that we accept that. But you’ve got the younger ones that have got to come up and not sit on their laurels, they’ve got to make sure that the organisation keeps going – a 100 years!

Desraé, thank you for all of the work you have done over the years, and particularly the hundreds, if not thousands of hours spent editing BIDDIP – that’s a great contribution to TFOR and one to be celebrated.

At the 2023 AGM, Desrae was presented with the BIDDIP Award in appreciation for her work compiling and editing BIDDIP 2008-2023, and Wayne was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work editing and producing BIDDIP since 1999. Fitting recognition for a great contribution from both of you. Thank you.



*Above: Gaven Donegan (President) explaining a point to Desraé Clarke (Vice President) 17 August 2008*

*Photo: Wayne Clarke*

# Tribute to Gaven

by Robyn Taylor, President TFOR 2014

## Gaven Donegan (1941 - 2013) Photos Robyn Taylor

It's been ten years since the passing of one of the Avon River's greatest Friends. Gaven, with his cheeky grin and numerous stories, was a dear friend to all of us and the wider Toodyay community.

As a tribute to Gaven in this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of his passing, it was decided, for the benefit of those who didn't know him, to reprint the story about the memorial that was erected just downstream of TFOR's Millards Pool picnic shelter. It was officially unveiled on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2014 as part of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The original article can be found in the August 2014 edition of *Biddip*. An obituary giving Gaven's life story was published in the 2013 Spring issue (No.32) of *Duidgeana*, the newsletter of the Toodyay Historical Society. These stories can be found on the websites of both organisations.

## Our memorial to Gaven

The idea of having a special memorial for Gaven was something we didn't have to think about. We simply knew we would erect one somewhere along the river to honour this great champion of the Avon and our very own dear Friend.

I think many of us felt Gaven's spirit was still hovering about and it would be good to have a dedicated spot along the Bilya Walk Track where we could stop and say 'Hi Gav, how's it going?' It felt like he was simply away for a bit and would turn up in his blue shirt, his bushman's hat and stick for warding off the odd snake. His covered ute would be parked nearby and probably Sticky, the last of his long line of dogs, would be in the back. That's how I remember Gaven and of course he would be telling one of his many 'tall tales but true' about the river where he grew up as a boy and worked as a young man.

We decided upon a stainless steel plaque to be attached to a boulder of local stone. Selecting the wording was a democratic process with much to'ing and fro'ing about the final choice of words. Google was a great help for finding poems with an appropriate river theme and a selection was circulated to the committee and the Donegan family. Gaven's wife Christeen was asked if he had a favourite, but *The Man from Snowy River* was a tad lengthy for what we had in mind. We finally agreed upon a verse by Henry David Thoreau, and serendipitously discovered the writings of this 19th century poet and philosopher anticipated today's environmental thinking. Christeen thought Gaven would be chuffed. The wording has an old world reflective cadence to it.

*I was born upon thy bank, river, My blood flows in thy stream, And thou meanderest forever, At the bottom of my dream.*

Mick and Stephen Ferguson of Vernice (the firm is a life member of TFOR) found the perfect lichen covered granite boulder on Stephen's property. This was erected at a suitable distance from TFOR's picnic shelter at Millards Pool – one of Gaven's many special spots.



Above: Gaven's Memorial Rock



Above: Gaven's Memorial Plaque

# Avon Catchments - the Yilgarn Catchment

by Wayne Clarke

**THE Avon River is one of the great rivers of Australia** - its catchment covers an area over 120,000km<sup>2</sup>. To put that into perspective, add the Shire of Kalbarri (17,000km<sup>2</sup>) to the catchment and it would be double the size of Tasmania (at 68, 401km<sup>2</sup>).

The Avon catchment (often referred to as the watershed) comprises five sub-catchments – the Yilgarn, the Lockhart, the Salt, the Mortlock and the Avon Rivers.

## Yilgarn River catchment

The Yilgarn River catchment is approximately 55,900<sup>2</sup>km in extent and is the largest of the sub-catchments. It originates north-east of Southern Cross from water draining into Lake Seabrook. The fall from the top of Lake Deborah East to Caroline Gap is 91 metres over a distance of around 270km (approximately 2.97 metres/km. Compare Mt Eliza/Kings Park in Perth city at 103 metres above the Swan River to the 91 metre fall in the Yilgarn River system).

Its eastern extremity is approximately 130km from Coolgardie. A chain of salt lakes commence around Boorabbin and Yellowdine, draining west through Lake Eva and through almost flat terrain to Lake Seabrook. These salt lakes continue south west and are further fed by salt lakes from the north and south east of Southern Cross. Lake Seabrook feeds into Lake Deborah East after crossing the Koolyanobbing-Southern Cross Road, Lake Deborah West and then Lake Baladjie and the Lake Baladjie Nature Reserveana (cont.





# Monitoring & River Creatures

by Bridget Leggett

THE health of the Avon River is monitored by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) at several points, including Toodyay, every three years, and the data collection happened this month.

DWER Officers invited the Friends to come and observe the pulling of the nets and to see what had been caught – it was fascinating.

What a thrill to see not one, but four large, healthy, South-western Snake-necked Turtles (*Chelodinag obloonga*) along with a number of juveniles. They didn't take long to swim away once released!

The turtles were caught in Pyke nets which have specially designed, home-made floats at the ends to accommodate air-breathing animals – obviously they work well.

Accompanying the turtles was a seething collection of shrimps, a good number of small native fish including the Western Hardyhead (*Leptatherina wallacei*), a few Gilgie (*Cherax quinquecarinatus*), Blue-spot goby (*Pseudogobius olorum*) and one leach. Two invasive species were also recorded: the Eastern Gambusia (*Gambusia holbrooki*) and the Yabby (*Cherax destructor*).

The data collection goes far beyond the 'catch' – the river monitoring schedule is really comprehensive. Field Officers are required to draw a cross sectional diagram of the river and its adjacent banks at the sampling point, showing the local vegetation. Water quality assessments are done on site and any potential pollutions are noted; samples taken away for additional analysis.

A photographic record of the area forms part of the schedule, taken with waterproof cameras and a state-of-the-art drone, which gave us an amazing view of the river as it flew upstream and downstream. Altogether, it was a most successful and informative morning.

## *Avon Catchments - the Yilgarn Catchment (cont)*

Then the system crosses the Koorda-Bullfinch Road and drains into Lake Champion and Lake Brown. The Mulka River (draining from north of Lake Brown) enters the system and it is here where the Yilgarn River attains its status.

After crossing the Merredin-Nungarin Road the Yilgarn River heads south through Nangeenan Gully (where Bullguttin Creek enters the system). The Belka River - draining from south west of Merredin, Wallatin Creek and Mooronoppin Creek - both from the north enter the system. It then passes south west of the town of Kellerberrin where it picks up Minkadine Creek, and finally makes its confluence with the Lockhart River. at Caroline Gap. From this confluence the Salt River commences its path south west of Quairading towards the Avon River. The Salt River will be subject to an article in a later edition of Biddip.

*Sources: Various publications of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (formerly Dept. Water); Avon River System Management Strategy (former Waterways Commission); knowledge and data collected whilst on Avon River Management Authority and Avon Waterways Committee.*

# *AGM Award Presentations*



*Above: Left - Wayne Clarke after receiving his 'Certificate of Appreciation' for Editing and Producing Biddip since 1999*

*Centre - President, Jennifer White who presented the Certificates*

*Right: - Desraé Clarke receiving her 'Biddip Award' in appreciation for [your work] compiling and editing BIDDP 2008-2023*

*Photo: Nikkola Palmer*

# DWER River Health Monitoring



*Photo: Bridget Leggett*

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

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## The Back Page

### *River-talk: Understanding the terminology*

#### **ALUVIAL**

An environment made up of, or a channel cut into, alluvium. Alluvium is material deposited by running water, typically rivers. It displays characteristics such as stratification and size sorting. The term is usually restricted to relatively young sediment and does not include lithified (compacted) material such as sedimentary rock.

#### **ANABRANCH**

A secondary channel of a river which splits from the main channel and then later rejoins the main channel.

#### **BRAIDED**

A word of Germanic origin; from Old English 'bregdan' - to plait [plat]. Resembling the strands of a braid (as with rope, hair, etc.), a braided river or stream has multiple, small narrow channels that divide then reform numerous times; braided streams form where there is a high sediment load in the main channel. They can form and reform many times along a river, particularly one with minimal slope like the Avon River.

Learn more about Alluvial and other topics from Geoscience Australia go to the website: <https://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/water>

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