

August 2012



# ***Biddip***

Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 6, Issue 2



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*The Toodyay Naturalists' Club is indebted to the Toodyay Community Resource Centre for their support in producing the August newsletter*

**Toodyay Community  
Resource Centre Inc**



# Presidents Report by Greg Warburton



*In the interests of saving space my report is in the form of an abbreviated chronology of events starting from May of this year.*

**MAY-** There has been an addition of some 15 species to the Weeds of National Significance (WONS) list including River environmental weeds such as Box Thorn. A concerted campaign, which included tree lopping, debris removal, raking, burning and weed control, by the Shire and combined community volunteers was completed at Nardie Cemetery in time for a significant Toodyay Historical Society (THS) event there. Attendance of the State Trails Conference at UWA with Avon Valley Environmental Society (AVES) members. Attendance at Talbot Brook Landcare Management Association (TBLMA) meeting. Presentation at Swan River Trust (SRT) Foreshore Restoration workshop at Maylands. Successful funding application for Toodyay Naturalists' Club (TNC) bird hide planning with promise of further funding for construction from Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management (WBNRM). FESA conducts controlled burning in River between Lloyd Reserve and Connor Bridge.

**JUNE-**Second Conserving Avon River the Environment (C.A.R.E.) meeting held in the offices of Max Trenorden in Northam attended by representative (s) of the Department of Water (DOW) and newly incorporated Friends of the Dale. Weed Workshop at Chittering Land Care Centre including Bridal Creeper control techniques. Continued removal of plastic tree guards at Boyagerring.

**JULY-**Wheatbelt Resilience session by Dr Liz Kington of WBNRM. Ongoing weed control in town river section, Lloyd Reserve and Harper Brook site. Participation in TBLMA tree planting weekend. Tree planting conducted at Dawn Atwell Reserve and Malkup Brook Reserve. Despite a reasonable break to the season July was the driest ever on record. A Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee (TTTC) is formed with a strong TFOR representation.

**AUGUST-**40th Anniversary of the Avon Descent and the first time the course had to be shortened due to record low water levels. TFOR hosted a highly successful Millennium Kids event with some 50 people in attendance. Activities included bird watching and a reptile demonstration in Duidgee Park followed by walk from Lloyd Reserve to Millard's Pool with a high attendance of TFOR members. Incursion of cattle into Harper Brook re-vegetation site and resultant extensive damage to plantings with a subsequent repair of fence. Weed spraying along the Walk Track from Extracts Weir to Connor Bridge. Impending vesting and Management changes for Lloyd Reserve.

*Thanks to a vibrant and dedicated committee and membership it has been yet another satisfying year to be a part of the TFOR vision. For me, the overriding impression of the past year is that of collaboration and co-operation. I look forward to continued enrichment and fostering of these relationships as a way of progressing and facilitating our work.*

*I especially want to thank Gaven for the years of work and dedication he has put in as Project Officer. As we know Gav has brought to our organisation a special quality not only from his character and generosity but a connection to the River spanning a lifetime of experience and observation. We look forward to him continuing to be amongst us and understand his desire (and that of Christine's) to reduce his involvement with community affairs after 40 years of service to the people of this town.*

*I know we have all said a collective prayer for Lee Francis who has had a horrendous time of late with health problems. Thankfully, she is finally on the road to recovery and is now enjoying daily walks at Millard's Pool. We look forward to her return to community involvement and activity.*

*The future looks good for TFOR and I am confident that we can act together as a community of conservationists to meet tomorrow's challenges.*

Greg Warburton

Cover Photo: Rebecca Meegan-Lowe entertaining contestants in the 2011 Avon Descent.

Photo Ric Lowe

# WHO CARES WINS

by Wayne Clarke

Managing the Avon River has been an issue for the Western Australian Government for many years. The river has been badly mismanaged in the past, particularly with the River Training Scheme (RTS)<sup>1</sup>, where untold damage was perpetrated with a fruitless war in an attempt to stop nature having her way. Floodplains comprise the food-bowls of many nations, however building on or near them has proved to be disastrous across the globe. Hopefully we have learnt by our mistakes!

Without doubt, the Avon River could not be managed without community involvement, together with some degree of empowerment. It also requires a financial commitment on behalf of government. Waterways management has been a low priority with consecutive governments - to a point where they have adopted the 'blind-eye' syndrome.

## *Some history*

In 1992, the state government opened an office in Northam, and gazetted the Avon River Management Authority (ARMA). However after a mere nine years of community involvement through this management authority, ARMA was dissolved in (December 2001).

The government then introduced a number of rivercare programmes (with considerable Australian Government funding), while providing some financial support for a small advisory group, the Avon Waterways Committee (AWC). The AWC survived for a period just short of seven years (February 2002 to December 2009). In June 2012 the government closed the Northam Office, offering to provide support through an officer, to be co-located at the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management office.

## *C.A.R.E.*

Disillusionment with the government's hesitation to sustainably manage the Avon River has culminated in the rivercare groups collectively striving to form a non-government alliance, to be called '*Conserving the Avon River Environment - CARE*'. These volunteer community groups comprise the *Toodyay Friends of the River*, the *Avon Valley Environment Society* (Northam), *York's River Conservation Society*, the *Talbot Brook Land Management Association* and the *Friends of the Dale River*.

The proposed objects of CARE are: to act as an environmental advocate for conservation in the Avon region; to provide a representative group that can act on conservation matters for the catchment; to support member groups; to seek funding as necessary; to act in an advisory capacity; and to encourage excellent environmental practice. The Draft rules are being circulated, and once all member organisations concur on its content, CARE will meet to approve the Draft, and take steps to become incorporated.

Who cares wins? We do - a win for the river! And through CARE we hope to win support for the Avon River, the birthing place of the Swan River. The un-proportional spending of taxpayer's money fixing the symptoms and not the cause may one day shake the halls in Parliament Place. If we are suddenly confronted with the horrors of weather systems that inflict the type of damage Queensland experienced in January 2011, who will accept the blame?

We CARE, but it is difficult to get those down river - with the ability to take action - to care.

<sup>1</sup> See Biddip Volume 4 Number 1 Page 11 - River Training Scheme (RTS)

# LIVING AND WORKING WITH REPTILES

by Desraé Clarke

On Sunday August 5th Toodyay had a visit from the Millennium Kids, an organisation that began December 14th 1999 when the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth recommended that August 12th be officially declared as International Youth Day. Since that time the Millennium Kids has developed as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation run by youth of ten to twenty five years of age.

The Millennium Kids organisation was established to give youth a greater say in *their* environment and *their* world and they are committed to improving the environment through constructive action. With this in mind, young people learn about sustainability and environmental leadership, risk management, team work, communication and problem solving. Projects have been established that raise awareness about *air, trees, waste, native animals, energy, peace, lifestyle and leadership*. The visit to Toodyay, for the third successive year, was to follow up on the care of the river under the leadership of the Toodyay Friends of the River.

There are established groups of Millennium Kids in South Africa, Canada, Indonesia and Singapore and it was special to have seven young people from Java, visit Toodyay; they have an interest in the Kalimas River on the island of Surabaya.

Among the group of visitors were two members that had grown up with the Millennium Kids; they are now supervisors of the younger people and also, there were four recent arrivals from the United Kingdom who had come to assist on the day.

A special guest present was Vanessa Paget. Vanessa is an educator of reptiles, a 'snake buster' (Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Registered Reptile Remover) and organises programmes she has named 'bush wisdom'. She had a number of species of reptiles with her and it was beautiful to watch the expressions on the children's faces as they nursed Blue Tongue Skinks, Bobtails, Stimson's and Carpet Pythons and babies of each of the species. It will be a day to remember for those young people as a 'very special day'!

Vanessa has a pledge for the young people entitled:

## *'MY PLEDGE TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT'*

### **I will:**

Dispose of rubbish correctly to prevent tin cans becoming death traps.

b) Let my teacher or parents know if an injured or sick animal needs help.

c) Remember the Wildcare Help Line number 9474 9055.

d) Prevent reptiles drowning by providing a safe and easy way out of swimming pools or ponds.

e) Let my parents know to safely remove animal carcasses off the road to stop more animals being killed.

f) Teach my cat and dog to leave reptiles and other native animals alone.

g) Bring dry pet food or bird seed inside at night as these attract mice, which attract snakes.

h) Help in keeping my yard clean and tidy.

i) Know the three steps for snake bite management:

Stay calm.

Pressure bandage.

Call for help.

j) Let my family know that baits and pesticides kill native animals that eat what has been baited.

k) Let my teacher, family and friends know that they can be a volunteer on the 'Wildcare Helpline'.

l) Tell others what I have learnt!

To contact Vanessa's *Bush Wisdom SURVIVAL* her mobile: 0427 810 085 and her email: [vanessabushwisdom@hotmail.com](mailto:vanessabushwisdom@hotmail.com) to organise talks, school visits, etc.

*Editor*

# Millennium Kids Visit to Toodyay

*Have Fun, Eat Chocolate and Care for the Environment*

*by Viv Street*

Question How do you distinguish a poisonous snake from a harmless one.?

Answer: Ask a Millennium Kid

Last Sunday I was asked to help with a Millennium Kids event on the Avon River hosted by the Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR). How could I resist a group whose motto is Have Fun, Eat Chocolate and Care for the Environment!

The group, comprising of children and mentors from South Perth, Surabaya on the Kalimas River in Indonesia, and local children from the Avon Region, gathered in Duidgee Park for what was to be an action packed day. The weather was beautiful and we staked our claim on the lawn near to the river and started the event with morning tea and introductions all round. We were quite an International gathering and were all asked to make an effort to mix outside our normal group.

Because of the large size of the group we were divided into two lots, one heading down to the river for exploration and discovery with Wayne and the other to Vanessa of 'Vanessa's Bush Wisdom'. She had an interesting display of posters but our eyes were on the boxes by her side. After talking about snakes and their behaviour and habits we were handed a shedded snake skin each and asked to identify Poisonous or Harmless by looking at the belly skin. We all answered correctly proving we'd been listening and Beth gave us an easy way to remember.. Wide bands mean 'steer wide away from them' and divided bands mean they are harmless. How do you get a snake to roll over so you can check it is another matter!!!



*Left: Vanessa with the 'shedded' snake skin*

*Right: Neither the Stimson python or Pearce were scared of each other.*



We were shown python eggs, a huge boa constrictor skin, plastic rats, the skeleton jaw of a bobtail then were tortured with a crocodile clip to demonstrate why you DON'T stick your fingers in a Bobtail's mouth. Then, *the boxes revealed their treasures and* --- out came some Bobtails and a Bluetongue Skink which were admired, stroked and nursed and who were so used to being handled that they fell asleep on the laps of their carers. Questions were asked, hands whizzed up and everyone was caught up in the enthusiasm.

*...continued Page 6*

# Millennium Kids Visit to Toodyay (cont)

by Viv Street

But more excitement was to come. Baby Pythons were handed out, then bigger ones, and then bigger ones until there were pythons gliding and curling over the shoulders, hair, eyebrows, hands, knees and bodies of children and adults alike and not only of our group. A passing Pub Rock Band stopped to look with curiosity at all the action and soon had pythons wrapped round their necks too.

To say that Vanessa's presentation was a roaring success would be an understatement. The joy of handling these creatures showed on everyone's faces, even those who were at first reluctant to be near them were delighted. We all learnt such a lot...and I got to hold an 18 year old python!!!!



*Left A blue-tongue lizard being nursed  
Right:  
Surabayan 'Kids' enraptured*



Swap over time came all too soon and we reluctantly returned Pythons and Bobtails to Vanessa and gathered binoculars and cameras for a walk along the river led by Wayne. We were on the lookout for birds and the more experienced bird watchers with us identified the songs of birds hidden from sight of which there were many. We discussed work being undertaken on the river to repair it from the disastrous River Training Scheme and the constant work in the control of feral weeds, most especially Bridal Creeper. A child in the first group came back in a very fetching Bridal creeper dress but our group found more as we meandered back towards the park, studying the plant and water life and asking and answering questions.

We returned to a delicious lunch and general get-together then piled into the buses for Greg's "Mystery trip to a Very Special Place". This was a lovely walk. We were dropped at Lloyd's Reserve then led by Greg along the new walking track, past Red Pool to Extracts and finishing at Millard's Pool. Along the way Greg told of some of the history and Aboriginal Customs linked to the River and when we got to Millard's Pool we compared birds we'd seen and heard - a surprising number considering the large and enthusiastic group all chatting their way along, gathering soursob flowers, swinging on the rope near the water, posing for photos, racing through the dips and gullies and having a great time.

The ants struck by the shelter at Millard's Pool and Rachael and Catrina had to whip off their shoes and seek higher ground.

The children were all presented with a copy of 'Aquatic Invertebrates and Waterbirds of the Avon Region' (which will be useful for their next visit to Toodyay) and we all gave our thanks and appreciation to everyone before being transported back to Duidgee Park to go our separate ways.

It was an instructive, interesting and, above all, a happy day and wonderful to meet such enthusiastic and involved young people and their mentors, all so committed to our precious environment.

***Thank you, Millennium Kids, see you next year!!!***

# *Members Gallery*



*Above: Millennium Kid with bridal creeper veil  
Photo: Viv Street*



*Above: Desraé Clarke, Greg Warburton and John Masters  
at AGM*

*Photo: Rebecca Meegan Lowe*



*Left: Secretary Robyn  
Taylor on her voyage  
downstream  
Photo: Wayne Clarke*

# Members Gallery



*Above: Kayaking on Millard's Pool, heading towards the historic homestead Knockdominie .*

*Photo: Jenny Isbell*

*Below: Millennium Kids looking at the Avon River with Wayne Clarke*

*Photo: Viv Street*

*Above: Wildflowers or weeds - two Millennium Kids with some soursob*

*Photo Viv Street*





## *TFOR leads the way to a Tidier and More Sustainable Toodyay*

*By Beth Frayne*

With the support of the Shire of Toodyay, the Toodyay community has formed a Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee on 18 July, and plans to enter the 2012-2013 Tidy Towns - Sustainable Communities competition.

TFOR President Greg Warburton is our official **representative** on the inaugural Committee. TFOR is also well supported by Beth Frayne as Chair, **Desrae Clarke as Acting Secretary**, and Wayne Clarke, all representing other Toodyay community groups. Although we generally think of picking up litter and beautifying the town when Tidy Towns is mentioned, the competition is much broader these days with eight categories, including 'Natural Environment Conservation'. TFOR's River Track and revegetation projects sit nicely under this umbrella, as does our redeveloped website. Projects do not have to be town-based nor do they have to be new! Existing work being done or planned throughout the Shire can be included. The idea is to celebrate all the community and Shire activities of the town and district. Working with other groups and involving youth (Millennium Kids, for example) are big winners in the Tidy Towns environment.

## *TFOR takes on turning Toodyay into a Tidy Town*



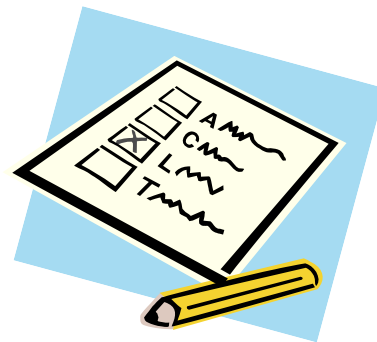
Caption: Greg with his bags of litter collected during the TTTC promotional event on 25 August, part of Keep Australia Beautiful Week, 20-26 August. Photo: Greg Warburton, 2012).

# The 2012 Annual General Meeting

Taking advantage of a delightful early morning members of the Friends took the River Track Walk from Duidgee Park to the picnic shelter at Millard's Pool. The included images, taken by Viv Street and Rebecca Meegan-Lowe, depict scenes of tranquillity that can be enjoyed by walkers, kayak enthusiasts and bird watchers.

The Annual General Meeting began with Greg's comprehensive report of the past four months followed by the elections conducted under the watchful eye of Honorary Life Member, Bob Frayne. The members elected for the next twelve months are as follows.

President: Greg Warburton (and Project Officer)  
Vice-president: Desrae Clarke (and Publicity Officer)  
Secretary: Robyn Taylor  
Treasurer: Wayne Clarke  
Honorary Patron: Viv Read  
Honorary Advisor: Bernie Kelly  
Auditor: Bendigo Bank  
Committee: Bob Frayne  
Sarah Dudley - Reports Officer  
John Masters  
Viv Street  
Maurie Jackson



The AGM was followed by a General Meeting with discussion on the forthcoming Agricultural Show and the presence of the 'Environmental Matters' marquee, the Naturalists' Club plans for a bird hide, along the river at Red Banks, and the funding for the 'walk track', with all topics creating much interest.

A BBQ lunch completed a beautiful day. Robyn and Greg had kayaks to paddle downstream to Toodyay town and, as Robyn later reported, the paddle was 'magical' and with SO many birds.

*Desrae Clarke.*



*Above left: The River Walk out to Millard's Pool through Lloyd's Reserve.*

*Above: Redbank Pool, Lloyd Reserve*

*Photos: Viv Street*

*Left: Sacred Ibis roosting at Millard's Pool*

*Photo: Desrae Clarke*



# The 2012 Annual General Meeting

## If the rivers all ran dry...

Have you ever wondered what would  
Happen if the rivers all ran dry?

If all the creek beds turned to dust  
And our fertile fields diminished  
If our harvesters succumbed to rust  
And our farms were all but finished

If the fish and bird life disappeared  
And the people's spirit sank  
If towns and communities all decayed  
Along the river's bank

If children's favourite water holes  
Were empty, dead and barren  
If, rafts, canoes and rods became  
Extinct, like ducks and marron

If all these things should come to pass  
We'd drown in our despair  
But together we can take the steps  
To act, commit, prepare

So gather up your family  
Your deck chairs or your tent  
And head down to the AVON  
Where you'll see a great DESCENT

You'll see the human spirit  
And the river come together  
So ACT, BELONG, COMMIT to have  
The Avon live forever



Mentally  
Healthy W.A.

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

*Left: This poem appeared on the back of the 2012 Avon Descent Programme, and was written by Judi Hannah, the mother of Amberlee Laws, Manager of 'Act, Belong-Commit Campaign' for the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer Control at the Curtin University.*

*It was read by Beth Frayne at the Annual General Meeting.*



*Above: Beth Frayne reading Judi Hannah's poem to the members at the Annual General Meeting.*

*Photo: Viv Street*

**NEWS  
FLASH**

## Constitution Update

Just prior to going to print, the Toodyay Friends of the River Inc. received the following notice from the Department of Commerce:

“I refer to the Notice of Special Resolution received by this office on 24 August 2012. The amendments to the Association's rules have been accepted as lodged with effect from 29 August 2012.”

This means we will effectively operate under the revised rules (Constitution) immediately.

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

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**Treasurer: Wayne Clarke (08) 6364 3609**

**Editor: Desraé Clarke (08) 6364 3609**

**Editorial to : editor@toodyayfor.org.au**

The objects of the *Toodyay Friends of the River* are to *work towards the conservation and rehabilitation of the Avon River and its environs. In the bigger picture of natural resource management, we are committed to implementing the Avon River Management Program and its associated River Recovery Plans for each of the four sections of river that pass through Toodyay.*

**Contact us at: [info@toodyayfor.org.au](mailto:info@toodyayfor.org.au)**

*"Make Friends with  
our Avon River"*



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**Visit our website at  
[www.toodyayfor.org.au](http://www.toodyayfor.org.au)**

## The Back Page



Enjoying Brian's lemon meringue and Desraé's coffee cake under the picnic shelter at the 2012 Annual General Meeting are: (L to R) Brian Shepherd, Richard Brouwer, Ric Lowe, Desraé Clarke, Viv Street and Vicki Warburton.

For details on the committee for 2012-2013 see Page 10

*Photo: Rebecca Meegan-Lowe*

### OUR SPONSORS

Members of the Toodyay Friends of the River would like to acknowledge the continuous support of our sponsors:

- Vernice Pty Ltd
- Bendigo Bank
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- W & P Brennan
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- Toodyay Op Shop
- Toodyay Garden Centre
- Toodyay Hardware & Farm - Makit Hardware
- Wheatbelt NRM