



River Conservation Society

Newsletter No. 42
June 2015

From the Chair

Our Annual General Meeting was made up of a small group of members able to meet (on 30th May) plus several proxy votes. Those attending took a positive view of the future and ongoing projects.

Amongst the reports presented were:

- The Water Rat project, which Robert Pearce has given much of his time to make the initial concept progress to the point where we may say, it is now becoming a reality.
- One of our members, Audrey has been working on the digital copy of the RCS Herbarium Record to make it more "user friendly." This is a mammoth task yet Audrey has taken it on with enthusiasm and expressed her excitement regarding what she sees as the potential in this project.

In discussing these reports the members agreed that the River Conservation Society should purchase four camera traps specifically for the Water Rat Project, with the broader future use also in mind. We are now actively seeking funding for the cameras.

Upcoming events

In looking to the coming year the meeting considered ways to involve local Schools, the Community, and Members. The question is; what to do? Restoration of vegetation, especially tree planting on one or more of our reserves were among the ideas shared.

The River Conservation Society is also looking to hold an information event with a Ph.D. Graduate from the University of W.A presenting a paper on work with Water Rats (Rakali).

So, friends, here is a taste of what we aim to achieve in the coming year and we look forward sharing our excitement with more of you.

Thanks for your support,

Trevor Meffat (Chair)



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CARE meeting

By Greg Warburton



The most recent meeting of CARE took place in York on the 24th of April at the new Community Resource Centre. Trevor Moffat and Dimity Boggs attended on behalf of the RCS. With the help of Colin Cable of the Talbot Brook Management Association the meeting convened with no less than 12 different environmental groups represented.

It was a dynamic gathering with important reports and input from all attendees which provided an environmental “snapshot” of the river and catchment. Below is a brief summary of the reports from the various group representatives present;

Greg Atwell-Friends of the Dale River: Reserve Pool Project, revegetation success, fencing, signage etc.

Tom Kerkmeer-Avon Valley Environment Society: Northam river walk tracks.

Wayne Clarke-Toodyay Friends of the River: Bilya Walk Track and water quality monitoring.

Desrae Clarke-Toodyay Naturalists' Club: John Masters Bird Hide, Avon Water Bird survey and June long weekend excursion to Talbot.

John Masters-Birdlife Australia: Monthly bird surveys from Yen Yanning Lakes to Millards Pool and proposed Mortlock River bird hide.

Julia Murphy-Greening Australia: Living Mortlock Project (fencing, native fodder shrubs, revegetation), Enright Park development, direct seeding for Whole of Paddock Restoration (WOPR).

Trevor Moffat and Dimity Boggs - River Conservation Society (York): Water Rat survey (Rakali) and camera trap success, refurbishment of work trailer and new look newsletter.

Colin Cable, Kay Davies, Robyn Davies -Talbot Brook Land Management Association: Allawuna Farm land fill proposal, Qualen Reserve revegetation and rubbish removal. Roadside vegetation clearing with Alan Rourke of the York Shire present to answer questions.

Dr Liz` Kington-Wheatbelt NRM: Mortlock Connections Program, Red Card for Red Fox, Ranger Program, Healthy Soils-Healthy Rivers project with Perth NRM , “Activate the Wheatbelt”, a youth engagement project. Don Woodcock provided an update on WBNRM’s Storm Water re-use project.

Don Woodcock - Australian Farmland Conservancy: A proposal to purchase farm land in the wheatbelt and introduce diverse, regenerative agricultural and environmental activities.

Brian Dale - Avon & Hills Mining Awareness Group: A presentation on the Bauxite mining proposal by Bauxite Alumina Joint Ventures to establish operations in the Northam, Mundaring and most extensively in the Toodyay Shire. Environmental and social impacts were highlighted. The mine would be only 1.5 kms from the Avon River. Special thanks to Brian for re-scheduling at very short notice to present to the group.

Avon River Management pioneer and author Fred Bremner was unable to attend due to a recent bout of ill-health but copies of his latest book, “Bulldozing the Avon” were available. Fred’s extensive research has chronicled the decisions and events that lead to this regrettable program, the legacy of which has contributed so much to the environmental degradation of the River. After the meeting we all enjoyed a delicious lunch at York’s legendary Jules Cafe before wending our way back to our various Avon Valley homes. Judging by the feedback all gained much from the meeting and felt encouraged by the desire of the group to communicate and co-operate to conserve and protect the catchment. There is no doubt that Bauxite Mining and Landfill loom large as major concerns both environmentally and socially.

The next meeting of CARE will be an AGM at a date and time yet to be finalized.

Enquiries about CARE or its member groups please phone Greg (08) 9574 5445 or Wayne (08) 6364 3609.

TFOR Tour of Talbot Brook

Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) and Talbot Brook Land Management Association (TBLMA) members enjoyed a successful weekend of NRM activities and networking over the June long-weekend in Talbot Brook. RCS members were invited to join however, only one attended. Participants camped at the Talbot

Hall from Friday night and spent Saturday exploring the flora and fauna of the Boggs' block and setting camera traps followed by a BBQ. Eggy and Rob were impressed by the amount of environmental knowledge within the group. On Sunday the group toured the area taking in RCS Dell Reserve, Mt Talbot and TBLMA revegetation areas followed by another BBQ at the hall with chops donated by Coin Cable and some very enthusiastic boot scooting. On Monday they returned to the Boggs' to check the camera trap, but unfortunately, it had not worked. Nonetheless, all reports were very positive for this event.

RCS Reserve of the Quarter: Badgin Creek

At a glance...

Reserve Name: Badgin Creek Nature Conservation Reserve

Area: ~27 ha

Location: South Mortlock River

Access: Flea Pool Rd

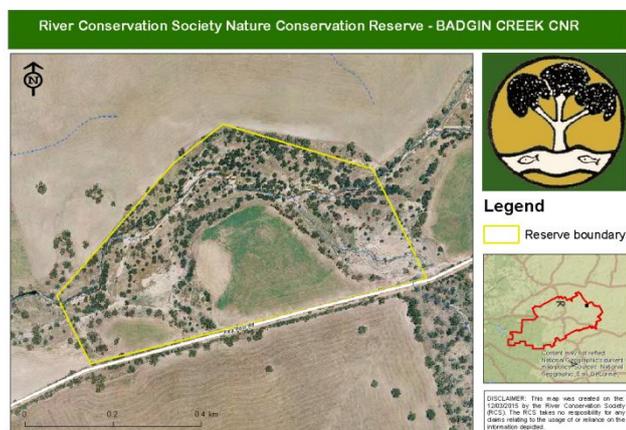


Figure 1. The location of Badgin Creek Conservation Reserve, York.

Badgin Creek Nature Conservation Reserve is located on the Mortlock River south branch, downstream of Flea Pool (Figure 1). The reserve was generally in poor condition when the Vale of York Reserves Committee (VOYRC) took it over; parts of the reserve had been used for grazing and cropping and showed signs of secondary salinity. The reserve had been partially fenced in the past but the RCS completed fencing in 2006 utilising funding from the Western Australian Department of Water Avon River Basin Fencing Program.

The VOYRC vision was to create a large wildlife corridor that linked the Wallaby Hills to the Mortlock River. Therefore fencing and revegetation efforts focussed on linking Badgin Creek reserve to the upstream Shire of York Reserve 838 and the downstream RCS reserve called Crees Rd with intervening vacant crown land along the river. Other RCS revegetation efforts in the area occurred along Badgin Creek and Grass tree soak in 2002.

The reserve supports woodlands of wandoo, York gum, salmon gum, morrel and gimlet over soils of red and grey deep sandy and loamy duplex as well wetland habitats along Badgin Creek and the South Mortlock River.

AWC Report: Feral Cat Research



The AWC are conducting the largest feral cat research program in Australia's history. An estimated 5-18 million feral cats roam our

country killing 5-30 animals each a day. Cats are difficult to manage at a landscape scale using traditional techniques such as baiting, trapping and shooting therefore the AWC are trying to learn more about their ecology by collaring 50 feral cats with GPS tracking devices at Mornington and Marion Downs in the Kimberley. Interestingly, they are using specially-trained feral cat-detector dogs that follow the scent of a feral cat and chase it up a tree where it can easily be sedated using a dart rifle. Further to the tracking, the AWC are using camera traps to more accurately measure cat densities and to identify individuals.

Predators such as cats and foxes are a major issue in York; RCS' own camera traps have captured several foxes prowling the banks of the Avon River during the Water Rats surveys. Fortunately, there is lots of support for those you wanting to manage feral predators on your property. Wheatbelt NRM Inc. are now running a series of workshops called "Fighting back against Wheatbelt ferals" where you can get your 1080 poison accreditation and learn about pest and weed management. They also have range of equipment for loan, including camera traps.

Unfortunately, they don't yet loan out feral cat-detector dogs. Contact Rachael or Leigh at Wheatbelt NRM on (08) 9670 3100.

Coming up....

Wildflower Society State conference - York

Hosted by Avon Branch and held at The York Palace, cnr Avon Tce/McCartney Street, York 27-28th June 2015. Read more [here](#).

The Magic of Bush Medicine

Held at Wongan hills, 3rd July; a "ladies only" event using bush products to make ointments, moisturiser and potpourri. Read more [here](#).

RCS NEWS

RCS at Karakamia

The conservation centre at Karakamia has recently been cleared out of all the AWC pallets of brochures that were stored in there and has been tidied up. It looks much nicer now and RCS members are welcome to access the information after making an appointment; info@riverconservationsociety.org.

Newsletters and apps

While we largely draw on our member's experiences and networks in the York region to populate the RCS newsletter, there are a huge range of free electronic newsletters available through various environmental organisations. Here's a few that might be of interest to RCS readers (follow the hyperlink to subscribe):

Newsletter Title	Organisation
Wildlife Matters	Australian Wildlife Conservancy
Bush Tracks	Bush Heritage Australia
Wheatbelt NRM E-News	Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Inc.
BirdLife E-News	Birdlife Australia
Greening Australia E-News	Greening Australia
Love Our Parks	Botanic Parks and Gardens

Along the same vein, there are several awesome apps available for your mobile devices that you might like; (incidentally, if you're a bit techno-challenged the

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York CRC is offering courses in using your smart-phone and tablets. See [here](#) for more info...)

App Title	Organisation	What's it for?
Field Guide to Australian Fauna	Museum Victoria	Fauna identification
Seedling Selector	Wheatbelt NRM Inc.	Which plants suit your on-farm revegetation project
ClimMATE	Commonwealth Government	Explore climate records
The Michael Morcombe and David Stewart eGuide to the Birds of Australia		Bird identification
Pizzey and Knight Birds of Australia Digital Edition		Bird identification
SoilMapp	CSIRO	Soil types near you and their properties
Native Plant Guide		Native plant identification
Field Guide to Pest Animals of Australia	Invasive Animals Limited	Feral animal information

Water Rat Progress



The amazing news is; the RCS camera traps have confirmed the presence of water rats on the Avon River! A single adult, female Rakali was captured on a camera borrowed from Wheatbelt NRM Inc. earlier this year. Congratulations to Rob Pearce who has worked hard on getting this result and now has the go ahead to purchase our own set of camera traps to further this work and other RCS pursuits.

Aussie Backyard Bird Count – York



Results from Birdlife Australia's Aussie Backyard Bird Count from the Shire of York have been made available to the RCS. Two observers recorded 18 native bird species, the most common being the Australian Ringneck, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Australian Magpie and Australian Raven. The report states that there is a declining trend in numbers for bird species residing in the Shire of York and within the Avon Valley. More participants in this survey from across the Shire would give a more comprehensive picture of the state of our avifauna. For a copy of the report email Dimity info@riverconservationsociety.org

What's out in York?

Ghost Fungi

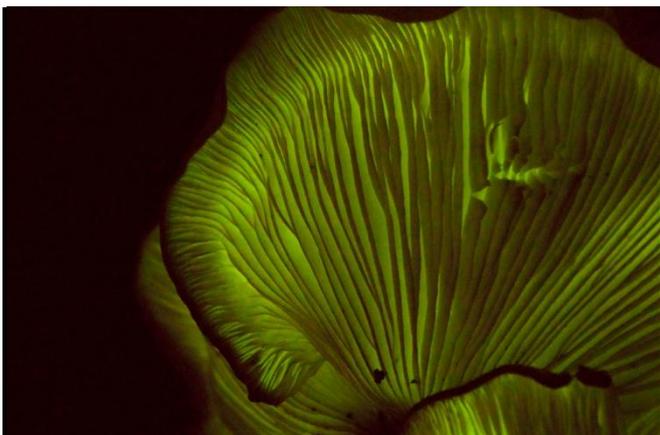


Figure 2. *Omphalotus nidiformis* showing its full luminescent magnificence. Photo credit: Kelly Thorburn.

There's a spooky presence in the bush at night at the moment. See this photo of *Omphalotus nidiformis* taken by Kelly Thorburn from Wheatbelt NRM Inc near her home in Baker's Hill. Kelly took the photo with her Nikon D90, 18-55mm lens, f/5.6 30 second exposure, ISO-100, no flash (for the photography buffs) to capture the green bioluminescent glory of this fungus. It grows on dead wood/detritus and during the day, appears as a light brown cap with a white underside. Many organisms are bioluminescent; see the book titled [Bioluminescence; Living Lights, Lights for Living](#) by Therese Wilson which explores the hypothesis that early life used luminescence to remove oxygen, which was toxic to life when it first appeared on earth. Modern organisms use bioluminescence for defence from predators, for their own predatory purposes or sexual communication.



Figure 3. *Omphalotus nidiformis* when not luminescent.

My thanks to those who contributed to this quarterly newsletter. We rely on your input to make it interesting and relevant. All members are welcome to contribute. Please forward email submissions to:

Attn: Dimity Boggs

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