

ENVIRONMENT

Exciting finds of rare birds in the Julimar forest

Toodyay Naturalists' Club
Desraé Clarke

NOTED amateur bird specialist, Max Howard, was the Nat's March guest speaker. Max is one of the three foundation members of the now 50-strong membership of the Avon Bird Group.

The publication, 'The Birds of the Avon River Basin' was featured in the February edition of *The Herald*.

Gathering knowledge on birds, and their interesting lives, has been Max's passion since he was a young 15 year old.

He heard the Duke of Edinburgh, who was visiting Western Australia at that time, speak of the importance of maintaining suitable habitats for wildlife in the metropolitan area.

Max was impressed and followed his interest that is now his passion.

In the week following the duke's visit *The Daily News*, the Perth afternoon daily paper at that time, featured articles on the various suitable habitats for birds around Perth.

Max's talk was sprinkled with snippets of knowledge that aren't typically featured in books, derived instead from his lifelong interest and observations.

One example given was that of learning the difference between the very similar-looking Collared Sparrowhawk and the Brown Goshawk.

The Sparrowhawk has a wide-eyed expression and an extremely long middle toe, whereas the Brown Goshawk has a lowered eyebrow that makes it look very angry.

The Square-tailed Kite and the Little Eagle appear similar, but the Kite has a white face. Max spoke of exciting finds of rare birds

in the Julimar Forest that have not been seen for many years.

The Shrike-tit was a common bird in the 1980's but may have been absent for well over 20 years until the recent exciting find. Max's presentation was inspiring.

He encourages the community to take time to observe birds. During observation note their movements and their assorted calls, and if you encounter a bird new to you, record the time of observation and the behaviour that attracted your attention.

The Nat's Club members would appreciate the information.

The 'Cleanup Australia Day' contribution from the Toodyay Nat's members was sadly very successful.

A whole 12 bags were filled with trash collected along tracks in the beautiful Julimar Forest.

A Nat's fundraiser will be held on Friday and Saturday April 5 and 6 at the front of IGA.

Feel free to drop by and have a chat with TNC members.

The next meeting will be held Saturday April 20 during an excursion to Narembeen.

A highlight of the weekend away will be an 'after dark' visit to the Wadderin Wildlife Sanctuary.

Enquiries are encouraged, contact us at secretary@toodyaynats.com.au or call 9574 5574.

The Nat's Club members appreciate receiving community natural observations and photos.

As mentioned, there can be many surprises within our Shire.



Brown Goshawk at garden birdbath. Photo: Wayne Clarke.

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ENVIRONMENT



Part of the collection of the insect collection of Andrew Wallace.

Bugs and beetles under threat when wetlands are cleared or altered

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance
Wayne Clarke

HELENA College Year 12 Student, Andrew Wallace, was the guest speaker at the Toodyay Naturalists' Club's February 2024 meeting. The young man spoke on 'Local invertebrates and how to get them into your garden,' and what an entertaining speaker he was.

Andrew explained that invertebrates related to any fauna without a spine and they comprise over 95 percent of all animals.

They include insects and spiders and many coral and marine animals.

Very few of the huge number of invertebrates discovered have been named, and until they are formally identified (and scientifically named) they have no protection.

Any number of them could be unique in the environment and serve multiple purposes.

One genus found in Julimar State Forest – the Castiarina or Jewel Beetle – has over 476 species in Australia, many of which can be found in Toodyay.

They pollinate many plant species including eucalypts, banksias, myrtles and quandong.

Bull ants or Sergeant Ants (*Myrmecia* species) use their large eyes to latch on to prey rather than smell (like most ants) and also play a part in pollination.

The bodies of both centipedes and millipedes are made up of segments. The difference between the two is that centipedes have one pair of legs per body segment while millipedes have two pairs.

Huntsman spiders have a squat body with two rows of small, flat (and hard to see) eyes running horizontally down their side with legs splayed outwards and angled down, whereas wolf spiders have two large forward facing eyes (that shine at night), with legs spreading outwards but not angled.

There are over 300 native species of termites in Australia that all belong to the cockroach family of which there are over 450 known species in Australia.

Andrew has a permit to collect invertebrates and his collection is quite extensive.

Specimens were well laid-out and painstakingly mounted, indicating his genuine enthusiasm for invertebrates and nature in general.

At least 87 species of aquatic invertebrates were collected at Julimar Claypan in October 2021.

This richness is typical of higher quality freshwater wetlands in the southwest of Western Australia and as high or higher than vegetated ephemeral claypans previously sampled.

An estimated 70-95 per cent of all clay-based wetlands have been cleared or altered (see Gibson et al., 2005, Department of Parks and Wildlife 2015) and clay-based wetlands are now listed as 'Threatened Ecological Communities' (Department of Parks and Wildlife 2015) with conservation status ranging from 'Priority 1' to 'Endangered.'

¹ Cale DJ, 2023, Julimar-Claypan Aquatic Invertebrate Survey, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Perth.