



Max the giant chuditch charms volunteers at last month's Friends' Avon Descent marquee.

Human chuditch highlights critically endangered critters

Toodyay Friends of the River
Bridget Leggett

FRIENDS of the River had a busy time over the Avon Descent weekend, with the International Food Festival and working bees on the Sunday and Monday.

Toodyay Friends of the River shared marquee space in Duidgee Park with the **Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance (JCAFA)** while the food festival was underway.

Thanks to the Shire of Toodyay for making the marquee space available to us.

The Friends' display included maps of the catchment of the Avon and photos of the flooding at Duidgee Park in February 2017, fast-flowing water and significant erosion at Red Bank Pool in August 2021 and a contrasting photo of black swans flying over glassy water from June 2016.

Max the human-sized chuditch drew the festivalgoers' attention to the plight of endangered and critically endangered species in Julimar Forest.

The JCAFA display also featured a range of the animals and plants found in Julimar, and an opportunity for visitors to sign a petition to have the forest reclassified as a national park.

Despite 40 years of promises, there has been no progress on giving the area the protection it deserves.

If you missed the chance to sign the petition, it can be accessed at www.bit.ly/julimar-petition.

The Sunday working bee completed plantings for the year, adding sedges to the work already done to stabilise the banks of Boyagerring Brook near Toodyay District High School.

The sedges were grown by Boola Boonup

(place of many trees) – formerly WA Farm Trees – and now operated by Noongar Land Enterprise Group.

Friends walked a section of the Bilya Walk Track on the Monday, checking Avon Descent access points for rubbish and were pleased to find minimal impact.

Our observations matched those of TFOR Project Officer and Shire Reserves Manager Greg Warburton who had inspected other sections of the river the previous day.

Congratulations to this year's Avon Descent organisers and volunteer clean-up crews.

While out on the track we checked the track counter.

Since November last year, we have recorded 3000 walkers along the track.

The number of individual users will be considerably lower, as some locals regularly walk the track, however it shows the track gets considerable use.

The next working bees will be on Sunday September 10 and Monday September 11.

Details of meeting points and activities will be posted on the Drummond House noticeboard, emailed to members and put on the Friends' website and Facebook pages.

For contact information see Where and When, page 30.

Birthday party is the icing on the cake



Critical refuge for vulnerable spotted carnivore



ENVIRONMENT

Protest banner at Newcastle Bridge during last month's Avon Descent river race.

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance

Sharon Richards

EASILY recognised by its spotted coat WA's largest marsupial carnivore is the chuditch or Western quoll, *Dasyurus geoffroii*.

The smaller Northern quoll can be found in the Kimberley and parts of the Pilbara.

They are members of a large group of meat-eating marsupials called the Dasyurids which include other quoll species, the Tasmanian devil and thylacine.

The chuditch was once found across much of inland Australia but is now

confined to isolated pockets of our own South West.

Julimar Forest is a critical refuge for the chuditch although the population that survives there has descended from translocated individuals.

In the early 90s the then Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) launched a campaign to rescue the species.

Julimar Forest was identified as ideal habitat and continues to be a vitally important part of the species' conservation.

As with most of our native mammals, habitat loss and predation by foxes and cats continue to drive the chuditch's decline.

It is currently listed as "Vulnerable".

As some chook owners will attest, the chuditch is a voracious hunter.

They are mostly solitary, only coming together in the mating season during the winter months.

Two to six pouched young are produced and when they are too big to carry around the mother secretes them in a den.

Chuditch need large territories to survive and Julimar Forest provides the crucial northern jarrah habitat it requires.

Fungi Foray keeps Nats busy in forest

Toodyay Naturalists' Club

Desraé Clarke

THE MONTH of August has been a busy one.

A 'Fungi Foray' was held in the **Julimar** Forest with Nats members and enthusiasts from further afield.

Fungi play an important role in maintaining health in a forest and of course there are many critters that depend on fungi as food.

A presentation was given at the August Nat's meeting by Desraé and Wayne Clarke on a CALM (as the overriding State conservation body was known) Landscape Expedition to the Gibson Desert in 1998.

What is a desert?

A desert is an area of unreliable rainfall.

This was an interesting answer to that question as it was expected to be a landscape of no vegetation and bare, sandy hills.

Imagine the surprise to find a relatively thick plant coverage and two large trees in the



A 'trapline'. Photo Wayne Clarke

vicinity of the camp.

The expedition attracted participants from interstate and overseas and from all walks of life to assist in research of the flora and fauna of the area.

Twenty traplines were set to catch small critters.

Each trapline consisted of a 30 metre length of soft wire netting, 15cm high with plastic household buckets and 20cm diameter polypipe pieces, the height of the buckets spaced along the length of the net. The polypipe and buckets were both dug into the ground with the tops level with the ground.

The small creatures scurry through the spinifex, hit the netting, run along it to fall into either the buckets or the pieces of polypipe.

It was imperative that receptacles were checked early in the morning to count, photograph and release the creatures.

The mechanism used to track larger animals was by dragging a piece of railway line behind a truck over two tracks of 30km and 32km.

Early checking found camels, kangaroos, feral cats, dingoes, foxes and reptiles had crossed the graded areas.

A third area of research was that of making, and then checking, 50-metre square plant quadrates on the effect of plant growth on burnt and unburnt areas.

The burnt areas yielded 25 species whereas the unburnt quadrates held five, including the dominant spinifex.

Nats continue to receive interesting natural history observations from the community.

It is greatly appreciated as the information can be included on the Club's database of records.

The next meeting of the Nats on Saturday 16 September is to be an 'out and about' wildflower excursion in the Wongan Hills area.

Final details will be distributed shortly.

For contact information see *Where and When*, Page 30.