



# Turtle Talk



E-news for members & friends of the

Our Network was formed in response to the turtle crisis caused by 2011's very hot Summer when many of Perth's metropolitan lakes dried up resulting in widespread turtle deaths and a mass rescue of debilitated turtles.

Although our official name is Turtle *Oblonga* Rescue & Rehabilitation Network Inc., or TORRN for short, we will also be using Turtle *Oblonga* Network as a trading name.

## A TURTLEY CHRISTMAS MESSAGE from our Chair-Secretary, Ruth Haight RVN

Thank you to all Turtle Oblonga Network members & supporters, you have made an important contribution to the preservation of Oblong turtles.

The Network's start-up year 2012, is drawing to a close; it's time to reflect on a very busy but rewarding 12 months.

- Dianne Hunter, founder and key mover & shaker, held a Turtle Forum in late 2011 from which the Turtle Oblonga Network was formed.
- We are honoured that Gerald Kuchling, world renowned turtle scientist, has agreed to be our Patron.
- The Network became incorporated in January this year, with a Constitution and a committee comprised of representatives from the main Wildlife Centres around Perth.
- We have applied for registration on the Register of Environmental Organisations which will give us Deductible Gift Recipient status which will allow us to issue tax deductible receipts for donations. As a result of recent changes to the interpretation of charitable organisations in Western Australia, we have applied for the requisite Charitable Collections License.
- In anticipation of the coming Summer we have applied to Lottery West for a grant to purchase turtle tubs for loan to wildlife individuals and centres, rescue equipment, a microscope and basic blood testing equipment.
- In July, Dianne and I presented papers on Oblong turtles at the Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference which was held in Townsville.
- The committee has been meeting every two months and held three General and one Annual General meetings.
- Public Information talks on turtles and the Network's activities were delivered to the Nature Reserves Preservation Group and to environmental students at Challenger TAFE Murdoch Campus and at Kanyana's Open Day.
- Two training sessions on Basic Housing & Triage and First-aid for Oblong turtles were held with excellent attendances. Due to circumstances beyond our control we were obliged to postpone the planned third training session Turtle Nursing.
- Our abstract for a presentation to be delivered at the World Wetlands Day Seminar in February 2013 has been accepted.
- We have submitted a tender to deliver the Care of Reptiles & Amphibians segment of the DEC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation courses in 2013.
- Membership Secretary, Karen, has put TORRN on Facebook with over 70 likes, welcomed 59 new members, taken on the E-News editorship and continues to manage and upgrade the website.

*Continued overleaf.....*





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- Committee member, Barbara has taken on the management of our fundraising merchandise items which are now available on our website, just in time for Christmas!
- Congratulations to Committee member Dr Amy, who has just completed studies for her Masters of Conservation Medicine Post graduate degree. Amy co-presented the Triage & First-aid Workshop.
- Dozens of turtle enquiries have been fielded and rescues have been conducted throughout the Perth metropolitan area.
- A log of the turtles' habitat, climatic and bio-triggers for mass movements and incidents has begun to unravel the habits of this secretive and often invisible creature.
- An Oblong turtle husbandry manual is in the pipeline and should be available in Autumn next year.
- A one-day turtle rehabilitation workshop incorporating all facets of turtle care is planned to coincide with the release of the husbandry manual in 2013.
- We are also planning to conduct community information sessions throughout the metropolitan area.

Considering that this year has been busy setting up protocols and organisational structures we have achieved a lot in a short time.

The general public have amazed and heartened us with their empathy and genuine concern for turtles in distress. Let's make 2013 our Year of the Turtle.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your support and wish you all the best for the coming festive season.

Cheers Ruth xxx

## TURTLES ON THE MOVE...

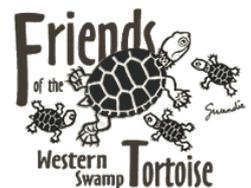
Turtles have been on the move over the last few weeks. Saturdays seem to be the busiest day for calls about turtles which is because people are out and about for the weekend. We learn something new from every turtle rescued. We now have a turtle incident sheet on which we're recording rescue locations and the turtles' vital statistics which will help build up a picture of what's happening with our normally out-of-sight turtles.

Over the last few weeks we've learned that it's best if rescuers finding a turtle take it home so that we can collect it from a fixed location instead of driving across town and then trying to find a single turtle in a lakeside environment. Another reason we want rescuers to take the turtle home is that any weak or injured turtles are at risk of being preyed upon by Ravens. Injured turtles are also at risk of becoming fly-blown in a very short time. We're also asking people to *rescue* dead bodies we want to record measurements, weights and sex. As well we can perform basic necropsies which are an important learning tool.



## HELP OUR WESTERN SWAMP TORTOISES BY EATING CHOCOLATE !

As a fund-raiser, Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise have partnered with the Margaret River Chocolate Company to produce some very appealing and attractive boxes of chocolate turtles.



These are a great idea for a Christmas present with a difference. Everyone likes chocolate, and by buying these you're contributing to a good cause. These chocolates are available from their outlets in Margaret River, the Swan Valley and in Perth at 317 Murray Street.



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## TARONGA ZOO

We had hoped to include an article by Dr Amy about her Taronga Zoo adventures in this edition. Unfortunately Amy has been sick and in hospital with viral pneumonia. We all wish her a speedy recovery ☺

## SPREADING THE WORD: E-NEWS, ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

If you have any pictures of Oblong turtles, stories or news about them for inclusion into the next Turtle Talk E-news edition or for adding to our website or Facebook page, then I would love to hear from you at [membershipsecretary@turtleoblonganetwork.org.au](mailto:membershipsecretary@turtleoblonganetwork.org.au)

We also welcome your suggestions and comments about our website, see [www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au](http://www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au)



We are currently on 76 likes and counting... Please help us by sharing things of interest with your friends, as this may also assist us in gaining more likes and subsequent members.



## AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIP.....

WE CURRENTLY HAVE 59 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS (+5 PENDING APPROVAL) AND 1 GROUP MEMBERSHIP

To those of you who are receiving this newsletter, but have not yet joined us as a member -shame on you!

Numbers count. Just by becoming a member you are helping. The more members we have, the more supporters our turtles have which will be of benefit when we are lobbying on their behalf. Membership is FREE but you'll still need to complete a membership form. Download a [Membership Form](#) from our website.



## TURTLE NURSING WORKSHOP

We were hoping to have Michelle Rouffignac, Head of Nursing at Perth Zoo, present the last of our 2012 turtle workshops. However, due to Zoo policy we would have to have paid the Zoo's rates for Michelle's time (even out of hours) which we couldn't afford. As a compromise Michelle has found a way around this. Michelle in conjunction with a Zoo vet will be presenting a Special Topic talk "*Care of Freshwater Turtles*" for DEC on the evening of Thursday 10 January, 6-8.30pm. This will be held at DEC Bentley at a cost of \$25 per person with bookings through DEC. The Registration Form has been emailed along with this E-News. This talk may also be teleconferenced to Regional centres if there is sufficient demand - the video-conferenced talks are presented free of charge in regional areas.

As a result, the Turtle Oblonga Network will be delaying the third of its workshops - turtle nursing - until after the Zoo-DEC talk to avoid the possibility of overlapping information.

## 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Committee hopes to endorse our 2013 Calendar at our December meeting this week and we will advise members these dates as soon as possible, as well as posting them to the [Events page](#) on our website shortly.

In the meantime, here are some dates for your diary:

- **9 January 2013:** Turtle Oblonga Network 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday!!!
- **1 February 2013:** World Wetlands Day Seminar - Cockburn Wetlands Centre, Hope Road, Bibra Lake.
- **3 March 2013:** Turtle Oblonga Network - General Meeting - Venue tbc.



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## LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER....

In spite of the recent rain, Perth's rainfall is currently 260ml below the average for this time of the year. Many of the lakes' water levels are lower than we would like and we anticipate that the coming Summer may be a difficult one for turtles.

With this in mind we are gearing up our plans and equipment in preparation. We would like to build up a stockpile of 220 litre tubs (and other items) to be loaned out to wildlife rehabilitators and wildlife rehabilitation groups for turtle housing over the coming Summer. Your financial support would be appreciated. PLEASE READ ON.....

## OUR "WISH LIST" AND HOW YOU COULD HELP BY BUYING A VIRTUAL GIFT!

Have you heard of the "Give a Goat" promotion by Oxfam? Well we are not selling goats or even turtles for that matter - but you can help us by selecting an item below either as a special gift for someone else or simply by making a donation on your own behalf.

All of the funds raised will enable us to buy these much needed items which will ultimately help us to rescue, rehabilitate and conserve our wonderful local turtles!!!

Do you have someone in your family who already has everything or is difficult to buy for? What about really surprising them with the virtual gift of a turtle tub or another item for Christmas?

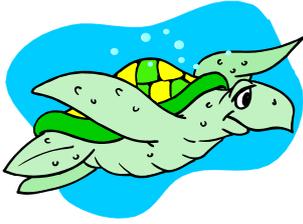


These sturdy, long-lasting 220L Turtle Tubs (\$99) will be used to house turtles in rehabilitation. These tubs can each house two turtles, each tub needs a Turtle Topper (\$15) and its own combined hide-basking platform (\$10).

Although these tubs are 220L we don't fill them more than about a quarter full, with the high tub walls ensuring an escape-proof environment. As we house the turtles outdoors in Summer-Autumn, the mesh topper is essential for protection from predators such as ravens and rodents. The tubs are placed on a raised support and fitted with a drain in the bottom to facilitate the daily water changes needed, which when combined with a small water filter, ensure a healthy water quality for the turtles.

Please see the [Special Gift Donation](#) page of our Turtle Shop for additional ideas and information.

NOTE: If you make a donation, through the WA Wildlife Rehabilitation Council's Public Fund account, you will be issued with a tax deductible receipt and we will send you a gift card for presentation on Christmas Day. As a Christmas gesture, WAWRC is waiving its usual service fee which means 100% of your donation will come to the Turtle Oblonga Network. Payment details and a link are available on the Turtle Oblonga Network's website.



## LOVE TURTLES & TRAVELLING

Are you interested in making a difference to turtles worldwide? Then why not...

- Volunteer with Sea Turtle monitoring in the Cook Islands... see [www.seaturtle.org/jobs/?view=743](http://www.seaturtle.org/jobs/?view=743)
- Work as a Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Veterinary Technician/Educator in the Florida Keys... see [www.seaturtle.org/jobs/?view=751](http://www.seaturtle.org/jobs/?view=751)
- Volunteer at the Cuc Phuong Turtle Conservation Center, Vietnam. Email Douglas Hendrie at: [dhendrie@fpt.vn](mailto:dhendrie@fpt.vn)
- Volunteer right here in WA in Hedland - see <http://www.careforhedland.org.au/programs/turtle-monitoring.aspx> and below...

The Care for Hedland Environmental Association is again gearing up for the 2012/2013 Flat back turtle nesting season. The Group monitors two local Port Hedland beaches - Cemetery Beach & Pretty Pool Beach from November 2012 - February 2013. Volunteers get the opportunity to observe Flatback turtles returning to the sea, see hatchlings emerge from nests, assist in turtle rescues and observe the nesting process at night.

The monitoring is in two components: morning track monitoring and evening monitoring/tours for people watching turtle nesting. We GPS the location of successful nests, record any disturbances and so forth. Any interested volunteers who would like to assist from now until February 2013 are most welcome for any length of time from one week to four months.

If you are interested contact the Program Coordinator [Pip Short](#) for a volunteer application form.

## REPTILE INCUBATOR

An anonymous donor has donated the money for a reptile incubator for the Network's use. During nesting time, gravid females leaving the lakes for nesting are often victims of car accidents. The incubator will allow the Network to hatch these eggs which is felt to be necessary given the lack of recruitment occurring in turtle populations. The resulting hatchlings will be kept for a couple of weeks until their shell hardens and we are sure they are feeding well, before being released into water. This will greatly increase their chances of survival, as most hatchlings are preyed upon by ravens either when emerging from the nest or making their way to water.

Ravens also consume turtle eggs from nests already dug up by other predators such as foxes and dogs. Due to a prevalence of abundant food sources from human litter/waste, there are now inordinate numbers of Ravens in the metropolitan area to extent that the balance of nature has again been weighted against turtles. This has resulted in a decrease in eggs and young whilst adult mortality is increasing. Without intervention, turtle populations will continue on this downward spiral.

\*Ravens are an Australian native species; they are not introduced.



*X-ray of gravid female*



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## JEWELS, JEWELS & MORE JEWELS

Our fundraising sub-committee of Dianne, Barbara & Karen has been working towards expanding our range of merchandise. After starting initially with turtle-themed jewellery we have broadened our range for wider appeal. Our jewellery is now on our website, just in time for Christmas!!! Just some of our range is pictured below...



The sale of these unique and modestly priced items will help us raise much needed funds whilst giving you something in return. Many of the items would make ideal stocking stuffers or Christmas bon-bon inserts. So get your orders in really quickly!!!! Please note that stocks of some items are limited and that we may not be able to re-stock until after Christmas. All items sold in December come with a red-for-Christmas organza bag (subject to availability) and if you spend \$20 or more you will receive a free gift!!!! **Please support us by purchasing some merchandise from our [Turtle Shop](#).**

## DOGS

In the short time the Network has been gathering data on turtles we have discovered that dog attacks are more of a problem than we had realised. Many of the trauma cases admitted into care have been the victims of dog attack and many turtles' shells bear the marks of old puncture wounds from dogs' canine teeth. Turtles' shells, even those of adults, are not impervious to predators. Dog attacks often result in puncture wounds which pierce both the top and bottom shells, invariably penetrating the lungs and other vital organs leaving the animal to die a slow death by drowning (punctured lungs) or infection and/or organ failure. Injured animals are also susceptible to fly-strike and being preyed upon by Ravens.

Dogs are required to be on a leash when in the metropolitan area but many owners, believing their dog to be harmless, flout this rule. Dogs cannot resist attacking reptiles; it's in their nature. However, all owners can prevent their dogs from attacking by keeping them on a leash and under control. A dog off-leash is not under control. Quite apart from the risk to turtles and bobtail skinks there is also a considerable risk to any dog allowed off-leash in turtle habitat which is also Tiger Snake habitat due to the availability of plentiful food sources such as rodents and frogs in lakeside environments.

## PLASTICS ARE FOREVER

Did you know that every piece of plastic we have ever used is still on the planet today? That means, like diamonds, plastics are forever; which is a timely reminder for us all with the approaching summer/Christmas season. Remember that pollution of our waterways is not just a marine issue. You can check out the Australian Marine Conservation anti-plastic campaign details at <http://www.amcs.org.au/pdf/PlasticsAreForeverPoster.pdf>



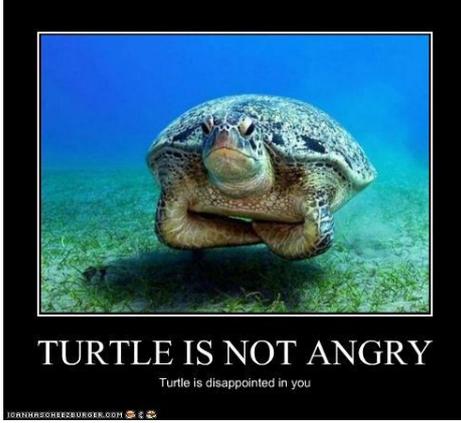
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☺☺☺ JUST FOR LAUGHS ☺☺☺



Has the rain has finally come...?



When turtles attack!



**WE NEED YOU!!**

If you have some spare time and would like to get more involved - please get in touch with one of us ...

## TORRN COMMITTEE MEMBERS & CONTACTS



Our Committee Members have a variety of experience and include administrators, veterinarians, vet nurses, wildlife volunteers & rehabilitators affiliated with many centres across Perth.

Chair-Secretary Ruth Haight  
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- Member June Butcher
- Member Michelle Hazelwood
- Member Diane Munrowd
- Member Dr Amy Northover
- Member Sue Rose
- Member Carla Tassone

**MOBILES** 0424 727 411 (East of the City and Hills areas) -or-  
0424 727 624 (North and South of the River)

**WEB** [www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au](http://www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au)

