

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.

VALE MARIA BRUCCIANI

Those of us who knew Maria will always remember her passion and compassion for wildlife - and her wonderful smile. She will be sorely missed. RIP Maria.



WELCOME 2013

2013 is turning into a bumper year for the Network. We hope you enjoy our E-news, look forward to seeing you at our events and it goes without saying that we hope it rains!!!



TURTLE SHOP

As advised in our Christmas edition, we have a great range of modestly priced merchandise available on our website. Please support us by purchasing something from our [Turtle Shop](#). We will also have selected items available for sale at coming events, so bring your wallets!



THE TURTLES SAY THANK YOU

Please join with us in thanking our wonderful supporters:



CONTENTS

PAGE

➤ Turtle Rescues	2
➤ Meet our "Aphrodite"	2
➤ The Swan River	2
➤ My Taronga Zoo Experience	3
➤ Spreading the word	3
➤ 2013 Calendar of Events	4
➤ Wetland Management Conference	4
➤ Wetland Clean ups	4
➤ Turtle Rehabilitation Workshop	5
➤ Community Information Sessions	5
➤ Katanning Creek, Living Creek Project	5
➤ Licenced Turtles	6
➤ Oblongs - Fact or Fiction...?	6
➤ Member Profile	7
➤ Love turtles and travelling?	7
➤ Follow up story: Reptile Incubator	7
➤ Just for laughs	8
➤ Our Contacts	8



TURTLE RESCUES

We're now fielding turtle rescue calls and it's been an eye-opener. We learn so much from every turtle. We must acknowledge the caring members of the public who often go to a lot of trouble to help the turtles they're encountering which is heartening.

- A turtle was seen limping in lakeside surrounds. By the time we got there the turtle was dead, from an injury which was possibly caused by a trail-bike or similar. Turtle was necropsied.
- A turtle was found in a driveway. Rescuer did not want to return turtle to nearest lake due to the danger from the busy roads surrounding the lake. Advised to relocate to another nearby lake which appeared to be much safer as it was located in a reserve.
- A turtle was found in river at Matilda Bay being harassed by Seagulls. The Turtle was found to have a fishing line injury (deep cut) to its snout. An X-ray was taken to check for an ingested fish hook. The turtle is now in care on pain-relief, antibiotics and is currently being tube-fed. Prognosis = Good.

*Would you know what to do if you found a turtle?
We suggest you download this [document](#) and place a copy in your glove box - just in case.*

Add our emergency mobiles into your phone...

0424 727 411 East Metro
0424 727 624 South Metro
0414 476 867 North Metro

If, for any reason, the number in your area doesn't answer, please call one of the other numbers.

MEET OUR "APHRODITE"

A turtle was found in a garden just as everyone in the family was leaving for work. The rescuer said that there was no lake nearby. Wrong! The turtle was a large, healthy female and was returned to her home lake the following day after starring in a photo shoot.

To read more about poster-girl "Aphrodite" and see the results of her awesome Houndstooth Studio photo shoot [click here](#).



houndstooth studio

THE SWAN RIVER

After the rescue of the turtle from Matilda Bay there was some email debate between Ruth and Dianne which lead to some interesting findings. We know that our turtles can tolerate some salt (brackish water) but as they're freshwater turtles, they do not live in salt-water. As well our turtles like still, turbid water (often tannin stained); they don't live in running water. The following items need to be read in context with present day weather and river conditions.

The following comes from this [undated website](#):
"Once the sand bar at Fremantle was removed, much more seawater was allowed to enter the river and flow upstream until it reached out-flowing freshwater. In fact, about 4/5 of the ocean tide now actually makes it into the estuary. Previously brackish, the Swan River is now almost as saline as the sea in summer. However, because of heavy winter rains, it stays fresh in winter. So seawater and freshwater are often both present in the estuary. The sea-water is heavier, so the freshwater flows on top of it, forming layers, or strata. This condition is therefore known as stratification.

The lower 20 km of the estuary is now generally well-flushed by these tides, so this area experiences few water quality problems. Marine animals like Crabs and Tailor may stay in the estuary for longer periods of time. The increase in tidal range has drowned out many plant species on river banks.

In early spring, the amount of rainfall decreases and fresh water flow into the estuary is reduced. The seawater moves farther into the estuary with incoming tides, pushing up underneath the out-flowing freshwater in a "salt wedge". Though initially stratified, the two layers will gradually be mixed by the wind and the salinity of surface waters will increase.

As the weather becomes even drier and river flow decreases, the saline water continues to move upstream until the end of summer, when most of the estuary will almost be as saline as the sea."

And from this [2012 website](#):
"At the time (of James Stirling) the river near where Perth sits today was described as a 'little bit brackish' (a little bit salty). Today it is as salty as the ocean and this is due to the removal of the rock bar at Fremantle, the damming of the Helena River, and the Hotham River turning salty due to land clearing in the wheat belt."



MY TARONGA ZOO EXPERIENCE by Committee Member, Dr Amy

In October 2012, I spent 4 weeks working at Taronga Zoo as part of my post-graduate veterinary training. Alongside the Taronga Zoo veterinarians, I was privileged enough to gain valuable hands-on experience working with a wide-range of native wildlife and exotic animal species.

Whilst anaesthetising a Sumatran Tiger, performing a general health check on a Chimpanzee, and getting to meet her very first puggle were amongst the highlights of her trip; microchipping two very cheeky Eastern long-necked turtles (*Chelodina longicollis*) also proved to be a challenge! The microchip, which is the size of a grain of rice, is implanted just beneath the skin in the inguinal region.



Figure 1: Juvenile Eastern long-necked turtle.

Photo courtesy of Amy Northover

At the other end of the turtle scale, I also got to work with a number of sea turtles, including a Hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and an Olive Ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*). Sadly both of these turtles presented to Taronga Wildlife Hospital as "floaters" unable to submerge.

Floating syndrome develops secondary to the accumulation of gas within the gut or body cavity, and epibiota (algae and barnacles) are often present on the shell in such cases. There are a number of causes of floating syndrome including foreign body ingestion (e.g. plastic bags and balloons) and gastrointestinal impaction.

Dr Amy will begin a regular column in our E-news from the next edition. She hopes to include some interesting local case studies for your information.



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

PICS..... If you have any pictures of Oblong turtles (and/or stories about them) for inclusion into the next Turtle Talk OR the website/Facebook page, then [Karen](#) would love to hear from you.

OLD STUFF..... Have you been out of the loop or want to re-read something? Find previous editions of the TURTLE TALK E-News [here](#).

NEW STUFF..... Please note that the following new pages have recently been added to our website: [Press Releases](#), [Rescue Stories](#), [Our Services](#) & [Our Supporters](#).

WEBSITE... We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website, see www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au.



FACEBOOK... We are currently on 101 likes and counting... Share things of interest with your friends, as this may also assist us in gaining more likes and subsequent members.

AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIP.....

CURRENT MEMBERS- INDIVIDUALS=64, GROUPS=1
FRIENDS ON OUR MAILING LIST=34

To those of you who are receiving/reading 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 Membership Form](#).

CHANGED ADDRESS, EMAIL OR PHONE?

Remembering that we might need to mobilise our forces in the event of emergency, it would be great if our lists of members and friends were always up to date. Please email [Karen](#) any changes to the above.



2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*date or venue to be confirmed

WHEN			WHAT	WHERE
JAN	17/31	Thu	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - Community Information Session. <i>See next page.</i>	Piney Lakes Environmental Education Centre, Leach Highway, Winthrop
FEB	1	Fri	World Wetlands Day - 9 th WA Wetland Management Conference. <i>See below.</i>	Cockburn Wetlands Centre, Hope Road, Bibra Lake
FEB	TBC*	Thu 6:00-8:30pm	Special Wildlife Presentation - Care of Freshwater Turtles (presented by Perth Zoo) - <i>We will advise the date once it has been re-scheduled.</i>	DEC, Bentley and video conferenced to selected regional centres
MAR	10	Sun 10am	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - General Meeting	Whiteman Park*
APR	14	Sun	Envirofest. <i>Details to follow in the next E-News.</i>	Whiteman Park
APR	28	Sun 10am	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - Turtle Rehabilitation Workshop. <i>See next page.</i>	Canning Eco Centre, Cnr Kent and Queens Park Roads, Wilson
MAY	23	Thu	World Turtle Day	Worldwide
MAY	26	Sun 10am	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - General Meeting	Venue tbc*
SEP	15	Sun 10am	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - Annual General Meeting	Venue tbc*
DEC	8	Sun 12pm	Turtle <i>Oblonga</i> Network - General Meeting & Lunch	Venue tbc*

WORLD WETLANDS DAY - 9TH WA WETLAND MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

The Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre in Hope Road, Bibra Lake is holding the 9th WA Wetland Management Conference on World Wetlands Day - Friday 1 February. On behalf of the Network, Ruth will be running a workshop-presentation on oblong turtle conservation (workshop 2). A copy of the program is available [here](#) and the registration form is available [here](#). The \$60 registration cost (\$20 concession) includes lunch and morning-afternoon tea. Hard copies of the proceedings are \$20, or \$10 for an electronic version.

ACT NOW!!!! The organisers tell us that to attend you must forward the completed registration forms immediately (by COB Monday 28th January) to denise@cockburnwetlands.org.au in order to secure your place.

WETLAND CLEAN UPS

If conferences aren't your thing, then why not help the turtles by cleaning up your local wetlands or lakes on World Wetlands Day (Friday 1 February) or on Cleanup Australia Day (Sunday 3rd March). Please see www.cleanup.org.au for ideas and how you can get involved.

If we could just get people to collect rubbish and weeds from areas around their neighbourhood creeks, ponds etc, it would make a huge difference. Hatchlings have a hard enough time making it to water from their high & dry nest site but if they encounter rubbish obstacles and thick weed growth (even dried up weeds) they can be forced to go the long way around (they are only as big as a 10 cent coin) and this increases the chances of predation. Weeds and rubbish are partners in crime - rubbish acts as a collection site for weed seeds. Turtle Watch have identified rubbish and weeds as the biggest problem in and around wetlands.

Always keep your eye out for turtles!!!



Photo courtesy of TORRN Member, Atlanta Veld



TURTLE REHABILITATION WORKSHOP

On Sunday 28 April the Network will be holding a day long Turtle Rehabilitation Workshop at the Canning River Eco Education Centre at the Kent Street Weir in Wilson for wildlife rehabilitators.

This workshop is planned to coincide with the issue of our husbandry manual on Oblong turtles. This workshop will combine all aspects of turtle rehabilitation from rescue through to release and relocation. We'll have a three tier price range for this workshop as some members have already completed the Housing and/or Triage segments. Members won't need to pay for the segments already completed but are encouraged to re-attend as a refresher as we continue to learn and update our information. More information will be included in forthcoming newsletters.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

After a busy year setting up the Network and getting it up and running we're now starting to do the things we should be doing such as turtle rescues and community information.

Our first community information session was held at Piney Lakes on 17 January. This booked out almost immediately and we have been engaged to present another session which is also booked out!!!

The presentation was in two parts with the first aimed at the children after which the dynamic Penny, Piney Lakes Environmental Education Officer, took the children downstairs for a turtle-themed craft session while we directed the second part of the presentation toward the parents. The growing interest in turtles is heartening.

We hope to schedule more community information sessions at different venues around the metropolitan area during the year. So watch this space.....

KATANNING CREEK LIVING CREEK PROJECT - TURTLE RELOCATIONS

Fauna for the Future (fauna relocators) were recently utilised in Katanning to undertake two approved fauna relocations from a section of the town creek line/drain, and a main dam for the protection of the Oblong turtles prior to any earthworks commencing in the coming weeks. Both juvenile and adult turtles are present in the creek, and these were collected and moved to a more preferred environment at an alternative nearby water source. This was necessary for the turtles welfare, and to safely facilitate works required for a funded living stream project, and dam repairs. Local residents and volunteers are also undertaking daily checks of the creek line to ensure temporary mesh barriers installed were not impeding movements of turtles.

Committee Member and Katanning Landcare Volunteer, Carla is writing a feature article for inclusion in the next Turtle Talk edition.



Photos courtesy of Darren Darch, Fauna for the Future.

(Thanks Darren!!)



LICENCED TURTLES

As we have acquired our knowledge and expertise of these unique animals through the support of the community, we believe that we can utilise this experience to improve the welfare of licensed Oblong turtles.

DEC licensed turtle owners are passionate about their animals but, in many cases, lack the knowledge needed to provide their turtles with a healthy and happy life which meets the five freedoms.

- **Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from Fear and Distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Many turtles are housed indoors where they receive no sunlight, are subject to household noise and an abnormal photo cycle due to households blazing with light until well after sunset. Diet too is an important factor for captive turtles which often receive a very limited range of foods.

We plan to offer 1 hour on-site appraisals to assist licensed turtle owners improve their turtles' living conditions. These appraisals look at all conditions involved - water quality and temperature, enclosure size and suitability, lighting conditions, and diet. A written report including recommendations for equipment upgrades is included in the cost.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Noongar word for long-necked turtle is BOOYI.

OBLONGS - FACT or FICTION...?

Turtles stink...?

- Little information available on Oblong Turtles
- The same literature is quoted over & over again
- Whilst turtles do have scent glands and can, in our handling of hundreds of turtles we've not experienced this
- Yet to be convinced

Turtles are bombproof...?

- No, far from it. Turtles are sensitive creatures which are easily stressed
- Turtles are no match for a motor vehicle
- Their shell is not a suit of armour; it's living bone
- Their complicated physiology means that when things go wrong the treatments can be very complicated and over a long period of time

Turtles can communicate...?

- Yes, through series of clicks & Hoo's
- They can echolocate their prey in murky water as river dolphins do in Brazil

Turtles eat vegetables...?

- No, our turtles don't eat vegetation although they may consume it along with their prey . . . and spit it out
- Our turtles are carnivores
- Turtles can only swallow food in water

Turtles will eat ducklings...?

- Yes, this is true
- Large turtles are capable of taking down birds as large as Swamphen





MEMBER PROFILE - RUTH HAIGHT

A revealing interview with our Chair-Secretary, Ruth. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.....

"I am an optimist and aging vet nurse with intense interest in anatomy, post mortem examinations, blood & poo and what it tells us about the body it has just left.

A background in laboratory work, dairy farming, travel, and surgical vet nursing overseas which was nothing compared to motherhood with the 3 Fabulous Haight Brothers.



THE LOVELY RUTH -WITH MANDY- IN ONE OF HER TURTLE TUBS !

I love coffee in bed with my sweetheart, leaning dogs, good wine, good friends and solving an enigma. Usually lots of study and networking gets the best results.

Husbandry, especially when working with wildlife, is one of my favourite jobs as you have the time to observe the animals when they think you are not looking.

I could sit and watch animals (including the human variety) for hours - better than TV! Housework can always wait.

I like to think we can all make a difference; I have learnt amazing things from the most unlikely people but it's also good to pick an erudite brain when the opportunity arises.

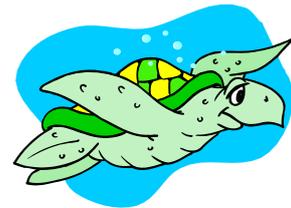
I feel that I have had many lives in one and am now in my turtle years - bliss!"

If you are interested in becoming the next featured member/friend in this column please email [Karen](#). Note: you don't have to pose for a silly photo - unless you want to!

LOVE TURTLES & TRAVELLING

Are you interested in making a difference to turtles around the world? Then why not...

- Visit or volunteer at the [Turtle Rehabilitation Centre](#) in Cairns.
- Visit the [Mekong Turtle Conservation Centre](#) in Cambodia.
- Check out both paid and voluntary opportunities working with sea turtles at: <http://www.seaturtle.org/jobs/>



FOLLOWUP STORY

The reptile incubator we mentioned in the last E-news has now been purchased with the help of that mysterious benefactor.

The incubator will allow the Network to hatch eggs which is felt to be necessary given the lack of recruitment occurring in turtle populations.

Oblong turtle eggs are elliptical and measure 31-34mm long and 20-24mm wide.



If you find any turtle eggs, please put them into an egg carton to minimise movement, then call us on one of our mobile contacts (see next page).





☺☺☺ AND JUST FOR LAUGHS ☺☺☺



And a repeat of one of our favourites... " Hello !!! Turtle Oblonga Network... "
Call us on one of our Turtle Rescue Mobiles below.



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



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

Chair-Secretary [Ruth Haight](#)
Treasurer [Dianne Hunter](#)
Membership [Karen Cavanough](#)
Merchandise [Barbara Wright](#)

Member June Butcher
Member Michelle Hazelwood
Member Dr Amy Northover
Member Sue Rose
Member Carla Tassone

MOBILES

0424 727 411 East Metro
0424 727 624 South Metro
0414 476 867 North Metro



www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au

If, for any reason, the number in your area doesn't answer, please call one of the other numbers.