

May-June 2013

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.

TURTLE SHOP

Please support us by purchasing something from our [Turtle Shop](#). We will have selected items available for sale at future events, so please bring your wallets!



SHORT & SWEET

We've been a bit busy, so this edition is full of pics and not as jam packed with information as usual. A bumper edition will follow.

HELP!!!!

Does anyone know of anyone who has been employed for "at least five years in the fields of accounting or book keeping or banking or finance" that would be willing to audit our finances annually? Please email [Dianne](#) if you do!

CONTENTS

PAGE

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ➤ Hatchling update | 1-2 |
| ➤ Turtle Rescues, Rehab & Releases | 2-3 |
| ➤ Events Pages - Past, Upcoming & Future | 3-4 |
| ➤ FEATURE ARTICLE - Fixing bent & broken turtles by Dr Gary Beilby | 5-6 |
| ➤ Spreading the word | 7 |
| ➤ Miscellaneous stuff | 7-8 |
| ➤ Members Profile - Tanya Marwood | 9 |
| ➤ Just for laughs | 10 |
| ➤ Our Contacts | 10 |

OUR LATEST NEWS...

HATCHLING UPDATE

Some of you will already know from Facebook and the Rehabilitation Workshop that only two of the little hatchlings remain ☺ They currently weigh in at 7.6g and 9.9g!

Unfortunately two of the four (pictured below) died recently of an unknown cause, which was very disappointing as they had been gaining weight, hunting and eating well. We suspect an infection of some sort and hope that a post mortem session with Murdoch University Vet staff and students may reveal a potential cause.



This photo of the hatchlings went a bit viral, creating a spike in our Facebook likes; being shared 33 times and seen by **4057** people from the US, NZ, Spain and other places all around the world!!!

Continued...



This recent photo has been shared 27 times and seen by **2204** people (since 25/4)!



out by the return of hot dry weather - it was 36C the day prior to his rescue. It is thought that he may have smelt the water in the backyard pond and in his desperation left the nearby "wetland" to reach it.

Timothy was placed in a large tub to rehydrate for a few days during which time it was noticed that he was passing dark, hard granules. After a consult with TORRN experts it was decided that he had probably been severely dehydrated and would require a longer period of rehydration to ensure that no blockages remained. He has recently developed an appetite for whitebait stuffed with reptile mix and will shortly be assessed for release to a suitable wetland.

TURTLE RESCUES, REHAB & RELEASES

Timothy...

Was it love in the air or just the smell of water?"

Timothy was found in the front garden of one of our "turtle taxi" members. Recently trained in the art of turtle-taxiing, our new member Karen was expecting her first call-out to involve some driving. Instead, this smart little turtle found his own way to help. Also caring for a recovering turtle, Thorpie, in a backyard pond, Karen was very surprised to find a dehydrated Timothy wandering in her garden.



"Timothy"



"Thorpie"

Gobble...

A young male Oblong turtle was rescued after being run over by a car. In shock and at 290g he was very underweight and did not have a very good chance of surviving surgery to repair the shell and the two broken coracoid bones (these bones connect the top and bottom shell at the shoulders). The Vets decided to go ahead based on the turtle's feisty attitude. The will to live is essential in wildlife cases. But, they warned, it would take months of nursing care.

Gobble had lost over a third of his body weight due to the current dry climate trend. Oblong Turtles prefer slow moving water. The temporary, or ephemeral, lakes and wetlands of the Perth coastal plain only have water for a few months of the year now compared to 10 - 15 years ago when they were full for at least 6 months or longer. Consequently, there has not been enough food available in recent years. Turtles can only feed in water, so once the ponds dry up they have no choice but to migrate to a better food source in order to build up fat

February and March were extremely hot this year followed by an intermittent patch of heavy rain and yet again more hot weather. One theory is that Timothy came out of aestivation with the rainfall and was caught



reserves before the cold winter temperatures render them unable to digest. Crossing roads is a major hazard in the busy metropolitan area. Some make it but others like Gobble are injured.

With over a month of dry-dock housing, antibiotics and pain relief, Gobble was not interested in doing anything but sleeping. Tube feeding and oral fluids are needed to keep up the resources the body needs to heal and put on weight. But, things were not improving so Gobble went back to the Vet for a check-up. The Vet advised continuing to tube feed daily until he gained more weight. Gobble had two weeks to show improvement or else.....



Gobble - Photo courtesy of Bruce Hunt

If a wild turtle cannot be released, it is kinder to euthanase it. This is because the Oblongs do not adjust well to life in captivity and often they die from stress related illnesses before their life expectancy of 80 - 100 years. Also, if there is no improvement it could mean that there are internal injuries that cannot be repaired - organ damage is difficult to detect. We are ethically obligated to **do no harm**; if he could not be healed, there was no future for Gobble.

Another two weeks passed and suddenly, as if a light went on inside his head, Gobble turned a corner and began to take notice of the world around him. He began to self feed, quite clumsily at first, but this was a good sign. He now weighed 360g and although there is still a long way to go, we are more hopeful that he will make it. His muscles are building stronger every day and he will do anything to grab his food in those long sharp claws and gobble it down. Time is often the best medicine. Stay tuned

Read an [article](#) featuring Ruth with Gobble in the local newspaper.

EVENTS PAGES

PAST EVENTS - AN UPDATE...



TORN TURTLE REHABILITATION WORKSHOP-SUNDAY 28 APRIL @ CANNING RIVER ECO EDUCATION CENTRE

Despite some technical difficulties at the start, the workshop went almost according to plan :)

To all of you who attended, we hope that you enjoyed the day and made some connections with like-minded people. We have had a workshop review and plan to incorporate your suggestions into the next round of training.

Thanks to those of you who purchased merchandise on the day - a reminder that Barbara is happy to take an order via the [Turtle Shop](#) at any time and post it to your door.

This and other pictures have been added under the [Events Photo Gallery](#) on our website.



Events Continued.....



Turtle Oblonga
Rescue & Rehabilitation
Network

Turtle Talk

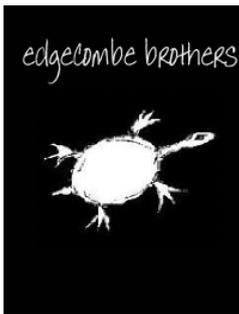
May-June 2013



UPCOMING EVENTS.....

**TORRN LUNCH FOR WORLD TURTLE DAY
- THURSDAY 23 MAY @ EDGECOMBE
BROTHERS WINERY, SWAN VALLEY.
12 NOON**

Join us for lunch on World Turtle Day - Thursday 23 May - at Edgcombe Brothers Winery in the Swan Valley. Please email [Barbara](#) ASAP to reserve your place.



Decisions, decisions!... Extravagant Figs? Estate grown dried figs, marinated in Edgcombe Brothers Winery Muscat and coated in dark chocolate and served with fresh cream or **Muscat Ice Cream?** Creamy vanilla ice cream blended with Edgcombe Brothers Grape Jam and garnished with dried grapes in Muscat.

When you've decided, check out the rest of the [Menu....](#) and on the way home from lunch why not stop in at the Margaret River Chocolate Factory for some chocolate turtles.



THE MARGARET RIVER CHOCOLATE COMPANY



**TORRN GENERAL MEETING - 26 MAY @
KANYANA WILDLIFE REHABILITATION
CENTRE, 120 GILCHRIST ROAD
LESMURDIE. 10:30 FOR 11:00 START**

Come along to our next General Meeting and connect with like-minded turtle people in a friendly, social atmosphere. Come early and enjoy a cuppa and a chat before we begin. We don't enjoy meetings any more than anyone else, so the meeting will be short and to the point.

Grateful thanks to Kanyana Wildlife for hosting this meeting. After the meeting June Butcher has kindly offered a tour of their facilities for those interested.

Non-members are always welcome to attend meetings as observers.

Shop. We'll also have our fund-raising jewellery on sale. Check out our merchandise beforehand via our [Turtle Shop](#).

RSVP. We'd be grateful if you would let us know if you plan to attend the meeting so that we can ensure we have sufficient chairs. Another reason we appreciate advice of your attendance is that we often find that we've overbought on consumables like milk and food. Just a quick email to say you're coming is all we need. Apologies are also appreciated.

Agenda Items. If you have any items you'd like added to meeting Agendas please let us know no later than the Thursday before the meeting. Kindly note that items not added to the Agenda before the meeting will not be discussed; instead they will be added to the Agenda for the next meeting.

Please email [Dianne](#).



FEATURED ARTICLE FIXING BENT & BROKEN TURTLES

By Dr Gary Beilby, BSc BVMS MVS (Conservation)
Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital

Background

In the minefield that is urban and semi-urban existence for our chelonian friends, fractures of either the upper shell (carapace) or lower shell (plastron) are one of the more common problems encountered by turtle rehabbers. Vehicles and dogs are the two most common culprits and the injuries range from trivial little flapping edges to massive whole-body smashes.

The following article summarises Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital's approach to dealing with these injuries.



Initial assessment

1. Is the animal viable? Any of the 3 scenarios below are usually best euthanased
 - Unstable fractures to both plastron and carapace
 - Displaced fractures that occupy over a third of the entire carapace or plastron
 - Wounds that go right through to the internal body cavity
2. Level of contamination, age of wound and presence of infection.
3. Radiography to assess amount of internal bony damage.

4. Full assessment of all other problems.

Initial treatment

1. It is important to start with fluid support, antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. Ideally a turtle should have had 10 days antibiotics before embarking on shell repair - however in most cases this is not practical and repair is begun as soon as the animal is presented to our hospital from a wildlife carer
2. Full general anaesthesia is usually induced for all wound management procedures in turtles. Either a gas or an intravenous agent is used.
3. Wounds without unstable fractures are cleaned and debrided thoroughly, then dressed with Flamazine or DuoDerm and lastly waterproofed with an adhesive dressing such as Opsite. Superglue is sometimes used to ensure the Opsite stays adhered in stubborn spots
4. Wounds that are part of unstable fractures are cleaned carefully, debrided back to healthy tissue or bone surface, sealed with narrow strips of thin DuoDerm and then repaired with a thick layer of quick-setting epoxy resin that goes 10-20mm beyond the margin of the fracture. The displaced carapace or plastron elements are carefully held in correct alignment while the resin sets with attention to ensuring resin going around the edge of the shell doesn't stick to bits it shouldn't!



Continued.....



Follow-up and release

1. A successful resin repair is often effectively waterproof, however "dry-docking" is still the safest approach to subsequent rehabilitation - keeping the body above water but allowing a head hole so these carnivorous obligate water feeders can take food. Force feeding is advised in cases where the animal refuses to feed in a dry-dock setup. The healing of major wounds is a substantial metabolic drain on any animal, and all rehabbers know how difficult it can be to get some patients to eat enough!
2. Failure of the epoxy resin to adequately stabilise the fracture is usually evident within the first few weeks so rechecks are scheduled to monitor for this. Simple application of more resin is generally all that is needed to address instability. Again a general anaesthetic is a basic requirement to lower stress and ensure a good result.
3. Within approximately 4-6 weeks the wounds are becoming internally waterproof and small leaks that invariably develop under the resin repair are less of a problem.
4. Once the turtle has been rehabilitated to a size appropriate body weight, and all signs of infection or instability are addressed, the animal can be released as is. Full healing and development of a bony callous takes 12-18 months so removal of the resin prosthesis is never attempted. Eventually it will be cast off as the animal grows and sheds its scutes.



As always, we would like to express our thanks to the Vets and Vet Nurses at Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital for their ongoing support of the Turtle Oblonga Network.

*By Dr Gary Beilby
BSc BVMS MVS (Conservation)
Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital*



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 pages were recently updated on our website: "[Reference Books](#)", "[Events Photo Gallery](#)" & "[In the Media](#)".
- WEBSITE: We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website see www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au
- FACEBOOK: We are currently sitting on **196** likes and counting... **WHO WILL BE OUR 200th?** Please LIKE US and share things of interest with your friends, as this may also assist us in gaining more likes and subsequent members.



AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIP.....

- INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS: **102**
- YAY WE'VE FINALLY HIT 100!!!
- GROUP MEMBERS: **1**
- FRIENDS ON OUR MAILING LIST: **39**

To those of you who are receiving/reading this newsletter, but have not yet joined us as a member please do so! 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 our 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.

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF



LOVE TURTLES AND TRAVELLING...?

Volunteer Overseas

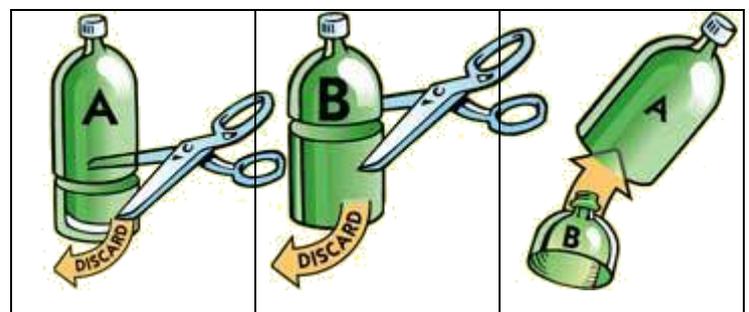
Volunteer with sea turtles all around the world, see: <http://www.seaturtle.org/jobs/>

Sea Turtle Health and Rehabilitation Workshop

The workshop will be held between Tuesday 16th and Thursday 18th of July 2013 at James Cook University, Townsville in conjunction with the Sea Turtle Foundation. For additional information, please see: <http://seaturtlefoundation.org/workshop>

GAMBUSIA TRAP

As shown at the Rehabilitation Workshop, here's a "how to" for making and using Dianne's Gambusia Trap...



- Take two 1.25 litre plastic drink bottles.
- Remove the labels.
- Cut the base off the first bottle and discard the base. Retain the cap.
- Cut the top off (at the shoulder) the second bottle and discard the base and the cap.
- Place the top of the second bottle into the base of the first bottle as illustrated.
- The two pieces as shown can be held together with something like gaffer tape, or cable ties.

Continued.....



- To use as the trap remove the cap from the trap, insert bait (a long thin piece of grain bread or crust) and fill with pond water before re-capping. The weight of the water inside the trap will prevent it from floating*.
- Place in shallow water where *Gambusia* are present.
- Take a seat for 15-20 minutes with a good book, or a good friend. Go back to your trap and you should have a good haul of *Gambusia*.
- When retrieving the trap, have a clean, uncontaminated bucket handy before picking up the trap by the base so that the water doesn't drain out. Un-cap the trap over the bucket and pour the *Gambusia* into the bucket.
- Add more pond water to the bucket if necessary. If you need more fish, the bread can be re-used and the trap re-set.

**Some plans for these types of traps suggest drilling holes in the bottle and weighting it with stones but it's not necessary with this simple but effective design.*

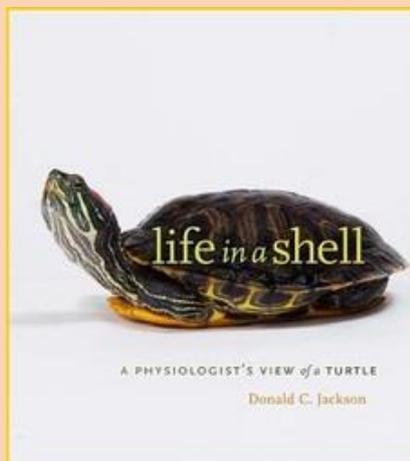
More turtle-stack photos!



BOOK CLUB

A paperback version of **A Life in a Shell** by Donald Jackson is now available from the Book Depository for \$17.70 with free shipping. Hardback price is \$35.

See the [Book Review](#) on our website.



MORE CITES PROTECTION FOR ASIAN FRESHWATER TURTLES

What is CITES you ask? It's the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" and is an international agreement between governments. The aim of the convention is to ensure that the international trade in wild animals and plants specimens does not threaten their survival.

A recent CITES Meeting held in Thailand accepted proposals further regulating the trade in the 44 Asian and 3 North American turtle species. This is timely given that a report by Wildlife Conservation Society and the Turtle Conservation Coalition in 2011, states that nearly 70% of the world's 25 most endangered turtles are found in Asia, where they are in high demand for the pet trade, meat and other products including traditional medicine. Those who have visited the region will have seen this first hand in markets and shopping precincts where turtles and other wildlife are readily available for purchase.

For more information about the international trade of wildlife, check out the [CITES](#) website.



MEMBER PROFILE

TANYA MARWOOD

We probably had freshwater turtles in south-eastern NSW, where I grew up, but I never noticed them. I did notice other wildlife like possums, cockatoos, crimson rosellas, satin bowerbirds, kangaroos, carpet pythons and blue-tongued lizards. But not turtles. I wasn't ever a 'reptile person' and even now, though I'm a long-term 'friend' of the Western Swamp Tortoise and a 'turtle-taxi' driver for TORRN, I have to confess to a fondness hierarchy that goes, in decreasing affinity: mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, and then invertebrate. Do I have a favourite animal? Not really—they're all pretty wonderful. But I always go and see the Pygmy Marmosets when I'm at the Zoo 😊

Though I was interested in animals and plants from a young age, I never studied biology or anything related to animals, at school or university—to my regret. I took on a degree in engineering and whilst I did alright in that, I didn't enjoy working as a chemical/ceramics engineer and quit after two jobs in that field. Thereafter I had a series of jobs that took me further from engineering and now I'm 'officially' (at least as far as the tax man and census takers are concerned) an editor and writer. But it still isn't what most interests me.

That's where wildlife volunteering comes in. Everyone knows it's hard to make a living in anything to do with wildlife or conservation, but volunteering is a good way to experience the non-monetary rewards. I joined the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise when it began in 2004, mainly because this very rare animal was right on our doorstep—how convenient! I knew nothing of freshwater turtles then, but have sure learnt a lot since.



Tanya at a Western Swamp Tortoise release

I also have volunteered on DEC projects concerned with the Woylie and the Ring-tailed Possum, in the wildlife hospital at Kanyana for 6-7 years, and for 2-3 years at Kaarakin, being a 'cocky-taxi' and rescuer. And I joined the WA Naturalists' Club a couple of years ago. Finally, for the past 8 years I've been on the Wildlife Helpline at DEC. The latter has been very educational, over a broad range of situations and species, from entangled dolphins to swooping magpies and bothersome possums in roof spaces. But *Homo sapiens* seems to me to be the most troublesome species we have to deal with!

Given the drying climate in this corner of the country, I'm looking forward to offering practical help to the oblong turtles through TORRN and hope to have some fun with you all along the way.



If you are interested in becoming the next featured member in this column, please email [Karen](#).

If you don't start volunteering, we will start targeting individuals or might even start making stuff up about you!!!



Turtle Oblonga
Rescue & Rehabilitation
Network

Turtle Talk

May-June 2013



☺☺☺ AND JUST FOR LAUGHS ☺☺☺



AND THE TURTLES, OF COURSE...
ALL THE TURTLES ARE FREE -
AS TURTLES AND, MAYBE,
ALL CREATURES SHOULD BE.
DR. SEUSS
QUOTESEVENLASTING.COM



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**

Committee Member **June Butcher**
Committee Member **Michelle Hazelwood**
Committee Member **Dr Amy Northover**
Committee Member **Carla Tassone**

EMERGENCY 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.