

May/June 2015



# Turtle Talk



E-news for members & friends of the

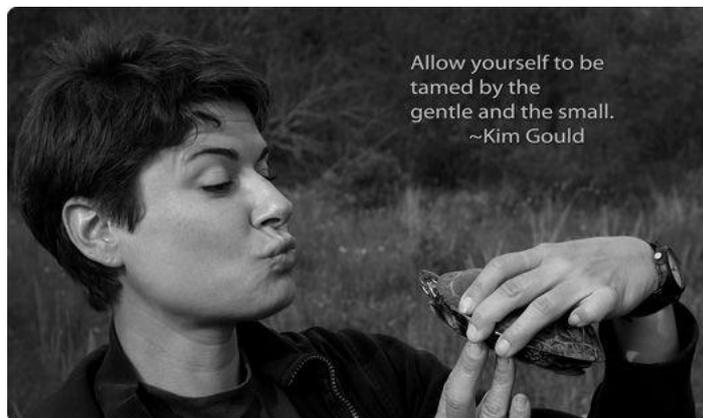
Our Network was formed in response to the turtle crisis caused by 2011's very hot summer, when many of Perth's metropolitan lakes dried up resulting in widespread turtle deaths and a mass rescue of debilitated turtles.

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.

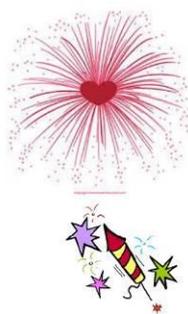
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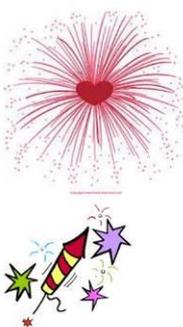
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Thanks everyone, we've finally hit the big one!



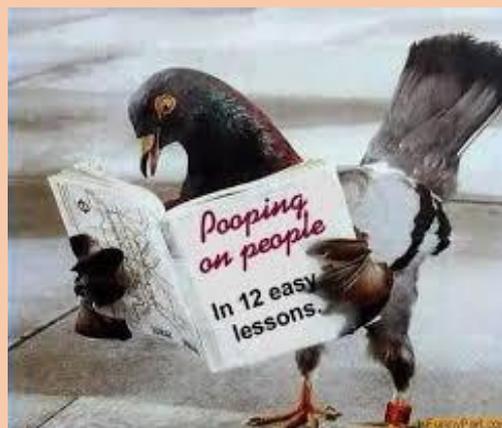
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LIKES



...next stop 1000



As is often the case with wildlife rehabilitation it's all about the poo!!



Congratulations to member Lindy who recently co-authored a paper published in *Experimental Parasitology* that identified a new *Eimeria* species in the western long-necked turtle.

We would like to thank Lindy for her ongoing work and for her acknowledgement of TORRN.

Paper reference:

R.Yang et al/*Experimental Parasitology* 154 (2015) 75-81. *Eimeria collieie* n. sp. (Apicomplexa: Eimeriidae) from the western long-necked turtle (*Chelodina collieie*)



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## EVENTS PAGES

### WORLD TURTLE DAY 23 May 2015

On learning that World Turtle Day 2015 fell on a Saturday, TORRN together with Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise and the Rockingham Regional Environment Centre (Naragebup) decided to host an event to show the people of Perth why turtles are great!

Each group gave two illustrated talks on their turtle species, with the Naragebup speaker Ryan Wagstaff covering all marine turtles. People flowed through the doors gradually from 10 am until about 1.30 pm.

There were lots of kids, turtle games, a sausage sizzle, the Centre's reptiles and fish were on display and we ran a free raffle with turtle-themed prizes.

We split the proceeds three ways, knowing that at least a few more people now know something more about turtles.



Just because... you can never have enough cute hatchling photos ☺

The following post on World Turtle Day on our Facebook page reached 1097, had 38 likes, 11 shares and 1 comment since adding on 23 May...



### Come out of your shell on **World Turtle Day**

You're invited to join **Turtle Oblonga Network, Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise** and **Rockingham Regional Environmental Centre** as we celebrate

#### The Secret Life Of Turtles

**Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>** from 10am - 3pm  
Rockingham Regional Environment Centre  
49 Safety Bay Road, Rockingham (opposite Lake Richmond)

- > **Illustrated talks, including rare video footage**  
10.30am and 12.45pm: Marine turtles  
11.15am and 1.30pm: Western swamp tortoise  
Noon and 2.15pm: Oblong turtles
- > **Be inspired by our guest speakers**
- > **wRiggly Reptile displays** (sorry, no live turtles)
- > **Marvel at our WA turtles which have outlived the Dinosaurs**
- > **Entry fee includes access to Centre's displays and gardens**
- > **Find out about turtle conservation efforts in your area, and how you can help**



Entry fee \$5.00. No concessions.  
Sausage sizzle \$2.50  
Cool drinks and ice-creams available  
Closed-in footwear recommended



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**HAPPY WORLD  
TURTLE DAY!!!**



## EVENTS PAGES

Continued...

### TURTLE TAXI WORKSHOP June 2015

On Saturday 6 June a group of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers attended a "Turtle Taxi" Training session. Turtle Taxis are our front-line people and attend incidents, rescue sites and veterinary clinics to rescue or pick-up turtles. They are the turtle equivalent of ambulance paramedics and receive a request from the holder of one of our emergency phones who then dispatches the nearest and first available Turtle Taxi member to the incident site.

Attendees learnt about the process of conducting turtle rescues including personal safety, rescue kits, turtle triage, examination and assessment, basic first aid, euthanasia cases, decision making, transporting turtles, overnight housing, release criteria and of course...paperwork.



Keeping records is a very important and necessary aspect of wildlife rehabilitation work - it contributes to long-term records and research which enhances the knowledge base of different species, it assists veterinary professionals and rehabilitators and enables them to provide the best possible care, and it provides important evidence of rehabilitation efforts and techniques. Every time a rescue is carried out, the Turtle Taxi completes a detailed incident form which is submitted to the Network's Home-Care Co-ordinator.

As well as providing details about the rescue, it covers the turtle's condition, weight, measurements, gender, the turtle's outcome (veterinary attention, rehabilitation, release) and even the barometric pressure and temperature on the day. The long-term collection of such data is invaluable.

We are always very grateful to the compassionate and caring members of the public who go out of their way to rescue turtles, and the incident form even includes a section where the rescuer is asked if they would like to receive updates about the turtle's outcome and condition. Many rescuers are keen to know the outcome of "their" turtle and we have had a number of rescuers attend post-rehabilitation releases.

The Turtle Taxi training emphasised the importance of drawing on the expertise of veterinary professionals and experienced rehabilitators. TORRN has a strong veterinary focus and this is very important in ensuring that every turtle receives professional and compassionate care.

Our new recruits discovered that their car-boots will no longer be their own and will be given over to the paraphernalia that accompanies a turtle paramedic.

Following the session, attendees were treated to a field trip where they observed the release of a batch of hatchlings that had been in care for a number of weeks after being rescued from a construction site. Releases are the culmination of our rehabilitation efforts and are always happy occasions. (See Release stories Pg7)

**Thank you to all of our new Turtle Taxis - we very much look forward to working with you!**



The contents of a Turtle Taxi's car boot...



Close-up of a few essentials...

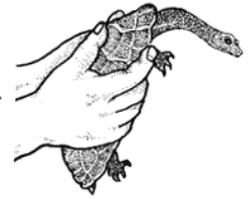


No matter the size or life stage of the turtle, we have a rescue tub fit for purpose...

We were even treated to some terrific turtley art at the training venue by the students of Quintilian Pre-Primary and Churchlands Primary...



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A TURTLE



Caring for Australian Wildlife: Sharon White

When our Turtle Taxis attend an incident, they provide the rescuer with a "What to do if you find a Turtle" fact sheet. The Network also distributes these fact sheets at its many workshops, to residents who live near lakes and wetlands, and to wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators.

A few important reminders from our fact sheet:

A turtle out of water is a turtle at risk: a turtle found wandering on land may be dehydrated, stressed and at risk of predation or road trauma. Please rescue the turtle (take it home) and call one of our emergency phone numbers so we can send someone to assess it.

Our aquatic, freshwater turtles do not belong on the beach, in seawater, or in the lower saline reaches of the Swan River (beyond the causeway). These turtles require urgent attention and need to be brought into care.

Hatchlings: Turtle nests can be laid a long way from a water body and the journey from the nest to the lake is a perilous one. You can increase the hatchling's chances of survival by up to 90% by gently picking it up and placing it in fringing vegetation at the edge of the nearest water body; allow the hatchling to walk into the water itself rather than placing it directly in the water. If a hatchling appears dead or weak and dehydrated or if you have any concerns please call us for advice.

For all turtles in need of help, please do not leave them at the incident site. Turtles move quickly and by the time we get there it may be impossible to locate the turtle. Instead, you'll need to take the turtle home; just place it in a suitable container where it can't escape, in a quiet, cool place in your home until one of our Taxis arrives. It may help to place a hand towel over the turtle so that it feels more secure. Please keep it away from your pets.



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Never, ever transport a turtle in water; they are air-breathers and water can slosh into their airways during transport drowning them.

If you find a turtle laying eggs, please guard her until she's finished (15-30 minutes). We ask that you carry her back to the nearby lake so that she doesn't have to risk her life on the roads; the turtle won't appreciate this gesture but we will. Please mark the site and contact us so that we can arrange protection for the nest.

Finally, if you see a turtle anywhere in your travels and have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact one of our emergency phones for advice. We would rather you call us than not, even if the turtle turns out to be perfectly healthy!

## TURTLE RESCUE FEATURE: EGGS & HATCHLINGS

### MISS AUSTRALIA... EATING FOR AUSTRALIA?

We received a call from member Kristy at Armadale Reptile Centre to say that they had a hatchling. The hatchling was the lone hatchling from a batch of eggs which had been dug up by an excavator. Although the eggs weren't thought to be viable (because they've been moved) they were placed in the incubator anyway.

Although we can't accurately determine the sex of turtles until they're about 15 cms (straight carapace length), we do think that some of the hatchlings can be identified as female - they eat more, and grow noticeably faster than their siblings.

Miss Australia embraced food from the start and was released after three weeks at 8.7 grams from an admission weight of 5.1 grams; an amazing 70% weight increase.



### HARD HATS NOW REQUIRED ON TURTLE RESCUES !?!?

Recently we received a call from an environmental officer involved with a major building project. Last December a female turtle was observed (and filmed) laying eggs outside their site office.

The nest site was immediately fenced off and days were being crossed off the calendar as the due hatching date approached.

However, some of the ground works progressed faster than anticipated which meant that the area between the nest site and the nearest water body would become the equivalent of a war zone for the hatchlings. The Turtle Oblonga Network was called and an appointment made for the relocation of the eggs.

As Dianne has had the experience of finding hatchlings when eggs were expected she went prepared for both eggs and hatchlings (but expecting eggs given that they weren't due to hatch until July).

Dianne and Michelle managed to negotiate the site and find their way to the site office where, after signing all sorts of work-safety documents and being kitted out in hard-hats, safety glasses, steel capped boots and high-vis vests (and feeling ridiculous), got down to work . . . on hands and knees to hand-dig the nest site which was hardly a risky pursuit but rules are rules.

Fortunately the environmental staff had pictures of the turtle nesting so we were able to match the nest chamber site to nearby visual markers.

The egg relocation became a hatchling excavation which resulted in 10 healthy hatchlings and 1 intact egg of questionable viability which will be incubated anyway.



Lots of staff, all with cameras at the ready, emerged from their offices with lots of questions. All good! More turtle converts!



The average weight of the hatchlings was 5.12 grams. All were fully developed and had absorbed their yolk sacs. Our release criteria are -

- \* minimum weight of 6 grams
- \* "ribs" on carapace are no longer discernible
- \* self-feeding
- \* mastery of buoyancy control
- \* a spell of fine weather for the release

### **Why were the hatchlings still in the ground . . . and why had they hatched over two months early?**

We still have a lot to learn about our turtles which is what makes turtle rehabilitation so exciting compared to other areas of wildlife rehabilitation where so much more is known about bird and mammal species.

Oblong turtle egg are laid at depth of around 15-20cm. That may not sound like much but when you're a 4-5 gram turtle hatchling the size of a 10c coin . . . and have to work your way through the soil and, perhaps, finally a thick layer of grass or weeds . . . Phew! What a monumental feat! Once emerged from the soil these tiny turtles may then have to travel up to a kilometre to the nearest water . . . running a gauntlet of predatory birds, cars and bikes, and any number of manmade hazards.

Perhaps the hatch time for turtle eggs is much less than we've been led to believe? The quoted figure in literature is 220 days (7-7.5 months)\*

Perhaps the hatch time (from the egg rather than emergence from the nest) is more like 160 days (5-5.5

months) with the hatchlings taking their time to reach the surface in stages between moving upward, and periods of rest/torpor with weather as the final prompt to emerge from the ground?

\* We are increasingly aware that the turtles haven't read the literature.

### **WHICH CAME FIRST, THE EGG OR . . .**

In Dianne's case the eggs came first. Dianne has been incubating 28 turtle eggs, from three different, relocation exercises carried out last year.

The first batch of eggs was due to hatch around the 6 May, with the second batch due around 27 July.

The eggs which are incubated in Vermiculite, must be misted on a regular basis in order to maintain a high level of humidity. Dianne was going through her regular misting routine when she was shocked to find a hatchling from the first batch of eggs - some three weeks early. These eggs hatched out over a period of two weeks after which she discovered the second batch had begun hatching some three months early. Eeeeek! The second batch of eggs hatched out over three days. The hatchlings from the two batches were kept separated - the first hatchlings all weighed between 5 and 5.5 grams with the hatchlings from the second batch weighing between 4 and 4.5 grams. The three-month-premature hatchling were fully-developed and had absorbed their yolk sacs.

### **Why did the eggs hatch so early?**

We can only speculate that it is something to do with less temperature variation due to the way the eggs have been incubated - in Vermiculite, and indoors.

As hatchlings continue to receive nutrition from their yolk sacs, they may not begin eating for a week or more.

Unfortunately, because of the cold weather at the time mosquito larvae were in short supply so the hatchlings were raised on frozen brine shrimp and blood worms which is a slower process as the hatchlings are stimulated to eat by the movement of their "prey".

The second batch of hatchlings was passed on to members Tanya and Merry; each beginning with a



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manageable half dozen hatchlings leaving Dianne with 15 hatchlings.

The first batch's release was delayed by bad weather so when released their weights ranged between 6.1 grams and 9.9 grams (6 grams is the minimum target release weight).

Hatchlings can be a good introduction to rehabilitating turtles as, apart from twice-daily feeding/water changes, it's a case of "rest and neglect" apart from glancing at the temperature gauge as you walk past.

The third batch of three eggs is yet to hatch... or not.

## TURTLE REHAB & RELEASE

### HATCHLING RELEASE

After the recent Turtle Taxi training, participants were treated to witnessing the release of many hatchlings into a lovely area of the Canning River catchment. (See story above).



Check out more release photos on our [Facebook](#) page.

### GWELUP JACK

You may remember the story of Jack came to us to be treated for a fractured carpace.

We are pleased to report that he was successfully released back on 11 April; the happy event being witnessed by his rescuer, Paul and his lovely family!



One of our faves, Gwelup Jack at his release



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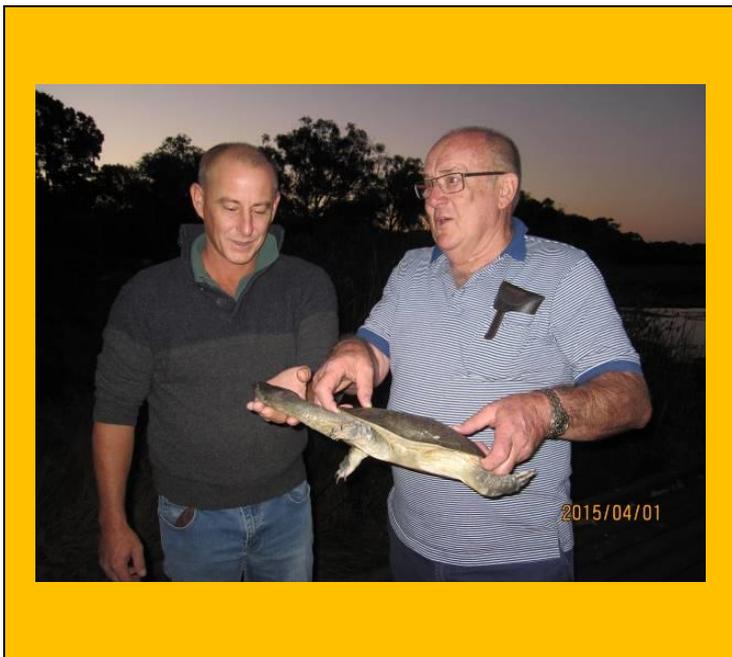
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## LADY CLARE MONT

A big thank you to the "Friends of Lake Claremont" Board and to the Town of Claremont for their generous donations of \$250 each that they made on behalf of "Lady Clare Mont", a turtle we helped to rehabilitate after she was found to be at risk of attack from Ravens because of her abnormal lethargy and rescued by member Richard.

Here is Lady Clare being released by carer Alan along with Nic Cook from the Friends of Lake Claremont.



## FLIPPER

After a long rehab for a badly fractured carapace, Flipper was recently released into a lovely wetland.

Just before release with his Carer Deb...



Sprinting for the water...



Picture via Turtle Cam... 😊



POST  
March 2015

### Crow attack leaves Clare raven mad

By ROSE SENIOR  
A member of the  
Friends of Lake Claremont.

A western long-necked turtle is in rehab after being attacked by ravens when it emerged from Lake Claremont.

Another turtle had to be put down after it was attacked by a gang of eight ravens, commonly called crows.

Sightings of turtles at Lake Claremont are becoming increasingly rare, according to the Friends of Lake Claremont.

Claremont council and the Friends are collecting information about the resident long-necked turtle species, *Chelodina oblonga*.

Major threats to these turtles include loss of habitat and attacks by foxes and ravens.

Recently a large female turtle, named Clare, was spotted beside the lake attracting unwanted attention from a group of ravens.

The Turtle Oblonga Rescue and Rehabilitation Network (TORRN) was notified and a volunteer rescued Clare. She was treated by a vet and then sent to a carer.

Raven numbers appear to have increased significantly in the western suburbs, due to readily available (human) food and nesting sites.

Residents can discourage ravens and protect turtles by not overfilling bins. For more information on ravens contact your local council or google "DPaW Ravens".

TORRN can be contacted on 0414 476 867.

*Clare the long-necked turtle being rescued from crows at Lake Claremont*

LADY CLARE & TORRN GET A MENTION IN THE POST 😊



## MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Here's an amusing story we found in "[The Independent](#)" from Sunday 12 April 2015 by Rebecca Armstrong

Eggs, milk, butter, . . . tortoise . . .

What's in your fridge?



Who knew that a survey of Europe's fridges would be so fascinating? As well as shedding light on our eating habits, it also revealed the inedible things we stash in there. Medicines, nail varnish, batteries, sun lotion and glue were items that those surveyed admitted to having in their doors and drawers.

I'd like to think I can go one better than a handful of AAs. My tortoise, Nimrod, has his annual hibernation in the fridge. OK, he's in my parents' fridge, but that's because he joins his little cousins for a spot of chillaxing between December and March. It's safe, quiet and a constant temperature. Quite a cool idea, right?

This story led us to ask...

### WHAT'S IN ONE OF OUR FRIDGES ?

Well, there's probably more animal food than food for me.

. . . you know you're a turtle person when your shopping list for the turtles is greater than yours.

Starting at the top, in my freezer I have . . .

- a silicone ice cube tray of frozen chicken livers (I just slice off what's needed on a turtle-by-turtle basis)
- Albany whitebait
- Raw river prawns
- Hills AD Feline in small frozen cubes
- Cubes of brine shrimp and bloodworms (look like small cubes of chocolate)

Is that all? Well, no . . . I am fortunate to have a wild brush-tail possum living in my roof, so the freezer also contains frozen mango, kiwi-fruit and slices of fresh corn. And what about the fridge? This is becoming a bit too personal . . . but . . . apart from eggs, milk and butter . . .

In a separate compartment at the bottom of the fridge I have -

- Flamazine (for turtle wounds).
- KY jelly for lubricating tubes when tube feeding turtles. Honestly !!!!
- Turtle worm-gel which is quite GROSS because of its artificial fruity smell which doesn't bother the turtles one bit whilst I'm gagging . . .
- Eye drops for turtles
- Pre-loaded syringes from our Vets of some basic medications for turtles which are injured outside vet hospital hours as turtles, inconveniently, do get themselves into trouble outside normal business hours . . .

What does this say about you? That I'm a wildlife rehabilitator . . . and that you shouldn't go rummaging in MY freezer without me . . . or your Bloody Mary cocktail could be very much bloodier and more textured (non-vegetarian too) than you would like . . . and what look like little cubes of chocolate will put you off chocolate for life.

Story continues...



Whilst everything in my fridge-freezer is food-grade it's not necessarily to our taste . . .

There's a "rule" in the wildlife rehabilitation world that "you shouldn't feed an animal anything which you wouldn't eat yourself" meaning that the food should be fresh, nutritious and of the best quality . . . turtle and raptor rehabilitators excepted! We can't be expected to eat raw seafood, bloodworms, brine shrimps and raw liver any more than raptor rehabilitators can't be expected to eat mice and rats! That's a call too far!



## 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](#).
- UPDATES/NEW STUFF: We recently updated the [Photo Gallery](#) and [Media](#) page.
- WEBSITE: We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website see: [www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au](http://www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au)
- FACEBOOK: We are currently sitting on **559** likes and counting! 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 : **147**
- GROUP MEMBERSHIPS : **1**

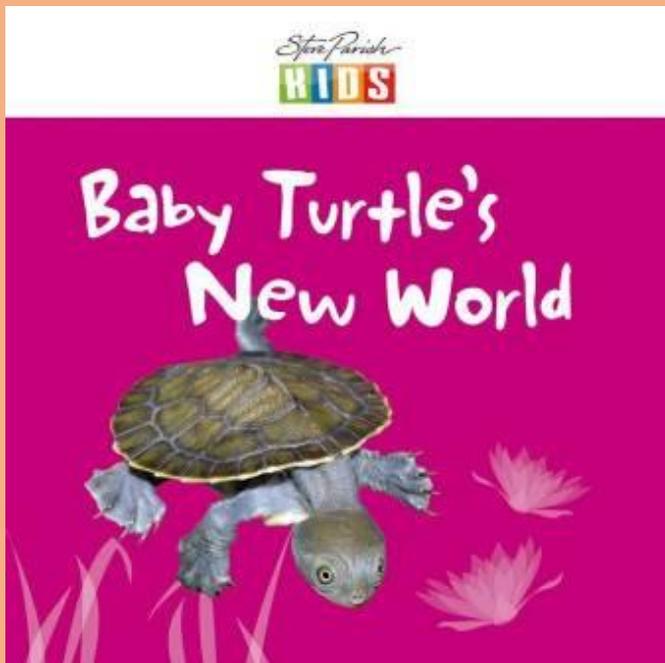
To those of you who are receiving/reading this newsletter, but have not yet officially joined us as a member - please do so! Numbers count. Just by becoming a member you are helping. The more members we have, the more supporters our turtles have which will be of benefit when we are lobbying on their 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 an emergency, it would be great if our lists of members were always up to date.

Email **Karen** any changes to your contact details.

## BOOK CLUB



Bright graphics and beautiful colourful photographs by Steve Parish are accompanied by simple text, easy-to-follow storylines.

The repetition of sounds and actions encourage children to join in, repeat the noises and answer questions - and of course learn to read!

24 pages, \$4 wherever Steve Parish books are sold.



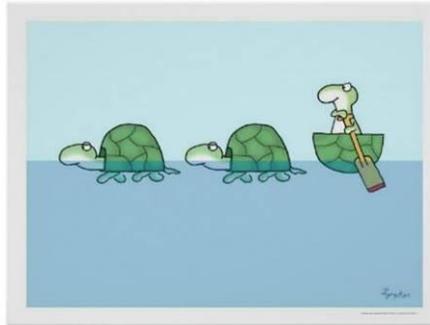
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## JUST FOR LAUGHS !!!



## CONTACT US

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

### TORRN COMMITTEE MEMBERS & CONTACTS



### TORRN COMMITTEE

Chair Karen Pye  
Secretary Dianne Hunter  
Treasurer Carla Tassone  
Membership Karen Cavanaugh

### Committee Members

Michelle Hazelwood  
Deborah Lavigne  
Dr Amy Northover  
Sandy Shailes

### EMERGENCY MOBILES

#### **PERTH METROPOLITAN:**

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.*

#### **REGIONAL WA:**

0428 984 445 - Albany  
0438 813 919 - Margaret River  
0437 910 054 - Busselton