



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!



PLEASE HELP !!!

As requested in the last edition we urgently need someone to check our annual financial figures, and that person doesn't have to have auditing or accounting qualifications. The Department of Commerce has relaxed the "audit" requirements for not-for-profits earning under \$50,000 annually - we should be so lucky! Anyone who has worked for five years in the finance, banking, taxation or similar sectors can "audit" our financial figures. The Department of Commerce has provided some simple guidelines which we can make available to anyone interested. Please email [Dianne](#).

OH DRAT (TO PUT IT POLITELY) !!!

When we set up the Turtle Oblonga Network we were aware that there were differences of opinion, going back some 160 years, about the use of the scientific name *Chelodina oblonga* for our SW oblong turtles. As this had been an issue since 1856 we wrongly assumed that it would be an unresolved issue for some time to come.

Our Patron, Gerald Kuchling, recently advised us that the *International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature* published their decision on this matter last month. What this means is:

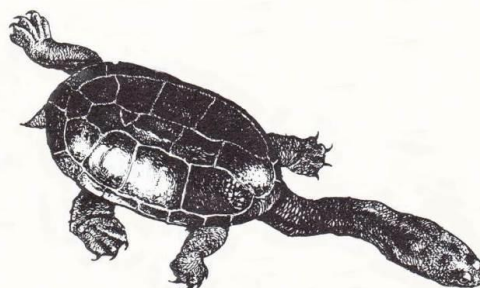
- That the scientific name of our SW oblong turtles (what we have known as *Chelodina oblonga*) will now be *Chelodina colliei*.

- That the scientific name *Chelodina oblonga* is now the correct name for the northern longneck which has until now been known as *Chelodina rugosa* (in the north of Australia) or *Chelodina siebenrocki* (in Papua New Guinea).

Chelodina colliei was named after Dr Alexander Collie (1793 -1835) who was a Scottish surgeon, naturalist and explorer. Collie arrived in Western Australia on the HMS Sulphur in 1829 and died in 1835 in Albany where, at his request, he was buried beside his Aboriginal exploring companion, Markew (Makkare).

Rugosa means heavily armoured, tough. *Chelodina rugosa* is a much larger version of our SW oblong turtle.

As we don't fancy changing our name to the Turtle Colliei Network; one idea (thank you Carla) is to drop off the "a" from Oblonga and remove the italics to recognise the common name of the species. Stay tuned!



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TURTLE RESCUES, REHAB & RELEASES

WE SHOULD REALLY CALL THIS THE
"SEA WATER" ISSUE!

TURTLE RESCUED FROM FLOREAT BEACH - WHAT THE !!!

On the Saturday after the heavy rains early last month, Dianne received a redirected call from the *Wildcare Helpline* about an Oblong Turtle on the beach at Floreat. The call had originally gone to membership secretary Karen who, literally, had her hands full with Bilbies as it was the Kanyana Bilbies' fortnightly health check and weigh-ins. The message from the *Wildcare Helpline* was that the "turtle was on the beach at Floreat, near the playground and that it had been covered with seaweed". Oh great! Thoughts of needles in haystacks immediately sprang to mind. Fortunately, the caller had left his mobile number so we were able to glean a bit more about the location of the turtle.

Dianne then contacted member and rescuer (the other) Karen who wasn't too far from the beach. Karen swung into action and, much to everyone's amazement - including Karen's, found the turtle which was in a very poor state. Unfortunately, the turtle was too far gone to save and died the next day in warm, comfortable conditions. This is the second turtle that we know of that's been found on Floreat beach which set Dianne off on a hunt to find out what was going on.

Who knew? We've subsequently discovered that the Floreat Drain (pictured) annually drains some 9 gigalitres of water from Herdsman Lake into the sea. Many proposals to make use of this wasted 9 gigalitres have, unfortunately, failed. One of the proposals was to divert the water to restore the Perry Lakes.

Why does Herdsman Lake need draining, we then wondered? It seems that there are many (polluting) stormwater drains which empty directly into Lake Herdsman which then empty into the Herdsman Drain which empties into sea via the Floreat Drain.

We think this turtle washed down the drain from Lake Herdsman (after the 51mm deluge on Wednesday 8

May) and into the sea at Floreat before being deposited on the beach at the high tide mark four days later.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RESCUE A TURTLE??? THIS IS BOBBI'S STORY...

Over 100 kms, and three hours! Not all turtle rescues involve such time, or distance. However, on a recent Saturday afternoon Dianne received a call from Turtle Hero, Wayne, who reported an Oblong turtle swimming in the sea at Rockingham. Wayne, a Pom, knew that a freshwater turtle shouldn't be in the sea unlike his fellow onlookers who were Australians. In Wayne's words... "not bad for a POM, eh?" We agree!

Wayne waded in and retrieved the turtle while Dianne set off to meet Wayne at his home in Baldivis. The turtle was then transferred to Ruth who immediately began treatment as she knew she couldn't get it to the Vet until Monday. The turtle was subsequently diagnosed with a depressed shell fracture. As well the X-ray showed reduced lung function/pneumonia and the white cell count indicated infection/sepsis. In short - Bobbi was a very sick girl. She was dry-docked, placed on antibiotics and pain relief.

Happily, she is now out of dry-dock after 3 weeks and almost finished her 4 week course of antibiotics (one injection every three days). Dr Gary is pleased with her progress and thinks she can be released soon. Although she's been tube fed during this time it is expected that she will resume self-feeding now that she's back in water. Once she's off the antibiotics she'll be kept for a further two weeks to ensure that no antibiotic residue will be transferred into the wild when she is released.



How did this turtle get into the sea....?

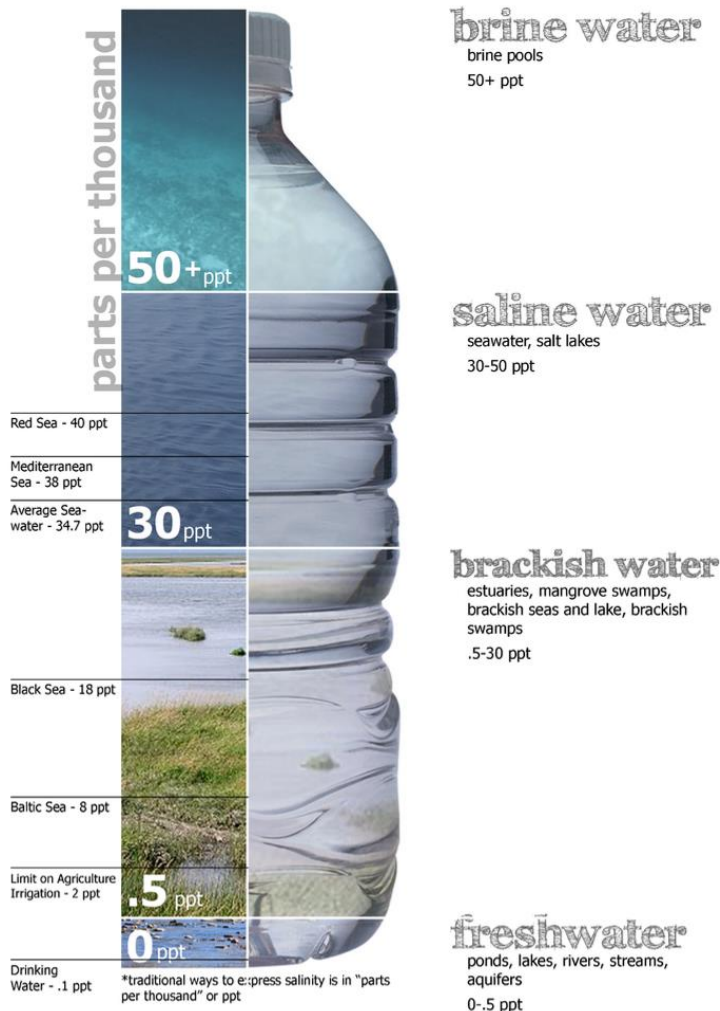
We'll never know but suspect that someone found it wandering and thought it had to go into water - sea water, unfortunately.

THESE RECENT EVENTS HAVE RAISED A FEW QUESTIONS...

What is brackish water?

At the recent turtle rehabilitation workshop we talked about turtles being able to tolerate brackish water. Someone asked what that meant. Brackish water doesn't have an exact definition, but it is typically defined as distastefully salty but less saline than seawater.

What we don't know is what level of salinity freshwater turtles are able to tolerate, although we do know that they don't tolerate seawater.



What does sea water do to fresh water turtles?

Freshwater turtles don't have salt glands. Like us turtles need to maintain a balance of 0.9% saline within their tissues. If they drink saltwater, the kidneys try to excrete it but a lot of fresh water is required to flush it out. This can't happen if they are trapped in salt water so the concentration of salt becomes too high and the tissues *bleed* fluid creating severe dehydration which can lead to organ failure and death.

Seawater is usually 3.3% or more saline. Freshwater turtles avoid seawater but if they are accidentally immersed in salt water they fight to get out. This struggle further exacerbates their problems by placing a high demand on an already taxed system. If any seawater enters their lungs the dehydration is magnified. Turtles can go without oxygen for longer than we can but if the water is cold their metabolism is slowed and they are less able to swim back to safety. Drowning in salt water is due to lack of oxygen or the inability to expel carbon dioxide.

How do Marine turtles manage...?

Marine turtles have specialized papillae in their oesophagus to hold their food while they "burp" out the sea water, reducing the amount of salt intake. However, some salt still enters their body.

In order to maintain a concentration of 0.9% saline within their tissues, sea turtles use modified tear glands to extract excess salt. This gland is located near the eye and is a biological desalination plant. When sea turtles go ashore to lay eggs they are often seen "shedding tears". This "crying" is a normal function; when in the sea the tears are washed away by the seawater.





Drowning in salt water

Inhaled salt water acts as a physical barrier between the air and the lungs. If the salt water is removed, breathing can resume. If the animal survives it's relatively easy to rehydrate the blood by giving fluids.

In the case of Bobbi, from Rockingham beach, X rays and blood results indicated she had inhaled salt water and was treated for aspiration pneumonia and marked dehydration. Three days of oral fluids resulted in her gaining over 100g (10% of her body weight) in dry dock and without eating. A month of antibiotics has cured the pneumonia and she is now feeding up for release.

Daniel, the Floreat Beach turtle, was not so lucky. He also suffered the effects of salt water drowning but the dehydration was so severe and the time between immersion and rescue was too long for him to be saved. Karen, his rescuer, noted that he felt very light when she picked him up even though he was a large adult male.

Salt water immersion is an emergency for freshwater turtles. The turtle needs to be assessed by a wildlife vet as soon as possible. Diagnostic tests are invaluable for an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. Oral fluids are a life saver to reverse the life threatening effects of dehydration.

Drowning in fresh water

Fresh water is hypotonic (lower osmotic pressure) compared with lung tissue, this causes water to enter the lung cells, and some of the cells may burst. Because capillaries in the lungs are exposed to the fresh water, water then enters the bloodstream which dilutes the blood. Blood cells burst (hemolysis) and changes in blood chemistry adversely affect heart and kidney function. Even if an animal survives the initial drowning, it can die within a few hours or days due to these irreversible changes.

Freshwater turtles only drown in fresh water if they are injured or trapped and unable to go to the surface and breathe air. Due to the physiological difference between the two kinds of drowning, changes to the tissues can reveal if the animal died from salt or fresh water drowning on post mortem examination.

A RECENT TURTLE RESCUE...

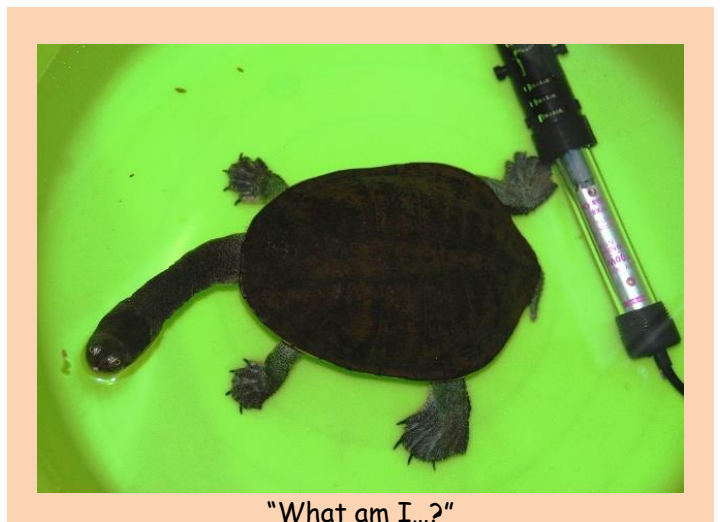
Dianne was browsing in a bookshop when the turtle phone rang. A couple in the southern suburbs were cleaning out their Yabby pond (a former swimming pool) when they found a large female turtle in mud at the bottom. There were no Yabbies!

No-one was blaming the turtle but she was in excellent condition apart from retained scutes due to the fact that she wasn't able to get out of the swimming pool to bask. This condition should right itself with time, and basking opportunities. As there was no suitable habitat close to where this girl was found she was released the two days later into a more suitable habitat.

ANOTHER UNUSUAL RESCUE...

The next day the turtle phone rang again with double good news. A turtle had been found in a carport just minutes away, and it was in good condition but was rather unusual looking for an Oblong turtle.

Dianne was convinced that it was an Eastern Long Necked turtle until Ruth produced her copy of "*Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*". This turtle didn't have the typical oblong shell, it was lacking the characteristic black eye-stripe and it's neck and head were not as long/solid when compared to most Oblong turtles. However, once we checked the plastron's scutes we were able to confirm that this unusual looking turtle was indeed a Western Long Necked turtle (Oblong turtle). It was released together with the large female from the Yabby pond.



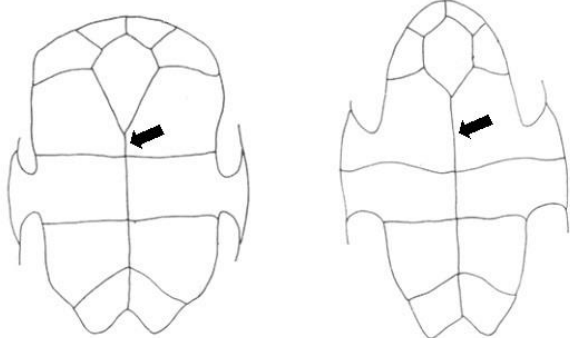
"What am I...?"

Continued...



Dianne would like to say in her defence that whilst the illustrations clearly illustrate the differences, it's not nearly as clear cut when you've got a slippery, unhappy turtle (or turtles) in your hand with legs and a long neck constantly in motion.

What's the difference ?



Chelodina longicollis
Eastern Long necked turtle

Chelodina oblonga
Western Long necked turtle

AN UPDATE ON TIMOTHY & THORPIE...

As reported in the last edition, Thorpie and Timothy were awaiting a little more rain to fill into their intended release sites. We are happy to report that Timothy was recently released ☺



"Timothy"

Meanwhile, Thorpie enjoys life with Karen (the other one) and will have to wait a little bit longer to return to her home lake because she broke her fast. Karen had been fasting her and decreasing the water temperature to prepare her for release. However, the discovery of a poo revealed that she had been eating the *Gambusia* in the pond so it was back to square one with the fasting/chilling process to be continued ☺



"Thorpie"

HATCHLING CENTRAL

JUST WHO ARE YOU CALLING OBESE, DR GARY?...

The surviving hatchlings from our rescued February clutch "Monster" and "Tiny" are enjoying life and are steadily gaining weight (8.7g and 13.5g) - too much according to Wattle Grove Vet Dr Gary who recently told us that Monster was obese! Well OK he does have a bit of a muffin top poking out from under his 4.5cm carapace - doesn't everyone?

We were concerned when Monster began developing small spots in both his eyes; so both bubs had a day out and saw Veterinary specialist Dr Martin King who examined them and determined they both had corneal lipid deposits, but felt that this condition should not adversely affect their sight or hunting ability. We are now trying to cut back on their handling, feeding and heating in the hope that they will be better prepared for release.

MEET LITTLE "ROSIE"

Our latest hatchling was found by a member of the public in their (rose) garden. These good samaritans tried to release her/him at a local lake, but were worried about the ducks hanging around that were trying to eat him!!! They contacted us and s/he is now hanging out with Monster and Tiny. Whilst with us, Rosie has gained weight from 4.8 to 6.9g. S/he has very good predator avoidance skills so we are trying to limit handling and hope to release her/him very soon with a little "head-start" on life!



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](#).
- WEBSITE: We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website see: www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au
- FACEBOOK: We are currently sitting on **232** 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: **106 (+2 PENDING)**
- GROUP MEMBERSHIPS: **1**
- FRIENDS ON OUR MAILING LIST: **39**

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 emergency, it would be great if our lists of members and friends were always up to date. Please email **Karen** any changes to your contact details.

EVENTS PAGES

UPCOMING EVENTS.....

SERCUL'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY



SATURDAY 6 JULY, 1:00PM - 4:00PM
@ 69 HORLEY ROAD, BECKENHAM

Why not join in on the celebrations on 6 July? To find out more about SERCUL, please visit their [website](#).

TORRN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
- 10:30AM FOR 11:00AM START -
SUNDAY 15 SEPTEMBER @ CANNING
RIVER ECO EDUCATION CENTRE

We have booked the Canning River Eco Education Centre for our AGM - so add it to your diaries now! Further information will be provided closer to the date.

PAST EVENTS - AN UPDATE...

TORRN GENERAL MEETING
SUNDAY MAY 26 @ KANYANA WILDLIFE

Thank you to those of you who took the time out of their day and attended our meeting. We hope you enjoyed the informal meeting on the sunny terrace (and the pumpkin scones!) and learnt a little more about what TORRN has been up to in the past few months.

Thank you to Kanyana Wildlife for allowing us to use their venue for the meeting!





Turtle Oblonga
Rescue & Rehabilitation
Network

Turtle Talk

July-August 2013



WORLD TURTLE DAY

How did you celebrate World Turtle Day on 23 May?
Here are a couple of events that we know about...

TORRN LUNCH @ EDGECOMBE BROTHERS WINERY

A small group of TORRN members and Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise joined together for a yummy lunch at the Edgecombe Brothers Winery to celebrate World Turtle Day. Note their lovely turtle logo ☺



MORNING TEA FUNDRAISER

The "Friends of Mary Carroll Lake" held a small fundraising morning tea to celebrate World Turtle Day. We send a big thank you to this group, particularly the wonderful Unice Robinson, for their generous donation to us of \$172.50.



2014 WORLD TURTLE DAY CELEBRATIONS ?

Put your thinking caps on for ways to celebrate World Turtle Day next year, then send us your ideas. You could do something to celebrate turtles and benefit TORRN at the same time - just as the Friends of Mary Carroll Lake did.

We are thinking of holding a seminar with guest speakers and a catered lunch to celebrate all things turtle - so stay tuned!!!

Postscript: Congratulations to Unice Robinson (Founder of the Friends of Mary Carroll Lake) who recently received a well-deserved Environmental Achievement Award in the 3rd Annual Hasluck Heroes Awards !!!



It's thanks to people like Unice that our remaining lake and wetland habitats are being preserved for the benefit of all - the community and our native fauna.



The hatchlings celebrating World Turtle Day!
This picture was seen by 738 people on Facebook!!



FEATURED ARTICLE

THE FRIENDS OF POISON GULLY

By Elaine Sargent, TORRN Member

Sylvia Netherway and I formed the Friends of Poison Gully 14 years ago with a membership of two!

A thousand homes were due to be built along Maida Vale Road and the creek line, a Bush Forever site, which was in dire need of restoration, the creek and surrounding bushland being infested with introduced trees, weeds and rubbish.

Our first task was to remove all the introduced trees, mainly three kinds of wattles, Cape Lilacs, Olives and Tagasaste. We've cut down at least a hundred!

We successfully applied for a grant from the Lotteries Commission for an initial spraying of the Paspalum (grass), Arundo (cane) and Watsonia (lily). With the help of members of the Nature Reserves Preservation Group, we collected two truckloads of wire, old agricultural pipes, car parts, an old bath, a tank and other general rubbish from the creek. We also had help from the Keep Australia Beautiful Council which sent a crew to gather bags of rubbish from the bushland. Another grant from Cleanaway, enabled us to install bird and possum boxes which are used by owls, kookaburras, possums and wood ducks. Thanks to an Endangered Species grant we have had bollard fencing installed along with cyclone fencing in the areas considered dangerous.

Our group has planted thousands of plants and direct-seeded bare areas. We now have five species of frogs, along with turtles and other reptiles, Quenda (Bandicoots), and birds including the occasional Ibis and Kingfisher. We have left the pine trees for the Carnaby's cockatoos and planted many more food plants for them. Our work has been extended and, three years ago, we decided to restore the part of the creek line at the top of Milner Road where we recently installed jute matting to prevent erosion of the steep banks. This month we have planted 900 sedges and native seedlings. Our future plans are to have bollard fencing erected right around the reserve to prevent the invasion of quad and trail bikes. Our work is ongoing and rewarding, in spite of the drought and vandalism.

Before and after pictures of the Poison Gully creek restoration are included on the next page....

We are continually inspired by Friends of Groups like Mary Carroll Lake (previous page) and Poison Gully (featured here). These two examples demonstrate that it only takes one (or two) people to make a start to help to preserve our wetlands as habitats for turtles and other species!

THANK YOU ELAINE AND SYLVIA !!!



BACKGROUND TO POISON GULLY RESERVE:

Poison Gully Creek Reserve is Bush Forever site number 45. It is believed to have derived its name from the *Gastrolobium* plant which poisoned stock belonging to early settlers. The species growing in Poison Gully is *Gastrolobium oxylobioides*, the *Champion Bay Poison*. Some people add another 'S' to the name and pronounce it 'Poisson' which is French for fish, to explain the meaning of the name. This is incorrect. The creek line is an ephemeral seasonal watershed and although turtles and gilgies aestivate during the summer months, fish would not survive in a dry creek bed.

The creek commences at Stirk Park, Kalamunda and meanders above ground through Maida Vale and High Wycombe, travelling underneath Dundas Road into the Forrestfield Marshalling Yards, finally dispersing into Munday Swamp, which was named after an Aboriginal elder of the Beeloo tribe and of Aboriginal Heritage significance. The swamp is on airport land and contains valuable flora and fauna which remains in very good condition, mainly because it is not predated upon by humans.



POISON GULLY CREEK RESTORATION

BEFORE ☹️



This is the pond, showing the newly planted sedges and after we removed an old tank, a bath, industrial pipe and rusty wire.

AFTER 😊



The same scene. Planting sedges and rushes in the pond has helped filter out heavy metals, slowed down the water and provided habitat.

BEFORE ☹️

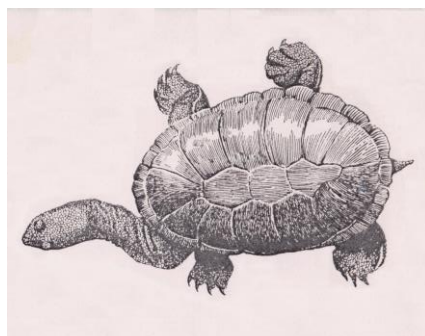


This is the shot of the sandbank before we planted the shrubs to slow down fast moving water. The juncus was a couple of years old at the time.

AFTER 😊



This is a view of the same scene. The shrubs have slowed down the water during peak inundations in winter and prevented the creek beds silting up.





MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

LOVE TURTLES AND TRAVELLING...?



Ningaloo Turtle Monitoring

Key duties:

- Collecting data on turtle nesting beaches.
- Remote camping on the Ningaloo Reef and monitoring isolated beaches.
- Assisting with turtle rescues.

Want to know more?

- Information on the 2013/2014 season should be available soon (the website says July/August 2013).
- Recruitment is generally done around September-October (2-3 months prior to the beginning of turtle season) each year.
- See the [website](#) for further information.

Other volunteering opportunities from the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA)

The 11th Annual Symposium on the Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles will be on August 7-10, 2013 in St. Louis, Missouri. The meeting, sponsored by Zoo Med Laboratories, Inc., is co-hosted by the Turtle Survival Alliance and the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG).

The TSA is seeking volunteers to assist with AV and photography throughout the duration of the 2013 conference. In return for their service, the volunteers that assist in these positions will receive complimentary meeting registration and full meeting benefits (including all meals and events that are included with full registration).

All travel expenses (including transportation and accommodation) are the responsibility of the volunteer. Please [click here](#) for a full description of duties and if interested, complete and submit the application as soon as possible. Positions will be filled with qualified applicants on a first come, first served basis.

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS NEEDED

No time to help rescue or rehabilitate turtles ?

How about cultivating some Bloodworms for our turtles in care? No experience necessary, no special equipment needed.

Our turtle hatchlings and juveniles eat Bloodworms (midge larvae) at a rate we find difficult to keep up with.

It's a simple process which won't take much of your time. The most time-consuming part is harvesting the Bloodworms every two weeks or so with a Pipette which the Bloodworm farmers amongst us find quite therapeutic.

Contact us (see last page) for a "how-to" information sheet.

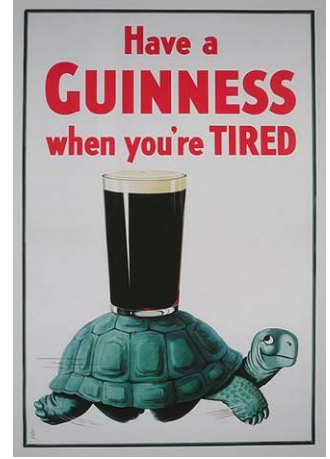
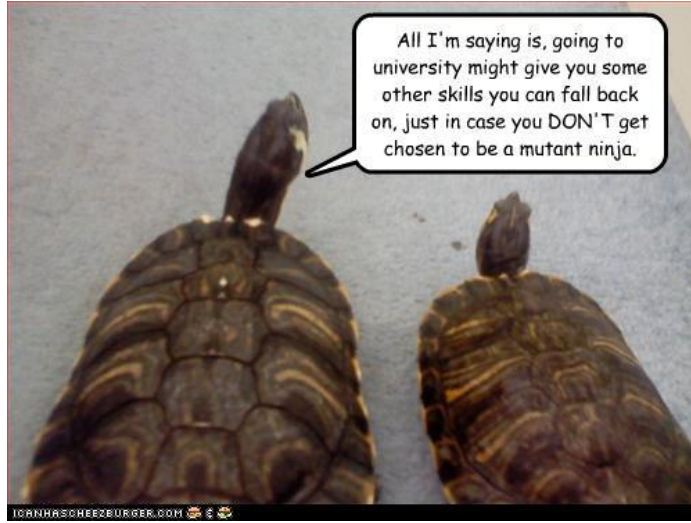
JUST WHAT IS AN OBLONG TURTLE YOU ASK? CLARIFICATION IS PROVIDED BELOW ;)

ROUND	SQUARE	OBLONG



MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

☺☺☺ AND JUST FOR LAUGHS ☺☺☺



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

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



www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au