

# Turtle Watch News 5



August 2011

Welcome! Great progress this month for *Turtle Watch* ...

## Turtle Hatchling Sightings

Turtle hatchlings have been sighted at all three Turtle Watch sites – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre (HLWC), Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre (CWEC) & Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC). For example, Roger Harris, Centre Manager of HLWC, reported the following on 10th August, “...*two hatchlings were found by students on limestone paths around the Centre this week ... looking dry and in danger of being eaten by ravens. After a suitable naming competition and much celebration the students released ‘Horachio’ and ‘Pigmy Pete’ back into the lake*”.

**Action:** Please send key events and summaries of *Turtle Hotline* reports to Elaine for data collection, inclusion in future e-bulletins and grant reporting purposes. Thank you.

## Science Fair Success

The second of our community education events was held on Sunday 21st August at CREEC. This event involved a Turtle Watch stall, open from 10am – 3pm, at CREEC’s annual Community Science Fair. Turtle activities and displays were organized by Elaine Lewis, with support from Caitlin Bartholomaeus (Murdoch PhD candidate), who is conducting research on the oblong turtle. Visitors enthusiastically participated in creating playdough feral animals, turtle origami and role play activities, with their questions answered by Caitlin, Helen (also a Murdoch Environmental Science PhD candidate) and Elaine. The animal displays - fox, cat, eggs, turtles - attracted great interest. Over 200 people, from pre-schoolers to senior citizens, visited the stall. Sincere thanks to Caitlin and Helen for sharing their expertise with the community.

Joe Tonga, our project Camera Surveillance Consultant, presented a bat and nest box display at the Science Fair. He reported his stall was also “*excellent for raising awareness of the Turtle Watch project*”. Joe indicated attendees asked interesting questions about fox predation.

## Future Turtle Education Events

Two turtle education events are scheduled for September and October:

- ✚ Friday 30 Sept 6-8pm, Frogfest, at HLWC – including a talk on turtles presented by Elaine Lewis.
- ✚ Saturday 15 October am, Bird Walk, at HLWC – including a talk on turtles presented by Jacqueline Giles.

**Turtle Watch Aims:** 1. Identify predator/s involved in the destruction of oblong turtle nests at three sites – Herdsman Lake, Bibra Lake and Canning River. 2. Foster partnerships between the community, research organizations, educational institutions and industry in relation to the conservation of oblong turtles.

Everyone welcome.

### **Sensational Camera Surveillance Footage:**

Joe Tonga reported all cameras are performing to high expectations and he has even caught a fox and rats on camera. Joe stated, *“A fox at Bibra Lake has been caught on camera actually lowering its head sideways to the ground and picking up an egg with its teeth. With its mouth bulging, it turned around and ran off”*. What amazing footage!

Joe also explained, *“I’m experimenting with the ‘time lapse’ feature on the cameras. This means that the camera is set to activate at sunset and take a photo every minute till sunrise. This is the time when foxes are most active. After downloading 720 photos per day computer software will automatically search through each image and stop at a predetermined section on the photos. If any fox moves within the entire viewing area then it will be recorded. Normally it has to enter the sensing zone to trigger the camera. The benefits are very little activity is missed”*. Thank you Joe for sharing your expertise and making this important contribution to the project.

**Action:** Please let Elaine know immediately if you receive *Turtle Hotline* feedback regarding turtles nesting at any of the three Turtle Watch sites so that camera surveillance can be set up to determine predator/s involved in the destruction of nests. Thank you.

### **Turtle Education Pack**

Elaine continues to develop the collection of resources for a turtle education pack. She is liaising with CWEC, Excelsior Primary School and Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise.

Denise Crosbie (CWEC) advised a turtle care guide can be accessed from the Australian Freshwater turtle site. See: <http://www.australianfreshwaterturtles.com.au/>

### **Oblong Turtle Collaborative Research Group**

The next meeting of the Oblong Turtle Collaborative Research Group will be held on Monday the 29th August, 1.30pm, at Murdoch University in the Environmental Science Building seminar room.

### **E-bulletin**

The fourth e-bulletin was circulated to stakeholder groups:

1. Turtle Watch project team: Dr Jacqueline Giles (Oblong Turtle Consultant); Joe Tonga (Camera Surveillance Consultant); and Dr Jennifer Pearson (Community Education Consultant).
2. Eco-education centres: Roger Harris (HLWC); Vicky Hartill & Denise Crosbie (CWEC); and Hayley Bullimore & Kirsty Rowland (CREEC).
3. Oblong Turtle Collaborative Research Group: Dr Catherine Baudains, Dr Jane Chambers & Dr Mirela Tulbure (Murdoch Uni); Caitlyn Bartholomaeus (Murdoch Uni PhD candidate); and participants listed in 1 & 2 above.
4. City of Cockburn: Climate Change Adaption funding for an ‘Oblong Turtle Population and Recruitment Capacity Study’ (CWEC).

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5. Environmental and Landcare departments/organisations committed to oblong turtle conservation e.g. DEC, SERCUL.

6. Friends/volunteer groups interested in oblong turtle conservation e.g. Friends of Herdsman Lake and Canning River Regional Park Volunteers.

Feedback on the fourth e-bulletin was received from:

CWEC, CREEC, HLWC, SERCUL, Western Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council Inc., Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise and Coolbinia Primary School.

### ***Turtle Watch Information***

For further information, you are welcome to contact Elaine Lewis at:

[Elaine.Lewis@det.wa.edu.au](mailto:Elaine.Lewis@det.wa.edu.au)

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Thank YOU



Australian Association for Environmental Education -WA

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