

## Newsletter of the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise

### Our tortoise inspires artists

Our iconic Western Swamp Tortoise has recently been immortalised in several artworks around Perth.

A two-metre-tall, formed mild steel sculpture featuring six Western Swamp Tortoises in cast silicone bronze, all displayed in natural poses, has been completed by Swan Valley artist Peter Graham. It was officially unveiled at The Margaret River Chocolate Company (5123 West Swan Road, West Swan) on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November by Martin Black, part-owner of the MRCC, as a tribute to Australia's oldest and rarest reptile.

Martin's staff spoiled attendees with cupcakes decorated with chocolate tortoises for morning tea. The MRCC has been donating part proceeds from the sale of each box of Western Swamp Tortoise chocolates to the Friends since 2011.

Sculptor Peter said:

'When I was first approached to create a sculpture commemorating the Western Swamp Turtle, I considered it a fantastic opportunity to help raise the profile of this endangered animal. I must admit that the words "Chocolate Factory" also caught my attention.

'Working with the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise committee, I have constructed a representation of the turtle swimming among reeds and basking on fallen logs in its natural environment. This environment is rapidly shrinking as the brutal effects of clearing and man-induced climate change decimate wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain.

'My work is typically a response to my appreciation of the natural world and a desire to represent and protect it.'

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Below: Peter working on the sculpture.

Right: Installed near the Providore building





The WST also featured in a community art project at Elizabeth Quay, where participants collaborated with artist, Mel 'Melski' McVee to add a giant tortoise to a mural of local flora and fauna (*above left*).

Some of our local junior members assisted artist 'Melski' McVee with a mural at Ellenbrook.

The Parkway Project is a temporary parkland in Ellenbrook, to be in place while Metronet's arrival draws closer. It begins at the intersection of The Parkway and Gallery Lane, and continues along The Parkway towards Ellen Stirling Gardens.

One of the artworks is titled *Western Swamp Tortoise*, and was painted by Mel alongside community members, over the weekend of the 7-8 December, in a paint-by-numbers style (*above right*).



### Like a presentation for your school or group?

If you know of a **school or community group** that would like us to come and talk please contact Jan on 0408 024 800 or Cathy via [westernswamptortoise@yahoo.com.au](mailto:westernswamptortoise@yahoo.com.au).

At schools we include an exciting free games session for the younger children.

### Education report

Chairperson Jan Bant visited Nido Early School in Aveley to present a talk to the kindergarten class, who have fallen in love with our *Westy* book, thanks to teacher and Curriculum Leader, Teylah. They were happy to show me the outdoor play area with an amazing mural of 'Yarkiny', a Western Swamp Tortoise, by local artist, Brian Blatchford (*right*).



Teylah tells me their goal at Nido is to raise awareness and join the community's efforts to protect the Western Swamp Tortoise. They believe education is an essential part of conservation, as people protect what they know and love. Their hope is to spark a love of Western Swamp Tortoises in the children and families. From the enthusiasm and knowledge of these 4 and 5 year olds (*left*), they're succeeding.



## Welcome to a new sponsor

Josephine Perry is the one-woman-show behind Margaret River's **Dormilona** winery. 'Dormilona' is Spanish for 'lazy bones', a nickname winemaker Jo Perry was given in Spain. After finishing a degree in Oenology (the science of wine-making), Jo completed many a vintage throughout France (Burgundy, Bordeaux and the Rhone Valley), plus harvests in California, New Zealand and Australia. Jo also spent seven years managing two wineries in Spain and consulting to a winery in the Canary Islands.

Now Jo is back on home turf, focusing on her own label of natural wines, Dormilona and her business Perryscope Wine Solutions. Running her own "micro" winery in Margaret River, Jo is currently working towards becoming a certified biodynamic winery. She uses only organically and biodynamically farmed fruit from high-quality vineyards across Margaret River and the Swan Valley and has been dubbed one of the most exciting emerging producers in Margaret River.



The mascot and friend of Dormilona is a **Western Swamp Tortoise**, called **Yokel**. The winery's website says:

"The country bumpkin that is coming to the big smoke to get up to some mischief. Dressed in his 1920's gear as this the era that the vines were planted in the Swan Valley for these wines.

"With every bottle of the Yokel wine sold, a dollar will be given back to our little mascot and donated to the hard-working Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise and the amazing breeding program at the Perth Zoo."



Welcome aboard Jo and thanks for helping us. Find out more at <https://www.dormilona.com.au>

## Where are they now?

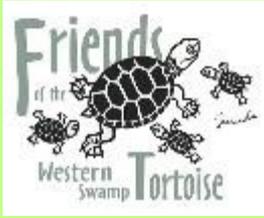
As we move into summer, the Western Swamp Tortoises are also on the move: out of the drying swamps and into their natural aestivation places within crevices in the clayey ground, in deep leaf litter or in the artificial tunnels (right) installed by nature reserve managers. Aestivation is a type of hibernation or torpor that protects the tortoises from the hot summer and (if they're fortunate) any bushfires that may occur. The tortoises occasionally emerge for a drink if there's a significant rain event. Summer is a dangerous time for the tortoises: apart from the threat of fires, if they don't have enough fat reserves to last until the rains return, they may starve. The trends in climate change mean the dry period is getting longer and longer.



During the summer, adult breeding females (at least 8 years old) lay 3 or 4 eggs underground in their aestivation places near the edges of the swamp, and take no further care of them.

# You can help save an endangered species, right on your doorstep!

**Membership** of the Friends is **FREE** and we have lots of great activities, including behind-the-scenes zoo visits and tortoise release days.



**Join us to help save the tortoise...  
because EXTINCTION SUCKS!**



For further information on any of the group's activities, contact Jan on  
**9344 2872** or **0408024800**

Email: [westernswamptortoise@yahoo.com.au](mailto:westernswamptortoise@yahoo.com.au)

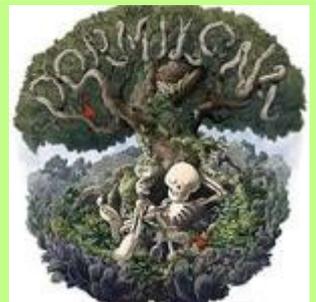
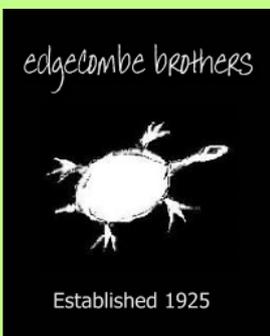
check out the website [www.westernswamptortoise.com](http://www.westernswamptortoise.com)

or find us on **Facebook** [www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheWesternSwampTortoise/](http://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheWesternSwampTortoise/) where we usually post the latest news.

**Committee:** Jan Bant, Chair; Tanya Marwood, Vice-chair; Bob Height, Treasurer; Pippa McLeery, Secretary; Mike Stokes, Cathy Levett (general); education sub-committee—Jan Bant & Cathy Levett.



## Our current sponsors and recovery partners include:



...as well as **Boral**, the **University of Western Australia**, **Curtin University**, **Adelaide Zoo**, **Long Road Website Development..**