

## Newsletter of the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise

### Western Swamp Tortoise on stage

Aveley Primary School students recently performed their Western Swamp Tortoise story 'Yarkiny' at the 2023 Wakakirri Story, Drama and Dance Festival and won a State Award for an Endangered Species Conservation Environmental Story. And they also received a nomination for a National Award!



The performance finale on stage at the Concert Hall.

Fifty-seven Year 4–6 young performers participated in the festival at the Perth Concert Hall. Their performance was an original play about the finding of the Western Swamp Tortoise, after 113 years of its being considered extinct.

In Term One, Aveley Performing Arts specialist teacher Chris Spencer and his wife Julia developed the storyline with students. They made it into a fantastic seven-minute item, which outlined the significant events in the history of the tortoise. They invited FoWST Chair Jan Bant to verify the accuracy of their story and view an early rehearsal.

Participating in this event is a huge commitment for students, with rehearsals every Tuesday after school, the making of costumes and props, and transporting actors and equipment for the final event.

Performance day was long, leaving school at 10:15 am to travel to the venue for stage rehearsal from 12:30 pm to 1 pm. Then it was back to the change rooms to start the big preparation. After hours and hours of hair and makeup work, they were ready for the show, which commenced at 7 pm but the Aveley team had to wait until 9 pm for their seven minutes in the spotlight.

Immediate feedback from the judges followed. Wakakirri Ambassador Libby Hammer said: "The Aveley Primary School performers and team went 'above and beyond' with their story dance. Yay For Yarkiny. Being a local story means that the behind-the-scenes initiatives have been running for some time and the



Left: rehearsal time at the Concert Hall.

Above: Some of the cast in their costumes.

performers certainly displayed a proud sense of ownership of this topic. Their story-dance contained many varied elements: the use of effective video projections, the boards displaying the timeline, the excellent choice in music and of course the costumes were extra-fantastic. This performance also contained many humorous moments which is always enjoyable, and of course a very happy ending.

"A great example of a clear, colourful, fun, relevant story dance with it all; an uplifting local story told with vibrant energy and wonderful costumes."

Chris Spencer, said "We were all so proud of our amazing performers, who gained such valuable confidence and experience, and proud of the story we shared about Yarkiny, the Western Swamp Tortoise. Special thanks to our amazing parent helpers backstage on the day/night and for all of the help we had along with way with costumes and props."

\* An Australian national Story-Dance festival for primary and secondary schools.

## Local Swan Valley business donates to the Friends

The Friends group gratefully accepted a donation on August 23 from our valued sponsor **Margaret River Chocolate Company**. A cheque for **\$10,000** from the sale of their western swamp tortoise chocolates was handed to Chairperson, Jan Bant, who thanked the company for a decade of support and indicated part of the money would go towards rehabilitating the Ellen Brook Nature Reserve after the catastrophic fire of February 2021 (see next page).



Above left: FoWST Chair Jan Bant (L) in front of the display of chocolate tortoises at MRCC

## Planting at EBNR to repair fire damage



On July 1 at a fire damaged corner of Ellen Brook Nature Reserve Friends and helpers replaced the many plants lost in the Feb 2021 disaster. A huge thanks to our 60 hard working volunteers, and the children, who really got into the job. Together we planted 6500 tube-stock and used weed matting around an experimental 500 plants. However, gone are the days of grovelling around on your hands and knees; modern tree planting uses a 600mm long tubular steel device which is pushed into the planting hole. A plant is then removed from the container, and dropped down the tube, to land in a perfect position. The tube is then withdrawn and the plant firmed in, using your foot (see **above left**). No bending! It is so quick and easy, even the kids are capable of planting a large number of seedlings.

## New Henley Brook Primary School keen to embrace WST

FoWST Chair Jan met staff members of a new Swan Valley primary school recently.

The school will have art work by a local artist: five large western swamp tortoise models in the playground for students to climb on, with etched concrete underneath depicting habitat, food, etc. The P&C group has been very supportive of this art project. Jan and the staff discussed future FoWST involvement at the school, offering to speak to students, parents, and/or a public meeting. The school is keen to do an art project, so Jan described what other schools have done. Jan then presented 'Westy' to Daniel, for their library. It will be their first book! Daniel said, "I must admit, the Western Swamp Tortoise being represented at Henley Brook has been very well received, and we are thrilled to be able to learn more, connect with and be a part of such a special animal in our local area."

## Where are they now?

(Djilba; Aug-Sept): As we move through early spring and towards summer, the Western Swamp Tortoises are also on the move, out of the drying swamps and back into their natural or artificial aestivation\* places.

\*Aestivation (a type of hibernation) protects the tortoises from the hot summer and any bushfires. It can be in natural cracks in the clayey ground, under deep leaf litter or in artificial PVC tunnels installed in the reserves.

**Right: an artificial tunnel helps the tortoises find shelter from the sun through the hot, dry summer.**



## 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.



## 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)

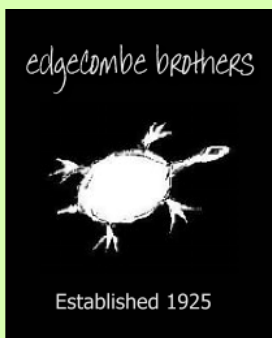
check out the website <https://westernswamptortoise.com.au>

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

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



**Our current sponsors and recovery partners include:**



...as well as **Tronox, Boral, the University of Western Australia, Curtin University and Adelaide Zoo.**