**Didn’t we have a luverly day, the day we went on the Collgar Scenic Drive.**

**Roy Butler**

The Collgar Scenic Drive was launched on Sunday afternoon, September 17, by the Merredin Branch of the Wildflower Society.

Perhaps “launched” is not the appropriate term. Revealed? Opened? For more than a year, Branch members have been driving and exploring this route, and gradually developing a map and guide. The Drive is entirely on public roads and includes Merredin’s only Flora Road, Scott Road.

In perfect weather, more than 70 people, in a convoy of two buses and perhaps eight cars, set off from the Merredin Herbarium, after a welcome and information provided by Branch President Mal Harper. The convoy was led by an electric car, slowly, around approximately 70 km of good gravel roads and bitumen. The first stop, at Collgar Wind Farm’s Information Bay, was not to recharge the EV, but to learn about the spectacular and valuable additions to our landscape.

Subsequent stops were made to admire the plentiful, and extremely diverse array of native plants, many in flower. Last September, along the seven km extent of Scott Road, member Heather Adamson identified over 170 different native plant species.

 Some adventurous people tried eating snotty gobbles (tiny but sweet) and quondongs (bigger but not sweet). A lucky few discovered a large legless lizard, and a dragon (native, not fire-breathing). Snakes were almost certainly present, but none was seen.

The guided tour concluded at Tandegin Rock with a wonderful afternoon tea and a short talk by the State President of the Wildflower Society, Brett Loney. Brett greatly enjoyed the drive and said that other Branches should follow the Merredin Branch’s lead in developing scenic and wildflower drives. Many stayed a while at Tandegin to explore the beautiful bushland and Rock. Eventually all made a short trip home to Merredin (or further, to Nungarin, Mukinbudin, or Perth), with happy memories of a friendly, stimulating afternoon in Merredin’s Great Outdoors.

To see some of the plants, animals, and happy people on this tour, see Grant Stainer’s Youtube video at <https://youtu.be/poR1XZhF21c>

The success of the Drive was due to the work of the small group of members of the Merredin Branch of the Wildflower Society, and the valuable help of volunteers. Everyone involved in the event contributed to its success, but here are some particular acknowledgements: Member Sina Gringer designed the informative colour brochure, which includes a map of the Drive; Audiene and Peter McCrae and Sue and Phil Sachse organised everything to do with the two buses; Laurie Maiolo placed warning signs and transported afternoon tea and other necessities; Grant Stainer was the official photographer for the event; member Steve Pickersgill transported State President Brett Loney and had the difficult job of keeping the convoy on-time (herding cats anyone?); member Laura Cruz and her family provided the fabulous afternoon tea at Tandegin Rock; and a much-appreciated relief station was provided at the Tandegin stop by member Tracy Scott.

If you would like to explore and enjoy Merredin’s Collgar Scenic Drive, go soon, ideally within a few months. It’s an interesting drive anytime, however. You can obtain a guide to the Drive (Sina’s brochure) from the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre, in Merredin.

Would you like to join a friendly active group, to learn more about native plants and the natural environment? Join the Wildflower Society of WA Inc. <https://www.wildflowersocietywa.org.au/>. Membership of the Society gives many benefits, including membership of the Merredin Branch, which meets monthly at the Merredin Herbarium. For more information contact Mal Harper, Branch President, 0437 388 292, or wildflowersocietymerredin@gmail.com