



# FRIENDS OF PARKS INC

VOLUNTEERS WORKING FOR CONSERVATION



## BANDICOOT TAILS

**Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek  
Conservation Park**

**No. 74, October, 2002**

### **The President's Words:**

Last month's guest speaker, Nigel Willoughby, spoke of his research work on Brown-headed, White-naped and Black-chinned Honey Eaters. Some of his research, involving the two first named species, is carried out in Scott Creek Cons. Park. Their populations, feeding habits, and movements are monitored. This study is assisted by colour banding, radio tracking – tiny devices glued to feathers and eventually shed – or in one case, swallowed by a Kookaburra, along with the wearer. Nigel expressed his appreciation of our group's Blackberry removal along creek lines. Much of his work, especially banding activities along Derwentia Creek, would otherwise have been impossible.

This year, the Friends Forum in September, was attended by two hundred and twenty five delegates. Our group accounted for three. Enid accepted a Project Award for our work on Monodenia Orchid control. Guest speaker, David Paton, spoke on "Birdscaping the Environment" and where he believes more needs to be done in returning farmland to a more natural state, by paying farmers to manage it to this end. He also questioned the wisdom of so much money being put into direct seeding projects, which in the long term return relatively little by way of biodiversity. David also spoke of the declining bird species of the Mount Lofty Ranges. Many of these species occur or were once present in Scott Creek. The Declining Birds Project has received \$50 000 towards its research, which is good news given the desperate plight of many species which not so long ago we took for granted or were common.

The park is looking superb at the moment with a huge diversity of spring colours throughout the understorey. Spider Orchids appear to be half the size of last year and numbers are also down, the result of a prolonged dry winter and late rain. All the usual species are out. One of the best ways to see this variety is by coming out to working bees, which often go to little visited areas. You can't blame me for trying!!

### **From our last meeting:**

At our September meeting, we were delighted to welcome Nigel Willoughby, who is doing his PhD in Environmental Biology and spoke to us about Melithreptid Honeyeaters. That's not some strange affliction that attacks these birds, it's just the collective term for honeyeaters of the genus Melithreptus, of which there are six in Australia. Melithreptids glean the bark and foliage for a variety of food such as lerps and "manna". They also take nectar when available, from both flowers and extra-floral nectaries, honey-dew (from sap-sucking insects) and insects.

Despite the cessation of habitat clearing, populations of these birds continue to decline. Research indicates that other reasons for the decline include such factors as weed invasion and fragmentation of the remaining habitat. (For example, the Brown Treecreeper is now extinct in Belair NP as the nearest population is found near Para Wirra. As the females must leave their home territory on maturing, and search for mates in an adjacent population, the distance between these two parks has made it impossible for this to occur for several years).

In his research, Nigel studied populations at over 90 sites ranging from Para Wirra to the southern Fleurieu Peninsular. Five sites were in SCCP. Observations over a year show that there is quite a variation in the habitats and feeding habits of the five honeyeaters that we are familiar with in this area. For instance, the Brown-headed Honeyeaters are more widespread throughout the range of habitats, whereas Black-chinned Honeyeaters are restricted to tall trees with large canopies at lower altitudes and not on steep slopes. These are, not surprisingly, rarer than the others. White-naped Honeyeaters do not range as widely as some others, and are more resident in their preferred areas.

Competition from larger and more aggressive birds such as New Holland Honeyeaters also seems to play a role in how well other honeyeaters thrive.

The talk was well illustrated with a variety of photographs of birds and habitats, as well as maps and diagrams, and was warmly received by the small but enthusiastic audience.

#### **STOP PRESS: AGM & GUEST SPEAKER**

Our guest speaker at the AGM in November will be Steve Taylor, the Frog-Watch coordinator, so this will be a meeting not to miss.

#### **FRIENDS OF SCOTT CREEK CONSERVATION PARK PROGRAMME FOR 2002**

<b>October</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup>. Tue.</b>	Gorse	S. of Bandicoot track, 9 am.
	<b>10<sup>th</sup>. Thur.</b>	Business meeting	Thompson's, Frith Rd, Cherry Gardens
	<b>13<sup>th</sup>. Sun.</b>	Gorse	Upper Wood Duck Ck., off Neville Rd., 9 am.
	<b>19/20<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Bird banding	Gate 3, Kangaroo Gully, 7 am.
	<b>26<sup>th</sup>. Sat.</b>	Cotoneaster, etc.	Almanda Tk., Frith Rd. SE of G21, 9 am.
<b>November</b>	<b>2/3<sup>rd</sup>.</b>	Bird banding	Gate 9 site, 7 am.
	<b>5<sup>th</sup>. Tue.</b>	Broom	Ford on Cup Gum Track, 9 am.
	<b>9/10<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Bird banding	Gate 3 crossroads site, 9 am.
	<b>14<sup>th</sup>. Thur.</b>	Annual General Meeting	Coromandel Valley Primary School, 7.30 pm With Steve Taylor from Frog-Watch.
	<b>16<sup>th</sup>. Sat.</b>	Rotary Christmas Fair	Selling Proteas, etc. at Blackwood, 8.30 am to 2 pm.
	<b>17<sup>th</sup>. Sun.</b>	Seed collection?	TBA
	<b>23<sup>rd</sup>. Sat.</b>	Dig Watsonia	Neville Road, enter G3, 9 am.
	<b>30<sup>th</sup>/Dec 1<sup>st</sup>.</b>	Bird banding	Gate 7 site, 6.30 am.
<b>December</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup>. Tue.</b>	Working bee	TBA
	<b>8<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Propagation day	Thompson's, Frith Road, Cherry Gardens, 9.00 am.
	<b>15<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Working bee	TBA
	<b>20<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Christmas function	TBA
	<b>28<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Working bee	TBA

**Office bearers:**

Any queries on Friends activities, please contact your office bearers.

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