FRIENDS OF PARKS
VOLUNTEERS WORKING FOR CONSERVATION

BANDICOOT TAILS

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 82, August, 2003

The President's Word:
Firstly a big thank you to the ten members and two Adelaide Bushwalker "friends of friends" who helped with our planting out working bee. The weather conditions did not auger well, however as we arrived on site the teeming rain stopped, the sun nearly came out and all the plants were in the ground by lunch time. A well deserved and enjoyable BBQ followed.
Scott Creek CP was selected for the only State release of the Bridal Creeper beetle. This little insect (approx 5mm) is part of the biological control armoury being used to try and bring this particularly invasive pest plant under control. Martin Wiedenbach from Fleurieu Animal & Plant Control and I released about 300 of the little dears in the Panhandle area – they did seem less than enthralled with their new home but the abundance of feed should have cheered them up. Martin believes it may be several years before their numbers are sufficient to make any serious impact. After having just driven through Tintinara – Bordertown area I fear the beetles and all the other agents have a mighty battle ahead. For many kilometers at a time all of the roadside verge understorey is completely swamped by this plant. The reduction in overall biodiversity must be quite dramatic and a very noticeable symptom, even allowing for the drought, is the absence of bird life in these areas.

I have recently been supplied with some data on fox baiting on the park. From the 25th. Fbruary to the 18th. March this year, of 60 baits laid 17 were taken over this three week period. These results certainly show the need for this programme to be maintained, given the fact that S.A. Water also bait on a regular basis. The number of baits still being taken indicate numbers of foxes quickly filling the void.

MORE SUPPORT FOR VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In the last "Tails" I expressed my concern as to the urgent need for an increase in State Government commitment to funding so as to improve "on ground" support for groups like ours. This would allow measures on the bush-care front, to have a much greater likelihood of long-term success. Although we have certainly made significant inroads in many areas of Scott Creek C.P. because of our numbers we have only been able to carry out a fraction of the work needed to bring the many serious pest plant species in the Panhandle, under control. This section of the park covers approximately 60-70 hectares on the west side of Frith Road and whilst much of the rocky hillsides are covered in good, relatively intact vegetation, the valley floors and creek lines are in a very poor state. Blackberry infestation, up to 40-50 metres wide, dominates the majority of the main creek line and valley floor, bridal creeper has steadily increased in area over many years and woody weeds abound. Although work by our Group around the periphery has been maintained

we have had to make the difficult decision to leave this area until the high priority work in the rest of the park has been completed.
The situation in most of the parks in the Adelaide Hills is even worse. Belair, Cleland, Horsnell Gully and Morialta Parks are all seriously infested with a variety of bad invasive weeds. A concerted long term effort is required to prevent an ecological disaster. Considering all of the above and the well documented threats facing this and other parks, the need for substantial and sustained funding increases for bushcare and research is abundantly clear.
At the risk of turning this into something of an epic (and yes you can read it in installments), I think it worthwhile enumerating some of the reasons why Scott Creek Conservation Park and our work is so important and why these increases are so necessary.

- Of the 120 plus species of birds recorded (in Scott Ck Con Pk), 2 are rated as Vulnerable,1 Rare, 2 Nationally Near Threatened, 1 Nationally Endangered (a sub-species of the Chestnut-rumped Heathwren occurring only in the MLR. Of the 34 Declining Bird Taxa of the MLR, 27 are in or have been recorded in Scott Ck Con Park.
- Twenty two reptile species (17 lizard, 5 snake) –3 are Rare and 3 Uncommon.
- The Nationally Endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot, whilst relatively secure in the Park, has certainly helped raise public awareness as to the plight of many once common species. Among them is the Brush-tailed Possum which is declining throughout much of it's former range but has obviously found suburban living much to it's liking.
- Two native fish (Climbing & Mountain Galaxias): both are confined to small pools and are very vulnerable to predation from introduced fish and/ or severe drought.
- 25 Water Beetle species have been recorded -17 of these species are of one Family and represent around 40% of the States total for that Family (all this from a one-day survey a few years ago).
- The Butterfly Survey conducted in Scott Ck CP in 2000-2001 recorded 26 species which represents approximately half of the total species recorded in the MLR. Five of our 26 are Rare or Threatened.
- Although I have collected over 40 species of ants, little is really known about the invertebrate life which really underpins the health of these ecosystems.

This brings us to the great botanical reserves of Scott Ck C P. The importance of the Park can hardly be overstated with around 600 native species recorded. 200 have a Conservation Rating in the MLR whilst 70 are Rare,Vulnerable or Endangered at a State level and 5 of these at a National level.
The following is a quote from a scientific paper published in "Science" Aug 2002- — "one of the most important strategies to safeguard relatively intact ecosystems is the maintenance of remaining habitats in protected areas. This costs money, and predictably, our current undervaluation of nature is reflected in marked underinvestment in reserves".
To read this very compelling paper on the purely economic reasons for preserving our remnant vegetation and the true worth of the services they provide, go to www.sciencemag.org –9th August 2002 Vol. 297 - authors Andrew Balmford et al.

STOP PRESS: There is now an Ant species named after the Park - Camponotus scotti - has recently been formally recognised. Although it has been collected elsewhere, Archie McArthur and I have made several collections in Scott Ck. Thanks for that recognition, Archie.

Next Meeting: This will be held at Tom & Sue Hands' residence, Mahar Road (off Frith Road) at 7.30 pm, 14th. August, 2003.

From The Secretary:

Late last month, John Butler and Don Reid attended a meeting at Noarlunga, called by the Friends Of Aldinga C.P., where a public forum on Fire Policy was held. Members of NPWSA, Aldinga Friends, CFS and several other local organizations attended. The major speaker was Fraser Vickery (NPWSA) who has spent many years studying fire prevention and control.

There is a proposal by NPWSA to carry out controlled burning within Aldinga C.P. and to construct a N-S fire break through the park to help in overall fire control. The major argument was whether the dangers are fire within the park escaping to the surrounding areas, or fires from outside entering the park. There is also the problems with different ecosystems being affected differently by fire, with possible long-term effects, particularly in Casuarina woodland. Recently, I have received, via email, a copy of NPWSA Fire Control Policy, accompanied by an appeal by the Aldinga Friends to oppose the controlled burnoff proposal. Anyone who wishes to see these documents, please contact Don Reid. The potential problems at Aldinga are vastly different to those we might face at Scott Creek, where we don't have anywhere near the pressure from surrounding properties, and we have a very different set of ecosystems. However fire policy will be a continuing debate within Friends circles and we should be ready to add our opinions to it.

Bird Banding:
The bird banding reporting year, to ABBBS in Canberra, finished at the end of June. We reported on 455 captures, including 77 recaptures, covering 21 species. Here are the details:

Species	Total Captures	Recaptures inc.	Greatest Ages	Greatest Movement
Grey Fantail	4	1	1+	
Scarlet Robin	13	2	1+	200m
Golden Whistler	7	1	3+	
Grey Shrikethrush	4	1	10+	
Striated Thornbill	46	11	14+, 8+, 6+	250m
Brown Thornbill	10	1	8+	
Buffrumped Thornbill	5		1+	200m
Yellowrumped Thornbill	10	2	1+	
Whitebrowed Scrubwren	27	8	4	
Superb Fairy Wren	94	31	3+	200m
Whitethroated Treecreeper	4	1	2+	
Mistletoebird	2		1+	
Silvereye	33	1	3+	200m
Eastern Spinebill	12		1	
Yellowfaced Honeyeater	7		1+	150m
Crescent Honeyeater	33	4	1+	
New Holland Honeyeater	61	5	5,6	200m
Red Wattlebird	4		1+	
Redbrowed Finch	73	6	1+	200m
Magpie	4	1	1+	
Bassian Thrush	1		1+	

These results give some idea of the relative abundance of some of our small passerine birds, and, as demonstrated by the small movements shown by some of the recaptures, their territoriality. Most recaptures are found in the same area as their initial banding. The ages of some of the smallest birds are quite long for such small organisms, the Striated Thornbill, in particular, demonstrating a longevity not usually expected in such a small (7 gms.) bird. The 14+ bird is the second oldest age recorded for this species. A recaptured Grey Shrikethrush, at 10+ years, is also of a venerable age. (The + in the ages column indicates the known minimum age from banding recoveries).

Our rarest record was the Bassian Thrush banded at Gate 19. We see or band enough of this species to be relatively certain that it is maintaining a small, scattered population in favourable areas in the park.

Since the last "Tails" we have had four sessions at Gate 7 Old Bush (48 birds, 1 day); Gate 9 (23 birds, 2 days); Gate 6 (13 birds, 2 days) and Gate 7 Direct Seeding area (49 birds, 2 days) . Notable recaptures amongst these were another sighting of our Striated Thornbill Methusalah – the 14+ bird, at Gate 7, and another Striated Thornbill from the same area was 6+ years.

There will be no bird banding sessiojns in September. Unfortunately, Don Reid will be away that month, and our calendar is otherwise too busy to fit anything in.

FRIENDS OF SCOTT CREEK CONSERVATION PARK
PROGRAMME FOR 2003

Month	Date	Activity	Location
Aug	5th.	Tuesday Working bee	Boneseed N of Shingleback Tk; enter G14 & head north along Neville Rd.
	14th.	Business meeting	Hands' residence, Mahar Road, Cherry Gardens, 7.30 pm.
	17th.	Sunday Working bee	Pull Erica both sides of Fern Gully; enter G17, go S past Currawong Ridge Tk., follow up S side of next creek line.
	23rd.	Saturday Working bee	Pull broom W of G7; follow track W of SW end of old paddock.
	30th. – 31st.	Bird banding	Gate 9, 7.00 am.
September	2nd.	Tuesday Working bee	Pull broom W of Old G10, check Eriostemon; gate has been replaced by wire. Enter G11 & drive N or park along Mt. Bold Rd.
	11th.	Business meeting	TBA
	14th.	Sunday Working bee	Erica W of G7; Viminaria Ck. Area.
	19th. – 21st.	Riverland Forum. Berri	
	27th.	Saturday Working bee	Boneseed S of Stringybark Tk.; enter G14 & head N along Neville Rd.
October	4th. – 5th.	Bird banding	Derwentia Creek, enter G24. 7.00 am.
	7th.	Tuesday Working bee	Boneseed N of Shingleback Tk. ;enter G14 & head N along Neville Rd.
	9th.	Business meeting	TBA
	12th.	Sunday Working bee	Ivy at Bushrat Ck. Ruin; follow track W

			of G7
	18th. – 19th.	Bird banding	Kangaroo Gully, enter G3. 7.00 am.
	25th.	Saturday Working bee	Dig Watsonia bulbs N end Neville Road; enter G17
November	1st. – 2nd.	Bird banding	Gate 19, 7.00 am.
	4th.	Tuesday Working bee	C&S broom (flowering plants esp., Mt. Bold Tk, between G7 & G8
	13th.	Annual General Meeting	Coromandel Valley PS, 7.30 pm.
	15th.	Blackwood Rotary Fair	Blackwood Rotary Park, 8. am. – 3. pm.
	16th.	Sunday Working bee	Dig Watsonia bulbs, SE of G6
	22nd.	Saturday Working bee	Pull, C&S boneseed, N of Stringybark Tk. Enter G17 & head S, second track on left
	29th. – 30th.	Bird banding	Gate 3 Crossroads. 7.00 am.
December	2nd.	Tuesday Working bee	Pull, C&S boneseed, gully W. of Blackwater Dam
	6th. – 7th.	Bird banding	Gate 7, 7.00 am.
	13th	Propagation Day	Thompson's, Frith Road, 9.00 am.
	19th.	Christmas function	TBA

Don't Forget: Meeting point for working bees is the Almanda Mine/Gate 19 at 9.00 am.

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

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