



Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 166
March-April 2017

The President's words:

As most of our members are no doubt aware, there was a prescribed burn that took place in Scott Creek CP late November 2016. What may not be so obvious is the amount of work that goes into planning such a burn.

Discussions between the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and the Friends group started a couple of years ago with Tom. Much of this was brokered with much appreciation by our Ranger, Jen. This discussion is a crucial part of the planning, as there is a great deal of detailed knowledge that has been built up by the group over the years regarding specific locations of threatened plants, wildlife and weed infestations. This information assists with the planning of the burn, including the timing and desirable intensity, areas that should be left out of the burn and the level of weed management required following the burn.



Epicormic growth on eucalypts
after the prescribed burn

Part of the rationale for this burn was to create a strategic area with a lower fuel load, which can be used to help prevent the park and surrounding habitats from burning in a larger single bushfire event. The lower fuel areas provide locations where these fires can be fought more effectively and safely. This naturally benefits isolated fauna populations, which might become locally extinct if a bushfire sweeps through the whole area.

Within the burn area there were a number of threatened plant species, mostly growing within the lower parts of the creeklines. Amongst these is a small population of the nationally critically endangered *Veronica derwentiana* ssp. *homalodonta* (Mt Lofty Speedwell). The good news is that this species generally responds well to fire, but it was still important to get the information about the population and factor it into the planning process.

Part of the area is also suitable habitat for the nationally endangered Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, and the burn needed to be hot enough to stimulate native vegetation germination

and regrowth in this area, which had been deteriorating with age and had a lack of new growth taking place. On the other hand, there was a known population of the nationally endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot living in the creekline. Suitable refuge for birdlife in adjacent areas also needs to be available.

These and other issues, including follow-up weed management requirements, are all part of a detailed environmental assessment process which is undertaken by DEWNR and which is signed off by an ecologist. In the end, the proposed burn area was split in two, with 67 hectares scheduled to take place early in spring 2016, and the rest to go into the planning at a later date. With an early spring burn, the creeklines would be less likely to burn, protecting the threatened plants and Bandicoots, but it should still be dry enough on the higher ground to get good native plant germination and regrowth.

In the normal course, an early spring burn would probably mean September, but the extended spring rainfall meant that the vegetation was still too wet to burn then, and it ended up being the last week of November.

Weed management is one of the most important aspects of the planning process from the Friends' point of view. This is because, over the years, much effort has been contributed to treating weeds in this part of the park, in particular Blackberry, Boneseed, Broom and Erica. Most of these weeds are considered fire responsive, meaning they will either regrow after the fire or their weed seedbank will germinate in great numbers.



Germination of Montpellier Broom, a Weed of National Significance

If follow-up of these weeds is not undertaken in the years immediately following the burn, they can impede the regrowth of the native vegetation, which we are trying to protect. There has been a strong commitment to this weed management by DEWNR, including some additional control undertaken before the prescribed burn took place.

It is always very interesting to see how nature bounces back after a fire, and this was no different. Visiting the burn area this February, it was obvious that the continued wet weather has resulted in masses of both weed and native plant growth, and it will certainly be a challenge to keep on top of the weed management for the staff from DEWNR. Already they have re-assessed their original strategy, which was to start work from the bottom of Bushrat Creek and work their way upstream. With mass germination of Broom seedlings in the vicinity of the Mt Lofty Speedwell, along with strong Blackberry growth, work has commenced in this area.



Regrowth of native plants in one of the gullies after the prescribed burn

The Speedwell has also produced very good regrowth, along with germination of many of its own seedlings. Other positives include regrowth and seedling germination of the fire responsive state rare *Viminaria juncea* (Golden Spray), an upright shrub in the Legume Family that grows in wet areas like creeklines. There

was also a sighting of the state rare Bassian Thrush within the area of the prescribed burn. This is a secretive bird that forages in leaf litter on the ground for small invertebrates and worms.

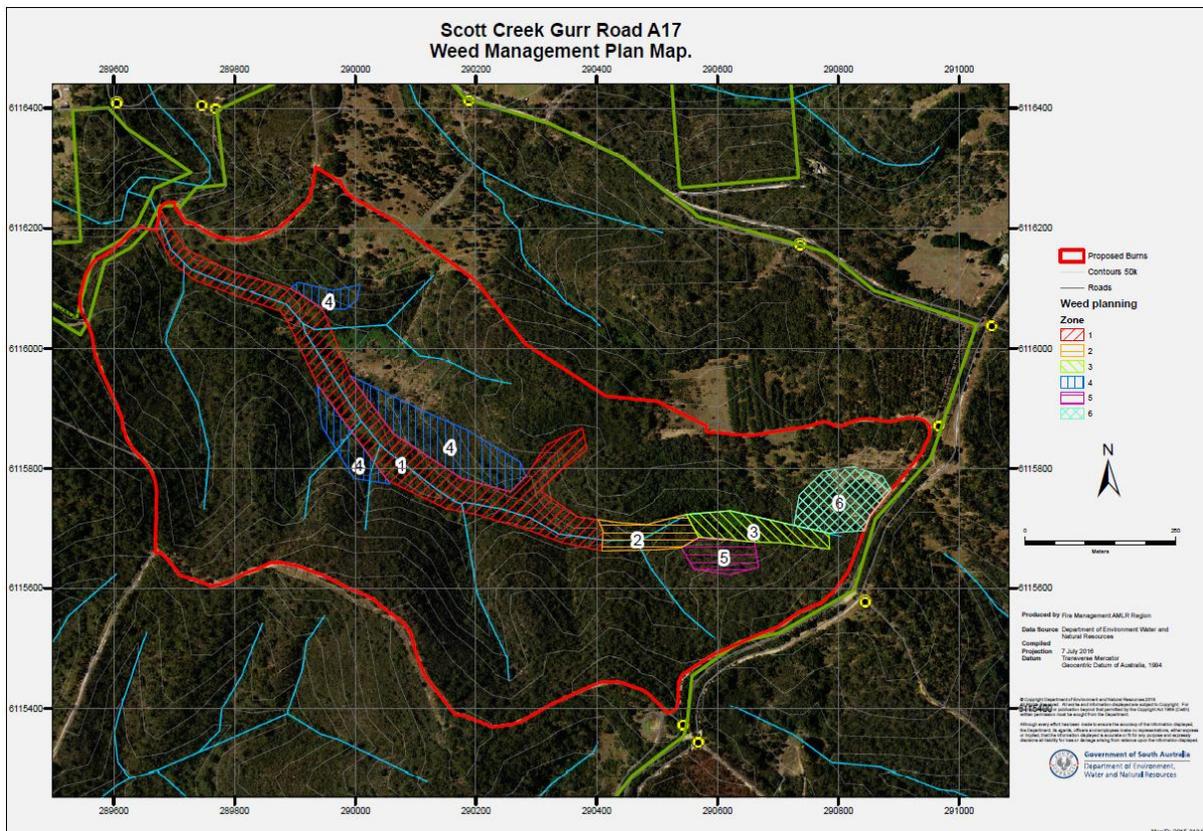


State rare Bassian Thrush



Regrowth of the critically endangered Mt Lofty Speedwell

While there will be plenty of work for the Friends to contribute to the recovery after the prescribed burn, the last thing our members want is to have to divert our time away from our regular weed control activities across the whole park to attend to a problem created by the burn.



DEWNR Weed Management Plan Map prepared before the Prescribed Burn took place

Contractor work being undertaken in the park:

The question was recently raised about current contractor work being undertaken in the park and whether it could be listed in Bandicoot Tails for our member's interest. So here is a summary that I have put together.

- \$5000 DEWNR on-park Volunteer Support Grant 2016: work completed in Almanda Valley (Erica) and Scott Creek (woody weeds including Broom and Dog Rose), due date 31st December 2016 – acquittal and final report have been completed (thanks Jen)
- \$5000 NRM Volunteer Support from Kat: \$1000 eastern end Bushrat Creek Blackberry follow-up, \$2000 Almanda Valley Blackberry, Erica and Cape Tulip follow-up, \$2000 Panhandle north woody weed follow-up – due date 30th June 2017
- \$2000 Adelaide Hills Council Community Development Grant: \$2000 Blechnum Creek – due date 30th June 2017 (or 12 months from funding receipt)
- NR AMLR District Officer funding from Mark: second of three year work plan commitment in Number 1 Block, amount to be confirmed, mainly Blackberry and Erica – due date 30th June 2017
- \$2000 City of Onkaparinga Community Development Grant: \$435 remaining to be allocated – due date 31st July 2017
- \$5000 NRM Community Action Grant: \$2000 for Blechnum Creek, \$3000 for Scott Creek – due date 30th October 2017
- \$5000 DEWNR on-park Volunteer Support Grant 2017: \$2000 woody weeds Panhandle, \$1000 Bridal Creeper Neville Road, Blue Gum Flat and Panhandle, \$1000 Blackberry follow-up Derwentia Creek, \$1000 Blackberry follow-up Kangaroo Gully – due date 31st December 2017
- Almanda Project funds in FoSCCP account:
 - \$2000 Blackwater Dam and Creek to follow-up Blackberry
 - \$5000 Brown Frog Creek follow-up woody weeds including Boneseed and Erica
 - \$1000 Viminaria Creek to follow-up Blackberry
 - \$4000 North Bushrat to follow-up and extend Blackberry and woody weed control in unburnt areas
 - BushRAT monitoring (to discuss areas with John W)
- Patagonia – Tides Foundation Grant: application sent in January 2017 and receipt acknowledged 24th January by Patagonia, sought USD5000 this year to continue work in Mackereth Creek

As you can see, there is plenty of funding support currently being provided to our small but dedicated Hands-On Team. This support is critical to ensuring that we are able to continue expanding the restoration work that has been taking place over the past 26½ years that the group has been working in the park.

It is also important, however, that we don't have large areas of weeds cleared by contractors that our volunteers won't be able to maintain follow-up of in future years. We will therefore ensure that some funding is retained so that contractors can undertake the initial follow-up of some of this work, particularly with weeds like Blackberry.

It is essential that all weed control be followed-up, so that previous efforts are not wasted.

Peter Watton



NATIONAL
Eucalypt DAY
23 March

Thursday 23rd March is National Eucalypt Day:

National Eucalypt Day is an initiative of the Bjarne K Dahl Trust, which aims to further raise awareness of eucalypts and celebrate the important place that they hold in the hearts and lives of Australians. The Bjarne K Dahl Trust held the inaugural National Eucalypt Day on the 23rd of March 2014. This date was chosen as it is the birthday of the Trust's namesake and it is intended that National Eucalypt Day becomes an annual event.

<http://dahltrust.org.au>

<http://www.eucalyptaustralia.org.au>



A couple of stunning photos of a Yellow-footed Antechinus taken in the park at bird banding by Jim Spiker earlier this year.



Bird Banding Notes:

There are quite a few banding days to report on since our last report. It has been a period of wild storms, heavy rain and few hot days. As a consequence, several species have had extended breeding, shown by the large number of immature birds we have caught recently.

Here is a summary of our results since mid-November with significant recaptures noted.

19, 20 November	Scott Ck.	23 captures inc. 4 recaptures	12 species inc. 1 recapture	Fantailed Cuckoo originally banded at Mineshaft Track
3, 4 December	Frith Rd.	17 captures inc. 4 recaptures	6 species	
17, 18 December	Mackereth Ck.	26 captures inc. 5 recaptures	10 species	9+ Whitebrowed Scrubwren 5+ Silvereye 2+ New Holland Honeyeater banded at Scott Ck. 7+ Golden Whistler
14, 15 January	Gate 11	15 captures inc. 1 recapture	7 species	
4 February (1 day)	Gate 4	6 captures inc. 1 recapture	3 species	
14, 15 February	Gate 9	28 captures inc. 4 recaptures	10 species	
4, 5 March	Kangaroo Gully	41 captures inc. 2 recaptures	11 species	8+ male Superb Fairywren

A comment about the 8+ Superb Fairywren. It was a male in full breeding plumage, which males retain all year round from about the age of 4. We have had several birds reach 7+ in our years of banding, but this the first Wren to exceed this figure. I suspect that this bird is near the end of his life span.



Above: A female Superb Fairywren checking out Jim's new camera

Left: Our "fledgling" bird bander Lara, with a Red-browed Finch

Keep this date free!

Almanda Project Showcase 2017

celebrating this wonderful project's 3rd year

Sunday 7th May 10am - 3pm

Come and see this Adelaide Hills creekline regenerating – helping to conserve the precious homes of **60% of SA's rare and endangered species**

FREE informative **self-guided/guided walks** including some 100 regenerating indigenous plants!

Almanda Mine site, Dorset Vale Road, Cherry Gardens

Walk is 1km along Almanda Creek and around Almanda Swamp.

Wear suitable shoes and cover legs [*Nearest toilets at oval 432 Scott Creek Road*].

For sale: local bird brochures / park maps / *Almanda Project's* comprehensive first and second Annual Reports.

On display with orders taken for Spring: get your own rare *Almanda Blue* plant with its specially designed watering system that you can set and forget!

All proceeds help us conserve this important 840 hectare conservation park



Programme March - May 2017

Working bees meet at Gate 16 Almanda Car Park; meet at 8.30am during March and at 9.00am from April, when daylight saving ends

**NOTE: WORKING BEES CANCELLED IF FIRE BAN
ANNOUNCED FOR MOUNT LOFTY RANGES**

Month	Date	Activity	Location
MARCH			Working bees meet at 8.30am in March
Saturday, Sunday	4, 5	Bird banding	Gate 3 Kangaroo Gully, 7.00am
Tuesday	7	Working bee	Gate 8 Area 9: Broom in NE corner
Sunday	12	Working bee	Gate 15 Area 22 Almanda Creek: Broom, Blackberry and other weeds in creekline
Wednesday	15	Social Lunch All welcome!	Joan's Pantry - Hawthorndene, 12 midday (Watahuna Ave opposite the oval)
Saturday	18	Bird banding	Gate 20 Frith Rd opp. Thorley Rd, 7.00am
Sunday	19	Excursion	Laratinga Wetlands, Mt. Barker, 8.00am
Saturday	25	Working bee	Gate 11 Areas 18 & 19: Blackberry around Clematis near Pump Creek, woody weeds around ETSA Spur Track
APRIL			Working bees meet at 9.00am from April
Tuesday	4	Working bee	Gate 3 Area 7: woody weeds around end of Yacca Track, then Helipad area
Sunday	9	Working bee	Gate 3 Areas 8 & 9: woody weeds either side of Currawong Ridge Track, NE section
Tuesday	11	General mtg All welcome!	Butler's residence, Coromandel Valley, 7.30pm
Thursday	13	Social Lunch All welcome!	The Essence - Stirling, 12 midday (via lane between Gardiners Real Estate & children's wear shop)
Saturday	22	Working bee	Gate 14 Areas 12 & 13: woody weeds around Currawong Ridge Track, SW section
Saturday, Sunday	29, 30	Bird banding	Gate 7 adjacent to prescribed burn area, 7.00am
MAY			
Tuesday	2	Working bee	Gates 15 & 16 Areas 22 & 25 Almanda Creek & Valley: Broom, Blackberry and other weeds in creekline
Saturday	6	Bird banding	Gate 15 Mineshaft Track, 7.00am
Sunday	7	Almanda Showcase	Open day and guided walks at Almanda Creek and Almanda Valley – 10am to 3pm
Sunday	14	Working bee	Gate 3 Area 11 Gracilis Creek: woody weeds
Tuesday	16	Social Lunch All welcome!	The Artisan - Blackwood, 12 midday (down lane beside Bendigo Bank)
Saturday, Sunday	20, 21	Bird banding	Gate 3 Crossroads, 7.30am
Saturday	27	Working bee	Gate 21 Areas 28 & 30: Blackberry & other woody weeds along lower Greenhood Track creeklines

Meeting at the Almanda Mine for working bees enables everyone to be brought up-to-date with late changes to the programme. Bring a small back pack in case we are working further from the cars.

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

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