

Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

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President's Words: DENR has recently released its draft "People and Parks Strategy", signalling the move toward a more "corporate based" approach to our Parks. In an interview soon after the release CE, Allan Holmes, pre-empted the response from certain sections of the community by saying the Strategy would meet "resistance" from environmental groups. Does this mean he excludes himself from involvement with people who hold concerns over the future of our declining natural environment? Allan followed up with the observation that there needs to be a "balance", a word that generally means "why can't you see the environment is all very well, but let's not stand in the way of progress". 'Balance' in such a context means further compromises for nature.

I am curious as to why the CE expects resistance unless he already knows that some of the proposals will be at odds with the primary purpose of creating parks ie, the conservation and preservation of what is left of our natural environment.

The economic imperative is trotted out as ever, but there is a glaring omission which is never factored into the equation. It is called ecosystem services. These are services that the environment provides on a daily basis for free but are actually worth (world wide) billions of dollars annually. Clean, oxygenated air, filtered water, medicines, known and yet to be discovered, crop pollinators, natural pest controllers, untold numbers of invertebrate species keeping ecosystems healthy, as well as critical breeding ecosystems that benefit humanity such as mangrove fish nurseries.

These are just a few examples, but how often are they cited as having economic worth? They have been calculated and they are already available. They also show an intact ecosystem returns far more in the long term than its modified version.

The following three paragraphs give a glimpse of the balance we need to reach, despite what I see as some fairly contradictory aspirations on the part of the "stakeholders" themselves. (The underlining is mine).

“Research shows that visitors to parks are increasingly seeking experiences that reconnect them to nature on a personal level and make a contribution to the planet. At the same time they expect to have a minimal impact on the environment.”

There is an increasing need to provide a socially equitable and accessible range of activities and facilities ranging from camping to luxury lodges. Visitors are also seeking learning and adventure outcomes and ‘exclusive’ experiences.

The wide range of activities that visitors now expect to be provided in parks include horse riding, cycling, four-wheel driving, rock climbing, scuba diving, luxury camping, sleeping under the stars, watching wildlife and participating in conservation programs.”

I think a new interpretation of “minimal impact” along with “balance” and “sustainable”, is about to be launched. If recent developments in Belair NP are an indication of what is in store then we have a lot to worry about. New visitor facilities now cover ground where rare species grew only a couple of years ago. These species were also “protected” under the NPW Act. What future for the rest? Was DENR unable to find suitably degraded areas in Belair NP? At the same time the mountain bike fraternity was making ambit claims to try and open the majority of the park to their particular “minimal impact” activities. Destructive and eroding trails through native vegetation, and the subsequent damage caused, was all going to be readily embraced by DENR and were it not for the efforts of conservationists all these trails would have been approved.

Consider this statement from the “Vision” and “Enriching our lives” section of the Strategy (underlining is mine).

“The impact of visitor activities can be expressed in terms of an ‘environmental footprint’. In this case the ‘environmental footprint’ describes the scale of modification to the park and can be expressed in hectares. Examples might be changes to the landscape caused by regular visitor use, or modification due to built visitor facilities. Trends in the scale of impact can be measured through scientific monitoring”.

Well that is a relief, nothing like some monitoring, after the event, to save the day. Why is the environmental footprint not measured in hectares AND species lost, weeds spread, pathogens introduced, or is that carrying monitoring too far?

We are also told time and again that “visitors expect----”. When visitors were being canvassed for their expectations was the question asked “do you expect to walk through a peaceful, natural environment free from weeds, ferals, horse and bike riders”?

Apart from the more well known parks there was no list of parks that had been flagged for possible development. Nor was there a commitment to use the money generated by the projected doubling of visitations from 4M to 8M, for conservation programs.

Finally, as I lost count of the number of times the word exciting had been used, and as rebranding is a must; DENR will “*revitalize the public image of South Australia’s parks by creating an exciting, new, motivational parks brand*”. Sounds like we’ve got the advertising industry firmly on board. I think Mark Twain might have called it “chloroform in print”. **With the millions in budget cuts to the environment, would it not be more prudent and productive to stay with the not so stimulating, less exciting, older brand and just risk being less motivated whenever we see it? After all,**

marketing is merely a sideshow of appealing images and words, when what our parks really need is more purposeful on-ground conservation actions.

I'll leave the last word to the retiring Secretary to the Treasury, Dr Ken Henry.

“Much more needs to be done if we are to be able to say that the wellbeing of future generations is not being threatened by poor valuation of the environment.”

If you would like to make a contribution to the public feedback you can download the Strategy in PDF form online from the website- DENR + People & Parks- there are guidelines for providing feedback. Submissions close on the 8th of April.

Back to Scott Creek where Bob Bates continues to turn up new species for the park, this time the State and MLR Rare Swamp Lily (*Ottelia ovalifolia*) and Slender Plumegrass (*Dichelachne hirtella*) which does not have a rating yet because it is not in the SA Census of Vascular Plants, despite its palpability in the park. Several other recent discoveries would suggest we are far from finished.

The brochure on Birds of Scott Creek CP has gone to the printers and should be available in two weeks. It quickly went beyond being a labour of love for Les, as fine tuning of photos, editing, re-editing and close-up nit picking by us all took their toll. However, we are now happy with the result and thanks go to Les for the hundred plus hours spent on gathering photos, resizing and printing and re-printing till it was right.

Thanks also to Jenny for persistence and editing skills and Don and Donna for the same. If you do happen to find a mistake, please keep it to yourself until the re-print.

See you at the next working bee, by which time John should be back from his Tarkine adventure and general meanderings around Tasmania.

Bird Banding:

We have had only been out for 3 days in the last two months, due to wet weather in this very damp summer. However, results of these forays were exceptional.

The 15th. and 16th. saw us operating at Scott Creek.. The 15th yielded 32 new captures and 8 recaptures. 11 species were netted, and the recaptures included 2 6+ Whitebrowed Scrubwrens. On the 16th., 8 species were netted for a total of 40 new birds and 3 recaptures. The grand total of 83 birds for a weekend was a new record for our operations.

We were scheduled to work at Gate 4 on the 19th. February, but rain intervened. However, the 20th. was fine and we netted 11 species with 35 birds including 4 recaptures. The recaptures included a 5+ Whitebrowed Scrubwren.

The cooler, wetter summer appears to have had a beneficial affect on our bird community. We have seen many juveniles in our catches and the increased number of birds caught suggests a resurgence in the local population, compared to the last couple of years.

This Issue's Photo:

President Tom Hands was working in Mt. Bold recently and came across a Crested Shriketit feeding its young with pieces of an enormous caterpillar. How is this for a photo of the event!



Programme October 2010 - January 2011 (all working bees meet at 9.00am at G18)

NOTE: WORKING BEES CANCELLED IF FIRE BAN ANNOUNCED FOR MT. LOFTY RANGES

Month	Date	Activity	Location
March	1	Tuesday Working Bee	Broom, Fleabane, Bushrat Ck. Enter Gate 7, bring pack.
	5, 6	Bird banding	Mackereth Ck., 7.00 am
	13	Sunday Working Bee	Broom and Erica, SW of Gate 4
	19, 20	Bird banding	Derwentia Ck., 7.00am.
	26	Saturday Working Bee	Watsonia, Erica, Lower Viminaria Ck.,
April	2, 3	Bird banding	Gate 7, 6.30 am.
	5	Tuesday Working Bee	Broom, Erica, Lower Bushrat Ck., enter Gate 3 or 4
	10	Sunday Working Bee	Erica and broom, Upper Viminaria Ck., Gate 7

	14	Business Meeting	Thompsons, Frith Road, 7.30 pm. Ewan and Liz Campbell talking about their international birding experiences.
	16,17	Bird banding	Gate 19, 7.00 am.
	23	Saturday Working Bee	TBA
May	3	Tuesday Working Bee	TBA
	8	Sunday Working Bee	TBA
	14,15	Bird banding	Gate 9, 7.00 am.

John Butler asks that anyone attending working bees and going directly to site rather than to the meeting area at Gate 18, give the organiser a call the day or so before, in case of a change in plans.

As a safety measure when working in the park, consider carrying a switched on mobile phone if you have one, with John's 0427 164 290 or Tom's 0417 869 349 numbers stored. Let John and Tom know your mobile No.

We have several two-way radios for members use. These are also available at working bees.

Officebearers:

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

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