

Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 143, January - February, 2012

President's Words:

Tom's message this time is his president's report to our AGM last November, repeated here for those of our members who could not attend that meeting.

Welcome everyone and thanks for coming. Welcome also to Bruce Pascoe who has stepped into the breach and saved me from a potentially embarrassing gap where a speaker should be.

As ever, we have been keeping up the pressure on all the feral plants in the park & they in turn have reciprocated. I cannot remember a year when the grassy weeds have been looking more robust. We have put in around 960 hours on pest plant eradication and a further 550 hours on bird banding, including 120 in which Don continues to run and document our records; a big tick and emu stamp for him. Bob Bates contributed some 120 hours botanising and updating the plant list with nearly fifty additions this year. Other activities such as producing and selling the bird brochure, grant applications and liaising with contractors accounted for another 150 hours giving a total of around 1780 hours or about 222 eight hour days.

Our esteemed Vice Pres. John Butler, despite avoiding the coal face by lying around in a hospital bed and convalescing after heart surgery and skipping off for a cruise around the shores of the Northern Territory, managed to put in 245 hours on top of attending regular working bees. John and Rosemary aren't here tonight as her birthday very inconveniently coincides with this AGM.

The bird brochure has sold steadily and we have easily covered our costs now. As they asked that I not mention them, I would like to thank the person unknown who spent at least 100 hours on this production and also attends to our very excellent web-site. They and Sue and Jenny have also been helping to sell the brochure and our group at the Stirling Market and other venues.

We have successfully applied for two grants that have enabled us to use contractors to slash another section of Bushrat Creek near a population of a tiny plant called Water Blinks, which only grows in seasonally damp areas and is Vulnerable in S.A. and the MLR. When you see the environment it grows in you can understand why. Broom is the

great competitor here. Another grant paid for the cutting/drilling and frilling of sugar gums and willows below the Water Blinks. Tim Jury from TPAG continues to monitor and weed around these and other threatened plant populations putting in around 50 hours a year.

Our Ranger, Jen Pitman, has secured funding from Grants which ensure ongoing long term contract work to be carried out in several areas and this is already making an impact on areas like Scott Creek and on bridal creeper infestations in many areas. Three cornered garlic and oxalis have also been treated recently. Jen continues to take an active interest despite being on maternity leave, (which is really a nice way of saying she can't bear the idea of something happening she doesn't know about). Kat, our liaison Ranger and Jen's replacement has also provided excellent service and takes part in our social activities too.

I would like to make special mention of Ruth Stevens who for many years worked on her own or occasionally with a helper, in the vicinity of Gate 11, patiently digging or swabbing the introduced orchid *Monadenia*- (now *Disa*), her efforts have greatly reduced that population but owing to advancing years and recent ill health, Ruth tells me she can no longer continue. In recognition of her dedication I would like to nominate her for Life Membership. Ruth exemplifies that no nonsense, practical approach we rely on to keep getting things done, and I know we all wish her the very best for the future.

For the rest, it has been all the usual stalwarts putting in many hours over the year, I'd like to formally welcome John Wamsley into the group. He joined as a result of a chance meeting with John Butler and obviously enjoys the park as much as we do. It's also welcome back to John Bartlett after a two year enforced absence and we are very pleased to see him again.

My thanks to Jenny for all her social secretariat activities and enthusiasm for weeding not to mention her unswerving belief that if we harangue the local community long enough, they will all become active members.

So thank you all for your efforts throughout the year. I would like to wish everyone the very best for the New Year. I can only promise one thing -- lots more of the same in 2012. Try to think of the clear conscience and sound sleep afterwards.

Friends of Parks Message:

This issue is the time for messages. Following is David Mitchell's FOP President's Chat #28, which will bring you up-to-date with the broader aspects of environmental management.

Dear Friends of Parks Groups

DENR: amalgamation with NRM and budget cuts.

I'm afraid the bureaucratic wheels continue to grind exceeding slow. The top-down approach so beloved by the bureaucracy means that from a Friends' perspective not

a lot appears to be happening apart from the creation and filling of a number of senior managerial positions. Despite assurances that there's plenty going on, in terms of delivering a net improvement in services to Friends of Parks and other volunteers the result so far has been disappointing. We continue to receive good support from the Volunteer Support Unit and regional and district staff work their socks off to keep the system functioning but at the moment the weeds are winning and many parks are deteriorating. This has been pointed out to the Minister and senior departmental management resulting in promises that the benefits of the amalgamation will eventually flow through to the service delivery level. In the meantime many of us, staff and volunteers, are left struggling to work out how the new deal will impact upon our parks, our activities and our members. Charles Connelly and I are meeting with Minister Caica again in January to discuss our concerns and suggest some solutions.

The situation has been exacerbated by budget cuts both to staff and to funds spent on-ground. Many groups are either without a liaison ranger or don't know who the appropriate contact person is. Several experienced rangers have taken separation packages putting extra strain on those remaining with many groups and their office holders now feeling frustrated and disillusioned. I'd encourage you to hang in and do the best you can. Things will hopefully improve in the coming months as regional managements work to optimise their resources at the service delivery end of the business. In the meantime I'd suggest that if you are having problems finding out who is looking after your group you contact your Regional Manager or your local Manager, Public Lands.

In an attempt to improve relationships at the local or regional level Friends of Parks Inc will be initiating a number of pilot discussions with member groups. John Schutz, Anne Sellar and the Volunteer Support Unit have pledged their support and will assist in facilitating the process. The idea is to convene a number of member groups within a region and explore how those groups can network to improve their effectiveness and to facilitate improved communications with local DENR and NRM personnel. There is no set agenda other than to start a dialogue about how we can help ourselves and what support is required from the new departmental arrangements and from Friends of Parks Inc. The Board's view is that we should at least try to get something happening rather than sitting waiting for the top-down approach to eventually filter down to where the action happens.

Although we have some thoughts about where we might trial our ideas we'd I'd like to hear your thoughts and suggestions. If you want to be involved please let me or one of my Board colleagues know. If you have some other approaches or suggestions we'd welcome those as well. The Board is strongly of the view that we need to adopt a more regional approach not only to undoing the damage to the environment but also to how we manage ourselves and our activities. For example funding authorities are looking much more at the landscape approach and wanting more collaboration at the community level. This has implications for how we manage ourselves in the future, how we relate to each other and what sort of regional/district support is required. Please let us know if you have any bright ideas.

My apologies for what might seem a level of negativity. We are in challenging times and I'm concerned that the health of our natural and cultural heritage doesn't suffer whilst the public service works out its institutional arrangements. Nowadays many parks rely almost entirely on volunteers for their on-ground care which is a situation that is not sustainable indefinitely. Friends of Parks Inc is determined to do whatever

it can to raise these issues and explore ways of solving what is fast becoming a critical situation.

In the meantime, on behalf of my colleagues, I wish you and your families all the best for Christmas and the holiday period. Please take care, stay safe and thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of the natural and cultural heritage of South Australia; without the efforts of volunteers I'm afraid the system would be unsustainable

Yours sincerely



President

Ornithological Activities:

The weather interfered again with our plans for November and December, even though the forecasts didn't turn out to be quite what happened. We lost a complete weekend in December because of threatened rain and storms, which only eventuated just in the nick of time to make the cancellations appropriate.

Here is our work summary.

20-11-11	Gate 4 site	28 captures inc. 10 recaptures	10 species
3 & 4-12-11	Kangaroo Gully	29 captures inc. 2 recaptures	13 species

The most notable recaptures were those of a Golden Whistler and a Whitebrowed Scrubwren at Gate 4, both of which were aged at 6+ years.

Please see our work programme for our next dates. We are also programming a visit to the Laratinga Wetlands at Mount Barker on the 19th. February, for some observing of a very different mix of species. We plan to meet there at 8 am., and retire about 10.30 am to Millie's Bakery in Mount Barker, for a cuppa and sticky bun.

Programme January - March 2012 (all working bees meet at 9.00am at G18)

January	3	Tuesday Working Bee	Erica, North Viminaria Creek
	8	Sunday Working Bee	Boneseed, broom east end Bluegum Flat, G13
	14,15	Bird banding	Gate 9, 6 am.
	28	Saturday Working Bee	M. Broom & Erica, Lower Bushrat Ck., G4
February	7	Tuesday Working Bee	Erica, Winter Cascade Ck., G22 (pack)
	12	Sunday Working Bee	Mid Mackereth Ck., Boneseed & olives. 4WD access
	18	Bird banding	Scott Creek site, 6.30 am

	19	Birding outing	Visit to Laratinga Wetlands, Mt. Barker. Meet at entrance at 8am. (see note above)
	25	Saturday Working Bee	M. Broom & Erica, Lower Bushrat Ck., (pack)
	26	Clean Up Australia Day	Mt. Lofty Rangers 4WD Club working bee. Location advice will follow by email.
March	3, 4	Bird banding	Mackereth Creek, 7 am.
	6	Tuesday Working Bee	Broom & Erica, SW of G8
	11	Sunday Working Bee	Erica, S. side Stringybark Track
	17, 18	Bird banding	Derwentia Creek, 7 am.
	24	Saturday Working Bee	TBA

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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