

Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 146, July - August, 2012

President's Words:

With the year half over we seem to be finding more working bee sites rather than less. Some of our more recent ones have reinforced the need to not only follow up but **frequently**. We are at least getting to many sites before flowering and seed set but the speed of regeneration is something to behold. Thankfully the extra work being done by contractors has eased the pressure but large areas of the park still remain unvisited for long periods of time.

The following is an extract from InDaily, an Adelaide based independent newspaper, on 24th May 2012.

“Three times a year, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources puts on an event called Stirring the Possum, a panel discussion that looks at environment-related subjects. The importance of connecting with nature for our sense of wellbeing and happiness seemed the perfect Stirring the Possum topic for the most recent discussion, which was held on Tuesday night.” (22 May).

Well some of our Chief Executive's utterances certainly agitated the marsupial for me; read on and see if your wombat is whisked.

“I want kids to be able to ride their mountain bikes across our metropolitan parks. Not on walking trails but on the fire tracks and vehicle tracks that we don't let them ride on now. Because I don't think that makes any sense”.

Well perhaps it would make sense if he had read the Management Plans for the Conservation Parks for which he is responsible. These statements actively undermine both Rangers and Friends efforts to improve biodiversity and heighten public awareness through LOW impact measures and initiatives. Another point worth noting is that the only walking tracks in Scott Creek CP (and many other parks) **are** fire tracks and vehicle tracks, so sharing these tracks would be unavoidable.

InDaily continues- He (Holmes) said that along with the change in public mood, politicians were becoming less willing to support or fund parks. “I'm not talking about in

my backyard, I'm talking about across Australia. I worry about that. I worry about it in terms of you've got to look after these places; they don't look after themselves. And if they're not a priority you don't do that management."

"Holmes said he wanted his department, which is responsible for managing SA's national and metropolitan parks, to open up parks for the public to use without restriction".

Doesn't this directly contradict what he's just said above? Looking after Parks by encouraging erosion and collisions with people who actually enjoy WALKING through remnant vegetation. I am also curious as to what "without restriction" encompasses.

Further remarks include, "The organisation is trying to turn itself around to face people. If you're not part of community, if you're not working with community, you're not doing your job."

Does this job include compromising what is left of our natural environment for the sake of attracting people who can't be bothered walking through it and actually experiencing the natural world quietly and peacefully? Colin Malcolm, Friends of Onkaparinga, asks the question in their latest newsletter as to who thought it a good idea to hold a car rally through Belair National Park. I ask why are these ideas even given oxygen?

Specious arguments generated for a quick publicity grab, do nothing to further or foster a genuine and lasting understanding as to why it is important to value the natural world. The perception that nature exists solely for humans to exploit and it is somehow "selfish" to try and preserve intact, what little is left, no doubt gains traction with those who would only visit a park if off road driving and cycling is permitted. I am yet to be convinced someone travelling downhill at 60kph in Scott Creek CP or any other park is taking in or appreciating what surrounds them. Perhaps a more valuable contribution to the debate would have been; how do we dispel these perceptions and try to instill a lasting understanding of the value of what has been gifted to us?

Below is a call to arms some of you might be interested in- I will be going, if anyone wants a lift.

Volunteers are needed to help with the largest ever planting of the endangered Mount Compass Oak-bush and help create habitat for the nationally endangered Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren.

Saturday 14th of July at **Stipiturus Conservation Park on the Fleurieu Peninsula - 7 kms from Mount Compass.**

If you would like to be involved or find out more information contact Kat Mroczek on southernloftyvolunteers@sa.gov.au or phone 8130 9064.

Controlled Burning In Conservation Parks:

The question of controlled burns in parks is something which has been coming to the fore in the last couple of years. Tom Hands has been engaging in some in-depth questioning of the practise and here is a series of Q & A he has been involved in recently.

DEH Response to questions raised re Derwentia Gully Burn

Hi Randall,

I would like to raise a few points about the Scott Ck A13 burn. The proposed site is a tract of very high quality intact remnant vegetation. This is due in no small part to the efforts of the Friends Group which has spent over fifteen years eradicating erica, boneseed, olive, briar and blackberry. Several plants of high conservation significance also occur here.

- Derwentia (now Veronica) derwentiana, EPBC listed, Endangered SA & MLR
- Veronica gracilis, Vulnerable SA & MLR
- Logania saxitalis, Rare, SA & MLR

There are also several patches of the MLR Uncommon Rubus parvifolius, Native raspberry. We have planted several Derwentia, grown from seed from the original find, in another creek line in the proposed burn site not far from the Logania saxitalis. Did your pre-burn ramble survey pick up all these species?

No, the pre-burn ramble survey did not detect either Logania saxitalis or Veronica gracilis but did pick up both Derwentia (Veronica derwentiana) and Rubus parvifolius. Of these four species only one (Veronica derwentiana) is in the database so it would be good to pass records for the other three species on to the Biodiversity Conservation Unit for entry into BDBSA. If this data has been passed on to DENR it hasn't made its way into the database for some reason - not sure why.

Do you know their response to fire?

Logania saxitalis: prolific resprouter based on observations at Sturt Gorge etc

Rubus parvifolius: has been killed by 100% scorch in one study and survived 100% scorch via root suckers in other studies (vital attribute data)

Veronica derwentiana: survives 100% scorch via root suckers (vital attribute data)

Veronica gracilis: no data but suspected to be in the same category as V. derwentiana

As discussed on site, at this stage our plan is to exclude main drainage line and lower slopes so expect we will not be attempting to burn areas supporting these species. I have to get Tim or Ian out on site to assess whether this is feasible and will keep you in the loop on that.

We have all the waypoints for these species and have passed them on to DENR but it would be advisable to check that your information is up to date. Much of the terrain is steep-very steep. We are at a loss as to why this burn needs to occur at all as,

- there will be a loss of excellent habitat

Based on my observations the other day I think that the areas of relatively long unburnt heathy woodland/heathland would respond very well to fire. There will be some temporary displacement of flora and fauna but this will be followed by a period of regeneration and higher productivity. I am concerned that some Messmate that are already stressed may be impacted, however, fire will likely initiate recruitment of this species which is desirable. I am less comfortable with the idea of burning the gum woodlands associated with the main drainage line as these areas of higher

natural fertility and available moisture will be very vulnerable to weed invasion, particularly where there is a seed bank of fire responsive species and in open areas where annual grasses/herbs etc may increase in abundance. As discussed, my aim is to exclude what I consider to be the areas most susceptible to weed invasion/re-invasion.

- The hakea species found here are mature plants that provide a valuable food source for many YT Black-cockatoos. This food source has already been badly depleted by previous burns in the park, especially the Kangaroo Gully area burn. These plants take at least five-six years to start producing seed in any significant numbers. As you would be aware, the YTBC is already a Vulnerable species. Habitat loss and fragmentation, a familiar cause of so many species declines, will be further exacerbated. Is there any scientific evidence to show they will not be adversely affected by this and all the other burns? It is worth considering the lag effect of these fires, as burning at the current levels may well be putting the future of this and other species at risk.

It is very difficult and arguably not as high a priority (in comparison to sedentary/terrestrial species) to accommodate highly vagile/wide ranging species such as YTBC at an individual burn scale. Based on my own observations fire creates an immediate boon for this species and they exploit the area straight away hitting the cones that the fire has opened up (I watched them do this at Hardy's Scrub a few months ago). I accept that this area will offer limited or no summer feeding and therefore breeding resources for this species for several years but following that I expect it will be higher in productivity than it is at the moment, ie as *H. carinata* enters into its reproductive prime. I believe the feeding requirements of YTBC are accommodated in the Ecological Fire Management Guidelines and as long as we ensure that we are maintaining a significant proportion of habitat >10 years post fire in a given landscape; which the guidelines dictate we will, then feeding resources for this species will be maintained and potentially enhanced. If there is no feeding habitat at this location this species has the ability to move to areas that do support such habitat. There are areas that are more productive than others and there will inevitably be temporary displacement of pairs of YTBC but I am more concerned about less mobile fauna species, weed management and fire sensitive flora in this particular case. If we know of old trees supporting hollows then we should identify these and protect them prior to and during burning as this important resource cannot regenerate or be replaced.

- The burn is next to SAWater to the south which has open paddocks of introduced grassy weeds which will pose a threat with the "edge effect"

I expect that most of the weedy perennial grasses (*Dactylis*, *Phalaris*, *Piptatheim* etc) will not gain much of a foothold in the lateritized soils of the ridgelines and upper slopes. I agree that the drainage lines and gullies in particular are vulnerable to invasion by weedy annual and perennial grasses but we are planning on excluding these areas as a result of our inspection and conversations.

- Given staffing levels currently engaged on post burn weed control, we doubt the capacity of DENR to adequately follow-up all the weed control work that will be necessary to ensure the area returns to it's previous high quality condition.

As discussed in my earlier email, the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Region Fire Program is comparatively well resourced to implement post-fire weed management priorities. We have two dedicated weed management officers and as of next financial year we are actually increasing our resourcing with a further two staff that will work alongside our existing WMOs. Having said that, I (we) have no intention of creating post-fire weed management issues at a scale which will use up significant amounts of resources as those staff are working on all post-burn priorities across the whole AMLR Region. I am interested in getting more information on the areas where your group

have done works and if possible excluding these areas from the proposed burn. I am keen to get you involved in the development of the post-fire weed management plan and I'm sure your group will keep us honest in delivering the priorities that we identify. We have a stated duty of care to not leave an area with worse weeds than before we burnt it. I question whether this is always possible as we typically don't focus on herbaceous and grassy weeds but that is more relevant to the grassy box/gum woodlands.

- Can you give us an assurance that there will be an adequate and long term commitment to this follow-up?

Discussed above

- What, apart from fulfilling a requirement to meet a burn area target, will this burn achieve?

I have had some discussion with Ian about this and he has provided the following: *The Scott Creek/ Mt Bold block is a large continuous area of native vegetation, and consequently fuel. There is the potential for a large fire to build in this area and the whole block will be burnt out. The strategy of having some low fuel areas within the block to provide suppression opportunities has some merit. To achieve this we have two choices, regular low fuel areas (B-Zone) or floating low fuel areas that are not repeated (C-zone burning). There are advantages and disadvantages with either strategy. However we feel that fire spread across the landscape block on more random inter-fire periods is preferable to B-zones where the same patch of scrub may be burnt every 7-10 years. The c-zone burning strategy allows us, in consultation with the friends to maximise the fuel reduction strategy imposed on us and attempt to get the best biodiversity outcomes. It gives us some choice. We will not be allowed to have a large block of vegetation (fuel) without a level of fuel reduction within it. This is really just a discussion about where and how we manage it. Also worth noting is the proximity of a high value assets (water and electricity) .*

As discussed above, I do think that the long unburnt areas of heathy woodland/forest and heath will respond well to fire based on our observations of similar habitat elsewhere.

Much food for thought in the above!

Bird Banding:

Since our last report, we have not been able to hold a session, due to inclement weather. After all, it IS winter, but there were a day or so on our scheduled weekends, where we might have been able to operate. It is something we have to play by ear.

It is Annual Reporting Time to ABBBS in Canberra. Our group handled 405 birds in the 2011-2012 year. More details when the report is finished.

The most important development, however, is that we were successful in obtaining a grant of \$4500 from the Norman Wettenhall Trust to finance the detailed statistical study of our 18 years of banding data in the Park. The work is being done by Elizabeth Campbell, who, with husband Ewan and wee bairn Hamish, spent a couple of years with us, before returning to Scotland, where Ewan is doing important research on the Veroa mite, a parasite of honey bees. Liz is an experienced biological statistician, and the internet means we can forward data very easily. We hope this work will lead to some serious publication.



John & vanquished enemy (Boneseed) In case anyone thought we'd done all the big ones

Officebearers:

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

President: Tom Hands 8388 2150, 68 Mahar Road., Cherry Gardens,
5157
Email: almanda11@bigpond.com

Secretary: Don Reid 8388 2123, 224 Mt. Bold Road,
Bradbury, 5153
Email: dre00249@bigpond.net.au

Treasurer: Donella Peters 83395639, 10 Boomerang Cres, Aldgate, 5154
Email: dld@internode.on.net

Saturday Working Bee Coordinator:

Tom Hands 8388 2150, 68 Mahar Road., Cherry Gardens, 5157
 Email: almanda11@bigpond.com

Tuesday/Sunday Working Bees Coordinator:

John Butler 8278 2773 5 Trevelyan Court, Coromandel
 Valley, 5051
 Email: jhbutler@chariot.net.au:

Friends Website: <http://friendsofscottcreek.org>

Programme July-November 2012
All working bees meet at 9.00am at G18 (now Gate 16)

July	8	Sunday Working Bee	Boneseed & gorse, S. of Bandicoot G3-backpack
	12	Business Meeting	Thompson's - 7.30
	14	Bird Banding	Gate 9, 7.30 am.
	15	Bird Banding	Gate9, 7.30 am.
	26	Thursday Social Outing	Meet at Museum coffee shop 10:30am – Waterhouse Exhibition.
	28	Saturday Working Bee	G23 Panhandle tributaries, Boneseed/feral Billardiera -backpack
August	7	Tuesday Working Bee	G5, Ac longifolia, erica-top of Bronzewing Tr
	12	Sunday Working Bee	Boneseed, Helipad Hill, enter at Gate 3
	18	Bird Banding	Gate 4, 7.00 am.
	19	Bird Banding	Gate 4, 7.00am.
	25	Saturday Working Bee	G11- Erica- Fox Bog- backpack
	26	Banrock Station	Meet in Restaurant 11-12 for lunch before a wetland walk
September	4	Tuesday Working Bee	TBA
	9	Sunday Working Bee	TBA
	13	Business Meeting	TBA
	16	Spring Walk	Meet 9.30 at Gate 3. Morning tea on walk – lunch back at Gate 3, approx 1pm
	22	Saturday Working Bee	TBA
	29	Bird Banding	Mackereth Creek, 7.00 am
	30	Bird banding	Mackereth Creek, 7.00am
October	2	Tuesday Working Bee	TBA
	5/6/7	Friends Forum	Naracoorte
	14	Sunday Working Bee	TBA

	20/21	Bird Banding	Gate 7, 7.00am.
	27	Saturday Working Bee	TBA
November	6	Tuesday Working Bee	TBA
	9	Note- FRIDAY AGM Change of venue	7:30 PM Cherry Gardens CFS Station Guest Speaker – Bev Langley-Minton Farm
	11	Sunday Working Bee	TBA
	24	Saturday Working Bee	TBA

**SEPTEMBER 8TH& 9TH –OPEN GARDEN at JOHN WAMSLEY’S RESIDENCE
WE WILL BE HAVING A STALL TO PROMOTE THE GROUP AND SELL
SOME BIRD BROCHURES AS WELL AS THE VIRTUES OF OUR BEAUTIFUL
PARK.**

VOLUNTEERS WILL BE MOST WELCOME

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