

Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 152, October - December, 2013

President's Words:

As we enter into another season of prescribed/asset protection/biodiversity enhancing/removing burns, a report in the latest Australian Birdlife (ex Wingspan) magazine is just one of a growing number of reports that question the wisdom, timing and impact of these burns. The article focuses on the burn in Cox Scrub earlier this year when the planned 40Ha burn eventually destroyed around 350Ha of the park. Given the Park is 544Ha and home to the Endangered Southern Emu-wren and Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, losing around 65% of available habitat could have dire consequences for these species. Cox Scrub is literally an island surrounded by a cleared and highly modified landscape. There is nowhere these birds can go when their habitat is destroyed. They are weak flyers and would be very vulnerable when trying to cross open ground, especially since the decision to cease fox baiting has been implemented on the grounds of not enough evidence to show effectiveness (read cost). It would seem the biodiversity assets of many of our parks are low on the priority list in the scramble to justify these burns.

If biodiversity and long term viability of parks were of major concern, why is an area of 10% the target to be burnt every year? These burns will result in a more stratified and uniform bushland where species diversity will decline. Smaller, targeted burns at the right time will maintain and restore ecosystems; burning in early spring is a recipe for killing nesting birds and many herbs and orchids. The knowledge is there but the will to do the right thing by the natural world seems lacking. I would imagine most of the Rangers and other staff involved did not join the Department to become firefighters for several months of every year either.

Australian Birdlife also had some very worrying news on the threatened bird front especially the Orange-bellied Parrot. There are some 250 bird species listed with about \$3million being spent annually on all of them. According to AB this is "less than 1% of the *weekly* defence budget for the nation". If this amount were to be tripled then the predicted extinctions over the next 80 years could be reduced to almost zero. In January this year 20 Orange-bellied Parrots returned to SW Tasmania to breed. It doesn't get much more dire than that. A recent book by Jane Goodall "Hope for Animals and Their World" is an excellent book for lifting the optimism level of anyone who is despairing of what we humans continue to do to our natural world. There are many stories of species brought back from the edge through, quite often, incredible efforts of one or two or a small group, of totally committed individuals.

The same can be said for many Friends Groups who continue to transform their parks and reserves. This is why the allocation of resources and the emphasis on promoting high impact recreational pursuits such as mountain biking, horse riding and 4 wheel

driving, at the expense of remnant native vegetation, is a myopic vision that does a great disservice to the natural world and to us. As there is a need to present this shabby policy as something it isn't, the office for disinformation has come up with "bushwalking on wheels". The CEO seems to have gone from stirring the Possum to nuancing the Numbat. Obviously butchering the English language in an attempt to dilute or change public perceptions has innumerable historical precedents. Insulting intelligence aside, euphemisms would have been unnecessary had these activities been legitimate ones for our parks. Can we look forward to mountain biking in jodhpurs or bushdriving in halters? Just another symptom of corporatisation where a spade is not a spade but a manually-operated-soil-inversion- unit.

The ranks of our working bees have been increased lately with two (youngish!) new members. Glen and Sarah know a good park when they see one. They may also have thought that after 23 years we would have nearly finished. We have been re-visiting many old haunts and our efforts are really paying off; you just have to get used to the sensation of not finding boneseed and feeling somewhat less productive.

The Group's trip to the Museum for the Nature Photographic Exhibition was very well attended and it was good to catch up with so many in a non-work related environment, also nice to have Jen, Will and Felix join us. Below is a photo by Peter Charles of one of our Nationally and State Endangered orchids growing in one of our sites after a burn (not all are bad). If you know what it is, you were there, if you don't you will have to wait till next year and make sure you come along. I hope you can make it to the AGM and find out all about our lovely native bees.



Bird Banding Notes

We had the usual problems with the winter weather. In fact, July was a complete washout, as was most of August, and banding didn't get going until the end of that month..

Details of our banding sessions are as follows.

31/8-1/9	Gate 11 site	14 captures including 2 recaptures	
14/9	Gate 9 site	27	5
5/10-6/10	Gate 19 site	13	2
19/10-20/10	Gate 4 site	27	12

Recaptures include a 4+ Superb Fairy Wren at Gate 11, a 3+ Striated Thornbill at Gate 9 and a 4+ Striated Thornbill at Gate 19.

Then, Gate 4 provided a real retrap bonanza. Of 27 birds caught there, 12 were retraps, a very high recapture rate. The ages were also exceptional, as follows:

Whitebrowed Scrubwren	2 x 8+
Brown Thornbill	1 x 4+
Striated Thornbill	1x 6+
Golden Whistler	1 at 8+ and 1 at 6+. Additionally, the 8+ bird had been first banded at the Gate 3 Crossroads and had then turned up two years ago at the present location. Her move was about 1.5 km as the Whistler flies.

Annual General Meeting:

This is being held at the Cherry Gardens CFS on the 14th. November. Besides the election of officers, we can promise you a fascinating talk on our native bees, and how to help them survive the present pressures on their environment.

See you at 7.30 pm.

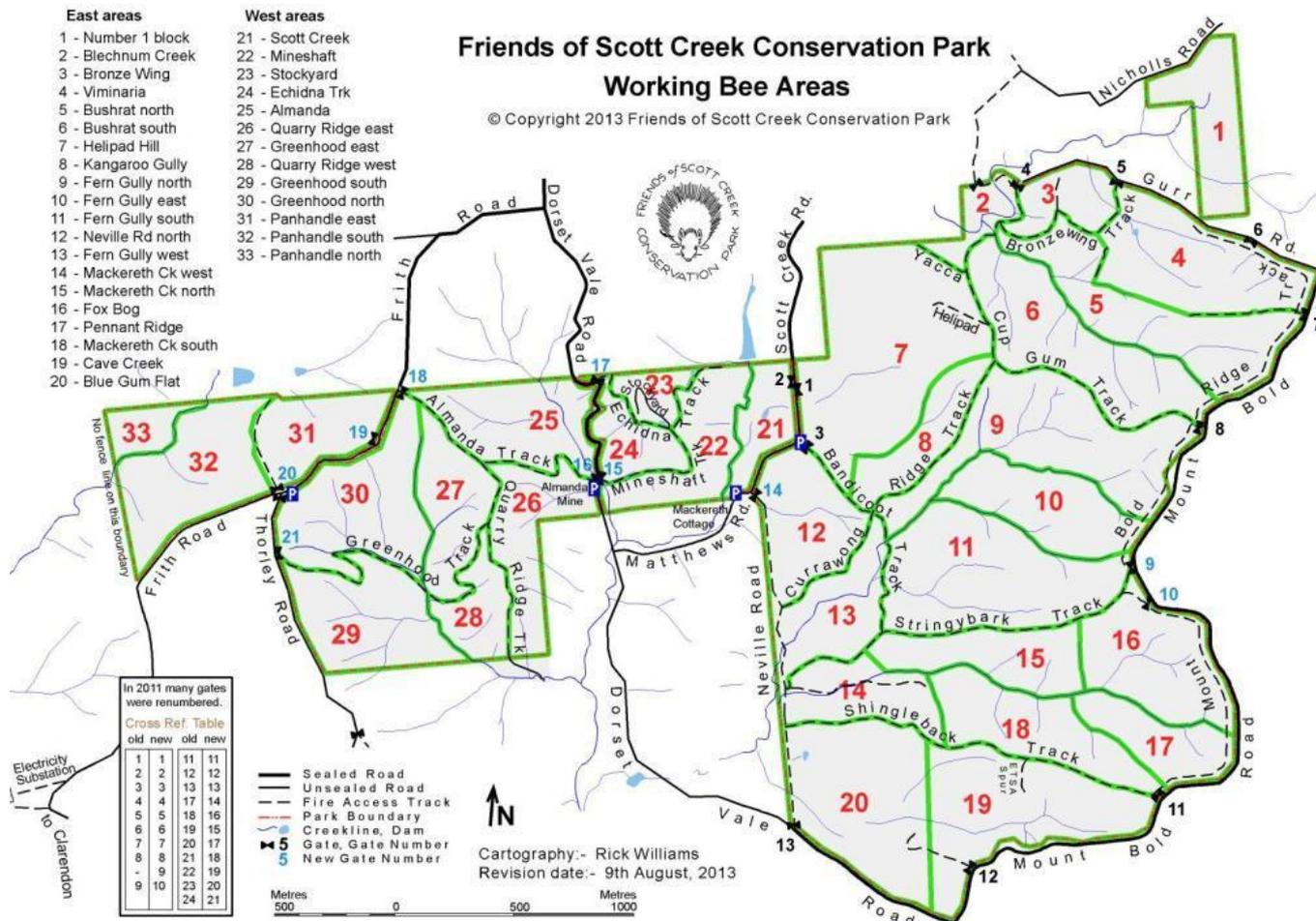
Programme October 2013– January 2014

All working bees meet at 9.00am at Gate 16-Almunda Car Park

November	5	Tuesday W Bee	Upper Fern Gully- Boneseed/erica-(Area 9/10) Backpack
	10	Sunday W Bee	Mid Mackereth Creek-Boneseed- (Area 18)-Backpack
Thursday	14	AGM 7:30pm Cherry Gardens CFS	Katja Hogendoorn ; Native bees and what they do.
	16/17	Bird banding	Mackereth Creek, 6.00 am. Enter via Gate 13
	23	Saturday WBee	Panhandle-broom/Billardiera- Enter G20 Frith Rd –(Area 32/33)
December	3	Tuesday WBee	Broom & Erica, Viminaria Ck, G5

	8	Sunday WBee	Broom & bulbs, Upper Bushrat Ck, G7 Area 5
	14/15	Bird banding	Scott Creek, 6 am. Area 21
	20	Christmas BBQ	Thompson's from 6pm
	28	Saturday WBee	Erica & Broom-Nth Vim Ck-Area 4
January	4/5	Bird banding	Gate 9 site, 6.00 am. Enter at G9
	7	Tuesday WBee	Bulbs & Erica-G7-Area 5&6
	9	Business Meeting	Reid's - 7:30pm
	12	Sunday WBee	Erica -Sth Derwentia Gully -Area 29
NB Wed	15	Social Committee	The Artisan - Blackwood
	18/19	Bird banding	Gate 7 site, 6.00am.
	25	Saturday WBee	Broom, Agapanthus-G8-Area 9- near Mt Bold Track

As many of the WB's are a reasonable walk from cars it is always a good idea to bring a small back pack –or find a willing slave to carry it for you, there is usually one around.



Officebearers:

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

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Saturday Working Bee Coordinator:

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**AND FINALLY,
A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW
YEAR TO ALL IN
THE FRIENDS OF PARKS!!!**