

Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 154
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President's Words:

I would like to thank everyone who sent cards and messages of support during my recent travails. Your thoughts and sentiments were always a welcome read – and reading was something I had a lot of time for. Your responses also re-enforced my conviction that it is this loyal support base that has enabled us to achieve so much in the past 23 years. So a very sincere thanks for all your past and present support.

Fortunately, and very importantly, the Working Bees have continued unabated and it was very pleasing to find out that a very extensive patch of Stinkweed, (*Ditrichia graveolans*) has virtually been eradicated by hand pulling from the crossing on Viminaria Creek. So it is now a “monitor closely” rather than a “to do” on the ever lengthening “to do” list.

Speaking of ferals, Bob Bates came across an interesting one on the side of Neville Rd recently that we finally determined was *Scilla hyacinthoides*, a lily which had obviously been dumped many years ago. As some of the flower spikes were a metre tall with bright blue flowers it begged the question, why hadn't anyone noticed it before? They were only a couple of metres off the track and a large clump at that. In this particular instance the non native met with a happier end than we originally intended as John Wamsley contacted the Lilium Society for confirmation of ID and they expressed a desire to have them as, apparently, they are not very common. John and I duly dug them up and he duly delivered them. They did assure us the bulbs would be going to good homes and would not be allowed to stray.

Below is an extract of our Submission to DEWNR re Draft 2014 Strategic Assessment of DEWNR Fire Management, which has been included, not only to pad out my words, but to give you a sense of how important this issue is and will continue to be. Our being able to contribute, even in the face of a fairly entrenched political stance, may still at least give pause for thought. The red highlighted sentences are from the Fire Management Plan. Apart from the follow-up pest plant control, we also expressed our concern with the timing and size of burns. If anyone wants to see the full submission just email me.

3. FOLLOW-UP PEST PLANT CONTROL

2.2.1 Prescribed Burning,

To manage for ecological outcomes (e.g. regeneration of species, maintain specific habitat for fauna, assist to control pest species)”

3.2.4 Weeds

*Weed invasion may also increase where prescribed burning occurs at sites where the soil contains high densities of weed seed of species readily stimulated by burning, such as Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) and Montpellier Broom (*Genista monspessulana*).*

4.4.3 Weed management *Fire can be an effective tool in weed management, particularly against woody weed species.*

This essential program has been one of our major concerns since the inception of prescribed burning began. We have witnessed the regeneration and encroachment of weeds into the

burn sites, not just of Scott Ck Con Park but many others, for many years. The primary reason being, the pest plant follow-up program is seriously under-resourced. If DEWNR is concerned as to the biodiversity outcomes of the burns then that concern needs to be reflected in their response to this ever present threat. The Friends recognize the essential need for constant, vigilant follow-up. We understand that restoration is forever.

Newly burnt areas can quickly become monocultures of introduced species unless an early intervention program is front and centre of the overall burn plan. Burns can exacerbate weed spread where a few scattered pest species, will rapidly become dense infestations arising from the substantial seed bank. As the majority of many seed banks will germinate post fire, there will always be a residual so follow-up needs to be early and annually for several years until the follow-up is easily managed by either Friends or contractors.

To imagine a burn site is “finished” after a two or three year timeline is at best ignorant, at worst a dereliction of a responsibility vested in DEWNR to protect and care for these habitats.

It is our observation that the rhetoric is not matched by the on- ground reality as to post-burn weed control and the crucial importance weed control plays in habitat recovery. Pest plant control has a direct bearing on MNES and has to be kept in the “High Priority, long term commitment to control measures” category.

More staff must be employed and dedicated to follow-up weeding alone.

1.2.4 *Significant resources are invested in assessing weed potential and post-burn weed management following burning, particularly in the Mount Lofty Ranges where high weed levels exist in native vegetation.*

What exactly does **significant** mean in this case? i.e. what percentage of the fire management budget is spent on this activity?

Given the rapidly expanding areas in need of follow-up, to reflect this expansion, a commensurate increase in on-ground work by staff properly trained in pest plant control and most importantly have good native plant recognition skills as newly burnt areas can often contain rare species that may have lain long dormant. Presently the program can be interrupted by re-deployment of the already skeleton pest plant control staff, to fire control or other duties.

Early Intervention

It is false economy and irresponsible policy to leave newly burnt areas for any more than a year post burn. The first three years are crucial to eradicate/control the majority of any infestation that may occur.

The FOSCCP had first-hand experience of this with a burn in Kangaroo Gully. The preliminary vegetation survey failed to pick up the presence of *Billardiera (Sollya heterophylla)* on the site. It was not until several years later when the Friends went in to do follow-up, was this very invasive species discovered. By this time the regrowth vegetation was extremely dense and difficult to work in systematically. Many long mature plants had shed seeds and newly emerging plants were often found. We spent the equivalent of 8 working days attempting to eradicate this species but we will have to return for many years to achieve this goal. The system failed on two levels here, firstly the species was missed in the initial survey and secondly early and timely follow-up would have prevented this time wasting and difficult catch-up work. Boneseed follow-up was also inadequate in this area. We have also experienced similar scenarios where lack of adequate resources (staff) has led to late

intervention and broom, boneseed, erica and acacia longifolia have all had time to flower and set seed.

As it easy to anticipate the rapid increase in areas in need of pest plant control and if DEWNR is serious in protecting and preserving *"its precious biodiversity"* (quote from People and Parks Strategy), then the above measures must be must be adhered to. The long term benefit of early intervention far outweighs the cost both in environmental impact mitigation and biodiversity gains.

It is also worth noting that **we consider all of the negative outcomes enumerated above, directly contradict the targets and aspirations of SA Gov't & DEWNR'S own Park Management Plans, Vegetation Management Plans and the No Species Loss Strategy.**

Areas regenerating post-burn must be seen as opportunities to

- Increase the number of known species
- Find rare and threatened species that lay dormant for long periods
- Control and/or eradicate pest plant species before they flower or reproduce
- Monitor recovery rate and species gains/losses
- Possibly programme two follow-ups in the first year to maximize control measures

Pest plant control needs to be regarded as integral to all burn programmes. One of the measures of a successful burn must be the regeneration of native species free from non-native species competition. The greatest threats to the biodiversity of our precious Parks and Reserve systems, particularly in the Mount Lofty Ranges, is not a lack of burn offs, but the ever increasing spread of weed species and lack of adequate resources to combat them.

Our observations and experience lead us to believe the cumulative effect of continuing burns combined with inadequate long-term pest plant control will have a negative effect on the States biodiversity and, in some instances, increase fuel loads.

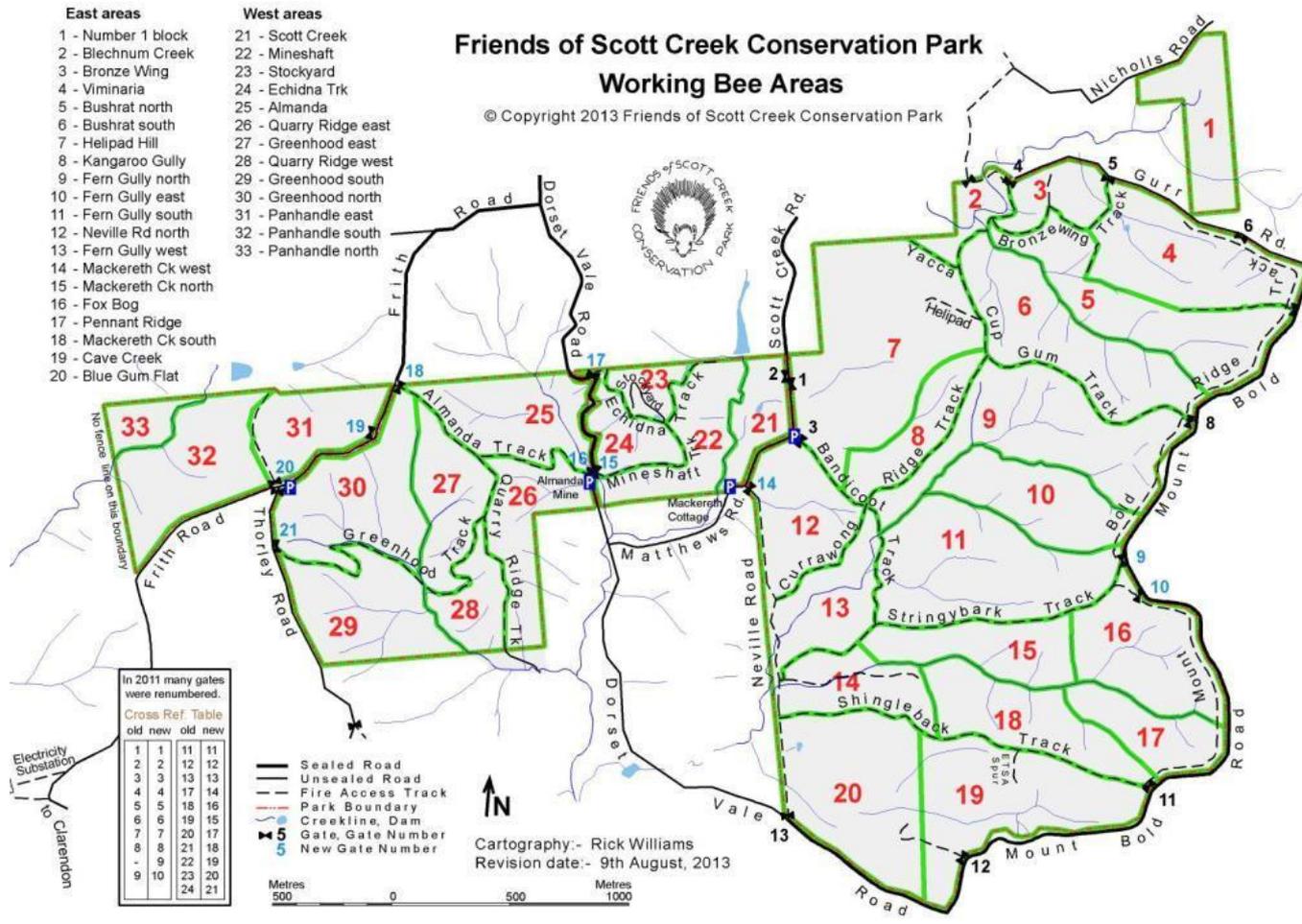
Our concern too that there is evidence of a demoralizing and demotivating effect on the (over) committed and active Friends' members when they are left to try and regain control of such additional weed infestations.

Finally we make the observation that mounting scientific evidence as to the effectiveness of prescribed burning casts doubt on many of the premises used to justify this activity. Rather the research emphasizes that proper pre-fire season precautionary actions taken by residents is the best defense against property destruction. Does DEWNR accept the veracity of this science?

Thank you for this opportunity to respond and comment on this very important document.

	11	Sunday W Bee, Area 9	Gate 8, Blackwater Dam, Boneseed/erica
	14	Social Committee	Organic Market-Stirling 12pm
	24	Saturday W Bee, Area 16	Fox Bog, SW Gate10, Boneseed, pink erica
	31	Bird banding	Gate 9, 7.30 am.
June	1	Bird banding	Gate 9, 7.30am.
	3	Tuesday WBee, Area 16	W of Gate 10, Erica
	8	Sunday W Bee, Area 16	NW Gate 9, Boneseed
	14/15	Bird Banding	Gate 11, 7.30 am.
	18	Social Committee	Organic Market Stirling 12pm
	28	Saturday W Bee, Area 17	NW Gate 11, Boneseed, Erica, Broom
July	1	Tuesday W Bee, Area 17/18	E of Shingleback Track, Broom, Boneseed
	5/6	Bird Banding	Gate 7
	13	Sunday W Bee, Area 19 & afterward Sausage Sizzle/Business Meeting in Park	SW of Gate 12, Olives, Af daisy, briar
	19/20	B Banding	Gate 3 Crossroads, 7.30 am.
	26	Saturday W Bee, Area 25	NW Gate16, Briar, erica, gorse
August	5	Tuesday W Bee, Area 32	NW Gate 20, Broom, Af daisy
	10	Sunday W Bee, Area 12/13	S Gate14, Watsonia, Boneseed
	16/17	Bird Banding	Gate 4, 7.30 am.
	23	Saturday W Bee Twisted Chimney, Area 14	G 13 Periwinkle, Arum lily, Fleabane
	24	Sunday, Waterhouse Exhibition	Meet at Museum café 10.30
	30/31	Bird Banding	Gate 9, 7.30 am.

Nest Box Workshop re-scheduled for September- date TBA next Bandicoot Tails



. Officebearers:

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

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