



Bandicoot Tails

**Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek
Conservation Park**

No. 161

January-February, 2016

The President's Words:

Nature Heals.

I headed up to our Swan Reach block on the Sunday following Tom's memorial service. I went for a wander around as I usually do, birding and looking at all sorts of interesting plants and other wildlife, and suddenly all seemed good in the world again.

It was a great morning with some of the less frequently encountered birds making their presence known (like the Restless Flycatcher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Woodswallows, Purple-crowned Lorikeet and possibly Scarlet-chested Parrot, which needs confirmation but would be a new one for the list).

I had the real treat of spending about an hour and a half watching 10 Regent Parrots feeding on flowers of *Eucalyptus socialis* ssp. *socialis* (Beaked Red Mallee) and seed of *Dodonaea viscosa* ssp. *angustissima* (Narrow-leaf Hop-bush). It was fascinating watching them take the Hop-bush capsule in their beak and manipulate the seeds out of them, before "spitting out" the empty capsule. I have never seen their feeding activity up close like this before so it was a real bonus.

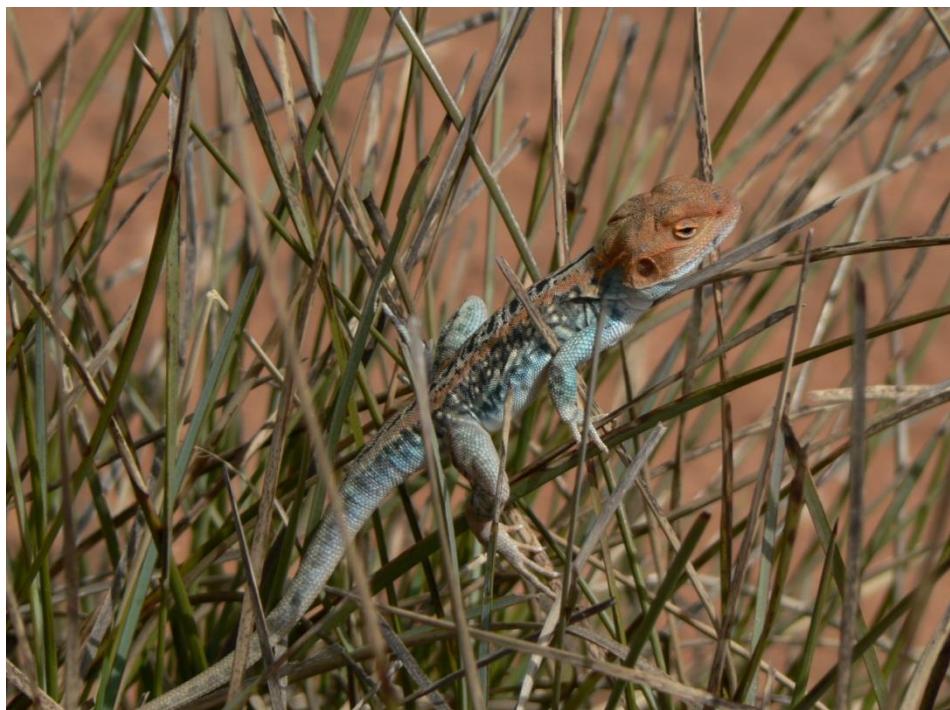
While watching the Regent Parrots, I also saw a pair of Painted Dragons racing around a nearby saltbush. The female seemed to get just far enough away from the male to be out of sight and then stopped dead in her tracks. The male couldn't find her and climbed up into the saltbush a little way to get a better view of the surroundings. After a while they raced off again and the female must have done the same thing, because the male ended up climbing into a Lomandra this time.

All in all it was a really good day and we should never underestimate the healing powers of nature.

Peter Watton



Above: Regent Parrot feeding on Narrow-leaf Hop-bush, Peter's block



Above: Painted Dragon perched in Lomandra, Peter's block

Vale Tom Hands

Scott Creek Reserve was proclaimed a Conservation Park in 1985, with the Friends Of Scott Creek Conservation Park (FOSCCP) formed five years later. At that time, Tom Hands accepted the responsibility of leading this new group of keen but inexperienced volunteers in the restoration of the Park under the guidance of Enid Robertson. Tom held the position for the next 25 years, when ill-health finally forced him to stand down at their annual general meeting in November 2015.

From a basic knowledge of his local environment, Tom spent hours in the Park, learning about all aspects of its flora, fauna and habitats, so much so that he became the acknowledged expert in these matters. He has been much sought after over the years because of this knowledge, which he very generously shared along with the passion with which he acquired it.

Under Tom's leadership, the FOSCCP went about restoring the Park and, in the process, became leaders in this field. As they continued to learn new skills and techniques, they became innovators in bush regeneration themselves. Tom was instrumental in helping develop the best practise Erica control technique, manually breaking them off below the lignotuber, which is now used by many bush regeneration contractors. Experience showed the group what worked and what did not. In particular, the data collection, mapping and their record keeping ensured regular follow up of weed control was always undertaken, while new and emerging weed issues were located and dealt with before they became established.

In addition to regular working bees, Tom would spend many hours roaming the Park, sometimes alone and at other times with another volunteer. He would continue to treat weeds, while also looking for rare and threatened species that needed their location recorded and protected. The FOSCCP are responsible for adding numerous records to the Park's dataset, with almost 1000 individual plant species having been located and recorded within the Park.

Tom's interest was in all things natural and he also became adept in the identification of wildlife, from the very smallest invertebrates to reptiles, mammals and birds. He loved bird watching and became particularly skilled at their identification, becoming a qualified A Class bander to support the coordinator of bird banding within the Park. Over the years, Tom became accomplished at project development and management, using it to seek additional funding to support contractor work in the Park for specific tasks that are better suited to professional bush regeneration contractors than volunteers. This enabled a much greater scope of work to be undertaken than would have been possible with volunteers and park staff alone.

In addition to his commitment and dedication to the protection and restoration of Scott Creek C.P., he was an active volunteer and advocate on broader environment and conservation issues. In his own time, Tom prepared many submissions to government planning processes and programmes and was always a source of good advice, routinely giving his time to assist park rangers, regional ecologists, private landholders and others. He gave guided walks and made many presentations to other Friends and community groups on habitat restoration, weed management and native species conservation. Tom helped initiate an annual tree-planting programme with students from the Scott Creek Primary School which continues to this present day.

Tom gained the respect of everyone he met. He was a leader and mentor to the FOSCCP for 25 years, but also to Department of Environment staff and the general community who had the pleasure of meeting him. Tom inspired his group and other members of the community to get involved in conservation efforts in the Scott Creek CP and his knowledge and approachability have meant that many a Department of Environment executive knew and respected him. He extended the same hospitality to take visitors through the Park on tours of rehabilitated area and had a penchant for raising concerns with respect and courtesy. Tom's influence was felt across the much broader environment and conservation community and we are all indebted to him for his passion and contribution to protecting our South Australian environment.

During the past couple of years, Tom has pushed through the pain of medical treatment undeterred, until this finally overcame him and he passed away on the 27th November 2015, just two weeks after handing over the reins as President of the FOSCCP at their AGM. He will be sadly missed.

Peter Watton.

(This the transcript of an article that Peter wrote for the Cherry Gardens Chatter in December 2015)

Birdbanding Notes:

There are no notes for this newsletter, due to our November weekend already reported in ‘Tails #160’ and extreme weather cancelling our December weekend. However, we have had a good start to the New Year, with our first foray, to our Scott Creek site, netting 46 birds. The details will be reported in “Tails #162”. I can say, however, that we recaptured a male White-browed Scrub-wren, who was originally banded at Gate 4 in September and turned up at Scott Creek, two and a half months later, having travelled 1.5 km. over Currawong Ridge Track to reach Scott Creek. It probably went much further, but we have no means of telling. This is a long jump for a small bird which is usually very territorial.

At the Australian Ornithological Conference, held at Flinders University in mid-November, several of our student banders, who work under Sonia Kleindorfer, were quite noticeable acting as ushers and information providers, as well as several presenting papers on their research activities.

Laratinga Visit:

We usually have a couple of visits to the Laratinga Wetlands at Mt. Barker each year, one in summer and one in spring. A tentative date for this year’s summer visit is the 28th February, **BUT**, the water levels are very low and there may not be much to see. There will be more advice closer to the date.

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Weather Extremes:

Several Friends groups have a policy of cancelling working bees, etc. automatically when the forecast temperature is above a certain figure. This does save a lot of last-minute emailing and so on. We have decided to try this and have decided to set a figure of **38°C** forecast for Adelaide as an automatic trigger to cancel any operations we might have scheduled.

It may be a bit cooler in the Hills, but there is always the uncertainty as to how quickly it might heat up, whether the weather might affect weeding activities and if a fire ban might be proclaimed. Remember, if there is a fire ban declared in the Mount Lofty Ranges fire ban district, no activities will take place in the Park regardless of the forecast temperature.

So, 38°C, sleep in!!

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Social Matters:

The weather has disrupted a number of our activities this summer, including our regular Christmas get-together. To make up for this, we have organised a pavilion at Belair for Friday, 29th January, from 5.30-6 pm., to replace this lost opportunity for conversation and fellowship (and no weeding!).

Site: Government Farm Picnic Ground No. 1, Belair National Park.

**It's just before Old Government House and State Flora Nursery -
reached by heading east in from the main gate towards the Nursery (map via link below)**

As with our Christmas arrangements, it's BYO chairs, drinks and BBQ meat (and bread) - and we each bring a salad and a dessert/fruit/cake to share with each other.

We are able to stay until at least sundown.

<file:///C:/Users/Computer/Downloads/belair-national-park-map.pdf>

Contributions to ‘Bandicoot Tails’

Is there a secret author out there who has a story to tell, which would interest our members! Your editor is on the lookout for material to use to give our regulars a rest. Even a few lines about a happening in nature, recent trip or excursion would be very acceptable and much appreciated.

**NOTE: WORKING BEES CANCELLED IF FORECAST TEMPERATURE
FOR ADELAIDE IS 38°C OR ABOVE OR IF FIRE BAN
ANNOUNCED FOR MOUNT LOFTY RANGES**

PROGRAMME January-March, 2016

January	23	Saturday Working bee	Blackberry, Fern Gully, Area 9, Gate 3 & Boneseed, Blackwater Ck., Area 10, Gate 9
	29	SOCIAL FUNCTION	BELAIR NATIONAL PARK – SEE NOTICE ABOVE 5.30 – 6 pm.
February	2	Tuesday Working Bee	Erica, Bushrat Ck., Area 5, Gate 5
	6,7	Bird banding	Gate 9, 6.30 am.
	11	Business Meeting	TBA 7.30 pm.
	14	Sunday Working Bee	Broom near Blackwater Dam, Area 9, Gate 8
	20,21	Bird banding	Gate 3 crossroads, 7 am.
	27	Saturday Working Bee	Erica, near Gate 7, Area 5, Gate 7
	28	Laratinga visit, Mt. Barker	Ornithological outing, provisional only, 8 am. (depends on water levels in ponds)
March	1	Tuesday Working Bee	Erica, above Almanda Swamp, Area 25, Gate 16
	5,6	Bird banding	Gate 7, 7 am.
	13	Sunday Working Bee	Blackberry near Blackwater Dam, Area 9, Gate 8
	19,20	Bird banding	Mackereth Creek, Gate 13, 7 am.
	26	Saturday Working Bee	Broom, top of Panhandle, Area 32, Gate 20

There may be alterations to the weeding programme close to the day, so the meeting at the Almanda Mine enables everyone to be brought up-to-date on the morning in question. 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.

MEET AT GATE 16, ALMANDA CAR PARK, 9.00AM

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

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