



Bandicoot Tails

Newsletter of the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

No. 192

September—November 2023

Website: www.friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofscottcreekcp

Welcome to your spring edition of *Bandicoot Tails*.

During spring, our scheduled bushcare activities will continue to start at 9.00am, meeting at the nearest gate for the location of the activity. An email will be sent to bushcarers advising the location in advance. Any new members can contact the leader on info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au to receive the emails.

Unless otherwise indicated, all articles and photos by Peter Watton. Please send any contributions for the summer edition to info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au by mid-November.

The President's words:

Whoever coined the phrase, "a walk in the park" to describe something being easy clearly has not walked up Mineshaft Track in the last two weeks. My boots have only just now started to dry out in the end-of-winter sunshine. I even thought of proposing that we change the name to 'Mineshaft Creek'. During bird-banding we had several visitors come past who could justifiably be described as being 'excited' to be walking in the Park. Even while there was still a misty rain falling.

This next paragraph is addressed to our FoSCCP volunteers.

Allow yourself to stop working on whatever it is that you do in the Park; make it anything from half an hour to half a day, and just be there! At the 40th anniversary event for Friends of Parks there was an option to try bush bathing. But keep your shirt on. This is about meeting and greeting the plants and animals, breathing the fresh air, feeling the wind and wondering at the inter-connectivity of the environment. Sit in a place you often go to and find something new. For some inspiration take some time in the bush with Jason Tyndall's poetry and images in the NaturePlay SA book *Where birds sing and wildflowers dance*. (See an example further down in this newsletter.)

Perhaps you could just turn over a new leaf – there are billions of them in the Park. Be aware that across the northern hemisphere many people have experienced a horror season of fire and heat. We don't know what our Summer will bring, so take some time to implant the wonder of this Spring in the Park.

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A good place to start may be at Tom's Outlook or at the new 'Don's Seat' as below, located at the corner of Stringybark, Twisted Chimney and Neville Road Tracks.

Jim Spiker

President Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park.

*Late breaking news—our total volunteer hours for 2022-2023 have just been added up to **4,095**, which is the equivalent of **\$190,908.90** at the Australian Bureau of Statistics rate of \$46.62 per hour. Great result again and thanks to everyone who contributed, plus a big thank you to Jenny for compiling them for us.*



Above: The new memorial seat installed to celebrate Don Reid's massive contribution to the Park, including establishing our 30+ year bird banding project.



Above: Tom's Outlook on Cup Gum Track, overlooking the Park and all the way down to the Willunga Hills.

Spring:

Another winter has passed. The fungi and early orchids have bloomed, seeded, and returned to dormancy laying the foundations for the next generation of life that will emerge next winter. As they always do, the yellow blooms of the Golden Wattles signalled spring's imminent arrival. Now the sun shines with intent. To breathe life in the landscape. To warm the soil. To help the Park sing with colour. *Jason Tyndall*

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Zanda funereal whitei*)

Known as 'Wilampa' in Kurna, flocks of YTBC have been seen regularly in the Park over winter as they prepare for breeding in Spring. Fortunately, the Park does have active breeding hollows – but, the landscape as a whole does not (which is why these birds are a Threatened species). Their other challenge is their scarcity of their natural food source – Banksias and Hakeas. They are a threatened species and often leave people in awe with the majestic nature. Females have a brighter cheek patch and their tale is more speckled than the male.



Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*)

An iconic Australian native with its big, beautiful nectar-rich flowers. There are quite a few patches through the Park. The flowers begin the bloom in spring and attract a cohort of wildlife from native bees and beetles to honeyeater and possums. The seeds also offer food to cockatoos (such as the Yellow-tailed Black) and parrots. Many banksias in the Park were affected by the fire. Some have died and will rely on regeneration of seed to rebuild their population but others resprouted and are responding well.



Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida*)

Butterflies can be seen most months throughout the year. But spring through to summer sees adult butterflies more prominent as they glide from flower to flower. Few other things can be as mindful and good for the soul than watching a butterfly on a spring day bathe its wings in the sunshine. The Meadow Argus is one of the more common butterflies especially around its host plants – fan flowers (Scaevolas) are one of those.



Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*)

A sedentary reptile that becomes more active in spring. Often seen perching in trees or on fence posts. Often camouflaged, especially when on trees which is quite impressive for almost 60cm lizard. In the cooler months dragons are dark in colour and in the warmer months they become lighter. The term bearded refers to their response when threatened – they puff up the skin under their jaw resembling a beard (the term 'pogona' is derived from the Greek word pogon meaning beard).



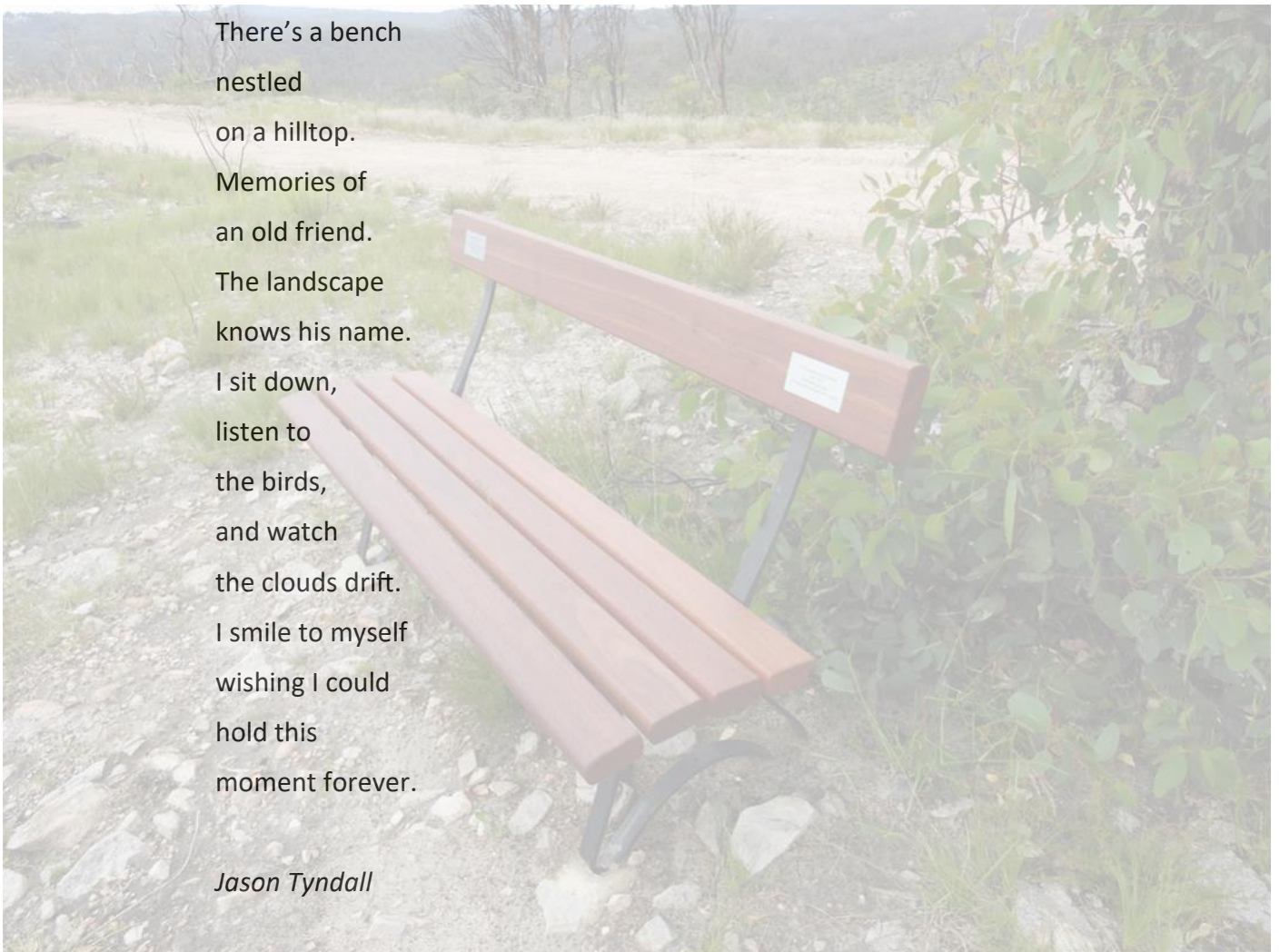
An ode to an old friend

I walked along
the familiar
Currawong
Ridge Track.
I could feel spring
on my skin.
I could smell
it in the air.
The wildflowers
have arrived.
A season of hope.
Of new beginnings.
I come here often.
I wander the
paths as
butterflies
greet me.



There's a bench
nestled
on a hilltop.
Memories of
an old friend.
The landscape
knows his name.
I sit down,
listen to
the birds,
and watch
the clouds drift.
I smile to myself
wishing I could
hold this
moment forever.

Jason Tyndall



Bushcare activities:

It is now well over two and a half years since the January 2021 fire burnt through 500 hectares of the eastern side of the park.

The general consensus was that the fire would result in the mass germination of the majority of the seed of fire responsive weeds that had fallen in the soil over the years.

Unfortunately, perhaps because of the uneven fire intensity, perhaps because of the last couple of mild and fairly wet summers we have had, this has not turned out to be the case.

We have been through and treated the priority weeds in many different areas, and obtained funding to get contractors to treat larger infestations as they came up. As we return to these areas, sometimes less than a year after our previous visit, we are finding that many more seeds of the same weed species have germinated, growing rapidly to flowering stage.

This is, again, the crucial phase of post-fire recovery of the park, trying to prevent these weeds from getting to the stage that they set seed and replenish the soil seedbank once again.

After a pretty wet winter, we look forward to things drying out a little, so that we can continue our follow-up of the many patches of priority weeds we have been dealing with, without getting soaked roaming through the dense native regrowth that holds the water in its foliage so well and for so long after rain.

Almanda Bush Gardening:

The Almanda Bush Gardening team has continued work along the north side of Scott Creek, next to Matthews Road, while also following up the previous weed removal along Almanda Creek.

More rare species have been planting along this section, adding to the ones planted last year along Scott Creek.

See more about the rare species planting after the bushcare activities report.

Bandi Bunch:

We are continuing to guard some of the regenerating natives that are vulnerable to trampling and/or grazing, prioritise dense diverse habitat in healthy soil, hand weed priority woody weeds (blackberry, broom), and cut and swab where hand-removal isn't possible (e.g. big, old crowns of blackberry too deep to dig out without damaging surrounding soil and vegetation).

Scheduled bushcare activities during winter:

6th June 2023—seven volunteers patrolled up Bushrat Creek from Cup Gum Track, following up previous post-fire efforts on Montpellier Broom, finding and treating many of these along with a few Boneseed, *Acacia longifolia*, South African Daisy, Fleabane and Spear Thistle, along with some scrambling Blackberry.

Below left: Betty removing Montpellier Broom in Bushrat Creek in June.



Below right: Blackberry can resprout when canes come in contact with the soil, this one in Bushrat Creek.





Above left: Glenn with a large Erica resprout in Fern Creek.



Above right: Working on Erica in Fern Creek in June.

11th June 2023—10 volunteers walked down Bandicoot Track to follow Fern Creek downstream to Neville Road Track, including roaming either side of the gully and finding many large scattered Boneseed, a couple of outlier large regrowth Erica and then are very big patch of Erica that took a considerable time to treat. There was also some Bridal Creeper, a small patch of tall Montpellier Broom, South African Daisy and Fleabane. Our previous visit here was in September 2021, and clearly much of the Erica was not resprouting at that time and escaped our notice. While it would be ideal to follow-up all our core areas annually, this shows the importance of at least revisiting them every two years, to reduce the opportunity for these priority weeds to flower and seed, topping up the soil seedbank once again.

24th June 2023—seven volunteers patrolled either side of Almanda Gully behind the Almanda Mine car park, finding it in generally good condition with scattered Boneseed, Broad-leaf Cotton-bush, Olive, Rose and South African Daisy treated. Of concern, however, is the amount of Bridal Creeper finding its way across the more open southern hillside under Native Cherry, while dense infestation occur on the northern hillside along with masses of Blackberry. The latter is a lower priority, being amongst disturbed and lower quality native vegetation—this is all part of the process of prioritising our work.

4th July 2023—nine volunteers were joined by rangers Brent, Courtney and Josh to check for weeds along the south side of Pennant Ridge, finding thousands of Montpellier Broom hidden amongst the Wattle regrowth in several discreet patches. There were only a handful of other weeds present.

9th July 2023—on a drizzly winter's morning six hardy volunteers turned out to follow-up previous work on Montpellier Broom either side of Bandicoot Track, up from gate 3. After morning tea we then walked up to the Crossroads to again follow-up previous work, this time both Montpellier and English Broom and a little Tree Lucerne.

Below left: Montpellier Broom treated on Pennant Ridge.



Below right: Jenny and Andrew along Almanda Gully.





Above: Montpellier Broom was one of the main targets worked on near gate 8 in August.

23rd July 2023—our Saturday bushcare activity was delayed a day due to inclement weather, then nine volunteers turned up to work on a large patch of English Broom near gate 6, also finding and treating some Montpellier Broom, *Acacia longifolia*, Erica, Sollya, South African Daisy, small Blackberry, Watsonia and other bulbs.

1st August 2023—nine volunteers started looking for weeds south-west of gate 8 on Mount Bold Road, not getting far before finding large numbers of Montpellier and English Broom, a few Boneseed, Tree Lucerne, South African Daisy and small Blackberry. Once more we were having to hunt for the weeds amongst very dense native regrowth, principally Wattles.

13th August 2023—12 volunteers continued the work started on 4th August, heading further south from Pennant Ridge, working on one very large and one smaller patch of Montpellier Broom, along with some English Broom, Tree Lucerne, Blackberry and Watsonia, then across to the south of Shingleback Track finding some *Acacia longifolia* and just a few other weeds. Pleasingly, the area further west on the south side of the track is in very good condition.

26th August 2023—nine volunteers returned to the gate 8 site we worked on earlier this month, to look for more woody weeds. We found a large area with hundreds of English Broom, from small 20-30cm plants up to 2-3m tall with many of them already flowering. Unfortunately there were too many for us to deal with in this session, so we will need yet another return visit in the coming weeks to keep working on these and other woody weeds nearby. There were only a small number of other weeds found, though some sprawling Blackberry and a patch of Watsonia will need a follow-up visit for spot spraying.

Below left: Flowering Montpellier Broom in August at gate 8, Mount Bold Ridge Track.



Below right: Rick and Mardi working on Montpellier Broom on the south side of Pennant Ridge in August.



Additional independent bushcare activities:

4th July 2023—after the regular bushcare activity, Peter returned to Almanda Gully and sprayed much of the Bridal Creeper on the southern side of the gully. This was seen as the priority here, with infestation of both bridal Creeper and Blackberry on the northern side a much longer term project that will likely require funded contractor assistance.

5th August 2023—Andrew and Mardi worked on English and Montpellier Broom and Tree Lucerne at the top of Number 1 Block.

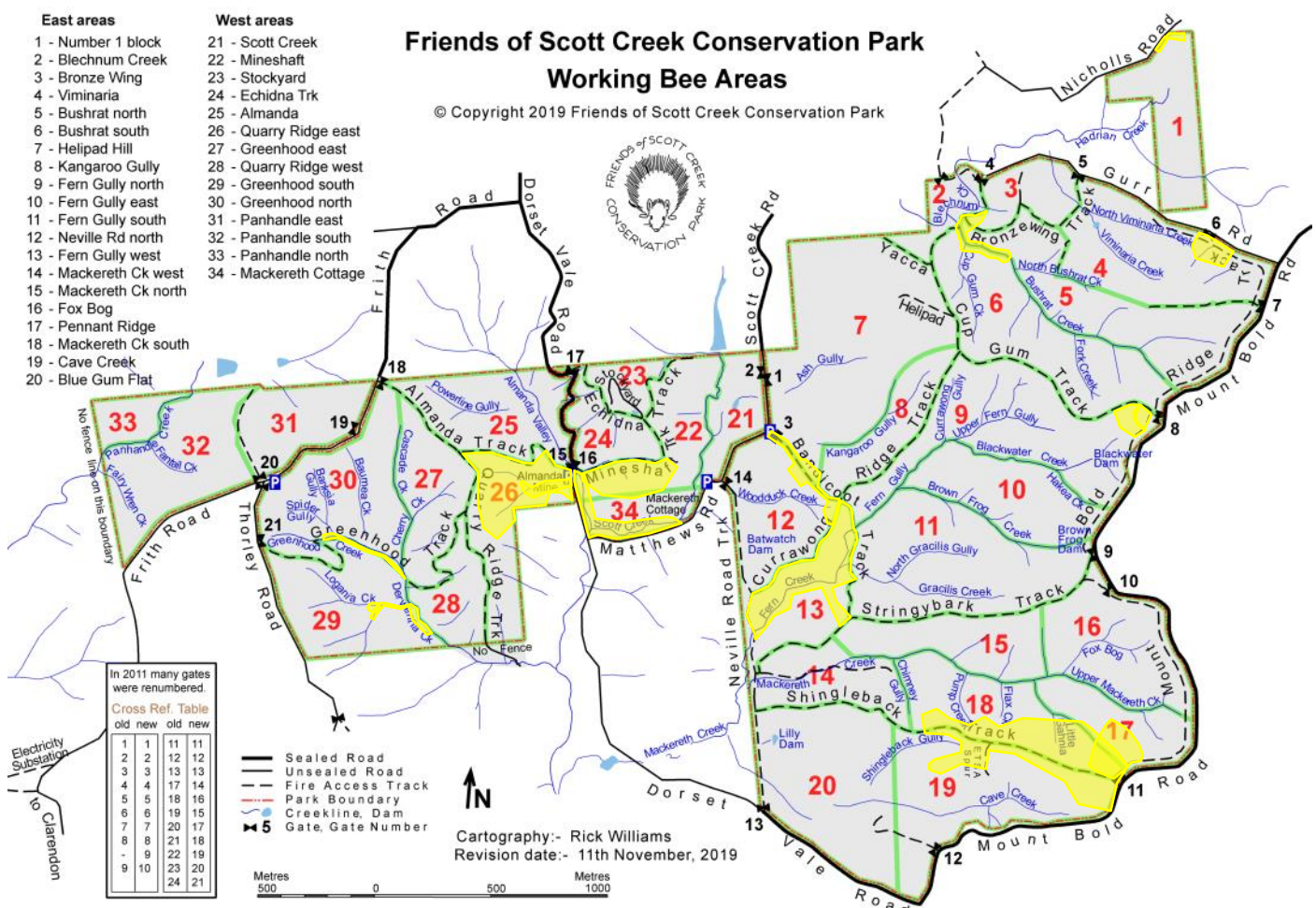
16th August 2023—Andrew and Mardi worked on hundreds of small to medium Montpellier Broom, plus small numbers of an assortment of other priority weeds at the top of Number 1 Block.

20th August 2023—After bird banding, Peter headed up Mineshaft Hill to deal with a small patch of large Boneseed he had waypointed a couple of weeks earlier. In addition to this patch, he removed several others across the hillside that he spotted, thanks to their bright yellow flowers that are now evident.

24th August 2023—Peter sprayed two Bridal Creeper patches previously seen up Logania Creek and alongside Greenhood Track.

Peter Watton

Below: Bridal Creeper and Soursob on the southern side of Almanda Gully, nearly two months after spraying.



Rare Species planting:

Following the successful planting of some rare native plant species in the park last year, there has been more planting this year. As part of a partnership with Green Adelaide, the plants include nationally critically endangered *Veronica derwentiana* ssp. *homalodonta* (Mount Lofty Speedwell), nationally vulnerable *Glycine latrobeana* (Clover Glycine), state endangered *Pycnosorus chrysanthes* (Yellow Drumsticks), state rare *Dianella longifolia* var. *grandis* (Pale Flax-lily) and *Podolepis jaceoides* (Showy Copper-wire Daisy). There was some weeding done opportunistically during these planting sessions.



Above: *Brachyscome diversifolia* (Tall Daisy), planted near Mineshaft Track, near the remnant population.



Above: *Veronica derwentiana* ssp. *homalodonta* (Mt Lofty Speedwell), one from last year's planting and one from this year.

Below: Planting Mt Lofty Speedwell back into Derwentia Creek and Logania Creek in the western side of the park.



Funding and Contractor report:

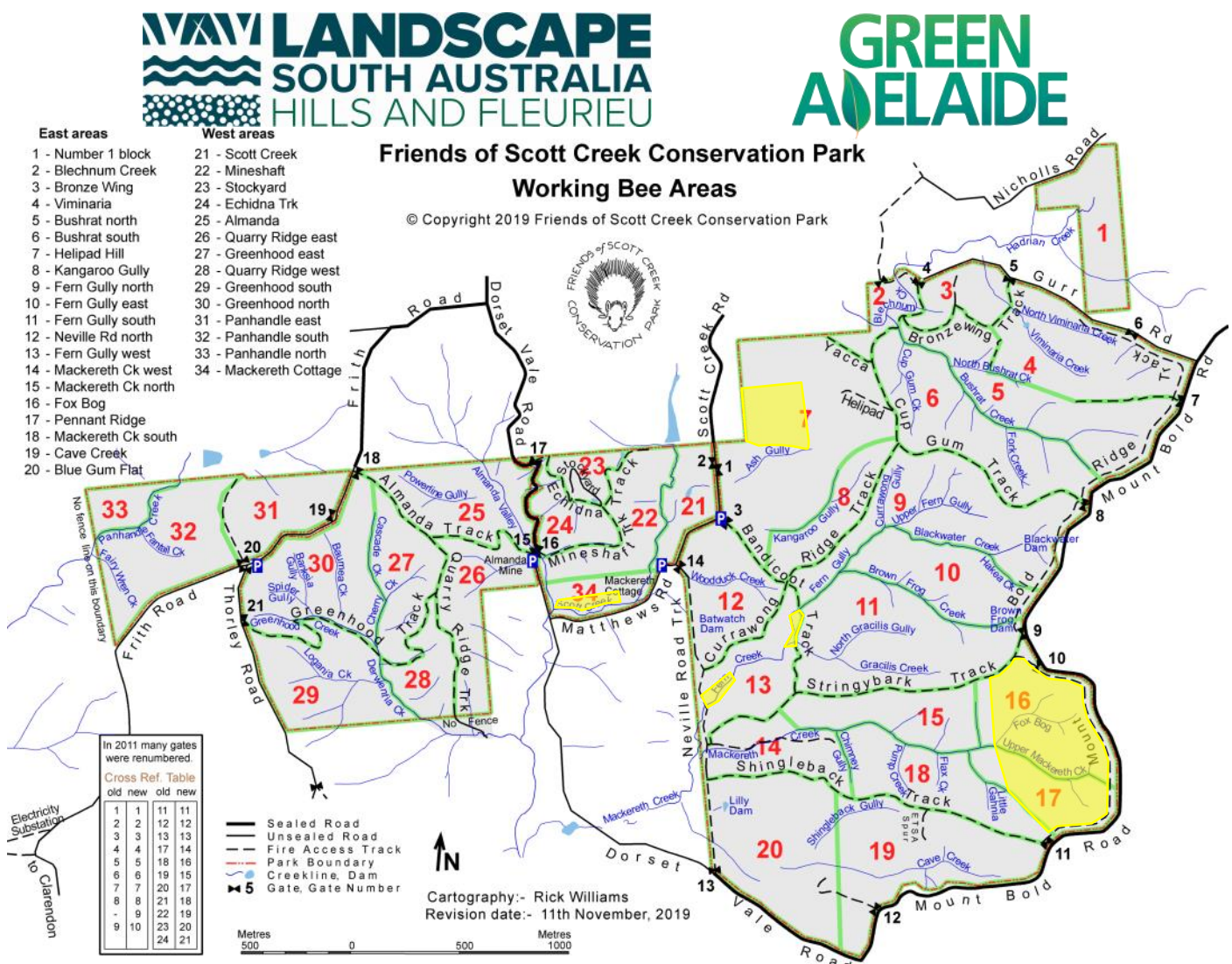
Funding update—thanks to Anna for her help with these:

- Submitted the second year budget report for our three year project “Threatened Species Recovery Scott Creek”, funded under the NPWS Friends of Parks Partnership Grants Program 2021-2022.
- Application for Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu Grassroots Grant for \$3,000 has been approved and funds are held by our sponsor, Friends of Parks Inc. This grant is for contractor follow-up of Sollya regrowth post-fire across Yacca Hill west;
- Application for a Green Adelaide Grassroots Grant for \$10,000 for our project “Post fire recovery of Scott Creek” has been approved. This is to fund contractor primary control and follow-up of priority weeds along Scott Creek between Mackereth Cottage car park and the northern boundary of the park, mainly Montpellier Broom and Boneseed;
- Application for a Green Adelaide Grassroots Grant for \$10,000 for our project “Controlling Blue-bell Creeper and other priority weeds in the Panhandle” has been approved. This is to fund contractor primary control and follow-up of priority weeds in the Panhandle, mainly Sollya/Blue-bell Creeper, Erica and Montpellier Broom.

Below is a list of the main work that contractors have completed during autumn:

- funded from the NPWS On-Park Volunteer Support Grant—Partnership Grants Program:
 - Fern Creek—Mint Green continued work and follow-up on Blackberry and other priority weeds.
 - Scott Creek north bank—Mint Green followed up previous treatment of Blackberry.
- funded under a Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu Priority Fund:
 - Upper Mackereth Creek—Andrew Morgan treated Erica baccans, Tree Lucerne and declared weeds.
 - Yakka Hill west near gate 1—Andrew Morgan worked on Sollya and other declared weeds.

Peter Watton—Grants & Funding, Contractor Liaison & Reporting



Bird Banding notes: September—November 2023

We handled more than twice as many birds this season compared to the last one from about the same number of outings. And it is all about the honeyeaters and Superb-Fairy-wrens.

It has also been another time of ‘first-ever’s for our project. We banded two Rainbow Lorikeets at The Panhandle and two Crested Shrike-tits at Mackereth Cottage, along with two Red Wattlebirds – these have not been captured for over 10 years.

In the table below, where there is an entry, for example 12 (1), it means that 12 birds were handled and one of them was a ‘re-capture’. The most interesting re-capture was an 11+ year old White-browed Scrubwren at Gurr Road. This ‘old bird’ clearly escaped from the fire in January 2021 to a safe refuge in the private (unburnt) land adjacent and has now returned to the Park. Both Laughing Kookaburras banded at Kangaroo Gully have now been recaptured (and, of course, released) – the latest is now 4+ years old.

At Gate 3 in June, a ‘colour-banded’ Superb Fairy-wren was observed skipping along Bandicoot Track. It has been ten or more years since Don placed colour bands on male Fairy-wrens as part of our project. This could have been a remarkable record for SFW’s nationally. When we banded near Kangaroo Gully at the beginning of August, we captured this bird and two others that had been colour-banded. The first one seen had a very worn numbered band and along with the other two (that were much younger) they had been banded by a University research group. The one first seen was banded as a fledgling in December 2016 and would be aged 6+. Maybe it was one of the Fairy-wrens I saw in the fire-scorched Native Cherry tree just inside gate 3 two weeks after the fire?



Above left: Male Superb Fairy-wren, one of three wrens netted at Kangaroo Gully with coloured bands.



Above right: Red Wattlebird, one of two netted during winter, this one at Kangaroo Gully in August.

Below left and right: Jim with the Laughing Kookaburra at Kangaroo Gully.



Bird	3/4 Jun The Panhandle	17/18 Jun Mackereth Cottage	1/2 Jul Gurr Road	15/16 Jul Almanda Battery	5/6 Aug Kangaroo Gully	19/20 Aug Mineshaft Track	Total
Brown Thornbill			2		2	1	5
Striated Thornbill	2 (2)				3	2	7
Golden Whistler						1	1
New Holland Honeyeater		12 (1)	6 (1)	6	15 (1)	4	43
European Goldfinch	1						1
White-throated Treecreeper	1						1
Brown-headed Honeyeater						1	1
Crescent Honeyeater			1		7	4 (1)	12
White-naped Honeyeater					1	5	6
Yellow-faced Honeyeater						10	10
Eastern Spinebill			1		3	5 (1)	9
Red-browed Finch	2		2		1		5
Scarlet Robin					2	2	4
Laughing Kookaburra					1 (1)		1
Silvereye	17 (1)	2			2	2	23
White-browed Scrubwren	1 (1)		4 (2)	1	1	1 (1)	8
Grey Shrike-thrush		1					1
Superb Fairy-wren	5	4 (2)	6 (1)		12 (C3)	7 (5)	34
Rainbow Lorikeet	2						2
Crested Shrike-tit		2					2
Common Blackbird			1				1
Red Wattlebird				1	1		2
TOTAL	31	21	23	8	51	45	179

We are still browsing through research papers to make comparisons and learn about how birds recover after bushfire—see also the article showing the results of Freya’s university [assignment](#) regarding bird density and distribution following the 2021 Cherry Gardens fire later in this edition of Bandicoot Tails.

Thanks to our regular team of banders – we are together producing a unique record of how birds adapt to the changing conditions in SCCP and MLR generally.

Please check the program at the end of this newsletter for dates and times of future banding sessions. Visitors are welcome to ‘come and see’ banding without having to commit to an early start. If you would like to receive an email notice, get in touch with me at president@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au.

Jim Spiker
Bird Banding Coordinator



Above left: Grey Shrike-thrush

Below left: Female Scarlet Robin.



Above right: White-naped Honeyeater.

Below right: Male Scarlet Robin.



Below left: A pair of male Eastern Spinebill.



Below right: Brown-headed Honeyeater.



Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*):

This is the first time these common birds have been banded in our bird banding project.



Betty Brezovskis



Betty Brezovskis

Above left: Peter and Jim carefully taking measurements, while avoiding that very strong and sharp beak.

Above right: The paparazzi waiting for Jim to release the Rainbow Lorikeet.



Betty Brezovskis

Above left and right: One of the Rainbow Lorikeets showing off their spectacular plumage.

Eastern (Crested) Shrike-tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*):

In 2019 the Crested Shrike-tit was split into three species by the Birdlife Australia Working List v3. Separate field data sheets have therefore been compiled for the three species – Eastern Shrike-tit *F. frontatus*, Western Shrike-tit *F. leucogaster* and Northern Shrike-tit *F. whitei*.

While known in the park, particularly along the lower parts along Dorset Vale Road and Matthews Road, as arboreal feeders, Crested Shrike-tit usually manage to avoid our nets, and these are the first that we have managed to band.



Above left: Jim and Peter try to evade getting nipped while extracting the Crested Shrike-tit from the net.



Above right: Crested Shrike-tit, with female on the left with green under her throat, and male on the right with black.



Above left: Male Crested Shrike-tit.



Above right: Female Crested Shrike-tit.



Above left: Female Crested Shrike-tit.



Above right: Female Crested Shrike-tit.

Photo Gallery:



Above left: Mt Lofty Ground-berry (*Acrotriche fasciculiflora*).
Below left: Golden (Western) Whistler.



Above right: Southern Brown Bandicoot.
Below right: Western Golden-tip (*Goodia medicaginea*).



Above left: Yellow Star (*Pauridia vaginata* var. *vaginata*).
Below left: Marbled Scorpion (*Lychnis marmoreus*).



Above right: Moss.
Below right: Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*).



Photo Gallery: some fungi



Investigating the impact of the 2021 Cherry Gardens Bushfire at Scott Creek Conservation Park on bird density and distribution:

Freya Harrihill, studying wildlife conservation biology at Adelaide University, joined our bird banding team earlier this year. She was given an assignment that required her to use GIS to solve an environmental problem, and wanted to see how GIS could be used to map the change in vegetation types before and after the 2021 Cherry Gardens fire in Scott Creek Conservation Park, and how the fires have impacted the bird distribution.

We were very keen to assist Freya with her assignment, as it could provide support our opportunistic observations regarding bird behavior since the fire. We provided Freya with our relevant bird banding data and copies of maps of the park, from before and after the fire. Freya has completed the assignment and had it assessed (very good marks!), and has kindly permitted us to reproduce the results here.

Results

Analysis of bird banding data from FoSCCP resulted in two maps that can be used to compare bird density before (see Figure 5) and after (see Figure 6) the 2021 fires.

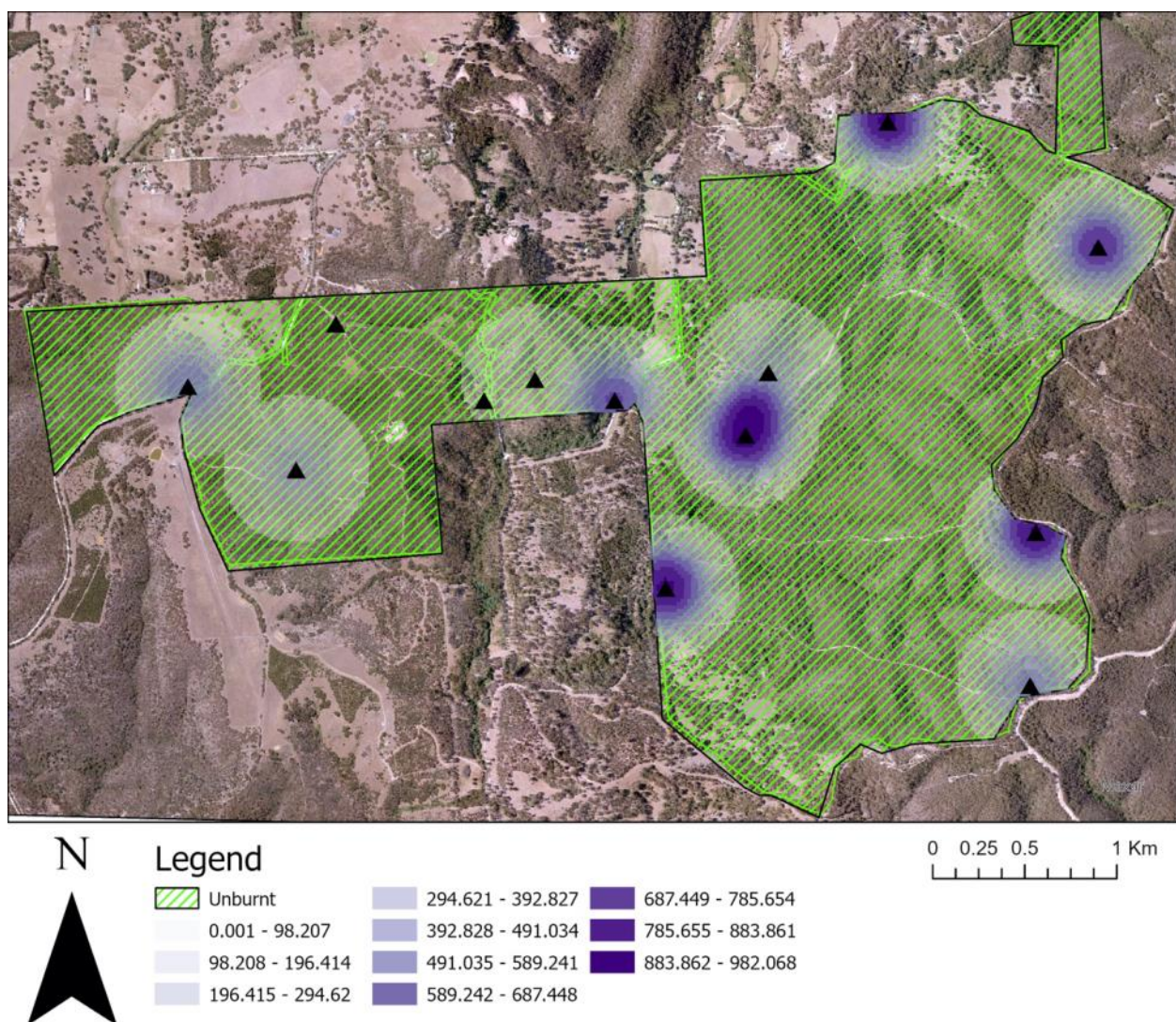


Figure 5: Map of bird density within Scott Creek Conservation Park before the 2021 fires. The green hatching represents the areas of the park that are unburnt. The thin black line represents the boundary of SCCP. Bird density is represented as a gradient, with darker purple representing more birds, and lighter purple representing less birds. The values in the figure legend represent the number of bird banding records at each of the banding sites. The black triangles are the location of each bird banding site. This map shows that the eastern side of the park has a higher density of birds that were caught during bird banding efforts by the FoSCCP than the western side.

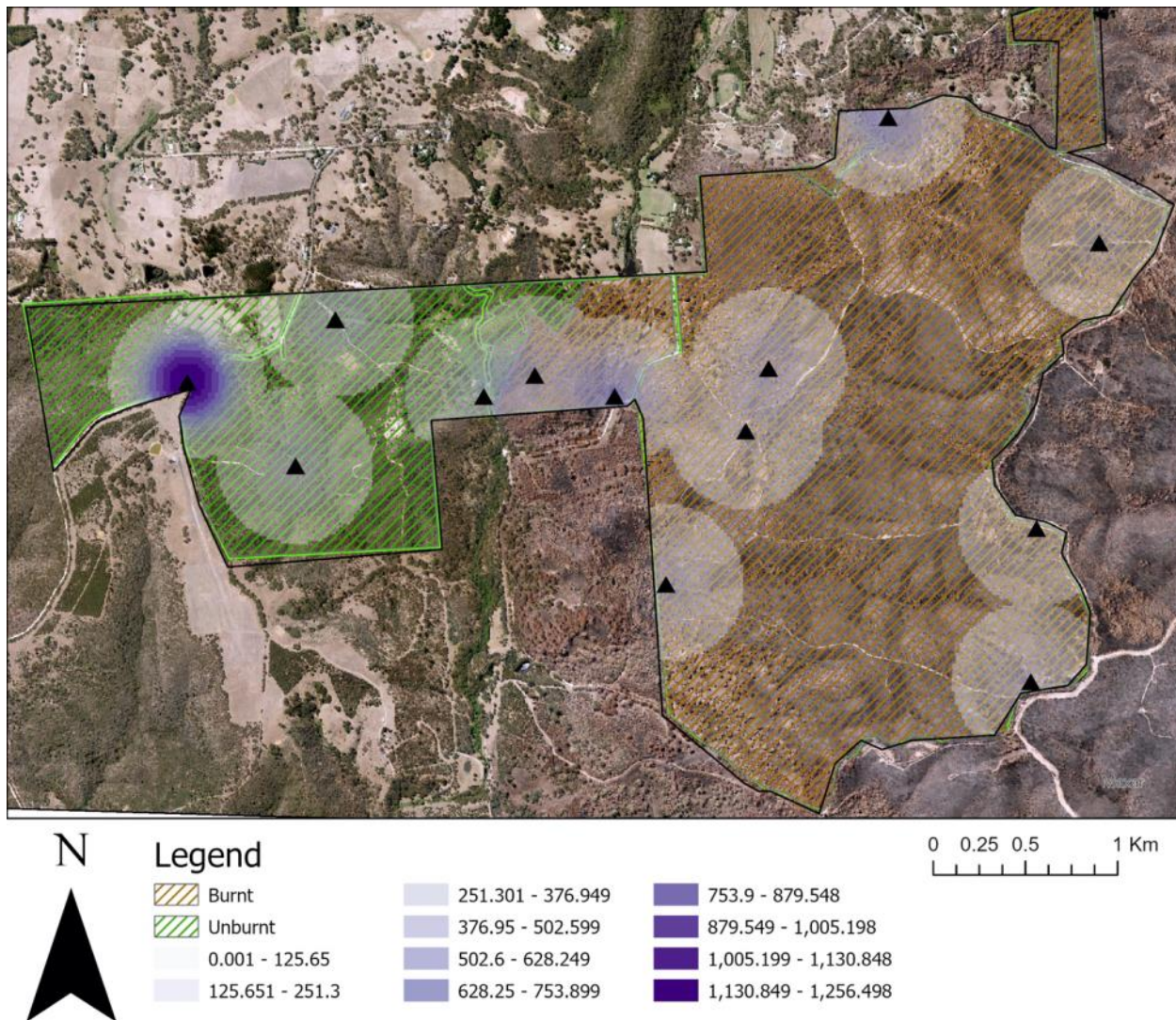


Figure 6: Map of bird density within Scott Creek Conservation Park after the 2021 fires. The green hatching represents areas of the park that were not burnt during the 2021 fires. The brown hatching represents areas of the park that were burnt during the 2021 fires. The thin black line represents the boundary of SCCP. Bird density is represented as a gradient, with darker purple representing more birds, and lighter purple representing less birds. The values in the figure legend represent the number of bird banding records at each of the banding sites. The black triangles are the location of each bird banding site. This map shows that the banding site at the western most point of the park had the highest density of birds caught during banding efforts by the FoSCCP than the other banding sites.

The data mapped in Figure 5 and Figure 6 suggest that bird density within burnt areas of the park has decreased after the 2021 fires. Figure 6 has lower bird density in the burnt areas of the park compared to the same areas in Figure 5 when they were unburnt. Additionally, the unburnt areas of the park in Figure 6 has higher density than the same unburnt areas in Figure 5. This suggests that bird distributions may have moved to unburnt areas of the park following the 2021 fires.

Conclusion

The hypothesis, that bird densities have changed post fire due to change in habitat and food resources, is supported by the maps created using ArcGIS Pro. The maps show that post fire, burnt areas of the park had lower densities of birds compared to the same areas pre fire. There are limitations to the maps created, including inconsistencies and restrictions from the bird banding data. These limitations leave room for improvement for analysis of the effect on the '21 fire on bird densities. Therefore, further analysis of the bird banding data, as well as further surveys of vegetation within SCCP, will lead to more reliable results regarding the effect of the '21 fire on birds at SCCP.

Bird banding at Gluepot Reserve (Birds Australia):

I first visited Gluepot back in 2002. There is even a photo in the Visitors Centre of this much younger version of me among those of many other volunteers. At the time the legendary Wally Klau (he was the Gluepot equivalent of Don Reid) was demonstrating the art of red-soil, mallee country bird-banding. I had my only encounter with a Chestnut Quail-thrush under Wally's tutelage. In more recent times I have been back to Gluepot in support of Petra and Chris in their regular banding efforts there. This year I have worked alongside Greg Johnston (of Pelicans fame) to continue the project.



Image: Gluepot website

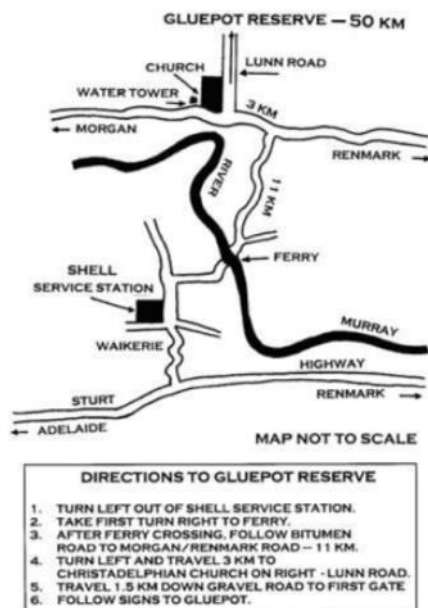


Image: Gluepot website

Gluepot Reserve is located in the mallee country 50 kilometres north of Waikerie. In many ways it is unwelcoming country. The plants actually seem to be constantly on the attack! Soft leaved plants with silvery foliage hide many prickles! Many plants use this defence, but little birds zip in and out seemingly unharmed. It also gets hot. And it gets cold. The magnificent star-studded clear night-sky disguises the bone marrow freezing minus 5 mornings that follow. It is, however, exceptionally beautiful.

Over the last 20 or more years there have been over 9,000 banding captures. As you would expect, most of the birds are 'dry-land' species. Banding has taken place at more than twenty sites in the reserve, but there are five main sites where banding has been concentrated. The system is similar to Scott Creek. Nets are set so that birds are intercepted moving between foliage clumps.

In August this year, we ran an 'Introduction to Bird Banding' course as part of the Gluepot Birds Australian education program. Nine people from three states camped in the reserve and did the course.

We did a presentation about the history and practice of banding, described the scientific rationale behind bird banding and showed the equipment that is used. This was followed up with two 'field sessions' where we set up at the 'Airstrip' site with six nets.



Image: Gluepot website

The bird most often captured is the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater – this is roughly equivalent to the SCCP proliferation of New Holland Honeyeaters. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters show they are poorly named because the ‘spiny’ bits are actually soft feathers that look spikey. They would be more appropriately named for their very sharp (bleeding inducing) talons. The darlings of the environment are the Red-capped Robins, a little smaller than Scarlet Robins, the males with the same spectacular red colouring. Weebills are common, as are Striated Pardalotes. The scrub resounds to Grey Butcherbird calls. Butcherbirds are tricky to band around their sharp bits. There are several ‘dry-land’ honeyeater species that are wonderful to meet up close – not the least being the Striped Honeyeater.

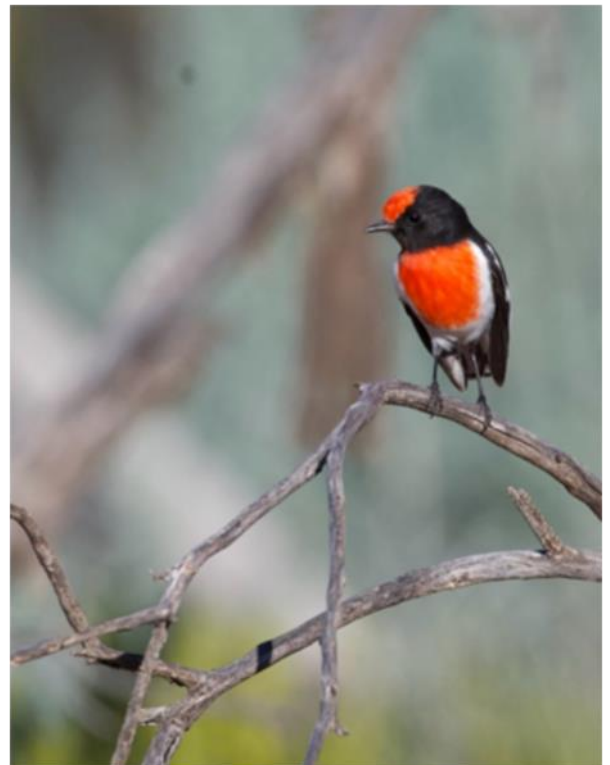
This kind of collaboration produces a win in both Gluepot and SCCP. At this stage three of the people who attended the course have enrolled for a ‘C’ class banding Authority through our FoSCCP project. When they are ‘qualified’ they will be able to band under supervision as part of other projects, including Gluepot. <https://www.gluepot.org/>

Jim Spiker



Above: Yellow-plumed Honeyeater.

Below: Grey Butcherbird.



Above: Red-capped Robin.



Above: Splendid Fairy-wren.

Left: Striped Honeyeater and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater at a bird hide watering point.

Hills invasive animal control is a win for native species:

Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

[News article 31 July 2023](#)

The control of invasive herbivores across our landscape is helping to support our native plants and animals.

Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu and partners undertake several aerial control operations each year to manage invasive herbivores. A successful aerial shooting operation was undertaken in the Adelaide Hills in June, removing 375 fallow deer and 12 feral goats from SA Water's Mount Bold Reservoir Reserve, Scott Creek Conservation Park, adjoining ForestrySA land, and private properties.

The operation was undertaken as federal and state governments named South Australia as leading the nation in removing feral deer, with the 10-year South Australian Feral Deer Eradication Program aiming to eradicate the pest from the state by 2032. There were an estimated 40,000 feral deer estimated in South Australia in 2022, having a devastating effect on the natural environment and costing primary producers an estimated \$36M in direct productivity losses annually. Since the program's commencement in May 2022, over 8,000 feral deer have been removed. Almost half of these from the Hills and Fleurieu region.

"Grazing pressure from invasive herbivores such as feral deer and goats can have substantial impacts on primary production, water catchments, and native plants and animals. The damage these invasive animals do to the landscape, and the subsequent effects that has on native species can be substantial," said Tom Kloeden, Regional Coordinator for Grazing Pressure Management at Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu.

"Mount Bold Reservoir and Scott Creek Conservation Park have particularly high conservation value, providing habitat for threatened species such as the Endangered chestnut-rumped heathwren, southern brown bandicoot, and several species of orchid. All of these species can be impacted by feral deer and goats.

"In partnership with public land managers, private landholders and community groups, we were able to conduct the five-day aerial operation, across almost 6,000 hectares, using 25 hours of helicopter flight time. We have now removed over 650 fallow deer and over 70 feral goats from that part of the region in the past 12 months.

"Removing these invasive animals obviously reduces their impact on the landscape and native species, but also limits their continual reproduction and distribution. With feral goat populations increasing at up to 65-70 percent each year, and invasive deer at around 30 percent, it's important that these operations are done efficiently and at landscape scale. Without intervention, numbers will explode beyond manageable levels very quickly, putting irreversible stress on our landscapes and native species.

"Invasive deer species are established across much of the region. The approach to deer management is to reduce high-density deer populations, and to contain or eradicate isolated populations where possible, supporting the long-term goals of the SA Feral Deer Eradication Program.

"The program also has the objective of eradicating all known invasive goat populations within the Hills and Fleurieu region. To find only 12 animals in this operation is a positive indication that we are very close to removing the population in that area and achieving a local eradication target.

"As always, we encourage landholders and the general public to report any sightings of feral goats and deer at www.feralscan.org.au. This will trigger an alert to our team and help us understand where sub-populations are residing and how to best plan our programs.

"Many methods have been used over the years to manage invasive species, and our approach through this program is working to restore some balance in favour of native species. We have an opportunity here to take action, and the alternative could be costly for both the environment and primary production. We're on the right track, but need to be persistent to keep numbers at a manageable level," said Mr Kloeden.

“This is a great example of land managers and the community working together to achieve a positive outcome for the local environment. Thanks to SA Water, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, ForestrySA, the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park and neighbouring landholders for supporting this operation.

You can find out more about Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu’s Regional Grazing Pressure Management program and access useful resources, updates and links at:

<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/hf/our-priorities/nature/nature-projects/regional-grazing-pressure-management>

The Regional Grazing Pressure Management program is funded through the Landscape Levy and is being delivered in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water’s National Parks and Wildlife Service, Green Adelaide, ForestrySA, SA Water, and private landholders, to control invasive goats and deer, which are declared pests under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019.

The South Australian Feral Deer Eradication Program is a statewide partnership between the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), landscape boards and Livestock SA and is jointly funded by both the State and Australian Governments.



Grazing pressure from invasive deer and goats can have substantial impacts on primary production, water catchments, native vegetation and threatened flora and fauna. Above: a young blue gum thrashed by feral deer. Credit: Clinton Garrett

Reflections:

The deeper I look into the natural world, the more mysterious and extraordinary it seems. The humblest organisms embody secrets and their familiarity can blind us to a staggering complexity.

On a recent bushcare day, as we planted sedges along Scott Creek, a fellow traveller tossed something in my direction and called out for me to catch it. The shapeless mass I grabbed out of the air uncoiled itself and began sauntering along my finger on a carpet of mucus.

It was a large slug, the kind of animal whose very name we associate with the decaying underbelly of the world. Extruding its eye stalks it revealed itself in its full glory, spotted like a leopard. I thought it must surely be called a leopard slug, and the internet confirmed it. *Limax maximus* is the largest of slugs. It is a hermaphrodite and engages in a sensuous mating dance at the end of a slimy thread. They seem to have such a tenuous hold on life, needing moisture just to keep from shrivelling up into parchment, yet they are universal, hopping from continent to continent and somehow introduced to Australia. The unseen work of these and our indigenous slugs among decomposing vegetation is part of the process which keeps us from being buried in our own waste.



Above: Leopard Slug (*Limax maximus*) photographed by 'debbie776' at Scott Creek in October 2022 (iNaturalist).

As it slid along my finger I couldn't help but be taken with its beauty, even if it was yet another introduced species. I only mention this little incident because as I get older (and older) I experience a sharpened awareness of the seemingly infinite variety around us in the living world. Everything from the way inch-ants organise themselves in colonies to the marvel of common garden aphids which change their gender and cease producing live young (asexually) in favour of sexually reproducing via eggs which last through the winter. Or the deliberate motion of insects so tiny we can barely discern them with the naked eye, yet they each contain a micro-computer (an 'organic' computer) which enables them to make certain decisions. Then there is the mystery of evolution which gave these inconsequential things the power of flight.

At every level there are more questions than answers. We have yet to fathom the most basic conundrum of all viz. what make something alive? What compulsion drives so called inorganic molecules to bond together and start walking or flying around?

Recently, near my house, I found a dead magpie. It had no obvious signs of trauma, yet it had ceased to exist. All its parts remained in the correct order, yet it no longer moved and its 'organic' molecules were returning to their component inorganic elements. If we could put all those components together in the right way, could we create life? My apologies to Mary Shelley. Life comes from life, yet whence the first stirrings towards sentience?

Some animals are so perfect they take my breath away. At Middleton Point on the South Coast, very recently, I was honoured to see a bird which I will refer to as a falcon because I have no idea of its exact identity.



Right: While not the actual bird Steve was watching at Middleton, this beautiful Brown Falcon is displaying its equally impressive hovering prowess.

It was being harried from above by a very determined magpie lark, whose territory it must have invaded. The falcon seemed untroubled by the attentions of the much smaller bird, and soon put on a display I will never forget, for it stopped in mid-air. And I do mean stopped, because it held its body perfectly still while its neck was bent downwards, enabling the bird to scan the ground with telescopic vision. Only its wings moved, beating in impeccable rhythm, applying exactly the right amount of force to counteract both gravity and a blustery wind. Perhaps we can do the same with a helicopter or drone, but this was a living thing, made up principally of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen which had arranged itself into the most exquisite and perfectly adapted shape, powered by an organic engine and directed by an organic computer.

No doubt this scene is repeated over and over again along the coast, but on that day I just happened to be in the right place to witness it. Eventually the raptor appeared to grow tired of the pestering magpie lark and flew off inland. Or maybe it was simply done for the day. I doubt there is much that bothers these powerful creatures.

It is easy to miss or to ignore the natural world which encloses us on every front, and thus it is so important to get out into the parks, away from the city, and be reminded of the things which are their own reason for being.



Above: Mallee scene from Swan Reach CP. (Image Steve Davey)

I visited the mallee of the Swan Reach conservation park after an absence of some years and walked into the trees with a map and compass, the way I used to do. At a certain point all outside thoughts and stimuli ceased to matter, leaving only the endless verticality of the delicate mallee stems.

At such moments it becomes apparent that the earth moves on its course through time and space regardless of us. We don't matter at all, and in a strange way, this is liberating.



In a sense, the earth knows what it is doing. It is we who bumble along, but I like to think that in our bushcare efforts, no matter how humble, we may yet mitigate the decades of unwitting harm and save something of the wonder for our children's children.

Steve Davey



Left and right:
Dryland Boronia
(*Boronia inornata*
ssp. leptophylla).
(Left image Steve
Davey)

Office bearers:

Any queries on Friends activities, please contact the relevant person below, general queries to:
info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

President: Jim Spiker email: president@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Vice President: Peter Watton email: info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Treasurer: Andrew Biven email: treasurer@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Correspondence Secretary: position vacant email: secretary@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Administration Assistant: Jenny Dawes email: info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Minute Secretary: Anna Dutkiewicz email: webmaster@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Membership Officer: Lorraine Billett email via: info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Other roles and positions:

Bird Banding Coordinator: Jim Spiker (contact details above)

Bushcare Coordinator: Jenny Dawes (contact details above)

Assistant Bushcare Coordinator: Glenn Giles

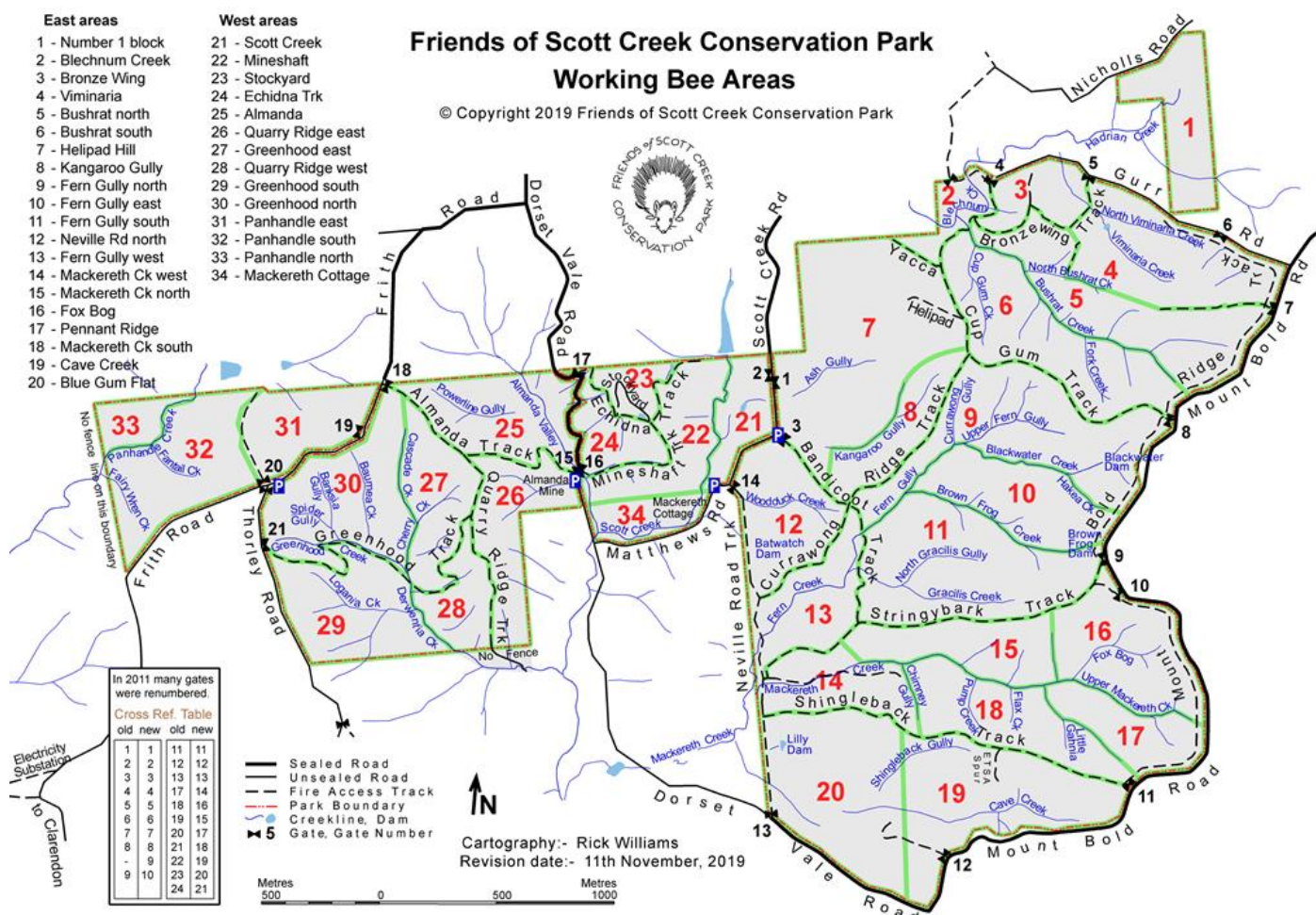
Bushcare — Grants & Funding, Contractor Liaison & Reporting: Peter Watton (contact details above)

Bush Gardening Almanda Creek: John Wamsley email: john@johnwamsley.com

Editor Bandicoot Tails & Facebook: Peter Watton (contact details above)

Website Coordinator: Anna Dutkiewicz email: webmaster@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Social & Events Coordinators: Jenny Dawes (contact details above), Sue Braddock-Smith



Spring Program of Activities September–November 2023

The Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park welcome visitors to all of our activities, which include regular bushcare, bird banding and bush gardening.

For enquiries and information: E info@friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au W www.friendsofscottcreekcp.org.au

Bushcare activities: During spring we will meet at **9.00am** at the **nearest gate for the activity location**.

An email will be sent to bushcarers advising the location in advance.

Any **new members** interested in joining us, contact the above email address to receive the email.

Be prepared for walking through sometimes rugged bushland, including areas recovering from fire, and bring a small backpack to carry your morning tea.

Bird Banding activities: Contact the Bird Banding Coordinator (see next page) to receive emails about activities.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Local activities will be **cancelled** if a **fire ban** or **severe weather warning** is announced for the **Mount Lofty Ranges**. Bird banding will also be cancelled in conditions that may adversely affect the birds.

See links to BOM & CFS websites below.

BOM website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteo/dorset-vale>

CFS website: https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/site/bans_and_ratings

Month/Day	Date	Activity	Location
SEPTEMBER 2023			
Saturday, Sunday	2, 3	Bird Banding	TP The Plantation, Gate 7, 7:00 am
Tuesday	5	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Sunday	10	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Saturday	23	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Sunday	24	Social Outing All Welcome!	SA Museum—Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year 2023 exhibition, meet 10:00 am at the café
Tuesday	26	Social Lunch All Welcome	Sheoak Café—Belair at noon (cnr Sheoak and James Roads, parking on three sides)
OCTOBER 2023			
Tuesday	3	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Saturday	7	Bird Banding	PR Pennant Ridge, Gate 11, 7:00 am (DST)
Sunday	8	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Tuesday	17	General Meeting	4.30 pm, venue and/or Zoom link to be emailed
Saturday, Sunday	21, 22	Bird Banding	FB Fox Bog, Gate 9, 7:00 am
Sunday	22	Spring Walk All Welcome!	More details to come
Wednesday	25	Social Lunch All Welcome	Essence—Stirling at noon (down lane between Gardiners Real Estate and Stirling Florist in Stirling's main street)
Saturday	28	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
NOVEMBER 2023			
Saturday, Sunday	4, 5	Bird Banding	DV Derwentia Valley, via Gate 21, 6:30 am
Tuesday	7	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Sunday	12	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Saturday, Sunday	18, 19	Bird Banding	XR Crossroads via Gate 3, 6:30 am
Tuesday	21	Annual General Meeting All Welcome!	7.30 pm, Cherry Gardens CFS, 294 Cherry Gardens Road—guest speaker to be announced
Saturday	25	Bushcare	Post-fire weed regeneration will determine location
Thursday	30	Social Lunch All Welcome	Joan's Pantry—Hawthorndene at noon (Watahuna Ave opposite the oval)