



Newsletter of the
 Friends Of Whyalla Conservation Park
 PO Box 805 WHYALLA SA 5600
 Web: www.fwcp.org
 Volunteers Working For Conservation

Myall Post

The



May 2006



President's Message

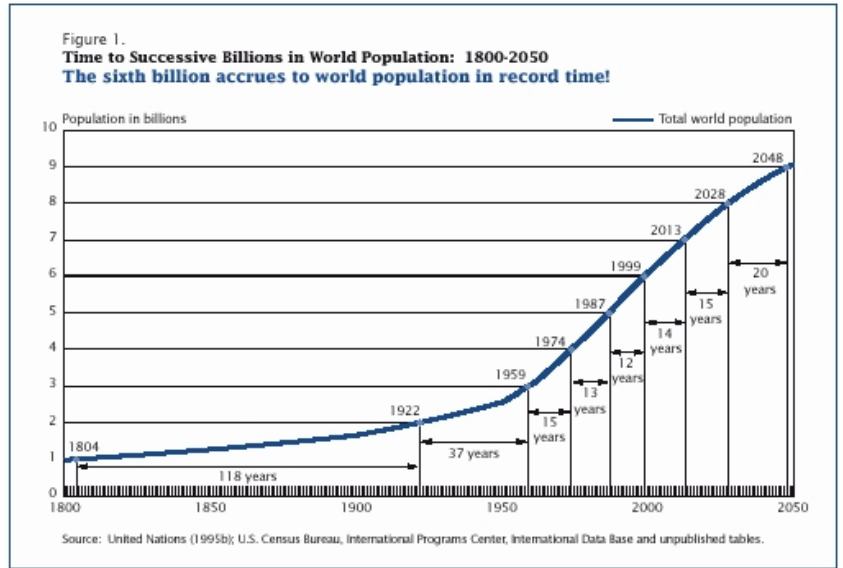
We welcome the safe arrival of Hayden Poyner. David and Denise now have a handsome young man to care for. We wish all three well for the future.

Hayden is one of the 250 children born every minute of the day around the world. His birth is part of an encouraging trend in our society. Parents are having their children later (when they can better afford them) and they having fewer children. In other countries the picture is not so bright, however the general picture is that population growth across the world is slowing.

In the late twentieth century, it took as little as 12 years to add another billion people to the world's population. You can see in the following

graph that by the mid twenty first century that this rapid rate of increase will slow. Better education especially for women and increased prosperity mean fewer children. We can only wait to see whether the slowing growth of population will happen soon enough to avoid a major rundown of resources.

Clint Garrett



Here is the latest member of the Friends of the Whyalla Conservation Park - our little bundle of joy Hayden, who was born on Tuesday 2nd May. Myself and Denise would like to thank everyone who sent their best wishes, cards or presents for Hayden. We are extremely lucky to have such a wonderful group of people as friends. - David.

Important Dates

Make sure that these dates are entered into your diary!

Working Bee
Saturday 17th June @ 9:00am
Wild Dog Hill
Please note changed date!

Committee Meeting
Thursday 22nd June @ 7:30pm
267 Landrace Rd

Working Bee
Saturday 8th July @ 9:00am
Wild Dog Hill

Committee Meeting
Saturday 27th July @ 7:30pm
267 Landrace Rd

AGM + BBQ
Saturday 29th July @ 4:30pm
Location TBA
Please note changed date!

Guest Speaker / Public Meeting
Saturday 29th July @ 7:00pm
Location and speaker TBA

Park Roster

The following individuals or families have volunteered to empty the bins, check the toilet, and check the Park on the weekends beginning Friday:

June 2nd - Hughes / Hollingworths

June 9th - Carters

June 16th - Nields

June 23rd - Holds'

June 30th - Hughes / Hollingworths

July 7th - Deans

July 14th - Vacant

July 21st - Garretts

Please remember to wear clothing which will identify you as a Friends member and NPWS volunteer if at all possible. **Don't forget to look out for syringes! Remember, if you are not a financial member, you are not insured and you should not be on this roster!**

If you would like to volunteer for the roster, please call Denise Sharp on 8645-4442

Mouse Spiders

When heavy rain happens at this time of year, it is common to see the male of the Red Headed Mouse spider out and wandering around. They are looking for a female spider, which is hiding at the bottom of a 30 cm deep burrow. The male is intense blue-black in colour with bright red head and mandibles.

Female spiders are rarely seen, except when we have enough rain to flood the burrow and force them out into the open. Females are large; this one pictured below was about 8 cm tip to tip and had a body about 3 cm long. They get the name mouse spider from their burrow, which is large and was thought big enough for a mouse to enter.

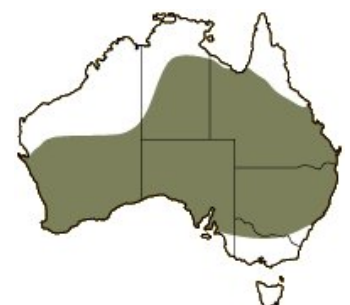
This female was brought to Clinton last week by the Whyalla News. It was being played with by a cat. when it was rescued by the cat's owner. That was a good thing to do as you can see that the female of the Red Headed Mouse Spider has large venom glands and a powerful set of fangs to inject the venom.

According to the Australian Museum, the venom is quite potent. However there are few cases of hospitalization as people rarely see the female spider. There has been only one case of a Whyalla person being admitted to hospital with a mouse spider bite that Clinton can remember.

If you look carefully in your yard, you may find a trapdoor belonging to a mouse spider. The entry is about 2.5 cm in diameter and is camouflaged with soil. At night, the spider waits close to the mouth of the burrow, until an insect or small lizard touches one of the trap-lines that radiate from the burrow. The spider then rushes out captures its prey and drags it down into the burrow. Here the enzymes in the venom will digest the protein in the prey and the spider can drink the nutrients.



CLINT GARRETT PHOTOGRAPH



Aussie "Mad Woman"

Members Bev and Rodney Dunham are currently in China - and are having a wonderful time as this email from Bev explains:

From: "beverley margaret dunham"
<bevdunham46@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 21, 2006 2:09 PM
Subject: Aussie Mad Woman Invades Yanshou

The locals here at Yanshou will never be the same after our visit. Yesterday we set off at 9.00a.m. for the Moon Mountain - a leisurely 8 kms. bike ride through paddy fields and amid the glorious limestone karsts of the Guilin area. Ha - Luckily I had decided that the bike ride was not on so I asked the tour guide if she could arrange alternative transport - suggestions from her - motor bike - pillion passenger which I thought sounded very with it and cool.

Imagine my surprise when I went downstairs to check out my ride to be greeted by a lad on a push bike which had a trailer built in - resplendent on the trailer was a kindly chair. (Needless to say my round bottom did not fit well on a little square chair) Talk about laugh - I couldn't stop not could anyone else who was in coo-ee. It got worse as we went through the crowded streets - smiles all round. I was nicknamed the queen and my loyal subjects would all bow and wave as they whizzed past at a furious rate - compared to Wang and I. He didn't speak any English so conversation was phrase book practice only. He was giggling a lot so I must have got muddled up somewhere along the line. I was the only person on the road that day - riding in such a rig - did see some people in a donkey trap, tandem and triple bikes and lots of ordinary bikes.

I saw more of the countryside than the rest of the group as I did not have to worry about the traffic - drive on the opposite side of the road to us. Rodney was whizzing around like a maniac and he looked the fittest of the group - most of the group are my age or mid 50s. The it was 16 kms. round trip - some bitumen and the rest hilly bumpy dirt roads.

The focal point of the trip was a hike up to the top of Moon Mountain - despite my leisurely bike ride I managed half way up the hill before I sat down and wait for the rest of the group to return - smart thinking as they then had to ride their bikes another 8 kms back to town. Lunch was in a farmer's house. About 7 courses - all very well cooked and presented. There were lots of groans when we finally set off back to Yanshou.

Julie our guide is a sadist as we only had time for a quick shower before leaving on the Li River cruise - wonderful trip - small local boat up stream flanked by big steamers who were returning to their bases at the end of the day. Saw sunset over the river with a marvelous backdrop of the limestone karsts. Wandered through the old village, dinner at a local cafe - another 8 courses and then on to another boat to watch the fishermen with their cormorants catching fish by spot light. 25 km drive back to Yanshou - night market in full swing so checked out the shops. Got some imitation north face shorts for Rodney and finally returned to the hotel at 11.30 p.m.

Up crack of dawn again today - breakfast at a street cafe - banana pancake and Lipton tea - lovely before setting off again

around the shops etc. We leave this arvo by o/n train to Wohan then bus to catch the boat for our 4 night ride up the Yangtze. Will try and send some more emails from Dazu County - after our boat trip. Rodney is called Dad by the guide and I call her Little Mum as she is always telling us to eat up ALL our food or go to the toilet now. She is sweet and very good at organising us all.

Well gang - Time is up - time to pay the 3 yuan for the half hour use of this machine.

Trust you are all well.

Bev and Rod.

Bird Of The Month



Barn Owl

The Barn Owl is not only common throughout Australia but also across the world. It prefers diverse open country such as woodlands, grasslands, and farmlands. It's face and under parts are predominately white with the upper parts being light brownish grey.

Although common, like most nocturnal birds they are rarely seen. By day they rest quietly in tree hollows, thick tree foliage, caves, buildings etc. At night they hunt for food which is mostly mice.

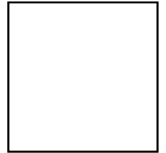
Their prey also includes other small rodents, small birds, lizards, and night flying insects such as beetles and moths. Sometimes they are caught in car lights during these activities. Their call is usually described as a screech. Generally they live alone or in pairs.

Breeding occurs at anytime of the year when there is abundant prey available. During a mouse plague they may continue with successive clutches until the food supply reduces. Tree hollows are mostly used as sites to incubate their two or three white eggs. The young take about five weeks to hatch and a further two months to fledge.

Ella Smith



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Working Bees

The May working bee saw Lance install a level gauge on the tank in the toilet. This will allow us to see at a glance how much water is in the tank. Currently it is about 1/3rd full. Margaret patrolled the walking trail looking for Saffron Thistle and Maltese Cockspur. She found 2 areas of Saffron Thistle, which have now been removed.

Troy and Clinton planted 15 Western Myall trees in the area around the car park. It is pleasing to see that some of our trees from earlier plantings are now over 1 metre high and are thriving in spite of the drought.

The June 17th working bee will involve pruning branches back from the main access track as there are some spots where it is difficult to drive without scratching a vehicle. Several box-thorns found near the dam during the Mother's Day Walk will also need to be removed.



It Seems Like Yesterday: The picture above was taken during celebrations for the group's 10th birthday in 1997 - which means the Friends of the Whyalla Conservation Park will be 20 next year!

Mother's Day Walk

Just over 20 people took part in this year's Mother's Day Walk. Is it possible that other potential participants were sitting at home, watching Port Power getting beaten, instead of enjoying the beautiful weather outside? This year's walk was notable for the number of children who were involved, seven in all. Their enthusiasm and knowledge of the bush was pleasing.

The walk commenced from the dam and followed the northern edge of the creek-line before circling back to the dam. A male Mistletoe bird sat in clear view of the group and allowed Ella to explain some of its habits. Clinton explained how the local plants were adapted to the low rainfall and high evaporation of the area.

Afternoon tea was magnificent, thanks to the cooking of Denise, Marg and Bev.

Contacts

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