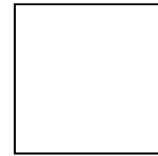




Friends of the Whyalla
Conservation Park
PO Box 805
Whyalla SA 5600



Xmas BBQ



This year's end-of-year Xmas function will be held at 6:30pm on Saturday 4th December at Clint and Margaret's house at 71 Jenkins Ave.

Please bring either a salad or desert to share. BBQ will be supplied, as will Xmas pudding. NPWS will be generously supplying some drinks, but if you have a personal preference for either food or drinks, please bring our own to ensure you won't be disappointed.

Special General Meeting

Prior to the social event, there will be a Special General Meeting of the group to make a change to the constitution, so please arrive at 6:00pm for the meeting.

The clause that the committee is suggesting be changed is:

9. The Annual General Meeting of the members shall be held on the first Thursday in June of each year and members shall be given notice in writing at least 14 days before each meeting.

As astute members may note, we have not been abiding by clause 9 of the constitution for some years now. We have however been holding the AGM in June. This presents problems for the Treasurer who needs to close the group's accounts on the 31st May so that he can have them audited in time to present to the AGM.

In order to bring the group's financial year into line with standard accounting practices, it is suggested that clause 9 should read:

9. The Annual General Meeting of the members shall be held in July of each year on a date to be determined by the committee and members shall be given notice in writing at least 14 days before each meeting.

Lake Gilles Trip

On Sunday 17th October, 9 members made the trip to Lake Gilles Conservation Park. We met up with the Friends of Kimba and District Parks who were performing a roadside cleanup. The Kimba Friends led us through the southern section of Park to a spot below a small rise where we had morning tea. A short climb to the top of the rise provided a spectacular view of the surrounding area.

We then headed back towards Kimba and up the western boundary of the Park, stopping to view a Mallee Fowl nest. Once we reached Lake Gilles, we turned east and drove through the centre of the Park. Our members were amazed at the diversity of the vegetation in the middle of the Park, compared to the seemingly monotonous mallee that is visible from the highway.

I think that all 9 members of our group agreed that the trip was an enjoyable experience.

Contacts

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

The Myall Post



November
2004



President's Message

The 2004 Friends of Parks Forum in Clare emphasized the value of the work that Friends groups do. During the financial year 2003/2004, Friends groups contributed \$5.6 million in labour on projects in parks. The wages bill for park staff was \$60 million over the same period. The work that you do does make a significant difference to what happens in the park system.

The Forum was valuable for the information that it provided and for the opportunity to speak directly with the Minister and CEO of the department.

Dr Ann Prescott spoke on "The Importance of Grasslands". She explained that grasslands were the first areas to be used for agriculture by European settlers. As a result 90% of all grasslands in our state have either been ploughed up or grazed so heavily that they are functionally destroyed. Only 10% of the remaining grasslands are protected within the park system. Grasslands are very rich in species numbers and have the ability to make a big contribution to salinity control IF they are properly managed.

Professor Rod Wells spoke about the "Fossil History of South Australia". The earliest multi-celled organisms are found in the Ediacra Fauna of the Flinders Ranges. The Naracoorte Caves fossil site was the first World Heritage area declared in SA. South Australia has many fossil sites that have only just begun to be explored. Our field trip on Saturday afternoon demonstrated just how rich the fossil record is in our state.

Minister John Hill pointed out that Conservation Parks now cover 21% of the area of the state – this is the highest percentage of protected land of any state. The Coongie Lakes National Park is to be declared later this year. He has a goal for 19 Marine Protected areas to be developed by 2010. Existing conservation areas are to be linked by biodiversity corridors so as to allow species to move between one area and another.

I look forward to the 2005 Forum, which will be held at Victor Harbour. Will you be there too?

Clint Garrett



Members of the Friends of Kimba and Districts Parks and the Friends of the Whyalla Conservation Park at one of the entrances to Lake Gilles Conservation Park on Sunday 17th October

Important Dates

Make sure that these dates are entered into your diary!

Working Bee
Saturday 13th November @ 9:00am

267 Landrace Rd
 (Please note change of venue, see committee meeting report)

Committee Meeting
 Thursday 25th November @ 7:30pm
 267 Landrace Rd

Special General Meeting
Saturday 4th December @ 6:00pm
 71 Jenkins Ave

Xmas BBQ
Saturday 4th December @ 6:30pm
 71 Jenkins Ave

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:

12th November - Poyner / Sharp / Smith

19th November - Holds

26th November - Carters

3rd December - Garretts

10th December - Fennells

17th December - Garretts

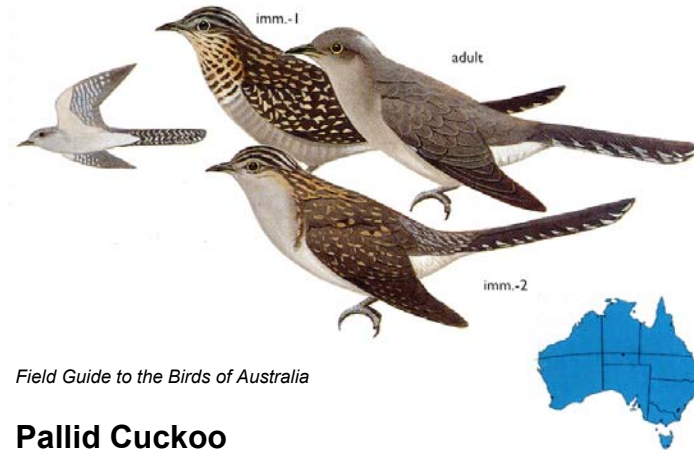
24th December - Deans

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

Bird Of The Month



Field Guide to the Birds of Australia

Pallid Cuckoo

At various times of the year the Pallid Cuckoo can be found all over Australia. It is usually only found in Whyalla from June to September although occasionally as early as May and as late as October.

I have one unusual record of a young Pallid Cuckoo being hatched and fledged by a pair of Willie Wagtails as host parents in January (photo below with Willie Wagtail). This was a good example of the opportunistic behaviour of this parasitic species which is known to use at least 80 other species of birds as hosts. Any birds that have open cup nests and eggs somewhat similar to it's own will do. The female will lay one flesh-pink egg in a host nest, with possibly several hosts per season. The egg will hatch in 12 to 14 days, usually a day or two before the host eggs, enabling the Pallid Cuckoo hatchling to then eject the host eggs or any young that have hatched.

They are solitary birds with the males using a piping call to attract a female in breeding season which is early spring to early summer. Food consists of a variety of insects, mostly caterpillars if available, caught by diving to ground from a vantage perch.

The adult Pallid Cuckoo is a grey bird, darker above with lighter under parts. A young Pallid Cuckoo is streaked and mottled with brown. Like all of our cuckoos it has a distinctive head and bill shape peculiar to this group, and once seen is a great help in identification thereafter. A little smaller than the Black-faced Cuckooshrike it has a somewhat similar undulating flight.



Willie Wagtail

Our Fossil Past

Clint Garrett has provided a report from one of the field trips held during the 2004 Friends Forum.

Can you imagine that there was a time when Australia was north of the equator? Professor Rod Wells gave the Forum an excellent description of the movement of our continent since the breakup of Gondwanaland. He also explained the pattern of Ice Ages and its impact on the fauna of Australia

One way of adapting to the cold was for animals to develop bodies that were larger and furrer to conserve heat. Australia had many very large species, such as a 3 metre high Kangaroo, a 2 tonne Wombat and a marsupial carnivore about the same size as a present day tiger. Our mega fauna began to become extinct about 60,000 years ago. This is the time when the first Aboriginal people came to Australia. It was an ice age, and sea levels were lower, allowing people to move from Asia to Australia.

Within 20,000 years, most of Australia's mega fauna were extinct. Scientists such as Tim Flannery claim that the Aborigines were responsible for this extinction. Dr Wells



Meeting Report

At the committee meeting on Thursday 27th October, the following items were discussed:

- Committee members spoke with Ranger Stuart Beinke via phone regarding the slowness of finalising the OneSteel Vegetation Agreement. The legal process has stalled the financial contribution that OneSteel is proposing to make to the group. The committee agreed that speaking to Stuart via phone when he is unable to attend would be worthwhile in future.
- The committee also spoke to Stuart regarding the structure and layout of signs for a trailhead at the Wild

does not think that this is the case, as he has not found a single arrow head or tool-cut on any of the skeletons that he has examined. He attributes the death of the mega fauna to their inability to adapt to climate change. There is a warning in this for humanity today, as temperature is changing far more quickly than it did during the mega fauna extinction.



Drawing by F. Knight – **Kadimakara Extinct Vertebrates of Australia**

South Australia is rich in fossils and Prof. Wells believes that there is considerable opportunity to develop tourism based on visits to and work on fossil sites. During the afternoon he took us to Redbanks – just west of Burra. There we found many fossils just lying on the surface. A few minutes searching by our group turned up a Diprotodon tooth, several sets of fossilized insect pupae and many fossilized algal mats.

The picture above shows a 2 tonne adult Diprotodon watching its young trapped in a swamp. This is the likely cause of death of the Diprotodon that Prof. Wells' team was working on at Redbanks.

The head of the Diprotodon had already been extracted some time ago and sent to the SA Museum, where it will be prepared for display. The volunteers were carefully excavating the neck bones, shoulder and ribs. You can see some of these bones in the accompanying photo. The full excavation of the skeleton will be a three year job, as work can only be done part-time and has to be done with great care.

Professor Wells also believes that South Australia has a unique record of geological time of which we should be proud. He also called for more volunteers to be involved in the excavations. Any takers?

Dog Hill walking trail. Stuart pointed out that the current official classification of the trail would actually make it a "hike". The committee will prepare a draft of the layout and content of the signs.

- Members of the committee that were present at the October 16th working bee reported on their success with spraying Carrion Flower. The committee resolved to purchase two new spray units.
- Discussion was held about preparations for the 2005 Plant Sale. Clint noted that he had a large number of cuttings ready for potting on and that the November working bee on Saturday 13th November would be an appropriate time to do this.
- Preparations for the Xmas BBQ and Special General Meeting were discussed.