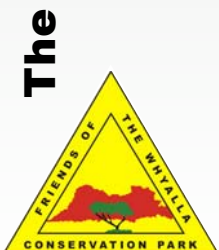




Newsletter of the
 Friends Of Whyalla Conservation Park
 PO Box 805 WHYALLA SA 5600
 Volunteers Working For Conservation

The Myall Post



September
 2004



President's Message

Listening to Prof. Ian Lowe, speaking on background Briefing 22nd August, was instructive. Prof. Lowe was the editor to of the Australia: 1996 State of the Environment Report and a former chair of the Commission for the Future.

He pointed out that the while the Natural Heritage Trust had been responsible for planting many trees and the fencing of some areas of remnant vegetation. However, for every 1 tree planted, about 100 others had been bulldozed. He highlighted the lack of scientific co-ordination of the scheme and the massive under-funding of environmental repair work. *"My worry is that in political terms, no-one has yet accepted publicly the scale of the problem."*

Vegetation destruction can happen in many ways. The violent uprooting of trees with a bulldozer is dramatic, but rabbits and weeds can be just as successful in the long run as destroyers of native vegetation.

The work of the Friends in trying to control rabbits and Carrion Flower in the park is good as it helps to protect our park. What is happening (or not happening) beyond the park can ultimately impact on our park too. For example, this week, I have been involved in tagging two large Carrion flower

infestations -- one to the north of the park and one to the south. Both have the potential to act as a seed source to re-infect our park.

This is part of the problem that Prof. Lowe was talking about. He was definite about the need for scientific research into many of our environmental problems, so that on ground works are more effective. As well as increased research spending, there is the need for a much greater level of environmental spending. The states and the Federal government are spending about \$400 million a year on environmental repair. The estimated amount needed is \$6,000 million per year. I wonder how many Australians are willing to pay more to protect the environment???

Clint Garrett

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Participants on the Father's Day walk pause while Clint Garrett (obscured) explains how False Bay was named by Mathew Flinders. Whyalla, Hummock Hill and Mt. Laura are visible in the background.

Important Dates

Make sure that these dates are entered into your diary!

Working Bee

Saturday 11th September @ 9:00am
Wild Dog Hill

Committee Meeting

Thursday 23rd September @ 7:30pm
267 Landrace Rd

Lake Gilles Conservation Park

Saturday 9th October @ 9:00am
Cnr McDouall Stuart Ave, Iron Knob Rd
(see separate article this page)

Committee Meeting

Thursday 28th September @ 7:30pm
267 Landrace Rd

Bin Roster

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

3rd September - Poyner / Sharp / Smith

10th September - Dean

17th September - Garrett

24th September - vacant, please call

1st October - vacant, please call

8th October - vacant, please call

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

Meeting Report

The last committee meeting was held on Thursday 26th August. At that meeting, the following items were discussed:

- Our Ranger, Stuart Beinke, faxed over the plans for information sign shelters that DEH use. Denise showed the committee copies of a design that Whyalla City Council uses from a company called Landmark. This design can be manufactured in steel and Stuart would be happy for us to purchase one of these. It would be used as a trailhead to the Wild Dog Hill walking trail and paid for from the OneSteel Giving Fund donations.
- David and Clint briefly discussed beginning preparations for the 2005 Plant Sale.
- An application form for grant funds was received in the mail and it was decided that the group should apply for funds to purchase new, lighter display boards to replace the heavy set we currently have (which have performed wonderfully over the years)
- Preparations for the Father's Day Walk, the September Working Bee and the trip to Lake Gilles were discussed.

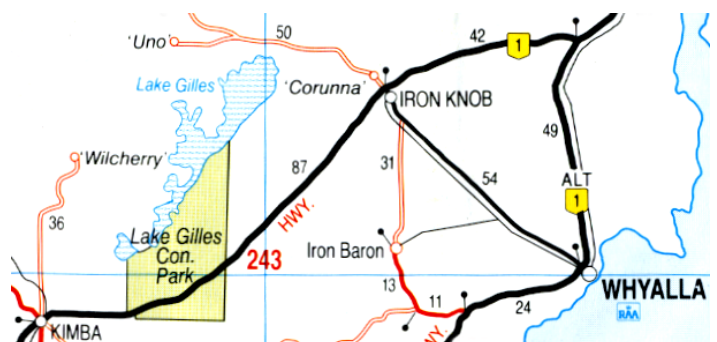
Lake Gilles Trip

Members will note that Saturday October 9th can be more interesting than the major political event happening that day - there will also be a trip to Lake Gilles Conservation Park!

Lake Gilles Conservation Park is primarily composed of mallee scrub which abuts a dry salt lake and is located around ten minutes drive out of Kimba.

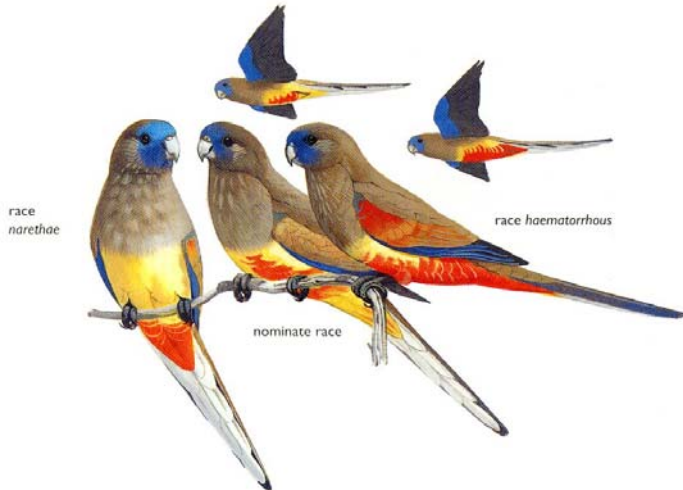
Members interested in joining the trip should meet at the intersection of McDouall Stuart Avenue and the Iron Knob Road at 9:00am. Participants should be back in Whyalla around 4:30pm (which gives you plenty of time to drop into Memorial Oval Primary School and vote - and say hello to us poor people that will have to work that day!).

Members should take their own lunch, however the Friends group will provide morning tea for everyone.



Bird Of The Month

August Working Bee



Field Guide to the Birds of Australia

Blue Bonnet

Along with the Pt Lincoln Parrot and the Mulga Parrot, the Blue Bonnet is one of the three parrot species that can be found in the Whyalla Conservation Park all year round.

It is usually found in pairs or small family parties. Being a predominantly light brown parrot it can be hard to see when perched in trees. Once in the open the blue face becomes more obvious, along with the yellow and red on the lower underparts, and the yellow and blue on the wings. Males are usually a little brighter in colour than the females. The bird is most attractive when perched facing the observer and slightly side-on.

There are several races of this species with plumage variations. The race in our area is the Yellow-vented Blue Bonnet. Blue Bonnets are found in the semi-arid inland areas of SA, Victoria, and NSW, with a separate small population, the Naretha Blue Bonnet just across the border in the south east of WA.

They mostly feed on the ground on seeds from the types of vegetation commonly found in our park. Like many parrots, the breeding season is July to December, preferably after rain. Clutch averages five white eggs, with hatching time of 3 weeks and the young fledge in 4 to 5 weeks.

They are an extremely aggressive species, and in captivity a pair of Blue Bonnets have to be kept well separated from any other birds. They have been known to kill birds much larger than themselves.

Ella Smith

The August working bee found Ella Smith, Darren Thomas, Clint and Marg Garrett crawling on their hands and knees. Why? They had just found hundreds of seedling Carrion flowers instead of the flowers and fruits that they had expected to be picking. The birthing area was the same area from which members removed 100's of kilograms of plants at the previous working bee.

Carrion flower seeds germinate best in shady situations and that is just what they had done. There were many 3 - 5 cm long seedlings that had germinated beneath salt-bushes and blue-bushes near the parent plants. Clearly the rain that we had in July was what was needed to get germination started.

As you will see from the photograph, the number of seedlings was huge and we do not guarantee that all were seen and pulled out. The group of four removed approximately 750 seedlings in a little over an hour. The pile that you can see in the first photograph is 3 or 4 layers deep. Clint weighed 100 seedlings and then weighed the whole pile to estimate how many they had removed.

Clint Garrett



Our Website

Some members may not be aware of our website which can be accessed at:

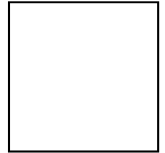
www.fwcp.org

Our site was the first Friends Of Parks website in 1996, but has only had it's own domain name for the last three years.

Admittedly, in the recent past I haven't been keeping it as up-to-date as it should have been. It's had a make-over recently however and I'll do my best to keep it current!



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



Father's Day Walk

The Father's Day walk was enjoyed by everyone that attended, despite having to contend with hordes of flies. 19 people attended, which was a good turnout given that we had to compete with Port Power playing their first final!

Everyone met at the front entrance to the Park, and we then made our way to the Black Point road where we parked in a clearing just over the grid. From there, we walked west parallel to the road for approximately three quarters of an hour. The soil was the same red sand that we are familiar with in parts of the Park.

Two species of mallee dominated the vegetation, *Eucalyptus socialis* (Red Mallee) was interspersed with the less common *Eucalyptus oleosa*. Amongst the shrubs, we spotted Bluebush, Bluebush Daisy, Twin Leaf, Grevillea and Acacia.

Around about half way, we pondered how the indigenous people of the area could have possibly found enough water to survive. We speculated that there must have been a soak somewhere behind the first line of sand dunes.

We made our way back to our starting point behind that first set of dunes, where the soil had changed to the classic white sand of beach dunes. We stopped at a large expanse of Nitre Bush and listened to, and watched, a male Splendid Wren warbling to his harem.

Eventually we exited the dunes to emerge on the beach and we made our way back to our starting point past the first of the False Bay shacks.

The afternoon tea was delightful and was provided by Denise Sharp, Bev Dunham, Rosemary Carter, Joan Nield and Marg Garrett - that is if you could get it to your mouth without it being carried off by the flies!



Parks Service staff from Mambray Creek have recently done a great job in repairing the barrier attached to the grid on the western gate. The barrier had been broken since a vehicle hit it over six months ago and the Friends had been unable to source portable welding equipment to fix it sooner.

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