

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2007

NUMBER 13

Editor: Peter Bird



President's Page

When I went for a walk up Wild Dog Glen and across Urrbrae Ridge early on a March morning I was surprised to see five separate groups of people walking and enjoying the reserve. Perhaps like me they had been brought out by the cooler weather, a welcome break after a hot week and a hot summer. One visitor mentioned seeing an echidna that promptly dug itself in when it was surprised near the Symons Family table.

On a previous walk just before dusk, the yellow evening light had highlighted the trunks of the trees in a most beautiful fashion. Much of the grass has dried and collapsed down over the last couple of months to reveal patches of moss underneath. Surprisingly this still has a touch of green and appears to be just waiting for a break in what will hopefully be a wetter year.

I was surprised by the new growth on some of the eucalypts. Surely that little bit of rain in January couldn't have triggered new shoots? Many of the seedlings planted over the last few years have survived. Perhaps, like the eucalypts, they are tougher than I thought. There have been some casualties too. The committee's approach to re-vegetation is to persevere with a variety of methods so that, despite the odd poor season, we will succeed in the long run.

The reserve has not had any fire problems this season and, as always at this time of year, we keep our fingers crossed. Grant has conducted much University-financed fire prevention work, particularly on the reserve boundaries.

Jennifer's enduring hard work has resulted in another successful Envirofund grant application. This will enable Stephen and

Grant to continue their work on revegetation projects increasing rehabilitation work achieved in the reserve. They will be assisted by Work-for-the-Dole participants and the efforts of the Friends.

In more good news, Penny Paton was successful in attracting another Envirofund grant to continue the Grassy Woodland Network. Funding includes more rehabilitation work proposed for our reserve. Attending a working bee not only gets a job done on the day but also attracts grant funding on a matching basis. In this way your working bee efforts can make a significant difference and I encourage everyone to participate as much as circumstances permit.

Working bee dates are included on enclosed flier. Andy and Annette Baker have again kindly offered to run the BBQ. Please let me know if you can help out with the barbie on the odd occasion when they aren't available.

An encouraging trend amongst members and friends over the last few years has been the growing of seedlings from seed collected on the reserve. Many more boxes of seedlings have been grown over the past summer with potting mix, tubes, seed and boxes supplied by the Friends group. Special thanks to Stephen and Grant for the bulk of the seed collection. My Acacia seedlings germinated slowly but are now thriving and hopefully will provide some good habitat at a future date.

Thank you also to Peter Bird for editing this newsletter.

We look forward to a successful 2007 and your continuing support.

Regards

Chris Kaczan

Grassy Woodland Network to continue

A successful Envirofund grant will provide the Friends of the Waite Conservation Reserve with an increased opportunity to participate in the *Grassy Woodland Network* and will bolster their on-ground works. The grant, submitted by the Nature Conservation Society of SA, will continue to fund the *Grassy Woodland Network* begun in 2005.

This skill-building network provides support to practitioners working to rehabilitate grassy ecosystems in the Mt Lofty Ranges. The support includes a quarterly newsletter, workshops and information on new techniques, publications, conferences and other activities designed to more effectively manage native vegetation.

Active management of grassy woodlands in the MLR is urgent given the low percentage of grassy habitats that remain, their often degraded state and the high number of woodland bird species that rely on this habitat. The Network brings together community groups, non-government organisations and state agencies often working on similar problems and often on adjacent properties.

As well, the Envirofund grant will provide some paid contractor time to tackle weeds on priority sites in the WCR and supply two cordless drills to allow the Friends to employ the 'drill-and-fill' method for control of olives at certain sites in the reserve. Practical instruction on the 'drill-and-fill' method will be provided by the *Grassy Woodland Network* in the first half of 2007.

This technique has proven very effective in other grassy woodland sites in the MLR. Its great strength is that olives can be left standing thereby providing interim habitat for fauna while native plants are regenerating. It also uses minimal amounts of chemical and lessens damage to native vegetation through the removal of olive branches and trees. Watch this space for opportunities to learn more about the 'drill-and-fill' technique.

To join the Network, please contact Penny Paton at: pennypaton@adam.com.au
8344 8891 47 Gilbert St GILBERTON 5081

Penny Paton

*Temperate Woodland Campaigner
Nature Conservation Society of SA*

FRIENDS OF WCR AGM & ILLUSTRATED PRESENTATION

Reptiles of the Adelaide foothills & southern Mt Lofty Ranges

Tim Milne

Starting as an avid herpetologist, Tim's interest in conserving the ecosystems that support our diverse reptile fauna led to many projects in revegetation and monitoring flora and fauna. He has worked in most SA ecosystems and is project manager at the Nature Conservation Society of SA. His photos showcase our wonderful reptiles and their interdependence with our bush. Come along and be delighted and informed by Tim's highly interactive presentation featuring live specimens.

Urrbrae House Wednesday 23 May 2007 7.30 pm

Free admission Supper provided.

All welcome

Enquiries: Joe 8271 2660 Chris 8338 4443 A flier will be mailed to all members nearer the date.

RESERVE REPORT....

Weed control

The ongoing weed control programme has continued in the reserve throughout the summer. Olives have been targeted in different areas, including follow-up work in Wild Dogs Glen. The perennial grasses Cocksfoot and Phalaris have been brush-cut in preparation for spraying once it rains and the grasses are active again. The Kikuyu near the Springfield Gate entrance (Gate 82) is under the same regime.

Reserve in drought

It was a very dry winter and spring last year, followed by a hot summer with no rain since January. As a result there have been some casualties amongst last season's working bee plantings. But there have also been survivors. Seedlings planted by a volunteer in Wild Dogs Glen have fared best due to watering by the same dedicated individual.

The reduced rainfall has had some benefits though, with many weed species setting little viable seed. Unfortunately, the drought-resistant Olives seem to be coping comfortably with the dry conditions.

Among the native species the canopies of the Grey Box have noticeably thinned and the young Native Apricots (*Pittosporum*) have been completely defoliated, but all are expected to recover with the much anticipated rain of the coming season.

Fox baiting

Recent fox baiting saw more than 20 baits taken and a fox carcass found on Netherby Spur.

Fox baiting programmes at nearby Belair and Cleland reserves were temporarily suspended last year but have resumed after re-evaluation by the Department of Environment and Heritage.

Baiting at the Waite will only ever be practical if it is part of a wider regional effort so it is heartening to see the resumption of baiting in the neighbouring parks. Hopefully this will translate into further recovery of bandicoot populations in the local region.

Correctional Services help

A work crew from the Department of Correctional Services spent six hot weeks over summer removing olives under the co-supervision of Grant Joseph and the DCS supervisor.

To the casual observer the most conspicuous work done was on Netherby Spur and along the Yurrebilla Trail. However, they also cleared many olives in the very steep and difficult terrain on the little visited eastern boundary as part of our fire management plan (see photos next page).

'No bikes or dogs in the reserve'

This remains the policy of the reserve and is sign-posted as such on all entrances. Currently these signs seem to be disregarded by many cyclists.

On the other hand, I haven't seen many dogs in the reserve recently. It seems that sign-posted warnings about the dangers of fox baiting are acting as an extra deterrent.

.....Stephen Wait

**Yurrebilla Trail
View before and after work by DCS**



Photos: Grant Joseph

Envirofund grant 2007

The University has secured grant of \$36,724 from Natural Heritage Trust Envirofund for revegetation projects in Waite Conservation Reserve.

The purpose of the projects is to consolidate and build on the substantial achievements made to date in conserving and restoring our significant Grey Box Grassy Woodland. The project will establish the modus operandi for all future revegetation programs and begin implementation under the guidance of site supervisor Stephen Wait.

Friends can play an important role by attending working bees and propagating plants at home. Last spring and summer, Stephen and volunteers collected seed from many species on the Reserve and seedlings will be available for planting in 2007.

This year the Friends' committee plans to implement an 'Adopt-a-Patch' program to encourage the involvement of staff and students on the Waite Campus as well as the broader community.

Penny Paton, an environmental consultant with expertise in the restoration of grassy woodlands has been engaged to develop a detailed Revegetation Plan to guide and maximize our efforts.

Last year employee Grant Joseph completed Revegetation and Restoration Plans for WCR as part of his TAFE Diploma in Conservation & Land Management course. These very valuable documents brought together all the surveys and other data gathered on the WCR to date. In addition, Grant added new data, mapping the four dominant tree species - *Eucalyptus microcarpa*, *E. camaldulensis*, *E. leucoxylon* and *Allocasuarina verticillata* – throughout the WCR and correlating their distributions with geology, slope and aspect. This enabled him to delineate Vegetation Community Formations (dominant species and associated understorey) which will inform our revegetation efforts, ensuring that we plant the right species and in the appropriate species mix at any given site. Stephen, Grant and other members of the Waite Reserve Advisory Committee will work with Penny, contributing their specialist botanical or site specific knowledge to the Plan.

Our revegetation efforts will not only work towards reinstating the indigenous flora, but will also provide a seed source far into the future to enhance long term positive outcomes for the Waite Conservation Reserve and the wider region.

Jennifer Gardner, Manager WCR