



# FRIENDS OF ANSTEY HILL



ABN: 53 952 413 248

PO Box 653

ST. AGNES SA 5097

## NEWSLETTER

**FEBRUARY 2026**

**NO: 01/2026**

### DIARY DATES

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	Clean Up Australia Day	The Shed – Gate 18 - 9.30am
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2026	Committee Meeting	56 RRS
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	Bushcare Session	The Shed – Gate 18 – 9.30am
Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2026	Committee Meeting	56 RRS
Sunday June 2026	Planting Day	The Shed – Gate 18 – 9.30am
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> August 2026	Committee Meeting	56 RRS
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> September 2026	Bushcare Session	The Shed – Gate 18 – 9.30am
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2026	Orchid Walk	TBA
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2026	Committee Meeting & AGM	TTG Heritage Museum



**What you need to know about one of Adelaide's most endangered plant communities!**



Ever heard of a native grassland? If not, you're not alone, and that's part of the problem. This type of vegetation community once covered a huge area around Adelaide, but today, only around 1% of grasslands remain.

Before colonisation, some of the greater Adelaide area you now know as the 'burbs would have been made up of a particular type of vegetation community – a native grassland (also called a Tussock grassland).

This vegetation community (a.k.a a group of plants that grow together under the same environmental conditions), is open and sunny and provides specific habitat for species that avoid areas with lots of trees, shrubs or shade.

Low open and entirely treeless vegetation communities have faced many unique threats and challenges – and in turn, so have the critters that call them home.

Discover more about native grasslands in Adelaide, and how you can help protect them.

### **What is a native grassland?**

Native grasslands are a type of vegetation community made up of mostly, you guessed it, native grasses! Check out this video to learn more and see for yourself.

Healthy grasslands usually include other native plants such as herbs and some also contain a variety of small shrubs. Good quality grasslands can have over 150 different plant species in them!

Just because they have mostly native grasses, don't be fooled into thinking they are like empty paddocks. These plant communities are rich in life and structure, and the variety of plants on show can change dramatically by season. Native grasslands are defined by their tallest layer of vegetation being, well, grass. Occasionally areas with really low densities of trees or shrubs may still be considered as grassland, however, they generally comprise less than 5% of the space. This is handy to remember as some grasslands can have a number of really sparsely scattered trees.

Historically, native grasslands were often cleared for crops, grazing animals and farming. Remnant patches often retain lots of their former species' diversity but it is easy for these areas to be overlooked as just "open space". Because native grasslands don't seem as visually striking as a forest for example, this type of community is one that has become the most poorly conserved in many areas where they once occurred – and knowledge and understanding of grasslands conservation is poor.

### **So, how do I know if I am looking at a native grassland?**

It can be tricky! Native grasses can look weedy to the untrained eye, and many grasslands have been degraded over time. But here are a few clues:

- You'll typically see one or multiple species of native grasses, which often are perennial (meaning they live for multiple years) and form clumps or little tussocks.
- Less degraded grasslands may have a range of wildflowers that may emerge at different times of the year (but particularly in spring).

### **What sort of management does a native grassland need?**

- For grasslands to stay healthy many can actually benefit from some disturbance, such as fire, grazing (from our native wildlife, or stock, as long as the timing is right and the site isn't over grazed). Without this disturbance, grasslands can become too dense, where the space

between tussocks gets filled with plant material. This extra ground cover prevents many grass and herb species from regenerating, and they can lose their diversity. The open space between tussocks is also important for many of the species that live in grassland environments.

- If you are lucky enough to have a grassland on your property, it can be important to maintain your management style and then endeavour to find out what species it is already supporting!



*Cryptic sun-moths are one of the creatures that calls native grasslands home*

### **Why do native grasslands matter?**

While these plant communities might look simple, they have quite diverse native plants, which are important for a number of different species which call grasslands home.

Native grasslands provide vital habitat for:

- reptiles and sun-loving species that need open and warm spaces to bask
- birds that prefer treeless areas, such as many quail species or the plains-wanderer (sadly no longer found in the Adelaide area)
- a whole range of insects that love sunny grasslands
- rare species, such as the cryptic sun-moth, Flinders Ranges worm-lizard and pygmy bluetongue lizard.

They're also important for preserving the unique diversity of plants around Adelaide.

### **What are the threats?**

Unfortunately, native grasslands face a long list of threats that impact on their plant diversity and important low and open structure:

- planting of trees and shrubs
- invasive weeds

- urban development
- misidentification (native grasses mistaken for weeds and sprayed)
- inappropriate soil disturbance

The general lack of awareness about our native grasslands and their management needs means that threats remain largely undetected.

### **Wait – so does this mean we don’t want trees?**

Just to be clear – we love trees! We have a whole blog on why you should [protect mature trees](#), plus one of our flagship projects is our [Urban Greening Strategy](#), metropolitan Adelaide’s first practical roadmap for increasing tree canopy cover and boosting biodiversity.

But, it is about having trees in the right places. In our cities, lining suburban streets, and even in our own backyards, trees play a critical role in cooling our city, providing habitat, and can even improve our own health and wellbeing.

But in native grasslands, and even in our open grassy woodlands, the addition of trees can impact on the open sunny space that many of our lower growing species’ grasses and herbs depend.

### **What can you do to help?**

Here are a few ways you can be a guardian for our native grasslands:

- Learn about grassland habitats in your area. You could even try to identify native grasses and some of the small grassland herbs (Checkout our [guide to native grass ID](#) or use the free [iNaturalist app](#) to help you identify species).
- Avoid impacting negatively on remnant native grassland communities by not driving on them, even if they do look clear of obstacles!
- Be mindful of where and what you plant. Trees are great, but we don’t want to degrade grassland habitats that are meant to have a low and open structure.
- If you are lucky to have remnant grassland in your area, learn about all the different species in your open areas before you change the way they are managed, you may just have some really important native grassland species hiding in there!

Remember, native grasslands aren’t as well-known as some other plant communities, but they’re just as important. Want to know more? Check out the webinar by Green Adelaide’s own Landscape Officer, Dr Julie Schofield.



## PROPAGATION DAY



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is the first report since the AGM so a fair bit has happened over the 4 months, although we did take a few weeks off over the Christmas break and we missed a couple of Wednesdays due to the severe weather conditions.

Despite the breaks, the group has contributed nearly 1,000 volunteer hours in that time with our Wednesday Bushcare Sessions, Propagation Day and increasingly from Adopt-a-Patch.

Propagation Day was held in early December and we had 27 volunteers attend, a fantastic turnout. Over the last few years, we have tried to be a bit more strategic with our plantings, so we have been planting less and hence propagating less. I still think that Planting Day and Propagation Day are key events in our calendar and although there is less work to be done it is more of a social event where volunteers can interact and share ideas over a barbeque. For Propagation Day, Mary Lane took a group for a wander through the park to identify various plant species to supplement the propagation activity prior to gathering for the barbeque. An enjoyable morning in the park for all.

There is an increasing interest in Adopt and-a-Patch with the activity contributing about a third of the volunteer hours over the period. There are now 5 "patches" covered by individuals or groups with 15 volunteers on the WhatsApp group either working on a patch or helping out others when requested. This has worked well, particularly with the dry weather, where we have watered the seedlings more that would be normal (although maybe this is the new normal?). The primary purpose of the WhatsApp group was to allow the rangers and myself to know when people are in the park, primarily from a safety point of view and additionally for the Bushcare Coordinator to log hours and activities in the park. It also allows people on the

group to seek help when needed whether that be boots on the ground or advice of various kinds. Overall, it has been a great success.

Every year the ranger produces an Adaptive Weed Plan for Anstey Hill Recreation Park that we use to guide our activities for the year. In addition to providing a month-by-month list of suggested areas and weeds to target it also contains useful background with bushcare principles and a weed priority list describing the weed of interest and methods of control.

Late last year, the contractor, Restore Environmental Services, completed 2 bodies of work for us.

1. Woody Weed Control to Protect Chestnut-Rumped Heathwren Habitat, Stages 2 & 3. This was work undertaken under a Friends of Parks and Nature Grants Program for the sum of \$15,000.
2. Olive eradication project between the SA Water Treatment Plant and the ruins. This work was funded directly by FOAH for the sum of \$10,000.

These activities and the work done under previous grants and work sponsored by Green Adelaide guided our thinking for the next grant application. This was an attempt to link all these areas and create corridors for both flora and fauna in the park. I am happy to say that in late December we received a letter from the Minister saying we were successful in our application for \$15,000 to fund the project (see attached). Thank you to Ranger Taylor for guiding the application process and to the Member for Newland, Olivia Savvas, for providing a letter of support.

It is fantastic to see a number of new members join the Friends. These new members bring fresh energy and ideas, gives us more hands on the ground and fosters a stronger community connection. This is important in that it builds resilience, balancing the natural turnover and ensuring that we remain active for the long term.

Part of our strategy to increase community connection, and hence increase the opportunity to attract new members, is taking part in various forums and community activities that come up from time to time. This one, which we have attended in the past, is the Seniors' Forum hosted by the Member for Newland, Olivia Savvas. Thank you to the volunteers that will help with the stall over the 2 sessions.

A final thank you to Roberta Swift who has informed us that she is resigning from the committee due to work commitments. Roberta has helped us on the committee over a number of years and was the one who suggested we set up the WhatsApp group for Adopt-a-Patch which has been a resounding success. Hopefully we will see her back sometime in the future.

Steve Lukacs  
11th February 2026

## **BUSHCARE REPORT**



**Period: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026**

This is the first report for the financial year. During this period, I was away for a month, so a big thank you to Diann for mustering the troops on a Wednesday. We also had a 3-week break over Christmas and missed the first session back due to a fire ban.

It is my intention to step away from the Bushcare Coordinator role at the end of September and have a replacement ready to go at the next AGM. To that end, I have sent out a brief position description to the Wednesday group to see if anyone is interested in taking over the role with the view of working with them over the coming months to enable a smooth transition.

This is a summary of activities undertaken over this period:

- Ridgetop (past Kurna) western side aloe vera, olives, rhamnus, african daisy
- Maintenance of Gate 1 quarry planting area including a visit from visit from the Friends of Para Wirra (including watering, grass slashing and guard replacement)
- Gun emplacement - olives, boneseed
- Gate 5, clearing any fresh growth of boneseed, check on olives (emu walk)
- Kurna Way, olives and african daisy (support for grant)
- Area around lookout, general maintenance

Future activities include (based on 2026 Adaptive Weed Plan):

- Return to western side of Ridgetop (past Kurna), agave, olive, bridal creeper
- Eastern side of Ridgetop (past Kurna), olive, Rhamnus, bridal creeper
- Return to Gate 5, clearing any fresh growth of boneseed, check on olives (emu walk)
- Return to creek line going up from the ruins, Rhamnus, african daisy, olive
- Arum lilies coming up from gate 6 following the creek line
- Kurna Way near the roundabout tree, support grant activities
- Return to Gun Emplacement and (Erica, olive, dog rose, blackberry, boneseed)
- Return to Angove's Conservation Park (note new ranger Matt Shattock) – bulbous weeds
- Remove old fencing, particularly those which include barb wire strands.

Statistics for the Bushcare Group activities for this period:

- 12 Wednesday mornings sessions plus a Sunday Bushcare Sessions and Propagation Day
- Total of 603 hours plus 387 hours from Adopt a Patch (990 hours in total)
- Average number of hours per morning session is 35
- Average number of workers per morning session is 13

Many thanks to all.

**Steve Lukacs**

**Bushcare Coordinator**

11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**EXTRACT FROM THE ADAPTIVE WEED PLAN FOR ANSTEY HILL:**

Anstey Hill Recreation Park conserves an area of 362 hectares of native vegetation and previously grazed land, located 18 kilometres north-east of Adelaide in the Hills Face Zone of the Mount Lofty Ranges. The majority of the park was proclaimed on 31 August 1989 to conserve the native vegetation and cultural heritage of the park, and to provide for public recreation and enjoyment. The Friends of Anstey Hill have cared for the park throughout its existence, recently celebrating their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of care and conservation.

Anstey Hill is managed by the Department of Environment and Water's National Parks and Wildlife Service, falling within the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Region. It currently falls under the purview of the 'Barossa Cluster' within the North Lofty District, a team of 4 rangers (plus one senior ranger), managing 11 parks between Tea Tree Gully and Tanunda. These parks cover about 3700 hectares of reserves and conservation areas, with Anstey Hill (the 4<sup>th</sup> largest we look after) making up a little under 10% of this area.

Anstey Hill has many challenges to its native biodiversity, most notably from invasive weeds, which this document is primarily focussed on. Other challenges include steep terrain, over-grazing by native kangaroos and illegal activities by park users.

## **Bushcare Principles**

Due to the large size of Anstey Hill, a targeted conservation-based approach should be used to ensure work is sustainable, working with the vegetation to set the pace of weed removal. To achieve this, bushcare principles should be followed to ensure long-term success and maximum efficiency of the work.

1. Work from the good native vegetation outwards towards more weed-infested areas. This encourages natural recruitment and sets the pace for weed control.
2. Follow-up first! Following up on previous years' weed control efforts should always be undertaken before beginning control in new areas. This consolidates previous efforts, and limits growth of new seed-producing plants.
3. Cause minimal disturbance to soils and existing plants. Soil disturbance leads to further weed growth, but targeted herbicide use not always most effective/desirable method. Balance needs to be struck between efficiency of control, minimising soil disturbance and chemical handling.
4. Less weeds is sometimes better. An 'emu walk' through good native vegetation that only yields 6 weeds in an hour is just as, if not more, effective than 200 plants out of a weed-infested area.
5. Always consider 'why is this weed being controlled' and 'what is the most likely vegetation to grow back'. If controlling a weed in a particular area is largely futile in the long run, best to leave it and focus on other priorities.
6. Avoid overclearing. Doing 'too much' can create an unsustainable follow-up regime, so always ensure group has capacity to follow-up in all weed control areas.
7. Promote biomass breakdown. Cut up removed weeds into smaller pieces so that as much vegetation is in contact with the ground as possible.

## **NATIONAL PARKS FIRE CREW VISIT**



Just before New Year we had a visit from Jake and his crew – Jack, Zak and Andrew (Canadian exchange fire fighter). They worked to clear brush and trees overhanging the Shed to help with protecting our equipment and facilities from any fires.



## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members who have joined since our last newsletter. Hope to see you at one of the events during the year.

Eliza Van der Ploeg

Cameron Rayner

Lucy Blake

Poppy Molloy

Trevor Bagshaw

Bri Stewart

Julie Blake



Tawney Frog Mouths Near Gate 20 – David Cristani Photo

Congratulations to William Harmer for completing his Duke of Edinburgh Award Hours to obtain his Bronze Award this year by attending our Bushcare Sessions with his family. His brother Alex, was also able to use his volunteer hours towards his Children's University Degree Award. Congratulations to Alex.





The Wednesday crew enjoying a yarn with a cuppa and bickie after a solid morning's work in the park.

**YOUR 2025-2026 COMMITTEE:**

**President:**  
Steve Lukacs

**Secretary:**  
Diann Lozoraitis

**Treasurer:**  
Kevin Laurance

**Committee Members:**

Rob Carthew  
Jenny Carthew  
Christine Thomas  
Roberta Swift (resigned)

Reg Smith  
David Sheppard  
Duncan McAulay  
David Crisanti

**Newsletter:** Diann Lozoraitis

**Facebook:** Christine Thomas

**Bushcare:** Steve Lukacs

**Ranger:** Taylor Heath and Alisha Adams

**LIFE & HONORARY MEMBERS**

Rodney Attwood  
Don Bursill  
Margaret Bursill  
Merv Fenwick  
Jill Fenwick  
Rommy Freebairn

Victor Gostin  
Olga Gostin  
Mary Lane  
Roger Collier  
David Sheppard  
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**Olivia Savvas MP**  
MEMBER FOR NEWLAND

Office 4, 1257 North East Rd,  
Ridgehaven SA 5097  
8264 4482  
newland@parliament.sa.gov.au



  OliviaSavvasNewland



**Drakes.**

**Drakes Community Dollars**

Contact Details

Website address: <https://friendsofparkssa.org.au/members/members-directory/friends-of-anstey-hill-recreation-park>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/friendsofansteyhill>

Email: [anstey.friends@gmail.com](mailto:anstey.friends@gmail.com)

