



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 117 November 2016

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Park Working Bees
First Sunday of
month 10am, Main
Gate, Hallett Road
Stonyfell

Park Working Bee
Dates 2016

3 January
7 February
6 March
3 April
1 May
5 June
3 July
7 August
4 September
2 October
6 November
4 December

Reminder:
Christmas luncheon
to be held at
Geoffrey's house on
Sunday 11th
December
(directions to be
provided)

Working Bees Update August – November 2017

Two planting sessions were held in the Park during late winter. On 7 August, members planted approximately 40 plants adjacent to the Hallett Road gates as an 'Entrance to the Park' feature. This area was practically devoid of native species and what shrubs were there were destroyed during the re-fencing of the park. Additional *Bursaria spinosa* seedlings were planted along the track from the gates to Ferguson Creek.

The second planting was held on Friday 26 August and was carried out by a group of 28 Years 8 and 9 students from the neighbouring St Peter's Girls College, some of whom are members of the school's conservation group. Approximately 200 seedlings were planted in three sites:

- Site 1 was in Stonyfell Creek near the first constructed weir;
- Site 2 was adjacent to the entry from Stonyfell Road (this was an ocean of Soursob); and
- Site 3 was at the intersection of tracks at the SE corner of the school oval.

The species planted were *Acacia pycnantha*, *Acacia acinacea*, *Bursaria spinosa*, *Cyperus vaginatus* (creek only) and *Lomandra multiflora* var. *dura* (Stiff Iron-grass). The plants were raised for us by Environments by Design using seed collected in the park.

The afternoon was overcast and it rained during the evening which was ideal for the plants which we had not 'watered-in'. The girls did a great job and, judging by all the talking, thoroughly enjoyed themselves! Our thanks to teacher Anna Stefopolos for organising the event.

Group of students busy planting at Site 3

Some of the girls recording their efforts!

At our October working bee, we systematically weeded the Hallett Road Triangle for Cape Tulip, Plantain and Sparaxis. The bulb species were in full bloom so were easy to locate. Most were removed by digging the bulb but for some the flower heads were removed to prevent seed set. Approximately half the site was completed. The dense swathe of flowers of years past was gone but a good number of juvenile plants came to flower this season.

Whilst weeding the area, five native orchid species were located. This was a pleasant and unexpected find. Dwarf greenhood (*Pterostylis nana*) has been recorded from here in past seasons but the other four are new – King Spider Orchid (*Caladenia (Arachnorchis) tentaculata*), Common Pink Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra rubra*), Maroon-hood Orchid (*Pterostylis pedunculata*) and Sandhill Onion Orchid (*Microtis arenaria*). The orchids were marked so that they can be observed and weeded.

The November working bee included weeding around the new plantings, both at the Hallett Road entrance and in the vicinity of Stoneyfell Creek. Follow-up control of Cape Tulip, Plantain and Sparaxis was also carried out. A hunt for Pussytail Grass (*Pentameris (was Pentaschistis) pallida*) failed to find more than a handful of individuals which was most encouraging!

Geoffrey Bishop and Sarah Telfer

The song of the cicadas in Ferguson Conservation Park

With the hot season approaching, the Park is turning again from a pleasant green to a yellowish brown. Our common weeds like the Soursofs or the Cape Tulips have withered and almost disappeared. This year the grasses are high after a good winter rain and are setting seeds. The Chocolate Lilies abound everywhere as do small butterflies commonly known as “Blues”.

This is also the time when the Noisy Miners feed their offspring and the constant begging of the young for food may annoy you on your walk through the Park. There is, however, some kind of noise, which would probably be more unnerving than that one of the Miners, if it were more in the audible range of the human ear. It is the song of the cicadas.

On warm days, from about the second half of November, there is an army of these insects actively to feeding, singing and reproducing. There are two species, one which makes a clicking noise high up in the gum trees and a second one which generates a squeezing, rattling sound. The latter is absent in the lower lying parts of the Park, maybe because of the lack of a suitable understory.

An individual of those cicadas which click may start by single beats while others gradually join in. They synchronize their clicks to the effect that the beats grow stronger as more insects join the chorus. After up to a minute the intensity of this combined synchronized noise dies off only to be resumed again after a while.



You are reminded of the surf on the beach with the swelling and falling noise of the waves. The frequency of the noise is centered at around 10 kHz and ranges from 5 kHz to 20 kHz.

The song of the second species of cicada consists of two sections, a continuous intense chirping and rattling which eventually crosses over to a rhythmic squeezing. As soon as this part of the song stops the whole sequence repeats, which may last about 45 seconds. This noise comes from cicadas on shrubs and trees not higher than 3-4 meters. The centre frequency of the song and its range is about the same as described previously. This second species is only active for about two to three weeks, while the other species may continue to produce its clicks until February the following year. Should your hearing still be good you will have no problems listening to both songs. If you are an elderly person you may need a bat detector to listen to this kind of insect singing.

Some large cicadas of the eastern states have common names like 'Greengrocer', 'Yellow Monday' or 'Redeye'. The small cicadas which inhabit Ferguson CP are known as 'Ambertails', a collective name for a complex of species, which are mainly a black colour with various orange

markings on the abdominal segments. They closely resemble each other. They are present as pinned specimens in the insect collection of the South Australian Museum. Their genus names are now *Yoyetta* and *Clinopsalta*, which have replaced the older name *Melampusalta*. The photo on the left shows one of these singers, most probably a *Yoyetta* sp.

Gerhard Weber

The Ant Man – Archibald (Archie) John McArthur

We noted recently the passing of Archibald (Archie) McArthur - The Ant Man, a friend of FFCP in that he confirmed that an ant discovered by one of our members, Gerhard Weber, was a 'new' species and is now accepted and registered as *Camponotus fergusonii*. This discovery was covered in Newsletter No.81, December 2004, as follows:

Ant species named after Ferguson Park

One would expect that the different species occurring in an area as small as Ferguson Conservation Park, east of Adelaide, would today bear proper scientific names. However, the recent discovery of an ant, previously named, in Ferguson Park demonstrates that just the opposite is true. The ant had been collected from other locations in South Australia and specimens had been deposited in the insect collection of the South Australian Museum.

When asked to identify such an ant collected in Ferguson Park, the specialist at the Museum, Archie McArthur, found that no description existed of this species and consequently no name. After obtaining 'fresh material' from the Park, Archie published a short description in 2003 of the two worker castes of this species and proposed its name, *Camponotus fergusonii*, in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 127, 5-14, together with descriptions, illustrations and names of other species belonging to the genus *Camponotus*. The name *C.fergusonii* has been accepted by the authorities in this field and is now a valid name.

The workers of *C.fergusonii* are about 7mm long. They may be seen from spring to autumn on the ground or on plants with aphids or coccids. Currently only two nests are known in the Park, which are in the ground in heavy soil. Populations seem to be small. The maximum number of workers observed outside the nest was about 150. Apart from the workers there exists a large-headed caste, the main function of which could be to guard the nest entrance.

This find illustrates how little we know of the micro-fauna and probably the flora of small natural parks as Ferguson Conservation Park and the importance of allowing minimal disturbance. (Author - Gerhard Weber)

As described in part in his obituary 1 October 2016, Archie McArthur developed an interest in ants whilst working on his family farm in Millicent and became an authority in that area. Later, when he retired and moved to Adelaide he became a volunteer with the SA Museum in 1990, and as his encyclopaedic knowledge of ants became clear, he was made an honorary research associate and given his own office in 1994.

Doug Nicholas

Bikes are coming!

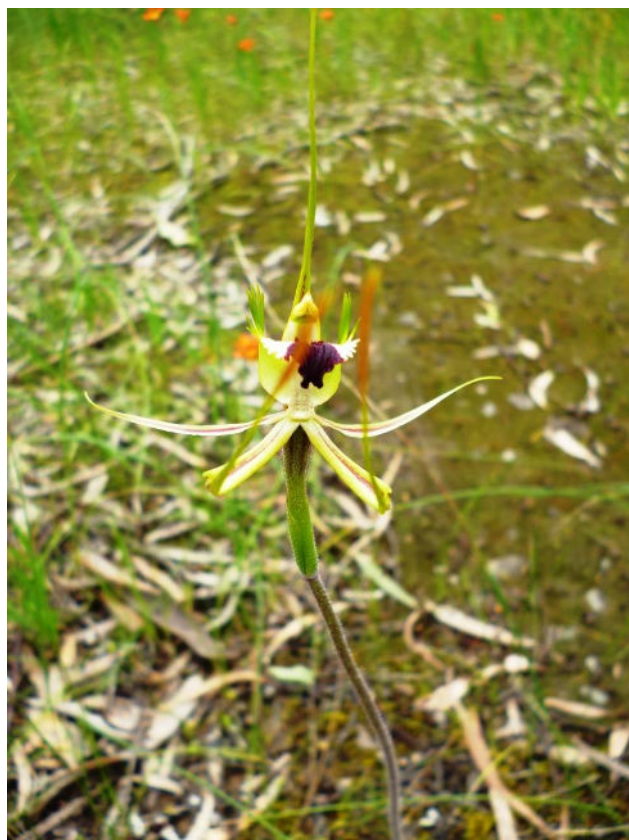
In a letter to The Advertiser on 1 October 2016 it was confirmed that Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources had recently constructed a mountain bike track through a revegetation area of Anstey Hill Conservation Park. A sign on the park gate suggests it is part of the Department's plan to convert Adelaide's Conservation Park's system into an international mountain biking destination.

We have had our own experiences with mountain bikes and it may be just as well we are considered a small park!

Doug Nicholas



Maroon-hood Orchid at Ferguson (Photo: G. Bishop)



Spider Orchid at Ferguson (Photo: G. Bishop)