



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 118 March 2017

President: Geoffrey Bishop, "Ferndale" PO Box 194, Uraidla SA 5142 Ph: 8390 3138

Newsletter Editor
Sarah Telfer
Ph: 0427 313344

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

Park Working Bee
Dates 2017

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

Working Bees Update December 2016 – March 2017

Weeding continued apace, with target weeds including Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Pussytail Grass (*Pentameris pallida*) and Rice Millett (*Piptathrum miliaceum*). Couch (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Kikuyu (*Cenchrus clandestinus*), which took advantage of the summer rains, were sprayed along Ferguson Creek in March.

Desert Ash (*Fraxinus rotundifolia*) was again cut and swabbed along Stoneyfell Creek – it too seems to have thrived during the wetter than usual summer.

Thanks to Doug and James, much of the recent revegetation has been provided with a drink over the summer.

President's Report - Friends of Ferguson Conservation Park 2016

This has been our 34th year of caring for 'our' park – that's a pretty impressive record.

Eleven working sessions were held during the year with another truncated due to the weather conditions. Our attendance ranged from 7 to 13 people with an overall average of 9 people. Our total time spent for the Sunday morning work sessions was 211 hours or 8.8 days. Added to that were a few other sessions and meetings which brought the total to 293 hours. We don't keep very good track of 'out-of-hours' input such as visits to attend to project matters, spraying, newsletter production, etc. and I think we could just about double our recorded hours.

Our extra projects this year included a planting session with SPCGS students on 26 August. Twenty-eight Yr 8 and 9 students took part and planted over 250 plants at three sites, one being in Stonyfell Creek. They also planted a key path intersection near the SE corner of the school's oval and our members later did a similar key planting just inside the Hallett Road gates to improve the entrance to the park.

April was our last time with our ranger Amy Anderson present before she left to take up a new position at Willunga. Our thanks go to Amy for her wonderful support over the past couple of years. Her enthusiasm and involvement was much appreciated. Since then we have welcomed our new contact ranger, Brent Lores.

One major job undertaken by DEWNR early in the year was to replace the old pine railing fence. The new fence has a more 'rural' appearance and has brought good comments from neighbouring residents.

Our work over the year entailed quite a lot of targeted weed control; for example, continued work in the Hallett Road Triangle which is showing good signs of improvement. The wet season resulted in prolific flowering of Cape Tulip which we pulled/dug on two occasions. We have also continued to target the areas of *Pentstemonis*, again with pleasing results. The original area is virtually free of this annoying annual grass but our most recently discovered area will require continued vigilance.

Rice Millet remains a significant concern, especially along Stonyfell Creek and at other sites, e.g. adjacent to Marble Terrace. This perennial grass will go from seedling to seed production in one season and its fine seed remains viable in the soil for a long time. (The perfect weed!). Ash seedlings, again on Stonyfell Creek, are an ongoing concern and several sessions of poisoning were carried out. Another concern along the creek is the active fox dens; we continue to find partly eaten possums.

A project of a different kind has been the attention given to the Native Apricots in the corner next to the Early Learning Centre. The sole remaining tree was prompted to sucker when earthworks were carried out for the new boundary fence. Some plants may be seedlings but this is difficult to ascertain. The plants were watered in dry periods and have been sprayed several times to control pittosporum Bug, a sucking insect which can kill young plants and severely affect mature ones.

Our work on the Stonyfell Creek project has mainly involved repair work to the weirs that were installed. The heavy flows this past winter, and large silt loads, have resulted in large amounts of material being deposited behind the weirs forcing the water to breach the weirs at the banks resulting in considerable undermining of the banks. Hay bales have been installed to rectify the situation and appear to be 'holding'.

Our thanks are also recorded to Sarah Telfer for producing our newsletter and to Wendy and Martin Percy for their secretarial work on our behalf. It was also very pleasing to welcome some new members during the year – Bill Bainger, Kasia Siwicki and Dan Wilson (all newly moved into Stonyfell).

Every year some things get done and some do not in spite of our planning. But, most importantly, we do achieve results and, as a group, we share a common interest in the future of the park and enjoy working together. So, thanks are extended to all our members for their continuing enthusiasm and involvement. We do make a difference and will continue to do so.

Geoffrey Bishop, President,, February 2017

Track maintenance

Wow! What a winter for water movement..... and track soil in the Park! Since last writing, I and one other shoveller have made many more water diverters, mostly during rainy events, so the need and result can be judged instantly. This has displayed, for all to see, the constant erosion that is happening, because there is no soil leaving the Park - it just gets dropped at the lower end of the diverters as the water slows down.

The main track from the north-east corner of the school oval, south east to the 'Jay ' memorial is heavily eroded. It heightens my awareness of the need to stop this soil movement by 'armouring' the tracks as needed. There are already examples of this, for example on the steep approaches to the footbridge over the small creek just south of the school oval.

I am happy to coordinate a small group of us to:

- 1) Do some homework on the feasibility of raising eroded tracks to ground level , then carting gravel into the park (maybe in wheelbarrows) with minimal damage to the native veg;
- 2) Apply to Parks or Council for funding; and
- 3) Recruit the road cartage and wheelbarrow teams for gravel spreading.

Bill Bainger

Planting with St Peters' Girls students

During 2016 we conducted a very successful planting with the students of St Peters Girls College at the new entrance location and nearby sites of the Stonyfell Road gateway to the Park. Some fifty plants were planted, with the help of about forty senior and junior students from the School, and of course they have had the benefit of the very good rains we have had through 2016/17. Most of them are now up to 60cm tall and looking very healthy which will make a more attractive entrance to the Park.

The plantings that Friends group members carried out at the Hallett Road entrance have also been very

successful and are showing good growth.

Doug Nicholas

Native Apricot (*Pittosporum angustifolium*)

Our attempts to grow on the Native Apricot have not been successful despite 2-3 efforts. When the St Peters' Girls Early Learning Centre was developed in 2014 the movement of soil (and damage to roots) caused a large number of seedling-like plants (or suckers) to grow so a program of watering was instigated to ensure they grew during what were very dry seasons at that time. In 2015 Fred and Doug took some seedlings to develop at home but they gradually died off without one successful plant.

Doug Nicholas



Christmas Bush (*Bursaria spinosa*) in full bloom near the Hallett Road Park entrance in early January 2017.

Control of Desert Ash (*Fraxinus rotundifolia*)

Desert Ash originated in the Mediterranean region and Western Asia. It has been widely planted in the past, particularly in public spaces such as parks, urban streets and rural roadsides. It is a highly invasive species in disturbed riparian areas and drainage lines and major infestations now occur in the Adelaide Hills. It prefers seasonally moist, fertile soil, but can establish and persist in drier locations, usually where extra run-off is available.

At Ferguson, Desert Ash occurs along Stoneyfell Creek and a concerted effort has been made over a number of years to control seedlings and young adults, however it will continue to be a problem as long as there is a source of seed in upstream areas (outside of the Park). We've been controlling by either hand-pulling when the soil is moist and there is no chance of leaving any root in the ground, or by cutting and swabbing using Triclopyr ('Tree Killer'). It is an on-going job but worthwhile as the thought of mature Desert Ash trees taking over the creekline is not a pretty one!

Sarah Telfer