



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 129 –October 2020

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

Park Working Bee
Dates 2020

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

Working Bees Update

July 2020

After good rain in June, the soil was nice and moist and a concerted effort was made to hand-pull Sparaxis bulbs in The Triangle.

Andre reported to the group on the meeting with a Burnside Council representative re the issue of sediment in Stonyfell Creek. The Council is on side and working on it.

August 2020

More weeding of Sparaxis and Cape Tulip in The Triangle. Transplanting of some Cyperus from the creek into a bare patch (see article below).

Geoffrey reported that DEW's re-designed website now allows access to Friends groups to upload information, photos, etc. Martin and Wendy have volunteered to be the contact for this.

The St Peters Girls' Environment Group will be undertaking projects in the Park on every second Wednesday. Geoffrey did an introductory session with them. Projects will include weed control (Sparaxis, Freesia, Pentaschistis); repeat of previously established photopoints; photograph orchid species.

September 2020

Burnside Councillor Henry Davis attended the working bee and updated the group on the issue of sedimentation in Stonyfell Creek. Boral is moving its sedimentation pond which should help to alleviate at least some of the problem. Henry informed us that the Burnside Council may have the resources to assist with other projects at Ferguson.

Geoffrey has held two sessions with the St Peters Girls' Environment Group and reported that the upcoming session on 16th September would see the girls helping to control Cape Tulip and Sparaxis (see article below).

The focus of today's working bee was Sparaxis and Cape Tulip which were in full flower.

Sarah Telfer, Editor

The missing bronze plaque

The bronze plaque from the Hallett Road gates remains lost. Its disappearance was reported to the police but they indicated that it was unlikely to be recovered. The theft is most frustrating as its scrap value is likely to be less than \$20. Replacing it is a very different story.

Options to replace the plaque have been investigated. It could be reproduced as a photograph on a metal backing (in effect, a sign) but this material exposed to sunlight is likely to have a life of only 10 years. An option suggested by DEW is for a trailhead sign for the park incorporating an image of the plaque. These signs are in line with current DEW signage budgets and their longevity is likely to be at least 10 years or more. The

only long-term option is a brass or bronze plaque.

Quotes have been obtained from Schubert & Sons, Monumental Masons. An exact replica of the original bronze plaque with corner pyramid nuts will cost \$1993 and one with a just a simple raised border is not much less at \$1885 (both prices include GST and installation by a monumental mason). The cost is largely in the metal and casting.

The group cannot afford to pay all of this cost so we are looking for donations from members toward half the cost of the replacement plaque, that is, around \$1200-1500.

Geoffrey Bishop

An unusual fungus

This winter has been a good time for seeing a wide variety of fungi in the Park. The warm period prior to the coming of the winter rains left the soil warmer for longer than usual and this is advantageous to many species of fungi.

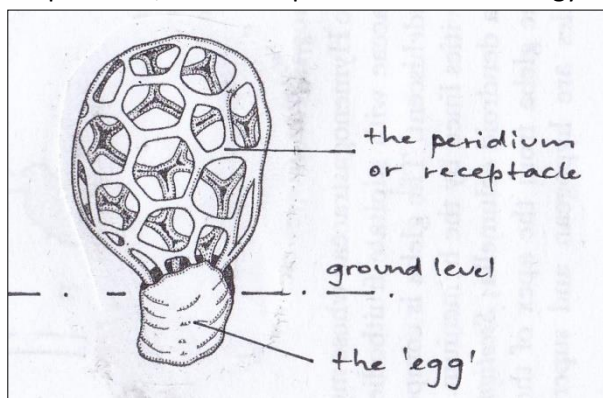


Of particular interest is this seldom seen species *Clathrus gracillis*. It does not have a common name but the members of the genus *Clathrus* are broadly known as the lattice fungi due to the unusual nature of the fruiting body. This specimen is approx. 8 cm in diameter and 5 cm high. This species can be as large as 20 cm in diameter.

Where does *Clathrus* fit in the fungal family? It is a Higher Fungus, that is, a member of the Basidiomycetes and is in the Class Gasteromycetes. This large Class includes various forms, some that may be familiar and some not so - stinkhorns, puff-balls (both fleshy and dry),

earth stars, earth balls and false truffles. Many species exist in mycorrhizal relationships with tree and shrub species. Some are edible, especially puff-balls when young, but some species are foul-smelling.

The genus name *Clathrus* comes from the Greek *kleithron* meaning a lattice. There are three species recorded from Australia of which two occur in South Australia – *Clathrus cibarius* and *C. gracillis*. The mature fruiting body, the peridium, of these species is white to dingy white in colour. The third species, *C. pusillus* occurs in eastern Australia and its peridium is red. The common species in Europe, *C. ruber* (syn. *C. cancellatus*), also has a red-coloured peridium and has a distinctly unpleasant smell.



The Gasteromycetes have two parts to their structure. The hyphae form an 'egg' below the ground and it matures to form an oval, hollow lattice receptacle (the peridium) composed of united hyphal branches with a slimy gleba (the fertile part of the peridium) on its inner surface where the spores are borne. The remains of the 'egg' are left as a cup surrounding the base of the fruiting body. This is illustrated

here in a drawing from 'Principles of Fungal Taxonomy' (1971) by Dr P.H.B. Talbot who lectured Mycology at the University of Adelaide. I had Dr Talbot as a lecturer in Plant Pathology II and he was an inspiring teacher. His hobbies were painting and wood carving; his office was decorated with carvings of fungi.

Geoffrey Bishop

Lower Ferguson Creek

Lower Ferguson Creek (below the ford) supports a healthy crop of weeds – soursobs, kikuyu, sparaxis bulbifera, cape tulip, arum lilies, snowdrops, three-cornered garlic, rice millet, salsify and umbrella sedge amongst others. There are also some dense stands of the native flat-sedge, *Cyperus vaginatus*. The kikuyu competes with the Cyperus and threatens to smother it. I have sprayed a large section of kikuyu several times over the last year or so with good results. In August this year Neil Crisp and I revegetated the sprayed area with Cyperus transplanted from healthy stands elsewhere in the Park. With continued suppression of the kikuyu, I am hopeful that the Cyperus will become established.

Further down the Creek, three cornered garlic has become widespread. This is a bulb plant with small white flowers and an onion smell. This will need repeated herbicide treatment before it is suppressed. Mixed in with the garlic are a number of salsify plants. Geoffrey reports that salsify is a crop plant grown in Greece and Turkey and its long taproot may be cooked and eaten like parsnip.

James Swanson



Cyperus vaginatus planted in an area of creekline previously dominated by kikuyu.



Salsify, cultivated as a root crop in the Mediterranean.

St Peter's Girls' Environment Group gets involved

Following a request from St Peter's Girls' Environment Group through the group's leader Sara Peak (Year 11) a formal programme of involvement with FFCP commenced during Term 3 and will continue in Term 4. The Environment Group meets every alternate Wednesday from 12.15 to 1.30 pm and has an established programme of events. Its focus has two components, one being the natural environment and the other human or social environment, and then the linkages and dependencies between the two areas. The Group's teacher mentor is Anna Stefanopoulos, Humanities Teacher, who has worked with me in past years.

I have run three sessions with the girls to date and more are planned next term. Anna, Sara and I went through some options for activities which would broaden the girls' appreciation of Ferguson Park from a natural history and biology perspective rather than them simply doing tasks as directed in the Park. The Environment Group currently has 45 members from Year 8 to Year 11 but numbers attending each meeting varies depending on what other school activities are occurring (and there are plenty of calls on students' time!).

Our first session on Thursday 6th August was an introductory session of 40 minutes held in a meeting room. I did two things at the session – introduced the Park and the Friends group via a PowerPoint presentation and then spoke about two role model environmentalists. In hindsight I should have done it in reverse order as the second part really grabbed their attention. I spoke to them about two young female environmental figures, one for the natural world and the other for the social world. I didn't name either of them and the girls eventually worked out

who they were The first was Greta Thunberg, 17, climate activist, and the other Jessica Watson, 26, United Nations Youth Ambassador working with Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The second session was held in the Park on Wednesday 16th August and the girls direct seeded native grasses on the St Peter's Track site – time will tell if any plants grow as the planting was followed by some dry, warm weather. The first part of the session was a talk to the girls by our Ranger Natalie Lewis, entitled 'A day in the life of a ranger'. Natalie gave a warm, engaging address of how she came to study environmental science, her early volunteering work, being a 'firey' and a ranger and then covered career opportunities in the area. One girl said she planned to do environmental law given the lack of jobs in the natural sciences. Natalie stayed on to help with the planting and to talk one-on-one with the girls.

The third session, on Wednesday 16th September (Week 9), was again in the Park and the girls (just 8 as the rest were away on Year Camps which had been delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions) weeded Cape Tulip and Sparaxis from The Triangle and the area immediately to the north of this area. Lots and lots of plants were removed many with bulbs attached as the soil was still quite moist. At the beginning of the session I talked to the girls about the concepts of weeds and invasive plants. Martin and Wendy came along and worked with the girls. The girls worked well and were appreciative of being involved and there were many 'thank yous' on their departure.

Thank you Natalie, Wendy and Martin for your input into the programme!

Geoffrey Bishop

Sparaxis in Ferguson

Sparaxis is one of our high priority weeds for control at Ferguson, particularly in the Triangle which supports good patches of native grasses and regenerating native tree and understorey species. Sparaxis is a bulb which belongs to the Iris family and it has probably become established in the Park as a result of escaping from surrounding gardens. Foliage emerges in winter, with flowering and seeding occurring in spring.

Sparaxis can form extensive stands and impede the growth and regeneration of native plants. The species reproduces by seed as well as corms/bulbs, therefore control is best undertaken prior to flowering and seed set. At Ferguson, we've been working for many years on hand pulling or grubbing plants in late winter to early spring or cutting off flower heads prior to seed set. Its an ongoing project!

Sarah Telfer



Sparaxis forms dense stands and is very colourful and attractive in the spring – its easy to see why they are a popular garden plant!