

June 2022

Vol 26, No 2

Para Wirra News



Photo: Leonie Hobbs



From the Friends of Para Wirra (Patron: Mike Johnson)
and the Barossa Goldfields Historical Society
- Proudly members of Friends of Parks Inc.

Welcome to the march 2022 Edition of Para Wirra News

Welcome to the rather belated June edition of Para Wirra News. Sometimes 'life' catches up with you and things need to move a little slower...

Lots of things have been happening in both the Barossa Goldfields Historical Society and FOPW. Keep you eye out for changes around Bowden Cottage, New land addition to Para Wirra and, hopefully, some new grants.

Darren Williams

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President's Report



JUNE 2022

As usual the working bees have been carried out with great results this quarter, and the park is looking all the better for this hard work. It is amazing how much can be done in so short a time at these events – congratulations to all who attended. The Whack a Weed day with cubs and scouts went well.

At the Quarterly meeting on 18th June, Phil reported that we have recently had some fantastic working bees working on the slopes going down to the South Para River and taking out small olives above Glenburnie, also below the Knob and the Glenburnie section. Para Wirra is Park of the Month this weekend with those attending to enjoy a Big Night Out.

The suggestion to ask John Dawkins, who has been our Honorary Member for some years due to his support of our group, if he would like to become our Patron, was agreed at this meeting.

A Green Adelaide Grant for \$7000 has been applied for by Grants manager Steve Taylor, who has produced his usual great submission, and we have been notified of his success for this. Great work, Steve!

We have recently been joined by new members Kailee Williams, Stuart Horrocks and Alex Mackenzie – a big welcome to them all!

Square-tailed Kites have been seen in the area, report to Tammy if you see any.

The Scenic Route is to be closed to cars due to poor condition. A sign will be erected.

Tammy showed us the Rangers' walking trail planning roster, as we had indicated our interest in working in these areas.

Another great quarter at Para Wirra, thanks to all of you, members and staff, my apologies again for not being able to help with the working bees.

Regards and best wishes to all.
Patsy.



Rangers Report June 2022-Tammy Leggett

The Department of Industry and Transport has provided some workers who have been very helpful working in the Park. They have been doing various jobs including planting trees and upgrading picnic tables. The water project upgrade has nearly been completed with all toilets now being fed by lake water

Burns have been completed for the season with some more burning to be done around the campsite at a later date.

Seats within the Park have been documented by Tammy and it is possible that the Dept of Transport workers may be able to help out with upgrades. Mike has contacted Rotary and they have agreed to look after their seats.

The Lady Alice mine work has nearly been completed. Fencing and danger signs have been erected with just a little more work to be done.

The Grazing program didn't take place in June due to wet weather and the illness of the person running the program. There are many deer in the Park at present.

A University study through Green Adelaide has set up an audio survey to identify the Bassian Thrush, which is a threatened species, within the Park. So far no birds have been picked up. There is also research taking place through Green Adelaide into Square Tailed kites. Trackers have been put on fledglings. If you are confident in identifying these birds, please let Tammy know where and when you have seen them. (tammy.leggett@sa.gov.au)

More weed control and planting has been taking place at Glenburnie. There has been a problem with mice chewing off shoots within the exclosures. Tammy suggested that we might like a tour of this area on one of our working bee days.

The campground is being well used with minimal problems. Easter school holidays went well with many visitors being locals. The Hideaway campsite has been approved and Friends members voted to go ahead with this development.

Park of the Month activities went well. There was to be a camp in at the campground on Saturday night the 18th June.

Drainage work around the Park is going as planned. Scenic drive will be closed permanently with access only for walkers and bike riders.

Please let Tammy know of any wildlife sightings or use an app such as INaturalist to report sightings so these can be include in the Dept. data base. Susan Close, the Deputy Premier and Environment Minister is on board with funding and activities within the Parks. Tammy has some ideas and suggestions as to how grant money can more efficiently be awarded to groups.

A permit is needed for us to enter the Goldfields area to work. Tammy has to write a briefing for this to occur.

Erik Dahl's farewell will take place on Saturday 2nd July at Park Headquarters.





Barossa Goldfields Historical Society



Secretary's Report - Leonie Hobbs

A very productive two months! A successful school visit from Coromandel Valley Primary. The weather was kind and the students were a great bunch and seemed to have had a good time.

The signs have been installed after a good bit of hard work! Holes dug, cement added with few dramas. Then after a couple of weeks, the signs were put up and have had approval from Tammy, Senior Ranger. Merv wants to add some more iron work, but I think they look great. A huge thanks to Merv for the mighty effort he has put in. Thanks also to his helpers. Great job everyone.

History Month is here and the first two Tuesdays have been well visited. We have our usual third Sunday open cottage which this time has been advertised a little more widely. There was an article in "The Bunyip" newspaper, with the History Week booklets and website, as well as on the DEW website. Someone read the Bunyip article as I have had an enquiry as a result.

Our next meeting, July 17th is the AGM, but that might be put off for a week or so as most of the committee will be gallivanting around the Murray somewhere! Please consider taking up a position on the committee.

Thanks everyone.

Leonie

Snakes!-Mike Johnson

Grass snakes and adders were the two snakes we knew of in the green grassy woodlands of Surrey in the Southern England of my boyhood. Grass snakes had the habit of appearing out from the pockets of one of the boys at the primary school, quite harmless they still repelled me with their beady eyes, slippery looking skin and a flicking tongue and hiss. Shades of my Irish heritage with St Patrick having banished snakes from the emerald isle in historic times! Only just tolerated, grass snakes were viewed with suspicion whereas the adder was simply terrifying. Come to think of it I never remember seeing an adder but still their very existence in the peaceful woods was a matter of serious concern! How then have I managed in snake infested Australia? Everyone knows snakes abound in this land, many different species, and the most deadly serpents call this country home!

The truth of the matter is that I have seen few snakes here but have probably been seen by many hundreds as I wandered through the bush in my later years. They see me and flee. We are much more dangerous to them than they are to us but still that instinctive caution kicks in when one is seen. Living in metropolitan Adelaide to begin with I had the same experience with the Australian snakes as I had with the English adder, I never saw one but was quite willing to be terrified never the less.

My father in law who as a young lad floated down the Murray on a raft from Hay in New South Wales with his family told the stories of his mother walking to the nearest homestead for her tea and flour ration when the raft was stranded on the river bank “carrying a piece of number eight fencing wire to break the back of any snake she encountered on the walk”. And by all accounts she became quite an expert, one blow one broken backed snake.

Dreams these stories conjured up are called nightmares.

However, when I did see a snake I knew what to do. It was next to an area where my daughters played tennis. Opening the small shed door there was a snake lying across a water pipe on the ground. Neither head nor tail was visible but I realised I would have to break its back. A long handled shovel was within reach so I brought it down hard where the snakes body was stretched across the pipe. Bang! Hold the blade tight on the snake so it could not get away. It did not get away, its head, hissing and wicked came winding up the long handle. Surely it cannot reach this far! But “yes” it can! The shovel went flying and I went running, a quick look behind and the snake was following! I have never reached that speed running before or since.

Now my approach to snakes is different and the few I have seen in the wild are few but to me are memorable.

Both times I encountered a red bellied black was near a watercourse. We had an exchange student staying with us and I wanted to look at a neglected area on the river bank where the North and South Para rivers join to form the Gawler River. We were walking through some ankle high grass when Just as the exchange students foot was about to descend on the coiled body of a snake. It was spotted just in time and the student managed a delicate hop and a loud word that suited his fright but is not suitable for typing. The next one was when I was exploring the South Para at Glenburnie accompanied by another person who loved the bush. It was late autumn and the grass was responding nicely to the showers that had fallen but we could see easily the depressions in the sides of the water course where in our guess the fossickers many years ago sought to find the gold in the area. It almost seemed as though no one had visited the area since so wild and overgrown it was. It was here that I saw the largest bone seed plant

I have come across. It was much taller than me and its main trunk was the size of my thigh. I called it the grandmother of all the feral bone seed plants in the Park next door. It was a major point of discussion and we were chatting away when I imitated that exchange student in a hopping dance as just below my foot was a very thick red bellied black and this one had its head raised as a warning it was about to strike. From where my leap of fright took me, several feet away, I watched it slither away through the undergrowth. When we took the chain saw in to cut down grandma we kept a good lookout but if they were there that snake and friends must have heard us coming (we made a lot of noise arriving) and kept their distance.

There are three times working on Glenburnie that I encountered brown snakes. The first was while I was dealing with some thistles alongside a dry stream bed coming out of the Ridlee Ree gully and flowing across a sheep paddock. Wearing boots and gaiters glancing up I noticed coming towards me, about thirty yards away, a brown snake about three feet in length. The work I was doing was very quiet and he appeared unaware of my presence. Standing up but keeping both still and quiet I watched as he steadily approached. About fifteen yards away he paused, head raised looking towards me and then moved off uphill for about ten yards and then turned and proceeded in the same line of direction as he had approached. Once safely round me he turned back down hill and when level with me turned and continued on his way. I was most encouraged by this experience as it seemed that given the choice, if left alone the snake will leave you alone.

The next time a brown snake and I saw each other was as I was walking across a hillside near Whites Gully. Late spring and the grass ankle high, loose rocks made for careful walking, watching to see where the feet were about to fall then glancing up about four

feet in front in a coil sat a large brown watching my approach. Another step or two and we might have had a close encounter of which I might not have enjoyed. Immediate halt and stand still. Will the snake move off? It has obviously noticed me. A short time passes and neither of us moves. Then I remember my last encounter. I carefully moved off to the right uphill for several yards, walking carefully around and well away from that coiled snake that followed my progress by turning its head as I moved. Once well away I continued to walk on but I must admit that I was now looking both directly in front to where my feet would fall and directly ahead in case another snake was taking a rest in the sun. And then, again in Whites Gully area, (I spent a lot of time there), this time in the eastern end, down in the bottom of the gully. Working away on some small olive seedlings I noticed movement in the long grass alongside coming towards me. Freeze! Keep very still and very quiet. The movement got closer and then it was close enough for the shape of the snake to be seen winding through the bottom of the grass stalks. Once the head had moved passed I looked carefully through the tops of the grass so I could admire the sinuous movement, the colour of this creature, so adapted to its environment. In its own way even if very dangerous, it has a beauty.

I have come a long way from the gentle Surrey woodlands.

Ranger Erik's Retirement Party







FRIENDS OF PARA WIRRA PROGRAM 2022

***PLEASE NOTE:** in the event of **Total Fire Bans**, meeting or working bees will NOT be at the park. Other arrangements may be advised if extended forecast allows time, **otherwise events will be cancelled.**

***CHECK THE CFS WEBSITE FOR FIRE BAN INFORMATION, THE NIGHT BEFORE AND MORNING OF THE WORKING BEES/MEETINGS.**

Colour code - **Whole group meetings** **Executive Meetings** – Members are welcome to attend. **Working Bees** – Working bees start at 9am at the Parks Office.

Please note that meeting schedules/venues may vary depending on Covid restrictions at the time

| | | |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
| Thursday | September 1 st | Weed control as required. Potential work on Partnership Grant. Morning tea at work site. |
| Saturday | September 17 th | WILDFLOWER WALK or work on Partnership Grant. Bring morning tea and lunch if attending Quarterly MEETING. |
| Thursday | October 6 th | Weed Control and trail maintenance as required. Potential work on Partnership Grant. Morning tea at work site. |
| Saturday | October 15 th | Weed control, possibly visit Hale in collaboration with KLG? Morning tea onsite. |

URGENT NOTE: Check CFS website before November to make sure it is safe to attend, but **ALSO ALL of Summer!**

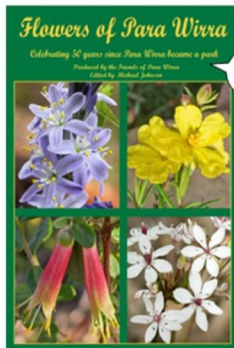
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|----------|---------------------------|--|
| Thursday | November 3 rd | *Work on Tanger Pea, Olives as required. Morning tea at work site. |
| Saturday | November 19 th | *Olives, Boneseed as required. Morning tea onsite. Executive MEETING. |
| Thursday | December 1 st | *Weed control and trail maintenance as required. Morning tea at work site. |
| Saturday | December 17 th | * CHRISTMAS PARTY. 5.30 p.m. BYO FOOD, DRINKS ETC. Family and friends welcome. A venue to be announced/confirmed at a later date depending on the weather. |

***CHECK CFS WEBSITE FOR FIRE BANS & WARNINGS. Alternative venue if necessary will be advised.**
PLEASE NOTE: GUEST SPEAKERS AND OTHER ITEMS (eg Training) MAY BE ADDED TO THE PROGRAM WHEN AVAILABLE. **IF YOU KNOW OF ANY POSSIBLE SPEAKERS**, please advise the President by text, email or phone



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AVAILABLE FROM:

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BOOK & CARDS: *Williamstown Bakery *Gawler Natural Resource Centre *Barossa Bush Gardens.

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THE FRIENDS OF PARA WIRRA

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