



Friends of Sturt Gorge Newsletter

www.fosg.org.au

No. 22: Nov 2010

This edition: Award Winners, New web site, January Picnic, 2011 AGM, New edition, Hands-on learning, Starlight Crescent, Bird life in the Gorge, Training - a new volunteer's experience, Grants, Calendar (Dec-Mar)

Award Winners

I am pleased to announce that the Friends of Sturt Gorge won the **Friends Group Achievement of the Year Award** at the August Friends of Parks Forum in Woomera. We received \$900, the McLaren Shield and a framed certificate.

As we don't have a permanent home, here is a picture of our award at a recent working bee.



New web site www.fosg.org.au

We have created a new web site with our own domain name, and our Web site Coordinator Larry is gradually migrating information from our previous site over to the new site.

We hope the simplified menu structure will make the site easier to navigate. We will then begin the process of reviewing and updating the information about the group and its activities. It is also exciting that in its new form, we are able to offer a members-only area of the site where copies of the minutes and other documents can be accessed.



January Picnic

Come and join us for our annual picnic meeting at Karinya Reserve, Eden Hills on **Tuesday January 18th** at 7pm. Find out what we've been doing and our plans for 2011 and beyond. Food and drinks provided - please byo chairs, and cups for soft drink/juice and coffee/tea. Please RSVP by Jan 15th to Amy on 7120 6340 or shawlock@internode.on.net

2011 AGM

Tuesday February 15th, 7:30pm at Bellevue Heights PS. We will elect our committee, and our guest speaker is Kirstin Long from DENR talking on fire ecology in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

New Edition of a valuable resource

Our patron Enid Robertson informs us that a new edition of 'Restoration of grassy woodlands: Watiparinga Reserve Management Plan' has been published.

Hands-on learning - Chris Thomson



A few of us were working in the Gorge today and it was necessary to take out an ash tree which was in the way of the trail.

The pattern that emerged through the cut section was quite interesting. The tree had been ringbarked and drilled-and-filled twice and it was still putting out some green shoots. The drill holes were about 4cm apart and the darkened wood suggests that the wood is no longer alive, however there is enough functioning wood to keep the tree from dying completely.

It seemed to us that the drill holes have to be fairly close to ensure a good result. Today's experience is a good example of what Enid (our patron) calls 'hands on learning'.

11/11/2010

Starlight Crescent

A conversation with member Dennis Rowe.

Where have you been working?

I've been working on Management Unit 8 off Renwick Street (Flagstaff Hill).

What have you been working on?

Boneseed, olives, clearing around the blue gums and all of the native trees that are growing through that area.

Why did you start working there?

I found Chris Thomson and Rick Coyte working there, and I thought I could do a good job of clearing the side of the hill, which I've given myself two years to clean up.

And how far have you got so far?

Half way, since starting in April this year. I've covered half of the area, but less than half of the weeds so far.

Are you finding good stuff there?

Oh yes, there's a lot of good stuff there, a lot of grasses and a lot of blue gums.



Bird Life in the Gorge by Pat Bowie

We would like to acknowledge that all of the photos in this article have been kindly provided to us by John Spiers from Birds SA.

The Park has just experienced one of the best winter seasons for a considerable time. This will be especially beneficial to the recent plantings in newly incorporated parts of Sturt Gorge: the understorey plantings of 2008, some of which are now over 2 metres tall, and the *Eucalyptus microcarpa* plantings of 2009 in the same paddock.

I have considered what effects this changing vegetation pattern may have on birdlife as the growth becomes more dense. While some species will move in one bird species that could be displaced is the Black-shouldered Kite. Slightly smaller than the Magpie, the Black-shouldered Kite is unmistakable with its brilliant white and soft grey plumage, and the black shoulders which give it its name. It is a bird which hunts over open areas. It can be seen hovering or gliding with wings held straight and in a wide V-shape, scanning the ground for prey. Once a likely food source is spotted, it comes into a hover, drops down, pauses, then plummets down to earth, legs down and wings held in a sharp V. It feeds on small mammals, reptiles and birds, and insects such as grasshoppers. A favourite prey is the mouse.



Black-shouldered kite

Delwyn Clark recorded a successful breeding by a pair of Black-shouldered Kites in the Park in 2009, close to the paddock which has been planted up. The birds returned to the nest site in August this year, but a further breeding attempt failed, and the birds moved away.

There is still plenty of open space in the Park, and I hope that this species, one of my favourites, will continue to find areas to hunt in.



Fan-tailed cuckoo

A bird that does appear to have had a successful breeding season in the Park this winter is the Fan-tailed Cuckoo. There are over a dozen species of cuckoo in Australia, though none of them give the typical "cuckoo" call of the single European species. The two common cuckoo species in the Park are the Fan-tailed Cuckoo and the Horsfield's-Bronze Cuckoo. Both are nomadic, and the calls that announce their return are usually first heard around July. This year I have only heard the Horsfield's-Bronze Cuckoo call once, in July, but the first Fan-tailed calls were heard in June, and, as I write this, in October, they may still be heard. The call, which is far carrying, is a rather sad, slow downward trill, which is repeated after a short interval.

Cuckoos are parasitic, laying their eggs in the nests of other birds. It is tantalising to speculate on the number of unwelcome Fan-tailed cuckoo eggs laid in the Sturt Gorge during the past few months. One egg is laid, and when the young cuckoo hatches out, it pushes out of the nest any young of the host species, so that the hapless birds, the wren being one target species, end up rearing a single nestling that can rapidly outgrow them in size. Despite this they continue feeding it, instinctively responding to its insistent cries.

continued on page 4

Bird Life in the Gorge *cont'd*

Little Ravens (top, right), the local corvid species (the only Crows in Adelaide play football) appear to have had a successful breeding season, now more or less ended. Nesting activity by Red Wattlebirds (bottom, right) has been ongoing for 6 months now, which is exceptional.



Finally, in one of my regular Park bird surveys, just completed, I noted breeding activity in 5 species other than those already mentioned. All this is heartening to see, and must be due to the excellent winter, which is allowing not only the Park vegetation to recover its vigour, but the birdlife also.



Training: a new volunteer's experience - *by Angela Stephen*

A brief report on the recent Bush for Life workshop which I attended on Friday 05/11/2010 at Woorabinda in Stirling. It was a full day of very interesting and stimulating sharing of knowledge. The following subjects were discussed in detail:

- * native vegetation and biodiversity.
- * different types of vegetation.
- * how historically SA has changed.
- * remnant vegetation.
- * management of native vegetation.
- * environmental weeds.
- * principles of bush regeneration including hygiene, minimal disturbance, manual and herbicidal application and biological control.
- * occupational safety in the bush for workers including protection, weather conditions and equipment.
- * hazard management.

This is just a brief synopsis of the day, which also included a walk around the site in the late afternoon looking at the remnant plants. Thank you for the opportunity to attend this informative workshop.

We encourage any members who are keen to be involved in working bees to attend this course - Friends of Parks Inc provides a limited number of free places for Friends of Parks members over the year.

Introducing students to the Gorge

On August the 11th, about 40 students from Bellevue Heights Primary School participated in a walk through the Sturt Gorge led by members Nick Taylor, Bob Grant and Ronn Reid. The students enjoyed the walk greatly, especially Nick's *Show and Tell* of plants found in the Gorge. Here are some messages from their thank you cards:

"Dear Bob and Ronn, we would like to say thanks for leading us on a walk and showing us the Gorge. I specifically liked seeing the mountain ranges because it was quite a spectacle. I would like to go there one day with my family."

"Dear Nick, thank you for showing us the difference between a weed and a plant. Before then we would have thought the native plants were weeds. We found that the Gorge was huge and peaceful. It was enjoyable and interesting. The next time we go there we hope that we can stay longer."

Grants - *Liz Sawyer*

We have submitted another successful application for an Office for Volunteers **Volunteer Support Grant**. We requested \$2000 to buy two external hard drives, and to fund training for members in bushcare, and safe use of tools such as chainsaws and brushcutters.

The group would like to thank Jen Pitman and Pam Smith for their ongoing support in the grant application process.



Friends of Sturt Gorge

Calendar of Events December 2010 – March 2011

Visit our web site www.fosg.org.au

Month	Date	Purpose	Meeting Place/Focus	Man Unit
Dec	Thurs 2nd	Working Bee	8.30AM Gate 1 York Dr (Opposite Pelham St) Olive & boneseed eradication at end of Marri Track to help preserve an area with a less common plant (<i>Logania saxatilis</i>)	MU26 Pty Area 4
	Sat 18th	Working Bee	8.30AM End Gorge Rd, Bellevue Heights – sweep from EWS station around to end of Gorge Rd and down hill towards junction for olive seedlings and boneseed following up previous years' work (not in burnt area)	MU11
	Mon 20th	Trail Maint	8.30 AM Trail Maintenance – Refer to Bob Grant – See note below	
		General Meeting	No DECEMBER MEETING	
Jan	Thurs 6th	Working Bee	8.30AM Opp 62 Broadmeadow Dve, F/staff Hill. Work on olives and a sweep for boneseed. This area has several <i>Glycine</i> sp plants that require monitoring and need to have weed pressure reduced.	MU9 Pty Area 2
	Sat 15th	Working Bee	8.30AM Opp 21 Bushland Dve, Bellevue Heights. Work on olives and other woody weeds moving west above and below trail.	MU17
	Tues 18th	General Meeting	7.00 pm Picnic meeting, Karinya Reserve, Eden Hills Food/Drink provided. RSVP by Jan 15 to 71206340	
	Mon 24th	Trail Maint	8.30AM Trail Maintenance – Refer to Bob Grant – See note below	
Feb	Thurs 3rd	Working Bee	8.30AM Gate 11 (old Gate 9) end of Broadmeadow Dve Check area close to gate and then work eastwards.	MU22 Pty Area 8
	Tues 15th	AGM	7.30 pm Bellevue Heights Primary School Guest speaker: Kirstin Long (DENR) - fire ecology in the Mount Lofty Ranges and monitoring in Sturt Gorge	Please RSVP on 7120 6340 to Amy for catering
	Sat 19th	Working Bee	8.30AM End Gorge Rd, Bellevue Heights – drill and fill large olives, cut and swab small woody weeds working west in burn area (outside of monitoring plots)	MU11
	Monday 28th	Trail Maint	8.30 AM Trail Maintenance – Refer to Bob Grant – See note below	
Mar	Thurs 3rd	Working Bee	8.30AM Opp 52 Broadmeadow Dve, F/staff Hill. Continue along ridgeline freeing up old growth gums. Sweep for olive seedlings and boneseed.	MU9 Pty Area 2
	Tues 15th	General Meeting	7.30 pm Bellevue Heights Primary School	
	Sat 19th	Working Bee	8.30AM Opp 21 Bushland Dve, Bellevue Heights. Work on olives and other woody weeds moving west above and below trail.	MU17
	Monday 28th	Trail Maint	8.30AM Trail Maintenance – Refer to Bob Grant – See note below	

*Management Unit (Vegetation Management Plan 2003)

Interested in walking trails? Bob Grant leads regular working bees to maintain walking trails within the Park. These are held on the 4th Monday of the month. Please contact him on 8278 6724 or email bobgrant@esc.net.au for information.

PLS NOTE SUMMER MONTHS (DEC-MAR) WORKING BEES START AT 8.30 AM – ON FIRE BAN DAYS WORKING BEES ARE CANCELLED