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Friends of Sturt Gorge Newsletter

No. 27: July 2012

This edition: Planting day; Volunteer Award; Weeds & wasps; Work reports; Magpie Creek ruins

Healthy gums on Starlight

The weather could not have been better for our community planting event on May 20th at Starlight Crescent, Flagstaff Hill: sunny and dry on the day then a few rainy days to follow. The site was a south-facing hillside of open eucalyptus woodland, recently cleared of feral olives by the Friends.

19 people participated, including young children, grandparents, local residents and – of course – the regular working bee Friends. It took just over 2 hours to give 320 understorey plants a permanent home on a deceptively steep site, then the workers stepped across the road to 14 Starlight Crescent for a spectacular afternoon tea.



Special thanks go to Amy Blaylock for publicity and organisation, to Rick Coyte for planning the distribution of plants, to Dennis Rowe and Chris Thomson for site preparation, and to the Fletchers for hosting afternoon tea in their front garden.

According to Rick and Dennis all plants are doing well.

This project was supported by an NRM Achiever Community Grant 2011-2012 from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board.



Government of South Australia

Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
Natural Resources Management Board

STOP PRESS: Please note that the next **Calendar** will be sent out as a separate issue.

Award nomination

At the Annual Awards Dinner for the Rotary Club of Burnside Inc on April 18th our President, Amy Blaylock, was a finalist in the 2012 Volunteer of the Parks Award, which was won by Tom Hands, long-standing president of the Friends of Scott Creek. Amy would like to thank the members of the Friends of Sturt Gorge, our Liaison Ranger Kat Mroczek, and Jess Mitchell from the AMLR NRM Board, for submitting the nomination.



Is that a weed or what?

Most bushcarers can recall heading towards what looks like a baby olive (exotic) only to find on closer inspection that it's a small *Dodonaea* or *Bursaria* (both native).

Even harder can be spotting the difference between native and exotic plants of the same genus, especially when the plants aren't fully grown.

Fortunately, the weed African Daisy (*Senecio pterophorus*) can be distinguished from its Australian cousins (*Senecio spp*) by a small wing-like intermediate leaf on its stalk. There's more information available via this link to a Bush for Life site:

http://www.treesforlife.org.au/resources/ReLeaf0012_BFL_WsthAfricandaisy_Nsenecia.pdf

European wasp

European wasps are in the Gorge and have caused problems for some of the Friends hard at work clearing olives, so here's some useful information from the *Local Government Association website*.

If a European wasp is aggravated it may STING. Unlike the bee, a European wasp can sting MULTIPLE times.

If left undisturbed the European wasp is NOT AGGRESSIVE to humans or other animals. If a nest is disturbed, the wasps release a chemical which triggers the wasps to defend the nest.

DO NOT DISTURB NESTS - contact your LOCAL COUNCIL or a pest control operator.

Trail maintenance

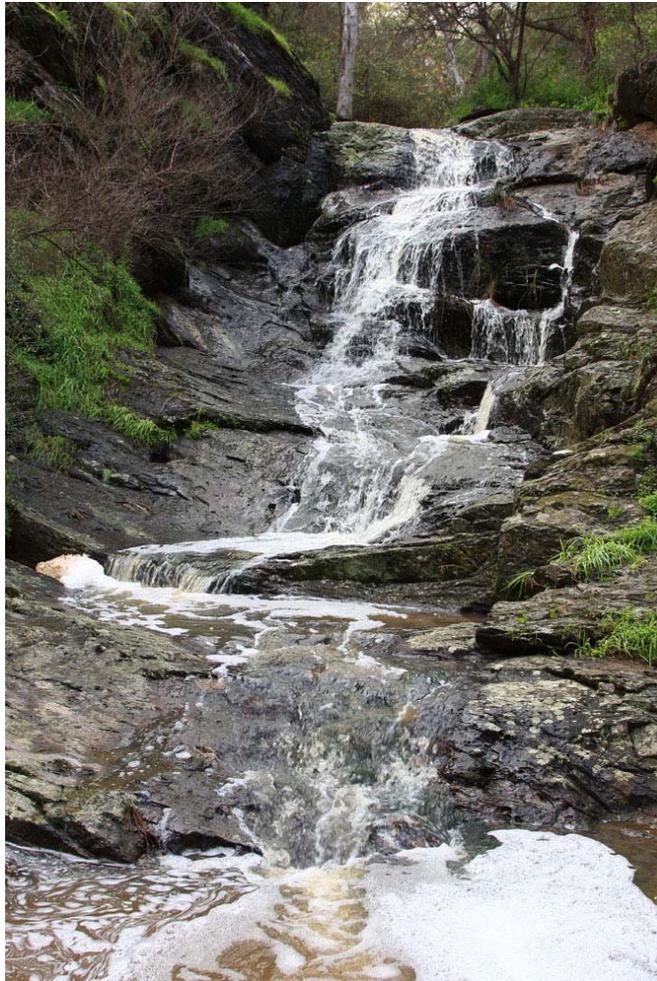
From late 2011 to mid-2012 trail maintenance has concentrated on: further improvement to crossing points; path drainage and alignment; and clearance of encroaching vegetation / weed hot-spots.

Most recently, Bob Grant's team has been making major improvements to the lower sections of trails below Gorge Road, particularly those which branch east and west down to the Sturt River. These trails are being widened, realigned in places, and steps installed on steeper sections.

A recent photo of the Magpie Creek cascade taken by Bob Grant

Any feedback on existing trails – including suggestions for future work - would be gratefully appreciated: phone Bob Grant on 7329 8296 or by e-mail at bobgrant@adam.com.au.

Bob's also the contact for our detailed and up to date trail maps, still just \$10 each.



Working bees in high conservation areas

On the south-side of the Gorge this year Chris Thomson reports that the working bees have been well supported by members and the weather on the Thursdays has been particularly good, making conditions very pleasant.

Friends have worked mainly in MU9, along Broadmeadow Drive, and MU26, north of the Scout Hall. As usual the focus has been olives and boneseed and it has been rewarding to return to an area to see it more open and not so dominated by olives. In planning some working bees the focus has been on plants of conservation significance as listed in the Vegetation Management Plan, eg *Glycine tabacina* and *Logania*, and weed removal has targeted the areas where those plants grow.

On the north-side of the Gorge the focus this year has been on removal of olives from the hillside below Bushland Drive as our contribution to the 'Bushland Olive Blitz' grant. This involves Friends putting in volunteer hours in more accessible areas to complement work put in by a paid contractor dealing with ash and olives along the creek line and on steeper slopes. This area has good understorey shrubs and grasses so it is very satisfying being able to protect them from the encroachment of olives.

Magpie Creek ruins

A detailed study of the ruins by Robert Stone, then an honours student in the Flinders University Archaeology Department, was published in 2005 as part of the University's Hills Face Zone Cultural Heritage Project, Volume II. This study concluded that "The ruin was almost certainly the first home of Charles Trott after he purchase Section 19 [in 1857]" and noted that its heritage value derived from its association with early European settlement in the district and not least because of its unique design features. For example, while the ruins are of a cottage of two rooms, there is evidence that the larger room was built first and the smaller room added later. Furthermore, the three fireplaces along the eastern wall, all still clearly visible, were an unusual feature for the time.

The ruins are on the southern side of Magpie Creek (UBD Map 154, grid D 12) directly opposite the lower end of the Kurrakilla fire track. In recent years the Friends have cleared the site of large invasive trees which were damaging the foundations and have also arranged for the stonework to be capped professionally to prevent further deterioration. The mortar is intended to look different so as to distinguish it from the original materials used. The issue now is whether to seek approval and funding for more detailed survey work of the ruin and surrounds in the hope of locating any outbuildings and getting more details of the cottage's interior structure. The ruin itself seems free of vandalism or inappropriate use, so we could also consider putting an interpretive sign on the site with help from DEWNR.

Any thoughts or suggestions would be very welcome.

That's all for now – please let me know of any topics you'd like to see covered in the next issue (Phone: 8278 2646 or email: mgoldie@vtown.com.au). Andrew Goldie / Editor.