



# Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Spring 2003

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## Oval dreams The new threats to Hender Reserve

Many people would have felt anger and dismay a couple of months ago when they read in the Mt. Barker Courier on 3rd September that the Adelaide Hills Council had voted unanimously to investigate the establishment of an oval in Hender Reserve.

To set the record straight, this was inaccurately reported by the Courier.

At the August 5th Council meeting, Cr. Evans moved a Notice of Motion, seconded by Cr. Nelson as follows:

*'As there is a serious dearth of Ovals in the Adelaide Hills Council area, staff be requested to:*

1. *bring down a report of the estimated costs of creating a good quality Oval to serve the Mt Lofty/Manoah Ward area suitable for senior sport.*
2. *in particular, cost of establishing such oval in Hender Reserve opposite the junction of Hender & Longwood Roads (ie below the original dump site and in the original Council sand pit area).*

The Director of Engineering pointed out at that meeting that the cost of such an investigation could be in the range \$2000 to \$10,000, depending on the accuracy and detail required. He added that \$1m would not be an unreasonable guess for the cost of such an oval.

The Council then voted to let the Notice of Motion lie on the table.

At the following Council meetings (3 September and 4 November), Council again voted for the motion to continue to lie on the table without debate.

In the meantime, The Courier of 1 October in a gesture of clarification reported that that 'The Adelaide Hills Council will not be investigating the establishment of a new oval near Heathfield at this stage.'

This appeared under the ominous heading: 'Oval on Hold'.

Whether or not the 'dearth of ovals' is serious enough to warrant yet another oval is not the issue here. The real issue from the point of view of this conservation group is the level of understanding that councillors have about the natural environment entrusted to their care.

Admittedly, councillors have a huge area to administer (almost 800 sq km). There is a lot of information to digest, and many issues to attend to. The job is often onerous and time-demanding. But surely Hender Reserve, part of environmentally-significant Stirling Linear Park, should have alerted the councillors to at least a cautionary approach to such a massive development? After all, the controversy about the Woorabinda buildings is hardly a distant memory. Even the suggestion of a 'sand pit' in Hender Reserve was accepted it seems at face value. There is of course no 'sand pit'. A small area of scarified ground in the centre of the reserve where the topsoil was scraped off many years ago can hardly be termed a 'sand pit'.

Hender Reserve should never have even surfaced

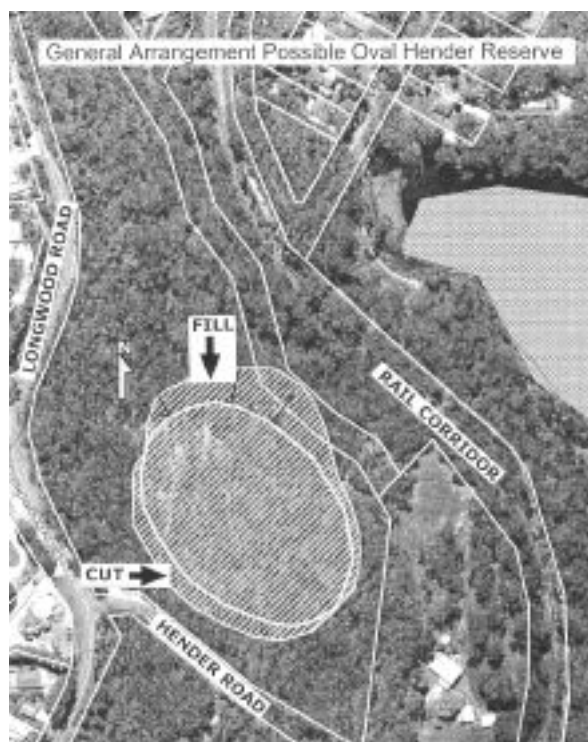
as a possibility for the site of an oval. To begin with, it is part of, contiguous with, and zoned in accordance with the conservation prescriptions for the rest of Stirling Linear Park. It forms the only old-growth stringybark woodland of any size within the Stirling township. It is protected under the Native Vegetation Act, several Wildlife Acts and the Commonwealth's Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act. If that is not enough, then any proposal to construct an oval in the reserve would fire up a level of local community outrage not seen since the plan to sub-divide Stirling Park over a decade ago.

As can be seen from the accompanying AHC photo, an oval would entirely destroy the reserve. When land is cleared for car parking, vehicle access and other facilities, as well as the oval itself, there will be little if any of the original vegetation remaining. This highly valued natural resource would be lost forever.

AHC aerial photo showing indicative arrangement to accommodate a competition-sized oval in Hender Reserve. For clarity, the photo has been trimmed and captions added. The size of the oval is approximately the same as Heathfield Oval and will take up some 2.5 ha of the reserve. Additional Reserve land will be needed for parking, supporting facilities and access.

Subsequent to all the kerfuffle, two councillors, far from their local Wards, have visited Hender Reserve to see this woodland and to learn why its preservation is so important to the community. We hope they can influence other councillors to do the same.

All councillors are more than welcome to see the Park, and if they would only give us a date and time for their visit, we will gladly make ourselves available to show them around.



**If all this were not enough to worry about, we have recently learned that the SW portion of Hender Reserve is also under threat.**

This is the triangular area of bush bounded by Hender/ Longwood roads and the High School. The reserve is also linked to very good bush within the school grounds surrounding the ovals.

The development plan for the new Community Recreation Centre which is proposed for the High School grounds, includes a sealed access road running through the reserve. The scale of such an access would be sufficient to effectively destroy any conservation value attached to this part of Hender Reserve.

This part of Hender is known to support rare and uncommon flora, and as members will know, it receives regular attention on our working bees.

This is yet another piece of remnant indigenous vegetation and habitat that the community can ill afford to lose. It is just as important as the main area of Hender Reserve.

At the November 4 Council meeting, David Ragless presented a deputation opposing this desecration. We urge members to support this action by sending a clear message to Council to leave Hender alone. Post your letters and fire off your emails to the Council without delay.

# The 2003 AGM

Despite the overnight annual time warp when everyone loses a useful hour of sleep, the AGM got away on schedule at 11am SA Daylight Saving Time on the 26th October.

Some thirty people attended the event, which was held in the Woorabinda main building.

Chairperson David Ragless delivered his Annual Review of The Friends activities during the 2002-2003 financial year. Treasurer John Allison followed with a report on the healthy state of our finances.

The new committee was chosen. Most of the previous year's committee had re-nominated and were elected unopposed.

Office bearers, per our Constitution, will be selected at our next committee meeting on Dec 16.

After the business of the AGM, Nerissa Haby gave

us a very informative talk about Bandicoots.

Every year, the life of the Park is usually marked with at least one highlight of outstanding significance. A few years ago it was the establishment of the walkways and the construction of the bird hide. A year later saw the beginnings of the Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre. The 2002-2003 year was the year in which our Public Fund began.

This current year will almost certainly be known as the year of the bandicoots.

The discovery of these delightful creatures in Hender Reserve — not forgetting their smaller cousins the Antechinus, which are in evidence in Woorabinda — is certainly going to demand renewed conservation efforts by everyone.

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## The year in Review, 2002-2003

*by David Ragless*

Stirling Linear Park is a beautiful piece of publicly accessible bushland and wetland, linking Stirling, Aldgate and Heathfield.

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park have continued to help maintain and protect the area for the future.

This has meant another busy year.

Our most important work is our hands-on work — bushcare, revegetation and trail building.

### **Bushcare**

Monthly working bees have again rotated around the four reserves and Bogaduck walkway.

Average attendance has been twelve volunteers, which is an improvement over last year.

Individuals working alone when time and weather permit have also contributed to the bushcare support.

A total of 786 hours of volunteer bushcare time was donated during the year. This is an all-time record for the Friends.

Thanks to all our supporters, but particularly to Bob James who works almost every day in Hender Reserve.

### **Revegetation**

Degraded areas around the south-west side of the lake and areas of Stirling Park were planted during the year. A total of 2400 tubestock from over thirty species of local indigenous ground cover, understorey, wetland and canopy plants were planted.

The major plantings were made on National Tree Day in July last year. Other plantings were carried out in September, October and May, and altogether forty-two volunteers took part, including a Green Corps team and ten staff from the National Australia Bank. The Green Corps and National Bank teams were organised by Conservation Volunteers

Australia.

Our grateful thanks to Anne Hicks, and to Reece Pedler and Alan Wickham who grew our tubestock.

### **Weed control**

Conservation Volunteers Australia has helped us a great deal with weed control through their Revive Wetlands and Lending a Hand programs. These were funded by BHP Billiton and the Commonwealth Bank respectively.

CVA also carried out weed control in Madurta Reserve and along Madurta walkway with Council support.

Our grateful thanks to all these organisations.

### **The Interpretive Signage project**

Large signs were erected during the year at the Woorabinda Drive, Branch Rd and Keroma Drive park entrances and in Madurta and Hender Reserves.

The Woorabinda Drive and Branch Road signs incorporate roof shelters and notice boards.

Signage and leaflets for a self-guided walk around the lake will be installed soon.

Our grateful thanks to Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board and Stirling Lions Club for funding this.

### **Park benches**

Last year, Mr. John Weightman, a past resident of Woorabinda Drive and a Friend of the Park, donated a seat to the community in memory of his late wife.

We also installed two new park benches along the embankment of the lake wall. These were purchased and installed by the Friends using funding attracted from the Adelaide Hills Council's Community Grants Program.

### **The bird hide**

Friends volunteers painted the inside of the bird hide during the year and repaired graffiti damage. As reported in our newsletter, we are now also photographing any appearance of graffiti 'tags' for the police, who tell us that this information will assist their pursuit of the offenders.

### **Trails and boardwalks**

Lending a Hand volunteers extended the boardwalk beside the Woorabinda lake. Earlier in the year, a Green Corps team constructed a boardwalk and steps on the trail leading from Branch Road across the creek.

All of this work was arranged through Conservation Volunteers Australia and supported by Adelaide Hills Council.

### **The Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre**

The Friends have continued to foster the development of this Centre.

The main building is leased to the Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network but is being regularly used by Conservation Volunteers Australia for training sessions. Other users throughout the year included the Catchment Care Program of Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board, Trees for Life and the Nature Conservation Society.

The building is home to two full-time Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network staff, their volunteers and work experience people.

Most people probably appreciate that the Network co-ordinates their catchment activities from Woorabinda, but few realise the extent of the work involved.

51 schools and other community groups like us sample bimonthly from 150 sites across the Onkaparinga catchment. Some analyses and the management and coordination of this program are carried out at Woorabinda..

This school year, 300 children from 10 classes visited the Centre for environmental education. The Network staff also visited schools to present classroom education to 402 classes which were attended by 12,060 children.

This building certainly deserves its official title of the Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre. It is now a centre for schools to take their students for water education. In future it is expected to become even more important because the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board will expand its travel subsidy. This will encourage more schools to send their children the Centre to learn about the inland water environment.

We were pleased that Council arranged removal of the derelict lakeside building known as the family Unit. They did an excellent job of tidying up the site after the demolition contractors had left.

### **Meetings**

The Friends committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis to handle the growing heap of correspondence and to determine our attitudes and actions. On two separate occasions we welcomed Adelaide Hills Council guest speakers: General Inspector, Wayne Cook, and Natural Resources Officer Glenn Williams. Several topics were presented, including signage and dog control and the forthcoming State Government revision of the Dog & Cat Act.

We have also networked with a number of other groups and have attended several meetings. We continue to be a registered Landcare group and are members of Trees for Life and Greening Australia. Friends of Parks Inc upgraded our status during the year from affiliate to full membership in recognition of our extensive conservation work.

### **Planning**

The new Draft Management Plan is nearing completion. This has been helped by a number of professional surveys documenting our plant, fish, mammal, reptile, bird and bat populations. These surveys and the Plan are supported by a \$5000 funding attracted from Wetland Care Australia. The new Plan will build upon the previous plan but it is based on more information. It will be a less philosophical document and more prescriptive. Upon completion it will undergo scrutiny by Adelaide Hills Council staff and councillors before being adopted by Council.

Our extensive thanks to Russell Seaman, who is coordinating the draft and the various surveys. A significant area of remnant bushland adjacent to the Park came on the market during the year and it was hoped that it could be purchased and added to the Park. After meetings involving Adelaide Hills Council and Planning SA, Planning SA offered to fund half of the cost if the Council would fund the balance.

Unfortunately it could not do this and the property was sold to new owners. On the plus side however, the new owners do not plan to build and are very positive about conserving and bushcaring the area.

### **Photomonitoring**

Photomonitoring from some 34 locations around the Park continued throughout the year. The frequency of this work is now reduced generally from six-monthly to yearly, except in cases where rapid change is observed.

The mounting number of photographic records are contained in a series of ring binders. These are on display next door for your perusal.

Our thanks to Jack Benlow for his ongoing commitment to this task.

### **Waterwatch**

The Waterwatch team continued to sample and test from both the lake and the creek running through Stirling Park. Testing is now on a bimonthly basis. We also participated in a training workshop and the annual nationwide survey of macro-invertebrates. Our results indicate the good water quality of the lake is continuing, while that of the creek shows some stress from peri-urban run-off. The Park however acts as a filter for the creeks. Our thanks to Lorri Ragless and her Waterwatch team for their ongoing work. Lorri also represents Friends of Stirling Linear Park and the wider community on the Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network steering committee.

### **Bushcheck**

Monitoring continues in Hender Reserve. Our thanks to the Hicks family for their monthly bird observations and to Rob Tanner for his analysis of the collected data.

### **Dog owner survey**

Observations of dog behaviour and owner responses were made over a two-week period during February/March. The results showed that only about a third of dogs were under adequate owner control. Our thanks to our observer team and to Neil Strong who designed the questionnaire and coordinated the results.

### **Funding applications**

During the year we applied for the following grants funding:

- From Envirofund for revegetation work mainly in Madurta Reserve.
- From Family & Community Services a small equipment grant to purchase an air conditioner for this room.
- From Land & Water Australia to support a written history of the Park.
- From the Catchment Care Program to support a native demonstration garden around these buildings.

So far, only the latter application has proved successful.

### **Publicity**

Our quarterly newsletter to members has continued, thanks to editor Jack Benlow for his work and to secretary Shirley Benlow who has had many frustrations with malfunctioning photocopiers during newsletter printing.

We introduced a new website during the year. If you haven't visited it yet I recommend

<http://users.esc.net.au/~slp>.

This address can be found on the back page of our newsletters if you missed it.

Our thanks to Kathy Bowman for setting this up and keeping it up to date.

On World Environment day we mounted a display in the Stirling Library showing photographs of our work. Thanks to Shirley Benlow for organising this. We regularly send out reminder notices for working bees and display various posters advertising our planting events etc. Thanks to Jack Benlow for his skills in producing these. Jack is becoming quite famous for his dog cartoons on these notices — he even shows one attending this AGM!

Also during the year we presented a session about the Park to the University of the Third Age, Adelaide Hills branch. This was well received.

### **Recognition**

The value of the Park's biodiversity continues to be more widely appreciated. During the year, an exhaustive survey of 85 wetlands in the Mt. Lofty Ranges conducted by National Parks & Wildlife SA considered Woorabinda lake to be one of the top areas of significant conservation value.

For example, a fish survey we commissioned as part of the underpinning of the new Management Plan discovered various schools of Mountain Galaxias in the creek. The survival of this once common species is now threatened, and it is regarded as being 'rare in the Mt. Lofty Ranges'.

During the year we were honoured to receive the following new awards:

- Certificate of Achievement for Outstanding Voluntary Effort, from Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network.
- Certificate of Achievement Regional Winner, also from OWN.
- Certificate of Achievement from Planet Ark.
- Award for Monitoring Commitment from Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board. Along with this award we received our own water testing kit.

### **Our support base**

It goes without saying that none of all these things could have become reality without our loyal supporters — a few of whom I have already mentioned by name.

To all the many others I say many thanks. They include our general membership, which as at 30 June 2003 stood at 126 financial members. This is up from 119 on 30 June 2002.

Thanks to all those who at the call of a phone will undertake to go to a meeting or undertake any task asked in the service of the Park.

Thanks especially to Conservation Volunteers Australia for their ongoing support.

Thanks to Wirraway Venture Scouts from Salisbury in the northern suburbs, four of whom came and worked in the Park last summer.

Thanks also to the members of the Mt. Lofty Venture Scouts for spending some hours in weed control in the Park.

Thanks to the supporters of our Public fund who

donated over \$1500, and to our Public fund Committee, Dr. Barry Ganguly, Isobel Redmond and Anita Aspinall.

#### Volunteer time

The Friends donated 2,256 hours of labour to various Park activities and projects during 2002-2003. Costed at the current standard volunteer rate of \$20/hour this represents \$45,120 work of donated labour to the Park.

#### Concluding,

I would like to thank the Adelaide Hills Council staff, especially Glenn Williams and Alan Wickham, who with severely restricted resources work with many community groups over a very large area, and always give generously of their time and effort.

*David Ragless,  
Chair, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.  
Woorabinda 26.10.03*

#### Friends of Stirling Linear Park Volunteer hours 2002-2003

Activity	Hour
BUSHCARE and woody weed control.	786
REVEGETATION: seed collection, tubestock production and planting, staking.	286
SPECIAL PROJECTS: Signage, grant applications, reporting on projects. Project meetings and correspondence. Installing benches and notice boards.	173
COMMITTEE WORK: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, auditor, members.	220
SECRETARIAL WORK: Correspondence, agendas, minutes, website, photocopying, filing.	198
NEWSLETTER: Writing, typing, editing, printing, distribution.	196
PUBLIC FUND: Publicity, record keeping, correspondence, reporting and auditing.	28
DISPLAYS AND POSTERS: Production, captions, laminating, recording, filing, displaying.	98
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING: Waterwatch, photomonitoring, Bushcheck, surveys.	231
WOORABINDA BUILDINGS & GARDEN: Repairs and maintenance.	40
Total hours	2256

#### Friends of Stirling Linear Park Financial Statements for year ending 30 June 2003

Statement of Receipts and Expenditure Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc	
<b>Receipts</b>	
Subscriptions	350.00
Landcare grants	750.00
Interest	24.29
Total	<u>1124.29</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Weed control & revegetation	74.50
Secretarial costs	528.95
Debits Tax	4.70
Park infrastructure	3738.92
Surplus (deficit)	<u>(3222.78)</u>
Total	<u>1124.29</u>
Balance of	
Savings Account 01.07.03	7165.18
Surplus (deficit) 30.06.03	(3222.78)
Cheques not cleared	625.64
<b>Balance of Savings Account 30.06.03</b>	<b>4568.04</b>

Statement of Receipts and Expenditure Friends of Stirling Linear Park Fund	
<b>Receipts</b>	
Donations	1505.00
Interest	<u>0.49</u>
Total	<u>1505.49</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Debits tax	1.50
Park infrastructure	605.00
Surplus (deficit)	<u>898.99</u>
Total	<u>1505.49</u>
Balance of	
Savings Account 01.07.03	1.90
Surplus (deficit) 30.06.03	898.99
<b>Balance of Savings Account 30.06.03</b>	<b>900.89</b>



## A demonstration native garden for Woorabinda

Grant funding has now been secured for the establishment of a native garden in the Woorabinda buildings precinct. Phase 1 is already underway with seed collection and preliminary weed spraying.

This project will add extra interest to the Park. Only those natives common to the Adelaide Hills will be selected, and these will be propagated from seed collected locally.

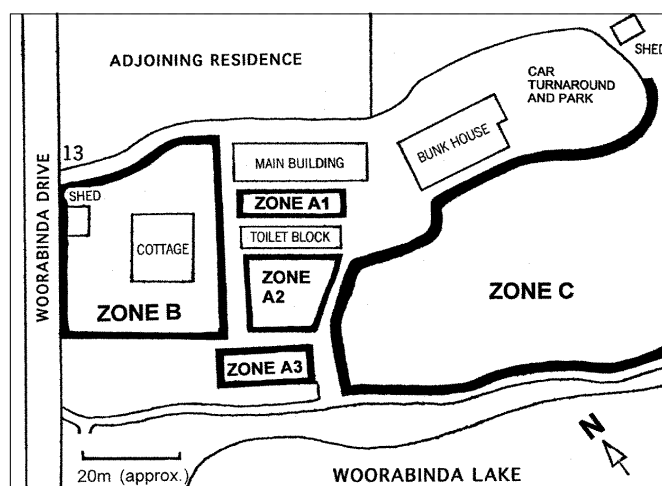
The garden is intended to demonstrate to the public the many advantages of a home garden stocked exclusively with indigenous species.

- Indigenous plants are just as attractive for ornamental display as their exotic cousins.
- Local plants need less water, less frequently.
- They only need modest care, and are generally more pest resistant.
- They offer an improved habitat for native birds and wildlife by supplying preferred food and nesting requirements.
- Native vegetation is superior for the effective management of peri-urban water catchments, such as exist in the Adelaide Hills.

The new garden will help conserve the existing indigenous vegetation in the Park by hopefully attracting a greater variety of birds, thus increasing pollen and seed dispersal.

As well as providing a native planting guide for the local community, the garden will serve as an education resource for schools, Landcare groups, other Friends organisations and environmental trainees.

The project will be managed by Friends of Stirling Linear Park in consultation with staff from both Adelaide Hills Council and Onkaparinga Catchment



Water Management Board. Friends volunteers will be assisted by Conservation Volunteers Australia. Participation will also be sought from local schools, service clubs and the Australian Plants Society.

The project has been divided into two phases:

**Phase 1 (2003-2005):** All large woody weed species will be removed from all the Zones. Zones A1, A2 & A3 will have all other weeds controlled in preparation for a mass planting of low-growing (less than one metre) local plants. This phase will also involve seed collection, propagation and planting of the three zones.

**Phase 2 (during 2005):** Additional funding will be sought in 2005 to carry out appropriate replanting of Zones B and C.

### Recent Working Bees

Date	No. of volunteers	Area	Work done
14 Sept 03	6	Woorabinda	Rain & hail. Removed various woody weeds
12 Oct 03	12	Stirling Park	Cut and swabbed gorse

### Catchment Care Workshops

The Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board is offering the community an opportunity to learn best practice catchment care. If you would like to attend one of the following free workshops, please phone **8374 6000** for a booking. Venue details will be finalised later

TOPIC	DATE	TIME	REGION
Weed control in your watercourse	Saturday 13 December 2003	9 - 11 am	Kangarilla
Native plant seed collection	Saturday 17 January 2004	9 - 11 am	Stirling
Weed control in your watercourse	Wednesday 4 February 2004	6 - 8 pm (supper inc)	Echunga
Native plant seed collection	Saturday 14 February 2004	3 - 5 pm	Stirling

## Recognising Bandicoots

Aside from David Ragless's comprehensive review of the year, the highlight of the Annual General Meeting was Nerissa Haby's talk about Bandicoots.

Most enlightened folk would be aware of what a bandicoot looks like, even if they haven't actually seen one in the wild. But Nerissa was leaving nothing to chance. The easiest way to differentiate them from rats she says, is by the length of their tail (shorter) and the size of their bum (much bigger). Other distinguishing features are of course their pointy snout and clawed front feet, which leave distinctive three-toed tracks. Rats and Antechinus leave smaller four- and five-toed tracks respectively. Since the Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery program began earlier in the year, bandicoots have been popping up everywhere. People are revising their opinions about what they have seen. Sightings of what were thought to be rats could in many cases have been bandicoots.

Bandicoots stay on the ground and build simple nests in the undergrowth — the tanglier the better. They don't climb as rats do, and they don't burrow like rabbits. They generally lead solitary lives, although of course males and females cohabit for short periods while breeding.

As Nerissa says, our old idea about slashing or poisoning every bit of noxious weed we see is not always a good idea. Exotic pest species such as blackberry, gorse, boneseed etc often provide good refuge for bandicoots.

This is not to say we should abandon essential weed removal. It's just that we need to exercise care — perhaps gradual removal is better, followed immediately by replanting with indigenous ground covers. Government legislation now makes it an offence to remove habitat (including pest species) if it is known to be sheltering wildlife.

Do you think you have bandicoots in your garden? Look for conical shaped holes in the ground where those distinctive snouts have been nosing for insects and fungi. You can tell if they're rabbit diggings by the presence of poo around the hole. Bandicoots do not generally leave scats where they dig for food — unlike rabbits.

In October 2003, Nerissa and Russell Seaman surveyed Woorabinda and Hender Reserves for evidence of bandicoots. As a result, they now have positive proof that there are Southern Brown Bandicoots in Hender Reserve and Yellow-footed Antechinus in Woorabinda.

Tracking tunnels were positioned in Hender and Woorabinda and left in place for three

Extract from  
**Bandicoot survey in Hender  
and Woorabinda Reserves**  
by Nerissa Haby

A total of 24 tracking tunnels were each placed in Hender Reserve and Woorabinda Reserve from 11th to 14th October and 14th to 17th October respectively. Tracking tunnels were placed in animal runs, under vegetation or near burrows.

In both reserves the numbers of tunnels detecting small mammals had declined by the third night. However during the survey period Southern Brown Bandicoots (*Isodon obesulus obesulus*), rats and mice (*Mus musculus*) were successfully detected in Hender Reserve, and yellow footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) and rats in Woorabinda Reserve. The rat prints obtained using this technique are likely to be from black rats (*Rattus rattus*) due to the species being detected earlier in the year.

During the placement of tracking tunnels within Hender Reserve, two Southern Brown Bandicoot nests were identified ...

days (see insert). These deceptively simple devices record an animal's footprints on a sheet of paper as it passes through. The base of the tunnel is a narrow strip of wood on which is fixed a sheet of white paper and a porous pad loaded with harmless food colouring.

Small animals enter the tunnel, walk over the pad and leave their footprints on the paper. It is then a simple matter to collect the evidence each morning. The tunnels are not baited. The animals are driven by curiosity to investigate these strange additions to their environment.

Southern Brown Bandicoots are officially listed as Nationally Endangered under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The implications of their discovery in Hender Reserve are clear:

- Native plant regeneration programs should be expanded — particularly those varieties forming dense ground cover.
- Need for a cautionary approach towards the removal of certain weed species, particularly blackberry.
- Raise a greater community awareness of the need for better conservation practices in the Park, with particular reference to the responsible management of cats and dogs.
- Target the removal of foxes within the reserves.



## Bicycles in the Park

When the Stirling Linear Park walkways were opened four years ago, Adelaide Hills Council and the Friends intended to maintain them as dedicated walking trails. There was no suggestion of them being 'shared pathways'. Their design assumed a long service life requiring infrequent maintenance because the only impact on them would be foot traffic.

Constructed to a minimum width in accordance with accepted standards, the trails and their alignment were carefully chosen to minimise the impact on vegetation. Areas of pristine natural bush were especially avoided.

Underlying the establishment of the trails was the philosophy that Park visitors should be able to enjoy a peaceful natural setting on foot — arguably the best means to access the natural world and appreciate its benefits.

So it's hardly surprising that walkers and bush-carers get a little tetchy on the subject of mountain bikes on the walkways.

The growth of mountain biking as a sport (some 42,000 machines were sold in South Australia in financial year 2001-02) is placing more and more walking trails under pressure in the Adelaide Hills as the biking lobby demands greater access to parks and reserves. To be fair, some of the biking clubs are aware of walkers' safety concerns and the need to limit environmental damage. Organisations such as Bicycle SA and the Department of Recreation and Sport publish safety and environmental awareness guidelines to educate mountain bikers about their responsibilities.

Local authorities have been forced to bend to the mountain biking juggernaut. After much community wrangling, and the inevitable flurry of reports, Mitcham Council agreed to develop a 120 ha site at Eagle-on-the-Hill with trails specifically designed for mountain biking.

Fortunately, Stirling Linear Park offers little in the way of testing conditions for the sport biking enthusiast. There are no steep gradients to speak of, nor are there stretches of difficult terrain to challenge the riders' skills. As a result we have been largely spared the trials and tribulations of Friends

groups in other parts of the Hills, where the topography is more precipitously inviting to mountain bikes. Conservation groups operating within the Mitcham Council area for instance, have had an ongoing battle with mountain bikers, often to the point where confrontation has produced very ugly scenes.

Mountain bikers and other cyclists do however use Stirling Linear Park's walkways from time to time. Adelaide Hills Council should discourage them, because of the danger to life and limb on these narrow paths and boardwalks. It is only a matter of time before someone, possibly a child or an elderly person is seriously hurt.

Would the Council's public liability insurance cover such an incident?

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park committee has always recognised that youngsters on small bikes accompanied by responsible parents hardly pose a threat to health, safety or the environment. Mountain bikers, on the other hand, and adolescents hooning around on larger bikes most definitely do.

It's a difficult issue, because a bicycle is a bicycle. How do you make a rule for one group of cyclists and not another? If you have a rule banning bicycle riding in the Park, the ban would have to include the benign with the downright destructive.

And yet a total ban has to be the only option. As in so many instances where rules must be written to protect the interests of the wider community and the natural environment, the innocent sometimes get lumped in with the perpetrators.

Thus, at our October meeting, the FoSLP committee resolved that: *As the walking trails in Stirling Linear Park are not designed for joint use by walkers and bicycles, this committee recommends to Adelaide Hills Council that the riding of bicycles be prohibited in the Park'.*

This resolution has been forwarded in writing to the Adelaide Hills Council's CEO. In our letter we draw attention to the environmental and safety problems of bicycles in the Park, and hope that Council will respond appropriately.



## Feedback

Although we do our best to report accurately and fairly on Park matters, we know there are issues we may have missed.

This newsletter goes to some 150 Friends and similar interest groups. That's a wide enough readership to harbour a diversity of ideas and opinions.

Do you approve of the program of revegetation and regeneration going on the Park? Or do you have misgivings about the Park's management and its future directions?

Let us know what you think. Keep it brief and we'll gladly publish it in the newsletter.

Post your comments to:

J. Benlow, PO box 1, Stirling 5152.

Visit us at our website:  
<http://users.esc.net.au/~slp/>

Disclaimer: Contributors' views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor, the committee or the general membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.  
Contributors to this issue include David Ragless and Jack Benlow.

## Not a member yet?

The purpose and commitment of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park is to help restore the Park to natural bushland and to ensure its preservation as a public open space in perpetuity.

If you share this vision, why not join us? Active participation in working bees etc, is entirely voluntary. Membership is open to anyone who has the best interests of the Park at heart.

This newsletter is distributed quarterly to all members.



**Patron** Anita Aspinall

**Committee** 2002/2003:

David Ragless.....	8339 1038
Bob James.....	8339 1903
Shirley Benlow.....	8339 2218
John Allison.....	8339 1577
Kathy Bowman.....	8370 9177
Jack Benlow .....	8339 2218
Lorri Ragless .....	8339 1038
Philip Hicks.....	8339 3156
Alistair McHenry.....	8339 5114
Russell Seaman.....	8398 0626
Neil Strong.....	8339 4085
Merilyn Browne	
Glenn Williams ( <i>Natural Resources AHC</i> ).....	8408 0400

**Note:** Office bearers will be appointed at the next committee meeting on 16 December 2003.

## Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. is a Member of Friends of Parks Inc. We are also a Registered Landcare Group and a Member of both Greening Australia and Trees for Life.



## Friends of Stirling Linear Park — Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park (strike out word not applicable).

\$..... membership fee is enclosed.

\$.....donation is included. Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible. A separate receipt will be issued.

Membership fee for both individuals and family:

1 year.....\$5.00  
5 years.....\$20.00

**Name:**.....

**Address**.....

..... **Phone**.....

**Please return to:** David Ragless, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 6 Branch Rd, STIRLING SA 5152.