



Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Winter 2011

STIRLING AUTUMN FESTIVAL, 2011

Friends of Stirling Linear Park's stall for the Autumn Festival this year was lucky enough to be placed in the middle of the main street, outside Locavore. This proved fortuitous in many ways!

The sunny weather enticed visitors from far and wide to marvel at our beautiful town in its Autumn colours. Many showed avid interest in our stall. They complimented us on the large array of photos taken of our work over the years and found particular pleasure in the excellent photography, kindly lent to us for the occasion, by our star photographer Brian Cartwright. Brian's photos of Moths of the Adelaide Hills amazed and interested people of all ages.

It was a fun day for the Friends group as so many people showed interest in our work. We even had six new offers to join our monthly working bees, which was very satisfying indeed.

Jane, Marilyn, Kath, Bev and Brian were very grateful to have David Ragless, David Forward and Jane's husband Wolf to erect and later dismantle the large tent for the event.

It was heartening to notice the large environmental awareness as well as an obvious interest in what FSLP stands for and is doing, amongst so many in our community.



Jane Schoettgen at our stand

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Fire Management Plan

The Stirling Linear Park Advisory Group has been working towards a bushfire management plan for the park and Council has contracted a bushfire management consultant to develop a plan for the next bushfire season. Council recently wrote to residents adjoining the park seeking their comments about the approach to fire management within the park. The letter stated that:

‘The plan is to provide strategic and operational direction on the management of bushfire mitigation within the Stirling Linear Park (Woorabinda, Stirling, Hender and Madurta reserves). Its focus

will be on prevention and mitigation of bushfires starting within the park. Expected outcomes include delineation of asset protection zones, fire maintenance trails and areas of ecological and environmental significance.’

Council’s Natural Resources Officer advised that Friends of Stirling Linear Park will be given the opportunity to provide input and comment in relation to the proposal. If you have any comments that you would like included as part of the Friends input, please email Philip Hicks: lhicks@chariot.net.au.

Recent sightings

For the ten people taking part in our June working bee above the Ethel Trail in Stirling Park, a highlight was seeing extensive fresh Bandicoot diggings in an area not far from where we were removing gorse regrowth from remnant bush. This is just north of an area where a bandicoot was sighted a few years ago.

Another highlight and perhaps a rarer event was the sighting of a Spotless Crake at Woorabinda Lake in early May. These small, elusive birds are listed as ‘Rare’ at state level and ‘Uncommon’ in the Mount Lofty Ranges and, as far as can be ascertained, have not previously been recorded at Woorabinda. Spotless Crakes are occasionally observed at Laratinga Wetlands, Mount Barker, as well as the relatively more common Australian Spotted Crake and Baillon’s Crake. They are most often seen in dull light – early in the morning or on overcast days when they briefly emerge from vegetation on the water’s edge.

Overall, water bird species and numbers on the Woorabinda Lake have continued to be relatively low. One reason for this may be the abundance of alternative locations locally and further afield after good rains. In addition to small numbers of the more common Pacific Black Ducks, Wood Ducks and the recently sighted pair of Grey Teals, one Hardhead has been a resident at the lake for some time.

Little Pied Cormorants have continued to be occasional visitors but Purple Swamp Hens are no longer resident.

Another unusual sighting near the lake was that of a Painted Button-quail, flushed by an off-leash dog.

Up to three kangaroos at a time have been seen recently in the bush towards the southern end of Woorabinda.

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Revegetation

Council has approved plantings of seedlings this year to backfill the existing revegetation area in Madurta. The seedlings are being grown Anne Hicks using material supplied by Trees for Life. They will be planted by local Rover and Venturer Scouts as part their work towards scouting awards.

Last year Friends of Stirling Linear Park was advised at short notice that we would not be given Council approval to continue plantings within the existing revegetation areas in both

Stirling Park and Madurta, in line with approved revegetation plans, until a fire management plan has been completed. This meant that we had to dispose of the plants grown for this purpose. We also had to refuse a request from Scouts to assist in plantings as part of their environmental work towards their Queen’s Scout awards, as other Scouts had done in previous years. This year we are still not able to continue plantings in existing revegetation areas within Stirling Park for the same reason.

Recent Working Bees

In addition to our monthly Sunday working bees, we now have working bees on the last Thursday of each month. The Thursday working bees are already attracting a number of dedicated regular volunteers and we look forward to increasing community participation. We would like to thank the Weekender Herald newspaper for their recent article highlighting our call for additional volunteers to assist us in our working bees.

Since our last working bee report in the Summer 2010 Newsletter, our Sunday working bees have concentrated on:

- Woorabinda – in February, March and April – starting at the northern end of the good bush between the lake and the railway line, we systematically worked south and then to the south east of the lake through as much of the good bush areas as possible, covering a large area and removing mainly scattered small to medium size woody weeds that have re-established since previous working bees in these areas. Members have been enjoyed seeing the results of our past work.
- Madurta – in May – mainly broom at the SW corner of the good bush.
- Stirling Park – in June – mainly gorse regrowth with some *Watsonia* in remnants of bush. A very pleasant day after a questionable forecast.

Our Sunday working bees have continued our overall long term strategy of working outwards from areas of good bush, where possible. All working bees were well attended, although fewer

members were present in April as some were busy setting up our stall at the Autumn Garden Festival. At the May working bee we welcomed three new participants recruited at our stall. In June we enjoyed the company of Ben from the Mount Lofty Scouts, doing work towards a scouting award, and his father, scout leader Michael.

Our Thursday working bees have concentrated on margins of the good bush in an area of Woorabinda between the Keroma Trail, the Linwood Trail and the firetrack into the park from Keroma Drive. This work complements the Sunday working bee program in Woorabinda.

In parallel with our regular working bees, a number of individual volunteers are continuing their valuable weeding work in particular areas of the park.

For the remainder of the year we will be continuing the work already outlined in Woorabinda, renewing our efforts to reduce the spread of *Watsonia* into the good bush in Woorabinda and Madurta and doing further work on gorse regrowth in remnant bush in Stirling Park.

The Working Bee reminder notices continue to be sent out by email to the “regulars”. If you are considering joining us at the times set out below, please email Bob James: bobjames@chariot.net.au or Jane Schoettgen: jschoett@bigpond.net.au (while Bob is away until September) and you will be included on the list of working bee reminder notices.

FUTURE SUNDAY WORKING BEES, 2011

Date	Location	Meeting Place
July 17	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
August 21	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 16	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
December 18	Stirling Park	Branch Road

Time: 9.00 am – 11 am

FUTURE THURSDAY WORKING BEES, 2011

Date	Location	Meeting Place
Last Thursday of the month	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive

Time: 9.00 am – 11 am

Creek Crossing

Council has recently constructed a new creek crossing at the point where the Stirling Park Track crosses the main creek through Stirling Park. The crossing consists of a concrete roadway over four separate pipes and provides access to Woorabinda for emergency services vehicles. It replaces a low level foot crossing which could be difficult to cross in wet winters and could not be used by CFS fire trucks.

Friends of Stirling Linear Park has advocated a new creek crossing since the early 1990s and in about 2002 had funding for materials and labour (Conservation Volunteers Australia) to build a bridge and ford but Council did not approve it. More recently, FSLP proposed in three separate submissions to the Stirling Linear Park Advisory Group:

- a foot crossing in the form of a boardwalk, similar to that downstream at the eastern end of Stirling Park, and
- a parallel low level ford.

FSLP's plan was to create the ford by removing the hump on one side of the existing crossing, allowing fire trucks to cross the creek in summer (the main purpose of a ford) while not impeding significant flows after heavy rains. One of our members, who is also a CFS member, tested the crossing with a fire truck as part of a review of CFS vehicle access to the park and considered that this plan would provide sufficient access for fire trucks.

FSLP also provided Council with a copy of a plan for a boardwalk professionally prepared some years ago when a new crossing was previously being considered by Council.

Council staff met FSLP representatives on site

just before construction of the new crossing commenced and outlined the reasons for adopting their design.

In the short time that the small diameter pipes under the crossing have been in place, they have not been able to handle the flow generated by moderate winter rains and water has flowed around one side of the concrete roadway and removed some of the filling below it. At the time of writing, consolidation work is being undertaken.

FSLP understands that, when planning the structure, Council staff considered that the creek was a continuation of the small stream which starts at the head of the valley at the northern end of Stirling Park and only flows in wet winters. A low profile crossing was constructed over this creek two or three years ago to improve vehicle access to the western area of Stirling Park. In fact, the stream passing through the newly constructed crossing is the main tributary by volume of the Aldgate Creek. It has a much larger catchment area than the creek originating in Stirling Park and flows for much of a non-drought year. In this respect, Council staff had been advised by FSLP members that a metre of water could flow over the old crossing during peak rainfall events.

The final stage of the project will involve revegetation of the surrounding area. Council staff asked whether FSLP can supply plant species which are suitable for the location. We can supply *Leptospermum lanigerum* (silky teatree) seedlings. This species grows immediately upstream and some plants were removed for the work on the crossing.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

When: Tuesday 22 November 2011, 6.30pm
Where: Woorabinda Environment Centre
Speaker: Janet Pedler, Environmental Consultant

All welcome. Barbeque facilities will be available after the meeting (please bring your own meat, salad and drinks).

Council Decisions on Dog Access in Stirling Linear Park

While recognizing that most of us and the community as a whole has had enough of this subject, the content of FSLP's deputations on dog access in SLP to the Council meeting on 22 March has not been disseminated since the meeting, either by FSLP or in the media. For this reason, extracts from the deputation are included in this Newsletter. Additional, more detailed information, including FSLP's detailed submission to Council, is available on the FSLP website.

Dog Access in Stirling Linear Park: Extracts from Friends of Stirling Linear Park Deputation to Council – 22 March 2011

FSLP's reasons for supporting dogs on leash

FSLP has a large membership representing a cross section of the local community, including many dog owners. We see the park as a resource for use by the whole community as evidenced by our work on construction of boardwalks, paths and seating. We also consider that the park's high conservation value needs to be factored into the way this community resource is used.

As SLP is a community park, dogs should be on leash at all times to allow for all community members to use it. Feedback from local residents is that allowing dogs off leash discourages some people, particularly the elderly and those with young children, from using the Park.

We do not advocate no dogs or dog exclusion zones but dogs on leash. Many dog owners prefer to keep their dogs on leash. We see a dog on leash policy as a balanced approach providing equity of access for all of the community.

Our concern is about dogs being off leash and not under effective control. Some dog owners consider their dogs to be under effective control when other users of the Park, including other dog owners, would consider that their dogs are not under effective control.

A *significant* number of dogs within the Park are clearly not under effective control. It is often the large dogs within this number that cause problems for people in the park, including those with other dogs. An added problem is the commotion and disturbance of the otherwise peaceful environment caused by owners trying to retrieve their dogs.

Dogs off leash can have a very significant adverse effect on native wildlife. There is much

accumulated anecdotal evidence of the effect of dogs in SLP, as set out in many individual submissions. The scientific research paper of Haby refers to details of dog damage to Southern Brown Bandicoots and that of Banks and Bryant covers the dog damage to native birds.

We have observed an increase in dogs swimming in the Woorabinda Lake. Some owners encourage their dogs to swim in the lake. We have also noted a reduction in numbers and species of water birds. There would seem to be a correlation between these events.

Current dog access position in SLP

Dog control policy in SLP from the time of the formation of SLP until 2006 was dogs on leash at all times. From 2006 until 2009 an interim policy applied.

In 2009 the Stirling Linear Park Advisory Group set out to produce a balanced dog access policy. Their report recommended dogs on leash throughout the park, apart from a fenced dog off leash area in Madurta Reserve.

In December 2009, AHC adopted the current dog policy for SLP. In doing so, major changes were made to the dog access policy recommended by the Advisory Group.

The current dog policy has not yet been implemented, well over a year after it was adopted, as it is too difficult and unworkable. This is because of the many amendments made to the original, balanced, Advisory Group recommendations. Implementing the current policy would pose considerable difficulties for dog owners. A dog owner who intended to walk from one end of the park to the other and take their dog off leash where permitted would need to change from on leash to off leash at least four times – providing that they could comprehend the complicated signage required. This problem was immediately acknowledged by members of dog interest groups present at the Council meeting at which the policy was adopted.

Comparison with dog access policy in other parks

SLP is the only Council reserve not included in the Open Space Animal Management Plan. Introduction of a dog on leash policy would mean that the dog access policy in SLP will be consistent with that for other similar parks which are included in the Open Space Animal Management Plan. This includes Bushland Park, Lobethal and Mylor Parklands, which are similar

to SLP in that they include areas of high quality bush and some open areas. It would also mean that dog policy in SLP will be consistent with other similar parks outside the AHC such as Laratinga Wetlands at Mount Barker. Dogs must be on leash at all times in Laratinga Wetlands, which is a wetland and revegetation area and does not contain any areas of remnant bush such as that in SLP.

Reports on Management Strategies

There have been 23 reports – collectively covering 1139 pages – into the management of Stirling Linear Park. They have been written by a range of authors over a number of years and include:

- Private consultants mostly employed by Council
- Council Boards or Council Committees
- Tertiary students as part of degree work
- Friends of Stirling Linear Park
- Official environmental monitoring organizations

These reports have been written from a range of perspectives, but they all agree on these issues:

- That the Park is of conservation significance, it should be managed accordingly, and should allow a range of passive recreation for the community.
- None of the reports consider the Park to be of modest conservation value, or of no conservation value.
- None of the reports recommend dogs off leash throughout the Park.
- All the reports recommend dogs on leash in the Park.
- One report recommends that Council also investigate the possibility of a fenced off leash dog area in a grassy area thought to be in Hender Reserve (this area is actually outside the Park boundary and privately owned.)

- One report recommended a small off leash area in Madurta Reserve.
- None of the reports recommend prohibiting dogs in the Park.

The most comprehensive of these reports is the *Stirling Linear Park Management Strategy*. It was prepared by Urban and Regional Planning Solutions and completed in 2006. This followed a lengthy process of Council determining terms of reference, calling for expressions of interest, selecting a consultant and undertaking extensive community consultation. This included written public submissions, community representation on working parties, open community workshops, public meetings to present community views, and finally a public review meeting of the draft report.

This report was a costly exercise. Senior Council staff spent hundreds of hours of time on it and the consultants were paid \$25,000, a modest fee given the time and effort they put into it.

Part of this report is titled the *Ecological Value of Stirling Linear Park*. This gives an overview written by independent specialist ecologists. Anyone who doubts the conservation value of our Stirling Linear Park should read it.

The most recent report is from the Council-appointed Stirling Linear Park Advisory Group. They recommended - unanimously to Council - that dogs must remain on paths and be on leash at all times within Stirling Linear Park. They then detailed six reasons why Council should adopt this policy.

Given that all reports have recommended that dogs be on leash, it is not surprising that the majority of present councillors have adopted a dog on leash policy for the park. They are to be congratulated for accepting the experts' recommendations.



Newsletter Mailing List

FSLP plans to email future editions of our Newsletter to members rather than print and post them to reduce costs. Please help by sending your email address to Kath Bowman kjbowman@internode.on.net

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Committee 2010-11

Kathy Bowman	8370 9177
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162
Phillip Hicks	8339 3156
Bob James	8339 1903
Ian Perrin	8339 3262
David Ragless	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038
Alistair McHenry (Advisor)	8339 5114
Russell Seaman (Advisor)	8398 0626

Web address: <http://esc.net.au/~slp/>

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.



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 Philip Hicks, David Ragless, Jane Schoettgen and Merilyn Browne.

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. (strike out words 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.....\$10.00
5 years.....\$40.00

Name.....

Address.....

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

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154