



No 39

Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Summer 2005

Chairman's Annual Review 2004-05 (presented at the Annual General Meeting)

I am pleased to report that last financial year a record number of hours of work were donated to Stirling Linear Park by Friends and other volunteers: in total just over 4000 hours. I would like to express thanks to all who have donated time, skills and energy to supporting Adelaide Hills Council in maintenance and enhancement of the Park. It has been a massive effort.

A detailed breakdown of hours for various works will be published in our next Newsletter, due out in mid December.

Our most important work is Bushcare and woody weed control to improve the biodiversity and habitat value of the Park.

Monthly bushcare working bees have, as previously, rotated around the four sections of the park and the walkways to Madurta. Working bees have, on average, been attended by 10 workers. Individuals have also worked on their own at bushcare throughout the year. In particular I must mention Bob James who works in Hender Reserve almost every day.

We have also had wonderful support from groups from the business community. Grateful thanks to the staff of the National Australia Bank (who have worked in the park on 5 previous occasions) and to the staff of Ernst Young.

Thanks also to Conservation Volunteers Australia who organized the massive one day event with 126 workers from Ernst Young, and to Alan Wickham from Adelaide Hills Council who always happily assists with technical supervision and instruction.

A total of 1251 hours of time was donated by volunteers to bushcare and woody weed control work in the Park during the year. This sets a new record of bushcare hours worked in a year.

Revegetation work to improve habitat connectivity, catchment management and visual amenity, has again been of high priority in our work program.

Planting working bees were held on three occasions when over 2500 tubestock, of ground covers, understory shrubs and canopy species, were planted.

All tubestock were raised from seed collected in the Park or from areas close to the Park.

Thanks to all involved in this program, including seed collectors, tubestock propagators, planters, weeders and Planet Ark. Particular thanks to the Australian Government Envirofund and the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board who have supported us financially.

Planning Reports underpin all our work in the Park.

What's inside

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This year will certainly be remembered as 'the year of the reports' for our year seems to have been dominated by work of background research, meetings, writings, compilations, editings and publishings of reports.

There have been four major reports and a similar number of minor reports. This work has hung over our year like a constant cloud.

1. The *Environmental Assessment of Stirling Linear Park* was commissioned by Friends and written by Robby Towill who is now employed by the Department of Land, Water and Biodiversity Conservation. This report uses modern methodologies to assess the environmental value of the park to the community. Copies are available from our committee for \$5 each, or it can be downloaded from our website.

2. The *Resource Document for Stirling Linear Park* was written by our committee member Russell Seaman and funded by Wetland Care Australia. This report is underpinned by independent wildlife surveys of the Park's flora and fauna by the SA Museum Herpetology Group, a contract biologist and a contract botanist as well as surveys by professional members of Friends.

Originally intended as a new management plan for the Park for consideration by Council, it was overtaken by the Strategy Management process report. It has proved, however, a valuable information source for the Strategy process.

3. The Council sponsored *Stirling Linear Park Draft Management Strategy Report*. While this report was not released until after the end of the financial year it has been a dominant part of our work year.

Our thanks to Andrew Murray and Rob Tanner who represented Friends on the Management Strategy Steering Committee which drafted terms of reference, aims and objectives, and selected a consultant to undertake researching and writing the report.

This report contains an excellent ecological assessment of the Park to help guide future management. I will come back to this assessment later.

The Draft Strategy Report contains

recommendations for environmentally friendly uses of the Park. These recommendations are very close to present use. Your committee broadly supports these recommendations for use, but has concerns about the proposed Management Committee structure because it is too limited and omits major stakeholders.

Another major concern is that it is recommended that the Woorabinda cottage should become a cafe/restaurant, or be demolished for a car park. We believe that it should be maintained as part of the Woorabinda Environment Centre.

4. Much thought and work has gone into the *Rehabilitation Report for Madurta Reserve*, again compiled by Russell Seaman. Our thanks to him and Alan Dickens, who helped with the field survey work.

Again the public release was after the end of the financial year but the work was done during the year. Our thanks to the Australian Government Envirofund for funding this report and also providing grant funds for on-ground work which will flow from it in due course.

When approved by Council this will guide all future weed control and revegetation work in Madurta Reserve.

It cannot be said that work is done in the Park without any planning!

Development and repair of Park Trails

continued during the year with a considerable amount of work being carried out by Scouts from the Mt Lofty Scout group and students from Pembroke School, as community service work.

Over 300 hours of work, supervised by Friends members, was done by two Venturer scouts and ten Baccalaureate students.

Our thanks to these energetic youth, in particular to Tim Ganguly, for his leadership. Also thanks to Glen Williams for cheerfully organizing deliveries by Council of pipes and dolomite (often at ridiculously short notice).

During the year one of our members has monitored the bird hide and other places for graffiti and when necessary painted it out. Our thanks to member Paul Hannan for doing

this work.

The **Ecological Assessment** of Stirling Linear Park was undertaken by consultants *Ecological Associates Pty Ltd* as part of the Park Management Strategy process. As mentioned previously, it is an excellent survey and provides ecological data confirming the high environmental values of the Park.

Flora

166 species have been recorded. They include four species listed as Rare for South Australia, 17 species with regional conservation listing and two plant associations of particularly high conservation value.

Birds

94 species have been recorded, including 54% of the declining bird species identified in the Mt Lofty Ranges.

Mammals

18 species have been recorded including three threatened at State or National level.

Marsupials

Three species recorded including a nationally Endangered species and a species listed as Vulnerable under proposed changes to the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Fish

Three species identified including a species listed as rare under proposed changes to the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Macro-invertebrates

Fifteen species identified in Woorabinda Lake.

Frogs

Five species identified.

Reptiles

Thirteen species identified including one of high regional conservation significance.

One of the most exciting things during the year has been the sighting of Southern Brown Bandicoots in Woorabinda and in Stirling Park where they had not previously been seen.

Additional sightings in several parts of Hender Reserve also occurred during the year. Bandicoots are now known to be living in all parts of the park except Madurta Reserve. **Environmental monitoring** of biodiversity and ecological values of the Park has continued with a range of programs.

These include:

- Annual photo monitoring from 34 sites;
- Bi monthly water sampling and quality testing from the lake and creeks;
- Bushcheck monthly bird observations from six areas;
- Annual frog census;
- *Monadenia* mapping;
- Bird observations by students of CVA training programs, as part of Birds Australia monitoring program.

It is pleasing to note that water quality is stable, weeds are decreasing, bird numbers and diversity are encouraging, but it's alarming to note the increase in the weed orchid *Monadenia* in disturbed areas.

Our thanks to the large number of people who work for these programs.

During the year Friends became partners in **The Central Hills Green Web Project**. This project consists of a number of local volunteer conservation groups and government agencies that have an environmental interest.

The aim is to link up and better care for the remaining fragments of native bushland on both public and private land.

The project is currently supported by funding from Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board (now part of AMLR NRM Board) Urban Forest Biodiversity Program and Adelaide Hills Council.

Public displays show-casing the Park and Friends work have been mounted at the Stirling Library on two occasions and once at the Mt Lofty summit Tourist Centre during the year. Thanks to Shirley Benlow for arranging these – an example of her displays is outside in the passage.

We have continued to provide our **Walkers' Guide to Stirling Linear Park** to a number of Adelaide Hills tourist information outlets on request. Demand surprises us, with 470 copies distributed during the year.

Efforts were made during the year to link our walkers' guide to a map of the Stirling and Aldgate main streets to encourage visitors to patronise local businesses while in the district. While the idea attracted some support it has

yet to become a reality.

The Woorabinda Lake Self Guided Walk leaflet was released during the year and made available in a self-serve dispenser at the Woorabinda notice board. (Someone has now taken the dispenser; we plan to replace it with a more secure type.)

The most frustrating event this year was Council delaying the building of the long planned bridge over the creek in Stirling Park. Council had previously approved a bridge design and we have donation money for materials and labour available for construction. After rain the crossing continues to be a muddy and slippery adventure.

We have continued to publish our **seasonal newsletter** to keep membership informed of Park issues and activities. Our thanks to editor Marilyn Browne for her efforts.

During the year our committee member Russell Seaman won the **top planning awards** at both State and National level for his management plan for the Coorong.

Also a **Civic Award** for community service was given to Lorri Ragless, another of our

committee members.

We offer our congratulations to both people.

It has been a busy year for meetings supporting all our activities and on-ground work. Your committee has continued to meet monthly, and there has been a seemingly never-ending schedule of other meetings.

In conclusion we look forward to the future given that the Management Strategy for Stirling Linear Park should, when adopted by Council, give us, and the community, certainty about the Park's value and its community use, and call a halt to the divisive and often mischievous debate which has been taking place lately.

Finally a couple of things have happened in the last week which are too good to wait a year to announce at an AGM.

They are:

- 1 That the Greenweb project, of which we are a part, was awarded a Catchment Ambassador Award by the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board. The citation says: 'for an innovative and resourceful approach to improving catchment health.'

FRIENDS WIN SA GREAT AWARD

At the SAGreat Adelaide Hills Regional Awards 2005 the Friends of Stirling Linear Park were announced winner of the Science and Environment Award. This was in recognition of our fifteen years of community work in support of the Stirling Linear Park. The extent and quality of Friends work was cited as a major achievement. The citation states that recognition builds prosperous communities.

The award was announced at the Hills gala presentation ceremony at the Wallis Theatre at Mount Barker which preceded the celebratory cocktail party for entrants and winners.

The committee of Friends is proud to have accepted this prestigious award on behalf of the large number of volunteers who have

worked with us over a long period. Your efforts have once again been recognised. Congratulations and many thanks from your committee.



Rehabilitation Plan for Madurta Reserve

A detailed plan, commissioned by Friends to guide future weed control and revegetation of Madurta Reserve, has been completed and forwarded to Council for approval. This has been prepared by Russell Seaman, the highly awarded Ecological Planner, with assistance from Alan Dickens, and funded with a grant to Friends from the Australian Government *Envirofund*.

Madurta Reserve requires rehabilitation within several sections, namely along the drainage lines. The plan defines these sections through documenting issues and suggested actions. A revegetation list is provided, which

documents species needed to establish basic vegetation structure. A large area of open space has been left between Madurta Avenue and the creekline.

This resource document will be a tool for reserve managers and community groups who are managing and undertaking conservation work within the park. These are notably the Adelaide Hills Council with assistance from Conservation Volunteers Australia, the Friends of Stirling Linear Park and other volunteers coordinated by Friends such as Scouts, business volunteers and International Baccalaureate students.

THE ALTERNATIVE STIRLING LINEAR PARK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT

The representatives of Friends of Stirling Linear Park on the project steering committee (Rob Tanner and Andrew Murray) were disappointed during the process that the steering committee had little or no input into what and how things were done – such as the organisation of the public meeting. Because of problems caused by this, and because they feel the draft report has major errors and deficiencies, neither representative was prepared to have their name included on the draft report. Instead, they asked that they prepare an alternative report for consideration by the public and by Council. This request was refused by Council. This report has therefore been submitted as a public comment to the public review of the draft management report.

Problems with the process

The steering committee had very little input into what and how things were done.

Inadequate analysis

The analysis of written submissions in the draft report is incomplete and ignores the range and number of views they contain. For example less than three pages is devoted to reporting on one hundred and thirty letters, many of which cover a number of pages and some up to fifteen pages. In contrast the report on the public meeting covers thirty eight

pages, and while it reports in detail a range of attendees opinions, it is not made clear what support each opinion had at the meeting.

Inappropriate recommendations

Several major action recommendations in the report are inappropriate, and are neither in line with public opinions expressed during the process nor with existing management plans.

Two examples are:

- the structure of the proposed management committee which ignores the major stakeholders in the Woorabinda Environment Centre, and
- the proposal to use the Woorabinda cottage for a cafe, which ignores the views of local residents, and negates the opportunity to have a caretaker without cost to Council.

Additions to the Report are colour-coded for easy comparison – find it on the FoSLP web site or purchase a copy from FoSLP for \$10.

Stirling Linear Park and the 'Green Web' project

As well as being a site with considerable conservation value in its own right, the Stirling Linear Park is now also a crucial component of a much larger project, the 'Central Hills Green Web'.

The Green Web, interwoven through the Stirling, Heathfield, Aldgate, Bridgewater and Mylor districts, combines many, smaller conservation projects to create a single, larger biodiversity conservation and watershed protection project in the Central Hills.

The Stirling Linear Park is one of the largest pieces of the Green Web 'jigsaw'. It is crucial for the Green Web that the Stirling Linear Park continues to be managed as single, integrated conservation park for its biodiversity and watershed values.

The Central Hills Green Web has attracted some \$130,000 in new funding in 2005, along with more than \$300,000 in 'in-kind' support and 'matching' funding from its various partners – including very strong support from the Adelaide Hills Council, which (among other things) holds the funds for the project.

We confidently expect that the Green Web project will continue to attract similar or increased levels of support into the future, and that it will also provide an umbrella for the numerous community groups involved to apply for specific project grants. This will funnel substantial new funding into conservation and watershed management on Council, private and public land in the Central Hills.

Needless to say, the future of this extremely innovative and important project – which is already being seen as a model for other areas – depends on all its partners continuing to show their strong support, both in rhetoric and in practice. Therefore any move to reduce the conservation and watershed values of Stirling Linear Park would be severely detrimental to the Green Web. This is because it would impact on one of the Project's main signature sites, and because of the negative message it would deliver about the Adelaide Hills Council's commitment to the Green Web project.

The 'Central Hills Green Web': some background information

What's so special about the Central Hills?

The Central Hills Green Web area – a roughly triangular area about 10 kilometres by eight kilometres – is a small pocket of dense, high-rainfall bushland locked within Australia's driest State. It lies at the heart of the Mt Lofty Ranges – an area which the Federal Government identified in 2003 as being one of Australia 15 'Biodiversity Hotspots'.

With an annual average rainfall of around 1,000mm (40 inches), the Central Hills in its natural state is the wettest region in South Australia (with the possible exception of the State's extreme South-East corner). The two main south-flowing creeks which arise in this tiny catchment area – Aldgate Creek and Cox Creek – together provide more than 25 per cent of the natural inflow to Mt Bold Reservoir, one of the main water storages supplying metropolitan Adelaide.

This small area is home to many rare,

vulnerable, and endangered species – including many of the Mt Lofty Ranges' 56 threatened bird species, the nationally endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot (the last survivor of South Australia's original eight bandicoot species), various rare reptiles, frogs and native fish and numerous plants with conservation ratings. All of these species are under some level of threat, largely due to the destruction and fragmentation of their habitat from clearing, weed invasion and feral animals. An estimated eight per cent of the original native vegetation now remains, and most of that is in poor condition due to weed and feral invasion.

What the Green Web will deliver

Over the past 20 years many small volunteer environmental 'Friends' groups have sprung up in the area, working in isolation on individual reserves to remove weeds,

revegetate areas and protect and rehabilitate bushland. For the first time ever the Central Hills Biodiversity Hot Spots project has brought all of these groups together in a single, concerted effort to create a 'Green Web'. Working together with the Adelaide Hills Council and the other relevant agencies, the Project will link, expand and rehabilitate the bushland fragments. This will create a network of linked conservation areas on both private and public land which is on a large enough scale to restore ecosystem function to the Central Hills.

In doing so, the Central Hills project will help secure the future of a large number of native species, many of which are now threatened, living within their natural habitat. It will also deliver a substantial improvement in the water quality and environmental flows in some of the most important streams in the Adelaide region.

The Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board and Urban Forests Biodiversity Program have each provided \$65,000 toward the first year of the Central Hills Green Web Project. Part of this funding has gone toward employing a part-time Project Officer (Mark Fagan). The remainder will be spent on:

- targeted bush rehabilitation work (using accredited contractors and environmental volunteer and Bushcare groups) to increase the size and quality of native vegetation fragments in the Central Hills
- associated mapping & GIS work to help prioritise spending
- managing feral animals and weeds
- fencing and other protective measures
- seed collection and plant propagation
- monitoring and evaluation
- public education and stakeholder

communication.

The funds will be used to fund conservation works on both private and public land, working closely with the relevant local groups at sites identified as being top priority for establishing the Green Web network.

Who is the Green Web?

The Central Hills Green Web is managed by the Central Hills Community Partnership (CHCP) - an umbrella committee which represents the seven main community volunteer groups in the region (six Landcare & Friends Groups, plus the Bush for Life network). It also includes representatives from local government and other relevant catchment groups, NRM bodies, agencies and organizations. The full Partnership includes:

- Adelaide Hills Council
- Aldgate Valley Landcare Group
- Arbury Park Outdoor School
- Deanery Community Landcare Group
- Department for Environment & Heritage
- Friends of Mount George
- Friends of Stirling Linear Park
- Mt Lofty Ranges Animal & Plant Control Board
- Mylor Parklands Bushcare Group
- National Trust SA
- Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board
- Sturt Upper Reaches Landcare Group
- Trees For Life/Bush For Life
- Urban Forest Biodiversity Program

The Adelaide Hills Council holds and manages funds on behalf of the Committee, while the Project Officer for the Central Hills Green Web is employed through the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board.

*David Mussared
(Chair, Central Hills Green Web)*



Volunteer Hours Worked 2004-2005

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>Bushcare</i> and woody weed control | 1250 |
| <i>Special projects</i> ; signage, grant applications, reporting, meetings, management strategy process, Green Web | 1106 |
| <i>FOSLP Committee</i> , chair, secretary, treasurer, auditor, workshops | 261 |
| <i>Revegetation</i> , seed collection, tubestock propagation, planting | 304 |
| <i>Secretarial Work</i> , agendas, minutes, correspondence, Website, photocopying, phone calls, emails | 226 |
| <i>Newsletter</i> , writing, typing, layout, editing, printing, distribution | 136 |
| <i>Public Fund</i> , publicity, record keeping, reporting, auditing | 26 |
| <i>Displays</i> , posters, captions, laminating, setting up | 113 |
| <i>Environmental Monitoring</i> , Waterwatch, photomonitoring, Bushcheck, workshops | 267 |
| <i>Infrastructure Repair/Maintenance</i> trails, seating, birdhide, graffiti repair | 339 |
| Total | 4028 |

Annual General Meeting and Open Day

Over thirty people attended the Friends 2004-2005 AGM held in the central classroom at the Woorabinda Environment Centre on Saturday November 20. Attendees included Isobel Redmond (Member for Heysen) elected members of the Adelaide Hills Council, and representatives from the Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Walking SA, other Landcare groups and Parks for Paws.

Following the AGM business session (which included presentation of the Chairman's and Treasurer's reports, and ratification of a new committee) a Devonshire afternoon tea was enjoyed by all. Our grateful thanks to Bakers Delight in Stirling who again generously donated the fresh scones.

During the rest of the afternoon the Woorabinda Environment Centre was open to visitors to get an idea of the educational and training programs which the Centre conducts. Staff from the Waterwatch program used a microscope attached to video screen to show highly enlarged, the range of tiny macro-invertebrates which should be present in healthy water. Conservation Volunteers showed visitors through their training rooms, explained the wide range of programs which they conduct and also ran a slide show of wild flowers of the Stirling Linear Park.

Over forty people attended the open house session and many expressed surprise at how much was being achieved at the Woorabinda Centre.

Friends Join Back Scratchers!

The Autumn Gate Cafe has introduced an innovative and novel way of advertising while at the same time supporting local community groups. This is known as *Back Scratchers*. This program donates a percentage of patrons' expenditure on food and beverages to nominated community groups (instead of spending a similar amount on media advertising.) In turn the community groups support the cafe and spread the good word, while earning funds. To date over \$400 has

been refunded to community groups.

Friends of Stirling Linear Park are pleased to join this program as group number fifteen. We urge all our supporters to patronise the cafe and nominate us as your *Back Scratcher* recipient.

A leaflet is enclosed with this newsletter giving details of *Back Scratchers*.

Statements of Receipts and Expenditure 2004-05

1. Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

| Receipts | | Expenditure | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Government Grant | 10,643.00 | Consultant | 1,500.00 |
| Council Grant | 500.00 | Administration | 428.90 |
| Subscriptions | 670.00 | Newsletters/promotions | 175.95 |
| Bank Interest | 62.09 | Subscriptions | 49.50 |
| | | Bank Fees | 5.70 |
| Totals | 11,875.09 | | 2,160.05 |

2. Stirling Linear Park Fund

| Receipts | | Expenditure | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Donations | 595.00 | Expenses | 0.00 |
| Bank Interest | 1.17 | | |
| Totals | 596.17 | | 0.00 |

Certified correct positions of Friends of Stirling Linear Park funds at 30/6/05: John Allison, Treasurer; J A Thompson, Auditor; David Ragless, Chair.

Monadenia Update

An increased number of sites of the weed orchid *Monadenia* have disappointingly been discovered in the park this season. While it is very pleasing that many people are now aware of this menace, are actively looking for it, and are removing plants and bulbs before seed is shed when they discover infestations, it

is of concern how it is spreading. Our thanks to all who are helping to control the insidious spread of this pest.

Anyone who discovers suspect plants and is unsure about identification should contact a Friends committee member or Council's Natural Resource Officer, Glen Williams

Dogs and Bandicoots

There are few documented reports of dog predation on bandicoots but it is generally agreed in the literature that along with cats and foxes, dogs are predators of bandicoots. Studies in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park in NSW have certainly reported bandicoot remains in dog scats and both the 'Recovery Plan for the Southern Brown Bandicoot in the Mount Lofty Ranges, 2004-2009' and the draft 'National Recovery Plan for the Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isododon obesulus obesulus* (Shaw, 1997), 2005-2009' recognise predation by introduced carnivores, including dogs, as a threatening process.

Dogs roaming in bandicoot habitat are also likely to disturb bandicoots that are either foraging or resting in nests (which are located

on the ground beneath shrubs). It is unknown to what extent bandicoots alter their normal ranging behaviour in response to the presence or scent of predators but I expect they are likely to restrict their activities to denser areas of vegetation. Additionally, when stressed, bandicoots are prone to 'ejecting' large young from their pouch. Such a response may be elicited when bandicoots are chased by dogs and other predators. Although to my knowledge this has not been documented it is a behaviour often observed in trapped bandicoots.

Kirstin Long
Bandicoot Project Officer, Mount Lofty Ranges
Black Hill Conservation Park

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Committee 2005-2006

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| John Allison | 8339 1577 |
| Shirley Benlow | 8339 2218 |
| Kathy Bowman | 8370 9177 |
| Merilyn Browne | 8339 6839 |
| Janet Bryan | 8339 4639 |
| Marilyn Forward | 8339 3162 |
| Phillip Hicks | 8339 3156 |
| Bob James | 8339 1903 |
| Alistair McHenry | 8339 5114 |
| David Ragless | 8339 1038 |
| Lorri Ragless | 8339 1038 |
| Russell Seaman | 8398 0626 |
| Neil Strong | 8339 4085 |

Web address: <http://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, Lorri Ragless, Merilyn Browne, David Mussared and Kirsten Long

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 Inc. (strike out words not applicable)

Membership fee for both individuals and family:
1 year.....\$5.00
5 years.....\$20.00

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

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

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