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## Dogs and their owners

### A study of visitor behaviour in Woorabinda

There has been plenty of anecdotal evidence about inappropriate dog/owner behaviour in Woorabinda. But until now there is little by way of documented evidence showing the type and level of this abuse.

Most of us are concerned about dogs plunging into the lake, swimming about in the water and disturbing the ducks and other birds. All of us are fed up with those owners who do not remove their dogs' droppings or allow their animals to run amok and upset other Park users. The increasing popularity of the Park has brought more dogs onto the scene, and these problems have escalated as a result.

Early in the year, and acting on advice from the Council, the committee arranged a meeting with AHC officers to discuss a program for formally surveying visitor numbers and dog behaviour in Woorabinda reserve. As time and resources were limited, it was proposed to record data over a two week period, commencing around the second week in February, which would avoid the atypical December/January holiday period. The data was collected at various times by five committee members, two of whom have professional experience with statistical methods. Although Woorabinda was the primary focus of the study, the findings will have wider implication for other environmentally-sensitive areas in the Park.

Neil Strong, a committee member and nearby resident, collated the data and authored a comprehensive report, a copy of which has been forwarded to the Council.

The report found that an average of 84 people visited Woorabinda each day during the survey period, bringing with them a total of 31 dogs (week days) and 22 dogs (weekend days). Regrettably, 70% of these dogs were off-lead.

The main finding of the report is as we might have expected — ie. that by far the greatest incidence of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour is caused by groups and individuals with off-lead dogs. The 30% of dogs who were on-lead were all well controlled, with their owners often exhibiting positive behaviours such as carrying plastic bags for collecting their dogs' faeces.

On the other hand, the greater majority of owners with off-lead dogs were observed to be unable or unwilling to control their dogs. Some of these dogs were allowed (and often encouraged) to engage in destructive and inappropriate behaviour. Observed incidents included::

- Dogs harassing and pursuing wildlife (ducks, other waterfowl and even black cockatoos).
- Dogs charging repeatedly in and out of the water through fragile riparian and low-lying wet areas to retrieve sticks that their owners have thrown. Owners were seen to move along the bank past sensitive areas that are struggling to revegetate. On one occasion an owner attached a lead to his dog, entered the water and attempted to drag the animal into the lake,

presumably to encourage it to swim.

- Dogs defecating and the owner not removing the faeces.
- Dogs barking loudly and persistently, disturbing the native fauna and spoiling the quiet enjoyment of the Park for other visitors.
- Dogs menacing other dogs and their owners.
- Dogs roaming at large. Two dogs were observed with their owners never being sighted. A third dog was left to wander around the Park for fifteen minutes while its owners remained in their car.

The report effectively formalises the many complaints that your committee, Friends members and the general public have voiced about irresponsible dog owner behaviour in the Park. With the Dog and Cat Management Act at present under active review, we felt the time was opportune to present Council with solid evidence of the failure of the present laws

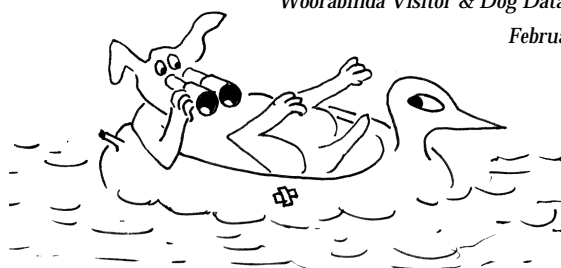
regarding dog control in public reserves.

The report recommends... 'that Woorabinda and all other environmentally sensitive areas of Stirling Linear Park be classified as on-lead areas for dogs under the proposed changes to the Dog and Cat Management Act, and this be enforced by the AHC through its regulatory function under the Act.'

Interested members can obtain copies of the Report from David Ragless, phone 8339-1038.

*Woorabinda Visitor & Dog Data Survey*

*February 2003*



## SA Youth Conservation Corps training at Woorabinda

The new State government funded Youth Conservation Corps is up and running, and Stirling Linear Park is one of the early beneficiaries. A training course, managed by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has now begun in the Park, with Woorabinda main building being used for indoor instruction.

Teams of ten volunteers, 15 to 24 years of age who are unemployed or under-employed, will receive training in a wide range of land care theory and practice. The duration of the course is to be three days per week over 24 weeks.

CVA will instruct the young volunteers in

environmental education, bush care, weed control methods, revegetation techniques and the safe and proper use of tools and equipment.

The course is designed to be employment-related, and each participant will receive job search assistance on completion.

As well as helping our young people, this project will be of great benefit to the Park and will make a valuable contribution to its ongoing maintenance and enhancement.

For further information contact CVA Project Officer Terry Peacock: 8212-0777

## You can help the Park

Adelaide Hills Council has 170 parks and 30 road reserves to maintain and improve. Council resources are currently stretched to cope with this responsibility. Consequently Stirling Linear Park can only expect limited help from Council.

Over the years, the Friends have been successful in attracting more than \$70,000 in grant funding for the Park's maintenance and enhancement. Council has assisted us by matching these grants — a condition of our obtaining them.

However, much work remains to be done in the Park, such as trail formation, small footbridges, boardwalks, weed control, revegetation, bushcare etc.

Donations to our Public Fund are tax-deductible and will assist our efforts in

maintaining and improving the 34 hectares of Stirling Linear Park. This Fund is administered by a separate committee of Trustees, and is authorised by Environment Australia in Canberra.

A \$50 donation will help establish and maintain 100 trees, shrubs and groundcover plants, or build an all-weather trail.

Donations should be made to  
**Friends of Stirling Linear Park Fund**  
and forwarded to  
John Allison  
9 Orley Avenue  
Stirling 5152.

Official receipts for taxation returns will be issued.

## Waterwatch update

The Stirling Linear Park OWN group have added yet another certificate to their growing collection.

In April, they received an invitation from the Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network and the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board to attend the Hub centre in Aberfoyle Park. The occasion was to formally congratulate FoSLP OWN and other OWN groups for their commitment to water monitoring. Along with the presentation of the certificate, each group received a new water monitoring kit from Roger Goldsworthy, the Presiding Member of the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board.

The new Award (and the kits) went to groups in the catchment area who had monitored for a minimum of two years, and had consistently returned good data in at least 65% of their samples. The FoSLP OWN group have been monitoring for eight years, and have returned good data in almost 100% of their samples.

Other Awardees at the ceremony were:

Engler family at Carey Gully

Lobethal Lutheran School

Friends of Onkaparinga Conservation Park

O'Sullivan Beach School

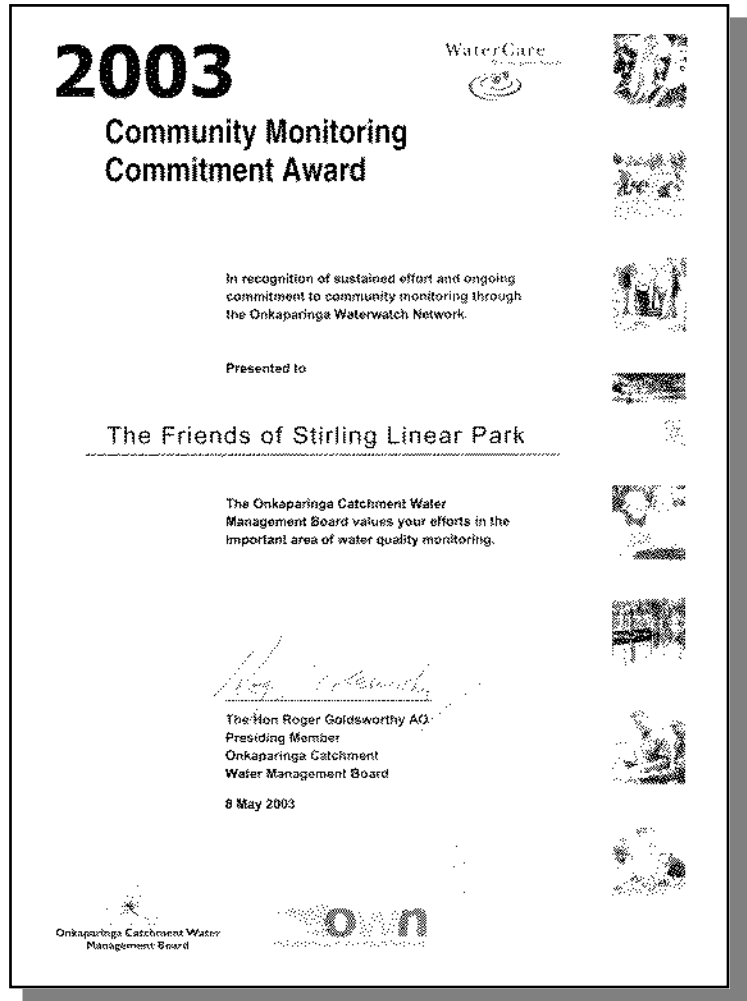
Hallett Cove East School

All Saints Catholic School, Seaford.

A high light of the occasion was an excellent Power Point presentation by Sheralee Cox showing the various activities of the seven OWN groups.

The water quality in the Onkaparinga Catchment is constantly monitored from 140 sites positioned along its many streams and watercourses. Regular sampling is carried out by 55 volunteer OWN groups, with 65 schools being involved in the program.

Our OWN group members are: Lorri Ragless, Vivian Curro, Merilyn Browne, Ina Mattens and Brigitte Kingham.



## Committee discusses new Management Plan

At the May FoSLP committee meeting, consulting ecologist Russell Seaman presented for general discussion a proposed outline of the new Management Plan for Stirling Linear Park. The Plan is being developed in collaboration with Adelaide Hills Council staff.

The committee put forward their suggestions for each section of the Park, ranging from future revegetation programs to sustainable use in terms of visitor impact on biodiversity. Walking trails and dog control were debated at length, as were significant issues concerning Woorabinda Lake. The committee also contributed various ideas for the future management of Stirling Park, Hender Reserve and Madurta Reserve. Matters affecting access to the Park were also discussed, including the often vexed

question of vehicle parking.

A number of surveys have also been commissioned to gather information about the Park's biodiversity. \$5000 funding has been provided by Wetland Care Australia.

The new Plan will be an exhaustive study of Stirling Linear Park, and will detail every aspect of its future management in order that the Park can retain its peaceful character and environmental integrity in a climate of increasing popularity.

The revised Management Plan will be an essential document to accompany future funding applications. It is expected that a draft should be ready in early July for committee approval. The final Plan will then go to the Adelaide Hills Council in September for consideration.

## Help save our birds

There are about 100 of Australia's 800 bird species now under threat of extinction, with the very real possibility that this number could double before the end of the century.

We could help prevent this looming environmental disaster by encouraging native birds to breed in our own backyards.

Birds Australia, the nations foremost native bird conservation group, suggests some of the simple things you can do to help secure the future of our native birds:

- Plant natives from local seed in your garden; ask your local nursery to stock local native seed or propagate your own and give extras to the neighbours.
- If your garden contains medium to large trees without hollows, erect nesting boxes designed for the species you wish to encourage. Evict unwelcome visitors such as Blackbirds and Common Starlings.
- Plant clumps of prickly native shrubs so that small birds can nest safely away from cats and dogs.
- Save hair and beard trimmings to spread on the lawn for birds - they make great nesting materials and are gratefully received by local native birds.
- Be careful about feeding birds in your garden. Try not to let native birds become too dependent on your food supply. For the long-term, plant native shrubs and trees to provide the birds with natural food.
- Work towards the development of a bird-friendly environment by maintaining and enlarging areas of remnant vegetation. Aim to cover at least 10 percent, preferably 30 percent, of your property.
- If you're fortunate enough to have a dam, create a bird-friendly environment with a shallow, reedy area as well as a deep area to encourage a mix of wading and diving birds. An island will provide refuge from predators and breeding areas for a range of birds.
- Provide a year-round water supply in your garden. Place a bird-bath away from windows (to prevent birds attacking their reflections in the glass) and out of reach of domestic pets.

- Don't tidy up your yard too much! Birds use undergrowth, leaf litter and dead branches for protection, shelter and feeding.
- Replace red gum firewood with plantation-grown timber, or install natural gas heating. In Australia, as much firewood is used each year as is consumed by the woodchip industry.
- Purchase a field guide for your home or give one to a friend. You will soon enjoy identifying regular garden visitors and birds you see when bushwalking or on holidays.
- Be a responsible cat owner. Keep your cat inside at night. Confine it to a fenced or caged area when it is outside. Cats do get used to it, and it also helps to protect them from disease, dogs and cars.
- When you come across a sizable road kill, move it well away from the road so birds of prey can feed on it safely (taking care not to become road kill yourself!).
- Help change longstanding attitudes that native vegetation is unattractive; give gifts of books featuring native landscapes, potted plants or seedlings and native floral arrangements. Learn to tell the difference between the local native plants and the introduced ones.
- It is estimated that billions of birds may be killed each year in window strikes around the world. If birds continually crash into particular windows or sliding doors, plant screening vegetation, install an awning or allow the window to build up an external film of dust.
- Safely dispose of plastic six-pack holder rings. Birds and other animals often choke on them.
- Also when you find fishing line on the beach burn it into a solid blob before disposing of it.

Source: *Birds Australia Information Sheet No.18,12*  
Feb 2002.

## Recent Working Bees

Date	No. of volunteers	Area	Work done
9 March 03	9	Madurta Reserve	Cut and swabbed blackberry, gorse, cotoneaster and Spanish heath
13 April 03	11	Hender Reserve	Cut and swabbed woody weds
4 May 03	4	Woorabinda	Removed longifolia. Cut and swabbed gorse along dam wall and the Linwood track

**01 June..... Stirling Park.....**meet at Branch Road entrance.

**13 July..... Madurta Reserve.....**meet at cnr. Bogaduck Rd/Linwood Av.

**10 August..... Hender Reserve.....**meet at Hender entrance, Hender Rd.

**14 September..... Woorabinda.....**meet at Woorabinda Drive entrance

**Dust off those workaday blues with a couple of hours each month helping the Park. It's a rewarding experience and it's fun. Tools are provided, but bring your favourite gardening gloves if you wish.**





## Phytophthora on the march

The latest issue of the SA government's *Phytophthora Newsletter* (March), states that more than thirteen species of the fungus are known to affect plants in South Australia. Three of the species have been identified in native bush vegetation (*P. cinnamomi*, *P. citricola* and *P. cryptogea*).

*Phytophthora cinnamomi* is the most common and destructive. It targets a broad spectrum of native plants including eucalypts, banksias, hakeas, grevillea, grass trees, bush peas and various acacias.

During the past year several areas in our district have been added to the growing list of those suspected of being infected with *Phytophthora*. These are: Cherry Gardens cemetery; Elmstead Drive and Sturt Valley Rd in Upper Sturt; Emmett Rd reserve and Hilltop Drive in Crafers West; Mt. Bold

reserve and Nicholls Rd reserve in Scott Creek.

As the primary vector for distributing *Phytophthora* spores, the wheels and tracks of vehicles and heavy machinery must always undergo regular disinfection. Local councils bear a special responsibility in this regard.

Walkers in our parks and reserves also need to adopt good prophylactic habits. Boots and shoes should be cleaned of mud and rinsed with methylated spirit if their owners have been walking in areas suspected to contain *Phytophthora*. When walking, it is best to keep to established pathways. The increasing use of dolomite on walkways in public reserves will also help in the fight against the spread of the fungus. Dolomite is mildly alkaline, which tends to act as a barrier to infection.

## Overheard beside the lake

Apart from giving the dog a bath, and disposing of the week's supply of stale bread, some folk are contemplating other uses for Lake Woorabinda. A group of fitness ladies were overheard discussing family planning as they jogged around the lake:

"I'm thinking of scattering my husband's ashes here'.

"Hey, that's a good idea. I think I might do the same. Anywhere in particular?"

"Oh, along here I think (indicating the dam wall). There's several nice places. He'd like that."

The ducks might enjoy it too. Makes a change from stale bread.



Personally, I think it always tastes a bit overcooked.

## Feral ducks

A pair of feral mallards have been cruising around the lake since the middle of April. We feel it's time that they left. Mallards have a habit of interbreeding with Pacific Blacks, creating hybrids.

Committee member Reece Pedler who has had some experience with duck catching (not as easy as it sounds) has volunteered to remove the ducks to a good home. There is absolutely no truth whatsoever to the ugly rumour that the ducks will be sold to a local restaurant. They will be taken to South Australia's Riverland to join other unwanted ferals. So there.

### Seen a bandicoot lately?

Nature Foundation SA would like to know about it.

The Foundation and the Dept of Environment and Heritage are embarked on a Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Program.

The program will run for five years and will attempt to reverse the declining population of bandicoots in the Mt. Lofty Ranges. Reliable data about existing bandicoot numbers is important, so If you've seen one, or know someone who has, please call The Nature Foundation Sighting Hotline:

**1300 366 191.**

### PLANET ARK National Tree Day Sunday 27 July 2003 in Stirling Park

Everyone is invited to participate in this annual event. This year we'll be continuing our revegetation program in Stirling Park. Planting starts at 10am. Go to Branch Road and follow the signs.

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

: - )

If you would like to get updates of news and meetings etc faster than through the pages of this newsletter, then why not send in your email address to our membership secretary? Just send a blank email with "FoSLP members" in the subject line to Kathy Bowman:  
**kbowman51@ozemail.com.au**

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.  
Material in this issue was contributed by:  
David Ragless, Lorri Ragless, Neil Strong 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 ( <i>Chair</i> ).....	8339 1038
Bob James ( <i>Dep.Chair, Working bees</i> ).....	8339 1903
Shirley Benlow ( <i>Secretary</i> ).....	8339 2218
John Allison ( <i>Treasurer</i> ).....	8339 1577
Kathy Bowman ( <i>Public Officer, Membership, website</i> ).....	8370 9177
Jack Benlow ( <i>Newsletter</i> ).....	8339 2218
Lorri Ragless ( <i>OWN representative</i> ) .....	8339 1038
Reece Pedler .....	8339 3658
Philip Hicks.....	8339 3156
Alistair McHenry.....	8339 5114
Russell Seaman.....	8398 0626
Nick Stevens.....	8339 8643
Neil Strong.....	8339 4085
Merilyn Browne.....	
Glenn Williams ( <i>AHC: Natural Resources</i> ).....	8408 0400

### Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. is an Affiliated 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 no: .....Email (optional).....

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