



Friends of Belair National Park Inc. *Volunteers working for Conservation*

Patron: Dr. David C. Paton AM



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR JUNE 2026

The Friends of Belair National Park Incorporated (the Friends) is a group of community volunteers with a shared interest and passion for contributing to the preservation of the significant biodiversity and heritage of Belair National Park (the Park) and is a non-political organisation. The Friends formed in 1985 and now have around 290 members. The objectives of the Friends are:

1. To provide voluntary assistance in the conservation and management of the Park in close cooperation and liaison with the staff of the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) or its successors.
2. To provide cultural and social activities for the enjoyment of members and the public.
3. To provide support for the protection and preservation of the natural and historic values of the Park.
4. To raise funds for special projects to benefit the Park and for administration and social activities of the Friends.

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Kudlila / Winter



Timing: Approximately July, August and September.

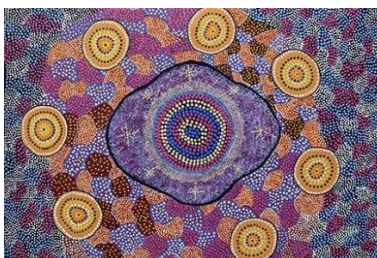
Indicators: Kudlinthi (to wash) – winter is when the earth is washed.

Wartapukkara (north/west wind, tempestuous weather).

Plant and Animal Indicators: Vegetables, grubs mainly eaten. Bloodworms in mud. Ducks/water birds nesting.

Seasonal lifestyle: Grubs collected from west sclerophyll scrub covering Mount Lofty Ranges – gum from Acacia trees collected for eating.

Courtesy: [Kurna calendar - Indigenous Weather Knowledge - Bureau of Meteorology](#)



We acknowledge the Kurna and Peramangk peoples as the traditional custodians of the land which is now Belair National Park. We pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging, and acknowledge the ongoing connection to the land, waters, sky, and spirit.

Image: Seven sisters and the coloured stone by Doras Miller, a Mirning Woman from Koonibba, South Australia

President's Report

Winter feels like it has arrived early and, unlike the previous two years, we have experienced storms and good rainfall over the past three months. The Park is looking greener and there is a bit more water in the lakes and dams than at the same time last year. Bushcare volunteers continue to work hard at weed management, drawing on support from external groups, and tackling some challenging terrain.

We have been involved in promoting the activities of our Friends group with a presence at Walkfest (pictured right) and then Grey Box Day at the State Flora Nursery. We have trialled changing the dates of some of our usual monthly Saturday meetings with guest speakers. In April, due to the clash with Easter, we had a successful Friday evening meeting at Tiwu Kumangka (Blackwood Library and Community Centre) with Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park as guest presenters. We lined up our May meeting on a Sunday to coincide with Grey Box Day activities, with a guest speaker from Green Adelaide talking about threatened Grey Box Woodland habitat and its preservation and management.



More recently, we continued our support of the TAFE SA / Friends of Belair National Park 'Emerging Environmental Steward Award'. One of the aims of the Award is to raise awareness to our activities and encourage the involvement of these motivated and educated people.

The criteria for the Award are:

- completed a Certificate III Conservation and Ecosystem Management,
- demonstrated commitment to conservation industry, and
- conservation ethic, passion, and enthusiasm for environmental issues.

At the TAFE SA graduation ceremony on Tuesday 26th May 2026, I was proud to present the Award for the Class of 2025 to Heidi Clark.

Heidi has had a lifelong interest in the environment and all that it entails. This led to her leaving a previous career in a different field to undertake studies in Conservation and Ecosystem Management – first a Certificate III and now a Diploma.

Heidi has jumped all-in to volunteering in the conservation field. On top of full-time study and part-time work, she has volunteered with such groups as Fauna Rescue SA and Gorge Wildlife Park.

Heidi's bright future sees her aiming to undertake further study with an end-goal of working as a Wildlife Ecologist, and we hope this recognition goes a long way towards this. Congratulations Heidi.



I must also give thanks to Pete Raine for his efforts in coordinating the selection process for the Award.

David French

President

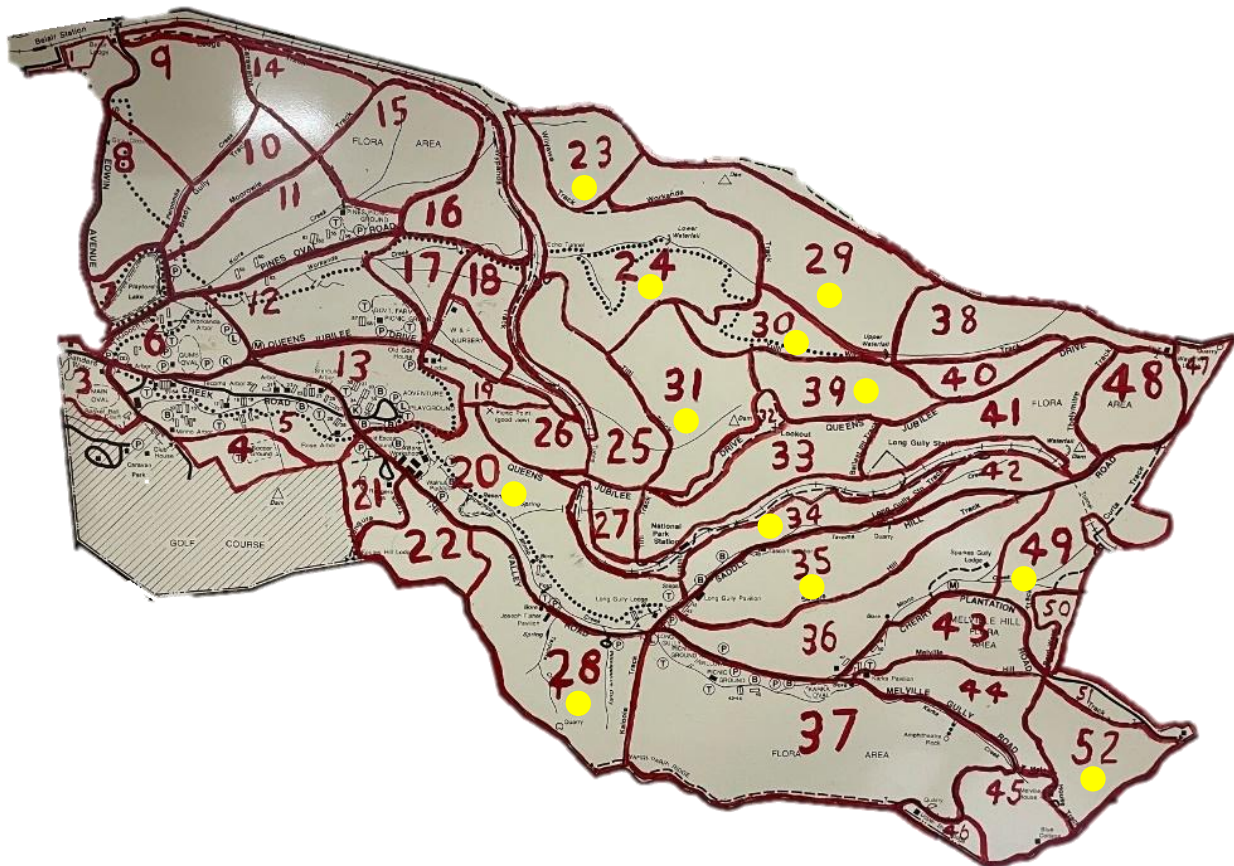
Bushcare

Bushcare is the targeted removal of competitive weeds allowing nature to thrive through natural regeneration. We aim to manage for best habitat value for our amazing biodiversity in one of Australia's 15 biodiversity hotspots.

- Tuesday and Friday morning (8.30-10.30am) every week
- Saturday morning (9.00-11.00am) on third Saturday of the month

Cancellation Policy: Bushcare is cancelled for safety reasons on days of a Total Fire Ban, a forecast of 34 degrees or higher, a Severe Weather Warning for the Mt Lofty District, or heavy rainfall.

Bushcare volunteers contributed **499 hours** of their time during February (172), March (187) and April (140) in these VMUs:



SUMMARY REPORT

It was a slow start to the year with lots of cancellations in January, but here at the end of the quarter, we are not far off the effort of previous years. Looking at previous years, sessions times vary greatly but come to a similar number of hours at the end of the year, and reminds us of how variable our seasons are each year.

Work started with a focus on bluebell creeper in the south-east area of the Park in VMU 52 and adjacent areas. This species seems to spread regardless of wet or dry years and invades good areas, unlike most other dominant weed species. All we can do is try and reduce the seed production to limit its spread, and the same as last year, we perfectly timed our work before seeding. GPS records and observations show a much-reduced number of plants this year.

The last two years have had particularly dry starts and this has been an advantage to limiting broom and boneseed recruitment. This year we have substantially more recruitment, but we have lots of time before seed is produced at the end of the year. Lots of time has gone into broom in VMU 31, which is important to

Bushcare (cont.)

remove now, because in this area it is competing with natural regeneration. We continue to learn from nature and our methods can evolve. This particular area has been a lesson in actions to be cautious of, but after several years we are back on track.

Many hours have gone into VMU 29, which is having an impact on mature boneseed and following up other weeds. This area between the Waterfalls also had contractor work started for the Friends of Parks and Nature grant, to push back blackberry. This work is opening up more ground for our volunteers to access to tackle other weeds growing. Adopter Wendy Simpson has guided the contractor, while putting in lots of her own volunteer time, and this united front is really going to make long term change for this important area.

Follow up of past control areas was done in VMUs 20, 23, 24 and 28. This was done very efficiently, and it is great for our bushcarers revisiting sites to see how effective the natural regeneration has been and how it naturally restricts weed recruitment.

The photos here (right), taken on Saturday 21/03/2026, show a before-and-after from tackling a forest of boneseed seedlings. A bit of tidying up after large scale weed removal in 2024. Gotta love helping the local ecology.



During April, earlier rains than last year has seen recruitment of boneseed and broom in particular. We still have lots of time before these produce seed, but our work has focused on following up past control areas for these species. These focus areas have been VMUs 24, 30, 34, 39 and 49.



On Saturday 18/04/2026, a group of dedicated bushcarers tackled a dense infestation of invasive weeds on one of the steepest tracks in Belair National Park in VMU 35, opposite the Volunteer Centre. Despite the ardour, it was great fun on such a fantastic Autumn morning. It's the people, the sites and the vibe that make bushcare feel like therapy.

A huge thank you also to the Casual Runners Collective for working in the same area. I was busy running up and down the hill, firstly pleased to catch up and work with this great group of regular Saturday bushcarers and some I haven't seen for a long time, but then racing down the hill to lead back up a group of about 20 energetic and motivated volunteers. Unfortunately, my phone was broken so I can't even share a picture! The track got a bit of a work out with some of these runners having run up it earlier!

The Casual Runners Collective did fantastic work last year on the north boundary of the Park and 'smashed out' clearance of a large area of boneseed in only an hour. So good to work with such energetic and motivated people. And they do this after running in the Park beforehand and then doing their bit to help the great environment we all enjoy.

The area on this hill has had incredible work done by our Friends member Ross, who has killed a massive amount of olive. Now clearing this huge amount of boneseed has removed the main 'transpirers' that are pumping the moisture out of the soil, particularly in drought, and making it harder for the remnant native flora to survive and thrive. These are big steps towards proper natural ecosystem restoration!

Contributors: Craig Boulderstone (Bushcare Coordinator) and Steve Raine

Guided Walk - April

During 2026, guided walks will be conducted between 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm on selected Sundays between April and November. Please check the website or Facebook for any last-minute changes.



Upcoming walks

14 June

12 July

9 August

13 September

11 October

8 November

The first walk for the year was led by Pete Raine after Walkfest opened the walking season. Normally, the area is dry, but we have experienced some good rains in the previous six weeks with the Bureau of Meteorology recording about 80 mm at West Tce and 115 mm at Mt Lofty. Conditions were comfortably cool and overcast with about 15 eager participants. The April guided walk commenced at the Pines Oval, walking west along Carawartha Track and stopping at the junction of Moorowie Track. This area contains a native orchid hot spot, where we located the Parson's Band and Midge orchids.

We also located Native Cranberry, a small Puffball and Scarlet Bracket fungi. We wandered south to Playford Lake, taking note of the recent upgrades to the road, parking areas and toilet facilities. We returned walking north along Pines Oval Road and were able to observe the positive results of bushcare work in VMU 12.



Photographs:

Eriochilus cucullatus (Parson's Band Orchid), *Genoplesium* sp. (Midge Orchid); *Lycoperdon* sp. (puffball), *Pycnoporus coccineus* (Scarlet Bracket Fungus), brown *Reticularia* sp., orange *Arcyria* sp., white *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* (Coral Slime Mold) and the red *Styphelia humifusa* (Cranberry Heath).

Contributors: Peter Bos and Pete Raine



Guided Walk - May

The guided walk for May traditionally coincides with History Month. Starting at the Government Farm carpark, Pete Raine led us past the State Nursery, Old Government House, various trees of indigenous significance in the Adventure Playground area, up to the Railway Dam, and returning via a more southerly route back to the carpark.

We received an impromptu introduction to Old Government House by Dave, one of the volunteers, who strongly recommended coming along for a visit and gaining an understanding of some of the early European history involving the Park.

Pete also paid respects to our far older Indigenous history including the ancient Red Gums in the Adventure Playground that were culturally modified by the Kaurna people.

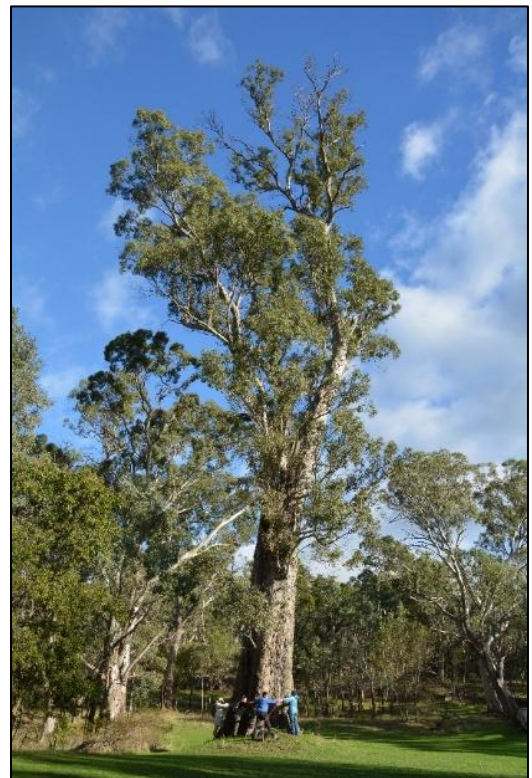
One of the features of the walk was the mix between the old and the new, the large and the small. We visited the largest gum in the Park at about 43 metres tall. The *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) needed quite a few humans to measure its circumference.



Later, keen eyes spotted the tiny 5 mm *Acianthus pusillus* (Small Mosquito Orchid) and a number of relatively large and colourful *Danaus plexippus*

(Monarch caterpillar) feeding on a *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* (Swan Bush).

All in all, a wonderful informative walk with good people in beautiful weather. The May 2026 walk has now become history itself.



Contributors: Peter Bos and Steve Raine

Grey Box Day - Sunday 3rd May

A wonderful time was had on Grey Box Day with many people helping our stand on a surprisingly busy and much less wet than forecast event in the State Flora nursery. Visitors enjoyed food and music and got to see some *Tiliqua adelaidensis* (Pygmy Blue-Tongue lizards) amongst other things. A very successful day and a big thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who made it so.



Photographed helping out at the stall were Alan, Pete, Tin, David, Jan, Sharon and Elizabeth.

Contributor: Steve Raine

Welcome to new members of the Friends of Belair National Park

Jeanette Milford, Berin Behn

Marcel and Carol Fortier

Tara Excell

Nina Lagzdins

Andrew and Deb Prentice

Bronwin Patrickson and Matt Zonca

For joining or annual renewal information see: [Join - Friends of Belair National Park](#)

Guest Speaker - March - Jeffrey Krieg (ornithologist, musician, writer)

“Raptors at a Glance: A guide to identifying South Australian Birds of Prey”

Our March guest speaker was Jeffrey Krieg speaking about Raptors, birds of prey.

Born in Minlaton on the Yorke Peninsula, Jeff grew up mainly in country areas of South Australia. He fell in love with birds of prey when he was 9 years old and about a year later, he discovered a book called “Hawks in Focus” in his school library. Ever since then, Jeff had a dream to write his own book on birds of prey. In 2010, that childhood dream was kicked into action as he began planning “Raptors at a Glance”. In 2025, after a lot of planning, research and meticulous field work, his book was finally self-published. A work that hopefully documents and passes on a lot of knowledge to help educate the ornithologists of tomorrow!



A fascinating talk by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable speaker, bird watcher and author. Jeff, ably assisted by his daughters, described the features and habitats of all 21 species of our resident diurnal raptors (i.e. daytime birds of prey) as well as providing some great photography advice. Jeff personally photographed almost all of the more than 550 birds presented in his book.

The types of diurnal raptors found in South Australia include six species of Falcons, two Kites, three True Hawks, four Medium Hawks / Kites, two Harriers, one Osprey, and three Eagles and Sea Eagles. To assist with identification, Jeff focusses on describing the birds’ size, shape, silhouette, flight style, wing carriage and tail shape rather than their plumage. The differences between the plumage of many of the birds is often subtle.

Did you know we have a pair of the highly threatened *Lophoictinia isura* (Square-tailed Kites) in Belair National Park? These raptors are rare and can be hard to spot due to their love of woodland habitats. They have a white face, reddish chest and neck, and dark grey to brown back and wings, with a squared-off tail.

A very enjoyable presentation, which has given quite a few of us some new reading material and a better understanding of our avian dinosaur apex predators. One lucky attendee managed to win a copy of Jeff’s book, as well as the Friends purchasing a copy for our library.

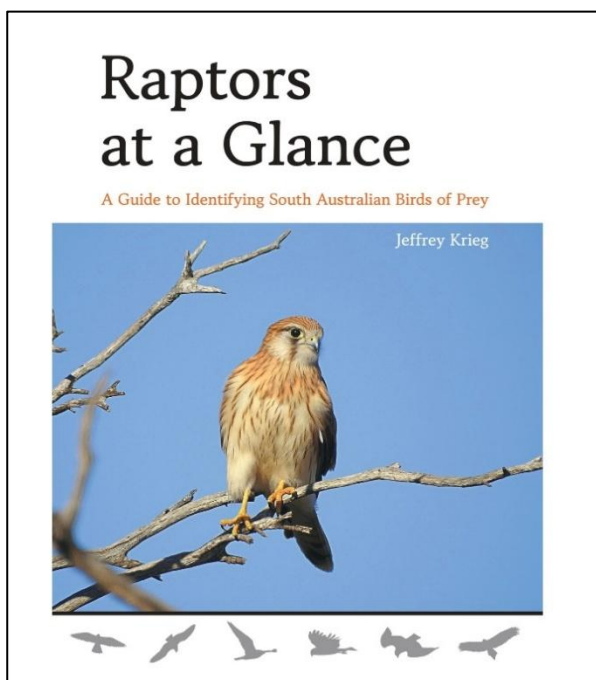


Photo of a Square tailed Kite courtesy of Darcy Whittaker ([Green Adelaide Facebook post](#))

Contributors: Steven Raine and Raechel Bos

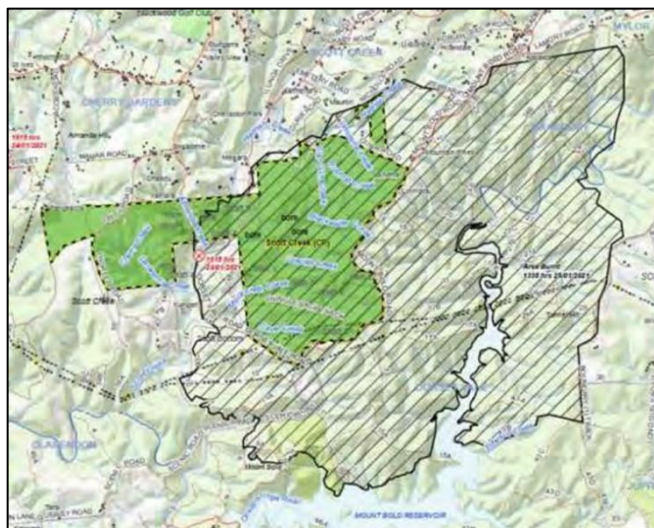
Guest Speakers - April - Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

Due to the timing of the Easter weekend, the April meeting was held on Friday 10th April at Tiwu Kumangka (the Blackwood Library and Community Centre).

We hosted three engaging guest speakers - Sam Chesson from the Department of Environment and Water (DEW), and Peter Watton and Jim Spiker from the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park (FoSCCP) – speaking in relation to the impacts of the January 2021 Cherry Gardens bushfire on the Scott Creek Conservation Park (SCCP) and the post-bushfire recovery activities conducted by the FoSCCP.

The Scott Creek Conservation Park was proclaimed as a Conservation Park in November 1985 and is managed by National Parks and Wildlife SA. In 1990, the inaugural meeting of the FoSCCP was held. The group now conducts restoration activities including rehabilitation of creek systems and wetland areas, bush regeneration and tube stock planting in degraded areas, as well as monitoring and recording weed and native species locations, weed control and a bird banding program that has run since 1993.

In January 2021, a deliberately lit fire, with multiple ignition points, burnt through 2,565 hectares of vegetation in the Cherry Gardens area, including 500 hectares of the 720 hectares that make up SCCP. With rainfall, and hundreds of firefighters, the fire was contained within about 30 hours. The image (right) identifies the fire scar (shaded black), the outline of SCCP (dark green) and the fire's impact on the eastern two-thirds of the Park (per *South Australian wildlife and habitat bushfire recovery framework: Building resilience for future bushfires*).



1. Sam Chesson, Ecological Fire Management Officer, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges, Department for Environment and Water

Sam spoke about his current role at DEW and the Fire Management Planning process, which involves managing the different requirements of four zone types such as (a) Asset Protection Zones, (b) Buffer Zones, (c) Strategic Fuel Management Zones and (d) Conservation Zones.

The first three involve a level of fuel reduction management. This requires conducting Environmental Assessments and compliance with a range of state and national legislation. The assessment includes conducting Desktop Surveys (e.g. maps, land use, flora and fauna databases, vegetation type, fire history, water courses, access, timings etc), and Ramble and Onsite Surveys to confirm species lists, mapping vegetation, setting up monitoring, and searching for specific species. Additionally, it reviews mitigating impacts (e.g. which areas to exclude, determining fire intensity) and risk management.

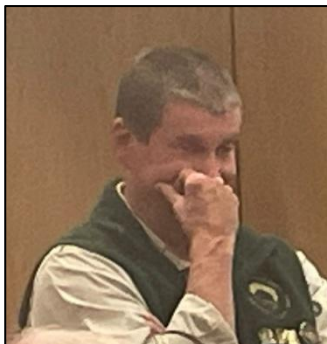
With respect to the impacts of the Cherry Gardens fire, it burnt 60% of modelled heath habitats in the Mt Bold area, which is the preferred habitat for a range of threatened species. Since the fire, various surveys have been conducted to monitor the rate of return of birds and bandicoots. Prescribed burns were also postponed in Scott Creek Conservation Park, but are due to re-start in the next year or two.



Guest Speakers - April - Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park

2. Peter Watton, Vice President of the Friends of Scott Creek CP. "Post-fire Recovery"

Peter spoke about the initial devastation experienced by the Park due to the intensity of the fire and the thick layer of ash on the ground. They actively communicated with their members and their Facebook posts reached more than 10,000 people. It took about three months to obtain permission to re-enter the burnt section of the Park.



They worked with National Parks and Wildlife Service, established a Fire Incident Response Group between them, and received in-principal support to discuss fire recovery grant funding. This included the need to develop and provide a scope of works. Historical weed mapping was vital in planning and prioritising weed control and supporting grant applications.

The Park was divided into numerous Working Bee areas, and numerous working bees were held. They used GPS tracking logs to record the locations worked and maintained an extensive database for record keeping.

They reviewed locations for fire-responsive weeds and found that different types thrived with the lack of tree canopy, including various Gums, Wattles, Watsonia and Honey Myrtle as well as the usual Blackberry, Bluebell, Boneseed, Broom, Gorse and Olive. At one of the 87 GPS waypoints for *Sollya heterophylla* (bluebell), they removed some 878 seedlings within a 10-metre area. Peter also spoke about differences in the areas burnt by previous prescribed burns, the 2021 bushfire and "long unburnt areas", and the extensive use of contractors to assist the efforts of their volunteers over the past five years.

3. Jim Spiker, President of the Friends of Scott Creek CP and Bird Banding Coordinator. "Birds before and after the fire"

The Friends have been conducting bird banding since 1993 and, so far, have recorded about 13,000 bird captures. They deploy "mist-type" bird netting in specific areas about 12-18 metres long and 2.5 metres high during regular times between sunrise and midday on specific days. The captured birds are weighed, banded, measured, photographed and released. Data is recorded and shared in various databases.



Jim spoke about a 10-year study they undertook, looking at the 5 years before and after the Cherry Gardens bushfire. He spoke about the impacts of the complete destruction of various areas where even epicormic growth failed due to tree roots being dead and dry. However, the significant regrowth in various areas since the bushfire has produced vegetation areas so thick that it was impossible to get through. This has impacts on birds too, where those birds older than 5 years are dealing with the vastly transformed landscape, and birds younger than 5 years, only know of the existing habitat.

Immediately after the bushfire, the presence of predatory birds such as Currawongs and Wedge-tailed Eagles increased. Other birds, such as the Honeyeaters left the area due to the loss of food sources (e.g. nectar, lerps). It was evident that insects were also less prevalent.

For further information, the FoSCCP have a range of informative publications available on their website, including an extensive summary of their response to the fire at: [Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park:](#)

- *Birds of the Scott Creek Conservation Park* [brochure]
- *Scott Creek Conservation Park – A South Australian Biodiversity Hotspot* [book] which celebrates the first 25 years of the FoSCCP
- *Scott Creek – From Settlement to Conservation* [book] by Mary Steiner
- *Scott Creek Conservation Park: Post-fire recovery, a Friends group perspective* [online e-book]

Contributor: Peter Bos

Guest Speaker - May - Jason van Weenen (Ecologist, Green Adelaide)

“Grey Box woodlands and some current conservation programmes at Green Adelaide”

What do *Yoyetta incepta* (Black Ambertails), *Lophoictinia isura* (Square-tailed Kites), *Maireana aphylla* (Leafless Bluebush) and many local rare native orchids have in common? All of these species were mentioned during Jason’s excellent talk on caring for our Grey Box grassy woodlands and other threatened local ecosystems.

Jason opened his presentation with a close look at the threatened habitats of the *Eucalyptus microcarpa* (Grey Box). These occur mostly along the Mt Lofty Ranges which has high topographical diversity. However, land clearance has reduced the habitat available overall, increased habitat fragmentation and reduced the resilience of native species in these areas.

Naturally occurring Grey Box woodlands are around 50 percent open area, so weedy invasion from woody weeds such as boneseed and olives presents a significant challenge for protecting these areas. These weeds create too much competition leading to a loss of the understory followed by death of the trees. Another impact is the effects of drought die-back. Rolling hills and shallow soil profile with rocky outcrops means that there is less capacity for the soil to retain moisture.

In the Mount Lofty area mapping is ongoing to assess the condition of remnant woodland areas, and they are still mapping areas of newly located sites.



Green Adelaide’s focus remains on site management and restoration of larger Grey Box patches, which requires significant hard work. They also work to support private properties where possible, as these land owners often have other commitments.

Green Adelaide actively supports Trees for Life to build their volunteer capacity and they provide a range of Grassroots Grants each year with around \$1M available for local projects that contribute to a cooler, greener and wilder Adelaide.

Other ongoing Green Adelaide projects include:

- Orchid conservation in Belair National Park with a focus on *Pterostylis cuculatta ssp. sylvicola* (Leafy Greenhood), *Caladenia behrii* (Pink-lipped Spider orchid), *Prasophyllum pruinosum* (Plum Leek orchid), *Pterostylis biseta* (Mallee Rustyhood) and *Diuris behrii* (Golden Cowslips). This work sees seeds being collected for seed bank along with the investigation of fungal associations.
- Square-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*) Conservation Project. These Kites are highly threatened with about 10 pairs known, including sightings in Belair National Park. Monitoring has included using video cameras to monitor nests and satellite tracking of movements between South Australia and the Northern Territory. They’ve learnt that healthy bird habitats are required to support Kite populations.
- The *Yoyetta incepta* cicada (Black Ambertail) is (so far) recorded only in two locations at Burnside and a small corner of Belair National Park.

Contributors: Steve Raine, Raechel and Peter Bos

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Belair National Park NPWS

Visitor Information Centre: 8278 5477 After hours emergency: 0427 556 676 (voice only)

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Louise Miller-Frost's office is on the lands of the Kaurna people