



WINTER 2006 NEWSLETTER of Nature Foundation SA Inc. www.naturefoundation.org.au

One of our biggest projects yet

*Nature Foundation SA has once again been at the forefront of protecting valuable natural resource habitat for our rapidly diminishing biodiversity **in this State.***

By Duncan MacKenzie, Executive Director NFSA

Boolcoomatta Station, a 63,000ha pastoral property in the far north of South Australia near Broken Hill, has been purchased by the Nature Foundation SA (through its Land Purchase Fund,) in conjunction with the Australian Government's National Reserve System program.

The SA Department for Environment and Heritage provided valuable assistance in on-ground biodiversity

surveys and ensuring that past survey records and information on the property were readily available.

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund will own and manage the property for the long term and work with the local community on regional conservation issues.

Conserved for future generations as an outstanding representation of rare and endangered animals and plant species, Boolcoomatta consists of rocky hills, saltbush plains, grasslands, low mulga and needle wattle woodlands, river red gum woodlands, blackbush and cottonbush shrublands and freshwater wetlands, providing an abundance of habitats for wildlife. It is home to a number of threatened plant and animal species including purple wood; Slender Bell-fruit; the Plains Wanderer, which is endangered throughout Australia (Boolcoomatta provides large plains of grassland habitat required by this species); the Slender-billed Thornbill and Thick-billed Grasswren.

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Save protect restore





One of our biggest projects yet...continued

By Duncan MacKenzie, Executive Director NFSA

► STORY CONTINUES FROM FRONT PAGE

In addition, Boolcoommatta will work with its western neighbour, Bimbowrie Conservation Park, to ensure effective control of goats, rabbits and foxes in a concerted effort to restore and enlarge the nationally vulnerable Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby population. It is hoped that the wallabies will recolonise the western portion of Boolcoommatta. By expanding the area of protected land we will help to enhance the long-term viability and importance of both reserves.

Important to the success of any land acquired for conservation purposes, are the partnerships developed with neighbours, particularly working co-operatively in the control of weeds and pest animals. The purchase of Boolcoommatta, as an outstanding addition to Australia's National Reserve System, highlights the growing role of the private sector in protecting our environment for future generations. It is a great example of how partnerships between conservation groups, the private sector and governments, can provide common ground to conserve Australia's unique

and threatened biodiversity.

Nature Foundation SA can be proud of its leadership role in preserving this exceptional property, our largest single donation to a project.

We will have ongoing input to the management of Boolcoommatta, particularly in the area of scientific research, and we envisage running a range of biodiversity projects that will provide baseline data and a better understanding of the habitat requirements for many of our threatened species in this unique area of Australia.

President's letter

Greetings members and supporters.

The Foundation has had a very busy few months during which we have completed one of our most ambitious projects yet. The purchase of the 63,000ha Boolcoommatta Station near Olary on the Broken Hill road is a wonderful achievement. Its future as a Nature Reserve under the management of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund represents a major contribution to nature conservation in this generally poorly conserved arid range and plains country of northern South Australia.

You will have read the front page article by our Executive Director, Duncan MacKenzie, outlining the nature conservation significance of Boolcoommatta and the partnerships that have been forged to make the purchase possible. We are increasingly working with State and Federal Governments and other community organisations, as well as with business and private interests, to create new opportunities to advance nature conservation in South Australia. One of these opportunities relates to the BankSA / Nature Foundation SA GreenCard that continues to be a really important source of regular income to the Foundation. You may obtain this green Mastercard from any BankSA branch or by contacting the Foundation. BankSA is pleased to be associated with the Foundation and we are currently investigating other ways in which the two organisations can cooperate.

Right at this moment, Duncan is working with the Scientific Expedition Group (SEG) to conduct the first comprehensive nature survey of Boolcoommatta Reserve. Perhaps some of our members and supporters may like to join this survey in a range of roles later in the year. Similarly, the Foundation is working with staff from SA Tourism to develop a program to assist Sea Lion conservation on Kangaroo Island. As well as these cooperative activities, Duncan and I will be attending the Planning Day for setting the SA Strategic Plan (SASP) sustainability targets for the next decade. We will be contributing to a revision of the SASP biodiversity targets for the State. The Foundation has a significant interest in the achievement of these targets to which it contributes with its own programs.

*When I first started becoming involved in nature conservation advocacy in 1970, the major concerns were with acquiring and protecting national parks and establishing a comprehensive National Parks and Wildlife Act. In 1970 I would never have dreamed that a conservation organisation in 2006 could buy a \$2.2 million dollar sheep station to turn it into a private Nature Reserve as well as run its own land acquisition program called **Bushbank SA**. We certainly work nowadays in a very different world from the 1970s, and one of those differences is that we have learnt how to work **with** business and government to utilise the market economy to advance nature conservation. With your continued*

support, the Foundation has been able to make a real difference on the ground and to engage financial interests in our mission, who in the 1970s were considered to be a part of the problem.

*Reflecting the changes in the way we work for nature conservation, Minister for the River Murray, Mrs Karlene Maywald, has approached the Foundation to see if we would consider taking on the role of a **Voluntary Water Trust**. The purpose of such a Trust would be to receive donations of water from River Murray water licence holders that could be used for the purpose of creating **environmental flows** to assist recovery of the suffering River Red Gums and floodplains. This would be a new role for the Foundation and one that Council members are seriously considering.*

*Finally, let me finish by encouraging any members and supporters to attend the special meeting organised by founder of the Foundation, Dr Barbara Hardy to form a **Friends of the Foundation** group. The Friends group will be a lot of fun and will assist the Foundation in its work. The meeting will be held on Friday June 2nd at 5pm for 5.30pm until 7pm at the Manse, 32 Holden St. Hindmarsh. Hope to see you there!*

Best wishes and all our thanks for your continued support,

David Moyle AM, President



MORIALTA

Birds of our reserves and open spaces

With its hilly terrain, steep cliffs, caves and a seasonal (once perennial) stream (Fourth Creek), Morialta is one of the most spectacular of all Adelaide reserves. Morialta is derived from the Kurna aboriginal term Moriatta meaning ever-flowing creek.

We can thank John Smith Reid for his generosity in bequeathing the land in the 1920's which formed the basis of the reserve. Morialta - 533 hectares is contiguous with Black Hill reserve - 684 hectares, separated by Montacute Road. Larger reserves can be disproportionately richer in animal and bird life. Moreover Morialta has varied habitats, with slopes, hills and cliffs arising from the flats bordering Fourth Creek. Work is in progress to restore the degraded habitat beside the creek (187 species of weeds have been recorded in the reserve).

Along the creek superb blue wrens seek insects, hopping from rock to rock, above them grey fantails criss cross the stream,

capturing prey in flight, then perch on a bush or stone. A white-faced heron stands silently in the shallows, patiently stalking fish or frogs. Occasionally the usually retiring white-browed scrub wren leaves dense cover and comes to the creek in search of food. Occasionally honey-eaters arrive to drink. Rarely a sacred kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* (previously *Halcyon sancta*) (illustrated) perches above the stream.

Parrots include eastern rosella, the Adelaide race of the crimson rosella, yellow-tailed black cockatoo and rainbow lorikeet. The creek zone is also rich in honey-eaters: noisy miner, New



▲ KINGFISHER

Holland, crescent, white plumed and white-naped honey-eaters and eastern spinebill. Occasionally a party of red-browed finches visits the creek to drink.

Amongst the breeding birds in the reserve is the wonderfully camouflaged tawny frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*: during the day it roosts on a branch, immobile and difficult to discern. At dusk the frogmouth becomes active: on sighting prey, usually a large nocturnal insect, it glides silently to seize it in its bill, then usually returns to its perch before eating it. Unlike the frogmouth, the kookaburra perches conspicuously during the day; however its loud laughing call is often the first evidence of its presence. Like the frogmouth, the kookaburra usually catches its prey on the ground after gliding from its perch; its main food consists of invertebrates (insects, earthworms and snails) and lizards.

Article and Photograph by Dr David Hansman

End-of-Financial Year!

A Wonderful Opportunity! to remind all our dedicated donors, and their friends and colleagues that this is the time of year to **ethically reduce their taxes** by contributing to an absolutely dedicated non-profit body that has **tax deductible status** and works in an admirable fashion to save, protect and restore Nature.

Since 1st July 2005 this hard-working and greatly respected Foundation has raised:

\$34,125 from 342 responses over the period to assist its vital work

\$12,335 to help conserve our vulnerable native freshwater fish population;

\$19,510 from 337 responses to help 'save' the Coorong.

That has been a very good overall result. **Now we propose to beat it!**

Of course the remarkable success of the Foundation in funding many vitally important conservation research and action programs in South Australia has been principally due to the hugely welcome support of the many generous people who understand how important these efforts are.

You will read about our purchase of Boolcoomatta station in this newsletter – an exceptional property in the north of the State.

The Council is now planning major research and conservation programs for places such as the **Coorong** and **Para Woodland**, as well as providing scholarships for a number of hard-working post-graduate students (the nature conservationists of the future), and assisting Friends of Parks groups – amongst many other very worthwhile projects.

You can be part of all these exciting and greatly needed actions to save, protect and restore Nature. **Donate now to the annual appeal** Nature Foundation SA, PO Box 448, Hindmarsh SA 5007.



Council visit to 'Para Woodland', near Gawler

On April 7, on a cool sunny afternoon, a long-planned visit to Parawoodland by Council members took place. Led by David Moyle (President) seven councillors attended. Jim McHugh of Bushbank and two experienced rangers, Chris Halstead (district ranger Northern Lofty) and Steve Taylor, from the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) also participated. Leith Chester, farm manager, acted as our guide and showed much interest in explaining features of the properties.



▲ VIEW OF SOUTH PARA RIVER FROM THE FARM BLOCK

We entered the Farm Block by means of a new road, construction of which had been generously funded by Mrs Elizabeth Law-Smith. The Farm Block has been grazed for many decades and most of the tree cover had been removed long ago. Weed containment has been effective over wide areas of grazed land. Currently

problem weeds include artichoke thistle and horehound. Control measures include application of herbicide and withdrawal of superphosphate. Re-vegetation has begun.

The Farm Block is hilly and an especially steep section overlooks the South Para River. Relict species of indigenous plants, including

acacia, eucalypts and Xanthorrhoea, cling to the almost precipitous slopes, as well as European olives. After admiring the view from above, we drove down a steep winding track to the river, now a series of water holes, and then walked along its bed. Along the course of the stream, eucalypts and smaller plants, including sedges, have survived and could form a nucleus for re-vegetation. A walking trail along the course of the river is planned, in honour of the late Mr David Law-Smith, which will be open to the public.

Finally, we visited the Barossa Block, to the south, which is under the control of the DEH. This section is partly woodland; like the Farm Block it has been lightly stocked with sheep and is being re-vegetated.

The plan overall is to use only regional indigenous plants, with the aim of restoring the areas as suitable habitat for birds and animals.

Article and Photograph by Dr David Hansman

◀ REVEGETATION SITE AT 'PARA WOODLAND'





A threatened small fish species in a large river system

The Murray hardyhead (Craterocephalus fluviatilis) is a small fish species that grows to 8cm long. Endemic to the Murray-Darling Basin in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, the Murray hardyhead is threatened with extinction and is 'Vulnerable' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.



▲ THE MURRAY HARDYHEAD INHABITS SHALLOW, WELL-VEGETATED WETLANDS AT THE LOWER LAKES, INCLUDING DUNN LAGOON AT CLAYTON. (PHOTOS TAKEN BY MICHAEL HAMMER)

Combining his interest in conservation biology and freshwater ecology, Scottie Wedderburn has made the Murray hardyhead the focus of his PhD study at the University of Adelaide.

With financial assistance from **Nature Foundation SA**, the Goolwa-Wellington and Coorong Local Action Planning Boards and the River Murray Natural Resources Management Board, Scottie is studying the factors determining the distribution and abundance of the Murray hardyhead.

Initial results suggest that salinity has the most influence. Populations thrive in highly saline waters, and occur in low numbers in wetlands that fringe the Lower Lakes where salinity is slightly elevated. On the other hand, where salinity is low the closely related Unspecked hardyhead (C.

stercusmuscarum fulvus) is a dominant feature of the fish community and the Murray hardyhead is absent.

Scottie's research will now investigate the significance of salinity in separating populations of the two hardyhead species. Further work will examine the genetic variation between distant populations of Murray hardyhead, which may identify distinct populations for special conservation consideration.

Scottie's work will provide information vital to the management of Murray hardyhead populations by identifying threats and the reasons for decline. The research will also increase our general understanding of rarity in small fish species in South Australia.

Article by Dr Scottie Wedderburn



▲ MURRAY HARDYHEAD (CRATEROCEPHALUS FLUVIATILIS)



▲ THE MURRAY HARDYHEAD THRIVES IN HIGHLY SALINE HABITATS OF RIVERLAND EVAPORATION BASINS



Bushbank SA news article

Bushbank SA is a revolving fund, set up by NFSA to buy, protect and then on-sell areas of significant vegetation. Land parcels are carefully selected and given Heritage Agreements before they go to their new owners. Net proceeds are returned to Bushbank SA to fund further purchases.

Here, Bushbank SA Executive Officer Jim McHugh updates the latest Bushbank SA happenings...

Sale of the Padthaway Bushland

As a result of advertising at Easter time in the Adelaide Advertiser and the Adelaide Review, our selling agent at Bordertown received about 10 to 12 inquiries about the Padthaway Bushland. He secured a good offer, which exceeded NFSA's asking price. Settlement is due on 23rd June 2006.

Croser's Scrub

Following an urgent call from a local farmer near Minlaton in February, I

found myself inspecting one of the few reasonably large areas of bushland left in the middle of Yorke Peninsula.

Measuring 181 ha, the bushland property was one of four allotments that were being put up for auction by the owner, Mr Bob Croser. The other three mostly comprised good arable barley growing country although one block did contain a smaller bushland patch.

Given the time-frame and the auction process, the Bushbank Management

Committee was not prepared to go to auction. However I contacted Mr Croser, who, happily, was prepared to withdraw the property from the auction once he realised that the bushland could be purchased by Bushbank SA via private sale and protected under a Nature Foundation SA Heritage Agreement.

We negotiated a price and, on 4th April, the Nature Foundation became the owners of section 214, Hundred of Minlacowie. The bushland is 128 hectares in area with the rest being mostly barley crop land.

We have some work to do before the property will be ready for sale to new conservation-minded owners, and the result will be reported in future issues of Nature Matters.



Foundation Chatter

BARBARA HARDY

Friends of Parks Inc.: AGM for 2006

This AGM was held in Strathalbyn on 1st May, and all present greatly enjoyed the historic and beautiful surroundings of Glenbarr Camp and Conference Centre.

President Brian DuBois chaired the AGM, which was attended by about 60 members of various Friends groups - about 30 groups in all. Those groups who wished to do so had the opportunity to give a short report on their work during the past year.

It was inspiring to hear about all the excellent ways that they cared for their 'adopted'

conservation or national park, recreation park or reserve. Trail maintenance, weeds-weeds-weeds(!), fox baiting, seed collecting, propagation and planting of indigenous plants, bird-watching and monitoring, habitat restoration, etc, are just a few of the jobs that they do to assist the natural environment of the precious parks.

The Friends groups expressed their appreciation for Nature Foundation SA's ongoing assistance. In particular, they appreciate our sponsorship of the Friends Forum lunch each year.

Former Council Member, Warren Bonython AO, and I, are honoured to be Patrons of Friends of Parks Inc.

Bernd Stoecker's wonderful gift to the Foundation

Renowned photographer Bernd Stoecker has given to the Foundation a magnificent and very large, framed picture of Wanna Bay in the Lincoln National Park. It is absolutely beautiful and he hopes that it will assist our fund-raising efforts.

Bernd has listed all the visits that he has made to parks in South Australia during recent years, and has a large collection of exquisite transparencies as a result of his unequalled expertise as a landscape photographer.



Foundation Chatter ...continued

Friends of the Foundation

As some readers will remember in August 2004 we had a very happy drinks and nibbles party to thank many volunteers who had assisted our work in previous years.

At that time I had hoped that the Foundation might set up a Friends group to assist with some of its activities, and might 'brainstorm' ideas for fund-raising, arranging functions, etc. Jenny, our Office Manager, would greatly appreciate help with some of the tasks that confront her at times.

Therefore, the President and Council have invited a number of people that have been showing interest in helping us in this way to join us at the Manse, and to enjoy a glass of Geoff Hardy's wine, plus some appropriate nibbles, on Friday, 2nd June, at 5 for 5.30pm until 7pm. If any reader is interested in being part of that group please give Jenny a phone call at 8340 2880 –you will be most welcome.

A Bequest Surprise, plus some unexpected money-boxes

Regular readers will remember that the new geological information boards in the Gawler Ranges National Park on Eyre Peninsula were able to be produced and installed as a result of a wonderful bequest to the Foundation by the late Honor Cameron Wilson.

The other day, we received another cheque for \$97, resulting from the final sale of some of Honor's personal effects, so we again think of her with great affection.

In fact, we've had a number of happy financial surprises of late, coming in from all over the State. We've collected small windfalls from donation boxes at Mitre 10's Glynburne Rd store, from Stenhouse Bay at the bottom of the Yorke Peninsula and from Kangaroo Island. All very welcome.

Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo threatened in South Australia

Recent publicity has drawn attention to the plight of the critically endangered orange-bellied parrot, which winters in South Australia. Another endangered parrot in this State is the red-tailed black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii*, named after Sir Joseph Banks (the generic name *Calyptorhynchus* means covered bill).

This is the largest species of black cockatoo with a coloured (red) tail panel. However the sub-species which occurs in south-east SA, *C. banksii graptogyne* is relatively small. Although it could be confused with the glossy black cockatoo (which also has a red tail panel!), the latter is restricted in SA to Kangaroo Island.

Sadly, the total population of the sub-species of the red-tailed black cockatoo in south-east SA and western Victoria has fallen to between 400 and 1000 birds.

The decrease in population is probably due to clearance of its habitat which, in the South Australian area is principally woodlands including brown

stringybark *Eucalyptus baxteri*, for either agriculture or forestry.

The cockatoo's diet consists principally of seeds, especially of acacias, banksia, allocasuarinas and eucalypts.

We need to arrest the population decline, by protecting remaining woodland and replanting suitable trees in cleared areas. A recovery programme is proving successful for the glossy black cockatoo on Kangaroo Island, which is also endangered.

▼ HIGHLIGHTED IN RED IS WHERE THE GRAPTOGYN RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO IS FOUND



◀ RIGHT BIRD RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO





NATURE FOUNDATION SA

Greencard

Did you know you can help protect South Australia's native fauna and flora every time you shop?

BankSA offers a special Greencard Mastercard, that you can use in the same way you would any other credit card – to purchase petrol or groceries, for dining out and other every day items.

There are no extra or hidden costs on your account but, based on your use of the card, BankSA pays a contribution to your choice of one of three environmental groups, including Nature Foundation SA.

In the past year, the Foundation received more than \$15,000 through the Greencard program. For further information please contact Nature Foundation SA on 1300 366 191.

Help us help Nature

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My tax-deductible donation of \$ _____ is enclosed.

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