



Friends  
of  
**Belair National Park**  
Volunteers working for Conservation  
Established 1985



Best Newsletter 1996 - Friends Group of the year 1998

## **NEWSLETTER 3, SEPT 2010**

Please note this is a quarterly newsletter. 4 per year. March, June, Sept and Dec.  
Deadlines are the 3rd Monday of the month preceding its issue.  
Contributions can be emailed to Michael Cerchez at [cerchez@tpg.com](mailto:cerchez@tpg.com).

FRIENDS OF BELAIR NATIONAL PARK.

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Website: [www.communitywebs.org/friendsofbelairpark](http://www.communitywebs.org/friendsofbelairpark)

This newsletter is available by Email. If you prefer not to receive a printed copy please let a committee member know.

### **IMPORTANT!**

When a meeting is scheduled on a day of a **TOTAL FIRE BAN** it will not go ahead.  
In the case of the AGM it will be rescheduled to occur with next month's general meeting

### CALENDAR 2010

#### REGULAR EVENTS

General Meetings on the first Saturday of the month.

1.00pm at the Volunteer Centre, Long Gully, Belair National Park. Visitors welcome.

Barbecue – 6th November meeting is at 12.30pm for a barbecue.

There will be Yiros again! Cost \$5.00 per Yiros.

Please bring a plate of either sweets or savoury. The Yiros will have salad in them.

Working Bees on Tuesdays and Fridays, meet outside the Information Centre, Belair National Park

8.30 am in the winter. (8.00 am daylight saving time) Enquiries Mike 8339 6801

For Sunday or Wednesday working bee telephone Ron on 8278 6593.

For Monday, telephone Vaike on 8277 9559.

REMEMBER THAT START TIMES CHANGE WITH DAYLIGHT SAVINGS

**Guided Walks** are from April to December, on the 4th Tuesday afternoon.

The next walk is on the 28th September Meet outside the Information Centre, Belair National Park at 1.45 pm. All welcome.

### **December- Monday 6th DENR barbecue**

### **December – Sunday 19th. Birthdays.**

Belair National Park 119th and Friends of Belair National Park 25th

### **NO WORKING BEE IF IT IS TOO WET OR THERE IS A MOUNT LOFTY RANGES FIRE BAN OR IT IS DECIDED TEMPERATURES ARE GOING TO BE TOO HIGH**

### **CLELAND WALK 2010**

The Friends of Belair National Park, who are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year, invite you to come on their annual FREE Sir John Cleland Memorial Walks on Sunday 19th September.

There will be two guided walks, each about 2 hours long, the morning walk starting at 9.45 and the afternoon walk starting at 1.45. Meet at Courts 14 and 15 in the Dianella Precinct off Creek Road (there will be signs).

Historically, these walks used to be whole day walks around the entire park boundary, reproducing the walk that the then Commissioner of the Park, Sir John Cleland would do every summer as an inspection tour.

This year we have decided to do as much of the boundary as is possible, in two separate walks, covering the southern and eastern boundaries in the morning and the western and northern boundaries in the afternoon.

Please bring your own lunch, snacks, water, hat and sunscreen.

Spring is a lovely time in the park and we'd love to share with you our flora, fauna and history.

For more information, contact Jenny on 82788986 or email <jenke@slmember.on.net.

### **FORUM AWARDS 2010**

The Friends of Belair National Park, were awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award – Volunteer Group Project Award. I accepted the award on behalf of our group. However it is the group who achieved this award.



Receiving the award from Mike Williams, Acting Executive Director, and Regional Services.

The citation which accompanied the award read as follows:

“ The Friends of Belair National Park have been active in the threat abatement and community programs

for some time, but in 2009 they were especially instrumental in working with a range of community groups in Belair National Parks including:

- The Blackwood Scouts who completed 100 hours of weed control and tree planting.
- a planting day with Department staff and students from the Hawthorndene Primary School.
- weed control with Rangers and Corporate group with Westpac.
- Four guided walks in the Park, showing visitors seasonal highlights, biodiversity values and heritage areas in the park.

These projects have helped community members learn about Belair National Park, encouraged new volunteers and visitors to the Park, supported DENR's corporate plan strategy of "Involving South Australians".

The Friends of Belair also have good relationships with neighbouring Friends groups, liaising with them for events such as the Blackwood Christmas Pageant and Park celebrations, and often discussing projects and ideas. The Friends set an excellent example for other groups, being one of the largest and oldest Friends of Parks group in State. Congratulations Friends of Belair National Park."

We thank Jen Pitman, our Liaison Ranger, for nominating us. This award included a cheque for \$1250.00

### **Jen Pitman also received an award**

Jen Pitman was awarded the Most Supportive Staff Member which recognises an individual who has provided exceptional support to the

Although a relatively young staff member Jen has supported a number of Friends groups in Southern Lofty where she has encourages s sense of ownership and provides considerable guidance and encouragement. She has contributed significantly to member group grant application processes and was instrumental in securing a very considerable grant for the district which will in turn benefit several parks over a three year period. Friends of Parks manifestly see Jen's efforts and skills as making a difference."



Jen Pitman receives her award from  
Michael Harbinson, Lord Mayor of Adelaide.

The citation which accompanied the award read as follows:

"Jen is a Senior Ranger in the Southern Lofty District and was nominated by the Friends Mark Oliphant Conservation Park and separately by a work colleague. As the Friends group stated "the impact of Jen's initiative, enthusiasm and forward thinking and great organisational and communication skills was, and remains, profound."

## **CHRISTMAS BBQ**

**DENR barbecue** to thank the Friends of Parks will be held on Monday evening 6th December 2010. Put this date in your diary. Invitations and details to be sent out shortly.

## **Compliance**

Over the past few months, Southern Lofty Rangers have been undertaking targeted 'out of hours' compliance patrols in several parks including Aldinga Scrub CP, Hallett Cove CP, Belair NP, Cleland CP and Sturt Gorge RP. Particular attention has been paid to non compliant dog and bike activity; however other offences have been dealt with as detected. A number of expiations and formal written cautions have been issued.



## **26TH FRIENDS OF PARK FORUM, WOOMERA, 20TH TO 23RD AUGUST 2010**

Another very interesting and successful forum, in a very interesting location.

Friends of Belair National Park had 13 members present, although some of these belong to other groups as well. The accommodation was the ELDO Hotel complex, which also provided the meals.

The Forum's food was excellent. The only thing that was a bit of a letdown was the weather; it rained on Sunday which meant Monday's trip to the Mound Springs was cancelled due to closed roads. Instead we had a trip to Coober Pedy.

Woomera was certainly an interesting place.



The town is only a fraction of its original size. Once it had a population of over 6000, now it has less than 300. However there is a lot of accommodation for temporary visitors to use the Range's facilities (last year they had 9800 bed nights). At the moment, under the control of the Air Force, it is catering for 100 tasks a year and getting busier. As well as the Australian force testing their weapons, many overseas countries use the range for a variety of tasks. We were able to see the launch sites and given a good tour of the normally restricted areas.

Wing Commander Lindsay Campbell, the officer in charge of the Range, was one of the speakers and our guide.

There was an interesting selection of speakers and topics:

- Iris Iwanicki, a social history of Woomera.
- Lindsay Campbell, The strategic defence role of Woomera.
- Tom Gara, Aboriginal prehistory and history.
- Geoff Axford & Alex Clarke, Natural history of the Far North.
- John Read, Ecological adventures in the outback.
- John Reece, Natural History of the Far North 2
- Colin Harris & Travis Gotch, Mound Springs of the Great Artesian Basin.

Helen Crisp of the Arid Recovery Unit gave a run down on what this unit's aim are:- to facilitate the restoration of the arid zone ecosystems through ground work, applied research with the aid of industry, community, and government partnerships.



The unit is based at Roxby Downs and works on the BHP site, and surrounding areas.

On the political side, David Mitchell, President, FOP Inc, gave us his views on the current situation with DENR. (His speech is included at the end of this newsletter.)

Mike Williams, Acting Executive Director Regional Services gave DENR's views on their organisation which will take 2 years to complete. As it is a new department a corporate plan will have to be written. Sustainability seems to be the in word for the Department.

The some of the sponsors also had a spot:

- David Nash, Oz Minerals gave an overview of the Prominent Hill Mine.
- Andrew Banfield, BHP Billiton, spoke about the Olympic Dam Mine.
- Surya Prakash, Electranet, spoke on the environmental initiatives of Electranet.

The other excursion Peggy and I took part in was to Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam. Roxby is a growing town, an oasis in an arid area, (it was raining and wet). Olympic Dam is a huge mining complex which will keep BHP Billiton happy for 100 years. It's the world's largest uranium reserve, 4th largest copper reserve, not to mention the gold and silver. The only problems are- it needs a tremendous lot of water, which at the moment it's drawing from the Great Artesian Basin and a huge amount of electricity

which it's getting from Port Augusta. They are doing something for the environment through Arid Recovery and are trying to preserve the Aboriginal Cultural material by conduction of a very extensive archaeological survey of their lease.

The Forum ran from Friday to Monday and it is impossible to give a complete run down here. If you want a complete picture of a Forum go to the next one, which will be held at Kimba, 3rd – 5th September 2011. Michael Cercez.

#### Lunch at Lake Koolumilka



#### *An Extract from an Email sent to Mary Cole by Stuart Paul, once a Ranger at Belair National Park*

I think it must have been 12 or 13 years now since I left Belair and in that period we have had some interesting life experiences. I moved to the NT with my partner (now fiancée) Natasha in early 2005 to take up a role in Kakadu National Park. We had three years living at the Jim Jim Ranger station in Kakadu where I was involved with the management of such great places like Yellow Waters, Jim Jim and Twin Falls and Nourlangie Rock. I'm sure you would know or have heard of these spots after spending 9 years in Darwin. I then moved a little further out into Gunbalanya in Western Arnhem Land where I

worked for a year or so assisting local aboriginal people build the training and experience they needed to move into employment. Its slow progress, but pretty rewarding when you see results and feel that you have helped make a difference. I'm now working in Darwin and still helping with training and employment for our staff across Kakadu and Uluru National Parks. So, it's been a great adventure. We are getting married in Adelaide next January, and of course we are still coming back home to live – we just keep putting it off!

### **OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2010**

PRESIDENT Mike Cerchez 8339 6801

VICE PRESIDENT Jim Trueman 8278 9359

SECRETARY Jill Salvi 8278 6736 4 Colton Rd BLACKWOOD SA 5051

TREASURER Carol Parrott 8278 6783

COMMITTEE MEMBERS. Delwyn Clark, Brian DuBois, Barry Palmer, Isabel Storer, Ron Tamblyn.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE BOOKINGS	Jill Salvi	8278 6736
GUIDED WALKS	Jenny Skinner	8278 8986
LIBRARIAN	Pam Tamblyn	8278 6593
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Mike Cerchez	8339 6801
WORKING BEES	Mike Cerchez	8339 6801
SIGNIFICANT TREES	Ron Tamblyn	8278 6593
WEBSITE MANAGER	Brian DuBois	8270 4215

Welcome new members.  
Bevin Scholz,  
Leah Egan and Family

We thank Greg Rossiter of Roxy's Music for the Bilby Photo and the 2 presentation photos. The other photos included in this newsletter were taken by Peggy and Michael Cerchez.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors of the articles, and the Editor, and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the Friends of Belair National Park.

### **Extracts from report on fox baiting in Bair**

- 40 stations were baited in Belair National Park this year, down from the 43 in previous years, due to the new buffering distances.
- Activity was recorded at 10 stations in 2010 compared to 35 in autumn 2009 and 34 stations in autumn 2008.
- 87 baits were laid and 13 of these were taken. 12.5% in 2010 compared to 43.26% in autumn 2009 and 54% in autumn 2008.

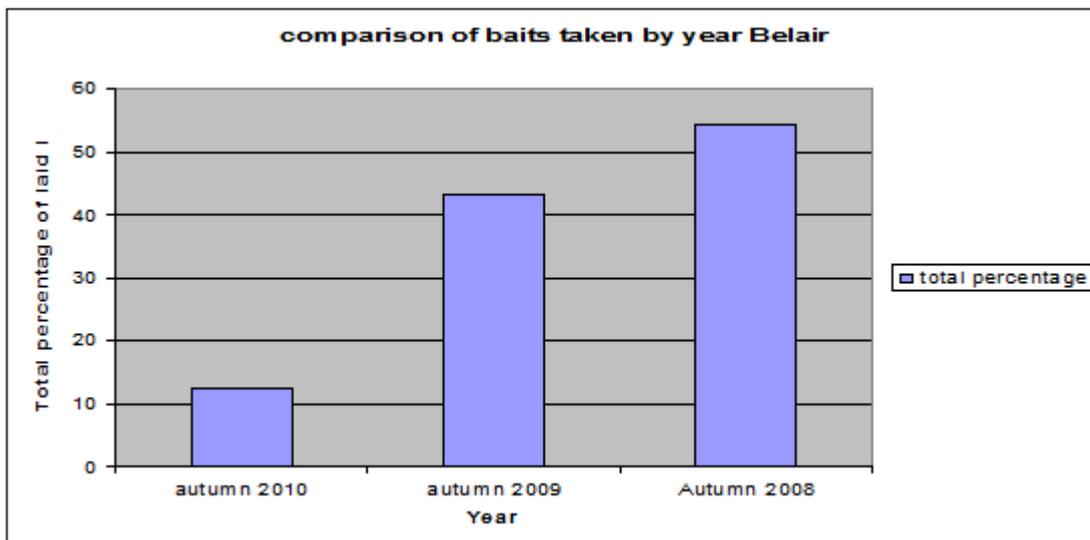


Figure #3

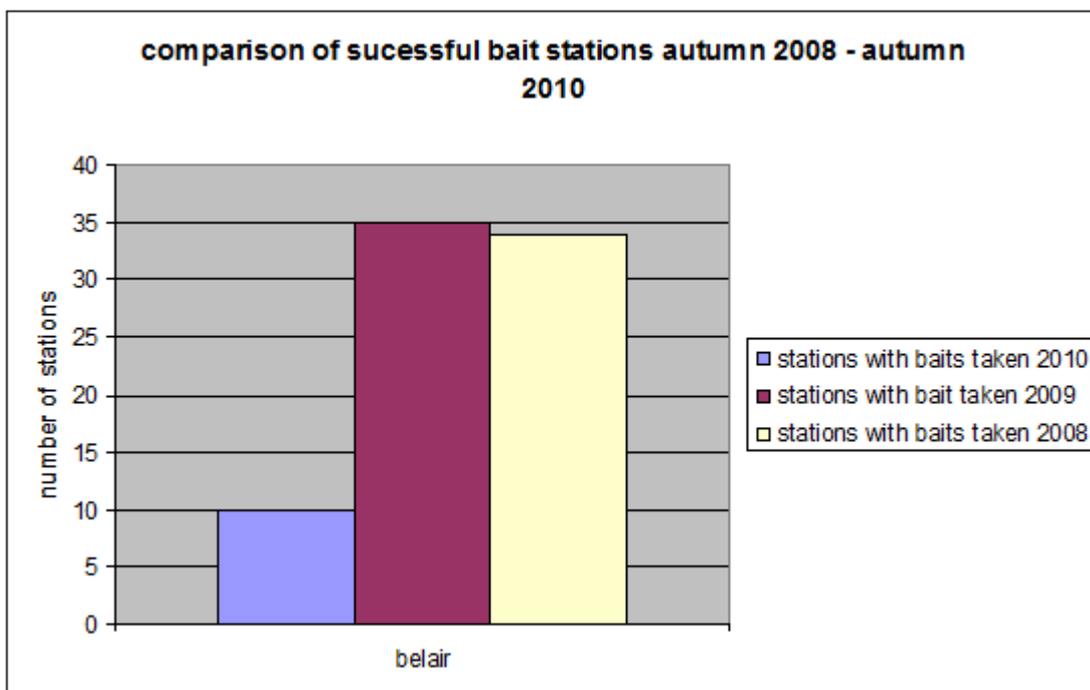


Figure #4

### Summary

To evaluate the survey we are only able to gauge the success or otherwise by the amount of baits taken. There was a significant decline in bait takes in the autumn 2010 program compared to other years (see fig.12). This may be in part due to a slightly higher rainfall this year resulting in more abundant prey species therefore reducing the need to scavenge for baits at the same level. This said the rainfall was still below average and we have consistently good bait takes in the spring program when prey species are likely to be more abundant. I suggest the most likely reason is that the baits were harder for the foxes to locate since the new requirement to bait 20m off the tracks instead of the 5m buffer previously used. Foxes use roads and tracks for movement and territorial marking (Mitchell and Balogh, 2007). As with the previous 2 autumn baiting programs Mark Oliphant Conservation Park continued to have the highest percentage of bait takes (see fig 5). However it was down to nearly half the takes of the previous 2 years. Cleland Conservation Park was the worst performing with a dismal 3.7% of baits taken in 2010 compared to 49% in 2009 and 50% in 2008.

The guidelines for use of this product once again have been changed. National Parks are once again able to bait within 5m of a track or trail. I have discussed this with Chloe Houlson who is the compliance officer for PIRSA and the person who recently audited us. She agrees that we can go back to baiting within 5m of tracks. Although she did have some concerns with Belair as people are allowed to have dogs on leads, but may let them off at times resulting in accidental poisonings. With this said she stated were

are within our rights to bait with the 5m buffer but she had concerns about if there was a poisoning it could reflect badly on the use of 1080 which has gotten some bad press and pressure to have its use discontinued, which would be bad for fox and rabbit control if it occurred. Since the baiting program was so unsuccessful this season I propose we move the stations back to within 5m of tracks in all the parks except Belair where we split the difference and go to 10m for an effectiveness trial.

## **Extracts from David Mitchell's forum speech**

### **WOOMERA FORUM 2010** **WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

In 2008 at Wilpena my address was entitled Our Vision for the Future. Twelve months later at Sunnybrae I needed to talk about the Reality of the Present. I referred then to the continuing struggle that requires not only intellectual horsepower but also plenty of energy and, above all, commitment. Now in my third year as President of Friends of Parks I can only say that the struggle has become even more challenging. In the midst of what appeared to be some serious improvements in the relationships between the Department and the Friends a portfolio restructure is announced, a lot of things are put on hold and a level of institutional paralysis almost inevitably ensues. So where to from here in terms of the special relationship between what is now known as DENR and Friends of Parks?

Some things are beyond our control and I'd suggest portfolio restructuring is one of them. You can only play the cards that you are dealt and up until now my advice to Friends groups inquiring about the impact of the new arrangements has essentially been to keep "heads down and bums up". I'm trying to remain optimistic but in the absence of hard information the rumour mill is in over-drive which doesn't inspire confidence that the new arrangements and the merger with NRM will not adversely impact Friends of Parks and our volunteering efforts.

So, given the collective muscle of 6,000 members and our special relationship with DENR we can surely influence the shape, direction and culture of the department and its staff. There's that dreaded term "culture" again! I'm cautious about promising too much because we know from personal experience that culture change is a long and arduous process and that it's also resource-intensive. Unfortunately we haven't got much time, neither are we over-burdened with resources. In fact at last year's Forum I rather rashly said: - "Increased resources in the Volunteer Support Unit, more Volunteer Support Rangers and further training and development of liaison rangers are all essential ingredients of the culture change process." Regrettably after twelve months and repeated promises such increases have not been forthcoming and we still don't know what the state budget has in store. The Volunteer Support Unit still only has two full time positions filled of the four on the approved establishment and this has been the situation for the past year. In saying this I don't want to undervalue the great work done by RCD staff across the state, there just isn't enough of them and hasn't been for years.

So how can Friends of Parks influence the direction and style of the new agency? First of all I suggest by getting behind the intent of the restructure. The planned amalgamation of parts of the old DWLBC into DEH to become DENR and then integration with natural resources management (NRM) has to yield environmental dividends. Done well it could transform the public and private land system, done badly it will be a screaming disaster for generations to come. As the major on-ground contributor to the protected reserve system I believe we are entitled to be fully engaged in the process of developing the new agency and we have a vested interest in making DENR a success. Failure will be a tragedy for our parks, our natural environment, our cultural heritage and for Friends of Parks.

Early discussions with Allan Holmes, John Schutz and Minister Paul Caica provide cause for cautious optimism. John has tried to keep Friends of Parks Inc aware of plans for the restructure, is concerned to ensure that Friends of Parks are respected as partners and is in the process of establishing processes to improve relationships with other community stakeholders and environmental NGO's. The Minister has met with the Friends of Parks Board and clearly expressed the value he places on Friends and their activities. (Of course he would say that wouldn't he!) In meeting with us Minister Caica was open to questions about his aspirations for his portfolio, the new departmental arrangements and the role to be played by Friends of Parks member groups. In fact on Wednesday this week the Minister along with Allan Holmes will be hosting a stakeholder forum to discuss the process of integrating natural resource management delivery at a regional level. Friends of Parks has been identified as a key player along with other community groups. My sincere hope is that the forum provides a genuine basis discussion and not

the presentation of a “lay down misere” as has so often been the case in the past.

Elsewhere the Minister has talked about the need to improve access to our parks while stressing the need for sustainability. Given that this is a term much over-used by the political classes at the moment I’ll quote the Minister’s own words in a recent letter sent to Friends of Parks. “DENR has been created to help the government and South Australians find a way to live that is both sustainable and prosperous, a way that doesn’t diminish or damage our environment”. This is a huge challenge and one that most Friends have been doing something about for decades, in fact it’s the reason many of us joined the environmental movement. If the government can see beyond its current “growth at any cost” philosophy we may yet be able to properly protect, restore and maintain what is left of our natural and cultural heritage.

The following are some guiding principles that Friends of Parks have expressed to the Minister and the Chief Executive that we would like to see incorporated into the new DENR model:

- A landscape scale approach to planning that provides for the proper consideration of conservation objectives and issues (consistent with NRM principles)
- Determination of funding priorities and resources with emphasis on the protection of biodiversity from feral plant and animal species and other key threats including increased visitor usage
- Early resolution of the heritage issue in terms of its importance and place in the scheme of things (we note its absence from the Chief Executive’s newsletters with considerable concern)
- Early and representative stakeholder involvement both internal and external
- Transparent, accountable and inclusive processes for consultation

Consultation is an area where unfortunately the Department does not have a good track record as is evidenced by the recent poorly conceived draft Visitor and Linking Adelaide with Nature strategies and their equally flawed consultation processes which are now being revisited. With earlier consultation such embarrassments might well have been avoided. Hence we continue to negotiate to ensure that in developing new policies and strategies there is:

- An opportunity for robust debate of the overarching objectives and policies that inform departmental strategies
- Decision-making informed by the results of an agreed environmental risk assessment process that includes appropriate scientific evidence and expertise
- Scientifically sound monitoring and evaluation to support adaptive management and inform future planning and last but by no means least
- In the process of merging DENR and the various regional NRM Board to avoid “throwing out the NRM baby with the bureaucratic bath-water”.

This last point is especially important since, with all its failings and after a shaky start, the NRM process has begun to yield some positive results. Neither must we overlook that an increasing number of Friends of Parks groups have been beneficiaries of the last two rounds of NRM small community grants and other project-based funding. To lose these benefits would be a serious backward step.

Our immediate future is in my view bound ever more closely with that of DENR and our shared vision must embrace a mature, robust and progressive partnership. The actions need to match the rhetoric. I’m aware that not all of you want to be involved in the politics of this relationship but for our future and for that of our parks, reserves and heritage it’s essential that we get things right or at least a darn sight better than they currently are. None of us likes change but we need to adapt to changing circumstances otherwise we’ll truly become dinosaurs.

Each year our volunteers contribute roughly 80 full time equivalents which compares with a ranger complement within DENR of about 90 FTE’s. I’m in no way suggesting that our volunteers have the same level of training and expertise as professional rangers. Nevertheless the figures are an indicator of the extent to which the government relies on Friends of Parks to deliver its services. This is a message that we need to market more effectively, as a means of attracting more support from within and without government. This remains a challenge for us as advocates for the conservation cause and the state’s future. Friends of Parks is an engine room for community engagement and we must be able to sell that capability to government. Friends of Parks is currently working with other NGOs, the Conservation Council and several of the NRM Boards to precisely that end and is looking to seal an effective partnership with DENR. Only time will tell if we have been successful.