

The Newsletter of the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia



XANTHOPUS

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About

The Nature Conservation Society of SA:

Major foci of the NCSSA include:

- Native vegetation, threatened species and habitats.
- Protecting all forms of life (biodiversity) on land and in the oceans.
- Park dedication, management and legislation.
- Education about biodiversity to all sections of the community.
- Cooperation with other conservation groups and land managers.

Activities include:

- Education about biodiversity including the 'Walks with Nature' program and through our *Bushcare Support* program.
- Scientific research including surveys of areas such as Mokota.
- Lobbying and advising governments for adequate protection of species and habitats.

The NCSSA is an organisation built on the strengths of its members and volunteers with an interest in conservation of our natural heritage. The Society is managed by an elected voluntary committee and administrated by several staff.

The views presented in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the NCSSA

COVER: The nationally 'vulnerable' Murray Hardyhead found at Dunn Lagoon, Clayton. (Photo courtesy of Michael Hammer).

Committee:

President – vacant

Vice-President – Helen Vonow

Secretary – Phil McNamara

Assistant Secretary – Annie Bond

Treasurer – Misch Benito

Amanda Camp, Nicole Lewis, Ann Prescott, Peter Tucker, Scotte Wedderburn, Luke Geelen

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Staff:

General Manager - Tanya Wittwer

Scientific Officer – Matthew Turner

Administrator – Raelene Telfer

Biodiversity Extension Officer – Tim Milne

Temperate Woodland Campaigner – Penny Paton

Project Officers:

Kerry Gilkes (*Grassy Ecosystems - Upper SE*)

Jo Spencer (*Grassy Ecosystems - Mt Lofty Ranges Eastern Flanks*)

Meg Robertson (*Mokota Vegetation Monitoring & "Stop Bushland Weeds"*)

New Members from June 1, 2003

Michelle and Chris Warren, Josh Griffiths, Tony Thompson, Jean Turner & David Potter, Lee Heard & Nick Neagle, Peter Watton, Nick Couch, Janet Newell, Anne Brown, Wanda & Robert Meyers, Owen Gale, Irene Thomas, Wendy Cliff, Nandine Kelly, Sally Maxwell, Natasha Dawson, Travis Hague, Randall Johnson, Ben Shepherd, Jenny Pascoe, Jane Corin, Dept Water, Land & Biodiversity Conservation

SCIENTIFIC OFFICER'S REPORT

NCSSA members may have read that on September 12, 2003 prominent South East land holder Tom Brinkworth pleaded guilty and was fined a total of \$273,000 on three counts of illegal native vegetation clearance. However, on September 18, the highest fine (\$213,000) was recalled- the other two penalties remain at \$30,000 each. Details are discussed below.

The illegal clearance exceeds a staggering 280 hectares. This area is greater than 150 times the size of Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The following information comes from the sentencing remarks made by Mr AR Newman Stipendiary Magistrate (SM) made in the Naracoorte Magistrates Court.

The three counts of illegal vegetation clearance are as follows:

- 2.8 hectares in November 2001 on the property known as "South Flagstaff"
- 266.25 hectares between January and June 2002 on "Stoneleigh Park"
- 11.9 hectares between July and September 2002 on "Taunta Downs"

The **South Flagstaff** offence was "virgin remnant scrub" under a Heritage Agreement. The clearance resulted from the construction of a drain to draw saline water away from an area known as the Mandina Marshes. It was widely agreed that something needed to be done to remove the excessive and often saline water away from Mandina Marshes. The State government's view was that the saline water should be drained via the Petherick Road interchange. However, Mr Brinkworth was of a different view. He acquired the necessary land and immediately set out to construct a drain through the Heritage Agreement area. Justice Newman indicated that "...in digging that drain [Brinkworth] had little or no regard to good practice. He seems to have dug it as quickly and as cheaply as possible."

The **Stoneleigh Park** offence was the most substantial clearance, 266.25 hectares of regrowth and remnant scrub were cleared adjacent to the Tilley Swamp Drain. The area cleared was also part of a wider monitoring project established to monitor the effects of the Tilley Swamp Drain. The magistrate expressed confusion over why Mr Brinkworth cleared the land:

"No explanation has been given to me why this has been done. I ask myself was it to frustrate the monitoring? Was it to frustrate the possible conversion to Heritage Agreement or was it just for financial gain to gain more grazing land? I don't know."

The **Taunta Downs** offence totalled 11.9 hectares and was also for the construction of a drain. Again, all parties agreed that a drain was needed- the authorities preferred a route that did not go through intact native vegetation. Mr Brinkworth's only explanation given was that the drain that went through the scrub was a cheaper option. He knew that the Native Vegetation Council was opposed to this, but went ahead regardless.

In summing up, the magistrate referred to a statement made by Mr Brinkworth in defence of a previous prosecution of illegal clearance.

"The statement I wish to make in regard to Rosemary Downs is a farmer's point of view. We run our own conservation program, without the help or hindrance of the Department in the past, which we are happy to show anyone who is interested in conservation at any point of time.

It's my land and my trees, if I want to keep the trees or kill the trees, I will, whether with a bulldozer or with matches or cattle is immaterial.

If it takes one year or ten years, the outcome is the same. I am the one who has to pay the rates and taxes, keep the land free from weeds and vermin, look after the land and hold it in trust for future generations and make a living off the land. If the Government thinks it can affect the outcome of land use with fines and intimidation, it is wrong. Landholders must be encouraged and educated into better land use and management. Coercing will not work. The more you threaten and coerce the more I will dig in.

You must convince me that what you want to do is a good idea, and good for the environment, then I will be only too willing to help in any way possible. The simple fact is that nothing will do well on my land unless I want it to. I am not ashamed of what I do. I am proud of what I do. We run our own conservation program which is more successful than any government run program.”

Magistrate Newman said that Mr Brinkworth has continued to show the same arrogant disregard for the need to comply with the rule of the law.

Fortunately for Mr Brinkworth each of the above offences was committed before the latest amendments to the Native Vegetation Act. The penalty for illegal clearance pre-amendments is a fine of up to \$40,000 or \$2,000 per hectare, whichever is the greater. The South Flagstaff and Taunta Downs cases of illegal clearance were fined at \$30,000 each. The Stoneleigh Park clearance was seen to be more serious and was therefore fined at the rate per hectare. In this case the magistrate chose to fine Mr Brinkworth at \$800 per hectare- resulting in a \$213,000 fine for this case alone.

However, on the 18th of September it was brought to Magistrate Newman’s attention that the maximum penalty that can be applied to a breach in the Magistrates Court is \$150,000. Magistrate Newman has since made additional sentencing remarks and remanded the defendant to the District Court for sentence. However, the conviction remains. The District Court could decide that the penalty was too harsh, or conversely, too lenient and increase it accordingly. The case will go before the District Court in Adelaide on 20th October.

The Society understands that Mr Brinkworth has appealed.

The Native Vegetation Council has indicated that it will seek to enforce a “make-good” order. This will ensure that Mr Brinkworth attempts to rehabilitate the cleared land, but more importantly the land will not be able to be used for primary productivity purposes.

Today, when much of our native vegetation has already been cleared, every last stand is important. The Society supports strong legislation and enforcement to protect remnant vegetation.

Matthew Turner
Scientific Officer
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XANTHOPUS COPY DEADLINE

Copy for the August issue of *Xanthopus* is **Monday 15 November 2003**.
Contributions in a variety of formats will be considered, but electronic submissions are preferred.

get a grip

: Hands on Activities for Members

Upcoming events...

Grass Identification Workshops

6 - 8 weeks, commencing 7th & 8th October

Following the success of last year's workshops the NCSSA and the Native Grass Resources Group (NGRG) are offering another season of Grass Identification workshops.

A series of 6 to 8 sessions will be offered, presented by Ann Prescott, and will take participants from the basics to an appreciation of some of the major indigenous genera. Sessions will begin on Tuesday the 7th and Wednesday the 8th of October at 7-9pm at the Urrbrae Wetlands Centre.

Contact the NCSSA office on 8223 6301 for further information and to register your interest.

Porters Scrub Survey - 12th October

When: Sunday 12th October, 10 - 4pm

Where: proposed Porter Scrub C.P. (soon to be gazetted) a new park in the Adelaide Hills.

Activities: a morning walk through the park, a picnic lunch, and afternoon activities including mapping rare plant populations, looking for hollows and nesting sites for the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos etc, and locating significant weeds. It is intended that the types of activities will cater for a range of different ecological skills.

Contact the NCSSA office on 8223 6301 for further information and to register your interest.

NCSSA Spring Survey 2003 - 7th - 14th November

Who: NCSSA members and keen, capable, non-members

What: Spring Survey of vegetation, birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs, invertebrates and maybe even fish!

When: 7th November (evening) - 14th November (to catch the grasses flowering)

Where: Hopkins Creek, south of Burra

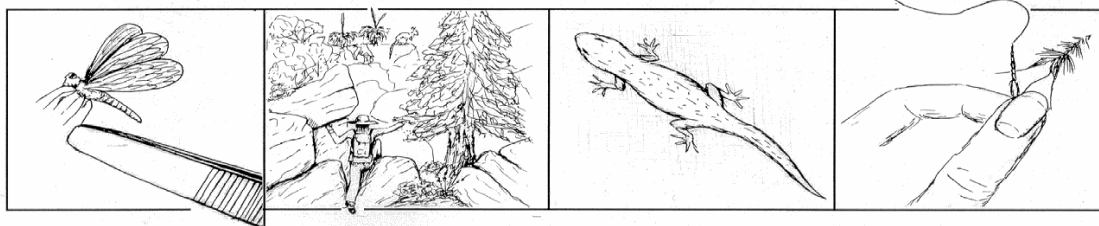
Why: a newly acquired Reserve, and ties in well and helps with the on-going future programs of the DEH Biological Survey of South Australia.

Aim: to look for, and document the biodiversity, particularly in sensitive areas.

For further details see page 9 or leave a message at the NCSSA office (8223 6301) to register your interest.

Call for members and new ideas...

Our small organising group is looking for new members and new ideas for activities. If you would like to contribute to our sub-committee, or if you have an idea for an activity in which to participate, please ring the NCSSA office (8223 6301)



A Celebration of Bushcare Support

“HOW BUSHCARE SUPPORT CHANGED MY LIFE”

At the AGM on September 4 2003, four people talked under the above title: Tim Milne, Patrick O'Connor, Janet Pedler and Ann Starkey. The following is a précis of Ann Starkey's contribution:

“The Clayton Experience”

My world's experience prior to retirement to a quiet life at Clayton was in the area of Aged Care, in particular, policy and future directions for care provision. My association with Clayton had been some 20 years as a weekend resident. We had a house there for many years, and some four years ago chose to live there permanently to enjoy a quiet life at a slower pace.

Clayton is between Milang and Goolwa on the shore of Lake Alexandrina, one of the Lower Lakes of the River Murray. It is a small limestone peninsula surrounded by lagoons and swamps. In the mid 19th Century it developed as a small port, and provided wood for paddle steamers and was used for cattle grazing. In the 1960's the township developed as a holiday hamlet with ambitions of becoming an exclusive country holiday resort. But stemming from a small commercial fishing industry in the 1970's, Clayton became well known as “Yabby City”! It is now made up of both holiday homes and permanent residents, and supports a General Store with a restaurant; Boat Club; Community Centre; Community Association; CFS; Caravan Park, and a Clayton Camp formerly owned by Pembroke School.

Three years ago there were barely sixty permanent residents. Since then the number has trebled, and new holiday homes being built during that period has been constant. In holiday periods numbers easily exceed 500 people, because of family groups in the weekend holiday homes. This accelerated urbanisation and the increase in the permanent population has changed the town's social structure, and there is a demand from residents for work in the local area.

Swamps and lagoons divide the peninsula township into distinct areas, and in the past, recreation has mainly occurred on the major part of reclaimed land on its western side. This has been developed, and is indeed very attractive for many residents and visitors. It includes toilet blocks; barbecue shelter; swings; boating ramps; a public jetty; Boat Club; swimming area and caravan park. These are all under the care and control of the Alexandrina Council and are tidy and well-maintained by its Parks and Gardens employees.

On the eastern side is Dunn Lagoon. Its foreshore is held by several title holders. Seven acres (ca. 2.8ha) are privately owned, and a further subdivision is being sought. Crown and Council hold ownership of a foreshore reserve. A Council road reserve runs the length of the foreshore. Council is now happy to talk to us about closure of this road reserve and for it to revert to foreshore. Up to now the foreshore area has been mostly left alone. In the 1950's it was a sanctuary, and 92 species of birds have been recorded. Up to ten thousand Coots have been estimated to be on the lagoon, and three years ago many thousands of Black Swans gathered there and many bred. Every night cormorants fly in across the Lagoon and roost after their day's fishing in the Coorong. Recent lower water levels brought the arrival of sandpipers and other wading birds, spoonbills and Banded Stilts. However, this has changed markedly this year with the winter rains. The water-based ecosystems and the fringing reeds along the lake's edge are also home for many native plants and invertebrates.

Many parts of Dunn Lagoon are inaccessible to all but the most intrepid walkers. When there was talk of the need for jetties to augment a proposed walking trail concerns were raised by some members of the community. The ideas expressed of a developed foreshore with jetties, mowed lawns, table and chairs to enhance the experience of the natural surroundings did not fit some other peoples' idea of a sustainable environment. From our point of view we are passionate about protecting this area. Where else can you live across a road from a lagoon so rich in nature in a township one hour from Adelaide? However some of us realised that unless we started to understand this stretch of water we were not going to gain the support of the general population to protect the locality, nor would our standpoint be considered in the face of the increasing demands of tourism and the jetty development discussions.

So why Bushcare Support?

Well, in Clayton we have one or two of everything, and of experts we have many. Everyone has a view about what should happen on the foreshore, and we could count ourselves among them. Community consultation had been undertaken for the walking trail around Clayton, including Dunn Lagoon. This consultation had been run through the Community Association and the presenters were local people with local ideas. The major discussions centred around a boating destination, and for many of us this was the last straw. More was to come. Canoe launching facilities, a public fishing jetty, private jetties individually owned, or a Community-owned jetty with access for mooring. The

development of a park, and foreshore gardens with a number of carefully sited seats, regular mowing and recreational activities were all part of these vistas. What about the environment that supports what we came here to enjoy? some of us asked. These discussions heightened emotions in our small community, but it was clear that the majority preferred nothing to change.

But a vote for nothing leaves room for future *unintended* change.

So a couple of us armed ourselves with bird lists and maps of flyways, looked for that rare native bird or fish that might help our drive for the locality's protection, to find out what we could do to both retain and sustain our environment. From all this frenzied activity it became highly obvious that we needed the help of the experts, armed with their scientific backgrounds and methodology. Through the *Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning (LAP) Group* we were put in touch with *Bushcare Support*.

Relief. *Bushcare* proved to be a resource that provided the scientific expertise, answered questions, and provided insights and answers as and when required. When it came to presenting the findings, we as a community were given information in a practical, informative and fun way which in many cases gave us a thirst for more information before becoming involved.

Some of the attributes that made the *Bushcare Support* program so successful for our community were: First, the ability of its officers to listen and understand the issues and the many needs of the community without being judgemental. People can get very carried away and passionate, but a planned logical approach, based on scientific data collected on the ground was the necessary prerequisite for our community to listen and gain more understanding of the environment.

Gathering information is one thing. But presenting it in a professional and informative way that provides an enjoyable experience to people from many walks of life, and which also enables them to appreciate the intricacies of the environment and the wildlife it supports yet still maintain a scientific approach, takes people with special skills.

The outcomes for Clayton, and in particular for Dunn Lagoon, from the *Bushcare Support* Program have been many, both tangible and intangible.

Bushcare Support provided funding for a complete Vegetation Map by Janet Pedler, Patrick O'Connor and Nigel Mallen of Dunn Lagoon and the cliff top. They presented their findings at the 'Life on the Edge' workshop. The expected attendance for this workshop by *Bushcare Support* was 20 to 25 people, but 78 people attended the first workshop, and there were 12 apologies.

It was a day of discovery. Some of the many topics covered by Janet, Patrick, and Nigel were the role of fringing reedbeds, of riparian remnant vegetation and fragmented plant communities. Watching macroinvertebrates under the microscope was enthralling. Janet gave a talk about the birds and the need for vegetation corridors. Todd Birkenshaw talked about his role as *Bushcare Support* Officer available for community projects.

A second workshop commencing with a birdwatching session early on a Sunday morning was attended by 27 people and run by Janet Pedler. Other sessions on frogs and plants, and a field trip for identification, made for an information-packed day. Fifty-four people participated, either for part of the day or all day. An important outcome was that we were shown an area that has become a prime source of seed for our plant propagation program.

Comments after the two major workshops were very positive, and more people wanted to know more. But most positive of all, they wanted to do something to look after THEIR environment.

All of the outcomes following the two workshops are directly or indirectly attributable to *Bushcare Support* and its involvement at Dunn Lagoon.

During the lead-up to the first workshop our small group realised the importance of developing a coordinated approach. Our first thoughts were for the development of a vegetation management plan written by professionals with a work manual of how, where and what to do, and where to plant in different soil-type areas. Funding was gained from the LAP and from the Department for Environment and Heritage under the Coorong and Lake Alexandrina Ramsar Plan for the vegetation management plan, and I believe much of our funding success was because of the strength in both numbers and interest displayed by the community at the workshop.

Since then our group has secured funding from *Envirofund*, for implementation of the management plan, and Council funding for some fencing. In total some \$40,000. Information gained from the first Workshops were used to support our applications for funding.

We have run two other workshops on seed collection ~ 14 people attended. Ten people later gathered seed from the foreshore of Dunn Lagoon. The seed has produced 1000 seedlings planted this year, and 2000 more are growing for next year. More seed collection will be done in the next few months.

Funding from Envirofund for Waterwatch

Waterwatch workshop speakers covered the importance of wetlands and provision of habitat for migratory birds, and 35 people attended a talk by Scottie Wedderburn on native fish. During the following field trip the nationally 'vulnerable' Murray Hardyhead was found in Dunn Lagoon.

We ran a second workshop and invited people to come and play with the *Waterwatch* equipment. From this, nine volunteers came forward. *Waterwatch* commenced in March 2003 at six sites around Clayton ~ three in Dunn Lagoon. Results are interesting in relation to increasing salinity, and it is noted that there is a lack of macroinvertebrates in the reeds around the recreational areas of the caravan park. *Waterwatch* volunteer Mike Cichon who looks after this area has constructed habitat to encourage macroinvertebrates.

Following Scottie Wedderburn's finding the Murray Hardyhead, he returned to Dunn Lagoon with a couple of fellow researchers. Together they found a large number of Murray Hardyheads and two of its relatives, the Flyspecked and Small-mouthed Hardyheads. Scottie says of 52 sites sampled in the Lower Lakes there was only one other in which all three species were recorded. At last! A species that is rare, near extinction, and in need of protection! A few of us can feel vindicated, as further research will be undertaken in the area by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Aquatic Sciences later this year, with a further field study considered for 2004.

Waterwatch is up and running well with an enthusiastic group of volunteers who enjoy their work and sharing the information through reports to our local Community newspaper. I gather that they also enjoy their debriefing sessions.

Lastly: A birdwatching group has evolved. Earlier I spoke of the 92 birds recorded as sighted around the foreshore and on the Lagoon. This count was put together from the records of three individuals who had worked independently of each other, each with their own style of recording. The initial *Life on the Edge* workshop provided an opportunity to draw the individual birdwatchers in the community together (permanent and weekend residents) to form a group. Under the leadership of Andrew Crouch, they now have a standard method of recording data, and have developed a database which will be available on the Community Computer in the shop. They have costed a simple bird hide and selected a site. This will be discussed at the Community meeting on the Management Plan. With funding gained from the *Envirofund* grant they have now produced a Birds of Clayton pamphlet for distribution.

The locality will also provide recreation and ongoing education to visitors by providing them with information about the importance of the local flora and fauna and the role of the wetlands in our part of the world.

The good works undertaken by *Bushcare Support* and its staff and consultants has been pivotal in initiating the high level of interest and participation within the community. As a community we can consider ourselves more fully informed, and sharing knowledge and understanding of what makes this part of the world so special to us. Importantly, when considering the future development of Clayton its environmental needs can now be considered along with its social, economic and recreational needs.

The future involves implementation of the vegetation management plan to enhance biodiversity by protecting and rehabilitating natural habitats leading into and surrounding Dunn Lagoon.

Our overall objective is "to protect and provide a sustaining environment that has improved the environmental benefits to water-dependent ecosystems but at the same time balances this with the recreational needs of the changing face of Clayton" and to draw as many people into the processes at whatever level of understanding and volunteering they wish to participate, and to spread the word.

Without the support, and I stress support, help and resources of *Bushcare Support* what we have achieved so far could not have become a reality. So thank you from us at Clayton for listening and delivering what you said you would.

WALKS with NATURE

**Do you like bushwalking?
Do you like to chat to others about what you see around you?**

We are on the search for budding naturalists, birdos and vegos (and everything in between!) to help lead a walk. This is what happens....

- Walks are advertised in the Sunday Mail one week before they commence.
- Leaders (yourself) arrive at an allotted time, with the route, instructions and detailed 'nature notes' in hand. These are all sent beforehand.....no need to worry, as these nature notes also tell you a fair bit about the track ahead!
- You are allocated a small group and take them off for approximately 2 hours, instilling in them greater appreciation for nature and conservation.

For more information and to let us know if you would like to be on our list of leaders, please contact Geoff Coombe on 8178 0344 or on 0408 838 034.

The next walk will be held on:
October 26th at Kyeema Conservation Park

HOW TO GET THERE:

This is not the easiest place to find, so read carefully..... Kyeema is about 60km south of Adelaide (about an hours drive). From Main South Rd take the Chandlers Hill Rd turn of beyond O'Halloran Hill to Clarendon and Kangarilla. About 9km past Kangarilla and 2km before Meadows turn right and immediately right again on to Brookman Rd towards Willunga. Go 11.5km, then just before a sweeping right hand bend go straight ahead on to a narrow gravel road, then turn left immediately into Woodgate Rd. The gate into Kyeema is on the left 0.6km along this road. Go through the gate, being careful to close it behind you, then drive a further 0.8km across an open paddock past grazing cattle to a gate into the forest.

SPRING SURVEY 2003

WHEN: Friday 7th (evening) - Friday 14th November inclusive

WHERE: Hopkins Creek, south of Burra, in the Mid North of South Australia

WHAT: Biodiversity survey of vegetation, mammals, reptiles, birds, invertebrates and fish.

INTERESTED? Whatever your level of expertise and availability, complete the slip below, or call Raelene at the NCSSA office on (08) 8223 6301. We will be conducting a training workshop on a weekend in late October with experienced botanists and zoologists to prepare for the survey. You will be required to attend this workshop if you wish to participate.

PLEASE NOTE: This is the only *Xanthopus* notification of the Survey, therefore filling in this slip will ensure you receive more information when the finer details are sorted out. So act soon, or you may miss out. And Its Fun!!!

Name

Address

PhoneEmail

Availability

Areas of Interest

Skills.....

NCSSA ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

The Nature Conservation Society of South Australia Inc. (NCSSA) is a not-for-profit voluntary conservation organisation that fosters the retention of remnant and rare habitats and the ecologically sustainable management of all natural habitats.

The Society works to provide input into research, scientific work, communication and education, cooperative biodiversity management planning and implementation, the State's conservation reserve system, government policies, programs and legislation.

General objectives for NCSSA

- A. to undertake good scientific research and surveys that provides information for nature conservation
- B. to advocate good conservation of ecosystems through management and legislation
- C. to provide good quality ecological information to the public to foster a community conservation ethic
- D. to have an active membership and volunteer involvement in the NCSSA's activities and objectives
- E. to provide service to members through a sound administrative and financial base
- F. to raise awareness of the NCSSA's objectives, publications, and activities
- G. to cooperate with existing organisations of similar aims.

A. Scientific endeavours: scientific research and surveys

Projects, surveys and grants

The NCSSA undertakes surveys on a regular basis and other scientifically based projects funded by competitive application from a range of granting bodies. NCSSA Steering Committees manage the projects, evaluate the work of the contractors, assist with completion of survey reports and submit acquittals to the appropriate funding bodies.

The NCSSA gratefully acknowledges funding support from the following sources and programs:

Animal and Plant Control Commission [APCC]	NPWSA Wildlife Conservation Fund, [WCF]
Australian Government Envirofund [Env]	River Murray Catchment Water Management Board [RMCWMB]
City of Onkaparinga	South East Natural Resource Consultative Committee [SENRC]
Eastern Hills & Murray Plains Catchment Group/Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Group	The Natural Heritage Trust [NHT]
ForestrySA	The World Wide Fund for Nature devolved NHT fund [WWF]
Native Vegetation Research Fund of the Native Vegetation Council [NVRF]	
Nature Foundation SA [NFSA]	

Projects completed during the 2002-2003 year and reports published or pending

1. Beetaloo Valley – Biodiversity Survey of Remnant Habitat [NHT, ForestrySA]
2. Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges – Year 2 [WWF]
3. Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of Upper South East of SA – Year 2 [WWF]
4. Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of Mid North of SA [WWF]
5. Silky Teatree and cutting grass wetland protection and rehabilitation project in the Lower South-East [NHT, NFSA, WCF]
6. A Vertebrate Survey of Tangari Regional Park [City of Onkaparinga]
7. The Identification and Assessment of Grassy Woodlands in Forest Reserves in Mount Lofty Ranges [NVRF, ForestrySA]
8. Vegetation Monitoring of Temperate Grasslands at Mokota Conservation Park – Year 2 [NVRF]

Projects still under way at June 30

9. Bushcare Support Program (consortium with Greening Australia) [NHT]
10. Conservation of Temperate Woodlands [ForestrySA, NVRF]
11. Invertebrate component of the Biodiversity Survey of native grasslands at Mokota Conservation Park (Mt Cone) [NFSA]
12. Mokota Conservation Park Vegetation Monitoring project - Year 3 [NVRF]
13. NCSSA Annual Survey 2002 – Biodiversity of grasslands of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges [Eastern Hills & Murray Plains Catchment Group; Goolwa to Wellington LAP]

New grants as at June 30 but not under way by end of this financial year

14. New revised edition of *Stop Bushland Weeds* [NHT, NCSSA, Env, APCC]
15. Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of Upper South East of SA – Year 3 [SENRC]
16. Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges – Year 3 [RMCWMB]

The Society also supported scientific research activities by allocation of funds to set up a Conservation Biology Grant and has supported Native Fish Australia (SA) Inc to undertake a fish survey Kangaroo Island.

B. Advocacy for nature conservation issues

Scientific Officer and Committee initiatives

The work of the NCSSA Scientific Officer augments the work of the NCSSA Committee in our community advocacy role. The Scientific Officer has the essential role of the longer-term follow-up advocacy, education, and input into submissions and legislative reviews based on the work of the specific grants and Committee expertise. This may involve personal involvement on the part of the Scientific Officer through reports and submissions on environmental issues, or the Scientific Officer may brief the

Committee with action taken by one of its members. The position involves an important point of contact for the general public, community groups, NGOs and government officers. The role is also important for coordinating the numerous volunteers that contribute to the work of the Society. Matthew Turner continues in this position, in a part-time capacity.

Major initiatives for the Scientific Officer and the Committee have been in the areas of Threats to Biodiversity, On-Park Biodiversity Conservation, Integrated Natural Resource Management and Community Education.

Threats to Biodiversity

This year the NCSSA has undertaken:

1. submissions to the following reviews: Native Vegetation Act; Productivity Commission Inquiry into Impacts of Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Regulations; Fisheries Act
2. submission and information provision on potential subdivision and development of land with significant native vegetation (Coffin Bay proposed subdivision, Monarto Compost Facility, Lochiel Park, Brukunga reserve reclassification, Cedar Avenue Reserve, Seal Bay Development proposal, Strathalbyn, Burnside Council subdivision of the Simpson property)
3. research into community concerns regarding alleged illegal vegetation clearance in the south-east.
4. submissions on various government policies and programs: the Animal and Plant Control Commission (APPC) Weed Risk Assessment guidelines; DEH re the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary; to PIRSA regarding ongoing stocking of waterways with Brown Trout; DEH re duck and quail hunting seasons; regular liaison with the Pastoral Board; representation on the Yurrebilla Stakeholder Management Group
5. Work on Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, including facilitating an NGO Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC) Nominations Committee
6. Consultation with Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) regarding environmental aspects of SANTOS' proposal for drilling, production and processing in Cooper Basin
7. Submission and information on biodiversity protection: commercial goat farming in the pastoral zone; wind farm proposals; culling of native birds, diseases such as Mundulla Yellows, Phytophthora, Stringybark dieback
8. provided information to media on the impact of koalas and of land division affecting biodiversity
9. provided editorial for the *Invasive Species* section in *2003 SA State of Environment Report*
10. gave a paper at the National Forest Summit on SA Native Vegetation Protection Laws
11. provided input into management programs for remnant vegetation.

On-Park Biodiversity Conservation

1. submissions to both NPWSA and Forestry SA Draft Management Plans
2. submissions on the fire management and prescribed burning of NPWSA reserves
3. provided input into CCSA National Parks policy
4. prepared an analysis of SA IBRA regions for representative status.

Integrated Natural Resource Management

1. provided ongoing comments on NRM legislative framework as it relates to biodiversity conservation (NRM Discussion paper and Draft NRM Bill)
2. provided comments on regional INRM plans (specifically South East; Mount Lofty Ranges (MLR) and Greater Adelaide; and Kangaroo Island INRM plans)
3. provided comments on Draft INRM Investment Strategies for MLR and Greater Adelaide
4. submission to MLR INRM group regarding promotion of best practice forestry in MLR for provision of the State's future firewood supplies and biodiversity benefits, and investigation of options for MLR/KI.

Community education for nature conservation

1. provided advice, assistance and educational information on biodiversity conservation issues to members, the general public, and to the media
2. facilitated the involvement of individuals or groups in the planning and management of biodiversity
3. provided representation at educational or promotional events
4. held monthly meetings with guest speakers on biodiversity topics
5. conducted biodiversity knowledge and skills training workshops for members
6. provided NCSSA volunteers and local community groups with the opportunity to participate in its biodiversity survey of the Eastern flanks of the Mt Lofty Ranges
7. maintained a web page providing information on biodiversity issues in South Australia and information about the NCSSA and its resources
8. published six editions of the NCSSA newsletter *Xanthopus*
9. offered five free Walks with Nature in the Mount Lofty Ranges led by up to 50 volunteer naturalists
10. provided a precis of environmental issues mentioned in Hansard.

The NCSSA acknowledges the support of the South Australian Government through the State Government Service Agreement Grants for funding the position of the Scientific Officer.

C. Good quality nature conservation information to the public

Bushcare Support

In mid-1998, the Society formed a Consortium with Trees for Life and Greening Australia (South Australia) to deliver the Bushcare Support Program in South Australia on behalf of the Federal Government Natural Heritage Trust Bushcare program, as a tender contract for three years. This contract was extended for a further 18 months from mid 2001, and then a further 6 months until June 30th 2003 with only Greening Australia. As such, the contract with the Federal Government has finished, and further

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funding will need to be sought through the new regional Integrated Natural Resource Management process to continue this initiative.

Our specific role in the consortium was to provide specialist biodiversity advice to community groups and landholders. This advice aimed to educate local residents about the unique features of the native vegetation and fauna in their local regions, explain the specific threats to regional biodiversity, and detail methods to reverse these degradation processes. The NCSSA also assisted with the on-ground implementation of Bushcare projects funded through the Natural Heritage Trust by providing specific technical advice to ensure that these projects deliver maximum biodiversity return. Provision of advice on fauna and flora survey and monitoring was a key component of this technical advice.

In the last year, the NCSSA Bushcare Support program has had three staff – two part-time biodiversity extension officers (Tim Milne and Robyn Sutherland) and an administrative officer (Elizabeth Lonie). The program has also accessed a broad wealth of biodiversity expertise through a pool of consultant naturalists who help deliver workshops and provide specific advice to Bushcare projects. In 2002-03, a total of 13 consultants provided their expertise to this program.

Key outcomes from Bushcare Support for 2002-2003

The two key aims of education and technical advice were delivered to community groups through ‘workshops’, as well as specific one-on-one advice to landholders. Sixteen workshops to 400 people were conducted this year throughout all regions of the state. Advice was also provided to projects and individuals in the South East, Mount Lofty Ranges, Northern Agricultural Districts, Eyre Peninsula, and the Murray Darling Basin.

Two new products were also developed in the last year to as part of Bushcare Support – the “*Field Guide to Bushland Monitoring*” and “*Native Vegetation Management: Needs Analysis for Service Delivery*”. The “*Field Guide to Bushland Monitoring*” is a manual designed to enable landholders to monitor changes in the condition of their bushland. The “*Native Vegetation Management: Needs Analysis for Service Delivery*”, jointly prepared with Greening Australia, is a review of services relating to native vegetation management for all temperate regions of the state.

A final report for the Society’s component of Bushcare Support will be prepared by October 31st. It will review the activities and impacts of the project, which included:

- 210 workshops to more than 5000 people
- preparation of grants for biodiversity projects totalling more than \$450 000
- technical advice and assistance regarding biodiversity to more than 50 different projects throughout the state, funded through the Natural Heritage Trust
- development of grassy ecosystems projects in the Mount Lofty Ranges, Mid North, Eyre Peninsula and South East.

Community education and biodiversity

The Society provides an important point of contact for the community and, following public requests, provides information on a broad range of topics on a regular basis.

Publications produced this year:

The Biodiversity and Natural History of Beetaloo Valley (2003), Vicki Philpott, Nature Conservation Society of SA Inc.

Distribution and Status of the Eastern Pygmy-possum Cercartetus nanus unicolor (Marsupialia: Burramyidae) in South Australia, (2002), Jason Van Weenen, Nature Conservation Society of SA Inc.

Evaluating the use of nest boxes by birds at Monarto, South Australia, Report to the Native Vegetation Council (2003), Emma Crossfield, Adelaide University.

Grassy Woodlands within Forestry SA Native Vegetation Blocks Mount Lofty Ranges South Australia (2002) Michael Hyde, Nature Conservation Society of SA Inc and Forestry SA.

Silky Tea-tree and cutting Grass Wetland Rehabilitation Project Summary 1999-2002 (2002) Mark Bachmann, Nature Conservation Society of SA Inc, Nature Foundation SA Inc, National Wetlands program, Natural Heritage Trust, Department for Environment and Heritage, Government of SA.

These are now available at cost recovery price.

In addition to NCSSA reports, NCSSA retails three ‘popular’ book titles, namely *Pre European Vegetation of Adelaide*, *Stop Bushland Weeds* and *20 Walks with Nature in the Mt Lofty Ranges*. These contributed a gross turnover of about \$8,750 to the Society.

D. To have active membership involvement in NCSSA activities and objectives

Volunteers and committees

During the year, the Society had a strong volunteer base with over 7300 hours of volunteer time. Special mention to Keith Lloyd and Graeme Lawson who invoiced publication sales, distributed, and kept stock of book numbers, and Phil McNamara who made decisions on stock levels.

Memberships

NCSSA has a current membership of 318 members and welcomed 36 new members during the year. Thank you to Max Possingham and Sybille Haflinger for maintaining our database and distributing information to members.

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NCSSA volunteers involved in the activities of the NCSSA in 2002-2003			
Activity	Volunteer Details	Time (hours)	People
Biodiversity Projects	Steering Committee meetings plus follow-up, project supervision, report editing and publication of projects	2100	28
Bushcare Support Consortium	Steering committee	200	5
Committees, submissions, meetings	Contributions to government policy and planning, sit on government standing and <i>ad hoc</i> committees, submissions	100	6
Field surveys – program planning	Planning work towards projects such as Annual Survey and grassy ecosystems	100	5
Field Surveys – field time	Various within NCSSA Projects	720	43
Monthly General Meetings and AGM	Expert volunteer speakers and educational talks at general meetings plus organisation of meetings	200	15
Management of NCSSA	Monthly committee meetings plus follow-up by Executive	1090	11
Management of staff and contracts	Management of contracts, staff, performance appraisal	100	4
Members Activities	Providing learning opportunities for members - organisation, publicity, expert volunteer leaders	100	10
Membership and office management	Membership lists, archiving, library cataloguing and other office assistance, public customer service	1250	8
Newsletter “ <i>Xanthopus</i> ”	preparation of articles, editing, layout, printing	360	6
Reports and publications	Editing, publication, distribution and promotion	105	4
On-ground biodiversity activities	Various within NCSSA Projects (eg Temperate woodlands – weeding)	200	2
<i>Walks With Nature</i> Program	5 four-hour walks each year – involving organisation, publicity, and 10 - 20 volunteer leaders each walk	650	50
Web page activities	Web page coordinator updates	60	2
	VOLUNTARY TOTAL HOURS	7335	about 199*
Volunteer hours equivalent to 4 FTE			
*Note: Many volunteers do more than one task so this column is equivalent to about 50 - 60 individuals.			

General NCSSA committee

The NCSSA is one of few voluntary organizations in the state with strong biodiversity credentials and great depth in understanding biodiversity issues both scientifically and in appropriate on-ground actions to achieve conservation outcomes. All NCSSA committee members have at least one degree in the biological sciences and most have extensive field experience. Members of the 2002-2003 Committee have expertise in botany, ornithology, ichthyology, native mammals, vegetation management, plant taxonomy, rangelands, arid lands, remnant vegetation, grassy ecosystems, biodiversity principles, flora and fauna survey work, habitats and habitat management, threatening processes, rare and threatened species, education and communication and financial and project management.

Committee members were Helen Vonow – Acting President (Vice President), Phil McNamara - Secretary, Misch Benito - Treasurer, Annie Bond - Assistant Secretary, and committee members Scott Field, Nicole Lewis, Ann Prescott, Peter Tucker and Scotte Wedderburn. Scott Field resigned and Amanda Camp filled the vacancy.

Steering committees

Each project is managed by a Steering Committee, with a specific set of outcomes and budget. These Steering Committees in 2002-2003 included Bushcare Consortium, Conservation of Temperate Woodlands, Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges, Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of Upper South East of SA, Conservation of Grassy Ecosystems of Mid North of SA, Mokota Conservation Park – Biodiversity Survey invertebrate component, Mokota Conservation Park vegetation monitoring project Year 3, NCSSA Survey 2002 - Biodiversity of grasslands of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges, NCSSA Survey 2001 – Beetaloo Valley Biological Survey, Silky tea-tree and cutting grass protection project, *Stop Bushland Weeds* revision project, Tangari Reserve Vertebrate Survey, brochure and Stationary update, Conservation Biology Grant, Finance Committee, Members activities sub-committee, NCSSA display and website, Walks with Nature, and the *Xanthopus* newsletter.

Increasing involvement in project work with community groups has continued to be an emphasis of the Society. The survey of grasslands of eastern flanks of Mount Lofty Ranges involved working in partnership with community groups (Eastern Hills & Murray Plains Catchment Group, Goolwa to Wellington LAP, and the Field Naturalists Society of SA Mammal Club), local landholders and approximately 40 volunteers.

E. Sound administrative and financial base for the Society

At the Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield Street, Adelaide, the Society and the Conservation Council of SA jointly own the land and building in the proportion of 30:70. This included a mortgage to the Government of South Australia up to May 2003 when the Minister for Environment, the Honourable John Hill, handed over the freehold title to the property. The Society is most grateful to the State Government for the forgiving of this mortgage. Building expenses such as the Council rates and electricity are apportioned to the NCSSA and CCSA.

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At a strategic planning in January 2003 it was decided to assign funds to review the management and activities of the Society. To this end it decided to appoint an additional part-time staff member as General Manager to update systems within the organisation and carry out this review.

The financial reports were developed by Raelene Telfer and Elizabeth Lonie on Excel Spreadsheets. Salary and fund transfers are arranged through BankSA Business-on-line on the web. New and longer-standing volunteers contributed a variety of specialised skills in the office. The Administrator coordinated the work of these volunteers. The NCSSA has dedicated individuals who perform administrative tasks that make the Society work well.

Trevor Garnett maintained the NCSSA website www.ncssa.asn.au in which member's events and *Walks with Nature* were advertised to the wider public; this website was comprehensively upgraded during the year. Job descriptions of three positions with the Society were posted on our website for applicants, saving many hours for the administrator.

Staff and project officers

Current NCSSA staff and project officers are three part-time paid from competitive tender for NHT project (Bushcare Support) and nine part-time paid from competitive grant monies. The Society wishes to express its gratitude to these staff and project officers for their continued excellent work and commitment. The NCSSA also acknowledges the support of the Federal Government Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO) in funding the position of the Administration Officer.

F. To raise awareness of NCSSA objectives, publications, and activities

Our eye-catching display promoting the types of activities that underpin the NCSSA for use at events such as celebrations, shows, and field days helps to explain the strengths of the Society in quality active work in biodiversity and nature conservation. Panels cover major habitats and the main activities of the Society in conserving, protecting, educating, influencing, participating and volunteering. Our Society was promoted when volunteers took the Society display boards to the Australian Plant Society Sale, Murray Plains Show and the Students for Sustainability Conference and Bushcare Workshops.

Articles in the Greening Australia (SA), Trees for Life and in *Ecovoice* magazines have promoted our Society and its activities.

G. To cooperate with existing organisations with similar aims

The Society is a member of the Conservation Council, and through it links with other organisations with similar aims. The Bushcare Support Consortium, in which the Nature Conservation Society of SA worked in partnership with Greening Australia and Trees for Life, provided delivery of services to rural communities, with NHT funding.

Our Society works on many projects in partnership with government departments and a variety of other organisations. These include the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Conservation Council of South Australia, the Threatened Species Network, the Wilderness Society, the South Australian Ornithological Association (Birds SA), the Field Naturalists Society of South Australia, the South Australian Herpetology Group and other local community conservation organisations and tertiary institutions. The Society has much in common with other environmentally focused organisations, and there are informal links with many of them at the committee and staff levels.

The society is trialing a reciprocal one-year concession membership with Trees for Life – the aim is to provide a compatible and logical extension to members of Trees for Life to participate in a wider range of biodiversity activities and issues than undertaken by TFL, and to provide options for more practical on-ground activities for NCSSA members.

Highlights for the Year

- Realising ownership of the 120 Wakefield Street building, with the assistance of the State Government.
- Planning workshop and establishing criteria for the proposed part-time General Manager.
- Continued success in achieving competitive grants for a wide range of NCSSA programs and projects.
- Continuing strong input into government policies, procedures and legislative changes, particularly the integrated natural resource management proposals.
- First rate achievements of the Bushcare program in education and assisting in biodiversity outcomes.
- Upgrading of electronic administration, and the use of the NCSSA webpage for advertising information, grants, and paid and voluntary positions.
- Increasing involvement in project work with community groups and in partnerships, and closer affiliation with the Biology Society and Trees for Life.
- Successful launch of the new NCSSA Conservation Biology Grants for student research projects.
- Loyal and hard-working staff, volunteers, and committee members.

Summary

The Society continues its aim of working towards good biodiversity protection and management. Specific projects and campaigns fall within this program of major strategic goals. In all our work the NCSSA has stuck to the principle that the key to the conservation of South Australia's biodiversity is good science and education of the community.

Helen Vonow
Acting President, Nature Conservation Society of SA
August 2003

General Meetings

1st Thursday of the Month

**at the Conservation Centre Meeting Rooms
120 Wakefield St, Adelaide**

8pm (front door open at 7.45)

2nd October **Dave Taylor, Threatened Plants Officer, Department for Environment and Heritage 'Nationally threatened plants on Kangaroo Island'.**

6th November **Sue Gehrig, Ph.D. student, University of Adelaide 'Willows suck...water!'**

Friday 5th December

End of year celebration

5.30pm Botanic Park

(south-eastern corner, opposite the Conservatory gate)

NCSSA NEWSLETTER: XANTHOPUS

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