

# PAIWALLA NEWS

## January 2018



### VALE BILL



It is with sadness we announce the passing of Bill Mountain. Bill passed away suddenly on 4th Jan aged 85 while following one of his great passions: travelling, and I imagine doing a bit of bird watching as well.

Bill has been visiting and birdwatching in the area of Paiwalla since 1965. He has been a familiar figure over the years spending many hours walking the levees with his binos. Bill was also responsible for building, single-handedly, all the raised walkways around the ends of gates on the levee and has always shown a keen interest in all things 'Paiwalla' attending many of our functions and AGMs. A true 'Friend of Paiwalla'.

Paiwalla featured several times at his funeral service and the family mentioned that Bill's wish was that his ashes be spread at Paiwalla. That will take place some time in the future.

We will miss his presence.

Steve Scown

### AGM

The AGM for last financial year 2016/2017 was held on the 29th November, 2017 with an attendance of 19 persons. The discussions were comprehensive and positive. The minutes of the meeting and the financial statement for the year are available to members on the website

### FERAL CONTROL



Our friendly 'hunter', Richard De Nichilolo, visited Paiwalla again in November. The wetland was closed for the weekend and notification was placed on the gates and announced on our website.

There was evidence of cats, foxes and goats. One goat was observed at close range and is no longer a threat to our trees.

### NRM EDUCATION DAY

Twenty-one grades 5,6, & 7 students from 6 schools attended an education day presented by Natural Resources of SA on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2017.

Danielle Dutschke, Angela Breeding, David Cheshire, and Kurtis Madigan of NRM conducted the education and together with a Paiwalla representative spent the day with the students.

Subjects covered were -: Frogs, Birds, Water bugs and Planting trees.

### GREEN DONATIONS



We have been fortunate to receive two healthy donations for the planting of trees. One was to offset the donor's carbon footprint from all the flying he does, and the other is from an English visitor who just likes Paiwalla.

These are in addition to the 500 trees we have to plant for the volunteer project we were successful with last year. The trees will go in around April/May/June.



Workers @ Paiwalla - our faithful tractor has a new set of tyres



## BIO BLITZ and BAT MONITORING

The results from these two activities are still outstanding.

The BioBlitz, conducted by staff from the Natural Resources Management Board (NRM) was held on the 2nd November and had 20-25 attendees. The bat monitoring was carried out on the nights of the 3rd, 7th and 15th of November.

One disturbing finding by David Cheshire of NRM was the incidence of carp in the wetland. There are carp screens on the water inlet, and the inlet has not been open since June. A possible cause is that a carp screen may have dropped but we will need to wait for the river level to fall before we can identify the entrance point of the carp. Following this we may need to drain the wetland completely to eliminate the carp and install a new screen on the inlet if required.

This drying of the wetland would then occur two to three years earlier than planned.

## TURTLES

Claudia Santori, a PhD student from Sydney University will be commencing a survey project at Paiwalla on 5<sup>th</sup> February. She will do daily visits to the wetland until approx. 20<sup>th</sup> April. Below is a brief summary of the project that Claudia has submitted.

*"In the past, freshwater turtles were estimated to have a very important role in the Murray River, scavenging up to 430 tonnes of carrion per day (Thompson, 1983). For the last four decades, turtles in South Australia have been greatly declining due to several threats (e.g. vehicle collisions, foxes). There is potential that the disappearance of turtles could be highly problematic for the Murray River, which could start being affected by algal blooms and degraded water quality due to the absence of many turtles eating carrion. Therefore, research on this issue is of great importance to ensure the conservation of the Murray River and its associated wetlands' ecosystems. As part of my PhD at the University of Sydney, I am planning a field experiment to quantify the scavenging role of freshwater turtles. I will be working in the wetlands of Paiwalla and Riverglades. Starting in February 2018, I will place a few fish carcasses into the wetlands, each inside a small enclosure that will either be accessible or not accessible to freshwater turtles. I will monitor the fish carrion decomposition rate, and any perturbation in water quality parameters. I am expecting the carcasses accessible to turtles to disappear more quickly, not affecting water quality. The data collected will permit the assessment of fish carcass decomposition rate change against time, and its effects on water quality with and without turtles scavenging.*

This project is supported by the Nature Foundation SA."

## TIM LOWE Visit



Tim Lowe, popular science author and regular contributor to The Australian Geographic was shown around Paiwalla by 'Ranges to Rivers' District Manager, Sarah Lance. Tim is author of the 'Feral Future', 'The New Nature' and 'Where Song Began'. Tim expressed an interest in seeing and hearing the story of Paiwalla as one of the key sites that he would like to experience in the SAMDB. After a short walk and a long talk, he suggested we look out for his next book. *Watch this space!*



## FENCING PROJECT AT SUNNYSIDE

Thursday activities have focused on repairing and replacing the fence at the downstream end of Sunnyside. There are still a few more pieces of wood to be bolted on and a coat of paint added but it is keeping the bikes out. We made application for funding for this project but were unsuccessful.