



# Sentinel



"FRIENDS OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK ARE COMMITTED TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK"

## GRANTS AND FUNDING

FoAICP were finally successful in our quest for grant funding. After applying earlier in the year, we were awarded a DEWNR on-park Volunteer Support Grant for \$5000, to use towards transport by helicopter to the island in 2017. This will fund 2 one-way trips, providing safe equipment and people transport to the island. Return transport will still need to be covered by our own funds. So further fundraising and member subscriptions are still vital to the environmental and heritage management of the island.



## 20 YEARS LATER - A VISIT TO ALTHORPE ISLAND CONSERVATION PARK

*Photos and article by Michiel Lucieer, FoAICP Secretary*

We began as a group on September 18th, 1996 and visited the island over 70 times and once again the Friends of Althorpe Island arrived on October 25th and departed November 2nd, 2016.

I arrived as a Keeper in 1989 and have maintained a 27 year involvement and you may be able to imagine the many changes observed, including with our community group. Many people have been involved and today we have a healthy, adventurous group that congregate on Althorpe Island and share the many exceptional experiences.

Our maximum quota of eight people (charter boat capacity) left Marion Bay around 1pm on October 25th and arrived just after 2pm, following a smooth journey with very calm bay. We had all afternoon to haul our gear/supplies up the 370 meters zigzag path up to a height of 90 meters. With a bit of huffing and puffing and the number of trips varied from 4 (Andy) to 2 trips, which applied to most of us, we eventually settled in the cottage. Our cottage, the former Head Keeper's residence was in good clean order and once unpacked our induction session discussed hazards of this coastal island.

It is imperative that we discuss the responsibility of being on Althorpe Island whilst living amongst a lighthouse station that is 137 years old.

The weather during our stay had a mixture of conditions, gale force winds, rain and sunshine and in between the sunsets or sunrises, the 'island life' provided signs of a nourishing environment. The fresh growth of vegetation, birds of prey a plenty, shearwaters maze spectacle and around the 3.2km circumference, coastal life had very healthy existence (eg. Australian Sea Lion count totalled 45). How often does one see 90 meters above sea level a pair of Sea Eagles, Osprey, Spotted Harrier and the new identification of the Australian Hobby, also a pair.



FoAICP Volunteers: from left standing, Nick Humphris, Andy Mills, Peter Hill, Barbara Colquhoun, Frances Watkins, Michiel Lucieer. Sitting - Colin Colquhoun and James Von Doussa.

## 20 YEARS LATER - ALTHORPE ISLAND OCTOBER VISIT

For 20 years the Friends have concentrated the removal of the prominent African Boxthorn and their numbers have reduced and inclusive to a total eradication goal, we also focus on the Tree-Mallow, Common Mallow, Cape Weed. The natural environment is becoming more noticeable but a closer look, eradication of weeds such as the Tree & Common Mallow and Cape Weed need to be continued and the benefits of our weed eradication program continues to grow. Tree Mallow 282, Common mallow 1642, Boxthorn 19, Cape weed (3 full feed bags).

South Australia's maritime history began a year after the settlement in 1836 and as the years passed on, Keepers were eventually replaced with technological guided aids. I was involved with the transition of 'manned' to 'automation' in 1991 and really appreciated that Althorpe Island's heritage listed tower had a lantern room (exterior/interior) revamp by the Australian Maritime Services during our stay. (Althorpe Island's daytime occupation was 13 people, 3 more than during the first year of operations in 1879).

Althorpe Island's rich maritime history involves deaths at sea and we attended to three grave/memorial sites by painting, etc.: Peterson 1838, J. Garbis 1890, D. Johnson 1937. There are three heritage listed cottages, now 137 years that had accommodated over 150 Keeper's and the 'care-takers', members of the Friends of Althorpe Island and DEWNR staff. As one could imagine, the condition of these cottages vary with the exception of cottage 1. Over the 20 years, we have maintained, improved the cottage and adapted to solar hot water and electricity. (Why fill the kettle full for one cuppa? Replacement gas bottles need to be transported by helicopter and that delivery has a price!).

So, we were involved with cooking and eating together with our wind generator providing the amps during the evening winds. We shared some creative dinners and as I sat at the table, recognised we had some multitasked friends here. Multitasking happens on the island. Some of us are replacing gates or involved with tank repair, whilst others are experiencing some spectacular views during the weed eradication doings. Some of us were involved with a project that would help preserve the exterior of cottages 2 and 3. We prepared and painted the west walls of both cottages and during our 8 day stay, the comfort of our residence was made easier with various sticky doors being attended to and now we have a non-slamming fly screen door!

I find the journey back to the mainland with M. Graham (Marion Bay Fishing) on November 2nd identical to other departures and the sense of thanks for the opportunity goes a long way, along with our memories, we share as we make our way back to Marion Bay and the island became smaller.

### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Cleared path from succulents,
- Re-erected the east fence, replaced part of south fence & back gate erected of cottage 1,
- Painted a section of the shower area,
- Various doors in cottage 1 made easier to close,
- Replaced a fly screen,
- Slotted entrance board attached (east side cottage 1),
- West wall of cottage 2, 3 painted, south side of cottage 3 painted (one coat),
- Fixed a window in cottage 3,
- Rope locker roof hole fixed,
- Brush-cutting pathway,
- Plugged hole in large fibre glass tank near workshop,
- Cleared vegetation around tank on west of workshop,
- Burned old weed vegetation both incinerator & ground),
- Garage door easy to close (fixed),
- Tractor works & running sufficiently,
- Beach clean-up,
- Painted Peterson, Garbis and Johnson graves,
- Little Penguin research,
- Boxthorn control and Tree mallow, common mallow,
- Prepared old lead batteries to be removed from island,
- Fixed portable fire fighting back-pack,
- Secured cladding on west side of workshop,
- Organised recycling to be taken off the island,
- Sea Eagle nest sighted with one sitting on nest,
- Seal Lion counts,
- Added to plant list: almond tree, passion fruit, melaleuca and grape vine,
- Cottage 2 garden cleaning,
- Environmental check in various sections of the island (shore-line & plateau).



Photo: FoAICP Volunteers removing tree mallows.

## ALTHORPE ISLAND'S EASTERN OSPREY



*Photo: Eastern Osprey*

One of the rarer visitors to Althorpe Island is the Eastern, or White-headed Osprey (sometimes known as the "Sea Hawk"). This beautiful raptor can sometimes be seen along the coastline of the island soaring in the breezes or even sitting on the jetty poles.

The Osprey, together with its more celebrated cousin, the White-Bellied Sea eagle, are considered "indicator species"; that is species whose breeding health indicates the environmental health of coastal regions as a whole.

The Osprey is widely distributed around the top half of Australia, but is isolated and listed as endangered in South Australian coastal waters (and the Murray River), where approximately 60 breeding pairs are thought to exist. The population is at the moment stable, but clearly has declined since the 19th century, and is under threat from habitat clearing. They breed in spring and early summer.

In northern Australia, the Osprey nests in trees, but in S.A. they may nest on coastal cliffs, and the large nests made of sticks are more than obvious. The S.A. population of ospreys live for up to 20 years.

The Eastern Osprey has been a frequent visitor to Althorpe Island Conservation Park, with at least one breeding pair present. A highlight for some of the group on the last trip was observing the Eastern Osprey pair land on the crane at the end of the jetty, a rare close encounter. During the 20 plus years, nests have been seen in the Althorpe Island's calcified sand stone cliffs, the rocky outcrop, the Pareoras and the southern end of the island close to the archway.

*Article by FoAICP Member, Peter Barrien*

## CELEBRATING FOAICP 20 YEARS VOLUNTEER SERVICE



*DEWNR Ranger, Aaron Smith and FoAICP Secretary Michiel Lucieer.*

A Certificate of Appreciation was gratefully received by FoAICP Secretary Michiel Lucieer from DEWNR, at the October 2016 committee meeting held at the Belair National Park. DEWNR gave recognition to the FoAICP's 20 years of volunteer efforts in the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park.

## ALTHORPE ISLAND OCT/NOV VISIT - A FIRST ENCOUNTER

I was privileged to be invited to the October /November Althorpe Island trip, and was looking forward to visiting a remote little known destination. Approaching the Island by boat was a feature, especially passing the small rugged islands on the way. Althorpe itself exceeded my expectations with its rugged beauty and abundant wildlife, and the many walks around the coastline were the highlight for me. The rock formations, caves and wild surf surpassed what I have seen on the south coast of Kangaroo Island. Thankfully I managed to get up at predawn and witness the awesome spectacle of the Mutton birds taking flight on the last morning of our trip. A wonderful experience all round!

*FoAICP Volunteer Member, Peter Hill*

# FOAICP MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL JAN 1ST, 2017

*Andy Mills, FoAICP Treasurer*

Your membership of the Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park is highly valued by the committee, and it is now time to renew memberships for 2017. With uncertainty over grant funding in the future for ongoing travel, the revenue we generate is our last resort for ensuring we have access to the island. Please consider making a donation and/or including a bequest in your will - sounds drastic, but as we have shown, we can make a little bit go a long way! Given we have an annual membership renewal date of 1st January every year, the committee recently passed a motion which excludes new members from needing to rejoin if they have joined in the last three months of any year.

## Membership Fees & Payment Options

Individual Membership - \$15  
Family Membership - \$25

Direct deposit:  
Name: Friends of Althorpe Island  
BSB: 105063, Acc: 025883440  
(Please reference your name)

Or mail cheques to:  
Andrew Mills, Treasurer FoAICP  
PO Box 148, Ashton S.A. 5137

## IMPRESSIONS OF ALTHORPE ISLAND VEGETATION

*Article and photos by Barbara and Colin Colquhoun*



*Apium prostratum*



*Leucophyta brownii*



*Podolepis rugata var. Litoralis*

It comes as no surprise to anyone who has visited the island in the last few years that it is a beautiful place with a covering of low shrubs and grasses ringed by a rugged coastline. The vegetation has largely returned to native species with the efforts of the FoAICP the last twenty years. The rocky cliffs, up to 90 meters high, which circle the whole of the 91.4 hectare island, are particularly colourful as they are clothed in plants from green to silver to red and that is only the leaves. There are areas that have been disturbed where introduced species have naturalised, in particular the runway area where common mallow is being tackled. Colin and I have only been on two volunteer trips, both in 2016, but we have been told of the past widespread occurrence of boxthorn and tree mallow. We are in much admiration of past volunteer efforts because these species now only occur as youngish plants widespread as they continue to germinate from seed reserves. These can be successfully removed if regular bush weeding continues.

In total nearly 100 species of plants have been identified, of these just over half are native. The non-natives are largely near the three houses and paths, however some are widespread and common such as the ice-plant.

Walking around the rocky coast and cliffs reveals some special plants. There are patches of native sea celery (*Apium prostratum*) which early mariners ate to supply vitamin C etc. It is growing on sandy soil between rocks on cliffs in the spray zone-amazing to see! Also on some of the steepest sites there are patches of beautiful silver cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*) but the most impressive plants, visible in spring, were the startlingly large yellow daisy flowers produced on insignificant clumps of leaves belonging to *Podolepis rugata var. litoralis* which is only found in coastal S.A. We appreciate the wild, unspoilt beauty of Althorpe Island and want to share some photos with you (above).

# FOAICP NOMINATED FOR AWARDS

The 2016 Friends of Parks Forum was hosted by a consortium of Southern Vales friends groups. The Forum Dinner was held at Club Marion at which awards were presented to groups with outstanding projects in various areas. FoAICP was invited to send delegates as we had been nominated for two awards by Aaron Smith, Head Ranger for Park Operations at Innes National Park. These were Habitat Restoration and Protection for which there were three nominations and Wildlife Protection and Recovery with two.

We didn't receive either award on the night but just the fact that our name was up there with two of the four awards raises our profile amongst the Friends groups and DEWNR! I think we could have given Cultural and Structural Heritage a go too but we weren't aware that Aaron was putting us in for these awards and looking at the profiles for the projects that won compared to ours we probably could have worked with Aaron to improve ours.

Five of the committee attended and the organisers ensured that we didn't stick to our group by putting everyone on different tables. This gave us a chance to further spread the word about our activities and in fact one of us sat with the head of Friends of Parks and another with the head of DEWNR. I was next to a lady who was in both Friends of Gawler Ranges and Friends of Mound Springs in the outback. Most people were very interested that we had been able to access a remote island for 20 years by sea and air.

As this is a biennial event the next forum in 2018 will be hosted by a consortium of Yorke Peninsula groups and Michiel and I have put our names forward to be on the steering committee so you will be hearing more about the 2018 event.

*Nick Humphris, FoAICP President*

## WELCOME NEW FOAICP MEMBERS



Tim Hamilton & Karen Bartlett, Peter Young, Kane Spooner, Frances Watkins, Robert Cook, Stefan Caddy-Retalic & Emrys Leitch and Peter & Erica Hill. Welcome back Jan Dempster and Barbara & Colin Colquhoun.



# APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

### Benefits of Membership

Membership will entitle you to the rare opportunity to visit Althorpe Islands and contribute to the preservation of the environmental and cultural heritage of this unique lighthouse station, as well as being kept informed of the groups' activities by receiving regular newsletters (The Sentinel) and enjoying the privilege of being an office bearer on the Committee of the Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park which oversees the interests of this diverse and dynamic group.

### Our Philosophy

Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park are committed to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Althorpe Islands.

I/We would like to subscribe to **Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park**

Name of individual(s):

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Address: .....

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..... Postcode: .....

Telephone: .....

Email: .....

Please find enclosed membership fee of \$ .....

I/We wish to donate \$ ..... Date: .. / .. / ..

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES:

\$15 for individuals 18 years and over

\$25 per family (up to 2 adults with children under 18)

Please make Payment to:

FRIENDS OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK

or use INTERNET BANKING,

name: Friends of Althorpe Island

bsb: 105 063, acc: 025883440

Send address application to:

Treasurer/Membership Officer,

Mr. Andrew Mills, PO Box 148, Ashton, S.A. 5137

Please note: Receipt will be returned with Newsletter.