

SA Veg. on the Edge

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The joint threatened plant newsletter of the Threatened Species Network (SA), Dept for Environment and Heritage (SA) and the Threatened Plant Action Group (SA).

Supported by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, South Australian Government and WWF-Australia.

Volume 7, No. 1, 2007



Acacia enterocarpa

Recovery Plan for 12 Threatened Orchids in the Lofty Block Region released

Since 1998, the Lofty Block Threatened Orchid Recovery Project (LBTORP) has been implementing recovery actions for threatened orchids in the Lofty Block region of SA. In late 2006, a draft recovery plan was completed for the following twelve species:

- Caladenia argocalla* (White Beauty Spider-orchid) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. behrii* (Pink-lipped Spider-orchid) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. gladiolata* (Bayonet Spider-orchid) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. sp. 'Brentwood'* (Ghost Spider-orchid) – Nominated as CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. macroclavia* (Large-club Spider-orchid) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. rigida* (White Spider-orchid) - EPBC Act – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- C. woolcockiorum* (Woolcock's Spider-orchid) – VULNERABLE (EPBC Act)
- C. xantholeuca* (Flinders Ranges Spider-orchid) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- Pterostylis bryophila* (Hindmarsh Valley Greenhood) – CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- P. cucullata* (Leafy Greenhood) – VULNERABLE (EPBC Act)
- P. despectans* (Lowly Greenhood) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
- P. sp. 'Halbury'* (Halbury Greenhood) – ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)

The recovery plan describes each of these twelve species in detail including their morphology, distribution, population size, habitat, and ecology. Importantly, it also outlines the threats to each species and prescribes recovery objectives, targets, and actions for the next five years.

The following general recovery strategies were identified for each species in the recovery plan.

- Determine population size and trends.
- Determine current extent of occurrence and number of sub-populations.
- Mitigate threats to sub-populations.

- Protect and manage habitat critical to survival.
- Preserve germplasm and mycorrhizal fungi in vitro.
- Determine and conserve the genetic diversity.
- Determine the feasibility of translocation and implement translocation proposals.
- Undertake research related to the species.
- Inform, encourage and support landholders and the community.



Recently discovered endemic *Caladenia sp. 'Brentwood'*
(Photo: J. Quarmby)

Recovery actions will be implemented for each of the twelve species in accordance with the recovery plan over the next five years by the LBTORP. Community involvement is recognised as a key factor in the successful delivery of on-ground recovery actions.

Fact sheets and a webpage that provide up to date information on the program were recently completed, view at: www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened.html.

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Threatened Flora Genetics Study

An exciting new research collaboration has commenced in South Australia, which we believe will answer important management questions for some of our threatened plants in this State. SA Dept for Environment Heritage (DEH) Head of Science, Dr Andy Lowe, has negotiated with Adelaide University to begin a study that will examine the DNA of eight of our threatened plant taxa.

The species identified for study are the: Monarto Mintbush (*Prostanthera eurybioides*), Large Club Spider-orchid (*Caladenia [syn. Arachnorchis] macroclavia*), Fat-leaved Wattle (*Acacia pinguiifolia*), *Cassinia tegulata*, Beyeria Push-pea (*Pultenaea insularis*), Hindmarsh Valley Greenhood (*Pterostylis bryophila*), Silver Daisy (*Olearia pannosa ssp pannosa*), and *Daviesia sejugata*.

Adelaide University will be providing a post-doctoral position to conduct the study. Molecular markers will be developed for the different taxa, using a process known as Amplified Fragment Polymorphism Analysis (AFLP).



Monarto mintbush (Photo: M Jusaitis)

The study has three main aims:

- To assess the genetic differentiation between remnant populations of certain species, this is important when considering translocation between populations separated by large distances. Such populations will have had no genetic transfer between them for a considerable length of time, and there is the potential for out breeding depression. Monarto Mintbush is one such example. It is found in two disjunct locations separated by more than 160 km of unsuitable habitat: Monarto near Murray Bridge, and Mt Monster near Keith. The northern population is in decline with little or no recruitment, whereas the southern population is stable but small and isolated. The DNA study will assist decisions on whether to introduce plants grown from Mt Monster seed to locations around Monarto.

- To assess the genetic health of endangered remnant populations of some species and the likely influence of genetic factors on future population survival, this will help determine why some populations are in decline and not others. For example, the Fat-leaved Wattle populations from around Finnis are small and declining compared to the larger more stable Eyre Peninsula populations. Has the gene pool of the fragmented Finnis populations become so small as to be contributing to population decline? Or is the decline due to other environmental factors? If the Finnis populations are to be boosted by plantings, should the material for these plantings be local or would Eyre Peninsula material be more suitable?

- To assess the taxonomic status of some individuals that are otherwise difficult to identify. For example, the recently described *Cassinia tegulata* is only confirmed at two sites in the SE of SA, although two populations of what appear to be *Cassinia* hybrids also exist. One of these is on the Fleurieu Peninsula, where *Cassinia tegulata* is not known to occur. Are these other populations in fact *C. tegulata* hybrids, or aberrant forms of *C. tegulata*, or hybrids of two other species of *Cassinia*? These are important questions in deciding whether to commit limited resources for management of these populations.

Threatened plant project officers have already begun collecting sample material from populations of interest in the South-East, Lower Murray, Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Yorke Peninsula, Mid-North and Eyre Peninsula. Genetic analysis will commence in October and a report is due Autumn 2008.

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New population of the endangered Spiny Daisy discovered at Telowie, SA

Until recently, Spiny Daisy (*Acanthocladium dockeri*) was considered to be one of South Australia's extinct plants. Its surprise rediscovery near Laura in the Mid-North of South Australia in 1999 (see *SA Veg. on the Edge Vol. 2 No. 2*) triggered a flurry of searching for further populations in the area, resulting in the discovery of two more populations near Laura, and a third near Brinkworth. Genetic studies showed that each of these populations was clonal, reproducing vegetatively by root suckering (Jusaitis and Adams 2005). Essentially, this meant that only four genetically distinct individuals remained in the wild!

In January this year, while driving along a dirt road near Telowie, Anne Brown (local Greening Australia identity and member of the Spiny Daisy Recovery Team) spotted a flash of grey foliage on the roadside.



Roadside population at Telowie, July 2007 (Photo: M. Jusaitis)

Backing up to investigate, she was amazed to find that she had stumbled across yet another previously unknown population of the Spiny Daisy. This fifth population lies about 30 km north-west of its nearest neighbouring population at Laura. It is located about a kilometre east of the Telowie Gorge Conservation Park, and is the only population known from the western side of the Southern Flinders Ranges.

The new population (referred to as the Telowie population) is the smallest of the five, containing a mere 75 plants (ramets) spread over an area of approximately 90 m². Most of the daisies occur along the roadside near the grader line, but plants also extend onto the banks of a floodway/drain that cuts through the southern end of the population. The soil is of sandy loam structure, contrasting with the heavier clay loams of the other populations. Average annual rainfall is similar to that of the Laura sites (~450 mm).

The roadside vegetation at Telowie is dominated by the shrubs *Bursaria spinosa*, *Acacia ligulata* and *Rhagodia parabolica*. During winter and spring, the site is overrun with Soursob (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) and Wards Weed (*Carrichtera annua*), and there are also scattered occurrences of Wild Mustard (*Sisymbrium orientale*) and Wild Oats (*Avena barbata*).

Preliminary observations indicate that flower heads in this population fail to set viable seed. Previously, seed-set in the other populations was found to be extremely low, probably due to low pollen germinability (Jusaitis and Adams 2005). Allozyme analysis showed that this population is also clonal and represents a fifth distinctive genetic lineage within the species. Each of the five clones displays one or more alleles not found in the other four, and all display comparable levels of genetic divergence (M. Adams, pers. comm. 2007).

A photopoint has been set up to monitor the population, and attempts are being made to vegetatively propagate Spiny Daisies from Telowie to initiate an ex situ collection. A site action plan is currently being written by the Spiny Daisy Recovery Team.

Reference:

Jusaitis, M. & Adams, M. (2005). Conservation implications of clonality and limited sexual reproduction in the endangered shrub *Acanthocladium dockeri* (Asteraceae). *Australian Journal of Botany* 53: 535-544.

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Acanthocladium dockeri at Telowie showing proximity of plants to grader line. Note heavy infestation of Soursob (Photo: M. Jusaitis)

Saving threatened flora in the Northern and Yorke Region

Hi, my name is Anthony Pieck and since December 2006 I have been working as the Threatened Flora Ecologist for SA Dept for Environment and Heritage's (DEH) Northern and Yorke Region.

I have previously worked in various roles for DEH, starting off as a member of the seasonal fire crew in Cleland Conservation Park, before becoming a field officer in Belair National Park. My most recent role was as a field assistant for the Tammar Wallaby Reintroduction Program in Innes National Park.

At university I studied Conservation and Park Management. In 2001, I wrote my honours thesis on the distribution and habitat use of the Common Brushtail Possum in the Yellow-tail Black-Cockatoo breeding area of Koppio Hills on the Eyre Peninsula.

My main role as the Threatened Flora Ecologist for the Northern and Yorke Region is to coordinate the recovery teams and on-ground activities for the critically endangered Spiny Daisy (*Acanthocladium dockeri*) and the endangered Spalding Blown Grass (*Lachnagrotis limitanea*).

There are only five Spiny Daisy populations left in the world, and they're all in the Mid North of South Australia. Spalding Blown Grass is also endemic to the Mid-North of South Australia, with only four natural populations known to exist – two of these containing less than three plants.

Recently I've been busy planning translocations for each species. Translocation involves taking cuttings or seeds from existing populations, propagating them in a controlled environment, and planting the resulting tubestock at new sites. The populations at the new sites then act as a back-up in case the existing populations fail to survive.

On World Environment Day, 5 June 2007, the Spiny Daisy was translocated to two new sites in the Mid-North. The first Spiny Daisy translocation took place in the morning at a roadside reserve between Caltowie and Stone Hut. One hundred tubestock, representing each of the existing Spiny Daisy populations, were planted at the site with help from year six and seven students from Laura Primary School. This was the first time tubestock from the different Spiny Daisy populations had been planted together. I am hoping the mixed-gene translocation will encourage cross-pollination, leading to a more genetically diverse and robust population.



Translocation, Laura Primary School (Photo: A. Pieck)

The second Spiny Daisy translocation took place in the afternoon at the Caltowie cemetery. Twenty-four Spiny Daisy plants sourced from the Rusty Cab population were planted at this site.

On 27 July 2007, the Spalding Blown Grass recovery team translocated the species to a Waterwatch site near Spalding Primary School. Children from the school helped by planting Spalding Blown Grass tubestock at the site. The site is within walking distance of the school, so the students will be able to track the progress of the plants over the coming months and years. It is fantastic to have school students involved in the recovery efforts for both the Spiny Daisy and Spalding Blown Grass. A big thank you must go out to the kids from the Laura and Spalding Primary Schools. I hope that having local schools involved will encourage wider community involvement in both

projects in the future and will bring lots of interest to the students.



Translocation, Spalding Primary School (Photo: A. Pieck)

The Spiny Daisy and Spalding Blown Grass recovery programs are supported by the Northern and Yorke Natural Resources Management Board, and the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust. The translocation projects are funded by a Threatened Species Network Community Grant.

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New protection for rare SA habitats

Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland and Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland have recently been listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.

The listings of two of South Australia's rarest habitats will mean greater responsibilities for some property owners, but also funding avenues for land management and conservation. Property owners wanting to restore or rehabilitate areas of either habitat can apply for grants of up to \$50,000 from the Envirofund or for TSN Community Grants, which are both part of the Natural Heritage Trust.

Properties affected by the grassland listing lie mostly between Clare and Peterborough in the state's mid-north, with some isolated patches in the surrounding districts. The biggest concentrations of the woodland are found in the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Mid-North Agricultural Region. Pockets can also be found from the southern Flinders Ranges to Lake Alexandria.

Work has already started on re-establishing areas of these species by removing weeds, reducing heavy grazing and re-planting by the Threatened Species

Network and the Threatened Plant Action Group (TPAG).

The EPBC Policy Statement 3.7 for the listing of Peppermint Box (*Eucalyptus odorata*) Grassy Woodland of South Australia and Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland of South Australia, can be viewed at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/peppermint-box-iron-grass-policy.html>



Iron-grass community, Mokota CP (Photo: VJ. Russell)

Project Pine Point – Neat Wattle (*Acacia rhetinocarpa*)

Yorke Peninsula is one of the richest agricultural areas in South Australia, and those who work the land can be justly proud of the way that such fine harvests can be gleaned from this rich environment. It has been extremely hard work though, and nobody can take that away from those who ventured into this area in those early days, to clear the land so that a living could be made from it. Over the years, vast tracts of land were cleared, and one can only imagine what the Yorke Peninsula might have looked like before.

The downside of land clearing is the significant loss of native species, and just as importantly, the habitat that native fauna depend on for food and shelter. One species that has been reduced to only a handful of individuals is the *Acacia rhetinocarpa*, or Neat Wattle.

The species found on Yorke Peninsula is one of the last strong-holds of this very rare wattle. It is not recorded outside of South Australia and is known in only two other restricted areas in this State. It has been recorded as endangered for the Yorke Peninsula region¹.

The Pine Point Project began back in June 1996, but prior to that, on an excursion with the Australian Plants Society (APS) to Innes National Park, we decided to search for *Acacia rhetinocarpa* and *Acacia enterocarpa*, knowing how rare both species are on Yorke Peninsula.



Acacia rhetinocarpa (Photo: J.Reid)

We eventually found the *A. rhetinocarpa* at a place where we stopped for lunch, which began the work that the Australian Plant Society (APS) Conservation of our Threatened Species (COOTS) Group and Threatened Plant Action Group (TPAG) continue to this day. A management plan was drawn up between the two groups, with a commitment to protect the existing specimens of only around 200 individuals, and to increase their numbers significantly.

Work began on weed reduction in the main reserve area (section 202) and the propagation of the many species to be planted throughout the site, especially the *A. rhetinocarpa*. Negotiations were made with the adjacent landholders to fence portions of their paddocks adjacent to the project to create buffer zones for section 202, and soon the project had enlarged quite significantly. This has enabled us to extend the range of the *A. rhetinocarpa* much further, protecting the species even more, because a bushfire could wipe out many specimens. A less concentrated population has a far greater chance of survival. We have noted scattered specimens as far as five kilometres from the main reserve area.

Each year we have five programmed weekends at the site, and that time is spent planting, doing weed removal, and collecting seed and cutting material. We also have an annual seed sowing day, where volunteers sow the seed in boxes and then baby-sit them at home until the seedlings are large enough to plant out, generally after the first rains in May/June. Seed is collected around the last few weeks of the year, and I normally head over to Yorke Peninsula the day after Christmas, and in most cases will collect significant amounts of seed. Seed is encased in a sticky resinous pod, and will stick to your fingers and clothes. It makes for an interesting time when trying to extract the seed from the pod, ready for planting.

As with other *Acacia* species, the seed is soaked in very hot water for a day or two, before it can be planted. It can also be scarified (e.g. scratch/break the testa with sandpaper) because moisture is the trigger that makes the embryo swell, and begin to germinate.

In the right conditions, the seedling begins to emerge (around 14 days normally) and quickly develops. Once the seedling reaches 15-20 cm, it can be planted into its final position. By the second year, it has begun to flower, and seed is then being produced.



A. rhetinocarpa seeds (Photo: J.Reid)

A. rhetinocarpa is an erect, compact and rounded shrub up to 1.5 metres in height. It is a very easy species to grow, and in its natural environment it has adapted so well, it will survive the harshest of conditions, surprisingly better than even the Eucalypt species. The future looks much brighter for *A. rhetinocarpa* now. With continued work at the site, and the education of the community about the value of this small piece of remnant vegetation on the Yorke Peninsula, I believe that all who have been involved in saving this species should be extremely proud.

For more information about the project:
<http://homepages.picknowl.com.au/jreid/>

Reference:

Green, PS (1993) *Threatened Plants of YP*.

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Restoring biodiversity on the Hindmarsh Tiers

The Hindmarsh Tiers Biodiversity Group has been working since 2004 to protect and manage remnant networks of native vegetation along the Hindmarsh Tiers and Hindmarsh River, in the southern Mount Lofty Ranges. This biodiversity partnership has taken an asset-based approach to coordinating on-ground actions to restore habitat for threatened species and ecological communities as well as significant remnants of native vegetation on public and private land.

The Hindmarsh Tiers project area is characterised by relatively high remnancy, spanning from Peeralilla Hill in the east to Strangways Hill in the west, taking in the Mount Billy Conservation Park, Hindmarsh Falls Reserve, and the Hindmarsh Tiers SA Water Reserve.

The project area straddles the hundreds of Encounter Bay and Goolwa, which contain less than 16% and 12% native vegetation respectively.

Most remaining native vegetation occurs along the river, ranges and roadsides. Native vegetation communities include a mosaic of shrubby eucalypt forests, grassy woodlands, riparian ecosystems, and Fleurieu Peninsula swamps. Threatened species and ecological communities being recovered through the project are listed below.

Pterostylis bryophila (Hindmarsh Valley greenhood) - CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
Correa calycina (Hindmarsh correa) - VULNERABLE (EPBC Act)
Glycine latrobeana (Clover glycine) - VULNERABLE (EPBC Act)
Leptospermum lanigerum shrubland over ferns & sedgeland (Fleurieu Peninsula swamps) - CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (EPBC Act)
Galaxias previpinnis (Climbing Galaxias) - VULNERABLE (NPW Act)
Galaxias olidus (Mountain Galaxias) - RARE (NPW Act)

On-ground work implemented to date includes: the construction of stock-proof fencing to protect remnant vegetation from grazing, regeneration of native species habitats, and rehabilitation of riparian areas. Extensive infestation of willow along the Hindmarsh River has been reduced through in-situ stem injection. Invasion by serious environmental weeds including blackberry, broom, sweet pittosporum, bridal-creeper, and watsonia is being managed at priority sites to reduce competitive displacement of native flora.

The project is assisting broader conservation programs in the region through increasing the area of remnant vegetation across all land tenures being actively managed for biodiversity conservation, and by upscaling control measures for weed species of national significance (WONS).

Vegetation and plant surveys have been conducted to improve local knowledge of biodiversity assets and action plans are being prepared to guide the management of threatened species habitat. Additional occurrences of nationally listed species such as Hindmarsh correa (*Correa calycina*) and Hindmarsh Valley greenhood (*Pterostylis bryophila*) have been discovered through active searching in the project area, as well as several Fleurieu Peninsula swamps for which protection is currently being negotiated.

Community workshops and field days are being held to raise public awareness and support landholders tackling biodiversity conservation and property management issues. These field days provide opportunities to demonstrate and provide training in appropriate management techniques for fostering local participation in the project.

For example, public workshops convened at the Hindmarsh Falls Reserve have led to remnant protection and watercourse rehabilitation works on adjacent private land. The project engages private landholders and other local stakeholders on key biodiversity management issues in the district, such as remnant protection, threat management, and appropriate revegetation methods for improving the condition and increasing the extent of habitat.



Stock proof fencing at Hindmarsh Tiers
(Photo: T. Parkinson)

The project continues to produce tangible conservation outcomes, including the protection of critical habitat for nationally threatened species, improved habitat condition through the abatement of threatening processes, and increasing knowledge of biodiversity assets in the district. The Hindmarsh Tiers Biodiversity Group takes a key role in providing crucial on-ground support for biodiversity conservation on the Fleurieu Peninsula, including threatened flora recovery, native vegetation protection, and broader biodiversity conservation planning and implementation. We look forward to building on the momentum of this successful project.

Acknowledgements:

The Hindmarsh Tiers Biodiversity Project is a district-focused initiative of the: City of Victor Harbor; SA Water; SA Department for Environment and Heritage; Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board; Threatened Plant Action Group; Fleurieu Swamps Recovery Program; Friends of Mount Billy Conservation Park; neighbouring private landholders; and Green Corps. Project funding has been received from SA Water, Threatened Species Network Community Grants (WWF-Aus), AMLR NRM Board and the Natural Heritage Trust.

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***Cassinia tegulata* - predictive habitat analysis and on ground searching**

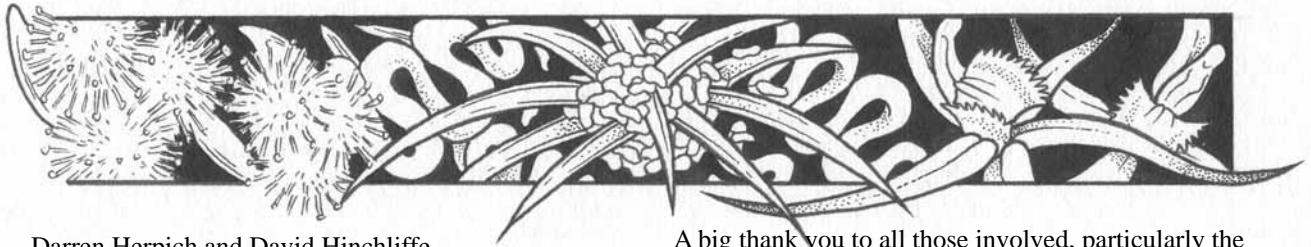
Cassinia tegulata was described in 2004 following a revision of the genus. The species is endemic to South Australia with collections taken from around Naracoorte and Lucindale in the South East, as well as the Fleurieu Peninsula. Despite searches of these historical sites and other areas, in 2004 the species was only known from two locations near Lucindale. After revisiting the sites in 2005 it was discovered that one of the populations had become extinct when the remaining plants had senesced, and hence only one extant population was thought to remain. The plants occur in roadside vegetation with an estimated population of 1,000 individuals.

A submission to get the species listed as critically endangered under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is currently being reviewed in Canberra by the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Water Resources.

The SA Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) in the South East undertook spatial analysis of the South East region using GIS to identify areas of potential habitat. Various layers (datasets) were used for analysis and included SA vegetation; roadside vegetation; soil landscape; geology and extant, recently extinct and suspected extinct *C. tegulata* sites. From the modeling several hundred sites were identified, but after further analysis this was narrowed down to 14 potential habitat sites. The majority of potential sites identified were roadsides; however others included a Heritage Agreement property and a disused railway corridor.

All the sites were searched during March-April 2007 when the plant was flowering and therefore most conspicuous. Unfortunately no additional populations were detected despite thorough searching of both roadside and non-roadside vegetation identified in the spatial analysis. The extremely dry conditions experienced in 2006/2007 may have negatively affected plant numbers and/or flowering success and therefore reduced the conspicuousness of any plants. Hence some individuals may have gone undetected. Some sites will be revisited in the 2008 to confirm the results.

However, good news followed shortly afterwards when a contractor for the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure working on the roadside located some potential plants and a sample sent to the species' author in Canberra for identification was confirmed to be *C. tegulata*. The small roadside population increased the known number of plants by about 30 individuals. This result highlights the importance of good communication and information sharing between agencies.



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A Kangaroo Island festival rebuilds declining bushland

Held from the 6th to the 9th July, over 60 people took part in KI's biggest four day tubestock planting festival ever planting 15,053 tubestock to rebuild declining native plant communities in eastern Kangaroo Island. For the first time, this involved planting four nationally threatened plant species, as part of a Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and KI Natural Resources Board program to recover Kangaroo Island's rarest plant life, much of which is found nowhere else in the world.

Planting intensity reached its height on the morning of Sunday the 8th July, when mud-caked planting veterans from the previous two days combined with a fresh pack of keen planters to plant an impressive 2892 tubestock in 90 minutes (more than one planted every two seconds!). The festival wound down gradually on the Monday morning, with a bus tour through Cygnet River, the Hog Bay Rd and the MacGillivray area, to look at key sites and pressing issues affecting KI's bush land.

A big thank you to all those involved, particularly the people who volunteered their time to get their hands dirty; the Humphry, Ingram and May families, who volunteered their land for revegetation; and the catering staff who put on a simply awesome feast. The festival will return to KI again in July 2008.

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Volunteers participating in KI's Tubestock Planting Festival (Photo: H. Stewart)

Invitation to submit articles

SA Veg. on the Edge is a community newsletter that aims to keep interested groups up to date with the activities of others working for threatened plant species throughout South Australia. I encourage anyone with an interest to submit articles to *SA Veg. on the Edge* on their group's activities, upcoming events, achievements and to canvass support. Graphics complementing articles are also welcome and for clarity should be a minimum of 300dpi.

Thank you to all the contributors for this issue. Please send material to: TSN SA, *SA Veg. on the Edge*, c/-SA Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield St, ADELAIDE SA 5000 or email tsnsa@wwf.org.au.

Regards, Vicki-Jo Russell - State Coordinator.

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