

The 'After the Kangaroo Island Fires' event series

In January 2020 Kangaroo Island was ravaged with fires which burned almost 50% of the island. Started by lightning on the western end of the island, the Flinders Chase National Park, the adjoining Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection area were burnt along with the Kelly Hill Conservation Park. Fires continued to burn across the island for some weeks; two lives were lost, many businesses, homes and farms, countless numbers of livestock, and precious habitat and wildlife perished.

However in the aftermath amazing stories of survival and recovery are emerging, as Museum and Botanic Gardens scientists continue to assess the impact.

The Waterhouse Club scheduled three 'After the Fires' events, two of which are reported below. A third event 'Saving the endangered bees and vanished spiders of Kangaroo Island' is scheduled for later this year.

Fascinating Fungi

The first event *Fascinating Fungi – The unsung heroes of fire recovery* was held in the Pacific Gallery on 23rd March with Pam Catchside (assisted by husband Emeritus Professor David Catchside) presenting to about 60 members on the foundational role of fungi, the endemic fungi of Kangaroo Island and the impacts of the 2020 fires.

Pam is the doyen of fungi research in South Australia and she and David have been studying KI fungi for the last 20 years. The fact that we had a full house is itself an indicator of the growth of public awareness about the significance of fungi in the survival of all species on the planet, and Pam lived up to her reputation as a communicator in the Sir David Attenborough mould with a fascinating AV presentation.

'Lost' Plants and Microbats of Kangaroo Island

'Lost' Plants and Microbats of KI was held on Monday 29 March in Lothian Hall, Botanic Gardens with Dan Duval (biologist at the South Australian Seed Conservation Centre in Adelaide) and Terry Reardon (internationally recognised bat expert) as the main presenters. 32 Members heard from Dan about what he and his team have learned about plant survival and recovery on KI, including the discovery of plants previously thought to be lost. There was a hands on session where members were able to propagate and take home some potted seeds to care for until ready to return to KI for planting.

Terry Reardon has a brilliant AV presentation on bats generally. He was fascinating as usual on microbats and the Grey Headed Flying Fox, as well as talking about the emerging knowledge about how bats respond to fires.