

FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



COMING EVENTS

Working Bees

June 1st

June 16th

July 6th

July 21st

August 3rd

August 18th

See page 3 For details



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

President's message

Taste the difference! The rain has finally come and the reserve has rapidly changed from brown to green. The taste of dust has been replaced by the flavours of autumn and winter – that beautiful humid earthy mix of plummy fruit cake with notes of blue gum nectar. I need the palate of a wine connoisseur to describe it properly! Grab a taste for yourself at our next working bee.

This is Clint's last newsletter, prior to Meg Robertson taking on the role for the next issue in September. I thank Clint for his time as Editor and for all his many contributions over his seven years on the Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve committee.

At the May AGM we welcomed two new people onto the Friends committee: Grant Joseph and Glenn Gale. Grant needs no introduction to us old-timers, having worked in the reserve, written spectacular restoration and re-vegetation plans for it and has been on the committee previously from 2007-2010.

Glenn has lived locally and had a glittering career in land-care, native vegetation and soil science but is fairly new to the reserve. Both come with impeccable pedigrees and I am excited by the opportunities they offer in contributing to the future management of the reserve. Welcome Grant and Glenn. See inside for short biographies on each.

I am pleased to announce the recent receipt of a \$3,690 Volunteer Grant from Department of Social Services to purchase equipment to support our volunteers. The grant will enable the purchase of a chainsaw & replacement chains for cutting olives and conducting other maintenance; 2 people-counters plus installation; 2 harness backpack sprayers; and secateurs and mini mattocks for working bees. I thank DSS for supporting our work.

Peter Bird



New committee members Grant & Glenn pulling olives in Netherby Gully
Photographer: Peter Bird

Life Membership for Peter Bird

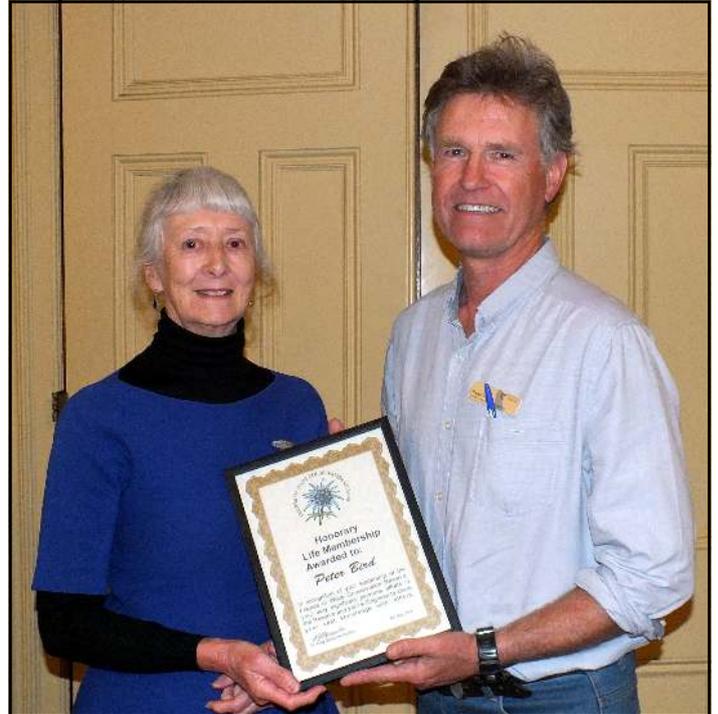
It was my great pleasure to present Peter Bird with a Life Membership of the Friends of the Waite Conservation Reserve at the 2019 AGM. Peter has been a member of the Friends since its foundation in 2001, as an active participant in and supervisor of working bees, a member of the Friends Committee for 16 years and an outstanding leader as President of the Friends for the last nine years.

Peter has an encyclopaedic knowledge of animals, plants, pest animal and plant control together with many practical skills, boundless energy and a personality which engages and inspires others. As Manager of the Reserve I valued his knowledge and experience which he willingly shared, and he assisted me in preparing grant applications as well as securing community grants for the Friends. Kate Delaporte now enjoys that on-going support from Peter.

Peter is a long-standing member of a number of environmental organisations: Nature Conservation Society SA, Butterfly Conservation SA, Birds SA, SA Herpetology Group and others. Through those affiliations Peter has organised faunal surveys and trapping nights - bats, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates. He keeps meticulous records of bird and other sightings when he is in the Reserve.

Over the years Peter has conducted a number of very well attended walks in the Reserve for the Nature Conservation Society of SA (the first 'Walk with Nature' was in 2001), PAWS (Postgraduate Students Association at Waite) and the general public. He is a regular contributor to the Friends Newsletter.

Since retiring from Biosecurity SA Peter has continued to make an outstanding contribution volunteering in the Reserve. He is up there most days spraying annual weeds, fixing fences and gates, checking and monitoring understorey of all 51 photopoints, and assisting with feral animal control.



Our Patron, Jennifer Gardner presenting Peter Bird with Honorary Life Membership
Photographer: Clint Garrett

He also organises and supervises 16 week-end working bees a year, conducts burn-offs of cut olive branches in winter, recruits new volunteers and committee members, works with TAFE Conservation and Land Management students who are doing work experience, and over the last two years has undertaken basal bark treatment of olive re-growth. Using basal bark treatment, he has treated over 9.5 hectares in Stone Reserve east, the western slopes, Pittosporum Gully and Urrbrae Gully.

Peter has also compiled a short history of key events of the Reserve land from 1846 to the present. He is now planning to write a more detailed document chronicling all the environmental work that has been undertaken over the last 27 years since the Reserve was declared in 1992. It will be a very valuable record.

Thank you Peter from all of us for your enthusiasm and impressive contribution to the conservation and restoration of the Waite Conservation Reserve.

Jennifer Gardner
Patron

WORKING BEES

Wow! Sixteen at the first working bee must be some kind of a record! The large crew and good numbers at subsequent working bees have enabled us to cover much of the southern part of the reserve in our annual hunt for olive seedlings. At the same time we also treated a good number of re-sprouting olive stumps and a couple of patches of Silver-leaf Nightshade.

The May 19th Working Bee saw 6 people brave the weather. Fortunately the forecast heavy rain held off until the afternoon and we were only showered upon briefly. Netherby Gully has now been worked over until next year and as in previous years, it has yielded many young olives again!

The June 1st working bee was also well attended, with 12 members and supporters showing up. As we are now working in the top end of the reserve, the slopes are more gentle and with 12 volunteers, the amount of area that was able to be covered was significant. The recent rains have meant good growth of grass and softer soils. There were few young olives to pull up, but there were LOTS of olive pits that had been vomited up by deer to be collected.



The first working bee of the year saw 16 workers come along to pull up olives
Photographer: Glenn Gale

EARLY WINTER WORKING BEES

JUNE

Saturday 1st
Sunday 16th

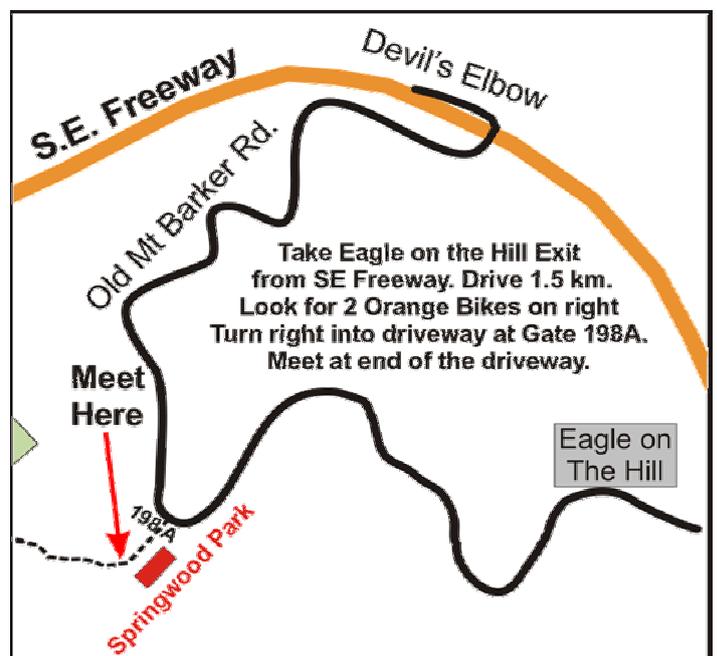
JULY

Saturday 6th
Sunday 21st

AUGUST

Saturday 3rd
Sunday 18th

**Meet at Springwood Park
For 9:00am start.**



Yanchen Zhang, Gerry Xu and Meg Robertson collecting and bagging olive pits which had been vomited up by deer.

Photographer: Clint Garrett

President's AGM Address

The Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve are a small but enthusiastic group committed to the protection and restoration of 'Waite reserve'. For the uninitiated, we're talking about the 121-ha of wooded foothills that overlook Waite campus. Do yourself a favour and take a walk up there - either on the Loop Track up Wild Dogs Glen or via the Yurrebilla Trail - and I'm sure you'll get what we get - that Waite Conservation Reserve is a rather special place.

This is not to say the reserve doesn't have its issues. For one, it was once almost completely covered in feral olives. Three years ago the Friends obtained a grant that demonstrated the great potential of Basal Bark Treatment to efficiently control olives. Two years ago we started using BBT for real. And in this last year we helped draft an olive management plan that aimed to harness BBT to eliminate the remaining 13½ hectares by 2020.



Dying Olives in Caves Gully treated using BBT
Photographer: Clint Garrett

That is where the Friends shine. We support the primary control by using our bi-monthly Working Bees to methodically walk the entire reserve, sniffing out and destroying the tens of thousands of olive seedlings that emerge each year. At the same time we also treat the many re-sprouting olive stumps, some of which have sat there looking dead for 15 years or more. Olive trees are amazingly resilient things, but then so are Friends of Waite. After 27 years of hard grinding work we are nearing the end. But we will need to be vigilant to keep one foot on the throat. Our Photopoints reveal a sobering chronology of olives, once cleared, only to re-appear in later photos, showing what can happen when the foot is taken off!

Last year in 15 working bees, 34 Friends walked and climbed and crawled the entire Reserve, removing tens of thousands of olive seedlings and tackling other weeds: St John's Wort and Soursobs, Hawthorn and Blackberry, Fountain Grass, Perennial Veldt and False Caper. In all we contributed 380 hours at our first-Saturday-and-second-Sunday-of-the-month working bees.



Removing Perennial Veldt Grass from Quartz Hill
Photographer: Clint Garrett

Last spring we helped shave off 5 hectares of olives. This spring we plan to whittle away another five. And next year, the final 3½-hectares are destined to go. Sounds easy when you say it fast but it will be a tough uncompromising work. Not just to complete the initial control, but to make good afterwards.

Working bees though are just the tip of the iceberg of what we do, and what particularly we did last year to manage the reserve is quite a list.

Continued on following page

President's AGM Address

Among other things:

- Clint Garrett and helpers donated hundreds of hours re-building and making safe the walking tracks up Wild Dogs Glen and on the Yurrebilla Trail;
- Andy Baker gathered intel and coordinated members of the Australian Deer Association to manage the serious pest problem of feral deer;
- 10 Friends volunteered 230 hours over 28 days to cut down, drag up and burn piles of killed olives to maintain access for follow-up control;
- Helen Pryor, Peter Lang and Meg Robertson attended Wordpress training to learn the skills to edit our new, autonomous website built by UniSA Communications students;
- Clint edited 4 Newsletters and our brand new Facebook page, created by Erica Boyle, in the process dragging us into the 21st century;
- Penny Paton led a well-supported Flora and Fauna walk;
- We applied for two grants and succeeded in obtaining one of \$3690 from Department of Social Services for people counters, a chainsaw and equipment to support our efforts;
- We hosted several groups in the reserve and look forward to collaborating with them all again this year:
- 53 students and staff from Urrbrae TAFE Conservation & Land Management, and Horticulture, demonstrating techniques and overseeing 100 hours of olive control and seed collection.
- 7 University of Adelaide Agricultural Science interns for weed control.
- 24 Post-graduate Adelaide Waite Students (PAWS)
- 30 University of Adelaide Vertebrate Pest Management students

As well, we sprayed weeds and conducted herbicide trials, removed fallen trees, monitored under-storey vegetation, planned a new walking trail, kept boxes re-stocked with trail brochures, cleaned up old fencing wire and much more.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this work, especially the committee who were responsible for much of this, to Secretary Helen Pryor, Treasurer Lynda Yates, Penny Paton, Peter Lang, Meg Robertson and Andrew Walters, and not forgetting our University ex-officio Kate Delaporte. In all our volunteer effort amounted to around 1900 hours worth \$80,000.



New steps above Koala Gully to improve safety
Photographer: Clint Garrett

Finally, I want to personally single out Clint Garrett for special thanks. Over the past 7 years Clint has contributed hugely to the Reserve as Newsletter Editor, Working Bee Coordinator, trail engineer, designer of flyers, weed sprayer, and my go-to for countless other tasks. Sadly, he and Erinne are moving on. They will be around for a little while yet but I'd just like to take this opportunity to formally thank him, and Erinne, on behalf of us all, for their amazing contribution and to wish them well for the future.

Peter Bird

Steve Donnellan described for a small AGM audience the range of ways that genetic information can be used to improve conservation outcomes. The most obvious one is identification of species.

Climate change is going to cause heat stress for many species. If scientists like Steve can identify the heat tolerance of particular populations of a species, then they can identify populations which could be most successfully translocated to what is currently a cooler area, but which in time will be as warm as their current habitat.

A recent example of the role of genetics in conservation programs involves the Western Pygmy Possum. Western Pygmy Possums are abundant and distributed widely in open woodland environments from western Victoria to the Australian west coast and as such can provide a model system for understanding the process and outcomes of proactive translocations ahead of predicted climate change range redistribution.

Genetic analysis of western pygmy possums in South Australia shows contrasting patterns of population structure east and west of Spencer Gulf. This contrast provides independent experimental opportunities to evaluate the likelihood of arid adapted genotypes dispersing south under the harsh climate predictions over the coming century and to implement, if necessary, proactive translocations where dispersal is unlikely.



Clint making the thank you presentation to Steve Donnellan

Photographer: Peter Bird

The issue of increasing kangaroo numbers in the Mt Lofty Ranges is topical at the moment. It is clear to me that kangaroos have also increased in the reserve during my time. But how many are there?

Figures from our biological survey in November 2008 provide an interesting baseline. Although we didn't specifically count the kangaroo population, we did record all observations during the intensive 9-day survey. And the total? Only a paltry **three** sightings were made during hundreds of hours spent in the reserve during the survey.



Western Grey Kangaroos in Leaf-hopper Gully

Photographer: Clint Garrett

Ten years later the numbers are probably an order of magnitude greater. I've seen a dozen or more on casual walks through the reserve. Clint saw a mob of 15 at a recent working bee. It's time we attempted a formal count. This need not be more than several people systematically walking the reserve recording all sightings, while taking care to avoid multiple-counting. We'll research it a bit more and get back to you for a date and time.

By the way, I'm talking here about the Western Grey Kangaroo *Macropus fuliginosus*, the only macropod known from the reserve. But maybe not for long. The Swamp (or Black) Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor* is on the move from eastern Australia and I predict will become common in the Mt Lofty Ranges in the next few decades.

Peter Bird

Walks in the Reserve

PAWS Walk

After a successful walk last year we again hosted the Post-graduate Adelaide Waite Students (PAWS) group for an afternoon saunter around the Loop Walk.

Twenty-one mostly international PhD students from the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine marveled at the big flocks of Rainbow Lorikeets feasting on early-flowering Blue Gums and a lone Echidna shouldering over large rocks while looking for ants in the perfect weather.

Peter Bird



PAWS group inspecting a deer rutting site in Leafhopper Gully



Juvenile Tawny Dragon
Photographer: Clint Garrett

Reptile Walk

Friends and members of the SA Herpetology Group gathered on a beautiful warm Sunday afternoon on 17 March to scour the reserve for scaly residents. Unfortunately the 16 attending severely outnumbered the reptiles. Only a paltry two of the 15 known species were spotted – a single young Tawny Dragon (*Ctenophorus decresii*) out basking at Harold's Lookout and a few juvenile Garden Skinks (*Lampropholis guichenoti*) were seen rustling through the undergrowth. The rocks were too hot to shelter the usual suspects normally found beneath. Cunningham's Skink was searched for in many likely places, but alas could not be found.

The birds were a little better with a rare sighting of a White-throated Treecreeper in Groundberry Gully and good views of Grey Currawongs in Stone Reserve. Plus there were the usual couple of kangaroos and koalas. Thanks to Peter Matejcic and Clint Garrett for leading the walk.



Juvenile Garden Skink
Photographer: Peter Bird

We welcome 2 new Committee members

Glenn Gale

Glenn lives at Lower Mitcham with his wife Jo and their daughter Lucy.

Glenn retired at the end of March this year after a 30-year career working on soil conservation and sustainable land management projects with farming and community groups. For most of that time Glenn was with the SA Dept of Agriculture / Primary Industries. In the latter part of his career Glenn held several senior roles including State Manager of the Soil and Land Management Group, the Pastoral Land Management Group & the State Heritage Unit.

Glenn left the public sector in 2014 and was then the Executive Officer for the Landcare Association of SA until he retired. Glenn says that the best part of his career was that it enabled him work with dedicated and inspiring volunteer groups and individuals from across the state who are committed to improving their properties and the local environment.

In his retirement Glenn is keen to do some hands-on volunteering work with local Friends of Parks and Bushcare groups. The Friends of Waite Reserve seemed an ideal choice for him, being close-by and having had a long association with the Waite campus commencing with his degree in Agricultural Science at the University of Adelaide in the late 1970s and then working from the Waite from 2000 to 2012.

Glenn is very active person, being a keen bushwalker and cyclist, and is passionate about the natural environment and what we can do to conserve and improve it.

Grant Joseph

I am excited to have the honour to again be able to serve on the FWCR Management Committee. The previous Director of the WCR Jennifer Gardner and then Site Supervisor Stephen Wait gave me my first employment opportunity in bushcare /ecological restoration at the WCR in 2005 and I initially joined the FWCR.

After completing an Honours Degree in Biological Sciences at Flinders University, I pursued a 10 year career in science laboratories in Adelaide and Queensland. Returning to Adelaide in 2005 gave me the opportunity to make a career change. The passion I have to see our native landscape cared for and restored was a "fire" (a cliché I know) within me. Having started with 3 years at the WCR, including completing a Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (TafeSA), I have now gained over 14 years of on-ground experience working for Bushcare contractors (in SA and WA), mine sites (WA), NGOs such as Greening Australia (SA and WA) and government departments (DWLBC-SA).

The restoration of the Grey Box ecological community of the Adelaide Hills has become a lifelong passion; as I live in Eden Hills amongst the Grey Box trees with my suburban property a restoration in progress, along with helping restore parts of my neighbours' properties. Since 2008 (when in SA) I've been involved with another local community effort with the Grey Box Community Group, with its signature Grey Box Day held in May every year in conjunction with State Flora.

In 2018 I returned to work at the WCR on a casual basis helping support the considerable on-going effort spear-headed by Peter Bird. I look forward to contributing to WCR's continued restoration through my technical expertise and extensive on-ground knowledge of the reserve.

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Treasurer: Lynda Yates **Editor for this edition:** Clinton Garrett

Committee: Kate Delaporte, Glenn Gale, Gant Joseph, Peter Lang, Penny Paton, Meg Robertson, Andrew Walters

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