

FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



COMING EVENTS

Working Bees

1st Saturday &
3rd Sunday each
month.

Spring Working Bees

Enter from
Springwood Park
Eagle on the Hill

Saturday October 1st
Sunday October 16th

Late Spring

Saturday November 5th
Sunday November 20th
Saturday December 3rd

Beetle Walk Saturday 12th November

Dr Peter Lang will
lead a walk in the
reserve for the
purpose of looking for
Jewel Beetles.



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

President's message

More than 40 years ago Enid Robertson (AM) pioneered the restoration of degraded plant communities in South Australia at her beloved Watiparinga National Trust Reserve. Almost 25 years ago in January 1992, then Director of the Waite Institute Harold Woolhouse invited Enid to supervise students in bush regeneration techniques on the 'Waite Hills'. This effectively was the start of restoration works in the reserve that we continue today.

Later, in February 2001 at a public meeting in Urrbrae House, Enid formally proposed the formation of a Friends group "to support and nurture the Waite Conservation Reserve". In 2011 she cut the celebratory cake at our tenth AGM.

Enid died on 10 July 2016 aged 90. Botanist, taxonomist and avid collector of plant specimens, Enid was well-known and respected after a distinguished career in botany that commenced at the Waite Research Institute in 1947.

But it was her recognition and long-standing dedication to restoration works using minimum disturbance methods that set her apart. Enid inspired and trained a generation of restoration devotees in South Australia including those responsible for the first tiny steps in WCR.

At its last meeting the FWCR Committee agreed to replace the rickety old bench part way up Wild Dogs Glen with a new seat in memory of Enid. This is an appropriate place for a memorial to her.

Wild Dogs Glen was the site of the very first olive removal work in the reserve, overseen by working bee organiser Phil Shearman, trained and recommended by Enid. It was also the area where Enid discovered remnant Blackwood trees while conducting flora surveys in the reserve.

Not so appropriate is the choice of memorial. Enid was a woman of prodigious energy. Taking time to sit when there was work to be done was not in her nature. But the more important memorial to her is not the seat itself but the view from the seat, now largely cleared of olives and starting to repair. I'm sure that Enid rested a little more easily in later years knowing that the Friends group that she inspired was on the case. We owe it to Enid to continue the work she started.

Peter Bird



Enid Robertson; AM

COMMITTEE REPORT

New Committee

President: Peter Bird,
Vice President: Peter Lang (suggested) 
Secretary: Helen Pryor,
Treasurer: Lynda Yates,
Newsletter Editor: Clint Garrett,
Technology Officer: Luke Day.
Committee members: Jennifer Gardner,
Penny Paton, Erinne Stirling

AGM 2017

The AGM date will be earlier in 2017 than this year's AGM. Put the 3rd of May in your diary today. A number of possible speakers were suggested and they will be contacted, to find out who is available.

Treasurer's Report

Income from about 26 financial members, and donations and jewel beetle card sales. Our only expenditure has been the lease for the Mitcham Mall Stall \$55.

Our bank balance at 31/7/16 was \$8,341.10

Grant Applications

Peter and Jennifer have applied for Green Army funding for 4 projects. These are to be joint projects with Carrick Hill.

The application for a Portaloo to support these projects was unsuccessful.

Enid Roberson Memorial

Enid died on July 10th. Peter suggested that her significant input to the management of the reserve in its early years be recognised by the installation of a seat with permanent plaque. The seat could be installed about 2/3rds of the way up Wild Dogs Glen.

Echidna Damage

Helen raised concerns regarding the amount of damage that Echidnas are doing on Pultney Hill. It is difficult to do anything about them as they are part of the ecosystem, which before European settlement had a lot of digging animals eg bettongs and bandicoots. 

Cattle in the Reserve

Cattle are getting into the Reserve by butting through the fence between gates 87 and 88 which the roos and deer have pushed under. Old netting is pushed up and shorts the electric wire and needs replacing. To be effective it needs electric wiring inside as well as out, but is dangerous to echidnas and snakes which get caught. Jennifer will contact the landowner to see if they are able to contribute to new fencing. Peter  maybe able to help with some mesh.

Walking & Bike Trails

Jennifer gave a brief introduction to the proposed Connecting Communities Cultural Heritage Wirraparinga Interpretive Walking Trail which would potentially link Brownhill Creek, Carrick Hill, Waite Conservation Reserve, Urrbrae House and the Arboretum. Support has been obtained from government members, Mitcham Council, community groups and schools for a visionary integrated long term plan. The trails are to be walking with a separate designated bike trail 

Weed Mapping

Luke Day, our new Technology Officer has offered to investigate a free app for our mobile phones to map weeds etc as we walk around the reserve. This could be backed up by high resolution imaging with a drone to map weed infestations with data results in 2D or even 3D  He will meet with Jennifer to discuss finer details and possible application to a Waite Conservation Reserve Trail App.

Beetle Walk Saturday 12th November

Dr Peter Lang will lead a walk in the reserve on 12th November for the purpose of looking for  Jewel Beetles.



WORKING BEE REPORT

Twenty-dedicated Friends have contributed to working bees so far this year. Together we have searched for and removed thousands of olive seedlings and treated hundreds of re-growth olives from three-quarters of olive-cleared parts of the reserve. Accordingly we are on track to complete follow-up work on the entire 97 hectares, notwithstanding that we have recently been slowed by a couple of bad re-growth patches.

We will continue to tackle olives but soon will start our annual removal of Perennial Veldt Grass on Quartz Hill and at a second incursion discovered last year on Sheoak Slope. We will also mix it up by tackling nasties such as African Weed Orchid and even collecting seed for future re-seeding of olive-cleared sites.

There are plenty of opportunities to participate in whatever way suits you. Each of the Friends have their favourite tasks. For Clint it is the big tree-popper that he uses to great advantage on large olive saplings. Helen prefers getting down and dirty carefully noodling out weed orchids and Sparaxis bulbs in the best patches of bush. Penny uses her secateurs and Roundup dauber on larger seedlings and Erinne systematically walks the reserve scanning for seedling olives.



Erinne is a fan of using the small mattock, while Chloe is trying out the large popper

For myself, I have the kit described in the last newsletter. Most of my time is spent drilling and filling re-growth olives.

There are a range of different jobs at any working bee. I'm sure there is one you'd enjoy.

Come along on the first Saturday or third Sunday of the month and give it a go. See the program on the next page.

Peter Bird



Peter, Jennifer and Meg using their preferred methods of restoring the Reserve

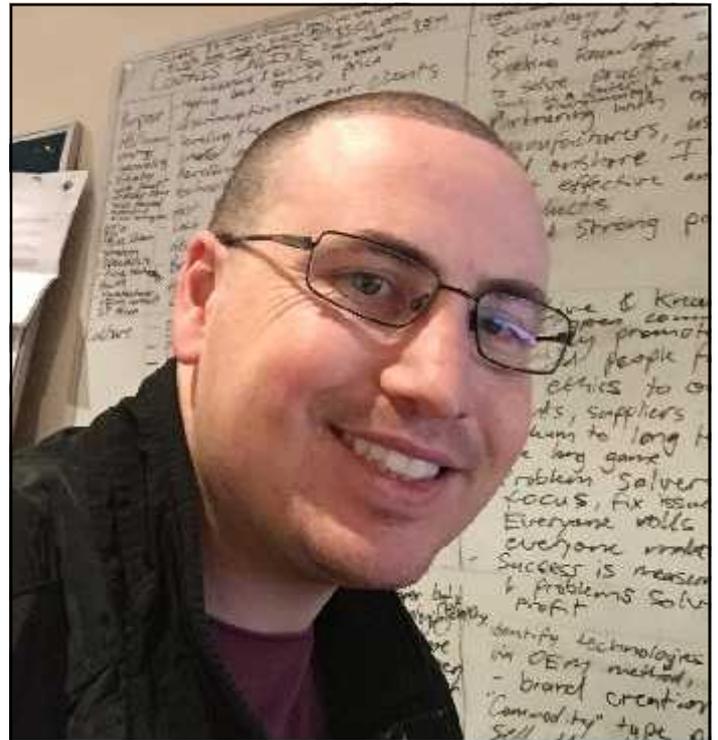
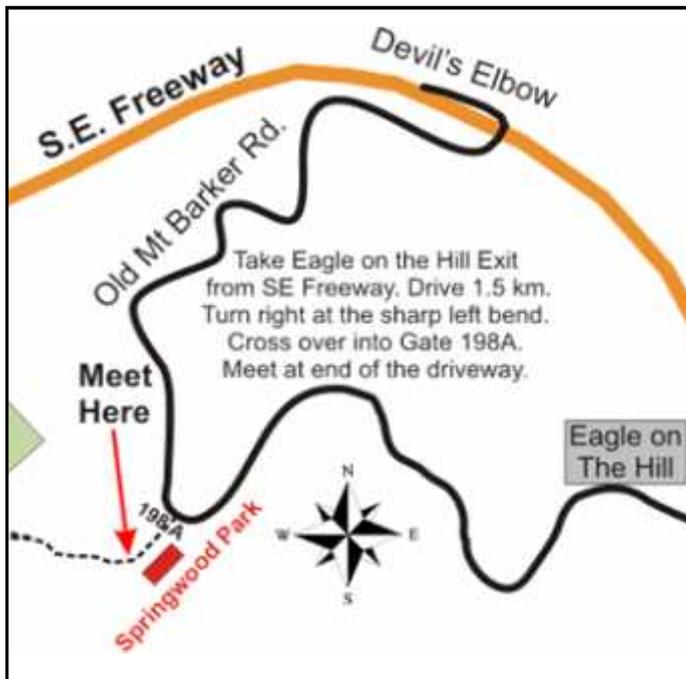
SPRING WORKING BEES

Use Springwood Park

Eagle on the Hill entrance

Saturday 1st October

Sunday 16th October



Luke Day is our newest committee member and will look after technology related projects.

Luke has had a lifelong interest in the environment and local flora and fauna - particularly birds. He has been enjoying walking in the Waite Conservation Reserve regularly since he was 10 years old, after his family moved to Adelaide from the Mid North of South Australia. He is deeply concerned about the environment and human impact on it and keen to help conservation and preservation of the natural world, starting local and getting hands on.

He has a career in Automation and Control Systems Engineering, he enjoys developing new technology and brain storming ways of applying this technology in more meaningful ways, outside of profit driven enterprise, to benefit the environment. He is keen to roll up the sleeves and fight enemy number one (olives) with Friends of the Waite and has been enjoying getting out in the reserve with a great crew who are both knowledgeable and entertaining.

Luke's interests include: Nature and Environment, Birds, Astronomy and Physics, Computer Science and AI, Robotics, Process Automation and Monitoring.

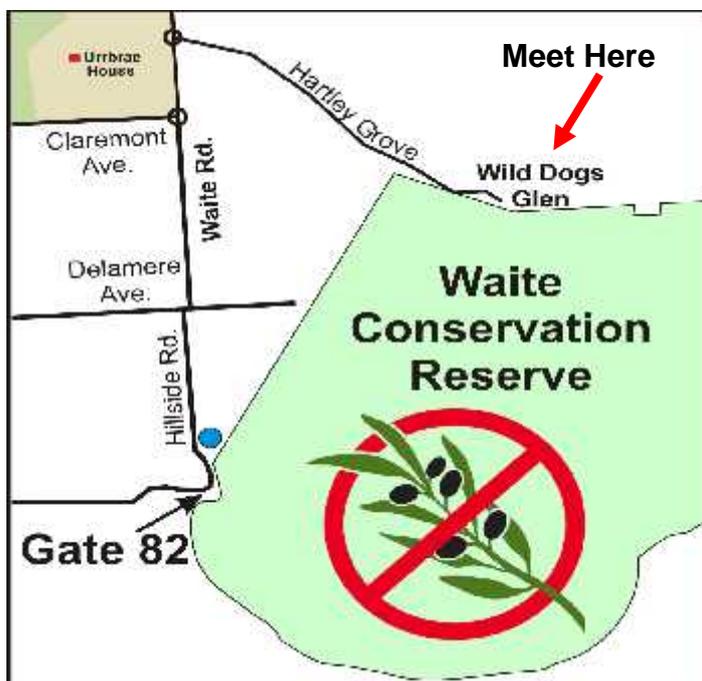
LATE SPRING WORKING BEES

Use Wild Dogs Glen entrance

Saturday 5th November

Sunday 20th November

Saturday 3rd December



Which Rosella is it???

The Newsletter Editor asked me to write this article on rosellas as he noticed on his return to Adelaide after a long absence that the Eastern Rosella appeared to be more common now. He is quite right and thereby hangs a tale.

But first to the two species of rosella found at the Waite, what they look like, their ecology and then the history lesson. Both species are long-tailed like most parrots, and largeish and in fact they are about the same size. The Eastern Rosella (*Platycercus eximius*) is the classic 'sauce bottle' parrot, with a bright red head and neck, white cheek patch, blue wings and bright green rump and belly, while the Adelaide (or Crimson) Rosella is more or less orange/red all over with a blue cheek patch, wings and tail. Their breeding biology is also similar – both nest in hollows in trees, lay about 5 white eggs on a bed of wood chips, only the female incubates the eggs and feeds the very young chicks and she is fed by the male through this time. The breeding season extends from August to late summer (Higgins 1999). The calls of both species have a ringing bell-like quality and are difficult to tell apart.



Eastern Rosella (male)

Photo: J.J. Harrison

Eastern Rosellas prefer open woodland and are well adapted to grassy woodlands without many shrubs and to parklands, where lawns amid scattered trees predominate. The Adelaide Rosella is generally found in denser forest and woodland and this difference is reflected in their choice of nesting tree, with Adelaide Rosellas preferring trees in dense scrub while the Eastern prefers trees in grassy areas (Penck *et al.* 1995).

Another difference is in the feeding preference of the two species – both feed in trees and on the ground but the Eastern is much more likely to be found feeding on the ground.

Both species are fairly sedentary but the Eastern Rosella does exhibit post-breeding movements in South Australia and young birds are often more mobile than adults. In the breeding season both rosellas are found in solitary mated pairs but small groups can be seen at other times of the year.

For the first 70 or so years of white settlement the only rosella found in the Adelaide region was the Adelaide Rosella. Its taxonomy has been fluid over the years – sometimes thought to be a separate species, but now regarded as a subspecies of the Crimson Rosella, *Platycercus elegans adalaidae*, which intergrades in a cline of decreasing red in its plumage from south to north. In the juvenile plumage the orange is replaced by green so they look quite different from their parents for the first months after fledging.

This changed in about 1912 when Eastern Rosellas began to be recorded around Adelaide in the autumn and winter (ie the non-breeding season), with breeding confirmed in 1934 at Clarendon in the Adelaide Hills (Parker 1988). Opinions vary as to the origin of these Eastern Rosellas, with some authors suggesting that they derived from cage escapees. The alternative explanation is that the birds found their way from the South-East of South Australia (where they are common) perhaps aided by the clearing of the land for farming (Parker 1988).

Captain S. A. White, a noted ornithologist with a large property at The Reedbeds (now Lockleys), had this to say in July 1924:

“The writer has never seen so many White-cheeked Rosellas *Platycercus eximius*. They visited the plains in great numbers this autumn and early winter, and many are still with us.” White 1925

Which Rosella is it???

For many years after this the Eastern Rosella was less common than the Adelaide Rosella, at least in the city. For example, a study of the Adelaide Botanic Park and Gardens (Paton 1976) reported that there were no records of the Eastern Rosella prior to 1953, but by 1971-74 they were present, but less regularly reported than the Adelaide Rosella. Our records from Gilberton since 1981 show interesting variations in Eastern Rosella numbers while Adelaide Rosella numbers and frequency of reporting have been very consistent.

Eastern Rosellas were uncommon through the early 1980s at Gilberton, started to be reported more often through the late 1980s and early 1990s, but with long gaps with no records, until in early 1994 there were more birds than Adelaides (up to 4). From 1995 there were long gaps in records of Eastern Rosellas, mainly around the breeding season (spring/summer). This ended in 2002 when Eastern Rosella numbers built to up to 7 birds in one week and from then they have remained fairly consistent. Now we see about 2-6 birds of both species every week and neither species is more common than the other.

Paton (1976) also noted that the rosellas were often in mixed flocks and in the late 1960s/early 1970s there were several records of hybrids between the two species – birds that looked more-or-less like Adelaide Rosellas but with a **white** cheek patch.



A hybrid was collected on the Fleurieu Peninsula by Oscar Symons in September 1937 soon after the species became a breeding species in the region. Hybrids appear to be less common now than in the 1970's perhaps due to the increasing number of Eastern Rosellas in the city and suburbs. In some areas the Eastern Rosella is more common than the Adelaide, and this may be due to the establishment of parks that provide habitat more suited to the Eastern (Penck *et al.* 1995).

Both species occur in the Waite Conservation Reserve, so next time you see the flash of red, blue and green through the trees, try to determine which rosella you are looking at.

References

- Higgins, P.J. (ed.) 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds. Volume 4: parrots to Dollarbird.* Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Parker, S.A. 1988. The origin of the populations of the Eastern Rosella inhabiting the Mount Lofty Ranges and Adelaide Plains, South Australia. *SA Ornithologist* 30:32.
- Paton, P. A. 1976. A survey of the Adelaide Botanic Park and Gardens. *SA Ornithologist* 27: 131-137.
- Penck, M., Torcello, J.C. and Sanderson, K.J. 1995. *SA Ornithologist* 32: 25-32

Penny Paton

Adelaide Rosella
Platycercus elegans adalaidae
Photo: D. Paton