

FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



COMING EVENTS

Wed 14 May 2014—AGM
of FWCR, 7.30-9.30pm

Sun 4 May 2014—Friends
of Urrbrae Wetlands
Open Day, 1.30-4pm

Sun 8 June 2014—Film
event, Capri Cinema, 3pm
for 3.40 pm seating



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

President's message

I have a farming background. As a consequence I have more than a passing interest in the weather. We experienced record summer heat culminating in an extraordinarily wet finish, with 7 times the average February rainfall. A few weeks later it is difficult to see how all this extreme weather has affected the Reserve – perhaps some plants are flowering a little more profusely than usual – Grey Box, Twiggy Daisy-bush and what seems to be a massive blooming of Garland Lilies.

The Waite landscape has changed. For the past 13 years the Friends group has been working with the university to help restore the ecology of the Reserve. In particular we have sweated literally shoulder to shoulder with the university work crew to remove weeds and to plant trees at our twice-monthly working bees.

All this changed last year when the university moved from employing casual staff who worked year round in the Reserve, to employing contract teams for short bursts of targeted work. This will alter how the Friends group operates in two important ways.

Firstly, our activities will no longer be directed by hands-on Reserve staff with an intimate day-to-day knowledge of the seasonal tasks needing to be done. Of course Jennifer still has a good knowledge of the work at hand, and will no doubt help guide our working bees but it is probably fair to say that we will have greater autonomy in choosing our future

working bee program. I am mindful though that any work we do must fall within the policies and priorities set down by the university.

Secondly, the nature of the work done by the contractors has changed from that done previously. The university crew undertook a range of tasks throughout the year – treating various weeds at seasonally appropriate times; collecting seed and growing, planting and maintaining tubestock for re-vegetation; undertaking slashing for fire prevention; and systematically nibbling away at the diminishing forest of olives. In contrast,



Line drawing of Ring-tailed Possum, a feature of the new Trail Guide (Lydia Paton)

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FROM THE COMMITTEE

the contractors will not have the same year-round contact with the Reserve and this will limit their capacity to undertake some of the tasks done by the previous crew. Their strength will be getting stuck into targeted projects such as primary olive clearance – as evidenced by their great work below Netherby Spur last year.

How then will these changes influence what we do from here and how can we make the best use of our limited time and best support the university effort? What are the most important things to focus on and what are the least?

Take tree-planting for example. Over the past few years we have increasingly spent our winter and spring working bees planting out tubestock. Our aim has been to reinstate mostly understorey species into areas from which they have been lost. This has been fairly successful with a range of species established – hop-bush, wattles, sheoak, daisy-bush, bursaria, hollyhock, scurf-pea, etc.

My guess however is that tree-planting will become much more problematic for us under the new regime. Without the university crew to collect seed and grow seedlings, provide support on planting days, and water plants over summer, tree-planting in future will require far more effort from the Friends and seedling survival is likely to be much poorer.

Olive management is a second example. Feral olives are a transformational weed. They have been targeted for removal ever since the creation of the Reserve. In the past they dominated the Reserve landscape. Left unchecked they would very quickly do so again. Over the last two decades the University and Friends have invested heart, soul and a vast amount of money targeting olive removal. Our priority must be to consolidate this investment and to prevent olive seedlings from reinvading cleared areas. In the past this was largely done by the university work crew but I suggest it might be something that the Friends take responsibility for.

The good news is that we have cleared olives from about 95 hectares of the Reserve. The bad news is that we have 95 hectares to protect from reinvasion. It will not be an easy task but one which I think would suit our talents - an opportunity to systematically wander all cleared parts of the Reserve seeking out and pulling seedlings.

I look forward to your feedback.

Peter Bird

Loop Trail Launch

It seems like forever ago but on 12 October last year we launched the new Waite Loop Walk, complete with a trail guide, 'Blue Devil' trail markers and 5 new interpretive signs. Well-known botanist, author and Waite Friend, Ann Prescott, kindly launched the beast after earlier helping to craft the wording on our new brochure and signs.

The launch day turned out a cracker. The Reserve put on a show for the 80-strong crowd that gathered to road-test the new route. Colour from the last of the spring wildflowers was bolstered by an unusual migration of Small Grass Yellow butterflies as well as the more usual clouds of Common Brown butterflies.

A few well chosen words from Ann and the punters were off up Wild Dogs Glen on the 4-km walk. Ann, Pete L, Jennifer, Penny Paton and Pete B led groups on interpretive walks while Meg, Annette, Andy and helpers prepared a barbeque in time for the walkers' return. Clint directed the parking and Helen welcomed people and masterminded the leaflet distribution.

The only sour note has been the vandalism suffered by the trail markers since our launch. Several markers were ripped off and the posts pulled out and slung away. The posts were quickly recovered, replanted with concrete, and temporary markers reinstated to direct traffic. New, more robust markers have been purchased and will be replaced once it appears safe to do so.



Erecting the new signs (Photo: Peter Bird)

The launch was the culmination of 10 months of team-work by the committee to conceive, write, edit, design, purchase, print, erect and launch the various trail accoutrements. Impressively it all came in on time and on budget. Thanks to all and to the generous grant from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board which started the ball rolling.

Peter Bird



New Koala sign and trail marker (Photo: Peter Bird)



New trail marker, Wild Dogs Glen (Photo: Peter Bird)



New Mistletoe sign (Photo: Peter Bird)

Pete is being his usual modest self, so the Editor is adding her bit here—he worked incredibly hard on all aspects of this project, from grant writing and acquittal to brochure and sign design and wordsmithing to physically installing the signs and markers. So well done Pete from the Committee and the wider community. You are a champion!

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Spring Working Bee 2013 Report

For the October to December Working Bees we worked on areas from the southern end of Stone Reserve, through Pultenaea Hill and Urrbrae Ridge ending up in Leafhopper Gully for the final one.

As we walked through each area we pulled out any small olives we came across but also focussed for some of the time on the patches of seasonal weeds such as Ehrhata, Cape Tulip, thistle and African Weed Orchid/ Monadenia (*Disa bracteata*), hopefully getting as many as possible before they seeded.

Although the spring rain was minimal, the winter rains had been good and the woodland was full of native flowers blossoming, birds, butterflies and insects. It was a real pleasure working in such a place in such great weather.

Unfortunately there had been some vandalism on the new Loop Walking Trail so Peter Bird spent some time cementing in some sign posts and attaching trail markers. Apparently an echidna led him to one of the missing posts so it was not all bad!

We are also very grateful to Jennifer for making herself available on the weekends to supervise us, bring the tools and help with all the weeding as well as her fulltime job administering the Arboretum, Urrbrae House as well as the Waite Conservation Reserve.

On a sad note we regret that Annette our BBQ Chef who has faithfully supplied us with a delectable BBQ and hot cups of tea at the end of our WB over many years is to retire. Her cheerful presence will be sorely missed. She has our heartfelt thanks.

Helen Pryor



Echidna, at our working bee, Stone Reserve (Photo: Jennifer Gardner)

Ornithologica VI—The downside of walking dogs

As a former dog owner and bird lover my interest was piqued by a recent article in 'Australian Birdlife' the high quality three-monthly publication of Birdlife Australia (formerly Birds Australia). The author, Bob Holderness-Roddam, addressed the issue of impacts of dogs on Australian birds, including their conservation. Many people will be aware of the problems that dogs and beach-users in general cause to some beach-nesting birds, made worse by the prime time of human use (spring/summer) matching that of breeding birds. Locally the Hooded Plover is the bird most impacted and on which most effort has been spent.



Hooded Plover (Photo: Lydia Paton)

But what of the impacts of dogs on birds in general? There are a few examples of dogs causing catastrophic damage to endangered species and populations, with mass killings by one or a few dogs. There are examples of this in southern Australia, including on Kangaroo Island, where domestic dogs killed large numbers of Little Penguins in one night. An international example mentioned by Holderness-Roddam, is of five dogs killing every bird in Italy's largest flamingo colony in Sardinia in one day.

Research by Holderness-Roddam at the University of Tasmania shows that these incidents are just the tip of the iceberg, with domestic dogs probably responsible for more attacks on wildlife than domestic cats. Between 2006 and 2011 dog attacks were second only to motor vehicle strike as the reason for wildlife presenting for care in Tasmania. This finding was supported by data from the Healesville Sanctuary in Victoria, where dogs (115 attacks) outnumbered cats (79 attacks) in wildlife attacks.

As Friends of the Waite Conservation Reserve are aware, dog walking is banned in the Reserve, but that does not stop some neighbours from walking their dogs there. What damage could this possibly do to birds, I hear you ask? When dogs get too close to foraging or resting birds, birds are forced into emergency flight,

which requires "rapid take-off, steep climbing and faster-than-usual flight". Thus emergency flight is very energy-intensive for birds and these interruptions may occur several to many times per day. Moreover the spot where birds choose to feed often supplies the best foraging opportunity for them and relocating may force them to use sub-optimal areas.

To give an example of the energy demands that emergency flight places on birds, Holderness-Roddam cites a Great Knot (a migratory wader) gaining 2.77 kilojoules of energy by eating a large bivalve. This amount of energy provides this bird with resources to sleep for six hours, to forage for 159 minutes or to fly steadily for 26 minutes. But it only gives the Great Knot 7.5 minutes of alarm-induced flight.

So next time you are out walking in a park, a reserve, on the beach or even just in a suburban street, and you notice a dog disturbing a bird, watch what happens and think about the consequences of this action for the bird. And in particular think about the consequences if this occurs several times per day or even several times per hour. Clearly the impacts will be more severe in bushland than in urban areas and in the case of threatened species. Holderness-Roddam cites a 2007 study where "walking dogs in bushland resulted in a reduction of bird diversity of up to 35 per cent, while abundance of birds was reduced by 41 per cent."

Reference

Holderness-Roddam, Bob. March 2014. 'Gone to the dogs'. *Australian Birdlife*, Vol 3, No. 1, pp 50-51.

Penny Paton



A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a migratory wader very similar to the Great Knot (Photo: Fiona Paton)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Working Bees 2014

The first Saturday and the third Sunday of the month. Further details will be sent when we have determined the start date and program.

Film Night - Sunday 8 June 2014

Come and enjoy 'Grace of Monaco', a film event at the Capri Cinema, 141 Goodwood Road, Goodwood on Sunday 8 June, 3pm for 3.40 seating.. A fundraiser for the Friends of Urrbrae House, the Waite Arboretum and the Waite Conservation Reserve, tickets cost \$15. Further details on the enclosed flyer.

Urrbrae Wetlands Open Day- Sunday 4 May 2014

The Friends of Urrbrae Wetlands are celebrating with an Open Day on Sunday 4 May on site, from 1.30 to 4pm. All are welcome.



Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve Inc. **Annual General Meeting -** Wednesday 14 May 2014, 7.30pm

OUR BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLIES

How many of our local butterflies do you recognize? What do you know about their lifecycle? Mike Moore will answer these questions, when he speaks about the "Butterflies of Waite" on Wednesday May 14th at Urrbrae House on the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide.

Mike has been interested in Natural History since he was a youngster. Indeed the Shell Petrol Project Card Series (the series is still in his possession) was a starting point. At University he took Joan Paton's Bird Watching Course. Then a few years into teaching he did a WEA course run by Con Eardley on Plants of the Adelaide Hills. In 1974 he started to collect and breed butterflies and later "matured" and moved into moths. At present he is working on the Family Hepialidae (mainly Ghost, Rain, or Swift Moths) and is in the process of describing some previously un-described species in the Genus Abantiades.

The evening commences at 7.30pm with a short AGM for the Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve, followed by Mike's fascinating address. A free supper will be served at the conclusion of the event. Those attending should enter the campus from Fullarton Road. If you have questions about the evening, you can contact Jennifer on 8313-7405 or Helen on helenpryor10@yahoo.com.au.

If you want to know what this moth is on our President's finger, come along to Mike's talk. This photo was taken on our Butterfly Walk in November 2012.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

President: Peter Bird (0418-853 -834) pjbird@chariot.net.au

Secretary: Helen Pryor (helenpryor10@yahoo.com.au)

Editor: Penny Paton

Treasurer: Lynda Yates

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