

FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



COMING EVENTS

AGM

Wednesday
May 18

Working Bees

March 20

April 2 & 10

May 7 & 15

June 4 & 19

See pages 2 & 3 for
details



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

President's page

Adopt-a-patch bushcare

Hard to believe but I wrote a newsletter article with the above title in 2005. I have long been a fan of the *Trees For Life* Bushcare scheme (Bush for Life) - where volunteers care for their own individual patch of bush, and I thought aspects of the format might work for us.

Structured working bees have been the mainstay of our bushcare efforts forever but they don't suit everybody. They are held on weekends, but some people may have other commitments. They vary in location and tasks to add interest, but this may compromise the sense of achievement. Working bees are social events, but some prefer the solitude of working alone. Not to mention the weather is a lucky dip when working bees are scheduled months in advance.

I wrote at the time that: "one possibility for appealing to a broader range of bushcarers is for a system that allows individuals to 'adopt' and manage their own small patch. This would entail dividing the reserve (or part) into bite-size management units, say 1-hectare, then matching each patch with its own bushcarer. **This approach has the benefit of giving people the flexibility to work when time, weather, body and soul permit.** Moreover it instils in people a sense of ownership and pride in their patch".



Marg Brown with a patch of native *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* (clustered everlasting) in flower, WCR.

It has taken 16 years for *Adopt-a-patch* to become reality. In August last year Sarah Thomas and Marg Brown both adopted patches, Sarah on the southern boundary and Marg (pictured) at Harold's Lookout. See inside for an article by Marg on her patch; Sarah next issue. **Give me a yell** if you would like to adopt a patch of your own, or perhaps give Sarah or Marg a hand with theirs. I have a few potential sites which could do with a hand. Get in early before the rush.

Pete Bird

Annual General Meeting and presentation

Wednesday 18 May 7.30 - 9.30 pm

Urrbrae House: Entry Gate 3, Waite Rd, Urrbrae (behind library)

Dr Nicola Barnes

Grassland Ecologist, Murraylands & Riverland Landscape Board

***Getting down with the understorey
- lessons from native grasslands***

Nicola has spent two decades working as a botanist, mostly in the grasslands of south-eastern Australia

She will speak on her current project, managing the Iron-grass native grasslands of South Australia, sharing insights on her work to restore understorey vegetation including the importance of resilience and why grasslands are more than just grass.



The presentation will be preceded by a short AGM for the Friends Group
Light supper served afterwards

Under Covid protocols, Urrbrae House is currently restricted capacity.

Please RSVP to info@friendsofwaitereserve.org.au by 13 May

Enquiries: Peter Bird 0418 853 834

Working bees get a makeover

Some while ago we attempted to re-brand our fortnightly working bees to make them sound a little less onerous and potentially to attract more punters. For a while we called them 'Walking bees' to reflect that mostly we spent our time systemically marching across the reserve pulling olive seedlings.

Things have moved on. Now we generally either target weeds on our best patches or carry out revegetation. Less walking. More bushcare. Recently I saw the Friends of Glenthorne use the term '*Bushcare Days*' for their working bees. I propose we do the same. See below for our Bushcare Day program, the first scheduled for Sunday 20 March. See you there.

Pete Bird

Bushcare days (formerly 'Working bees')

As noted above, our re-branded Bushcare days resume on **Sunday 20 March**. Thereafter, they happen as usual on the *first Saturday and third Sunday of each month* through to December. **Note that the third Sunday in April clashes with Easter and has been moved to 10 April.** I will email reminders a few days before each bushcare day.

Our first three visits March-April will concentrate on the southern boundary and western slopes, hunting olive seedlings and other perennial weeds. Be prepared for a nice walk in the park. We will also maintain and pick up last year's tree guards. In May-June we will move 'up top' and, subject to rain, will start our tree planting program.

Contact Peter Bird for more information:

pjbird1@bigpond.com 418 853 834

Bushcare program

Sun 20 March

Sat 2 April Sun 10 April*

Sat 7 May Sun 15 May

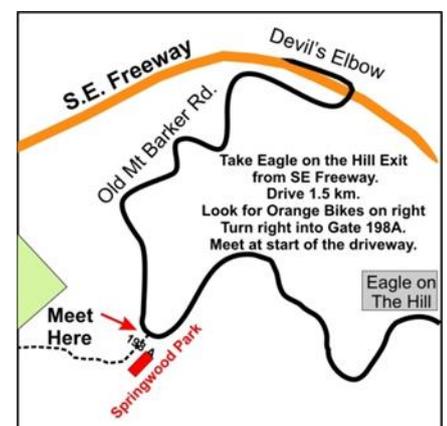
Sat 4 June Sun 19 June

**Changed from 17 April (Easter)*

Meeting places:

March – April: Meet Gate 82, opposite 10 Hillside Rd, Springfield (Left map).

May – June: Meet 'Springwood Park', 198A Mt Barker Rd, Leawood Gardens, via South-east Freeway (Right map)



Adopt a patch and commune with nature - *Marg Brown*

Adopting a patch in the Waite Reserve is a very satisfying thing to do. It provides one with a sense of connection to the land in a more meaningful way and the opportunity to learn about the plants, trees and the weeds! As Pete said, adopting a patch it has 'the benefit of giving people the flexibility to work when time, weather, body and soul permit'. It also provides time for quiet reflection in nature with the birds and, for me, the most stunning view from Harold's Lookout. It was named for former Director of Waite Research Institute, Harold Woolhouse. Apparently, it was his favourite place. It is easy to see how the views would have inspired him to turn what were sheep paddocks into a conservation reserve.



The view from Marg's adopted patch at Harold's Lookout

I am a close neighbour of the reserve. I have walked up the hill for the past 40+ years, exploring the hills and gullies, observing the changing seasons and falling in love with several of the old gum trees. I have watched some slowly die, others destroyed by lightning and many emerging from the ground as saplings then growing into fully fledged trees. My favourite is the huge Red Gum at the bottom of Wild Dogs Glen (inside Gate 61) which is now suffering from the changing weather patterns and needs lots of hugs!

My patch has some lovely remnant wildflowers, including Spur Velleia, Clustered Everlasting, Running Postman and Twining Glycine (pictured). But there are also plenty of weeds. The idea is to gradually remove these to allow the native plants to increase. I adopted the patch in September and started immediately on the Sparaxis and Cape Tulip, but too late to stop some going to seed. Hopefully this year! Since then I have chased African Weed Orchid, Narrow-leaf Clover and, over the summer, mostly Plantain, with considerable help from other Friends.

One of the most rewarding aspects of adopting a patch is the support one receives from our two stalwart committee members, Pete and Clint. Although I enjoy the solitude of an hour or so up the hill, I have also learnt to identify the plants and weeds and feel as though I am in a very small way contributing to the amazing amount of work that goes into preserving this precious conservation reserve.



Pete's Nature Diary

Know your onions

There have long been two species of Onion orchid on the reserve plant list: Notched Onion-orchid *Microtis arenaria* and Slender Onion-orchid *M. parviflora*, the latter listed as 'unconfirmed'. In recent years I had carefully inspected the labellum on each of many individual onion-orchids but only ever seen notched ones typical of *M. arenaria*. Then in late November I noticed several groups of late-flowering, quite slender Onion orchids on Quartz Hill. Sure enough, the labellum on each was notch-less. (The labellum is the middle one of three flaps visible in the left image). This with other characteristics and habitat suggest this is indeed the missing *M. parviflora*. I noted about 20 plants north-east of the summit.



Front and side views of the tiny individual flowers of Slender Onion-orchid *Microtis parviflora*

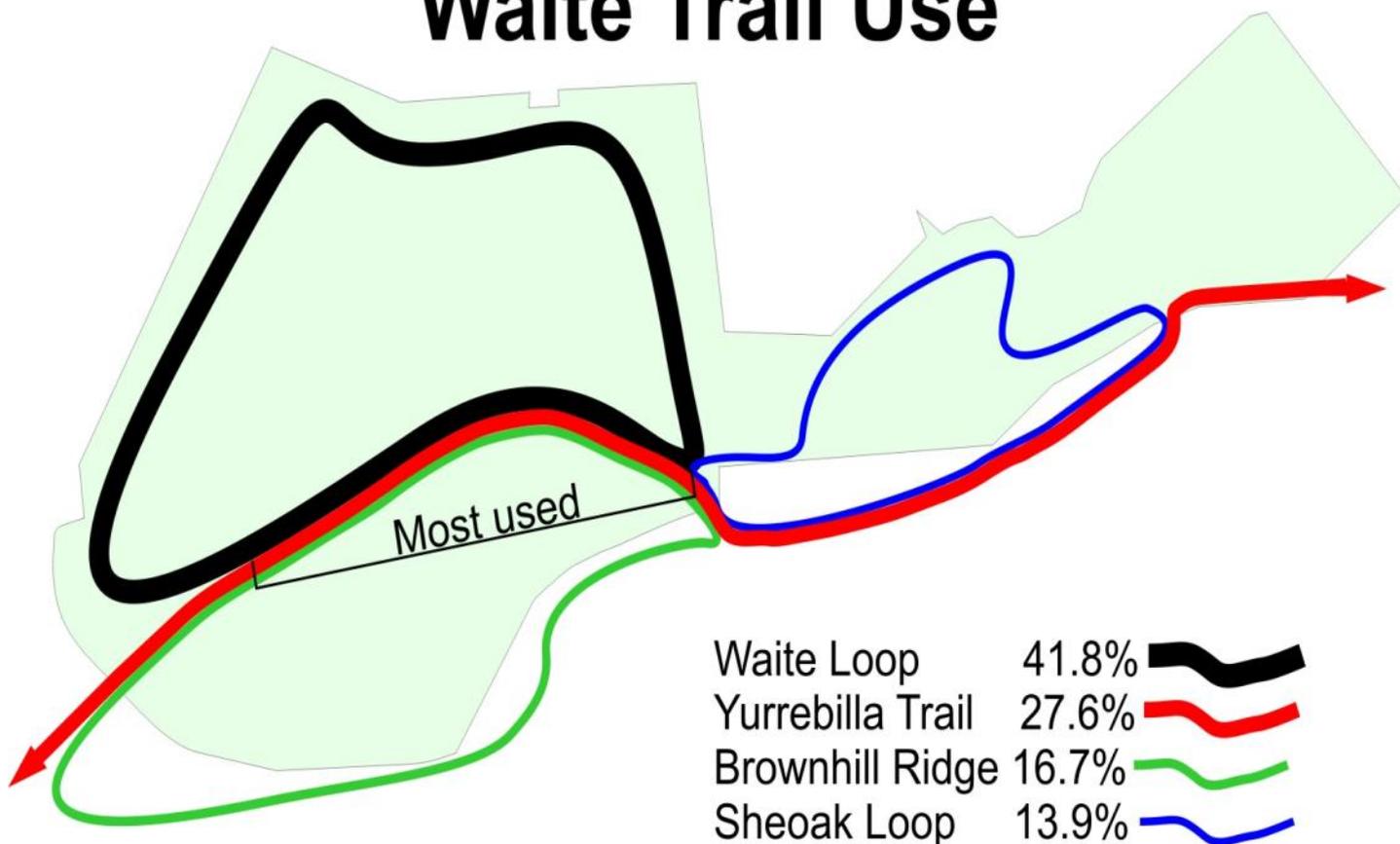
Spot the spider

In December I was admiring the yellow flowers of a Pale Groundsel *Senecio hypoleucus* at the base of Wild Dogs Glen when I noticed a hoverfly right under my nose. Musing why it didn't zip off when I clumsily invaded its personal space, I suddenly realised we were not alone. It was in the clutches of a Yellow-bellied Crab Spider *Zygometis xanthogaster*. Crab spiders, also known as Flower spiders, are masters of camouflage, their colour usually matching closely the flowers they stake out. They lie in wait with their long forelegs characteristically outstretched crab-like ready to ambush visiting insects like the unsuspecting hoverfly. These are quickly immobilised with a bite to the head or neck allowing them to handle prey way bigger than themselves.



Yellow-bellied Crab Spider *Zygometis xanthogaster* with Half-band Hoverfly *Melangyna viridiceps*

Waite Trail Use



The graphic above shows the results of counting 3263 walkers and runners at the crossroads of the Waite and Sheoak Loops in the Reserve during 2021.

The lines on the map have been scaled in proportion to the percentage of users of each trail.

It is clear that the section of trail from the crossroads of the Waite and Sheoak Loops to the Yurrebilla Trail exit in Koala Gully is the most heavily trafficked section of our trail network. This heavily trafficked section includes the narrow paths in Netherby Gully and Koala Gully, which is why I have put time into improving the trail in those sections. There is still more to do this next winter to improve trail safety.

On most weekends, Yurrebilla trail use is low, with generally less than 10 users per day. But this is not the case when events such as the Five Peaks Run are held. On those days, the trail can have 400 to 600 runners using it. The run organisers recognise that there narrow sections on the trail and start the runners in groups, so as to spread out the impact and reduce crowding.

The people counters near Gates 61 and 88 use changes in an infra red beam to count walkers. If there is waving grass in the line of sight, the counter will detect that too. The solution has been two-fold. Jeff Glasson has brushcut the grass and I have made a target for the beam to aim at. These changes have eliminated the waving grass problem, but the Gate 61 counter still undercounts by at least 15%. This is due to people who walk past in groups being counted as 1 rather than 2, 3 or 4.

Clint Garrett



New Counter target

Autumn may not be the best time to launch a new segment on weeds, but with more than 120 species of exotic plants recorded in the reserve, and many more beating a path to our door, there is pretty much a weed for all seasons.



In this segment I want to focus on those weeds that currently have restricted distributions, or that have been 'eradicated' but which periodically reappear. These are weeds that also have the potential to become a serious problem if not quickly jumped upon, often called 'alert' weeds.

Your job is two-fold. To sniff out any incursions and either to jump on them yourselves, or to bring them to the attention of others who can do the jumping for you, especially those that need chemical control. We start with a weed once common in the reserve, but reduced to low numbers by regular control.

Silverleaf Nightshade *Solanum elaeagnifolium*

Identification

Plant: Erect, blue-grey perennial to knee high with scattered fine spines
Leaves: Long, narrow, silver-grey & velvety with wavy edges
Flowers: violet-purple with fused petals and prominent orange-yellow stamens
Fruit: Round, green-striped, ripening to orange
Similar plants: Could be confused with native Kangaroo Apple *Solanum laciniatum* but which has smooth dark green leaves and oval fruits.



Location

Currently localised to small populations along the Easement Track and scattered individuals north and south of Netherby Knoll on the Western Slopes. Inside and just south of SA Water Tank fence. Also present in paddocks on campus, seed carried in by sheep.



Monitoring & Control

New shoots emerge and grow in late spring and summer. Search all infested areas several times from *October-May*. Control requires chemical treatment in *Nov-Dec* to prevent fruit set, and again in *March-April* to weaken and exhaust the perennial root system. Plants translocate energy from the leaves to the roots once the weather starts to cool in autumn. Spraying then uses this translocation process to carry herbicide to the roots. Avoid spraying if plants are moisture-stressed. Best done in the cool of the morning. Use secateurs to remove and bag any fruit before it matures.



More info: [PIRSA Silverleaf nightshade management manual.pdf](#)

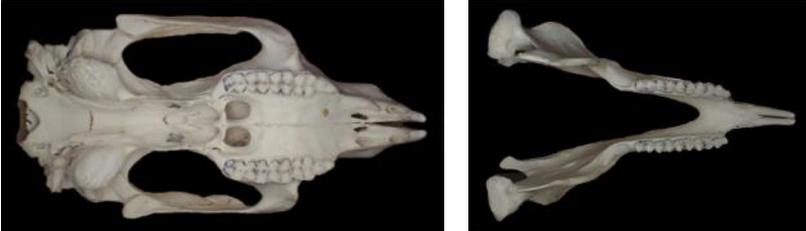
Pete Bird

Editors note: The PIRSA management manual describes how readily Silverleaf Nightshade spreads from root fragments if cultivated or partially dug up. This is why mechanical control is risky and unlikely to be successful.

Mammal Skulls - *Pete Bird*

After a previous feature on mammal poo I give you mammal skulls. From the scatological to the macabre. Yes, I'm a sicko! Mammal bones persist for a long time in the environment so it's not surprising that their skulls are often encountered in the reserve. There aren't too many choices so the four skulls described should be fairly easy to identify once you know what to look for. All are essentially herbivores although Brushtails do sometimes take eggs and nestling birds.

Knowing the dental formula can be helpful. It describes the number of each type of tooth on *one* side of the mouth from front to back in the sequence: Incisors, Canines, Premolars & Molars. For example most human adults have the dental formula: I2.C1.P2.M3. Check yours out now. The age of the animal can be determined by size, tooth number and wear pattern.

<p>Western Grey Kangaroo <i>Macropus fuliginosus</i></p> <p>Long, narrow muzzle Wide gap between incisors & molars Sharp, projecting lower incisors Molars move forward & fall out with age; old animals have few molars Upper dental formula: I3.C0.P1.M4</p>	
<p>Koala <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i></p> <p>Robust, rectangular skull Long, narrow eye sockets Large projecting ear bones (bullae) Small upper canines Straight molar row Upper dental formula: I3.C1.P1.M4</p>	
<p>Common Brushtail Possum <i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i></p> <p>Front of muzzle rounded Well-developed upper canine teeth Curved molar row Ridged palate Upper dental formula: I3.C1.P2.M4</p>	
<p>Common Ringtail Possum <i>Pseudocheirus peregrinus</i></p> <p>Rounded skull Triangular beak-like muzzle Teeth crowded without large gaps Upper dental formula: I3.C1.P3.M4</p>	

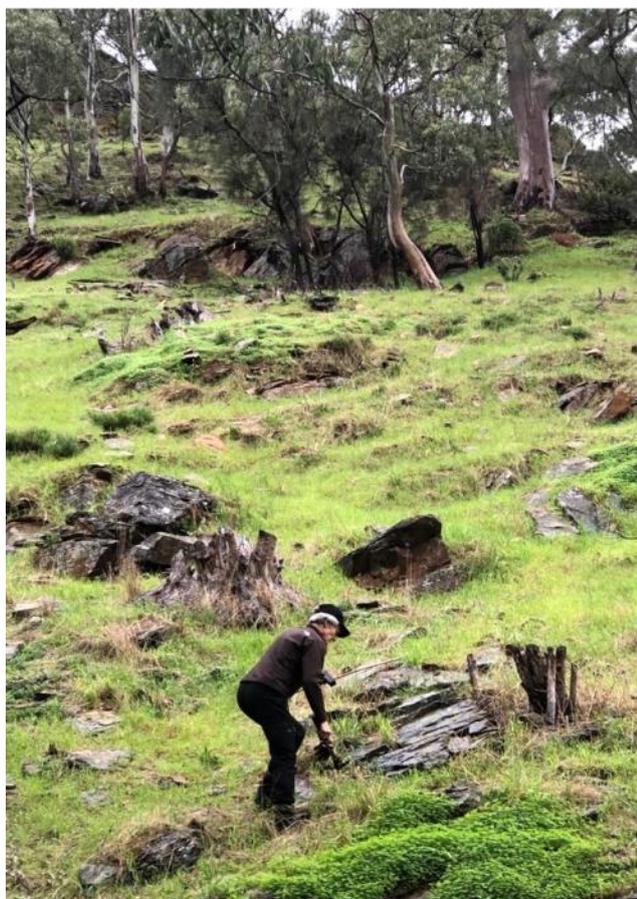
Friends in action



John, Andrea and others pulling Plantain on Sarah's patch, December 2021



Clint at work



Sally tree planting in Wild Dog Glen

And a not-friend.....



Sparaxis villosa, one of our abundant bulb weeds

Photo: Meg Robertson

Tree planters needed

Get ready now for a big season of tree-planting ahead! The Friends in November, and two groups of TAFE students in February, have just finished seeding a whopping 2,350 tubes at the Urrbrae nursery. Thankfully, not all will grow into seedlings, but with another 220 plants grown from cuttings or division at Burnside nursery, we will be busy. We also broke the ton, with an amazing 103 species sown.



Some of Rachel's TAFE students prepare tubes for seeding

Our November plantings have gone berserk following the January rain and humidity. The Kangaroo Apple, Native Hollyhock and Sheoaks in particular are thriving. Ditto the Acacias, once netted to stop the continual grazing by hungry Brushtail possums at the nursery.

Thanks to Mareya Dashorst, Rachel Eckermann and the 24 Conservation & Land Management students for seeding assistance. Now for some good opening rains so we can begin planting in May-June!

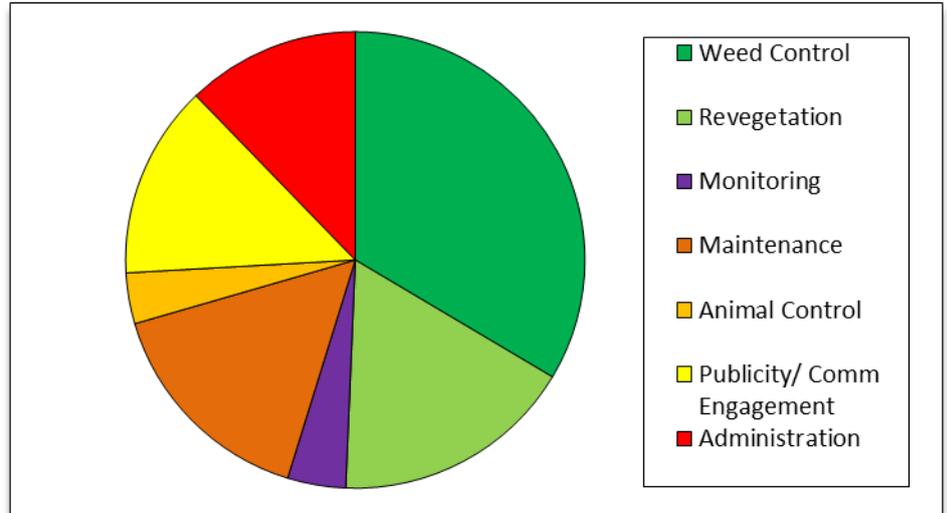
Pete Bird



Mareya & TAFE students with their freshly seeded tubes prepared in February

Volunteers break record!

Last year 62 Friends contributed 5,025 hours of volunteer time, breaking the previous year's record. This included over 740 hours at working bees. Well done all. The pie chart below shows restoration activities, including weed control and revegetation, comprised about half this effort. Maintenance (mainly trails and signage) and Publicity & Community Engagement also featured strongly.



Join the Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve!

Ordinary membership \$15

The Membership/renewal form and details can be found at:

<https://friendsofwaitereserve.org.au/>

Forms can be submitted electronically or printed. Email: info@friendsofwaitereserve.org.au

Non-members are welcome at our activities

New members

The Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve welcome new members who have joined recently including:

Kate Prescott, Mark Green, Linda Nelson, Michael Nelson, Jiyeong Park, Joy McDonald, Kelly Wright, Phil Shearman, Miranda Stocco, James Last, Bill and Sarah Last, Christopher Rawlinson, Barry Lynch, Claire Sims, Greg Sweeney, Cameron Longshaw, Jessica Lawson, Janice Amato, Robert and Pam Wright, Greg Harris, Craig Hill, Peter Boutsalis, John Cashen, Will Paior, Simon and Rae Wood, Neil Renfrey, Steve Mabbs, Roger and Anne Anastasiou, Bob Geary, Jennifer Birve, Glen Woodward, Day family (Andrew and Cilla), Shannon Evenden.

FWCR contacts

President: Peter Bird (0418-853 -834) pjbird1@bigpond.com **Secretary:** Glenn Gale (0428-812-902)

Treasurer: Lynda Yates **Newsletter editor:** Meg Robertson

Committee: Kate Delaporte, Grant Joseph, Penny Paton, Meg Robertson, Richard Brooks, Clint Garrett

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