



COMING EVENTS

Netherby Birds

Tues 29 Oct

Koala Survey

Sat 23 Nov

Working bees 2024

Sat 7 Sept

Sun 15 Sept

Sat 5 Oct

Sun 20 Oct

Sat 2 Nov

Sun 17 Nov

Sat 7 Dec

President's Page - A Century of Birds

My passion for the natural world started with birds (no surprise given my name). I joined the South Australian Ornithological Association, now Birds SA 45 years ago. Birds SA has a proud history. Founded in 1899, it is the oldest birding association in Australasia.

On 29 October, Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve and Birds SA will hold a joint meeting. Long-standing FWCR members Penny Paton and Philippa Horton will speak at the meeting. Their presentation: *'Netherby Birds: John Sutton's records and what has changed in the last 100 years'* will focus on John's records from 1919-1938 and compare them with the current day, including records from the reserve. It will also feature photos by members David Gunner and Peter Barnes.

That Penny and Phillipa are both life members of the Friends group speaks volumes of their contribution to our group. But they are also extraordinary bird people.

Penny has made a particular contribution to the history of ornithological endeavour in SA. Her speciality is tracking down obscure bird records from early correspondence.

Philippa was for 30 years Collections Manager at the SA Museum where she maintained the incredible specimen collection and pursued taxonomic and historical research.

Without wanting to pre-empt Penny and Phillipa's presentation, I think we can safely say they will report significant changes to the local bird community over the past century. Please join us for this historic occasion. See flyer inside.

Pete Bird

Spotted Pardalote
in reserve
(Photo: David Gunner)



On the trail - Clint Garrett

In theory, Winter is a good time for digging holes and putting up signs. The ground should be softer, which is often true but not all ground is soft as I found out.

There are new trailhead signs at Gates 61 and 85 using the old sign frames (No digging needed) and new signs on new frames at Gates 89, 91 and on Urrbrae Ridge. The latter sign was the exception to the softer ground idea. It took 6 hours to dig through rock to create two 500 mm deep holes.

Bob Geary kindly assisted by transporting the frames from Innovation Engineering to the Reserve and Peter Bird transported the frame for Urrbrae Ridge. David Gunner's photography session was interrupted in order that he could hold the frame in place while the concrete was put in around the legs of the new sign at Gate 91. There is one more sign to go at the Yurrebilla Trail entry from Carrick Hill. The ground there is Mitcham Quartzite, which will be a challenge.



The Urrbrae Ridge sign: a tedious job (Photo: Pete Bird)

There is a new gate at Gate 86 on the Southern Boundary. The old one had rusted through in several places and was very difficult to open. Bob Geary transported the gate from Mount Barker to site and Glenn Gale helped me to hang it. The rail-line post created its own set of challenges as gates are designed for fittings that screw into wooden posts, not steel rails.



Glenn Gale with the new Gate 86 (Photo: Clint Garrett)

Up until the end of August, we have had 30,424 walkers past the counters. This is 2,966 more than the same period last year. On August 4th we had 278 walkers during the day who came from 55 different postcodes. One of our walkers said this:

"Adelaide is so lucky to have the Reserve. I like it because it is peaceful, you get to see wildlife and the people you meet on the trail are nice people."

Some of our walkers are very determined people. This couple pushed this dual child pram from Gate 82 up to the crossroads of the 2 trails. On the narrow sections in Koala Gully and Netherby Gully, the pram was wheeled on two wheels and the children walked. A great effort by all concerned.



A long and difficult walk with a pram, but they succeeded!
(Photo: Clint Garrett)

Joint Birds SA & Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve meeting

a presentation by
Penny Paton & Philippa Horton

'Netherby Birds: John Sutton's records and what has changed in the last 100 years'



Grey Fantail (David Gunner)

Compares the birds seen by John Sutton at Netherby 1919-1938 with species present today.

Includes records of birds seen in Waite Conservation Reserve.

Featuring photos by FWCR members
David Gunner & Peter Barnes

**Tuesday 29 October
7.30 pm**

Charles Hawker Building
University of Adelaide Waite Campus
Waite Rd, opposite Hartley Grove,
Urrbrae

Waite Conservation Reserve

Koala Survey

On a very hot day in November 2012, we recorded 20 koalas in the reserve as part of the Great Koala Count organised by Uni SA.

Time to do it again.

Can you help?



Do you have a favourite part of the reserve? Are you available to count koalas on this patch?

We need around 15 people for a couple of hours. Get in early to choose your count area.

**Saturday 23 November
8.00 am...or when suits you**

Contact Peter Bird
pbjbird1@bigpond.com to register



Tall Moraea
Moraea bellendenii

Iridaceae

The genus *Moraea* should already be familiar to you. *Moraea flaccida* is One-leaf Cape Tulip, that beautiful but nasty out-of-control iris weed with the large salmon-coloured flowers. **Tall Moraea *Moraea bellendenii*** is a taller, yellow-flowered version. It is a distinctive species, easily identified and easy to control. Currently it has a restricted distribution in the reserve. With your help we can keep it that way!

Identification

Form: tall, slender, erect, dark green to 1.5 m.

Leaf: single long narrow pointed dark green strap 10 mm wide.

Flowers: diagnostic 3 large yellow petals on 1 metre stalks; Petals pointed oval with brown markings in throat; late spring.

Tuber: large brown corm \geq 5 cm below ground.

Fruit: long cylindrical seed pod that splits longitudinally into three.

Similar species: None when flowering. Plant taller and greener than the bluish One-leaf Cape Tulip

Location:

Uncommon but widespread in open locations. Seems to be increasing despite ongoing control. Mostly small colonies of 3-10 plants. New infestations can appear anywhere in reserve, spread by grazing animals, but most records from Urrbrae Ridge & Southern Boundary areas

Monitoring & control:

Check for presence at known sites and opportunistically in Sept-Oct when yellow flowers highly visible. Best to dig out corms. Use chisel or screwdriver to dig down beside stem & lever out deeply buried corm. Alternatively apply 1:5 glyphosate 360 or Metsulfuron methyl in water with 'Tongs of Death'.

Photos (left to right): detail of leaf, flower, and flower buds.



Working Bees

The late break meant a delay in tree planting and control of weed bulbs. Not to worry. This gave us more time to home in on removing olive seedlings from areas not visited in a while.

And we did eventually end up planting most of our 1300-odd tubestock. And shared a sausage sizzle on 3 August kindly provided by Annette and Andy Baker (below).

For the remainder of the year, we'll target Sparaxis, Cape tulip, and Weed orchid before transitioning to the perennial pain of Perennial Veldt Grass. See the program below.



Andy & Annette Baker presiding over the heritage barby



Working bee participants enjoying a sausage sizzle in the winter sun

Stay tuned for regular email reminders prior to each one.

Meet at Springwood Park unless instructed otherwise. Gloves and tools supplied. The final working bee for the year is 7 Dec after which we reconvene on Sun 16 March next year. Hope to see you out.

Pete



Working bees occur fortnightly every **first Saturday & third Sunday of the month 9.00am - 12.00noon**. Add the program below to your calendar.

2024 Program

Sat 7 Sept	Sun 15 Sept
Sat 5 Oct	Sun 20 Oct
Sat 2 Nov	Sun 17 Nov
Sat 7 Dec	

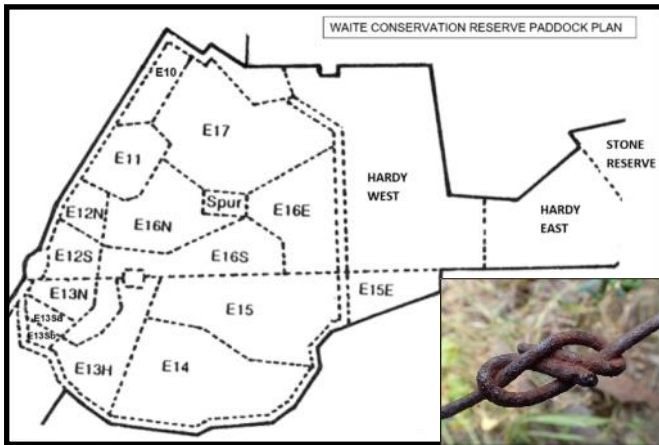
Reading this & want to help?

For anyone not yet volunteering, please go to: <https://bttr.im/o9678> and register online. Then email me at: pbjbird1@bigpond.com

A sheepish history - Part 1: fencing

Anyone who has wandered the reserve will probably have noticed reminders of its past use for grazing. But then I am the son of a sheep grazer so I may be more observant in this regard. Water troughs, yards, loading ramps and fences, all tell of a history of sheep.

Early maps show the reserve divided into around 20 paddocks, plus a perimeter laneway that facilitated easy movement of sheep between paddocks.



All this changed with the creation of the conservation reserve in 1992. At that time the Director of Waite, Harold Woolhouse, ordered the removal of the university sheep flock and dismantling of all internal fences to dissuade any future reinstatement of sheep. Phil Shearman and his workers obliged, removing more than 9-km of fencing weighing 15-tonnes at the metal recyclers.



All that remains of the fences 32 years later are the concrete or wooden strainer posts marking the corners of former paddocks. The posts often retain remnants of the wire fencing. One of these remnants is a small section of so-called 'marsupial netting' below Harold's Lookout.

By the time Peter Waite acquired his Urrbrae property he managed a huge pastoral estate in northern SA. Dingoes were a constant threat to sheep flocks. Exclusion fencing was used from the 1880s to protect sheep. Peter Waite was renowned as an innovator including his extensive use of fencing to manage grazing pressure.

It seems possible he was also an early adopter of fencing to exclude dingoes. If this was the case, he may well have been responsible for erecting the marsupial netting in the reserve.



While dingoes were locally eradicated by the time of Waite's tenancy, attacks by stray domestic dogs would have been a constant threat. Past manager of the university sheep flock, Tony Weatherly, tells me that dogs killing sheep was still an ongoing problem all those years later.

Pete Bird

Planting cross-cultural ties

Recently we were approached by Farah on behalf of 14 visiting Indonesian students seeking a 'volunteering opportunity to help conserve Australia's environment and introduce their culture as part of giving back to the community'. Not to mention celebrating Indonesian Independence Day.

The students from various Indonesian universities were recipients of Indonesia's International Student Mobility Award, a scholarship funding a semester of study at the University of Adelaide.

The group visited on 11 August resplendent in colourful traditional attire to help with our tree planting efforts. We had barely started however when a big male kangaroo caused a minor mutiny as the entire crew evacuated for the mandatory photos. The delightful group were soon back from their adventure and ended up planting 215 tubestock at Gate 82 and in the Southern Boundary 'tramline'. Thanks to the delightful Glenn, Meg B & Meg R for supervisory assistance.



The 14 Indonesian students ready for tree planting

TAFE weed controllers

Our crack team of weed warriors assembled on 6 August to train and oversee Nick Anderson's 16 TAFE Horticulture students in weed control techniques: Clint on *Tongs of Death* and Helen on digging weed bulbs on Quartz Hill; Pete on weed ID and spraying of annual weeds on the Stone Reserve direct seeding patch; and Grant presenting his celebrated 'Everything you need to know about herbicide spraying.' Fine weather, receptive students and generous help from Clint, Helen and Grant made for another productive day both for us and the students.



TAFE students spray annual weeds on the direct seeding site

One good intern deserves another

Sila, Roslyn, Leif, Irene and Lily visited the reserve on 22 August, part of the latest crop of university Horticulture interns. The five Marine & Wildlife and Agricultural Science students learnt basic restoration techniques: weeding, monitoring and revegetation, including the planting of 50 tubestock at Gate 82.



University interns visiting the reserve

Orchid reward fraud

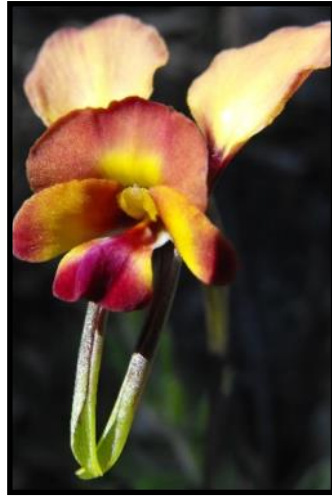
While researching last year's suspected [hybrid sun-orchid](#), I came across a discussion of individual variation in orchid species on the [Australian National Botanic Gardens](#) website. The author used the example of donkey orchids (*Diuris spp.*) as a group that exhibits extreme individual variation in flower colour and floral markings. But why I hear you ask?

The theory goes like this. Donkey orchids rely on insects for pollination. But unlike most other insect-pollinated plants, the stingy donkey offers no food reward, neither nectar nor pollen. Instead, they attract insects by mimicking the showy flowers of other plants which *do* offer a reward. This saves on energy but at the risk that potential insect pollinators will see through the ruse and avoid the duplicitous donkeys.

To counter this, the tricky orchid employs notable colour plasticity to minimise the risk of insects recognising and learning from the deceit. This tactic not only confuses the insects but at times those of us attempting to identify the orchid species. This difficulty is often compounded by their ability to hybridise with similar species (Thanks to Peter Lang who identified a probable hybrid among my photos for inclusion here).

All of this prompted me to look out some of my images of Wallflower Donkey Orchid *Diuris orientis* from the reserve. Thanks also to Clint Garrett for images 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

~ Pete Bird ~



Thar no be dragons!

There are 15 reptiles on the reserve list. In my 20-odd years I have seen all but one. The **Eastern Bearded Dragon *Pogona barbata*** is a large, distinctive lizard that basks on exposed perches and should be relatively easy to detect. It seems clear that they are no longer present. To be on the list I presume it was recorded by workers in the 1990's. Past and current Springwood Park managers similarly have failed to detect it. I'd be keen to hear if you've ever seen one in the reserve or surrounds. Let me know.



Cryptic by name & by nature

Some may remember I reported seeing Cryptic Sun-moths *Synemon theresa* in Stone Reserve in 2020 [see here](#). This record has recently caught the attention of those seeking to nominate the species for listing under the *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act*. As part of this, they hope to conduct surveys in the reserve this summer. Please contact me if you'd like to help. But only if you don't mind the heat. Sun-moths like it hot.

Toadlet curiosity

In early July I found this nondescript little frog sheltering under a log on Quartz Hill. With nary a drop of even semi-permanent water in the reserve, it is surprising that we have any frogs, let alone this one. You see, female **Brown Toadlets *Pseudophryne bibronii*** have the curious habit of laying their eggs on land.

Following the first autumn rains, male toadlets build nests and begin to call. They have two different versions: an advertisement call for the ladies and a territorial call to rival males. The females spend some time inspecting nests and their attendant males.

Rather than selecting one soulmate, they hedge their bets and spread the love between several, eventually laying eggs in up to 8 separate nests [Byrne & Silla, 2023](#).

The eggs start to develop but then pause until heavy rains flush them into a water body where they hatch into tiny taddies. Presumably, our little guy began life in the Springwood Park dam in the deep valley below Quartz Hill. Then climbed the 300 very steep metres up to the moist hiding place under our log.



Direct seeding progress

Ever since we ear-marked a 2-hectare patch in Stone Reserve for direct seeding in 2022, we have been slowly chipping away at the weeds. Not with hoes but with an intensive chemical regime, supplemented by hand weeding.

The heavy lifting work is being done by revegetation mob *Seeding Natives Inc.* who have sprayed the site four times: in Sept 22; July 23 and in Jan and August this year. It takes Caleb (pictured) less than 2 hours of zooming back and forth to complete the open parts with his GPS-assisted spray cart or ute and boom.

The Friends then take many more, sweatier hours to complete each spray treatment, mopping up the fiddly bits around trees, rocks and logs with a backpack sprayer. As well we have spent many hours shifting rocks, logs and olive stumps to improve access for weeding and ultimately for the direct seeding planned for 2026 or later.

On the matter of seed, we have received \$5,000 from the *Friends of Parks Small Grant* scheme to help purchase the understorey seed needed. Thank you to Department for Environment and Water for the grant.



Landcare grant

Thank you to the *Landcare Association of South Australia* for a grant to purchase chemicals to assist us in our long-term olive control program. The grant of \$1894 enabled us to purchase 200L of BioOil, 60L of BioSafe spray oil and 20L of triclopyr herbicide to continue Basal Bark treatment of olives.



The reserve at sunset (Photo: Claire Sims)

FWCR contacts

Please join us

Hello readers. Please consider joining/ renewing membership Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve. We need to maintain our membership above 50 to maintain Gift Recipient Status (tax deductibility for donors).

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.

President: Peter Bird (0418-853 -834) pjbird1@bigpond.com

Secretary: Glenn Gale (0428-812-902)

Newsletter editor: Claire Sims

Committee: Grant Joseph, Penny Paton, Meg Robertson, Clint Garrett, Simon Treloar, Sue Last, Sarah Thomas

Address: Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve Inc., PO Box 231, Mitcham SC, SA 5062.

Email: info@friendsofwaitereserve.org.au **Website:** <https://friendsofwaitereserve.org.au/>

Newsletter photo credits: Photos by authors unless otherwise indicated.