



President's Page - Stone Reserve boundary

Three years into an intensive weed control program on our direct seeding site and we've got the weeds roughly on the run. We're counting down now to mechanical seeding on the 2-ha Stone Reserve site in 2026. Pest plants are one problem. Pesty plant munchers are another.

Feral deer and kangaroos have severely impacted past tubestock plantings. You don't need a crystal ball to see they will also smash our direct seeding. Even small numbers of these herbivores are likely to obliterate the freshly seeded understory.

Culling deer gives only temporary relief and culling over-abundant kangaroos is problematic. It is time for a more permanent solution. The committee has been exploring the option to rebuild the Stone Reserve boundary fence to exclude herbivores. The perimeter is less than 2-km. The northern (freeway) section is good quality chainmesh. The southern (Springwood Park) boundary is cattle-proof, needing only 'topping & tailing' to raise the height and add a bottom apron. This leaves a mere 630-m of new fence to replace the dilapidated eastern and western sections.

Fences are not cheap, especially high ones to exclude high-jumpers, and when the landscape is steep and inaccessible like ours. We have applied for a Native Vegetation Heritage Agreement Grant to part-fund a fence, but at this stage are not hopeful of support. So just in case anyone out there has a few dollars to spare, I'd be happy to hear from you.

Pete Bird

COMING EVENTS

Xmas party

9 Dec

Urrbrae House

Birds SA meeting

25 Feb 7.30pm

Charles Hawker
Building, Waite Rd,
Urrbrae

Working bees

Sat 7 Dec 2024

Sun 16 Mar 2025



Stone Reserve boundary - Solid yellow line: new fence;
Dashed yellow line: upgraded fence; Green line: direct seeding site

2024 planting summary

A total of 1735 tubes of 94 species were sown at TAFE in February, plus a few SA Blue Gums and Manna Gums for Springwood Park. We eventually planted out 1305 tubestock of 75 species at a success rate of 75 percent.

We were helped mightily in our planting efforts this year by 31 TAFE students, 14 visiting Indonesian university students and 5 Horticulture interns who together planted 950 tubestock.

Initial plantings by TAFE in early May fared surprisingly well helped by pre-watering holes and water crystals in the very dry conditions. Most were protected from grazing deer and kangaroos by planting outside Gate 82 or within the double-fenced 'tramline' on the Southern Boundary.

Planting of the remainder was delayed until soil temperatures started to warm in late August.



Common Vanilla-lily. One of 167 tubestock planted including some carried over from last year and already flowering.

Species	Common name	Total
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Wreath Wattle	2
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Kangaroo Thorn	16
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle	18
<i>Acacia retinodes</i>	Hill Wirilda	20
<i>Acaena echinata</i>	Sheep's Burr	7
<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i>	Drooping Sheoak	27
<i>Anthosachne scabra</i>	Native Wheat-grass	12
<i>Aristida behriana</i>	Bunch Wire-grass	14
<i>Arthropodium fimbriatum</i>	Common Vanilla-lily	88
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Common Vanilla-lily	167
<i>Atriplex semibaccata</i>	Berry Saltbush	1
<i>Austrostipa blackii</i>	Crested Spear-grass	2
<i>Austrostipa curticomis</i>	Short-crest Spear-grass	16
<i>Austrostipa flavescens</i>	Coastal Spear-grass	3
<i>Austrostipa mollis</i>	Soft Spear-grass	3
<i>Austrostipa nodosa</i>	Tall Spear-grass	18
<i>Austrostipa scabra</i>	Rough Spear-grass	13
<i>Brunonia australis</i>	Blue Pincushion	15
<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	Bulbine Lily	173
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids	10
<i>Calocephalus citreus</i>	Lemon Beauty-heads	7
<i>Chamaescilla corymbosa</i>	Blue Squill	10
<i>Chloris truncata</i>	Windmill Grass	24
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	Old Man's Beard	18
<i>Convolvulus angustissimus</i>	Australian Bindweed	8
<i>Convolvulus remotus</i>	Grassy Bindweed	16
<i>Daucus glochidiatus</i>	Native Carrot	9
<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	Pale Flax-lily	5
<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily	1
<i>Dichelacne crinita</i>	Long-hair Plume-grass	6
<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i>	Sticky Hopbush	2
<i>Einadia nutans</i>	Climbing Saltbush	16
<i>Enneapogon nigricans</i>	Black-head Grass	6
<i>Eryngium ovinum</i>	Blue Devil	17
<i>Glycine rubiginosa</i>	Twining Glycine	1
<i>Glycine tabacina</i>	Variable Glycine	5
<i>Goodenia paradoxa</i>	Spur Velleia	10
<i>Goodenia pinnatifida</i>	Cut-leaf Goodenia	12

Species	Common name	Total
<i>Juncus pallidus</i>	Pale Rush	12
<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman	3
<i>Lachnagrostis aemula</i>	Blown Grass	19
<i>Lagenophora gunniana</i>	Coarse Bottle-daisy	26
<i>Linum marginale</i>	Native Flax	14
<i>Logania saxatilis</i>	Rock Logania	3
<i>Lomandra densifolia</i>	Soft Tussock Mat-rush	6
<i>Lomandra micrantha</i>	Small-flower Mat-rush	10
<i>Lomandra sororia</i>	Mat-rush (carry over 1)	1
<i>Lotus australis</i>	Austral Trefoil	11
<i>Luzula meridionalis</i>	Common Wood-rush	1
<i>Maireana enchylaenoides</i>	Wingless Fissure-weed	1
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	Weeping Rice-grass	25
<i>Neurachne alopecuroidea?</i>	Fox-tail Mulga-grass	2
<i>Nicotiana maritima</i>	Coast Tobacco	1
<i>Pittosporum angustifolia</i>	Native Apricot	10
<i>Plantago gaudichaudii</i>	Narrow-leaf Plantain	1
<i>Poa crassicaudex</i>	Thick-stem Tussock-grass	7
<i>Poa labillardieri</i>	Common Tussock-grass	18
<i>Rumex brownii</i>	Slender Dock	5
<i>Rytidosperma auriculatum</i>	Lobed Wallaby-grass	37
<i>Rytidosperma caespitosum</i>	Wallaby-grass	37
<i>Rytidosperma erianthum</i>	Hill Wallaby-grass	24
<i>Rytidosperma fulvum</i>	Leafy Wallaby-grass	40
<i>Rytidosperma pilosum</i>	Velvet Wallaby-grass	17
<i>Rytidosperma racemosum</i>	Slender Wallaby-grass	21
<i>Rytidosperma setaceum</i>	Small-flower Wallaby-grass	39
<i>Senecio hispidulus</i>	Rough Groundsel	20
<i>Senecio hypoleucus</i>	Pale Groundsel	9
<i>Senecio picridioides</i>	Purple-leaf Groundsel	10
<i>Senecio quadridentatus</i>	Cotton Groundsel	20
<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>	Kangaroo Apple	5
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass	41
<i>Vittadinia cuneata</i>	Wedge Vittadinia	9
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	Tall Bluebell	1
Total 75 spp.		1305

A sheepish history - Part 2: Water

Waite Conservation Reserve is spectacular, but a little on the dry side. Only after sustained heavy rain does surface water hang around for more than a day or two. Not much good for sheep which need to drink daily. In the last newsletter we talked about fencing to contain and manage sheep in the reserve. Just as there are artefacts of past fencing so there are reminders of a system to supply drinking water for the sheep.

The reserve was originally divided into about 20 paddocks. Each needed water, supplied by a

system of pipes and troughs. Water was pumped up to the tanks at Wylie Trig at the top of Tanks Track then reticulated to iron or concrete troughs in each paddock.



Concrete trough in Koala Gully



Rusted iron trough in Netherby Gully

The original steel pipes were mostly dug underground but you can see one section running down the southern side of Tanks Track. This pipe links the Wylie Trig tanks to the tank and pump just south of Tank 227, the huge SA Water tank in the reserve. The old steel pipe has been superseded in part by polythene pipe. The old troughs are no longer serviceable but have been replaced by two new poly troughs at Wylie Trig and the Koala Gully standpipe to service wildlife.

Most are still present although all are now decommissioned except for one in the southern Easement. This supplies water to sheep trucked in to keep the grass down in spring to manage fire risk. It is also used extensively by birds, especially local parrots, pigeons and honeyeaters.

Record $\frac{1}{4}$ -2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " drop-forged pipe wrench found in the reserve. Presumably used for joining threaded water pipes.



Pete Bird

Lendlease lends a hand

Rain ended the visit early for the Lendlease crew but not before they had pulled 1200 olive seedlings. The project team from the Women's & Children's Hospital build visited us on 18 October as part of their community volunteer program. Thanks to the 13 who attended and to FWCR Jake & CJ for help.



TAFE weed controllers

Seven metres! That's the height of the tallest olive sapling popped by TAFE students Dylan & Dan at our latest weed control training day on 28 October. The two D's were part of Nick Anderson's latest group of Conservation & Ecosystem Management students to help with our weed control efforts, and Nick's third weed control class to visit this year. The group of 19 students learnt about: Weed Spraying Techniques under Grant's tutelage; Basal Bark Treatment with Pete; Tree-popping with Clint; and Drill & Fill with Helen, Meg & Meg. Thanks to all for assistance with demonstrating & supervising.

Dylan & Dan with a 5-metre tree-popped olive sapling. They got others up to 7-metres!

Local member visit

Clint & Pete hosted a visit to the reserve by Member for Waite, Catherine Hutchesson on 20 September. They discussed a range of issues including: management of olives; feral deer control; the direct seeding project & funding for herbivore fencing.



KNOW YOUR WEED



Coolatai Grass *Hyparrhenia hirta*

Poaceae

Like many of our weeds, Coolatai Grass was introduced as a pasture grass but 'went feral'. Originally from the Mediterranean, Western Asia & Africa where it is known as Thatching Grass. A declared weed in SA with a very limited distribution in the reserve.

Identification

Form: tall perennial grey-green C₄ tussock to 1.2-m

Leaf: blue-green with a waxy bloom; rough to touch; flat, folded or in-rolled, 40 cm x 4 mm

Seed heads: many V-shaped spikes to 6-cm long; Nov-Mar.

Roots: dense, tough & fibrous.

Spikelets: long ~5-mm with 2-mm awn; hairy at base.

Similar species: Related to Silky Blue-grass (not known to occur in WCR). Don't be confused by tussocks of nearby Crested Spear-grass *Austrostipa blackii* & Native Wheat-grass *Anthosachne scabra*.

Location:

Known from a small area on the Western Slopes NW of Delamere Ave, Netherby. Plants have been found along the southern edge an embankment running upslope from a concrete post 60m NW of the Easement fence adjacent to Delamere Ave.

Monitoring & control:

Coolatai is summer active. It grows and flowers during late spring to autumn, depending on adequate moisture. Scout the above area & surrounds for new plants several times each year, especially from late spring to autumn. Carry a small mattock and grub out entire tussock. Bag and remove if seeds present. Alternatively spray with high rates of glyphosate & penetrant



Photos (left to right): detail of seed head, spikelet and leaves.

New committee member

Hi all, I would like to introduce myself as a new committee member. I became a volunteer on the reserve 6 years ago. Three years ago I 'adopted a patch' (known as Sarah's patch, near gate 82). Unfortunately I have been absent this year due to injury. Prior to my injury I was very much enjoying the process of understanding weed control, learning about native plants, enjoying the connection with nature and the freedom to go and do an hour (or three!) of weeding whenever I felt inspired. Pete (and many others) have continued to work on the patch while I have been 'laid up' and I was so pleased to see the progress that has been made, especially with plantain control, when I was able to get up there for the first time recently.

While my name is attached to the patch I am very keen for it to be a community effort. So, if you feel you have a bit of spare time and would like to get involved in weeding efforts, please contact Pete or me. Of course there is so much more work to be done elsewhere on the reserve and if anyone else who like to 'Adopt a Patch' please contact Pete.

While I have little expertise in bushcare (I spent my working life as an allied health professional), I hope to make myself useful on the committee in any way that is needed. I look forward to meeting you all at the working bee on December 7th at 'Sarah's patch'.

Sarah Thomas



More Birds of Waite Conservation Reserve

Last newsletter we featured bird photographs by members **David Gunner** and **Peter Barnes** to coincide with our joint meeting with Birds SA. Time for some more. Note, the meeting originally planned for October is now on 25 February, 7.30 pm at Charles Hawker Building University of Adelaide, Waite Rd, Urrbrae.



Images L to R from top: Western Whistler (DG), Noisy Miner (DG), Adelaide Rosella (PB); Crested Pigeon (PB). Note PB is Peter Barnes, not Pete Bird.



Working Bees

By the time you read this, our working bee season will be over. The past three months have seen us focus on weeding those parts of the reserve with the highest biodiversity: Quartz Hill and Pultenaea Hill; and other areas that one day we hope will have high biodiversity: Sarah's patch and the Direct Seeding Site.

Don't fret that our working bee season is over. Some weeds never sleep meaning there are always opportunities for you to assist between now and the official restart on Sunday **16 March** next year.

Clint and I will continue to visit the reserve over summer and are always happy for a hand. Olives are always high on my list and I hope to start dismantling derelict sections of the Stone Reserve fence. Give me a call.

~ Pete

Reading this & want to help?

For anyone not yet volunteering, please go to: <https://btrr.im/o9678> and register online. Then email me at: pjbird1@bigpond.com



Volunteers removing seeding grasses from the Native Grass Project area (Clint Garrett)

On the trail - Clint Garrett

Visitors

Counting people at the crossroads of the Waite Loop and Sheoak Loop provides information about where our walkers come from, as well as which trails are being used. On one recent Sunday count we had 258 walkers in 7 hours who came from 55 different postcodes. This information was part of my submission to the Mitcham City Council for \$2000 to assist with the printing of the Loop Trail guide. The postcode information showed that at least 35% of our walkers came from their council area. The application was successful and we received the \$2000 that was applied for.

The number of walkers in the Reserve is up this year. In 2023 between January and the end of November we had 36921 walkers. This year for the same period we have had 40793 walkers. Our surveyed walkers came from 158 Adelaide or near metro postcodes, as well as a range of interstate and International visitors. This is a good indicator of the popularity of the Reserve.

The map on the following page shows where some of our visitors have come from this year.



The big tree stump near the Crossroads is the highest point on the Waite Loop. Children pose on it to show that they have achieved success.

New signs

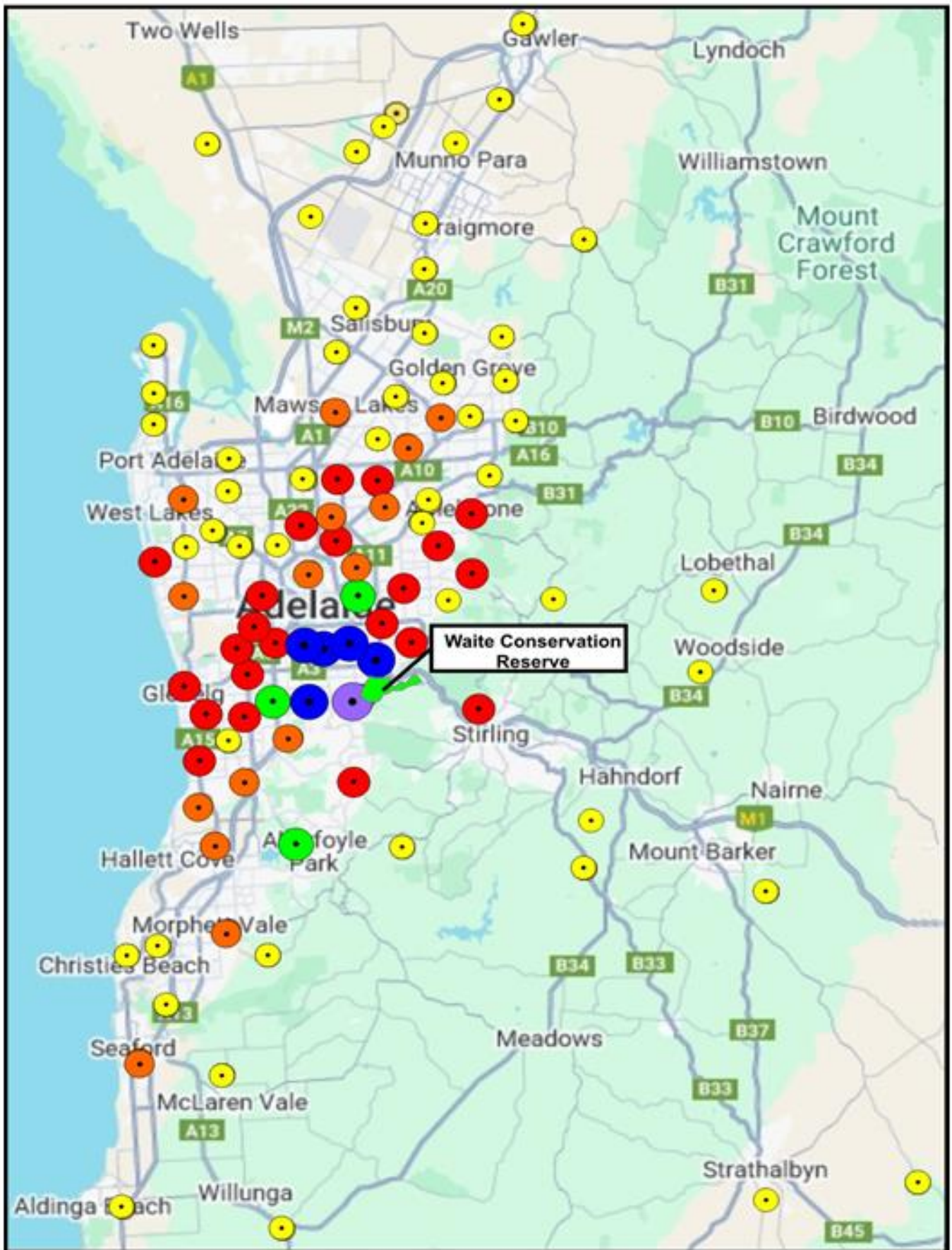
There are trailhead information signs at six entries to the Reserve. The last one to go in was at the Yurrebilla Trail entry from Carrick Hill. The ground there is very rocky and needed special effort. A timber and stone platform has been built to provide a level area for visitors to stand on while viewing the sign. Thanks to Andy Baker and Ian Turich for their help in getting this sign into place.



Three generous donations have funded three new information signs on Sheoak Loop. Prof. Helen Whitfield donated the money to buy the copyright for the Hans Heysen painting. Steve Mabbs donated the money for the signs and Innovation Engineering donated the sign frames. The signs give visitors information about olive control, the changing landscape over time and Sheoaks.



3000 walkers in 2024



On the trail - Clint Garrett

Trail work

Sheoak Loop has had several upgrades. 12 new steps have been put in to replace some second-hand round permapine logs which were worn. Further west, 9 metres of trail have been boarded up and leveled in preparation for the Yurrebilla Ultra Marathon. This work was done in places where footmarks showed that a walker has slipped on the edge of the trail.

In September 254 runners took part in the Yurrebilla Ultra Marathon. It was not a good day for the runners, as there was misty rain and strong winds throughout the morning. The winner ran the 56 kilometres and climbed 2500 metres in just less than 5 hours.

There is a section of trail in Netherby Gully where the soil is quite friable. My first attempt 5 years ago to control erosion/slumping at this point was a 75 mm board with 450 and 600 mm droppers to hold it. That arrangement has not worked. It has been replaced with 240 mm of timber edging with 600 and 700 mm droppers. A drain with mortared rocks has been put in to stop water pooling on the trail. That was another issue at this location, which was leading to softening/breakup of the trail.



Reconstructed section in Netherby Gully

Table 88

The old table near Gate 88 was falling apart – a walker leant on it and a board fell off. There is now a new deck on it which should last for many years because we were able to use coated screws designed to survive in treated timber and steel braces to link the deck strongly to the posts. These materials were not available 20 years ago, when the table was originally built.

The work took two of us three hours to remove the old timber and put the new deck together. The cutting of the timber, filling of knot holes, sanding and painting beforehand took me eleven hours at home. Ian Turich has helped me with this job and most of the repairs listed above.



Table 88 before



Table 88 after

Greater of two weevils

Ain't weevils just the most incredible little critters with crazy feet, saucer-shaped eyes, impossibly long nose and amazing body armour. This large **Elephant Weevil** *Orthorhinus cylindrirostris* visited my UV light at Sheoak Slope in August. Despite their long noses weevils have normal chewing mouthparts. Elephant weevils use these to eat a range of plant foods including the bark and leaves of grapevines and other fruit trees. They are thus one of those rare Aussie survivors to have successfully adapted to the life in the altered landscapes created by us humans.



Yellow on yellow

This **Small Grass Yellow** butterfly *Eurema smilax* flew past near gate 82 in early Sept. I averted my eyes for a second to grab the camera and it was gone. It took me ages to relocate, sipping nectar from a Soursobs flower. Yellow on yellow! I hate Soursobs but I momentarily warmed to them... just a fraction.

The SGY is an uncommon springtime visitor to the reserve. Their caterpillars feed on Silver Cassia, *Senna artemisioides*, common across drier parts of Australia. I've always imagined these little butterflies migrating in from some remote location, until I remembered several planted Cassias through the

fence in Carrick Hill only 150-m away. I couldn't find evidence of caterpillar grazing, but it made me wonder whether this little guy might be a local.

Two for the price of one

The **Nankeen Kestrel** is not at all common in the reserve. Neither is the **Tawny Dragon** *Ctenophorus decresiensis*. So for David Gunner to capture both in the same image is exceptional. I'm not sure the unfortunate lizard shared my excitement! We host two small populations of Tawny Dragons on the rocky cliffs of Harold's Lookout and Caves Gully. Cliffs also provide updraft for kestrels to variously soar or hover while hunting over the reserve for insects, mice and, yes, reptiles.



A history of fire

While treating olive regrowth in Stone Reserve over the past couple of months I was reminded of the part bushfires play in shaping the reserve. Olive clumps cover the steep northern slopes of Stone Reserve above the Southeast Freeway. All clumps exhibit the same general form. Each comprises a large central trunk and spreading branches, surrounded by an outer halo of smaller trunks. These are surrounded again by a peripheral ring of whipstick stems. The central trunk is dead. The outer trunks and whipstick are also mostly dead although many are regenerating.

Let me explain the scene. Around 1.00pm on 11 January 2005 a fire started on the freeway opposite Stone Reserve. It jumped the freeway and raced up the slope and into the reserve ultimately burning the entire 15-ha east of Gate 89. It razed what were large mature olives, killing the standing growth, accounting for the dead 'heart' of each clump. The olives then reshot from the lignotuber creating several new trunks. The many seedlings that subsequently germinated around the periphery were dwarfed by intense competition from each other.

Finally, the dead (or recovering) peripheral trunks and whipstick were poisoned using Basal Bark Treatment from 2017 onwards. Some of these are re-shooting but are subject to ongoing treatment.



The following notes catalogue bushfires near Claremont House (200m below the Wild Dog's Glen entrance), most of which are presumed to have burnt parts of the reserve. These are taken from a book by Frances Cumming. 1982. 'Claremont' Glen Osmond.

~ Pete Bird ~

- 1926** Bushfires were frequent during the summer. In January a fire started above the quarry and came within 200 yards of the top corner of Claremont paddock.
- 1927** In January two bushfires came close to the house but were stopped at a firebreak burnt around the hill below Hardy's Road (also known as the Bridle Track).
- 1930** In March Prof Trumble helped at a big fire in Springfield.
- 1939** Disastrous bushfires through hills; two came very close, one rapidly advancing on the house. A second grass fire burnt down the hill, under trees burnt the week before.
- 1955** Claremont seriously threatened by fire, only stopped 100 yards from the house.
- 2003** Fire in Stone Reserve from Springwood Park electric fence 17 December. Burnt 3 ha N & E of Gate 89 including two large SA Blue Gums. Good regeneration of these by late 2004.
- 2005** Fire in Stone Reserve 11 January (as described above).



View from Sheoak Loop (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.

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