

# FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



## President's Page - Blue Devil's advocate

It's a dry argument. Last year's rainfall was a mere 64 percent of the long-term mean. And we've just experienced our *eighth* consecutive month of below average rainfall. On top of this, February temperatures have been properly hot with the hottest summer day for 5 years. Plant and animal populations are struggling. Few of last year's plantings have survived. At times like these I think of climate change and extreme bushfire risk. The combination of extended dry and extreme heat also risks some of our plant species going locally extinct. Several comprise just a few individuals holding on by the skin of their teeth.

One of these is our logo, the striking **Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum***.



## COMING EVENTS

**AGM & Andy  
Chambers talk**

Wed 28 May

**Working bees**

Sun 16 March

Sat 5 April

Sun 20 April

Sat 3 May

Sun 18 May

Sat 7 June

Sun 15 June

Our entire population occupies only a few square metres. I remember seeing them on adjacent Springwood Park 20 years ago, now sadly gone. Even before their annual autumn dieback, the entire reserve population was looking very sad. Attempts to propagate more have failed to date. Each year we manage to grow seedlings and carefully plant out the tubestock. And each year they wither and die without trace.

It's time to get serious and successfully establish some new insurance populations. Otherwise, we risk our logo going the way of the dodo. Let me know if you'd like to help propagate some of our stubborn little devils.

~Pete Bird ~

# FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



## WHEN:

Wednesday  
28 May  
7.30 - 9.30 pm

## WHERE:

Gate House  
Claremont Ave  
Urrbrae

(just north of  
Rentoul Ave,  
Netherby -  
see Google maps)

## ENQUIRIES:

Peter Bird  
0418 853 834

*Free talk preceded by brief AGM. Supper afterwards*  
Guest speaker

## **Andy Chambers**

### **Precision measurement for action in the environment**



Andy has 40 years' experience in agriculture, the environment & natural resources with a constant theme – repeatable & accurate measurement. As Managing Director of AirborneLogic, he focuses on using remote sensing techniques to harness artificial intelligence & machine learning to provide repeatable, accurate measurement in the quest for environmental solutions.

*Join Andy as he shares examples including:*

- identifying **plant species** using drone-based hyperspectral imaging
- counting **feral animals** with manned aerial imaging surveys
- quantifying **carbon in native vegetation** using drone LiDAR
- measuring lost productivity in vineyards with **drones & satellites**
- identifying **animals & birds** using remote acoustic & camera recorders & assessing their distributions with AI & machine learning

SEATING LIMITED

RSVP [simon.treloar@bigpond.com](mailto:simon.treloar@bigpond.com) by Fri 23 May





## One-seed & Two-seed HAWTHORN

*Crataegus monogyna* & *C. x sinaica*

Rosaceae

Two species of weedy Hawthorn occur in the reserve: One-seed Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and Two-seed Hawthorn *C. x sinaica* (the latter a fertile hybrid, with *C. monogyna* as one parent). Seedlings of both species occur frequently, their seed introduced by deer, foxes & birds. The species are similar, but you don't need to tell them apart. Just remove *all* Hawthorn plants.

### Identification

**Form:** large woody shrubs or small trees with grey fissured bark. Seedlings have tangled horizontal branches. Spiny.

**Leaf:** mostly 3-lobed in both species; darker green, hairier and more toothed in One-seed. Deciduous. ± spine at base.

**Flowers:** 5 rounded white petals, like apple flower.

**Fruit:** green ovoid fruits ripening to bright red in summer; similar to rose-hip. One-seed <1-cm; Two-seed: >1-cm.

**Seed:** One-seed Hawthorn has single round 'stone'; Two-seed has two hemi-spherical halves.

**Similar species:** Leaf shape unlikely to be confused with any other species.

### Location

Seedlings turn up anywhere in reserve, dispersed by animals. Most common in Stone Reserve & higher slopes.

### Monitoring & control

Keep an eye out for seedlings during routine reserve-wide searches for olive seedlings and other widespread weeds. Carry secateurs & chemical for treatment as encountered. Hawthorn seedlings quickly develop deep, strong roots resistant to pulling. Either dig out and swab larger roots with Glyphosate or spray whole plant while in active growth with Triclopyr.

Photos L to R: One-seed Hawthorn young plant; Two-seed Hawthorn leaf, fruit & seed

~ Pete Bird ~



One-seed Hawthorn leaf & spine



# Visitors to the Reserve - Pete Bird

## TAFE Seed collectors

In November each year for the past few, we have been graced by classes of TAFE students coming to collect seed as part of their Conservation & Ecosystem Management studies.

So it was again when Sam Bywaters and 13 students and Red White and 17 students visited 25 & 28 November 2024, respectively.

Together they collected seed from almost 30 species. The seed of one was also 'planted'. Several Box Mistletoe berries were smooshed onto a couple of young Grey Box trees near the mistletoe sign at Netherby Gully where the previous mistletoe-laden tree has died.



## TAFE Propagators



Not really 'visitors' but this year we again enlisted Urrbrae TAFE students to help propagate tubestock for our revegetation effort. Three classes of Conservation & Ecosystem Management students prepared 1995 tubes of 99 species over the three morning sessions 10,11 & 13 February 2025.

Muchas gracias to the 40 students and to lecturers Mareya Dashorst and Red White for thinking of us. Another great collaboration with around 75 hours of labours contributed.

We've already lined up visits by two classes of students to commence planting out the progeny on 13 & 15 May. You're welcome to join us.

*Pete Bird*



# Drop bears plummet

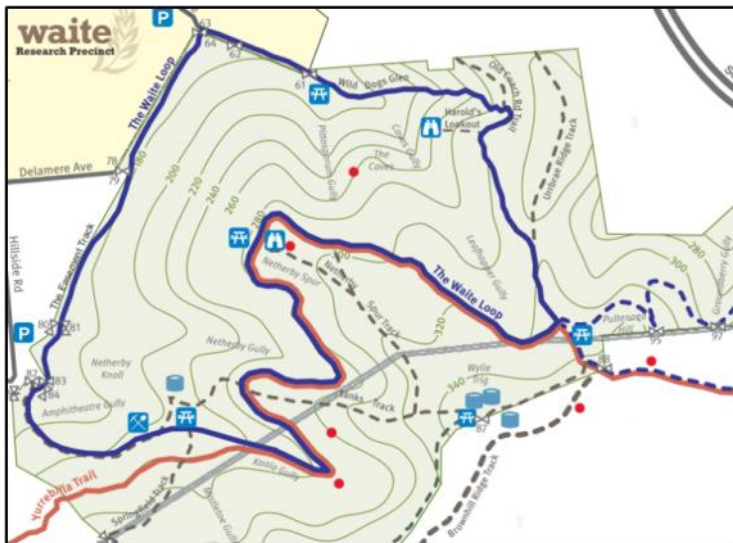
My suspicions were realized when only five koalas were recorded on our great koala count of 23 Nov last year. Two more were seen just outside the reserve near Gate 88 on Springwood Park. This compares with 20 sightings on our last census 12 years earlier 28 Nov 2012.

This drop-off also corresponds with reduced sightings on Waite campus. The university's Linda Sperring reports only two koalas currently on campus compared with 9 last year and 14 in 2022.

Thirteen counters spent 34 hours searching all corners of the reserve. Conditions were warm and muggy but came as a relief after the 37° day previously. Some tried out the new Koala Spotter App to record their sightings, contributing to knowledge of koala distribution and numbers across Australia.



Koala in South Australian Blue Gum near Caves Gully photographed by Caroline Mussared.



Map of koala sightings (red dots); includes two in Koala Gully

South Australian Blue Gums were the preferred tree species accounting for four of 7 sightings. All were of single animals except for an adult male and female together in a big Red Gum in Koala Gully.

We also saw 24 Western Grey Kangaroos, well down on 107 seen on our kangaroo survey five years earlier. And thankfully, no deer, despite 25 sighted only a month before. Thanks to Bob & Meredyth, Jennifer & Sirous, Sue & Janis, Caroline, Felicity, Raj, Helen, Ian and Simon for spotting.

*Pete Bird*

Location and tree species for each koala sighting

No.	Description	Spotters	Location	Tree species
1	Adult male	Caroline	Pittosporum Gully East	SA Blue Gum
2	Small, young?	Sue & Janis	Netherby Spur	SA Blue Gum
3	Large male?	Sue & Janis	Koala Gully S slope	SA Blue Gum
4^	Adult male	Sirous & Jennifer	Koala Gully - trail switchback	Red Gum
5^	Female	Sirous & Jennifer	Koala Gully - trail switchback	Red Gum
6*	Female	Raj & Pete	Springwood Park W Gate 88	Manna Gum
7*	Female?	Raj & Pete	Springwood Park W Gate 88	SA Blue Gum

^ together in same tree

\*Springwood Park



## A sheepish history - Part 3: Sheep yards

Two previous articles in this series covered fencing and water. This article talks about another piece of infrastructure essential for managing sheep: sheep yards. Sheep require routine yarding for the ongoing management tasks of shearing, crutching, jetting, drenching, lamb marking and loading for transport etc.

There are remnants of at least three sets of yards in the reserve: at the top of Koala Gully, below Old Coach Rd near Harold's Lookout, and the main set of yards, just inside Gate 82 off Hillside Rd, Springfield. This set features several separate yards, a brick-paved drafting race, water trough and grove of picturesque Lemon-scented Gums planted for shade.

While shearing was done in the campus woolshed, any flyblown sheep would have been crutched and treated in the yards as encountered. A couple of years ago I found an old shearing handpiece while cleaning up outside Gate 82 prior to us planting it up. I can imagine some disgruntled shearer chucking the worn-out handpiece in the creek after using it for the unpleasant task of crutching maggoty sheep.



Bricked drafting race in sheep yards at Gate 82

I don't know how long the handpiece had been there. Mechanical shearing machines took over from blade shears from the 1890s and handpiece design has changed relatively little since. I'm not suggesting it dates to Peter Waite's time, but I suspect he may have been an early adopter of the technology given his penchant for innovation.



Water trough and old sheep yards off Hillside Rd, Springfield



Old shearing handpiece found near sheep yards, and inset, modern handpiece for comparison

*Pete Bird*



# More Birds of Waite Conservation Reserve

In the previous issue we featured spectacular images by FWCR members **David Gunner** (DG) and **Peter Barnes** (PB). Here is another selection to enjoy.

Images (top to bottom)

Common Bronzewing (PB);  
Weebill (DG);  
Crescent Honeyeater (DG);  
Little Wattlebird (PB);  
Striated Pardalote (DG)





# Working Bees

The author of the saying “Golf is a good walk *spoiled*” is anonymous. Not so: “Hunting olive seedlings is a good walk *enhanced*”. I think we can safely attribute that saying to me.

Mr Google suggests several ways to enhance the *health* benefits of a walk:

- walking up hills
- walking with hand weights
- increasing your walking speed
- increasing the distance walked
- walking for longer

All five can be accommodated while hunting olive seedlings in the reserve. There are lots of steep hills; you can carry ‘weights’ such as a mini mattock or drink bottle; and you can walk as fast, far and for as long as you like.

Apart from the obvious physical benefits, walking in nature also has positive effects on our mental health. Especially given the extra satisfaction that comes from knowing you’re making a difference by keeping the olives at bay.



Summer is the perfect time for walking & weeding olive seedlings when they are most visible

We’ll test this out in our first few working bees next year when we walk and weed olive seedlings. We start Sun 16 March and continue thereafter the *first Saturday and third Sunday* of each month (see dates). In the meantime, you’re welcome to join me on weekdays over summer for an *enhanced* walk.

## 2025 Program:

Sun 16 March	Sat 5 April
Sun 20 April	Sat 3 May
Sun 18 May	Sat 7 June
Sun 15 June	

~ Pete Bird ~

## 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](mailto:pjbird1@bigpond.com)





# On the trail - Clint Garrett

## Visitors

The final visitor count for 2024 was approximately 43,520 visitors. This was an increase of 3650 above 2023 visitation. We have 9 public entries to the Reserve and counters at 2 of them, which means that the total figure is an undercount of our visitation. A frequent comment from visitors is that Adelaide is so lucky to have the Reserve right on the edge of the suburbs.

Counts at the crossroads of the two main trails show that the route from McElligott's Carpark along the Yurrebilla Trail and return via Springwood Park (or its reverse) is increasingly popular.

## Maintenance

All of the tables and seats in the Reserve have been sanded and oiled with a mix of Decking and Linseed oils. There is a table setting to the south of the trail near Gate 61. The seats on this were falling apart because of the interaction between iron and CCA treated pine. Replacing the seats was easy, using Organix treated pine. The table top was also in poor condition. We had a donation of 5 pieces of second-hand jarrah to make a new table top. These have been sanded and polished. The end result is that we now have an attractive and very durable table.

The seats and table top have been installed with help from Ian Turich, who also donated the jarrah.

## Watering

The watering trailer that Andy Baker put together for us has worked very well. I have taken 14 loads of water to various plantings in an effort to keep the plants alive. Even with watering, the extended dry weather has caused lots of plant deaths. This big River Red Gum in Wild Dogs Glen has had more than 3200 litres of water and still looks sick.

~ Clint Garrett ~





## The gall of it

The very dry conditions of 2024 didn't seem to worry the **Golden Wattle Gall Wasp** *Trichilogaster signiventris*. These tiny black & yellow wasps parasitize the flower buds of Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* and last year our wattles were thick with their bumpy round galls.

The female wasp lays her eggs in the wattle buds in summer. These hatch by early winter and the tiny grubs start the process of gall formation. It is hard to see but Golden Wattle flower-balls actually consist of 50-80 tiny individual flowers. The galls make this easier to appreciate with each flower showing as a separate bump on the gall. South Aussie gall wasps are world famous. Wasps from Mt Compass were successfully introduced to South Africa in 1992 as a biological control agent for invasive Golden Wattles there.



## New daisy

While clearing dense olives last year, I noticed a tall green 'daisy-bush' in a gully in NE Stone Reserve. Contractor Grant Joseph later burnt the olive piles. The daisy-bush flowered soon after, either in response to the clearing, burning or coincidentally. The plant turned out to be a Flat-topped Cassinia *Cassinia complanata*. Although native, it doesn't occur locally. Its occurrence can thus best be described as 'adventive', meaning it is neither native to the area nor fully established.



## Falcon peregrinations

Last spring Clint noticed the resident Peregrine Falcons that usually nest on the quarry face above the freeway were missing. I concurred ... until late November when I was alerted by the cackling call of the female warning me to rack off. Peregrines lay anytime mid Aug-early Oct and the young hatch ~33 days later. Seems like our pair nested a little later this year perhaps due to the dry season. Thanks to David Gunner for the photo of one of our spectacular Waite falcons.





## Waite & Carrick Hill gang up against olives

Feral olives know no bounds ...or boundaries. That's why we recently collaborated with our southern neighbour to apply for a successful Grassroots Grant to jointly combat feral olives. University of Adelaide and Carrick Hill Trust were awarded a combined \$50K, of which \$30K will be used on the reserve and \$20K on Carrick Hill.

Grant Joseph Bushcare Services was awarded the contract for both properties. Work has already started. The grant is being used to treat remaining olives and critically, to follow-up previous work.

It will enable around 70 days of control on residual olives scattered across the steep western and northern fringes of the reserve from Stone Reserve through to the Western Slopes. Plus another 35 days controlling olives up against our southern boundary in Carrick Hill. Thank you to Department of Environment & Water for the grant.  
*Pete Bird*



The Grassroots Grant will enable follow-up control of previously treated feral olives including these in Stone Reserve

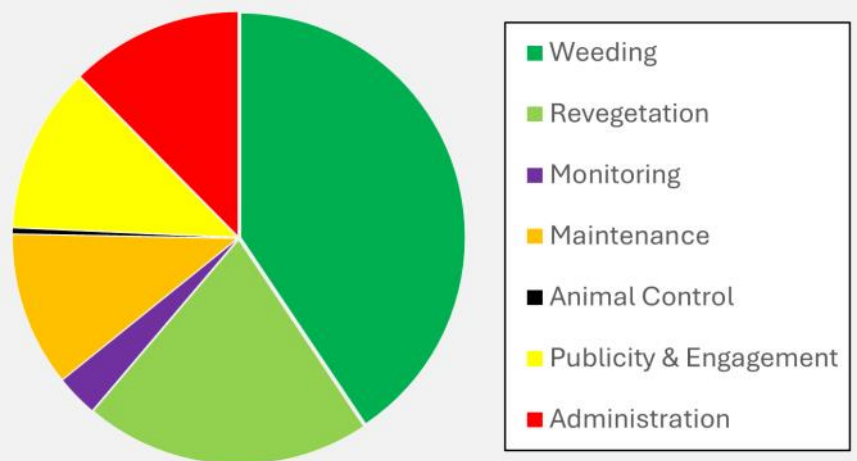
## 2024 volunteer hours

The Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve continues to blitz the university competition when it comes to volunteer hours. We contributed a combined total of 3704 hours or 2 Full Time Equivalents worth \$175K. Nevertheless, this was 15 percent less than last year and down again since our high point of 2022. Part of this was due to the university assuming the role of deer management from the Friends group, but hours fell across most categories.

Thanks to the 55 Friends who helped out and to other collaborating

organisations, especially Urrbrae TAFE. I particularly thank Clint who continues to rack up the stats on everything from trail maintenance to Facebook postings; Simon my right-hand man on olive control; John Glover who maintains the Graminetum; Glenn so professional on the Secretarial & Treasurer front; and working bee stalwarts Meg Byrt and Helen Pryor.

### FWCR Volunteer hours 2024





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](mailto:info@friendsofwaitereserve.org.au)

Non-members are welcome at our activities.

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**Secretary:** Glenn Gale (0428-812-902)

**Newsletter editor:** Claire Sims

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