

# FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



## President's message

Over winter I chain-sawed down the hectare of olives treated by Basal Bark Treatment contractors on the Western Slopes 18 months earlier. It took me forever and resulted in a nightmare of tangled fallen branches. These needed burning to allow access for follow-up control. A permit to burn was duly obtained from the City of Mitcham and I commenced work. After two days of laboriously dragging olive branches into piles, I quickly realised there were not enough suitable burning days to complete the task before the permit (and I) expired.

It occurred to me I could do with help. A quick email to the Friends and I suddenly had 10 helpers. We finished the remaining work over another four days. Later I seeded the dozen burn sites with a shandy of 10 plant species.



**Peter Bird burning olive trash**  
Photo: Clint Garrett

In total 131 hours were volunteered, more than a third of the hours contributed in a whole year of working bees.

Thanks to Clint Garrett, Helen Pryor, John & Rebecca Glover, Noel Nicholls, Simon Treloar, Carolyn Bishop, Tanja Lenz, Chrissie Hagger and Jennifer Gardner for their life-saving assistance. Interestingly two of the 10 had not been to a weekend working bee for a couple of years due to weekend commitments.

Clint, also has benefited from weekday warriors to help him lug walking track consumables up & down Wild Dogs Glen. This gets me thinking. The reserve is struggling under weeds. We need to do more. Many people are busy on weekends and might prefer to help out on weekdays. We could run a regular weekday working bee or perhaps just have impromptu task-oriented get-togethers. Your thoughts?

There are lots of jobs we can do – spraying / treating specific weeds, collecting seed, direct seeding, mapping, monitoring, cleaning up, pulling olive seedlings, and chain-sawing and burning olives. I'm often in the reserve doing stuff. I might just email out a 'pop-up' activity invitation around the traps in case you are interested. Seed collection and spraying St John's Wort come to mind for this month. Chasing seedling olives over summer.

Thank you all for your contributions this year. Notwithstanding the above invitation, have a good break and come back fit and relaxed next year.

*Peter Bird*



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## Nature Walk

Saturday September 22<sup>nd</sup> brought a lovely crisp spring morning for our flora and fauna walk. About 20 community members, including a child, joined the Friends. It was so good to see such interest in the Reserve. Our hearts were all beating a bit faster after the ascent up Wild Dogs Glen and we enjoyed the view and the rest at the seat halfway up, where attention was drawn to the plaque in memory of our mentor and friend, Enid Robertson.



Nature Walkers preparing for the walk

Birds were fairly thin on the ground, as they have been all winter and spring in the Hills, due to the very dry conditions. However fabulous views were had of a pair of Eastern Rosellas as they peered into hollows quite low down, no doubt looking for a suitable nest site. Rainbow Lorikeets also obliged by sitting still in the large river red gums in the gully of Wild Dogs Glen, to allow easy views of their striking plumage. Not so easy to see were the Striated Pardalotes which could be heard in the tops of the grey box trees but were hard to find, especially for those not used to binoculars.

Many questions were asked about the history, birds and plants of the Reserve and community members were interested to learn of the efforts of the volunteers and contractors in overcoming the significant weed issues over many years. It is a testament to these endeavours that much of the Reserve is now a “see-through” woodland as it should be.

*Penny Paton*

## Facebook & Website friends wanted

Are you a Facebooker? Do you spend time in the reserve? We need you. Erica Boyle, University of Adelaide Friends of Waite liaison officer is on track to create our very own Facebook page. Clint and I have signed up but we would love another co-administrator to add spice to the page and help keep it current by posting from time to time.

Similarly, three Communications' students from University of South Australia's Magill Campus have recently designed a new website for us using the Wordpress platform. The Committee will select the winner soon. Free training will be offered by University SA in the second two weeks in January. Again, we're looking for someone interested in helping to maintain our new site. Please contact me if you are interested in either or both roles.

*Peter Bird*



Uni SA student Brayden shows Pete his FWCR draft website design

(Photo: Alice Dodd)



# Olives on the run

Earlier this year the University of Adelaide adopted a 4-year management plan to remove all accessible mature olives from the reserve by the end of 2021. In 2018 the plan aimed to control olives in the following areas:

## New Basal Bark Treatment

Western Slopes South	1.22 ha
Pittosporum Gully	0.82 ha
Urrbrae Gully	3.20 ha
<b>TOTAL NEW</b>	<b>5.24 ha</b>

## Basal Bark Re-treatment of 2016-17 BBT work

Western Slopes	1.26 ha
Stone Reserve East	3.28 ha
<b>TOTAL RE-TREATMENT</b>	<b>4.54 ha</b>

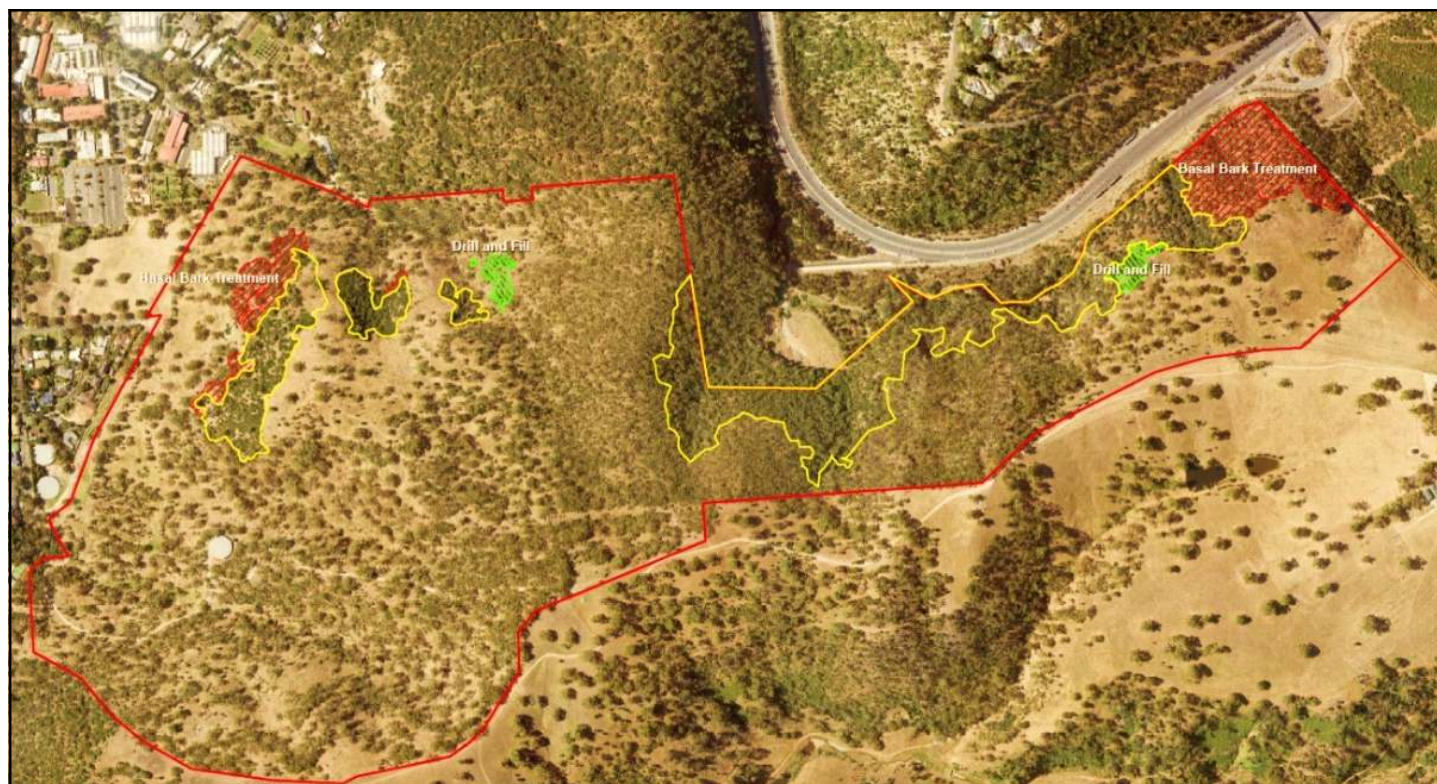
## Drill & Fill large olives

Stone Reserve/ Groundberry Gully 50 trees

I am pleased to say that most of the work proposed in this year's plan has been completed. Mike Kaczan's team conducted BBT on almost 10-hectares of new or previously treated olives over 20 days in October and November. This included treating the southern half of the Western Slopes, all of Pittosporum Gully and the western section of the main infestation from Urrbrae Ridge to Groundberry Gully. We have coined this the 'Urrbrae Gully' area.

As well, EBS Restoration contractors Drill & Filled at least 50 large olives in Stone Reserve and Groundberry Gully. In addition Grant Joseph has been busily spraying re-sprouting olive stumps throughout the reserve to keep the pressure up. I am not planning the ceremonial treatment of the last olive just yet but...

*Peter Bird*



Extent of olives at January 2018: Remnant patches of olives bordered in yellow west to east: Western Slopes; Pittosporum Gully; Caves Gully & Urrbrae Ridge–Stone Reserve. Red-hatched areas were treated with BBT and Green-hatched areas with Drill & Fill in 2017.



# Working Bees

Lay down the glasses, the final working bee is past. Only one working bee had to be cancelled due to weather and that was the last one for the year (December 1st) when it was a severe fire danger day, which caused the Reserve to be closed. Thirty-four people either attended working bees or volunteered at other times.

About 380 hours were contributed at formal working bees with many more hours outside our usual first Saturday- and third Sunday-of-the-month bees. Between working bees and other contributions by Friends we covered the entire reserve for the purpose of weeding out seedling olives and controlling our usual suspects including African Daisy, Broad-leafed Cottonbush, Hawthorn, Blowfly Bush and African Weed Orchid.

As well we revisited localised incursions of Perennial Veldt Grass, Fountain Grass, Coolatai Grass, False Caper and Boneseed for ongoing re-whacking. And along the way we stumbled upon and 're-eradicated' newly-found incursions of Bulbul Watsonia, Three-cornered Garlic and Topped Lavender.



Chayanika, Noel and others removing Perennial Veldt Grass at Quartz Hill

Photo: Peter Bird

This does not include all the hundreds of hours by Clint and helpers to improve and make safe the walking trails in the reserve, nor the time spent clearing and burning olives, re-photographing PhotoPoints, spraying Soursobs, monitoring and culling feral deer, removing rubbish and monitoring under-storey vegetation etc. Thank you for all your help.

We don't normally re-commence working bees until the third Sunday of April which next year is Easter Sunday. I propose we skip the Sunday and commence instead on the first **Saturday 6 April 2019**. See you then.

*Peter Bird*



October Working Bee workers. L-R: Meg Byrt, Chrissie Hagger, Carolyn Bishop, Peta Collins, Peter Lang, Grant Joseph, Jeff Glasson, Noel Nicholls, Peter Bird.

Photo: Clint Garrett



Repair work on the Loop trail continues.

Photo: Clint Garrett



# The Southern Boobook – a Nocturnal Bird of Prey

Southern Boobooks (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) or, as they are more commonly known, Boobook Owls, occur widely over Australia and New Zealand and in restricted areas of New Guinea. Two distinct subspecies also occurred on Lord Howe Island and on Norfolk Island. The Lord Howe birds were last recorded in the 1950s. On Norfolk Island owls from the New Zealand population were introduced in the 1990s and bred with a single surviving female bird and this hybrid population is slowly increasing (Higgins 1999).

While Southern Boobooks can still be widely found throughout Australia, they have declined in many areas through habitat clearance and particularly the destruction of hollow-bearing trees. There is also some evidence that populations have been impacted from competition for nest hollows with introduced native and non-native birds, like Laughing Kookaburras and Common Starlings, and also Brush-tailed Possums. As night-fliers, they are also commonly struck by cars, and they also strike fences and power lines and collide with windows (Higgins 1999).

Boobooks are our smallest owl, with the female bird being bigger than the male. They are a compact shape, with a large head, short wings and a short tail. They are a chocolate brown with white splodges on the head, back, belly and wings, and their large yellow eyes are set in a dark face mask, giving them a staring appearance. Like all owls their feathers are very soft and their flight is noiseless, making it easier for them to take their prey unawares.

During the day Boobooks will roost in tree hollows or in dense foliage of trees, usually by themselves, or in pairs and family groups in the breeding season. They breed in spring, laying 1-5 (but typically 2-3 eggs) in a tree hollow, with the young leaving the nest after 5-6 weeks (Higgins 1999). The call of the Southern Boobook is one of the best-known Australian bird calls – in fact they were called Mopokes or Moreporks in the early days because of the repetitive “boobook” or “mopoke” call that we hear at night even in the suburbs.

This led to a lot of confusion as one of the other names of the Tawny Frogmouth is also Morepork or Mopoke, but in fact their call is more of an “oom oom”.



**Southern Boobook Owl**

Photo: David Cook

Boobooks are carnivorous, eating invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, small birds and small mammals. They take their prey from the air, from the ground and from foliage and are most active in the hour after dark and pre-dawn. They take their prey in their talons, transferring small prey to their bills, and eat the prey on a perch or on the ground. Like most owls they regurgitate pellets, which consist of the undigestible parts of their food, like fur, feathers, bones and insect exoskeletons. They are cylindrical, with rounded ends, and provide valuable data on what owls eat across their range.

Boobooks are listed as unlikely to be seen in the Waite Conservation Reserve, although they are resident and probably breeding there, due to the large number of old hollow-bearing trees. Our President has seen a family party in Groundberry Gully near a likely nest hollow (P. Bird pers. comm.). They have been recorded either at night or during the day in every month of the year at the Waite.

The main threats to Boobooks in the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges are competition for nesting/roosting sites from increasing numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets and the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides by householders and councils. A PhD student found evidence of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) in 73% of 73 boobooks that were found dead or euthanised due to injuries in Western Australia (Lohr 2018). More concerning was that 18% of these birds had levels high enough to kill them directly. These SGARs are stronger than the first generation anti-coagulants and can take months or years to work their way out of an animal's body.

Studies in North America and Europe into similar problems have led to new regulations to end the retail sale of these SGARs, at least five of which are currently readily available from hardware and grocery stores across Australia. Testing of more carnivorous bird species is taking place in Australia as it is likely that other species are being impacted by these chemicals, which are being investigated by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. First generation anti-coagulants, which contain warfarin or coumatetralyl, are less likely to be a problem for wildlife eating poisoned rodents

## References

Higgins, P.J. (Ed.) 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds. Volume 4: Parrots to dollarbird*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Lohr, M. 2018. Silent Night. *Australian Birdlife*. Vol 7, No. 3, September 2018.

*Penny Paton*



***Diuris palustris*: Little Donkey Orchid.**  
This is a new species of orchid for the reserve.  
Photo Clint Garrett



***Diuris orientis*: Wallflower Orchid.**  
Clint recently found a colony of this species with more than 100 individual plants.  
Photo Clint Garrett



## Reconnection with Urrbrae TAFE

It doesn't rain but it pours. The reserve once regularly hosted local Urrbrae TAFE students but this ended some years ago when Steve departed. Two recent phone calls changed all that. The first was from lecturer Sam Bywaters looking for a place for her Conservation and Land Management students to collect native seed. She and 35 students ultimately spent two days collecting seed from 16 species, many from Netherby Knoll where past TAFE students had helped with planting. They hope to grow the seeds over the summer and plant out the tubestock in the reserve next year.



**Urrbrae TAFE students collecting native grass seed at Netherby Knoll**

Photo: Peter Bird

The second call came from Kim Zidarich from the Horticulture course. She rang at short notice looking for an emergency replacement site for students to undertake their 'Control Weeds' practical. She'd seen our working bee advertised and asked if they might be able to attend.

We were able to respond by demonstrating Basal Bark Treatment, Drill & Fill and use of Tree-poppers to 15 students. In a win-win the students contributed 30 hours of supervised olive control work using the above techniques. Thanks to Helen Pryor, Clint Garrett, Meg Byrt, Meg Robertson and Jeff Glasson for demonstrating the techniques and for supervision.

These two examples provide hope for future symbiotic collaborations – presuming that Urrbrae TAFE survives in some form. It is ironic that, just as we reconnect with them, the campus is targeted by the State Government for closure.

*Peter Bird*



**TAFE students learning weed control techniques. Tree popping, Basal Bark Treatment, Drill and Fill**

Photos: Kim Zidarich



## Grey Headed Flying Foxes

Three and a half species of gum trees occur naturally in the reserve, the half being a single Manna Gum just fractionally overhanging the boundary near Gate 89. As well there are 20-odd Lemon-scented Gums *Corymbia citriodora* planted along the western boundary. These elegant white-barked trees are a bit of a nuisance, spawning hundreds of seedlings requiring pulling each year, but they also have their benefits. Knowing that flowering Lemon-scented Gums are a magnet for **Grey-headed Flying Foxes** I visited after dark on 31 August. I'd seen these bats in the Arboretum but never recorded them in the reserve since they took up permanent residence in Adelaide in 2010.

I first visited the group of trees at the sheep yards up from Springfield Gate. All quiet. Not for long. I clapped my hands and out flew a lone bat silhouetted against the clouds. I repeated the process at the northern end of the Easement and a second bat "whuff-whuff-whuffed" away on steady wing-beats. This brings to 8 the number of bats on our list.

*Peter Bird*



**Grey Headed Flying Fox**  
Photo: Bruce Thompson

## End of Year Event

The end of year event on December 3rd had the added bonus of a performance by the Vivente Ensemble, who performed downstairs in the Urrbrae House Ball room. They are a talented group of musicians and their performance was appreciated.

Upstairs, there were snacks and wine and the opportunity to chat to members of the other Waite groups, The Friends of Urrbrae House and the Friends of the Arboretum. It was a good way to finish the year.



L-R: Helen Pryor (partly hidden), Meg Robertson, Peter Bird and Jeff Glasson.

**Merry  
Xmas**



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