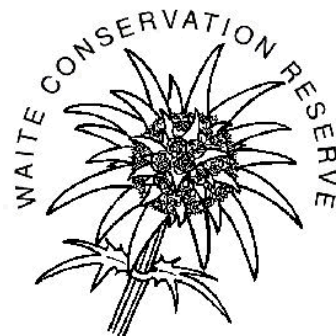


FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE

NEWSLETTER

**WINTER 2001
NUMBER 2**



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings all,

Activities in the reserve recently received a significant boost, with our successful application for a Mitcham Community Development grant ("Improving community access and understanding in the Waite Conservation Reserve"). We received \$3000 to put towards upgrading walking trails and installing interpretive signage pointing out key aspects of the flora and fauna. Particularly pleasing was the fact that the grant was fully funded in the face of stiff competition – 32 applications requesting a total of \$45,000 were received, but less than \$20,000 of grant money was awarded. Keep an eye out for the results of this project, which should become apparent over the next 12 months.

Another exciting upcoming event is the "Walk With Nature" planned for late September or October this year (date to be announced). These events are organized by the Nature Conservation Society of SA and regularly attract hundreds of city-dwellers for a weekend stroll in the bush. A walk in the Waite CR at that time of year is likely to attract 500+ people, so we will have our hands full! On the day, it will be very useful to have people who know the reserve to lead small groups of walkers and point some things out (cheat notes provided!), plus to help out with promoting the reserve at the post-walk BBQ in Koala Gully. Please come along and take part in what, in my opinion, is one of the most effective ways of galvanizing support for conservation issues – putting people in touch with nature. Stay tune for more information.

Work has recently commenced on devising an updated management plan for the reserve. Devising a prioritised approach to weed control is our first task, as weed invasion is the most immediate threat to the reserve's ecological integrity. I hope to bring some mathematical tools from conservation biology to bear on the problem, which becomes quite formidable when you are trying to manage upwards of 15 urgent weed problems spread over the reserves' 13 'bioregions' - just ask Bryan!!! By the end of the year we are also hopeful of obtaining a grant to facilitate a detailed survey to map rare and threatened plants in the reserve. This will be a tremendous help in focusing our management efforts. A species of sedge new to the reserve list was recently found lurking in Koala Gully – so there is still the potential for exciting finds out there!

Speaking of things weedy, a recent survey of bridal creeper revealed about 70 infestations in the reserve – almost twice as many as last season! Indications are that this incredibly damaging weed is invading the reserve at a rapid pace. John Virtue from the Animal and Plant Control Commission (APCC) recently released a leafhopper (insect) in the reserve as part of an Australia-wide effort by CSIRO to stem the tide using biological control. We will also be checking soon to see if the rust also released last year against bridal creeper by the Weed CRC has established. With this combination of biocontrol and carefully targeted spraying, we hope to prevent negative impacts on the many plants of conservation significance the reserve contains.

Lastly, some bird news: a white-throated treecreeper recently turned up, which is the first record for the reserve of this species. Listen for its explosive piping call in the Wild Dog's Glen/Urrbrae Ridge area. It will be interesting to see if it stays around, as their core habitat is the stringybark forests of the high ranges - it may just be a dispersing individual on its way somewhere else. Another first was a barn owl, calling from the top of Koala Gully - harsh screeches and an unnerving, almost human-like scream. Owls have probably been doing well lately, as the fox baiting seems to have resulted in a significant upsurge in small mammal activity.

Enjoy your reserve!

Scott Field

GRANT RECEIVED

Friend's President Scott Field recently received the news that the application he wrote to Mitcham Council for a grant under their Mitcham Community Development Scheme had been successful.

The sum of \$3,000 was awarded to the Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve to be used in the following ways:

To upgrade walking trails.

Will include the completion of unfinished trails, the erection of permanent fences in dangerous areas, placement of temporary fencing and signage in regeneration areas and the development of a low-impact picnic area in Koala Gully.

To provide adequate signage for the reserve

Will include a major sign with a map at the entrances to the Reserve, direction and name signs along walking trails and floral/ faunal signs at appropriate locations.

To develop an up-to-date guide pamphlet.

Will include information about all walking trails, location of geographical and biological features and areas of special significance. A well designed box will be located at the entrance to hold pamphlets.

We thank the Mitcham Council for their support and we know that the ratepayers in the Mitcham Council area will gain a much enhanced community resource for their use and pleasure.

WORKING BEES AND PLANNING

The next two working bees (July 15 & 29) will be in Hardy Block West. This is the area between Urrbrae Ridge and 'The Bomb Site'. If you find Station five on the walking trail guide, you won't be far off. This area has been selected because it contains some very good native understory which is under threat from reinvasion by old weeds as well as new infestations, and a great deal of good can come from a modest input. Apart from the usual suspects, there is also some *Monodenia* here (African Weed Orchid), so please bring something like an old screwdriver or knife for digging up bulbs, and some plastic bags to put them in.

It might be helpful to outline the season ahead as I see it. Late winter and spring will be a very busy time. This is a time when many important weeds are flowering and setting seed. (I'm sure many of you will be glad to see olives taking a back seat.) By far the most worrying of these in my view is Bridal creeper. New infestations are popping up all over the place - probably spread by birds - and I believe it is set to explode unless we can stop these new plants from fruiting. We now have two biological agents at large in the reserve - a rust and a leaf-hopper insect, but the developers of these bio-agents have very modest expectations of them. The only reliable treatments are digging up the tubers or spraying. Given the distribution of the menace, spraying seems to offer the only real hope. Another weed I am keen to control is *Lathyrus* (Tangier Pea), which also needs to be sprayed in spring. I would therefore like to hear from anyone with either spraying experience or a willingness to be trained. Spraying is actually quite easy; the difficult part is lugging a backpack around. There is a lot of ground to cover so a reasonable level of fitness is needed. Obviously this will not appeal to all, so I'm anticipating splitting into two teams, with the other group going on with follow-up work in the more accessible areas such as Wild Dogs Glen and Koala Gully. By Summer I'm sure we'll all be ready for a break.

The above has in part been prompted by complaints at the June 23 working bee about having no prior notice about the location of activity. It seems some people were disgruntled at having to walk a long way to reach the site. There are several things to say about this. Given that decisions about where and when to work are currently being made at short notice (more on this below), it is not practical to personally notify everyone beforehand. Some can be reached easily by email, but it seems unfair to only inform those few. If people wish to know in

advance, they are welcome to phone me and ask. Up to the minute information will also be broadcast on the Community Bulletin Board program on 891 5AN from 7am on the morning in question. It should also be pointed out that if people were to turn up at or close to the start time, transportation could be arranged. (This would also greatly assist the organisers in planning the day.)

As some will be aware, there are moves afoot to construct a new management plan to guide all works on the reserve in the foreseeable future. Strong foundations have been laid, and work is proceeding well. When this task is complete, it should in theory be possible to outline a work program for an entire season. In the meantime it falls to me to make certain management decisions on a more or less ad-hoc basis, and therefore we will have to deal with these communication and access issues. It should be remembered that, even with the most thorough plan in place, some flexibility will always be needed to accommodate seasonal variations and other contingencies. If anyone feels they have something constructive to offer to either the management plan proper, or ongoing decision-making, I hope they will feel free to discuss it with other members in general, and myself and/or Scott in particular.

Bryan Both
Working Bee Co-ordinator
0410 695 719 / 8331 8507

SCHOOL PROJECTS

In 2001/ 2002, 40 year 8 & 9 students from Urrbrae Agricultural High School will be participating in the Activ -8 a South Australian Youth Development Program. The students will make a significant contribution to the monitoring and restoration of Waite Conservation Reserve. Activities undertaken include transects, photopoint establishment, GPS mapping of plants and natural features, plant and animal surveys, birdwatching, weed control and track maintenance. Training is provided by staff from Adelaide University, Urrbrae Agricultural High School, Conservation Volunteers Australia and Urban Forest Biodiversity Program.

This project is supported by grants from Activ-8 Premier's Youth Challenge and Urban Forestry Biodiversity Program.

DOGS IN THE RESERVE

Waite Conservation Reserve, like all other conservation areas has a rule that dogs, on a lead or otherwise, are not permitted. This is for the protection of native fauna. Unfortunately some people ignore the notices and take their dog, or dogs with them while walking in the Reserve.

If you see people in the Reserve with a dog it would be a service to conservation if you could point out the rule to them. It could also be mentioned that the Reserve has poison bait laid at various times, as required by law, to control foxes and that these baits would be attractive to dogs.

MEET THE COMMITTEE

Tanja Lenz

I have enjoyed the Waite Conservation Reserve for about 5 years now. It has seen me grow from volunteer to casual employee and committee member, and from undergraduate student to researcher and occasional teacher.

My main interest is the ecology of both native plants and introduced weeds, as well as plant photography.

Bryan Both

Thirty something, BA student (English), jack of most trades. I began working on the reserve as one of a team of paid week killers during the summer of 1998/99. By a process of attrition I've ended up supervising works in general on a paid, part-time basis – in between a couple of other jobs and study. I have no formal training in environmental science, but my knock-about career and experience on the Reserve equip me well enough to get things done (with a lot of help from others). I now find myself with another hat to wear – co-vice president of the Friends of WCR. I hope I will get to know most of you at working bees.

Dr Jennifer Gardner

My involvement in the area began in 1990 when, with the support of the then Director of the Waite Institute, Prof. Harold Woolhouse, a committee of interested Waite Campus staff formed to develop a walking trail through the Waite hills land. In 1992, I was an inaugural member of the Waite Hills Management Committee, chaired by the Director, and formed to advise him on restoration of the bushland following the removal of sheep and the declaration that henceforth the Waite hills land was to be a Reserve.

At that time my half time position as Curator of the Waite Arboretum was expanded to a full time

position with additional responsibilities for the development of the Gardens of the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct and the management of the Waite Conservation Reserve.

As an ex officio member of the Committee I will keep the Friends informed about the University's policies and management of the Reserve. I also welcome advice and suggestions from the Friends on all matters relating to the Reserve.

Chris Kaczan

I'm a local resident who enjoys walking on weekends through the Reserve. As part of these walks I am trying to "work as I walk" and pull number of olive seedlings as I stroll along.

As a teacher at Urrbrae Agricultural High School I am particularly interested in working with students on weed control and park management.

Dr. Scott Field

I am a lecturer and research associate in the Department of Applied and Molecular Ecology at the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide. After completing my PhD in 1997 at the Waite, I spent two and a half years doing research in Israel.

In 1999 I returned to a position with Hugh Possingham in conservation biology; monitoring woodland birds and working on landscape reconstruction strategies in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

I live locally in Netherby which is handy for the work I do conducting regular bird surveys in the Waite Arboretum and the Reserve.

Andy Baker

I am 47, very happily married to Annette, with no children but we have had our niece and nephew live with us during their mid to late teens while studying in the city.

My training was as an electronic and mechanical engineer, which led me to work for the PMG/ Telecom/ Telstra for 19 years. In 1993 I joined a company developing metal detectors. This resulted in the development of a land mine detector in 1995, and to my work in many countries infested with land mines where I taught the use and maintenance of the detector until 2000. My work continues as a product development consultant. Recent developments include a tap timer, fishing products and aviation instrumentation.

I walk and run in the Reserve 3 or 4 days a week to keep fit and pull weeds.

Ian Mosel

In my life before retirement I taught a variety of biological sciences with a particular interest in plant and animal ecology, starting as a high school teacher and then at Adelaide Teachers College and Adelaide C.A.E. At the time of retirement I was teaching human physiology and genetics to nursing students at the University of South Australia.

The arrival of three grandsons since my retirement in 1996 has made me a popular choice when babysitting is required during the day. When time permits my wife Marilyn and I enjoy bushwalking, and the Reserve is a great place to do it.

Lynda Yates

I have always been keen on environmental issues. I originally wanted to be a vet but ended up with a degree in Physiology and Zoology followed by an Environmental Resources Masters at Salford (an ideal place to see the ugliness and pollution created in this conurbation so close to the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution).

After a dissertation on a nature reserve in Devon (where I counted woody lobelia and trapped voles in Longworth traps) I looked for work and ended up as a computer programmer in the Civil Service in Cardiff, Wales. I moved to London after a few years and spent 10 years there as an analyst/programmer, mainly doing contracts for banks in the City of London. I kept up an interest in the local environment - Perivale Woods, one of the few bluebell woods left near London, was close by.

I took a break in 1989 for eighteen months to travel and ended up in Fremantle Australia for 3 months. On returning to London I decided there were better places to live despite the 'a man who is tired of London is tired of life' quotation (things have changed since Samuel Johnson's day eg. rush hour, the Tube, suburbia).

I emigrated to Adelaide on the strength of a job at WorkCover in late 1993 and stayed there 5 years. I am currently 'resting' as they say in the theatre and enjoying myself very much. I volunteer at the Waite Arboretum and Coachhouse, do morris dancing, swim, take my dogs for walks and wonder how I had time to fit work in!!

ON PESTS

"It takes so few individuals to establish a population and such a lot of work to eradicate them"

Charles S. Elton The Ecology of Invasions by Plants and Animals (1958)