

FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



COMING EVENTS

Walking Bees

1st Saturday &
3rd Sunday each
month
Sunday April 17th
Saturday May 7th
Sunday May 15th
Saturday June 4th
Sunday June 19th

Gate 82
Entry off Hillside Road
Springfield

AGM
May 25th at 7:30pm
Guest Speaker:
Dr. Peter Lang
Jewel Beetles of the
Waite Conservation
Reserve and beyond



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

President's message

'Happy New Year! In the heat of summer I tend to take a break from the reserve when there is heightened risk of heatstroke, bushfire and choking on a bush fly. So it was rather pleasant to take the opportunity of an unseasonably cool day a couple of weeks ago to go for a walk. Recent torrential rain had swept the paths clean of litter and the damp soil smelled good enough to eat.

Last year's annual grasses which so densely clothed the reserve only a couple of months earlier, lay as a battered, greying stubble. And there, freshly revealed, was a scatter of familiar green leaves washed clean by the downpour. Olive seedlings by the score in an area where only a few working bees earlier, we had marched and heroically destroyed so many of their kind. The deep melancholy from seeing how many olives we missed was satisfyingly relieved by the delicious ease with which their roots came clear of the moist soil.

"As a people, Australians have lost contact with the world of nature, risking the collapse of civilization".

This is the attention-grabbing first line in the abstract of a recent paper by eminent Australian ecologist and self-confessed grumpy old man, Harry Recher. The paper (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1071/PC14907>) goes on to decry the inability of science to prevent the Earth and its biodiversity from undergoing catastrophic decline.

I can't help think Harry is right. That we as a species have become so removed from nature that many no longer interact with it in any meaningful way.

One of the Friends stated aims is 'to encourage the community use and enjoyment of the Waite Conservation Reserve'. While we can't force people to interact with us, we are at least here if they want to, and being so close to suburbia we are perfectly placed. But in talking with people it is clear that many have never heard of Waite Reserve. They don't know we exist.

Last year we were approached by the University of South Australia's School of Communications to see if we would like a free promotional video made for the reserve and Friends. We signed up and ultimately *two* videos were created by students Morgan Mighalls and Karen McDonough. The two are quite different. Morgan focuses on the work done by the Friends:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=753C9qM3xrs> while Karen's is a whimsical escape from suburbia to walk the Loop Trail: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6Bt6SrVj1F50u19zqQ>

Thanks to them both. Now to see how best to use the videos and other means to lure those who have 'lost contact with nature' to the reserve.

Civilisation is at stake.

Peter Bird

In the Reserve

WORKING BEE REPORT

Last year 26 people volunteered 616 hours at 16 working bees to remove olive seedlings from 88 of the 94 hectares already cleared of olives. No working bees were lost to weather ... until the very last (hot) one in December. But in a great show of dedication, nine volunteers turned up for a re-scheduled bee the following week to end the season on a high.

During the year we pulled tens of thousands of olives as well as treating larger re-growth with tree-poppers or by drill-and-fill. Disappointingly many hundreds of re-generating stumps needed to be re-treated, some re-shot from stumps that were "killed" a decade earlier. These we mostly sprayed with chemical. Although unlikely we killed many, spraying will buy some time until we get back to do a proper job ...and it makes us feel better. At the same time we also treated many other woody perennials, Buckthorn, Hawthorn and Blackberry, and other nasties with restricted distributions, Fountain Grass, Perennial Veldt Grass, Cotton-bush and False Caper.

This coming season we hope to knock over the final 6 hectares then set about walking the entire reserve again to systematically remove olive seedlings. The task will get easier with each pass as we exhaust the seed bank and the number of seedlings diminishes. I look forward to the day when 'olive green' is no longer part of the colour spectrum in the reserve.



Peter calculates how much area was covered on the walking bee. On this one, we had Girl Guide assistance.

2016 WORKING BEES

Walking (Working) Bees will be held on the first Saturday and third Sunday of the month, from mid April to early December. Start time is 9:00 am and we will generally try to finish at about 12:30pm.

Please bring lunch with you, so that we can sit and share time at the end of the walking bee.

Working bees will be cancelled if the temperature is forecast to be above 35C or the day is deemed to be a day of severe or catastrophic fire danger.

The 2016 program of working bees will start on Sunday April 17th. We will meet at Gate 82 for at least the first 5 sessions. Later in the year, we will work on the upper part of the reserve.

2016 Schedule

Sunday April 17th

Saturday May 7th

Sunday May 15th

Saturday June 4th

Sunday June 19th



Broad-leaf Cotton-bush — an environmental weed

This plant can be found in a number of locations throughout the reserve, most often on rocky hill-slopes. This is also its preferred habitat in southern Africa, where its range extends from southern Namibia in the west to East London in the Eastern Cape Province. The South African National Biodiversity Institute Red List of South African Plants lists *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* as "Widespread, common and not in danger of extinction"

Most plants are under a metre tall, with a similar spread. The plants stand out from our local plants as the leaves are dark green. Flowering occurs from April through to December. The flower heads are white and purple and are quite conspicuous. Removal of flowering heads is suggested as one means of limiting the spread of this species. The seed pods are filled with black seeds, which have a fluffy attachment to enable wind dispersal. It is this fluffy material which gives the plant its common name of Cotton-bush.



Seed pod of Broad-leaf Cotton-bush

In Australia, *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* is mainly found in the Adelaide Hills with other infestations in the South East of our state and in western and southern Victoria. In Western Australia, the closely related Narrow-leaf Cotton-bush *G. fruticosus* is a Declared Pest Plant. There are significant populations of this species on the Swan Plain.

It is a significant environmental weed and has established itself to the point that it is an environmental weed in a number of our local Conservation Parks. Broad-leaf Cotton-bush crowds out native species by competing for space, nutrients and water and as its sap is poisonous/irritating, no animals predate it. However it is a food species for larvae of Wanderer butterflies *Danaus plexippus*. The caterpillars do some damage to the leaves, but could never be considered to be a biological control as the damage is too limited and *G. cancellatus* has a ligno-tuber from which it can re-grow.



Wanderer Butterfly caterpillar on *G. cancellatus*

Gomphocarpus cancellatus is a garden escapee and is deliberately grown by some butterfly fanciers to attract Wanderer Butterflies. This butterfly species is also not native and seems to have arrived in Australia in about 1856. The garden planting of *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* provides a continuing seed source which has negative environmental consequences. The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board have placed it on their "**Do Not Plant**" list in their publication "**Adelaide Gardens - A Planting Guide**".

Anyone attempting to control Broad-leaf Cotton-bush is advised to wear gloves, as the sap is irritating. It is also staining on clothes and requires a significant effort to remove should you get it on them. Trees for Life suggests cutting off the foliage and drilling and filling the lignotuber. As an alternative, Glyphosate with a wetting agent and a small amount of Triclopyr applied as a spray seems to be effective.

Clinton Garrett

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Items from the 16th of February Committee Meeting

Treasurer's Report

Lynda Yates reported that our total income for the year to date was \$1728 from 30 financial members, donations and fundraisers. Our bank balance is \$7145.65.

Reminder that our membership year runs from 1st January to 31st December. Annual membership will remain as present, \$15 per individual or \$20 per family.

AGM 25th May

25th of May at 7:30pm.

Topic: Jewel Beetles of the WCR and beyond. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Peter Lang, who will speak on the interaction between two of his passions, botany and entomology. Peter will follow this up with a walk in the Reserve on Saturday 12th November.



Melobasis propinqua on *Pultenaea largiflorens*

Funding

Green Army—we missed out on this round as the emphasis was on Threatened Species, further complicated by the Federal government reducing funding for the scheme, which will see it reduced from 15,000 to 5000 workers. Peter and Jennifer will try again as the 5th round has just been announced.

Conservation Volunteers Australia

This group will continue with its 2 days per month Work Experience program in the Reserve. There is a Federal Department of Social Services grant for Volunteer activities. Peter has applied for \$5000 to buy a Portaloo to support their work and the work of other groups.

Displays

University "O" week was an opportunity for the group to mount a display at Waite Campus in the hope of attracting some younger members to the group. Helen and Clinton staffed the display, which was held on the 25th of February.

Helen has negotiated with the managers of the Mitcham Square Shopping Centre to allow us to have a display in the centre on Thursday 21st April. There was discussion of whether we could run this display over 3 days or just one. Given the number members available to staff the display, it was decided that a one day event would be feasible. Clinton to produce a tri-fold pamphlet for both displays

Website

No update of the FWCR website is anticipated in the near future. Jennifer has contacted UniSA to register the creation of a FWCR website as a suitable student project. A previous UniSA student created an excellent website for the Friends of Waite Arboretum. The university hosts the website and gives training to someone from the group to maintain and upload new information to the site. The site can be accessed at: www.communitywebs.org/friendsofwaitearb/ Unfortunately applications for 2016 have just closed, but a new FWCR application will be submitted for future opportunities

Olive Removal

Following a tender process, a contractor has been selected to continue olive control in the Reserve. The first contract will be for 1.27 hectares in the gully between Harold's Lookout and The Caves. The area is steep and will be challenging.

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