

# FRIENDS OF WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE Inc.



## COMING EVENTS

**Working Bees**  
See page 4 for details

**Flora and Fauna Walk**  
Saturday 22nd Sept.  
9am—12:30pm



THE UNIVERSITY  
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## President's message

Spring is a special time in the Reserve. The wattles have kicked off the wildflower season in the first of a sequential dance, choreographed by increasing day length and warming temperatures. This is best shown 'up top' at Quartz Hill and Pultenaea Hill. Spring warmth also brings out the butterflies, native bees and other insects for their moment in the sun. And the birds are in full cry, vocally staking out territories for the breeding season.

I mention this because on Saturday 22 September we are holding a **'Flora & Fauna Walk'** for members and friends. The walk will be led by ornithologist Penny Paton and others knowledgeable about the local plants and animals of the Reserve. See Clint's flyer on page 2 for details.

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Lets face it. We're none of us gittin' any younger and them thar Waite hills aint gittin' any flatter. There's no gittin' around it; us Friends are a danged old bunch. We need to attract some fresh young blood; something under 60 would be a good start.

There are a few things that we can do to attract new, hopefully younger members, but harnessing the new-fangled communication technologies would be a good start. As a frequent 'googler', I know the value of a visually

appealing, up-to-date and informative website. The existing website has its limitations so, following in the footsteps of the Friends of Waite Arboretum, we have recently joined with three Communications students from UniSA to design us a **new website**. The three student designs are expected in October. The Committee will then choose one and develop it further ready for launch. Anyone wishing to help maintain the website is welcome to attend training in the *Wordpress* platform offered free by UniSA late this year or early next.

As well Waite volunteer support person Erica Boyle has kindly offered to help us create a **Facebook page** to further engage with the big wide world. Again, I'm sure there will be opportunities for you to learn and contribute.

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The Reserve is a very popular destination for walkers who like it demanding. Until recently however some of the tracks were a little more demanding than ideal – especially the **Wild Dogs Glen track**. Enter Clint Garrett, who saw a need and has worked exhaustively to remedy any awkward steps. Our knees thank you. See Clint's article on page 7.

*Peter Bird*

# COME ON A FLORA & FAUNA WALK



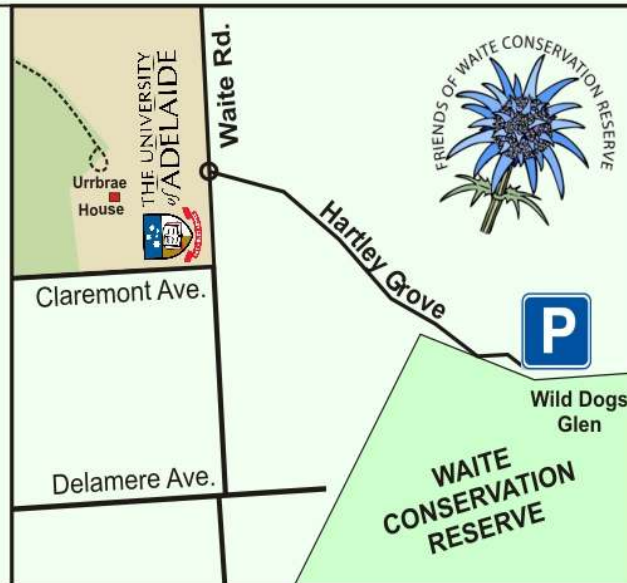
**SATURDAY SEPT. 22ND**  
**9am-12.30pm**



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## WHERE

Drive to the far end of Hartley Grove and park there. Ignore signage.



## WHAT

This is a guided walk through the Waite Conservation Reserve with our knowledgeable guides.

It is spring time so there should be plenty of birds and flowers to see. There may be koalas, echidnas and kangaroos as well. The reserve has good populations of each of these mammals, but we never can tell where they will be on any day.

The first part of the walk is quite steep and rocky, but the remainder is easy going and has some good views.

## BRING

Bring a snack and a drink.

Wear shoes suitable for rough and possibly muddy ground.

Come prepared for the weather of the day.

If you have binoculars, please bring them.



**Enquiries: Peter Bird 0418 853 834**  
**Helen Pryor helenpryor10 @gmail.com**



# Cottonbush conundrum

Over the past year or two we have stepped up control of Broad-leafed Cottonbush *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* in response to a major resurgence of this weed in the Reserve. This may cause unease among some members because cottonbush is the food host for caterpillars of the beautiful Wanderer Butterfly. The Wanderer, or Monarch, in its native North America, first appeared in Australia around 1870, presumably island-hopping across the Pacific.

Wanderers feed principally on milkweeds, a world-wide group including native Australian species, but it is the exotic *Gomphocarpus* genus that is their main host plant in South Australia. Conveniently the African *G. cancellatus* was introduced to Australia in about 1860, facilitating self-introduction of the butterfly a decade later.

There is no disputing the Wanderer is a spectacular and apparently benign addition to the reserve fauna. Indeed, it could be argued that it is an important biological control agent for what might otherwise be a much more serious weed. Cottonbushes produce a suite of cardiac glycosides highly toxic to most native herbivores meaning they have few other local predators.



**Wanderer Butterfly**

Photographer Clint Garrett

But for some reason the Wanderers seem not to have been keeping up with the cottonbushes over the last couple of years. It may be due to the partiality of cottonbush for disturbance and the stepped-up olive control work done recently, but their increasing numbers meant that intervention seemed prudent. At least 2000 have been removed. Many still remain on our patch and surrounds ensuring we will continue to see these beautiful orange butterflies sailing through the Reserve.

Interestingly, a second species of cottonbush has recently turned up in the Reserve. A single fruiting specimen of Narrow-leafed Cottonbush *G. fruticosus* was recently removed from central Stone Reserve.

*Peter Bird*



**Wanderer Caterpillar on Broad leaf Cotton-bush**

Photographer Clint Garrett



**Narrow-leafed Cottonbush *G. fruticosus***  
This is a major weed in SW. Western Australia.

Photo WA Dept Agriculture

# Spring Working Bees

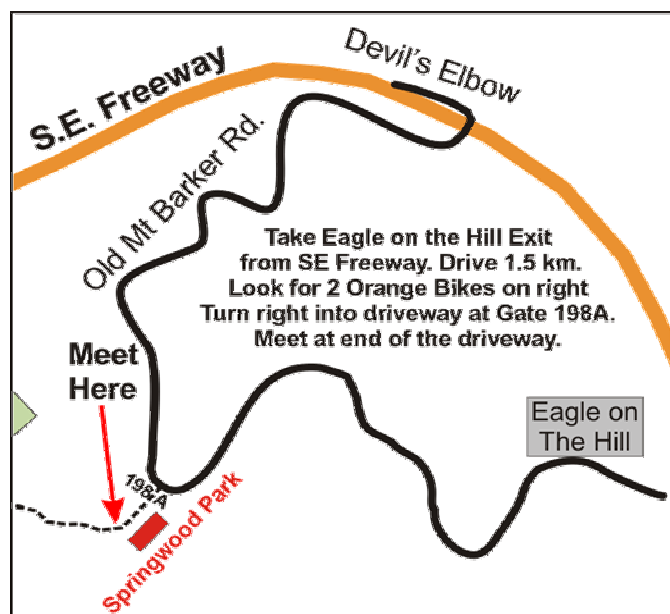
It was early 2014 when the Friends group decided to concentrate our limited resources on removing the annual crop of olive seedlings to ensure that olives would never again take over the Reserve. Almost 5 years later we are achieving our goal. It was a bit of a struggle in the first couple of years, but now, diminishing numbers of seedlings means we should comfortably complete the entire 107-ha of olive-cleared sections of the Reserve this season.

Twenty-three people have contributed to the 9 working bees to date accounting for several thousand olives as well as Buckbush, Hawthorn, Boneseed, African Daisy, Cottonbush and other enemies. In the working bees remaining we will diversify into controlling weeds in our better patches of native vegetation such as Quartz Hill, Sheoak Slope and Pultenaea Hill. We'll target the weedy bulbs Sparaxis, Cape Tulip and African Weed Orchid as well as chasing up the Perennial Veldt Grass incursion on Quartz Hill.

From October we meet at the Springfield Gate (Gate 82) off Hillside Road.

*Peter Bird*

## SEPTEMBER WORKING BEES



Friends of Waite Conservation Reserve

## Spring Working Bees 2018

**September: Sunday 16th**

**Meet at Springwood Park 9:00 am to 12.00 noon**

### October

**Saturday 6th and Sunday 21st**

### November

**Saturday 3rd and Sunday 18th**

### December

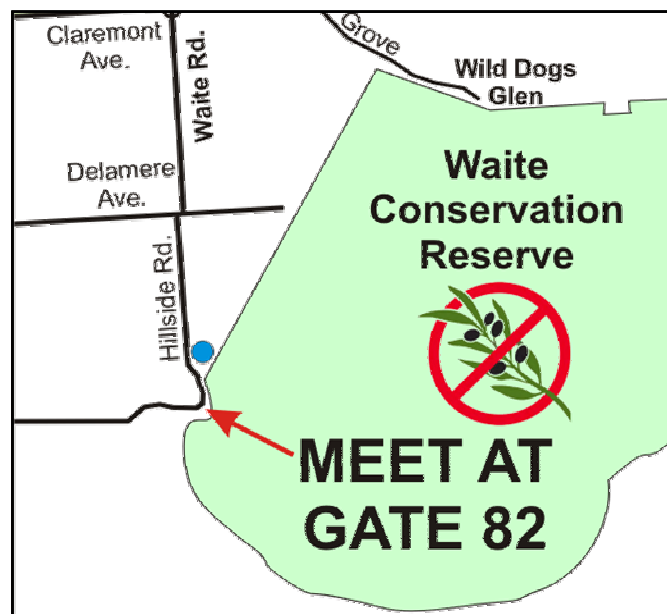
**Saturday 1st**

**Meet at Gate 82 off Hillside Rd.**



Perennial Veldt Grass Removal on Quartz Hill  
Photographer Clint Garrett

## OCTOBER—DECEMBER WORKING BEES



Spring 2018 Newsletter Page 4



# White Plumed Honeyeater's Decline at the Waite

Affectionately known as the 'greenie', the White-plumed Honeyeater *Ptilotula penicillata* is familiar to many suburbanites as one of the commoner honeyeaters in gardens and parks. Most people will know the call, often starting before dawn with a sound quite different from its daytime note. This small olive bird, with a distinctive white ear plume, frequents the upper limbs of eucalypts, taking lerp and other carbohydrates such as manna and honeydew, but will feed on nectar when available. They are particularly fond of river red gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and are widespread across Australia where this species occurs, changing colour to a lighter yellow/green in the arid interior.

At Gilberton, an inner north-eastern suburb, they have declined in abundance since the early 1980s, possibly due to competition from Noisy Miners and New Holland Honeyeaters. This decline seems to be a familiar story across Adelaide, as the 'white-plume' seems to have disappeared from the Waite Conservation Reserve (WCR) in the early 2000s and also from the Waite lands on the plains sometime between the 1980s and the mid-2000s. Tellingly an intensive survey of the Arboretum between 1972 and 1981 reported five to six birds on most visits, apart from two months in 1981, but noted that most honeyeaters declined in the ten years of the survey "while Noisy Miners ... have markedly increased to the detriment of the smaller species ..." (Saunders 1983). I took a two hour walk in the Arboretum in February 2017, admittedly in the middle of the day, but only saw one honeyeater species – many Noisy Miners!

It may be that White-plumed Honeyeaters disappeared from the Waite lands on the plains before those in the foothills of the Waite Conservation Reserve. Possingham (2001) states that at that time one might record this species in the Arboretum, but that it still occurred at a low to medium density in the WCR. This fits in with Scott Field's checklist for the WCR, updated in August 2000, where he lists their chance of being sighted as

This is in contrast to the Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata* ('Very High') and New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* ('High').

Our President in his many visits to WCR, in fact 179 bird counts since 2009, has only recorded the White-plumed Honeyeater on two occasions, both in 2018. On 25<sup>th</sup> June and 27<sup>th</sup> June he saw at least one bird in a grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* and dead olives on the Western Slopes about 200m SW of the Wild Dogs Glen gate. Nearby were several Yellow-faced *Lichenostomus chrysops* and New Holland Honeyeaters, but he did not witness any aggression between the three species.



White -Plumed Honeyeater

Photographer: Les George

Likewise in a bird survey of several hours over most of WCR in October 2007, I did not record White-plumed Honeyeaters, but I did see Noisy Miners, Red Wattlebirds and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. The Friends of WCR conducted a Biological Survey in November 2008 and, in a series of atlas-type bird counts of 20 minutes over 2 hectares, did not record any White-plumed Honeyeaters.



All this suggests that the White-plumed Honey-eater disappeared from the WCR between 2000 and 2006, albeit there is always a chance of picking up the odd bird at any time.

To go back nearly a century, John Sutton, living on Fullarton Road in Netherby, kept meticulous bird records between 1918 and 1938 (from Bird Notebooks in South Australian Museum). At first he seems to have confined himself to his suburban area but in the latter years took long walks up through the Waite lands, at a time when the Arboretum was starting to be planted out (Pulleine 1933-34). Sutton recorded White-plumed Honeyeaters in every month of the year from August 1929 to July 1938, with quite a few breeding records in various years. He did record them (and breeding) intermittently, but still regularly, in the 1918-1929 period as well. So it is safe to say that they were once quite a common bird around the Waite.

I also believe that 'greenies' will be resident or almost so in some suburban gardens in the south-east of Adelaide, where Noisy Miner numbers are low. By careful planting of gardens, avoiding too many eucalypts and planting some areas with dense shrubs, Noisy Miners can be deterred. I also find at Gilberton that having a resident pair of Little Wattlebirds in the garden deters the miners which are resident in the adjacent park, but loath to take on the larger and more aggressive wattlebirds.

I want to thank Peter Bird for contributing his records (as well as keeping his records, which is quite a commitment) and his thoughts on the subject of White-plumed Honeyeaters at the Waite.

*Penny Paton*

#### References

Possingham, M. 2001. Birds of the Waite Arboretum and the Waite Conservation Reserve Part 2. *Friends of the Waite Arboretum Newsletter*, No. 26, Summer 2001.

Pulleine, R.H. 1933-34. The Botanical Colonisation of the Adelaide Plains. *RGSSA, Proc* 35: 31-65.

Saunders, J. 1983. Birds of the Waite Arboretum: 1972-1981. *South Australian Ornithologist* 29(2): 40-41.

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/waite-historic/reserve/pdf/bird-checklist.pdf> (accessed 7 August 2018)

[https://www.adelaide.edu.au/waite-historic/reserve/pdf/surveys/wcr\\_biological\\_survey\\_feb\\_2009.pdf](https://www.adelaide.edu.au/waite-historic/reserve/pdf/surveys/wcr_biological_survey_feb_2009.pdf) (accessed 7 August 2018)





# Walking trail upgrade

Over the last few months I have been working on the Walking Trail in Wild Dogs Glen, with the aim of improving the safety of the trail for users.

There are now 86 new or replacement steps that have been placed between the start of the trail at Gate 61 and the Old Coach Road.

There have been two major projects, the steps about 200 metres up the valley, and the new landing at the first seat. The first project involved re-routing the trail to get a more gentle grade for walkers and at the same time, to avoid a steep, and dangerous section of the trail. 17 steps have been built in this section. Significant amounts of stone had to be sourced for this project, as well as moving gravel, cement mix



**Chrissie Hagger was one of the first walkers to try out the new steps and landing.**  
Photographer Clint Garrett

If you have sat on the seat near the Enid Robertson plaque, you might have noticed that unless you have extremely long legs, that your feet do not touch the ground. This is due to erosion removing quite a depth of soil from in front of the seat. A stone landing has been built to bring that area back up to level.

This second project was more difficult as it required a run of three dry days. On day 1 some cement mix and pre-painted steel was moved from Old Coach Road to the seat. A large wheelbarrow was brought down the trail for use as a mixing place for cement. and the initial retaining stonework was built.



**The helpers.**  
**Front: Carolyn Shultz, Meg Byrt.**  
**Centre: Charlie Vassollo, Jeff Glasson**  
**Rear: Andrew Walters, Noel Nicholls, Liz Cousins**  
**Clint Garrett**

Photographer Mark Hicks

On day 2, 270 kg of cement mix which had been dry mixed and packed in buckets was carried to the site by 7 volunteers. As well as the cement there was 80 kg of water to move too. Without the help of these volunteers, the project would have been impossible. The rest of that day was spent laying the stone work for the landing.

On day 3, the stone work was washed to remove any cement over spill and the joints were grouted. Since then a set of 4 permapine steps has been built and fixed into place to connect the landing to the trail

*Clint Garrett*



## All this could be yours!

Glorious views. Great potential. Renovators delight! No, we're not *selling* real estate ...we're *loaning* it to you. This lovely piece of Waite Conservation Reserve is looking for a bush-carer that can spend an hour or two here or there to bring out its best.



Maybe weekend working bees don't suit. Maybe you prefer alone time in the bush. Or maybe you like the sense of achievement that working on a single patch of bushland affords. This patch on the southern boundary just up from Springfield Gate is made for someone with a little spare time to look after it. It has some distinct advantages over other parts of the Reserve: very accessible; not too steep; and already in quite good condition, so easier to maintain than some other weedier parts.

It supports at least 27 species of native plants including the last original Wreath Wattles in the reserve, good stands of pretty White Goodenia and New Holland Daisies, the only known population of Common Woodruff and lots of native grasses. See me if you want to sign up to be its bush-carer. Be quick before someone else snaps it up!

*Peter Bird*

## Soursob Control

Soursobs would have to be one of our worst weeds. Throughout the cooler months great swathes of their luminescent green foliage smother large parts of the Reserve, crowding out all other plants. After flowering they die back leaving little trace except for huge numbers of bulbs lurking underground ready to spring back to life the following season. Anyone who has them in their back yard knows how persistent they are.

At last year's AGM, Peter Watton, *Trees For Life* Bushcare guru told us about using low rates of the herbicide Metsulfuron-methyl (e.g. Brush-Off) for controlling Soursobs and other persistent broadleaf weeds. Inspired, I conducted a trial, spraying six patches of Soursobs totalling 193 m<sup>2</sup> on the Western Slopes on 1 August last year. I sprayed at the rate of 10 grams/ha after first carefully calibrating the sprayer & rate of spray.



**Before: 1-8-17**

**After: 6-6-18**

The treated areas were inspected on 6 June 2018 and assessed for the area controlled. Results ranged from 71-96 percent control (mean 85 percent – see images). About 29 m<sup>2</sup> of the original 193m<sup>2</sup> required follow-up re-spraying to make good. Importantly there was no obvious damage to neighbouring native chenopods and grasses: *Atriplex semibaccata*, *Enchylaena tomentosa*, *Einadia nutans* and *Austrostipa blackii*.

There is no shortage of Soursobs to go on with so anyone wishing to learn the technique is welcome to assist. Next year.

*Peter Bird*

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