

*Snape Reserve
Committee of Management*



Diana's Track, September 2023

Annual Report 2023 - 2024



Silky Desert Mouse

Snape Reserve Committee of Management

2024 Annual Report

Weeds

It was an extremely dry period from June to November, but a good rainfall event in June resulted in plentiful numbers of winter and spring weeds. Exceptional rainfall over the summer months totalling 184.5 millimeters saw a phenomenal growth of summer weeds. Greg Bourke and Ian Flux did most of the weed control work as set out below. Lindsay Smith, Terry Lynch, Coral Schmidt and Sharyn Cook all contributed.

- Many days were spent spot spraying Veldt grass around Brian's shed. This was done with two objectives, one environmental and two to reduce the fire hazard of long grass close to the Reserves' building and machinery assets.
- Saffron thistles numbers were fewer than last year, and Lindsay visited its known locations and hoed this weed.
- Winged slender thistles were in lower numbers and were removed by hoeing when found.
- Stemless thistle numbers were low due to past control work. Red Gum Swamp was the area where most were found this year.
- Amsinkia numbers were considerably lower than last year. Black Box Swamp still required a couple of days hoeing work on Amsinkia control.
- Malta thistles numbers overall were much reduced from last years' exceptional numbers. Nevertheless, on the west side of Black Box Swamp, several days were spent spraying large patches of this weed using a knapsack sprayer. Follow up hoeing of missed plants was done on several occasions. Greg and Ian spent four- or five-days hoeing Malta thistles at Callitris Swamp and locations to the west amongst the Yellow Gums and Quandongs.
- Malta thistles had a second germination event due to the summer rain. Greg Bourke did a wonderful job hoeing this weed at various sites.
- Moderate numbers of Bridal creeper were spot sprayed or hoed.
- Fewer numbers of poppies were sprayed and hoed this year at Callitris Swamp and Willow Wattle Hill, but it still took a couple of days' control work.
- On the Reserve, many Wild Sage weeds were painted with Glyphosate with their numbers gradually decreasing. This is fortuitous because bad areas were Red Gum and Callitris Swamp which are to be planted with Myoporum in July to hopefully establish a Golden Rayed Blue Butterfly population on the Reserve with the help of Melbourne Zoo.
- Some Fresias, Horehound and Onion weed were knapsack sprayed over two days along Old Racecourse Road.

- Some Horehound and Evening Primrose have been hoed but their numbers are greatly reduced. One spot where many Horehound plants were removed is amongst the *Acacia brachybotrya* to the east of Wimmera Woodruff Swamp.
- Gazanias were found and removed over a widespread area. Their numbers are not prolific but remain a considerable threat.
- Hexham Scent was spot sprayed at Old Racecourse Swamp. Its numbers fortunately were much lower than last year in this location. Hexham Scent was also sprayed several times by knapsack spray at Black Box Swamp and Callitris Swamp locations.
- Eight South African weed orchids were found by Mary Argyll at the location where Adam Blake discovered their presence last year. They had not seeded and were dug up with their bulbs and placed in a bag and removed from the Reserve.
- Marshmallow numbers were bad in summer after many years of not finding much of this weed. Bad areas were along the fence line with Lehman's property, the east side of Old Racecourse Swamp and the hill to its south.
- Heliotrope numbers were horrendous after the summer rains. Many days of spraying this weed each week over summer was carried out. 4700 litres of spray mix were used. The weed is widespread on the Reserve. It is the worst numbers of the weed since control work started 8 years ago.
- Black nightshade numbers were very low.
- Only small numbers of Patterson's curse have been found and hoed.
- Disappointingly, around 30 Bindii plants were found and removed after two years of no plants being discovered.
- Stinkworts have been found and removed from several sites, the worst of these was Wimmera Woodruff Swamp.
- Melon plants were also present across the Reserve in reasonable numbers after many years of very low numbers being found.
- Evening Primrose numbers, although not significant, were more prolific than in recent years.

Rabbits

More rabbits are being seen active around the Dimboola district. Several rabbit holes have been ripped on the Reserve, the first in a long while, but there is still evidence that Calicivirus is impacting rabbit numbers.

Foxes

A few young foxes have been sighted on the Reserve. One was caught on camera at the dam. Geoff Somers has shot two foxes just outside the boundary of the Reserve.

Bees

Bacillus thuringiensis was added to the bird drinker in summer of 2023, because there were many hundreds of feral bees getting water there. The *thuringiensis* kills the feral bees without harming the birds. Over many months of treating the water weekly the bees numbers at the drinker were small.

Cultural Fuel Reduction Burns

Scheduled fuel reduction burns were postponed for 2023/2024.

Flora Survey

Mary Argall and Lauren Eddy (TFN) carried out the flora survey on the 10th of October 2023. Quadrats 2, 4, 7, 8, and 14 were surveyed. Sue Smith updated the records for these quadrats.

Track Signs

All the tracks on Snape Reserve have now had new signs installed. Thanks to the help of Lou Catania, a Dimboola signwriter who did the signwriting for free. Lou also donated 30 posts to display the signs valued at \$300. A further 100 posts were purchased using a grant of \$1,000 from the Horsham Sports and Community Club, and 10 more were purchased with a bequest from Diana Snape. The installation was carried out by Lindsay Smith with the help of various management committee members.



Left, Sharyn Cook and Lindsay Smith erecting the track sign for Bushby's Track.

Right, Lindsay Smith, bolting the Winter Track sign onto its supporting star steel posts.



Fencing

Two new areas were fenced to create kangaroo and emu exclosures to allow revegetation planting in June 2024. The largest exclosure was on Gurra track and enclosed an area of approximately 1.5ha. The second exclosure was on Moffat's track and enclosed an area of roughly 1.2ha. 2.4 m posts were purchased, and enough mostly second-hand ring-lock wire was used to enclose the areas. The posts were bought through a grant from the Horsham Sports and Community Club. Two rows of ring-lock were used on the fence to give enough height to keep out kangaroos and emus. One and a half roll of new ring-lock wire was used to complete the job. This wire was donated to Snape Reserve by Hindmarsh Landcare who generously donated 20 rolls of ring-lock wire at current value of \$6,160.00.



Greg Bourke and Ian Flux working on the Moffat's track exclosure.

Revegetation

On 8th June 22 volunteers planted 1500 understorey plants in the two newly created exclosures on Moffat's and Gurra tracks. Mary Argall oversaw the planting day and did a wonderful job of organizing. Two water carts from Hindmarsh Landcare were used to water in the plants. A third water cart owned by John Nichols was also used. Having the three water carts made it possible to do such a large planting successfully on one day. Hindmarsh Landcare donated cardboard plant guards to Snape

Reserve valued \$2,650. Murra Warra Wind farm grant worth \$4950 was used to obtain overstorey and understorey plants covering land cleared for farming



Mixing up plant species at the Gurra track planting site.

The overstorey species of Yellow gum and Stringy bark have been planted in many suitable areas on the Reserve. 40 Red gums have also been planted south of Old Racecourse Swamp. 50 Acacia Brachybotrya (Grey mulga) were planted around Callitris Swamp. These plantings were done mainly by committee of management. All these plants were individually guarded using one star steel post a wooden post and either a guard made from ring-lock fencing wire or manufactured plastic guard recycled from previous revegetation events.



Left, Yellow gums recently planted on the hill to the south of Old Racecourse Swamp.

Golden-Rayed Blue Butterfly

The Golden-rayed Blue butterfly found only in Victoria is endangered. It is found along the edges of salt swamps and feeds exclusively on *Myoporum parvifolium* (Creeping boobialla). Creeping boobialla grows on Snape Reserve and is found in good numbers. Three surveys led by Jessie Sinclair of Zoos Victoria have looked for the butterfly over the summer months without success. Sharyn Cook and her grandchildren have also looked unsuccessfully. Jessie has offered to introduce the larvae of the butterfly and will also supply 200 plants of Creeping boobialla to be planted in equal numbers at Red Gum Swamp and Callitris Swamp verges.



Slasher purchase

A new A203 Longreach SL5 slasher at cost \$4,345 was purchased to replace the Snape Reserve Kanga slasher. The old slasher had stress fractures in a number of places and refurbishing it was not a practical option.

Track Maintenance

Daryl Argall slashed the vegetation on the Reserve tracks before the fire season started to reduce fuel loads and to maintain access for management vehicles, and in the case of wildfire, for fire fighting vehicles. Several trees that had fallen over tracks blocking access during the year were moved off the tracks.

Seats

A grant from Hindmarsh Shire helped purchase the materials for 9 seats which were erected on the Reserve for walkers and bird observers.



Brochure

The brochure has been re-designed with a QR code and a situation map for the Reserve. It is now available on the website and 2,000 new brochures have been printed.

New plant

A new plant species for Snape Reserve, *Chenopodium glaucum* (Glaucous Goosefoot) was found on Red Gum Swamp.

Walking Access

Visitors have come from Adelaide, Allendale, Arapiles, Berlin, Berry, Bowden, Bundoora, California, Carum Downs, Cape Paterson, Colac, Coorong, Dandenong, Dimboola, Dumbalk, Dimboola, Franklin, Greensborough, Grenville, Hamilton, Horsham, Knoxfield, Lilydale, Numurka, Melbourne, Mt Gambier, Ocean Grove, Pemberton, Queenscliff, Ridell, Sassafras, Stawell, Sweden, The Basin, Thornbury, Violet Town, Warrnambool and Wesburn.

Donations from walking access visitors in 2023 – 2024 totalled \$208.70.

Visitors

On the 23rd of August 2023 Shannon Argall and 17 students from Horsham College visited the Reserve. Adam Blake (TFN) led the group. On the 6th of September Dan Mason, Austin Van Slip and students from Flinders Christian Community College visited and were led by Sharyn Cook and Annie Hobby (Landcare). Wimmera Growers of Australian Plants visited the Reserve on 9th of September. Mary Argall and Sharyn Cook led the group and a donation of \$75 was received.

Grants

Snape Reserve Committee of Management wishes to acknowledge and thank the support of grant providers to the work of the Committee. The following three community grants were obtained.

The Horsham Sports and Community Club grant of \$1000 enabled the purchase of 2.4 metre star steel posts which were used in the construction of kangaroo revegetation exclosures on Gurra and Moffat's tracks.

The Murra Warra Wind Farm grant valued at \$4950 enabled the purchase of plants both understory and overstory to be used in areas previously cleared for farmland.

Hindmarsh Shire grant of \$600 which paid for half the cost of materials to build 9 of 2 metre seats for the use of bird observers and walkers.

Voluntary Hours

The 2023 to 2024 voluntary hours worked at the reserve are set out in the table below.

ACTIVITY	HOURS
Building	11.25
Fencing	91.5
Maintenance & Improvements	18.0
Management	385
Revegetation	1027.30
Surveys	122.95
Vermin	2
Weeds	944.75
Educational Visits	307.25
Total Hours	2910
Week equivalent (38Hr)	76
Dollar Equivalent (\$43/hr)	\$125,130

Total volunteer hours worked since Snape Reserve was purchased are listed in the table below.

Year	Hours Worked	Value
2003 to 2023	56,074	\$1,249,141
2023 to 2024	2,910	\$ 125,130
TOTAL	58,984	\$1,374,271

The hours worked up to and including 2013 were valued at \$20 / Hour. The hours from 2013 to 2023 have been valued at \$25 / hour and the current volunteer hourly rate of \$43 (value from the Centre for Volunteering Victoria) was used for 20023/24.

Chairman's Thanks

Thanks to all the committee members who have contributed to the running of Snape Reserve.
Special thanks to the Thursday work crew.

Sharyn Cook (Chair Snape Reserve Management Committee)