

*Snape Reserve
Committee of Management*



Tremella messenterica (Yellow Brain Jelly)

Annual Report 2017 - 2018



Silky Desert Mouse

Snape Reserve Committee of Management

Annual Report

This report covers the period since the last Annual Meeting in March 2017 up to and including the first 6 months of 2018. This brings the Snape Reserve reporting period in line with the rest of Trust for Nature.

Weeds

Weeding continues to take up around half of our weekly volunteer activity. As in previous years Ian Flux has put many hours into weed eradication. The following is his weed report:

Slowly over the years since the purchase of Snape Reserve weed numbers have been reducing yet there are still some major weed problems on the property. Rapidly spreading weeds, such as thistle species, amsinkia and horehound have been the priority targets in weed control work. Now drastically reduced in numbers these fast-spreading weeds still require considerable attention because checking for their presence, mostly by foot over a large property, is time consuming. Nevertheless, reduction in their numbers has now allowed more time to attend to different problem weeds. During 2017/18 considerable time has been spent on controlling Veldt grass (slow spreading but in huge numbers on the property), Wild Sage and Blue Heliotrope.



Lindsay Smith spraying the new section

A newly added section of about 0.7 ha to Snape Reserve, incorrectly fenced off by neighbours, will require considerable weed control work over the next few years as it has a long cropping history.

Appendix 1 gives a broad-brush picture of Snape Reserve weeds in 2017/18.

Vermin

On behalf of the Snape Reserve Committee of Management I signed off on the Wimmera Mallee Pest Animal Control Plan for Trust for Nature properties. I also produced and provided to Adam Blake a shortened version extracted from this plan which was particular to Snape Reserve. It covers destruction of cats, rabbit ripping and fox control by a contractor who whistles and shoots foxes.

Rabbits

As reported in the last Annual Report a large reduction in rabbit numbers probably due to a build up in mosquito numbers that spread a virus. Over the last 16 months there have only been around 12 warrens ripped. Prior to the release of the new calicivirus in March 2017, Ian Flux, Sue and

myself did a spotlight survey of 8km of the open areas and saw one rabbit at the west end of the property. On a similar survey in May 2009 we recorded around 5 rabbits per kilometre. In the last month we have seen rabbits locally starting to build up again.

Foxes

We have a Sporting Shooter (SSAA) member who is contracted to whistle foxes. He will be present on the reserve for around an hour. During this time the reserve is closed and the walking access gate is locked for 2 hours. A drop-down sign is opened. Daytime control is by shotgun and night control by 0.226 rifle to allow for a more humane kill. To date he has shot foxes on a neighbour's property. The neighbour northeast of Snape Reserve has recently had two foxes shot on his property. It would appear that Snape Reserve gives cover for foxes during the day and that they spend time at night looking for mice and quail.



Fallow Deer

There are fallow deer in the Little Desert National Park. At the start of October, during the BirdLife Camp October, 1 male and 4 female fallow deer were seen on Snape Reserve. As this is the first sighting in 16 years there is no need for a control program at present.

European Bees

European bees have been a problem on Snape Reserve over the last 16 years. A neighbour had 32 hives adjacent to the reserve until stopped by the Government Inspector. Bees have also been placed on a property on the opposite side of Old Racecourse Road to access the banksia on Snape Reserve. However, the major problem is feral bees in hollows of trees across the reserve. We have trialled an ant killing powder in the holes with limited success. With the help on Clive Crouch we have recently trialled another method. The bees are given 2 feeds of honey water followed by a mixture containing a liquid insecticide, which is placed in a container which does not allow access to birds. The result was bees were eliminated from the area around Brian's Hut. This method will be tried again next summer.

Lost Land Retrieved

Committee member, Jonathan Starks, discovered in a computer search that around 0.7 hectare of the Snape Reserve was in a neighbour's Adrian Tippett's paddock and had been cropped. Regional Manager, Adam Blake, took on the project to get the boundary fence line corrected.

Adrian requested a survey be carried out and this was completed at Trust for Nature's cost for \$2,215 + GST. I assisted the surveyor to find the six points already surveyed on the property and just outside which led to establishing the three points on the fence line needed to correct the boundary fence.



Greg Bourke, Terry Lynch, Leon Ryan and Ian Flux removing the old boundary fence in April 2018.

The land concerned has been farmed for 140 years and has cropping weeds and a summer cover of bindii.

Overstory is to be planted next year, with spraying to continue for several years prior to understory planting.

A professional fencer was required by Adrian Tippet. Adam Blake obtained two quotes. The job was won by a fencer with environmental sympathies for \$2362 + GST, with the costs shared by the property owners. The job was completed on 21 June 2018. Darryl (Slim) Avery did an excellent job



Ian Flux, Greg Bourke, Slim Avery, Lindsay Smith and Adam Blake beside the new fence in June 2018.

Asbestos

Trust for Nature arranged for an inspection of Brian's Hut for asbestos. The roof was removed and replaced with iron in 2003 under the laws applying at that time.

Samples from the external walls established that these were cement sheeting. Dust from the ceiling cavity did not contain asbestos. No tests were done on internal walls, despite the offer of the chairman to find inconspicuous places for him to take samples. A further test of this area has been requested.

It was found that when the shed was moved to the land Asbestos sheeting was used as packers on top of the concrete block stumps. A clean up of the area below the hut is being organised by Trust for Nature. We await advice of when this will occur.

Bore

A bore on the east fence was used by neighbour Stephen Walker until he sold the land. In May a licence was obtained to decommission this bore and this was completed by filling it with concrete.

The water supply is now off the roofs of Brian's Hut and the Wail Shed. We are able to fill 2 x 9,000 litre tanks and a fire tank of 23,000 litres as well as a 1,000 litre tank that also collects water from the toilet roof. This gives us water to spray weeds, water plants and fill a 35 litre fauna drinker.

Equipment

After 16 years we now have all the equipment to run Snape Reserve for many years to come.

A small mobile 240 v air compressor allows us to maintain tyre pressure as well as remove grass from the radiator and undercarriage of the tractor and ATV and dust from the air filters.

The last plant purchased was a 3 point linkage post hole digger. This will allow us to replace strainer posts, stays and a few wooden posts over the next 3 to 4 years. The funds for this plant came from a Horsham Sports and Community Club grant and donations.

Clive Crouch donated a motion camera, which will enable us to monitor fauna from time to time.

Revegetation

Three small areas were planted with 40 Yellow Gum in July 2017. They were:

- South of Brian's Hut
- Off Bushby's Track, west of Calistemon Swamp.
- North of the planting between Ba Ring Track and Old Racecourse Road.

With the dry period from October 2017 to April 2018 these plants were watered a number of times.

Conservation Reserve Management Plan

The agreement was signed last year, but we are still awaiting Protocols for the property before the agreement is in force. The management of the reserve is being carried out according to the principles of the agreement.

Flora

Ian Flux identified *Cymbonotus priessianus* (Austral Bear's Ears), which had not been recorded on the property previously.

Mary Argall found plants of *Acacia cupularis* (Coastal Umbrella Bush) on the edge of Old Racecourse Swamp. This is a rare plant for Victoria and is found in the Dimboola area. These plants are probably regeneration from an early planting but were not previously recorded on the species list for the property

Birds

Participants in a BirdLife Camp at the reserve in 2017 recorded 94 birds, including two new birds. They were a Square-tailed Kite and a Eurasian Skylark. This brings the total of birds recorded on the reserve to 175.

Fungi Workshop

Two workshops were held in Dimboola on 13 and 14 June 2018. Each had 16 participants. They were organized by Hindmarsh Landcare and Snape Reserve Committee of Management and funded by Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.

Ecologist Alison Pouliot led excellent workshops engaging participants with her knowledge and enthusiasm. Each day a morning session with an amazing display of fungi was held in Dimboola. This was followed





Alison Pouliot squatting in front of log covered with lichens. 13 June 2018

by an afternoon trip to Snape Reserve to seek local fungi. Despite the dry lead up to the workshops an exciting array of fungi were observed.

The committee now has the challenge of recording the fungi found on Snape Reserve.

Visitors

Since the last annual report there have been a number of groups visiting the reserve.

- A Birdlife Camp of 51 people from 28 September 2017– 5 October (\$1295.00 donation)
- 41 Field Naturalists from across the state (in two groups) visited on 14 & 15 October 2017 (\$83.50 donation)
- Clive Crouch introduced 2 Canadian bird experts who camped 29 – 30 March 2018 (\$50 donation)
- 11 Nhill BirdLife Members visited on 8 April 2018 (\$26.10 donation)
- 11 members of Dimboola Probus toured on 19 April 2018 (\$72 donation)



Dimboola Probus members 8 April 2018

Walking Access

Walking access visitors have come from Loxton, Adelaide, Sydney, Jeparit, Melbourne, Victor Harbor, Ocean Grove, France, Werribee, Mt Martha, Geelong and Portland. Donations of \$65.30 were made.

Training

Doug Robinson (TfN Regional Volunteers Co-ordinator) obtained funding for a number of training workshops.

Sue Smith and I attended a workshop for Statewide committees of management/friends groups at Melbourne Zoo. Sessions included Aboriginal cultural heritage, future directions of the Trust, O.H. & S., succession planning, presentations by committees and planning for climate change.

Mary Argall, Sue Smith and I completed a First Aid Level 2 course held in Horsham.

Voluntary Hours

The hours worked up to and including 2013 were valued at \$20 / Hour. The hours since 2013 have been valued at \$25 / hour.

Year	Hours worked	Value
2003	2938	\$ 58,760
2004	1526	\$ 30,520
2005	2172	\$ 43,436
2006	2644	\$ 52,879
2007	2753	\$ 55,062
2008	3691	\$ 73,825
2009	2351	\$ 47,018
2010	2655	\$ 53,102
2011	2686	\$ 53,727
2012	2995	\$ 59,895
2013	4132	\$ 82,642
2014	2044	\$ 51,111
2015	4336	\$108,406
2016	2518	\$ 62,948
Jan – Jun 2017	1070	\$ 26,754
2017-18	3196	\$ 79,906
Total	43708	\$ 939,991

Committee

Resignations from Committee

Inaugural committee member Clive Eastwood resigned on 30 December 2017. He had been involved in painting, building projects, fencing, making track signs, maintaining gutters and keeping rainfall records. Clive's regular visits helped maintain the security of the property.

Inaugural committee member Gillian Eastwood resigned on 30 December 2017. Her input at meetings contributed to the running of the reserve.

Jonathan Starks, who joined the committee on 1 November 2005, resigned on 4 May 2018. His knowledge of birds added to the records of the bird life on the reserve. During his time with the committee he led many groups of visitors on bird observation outings. With his broad knowledge of the environment, Jonathan was always a participant in committee discussions.

I wish all the people retiring from the committee all the best in their future endeavours.



Adam Blake presents Clive and Gillian Eastwood with certificates of Appreciation from Trust for Nature.

Vale John Richards

Sadly, one of our newer committee members, John Richards, passed away on 2 January 2018. John joined the committee in April 2015. He was a regular at Thursday working bees and a willingly worker on any job. His orchid knowledge added new species and helped add to the records of orchids and their location on Snape Reserve. John will be greatly missed.

Chairman's Thanks

To all the committee of Snape Reserve I extend my thanks for your participation over the last 16 months. The running of the reserve would not be possible without your support.

The whole committee needs to work on finding the next generation of recruits, especially recruits from the Dimboola district.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Leon Ryan who volunteers at the reserve on Thursdays. His input is invaluable to the running of the reserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsay Smith', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Lindsay Smith
Chairman

APPENDIX 1. Control status of some problem weeds on Snape Reserve in 2017/18

Weed	Status	Comments
Amsinkia	Still widespread on the property in cleared areas and often found under trees where it has been spread by birds.	Less found this year. This is a very difficult weed and will never be eradicated.
Bindii	Found mainly in planting areas 1 & 2 although some patches have been found and marked in the west of the property. The property to the east of the reserve is still badly infested with Bindii and is likely to be an infestation vector to the reserve.	Fewer plants found this year. The farm land on the eastern side of Snape Reserve is an area where Bindii is bad. The section incorrectly fenced out from the Reserve will shortly pass back into the 'Trust' hands and considerable care should be taken to stop the transfer of Bindii seeds into other parts of Snape.
Bridal creeper	Occasional plants still being found & removed or sprayed. Some very bad patches near Snape and birds carry the seed.	Not a major problem weed but vigilance must be maintained to see it stays that way.
Evening primrose	Found in grassed areas on the northeast of the Reserve.	Some plants still being found and removed. No longer in large numbers.
Grasses eg. Veldt grass.	Veldt grass and other introduced grass species are widespread major weeds. Difficult to control because of the scale of the problem.	Considerable time was spent spraying Veldt grass around Brian's Shed area during winter of 2017. This area is now looking much improved.
Heliotrope	Widespread summer weed in grasslands. Will need a lot of work to get under control.	Many days were spent over summer spraying, hoeing and pulling this weed.
Horehound	Was very widespread.	Still finding a few small plants in some areas.
Marshmallow	Widespread weed in grasslands with a few bad patches.	Less hours in control work needed this year.
Melons wild and paddy	Once widespread & common in grasslands.	Very few plants found over summer months this year.
Patersons Curse	Fewer plants found each year. There is a bad infestation of this weed on a nearby property & birds spread its seed.	Less Paterson's Curse found this year but it needs constant vigilance.
Saffron thistle	Many bad patches scattered around.	Fewer plants found.
Winged Slender thistles	Many more thistles found this year mainly under Yellow gum in the west of the property.	Still large numbers found at known localities.
Skeleton weed	Widespread. Can be controlled at rosette stage. Will take a lot of effort to get under control.	No major control work yet.
Malta thistle	Widespread in grasslands particularly in the western half of Snape.	This thistle has been reduced in numbers to an occasional find but could quickly become problematical if vigilance is not maintained.
Stemless thistle	Was widespread in patches in grassland areas.	Still many plants hoed at Callitris Swamp this year and seeds blow on the property from elsewhere.
Twiggy Mullein	Patches in grasslands	Only a few plants found where the weed was found previously.
Wild garlic	Widespread in planting areas 1 & 2. Very difficult to treat without killing non-target species. Will take a massive effort to control this weed.	In the past a little control work was done by digging up the bulbs. This was time consuming and not effective as bulbs are easily missed. No control work done this year.
Wild sage	Common in grasslands. Will take a lot of effort to control.	The two very bad large patches were sprayed in spring this year but much more work is required to get it in check.