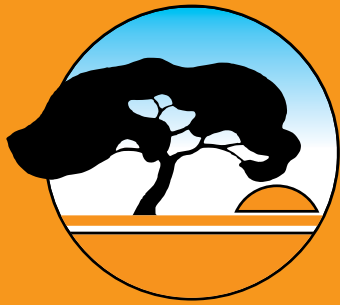




Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



Dec 2024
Issue #203



From Left: View of the courtyard, Comb Spider-flower - *Grevillea huegelii*, Spring Pod Cassia - *Senna circinnata*, View of the courtyard - Brian Reichelt

President's Report by John Zwar OAM CF President



Hello Friends. We had a successful AGM in September followed by a presentation on the very impressive Arid Recovery Project north of Roxby Downs.

On Friday 11th October I visited the AALBG with 40 members of the Mediterranean Garden Society who were on a pre-conference tour of gardens in the Mid North of South Australia. The international MGS Conference was held in Adelaide this year with participants from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, UK, Holland, Germany, California, NZ and interstate. Those who visited the AALBG were most impressed with the Garden and the chance to see so many Australian plants in an arid garden. Many of them grow Australian plants from the Mediterranean climate regions of Australia in their own gardens overseas and were familiar with some, but were delighted to see many plants that were new to them at the AALBG and in other native gardens visited at Kadina, Port Pirie (Urumbulla), Blyth, Victor Harbor, Wittunga BG and Pangarinda BG. They were particularly impressed by the huge range and variations of *Eremophila* species as there is only a limited range available in other countries.

Kids Adventure Passports

In 2023, The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden secured a Grassroots Grant to explore opportunities to extend children's engagement with nature in the garden and beyond.

Produced in partnership with Maria from Outside the Box Learning, the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, Multi Print SA and the Friends of the Arid Lands, they created Outdoor Adventure Passports with information cards to match.

These learning resources are some of the best, most fit for purpose resources, and will make visits to the garden with school groups a 'must do'.



Some will be seeking to import more through their botanic garden exchange programs. Some of the participants did an early morning bird walk with Brian and Peter and I saw some very good photos taken by visitors of both birds and plants at the AALBG. Many of them considered the AALBG the highlight of their visits to more than 30 gardens in SA. The gift shop did very good business and the visitors enjoyed some of the bush food offerings in the Bluebush Café. It was very gratifying to see a group of experienced and passionate plants people from around the world, enjoying their AALBG visit so much. Thanks to tour guides, bird watch guides and AALBG staff who made this visit such a success.

It is my pleasure to formally announce that well known horticulturist and Gardening Australia presenter has accepted our invitation to become Patron of the Friends of the AALBG. Sophie has visited the Garden many times and promotes it on her TV and radio presentations and in her written gardening articles and regularly brings tour groups to visit the AALBG. A worthy choice for our Patron so we are delighted to welcome Sophie as our first ever Patron. We appreciate your promotion of the AALBG and look forward to a long association.

Our December meeting will feature a review of the Friends volunteering and other activities for 2024, our 40th year of operation, presented by Brian Reichelt. We look forward to seeing those able to attend. Although early, my best wishes to all for a very happy and enjoyable Christmas and for the new year. Thank you all for your ongoing support of our wonderful AALBG!



NEXT MEETING / CHRISTMAS MEETING

Date and Time:

Saturday 7th December 2024 at 1.00pm

Venue: WMC Herbarium and Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker & Topic:

Brian Reichelt, 'Achievements in the Garden in 2024'

Long-time Friend of the AALBG, Brian Reichelt is a tireless worker and passionate supporter of the Garden. Using photos to illustrate his points, Brian will outline what Friends have achieved in the past twelve months in partnership with Garden Staff. You will be amazed and delighted at the scale of contribution achieved by so few Friends.

DIARY DATES

FRIENDS MEETINGS 2024

1.00pm WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

- 7th December: Achievements in the Garden in 2024, Brian Reichelt.

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Watching Field Trips for the Birds SA PORT AUGUSTA GROUP

Saturday 3rd November

Chinamans Creek. Meet at Augusta Hwy turnoff at 8.00am (Wear beach walking footwear.)

Sunday 8th December:

Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. Meet in the Car Park at 7.30am. (Christmas lunch in the Café and a Showing of year's best birding photos.

Please bring: binoculars, sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection, morning tea and lunch

Contacts: Bernie 0419 863 834
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Senecio magnificus by Chris Nayda

Senecio magnificus with its large, bright, yellow, daisy flowers is quite eye-catching and is commonly seen and stands out along roadsides, gutters and creek beds of all mainland states. In South Australia it is not usually seen in the southern Mt Lofty Ranges or the Nullabor or Yorke Peninsula. At one stage it was widespread and common but its distribution appears to have been less in recent years, some feeling it may now be at risk.

It flowers in late winter to spring, and is still flowering now, although sparsely, in the northern Flinders Ranges close to roadsides.

This perennial shrub is quite erect, may reach a metre in height, and has toothed fleshy leaves.

Senecio - from Latin (senex), for old man - the fluffy white seeds remind one of the white hair of an old man; magnificus - meaning magnificent or splendid.



Senecio magnificus, AALBG, Perry Jones



Senecio magnificus, AALBG, Perry Jones

B.I.G. FAALBG Bonsai Interest Group by Jim Hayward

In October I was at a Kadina meeting with their Australian Plants Society Bonsai Interest Group. We focussed on repotting, which we know we should do more often. This gives us a chance to check the root health of our bonsai and do some root pruning. It may come as a shock, but many Australian natives grow quite quickly in their bonsai pots, to the point where the roots grow around the inside walls of the pot and don't allow any room for water to penetrate.

The first photo is some of us, working hard, removing bonsai from pots (sometimes requiring much care and the use of a sharp knife), removing old soil from plants (a bent fork works well), adding new potting mix (make sure it is a well-draining mix), upsizing from the old pot to a larger pot, and often spending time contemplating what to do next.

Just for fun: the second photo shows a little two year old *Kunzea pulchella* that was very well received at the Adelaide Bonsai Society recently.



The B.I.G Group repotting their bonsai, Lib Bartholomeusz



Kunzea pulchella Bonsai, Jim Hayward

If you have a small group interested in Australian native bonsai, have you considered running a workshop? Talk to us or AALBG staff.

Bird Talk from The Garden by Peter Langdon

The continuing dry spell is still having an adverse effect on bird numbers and species at the Garden.

There are still some Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*) around; two seen near the Boardwalk were juveniles (beaks patchy yellow), and there was an odd bird or two visiting the pond at the Chenopod Bird Hide.

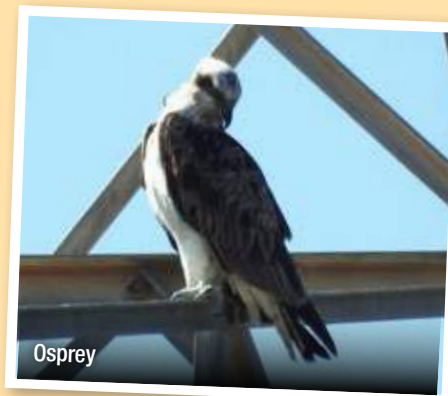
Small flocks of budgies (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) have been seen flying over the Garden, and an Owlet Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristatus*) was seen near the Boardwalk.

Rainbow Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) have returned and have been spotted in the Garden and at the Matthew Flinders Redcliff Lookout; and from the Flinders Lookout Pied Oyster Catchers (*Haematopus longirostris*) can usually be spotted either out on the mud bank at low tide, or on the western shore, if the tide is in.

Red Wattle Birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) and Spiny Cheeked Honeyeaters (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*) have nested, as have the Nankeen Kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) in the River Red Gum at the Reflection Garden. Unfortunately the two chicks were blown out of the nest in one of the strong winds lately and were eaten by the Black Meat Ants (*Iridomyrmex purpureus*).

Visiting birders nearly outnumber the birds at the moment, most of them getting onto our "flagship birds" the Chirruping Wedgebill (*Psophodes cristatus*) and Red Throat (*Pyrholaemus brunneus*). A flock of some 30 Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) was seen flying around the Garden, so they have not moved on as yet. Neither has the Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) population near the Pastoral Hotel.

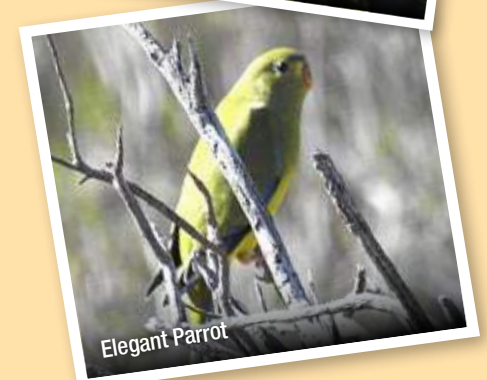
Of interest to birders an Osprey (*Pandion cristatus*) was seen near the old Powerhouse site, roosting on one of the powerline towers.



Osprey



Grey-headed Flying Foxes



Elegant Parrot



What a lot has happened since our last Newsletter in September!

We said goodbye to Anne Murrie, one of our valuable Tour Guides, who has moved to Adelaide to be closer to her family. Tours have continued to grow in numbers with both individuals and a number of busloads of people taking tours.

We also said goodbye to two Garden Staff, Paula Jones Visitor Centre Coordinator, and Michelle Henery Tourism Officer, and we thank them for their support of the Friends and the great work they conducted as part of the Garden Team.

The Friends have produced two educational products for use by children taking tours of the Garden; firstly a Garden Passport Booklet which has a number of interesting facts and pages for them to fill in on their journey around the Garden, and to assist Tour Guides a set of flip cards has been produced for use with the Children's Tours. We thank the SA Arid Landscapes Board for their Grant for the Friends to engage Maria Taylor Consulting to assist in the production of this educational program, and we look forward to its introduction in late October 2024.

Visitor numbers for the first nine months of this year to the Garden total 86,205 persons.

The Garden Staff and Volunteers have been extremely busy with the Propagating team continuing to grow and prepare plants for sale at the Garden Shop and for Postal Orders; and the outdoor Garden team has been extremely busy weeding, pruning and maintaining the Garden. A major project is currently underway with upgrading pathways around the Café, Courtyard, Old Eremophila Garden, Arid Smart Gardens and the

Reflection Garden. Many tonnes of old path material have been removed and replaced with a new surface which will allow much better access for all who visit the Garden. This project has been able to be undertaken due to the Friends providing \$12,000 for the New Surface material, the Archibald Foundation's generous donation of \$10,000 for hire of a contractor to assist staff and volunteers in the construction of the new paths, and some funds from the Garden budget.



The Sculpture exhibition was held from the 20th September to 25th October in the Garden with 13 sculptures on display. Winners were not available at the time of this newsletter's production.

On a final note it is pleasing to see that the Port Augusta City Council has called tenders for the construction of the new toilet, for which the Friends are contributing \$140,000.

Book Review by Anne Murrie

Dead in the Water: A Very Angry Book about our Greatest Environmental Catastrophe... the Death of the Murray-Darling Basin, by Richard Beasley, 2021.

<https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/murray-darling-basin-royal-commission-report.pdf>

In 2018 the South Australian Government set up a Royal Commission to examine the Murray Darling Basin Plan and any implications for South Australia. As a community totally dependent on water from the Murray River, it seems beholden for those of us on the pipeline to be aware of this enquiry.

Richard Beasley SC was the Senior Counsel Assisting the Commissioner, Bret Walker SC.

The Murray-Darling Basin has sixteen wetlands listed under The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, to which Australia was one

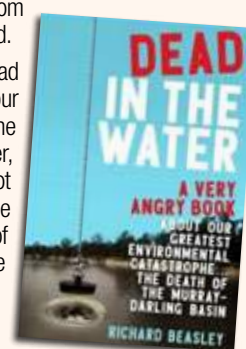
of the original signatories and has ongoing obligations under international law. There are another 30,000 wetland sites in the basin.

The Coorong is one of the most important RAMSAR sites but has suffered significantly with poor river management over decades. It needs sufficient flow to clean out salt and nutrients. This is happening less with water being removed higher up in the system.

The Commission highlights the exceptional Water Act (2007). However, both political and administrative arms of government over many years have failed to implement the act as described. Beasley uses words like unlawful, maladministration and gross negligence. When the Commissioner requested various ministers and public servants appear before the commission, the Federal Government took him to court to prevent these people from giving any evidence.

One concern for me was the censorship imposed on scientists from the CSIRO in providing evidence. It seems ironic that governments are spending millions on STEM education to improve Australia's capacity in the sciences, and then muffling independent scientific information from those who work in the field.

The book is easy to read and written with humour to offset some of the concerning facts. However, be warned, there is a lot of swearing. Given the primary importance of water now and into the future, it is worth a read.



Peter's Plants by Peter Hall

With its large, pink flower heads, to about 10cm x 5cm, set against the grey, felty leaves, *Ptilotus rotundifolius*, in my opinion, would have to be the most attractive of all the species of *ptilotus*.

Pink Candles or Royal Mulla Mulla (common names) grows to about 1.2 x 1 metre and is found in the mid regions of Western Australia in the Gascoyne, Murchison and Pilbara regions. It does not like cool, damp conditions.

The name *ptilotus* comes from the Greek word *ptilotos* (feathery) and refers to the flowers.



Ptilotus rotundifolius,
Lenore Swanson



Ptilotus rotundifolius,
Lenore Swanson

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Reminder Are you financial?

Renewals for Memberships for the 2024-25 year were due 1st July, 2024.

Discounts for the purchase of meals and gifts in the café and gift shop only apply to the Friends Membership card holder/s and cannot be transferred to family and friends who are not members.

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Issued December 2024 by Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc. Designed, Produced and Supported by Multi Print SA Port Augusta ~ Telephone: (08) 8641 0900

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