

Friends of Pallister's Reserve Inc.



Pallister's Reserve is a 254 ha wetland reserve on Masons Road, Orford, owned by Trust for Nature, & managed by the Friends of Pallister's Reserve Inc. Established January 1990

Aug
2025

Next Meeting: Sunday, August 24, 2025

10am: Working Bee

Noon: Lunch

12:30pm: General Meeting

Varroa

Beekeepers are fearful about the spread of the Varroa destructor mite that attacks European honeybees, threatening Australia's honey production and plant pollination industries. First discovered in Australia at Newcastle in 2022, Varroa destructor has slowly spread beyond NSW to areas of Queensland and Victoria; it has yet to be seen in South Australia.



Varroa destructor mite, about 1 mm across, on a honey bee. Varroa does not attach to native Australian bees.

Varroa attaches to and feeds on European and Asian honey bees. A vector for a least 5 bee viruses, Varroa weakens the bees and, if left untreated, infested bee colonies typically die within 2–3 years. By August commercial bee-pollination services are already moving hives around Australia in preparation for the upcoming crop production season. **The scale of this enterprise is prodigious:** in 2025 over 700,000 hives will be relocated to pollinate about 20 different crops, the largest requirements being for almonds, canola, macadamia nuts, and avocados. Notwithstanding strict quarantine measures, the potential for spreading Varroa is acute.

Varroa destructor originated in Asia, but has spread to most other continents, including North and South America, Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa. Australia was one of the last remaining outposts. It seems inevitable that in time the mite will inhabit all regions of Australia. For even if every commercial and hobby beekeeper were to diligently monitor and control their hives, a larger number of hives exist that are completely unregulated, let alone monitored. These are the hives of non-native feral honey-bees, produced, for

example, when managed hives "swarm". These feral hives could stand as unassailable reservoirs for Varroa and other honeybee pests and diseases.

It is estimated that Australia has 100–150 feral hives per square kilometer, suggesting that 250–380 feral hives exist in Pallister's Reserve.

Naively, we might think that having these additional pollinators in the bush is a good thing. **"Not so" say ecologists:** there were ample native pollinators prior to the advent of the ferals. By depriving them of their nectar and pollen requirements, feral bees displace native birds, mammals and insects – apart from native bees. Honey producers consider feral bees as competitors to their managed hives.

There could be compensatory benefits if Varroa were to significantly impact feral hives. But there is little evidence for that at present.

Elsewhere it has been found that commercial and hobby beekeepers can **control** – but not eradicate – Varroa by a variety of methods: chemical, mechanical, thermal, and genetic. The threat Varroa poses to our food security can be confronted, but not without considerable effort. It is speculated that most hobby beekeepers will find the task too onerous and quit after 2–3 years.

Agriculture Victoria has appointed 12 Varroa Development Officers to teach and prepare Victoria's beekeepers to manage Varroa. Although the lack of bee clubs in the south-west of the state impedes the provision of extension services, AgVic is eager to engage all beekeepers. As soon as practicable, all south-west beekeepers should contact Senior Varroa Development Officer Kris Fricke by [email](#) or by telephone: 0499 942 805.

Bolte's Birds

On 20/7/2025 Peter Bolte observed 20 bird species at the Reserve:

Superb Fairy-Wren, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, White-throated Tree-creeper, Striated Pardalote, Spotted Pardalote, New Holland Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Red Wattle Bird, Australian Magpie, Little Raven, Crimson Rosella, Galah, Long-billed Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Shelduck, Black Duck, Wood Duck.

Pallisters Reserve lies in the traditional Country of the Eastern Maar and Gunditjmara peoples, who never ceded their sovereignty of the Land. We are indebted for their past and ongoing custodianship.

Meetings are held at the Reserve; usually every fourth Sunday except July and December.

Co-leaders: Julia Schlapp 0427 778 265 & Anthony Leddin 0408 333 046 Sec./Treasurer: Trevor Kennedy 5565 8692;

Minute Sec.: Nick Glover; Newsletter Editor: Ross Hicks (pallisters_newsletter@proton.me).

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<http://www.apswarnambool.org.au/pallisters/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pallisters>

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August Working Bee Objectives

- Service herbicide sprayers
- Inspection of planted enclosures
- Koala count – bring binoculars
- Mowing, weed control
- ...

General Meeting Agenda Items

Following a request from Lisette Mill, an impromptu meeting of readily available committee members was convened in July to discuss the monitoring and controlling of foxes and cats at Pallister's. A certified trapper, Lisette has set up several camera traps on the Reserve to monitor these pest predators. As of July, four foxes and two cats have been recorded. In addition, Lisette has also installed dummy and active baiting stations, resulting in the eradication of one fox.

The committee members present tentatively agreed to pay Lisette \$200 a month for her services, which include camera installations, baits and baiting stations, cat traps, and travel. This decision needs to be ratified at the full General Meeting in August. Also for consideration is the desirability of a more comprehensive, longer term program, possibly using rostered members to assist with monitoring.

Another management issue up for discussion concerns our ongoing planting program.

"Of all the water in its various forms on Earth, about 96.5% is sea water – too saline for most life on continental land – and about 1.8% is freshwater locked up in the form of ice. Continental water (including atmospheric and biological water) makes up only about 1.7%, and of this, more than 98% is below the surface – termed groundwater – much of which is also saline."

Leon Costermans, *Stories beneath our feet*, (2022)



Founding Pallister's member Mary Griffith, Prue Brown, and their friend Doris setting out for birdwatching; Pallister's Reserve, 1996.

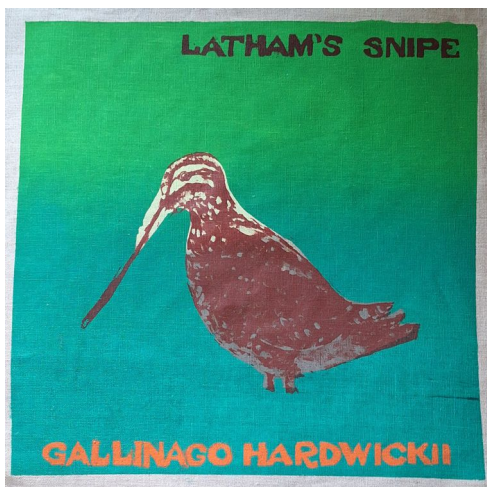
Friends of Pallister's Membership

New – and Re-newing – Friends are Always Welcome!

By registering as a member you contribute to the ongoing volunteer conservation work (over 4000 hours performed in 2024-25!) of the Friends of the Reserve. You also become entitled to a key, allowing you to visit the Reserve with family and friends, any day of the year – except for days of acute fire danger.

Annual membership costs \$20 per person, and is due at the start of each calendar year. Included is an electronic copy of the monthly newsletter.

Click [here](#) for the Membership / Renewal form.



Original print on linen – suitable for hanging or as a tea-towel – by Pallister's member Wendy Ginter. Wendy will offer the prints at the Peshurst Community Seminar on August 16. Proceeds from the sales benefit the Friends of Yatmerone.

A seasonal visitor to Australia, Latham's Snipe breeds in Japan and islands to its north. Small and large parties start to arrive in Australia in July, taking up residence in the eastern states, including Tasmania and South Australia.

Locally, the Powling Street wetlands in Port Fairy are known to provide a valuable summer refuge for Latham's snipe, and this recognition was used to challenge a new housing development proposed for the area. Subsequent studies throughout the Port Fairy – Warrnambool region revealed that over 95% of the snipe population favoured local urban wetlands.