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

Oct. 2026

TRUST FOR NATURE

Next Meeting: Sunday, October 25, 2026

10am: Working Bee *Noon: Lunch* *12:30pm: Discussion*

Ai iNaturalist

With the joint objectives of learning and biodiversity mapping, Pallister's volunteers have for some time used the iNaturalist on-line service for sharing and identifying plant and animal observations. Launched in 2008, iNaturalist is a non-profit social network of citizen scientists and biologists. Originally, contributors would upload field observation photos for identification by volunteer experts. According the clarity and consistency of the interpretations, identifications were rated on a scale ranging from "casual" to "research grade". In Australia, iNaturalist is managed by the Atlas of Living Australia.

Notwithstanding its community-minded origins, the volume of submissions to the platform soon exceeded the availability of experienced identifiers, leading iNaturalist to generate prompt suggestions via *computer vision* – an early form of AI. With the award of a grant from Google.org, in the past year iNaturalist has improved its technologies so that most on-line submissions can be almost instantaneously identified by AI, a development that has generated some controversy.

The sample identification shown below was photographed near Wye River in an area of good network coverage. With 99.7% confidence, iNaturalist identified the plant on-site as Pink-Bells – *Tetratheca ciliata*.



The second sample was seen at the edge of Reedy Swamp at Pallister's Reserve. While Ai iNaturalist had little trouble with the Common Halfband hoverfly – *Melangyna viridiceps* – it was able to identify the plant only to class level – *Magnoliopsida*. Trevor Kennedy proposes the plant is Slender Bitter-cress – *Cardamine tenuifolia*. (Vicflora notes there have been few recent observations of this species, suggesting that it may be rare in Victoria.)



Although network reception at Pallister's is spotty, during the September working bee several other plants were accurately and immediately identified on-site, demonstrating the app's utility.

Numerous other apps have been developed as online identification tools: PictureThis, Pl@ntNet, Blossom, Plantin, GoogleLens, PlantApp, and NatureLenz. Most of these identify plants only and some carry subscription fees; iNaturalist is free!

The apps often struggle with identifications of less common species. For example, betraying its global origins, PictureThis regularly converges on foreign species. PictureThis is perhaps better suited as a resource for gardeners: it informed me that my cumquat tree was in poor health and recommended measures for its restoration!

Developed by professional and citizen scientists in Europe, the free Pl@ntNet app may be useful for field work in the Australian bush: identifications are specific to contributors' locations.

GoogleLens is reportedly powerful and popular with those comfortable with Google's history of user tracking and data sharing.

October Tasks

- Mow
- Read bores.
- Fungi and orchid observations.
- Weeding: Thistles, Bridal creeper, arum, Coast wattle, …
- Check for South African Weed Orchid

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

Moths everywhere

As reported in the January 2026 newsletter, in the 1980's Bogong moth populations began to decline before crashing in 2017–2019, resulting in their listing on Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

But this 2026 spring Bogong moths are everywhere: swarms have been seen in Canberra, Sydney, and coastal NSW. In south-west Victoria the moths are also currently abundant as they emerge to gather for massed migratory flights to the Australian Alps, where they will aestivate in caves and nooks to shelter from the heat of summer.

Lepidopterists are delighted by the unexpected resurgence of the Bogongs.

In the past First Nations peoples famously feasted on Bogong moths in the high country of the Australian Alps. According to one report, moths were fried on flat rocks preheated in a fire. When cooked, the moths were mashed, and could be eaten on the spot or carried for later consumption, rather like a bush-tucker muesli bar.

Not only is their nutty flavour pleasing, but they are also nutritious: 100g of Bogong abdomen contains about 40g of fat and 1.8 megajoules of energy, surpassing a similarly-sized Big Mac.

Southern Moon moths are also locally abundant this spring: compare the two images below. Southern Moon moths are not known to be migratory.



Bogong Moth – *Agrotis infusa*.



Southern Moon Moth – *Dasypodia selenophora*.



The third moth photographed during the past week was identified by iNaturalist – with 98.7% confidence – as a Bogong. Perhaps its different appearance is due to it having freshly emerged from its final instar stage? But maybe it is not a Bogong at all but *Agrotis porphyricollis*, a related species that has also been seen in SW Victoria?

Yesterday the roller door of my garage was open all day and by early evening more than 20 months – mostly, Bogongs – rested against the inside windows. After leaving the roller door open for the night, all moths had vanished this morning. Bon Voyage Bogongs on your long flight north to the high country!

In conjunction with the Moyne Shire Seniors Festival
U3A Port Fairy Presents

AI and what it means for Seniors

Justin Williams from iXplainIT

10am, Wednesday October 28
RSL Hall, Bank Street Port Fairy

Gold coin donation for U3A non-members.