



**RHHFFPS**

# Wallumetta

Newsletter of the Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna  
Preservation Society Inc.

Website: <http://rydehffps.org.au/>

Member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)  
and founding member of the Powerful Owl Coalition

No. 309

**DECEMBER**

**2024**

*We acknowledge the Wallumedegal, original inhabitants of the Ryde – Hunters Hill area.*

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Members have reason to be concerned about the outcome for the environment of Donald Trump's election as the next President of the United States. Trump is a climate change denier who has promised to increase fossil fuel production and withdraw the US from the Paris climate deal, among other worrying pledges.

The US has walked away from global climate agreements before, for example, refusing to join the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. But readers of the on-line journal The Conversation will have noted an article by Wesley Morgan (Research Associate, Institute for Climate Risk and Response, UNSW Sydney) and Ben Newell (Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Director of the UNSW Institute for Climate Risk and Response, UNSW Sydney) published in the 11 November edition. It sets out 10 reasons why Trump can't derail global climate action.

- (1) The global clean energy transition can't be halted,
- (2) Clean energy momentum is likely to continue in the US,
- (3) The US still wants to beat China,
- (4) The federal government is not everything in the US,
- (5) The US climate movement will be more energised than ever,
- (6) Global climate cooperation is bigger than Trump,
- (7) The rules-based global order will remain,
- (8) Australian Diplomacy matters,
- (9) Australia's clean energy shift is accelerating, and
- (10) Trump cannot change the science of climate change

The detail behind each of these reasons may be read at <https://theconversation.com/>. Each reason has a solid basis but reasons 5 and 8 are particularly relevant for the Society where we can contribute constructively.

The US climate movement will be more energised than ever and during Trump's first presidency, the US climate movement developed policy proposals for a "Green New Deal". Many of these proposals were later implemented by the Biden administration. Initial reactions to Trump's re-election suggest we can expect similar policy advocacy this time around. Our Society can do likewise and contribute to policy proposals.

Australian diplomacy matters and Australia is seeking to co-host the United Nations climate talks with Pacific island countries in 2026. Hosting the conference, known as COP31, would be a chance for Australia to help broker a new era of international climate action, even if the US opts out under Trump. Our Society can support the momentum in Australia for continuing diplomacy to pursue international climate action

As Morgan and Newell state in their article, *On gloomy days – like, say, the election of a climate denier to the White House – it might feel humanity won't rise to Earth's biggest existential challenge. But there are many reasons for hope. The vast majority of us support policies to tackle climate change, and in many cases, the momentum is virtually unstoppable.*

*Frank Breen, President*

### In this issue:

- [President's Note](#)
- [Coming Events](#)
- [Past Events](#)
- [News from Field of Mars](#)
  - [Track Works](#)
  - [Wildlife](#)
  - [Visitor Centre Gardens](#)
  - [A Mystery](#)
  - [Bushcare](#)
  - [Visitor Centre](#)
- [Birds: A Sickening Thud](#)
- [Birds: Whalers Way](#)
- [Myrtle Rust](#)
- [A Win Against Gas and Oil](#)
- [Scott Reef](#)
- [Vale Bill Jones](#)
- [Membership](#)
- [Win a new rug!](#)
- [RHHFFPS Committee](#)

## COMING EVENTS:

### END OF YEAR AND VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION GET TOGETHER – SUNDAY 1 DECEMBER

**Help us celebrate the efforts of our active volunteers!**

All members and friends are invited to come on an afternoon held early enough for you to enjoy our cool environment and avoid the end-of-year rush.

**From 12.30pm a barbecue + salad lunch will be served**, and you may have afternoon tea anytime.

### CITY OF RYDE “HAVE YOUR SAY” – WASTE, RECYCLING AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

City of Ryde is reviewing its [Waste Management Strategy](#) to move towards a circular economy approach. They invite submissions, which must be received by 11.59pm **Sunday 23 February 2025**. You may provide your submission by email or post, or complete an online survey. Go to <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/HaveyourSay/Have-Your-Say/Waste-Recycling-and-the-Circular-Economy>

## PAST EVENTS:

After holding several events in recent months and with the promise of track works set to take place, we held no special events at the Reserve during the past two months.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS



### Track Works – slow progress

We expected developments during the October school holidays, but nothing much has happened. Contractors removed the old concrete path between the Visitor Centre and Memorial Garden – these originally led to demountable classrooms when the Field Studies Centre began. The bags of rubbish behind the Visitor Centre had not been taken away beforehand, so they are still there. A few days ago, new turf was laid and the fence removed.

Some months ago, we asked for attention to tracks due to muddy soil and loose or washed-away rocks and paving stones. No action has yet been taken, so we advise visitors to take care especially at the Kennedy Street and Tyrell Park entrances and the Kunzea Track near Cemetery Creek 1.

Recently, work began on sealing the gravel road from the bus turning area to the vicinity of the Visitor Centre. A temporary protective cloth barrier appeared along the edge of the wetlands by Buffalo Creek but it is not tied down to the bottom of the start pickets... and the families of ducks have already realized they can cross it quite easily when it blows in the wind!

Works are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024.



## Wildlife

Bushwalkers continue to report finding ticks; see advice given in the October 2024 Wallumetta. Meanwhile, the natural bushland seems to be quite healthy with the summer flowers appearing. These include Isopogon, Kunzea ambigua and Acacia spp. There are some excellent photos on the Habitat Network Facebook page: <https://facebook.com/share/p/18CUK8vuM2/> Native animals – and rabbits – abound. Ducklings that appeared in the creek have now grown to almost adult size, and often graze in the grass near the Visitor Centre. And we hear the channel-billed cuckoos!

## Visitor Centre Gardens

During the October school holidays, some East Ryde Scouts and Cub Scouts spent a day working on the two native plant gardens adjacent to the Visitor Centre. Both the Memorial Garden and the Rod Wallace Garden had many weeds introduced by wildlife and council mowers. The team of enthusiastic youth members cleaned up both gardens. In the process they levelled last year's brush turkey mound, removed invasive weeds, repositioned the logs forming the garden borders, and planted seedlings supplied by The Habitat.



photo – M.Hughes

### Behold... a mystery!

This tree suddenly appeared in the open grass area between the Education building and the creek. We do not know why or by whom it was planted, but identified it as being *Eucalyptus cinerea* which is not native to our local area – the species is endemic to inland areas south of Canberra.

Meanwhile, we have been monitoring the growth of a *Melaleuca lineariifolia* seedling which we planted in April 2021 and, now 2 metres tall, is growing well. It replaces a large *Melaleuca* in which a

butcherbird was nesting near the Buffalo Creek footbridge near the Visitor Centre... until that tree was cut down.



## Bushcare

We ordered, but have not yet received, our Streamwatch kit, but bushcare groups continue Streamwatch monitoring with the equipment provided by City of Ryde. Interested participants in Streamwatch will receive training in its use

Meanwhile, the volunteer groups continue to work well, weather permitting, and most of the native plants in our areas are healthy; we also manage to control the enthusiastic weed growth. Rocky outcrops along the small escarpment near the Visitor Centre are looking good, thanks to the efforts of the Roving / Kennedy Street bushcare group.

## Visitor Centre

The building is well-used during school term periods, with children regularly accessing the Visitor Centre toilets to fill their buckets for the environmental science activities. In the October school holidays we discovered the fridge was left unplugged! Fortunately the only perishable item in it at the time was our milk. It turned out that electricians had been in to do the annual testing and tagging of all electrical equipment. Meanwhile, visitors to the Reserve appreciate assistance provided by our team of volunteers on weekends and public holidays.

**JOIN OUR VISITOR CENTRE TEAM!** to keep the Visitor Centre open 9am-5pm on weekends and public holidays. Our roster of 4-hour shifts is negotiated according to members' availability. No specialised skills are required, and Alfred happily provides the training needed. Most visitors' questions are answered in the maps and range of free leaflets we have available.

## A SICKENING THUD

According to an article by Tanya Loos in the Spring 2024 edition of Australian Birdlife magazine, **Bird strikes** on glass windows are increasing. This comes with more dense building developments and the rising popularity of walls with large areas of glass.

Birds have eyes towards the side of their head so they can rely on lateral vision to be fully aware of their surroundings, but this leaves a blind spot in their direction of travel. Without binocular vision they simply cannot see a clear pane of glass.

Effects of impact may include head and eye injuries, and damaged feathers. Even if the bird picks itself up and flies off, these issues may prevent it from being able to feed or defend itself.

If the bird is sitting stunned, it is best to pick it up with a teatowel and place it on a towel in a cardboard box with air holes and a secure lid. Do not give it any food or drink. Put the box in a cool place and call Sydney Wildlife Rescue - phone 94134300.

Stopping the strike involves a compromise between having a clear view and letting light in, or having a window that birds can see. Here are some suggested solutions:

- Mark the window with tape, decals or light paint – no more than 10cm apart.
- Use a set of anti-collision bird stickers you may buy from the Birdlife Australia store – <https://store.birdlife.org.au/> – they rely on UV light being visible to birds but invisible to us.
- Do not clean your windows!

## MORE SAD NEWS ABOUT BIRDS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION:

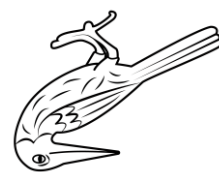
*by Brendan Sydes, National Biodiversity Policy Advisor*

**Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek approved the destruction of sensitive coastal heathland for a rocket launching facility at Whalers Way, South Australia.**

Whalers Way has been described as 'critical habitat' for the survival of the Eyre-Peninsula Southern Emu-wren. There could be as few as 750 of these tiny birds left.

Allowing Southern Launch to bulldoze nearly 24 hectares of heathland to build launch pads, blast walls and bunkers flies in the face of the government's pledge of zero new extinctions.

This decision shows just how broken Australia's nature laws are.



## INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

*We support this independent environmental group. They monitor threats to Australian wildlife and agriculture, and campaign for actions to prevent and deal with problematic invasions of diseases and pests such as fire ants. On Tuesday 19 November 2024 they hosted a recent webinar about:*

### MYRTLE RUST – AN INSIDIOUS THREAT

As early as 1990 scientists identified Myrtle Rust as a potential threat for Australian flora. And in April 2010 it happened. Myrtle rust was identified at a nursery near Gosford NSW.

It slipped through national biosecurity borders and has since spread from NSW to Victoria and to far north Queensland and north-western Australia. Climatic modelling suggests it will spread further, with south-western Australia at grave risk.

#### What does it affect?

Myrtle rust attacks many plants in family Myrtaceae, which is Australia's dominant plant family.



Melaleuca quinquinervia infected with myrtle rust.  
Photo: NSW Department of Industry & Innovation

There are more than 2000 plants in family Myrtaceae, These include eucalypts, turpentines, bottlebrushes, paperbarks and tea trees. It targets young, soft plant tissues, leading to severe disease or death.

It reshapes forests, heathlands, and wetlands, with affected species disappearing and being replaced by non-affected species.

#### What are the dangers?

Myrtle rust is common in foreign countries, but their flora has evolved along with the disease. Australian flora evolved without it, so there is no resistance to its impact and entire ecosystems may be decimated. It's one of the worst biosecurity threats Australia has faced, putting already endangered species at further risk.

The threats extend to fauna that depend on the affected species. These include koalas

The pathogen, myrtle rust, had slipped through national biosecurity borders and has since spread to far north Queensland and Victoria. Climatic modelling suggests it will spread much further.

Myrtle rust could alter the composition and function of forest, woodland, heath and wetland ecosystems. This incursion is about as bad as it can get for biosecurity in Australia – a new disease attacking our dominant plants, including species already on threatened lists.

#### What is myrtle rust?

Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is a fungus that affects trees and shrubs in family Myrtaceae. It infects leaves, stems, buds, and fruits, potentially leading to severe impacts that vary from species to species. Some species experience only mild symptoms, such as leaf spots, while others face near extinction. Within some species there is great variation in susceptibility.

Myrtle rust spreads through wind, water, insects and other animals. Its spores can travel far and infect plants many kilometres away. Spores can be carried on tools, vehicles, and clothing.

## **Where is it now?**

Myrtle rust has spread rapidly across eastern and northern Australia, from Tasmania to Torres Strait islands, and west to the Kimberley. It thrives in the rainforests of eastern Queensland and NSW, but colder climates and dry regions may limit its spread in Victoria and Tasmania. South Australia remains rust-free, although conditions in its southeast could become suitable.

## **Environmental impacts**

Myrtle rust poses a serious threat to Australian ecosystems, given the dominance of Myrtaceae plants. It may exacerbate the effects of climate change by reducing vegetation recovery after intense bushfires and droughts. A highly flammable weed, lantana, has replaced some rainforest plants killed by myrtle rust. Impacts will be massive if eucalypt-killing strains reach Australia. Threatened species that could be affected include the koala, greater gliders and swift parrot.

## **Economic impact**

Myrtle rust has imposed costs on nurseries and lemon myrtle and tea tree growers. Nurseries must now use costly fungicides and have abandoned some susceptible plant species, while the lemon myrtle industry faces increased costs from fungicide use, which has derailed plans to achieve organic status. If myrtle rust spreads to Western Australia it could devastate farms growing Geraldton wax, which is highly susceptible. New eucalypt-killing strains pose a threat to Australia's native hardwood industry.

## **What have we done?**

The Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer released a national response plan in 2007 and Plant Health Australia published a contingency plan for the nursery and garden industry in 2009. Quarantine restrictions were introduced to reduce the risk of infected Myrtaceae material from countries known to host the rust.

The Invasive Species Council highlighted the dangers in our submission to the government's review of biosecurity arrangements in 2008 but, despite government recognition of the high threat level, Australia was poorly prepared for an incursion.

On 30 April 2010, the National Management Group decided against an eradication attempt, deeming it not feasible even though the rust had been detected on only 2 properties and not in bushland. Under pressure from key groups, including Plant Health Australia and Nursery and Garden Industry Australia, an eradication program was launched in July, involving up to 380 staff.

This ceased in late December after advice that eradication was no longer feasible because the rust was spreading in bushland, facilitated by wet summer weather.

This response to the arrival of myrtle rust was heavily criticised by environmental, industry and government stakeholders, including the Invasive Species Council.

## **Result?**

Australia missed the chance to detect and stop myrtle rust early.

Poor surveillance and poor decision-making has left us all with serious consequences.

## **VALE BILL JONES**

Bill was another dedicated bushcarer within the Field of Mars over many years. He was an active member of our Society since the early 1970s and in 1982 Bill was our Society President. After his death in October, a memorial service was held at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden. To his wife Noela we extend our heartfelt sympathies.

## NEWS FROM THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL (NCC) - A WIN AGAINST GAS AND OIL

The QLD Miles Government fulfilled its promise and formally introduced a ban on new oil and gas on the Channel Country floodplains of the Lake Eyre Basin.

Traditional Owners alongside the local community and graziers, have been asking for protections for the rivers and floodplains of the Lake Eyre Basin. After years of concerted effort from the local community, last December Premier Miles committed to protecting this special area.

The Channel Country Rivers and floodplains of the Lake Eyre Basin are some of the last free-flowing desert rivers in the world, and they sustain a clean, grass-fed beef industry and a growing nature-based tourism industry.

This is a historic moment for Queensland. We can be grateful that these floodplains will be protected from new oil and gas developments for generations to come, and we hope there will be ongoing bipartisan support for these important protections.

### SCOTT REEF

*News from Paul Gamblin, WA Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society*

Woodside plans to drill for gas just 2km off Scott Reef, a world-class and fragile coral ecosystem off WA's Kimberley coast. The WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has raised significant concerns about this project, which involves extracting highly polluting fossil fuels.

The EPA advised Woodside that the project was 'unacceptable', citing threats to migrating whales and endangered turtles, and from an oil spill.

Woodside's proposed project involves drilling more than 50 wells, as close as 2km from the magnificent Scott Reef, which would risk a coral reef ecosystem that's home to well over a thousand species, many unique to the area.



*Greenpeace image: Location of the drill site in relation to Scott Reef.*

#### Why this matters

This gas project will be a major contributor to Woodside's proposed Burrup Hub project, a climate disaster that will produce billions of tonnes of emissions over its lifetime.

Building an oil and gas project around the biodiverse and fragile coral reef poses unacceptable risks to its extraordinary marine wildlife. According to Dr Ben Fitzpatrick, coral reef ecologist: *"It's been so isolated that...fish, corals, invertebrates, giant clams, crustaceans and sea cucumbers – are quite genetically distinct. You get a lot of krill and... large marine animals – blue whales, manta rays, whale sharks. There's an amazing turtle nesting rookery where turtles lay eggs on a sandy cay. They're ancient, prehistoric animals that have been doing this for millions of years."*

The Environmental Protection Authority's final report is expected next year, but the federal and WA governments will have the final say on whether the project goes ahead. We must prioritise protection of our fragile oceans over corporate fossil fuel interests.

When the time comes, we must ensure our governments make the right decision. To add your voice, go to <https://www.marineconservation.org.au/actions/woodside-drilling-gas-scott-reef/>

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE AT THE END OF DECEMBER!**

Payments and donations from members account for around 40% of our total income, half of which is used to pay for our own operating expenses and insurance. Remaining funds are used for our Society's membership and support for other environmental organisations.

**We invite you to renew your membership** and consider making a donation towards your Society's activities. Members enjoy active involvement in our Society's activities to support the protection of natural environments both locally and beyond, receive this "Wallumetta" newsletter and early notifications of our special events. **The form below has details of fees and payment methods.**

**Do you know** anyone who may be interested in the activities of our Society? Or someone who has skills that may be helpful in taking on roles in our special events? Invite them to join us!

**NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**

**YARNKNIT RUG RAFFLE PRIZE**

Please pay membership fee by direct transfer to our Bendigo Bank account: RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589.

Donated once again by Holy Spirit Yarn Group, you could be the lucky winner when the raffle is drawn at the AGM in early 2025. The handmade article is suitable for both winter and summer use. Keep it yourself, give it to a family member or friend or donate to a worthy organisation. Funds raised support the Society and the organisations we support.

Include your name in the transaction description and email your name, address and phone number to [rhffps@gmail.com](mailto:rhffps@gmail.com)

Or you may pay by cash: Complete and hand in form with payment in a sealed envelope at Field of Mars Visitor Centre, or post to:

You may buy tickets at the Visitors Centre or online by transfer to our Bendigo Bank account: RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC, BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589. Include your name and "raffle" in the transaction description, and email contact details to [rhffps@gmail.com](mailto:rhffps@gmail.com)

RHHFFPS, PO Box 552, Gladesville 16

One ticket for \$2, Three tickets for \$5

NAME:

Address:

Phone:

Annual Membership (add \$10 for newsletter to be sent via Australia Post):

\$

Individual \$ 15 (+ \$ 10)

Family \$ 35 (+ \$ 10)

Concession \$ 10 (+ \$ 10)

(Students/Pensioners) Donation

**Total Payment:**

**Email address to receive your newsletter - please print clearly:**



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