



Friends of Pallisters Reserve Inc.

Pallisters Reserve is a 254 ha wetland reserve at 457 Masons Road, Orford, owned by Trust for Nature, and managed by the Friends of Pallisters Reserve Inc. Established January 1990

Oct.
2023



Open Day: Sunday, October 22, 2023

10am: Gates open

11am: Speaker: David Brennan

2:00pm: Close

OPEN DAY — SUNDAY OCTOBER 22

NATIONAL WATER WEEK TALK

“Fire as a tool for increasing floristic biodiversity on Wannon Water sites”

David Brennan (Wannon Water)

Talk starts 11am

In 2012 Wannon Water commissioned the Glenelg–Hopkins–Dunkeld group to develop a 10 year management plan for biodiversity values at the Dunkeld Grassland.

Throughout the past decade this grassland has been strategically burnt by the CFA and the results have been monitored closely by scientists at La Trobe Uni. The thesis written by Matilda Alvarez has recently been released and David’s talk focusses on the findings of that study.

The topic is relevant to Pallisters future management plans.

Pallisters Reserve, a sanctuary for biodiversity in SW Victoria is home for broilgas, koalas, orchids, and many other indigenous plants and animals. During Open Day visitors have the opportunity to explore this environment. Bring boots and suitable clothing! Tea and coffee will be provided, however we suggest you pack your own lunch. Pallisters Reserve is located at 457 Masons Rd., Orford, about 5 km west of Orford settlement.



Shingleback
Trachydosaurus rugosus

Planting

During the September meeting, 12 Friends planted 500 forestry tubes containing Swamp and Manna Gum, Blackwood, Myrtle Wattle, Silver Banksia, Sweet Bur-saria, Prickly Tea-Tree, Slender Honey Myrtle, Scented Paperbark, and Swamp Sheoke along with a mix of Flax Lily, Mat-Rush, Tussock, Kangaroo and Wallaby Grasses, Bulbine Lily, Yam Daisy, Blue Devils, and Native Violet.

This was part of a lot of 2000 seedlings funded by Pacific Hydro, and raised by Coddington and Worn Gunditj Nurseries.

With one exception – Yam Daisy – all these plants have been previously recorded at Pallisters. A staple food of the Traditional Owners, Yam Daisy would have been abundant at Pallisters prior to the introduction of grazing. And rabbits.

Seedlings were planted on the fringe of a seasonal wetland, within a fenced-off area in order to reduce the browsing pressure on them until they can become established. Improvements were made to the fence in order to resist incursions by red-necked wallabies.



Computer

At the September meeting it was decided to proceed with the purchase of a new laptop computer to used for recording bird sightings, processing images and videos, and other purposes. For file storage and back-up, two 4 TB portable hard drives will also be procured.

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.

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>

Friends of Pallisters Reserve Inc.

Pallisters Koalas

I. Eucalypts

Three eucalypt species grow at Pallisters Reserve: Man-na Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Swamp Gum (*E. ovata*) and Shining Peppermint (*E. willisii*). The surrounding plantations are of one species, Southern Blue Gum (*E. globulus*). Koalas are selective feeders, preferring some particular species over others and even distinguishing between the same species from different sites. Species preferences also depend on site location within the state.

Victoria's Koala Management Strategy (VKMS) lists Man-na Gum, Swamp Gum and Southern Blue Gum as three of the five species preferred by Koalas. Consequently, when harvesting operations begin in the adjacent blue gum plantations koala populations at Pallisters will need close monitoring.

II. Counting Method

In 2019–20 Kita Ashman measured koala densities in native vegetation blocks, roadside strips, and plantations for a range of sites extending from Orford to near the SA border. Included were the 3 transects in Pallisters Reserve shown in the map on page 3. Also surveyed were native eucalypt strips along the side of Pallisters Rd., 2.5 km west of the Pallisters gate.

In addition to counting koalas, Ashman recorded the tree species koalas inhabited and measured their leaf canopies. This allowed her to assess forest quality as a koala food source.

Ashman's protocol provides the basis for our koala counts at Pallisters Reserve. Pairs of surveyors count koalas along five different transects. While we identify the tree species koalas occupy, unlike Ashman, canopy measurements are not made due to volunteer and time limitations. As devised by Trevor Kennedy, our procedure follows these steps:

- Transects 300 meters long have been established along the existing foot tracks. As indicated on the map, 3 transects are in the Pallisters bushland and 2 in Hocking.
- Each transect is marked at the start and finish.
- Recorders work in pairs with one person responsible for each side of the track. To cross-check counted numbers, recorders swap sides on the return walk.
- Koalas are recorded if they are above or within 25 m of the track. (Taking into account the 2 sides to each transect, the width of the monitored strip is therefore 50 m.)
- Binoculars are used to identify koala sex if possible and whether a young koala was present, – or to locate koalas in mistletoe, etc. – believe it or not!
- Details of sightings are entered on recording sheets carried by each pair of recorders.
- Records are collated and entered into a spreadsheet.
- Counts are performed quarterly – in February, May, August, and November.

The total area surveyed along the 5 transects is

$$5 \times 300\text{m} \times 50\text{m} = 75,000 \text{ m}^2 = 7.5 \text{ ha,}$$

approximately 5.8% (or 1/17) of the 129 ha woodland portion of Pallisters Reserve. Thus, in principle, the total number of koalas on the reserve could be about 17 times larger than the number observed during the quarterly counts.

As a check, results can be compared with Peter Bolte's koala observations separately made during Peter's monthly bird surveys of five 2-hectare areas.

III. Monitoring Program

Friends of Pallisters will continue the periodic monitoring for as long as practicable. Our monitoring not only involves the regular counting of koalas along designated transects, but also recording the numbers and health of feed trees. In his 2013 management plan submitted to the Kirra Whurrong Aboriginal Corporation at Framlingham, Rob Wallis suggested that feed-tree monitoring should be repeated at 3-yearly intervals, along with consideration of planting new trees.

In May 2023 a new Victorian Koala Management Strategy (VKMS) was released by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). An update of the 2004 VKMS, the 2023 VKMS was developed collaboratively with a working group that included Traditional Owners, scientists, animal welfare organisations, wildlife carers, the blue gum plantation industry, veterinarians, Zoos Victoria and other Government agencies from Victoria and interstate. Community feedback was also incorporated.

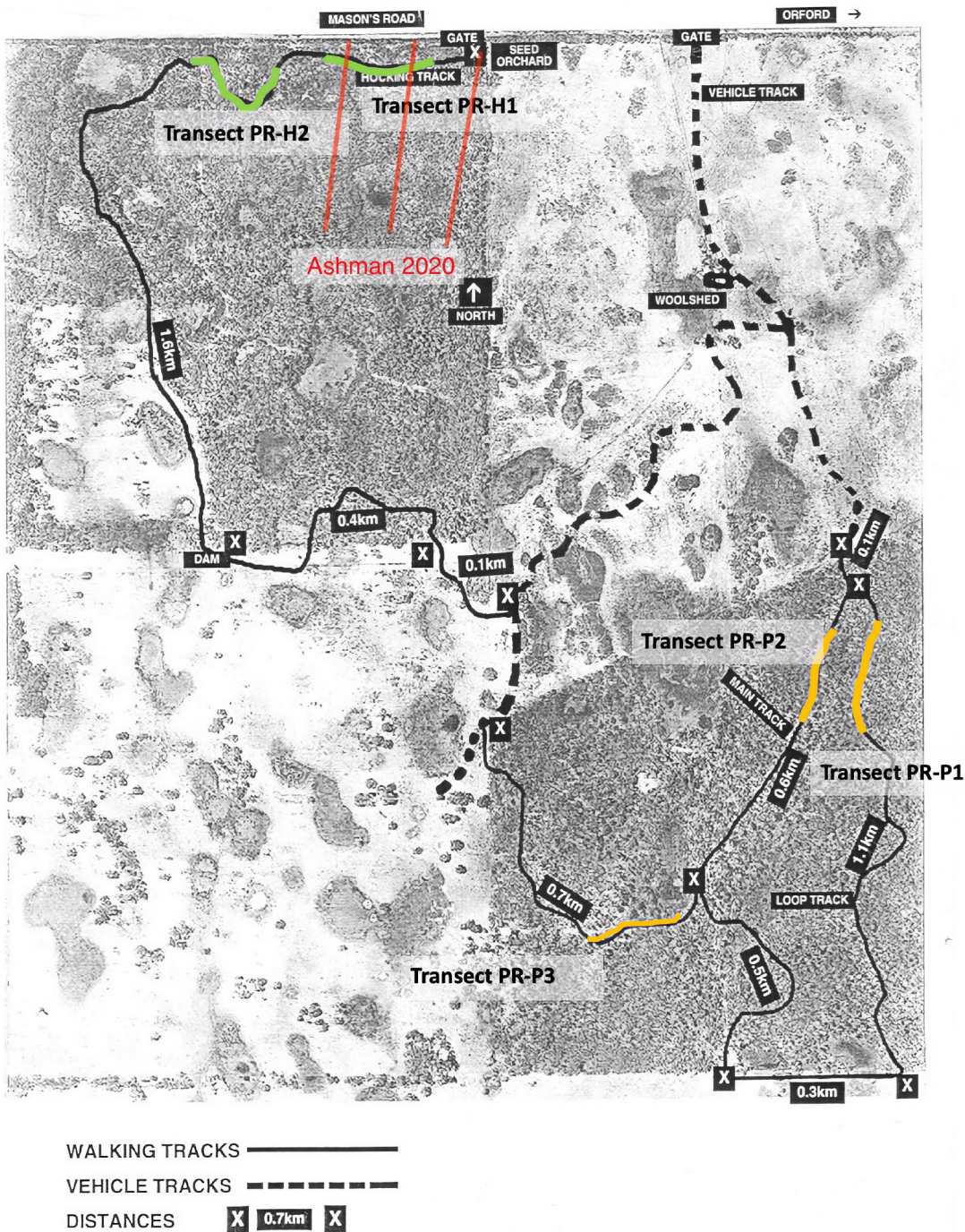
The VMKS sets out actions to address koala management issues over the next 10 years. The objective is that Victoria's koala populations and habitat are secure, healthy and sustainable in the long-term.

Owing to the necessity of accommodating the conflicting interests of a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the negotiations in constructing the VKMS would have been challenging. But, by itself, VKMS is simply a strategy: the next stage in the process – likely even more difficult – is to implement the actions it advocates. Implementation will be in two phases; for most actions the first phase is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2025.

The 2022-23 Victorian State Budget provides \$3.309 million over 2 years to support actions under the strategy.

Along with the full and summary versions of VKMS, the current version of the implementation plan is available at:

<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/koalas>



Koala monitoring transects at Pallisters Reserve. The yellow and green transects show the paths of our quarterly koala counts. The red transects were used for a one-off count by Kita Ashman.

Current koala numbers at Pallisters seem stable, however, if a concerning change in the koala population were to be observed, the Trust for Nature would be consulted to begin a stepped-up monitoring that could include, for example, mapping the distribution of key eucalypt species on the Reserve.

Looking ahead, we will periodically review our methodology and make changes when called for. For example, transects in the Hocking bush (and all bird survey areas) are near the edges of the block so an interior transect may be of value. Another improvement would be to survey previously-pastured parts of the Reserve now revegetated with scattered trees. Finally, methods like that

provided by the HabitApp tool could be employed to estimate canopy cover of selected trees along transects.

IV. Management

The role of the Friends of Pallisters is confined to koala monitoring. Neither we – nor the Trust for Nature – have the capability or the authority to *manage* koalas by means of on-the-ground actions such as health checks, genetic surveys, fertility control, disease treatment, and translocation. Koala management in Victoria lies in the hands of DEECA – Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – formerly known as DELWP – Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning.

On the banks of the Hopkins River, Framlingham Forest Indigenous Protected Area has had a history of koala overpopulation and provides an example of DEECA's remedial actions.

In 2018 DELWP Wildlife Officers and vets conducted a one-week program at Framlingham, performing health checks on 194 koalas and fertility control on all adult females; 168 koalas were translocated to the Fergusons and Claude Austin State Forests, south of Rocklands Reservoir.

As summarized on page 2, DEECA's Management Strategy for koalas – VKMS – has been reviewed and its implementation is now being addressed.

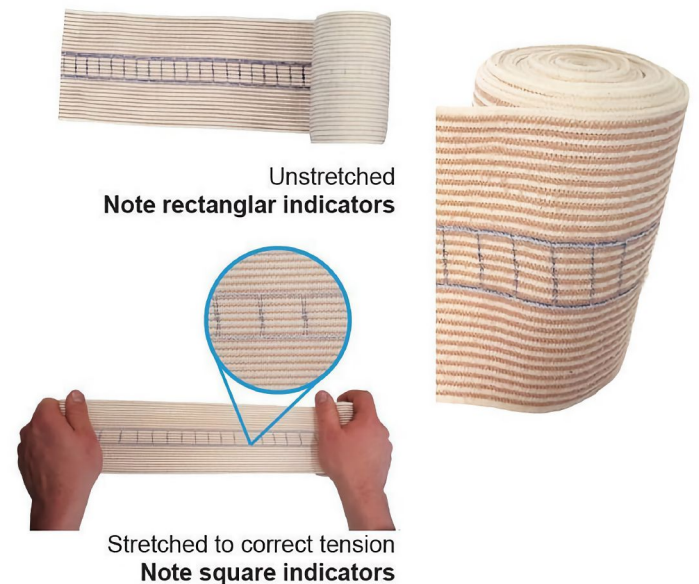


Framlingham Forest, 2018.

Snake Season

Pallisters is home to two species of snakes identified as dangerously venomous: the Lowlands copperhead and Eastern tiger snake. Also present is the small, slender and rarely sighted White-lipped snake, but this is only mildly venomous and is not regarded as a threat to humans.

A purpose-built snake-bite pouch has been placed in the Woolshed for use in the unlikely event of snake-bite at Pallisters. The key component of this kit is a compression bandage that indicates the correct tension for arresting the flow of venom through the lymphatic system. It accomplishes this by means of rectangles printed on the bandage. When stretched to the correct tension, these rectangles appear as squares. (These bandages are readily available at chemist shops.)



Properly – and promptly – applied, bandaging in this way can be effective for hours, as demonstrated by the example of a woman recently bitten by a brown snake on a remote beach in Northern NSW.

The victim reported that the pressure bandages were so effective at containing the venom, she only felt the onset of the toxicity when the bandages were removed in a hospital six hours later.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-05/snake-bite-bandage-saves-surfer-beach-sandon-nsw/102937166>