

THE BABBLER



News from Gluepot Reserve Autumn 2026

Rain, Glorious Rain: A Rangers' Experience

We were privileged to be the rangers at Gluepot when an unprecedented 126mm of rain arrived over 2 days in early March. Luckily, we had arranged to arrive a day early for ranger changeover due to the predicted storm. When we arrived, Alistair the previous ranger of two months was ready to exit Gluepot in his lovely red electric Tesla with his bicycle on top. Alistair had experienced many weeks of extreme heat during his rotation; we are indeed the fortunate ones.

The rain began the next afternoon and fell steadily all night. The next morning, we ventured to see if any water had made it into the bone-dry dams in the exclusion zone. We were greeted by overflowing dams; tracks turned into streams and dozens of burrowing frogs - swimming. That night we went to sleep to a chorus of frogs croaking and the sound of more rain. The next morning the Black Ducks arrived, how do they know?



The Homestead is surrounded

The homestead area was awash, every rainwater tank was overflowing, giving Gluepot 346,000L of fresh water and the rain still fell. We allowed ourselves a longer shower that evening, a rare treat at Gluepot. The new plantings around the visitor centre and in the exclusion zone were submerged, we worried for their health.

Finally, the sun came out, and we ventured out in the trusty Kubota to check the tracks and Sandy Dam. The tracks past Babbler campsite were lakes, all the Black Oak was flooded, and the Sandy Dam wall was a small island in the middle of a large lake. The dam restoration and revegetation project planned in the next few weeks would have to wait.

We had to close the reserve to visitors, as many roads were impassable. Given the amount of water, we wondered how long it would take to dry out. However, the land was like a sponge after many years of low rainfall, within 4 days the grader was out repairing roads. We were able to check most of the reserve but there were still large pools of water and some deep washouts making some areas impassable. We had already received more rain in 2026 than the total rainfall for 2025.

Ten days after the rain, the once submerged new plantings near the visitor centre were flowering, isn't nature fantastic! We had never seen so many lizards: skinks, and dragons, large and small; there were dozens which darted out of the way when we walked the nature trail near the homestead or ventured out into the campsites. The frogs had been replaced by tadpoles who were feasting on the millions of mosquitoes which had also appeared, if only they could eat more!

In the middle of March, we were ready to reopen so visitors could share this wonderful experience, when the rain started to fall again. We were looking forward to seeing a few different faces - isn't nature fickle.

Anne and Dave Sellar
Volunteer Rangers March 2026

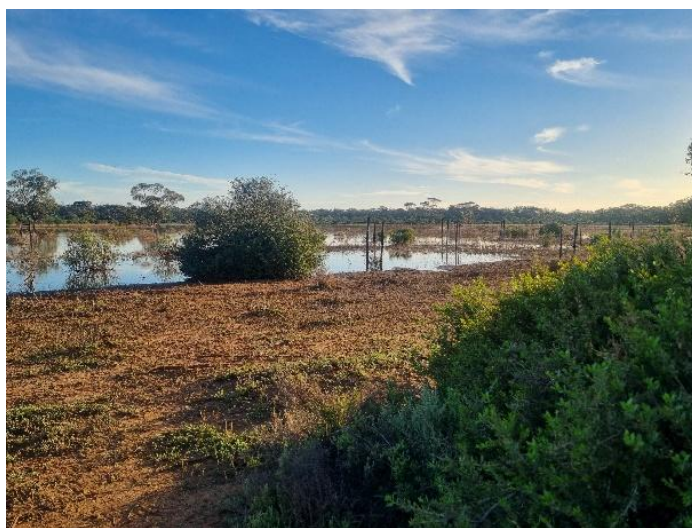
Water, Water, Everywhere



New plantings get a watering



Sandy Dam



Old Gluepot



Kangaroo Dam



Quinn's Dam



Homestead Dam is full



Left: Frog species

Right: Fungi species

Far right: New growth



In Contrast: Glimpses of life during a long hot summer.

By Bronwyn Mart

With no rain in 2026 until February 12th, this first sprinkle of just 1.6mm helped to keep the dust to a minimum. By 9:00am temperatures were rising and Gluepot's birds were significantly quieter. Minimal flowering and no noticeable insect activity indicated the scarcity of food for many species. Even in these extreme conditions, Gluepot has so many hidden gems.



Australian Ringnecks and Mulga Parrots frequented watering points near the Homestead and hides early each morning.



With only a small number of Mistletoe flowers, nectar feeding species such as White-fronted Honeyeaters were rarely heard.



Early morning provided brief views of species such as the Purple-backed Fairy Wren before they remained within the cover of dense vegetation.



Sighting a juvenile Yellow-plumed Honeyeater indicated that some breeding pairs had successfully raised their young.



A Sand Goanna sunny itself in the morning warmth close to the upright cylinders used for termite traps. Following rain, it could not be located.



Weebills mainly obtain their moisture from insects, with drinking only in very dry conditions. This bird was at the trough for about ten seconds.

Maintaining Gluepot's Roads

Gluepot's significant rain event in early March, followed by occasional showers for the next two weeks, closed the Reserve for most of the month. Gluepot's soils respond to their name – sticking to vehicles, create slipping surfaces as well as being eroded within limestone outcrops.

Deep ruts can be created by a single vehicle driving on wet squishy surfaces and when dry, these remain with not just the depression but raised edges to amplify an uneven surface. The road ahead may look clear of water but an undulating system of dunes and swales across the Reserve results in runoff pooling in pockets. Finding a suitable place to turn around is often not possible.

With our Grader driver Vic Breeding unable to enter the Reserve, Volunteer Ranger Dave refurbished Gluepot's six-tyre triangular dragger to be ready for service once our dirt roads began to dry.

The cost to repair significant road damage can be measured in time and fuel usage, but it is also the damage to vehicles, including those of other visitors that is of greatest concern.


Gluepot Management thanks our visitors, who, after rain, have respected the need to stay within their camping area and rely on walking for their birdwatching.



Dave Sellar

Opportunities for volunteering at Gluepot following cancellation of April Working Bee.

Following the cancellation of Gluepot's April Working Bee, the Management Committee have assessed how some projects can be rescheduled. Those who registered to attend the Working Bee will be sent notices for forthcoming activities. However, if you did not register, but can assist in the latter half of this year and into 2027, please notify Sue Nettlefold, jdsmnett@gmail.com, who will place your details onto this registry.

2026 and 2027	
<u>June onwards:</u> Weeding throughout reserve mainly using spraying units.	
<u>July to August:</u> Water catchment structures at Emu and Froggy Bird hides. Details being developed.	
<u>October:</u> Pitfall trapping requires a small team of volunteers to support construction and monitoring.	
Sandy Dam Project: <u>Winter / Spring '26:</u> "Branching" – collect and layer branches and other vegetation onto bare ground. <u>Autumn '27:</u> tree planting	
Volunteer Kitchen Upgrade: A small team of volunteers (up to 4) are required from time to time through <u>May, June and July</u> to help tradesmen undertake construction work.	
<u>Long-term projects</u> also include electric fence maintenance, ongoing Sandy Dam Restoration Projects and removal of redundant buried pitfall buckets.	

The first project to get underway after the rain was to tackle the abundance of weeds that had come up. In the first week of April, Dave Georg sprayed the edges of track 1, track 8 near Sandy Dam, the track through the home dam enclosure, and the four tracks radiating out from Old Gluepot tanks, using glyphosate. He was targeting mostly Wards Weed to minimise its spread along these tracks.



The Weeders

Then a **Weed Bash** was held on 17-19th April. Eight volunteers attended at various times over the weekend. We did follow-up spraying of the tracks treated two weeks earlier, plus the Old Gluepot Homestead area, and the three campgrounds. Camp sites and tracks were cleared of *all* vegetation, not just exotic weeds. The Homestead precinct, from solar panels to the Education Centre car park, was weeded using a combination of spraying, hand-weeding, and brush cutting.

On the Sunday morning, Dave, ably assisted by Peter, cooked pancakes for everyone present, a much-appreciated treat!



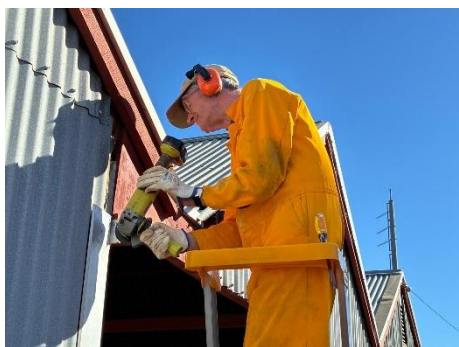
Left: Enjoying a well-earned Pancake Breakfast.

Right: The 2024 plantations benefitted greatly from the rains.



Kitchen Renovations

It was not until Easter that preliminary work could be started on the kitchen upgrade. When the outside cladding was removed, old extensive termite damage was found. Unfortunately, this required an architectural rethink, and the damaged walls and beams will need to be replaced. While waiting for the new timber to arrive, work commenced on laying the concrete foundations.



Inspecting for termite damage



Preparing for the concrete



Laying concrete



Nearly done



Task completed



A Happy Volunteer

Our happy volunteer (pictured) is Martin Toland. Martin and his wife Janet have travelled from New Zealand regularly over the last 20 years. They take on the Ranger duties at Gluepot for at least 2 months at a time. Martin is an experienced carpenter. He has been a major contributor to many of the construction projects. Help is always needed, though, to complete these projects, and there will be more calls for volunteers in the coming months.

While you are helping out at Gluepot, there will always be time to explore and birdwatch. Below are some of the recent images captured by the cameras that are installed at the water troughs at each bird hide.



White-faced Heron at Emu Hide



Hooded Robin at Old Gluepot



Pink Cockatoos at Grasswren Hide

Thanks to our photographers who have contributed to this issue: Anne Sellar, Janet Toland, Sandy Dickson, Andrew Humpage, Rod Bradtke, Ian Falkenberg, Petra Hanke and Bronwyn Mart.

Environmental Courses at Gluepot Reserve: spring 2026 and autumn 2027

Facilitated by experts in their field, Gluepot's ecology is explored through both science and art. Additional information and booking is via –

<https://gluepot.org/education/environmental-education-courses>



29 & 30 August: Bird Banding – Luke Ireland

5 & 6 September: Nature Painting – Wendy Jennings

19 & 20 September: Mallee Vegetation at Gluepot – Mitchell Livingston

26 & 27: September: Birdwatching Basics and Beyond – Ian Kerr

17 & 18 October: Producing Art Images from Gluepot's Environment – John Whitney

7 & 8 November: Getting to Know Reptiles – Mark Hutchinson

19 March p.m. 2027 – Sunday 21st March 2027: Invertebrates: Dave Georg and Margaret Evans

Attending an Educational Education Course weekend is an excellent introduction to Gluepot, its environment and the services offered to all visitors. Useful information on planning your visit to Gluepot is located at -

<https://gluepot.org/visit-us/visitor-services-information/>

<https://gluepot.org/visit-us/camping-information/>



Gluepot Reserve is a Reserve of Birdlife Australia. ABN: 75 149 124 774

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Postal address: PO Box 345, Waikerie, SA 5330 Website: www.gluepot.org On Facebook.

Gluepot is a not-for-profit conservation reserve, managed and operated entirely by volunteers.

It is funded through donations and bequests from its supporters, and by grants for capital works and projects. If you wish to support the Reserve by being a donor or providing a bequest, please contact the Chairman:

Ian Falkenberg E-Mail: hawknest2@bigpond.com Phone: 0428 842 873

This 'Gluepot' Newsletter is produced as an e-newsletter, and is not available as a printed version. Contributions, comments, and feedback may be forwarded to the editors—Sue

Nettlefold and Bronwyn Mart

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