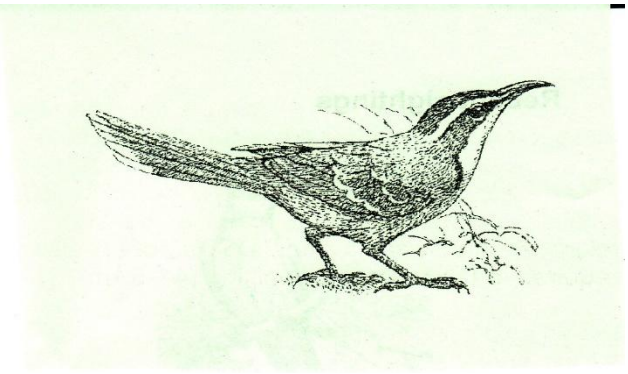


THE BABBLER

GLUEPOT RESERVE

News from Gluepot Reserve Winter 2026

Dedicated Volunteers

Every year the Department of Environment and Water recognises significant achievements of the volunteers who give their time to improve parks and reserves in South Australia. This process is facilitated by the Friends of Parks and Nature Inc. and coordinated by the Volunteer Programs Unit.
Friends of Gluepot Reserve came into being in 2004, and since 2024 we have had 11 of our volunteers recognised for 20 years of service. All recipients receive a framed certificate, a personal letter from the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, and a hat badge.
This year, Martin and Janet Toland were acknowledged for their contribution to Gluepot Reserve over 20 years.
This is an outstanding effort, considering that Martin and Janet live in New Zealand. For most of the years since 2001, they have undertaken the jobs of Assistant Ranger and then Rangers, staying for two months at a time.
Martin is a skilled carpenter and has been involved in many of the building projects at Gluepot.
Janet is the perfect back up - coordinating their trips, welcoming the visitors to the Reserve, and keeping up with all the data collection and computer work, as well as assisting with the construction processes.
Gluepot owes a huge debt of gratitude to them both.

Martin and Janet Toland

The Kitchen Renovations

An amazing amount of work has been done on this project in the last three months.
The Rangers over this period – Martin and Janet Toland, Brendan and Maryanne Freeman, Graham and Linda Lee, Mark and Georgia Darter, Bronwyn Mart and Geoff Gibbons -and their assistant Rangers, have done a wonderful job keeping the Reserve running, hosting many volunteers and visitors and always contributing to the building works.
Once the concrete slab had been poured, Ian and Margaret Falkenberg delivered a large trailer-load of roof trusses and wall construction timber. Then, a construction team led by Fred and Petra Van der Heiden, and ably assisted by Vic Breeding, Rod Bradtke, Craig Oliver, Shane Petsch, Anne & Dave Sellar, and Stephen Gun erected the treated timber stud walls.
From 14th – 18th June, the corrugated iron to the roof trusses and wall structures together with the guttering and eaves were finished, once again with the help of Fred, Vic, Rod, Anne and Dave along with Arthur Simpson also assisting. Insulation batts were then installed. A trench was dug by Steve Shaw for the electrical cable, and Adrian Jacobs has completed the electrical circuits for lighting and power points.
Gyprock has been applied to the internal walls by Con Zagotsis and his team, and the walls have been painted by Ian and Oriana Williams. Dennis Mathews, Craig Oliver, Geoff Gibbons and Bronwyn Mart assisted Ian and Margaret Falkenberg over three days working towards preparing architraves and skirting prior to the placement of kitchen fittings.
There have been several rain interruptions along the way. Much work was done by Vic Breeding and Arthur Simpson to keep the roads graded and safe. Other volunteers who have contributed along the way include Jenny Reilly, Scott and Sharon Moore, Julia Harris, Mike Chuk, Dave Georg and John Glover.

Various stages of the Kitchen Renovations

Initial stages of extension with one original wall remaining

Willing workers take a short break

Enclosing the walls once roof trusts are in place

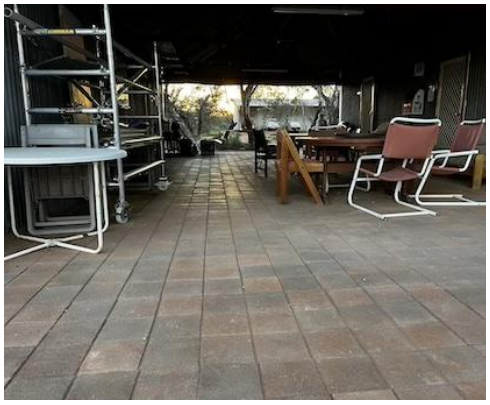
Walls and roofing form the shape of the new structure.

Placing the first roll of lino along a marked line

Bringing in the first kitchen fitting

The Breezeway has enabled safe storage of a multiple range of materials for both building and replacement within the completed kitchen.

Oriana completes a feature wall.



By the end of August, outdoor furniture could be returned enabling this space to be utilised by volunteers.

River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC)

In 1998, the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal peoples submitted a claim to have their Native Title Rights and Interests recognised in Law. After 13 years, on 18th November 2011, Native Title consent determination was bestowed on the River Murray and Mallee peoples. This recognised that the River Murray and Mallee peoples had exclusive rights and interests to parts of their traditional lands in the Riverland of South Australia. The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation now administers this land on behalf of their community.

After much work, by March 2022, the Corporation had developed a team of Rangers to lead their young men and women in caring for country. The founding principles for the Corporation are to celebrate living culture, assess and protect areas of cultural heritage, and to care for the environment. By building partnerships that support pathways for education and training, employment opportunities are expected to follow. The Corporation also advocates to improve health services, develop youth programmes and foster community pride in their culture.

The Corporation, through the Rangers, has been working with several local environmental groups, and while learning new skills, the Rangers are also contributing to the understanding regarding traditional aboriginal culture.

The RMMAC Rangers. *Photo Alexandria Giles*

Gluepot is preparing to work closely with RMMAC, and we anticipate that this arrangement will be beneficial to both parties.

Weeding at Gluepot: Sometimes choices are needed

Following exceptional rains in early autumn, germination of both native and invasive seeds was immediately evident. Areas with a history of either stocking (such as old dams) or general soil disturbance (e.g., close to buildings) are particularly susceptible to weed infestations. The good news is that vast areas of Gluepot remain weed free with endemic species thriving.

Managing current weed growth has required volunteers to make choices based on a number of factors: the emergence of specific species, past efforts to eliminate species, their location, time and effort required to reduce further spread. For example, Wards Weed is targeted along all track edges to minimise spreading by vehicles, but when located at old dam sites, it is too common to be successfully eliminated.

Targeted spraying around natives planted at Old Gluepot.

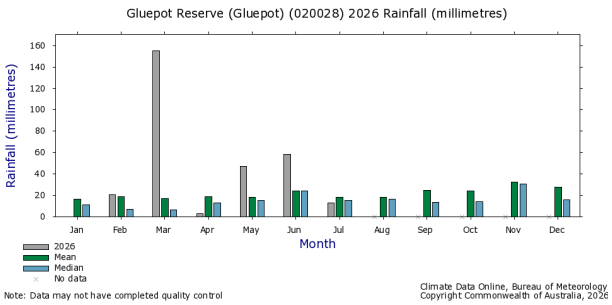
Dave removing Bower Spinach which had smothered planted natives.*

Removing thistles at Kangaroo Dam. A range of other weeds are too common to be successfully eradicated.

*Although Bower Spinach (related to Warrigal Greens) is native to parts of South Australia, it is not native to Gluepot.

Highlighting an exceptional spring in '26.

An exceptional spring awaits, following above average rains through autumn and winter. Gluepot's various habitats are bursting with colour, as captured by Petra Hanke and Graham Lee on pages 4 and 5.



A photographic snapshot of Gluepot in mid 2026

Meadow Argus Petra Hanke

Lesser Wanderer Petra Hanke

Spotted Jezebel Petra Hanke

Australian Wood Duck Graham Lee

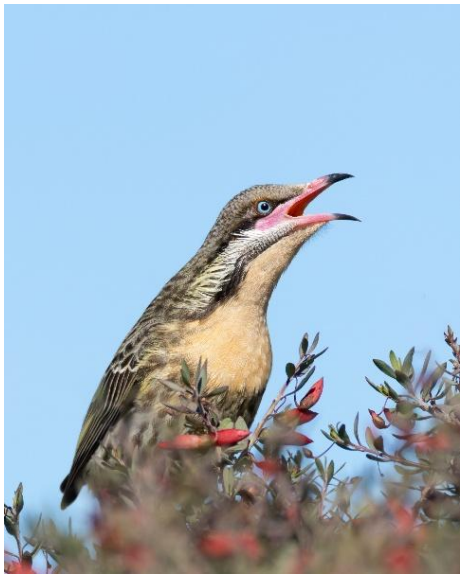
Brown Falcon Graham Lee

Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo Petra Hanke

White-fronted Honeyeater Graham Lee

On the Airstrip Petra Hanke

Pallid Cuckoo Graham Lee



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater Graham Lee

Pied Honeyeater Petra Hanke

Mulga Parrot Graham Lee

Hardhead at Old Gluepot Petra Hanke

Morning dew Petra Hanke

Red-capped Robin Petra Hanke

Eremophila in flower Petra Hanke

Pied Stilts Petra Hanke

Snakes of Gluepot Reserve – the Ringed Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja modesta*)

Ian Williams

The Ringed Brown Snake is one of the more commonly sighted snakes on Gluepot (not that snakes are seen very often). My most recent sighting was whilst undertaking fox baiting, when one slithered almost between the legs of my colleague who was down on all fours burying a fox bait. The snake showed no obvious behavioural response to our presence and appeared to be foraging amongst the plants, perhaps for a meal. This lack of interest in us was most likely due to our ability to stay calm, with minimal movement whilst observing the snake.

Fifty species of reptiles (snakes and lizards) have been observed on Gluepot Reserve. This includes 39 lizard and 11 snake species. The snakes include 2 species of blind snakes and 9 species of elapids, the latter also referred to as the front-fanged venomous snakes.

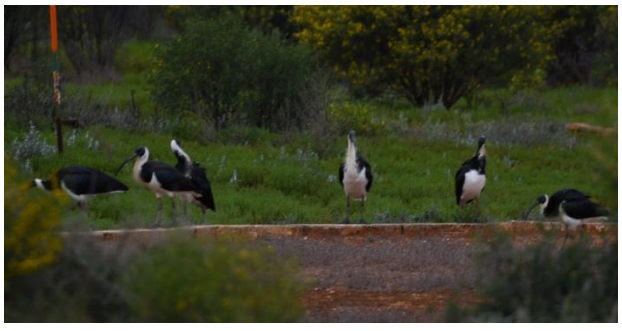
The Ringed Brown Snake is an elapid and the smallest member in the genus *Pseudonaja*. This genus comprises 9 species in Australia, including some of the most dangerously venomous snakes in the world.

This relatively slender adult snake has a total length up to about 60 cm. Varying in dorsal (the back) colour from greyish tan to reddish brown, it has a black patch on the head and a black band across the neck. One helpful identifier is the presence of 4-11 thin dark crossbands present along the length of the body. However, in aging adults, the crossbands fade and may not be visible at all.

Observed in a variety of habitat types, the Ringed Brown Snake is primarily diurnal (active during the daytime) but may forage nocturnally (at night-time) during hot weather. Its diet comprises mainly small lizards. As well as envenoming their prey, there is some evidence that the species uses constriction to subdue its prey.

This small to medium sized snake is usually inoffensive, but as with most snakes, it may bite if harassed, trodden on or handled. Reports of bites and envenomation by the Ringed Brown Snake are rare. One bite described in 1987 reported mild symptoms without significant blood clotting (bleeding, bruising) or neurological (breathing difficulty, paralysis) symptoms. Although the venom is reported as having limited medical significance for humans, a snakebite should be regarded as potentially dangerous and appropriate first aid applied.

Something different ……visitors to the Ranger Residence and helicopter landing pad.



Exciting new clothing items have arrived at Gluepot

Gluepot has recently received a large order of clothing, including some new items to complement old favourites. There is currently a wide range of colours and sizes for most styles for women, men and kids.

Our display rack and table are overflowing with a comprehensive range.

Thanks to Danielle Packer for overseeing product sales records and purchasing Gluepot's clothing.

T-shirts in a great range of colours.

Sleeveless tops are made in a very light fabric.

Sunhats are also available in off-white. Various beanie colours.

Gluepot's cookbook and local bird identification aids.

Warm windcheaters and vests are always popular.

Education Courses at Gluepot Reserve

Learn about Gluepot's amazing environment through a weekend course facilitated by an expert in their field.

Nature Painting 5 & 6 September. Wendy Jennings has developed a popular following.
Last minute interest should be directed to Bronwyn at gibbart@bigpond.com

Mallee Vegetation with Mitchell Livingston from Trees for Life,
19 & 20 September.
Visit the various habitats within Gluepot and explore the components of different habitats.

This project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the Landscape levies.

Birdwatching with a focus on **Mallee species** with Ian Kerr 26 & 27 September. A rare opportunity to be mentored by a passionate birder.

Art imaging with John Whitney, 17 & 18 October: Create in the outdoors by transferring what you see and feel through colour, shape, patterns and texture.

Reptiles with Mark Hutchinson on 7 & 8 November. Day and night walks to identify various reptiles and other small animals supplemented with key identification features for common genera.

In March 2027, an opportunity to focus on **Insects** with Margaret Evans and Dave Georg.

Aspects of Management of Gluepot Reserve

At Gluepot, the management committee aims to use the best available scientific data when making management decisions. There is always a balance to find between protecting habitat for native birds and other animals and being welcoming to the growing number of visitors. This year the Reserve has been closed on several occasions because of significant rainfall events. These decisions are necessary to prevent damage to the main road into Gluepot as well as the internal vehicle tracks. Keeping visitors safe is also front of mind.

The Science and Monitoring Committee, ably led by Rebecca Boulton and Greg Johnston, oversee all the research studies that occur at Gluepot.
Currently Gluepot is involved in 6 major projects:

1. The call of the mallee project in partnership with Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (MRLB), Department of Environment and Water (DEW), and the Australian Landscape Trust (ALT). The habitat augmentation at Sandy Dam is one part of this project, and initial Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Surveys have been carried out and significant artifacts have been found. The RMMAC will be doing follow up surveys and will be involved in other projects on Gluepot.

2. Developing automated Acoustic Recognition for the Mallee Birds – a project led by La Trobe University.

3. A National Environmental Science Program (NESP) project which aims to restore landscape resilience, safeguarding mallee birds and their habitats from compounding threats. Organisations also involved in this project are La Trobe University, University of New England, CSIRO, MRLB.

4. An Australian Research Council (ARC) project being undertaken by RMIT University is looking into the benefits of Private Protected Areas. Gluepot Reserve is the first conservation area that they have examined.

5. Phenology citizen science project: mallee tree flowering cycles, partnering with the ALT.

6. Resolving the drivers of variation in cooperative social groups along environmental gradients. This project is being led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Monitoring of the bird population is done regularly throughout the year. Volunteers are assigned areas of the Reserve to carry out their bird atlassing, and they try to do this about 4 times a year.
Gluepot participates in the National Malleefowl survey every year. Dates for 2026 will be advertised soon.
Reptile and small mammal surveys and bird banding are undertaken yearly. The plan is to conduct these surveys around the weekend of 10-11 of October this year. While the risks of H5-Bird-Flu spreading to birds in Mallee environments is low, it may be that for biosecurity requirements some of these surveys may need to be cancelled.

Thanks to our photographers who have contributed to this issue: Petra Hanke, Graham Lee, Bronwyn Mart, Craig Oliver and Ian Williams. Proof reading by Petra Hanke.
Page 2 graph of rainfall at Gluepot was sourced from BOM website.

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