

HFNC Excursion to Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve - 20 July 2019

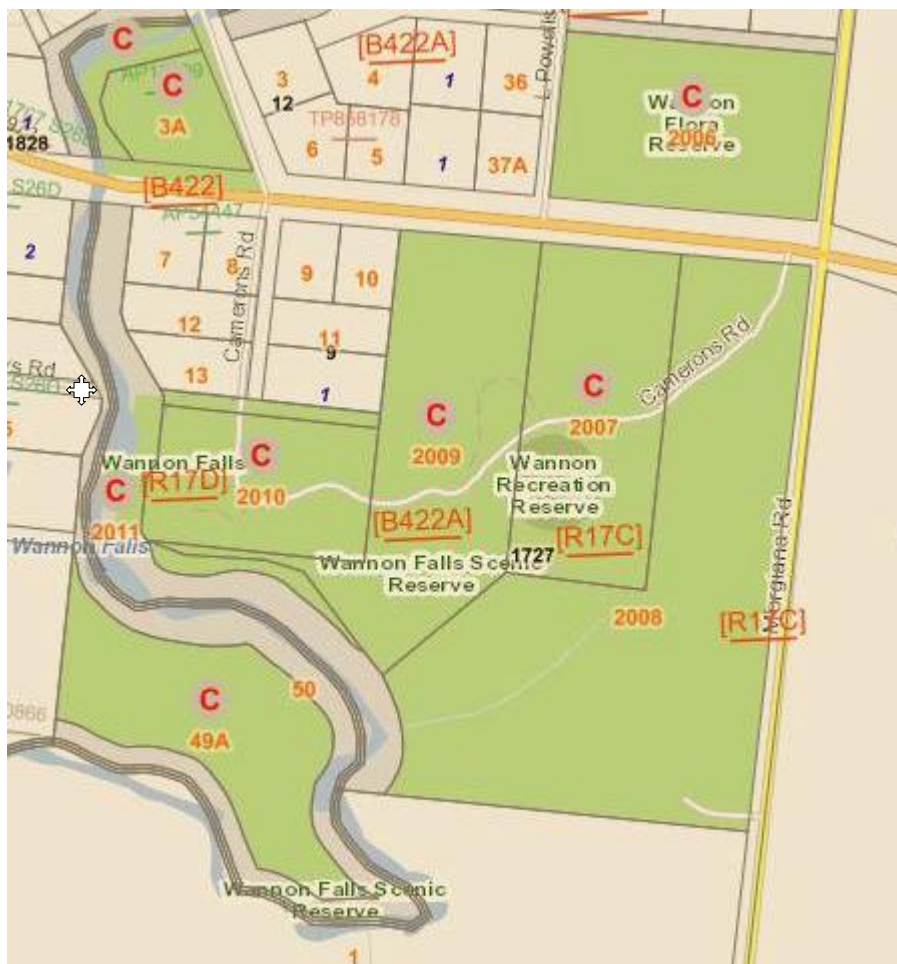
Rod Bird

Participants: Diane Luhrs & Rod Bird, Reto Zollinger & Yvonne Ingeme, Glenys Cayley, Amanda Smith, Peter Hocking, Liz Fenton, Dave & Lyn Munro, Hillary Turner, George & Albert Turner.

The main objective of the excursion was to explore the southern block of the Scenic Reserve and then have a picnic lunch at the campground picnic area followed by a stroll near the Oval in the main northern block, looking for orchids. The list of native vascular flora for the entire Scenic Reserve is currently 222 species, with 219 recorded for the northern block and 82 for the southern block. Orchids make up 25 species in the list. The southern block has fewer native species, probably because that area was compromised by continuous grazing there from settlement in 1840 to about 1970. Local residents adjacent had also planted many non-local wattles, Sugar Gums and other trees on the ridge.

We met at the Falls car park and soon found that the access across the river at the pool to the southern block was not tenable, due to the flow of water over the walkway weir. We drove across the bridge and along the river road to a public access lane leading to the reserve. We parked at the river end of that access lane and entered the reserve by the gate at that point, upstream from the falls (📍), not far from the swimming hole.

The map below shows the layout of the Scenic Reserve and its relationship to the Wannon Flora Reserve across the Glenelg Highway.



A short stroll along the river bank brings one to a view of the falls from the west bank. On this day there was only a moderate flow over the lip of the falls to the plunge pool below.

Continuing a little further to the east one can obtain a view from craggy eminences where artists in the 1860-70s (Louis Buvelot, Nicholas Chevalier and Thomas Clark) painted views of the Wannon Falls.



We walked down the spine of the south block to the bend where the river turns west. The latter part is narrow and there is a fairly steep slope at the end to the river bed. There are great views to the south and west as one walks along this path. The western boundary lies in a hollow far below this ridge and we did not descend into that trough.

There are a few exotic tree species in this block, including a couple of majestic Sugar Gums (*E. cladocalyx*) and Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*). The Sugar Gums must have been planted at least 70 years ago to have gained such size. There are also pasture weeds, kept down by the macropods.

We saw about 10 Eastern Grey Kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) lolling on the distant hillside paddock to the west, soaking up the morning sunshine. At the riverside we surprised a pair of Black Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*), while the ripple of the water drowned out the sound of our arrival.

We did not discover any species not listed on the report '*Indigenous Vascular Flora of the Wannan Falls Scenic Reserve (north W2 & south W1)*' by Rod Bird (2018). However, the season was rather too early to find flowers and we did not venture far from the ridge.



View from the ridge to the Wannon River winding away to the west



Kangaroos enjoying the sunshine on the slope to the west



Walking along the ridge on the south block



Wannon River at the western turn



Walking back up to the ridge



Black Wallaby

We observed a few fungi on our walk, the most noticeable being Yellow Belly Buttons (*Omphalina chromacea*). Birds that were seen included White-eared Honeyeater, Superb Fairy-wren, Wedge-tailed eagle, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crimson Rosella, Australian Magpie and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

Back at the vehicles, we drove around to the Oval and had a picnic lunch. We then took a stroll behind the oval, looking for the Striped Greenhood (*Pterostylis striata*), a winter-flowering species that was first seen there in 2008 by Liz Fenton. We found several in flower and also the Slaty Helmet orchid (*Corybas incurvus*). Unfortunately *Freesia*, *Sparaxis bulbifera*, Angled Onion and *Oxalis purpurea* remain.



Yellow Bellow Buttons



Slaty Helmet orchid



Striped Greenhood