

## **Lower Limestone Coast District - Southend/Robe Area Report - August 2025**

A huge thank you to everyone's involvement in caring for our parks and wild spaces. Having community involved in the care of our parks is really important at a local level, agency level and to me personally. Your efforts are invaluable in helping to improve and protect our parks, reduce impacts of marine debris on wildlife, and your advocacy for the long-term conservation of our parks and wildlife.

### Staffing

Rachel is having a baby in December! Very exciting for her and family - she has made the decision to return to Mount Gambier to be closer to them. We are hoping to recruit a new ranger for Robe in the month. We now have a full team based at Southend (Adam and Connor), with Cath in team leader role for the district.

### Rosterfy

DEW is rolling out a web-based Friends of Park group management tool which will be very useful. All volunteers need to register themselves, which will include having an emergency contact listed. Volunteers will be able to log their volunteer hours, source information on training and safety etc. I would like to run a session specifically to help volunteers register. See flyer and QR code for link. Currently only website based but I believe a app will be rolled out also.

### Summer/Easter School Holidays

Visitation slightly down from last couple of years, but more importantly, visitor behaviour has significantly improved since Covid years. Rangers anecdotally observed more families returning to camp in the parks over summer. Traffic counter data is still recorded every month, with a very big thanks to Malcolm who regularly checks them. The data is attached to this report.

### Fire Season

- Summer/Autumn 24-25 was busy for wildfires in our area. Lake Hawdon South - 600 hectares burnt from escaped paddock burn; Lake Eliza burn south - lightning strike; Lake Eliza burn north - escaped paddock burn into crown land; Lightning strike Canunda NP, and many others across the region.
- 4x Prescribed burns in parks and crown lands across the region including 450 hectares of Lake Hawdon north (prescribed burn and also clearing of tea-tree burn piles).

### Weeds - Weed control season!

- Little Dip weed being controlled are Polygala, Dolichus (dunny vine), Spiny Rush, Boxthorns, Olives and Buckthorn.
- The FOLD grassroots grant (from LCLB) has been a fantastic opportunity to tackle polygala infestations around Stony Rise track, Gums campsite, and on private land and council owned land adjacent to the park. The grant provided funding to employ Burrandies first nations contractors to help map and control Polygala both in Little Dip and adjacent properties, and provided an excellent opportunity for First Nations, community volunteers and agency staff to work together. Map is attached below. Total volunteer hours logged for this project is 109 volunteer hours...a huge

contribution to combat weed impacts on the park! The grassroots grant received an extension until 30 July 2026. There is still \$5K remaining for a cultural training/event, or we could ask to vary the grant to continue employing Burrandies workers on weed control. There is also a commitment for a community event/stall to raise awareness of weeds – could be a stall run by DEW/FoLD, or I could invite council, park neighbours, volunteers to an info session. Thoughts?

- Lake St.Clair CP: Ongoing control of polygala infestation that is isolated along the lake edge. Successful initial control of Periwinkle vine and Jonquils – follow up due in spring.
- Woakwine CP: Polygala control – due for site visit and control of seedlings so will program this for spring

### Feral animal control

- Fox baiting program completed in Autumn and winter baiting has been laid this month prior to beach nesting bird breeding season. Spring baiting will occur in November.
- Cat trapping: Malcolm and Josie/Graeme have assisted rangers with cat trapping. Without their help, traps not set due being labour intensive task and staff turnover limiting resources. Since May 2024, 3 trapping sessions in LDCP = 149 trap nights = 4 cats, 1 wombat, 3 crows and 1 echidna! Cats varied from pregnant female to large male (5.5kg!)
- Deer control – an ambitious regional control program across parks and private lands in conjunction with the landscape board.

### Long Gully Campground Upgrade

No action. Upgrade will be limited to toilet block replacement at some stage. Revegetation efforts by FoLD have significantly changed the weather protection at this camp site, as well as aesthetics and screening between sites which makes for a much improved camping experience. Rangers noticed more small birds in the campground, and the wombat population remains very healthy (wombat gully!).

### Coastal 4WD track

- FoLD revegetation efforts for track rehabilitation have been very successful even with one of the driest years on record. The combination of fencing and reveg for blocking degrading sections of track really works! Positive feedback from other rangers who now implementing similar techniques. Great contribution from FoLD.
- Successful closure of Evans Cave, Matches and West Beach to vehicles in the last 3 years, with only minor incidents of posts/signs being pulled out (3-4 incidents... pretty good really!). One more beach we can look at closing to vehicles – a short beach between Little Dip Beach and Long Gully. Has a track behind the dunes, and the beach is not regularly used for fishing/surfing etc, but is used by beach nesting birds who have nesting territories on adjacent beaches.

### Wildlife

Citizen science opportunities abound!

- I-naturalist is a fantastic nature recording app that can be used by anyone. Photos can be uploaded along with other information (location etc) creating a

wealth of information that can be accessed by anyone, and particularly useful for wildlife distribution records. You don't have to know what the species is, just need a photo and some other information relating to location, etc. New species of moths, invertebrates are regularly being found through this app, and distributions and occurrence of plants and animals is more thorough than ever.

- Frog season: Frog Watch app an easy to use recording app that collects frog calls. These recordings are analysed for species
- Malleefowl mound surveys in Upper Limestone Coast parks coming up in October and Vicki Natt is always looking for helpers. Let me know if you are interested.

Hooded Plover Breeding season around Robe/LDCP was lower than previous years, however, the successful breeding events once again occurred on beaches in LDCP. 3 chicks fledged that we know of.

Swamp Antechinus trail cameras were deployed at Lake St.Clair CP for 1 year - they were removed and redeployed in Lake Hawdon South CP in Feb 2025, however, had to be removed during the recent fire incident in April. We are looking at putting them in LDCP or Lake Robe later this year. The camera trapping program is aiming to collect records of Swamp Antechinus (Vulnerable), and best time to record images is during Autumn when they are moving around for mating (males die off in winter after mating).

H1N5 bird flu strain hasn't reached Australia as yet - the only continent to remain free of this particular strain. Has impacted wild bird populations in other countries and also jumped between birds and mammals. Is now in Antarctica and all state and federal governments are preparing for impact both on livestock agriculture, and wild bird/animal populations. Good news article: [The deadly H5N1 bird flu has jumped species in Antarctica. It's getting closer to 'pandemic potential' - ABC News](#) **If you find groups of dead birds Do NOT touch as you can be affected by the virus. Call Emergency Animal Disease Hotline and report 1800 675 888.**

Algal Bloom - disastrous in other parts of SA waters, however, not currently significantly active in our region due to currents and cold water temperature. However, John D recently found a dead blue shark on Long Beach appearing to be impacted by the bloom. Unusual animal deaths/incidents on the beach can also be reported via the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline number above, or to Cath.

#### Lake Hawdon North wetland restoration

Approx 400Hectares of swamp paperbark has been removed (mechanical or burn) and a regulator has been installed and is now fully functional. The regulator allows control of water in the wetland system. Prior to regulator being installed, any rainfall in local wetland catchment speedily drained into Drain L - creating conditions for Swamp Tea-tree to flourish and create a monoculture. The tea-tree removal returns the area to mudflats, and the regulator allows for control of water - holding water in the wetland system to expose the mudflats (and food resources) in late summer for declining shorebird species. Would the group like me to organise a tour of the regulator?

Prepared by Cath Bell  
August 26<sup>th</sup> 2025

# **LITTLE DIP CONSERVATION PARK - ANNUAL TRAFFIC COUNTER DATA**

Month	Year						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
January	no data^	12176	18340	13821	16957	14758	11976
February	2393	5100	5721	7889	16189	7033	4984
March	5103	5825	7615	7702	7960	9191	6366
April	7711	2034	10497	8,555	9,678	4,995	7,206
May	2115	2001	3530	3259	1,283	3,886	2,849
June	2755	3943	3616	3224	3512	4056	2,974
July	2032	3465	3444	2767	2754	2974	1,334
August	2250	2351	3991	2410	2621	3003	
September	2761	3503	3859	4001	6273	4586	
October	n/c	6758	6671	6685	4989	7248	
November	9007	5602	5443	11796	7328	5,169	
December	8132	8263	9593	12239	18610	12,493	
<b>TOTAL*</b>	46278	61021	82320	84348	98154	79391	37689

<b>Annual Vehicle Count</b>	<b>23139</b>	<b>30510.5</b>	<b>41160</b>	<b>42174</b>	<b>49077</b>	<b>39695.5</b>	<b>18844.5</b>
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Annual visitation (pax)	62475.3	82378.35	111132	113869.8	132507.9	107177.85	50880
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\*Total Vehicle count data: needs to be divided by 2 (1 entry 1 exit) - See **Annual vehicle count** figures

Annual visitation = TOTAL/2 (1 entry 1 exit per vehicle) \*2.7 ave persons per vehicle



Polygala sites recorded during grassroots grants project - Stony Rise track and council/private land north of the park, as well as sites at the Gums campground.

