

# Reedy Creek update

A report for Sunrise@1770

May 2023



Bush Heritage  
Australia

# Thank you

Dear residents of Sunrise@1770,

Bush Heritage Australia would like to say a big thank you for your support over this past year. Your in-kind donations have enabled us to not only manage, but better understand, what Reedy Creek Reserve protects.

Fire management, weed control and feral animal management forms most of our day-to-day work. This year we have also had the opportunity to expand our understanding of what we protect at Reedy Creek with a great freshwater fish survey and terrestrial fauna survey. Importantly, this year, we have secured a Threatened Ecological Community listing for Reedy Creek – National recognition of the fragile habitats it protects. This in turn allows us to raise increased awareness of the pressures of urban encroachment.

The Paperbark walk is becoming a popular attraction in Agnes Waters with over 100,000 visitors recorded in just in the past 12 months. Bush Heritage has made much needed upgrades to the boardwalk to manage this increasing number of visitors coming to see the swamp.

In October Bush Heritage hosted a visit from local Traditional Owners and we are now looking at ways we can better work together to acknowledge their historic connections to this land and continue that connection into the future.

This has been my first year as Reedy Creek Reserve Manager and it has been a wonderful experience. I am grateful to live and work in such a special place. We are working hard to ensure Reedy Creek continues to be effectively managed and protected in perpetuity. I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Feel free to reach out and say hello any time.



**Christian McCollum**  
Reserve Manager – Reedy Creek

Email: [christian.mccollum@bushheritage.org.au](mailto:christian.mccollum@bushheritage.org.au)

# Acknowledgement of Country

Bush Heritage respectfully acknowledges the Bailai, Gooreng Gooreng and Tarbelang Bunda people as the Traditional Owners of Reedy Creek. We recognise and respect their deep and enduring relationship with their lands and waters, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to building genuine and lasting partnerships and meaningfully engage with traditional owner families and communities to protect and restore Country today and for future generations.

Reedy Creek Reserve was acquired in 2015 with generous support from our funders. Bush Heritage gratefully acknowledges our supporters, staff, and volunteers. Thank you for making the work of Bush Heritage possible and supporting us to achieve our vision of Healthy Country Protected Forever.



Above: Christian McCollum, reserve manager and Prof Stephen Kearney at Reedy Creek

# Healthy Country, protected forever

**We're a unified force for nature,  
grounded in science and culture.  
We work to heal and protect the bush,  
now and for future generations.**

Bush Heritage is a leading not-for-profit conservation organisation that protects ecosystems and wildlife across the continent. We use the best science, conservation and right-way knowledge to deliver landscape-scale impact. We're on the ground, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the agricultural sector to make sure our impact is deep, sustainable and collaborative.



Above: Paperbark forest walk at Reedy Creek. Photo by Steve Heggie

Climate change

## Our vision

Healthy Country, protected forever

## Our mission

To return the bush to good health

## Our 2030 strategy

To deepen and double our impact

Invasive species

Our strategy is delivered through three impact models and shared capability



Reserves



Aboriginal partnerships



Natural Capital in Agriculture

emerging focus

Land use threats

- Deepening ecological and cultural health outcomes
- New reserves

- Deepening Healthy Country Plan delivery
- New partnerships

- Environmental services
- Biodiverse carbon capture
- Natural products

Priority landscapes | Conservation innovation | Impact management

Fire risk

Our strategy is enabled through our people, our community, the right-way approach, science & technology and our astute use of all resources

People and culture

Safe and well

Right-way approach

Engagement and support

Data and digital

Financial rigour

# Protecting Reedy Creek

Reedy Creek protects 474 ha of intact Queensland coastal and riparian forest and its inhabitants. The Reserve draws its name from a seasonal creek system that holds roughly 150 ha of tall melaleuca dominated forest with a dense fern and sedge understory. The main creek is fringed to the east with woodland of *Eucalyptus robusta* with grass and bracken understory.

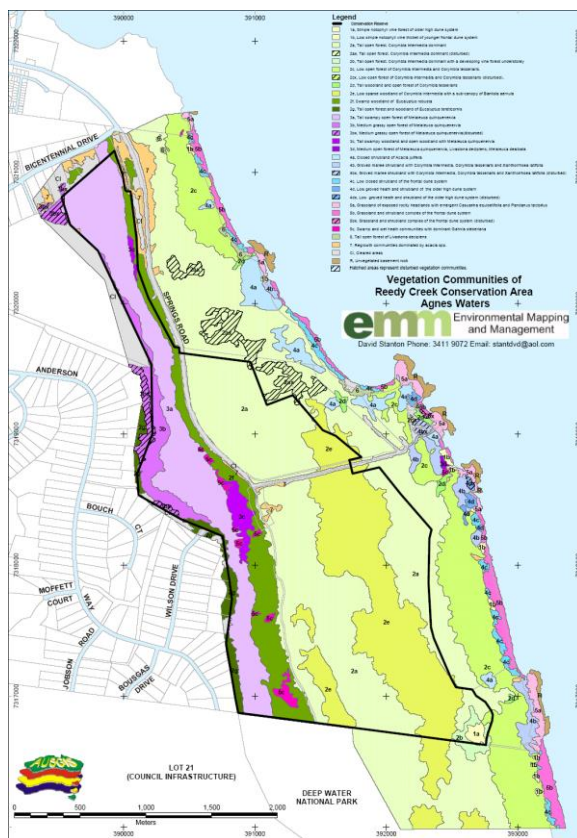
Similar swamp vegetation communities have been widely and dramatically cleared over the past decades to make way for development along the Queensland coast.

The remainder of the reserve is comprised of ancient sand dunes that support mainly tall open bloodwood dominated, or lower banksia dominated, forests. Hidden away in our southern corner is approximately 20 ha of unique notophyll vine forest.

### Our vision:

“Together with Traditional Owners and the local community, we are enhancing the ecological, cultural and community values of Reedy Creek.

The reserve provides a unique opportunity for people to connect to nature and learn about culture. Home to rare and endemic species, the reserve provides landscape connectivity and improves ecosystem resilience.”



Above: Broad-leaved Paperbark overhanging Deepwater Creek. Photo by Carl Moller

# Community Engagement

Reedy Creek Reserve is an important natural resource for the community of Agnes Water and for the broader community. In 2022, the Paperbark Boardwalk attracted over 100,000 visitors annually. This spectacular walk takes visitors into the heart of a Paperbark Forest rarely seen in such pristine condition. To be surrounded by hundreds of these trees and majestic green cabbage palm fronds is a thing of wonder. To ensure this asset is safe Bush Heritage has recently undertaken several upgrades to the boardwalk, improving the path and controlling erosion around the stepping-stones.

Whilst wonderful to have so many visitors enjoying the boardwalk, this volume inevitably takes its toll on the paths, resulting in sections becoming worn down exposing tree roots. With the added pressure of increasing local urban development, conservation management is critical to keep Reedy Creek special.

In early February, with the help of volunteers, we put down 73 tonnes of new decomposed granite, with special care to cover tree roots that had become exposed over time. This will ensure that impact on the reserve is kept to a minimum for years to come.

Now that Reedy Creek has become a 'must do' experience within the region, we are excited about how the track can evolve, with engagement opportunities to showcase the reserve and highlight the importance of our work here, and across the country.



Above: Upgrading the path. Photo by Christian McCollum

# Fire Management

The fire management plan for Reedy Creek was revised and updated in 2022. Management includes a fire safety plan to ensure the protection of staff, residents, visitors and assets, and an ecological fire management plan to ensure the ecological integrity and values are protected, maintained and enhanced.

In June last year, hazard reduction burning was successfully undertaken. The large block to the west of Springs Road had excellent results with significant reduction of understory fuels. Fire slowly crept along for a few weeks in the southern section, burning the compost material around the Saw Grass.

We burn the blocks adjacent to the Sunrise@1770 estate annually. We do this to mitigate the risk of wildfire in the hotter drier months. These are broken up into two sections. Bloodwood North and Bloodwood South. Most of our Fire Management this year was focused on fringe burning due to this year's conditions.

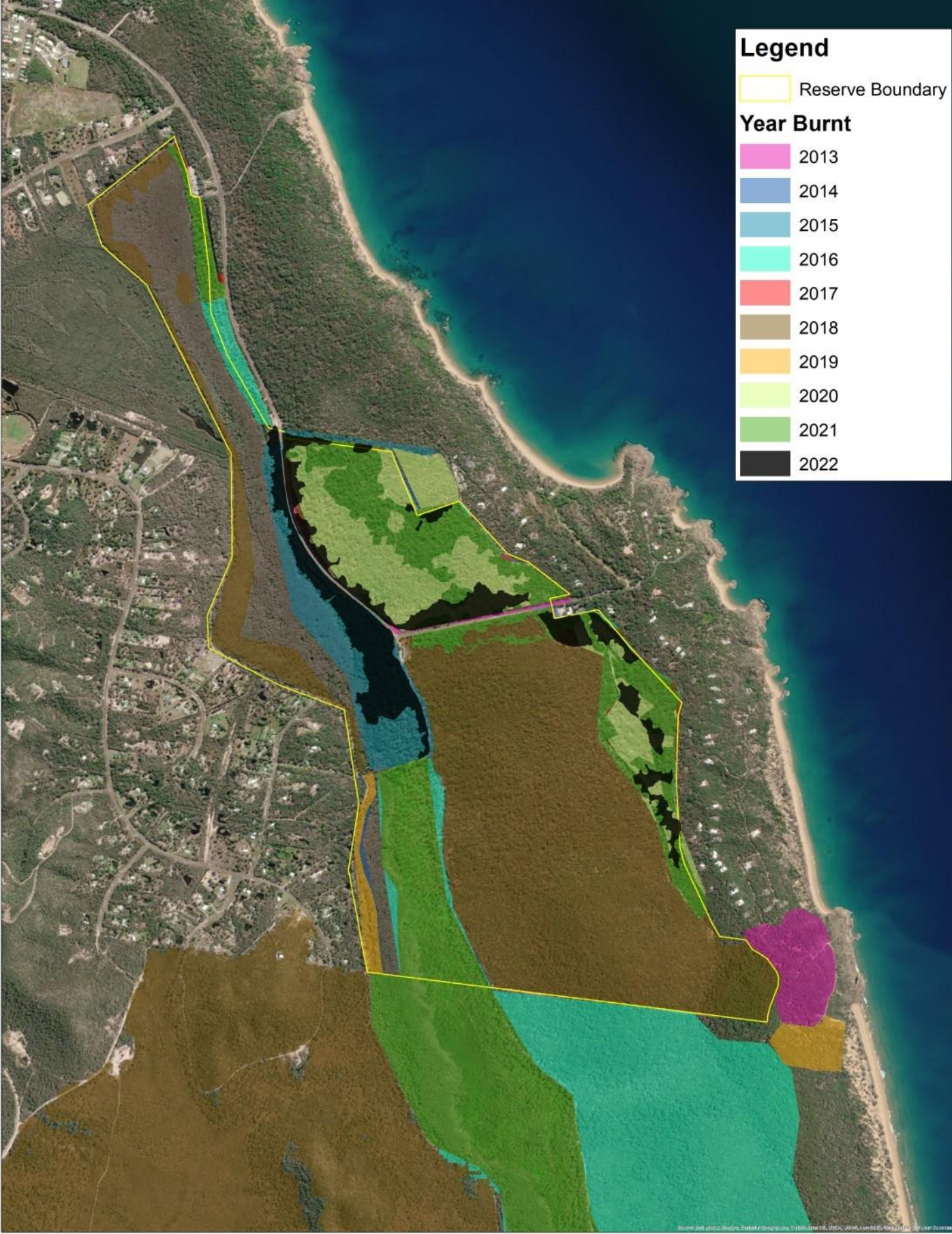
The North block burn achieved good results to the north of Springs Road with a significant reduction of fuels in that area. To the east of Springs Road, further good results were achieved reducing fuel levels near the roadway.

The burn on the South block resulted with a good mosaic finish throughout. We managed to reduce fuels significantly in the area to the immediate south of the Sunrise compound. The mid-section of the block had a good burn along the slope, as did the southern-most section, stopping the fire well before the vine thicket.



Above: Controlled burn on Reedy Creek. Photo by Steve Heggie





**Legend**

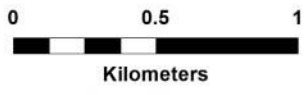
 Reserve Boundary

**Year Burnt**

-  2013
-  2014
-  2015
-  2016
-  2017
-  2018
-  2019
-  2020
-  2021
-  2022



# Reedy Creek Reserve 2022 Time Since Last Burnt



Coordinate System: GCS GDA 1994  
Scale 1:8,571 @ A1

Copyright © 2022 Bush Heritage Australia. All rights reserved. This map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an offer of any financial product or service.

# Flora and Fauna Monitoring

We were delighted to have Dr Steve Kearney start with Bush Heritage in 2022, leading the ecological monitoring of Reedy Creek's natural values.

In February 2023, Steve led a terrestrial fauna survey across Reedy Creek with a team of ecologists. This survey will help us to better understand the species that live on or visit the reserve. The team consisted of ecologists in specialist fields such as mammals, birds, and reptiles.

A variety of methods were used for surveying six key locations on the property. These included motion sensor cameras, drift fence and funnel traps, Metal Elliot traps (baited), acoustic recorders and visual bird counts.

The survey was more successful than expected. Importantly, Steve noted two things; firstly, the diversity of native mammals recorded during trapping and on camera traps; and secondly, the very low numbers of introduced predators recorded (one fox, no cats in 10 weeks of camera trapping). This highlights the importance of the reserve as a refuge for species susceptible to predation (e.g., small and medium sized mammals and reptiles).

Having accommodation options for the ecological team at Sunrise@1770 was critical, allowing for early starts and late nights, reducing travel time at both ends of long days in the field



Above: Reserve Manager, Christian McCollum (bottom left), Dr Steve Kearney (top right) and the team in the field. Photo by Christian!

# Residents and Guests of Reedy Creek



The motion sensor cameras revealed some of Reedy Creek's most special residents and visitors. From left to right – Row 1: Ring-tail Possum, Sugar Glider, Kookaburra. Row 2: Dingo, Brown Quail, Giant burrowing Cockroach. Row 3: Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Echidna, Long-nosed Bandicoot. Row 4: Swamp Wallaby, Freckled Monitor, Sugar Glider

# New species found at Reedy Creek!

## Excerpt from Bush Heritage blog

Ecology isn't all paperwork and Latin species names. Bush Heritage ecologist Dr Stephen Kearney demonstrated this during a recent freshwater survey at Reedy Creek Reserve.

A short distance from the well-trodden Paperbark Forest walk, whilst setting up a survey location with Reserve Manager Christian McCollum, and Freshwater Ecologist Dr Dean Gilligan, Stephen found something intriguing.

“In a quite shallow part of the creek amongst Melaleuca and ferns, strangely where we get lots of visitors, we managed to identify a crayfish in the *Tenuibranchiurus* genus which has not been recorded before.”

Only one of the species in this genus has been formally described, and to add to the mystery it is found significantly further south than Reedy Creek.

What began as the team's effort to better understand the reserve's freshwater inhabitants ended in the discovery of a new crayfish species.

Another highlight was the diversity of native fish recorded across the reserve. Prior to these surveys, the only knowledge of fish on the reserve was from observations made whilst undertaking other activities on the reserve. It was a pleasant surprise to record at least 10 native fish species and in such large numbers.

Such wonderful and surprising discoveries highlight the need to protect the ecosystem at Reedy Creek as surrounding areas become popular sites for development. And it makes you wonder...what might Reedy Creek reveal next?

*Read more on our blog here:*

[New species at Reedy](#)



Left: Steve and Dean at work! Photo by Christian McCollum  
Right: *Tenuibranchiurus* sp. Photo by Stephen Kearney

# Where Bush Heritage Australia works



# Thank you

If you have any questions about this report or Bush Heritage Australia please contact:

Jonathan Lyford

Philanthropy Executive, QLD & NT

[jonathan.lyford@bushheritage.org.au](mailto:jonathan.lyford@bushheritage.org.au)

+61 (0)498 374 026

**Bush Heritage Australia**  
Level 1, 395 Collins Street  
PO Box 329 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne VIC 8009

1300 NATURE  
[info@bushheritage.org.au](mailto:info@bushheritage.org.au)  
[www.bushheritage.org.au](http://www.bushheritage.org.au)