



Mount McKinlay

FRIENDS OF VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK Inc.

NEWSLETTER No. 13

5th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The group's 5th AGM was held at the Fullarton Park Community Centre on Friday 13th March 2020 in the presence of Hon. David Speirs MP Minister for Environment & Water (DEW) and 34 members and apologies from a further 25 members. This is an outstanding attendance given that Australia was grappling with ways to reduce the transmission of the COVID 19 virus. Thank you to all members who were able to attend and to hear from our Committee members on the achievements of the group since the last AGM in October 2018 and the interesting talk by our guest speaker, Harald Ehmann.

Harald's topic was **"Ecological Impact of Climate Change on the Northern Flinders: Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby, Frogs and Fishes and Vegetation"**. His talk was based on a very informative and comprehensive Power Point presentation which included high quality still images and video clips. These, combined with Harald's personal knowledge and first-hand experience of the stress under which Australia's wilderness areas are being put under by climate change kept everyone interested and attentive throughout.



Left – AGM attentive audience

and above the YFRW.

President's Report:

President Martin gave a summary of the group's three projects within the park in 2019.

1. **Balcanoona Headquarters revegetation** group received a grant of \$5,196.00 through the Friends of Parks On-Park Volunteer Support Grants 2018-19 and attended two working bees in 2019, 2 more were planned for 2020; however DEW has issued a notice that volunteer programs in all parks have been suspended for the foreseeable future.
2. **Oocaboolina Outstation refurbishment** project received a donation from of \$1,000.00 the Lions Club of Blackwood Lions Club and a grant of \$5,500.00 through the Friends of Parks and DEW Volunteer Support Grants program. The Lions donation enabled the group to purchase 6 second-hand windows to replace the rotten and broken windows at Oocaboolina, whilst the other grant will enable the group to purchase and install 6 steel security screens and to purchase surface levelling compound to resurface several floors. The Oocaboolina team had 2 successful working bees in 2019 and intended to spend 2 weeks at the hut this year, but this is now on hold.
3. **Weetootla and Nepouie Springs** fish and water quality monitoring received a community grant of \$2,362.00 from the SA Arid Lands NRM Board to purchase equipment. There were two working bees in each of 2018 & 2019, 2 more were planned for 2020.

In addition the members have continued working to remove the Tobacco Bush and Horehound along Weetootla Gorge; record observations of the Yellow-footed Rock wallabies, commenced mapping the native Iga (Native Orange) in the area and begun assessing the condition of the springs using a tool that will allow the assessments to be compared over time.

- 4 And we have reached out to the Nepabunna and Iga Warta communities to see how our group can engage with and work more closely with them through our various projects and activities.

Administrative achievements:

On 12 December, 2018 we became an incorporated body and are also listed as a charity on the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) effective from 1 January 2019.

We are in the process of establishing and listing a Gift Fund on the Register of Environmental Organisations (REO) to allow the group to accept tax-deductible donations. This requires a modification of our constitution.

Newsletters and Website: the group produced 5 newsletters since October 2018 all of which are available on the Friends website as well as the Minutes of Committee meetings since April 2015.

DEW Staff:

Right – Rangers Arthur and Sian

The group is appreciative of the cooperation and work with the onsite rangers, **Sian Johnson** and **Jouella Coulthard** and Liaison Ranger, **Arthur Coulthard** (soon to move to Wilpena and replaced at Balcanoona), the new District Ranger for Northern Flinders District, **Dave Phillips** (replacing **Alan Harbour**) and of the assistance of the Arid Lands Ecologist, **Rob Brandle**.

Ross Sawers is the new Govt. appointed Presiding Member for the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board which covers Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park.

Chair of the V-GR NP Co-management Board is **Pauline McKenzie**



CONSTITUTION CHANGE

At the AGM members by special resolution voted unanimously to amend our Constitution to allow the group to apply to be listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations. When listed we will be able to apply to the Australian Taxation Office to become a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) enabling donors to receive a tax deduction if they wish.

The first step is for our Public Officer to advise the State Office of Consumer and Business Services of the change in the Constitution.

MEMBERSHIP FEE

Members at the AGM voted in favour of increasing the annual fee to \$20.00 per household. Any member not currently financial (that is, if you haven't paid a membership fee since October 2018) is encouraged to renew. If you are not sure whether you are currently financial please contact our Treasurer, Graeme Oats on gdoats@bigpond.net.au

2020 COMMITTEE

The following were re-elected unopposed, President - Martin Caon, Vice President – Roger Mathers, Treasurer – Graeme Oats and Committee members – Kirsty Jolly and Nicki De Preu.

Committeeman, Ric Williams and Secretary Ray Hickman did not seek re-election, their positions are now vacant. Anyone interested in filling these positions should contact President Martin – m.caon56@gmail.com

Ray is continuing to maintain the website and assist with dispatch of notices.

Fish Monitoring

The Flinders Ranges Purple-spotted Gudgeon (*Mogurnda clivicola*) is one of several very similar-looking *Mogurnda* species in Australia (see the two figures below of different species). They are so similar that their looks alone are not distinct enough to separate them into different species. Specialists have to resort to analysing some of their genes to separate different populations into different species.

They are said to grow to about 14cm in length but the most common size that we see in Weetootla are from 5-8cm. They are mature enough to breed when they are 6-7cm in length. One of the reasons that we measure fish total length (snout to tail tip) is to see if we can discern any age cohorts. That is, a grouping of fish of similar length that we could infer was all born at a similar time and another grouping of larger fish that would signify an earlier hatching. In this way we may be able to infer how fast the fish grow in the wild. By doing this survey for several years we may be able to follow a cohort as it grows, hence we may also be able to ascertain how long they live in their pools. We are also looking for very small fish of length less than 2cm. These would signify a recent hatching and so would be good evidence that the fish are in good enough health to reproduce.



Flinders Ranges Purple –spotted Gudgeon *Mogurnda clivicola* (Wirti Udla Varri)



Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon *Mogurnda adspersa*
(showing 6 purple spots along the distal midline)

Martin Caon

(m.caon56@gmail.com)

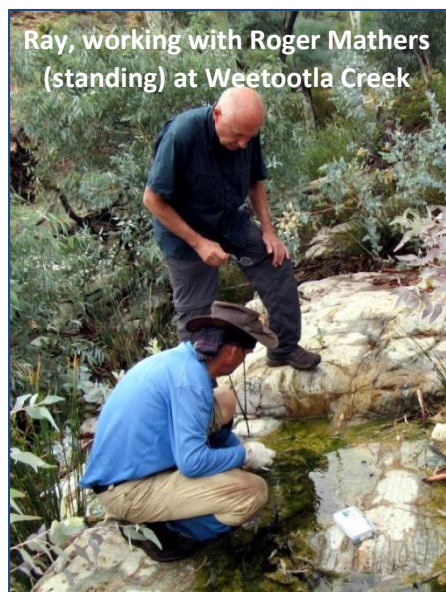
Link to NPWS SA – website – COVID-19 advice

<https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/know-before-you-go/covid-19-faqs>

covID-19 and parks FAQs

- [Are parks open?](#)
 - [Can I get a refund on accommodation, camping and entry?](#)
 - [Can I get a refund on a tour I have booked?](#)
 - [Will Park of the Month events continue to be held?](#)
 - [Can I visit Cleland Wildlife Park?](#)
 - [Where can I get more information?](#)
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Salute to Ray Hickman



Ray, working with Roger Mathers (standing) at Weetootla Creek

Ray was an inaugural member of the restarted Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park and its secretary until March 2020. His long-standing and extensive experience within the bushwalking community, the Scientific Expedition Group, Friends of Ikara-Flinders Ranges NP, Mallee Fowl interest group and SA Superannuants has earned him an extensive network of contacts, within and outside of Government, which have been invaluable to the running of our Friends organisation, and in recruiting new members.

Ray put his mind to thinking about what such a group would be able to do that would be of value to V-GRNP and of interest to its members and how such a project could be self-sustaining. The endangered fish, *Mogurnda clivicola* is a major feature of the V-GRNP as is the incongruity of a fish inhabiting a mostly dry desert creek. So he came to the idea of a citizen's science project that used his Chemist's background to conduct water quality measurements and my Zoology background to monitor the fish population. Ray has attended all but one of the working bees at

Balcanoona and been the Trip Leader on several.

The achievements of the Friends group are largely due to Ray's and Graeme's hands on approach: Ray set up and maintains the Friends website at <http://www.rayh.id.au/vulkathunha/index.html> ;

Ray took, edited and circulated the Minutes of our Committee meetings, as well as organising participation by some members in the meetings via the internet. In addition he drafted and circulated arguments to modify the constitution so that it complied with the requirements of an incorporated organisation and one which is able will be able to accept tax deductible gifts. Ray organised our Incorporation, our listing as a charity, and is continuing to work to get us listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations so we can accept tax – deductible gifts.

Ray also wrote or contributed to the writing of, several grant applications that resulted in our ultimate success in attracting several grants. He leaves the committee at a time when the Friends group is at its most productive and is held in high esteem by the DEW and the national park organisation.

BIG thank you, Ray.

Martin Caon, President on behalf of the Committee and members.



PHOTOS USED IN THIS NEWSLETTER

YFRW and Rangers by Jan Hutchinson, Balcanoona Re-veg by Richard Smith, those associated with Ray's Salute – Martin Caon and Oocaboolina and AGM audience by Graeme Oats.



Letter Received from Friends of Parks 17 March 2020



FRIENDS OF PARKS
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Volunteers working for conservation

Dear Member Groups

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the Friends of Parks Board has been in close consultation with DEW and in particular the National Parks and Wildlife Service's response to the viral outbreak. While the situation is rapidly changing the Board intends to follow both the Government of South Australia and the Australian Government's advice, and implement a number of precautionary measures to ensure the health and safety of everyone.

While the risk of transmission remains relatively low, it is important nevertheless to remain alert and practise sound hygiene practises such as regular washing of hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitisers. If you are being tested for the Coronavirus you should self-isolate (until test results are received), and avoid large public gatherings if at all possible (there is no need to wear a face mask if you are healthy).

Therefore, in light of the present circumstance the Board is postponing its Board meetings and the 4 May 2020 Friends of Parks AGM. The Governor's Friends of Parks reception that was scheduled for 30 March 2020 has also been cancelled.

Both will be re-convened as soon as the Board is formally notified by the State Government of a cessation of the present conditions and arrangements. At this stage we don't know when or how long that may be.

In the meantime the Friends of Parks member groups need to make their own decision in consultation with their members and the NPWS region, regarding their planned working bees and other activities, keeping in mind the latest information from the Government - there is regular updated advice available through the [Australian Government](#). Please contact your local National Parks and Wildlife staff if you have any questions about imminent planned FoP activities.

You can also phone 1800 020 080 (in Australia) if you are seeking more information on Coronavirus (COVID-19). The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Thank you for your understanding and take care of yourself and your families.

Regards

Duncan MacKenzie

President

BALCANOONA REVEGETATION & WEETOOTLA PROJECTS– burning tobacco bush & making plant fencing guards



NOTIFICATION FROM NATIONAL PARKS and WILDLIFE SERVICE SA – 27 MARCH 2020

Dear Friends of Parks Group Members

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia (NPWSSA) is implementing precautionary measures to prioritise the health and safety of staff, volunteers and park visitors. This includes the cancellation of all campground host volunteer placements and volunteer ranger activities until further notice.

I am sure you would have seen the communiqué from the President Duncan MacKenzie on March, announcing the cancellation of activities such as the Governor's reception in April, Friends of Parks AGM in May and the bi-monthly Board meetings.

The decision has now been made that Friends of Parks members cease all organised activities in our parks until further notice.

NPWSSA will continue to monitor the situation and provide you with additional information regarding volunteer activities as appropriate.

It is important to ensure you are relying on up-to-date and credible information.

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [SA Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- Australian Government Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080.

We appreciate your understanding on this matter and apologise for any inconvenience caused, however your health and safety is of utmost importance to us. Please continue to take care of yourself, your family and friends during this challenging time.

Please don't hesitate to contact the Volunteer Programs Unit or regional staff if you have any further questions regarding your group's activities.

Kind regards,

Mary-Anne Healy

A/g Director, National Parks and Wildlife

OOCABOOLINA OUTSTATION REFURBISHMENT – VOLUNTEERS AT WORK

L-R: Cynthia Kirkham, Phil & Kathryn Gaukroger, Ray Hutchinson

