

THE FRIENDS and COVID-19

The advent of the Corona Virus – 19 caused all Parks in South Australia to be closed from early March 2020. The Friends had planned working bees for a week in mid April, these of course were cancelled, but with the easing of restrictions including the number of people being able to be in one place increased to 20 allowed us to plan working bees after the Park was re-opned on 11th May 2020. Roger, Martin and Graeme set about planning a weeks' visit to the park during early June.

A group of 8 attended Oocaboolina whilst a much larger group were busy at Balcanoona on the revegetation project and others found their way into the Weetootla and Nepoule Springs checking the water quality and fish monitoring – detailed accounts of these are found later in this Newsletter.



OLD BALCANOONA HOMESTEAD

The homestead built in the 1880's consisting of 2 rooms with areas at the rear being the old station kitchen, eating area and laundry. The Department have restored the homestead and are currently fencing off an area on the eastern frontage. In due course the Friends will assist in revegetating this area.





THE ORIGIN of the VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK

The north-western part of the Gammon Ranges was first taken into Government care from the hands of the Yankaninna station in 1968, a national park being declared in 1970. Balcanoona Station was purchased in 1980, and the lands officially added to the national park two years later. The 25,000 ha Balcanoona 'Plains Block', which stretches from the Balcanoona headquarters east to Lake Frome, was proclaimed as reserve in 1984 and added to the Park for biodiversity conservation reasons, so that the Park's size became 1257km² (128,228 hectares). In 2003 the park was co-named to include 'Vulkathunha' in its title, in recognition of the Adnyamathanha traditional owners of the area. The Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area to the south, Nepabunna Aboriginal Land to the south west, Mt Serle Station to the west (proposed as an IPA) and Arkaroola to the north adjoin the National Park and extend the conservation area. In addition, Yankaninna Station which adjoins the Park to the west is destocked and is now home to "Operation Flinders".

Origin of the name Gammon

The name "Gammon" is applied to the Gammon Ranges in South Australia (since before 1894) and is also used for Gammon Hill (about 1010m above sea level), Gammon Creek, and Gammon Waterfall. The name Gammon Creek was recorded in newspapers by 1857. It is not known why the "Gammon Ranges" are so named, but here are some suggestions.

- 1. Gammon is a surname, so the Ranges could be possibly having been named after some historical figure. However if this was the case, it is strange that no record of whom the Ranges may have been named after exists.
- 2. Gammon was a name in use in other parts of Australia. For example, from the South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal (Adelaide, SA: 1847 1852) of Thu 1 Jan 1852, Page 2: "THE NEW DIGGINGS.—the diggings near Mitchell Flat have been named "Mount Gammon.". And also: (South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal (Adelaide, SA: 1847 1852) Sat 3 Jan 1852 Page 2: "We are enabled to publish the official report of Messrs Bonney and Babbage on the pretended discovery of gold at Mount Gammon, near Mitchell Flat." (Near Woodside). Gammon Creek had already gained its name by 1857: (from the) South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA: 1839 1900) Mon 28 Sep 1857 Page 3 regarding MR. GOYDER'S NORTHERN DISCOVERIES. "The road passes over the low lands already alluded to between Mount Rose and Arcoona Bluff, crossing the Arcoona, Gammon, Fifteen-Mile, and Taylor's Creeks." So the name of the creek could have come to be applied in general to the northern Flinders.
- 3. Mining prospects, real or illusory, have been associated with the northern Flinders Ranges since the mid nineteenth century. Perhaps Gammon is a term applied because of the mining history of the Ranges. Gammon is a British word meaning "nonsense, pretence, 'humbug' " (from British criminal cant). It was in common usage in the 1800s. The definition of gammon from the Macquarie dictionary is "to tell a lie"; are you gammon? (Are you telling the truth?); Who are you trying to gammon?. In NSW, "pidgin English" was used as a communication language between the original Australians and the British settlers. It was a way that many words from NSW aboriginal languages entered Australian English. Two common words in NSW pidgin were "baal" (meaning "no, negative") from the Sydney Language and, later, gammon "nonsense, pretence, 'humbug'". The Baal Gammon Mine is an abandoned open cut and underground copper mine located in northern Queensland. Another gold mining reef identified in 1888 near Mannahill SA (42 km north east of Yunta) was called "No Gammon" reef. Perhaps these mines were so named to emphasise to investors that they were real and not illusory and the name was transferred to the ranges around the Gammon Creek.
- 4. The Sydney Morning Herald of Wed 22 Jul 1857 (Page 5) in a story entitled "THE DISCOVERIES IN THE NORTH OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA." States: "The Yamba, Nepowie, and Ben-bonyathe Ranges, were visible to the east, south-east, and south their elevated peaks of sandstone fashioned by the atmosphere into fantastic forms" and goes on to mention Gammon Creek but without mentioning "Gammon Ranges". The Adelaide newspaper: The Express and Telegraph on page 3 of its Monday 10 July 1899 issue states: "The highest mountain is Benbonyatha (spelt locally Benbonathe). It is the

highest peak in the Gammon Range, and is said to be the highest point in South Australia". Given that Benbonyatha Hill is the loftiest in the range known in 1899 as the Gammons; it seems likely that the same Hill was located in the ranges known in 1857 as the Ben-bonyathe Range. Perhaps the present Gammon Ranges used to be known as the Ben-bonyathe Ranges.

5. Gammon is term used to describe ham. For example: "He noticed in the retail shops that the "streaky" bacon generally fancied in Australia was the cheapest, having been priced at about 9 pence a lb., whereas the heavily-fatted cuts from the gammon and back were most in demand and ranged in price up to 14d. a lb.". Warren Bonython suggested that the curve of Gammon Hill does, under "certain conditions", look like a piece of bacon.



Photo above: Gammon Hill.

Photo right: Gammon, leek and pasta bake. You be the judge. Does Gammon Hill look like a piece of bacon?



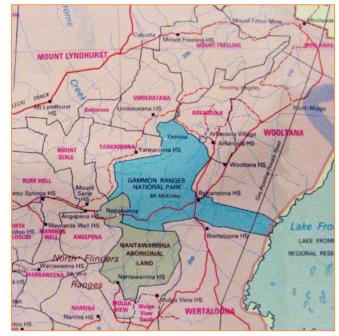
The term "Gammon Ranges" has been in use since 1894 if not earlier as evidenced by a poem entitled "Legend of the Gammon Ranges" published in the Weekly Herald (Adelaide SA), 26 October 1894, page 4d Vol. 1, no. 1. The name also appears in 1897 and 1899, but there seem to be no newspaper mentions prior to 1984. Furthermore a letter in the Adelaide Observer July 1890 referring to the booming sounds ("that big one growl along ground") reported to be heard in the area that we know of as the Gammon Ranges, specifically mentions the northern part of the Flinders Ranges and Frome and Gammon Creeks, but does not use the name "Gammon Ranges" when it would have been useful to do so. So I am going to stick my neck out and hazard that the name came into use between 1890 and 1894!!



The origin of the name Vulkathunha

Vulkathunha is an Adnyamathanha word meaning old lady. The edge of a mountain slope seen in the cliffs over-looking Balcanoona Creek is reminiscent of the profile of the face an old woman viewed from the side.

Photo left: - Profile of Vulkathunha (right hand slope of the peak) over Balcanoona: (buildings from left) the old homestead, a storeroom, garage workshop, Ranger's office.



CAN YOU HELP?

The Friends are looking for a person to take on the role of Minute Secretary. This role includes recording the Minutes of our committee meetings of which there are usually 4 each year and the Annual General Meeting.

The Committee meetings are held in the evening in an office centrally located adjacent to Adelaide's south park lands. If you are able help please contact President Martin at <u>m.caon56@gmail.com</u>

What are the lands that adjoin the V-GRNP?

Clockwise from Balcanoona: Wertaloona Station, Nepabunna Aboriginal Land, Nantawarrina IPA, Angepena Station, Mt Serle Station, Yankaninna Station, Umberatana Station, Arkaroola, Wooltana Station (see Figure)

Author – Martin Caon.

A poem entitled "Legend of the Gammon Range" (from the Weekly Herald (Adelaide SA), 26 October 1894, page 4, an Adelaide newspaper that was the "Labour and Democratic organ of South Australia")

LEGEND OF GAMMON RANGE

In a station up North, you'll please to believe, Where blacks are not wild, but in harmony live; Where the kangaroo hops in an ordinary way, And the squatter has lost his absolute sway; Where birds are not songless, nor flowers without tint, And specks in the quartz don't invitingly glint; Where the sky is not clothed in poetical hue, Nor the minder of stock wears shirts that are blue; Where chops that are grilled, and black fellows sware, With damper so hard are equally rare; In fact, where one looks seems everything queer, And, according to books, topsy-turvy appear, There's a terrible snake—such a monster 'tis said ; A gum tree but offers scant shade for its head, So the natives all say, and they of course know, For the place where it dwells they're willing to show In a range called the Gammon—no gammon or fun They find in the name, nor attempt e'en a pun; But down in dead earnest they say there's a snake That a few years ago swallowed up a whole lake, The water that is, or was, in the Frome. Just stretched out its head from its cavernous home, And without e'er a wink, in a twinkling drank Till the sheet of pure water to nothingness shrank. And, strange to relate, since that awful swill The Frome has no more been able to fill. And the blackfellows think round the whole country side Whenever the snake its gullet opes wide The waters above and below all get caught, And hence, they declare, there follows a drought.

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One thing can be noted about this affair, Whether or no the serpent is there, The weather's dry fact—for as often as not Not rain enough falls to fill a quart pot, And some, I have heard facetiously say, The moisture that falls on a showery day— Exception the rule goes to prove it of course— Would scarce make a drink for a Southerner's horse.

Oocaboolina Working Bee Report -7-13th June 2020

<u>Volunteers</u> – A team of 8 volunteers comprising – Mal Kirkham, Ruth Simpson, Ray and Jan Hutchinson, Phil and Kathryn Gaukroger, Graeme Oats attended. Jonathon Gobin attended for 2 days due to work commitments.

<u>Volunteer Support Grant</u> – The grant was for the supply of 6 steel security screens, surface levelling compound for the floors of 2 bedrooms, hire of an industrial vacuum cleaner & a fuel subsidy. Due to COVID-19 the Friends of Parks Board agreed to an extension of the acquittal of the grant to 31st August 2021.

Works Undertaken:-

- Windows Six wooden framed windows were removed and replaced with 2nd hand aluminium framed windows and the steel security bars removed and replaced with steel security screens – this was completed except for final coat of paint on the timber surrounds.
- Locks the new locks supplied by DEW were installed in the east and west doors.
- Gutter Guard cleaned the gutters of leaf debris. The Friends recommend that this be replaced with more stable steel wire gutter guard.
- Internal door frames these have either been repaired or replaced and 18 mm quad has been installed on all frames except the 2 kitchen doors (subject to lead based paint removal).
- Tank connection Polypipe and fittings were purchased from group funds (\$220) and a pipe was laid underground from the tank and connected to the west wall of the hut.
- > West entry stone walls the interior side stones were cut back as directed by DEW Rangers.
- **Verandah** the gap between the verandah & the hut has been cleaned & refilled with mortar.
- Painting interior walls the lounge walls were given a second coat, a further coat is to be applied next visit. Bedroom 1 walls have been cleaned again and undercoated.
- Bedroom floors have been cleaned and cement mortar applied to even up the surface in preparation of the application of a surface levelling compound (SLC) during the next visit.
- Athel Pine two Athel Pines outside the east fence were poisoned by DEW Rangers as had the regrowth on several of the pines inside the fences. The regrowth was removed and further reduction of the stumps was undertaken, some being burned and buried. The two pines outside the fence along with other dead miscellaneous growth were removed, burned and ash buried.
- Wash basin the group donated a stainless steel wash basin. An aluminium stand, at the cost of the Friends was erected under this and placed next to the toilet for use during visits. DEW also supplied a wash basin for installation at some future date..

<u>Next Visit</u> – Will be 22-28th August 2020. It is hopeful that the following some or all of the following can be completed during this visit:-

- Windows completion of painting.
- Sutter Guard approval will be sought from DEW to purchase and install steel wire gutter guard
- Internal door frames complete painting of the 6 internal door frames.
- Stormwater connecting PVC stormwater pipe (& tank overflow) to replace existing pipes.
- > West stone walls completion of render or whatever is agreed with DEW staff.
- Painting internal walls Complete painting of lounge and 2 x bedroom walls. Commence work on preparing laundry, store room and west porch walls for painting.
- **Bedroom floors** apply surface levelling compound.

Athel Pine – continue to remove and burn remainder of pines

Graeme Oats - Coordinator of the FoV-GRNP Oocaboolina Refurbishment Project





Top – new steel security screens, old windows replaced, cementing around hut to fill gap.

Centre left – Graeme applying "Builders Bog", right - Phil mixing cement mortar.

Bottom left – Mal making stand for wash basin, right, Roger supervising Ruth who is jemming out the old window frames.

Balcanoona Re-Vegetation Report

June 2020 - Volunteer and Ranger Engagement

Twenty friends were based at Balcanoona supporting both Balcanoona Re-Veg and Weetootla Monitoring projects.

Eleven friends focussed their time on the re-veg project: Libby & Wayne, Barbara & Peter, Marg & Richard, Lynne & Bill, Kathryn & Paul, and Roger. Friends focussing on Weetootla Monitoring also made valuable contributions to the re-veg effort.

Joeulla Coulthard and Sian Johnson, our Balcanoona Rangers spent a significant part of their work program on-site with the re-veg team.

A very productive and enjoyable re-veg program was achieved, drawing upon on the considerable volunteer and ranger experience and knowledge about re-vegetation approaches and indigenous plants more broadly. Extending our collective understanding of the value of native ground covers and plants growing alongside our re-veg plantings and the role of rocks in in the natural Balcanoona landscape was much appreciated.

Marg, Richard and Roger arrived on Monday before the main group on Tuesday. This provided time to meet up with Joeulla and Sian, to walk around with them, to review plantings and irrigation since the last trip and to get a deeper understanding of their priorities for the re-veg project for this trip and coming trips.



Left: - This Manduwarra / Curly Mallee / *Eucalyptus. gillii* was planted out in August 2019 together with a protective mesh guard and stakes. It was propagated by Friends from seeds collected locally and was about 150mm in height when planted.

In June 2020, it was about 400mm in size. Earlier in the year, when the rangers were checking the plantings and irrigation, the guard was removed as its branches were getting entangled.

Activities Undertaken

Re-veg focus - As a result of discussions with our rangers, the focus was: (1) The Office, Carpark and Entry mound - this is a key point of contact for visitors and is the work place of the rangers; and (2) Increasing the density of plantings at the north and south end of the western entry to the Park HQ (Area 1).

Planting - 110 seedlings were planted and supported (fertilise, mulch mats, plant guards and irrigation). The majority of seedlings were grown by friends from seeds collected in 2019 involving seven different local species. Some seedlings were purchased from AALBG and State Flora. All new plantings continue to be recorded on a data base.

Access to water and digging of holes - The Rangers used a back hoe to dig the majority of holes and provided a trailer and large water tank for easier access to water when planting away from the Balcanoona HQ. A hose

was fitted to the tank outlet. Fire hoses were also used when planting near Park HQ buildings. This valuable support enabled volunteers to focus more on planting and plant support.

Checking earlier plantings - All plants from earlier plantings were checked, re-fertilised, irrigation checked, drippers cleaned and adjusted, guards adjusted / removed as needed. This component of a re-veg trip forms an increasing proportion of our time.

Irrigation system - The new irrigation system is proving to be fit for purpose. Splitting the system into several zones means water is able to better reach all locations and enables the rangers to better manage their watering timetable. In June 2020, with the focus on infilling in existing areas where 25mm headers were already in place, our stock of 13mm poly pipe, 13mm fittings and drippers has been largely depleted.

Plant labels/plaques - The re-veg project includes the labelling of plants consistent with DEW's format and style like those already installed near the Weetootla campground. A draft list of plant species was developed with Adnyamathanha, common English and scientific names. This list will be sent to the rangers to check and confirm the wording before having them made by Ross Signs in Port Augusta. The majority of plaques will be positioned in the Office /Carpark area. Options for securing the plaques to a star dropper were explored. Paul Saxby will design and make a prototype for our consideration.

Old Balcanoona Homestead Garden - The rangers have set out the boundaries of the Old Balcanoona Homestead Garden and have commenced construction of the fence. It is quite a large area. Irrigation and plantings are expected to commence in 2021, with detailed re-veg planning needed in August 2020.

Inventory of items in our Shed - A detailed inventory of irrigation items, guards, fertiliser and tools was completed by Wayne and Libby. This is an important task that needs to be undertaken at the end of each trip. Paul Saxby measured up for a metal frame to enable our tools and plant support items to be more safely secured.

Tidying up - Disused irrigation lines and chicken wire plant guards and metal droppers were removed from the Office / Carpark and other open areas and taken to the Compound. The re-veg areas now look much tidier.

Volunteer Support Grant

The Volunteer Support Grant (2018/19) we received in early 2019 has now been largely expended. About \$300.00 remains most of which will be used to purchase plant labels consistent with DEW specifications.

Due to the Coronavirus, the acquittal date of the grant was extended from June 2020 to August 2021. After the August 2020 trip a completion report will prepared and submitted to Friends of Parks / DEW.

Brief review of re-veg activities

At the end of the June trip, participants were invited reflect on their re-veg experiences, identify what went well and what improvements could be made. Eleven volunteers provided feedback drawing on their extensive experience of volunteering and re-veg activities. In summary, the main suggestions centred around:

Bring participants together at the beginning of each re-veg trip - Outline the purpose and scope of the reveg project; provide map or maps of the re-veg areas; what been achieved so far; what are the next stages.

Set out tasks and work schedule over the whole trip period – schedule re-veg activities with other activities (Weetootla Monitoring, rest days etc); planting and irrigation work to be carried out; work teams and team coordinators, matching interests to tasks; whose doing what; who to go to for assistance.

Complete set of tools and supplies - each pair of planters or irrigators to have a full set of tools, items and supplies before work starts; short on-job practice and induction sessions as needed for new folks.

Re-veg activity coordination - provide one overall re-veg activity coordinator for each trip; ensure adequate time is set aside at the beginning of each trip for consultation and scheduling, and at the at the end of each trip for final checking of work done, inventory and review.

August 2020 activities

Matters that the Re-Veg Coordination team will need to consider are: 2 Proposals from the June review

- Expected work program (plantings, irrigation, checking etc), numbers of days & volunteers needed.
- Planning for the Old Balcanoona Homestead Garden
- Irrigation program which areas? One option for August 2020 is to focus on irrigation and hole digging for Area 2 (East side of entry road) and the remainder of Area 3 (east of the SQ carpark).
- How many plants to be planted and where existing plants and additional purchases from State Flora and AALBG
- Seed collection in August and by Rangers at other times
- Identify additional irrigation, plants, plant support items, tools etc needed. The cost of these are likely to come from the Friends operating budget and or from DEW.

2021 and beyond

The Balcanoona Re-Veg program is an ongoing program and is relatively complex and multidimensional.

Matters for consideration:

Case for a second Balcanoona Re-Veg Volunteer Support Grant (2020/21); It would make sense to seek a second grant to build on the successful work to date. Key aspects could include the Old Balcanoona HS Garden and the large area near the Visitors Area (Area 4).

A short walk for visitors to Balcanoona. Sian indicated that she intends to submit to the Co-Management Board a proposal to establish marked short walk from Balcanoona Park HQ, which takes in some nearby hills. Visitors often ask if there is an interesting short walk they can take while visiting the Balcanoona Park HQ and historic precinct. The friends have also thought about a walk which will enable visitors to take in the OBHS and garden, Shearing sheds, and the local Balcanoona Creek. This could present an opportunity for the Friends to be a co-partner in the development of such a walk which will enable us to allocate all or a major proportion of the Bonython bequest.

Roger Mathers - Coordinator of the FoV-GRNP Balcanoona Re-Vegetation Program





Revegetation of the Balcanoona Homestead Precinct, Bill Jeffery and Martin Caon preparing BBQ lunch

Balcanoona & Weetootla - June 8-15, 2020

The cancelled 19-25 April visit was rescheduled for 8-15 June when the Park re-opened and the COVID19 restriction on the number of people allowed to gather was relaxed. Despite the short notice, 20 members attended including 6 couples and 8 first time participants. To comply with COVID19 restrictions, people were asked to sign-up for one of two dinner preparation sessions in order to reduce crowding in the kitchen. However, as several couples cooked in their caravans or on the verandah or in the meat store, these arrangements were largely not needed. The members progressed the revegetation work at Balcanoona, or in the water quality monitoring and fish surveys at Weetootla and Yuwanhinya springs in the V-GRNP and at Nepouie Spring (on Wooltana station).

For the first time, the Friends group involved in refurbishment of the Oocaboolina outstation was on site at the same time as the Balcanoona group, so many people took the opportunity to drop into Oocaboolina on the way to Balcanoona to view the progress. In addition, the Oocaboolinners visited Balcanoona on Friday for a shared barbecue lunch and to socialise. The Friends supplied the salads.

Report on Mogurnda Monitoring – Weetootla and Nepouie Creeks

We visited 3 sampling sites in Wortupa Creek, walking in from the Grindell's Hut road parking site. Also 3 sites on Balcanoona Creek, walking in from the Balcanoona Campground. We also re-visited 4 sampling sites in Nepoule Creek, walking in from the Balcanoona – Innamincka road.



A total of 522 fish were captured and their length measured. The Weetootla Spring head seemed to be very similar to our last visit, but there were a lot of small sized fish which indicates a recent breeding. The Yuwanhinya Spring head seemed to have less water than in 2019 and it was shallow, and with a small area. The fish seem to be able to exist in pools of limited water volume and low quality. No small fish were captured. Nepouie Creek had a substantial flood following a 70mm rainfall event, where the water level rose by 1.5m (judged by the debris caught by tree trunks). This flushing of water will

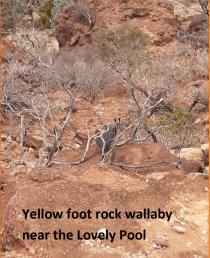
have altered the water quality and food availability in the pools. We found a very large number of very small fish which indicated a major breeding event in the two months preceding our visit. We also found a pool of water upstream of the spring head with fish in it. The temp of this pool was 15C ? compared to 26C in the spring head pool. We also found fish in the most downstream pool where there have been no fish present during previous sampling visits. We found 4 or 5 fish with noticeable disease at Nepouie, but not at Weetootla.



The Tobacco tree plants that were removed in August 2019 had not been replaced with new growth or new seedlings. We found just a few small plants that had germinated, which we uprooted. However, two large tobacco tree plants were found a little way upstream of the Lovely Pool. They will need cutting and swabbing during a future visit. An echidna was noticed asleep adjacent to the Large Tree alongside the walking trail. Some echidna poo was collected for forwarding to an interested party. We found no horehound weed.

Two motion-sensitive cameras were left at the Weetootla Springhead and at the Lovely Pool for 3 nights to assess what information they could provide. I note that leaving the cameras in place for longer may result in more photos The first camera captured a photo of a YFRW with joey and a Common Bronzewing pigeon. Hence the camera "discovered" evidence of a YFRW colony in the vicinity of the Springhead. Two other colonies were noted: one in the high ground above the Lovely Pool (where 5 or 6 wallabies were seen) and another along the access road to the Weetootla Campground where 2 YFRW were seen where we got out of





Water quality monitoring was conducted by Rob Gabb. We also collected water samples for later analysis in Adelaide. The results of these measurements in Adelaide the cars to examine some Iga trees (as well as 2 emu and 2 wedge-tailed eagles perched on the cliff).

Perhaps the Friends group could commence a project that assessed and monitored the YFRW colonies in the Park.. Also SEG may have some data from their previous monitoring of YFRW in the Park.



will be compared to the measurements made in field. We would expect that the measurements will be similar which would allow us in future to restrict our in-field measurements to temperature and oxygen concentration. This will decrease the time required for the water quality assessment in the field, and perhaps allow other tasks or projects to be pursued.



Seed pods were collected from Iga, Quandong and Slender Bell fruit trees and we will attempt to germinate them for a future planting.

Judy showed us some petroglyphs chipped into horizontal rock surfaces near the road to Weetootla Campground. Reported to be made by people other than the Adnyamathanha!

> Petroglyphs near the road to Weetootla Campground



Martin Caon - Coordinator and Trip Leader of the FoV-GRNP of the Weetootla Springs Monitoring Project