



## **Friends Park Visit - September 3-10, 2021**

### **Trip Leaders' Report**

Twenty-six participants: Peter Bansemer, Mary & Glynn Bartel, Martin Caon, Peta & Colin Conor, Mark & Georgia Darter, Nicki de Prue, Marg Eason, Rob Gabb, Barbara Godfrey, Wayne Hooper, Lynne & Bill Jeffrey, Chris & Greg Kirby, John Koumi, Roger Mathers, Libby Robertson, Richard Smith, Mike Tanner, Garry & Michelle Trethewey, Annette & Bob Vincent, were accommodated in the Balcanoona Shearer's Quarters, in House #2 or camped in their own accommodation. In fact the Friends purchased some cutlery and crockery items to fit out the kitchen of House #2, which was otherwise lacking such things.

Some members were on site from the 27 August and left on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September and others arrived after the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Sept and/or left before the 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Spring Water-Quality monitoring**

Water pH, temperature and dissolved oxygen measurements were made on site at 9 observation sites by Rob Gabb. In addition, water samples were obtained and delivered to Ray Hickman in Adelaide for analysis, this way, time in the field is minimised and measurements are made efficiently. The prolific growth of Bulrush (typhus) changed the appearance of the pools and made it difficult to net for fish.

#### **Fish monitoring**

The Nepouie, Weetootla and Yuwanhinya Springs were visited during the first three days and over 500 fish were measured. Nepouie as usual, had more fish and water than the other two springs. On this occasion, very few small fish less than 3cm in length were found. This may indicate that very little breeding has occurred recently. Fortunately, fish were still present at Yuwanhinya, despite the small volume of water there. As usual, no small fish were found there.

Along the path to Weetootla, we took the opportunity to remove some Tobacco Bush and bag the flowers, uprooted some Horehound that was growing where the water ends at Hells Gate, and pulled out some Salvation Jane – but there was much more coming through. We noted where some Tobacco Bush was infesting the Creek and in need of a concerted effort to remove it. The *Acacia victoriae* were looking healthy and about to burst into bloom.

## Biological Databases of South Australia (BDBSA)

This is a system of formally recording sightings of Flora and Fauna to a central depository, using a standard format provided via a template.

The work that we do has been registered as a project with BDBSA:

**Project Number = 1286.** Project Name = FRIENDS OF VGRNP BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

**BDBSA observer number = 3442.** Our Friends group has been registered as an “observer”. Rather than each person that makes an observation having their own observer number, the group as a whole has an observer number.

Our members engaged in compiling an ongoing list of bird sightings will record their sightings on the BDBSA and in addition, I (Martin) will record my own observations of fauna. The returns to the BDBSA is a requirement of our **Scientific Research Permit (number Q26980-1)**.

### Camera trap results

Four remote cameras were placed during the April 2021 visit and the images captured were downloaded during this trip. The batteries were replaced and the cameras were left in place until our next visit, probably in April 2022.

The fabulous images were captured and showed: lots of photogenic Yellow Foot Rock Wallaby, too many Goats, a Raven, a crested pigeon, a Bronzewing pigeon, a cat, Emus and chicks and Red Kangaroo.



*Left: - YFRW bouncing above the Lovely Pool*

*Below: - Feral goat*



*Below: - A feral cat at the Weetootla spring-head.*

For more photos, visit the Friend's Flickr site: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/14710340@N24/pool/page1>





### **Day walk to McKinley Spring from Italowie trail head**

Thirteen of us walked the 6km (or part thereof) from the Italowie trail head to the (dry) Mt McKinley Spring where we had lunch. Along the formed and marked trail we looked for Quandong (saw none), Slender Bell Fruit (saw one large dead tree near the start) and Iga. We came across one Iga with quite a few seed pods, while, strangely all the others we looked at were bare of fruit. After lunch we explored a spectacular and narrow gorge that opened to the South from the Mt McKinley Spring Gorge, about 150m away.



***Narrow gorge near Mt McKinley spring***

On Wednesday afternoon, 18 of the group gathered at Arkaroola for an evening meal and to watch the YFRW being fed. Wednesday night is BBQ night at Arkaroola, so we ate outside and listened to the live music provided by the receptionist.



***YFRW coming in to feed on the Arkaroola wallaby rockery***

On Thursday for lunch, the crew that had arrived at Oocaboolina travelled to Balcanoona for a combined BBQ and looked over the re-vegetation work being done there. Some took the opportunity to visit Oocaboolina on our way home to inspect the workmanship happening there.

***Combined Oocaboolina - Balcanoona BBQ. The warm day meant that an indoors meal in the Lounge room was preferred.***



***Mogurnda clivicola with a cap-like lesion on its head***

**Martin Caon** September, 2021

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## **Balcanoona Re-Vegetation Report - 27 August – 9 September 2021**

### **Volunteer and Ranger Engagement**

Friends primarily involved in the re-veg program this trip included Nicki, Marg & Richard, Roger, Barbara & Peter, Wayne & Libby, Chris & Greg, Lynne and Bill.

Friends involved in Weetootla Monitoring made valuable contributions including planting out, guard making, irrigation work, fertilising, plant guard replacement, counting plants, and collecting broken glass.

While Ranger Sian had Park responsibilities to attend to, she supported the re-veg team on several days, including the back hoe digging of over 150 holes and setting up and filling the water tank on the trailer. At the end of most days Sian would catch up with the team.



*Some pictures of friends in action.*



## Activities and Findings

### Planting:

- 130 seedlings were planted out this trip, all propagated by friends. The bulk of seedlings were Curly Mallee together with some Red Mallee, River Red Gum, Senna, Cocky Tongue, Wild Orange (Iga) and Hibiscus (see picture below of some of the seedlings).
- The majority of plantings were in Area 2; many in the 'gully' in the southern part of Area 1; some in the Office / Carpark Area.
- About 10 plants were replaced in the various areas.
- At the end of the Aug/Sept 2021 trip, 562 plants are under irrigation, of which 374 are new plantings by the Friends and 188 were already in place

The aerial picture taken by Chris (with Greg) reveals the impact of our work. It shows many of holes dug by Sian, which were subsequently planted out.





## **Irrigation:**

- In Area 2, additional 13 mm lines were installed to support new plantings.
- In Area 1 (South) and Area 3 (West) several existing 13 mm lines were added or extended to support new plantings.
- The irrigation system for Area 2 was not able to adequately support the large number of existing and new plants. Libby identified a solution leading to the installation of an additional 25mm header to support the 13mm lines and plants at the southern end. In-line taps enable the northern and southern section of Area 2 to be irrigated separately.
- A section of 25mm line was replaced and buried near the road way between Area 2 and Area 3.

## **Blocked Drippers and Lines:**

- Due to high mineral content of the bore water, drippers frequently block up leading to reduced or no water flow. The adjustable dripper enables them to be cleared, yet frequently after clearing and adjusting, some drippers block up again relatively quickly. This appears to be happening more in Area 1 where the irrigation system has been in place for three years. Wayne noticed drippers appeared to be blocked more often towards the end of the 13mm line.
- Blocked drippers are likely to be the main cause of the fatalities we have experienced, which is estimated to be around 10%.
- The removal of some 13mm end plugs in Area 1 revealed a thick milky sludge at the end of the lines. The black poly pipe and drippers lay out, uncovered, in arid conditions, facilitating the precipitation of mineral salts.
- One solution is to install 13mm taps at the end of each line to enable period flushing out. Another is to ensure an adequate pressure of water reaches the lines and drippers.
- The 32 mm pipe from the bore water pump supports three 25 mm headers for Area1, Area 2, Area 3 and the 19mm header for the Mound. In between the 32 mm pipe from the bore and the headers are four small brass garden taps. One tap is turned at a time to ensure a full flow to each area (picture below).
- The existing taps reduce the water flow from the bore water pump and need to be replaced with taps which enable a stronger flow to each of the headers.



## **Natural Regeneration around Revegetation Plantings**

- Annual Saltbush and Bluebush and longer-lived species such as Senna, Fanflower and various Wattles are starting to establish around plantings providing habitat to support native wildlife (picture of Senna and Red Mallee).
- The revegetation plantings are already providing evidence of improved habitat for insect species (pictures of a Blue Banded Bee and a butterfly (not yet identified) in Eremophila). Native birds are frequent visitors including Honey Eaters, Parrots, Variegated Fairy-wrens, and Zebra Finches (picture of Ring-necked Parrot in revegetation).



### Survey of remanent vegetation

- To better understand the plant species found in surrounding remnant vegetation, Nicki led a survey in the area east of the DEW houses towards the boundary of the Park.
- The vegetation is Curly Mallee woodland with understorey plants of Broom Bush, Sennas, Sandhill Wattle, Boobialla, Ruby Saltbush and Rock Fuchsia. Seeds and cuttings will be taken from this area as part of our revegetation program.

### Seed collection and plant propagation

- Seeds collected from plants near the Park HQ included Red Mallee, Gum-barked Coolabah, Curly Mallee, Sandhill Wattle and Elegant Wattle.
- Seed was collected from a Slender Bell Fruit specimen located close to the Copley Road.
- Cuttings taken included Broom Bush and Myoporum.

### Checking and maintenance

- Currently there are 562 plants under irrigation.
- All plants under irrigation were checked, replaced as needed, drippers checked and adjusted, headers flushed out, plant guards removed /changed, plants fertilised & mounds rebuilt as needed.
- Wayne undertook a stocktake and has identified items in need of replenishment.
- Photo points have been formalised to monitor the growth of our revegetation.
- Checking and maintenance tasks are critical to looking after our investment in revegetating the Park HQ and takes an increasing proportion of time spend on every revegetation trip. As a consequence, we need to ensure an appropriate balance between new planting work and maintenance work.



## Next Steps include

### Irrigation matters:

- Trial the use of 13 mm end taps for flushing out of lines.
- Review and replace the taps to the headers in order to provide a stronger water pressure. Rob Gab suggested following up with a Reece Plumbing retail outlet which specialise in irrigation.

### Plantings over 2022 and 2023

- Area 3 (east side) - replace the 19mm irrigation system, support existing plants and commence additional plantings.
- Area 1 – continue infill planting.
- Mound – replace the 19mm irrigation system; remove road gravel, extend area for planting, in particular ‘bush tucker’ species.

### Roger Mathers for Re Veg Team

(Wildlife pictures provided by Chris Kirby.)

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## Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Inc.

**Annual General Meeting will be held at the**

**Fullarton Park Community Centre on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**GUEST SPEAKER - Mr. NEVILLE BONNEY**



Neville is a native plant expert, ethnobotanist and published author. His most recent book, "From One Small Seed, a Forest is Born" has just been published. Books of particular relevance to our work in the Park include "Adnyamathanha and Beyond: Useful Plants of an Ancient Land" and "Jewel of the Australian Desert: Native Peach (Quandong); the Tree with Round Red Fruit". He is an advocate for the commercialisation of "useful" indigenous flora, including wattleseed and has promoted the production and development of markets for "bush foods" in Australia and beyond.



## Oocaboolina Report - September 8-15, 2021

Members present were Jan & Ray Hutchinson\* – 7-10 Sept. and 14-15<sup>th</sup> Sept., Mal Kirkham, Ruth Simpson, Graeme Oats 8 -13<sup>th</sup> Sept., John Koumi 10 -13<sup>th</sup> Sept., Jill Tugwell 11- 13<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Works undertaken:-

- Transferred all Friends tools & equipment from Store to laundry.
- Applied first top coat of paint to 2 bedroom door jambs.
- Installing of 2 bedroom threshold timbers which first required chiselling out concrete at the threshold.
- Installing a pair of French doors to each of the bedrooms.
- Installing security screen to bedroom 2. Security screens for bedroom 1 were found to be the wrong size. More info later. \*\*
- Preparing bedroom 1 floor with surface levelling compound (SLC) in readiness for lino laying.
- Laying lino in both bedrooms.
- Installing quad to both bedrooms
- Painting of bedroom 2 French doors. (one coat)
- Preparing 2<sup>nd</sup> hand door to fit laundry/porch entry and installing. Removing existing door furniture, cutting to size, sanding down all surfaces, repair moulding, applying undercoat and 2 top coats.
- Applying “sealer paint” to porch and store room cement rendered walls and applying two coats of top coat to some walls.
- Porch ceiling – applied first jointing strip to ceiling.
- Poured SLC to both store room and porch.
- Poured SLC to east verandah entry slab.
- Applied expanding foam and Builder’s Bog to east door frame.
- Tidied up and watered garden area north of hut, staked up various plants.

\*Ray & Jan departed to work at Innamincka – found roads closed in that area and returned to Oocaboolina for 2 more days

\*\* The manufacturer admitted error and will replace one pair of security screens at no cost to the Friends to be installed in 2022.

**Graeme Oats**

**Convenor – Oocaboolina Refurbishment Project**

**Left, Ray sanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> hand door, middle John & Mal fit security screen to bedroom 2 and right SLC applied to parts of bedroom 1 floor.**





French Doors  
installed in bedroom 2



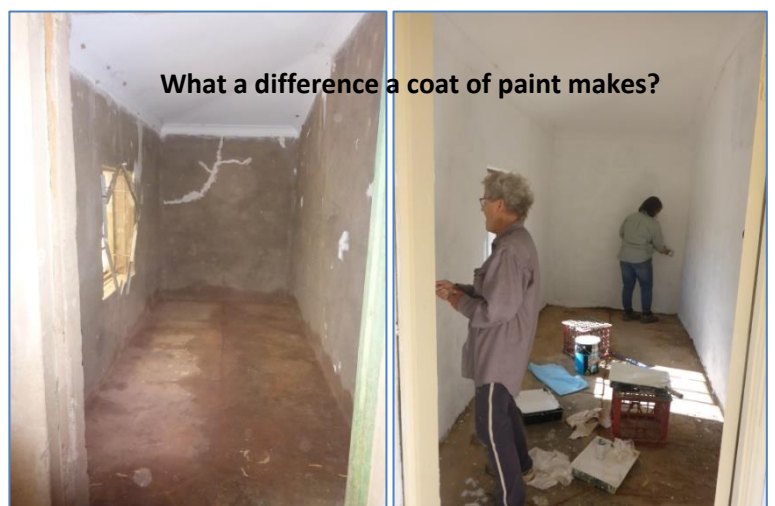
Second hand door refurbished



SLC applied to verandah



Ruth – working on  
the lino laying

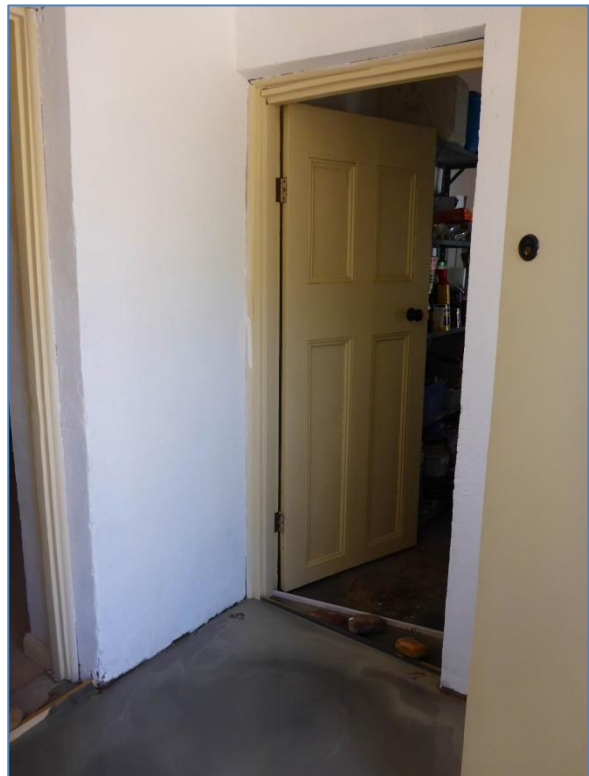


What a difference a coat of paint makes?





**THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE STORE & PORCH FLOOR WITH ADDITION OF SURFACE LEVELLING COMPOUND - NOTE NEW DOOR TO LAUNDRY**



## BIRD REPORT by Chris Kirby.

Following the two trips this year, we now have a dedicated group of people recording and photographing the birds in the park. This year lists and photos from Balcanoona were contributed by Barbara Godfrey, Mark & Georgia Darter and myself. For Oocaboolina Jan Hutchinson made a list and contributed photos.



We added some new sightings to the lists which are exciting, as there are still probably more species to be found. The list for both sites stands at 38 species compared to 31 this time last year. The visiting rangers were also keen birders and contributed to our knowledge. Birds that we have seen are being recorded on E Bird and SA Biological Database. We are reporting on birds seen around Balcanoona Station, Weetootla, Balcanoona and Nepouie Creeks and the Gibber/scrubland area mentioned.

In September I went further into the Gibber area west of Balcanoona Creek and found a population of **Southern Whiteface**. (Photo – left) I will explore this area further next time as there are bound to be more little scrub birds.



While in Weetootla Gorge we heard and then spotted **Rufus Whistlers**. (Photo – left) These were also seen in the garden around the car park near the Rangers Office. Possibly their appearance is seasonal as I had not seen them before.

The watering points in the revegetation area continue to provide water for drinking and bathing for the large flock of finches and the Purple-crowned Fairy Wrens, in particular. The larger birds such as Elegant Parrots prefer the overflow from the rainwater tank on the hill as this is more open for them. An Emu dad and two chicks visited the pond by the water tank daily and were seen around the area. Jan reported that the birds are coming to the

open water source at Oocaboolina.

Last September pairs of Wood Swallows nested in the gums in Balcanoona and Weetootla Creeks. We looked carefully but there were none to be seen this year, probably due to the drier conditions that we observed in both the creeks.

At a stop on the track to Lake Frome we accidentally disturbed a number of Zebra finches which were nesting in a grove of Iga trees. We also saw a small flock of budgies and a large flock of Little Corellas at the same stop. Our bird photos can be viewed in our friends Flickr page

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/14710340@N24/>

Some of the additions to the 2020 Bird List.

**Rufous Whistler**- Georgia Darter, **Grey-fronted Honeyeater** and **White Plumed Honeyeater**- Jan Hutchinson (Photo- right),

**Southern Whiteface**- Chris Kirby.



The Friends Flickr Photo Sharing Group: - A reminder that if you have any photos from our trips to share, please send them to me and I will post them for you. [Chriskirbyreader@gmail.com](mailto:Chriskirbyreader@gmail.com)

**Chris Kirby.**



**2022 PARK VISITS**

**WEETOOTLA WATER & FISH  
MONITORING**

**APRIL – 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>**

**AND**

**AUGUST - 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>**

**2022 PARK VISITS**

**OOCABOOLINA OUTSTATION**

**REFURBISHMENT**

**MAY - 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>**

**AND**

**JULY - 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>**

**2022 PARK VISITS**

**BALCANOONA REVEGETATION PROJECT**

**APRIL – 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>**

**JUNE – 17<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>**

**AUGUST - 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>**

**EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

The project leaders would welcome expressions of interest from members who are interested in joining the teams next year. Please contact any of the leaders.

**Weetootla** Monitoring - Martin Caon – [m.caon56@gmail.com](mailto:m.caon56@gmail.com)

**Balcanoona** Re-vegetation Project – Roger Mathers – [roger\\_mathers@yahoo.com](mailto:roger_mathers@yahoo.com)

(Please note there is an underscore between roger & mathers)

**Oocaboolina** Outstation Refurbishment – Graeme Oats – [gdoats@bigpond.net.au](mailto:gdoats@bigpond.net.au)