



FRIENDS OF VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES
NATIONAL PARK Inc.

Newsletter No. 9 February 2019

Park Visits 2019

1. A visit to Oocaboolina outstation to continue work on getting the building to a safe and secure condition is scheduled for May 17-24. There will be a second visit later in the year. For these visits people will be camped near the Outstation and arrangements will have been made for access to showers at Nepabunna.

The planned activities for the May 17-24 Oocaboolina visit are:

Continue repairing/replacing internal door frames, removal of fretted concrete floors. Outdoor projects could include, secure entry of vermin/birds under eaves, painting all external and internal surfaces of toilet, provide outlet pipe to tank, connect poly pipe from windmill to stone tank and bury, connect poly pipe at creek to house yard tap, remove old fencing wire near windmill.

Members interested in participating in this trip should let Graeme Oats (gdoats@bigpond.net.au) know

2. Visits where group members will be based at Balcanoona are scheduled for May 5-10 and August 24-31.

Previous working visits to Balcanoona have been for four nights/five days allowing two days for driving back and forth and three days working on site. This year accommodation at Balcanoona will be available for one extra night in May and three extra nights in August. The idea is to give people going to the park more flexibility in choosing when they will be on site and what they do while there.

The expectation is that people will be involved in group activities for most of the time that they are in accommodation at Balcanoona but can do other things that suit them for some of the time.

May 5-10 at Balcanoona- the planned activities are:

Balcanoona Re-vegetation

- a) develop a multi-year master plan for re-veg project
- b) continuation of work on irrigation lines, plant guards and new plantings at Park Headquarters
- c) assessment of possibilities for re-establishment of gardens (fenced off) to make the Park headquarters more interesting for visitors

Weetootla Environmental Monitoring

- a) assessment of the effectiveness of last year's work on removal of tobacco bush in Weetootla Gorge and further removals as necessary. Check regrowth of horehound and remove as necessary.
- b) water quality measurements, assessment of purple-spotted gudgeon numbers at Weetootla, Nepouie, Yuwanhinya springs and pools fed by these springs.
- c) continued observations on yellow-foot rock wallaby numbers and assessment of habitat.
- d) Photographing and identifying aquatic invertebrates- the purple-spotted gudgeon relies on small aquatic invertebrates for its food. Knowing what is in the spring-fed pools will give some insight into the fish's preferred conditions. Martin Caon will be taking the lead with a search for aquatic invertebrates, using nets etc and photographing what is found for identification. If you have an interest/expertise in zoology, close up photography (or are willing to learn), have experience and/or ideas for the taking of successful photographs of small, live aquatic invertebrates (lighting, black/white background etc), this project may interest you. You can contact Martin at m.caon56@gmail.com

Balcanoona Re-veg will see people working close to facilities.

Weetootla monitoring will involve being on foot away from vehicles and facilities.

Members interested in participating in this trip should let either Ray Hickman (raywen@bigpond.net.au) or Roger Mathers (roger_mathers@yahoo.com) know.

2019 Committee

At the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting there were two vacancies on the Committee not filled with some members afterwards indicated an interest in joining the Committee. This has seen the Committee composition become:

President: Martin Caon

Vice-President: Roger Mathers

Treasurer: Graeme Oats

Secretary: Ray Hickman

Committee Members: Nicki de Preu, Ric Williams, Kirsty Jolly

Group Logo and Brochure

Logo - the Committee through member, Hannah Jones has developed over several months the design at the top of this Newsletter. It represents an indigenous plant (Iga – native orange – *Capparis mitchellii*) and the Purple Spotted Gudgeon (*Mogurnda clivicola*), with the colours of the indigenous flag – red outer rim, black text (group name) with yellow background.

Hannah was able to design the logo in black and white which was later enhanced with colour by Alun Thomas, a friend of a member.

Brochure – using the logo the committee are preparing an A4 tri-folded double-sided brochure for distribution. The brochure will cover our objectives, outline the group's projects, include an application/renewal form and information about the location of the Park.

Group Clothing

The Committee is about to adopt a logo as shown on this Newsletter. Other Friends groups have produced, for their members, shirts, floppy hat with brim etc – the Committee would like to get a feeling from members if they would be interested in purchasing a shirt and/or hat. Some years ago, members of the Scientific Expedition Group purchased a cotton shirt (see right) – long sleeves, 2 breast pockets, air vents under arm with a double pen holder on left sleeve. Hats come in many shapes and designs – wide brimmed bucket hats, cargo hats etc. One style is pictured on right.



At the present time no costings have been undertaken. We are looking for expressions of interest in either the shirt and/or a hat. It may be possible to have a logo printed on your own shirt or hat.



Please let us know what you think. Send me an email (gdoats@bigpond.net.au) and I will collate the replies for discussion at our March Committee meeting.

Group website

Change in editing arrangements: the Association's website is currently written and edited in the old-fashioned way. This has some advantages but there are modern methods for writing and editing websites that are easier and more versatile. One of these makes use of a software package called 'WordPress' and the University of South Australia, Magill Campus, provides support in using

WordPress for community groups that have websites written with it. Many Friends groups make use of this support.

The existing website is to be rewritten using this package. Once this has been done it will be easier to maintain the website and easier for the group to find a replacement for its website administrator when the inevitable happens and someone new has to be found.

Incorporation

As of 12 December 2018 *Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park* is an incorporated body under the Associations Incorporation Act 1985 and Henry Pecanek is the Association's Public Officer.

This additional formality will not affect the group's activities and will provide it with the following advantages:

1. it removes the small risk of members being sued in the event of a mishap occurring in circumstances where, inadvertently, there was not full compliance with Department of Water and Environment (DEW) guidelines.
2. it allows the group to make grant applications directly rather than via sponsorship of another group that is incorporated.
3. it gives the group the capacity to apply to the tax office for approval to accept tax deductible donations. This application is being prepared.

The cost (once-off) of registering the group as an incorporated body was \$196.

Weetootla spring still flowing strong after a low rainfall year

2018 was a dry year for the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. The recording rain gauge installed 30 years ago on the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Plateau by the Scientific Expedition Group (SEG) reported the annual rainfall as 92 mm. This was 27% of the average rainfall for the 30 year period and 57% of the next lowest rainfall of 160 mm that was recorded in 2002.

Bureau of meteorology rainfall measurements at nearby Arkaroola go back 80 years. The 2018 Arkaroola rainfall of 66 mm was 26% of the 80 year average. This suggests that last year's rainfall in the Vulkathunha-Gammons, and surroundings, was likely a once-in-a-100+ years low.

The Weetootla Spring flow rate remained strong throughout 2018 with a member reporting a strong flow rate in early November and running water extending for about 2 km from the spring head. Elsewhere in the Northern Flinders waterholes and springs, previously considered permanent, dried up or

slowed down markedly during 2018. So Weetootla is among the most reliable springs in the Northern Flinders and this would explain why it is one of only two locations in the area that is home to the purple-spotted gudgeon. There is another population of the fish at the nearby Nepouie Springs on Wooltana pastoral lease. This spring has gone dry in the recent past and it is believed that the population at that site was re-established using fish from Weetootla.

Robert Brandle, Arid Lands Ecologist with the Department Environment and Water (DEW), is looking for other sites in the Northern Flinders where populations of the purple spotted gudgeon, once established, are likely to survive for the long term. We have advised Robert that we will help with this in any way we can.
