

FRIENDS of VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK Inc.

NEWSLETTER No.27 December 2023



Gathering of Nantawarrina Rangers, Friends, LASA, Hon. Dr. Susan Close, Deputy Premier and Hon. Geoff Brock MP. Plaque Campground – Nantawarrina IPA.

*Merry Christmas to you all and thanks for your support during
2023. Look forward to catching up in 2024.
Martin, Nicki, Graeme & Mike - Friend's Committee*

Helen Johnson. (KDolphin@Internode.on.net)

25th Anniversary of Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area

Earlier in the year the Friends of Vulkathunha Gammons Ranges National Park were invited by Gerry Butler, Event Facilitator from the Landcare Association South Australia, to assist with the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) – the very first IPA in Australia. The 4WD Adventurers Club of South Australia also assisted with the celebrations. Graeme Oats liaised with Gerry Butler to guide the Friends' involvement.

The Friends' duties were to prepare and serve an evening BBQ for up to 100 guests on Friday 1st and a smaller number on Saturday 2nd September 2023 and to prepare breakfast on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Our assigned location was the Community Centre at Nipapanha (formerly Nepabunna). The 4WD group prepared the BBQs, breakfasts and packed lunches at the Nantawarrina Plaque Campground, catering for campers and people attending cultural tours on Saturday and Sunday.

The 58,000 ha Nantawarrina IPA lies at the heart of the traditional Adnyamathanha lands on the southern boundary of the Vulkathunha GRNP on the outskirts of Nipapanha and 600 km from Adelaide. On 2nd September 2023 the IPA celebrated its 25th anniversary with over 150 visitors to the Nantawarrina Plaque Campground where the first ceremony establishing the IPA took place on 26th August 1998. Community and Government leaders took part in the moving ceremony.

In 1995 the Adnyamathanha community at Nepabunna pioneered the idea of an indigenous protected area on their country. They led the way in what became an internationally recognized revolution, seeking Federal and State government support for a protected area on Indigenous land where First People's knowledge and skills could be used to protect Country and culturally significant sites.

At the first ceremony in 1998 Adnyamathanha Traditional Owner Gertrude Johnson proclaimed the “First Indigenous Protected Area in Australia”. Pivotal to the start-up were the Aboriginal Lands Trust and Indigenous Land Management organizations supporting the Adnyamathanha community to achieve the first Indigenous Protected Area of its type in the world.

The Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation (NCAC) established in 2009 manages the IPA and guides a team of full-time Rangers (currently 8) to deliver the requirements of a Plan of Management. The Ranger teams have developed relationships with Aboriginal Lands Trust, Bush Heritage, Pew Charitable Trust, UniSA and other organizations to share their knowledge and learn new ways of improving their country. Rangers improve their skills through targeted training including Certificate level training in Conservation and Land Management and Indigenous Land Management.

Nantawarrina is highly regarded as an example of how land can and must be rejuvenated and protected for future generations. Under the Federal Government’s Working on Country Program, employment and training opportunities are provided for up to 10 full time Rangers.

Once a severely degraded pastoral property heavily grazed by animals, the removal of sheep, donkeys, rabbits, 20,000 goats and weed management has allowed natural regeneration of native vegetation and the country looks beautiful, particularly so in spring. However, goat control continues, since goats enter from the National Park.

Over the past 25 years the Rangers have replanted native vegetation - conserving biodiversity and helping to preserve the Andu - yellow-footed rock wallaby, and scientifically monitor their health and numbers. Populations of Andu have doubled since monitoring began in 2000. Bird surveys and wildlife monitoring using cameras and radio tracking also support biodiversity.

The Rangers have restored cultural sites, maintained waterholes, built bores and water tanks and laid out irrigation pipes. They have greatly improved infrastructure for tourists at Big Moro Gorge where there are three spring-fed waterholes, and restored and protected a heritage homestead called Irish Well Hut. A campsite has been established for tourists at the Plaque Campground, and camping is permitted in several other areas with toilets provided. Roads, facilities and signage are continually maintained and improved.

IPAs offer commercial opportunities to build cultural and nature-based tourism, providing local employment and building cultural understanding. The Nantawarrina website and the Nantawarrina brochure available from the Nipapanha Information Centre provide information for people wishing to visit.

At the IPA ceremony held at the Plaque Campground on Saturday we were welcomed to Country by Gertrude Johnson’s son Adnyamathanha Elder and Traditional Owner Uncle Kelvin Johnson (sadly recently passed) and Adnyamathanha Elder and Traditional Owner Uncle Noel Wilton. The Honourable Susan Close, Deputy Premier South Australia and Minister for the Environment and Water and the Honourable Geoff Brock MP, SA Minister for Local Government and State Member for Stuart gave speeches and they acknowledged the hard work over the past 25 years of all the past and present Nipapanha community members who have worked on and supported Nantawarrina.

In her message read at the Plaque ceremony the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, Federal Minister for the Environment and Water said “the first IPA began with a simple idea: that if we listened to First Nation’s people and we valued First Nation’s expertise, and if we empowered First Nations communities on the ground, we could protect Australia’s environment, while supporting local jobs and economic development”. Minister Plibersek also said that 25 years ago the Adnyamathanha people “started a movement which has spread across this continent like a brilliant, unstoppable flame”.

The Honourable Linda Burney, Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in her message congratulated the Indigenous Rangers who are using their knowledge and skill to protect Adnyamathanha lands and for leading the way for others to follow. The Honourable Rowan Ramsey MP, Federal Member for Grey wrote "Australia's Indigenous Protected Areas have become the preferred model in Australia to manage our vast National Reserve areas."

In 2023 IPAs make up over half of Australia's National Reserve System and include some of Australia's rarest and most fragile environments. Eighty two dedicated IPAs cover 87million ha of land and 5million ha of sea country. Indigenous Protected Areas are similar to other reserves or national parks but are owned and controlled by local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. The Federal Government is currently adding ten new IPAs and planning to double the number of Indigenous Rangers by the end of the decade.

In 2000 the Nantawarrina IPA received international recognition from the United Nations Environment Program, joining the Global 500 Roll of Honour for Environmental Achievement. The UN Secretary General visited Nepabunna when Prime Minister John Howard and Minister for the Environment the Honourable Robert Hill made a presentation on the IPA to the United Nation's International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). In 2003 the Nantawarrina IPA programs were showcased in a presentation to the 5th Congress of the IUCN in Durban, South Africa.

On Friday 1st September Annette Vincent and I drove to Nipapanha from Arkaroola where we had spent 6 peaceful days. We arrived as the school children from Leigh Creek School were receiving their bright red Nantawarrina T-shirts and gift bags. We were greeted by Desiree Fielding, Acting CEO Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation (NCAC) and people from Landcare SA. We were offered a gift bag and given a T-shirt and cap or beanie, which was a lovely surprise, and were invited to join the children in tree planting.



Genevieve Chaffey, Gerry Butler.

The One Tree per Child project started by Olivia Newton-John and John Dee aims to have every child planting at least one tree in their primary school years. Annette and I planted a tree each and assisted some of the children to plant theirs. On Friday night Susan Close and Geoff Brock each planted a tree before attending the BBQ. Annette and I met other 'Friends' Chris and Dave, Genevieve and Russell, Barb and Mal and were assigned our duties to cook the BBQ meats (10kg sausages, 4kg patties and 100 lamb chops) and potato wedges, and to serve the meat

and prepared salads to guests. Henry, Rory, Vicki and Judith worked at the campfire at Nipapanha where damper and kangaroo tails were cooked and also assisted the 4WD Club



David Mussared & Mal Kirkham

members at the Plaque campground as needed. Our Friends team working in the Nipapanha Community Centre had our problem-solving skills tested on the first evening feeding 100 people in a timely fashion with some equipment difficulties, but by breakfast time we were a well-oiled team. On Saturday night the Aboriginal ladies kindly provided a delicious dessert of stewed native peach (quandong), custard and a big container of ice-cream provided by Adnyamathanha Elder and Traditional Owner Uncle Terrence Coulthard.



Big Moro Gorge - Waterhole

All visitors were included in the cultural tours on Saturday and Sunday. We drove in convoy to the Big Moro Gorge on Saturday afternoon. Moro Gorge is one of the most important Adnyamathanha cultural sites where Akurra the giant serpent leaves the ranges. Adnyamathanha Elder and Traditional Owner Uncle Vince Coulthard told us the story of two brothers who came down from the sky at Paralana to teach people how to live and behave well, what animals they could eat and how to kill and prepare them. The brothers travelled from Paralana down through Munyalinna, Nepouie, Italowie and Big Moro Creeks. They left the ranges and went south to Chambers Gorge and then to Mt Hack finally rising in the smoke and wind of a big fire they had lit ascending into the sky as two black holes in the Milky Way. The Yura Muda – story, is described in Terrence and Josie Coulthard’s wonderful book; “Adnyamathanha. A Cultural Guide and Language Book” 2020.

Members of the Nipapanha Community and Nantawarrina Rangers.
L-R: Bruce Wilton, Kelvin Johnson, John Chester, Cameron Johnson,
Phil Wright, Ian Johnson Jr, Jason Downs, Kimberley Steele, Greg
Cramond, Thomas Wilton, Ian Johnson Srr.



On Sunday we visited Irish Well Hut which has been beautifully restored and has storyboards placed on the outside walls with a large sculpture of a young aboriginal boy shearing a sheep which looks so life-like it is startling. The hut, which is very cool inside, has been enclosed by a wide verandah protected with fly screening. We then drove through some kilometres of bull dust to Waukla Woodna Gorge

where Uncle Kelvin explained the story of the wildu - eagle, and his nephews, the wakarla - crow and the urrakurli – magpie, that were disrespectful to their uncle. The moral of the story is to be respectful to your elders. We enjoyed our lunch whilst Uncle Noel sang songs about the wildu story, a song called “Imagine” about children’s love of living at Nepabunna, and a song he had written. We walked up the Gorge and then drove in convoy back to Nipapanha.

The cultural tours were enlightening and we felt privileged to be part of three days of anniversary celebrations - meeting Rangers, community members from Nipapanha, LASA members and working alongside our “Friends”. That night Annette and I enjoyed kangaroo tail and damper for our tea at ‘Angepena’.

On Monday we went to the wonderful Copley nursery and met Ron Johnston who created the nursery. We were joined by LASA friends Gerry, Lara and John who were heading south. Annette and I enjoyed some peaceful days at Balcanoona before the Friends’ water monitoring team arrived on the Thursday 7th September.



Annette Vincent, Dr. Susan Close



Annette Vincent, Ranger Sunni and Helen Johnson.

Photos: - Gathering – Russell Chaffey, Meals – Annette Vincent, Big Moro Waterhole – Greg Cramond, Community& Ranger group – Lara Tilbrook. Vincent & Close and Friends & Ranger - Annette Vincent.

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Friend's Park Visits 2024

Weetootla Water & Fish Monitoring

Fri 19 to Fri 26 April 2024

Sat 24 Aug to Sat 31 Aug 2024

Balcanoona Revegetation Project

Fri 26 April to Fri 3 May 2024

Sat 17 Aug to Fri 24 Aug 2024

Contacts – Weetootla – Martin Caon – mcaon56@gmail.com

Balcanoona – Coordinator - position vacant.

New projects to be undertaken by the Friends group as approved at the Co-Management Board meeting at Hawker in February 2023 • Buffel grass control in Balcanoona Creek • Revegetation works at Weetootla Campground • Directional marker at the summit of a short walk near Balcanoona

Sept 7-14, 2023 Balcanoona Trip Report: Water and Fish Monitoring.

Martin Caon – mcaon56@gmail.com

Fifteen participants: Annette; Helen; Mike T; Rob G; Mark & Georgia; Chris K, Roger & Barbara (from Vic.); Simon & Genevieve (from Vic); Martin & Janet; Henry, Mike R; & Rob (from Vic.) attended the visit for part or all of the time, some of them after helping at the Nantawarrina 25th anniversary celebration. Each evening we held a de-briefing session where everyone had a turn at saying what they had been involved with during the day.

The Arkaroola and Northern Flinders Bird identification brochure was printed just before the trip so 10,000 brochures in 14 boxes were transported to Balcanoona. Many brochures were distributed at the Nantawarrina event and to Nipapanha and Iga Warta or left at: the Leigh Creek Library, Copley Bakery, Copley Community Garden, and Balcanoona Headquarters and at Arkaroola. It has been very well received and should be a good source of publicity for our Friends group. An electronic copy is available from the publications page on our website: <https://friendsofgammons.org.au/publications/>.

The Nepouie, Weetootla and Yuwanhinya springs were visited on the first three days and water samples taken and the fish were monitored. As was the case for the May visit, the extensive *Typha sp.* reed growth hampered easy access to water suitable for dip-netting so efforts at Nepouie were focussed on one large downstream pool to ascertain how many fish it might contain. It was pleasing to see the continued growth of River Red Gum saplings at all three places.

A notable occurrence was the presumed actions of fish-eating birds as evidenced by the many Yabbie claws left on the rocks adjacent to pools at Nepouie and the almost absence of fish in Weetootla's Lovely Pool. Our remote camera had photographed a Great Cormorant that had been in residence for about a month during which time we presume that it had been feeding on fish. There are Yabbies at Nepouie but not in Weetootla.

At Weetootla, we pulled out a few Tobacco Bush and Horehound, the latter seems to be increasing again. Salvation Jane and some Solanum/Nightshade were other weeds that we came across. The four remote cameras were re-supplied and one repositioned. Photos taken by the cameras may be viewed from the projects page of our website at: <https://friendsofgammons.org.au/wildlife-monitoring-with-remote-cameras/>

The morning visit to Munda/Lake Frome to service the two cameras there was warmish, so Central Bearded Dragons, Painted Dragons and Lake Eyre Dragons were seen enjoying the weather. There were a lot of scampering Dragons on the lake bed!



Lake Eyre Dragon (left), Central Bearded Dragon (right)

A major task for this visit was photographing (by Chris K) the flowers for our proposed Vulkathunha plants identification

booklet, the production of which is being managed by Greg K.

We found the exclosure alongside the road to Grindell's Hut that was intended to protect the Ashy-haired Swainson-pea (*Swainsona tephrotricha*) and it was performing that duty well. This *Swainsona* is regarded as "near threatened" but stable. During our day bushwalk – a slow walk due to the number of flowers to photograph – we found many *S. tephrotricha* growing north of Red Hill and doing very well there, and also many Whalenbergia flowers (Its Blue with 5 Petals). The two Victorian couples, instead walked the Oppaminda trail between Nudlamutana Hut and Arkaroola.



Photos: (left) Whalenbergia and (right) Swainsona.

Mike T was able to identify some Buffel Grass near the crossing of the Gas Pipeline Road and Balcanoona Creek and we await directions from Jesse and Sian on how we can help with this invasive weed.

Quandong fruit are ripe in early September, so some were harvested and cooked with apples for a well-appreciated addition to

breakfast or as dessert. And we kept the seed for propagating more Quandong. The presence of fruit on the *Santalum* made identifying them easier and so we found one alongside the road that we had driven past numerous times without noticing it. As well as quandong seed, seed from *Callitris*, *Hakea*, Ghost gum (?), *Iga*, and *Eremophila* was collected.

We were able to spend a day and a half doing some maintenance to the re-vegetation watering system at Balcanoona. Mark marshalled us so that all of the plants in Areas 1, 2 and 3 have had their drippers maintained, been fertilised and been watered. The recently planted stand of Balcanoona wattle were weeded and are all doing well. Jesse dug some additional holes for new plants using the backhoe – they will be ready for our next planting visit.

There is now an impressive Balcanoona Walks trailhead adjacent to "Area 1" that marks the start of walks to Echo Bend and to the Lookout Point above Balcanoona. Jesse and Sian have laid the concrete square for the foundation of the soon-to-be-built-by-Graeme stone cairn on which will be placed the directional toposcope.

On our way home we stopped at the Copley Community Garden (and there noticed our punctured rear tyre) to speak to Ron and to inspect the progress of his Citrus, Fig and Quandong plantings and the growth of their/our native seedlings. We gave him some more Quandong and Iga seed.

During our tour of the nearby Copley "Botanic Garden" Rosalie, the Adnyamathanha Language Coordinator at Leigh Creek Area School, phoned Ron and spoke to me (MC) as well. After praising our Bird Brochure, we exchanged email addresses and she has since advised me on Adnyamathanha names of birds and plants and we have sent her some photographs of birds and animals that she requires for language posters. In this way our connection with Copley and the LC Area School is being enhanced.

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Annual General Meeting.

Will be held at the
Fullarton Park Community Centre
on Friday 22nd March 2024.

GUEST SPEAKER - Mr. JASON IRVING



Jason is Director, National Parks Programs in the South Australian Department for Environment and Water.

He is managing the nomination of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage listing and oversaw the creation of the new Nilpena Ediacara National Park. He is chair of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board and a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas.

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Email to the Editor.

Hello Graeme,

This is a very professional and interesting Newsletter No 26. I congratulate everyone who contributed and who achieved good work. I feel hopelessly inadequate when I read of the achievements that so few people are making. It gives me a lot of joy to see what has been achieved and the aspirations of members of your group. You all must be feeling very proud. And I am sure that the environment is going to show us some good progress.

When we look back, it is amazing that so few can make such a difference. I am always supportive of your efforts, although from a distance and increasing age!!

My kindest regards,

Dene Cordes Patron.

7 August 2023.



Bird Brochure. The Friends received grant funding through SAAL Grassroots program to produce a brochure of the many birds found in and around the VGRNP. Chris Kirby compiled the brochure and snapped most of the photos. Additional photographers were members, Jan Hutchinson, Garry Trethewey, and Georgia Darter. It was professionally designed by Janet Stone. Arkaroola Sanctuary added funding to print a further 5000. Hence 10,000 copies have been printed, 5000 for Arkaroola and 5000 for us to distribute. A digital copy is on our website at [\(friendsofgammons.org.au\)](http://Home - Friends of Vulkathunha (friendsofgammons.org.au))

See the story published in "Across the Outback" December 2023 issue (the magazine of Landscape South Australia: SA Arid Lands). [Across the outback - SAAL e-Bulletin \(createsend.com\)](#) and here [New bird watchers guide... | Landscape South Australia - SA Arid Lands](#) and here [Landscape South Australia - SA Arid Lands | Birds of the...](#) The digital online version is the 2nd edition which includes the SAAL logo, some updated Adnyamathanha spelling of bird names provided by Rosalie Richards of Leigh Creek Area School. This version

is currently with the Printer where a further 10,000 copies will be printed.