



AGM REPORT

The Friend's 2024 AGM was again well attended, 26 members present. Our guest speaker was Jason Irving, Director; National Parks Programs in the South Australian Department for Environment and Water is managing the nomination of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage listing and oversaw the creation of the new Nilpena Ediacara National Park. Jason is also the chair of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board and a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas.

Jason's talked about the progress of the nomination of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage listing and the establishment and development of the Nilpena Ediacara National Park as its centrepiece.

Reports were presented by:-

Martin Caon reported on Weetootla Water & Fish Monitoring the immediate plans for near term goals. Publication on water quality submitted to SA Naturalist Journal. Another publication for Transactions of the Royal Society of SA is in planning/preparation,

Roger Mathers on the progress and future of the Re-vegetation of the Balcanoona Historic Prescient,

Chris Kirby talked about the success of the publication of a brochure on the birds of the northern Flinders Ranges and Arkaroola,

Julian Evanochko spoke to the plans for the Geology brochure and detailed progress the working group had achieved to date, Graeme Oats spoke about a plan to erect cairn during the August visit to the Park with help of stonemason and showed a model of the toposcope,

Chris Kirby reported on the production of a Plants of Vulkathunha Identification booklet and the progress of photographs being collected for this publication, Graeme spoke Report on the plant label project and presented examples of plant labels.



PARK VISITS

Balcanoona Revegetation 18-25th August

▪ Contact Roger Mathers – roger_mathers@yahoo.com (note underscore)

Weetootla Monitoring 25th August – 1st September.

▪ Contact Martin Caon – mcaon56@gmail.com

SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITITON GROUP
VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES SCIENTIFIC PROJECT – UPDATE



Plateau Pluvio temporary logger being installed

Following the 2023 pre-Christmas bushfire in the Gammons, the Plateau Pluvio has stopped reporting. A visit to site during ANZAC weekend showed that the plateau Pluviometer was undamaged, but the solar panels and transmission gear are burnt beyond repair. The actual logger box containing data loggers, modems and solar regulators, was protected by a Heat Shield designed and built by SEG member, John Love. This gear has escaped damage.

In order to carry out repairs and rebuild, the logger box will be returned to Adelaide probably after our next visit in August. In the meantime and until the telemetry link is re-established and to ensure no loss of rainfall data, Graham Blair has arranged for temporary data loggers to be installed alongside the Pluviometer. They will collect and store rainfall data which will be recovered by the team on their next visit.



Solar panels destroyed, but the Heat Shield has protected valuable data loggers and modem

When the logger box and modem have been rebuilt, all new gear will be carried up to the Plateau (involving a 5-hour walk each way) and new wiring installed to replace burnt items. Once that is done The Plateau rainfall site will be back on the rainfall map!

Lead-acid batteries used to power loggers and modem, have a 5-year life. Therefore we will replace all batteries in October this year. Involving a lot of effort carrying in new batteries and carrying out the old ones!! In addition to the above, TELSTRA which operates the mobile network, advises that the 3G network will be replaced by 4G at the end of June 2024. We don't know whether 4G will give coverage, particularly to the Plateau site.

Christopher Wright
Scientific Expedition Group Inc.



The burnt out Plateau will take many years to recover



8th Dec 2023, The **IN Daily** website The CFS reported a fire today at Vulkathunha- Gammon Ranges National Park, near Leigh Creek. The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges fire near Leigh Creek has burnt approximately 12,000 hectares of National Park in "largely inaccessible terrain", the CFS said.

Plant Labels Project

As previously reported the Friends received a grant through the Friends of Parks Small Grants Program in 2023. A small group of members have produced a list of 65 species growing in and around the Balcanoona Historic Precinct, identifying the plant Adnyamathanha, Common and Scientific names. Several members of the revegetation team identified plants for labelling in the revegetated areas during the May visit to the Park.

Quotes were sort for the manufacture of the labels and a decision has been made to use a firm recommended by the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

Friend's members, Ray Hutchinson and Neil Hampton have kindly offered to make the 150 backing plate and stakes. We are hoping that they can be put in place during the August visit to Balcanoona.

Defibrillator (AED - automated external defibrillator)



Recently the SA Health Department through its Preventive Health SA program offered a grant towards the purchase of a defibrillator for not for profit groups. However their grants were only available for defibrillators that are fixed to building and the applicant had to own a building.

There is a defibrillator attached to the north wall of the Balcanoona Park office adjacent to the public telephone. This should not be taken from there as it is known to be there.

The Committee discussed the possibility of the purchase of a portable defibrillator for use by the group when away from Balcanoona, for example when monitoring the fish and water at the springs and other ventures away from Balcanoona.

Enquiries to other remote area Friend's groups have shown that Friends of Great Victoria Desert, Simpson Desert, Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and Mound Springs all have a portable defibrillator.

To assist the Committee we are seeking views from members. Should we invest in a portable defibrillator?

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FRIEND'S SOCIAL EVENT

In November 2023 the reveg team met at Belair National Park for a chat over a BBQ lunch. This proved very successful. The Committee has discussed whether a similar event could be held towards the end of this year for the wider Friends members.

Would you be interested in attending if such an event is arranged for November 2024?
Drop me an email at – gdoats@bigpond.net.au



THE TREE FROM OOCABOOLINA

Myoporum Montanum (Native Myrtle - Water bush - Western Boobialla – Adlyu)

In 2022 a specimen of the *Myoporum Montanum* had germinated at Oocaboolina after a summer thunderstorm in the area. The small creek west & north of hut flooded flowing across the small flood plain in which Oocaboolina is built. During the Friend's visit to site in May 2022 it had self-established adjacent to the verandah near the NE of the hut. It was around 12-15cm high.

I carefully removed it together with sufficient soil making sure that I captured all the root growth, put it in a large ice-cream container and brought it home. I carefully transplanted it into a 15cm pot and, fed it with Go Go Juice and Bush Tucker fertiliser.

In early 2023 I transplanted it into a 20cm pot and nurtured it. In May 2023 it was placed in its final resting place in the NE corner of the car park near the Shearer's Quarters at Balcanoona. It is watered by the drip irrigation system established by the Friends. In May 2024 this photo was taken by Roger Mathers who said it had thrived and was now around 1.5 metres.



Photo – May 2024



Photo – May 2023



Above right – flower and fruit of the *Myoporum Montanum*.

Trip Leader's Report:

Friends of Vulkathunha-GRNP water & fish monitoring expedition.

Friday 19th April to Friday 26th April, 2024.

Friday 19th April. On the way through Leigh Creek, we dropped off a box of bird brochures to the LC Library, and then some for the Copley bakery. We left 2 quandong seedlings with the bakery for planting. I will hope to see some growing the next time I am there. We also stopped at the Copley Community Garden to pick up a tray of seedlings for Balcanoona and to chat with Ron. One tray was all I had room in the car for. In return we gave Ron 2 Iga and a River Red gum. Along the southern edge of the Copley to Balcanoona road we were surprised to see 8-10 Slender-Bell Fruit trees growing – about 22 km east of Iga Warta - that had escaped our attention until then.

Martin, Angelo, Annette, Michael, Leslie, Roger B, Barb, Simon and Genevieve – the last 4 from Melbourne - made up the 9 expeditioners in April 2024, while potentially 5 others withdrew for a variety of reasons. We were very thankful for the energy and enthusiasm of the Melbourne Four. And for Angelo's great photographs for this report. Balcanoona has had some refurbishments: the Manager's rooms have had a facelift; there is a new toilet pan in one of the toilets; and a new outside BBQ should be there for our next visit.

Saturday, Sunday and Monday we hiked into the Nepouie, Yuwanhinya and Weetootla Springs respectively to monitor the water quality and to assess the fish population. Roger and Barb stayed at one location at both Nepouie and Weetootla to replicate the multiple passes with baited traps that was first tried in 2023 in order to gather data about the number of fish that might be present in particular pools. Simon and Genevieve operated the oxygen and the electrical conductivity meters and collected a water sample for analysis in Adelaide. For the first time since our monitoring began, there was no water at Hell's gate and at the 4th Weetootla location. Hence the fish that were there in September 2023 had perished. The last pool at Nepouie had been obviously browsed and trampled – perhaps by camels! As usual, we found fish of 2cm and smaller in length, indicating recent breeding.

Ranger Jesse and his wife Tina came with us to Yuwanhinya and helped fish. On our return to the Weetootla campground, we planted out about 2 dozen plants into the roped-off areas to improve the visual amenity of the place. These plants were watered on at least two separate days to hopefully give them a good start to their growing. Again we hope to see them grow over the next few years. Roger B took up the challenge of determining the depth of the Lovely Pool by swimming in it and plumbed the depth as between 4-5m deep.

Our trip to (Lake) Munda on Tuesday was both productive (we saw the Dragon and a Shield-snouted brown snake) and unproductive – we could not locate the remote cameras! (Perhaps they had become buried under the sand?). On returning to Balcanoona and on Thursday, we undertook some re-vegetation maintenance work. We watered all the areas; fertilised the plants in Areas, 1,2 and the Mound; planted all of the plants from the Copley CG into places where the existing plants had ceased to exist, using corflute tree guards; we adjusted all of the drippers and soaked the others in vinegar; we removed the mesh tree guards where they were no longer useful; we dug out between 20-30 holes ready for new plantings by the Revegetation Team who arrived on the afternoon that we left – thankfully, the backhoe had loosened the ground before we had to dig.



Lake Eyre Dragon on Munda

Wednesday was our bushwalk. Rather than walking north along the Mount McKinlay creek as I had planned, we scoped a walk suggested by Ranger Sian as a new one that they may develop. Commencing at Italowie campground we crossed the road and walked south past some old sheep yards then along a small creekbed up to an insurmountable waterfall. Instead of turning back, the group decided to keep going up a quite steep section to reach the summit shown in the photo. The views were spectacular. From the summit, we collected some Gum-barked Coolibah (*Eucalyptus intertexta*) seed. The descent was easier than the ascent, although there was no path. The walk finishes by following a closed vehicle track back to Italowie. Along the way we collected some Flinders Ranges Hakea (*Hakea ednieana*) seed. We recommended to Sian that the walk be undertaken in the reverse direction to the way we walked – that way, the scramble up the steep slope adjacent to the waterfall could be avoided.



Thursday afternoon we drove to Arkaroola for dinner and for the opening of Annette's exhibition of drawings. Arkaroola are upgrading their outdoor BBQ area, so that was closed, but the BBQ night was held in the restaurant instead. As usual, it was "all you can eat". However, two of our party would say that they need to get their vegetarian act together!

Left: The view towards Italowie from the top of our walk.



Left: Roger Burt in Lovely Pool.

Below: Slender Bell-fruit (*Codonocarpus pyramidalis*) trees along the edge of the Gammon Ranges Road. Twelve months ago, some *Codonocarpus* seed was been buried "in situ" in a pre-treatment attempt to promote their germination. The seed was retrieved and has now been sown and is awaiting Nature's attention.



Left: "Friends of" members at the launch of Annette's exhibition of drawings, opened by Doug Sprigg in the Greenwood lodge.

The following article recently appeared in the online Weekly Update distributed by the Friends of Parks.

Plantings grow at Balcanoona

In 1982, the lease of Balcanoona sheep station was purchased by National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia and added to the Gammon Ranges National Park. The station environment had been seriously degraded by land clearing and historic grazing and the park staff set about revegetating the area around the new park headquarters.

From 2017 to now, members of the Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park have planted around 650 seedlings around the entrance to the Park Headquarters at Balcanoona.

Since being granted a permit to collect seed from the park in 2019, most plants have been propagated by the Friends. The group are currently working on preparing labels for the plants with their Adnyamathanha name followed by common and then scientific name.



Left – 2017. Entry to Balcanoona Shearer’s Quarters near the NE corner of the building.

Below - Same location in 2023.



Big plant out in April / May 2024

Over the two weeks, around 140 tube-stocks were planted out Balcanoona and Weetootla, representing one of the largest re-veg planting efforts since our project commenced in 2018.

All the tube-stock were propagated by friends: Lynne, Barbara, Nicki, Graeme, Martin, Roger and Ron from Copley. Around 120 were planted out in Balcanoona and 20 at Weetootla Campground. The majority of plants were propagated from late 2022/early 2023, yet as two re-veg trips were cancelled in 2023, due to wet weather and illnesses amongst the re-veg team, we were at last able to get our back log of well-advanced plants into the soils of the Gammons.



Left: - Marg and Barbara checking some of the tube stock grown by Friends

Planting out

At Balcanoona, the major planting effort was in Area 3B, north of the Historic Shearers Quarters concrete base, using holes dug by Sian. The location of plants took into account the intended walk way for visitors

beginning at the concrete base, by the old water tank, through the creek and on to the trail head for the Balcanoona Ridge Walk located near the Mound area. All plants were fertilised, guarded up and irrigated. Some 15 tube stock replaced lost plants in other areas.



Pictures of the new plantings in Area 3B, west and north (provided by Richard Smith)

Maintenance and Irrigation

Friends during the first week undertook much of the essential maintenance work including the arduous task of cleaning, adjusting, replacing and matching drippers in several areas.

At the end of the two weeks, all drippers in all areas were cleaned and scrubbed using vinegar and the correct dripper top attached to the correct dripper base. The drippers purchased in 2023, replacing those used since the commencement of the project, were found to have a poor adjustment standard. The supplier has been informed of this performance issue; we are trying to source the earlier dripper.

All plants fertilised, mounds checked and re-mounded as needed.

For Area 1, the current irrigation arrangement is not able to provide a reliable water supply to each of the large number of plants now in place. An additional parallel 25mm header will be installed to support 50% of the plants; such an arrangement is already in place in Area 2.

For the remaining section of Area 3B, all holes have been dug with irrigation infrastructure in place ready for planting out. For Area 4, the irrigation setup is in place to support the future planting program.

Seed collection

Seeds were collected from over 20 different species, most collected from around Balcanoona, walks in Weetootla and off the Copley Road. They included Vulami warta/Ruby Saltbush, Vinba/Native Pine, Vada/Dead Finish and Virnba/White Cypress-Pine. Cuttings from Adlya/Native Myrtle and seeds from Urti /Quandong were given to Ron at Copley.

A complete list of seeds collected has been collated for consideration by the re-veg team in propagating for 2025 plantings.

Roger Mathers 10.6.24.