

FRIENDS of VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK Inc.

NEWSLETTER No.31

DECEMBER 2024

Edited by Graeme Oats

Photo taken on 25th April 2021 by the upper remote camera above Lovely Pool – Weetootla Spring

Merry Christmas to you all and thanks for your support during 2024. We look forward to catching up in 2025.

Martin, Nicki, Graeme, Mike & Dennis - Friend's Committee

Four visits (so far) are planned to Vulkathunha GRNP in 2025.

You may choose any number of visits to attend if you are joining a working group to the Park in 2025. Just let the organiser know your intentions.

- **Balcanoona for monitoring of Fish and Water Quality** will be in April (**Wed 23 to Wed 30**), and in September (**Tues 9 to Tues 16**). Contact Martin (m.caon56@gmail.com) to express your interest.
- **Balcanoona re-vegetation** will be in June (**Sunday 8 to Sunday 15**), and in August (**Sunday 17 to Sunday 24**). Contact Roger (roger_mathers@yahoo.com) to express your interest.
- **Idninha Outstation Renovation**, it is likely that the Friends will visit and camp alongside the Outstation in 2025 to begin its renovation. The dates will be announced in early 2025. Email Dennis (dennisjury1@gmail.com) to join the team.



Idninha Outstation

Idninha – May 2018 – Photo G. Oats

The Friends are recognised as experts



The Friends have been invited by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, established under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (which provides advice to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Tanya Plibersek), to comment on their “draft assessment of *Mogurnda clivicola* (Flinders Range Mogurnda) for transfer from Vulnerable to Endangered.”

The Flinders Range Mogurnda is currently listed as a Vulnerable species and it seems likely to be uplisted to “Endangered” (from there it goes to “Critically Endangered”, then “Extinct in the Wild”, then “Extinct”)

This is because they recognise our “relevant expertise with this or similar species, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee is particularly interested in your views on the draft conservation advice and answers to the related questions. The Committee would also be interested in any additional information that you believe might assist in its deliberations.”

If you are interested, the draft conservation advice, as well as related questions for this species, can be downloaded from the department’s website at: <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/species-listing-eligibility-and-conservation-actions-mogurnda-clivicola-flinders-ranges-mogurnda>

Martin Caon



Left: - Dragon Lizard, Weetootla Campground, right, fish in net.

Photos by Martin Caon.

Potential new environmental projects for the Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park.

Committee Members of the Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park (FoV-GRNP) met with DEW staff in September to discuss current environmental monitoring projects and possible new ones that members of the FoV-GRNP might be able to assist with in the future.

The following provides a summary of project ideas discussed, including some existing ones, so please let us know if you are interested in getting involved, and any skills or expertise you may have to offer to specific projects, via email to the FoV-GRNP Secretary, Dennis Jury at: dennisjury1@gmail.com

Rob Brandle DEW Senior Ecologist, Outback Region will be developing plans for these project activities over coming months, including staff resourcing and how the FoV-GRNP can assist in their delivery.

Monitoring of endangered plants and browse activity at key sites

- Target species to include Balcanoona Wattle and Slender Bellfruit
- Browse assessments to be undertaken using standardised methods to document the impact of herbivores and specifically goats over the next 3 years.
- Autumn ideal time for monitoring browse impacts.
- Would involve a small team of people to work on different indicator species to increase efficiency of monitoring.
- Would require a couple of people with knowledge of plant identification to lead the project but others could be involved in browse measurements or as scribes recording the data.

Frequency: Annual

If you are interested in leading or participating in this project, please email Dennis Jury.



Far Left: Slender Bellfruit
Codonocarpus pyramidalis
Left: Balcanoona Wattle
Acacia araneosa

Fish and water quality monitoring – Ikara/Flinders and VGR National Parks

- Members of the FoV-GRNP have regularly monitored the Flinders Ranges Mogurnda (*Mogurnda clivicola*) and water quality at key springs in Weetootla Gorge and Nepouie since 2017.
- These surveys are important for the long-term conservation of the species and have resulted in the publication of scientific papers that are accessible on the [FoV-GRNP website](#).

- Our surveys are conducted under a DEW Scientific Permit and Animal Ethics Licence.
- Members of the FoV-GRNP were involved in the translocation of Flinders Ranges Mogurnda to Yappala IPA near Hawker and Bunyerroo Gorge in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park in 2023.
- Opportunity for members to assist with follow-up monitoring of translocated Flinders Ranges Mogurnda in late January 2025.
- Monitoring aims to develop population estimates for the translocation sites with some DNA sampling to determine the degree of genetic bottlenecking.
- May need to undertake further translocations from Weetootla/Nepouie in the future to increase genetic variation.

Frequency: Annual

Contact Martin Caon for further information about this project: m.caon56@gmail.com



Left: Friends of V-GRNP monitoring Flinders Ranges Mogurnda in Weetootla Gorge.

Opportunistic bird surveys at biological survey sites throughout V-GRNP

- A number of biological surveys have been conducted across the Park and neighbouring properties over the past three decades that provide important

information about the native vegetation and fauna that occur in the area.

- BirdLife Australia has identified the Gammon Ranges-Arkaroolla area as a [Key Biodiversity Area](#) due to its international significance for biodiversity.
- Chris Kirby and other members of the FoV-GRNP have produced a bird identification brochure that has proven very popular with local communities and visitors to the Park and surrounding areas and are available for download on the [FoV-GRNP website](#) along with further information about birds seen in the Park from 2000 to 2023.
- We are seeking members with an interest in birds and skills in their identification to conduct repeat surveys at established biological survey sites throughout the Park to increase knowledge of changes in species diversity and abundance over time.
- Surveys would involve standardised 20-minute 2Ha search with data entered via the Survey 123 app which sends data direct to the Biological Database of SA.
- Surveys at key sites could be staggered over time/years on a rotational basis.

Frequency: Annual/Biannual

If you are interested in leading or participating in this project, please email Dennis Jury.

Remote Camera Monitoring

- Camera 'traps' are being increasingly used to monitor fauna and determine the distribution and abundance key species in ecological projects throughout Australia.
- DEW are moving towards a continuous camera monitoring framework for detecting medium to large fauna in all of the major Parks within the Bounceback footprint with at least 50 cameras in each Park.
- Regular maintenance checks are needed to replace batteries and change SD cards.
- FoV-GRNP could assist rangers with this as part of our regular field trips once or twice per year and contribute to the image analyses and data basing process.
- Further training would be provided on how to get images from the FoV-GRNP remote cameras into the Bounceback Database to ensure data is processed consistently.
- The FoV-GRNP currently have 3 remote cameras located at springs along Weetootla Creek and near Munda (Lake Frome) that might fit into the broader Park wide framework being developed.

Frequency: 1-2 times/year; specifics including number of days required to be confirmed in conjunction with Rob Brandle and Sian Johnson.

If you are interested in leading or participating in this project, please email Dennis Jury.

Quoll trapping/monitoring

- Western Quolls or Idnya were reintroduced to V-GRNP in 2022 as part of the Bounceback program in partnership with the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species Ltd. and Australian Government Landcare Program.
- Regular monitoring is organised and led by Tali Moyle DEW Reintroduction Ecologist.
- Annual trapping is conducted to monitor the Quoll population and there may be opportunities for a few members to assist with future trapping events if required.
- Would involve camping out or possibly staying at Grindell's Hut.

Frequency: Annual

If you are interested in assisting with this project, please email Dennis Jury.

Strategic weed control (Buffel grass, Tobacco bush, Horehound).

Buffel Grass

- Buffel Grass is a highly invasive grass that has recently been listed as a Weed of National Significance.
- There is a large infestation of Buffel Grass along Gas Pipeline Road out towards Lake Frome where it is starting to spread up the Balcanoona Creek.
- Discussions have included how best to prevent the further spread of Buffel Grass including a trial to remove from ~10metres either side of the road or alternatively to tackle the problem at the weed front in Balcanoona Creek to prevent its further spread.
- Due to the extent of the infestation, it will require application of herbicide and use of a contractor to conduct the initial control efforts.

- Members of the FoV-GRNP could assist with follow-up control once they have completed DEW training in the safe use and application of herbicides for weed control.

Frequency: TBC

Contact Mike Tanner for further information about the Buffel Grass control work:

miketanner1@bigpond.com

Horehound & Tobacco Bush

- The FoV-GRNP have also conducted targeted control of Horehound *Marrubium vulgare* and Tobacco Bush *Nicotiana glauca* in Weetootla Gorge since 2017.
- Horehound has mostly been removed by hand after removing any seed heads present and taken away for disposal/burning.
- Tobacco Bush is being controlled using the cut and swab technique using a 1:5 solution of “water friendly” glyphosate after removing flowering stems and seed heads and taken away for disposal/burning.
- Important for the FoV-GRNP to reinspect key areas each year and remove any additional plants observed.

Frequency: Annual

If you are interested in participating in this project, please email Dennis Jury.



Left: Friends of V-GRNP searching for Tobacco Bush infestations in Weetootla Gorge.

Vegetation Photopoints & Monitoring across V-GRNP

- Permanent vegetation monitoring sites have been established in a range of vegetation communities across V-GRNP as part of the Land Condition Assessment completed in 1999.
- A Vegetation Monitoring Manual was compiled that includes monitoring data and photos from previous surveys that is currently held at the DEW office in Port Augusta.
- These sites were last surveyed back in 2010 by Nicki de Preu when she was the Regional Ecologist so would be useful to commence site revisits on a rotational basis every 3 to 5 years.
- Will utilise the Native Vegetation Council’s Rangelands Assessment Method to survey vegetation and condition of sites.
- Members with skills in plant identification or an interest in learning more about native vegetation could assist with this project.

Frequency: Annual – surveys staggered over time/years.

Contact Nicki de Preu for further information about the vegetation monitoring project:

nickidepreu@gmail.com

Assist with Cat Baiting Program

- Feral cats are a major threat to native fauna across Australia.
- Through the Bounceback program DEW have reduced feral cats using broad scale baiting with Eradicat baits.
- DEW currently conduct aerial and ground baiting along tracks in May each year with some additional ground baiting along tracks through the year when increased numbers of feral cats are observed on the remote camera network.
- FoV-GRNP members may be able to assist with distribution of Eradicat baits along walking trails and major watercourses to enhance the cat baiting program.
- Training would be needed in the safe handling and distribution of Eradicat baits and DEW would provide all the necessary PPE.

Frequency: Annual/Biannual TBC

If you are interested in participating in this project, please email Dennis Jury.

Nicki de Preu

IDNINHA: - (Shown as Yadrina on 1984 topographic maps) located approximately 55 kms from Copley-Balcanoona Road via Mt Serle, Owieandana.



Native Broccoli and Fruit Salad Plants

What is it with the common names of Australian and Vulkathunha plants using “native” and then the name of some green grocer’s fruit? All Australian indigenous plants are native! There is the Iga tree being called the “native orange” even though it doesn’t look, taste or have the same colour as an orange. It is not even edible, but part of the Caper Family..

Then there is the perfectly adequately named Quandong which some people seem to want to call the “native peach”. Again it doesn’t look, taste or have the same colour as a peach. Nor is it even in the same genus or family as a peach, although this time it is edible. Perhaps it is thought that by calling Iga a “native orange” some sort of information is being conveyed. In fact what is being conveyed is disinformation. If you don’t know what an Iga is, the best way of knowing is for someone to show you an Iga tree and to tell you the name. This is just the same way that you once learnt what a peach was.

The “native banana” bears no visual or taste resemblance to a banana. Calling it a “banana” is no help in understanding what it is. What it is is *Marsdenia australis*. Let’s call it Marsdenia, or its Adnyamathanha name which is Maiaka or Nandi.

Then there is the “native cherry”. OK, I grant that *Exocarpos cupressiformis* is difficult to say, but cherry ballart isn’t.

Santalum lanceolatum is the “native plum” when it should be plum bush or the more preferable Manawarra.

“Native apricot” is used for *Pittosporum augustifolium* when everyone can say Pittosporum (or Matu in Adnyamathanha).

Solanum simile is called the “Kangaroo apple” when it should be named the native mandarin (ahahaha... 😊 .just kidding). Do Kangaroos eat it? Oondooroo is another of its (better) common names.

There is a “potato bush” aka “bush tomato” (*Solanum ellipticum*) that doesn’t grow potatoes, tomatoes or any toes. However in this case the delicious greengrocer tomatoes actually are in the genus Solanum.

Thankfully there is no such thing as “native broccoli”, but inexplicably there is wild parsnip! *Trachymene glaucifolia* (call it whatever you want except parsnip!) and even a plant called native carrot (*Daucus glochidiatus*).

As an exercise, see if you can match the fruit (labelled A to H) with the images of the 8 plants (numbered 1-8), foolishly named after their edible alter egos.

Martin Caon.

Native Plants

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



Green Grocer's Fruits

A. Cherry



B. Orange



C. Apple



D. Plum



E. Banana



F. Parsnip



G. Peach



H. Apricot

