

FRIENDS of the GREAT VICTORIA DESERT PARKS

Newsletter Number 38, August 2010

2010 Friends of Parks Stony Deserts Forum - Woomera 20-22 August.

This year's forum was hosted by Friends of Arid Recovery and Friends of Mound Springs and called the 'Stony Deserts Forum'. These groups were assisted by an Adelaide based steering committee chaired by Lesley Hunkin. The venue was the comfortable Eldo Hotel at Woomera where a variety of accommodation was available and where the meals were wonderful. Some folks also stayed at the nearby Caravan park.

Friends of the Great Victoria Desert parks were represented by half a dozen or so members.

A variety of high quality speakers provided an insight into the Social History of Woomera; the background to the Strategic Defence Role of the Woomera test range; Aboriginal pre-history and history in this region; Natural History of the Far North; The Arid Recovery Program and the Mound Springs including the challenges being faced in managing the waters of the Great Artesian Basin. Saturday evening keynote speaker John Read provided an entertaining yet deadly serious presentation entitled *Ecological Adventures in the Outback* with particular reference to the impact on native fauna posed by feral cats.

Forum excursions provided for delegates were to Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam site, to the Woomera township and Test Range and to Andamooka.

Unfortunately a planned post-forum day trip to the Mound Springs and Arid Recovery Centre were not possible due to rain making the roads impassable. The spirits of the delegates were not dampened however and a day trip to Coober Pedy was organised and enjoyed by all.



Dinner guest, our forum mascot

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Woomera Test Range.

We were very fortunate to be able to visit the Woomera Test Range as in recent years use being made by this facility by Australian and overseas researchers has increased dramatically and following our tour, public tours will be suspended.



The Woomera test range was founded on 1 April 1947 as a rocket and missile test range under the Anglo-Australia Project. This project was born out of the need to counter rapid advances in rocket and missile technology following the end of the Second World War. During its thirty years of life, and through the height of the 'Cold War' period, Woomera was one of the western world's most secret bases.

The Range is in the northwest of the state of South Australia and is about 127,000 square kilometres in area (about 12.7 million hectares). It's southeastern

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Secretary: Gordon Smith 08 8556 2308

Treasurer: Ross Mathews, 9 Harrow Road, ST. PETERS 5069 S.AUST.

Membership fees are \$25 annually, due on 1st January each year.

Newsletter Editor: Jan Forrest OAM - forrestjan@adam.com.au

Articles for newsletter may be posted to Editor, Friends of the Great Victoria Desert, C/- South Australian Museum, North Terrace, ADELAIDE, 5000

Meetings: three meetings are held annually in the Camden Community Centre, 7 Carlisle Street, CAMDEN PARK.

Webmasters: Bill Dowling arbill@internode.on.net and Fiona O'Connor www.fgvd.org.au

Our book: 'Field Guide to Shrubs and Trees of the Great Victoria Desert' may be obtained from Doug Smith 08 8268 4625



corner is located some 400 kilometres NNW of Adelaide. It is located on a stony plateau which is very old geologically, composed of Pre-Cambrian rock (called gibber stones) and red salty clay. Most of the time the ground is hard and dry, but after rain, the clay becomes very sticky. Generally, as little as 4mm of rain will render the unsealed roads impassable. The red sand hills are covered with various types of native vegetation such as She-Oak, native pines and mulga. Numerous salt lakes (usually dry) are also located in the surrounding areas.

At the height of the Anglo-Australia project (1953-1972 the Woomera population peaked at over 7000. Between 1977 and 1999 the range itself saw little activity. However the US Air Force established the Nurrungar Joint Tracking Station 18km south thus sustaining the critical village infrastructure for the next 30 years.

In 1999 the USAF left and the RAAF took over operational command of Range Operations. Since that time the operational tempo at Woomera has soared. Along with the continued testing of current and new war-fighting systems, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided further focus to the unique capabilities of the Woomera Test Range to support the Australian warfighter. Today, between 60 and 100 major trials activities are conducted at the range each year. The airfield is once again in almost constant daily use, and around 2500 trials personnel transit through the Range requiring around 30,000 bed nights each year. The Woomera Test Range has thus entered a new era in its illustrious history.

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Left column: Launch facility on the edge of Lake Hart
 Right column: Top (2): Lake Hart Usually dry, however the 2010 rains have filled the lake and attracted many birds.
 Above: inside the Command Centre of the Woomera Test Range.

Photos: Jan Forrest

The name 'Woomera' is an Australian Aboriginal word from the Eora people, who were the original inhabitants of the Sydney area, from a spear-throwing device described as "the most efficient spear-throwing device ever". Like the Woomera Test Range, it is an enabling device that allows a spear to travel much further than with arm strength alone. The woomera is still used today in some remote areas of Australia. The name 'woomera' therefore is an apt name for Australia's national/international air, space and land test and evaluation facility. The unit's motto of 'sharpen the spear' therefore alludes to the enabling role of the capability in enhancing the operational capabilities of the Australian warfighter.

Andamooka

The visit to Andamooka by delegates was a great experience especially seeing the fantastic display of Sturt Desert Peas and other plants on a sand dune close by the town and the historic cottages in the main street.



LAKE EYRE: Are you interested in visiting Lake Eyre in the next couple of months either as a 'tag along' in your own vehicle or as a passenger? If so contact Jan Forrest 82978230. If you have been to Lake Eyre recently and can provide information in your experience, Jan would also be interested in talking to you.

Cooper Pedy

The day trip to Cooper Pedy was a long day on the bus however a visit to Umoona Opal Mine and Museum made the trip worthwhile see below and the view from the top of the nearby hill (photos Jan Forrest).



ARID RECOVERY RESERVE

Arid Recovery is based at Olympic Dam, 550km north of Adelaide and the reserve is located 22km from the Roxby Downs Visitor Information Centre. Arid Recovery is dedicated to the restoration of Australia's arid lands. The centre is a 123 square km fenced enclosure. Feral cats, rabbits and foxes have been removed from 60 square km of the area leaving some areas as control areas and others which are currently being made feral free.



The project was initiated in 1997 and now provides areas of complete protection allowing the regeneration of native vegetation and the re-introduction of four locally extinct mammals (greater bilby, burrowing bettong, stick-nest rat and western barred bandicoot).

Book at tour of the complex (bookings are essential) by contacting the Visitor Information Centre 08 86712001. Start times may vary according to sunset times. Group and day time tours can be arranged on application.

Tours require a minimum of two people and to maximise everyone's experience are restricted to a maximum of ten people although group bookings which may include more than 10 and up to 50 people can be made by special arrangement.

When at the reserve visitors will be escorted on a 1km walk throughout a range of outback habitats to the viewing platform where on most nights visitors will catch a spectacular outback sunset before returning to the main car park and to the nocturnal hide.

The reserve tour takes around 2.5hrs on site.

Friends of Mound Springs.

Friends of Mound Springs was established in 2006 to support the conservation and management of the mound springs of Far North South Australia which are part of the artesian springs of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB).

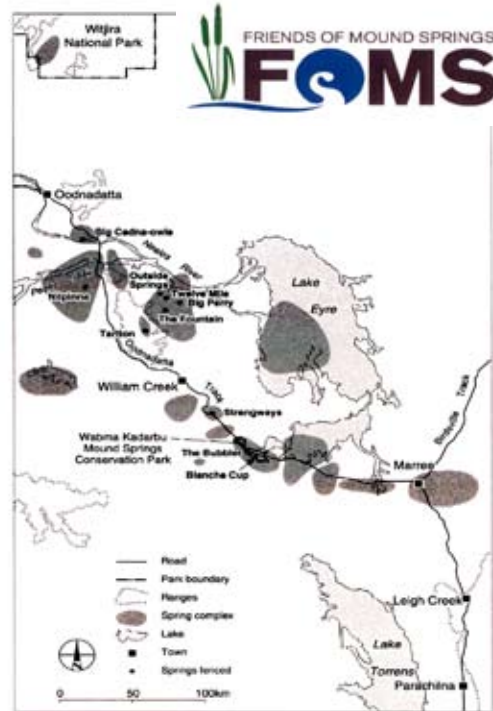
The GAB underlies 22% of Australia and is one of the largest groundwater basins in the world. Natural discharge from the GAB occurs around its margins where confining beds are thin and through fractures from faulting and folding elsewhere in the Basin.

It is estimated there are approximately 5000 individual mound springs in the Far North of SA. As virtual oases in the desert, the springs were, and still are, of vital importance to Indigenous people and support a range of endemic plant and animal species of enormous conservation significance. They provided essential water supplies for early explorers and settlers and were instrumental in guiding the routes of the Overland Telegraph line and the Ghan railway in the late nineteenth century.

Since bores were first sunk into the GAB over one hundred years ago it is estimated that natural flows to these springs have declined by 30%. There have also been impacts from stock and pest plants and animals. A number of programs are now in place to address such impacts and the Friends of mound Springs group is playing its part in this process.

Information on this group may be obtained from Colin Harris 8331 3571 or Simon Lewis 8272 8496.

If you are interested in joining the annual subscription is \$10 payable to Treasurer, Friends of Mound Springs, 10 Waratah Way, STONYFELL 5066 SA.



Mound Springs, Far North SA

Photos below Jan Forrest: The ‘Bubbler’ and ‘Blanche Cup’ Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park.



Friends of Great Victoria Desert Parks 2010 FIELD TRIPS

The first group, led by Peter Facy, were to carry out bird surveys, animal track surveys and photographing of existing DEH vegetation plots. The group planned to leave Ceduna on 22nd July travelling via Maralinga, Emu and Tallaringa and to finish in Coober Pedy on 4th August.

The second group, led by Phil Gaukroger, were to carry out new vegetation plot surveys between Maralinga and Emu and between Tallaringa Well and the Dog Fence on the Anne Beadell Highway. This group planned to leave Ceduna on 9th August travelling the same route, and to finish in Coober Pedy 21st August.

We look forward to hearing about these trips in the next newsletter and to see images of the work undertaken. If you took part please send images (as separate files) and information to the Newsletter Editor - forrestjan@adam.com.au.



SOCIAL OUTING TO THE ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On Sunday 27th June a group of approximately ten members met at the gallery for a special guided tour of the Australian Collection organised by Neville Hudson. The idea was to view representations of Australian landscapes, especially outback landscapes. We looked at colonial paintings, impressionist and modern paintings as well as superb examples of indigenous art. Our guide pointed out details and gave information about the artists. She was able to answer questions from members and invited them come again as the collection changes from time to time. After the tour, members met at the Hackney Hotel for lunch and an opportunity to chat about the exhibition and the forthcoming field trips to the GVD.

June and Neville Hudson

Kimba Forum 2011 'West of the Middlebacks' 27th Annual Friends of Parks Forum

Friday 2 September – Monday 5 September 2011

Kimba Soldiers' Memorial Hall, High Street, Kimba



Our program will kick off with a unique Friday night BBQ and welcoming presentation that can't be missed! Saturday and Sunday will follow the familiar theme of speakers in the morning followed by tours in the afternoon. Monday will be an all day tag-along tour to the northern side of Lake Gilles through pastoral lease property.

Kimba is on the northern edge of the agricultural area and has two large parks, Pinkawillinie Conservation Park and Lake Gilles Conservation Park within its district. We will be trying to feature their main attributes. Within a 20 – 50 km range is pastoral country that retains its natural vegetation.

The Forum dinner will be held in the Kimba Community Hotel. The evening's events will include the award presentations and guest speaker talking on the innovative "Middleback Alliance".

Forum speakers will cover topics such as: landscape evolution, life on salt lakes, Millennium Seed Project and bushfire research.

Afternoon tours at this stage include:

Buckleboo Stock Route

This 4WD tour explores the route travelled by early pastoralists to access the Gawler Ranges. It includes the magnificent granite outcrop of Corrobinnie Hill, the amazing water harvesting site at Peela Rocks and the 15 mile sand track through Pinkawillinie Conservation Park. Wild flowers, including *Hakea francisiana*, feature in the sand country.

Lake Gilles Conservation Park

This tour to the ENE of Kimba will feature the wide variety of vegetation in the park. This varies from samphire flats around the lake, open mallee, myall and bluebush with some granite hills mixed in as well.

Three Hills

This tour is to the south and west of Kimba. It includes the three major hills of Caralue Bluff (495 m), Carrapee Hill (490 m) and Darke Peak Range (445 m). All three stand out from the surrounding farm land and will include a wide range of wildflowers in spring. Native orchids are a feature at Carrapee in good seasons.

Town Tour

This tour will include Whites Knob lookout, the grain handling facilities, water reticulation, and the Big Galah. A visit to the highly regarded Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Museum will be a highlight with its pioneer house, one teacher school, general store, settler's house, restored machinery and engines and much more.

Secret Rocks

Once a valuable refuge for aboriginals, Edward John Eyre and early pastoralists, this former pastoral land is now being rehabilitated by feral animal and pest plant control and fire management. The new owners have also formed an alliance with the nearby graziers in the Middleback Range area and One Steel to extend their conservation effort. Flora and fauna will be the highlight of this tour.

See page 6 for 'Expression of Interest' Form.

**Kimba Forum 2011 West of the Middlebacks
27th Annual Friends of Parks Forum**

Friday 2 September – Monday 5 September 2011
Kimba Soldiers’ Memorial Hall, High Street, Kimba

Registration of Interest

We warmly invite you to express your interest in attending the 2011 Kimba Forum.
Please complete this form and forwarding it to us to receive direct communication about the Forum.
Post to: Mrs Susan Grund, PO Box 72, KIMBA SA 5641 or email to: susangrund@yahoo.com.au

**Kimba Forum 2011 West of the Middlebacks
Registration of Interest**

Please print

First name: Last name:

First name: Last name:

Postal address:

Email address:

Phone No: Mobile No:

Friends Group:


BAROSSA GOLDFIELDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY OPEN DAY
Sunday 26th September, 2010 from 9.30 am - 4.30pm

At Bowden’s Cottage, located 4km up Goldfields Road (see arrow on map).
Turn off the Williamstown Road onto Balmoral Road and next left onto Goldfields road. Approximately 15km from Gawler.

Gold Panning, Mining Displays, Local History and Descendants, Restored Settlers Cottage, Old Jail Cell, Guided Walks, Blacksmithing, Cross Cut Sawing, Wilfley Ore Sorting Table, Billy Tea and Damper, Bring a Picnic, Family Fun.

Cost: Adults \$5, Children (5-17yrs) \$3, Family \$14

Contact: Bob 0407 712 621



DIARY DATES

MEETINGS

NEXT MEETING: Friday 5th November 2010 7.30 at Camden Community Centre, 7 Carlisle Street, CAMDEN PARK at 7.30. The Agenda for the meeting will be available in the Members area of the Friends of the Great Victoria Desert website www.fgvd.org.au prior to the meeting.
Guest speaker will be Geoffrey Sandford who will talk about his trips through the GVD with Simon Coxon in 1981 and 1986. The presentation will include some of the early history of exploration and slides from a surveyor who was on the original survey of the trig network through Western Australia.

FOLLOWING MEETING DATE: to be advised

FIELD TRIP DATES: 2011 for discussion at next meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Neville Hudson	President	08 8556 6782
Gordon Smith	Secretary	08 8556 2308
Ross Mathews	Treasurer	
Doug Smith	Marketing	08 8268 4625
Jan Forrest OAM	Editor	08 8297 8230

WEB LINKS

DEH information on Mamungari Conservation Park:
<http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/mamungari/index.htm>

Friends of Great Victoria Desert: www.fgvd.org.au