

FRIENDS of the GREAT VICTORIA DESERT PARKS

Newsletter Number 43 December, 2012.

VEGETATION SURVEY REPORT – 2012 GOOGS TRACK TRIP

Fiona O'Connor Coordinator, Vegetation plots

It was great to return to Googs Track this year and revisit some of the sites (and sights) we saw in 2009.

The vegetation from Googs Lake north to Mt Finke and Tarcoola, west on the Jellbinna Track and east towards Nalara Rock is looking healthy, once again demonstrating survival skills in what appears to have been a drier year in that area than in 2009.

Highlights this year included seeing *Eucalyptus youngiana*, both cream and pink flowering at Nalara Rock and on the lower slopes of Mt Finke, the beautiful pink and green colouring of the *Maireana* species (food of the (sighted) scarlet chested parrot), a number of very healthy *Hakea francisiana* flowering alongside the track, and several *Eremophila* species in full bloom.

Members of the group were also fascinated by the mosses and lichen, particularly those growing on Nalara Rock that changed from dry to quite lush to dry again with the rain. We need to add some good books on mosses, lichen and fungi to the Friends' library.

Those who were on the 2009 trip will recall the delight of seeing large areas of wildflowers – everlasting daisies in particular – as we drove towards Mt Finke. This year the daisies were sparse and there was little evidence of there having mass flowering earlier in the season. The good news, of course, is that the seed bank of everlasting daisies in the sands, awaiting rain to germinate, means that in future we could well see another show to rival that of 2009.

We missed the flowers of a number of *Acacia* species, but were delighted by the Sennas displaying their beautiful bright green seedpods, indicating that they had experienced an excellent flowering season a month or so earlier.

An added aspect to this year's vegetation work was to look out for Buffel Grass. As members heard from Chris Brodie, Weeds Officer at the Herbarium at our November meeting, this aggressive African grass is spreading rapidly through some areas of outback South Australia, threatening native vegetation. While we spotted small areas of some common

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JOURNAL NOTES:**TRIP TO THE FLINDERS RANGES***Arlene Dowling and June Hudson.*

From May 21st to May 29th 2012, twenty-two members of Friends of the GVD attended a working party based at Oraparinna, working with Friends of the Flinders Ranges.

This trip was organised by Terri and Trevor Coleman, joint members of both Friends groups.

The planned tasks were;

- Removal of useless rails, posts – Yanyanna
- Transport of old rails to Oraparinna for BBQ
- Winding up fencing wire on yards - Yanyanna
- Cutting new rails in the Park
- Transporting rails to Yanyanna
- Shaping rails, drilling holes, wiring rails to posts – Yanyanna
- Care for the new trees and shrubs – Wilpena Shearers Quarters
- Fixing the roof of the Appealinna Miners' Dug Out.
- Spraying floors at Appealinna
- Data Base collection

The trip was well planned to include a good mix of tasks and learning about the country. There were several social events planned to ensure that both groups had time to get to know each other.

Attending from the GVD group were; David and Susan White, Brenda and Trevor Finney, Jan Forrest and Jo Wood, Helen and Peter Facy, Di and Paul Koch, Kathryn and Phil Gaukroger, Joan and Gary Vine, Neville and June Hudson, Arlene and Bill Dowling, Val and Ken Paget, TC and Terri Coleman.

GVD members camped in caravans, camper trailers and tents, with use of a huge shearing shed, porta-loo and a campfire ring and wood supplied by Parks.

Arriving Monday we were warmly welcomed to visit the very luxurious shearers quarters, built when Oraparinna was a working sheep station. There are two large rooms- a kitchen and lounge with a lovely wood fire. Also 8 dormitory rooms accommodating 4 people each, and two bathrooms. All facilities are very comfortable and well set up. This facility is used by the FOFR group when they have their monthly meetings and working groups.

Flinders President Tony Bott talked to the group about the pastoralist / mining history of the area. The Flinders Friends are very interested in this and have accomplished many projects over the years, eg. recently re-building a Guide Hut. Their website has more details. (www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au).

Tuesday; our first working day we divided into two groups. **Group A:** tree-fellers cutting large posts and rails with chainsaws for reconstruction of stockyards from a Callitris forest. Used loader, trailers, to transport wood.

Group B: Drove for about fifty minutes to Yanyanna Hut. Good policy established of smoko before work begins. Deconstruction of rotten posts and rails. Old wire removed and reclaimed. Rubbish picked up around carpark and Yanyanna Hut. Much old broken glass/tins etc. The Hut is still in use for walkers on Heysen Trail. BBQ dinner in shearing shed.

Wednesday; Both groups continued with tasks and construction of stockyards began. The GVD teams showed great strength and team-working abilities!

In the afternoon TC and Terri led GVD members back to Oraparinna via the Yanyanna-Elatina track and the main Blinman road; led us on locked tracks to see various ruins of early settlement, possibly the largest tree and the largest rabbit warren. Also the "Golden Spike" marking the Ediacaran fossil area near the Trezona campground. Happy Hour with Friends of Flinders. Much lively chatter, and probably a few tall stories.

Thursday; rainy and cold. Work abandoned for the day. Morning spent happily exploring Wilpena Shearers Quarters, Old Homestead and outbuildings with interesting interpretative signs. On to Appealinna Hut, where FOF have been working, accompanied by a descendant of the original Wills family, who is now a member of Friends of Flinders.

Lunch at Oraparinna, then a great drive on locked roads to the recently restored Guide Hut. Dusk and kangaroos appearing hastened us to the North Blinman Pub for an excellent meal. A slow drive home trying to avoid huge mobs of kangaroos.

Friday; Third group formed to begin work on shrubs and trees at Wilpena Shearers Quarters. These were planted some time ago, with irrigation drippers. The eucalypts are doing very well, other trees showing much slower progress. Removed some tree guards stunting growth. Lots of overgrowth of horehound and Ward's weed. Needed more hands and tools than we had available. Garden group managed a coffee at Wilpena Kiosk.

Meanwhile Stockyard fever was taking over! Back at the stockyards they continued with the heavy work of shaping and attaching rails to posts. The plan was to replace with "like for like" wherever possible. The tree cutters were pushed to keep up with rails as orders kept increasing, and one chainsaw was out of order. Rain ended work at about 3pm, one group home again via locked Wilcolo Track, enjoying some beautiful country.

By now the wet weather, leaking tents, cold etc. caused some GVD group members to move to the dormitory and others were camped inside the shearing shed. Joint washing up, levity and sharing chocolates followed by an early night.

Saturday; Rain. The decision was made to drive to Stockyards in the hope that the weather would improve out there. They managed to work so hard that the stockyards were nearly completed! Rain again stopped work late afternoon, so most of the group came back to enjoy watching football at the Shearers Quarters.

The Garden group waited out the rain in the very comfortable lounge room and enjoyed hearing some history of the Flinders Friends. Also discussed issues about Friends groups, such as constantly changing staff, differing priorities, history sometimes being lost. FOFR are developing a data base to collect information on the park to pass onto new staff. They also are now dealing with the very recent co-management development.

The Garden group returned to Wilpena to work again on removing tree guards, making double-height guards for the casuarinas, cleaning up the area and checking for breaks in

the irrigation. We were heartened to hear that another group was coming up in a weeks time to do some re-planting and maintenance tasks there.

Mal and Val Hansen arrived after driving from Oak Valley in two days to be with us. Mal was a ranger in the Flinders, and had planned some great drives for the next few days.

Sunday; a small group went out to the Stockyards to finish off, joined by the rest of the group for a celebratory group photo and lunch! We all drove through the Bunyerroo Valley to the Brachina Gorge Road. Interesting to see ancient pre-cambrian jellyfish, yellow-footed rock wallabies, the evidence of the meteor strike at Lake Acraman in the soil profiles at Aroona, and work done in the area by other groups, which Terri and TC had also attended.

After afternoon tea at the Aroona Campground we continued up and up eastwards to Red Hill where we had three hundred and sixty degree views of native pine covered valleys and hill. A group photo was taken at the top. We headed back to camp via the Blinman Road.

Monday; Of course, on the last day we enjoyed excellent sunny weather as we tagged- a-long with Mal and Val Hansen to other special areas of the ranges. In the morning we traversed some rough tracks towards The Bunkers and then a short walk to see the famous "Skull Rock" calcium carbonate deposit, known as tufa or travertine, near Mount Caernarvon. On the way back we checked out the remains of a calcite mine where there were large crystals ranging in colour from clear to opaque to various shades of green.

After lunch back at Oraparinna, we walked around the old wells and tanks at Mount Well and walked a little way up the Elatina Creek to look for Aboriginal art works in the overhanging caves. Our vehicles then chugged up to the top of Mount Sunderland for another view in all directions including Wilpena Pound, Rawnsley's Bluff and Patawerta Hill north of Blinman. Telstra coverage is available there so many members took the opportunity to make a call. More of our group left for home that evening and the rest dispersed the next morning.

In summary; helping another group with our skills and energy is very satisfying. It was a good activity for GVD members who may not come out to the desert and it was great to catch up with some long-term members we haven't seen for a while. Easy access to Adelaide and less planning needed in terms of catering, vehicle preparation etc. certainly makes for a more relaxed trip.

To enjoy a completely different landscape and culture and work on different projects with another Friends group was mutually beneficial.

Thanks again to TC and Terrie Coleman for their coordination of this combined working party at the Flinders Ranges National Park. Thanks to Friends of Flinders Ranges, and Sarah Franks, Liaison Ranger for your hospitality.

Thanks to Arlene and June for this article and my apologies for not including it in the last newsletter.

Jan Forrest Editor.



Dinner at the North Blinman Pub Thursday night.



REPORT GVD FIELD TRIP September 2012

Neil Matthews 2012 Trip Leader

OBJECTIVES

The planned objectives were to – 1. find and photograph existing photopoints 2. carry out complete vegetation surveys on three or four new one hectare quadrats 3. record bird species observed at waypointed sites and record opportunistic bird observations 4. conduct opportunistic reptile observations and plant specimen collection, including buffel grass 5. carry out Malleefowl track identification and monitoring and 6. have a pleasant time in the bush and enjoy the planned social activities.

ACTIVITY COODINATORS

1. Trip Leader - Neil Matthews
2. Logistics - Neil Matthews
3. Plot measuring and set up - Phil Gaukroger/Peter Facy
4. Vegetation leader -Fiona O'Connor
5. Birding leader - Elizabeth Lloyd
6. Malleefowl surveys leader - Neville Hudson
7. Culture and heritage - Phil Gaukroger
8. Social entrepreneurs - Kathryn Gaukroger/Rosemary & Gordon Smith
9. Photopoint photographers - Peter Facy/Neil Matthews
10. Vegetation samples photography -Lynne Murray-Walker

Although the persons above were responsible for the management of their respective activities, the work carried out was shared by the trip participants as a whole. Trip participants: Fred and Lynne Murray-Walker, Gordon and Rosemary Smith, Neil and Shelagh Matthews, Peter Facy, Jo Wood, Phil and Kathryn Gaukroger, John Harvey, Peter and Maureen Buckland, Fiona O'Connor, Elizabeth and Peter Lloyd, Geoff Rishworth, Johan van der Walt, Phil Prust and Neville and June Hudson.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

Sunday 2nd September. The group gathered at the Ceduna Hotel for a very pleasant get together meal, especially meeting Maureen and Peter, Johan, Jo, John and Geoff, who were joining their first trip.

Monday September 3rd. The group then met at the Ceduna foreshore for an OH&S introduction and then headed off to look at the old Telegraph Satellite Earth Station Observatory before heading to Googs Track. Googs Lakes was the first campsite where we were met by Nathan Williams from the Department and members of the Oak Valley community. Photopoints were photographed along the way. The chuppa chup wrapper challenge was won by Fiona O'Connor in a world record two seconds!!

Tuesday 4th at Googs Lakes. The first Vegetation Plot was surveyed. Then Neville and June Hudson, Rosemary and Gordon Smith and Geoff Rishworth accompanied Nathan and his crew for Malleefowl surveys. Birding surveys were also performed.

Wednesday 5th September. Travelled to Nalara Rock and setup second campsite. Explored Nalara Rock. Birding surveys conducted.

Thursday 6th at Nalara Rock. Visited Childara Rockhole and tank (permission granted by the Manager Lake Everard Station), and Lois Rock. Malleefowl and birding surveys conducted.

Friday 7th at Nalara Rock. The second Vegetation plot was surveyed. Birding surveys were conducted.

Saturday 8th. Travelled to Jellabina track and second campsite. The third vegetation plot was setup as well as performing birding surveys and photopoint photographs.

Sunday 9th at Jellabina Track. The third Vegetation plot was surveyed. Birding surveys were conducted and photopoints photographed.

Monday 10th at Jellabina Track. Rest day. Social activities were enjoyed. Scone bake-off was won by John Harvey with date and ginger delights!!! Ceremonial carving was won by Geoff Buckland.

Tuesday 11th. Travelled to Mt Finke for the fourth campsite. Malleefowl and birding surveys were conducted and photopoints photographed.

Wednesday 12th at Mt Finke. Mt Finke was climbed successfully. No Mt Finke grevillea seen in flower. Birding and Malleefowl surveys conducted. Photopoints photographed. Native plant art hangings won by Maureen Buckland. Unfortunately adverse weather conditions cancelled the social activities finale and the group dinner.

Thursday 13th. Travelled to Kingoonya where the trip concluded. Friendships acknowledged with fond farewells!!

ACHIEVEMENTS

We had some really great outcomes: 1. three vegetation quadrats surveyed (121 plants catalogued and photographed and specimens collected) 2. no weeds seen (incl buffel grass) 3. 27 photopoints found and photographed 4. some great bird sightings (including the shy heath wren - not listed as found in the GVD) 5. many malleefowl tracks waypointed 6. some lizards waypointed and photographed and 7. photographs taken during the trip shared.

CONCLUSION

We were especially pleased to spend some time with Nathan Williams (DEWNR) and the Oak Valley community members. They were expert at finding and following malleefowl tracks and using the cybertracker computers. We are excited to learn they would like to come with us again next year. Nathan especially was a big help. Thank you to the activity leaders who were such a great help in the planning process along with President Kevin O'Connor. Also thank you for help in logistics and organisation from members of the Department, including Ollanta Lipcer, Justine Graham, Brett Dalzell, Justin Jay, Helen Owens, Matt Ward and Adam Wood.

The most accolades are deserved by the participants group as a whole. Each and every member made their own unique contribution and resulted in the great outcomes. The achievements belong collectively to the group and have been forwarded to the Department who were extremely pleased to see the work done and the specimens and data presented to them.

I have digitally scanned all the vegetation and birding survey data and it is available to Members of Friends of GVD Parks upon request.

SOCIAL REPORT GOOG'S TRACK

Kathryn Gaukroger

An excellent dinner was held at the Ceduna Hotel on the Sunday night of the trip where old friends caught up and new ones were welcomed.

Following departure on Monday, the days all ended with the compulsory beer o'clock gathering despite some blustery and damp conditions on occasion.

There were a number of activities planned for this intrepid group, the most challenging being the "unwrap the chuppa chup competition" which Fiona won in exceptional time. What a granny she would be!

Many daily drives began with a chuppa to suck for sustenance and amusement. Some people had quite a collection by trip's end.

The "Princess Parrot Quiz" was distributed to all and the answers were amazing, unbelievable and incredible. The supreme winner was June, but sadly not one person was able to recall the 2nd verse of the National anthem. We are a bit shameful aren't we?

A real highlight was the "Scarlet Chested Parrot" competition where the men displayed their excellent skills preparing scones for all to sample. Awards were given for various categories but the clear winner was? Bugger, I forget! The delicious fare was shared at both morning and afternoon tea. More of this type of event should be encouraged!

Bocce was hilarious and competitors struggled in the conditions. Faced with foot traffic, hills and lumps on the track and foliage decorating the runway, all sorts of skills were needed to overcome the significant challenges this competition presented. Jo was exceptionally talented and Johan and Phil were the best of the boys, but all who gave it a go really enjoyed the fun and had a lot of laughs.

Rosemary prepared an excellent activity for the ladies which involved string and art. The most amazing and beautiful scenes and hangings were completed and displayed on Phil's 79 series for judging by the men. Superb work by Maureen was the winning entry, though there were allegations of bad language coming from the vicinity of her camp site! We left these delightful objects d'art decorating the camping area....and for many a traveller to wonder what the heck they were!!

Gordon had the men doing manly fire burning things and with wire and flame, and clapping sticks were lovingly decorated. Maybe Geoff went a little far when he got out his soldering iron, but the result was wonderful.

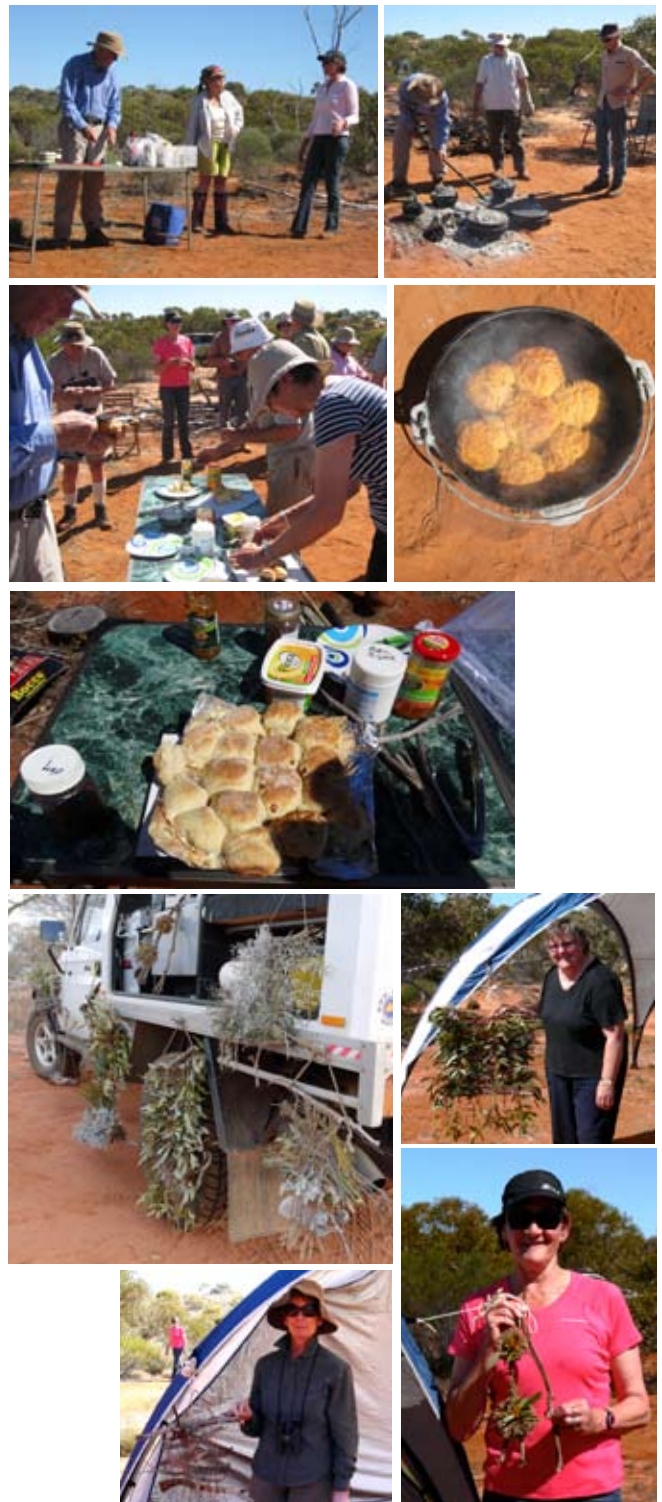
The last night saw the winners presented with their prizes by Lady President in the absence of her husband, the Right Honourable Mr Fingerless President. All the camping awards were also presented and no one could deny that the recipients well and truly deserved the award in their nominated category. I can see a few challenges coming on next year because it's going to be jolly hard to beat Elizabeth in the "Fashions on the Field" award!

Sadly the wild weather defeated me when it was Pizza night. The Friends group so wanted to thank you all for your superb contribution to our group and our trip. Sometimes we forget to say thank you to our volunteers and this was meant as a small gesture to show our earnest thanks Maybe next year.

Also forfeited was the chance for the Captain's Table dinner where we all joined a collective meal. Table decorations were expected for judging and this would have been the award night as well. The best laid plans don't always work out, but the intention was good!

I have neglected to say that there was quite some corruption and bribery going on at times, but the guilty parties should not be named and shamed because they might be reluctant to try it again next year!

I am sure all participants had a very happy trip. Good driving, wonderful scenery, excellent field work and fantastic people made for a very successful Goog's Track field trip in 2012.



MALLEE FOWL REPORT

Neville Hudson, Co-ordinator Mallee Fowl Survey Team 2012

During the 2012 Field Trip The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert survey group located the highest number of sites with fresh Malleefowl Footprints in ten years of survey.

A small group of people from The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks (FoGVD) 2012 Field Trip formed a Malleefowl Survey Team. They actively searched for evidence of Malleefowl, *Leipoa ocellata*, also known as Nganamara. The information collected is a contribution to the Nganamara in the Southern Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Region Program. This program has been gathering data and other information since 2003 and seeks to make an assessment of the abundance, distribution and habitat choice of these birds.

The FoGVD Malleefowl survey team was given a list of 24 sites of interest within the Yumbarra Conservation Park and Yellabinna Regional Reserve. Environment Department Officers had found an old Malleefowl nesting mound at several of these sites but footprints had only been found at 7 sites over a period of several years. Their best year was 2008 when fresh footprints were found at three different sites.

This year, 2012, our Malleefowl team located 11 sites where there were fresh footprints. This is the highest number of sites found during a single survey along Googs Track.

Environmental Officer, Nathan Williams from AWNRM Ceduna and a team of four people from the Oak Valley Community assisted with the survey. Nathan’s team worked with us on Tuesday 4th Sept; a hot and windy day. Nathan was an excellent leader and we admired the skills of the tracking team as they quickly picked out Nganamara footprints in the terrain and showed us how to use the cybertracking tracking machines. Two teams recorded animal and bird tracks while walking concurrently a 200 x 200 metre square and a 500 x 500 metre square. The information gathered will be added to the monitoring program’s data base.

It wasn’t pleasant in the field as the sand was blowing and it made driving over the sand dunes difficult. But all participants willingly contributed to the task.

Five members of the Friends of the Great Victoria Desert group accompanied the tracking team. We did not accompany the Oak Valley men at first to give them space and an opportunity gain confidence with us as team members. We watched them use the tracking devices but did not use them ourselves. During the day we surveyed six sites; AWMF013, AWMF014, AWMF015, AWMF016, AWMF017, & AWMF059. Evidence of Malleefowl was found at several of these sites. Details from the information gathered and recorded in the cybertrackers will be issued in a later report.

As we were returning that evening we found many Malleefowl footprints on the vehicle track. Ref. (GVD040912a). These tracks were less than an hour old as they were on top of vehicle tracks. We had observed a party of three 4WDs travelling north a short time earlier. Time did not permit a good search of the area but the position was recorded.

Nathan and his team left from Goog’s Track in the morning of Wednesday 5th.

Unfortunately we were not able to do any more tracking of the Malleefowl sites until Wednesday 12th September. We were obliged to stay with the rest of the FoGVD people as they completed vegetation and ornithological surveys at Nalara Rock and at the western end of the Jellibinna Track. It was not practical to drive from these places back to the Googs Track to survey Malleefowl sites.

A small party did survey two 10 km sections of the track near Nalara Rock at 10 kms per hour but found no tracks. However, when the main party returned to Googs Track from Nalara Rock, we found some very fresh Malleefowl tracks further east than had been previously recorded on this track. Ref. GVD120912a Photographs were taken and the position was noted.

We planned to carry out some surveys as we travelled in convoy to Mt Finke on Tuesday 11th September. However, the weather was again very unpleasant and it was not possible to spend time doing the formal Cybertracking surveys. One of the reasons we did not have time to carry out the cybertracking surveys was because we spent so much time stopping to record and photograph several places where Malleefowl footprints were found on the vehicle track. We found at 8 new sites. Ref. GVD110912a-h.

The whole FoGVD party camped at Mt Finke for two nights. The first opportunity for us to carry out a formal Cybertracker survey was on Wednesday 12th September when we made a visit to AWMF022 a site about 4 kms north of the northern track into Mt Finke.

This was the first and only time we attempted to use the Cybertrackers ourselves and it was quite a learning experience. Two FoGVD members took the a cybertracker and completed the 500m square while two members used a cybertracker for the 200m square.

Unfortunately we did not have another opportunity to learn from our experiences and carry out a further survey as the group decided to leave for home on Thursday 13th Sept. As we drove north on Thurs 13th we found an active malleefowl mound at Lat 30.85670 Long. 134.11375. Ref GVD130912a There were many footprints around the mound and new litter material had been scraped into the opening of the mound. Photographs were taken. Records indicate that this mound had been located by Robbie Sleep DEWNR Ceduna last spring.



Photos: active malleefowl nest on the edge of Googs Track.

Summary:

- It has been a great learning experience but the Malleefowl surveys were compromised by a need to stay with the group while they pursued other surveys. The travel distances required to leave the main



Photos: footprints and nest.

party, carry out a survey and return in one day was impractical. Inclement hot weather made it unwise to have participants walking long distances in the scrub.

- We were not able to use the tracking cybertracking devices as planned. We only had one opportunity to use them on our own but we did acquire a working knowledge of the machines and would be keen to use them in future Malleefowl surveys.
- Despite the limited opportunities to carry out the surveys the team found many new sites where there were Nganamara footprints and an active nesting mound.

Recommendations:

- It is suggested that the Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks Executive Committee and Field Trip Planners discuss the reasons why Malleefowl Monitoring Surveys should be included or excluded from future field trips.
- If Malleefowl surveys are to be part of the future field trip objectives it is recommended that the planning allows a dedicated malleefowl survey team to spend time pursuing known sites using the cybertracking and 200m and 500m square methodology.
- It is also suggested that Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks liaise AWNRM & DEWNR to establish a sound working relationship with their personnel and take advantage of their resources and possibly gain support funding.
- The surveys should follow the methodologies established by the AW Nganamara Monitoring Program.
- The involvement of members of the Oak Valley Community or other Indigenous groups is to be

encouraged.

- The Malleefowl Survey Team does not require a large number of participants and should be limited when including Indigenous participants.
- Cybertracking equipment should be used in coordination with Dr. Joe Benshemesh and his colleagues.
- To facilitate the success of future Malleefowl Surveys as part of a F of GVD Field Trip consideration should be given to establishing logistics which would allow the team to have more time (days) to carry out the surveys. This will require flexibility. It could be necessary to make unscheduled stops and even camps to follow up sightings.
- The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks could consider encouraging members to participate in Malleefowl Monitoring Programs in the Murray Mallee to improve knowledge and understanding of the bird and monitoring techniques.

Acknowledgements:

We are most grateful for the assistance given by following people who made the 2012 Malleefowl, (Nganamara) Survey such a success.

- Justine Graham; AWNRM Port Lincoln. Justine was very helpful in assisting with the liaison between Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks, DEWNR, AWNRM and Dr Joe Benshemesh
- Nathan Williams; AWNRM Ceduna Office and his team ; Aaron, Aaron, Linden and Lynton from the Oak Valley Community.
- Dr Joe Benshemesh; Malleefowl Monitoring and Recovery Program. Dr Benshemesh prepared the cyper trackers for the field trip and gave valuable advice.
- Dr. Matthew Ward; Acting Regional Manager- Natural Resources AWNRM. A primary coordinator of the Nganamara in the Southern Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Region Program
- Members of the Friends of GVD Parks Malleefowl Team: Geoff Rishworth, Gordon and Rosemary Smith, June and Neville Hudson. With a special mention to Phil Gaukroger who assisted with logging and mapping several of the sites.



top of Mt.Finke, Googs Track 2012

BIRD REPORT 2012 GOOGS TRACK

Our 2012 trip to Goog's Track was most rewarding. Despite some difficult birding weather - very windy at times - we were able to see 41 species of birds.

The target bird was the Scarlet-chested Parrot which was seen at the Nalara Rocks. We saw 2 males and 1 female perched on a dead tree in the glorious late afternoon sun, and then feeding on the ground. There was also a flyover sighting of 8 parrots. Although we searched hard, unfortunately not everyone saw these birds.

Also at Nalara Rocks we had multiple sightings of 24 Major Mitchell Cockatoos, flying over, feeding and roosting in nearby trees.

On the Jellabina Track, we were pleased to be able to add Shy Heathwren to the GVD bird list, I believe it was on the edge of its range. With all the unusual weather we have had over the last number of years a lot of birds are seen in out of range areas, or their range is extended. Is this due to climate change?

For many birds we only had one brief sighting even though we were always on the lookout for them. It seems Goog's Track is not rich in birds.

The participation rate in birding was excellent and a few people have asked about binoculars and bird books, all auspicious signs for the future.

Elizabeth Lloyd

Birds Seen

- Emu *Dromaius*
- Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*
- Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*
- Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*
- Common Bronzewing *Phaps chaoptera*
- Crested Pigeon *Oeyphaps laphotis*
- Galah *Cacatua leadbeateri*
- Australian Ringneck *Barnardius zonarius*
- Mulga Parrot *Psephotus varius*
- Scarlet-chested Parrot *Neophema splendida*
- Australian Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus*
- Variiegated Fairy-wren *Malarus leucopterus*
- Shy Heathwren *Hylacola cauta*
- Red-throat *Pyrrholaemus brunneus*
- Weebill *Smicornis brevirostris*
- Inland Thornbill *Acanthiza apicalis*
- Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza uropygialis*
- Spiney-cheeked Honey-eater *Acanthagenys rufogularis*
- Yellow-throated Miner *Manorina flavigula*
- Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus viresceus*
- Grey-fronted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus plumulus*
- White-fronted Honeyeater *Phylidonyris albifrons*
- Jacky Winter *Microeca fasciatus*
- Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii*
- Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*
- White-browed Babbler *Pomatostomas superciliosus*

- Chestnut Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma castanotus*
- Crested Bellbird *Oreica gutturalis*
- Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*
- Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*
- Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novae hollandiae*
- Dusky Wood Swallow *Artamus cynopterus*
- Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*
- Grey Currawong *Streptera versicolor*
- Australian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
- White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosternus*
- Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*
- Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*

BIRD JOTTINGS

Princess Parrots.

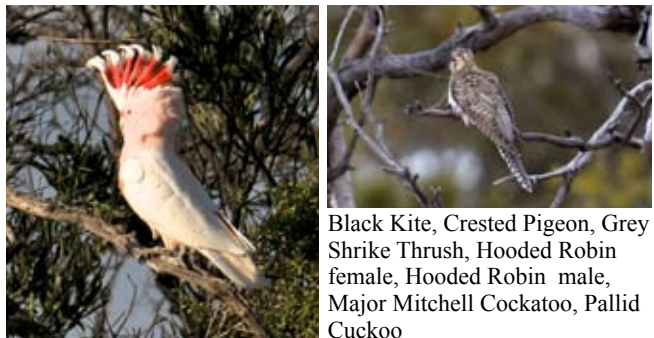
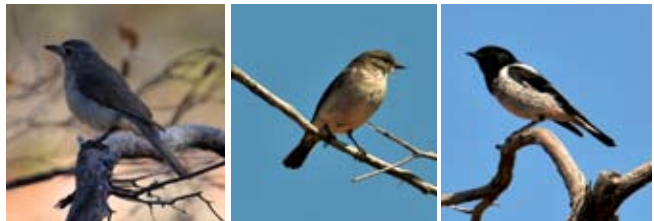
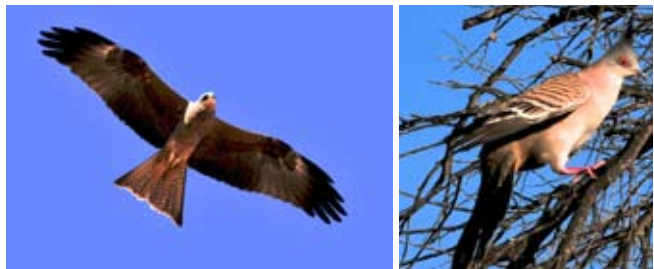
Many Princess Parrots have been seen over large areas this year. Flocks of 30 and occasionally up to 120 have been seen at Newhaven - a 262,000 hectare conservation reserve co-managed by Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Birdlife Australia. They have also been seen within 30km of Alice springs.

Scarlet-chested Parrots

A pair of Scarlet-chested Parrots were seen near Ceduna in June and parrots continue to be seen through to the North Western area of South Australia into Western Australia. Now I have heard they have come back to Gluepot.

Quandong

Quandong seeds apparently need to pass through the digestive system of an Emu before they can germinate.



Black Kite, Crested Pigeon, Grey Shrike Thrush, Hooded Robin female, Hooded Robin male, Major Mitchell Cockatoo, Pallid Cuckoo

VEGETATION REPORT Continued from page 1.

weeds, especially near Nalara Rock, we saw no evidence of Buffel Grass on the tracks we travelled. This is an aspect of Friends of the GVD Parks activities that should be continued on future trips.

With only one nominated ‘plants’ person on the trip this year, and to give everyone a chance of trying the range of activities available, we undertook three vegetation surveys – one each south of Googs Lake, between Nalara Rock and Lake Everard Station boundary and on the Jellabinna Track. We used the usual survey methodology, recording and collecting 121 separate plant specimens across the three sites.

The site south of Googs lake spread along the top of a sand dune was the driest, least hospitable of the three, and dominated by mallee, dodonea (*Dodonea viscosa*), bullock bushes (*Alectryon oleifolius*), and some large native pines (*Callitris verrucosa*). Many of the small herbaceous plants on this site were so dry and beyond recognition that it is difficult to know what the Herbarium will do with our samples! (It was at this site that we found the mystery plant (see photo below) that has Bill, Judy and me stumped. In true Friends of the GVD Parks tradition, there’s a chuppa chup for the first person to name this plant.)

The site between Nalara Rock and Lake Everard Station benefited from run off from a nearby mini version of Nalara Rock and so had some dense vegetation, including some large black oaks (*Casuarina pauper*) and mallee, and a number of

sugar woods (*Myoporum platycarpum*), *Eremophila oppositifolia* and *Westringia rigida*, all covered in flowers.

The site on the Jellabinna Track was right across the road from our campsite, so we could enjoy strolling to work in the morning, something to think about for future trips. It was across the flank of a sand dune and we estimated that it had been burnt between 5-10 years ago. As a result, it had few really mature trees but a lot of mallee regrowth and smaller plants growing in the shelter and debris of the mallees, including the stunning grey leafed, red flowering *Eremophila glabra* ssp *glabra*.

Each of these sites has been added to our growing list of GVD photo points. A huge thank you to the many people who assisted with the various aspects of the vegetation surveys this year, both new and old members, at times in uncomfortable weather. Phil Gaukroger was the Coordinator for Plot measuring and setup, and plant pressing, Peter Facy was responsible for photographing the photo points and assisted with the vegetation association descriptions, and Lynne Murray-Walker photographed every plant we collected for the Herbarium and for our records. Peter and Maureen Buckland, Gordon and Rosemary Smith, John Harvey, Phil Prust, Kathryn Gaukroger, Neville and June Hudson, Jo Wood and Fred Murray Walker also filled vital roles in the vegetation surveys. Your efforts were certainly appreciated.



Photos: *Senna artemisioides*, *Olearia muelleri*, *Sarcosona praecox*, *Eucalyptus socialis*, Narla Rocks lichen, *Maireana erioclada*, Walking to work!, *Calandrinia* sp.

There are over 30 eremophilas listed in Census of South Australian Vascular Plant - Edition 5, for the North West region which includes the northern Nullarbor and Great Victoria Desert. Many of these species were seen by participants on the Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Field Trip in August 2011.

Graham and I have been to the Great Victoria Desert six times in the last 13 years. The first in 1999 when we travelled the full length of the Anne Beadell Highway from Coober Pedy in SA to Laverton WA. Since then we have spent time in Plumridge Lakes Nature Reserve WA, travelled and camped on the Connie Sue track WA on two occasions, Goog's Track and twice for the Nullarbor to Vokes Hill Corner track. It never ceases to amaze us because each time the GVD throws up something new at us. On our first trip in 1999 it was extremely dry and even though we saw many eremophilas, very few were in flower. Since then, on all our other trips, we have seen many species in full flower.

On the GVD 2011 field trip, one of the first eremophilas to put on display was *Eremophila delisseri*, named after E A Delisser, 19th century South Australian squatter and surveyor. *E. delisseri* grows to about 1-1.5mts tall and it certainly was not difficult to spot on the flat, windswept, limestone Nullarbor Plain. Most of the vegetation was less than knee high. In a frantic few minutes we hopped out of our vehicles to swoon over these shrubs, take our photos and record our sighting. It was no time before our trusty leader announced time to move on. He had a destination to reach for the evening's camp. The exact location of *E. delisseri*, previously found in 1980, was not known until 2004 when Russell Wait and Ken Warnes came across it. The advantage of GPS recording. Another interesting feature about this site, which was brought to my attention by one of our travelling companions, was the difference in leaf shape and some other features in a shrub we first thought was just a variation in *E. delisseri*. It is only now we are realizing that it was a different species and could possibly have been *E. decussata*. The need to revisit and check this out awaits us.

Other eremophilas we had to pass by were *E. dentritica*, another low shrub with green-grey leaves and lilac flowers, *E. hillii*, grey leaves with bright red flowers, and *E. latrobei* subsp *glabra*, taller shrubs

with bright green leaves and red flowers. *E. latrobei* subsp *glabra* is widespread, hence being recorded in most of the vegetation surveys during the field trip. By now we were into the GVD and *E. platythamnos*, not sure which subspecies, was flowering profusely on the side of the track. Its leaves are green with varying shades of pale to dark lilac flowers. Also *E. paisleyi*, a shrub to 1.5mts tall covered with white flowers.

On our vegetation surveys we managed to record seven different species. *E. alternifolia*, both the pink and white flowering forms, *E. gibsonii*, fine green leaves with lilac flowers and grows on top sand dunes, *E. latrobei* subsp *glabra* as previously mentioned, *E. willsii* (not sure which subspecies) a spindly shrub with bright green leaves and dark purple flowers, *E. glabra* with green leaves and orange to red flowers and *E. gilesii* with dark grey-green leaves and lilac to blue flowers. It is distinguished from the other species which were seen by its hairy fruit. Another species was *E. platythamnos* subsp *exotrachys*, a low shrub with bright green leaves and lilac flowers. At our first official campsite, *E. clarkei*, a shrub to 1.5mts high with bright green leaves and lilac flowers was growing under *Casuarina pauper*. The flower colour of over 70% of Australia's eremophilas is dominated by blues, lilacs and purples.

The finale to our trip was on the way home when we saw a colony of *E. hygrophana* in full flower growing in a depression near Oak Valley. Just as well we were near the back of the convoy because we stopped, took our photos, then jumped back into the vehicle and off again.

Not a bad effort for the FoGVD to see over one third of the species listed for the NW region in such a small area in comparison with the big picture of the Great Victoria Desert.

Photos:
Eremophila delisseri, *E. alternifolia* white form, *E. clarkei*,
E. platythamnos subsp *exotrachys*, *E. willsii*
Eremophila glabra, *E. gilesii*, *E. gilesii* fruit
E. paisleyi, *E. alternifolia*.
E. alternifolia apricot form, *E. platythamnos* subsp. *villosa*

Maree Goods



NEWS FROM DEWNR and FRIENDS OF PARKS

**NATURAL HISTORY
PUBLIC TALKS
PROGRAM**

SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Safe Work Australia have recently released a new package of information including a range of information sheets on the new Work Health Safety Act recently introduced to State Parliament. For further information contact Safe Work Australia on <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>.

GIFT IDEAS

Flowers of Para Wirra Greeting Cards \$2 ea or a pack of 6 for \$10. Flowers of Para Wirra book \$15. Contact 8280 7279 to arrange postage.

TREES FOR LIFE

are looking for volunteer growers. If you can help telephone 8406 0500.

SCIENCE ON LINE - COLOURS OF THE GREAT VICTORIA DESERT

President Kevin was recently involved in contributing to an article on the Friends of the GVD and the recent trip to Googs Track. Go to <http://www.abc.net.au/science/photos/2012/11/21/3636626.htm> to see some of the stunning images from this trip.

**Presented by
Butterfly Conservation SA Inc.**

will continue in 2013 on the first Tuesday of the month March to November at 6.15pm for a prompt 6.30pm start.

Venue: the Clarence Park Community Centre
72-74 East Avenue, Black Forest.
Bus route W91/W90: stop 10.
Noarlunga Train service: Clarence Park Station
Glenelg Tram: Forestville stop 4, 9min walk south.

Entry: by donation (minimum of \$2).
Bring: supper to share, tea/coffee will be supplied.
Meetings should conclude by 8.30pm.

At the start of each meeting (other than in Aug) a ten minute presentation on a 'Butterfly of the Month' will be given by a BCSA committee member.

MORE IMAGES FROM GOOGS TRACK



DIARY DATES

MEETINGS

NEXT MEETING: Our next meeting will be at 7:30 pm on Friday 15th February. Meetings are held at the Royal Lifesaving Society, 175 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, Cowandilla SA 5033. Off road parking is available behind the building. All members and prospective members are welcome. The agenda will be available before the meeting in the member's area of the website <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fgvd/index.htm>.

2013 MEETING DATES

Friday- 15th Feb, Friday 14th June and Friday 15th Nov.

2013 FIELD TRIP:

to be discussed at the next general meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kevin O'Connor	President	0430 498 177
Judy Morton	Secretary	08 8556 2308
Peter Facy	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:
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fgvd/index.htm>