



2010 Field Trip Report **Group 2 - Vegetation Survey Group**

8th – 21st August 2010

INTRODUCTION

Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks is a volunteer group affiliated with Friends of Parks Inc and operating under a memorandum of understanding with the South Australian Department for Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Thirteen members in six private vehicles participated in this field trip, travelling just over 1000 kilometres in from Nundroo to Coober Pedy via Maralinga and Emu. We estimate that the participants contributed many hundreds of hours of voluntary labour to this exercise, including travel and planning time.

OBJECTIVES

1. To carry out rigorous vegetation surveys to produce high quality data for the Environmental Database of SA (EDBSA), strictly adhering to Biological Survey of SA methodology¹.
2. To look for opportunistic sightings of the Ooldea Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia Crispula*)
3. To visit the Maralinga site for educational and historical reasons
4. To identify vegetation sites on the Anne Beadell Highway in Tallaringa Conservation Park for potential future signposting
5. To visit the currently active Mallee Fowl nest adjacent Maralinga Airfield. This would assist group members in identifying opportunistic sightings of mallee fowl tracks or mallee fowl nests.

¹ Department of Housing and Urban Development *Guide to a Native Vegetation Survey, Using the Biological Survey of South Australia* South Australia, 1997.

6. To visit areas of importance to the indigenous people and historical areas such as Ooldea railway siding, Ooldea Soak and site of the Uniting Church Mission, Tietkens Well and the Len Beadell Tree.

OUTCOMES

1. Five one-hectare vegetation quadrats in the Maralinga-Tjarutja lands were surveyed adjacent to the Maralinga-Emu road between the north gate and Emu. A full day was allowed for each quadrat, using a team approach. The logistics team set up the quadrat and a shady base camp, the collection and survey team recorded every plant on the site, the recording team vouchered the specimens and filled out the data sheets and the logistics team cleaned up. All five sites were new sites established in previously un-surveyed areas. 172 specimens were vouchered.
2. Our group visited the Ooldea area, north of the railway line on August 9th and 10th and were unsuccessful in finding examples of *Hibbertia Crispula*. We visited the Ooldea Soak and compared the site as it appears today with what was present before and after the railway line was built. We reflected on the vital importance of this past water source to the nomadic indigenous people and the importance of this site as a meeting place and trading centre for people to the north, south, east and west.
3. Our group spent two nights as guests at the Maralinga Village, and were warmly welcomed by the resident caretakers Robin and Della Matthews. In a large group combined with other guests, we were taken on a guided tour around the Village, airstrip, many of bomb sites, and rehabilitated areas. There were large areas of Sturt Desert pea. In addition we visited the historical site at Tietkens Well. The information provided by Robin was very detailed.
4. Following on from training by DEH consultant Rick Southgate and staff member Matt Ward in 2009 to FOGVD members, we searched areas for mallee fowl tracks. We found possible fresh tracks at Tallaringa Well which were photographed, and coordinates submitted.
5. Small recent rubbish items that we found in our travels were removed in an attempt to maintain the pristine appearance of this section of the GVD.

COMMENT

The outcomes listed above indicate a very successful and productive Field trip. All participants expressed great satisfaction with the tasks that were achieved and all enjoyed the process.

No major difficulties were encountered. All participants had thoroughly prepared their vehicles and communications were effective. There were no significant health problems or reportable injuries.

This part of the eastern GVD was found to be in good condition following better-than-average winter rains. The native wildflower displays brought on by the rains were magnificent.

Many people contributed to the success of this field trip. Neville Hudson, Peter Facy and Ian Jackson were members of the core organizing group who contributed a immense amount to the success of the Vegetation Group's trip even though they were not present in this group. Group members Fiona and Kevin O'Connor and Judy Morton were our amateur botanists, and I would respectfully suggest that their knowledge and skills were more professional than amateur. The quality of work to come from the 5 vegetation surveys was at least equal to that of the past 2 years.

Other members of the group were responsible for the more mundane tasks of choosing and setting out the veg plots, collating the information, collecting the plant specimens, documentation, vouchering and pressing the specimens. Other members did the historical research and provided the important experience in remote desert travel that made the trip proceed on schedule and without incident.

The Department for Environment and Heritage was most supportive. Ranger Brett Dalzell could not be with us this time, and his position as our Liaison person was taken over by Lance McWaters just prior to us leaving on our trip, so we were unable to make contact this time.

Our thanks also go to State Herbarium staff Sue Kenny and Jeff Foulkes for identifying the areas in which we should conduct the vegetation surveys.

Report Author:

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