**FRIENDS OF THE GREAT VICTORIAN DESERT PARKS**

**PHOTOGRAPHIC FIELD TRIP REPORT**

 **AUGUST 2023**

Peter, Emma, Peter, Peter & Margaret and Manfred & Anne formed the surface photographic team. No drone photographing was carried out as Phil, our drone pilot, was not able to attend.

We left Ceduna on Monday 21st after meeting with Yasmin, Ollanta, Robbie and other staff at the Ceduna office to discuss safety issues, we carried a “Spot Checker” and a Satellite phone provided by the department for safety purposes.

There were 52 vegetation sites scheduled to be photographed on a four-year rotation basis. These sites were along the Cook to Voakes Hill road (Using the bypass roads of sensitive areas), along the Anne Beadell Highway from the Eastern border of Mamungari West to the W.A. border at the Serpentine Lakes.

Our first camp was at Nullarbor Road house. The next morning, we drove North to Cook via Knowles Cave and Kundra Rock Hole, once across the Railway line at Cook we photographed 7 sites on our way to a camp approximately 90 Kms North of Cook.

The next morning, we drove up the Voakes Hill Road using the new bypass road to camp about 18 Kms South of Voakes Hill Corner and photographed 8 sites.

We then drove up to Voakes Hill Corner and were impressed by the new camping area and very clean toilet which has been built there, we then drove East to the Eastern end of Mamungari along the Anne Beadell Highway and returned to the same campsite having photographed 10 sites, the area, although has had rain earlier in the year, was now quite dry compared to previous years.

The next day we packed up and drove to our camp about 5 Kms East of the Eastern border of the exclusion zone, we photographed 13 sites on the way.

Today we drove to the Serpentine camp photographing 9 sites on the way, here we were amazed at the regrowth of vegetation around the area obviously the result of the rains earlier in the year, it is certainly a beautiful area around the lakes.

We camped a second night here photographing the remaining 5 sites around the lakes and visiting the Tjintagarra Soak in W.A.

Having completed all 52 Vegetation site photographs we then drove back to our camp site 18 Kms South of Voakes Hill Corner.

The next day we drove South and met up with our Quandong Survey Group who were conducting surveys on the bypass road of the Cook Road and had morning tea with them, after which we drove to Oak Valley to refuel and Peter and I had a meeting with Jeremy, the Chairman of the Maralinga Tjarutja Trust and discussed our Survey with him and thanked him for allowing us into his Lands. We then continued South on the Dey-Dey Road to the Irish Well camp.

Next day we returned to Ceduna having found no sign of any Buffel Grass during the entire trip.

Thank you to our team for the way they carried out their work and to the staff at Ceduna for their part in assisting us.

Peter

Trip Leader

**Friends of the Great Victoria Desert 2023 Quandong Survey Trip**

**Team Members**

**Mary and Glynn**

**Sandy and Andrew**

**Claire and Martin**

**Karen and Lynton**

The above team assembled at Lake Gilles for a free camp before heading to the Penong Caravan Park and dinner with Richard at the hotel on Saturday evening. Richard’s commitment to drive from his important duties in Ceduna to meet with us was appreciated. We departed early the next day only stopping at Nundroo to top up with fuel.

The trip via Colona and Ooldea to our first bush camp at Irish Well was uneventful. The next morning we visited the Oak Valley Community to collect two monitoring devices (tablets) containing all previous data history and the location of each tree for our survey. It was here that we noticed a potential issue with Mary’s van so we stopped at a water tank shed to enable wheel bearing adjustments to be undertaken by Glynn (geez we missed having Kathryn and Phil there to assist)! It was then a quick dash to our first camp, about two thirds of the way up to Voakes Hill Corner to begin our first health survey patch of Quandongs (Wayanu).

After agreeing on the assessment protocols to ensure consistent reporting we separated into two teams which we maintained for the duration of our trip. As previously arranged, we worked the Transect 6 stretch until Peter’s group trundled past.

It was great to have the two groups mingle for a morning tea, some storytelling and group photos. Peter graciously handed over the Departmental Sat Phone so our group could have communications if needed for the remainder of our surveys.

The rest of our Quandong surveys (Transects 1, 2 and 4) were done in very warm weather, sometimes quite challenging, with very strong winds keeping us battened down in camp on occasions. Our observations at every Transect were that the trees this year were heathier and consistently had the most fruit we had ever recorded.

Sandy and Andrew maintained their activities after dark! Scouring sand dunes and vegetation, they photographed and recorded many creatures, which is a bonus for our ecological records.

As is tradition for our group we had two shared roast dinners during our stay in the bush. The pancakes were enjoyed by all.

I greatly appreciated the efforts made by all members to complete the 2023 Quandong survey for the Oak Valley Community and for making this another enjoyable Friends of the Great Victoria Desert trip.

We look forward to undertaking these important Quandong health surveys again next year.

**Lynton**

**Trip Leader**