

FRIENDS of the GREAT VICTORIA DESERT PARKS

Newsletter Number 39, January, 2011

REMEMBERING OUR PATRON ANNE BEADELL

We were saddened when our co-patron Anne Beadell died on 24th November 2010. Anne followed Len Beadell as the patron of our organization when Len died in May 1995.

Anne's long association with the Great Victoria Desert began when she, with baby Connie, accompanied Len as he completed the reconnaissance of the Anne Beadell and the Connie Sue Highway in 1962. She enjoyed many, many other trips to the heart of Australia and in recent years was delighted to share her love of the desert areas with those journeying with her.

Several members of The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks attended her funeral at All Soul's Anglican Church, St Peters on Tuesday 30th November.



During the service the congregation was reminded of the contribution Anne had made to the community, the enjoyment she gained from singing in choirs, her talent as a musician and her sharing of this talent and interest with others.

A Thank You card from the Beadell Family to the Friends of GVD has been received and a note within it reads;

On behalf of the family I would like to extend our thanks to all of the members for their friendship and to those who sent cards and good wishes.

Mum was honoured to be a member and we consider ourselves lucky to be associated with such a group of desert lovers!

All the best for a successful 2011.

Best wishes from Connie, Mick, Phil, Gary, Jacqui and families.

*Neville Hudson
President*

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2011 MEETING DATES AND EXCURSIONS

AGM 25th February at Camden Park - speaker Jan Forrest on the planning, creating and assembling the Biodiversity Gallery in the S.A. Museum.

2nd March an after hours visit to the SAMuseum Biodiversity Gallery 6 - 8 pm with dinner afterwards.

24th June at Camden Park - speaker to be advised

Field Trip tentative dates: Depart Ceduns Monday 15th August, conclusion Friday 26th August. These dates subject to confirmation.

4th November at Camden Park - speaker to be advised

President: Neville Hudson nhudson105@bigpond.com

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



FROM THE PRESIDENT

In this the first Newsletter for 2011, I want to take the opportunity to share something about myself, the to comment on last year's activities and encourage members to become involved in events already planned for this year.

A little about me.

Originally from a farming background on Eyre Peninsula and following a short time with the stock firm Elders GM I worked with the SA Education Department for 35 years. At the end of 2001 I retired from the teaching and have worked part time with students in Outdoor Education since then.

Married to June, we have two sons; Brenton, in Victor Harbor, and Gregory, in Perth. We have a delightful grand-daughter at Victor Harbor and look forward to Western Australian grandchild in March.

As a teacher I worked in metropolitan schools as well as Cleve and Sedan in SA. I also taught in Darwin, Alice Springs and had a year at Thunder Bay in Western Ontario, Canada.

June, is a physiotherapist, and has enjoyed working with older people, helping to keep them as mobile and independent as possible.

We have loved the outdoor lifestyle which began when we were living in the Northern Territory. We went on frequent camping trips and expeditions with friends. Our son camped with us when he was less than six weeks old.

I have been a keen birdwatcher since my visit to Fogg Dam at the Top End NT in 1971. I have an interest in the environment in general and enjoy observing and learning about the flora and fauna in the area in which I live and visit. During my professional life I served on the State and National Committee for the Australian Association for Environmental Education.

Within the last twelve months I have devoted a lot of time to improving my knowledge of Marine Ecology. In addition to teaching coastal ecology to students I have taken a role in community education programs. This has included a coordinating role with the Reef Watch Program in which participants carry out surveys of marine life in South Australian waters.

Conducting surveys along the coastline has some similarity with the surveys Friends of the Great Victoria Desert do a long way from the sea. Both involve observing and carefully collecting and recording data in the field which is the interesting and fun part. But, both involve the sorting, presenting and analysing that is then passed on to the experts or government departments. This is time consuming and less enjoyable.

Friends of GVD Activities in 2010.

In this newsletter there are reports of the two Field Trips conducted in the winter months of last year. I thank the people who planned the trip and those who participated. I believe people had a pleasant and rewarding time while travelling, observing and recording in the desert. It was pleasing to share the experience with people from the Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resource Management Unit at Ceduna and I look forward to further fostering this association in the coming year.



The year ahead.

At the AGM to be held on Friday 25th February Jan Forrest will give a brief introduction to the Biodiversity Gallery at the SA Museum. This will be followed by a visit to the gallery on Wednesday 2nd March from 6 pm to 8 pm. Details are with this Newsletter.

An invitation has been extended to Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks to join with us for this event. There is another opportunity for Friends of the GVD to visit the Biodiversity Gallery on Tuesday 12th when the Friends of the Simpson Desert will be the hosts. This visit will be between 3 pm and 5 pm. On both occasions there is an invitation to join together for a meal at the Skycity Casino Buffet Diner.

Tentative plans have been made for members to participate in Social Tag-a-Long trip in the southern Adelaide Hills. The trip will culminate at venue where we will have a camp fire and opportunity to barbecue, dine and socialize. No date has been set for this but it will be in autumn or early winter when fires in the open are allowed.

A suggested program for the 2011 Field Trip has been outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Planning future field trips will need much more liaison with stakeholders in the Great Victoria Desert area. There have been several changes in the administration procedures through the amalgamation of DENR and AWNRM and we need to be cognizant of the management partnership arrangements with the Maralinga Tjarutja Aboriginal people. It is important that we consult widely with ecologist experts, rangers and other field officers to come up with a program of surveys and similar activities that make a contribution that assists with the conservation and management of the area and is valued by those whose home is the GVD.

To this end I have begun discussions with Lance McWaters the DENR Executive Officer Maralinga Lands. I am also seeking assistance from the Awnrm. It is necessary for us to draw up a tentative proposal for Lance to take to the Mamungari Board that will meet in early February.

If any members have thoughts or suggestions that could assist with planning the 2011 Field Trip I encourage them to contact me.

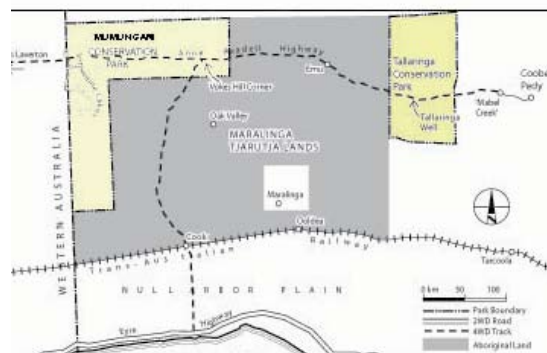
The next Friends of GVD meeting will be the AGM. I encourage people consider a position within the organization. If you would like to offer yourself for a position or nominate someone please contact me.

I look forward to an active and successful 2011.

Regards Neville

- We were disappointed with the birding results last trip and it is suggested we no longer observe birds only on existing vegetation plots but to report all opportunistic bird sightings.

Any thoughts or ideas members have to improve the trip please refer them to Phil, Neville or Peter



Early preparation for the 2011 Field Trip.

Peter Facy has presented some suggestions for next year that arose from a meeting of the 2010 organizers.

1. Groups: There should be one group only, all leaving at the same time and camping as a group when convenient, splitting up into specialised groups to carry out specific projects. This will enable members to change projects during the two weeks in the desert to gain experience in another field at any of the major camps.
2. Dates: The suggested timing will be two weeks from the middle of August 2011
3. Location: Philippa Schmucker from the Ceduna office of Natural Resource Management/DENR has suggested we travel to an area west of Oak Valley bounded by the business road to the South, the eastern border of Mamungari, the Cook Road to the east and north to the Anne Beadell Highway. This area has been extensively used by mining exploration companies and would open up an area not previously visited by the Friends group or the DEH. As this is a completely new area we thought it would be an advantage for a small party to go to there earlier in the winter to survey the area to gain knowledge of what we would be up against and to plan an itinerary.
4. Working groups: We suggest the specialised groups should consist of a Veg plot group, an Animal tracking group, a Veg plot photographing group and a Birding group.
5. Projects: Philippa Schmucker from the Ceduna office along with Jeff Foulkes and Sue Kenny from DEH Adelaide will suggest areas to carry out our projects.
 - Princess parrot: This new area has many good stands of Marble Gum with hollows that are potential nesting sites for the Princess Parrots. There has been an extremely large increase in the Princess Parrot numbers west and south west of Alice Springs this year. We are keen see if these birds will disperse in 2011 and use the Marble Gums in and near Mamungari. The bird watching group could survey the old Marble Gum trees to record potential nesting sites in addition to recording actual bird sightings.
 - The Mallee Fowl survey for Awnrm will continue.

Participants in the Field Trips 2010

First Group left Ceduna Thursday 22nd July.

Focus: Animal Tracking, Bird Observations and Vegetation Plot Re-photographing.

Peter Facy

Neville & June Hudson

Gordon & Rosemary Smith

Peter & Elizabeth Lloyd

Shelagh & Neil Matthews

Peter & Sandra James

Harold & Glenda Ross



Second Group left Ceduna Monday 9th August.

Focus: Survey new vegetation plots

Phil & Kathryn Gaukroger

Jan de Wit & Ross Matthews

Des & Alan Phillips

Kevin & Fiona O'Connor

Judy Morton

Trevor & Terrie Coleman

Paul & Dianne Koch



NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Changes in the Department include the formation of a new department, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) combining natural resource management or 'NRM' and Environment and Heritage.

The integration of NRM functions is aimed at providing a single shop front for community services at regional level making it easier for members of the public access a range of government environment and natural resources services. NRM Boards have established relationships with the community including volunteer groups, this will continue however with an emphasis to strengthen community engagement in regional NRM through the integration process.

Friends groups will still have a point of contact through DENR rangers and liaison officers and the department will still work in partnership to achieve common goals.

Information in part from - the Executive Director Regional Services John Schuts DENR 2.12.10

ANNE SELLAR is the recently appointed Director, Volunteers and Visitor Services a newly created position in the new Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

It is envisaged that linking Volunteers and Visitors will enable the Department to get more people involved in our parks, to enjoy them and to protect them.

GEOFF AXFORD is the newly appointed Regional Manager for South Australia's Arid Lands Region.

WALKING SA extends an invitation to people to participate in the Opening of the Walking Season 2011. This major event will be held on 3rd April from 10am - 3pm at the Tea Tree Gully Oval in Adelaide's northeastern suburbs.

The opening is at 1pm in conjunction with the Friends of the Heyson Trail who will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of their organisation.

Is any member attending this event who may like to promote the Friends of GVD with a stall?

ROTARY CLUB OF BURNSIDE AWARDS for Leadership in Conservation and Volunteer/s of the Parks are now open. Information from the Secretary should you be interested.

FRIENDS FORUM 2011 West of the Middlebacks 2-5 Sept. see information in previous newsletter.

ANNUAL SHOREBIRD COUNT request for volunteers. Go to www.shorebirds.org.au for further information.

AUSTRALIAN PAINTED SNIPE SURVEY volunteers wanted. Further information www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/australian-painted-snip.html.

SEED COLLECTION WORKSHOPS Friday 28 January at Belair. Monday 7 March at Stirling, Sat. 2 April Normanville. To register your interest call Trees for Life 8406 0500.

CLELAND RESTORATION VOLUNTEER GROUP second Sunday of each month 9.30-12.30, meet Cleland Wildlife carpark. Just turn up! Further info: Kat Mroczek DENR 8130 9064.

THREATENED PLANT ACTION GROUP to become involved in hands on work in National Parks and save some threatened plant species contact Tim Jury 08 7127 4630 for further information.

FREE WORKSHOPS through Volunteering SA

Information at www.volunteersa.org.au.

Fri 4th Feb times tba: 'Developing Grant Applications' Aldgate.

Tues 8 Feb 9.30-12.30: 'Skills for Committee and Board Members' Mt.Barker.

Tues 8 Feb 9.30-12.30 'Introduction to Volunteer Management' Adelaide.

Thurs 10 Feb 1-4: 'Developing Grant Applications' Gawler.

Thurs 10 Feb 9.30-12.30 'Recruiting and Retaining CALD Volunteers' Adelaide.

Tues 22 Feb 9.30-12.30 'Connecting with Older People' Woodville.

Wed 23 Feb 9.30-12.30 'Introduction to Effective Communication' Brighton.

Fri 25 Feb 9.30-12.30 'Enhancing Customer Service skills' Aldgate.

'THE AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANT GUIDE' by Peter Yau and Tim Langdon is now available as an application on your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch. For information enter 'native plant guide' in the search box at the Apple store on your iPhone.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE FUND GRANTS 2011-12 now open. Applications close Mon 28 Feb. 2011.

www.heritage.sa.gov.au/conserving/grants.html

BIODIVERSITY WALKS at Cleland Wildlife Park perimeter track. Two times 9-10.30 and 11-12.30 on Tues 18 Jan 2011 provided temperatures for MtBarker do not exceed 35 deg. Meet Cleland Wildlife Park carpark. Booking required: 8339 2769.

PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN FRIENDS OF PARKS AND NRM BOARDS.

Advice from Friends of Parks President David Mitchell has advised that on 10th December nine of the larger environmental NGO's including 'Friends of Parks' signed a MOU between themselves and the NRM Boards which David refers to as "rules of engagement" with the underlying intent to ensure transparency of process and a more collaborative approach to ensure better environmental outcomes.

A working group has developed the MOU over this past year refining the MOU and Action Plans. The agreement is recognised as a positive commitment to build enduring strategic partnerships between NRM Boards and NGOs to ensure better environmental outcomes.

Groups signing the agreement are: Conservation Ark, Zoos SA; Conservation Council of South Australia; Conservation Volunteers Australia; Friends of Parks Inc.; Greening Australia SA; Nature Conservation Society of South Australia; Nature Foundation SA Inc.; The Wilderness Society (South Australia) Inc. and Trees for Life.

The MOU includes: Purpose, Commitment Strategy, Partnership Values; Custodians of Agreement; Roles and Contribution; NRM Boards; E-NGOs, Key Messages, Commitment to Action, Partnership framework and Implementation/Logistics.

The agreement will take effect from the 10th Dec. 2010 for a period of three years. Attachments in the agreement include examples of Action Plans. These may be of interest to members to use as a template for own plans.

Copies of 'The Mutual Agreement' are available from our Secretary and the Editor of this Newsletter Jan Forrest.

FIELD TRIP - GROUP ONE

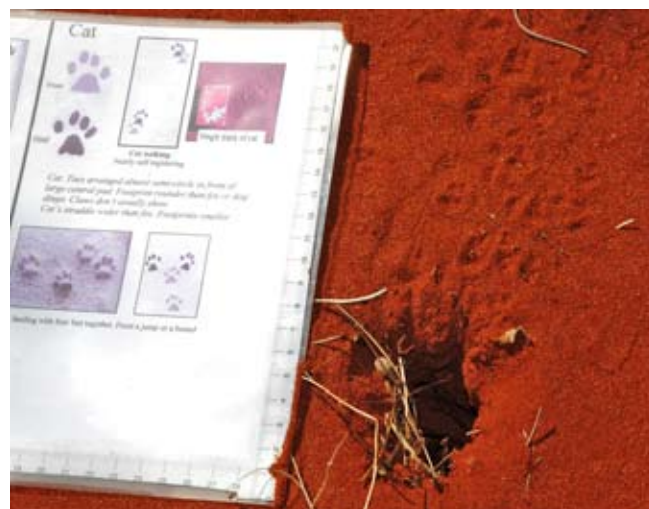
22nd JULY to 4th AUGUST 2010

June Hudson

The group of seven vehicles (13 people) led by Peter Facy (Logistics) and President Neville Hudson (Field Studies) met at Ceduna for dinner at the hotel on Wed 21st July. On the following day we journeyed to Ooldea and then to Maralinga, where we were met by our host and guide Robin Matthews and his wife Della. We had a wonderful time at Maralinga, made to feel so welcome and provided with accommodation if we needed it. Della cooked our evening meal one night as a surprise. We had a 70km tag-a-long tour of Maralinga with Robin who is a font of knowledge. We understand so much more of the history of Maralinga now. On our way out of the site the next morning we visited the Malleefowl's nest near the airport. Cameras monitoring the mound have photographed the male bird digging out the eggs just prior to them hatching. It had been thought that hatchlings always had to dig their own way to the surface.

After leaving the northern barrier gates we travelled due north, passing through fields of wildflowers along the way. We began taking the photos of the vegetation sites we had been given by DEH. Our first camp was close to several monitoring sites and we were able to stay there for three nights. We began our bird surveys (leaders Elizabeth Lloyd and Neville Hudson) and animal and bird tracking surveys (leader Neville Hudson). We were fortunate to have Elizabeth Lloyd with us as she is a very experienced bird watcher and during the trip we had many exciting sightings. Elizabeth has completed a comprehensive report but I will include some highlights in this report. At the first campsite area we saw a pair of Bourke's Parrots, Crested Bellbirds, Chiming Wedgebills and White Backed Swallows. The next day two of the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM team from Ceduna, Philippa Schmucker and Paul Gregory, arrived to share a couple of days in the field with us.

On Day 6 (27th July), we set off north again to Observatory Hill, which was named by Len Beadell. A group photo was taken at the top of the rocky rise. The track was overgrown and blocked by fallen branches at times but we finally reached Emu Junction. On the way we did an animal tracking survey and found lots of evidence of hopping mice including "pop holes" where the mice can quickly escape from predators. We also found red kangaroo prints. These were the first kangaroo tracks since leaving Maralinga and were further south than those recorded in previous surveys. Along the way and at Emu, where we stopped for lunch, birds observed included Southern Whiteface, Splendid Fairy Wrens and some unidentified babblers and quail thrush. We left Emu heading NW to our campsite near Lake Meramangye. The track was very overgrown and rough and we lost it several times. We created the "Peter Facy Detour" down off the escarpment and found a suitable campsite near our logged vegetation and birding sites by 4.30pm.



Photos: Group at Observatory Hill
Hopping Mouse 'pop holes'
Western Myalls and storm clouds.
Sandy shot line from Meramangye Lake

Around the camp we had Pied Honeyeaters, Chiming Wedgebills, Mulga Parrots, Crested Bellbirds, Southern Whiteface and Singing Honeyeaters. We had a sharp shower of rain at 8.30 pm which sent everyone scurrying off to bed. Although most of the showers with thunder and lightning went south of our camp there was a sudden heavy down pour at about 5:00 am.

The AW NRM rangers wanted to observe our monitoring activities so joined our morning program before leaving. The overnight rain had obliterated small nocturnal animal tracks and in fact we found it took several days before the sand was soft enough to show the small prints. We were able to see dingo, fox and rabbit quite well. New birds were; Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Black-faced Woodswallows, and Grey Shrike-thrush. Neil and Shelagh Matthews left us at lunch time that day as they had a message about a bereavement in the family. We missed their company very much on the rest of the trip. While birding and tracking in the afternoon we found dry lake beds and calcareous ridges where the shot line constructors had made a severe impact on the local terrain.

Overall we had three days at this site where the daytime temperatures were up to 28 degrees. We explored all around, finding different vegetation including the highly aromatic *Eremophylla alternifolia* and more "new" birds for the trip including Peregrine Falcon, White-browed Treecreeper, White-winged Triller and one Magpie.

On Friday 30th July our convoy moved out following a "shot line" south. This promising track soon petered out, disappearing under the re-growth. We had some adventures but it all turned out well as we got back on to the Anne Beadell Highway west of Emu. Harold Ross led us on a tour of the significant sites from the Emu atomic testing era. The cold wind made it all the more bleak. There were a couple more vehicle incidents including a small electrical fire before we all got to our overnight campsite.

The following day, our group continued along the severely corrugated Anne Beadell, stopping for 15 photo points, although some were very hard to find after 25 years. In those days they used only one marker and some were very short, stumpy survey pegs. On the roadside were many small bright green desert poplars and we wondered if the camels are grazing on them. Philippa, from the Ceduna AWNRM, had wanted us to look out for evidence of camels grazing on plants in particular the quandongs.

There was quite a flurry of action when we disturbed a small snake at morning tea. It was identified as a Ringed Brown Snake, *Pseudonaja modesta*. More birds were spotted along the track including inland Thornbills, Red Capped Robin, Zebra Finches, Nankeen Kestrel, Rufous Whistlers, White-browed Babblers and Mistletoe Birds. We set up camp for four days a few kilometres west of Tallaringa Well. We have Peter Facy to thank for his detailed planning so



Photos: Spreading crisp bread with one hand!

25 year old short stumpy survey marker

Beaded Gecko *Lucasium damaeum*

that we had mostly three or more days in the one spot. This lovely campsite was in among tall shrubs and trees, including Water Bush, *Grevillea nematophylla* covered with long burgundy seed pods glowing in the sun and Witchety Bush, *Acacia kempeana*, complete with Mistletoe. We also had visits from a Beaked Gecko, *Phynchoedura ornata* and a Beaded Gecko, *Lucasium damaeum*.

The vegetation photo point party had difficulty finding the plots with the short survey pegs. It was easier to locate the spot by following the description of the terrain and vegetation. Gordon and Rosemary Smith coordinated a session of games, competitions and activities one afternoon. Some of our members are

“soooo..” competitive! We had the “30 metre step out”, the “hat toss” and the “honey and vegemite spread and slice”.

Other highlights of the Tallaringa Well area were several Chestnut Quail Thrush which were heard “peep peep”ing all around the camp site, Yellow Throated Miners, a huge Wedge-tailed Eagle’s nest with a fluffy white nestling poking his head up to look around and a single group of Red Mallee, *Eucalyptus socialis*, covered in creamy yellow flowers. It was interesting to note that the eagles had used *E. socialis* to line the nest that was in a sandalwood tree.

We continued on with our animal tracking, selecting sites where there was sufficient soft sand. Neville has done a complete analysis of the findings of the 14 sites but in general we saw evidence of camel, rabbit and fox on almost every site. The feral animals are very widespread and common. We also saw dingo on many sites. The most commonly found small indigenous animal was the hopping mouse. Our group did not see any evidence of malleefowl.

Our last day was Wed 4th Aug. We packed up and made our way into Coober Pedy. There were a few more photo points to do on the way. We saw several flowering Mulla mulla, *Ptilotus exaltatus* and *P. obovatus*, along the road sides. We were a little too early to see fields of flowers except for the white and yellow daisies just north of Maralinga.

Our final meal together was at the Greek Taverna that night, the culmination of a successful and rewarding expedition. Many of the group were wearing their GVD T-shirts which attracted comments from the management and other diners.

Photos: Neville Hudson, Philippa Schmucker and Rosemary smith



Photos: Beaked Gecko *Rhynchoedura ornata*
Peter Lloyd refers to guide
Ringed Brown Snake *Pseudonaja modesta*



Mallee Fowl nest near the airport at Maralinga. Photo: Robin Matthews.

These rare images are from the monitoring cameras provided by the local NRM Board. Robin advised that generally it is on extreme hot days that the female assists the male to work on the nest, usually only the male is seen working on the nest.

THE VEGETATION GROUP EXPEDITION TO THE GREAT VICTORIA DESERT

August 2010

Dianne Koch and Phil Gaukroger

Thirteen people from quite diverse backgrounds and varying experience in vegetation surveys met over dinner at the Foreshore Hotel in Ceduna on Sunday 8th August. Armed with an itinerary carefully planned by our leader, the vegetation group's tour of duty began.

The sun shone as we gathered for briefings from our Trip Leader Phil Gaukroger and from Philippa Schmucker from Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Board at Ceduna. In high spirits we set off in convoy for our first stop at Nundroo Roadhouse to top up-fuel. Huge, slushy puddles and a well churned-up entrance to the roadhouse indicated that the small showers we had overnight in Ceduna had been something more significant to the west and north-west. Turning north at Colona we were greeted by a well maintained mining road for 2/3rds of the way to Ooldea. The road gets dampened with salty water to reduce the dust – but in our case, frequent showers meant that we arrived in Ooldea looking rather muddy.

First night out was near Ooldea, a region with a very rich but, in many ways sad, history. For many thousands of years, the Ooldea Soak was a vital source of water for indigenous people and an important meeting place. In the early 1900's the transcontinental railway was pushed through the area and the soak was used as a source of water for the railways. Unfortunately the many bores that were sunk in the area created a sieve in the bedrock and since 1926, the soak has become a dried up depression. The Aboriginal people became dependant on the railway for food and water and their nomadic way of life was compromised. The journalist/anthropologist Daisy Bates lived in a tent for 14 years near Ooldea and helped care for the Aboriginal people. Later they had to leave the area because of the impending British Atomic Nuclear Test program.

Recent rains had made the surrounding area more lush than we were led to believe from the photographs. We saw some nice examples of Ooldea Mallee, *Eucalyptus youngiana*, with their very distinctive large nuts. We also stopped at many places to examine plants with yellow flowers in our unsuccessful search for the elusive Ooldea Guinea Flower, *Hibertia crispula*.

The ruins of Watson and the old quarry told only a little of this former town's role in the development of Maralinga. The photographers and fossil hunters amongst us found some real treasures in



Photos: Sandhills near Ooldea
White 'Pom pom' flowers
Rabbit warren
Large rabbit warren

the quarry which became a rubbish dump, but is loaded with limestone fossils.

Crossing the rail line, heading north, we were pleasantly surprised to find bitumen – a road constructed by the British in the late 1950's to facilitate movement of materials, equipment and personnel to the new atomic test site at Maralinga. Although no longer maintained (and little used) the road is in surprisingly excellent condition. What a dream..... rolling along in the outback as smoothly as on the Stuart Highway!

Our hosts and managers of Maralinga Village were Robin and Della Matthews. Maralinga Village exists as a miniscule part of its former self. Few buildings remain but there is plenty of evidence of the life it previously had. It is a concrete slab city! Whilst many buildings have been removed, the hundreds of concrete slabs that formed the floor of village accommodation, administration and workshops remain, testimony to Maralinga's once thriving past. What remains is well-maintained and the half-century old diesel generators chug over beautifully as though they are brand new.

The following day Robin guided us on a tour of a number of the bomb sites that have been re-habilitated at a cost of over \$100 million. \$31 million was contributed by the British Government and \$75 million by Australia. Each of the bomb sites that we visited was marked by an obelisk carrying information about the test as well as warnings about radioactivity. An active malleefowl nest close to the airstrip was a highlight. The site was being well monitored with 6 cameras set up in the surrounding bush.

Also interesting was the visit to Tietkens Well No1 dated 1879. Tietkens accompanied Ernest Giles and subsequently did some of his own exploration of the GVD. The well was set up as a water source for those travelling north of Ooldea.

After the recent rains, much of the Maralinga area had spectacular carpets of South Australia's floral emblem; Sturt's Desert Pea, *Swainsona formosa*.

We left Maralinga on Thursday morning (12th) travelling through the locked north gate to the "Len Beadell" tree, stopping on the way to look at another beautiful Ooldea Mallee, swathes of white pom-poms and for a group photo. In our travels we came across herds of fit young camels and stopped at multiple sites to see some very, very large active rabbit warrens.

The next four nights were spent at our base-camp a few kilometres south of Beadell's tree amongst a beautiful stand of Black Oaks, *Casuarina pauper*. This was the start of the main purpose of our journey – to help complete the vegetation map of South Australia by collecting information from areas not covered in previous surveys. This was the third year



Western Bluetongue lizard Photos: M.Hutchinson
Ooldea Mallee, *Eucalyptus youngiana* Photo: P.Bessell
Mallee Fowl nest near the Maralinga airstrip

Continued page 11

FRIENDS of the GREAT VICTORIA DESERT PARKS

AN INVITATION

*A combined outing for
Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks
and
Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks.
A Special Guided Tour of the Biodiversity Gallery
South Australian Museum.*



*Wednesday 2nd March 6:00 pm. to 8 pm.
followed by
Buffet Dinner at Skycity Casino from 8:00 p.m.*

The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Parks are pleased to host this opportunity to view and learn more about the museum's new Biodiversity Gallery.

Members of the Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks are invited to join the FoGVD group for this special event.

Arrangements have been made to visit the museum after normal visiting hours when Jan Forrest, with a museum colleague, will provide a guided tour of the exhibits. Jan, a member of FoDVG and FOS, had a major role in the creation of the Biodiversity Gallery.

The South Australian Biodiversity Gallery is a transect through South Australia, from the hot and dry north through to the deep oceans of the south. It tells the unique story of South Australia's diverse wildlife, divided into four distinct environmental regions: arid, temperate, coastal and marine.

Details:

Biodiversity Gallery.

- Meet at the front of the SA Museum near the main entrance at 5:45 pm.
- There will be no cost, the Friends of GVD are hosting the event.
- The tour will take nearly two hours
- After the guided tour you may wish to dine with the group at the Casino Buffet at the Skycity Casino.

Dinner.

A booking will be made to reserve dining space at the Buffet Diner from 8:15 pm.

There is one price for the buffet meal: \$19.90 per person. Foods available from the buffet include:

- Soup of the Day with Bread.*
- Fresh garden salads with dressings and condiments.*
- A large array of hot dishes and roasted vegetables. Roast meats with gravy and accompaniments.*
- Hot and Cold Desserts, seasonal fresh fruit.*
- A cheeseboard selection.*

The buffet meal finishes at 10:00 pm

Further information and RSVP by Friday February 25th .

It is important that you advise me that you will be attending this event.

Confirmation with the gallery and hotel must be made on Monday 28th February.

Neville (08) 8556 6782. Mob. 0429804100. Email. nhudson105@bigpond.com

Special note: The Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks will host a visit to the Biodiversity Gallery on Tuesday 12th April between 3 pm and 5 pm. Again there will be an opportunity to dine together at the Skycity Buffet.

Friends of the GVD would be welcome to attend this event.

We thank Jan Forrest for her assistance in arranging these events.

For more information about the biodiversity gallery go to www.samuseum.sa.gov.au

Friends of the GVD have conducted vegetation studies to the standard required by DENR.

Each day, with the aid of GPS and compass, one hectare plots representative of the surrounding vegetation were marked out. A photo point was established in the corner of the plot. After morning tea, the plot was methodically examined for every plant species present. Specimens of every plant were collected, labelled, and pressed ready to be taken to the State Herbarium for positive identification. A total of 172 specimens was collected during the trip.

At the end of the day we returned to camp for happy hour which was a little different this trip because of the weather. We were bothered by unusually strong south winds and rain for most of the time we were away. A lot of the labelling and documentation was done back at camp in the shelter of one of the camper trailers. The rewards for each day's work came later, around the camp fire where relaxation and convivial company were elemental!!

Having spent 4 nights in such a beautiful desert camp, we shifted our base camp to a cleared spot north of Observatory Hill. A flat area of ground next to the shelter of a high dune was used because of the harsh weather. Great for the camper trailers but not good for the tents because the limestone was just under the surface and the tents were likely to blow away.....oh well!

The drive was taken at a very leisurely pace with plenty of time to look at anything of interest. We wondered what the funny shaped star dropper poles were that were spaced at one mile distances on the west side of the track. On closer examination, there were aluminium plates and paper clips at most of the sites – and Des put us out of our misery by confirming that they were “Sticky Plates” used in the monitoring of fallout during the Maralinga bomb tests.

There were further areas of large rabbit warrens indicating that the rabbits had made a big comeback, and lots more camels were seen. Further north the countryside took on a harsher appearance and the vegetation became sparser and hardier. Even so, the two surveys in this area rewarded us with some interesting and beautiful plants.

The surveys completed we travelled further north. As we approached Emu we passed some elegant stands of Myall trees, *Acacia papyrocarpa*. We made visits to the old tent city site, the airstrip and later on Ground Zero, Observation Point and Camera “C” site. At Emu there was a solo motor bike rider who was resting. He had come from Coober Pedy with intentions of travelling the length of the Anne Beadell Highway but his bike, and most likely his body, was suffering from the impact of all those corrugations. His plan was to have a rest and turn back!

Emu/Ground Zero was the site of the first mainland



Photos: Taranaki obelisk at 'ground zero'
The 'Blowhole'
Tietkens Well No 1
Sturt's Desert Pea, *Swainsona formosa*
“Sticky Plates”

Atomic Bomb test in 1953, and the history is well described in Len Beadell's book "Blast the Bush". Emu was abandoned after two atomic tests in favour of the more easily accessible Maralinga site. With limited rehabilitation, Emu is approved for short visits, but not for habitation. Dollops of black molten material on the ground show how the heat generated by the test bombs turned the desert sand to glass. Towards the distant horizon, circling the sombre concrete obelisks that marked the test sites, were two faint lines of trees which one can only imagine mark the outer perimeters of the major impacts of the test blasts.

The Anne Beadell Highway lived up to its reputation – the road with the worst corrugations in Australia! Bouncing eastwards we made two camps on the way to Coober Pedy and recorded a number of significant vegetation points for later consideration for interpretive signposting.

Around the camp fire on our second last night, talk turned to the impending Federal Election. Back to civilisation. Back to reality. It was almost over and the atmosphere was somewhat melancholic. We stared into the flames and thought about the last fortnight. The stars beamed down on us, the flames danced before our eyes. What more could anyone want?

Oh, um, pass the damper, please.

Photos (not already acknowledged):
Phil Gaukroger and
Jan de Wit



Photos: left Vegetation Marker
Vegetation survey work in progress
Checking the paperwork
The weather!

DIARY DATES

MEETINGS

NEXT MEETING: Friday 25th February, 2011 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. Jan Forrest - Biodiversity Gallery of the SAMuseum, from conception to the opening.

EXCURSION: Wednesday 2nd March out-of-hours tour of the SAMuseum Biodiversity Gallery meet 5.45 out the front of the Museum.

FOLLOWING MEETING DATE: 24th June at Camden Park

FIELD TRIP DATES: proposed 15th August 2011 at Ceduna, conclusion 26th August

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Neville Hudson	President	08 8556 6782
Gordon Smith	Secretary	08 8556 2308
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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