

FRIENDS of the GREAT VICTORIA DESERT PARKS

Newsletter Number 51 January, 2020.

GOOGS TRACK FIELD TRIP REPORT MAY 2019

Peter Facy

This year we split the trip into three groups, all with a separate project to carry out during the day and to meet back if possible to a common campsite each night where a discussion around the campfire on the day's activities would be carried out.

The three groups were –

Surface photographing of existing vegetation sites

Aerial photographing of existing vegetation sites with the drone

Inspection of Mallee Fowl "B category" nests

Phil Prust led the Drone team assisted by Jan & Pieter de Wit and Bob & Eleanor Baxter. Peter James led the Mallee Fowl team assisted by Sandra James and Peter & Margaret Wright. I led the Surface photographing group assisted by Nigel Facy and Bill and David Dowling.

We had 7 vehicles in total, Ian and Evan Jackson were to come but had their vehicle stolen from Evan's driveway the week before we were due to leave.

Continued page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

- Trip report - Peter Facy
- President's Report
- 2020 Field Trip overview
- Mallee fowl survey group report
- Wildlife Recovery Fund
- Call to Action
- AdAnimation
- BCSA Public talks program 2020
- Diary Dates and Websites.



TOP ROW L to R – Pieter de Wit, Peter Wright, Peter James. MIDDLE ROW – Phil Prust, Bob Baxter, Bill Dowling, Jan de Wit, David Dowling, Nigel Facy FRONT ROW – Eleanor Baxter, Sandra James, Peter Facy, Margaret Wright.



Photos top: "Denton Family Memorial" sign located above Goog Denton & his son's memorial plaques at Googs Lakes, Centre: David and Bill Dowling. Above: 'drone watching' Jan de Wit, Phil Prust & Bob Baxter.

President: Peter Wilson president@fgvd.org.au 0457913916

Vice President: Lynton Huxley

Secretary: Neil Matthews OAM secretary@fgvd.org.au

Treasurer: Peter Facy treasurer@fgvd.org.au

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

Newsletter Editor: Jan Forrest OAM jan_forrest@bigpond.com Articles 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 Sports SA Industry Skills Centre on Military Rd at West Beach (across the road from the West Beach Caravan park)

Webmaster: Bill Dowling C/- secretary@fgvd.org.au

Our book: 'Field Guide to Shrubs and Trees of the Great Victoria Desert' may be obtained from Peter Facy see email address above.



2019 PRESIDENT’S REPORT - Jan Forrest OAM

During 2019 one field trip was undertaken and thanks go to Peter Facy for organising this trip to Googs Track.



A comprehensive report on this trip is included in this Newsletter including information from Margaret Wright on the team managing the mallee fowl survey.

I would like to record with appreciation the support received from the MT Lands council and the NRM officers at Ceduna for their continued support. In particular Jasmin Wolf and Brett Backhouse. We are pleased also to welcome Robbie Sleep to his new role and we look forward to working with him.

The executive group met during October and have decided to run one trip only during 2020 and thanks go to Peter Facy for offering to be trip leader. The location for 2020 will be Cook/Voakes Hill road and west to WA on the business road see Peter Facy’s summary below. Expressions of interest for this trip to the Secretary by 29th February, 2020.

I have decided not to stand for President at the upcoming AGM however I am delighted to report that we have received nominations / expressions of interest for all three executive positions so the organisation will be in good hands.

Best wishes to all, it has been a privilege to be part of the Friends of the Great Victoria Desert executive team for the last five years and a special thanks to Peter Wilson, Neil Matthews and Peter Facy for your support over this last year.

FIELD TRIP 2020 - OVERVIEW

There will only be one Field Trip this year which will have four separate Teams operating under the one banner.

DATES

Meet in Ceduna for dinner at the Foreshore Hotel at 6pm on Sunday 21st June. Expect to be back in Ceduna on the evening of Tuesday 30th June, but could be extended for one day if conditions require.

TEAMS

- Quandong tree survey led by Lynton Huxley
Scientific surveys of Marble Gums and Birds led by Harald Ehmann
Surface photography of vegetation sites led by Peter Facy
Drone photography of vegetation sites led by Phil Prust

Each team will have a maximum of 3 vehicles including the leader making a total of 12 vehicles.

CAMPS

Apart from the camp on the Irish Well road on the way up we will be camping at the junction of the Cook / Voakes Hill road and the Business road west of Oak Valley for the entire time with each team radiating out each day to carry out their specific activities and returning to the same camp each night if practicable.

SURVEY AREAS

The majority of the area which will be worked in stretches from Cook in the south to Voakes Hill corner in the north and the WA border on the business road to Ooldea in the east depending each team’s itinerary.

The overall Team Leader will be Peter Facy

Peter will be away from April 14th to June 13th so it is imperative that most of the arrangements are set in place before then.

All Expressions of interest are to be received by February 29th 2020



Photos Jan Forrest

We met at the compound of the DEW offices at 50b McKenzie Street Ceduna at 9.00am and were addressed by Robbie Sleep, who is our new contact in Ceduna, Jasmin Wolf and Brett Backhouse, an informal discussion was then had involving most of the staff in the office which was quite rewarding.

Our first day's route for the two vegetation groups was to drive to Nalara Rocks to camp for the night carrying out our photographing on the way and leapfrogging each other on the way. The Mallee Fowl group stayed behind in Ceduna to be briefed by Brett Backhouse on how to carry out their survey and were to catch us up at Nalara Rocks for the night as none of their sites were on the lower Googs Track or the Nalara track but as the light faded they decided to camp at Googs Lakes and come on in the morning to join us visiting Childara Rockhole.

Day two, after visiting Childara Rockhole we drove back to Googs Lake campground photographing on the way.

Day three, we left our camp set up and drove out on to the Jellabinna track to photograph all the Vegetation sites along the way. The Mallee Fowl group began their surveys on Googs track we then all returned to Googs Lake camp ground for the night.

Day Four, we packed up camp and drove North on Googs Track all three groups leap frogging each other as we went about our surveys eventually making camp at the Mt Finke camp ground for a two night camp.

Day five, was a free day for most who took the opportunity to climb Mt Finke while some of my group photographed the remaining 6 veg sites around the area, we had our final campfire where we discussed each groups results.

Day six, Peter & Sandra James and Peter & Margaret Wright decided to stay longer at Mt Finke and terminate their Field trip whilst the rest of us continued on to Kingoonya and then South to Camp at Lake Gairdner National Park camp ground.

Day seven, home via Nonning & Pt Augusta
The Field Trip was a great success –

Phil Prust and his team flew the drone over 17 vegetation sites, bearing in mind these photo shoots are time consuming, it was a great effort on their part. Peter James and his team inspected some 26 "B" sites which again was a good effort as some of them



Photos: Top. Bill Dowling and Peter Facy undertaking ground vegetation photography. Above, Phil Prust and team setting up the drone for aerial photograph of vegetation sites.

were up to 850 metres from the road. (See attached Margaret Wright's complete report) and my team were successful in photographing all 30 veg sites.

This year we had three Father & Son teams, Nigel with me, David with Bill and Pieter with Jan, unfortunately Ian and his son Evan as explained previously were not able to come but it was great having our sons experiencing what we have been doing for many years.

Before we left Ceduna Robbie asked us to discuss what we thought of the tracks we were travelling on, so after a camp fire discussion the following was decided – neither Googs Track nor the Childara Rocks tracks should be maintained.

Perhaps a big sign at the dog fence gate at the Southern end be erected recommending (or even demanding) that tyres are to be lowered and trailers not to be taken.

Thanks to Margaret Wright for her comprehensive report on the Mallee Fowl nests.

Peter Facy
Trip leader

**MALLEE FOWL NEST SURVEY GROUP, GOOG'S TRACK TRIP,
17TH TO 23RD JUNE 2019.**

The task: Brett Backhouse of the Ceduna DEW asked us to check out if a series of “B category” GPS points taken from an LIDAR radar survey to establish if they were Mallee Fowl nests, or not.

Participants: Peter and Sandra James and Peter and Margaret Wright.

Of the 26 B sites we visited, none proved to be nests. One was a beautiful Spinifex plant that looked just the right shape and size. The others were all either dead or live plants with sand built up around them. From this experience we would say that it seems that the B's are unlikely to be nests and wonder if it is even worth putting effort into visiting the C & D's. We also wondered if drones might be effectively utilised to good effect to perform this task in the future.

We found it very disheartening on the first day to discover that nearly all the sites we went to, with some being up to 850 metres from the track, had clearly been previously visited.

The GPS points were very accurate. The ‘phone App’ proved easy to use, but a “non nest” short cut would have been useful. There was not a “Camel” foot print option.

The one proven nest site we were given to look at had recent Mallee Fowl prints around it but also cat prints. Two other separate sightings of fresh Mallee Fowl prints were seen on the track as we drove. These positions were recorded on the Department GPS #1. We would be interested to find out if there are any confirmed nests nearby. We also have photographs of these if they are required.

Except for birds we were surprised at the general lack of wild life we saw. We noticed many cat, fox and camel prints both old and new throughout our trip. Some dingo prints were seen by us but we neither saw nor heard any. A couple of other travellers did tell us they saw “three very healthy looking dingos just north of Goog’s Lake”. There was a lot more water in Goog’s Lake on the 18th than the 17th. We saw some very large dog prints on the edge of the lake and where some animal had dug a large hole. Two waterholes on top of Nalara Rocks had many rotting Emu’s in them. Do you know why? At Mt Finke we saw many large birds of prey, some were clearly Wedge Tail Eagles. We saw a few Emus and Kangaroos.



Photos M and P Wright. Top, yes this is a Mallee Fowl nest two above, no these were not nests.

A few comments on how we found the tracks, bearing in mind that we were in two OKA motor homes that would be a bit wider and certainly higher than the average vehicle traversing these tracks. The track, particularly on the way between Goog’s Lake and Nalara Rocks, was overgrown both on the sides and overhead in some places. Maybe some cutting back could be done to reduce vehicle damage. In our view the track itself should not be maintained. We agree that a closed season during summer would be a good idea for safety.

We saw one vehicle heading north towing a camper trailer, as it crossed a dune the trailer was bouncing 400mm off the ground on every scallop. Some of us would support towing restrictions. Rain had made the sand firmer.

Two of us climbed to the top of Mt. Finke to be rewarded with fabulous 360° views. A few markers would have been helpful particularly when it was time to find the track to descend. Other things to maybe think about in the future are information boards or pamphlets on flora, fauna, culturally significant and historical facts. Sandra and Peter had had some tracking training which proved helpful and interesting to Peter and Margaret. If another course was organised Peter and Margaret would be very interested in participating.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey we really enjoyed the experience and seeing this beautiful piece of country. We trust that our contribution will assist in improving the accuracy and effectiveness of future research.

Margaret Wright.

WILDLIFE RECOVERY FUND



The National Parks and Wildlife Service SA has joined forces with Nature Foundation SA to launch a fund assist with the recovery of fire-impacted flora and fauna.

While many community groups have mobilised to provide an immediate response to caring for injured wildlife, the wildlife recovery fund will be used to re-establish habitat, particularly for our most endangered and vulnerable species, both in parks and on private land.

Donations will go to local landholders, farmers and community groups in fire affected regions to urgently assist natural regeneration through activities including feral animal and weed control and fencing. This will give both threatened animal and plant life the best chance of recovery. All donations will be directed to wildlife and habitat restoration and donations \$2 and over are tax-deductible.

Funds will also be directed to restore habitat in fire-devastated national parks - particularly on Kangaroo Island.

Please do what you can to help promote this fund amongst your networks. Further information from: <https://www.naturefoundation.org.au/support-us/wildlife-recovery-fund>.

CALL TO ACTION

Ali Lawrence

Our country's creatures are paying the toll
For problems we've caused koala, bilby and quoll.
Endangered or rare, they've gone or they've nearly -
Did we care enough for them? Well, no, not really.

They've had their homes flattened by our heedless kind,
Until nothing remains – does anyone mind?
By things that went feral, countless got eaten,
Cats, dogs and foxes just thought this was Eden.

Our uncaring lifestyle is like a brick wall
To creatures with no protection at all
Against progress relentlessly taking place,
A juggernaut ploughing across the land's face.

Because they are merely bird, insect or lizard's
No reason to blight those with tails, wings or gizzards.
Thoughts and prayers aren't really much use,
In the face of such extreme abuse.

Don't look at the ground, shrug your shoulders and pout
And turn a blind eye, 'til they've all been wiped out.
Don't shed a croc's tear and rail at their fate –
Do something now, before it's too late!

If each of our species does just a fraction
It might make a difference, for nature needs action.
Sign a petition to save ancient trees,
Plant a bird habitat or a garden for bees.

Give your support to schemes that fill gaps
In ecosystems where there's a lack.
Protect and conserve or regret it in time,
As you gaze long and hard at the last of their kind.

One day we'll go looking and find they've all vanished
And our reputation will be again tarnished.
And their songs *won't* be heard as you camp by a billabong,
Because without fuss, they'll be going... going... gone.

AdAnimation – How Nature Can Save Us from Climate Breakdown

Natural Climate Solutions is an organisation that wants to help bring together two issues that have mostly been considered in isolation: climate breakdown and ecological breakdown.

They have created a short animation that shows that when living systems – like forests, peat bogs, saltmarshes and the seabed – are allowed to recover, they draw down carbon from the atmosphere, reducing the chances of climate catastrophe. Their restoration will also minimise extinction and ecological collapse, and create a richer world of wonders for us to enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9mjbzqqA_M&feature=youtu.be

**Butterfly Conservation
South Australia Inc.**

presents the tenth

**PUBLIC TALKS
PROGRAM for 2020**

On the first Tuesday of the month March to November at 6.15pm for a prompt 6.30pm start.

At the Plympton Community Centre

34 Long Street, Plympton.
(200 metres E of Marion Rd, and 300 metres N of Anzac Highway).

Public transport options include:

Bus from the city via Anzac Highway.

Routes: 245, 248, 262, 263, 265, M44, N262.
Closest stop is Stop 9, then approximately 350 metre walk along Long Street.

Bus from the city via Marion Road.

Routes 100, 101, H20. Closest stop is Stop 10 (east side is approximately 100 metres south of Long street). Stop 10 (west side is on the other side of Moringie Ave. approx. 100 metres north of Long Street). Then approx. 250 metre walk along Long Street.

Entry by donation (minimum of \$2).

Bookings not required

Please bring supper to share and your own cup, tea/coffee will be supplied.

Meetings should conclude by 8.30pm.

At the start of each meeting a ten minute presentation on a 'Butterfly of the Month' will be given by a BCSA committee member.

DON'T FORGET TO BYO CUP.

In the case of an advertised speaker not being available a speaker of similar interest will replace them.

Order for our new book *Caterpillars moths and their plants of southern Australia* McQuillan, PB., Forrest JA., Keane DK., and Grund R. 2019 may be made on-line via the BCSA website. For a signed copy put the words 'signed' in the coupon box.



www.butterflygardening.net.au



3rd March Natural enemies of butterflies. Presented by Emeritus Professor Dr. Michael Keller from the University of Adelaide. Butterflies die from attacks by a wide range of natural enemies including vertebrates, predators, parasitic insects and pathogens. This talk will describe the biology, behaviour and ecology of predatory and parasitic arthropods.

31st March (NEW DATE) Tales from the underground. Principal Researcher at the South Australian Museum Professor Steven Cooper, will investigate the diversity, evolution and molecular ecology of the Australian fauna and discuss the subterranean and groundwater invertebrate stygofauna found in the arid zone of Australia.

5th May Brain evolution of fossil fish and the first tetrapods. Presented by Dr Alice Clement from Flinders University. Fish gave rise to the first terrestrial vertebrates (tetrapods) some 400 million years ago. The changes that happened in their bodies over deep geological time can be studied via spectacular fossils, modern scanning techniques and comparison with living species. In doing so, we have uncovered some secrets of early brain evolution in fish and discovered what the brains of the first tetrapods, our ancestors, looked like.

2nd June: Weed management: Strategies and tactics. Professor of Weed Management at the University of Adelaide Dr. Chris Preston will discuss weeds, weed invasion and weed management. He will talk about why we have weeds, where they come from and what can be done about them including strategies and tactics for different types of weeds.

7th July Water in the Murray Darling Basin – its relevance and lessons for water management and conservation in Adelaide. University of Adelaide Adjunct Professor Wayne Meyer will set the context for considering water amounts, uses and variability. Prof Meyer will discuss the changing governance and management in the Murray Darling Basin and what we should know about water in greater Adelaide in relation to its management and conservation.

4th August A day in the life of a zookeeper. The Assistant Curator of natives and primates at Monarto Zoo, Louise Stockburger, will provide a fascinating insight into behind the scenes of one Australia's most prestigious zoos.

1st Sept. 6.30pm BCSA AGM 7.00pm Public Talk Biological Surveys in Australia and their value to science. Dr. Cath Kemper, Curator of Mammals at the South Australian Museum has undertaken vertebrate surveys in outback Australia for the best part of thirty years. She will talk about and show images of some amazing outback locations and important vertebrate finds and will explain why Museums collect and how these collections not only provide us with important distribution data but are pivotal to future conservation efforts.

6th Oct. Maralinga and Emu, a dark chapter in Australia's history. Jan Forrest OAM will trace the history of the British atomic bomb tests at Emu Field and Maralinga in the 1950s and present images of the flora and fauna presently found in this remarkable area of the South Australian landscape.

3rd Nov. 20 years of monitoring butterflies - BCSA committee member Bryan Haywood will provide an historic overview of the Penambol Butterfly Walk including how to set one up and the findings after 20 years of monitoring at this site. He will also highlight some of SA South East butterfly species and the conservation efforts currently being undertaken to conserve them.

DIARY DATES

MEETINGS

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Our next meeting will be at **7:30 pm on Friday 5th June 2020** at the Sports SA Industry Skills Centre on Military Rd at West Beach (across the road from the West Beach Caravan park). All members and prospective members are welcome. The agenda will be available before the meeting in the member's area of the website <http://www.communitywebs.org/fgvd/>

2020 MEETING DATES: Friday **6th November** at the Sports SA Industry Skills Centre as above.

2020 IELD TRIP: At Ceduna for dinner at the Foreshore Hotel at 6pm on Sunday 21st June. return to Ceduna on the evening of Tuesday 30th June, but could be extended for one day if conditions require.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Peter Wilson	President	president@fgvd.org.au
Lynton Huxley	Vice President	
Neil Matthews OAM	Secretary	secretary@fgvd.org.au
Peter Facy	Treasurer	treasurer@fgvd.org.au

WEB LINKS

DEH information on Mamungari Conservation Park:
<http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/mamungari/index.htm>
Friends of Great Victoria Desert:
<http://www.communitywebs.org/fgvd/>