

FRIENDS of VULKATHUNHA-GAMMON RANGES NATIONAL PARK Inc.

NEWSLETTER

No. 24. JANUARY 2023

Editor - Graeme Oats

BEFORE THE RAINS

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Grant News

The Friends have been successful in obtaining two grants through the Dept. for Environment & Water and Friends of Parks Small Grants Program 2022-23. A grant for partial reimbursement of fuel costs for vehicle providers for Balcanoona and Weetootla Projects for 2023 and another for some members to attend a Remote Areas First Aid course conducted by St John. These build on the recent success of an Arid Lands Grassroots Grant to produce a multipage brochure of the *Most commonly seen birds in the Northern Flinders and Arkaroola*.

The Copley - Balcanoona Connection

During 2022, several Friends members made contact with Copley people involved with their Community Garden and Botanic Garden, initiatives of the Copley & Districts Progress Association (CDPA). Our key contacts are Ron Johnston, volunteer coordinator of the Copley Revegetation Project and Theres Bertram, Secretary of the CDPA. Their facilities are extensive, including a purpose-built propagation area, an enclosed community garden and storage area, all built around an old horse stable.

In early December 2022, Martin, Graeme and Roger spent two days in Copley with Ron and some of his re-veg volunteers and Theres. The visit provided an opportunity to commence a shared understanding of the Copley Reveg Project, the Balcanoona Reveg Project, and explore how we might be able to support each other and work together.

One practical outcome of the visit was working together to propagate a large number of tube stock using Balcanoona sourced seeds using Copley's facilities, resources and expertise. The intention is to share the successful seedlings between the Copley and Balcanoona projects.

Propagation summary: 300 quandong tubes for Copley and 20 for Balcanoona; 80 Iga tubes (low confidence of success rate); 12 Sandalwood into a tray of vermiculite; 100 Curly Mallee, to be shared; 20 Red Mallee, to be shared; 30 *Pittosporum* (Native Apricot) for Balcanoona.

Some of the seeds collected and mailed by Sian were sent onto Ron for propagation at Copley.

Several Copley people are keen to visit Balcanoona in 2023 to have a closer look at what we are up to and work together onsite. Some have already become members of our Friends group. Having members from local towns and districts has been an intent of the Friends.

The joint propagation effort at Copley has identified some interesting opportunities which are worthy of our consideration.

- Copley is in the arid lands where plants grow, the environment is dry. Propagation success is expected to be higher and propagation can commence at times other than Summer in Adelaide.
- Propagation in a team setting was very enjoyable. The opportunity for some of our propagation effort to be undertaken at Copley, after a Balcanoona trip, on the way back to Adelaide was keenly supported by the Copley people and the Balcanoona visitors.



Copley Propagation shade house



Trays of Friend's seeds

Balcanoona Re-Vegetation Activities - August/September 2022

Volunteer and Ranger Engagement

Friends involved included Nicki, Greg and Barbara & Peter (August): and Marg & Richard, Lynne & Bill, Graeme and Roger (September). Friends involved with the Weetootla monitoring work also assisted with revegetation work, general tidying up of excess pegs and guards and formalising photo point monitoring sites.

About 85 plants propagated by Nicki, Barbara, Martin, Lynne, Marg and Roger were brought up to Balcanoona; all were planted out with mulch mats, fertiliser, guards and irrigation support.

Valuable time was spent with rangers Sian and Jesse including a trip to Lake Frome where the rangers were preparing for a construction team to build a shelter for visitors. Sian pointed out variegated Sturt Desert Pea growing along the way. Native apricot seeds were collected from the Lake.

In addition to planting out, time was spent on some local walks, visiting Lake Frome, Weetootla and Arkaroola, seed and cutting collection from around Balcanoona and the creek, tidying up, stock take and progressing propagation planning for 2023.

Maintenance & Plantings: All plants in all areas were checked, re-mounded as needed, lines flushed out and drippers checked and adjusted. Plants, including, Vildalda (Silver Mulla Mulla) a Mayaka (bush banana), Manduwarras, Hibiscus, Ulka, Minga (Elegant wattle), Arladu (Desert paperbark), Senna and few Myoporum cuttings in with Uti without host plants were planted out. Six quandongs were planted using existing saltbush plants as hosts

One Warrridi (Butterfly Bush) was planted near the tap system to replace a dead plant.

In the Mound Area 8 plants using nearby irrigation plus 6 native myrtles and myoporium were transplanted by Sian. Six Lemon-scented Grass and 2 Vildalda were planted on the northern side of the Mound.

The location of photo points to monitor changes in vegetation were reviewed and photos taken from each point in order to compare re-veg progress over time.

Revegetation progress to date

Our planting program got underway in 2019 with a limited number and range of species, mainly Curly Mallee (Manduwarra). Friends collect seeds and cuttings from a wide range of plants from around Balcanoona and local environs for propagation at home over the summer. This year Sian collected and mailed to Friends mature seeds of Sturt Desert Pea, Darling Pea, Balcanoona Wattle, Silver Wattle and SA Christmas Bush. We now have around 25 different species which can be propagated including trees, shrubs, smaller plants and grasses.

At the end of 2022, about 700 plants are being supported, of which about 500 have been propagated and planted out by Friends. After 4 years, with the help of good seasonal rains, ongoing onsite support by our rangers, irrigation support, checking and maintenance by Friends on their periodic working bees, we can now see, at last, the progress being made.



Left: A Curly Mallee (Manduwarra) planted out in 2019, now over 2 metres high and wide.



Right: A River Red Gum (Wira) planted out in 2021 now over 1 metre high.

Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Inc.



Annual General Meeting.

Will be held at the Fullarton Park Community Centre
Friday 10th March 2023 @ 7.30 pm.

GUEST SPEAKER - Mr. JASON IRVING

UPDATE ON FLINDERS RANGES BID FOR WORLD HERITAGE LISTING & NILPENA EDIACARA NATIONAL PARK

Jason (pictured) Director, National Parks Programs in the South Australian Department for Environment and Water. He is managing the nomination of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage listing and has overseen the establishment of the Nilpena Ediacara National Park. He is chair of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board and deputy member of the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board.

2023 PARK VISITS

BALCANOONA REVEGETATION PROJECT

May 22 - 29

June 29 to July 6

September 14 - 21

WEETOOTLA WATER & FISH MONITORING

May 15 - 22

September 21 - 28

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

The project coordinators would welcome expressions of interest from members who are interested in joining the teams this year. Please contact any of the leaders.

Weetootla Monitoring - Martin Caon – m.caon56@gmail.com

Balcanoona Re-vegetation Project – Roger Mathers – roger_mathers@yahoo.com

(Please note there is an underscore between roger & mathers)

New Friends Website

The Friends Committee agreed to establish a new website. The original website was always meant to be temporary that was kindly undertaken by member and former Secretary, Ray Hickman. The Committee engaged a recommended a local web design company (Daedalus SA Pty Ltd). The new site is active and can be accessed here - [VGRNP](#)

New Ridge Walk at Balcanoona



Sian updated us on the plans and developments relating to the local ridge walk. It appears that once a local elder has walked and checked the trail, implementation can then proceed. Sian reaffirmed her support for the “directional dial” for the top of the ridge walk and asked the Friends to prepare a brief concept proposal for consideration by the CMB.

The 5 varieties of *Swainsona formosa* – Sturt's Desert Pea

Member of the [Fabaceae](#) family

Isobel Barrett

On a trip to Oocaboolina, 24-30 July 2022, we spent an afternoon in search of the Sturt Desert Pea and weren't disappointed. As we walked along the side of the creek near the Italowie Camp Ground the brilliant red flowers with shiny black centres were all around us and creeping up the hillsides giving an awe-inspiring display. I wondered if William Dampier in 1699 and Charles Sturt in 1844 had the same feelings when they first saw this unique looking flower.



As we reluctantly walked back to the cars, I found a patch of red and black Sturt Desert Peas that surrounded a plant of completely pink ones, the first like this any of us had seen and there was great excitement.

A few weeks later at Balcanoona, 19-26 August, we enjoyed a trip to Lake Frome. I had been told by a friend that,

white Sturt Desert Peas could be found somewhere along this 38km drive. The sides of the road abounded with colour of striking red which appeared to stretch for a few hundred metres and other patches dotting the landscape along the way. It seemed the extra rain this year had given rise to a colourful display.



Being unsuccessful that day, I took some time another afternoon, with Judy Harvey, to explore yet again and was overjoyed when finding a plant of Sturt Desert Peas with creamy white petals and pink purple centre or boss.

Hoping I would find more I kept searching. My efforts were rewarded, but in an unexpected way, as I came across plants with all red flowers, reminiscent of the

all pink ones and another plant which had completely gone to seed. (Photos, next page)



Now I was hoping to find an all pink again but to my delight and amazement a patch of beautiful Tricolour flowers were intermingled with the red and black. The top of the flower is red; the bottom is purple black and the lower petals pure white with a red outline. To me, they were just as striking as the red and black.



As we returned to Balcanoona I wondered what Isaac Swainson, the naturalist, after whom the flowers have their botanical name, would have thought about these mutations.

Back at Balcanoona there was enthusiasm to also see the plants, so we set off again. It was just as thrilling to see them for a second time.

In a paper published online on 11 April 2018, by The Board of the Botanic Gardens & State Herbarium (Adelaide, South Australia);

“The Adnyamathanha word for the species, ngarapanha, can be translated as ‘little liar’, as it was thought to deceive locals into thinking there was water nearby. This name is fitting in a botanical sense as well, as the Sturt Pea is quite distinct from its closest relatives and has often deceived botanists. It’s large, striking red flowers are very different from the other species in the genus Swainsona Salisb (Swainsona Salisb is the common pea flower found in a variety of colours)

It seems the Sturt Desert Pea has underlying secrets of not only colour but also formation.



Ed: - All photos in this article by Isobel Barrett.

Oocaboolina Report

Completion of Refurbishment

The project to make the building safe and secure has been completed. There are a few minor interior tasks to be undertaken. These will not enhance the safe or secure situation. No working bees are planned for 2023. The last two major jobs of installing a ceiling in the porch and security screens to bedroom 1 were completed in July.



Future Use

President Martin wrote to Tony Magor (DEW) in August enquiring as to the future use of Oocaboolina. Tony replied (In part) –
“The Board decided that Oocaboolina outstation be maintained to a basic standard, for use by the Friends of VGRNP as a base of operations. If the Friends group seek to undertake further works, these works should be minor and/or easily removed to ensure flexibility for the building to be used in various ways in the future e.g. as a museum, base for cultural tours, accommodation, etc. Also, these works would need to be endorsed by the Board on a case-by-case basis”

Both Ranger Sian and District Ranger Dave were advised by email as follows, in part - *“..... the Friends have completed the refurbishment, bar a couple of minor jobs which will take two people about 2 days to complete. It is likely that these will be carried out when members are working at Balcanoona and will drive around to Oocaboolina for a day or two.”*



Mogurnda clivicola (Flinders Ranges Mogurnda)

The Friends have submitted second article describing the Friends' water and fish monitoring work, to the journal: Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, entitled: "*Mogurnda clivicola* (Flinders Ranges Mogurnda): Growth rate in the wild and further results of a monitoring program". The manuscript is currently under review by expert reviewers and will be posted on the publications page of our website when accepted. The co-authors (Martin Caon, Raymond Hickman, Robert Gabb, Mike Tanner, Garry Trethewey and Robert Brandle) wish to thank the Friends volunteers who helped to collect the data for the publication by fishing and recording measurements.



The first article submitted to the transactions RS of SA can be found here -

[AsPublishedWaterqualityparametersandpopulationcharacteristicsfortheFlindersRangesGudgeon \(1\).pdf](#)