Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Inc.

NEWSLETTER No. 34 **December 2025**

Balcanoona Homestead circa 1928

Editor – Graeme Oats

Merry Christmas to you all and thanks for your support during 2025. We look forward to catching up in 2026.
Martin, Nicki, Graeme, Mike & Dennis - Friend's Committee

Five visits are planned to Vulkathunha GRNP in 2026.

You may choose any number of visits to attend if you are joining a working group to the Park in 2026. Just let the organiser know your intentions.

- **Balcanoona for monitoring of Fish and Water Quality** will be in **April** (**Sat 11 to Sat 18**), and in **September** (**Mon 14 to Mon 21**). Contact Martin (m.caon56@gmail.com) to express your interest.
- **Balcanoona re-vegetation** will be in **April** (**Sat 18 to Sat 25**), and ~~in~~ **August** (**Sat 1 to Sat 8**). Contact Roger (roger_mathers@yahoo.com) to express your interest. (**NOTE**: - there is an "underscore" between Roger and Mathers)
- **Idninha Outstation Renovation**, One visit only in 2026. The Friends will camp at Mainwater Camp Ground to continue the renovation of Idninha. **The date will be announced in early 2026**. Email Dennis (dennisjury1@gmail.com) to express your interest.

Old Illinawortina Ruins

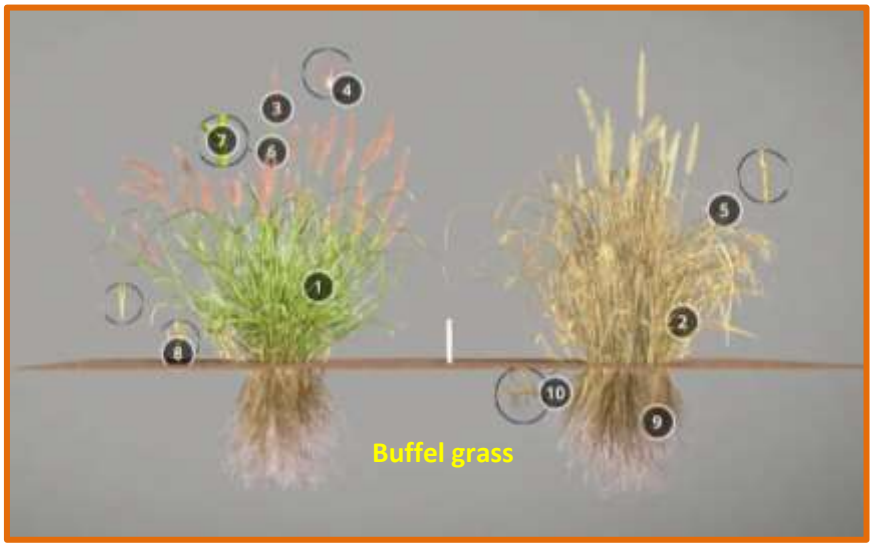
Weed Identification and Weeding

National Parks are great places to see native bush and animals. However, they also contain feral animals and plants. My eyes can't not see the weeds that grow there. Below are six examples of weeds that we have found in Vulkathunha NP. Here is a great plant website to explore - the Plants of South Australia website: https://syzygium.xyz/ which allows you to elect to see plants from the Northern Flinders (= FLB05 Northern Flinders, Arkaroola, and Gammon Ranges) - as well as Jewel Beetles (!)

Chris Brodie (the Weeds Botanist) & his team at the State Herbarium are keen to receive samples of pressed plants with a "data sheet" for identification. Such specimens also allow them to map the distribution of weeds and be aware of their spread. These specimens **must** be accompanied by a filled-in Data Sheet (see below for some data sheets and an image of a plant press).

Tobacco tree (*Nicotiana glauca*), growing to 3-4m tall is an introduced species from South America that is considered an **environmental weed** (a plant that spreads outside of its intended growing area (like a garden) and negatively impacts natural ecosystems). The Friends of VGRNP pull it up when we find some in the Weetootla Gorge. Big ones we cut off with a saw, then swab the stump with herbicide.

Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) is a **declared plant** in South Australia (landowners have a legal responsibility to control it under the South Australian Natural Resources Management Act 2004). It was first recorded as naturalised in Australia by the 1840s. This was common in Weetootla Gorge in 2019 but seems less so now. We have pulled it out on occasion and removed any flowers to destroy later.



Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris* and *Cenchrus pennisetiformis*) is an introduced perennial tussock grass and a **declared** weed. It burns hotter and more frequently than native vegetation, killing larger shrubs and trees, and regenerates more quickly after fire events, transforming diverse healthy landscapes into grasslands, creating a monoculture. There is some progressing upstream in Balcanoona Creek from the Moomba Gas pipeline Road.

Datura seed pod

Thornapple (*Datura sp.*) is a robust, bushy, annual herb that grows to 1.2 m high and has bright green leaves and white or lilac tubular flowers. Are poisonous, with all parts of the plant containing dangerous levels of anticholinergic tropane alkaloids and ingesting them can be fatal. We pulled out some from the Weetootla Campground in April 2022.

Salvation Jane (*Echium plantagineum*) is an erect, annual ornamental plant with purple flowers, reaching about 60cm. We see its rosettes in Weetootla Gorge. And they can be grubbed up by kicking them out with the toe of your walking boot!

S Jane (or Patterson's Curse) rosette

Athel Pine (*Tamarix aphylla*) is a tree with weeping branches that is not a true conifer (pine), but rather an angiosperm (a flowering plant). It is **a weed of national significance** (a plant species identified as a major threat to the environment, economy, and/or society due to its invasiveness and potential for spread.) The Oocaboolina restoration crew removed and destroyed some at the Oocaboolina outstation (It wasn't easy!).

Athel Pine/Tamarisk

A Plant Press. Notes
1. Sturdy wood or metal frame;
2. Corrugated cardboard separators to allow air flow for drying;
3. Newspaper in which to place plants to absorb moisture for drying;
4. Tie down straps/belts to exert pressure.

Martin Caon, July 2025

Plant name: *(if known)*

Collector surname:..... **Initial(s)**: .....

Collection number: **Collection date**: / / 20

Locality: State: Region: *(if known)*:.....

Description: *(km-direction-from–place name / reserve name /address / proximity to roadside / river / creek / landmark / property owner / Not hundreds and sections)*

.....

.....

.....

Geocode: Lat:..... S Long:..... E

OR UTM. Zone: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ E _ _ _ _ _ _ _ N Map ☐ GPS ☐

Frequency *(population number or size / area covered / how common in area)*:

.....

.....

Habit: *(form: tree, shrub, herb, grass, bulb, etc.; size: height & width; features: shape, flower & fruit colour, scent; other: variation, bark texture, leaves, etc.)*

.....

.....

Habitat: *(e.g. grassland, woodland, dunes, road verge, pasture, associated plants)*

.....

.....

.....

Collecting notes: *(interesting observations; how long the species has been there)*

.....

.....

Permission to collect is essential.

Plant specimens without permission information will not be added to the State Herbarium collection.

Please mark (x) relevant option(s), and supply details.

☐ Permit number (supply here): .....

.....

☐ Private or public land - written consent from: .....

.....

☐ Private or public land - verbal consent from: .....

.....

Your contact details:

Name: .....

.....

Phone or Mobile number:

.....

Email:

.....

For identification of your weed or suspected weed:
Please complete this pro-forma (using a pencil), providing details for all headings in **bold** including permissions, and return with the pressed plant specimen to:

Chris Brodie, Weeds Botanist,
State Herbarium of South Australia,
Adelaide Botanic Garden,
Hackney Road, Adelaide, SA 5000.

email: chris.brodie@sa.gov.au
Ph: (08) 8222 9468, Mobile: 0437 825 685

For official use only
Please leave blank

Save the Date!

Dr Elisa Sparrow of the Arid Lands Landscape Board is planning to monitor for the presence of translocated Flinders Ranges Mogurnda in the Hookina Creek Spring at the Yappala Indigenous Protected Area (near Hawker), early in 2026. She has asked for the assistance of the Friends of Vulkathunha-GRNP. I have said that I am willing to help.

While the dates have not been finalised, the proposed dates at this stage are either: on **2-6 February or 2-6 March 2026** – dates to be confirmed. In the mean-time if you are interested in being involved in this monitoring, let me know (m.caon56@gmail.com)

The visit is funded by the ALLB and includes accommodation at Hawker, fuel & food. The purpose of monitoring is it to educate the Yappala Rangers so that they can monitor the fish in future and also to monitor the translocated fish to check the continuing viability of the population (they were extensively surveyed, and the translocation confirmed to be successful so far, by Rob Brandle – and some Friends of V-GRNP - in February 2025).

Martin Caon

Purple patch for endangered Flinders fish

DEW – Environment News - 11 July 2025

The critically endangered purple-spotted gudgeon is making an encouraging return to South Australia's Far North as part of a project to increase its resilience to our changing climate.

The number of Flinders' Ranges purple-spotted gudgeons has more than doubled to about 1300 at Bunyeroo Creek in Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and Hookina Creek on Yappala Indigenous Protected Area since their May 2021 translocation.

It is one of 11 Bounceback projects the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and philanthropic conservation organisation Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) are undertaking in the Flinders, Gawler and Gammon ranges over three years.

The projects help increase climate resilience and create potential refuges for species reliant on cooler, wetter, higher areas of the Flinders Ranges.

About 600 fish were moved from Weetootla Spring at Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park and Nepowie Spring at Wooltana Station as part of Bounceback.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Senior Conservation Ecologist Rob Brandle said it was heartening to see conservation efforts being rewarded.

"We are delighted that the survey results show the translocations of purple-spotted gudgeons have succeeded at both sites," Mr Brandle said.

"The post 2022 floods and current dry conditions highlight the species' resilience to a changing climate and give us confidence about their future."

The same partnership has already successfully reintroduced western quolls and brushtail possums to the Flinders Ranges, and is working to establish red-tailed phascogales in the Gawler Ranges.

FAME Chief Executive Tracy McNamara said: "What we're seeing isn't just the return of a small, critically endangered fish; it's a signal that tenacious ecosystems can be rebuilt."

"With bold vision, deep collaboration and decisive action, we can give species the best chance to adapt and survive in a changing climate."

The Flinders Ranges purple-spotted gudgeon (Wirti Udla Varri), also known as the Flinders Ranges Mogurnda, is listed as critically endangered in South Australia.

Increased numbers and mix of sizes show the translocations have produced self-sustaining populations that help increase resilience to climate change by reducing the risk of extinction if the original springs dried during an intense drought.

DNA was collected and will be analysed to determine the gudgeons genetic health and any potential breeding risks that would require intervention.

FRIEND'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FRIDAY 20th MARCH 2026 - 7.30pm
FULLARTON PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE
GUEST SPEAKER – TBA.

Balcanoona Re-Vegetation
Trip Leader's Report August 2025

Introduction:

We had a small group on this trip, yet much was accomplished. Five friends were involved in a range of re-veg and plant identification activities: Chris & Greg, Jill, Nicki and Roger.

During this trip, the Re-veg program has taken a significant step towards "maintenance" of the various re-veg areas. The new area, Area 8 was planted out with irrigation support and additional infill plantings progressed in other areas. The focus now will be on infill plantings in particular, smaller plants and grasses, and encouraging natural regeneration. The irrigation infrastructure is now complete but will require ongoing checking and maintenance to ensure it continues to operate effectively.

Natural regeneration continues to progress throughout the reveg area with many plantings now coexisting with additional species that have germinated from seeds from surrounding established plants as illustrated in the above photos. The first one shows a young Native Myrtle *Myoporum montanum* and the second a young Broombush *Eremophila scoparia*, both growing beside our Curly Mallee plantings, while the third one shows native grasses that have germinated around an early Desert Rose planting that has since died but is providing protection for the grasses to establish.

Plantings:

Around 70 tube stock was planted out propagated by Friends Lynne, Nicki, Barbara, Martin, Roger and Ron at Copley. A few smaller plants were returned to Adelaide for potting up.

The major planting effort was in Area 8 across the road near the Visitors' Facilities where 48 tube stock were planted out and 6 plantings already in place were included in the irrigation system. Sian prepared the way by digging holes with the backhoe.

22 tube stock was planted out in Area 2, 3, 4 and 7 (carpark area). The earlier plantings in Area 4 north and south of the historic SQ foundation have held up very well with only three losses that were replaced with new plants.

Planting practices Of note was the planting out of several species including Native Apricot in Area 2 next to dead saltbushes where the dead plant structure will encourage accumulation of leaf litter and seeds to facilitate natural regeneration.

It seems that kangaroos enjoy "boxing" plant guards rather than destroying young Curly Mallee seedlings. As a trial, new plantings of Curly Mallee were marked by a single stake without a guard.

Planting out in a slightly deeper hole provides for better water retention and better capturing of leaf litter, as well reduced need to
maintain mounds around plants.
Sian reported that the corflute guards used in Weetootla tended to "cook" the plants in the hot summer period. The Balcanoona re-veg experience confirms such an approach so we will not be using them for any new plantings.

Maintenance and Irrigation: Apart for Area 1, all drippers in other areas were adjusted, plants fertilized and given a good watering. After adjusting drippers, they often quickly block up again giving a much-reduced flow. In Area 2B (southern section) all dripper bases were scrubbed and dripper heads replaced with cleaned drippers heads giving a reliable water flow. The progressive replacement of dripper heads with new or vinegar-cleaned heads will form part of the ongoing maintenance of our plantings.

As mentioned earlier, the irrigation system (and main plantings) is now complete enabling us to focus more on in-fill plantings and natural regeneration.

Seed and plant material collection: Seeds were collected from the Park including Curly Mallee, Gum Barked Coolabah, Beaked Red Mallee, Bush Banana, Native Apricot, Lemon-scented Grass and Native Pine. Cuttings of Eremophila were also taken.

As before, Sian agreed to collect seeds on our behalf and mail on to us, especially small to medium sized species. Heather's list of such species will be forwarded to Sian, many of which are already present in the plantings.

The re-veg group will need to refine its seed collection and propagation program to reflect to the requirements of the "maintenance" phase and infill plantings of shrubs and grasses rather than trees.

Photos of revegetation progress: Using the established photo points, Chris took pictures of propagation progress. Additional photo points were added to Areas 4 and 8. Also, using some selected photos taken at the commencement of Balcanoona re-veg project, some 'before' and 'after'

pictures from the same location were progressed to reveal the changes made over some 6 or 7 years. This comparison work is ongoing.

Plant identification and documentation: Chris & Greg with Friends continued collecting, analysing and photographing plant material from the Park for the plant booklet.

Chris visited a number of sites to fill in gaps for photos needed for the Booklet. This included several sites on Mt Hopeless Road, Italowie Gorge and checking the Reveg flowering plants, where there were more *Amegilla scoparia* (Teddy Bear Bees) seen than ever before! Our Eremophila, especially the *E. maculata* bushes are really drawing them in! Also, Sian took Chris to Mainwater Creek where the creek bed had been flooded to 2-3 metres during the rains a few months ago. Invariably a few 'new to us' species were found! Each evening Chris and Nicki spent several hours sorting and working out IDs.

The new BBQ Area: Camp Hosts/Volunteer Rangers Ant and Jane from Kangaroo Island did a great job paving under the new BBQ shelter area, building a long table cleverly incorporating the old Gammon Ranges NP sign. To complete the look Sian made an impressive chandelier, outback style, using a roll of old barbed wire and fairy lights! Drinks and nibbles were held with a roaring fire in the fire pit, to celebrate the completion of the project.

Stocktake: Additional items were identified: Pack of medium sized wooden stakes; packet of drippers; 19mm end tap; a pressure reducer for the 25mm header in Area 8.

Our stock of 25mm and 13mm is practically finished. For Balcanoona, further irrigation lines are not envisaged. Yet, further irrigation lines maybe required at Weetootla Campground.

The tubes on the tyres on our tool cart were not able keep a pressure. The wheels were removed so the inner tubes and valves can be checked by a local Adelaide tyre dealer. We had the same problem a couple of years back.

Jobs yet to be progressed: Due to limited resources, several jobs were not progressed. Priority was given to planting and irrigation.

Jobs for future trips and completion include - Completion of gravel path to Trail Head [completed, thanks to the Fish & Water Monitors]; Progressing placement of plant labels; Wording, pictures and layout for the sign describing the Balcanoona Re Veg project; Secure hooks and place tools on wall board; Secure flagging tape on re-veg tools; Progressing the 'before' and 'after' pictures.

Photos by Chris, Nicki & Roger

Roger Mathers, Re-Veg Coordinator

Members Visit Currency Creek Arboretum

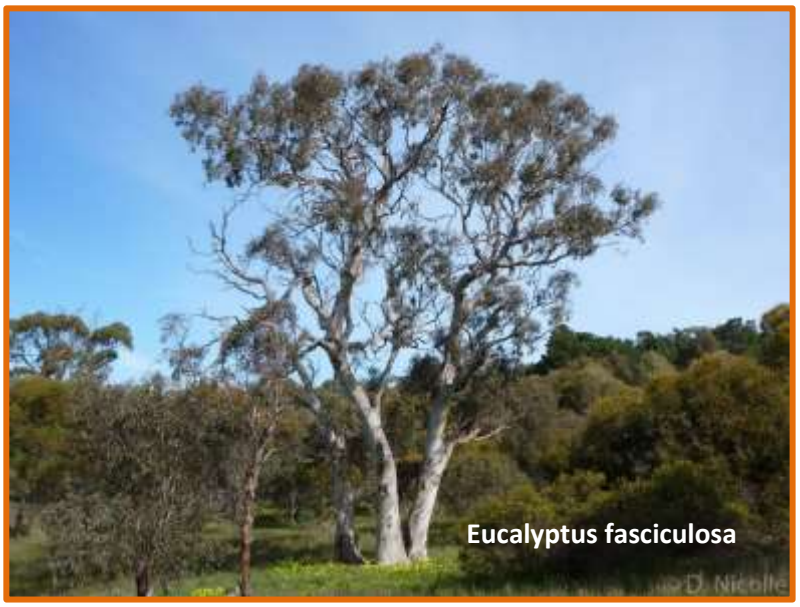
Our social get together this year was to the “Zoo of Trees” – a name given to the Currency Creek Arboretum (CCA) by its owner, Dean Nicolle. Eleven members and partners enjoyed following Dean on a two hour tour on a calm and sunny spring morning around his 80 acre property.

Following the tour we gathered at the nearby Currency Creek Lions Park for a lunch and chat.

Currency Creek Arboretum is a specialist eucalypt arboretum ('zoo of trees'), with its main purpose being research into Australia's most dominant natural group of plants, the eucalypts.

CCA was established and is managed by Dean Nicolle and is largely self-funded. The arboretum has the largest collection of eucalypt species in the world, with over 950 species and subspecies (and over 10,000 individual plants) having been planted on the site, more than double the number of eucalypt taxa being grown on any other one site elsewhere. Major plantings continue at CCA most years.

All plants growing at CCA have been grown from seed collected from wild populations along with accompanying dried and pressed herbarium specimens of the parent (seed or mother) tree, with specimens mostly housed at herbaria in Adelaide, Canberra and Perth. Other data collected at the time of each seed collection includes GPS locality information and other field recorded individual and site data including associated eucalypt taxa, which help when identifying and isolating hybrid seedling progeny. Eight seedlings of each accession (mother-tree) are grown as part of the CCA project, with four seedlings planted out at CCA and the remainder being pressed and dried as a preserved seedling specimens and housed at Adelaide or Perth. A complete voucher is therefore present for every accession grown at CCA.



Graeme Oats

Re-veg Tips from Visit to Currency Creek Arboretum

Several valuable ideas emerged from our visit which the Re Veg team could consider in relation to Balcanoona and other areas in the Park. They centred on the use of plant guards and soil preparation prior to planting.

Plant guards:

Open wire mesh guards are used enabling light and air to flow by the young plant.

Corflute guards are not used or supported as they restrict air and light and create unnatural and unhealthy conditions for the plants.

Mallee Mesh guards which we used is not preferred as they are somewhat fragile. A relatively sturdy circular chicken wire guard is used with one sturdy stake.

The wire guards are not removed as the plant grows through the mesh. Keeping the guard in place gives protection to the plant from invasive kangaroos. When the plant is of sufficient size to no longer require the guard, the guard is sacrificed by cutting the wire to free the branches.

Soil preparation:

Prior the planting out, a ripper is used to create a long trench. Seedlings are planted out in the trench at a standard distance apart. Seedlings are watered periodically by hand over the first summer period. The trench captures additional water from natural rainfall which will be of benefit to the plant as it grows. The trench captures leaf litter and moisture and encourages natural regeneration. Ideally, trenching along natural land contours is preferred.

Roger Mathers

New Faces & Flavours in the Northern Flinders

YouTube – here

The Northern Flinders Ranges, in Outback South Australia, is a region of rugged mountains, vast saltbush plains and deep cultural history. With its powerful Adnyamathanha heritage, striking natural beauty and welcoming communities, the region continues to inspire new generations of locals, travellers and business owners.

In this video, we meet three new hospitality operators who have brought fresh energy and ideas to two iconic Flinders Ranges towns —Leigh Creek and Beltana.
Dale McPeake, owner of the Sassy Emu Tearoom in Leigh Creek, shares how a spontaneous road trip north turned into a life-changing decision to stay and create a calm, creative space for locals and travellers alike.
Baljit Singh Bajwa, publican of the Leigh Creek Tavern, talks about reviving a large regional hotel and his vision for growing tourism, community events and outback experiences.
Jan and Chris Ferguson, from the Royal Victoria Hotel in Beltana, explain how preserving an historic outback pub became a passion project and a way to connect visitors with the town's rich history.

PUBLISHED ON YouTube BY OUTBACK COMMUNITIES AUTHORITY

Explore the Ediacara biota in an interactive environment.

This article is published with approval from *2025 Inspiring South Australia on 10th December 2025.*

Over half-a-billion years ago, mysterious animals without bones or predators populated the ocean floor. These were the Ediacara Biota, the earliest known complex lifeforms on the Earth.

A new educational resource brings the story of the world's earliest complex life to a global audience. Whether you're a student, a scientist, or a curious explorer, delve into fossil analysis and interactive tools, all informed by the latest research.

Focused on four key Ediacaran organisms and the microbial mats that sustained them, the site allows visitors to explore animated seafloor environments, interactive 3D models, and insights into the pioneering palaeontological work at Nilpena Ediacara National Park.
Click here - Foundation - Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation

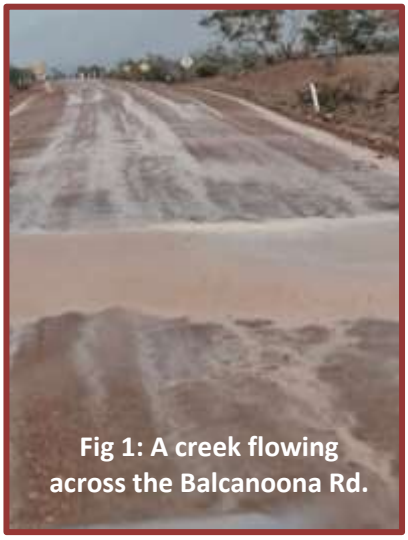


Fig 1: A creek flowing across the Balcanoona Rd.

Balcanoona Water and Fish Monitoring
Trip Leader's Report: September 9-16, 2025

Participants: Mary C, Rob G, Martin C, Greg & Chris K, Roger & Barb B, Mike T. Garry & Michelle T. joined us for Thursday. Elisa S and Claire M (both from SA Arid Lands Landscape Board) were with us for Wednesday evening to Friday lunchtime to see how we monitored the fish.

The forecast for Tuesday was for rain at Copley/Arkaroola. In the event it rained heavily and the wind blew strongly on our car as we drove from Copley to Balcanoona. The unpaved road coped with the rain remarkably well (Fig 1). However, Chris & Greg were south of Leigh Creek when the flooded road proved impassable and caused them to turn back to Parachilna for the night. Thankfully the rain storm was short-lived and the remainder of the trip was rain free (Fig 2). Chris & Greg brought a "*Starlink*" internet hardware set with them so unusually our group had welcome access to the internet from the Shearer's Quarters.

Fig 2: After the storm passed.

Elisa will visit Yappala IPA for a fish monitoring exercise in early 2026. I will email Members asking for expressions of interest to participate in this when the dates are determined. Claire described her role in SAALLB to our members after dinner on Wednesday night.

The Friend's Permit to Collect Native Plant Material was not ready for the September trip so we were not permitted to collect seed on this visit to Balcanoona.

Wednesday 10th: We walked in to Yuwanhinya spring collected water samples, reset the trail camera and noted that the fish were still present (37 fish were caught). That evening, Claire & Elisa spoke about their roles in the SAALLB and the proposed Yappala fish monitoring project. September is when the fruit of Quandong become ripe so we had quandong pie for dessert.

Thursday 11th: The day was taken up by the walk to Weetootla Springhead and onwards to the Lovely Pool. 37 fish at the springhead, 44 at the "helicopter site" but none at the Lovely Pool. Strangely and for the first time, we walked past 7-8 Emu carcases and wondered why they were seeing carcasses this year but apparently not in previous years. Three trail cameras were reset.

Friday 12th: We visited Nepouie (pronounced nee-pee-owie according to Mary C.) but the thick & dense Typha growth (see Fig 3) made it impractical to insert a dip net. Close to the springhead, after the rain, the slippery water edge was too dangerous to allow fishing. While the Typha is present, catching fish at Nepouie will be problematic.

The large pool at the downstream end of Nepouie was still present albeit with murky water after the rain and fewer fish (Fig 4). After Nepouie, we visited Munyalana Creek (aka Munyullina) looking for the (non-existent) spring (Fig 5). The creek was dry, despite having run after the Tuesday rain.

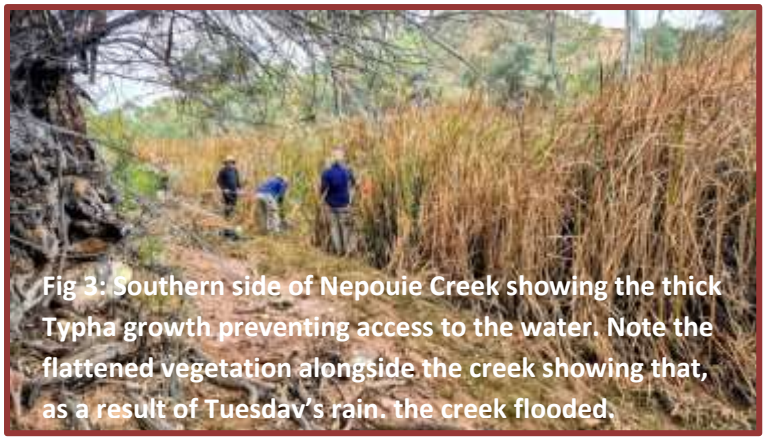


Fig 3: Southern side of Nepouie Creek showing the thick Typha growth preventing access to the water. Note the flattened vegetation alongside the creek showing that, as a result of Tuesday's rain, the creek flooded.

Fig 4: The large pool at Nepouie, Sept 2025

Fig 5: Munyalana Creek. Quite dry even after it ran with water.

Saturday 13th: Four of us bushwalked north along the Mt McKinlay Creek from the Balcanoona Road east of the Oocaboolina sheep yards, stopping to photograph any plants of interest. Roger & Barb bushwalked along Dr Chewings Creek from Italowie campground to the feature marked as "The Wall" on maps.

Sunday 14th: We drove to Munda/Lake Frome. The track into Munda from the Pipeline Road was wet in several places which required us to drive off track to bypass the difficult sections. The cameras were reset. However, they may be problematic if animals are so few as to initiate a small number of triggers. We may shift them to new locations at our next visit. Much vegetation had died due to the dry conditions. No lizards were seen.

Monday 15th: Following some maintenance work on the re-vegetation plantings 7 of us travelled to Arkaroola for dinner at the Pines Restaurant.

Greg and Mary usually stayed at Balcanoona and busied themselves with re-vegetation work. On Saturday afternoon and on Monday, the rest of us were able to complete the re-vegetation maintenance tasks that Roger M. had suggested to us. We also inspected and watered the new plantings that Jesse and Sian had established near the shearing shed alongside the Lake track.

Martin Caon.

PUBLICATIONS BY FRIENDS MEMBERS – on our website

1. Birds of Arkaroola and the Northern Flinders Ranges - Bird-brochure-final-web-version.pdf

2. Geology of the Oocaboolina Hut region - Microsoft Word - Vulkathanha.docx

3. Bolla Bollana Boulder Beds: Geological History from 720My ago preserved in Weetootla Gorge - Microsoft Word - Bolla Bollina Formation.docx

4. The Bell Fruit Book: *Codonocarpus pyramidalis* - The Bellfruit Book - Google Drive

Idninha Preservation Project
Trip Leader's Report - 1-9 September 2025

Six Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Phil Gaukroger, Mal Kirkham, Mike Tanner, Roger and Barb Byrt and Dennis Jury participated in the September work visit to Idninha.

On this visit we decided to set up camp at the Mainwater Well Campground which although a 15 minute drive away from the hut is in a more pleasant setting alongside Mainwater Creek with some shade and wind protection, and also has a long drop toilet and campfire rings

Many thanks to Park Rangers Sian and Jessie who once again assisted with provision of a generator, power leads, various ladders, tools and drinking water and called past a number of times to check in on us and provide some good suggestions and encouragement for the project.

Special thanks also to member of the Friends Group Ric Williams who very generously loaned his trailer to us so that we could carry essential materials and equipment up to the hut which would have been very difficult to manage otherwise.

Work Activities

Over the following 7 days we worked through many of the tasks we had set ourselves for this visit achieving a lot in a very productive week.

Worksite Toilet

Thanks to Phil for repairing an old tin shed adjacent to the hut to house a camp toilet and privacy shelter (and for managing the chemicals and waste water).

Roof

- Further work on ensuring all sheets of corrugated iron were well secured with existing nails or by adding Tek screws where needed
- All holes and other gaps filled with roofing silicone

- Old, leaky timber capping on gables replaced with custom rolled Zincalume flashing for correct fitting and waterproofing.

Gutters

- A fortuitous light rain over one night early in the week filled the gutters allowing us to assess where water was still lying due to lack of, or insufficient fall in the guttering. This helped us to target where to attempt to make adjustments to assist the flow of water to the two downpipes and plan further action in the future
- Guttering was installed onto the huts roof to keep moisture away from the fascia boards.

External Doors

- External door frames were restored/replaced as required to carry doors.
- Four second hand solid external doors were mounted in place.
- Door handles and locks fitted and operational.

Windows

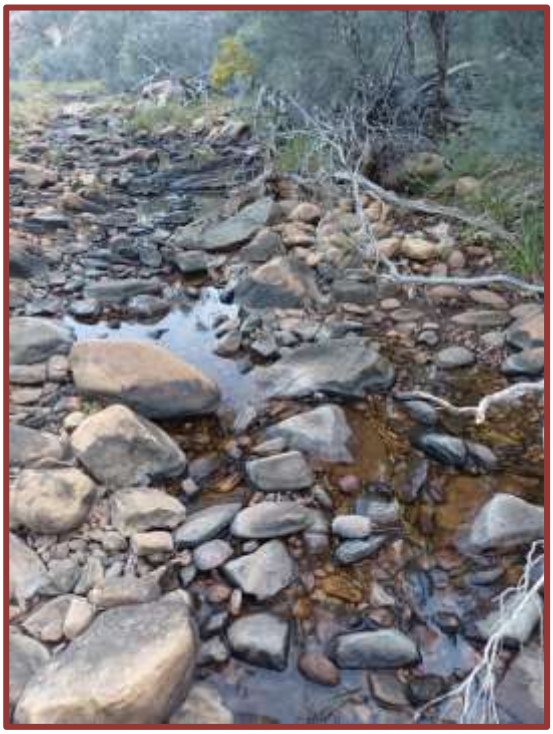
- All sash windows were removed and renovated ready for reuse.
- Window frames were stripped back and repaired including replacement of sash cords where needed.
- Polycarbonate sheets were cut to size and secured in place with glazing silicone.
- The renovated sash window for one of the rooms was hung in its restored frame to functional completion as proof of concept. However shortage of time and materials limited further completion on this visit.

Painting

- All external, weather facing timbers painted/repainted so that all have either 2 or 3 coats of fresh paint between the two visits including fascia and barge boards, verandah posts, doors, door frames, sash windows and window frames.

Other Activities and Events

We enjoyed some pleasant walks in Mainwater creek up and downstream from the campground with waterholes and some creek flow evident from rainfall the previous month.



We also went for a hike from Idninha Hut visiting a memorial to the Adnyamathanha people who used to camp nearby. We then went looking for a spring that is marked on the Topo map called Donkey Spring – we didn't find the spring but we did come across a dead donkey close to where the spring is marked on the map!

Thanks to Phil and Starlink we were able to set up a campfire TV and watch the Crows vs Collingwood match and although the result wasn't what we had hoped for the setting was very special.

We decamped and went our separate ways Tuesday morning September 9 with several of the group heading down to Balcanoona to join the fish monitoring visit.

That afternoon there was a localised but severe weather event centred around Arcoona Bluff and The Plateau but also impacting Balcanoona and Operation Flinders home base at Owieandana. This led to flash flooding of Arcoona Creek and most likely Mainwater Creek would have also run so we were fortunate we left when we did.

Considerations and Tasks for Future Work

A key task for a future work visit to Idninha will be completion of restoration and fitting of all remaining windows.

This will seal the building from weather, dust, insects and animal incursion allowing for cleaning, repair and painting of the interior surfaces including ceilings, walls and floors.

There are also a few outstanding tasks outside in regards to weather proofing the chimney, installation of a second rainwater tank and some further work on guttering and downpipes to improve gutter drainage.

While the grant funding was only for one year most of the materials for completion of the planned work can be pre-purchased and there is some scope for possible rollover of some funds into the following year.

Dennis Jury, November 2025.

Friends of Parks & Nature 2025 Awards

The Friends of Parks and Nature Board continue to recognise the incredible contribution of its member groups across the State. These Volunteers provide support to the management of SA parks and non-government reserves and parks, and the precious biodiversity they contain.

"The awards program is important in recognising the significant contribution our members make to their communities and the environment as a whole. Not only do these awards draw attention to the award recipients, they draw attention to the effort made by all Friends of Parks volunteers without whom our natural and cultural heritage would be the poorer". - Duncan MacKenzie, Friends of Parks and Nature President.

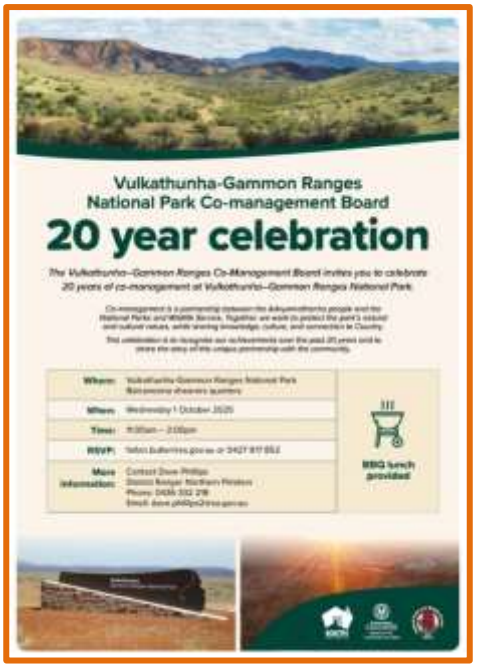
Martin Caon on our behalf nominated the *"Monitoring and translocating the Flinders Ranges Gudgeon"* in the Green Adelaide Wildlife Protection and Recovery Award category. The nomination received the Silver Award for that category.

The gold winners receiving a certificate and $1,000.00 cash, whilst the runner up (silver) winners receiving a certificate and $500.00 cash. The awards presentation was held at the Pavilion South Parklands on 30th August 2025.

Graeme Oats.

Co-Management Board – 20 Year Celebration

On 1st October this year the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-Management Board celebrated 20 years of co-management of the park at Balcanoona.
Co-management is a partnership between the Adnyamathanha people and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Together they work to protect the park's natural and cultural values, while sharing knowledge, culture and connection to Country.
The celebration at Balcanoona recognised the achievements over the past 20 years and it shared story of this unique partnership with the community.
The Friends received an invitation to attend this event. Graeme & Joy Oats were able to attend on the Friends behalf. Many local members of the Adnyamathanha people attended along with present Sian & Jesse, and past Rangers and Doug and Vicki Sprigg.
Welcoming speech by the Board's Chair Jason Irving was followed by speeches from Cultural Ranger Arthur Coulthard, Desmond and Vince Coulthard, Rob Brandle – Bounceback, and Trevor Naismith. Graeme spoke on behalf of the Friends linking our connection with the Board and the local community. A BBQ prepared by an Adnyamathanha Elder, Tanya McKenzie and Ranger Sian followed the speeches.



Joy & I were able to mingle & chat with many of the Adnyamathanha elders, both men and women.

Adnyamathanha Elder Tanya McKenzie and Ranger Sian Johnson

Cultural Ranger Arthur Coulthard

Graeme Oats.

Spotlight on Birds at Balcanoona

Over our three trips to Balcanoona this year the bird numbers heard and observed have been severely reduced, due to the continuation of drought conditions. Apart from the most common, the Little Corellas, Crested pigeons, Willy-wagtails and Magpie Larks, during the May trip there was practically no bird song. By the September trip the numbers of sightings were picking up. The Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were again giving their distinctive morning song, just before sunrise!

I heard a red-backed Kingfisher with its plaintive 'peer, peer' call coming from the Creek area. As it was quite cold during all the trips, little birds weren't out and about very often. The Zebra finches seem to be hiding in the bushes. I accidentally flushed a flock in an Iga tree while botanising. A pair of Purple-backed Wrens was seen in the Reveg Area when the watering was turned on. A family of Emus came through daily to drink in the top pond.

White-plumed Honeyeaters were in the trees outside the Managers Flat. The biggest thrill was seeing a pair of Cinnamon Quail Thrush fly off on Mt. Hopeless Road. The Brown Falcon was seen when travelling to Arkaroola.

Chris Kirby (Photos this page by Chris)

Above, Spiny Cheeked Honeyeater,

Above right, Red backed Kingfisher,

Right, Pair of white plumed honeyeaters

Below, Brown Falcon