

Bush Babbler Volunteer E-news



Edition 4 | 15 June 2020

Hello! The 'Bush Babbler' is the Volunteer Programs electronic newsletter. Aiming to bring some light-hearted banter and joy to you all during these challenging COVID-19 times.

Wow! It has been a busy few weeks and it's great to see our volunteers returning to our National Parks doing what they love- contributing to conservation and our local community. Park of the Month activities have restarted with plenty to do down at Deep Creek Conservation Park and more to come over the July school holidays at Morialta and Black Hill Conservation Parks. In this edition, find out what 'forest bathing' is and some great tips for reducing your carbon footprint at home too.

As we've just finished celebrating **National Reconciliation Week** 27th May – 3rd June, this is a time when we can reflect on our past, present and future with our First Nations People; and how we can work together for a brighter future for all. I hope many of you were able to participate in the many cultural offerings across the State or have had the opportunity to attend our Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training sessions for volunteers. Our parks and the places we volunteer are culturally important and you can find out more about one such place – Chowilla Floodplain.

If you're out volunteering, please take a photo or #Hashtag us on Facebook, so we can promote and share your amazing work - Gill, Ian, Amanda, Amy, Carly, Pam, Edi and Carol.

Volunteer Programs Update

Due to public health restrictions, the community has been taking the opportunity to discover our amazing parks and reserves; this has resulted in a sudden influx of park visitors, and there has been extra pressure on parks and campgrounds around the State. A HUGE THANK YOU to Campground Hosts and Volunteer Rangers, who have stepped up to provide extra support and a presence in parks to help our National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff during June and July. Your enthusiasm and dedication is very much appreciated.

Getting to know you...

This edition we get to know campground hosts, **Peter and Heather Hastings**. Peter and Heather are very active and valued members of the program; hosting all around the state at locations: Lincoln NP, Mt Remarkable NP, Flinders Chase NP, Witjira NP, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges NP, Onkaparinga NP, Gawler Ranges NP and Venus Bay CP.

When did you join the Campground Host Program?

We joined the program when we retired in 2012. We got to the point in our lives that said there must be more to life than working full time. Heather had worked at one of 'those banks' on and off before and after children, for just over 40 years, and I (Peter) started off working in the Airforce and continued in electronics and computing for what seemed like an eternity. As I said we gave all that away and retired from paid work in July 2012. Our last day of paid work was while we were on leave, having just completed the Canning Stock Route and sitting watching the sunset at Quobba Beach in WA.



Peter and Heather 'on duty' as campground hosts

What do you do when you are not volunteering?

We enjoy outback bush travel and the more remote the better. One trip involved driving to Alice Springs, turning left and coming out at 80 Mile Beach in WA. We have also done Cape York, the Chanel Country in Queensland, Tasmania, Kimberley via the Gibb River Road, Pilbara including the magnificent Karajini National Park, Rudall River, Lake Eyre, Warburton River, Anne Beadell Highway, Innamincka and so on.

We have gone to the North Island of New Zealand, a 12 week epic Europe trip chasing the Northern Lights and most recently Antarctica via boat from South America.

Yes, all fantastic, but the best bit of overseas travel is the reaction from people when they realise that you are Australian. Because of our extensive travel around our great country we are able to answer most of the questions that they have about Australia including serious questions like "can I hire a car from Sydney and go see Uluru, the Bridge and the Great barrier reef in a couple of weeks?".

What is one thing others may not already know about you?

Places we have lived include, but not limited to, Adelaide, Perth, Newcastle, Melbourne, Penola, Darwin, and of course, anywhere our travels will take us. Our children were born in Darwin.

What has been your most memorable holiday to date and why?

Probably Antarctica. A place every person should visit and protect.



A cool looking dude in Antarctica (Peter!)

Europe was a special trip to see our daughter in Sweden, and to find Peter's brother's burial site in Crete (there is one more for your useless info file that no one knows about us.... Oops you do now...).



Heather and 'friends' in Antarctica

If you could invite any 3 people in the world (dead or alive, besides your partner or family) to dinner who would they be and why?

Neil Armstrong as he would be one of the biggest explorers our generation has seen, Nostradamus to put a whole new perspective on our current situations, and Leonardo Da Vinci to capture the event in a painting.

What is your favourite SA park and why?

Mamungari Conservation Park. It used to be called the Unnamed Conservation Park. We like this park because it is remote...REALLY REMOTE. The scenery is fantastic, so is the history but give yourself a couple of weeks to drive from Coober Pedy to Laverton in WA via the Anne Beadell Highway to really appreciate this park.

Are there any movies could you watch multiple times or what TV series have hooked you?

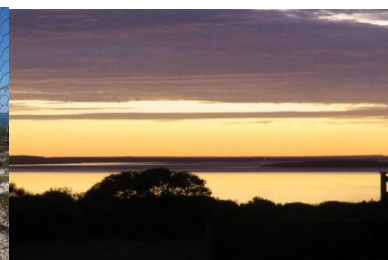
Peter has a passion for Close Encounters of the Third Kind, as it relates to some of his real life experiences (Damn, there is another unknown fact given up in the name of journalism).



A rainbow near Kolay Hut, Gawler Ranges NP



The vermin fence at Venus Bay CP



Venus Bay sunrise

You could be next! We plan to ask a range of volunteers and staff to share a little information about themselves in future editions. So be ready when the VPU staff come knocking!

Easy Steps to Help Save the Planet

As the globe celebrated 'World Environment Day' on Friday 5th June, it is a prime opportunity to look at what you can do at home to save energy, reduce your carbon emissions and most importantly make a difference to the planet. All whilst saving money too! Here's a few simple tips to get you started:

Power off when you can

- **Power off.** Household appliances, such as laptops, televisions and other appliances, consume electricity even when they're on standby. Turning off household appliances at the power point is one of the simplest ways you can save electricity and money.
- **Use power boards with switches.** This makes it easier to turn off individual appliances.
- **Turn off second fridges and freezers** when you're not using them. This helps the planet and your household energy bill.
- **Standby.** Set your screen to standby mode if you're going to step away from your computer. Turning your computer off overnight can also cut your computer's energy use by more than 60 per cent.
- **Switch off lights** as you leave the room and train other members of the household to do the same.
- **Switch off altogether.** Getting outside to appreciate and enjoy nature costs nothing at all but will bring immense benefits.

Turn down the heat

- **A degree of difference.** Turn your heating down a degree or set your cooler one degree higher to save 10 per cent on running costs.
- **Hug a hoodie.** Add a layer in the winter months before turning the heat on or up.
- **Let the light in.** Use natural lighting as much as possible at home during the day by opening blinds or installing skylights. Make the most of our sunny climate by using the sun to help heat the house.
- **Open up.** During summer, opening windows overnight will help cool the house.

Change the way you use water

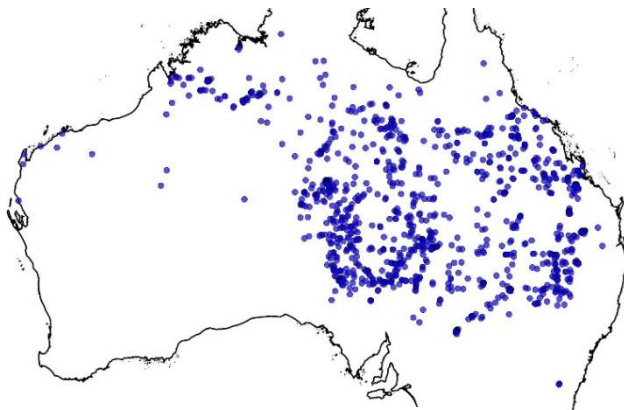
- **Wash your clothes in cold water** to save the energy cost of heating up the water. Run full loads of washing each time to save on water costs.
- **A shower timer** can help you shorten your showers to four minutes or less. Installing a water-efficient shower head can save at least 10 litres of hot water every minute.
- **Fixing those dripping taps** will cut wasted water, energy and headaches.

'Species' in the Spotlight – *Under the shade of a coolabah tree*



Photo: Robert Whyte

The Coolabah Tree, *Eucalyptus coolabah* of ‘Waltzing Matilda’ fame, grows in the dry northern and central interior of Australia near water courses, waterholes and floodplains that will usually not flow often enough to support the River Red Gum, *E. camaldulensis*. If you’ve visited an SA park in an arid or semi-arid area, such as Witjira NP, Lake Eyre NP, Innamincka RR or Simpson Desert CP and RR, then you’ve probably come across this iconic Australian tree.



Eucalyptus coolabah distribution map
(Sourced: The Australasian Virtual Herbarium)



The common name ‘coolabah’ was adapted from the Indigenous Australian Yuwaaliyaay word, *gulabaa*, and was first recorded by European settlers in 1885-90. The species was first formally described in 1934 by William Blakely and Maxwell Jacobs and published in Blakely’s book, *A Key to the Eucalypts*.

This species is very hardy and individual trees can live for hundreds of years. It is a small to medium sized tree, growing to 20m. The bark on all or part of the trunk is rough, while the upper bark is smooth and powdery, ranges from cream to pink coloured, and is shed in short ribbons. Adult leaves are a dull green to bluish-



greyish on both sides, and lance-shaped to curved. Flower buds are in groups of seven and they have hemispherical or conical fruit.

Indigenous Australians used the wood to make spears, fire-making apparatus, message sticks, coolamons (wooden dishes) and throwing sticks. They would also obtain water from the rootwood.

Forest Bathing

There’s no doubt that we’re all likely in need to some nature therapy after being cooped up inside for such a long time - why not try forest bathing, perhaps under a Coolabah Tree? Forest bathing or ‘Shinrin Yoku’ as it’s known in Japan, is all about being in the presence of trees and incorporating gentle mindfulness exercises. It’s no secret that spending time in nature can be beneficial for the mind, body and soul; and forest bathing has been proven to lower heart rate and blood pressure, reduce stress, boost the immune system, and improve overall feelings of wellbeing.

Here’s five tips to help you connect with nature on a deeper level from South Australia’s first certified Forest Therapy guide:

1. Give yourself time to relax and restore

Rather than taking a vigorous park hike, take a slow walk of no more than 1-2 kilometres in three hours. By taking things very slowly, you'll have the time to truly absorb your surroundings which will help you de-stress, relax, restore and reconnect.

2. Take notice

Rather than letting the sounds of the birds be part of the background, take notice of the bird and insect conversations surrounding you, or the changing sounds of the breeze in the trees. Paying attention to something in the moment, to the experiences of your senses, brings you into the present, which has a calming effect.

3. Enjoy the mystery

You might not know the name of that beautiful flower in your favourite park, but what can you notice about its scent, colours, textures and size? Ask yourself what you find intriguing about this being. Is there something particularly beautiful about it? What questions come to you as you enjoy the mystery of this being? Wallow in the unknown.



4. Look closely

Let nature draw you in. Find a plant, rock, or living being that draws your attention and take time to become familiar with it. What can you find if you look closely at all its textures and colours? What does it smell like? Is it rough or smooth, or soft or hard?

Take a magnifying glass and zoom in. Have an even closer look at something – how does it change? What's different about it when it's magnified? Where does your imagination and your curiosity take you?

5. Be thankful

Find a way to be grateful during your experience. Thank each being that brings you a positive experience, thank the forest, or the beach, or the wind, or the creek, or whatever feels right in the moment. Gratitude improves wellbeing and helps you to experience more joy and pleasure in life.

Chowilla Floodplain – Land and Culture



The Chowilla Floodplain is both a unique and highly significant area for its environmental and cultural values. Located north of Renmark, straddling the South Australian and New South Wales border, the floodplain covers more than 17,000 hectares and is the largest area of remaining natural riverine forest along the lower River Murray.

Chowilla, its surrounding floodplains and river, have sustained the unique culture and economy of the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee for thousands of generations. For many visitors, this deeply significant place is also a peaceful world away from the hectic pace of life in towns and cities. Here's what makes it so unique:

Significance to Traditional Owners

The word Chowilla (or 'Tjowilla') means 'place of spirits and ghosts'. The floodplain is highly valued and respected by the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region because of their long history and connection to the area. Traditional Owners' Ancestors have occupied the landscape for thousands of generations and their cultural heritage is beautifully evident across Chowilla's landscape.

For this reason, the ongoing preservation, protection and management of cultural sites located on the floodplain is a high priority.

Environmental significance

The floodplain is one of the last parts of the lower Murray that has kept much of its natural character. It contains the largest remaining natural river red gum forest in the lower River Murray and a range of aquatic habitats, including fast and slow flowing creeks, backwaters, wetlands and lakes.



The floodplain has experienced severe ecological decline due to long periods without flooding. In fact, floods that naturally occurred about 45 times in 100 years now only occur about 12 times in 100 years. This was made significantly worse by the Millennium Drought; resulting in rising soil salinity, the decline of trees (particularly the majestic river red gum and the black box) and fewer breeding opportunities for floodplain wildlife.

Chowilla is part of the Riverland Ramsar wetland of international importance and also an icon site of the Murray Darling Basin Authority's Living Murray program.

It's a significant floodplain and wetland with diverse aquatic habitats that are important for native fish species including iconic species like the Murray cod. It is also filled with river red gum and black box forest and woodlands and home to a range of threatened species.

Engagement with Traditional Owners and the broader community

First Peoples have unique rights and interests over their lands and waters, including the Chowilla floodplain.

Partnering with First Peoples supports more equitable relationships in looking after Country and, in turn, supports First Peoples' strong connection to Country and ensures long-term benefits can be achieved and sustained.

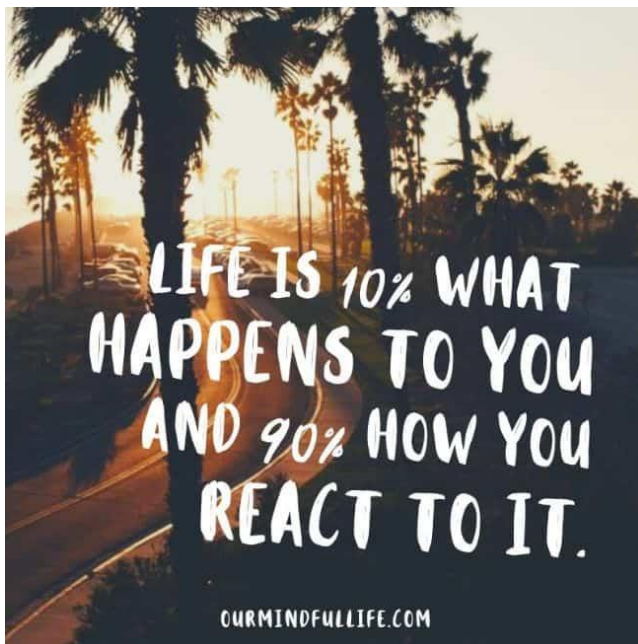
First Peoples community members continue their Traditional cultural practices in the Riverland area to this day. In fact, the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee last September were invited by younger generations and environmental managers to spend some quality time on Country to pass on the valued cultural knowledge of Traditional Owners.



The result was a memorable two days on the Chowilla floodplain. First Peoples members of all ages, from 7 months old through to Elders, were involved in traditional smoking ceremonies, wurley making, weaving, cooking and more.

Places like Chowilla, which are maintained in as natural a way as possible, are very important in passing on Traditional cultural knowledge to younger generations.

You know what they say...



Technology Tips & Tricks

Want to lower the amount of energy your phone uses and increase the length of time you can go without charging it?

If you have an iPhone, WikiHow can show you step by step instructions on how to do each of these things [here](#):

- Use low power mode
- Identify the apps using the most amount of power
- Access 'Night Shift' or 'Airplane Mode' via the control centre
- Reduce screen 'on' time

If you have an android phone, you could try these things:

- Set low sleep time
- Set low brightness level
- Disable background app refresh
- Disable auto-sync for email accounts
- Use battery saving location mode
- Disable location data for unnecessary apps
- Turn off Bluetooth and Wifi
- Disable vibrations & other sounds
- Enable battery saver mode

Techbout can elaborate on these tips [here](#).



Just a bit of Fun



Soul Food

Check out this **'Easy Eggplant Schnitzel'** brought to you by **Edi Jarman** (Volunteer Programs Unit). Edi says "this is the way my mother used to make it for our family and we all loved it. My own family also love it".

You will need:

1 – 2 eggplants
salt
flour
eggs
Breadcrumbs



Method:

Cut 1 - 2 Eggplants into ¼ inch slices either length ways or rounded whichever you prefer. Lay them on a tray on paper towels, sprinkle with salt on both sides and leave them for 20 to 30 minutes (the salt takes the moisture out from the eggplant).

Brush both sides with paper towels to absorb any excess moisture and brush salt off.

Prepare the flour, egg and breadcrumbs as you would for schnitzels. Crumb the eggplant slices and fry (medium to high heat) in clean oil until crispy and golden brown on both sides (usually takes 2-3 minutes).

Suggestions:

This recipe can be done with gluten free flour or gluten free breadcrumbs; and for vegans you can use a substitute for eggs. You can also add other ingredients into the bread crumbs for extra flavour e.g. granulated garlic, onion, nutmeg, grated parmesan cheese, or parsley for that extra special twist! ENJOY 😊

Upcoming Activities & Initiatives

Park of the Month – Deep Creek Conservation Park

Each month we celebrate a national park as our Park of the Month. We invite you to come along and join in on a range of fun, family-friendly events held throughout the month. Events often include ranger-guided walks, working bees, guided bike tours, nature play activities, cultural events and more.

Check out what's on this month at Deep Creek Conservation Park [here](#).

Native Bees in your Backyard – 18 June 2020

Explore the special role of native bees and how to attract these pollinators to your garden in this online workshop brought to you by the City of Mitcham and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board.

Find further information and how to register [here](#).

Nature-based Tourism Co-investment Fund

The Minister for Environment and Water recently launched the \$5 million Nature-based Tourism Co-investment Fund, which will provide grants to organisations to establish sustainable tourism experiences in South Australia's national parks and other public lands.

The fund is a key component of the state government's recently launched [Parks 2025 plan](#). As part of the development of new experiences and infrastructure, organisations will be required to commit to a conservation dividend, where options may include investing into critical conservation programs, such as restoring habitats, heritage, revegetation or rewilding projects.

We know many of you are deeply interested in any nature based tourism plans for our Parks, so we encourage you to find out more about the Fund here: www.parks.sa.gov.au/coinvest.

Contact Us

Do you have any tips, tricks, ideas, stories, recipes, photos etc. that you would like to share and have included in a future edition of the Bush Babbler? Send contributions through to Amanda or Amy – we would love to hear from you!

Please email either: amanda.parker@sa.gov.au or amy.anderson3@sa.gov.au

Also, don't forget you can keep in touch with us or your other program volunteers on our Facebook pages:

[Volunteer Ranger Program \(Private page for Volunteer Rangers\)](#)

[Campground Host Program \(Private page for Campground Hosts\)](#)

[Friends of Park SA](#)