

If not claimed within 14 days please return to the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 8663, Alice Springs, NT 0871



September 2004



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ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS INC.

NEWSLETTER – SEPT 2004

Meetings 2004

7:30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month,
in the staff room at the OLSH College on
Sadadeen Road.

8 Sept	Michael Barritt, Parks and Wildlife "Central Australian possums".
13 Oct	Gary Fry, Alice Springs Desert Park, on work being done at the Park on Mala populations.
10 Nov	Greg Fyfe, Alice Springs Desert Park "The History and Natural History of <i>Egernia slateri</i> " (a large endangered skink).
Dec	Break up function - Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Field Trips 2004

Date	Field Trips
Sat 28 Aug	Day trip to Rainbow Valley. Ranger Rick Hope will conduct an informal question and answer session at 9.00 am, so we need to leave from opposite Old Timers Home promptly at 7.30 am. 4WD recommended. Leader: Barb Gilfedder
Sun 19 Sept	Day trip to Native Gap. Meet 8am Sargent Street sign North Stuart Hwy. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694 after 6 th September for further information.
Sun 10 Oct	Walk – Ochre Pits to Inarlarga Pass and back.
Sat 23 Oct	Afternoon walk at Temple Bar Station to be followed by a BBQ in the creekbed. Leader: Connie Spencer.

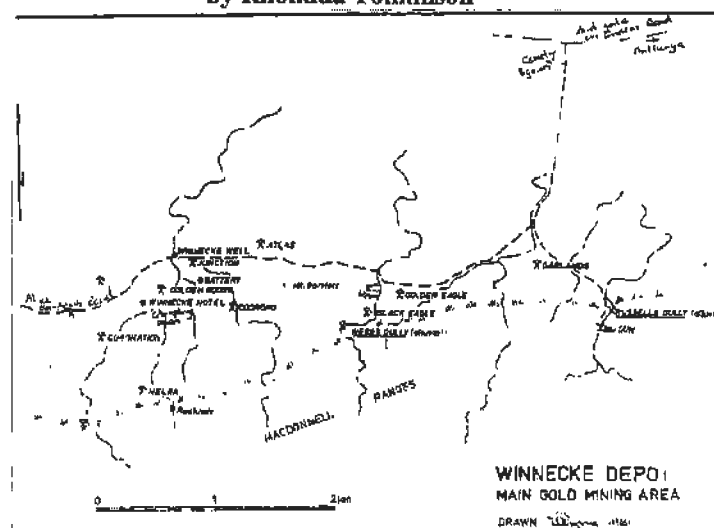


**Reminder: subscriptions are
now due!**

WINNECKE DEPOT GOLDFIELDS HISTORICAL ADVENTURE

26th & 27th June, 2004

by Rhondra Tomlinson



Our visit and chance to explore the Winnecke Depot Goldfields was a step back in time. The Goldfields was originally set up by the surveyor Charles Winnecke as a base camp when he was mapping the area in 1878.

Winnecke Depot Goldfields is located 58km north-east of Alice Springs and 10km south-west of 'The Garden' homestead. In 1890 miners reported 'fair prospects' of gold in the area. Gold in payable quantities was discovered in November 1902 and as a result, a short-lived 'rush', the first to a Central Australian goldfields, occurred. Small scale mining continued until about 1912.

Typical of this desert country, water was always a major concern, and due to the influx of miners and lack of sanitation the water became polluted. It is not certain how many people died but near the entrance gate to the property there are 7 or 8 graves. Most of these are unmarked but one has a headstone and a bush timber fence. These deaths occurred from typhoid and this is what makes this grave site significant and brought home the need to maintain a healthy living environment.

The greatest amount of miners known to be on the fields was 700 but this was only for a very short time. Even though the main 'rush' was short lived, houses and tents were well established. It is reported that there were stores, chemists, bakers, a

butcher, barber, sly grog shop and gambling saloon.

The three main alluvial sites, Russell's Gully, Webb's Gully and Sloan's Gully, were worked out in a very short time, but the reef mining lasted longer. The Coorong mine was first mentioned in January 1903 and was taken over by the New Coorong Mining and Public Crushing Company in 1904.

You really have to admire these pioneers as to the hardship they overcame. Even just to reach these gold diggings was a test of endurance. The railway only went as far as Oodnadatta and from there it was on foot carrying mining tools, food and belongings to Stuart Town (Alice Springs) for about 3 weeks, and then another 4 days to Winnecke.



Our first sighting of the Georgina Range was when we stopped to open the gates on the way into the property. It was a very popular photo stop for our convoy, which consisted of our leader Kevin Boyle, his friend Jane in the first vehicle, me in my little car, and Bob Read and Kaye Percy in the third vehicle. Bob and Kaye were only out for the day. The rest of us were to stay over night.

We stopped at what is called Winnecke Well Junction on the map and we were into looking at all the old building ruins and pieces of iron laying around trying to imagine what and where these remnants were used. We were looked upon by Mt. Bartlett which Kaye is inspired to return to again and climb.



We could not resist seeing what was at the top of a nearby rise. As there had been quite a bit of rain earlier the flowers were just beginning to make a very impressive display. Connie you will be pleased to know that with the photos I took and the help of Anne Urban I have noted some of the plants we saw. A *Dodonaea viscosa* (Sticky hopbush); *Hybanthus aurantiacus* (Orange spade); *Eremophila freelingii* (Rock fuchsia); a pale mauve daisy and a *Hakea suberea* (long-leaved corkwood). Sorry Bob about the bird list but I didn't take any notes but I do know Bob's list was quite extensive.

The well we looked at is possibly the one built in July 1903 at a cost of £256 and was 82ft deep. We had to lie on our stomachs to look over the edge to be able to see the water. There was also a water storage tank beside it.



After morning tea we headed toward where the battery and more buildings were in ruins. As seen in the photo we stood on the rise just near the battery ruins and looked out over the alluvial mining area where there is still so much evidence of the ground disturbance by the mining operations. Kaye exclaimed that she could see

Pine Gap, a large group of white quartz rocks prominent in the distance.

Here I must mention Kaye's great discovery of the fruit on the *Solanum* plant. We had for several weeks seen many of these plants in flower but none with fruit as yet. Kaye found the one and only one with fruit, some of which was in a mature stage. We checked other plants but they were only flowering. Good find!!!!

After lunch the two 4 wheel drivers decided they would like to explore along the station track a bit further to see if they could find a gorge that was named on the map. This we didn't find but the drive was very spectacular and on the way back Kaye got to visit her 'Pine Gap' sighting.



Kevin chose an excellent camp site just off the road and not far from where we had been exploring earlier. I took the opportunity to try out my new camp oven and cook golden syrup dumplings. We all slept well after that and the day's experiences.

Back on the track and headed home wards. Kevin had two hand held radios and I was glad of this as travelling on my own I was able to keep in contact. A quick stop at a dry river bed for Kevin to check out a possible future campsite then a detour to where the Johannsen family mined Mica during WWII as they were treated with suspicion by the local people as it was presumed they were German. K. Johannsen was also a Central Australian transport pioneer and we saw the ruins of an old truck near the family home. An added trip to the top of the hill near the microwave tower gave Kevin some 4 wheel driving practice. Thank you Kevin for a very interesting weekend and I for one would like to revisit this area

especially now that I have read the history notes which Kevin sent me as well as information from the internet and field study books that Connie lent me.



A GOOD AFTERNOON

by Bob Read

I had finished work in the Andado area near the Mac Clarke Reserve and was driving towards home when I saw a small yellowish bird flutter along the road ahead of me and then perch on a rock on the edge. A view through binoculars confirmed that it was a Gibberbird, a species that lives in open gibber areas, and which I had seen only once before.

Once past the Mac Clark turnoff I stopped to search the large dune to the west of the road, which I had tried before without success. There were White-winged Fairywrens on the dune, but I could hear faint squeaks coming from Sandhill Canegrass bushes (*Zychoa paradoxa*). After some time I was lucky enough to get a brief glimpse of two Eyrean Grasswrens scuttling from one bush to the next.

Continuing on my way I saw another yellowish bird fly over the road and stop on the gibber. This time it was an Orange Chat, one of a flock of six. More exciting, behind it in the field of view of the binoculars was another larger bird, standing stock-still and looking like a bird-shaped rock. Careful search of the area showed that it was one of a flock of about 10 Inland (or Australian) Dotterels. These birds were amazingly well camouflaged. Without binoculars they were invisible, except when moving when they looked like moving rocks.

This species is very hard to find, and I had seen only twice before about 20 years ago:

Once when I walked into a small flock on gibber and once seeing a few feeding on a road at night. Inland Dotterels were recorded only twice in Central Australia in the recent Bird Atlas. Strangely Ian Archibald has seen dead ones in the central business district. Presumably these have been hit by cars at some unknown location and carried a long distance on radiator grilles.



Five Mile Bore Outing

14th August 2004

by Anita Smyth

Eight people attended the outing to 5 Mile Bore which is located on the northern edge of the Waterhouse Range near Mueller Creek.

The weather was fine, warm and perfectly still. We spent our time birding and seeking out interesting plant species of which several were in full bloom. We stopped en route to admire carpets of wildflowers and wandered around the rocky hills at the bore. We then drove up the creek into the ranges proper, had lunch and then walked into a spectacular pound.

We recorded 26 bird species and 47 plant species although not all plants were listed for the trip. Rufous Songlark was heard often and Zebra Finches were most abundant. The latter intrigued us with their ability to drink water in above-ground tanks by hanging onto the vertical struts close to the water and leaning down to drink. No doubt they've learnt this behaviour since the spread of artificial water sources throughout their range. It was great to see a Masked Woodswallow along with the usual Black-faced individuals. Another interesting observation was the sighting of a clutch of eggs in an exposed tree hollow of a River Red Gum. It seemed a branch broke off ages ago and exposed the clutch. Three eggs sat at the base of a vertical hollow which was lined with termite dirt. Despite the fading of the eggs, Wayne Longmore at the Melbourne Museum informed me that their size, shape and pale colour suggest that they belong to a small parrot such as a budgerigar. The plant highlights were paddocks of Annual Yellowtop *Othonna gregorii* and Poached Eggaisy *Polycalymma stuartii*. In the rocky hills we saw pink/white harn kemp, *Halgania cyanea*, *Eremophila christophori*, *E. duttonii*, *latrobei* and *freelingii* in flower.

Bird species: Whistling Kite, Brown Falcon, Crested Pigeon, Budgerigar, Pallid Cuckoo, Red-backed Kingfisher, Variegated Fairy-wren, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, Grey-headed Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Hooded Robin, Crested Bellbird, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Masked Woodswallow, Black-faced Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Zebra Finch, Mistletobird, Rufous Songlark.

Notable plant species included: *Othonna gregorii*

Polycalymma stuartii, *Blennodia canescens*, *Calotis hispidula*, *Nicotiana rosulata* ssp. *ingulba*, *Sida platycalyx*, *Lepidium* spp., bluebell, woollybutt, *Sida* spp., *Swainsona* spp., *Rhodanthe tietkensii*, *Zygochloa paradoxa*, *Hybanthus aurianticus*, *Rostellulaia* spp., *Digitaria brownie*, *Stenopetalum* spp., twin leaf, *Enneapogon* spp., *Aristida* spp., Harn kemp, *Brachyscome* spp., *Eremophila christophori*, *E. duttonii*, *E. freelingii*, *E. latrobei*, Cattle bush, Bullock bush, spearwood, *Calotis cymbacantha*, wanderrie, kangaroo grass, silky browntop, *Halgania cyanea*, *Scaevola spinesis*, Mint bush, Finke River Mallee, *Maireanna campulata*, Native currant, and *Psilopus* spp.

Observers: Kevin Boyle, Rosalie Breen, Connie & Stan Spencer, Barbara & Peter Gilfedder, Rhonda Tomlinson and Anita Smyth.

Australian Naturalists' Network 2006 Get-Together in the Australian High Country 16 January – 2 February 2006

You are invited to attend a get-together of naturalists from around Australia.

Coaches will depart from Tullamarine airport about 1.30 pm on 16 January to take participants to Feathertop Chalet in Harrietville. This is an ideal location for excursions to Mt. Buffalo National Park and the Mt Hotham and Mt Bogong areas in Alpine National Park.

On 26 January the group will move to the Jindabyne Sport and Recreation Centre, a base for exploring Kosciuszko National Park. Coaches return to Tullamarine on 2 February.

The estimated cost, including all coach transport, meals, accommodation and park entry passes, is \$1550 per person for the 17 days.

The organisers need to know ASAP how many people intend to participate. If you are interested, please contact Connie Spencer for a response sheet.

CLUB T-SHIRTS

We have had lots of positive comments about the t-shirts printed with the club logo.

We need a minimum of 10 orders to do a print re-run. If you want one, I will start a list and have them printed when the minimum is reached.

Barb Gilfedder

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the Meeting held Wednesday 11th August 2004 at OLSH staffroom

Open: The President, Bob Read, declared the meeting open at 8pm.
Present: As per attendance book
Apologies: Kaye Percy, Jim Lawrence, Jim Gilfedder, Bev Dawson & Leoni Read
Minutes: The meeting resolved to accept the Minutes of the previous meeting held Wednesday 14th July as a true and correct record of that meeting.

Correspondence In:

DIPE – discussion paper on the review of pastoral land act
Aradlay – ASIC action with Triton, Trans Pacific & Aradlay
Morgan Flint (Hamilton Downs Youth Camp) – appreciation of our visit
Rosalie Schultz & Nick Tyllis – change of address advice
Land for Wildlife – newsletter
NTFNC – newsletter
South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc – 2006 ANN Get-Together

Correspondence Out:

Col Stanton – thank you

Treasurer's Report:

Opening balance (end June 04)	\$1384.91
Plus	
T-shirts sold	\$180.00
	<u>180.00</u>
	\$1564.01

Less

Australia Post (stamps)	\$50.00
M&M (t-shirts)	188.50
	<u>238.50</u>
Closing balance (end July 04)	<u>\$1326.41</u>

The meeting accepted the treasurer's report.

General Business:

Trips

- Sat 14th & Sun 15th August – Kevin Boyle advised that due to mustering, travel to James Range Bore was not possible. However, an alternative area has been suggested – Five Mile Bore on the North face of the Waterhouse Range. The Ranger has asked for our help by compiling a report on any plants, birds etc. of note. Meet 8:30am Flynn's Grave. Round trip approx. 130km. Option to camp overnight.
- Sat 28th August – day trip to Rainbow Valley. Barbara Gilfedder advised that the Ranger was prepared to hold an informal session with FNC members on Sat morning discussing the plants, claypan, geology and management strategies of the park. Meet 7:30am at the Information Bay opp. Old Timers Home on the south Stuart Hwy.

Sewage Ponds – Bob explained that members had received individual "Induction for Visitors to Alice Springs Waste Stabilisation Ponds" to be signed and returned to Bob or to the Power Water Corp in order for the Club to be indemnified.

Newsletter - Moya Tomlinson has kindly agreed to take over editing the newsletter. Elsa Corbet thanked all those who have been contributing to the newsletter. Elsa was pleased to be able to read about the trips that she hasn't been able to attend.

Supper for September – Rhondra Tomlinson

Note Taker for September – Rosalie Breen

Sightings

- Barbara reported seeing 2 Australian Bustards just north of Alice Springs on the Stuart Hwy plus many juvenile Black-winged Stilts at the sewage ponds.
- Bob reported seeing Inland Dotterels on Andado
- Connie reported seeing a family (1 adult & 3 juvenile) of Banded Lapwings on the Ernest Giles Road.

Meeting closed: 8:25pm