



Inside this issue

Birthday Celebrations

Programme

President's Ramble

Water bird surveys

Bush Stone Curlew Survey

Riverland Youth
Council

Karte CP

Fox Baiting

HAPPY 80th BIRTHDAY, HEATHER.



L to R: Heather, Wendy Mackintosh, Jenny Winn, Dawn Schultz, June Plush and Photographer Michael Mackintosh

Fittingly, on a beautiful spring day recently, a large group of Friends celebrated Heather Shearer's 80th Birthday at Bella Lavender Estate.

Heather has been a member of the Friends of Riverland Parks since **it's inception, and was the group's President for many years.** She, and her late husband, Rod, regularly attended working bees and carried out the fox baiting programme at Katarapko. Always an advocate for the National Parks, Heather had many ideas for the improvement of the environment, and ways to make the Parks more interesting for visitors.

Congratulations, Heather, we all enjoyed helping you celebrate.

2017 Programme

<u>Meetings:</u>	18th January	15th February AGM
	15th March	17th May
	19th July	20st September
	15th November	

All meetings 7.30pm in the DEWNR building (entry via Merritt Avenue). All members or intending members welcome.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Instructions</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Tues 3rd October	Waterbird Survey Katarapko	Meet at Lock 4 Entrance 0830 Bring binoculars, M/T	John Nettlefold 0408839214
Mon 30th October to Fri 10th Nov	Malleefowl Nest Survey Cooltong/Pooginook	TBA	Kevin Smith 0458817228
Tues 7th November	Waterbird Survey Katarapko	Meet at Lock 4 Entrance 0830 Bring binoculars, M/T	John Nettlefold 0408839214
Tues 5th December	Waterbird Survey Katarapko	Meet at Lock 4 Entrance 0830 Bring binoculars, M/T	John Nettlefold 0408839214
Sat 9th December	Christmas BBQ Wilabalangaloo	Start at 5pm Bring a salad or sweet	Sue Nettlefold 0418839214

Members intending to be at any of our activities please phone the relevant contact person before the event in case times and/or meeting places change.

The July and August activities, in particular, will depend on the availability of the posts and markers.

Newsletter

Presidents Ramble



A recent trip to Sturt NP in the north west corner of NSW was an opportunity to experience some different concepts in Park management. As some of you are probably aware the town of Tibooburra is located just outside the Park boundary. The Park is huge in area and is the result of the amalgamation of 5 grazing properties in 1972.

There are 4 separate camping areas within the Park, but the main Parks Office is located in Tibooburra.

The camping regulations provided some contrast to SA Parks. There was no on-line booking system here. Fees were placed in an envelope and there was an **"iron ranger" at each campground, or the fees could be paid at the Parks Office.** The fees were significant. \$8 per vehicle per day and \$6 per person per day.

However the facilities were excellent. The drop toilets were well serviced. There was tank water at all sites and these tanks were topped up as needed. There were good quality shelters with tables and chairs **and free gas BBQ's. No wood fires were allowed. All in all, the campgrounds provided a pleasant camping experience.**

We did some of the walks at the various campgrounds and these had good interpretive signage.

The landscape varied from granite tors near Tibooburra to "jump up" country around the Grey Range and sandhill country near Cameron's Corner.

The other focus of interest is the historic association with Sturt's inland expedition in the 1940's. He was trapped at Depot Glen near Milparinka for 6 months as he was unable to find water further north.

Eventually he reached the ephemeral Lake Pinaroo and established Fort Grey—his base for expeditions to discover Coopers Creek and the Diamantina River.

Perhaps the only negatives were the presence of feral goats and pigs in significant numbers, although nowhere near as many as outside the Park. Red kangaroos and emus were also abundant.

Quite a few of the dams, or "tanks" as they are known were holding water and one of these had a bird hide.

This allowed good bird watching and a chance to watch emus and kangaroos coming down to water.

There was certainly plenty of interest and good camping in Sturt National Park.

John Nettlefold



Tibooburra means place of rocks. This photo is of sunrise over one of the rocky outcrops surrounding the campground at Tibooburra



One of the designated walks in the "jump up" Country.

Katarapko Waterbird Surveys

The monthly waterbird surveys have been a bit haphazard this year. Access roads have been closed to some of the sites because of construction works associated with Katfish Reach. Wet weather also restricts access to most of the sites, and the activity is often abandoned.

Despite this, we have been able to submit about 6 survey forms this year. It is interesting how the populations of waterbirds can change from visit to visit.

Sometimes there are large numbers of pelican, sometimes avocets, sometimes swans, often grey teal and Australian shelduck—we always see something.

Small birds such as dotterels run along the edge of the lagoons, Caspian terns fly rapidly overhead.

The fallen tree trunks are often adorned with cormorants, ibis and spoonbill. Occasionally we will be lucky enough to see a wedge tailed eagle.

With the development of the Katfish Reach infrastructure, there is a lot more water at some of our observation points, and especially at point 2, we are seeing more waterbird activity.

This year Norm and Jenny Winn have joined John and I for most of the outings. We always finish with a cuppa and a chat by Eckerts Creek, and agree that it is a pleasant way to spend the morning. Anyone wishing to join us on the first Tuesday of each month is most welcome.

Sue Nettlefold



Norm Winn spotting birds on the opposite side of the lagoon.



*Australian shelduck (**Tadorna tadornoides**) with the male on the left and the female on the right.*



We often see bush birds as well. Here is a young Pallid Cuckoo (**Cuculus pallidus**) that we spied recently.

A Good Partnership

On 2 occasions recently, the MDB Youth Council have joined forces with the Friends group. On 12th July we had a combined working bee to put in all the new trail markers for the Ngak Indau walk. We had 7 Youth Council members with their mentors Bec Stevens, Karen Bishop, Hannah Spronk, Naomi Prunkun and Craig Ferber, as well as 8 Friends of Riverland Parks.

Thankfully the holes had already been dug the day before, and with all the extra help, we were able to finish the whole walk in 1 day. Working in teams, we placed the redgum posts in the holes and then screwed on the plates that had the directional stickers on them.

The MDB NRM team supplied lunch and Kevin Smith gave the students a talk about the Katfish Reach and the "Ribbons of Blue" Glossop High school Project.



A week or so later, the FoRP group met at Kevin Smith's place to discuss designs for the interpretive signs that will also be put up along the trail. Once these are made and installed, the walking track will be completed.

Our second working bee was on the 23rd August at Cooltong CP. The FoRP arrived early to inspect our plantings on the old dam site. Many of the chenopod seeds that we scattered have now germinated. June had brought some quandong, acacia and pittosporum phyllaroides seeds along, and these were scattered in the old furrows.



The Youth Council students arrived about an hour later. We introduced them to the reptile pitfall traps, which were opened the previous night, and were lucky enough to find one mallee dragon.

They then helped us remove all the buckets in the 4 grids. It seems like the end of an era, as there will not be any more pitfall trapping done in Cooltong.

Thanks so much to Kevin Smith for coordinating this activity for the last 12 years.

Later, after a well deserved and delicious lunch, again organised by



the MDB NRM, we show the group how to use a GPS to find a Malleefowl nest and then how to appraise the nest.

The day ends with us singing Happy Birthday to Hannah Spronk.

Sue Nettlefold

Karte Conservation Park

Karte CP, about 30Km NW of Pinnaroo, is a lovely place to visit, especially in spring. Recently, a group of us took the opportunity to explore the park on a beautiful warm September day.

When we first arrived at the camping area, there was a pair of Malleefowl fossicking around in the grass.



Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*)

They seemed to ignore us completely, despite the fact that there were 3 cameras following their every move.

We went for the marked walk along the sandy track that follows the ridge above the camp ground. There are some wonderful views of the surrounding farm area. All the wild flowers were blossoming, and you had to watch your step in places to avoid crushing delicate orchids.



Pink violet (*Lasiopetalum behrii*)

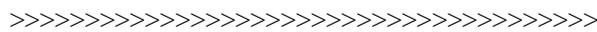


Spider orchid (*Caladenia verrucosa*)



Dwarf Greenhood (*Pterostylis nana*)

Photos by John Nettlefold



Katarapko fox baiting stations

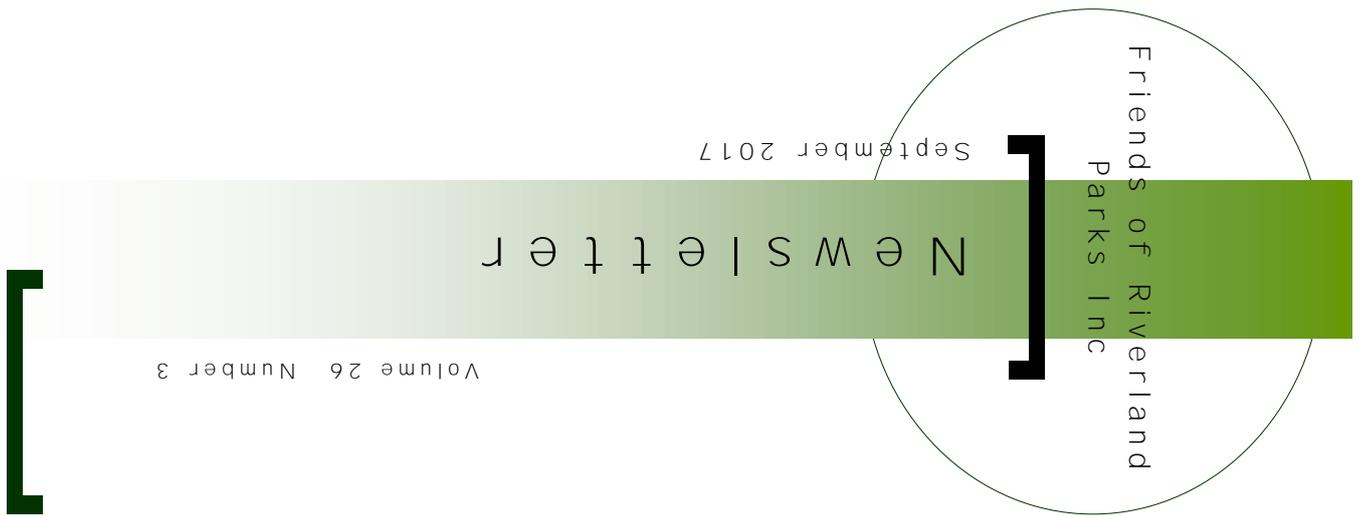
Our most recent working bee was held in the main section of Katarapko NP. The Friends of Riverland Parks carry out a fox baiting programme in all sections of Katarapko, in Cooltong CP and in the Pooginook CP twice a year. Wendy and Michael Mackintosh are currently responsible for this area.

Over the years, the posts marking the baiting sites have become faded, and obscured by vegetation, making their job more difficult. Our project was to remove the old posts and replace them with new stainless steel



droppers. There are 72 stations in this section of the park. We split into 2 groups and managed to get all the posts replaced and numbered. Bob Pankhurst came in his tractor which was very helpful removing posts that were too firmly stuck in the ground. Bob, and Murray Harvey, do the baiting in the other sections of the park, and are planning to replace these markers themselves. Kevin and Joan Phillips look after the baiting programme in Cooltong, and Kevin Smith cares for Pooginook. At the end of the day, Wendy and Michael were very happy that they can now easily see the markers.

Sue Nettlefold



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Friends of Riverland Parks Inc is a group of volunteers from most sections of the Riverland. Our common aim is to assist the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources in the conservation of both wet and dry land areas within the local district.