



## From the Regional Manager's Desk

The old saying that "the one constant is change" is certainly the case with Alinytjara Wilurara at the moment. In addition to the broad organisational changes as a result of Regional Integration, there are many of our staff who have also decided it is time for a change. Our Coast and Marine Officer, Aude Loisier, has taken 12 months leave to broaden her experience in Noumea and Ceduna based Program Manager Philippa Schmucker has also decided to consider other opportunities. Both of these individuals have made a fantastic contribution to Alinytjara Wilurara Region over the last two and two and a half years respectively and we wish them well. Similarly, Leanne Liddle, Project Officer with the Kuka Kanyini at Watarru initiative has taken up a position with Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division of Department for Premier and Cabinet. Leanne was ably supported by the ever reliable Glenys Jones who retired to focus more on her charity work for which she was well known. Both these individuals must be recognised for their work with the Watarru Community.

I am pleased to report that the Warru Recovery Program recently beat a strong field of contestants to win the coveted best 'Caring for Country' Award at the national NAIDOC Awards in Sydney. Leader of the Recovery Team is AW Ecologist Matt Ward along with AW Threatened Species Officer Harald Ehmann. This is a great example of the growing partnership between Alinytjara Willurara and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY).

**Trevor Naismith**

REGIONAL MANAGER

## Buffel Grass Control

**Teresa Gurney,**  
AW NRM Authorised Officer

The very invasive weed, Buffel Grass, is the focus of a control program in the southern AW NRM Region. Buffel Grass establishes along railway lines and

Adam Wood, AW NRM Fire Officer, Joe Stelmann and Mark Walsh.

The thick grass can pose great danger to people and homes if left dry around dwellings. Community members and Marcus Rohl helped spot burn higher density areas within the community for fire safety.



roads and then spreads into surrounding bush.

AW NRM Authorised Officer, Teresa Gurney, and DENR staff sprayed Buffel Grass along the railway line from Ooldea to Wynbring in March 2011. DENR staff returned in May to back monitor and continue spraying from Wynbring to Malbooma.

Buffel Grass Officer John Taylor and Teresa Gurney have been concentrating on the control of Buffel Grass at Oak Valley community over the past few months. About 41 hectares around the community was sprayed or burned, and mapped, with the help of AW NRM Knowledge and Information Officer,

Roger Williams, Lance Ingomar and Marcus Rohl with AW NRM Fire Officer, Joe Stelmann burning Buffel Grass near Oak Valley.



Marcus Rohl and AW NRM Fire Officer, Joe Stelmann spraying Buffel Grass. All photos: Teresa Gurney

For further information please contact Teresa Gurney, AW NRM Authorised Officer on (08) 8625 3706 or email: [aoc@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:aoc@aboriginalnrm.com.au)



## Volunteers in the AW NRM Region

**Philippa Schmucker, AW NRM Program Manager**

*Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the AW NRM Region!*

Volunteers are an important asset to the AW NRM Region in collecting baseline data and monitoring health and trend for flora, fauna and pest species.

The AWNRM Board supports the development of partnerships across the region to increase knowledge in sustainable land management programs, and increasing biological knowledge of the region through high standard biodiversity assessments.

### *The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert*

The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert (FOGVD) are an active volunteer group in the AW NRM region, providing assistance to increase biological knowledge of the region through high standard biodiversity assessments.

The group has just returned from their reconnaissance trip to the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and Mamungari Conservation Park, gearing up for the August 2011 major biological survey trip. The group photographed approximately 69 vegetation photo points- some of which had not been photographed for 27 years. The FOGVD also discovered a new stand of *Eucalyptus wyolensis* (Rare status in SA) on one of the recent exploration lines, which the group confirmed the plant's identification with Eucalypt expert Dr Dean Nicolle. The group will most likely conduct one of the vegetation surveys at this site to fully document its existence.

The reconnaissance trip also provided an opportunity for knowledge sharing between volunteers and Traditional Owners, meeting with community members from Oak Valley, and Mr Tommy Baker accompanied the group to assist in photographing some vegetation photo points. Phil Gaukroger, leading the reconnaissance said "Tommy taught us a lot about the country. We look forward to seeing Tommy and other members of the community in the future."

The recent mining exploration activity and track access provides the FOGVD and the AWNRM Board with a unique opportunity to conduct vegetation surveys and other monitoring activities in an area where this has not been done previously.



*Eucalyptus wyolensis in the MT Lands - Conservation Status Rare in SA. Photo: Philippa Schmucker*

The AW NRM region program delivery staff look forward to providing support and assistance to the group on the upcoming biological survey trip.

### *New Volunteer Group for the AW NRM Region*

The Desert Discovery volunteer group have just returned from a reconnaissance trip in the north east of the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, Woomera



*Neville and June Hudson discussing correct identification of animal tracks for data collection at sand plot monitoring site on the 2010 field trip in the MT Lands. Photo: Philippa Schmucker*

Prohibited Area and Tallaringa Conservation Park, in preparation for a biological monitoring trip proposed for September 2012. Priority areas for monitoring have been determined through gaps in flora and fauna information for the proposed project areas.

Desert Discovery are a volunteer group that have not previously done work in the AW NRM region, but have worked closely with the Department for Environment and Conservation (DEC) Western Australia and Traditional Owners in collecting important flora and fauna information.

Program Manager Philippa Schmucker has been liaising with the group since 2010 in developing the 2012 project

and said: "Threatened Species Officer, Harald Ehmann and Knowledge and Information Officer, Adam Wood have been of great assistance in preparation for the volunteer groups field work. The 2012 trip will include conducting surveys such as fauna trapping with pitfalls, collecting botanical samples for the SA Herbarium, recording water sources, bird surveys for the Birds Australia Atlas, and sampling for presence of threatened fauna species such as the Southern Marsupial Mole *Notoryctes typhlops* - classified as Vulnerable in South Australia."

For further information please contact Philippa Schmucker, AW NRM Program Manager on (08) 8625 3706 or email: [pmmc@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:pmmc@aboriginalnrm.com.au)

## Teaming to Succeed – Notes from Regional Manager

It's been great to see the good work that our Fire Management Officer, Joe Stelmann, has been doing with Anangu. With support from colleagues in the Fire Management section of DENR, fire training was provided to Anangu Rangers who immediately followed up the theory with some practical experience and burnt 85 Hectares around the Warru Pintji (enclosure fences) to better protect this vital asset from a wildfire. Good work all.

At the time of writing, another important milestone in the integration (or bringing together) of NRM with DENR has occurred. The Regional Management Team positions have been called which is the first step in forming up our new leadership group within the Region. Applications will be 'quarantined' to staff within the Regional Services Directorate which includes staff currently employed by the NRM Boards around the State. This is a time of uncertainty for many staff who are considering applying for these positions and want to step up into a leadership role in the new DENR. Once these key positions are filled, we will be able to progress with reviewing the balance of our staff structure and our contractual arrangements for the team.

Despite all this, AW staff are continuing to engage Anangu in delivering NRM across our Region. There are many more stories within this bulletin that highlight a selection of this important work.

**Trevor Naismith**  
REGIONAL MANAGER



## Rain, Sunshine and Flowers - A Season to Delight

**Karan Coombe-Smith, AW NRM Land Condition and Vegetation Officer**

The substantial rains across our region have brought our flora into full glory. On recent field trips I have been delighted to have seen the region putting on a beautiful display of its flowers with the region's flora blossoming and healthy. Like many of Australia's native plants, the flowers are best seen out of the car and up close.

One opportunity was provided by field work in June. I accompanied Brett Dalzell, the district ranger from the Ceduna DENR office, on a trip to the Bunda cliffs on the Nullarbor, travelling over several days from the Head of Bight across to the Western Australian border. While Brett was conducting annual monitoring of known haul-out and breeding sites for Australian Sea Lions, I was in search of more clues about the Nullarbor daisy (*Brachyscome tatei*). Trying to determine exactly where the species does and doesn't grow along the Nullarbor cliffs and to estimate the total population and distribution. On a previous trip I had found the Nullarbor daisy growing right on the cliff edge and on the cliff foot-slopes. But on this trip I even found it growing directly on the limestone cliff-face! It is a true survivor.

The daisy grows along the entire length of the cliffs, but prefers the patches of exposed limestone with no or minimal soil. These patches tend to be more south-east facing, perhaps because the soil is scoured out by the prevailing south-easterly winds, leaving behind the exposed limestone.

We were able to find a couple of different sites suitable for setting up longer term monitoring and confirmed that, aside from a few odd plants growing further back or on sheer cliff-faces, most plants are found either on the cliff top within 10 metres of the cliff edge or on the 'scree' foot-slopes directly below the cliff edge.

While my eyes were focussed on daisies, Brett's were behind his binoculars, locating Australian Sea Lions with pups, heralding the start of the breeding season on the Great Australian Bight. Brett and Saras Kumar, the Great Australian Bight Marine Park Manager will undertake further counts throughout the season.

South of the highway at Border Village, a track winds its way down the border



*DENR ranger, Brett Dalzell (circled) is dwarfed by the size of the Nullarbor Bunda Cliffs. Here he is using binoculars to monitor a known site for Australian Sea Lions far below.*

to the coast. On the Western Australia side is Eucla National Park. This border area is home to *Pomaderris forrestiana* (no common name), a pretty bush with heart-shaped leaves and creamy flowers. Although its stronghold is south-eastern Western Australia, there are several populations occurring in South Australia in Nullarbor National Park. I had been unsuccessfully searching through Western Australian connections for a photograph from the WA populations but it appears no-one had officially visited the populations in WA in recent times. Like the daisy the recent rains meant the plants were flowering and healthy.

On our return to Ceduna we stopped to check a *Lomandra* irongrass community adjacent to Highway One. Again, many plants flowering, a walk in the patch found it full of fragrant *Lomandra* blooms. Another delight of the season!

Given the great conditions for flora, the remainder of the work season this year will be brimming with field work and flora discovery.

For further information please contact Karan Coombe-Smith, AW NRM Land Condition and Vegetation Officer on (08) 8628357 3880 or email: [landveg@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:landveg@aboriginalnrm.com.au)



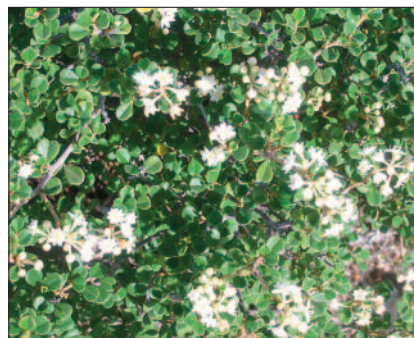
*A large flowering Nullarbor Daisy clings to a niche in the cliff.*



*The Nullarbor Daisy prefers the exposed limestone patches along the clifftops.*



*Pomaderris forrestiana growing on the coast near the Western Australia border.*

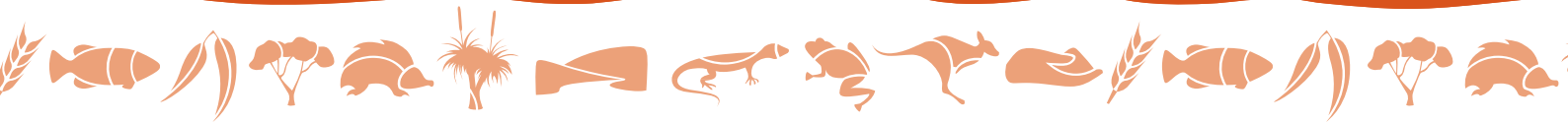


*Distinctive flowers and leaves of Pomaderris forrestiana in Nullarbor National Park.*



*Lomandra flower clusters are fragrant and the individual star-shaped flowers quite beautiful close up.*

*All photos: K Coombe-Smith*



## Revegetation and Regeneration in Landscape 4 (Yalata Lands)

### Paul Gregory, AW NRM Project Officer

A major project on the Yalata Lands is reducing erosion and restoring extensive damage to native vegetation.

The revegetation and regeneration project, awarded to Eyre Native Seeds, Port Lincoln, by the AW NRM Board, saw many tracks between the Yalata Roadhouse and the Yalata community being ripped, direct seeded, brushed and blocked over 5 days in May and June this year.

Eyre Native Seeds and the AW NRM Board Project Officer, Paul Gregory were assisted by Yalata Land Management (YLM) Coordinator, Alessandro Madonna and YLM Rangers, Brian Queama, Mark Young and Adrian Brown and Yalata Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) participant Matthew Kite for the work.

They blocked 7.2 km of track in a 358 hectare area of low open mallee woodland community dominated by the *Eucalyptus oleosa* subspecies that occurs on loamy sand to clay soils with open plains and low hill slopes. The vegetation community has a very sparse midstorey of *Eremophila scoparia*, *Acacia oswaldii* and *Myoporum platycarpum* with a dense low shrub layer of *Cratystylis conocephala*, *Atriplex versicaria*, *Maireana erioclada*, *Rhagodia crassifolia* and *Zygophyllum aurtiacum* subspecies.

The myriad of tracks in the area have been formed over the years by vehicles travelling across the native vegetation in order to access the roadhouse from the community.

Yalata Council supported the AW NRM Board's proposal to rehabilitate the area to help leave dust down around the community, assist in restoring areas of native vegetation and to educate community members and the YLM team in revegetation techniques and natural rehabilitation methods. The techniques learned will be very useful for future projects in and around the community.

The project included classroom and on-ground project training components.

In the classroom the YLM team and CDEP participants were shown different methods of rehabilitation and



YLM Ranger, Mark Young, preparing a track with water runoff for direct seeding.



A rehabilitated track blocked by large logs, sign posted and disguised by brush.

revegetation. They learned about site preparation, different methods of direct seeding and laying brush, and some plant and seed identification.

On the ground, Eyre Native Seeds Team Leader Merrick Savage, demonstrated hand seeding methods on level ground as well as on a hill slope at a water runoff area, how to set up photo monitoring points, and brushing methods. He also demonstrated how to set up, calibrate and use the ripper/seeder machine supplied by the Eyre Peninsula NRM Board.



YLM Rangers Brian Queama and Mark Young, preparing a track and direct seeding by hand. All photos: Paul Gregory

Rehabilitated tracks were blocked using large logs and various pieces of dead timber and disguised by laying brush, branches containing seed cut from trees and shrubs from the area, for the first 50 metres of each track. 'Revegetation Area' signs were also placed at the beginning of tracks made visible from main vehicle accesses and to prevent people from driving on the rehabilitated tracks.

Fifteen photo monitoring points were also set up throughout the site at the beginning of various tracks to assist in monitoring rehabilitation success.

or further information please contact Paul Gregory, AW NRM Project Officer on (08) 8625 3706 or email: poc@aboriginalnrm.com.au



## An update on the Nullarbor Monitoring project

**Harald Ehmann,**  
**AW NRM Threatened Species Officer**

AW NRM has been funded by the Commonwealth under Caring for Country to monitor environmental changes, in particular climate change, on the Nullarbor Plain. This will involve repeating some parts of the South Australian portion of the Nullarbor Biological Survey (BS14) of 1984.

The broad aims are to:

- monitor the current biological resources and assets of the region
- determine the ecological trends in those resources since 1984 particularly with respect to climate change, and
- apply additional base-line metrics (aspects of the environment that can be measured) that are likely to monitor biological impacts due to climate change.

The 1984 Biological Survey and data are a useful and valuable base line from which to evaluate changes and trends, so it is important to replicate the methods as far as is necessary.

The substantive monitoring event over two weeks is planned for April 2012, but there is a slight to moderate possibility that a follow-up will be needed in September 2012. This is yet to be finalized and will depend on financial, resource and science questions yet to be answered.

The initial field scoping reconnaissance was done in January 2010 and I was ably assisted by Barka Bryant and Brian Queama in that work. The re-commissioning of the 1984 sites is progressing well and four (Merdayerrah, Colona, Yalata and Ifould) of the eight "camps" (=monitoring areas) have now been done. This ground work commenced in late December 2010 and will be completed by October 2011. Mark Walsh, Paul Gregory and myself have been ably assisted by ten Aboriginal workers and further substantial involvement is anticipated.

Members of the Maralinga Tjarutja, Yalata and the Far West Native Title Group (particularly its Chairperson Mitch Dunnett) have been, are and will be involved in ongoing consultation about this project.



*Brian Queama demonstrating a Quandong tree that has been decimated by Camels just to the north of the Nullarbor.*



*Oak Valley Community members Ashly Hart, Stanley Queama and Sonny Pepper at Muckera Rockhole on the northern edge of the Nullarbor.*



*A Nullarbor Sleepy Lizard has right-of-way on the track.*



*Paul Gregory, Mark Walsh, Trent Porter, Jill Tugwell and John McDonald meet at one of the Yalata sites. Yalata workers at this site were Brian Queama, Teddy Edwards, Adrian Brown and Sandro Alessandro who had to return to other work on this final afternoon of the Yalata work and our recci visit.*

AW NRM has entered a collaborative arrangement with DENR's Environmental Assessment and Monitoring Unit (EAMU, which includes the former Biological Survey Branch) for the effective delivery of the science side of this project, and Rob Brandle is involved to co-ordinate EAMU's involvement. John McDonald and Nick Neagle are also involved particularly on the vegetation monitoring metrics.

AW NRM is pleased to have the Scientific Expedition Group (SEG, based in Adelaide) prepared to be involved as a volunteer organization in the April 2012 monitoring.

In April 2011 a week long reconnaissance trip was undertaken with Trent Porter and Jill Tugwell from SEG, John McDonald and I to evaluate the logistics in conducting the survey, to analyse vegetation trends using the techniques of Repeat Photography, and to complete standardised Repeat Photography at existing Photopoints. In that time we managed to do this at six of the eight "camps".

In June 2011 Paul Gregory, AW NRM Project Officer and I completed the reconnaissance work at the remaining two "camps" in the Nullarbor National Park and Regional Reserve while also developing new photopoint base placement methods.

An August 2011 reconnaissance trip is planned to finalise methods and metrics that will provide the most appropriate comparison of 1984 data with that to be taken in 2012, that better identify and describe vegetation (and possibly fauna trends) more comprehensively, and that align this project with other ecological projects of a similar or complementary nature such as the Terrestrial Ecosystems Research Network (TERN).

Substantial Aboriginal involvement in the April 2012 (and September, if that does eventuate) monitoring is planned and further consultations are and will be done about this. AW NRM will be guided by the need to proceed sensitively.

Further updates will be provided and any feedback from readers is welcome and sought.

Please contact Harald Ehmann on (08) 8357 3880 or mobile: 04 3881 8115 or email: [thsp@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:thsp@aboriginalnrm.com.au)

*All Photos: Harald Ehmann*



## AW NRM helps conduct a Biological Survey in the Sandy Bore IPA, APY Lands

**Harald Ehmann,  
AW NRM Threatened Species Officer**

In early March I joined APY Land Management staff Gary Lewis, Emily Lapinski, Laura Mitchell and Anangu IPA Rangers to conduct a biological survey on the proposed Sandy Bore IPA. Bob Ford (the Ranger's trainer from TAFE SA) also participated in the survey and conducted training activities during the four day survey. Ten Mimili School senior students and their teachers Sam Furniss and Rowland Singer also joined us for two days, and everyone pitched in to deploy the trap lines and do the survey work.

The survey activities included searches for endangered species and helped Rangers and students learn about

western science. Traditional Ecological Knowledge was applied wherever possible to improve the depth and comprehensiveness of the management information.

### So what was done and found?

Three survey sites were set up to trap small animals using standard pitfalls, Elliot traps and cage traps. Photopoints were established and site vegetation surveys were done, all with the substantial help of Anangu.

The three sites were on a gradient of plant productivity, from low to high. The animal catches reflected that, with the highest numbers and diversity of mammals, reptiles and insects at the site where both plant diversity and

grasses productivity were very high.

Fifteen different species of reptiles were found including the colourful Common Desert Ctenotus Skink, the friendly Tjaliri (the Nocturnal Desert Skink) and the vividly marked Narrow-banded Sandswimmer Skink, the scorpion-eating Papangaur (the Smooth Knob-tailed Gecko), and the strange fat-tailed Burrow-plug Gecko.

Seven different species of bats were also recorded at two sites in the Sandy Bore area: an excellent result for this part of the world which has not been previously checked for bats.

A single specimen of a young Ooldea Dunnart was found at Anpuru and four species of native rodents were caught:



*The friendly Tjaliri (the Nocturnal Desert Skink) found at Anpuru site 1. It avoids the extremes of the day with surface activity on warm nights and evenings. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*The fast and secretive Common Desert Ctenotus Skink found at Anpuru site 1. It occurs throughout the desert areas of Central Australia. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*The scorpion-eating Papangaur or Smooth Knob-tailed Gecko found at Anpuru site 2. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*Senior students and others (from left to right): Con Campbell, Timmy Dodd (IPA Ranger), Remy Dodd, Jacky Edwards, Glendle Campbell (standing), David Brumby (at drift fence), Howard Dodd (IPA Ranger) and Rowland Singer (teacher) from Mimili School setting up a pitfall and drift fence trap line at Anpuru site 1. Photo: Bob Ford*



*A female Tarkawara eating Parakeelya. When eating this plant the eyes are kept partly or completely closed: is Parakeelya like onion is for humans? Photo: Harald Ehmann*



Tarkawara (the Spinifex Hopping Mouse), Anoola (Forrest's Mouse), Wildjin (Desert Mouse), and Minkiri (Sandy Inland Mouse). There were also many introduced House Mice which showed a remarkable amount of variation in colour, size and other characteristics.

**Highlights, thanks and next steps**

The high diversity of small mammals is truly remarkable and it was due to the present excellent condition of the country following good rains.

The interest and dedication shown by all participants in the survey and associated traditional knowledge transfer was inspirational, and everyone worked really hard. All the

staff ably took on the various activities (sometimes for the first time!) that had to be done to achieve the excellent results. Thanks to everyone involved and special thanks to Margaret and Sammy Dodd and their family.

Besides the biological survey work the senior Anangu participants actively and unceasingly engaged the younger people and children in traditional teaching about the animals, the plants, the landscape and their Law.

AW NRM's assistance to APY LM has involved six weeks' of work with substantial input to the lodgement of licencing and animal ethics approvals, advice, planning, obtaining and transporting equipment, travel, conduct of the survey, specimen processing,

identifications, lodging materials into official collections, and data preparation.

APY Land Management staff and senior Anangu are looking at how the techniques we used on this survey can be adapted and applied to better suit the needs of Anangu. AW NRM looks forward to assisting them in that process.

For further information, please contact Harald Ehmann on (08) 8357 3880 or mobile: 04 3881 8115 or email: [thsp@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:thsp@aboriginalnrm.com.au)



*The vividly marked Narrow-banded Sandswimmer Skink found at Anpuru site 2. This nocturnal species buries itself in the surface layers of loose sand in animal burrow entrances and ambushes insects and spiders that unwittingly walk too close. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*The strange fat-tailed Burrow-plug Gecko found active at night near Anpuru site 1. It enters spider burrows head first and uses its tail to plug the hole. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



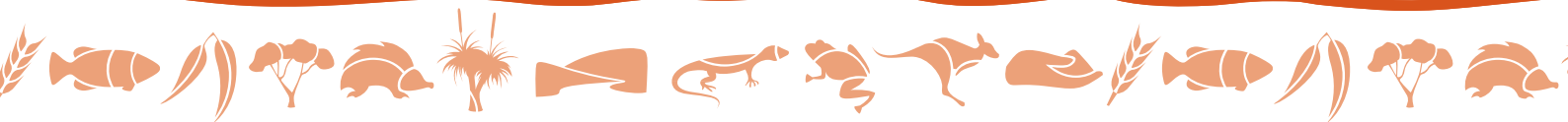
*A female Wildjin (Desert Mouse) found at Anpuru site 1. Note the reddish ring of fine fur around the eye, the shortish tail and the overall streaked appearance. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*Margaret Dodd telling her great granddaughter Carla Goodwin about the Tarkawara. Photo: Harald Ehmann*



*Some of the people on the Sandy Bore IPA biological survey at the Anpuru shed tank. Back (L to R) Harald Ehmann, Justine Goodwin, Neville Goodwin, Howard Dodd, Timothy Dodd, Wally Dodd, Kerry-Anne Dodd. Front (L to R) Emily Lapinski, Rita Andrews with son Dean, Margaret Dodd, Sammy Dodd and Laura Mitchell. Behind the camera: Bob Ford*



## Yalata coastal campsite and track management

**Paul Gregory, AW NRM Project Officer**

The Yalata coastal area is very popular for fishing, especially during the 'mulloway' fishing season (October to February), which brings with it concentrated off-road vehicle driving and bush camping.

Its vast stretches of relatively undisturbed coastline are also used for feeding and breeding by shorebirds, some of which, like the Vulnerable Hooded Plover, are listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The coast's highly sensitive vegetation and soil tends to have slow recovery times, and is therefore highly susceptible to damage by off-road vehicles and bush camping.

The Coastal Land Management project is helping to protect and enhance the Yalata coastal area and reduce the impact from bush camping and off-road vehicle use through on-ground projects such as track and campsite rationalisation.

In May 2010 AW NRM Project Officer, Paul Gregory, and Knowledge and Information Officer, Adam Wood, used ArcPad (GPS and mapping device) to ground-truth digitised tracks and capture new tracks along the Yalata coast. They also recorded recommendations of track closures in the area.

The closure recommendations, and recommendations for directional and interpretative signage and campsite fencing, were presented at the Yalata IPA work planning meeting in February 2011.

Due to the significant use of the coast and threats to the environment, AW NRM worked in collaboration with Yalata Land Management (YLM) and Yalata IPA to develop a program for managing coastal tracks in the IPA, and defining or re-establishing coastal camping areas.

In March to April 2011, Paul Gregory and contractor Mark Walsh, with the assistance of the YLM team, re-fenced the campsites at Granites, Coombra and Geues campgrounds and rationalised tracks between Granites and Geues campgrounds.

In total six campsites were restored and one campsite, overgrown with



AW NRM Project Officer, Paul Gregory working on track closures.

Photo: Paul Gregory



YLM Ranger, Brian Queama, and AW NRM Project Officer, Paul Gregory, working on campsite fencing. Photo: Paul Gregory

native vegetation, was removed. The 7.7 km of closed coastal tracks restrict vehicle access to a large expanse of coastal dunes and native vegetation. The closed tracks are being left to rehabilitate naturally.

The on-ground work was completed in a total of 16 days with the assistance of YLM Coordinator Alessandro Madonna and YLM Rangers Teddy Edwards, Brian Queama and Adrian

'Bubbles' Brown. The AW NRM's Buffel Grass Officer, John-Henry Taylor also assisted when rain in the region restricted his pest flora duties.

For further information please contact Paul Gregory, AW NRM Project Officer on (08) 8625 3706 or email: [poc@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:poc@aboriginalnrm.com.au)



## First marine cleanup at the Merdayerrah Sandpatch

**Aude Loisier, AW NRM Coast and Marine Officer**

The marine debris survey and beach cleanup at Merdayerrah Sandpatch in late 2010 has not only cleaned up, it has installed a transect for continued assessment and monitoring of marine debris at the western end of the Great Australian Bight Marine Park.

The marine debris survey and beach cleanup between 29 November and 3 December 2010 involved: GABMP Manager Saras Kumar; senior rangers in Ceduna, Robbie Sleep and Brett Dalzell; volunteer high school student from Ceduna, Brayden; two Anangu volunteers, Clem Lawrie and Brenton; and AW NRM Coast and Marine Officer, Aude Loisier.

The 1-kilometre transect, along the Merdayerrah Sandpatch near Border Village, yielded 170 kg of wood and one wool bag of mixed marine debris, such as fishing lines, nets, ropes, plastic and glass.

The transect will be re-surveyed next year at around the same time in order to compare the amount and the type of debris accumulated along this particular stretch of coastline.



Debris collected along 10 km of coastline along the Merdayerrah Sand patch.  
Photo: Robbie Sleep



The team getting ready to collect the marine debris at the Merdayerrah sand patch.  
Photo: Aude Loisier



Team at work.

Photo: Saras Kumar

The team cleaned up all objects bigger than a plastic lid from the remainder of the beach during the subsequent days. A total of 12 wool bags, or around 600 kg of debris, were removed from the 12 km of beach. Driftwood was left at the beach.

Debris found and collected on either side of the Bunda cliffs is being compared and next year's survey will allow further comparisons. The study will be used to inform future management strategies such as educational programs for boat owners.



Weighing debris.

Photo: Saras Kumar



Clem Lawrie and Robbie Sleep at work.

Photo: Saras Kumar



## West Mallee Protection Group

**Philippa Schmucker,**  
**AW NRM Program Manager**

The West Mallee Protection Group (WMPG) has contributed to the Caring for Our Country (CfoC) Monitoring Health Program and on ground threat mitigation project work.

NRM programs support on ground projects to reduce threats and enhance biodiversity protection in the region. The WMPG is a volunteer group supported through CfoC in the region through several of the Boards programs. The group currently assists the Board by delivering NRM monitoring and on ground work projects in the Yellabinna Regional Reserve and Yumbarra Conservation Park.

A major field trip was delivered autumn this year as a continuation of previous field trips, to monitor ecosystem health, deliver on ground threat mitigation projects and provide a means for community knowledge transfer.

### Outcomes

The focus of the field trip on several specific sites assisted the group and AWNRM staff Philippa Schmucker and Adam Wood in delivering significant outcomes in data collection, monitoring and on ground management actions. Outcomes from the trip included the assessment of five surface water ecosystems, of which all were rock-holes. Information was collected with an emphasis on water quality, weeds, fauna presence within the ecosystem, and cultural information such as bush tucker and medicine in the area. From the rock-hole assessments, management actions were implemented at four of the five sites, including cleaning out two of the rockholes by using a water pump and hand bucketing. The group was able to retrieve debris and sediment, animal carcasses and bones which were fouling some of the rock-holes.

Weed mapping and control was implemented at four of the sites, assisting in reducing threats to each of the surface water ecosystems. Weed removal is a measurable outcome which reduces competition with native species in the project areas.



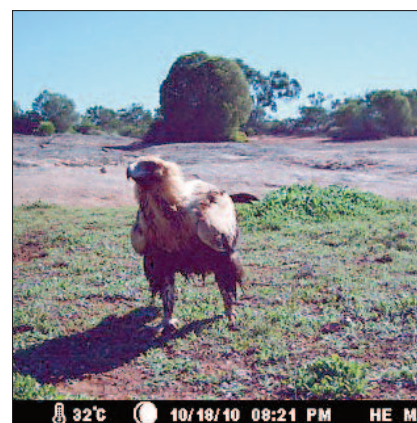
Adam Wood testing water quality at a rockhole.  
Photo: Philippa Schmucker

Bird surveys were conducted at four of the five sites and animal track surveys were conducted at two of the sites. Over time, bird and animal track survey data can be collated and compared to provide important health, trend, and species abundance, diversity and richness information for the ecosystems monitored, and therefore can assist in future management recommendations and on ground project action planning.

Motion sensor cameras were set up to collect fauna presence information at five of the sites, which found presence of native and pest species including adult and juvenile Wedge-tailed Eagles, dingoes and rabbits. Photo points were set up pre and post rock-hole cleaning and weed management work. Other on ground management actions included the removal of broken barrier fencing (poly pipe) at the Paint Lakes site in Yumbarra Conservation Park and revisiting a Biological Survey site to look for Malleefowl presence.

Additional broader outcomes of the trip included the passing on of cultural knowledge to younger generations of the Kokatha Mula group, and education and knowledge sharing and transfer of cultural, historical, flora, fauna and biodiversity information. The NRM skills base of members of the group was increased significantly through the assistance of field staff such as bird, flora and animal track identification and recording, and weed identification, mapping and management. The use of flora and fauna field data and fact sheets and identification books also assisted in developing the skill sets of participants.

The process of assessing sites and making recommendations for future



Motion sensor camera capturing an inquisitive Wedge-tailed Eagle at a rockhole.

management with the group has assisted in delivering on ground projects, and supports the group in skills development in monitoring methodology and data collection.

A safe working environment was provided to all volunteers, with the use of the Boards high quality hand-held UHF radios and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for on ground delivery of weed management and rockhole cleaning. A remote First Aid Kit was provided to the group for field safety, and the group was informed of the Hazard Identification and Safety Management Assessment Plan (HISMAP) for the field trip.

A field trip is being developed for spring this year, using the monitoring and assessment methodology developed to follow on from the autumn work delivered.

For further information please contact Philippa Schmucker, AW NRM Program Manager on (08) 8625 3706 or email: [pmc@aboriginalnrm.com.au](mailto:pmc@aboriginalnrm.com.au)



## Animal Track Monitoring Program in the Southern AW NRM Region

**Philippa Schmucker, AW NRM Program Manager**

A survey of the distribution and abundance of native and introduced fauna was conducted in the AW region in 2007 and 2009 using the sand-plot track-based monitoring methodology (Southgate et al. 2007 and Southgate et al. 2009). This work has focused on providing baseline ecological information from which to compare future trends. Additional sampling was conducted in 2011 with trips in May and June. Dr. Richard Southgate and associates were contracted to deliver this project.

A field trip for August is proposed to provide a third replicate of samples for 2011, provide track-based monitoring training for members of Friends of the Great Victoria Desert on their biological survey field trip, conduct reconnaissance of watering points in the form of shed tanks and turkey



*Dr Rick Southgate observing big moth on bush medicine Eremophila Alternifolia. Photo: Philippa Schmucker*

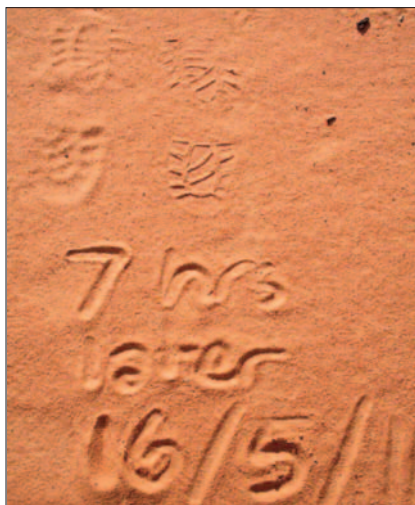
nests (created to provide water from mining activity and road works) for further targeted surveys and conduct a combined analysis and write up of the data collected over the last five years.

Overall the survey work across the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and Mamungari Conservation Park will be used to meet the following objectives:

It will provide baseline data on the distribution and frequency of occurrence of native and non-native animals over the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands.

We will be able to compare the animal distribution and relative abundance over the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands in response to exceptional rainfall conditions with previously drier years.

Liaise with the Maralinga Tjarutja community, and potential community participants (to be casually employed through AWNRM) and FoGVD



*Shoe imprints showing changes in tracking surface over a 7 hour period. Photo: Philippa Schmucker*

participants for the purpose of using the Animal Track Survey technique and build the capacity of the Oak Valley community to conduct on-going animal track monitoring into the future.

We have been able to record the location of weeds, particularly Buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris*, and look into investigating the relationship of animal species with distance to water points.

Sites visited on previous surveys in 2007 and 2009 have been resurveyed. Easily accessible sites and those with a good substrate surface for tracking have been selected.

There are sections of road with good substrate along the railway line toward Barton, to the west, east and south of Voakes Hill, along the Cook Rd and in the vicinity of Maralinga and Oak Valley. In 2007, 232 plots were sampled and of these 105 were sampled more than once. In 2009, 299 plots were sampled once only. In 2011, 94 and 124 plots were sampled in May and June, respectively.

Animal presence will be determined using the 2 ha track plot methodology conducted previously as outlined Southgate et al. (2009) and Moseby, Nano and Southgate (2009). Using this protocol, the occurrence of native and introduced animal sign is recorded while traversing a 100 x 200 m plot in a period of 20 minutes. Plots are spaced at least 5km apart.

The methodology can be used to monitor species including feral cats, foxes, dingoes, camels, rabbits, grey kangaroos, red kangaroos, echidna,

hopping mice, other rodents and small dasyurids, Emu, Malleefowl and Kipara (Australian Bustard) on the basis of gait pattern and foot imprint shape and size. It can be adapted to systematically survey vegetation including survey for weed species.

Presence or absence of species sign is the primary variable considered however, the amount of track and other sign including scats and burrows is also recorded.

Members of the Friends of Great Victoria Desert team will be provided with a description about track-based monitoring protocols and invited to accompany Dr. Southgate and assist with some of the sampling.

A report from the data gathered over the three year survey will include:

Distribution and relative abundance of trackable species compared to previous years

The local association of certain species eg. dingo, fox and feral cat

Some indication of relative abundance of dingoes, foxes, feral cats and camels in relation to free water points (roadside tanks and rockholes with accessible water) during cooler months.

Keep your eye out on the next edition of the newsletter for a future part of the project findings from 2007-2011.

Would you like to know more about community and scientific monitoring?

Phone Philippa, Program Manager Ceduna on 8625 3706, or call in to the DENR office at 11 McKenzie Street.



*Kipara (Australian Bustard) tracks in the MT Lands. Photo: Philippa Schmucker*



## Farewell and welcome to AW NRM staff

AW NRM Buffel Grass Officer, John-Henry Taylor has left the Board to spend more time with his young and extended family. Since he began with the AW NRM Board in January, John



has worked closely with AW's Authorised Officer, Teresa Gurney and residents from Yalata and Oak Valley to help develop skills, knowledge and control methods to reduce the spread of Buffel Grass in the southern two-thirds of the AW region. The AW Board and staff thank John for his contribution to Buffel Grass control in AW regional, and wish him and his family all the very best for the future.

The Board recently said *au revoir* to Coast and Marine Officer, Aude Loisier



who accepted a fantastic career development opportunity to work on marine planning in New Caledonia for a year. This position will help

further develop Aude's skills in Marine Park planning and negotiating with local communities in planning for the wise use and conservation of a key natural resource. Both these skills are critical for DENR and the AW region. The Board supports Aude in pursuing this opportunity. For the last two years, Aude has had a major impact on the coastal programs and the strong link needed to marine areas. And she brought a bit of la belle France to the Board, especially the Ceduna office! The Board and staff wish Aude success with her career development and look forward to welcoming her back in 12 months time.

In the meantime, the Board and staff welcome Ollanta Lipcer as a short-term contract Project Officer, Coast and NRM Support to AW region. Ollanta has come highly recommended through her East meets West work and island weed control work. Through her sandhill dunnart work in isolated areas she has some understanding of AW region and the communities. Ollanta's priority role

over the 2 months are to ensure that reports on coast and marine conservation are in for 2010-2011 and coastal projects are active for 2011-2012. She is ensuring the effectiveness of NRM projects in general and will be a valuable member of the AW NRM team.

In August this year, the Board and staff will bid farewell to Ceduna's Program Manager, Philippa Schmucker. Philippa started with the AW NRM Board in 2009 and has been responsible for



supporting community involvement in natural resources management, office management and co-ordination of the southern programs.

She has worked closely with the Yalata and Oak Valley communities and volunteer groups such as the Friends of Great Victoria Desert, West Mallee Protection Group and Desert Discovery. Volunteers in the AW region has been a major new initiative and Philippa's hard work has resulted in over one hundred and fifty volunteers including more than fifty Aboriginal volunteers and school children. This adds up to thousands of hours of unpaid work on the region's flora, fauna and threats. Philippa has co-ordinated and progressed projects in many areas of NRM, such as monitoring feral and native fauna through the use of sandplots and bird monitoring to meet recognised standards such as the Bird Atlas of Australia. Philippa set up the rockhole assessment and maintenance programs, working with the West Mallee Protection Group on methods that can be used into the future across the region. She forged many productive relationships on behalf of AW with local people and communities, other government agencies and non-government organisations. She is to be commended for her tenacity and work ethic and her shoes will be hard to fill! The Board and staff thank Philippa for her strong contribution to AW's success in the southern part of the region and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

## Proposed meeting dates in 2011 for AW NRM Board

- 12 & 13 October - Oak Valley
- 6 & 7 December - Adelaide

Please note that all meeting dates and venues are subject to last minute changes. Public are welcome as observers.

For further information or agendas please contact Belinda Berry at the AW NRM's Adelaide office on (08) 8357 3880.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Field trips and upcoming events in the region to include community participation for field trips:
- Friends of the Great Victoria Desert Field trip Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and Mamungari Conservation Park 15 - 29th August
- Sand plot (animal track) monitoring in the MT Lands with Rick Southgate 15 - 26th August
- Friend of Parks Forum - Kimba 2 - 4th September
- NAIDOC week 3 - 10th July. Theme - Change: The next step is ours

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