

ACROSS THE

Edition 111

OUTBACK

APRIL 2026



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Presiding Member update

Welcome to the first edition of *Across the Outback* for 2026.

Our region has been fortunate to have some excellent summer rains. For many this is a game changer for business and production, with the environment thriving after some very long stretches of dry conditions.

Of course, the 2025 floods in the far north east of the region have been compounded by the 2026 rains and with the many blessings, come challenges with infrastructure, access and some of the unwelcome impacts. As always, the people remain pretty resilient to the challenges and celebrate the opportunities.

Projects and priorities change for our board with such significant weather events. Several events, operations and on-ground activities scheduled across the region have been rescheduled or cancelled.

Thank you to our delivery and funding partners, and our communities for your understanding and patience as we reshape many plans and go back to the drawing board for some. This is how things go in our region, and we take it all in our stride.

Overall, there are many good news stories and successes to be learned about in this edition. The board hopes you have a great year ahead and our region continues to benefit from the strong start to 2026.

Douglas Lillecrapp



General Manager update

Hi all,

It has been a busy start to the year as you will read. The team has had to pivot to the significant weather events, but no complaints on that front!

This edition of the ATO captures a range of great stories on many of our current projects and priorities. I never tire of reading the stories behind the busyness and passion of our amazing teams in the SA Arid Lands region.

With the unwavering support and guidance of the board, we continue to chip away at the many threats to the sustainability of our region, whether it is the production, biodiversity, cultural or community values we are focusing on. Invariably, it is all of them with the integrated nature of our systems.

Importantly, nothing would occur without the strength of our partnerships with neighbouring landscape boards, the conservation and biodiversity sectors, pastoralists, industry and community.

Because of the scale and complexity of our region, we need to remember to celebrate all of the wins, no matter how small. Some of the work we do is long term, cyclical and doesn't always result in immediate change.

Thanks to the teams, the partners and the community for the persistence, commitment and good heart brought to all we do to protect, manage and sustain the natural resources of our region.

Thank you also to the contributors to our recent strategic plan consultation. We look forward to bringing our revised five-year Strategic Landscape Plan to you in the coming months.

Jodie Gregg-Smith

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to country and commit to working with the First Nations People of the SA Arid Lands as we undertake our business on this shared and sacred country.

Cover image:
Female Plains-wanderer
Photo: Saskia Gerhardy

Background Image:
Oodnadatta Track,
Photo: Isaac Forman,
SATC

Artwork: Marika Davies

Plains-wanderer call recorded

The calls of a Plains-wanderer identified from a song meter recording has expanded the known distribution of the critically endangered Plains-wanderer in South Australia.

It was particularly exciting for the project's ecologist and project officer because it followed 33,000 hours of monitoring data collected and analysed since the project began.

The confirmed calls were recorded in the northern part of the Marla-Oodnadatta district and is the northernmost confirmed record of a Plains-wanderer in South Australia.

It's a significant find, as the habitat it was recorded in will be added to modelling and expands both the known and potential distribution. The vegetation it was recorded in was similar to that present in other regions known to have Plains-wanderer records in South Australia.

Since July 2024 the project, which is run in partnership with Bush Heritage Australia and BirdLife Australia, has monitored 151 sites over 59 properties across the SA Arid Lands, Northern and Yorke and Alinytjara Wilurara landscape districts.

They include 51 pastoral properties and freehold farms, three national parks, two Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) and three private conservation properties. The length of time a song meter stays on a property has been determined by the habitat and its proximity to known records. The song meters collect data for just two hours per day – at dawn and dusk when the mating calls are most likely to be heard.

A Citizen Science project running alongside the song meter monitoring has received 16 sightings, reported through the project or directly to board staff.

While the number might seem low, sightings of plains-wanderers are rare, with the species difficult to find. Researchers were not expecting hundreds of records and say any information is extremely useful.

SA Arid Lands Landscape Board Community Ecologist Declan Morris said valuable information received from

the public had helped direct the team to priority areas for surveying. The information will also be used to update a habitat distribution model.

"Plains-wanderers are very elusive, so when community members are also keeping an eye out for them, it helps conservation projects like this a lot," he said.

"All reports and sightings from the community are important because they are used in many different ways to help the species."

To help with identification of the Plains-wanderer, a new video has been released to show how to confidently identify the bird and differentiate it from other ground-dwelling birds. View it at youtu.be/sIHusQ2llxE.

There's also a land management guide, which explains the landscape best suited to Plains-wanderers. Read the guide at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/projects-and-partners/projects/plains-wanderer

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Saving Native Species program and is delivered by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, Bush Heritage Australia and BirdLife Australia.

A Plains-wanderer pair, photo by Saskia Gerhardy



Andyamathanha and Wilyakali Country





Ian Ferguson working on the new fence



New fence protecting Copley's Botanic Garden

The Copley and Districts Progress Association has been successful in winning a number of Grassroots Grants over the past five years to establish a botanic garden at the town's entrance.

Past funds have supported the development of paths, purchase of plants and installation of irrigation and signage, with residents from the town and surrounding areas investing more than 1000 volunteer hours. The hours have been spent replanting lost trees, checking and fixing irrigation systems, maintaining paths, mulching and providing seating.

Together they have taken the site from a near empty block to a garden offering a tranquil setting with more than 600 trees and shrubs that attract native birds. It is visited and admired by locals and tourists.

In the 2025/26 Grassroots Grant round, the association received \$20,000 to install perimeter fencing to protect the garden from damage by horses, sheep, cattle and kangaroos.

Concerned also with impact feral goats in the area may have, the association sought a grant to protect the garden, plants and irrigation from the pest animals by erecting a fence.

The new fence around the 6600-square metre boundary was installed late last year and includes multiple pedestrian access gates.

Progress association secretary Theres Bertram said following its installation, volunteers checked the garden daily for three weeks to monitor any signs of incursions.

"There was no destruction of irrigation equipment and no damage to plants," she said.

"Not having to worry about fixing and replacing irrigation equipment in the hot weather has been a blessing to our volunteers."

With the protection offered by the fence confirmed, the volunteers can now continue their planting of rarer indigenous plants with confidence, knowing the work is not under threat.

"It may be an illusion, or wishful thinking, but the plants seem to be thriving," Theres, said.

"They seem to be growing from month to month, and it looks as though not having to worry about being trampled or eaten made them relax and grow," she said.

"The garden is looking healthier than ever."

APPLY NOW FOR A GRASSROOTS GRANT

The seventh round of the board's Grassroots Grant program is open for applications, offering \$150,000 for projects across the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) region.

Funded by the board's Landscape Levy, the program has grants of up to \$20,000 available for volunteer groups, schools, community organisations, recreational groups, property owners and individuals. The money can be used to undertake projects and activities to help build the environmental resilience and sustainability of the region.

Funding is available for projects valued between \$1000 and \$20,000 for the 2026/27 financial year. They will be awarded on merit to those that demonstrate the best value for money and delivery of benefits that align with the board's priorities of climate resilience, water management, sustainable land management, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and people and partnerships. Grants can be used for projects that support activities such as revegetation, pest and weed control, protection of threatened species, training, citizen science, environmental surveys and community events.

Work must be completed by 14 June 2027.

If you have a project in mind, please read the FAQs and guidelines available on the board's website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/SAALGrassrootsGrants, where you will also find details of projects funded in the past four rounds. It is recommended you speak to the Community Landscape Officer in your region to discuss grant ideas prior to writing the application.

Applications for this round of Grassroots Grants will close at 4pm on Monday 11 May.

Cochineal available for cactus control

Landholders in the North East Pastoral district are being encouraged to target *Opuntia* cactus infestations.

The board has cochineal available free of charge to treat Wheel cactus, Devil's Rope cactus, Coral cactus and Jumping cholla. To enquire about the availability of different cochineal species and how to source it, or advice to correctly apply the infected pads, Community Landscape Officer Ryan Hayward is available to support landholders.

While some landholders can be frustrated about the time cochineal takes to remove an infestation, the use of cochineal is a 'long game' that reduces the need for chemical use.

To guarantee success, it's important the cochineal provided is only applied to the species of cactus for which it is supplied as the wrong strain of cochineal will make it unviable

For quicker results, the board has an injection gun available for landholders to borrow. The North East Pastoral Landscape Group is also currently supporting the provision of glyphosate capsules. To access this gun and the capsules, please contact Ryan on 0459 762 603 or the SA Arid Lands office on 8429 9666.



Lisa Crawford injects wheel cactus to speed up control on Oulnina Park

LISA'S CONTROL DELIVERS FASTER RESULTS

Lisa Crawford and her family are currently leasing Oulnina Park and have fully committed to reducing the Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) infestations on the property.

While Wheel cactus can grow up to 4m, most plants on the property range in size from 1-2m. The species features flattened, circular blue green pads and yellow flowers with deep red fruits. When the fruit drops after flowering, the seeds within it are moved by birds and the wind, spreading infestations.

Cochineal was released on the property about four years ago, but it's taking longer to control the plants than expected.

To assist the process, Lisa and her family use a banana injector to inject undiluted RoundUp (glyphosate) into every pad of the wheel cactus they treat on the property. The method is recommended in the *PIRSA Weed Control Handbook*.

Lisa said the decision was made to inject all pads to eliminate the possibility of a pad falling and regrowing,

which removes the need to return to each site. The process is proving very effective, taking just three weeks from injection to kill the cactus.

They started injecting the cactus in June 2018 when the family took on the lease. They often walk long distances up and down hills, in gullies and across rocky terrain. In that time, they have injected and killed more than 5000 cactus plants across the property.


"We're trying to inject when the cactus is healthy because

we get better results," she said.

The family uses the same injection method on their Panaramitee and Tiverton properties and they now see less than 10 new plants growing across both properties each year.

It's a result that makes ongoing control easy to keep up with.

"We're passionate about the control and plan to maintain the work to reduce the spread across the property."



Mt Little Station, near Hawker, in flood
Photo by John Mundell

Widespread rain soaks the region

Rains that fell across the region from mid-February until mid March were widespread and plentiful for most.

The rain is bringing the country to life across all of the SA Arid Lands Region and while there is so much to celebrate, it also means extra vigilance will be needed by land managers for pests and weeds that will also flourish in the good conditions. With many properties receiving almost their annual rainfall and more in a matter of days or weeks, damage has occurred to roads, infrastructure and fencing.

The rain came at a time when many in the region had destocked or were preparing to sell off sheep and cattle. It transformed the landscape from brown to bright green.

The earliest rains fell over northern areas of the Marla-Oodnadatta and Marree-Innamincka districts, cutting the communities of Oodnadatta and Innamincka, and surrounding pastoral properties, from the rest of the larger region.

The late February rains damaged rail and road routes and delayed freight and supplies of food and fuel for rural communities.

Oodnadatta relied on a food drop from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to keep the community going, while for others, the goodwill of neighbours to drop in essentials was appreciated.

Larvicide, roll-on deet and educational information was delivered by the RFDS to the Innamincka, Marree and Oodnadatta communities in March, following a Flood Disaster State Response meeting between RFDS, Outback Communities Authority, SA Health and State Emergency Service. It came after many complaints of mosquitoes in the communities post rain and from water laying around.

In the **Gawler Ranges**, South Gap's Kate Greenfield said the majority of the property's rainfall total of 212.7mm fell in eight days and is responsible for considerable damage.

The property has damage to fences and dams, and sheet erosion and erosion to gully heads and roads. Whoa boys designed to slow the water down, and previously successful in doing so, were destroyed with the deluges.

"There's debris in areas where water doesn't usually flow," Kate said.

"I went down to the Gypsum Creek and there was debris in gum trees at my shoulder height. It's wider than it used to be and the overflow is wider and larger. At the flood out lake at the back of the creek, the water went right over the top.

"It was very, very destructive, but even though there's lots of damage, it's still preferable to being in drought."

REGIONAL RAINFALL TOTALS

Rainfall was widespread across the SA Arid Lands, and while most areas received rain, some areas received significantly higher totals than others. Rainfall totals received in February until 20 March (mm).

MARREE INNAMINCKA	
Innamincka	436.4
Mungerannie	530
Gidgealpa	377.5
Merty Merty	270
Wilpoorina	367
Marree	262.8
MARLA OODNADATTA	
Mt Barry	230
Tieyon	233
Todmorden	283.2
Hamilton	357.5
Macumba	331

NORTH EAST PASTORAL	
Koonamore	206
Oulnina	154
Boolcoomatta	155
Yarramba	125.4
Quandong Station	212.4
KINGOONYA	
Billa Kalina	193.5
Mt Vivian	110
Ingomar	65
Old Ingomar homestead	235
Andamooka	51

GAWLER RANGES	
South Gap	212.7
Thurlga	149.9
Mt Ive	132.3
Mahanewoe	120
NORTH FLINDERS	
Arkaroola	377
Holowiliena	207
Leigh Creek	180.6
Gum Creek	196

PORT AUGUSTA-QUORN	
Quorn	195
Arden Vale	205
Port Augusta shacks	127

Rainfall totals have largely been supplied by land owners.



Purple-backed Fairy-wrens are nesting in the vegetable garden at South Gap. Photo by Kate Greenfield



Damage along the Glass Gorge Road has cut access to Moolooloo Station in February, with property owners hoping for it to reopen by Easter. Photo by Tarina Warren

On the bright side, the birdlife exploded about three weeks before the rain and Kate had Pacific Swifts circling just ahead of the storm. Now she has Purple-backed Fairy-wrens breeding in her vegetable garden and Rainbow bee-eaters breeding near the homestead.

“The birds have been chortling with joy since the rain and the diversity of butterflies is through the roof,” she said.

In the **Marree-Innamincka** district, landholders are not unfamiliar with the isolation that comes with large rain events and floods.

With some areas receiving falls as low as 30mm in 2025, parts of the region have already received 400mm in 2026. Others are bracing for floodwaters to flow towards Lake Eyre from rains in Western Queensland.

A once barren and gibber landscape with swailing sand dunes has been replaced by a sea of green as wildflowers come to life and what were once roads are now creeks.

With most roads inaccessible already, jet skis have replaced motorbikes and gyrocopters are being used to drive cattle to good pasture and high ground.

Reports have been received of increased Desert trilling frogs (*Neobatrachus Sudellae*) popping up from the ground, and green tree frogs (*Litoria caerulea*) and red tree frogs (*Litoria rubella*) turning up in bathrooms. Snake sightings have increased and large fish are now present in once dry creek systems.

The SES has set up a temporary base at Moomba and has arranged food supplies and aviation fuel to be dropped to seven isolated properties by helicopter.

Tarina and Reece Warren initially received 200mm on Moolooloo Station in the **North Flinders**, with a large portion of that falling in under two hours.

“We had just finished mustering and were preparing for shearing. For the first five days we kept sheep in the holding paddocks and repaired the flood gates daily,” Tarina said.

“On the second Sunday (1 March), some of the fences washed away and the sheep just walked out.”

Tarina said while shearing happened two weeks later, damage to the access road meant trucks couldn't get to the property to allow them to sell sheep or wool. The sheep were returned to the paddock, and the wool is now being held in the shed.

From a tourism perspective, the property is accessed only via the Glass Gorge Road, which was still closed at the time of printing, with a date for reopening still to be announced.

“There are rock boulders, some of which are the size of a small car in the gorge. The power of water is amazing.”

*Koonamore Station's three lakes have joined to put more than 20ha under water
Photo by Nick Rasheed*



Tarina said continued closures that extend to the Easter period may cost them more than \$10,000 in lost bookings, and this is something other tourism properties are facing with the race on to get roads and infrastructure fixed ahead of the tourist season.

“There are graders out everywhere – DIT (Department of Infrastructure and Transport) and the contractors are doing a great job.”

In the **North East Pastoral** district, Nick Rasheed is a very happy man.

He received 178mm at the Koonamore homestead just north of Yunta, and 238mm at Melton over two weekends and described the rain as “unbelievable”.

“We had 20-40mm on the first Sunday, a couple of smaller falls of 8mm and 6mm during the week and then 130 to 200mm on the next Sunday,” he said.

“It was literally the perfect rain.”

Nick took a drive to inspect the property when he thought the rain was finished and said the water running across the road was “as clean as a whistle”.

“It wasn’t taking any country with it and I know that if we hadn’t had the rain the weekend before, it would have been a different story.”

The lake system on Koonamore is fed from rain that falls in Orroroo, Pekina, Mannanarie and Koonamore.

“Normally there’s three separate lakes, but right now there’s one big lake and I have 20,000ha under water.”

Nick has been at the property since 2002, and this is the most water he has seen.

In 2025 the property received 129mm for the year and things were very dry.

Before the rain he was preparing for crutching and had decided not to put the rams out this year.

“We were at a point that following shearing in May, we were going to get rid of some stock to lighten off,” he said.

“This has been a real game changer.”

The budgies came in before the rain at Arid Recovery in the **Kingoonya** district – and stayed to enjoy the grasses that sprouted shortly after.

Most of the site’s 70mm fell in one event, and although it wasn’t as big as forecast, it was significant.

Conservation and Land Management Officer Nathan Manders said he stays at the reserve when rain is forecast to ensure someone is on site to drive the fenceline and check for any damage or holes.

Budgie



Capowie Creek in flood, Quorn.
Photo by Ashley Betts



The Pink Roadhouse's Joe Calvert gets a delivery of fresh food from the RFDS's Mick Keane, Liam Coffey-Oates, Josie Calderwood and Alex Olliff



Given the rain closed the road to the reserve, it meant he was well placed to do the inspection needed the following morning. And it's a good thing he was, with the road closed for almost two weeks and a couple of holes needing to be filled to stop access by feral animals under the fence.

Fixing the fence is a priority to stop cats and rabbits getting in and Nathan has also been keeping a close eye on buffel grass on a site in the reserve.

He said there had been a noticeable response in wildlife, with a rise in activity by reptiles and some small animals. Unfortunately, an increase in cat and rabbit numbers is inevitable.

Joe Calvert runs the Pink Roadhouse at **Oodnadatta** and said the rain events in February had resulted in the town being cut off for 17 days in the month.

He said while you don't see anyone new, his biggest issue was supplies. A truck brings in supplies weekly, but the timing of the rain meant the town missed two consecutive trucks.

"We ran out of fresh produce early and we were lucky that the RFDS flew fresh food in once during that period," he said.

"Towards the end of the last stint, we had no top up for two-and-a-half weeks and we'd run out of nearly everything. It was pretty dire," he said.

He said the town's location meant that although Oodnadatta didn't receive any rain in the first fall, the creeks that flowed from falls at Mt Barry and Todmorden cut it off anyway.

"The pastoralists around us are very happy, but it's not been good for our business," he said.

Richie Paynter received 170mm over the two rain events at his property outside of **Quorn** where he farms sheep, cattle and

wheat. Properties located past Warrens Gorge received up to 250mm.

"Everyone's got full dams and full tanks and the green growth has been good and come really quickly," he said.

He said it was the second biggest flood he had seen at Simmonston in his 68 years.

"It's been quite a few years since the Willochra Creek has come down and there was quite a bit of damage out on the Willochra Plain where it flooded out," he said.

Despite the damage, the rain has given those properties their best start for "lots of years".

"It was a very handy rain that has set us all up for a decent year – and then the good steady rain which gave us a minimum of 35mm across the property in mid March was a very handy follow up."



Desert Inkcap (*Montagnea arenaria*)



Desert Shaggy mane (*Podaxis pistillaris*)

MUSHROOMS POPPING UP

If you've noticed some mushrooms popping up around your place, here's a couple they could be.

The Desert Shaggy mane (*Podaxis pistillaris*) is a species found in desert regions throughout mainland Australia. Often thought of as the 'stalk puffball', the mushroom cap skin slowly sheds away to release spores, giving rise to its

shaggy namesake. It's reported to have traditional uses for dyeing hair and as a fly repellent.

The Desert Inkcap (*Montagnea arenaria*), commonly known as the Gasteroid Coprinus, is a species also found globally in desert regions. In Australia the species has been known to occur in dry sandy or rocky soils, and dry river beds across

all mainland states. They can be found individually or in groups and the wind disperses its black spores.

If you have mushrooms on your property and you're not sure what they are, did you know you can upload them to www.inaturalist.org where you can seek help to identify them and see what else is around your area?

Get onto weeds early

If there's one piece of advice Philip Fels can share about weed control, it is to get onto it as early as you can.

For the past 32 years, Philip has spent multiple weeks each year walking the Moralana Creek watershed and floodplain to control African Rue and other weeds.

African Rue is the weed that "got away" before he knew what it was and what it would do.

"It's far harder once the horse has bolted," he said.

"If you see something that shouldn't be there, you need to get rid of it. If it's seeding, make sure you take the time to control it."

"Most of all, try to keep it out of your watercourse."

Philip was alerted to the weed by a visitor who knew what it was. He believes it was unintentionally spread to his Flinders Ranges property by a visiting grader operator working in the Moralana Scenic Drive, which may have allowed seeds to germinate.

African Rue is particularly hard to control because of its expansive root system. According to Philip, controlling at optimum times of the growing season when the weather is favourable will provide a better result.

In the early days, he said he spent four

weeks in November-December and a further three weeks in late January-February controlling the weed. These days the weed is down to a more manageable level and he now spends less than one month controlling it each year, although the area covered is still the same.

"The bonus is that the time I'm spending now is helping to clean up the watercourse from other weeds," he said.

He said control of any weed needed a concerted effort, but more so when it's spread is significant. The best results came when his neighbours were also working towards the same goal.

However, it hasn't always been easy going. When numbers exploded in 2007, Philip became a little disillusioned. Despite that, the work continued.

"If you're going to try to tackle something that's in multiple areas and beginning to get out of hand, just manage it paddock by paddock.

Philip said he was concerned about what will come from the recent flood events in the area.

"A lot of water was picked up from country that wouldn't normally end up in the creek system," he said.

"I will need to be vigilant."



African Rue



Apply now to represent your district

If you are interested in the way your district's landscape is managed, applications are open to fill vacancies on five of the board's district-based Landscape Groups.

Landscape Groups represent each of the region's seven districts and members provide an essential link between their local communities and the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board.

Nominations are called to fill vacancies in the Gawler Ranges, Kingoonya, Marla-Oodnadatta, Marree-Innaminka and North East Pastoral Landscape Groups. Two further groups based in the North Flinders and Port Augusta-Quorn districts, have full membership.

Landscape Groups are skills-based, and members are selected for their knowledge of areas such as conservation, Aboriginal heritage, primary production, mining, tourism, water resources management, pest animal and weed control and local governance.

In addition to regular district meetings, group chairs meet annually. At the 2025 group chairs meeting were, from left, Alice Allington, Alison Nunan, Jeff Bowey, Richard Williams, Tori Love, Rebecca Buono, Nathan Manders, Brett Devitt, Cherie Sauer, Nick McInerney and Ryan Haywood.

SAAL Landscape Board Presiding member Douglas Lillecrapp said the community members involved at a group level are a vital, practical link for the communities they represent.

"They provide a local perspective and ensure the priorities of their district are heard at a board level," he said.

Landscape Groups are actively engaged with the delivery of local projects and in developing district action plans that guide the work of each group and achieve outcomes in line with the board's strategic plan.

Applications opened on 27 March and will remain open until 11 May. New members will be notified of their successful applications in late June.

If you are interested in finding out more, speak with your local community Landscape Officer and register your interest in becoming a Landscape Group member at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/about-us/our-board/landscape-groups



PLENTY OF GOOD REASONS TO JOIN

Having been a member of the Kingoonya Landscape Group for a little over three years, Dylan Maidment says there are plenty of good reasons to join.

Better known as Pickles to many, Dylan recently left his position only due to a change in workplace that has seen him leave the district to work on a farm near Coonalpyn.

He said he had initially joined the group to help bring new programs to the local area and learn a different way of doing things.

"From a pastoral point of view, it's been pretty good," he said.

Through his involvement with the group, he was able to suggest programs for the district that could help the region's landholders.

During the District Action Planning held at the start of every financial year, members can influence priority actions for

the region's landholders. It is from these actions that events are planned for the coming year.

He said as a member, he was at the table to "throw some ideas around".

His favourite event was the soils day at Kingoonya, although he also has fond memories of a shared meeting with the Marla Oodnadatta Group at Coober Pedy.

"It's been good meeting people from different parts of the community too," he said.

"It helped to see issues from different points of view and spend time with people from different industries, like tourism.

"I really enjoyed bringing people together."

To anyone thinking of joining, he'd say "go for it".

"If you're prepared to give it a crack, you'll learn a bit and be able to see different parts of the region."

Dylan Maidment



LANDSCAPE GROUP NEWS

NORTH EAST PASTORAL

An increase in landholder concerns about feral animals has resulted in the North East Pastoral Landscape Group planning a trapping workshop, to be held at Olary in late May.

The workshop will provide landholders with additional knowledge to successfully control pest animals and will focus on cats, rabbits, foxes and pigs. Keep an eye on your email, or the board's website and social media channels for more information, which will be coming soon.

Vegetation assessments will be the focus of another workshop, to be held at Mannahill in early May. These assessments will focus on plant identification and ways to assess grazing pressure.

Control of pest plants and animals is high on the list of priorities for the group, which is also happy to report that control of *Opuntia* cactus species has occurred on the roadside between Oodla Wirra and Yunta. Baiting of feral pigs is also underway in the northern part of the district.

Priority weeds are the focus of new signage, supported by the group, which has been installed at Yunta and Olary.

The group's most recent meeting was held with members of the North Flinders group in March. Guest speaker Rebecca Greening provided an update on programs at Koonamore Reserve.

Keep an eye out for the board's information stand at the Yunta Gymkhana, where you can catch up with Ryan to discuss your land management issues or event ideas.

Ryan Hayward, 0459 762 603
Ryan.hayward@sa.gov.au

Image: Group members joined with members of the North Flinders Landscape Group for a shared meeting at Cradock in March.



PORT AUGUSTA-QUORN



KINGOONYA



NORTH EAST PASTORAL AND NORTH FLINDERS

PORT AUGUSTA-QUORN

Applications are open for the Growing Native Gardens project, which the Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group voted to continue into its fourth year. The project provides schools and community groups with funding to obtain \$300 worth of native plants to beautify their grounds.

Chemcert Training was held in Quorn in February, with most of the 13 participants being farmers from the Quorn district. The training will help landholders with their weed control and spraying efforts.

Community Landscape Officer Brett Devitt will be supporting Port Augusta Coastcare with the visits from the Marine Discovery Centre to local schools early next term.

Brett Devitt: 0409 753 495
Brett.devitt@sa.gov.au

Image: Group member Richie Paynter, pictured right with course leader Stewart McIntosh, was among 13 participants in Chemcert Training, supported by the Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group.

KINGOONYA

Community Landscape Officer Tori Love has been working with the Andamooka Opal Miners Association (APOMA) to tackle *Opuntia* cactus infestations in the town.

A workshop explored control with cochineal and glyphosate and introduced members to *iNaturalist* as a tool to record observations.

The group is exploring the provision of soil kits for landholders to increase knowledge of rangeland soils.

Late February rain, although welcome, did result in the postponement of Bruce Maynard's self-herding workshop at Billa Kalina. This is likely to be rescheduled to later in the year.

A group initiative will also be the provision of native plants to community groups.

The group farewelled Dylan Maidment, who has left the region to new pastures in the South East, leaving the group with one vacancy. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Tori.

Tori Love, 0408 807 498
Victoria.love@sa.gov.au

Image: Community Landscape Officer Tori Love discusses the implications of cactus and suitable controls during an event in Andamooka.

NORTH FLINDERS

The region's Adelaide-based volunteers, who contribute hundreds of hours of on-ground work, were acknowledged with a celebration late last year. The volunteers, many of whom regularly help control opuntia cactus species on private properties in the North Flinders, were acknowledged for their invaluable environmental efforts and given the opportunity to network and connect with one another.

The Summer Quiz series offered through the board's social media channels over December and January was funded by the North Flinders Landscape Group. These well supported quizzes educated the board's social media followers on weeds, native plants and pest and native animals. If you missed them, you can have a go on the board's education page at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/get-involved/education

Community Landscape Officer Claire visited Hawker Area School with the district's new Community Landscape Officer Alice, to work

with students on threatened and pest species in March.

The group's most recent meeting was a joint session with the North East Pastoral Group in March, held in Cradock. Members discussed volunteer programs, explored involvement in the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists, and received a research update from Bec Greening on her work at Koonamore Reserve, examining the effects of livestock on soil ecological processes.

With Claire heading off on maternity leave in mid-April, Alice Allington will be the North Flinders Community Landscape Officer, while continuing to support the Marree-Innamincka district.

Claire McKenry, 0439 051 085
Claire.mckenry@sa.gov.au

Image: North Flinders group members shared a meeting with members of the North East Pastoral Group at Cradock in March.

MARREE-INNAMINCKA

Landholders in the Marree Innamincka district may have noticed District Weed and Top 10 Travel Tips signage that have been placed at Innamincka and Marree.

These signs, along with resin moulds of priority weeds to be shared with contractors, friends groups and taken to workshops, were supported by the group to help identify and report invasive weeds.

The region's women came together in March for a Muddy Boots and Bush Banter online ladies luncheon with Tania Lehmann. The event was designed to strengthen relationships after repeated social isolation due to rain..

The group is also supporting the Family and Community Day to be held at Mungerannie Hotel in May with funds from the Community Recovery Fund. The group will fund a barbecue and activities for children. It is hoped a similar activity will be held at Innamincka later in the year.

The group has purchased echo meters for detecting bats at community and Kids on Country events.

Marree students will take part in a Wildlife Encounters event with Animals Anonymous in May, which is open to the Marree community.

A planned pasture plant identification 'Walkshop' activity through pastoral properties within the district and Innamincka township has been postponed due to flooding. This event involves looking at flora in your own backyard, advising on pasture species identification and their nutritional value for stock.

Alice Allington: 0436 403 682
Alice.allington@sa.gov.au

Image: Group members Frank Warren and Josh Haynes, pictured with Community Landscape Officer Alice Allington, joined the Yarning Circle discussion in Port Augusta in March.



MARLA-ODNADATTA

Group advocacy brought about a reduction of large feral herbivores in the district in spring, after the board supported an aerial control operation across the district's north.

The hunt across the district for a Plains-wanderer paid off, with the call of the critically endangered bird captured in the region.

While the region experienced average conditions in spring, these turned into unseasonably high widespread rainfall in late summer which is sure to bring about a green and productive 2026.

It did mean the Bruce Maynard workshop needed to be postponed and it is likely to be rescheduled until later this year.

A Rangeland Management Course will be offered in Oodnadatta and Marla in late May, and native plants will be provided to community groups in autumn.

The group is looking for new members to fill its vacancies. If you are interested please contact Tori.

Tori Love, 0408 807 498
Victoria.love@sa.gov.au

Image: Camels were removed from the district following a control program for large feral herbivores.

GAWLER RANGES

Positive reports of successful feral cat trapping have been received from properties across the Gawler Ranges following the provision of 24 feral cat traps distributed in the past year.

Since the traps were introduced, landholders have removed cats and foxes from the landscape. Lizards, a bird and a pet dog were also trapped, but released.

The traps were provided to raise awareness of feral cat management and district understanding of the need to manage feral cats and foxes in the district.

Eleven native plant vouchers have been provided to landholders across the district, which has resulted in an increase in native vegetation plantings around homesteads. They will be


appreciating the big drink they had in February and March.

There are still a few vouchers available and interested Gawler Ranges landholders can contact Nick for information.

The group's most recent meeting was held at Iron Knob in March, when the group heard updates from Defence in relation to Cultana, Barb Murphy from Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, SIMEC, Iron Knob Progress Association and Erappa Camp.

Nick McInerney, 0477 307 038
nicholas.mcinerney@sa.gov.au

Image: Iron Knob Progress Association members Rebecca Allport, left, and Kylie Cleasby received plant vouchers from Nick McInerney.



Yarning about kangaroos in Port Augusta were, from left, Jodie Gregg-Smith, Josh Haynes, Declan Morris, Jeremy LeBois, Cherie Sauer, John Solar, Alwyn McKenzie, Sharon Platt, Alice Allington, Reg Wilton, Mick McKenzie, Zaaheer McKenzie and Frank Warren.

Kangaroo Partnership Project

A First Nations led conversation focussing on kangaroos was held in Port Augusta in March and is one of five being held across a number of Landscape Boards regions.

The Yarning Circles are being held to ensure First Nations people's perspectives on kangaroos, their cultural significance, and opportunities to reduce their overabundance are included in the state and national discussion about addressing an overabundance of macropods.

With the Port Augusta event covering the SA Arid Lands region, they were also held in Northern and Yorke, Hills and Fleurieu, Murraylands and Riverlands, and Adelaide and were facilitated by Nat Sommerville, a Wagadagam woman of Mabuyag Senadh/ Torres Strait Islands, who lives and works on Ngadjuri Country as a primary producer near Spalding SA.

Hosted by the state-based Kangaroo Partnership Project, the Yarning Circles captured key First Nations perspectives on important cultural, social, economic, environmental and welfare topics regarding select macropods that included Red Kangaroos, Western Grey and Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Euros or Wallaroos, and Tamar Wallabies.

The groups also discuss the cultural significance of the harvestable kangaroo species, kangaroo management regulating policies, commercial and non-commercial harvest processes, and future prospects including desired changes, innovation and socioeconomic opportunities.

The information collected will be used to inform government and policy decision makers to ensure First Nations perspectives are considered.

Supported by the SA Drought Hub, the initiative is believed to be the first state-wide discussion about macropods with First Nations people and came about at the suggestion of the SA Arid Lands Aboriginal Engagement Network.

The Kangaroo Partnership Project is funded by the State Government's Landscape Priorities Fund.

KANGAROO GRANT PROJECTS

Practical landholder workshops have been held to introduce primary producers to drone capabilities for strategic land management.

Drone Technology for Kangaroo Monitoring: A practical workshop for landholders introduced participants to hobby drone capabilities when they were held at Port Kenny, Port Augusta, Burra, Murray Bridge and on Kangaroo Island in February.

Attendees learnt to fly and plan routes, understand policy and risks, and see how some of their drones could be used to better monitor grazing pressure on their land.

Roos on the Move: Understanding Kangaroo Movement for Improved Conservation has provided funding to a PhD project on Bon Bon Reserve which include collaring Red Kangaroos to better understand their movement behaviour.

After behaviour classification was conducted at Cleland Wildlife Park last year, six trips to Bon Bon resulted in the fitting of GPS collars to 11 Red Kangaroos. These will map telemetry data of wild kangaroos from central SA.

School visits

Students across the SA Arid Lands are learning more about threatened animal species, their threats and the role plants play in the ecosystem during school visits.

Willsden Primary School, Hawker Area School, Caritas College, and School of the Air students have enjoyed activities to help understand the impact of different species in the environment.

Similar programs have been offered at Nature Foundation's Kids on Country events.

Among activities were games connecting scats, tracks and facts, making observations from bones, and monitoring camera footage to help understand the connection between introduced and native species and their impact on the environment. Some students also looked at landscapes and the vegetation and threatened animals found in each.

Board ecologists have shared how they look at the 'big picture' in the work they do to look after threatened species and the environment, while Arabana Rangers talked to students about how they look after Country.

Some students were also lucky enough to take home socks from Team Kowari, which helps to support the work in protecting and increasing knowledge about the endangered animal.

A The board's senior Community Ecologist *Elisa Sparrow* joined Arabana Ranger coordinator *Zaaheer McKenzie* for a visit to Willsden Primary School

B Hawker Area School students *Daylani*, left, and *Ada* learned about species impacted by feral cats

C Hawker students match tracks and scats with native animals

D Some lucky students at Willsden Primary School took home some socks from Team Kowari

C Community Landscape Officers *Alice Allington* and *Brett Devitt* discuss threatened species with Caritas College Year 4 students



Sustainable land management projects funded

Four projects have been funded with Improving Land Management Grants as part of the board's Building Pastoral Sustainability project. Wintinna, Holowiliena, Umberatana and Pinegrove have shared in almost \$40,000 for projects that will assist businesses drive agricultural growth, while adopting sustainable natural resource management practices.

WINTINNA

Happy Cows, Healthy Paddocks & Increased Productivity – Using Optiweigh – \$10,000.

This project will implement the portable, in-paddock cattle weighing system Optiweigh to strengthen the property's rest-based grazing approach. It is technology not widely adopted in the SA Arid Lands region, or further afield, with very few examples available showing how it performs in large, extensive rangeland paddocks.

Optiweigh will provide accurate weight and body condition data without the need for mustering. The continuous real-time data will show changes in growth rates long before they can be seen visually, removing guesswork about whether cattle are performing well or if a paddock is running short of feed.

This early insight will allow the property to adjust grazing pressure before damage occurs, preventing overgrazing and protecting groundcover, biodiversity and soil health.

HOLOWILIENA

Increasing options for stock movement to proactively manage total grazing pressure – \$10,000.

After participating in the boards Property Management Planning program in 2020/21, Holowiliena Station identified a need to increase options for moving stock around the property during dry times.

By upgrading infrastructure, wether lambs can be moved off prior to the crucial summer grazing period. This will conserve ground cover by introducing rest periods into the grazing system.

Grant funds will support Holowiliena to purchase equipment to upgrade the yards adjoining these paddocks, incorporating additional drafting capacity and loading facilities.

The 'next step' in managing grazing pressure is expected to result in better plant recruitment, especially of preferred pasture species, and increased plant diversity.

PINEGROVE

Trialing the use of Kiwitech's portable, vehicle mounted, motorised electric fence system for managed rotational grazing and on-property trials – \$9,004.

A temporary portable fencing being used as a 'stop-gap' measure as Pinegrove moves toward permanent fencing to implement its rotational grazing program, uses handheld manual reels to create smaller paddocks. It has proven labor-intensive and time consuming.

The property will trial the Kiwitech's Powerpac system, providing a fast and efficient setup and removal for one person. The unit is a mounted, motorised, geared system that rolls out and reels in 2-3 wire polywire electric fencing in one pass, with a means of extracting tread-in posts, from the seat of a 4-wheeler bike.

It is hoped the system will allow Pine Grove to achieve a fast, simple, efficient, scalable, less labour-intensive means of implementing rotational grazing across the property, for the benefit of a healthy ecosystem.



UMBERATANA/QUORN Improving Grazing Management Through Automated Feeding – \$10,000.

To support Umberatana's rest-based and rotational grazing, new automated feeding technology will be implemented at its Quorn property. The auto feeder will become permanent infrastructure based at Quorn and will support how the property runs its livestock at Umberatana in the North Finders district.

While most of the physical infrastructure recommended as part of the property's Ecologically Sustainable Rangeland Management (ESRM) Plan is already in place, labour constraints have limited the ability to consistently apply the grazing and monitoring systems required to fully realise the plan's outcomes.

Automation will turn the property's ESRM grazing strategy into a practical, on-ground system that can be implemented consistently and confidently. The property's owners expect to gain better control over grazing pressure, making it possible to properly rest paddocks during key growing periods, responding earlier in dry conditions, and managing stock more strategically.

It is expected the project will return a measurable increase in native perennial grass species within sheep-stocked paddocks at Umberatana, improve ground cover, soil stability, long-term carrying capacity and reduce in daily labour requirements associated with manual feeding.

The Improving Land Management Grants are part of the board's Building Pastoral Sustainability Project, which is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

APPLY NOW FOR PROPERTY PLANNING

The second round of the Planning On-Property Projects program is open now for applications.

This program is designed to help land managers identify land systems and functions, management practices and priorities, and assess and map assets, infrastructure and natural resources.

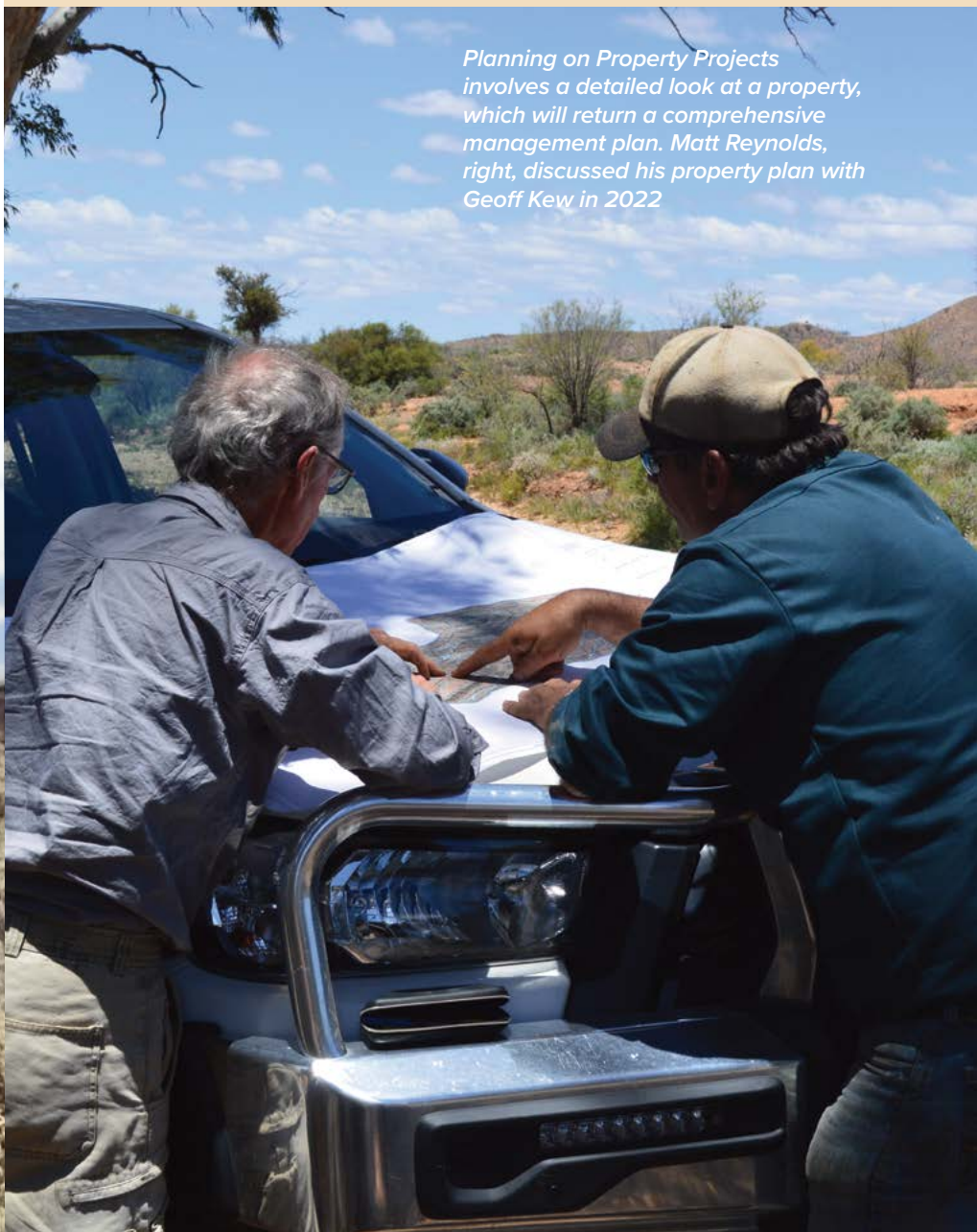
Through the board's *Building Pastoral Sustainability Project*, applications are welcomed for four more properties wanting to develop a comprehensive property map and plan forward for implementing change.

Through the program land managers will identify production management priorities and potential land management practices that can be implemented on their property. Through an on site visit with Contour Environmental and Agricultural Consulting, an Ecologically Sustainable Rangeland Management (ESRM) plan will be provided. The plan includes suggestions for erosion mitigation and remediation. More than 20 properties in the region have previously completed an ESRM plan as part of the board's former Property Management Planning program which ran from 2020-2024.

For more information about the program and to apply, visit our website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/get-involved/grants-funding or contact Matt Westover on 0438 816 210 or matthew.westover@sa.gov.au

Applications close Friday 1 May.

Planning on Property Projects involves a detailed look at a property, which will return a comprehensive management plan. Matt Reynolds, right, discussed his property plan with Geoff Kew in 2022



Aerial support for goat control

Aerial control to support landholders to manage feral goats occurred on six properties in the northern and central Flinders Ranges district in March.

The Flinders exercise controlled 921 goats on pastoral and private land, in addition to those mustered and trucked out by landholders. It was part of a larger operation undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service SA. An operation on three properties in the North East Pastoral was underway at the time of going to print.

The removal of 921 goats keeps an estimated 750kg of dry vegetation in the landscape per day – equating to 270 tonnes of dry matter in a year.

Further support will be offered to landholders in the southern Flinders, Mid North and Olary Ranges in the coming months.

The program followed a call for applications from landholders willing to work with neighbours to have a landscape-scale impact.

UNDERSIZED GOAT PROJECT

The board has continued to assist landholders with further removal of undersized goats that can't be sold or transported post mustering activities.

The program has removed more than 1800 undersized goats from the region since December 2025 and has included 429 being used by Monarto Safari Park to feed carnivores and 109 used for fox baits.

The program helps landholders meet their legislative and environmental obligations to remove goats and is open until November 2026.



Aerial mustering operations removed 921 goats from the northern and central Flinders Ranges

GAWLER RANGES AERIAL CONTROL

An aerial control program is planned for the Gawler Ranges in August. Landholders in that region needing support to manage feral goats, contact Community Landscape Officer Nick McInerney on 0477 307 038.

All goat programs are funded by the State Government's Landscape Priorities Fund.

FERAL PIGS NUMBERS TO GROW

The widespread rainfalls across the catchment areas is likely to see feral pig numbers increase and reporting is key to support for targeted control.

Prior to the rain, reports had been received of pigs being hit by trucks on roadsides around the border area with New South Wales, and a substantial population growth is expected post rain.

Community reports highlighted a western population expansion during drier times with pigs being reported south and west of Yunta and one bore shot in the southern Flinders Ranges. The reporting resulted in the board deploying cameras for monitoring as well as supporting landholders with control efforts where pigs were sighted.

Sows continued to breed in the dry, but when times are good, they can produce two litters a year with up to 10 piglets in a litter. As a result, populations can grow by as much as 86 per cent in a year.

Community reporting and involvement is crucial to understand how quickly, and where populations are growing.

Highly mobile and intelligent, pigs are hard to detect and trap once established.

The best defence is early detection and removal with feral pigs easier to control in smaller numbers.

The need to report and share information with neighbours is as important as ever. This can be done through the FeralScan app, which enables data to be logged remotely, the monitoring of movement patterns and the number of pigs in the area. This information helps the board determine where control efforts are directed.

The SAAL Landscape Board has motion-activated cameras available for loan to help monitor pig activity, which helps plan effective control measures.

The board also has subsidised baits available as well as bait boxes, pig traps and panels for loan.

The best control comes from integrated methods. Ground shooting of pigs alone is known to be ineffective at reducing established populations and making future monitoring and control efforts more difficult.

A coordinated and proactive control program should include trapping and baiting to ensure high numbers are



removed, with at least a 70 per cent population reduction required to have a lasting and long-term impact on populations.

Nationally, feral pigs cost the national agriculture sector \$106.5 million in direct cost to production.

There's an increasing concern they will act as vectors for diseases such as Leptospirosis, Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) and Brucellosis – all diseases that can impact humans and livestock.

To seek advice about control of feral pigs on your property, contact biosecurity staff on 8429 9666.

Vulnerable orchid found in the Gawler Ranges

Desert Greenhood (*Pterostylis xerophila*) surveys late last year recorded 11 of the threatened orchids at a site in the Gawler Ranges.

The Desert Greenhood is a target species of the board's *Discovery4Recovery* project. The board is mapping the species to address the large knowledge gap, essential to enable effective conservation efforts. The National Recovery Plan for the species aims to minimise the risk of extinction in the wild and increase the probability of populations becoming self-sustaining in the long term.

Pterostylis rosettes were recorded during a workshop in mid 2025 that focussed on areas with historic *P. xerophila* records and suitable habitat. Since rosettes alone cannot be used to identify orchids to species level, the sites were revisited in October, when flowering was expected to confirm whether the target species was present.

Additional sites were also surveyed following reports of the species from university researchers conducting other work in the area.

Even with flowers, identification can be a challenge as the Desert Greenhood can be mistaken for other *Pterostylis* species, including the Gawler Ranges Greenhood (*P. ovata*) and the Dryland Greenhood (*P. excelsa*).

The SA Arid Lands team was joined by staff from the SA Seed Centre, Nature Foundation, Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation and National Parks and Wildlife Service SA. Together the team of 14 spent almost 350 hours hunting for the orchid over four days.

Eleven sites were surveyed, with the Desert Greenhood found at only one, growing on red sandy soil on the edge of a granite outcrop and predominantly under Broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*) in the vicinity of spinifex (*Triodia irritans*). It was found growing alongside the Dryland Greenhood, and within the same habitat as the Gawler Ranges Greenhood.

Its discovery amongst the other Greenhood species provided an opportunity for participants to compare the species directly, and establish clear distinguishing identification features, gaining valuable visual reference among the three species.

The lower-than-average rainfall in the region at the time may have influenced the number of Desert Greenhoods observed, especially given they generally emerge following rain, and only a few plants, or none, may flower in dry years.

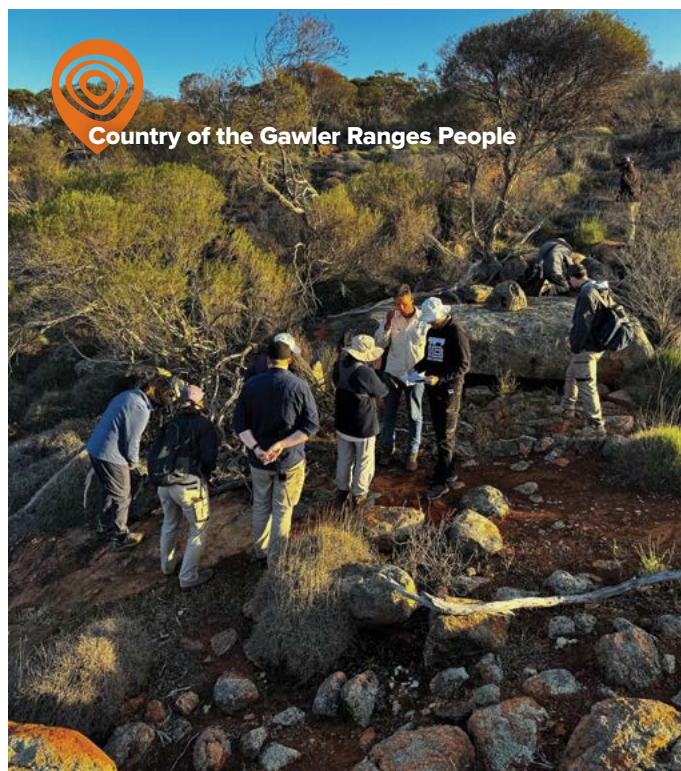
Other sites with suitable habitat and the presence of other Greenhood orchid species were visited during the surveys. These will be re-visited for surveys, particularly following record rains, as the current absence of the Desert Greenhood does not necessarily indicate the species will be absent under more favourable conditions.

Classed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the Desert Greenhood has been previously recorded at five South Australian locations, with two additional populations known in Victoria.



Above: A Desert Greenhood, left was found growing alongside the more common Dryland Greenhood

Below: The group that searched for the Desert Greenhood included representatives from SAAL Landscape Board, SA Seed Centre and Nature Foundation volunteers



Discovery4Recovery is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by the SAAL Landscape Board, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.



Rangelands study tour set to hit the road again

Based on a successful study tour to New South Wales in 2024 for land managers to learn from other pastoral regions, a second tour is being planned for late this year.

While the first trip visited both sheep and cattle properties in NSW rangelands, the upcoming trip is planned to head north to visit properties, projects and trials in the Northern Territory and the northern most part of South Australia.

Planning is in the very early stages and it is anticipated that week-long field trip will be held in late October and will feature a number of workshops and talks by pastoralists, rangelands vegetation specialists and livestock professionals.

It is expected that places will be available for 15-20 people from across the SA Arid Lands region to take part, with a focus on having next generation pastoralists filling the seats.

It is recognised that the week-long study tour requires a significant commitment of time by those attending and the board expects to have an expression of interest process released by mid-year so successful attendees can lock the dates into their calendars.

The NSW study tour was attended by 18 pastoralists aged 25 to 72, who collectively manage 1.8 million hectares of pastoral country across SA. The tour covered 2500 kilometres by 4WD coach and explored regenerative grazing techniques in semi-arid environments.

If you are interested in taking part in the 2026 Rangelands Study Tour, please contact Sustainable Agriculture officer Jade Leyden on 0438 990 399

The Rangelands Bus Trip is part of the Building Pastoral Sustainability Project, which is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

10 APRIL

Plants under pressure, Orparinna

20 APRIL

Plants under pressure, Thurliga Station

8 MAY

Plants under pressure, Olary

8 MAY

Marree-Innamincka Landscape Group Meeting 87, Port Augusta

13-15 MAY

Marine Discovery Centre Visit, Port Augusta

15 MAY

Wildlife Encounters with Animals Anonymous, Marree

16 MAY

Family and Community Event, Mungerannie

16 MAY

Coastcare Community Day

22 MAY

Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group Meeting 28,

29 MAY

Feral Animal Trapping Workshop, Olary

23-25 JUNE

SAAL Regional Board meeting, Port Augusta – Quorn

LATE JUNE

Rangeland Management Course, Marla Oodnadatta District

3-6 AUGUST

Indigenous Ranger Gathering, Arkaroola, Adnyamathanha Country

19 SEPTEMBER

RICE 50-year celebrations, Port Augusta racecourse

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The review of the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board five-year Regional Landscape Plan has included community consultation with feedback received during the consultation period considered for inclusion in the final plan.

Feedback was sought through a survey, by direct email, via an online information session for the board's key stakeholders, and during the board's Aboriginal Engagement Network meeting in December 2025. Members of the board's seven landscape groups and the board had provided feedback in the development of the draft, before it was released for consultation.

The revised draft strategic plan was presented to the board at its March meeting and will be endorsed by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water before it comes into effect and guides the board's work from July 2026 until June 2031.

The Regional Landscape Plan sets out the board's five strategic priorities, focus areas and key outcomes for the board over a five-year period. The plan provides a strategic direction for the delivery of the board's projects, programs and partnerships in the region.

WHAT IS HUDSON PEAR?

Along with many other cacti species, Hudson Pear is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS), declared due to their invasiveness, potential for spread and environmental, social and economic impacts.

A low spreading and deciduous shrub, it grows to 2m tall and to 3m wide. It produces pink to purple flowers and green to yellow-green fruit with sterile seeds.

However it is the plant's particularly vicious spines that cause the most damage. Encased in a detachable sheath, they can remain in a wound even after the body of the spine is removed. Each spine can be up to 4cm long and is capable of penetrating footwear and car tyres.

The species can severely impact livestock productivity by embedding itself into anything it touches, including livestock, wildlife and vehicles.

The spines can get into the skin or bodies of kangaroos and large infestations have been known to kill them. It can also injure smaller animals and marsupials who can then help spread it into other areas. One spine is all it takes to grow a new plant.

A GARDEN ESCAPEE

From Mexican lineage, the Hudson Pear was first detected in Lightning Ridge in north-western NSW in the 1960s and is believed to have spread from a local cactus nursery. Today it is estimated this weed covers up to 100,000 hectares of land in the area, although infestations have also been found in the Central West near Broken Hill.

Large Hudson Pear infestations have been known to devalue property and sheep. Landholders with infestations face increased mustering costs and have difficulties in attracting shearers. While infected wool can be treated, this too comes at a cost.

For this reason, the board is committed to removing the threat of a Hudson Pear by eliminating the weed from the region.

While cochineal is available interstate, a trial in the SA Arid Lands region had little success. For this reason, the board recommends chemical spraying of Hudson Pear plants as the main source of control.



Hudson Pear in flower.
Photo by Shauna Potter

Eradicating the Hudson Pear

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board has committed to eradicating one of the nastiest forms of cactus from the region by 2028.

The Hudson Pear is seen as the most threatening of the *Cylindropuntia* species to production, the landscape and native animals.

The board has been working with landowners at a number of sites around Port Augusta which have had Hudson Pear infestations, likely started as garden escapees. The landowners have conducted initial control spraying and follow up works are continuing. The number of sites around the region are thought to be minimal.

However, before the board can achieve eradication across the region, it needs to know where the plants are located, which is where it is seeking support.

The first step to eradication is knowledge and across the region, landholders and visitors are requested to keep an eye out and report any known plants – whether they are located on pastoral land or in town gardens.

CONTROLLING HUDSON PEAR

A spraying regime is needed for more than one Hudson Pear plant however, garden strength chemicals are unlikely to kill it. Control requires that chemicals coat every part of the plant and is most effective when undertaken in temperatures higher than 30°C. Follow up control is likely to be needed for up to five years.

If you have a single garden plant, we recommend you contact the board. If you have a number of plants, the board can link you to weed control companies with experience in dealing with this plant or provide advice on how to apply best practice control techniques.

Under the *Landscape SA Act 2019*, landowners with this plant must take reasonable steps to kill the plant and prevent its spread. It cannot be sold or traded in any way, or transported on a public road, including as a contaminant in wool or on tyres..

REPORT SIGHTINGS

If you have a Hudson Pear plant on your property or in your garden, please contact the board's biosecurity officers on 8429 9666 or saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au





Year focus on Rangelands and pastoralists

It's the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026 and is a time to celebrate the people, the places and the pastoralists who live and work in the rangelands.

It is also an opportunity to showcase these incredible parts of Australia to those who live in coastal, mountain or urban regions.

Australia's landmass is 75 percent rangelands. It is an area that is largely synonymous with the outback, where socially, the landscape is embedded in Australian culture.

Across the world, rangelands span from spinifex desert plains to tropical savannas and breakaway country in Asia, Africa, North and South America, and even Europe.

The International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists is a fantastic way to raise awareness to the crucial role these regions play in protecting precious ecosystems, providing essential food and fibre, and maintaining strong communities and economies.

To raise the profile of rangelands and pastoralists across the world. Head to your socials and add the hashtag #IYRP2026 to any social posts that promote the land, the industries and the people that make the rangelands a great place to live and work.

CHANGED LANDHOLDER BAITING REQUIREMENTS

An updated *Declared Animal Policy for Wild Dogs and Dingoes* has created an improved system that ensures smaller properties do not have a larger mandatory baiting requirement than properties of a greater size.

The change has been made to mandatory baiting requirements for properties that fall into Region One of South Australia, which are those south of the dog fence and outside of incorporated council areas.

Approved by the Minister for Environment in mid-February, the policy introduces a clear minimum baiting requirement for properties greater than 2000km².

It promotes a more even distribution of landscape scale baiting and gives landholders greater control over where baits can be laid. It replaces the previous policy that stated baiting requirements were at least 1 bait per kilometre for the entire length of vehicle tracks and roads on a property.

Board staff and landholder experiences highlighted inconsistencies over what constituted a 'track' to be baited and concerns had been raised about outdated or inaccurate property information, which was not reflected in mandatory property baiting requirements.

A review of the former policy was undertaken in 2025 in conjunction with relevant landscape boards, Primary Industries and Regions SA and representatives of the SA Wild Dog Advisory Group – SAWDAG.

The updated policy information as it was gazetted for properties that reside within region one of the policy reads:

"All owners of land must, once every autumn and once every spring (and irrespective of evidence of wild dog activity) lay at least one lethal wild dog bait per 2 km² of property and for properties exceeding 2,000km² in size, at least 1000 baits must be laid, or if organically certified, the land owner must provide to the local landscape board a plan that outlines an alternative method for the laying the equivalent amount of baits once approved by the local landscape board, immediately enact the approved plan."

In South Australia, the management actions that apply to dingoes and wild dogs are delineated by the Dog Fence. Wild dogs inside the Dog Fence are declared for destruction under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019. This requirement applies to all properties, not just those used for livestock production.

BITEBACK NEWS

Biteback update

WILD DOG BAIT CHARGES FOR AUTUMN SERVICES

The price for bait injection services has been reduced with the board receiving a small grant to subsidise the cost of injecting meat baits at the autumn injection services.

The *Livestock SA's Small Project Fund* grant enabled the board to reduce the cost of dog baits to 50c per bait, half the charge of the expected \$1 cost for the autumn services.

The board continues to work towards retaining the injection services at a low to no-cost for landholders into the future and is working with partners to secure long-term funding.

The historical free injection services were only possible due to shared investment by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board and industry bodies such as the Sheep Industry Fund (Livestock SA) and historically Australian Wool Innovation (AWI).

While the board's commitment or investment in effective wild dog control has not changed, the loss of industry funding means the board's ability to deliver services at previous subsidised levels has reduced. This resulted in a need for co-investment by land managers for baits.

Under the current constraints, local bait injection services will no longer be provided for properties north of the Dog Fence. However land managers are welcome to access services south of the fence and can continue to order manufactured baits at cost price.

Landholders wishing to provide feedback about the program changes are asked to email the board at saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au

SHARP INCREASE IN WILD DOG ACTIVITY

Despite wild dog numbers and impacts to stock remaining low inside the dog fence in comparison to previous years, there has been a significant increase in reported activity. In January, 19 wild dogs were removed from three properties in the Kingoonya district.

While these numbers are concerning, it is also a good reminder that reporting wild dog activity and impacts through the *WildDogScan* app or website is still one of the most effective tools to share information and monitor the effectiveness of control measures. No data represents no wild dog problems or impacts.

Please reach out to the biosecurity team or your local Community Landscape Officer if you need assistance in reporting wild dog impacts or sightings.

AUTUMN INJECTION SERVICES

Injection services scheduled across the SA Arid Lands region for March were postponed until later in the month and mid April following widespread rainfall. Landholders have received updated invitations from the board.



ACROSS THE OUTBACK

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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Long term Friends of Mound Springs members on a field trip were Colin Harris, Duncan Ross-Watt, Caryl Ross-Watt, Bis Lay, Bren Lay, Bruce and Sherrie Gotch, Chris Wenham, Brian Donaghy, Iris Iwanicki, Bernice Cohen, Rick Moore, Simon Lewis and Stafford Dow.

Springs volunteers celebrate 20 years

Friends of Mound Springs (FOMS) members will reflect on their achievements when they celebrate the volunteer group's 20th anniversary in June.

Formally established on 29 June, 2006, the FOMS group was formed under the Friends of Parks umbrella to encourage volunteers to take part in conservation efforts on the natural springs of the Great Artesian Basin.

The importance of the natural springs of the Great Artesian Basin is well documented, with a considerable amount of research undertaken since the late 1970s.

South Australia's environment agency was actively researching springs and was supporting additional research to identify springs of cultural and ecological importance. It was reserving areas under the National Parks and Wildlife legislation to protect springs, such as those in Witjira National Park and Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park. The work also included fencing of priority springs on pastoral leases to provide protection from grazing impacts.

Budget constraints in the department meant work on mound springs research was cut at the time when key staff involved in the work retired in the early 2000s. Concerned, two of the retired staff members worked with the department to form the FOMS group.

It attracted members quickly. They included field researchers, both local and interstate, former public servants with relevant experience, members of other Far North Friends groups and the general public, some with considerable knowledge and mound springs experience. All were keen to be involved.

These volunteers have supported the conservation of mound springs over the past 20 years. Their highlights include:

- Establishment of self-guided walks at Strangways Springs and Peake Overland Telegraph sites in 2011;
- Erecting 2.5km of fencing to protect 12 springs at Levi Springs on the Peake pastoral lease in 2019;
- Maintaining the springs monitoring program on springs on pastoral land that were fenced by the State Government in the 1980s;
- Surveys of major springs groups, including Francis Swamp and Hawker Springs;
- Co-hosting the Friends of Parks Forum held at Woomera in 2010.

More recently, FOMS has worked closely with the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, collaborating on projects such as the fencing of Reedy Springs on Murnpeowie Station, and planning work for the protection of other springs.

It also works closely with the Arabana Aboriginal Corporation and the Arabana Ranger group, building on FOMS' long history of contact with Arabana personnel. It also worked with Dieri on the Reedy Springs project and is building on this relationship for further springs work.

As is the case with many volunteer groups, ongoing succession is difficult, but this year members will celebrate the development of valued friendships and collaborations, formed over the past 20 years.