



SEGMENTS

Journal of the
Scientific Expedition Group



Chairman's Report - SEG AGM August 25, 2006

Written by Alan Thomas

The last year has been busy for SEG with the Moonabie Expedition, ongoing GRaSP and Minnowarra projects, planning for the Boolcoomatta Expedition as well as a number of presentations to other groups.

Moonabie

The Moonabie Expedition was held in late November and early December last year and was a successful follow up to the Munyaroo Expedition of several years ago. Munyaroo Conservation Park is a long park extending back from the coast on the western side of Spencer Gulf and has two distinct areas. The Munyaroo Expedition investigated a coastal zone and the Moonabie Expedition investigated an upland area which included mallee scrub and sandhill country. I am very grateful to the South Australian Museum, Cath Kemper, Jan Forrest, David Hurst and Graham Carpenter, who supplied much of the scientific expertise and equipment and to the members of SEG who assisted on the expedition. In particular thanks are due to Trent Porter for all his planning and organisation work.

GRaSP

The Gammon Ranges Scientific Project (GRaSP) has continued into its eighteenth year with an expansion of the number of rain gauges and upgrading of equipment. Chris Wright has ably managed the project. Thanks must also go to Graeme Blair for his continued assistance with maintaining and improving the technical equipment.

*****SEG 2006 Calendar*****

September/ October

September 17-29 SEG Boolcoomatta Expedition

Sep. 29-Oct.3 Minnowarra Spring survey

November

November 24-18 GRaSP End of Year trip

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PO Box 501, Unley SA 5061

Minnowarra

The Minnowarra biodiversity survey has continued with spring and autumn surveys. The survey has been expanded with a grant from the National Heritage Trust to carry out a detailed survey of invertebrates. The work has been done by Jan Forrest of the South Australian Museum and we are looking forward to receiving the results. Richard Willing has worked tirelessly to keep the project going with good assistance from SEG members and the local community.

Boolcoomatta

With the conversion of Boolcoomatta Station near Broken Hill from a pastoral property to a private reserve Richard Willing, our President, saw an opportunity for SEG to carry out a very interesting baseline study which could be repeated in the future to see how the property changed after de-stocking. He approached the new property owners, Australian Bush Heritage Fund. They were very supportive and in a few short months a major expedition has been planned for Sep 17-29. Duncan MacKenzie has agreed to be Chief Scientific Leader and has cajoled the Nature Foundation and some private donors to donate over \$5200 so that we can subsidise thirteen students to the tune of \$400 each. Donations of pipe and caps for pitfall traps valued at over \$2000 have also been received from Iplex Pipelines Australia. We are very grateful to all these donors for their generosity. A strong scientific team has been assembled.

The committee had the June SEG Committee meeting at Boolcoomatta and this assisted with understanding the scope of the expedition and the planning. The Boolcoomatta Expedition will be one of the largest of recent times with over 45 leaders and expeditioners. This presents a major logistical exercise with transport and catering. We will report in the December issue of SEGMENTS on the Boolcoomatta Expedition.

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(SEG AGM Report continued from pg. 1)

Presentations and Displays

Trent Porter has given presentations about the activities of SEG to a Rotary group, Friends of the Simpson Desert, a Probus Club and a Four Wheel Drive Club. I am very grateful to Trent for giving these presentations and spreading the word about SEG. John Love and other helpers have organised and attended nearly every day, a display for Science Week at the South Australian Museum.

SEGments

Linda-Marie and Matthew McDowell have continued to edit our quarterly newsletter. We send out about half of the number of SEGments by email. This enables savings in postage and for the email editions many of the photographs are in colour. If you would like to receive SEGments by email please provide your email address when you pay your subscriptions.

Committee

In my third year as Chairman I have been ably assisted by the Vice-Chairman, John Hayes, the Secretary, John Love and the Treasurer, Graeme Oats. Chris Wright has managed the GRaSP Project. Trent Porter has been tireless using his organisational skills. Linda-Marie and Matthew McDowell have continued editing SEGments. Judy Mack, Bruce Gotch and our newest member Peter Love have all assisted. I thank all of the committee for their work. I have given notice to the committee that I do not wish to remain as Chairman for a long period so we are on the lookout for new blood on the committee. It is not an onerous task and in my opinion there is a lot of enjoyment working on the committee on our various projects. I encourage all of you to consider serving on the committee.

After 22 years the organization is strong and dynamic with enthusiastic supporters. Our projects are getting more ambitious. I have confidence for the future of SEG.

MINNAWARRA BIODIVERSITY PROJECT Spring Survey 2006 - Sep. 29 to Oct. 3

Outline of survey written by Richard Willing

Weather plays a large part in any field work, so any program may be modified to account for this, but an outline of the day's activities is as follows.

Because of the presence of "die-back" (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) in the adjacent

park equipment is provided for boots to be cleaned of mud and sprayed before and after entering each site.

Inspection of the traps commences at 8.30 am. This involves going to each of the 8 sites in the scrub by 4 wheel drive and checking the various traps. The 6 pitfall traps are 20 litre buckets sunk permanently into the ground that are opened for 4 days, when a small fence is run along the ground above them. Small mammals and reptiles are caught this way. At each site there are 15 Elliott traps, small aluminium boxes that snap shut when a small mammal runs in. The bait is a mixture of peanut butter and rolled oats. The animals are weighed, sexed, marked and released. At each end of each line is a cage trap for larger animals. The traps are inspected again around 4 pm. After the final inspection on Tuesday morning the pit fall traps are closed, and the others collected.

A team from SA Museum traps invertebrates (insects, spiders, moths, bugs and beetles), but not necessarily at the exact time of the mammal trapping. Birds will be recorded at each site on a couple of days.

The evenings are spent looking up any species of skink, bush rat or plant that cannot be readily identified in the field, and documenting the findings. Bats are trapped if the equipment is available and the conditions right, and the "Anabat" records the different bats flying around in the area at night. It may be possible to go spot-lighting.

If there is time and energy left after all this, there are walks through the adjacent Springmount Conservation Park, or removal of non-native plants from the Heritage Area.

GRaSP July Cross Over Trip Reports July 13 to 19, 2006

Information from GRaSP Annual Report on July Cross Over – Provided by Chris Wright

This was a record trip with 3 groups:

Group 1: John Love, Chris Wright, Paul Rogers, Richard Kohler and Tim Loffler drove up to Balcanoona on July 13 and met Danny Doyle, Arthur Coulthard and Shara Coulthard, the Ranges, and stayed at the Shearer's Quarters. It rained that night and 20mm were recorded on the gauge next morning. Balcanoona Creek was up, but we were able to drive to Grindells Hut without incident and camped Friday night about 2 km west of the Hut. Saturday, John was suffering from cramp in his legs and decided

not to come with us. We gave him the Sat phone in case of emergency and continued to Rover Rockhole for the night, under overcast conditions. Plenty of water at Rover. Saturday we headed up towards the Terraces and Fern Chasm, unfortunately Chris slipped into the Bathtub, hurt his shoulder and got 2 black eyes, and so the group returned down the creek to camp at Junction Waterhole. It rained from Saturday night onwards and on Sunday we climbed through Streak Gorge and onto the Plateau in cold, windy and wet conditions with low cloud and poor visibility. Eventually with Tim's map reading skills and Chris' GPS, we crossed the Plateau and found the Pluvio. It was too exposed and wet to stop for more than scroggin, and we eventually descended the west side of North Tusk Hill to camp in amongst the pines in the creek. We were please to find good shelter after a 7.5 hour walk without any breaks. Monday we walked out without further drama.



Chris Wright, just before falling into the Bathtub.

Group 2: Trent Porter, Pat Betham, Sarah Jewell and Tom Winkler left Adelaide on Friday and drove to Copley, and then on to Arcoona Creek, in wet conditions, just before the Copley-Balcanoona Road was closed. On Saturday they started towards Vandenberg, heavily laden, camped that night near Sambot and continued on Sunday up the creek and towards the plateau. However, the going was slow, and after taking a wrong turn or two the group decided to turn back. The weather was foul. They retreated to the comforts of Paul and Kylie's hospitality at Owieandana where they stayed for 2 nights.

Group 3: Graham Blair, Trish Williams, Doug McMurray and Justin Tonkin drove up

with Group 2, and at Copley diverted to stay the night at the Shearers' Quarters at North Moolooloo. However the next 3 days they were rained in, and reduced to playing "500" at the kitchen table. Eventually the roads were dry enough to move, but the scientific program had to be abandoned.

All groups met up at Owieandana Homestead, 14 SEG people plus 5 others of Kylie's family stayed the night. There were hot showers and a wood stove to provide home comforts – real luxury after the rigours of the past 4 days. It took some time to link up with John Love who had driven to Moolooloo, the original rendezvous, and had to return to Owie to find us. Meanwhile Trent had driven back to Grindells, looking for John. They passed in the dark while at Balcanoona!!

Outcomes from July Cross Over

We have learned a few things from this trip:

- 1) When using Satellite and CDMA phones in this area, **always use message bank** if you can't get through to the other person. That means they can pick up the info when they are in range of a repeater, and have their phone switched on.
- 2) In wet weather it is better to stay at home and wait for 3 days, rather than mess up the roads, and walk in discomfort. Our planning up to now does not allow any flexibility, and we should.
- 3) Old men should stay away from slippery rocks!

Sarah Jewell's account of the Western Group

July 14 - Trent Porter (Team Leader), Sarah Jewell, Pat Betham, and Tom Winkler travelled by Trent Porters Nissan Dual Cab to Copley, Arcoona Creek and then Owieandana.

There were 3 separate parties of 4 or 5 people each which travelled up to the Vulcathanha-Gammon Ranges National Park. The trip coincided with some of the best rainfall that has occurred in the region for probably the last 5 years or so, resulting in some unscheduled changes-of-plans. I was travelling with 3 chaps (Trent Porter - aka group leader / comedian / storyteller / Roman centurion, Pat Betham - a Western Samoan/New Zealander - generally quiet and pleasant, and very good at lifting my rucksack onto my back or helping me over rocks designed for giants, and Tom Winkler - a tall and very thin chap with a love of

outdoors hiking, and fellow graduate engineer at SA Water).

When we reached the Mid North by late morning, we hit the oncoming low pressure system and heavy rain cells. Some of the towns were under minor flooding, and engulfed in strong wind and driving rain. When we got to Hawker at lunch time, it was practically bucketing, quite windy, and only 6 degrees. We were starting to wonder why we had even bothered to head north into such threatening weather. We took some shots of the amazing cloud formations and powerful uplift of the heavy rain clouds as they hit the Flinders Ranges and Wilpena Pound to our east as we were heading up the main road to Parachilna and Leigh Creek. At Leigh Creek, it was drizzling still, and we checked at the police station to see if the roads were still open (bitumen ends just after Copley, which is about 5 km north of Leigh Creek), and luckily they were.

From Copley it's normally about 60-70 mins' drive to Arcoona Creek at the western end of the Gammon Ranges, but it turned out to be at least twice as long, with roads turned to 4WD only, with slippery clay patches with big puddles and a few creek crossings. We passed a \$70,000 Volvo 4WD being towed out on the back of a truck after it drowned its engine during a creek crossing in convoy with a lot of other vehicles. We had to cross a wide fast-flowing creek too (which helped to wash a bit of the thick red mud off our vehicle), after I had waded across first to check that it was safe - my feet were just about numb by the time I reached the other side, and I'm still amazed the fast current didn't keel me over in the middle!

By late afternoon we reached Owieandana Outstation - it's part of the 540 km2 Yankaninna Station, and adjoins the Vulcathanha-Gammon Ranges National Park, and when we got into Arcoona Creek, it was still drizzling and approaching sunset, so we threw up our tents, cooked a quick dinner and crawled into bed.

The original plan was for us to carry out a 28-km crossover hike and pass another party somewhere around half way through. We were to meet each others' vehicles at opposite ends of the trip and then meet up for a rendezvous at a place called North Moolooloo near Copley on the final night. As it turns out, the other party, which arrived a day earlier, managed to carry out the entire trip, albeit with much inclement weather, and

one member of the party getting injured in a fall - he was extremely lucky not to break any bones, though he suffered from muscle injuries, and lots of cuts and 2 black eyes on his face.

The third party, which was travelling just behind us, had some work to do on pluviometers at North Moolooloo. The Copley to Arkaroola road closed only an hour after we got through, and that group were stranded at Moolooloo, living in shearers' quarters for 3 days, getting very bored. You don't take the risk of driving down a road that's been closed - the police wait in force at each end, and fine any vehicles at a rate of \$1000 per tyre (including spare tyres). We heard a story of a semitrailer truck driver who did, and got a fine of \$28,000, so he had to sell his house to pay it off.

We didn't know how much water would be available in the ranges, so had taken the precaution of carrying about 10 L of drinking water each, in addition to all our camping and cooking gear, tents and food for 4 days. The first day or two were almost misery with the pain of carrying all that much on our backs - for the first half day I was carrying about 25 kg, and Tom was carrying 28 kg! The days were almost always cloudy with drizzle on and off, and rain every night (one night we had about half an inch!). Fortunately we stayed down low near the creeks for most of the time - on the ridge tops it was very windy as well, and we would have quickly become hypothermic if we'd stopped for long.

Half way into the second day we discovered that we'd taken a wrong turn and were travelling north instead of south - counting creek tributaries hadn't worked for us as it turned out they're not all on the maps. By this time we'd lost 5 hours of walking time and all our emergency lee-way, the weather was deteriorating again, and we were also pretty sore (I'd fallen over twice and one of my knees was very painful and bruised from overuse on rough ground and steep climbing). We made the regretful but necessary decision to turn back again. It was just as well - the next night it rained and rained, and it drizzled all the way back to the vehicle just after lunch time on Monday. The nights were long - as it was cold and raining, there was no point in staying up after dinner and sunset and getting chilled through, so we retired to our sleeping bags by 5.30pm or 6pm each night and didn't get up till sunrise. All that rest each night worked wonders to

heal up the painful muscles and bruises, so that by morning we were almost good as new again.

We headed back to Owieandana, and Paul and Kylie, the station owners, welcomed us with open arms. They invited us to stay in the shearers' quarters, and use the facilities of the old outstation building - it's heritage listed, as it's the oldest remaining pug-and-pine dwelling in the southern hemisphere, built in 1845. They let us use their phone to try to make contact with the other crossover party (which was equipped with a satellite phone), but this wasn't successful. They even gave us beer and meat and said we could stay as long as we needed to. They were running rather low on supplies because the road had been closed for some time, but it finally opened that afternoon. They even allowed us to have a hot shower in the shower house out the back - what a luxury after 4 days!

Paul told us that the region is the most seismically active in the southern hemisphere, and that they have frequent earthquakes there as the Gammon Ranges undergo uplift at a rate of up to 1 m per year. Several years ago they had one about 6 on the Richter scale, and had to rebuild some of the station buildings and replace all the broken windows. It was just as well he warned us - that night was a very busy one indeed! I felt three tremors around midnight (this was nothing to do with the 2.8 quake that was felt at Peterborough, which was about 24 hours earlier), then Tom felt another just before dawn. Around 8 am, there was another earthquake that sounded like a long low crash of thunder coming out of the ranges. On top of all that, a terrific windstorm started around 9 pm, bringing several more mm of drizzle, and gusts that I estimated would easily have reached 100 km/h. I spent a lot of the night lying awake wondering if the roof was going to blow off.

The next morning was very cold and drizzly, but the wind calmed down over time, and by lunch time the fog and drizzle had lifted off the ranges and we saw some sunshine at long last. The party from North Moolooloo arrived and then headed off to service some of the pluviometers and data loggers, then we followed after them to do a 3-4 hour hike, up to Arcoona Bluff and back, to service a pluviometer and carry out a Yellow-footed rock-wallaby count. The views from the top were very spectacular indeed and worth all the injuries I got on the way up and a lot

more. We even got to see a couple of the elusive wallabies, plus a lot of soaring wedge-tailed eagles riding the thermals up the rock faces, looking for prey.

On Tuesday afternoon and evening all three parties finally made it back safely to Owieandana and it was quite a crowd! There were 14 SEG people, plus several friends of the station owners all staying there that night - so the old cottage and all the shearers' quarters were quite packed out.

Anyway, all was well that ended well, and we all arrived back in Adelaide Wednesday night after a smooth 9-hr trip home.

Paul Rogers' account of the Eastern Group

July 13 - Chris Wright (Team Leader), John Love, Tim Loffler, Paul Rogers and Richard Kohler travelled by John Love's Prado to Balcanoona and on to Grindall's Hut.

Paul's account is in the form of a poem -

From Grindalls' Hut in the East to Aroona
Creek in the West
An ancient landscape of some 600 million
years, prehistoric, eroded, rugged, rough and
craggy
The journey started with a late scratching
From John one of SEG's pioneers, a truly
likeable gentleman
Who needed to abstain due to the previous
night of leg cramps and pain
Our first steps were across a Gibber Plain of
small rounded scattered rock
Bonded by the characteristic red clay of
inland Australia
From a northern pass of Red Hill
We trekked through scattered terrain of spiky
Spinifex Grass plain
Through resistant local white ant population
stands of hardy native Calitris Pine
And on through rusty, lichen and moss
covered sharp edged creeks, valleys, gorges
and chasms
Paved by magnificent ancient river beds of
boulders of different composition, shape and
size
Eroded, rounded, rumbled and laid through
the millennium of time
Foliated by colossal Ghostly Gums
Some of which had been torn from where
they stood in times of raging flood
By the action of water in this often desert
scape
At night we camped out and bed down on flat
clay platforms in river beds

Much to our blessing at Rover Rockhole and Junction Waterhole water was on hand
Even though the weather was wintry, wet, windy, and somewhat grey
There was little evidence of significant water flow within the creeks
I am sure that the cloudy cover helped make our nights warm and cosy
Though unfortunately there were no stars to see only the darkness was above
Settling camp prior to night fall to ensure an evenings rest
We pitched our tents, strung our kitchen, charged the Trangia and dined well
Retiring by 7:30, though I was tired and weary, was not so easy
Our journey was not without incident
Chris our leader who never faltered both in spirit and inspiration
Throughout the journey had come a cropper on two occasions
On one occasion falling down a waterfall which echoed down the gully, nothing broken fortunately
Followed the next day by a loss of footing on our ascent to the plateau
Via a rocky, steep, slippery, cascading and rising erosion gully
The plateau we ascend to fight our way through
Is a unique environment of thick Mulga with open bands of Snow Gum in which to rest
The days weather drizzled or lightly showered from day break to dusk
Tim a wilderness traveller of great skill and experience kept us well on course
We found the Plateau pluviometer with very little trouble
But as the weather was so poor we could not service it for fear of drowning the electronics
There were some brief moments of lifting cloud to reveal what was hidden
Late that afternoon there was a stormy view off to the west, a stripe of light over a distant range
We made our steep and windy westerly descent from the rocky summit of North Tusk
To the calm and sheltered gully bed of Arcoona creek, soggy, ready for a feed and good nights rest
When we rose the following morning on our final trek
We detoured to the east to service the Sambot pluviometer, some field science
We also saw the scientifically controlled enclosures and the creek flow measurement transducer device
Fauna neither native Yellow-footed rock-wallaby nor feral stray rabbit nor goat were to be seen

Though we did see the large, predatory, soaring Wedge tailed Eagle and other small bird species
As we made our way west along Arcoona Creek before emerging
To the open desert Owieandana Station plain grazed throughout the years by sheep and cattle
We caught up with members of the easterly SEG group after our company of four
To those I made the journey with I wish to thank for their friendship, company and expertise
For a cross over that despite the weather, which will not be forgotten
Was fun, friendly, educational, bonding, character building and a challenge.

UPCOMING GRASP TRIPS

November (End of Academic Year) Trip- Vulcathunha - Gammon Ranges NP

24th to 28th November

This will be a routine SEG trip with checks on all the Raingauges, and some photography, Yellow-footed rock-wallaby monitoring. Approximately 3 days bushwalking, with no facilities, carry everything.

Leader:

Graham Blair (w) 8463 6979 (email)

blair.graham@saugov.sa.gov.au

David Kemp (w) 8343 2534 (email)

avid.kemp@transport.sa.gov.au

Conservation of Native Vegetation in South Australian Cemeteries

Written by Jane Corin,
President of the Conservation Council of SA

While cemeteries across Australia have been recognised as "life-saving refuges" for some of the nation's most endangered native plants - even for entire ecosystems - in South Australia these cemetery havens are under threat. The State Government is seeking to exempt clearance of native vegetation within existing public cemeteries from the provisions of the Native Vegetation Act.

This will mean - regardless of the importance of the native vegetation in terms of biodiversity or as habitat for wildlife or whether the vegetation contains threatened species or communities or provides habitat for threatened species - clearance will take place without any reference to the Act or the Native Vegetation Council.

In the South East, for example, 31 hectares of coastal scrub within the Port Macdonnell Cemetery forms part of a priority coastal area important for the nationally threatened orange bellied parrot. Under the proposed exemption, the District Council will be able to clear this vegetation because it is situated within an existing public cemetery.



Port Macdonnell Cemetery showing area of native coastal vegetation
 Photograph supplied by Jane Corin

Native vegetation within existing public cemeteries provides an important reference of natural ecosystems that have otherwise been destroyed or largely cleared, such as in the South East, Mid North and Yorke Peninsula. And in some areas they provide the only local source of indigenous plant seed and biological material for revegetation. The Nature Conservation Society of SA has stated that: "In terms of the value of both reference sites (species composition, structure) and seed sources, loss of either of these will mean foregoing future options for restoring natural ecosystems and future habitat reconstruction".

Just prior to the 2006 State Election the Government sought to amend the Native Vegetation Regulations to allow clearance that was significantly at variance to the Principles of clearance of native vegetation (Schedule 1 of the Native Vegetation Act). This was withdrawn after strong lobbying by the Conservation Council of SA. Now the Government is seeking to side-step the Native Vegetation Act all together.

The Minister for Environment and Conservation and the Premier both need to understand the value the community places

on these sites and their strong opposition to such clearance. Otherwise the amendment will be approved by Cabinet and gazetted, not having to go through any parliamentary process.

Concerned members of SEG can write expressing their concerns to:

Hon Gail Gago
 Minister for Environment and Conservation
 PO Box 1047
 Adelaide SA 5001

The Premier Hon Mike Rann
 GPO Box 2343
 Adelaide SA 5001

Kids Corner

The hidden words are taken from words in the article on Conservation of Native Vegetation in South Australian Cemeteries. The words are hidden in all directions. Can you find them all?

Word List

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| Vegetation | Ecosystems |
| Native | Seed |
| Conservation | Plant |
| Cemeteries | Indigenous |
| Endangered | Habitat |
| Threatened | Parrot |
| Species | Public |

F	N	P	T	T	D	E	R	E	G	N	A	D	N	E
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SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION GROUP - Membership

The Scientific Expedition Group came into being at a public meeting on 21st August 1984.

Membership is open to any persons, family or organisation interested in the following aims:

- * The promotion and running of expeditions of a scientific, cultural and adventurous nature.
- * The furthering of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.
- * Promotion of the values and philosophy of wilderness.
- * Enabling people to learn the skills required for planning and running expeditions, and to develop sound field techniques.

Members receive regular information on SEG activities and expeditions

Patron: Her Excellency, the Honourable Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, AC, CVO, MBE, Governor of South Australia

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SUBSCRIPTIONS (Including GST)

Working adult member - - - - -	\$22.00
Pensioner student or unemployed - - - - -	\$11.00
Family membership - - - - -	\$27.50
Organisation membership - - - - -	\$27.50

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Name

Address

.

Telephone (H) (W)

E-mail

Details of scientific, cultural, and adventuring or other relevant skill or interests you may be prepared to share with the group:

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Applications should be addressed to :
 The Hon. Secretary
 Scientific Expedition Group Inc.
 P.O. Box 501
 Unley S.A. 5061