

SEGMENTS

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PO Box 501, Unley, SA 5061

WALKING THE MAWSON PLATEAU

by

Graeme Oats

I've been bush walking for nearly two decades, every now and then I hear the phrase "God's Own Country". First it was Tasmania, then someone claimed the title for the Gammons Ranges and probably you've heard it said about another place equally suitable for the title, but three months ago I was invited to spend a week walking on the Mawson Plateau in the far northern reaches of our Flinders Ranges. It too could qualify for the title of "God's Own Country".

I won't be the judge of that, each of the areas mentioned I have visited and each qualify in their own right for the crown. It often depends on a number of attributes why a place becomes special in one's own view. On this occasion the timing was perfect, the weather was great even though we experienced one wild and thundery night. My friends were all of the same ilk, age and ability and we were visiting after a winter of good general rains.

This part of the Flinders Ranges often misses out on the winter rains, however as we wound our way up a creek known as Granite Creek on a mild Sunday afternoon, one of our greatest obstacles was water. Having

to sidle around and sometimes take lengthy diversions as the base of the creek was filled with huge waterholes of unfathomable depth.

We had left Adelaide at dawn on the previous day, staying overnight near Leigh Creek South then motoring onto Lyndhurst, then up the Strezlecki Track, pass the Mt Fitton Talc Mine before leaving the road to Moolawatana at the Mt Fitton ruins and heading for the Hamilton Creek.



I suppose you could say the Mawson Plateau is loosely bounded by the Hamilton Creek on the north and west, by a geological feature known as the Granite Escarpment on the east & by Freeling Heights in the south. It rises from about 250/300m to an undulating plateau of about 600/750m dissected by many creeks draining to the north-east into tributaries of the Hamilton Creek. Many of the creeks having been worn to granite bedrock, scoured and smoothed over the millennia carving fascinating rock holes, unique in design and structure, each providing a refuge for the animal and birds to flourish.

We spent a night in Granite Creek (not named on the 1:50000 Yudnamutana

nap - but can be found on the eastern edge of that map at GR553752) and the next day we followed its course upstream to another unmarked creek known as Saucepan Creek (GR518705). We followed Saucepan Creek westerly for just over 2kms and camped at another junction near a waterhole (again not marked) known as Ray's Waterhole (GR499706). This was our base camp for the next four nights.

Each day we set out in different directions, one day to the south towards Tee Junction Waterhole, the next to the Granite Escarpment. Thursday, north west into the Hamilton Creek and exploring it upstream a few kilometres. Each day we were delighted with the varying vegetation and granite formations.

On our last we the group split, one party walking north to the Hamilton and following that downstream to our

vehicles whilst the other traversed the ridge line north-east to the Hamilton. The parties regrouped for lunch before returning to our vehicles.

There are many places on this Earth that would qualify for the top ten as "God's Own Country" and the Mawson Plateau in my view must be one of them.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Richard Willing.
CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the first Annual General Meeting of the 2000's. The highlights of this report are: the annual expedition; the Gammon Ranges Scientific Project; last year's Think Tank; news of the committee; SEGments; a trip to Government House; and plans for the future.

ANNUAL EXPEDITIONS

At last year's AGM we had a report about Warraweena Expedition in the far north. This year the expedition will be at Gluepot, the Birds Australia property north of Waikerie, in November, with Duncan McKenzie as chief leader, who will tell us more about the planning later.

GAMMON RANGES SCIENTIFIC PROJECT

This most successful long-term project continues to flourish. As usual, several trips to the Gammon Ranges site have been made during the year. Servicing the pluviometers, monitoring vegetation photopoints, flowmeters, exclosures, native and feral animals, and baiting foxes keeps each small team of volunteers very busy. The driving force is still Chris Wright on committee with Paul Harvey in the background.

THINK TANK

Invited members joined the committee in an all day think tank last September to examine where we were and plan future directions for SEG. It was acknowledged that since SEG started, community attitudes have changed a lot, and some of our former functions are now being catered for by outdoor groups and families with four wheel drives, but we still provide the scientific component. The abbreviated summary of the discussions is that most of the things we are doing we do reasonably well, but there are still a few weak areas, particularly in the administration and publicity departments, where we need more specialized expertise. Extra help is being sought.

THE COMMITTEE

The hard working committee is very stable and the teamwork is terrific. Greg Kerr has joined, but most faces are familiar. Many turned up with families for a May working bee at the Willing farm, "Minnawarra," successfully sinking 48 permanent pitfall traps. Paul Wainwright's muscuses were much valued, likewise Trent Porter, Graeme Oats, Chris Wright, Alun Thomas, Duncan McKenzie. Phil Cole, John Hayes

and Bob Major are also valued members of the committee.

I am particularly indebted to the secretary John Love and treasurer Graeme Oats, both of whom spend a large amount of time looking after the day to day items requiring attention. Alun Thomas at present fills dual roles as vice-chairman and editor. We are pleased that Warren Bonython, that eminent conservationist, remains our president, and I remain chairman for the time being. I would like to thank again my wife, Gwen, for cleaning up after SEG has a board meeting in our dining room each month.

SEGMENTS

Alun Thomas has again taken up the challenge of producing SEGments, the quarterly bulletin of SEG activities. He is to be congratulated on maintaining his equanimity in the face of many other calls on his time, especially those related to his famous grandfather, Sir Douglas Mawson. These include the current exhibition at the SA Museum and an exhibition of Antarctic and Polynesian paintings in Norwood by Alistair McGregor, who attended one of our expeditions many years ago.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE VISIT



During the year three committee members and partners attended a garden party at Government House hosted by our Patron, the Governor, Sir Eric Neal. We are grateful for these visits, not only for our Patron’s hospitality, but because they enable some networking to occur with members of similar organizations.

FUTURE EVENTS

Expedition Gluepot will be studying birds, vegetation, soil, mammals,

reptiles and bats under the leadership of Duncan McKenzie next November. A talented team of leaders has plans well under way. Encounter 2002 will celebrate the meeting of Flinders and Baudin in 1802 and will involve a wide range of scientific, cultural and expeditionary activities. SEG is involved in the preliminary negotiations hoping to be involved in a suitable activity. (More information in this SEGments – Ed)

SUMMARY

After 16 years SEG is still providing high quality outdoor scientific programs to young people, and contributes to scientific knowledge in this state. Although a small organization, its loyal band of supporters, sponsors and members, particularly committee members, keep it running. A few gaps in our personnel, particularly in the fields of administration and publicity need some extra help. Please talk to any member of the committee if you think you can fill a role.

INVERTEBRATES AT WARRAWEENA

WENDY TELFER

Introduction

There is currently no information recorded about the invertebrate fauna of Warraweena. In fact relatively little is known about the invertebrates of the Flinders Ranges as a whole. This is primarily due to there being thousands of species and few people with the expertise and resources to identify them. While we recognised that the soaks and springs on the property would have their own microcosm of species, consistent with the Biological Survey of South Australia methodology, we chose to sample only terrestrial invertebrates. Some information about the freshwater invertebrates present was being obtained by SAWater staff who were sampling various springs and creeks in the area and stayed at our base camp with us one night.

Methods

To collect terrestrial invertebrates we set up micro-pitfalls located 1-2 metres to one side of each macro-pitfall hole. Each micro-pitfall consisted of a small plastic vial full of 75% alcohol placed in the ground flush to the surface. Micropitfalls were left open for a week. In addition to these we had a large glass jar of alcohol at the end of each trapline into which we put invertebrates that dropped into the macro-pitfall traps during the survey. Sorting and identification of the invertebrates occurred after the expedition by the Invertebrate section of the South Australia Museum.

Some insects were also collected opportunistically. Alex Coombe often had his nose to the ground examining and collecting meat ants (while simultaneously mumbling quotes from the Simpsons) and others found the odd interesting insect that flew into their face or that they stumbled over. (Ed. They must have been big insects)

Results

At several of the sites micro-pitfalls were disturbed. At site 2, four out of the six invertebrate micropitfalls were dug out and one had teeth marks consistent with the canines of a fox. At site 7 a fox dropping was found in an open invertebrate micro-pitfall in Line A and five out of the six micropitfalls were dug out in Line B, probably by the same fox involved with Line A. Some micro-pitfalls were also disturbed at sites 5 and 8 presumably by foxes or ravens.

Final lists of species of insects and arachnids are still being collated by the SA Museum. Initial counts of each order suggest ants were abundant at all sites. The high numbers of spiders found at sites 1 and 2 were consistent with the hypothesis that dunnarts favour this area because of the large invertebrates that live in the cracks of the gilgai soils. Other invertebrates found include low numbers of beetles, mites, cockroaches, grasshoppers, flies, collembolas and centipede. Due to low numbers it is difficult to comment on species diversity by site. We also found a large dead Stick insect while at Black Ranges Springs which was almost of a size that one could stumble over.

ENCOUNTER 2002

By

Graeme Oats

In early 2002 South Australia will celebrate its first bicentenary, commemorating the historic meeting at Encounter Bay between the British maritime explorer Matthew Flinders and his French contemporary Nicolas Baudin, the first Europeans to explore and chart the South Australian coastline.

But Encounter 2002 will also encompass so much more - exploring how those expeditions impacted on the social, cultural and scientific development of South Australia and highlighting the substantial role that regional communities played in that growth.

It will strengthen international ties between Australia, the United Kingdom, France and Mauritius, where Baudin later died and Flinders was imprisoned. Also highlighted will be how the traditional lifestyle and culture of Indigenous Australians has been affected by 200 years of European contact and settlement as South Australia looks to its past, present and future.

A feast of coastal-based events will sweep the State. A number of Tall Ships will follow the voyage (200 years later, to the day) of Matthew Flinders and his Royal naval sloop the Investigator, commencing with a spectacular opening ceremony at Port Adelaide. A touring exhibition from the South Australian Maritime Museum will bring history to life at

regional centres from Ceduna to Robe, while the Art Gallery of South Australia will host a major exhibition of artworks from the Flinders and Baudin voyages.

SEG has been involved through committee member, Graeme Oats since the inception some two years ago. Graeme is organising a re-enactment of the first ascent of Mt. Brown by Europeans.

On March 10 and 11, 1802 Robert Brown, the Botanist on board the Investigator with others ascended Mt. Brown with hope of finding an inland sea that would take them to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

be a botanist, a botanical artist and a representative of the indigenous community to accompany Graeme to the summit. Others in the walking party may include a person representing the media and SEG members.

The likely route taken by Brown has been checked and contact made with current property owners for permission, which has been given.

As the planning progresses information will be available through SEGments. For those with internet access check out:- www.encounter2002.com.

Encounter 2002 will be a celebration of state, national and global significance a coming together of 3 worlds, visions and cultures.

Planning of the re-enactment is underway and funding is being sought. It is hoped that one of the Tall Ships may be available to re-enact the historic landing by Brown on the shores of eastern Spencer Gulf.

SEG will be working closely with Laurie Haegi from the Plant Biodiversity Centre. The selection and size of the walking party is yet to be decided. Included will hopefully



SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION GROUP

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 will receive regular information on S. E. G. activities and expeditions

SUBSCRIPTIONS (Including GST)

Working adult member -----	\$16.50
Pensioner student or unemployed -----	\$11.00
Family membership -----	\$22.00
Organisation membership -----	\$22.00

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Name

Address

.....

Telephone (H) (W)

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

.....

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

Patron: His Excellency, the Honourable
 Sir Eric Neal, AC, CVO.
 Governor of South Australia

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Kids Corner

This time the hidden words are geographical terms from this month's article on Mawson Plateau. They are hidden in all directions. Can you find them all?

K	F	T	R	J	C	L	G	P	R	Q	X	C	Q	E
N	K	T	M	G	W	A	A	U	L	X	W	R	E	Z
N	Z	G	V	N	Z	W	M	V	F	G	A	E	M	Y
A	J	N	R	O	J	Y	M	P	L	A	T	E	A	U
P	S	L	O	I	N	G	O	Y	I	I	E	K	W	D
E	P	F	I	T	T	O	N	S	N	I	R	W	S	N
C	A	Z	G	C	L	D	S	A	D	Z	H	B	O	A
U	D	I	H	N	H	I	R	N	E	M	O	U	N	M
A	J	R	X	U	Q	G	M	M	R	S	L	D	E	U
S	P	H	R	J	N	Q	I	A	S	A	E	U	H	T
J	U	S	J	L	S	G	Y	E	H	W	R	H	X	A
Q	T	F	C	N	N	S	G	Y	L	S	T	J	M	N
F	R	E	E	L	I	N	G	X	M	R	L	Z	W	A
T	X	C	A	N	A	T	A	W	A	L	O	O	M	B
Q	L	S	T	R	E	Z	L	E	C	K	I	W	I	F

WORD LIST

- MAWSON
- PLATEAU
- FLINDERS
- RANGES
- GRANITE
- LEIGH
- CREEK
- STREZLECKI
- MOOLAWATANA
- LYNDHURST
- FITTON
- HAMILTON
- FREELING
- YUDNAMUTANA
- SAUCEPAN
- RAYS
- WATERHOLE
- EARTH
- TEE
- JUNCTION
- GAMMONS

EDITORIAL

The Gluepot Expedition has ended and by all accounts it was a great success. On a scientific level considerable research was completed. New species to Gluepot were discovered and extension of ranges for species of birds, bats and reptiles was recorded. Full details will be known when the report has been completed. On a social and educational level the expedition was also a great success with a great camaraderie in the camps and expeditioners asking when the next expedition would be held. Thanks must go to all the leaders and expeditioners and particularly to Duncan MacKenzie who was the chief leader and organizer.

It is that time of year when the committee wish all members and their families the compliments of the season, a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Please take everything in moderation over the Christmas break. I look forward to communicating further next year.

Alun Thomas

FUTURE PROGRAMME

The Scientific Expedition Group (SEG) welcomes enquiries from all members and friends who are interested in participating in one or more of our projects or expeditions. Please contact the leader or convener of the project or expedition that interests you for more information.

Current recurring project

Gammon Ranges Scientific Project (GRaSP) is now in its twelfth year. The project involves a four or five day trip to the Gammon Ranges about four or five times a year. Expeditions are being planned for New Years Eve and April-ANZAC weekend 2001.

Contact Chris Wright 8278 8818

Future Expeditions

SEG is planning a biodiversity project in the Spring Mount area near Myponga based on a number of Heritage Sites on Richard Willing's property, Minnowarra. For information contact Richard Willing on mobile phone 0408 807 517