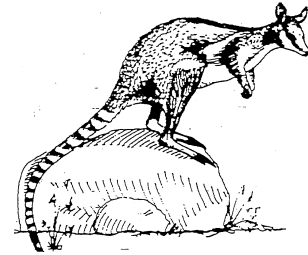


SEG Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Scientific Project

NOTES FOR EXPEDITIONERS

Like many scientific ventures, this project arose out of curiosity - how did the Gammon Plateau support such a dense growth of vegetation in a low rainfall area? Beginning in 1988 with a pluviometer on the Plateau, the project has grown into a significant, broad environmental monitoring exercise which now includes seven activities:

- Pluviometers (recording rain gauges) at eight sites
- Stream-flow monitoring at one site
- Botanical monitoring at six sites
- Aquatic biology monitoring at two sites
- Human impact monitoring at three sites
- Yellow footed rock wallaby colony monitoring
- Feral animal counts, numbers and locations



For a detailed description of the project, its rationale and historical background, see the SEG web-site www.communitywebs.org/scientificexpeditiongroup.

MINIMUM IMPACT CAMPING

The basic principle for minimum impact camping is to consider whether a party of visitors travelling several days behind you would notice the impacts you have made. Ideally of course, they should not be able to detect any impacts caused by your presence.

One of the aims of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Scientific Project is to assess the impact of regular visitation by SEG groups to this area of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. The whole environment of the project area is very fragile. The shallow soils are susceptible to erosion and compaction, the vegetation is sensitive to trampling and there is a high risk of fire. It is imperative that SEG sets a good example by minimising the human impact of these data recovery trips.

Protection of Plants and animals

Removal of plants and animals from the Park is not permitted, except specimens for scientific purposes.

Movement in the project area requires special care. Damaged areas will take years or decades to recover. Follow wildlife or other tracks wherever possible and try to avoid difficult and persistent 'bush bashing'.

Camp Sites

The existing sites at base and Vandenberg camps should be used for normal trips. When camping elsewhere, e.g. on a 'cross-over', find a place where you will cause the least disturbance to plants, animals and water sources. Never cut down vegetation except for shelter in emergency situations.

Disposal of Human Waste

Bury faeces after burning the toilet paper. (Do not burn if there is a risk of starting a bush fire.) Carry tampons out in a sealed bag. They are difficult to burn, do not decompose effectively and might be dug out by foxes if buried.

Disposal of Rubbish: If you can carry it in, you can carry it out.

Do not bury any other waste matter. Wrappers, plastic bags, tins, bottles, food scraps can all disturb the local ecology and be dangerous to indigenous animals. Bring all rubbish back to base camp and back to Adelaide. Check all camp sites immediately before departure to ensure that no litter is inadvertently left behind.

Washing of Bodies, Clothes and Utensils

Washing should be performed well away from water sources. Do not swim in waterholes unless the water is flowing: others may have to drink that water.

Cooking

All cooking on SEG expeditions to the project area will be with gas or spirit stoves. Burning wood removes the habitat for many small animals and plants and breaks the natural cycle in which nutrients are returned

to the soil by the decay processes. Wood fires may only be used in emergency for cooking, warmth or signalling, and not at all on windy or very hot days.

If all people who use wilderness areas follow these guidelines, there will be decreased environmental damage, and increased protection of natural environments.

Take nothing but photographs. Leave nothing but footsteps.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Bushwalking in a remote area can be dangerous and it is important that all expeditioners are suitably equipped and prepared for the trip. The group must stay together. If you have to stop for any reason while walking, tell someone.

The following survival kit should be carried by each person:

- at least 1 litre of water
- approx 250g of scroggin or other energy food
- personal first aid kit
- warm garment and/or rain coat
- whistle
- matches or lighter

Specific Risks

a) *Flood:* More people are killed by floods than fires. Do not try to cross strongly flowing creeks, by vehicle or on foot, if you cannot see the bottom. In stormy weather it is advisable to take extra food and cooking fuel in case of delays.

b) *Fire:* Carry a fire extinguisher in your vehicle. Do not park over long grass or other vegetation that could be ignited by a hot exhaust pipe. If caught in a fire while driving, stay in the vehicle with doors and windows closed.

Woollen garments are more fire resistant than other fabrics. Some synthetic fabrics melt in extreme heat. The bottom of a gully is a safer place than hill sides or summits. If you cannot escape from an advancing fire, burn a fire break and move into it when the ground is cool enough to stand on. Keep a wet cloth over mouth and nose to reduce smoke inhalation.

c) *Dehydration:* Ensure that you have enough water.

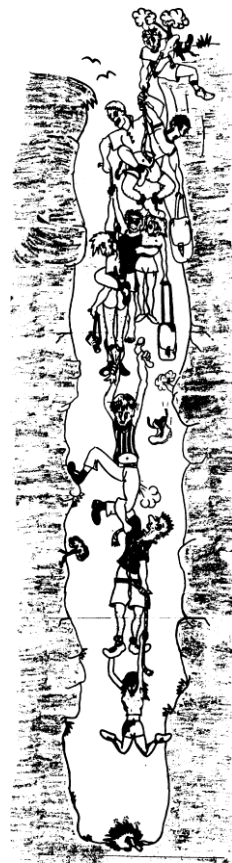
d) *Exhaustion:* If you need a rest, tell the leader - don't battle on till you drop!

e) *Hypothermia:* It can be very cold on the Plateau. Wet clothes are a hazard. Winter nights can be frosty. A warm garment, a rain coat and a good sleeping bag are needed.

f) *Getting lost:* This is very easy in the project area. If a person or group is lost, the following procedure should be followed:

- If it is dark, all members should remain where they are: walking at night is hazardous.
- A group that is lost on the Plateau could walk north down to Arcoona creek and then down-stream to Vandenberg camp or the base camp.
- If you find yourself alone and do not know where to go, stay where you are, blow your whistle or call out and listen for any response.

g) *Personal injury:* If there is a serious injury the leader will take suitable action and call State Emergency Service if necessary.



... can be dangerous

VGRASP trips are strenuous, tiring, scientifically useful and fun!