



NEWSLETTER October 2024 (Year 23 Vol 37)

Editorial

Our Annual General Meeting for 2024 will have a different format, time-of-day and location. Details for this event are listed on page 2. Please log the date, time and location in your diary. Your attendance will enable you to derive information on where the YFRWPA and BCR are at some 24 years on from our inception.

Our President's Report brings us up-to-date with the new machine that has been purchased. In addition, Kym outlines work that has been carried out with tidying things up in Davey Hut and round the campground plus new additions. These will be of great benefit to all who stay on the BCR.

Some new Work, Health and Safety documents have been approved in recent weeks. Next year will see a review of virtually all our documents.

Finally, our conservation news covers areas of: wild dogs and their management on the BCR; confirmation of the presence of an endangered species of bird; the Short-tailed grass wren – this is particularly exciting news; and the management of our Photo Points. Thank you to Jeanine for these reports.

This last item is of significant value to our management of the BCR. Whilst it is true that our landscape is forever subjected to mother nature and the amount of rainfall we might receive over

a given year, analysis of changes in vegetation over a period of time highlights the effectiveness of YFRWPA's custodial management of the BCR.

Elimination of extensive, commercial livestock grazing has been in place for some twenty-four years now. Those of us who remember what our 140 square kilometres of landscape was like before 2001 will assuredly agree with me when I say we have come a long way in rehabilitating the BCR. If only Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies could talk. I think I know what they would say!



“On behalf of bubs and myself, thank you to everyone at YFRWPA for making our homes safe and full of nutritious food”.

Shane Fantinel (Editor)

IMPORTANT NOTICE



This year we're creating an opportunity for members and supporters to gather in a more relaxed environment and catch-up to share stories.

We anticipate a Sunday afternoon, that is **24 November 2024**, will allow time for those who need to travel.

Please extend this invitation to any friends and supporters who have helped the association over the year.

To ensure we have a shorter and effective AGM, we please ask members to read the committee reports prior to the meeting. These will be sent out by the Secretary before the AGM.

We hope you can join us.

Catering

- Free sausage sizzle
- BYO drinks
- Soft drinks will be for sale (along with raffle tickets)
- additional food
- Coffee and tea provided

Program

- 12:00 – 1:00pm – Sausage sizzle, catch-up with members and supporters
- 1:00 – 2:00pm – AGM
- 2:30 – 3:00pm – Guest speaker Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered (FAME) talking about

the recent re-introductions of quoll in the Flinders Ranges

- 3:00 – 3:30pm – More catch-up with members & supporters and raffle draw

Location

Fullarton Park Community Centre – Parkview Room

411 Fullarton Road, FULLARTON

Easy parking in the grounds or nearby street parking

Parkside Room



411 Fullarton Road, Fullarton

Shortly, our Association Secretary will email out to all members:

- the Formal Notice for our 2024 AGM
- a Proxy Form for any members who are unable to attend and would like their vote to be recorded by their proxy member of choice
- the Nomination Form for a Committee Position



Location of the Fullarton Park Community Centre

President's Report

As was advised before, we have ordered and taken delivery of the machine that the membership voted for at previous AGMs.

A huge thanks must go to Adrian Davey and Grant Davey (Member). Adrian transported the machine and attachments to the Bunkers Conservation Reserve on his Semi Trailer at cost which was a huge saving to YFRWPA.



New tractor showing two of the attachments.

The machine will be a huge asset to YFRPA. Its application will assist with the various work to current infrastructure across the reserve.

A Policy and Safety Instruction, regarding use of the machine, has been drafted and passed by the Committee. A small number of members have been put through a familiarisation with machine. **These people will be the only authorised users of the machine.**

We are progressing with having a clean-up round the campground. This will involve moving some equipment, that was stored in Davey Hut, out into the new shed. In addition, there will be a tidying up of the filing cabinet for what it is meant for: WHS documents and files.

Members are asked to note that part of this clean-up will be the removal of the cupboard from the common area. This cupboard currently stores plates, pots, pans. These will be placed in the shed but moved back to the camp kitchen once the new storage facility is installed. The thinking behind this major down-sizing, of the stored equipment, is that we don't need 10 fry pans and 15 saucepans.

In future, if you are thinking of taking something to the reserve either take it home with you, when you leave, or it will be disposed of. In addition, in future anything taken to the Reserve and left there without prior committee permission will be disposed of. This includes, but is not limited to: books; magazines; rechargeable spot lights; bedding; towels; pots; pans etc. The Reserve, for some reason, has become a dumping ground simply by people thinking that it might be a good thing to leave items at the Reserve

Maintenance/Construction

Thanks to Bob Temby and friends the Camp kitchen benches have now been completed. In the near future, an under-bench cupboard will be installed to store pots, pans, crockery, cutlery etc. from the storage cupboard in the common area.

Stainless steel splash backs have been installed as well. The gas stove, that has been installed on top of the bench, was found to be in an appalling state. That is, it was left in a filthy state with fat layers found inside and out. **These are your facilities so please keep them clean and tidy for the next users.**

The camp kitchen has been completely cleaned. I sincerely ask that it should be kept this way. People should not store anything other than what is already in the camp kitchen.

Some general track repairs have been undertaken between the front Sign, on the northern end of the Reserve, and Headquarters. This work was carried out with the new machine. Of special mention was work carried out at the creeks crossings where water erosion was significant. In the past, rectification such as this was done manually with picks and shovels.

The shed is now full with all the attachments for the machine and other plant and equipment. Please keep it tidy.

I remind all members that no alterations and changes to any installed infrastructure are allowed without prior, expressed permission from the Committee. This includes, but is not limited to: drilling holes; cutting; grinding; and modifying etc. Thank you.

Kym Groves (President)

Vice President's Report

Work Health and Safety

No Hazard and Incident Reports have been filed since our May 2024 Newsletter. While this is great news, visitors to the BCR must always be mindful of their movements in this isolated area of the Flinders Ranges.

Several of our WHS documents, forms and procedures will be up for review next year. If any of these documents relate to your area of activity on the BCR, can I ask that you assist me with checking over the relevant document (s) for currency.

Members are reminded that our site, vehicle utility and all our trailers are not registered. Therefore, they should not be driven on a public road – namely the Wirrealpa Road near our northern boundary.

Earlier this year we took delivery of significant piece of plant and equipment. The front-end loader, with an array of attachments, has a SOP in place for its operation. In short, its application will alleviate many of the jobs that were previously done by lots of manual

labour. In addition, it will assist greatly with major work that would normally have required a contractor to be engaged. Not only are we saving in the cost of hiring the contractor but we are also avoiding the lengthy delay in obtaining suitable booking dates.

Local Liaison

Work continues with the mustering of neighbouring sheep off the BCR. With the removal of significant numbers, only a small number are wandering the reserve. Our neighbouring station people, at Wirrealpa and Willow Springs, have been extremely pro-active in this exercise of removal. Methods used in the mustering process have been the use of a helicopter and a team on motor bikes.

Maintenance of boundary fences is on-going. With this, can I ask that visitors are vigilant in keeping an eye out for breaks and if you are unable to carry our repairs then report the location in your Visitors Report.

The hope is not to have one sheep on the reserve, however, all things being equal we should expect that removal will be an activity going forward.

Communication

News items relating to the BCR are presented in four communication media.

These are:

- this Newsletter;
- our internet web site entitled, *Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc.* (www.yellowfoot.org);

- our Facebook site entitled, *Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc.*
- and our other Facebook site entitled, *Caernarvon Track*

As editor of our Newsletter, I welcome contributions from all our members, guests and visitors to the BCR. However, it goes without saying that people are more than welcome to visit, and indeed, become members and contributors to the two Facebook sites. Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc. will be around for a long time. So why not join in.

A final word on news. All news items – that is, facts, figures, scientific data and graphs, photographs and sketches – sourced from the BCR remains the intellectual property of Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc. Any use of these news items outside our four, communication medias listed above, requires permission from the Committee of Management. Requests can be emailed to the secretary at admin@yellowfoot.org

Shane Fantinel (Vice President)

Conservation

Wild dog baiting on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve

Dingoes have been part of the Australian landscape for the past 4000 years.



An Australia Wild Dog (photograph courtesy of the SA Landscape Board)

In South Australia, dingoes, part-bred dingoes and wild domestic dogs are all called 'wild dogs'.

Managing wild dogs depends on whether they are: south of the Dog Fence, where they are a declared pest for destruction; or, north of the Dog Fence, where they are listed as unprotected wild life. Management south of the Dog Fence is legislated to protect the sheep grazing industry, reduce the spread of disease and reduce the trauma and financial loss to landholders dealing with dead or injured livestock.



The Wild Dog Fence. This structure stretches across South Australia for 2,150 km from the Great Australian Bight near Fowlers Bay to the New South Wales border. More than two-thirds of the Dog Fence is being rebuilt in SA to protect our \$4.3 billion livestock industry. (photograph courtesy of PIRSA)

The Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR) is south of the Dog Fence and, as custodians of the land, the Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association (YFRWPA) is required to control wild dogs under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019. As a result, there are two wild dog ground baiting activities undertaken by members in the spring and autumn of each year.



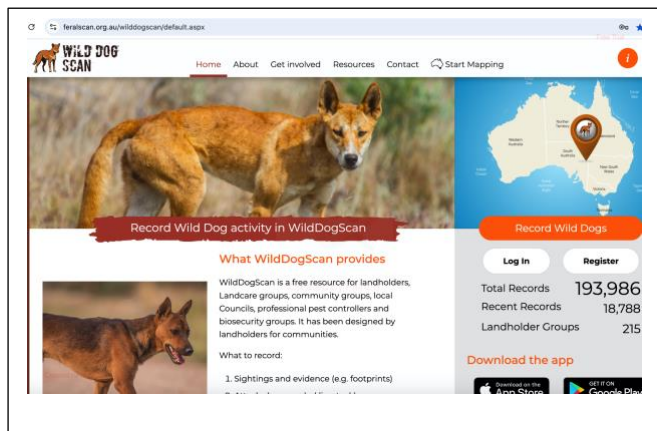
Yellowfoot on the BCR from last April 2024 (courtesy of Katrina Windebank)

In addition to the ground baiting, aerial baiting for foxes also occurs on the BCR. The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board (SAAL) have been providing this fox, baiting service free-of-charge as part of its Bounceback and Beyond project. We are grateful for this form of feral pest control which we could not afford otherwise.

Some members may wonder why both are undertaken as it may seem a bit over the top to do aerial and ground baiting.

The answers are simple. Mandatory ground baiting is determined by South Australian legislation and regulations which are clear, that is, 'land managers

must lay at least one lethal wild dog bait along every kilometer of vehicle track' (see [Declared animal policy: Wild dogs and dingoes](#)). This baiting uses wild dog baits which contain 6mg of 1080. Ground baiting for wild dogs is simply our responsibility as custodians of the BCR. We also report via WildDogScan, on when we bait and whether any wild dogs, their tracks or scats have been seen or controlled. This information is used by the SAAL Landscape Board to determine where more effort needs to be administered for wild dog control.



Opening screen from the web page for the Wild Dog Application. YFRWPA is a member of this organization.

Aerial baiting administered on the BCR is undertaken with fox-strength baits (3mg of 1080). This dose is half that used for wild dogs and may not be strong enough to destroy a wild dog. In addition, the licensing body who allows 1080 use in SA (the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority) does not allow the targeting of wild dogs with fox strength baits (and vice versa). This is because to do so would be a breach of chemical-use laws, much the same as the incorrect use of herbicides or pesticides.

Hopefully, this explains why both aerial and ground baiting occur on the BCR. Aerial baiting is done to control foxes

and ground baiting for wild dogs is undertaken according to the legislation that governs land managers. The ground baiting occurs at the same time as weed spraying activities, usually in April and September. Anyone who would like to participate is welcome. You can contact me via email at jeaninebaker323@gmail.com

Jeanine Baker

Short-tailed Grasswren (*Amytornis merrotsyi merrotsyi*) on the BCR

This year the YFRWPA was awarded a Grassroots Grant from South Australian Arid Landscape Board. These grants are funded by levies collected within each region and from state funding for boards that have no or low levy revenue. They are highly competitive and we are very lucky and grateful to receive one.

The grant provided - \$1,799.79 (GST Exclusive) – has been used to support our efforts to locate Short-tailed Grasswrens (STGW) on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR).



Female Short-tailed Grasswren. Photo copyrighted to David Pearce.

The STGW is listed as Vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2001. The



Male Short-tailed Grasswren. Photo copyrighted to David Pearce.

BCR supports large areas of likely STGW habitat and has been under management to reduce grazing pressure and the numbers of feral pests since the early 2000's. Consequently, there are several areas of high-quality spinifex habitat on the BCR and we always believed the STGW must be present.

The hard work in trying to confirm the presence of STGW on the BCR has commenced and has already produced some exciting results!

In early September, David Pearce and Renate Faast began the project with surveys in what has been identified as likely habitat for the STGW.

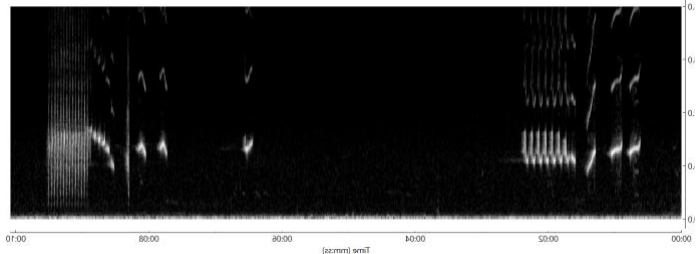
David and Renate spent 3 days walking transects in various areas; stopping, listening and looking. On day 3, in the late afternoon, they heard and saw STGW's. They captured photos of a male and female bird as well as recordings of song and calls. Given that this little bird is listed as Vulnerable we are over the moon that their presence has been confirmed on the BCR. This is even more exciting given Stokes Lookout (outside the BCR), where the

STGW had been present, has not recorded sightings for some time.

The next stage of the project is currently underway. To complement the human based surveys, the grant provided funds for two non-invasive acoustic recorders.

These will be used in various locations to record sounds – which we hope will include the songs or calls of STGW and give us an idea of how widespread the birds are across the area they were initially sighted in.

Analysing the recordings will take considerable effort. The calls will need



The needle in a haystack! Sound image of a short-tailed grasswren call and song. It's 10 seconds long and in one day we are collecting 16,800 seconds of sound. Overall, there will be at least 30 days of sound per recorder.

analysing electronically or we will be listening to hours of playback recording. Hypothetically, this could run into thousands of hours if we have the recorders out for extended periods! However, it is well worth the effort, especially as our first analysis, taken 500m from the original sighting, appear to have STGW calls and song on the recordings.

Some of the major threats to these ground foraging little birds are habitat degradation and fires. Reports suggest that sheep grazing will degrade STGW habitat, with dorper sheep posing a greater threat than merino sheep, as

dorpers are reputedly more destructive browsers and are more likely to venture into the hilltops. Similarly, feral goats can be destructive browsers and grazers.

Another threat is predation by foxes, feral cats and fires. Right now, even without the information from the acoustic recorders, we know the BCR has STGWs present. As a result, we will develop a conservation management plan and implement priority actions to mitigate against key threats. I am hoping we can implement an integrated management plan in collaboration with DEW to protect and expand STGW populations.

We already actively managing goats and foxes and need to continue this. We will have to remain vigilant about stray sheep, especially dorpers. While our neighbours muster we may need to discuss with them how we manage the small mobs of strays with double fleeces (in the case of merinos) and/or tails.

Other actions will include ongoing monitoring of population trends at key sites, researching information about optimal fire regimes, continue with and, if appropriate extend, fox baiting.

An exciting time is ahead as we can add the vulnerable STGW to our conservation plans and efforts.

Vegetation trends on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve

A photo point is a simple but really effective tool for monitoring perennial vegetation on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR).

Perennial vegetation is used to monitor change rather than annual vegetation

because we want to see long term changes rather than short term changes caused by boom-bust cycles when good rainfall occurs.

We have long term information for 25 photo point sites with over 25 years of records. In 2019, these sites were compared over a 14-year period. This covered the time since the YFRWPA established management of herbivores until 2018. The early part of this time showed relatively mixed rainfall years but finished with 2 years of severe drought (see Figure 1). The analysis showed that the overall trends for perennial vegetation change was positive across the entire BCR. There was recruitment of perennial plant species and increases in vegetation cover, reflecting the reduced pressure from grazing as sheep and feral herbivore numbers were much reduced over these years.



Figure 1



Figure 2

You wouldn't think this was the same site. Photo point (Love 001A) taken in 2007 (Figure 1 above) and again in 2023 (Figure 2 above). Note the development of grasses and leave litter since 2007, as well as the healthy pines obscuring the trunk of the gum tree. A positive change in vegetation.

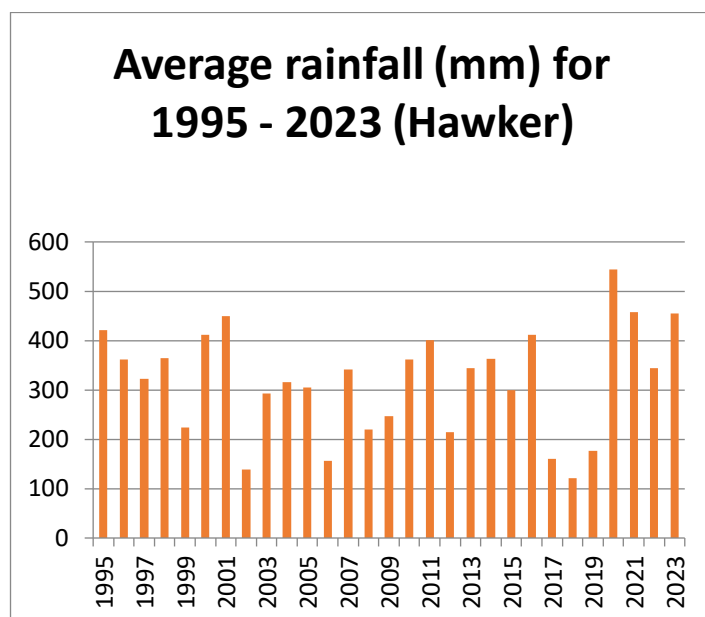
While it is time to redo the photo point analysis, the current state of the vegetation on the BCR is definitely showing that since 2020 rainfall levels have been good. Observations in 2023 provided a significant number of firsts:

- Sturt Desert pea flowering in the Northern Enclosure, along with other small plants and grasses not seen there before.
- The Bell Fruit trees near Mount Caernarvon were suckering and showing growth around the bases of many of the mature trees.
- Add 41 Yellow footed rock wallaby being sighted in Pristine Gorge and it felt like a wonderful year.

This year, despite the possibility rainfall levels will be down, has continued to show good vegetation responses across the BCR, even in the southern sections. In the words of some – ‘never seen it looking so good’. This has to be qualified by recent observations that some of our more vulnerable plants (for example, Silver Daisy and Bell Fruit trees) and young spinifex are being predated by herbivores.

Foliage around the bases of our Bell Fruit trees has been stripped as have all the flowers and new shoots on the silver daisy. A reminder to us all that the total carrying capacity of herbivores has to be monitored and kept to levels where the recovering vegetation has a chance,

especially if rainfall levels drop over the next few years.



Long term rainfall data for Hawker. This does not exactly match with the rainfall received on the BCR but provides a broad picture of rainfall in the area, in particular the 3 years of severe drought that occurred from 2017-2019.

Jeanine Baker

Below: Davy Hut and Campground, 2024

