

Editorial : Just Add Water

This has been a remarkable year. Damper Creek is lush. Plantings from the last few years, placed with forlorn hope into dry, unforgiving soil, are now flourishing. What a difference water makes! However, the transformation to Damper Creek pales in comparison to the transformation that water has brought to the desert sands of Central Australia.

I was privileged to be a member of a party which set off last month to trace the path of Cecil Madigan across the northern Simpson desert. Rain had fallen throughout Central Australia for months prior to our journey. The Cooper was flooded, Lake Eyre was filling and the Birdsville races were in doubt. All this water threatened to impede our progress but it also promised a wildflower explosion, quite possibly a once in a lifetime experience.

If there was one iconic plant I expected to see in the desert it was Sturt's Desert Pea. I was not disappointed as the first examples were spotted alongside the Stuart Highway not far from Coober Pedy. The brilliant red and black flowers did not disappoint as I repeatedly stopped the car and dropped to ground level to capture the beauty of this plant. Sadly my expectation of photographing this plant as it sprawled across the desert dunes was not to be realised as I saw no more examples after Oodnadatta.

The opal fields of Coober Pedy are usually identified with rock and dust than plants and flowers but while my companions were prospecting I noted some patches of colour which proved to be the poached-egg daisy,

Helipterum floribundum. This was the showpiece, but they were growing amongst many other plants including *Craspedia*. This story was to be repeated on innumerable occasions as we stopped the vehicles to capture what can only be described as a wildflower garden.

A flight over Lake Eyre revealed the sun glinting off innumerable patches of water covering the desert. The possibility of our route being impassable was real. At Old Andado Homestead, one of the most remote and desolate locations in the country we were greeted with a most remarkable sight. The homestead was on the far side of a large reed filled swamp. The homestead itself, occupied until very recently and completely intact including an operating telephone, was surrounded by new growth of green and wildflowers of white, yellow and magenta. It was hard to believe that this was one of the harshest areas in the country.

Near our first campsite was a small hill which we ascended early in the morning. There we were greeted with the sight of numerous *Ptilotus* (pussytail) plants. Their sight alone made the rocky scramble worthwhile. From this point we were into dune country.

Once into the sand dunes the flowers were prolific and I didn't know which way to point the camera. The remarkable purple of the *Swainsonias*, the whites and yellows of the daisy family, *Goodenias*, *Wahlenbergias*, *Helichrysums* and *Helipterums*, some tiny, some dominant, all set against the brilliant red of the Simpson Desert dunes. Will it happen again in my lifetime? If it does I will try to be there to see it.

SPRING FEVER AT DAMPER CREEK

Judy Borg

What a rich, wet, Spring we've had, with many visiting birds. On the lake this morning there were two pairs of visiting Chestnut Teal ducks and another pair that have evidently stayed: for there were eleven small, very lively, sooty babies on the pond, each with dark feathers splashed with white or amber spots. Today, too, as I walked back towards Tarella Bridge, a brilliantly coloured small bird alighted near my feet as I turned to gaze at the Pardalote cliff face, that is dotted near the base with small holes. Its colours of yellow, white, brown, black [through the eye] and amazing maroon were so bright and thick, it looked as if they'd just been painted on. Yes, it was a Pardalote: small, but so chunky, it was possible to believe it had dug one of the holes deep into the bank. It cared nothing for me, as it swallowed a large grub.

So much plentiful food this year – and many nesting Wattle birds cheerfully engaged in manoeuvres. Many calls from Butcher birds as well, while the Rainbow Lorikeets, as always, brighten up every scene.

October Meeting Guest Speaker

Dr Tim Fletcher's talk is titled:

"The Little Stringybark Creek Project "Testing of economic incentives for encouraging stormwater harvesting and retention at a catchment-wide scale; You can check his work on the website:

www.urbanstreams.unimelb.edu.au

Dr. Tim Fletcher last spoke to us in 1997 on the topic of raingardens. He is the Director of the Institute for Sustainable Water Resources at Monash University. His research focuses on the prediction of stormwater quality and

treatment, and its integration within the urban water cycle and waterway management.

September Working Bee

Our September Working Bee had 29 people signed on and at least 5 families & their children were represented from Yatama Court. It was good to see the children present.

The morning weather was perfect, and there was a buzz of enthusiasm in the air. Many piles of weeds (including masses of onion weed and buttercups were gathered including a general clean up of bottles, cans, a decomposing computer and a trolley.) A few more subscriptions were received too.

The October working bee will be held in the same area, behind Yatama Court.

Annual BBQ

Our usual end of year celebration will be held in the Alice St- Sunhill Rd area of the reserve, commencing at 12:00pm on Nov 28th. Family and friends are welcome, food will be provided but if you want to sit you will need to bring your own seat. We also ask that you bring your own cups, glasses plates and utensils to reduce the environmental impact of this celebration. If you wish to consume alcoholic beverages please bring your own. Soft drinks and cordial will be provided.

Invitation:

The Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve will be having Dr. Steve Sinclair as guest speaker at their AGM on Thursday 21 October 2010. His talk is entitled "Wildflowers in Waverley". "Dr. Steve" always gives an interesting talk FoDCR members are specifically invited.

Friends of Damper Creek Important dates to remember:

	October	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 27th - 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Sun Oct 31st 9-00am to 12-30pm	Behind Yatama Court
	November	
Meeting:	Wed 24th 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
Annual BBQ	Sun Nov 28th 12-00pm onwards	Alice St

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**FRIENDS OF
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.**

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

October 2010

