



# The Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Newsletter

Port Augusta Incorporated

May 2011

## President's Message

We are now well into the year and Friends have been busy in a number of areas. In March the ABC Gardening Australia Expo was held in Adelaide at Wayville Showgrounds and the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden staff and Friends mounted an impressive display. A number of Friends volunteered their time and travelled to Adelaide to help Garden staff talk to thousands of people and hand out promotional brochures and information on the Garden and on Port Augusta. They had many positive and favourable comments about the Garden and the city. The annual Laura Folk Fair, a large regional event, was also held recently and as usual plants produced at the Garden were sold there. Friends stalwart Shirley Mundy helped Garden staff with plant sales. Some Friends continue to volunteer their time propagating plants in the nursery at the Garden as well. Because of sickness and other commitments we currently have only four volunteer Garden Guides who do a wonderful job providing guided tours for visitors to the Garden, both individuals and those on bus tours. Bus tour groups visiting the Garden are increasing in number and there is an urgent need for additional guides. If you live locally and think you might be able to help please speak to Chris Nayda. Prospective guides are given comprehensive training and notes to help them when conducting tours. You may like to join a tour with our Guides and see what is involved. You do not have to be a plant expert; the training and notes will help you. Our Guides each have different interests and give slightly different tours. They meet interesting people from all over the world and find the job rewarding. Besides all this, tours raise funds for the Friends which are committed to improving the Garden.

Please help out if you can, and even if available only occasionally our overworked small group of guides will greatly appreciate your assistance. To those Guides on the sick list, get well soon - we need you!

Treasurer Geraldine Davis secured a small grant from BHP Billiton, enabling bird information signs in the two bird hides at the Garden to be upgraded and replaced. These feature the artwork of Peter Langdon, Friends committee member and acclaimed bird artist. Geraldine is currently seeking information on having this information and art work produced in brochure form as well.

The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Strategic Management Committee met for the first time in April. The Gardens former Reference Group ceased operating about two years ago with no explanation. The purpose of this new Committee is to provide direction to the development and management of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden to ensure that it becomes an internationally recognised centre of excellence for arid land plants and outback visitor experiences. Membership is made up of elected city council members, council staff, local business and tourism interests and the Friends. (I am the Friends representative). At the first meeting an AALBG general overview was presented, the vision plan for the Garden explained and an overview of the Café and Conference Room operations presented.

I presented an outline of the pivotal role the Friends have played in lobbying for and promoting the concept of the Garden from 1984 to the point where it was eventually taken up by the City Council, with Corporate funding (WMC Resources), State and Federal Government funding and Council funding jointly enabling development to proceed with Stage One eventually being opened to the public in 1996.

I highlighted the Friends role in voluntarily undertaking many roles at the Garden when there was only one and later two employees, our very significant fund raising for the Garden, plant collecting expeditions, establishment and operation of the Gardens nursery for 10 years and support in many other ways, both financial and practical, which continues to this day.

I am certain that had the Friends not persevered in keeping the concept alive through the 1980's the Garden would never have eventuated. My comments on the very significant role the Friends have played, especially in early years before the Garden even existed were intended to provide the majority of Council and Garden staff and community business representatives present most of whom were not living in Port Augusta in those earlier years, background on the Friends role and explain why we are so passionate about the Garden. This new Committee is the fourth "management" committee set up over the years for the Garden and I hope it operates successfully to the benefit of the Garden.

Our last Friends meeting featured a fascinating presentation on the amazing Seawater Greenhouse project established south of Port Augusta. Our next meeting will feature Jan Forrest speaking on butterflies. Jan is the recently retired Curator of Collections at the South Australian Museum and has a wealth of knowledge on natural history, but butterflies are a particular passion.

**Cheers for now! I look forward to catching up with some of you at our next meeting on May 28th.**

**John Zwar, President.**

**Singing Honeyeater**  
(*Lichenostomus virescens*) 17-22 cm



**White-browed Babbler**  
(*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) 20 cm



**Nankeen Kestrel**  
(*Falco cenchroides*) 31-35 cm



**Fairy-wren**  
(*Malurus sp.*) 12-15 cm



# A Trip to the Gammon Ranges

I went specifically to see the rare *Acacia araneosa* (Spider Wattle, Balcanoona Wattle) and see if they have been regenerating after the rains.

The trees are restricted to a small area from Nudlamutana Well to near Balcanoona along the range to Arkaroola; endemic to North Flinders Ranges (Rosemary Pedler. Plants of Northern Flinders Ranges)

The area has had significant rain over the last two years with the last being 5 inches earlier this year when some roads were washed away. In the drought preceding this, Marg Sprigg from Arkroola said the Spider Wattle had been starting to retreat to a smaller area.

After a very bumpy 4 wheel drive along a ridge top I was very pleased to see many seedlings about one metre high growing near the mature trees which were about 4-8 metres high. It is a very graceful small tree with pendulous phyllodes up to 60cm long and very slender. Overall it has a wispy and cobwebby appearance, hence its name. Many of the trees were flowering. The only other tree nearby was *Eucalyptus gillii* (Curly Mallee) with an understory of chenopods, scaevola and grasses so they looked lovely on the hillsides.

The Spider Wattle is now classified as vulnerable. There are a few specimens in the AALBG with a couple flowering now.

**Chris Nayda**

Unless where noted, all photos Chris Nayda

## Next Meeting

Saturday 28th May at 1pm at the herbarium/  
meeting room at the Visitors centre AALBG.

**Guest Speaker is Jan Forrest OAM leading authority on Butterflies, Honorary Research Associate, Terrestrial Invertebrates.**

Jan is recently retired from Adelaide Museum where she worked with butterflies for many years.

In a season that has provided thousands of butterflies and other creatures, it will be an excellent opportunity to discover which ones are native, whether they are harmful, how they improve our gardens and what plants are the ones they love.

### DATES TO PUT IN DIARY

Guided tours by our knowledgeable guides are conducted every weekday morning at 10am  
Tours last for approximately one and a half hours and you can book at AALBG by ringing (08) 8641 9116.  
Group tours can also be booked for other times.

Wattle Walk tours will be held every Sunday at 1pm during August and September 2011.



Spider Wattle (*Acacia araneosa*) on ridge-top early evening at Arkaroola - Photo Heather Adams



Spider Wattle (*Acacia araneosa*)



Stand of *Eucalyptus gillii* Curly Mallee



Spider Wattle (*Acacia araneosa*)

# Melaleuca faucicola (formerly Callistemon pauciflorus)



Found in Centre Australia around Serpentine Gorge in the McDonnell Ranges. *M. faucicola* is a small tree with slightly pendulous limbs growing to about 4m x 3m with red flower spikes 2-4cm long and 2cm wide.

This year at the AALBG, unusually one of the trees had cream flowers on one limb and red flowers on the others. (see photo) Normally these trees are not that conspicuous because they only have a few flowers but this year they were a picture, completely covered in flowers.

Chris Nayda / photos Chris Nayda

## Lysiana exocarpus (Harlequin Mistletoe)

*Lysiana exocarpus* is very prolific this season and looks very pretty with its red flowers tipped with green. Photo shows it growing at the AALBG. It is widely spread in inland regions of all mainland states. If the host plant is healthy it can cope with the mistletoe but if the tree is under stress and has much mistletoe attached to it, it may perish. Some say it is the lack of possums in some areas which have made it more prolific as they eat the seed.

Chris Nayda



## Desert Detective Day

Desert Detective Day was held at AALBG on Easter Sunday 24th April as a day out for Families during the school holidays. It was great to see many families walking around the Garden being detectives for a day looking for clues to find out where Clarissa the Crested Pigeon's babies, Chris and Cristina had gone.

Chris Nayda

Right: Ronda Hall giving on propagation demonstration



# A Biological Survey Of The AALBG (continued from previous newsletter)

In the past the survey areas native flora and fauna had been degraded by stock grazing, wood cutting, sand mining, rubbish dumping, (two areas were municipal dumps), off road vehicles, hunting and recreational pursuits.

In 1986 a rabbit and stock proof fence was built around the site, some pest and weed control was done and large amounts of rubbish removed. This was done by volunteers and work groups. The denial of easy access by the general public reduced the impact of rubbish dumping and off road vehicles.

After the first permanent workers were employed the rabbits were all but eliminated, boxthorns eradicated, Buffel grass and other weeds controlled. Foxes and cats have been periodically controlled, but impossible to eradicate due to the low boundary fence.

All this work has resulted in a big improvement in the quantity and quality of the native flora and fauna. For this reason it is necessary to monitor progress of the recovery by constant observation and biological surveys.

Since the establishment of the botanic garden there has been the introduction of native plant species from other unrelated arid areas and some will undoubtedly spread naturally further into the site. This will change the natural flora of the area and it would be worth while to monitor this as time goes by.

The increased flora will result in an increase of the fauna and the area would become a refuge for the local animals during hard times, such as droughts, or from nearby over grazing or the expansion of local city developments.

It is recommended that a suitable vermin proof fence, able to exclude pests such as foxes and cats, be erected around the site to remove the pressure on the native fauna.

This would make it possible to reintroduce animals that would have existed in the area in the past such as:

- Echidnas
- Dunnarts
- Numbats
- Bandicoots
- Bilbys
- Possums
- Bettongs
- Stick-nest rats
- Hopping mice
- Native rats and
- Reptile species.

This would add a broader dimension to the garden and give the public more interesting attractions to see and learn about.

**Bernhard Haase, Former Head gardener, AALBG  
Dip.of Hort., Dip.of Cons.**



Yellow faced whip snake  
(*Demansia psammophis cuprieiceps*)



Beaded Gecko (*Diplodactylus damaeus*)



Bynoe's Gecko (*Heteronotia binoei*)



Southern Sandslider (*Lerista labialis*)



Bolami's Mouse (*Pseudomys bolami*)

## Bird Watching Programme

Sunday 19th June 2011	Alligator Gorge	Meet at Wilmington Pub 8am
Sunday 3rd July 2011	Albury Creek	Meet at Stirling North Roadhouse at 8am
Sunday 14th August 2011	Telowie Gorge	Meet Gorge car park 8am

Phone: Peter 8642 5723 / Greg 8648 6882 / Shirley 8642 4013

## Contacts

**President:** John Zwar Phone Home: (08) 8338 6658 Work: (08) 8372 6876 Email: jzwar@bigpond.com

**Treasurer:** Geraldine Davis Phone: (08) 8648 6399 Mobile: 0418 447 020 Email: glgadavis@bigpond.com

**Secretary/Editor:** Christine Nayda Phone: (08) 8642 4684 Mobile: 0434 717 382 Email: b.nayda@bigpond.com

PO Box 2040, Port Augusta, South Australia 5700

Issued May 2011 by Friends of Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc. Port Augusta