



Report of Range Rover Discovery Club's Cactus cull at Wirrealpa

August 2022

Ralph Abbot

Distribution:

1. Shaune and Samantha Standley, Wirrealpa
2. Range Rover Discovery Club
3. Peter Allmand
4. Author - Ralph Abbot
5. Blinman Progress Association

All participants will be sent a copy, either a posted hard copy (as listed above), or emailed a soft copy.

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Wirrealpa

Wirrealpa is a property on the eastern edge of the Flinders Ranges, 35 km east of Blinman. Wirrealpa is now managed by Shaune and Sam Standley who have just taken over from Warren and Barbara Fargher.

Our Hosts

Shaune and Sam Standley are the hosts who made us welcome.

We stayed in caravans and the Shearers Quarters. In the bedroom building each room had multiple single beds. There were two flushing toilets attached. In a separate building was a kitchen and common room. There was a separate modern ablutions block with a donkey boiler attached. That had to be fired up well before showers were to be taken.

The team

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Friday 19 August

Peter, John and Ron arrived on Friday and found that the Wirrealpa property had been leased by the Fargher family to the Stoney family in Mansfield Victoria who had installed Shaune and Sam Standley as managers. Shaune welcomed the early arrivals and introduced them to two dogs, Jemma and Oki, two lovely kelpies.



Saturday 20 August

Most of the rest arrived, viz., Geoff and Jo, David and Caroline, Louise and Andrew and Ralph Abbot all arrived Saturday. Kingsley and Bronwyn were to arrive another day.

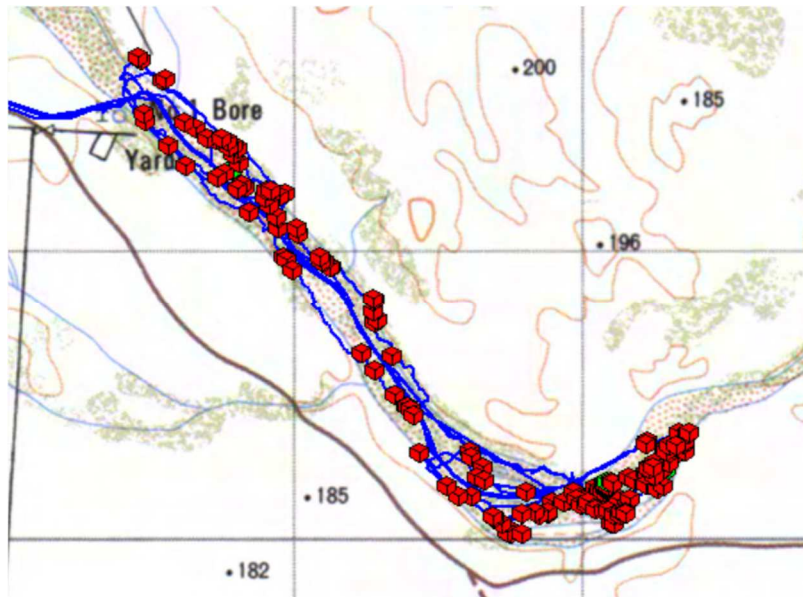
Sunday 21st August

We set out to collect cactus pads infected with cochineal from the area on Wirrealpa Creek south of Wirrealpa homestead as shown alongside. Infected rope cacti and prickly pear pads were both collected. Different colours are not used on this map above to show the separate species.

We then moved to past Bore 1 to continue on from where we finished last year.

The group split into two teams, Red and Blue. Both teams drove their vehicles 500 m forward. Then one team would search back for 500 m on one side of the creek and return to the cars on the other side of the creek. The other team would search forward 500 m and return, covering both sides of the creek. The cars would then move forward 1000 m and the search method continued. That same 500 m search procedure, move cars forward 1000 m, was used every day where applicable.

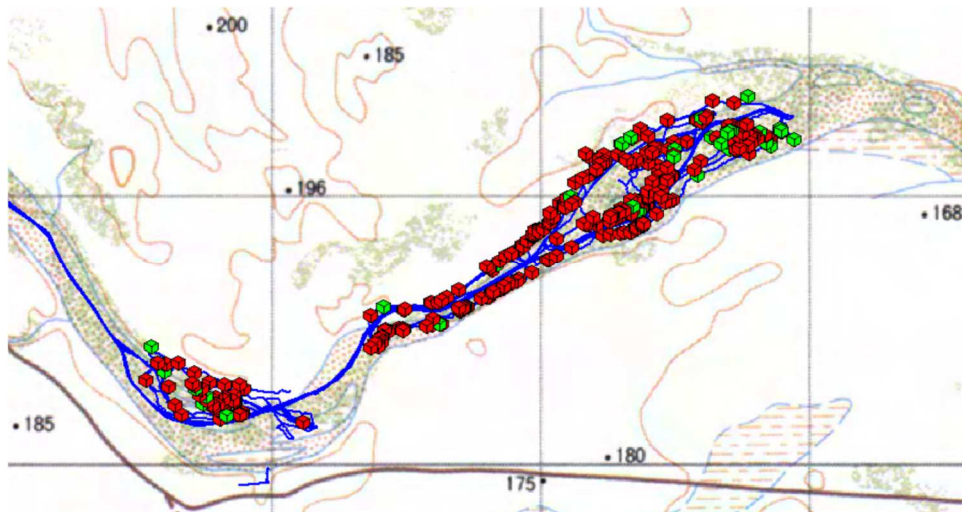
Below is a plot of Sunday's search past Bore 1. The red markers are for prickly pear while the green markers are for Devils rope. Some plants were already infected with cochineal and were not seeded. The waypoints from Louise and Andrew and Ralph were lost and have not been plotted. The numbers from Louise and Andrew and Ralph in their notebooks have been included in the tally.



Bronwyn and Kingsley arrived latish Sunday afternoon as we returned from the creek.

Monday 22nd August

With a 9 am start we headed out past Bore 1 and continued from where we finished Sunday. A small area was searched in Sunday's area as time had not permitted that part to be searched then. Later Kingsley's data was lost. His count in the book was included. In 13 years we have never lost data before. This year several lots have disappeared. A cold change came in late Monday. Andrew started a very small fire to heat coffee (?) at each lunch time. Did he rub sticks together?

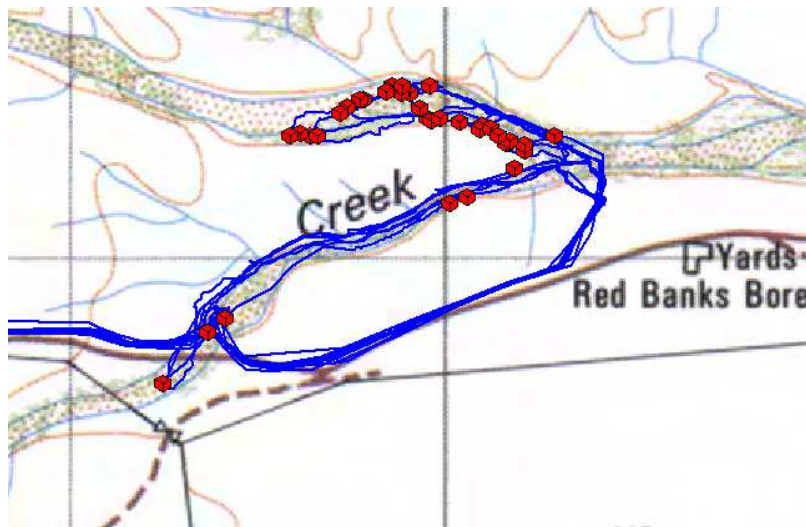


Tuesday 23rd August

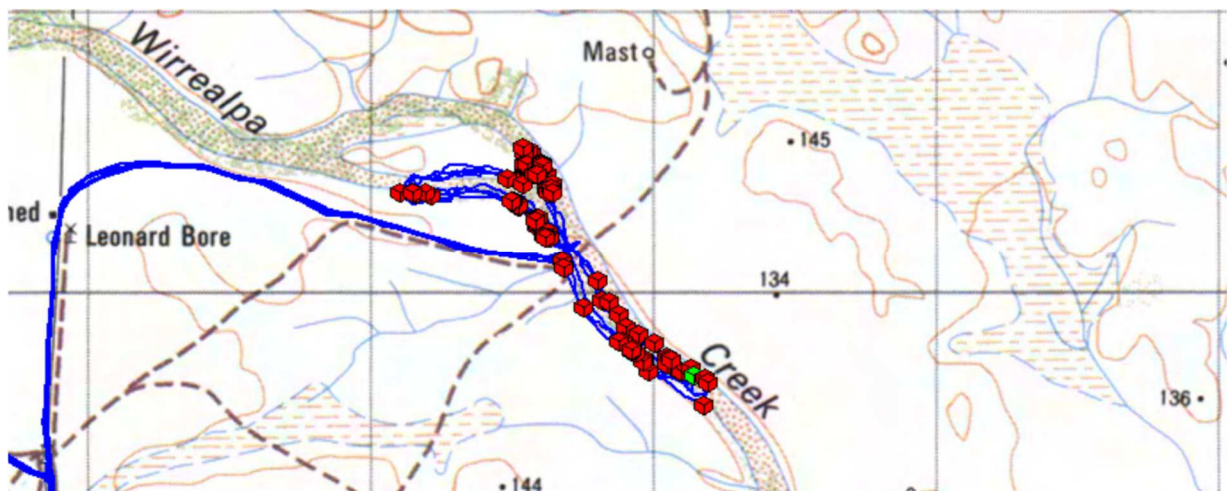
It was a cold morning when we woke Tuesday. We did some exploration on Tuesday. Since there is 65 km from Wirrealpa Homestead to Lake Frome we wish to know how far the cactus is present and where to access the creek with vehicles. The maps show a number of possible access points to the creeks. Refer to later in this document.

We went to the junction of Wirrealpa and Balcoracana Creeks to see if both had cactus. If cactus is in Wilcoracana Creek it means that creek will have to be searched too, nearly doubling the task. A few cacti were found in Wilcoracana Creek but they may have been spread by birds from the nearby Wirrealpa Creek that had plenty of cacti. Balcoracana Creek will have to be searched further upstream from the junction to see how far the cacti go.

Junction of Wirrealpa (upper) and Balcoracana (lower) Creeks. Downstream is eastward.



On the return from the junction of the Wirrealpa and Balcoracana Creeks access to Wirrealpa Creek was gained near Leonard Bore. There is quite a rocky section upstream from this crossing. That will prevent vehicle access upstream along the creek but the track does pass close to Wirrealpa Creek close to Leonard Bore, as shown below. Access to the creek upstream from the rocks may be possible there. From Bore 1 it is about 11 km to near Leonard Bore where we might get access, about 7 km from where we reached searching past Bore 1 on Monday. There are no other creek crossings shown in that region.



The photo below thanks to Louise. Shows the rocky creek bed upstream of the Black Oak Well track



On Tuesday night Geoff and Jo conducted a quiz out of the Saturday Advertiser. Louise and Andrew scored 26 out of 40. Brilliant score.

Wednesday 24th August

On Wednesday we went for a drive to the newly opened Ferguson Gorge in Moolooloo station. We first stopped in Blinman for coffee and cake then drove to Angorichina Village so some could get fuel. Then drove up the Glass Gorge Rd to Moolooloo Station. We registered there and collected a key for Ferguson Gorge. There was no charge for us cactus volunteers.

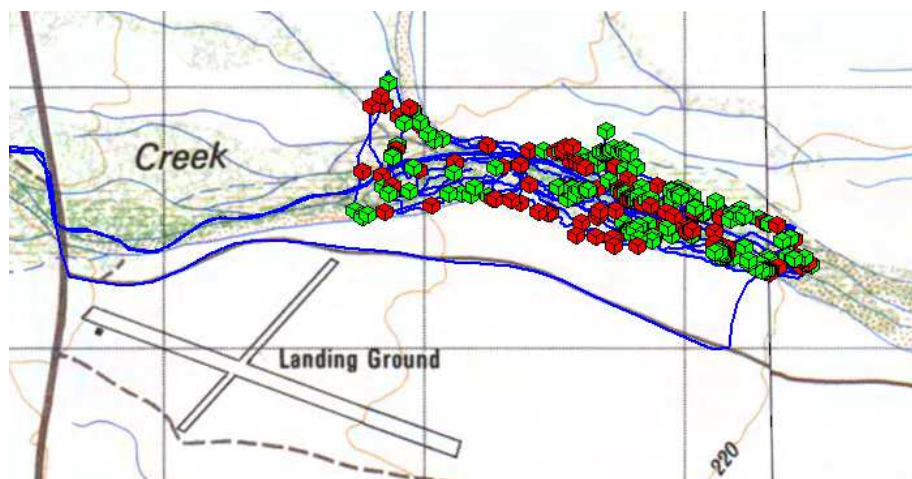
The track in Moolooloo is part of the Artimore PAR which goes through to the Narrina Rd. After exiting Hannigan Gap there is an old rusty vehicle alongside the track. Turn right there for Artimore PAR, or go straight on for Ferguson Gorge. When some of us waited just after the rusty vehicle Peter was having trouble in Hannigan Gap. In *a momentary lapse of reason* Peter ran over a sharp rock and blew both right side tyres. Fortunately Dave, who was behind Peter, was able to lend Peter a second spare so after 40 minutes Peter was able to move on and catch up to the rest, all patiently waiting by the Ferguson Gorge gate. Peters car, without a spare tyre, was left by the gate and Peter jumped in and got a lift. The Ferguson Gorge has some hills and goes for about 1.6 km into the hills. It is a pleasant walk.

We eventually made our way back and dined at Blinman hotel that night.



Thursday 25th August

Ron, John, Louise and Andrew left Thursday morning to return home to Adelaide. Those remaining searched in Wirrealpa Creek upstream from the vehicle access track that Warren put through for us the previous year. (Marked by two tyres on the Bore 1 track). Last year we searched downstream from that access track. Peter wasn't game to risk his car with no spare tyre so travelled with Ralph in supreme Landcruiser comfort!



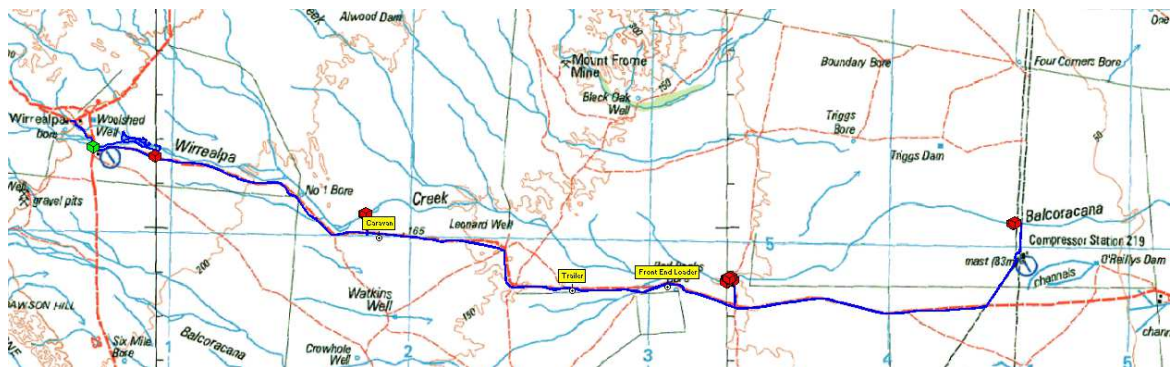
Friday 26th August

Geoff, Jo and Peter left Friday morning. Peter had one very dodgy plugged tyre on his Range Rover and no spare. His dodgy tyre had to be pumped up every 40 k to Hawker where he purchased two new tyres. But he kept the very dodgy one as a spare. And finally got home!

The depleted team did further exploration to check cacti presence at more eastern crossings. We started with seeing whether the access gate past No 1 Bore had a track to the creek. It didn't but we walked to the creek and thought that an access track could be made. As shown below, with both rope cacti and prickly pear were found that were probably missed on Monday. We have searched nearly 1000 m past that access point along the creek to 4 km from Bore 1. If there is no track made then we will come in via Bore 1. It is 7 km further to near Leonard Bore where we might get creek access.



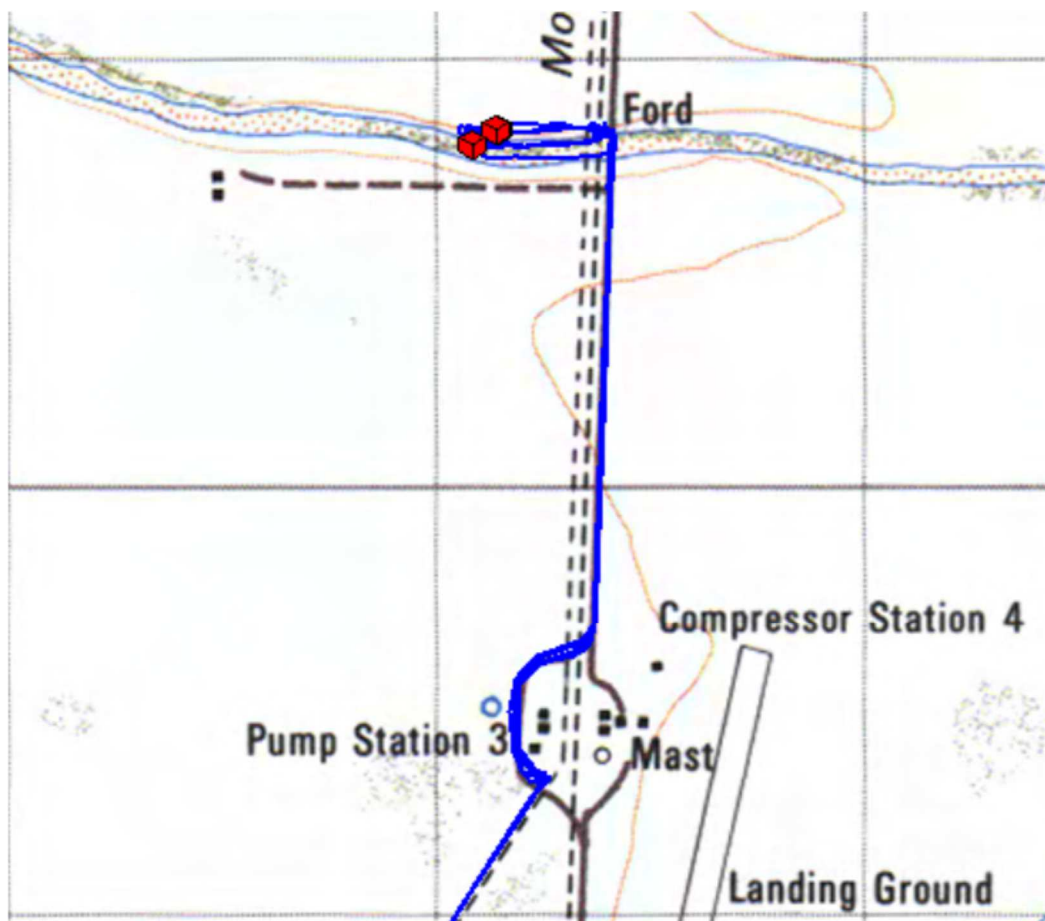
We continued eastward checking creek crossings and cacti presence. On the map below we have waypoint marked the caravan, and east of Leonard Well, the trailer and the front end loader. The Pipeline Road is the most easterly point we reached and is near the eastern end of the map where our blue track finishes. No Devils Rope was seen east of Leonard Well.



Emu well track crossing.



Pipeline track crossing



Saturday 27th August

Those left packed up and drove home.

Tabulated Results

Date	Wheel Cactus	Prickly Pear	Devil's Rope	Totals/Comments
Saturday 20 August	NA	NA	NA	Arrive
Sunday 21 August	0	275	14	
Monday 22 August	0	306	48	
Tuesday 23 August	0	145	2	
Wednesday 24 August	NA	NA	NA	Drive and Dinner
Thursday 25 August	0	120	280	
Friday 26 August	0	23	2	
Saturday 27 August	NA	NA	NA	Depart
	0	869	346	1215

Not all waypoints represent treated plants. Sometimes we had run out of cochineal. Cochineal will spread a small distance (10 m) so it is not necessary to seed all plants. But mostly all plants were treated whilst we had cochineal.

Access to creeks

Access by vehicles to the creeks depends on available access points. Various tracks and roads etc. cross the Wirrealpa Creek between Narrina Rd and where it joins and becomes Balcoracana Creek then further downstream to Lake Frome. Distances are given in UTM eastings in whole metres. The distances between crossings have been rounded up to partly compensate for the fact that they ignore any northerly meanderings of the creeks. These meanderings are most severe upstream between Fountain Spring and Wirrealpa Rd. Although the distance is shown as 4.8 km it is more like 8 km with significant northings. Below Fountain Spring to Wirrealpa Rd.



Upstream Access:

Name	Easting (m)	Distance to next crossing (km)
Narrina Road	289915E	0
Blinman - Wirrealpa Road	292885E	3.0
Fountain Spring track	297636E	4.8
Fence track	299461E	1.9
Fence (no sign of track)	302586E	3.2
Wirrealpa Station Bore track	305571E	3.0
Martin Wells Road	306743E	1.2

Downstream access:

Name	Easting (m)	Distance to next crossing (km)
Wirrealpa Station House Wirrealpa Ck.	305651E	0
Martins Well Road	306743E	1.1
Bulldozed track by Warren	309321E	2.6
No1 Bore	315185E	5.9
Gate	318138E	3.0
Black Oak Well track near Leonard Bore	325800E	7.7
Red Banks Bore (junction of Wirrealpa Ck and Balcoracana Ck) From here eastward the combined creeks are called Balcoracana Ck.	330191E	4.4
Emu Well track	333511E	3.3
Pipeline Road	345500E	12.0
O'Reillys Dam Track	349179E	3.7
Wyambana Outstation track	356215E	7.1
Yunta – Arkaroola Road	363243E	7.1
Perseverance Dam crossing track	365307E	2.1
Balcoracana Creek mouth at Lake Frome	366716E	1.4

The distance east of Balcoracana Creek mouth at Lake Frome from the Wirrealpa Station House is $(366716 - 305651 = 61,065 \text{ m})$ which is 61 km and 65 m). That is approximately correct (but is mathematically exact), as the creeks do not flow exactly east. The eastings ignore the meandering of the creeks.

Thanks

Thanks everyone for your time and effort. We are making a difference in the Flinders Ranges.