



Willow Springs Station, 11th – 13th June Long Weekend 2011

Saturday, 11th June



We met in the car park in Tarlee. Some of us were early, some had to return home to check the stove was off!! Chris and Julie went up the day before. In 6 vehicles, we left soon after 7am. Quenton, Stephen, Marie, Darryl & Joan and Max & Lyn. Bronte and Norma were tail-end Charlie with a load of wood in the back ready for the fire.

The trip was lead by Quenton, who was the only one who had been to Skytrek

before, a favourite.

We passed Auburn at 8:30, Clare at 8:45 and stopped at Spalding at 9:15. It was overcast and a chilly 13 degrees.

We stopped again at Orroroo between 10:30-11:00, some stopping at the shops and having morning tea at the Big Gum Tree just north of town. Quenton was very helpful with photos for the tourists. Stephen missed the turn but after a bit of a drive out of town, got there eventually.

We passed Carrinto at 11:20 and a back way into the Bendlby and Quenton and Marie think that it would be fun for a future trip!

Arriving at Hawker around 12:20, most went off to the Mobil to refuel. Stephen headed to the BP since he didn't have a company fuel card for Mobil and after they very ungraciously told him they couldn't use his cards. At the BP everything was on but no one was home!. Eventually he found and worked out how to use the only manual pump in town at the Shell servo.

Lunch was at the Railway Station park at Hawker. At 1:30 we arrived at Wilpena Pound, got our tickets for the Old Wilpena Station and did a bit of shopping. At the old station, it was good to stretch our legs walking around checking out the homestead, the blacksmith's, the store, the cemetery and the ingenious stables. Lots of reading about the history of the station and how life was back then. Signs were everywhere like those in the toilet detailing the life you could see in there, not just a redback on the seat!! There were plenty of emus and kangaroos that now call it home.

We arrived at the Willow Creek Station camp site (Grasswren) at about 4pm. Set among rolling hills by the creek. It was a quick hello to Chris and Julie then quickly setting up so we could go and see the sunset.



At 4:30 we went to the Stokes Hill Lookout and setup nibbles next to a model of Wilpena Pound with the real thing clearly in sight. It was cold as a ... you can fill in the blank. It might have been 10 degrees but with the chilling wind felt like less than zero. Nibbles were great and we where

soon joined by a tour group and were able to listen in and see a fine sunset.

Back to the camp for dinner, Bronte and Max soon had the fire going. It was very appreciated. The wood pile was maybe a little close and probably got as warm as we did. After an overcast day there was not a cloud in the sky until late in the night. We sat around the campfire well into the night looking forward to the well renowned Skytrek the next day!



[Stephen]



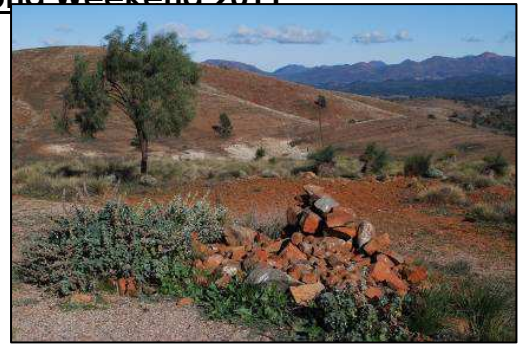
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Sunday 12th June

Or when is a kookaburra not a kookaburra?

Day 2 of our Willow Springs trip dawned COLD but promising. The mood was buoyant as we prepared for a day on Skytrek. With top rate directions and points plotted clearly on the map we obviously weren't going to get lost. (Also told to look out for "The Phantom" but more on that later)

I opted to drive early knowing there was a harder spot later on (yes, chicken). According to Chris I drive just a little too close to the left -- but I can't avoid the holes AND the bushes. But two heads are better than one and we are learning together how to get the best out of Paj and lessen those scratches!!



We give up after a while trying to tick off the numbered highlights against the speedo and just enjoy beautiful creek beds and rich red cliffs. The undergrowth is thick and the vegetation fresh from some good rains in the past year. We stop at Moxons hut for morning tea but mindful of a full day we soon press on.

The country opens out and the track winds gently through a bushy plain with just the right level of interest driving-wise for me. (No scary bits) Quentin gets his exercise jumping in and out doing the gates as Deb is home doing "her report".



The terrain gets a little harder before the lunch stop in Murrays Gully so Chris takes the wheel. That leaves me free to cover my eyes with both hands when the road disappears before us.



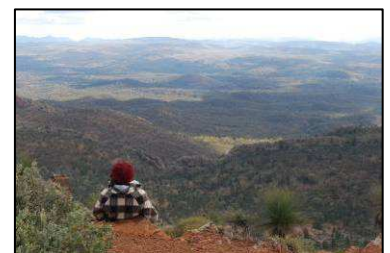
The lunch stop is short and the dodgy dunny feels more risky than the track. There's a feeling that the whole pot could disappear down the hole at any minute.

Onwards and upwards now towards Mt Carnaevon. Ahead of us is a truck with kayaks on board - do they know something we don't? Eventually at the 920m peak we stop for pictures – Clarentyne indulged in a spot of planking!!



Its windy up here and soooooo cold! But if you climb down behind the peak you are sheltered from the wind. Grass trees abound and the landscape is spectacular. I could have stayed there for ages but Quentin cracks the whip

The day is passing quickly and a visit to Skull Rock must be fitted in especially if we are to catch up with "The Phantom".





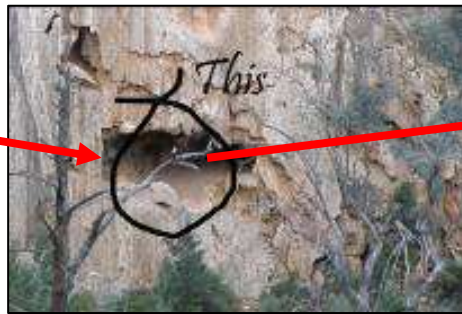
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So downwards we go! Off to see the home of the “Ghost who walks”. The Skull Rock carpark is just a little tight and with a large deep mud pit in the middle just begging to mess up Q’s car. A short walk (it could have been longer if everyone had followed me who didn’t spot two large rock arrows on the ground) to a viewing point for a spectacular rock formation.



In our search for “The Phantom” there were lots to be seen including the Kookaburra in the old oak tree!! Wondering why it wasn’t moving, Julie solved our dilemma !! Check out the zoom-in and I also swear that’s a rocky wallaby in the shadows within the skull rock caves!!

So, ***Kookaburra: a large woodland kingfisher that lives in Australia and New Guinea.***



Is not a Kookaburra but ...

Late in the day we all stumble back into camp and with the cold descending quickly, stoke up a decent fire. It was a full day and there are a few rather shattered looks in camp.

[Julie & Chris]

Monday, 13th June



Had a very lazy morning sleep in, helped others pack up and left the camp site at 10.45 am while Daryl and Joan were lucky enough to stay 2 more nights at this majestic site. Many took photos of the Eagle Wing Sculpture at the entrance to Willow Springs Station.



Didn’t travel very far on the black top when the need to capture one final photo of this area on Huck’s Hill lookout. We were reminded of the golden rule “*last vehicle to arrive at the start of the trip, must do a trip report*”, so today was our day to contribute.



Took a leisurely ride through Hawker and stopped at Quorn playground for either lunch or morning tea (depending on our hunger needs). Passed a few old trucks – Morris commercial and a Comer.



Our next stop was at Stonehut to purchase their famous goodies but most were sold out over the long weekend. The premises have now included several huts for accommodation. We continued on our progressive food binge to Laura for a Golden North Ice Cream – so many flavours, it was hard to choose just one, so we had 5. Noticed a fairly new roundabout at Gladstone but this town must have forgotten about the Monday holiday as the 25 km flashing lights were operating past the school which we had to abide to.



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Stopped at the Driver Reviver in Clare at 4.50 pm for a cuppa and the offer of jam and cream, but everyone was way too full. This was our last chat and farewells before heading home on our separate ways.

We took a millage from Willow Springs to home which was 413 kms just out of curiosity.

A special thank you to Quenton for his organisation of this very cold but really enjoyable, long weekend. Don't think I will ever forget just how cold Stokes Hill Lookout was at sunset!!!

[Lyn]
