



# Desert Sky News

"It's All About The Experience – Yours and Ours "



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**W**idespread Outback rain over the past few weeks caused the closure of many roads and tracks. A number of the roads, particularly in the Flinders Ranges have re-opened and our first trip for the year to that area was rescheduled by a couple of weeks.

The Channel Country is one of the places which received record rainfalls and graziers there are celebrating because it will set them up for another bumper season.

The largest report was 519mm at Kamanan Downs Station to the west of Bedourie, and Geoff Morton from Roseberth Station just east of Birdsville says the flood passing his property is the fourth in five years, and will make it an exceptional year.



"We were already having a pretty good year, but this will change a good year into an exceptional year - you couldn't get better. "In the mornings when it is quiet if you listen closely enough, you can hear the cattle getting fat!"

In other news:

Our next trip is to The **Gawler Ranges** on the 30th of this month. It will follow some of the former bus itinerary, but with interesting additions including "Kath's Castle" on Mt Ive Station and the "Organ Pipes" on Paney Station.

There are 2 seats available on our "alternative" **Birdsville** itinerary which travels up the Birdsville Track, then via the Birdsville Development Road through Betoota to Windorah, Bourke, Quilpie, Toompine, and Thargomindah. We arrive in Broken Hill through Cobar.

## Terowie on Anzac Day

**T**he Terowie Citizens' Association Inc. has written to ask if we would mention a special event planned in Terowie on Anzac Day.



A World War 1 Soldier's photographic collection will be officially opened at the Pioneer Gallery, followed by lunch at the Institute Supper Room.

The photographic collection, which has been held by the Terowie Citizens' Association Inc. since 1987 has been faithfully restored and catalogued with financial assistance from Department of Veteran's Affairs "Saluting Australia Programme" and the dedication of friends and members of The Terowie Citizens' Association Inc.

If you would like to attend this event, let me know and I will see if I can arrange transport.

Just on another note— sadly the Terowie Hotel - (like a number of rural pubs) has now closed, adding further to the decline of this historic town.



## Cooper Creek

**J**ulie at the Cooper Creek Homestay Innamincka sent a newsletter (February) in which she describes an abundance of bird and animal life following rains in January. It is interesting that one visitor who is normally seen in summer - the bush fly - is absent!!

If you are able to access the internet, The Cooper Creek Homestay has a great new website at :

<http://www.coopercreekhomestay.com>

## Birdsville News

**A** new pontoon has been opened on the shore of the Birdsville Billabong.

The aim of the project was to open up the billabong to locals and visitors alike. This will allow people to enjoy non-powered boating activities and to have organised water events as it is a body of water that offers so much now it is accessible.

Examples could include the world's desert swimming marathon or an inland surf boatrace.



The Billabong is already used extensively by local residents and the annual raft race on New Years day is a key feature on the local calendar.

It is also another attraction for visitors to the desert to bring their surf skis and other aquatic equipment to relax. There is also the possibility of forming a Diamantina Lifesaving Club and talk of a relationship with the Royal Lifesaving Association or aligning with a Queensland surf club.

The Birdsville pontoon was officially opened in a brief ceremony on Sunday 19th February.

The Birdsville Working Museum officially closed after 19 years on 20th September 2011.

At that time ABC Rural interviewed owner John Menzies about the museum and some of the items in it—including the cardboard gramophone.

John said he and Judy would certainly miss not doing the Shows at the museum.

John also gave an account of his life as a stockman, starting at Bourke and later moving to Camooweal and many Queensland Stations.



## Betoota—South West Queensland

In 2007 we set up a website “Friends of Betoota” and as the heading on the home page suggests, it is a fun site with affection for a south west Queensland Town.



One of the questions was always the meaning of the name, and despite research and a number of suggestions, no definite interpretation was found.

Finally through a posting on the website message board, the mystery has been solved! I have the permission of Demmi to publish his following comments:

"Pituri is the Karuwali name for Bedouri and it is a plant that heals the stings of wasps and scorpions etc.

Betoota is yet another mispronounced word for Pitootha, which means a place to spear fish. I think there is a big waterhole there still.

Some of the mob went to Keeroongooloo Station and I was told of the legends of 3 Mile Water hole .....

Long ago I grew up in Cunnamulla and Eulo and Yowah and other places and I did not forget my adopted Aboriginal languages of Kunja and Gungari and Guwa.

All the Elders have now gone and it is sad.

I know Mundagudda Dreaming , Emu and Kangaroo and others from the Elders of Yumba and people like Uncle Herb Wharton and Fred McKellar, and Auntie Jessie Shillingsworth.

My Father knew the Polish fellow who ran the Betoota Hotel and as he spoke Polish fluently, was a great friend of his.

I miss the heart of the desert, my red sandy home a lot as it has been too long since I was there...."

I sincerely thank Demmi for his interesting information

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## Desert Parks update

- Local flooding has occurred at Innamincka and the causeway is presently closed.
- The Cooper Creek crossing on the Birdsville Track is open, and the ferry decommissioned.
- Clayton Station on the Birdsville Track received 250mm rain early March.
- Water in Lake Eyre South is 2metres and rising (nearly full).

## Nissan Patrol 50th Anniversary Event



The event is to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the first Nissan Patrol to cross the Simpson Desert, and Nissan are looking to host this event over a two week period from 15th to 29th July 2012.

Until 1962, no vehicle had ever

crossed the Simpson

Desert until Reginald Sprigg and his family made the crossing in their G60 Nissan Patrol.

To celebrate and mark this enormous feat, Nissan wish to re-enact the commemorative crossing with a small team over the Simpson Desert arriving into Birdsville where invited Nissan 4WD customers will be waiting to be part of a celebration event at the Birdsville Racecourse.

The commemorative Re-enactment Crossing will be led by Pat Callinan and supported by Reginald Sprigg's children, Doug and Marg, Pat Callinan will film a documentary of this re-enactment on behalf of Nissan.

Camping points across the Simpson Desert include Colson Tk, Attora Knolls, Eyre Creek By-Pass, and Big Red concluding in Birdsville.

The team will consist of approximately 9 vehicles, carrying 16 people including media, catering, technical and equipment support vehicles.

A celebration event will be held at the Birdsville Racecourse on 21st July to welcome the team into Birdsville. It is expected around 600 people will attend this event.



## Upcoming Itineraries 2012 !!



**The Gawler Ranges**  
(5 days)  
\$1575 pp

**Friday March 30**

Port Wakefield, Port Germein, Port Augusta, Iron Knob, Corunna, Siam, Nonning, Mt Ive, Lake Gairdner, Yardea, Hiltaba, Paney Station, The Organ Pipes, Pildappa Rock, Tcharkuldu Hill, Minnipa, Wudinna, Kimba, Wilmington, Melrose, Gladstone, The Clare Valley.



**Lake Eyre**  
(3 days)  
\$995 pp  
Includes Plane flight!

**Wednesday April 11**

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, One and a half hour plane flight over Lake Eyre, Farina Ruins, Ochre Cliffs, Hawker, Orroroo, Terowie, Burra.



**Back O' Bourke**

**Saturday April 21 (9 days) - \$3300 pp**

Broken Hill, Mutawintji National Park, White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Tilpa, Louth, Bourke (Accommodation Bourke Riverside Motel), Lightning Ridge, Gilgandra, Cobar, Balranald, Murrayville, Pinnaroo



**The Painted Desert**  
(9 days)  
\$3295 pp

**Saturday May 5**

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, William Creek, Coober Pedy, The Breakaways, Painted Desert, Woomera, Roxby Downs, Andamooka, Port Augusta, Arid Lands Botanical Gardens, Horrocks' Pass to The Flinders Ranges, Orroroo and Burra.



**Mungo National Park**  
(5 days)  
\$1525 pp

**Saturday May 19**

The Riverland, Wentworth, Old Zanci Station, Mungo Woolshed, Walls of China, "Grand Canyon", Perry Sandhills, Paddle Steamer through Lock 11 Mildura, Red Cliffs, Hattah Kulykne National Park, Lake Victoria, Rufus River



**Coongie Lakes**  
(7 days)  
\$2500 pp

**Sunday June 3****Saturday June 16**

Old Strzelecki Track, Innamincka, Coongie Lakes, Camp LXV, Cameron Corner, Sturt NP, Tibooburra, Broken Hill, Loch Lilly and Quandong Stations, Burra.



**Birdsville & Innamincka**  
(9 days)  
\$3300 pp

**Saturday July 14**

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, Mungerannie, Birdsville, Innamincka, Cameron Corner, Sturt National Park, Tibooburra, Broken Hill, Old Pastoral Route to Burra, Adelaide.



**Birdsville & Windorah**  
(7 days)  
\$3300 pp

**Friday August 3**

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, Mungerannie, Birdsville, Betoota, Windorah, Quilpie, Toompine, Thargomindah, Cunnamulla, Bourke, Cobar, Broken Hill, Old Pastoral Route to Burra, Adelaide



**The Oratunga Track !!**  
(4 days)  
\$1525 pp

**Saturday August 25**

This 4WD loop commences 10km east of Blinman, on the private property of Di and Ian Fargher. The track passes Nildottie Gap and on towards Patawarta Hill. The scenery changes from cypress pines to ancient eucalypts through the Artimore Valley, culminating on the summit of Mt Lucius (815m).

This is some of the best country the Flinders has to offer! Includes Parachilna Gorge, Brachina Gorge, Bunyerroo Valley, Hawker, Orroroo, Eudunda and Kapunda.



**Flinders Ranges & Skytrek**  
(4 days)  
\$1475 pp

**Saturday September 1**

Rawnsley Park, Wilpena Pound, Willow Springs Station, "Skytrek", Bunyerroo Valley, Brachina Gorge, Blinman, Parachilna Gorge, Moralana Scenic Drive, Melrose, The Bride Track, Port Germein, Laura, Orroroo, Burra, Eudunda, Kapunda.



**Flinders Ranges & Arkaroola**  
(5 days)  
\$2025 pp

**Sunday September 9****Tuesday September 18**

Rawnsley Park, Wilpena Pound, Bunyerroo Valley, Brachina Gorge, Blinman, **Arkaroola, Ridgetop Tour**, Bolla Bollana, Arkaroola Waterhole, Gammon Ranges, Moralana Scenic Drive

**Itineraries 2012 (contd)**



**Tumby Bay & Eyre Peninsula (5 days) \$1525 pp**

**Saturday October 13**

Port Germein, Arno Bay, Port Neill, Trinity Haven Scenic Drive, Poonindie, Port Lincoln, Sleaford Bay, Tod Reservoir, Cummins, Mt Hope, Point Drummond, Greenly Beach, Dutton Bay, Coffin Bay National Park to Golden Island and Price Island.

We explore Whalers Way and visit the Koppio Museum. Also...enjoy a Clydesdale Horse and trolley ride!

Return is via Kimba, Iron Knob, Port Augusta and Horrocks' Pass to the Flinders Ranges, Orroroo and Burra

**Where are they now?**

John Hammond and his wife Genevieve are the proprietors of the Desert Sands Motel and have been residents of the Boulia Shire for the past two years.

The couple and their two daughters are no strangers to life in the Outback after spending 11 years at Mungerannie on the Birdsville track.

John is a Councillor in the Boulia Shire Council and has also had success in motor drag racing and motorbike events in the area.

**New Birdsville Plaque**

A PLAQUE to commemorate Burke and Wills' 1860-61 expedition has been unveiled in Birdsville.

It was donated by Dr Ross Bastiaan, a Melbourne periodontist, and amateur historian who has recognised a need to introduce people to events and places of historical significance.



"I felt that, rather than writing books, putting bronze information plaques around the world to mark significant events in Australia's history was a very practical way of informing both our people, and particularly people of foreign countries, about Australia's role in their history."

Made out of a single casting of bronze, the plaque is the first of a series of 13 plaques that will mark the route of the expedition from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

This plaque has been placed 280 metres south of the Diamantina River Bridge at Birdsville on the Windorah Road.

**Mail from Mungerannie !**



The following article appeared on the ABC website March 13th:

An hotel operator in the outback hopes tourists will start heading to the region as roads dry out after flooding.

The entire length of the Birdsville Track has now reopened for four-wheel-drives and most of the Oodnadatta and Strzelecki Tracks are again passable, after torrential rain more than a week ago.

Phil Gregurke from the Mungerannie Hotel on the Birdsville Track said the official outback tourist season was about to start in South Australia, with the opening of the Simpson Desert region for travellers, and it was a relief to see the roads open again.

"We're just getting a little bit short on a few little items up here because we haven't had a proper delivery for three weeks now, but as soon as the transport's up here, yep, it's all go," he said.



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Our **Back O'Bourke** trip has 2 seats booked for departure on 21st April.

We are monitoring the Barwon -Darling River system and at present the level of the River is causing flooding at Tilpa. Upstream at Bourke and Louth levels are falling.

On 19th March the peak level was reached at Tilpa and the peak at Wilcannia is expected 1st April.

This will certainly bring new life to the area and it will be a great trip!

If you are travelling over the Easter break, have a safe trip and an enjoyable time!

