

HFNC Excursion to Beachport, Southend & Canunda National Park 18-20 May 2018

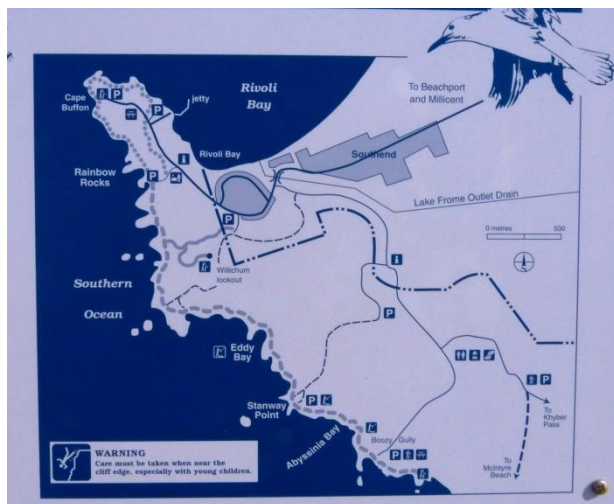
Janeen Samuel, Diane Luhrs & Rod Bird

Participants: Glenys Cayley, Lyn & Dave Munro, Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, Janeen Samuel

We stayed in two cabins at the **Southern Ocean Tourist Park in Beachport**, on a dune overlooking the town and Rivoli Bay. The adjacent cabins were occupied by a large group of blokes, equipped with off-road motor bikes and dune buggies, who proved to be quiet and courteous neighbours.

Janeen and Glenys arrived early enough on Friday afternoon for a short walk through coastal heath to the surf beach; Janeen repeated this next morning and walked along the beach as far as Cape Martin and a view of Penguin Island (no penguins seen).

The weather on Saturday was fine and mild and we spent most of it in the **Canunda National Park at Southend** (i.e. the south end of Rivoli Bay). We followed the walking track around Cape Buffon, starting at **Rainbow Rocks**. Later, some of us walked south along the “Seaview Track” and inland to the **Willichum Lookout**, while Dave and Lynn sampled the local coffee and pronounced it “execrable”.



Canunda National Park & Southend



We found the cliffs endlessly fascinating. They are Quaternary limestone – old calcareous dunes with well-developed cross-bedding (thank you, Ken). The soft limestone has been eroded by wind and water almost into lacework in some places, with arches and windows, projecting headlands and isolated stacks.



Cape Buffon trail from Rainbow Rocks – looking east and west



Cape Buffon trail, eroded limestone, stacks and solution pipes



There are numerous solution pipes – vertical tubes which formed while the calcareous sand was being cemented into rock – some visible from above, as at Rainbow Rocks, and others high in the cliffs.



The trail to the tip of Cape Buffon

Layers of sea shells were seen in the eroded face of the dunes along the cliff top. Was this evidence of Aboriginal middens or marine deposits when the land was under the sea? A flint scraper was seen.



Seabirds seen included Silver Gulls, Sooty Oyster-catchers, Little Pied Cormorants, Great Cormorants, Black-faced Cormorants and large numbers of Crested Terns – a group were seen flying along the coast. White-faced Herons were also observed along the shore. More surprising in that environment were Feral Pigeons (Rock Dove) and Galahs; both species were using – possibly nesting in – holes near a cliff-top.



Sooty Oyster-catchers



Great Cormorant & Black-faced Cormorants



Galahs



Rock Doves



Black-faced Cormorant

We walked down to the **Southend Jetty** before starting on the return walk to Rainbow Rocks. A flock of cormorants and Crested Terns were perched along the railing of the jetty.



Crested Terns on the Southend Jetty

The vegetation of the Cape is low heath, one of the most interesting components of which is the “South Australian Blue Gum”, *Eucalyptus leucoxydon* ssp. *megalocarpa*. The trees in the dunes were pruned by the winds to stand no more than 2-3 m high and had the appearance of mallees. Those growing inland just off the dunes had a much greater height. This was one of the few plants in flower. There was a notable absence of other eucalypts in the dunes and we saw only a couple of *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping Sheoak).



Eucalyptus leucoxylon ssp. *megalocarpa* on the dunes, with buds, capsules & flowers

Correa reflexa (Common Correa) was the only species in full bloom. Other species which had the odd flower were *Scaevola aemula* (Fairy Fan-flower), *Olearia axillaris* (Coast Daisy-bush), *Ozothamnus turbinatus* (Coast Everlasting), *Senecio odoratus* (Scented Groundsel), Karkalla (*Carpobrotus rossii*) and *Zygophyllum billardierei* (Coast Twin-leaf).

Alyxia buxifolia (Sea Box) grew profusely in the coastal sand dunes and several bushes had red berries. A few unidentified white-gilled fungi (appearing to have white spores) were seen along the trails.



Common Correa



SA Blue Gum – with pink flowers



Coast Twin-leaf



Coast Daisy-bush



Coast Everlasting



Sea Box



Fairy Fan-flower



Scented Groundsel



Karkalla



Fungi – *Tricholomataceae* or *Cortinariaceae* family ?

Birds seen in the heath included Welcome Swallows, Singing Honeyeaters, flocks of Silver-Eyes and the occasional Grey Shrike-thrush, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren and European Goldfinch. Willie Wagtails found a niche on the Beachport Jetty.



Grey Shrike-thrush



European Goldfinch

We saw no mammals but there were plenty of tracks and droppings, including characteristically wombat-shaped wombat droppings, and a few wombat holes.

After a picnic lunch at Rainbow Rocks our walk east along the ‘Seaview Track’ included the detour to the **Willichum Lookout** on a high dune some 200 m from the sea. A good view of the small town of **Southend** was had from there.

View of Southend from the lookout



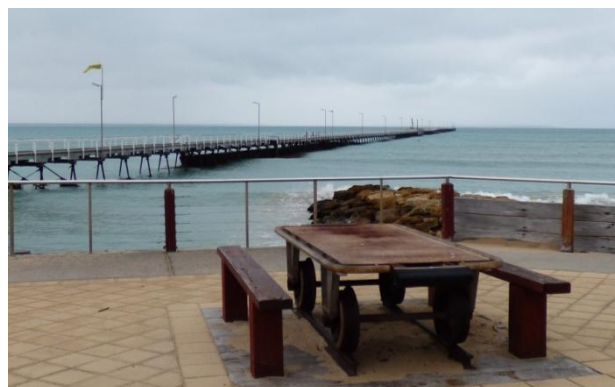
Saturday evening was a social occasion and we enjoyed a drink at the Tourist Park cottages before walking down to a hotel for dinner and, later, some enjoyed the TV spectacle of the royal wedding.



Southern Ocean Tourist Park

On Sunday the weather was distinctly less clement, with cold wind and intermittent showers. We left our accommodation and drove to the **Beachport Jetty**. We walked to the end, marvelling at the mats of floating seaweed of mingled types, and at the tenuous character of many of the supporting iron piles.

The Beachport Jetty was constructed in 1882, with iron screw piles from UK, Jarrah from WA and Red Gum from Mt Burr in SA. It was originally 1220 m long with a T head but that and the end 448 m was later removed, leaving it now 772 m in length. Today it serves fishing boats, fisher people and tourists, but parts are beginning to crumble.



Beachport Jetty from the pier and from the seaward end

We then headed inland, hoping to locate **Mount Burr Swamp** which has been recently acquired for restoration by Nature Glenelg Trust. With the help from the nice lady at the **Millicent Information Centre** (worth a visit, if only to view the echidna made from shearing combs and kangaroo from bike chains and other metal pieces), we drove to the **Marshes Wetland** which is adjacent to the acquired site. However, the rain now having set in more seriously, we decided to leave exploration for another day.

We made a brief stop for a late picnic lunch at **Umpherston Sinkhole** in Mount Gambier. The limestone was exposed some 15 million years ago when an uplift occurred and subsequent erosion by weakly acidic groundwater produced a cavern and then a collapse of the roof to form the present doline. Before 1930 there was water in the hole covering about a third of the base and Umpherston had a boat on the pool. Today the walls are festooned with ivy.



Umpherston doline at Mt Gambier

Finally, we regret to report that, without Yvonne and Reto spur us to culinary efforts, we took the lazy way out and, since the town of Beachport boasted two hotels, we ate one night at each of them.