

Mt Burr Swamp, Lake McIntyre & Tantanoola Cave, Millicent campout 9 May 2019

Rod Bird

Our major HFNC 'campout' for 2019 was to the South East region of South Australia concentrating on the area around Millicent.

Participants: Diane Luhrs & Rod Bird, Glenys Cayley, Janeen Samuel, Peter Hocking, Dave & Lyn Munro, Steve & Debra Martinich, Reto Zollinger & Yvonne Ingeme.

We departed Hamilton at 9 am, stopping at Penola to obtain fruit and vegetables, then proceeding via Kalangadoo to Mt Burr Swamp, stopping along the way to look at **Lake Leake**. We viewed this pretty crater lake from the high bank on the north side. Waterbirds were viewed with a spotting scope and a count was made of numbers of each species seen, the most numerous being Eurasian Coot, Australian Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler, Masked Lapwing and Hoary-headed Grebe (see Table).



Lake Leake, crater lake, viewed from the north bank

Lake Leake formed in a crater after a volcanic eruption. The molten magma encountered water in the limestone plain and the explosions resulted in rock and lava ash forming a rim around a wide crater. Lake Edward, to the south, is another crater lake, unique in the Mount Burr Range. The lakes are perched above the regional water table and rely on rainwater to fill them. On the basis of pollen collected from lake sediment, the volcanic activity here was thought to have occurred at least 20,000 years ago. In recent years some work has been done to revegetate the surrounds to these lakes.

Our next stop was at the **Mt Burr Swamp** owned by Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT). The former grazing property is 300 ha in area and is adjacent to The Marshes, a 600 ha wetland/bushland reserve.



Mt Burr Swamp and The Marshes

The swamp was acquired by NGT in 2017 to restore habitat for six nationally threatened species: Little Galaxie, Growling Grass Frog, Australasian Bittern, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Southern Bent-wing Bat, as well as a range of other important species, such as the Brolga.

The adjacent Marshes wetland reserve supports hundreds of species of native flora and fauna,

The star (☆) in the photo above indicates where the shed and yards are, where we had lunch and viewed the birdlife from the bank of the swamp. We had driven in along the track to the left, bordering the fringe of trees on the bank of the swamp, from the gate which is on the NE side of the property.

We examined the swamp with the spotting scope to see what waterbirds were present. A pair of Brolga on was seen on the western shore. The most numerous species were Black Swan, Masked Lapwing, Australian Shelduck, Purple Swamphen and Straw-necked Ibis. One small wader was glimpsed on the far shore but the distance was too great to allow identification. The swamp was quite shallow and birds in it were mostly obscured by the Water Ribbons and other plants.

After lunch we walked along the edge of the swamp, adjacent to the block of *Pinus radiata* plantation.



Brolga on the western edge of the swamp



Walk around Mt Burr Swamp

Several species of fungus were seen along the track, including Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), the edible (and delicious) Saffron Milk Cap (*Lactarius deliciosus*) and a truffle that remains to be identified.



Fly Agaric or Death Cap



Saffron Milk Cap



View across the swamp to Mt Burr



An unidentified truffle



Grass Tree on The Marshes



NGT tree planting project

We continued as far as the Brown Stringybark edge of The Marshes and the fence that separates the swamp from cattle grazing the western part of the property. There was a magnificent stand of Austral Grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) among the Brown Stringybark (*E. baxteri*), Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*) and other trees in the adjacent Marsh reserve.

We left the Mt Burr Swamp at about 3 pm and drove to Millicent, the western-most point of the Kanawinka Geopark. Our immediate purpose there was to visit **Lake McIntyre**. This is a wetland that was created when the council mined the site for limestone and sand. Subsequently, much effort was made to establish native trees and shrubs around the site and to provide trails, boardwalks and bird hides around the small 'lake'.

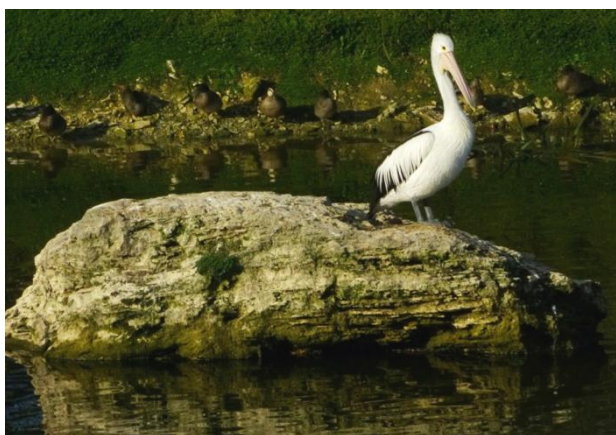


Lake McIntyre pool



Lake McIntyre shallow flats

We were surprised to see the number of birds that were using this refuge. Included were about 200 Freckled Duck, a protected species in Victoria, and 100 Straw-necked Ibis. There were no small waders present but a good range of other species were loafing on the shoreline or feeding in the shallow or deeper areas of water.



Australian Pelican & Pacific Black Ducks



Freckled Ducks & Eurasian Coot



Freckled Ducks



Dinner on Saturday night at Millicent Caravan Park

Our last stop for the day was at the Millicent Caravan Park, where we checked in to the cabins that Yvonne & Diane had booked. These proved to be very comfortable and we used the separate kitchen building to get together for dinner in the evening.

This was the evening of the Federal election and there was considerable disappointment at the outcome, which will mean no real progress on action to mitigate climate change or other action to protect the natural environment and our native species of fauna and flora. Sadly, most Australians do not appear to have a concern for the environment that we will leave.

Sunday was a little colder and showers were expected. We left the Millicent Caravan Park at 9.45 am and drove to the **Tantanoola Cave**. Except for one visitor, we were the first arrivals and so were able to be the first group shown through the cave which may be around 500,000 years in the making..

The cave was discovered many years ago by Boyce Lane after his ferret disappeared down a crack. He recovering the ferret and 8 days later opened the cave for tours! The rock in this landform is dolomite (a metamorphosed limestone) and is much harder than limestone and more resistant to erosion by acid rain water. The cave has a relatively low ceiling and a predominance of pinkish colours in the stalactites. The cave now is lit by many lights and relatively few of the stalagmites and stalactites have been damaged. It was a pleasure to wander around this attractive cave and view the great variety of structures.



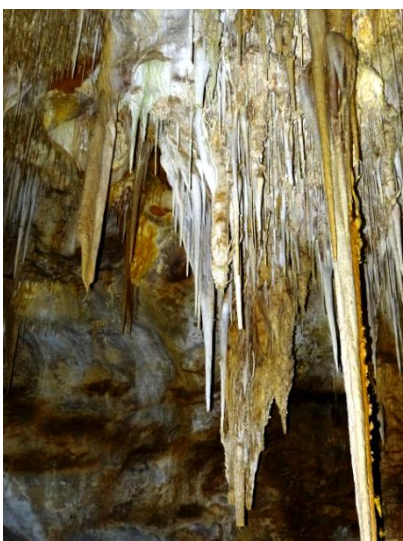
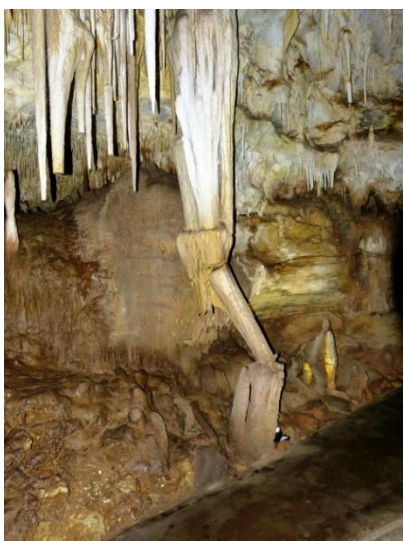
Entrance to Tantanoola Cave



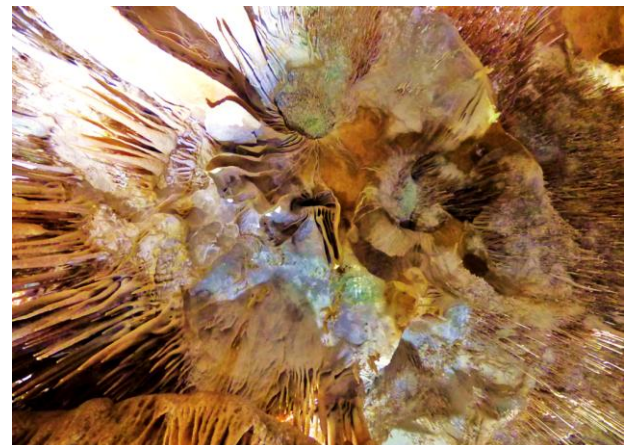
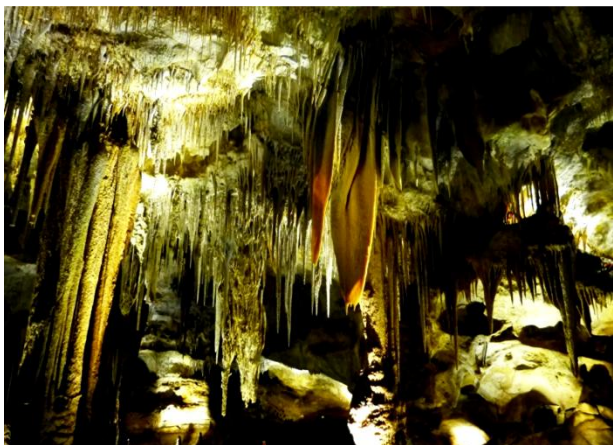
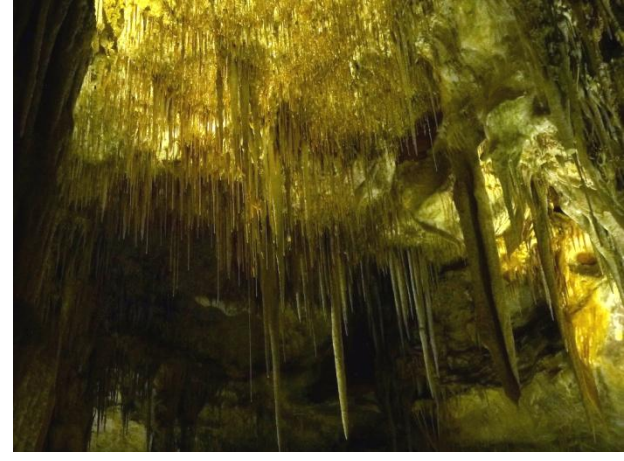
HFNC members inside the cave



A major stalagmite near the entrance



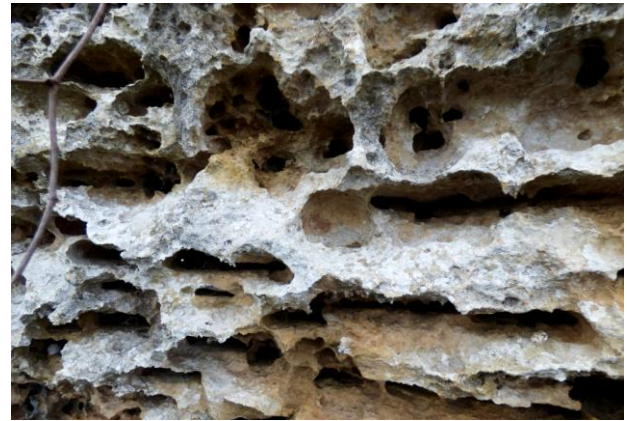
One feature is a broken column that has reformed on an angle after presumably having been broken by an earth movement. On another surface were scratch marks that could have been made by an animal trapped in the cave. Helyctites and thousands of 'straw' stalactites were emanated from the ceiling.



Features of the Tantanoola Cave



After our visit to the Tantanoola Cave we took the walk across the top of the limestone cliff and back down into the quarry area before returning along the base of the cliff to the car park. We looked for nodules of flint in the dolomite but did not see any. The Aborigines once prized these pieces of hard rock from the cliff face and fashioned cutting tools and spear points from them.



Cliff and quarry and eroded dolomite at Tantanoola cave

Bird species	Lake Leake	Mt Burr Swamp	Lake McIntyre
Australian Pelican	-	-	1
Australian Shelduck	100	50	P
Australasian Shoveler	46	-	P
Chestnut Teal	-	-	P
Freckled Duck	-	-	200
Grey Teal	4	4	P
Musk Duck	6	-	P
Pacific Black Duck	15	2	P
Eurasian Coot	200	-	P
Hoary-headed Grebe	30	-	P
Great Cormorant	1	-	-
Little Black Cormorant	-	-	1
Little Pied Cormorant	3	-	P
Black Swan	20	190	P
Australian White Ibis	3	P	P
Straw-necked Ibis	-	28	100
Brolga	-	2	-
Cattle Egret	-	1	-
White-faced Heron	25	2	1
White-necked Heron	1	9	-
Black-winged Stilt	2	-	2
Masked Lapwing	45	60	P
Purple Swamphen	2	28	P

	Lake Leake	Mt Burr Swamp	Lake McIntyre
Silver Gull	-	-	P
Brown Falcon	-	3	-
Swamp Harrier	1	2	-
Wedge-tailed Eagle	-	1	-
Whistling Kite	2	1	-
Australian Magpie	-	P	P
Brown Thornbill	-	P	-
Crimson Rosella	-	-	P
Galah	-	-	P
Grey Currawong	-	P	-
Grey Shrike-thrush	-	-	-
Grey Fantail	-	P	-
Little Wattlebird	-	-	P
Magpie-lark	-	-	P
New Holland Honeyeater	-	-	P
Red Wattlebird	-	P	P
Superb Fairy-wren	-	P	P
White-browed Scrubwren	-	-	P
Willie Wagtail	-	P	-
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	-	P	-
European Goldfinch	-	P	-

We departed Tantanoola at about 2 pm, some returning to Hamilton via Nelson and others via Penola.