



High Range 4WD Club of SA Inc

"Black Cockatoo Bush Camp" Naracoorte

Friday 21 March to Monday 24 March 2008

Easter Long Weekend

Submitted by Helen (Highwater) and Phil (McCracken)

Black Cockatoo Bush Camp is a lovely camping spot located 11ks before Naracoorte. It is an easy, enjoyable drive through the lovely wine region of the South East.

Phil and I decided to leave on Thursday afternoon to beat the Easter rush. The weather was cool and misty rain was falling. After a false start (wrong turn off on the freeway, heading straight back to Adelaide, you'd think we'd know our way out of Adelaide by now, wouldn't you!!), we were on our way. The run was uneventful, but very picturesque. This time we were joined by two of our children, Anton and Jim and we felt very lucky to have borrowed a camper trailer from one of Phil's friends, so were looking forward to some comfort at night.

We arrived at Black Cockatoo, around 6pm after a 4 hour drive. Cuffs was already there and settled. He had been able to secure a great camping spot (after setting Duke on to encroachers!), but had missed out on the pick of the spots due to the Moke club getting there first. It is the quick and the dead around camping spots!! As it was still daylight saving, we were able to set up most of the camper trailer in the twilight. We were joined shortly thereafter by Rob and Barb who had their little tent up before you could blink! Then we had dinner, chit chat and after stumbling around in the darkness I was able to locate the flushing toilets – luckily there was a little old lady wearing one of those head torches who inadvertently guided me to the correct spot thereby saving me trekking back to Adelaide! Flushing toilets – yay!

After a freezing night – we did not realize that the trailer tailgate should have been up and secured with canvass and we should have used a crate to climb up to the bed!!, therefore we had the freezing air blowing straight through the trailer, we compared notes on how we slept. Jim was crying because not only was he freezing, but he was driven mad by the snores of Phil, Cuffs and Rob! Anton was in the foetal position from the cold and so after we worked out why we were freezing and Phil fixed the problem, Anton decided to sleep in the tent area with us, rather than the annexe and we were going to be joined by Jim in bed with us!!
Hmmm

One of the best things we discovered, apart from the flushing toilets, was that there were solar heated showers!! After breakfast we explored the camping area and were really impressed on how beautiful the spot was. There was a lovely billabong, which although had been dry, our hosts, Elizabeth and Ken filled up for the campers with bore water. There were supposed to be yabbies and fish in the billabong, although I think that one yabbie was caught. Someone did try to show everyone how to throw a net into the billabong, didn't they Phil? Not very good were you!! By now other members of our club were joining us, and members from the Suzuki club and the Mini Moke Club were arriving to join their respective clubs – it was so interesting watching the little Mokes come in, around three of them were driven from Adelaide and the rest came in on trailers. We think that we spotted one Suzuki in the Suzuki Club!!

By late afternoon, all of our members had arrived and we had seven cars in all - sixteen people and four dogs. Geoff had trouble keeping tabs on his little dog, luckily it followed him around so he never lost it! The other campers learnt to keep their dogs leashed, otherwise Duke would have feasted well! Ray and Caroline had brought their large caravan towed by the Landcruiser and it was a beauty!

We spent the rest of the afternoon collecting firewood, exploring the beautiful spot, taking photographs and checking on the yabbies. We discovered the very clever yabbie pools that Elizabeth and Ken had built to breed the yabbies and fish they used to stock the billabong. We were also amazed at the amount of massive tree limbs which had fallen from the trees, obviously due to the dry conditions. We built a great campfire and talked into the night.

After a much warmer night, thanks to Phil securing the camper trailer better and being joined by Jim, no there were no photographs!, we woke early to the wonderful cries of the bush birds. We won't mention the snoring gentlemen!! The morning was milder and sunny. After breakfast everybody decided to pay a visit to Naracoorte and stock up on some goodies. I stayed back to guard the camp and took the opportunity to take more photos and actually read a book!

After lunch we set off for some off roading. Cuffs took us around the fire tracks and into the bush. The day turned out to be very warm and sunny. The tracks were very, very sandy and it wasn't long before the Territory lived up to its old tricks and got bogged. Rob to the rescue (again!). The aim of trying to avoid getting bogged was to keep up the speed, which is quite nerve racking. The problem with the Territory was the low clearance which caused the car to bottom out. I discovered actually straddling the track avoided further bogs, but caused anxiety to Phil when he thought we were going to crash into the fence, because I took to riding out the tracks on the edge. This had a tendency to push me down the side of the track and almost into the fence line. You don't want to know what words were being yelled in the car!! Then it was the turn of Neil (in the Hyundai Tucson) to get bogged, although he blamed everybody else for his bogging incident! It was someone (Geoff) stopping in front wasn't it Neil? So we have a score going now - Territory 3 bogs (2 at Goolwa, one at Black Cockatoo) and Tucson 1 bog? Henry was bragging that the Santa Fe had more clearance than the Tucson, that is why he did not get bogged! Cuffs didn't get bogged because he was the better driver and the rest of the crew had better cars!! After a couple of visits to Church (in the bush), where we spotted Easter Bunny, we made our way back to camp. It was an exciting day.

Back to camp to try out the fantastic solar heated showers. They were great and even though there was a line up to use them, it was worth the wait, just to meet the diverse group of people who were using the camping ground. I enjoyed hearing about the other clubs adventures with their vehicles. We then got ready for our wonderful formal candlelight bush banquet. Everybody brought along soup, main and dessert to share and the guys wore their ties and jackets and the girls wore their dresses. We set the tables with tablecloths and everybody tucked in to the wonderful food. The night turned into a breathtaking affair weather wise, not a breath of wind to blow out the candles, the air was balmy, the moon was full and the other campers appreciated our beautiful set up. After dinner, more chit chat around the campfire and into bed.

Sunday was warm and clear, we headed off into different directions. Caroline and Ray went wine tasting, we went to discover the Naracoorte Caves and the others went for a long, winding drive to Robe. Apparently it was a rather religious

experience, with the names of roads having a Holy significance!! We loved the caving experience, even though we had to change a flat tyre when we returned to the car. Amazing how many people offered to help once we had changed the tyre, although we were glad to say we had finished the job when a lovely 100 year old gentleman offered to help! It didn't take 7 minutes like our last change, maybe 15! The age of the caves is mind boggling and the fossils which are being discovered make them very valuable historical significance which the government and private enterprise is trying to preserve for our future generations. We then explored Naracoorte where we discovered an inland beach complete with salt water, set up as a swimming pool. We will save that experience for Christmas holidays.

Because we finished exploring the caves just after lunch, we decided to see if we could contact the rest of the group. We drove the direct route to Robe where we met them at the Obelisk and then drove in convoy to Long Beach. Long Beach is a beautiful stretch of beach which allows access for vehicles. It was amazing to see hundreds of vehicles and people enjoying the warm weather. Cuffs tried to make an exit at the end of the 4km drive, but the track was too sandy and so we drove back to the entrance and then on to home.

After dinner, we got the camp fire going again (the boys and Neil got it down to a fine art in the end) and we had a quiz night. We think that it was won by Neil, seeing as he had just sat for his Australian Citizen test, and most of the questions were on Australia, he had the edge on the rest of us. Good for you Neil. The evening was helped along with some of the very mellow Port, Caroline and Ray had picked up on their wine tasting expedition. Lovely. Time for bed.

Up early next day for leisurely breakfast and then slow pack up for journey home. The camper trailer is very easy to pack away and we made fast time. We left around lunch time and arrived back about 5pm. The journey was uneventful.

We had a thoroughly entertaining experience, helped along by the luxury of a camper trailer, which we think we have the hang of now. The driving experience was excellent with just minor dramas of bogging. The highlight of the trip was the candlelight dinner. Cuffs made a lovely toast and we couldn't help appreciate the beauty of the night. It was an experience meeting Elizabeth and Ken, the owners of the land we camped on. Seeing the work and effort they have put into making the area comfortable for campers, makes you appreciate it even more. It is interesting seeing how some of the farmers have diversified their land to obtaining more income, enabling them to survive the harsh drought. Once again, the dryness of the land was apparent, having the billabong full helped though. We did not encounter much wildlife really, the obligatory kangaroo, birds, rabbits and one dead wombat, unusual.

Once again, we would like to thank Cuffs, our leader for the very entertaining experience.

Meanwhile, we look forward to the next adventure

Cheers

Helen and Phil

Convoy

Cuffs (Xtrail), Rob & Barb (Landcruiser), Helen & Phil and clan (Territory), Henry and Helen (Hyundai Santa Fe), Caroline and Ray (Landcruiser), Geoff and Ruth (Suzuki), John and Helen and Neil (Hyundai Tucson), plus dogs.

Photo gallery



The beautiful evening coming into Black Cockatoo Bush Camp



The camper trailer



Idyllic bush camp



Looks like we know what we are doing!



The Billabong



I am not checking the answers to the Quiz!



Bush Tucker Man!



No words needed





Bogged again ...



Ray supervising, Henry digging, everyone else watching!!



Ready to be towed out



Henry clearing the track for the others!

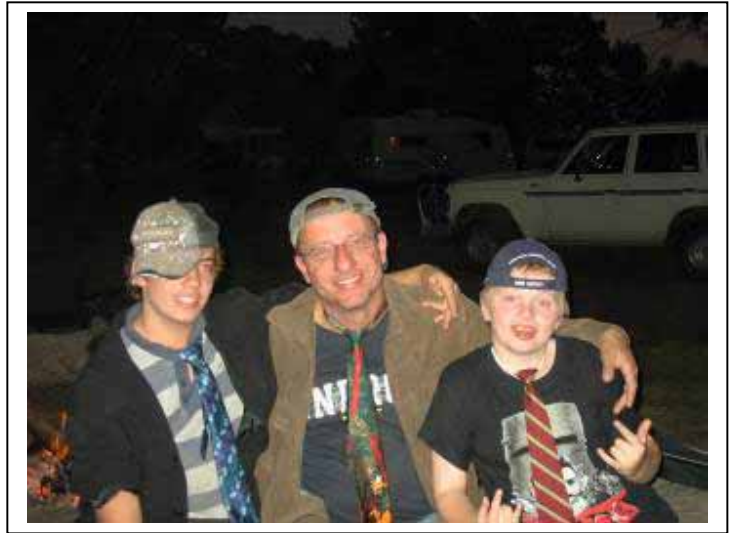


Ok, so who's fault was it that Neil got bogged





I am only wearing the school tie mum



Ok not sure what to say!



Trying to look glamorous



Beautiful candlelight setting



Great campfire





Wonderful Naracoorte caves



Long Beach



The end of the journey



It's not the size of a man's headlights that count Or is it?!



Honestly Henry, have you no shame?