



High Range 4WD Club of SA Inc
Border Track, Pinnaroo and Ngarkat
29 – 30th May 2010
Submitted by Helen

Ngarkat Conservation Park features a magnificent mosaic of mallee and heath land, extending across 270,000-hectares of remnant coastal dunes.

For many visitors, the vastness of this park is one of its most striking features. Walking trails vary from 20 minutes to five-hour hikes and camping and picnics are also popular activities.

Ngarkat is known for its challenging 4WD tracks. One of the most demanding is the iconic Border Track which follows the border that separates South Australia and Victoria. This narrow, sandy track passes through a fragile environment and requires drivers to have a high level of 4WD experience. Access is restricted one-way, travelling from north to south.

Diverse wildlife also inhabit the park and birdwatchers will also find fascination, with more than 120 bird species recorded in the park.

The park is very large and isolated, therefore sufficient fuel and water supplies must be carried at all times.

We met at Tailem Bend at 7.00am on Saturday (this entailed 5.00am rising!!). On the way, we met Cuffs and travelled in a convoy of two! The weather was very damp, cool and misty. After a hurried breakfast at Tailem Bend, we headed off to Pinnaroo. We were eight vehicles – Barra and Chris (Toyota Landcruiser and trailer), Henry (Santa Fe), Jerren, Jerrick and June (Nissan Tribute), Jo and David (Hyundai Tucson), Helen and Phil (Ford Territory), Wayne (Toyota Landcruiser), Scott (Holden Frontera), Cuffs (X-Trail).

We arrived at Pinnaroo around 10.30am for petrol refuel, something to eat, toilet (last one in civilisation!) and to obtain permits. Unfortunately I think we scared the girls in the shop and they had to call in the troops to help them!!

Then it was off to the track. The weather didn't really improve, light wind, light rain (supposed to be good for the sand!). The track was beautiful though. We stopped to let our tyre pressure down and take photos. It was raining steadily. Plenty of wildflowers and greenery. The track was very sandy and bumpy, luckily we were packed tight at the back! Phil nearly ran over a rogue sheep!! We stopped for lunch and a chat. After a couple of hours of driving, we reached our first challenge – rather large hills. Cuffs and Henry took the easy (I am not saying chicken) track and waited over the other side for us to rise to the challenge. We had a choice of two tracks – hard and hard! Phil tried the hard track, which proved to be really really soft sand. Reverse down! Then David and Jo tried, same thing, reverse down. Then Phil tried the other hard track, the ruts were so deep, bogged, reverse down – two reversing cars can be tricky, watch out!! Then Barra took the hard track (soft sand) and made it over. This tamped down the soft sand and David took a really long and hard run up and made it over. Then Jerren tried both hard tracks and reversed down. Then Phil tried the hard track and bogged so close to the top. Then the tip of the day from Barra – try the climb in first gear! We had never put the Territory in first gear for a climb before. Bingo, next climb we got over, thrashing the engine in the meanwhile!! Then Jerren tried again, long run up and nearly over!! Next try he used the “wobble”, where you wiggle the steering wheel over the sand and he was over. Much fun. Then Scott had a couple of tries and he was over! Then it was Wayne's turn. After around 9 attempts (I think Jo has it on film!), he finally made it over. Dare I say it, after he reduced his tyre pressure from 36psi to 20psi!! More driving over the sand track, more wildflowers and banksias! Next came the second large hills. Each of us tried both hills, by then the lovely chaps from the other club had caught us again! More advice. After nearly missing a tree on the first track, Phil opted for the other track and we were over. It was here that we must have

damaged the underside of the car, because a very alarming knocking plagued us for the rest of the trip. This time Wayne had no trouble!!

By this time it was around 4pm and we headed for Red Bluff for the campsite. It was a beautiful campsite. Our other friends who were following us, had overtaken us and were already set up. We all set up, had dinner and sat around the campfire. It was Scott's birthday, so he copped a very bad rendition of Happy Birthday from all of us! Nice birthday cake. Chris reminded Scott of his birthday all night, by singing it every hour!! It was an early night, after an early rising that morning! Even though it drizzled during the evening, the temperature was around 8 degrees. It wasn't freezing really and the wind had dropped and some stars came out! Phil and Wayne kept everyone warm with coals under their chairs and Jo provided the beautiful campfire potatoes, what a treat!

Sunday morning was quite mild and not too wet. After breakfast, we headed for the mud! Boy they weren't wrong. We did not attempt the giant holes at all. Geoff (Barra) took on a huge one and nearly didn't make it, but after putting the vehicle in low low, he clawed his way out of the hole – trailer still intact, impressive job Geoff! Entertaining stuff when it isn't your own vehicle!! The chicken (I didn't say that) tracks were ok this time!! Although one chicken track tricked Phil (twice) and we nearly slid into one of the holes once and the second time actually slid into one of the holes and got stuck. Scott and Barra provided some foliage under the wheels and Phil did a mighty job of getting us out. I was instructing him!! Kidding, good job Phil.

After some more uneventful driving, we came out of the track and pulled over to reinflate the tyres. Then Scott, Barra, Wayne and Cuffs went into Ngarkat Conservation Park for some more driving. The rest of us headed to Keith for lunch, chat and journey home. By then the weather had set in and by the time we arrived home, we had the same weather we had set out in!!

Mishaps

Barra – some electrical problems, back door to car wouldn't open, something lodged against it, well done Chris for wriggling inside to undo it! Trailer performed well.

Wayne – broken eggs which seeped into his clothes (don't ask me how!), our eggs cracked also, but they were in a Tupperware container (you can buy egg carriers for camping, good investment I think!)

Scott – beer cracked in his fridge!

Henry – coffee splashed all around his dash – why trying to drink coffee whilst driving over bumps?!

Henry – nearly drove over camping ground bbq plate – luckily Cuffs has good car horn!!

Phil and Helen – dislodged petrol tank bracket which made knocking noise everywhere we went – Phil gave it a good kick when we got home – solved!

David and Jo – didn't pack portable toilet – had to use long drop!!

Jerrick, Jerren, June – didn't bring CJ to do the cooking and take photos!!

Cuffs – nothing, as usual!!

Wildlife – kangaroo (one!), sheep, some birds

What a fantastic weekend, not too cold and I had the portable toilet – all good!! The drivers did a great job in tackling tricky situations and getting themselves out of pickles without having to be rescued. Well done everybody. Thanks to Barra for organising it.

Photo gallery







