



High Range 4WD Club of SA Inc

www.hr4wdclubsa.org.au

Bushy's at Coonalpyn September 2008

By Debbie R

Saturday morning was a beautiful day – well that was the forecast! When we threw the last of our things in the car and left for Coonalpyn, it was promising to be 24 degrees – Heaven - but it was still grey, cold, and uninviting. Not to mention too early for a Saturday! Mel looked at me sullenly still coughing from an asthma attack, her nose dripping from the cold and hayfever we “shared”. **Not happy Jan.** Come hell or high water we were going to spend the weekend at Bushy's playing in the sun!

So knowing my prowess at navigation – I put Coonalpyn into the gps and followed it religiously. My new traveling companion (Nokia Navigator) and his sexy authoritarian voice guidance made navigating the urban canyons easy and we made good time. Out on the highway we turned the CB on and soon heard familiar voices. There was a familiar face at the petrol station too – making sure the car was juiced up – although he didn't recognize us for quite some time. Wake up John!

I'm sure I recognized the voice of Geoff & Rob on the CB and that X-trail in the parking bay and German Shephard had to be Cuffs. So it was going to be a well attended trip – and it was only 9.30. So by 10am we had all met at Coonalpyn – but were waiting for last minute arrivals and completing the essential club paperwork. The Hr4wd club congregated with their brand new President – Brenton- who had doubled as trip leader for this event. We got to socialize for a while – catch up on stories and share trip plans for the future, and hear a little about Geoff and the Rav4 Simpson Crossing non-event. We ended up with 15 cars in all – a nice assortment of vehicles. Cuffs & Brenton with their X-Trails, John/Neil - Tucson, Geoff – Jimny, Geoff /Chris, Debby (forever known as DD now) and Len with their RAVs, Henry, Brian with their Santa Fe's, Debbie/Mel, Greg with their Pajero's (old and new), Kevin – Kluger, Rob, Nigel/Claire with their Cruiser and lastly Adrian/Belinda with brand new Prado. If I have forgotten anyone else's name I apologise profusely (email me and I will add it). OOOPs, can't forget the canines – Duke and Cooper. Off to Bushy's!

The convoy took off for the short drive to Bushy's property. We were not the only ones enjoying the sun – sleepy lizards were out sunning themselves. The warnings went out on the CB and the convoy's wheels avoided them. Hard not to feel for them when you realize they are monogamousⁱ and the longest recorded sleepy lizard relationship is 22years!ⁱⁱ True love in the Outback. Best of luck to them!



After avoiding the lizards we drove into camp to set up and have lunch, making sure we pointed out the signs to our visitors. And moving yet more sleepy lizards (I refuse to share my tent with one) – Thank you Rob for lizard removing services!



The wind started to pick up – but the sun was still shining down on us. Lunch was had – dishes were done and some teenage girl even got to potter around driving in their mum’s car. Sand flags were erected by those that had them and the real fun began!

The cars had to break into 2 groups as 15 vehicles were unworkable – it took too long to have a couple of attempts at each dune. One lot went with Bushy and the other with David. Both are definitely country characters to be remembered. Their guidance and knowledge of the area was invaluable and their personalities helped make the day. I was a tad nervous – the last time I was at Bushy’s (with Dad) , I had the Subaru Forester, an AWD - which if I remember correctly made one dune – and I spent the weekend wishing I had the old Paj. Unfortunately, I think I said it aloud as well! Now I had the old Paj – was she going to let me down? Did I have the intestinal fortitude to do some of these “ups”? Was I all talk? Well we would soon see!!!

If a picture paints a thousand words – this is a long report – and Rob’s face says it all!







The property was a great choice for the weekend, having a variety of terrain, standard sandhill tracks, twisting ones and even a purpose built 4wd track! The cars outdid themselves and were more than capable – We tried everything – and backing down a twisting sandhill track is always fun! - But if one couldn't make the dune there was no shame in being led around "the other way" by Bushy or his Son. After all we all ended up in the same place!

Back at camp for tea and a well earned drink. Of course there was the standard campfire and stories. And that sleepy lizard obviously had not gone far!



The highlight of the weekend was the night drive organized and led by Bushy himself. An assortment of cars and their brave, intrepid but motley crew followed him off into the dark and unknown. Only Bushy knew where he was going – we hoped! Down unknown tracks that “polished” the outside of the cars and “tickled” their underbellies ‘till their owners wondered if perhaps this had been a bad idea. The landscape was foreign in the dark – all ominous shapes shrouded in darkness. Black being the theme. The base of the sandhill stood out beautifully illuminated in the cars headlights – its height, tracks and twists indeterminate. To drive up it was like driving into nothing. Bushy didn’t make it up and had to back down and make a new “chicken track” up the side of the hill. It was freaky to see his headlights appear in the sky with nothing but darkness between us and them high in the sky!

I didn’t know cars could fly!

Some took the newly formed chicken track with the tantalizing smell of recently broken foliage and others braved the track into the sky. Either way we all made it back to camp after an excellent drive.

The campfire, stories and club discussion was broken up by the rain and we retired to our tents/caravans/campers to be lulled to sleep by it as it got heavier and the wind blew and buffeted our gear. By morning, the rain had gone and you could barely see that it had even happened. The ground was almost dry!

Some stayed in camp and prepared to leave, others left and some couldn’t wait to get back out onto the sand. Geoff with his GPS led us around to all the areas we had played in the day before so we could “do it all again”. Yes – we did it all again with much enthusiasm.



I had to admit that the old Paj went well for her age and I take back all the nasty things I have ever said about her. Sand she likes – water is a bit wet for the old girl! She did everything I asked of her. After the weekend I don’t begrudge her the Mechanic bills – which I can imagine I will have again soon. In fact it wasn’t until Sunday that I turned her over to petrol and discovered she had a lot more to offer. Unfortunately that probably was a bad thing – Mel and I learnt valuable lessons about ALWAYS wearing seatbelts and staying on the ONE track up a dune. Not to mention much practice at reversing. We got revenge on nature for the hayfever – taking out at least 2 young trees (which Mel told me off for for a considerable time – and wouldn’t get back in the car) and I don’t know why but David was muttering something about “Dukes of Hazard”.

Much too soon we had conquered the sand and went back to camp to pack up and leave. Back to “reality” and all its drudgery until the next time we all gather to go away!

Thanks Bushy and David – it was a great trip. **We will be back next year.** Thanks Brenton for organizing the trip.

ⁱ <http://bluetongueskinks.net/news.jpg> <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2005/s1355449.htm>

ⁱⁱ http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2008/01_january/08/cold_dragons.shtml