

Department of Environment, Water and Natural
Resources

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park
Co-management Board

Annual Report

2014–15



Government
of South Australia

Annual Report of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board 2014-15
September 2015

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Presented to Parliament by Hon Ian Hunter MLC, Minister for Sustainability Environment and Conservation,
pursuant to section 43L of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972

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**Government
of South Australia**

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30 September 2015

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Hon Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability Environment and Conservation
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Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 43L of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and the *Public Sector Act 2009*, I have pleasure in presenting the annual report of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board for the year ended 30 June 2015.

For further information on this matter please contact Denise McCourt on 86485 348 or denise.mccourt@sa.gov.au.

P J McKenzie

Pauline McKenzie
Chairperson
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board

A working partnership

First proclaimed in 1970, the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park forms part of the traditional country of the Adnyamathanha people, rich with cultural significance and evidence of their past occupation.

Adnyamathanha and the State Government share a vision for the Vulkathunha–Gammon Ranges National Park (V-GRNP). The Co-management model provides the framework for the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and the Adnyamathanha people to share responsibility for the Park. In 2005, the V-GRNP Co-management Board was established following Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation entering into a formal Co-management Agreement over the Park.

The V-GRNP Co-management Board has a challenging agenda - managing the cultural landscape, still known and understood by its Aboriginal traditional owners, in a way that also protects and conserves the Park's outstanding natural and cultural features. The Board seeks to:

Conserve its natural and cultural heritage, using both **traditional** and **scientific** knowledge to **better manage** the land

Respect the rights, interests and needs of the traditional owners and **create** social development and economic opportunities for Adnyamathanha families and communities

Provide **great experiences** for visitors

This report shows how the Board answered that challenge in 2014-15.

This is the tenth Annual Report of the Board and covers the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. It is prepared to fulfil requirements of section 43L of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, Regulation 16 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park) Regulations 2005* (the Regulations) and the *Public Sector Act 2009*.

Traditional stories connect to ancient landscapes

The Adnyamathanha people understand the creation of significant places through traditional stories

Yudlalypila (Spirit Pair) tells the story of depositing copper throughout the region, the copper being symbolised as rotting emu meat and gives motivation for place names in the area.

Two cousins (Valnaapa) killed an emu at Varavaranha (Parabana), place meaning "forks". They cooked the emu in the ashes at Yaldyilinha, a spring on Wooltana. The two fellows carried the cooked emu along as far as Vipakanya (paper rock). From here they went to Vadaardlanha (Paralana Hot Springs). The two of them put a fire stick into the spring here, and made the water hot. The fire (ardla) was on a dead finish stick (Acacia tetragonophylla),(Vada) hence the name of the Spring.

Next they went to Nardlamathanha (Nudlamutana), where they looked at the meat and saw that it was going green, so they threw some away. They went towards Marnninha Vari (Lynch watercourse) where they threw away more meat at Marnninha Warru Niarri (Marnninha Flat Bank), the flat bank to the north of the creek.

They went on through to Mudaawi (Big Moro), then on to Little Moro (Moro Mine) where they left the rotting hindquarter of the emu, which is why this place is called Warraty Ngurtuka (emu's hindquarter). Close by here is a spring called Wattle Spring in English, however the spring is called Matyarrainha Awi (water becoming hard).

Next the Valnaapa went south to Yanggunha Vambata (Yangoona). One of them looked back from here over his left shoulder, which is why the hill and the spring at the bottom of it are called Yanggunha (left hand). When he looked back, he saw Wardnuwartanha (Nepouie Peak) meaning the one hill with the stony peak. Wardnuwartanha was drawn up and lifted right off the ground by a mirage. From here they went south to Wadna Yaldha (Mt Chambers). The crack in the middle of this hill was made by the blue wren (Yuduyudulya) which threw a boomerang through it, hence the name Wadna Yaldha (boomerang crack). They proceeded to Mt John Mudlhunha (kangaroo hipbone) and from there to Mt Roebuck Windhalpunha.

Continuing west the pair went through Wakarlaudnanha Inbiri (Waukawoodna Gap). From here the Valnaapa proceeded to Vindha Awi (Pinda Spring). Finally they went on to Yarnngari Arraindanha Vambata (Mt Hack). They asked one another "where do we go from here", then they said lets make a fire of porcupine grass. They then made a big fire and the sparks rose up into the sky. These sparks made the gold which was said to have been at Vardnanha, (Pernana) meaning "goanna".

The goanna is said to obtain the gold colouring from actual gold said to be at Yanggavuthivuthi (Arcoona Saddle). The ash from the Valnaapa's fire made the lead to found at Urlurrunha Awi (Gumleaf Peak Spring).

The Valnaapa then said to each other "lets go up into the sky in the sparks of this fire, let's go and stay there". So they went up from this mountain, the name of which celebrate their ascension Yarnngari (young man), Arraindinha (going up).

These two young men can now be seen as the two white spots in the southern sky, from here they observe everyone below to make sure they keep the law. It is they who made the marriage law.; one must marry someone of the opposite moiety to oneself. That is, an Arrarru must marry a Mathari and vice versa. The Valnaapa were the first Ararru and Mathari (Valnaapa were the first Ararru and Mathari. (Valnaapa is the word used of any two people – other than husband and wife.

Strategic priorities and achievements for 2014-15

The Co-management framework meets a number of the State's Strategic Plan Targets, including:

Aboriginal wellbeing – Target 6

- Reconciliation, Cultural and Traditional Lands
 - Number of National Park Co-management Agreements (indicator 19)
 - Native title claims resolved (indicator 21)
- Governance and Leadership
 - Number of Aboriginal people on government boards and committees (indicator 17)

Aboriginal lands native title - Target 44

- Resolve 80% of native title claims by 2020.

Governance

The Premier announced in July 2014 the review and reform of all boards and committees within South Australia.

The reform was aimed at strengthening and broadening the way in which government engages with the community and makes decisions.

The Co-management framework for South Australia has been recognised internationally as a model which supports effective collaboration with Aboriginal people in the management of their traditional lands.

The Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board was retained. The full report is publically available on the "Your SAY" website.

Providing richer visitor experiences

The Board has endorsed an interpretation plan that provides a framework for improving interpretation and cultural information about the Park. Interpretation is designed to enrich visitor experiences, connect the audience to big-picture concepts and make emotional and intellectual connections to the park. There are a wealth of stories to tell in V-GRNP – stories about people and places, flora and fauna.

*Through interpretation, understanding;
through understanding, appreciation;
through appreciation, protection.* Freeman Tilden

Promoting Aboriginal culture through interpretation has been a high priority for the Board. Five sites have been dual named using both the Adnyamathanha and European name. This is a historical achievement for the Adnyamathanha community as the dual naming not only promotes Aboriginal culture, but highlights the partnership arrangement between the Adnyamathanha community and DEWNR.

Protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage

Munyi Rock Art Site

Managing and protecting this site is a priority for the Board. New measures were introduced to protect the site from indiscriminate access and damage, while maintaining access for the Adnyamathanha people via a walking trail.

Aboriginal gravesites

Aboriginal gravesites are a very important part of the Park's cultural heritage. Protection of these sites has been a high priority for the Board and a range of protection works have been implemented.

Native species protected and habitat improved through pest management

The Board gave approval for continuation of conservation and a pest management program conducted through Bounceback on VGRNP.

Widespread recovery of plants and animals across Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park continues. This recovery is attributed to a combination of good rainfall over the last five years and the effective control of foxes and goats, through the Bounceback Program.

A wide range of species including many with National and State conservation significance benefited from ongoing feral animal and pest plant management. These included the:

- Balcanoona Wattle
- Slender Bell-fruit
- Short-tailed Grasswren
- Carpet Python
- Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby

There is also anecdotal evidence that populations of regionally rare animals such as Echidna and Sand Goanna are increasing.

In the last few years, aerial fox baiting has been extended to Yankaninna and Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area, greatly increasing the area previously covered on VGRNP and Arkaroola Sanctuary. Off-park activities are funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Goat control activities have reduced grazing pressure to promote vegetation recovery and improve habitat for Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies. Long-lived perennial species such as Bullock Bush, Iga and Mulga Trees are now regenerating in response to the reduction in grazing by feral goats, which are being regularly controlled to minimise impact on recovering vegetation.

The role of the Conservation and Wildlife Management Branch of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia in goat control programs over the past two decades has been formally recognised by the Board. This work continues with two scheduled programs per year, during which the park is closed to the public.



'Big picture' results through partnerships

The Park is part of a broader natural and cultural landscape. The Board supported:

- ongoing feral animal control and monitoring, through the regional *Bounceback* program

Bounceback is a major conservation initiative which aims to protect and restore the semi-arid environments of the Flinders, Gawler and Olary Ranges of South Australia.

Fire Management Plan – Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges National Park

The development of a Fire Management Plan for the Northern Flinders Ranges, incorporating Flinders Ranges National Park, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges NP and Ediacara Conservation Park was initiated in 2011.

This Plan will examine fire risk and address fire management issues at a landscape scale and is being developed in accordance with DEWNR's policies and procedures for fire management planning. The DEWNR Planning Team will work closely with the VGRNP Co-management Board to ensure the Plan has a strong Aboriginal cultural focus.

The Board, as the management authority for VGRNP will be a signatory for both the release of the draft Plan for public comment and the subsequent adoption of the final Plan.

Ecological monitoring supported

Volunteers from the Scientific Expedition Group continued ecological monitoring work in the Arcoona Creek catchment area which includes:

- Continuous rainfall records at high and low altitudes from five sites
- Stream flow recording in Arcoona Creek
- Photographic botanical monitoring
- Aquatic biology and water quality
- Human impact monitoring
- Stream flow recording
- Feral animal counts
- Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby monitoring.

The Board acknowledges the value of this work for developing Park management strategies.

Local species revegetation project

The Board supported the Yura Language Group (Adnyamathanha Group) in a project aiming to revegetate areas within the Park with local species significant to the Adnyamathanha people. Park accommodation and infrastructure was offered to assist the group.

Improved research management

The Board has delegated its authority for approving research to the Scientific Permits Officer of DEWNR. The Board reviews reports on research projects annually and a new protocol has been implemented to safeguard cultural sites from research-related disturbance.

Working with neighbours and the Adnyamathanha Community

The Board is committed to working with neighbouring landholders to achieve shared management objectives. A promotional newsletter distributed through the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA), helps keep the local community informed. Board meetings are generally open to the public and community members are encouraged to, and regularly attend and participate in Board activities.

Employing Adnyamathanha people

Staff employed by DEWNR to manage the Park are local Adnyamathanha people, this is a historical achievement for co-management in South Australia. The staff work closely with the Board and provide advice on operational issues, including cultural site protection and visitor management.

Supporting the local community

The Board continued its involvement with the Grindell's Hut Artist in Residence Program. This Program is an initiative of the Northern Arts, Country Arts SA and Fountain Gallery, Pt Augusta and is aimed at supporting local art. The program was established in consultation with ATLA to ensure Adnyamathanha association with the land was accurately reflected. In recognition of the community benefit of the program the Board waived the accommodation fees for Grindell's Hut. An Adnyamathanha Board member was also invited to participate on the selection panel.

Managing the Park for success

Co-management of the Park is a partnership where the Adnyamathanha people work together with DEWNR to share decision-making and responsibility for the management of the Park.

Promoting Co-management

The Board continues to maintain an active role in promoting the park and co-management (including at National forums). Adnyamathanha Board members also provide regular presentations and updates at Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) and South Australian Native Title Services (SANTS) Congress meetings.

State-wide Co-management Workshop

The inaugural workshop was held in November 2014 to bring together Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees across the State to share co-management experiences. There are now 12 co-management agreements, covering two-thirds of the protected area systems in South Australia.

The Workshop identified a number of key issues, challenges and opportunities that will be progressed by both DEWNR and the traditional owners.

Members

Under Regulation 5 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park) Regulations 2005*, the Board consists of eight members appointed by the Minister, of whom:

- (a) four must be Adnyamathanha people appointed on the nomination of ATLA; and
- (b) three must be officers of the Department, of whom –
 - (i) one must be the person for the time being holding the office of Regional Conservator for the region in which the park is located (or the person for the time being performing the functions of the Regional Conservator for that region); and
 - (ii) one must be a person with qualifications or experience in the field of ecology or a related field; and
- (c) one must be a person nominated by the Minister who has qualifications or experience that may, in the opinion of the Minister, be of benefit to the Board.

The full membership of the Co-management Board is as follows.

Chairperson

Ms Pauline McKenzie (5)(a): nominated by ATLA (Chairperson)

Deputy Chairperson

Mr Stuart Paul (5)(b): officer of the Department (Regional Manager, South Australian Arid Lands Region)

Members

Mr Cliff Coulthard (5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Mr Reece Coulthard (5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Ms Janet Coulthard (5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Mr Trevor Naismith (5)(b)(i): Regional Manager Northern and Yorke Region, DEWNR
Ms Trish Mooney (5)(b)(ii): qualifications or experience in the field of ecology or a related field (Regional Ecologist, DEWNR)
Ms Maria Toscano (5)(c): qualifications or experience that may, in the opinion of the Minister, be of benefit to the Board (Program Manager Screening Unit, Communities and Social Inclusion)

Deputy Members

Mr Michael Anderson Deputy to Mr C Coulthard
 Mr Roger Johnson Deputy to Mr R Coulthard
 Ms Sharlene Tree Deputy to Ms McKenzie
 Ms Phillipa Johnson Deputy to Ms Coulthard
 Mr Terry Boyce Deputy to Mr Paul
 (Active Team Leader Active communities)

Mr Darren Crawford Deputy to Mr Naismith
 (Fire Management Officer, DEWNR)

Ms Michelle Smith Deputy to Ms Mooney
 (Business Manager SA Arid Lands)

Ms Janice Goodwins Deputy to Ms Toscano
 (Manager Projects, DEWNR)

The appointments are for a two-year period from 13 May 2014 to 6 November 2015.

Meetings

The Board held three meetings.

- 17/18 July 2014: Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park
- 29 October 2014: Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park
- 30 April & 1 May 2015: Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

Attendance at Meetings

Member	17/18 July 2014	29 October 2014	30 April/1 May 2015
Ms Pauline McKenzie	Y	Y	Y
Mr Cliff Coulthard	Y	Y	Y
Mr Reece Coulthard	Y	Y	Y
Ms Janet Coulthard	Y	Y	Y
Mr Trevor Naismith	Y	N	Y
Mr Stuart Paul	Y	Y	Y
Ms Trish Mooney	Y	Y	Y
Ms Maria Toscano	N	Y	Y

* Deputy Member attended for Member

The Co-management Board

The functions and powers of the Board are set out in Regulation 10 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park) Regulations 2005* as follows:

- (1) The functions of the Board are-
 - a) to carry out the functions assigned to the Board by or under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*; and
 - b) to carry out the functions assigned to the Board by the co-management agreement; and
 - c) to carry out other functions assigned to the Board by the Minister.
- (2) The Board has the power to do anything necessary, expedient or incidental to the performance of its functions.
- (3) Without limiting the generality of subsection (2), the Board may enter into any form of contract, agreement or arrangement.
- (4) The Board must perform its functions, or exercise a power, in a manner that is consistent with the co-management agreement.

Regulation 12 (1) of the Regulations states that six members (of whom at least three must be Adnyamathanha people and at least three must be members appointed under regulation 5(1)(b) or (c)) constitute a quorum of the Board. This requirement was met at each Board meeting.

Regulations

The following information addresses annual reporting requirements established under Regulation 16 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park) Regulations 2005*.

(a) Information relating to traditional hunting activities in the park carried out in accordance with section 68D of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

A voluntary log book system records use of the Cultural Use Zone in the Park for traditional hunting activities.

The Board believes that the log book may be being underutilised and will continue liaising with community members to ensure that information about traditional hunting in the park is accurately recorded.

(b) Information relating to the effect of traditional hunting activities in the park carried out in accordance with section 68D of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* on native plants and protected animals, or the eggs of protected animals (and in particular those species that are scheduled as rare, endangered or vulnerable under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*).

The density of kangaroos in the Cultural Use Zone of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park was not assessed this year. The Bounceback Program are in the process of developing monitoring techniques to assess browse damage from kangaroos in the Park. Walking kangaroo surveys to assess roo density maybe conducted every 3 years, if there are sufficient resources.

(c) Information relating to the operations and work programs undertaken by or on behalf of the Board.

The Board continued to implement its work program based on the obligations under the Co-Management Agreement, Indigenous Land Use Agreement, *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, *National Parks and Wildlife (Vulkathunha-GRNP) Regulations 2005*, Management Plan and *Public Sector Act 2009*. The work program also addresses the strategic priorities that have been identified by the Board.

DEWNR officers report on operational and management activities undertaken in the Park to the Board at each meeting. The report addresses visitor management, biodiversity programs, cultural management matters, asset maintenance, projects, planning, training and development, work health and safety, and funding applications.

Due to the cultural significance of the Munyi site, the Board has taken an active interest in its protection. It is patrolled twice a week by the Senior Ranger V-GRNP and regular reports are provided to the Board. Inconspicuous vehicle track closure work has also been undertaken in the Munyi area as directed by the Board.

Feral Control

Feral animal control undertaken throughout the year included fox baiting and goat control.

(d) Information relating to park infrastructure.

Park infrastructure is managed through DEWNR's asset management program to ensure appropriate maintenance of infrastructure/assets on reserves. The Board is provided with an overview at each meeting as part of the DEWNR management report.

During the reporting period there were a number of infrastructure improvements. Maintenance work was undertaken on Grindell's Hut and the Balcanoona workshop and shearers quarters.

(e) Any other information required by the Minister.

No additional information was required by the Minister during this reporting period.

Reconciliation Statement

The Board would like to acknowledge that the land on which it meets is the traditional lands for the Adnyamathanha people.

In fulfilling its functions, the Board is cognisant of the cultural and natural heritage of traditional owners and strives to achieve positive outcomes wherever these matters are concerned.

Human Resource Matters

Staffing

The Board has no staff of its own. Ms Denise McCourt, from DEWNR's South Australian Arid Lands Region provides executive support to the Board.

In accordance with the Co-Management Agreement, the Board is kept informed of DEWNR staff development and training. Staff working in the Park have undertaken a number of training programs including warden, fire, procurement and conflict training.

Disability Action Plans

The members of the Board are aware of and abide by their obligations under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the State *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993

Reporting requirements against the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993* require the Board to report on the number of occasions on which public interest information has been disclosed to a Responsible Officer of the agency. There were no disclosures made during the 2014-15 financial year.

Equal Opportunity Programs

The Board has no staff of its own and is serviced by staff of DEWNR. Members are aware of and abide by the equal opportunity policies and programs of DEWNR. Reporting on this matter may be viewed in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Gender Reporting

The gender balance of the Board is always taken into consideration when members are appointed. Within the reporting period there were four male and four female members.

Work Health and Safety

There were no incidents reported by the Board during the reporting period.

As a user of DEWNR facilities and equipment, the Board is aware of and abides by DEWNR's OHS&W policies. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

During the reporting period DEWNR Staff operating in the Park undertook First Aid, manual handling, safety awareness and 4WD vehicle training.

Use of Consultants

The Board did not engage any consultants in the reporting period.

Public Complaints

Nil

Financial Performance

DEWNR administers the budget for the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park on behalf of the Board and provides a financial report to members at each meeting. Expenditure has been maintained with the budget allocation.

Finance

The costs associated with the administration of the Board are met from within the existing resources of DEWNR. Members are paid sitting fees in accordance with the recommendation from the Chief Executive, DPC which states;

- Chair: \$221.00 per 4 hour session
- Members: \$177.00 per 4 hour session.

Government employees are not entitled to sitting fees.

Account Payment Performance

DEWNR provides administrative resources for processing account payments for the Board. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Contractual Arrangements

The Board did not enter any contractual arrangements exceeding \$4 million in value during the reporting period.

Other Reporting Items

Energy Efficiency Action Plan Reports

The Board uses the facilities and services of DEWNR staff. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Overseas Travel

It is declared that no member of the Board has travelled overseas on the business of the Board during the reporting period.

Fraud

It is declared that there were no instances of fraud detected in the activities undertaken by the Board.

Financial services are provided to the Board by DEWNR. Strategies to detect instances of fraud are reported in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Regional Impact Assessment Statement

The Board undertook no Regional Impact Assessment Statements in 2014-15.

Freedom of Information

As a DEWNR administered entity, the Board participates and abides by the arrangements outlined in the DEWNR Freedom of Information regime. Reporting on this matter is available on the DEWNR internet site. Please visit www.environment.sa.gov.au to view the FOI Statement.

Urban Design Charter

No events occurred in 2014-15 that required the Board to consider the principles of urban design contained in the South Australian Urban Design Charter.

Greening of Government (GoGo) Framework

The Board uses the facilities and services of DEWNR Staff. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Acknowledgment

The Board appreciates the support and encouragement it received over the past year from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, Hon Ian Hunter MLC.

The Board records its appreciation for the assistance provided by senior DEWNR staff, including: Ms Sandy Pitcher, Chief Executive; Mr John Schutz, Group Executive Director Partnership and Stewardships; Stuart Paul, Regional Manager South Australian Arid Lands Region; Tony Magor, Manager Public Lands and Co-management; Arthur Coulthard, Senior Cultural Ranger and Ms Denise McCourt, Executive Officer.

The Board acknowledges key stakeholders including the Adnyamathanha community, ATLA members, Mr Vince Coulthard and Michael Anderson (ATLA) the Native Title Holders.

The Board is working collaboratively and advancing partnership arrangements between DEWNR and Adnyamathanha to achieve shared objectives for future conservation management in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park.

