

Arckaringa Hills State Heritage Area

Arckaringa Hills was declared a State Heritage Area on 20 December 1985.

GEOLOGY

The Arckaringa Hills provide a unique South Australian example of Breakaway Country or Badlands Topography.

The term 'Badlands' was first applied to the arid, dissected plateau of SW Dakota USA, and refers to areas of severe erosion, usually found in semi-arid climates and characterised by countless gullies, steep ridges and sparse vegetation. Badland topography is formed on poorly cemented sediments that have sparse, deeply-rooted plants. Short, heavy showers sweep away surface soil and small plants, creating depressions that gradually deepen into gullies.

Because rainfall is low and infrequent, protective crusts known as Duricrusts, tend to form on reasonably flat surfaces. This Duricrust involves cementation of the original material and results in a hard resistant surface, in this case silcrete (cemented by silica). As weathering and erosion take place, these areas of Duricrust protect the underlying strata, but 'break away' on the edges to leave mesas or pedestal rocks. The ancient and richly coloured underlying strata are revealed, creating a cliffline known as Breakaway Country.

The erosion of deeply weathered marine and early Cretaceous mudstone and sandstone has produced the picturesque and colourful Breakaway Country of the Arckaringa Hills. The cliffs are an array of coloured strata of red, brown and yellow oxides and hydroxides. Prolonged weathering over time has formed hard, resistant caps, above which is a silicified soil composed of a red jasper matrix referred to as Rousseau Beds. The area also includes fossilised termite burrows.

BIOLOGY

Vegetation in the region is sparse but varied. The upper slopes are dominated by mulga. Cassia and Eremophila shrubs are also common. Most significant is the presence of two rare plant species - *Goodenia chambersii* and *Lepidium strongylophyllum*.

Australia's largest monitor, and probably the second largest lizard in the world after the Komodo Dragon, is known to visit the Arckaringa Hills foraging rocky outcrops and surrounding areas for small animals, birds, insects and smaller reptiles. The Perentie, *Varanus giganteus*, occurs across a large area of central Australia but is not common to any particular area.



Further Information

For further information please contact the State Heritage Unit

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