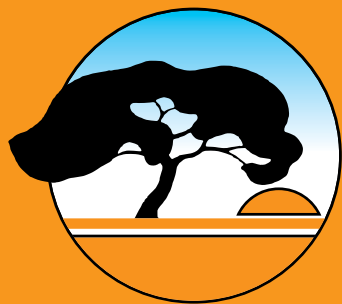




Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



Feb 2026
Issue #208

Image: *Crotalaria eremaea* - John Zwar, AALBG

President's Report by John Zwar OAM CF President



Happy New Year Friends and AALBG supporters. Despite some very hot days with temperatures above 47 degrees when the Garden was closed, secretary Chris mentioned that although visitor numbers are lower there is still a steady stream of people coming to the Garden most days. Some hardy plants are still flowering and making a show despite the heat, including *Petalostylis*, *crotalarias*, Sturt Peas and some *eremophilas*. No regular guided tours are scheduled through summer, but begin again in March. Chris mentioned that we are looking for new garden guides so if you are interested contact her. New Committee member, Myles McLure has proposed that we host a Sturt Pea Festival. We are investigating options and are looking at holding the event in early November. A large statewide tourism conference is to be held in Port Augusta in May and the Friends may be

making a presentation on the AALBG which will be good exposure for the Garden. Old paving which was breaking down has been replaced in the courtyard and looks really good.

With the State Government election being held in March we hope to convince government and opposition MPs to promise funding assistance for the AALBG as was done for the first time last election after lobbying for this help for many years. This enabled Council to continue operating the Garden by covering the budget shortfall and was greatly appreciated. We ask that Friends write, email or ask, if meeting candidates in person, for ongoing funding assistance. Please address requests to the Premier, Environment minister, local members, opposition members and any other parliamentarians/candidates you may choose. Friends will have received a request from Vice President Brian Reichelt to contact MPs and received suggested text for these letters requesting state government funding for the Garden, a few weeks ago. If you want more information please contact Secretary Chris. We look forward to seeing those who are able to attend our March meeting when the Guest Speaker will give a presentation on Mangroves. Keep cool! - John Zwar President



NEXT MEETING

Date and Time:

Saturday 7th March, 2026 at 1.00pm

Venue: WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker & Topic: Janine Baker
"Mangroves of Spencer Gulf"

Janine Baker has worked in South Australian marine research for more than 30 years. She is a valued contributor towards documenting species richness and biodiversity of the Great Southern Reef, and is a leading expert in the identification of species in this region.

DIARY DATES

FRIENDS MEETINGS 2026

1.00pm WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

- **7th March:** Marine Ecologist and Educator Janine Baker from Whyalla **Topic:** 'Mangroves'
- **6th June:** Tabitha Jones and growers from Sundrop Farm **Topic:** 'Sundrop Farm'
- **5th September:** Annual General Meeting Jim Hayward and Sandra McKenzie **Topic:** 'Using Our Australian Native Plants as Bonsai'
- **5th December:** Brian Reichelt **Topic:** 'Achievements in the Garden in 2026'

EVENTS

27th February: Gardening Australia with segment on AALBG to air 27/2/26.

Month of March: EUCALYPT MONTH The Guides and Friends of the AALBG will be running tours and activities. Check it out.

Month of May FAALBG reps at the Tourism Event on Central Oval.

7th November: The Friends in conjunction with the Lions Club Port Augusta and the Port Augusta City Council will be running a STURT DESERT PEA FESTIVAL at the AALBG. Sophie Thomson has been booked as a guest speaker. Not to be missed!

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Watching Field Trips for the Birds SA PORT AUGUSTA GROUP

Sunday 15th February

Bowman Park,
Meet at Crystal Brook info park
(main street) at 8:30 am.

Sunday 22nd March:

Chinamans Creek,
Meet at Augusta Hwy turnoff at 8:00 am
(Wear beach walking footwear.)

Sunday 12th April:

Devils Peak and Quorn area,
Meet at the Quorn pool at 8:30 am.

Friday 15th - Saturday 16th - Sunday 17th May

Ironstone Conservation Park.
Meet at the Whyalla wetlands at 9:00am.
(Camp out. No facilities.)

Please bring: binoculars, sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection, morning tea and lunch.

Contact: Bernie 0419 863 834
b.haase55@outlook.com

Bird Talk from The Garden by Peter Langdon

Lack of rain has made areas of the Garden look ordinary, however, the developed part of the Garden which has irrigation is still looking good.

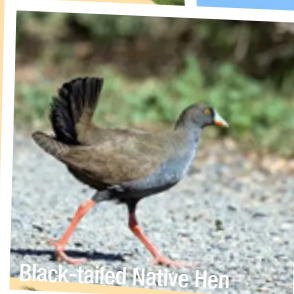
We still have a lot of species of birds in the Garden, but not numbers of birds. The regulars are still showing well, with some other interesting species turning up. A solitary Black-tailed Native hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*) was seen moving around in the "New" Eremophila Garden.

Speaking with a visiting birder on the phone, he reported seeing four Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) in the gulf out from the Flinders Lookout. I immediately visited the area and saw seven swimming just beyond the Grey Mangroves (*Avicennia marina*). Great Crested grebe is found throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, most of Asia, South Africa and Southern and Eastern Australia but not the Americas. It is mostly seen on large freshwater wetlands, also on large saline waters and sheltered coastal waters. They feed on fish and other aquatic animals, obtained by diving. This is a new species for the AALBG Bird List which now stands at 176 species sighted since records commenced. I phoned the birder back and he was chuffed to add it to our list; the birds were still present into the New Year in varying numbers.

Rainbow Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) and Red-backed Kingfishers (*Todiramphus pyropygius*) are still present in early January but in low numbers. Whilst watching You Tube I saw a birder had photos of a single male Black Honeyeater (*Sugomel nigrum*) in the Garden in recent weeks, and on checking the Bird List of Sightings at the Bird Bulletin Board it had been listed as sighted on around 5th January 2026.

If you are a birder and visit the Garden, please list the species you have sighted on the List of Sightings Sheet at the Bird Bulletin Board in the Car park area to enable us to monitor the bird species that visit the Garden.

Black Honeyeater



Black-tailed Native Hen



Red Backed Kingfisher



Rainbow Bee-eater



Great Crested Grebe

Peter's Plants by Peter Hall

Pityrodia terminalis, or Native Foxglove, is an outstanding native plant that comes from some of the inland parts of Western Australia. It grows to 1 to 1.5 metres in height to 1 metre in width.

Native Foxgloves are hairy and grey. Flowers are tubular and their colour can vary from white to pink to red but they usually stand out against the grey leaves.

Pityrodias are very hard to keep alive in a garden situation, even in a pot. I have only been able to keep them alive for at least one flowering.

Since writing this article *Pityrodia terminalis* has had a name change and is now *Dasymalla terminalis*.



Dasymalla terminalis



Dasymalla terminalis

Snippets by Shirley Mundy

Stripe-faced Dunnart Drops In!

This gorgeous fellow had been living in a box of plants, unknown to us. Perry brought the box into the nursery shed for me to weed. The dunnart jumped out of the box and fell off the bench into the rubbish bin. We wouldn't have seen him long enough to photograph him (18/12/25) if he had fallen straight to the floor. The prunings are from *Eremophila glabra* Canning Stock Route.

Editor note: *Sminthopsis macroura macroura* - a small Australian marsupial mouse.



Stripe-faced Dunnart

Our Eremophila Garden turns Thirty!

"A large representative planting of the genus *Eremophila* is to be established adjacent to the Reception Building, to revegetate ground compacted and disturbed when the building was constructed. This planting will provide an attractive and colourful foreground to the view of the Flinders Ranges, seen from the dining area in the building and will attract birds. At the time of writing Brian Powell, Bernie Haase and other helpers from Quom and Port Augusta are busy preparing the site and installing irrigation for a planting of about 1,200 *eremophilas* of approx. 160 species and forms. Plants are coming from the Pinery Nursery of Ronda and Peter Hall (*Eremophila* specialists) and advice provided also by Ken Wames of Owen, for many years the leader of the SGAP *Eremophila* Study Group. These plants and others will be purchased by the Friends. The *Eremophila* garden should quickly establish and become a very attractive feature of the AALBG. Thanks to all who helped with this project at short notice."

- THE EREMOPHILA PROJECT (From the Newsletter of March 1996)

No rain has fallen in the last three months, the chenopod is looking a little dry, but fortunately this year there is a little bit of dry vegetation between the Black Bush because of the September rainfall. The Garden itself has put on a good showing of flower despite the lack of rainfall surviving on the small amount of irrigation it receives.

The volunteering period for this report is a little shorter than normal due to the Christmas break of 3 weeks, however a large amount of work has been accomplished by the Volunteers and Garden Staff.

Propagating in the form of cuttings and seed has continued and potting up, weeding and preparing plants for sale at the Gift Shop Plant sales area has continued under the Supervisor of Propagation Supervisor Perry.

In the Garden under the watchful eye of Garden Supervisor Tyler and Gardener Nikki several projects have been completed or are nearing completion assisted ably by the Volunteers in most cases.

1. Council employed contractors to remove the old rubber compound area around the Sundial's and replace with Terracotta brick pavers. This project has been completed and has added a new dimension to the Courtyard.



2. The Arid Smart Coastal Garden has been landscaped and is looking extremely good and will add inspiration to visiting public to achieve similar situations in their own garden.



3. The Sandhill Bird Hide in the Great Victoria Region has received an upgrade to the pond for birds to drink and bathe, which will increase the number of birds able to utilize this pond and enhance birdwatchers' ability to sight the species easily.



4. The "New" Eremophila Garden has been weeded to remove the Potato Weed and other feral plants which germinated following the September rain.

5. The Eremophila Garden at the Arid Smart Garden's is now undergoing restoration with the removal of old plants, relaying the paving and the installing of concrete borders to secure the paving. It is now ready for soil upgrading, installation of irrigation and then planting. This refurbishment will indeed enhance the visitor experience to these Gardens. Two more are still to be refurbished in the 2026 year.



6. Final landscaping of the area containing the new Toilet facilities will begin on Monday 20th January and hopefully completed in a very quick time.

7. We urgently need more volunteers particularly in the areas of Tour Guides and Garden, please consider volunteering it is a very rewarding pastime, and you may gain more friends with like interests.

COME VOLUNTEER TODAY!

2025-2026 Corporate Members

The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc acknowledges its wonderful Corporate Members and requests that you support these businesses whenever you are able.

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We also welcome any additional business owners/ managers supporting us by becoming Corporate Members. For more information, contact Brian Reichelt on 0418 896 995 or email breich@bigpond.net.au

Reminder Are you financial?

Renewals for Memberships for the 2025-26 year were due 1st July, 2025.

Discounts for the purchase of meals and gifts in the café and gift shop only apply to the Friends Membership card holder/s and cannot be transferred to family and friends who are not members.

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BECOME A FRIEND

Individual (due annually 1st July).....\$30
Includes 1 membership card

Family (due annually 1st July).....\$50
2 adults & dependant children under 18
Includes 2 membership cards

Corporate (due annually 1st July).....\$250
Includes 1 membership card per business

To join or renew please fill in form and make payment to:

The Secretary
The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc
PO Box 2040, Port Augusta South Australia 5700

Cheques: Please make membership cheques payable to
The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Port Augusta Inc.

Direct Debit Details: Please use your name as reference
BSB: 035 065 Account: 164604 Account Name: FAALBG

Online: visit www.friendsaalbg.org.au/membership

Please tick a box: ☐ New Membership

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