



# Matt Deer Camp 2007



## Cruising Kings Canyon

**3-5 May 2007**

*MHACA's annual Matt Deer Camp  
was held on 3-5 May at Kings Canyon. Eleven people attended  
and a good time was had by everyone,*

*as Tim MacDonald reports ...*

# ***Cruising to Kings Canyon***



## **Heading out ...**

We left MHACA at 9:45am and drove towards Erldunda, stopping at Stuarts Well on the way to have a close look at some of the camels. This was followed by a tasty lunch of salad rolls and fruit at Mt Ebenezer. The weather was cloudy in the morning but cleared up towards the afternoon.

In the afternoon we played some games in the car and had general discussions about trips we have previously been on. After setting up tent around 4.30pm (everyone chipped in and it only took about 20 minutes to set up two tents) a group of us went to get firewood while the others went about cooking dinner and unpacking.

We tucked into dinner as dusk rolled over the horizon - each night we saw beautiful sunsets, particularly as the clouds diffused the warm colours. As we ate our salad and steak and Roland commented, "This is much better than what I eat at home." (I'd have to agree!). After dinner we sat around the fire with lots of good conversations flowing. Most of us were in bed by 10:30pm.

## **Early start**

We woke up early on Friday morning and enjoyed toast, cereal and coffee for breakfast (Laurent holds the record for the most pieces of toast: 7! Go Laurent).

After cleaning up, ten of us headed to the Canyon while Steve decided to stay behind and read. We arrived there at 9:30am (after playing a game of Chinese whispers in the van which worked well - the end result was very different from the beginning!).

Six people decided to do the longer more scenic 3-hour Kings Canyon walk while four of us did the more leisurely valley walk. I did the shorter walk - where we had plenty of time to talk about the unique flora and joined in listening to a guide who described the history of the Canyon. We then strolled back to the shelter,



and I went on to join the other group for the last 30 minutes of their walk. Roland told me that he had helped build the Kings Canyon track about four years ago - where they mostly had to work at night as it was too hot during the day.

The group headed back to the campground about midday where we made some burritos for lunch ... which tasted just great!!

## Afternoon activities

In the afternoon we played some games including frisbee, cricket, bike-riding and Yahtzee. Coral and Steve were a bit more adventurous and decided to go for a helicopter trip. Everyone got involved in the games and those of us who went down to the helicopter pad got plenty of good photo opportunities. Danielle taught myself and Seli how to make damper which turned out pretty well and was enjoyed by everyone later that night.

Danielle also prepared a wonderful dinner for us that night. It was apricot chicken cooked in a camp oven which slowly cooked in the fire until the chicken literally fell off the bone, it tasted very tender. Thanks Danielle! We also baked potatoes in the fire and some vegetables in another camp oven. After dinner we cooked the damper, which everyone enjoyed - we really did eat well throughout the camp. For our final dessert, we toasted some marshmallows (of course!).

## Heading back

On Saturday morning we got up a little later and had a large breakfast (as we had a lot of food to try and finish). We were going to have pancakes but had unfortunately used up all the firewood. Everyone chipped in with packing up the tents and we were ready to go by 9:00am.

We headed back via Kathleen Springs where we walked down a short track to the Spring. Along the way we saw a number of ruins which had been left by farmers who had previously mustered cattle there. We took one last group photo at the Spring before starting on our trip back to Alice Springs around 11.00am.

We made a number of stops on the way back,





including at Mt Ebenezer (where we had lunch and I got to kick a footy with a couple of local kids), Erldunda and Stuarts Well. Coming back there were some more interesting discussions in the Hilux about things like the nuclear debate, how to fix the drought (!) and the lack of stability in trucks travelling at high speed.

Both cars returned to Alice just after 5.00pm in the afternoon. There was a noticeable reluctance for people to part company and some phone numbers were exchanged which was a great thing to witness.

## High marks

Feedback overall, both formal and informal, was very positive. An evaluation form was handed out at the completion of the camp and nearly everyone gave high or very high marks for the food, accommodation, enjoyment, teamwork and preparation.

Half of those on the camp said they would like a longer camp next time as they had had a great experience. Those who said this also commented that they would be happy to contribute more to the next camp if it was longer. Suggestions were also made for a few other places we could go next time.

More detailed feedback was provided by staff which similarly suggested that overall things went very well. A few clients in particular have really benefited from the camp, with a noticeable change in behavior since the trip - demonstrating more energy, self-confidence and motivation.

Not everyone has the opportunity to be able to organise more involved trips such as this one which have many positive benefits. The 2-3 day camps are a great opportunity for people to 'get away', relax, get to know others, be part of a team, have some fun and generally feel good and enjoy themselves.

Thank you to everyone who came a long. I know I had a great time and look forward to going on the next MHACA camp.

*Tim MacDonald*

