

## The Hamer Newsletter



**9 November 2009**

Hello to One and All,

Well, we have been having so much fun since the last letter that time has really got away from us and we now have a lot of activity to tell you about. We are now at Coronation Beach W.A. and this coast is all that we expected except that it has been so windy we have not been able to do much fishing. Still, the temperatures are much better now that we are away from the north.

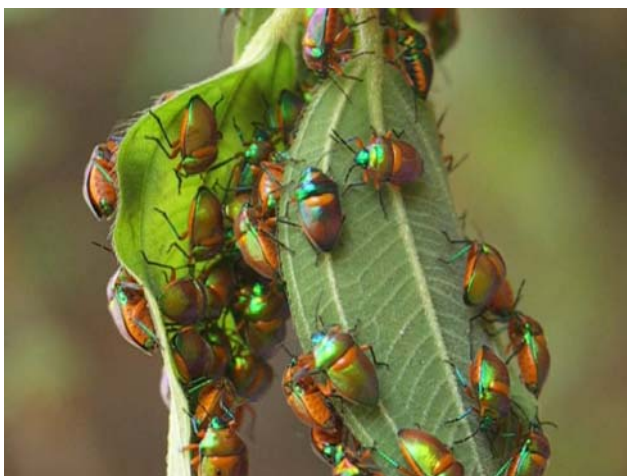
The heat in the Top End was just too much and unfortunately, we did not see as much as we would have liked in that area, but maybe we will return one day earlier in the year and explore some more. We missed the wildflowers – they appear in Winter, not Spring as we thought.

**Thursday 13 August**

The last letter ended at Adelaide River where we spent 2 days, and drove out to look at Robin Falls where we camped in a tent in October 1981 – doesn't seem to have changed much! We also had a look at some of the WW2 sites and the rail museum. It's hard to believe how busy some of these small towns were in the old days, especially during the war years. We also went to see "Charlie the buffalo" of Crocodile Dundee fame, standing in the bar at the Adelaide River Hotel.

**Friday 14 August**

To Copperfield Dam for a few nights – very hot, dry and dusty but with the cool lake to swim in it was



bearable. We drove to Umbrawarra Gorge and walked along the creek for a couple of hours – lovely clear running water and fascinating rock formations, clouds of butterflies and a tree with clusters of jewel beetles.

## Monday 17 August

To Manbulloo Homestead van park outside Katherine, another significant WW2 site. The van park was a bit tired but the huge shady trees made for a very pleasant and cool stay, and the river was great for a cooling swim.

Friends Cuppa and Mrs Tea (Ian and Julie Locke) arrived in Katherine with their Nissan Civilian bus on the back of a tow truck. After booking the bus in for repairs they came and joined us at Manbulloo, staying in a cabin for the duration.



## Tuesday 25 August

Finally deciding we really had to start heading west, we left Katherine and stopped at Victoria River Roadhouse. It was very hot so we were thankful to have a powered site and run the air-conditioner, although the power failed frequently due to the number of wimps like us running their van air-conditioners. At 5 pm the temperature was still 38 deg C. The Roadhouse staff said they didn't notice the heat as this is the cool season!

Next morning, we were up very early to do the Escarpment climb while it was still relatively cool. Mind you, by 8.30 am it was mid 30's.



At lunch time, a friend from our Canada trip last year suddenly appeared. Heather was on an outback adventure tour and they just happened to stop at the Roadhouse for lunch, and Heather just happened to notice Stopalot parked in the van park. What a surprise, but unfortunately she only had a few minutes to spare before boarding the bus again.

## Thursday 27 August

To Lake Argyle van park. On the way we detoured down a rough corrugated dirt road to visit the famous Gregory Tree, an old Boab where the pioneer Gregory camped for some time on one of his expeditions in the 1800's. Those pioneers were made of much tougher stuff than we are.



After being searched at the quarantine station on the NT/WA border – no fruit, veg or honey





allowed over the border into WA – we made it to Lake Argyle and found it is just as blue and beautiful as we recalled from 1981. We stayed a night there and visited the Durack Homestead which is now a museum and shows the way of life in the 1800's of the famous Durack family.

### **Friday 28 August**

To Kununurra, to the Kimberleyland van park and a site right on the water's edge (Lily Creek Lagoon). Unfortunately, they had a power problem and we kept losing power especially in the late afternoon when everyone wanted their air-conditioners on! Still, it was a good spot.

We went to the Kununurra markets on Saturday and bought fruit & veg, and tried some Baby Boab Tuber. This is a fairly new crop in the Ord River Irrigation Area. They grow boab trees from seed and harvest at about 16 weeks. The tuber (the main root) and the leaves are used raw in salads, or stir fried. They also use the boab fruit in relishes and chocolates.

We organised for the refrigeration people to come and replace the wiring on the fridge – couldn't do it as they did not have the right connectors. So, we now have to wait until we get to Perth and hope that Dometic can send the connectors to their agent there.

We decided not to visit Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungle) as it was just getting too hot, and we would have to leave Stopalot somewhere and camp in a tent. It would have been good to catch up with friends Neil and Marieke who were volunteer camp ground hosts, but we decided to leave it for another trip and pick cooler weather.

So, we did a 2 hour flight from Kununurra over Lake Argyle, The Bungles and Argyle Diamond Mine. That was a fantastic trip and



we saw far more than if we had driven in.



### **Friday 4 September**

We felt that we couldn't leave the area without seeing historical Wyndham, so headed there for a couple of days and ended up staying a week. The town Arts & Crafts annual competition was



on, and the van park visitors were rounded up to act as impartial judges, as the locals all know each other too well to judge the works. It was a pleasant duty and we were surprised at the variety of arts & crafts on display, and the talent shown.

Again, the heat was oppressive and we had days over 40 deg C, which the locals said was nothing! The small pool at the van park was well used. We did 2 early morning visits to Parrys Lagoon



(Marlgu Billabong) to sit in the hide and look at the birds – and the crocodiles. There were hundreds of birds including all the types you associate with the Top End – brolga, jabiru, magpie goose, ibis, spoonbill, ducks, cormorants and many others. We saw a crocodile stalking the birds in the water. It was fascinating and easy to spend a couple of hours watching the action.

The Five Rivers Lookout on the Bastion at Wyndham is an interesting place to watch the sunset, with impressive views over Cambridge Gulf and the 5 rivers emptying into the gulf.

### **Thursday 10 September**

Back to Kununurra to stock up with groceries. Frans organised to meet the Mayor and discuss RV parking for RV Friendly Town status, so we booked into the Kimberleyland van park again for 2 nights, again right on the water.

### **Saturday 12 September**

Finally, we were on our way west, heading for the coast. We decided to make this a big driving day so left Kununurra around 7.45 am and drove all day with only short stops for fuel and food. There were heaps of road works between Kununurra and Hall's Creek and beyond, with lots of detours onto dirt sections – thankfully we did not wash the rig before leaving Kununurra because it was filthy within a couple of hours.

We made it to Fitzroy Crossing at 4.30 pm after 690 klms and checked into the Fitzroy River Lodge for a few days. This is a beautiful van park, big drive-through sites and grassed areas and very well laid out – quite a surprise for such a remote region. We splashed out and had dinner in the Lodge.



The days here were very hot – in the 40's – but we enjoyed a boat trip along Geikie Gorge one afternoon viewing the beautiful gorge walls which are actually an ancient limestone sea bed, and saw a few freshwater crocodiles.

It was also great to stay inside and watch the US Open tennis finals, and see Kim Clijsters win her match, and Del Potro win his.

### **Wednesday 16 September**

To Derby, with more road works along the way and yet another layer of red dirt on the car and



van. The huge tidal movements at Derby were a sight to see.

We decided to do a day trip to “The Horizontal Falls” north of Derby. This involved a seaplane flight from Derby airport to Talbot Bay, landing on the water and transferring onto a jet boat for a trip through the Horizontal Falls. The tidal movements here are huge and the tide running through a narrow inlet creates a height differential of up to 5 metres.



After lunch and a spot of fishing, it was back on the seaplane for a very scenic flight home. That would have to be the best day trip we have done so far. The other 4 couples on the trip are also heading south and we have been bumping into each other and doing some travelling together

since Derby.

### **Saturday 19 September**

To Broome and a lovely waterfront site at Roebuck Bay van park. The beautiful aqua ocean after much red dirt was a real delight and we thoroughly enjoyed our time there, even swimming in the warm sea.

We did all the usual touristy drives around the place, visited Cable Beach and saw the sunset camel rides, and met up with friends who live there, including a delightful lunch with Collyn and Maarit Rivers. We were sorry to hear that



there were serious bush fires recently which threatened Broome and destroyed a lot of the bush in the area.

### **Friday 25 September**

To Barn Hill Station, a working cattle station with a beautiful rugged shoreline and cliff top camping sites. More swimming and beach walking and taking of photos. It was very windy again and the dust was swirling but the nights were OK.



### **Monday 28 September**

To 80 Mile Beach van park, and at last some productive fishing. We actually caught blue threadfin salmon, enough for 4 meals.

### **Thursday 1 October**

To Port Hedland, a service town for the mining industry. We stayed only 1 night, did the shopping and left the next day for Indee Station which is an old cattle property with a few very basic





camping sites. It was very hot, dry and dusty – back to the red dirt country again. While there we visited Red Rock and had a good look at the Aboriginal Art, images etched onto the surface of the rock. Unfortunately, erosion and weathering are slowly destroying the art works.



### **Sunday 4 October**

To Karijini National Park, Dales Gorge campground. We did some of the gorge walks here but although it was very hot, the water in the gorges was too cold to swim in. Bush fires have gone through the park since we were there so our timing was pretty good.

### **Tuesday 6 October**

To Tom Price. We drove up Mt Nameless for the sunset views over the iron ore mine, Tom Price town, and the Hamersley Ranges. The mine is enormous and although it is very



close to town is hidden away behind the mountain.

We visited Hamersley Gorge and did a fairly difficult hike to a little Grotto with a permanent pool.

### **Thursday 8 October**

Time to head for the coast and some cooler breezes. We planned to do an overnight stop at a free-camp, but the wind and dust was so bad we continued on to Nanutarra Roadhouse where we could at least have power, run the air-con and shut the windows against the dust.

### **Friday 9 October**

To Exmouth, finally back on the coast and cooler weather. We were advised that the camp sites in Cape Range National Park (adjoining Ningaloo Reef Marine Park) were full over the weekend so we stayed in Exmouth until Monday morning.



### **Monday 12 October**

An early departure from the van park and we were first in line at the entry gate to the National Park at 7am. When the gate opened at 8am we were able to secure a site in Osprey Bay campground, the best place for big vans like ours and the best of the many camp grounds in the park. There we stayed for the next 8 days enjoying the swimming, snorkelling, beach walking, whale spotting, dolphin and turtle watching, and socialising with the other happy

campers there. We also did a couple of gorge walks, and a harbour whale-watch sunset cruise out of Exmouth.

This has to be one of the best places we have stayed at – no facilities except a pit toilet, but with our tanks full of water and the sun keeping our solar panels charging we were very comfortable. There were also heaps of emus, euros and birds.



### **Tuesday 20 October**

Reluctantly leaving Osprey Bay, we drove to Coral Bay further along the coast, hoping to do some more snorkelling but the wind made the water too choppy. We tried fishing but no luck, so decided to head off again.

### **Thursday 22 October**



To Quobba Blowholes Reserve, where we spent 4 days and again enjoyed great snorkelling just off the beach. The coral was great with beautiful fish everywhere. Whales were spouting and frolicking offshore and we saw dolphins and turtles, osprey and heaps of terns. On our last night there we had a thunderstorm with hours of lightning and

thunder, and heavy rain – the first rain we have seen for months.

### **Monday 26 October**

To Carnarvon – and lovely freshly picked fruits and vegies. We bought peaches, nectarines, plums, pawpaw, strawberries, bananas, what a feast. It was a surprise to find such a productive horticultural area on this remote coast. Again, we had no luck at all with the fishing.



### **Thursday 29 October**

To Whalebone Bay (in Shark Bay) and a free-camp (one night allowed by permit) just a couple of metres from the water. In the morning we watched a lone dolphin cruising by, and a small shark nearby.

### **Friday 30 October**

To Denham – very windy, but a nice little town and close to Monkey Mia and the Francois Peron National Park.



We went to Monkey Mia to see the dolphins – a very “managed” experience but still amazing to see wild dolphins coming in for a snack of fish and to check out these weird humans who stand around watching them. We also went to the Ocean Park to see sharks, turtles, sea snakes and a variety of fish in ponds. Again, a managed environment but a great way to see these creatures close up and to learn about them.



Then we had a fantastic day trip through the Francois Peron National Park to Cape Peron, the very tip of the peninsula. It was a 40 k 4WD trip over a lot of soft sand and worth every minute of the drive. The landscape is truly beautiful with red sand dunes and white

beach sand, against the bluest of skies and ocean. From the lookout at Skipjack Point we watched dolphins, dugongs, sharks, manta rays, turtles and schools of fish. It just doesn't get any better than this!

That's it for now - until the next instalment,

Regards, Bev & Frans





