

Cobdogla Canoe Weekend MARCH 31ST to APRIL 3RD 2017

It was pre-dawn as hundreds of pink and gray galahs began chattering raucously in the trees above our campsite at Cobdogla Station on the River Murray. Thirteen SARCC members were waking to enjoy a few days of camaraderie whilst kayaking and camping together.



Paul and I are not regular canoeists and had hired a kayak each from Riverland Canoes. They were delivered to our campsite and when we saw them we were surprised that they were long and sleek with a rudder. Those rudders proved to be invaluable for easily moving us through the twisting channels. They made poor kayakers look proficient! Amongst our group the fleet of craft varied hugely as did the level of expertise of the paddlers, but everyone was very excited to be going out onto the water.



We launched near the Kingston Bridge without mishap and ten of us lead by Bernie headed down river towards Loch Luna. We quickly turned off the wide Murray River into the Nookuburra Creek which is part of a marked canoe trail.

It was a really beautiful experience gliding along quietly past lush foliage, to be a part of another world of birds and nature for a while. We all felt it because the whole group was silent with only the slight splashing of the paddles being heard as we immersed ourselves in the peace. Quite surreal.



We paddled about five kilometres before arriving at a large area of open water, Loch Luna, where we had morning tea without getting out. There are very few places where it would be possible to land due to thick tall reeds and we had been warned that a toilet stop would be difficult.

The return trip was the reverse so all up about 10 kilometres was paddled except that Paul and I were to paddle the 5 kilometres back to camp along the Murray River. We did manage to get a bit lost and found ourselves in Wachel Lagoon, a large expanse of open water where the waves were quite big which was becoming unnerving. After a while we realised our error and backtracked and arrived at camp having done 1.7 kilometres more than needed and very tired.



On Sunday morning we drove to Chambers Creek where it enters Lake Bonney on the Morgan Road. After some deliberation, a safe launch site was chosen, we launched and headed upstream.

Bernie and a couple of others went to Barmera instead of canoeing so we were led by David using Bernie's GPS instructions. Navigation is so important in the wetlands because the channels all look so similar that we could have been paddling around in circles for days.

The Chambers Creek trail was in open country with many dead gums and submerged stumps and logs. This environment really suited the water birds. We saw many whistling kites and their very large nests in tall dead trees as well as spoonbills, heron, waterfowl and flocks of various ducks.



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After stopping on the bank for lunch went on a bit further then returned the same way arriving back at camp mid afternoon.

The entire group went to the Cobdogla Club a short walk away for tea. The Sunday night special is roast with serve yourself vegetables for \$10 which reduced to \$8.80 with the caravan park discount! We had a table together and it was a good evening.

Only four of us remained to paddle on the Monday but the weather was perfect again so we explored the small backwater areas close to camp and saw several houseboats on the river for the first time. The river traffic had been very quiet over the weekend.

A great four days, shared with interesting generous people with perfect weather. What more could we ask for. We all agreed there is enough interest among club members for it to be considered to become an annual event.

Our thanks to Alan for organising.

Robyn Davill

