

Issue 5 SEPT / OCT 2014

Friends of the Larapinta Trail Newsletter



Section 3 near Standley Chasm
photograph by Amanda Markham
(Travel Outback Australia)



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Chris Day, Director Central Australian Parks, PWCNT.



Farewell until 2015!

What a great year of hiking, volunteering and making new friends it has been!

Friends of the Larapinta Trail offered:

- 3 working bees
- 4 guided walks
- 5 informative newsletters
- 6 Todd Mall market stalls

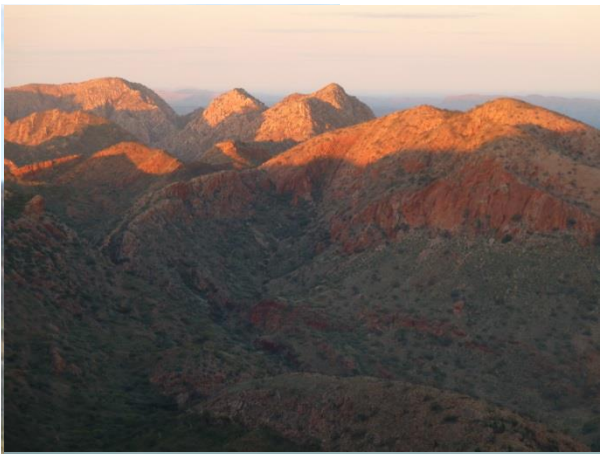
Check out the annual report sent through in mid-September for more details about FOLT achievements and goals for the future.

Our membership increased by 81% and 103 people participated in events.

This will be our final newsletter for 2014 – we'll be back in touch with a new calendar of events early in 2015. Over the summer the FOLT committee will continue to work on website content and the potential for Larapinta Trail merchandise.

If you know someone that would like to be a member then feel free to give them our email address and we will sign them up. Alternatively they can like the FOLT facebook page and find out about upcoming events that way.

Thanks to everyone who participated or contributed to the Friends in some way, no matter how small. We look forward to seeing you all in 2015!



In a nutshell

Summer Walks

1. **Go early for sunrise:** Many walkers choose to do this when walking Mt Sonder but it can be applied to any section. Get up early (very early!) walk by torchlight and be at your lookout point by sunrise. Sit, relax and enjoy some well-earned breakfast while soaking in the stunning sunrises that we so often miss. Get going again and be back before it gets too hot.

Short walks can be done early in the morning but when it is hot you should aim to be finished by about 9am. Even at this time the heat can really knock you around.

2. **Water + salts:** If you do go early don't underestimate how much water you will need! Take plenty and consider freezing some the night before so that you can enjoy some cold water on the last part of your walk. Take some salted nuts or similar to replenish the salts you are losing through sweat.
3. **Short walks:** Think of summer as a time of 'there and back' short walks rather than trying to do whole sections which can be quite dangerous and not very enjoyable when it is hot.
4. **End with a swim:** Walking near Redbank Gorge, Ellery Creek or Ormiston Gorge means you can finish your short walk with a refreshing swim!
5. **Have a plan:** Be smart... Tell someone your plans and estimated time of return, be prepared with plenty of water and snacks, take some form of emergency communication (borrow, hire or buy) and don't plan to do something that is not recommended in hot conditions (think short and leave early). Don't forget to tell the person you have returned.
If it feels too hot, don't keep going. Listen to your body, turn around and wait until later in the year.

All photos on this page by Chris Day (check out Chris's Lara Trail experiences in the member profile on page 6).

SPONSOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Milner Meat



A big thank you to Milner Meat for supplying us with 3kg of sausages for working bees and other events!

Phone (08) 8952 1171

ONGOING SPONSORS:



A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered at the Todd Mall Markets this year!

We couldn't have succeeded in having a regular presence without the contribution of these dedicated volunteers. 20 people contributed 73.5 hours at the stall and it resulted in a huge increase in our membership base.



A satellite phone could save your life...

Almost as important as having a satellite phone is knowing how to use it.

- Make sure you have a fully charged battery before you go and only turn on to make a call
- Check your plan – you may need to dial the international prefix before making a call even to a local number
- Some sat phones can give you your location in latitude and longitude – a potentially life saving feature!

To hire a PLB or Satellite Phone please visit www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/parks/walks/larapinta/links

for a list of companies offering emergency communication device hire and sale.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) – 17th September @ Montes

Thanks to everyone who attended the AGM last month. All current committee members were re-elected (no new nominations but several positions are still vacant... please let us know if you are interested!) It was a great opportunity to catch up and reflect on the year and chat about our goals for 2015.

A copy of the annual report is available on the FOLT website and includes membership statistics, financial report, attendance, fundraising and plans for 2015.

Ormiston Gorge Working Bee

Sunday 7th September



Written by Phil Cowan

Our last working bee for the year proved to be a good challenge for us. A seemingly simple task of installing a platform table at the Ormiston Gorge Larapinta Trail campground ended up taking us all morning! In our defence, we got away to a slow start with coffee at the kiosk (it was too hard to refuse ☺) before we got down to work.

We had 3 volunteers travel from town, myself, and help from Ranger Ryan. Richard arrived from walking section 9 just in time to help dig the holes and pass his presidential eye over the proceedings.

Construction of the table involved preparing the steel legs for painting, cutting the right angle to size, and drilling the individual slats together. The old rule of measure twice, cut once was certainly useful to remember! Once assembled, holes needed to be dug, legs were painted and the table was then gently lowered into place.

Thanks everyone for making it a fun morning. We finished with a toasted sandwich from the kiosk (thanks again Nick and Bec!) paid for by FOLT. The table is a great addition to the campground and something that many walkers have asked about, so there is no doubt it will be popular next walking season.

Thanks to everyone who has helped out on a working bee this year. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.
Phil.

If you would like to contribute financially to the protection and promotion of the Larapinta Trail, cash donations are gratefully accepted. You can make a direct deposit to the FOLT:

Friends of the Larapinta Trail Inc - Bendigo Bank - BSB: 633 000 Acc: 144757366

EXPLORE . PROTECT . ENJOY . CONSERVE . PROMOTE . EXPERIENCE

MEMBER PROFILE: Chris Day

Many people know you as Chris Day, Director for Central Australian Parks... do you ever get out on the Trail in your personal time? Yes I do, never as much as I would like, and these days mainly just in my own time. One of the great things about living in Central Australia is the great weather we have for walking especially during the cooler months, and this happens to be when we get most of our long weekends and that is when I get out most. I probably average two or three sections each year, along with some other favourite walks and the odd short stroll.

Have you walked the Trail end to end? I have walked all sections of the trail, most of them multiple times but never all in one go. Walking the Trail end to end is still on my bucket list, but probably will have to wait until I retire. I have the utmost respect for all those who do it end to end though because I know how tough some of it is.

Were you involved in the initial planning and construction of the Trail? No, I cannot take any credit for the original concept or planning of the Larapinta Trail, and always like to acknowledge those staff of the Conservation Commission / Parks and Wildlife Commission who were involved especially Alan Ginns, a Planner with the Conservation Commission. It is an amazing concept that dated back to about 1986-87 with the first section built in 1988. I was lucky enough to get involved when a lot of the hard work was done, but I did get the chance to see the trail through to completion with the last four sections to be finalised 4, 5, 6 and 7, which involved route planning, construction contracts, interpretation material etc. This occurred between 1999 and 2002.

Do you have a favourite section of the Larapinta Trail? That is as hard a question as what is my favourite park! I have lots of favourite places along the trail, and some of those places are on what I guess are my favourite sections, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 12... and 1, 2, 3, 10 actually every section has things that come into my mind as I sit and dream I am out on the trail instead of typing this 😊

What is the most common question you get asked about the Trail? Probably the one above 😊 But from a logistical and planning point of view by other walkers it would be, 1) Do I really need to carry that much water? 2) Can I find any surface water along the way? 3) Do I really need to treat the water? 4) Will the water tanks have water in them? So you can see the common theme is around water, and I guess that is understandable. Water is heavy to carry, but it is scary and potentially fatal if you don't have enough, so in response to those questions, the answers are: 1) Yes! 2) In some years yes, but it is always better to plan on not needing to rely on it. 3) That is a personal decision. The water that we place in the tanks is either Alice Springs town supply water, rain water carted from storage tanks at Ormiston Gorge or rain water collected on site. Unfortunately, we can't guarantee that there won't be some infection in the storage tanks due to the presence of frogs. 4) The Rangers take their responsibility for maintaining the tank supplies very seriously. They know walkers lives depend on it. The tank water supplies are maintained year round and we are looking at technological solutions to provide greater certainty for the rangers that tank levels are always ok.

What advice do you have for people who want to continue walking in the approaching summer conditions? Most locals know that doing long distance walks in the central Australian summer is challenging, very dangerous if the walker is not well prepared and can be very quickly fatal. Sadly, we have seen people pay the price in the past for trying to walk in extreme conditions. Most importantly, you probably won't enjoy the walk as much as you should, if the conditions are hot. The Larapinta Trail is a challenging walk, mostly in exposed situations without much shade and a lot of red rocky sections that radiate a lot of heat. To walk safely in the hotter weather requires very careful planning, starting the walk really early, stopping and resting in the hottest part of the day and walking again in the evening, and carrying lots of water. Always make sure you check the weather forecast before you do any walk.

What is the most unusual thing you've ever seen or experienced on the Trail? I had an eerie night camped on section 4, just short of the Brinkley Bluff summit where there was something that kept flying across the ridge top, very close to my bed, that made a humming / buzzing sound but I couldn't see what it was. There were a number of them, and it was very dark, but it went on for a long time. I also loved the story of a young Dutch girl who walked the entire trail a few years back, and had nothing more in the way of food than a packet of biscuits, a block of cheese and a jar of peanut butter, and her charm. She apparently managed to get fed by various other walkers she met along the way. I like to know I am going to have plenty of food!

You've volunteered at the FOLT market stall a number of times. What did you enjoy the most about contributing your time? I love meeting new people and some old friends too, and trying to inspire them to go and do some or all of the Larapinta Trail. It is an amazing asset to have on your doorstep if you are a local resident, and so easy to go and do some of it, whether just as a part day, a whole day or a couple of weeks to do the lot. It is also great to see the interest in the Friends grow and the great activities and projects that have been achieved this year.

What is your vision for the Larapinta Trail in the future? I think that it is just to continue to grow the brand of the Larapinta Trail as a renowned, long distance arid zone walk. It is clearly getting more and more well known, and the trail is becoming increasingly important to the local economy. At the same time, the Parks and Wildlife Commission wants to ensure we have good management processes in place to enhance the experience of walkers, ensure the trail experience is maintained through good maintenance of the trail and the facilities that support it. I see the Friends of the Larapinta Trail playing an increasingly important role in much of this.

There are still some improvements and additional facilities that we would like to see for the future which we think we will enhance the trail's reputation, but its biggest attraction will of course always be the landscape, and the amazing trekking weather we have in central Australia, especially between April and September.