

Saving Western Pygmy Possum Expedition - 1-3 April 2022

Expedition Leader's Report

In an effort to provide something different and innovative for Waterhouse Club members who wanted to join this, the fourth Western Pygmy Possum expedition weekend, the expedition leaders, Gaye and Tim Fischer, elected to organise the two nights accommodation and part of the travel in two River Murray houseboats. The house boating decision was a good one, enjoyed both by those familiar with house boating and those new to it. Exceptionally pleasant weather was a bonus!

On Friday 1 April 2022, 13 Waterhouse Club members and the museum leader of this Citizen Science Project, Professor Steve Donnellan, met at the Foxtale Marina at Morgan to board the houseboats, Murray Entertainer and Foxtale 3. While we could have accommodated 20 members, late Covid related cancellations reduced our party to 14 - seven on each boat. Sadly, Gaye Fischer who had done all the organising, had a completely unexpected positive Covid test the day before leaving and had to call on Alastair and Rose Dow to help Tim get members to the right places at the right time and have them adequately fed and watered over the weekend.

Gluepot Conservation Reserve was the destination for assembling 40 Pygmy Possum nesting boxes and to reach this site, Waikerie Coaches bus transport was organised from Cadell to Gluepot and return for the one hour trip. While we did not install any boxes this time we had a brief tour of the facility and visited a site where a box had been installed previously which showed signs of use. The tour also included a visit to one of five bird hides and a staff introduction to the many projects the reserve undertakes by a team of eager volunteers.

The presentations over the weekend by Aimee Linke (Pygmy Possum Project Manager from Mid-Murray Landcare) and Steve Donnellan who gave an excellent illustrated talk on Pygmy Possums and a formally dressed presentation together with Alastair on the Waterhouse Club Logie awards.

Catering over the weekend was organised by Gaye in advance and involved collecting moussaka and butter chicken with saffron rice from Hutt Street suppliers as we left Adelaide (Saturday dinner and Sunday lunch) and Waikerie bakery (Saturday lunch packs) while a courtesy bus took us to the Cadell Club for our Friday evening dinner.

Again can we acknowledge the help by Margie Heylen and Natalie Rollinson in promoting the weekend through ever-changing Covid times, the last minute leadership takeover by Alastair and Rose, the welcoming Gluepot staff, Aimee Linke and her helpers and yet again the unparalleled presentations by Steve Donnellan.

One new Waterhouse Club member joined us on her first expedition and was overwhelmed by the experience both in what she learned and by the warm friendliness of her fellow members. So we have to also thank the wonderful Waterhouse Club members who each made the weekend so memorable.

Gaye and Tim Fischer (Expedition Leaders)

