



Kilcowera Station News

2010 A year to remember

What a year 2010 has been, we have seen such a turn around in the season starting with fabulous rain on Christmas Day 09. After nine years of drought the change in the weather just snuck up on us. We were so used to the weather man on the radio telling us another change coming through would have isolated storms and areas of blowing dust so that's all we expected. But we have had 20 inches this year and the country has been transformed from a dustbowl to an oasis.

Oddly though most of the swamps on both Kilcowera and Zenonie don't have much water in them but the clay pans are full and the water holes in the big creeks are also full. The six thousand ha Lake Wyara is at maybe fifty percent

capacity and supported a massive pelican rookery earlier in the year.

The wildflowers have been blooming in succession for the last four months, first the sennas and eremophilas, then the eucalypts, grevilleas, hakeas and lastly it seemed some of the acacias. There were stacks of others to numerous to go into here, but it has been marvelous to observe the timing of the flowering and what birds are about to utilize the various parts of the grasses, bushes and trees. There is so much grass about it's dammed dangerous to walk in it let alone ride a motor bike through it. Lucy has to be constantly groomed to get the grass seeds out of her, I reckon I could just plant her and have another patch of

instant grass.

The rain and the wet weather have been so wonderful but there was a down side: many of the visitors who had booked in to stay at Kilcowera were unable to make it due to road closures both on the property and in the surrounding area. Even just the uncertainty of whether it was going to rain put people off because the country side was just so wet a duck would get bogged if there was to be another inch of rain. So I hope that they are able to make the trip another time and that the station has a few good seasons to fully recover.

After a five year drought in the nineties and nine years of drought this decade surely we can hope for a few good years?

New Plants found on Kilcowera

This year has seen the appearance of some new inhabitants namely the black goanna who visited our front verandah and three sightings of the Woma Python on Zenonie. We also had a frog man here who identified 10 different frogs (not just the ones in the toilets!)

In the plant world I

found what I think is a Parsonia but can't identify the species until it flowers and sets seed. These plants are growing around the top of rocky gorges amongst Acacia doratoxydon trees. Another new plant growing in the gorges is Eremophila oppositifolia. Then there was the Pink Plains Bush near the quarters

and the Fringe Lily growing in a flooded area on Zenonie. Also the fragrant and pretty Stackhousia or Carpet of Snow which has not been seen for years, has been flowering for months. Downstream from the cattle yard we had a beautiful stand of Red Flinders grass come up from seed in the hay.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2010 a year to remember.	1
New plants for Kilcowera.	1
Our Flinders Ranges trip.	2
A great year for the birds and Birdos.	2
Restocking Kilcowera & Zenonie.	3
Our Business trip to the NT	3
OQTA Awards 2010	4
A little Yorkie—A sister for Lucy	4



GREG AND TONI SHERWIN—OWNERS.

- *Hands on & personal attention for all visitors*
- *Guided or self drive tours around the 120,000 acre cattle property*
- *Catering for groups by prior arrangement*
- *A range of accommodation and camping options.*



Our Flinders Ranges trip 2010.

In late July, Greg and I were able escape for 10 days and headed for the Flinders on a fact finding tour about other station stays. SA has got quite a few that have been operational for many years.

Ralph and Barbara (Sydneyiders) had stayed at Kilcowera as guests and offered to caretake Kilcowera for us. They arrived here quite late after a trying day driving through rain and wet roads from Tibbooburra.

At Hawker we rang various stations to see about staying but could not contact anyone. So we drove up to Wilpena Pound and used their VIC and coffee shop as our office, once again trying to book in to one of the many stations on the list we had downloaded from SA Tourism. Most didn't answer their phone, didn't have messagebank or an answering machine and the two who did answer wanted in excess of \$200 for us to stay in their Shearers Quarters for one night! They explained that was the base fee for the use of their facility, there was a price per person

but the minimum fee was \$200.

So in desperation we rang Rawnsley Park and booked in there. It's very much a tourist operation, with a caravan park, eco cabins, units and a restaurant. We were thankful to have somewhere nice to stay but it was not the type of place we had wanted to stay in. Rawnsley is more of an Out-back resort and is not comparable to our operation.



We enjoyed driving around the Flinders for the next few days seeing the spectacular scenery, wild flowers and

doing the formidable Skytrek drive. Then, time to start heading home. Once again we tried to book into a couple of stations with out success, so our next night was at the Blinman Hotel. They seem to think tourists are there to be fleeced, and fleeced we were, as we found this to be a most expensive place to stay at given the quality of the establishment and the service. The meals were very good though. And the beer was nice.

The trip home was very eventful, in hindsight we should have rung the stations before leaving home for info on their policies and pricing as not everything you get from the internet is 100% correct. We could not really book ahead as we did not know when we were going to be anywhere. We had our camping gear with us so we were ok for a bed but we wanted to stay on places offering similar options to our place. It wasn't much of a fact finding mission anyway. More about this on my blog soon.

A great year for the birds and Birdos.

The Budgerigars have been laying non stop all year! Up and down every creek, around the claypans, swamps and creeks the trees are filled with the chatter and squabbling of these adorable little birds – surely they'll stop laying and raising when the hot weather comes?

The Crimson Chats were here earlier in the year in enormous numbers, then they disappeared and they're now back again. Major Mitchell Cockatoos are starting to arrive as their favourite berries and burrs ripen up.

One male Bustard was parading up and down one of our airstrips with full breeding plumage on (strange!!!),

looking for love for a few weeks. Two lovely ladies turned up to put him out of his misery. There seems to be squillions of emus and their chicks as well as Zebra Finches and Diamond Doves to mention just a few.

When all the waterholes and dams filled earlier this year we had what seemed like a plague of Cormorants and Darters who cleaned up all our yabbies. We are flat out catching a yabby anywhere now. We had two poms here at the beginning of November enjoying their retirement trip around Australia and I put six pots in the best yabby hole we have and only caught ten.

Still, it was a taste for them. They must be somewhere around Cairns by now.

Many birdwatchers have visited Kilcowera this year and have added a further thirteen birds to our list. The updated bird list will be on our website early next year. That job will entail a trip to Charleville to see my web person.

To all the birdwatchers who didn't make it this year due to wet weather, we hope you put us on your calendar next year to come and stay and enjoy our excellent facilities, the incredible bird and wildlife and the ever changing landscape.



Restocking Kilcowera & Zenonie

It has been a slow process trying to buy the right sort of animals for restocking. The market is very high for cows and calves and even higher for young cows. We bought one lot of mixed Hereford, Braford and Angus cross cows through the Roma Saleyards and put them in Delta paddock just west of the house.

On the recommendation of a local agent we purchased more cows from near Cunnamulla, this turned out to be a monumental mistake as the cows were uncontrollable in the paddock. We had to get a helicopter in to muster them out of the tiny paddock they were in and resold them. A very costly mistake. That's one Stock and Station agent that won't be getting any of our business again!

We then turned to the internet and bought another two lots on Auctionsplus from up north near Hughendon. These are all beautifully quiet young PTIC cows and some slightly older matrons (pregnant too). They're Brahmin, Droughtmaster, Charolais cross animals. We have also brought home the few that we had on agistment and now have to breed our numbers back up again.



The trucking of all these cows was not without difficulty – if it wasn't raining here it was raining at their end or the roads were closed. It's an interesting exercise waiting for a road train to arrive at ten PM and watching it creep over the four k's of hopefully dry enough station road into the cattle yards to unload. That truck did get in ok but broke through the road on the way out and had to spend the night there. We pulled him out with a grader the next morning.

We are only about twenty five per cent stocked on our two hundred thousand acres, so there are a few lean years ahead for us number wise and financially as well. Once again I'll say, let's hope for a few good years in the west.

Our business trip to the NT

Greg and I recently went on a Tourism Industry jaunt called Queensland's Outback and Gulf on Tour - an absolute first for us. We drove to Brisbane, met up with the other participants (most of whom we had never met before) and then flew to Darwin for 3 days and then on to Alice Springs for another 3 days.

We visited tourist attractions in Darwin where some of the party chose to swim with enormous crocodiles, then a fabulous outback bush retreat where we were able to eyeball wild bush buffalos up close and inspect the beautifully luxurious resort, had an indige-

nous day out with Tess and some of her family, followed by an evening cruise on the Mary River complete with nibblyies and drinks. Highlights of



Alice included visiting two different Station Stays, the Desert Knowledge Precinct and the scrumptious dinner put on for us all at the Crowne Plaza.

We all had one or two big nights, ate too much, drank too much but had a great time and met some interesting tourist operators who had some great ideas. Also met lots of ladies and gents working for various government authorities and organizations who seem to have great jobs just dreaming, scheming and plotting their next career move and how to spend that grant money. A job like that would be interesting to say the least.

Fringed Lily



Cruising the Mary River



Road to Kilcowera airstrips

Outback Queensland Tourism Awards 2010

This year I decided to have a go at these awards and submit an entry in the Hosted Accommodation section. Previously I had put it in the too hard basket as I am not particularly computer savvy and the whole thing looked very daunting. And it was!!!

It took me weeks of writing, researching, editing, selecting images and a trip to Quilpie so Angela our youngest daughter could polish the finished article up and publish it for me. I am so grateful for all her help and our eldest too, in Perth who cast her eye over my increasingly long winded and verbose answers to the odd questions in the submission.

To be honest the questions did make me more aware of things like how we present our product, marketing, business plans, goals and strategies.

The final result? A phone call from a reporter with the ABC radio to congratulate me on our win, even though we had heard nothing from the OQTA. It seems she had jumped the gun or something as we did not win but were highly commended and came second.

I am currently waiting on feedback from the judges and may possibly enter again next year as I wouldn't mind being able to put a gong like that on our brochures and advertising. I might even enter the State awards!



Highly commended for Hosted Accommodation.

A little Yorkie : A sister for Lucy.



For the past year or so I had been thinking of finding a little friend for our eighteen month old Australian Silky. She is so playful, loves other dogs and kids, she needed a mate – but not another puppy – oh no, not all that toilet training again! So when we went away recently I mentioned this to Greg who was not all that keen on the idea. But he'll get over it. And he has!!

I found this gorgeous three year old desexed female Yorkshire Terrier on Gumtree, so we went to check Maisie out at Woody Point in Brisbane. She had been rescued from a neglectful and bad home and was being cared for by some animal lovers. She was a tiny bit tubby but happy, friendly and playful - just what we needed.

Maisie has bonded with us very well, gets on famously with Lucy, chased her first emu off the road this morning and can even use the dog door. She picked up Lucy's favourite toy, a long soft fabric thing and was strutting out the door with it yesterday, so Lucy who was a bit jealous of this, grabbed the other end and they strutted out together with it and proceeded to roll and play all over the lawn for the next half hour. Priceless! She is so well mannered and gentle, her only problem is she is a bit clingy but I'm sure she'll get over that when she really settles in. Poor little thing has got to realize she now has a home.

Thanks to everyone for reading my newsletter and I promise the next one won't be so large! Thanks also to Neville Lazarus and Barbara Bryant for the use of their bird images on page two.

