

OUTBACK GUIDES SCHOOL LEADS the WAY

Ann Augusteyn

Seven guides from Capricorn Caves battled floods and road closures following Cyclone Debbie to attend the 35th Savannah Guide school in the drought stricken Queensland Outback. They were joined in Longreach by Neil Collinson and Laura Dawson from Te Anau who had also been diverted with airport closures. The 4 day school themed “*Pastoralism, Preservation and Prehistory*” showcased the amazing experiences in the Longreach/Winton area, field trips focussing on plant, fauna and fossil identification, a very competitive twitchathon challenge as well as an appreciation of the local indigenous culture and pastoral community. We were treated to the delivery of interpretation at its very best.



Examiner Vicki Jones and Capricorn Cave Guides Christian Bom, Jay Bond and Chennoa Wells after receiving their Savannah Guide accreditation.



Fossicking in an ancient creek bed

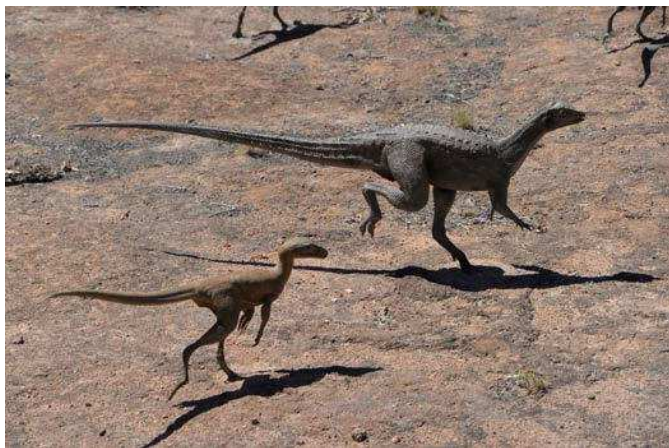


Examiner Vicki Jones, Neil Collinson, Laura Dawson, and Alan Smith (Smithy)

These schools are held biennially with the objective of “*maintaining high standards of interpretation and public education; training and guiding leadership and natural and cultural resource management*”. Established in 1988 in the Gulf Savannah, the network has expanded well beyond the tropical savannahs of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

To gain accreditation as a Savannah Guide there is a rigorous process of on site peer assessment on site covering interpretative content, communication and presentation elements supported by post assessment interview and mentoring when required. To maintain accreditation the guide commits to attending a Savannah Guide school at least once every two years.

There were two outstanding highlights amongst many. First was the inspection of the dinosaur stampede tracks at Lark Quarry, Winton with presentations of Scott Hocknull’s interpretation of the stampede, supported by technology research. This was followed by a very special opportunity to fossick in an ancient creek bed for 95 million year old plant fossils. Second, at the Australian Age of Dinosaurs, we were



Dinosaur Canyon Winton



Dinosaur graveyard Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum

privileged to view the Dinosaur Canyon prior to its official opening at Easter by Dame Quentin Bryce. The wheelchair accessible pathway meanders down the escarpment from the “jump up” providing a walk back in time when dinosaurs roamed the red dirt canyons. The authentic life size dinosaurs are further brought to life with audio and visual apps. Each themed gallery has been sponsored by a generous donor. The Australian Age of Dinosaurs is an amazing interactive

educational experience initiated by the passion of one man David Elliot, supported by enthusiastic and dedicated staff, research palaeontologists and the local community. It most deservedly won the top gong at the Queensland Tourism awards in 2016.

As ACKMA members we can relate to all these ecological sustainable tourism principles, guiding standards and protection of the natural resources.



Capricorn Caves team on top of the jump up at Winton. L to R Ann Augusteyn, Heidi Van Dermeer, Kathering Herring, Christian Bom, Chennoa Wells, Jay Bond, Jordan Wheeler.