



WITCHELINA

A NATURE FOUNDATION SA RESERVE



NFSA IS THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THE ACQUISITION OF WITCHELINA STATION, LYNDHURST FOR CONSERVATION.



The acquisition of Witchelina Station creates the largest private nature reserve in South Australia. At 421,900 ha, it is considerably larger than the combined areas of two other major conservation reserves in this region, the Flinders Ranges and Gammon Ranges National Parks.

This is a very significant addition to arid land conservation in South Australia. It will protect several threatened species, ecological communities and geological landscapes not previously protected in the National Reserve System.

The management of Witchelina by Nature Foundation SA will also provide for the protection of areas of cultural and historical significance.

The conservation of Witchelina will:

- protect a significant proportion of the Willouran Ranges, an important refuge for arid zone species, that extends from the northern Flinders Ranges through the Denison, Davenport, and Central Ranges and into the Northern Territory;
- protect the habitat of several species and ecological communities identified as

under threat in the SA Arid Lands Biodiversity Strategy;

- significantly increase the protected areas status of three distinct bioregions: Flinders-Lofty Block, Gawler and Stony Plains; and Witchelina;
- create a significant core area in the northwest of the Flinders-Olary Naturelinks Corridor.

This is a protected area, managed for nature conservation as a part of Australia's National Reserve System. It conserves important native habitat, plants and animals for the benefit of all Australians.

Witchelina



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This is a protected area, managed for nature conservation as a part of Australia's National Reserve System. It conserves important native habitat, plants and animals for the benefit of all Australians.

It was purchased by the Nature Foundation SA in 2010 with the assistance of the Australian Government, the South Australian Government and the following resource companies:

- Santos Ltd
- Beach Energy Ltd
- Victoria Petroleum NL
- Epic Energy Ltd
- Stuart Petroleum Ltd



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Road sign at the entrance to Witchelina

We acknowledge their important contribution to arid land recovery.

THE WITCHELINA LANDSCAPE

Witchelina comprises a magnificent outback expanse extending from Lake Torrens in the south to Marree in the north. With a total of 421,900 hectares (or 4,219 sq kms), it spans three bioregions, including the most westerly outcrop of the Adelaide geosynclines – the Willouran Ranges. Within these three bioregions, the property covers three very distinct biological associations – Willouran, Mulgarie and Marree – which in turn are divided into nine land systems. All this means that the conservation of the property



is a very significant win for biodiversity in this part of the State.

Below is a series of descriptions, running south to north, that encapsulate the variations in the landscape of Witchelina.

- Salt lake frontage transitioning to sandy or clay flats with areas of Lignum and Swamp Cane Grass between widely spaced dunes;
- Extensive dunefields with Black Oak, Native Pine and swales of Mulga with annual grasses;
- Stoney hills and flats with Bladder Saltbush and Mitchell Grass intersected by large creeks with River Red Gums and Coolabah draining to floodplains with Old Man Saltbush and Samphire;
- Hills with Red Mallee and Dead Finish, stoney valleys with Red Gum lined creeks and plains with Bladder Saltbush and Bluebush;
- Groves of Bullock Bush on hills, with stoney plains of low Bluebush and annual grasses;
- Gibber tableland country with Curly Mitchell Grass associated with gilgais and where large rivers dissect mesas bearing scattered Mulga.

FLORA AND FAUNA FOUND TO DATE

While the property has been unavailable in the past for Department for Environment & Heritage biological surveys, the state biological database nonetheless records a number of threatened species found on the property.

Research carried out on a neighbouring property to the south has shown, through examination of owl pellets, that 23 species of small native mammals once inhabited the

To purchase this significant property, Nature Foundation SA assembled a comprehensive funding package. The package included a major contribution from the Commonwealth's Caring for our Country program together with very considerable contributions from the South Australian Government and the following five resource companies who elected to discharge their environmental offset obligations through this project.

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- Beach Energy Ltd
- Victoria Petroleum NL
- Epic Energy Ltd
- Stuart Petroleum Ltd



region with only seven species remaining today and one uncertain. Species that are thought to be extinct include the Burrowing Bettong, Mulgara, Golden Bandicoot, Western Barred Bandicoot, Pigfooted Bandicoot and Desert Rat-kangaroo.¹

We expect, when we undertake further survey work, to uncover many threatened species on the property. Given that it spans the northern to southern and eastern to western extremities of range for a variety of species, many in the South Australian scientific community are hopeful of finding populations of plants and animals not previously known to exist in this area.

THE FUTURE FOR WITCHELINA

In order to maintain our management commitment to this exciting and important conservation project, Nature Foundation SA is hard at work on strategies that will set Witchelina on a path to steady recovery of its biosystems.

Total grazing pressure from feral animals and domestic stock represents the greatest threat to biodiversity values within these bioregions. The de-stocking of Witchelina

and ongoing management of feral herbivore populations, mainly goats, will over time create not only a significant environmental benefit, but importantly, a sustainable benefit.

Building these environmental gains will take several decades and this management responsibility represents a significant commitment by NFSA that will require considerable ongoing resources.

We are greatly encouraged by the interest shown by our neighbours and the local outback community and we look forward to a cooperative working relationship. We are also heartened by the interest shown in the project by the scientific community and we also thank Primary Industries & Resources SA (PIRSA), SA Chamber of Mines & Energy (SACOME), the Native Vegetation Council, the SA Arid Lands NRM Board and the SA Department for Environment and Heritage for their ongoing support.

The management of this conservation reserve will be guided by a management committee which will involve local indigenous interests, local communities and scientific and government representation.

Witchelina is very much a new project for Nature Foundation SA but it is one we can approach with confidence given the support that we have been shown.

¹ S Tunbridge, D (1990). The Story of the Flinders Ranges Mammals. Kangaroo Press

