

# Residential Ranger Training Workshop, Alice Springs, N.T.

by R. Sokolowski

Wildlife Officer G. Hanley and I were privileged to be selected to attend a ten-day training school at Alice Springs in May/June 1977. The school was held under the auspices of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Canberra.

The Director of the school was Mr A. Fox (Nature Conservation, Information and Training) Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Canberra, while the Northern Territory Reserves Board under its Director, Mr T. Hare, were the hosts.

Delegates attended from Norfolk Island, Papua New Guinea, Tasmania, New South Wales, Western Australia, A.C.T., Department of Defense and Rangers from many stations in the Northern Territory.

The training course was orientated to National Parks, but a variety of subjects covered common areas of wildlife and park management. Some aspects were control of feral animals, judiciary and crown law, court precedures, study and preservation of fauna and flora, management programmes for high tourist pressure areas such as Ayers Rock (Uluru) and the Olgas, machinery and vehicle servicing, law enforcement and planning.

Visits were made to Ayers Rock, the Olgas, National Park (covering 487 sq miles) and also to some of the reserves in the West Macdonnell Ranges, to carry out field studies in vegetation, wildlife and tourism. The use of basic field survey instruments and aerial photo interpretation exercises were included in the field work.

Ayers Rock (Uluru) and the Olgas are both important in the mythological beliefs and ritual life of the Aborigines of the Pitjandjara tribes. All male delegates were privileged to be conducted into the sacred initiation cave, Ayers Rock, by the keeper, Paddy Uluru, a senior tribal elder. The N.T. Reserves Board is conscious of the need for aboriginals to maintain their

ceremonial and ritual functions, which are still conducted at Ayers Rock and the initiation cave is permanently closed to the public.

Supt. D. Roff, Senior Ranger in charge of Ayers Rock National Park, gave an informative lecture on all aspects of management problems for this popular tourist area. A collection of aboriginal artefacts in a small museum at the Park Headquarters illustrated native culture of the area.

At the West Macdonnell Ranges reserves which were visited, a close study was made of the flora diversity in areas subjected to stock grazing, tourist visitation and fire. Mr Peter Latz, Senior Botanist, N.T. Arid Zone Research, spoke on this subject and supervised field exercises where groups of students produced informative records by use of a compass and inclinometer along a transect.

Geologically, most of the West Macdonnell reserves lie on the contact of the Arunta Block and the Amadeus Basin, which are thought to date back 1 700 million years. Rocks of the Arunta Block are tightly folded schists and gneiss. The younger Amadeus Basin is Heavitree Quartzite and rests on the Arunta metamorphics. A thin discontinuous siltstone formation may occur between these two. Both the siltstone and quartzite are part of the Upper Proterozoic Heavitree Quartzite formation which can be seen in recumbent folds at some of the gorges.

An early proliferation of fauna and flora species within these Ranges has been greatly reduced by feral animals and domesticated stock. The rock wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) was observed at some locations and a variety of avifauna was seen. Rock pools contained interesting aquatic life, including the spangled grunter (*Terapon unicolor*) and shrimps.

In-depth lectures and discussions, continuing into late evening, took place at the Library of the N.T. Reserves Board in Alice Springs. All delegates were expected to participate in the discussions. Anthropologist Miss S. Sullivan, of the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service, lectured on "The Problems of Maintaining and Preserving Aboriginal Cultural Resources" and discussed the employment of aborigines in the mapping and cataloguing of sites containing artefacts.

Mr C. Lendon of the C.S.I.R.O., Northern Territory, lectured on Avifauna within the region, and Mr B. L. Bolton, Senior Research Officer, Arid Zone, spoke on Wildlife Management in the arid zones, and the proper preservation of collected specimens to facilitate scientific investigation.

The hospitality and co-operation of the N.T. Reserves Board Rangers, under their Field Supervisor Mr Page-Sharp, was much appreciated and contributed greatly to the success of this workshop. The A.N.P. & W.S. is to be congratulated on arranging and organising the course. May they continue.



Workshop delegates with workshop director Mr A. Fox of A.N.P. & W.S., front third from right.