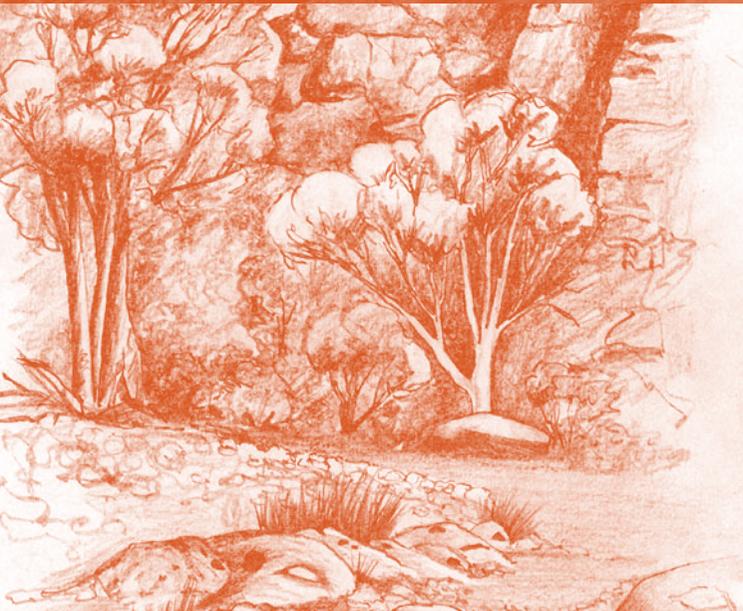


# Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Weetootla Hike Network



Healthy Parks  
Healthy People



Government of South Australia



## Weetootla Hike Network

The rugged hills of the North Flinders Ranges are often only accessible along the stony beds of creeks that have cut their way through the ranges. Balcanoona Creek makes its way through the range of the same name, providing bushwalkers with a gateway to Weetootla Gorge and its network of hikes.

Explore one of the linear hikes or create your own adventure by following sections of the different trails. The Monarch Mine Hike will take you past an abandoned copper mine and over shale and magnesite hills, while Balcanoona Creek Hike meanders through the Weetootla Gorge. McTaggart Track Hike is a longer option and is named after the track it follows.

The 800 million year old rocks encountered on these walks are exposed here close to the eastern edge of the ancient depression known as the Adelaide Geosyncline. These rocks dip away to the west in a huge basin under the quartzite and sandstones of the Gammon Ranges, which can be seen in the distance at high points of the walk.

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Traditional Owners and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources co-manage the park.

## Access

There are three locations in the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park where you can access walks in the Weetootla Hike Network:

**Weetootla Campground Trailhead (Checkpoint B1)** is 7.1 km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 1.9 km from the signpost at Balcanoona. The track is 2WD accessible.

**McTaggart Track (Checkpoint T1)** is 18.2 km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 8.2 km from the signpost at Balcanoona. Continue about 10 km along the 4WD track to reach the checkpoint.

**Grindell Hut Trailhead (Checkpoint B6)** is 26.5 km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 8.2 km from the signpost at Balcanoona. Continue for 17 km along the signposted 4WD track.

## Walking trails

There are three self-guided trails that can be walked as one-way linear hikes or as the circuits shown on the map.



### Balcanoona Creek Hike

6 km one way \*2.5 hrs

Hike from Weetootla Campground (Checkpoint B1) to Grindell Hut (Checkpoint B6) passing B2, B3, B4 and B5.



### Monarch Mine Hike

6.8 km one way \*2.5 hrs

Beginning at Checkpoint B2 and finishing at Checkpoint B5, pass by M1, M2 and M3.



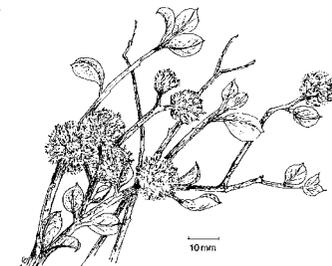
### McTaggart Track Hike

7.6 km one way \*3 hrs

Starting at Checkpoint M1 and ending at Checkpoint B5, this hike includes 6.2 km of road walking, passing T1, T2 and T3.

*\*Time is generously estimated for an average walking speed of 3 km per hour - allow extra time for resting and sightseeing.*

Silver Mulla Mulla  
*Ptilotus obovatus*



Distances decrease as you approach your destination.

## Balcanoona Creek Hike

6 km one way 2.5 hrs

**6.0 Checkpoint B1 - Weetootla Campground Trailhead (AMG 322 248)**

At the western end of the campground, walk around the barrier. Most of the trail will be close to the creek banks.

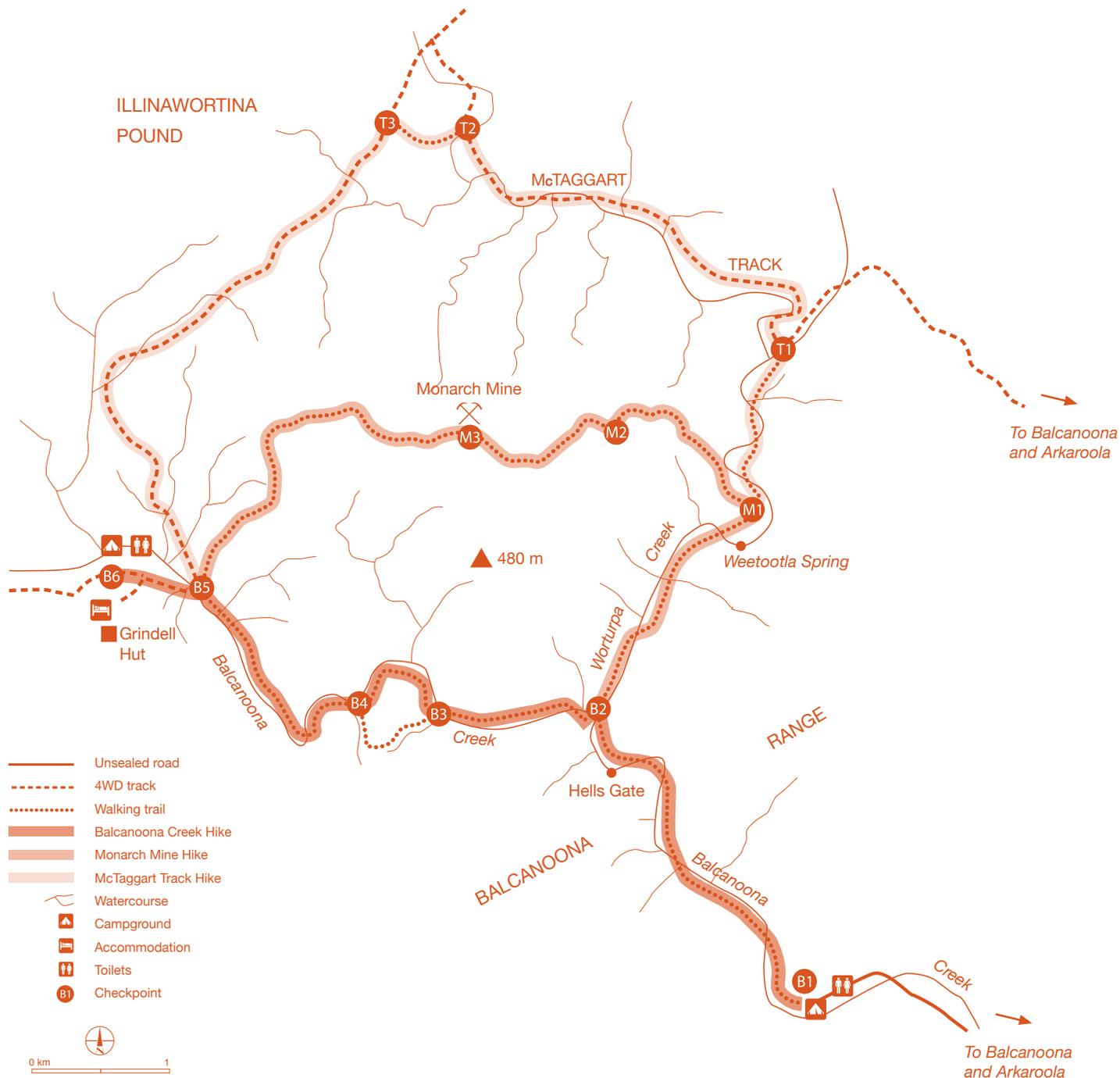
Here the long Paralana Fault begins to peter out as it reaches its south-west limit. It runs from this spot in a north-easterly direction for some 50 km to the Paralana Hot Springs. The fault occurred about 800 million years ago during the development of the Adelaide Geosyncline.

5.6 Creeks in the North Flinders Ranges support the Inland Paper-bark as well as River Red Gums. Infrequent big floods give rise to dense stands of trees as you see here. Weak individuals die in dry seasons.

5.4 Weetootla Gorge cuts through the Balcanoona Range, which is composed of glacial Merinjina Tillite, a sedimentary rock created from compacted mud, sand and pebbles transported by glaciers. It is exposed at this point across the creek and in the gorge walls. The tillite is older than the sedimentary rocks of the central and southern Flinders Ranges.

5.4 to 5.2 *Cross the creek.* On the opposite side of the creek, two tea-trees grow – the Inland Paper-bark *Melaleuca glomerata* and the Green Tea-tree *Melaleuca dissitiflora*.

4.8 to 4.6 *Cross the creek, then cut across the stony slope.* In recent years, storms have resulted in many tonnes of rock from side gullies being dumped across the track.



4.4 to 4.2 *Cross the creek and walk up the western side of the valley, following the creek around a bend.*

4.0 to 3.8 This section of the trail is known as Hells Gate. The dark red weathered cliffs of fillite are well-displayed and pebbles embedded in the rock are clear in the water-worn boulders in the creek. Pools of water tend to lie here and encourage the growth of bulrushes, sedges and Watercress. The afternoon sun provides a unique photographic opportunity of Hells Gate.

**3.6 Checkpoint B2** - junction of Balcanoona and Worturpa creeks (AMG 309 263)

3.4 The trail skirts the hills of Balcanoona Formation dolomites that lie to the north. Follow the route between two large boulders that have fallen from the hill above.

3.0 *Cross the creek to the southern bank.*

2.8 Here you come across a section of the old vehicle track, which crosses an island in the creek.

2.6 Large amounts of crystalline magnesite and numerous mine entrances (adits) in the hills are relics of the work performed to prove that high-grade deposits lie in the area. Although BHP Billiton had long standing leases, deposits in Queensland and elsewhere in South Australia can meet Australia's demand for the mineral more cheaply.

**2.6 Checkpoint B3** - track junction near magnesite adit (AMG 301 264)

*At this point you may choose to follow the old vehicle track over shales of the Tapley Hill Formation where Flinders Ranges Corkwood is common on the slopes above the creek or follow the creek*

*bed upstream where you can look into exploratory mining adits and walk across white boulders of magnesite.*

**2.0 Checkpoint B4** - junction of Balcanoona Creek and an old vehicle track (AMG 297 263)

1.2 Crystalline magnesite boulders.

0.8 to 0.6 Bullock bush groves grow on old flood terraces above the present creek level. An old telephone line near the track linked Balcanoona Homestead with the outstation at Grindell Hut.

**0.5 Checkpoint B5** - junction of Balcanoona Creek with the road to Grindell Hut (AMG 289 269)

0.2 Sheep yards near Grindell Hut have been modified to hold goats.

**0.0 Checkpoint B6** - Grindell Hut Trailhead (AMG 283 271)  
The original hut lies uphill behind the main house. The main house is available for hire. Please respect the privacy of those staying there.

End of Balcanoona Creek Hike.

## Monarch Mine Hike

### 6.8 km one way 2.5 hrs

**6.8 Checkpoint B2** - creek terrace and junction of Balcanoona and Worturpa creeks (AMG 309 263)

6.4 An old track above the creek with greyish shales.

6.2 *Cross the creek on a white bar of dolomitic limestone.*

5.6 A minor creek crossing here displays grey shales, dolomites and limestone boulders in the creek bed. A cliff on the western side carries the lifeless looking Caustic Bush, which sprawls across the rock face.

**5.3 Checkpoint M1** - track junction at Weetootla Spring (AMG 317 273)

*Cross the creek.* A strong flow of water issues from Weetootla Spring, which runs over an outcrop of white crystalline magnesite.

5.3 to 3.3 The trail crosses exposed slopes with little soil. The sparse vegetation includes the hardy Dead Finish, Rock Emubush and Lobed-leaf Hop-bush. Observe the massive red hills of the Balcanoona Range, cut by Balcanoona Creek at Hells Gate and with Mount McTaggart at its northern end.

4.0 Identify the small stand of Curly Mallee on distant slopes.

**3.3 Checkpoint M2** - viewpoint over ridge (AMG 308 278)

3.0 Grindell Hut is visible. On this side of the saddle magnesite is replaced by dolomite, then shale or siltstone. Scattered stands of dying Mulga show no signs of regeneration.

**2.3** Fifty metres beyond this marker is **Checkpoint M3** - the ruin of Monarch Mine (AMG 303 278)

The mine is just one of many copper diggings in the Flinders Ranges, with the unfulfilled promise of wealth. Take care near the digging.

The green rock fragments at the foot of the sloping slab floor and a rough chute at the top suggest it was used to sort and bag ore for carrying on horseback. Wooden boughs supported the shade canvas. The mine operated from 1906 to 1908. Only 12 tonnes of ore were treated.

In the mid-distance, the almost level gibber plain can be seen. The river terrace was formed between 1.8 million and 8000 years ago, from material eroded off the then much higher hills.

1.6 The trail continues downhill through a small grove of pines and across gentle rolling slopes of shale and siltstone.

0.0 **Checkpoint B5** - junction of Balcanoona Creek with road to Grindell Hut (AMG 289 269)

End of Monarch Mine Hike.



## Walk Safely

### Be prepared when bushwalking:

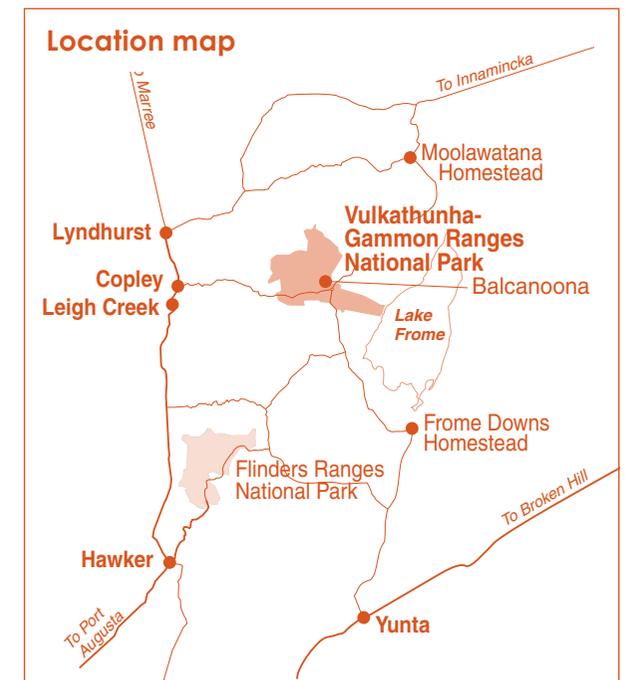
- Wear sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen.
- Carry sufficient food and drinking water.
- Keep to the defined walking trail and follow the trail markers.
- Inform a responsible person of your proposed route and expected time of return.
- Weather conditions can change quickly, ensure you have appropriate wet weather clothing.

## The National Parks Code

Help protect your national parks by following these guidelines:

- Leave your pets at home.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- Observe fire restrictions usually 1 November to 30 April. Check CFS hotline 1300 362 361.
- Conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves.
- Camp only in designated areas.
- Respect geological and heritage sites.
- Keep our wildlife wild. Do not feed or disturb animals, or remove native plants.
- Keep to defined vehicle tracks and walking trails.
- Be considerate of other park users.

**Thank you for leaving the bush in its natural state for the enjoyment of others.**



## For further information contact:

Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
 Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park  
 Phone (08) 8648 4829  
 Fax (08) 8648 4853  
[www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/)  
 Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910  
 Email [denrinformation@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:denrinformation@saugov.sa.gov.au)  
 Website [www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au)

**FLINDERS  
 RANGES  
 BUSH WALKS**

These notes were first published by the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia as part of a series.