

## Geotourism projects attract new stakeholders

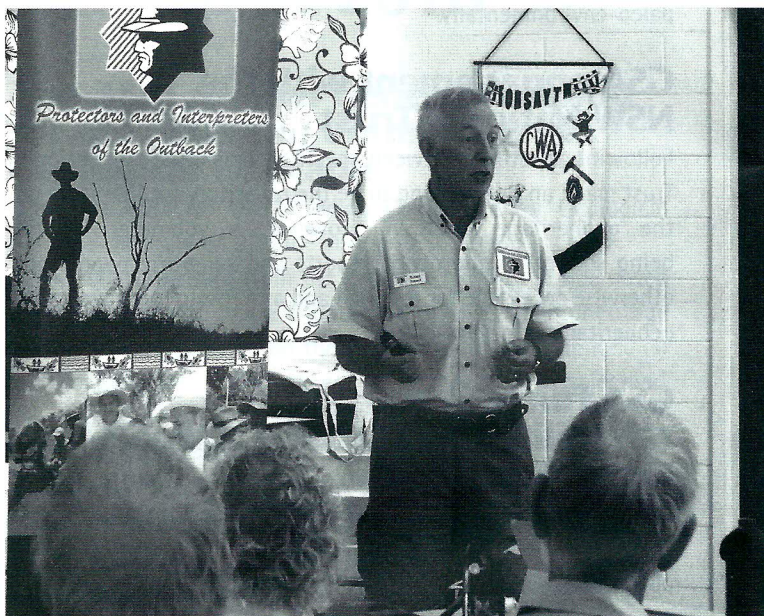
The continuing development of geotourism activities throughout Australia is continuing to attract engagement, with new stakeholders from both within the geoscience profession and from other interest groups and government agencies.

Of significance, the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) and GSA have agreed to co-fund a Western Research Institute study being commissioned by the Steering Committee of the Pre-Aspiring Warrumbungle UNESCO Global Geopark. The study aims to develop a model of the regional economy comprising the three local government areas across which the proposed geopark is located, and is being structured so that its findings can be used for other major geotourism projects across Australia. It will therefore develop an indicative, future visitor economy scenario based on existing tourist information data for the area, experienced increases in tourism for other similar developments, and local knowledge. It will also model the increased visitor spend related to the future scenario to identify the impacts on output, GDP, household income and full-time equivalent employment.

With the AGC (on recommendation of the GSA) also providing an official spokesperson facility for geotourism, other AGC groups such as the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) are becoming increasingly interested in participating in geotourism projects. For example, the Victorian Branch Committee of the AIG is currently reviewing opportunities for initiating projects in Victoria. Its Queensland Branch Committee is keen to assist in the development of the Pre-Aspiring Etheridge UNESCO Global Geopark project, as is the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM)'s Heritage Committee and its Far North Queensland Branch. In NSW, both the AIG and the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group have each taken up a major sponsorship in support of the new edition of the NSW Geotourism Map.

The Etheridge geopark project is benefiting enormously from the early establishment of a highly knowledgeable Geoscience/Mineral Heritage Reference Group, currently comprising Ian Withnall (Chair), Leonard Cranfield, Laurie Hutton, Warwick Willmott, Janice Wegner, John Nethery, Doug McConnell, Ken Moule, Patrick Maher and Graham Reveleigh.

External interest groups include the Savannah Guides – a highly regarded network of natural heritage guides developing and marketing sustainable regional tourism in northern Australia. At a recently convened Savannah Guides School held at Forsayth and Cobbold Gorge within the area embraced by the proposed Etheridge geopark, the guides enthusiastically responded to a



*Russell Boswell, Manager, Savannah Guides, addressing the Savannah Guides School, Forsayth, Far North Queensland. All images courtesy Angus M Robinson*

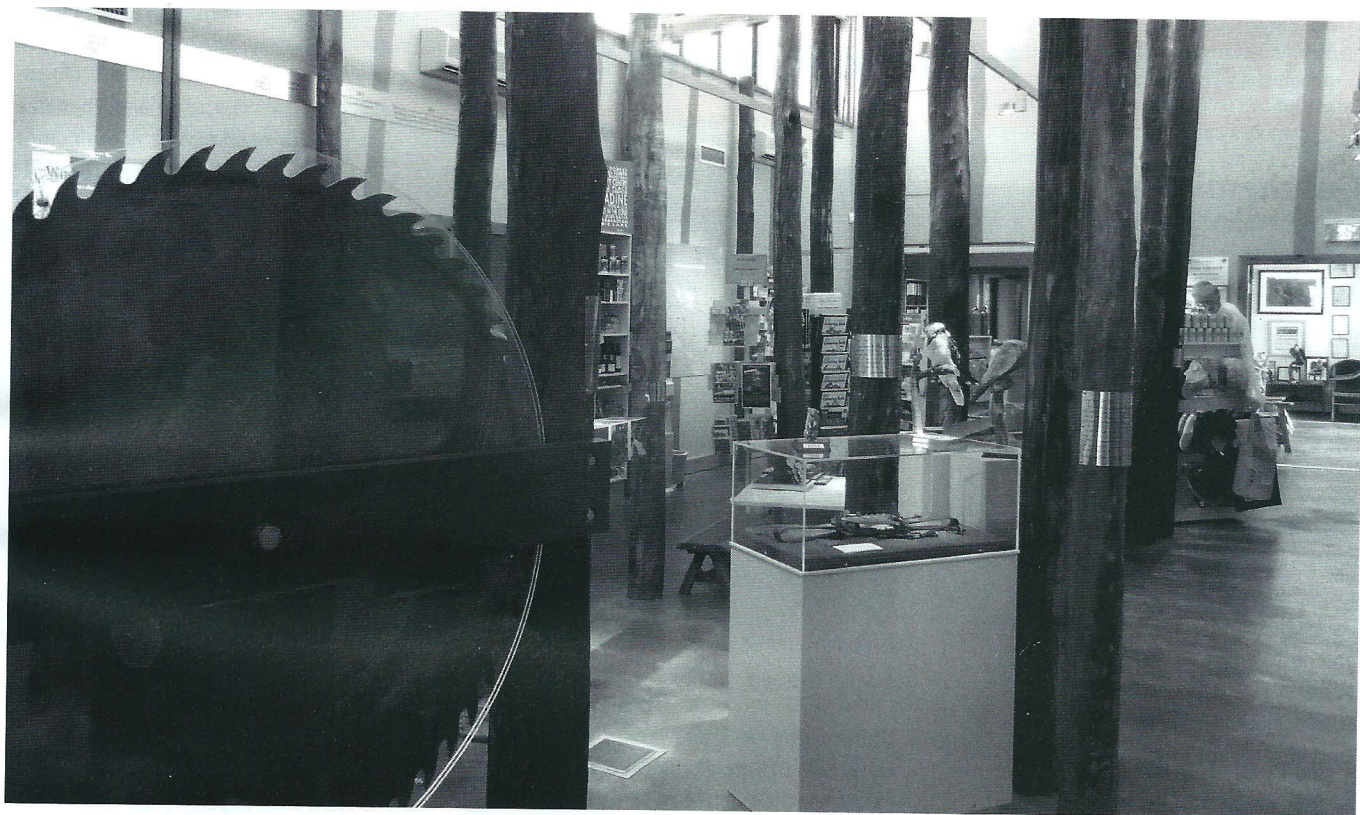
major presentation about this proposal. They expressed strong interest in including geoscience as part of their interpretation remit.

The Queensland National Parks and Wildlife and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) are actively participating in both the Etheridge and Warrumbungle projects, respectively. Expert wildlife support is also being offered through the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group for the Far North Queensland project.

The geopark projects also offer the opportunity for the work of these agencies to be promoted; for example, the outstanding Pilliga Forest Discovery Centre operated by the NPWS in the township of Baradine, located within the Shire of Warrumbungle. In addition, it is proposed that the geopark celebrate Warrumbungle National Park's designation as Australia's first Dark-Sky Park, centred on the co-location of the Siding Springs Observatory and the relatively little known but innovative Solar System Drive, which extends across the Warrumbungle region (<http://www.solarsystemdrive.com>). To add value to the celebration of the natural heritage of the Warrumbungle National Park, the Linnean Society of NSW is planning a symposium to be held in Coonabarabran in September 2018.

Opportunities for external engagement in South Australia will be facilitated by the newly established GSA Geotourism





Pilliga Forest Discovery Centre, Baradine, Shire of Warrumbungle

Subcommittee, headed up by Graziella Caprarelli. This will be done through geotourism workshops to be held at both the SEGRA 2017 (Sustainable Economic Growth Regional Australia) conference in the Upper Spencer Gulf (18–20 October) and the Global Eco 2017 event of Ecotourism Australia, also to be held in Adelaide (27–29 November).

SEGRA 2017 is focusing around the tri-city alliance of Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie, and the gateway to the Australian geotourism icon, the Flinders Ranges. The Upper Spencer Gulf has experienced its fair share of economic shocks and negative perceptions. This is reflected in this year's theme – *Disruption: a catalyst for change*. SEGRA attracts many delegates from government agencies around Australia with a strong interest in identifying and supporting innovative, regional development initiatives. Of course, this includes geotourism. Geotourism project activity is also being generated by the Nature Foundation SA and the University of South Australia, the latter through the auspices of the SA Geotourism STEM Education project. South Australia will also be the centre of attention in 2018 with the Convening of the Australian Geoscience Convention to be held in Adelaide on 14–18 October. This event is anticipated to feature geotourism as a key convention theme.

As further geotourism projects develop in NSW (eg, Port Macquarie and The University of Newcastle, the Sydney Basin and Centennial Parklands/Royal Botanical Gardens), WA

(<https://www.slideshare.net/leisuresolutions/geotourism-in-western-australia-by-alan-briggs>) and other regions of Australia, new supportive stakeholders will emerge. Geotourism as a new industry for geoscientists will continue to bear fruit!

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