

Observations made travelling the Hann Track.

I recently traversed the Hann Track accompanied by six good friends in four well equipped vehicles; my new Isuzu D-Max extra cab, a second near new Isuzu D-Max extra cab, a 200 series Toyota Landcruiser and a Ford Ranger extra cab.



We closely followed the track notes and waypoints from the small book 'Hann Track' (published by Westate Publishers Pty Ltd – author, Ian Elliot – rrp \$24.95). This book is invaluable to anyone even just contemplating the traverse of the Hann track let alone actually travelling along it. It is very descriptive and includes a great deal of the surrounding attractions (most of which we might have driven straight passed had we not had this book as a reference).

Reading the book and subsequent related articles appearing in Western 4W Driver we were warned that we could be in for an appalling number of punctures! In anticipation all vehicles carried two complete spare wheels and at least 50 x tyre plugs each. We even had an extra day up our sleeve to accommodate all the anticipated time fixing punctures, changing wheels, locating the faint track, etc.

We did need the extra day but for a completely different reason. My mate's D-Max, for some as yet unexplained reason, lost both nuts off the two wishbone pivot bolts on the right hand front wheel. This caused one of the bolts to drop out completely which in turn resulted in some very clunky and expensive type noises issuing from the front right hand side of the vehicle. Travelling a short distance behind in my D-Max we stopped to see what was up and soon established the predicament



we were in. The two passengers, one from each vehicle, immediately started back tracking along the track and to everyone's relief returned about 20 minutes later with the missing bolt but unfortunately no nuts (the nuts could have worked loose thousands of kilometres before). We replaced the bolt and locked both bolts in place with some oversized nuts forced on over some gaffer tape around the thread. As a precautionary measure a cable tie was pulled tight around the exposed tread of each bolt to also assist in keeping the

oversized nuts in place. This worked well and we were able to continue the last 5 km to our destination, Point Sunday.

We set up camp and over a very welcome cold beer discussed our options. When we had purchased our D-Max's they not only came with a five year warranty but with 5 years 'Roadside Assist' as well! Time to test how good 'Roadside Assist' really is. The 'Roadside Assist' number for Isuzu is 1800 883 883. Guess what? You can't ring an 1800 number from some Satellite Phones (including the two we had with us)!

Observation 1

Get to know your equipment and any shortcomings it might have before an emergency situation arises.



*(I have since contacted Isuzu UTE Australia Pty Ltd who advised that 'Isuzu Roadside Assist' can be called direct on **+61 07 3248 2000** from any Satellite Phone. I also discovered that RAC WA (who actually do the work for 'Isuzu Roadside Assist' in WA), can be dialled direct on 13 11 11)*

So much for that idea. We did finally get on to Isuzu in Kalgoorlie and yes they could supply the missing bolts and nuts after they had ordered them from, wait for it..., Thailand. How bloody stupid is that! By this stage we had worked out that all we really needed was two 14mm lock nuts.

By sheer arse, or should that read 'careful planning,' two of our intrepid explorers (in the Toyota) were three days behind us, as one of them hadn't returned from a trip to the UK until after the rest of us had already departed. Their original intention had been to

catch up with us at the end of the Hann Track and continue with us for the following couple of weeks. We were able to call them on the Satellite phone and organised them to call into Kalgoorlie the next morning and see what they could do.

On a whim we rang ARB (Adventure 4x4) in Rockingham (as they had been very helpful to us in the past), and asked if they could contact ARB in Kalgoorlie. ARB Kalgoorlie was very helpful, even opening up earlier than usual and directed our mates to Coventry's where suitable bolts and nuts were obtained.

Observation 2

It is probably worth establishing a good rapport with your own local 4x4 supply chain as you never know when or how they will be able to assist you.

So all was fixed and we could continue on our adventure, and only one day behind schedule and with the added bonus that our mates, following a couple of days behind could now accompany us for the rest of the trip.

Once we started travelling the Hann Track we were very pleased to discover that it was relatively easy to follow but there were lots of fallen trees, shrubs, etc. blocking the track. We spent some considerable time removing most of the debris (even resorting to a chainsaw at one point). We also marked any dangerous hazards with some pink florescent tape.

Observation 3

If other travellers of this and other tracks also kept them clear and marked any danger spots, it would be a lot easier for future travellers to follow.



And yes, we did get some punctures. The Toyota ended up with 5 punctures (one unfixable). We did some measuring and found the Toyota's wheel track was 100mm wider than the D-Max's and a whopping 200mm wider than the Ranger. We suspect that the wider footprint together with the softer sidewalls of the tyres and the wider tyres themselves probably all contributed to the number of punctures sustained by the Toyota which was fitted with standard Dunlop A/T 22 Grandtrek 285/65 17" tyres.



The Ford Ranger had one puncture. The two D-Max's (mine with stock standard Bridgestone Dueller A/T 245/70R 16" the other fitted with a new set of Coopers) had no punctures on the Hann Track and considering we led most of the way was a good result. We did sustain one puncture, about 1000km after we had completed the Hann Track.



We did sustain one puncture, about 1000km after we had completed the Hann Track.



Before this trip we fitted 'TYREDOGS' to the Toyota and to my D-Max. (The Ranger already had a TYREDOG system fitted). This Tyre Pressure Monitoring System's (TPMS) is simply brilliant. You can

set upper pressure, lower pressure and temperature alarms per axle. After lowering our pressures for track conditions we simply lowered the 'Low Pressure' alarm as well. This results in an audible and visual alarm for any tyre dropping below the set pressure. In many cases this is probably going to be the difference between fixing a tyre and continuing on, or the tyre being a 'write off' because you aren't aware it is flat.

Observation 4

The cost of fitting a set of 'TYREDOGS' will be recouped every time you save a tyre from being 'written off'.

Tyre plugs and the accompanying 'rasp' and 'installer' are very easy and quick to use. Some of the 'installers' are a little difficult to load. The secret here is to have it preloaded before you get a puncture.

After purchasing my new D-Max I decided to upgrade my CB Radio to the newer 80 channel type. I also decided to pay the bit extra and get a GME with the remote transmit button and hands-free microphone (GME TX3510W.)



At no time are your eyes averted from the road. The only disadvantage is that it is near impossible to transmit whilst turning the steering wheel more than a few degrees, a small price to pay! The second and third

button on the remote can be programmed to either go up and down the channels or (as I have it) one to switch to 'Scan' mode and one to switch to the 'Priority' channel. I have mounted the normal handheld microphone on the passenger side, making it much easier for my passenger to use when required.

Observation 5

The combination of a 'TYREDOG' to warn you of a puncture as soon as it happens and a preloaded tyre plug, make for very quick puncture repair. The puncture is usually fixed before much air has escaped, resulting in only a small amount of air to top it back up. Our record, from initial warning, to fixed and continuing on our way, was less than 5

Observation 6

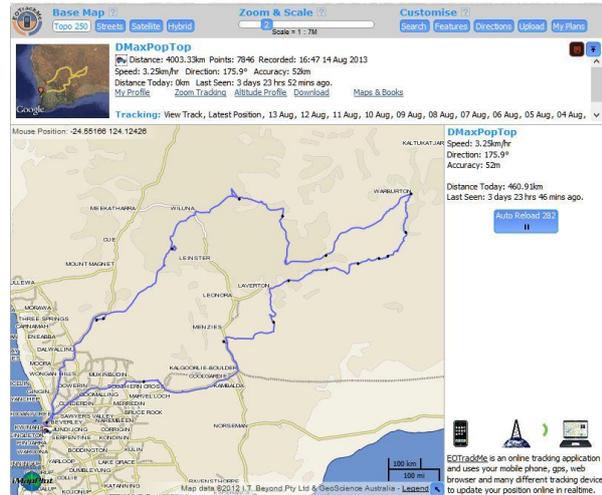
Having the hands-free microphone mounted at the top of the door pillar, together with the remote transmit button on the steering wheel is a considerably safer option than scrabbling around trying to find your normal microphone floating around somewhere.

Observation 7

The Hann Track is a great track to follow for experienced travellers but I wouldn't recommend it for anyone inexperienced or new to remote outback trips unless accompanied by experienced persons, with well equipped vehicles.

The Hann track is a bit like a 5 day condensed version of the Canning Stock Route (CSR). It is remote; we didn't see any other vehicles whilst on the Hann Track. It has much varied landscapes; from heavily wooded to almost bare desert and every variation in between. Although you do traverse sand hills, they are not as formidable as those on the CSR. Heavy rain in the area could wash away some of the track but I think most of it would be reasonably easy to relocate. If a few vehicles go through every few weeks or so the track will slowly become more permanent.

Members of ExploreOZ (Annual Membership is \$50) have access to a brilliant bit of software called EOTrackMe. For \$5 this app can be loaded on a smart phone and when activated and it is within mobile phone range, will upload your position and any previous positions not previously uploaded to the ExploreOz website. This enables your family and friends and anyone else you wish, to keep track of your progress and where you are currently located. As an added bonus it can be incorporated into



Observation 8

I strongly suggest anyone travelling for any length of time should seriously consider the EOTrackMe program (see adjacent track of this trip).

your own website. It can also be password protected should you not wish to advise the whole world where you are.

For those of you who read my article in the last edition of Western 4W Driver ('Tradie's Transformation') and were wondering if the change to the new vehicle was worth it or not. Yes it was!

Swapping over the canopy/pop-top was not all plain sailing. We had to build a sub-frame to fit between the

canopy and the chassis to enable all the bolts to go somewhere. As it turned out we also needed the extra height of the sub-frame (50mm) to provide clearance over the roof of the D-Max (which was slightly higher than the BT-50).

Then followed another week or two of re-wiring, modifying, upgrading, etc. until I was finally satisfied with the new setup.

As you are probably aware the suspension on all makes and types of utes leaves a lot to be desired, unless you are going to drive them around empty! After much investigating and researching I finally settled on an ARB 'Old Man Emu' suspension upgrade/lift. The result is nothing short of fantastic. Even fully loaded the ute has nearly an additional 100mm of clearance at the rear and about 75mm at the front. The ride is just as comfortable as it was before the upgrade, if not better and its capabilities over mild to moderate corrugations are also very good. I doubt if any suspension will comfortably handle the really bad corrugations found on some roads, such as some sections of the Ann Beadell Hwy.



The D-Max is also automatic (a first for me in a 4WD vehicle). I have read many articles, over the years, as to which is the better option. Now I know. An automatic transmission (as long as you can still select individual gears) is excellent and I would recommend it to anyone.

After completing the Hann Track we stopped at the Warburton Caravan Park to have a shower, do some washing and restock where required. We didn't need to buy much as we had most items for the whole trip with us.

A week before leaving on the trip I purchased a vacuum packaging system (Sunbeam FoodSaver VAC780). This proved to be very easy to use and very worthwhile. Two nights before we left we packaged up 15 x individual meals for two persons (such as Chili Con Carn, Spaghetti Bolognaise, stew, different flavoured snags, steak, mince, etc.) The whole lot was placed into the bottom half of a 40lt Engel fridge which had been set to freeze. Amazingly there was still about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the space in the Engel left over for the other essential items (like beer) requiring refrigeration. On the morning of departure the fridge was reset back to 'fridge' and it had very little work to do for the first few days with a quarter of its contents frozen.

After Warburton we travelled down the Great Central Road as far as Cosmo Newberry where we



turned north. Proceeding in a large loop, via some destocked ex-pastoral outback stations now managed by DPaW (Dept. Parks and Wildlife (previously called DEC)).

First was 'Lorna Glen Conservation Reserve' (known to local Aboriginal people as Matuwa), which covers some 244,000 hectares and was purchased by CALM in 2000. It is located close to the geographic centre of WA roughly 140 km west of Wiluna. There is camping available (prior bookings required) at the bunkhouse or on the lawns of the homestead. Some excellent bush camping spots are also to be found around the property. Visitors can enjoy a number of historic ruins, wells, etc. accessed via some of the many kilometres of internal station tracks. Lorna Glen also has a fully functioning airstrip. We camped alongside a lake for two nights which was very pleasant.

Observation 9

If you are going to carry any kind of load or venture off road give some serious thought to a suspension upgrade/lift. You will find it well worth the outlay in \$\$.

Observation 10

Vacuum packing pre-cooked meals before departure saves a lot of time, saves a substantial amount of space in the fridge and the food stays fresh considerably longer.

We then travelled via Wiluna to 'Lake Mason' (Proposed Conservation Park) which, like Lorna Glen, is also administered by DPaW, where we spent another two nights. You need to be self-sufficient with everything including firewood. The camp grounds include a couple of toilets and a couple of showers, which is very civilised and almost overkill for our type of camping.

However I suggest you be careful if travelling around on the extensive internal tracks as they are not all as they appear on the map. Although we did not actually get lost we certainly lost the track for a few kilometres before we were able to re-establish its location. If you do venture out and about the 'Devils Marbles' are well worth a visit.



Finally, after visiting Sandstone we spent two nights at 'Ninghan Station' which was declared an Indigenous Protected area in 2006. Ninghan covers some 48,000 hectares and is situated straddling the Great Northern Highway about 350km north of Perth or 98 km from Wubin. Warrdagga Rock is well worth a visit especially if you climb to the top and then down into the 'Hidden World' found in the very large depression within the rock. We almost expect to see Dinosaurs wandering around!

Equally worth visiting is Mount Singleton. A reasonably challenging but safe 4WD track winds to the top, where an excellent view can be had if you walk out past the encircling bush to the outer edge. Constructed at the top are two large towers, one belongs to Telstra (not a mobile phone type) and the other is for aviation. Mobile phone reception (I suspect Telstra only) is available however, only from the top of the hill probably emanating from a mine site situated a few kilometres away.



So came to an end another great trip and we reluctantly headed home via the bakery at Dalwallinu, well worth a visit.

Luckily we timed it just right and merged with the city traffic just before the true rush hour started.

A great trip made even better by the company of great friends.

See you out there sometime, somewhere
- Bernie Webb

Note: When this article was printed in Western 4WDriver it was renamed;-

Once Around the Paddock – on page 115 of the 89th Edition