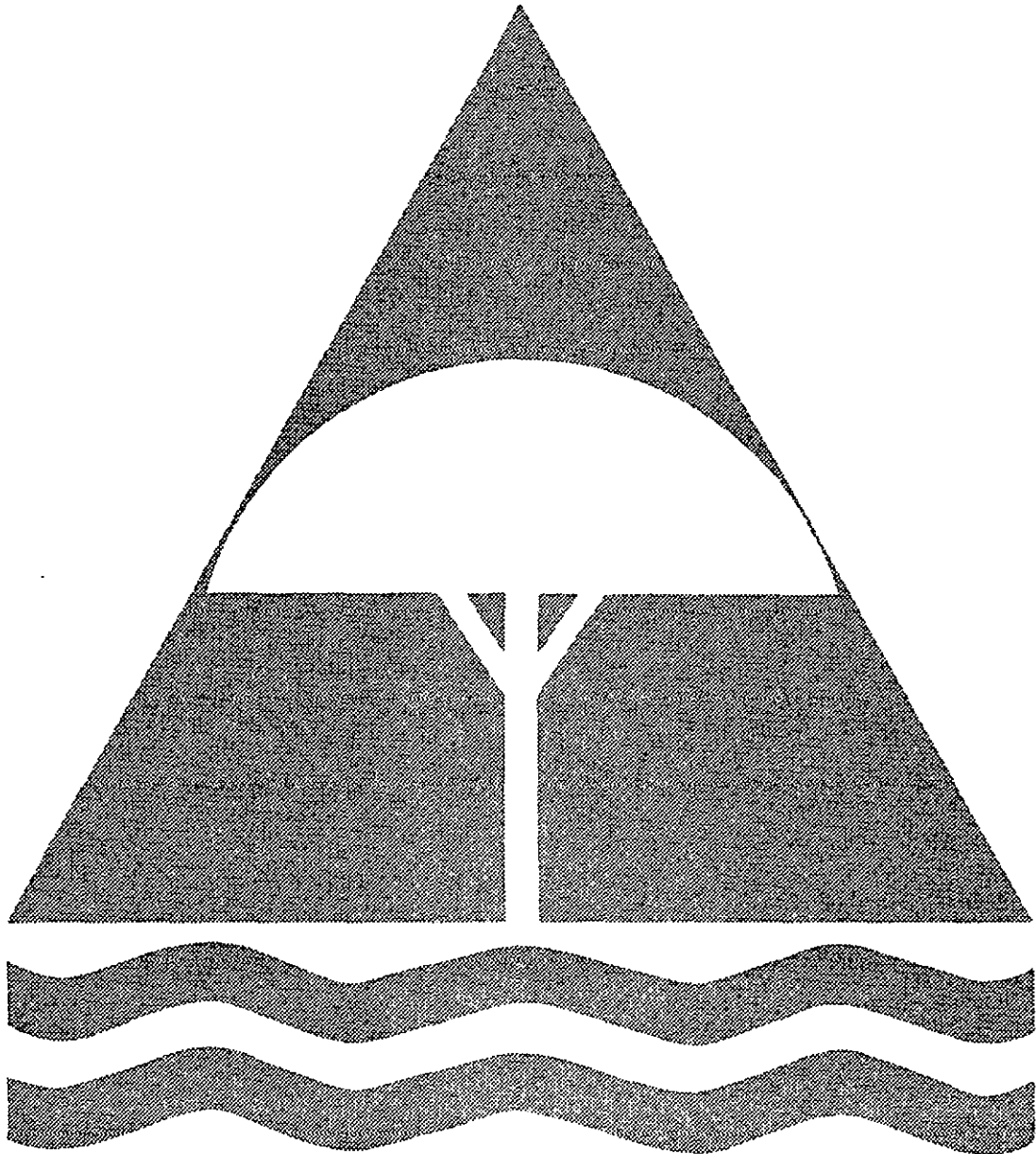


# NPA Bulletin

National Parks Association of the A.C.T. Inc.



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## EDITOR'S COMMENT

A moment of truth seems to have arrived for the Association as a result of receiving that \$5,000 grant (see Bill Watson's comments below). We got it because we applied for it earlier in the year, but we don't seem to have been given it for the reasons for which we requested assistance. This windfall is proving a bit of an embarrassment at the moment.

Our Association's committee has already given a lot of its time (including an extra evening) to discuss how we should spend the grant. But it hasn't really come up with the answer yet.

Dr. McMichael's opinion that we can do nothing useful to influence the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service came as an unpleasant shock to many of us, but then perhaps we have been deluding ourselves about what we can do. Let's face it we are a group of outsiders meddling in the affairs of New South Wales, and in the present parochial Australian federation this is resented. The argument that we are the main users of New South Welsh land around here, and hence should have a say in its management, cuts little ice with Tom Lewis.

Perhaps we should concentrate our energies on problems within the A.C.T. The trouble is that many people consider that we are so well looked after by the government here that there is little that we can usefully do.

But that is merely an opinion. We *can* carry out useful projects both within the A.C.T. and in south-eastern New South Wales if we really have the determination. And herein lies the crux. To do anything requires the time and energy of our members - not just of our committee.

The last Bulletin contained a report on our discussions about where we want our Association to go. The message that came out of these discussions was that by and large members were happy with it as it is - an association that has monthly speakers at meetings to keep members informed, and which organizes family walks in the bush at week ends. Both these activities are usually well attended, and they obviously serve a useful purpose.

But do we really want to do more? Now that we have the \$5,000 grant we have the opportunity. Do we want to take it? If we do, then as a society we must bestir ourselves.

## \$5,000 GRANT FOR N.P.A.

The following letter was received from the Minister for Urban and Regional Development :

"Dear Mr. Watson,

1 May, 1974

I have great pleasure in enclosing a cheque for \$5,000 being a grant made under my Department's National Estate Programme. This grant is to help your organisation defray administration expenses. It may also be used to meet any costs of the same type which you may have already incurred during the current financial year. As a matter of procedure I should be pleased if you would send me, within

one month of the annual audit of your accounts, a statement showing the specific purpose for which the funds have been used.

During this year the Australian Government is making a series of such grants to voluntary bodies in recognition of the valuable contributions they have been making and will continue to make, to our policies of preserving Australia's natural and historical heritage.

Yours sincerely,

(TOM UREN)"

Since hearing of this the Committee have had three meetings to discuss what happens now, for it is clear such a grant being five times our present annual budget, will allow new initiatives by the Association. The problem is what should those initiatives be. The Committee will welcome views from all members on the subject.

The Committee decided the issue was of such importance that it should not form a sub-committee to deal with the matter, but decided to discuss it, at length, in full committee.

The Committee considered the money should be used for special purposes, and not be "just frittered away" in a routine way.

So, what should those special purposes be?

One matter we have been probing is should we restrict our interests within the Australian Capital Territory, where we know we can influence events through discussion with NCDC, the Department of Capital Territories and the Department of the Environment and Conservation. The alternative is to concern ourselves with issues in New South Wales, where our past attempts to influence events have not been notably successful. To obtain a view on this five of the Committee had a working lunch with Dr. McMichael, Tony Ayers and Nev Gare of the Department of the Environment and Conservation. Their view was we should stick within the geographic limits of the A.C.T. (including the Jervis Bay area).

At a subsequent meeting the Committee rejected that view. Conservation problems are not constrained by state boundaries. Nor are the recreation needs of the people of the A.C.T. limited to the A.C.T. Our area of concern was emphatically considered to be the whole South East corner of N.S.W. That meeting decided the Association should, as a long term objective, investigate the conservation issues of that whole area, and aim to produce a report for wide distribution setting out carefully reasoned guidelines for future action, which would be consistent with good environmental practices. The task is an immense one. The view was expressed that as much as possible of the project should be undertaken by the members of the Association, so that the process would produce greater awareness within the Association. The grant will defray expenses, and, in special areas might allow the employment of specialists, and support staff.

That is the state of the thinking of the Committee at present. The discussion will continue. This major project does not preclude special narrower investigations such as a long term plan for A.C.T. section of Jervis Bay.

What do you think? Please tell us?

*Bill Watson (President)*

## EYES AND NO EYES

Members of the Association who joined some years ago will remember a series that used to appear in the 'Bulletin' called 'Eyes and no eyes'. Nancy Burbidge prepared an exquisite set of drawings of locally occurring plant and shrub species, and provided notes about them.

Nancy maintained that some people had eyes and some had no eyes when they walked through the bush. Those with eyes saw a myriad of plant species, while those with no eyes noticed very few. Some people with eyes are naturally observant, but we can all improve with practice.

By good fortune some of the original drawings turned up at the printer's a couple of months ago, and Nancy has agreed that they be reprinted. Two of these follow on the next two pages along with the original accompanying notes. Further drawings will appear in future issues of the 'Bulletin'.

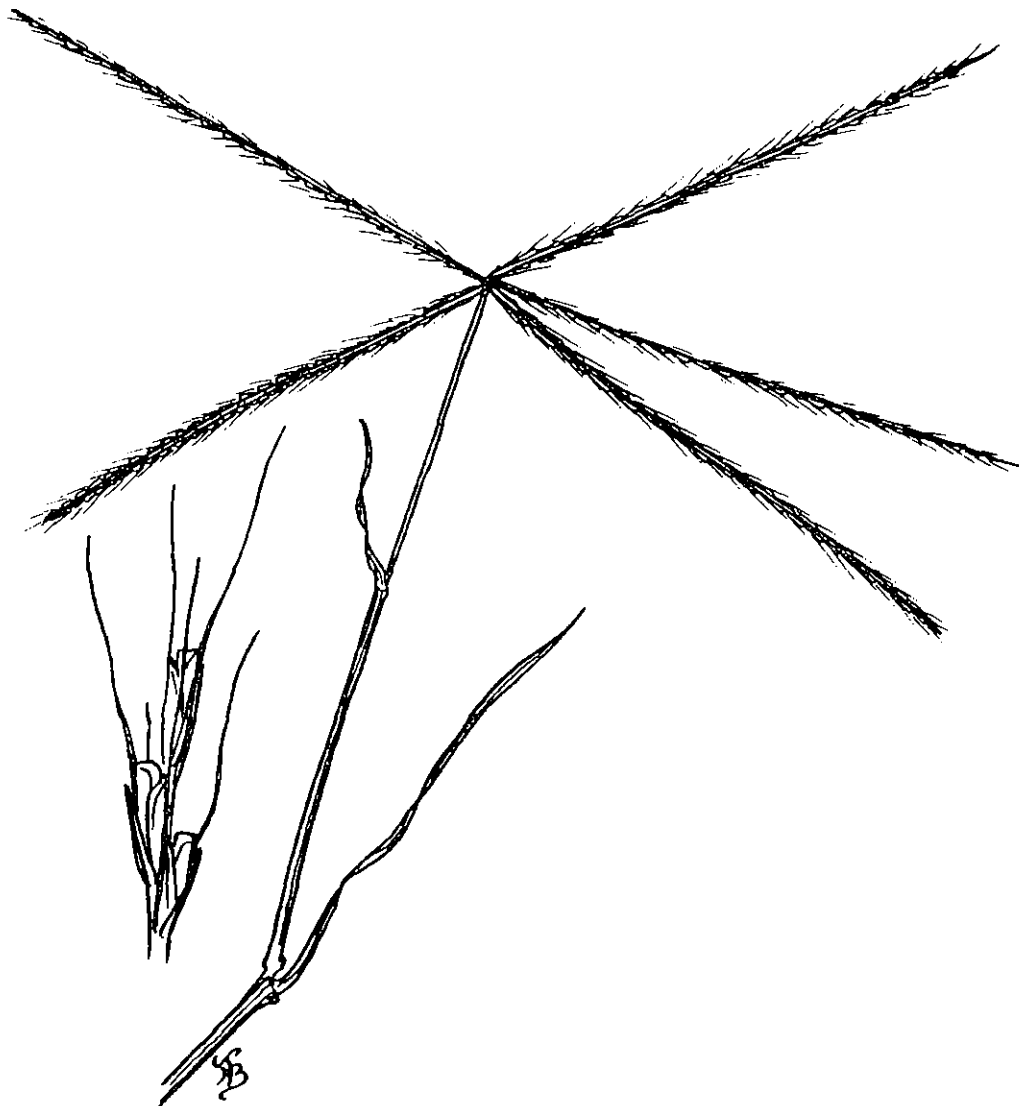
*Editor*

## READ THIS BOOK

Wildlife Conservation. H.J. Frith. (Angus and Robertson: Sydney 1973). 414 pp.

This book is a 'must' for every conservationist. Written by the Chief of CSIRO's Division of Wildlife Research, it contains a wealth of information about our fauna - past, present and future. Unfortunately, the book doesn't yet seem to be widely available from bookshops, even though the publication date on the fly leaf is 1973.

## WINDMILL GRASS



Now that our grassed areas are not being mowed quite so often many of them are forming masses of seedheads. One of these is shown here. It is a native grass, Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*). The heads are pinkish red and have a number of branches spreading from the top of the stem. Each branch has a series of minute blunt husks in an alternate series on its underside. The husks have minute bristles. Seen from the side the branch looks like the edge of a breadknife. This grass can be seen on the roundabout at the Junction of King's Ave. and Parks Way as well as in the Woden Valley and Belconnen.

Other grasses, now in head, also have branches spreading from the top of the stem. These include Couch Grass and Crab Grass but in both the heads are dark purple when seen in a mass.

Nancy Burbidge

## AUSTRALIAN BLACKTHORN



Australian Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*) is a common shrub of our woodland and dry forest areas. It blooms in late summer and sometimes a few flowers can be seen even during the early winter months. The creamy white flowers have a spicy-honey scent but this is more attractive to the beetles which pollinate them than it is to human noses.

The brown seed capsules become dry and rattle when the branches are shaken. Apart from these rattling sounds the bushes are easily recognised by the sharp spines along the branches. These spines are referred to in the Latin name "*spinosa*".

If you look closely you will find that each spine is really a very short branch because each has one or two small leaves near the base and each develops in the axil of a leaf on the main stem.

*Nancy Burbidge*

## MT BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

This is an account of an all-too-short holiday spent in January of this year at the Mt. Buffalo Chalet in Victoria. As relatively few from the A.C.T. and N.S.W. seem to visit this area, it was thought worthwhile describing what can be done there to members who might not otherwise be acquainted with this unique National Park.

Mt. Buffalo is located almost due south of Albury and about 150 kilometres from that City by road. It is reached via the Owen's Highway from Wangaratta through a lovely green valley where both tobacco and hops appear to be plentiful crops. The Buffalo range is about 1370 metres above sea level and occupies a relatively isolated position, being about 19 kilometres north of the Divide. This causes it to tower up relative to the surrounding country. The length of the Plateau is 11.3 kilometres and its width east to west 6.4 kilometres at its widest part. At the southern end is the Horn (1721 metres) while the Chalet is located on the east side looking out across the Buckland Valley and the small township of Porepunkah. About 2.5 kilometres from the Chalet is sylvan Lake Catani, named after the civil engineer who built the road, the dam for the Lake, and most of the tracks which are now used. Here it is truly delightful to swim and the pontoon anchored in the middle makes an excellent staging point and place to bask in the sun.

The Chalet itself is a great rambling building made of wood and completed in 1910. It is operated by the Victorian Railways and offers a relatively simple but nevertheless comfortable accommodation - it represents an excellent base from which to get to know the Plateau. While we were there it was full to capacity, having about 300 guests. It is very popular with Victorians, particularly those with continental origins and early booking through the A.C.T. Tourist Bureau is advisable.

Many and varied are the walks one can do from the Chalet. The general surface of the Plateau is remarkable for the abundance of the tors and granite blocks that are scattered over it. The Gorge, only a short walk from the front of the Chalet, is a startling sight, featuring as it does a north wall of granite 240 metres high. Looking down through the Gorge is a clear but distant view of the valley below. Just over a kilometre behind the Chalet, past the stables and through some tall timber is the Monolith. This is a giant granite block standing on its end atop a rock-strewn rise, and a commanding view of Lake Catani may be had from its airy summit.

Somewhat longer walks take one to Viewpoint via the Underground River or to the rock formations known as the Galleries. If one had sufficient time it is obvious from the maps available at the Chalet that many other longer walks are possible, some to places with delightful names such as Og Gog and Magog. One I followed to Manfield's Lookout, named after a Buckland miner who did some of the early exploring. It led in part across great slabs of upward-sloping granite with the way indicated by miniature cairns of three or so small stones placed at sufficiently wide intervals to make it an interesting exercise in powers of observation.



As a diversion in the evening a 6.4 kilometer drive from the Chalet takes one to the Tatra Inn, a pleasant little hospice nestling in a quiet hollow next to a trout stream, and from which ski lifts run up the near-by slopes. En route one can stop off to view the Leviathan a truly enormous rock over 33 metres long and with a girth of 52 metres.

Perhaps the moment I shall remember best was driving on from the Tatra Inn one evening while it was still light to the Horn, and looking out from it at the wide panorama of blue-hazed ridges and valleys stretching away to the south. In some of the darker blue depths of these valleys there were wisps of white cloud, hanging there, far below. Along there in the cool and diminishing light of the evening it was as though I stood on the Edge of the World.

*Allan Mortlock*

Og Gog and Magog were giants in old English folklore - Ed.

#### EASTER AT MALLACOOTA

'The rain it raineth every day', or that is how it seemed on our visit to the watery inlet. While the sun shone elsewhere, at Mallacoota we were treated to persistent rain and high winds. Nevertheless on Good Friday evening 13 of us had congregated in the shelter of either the Curries' large tent or their dormobile.

On Saturday morning while the skies were reasonably clear we set off on a road around the inlet to fetch the boat. Alas Ian's memory had faded with the years and the mini-walk stretched on and on until finally only intrepid Andrew was left to reach the boat.

However, the currents were too strong for safe handling of the boat, so we stayed ashore.

Despite the lack of water transport we took several watery strolls. Wading along the trail at Double Creek we were rewarded by seeing a number of birds - black swans, dusky wood swallows, and two friendly yellow robins which came close enough to photograph. On the seashore near Bastion Point we saw rufous fantails, restless flycatchers, and yellow-faced honeyeaters darting in and out of the bushes.

At the end of the day we retreated to the dormobile for hot cross buns, tea, and an evening's singing and card playing.

The sun finally shone on the Monday as we struck our tents and we were able to breakfast on the cliff overlooking the beach. We wandered on the beach at low tide looking at the marks in the sand made by flatheads, and the soldier crabs buried in their holes. Then it was time to leave Mallacoota after a wet, but very enjoyable weekend.

*Bruce and June Ward*

## SPACE AGE SPIN-OFF

Something really new has come onto the parka market which is so novel and useful that NPA members might like to hear about it. It is the so-called Apollo Jacket which is a light (280 gram) fully reversible jacket that keeps the wearer warm when it's cold and cool when it's hot. It has been made possible by the advent of a water-proof fabric developed for use in space suits in which a tough aluminium skin is bonded to durable 100% nylon. The non-aluminised side is navy in colour and this is the side which is worn outwards when it is cold but sunny as it absorbs the warmth from the sun. At night when it is cold the aluminised side worn next to the body reflects the body heat inwards. When the temperature rises the aluminised side is worn outwards: this reflects the sun's rays and helps to keep the body cool. The reflecting characteristics of the aluminised side are useful when riding a bicycle at night as the wearer is made visible for over a city block.

The jacket I bought is well tailored with four slit pockets on the navy side which are zippered on the aluminised side. It has a sewn-in hood rolled up in a zippered collar pouch which may be used in wet weather. All seams are double stitched and the front of the jacket has zippered closure. The jacket folds down into a hand-sized package for easy transport.

My jacket was obtained by mail order from Norm Thompson 1805 N.W. Thurman St., Portland, Oregon 97209 for approximately \$20 excluding mailing costs. They will send you a catalogue which includes a fully illustrated description of the Jacket for the asking. For a pretty universal piece of out-door clothing I can recommend the purchase.

*Allan Mortlock*



Allan in his jacket - reflecting side out.

## SURPRISE, SURPRISE

As the morning drew on the clouds grew heavier, and the hills completely disappeared. It looked as though we would be in for a wet walk at Honeysuckle Creek. 'I don't relish the prospect of carting Vanessa around in the wet' said my wife, and with that she reneged on the party and stayed at home. A small child can be a useful excuse!

So I set out without them to lead a band of stalwarts around a firetrail not far from the tracking station.

It didn't rain, although the clouds remained heavy. But the dank prospect seemed to be enough to frighten off most of the expected multitude. I had expected a lot of walkers since 70 or more had recently attended other walks near Canberra. Not more than 15 turned up.

I had always assumed that most members of the Association knew the area around Honeysuckle Creek well - it being easy to reach, and very pretty. So it came as a surprise to find that even some of the long-time members in the party had never been there.

We walked in a circle, starting on a track that branches off from the bitumen road before you reach the tracking station, then veering off to the left along a well concealed fire break. We finally emerged just behind the tracking station's public car park.

It's a wooded walk, and for much of the time you pass through snow gum woodland, in which you find occasional groups of black sallee and other eucalypts. On some days you can see a lot of birds, although on this particular walk we didn't do so well.

If you haven't walked around the Honeysuckle Creek area I recommend it, especially during the next few winter months since the hills of the Bimberi range protect it from the biting westerly winds. You don't have to find the fire trail we followed, there are many other easy walks that you can do.

The final twist? My wife's whingeing about the weather had an ulterior motive. It was my birthday, and while I was away she had secretly cooked an evening meal for four guests. The first I knew about it was when they walked in the door at 8 o'clock! We had a good evening.

*Brian Lee*

## OUTINGS AND MEETINGS

See separate insert.

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following - Mr. & Mrs. D.C. Peaslee, Mrs. B. Breakwell, Mrs. P. Mackenzie, Mr. & Mrs. M. Sterns, The Reverend E. Favier, Miss N. Gill, Mrs. H. Clark & family, Mr. J. Hunwick, Mr. & Mrs. J. Doyle & family, Dr. & Mrs. J.B. Allen & family, P.J. Roberts, W.S. Brown.



## NPA OUTINGS

### JUNE

2nd, Sunday

Booroomba Rocks

2-hour walk each way on fire trail and track.

Carry lunch. (Large rocks and cliffs dangerous for unattended children).

Meet at Honeysuckle Creek tracking station at 10 a.m.

Leader - John Holtzappfel

15th, 16th, 17th, Saturday, Sunday, Monday

Merry Beach (120 miles from Canberra)

Camp at Merry Beach, general activities on beach and heathland.

Meet at camping area 12 noon, Saturday

Leader - Andrew Fordham 818500

23rd, Sunday

Tinderry area

Hard walk with some scrub bashing. Also easy walk planned for others.

Meet at Michelago at 9 a.m.

Contact - Ian Currie 958107 (work)

958112 (home)

29th, Saturday

Vanity's Crossing on Cotter River

Turn left over ramp from Brindabella Road about one mile beyond Uriarra Station.

Meet at 12 noon for barbecue lunch. Easy ramble at 2.30 p.m.

Contact - Ian Currie 958107 (work)

958112 (home)

JULY

13th, 14th, Saturday, Sunday

Dingo Flats

Camp there if weather permits entry to the property.

Easy camp in a pleasant, sheltered place.

Some exercise in compass and map reading will be arranged.

Contact - Ian Currie 958107 (work)

958112 (home)

John Schunke 489828(home)

Please contact John re conditions

21st, Sunday

'Koorabri' - on Goodradigbee River, Brindabella Valley

Easy walk, bring lunch

Meet at Brindabella P.O. (turn left before crossing  
Goodradigbee) at 10 a.m.

Leader - Bill Watson 816601 (home)

28th, Sunday

Devil's Peak (near Mt. Coree)

Medium grade walk, carry lunch to top.

Meet at Uriarra homestead at 9.30 a.m.

Leader - Pat Jeffress

Andrew Fordham 818500

AUGUST

11th, Sunday

Mt. Tennant

6-hour round trip climb (with option of easy  
alternative).

Meet at Tharwa at 9.30 a.m.

Leader - Charles Hill

18th, Sunday

Gudgenby area

Rough walk along a creek

Meet at Gudgenby river near Gudgenby homestead at 10 a.m.

Leader - Julie Henry

24th, Saturday

Barbecue lunch, Stromlo forest

Ramble in the woods

Meet at Stromlo turn-off from Cotter Road at 12 noon

Contact - Brian Lee 484470 (work)

813340 (home)

GENERAL MEETINGS

At 8 p.m. Griffin Centre, Room 1

JUNE

13th, Thursday

Social evening for members and friends

Slides of Colorado River

Olive Buckman

20th, Thursday

National Parks in the National Estate

Judith Wright McKinney

JULY

18th, Thursday

Annual General Meeting

New Zealand's National Parks (illustrated talk)

Various NPA members

AUGUST

15th, Thursday

Research by the CSIRO Division of Land Use

Research

Dr. Dick Millington



## IT'S COMMON LOCALLY

The Australian water rat is quite common around Canberra. It lives in the Molonglo, Queanbeyan and Murrumbidgee Rivers, and I have seen them more than once in Lake Burley Griffin from Commonwealth Avenue Bridge when walking to work.

This animal, which grows to about the size of a small cat, inhabits swamps and rivers throughout Australia and New Guinea. It's a rodent, but unrelated to the European hero of 'The Wind in the Willows' who bears the same name. It eats freshwater mussels, yabbies, fish and even fully grown ducks.

It has a beautiful and valuable fur that is golden-brown to golden-yellow in colour and fine, soft and silky in texture.

The fur was much in demand in the 1920s and 1930s when the animal was trapped extensively. Nowadays the take is very small, and in most States the animals are protected.

In inland irrigation districts the water rat is considered a pest since the animals burrow into levee banks and other water-control structures. Fishermen also complain that they gnaw fish in their nets.

Ed Slater took the photograph, and the water rat is being studied by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research. Note the white tip to the tail.

*Brian Lee*

# National Parks Association outings summary

## JUNE

2 Sunday	Booroomba Rocks	Walk
15 17 Saturday	Merry Beach	Camp
23 Sunday	Tinderry area	Walk
29 Saturday	Vanity's Crossing (Cotter River)	Barbecue Walk

## JULY

13 Saturday 14 Sunday	Dingo Flats	Camp
21 Sunday	'Koorabri' (Goodradigbee River)	Walk
28 Sunday	Devil's Peak	Walk

## AUGUST

11 Sunday	Mt. Tennant	Walk
18 Sunday	Gudgenby	Walk
24 Saturday	Stromlo Forest	Barbecue

Members of the public are welcome. Many walks are suitable for people with families. Anybody interested should phone Mr. Ian Currie on 958107 (work) or 958112 (home).