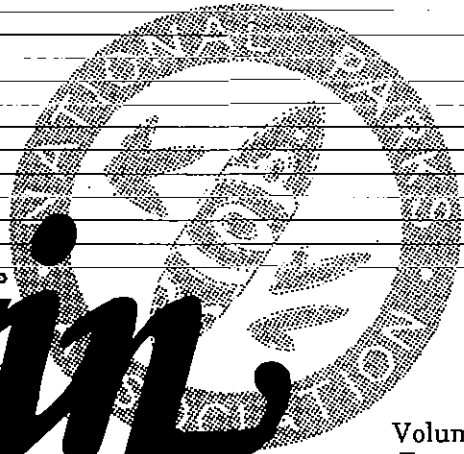
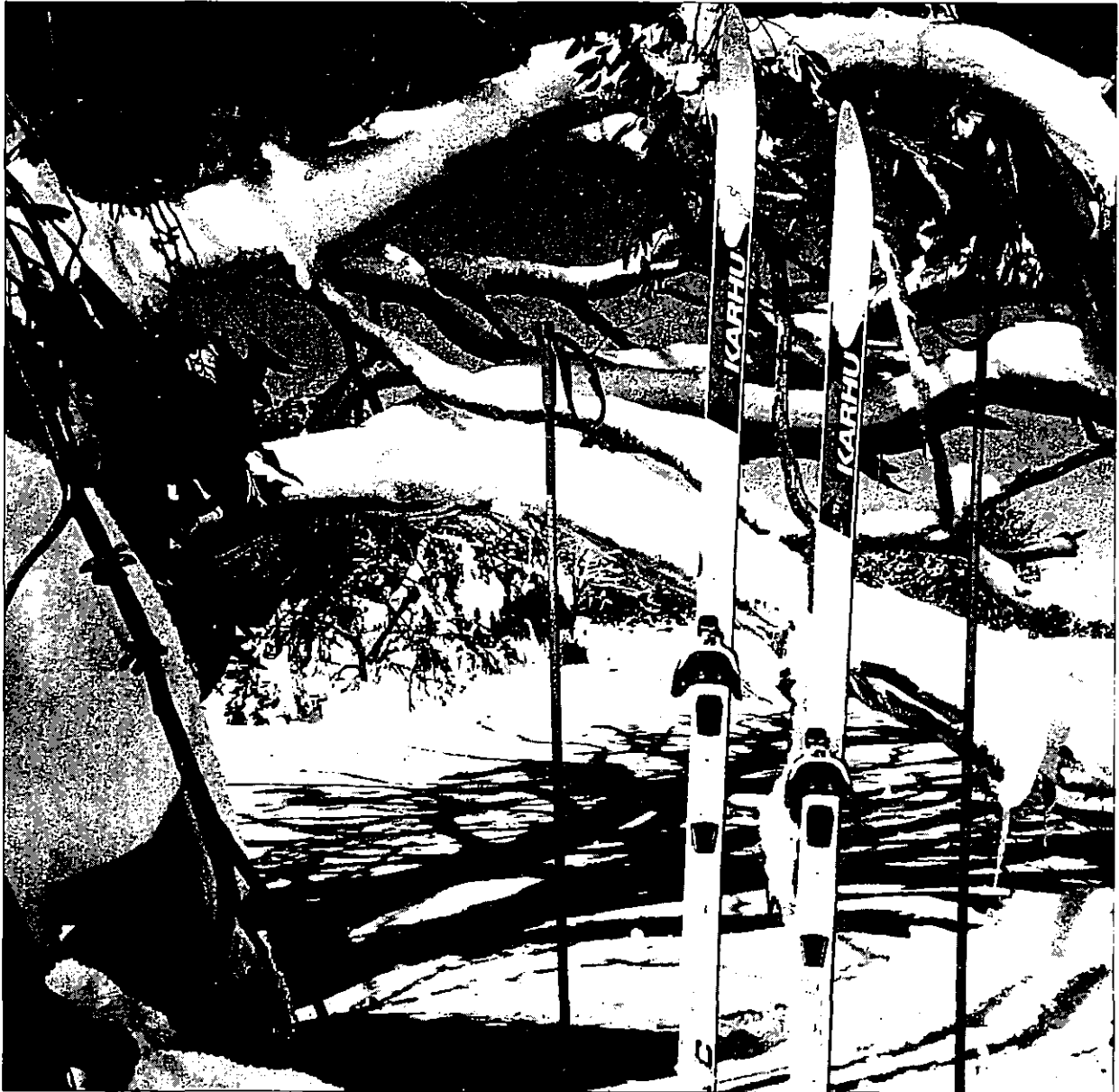


NPA Bulletin



Volume 28 number 2
June 1991

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



New ANPC executive officer

Launch of woodland and grassland report

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Cover

Photo: Chris Bellamy

Ski touring near Dunn's Hill, south of Kiandra, in Kosciusko National Park.

National Parks Association (ACT) Incorporated

Inaugurated 1960

Aims and objects of the Association

- Promotion of national parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery and natural features in the Australian Capital Territory and elsewhere, and the reservation of specific areas.
- Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.
- Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.
- Co-operation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- Promotion of, and education for, nature conservation, and the planning of land-use to achieve conservation.

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Membership enquiries welcome

Please phone Laraine Frawley at the NPA office.

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Contribute to your *Bulletin*

Contributions of articles (news, description or fiction), black-and-white photographs and line drawings are keenly sought for the *Bulletin*. Please label photographs with the name of the subject, the name of the photographer and the date. Leave contributions at the office or phone the editor, Roger Green, on (06) 247 0059. The editorial fax is (06) 249 7373.

Articles by contributors may not necessarily reflect Association opinion or objectives.

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President's foreword

Spending your capital

Many people in these financially stringent times know the implications of spending one's capital on consumption—dip into capital now and reduce your future income. Such an implication is personal and close therefore usually understood. But on a vastly broader scale around us there is a capital wasting scenario not so obvious to the average person but of immense significance.

I once heard an expert say that Australia had lost one-third of its topsoil since European settlement. We can focus on this as it becomes obvious to our very eyes. Gullies of soil erosion, dust storms over our cities, heavy sedimentation in rivers, and salination of soils tell their visible story. But subtler are the implications for biological diversity. Recent material from the World Wide Fund for Nature illustrates the point.

The wealth of life on earth and the genes it contains are the end result of some 4 billion years of evolution. It is however only in relatively recent times what we have been gaining knowledge of our gene banks, yet contemporaneously an exploding world population is eroding those banks at an increasing rate. The Fund material suggests that thousands of biologists over several centuries have described fewer than 5 per cent of the world's species. Yet according to some sources 15 to 20 per cent of all species on earth may disappear by the year 2000. 'So what!', many might say.

The material is riddled with examples of how vital it is to retain our banks of species and genes. It is more than a matter of moral persuasion and preaching to the panting pursuers of the short-term fast buck, it is also very much an economic matter of acquiring more dollars in the longer term. Wild species are the sources for new domesticates and for improvements to domesticates, and wild enemies of pests help control them in their attacks on domesticated crops. Domesticates



Pioneer members Fiona Brand and Robert Story with President Les Pyke at the Namadgi Visitor Centre in front of the display board and album which feature community involvement in the establishment and maintenance of Namadgi National Park. Fiona and Robert were part of the team that put together the NPA proposal for the dedication of a national park in the ACT. The album features pages on the NPA proposal and projects that have been undertaken by the Association. Photo: Reg Alder.

are spread throughout the world away from their wild sources. Thus the critical importance of banks of genetic material.

In California wild brambles provide a reservoir for wasps which control a major grape pest. A wild tomato collected in Peru was bred with commercial stock resulting in improvements in the sugar content of commercial tomatoes—to consid-

erable economic gain. Some of our main crops such as barley, millet, sorghum, rice and wheat have wild relatives which can grow well in salty conditions. This may open up possibilities for growing newly bred crops in salty soils such as those areas affected by salinity from past farming practices. Already a garden beet and tomatoes have been developed which

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President's foreword

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will grow in 70 to 75 per cent sea water.

Closer to home in the health area the World Wide Fund material describes the history of the modern aspirin compound. It started in the 19th century when pain killer compounds were produced from white willow and meadowsweet. In another direction the rosy periwinkle, a plant from Madagascar, yielded vincristine and vinblastine which with other treatments increased the long-term complete remission chances of children stricken with leukemia from 20 to 80 per cent. Several species of snail and the American bison are among the very few animals which do not contract cancer. Therefore an understanding of their defence mechanisms would seem to be very important, and thanks to those who managed to just save the bison from extinction.

Some, under pressure to exploit natural resources to the full in the short-term, might ask how do we know what will be discovered in the future from the bank of genes. In short what is the trade-off. Well, we had better take the gamble. The World Wide Fund material states that as a rough rule of thumb disease resistance has to be reintroduced in commercial crops every 5 to 15 years, because within this time-scale the pests and pathogens evolve ways around a plant's defences and can reinvade. But will the necessary wild stocks always be available? According to one conservative estimate by the year 2050 up to 60 000 plant species will have become extinct or threatened.

National parks are gene banks and thus have a crucial role. A biochemist told me that to ensure essential gene movements we need corridors between the areas of preservation. So we are entering an era of sophisticated management if the human species is to survive at present comfort levels.

Les Pyke

From the new ANPC executive officer

The Australian National Parks Council has recently appointed me to the position of executive officer. I am delighted to take up this job and hope to get to know (if only over the telephone!) as many Councillors and members of National Parks Associations as possible. This is a new part-time position working out of the NPA (ACT) office which the Association in Canberra has kindly allowed us to use.

The ANPC, as some readers may be aware, is the umbrella body for all State and Territory NPA's. It functions as a coordinating body, facilitating communication and activities between member organisations and the Council. My job will be to maintain and, indeed, increase that contact and to provide assistance where possible to State and Territory NPA's when dealing with issues of national interest.

I look forward to talking to representatives of NPA's and becoming informed about matters of concern to each Association, particularly ones which go beyond State boundaries. I hope soon to be in touch with Councillors and NPA members throughout Australia. Please ring me or write if you have any ideas about how your



*Anne Forsythe
executive officer ANPC*

Association and the Council can get together to be more effective in achieving our common goals.

My address is: Australian National Parks Council, GPO Box 2227, ACT 2601. Telephone: (06) 257 1063.

Anne Forsythe

Heritage Week

The ACT Heritage Week was held from 20 to 28 April, involving over 40 ACT community and government groups.

The week was full of activities designed to make people of all ages and interests aware of our local heritage.

The theme for Heritage Week 1991 was *Save the bush*, highlighted by a seminar and field day on *Why save the bush on farms*. The seminar was opened by The Hon. Ros Kelly, MP, and Neil Inall

the well known rural broadcaster. The field day was a bus tour to project sites in the ACT and Yass region. Seminar discussions were on varying perspectives of *The National perspective for ecologically sustainable development*.

Other highlights included guided tours of local heritage sites, urban walks through Canberra's parks, and bushwalks through the vast native surrounds of the ACT.

National Parks or 'national' parks

Throughout the world the term *national park* is used to denote areas with a wide range of protection and management regimes. When we use the label *national park* in Australia what do we mean? Do our national parks conform to national or international guidelines? At the April general meeting Dr Peter Bridgewater, the director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, tackled these questions and other ambiguities and shortcomings in our current systems of national parks.

Although our current parks may have been established for a number of reasons, there is now an increasing emphasis on the conservation of flora and fauna as the highest priority in the dedication and management of national parks. Parks are seen as reservoirs of genetic diversity and maintenance of diversity in national parks is now increasingly important. Should Australia have a national system of reservoirs to meet these objectives? Where should these reserves be sited? How large should they be? by whom and how should they be managed?

Dr Bridgewater pointed out that

we already have a number of areas which have been designated under international conventions. The Ramsar convention on wetlands, which seeks to protect habitat for migratory birds, and the Biosphere reserve designation for core areas of vital natural habitat within reserved areas, have both been applied within Australia. Unfortunately comprehensive systems of reserves even under these limited categories have not yet been achieved. Not all State governments are equally interested in applying international conventions in their land management practices.

To emphasise the inconsistencies in our approach to reservation of natural areas, Dr Bridgewater mentioned that there are some 45 different designations in current use across Australia. There has not been a strategic approach, either at state or federal level, to the identification and dedication of national parks. Dr Bridgewater outlined a set of guidelines to achieve a single system of integrated reserves in Australia, including the very important area of marine reserves. This class of reserve has been largely neglected in our current park systems.

Other countries have national parks within federal systems. Considering the way our federal systems operate in the area of land management, however, Dr Bridgewater saw the role of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, not primarily as a land manager, but as involving

- facilitation
- funding assistance
- identification of key areas and key networks of parks
- assistance to the States in the management of parks
- maintaining the integrity and quality of parks.

Although NPA ACT activities and lobbying are normally confined to parks and problems in our local area, it is essential that we are able to relate these activities to a national and international context. Dr Bridgewater has provided us with both current knowledge and a forward vision for national parks in Australia. Both these aspects will enable NPA to contribute more effectively to national park and National Park activities across Australia.

Neville Esau

1991 Fenner Conference

The theme of the 1991 Fenner Environment Conference is 'Protection of marine and estuarine protected areas—a challenge for Australians'. It is the first national conference to bring together specialists and concerned individuals and groups from around Australia and the Australasian region whose interest is the protection and management of marine and estuarine environments.

The conference, which will be run in Canberra from 9 to 11 October, is the initiative of the

Australian Committee of The World Conservation Union, with the assistance of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The aims of the conference are:

- To provide a national forum for government, non-government, commercial and community interests to undertake a strategic review of marine and estuarine protection and management in Australia.
- To formulate strategies for the conservation and protection of Australian marine and estuarine

habits and species, in particular through the national, integrated and representative system and estuarine protected areas.

- To boost the momentum in the establishment and management of marine and estuarine natural heritage and its conservation needs.

For further information contact:

Ms Tracey Walters,
Conference coordinator
Australian National Parks
and Wildlife Service
Phone: (06) 250 0353
Facsimile: (06) 250 0399.

PARKWATCH

Nattai Assessment

The NSW Minister for the Environment Mr Tim Moore advises that the Director of Parks and Wildlife has almost completed his formal assessment of the Nattai Wilderness nomination and that he expects to be in a position to discuss his recommendations with his cabinet colleagues shortly. The Director has also been asked to review options for protecting the area, including the feasibility of establishing a National Park.

The existence of coal deposits within the area of the proposed park—albeit probably sub-marginal particularly in the present depressed coal market—has been cited as the reason for delaying a decision.

*The Colong Bulletin,
March 1991*

Sanctions to save Fraser Island

The Fraser Island Defender's Organisation (FIDO) is coordinating a national campaign of economic sanctions to persuade companies to withdraw from Fraser Island. FIDO will be working in cooperation with a number of other conservation groups to develop ways of promoting and implementing an effective consumer boycott. Companies that will come in for attention include Boral, Pivot and Hyne and Son.

*The Colong Bulletin,
March 1991*

Your chance to comment

The Tasmanian Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage has produced a draft management plan for the World Heritage Area in western Tasmania.

The area embraces 20 per cent of the State's land mass, including some of Australia's most spectacular wilderness and is used for a wide range of recreational pursuits including sightseeing, fishing, horseriding and bushwalking.

A summary or full version of the draft management plan are available by writing to:

World Heritage Area Planning Team
GPO Box 44A Hobart 7001
ph: (002) 302 639 or
(002) 306 552.

\$80 'bite' for dogs in parks

Wimmera magistrate Tim McDonald fined a Warrnambool man in Stawell Court \$150 on each charge of having brought a dog into a national park and for having allowed the dog to remain in the park. The man had three dogs near Jimmy's Creek camping ground in the Grampians National Park in September last year. He said he saw the sign that did not permit dogs in the park but he did not take any notice.

Department of Conservation and Environment operations area supervisor at Stawell, Steve Munday, has warned that people who take dogs into national parks would now receive an infringement notice which meant an \$80 on-the-spot fine for each charge.

*Wimmera Mail Times,
18/1/91*

Wyrrabalong proposal

Wyrrabalong was the only park promised by the Greiner Government at the last election and after some 35 years since it was first proposed, Wyrrabalong National Park will soon become a reality.

There are two sections to this proposed Park. The southern section covers the coastline in the Forresters Beach-Bateau Bay area, north of Gosford, and will soon be gazetted. It will include two islands in the Tuggerah Lake.

The North Entrance section has been delayed but the National Parks and Wildlife Central Coast Branch now has assurances that the extended area of littoral rainforest, including all the areas of an endangered species Magenta Lily Pilly (*Syzygium paniculatum*), will be included in the national park.

*National Parks Journal,
March-April 1991*

Government threat to Iluka koalas

The NSW Minister for Lands, Mr Gary West, has announced a construction project on the north coast to make way for playing fields and a retirement village. The NPA of NSW believes that the project will involve clearing one of the last remaining habitats for koalas. The forested land is a long-standing proposal by the NSW NPWS for addition to the World Heritage Iluka Nature Reserve and is supported by the NPA because it will enhance the future of the largest single stand of littoral rainforest in NSW.

*National Parks Journal,
March-April 1991*

Jet ski ban

Jet skis may be banned from NSW waters unless the water behaviour of the skiers improves and noise emissions are reduced. The Maritime Services Board said that it will be policing the behaviour of jetskiers along the entire NSW coastline and will be asking manufacturers to improve emissions from their skis. Most complaints from the public have concerned dangerous riding practices by irresponsible skiers who insist on 'buzzing' swimmers and other water users. There have also been a number of serious injuries to swimmers recently as a result of this behaviour. Noise levels from these craft are considerably higher than for other motorised recreational craft due to the exhaust being discharged into the air rather than the water.

These craft are an increasing problem in Jervis Bay, the tranquility of which is often shattered by inconsiderate jet skiers who seem to persist in riding in the more recreational areas, placing swimmers and divers at risk. On 11 March a school of eight dolphins at Long Beach were harassed by two jet skiers, who repeatedly circled the group, drove between pairs of dolphins and appeared to be attempting to run over individual animals.

*Jervis Bay Beacon,
April 1991*

Snakes in our region

At our general meeting on 21 March, Rob Jenkins of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service gave to a large audience a most interesting lecture on the many facts he had researched on snakes which most of us are too timid to find out for ourselves.

It would have been more pertinent, because of the long, hot days of this summer if the lecture could have been given earlier, as programmed, to alert members of the likelihood and dangers of meeting snakes on our bushwalks. However, the information given will serve many more summers as to what types may be encountered in our immediate and surrounding areas, within a radius of about 25 kilometres.

The lecture progressed with reference to the projected slides and the following paragraphs summarise the remarks made to each slide.

Red-bellied black snake

This is one of the most ubiquitous species and perhaps the best known of all Australian snakes. In the local region and Australian Alps all snakes are venomous except for the small diminutive blind snake. All reptiles are cold-blooded and their body temperature approximates that of the surrounding environment. Because of Canberra's cold nights the local reptiles are obligatory diurnal animals, most active during the day. Except for the few hot nights during summer, night temperatures are by and large below the threshold temperature for activity.

The red-bellied black is most commonly encountered around watercourses and along the urban margin areas where they abut on to semi-rural land. They give birth to live young which are fully formed and about 20 centimetres long. That event which occurs during January and February gives the local park authorities a good deal of work as anxious householders want to know where the parent snakes are. It is a good

chance they will not be far away although no parental care is given. The young are the same colour as the adults, although they may be a little lighter on the snout.

Small-eyed snake

The species looks superficially like the young of the red-bellied black snake and occurs uncommonly in the ACT with only two records of sightings. It belongs to a completely different genus and grows to a maximum length of 60 centimetres, although an average adult would be about 40 centimetres. It is venomous but not considered dangerous and there has been only one reported death in Australia. It is more common along the coast right up to Cape York. It lives in forested country, is nocturnal and gives birth to live young.

Death adder

Fortunately this species is locally rare and does not occur in the high country. There are two confirmed records for the Canberra region. It is far more common along the east coast and northern Australia. There are two colour phases, grey and brick red. It gives birth to live young and is an animal to be wary of if walking in the Budawangs, Morton National Park and the South Coast during the summer months as it is nocturnal. It hides embedded amongst leaf litter or soft loamy earth with its wriggling tail elevated about 5 centimetres from its head to attract the unwary bird or animal seeking an easy meal.

Yellow-faced whip snake

More common to the north of the region. There are only two records of it in our area and these were found at Burrinjuck Dam. It is one of the more common representatives of a group of diurnal snakes in Australia that go loosely by the collective name of whip snake. They are long and attenuated with large eyes which are indicative of an animal that hunts through the day. They are common in north-

eastern Australia where they are more colourful than the dark brown specimen shown. They become olive green with a russet stripe along the back. They grow to 120-150 centimetres but are commonly around 60 centimetres. They lay eggs and although venomous are not considered dangerous.

Common brown snake

One of the most common to be found around the ACT and immediate environs but is most common in the country. It is responsible for most of the calls to the local wildlife authorities. It is extremely aggressive and highly toxic, and has to be regarded as dangerous. The specimen shown about 60 centimetres long showed that it was young by the remaining hint of bands. Brown snakes lay eggs in December which hatch in February. There is no parental care and the adult female is not likely to be in the area when the eggs hatch. Fortunately most eggs perish. The young are as venomous as the adult, but because of the small size of the fangs are not capable of injecting as much venom as the adult. There are large variations in colour in brown snakes.

The flap footed lizard

This lizard closely resembles a young brown snake and although harmless is often killed by mistake. It is relatively common in the local region. It may be recognised by its external ear, a feature snakes do not have. Snakes have a short post anal tail whereas flap footed lizards have a much longer tail which will break off if held tightly. Two vestigial hind legs can be seen and another distinct feature is that it has a fleshy tongue, as we have, distinct from the forked tongue of a snake.

Tiger snake

Unfortunately common through the many areas we are likely to frequent, it is aggressive and

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Snakes in our region

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highly toxic and is unlikely to get out of your way. Unless immediate medical attention is given, chances are that death will occur. It is diurnal except on warm summer nights. It frequents swampy areas and fields and feeds principally on frogs. It used to be extremely abundant around Lake George and other wetlands but with clearing and the decline in frogs it is less frequently met. In springtime they are likely to come out of their torpor on days of over 20 degrees. If one is met it is best to step aside to let it go on its way rather than to obstruct its path.

The lecture concluded with slides of a number of snakes which occur outside our region but may be met on our travels. The discussion on them provided a suitable conclusion to a very informative evening.

Further information on snakes in our region may be obtained from *A Field Guide to Reptiles of the Australian High Country* by R Jenkins and R Bartell* or *A Field Guide to the Snakes and Lizards of New South Wales* by Gerry Swan.

* Copies may be obtained from the Association.

Reg Alder

*What a privilege to know
the profound stillness
and peace of the land,
to see
star spangled skies,
and to listen to
the pulse of the universe.....*

Jill Tremain

Quotations here and elsewhere in the *Bulletin* are from the visitor centre at Mount Cook National Park. Passed on by Graham Scully.

Liberal Party seeks proposals

The ACT Liberal Party has called for proposals on specific environmental policies for the ACT. They believe it is now appropriate for them to review not only the effectiveness of their environmental achievements, but map out a strategy for the future.

Those considering proposals should consider the following points:

- If an environmental enhancement can be shown to provide a direct economic benefit, then the process of change can be accelerated.
- Try to allocate priorities to proposals and if possible suggest where financial compensators

could be found from other parts of the ACT Government program.

- Be practical and identify those issues which directly affect the ACT and over which the ACT Government has influence.

Proposals should be submitted by 1 June to:

Roger J. Dace
Convenor, Environmental
Interest Branch
ACT Division of the Liberal
Party
PO Box 66
Deakin ACT 2600.

Letter to the editor

I was pleased to see in the March issue of your bulletin the report on a talk given recently to your members by Dr Richard Baker of the National Museum of Australia.

The writer, Timothy Walsh, referred to the contrast between the enthusiasm of Dr Baker for his work on the human and environmental history of the Murray-Darling Basin and the 'grey cloud' of political apathy towards the construction of the National Museum.

Your members may like to assist us in dispersing this grey cloud by joining the Friends of the National Museum, a group of Australians determined to see the Museum built.

Formed in early 1989 under the presidency of actor Jack Thompson, the Friends have succeeded in getting the Museum back on the political agenda and a commitment from the Minister, Ros Kelly, to an opening date in 2001.

We have several thousand supporters including such distin-

guished Australians as Dick Smith, Vincent Serventy, Valerie Taylor and Robyn Williams, and we believe that as our membership continues to grow so does the pressure on the Government to make a definite commitment to a starting date for the construction of the Museum.

The Environment and its Influence on Different Groups of People' is one of the three major themes of the National Museum and we are sure that your members will have a particular interest in this area.

Further information on the Friends may be obtained by writing to GPO Box 2977, Canberra ACT 2601, or telephoning (06) 256 1116.

Judy Holding

*Vice President,
Friends of the National
Museum*

Chief Minister launches remnant woodland and grassland report

The Chief Minister of the ACT, Mr Trevor Kaine, launched the Association's report, *The Conservation of Remnant Woodland and Native Grassland in the ACT*, on the slopes of Mount Ainslie on 20 April before a large relaxed gathering which included Mr Norm Jensen, MLA. Tea and damper were served. The launch was the opening event of Heritage Week 1991.

The President of the Association, Les Pyke, said it was particularly satisfying to have a head of government who could find time from immediate pressures to participate in an event of gentler long-term significance, albeit not less important.

He continued: 'Our report is not put forward in any confrontational or abrasive sense. Rather it is a document which brings together existing scattered information and points the way for the future—in terms of policy, the further investigation and research needed, and the formal steps needed to ensure



Trevor Kaine MLA launches Heritage Week.

the protection of vegetation communities and associated fauna, particularly in the low altitude areas of the ACT most affected by

development as this great city grows. In short, we like to think of the document as an aide memoire for our elected political representatives and their policy advisers and planners.

'It is also an educative document for the general public who are entitled to be aware of the need to conserve our remnant woodlands and native grasslands. For example over half the bird species found in suburban Canberra are dependent on the native bushland for breeding habitat.

'In our immediate vicinity today—in the Mt Ainslie–Mt Majura region—the yellow box and red gum woodland is probably the best example of its kind in the ACT. Many bird species are known to utilise the area. If we add Black Mountain to our immediate vicinity, the total area supports over 80 breeding species including some uncommon in the ACT. The Ainslie–Majura ridge is part of the habitat used by transient grey kangaroos and swamp wallabies. I could go on about other fauna and other areas.

'So we put forward this report to assist knowledge and the articulation of issues and informed decision making. You have already helped in this, Chief Minister. As this Association has publicly said, through its Bulletin, your Government and its advisers are to be congratulated on its 40 page paper *The Environmental Budget 1990–91* which laid out so helpfully before us the policy landscape for the immediate future'.

In launching Dr Kevin Frawley's report on remnant woodland in the ACT, the Chief Minister, Mr Trevor Kaine, said that he had read the report with interest and considered it an impressive and important work which would be of great assistance in a number of ways' including community education, stimulating

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Tea and damper in a natural setting. Photos: Barbara Comfort.



Chief Minister launches report

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further research, and informing planners and administrators.

The timing and place of the launch—during Heritage Week on the eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie—was, he said, appropriate because the Ainslie-Majura area represented the largest area of remnant woodland in the ACT which, although subject to earlier development, had regenerated successfully. The Chief Minister said that the planning legislation now before the Assembly had provisions which, through its heritage provisions, would assist in the preservation of places of significance.

The Chief Minister said that his personal interest in the bush derived from his early years spent in the country and had been recently reinforced by a visit to the Gochi area where he was tremendously impressed by the beauty of the alpine vegetation much of which was in its original state. He drew attention to the importance of the open space areas in the ACT, and expressed the hope that Heritage Week would stimulate public awareness of the need to protect remnant vegetation areas.

Excerpts from the report are on the following pages.

Kevin J Frawley *The Conservation of Remnant Woodland and Native Grasses in the ACT*. Report prepared for the National Parks Association of the ACT (Inc), March 1991. Price \$5.

*Climb the mountains
and get their good tidings.
Nature's peace will flow into
trees.*

*The winds will blow
their freshness into you,
and the storms their energy,
while cares will drop off
like autumn leaves.*

John Muir

THE CONSERVATION OF REMNANT

Summary

1. A high degree of protection of vegetation communities (especially those of higher altitudes) has been achieved in the ACT due to the large proportion of the Territory protected in National Parks and Nature Reserves. The conservation goal now should be to protect the remaining unreserved communities and as many of their constituent associations as possible, in situations where their long term survival can be guaranteed. Related to this is the protection of associated faunal communities.

2. Low altitude vegetation communities are particularly in need of formal protection. These communities are:

- (i) Fringing Woodland (*Casuarina cunninghamiana* community)
- (ii) Open Forest (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* - *E. rossii* community)
- (iii) Woodland (*Eucalyptus melliodora* - *E. blakelyi* community)
- (iv) Tussock Grassland (*Stipa* spp. community).

As urban expansion and associated development proceed in the ACT, the secure reservation of remaining low altitude communities becomes more urgent.

3. Nine main remnant woodland areas are identified in the ACT, as well as lands adjacent to Namadgi National Park south of Tharwa, and the open savannah woodland of the rural areas. To date, the open forest and woodland communities have not been the subject of detailed and systematic study so their conservation needs cannot be fully specified. Identification and documentation of the associations within each of these areas would provide the rational basis for making recommendations for reservation. In particular, it is a prerequisite for ecologically based reserve boundary delineation and assigning conservation priorities in areas where urban and other

developments are to occur. Significant habitat values are identified for most areas, even those which have been considerably disturbed by past land uses.

4. Native grassland in the ACT has been severely reduced in extent and grassland associations affected by activities such as grazing, mowing, pasture improvement and changed fire regimes. Native grassland has important habitat and landscape values which are only now gaining recognition. There is an urgent need to re-survey the location, extent and integrity of native grassland, including where it occurs as understorey to woodland and open forest.

5. For each important remaining area of native grassland, detailed and clear management prescriptions are needed for their maintenance and protection. For areas within rural leases, for which formal reservation is not feasible or appropriate, the possibility of site management in co-operation with the rural lessee and if necessary, using lease provisions should be explored.

6. The remnant vegetation of the ACT owes its existence mainly to topography, planning policy and a range of 'chance factors' (for example, siting radio transmitters in grassland areas). A range of threats is identified. These include woodland clearing for urban, commercial and transport developments, and dieback in rural lands. In contrast, given suitable conditions, there is good potential for regeneration of native tree cover in the ACT, demonstrated by the many sites where this is occurring.

7. Recommendations for reservation or other protection of remnant areas are made. In general, the preference is for declaration as a Nature Reserve in the Public Land category of the proposed Land

WOODLAND AND NATIVE GRASSLAND IN THE ACT

Administration Act 1991, rather than reliance on inclusion in the National Capital Open Space System or as Designated Land under the National Capital Plan.

8. Revegetation policies for the rural lands of the ACT will soon become a matter of urgency. Broadly, there are two main choices in the pattern of revegetation of these lands. A mixture of the two is also possible and perhaps likely. Natural regeneration, where it is feasible, will not reproduce the current pastoral landscape, instead, a copse woodland will develop. This will have improved ecological values compared with the current pattern.

The alternative to this will be more intensive management to reproduce the open savannah pattern—either by planting, or thinning of natural regeneration. This would give priority to landscape and scenic values rather than ecological ones.

9. The report identifies gaps in current knowledge of the remnant woodlands and grasslands. As well as the incomplete documentation of tree associations, knowledge of fauna is limited—particularly so for some of the areas. Dissemination of available knowl-

edge of both flora and fauna would be improved by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service giving greater priority to publication of the research work of its staff in an inexpensive, publicly accessible format.

10. As a future publishing project, it is suggested that the NPA (ACT) consider publishing a field guide (or field guides) to the low altitude native grasses, herbs found in grassland, and common understorey species, to complement its *Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT*.

*Harmony with land is like
harmony with a friend;
you cannot cherish his right
hand
and chop off his left.....*

Aldo Leopold



Recommendations

TREE COMMUNITIES

Mulligan's Flat

(i) Mulligan's Flat is the most densely wooded site in the Gungahlin hills and contains, and is adjacent to, native grassland. It should be declared a Nature Reserve within the Public Land category of the proposed Land Administration Act 1991. The boundaries of the Reserve should be drawn to include the native grassland of the southern middle section and the forested ridge in the south-west. For the latter, footslope areas should be included to expand the narrow linear shape and to allow for regeneration.

(ii) The area north of the Gundaroo Road to Oak Hill deserves further investigation for inclusion in a Nature Reserve with Mulligan's Flat. This area is showing good natural regeneration, has an extensive area of *Themeda* grassland, and is part of the upper catchment of Ginninderra Creek.

Overall the two areas have the potential to combine open forest, woodland, and native grassland in one reservation.

Greenwood Hill, Fairbairn, Kowen, Molonglo Gorge

(i) The large remnant of dry sclerophyll forest in the vicinity of Greenwood Hill warrants Nature Reserve status. However, the area is currently in the Majura Field Firing Range which the Department of Defence has currently no plans to relocate. This restrictive use has protected the area to date. Nature Reserve status should be sought for the area if the Department of Defence decides to relinquish the area in the future. In the meantime, a thorough ecological survey of the area should be made. The wildlife movement corridor to Mt Majura needs to be maintained. This may be assisted by tree planting.

(ii) Maintenance of the savannah woodland tree cover in the Fairbairn area should be encouraged as for other rural lands.

(iii) The status of Molonglo Gorge



Open forest on Bluck Mountain. Photo: Kevin Frawley.

should be upgraded by declaration as a Nature Reserve under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991.

(iv) The open forest/woodland remnant east of the Sutton Road is currently managed by ACT Forests for conservation and as a buffer for fire protection of the large pine

plantation to the east. It is recommended that this arrangement continue and that management should focus on the conservation of the open forest and woodland and maintenance of the wildlife corridor. Control of wilding pines may be necessary.

continued on page 14

Outings program

July to October 1991



Outings guide

Day walks carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.
Pack walks two or more days, carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER BY WEDNESDAY.

Car camps facilities often limited or non-existent. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. BOOK EARLY WITH LEADER.

Other activities include nature rambles, environmental and field guide studies and ski tours.

Walks gradings

Distance grading (per day)

- 1 - up to 10 km
- 2 - 10 km to 15 km
- 3 - 15 km to 20 km
- 4 - above 20 km.

Terrain grading

- A - Road, firetrail, track
- B - Open forest
- C - Light scrub
- D - Patches of thick scrub, regrowth
- E - Rock scrambling
- F - Exploratory.

The walks program contains additional information. If necessary, contact the leader.

7 July-Sunday Walk (2/A)

Camel Back Ridge Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Len Haskew ph251 4268

Meet at corner Cotter Road and Eucumbene Drive at 8.30am. A 13km return walk in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve along a fire trail through forest, with optional rock scramble to top of the Camel's Hump for a spectacular view of Canberra. 70km drive (\$14 per car)

10 July-Wednesday Walk (2/A)

Casuarina Sands/Bulga Creek Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Olive Buckman ph248 8774

Meet at corner Cotter Road and Eucumbene Drive at 10am. A 16km walk on tracks through undulating country above the Murrumbidgee River. Ideal for beginners/families. 40km drive (\$8 per car).

14 July-Sunday Walk (3/A/C/D)

Nursery Creek Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Leader: Jack Smart

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8am. From Orroral Valley to Orroral Mountain, then descending NW to head of Nursery Creek, and along creek. 100 km drive (\$20 per car).

20 July-Sunday Walk (2/A/C/E)

Lower Molongolo Interpretive Walk Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Tony Winsbury ph248 6420w 258 1733h

Meet on the South side of Coppins Crossing at 9am. A pleasant interpretive walk along the lower Molongolo to look at its natural value and the effects of urban settlement and grazing. The route is through a little-visited gorge and ends not far from its confluence with the Murrumbidgee. Short car shuttle. 20km drive (\$4 per car).

20-21 July-Weekend Pack Walk (2/A/B)

Budawang's Ramble Ref: Budawang's sketch map (CMW)

Leader: Steve Forst 274 8426w 251 6817h

Contact leader by Thursday. A medium overnight trip in the Round Mountain area. 300km drive (\$60 per car).

27 July-Saturday Ski Tour (2/A)

Kings Cross to Cabramurra Ref: Mt Selwyn Ski Touring Map

Leader: Steve Forst 274 8426w 251 6817h

Contact leader by Thursday. An easy ski tour of 12-14km for near-beginners over level terrain with good views (weather permitting). 350km drive (\$70 per car).

28 July-Sunday Walk (2/A/C)

Mt. Tidbinbilla Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Len Crossfield

Meet at corner Cotter Road and Eucumbene Drive at 8.30am. A climb of 700m to the best view near Canberra (snow permitting). 70km drive (\$14 per car).

3 August Saturday Ski Tour (3/B)

Dead Horse Gap to Teddys Hut Ref: Thredbo 1:50 000
Leader: Phil Bubb 248 6769h 266 5128w

Contact leader by Thursday - destination depends on snow. A trip in open undulating country with one chance to show downhill skills. Intermediate skiers or better, not suitable for beginners. 450km drive (\$90 per car).

10 August-Saturday Ski Tour (2/A)

Mt Selwyn to Four Mile Hut Ref: Mt Selwyn Ski Touring Map

Leader: Steve Forst 274 8426w 251 6817h

Contact leader by Thursday. An easy/medium ski tour, depending on weather and conditions, to the historic Four Mile Hut. 350km drive (\$70 per car).

10-11 August-Weekend Car Camp (2/A/B)

Thirlmere Lakes National Park Ref: Nattai, Hilltop 1:25 000
Leader: Len Haskew ph281 4268

Contact leader by Wednesday. Camp by tranquil Thirlmere Lakes (water and toilets, no showers). On Saturday afternoon take an easy 15km walk through pristine bushland to Little River, or visit Railway Museum, or canoe lake (BYO). On Sunday walk Starlight's track by the Nattai River to view Russel's Needle (16km), and drive home. 300km drive (\$60 per car).

13 August-Tuesday Walk (1/A)

Brandy Flat and beyond Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Olive Buckman 248 8774

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 9am. A pleasant 10km walk on fire trails from Glendale Crossing, with lunch at Brandy Flat Hut, where there is water and a fireplace for tea, and on to cars near Old Boboyan Road. Climb of 430m. Short car shuffle. 90km drive (\$18 per car).

17-18 August-Overnight Ski Tour (2/A)
Mt Selwyn to Broken Dam Hut Ref: Mt Selwyn
Ski Touring Map
Leader: Steve Forst 274 8426w 251 6817h
Contact leader by Wednesday. A medium overnight ski tour to Broken Dam Hut and Tabletop Mountain. Trip depends on weather and snow. 350km drive (\$70 per car).

25 August-Sunday Walk (2/A/B)
Casuarina Sands to Kambah Pool Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Dugald Munro ph231 8776
Meet at Kambah Pool walking car park (at top of hill) at 8.30am. A walk of 16km along the Murrumbidgee River walking trail. A short car shuffle. 40km drive (\$8).

1 September-Sunday Walk (2/A/D)
Yankee Hat Mountain Ref: Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Frank Clements ph231 7005
Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8.30am. 14km walk follows the 'Charles Hill Route to Yankee Hat, return via Bogong Creek. 450m climb. Some scrub and some regrowth. 100km drive (\$20 per car).

7-8 September-Weekend Work Party (2/A)
Budawang's Track
Maintenance Ref: Corang 1:25 000
Leader: Di Thompson 288 6084h 284 5043w
Phone leader before end of August, numbers must be firm one week before trip for arrangements with NPWS (packs may be transported in). Track maintenance and improvement in Canowie Brook/Burrumbet Brook area. 300km drive (cost met by Association).

11 September-Wednesday Walk (1/A/C)
Booroomba Rocks Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Olive Buckman 248 8774
Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 9am. A pleasant 9km walk on fire trails and tracks to view of Canberra, then to high point for 360degree views. Climb 300m. 65km drive (\$13 per car).

14 September-Saturday Ski Tour (2/A)
Perisher Valley Ref: Perisher Ski Touring Map
Leader: Steve Forst 274 8426w 251 6817h
Contact leader by Wednesday. An easy to medium ski tour in the Perisher area. Mount Duncan, the Porcupine, and Betts Camp. Depends on snow and weather. 400km drive (\$80 per car).

14-15 September-Weekend Pack Walk (2/A/B/D)
Shanahan's Mountain,
Naas River, Reedy Creek Ref: Colinton 1:25 000
Leader: Jack Smart ph248 8171
Contact leader early for details. Over Shanahan's Mountain, down Shanahan's Falls Creek to gorges and junction with Naas Creek. Camp site near Horse Gully Hut or perhaps further North. Return trip up Reedy Creek over the Mountain. 160km drive (\$32 per car).

22 September-Sunday Walk (3/A/D/E)
Mt Gudgenby Ref: Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Len Crossfield
Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8am sharp. 10km return on tracks and a hard 5km return up 700m of scrubby, trackless ridge with dense regrowth in parts. The reward is a superb view on a delightful mountain top. A long day. 140km drive (\$28 per car).

28-29 September- Weekend Pack Walk (3/A/B/F)
Meryla State Forest
Leader: Len Haskew ph 281 4268
Contact leader by Wednesday. A pleasant walk mostly on trails through forest to colonial farming site. A side trip without packs to backwaters of Lake Yurrunga. 350km drive (\$70 per car).

29 September-Sunday Mountain Bike Trip (4/A)
Namadgi South West Corner Ref: ACT 1:100 000,
Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Di Thompson 288 6084h 284 5043w
Contact leader by Wednesday. Round trip up Back or Grassy Creek, Sheep Station Creek, Naas Valley, and a few kilometres of road to end trip. Supply own bike. Numbers limited only by facilities to transport bikes to start. 180m drive (\$36 per car).

4,5,6,7 October-Pack Walk (2/3/A/C/F)
The Dargals Ref: Khancoban 1:50 000
Leader: Di Thompson 288 6084h 284 5043w
Contact leader by Tuesday. Wander through Broadway and Pretty Plains, and upper Tooma River. Visit mountain huts, ruins, and old gold diggings. Destination depends on snow: alternative from Round Mountain. 350km drive (\$70 per car).

12 October-Saturday Walk (3/A)
Hume and Hovell Trail/
Blowering Dam Ref: Hume and
Hovell sketch map
Leader: Barbara de Bruine 258 3531h 259 2642w
Contact leader by Wednesday for transport arrangements. An easy day walk of 19km along the Hume and Hovell track.

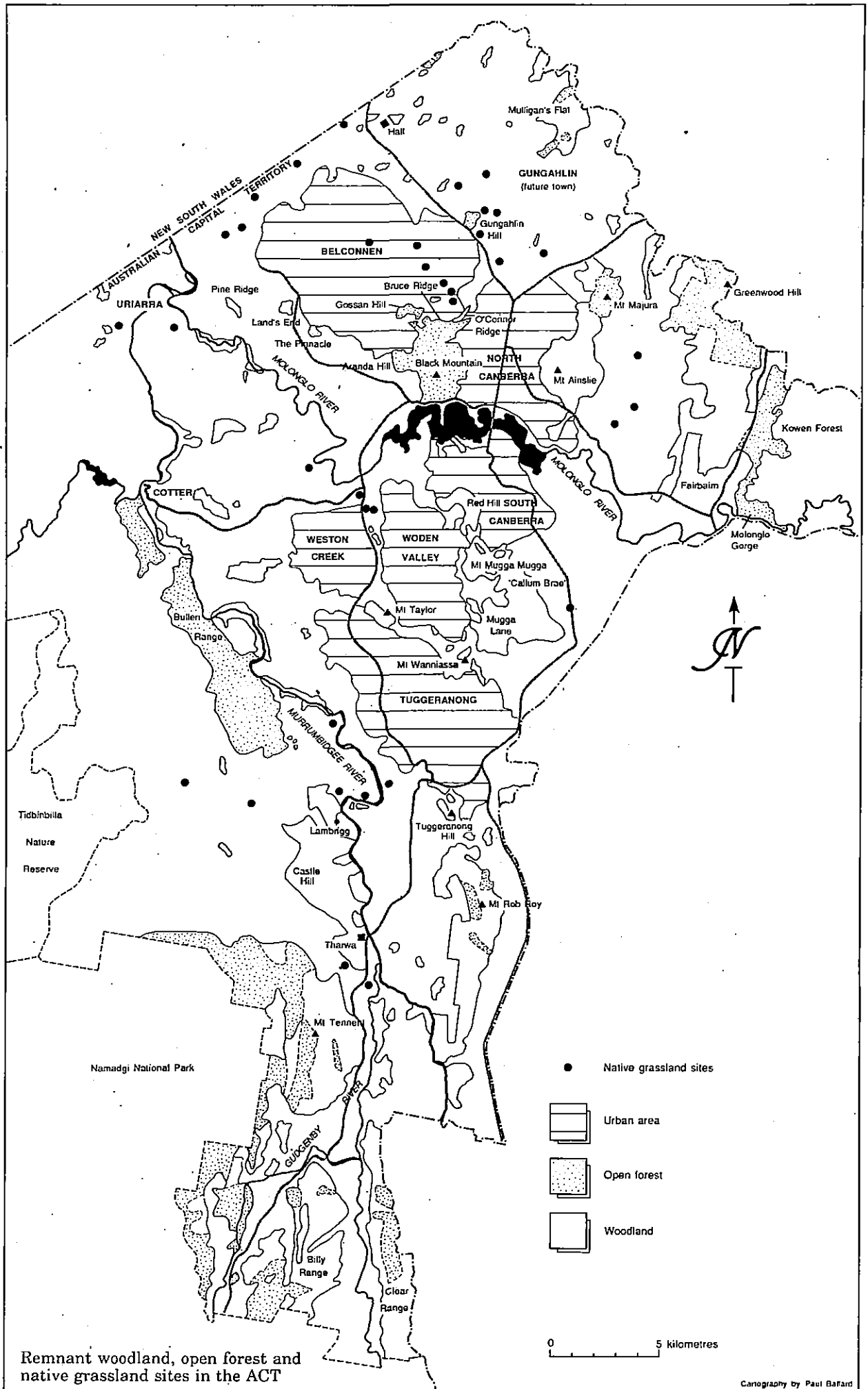
23 October-Wednesday Walk (1/A)
Square Rock Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Olive Buckman ph248 8774
Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 9am. A pleasant 8km varied walk on tracks to a fascinating rock formation with good views and exciting inner rock formation. Rock scrambling optional. A climb of 270m. Ideal for beginners and families. 80km drive (\$16 per car).

Points to note

New faces to lead, new places to go. Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead a walk occasionally.

All persons joining an outing of the National Parks Association of the ACT do so as volunteers in all respects and as such accept sole responsibility for any injury howsoever incurred and the National Parks Association of the ACT, its office bearers and appointed leaders are absolved from any liability in respect of any injury or damage suffered whilst engaged in any such outing.

The committee suggests a donation of TWENTY cents per kilometre DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS in the car, including the driver, (to the nearest dollar) be offered to the driver by each passenger accepting transport. Drive and walk distances quoted in the program are approximate distances for return journeys.



Remnant woodland, open forest and native grassland sites in the ACT

Cartography by Paul Barford

Recommendations

continued from page 12

Mt Ainslie, Mt Majura

Ainslie-Majura has experienced a range of disturbances and developments many of which will remain as permanent features (e.g. water supply reservoirs, transmission lines). However, the area retains outstanding regional ecological value and National Capital landscape significance. The Ainslie-Majura ridge (excluding the northern part of the Designated Area) should be declared a Nature Reserve under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991.

It is beyond the scope of this report to precisely define the Reserve boundary, but the following considerations are relevant:

(a) The Reserve should include all the native vegetation communities in the area, encompassing therefore the steep forested slopes of both hills and the intervening saddle. In particular it should include as much as possible of the regenerating savannah woodland at the footslopes of Mt Ainslie.

(b) An intensively managed buffer zone is needed on the western edge for fire protection and other purposes eg reducing exotic plant invasions.

(c) If constructed, Monash Drive should be located as low as possible so that it does not force recreational pressure upslope and does not encourage pressure for urban infill below the road.

(d) The preparation of a management plan (a requirement of the proposed Land Administration Act 1991) should be given high priority. This would deal with matters of particular importance given the history of land use in the area, such as revegetation, servicing of developments, use of grazing as a management tool, control of horse-riding, construction of public access tracks.

Black Mountain, O'Connor Ridge, Bruce Ridge, Gossan Hill, Aranda Hill

(i) Black Mountain Reserve bordered to the west by Caswell Drive and to the north by Belconnen Way is currently declared under

the *Public Parks Act 1928*. Its status should be upgraded by gazettal as a Nature Reserve under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991.

(ii) Aranda Hill complements the habitat values of Black Mountain carrying in part a woodland cover which in Black Mountain Reserve is only found in a narrow south-west section. It is recommended that it become part of Black Mountain Nature Reserve.

Part of Aranda bushland is under long term rural lease until 2005 (with full tenant rights). However, all rural leases contain a provision for withdrawal should the land be required for Territory or public purposes. The two main options therefore are reserve incorporation after 2005 or early withdrawal. For grassfire fuel reduction purposes some grazing may need to continue. This could be on a more flexible agistment basis.

(iii) Recommendations for the area north of Belconnen Way are more difficult because of the fragmentation, level of disturbance, and current and proposed developments in the area, in particular, the John Dedman Parkway. However, Gossan Hill is separate from these developments and Nature Reserve status is recommended. Subject to future land use decisions which will determine boundaries, a combination of Nature Reserve and Special Purpose Reserve may best suit the Bruce Ridge and O'Connor Ridge section.

Callum Brae, Mugga Lane, Mt Mugga Mugga, Red Hill

Development of some of this area appears inevitable in the longer term and large scale reservation is unlikely. The area has important conservation values, though the condition of vegetation communities and habitat values are highly variable throughout. A detailed survey of this area with the aim of defining the most important parts worthy of conservation and reservation is needed. If urban development proceeds these areas should be separated from housing by a

buffer zone. A combination of: (i) Nature Reserve and Special Purpose Reserve (under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991); and (ii) rural lease (if this continues in the south-eastern section with lease provisions aimed at maintaining tree cover, appears appropriate for the area.

Rob Roy Range, Tuggeranong Hill

The full extent of the area including Tuggeranong Hill should be declared Nature Reserve under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991. Attention needs to be given to maintaining and enhancing the tree cover in the northern section which is part of the annual honeyeater migration route. In the south, the Reserve should be made contiguous with the proposed Gigerline Nature Reserve of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

Some of the open woodland area to the west (between the Range and the Tharwa Road) has potential for future inclusion and would serve as a buffer between the Range and urban development.

Lambrigg, Castle Hill:

The area east of the Tidbinbilla Road forms part of the Lanyon Landscape Conservation Reserve declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*. This reservation is for cultural/historic purposes with a primary goal of conserving the historic rural landscape. It will come under the jurisdiction of the proposed *Heritage Act 1991*, currently a Bill before the ACT Legislative Assembly. However, in considering future management of the area, heritage values cannot be divorced from ecological aspects, particularly with regard to tree decline.

The habitat value of Castle Hill (west of Tidbinbilla Road) warrants attention being given to the maintenance and regeneration of the savannah woodland. This could be achieved through reduction in stock numbers or cessation of grazing for an appropriate

period of time while leaving the area in rural lease.

Bullen Range

Reservation is pending as one of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor Nature Reserves, either under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* or the proposed Land Administration Act 1991.

Murrumbidgee and Molonglo River Corridors

The pending declarations of Nature Reserves and Public Parks for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor as announced by the ACT government in June 1990 should proceed as soon as possible. Similar reservation of the Molonglo Corridor, especially

downstream of Coppins Crossing should be pursued.

Mt Tennent, Billy Range, Clear Range

Reservation of Mt Tennent as an extension to Namadgi National Park is pending. The northern extension of the Billy Range and Clear Range areas would require further ecological investigation before any recommendations could be made.

Other remnant woodland areas

It is not feasible in this report to detail recommendations for all of the scattered remnants of tree cover in the ACT. A general context in which decisions about particular areas may be made is

outlined in Hogg's (1990b) *Vegetation Strategy for the ACT*.

The following groupings of areas are noted:

(i) **Gungahlin**

It is recommended that the existing Gungahlin Hill Nature Park and its proposed south-eastern extension be declared a Nature Reserve under the proposed *Land Administration Act 1991*. Border hill areas incorporated in NCOSS should be further investigated for reservation purposes.

(ii) **Ginn's Gap**

Area should remain in rural use but with attention to maintenance of tree cover.

continued on page 16

Threats to remnant woodland and native grasslands

	MF	GH	A-M	BM	CB	RR	LC	BR	MRC	MT	OR	GR
CLEARING												
(a) commercial, industrial dev.					●						?	▶
(b) urban development			▶		●		?				▶	●
(c) transport routes incl. VFT	?		●	●	?						?	●
(d) services/public facilities	?		▶	▶	▶	?		○		?	?	●
DIEBACK	?	?	?	○	○	?	▶		○		●	
GRAZING	○	○	○	○	○	○	▶				▶	○
WILDFIRE	○	▶	●	●	○	○				▶	○	▶
FERAL ANIMALS/EXOTIC PLANTS	▶	▶	●	●	○	○	○	○	▶	○	○	●
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	▶		▶	▶	○	○			▶			
MOWING REGIMES (grassland)												●

Threat: ○→▶→●
Low → High

Locations: MF - Mulligan's Flat
GH - Greenwood Hill, Kowen, Molonglo Gorge
A-M - Mt Ainslie - Mt Majura
BM - Black Mountain, O'Connor Ridge, Bruce Ridge, Gossan Hill, Aranda Hill
CB - Callum Brae, Mugga Lane, Mt Mugga Mugga, Red Hill
RR - Rob Roy Range, Tuggeranong Hill
LC - Lambrigg, Castle Hill
BR - Bullen Range

MRC - Murrumbidgee Molonglo River Corridors
MT - Mt Tennent, Billy Range, Clear Range
OR - Other remnant woodland areas
GR - Grassland

Spaces left blank = no threat currently perceived

Note: May apply to part of area only

Recommendations

continued from page 15

(iii) West Belconnen (Land's End, Pine Ridge, The Pinnacle)

(i) The savannah woodland of Land's End is threatened as part of the proposed West Belconnen Land Development. The feasibility of retaining some of this woodland as open space in the planning of the area by the Territory Planning Authority should be explored.

(ii) Pine Ridge is an identified Site of Ecological Interest in the ACT. Continued regeneration of the site would benefit from the exclusion or reduction in grazing. It is worthy of consideration for declaration as a Special Purpose Reserve under the Land Administration Act 1991.

(iii) The isolated Red Stringybark stand at The Pinnacle is at present reasonably well protected under NCOSS but reservation of the site and adjacent area, probably in the form of a Nature Reserve is suggested.

(iv) **Uriarra to Bulgar Creek:** See page 80 of the report for discussion of maintenance of savannah woodland on rural lands.

(v) **Urban Canberra (Mt Wanniasa, Mt Taylor, Oakey Hill, Stirling Park Ridge)** Native vegetation cover is more fragmented and disturbed than in some other Inner Hill areas. Reservation as Nature Reserve and/or Special Purpose Reserve under the proposed Land Administration Act 1991 is recommended. Special attention should be given to the Stirling Park Ridge site both for its savannah woodland and population of the endangered Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*).

Native Grasslands

It is not possible to detail here each of the major native grassland sites and make specific recommendations for the protection of each. However, the following general observations can be made:

(i) Native grassland is poorly con-



Woodland on the southeastern slopes of Mount Ainslie.

Photo: Kevin Frauley.

served in the ACT with little formal protection except as groundcover or in association with tree communities in reserves.

(ii) There is an urgent need for a comprehensive survey of low altitude native grassland to assess its remaining extent, location and integrity.

(iii) In considering the ecological resources of the ACT the habitat values of native grassland need inclusion.

(iv) In drawing reserve boundaries, lower slopes with native grassland and savannah woodland should be included. An example is the proposed reservation of Mulligan's Flat - Oak Hill area.

(v) Following a re-inventory of native grasslands, detailed and clear management prescriptions are needed for each important grassland site. There is already a model for this. A conservation plan prepared for the native grassland at Yarramundi contained management prescriptions which could be applied elsewhere. For areas remaining under rural lease, for which formal reservation is not feasible or appropriate, the possibility of site management, in co-

operation with the rural lessee and if necessary using lease provisions, should be explored.

(vi) Measures to increase recognition of native grassland and its values in the community, and amongst landholders and government agencies would be valuable. Currently, for example, the Agriculture and Landcare Section of the Department of Environment, Land and Planning has no brief to manage native grasslands in any particular way. There is scope also to bring attention to native grasslands in agricultural extension work and activities such as the Landcare program. One measure to assist in this would be a local field guide.

Wildness is necessity.....

Mountain parks and reservations

are useful not only as

fountains of timber and irrigating rivers,

but as fountains of life.....

John Muir

New members

Gedda Aklif, Turner
 Des Baker, Dickson
 Oscar Bosman and Deborah
 Dawkings, Dickson
 Jan Carlisle, Kaleen
 Robert and Catherine Chapman,
 Hughes
 Lynn and Sam Dalgarno,
 O'Connor
 Grant Fitzner, Canberra
 Tony Fortey, Farrer
 Kevin and Rita Gill, Mawson
 Lis Haakonssen, Charnwood
 Christine Harkins, Giralang
 Dr Jan henderson, Lyons
 Rupert and Wilma Hewitt,
 Kaleen
 D-Ann Holliday, Kaleen
 Pearce and Porter family,
 O'Connor
 Judith Power, Hawker
 Catriona and Rebecca Roberts,
 Fyshwick
 Helen Semler, Cook
 Sahar Sharp, Lyneham
 Beryl Southward, Weston
 Anne Spencer, Bungendore
 Sullivan household, Hackett
 Javad Tabatabaei, Gilmore
 Ceri Teather, Downer
 Ron and Sonya Terry, Latham
 Susan Thomson, Chifley
 Elizabeth Thurbon, Manuka

*The din of the dusty world
 the locked-in-ness of man's
 cities
 are what man habitually
 abhors.
 Haze, mist and the haunting
 spirits
 of the mountains are what
 human nature
 seeks and yet can rarely find.*

Kuo Hsi 11th Century—
 Chinese

Trekking in Sikkim

Most NPA people enjoy hearing about other people's walks or treks, so the February meeting's talk by Rod Dagleish to Darjeeling and Sikkim was very well received. The scenery in the Himalayan Range is most spectacular with snow-covered peaks looming high over forested, steep lower mountain ridges, intersected by steep-sided gushing rivers cascading over great boulders. Rod's visit in May coincided with the blooming of the rhododendron forests so he walked for hours through pink and red blossoms on these tall shrubs which are as tall as trees.

The party travelled to Darjeeling by car but the road followed beside the narrow gauged railway line which carried a 'toy

train' like the trains once used in the Queensland sugar cane fields at harvesting time. The trek was towards the base camp at the foot of Mt Kanchenjunga and the party stayed in 'guest' houses with their cook preparing the meals. The track was well defined, being the 'roadway' for the local people and in constant use. The constant climbing, descending and river crossings kept the party occupied each day and all were entranced by the scenery. Trekking is a beautiful way to see a country and many thanks to Rod for sharing his experiences.

**Fiona MacDonald
 Brand**



*Kowmung River in the southern Blue Mountains.
 Photo: Babette Scougall.*

Huts and rivers

I was picked up from home by Timothy at 5.45am for a long drive—made longer by misunderstanding our leader's (Dianne Thompson) detailed written instructions! At the top of a hill, under a power pylon, her notes said something like, 'it doesn't matter which branch of the road you take here as long as you get back under the power line fairly soon'. We chose the right hand branch, as this road looked less horrendous than the left branch, and proceeded to wind our way gradually downhill to the Gungarlin river. There was no-one around: no cars at this so-called rendezvous spot—just dry paddocks and a small footbridge. It was the end of the road and the power line was nowhere in sight. I must admit that if we had looked at the map in conjunction with Di's instructions, we would have realised there was room for misinterpretation!

Retracing our tracks to the top of the hill (and passing two other NPA vehicles making the same mistake we had) we then took the left branch—a very steep, rutted track requiring some very cautious driving. Five gates to open and shut prevented us from hurrying to make up for lost time but we were punctual for the rendezvous at 9.30am.

There were 20 people on the walk—a large number for an overnight walk. Half of these had driven down the evening before and camped at a delightful spot beside the quietly flowing Gungarlin river.

Once we were all assembled, we crossed the river by a dilapidated wooden bridge—large sections were missing and the remainder looked as though it was deteriorating fast. It was then only a short walk to Daveys hut. Built around the turn of the century by Tommy Bolton this hut is fairly substantial and in good condition. It was used by Tommy and his wife before the arrival of children and later by the Williamson and Hedger families. The nearby grave on the side of the hill is one

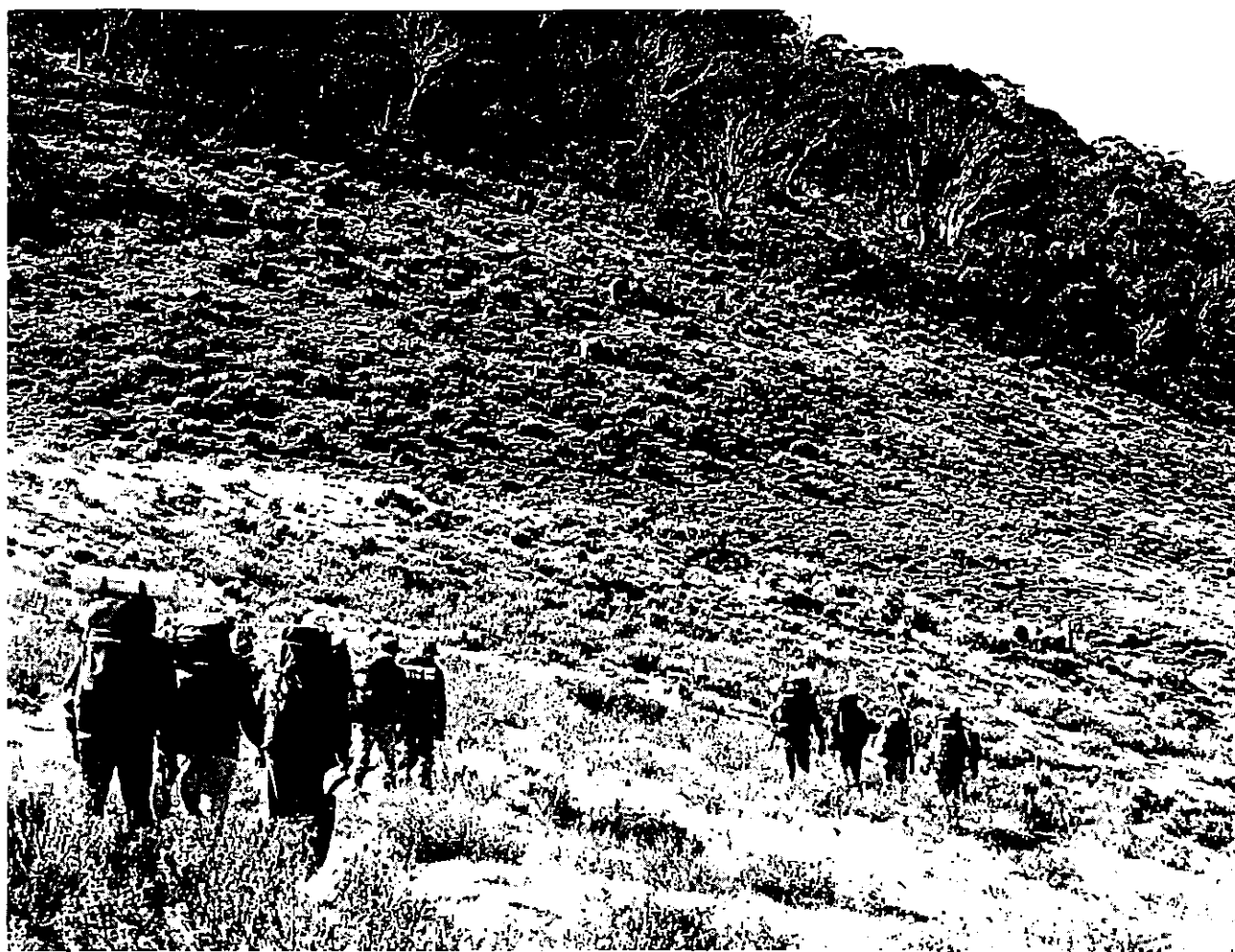


Conssett hut. Photos: Len Haskew.

of the Williamson children.

Leaving Daveys hut we continued on our way with easy walking over tussocky grass and along an overgrown firetrail. Cresting a saddle we looked down into a small valley and across to gentle hills. Behind these rose more rugged peaks, dark under cloud shadow and some still bearing a mantle of snow. On the opposite hillside, tucked amongst the trees, was the rustic little Kidmans hut. We arrived there at 3pm and set up a close community of tents (the herd instinct) just in front of the hut.

The huts in the mountains are old wooden structures built many years ago by stockmen when summer grazing was allowed in high country. For the most part the huts are fairly primitive. They are maintained as shelter accommodation by the Kosciusko huts Association. Kidmans hut is very small with a dirt floor—it could sleep three or four people, rather cosily, in an emergency. The hut is named after Ken and Alec Kidman, who with Bill Naphthali, built the hut in the early 1930s.



Burrungubugge, '...a tough little river cascading through steep country'.

On Sunday we set off at 8am to visit some other huts and ruins of huts. We followed the Burrungubugge—a tough little river cascading through steep country—to the site of Constances hut. The vegetation on one side of the river still bore the scars of a severe fire in 1983, the stark skeletons of dead trees standing out above the smaller, revegetated scrub.

Constances hut was burnt down a few years ago and a new hut—the Burrungubugge shelter hut—has been built to replace it. It is sited a little way above the river, on a green slope just below the tree line. Old timber has been used for the walls and with a corrugated iron roof in a subdued shade of green, this shelter hut blends in well with the scenery. The National Parks and Wildlife Service and KHA cooperated in building this and it was officially

opened in the spring of 1990.

Inside the Burrungubugge hut a small, potbelly stove with metal flue replaces the traditional open fireplace and rickety chimney seen in most mountain huts. I guess an enclosed stove reduces the risk of a hut fire. Another innovative feature of this hut (which demonstrated it was not a stockman's rude shelter) was a double-glazed picture window overlooking the valley!

We enjoyed a long morning tea break beside this charming hut. It was lovely weather so we had no need to shelter.

After leaving the hut, we briefly followed an old firetrail to a saddle but our route then took us back into the scrub. We dropped down a ridge to Diggers Creek where ditches and mounds of stones testified to gold diggers activity in bygone days. Set back from Diggers Creek, we discovered the

ruins of Con Boltons hut and work shed. During world war two the work shed sheltered a number of Italians ostracised from the community because of the war. They eked out a living on the diggings. All they left behind was a quantity of olive oil tins.

We arrived back at the cars about 3.30pm after a most enjoyable walk in attractive countryside; the visits to historical old huts and sites had given an additional interesting focal point.

A splash in the river and a brew of billy tea revived us all for our journey home.

**Judith Webster and
Dianne Thompson**

First night at Cradle Mountain

Syd and I, together with one of our sons, Michael, and girlfriend Karen, set off after lunch on a Monday in mid-March and were driven to Cradle Mountain where we arrived about 6.30 pm to spend the night at one of the huts at Waldheim.

Next morning with frost on the ground and ice on the puddles, we set off on the start of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair Overland track. I must admit I had some misgivings as I had never carried more than a day pack before and had certainly never camped overnight, let alone a possible 7 or 8 nights. But with one son lending me his good Goretex jacket another his superdown sleeping bag, a girlfriend a haversack, I felt I could not let them down.

Despite the cold start the day was magnificent and we set off along the Horse Track to Kitchen Hut where we stopped for lunch around the rim of Cradle Cirque, a look down Fury Gorge and on to Waterfall Valley where we spent our first night. Although there was room in the hut at this stage we opted to put up our tents and by nightfall the hut was full and there were five or six tents nearby.



Mount Oakleigh. Photos: Barbara Comfort

Wednesday morning there was low cloud and occasional drizzle but we were fed, packed up and on the track by 9 am.

We did not see too much of the distant scenery all day but we did see a bit of weak sunshine at Lake Windermere which was our lunch

stop, then on to the Pelion Creek where we camped in the bush. This was our longest day's walk—16 kilometres. We woke to brilliant sunshine and were rather late getting away because we did not have too far to walk this day. Michael left us during the morning to climb Mt Pelion West and caught up with us again after lunch. We had lunch at Frog Flats but had to move from our first log as we were nearly taken off by leeches. A hundred metres further along the track not one was to be seen. Our target this day was Pelion Plains where we were lucky enough to spend two nights, as Michael had work to do from here for the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

We had not been in the hut 15 minutes when a rather breathless man knocked on the door to ask for a radio telephone as a member of his party of 14 had had a bad fall near the top of Mt Ossa and needed medical attention. Michael packed a few essentials in a pack, took the stretcher from the wall and returned with the man to the scene of the accident. Michael then returned to Pelion Plains.



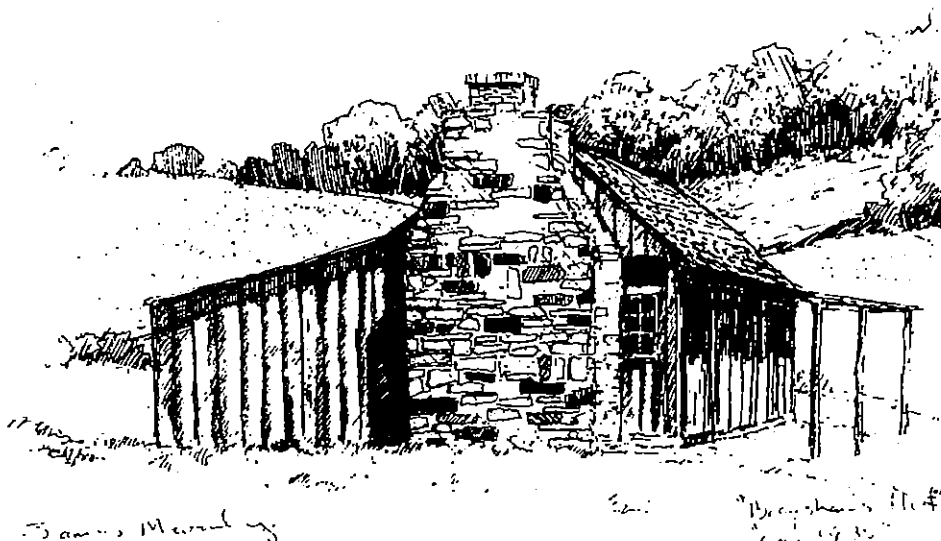
Karen, Michael and Syd look towards Barn Bluff.

Brayshaw's Hut

This sketch by James Merverley of Brayshaws Hut (circa 1935) is a composite one drawn from detail of how the hut appears today (March 1991 NPA Bulletin) and description provided by Roma Brayshaw who lived there during the 1930s.

Over the weekend of 6-7 April, Kosciusko Huts Association members and Venturer Scouts with joint KHA-NPA members Robert and Sybil Story, Fiona Brand, Babette Scougall and Reg Alder carried out extensive stabilisation work of replacing fallen boards, covering openings with reinforced plastic sheeting, stopping up roof holes and the sorting of the fallen chimney stone work. Doors were also fitted to both structures.

Beside being a competent artist, James Merverley is also a stonemason and will work on the rebuilding of the chimney of Westermans. We can be sure that the finished chimney will reflect the work of a true artist and artisan.



Hut sketch photo by Reg Alder.

Cradle Mountain

continued from page 20

The outcome was the injured woman spent the night with three of her party on Mt Ossa and was airlifted out by helicopter the next day to Royal Hobart Hospital.

Friday was to be a lay day so we only went for a short walk in the morning to Old Pelion Hut. Not far from here we looked across to Mt Ossa and saw the helicopter but we were too far away to pick out details of the rescue. We then walked to the old copper mine before returning for a late lunch and a lazy afternoon.

The cloud soon lifted next morning and we set off again along the track, Michael checking his insect traps along the way. We passed Kia Ora Hut, which is new and very comfortable, then on to Ducane Hut which is quite neglected, and pitched our tents not far away under some magnificent leatherwood trees which were in full bloom. Sunday was again a lovely day and we left our packs on

the track to climb down to Fergusson and Cathedral Falls, then further on to Hartnett Falls where we had lunch. Back on the track again and on to Camp Fire Creek where we camped for the night, during which a couple of light showers fell.

On Monday morning we climbed Ducane Gap, stopped briefly at Windy Ridge Hut, which was very dirty, then on to Pine Valley turn-off where we had lunch. Michael and Karen left us here as Michael had more field work to do in Pine Valley, while Syd and I walked on to Narcissus Hut and awaited their arrival. We decided to spend this, our last night, in the hut which was a wise decision as we had very heavy rain during the night.

Tuesday morning Syd radioed for the boat which would pick us up at 12.30 pm, so the morning was spent in various ways: short walks, diaries brought up-to-date,

and a search of the hut for about half a pound of jelly snakes which had mysteriously disappeared from Karen's pack during the night (we had to conclude that it was mice). A quick trip along Lake St Clair to Cynthia Bay, hot showers and a change of clothing, then delicious fresh hamburgers by the lake before picking up our car which Syd and Michael had driven there 10 days earlier, and we were soon on our way back to Hobart.

I felt a great sense of achievement at having completed the Overland track and as Michael said to me, 'You have broken all records by walking the Overland track with dry feet'. We were extremely lucky with the weather.

Barbara Comfort

Playing possum

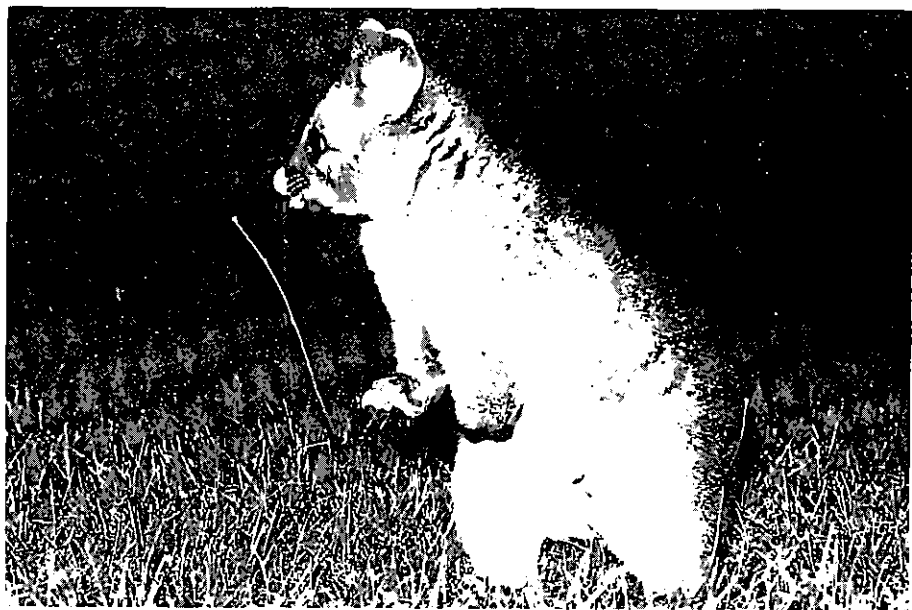
Tyke came to stay in the summer of 1990-91. His presence began the saga of 'playing possum'.

Sometime around Christmas we were awakened on several occasions by what sounded like a prowler in the vicinity of our side path. We prowled too, keeping lights off, all five in our family creeping around with torches. Eventually I decided that the noises were becoming too regular to be a prowler.

This conclusion was supported by the presence of dung pellets and the ever increasing rapidity of noises on the roof just as we were going to sleep and again early in the morning before we wanted to wake up. In between we made occasional sightings of a possum in the yard, often in the Swains pencil pines growing close to the house providing access to the roof.

I sought advice and assistance from the Parks and Conservation Service who sent us information on how to care for possums, build them a house, or alternatively, how to get rid of them. It was not difficult for us to become committed to this little fellow. In fact we became dedicated to protecting him when we discovered he was minus one front leg and that the remaining paw was severely damaged. According to one of the wildlife officers I spoke with, these injuries would have occurred in suburbia—most likely by a trap set in our own suburb. This officer thought Tyke's chances of survival were slight because of the following factors:

- parent possums despatch their adolescents (such as Tyke) to fend for themselves at a relatively early age
- most of these adolescents die because they fail to fend for themselves, primarily because they cannot establish a territory
- Tyke would be threatened by domestic animals but even more threatened by adult male possums staking a territory
- he lacked the ability to adequately feed himself.



We discovered early on that he was a ravenous little eater but he lacked the ability to hold the food in his mouth after the first bite because of his damaged legs. He was like a person with hands tied trying to eat an apple which was hanging from a string. His impediment also prevented him from reaching from branch to branch and stopped him jumping into trees that did not have branches angled at about 45 degrees.

To cut a long story down, we set about each morning and evening trying to find where Tyke spent his daylight hours. We knew it was in our roof, but despite many sessions on and in the roof (in the heat and cold) we never seemed to get closer to the truth.

We had crawled around the entire guttering, dragging hands under eaves full of cobwebs and leaf rubbish; removed and replaced huge quantities of roof tiles; just about dismembered the solar hot water system, solar heater panels, inlets and outlets; pulled and shaken every flue and chimney on the roof; and spent lengths of time in the ceiling. We sat out night after night getting bitten by mosquitoes and scrambled out still half asleep each morning to dive on the roof after we heard his morning scrambles.

We began to show signs of lack of sleep.

Finally I organised a neighbourhood roof sit-in. Family and neighbourhood kids were placed strategically about the house and garage roofs and even in the ceiling. After an hour and a half of restlessness amongst the troops Gary had the feeling that he was being watched. He turned and sitting only about 6 feet from him was our little furry friend, arms sort of folded, head tilted on one side as if to say 'What in the devil are you all doing up here?'

We were certainly dispirited after that, but after further spotting manoeuvres discovered his entry to be via one of our exhaust vents. This was subsequently blocked following the late night building of an appropriate possum house.

It took us three more moves to get the possum house sited in a safe and secure spot for Tyke, as, following a cat fight and a few other insights, we realised just how difficult and dangerous life could be for Tyke without the shelter of our ceiling. Finally we set his house 10 foot above the ground on planks laid between the two pencil pines. We have food and water dishes on a level just below the house, accessible to us by

ladder. The cats do not seem to like the pencil pines and it is surprising how he can blend into them and sit quietly.

Our neighbourhood has taken him to heart but several of us have been accidentally bitten when hand feeding him. Tyke is still a wild animal but we can surreptitiously touch him when feeding. He seems to welcome our presence and noise because of the likelihood of food, and in fact makes noises and will even sit in his food dish if we are late in delivering the goodies for the evening.

We have spent nights worrying about his adolescent excursions across the roof and into the front yard and even onto the lawn. We have barricaded the back yard for his protection and yet he puts himself at risk. Fortunately he has extended his territory to the yard behind us and the people there also feed and protect him. He walks with a waddling gait and bends to rub his chest and place his scent around the place. Some summer evenings he has marched to the top of the laundry steps to share in our kids evening 'pig out' (food from their jobs in the fast food business). This he does by standing upright and walking on his hind legs. Getting down is a sadder affair. He gets anxious and frustrated as he leans down but does not have the paws to put in place on the lower steps. Finally he used his tail as a grip and hangs over the edge until the tail grip fails and he falls with a clunk on his head.

More recently Tyke appears to have developed the knowhow to use his damaged paw to press objects such as food close to his body. Our lives and those of our neighbours are richer for his presence. We feel privileged to have him and hope that he will live to grow to adulthood and lead a normal life. Looking back 'playing possum' is now part of our lifestyle and we love it.

Dianne Thompson

Winter Time Talks

by local naturalist and conservationist Ian Fraser

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TIME: 2pm—4pm.

BOOKING: Phone 249 1560 (8am—7pm, 7 days). Limited seats.

TOPICS

1. All in the Name. SATURDAY 15 JUNE.
The folklore, art and science of naming plants and animals.
2. Fire in the landscape. SATURDAY 22 JUNE.
How Australian flora and fauna have come to live with and even depend on fire. Implications for us.
3. The Marvellous Mallee. SATURDAY 29 JUNE.
The little-known strange and fascinating 'Bonsai forest' that covers much of Southern Australia.
4. Beating the Bush. SATURDAY 6 JULY.
Europeans in the Australian landscape; how we saw it, and how we moulded it to suit our needs and prejudices.

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Calendar

JUNE

- Monday 3 Marketing, Education and Publicity (MEP) subcommittee meeting, 8.00pm. 24 McCormack Street, Curtin. Len Haskew 281 4268(h).
- Thursday 6 Committee meeting 7.30pm, 35 Millen Street, Hughes. Les Pyke 281 2982(h).
- Thursday 13 Namadgi subcommittee, 7.30pm, 5 Masters Place, Kambah. Dugald Monro 231 8776(h).
- Thursday 27 Environment subcommittee, contact Tim Walsh 285 1112(h) 274 1465(w).

JULY

- Monday 1 Marketing, Education and Publicity (MEP) subcommittee meeting, 8.00pm. 24 McCormack Street, Curtin. Len Haskew 281 4268(h).
- Wednesday 3 Outings subcommittee, 8.00pm, 27 Geerilong Gardens, Reid. Phil Bubb 266 5128(w) 248 6769(h).
- Thursday 4 Committee meeting 7.30pm, 35 Millen Street, Hughes. Les Pyke 281 2982(h).
- Thursday 11 Namadgi subcommittee, 7.30pm, 87 Shackleton Circuit, Mawson. Syd Comfort 286 2578(h).
- Thursday 25 Environment subcommittee, contact Tim Walsh 285 1112(h) 274 1465(w).

AUGUST

- Thursday 1 Committee meeting 7.30pm, 35 Millen Street, Hughes. Les Pyke 281 2982(h).
- Monday 5 Marketing, Education and Publicity (MEP) subcommittee meeting, 8.00pm. 24 McCormack Street, Curtin. Len Haskew 281 4268(h).
- Thursday 8 Namadgi subcommittee, 7.30pm, 5 Masters Place, Kambah. Dugald Monro 231 8776(h).
- Thursday 15 Annual General Meeting, 8.00pm, Griffin Centre.

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General meetings

20 June

Mr Peter Buckmaster, a primary producer and member of the ACT Parks and Conservation Consultative Committee, is involved with Greening Australia, has family links to the rural pioneering of the region and has many years of leadership in the local rural industry, will speak on 'Nature conservation in the ACT—a primary producer's historical perspective'.

18 July

Two speakers from the Act Government's Wildlife Research Unit will give an illustrated talk on the fisheries and wildlife of Lake Burley Griffin and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

15 August

Annual General Meeting

A members' evening with showings of slides and printed photographs.

19 September

A spokesman from the Australian Federal Police Rescue Squad will speak on the squad's operations and services and points for bushwalkers from its experiences with searches and rescues in the bush.