NPA Bulletin

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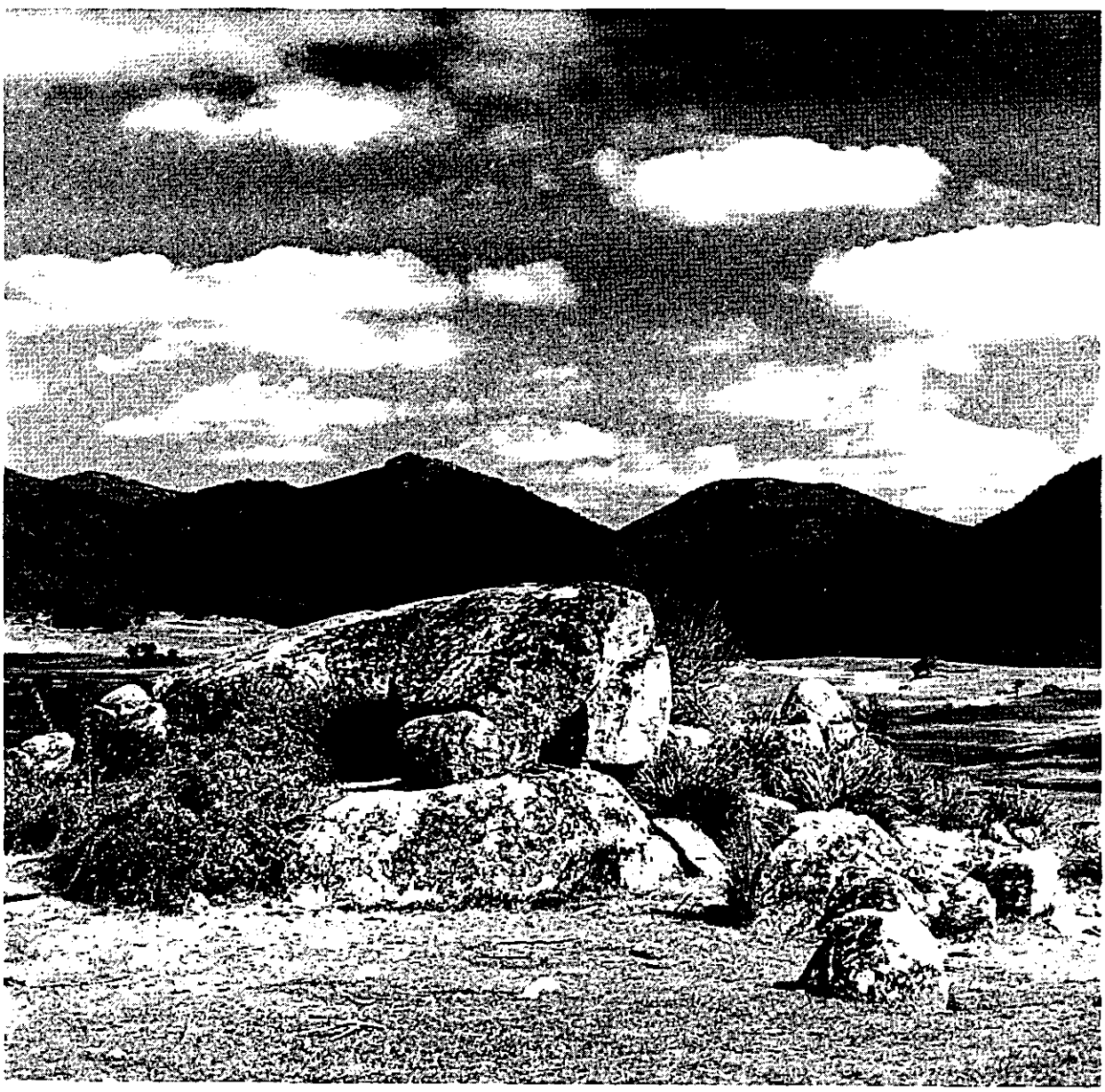
NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



Australian Alps Walking Track II

Weeding Lord Howe Island

NPA BULLETIN Volume 32 number 3 September 1995

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Cover

Photo by Reg Alder

The mountains of Namadgi from the Gudgenby Valley

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, natural features and cultural heritage 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 and cultural heritage by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.
- Cooperation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- Promotion of, and education for, conservation, and the planning of land-use to achieve conservation.

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Phil Bubb	248 6769(h); 275 8028(w)
Len Haskew	281 4268(h); fax 281 4257
Colin McAlister	288 4171

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10am to 2pm Mondays
9am to 2pm Tuesdays and Thursdays
Telephone/Fax: (06) 282 5813
Address: PO Box 1940, Woden ACT 2606

Contribute to your *Bulletin*

Contributions of articles (news, descriptions 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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A word from the president

Winter has seen members of NPA's committees and our research officer, Nicki Taws, putting in some extra work responding to several events which look as though they may lead to a reduction in wilderness in Namadgi National Park.

I have been impressed with how readily we have been able to get together a series of teams to meet local politicians to put forward our view on the management of Namadgi. Once a news leak made it apparent that government considered the management open to change, we felt we should speak up for the present management and for the need for any management to recognise that national parks are primarily established to conserve valuable natural features. Altogether we have spoken to Gary Humphries, Michael Moore, Lucy Horodny and Paul Osborne.

As well, Nicki has prepared responses on our behalf to a request for submissions from the Assembly committee on ecotourism and to the Price Waterhouse report on the ACT Tourism Strategy. We hope that our submissions will help balance the enthusiasm for money-making with a little recognition of costs, particularly the longer term ones.

Eleanor Stodart

Volunteers in Parks are Very Important Persons

In these days of economic rationalisation and diminishing budgets to be spread over existing and new parks, it is becoming increasingly necessary that some services are initiated or continued with the use of volunteers. In past years there have been objections by unions and management to the use of volunteers but generally these have been overcome and now there are many groups of Friends of National Parks and others under a number of diverse names.

During a recent visit to a national park in the United States I acquired a pamphlet under the title of *Volunteers in Parks*. It described how those who serve with the National Parks Service come from a very diverse group of park neighbours, college students, retired couples, business managers, farmers, engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers, architects, doctors, artists and anyone who might feel that they have a skill that is needed at the park where they could volunteer. Persons under 18 years of age may become volunteers with the official permission of their parents.

The suggested jobs that volunteers could undertake are extremely diverse and the list given is just a sample:

- work at information desk
- present living history demonstrations in period costume
- write or design visitors' brochures
- serve as camp-ground host
- build fences, paint buildings
- take photographs or work in a darkroom
- give guided nature walks
- assist with the preservation and treatment of museum artefacts
- design computer programs for park use
- conduct oral history interviews
- patrol tracks on foot or on horseback
- demonstrate arts and crafts skills
- organise photograph and slide files
- inventory underwater resources such as shipwrecks found on diving expeditions
- assist resource managers and researchers by making wildlife counts, planting trees and taking part in other projects.

Quite a list! Far beyond the scope of work I have known volunteers to undertake in our parks. I did not have the opportunity to check the range of tasks for which they have been successful in securing volunteers.

Once selected, VIPs are given training in their specific tasks and to acquaint them with the park. Volunteers are required to be in reasonably good health and for some jobs a paid-for medical examination may be required. Disabled individuals are encouraged to volunteer.

There is no payment for working in the park but in some parks, if there are sufficient funds, some out-of-pocket expenses such as local travel costs, meals and uniforms may be paid. A formal agreement is drafted setting out duties and responsibilities, work schedule and conditions of the working arrangement.

The theme of the September issue of *RANGER—A journal for conservation managers*, produced by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, is volunteer programs in national parks and conservation areas. I have submitted an article 'Working with Volunteers' in which I describe the work a Service needs to undertake to successfully employ the full services and time available from a volunteer group.

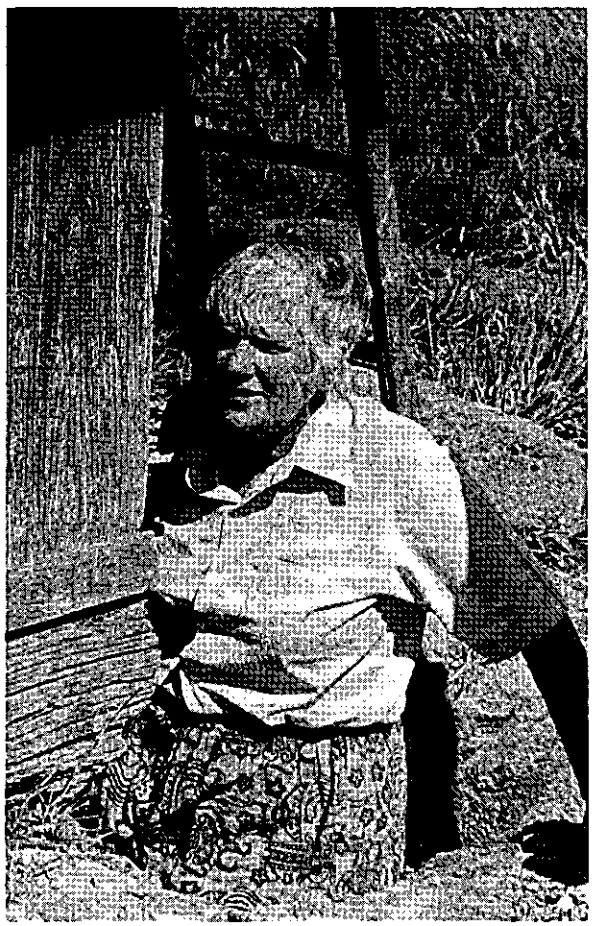
Reg Alder

Fiona Macdonald OAM

All members of our Association will be delighted to learn that Fiona's commitment and dedication to the cause of conservation was suitably rewarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours List when she was awarded an OAM 'for service to conservation and the environment through the National Parks Association of the Australian Capital Territory'.

Fiona has championed conservation and environmental causes all her adult life. Her interest was kindled while she was at Balmain Teachers College in 1952. There she met Alan Strom AM who encouraged his students to become members of the Caloola Club, an organisation which sought to imbue in student teachers an ethos of environmental protection which they would pass on to their pupils. There can be no doubt that the principles of the Caloola Club were readily assimilated by Fiona. Not only did she appreciate the environment herself but also throughout her teaching career she willingly undertook the voluntary duties of patron and organiser of the Gould League (an organisation devoted to interesting pupils in the environment) wherever she was teaching at the time. It is of interest to note that the Caloola Club was the precursor of the National Parks Association of NSW which was formed in 1958.

Fiona's appointment to Canberra saw her become extremely involved with the idea of the provision of a national park for the ACT. In 1960 she became a foundation member of the National Parks Association (ACT) and she has since had continuous membership. Fiona occupied various positions in the Association for 25 years, serving on the main committee in the positions of secretary, membership secretary and editor of the *Bulletin*, and also serving as a committee member. She is also a long-serving member of the Namadgi subcommittee. While



Fiona clears out the hole left after removal of the stump of one of the corner posts at the Orroral Homestead restoration. Photo by Reg Alder

Fiona was secretary, the Association's proposal for a national park for the ACT was formulated and forwarded to the government. The Association acknowledged her dedication and effort by declaring her a Life Member in 1986.

Fiona remains a passionate advocate for Namadgi National Park and at subcommittee meetings she is always concerned that its requirements receive the highest priority not only from members of the Association but also from those who manage the park. She is an active participant in work parties and in any other activity that advances the Association's aims and objectives.

Her concern for the environment has been recognised by bodies other than our Association. Her colleagues in the Labor Party have also recognised her commitment and she has been branch representative on the Environmental Policy Subcommittee of the Labor Party of the ACT. In 1992 she was appointed by Bill Wood, the Minister for Environment, Land and Planning, to the Environment and Conservation Consultative Committee which advises the minister and acts as a point of liaison on issues relating to the environment and its protection, park management, nature conservation, urban park management and outdoor recreation in the ACT. Also she has been a member of the ACT Natural Heritage Standing Committee. The Museum of Australia has made an oral history recording of her involvement in the conservation movement and, in addition, has acquired some of her early bushwalking gear.

I am sure you will all join with the committee in offering Fiona our warmest congratulations for her well-deserved award and may the recognition bring her as much pleasure as an overnight camp in her beloved Namadgi.

Len Haskew

Skis on the Brindabellas

Author, historian and NPA member, Matthew Higgins, was the guest speaker at the May general meeting of the Association. Matthew's slide and tape presentation concentrated on the history of skiing locally and the construction and use of Mt Franklin Chalet. The many historic and scenic slides shown throughout the presentation were greatly appreciated by his audience as were the taped interviews with local identities. In particular the tape recounting long-time member Pat Warkle's experiences in constructing her own skis from spotted gum under the tutelage of Charles Lane-Pool had poignant significance for many members.

Matthew began his presentation by asking his audience to reflect on the physical and seasonal changes that occur throughout the year in the high country. During this period we were treated to a wonderful selection of scenic slides of the Alpine National Park illustrating the theme to the accompaniment of appropriate music. Bushwalkers and skiers were easily able to relate to the various areas shown.

Early Canberra skiers were apparently very conscious of the power of politicians and saw the wisdom of making the Minister of the Interior a patron of the Canberra Alpine Club and of electing the federal Treasurer, R G Casey, to an official position. A road was built into the Brindabellas, the site for a lodge was selected in 1936 and Mt Franklin Chalet was constructed in 1938.

Even though the club now had a lodge, resourcefulness was still the order of the day. Club members made their own skis from local timber, hand-cut their own ski runs and, because of the road conditions, they were often towed into the area on skis behind a vehicle. Transport difficulties made weekend trips often very short indeed. On the other hand when access was easy then the snow cover wasn't the best for skiing. Indeed, many of the people Matthew interviewed related transport stories about the various trucks and buses used to get skiers in.

The club's skiing activities declined during the war, although the chalet was used by Dutch airmen for R & R. When the war was over activities began again, this time with the addition of very experienced and competitive skiers who had migrated to Australia from Europe. In 1949 and in 1957 the club hosted the Balmain Cup competition.

Members' labours and resourcefulness were still necessary to undertake improvements. In 1957 the engine from a Harley Davidson bike was used to build a tow and in 1957 an accident-damaged Austin A40 was used to power a lift. Its remains are still evident today and they stand in marked contrast to the elaborate machinery now considered necessary at modern resorts.

Matthew showed us pictures of other lodges in the area including the RMC complex at Ginini. An interesting side benefit of the military presence was the use of RMC vehicles for clearing snow.

Matthew also had many historic pictures to show us depicting the social life and very evident camaraderie within the club. This impression was also fostered by the taped interviews we heard.

Mt Franklin Chalet played an important role in local recreational activities and its significance has been recognised through classification by the National Trust and a nomination to the Register of the National Estate.

Matthew's enthusiasm for the area was evident throughout his presentation. For those of you who were not able to come to the meeting, I would highly recommend that you read either Matthew's own book, *Skis on the Brindabellas,* or Ian Fraser's and Margaret McJannett's *Brindabella Heritage.* In fact why not read both—they are available at excellent prices on the book table at general meetings.

Len Haskew

Native Title claims

The National Native Title Tribunal's role is to process claims by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over Australian lands and waters. The tribunal is not a court and disputed claims that fail to be resolved by mediation will be referred to the Federal Court for litigation.

The NPA has received notification of Native Title claims. Further information about these claims is available from the NPA office.

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The Australian Alps Walking Track project

An introduction to the Alpine Track was given in Babette Scougall's article in the July issue of the *Bulletin*, and the same article included a description of the first stage of the walk from Namadgi Visitor Centre to Booroomba Rocks car park/camp-site. The following article describes Stage 2 from the Booroomba Rocks site to the Orroral Valley.

Stage 2 is entirely along either roads or a four-wheel-drive track. Deviations to various features, for instance the collimation tower site (now dismantled) and three rock outcrops all on the ridge overlooking the Orroral Valley to the west, will add time and distance to the walk. Worthwhile deviations along the ACT section of the track will be described in a later issue of the *Bulletin*. A brief description of the Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station (now closed) is included in this article.

Note that the road to the collimation site is negotiable by two-wheel-drive vehicles in good weather, but in July snow is likely to be covering the top of the ridge. It is also very likely to be covering the last fifty metres or so of the road to the collimation site.

The exit from the Booroomba site is to the south-west of the oval-shaped area. A 'T' intersection is immediately encountered with no Alpine Track marker to indicate that the right-hand turn must be taken. The track continuing to the left is blocked by a log. From here until the Apollo Road (bitumen) is reached, the track is a coarse, rather narrow, two-wheel track. As Booroomba Rocks appears to be a popular place to visit at weekends, keep a lookout for vehicles appearing suddenly

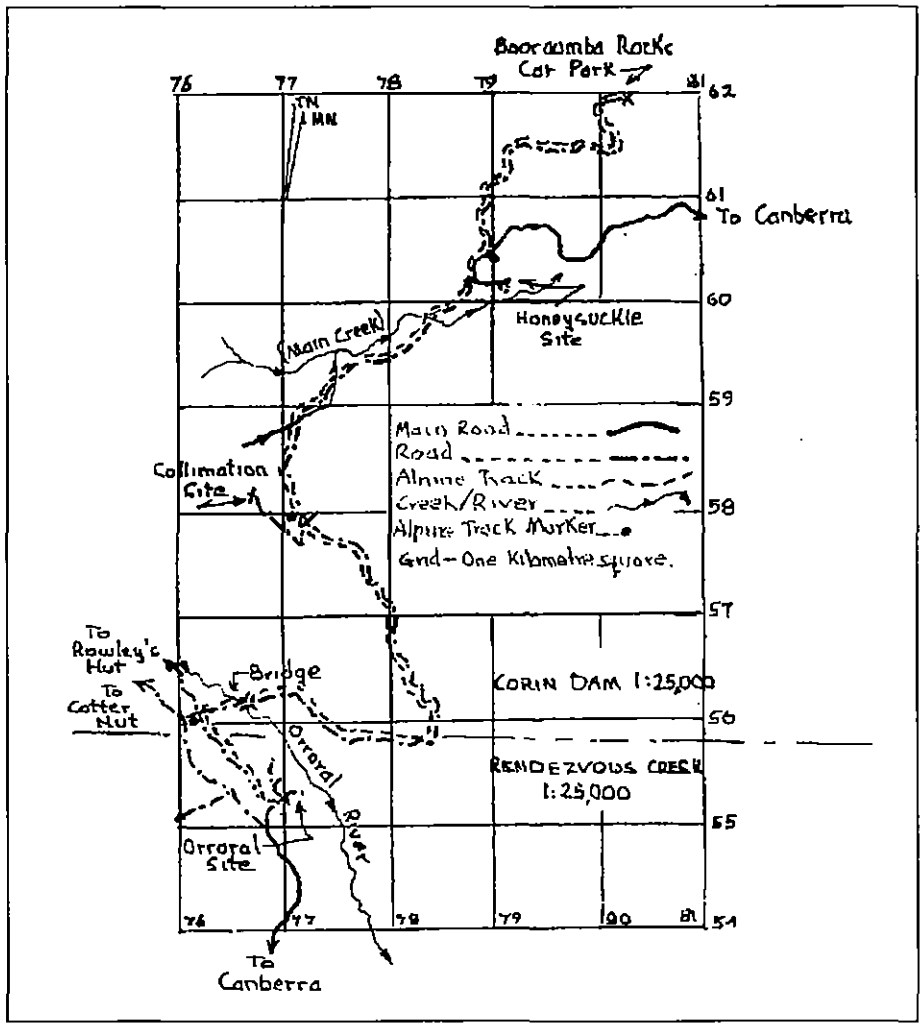
The firetrail from Honeysuckle to Orroral passes through attractive natural forest. Bev Hammond, one of the members of the Namadgi Subcommittee who reconnoitred the second day's walk along the Alpine Track, begins the climb over the ridge. Photo by Babette Scougall

around the many bends. Open forest with lovely eucalypts and many boulders provide a stimulating backdrop to the walk.

Soon after leaving the camp-site you will enter (not marked) the property taken up by Andrew McMahon probably as early as the 1860s. It extended to just south-west of the Honeysuckle Tracking Station site and the site of the huts he built is about one kilometre down the Apollo Road from the Booroomba Rocks road intersection.

At 1.5 kilometres the track steepens while at 1.8 kilometres there is a steeper section that some drivers, especially those in smaller cars and carrying three or four people, might have difficulty negotiating: a descending right-angle bend in the track precludes drivers taking a run at the slope. Walkers should keep clear of cars coming up the slope. Nifty gear shifting perhaps with double declutching might be necessary in very wet or extremely dry conditions as well as keeping up the revolutions.

The swampy section of Honeysuckle Creek is reached at about 2.5 kilometres and at 2.7 there is a small creek crossing and then the climb up to the old quarry at the edge of the Apollo Road. Close to the road there is a right-hand fork which should be taken until it joins with the bitumen. Proceed about 50 metres to a park management information board. As the edge of Apollo Road is reached, look to the left across the bitumen to see the Alpine Track marker. This indicates that you turn to the right to head in a south-westerly direction, that is, in the direction of the information board. This board features a topographical map of the area as well as a map of the ACT. Follow the bitumen curving to the left for 400–500 hundred metres. Two steel posts mark where the bitumen road enters the tracking station site and to the right there is the gravel car park.



The bitumen road swings immediately left up the slope to the first of the landscaped terraces. From here, the concrete foundations of the now demolished buildings can be seen. The information board tells us that one of the functions of the tracking station (opened in 1966) was to support the Apollo moon landing program. At the third terrace, further up the slope, concrete foundations mark the site of the 26-metre parabolic dish that, when the station was closed in 1981, was moved to the Orroral Valley Tracking Station. The gardens of exotic trees and shrubs still remain. I wonder if we'll ever have to contend with wilding exotic trees and shrubs in the surrounding bush just as we've had to contend with wilding pines in bushland near pine plantations.

The Alpine Track now follows the gravel road up to the site of the collimation tower in the ridge overlooking the Orroral Valley. Again it traverses open eucalypt forest with the usual large boulders. The Alpine Track diverts to the left to follow the four-wheel-drive track down to the valley floor just below the collimation site. The road itself starts a few metres into the entrance of the gravel car park, this entrance being to the right of the two steel posts. The start to the road (and Alpine Track) is marked by a parks management black marker post. The arrow shows the left direction to be taken and the post has the words 'Honeysuckle Creek to Orroral Valley Walking Track' printed on it.

Two hundred metres or so to the left there is a minor fork blocked off

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by a log. Another management marker tells you to proceed up the main road; and at 0.45 kilometres the Haskew high-tech pedometer tells us that there is a creek crossing at this point. This particular crossing is where the creek that drains the north-east slopes of the Orroral ridge and the lateral hills that border this road flows under the road to finally join with Honeysuckle Creek itself via the south-east side of the tracking station site. I call this creek the 'main' creek.

One aspect of this section of the Alpine Track that we decided to include in this article was the location of running water with its concomitant possibility of camp-sites. We thought that there might be overnight walkers who, having commenced the walk at the visitor centre, might consider that the Booroomba Rocks stage was too short for one day, and hence would be looking for a further camp-site. Running water availability varies of course with time of the year and rainfall; and the creek crossings I indicate in this article are those existing in July—they might not exist in summer. The crossings I do give on this particular road are the 'main' ones by which I mean that they are crossings of the above main creek. There are three of them. Further, as will be seen from the map, the main creek parallels the road, the greatest distance from it being about 200 metres, so that it is possible that water would be available from it even in summer. This would apply for about 1.2 kilometres for the first main crossing at 0.45 kilometres. A camp-site implies the availability of some flat ground for pitching tents.

At 0.73 and for some distance before it, a rock outcrop high up top to the south (left) is seen. This goes by the unimpressive name of 'The Spinnaker'. The name is probably unofficial. From here on there are a few ups and downs—not all of them minor—until finally at 1.4 kilometres the road crosses the main creek for the second time at a possible camp-site with flat space for perhaps four two-person tents. At 2.0 kilometres there is a minor side-track to the right and about 200 metres up the road the main creek is crossed again. Running water is still available but camping would hardly be possible because of the steep terrain on either side of the road.

At 2.85 kilometres and at an altitude of 1280 metres, the left-hand turn to the south-easterly heading four-wheel-drive track to the Orroral Valley is reached. It is a 'T' intersection. The Alpine Track marker, with its appropriate arrow heads, is on the right but, due to vegetation, is not easily discovered as it is approached from the downhill side. However, on the left-hand side of the road there is another management marker post with its arrow indicating the left turn to Orroral, again with the words 'Honeysuckle Creek to Orroral Valley Walking Track' appearing on it. The main road continues up to the collimation site at 1365 metres.

View from the bridge across the Orroral River looking downstream towards the Orroral Tracking Station site. Plenty of good camping sites—close to river or back in the shelter of the trees—available near here. Photo by Babette Scougall

Proceeding down this Orroral track there is a locked gate at about 50 metres. A notice on it says not to park cars in front of the gate so the track won't be blocked in case it is needed for bush fire access. Anyone wishing to drive up to the turn-off with a view to walking down to and back from Orroral, should park at the one or two spots available just short of the turn-off. Beyond the gate, pleasant open forest still prevails. There is a rocky rise to the left after 200 metres or so which could form the take-off point for a deviation from the west up to the previously mentioned 'Spinnaker' rock outcrop. At about 3.45 kilometres down the track there is swampy ground on the left and both sides become so after about 300 metres. Where this swampy patch finishes there is (in late July) running water available, but this appears to be only seepage from the swamp and in summer it is sure to be dry. At this point there is an old fireplace site. An immense mass of rock comes up on the right at 5.05 while at 5.61 there is a mossy rock to the left and a sharp right-hand turn. The Orroral Homestead can be seen through the trees to the right, and the descent steepens. At 6.2 Cathedral Rocks are on the left high up. The descent is still steep and winding and at 6.66 there is, in late July, running water and a possible camp-site. The track has swung around to the north-west and the old dog-proof fence is on the left as the floor of the valley is neared at 6.9. At 7.16 there is a potential camp-site in cleared ground on the right and in flat open forest ground at the left. Water might be available in a nearby creek in winter. The edge of the cleared Orroral Valley is reached at 7.98 and then, with the track heading westerly, the bridge across

Frank Clements, Stephen Johnston and Nicki Taws make their way across snow on the road to the old collimation tower site on Orroral Ridge—July 1995. Photo by Babette Scougall

the Orroral River is reached at 8.1 and at an elevation of 920 metres. The descent from the collimation site road is thus 360 metres. At the intersection of another two-wheel track at right angles about 400 metres further on, the Alpine Track marker indicates that the Alpine Track takes the right-hand turn, heading presumably to Rowley's Hut about 2 kilometres to the north-west. The Haskew all-singing, all-dancing pedometer tells us that we have walked 8.47 kilometres from Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station site. The track we have been following continues on in a westerly direction to pick up the Cotter Hut road, while the left track from the intersection heads towards the Orroral Tracking Station site and the locked gate. For anyone walking from Booroomba Rocks or the Honeysuckle Tracking Station and with a car shuffle arrangement, then this is the turn to take to pick up the car and/or inspect the tracking station site. The remainder of this article describes the latter alternative.

At 8.83 on the left, down towards the river, there is a weather station. Sometime later the track becomes indistinct but continues in the same direction. Fences can be seen and possibly the one building on the site—the recently completed solar-powered toilet. The locked gate and the style are to the half right, the tracking station site to the half left. Proceeding half left there is the alternative of climbing over a fence

Birds seen along the track in July

The wind whistled in the trees all day but the birds were not remotely in competition. In fact it was difficult to find birds at all, whistling or not. On the first section of the track from the Namadgi Visitor Centre the sheer numbers (if not species) of birds added much to the pleasure of that lovely walk, but on this second stretch from Booroomba Rocks car park to Orroral Valley it was a different story. This was mid-winter, windy and during a rather cold spell, even by ACT standards, whereas the first section had been covered at the height of the honeyeater migration from the Brindabella Range.

There was not even a magpie or a currawong or a galah to see us off from the car park. The first encounter was with a white-eared honeyeater, common enough at this elevation in winter but always a pleasure to watch. A few parties of striated thornbills flitted high in the swaying canopy as we made our way towards the former Honeysuckle Space Tracking Station site. There was a little more activity here and along the rest of the track: white-throated treecreeper, eastern yellow robin, gang-gang cockatoo, crimson rosella, golden whistler, superb fairy-wren and magpie (white-backed). There were good views of crescent honeyeaters feeding in the banksias. According to *Birds of the ACT: An Atlas*, they are more frequently encountered in the territory in winter than in summer, disappearing from many parts in September.

Other prevalent species for interested walkers to look out for would be both pardalotes, brown and yellow-rumped thornbills, grey shrike-thrush, grey fantail, eastern spinebill, kookaburra and wonga pigeon as well as migratory honeyeaters (fuscous, white-naped, yellow-faced) which do winter here but in reduced numbers from the summer influx.

Phyl Goddard

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then crossing a soggy drain (in late July), or parallelling the fence until the bitumen road into the site is reached just 100 metres further on. Taking the road alternative, turn left at the gate and enter the site. The road to the toilet is on the left, there is a car park and an information board. On this board we learn that this station operated from 1965 to 1984. It communicated with satellites orbiting the earth, the operators being the Australian government and NASA. It participated in the meeting of Russian and American astronauts in 1974, and the first flights to the Columbia shuttle in 1981. It was closed in 1984 when other satellites took over the monitoring. There are graphics boards at each of the building sites in the complex describing the function of each. Each site now of course is marked only by concrete foundations. The graphic at the canteen site says how the canteen served meals 24 hours a day, seven days a week for up to 180 people for 19 years. The site of the 26-metre parabolic dish is at the south-east extremity of the complex. This dish presumably came from the Honeysuckle Creek site when it closed in 1981, and if I remember rightly it went to the University of Tasmania when Orroral closed in 1984.

The pedometer gave a reading of 12.5 kilometres at the site.

Frank Clements

Vegetation: Booroomba Rocks to Orroral Valley

This section of the Alpine Walking Track traverses several typical subalpine vegetation types. The most common trees seen along the walk are the mountain gum (*Eucalyptus dalrympleana*), snowgum (*E. pauciflora*) and narrow-leaved peppermint (*E. robertsonii*) with occasional appearances by candlebark (*E. rubida*), black sallee (*E. stellulata*), broad-leaved peppermint (*E. dives*) and manna gum or ribbon gum (*E. Viminalis*). The common eucalypts can be seen at the beginning of the walk at Booroomba camp-site, a large flat saddle with an attractive open forest and grassy understorey. The main variety and colour in the vegetation along the rest of the walk are provided by the range of understorey shrubs.

Common shrubs include leafy bitter-pea (*Daviesia mimosoides*), with masses of small orange pea flowers in spring, the seemingly leafless broom-like pale-fruit ballart (*Exocarpos strictus*), which has pale mauve edible fruits in autumn, and two cassinia species with bunches of small cream flowers over summer. The silver wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) produces its yellow flowers in the mid to late winter and early spring, a welcome splash of colour when little else is flowering. Another acacia, the blackwood wattle (*A. melanoxylon*), is easily identified in the forest by its bright green phyllodes or 'leaves', in contrast to the more sombre blue-green or grey-green of many other shrubs. Blackwood may grow into a large tree in good soils and is distinguished from other large acacias by the pale cream flowers produced in spring. A third wattle which may be seen on this walk is the wedge-leaf wattle (*A. provissima*) with small triangular phyllodes on drooping branches and bright yellow flowers in spring.

Honeysuckle is the name early settlers gave to the banksia and, appropriately enough, occasional patches of the silver banksia (*Banksia marginata*) can be found alongside the track in the Honeysuckle Creek area. Some of the pale yellow flower spikes can be found at almost any time of the year, providing an important source of nectar to many honeyeaters.

In damp situations along the flatter gullies and hillside springs, the dry forest gives way to dense thickets of woolly tea-tree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*), mountain baeckea (*Baeckea utilis*) and heath (*Epacris breviflora*) or to open grassy swamps as along Honeysuckle Creek near Apollo Road. A good example of the tea-tree thicket can be seen beside the track on the flat 500 metres past the locked gate below the old Honeysuckle collimation tower.

At the top of the ridge between Honeysuckle Creek and Orroral Valley, the forest has a more alpine character. Mountain gum and snowgum are the dominant trees and for the first time on this walk the golden shaggy-pea (*Oxylobium ellipticum*), a common subalpine shrub, is prevalent in the understorey.

Exotic species—spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), mullein (*Verbascum thaspus*) and briar rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*)—start to appear close to the former grazing lands of the Orroral Valley. The cleared valley floor is predominantly native grasses and herbs with some introduced pasture species and weeds such as briar rose, St John's wort (*Hypericum perfoliatum*) and willows along the Orroral River. The valley is a haven for kangaroos and grassland birds such as magpies, galahs and flame robins. Scattered black sallee and snowgum struggle to regenerate and regain a foothold in the cold frosty conditions of the valley floor.

Nicki Taws

Australian Alps World Heritage nomination

In 1977 the Australian Academy of Science drew the Australian Government's attention to what should be one of Australia's World Heritage areas. The Victorian National Parks Association also recognised the importance of the area and, together with the National Parks Associations of the ACT and NSW, commissioned Dr Geoff Mosley to prepare a report on an area which logically included not only the Victorian Alpine Park but also Kosciusko and Namadgi. This report was completed in 1988 and was accepted by Joan Kirner, then Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, who subsequently officially launched the Australian Alps World Heritage nomination.

Mosley's excellent report (copies of which are in our library and make interesting and informative reading) based the nomination recommendation on the area's distinctive sclerophyll vegetation. The report claims that the vegetation of the Australian Alps is unique in world terms and also that conservation areas have the least disturbed extensive sclerophyll forests in the world. However, despite the detailed scientific study and Mosley's cogent reasoning, the importance of the region seems to have been overlooked by all levels of government. This non-listing is difficult to come to terms with when other areas continue to be listed.

It seems to me that one positive outcome from the suggestion that the nomination should include all mainland alpine areas was the formation of the Alpine Liaison Committee, which operates under a Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps. This body manages to ensure that state and territory governments work cooperatively, at least in part, and overcome parochial concerns. (The extension of the Australian Alps Walking Track into the ACT is an example of this cooperation.) The committee had the foresight to commission a prominent biogeographer, Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick, to prepare a report on the outstanding natural values of the Australian Alps. His report involved six years' work and was completed in 1993. For reasons best known to the committee it was not generally released to the public until 1994.

Kirkpatrick's report is titled *The International Significance of the Natural Values of the Australian Alps* and unequivocally states that there is absolutely no doubt that the area is of World Heritage significance. His major finding, like that of Mosley, is that the vegetation is of a universally outstanding value. He also concludes that the area ranks just behind the Tasmanian wilderness and Kakadu in World Heritage attributes.

Unfortunately, work such as that of Mosley and Kirkpatrick does not ensure that the heritage value of the area is sacrosanct. There is talk of almost 1000 additional beds being made available in Kosciusko National Park and the Victorian Alpine Resorts Commission has recommended the removal of the ban on the expansion of resorts in nearby areas. Horse tour operators are also proliferating.

I think it is now an important time for individuals to act and to endeavour to ensure that World Heritage nomination is made at the earliest possible date.

The VNPA suggests that it would be appropriate for you to:

(1) Write to Senator Faulkner and (if possible) Mr Keating, asking the Commonwealth to take the initiative in moving the next step of the nomination. In your letter it is suggested that you make the following points:
- the area has been thoroughly investigated and Kirkpatrick's authoritative report shows that it definitely meets the strict criteria for World Heritage listing
- the state and territory governments have indicated that they are willing to discuss the matter and it is now up to the Commonwealth to arrange such a meeting.

(2) Write to Mr Humphreys, ACT Minister for Environment, Land and Planning, asking his government to support the nomination and cooperate with the Commonwealth.

(3) You can also support the cause by forwarding a tax-deductible donation c/- Victorian National Parks Association, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne 3002.

Len Haskew

Can you help?

The Australian National Parks Council—the national umbrella body for national parks associations and conservation councils—will hold its annual meeting in Canberra on the weekend of 21–22 October 1995.

We urgently need billets on Friday 20 October and Saturday 21 October and transport to the meeting in Latham for a number of interstate delegates. If you can provide accommodation for our guests for these nights and/or transport to the meeting, could you please ring Stephen Johnston—254 3738 (home) or 264 2100 (work)—as soon as possible.

This is a good opportunity for those who would like to assist the NPA but are unable to participate in our committees and other activities.

Your help will be much appreciated.

PARKWATCH

Little protection for Victoria's coastal waters

The Land Conservation Council's Marine and Coastal Proposed Recommendations, released in mid-April, fail dismally to make recommendations that will result in the long-term protection of Victoria's marine environment. Only 1.4 per cent of Victoria's coastal waters are recommended as Sanctuary Areas and these areas allow for the possible removal of marine biota for restocking other areas. The report also recommends that all existing MEPAs be downgraded and regulations be left to the discretion of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Other areas called Marine Parks may allow for oil, gas and mineral extraction, aquaculture and various other forms of commercial fishing.

Park Watch, Victorian National Parks Association, June 1995

Labor's wilderness moratorium

The Colong Foundation is delighted with the progress made by the Carr Labor Government on its wilderness policy. Mr Yeadon, Minister for Land and Water Conservation, addressed the House and reported that: 'We have begun implementing our policy. Firstly, we have ceased logging in all areas of identified wilderness in New South Wales. Currently there is no logging in identified wilderness in New South Wales, and that will remain the case in the future. That is an election promise fulfilled. On 11 May we stopped logging within the Deua wilderness, in the Dampier State Forest in the state's south-east. Deua includes catchment areas for Georges Creek and Diamond Creek.'

The Colong Bulletin, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, July 1995

Green jobs

Green waste consists largely of lawn clippings and prunings, and currently costs Perth schools $100 000 per year to transport to landfill sites. Green waste disposal methods—composting and mulching—are being investigated in trials at two Perth schools with the aim of reducing waste disposal costs and generating school income.

Spring Cleaners is a community enterprise that is attracting work from community organisations, offices and households. The three people apply non-toxic agents such as vinegar and bicarbonate of soda. Due to the positive community response, Spring Cleaners is likely to continue as a viable operation after the project.

Another community enterprise likely to continue after completion of the project is one developing organic produce and teaching organic farming skills to holiday programs, government agencies and community organisations.

Habitat, Australian Conservation Foundation, April 1995

First nation wins forest victory

The Haisla are the traditional landowners of the Kitlope watershed, a huge river system of over a million acres which contains the world's largest remaining intact coastal cool-temperate rainforest. The ecosystem ranges from coastal marshes through old-growth spruce and cedar forests and merges into alpine meadows at the higher altitudes. It is important habitat for bears, mountain goats, moose and wolves. It is also the last part of traditional Haisla territory to remain intact and acts as a source of cultural and spiritual inspiration for the people. The Haisla have worked to protect the area for many years.

In August 1994, the Haisla Nation and the Premier of British Columbia announced permanent protection of the Kitlope valley, which constitutes three-quarters of the Greater Kitlope ecosystem. In an interesting development, rather than creating a provincial park similar in status to a national park, the area will be jointly managed by the government and the Haisla.

Bogong, Canberra and South-East Region Environment Centre, Autumn 1995

Wet Tropics under threat

Almost seven years after listing as a World Heritage site, there is still:

- no general legislative protection
- no management plan
- no joint management with Aboriginal people
- a proliferation of developments and proposals, such as SkyRail, East Trinity Inlet and the Chalumbin-Woree power line.

Cairns and Far North Environment Centre Newsletter, June 1995

Endangered Tibet

The fragile and unique ecosystems of the Tibetan plateau have been mercilessly exploited over the past four decades. Overgrazing, massive deforestation, decimation of wildlife, nuclear testing and huge transfers of population have caused irreversible damage to the environment of the 'roof of the world'. Since most of Asia's life-giving rivers rise in Tibet, this destruction of the ecological balance threatens hundreds of millions of people living on the Indian sub-continent, in China and South-East Asia. The destruction is continuing. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile have developed a far-reaching strategy to overcome the problems of present-day Tibet. The Dalai Lama has proposed the transformation of the whole of Tibet into a 'zone of Ahimsa' (from the Sanskrit 'non-harming'),

a world peace sanctuary where individuals and organisations dedicated to the protection of life could live in harmony with the natural environment. Accordingly, laws would be reintroduced to protect plant and wildlife, and to regulate the exploitation of natural resources.

Bogong, Canberra and South-East Region Environment Centre, Autumn 1995

Urgent need to conserve Asian fishery

Expertise gained by Australian CSIRO scientists at Sarawak, Malaysia, has led to their involvement in a million-dollar project to assist in the conservation of a major Bangladesh fishery.

Division of Fisheries researchers have formed a management plan to ease the fishing pressure on Sarawak's important Terubok fishery. Now they are becoming involved in a project with Bangladesh's Fisheries Research Institute in an effort to preserve that country's huge hilsa fishery.

This fishery has an annual catch of 200 000 tonnes—more than the entire Australian yearly total—and employs 2.5 million people. It represents 30 per cent of total Bangladesh fish production and is the most important single source of protein for many of the country's 120 million people.

Ecos, CSIRO, Winter 1995

Funding for Queensland's national parks

Management of Queensland's national parks has received a funding boost in the Budget with an extra $12 million allocated. The $12 million for national park management is only part of $35.6 million set aside over three years for both on-park and off-park conservation management under the Nature Conservation Act.

This Budget allocation means an extra 25 staff for national park management and 28 staff for off-park conservation management. Ten of these 28 positions will be dedicated to providing extension services to rural communities, five will deal with town and regional planning issues and the remainder will be dedicated to research. Only two of these positions are expected to be based in Brisbane with the other 26 being divided across the state. More than half the rare and endangered flora and fauna species of this state are outside our national parks. A large part of the additional funding will be used to increase the operational budgets of national park rangers.

NPA News, National Parks Association of Queensland, July 1995

Diamantina Lakes

The Queensland Government has secured a large area of bilby habitat following finalisation of extensive negotiations with AMP, the property owners of Davenport Downs. The new park of 246 000 ha will be added to the nearby Diamantina Lakes National Park. AMP will also be supporting further research into bilby habitat and threats to its survival to the tune of $500 000 over five years. The government will match this funding dollar for dollar.

NPA News, National Parks Association of Queensland, June 1995

Daintree clearing

The first interim conservation order under the Nature Conservation Act has been placed on a rainforest property in the Daintree to block an imminent threat of clearing. The interim conservation order will be in place for 60 days during which time it is hoped negotiations can be made with the owners to purchase the property with funds from the Daintree Rescue Programme. A national parks ranger is at the property with a warrant to monitor the situation and ensure compliance with the conservation order.

The 58 ha lowland tropical rainforest property adjoins the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and has a long frontage to the Cape Tribulation road and was identified by the Daintree Vegetation Audit as having very high conservation values. It is a known cassowary habitat and contains many rare and threatened species including some *species so rare, scientists are yet to* name them.

NPA News, National Parks Association of Queensland, June 1995

Struggle for Tarkine

The Tarkine wilderness area in north-west Tasmania includes the largest sub-temperate rainforest in Australia. It has a wealth of diverse flora and fauna and contains Aboriginal sites which have remained undisturbed for hundreds of years.

Despite the Tarkine being recommended for World Heritage listing, both the State and federal governments have consented to building a road that will open the way for logging, mining and disease in an area of unique biodiversity.

Paul Keating has one last chance to fulfil the federal government's obligation to nominate the Tarkine to World Heritage listing as determined by the World Heritage Council. The last 10 kilometres of the 'road to nowhere' is due to be bulldozed in November of this year.

A leaked document has recently proven that the link road is 'infrastructure for mining and forestry "needs"'.

ACT*wild*, The Wilderness Society (ACT Branch), Winter 1995

Coree conundrum

Leaving the Pabral Road which encircles the northern ridge of Mt Coree, Eric Pickering climbed steeply towards the summit. A vantage point on a knoll at 651922 (Cotter Dam 1:25000) gave extensive views to the east over the whole of Canberra and, to the south, the Tidbinbilla range.

At this point Eric found an unusual arrangement of rocks formed in the shape of a rectangle a little larger than two by one metres. Its formation was unlikely to be natural. Eric asked me if I would join him on another visit to determine, possibly by divining, what the purpose of the arrangement might have been.

On this occasion we drove along the now very rough Two Sticks Road from Piccadilly Circus, removing one fallen tree and negotiating many deep puddles to the Coree summit turn-off. We then walked up the road to the bend near the knoll at spot height 1275. It is always difficult to locate an on-ground feature after walking through bush which has no prominent above-ground features. At first an unsuccessful search was made on this knoll.

We then dropped down to the second knoll at 651922 and the site was soon found at the edge of the cliff. Stones had been arranged to form a low wall in the shape of a rectangle, the inner space cleared of loose rock and levelled off. Just the size for a small tent or a space simply to lie down in.

Nearby on the western slope a larger area nearer square in shape had been similarly outlined by a low line of rocks. On one wall a space had been left as if for entry. Similarly the internal space had been cleared of loose rocks and the surface levelled. Scattered about on the ridge, stones had been piled into cairns and in lines. Neither of these two feature types was on the crest of the ridge.

The smaller of the two stone arrangements on the northern ridge of Coree. The area within the lines of stones has been cleared of all stones and levelled to a smooth surface. Photo by Reg Alder

First thoughts were that they may have been boundary markers and the levelled sections the camps of surveyors when the ACT border was being surveyed. Water would have been a problem. A check of the map showed that at this location the border left the summit watershed north-east in a straight line and we were then 0.4 km into New South Wales.

There was a possibility that these lines of stones enclosed graves but a check by divining gave no indications of the digging of trenches and filling them in.

Therein lies the problem: when, by whom and for what purpose were these arrangements made? Any knowledge or suggestions?

Reg Alder

Outings program

October–December 1995

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.

[30] Sep to 2 Oct long weekend pack walk [3]/B
Mt Talaterang Ref: CMW Budawangs
Leader: Stephen Forst Phone: 279 1326w 251 6817h

Contact leader by Wednesday for details. After a long drive, an easy pack walk of 2.5 hours over flat terrain to a camp site at the top of Nyanga Falls (no sleepwalkers please!). A solid day walk to the top of Mt Talaterang through some scrub. 500kms $100 per car.

8 October Sunday walk 2/A/D/E/F
Mt Orroral Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25000
Leader: Mick Kelly Phone: 241 2330h

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30 am. A walk up past the lunar laser ranger and further to Mt Orroral (1609 on map). From Mt Orroral the walk is south-east to join the Nursery Swamp track. Some track walking, some scrambling and some scrub. Short car shuffle. Climb about 700m—distance about 10km. 80 km drive $16 per car.

14 October Saturday tour
Canberra and district native grasslands
Bookings: Stephen Johnston Phone: 254 3738h

Contact Stephen to make a booking by 6 October. Sarah Sharp, Grasslands Project Officer with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, will lead a tour of native grassland sites in Canberra and district, describing their composition, ecology and management requirements. A bus will be chartered if numbers warrant and the cost advised at time of booking.

14 October Saturday walk 3/A/C
Cotter Rocks–Rock Flats Ref: Corin Dam, Rendezvous Creek 1:25000
Leader: Murray Dow Phone: 257 4371h

Book with the leader by Thursday for this joint walk with CBC. Usual easy walk to Cotter Gap, up to Split Rock and across the mysterious Rock Flats for lunch. Cross the head of Rendezvous Creek and over tops North of Mt Orroral, descending clear area at GR 73558 to rejoin Orroral Valley Road. Much light scrub but, except for Cotter Gap, no big climbs. 18 kms. Not for beginners. 80 km drive $16 per car.

15 October Sunday walk 2/A/E
Bungonia Gorge Ref: Caoura 1:25000
Leader: Mike Smith Phone: 286 2984h 248 3624w

Meet at Southwell Park and corner of Northbourne Ave at 8am. A steep walk on track down to the Shoalhaven River then downstream to Bungonia Creek. Follow creek upstream through the spectacular Bungonia Gorge. Climb 400m out via the steep 'Efflux' route. 220 km drive $44 per car.

21 October Saturday walk 1/A
Black Mountain nature ramble Ref: ACT 1:100000
Leader: George Chippendale Phone: 281 2454h

Meet at Belconnen Way entrance to Black Mountain Reserve (several hundred metres to the east of Caswell Drive) at 9.30am. A morning ramble to see the flowers. Suitable for those aged 4–80. Bring your morning tea, camera, binoculars and *Wild About Canberra*. Finish by midday.

22 October Sunday walk 2/A
Boboyan Huts Ref: Yaouk 1:25000
Leader: Len Haskew Phone: 281 4268h

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8am. From Boboyan Pines car park, walk along old forestry roads to visit two fairly-recently built huts—Franks Hut (1950s) and Hospital Hut (1960s). Hopefully, we might also be able to say farewell to the notorious pines, too! Suitable for beginners. 100 km drive $20 per car.

23 October—Monday evening
Outings 'committee' picnic tea
Leonie and Phil Bubb Phone: 248 6769h 275 8028w

Anybody is welcome to attend a picnic tea from 7pm at our place to thank leaders, to plan new year's program or just to talk about past or future walks. Simple food will be available or you may bring your own. If you would like to come, please let us know a few days before to help plan catering.

28 October Saturday walk 2/A/B/E
The Pimple Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25000
Leader: Max Lawrence 272 2032w or 288 1370h

Meet at the Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. From the car park in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (above the koala enclosure), along the ridge and down to The Pimple, a remarkable rock outcrop on the western side of the range. A surprisingly wild and remote spot with no hint of its proximity to Canberra. Return by the same route. 60km $12 per car.

31 October Tuesday history ramble
Nil Desperandum property in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
Leader: Rob Forster Phone: 249 8546h

Meet at 2pm at the Tidbinbilla Visitor Information Centre. Ranger-guided two-hour visit to this historic, heritage-listed house constructed last century. Beautiful setting, with arboretum and propagation of exotic shrubs, and an old eucalyptus still. You may like to take afternoon tea. 60km drive $12.

5 November Sunday walk **1/A/B**
Ginini Cascades **Ref: Corin 1:25000**
Leader: Lyle Mark **Phone: 286 2801h**

Meet at Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.45am. A 6km walk from Mt Ginini through Arboretum no. 26, across Ginini Flats. Lunch at Ginini Cascades. Optional 100m return climb on good track to Mt Ginini summit. Suit beginners and families. 120km drive $24 per car.

4–11 November week-long pack walk
Ettrema Gorge **Ref: Touga, Nerriga, Yalwal 1:25000**
Leader: Stephen Johnston **Phone: 254 3738h**

This is a joint walk with the Victorian NPA. Contact leader by 30 October. An eight-day walk to this rugged sandstone wilderness. All off track with plenty of rock hopping, scrambling, climbing and swimming.

12 November Sunday history drive
Lost mines of the Monaro
Leader: Deidre Shaw/Barry McGowan
Phone Deidre: 231 5216h

Contact co-ordinator, Deidre, by Wednesday to reserve a place for this opportunity to visit Cowra Creek Mines, east of Bredbo, to be led by author, Barry McGowan (Barry's book is published by Tabletop Press). Access is through private property, and rationalisation of cars is needed to minimise the number of vehicles. 220kms $44 per car.

11–12 November weekend pack walk **3/A/C/D**
Rock Flats **Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25000**
Leader: Jack Smart **Phone: 248 8171h**

Contact leader by Wednesday. A one and a half day walk leaving Canberra midday Saturday. Walk over from Orroral via Nursery Creek to Rendezvous Creek. Next day walk up to Rock Flats with day packs and return to camp retracing walk in to car. Total climb 600m and distance 26km. 80km drive $16 per car.

18 November Saturday walk **4/A/D**
Booths Creek **Ref: Michelago 1:25000**
Leader: Jack Smart **Phone: 248 8171h**

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8am. Walk on fire track from Glendale Crossing to Brandy Flat, then over scrubby ridge to Booths Creek and open frost valley (North of Booth's Hill). Possibly explore a bit of Booths Creek beyond frost valley to a waterfall, possibly dry. Return mostly the same way, but on ridge west of frost valley. Total climb about 400m and distance 21km. 85 km drive $17 per car.

17–[illegible]ovember four day car camp **1/A**
Wingen Inlet **Ref: Croajingalong, Mallacoota 1:25000**
Leader: Murray Dow **Phone: 257 4371h**

Please check with leader by Wedesday. An informal camp at Wingen Inlet, just east of Cann River in Victoria. The presence of a four year old constrains walks to be short, however others can do longer walks. A small boat for crossing the lagoon would be useful. Ground parrots, emu-wrens and goannas. About 600 kms $120 per car.

18–19 November weekend pack walk **2/A/B/E/?**
Shoalhaven River **Ref: Caoura 1:25000**
Leader: Len Haskew **Phone: 281 4268h**

Contact leader by Wednesday. Walk down to the Shoalhaven from Long Point (near Tallong). Set up camp near the mouth of Bungonia Creek. Spend the rest of the time as you wish—swim, laze, read, sketch, fish or come with me and explore Bungonia Creek. 300km drive $60 per car.

25 November Saturday walk **2/C/D/E**
Green Peak? **Ref: Corin, Tidbinbilla 1:25000**
Leader: Matthew Higgins **Phone: 247 7285h**

Contact leader to book for the walk. Where is Green Peak? Come and discover the rock-faced peak which juts up behind the Tidbinbilla Valley and is visible from Canberra. Approach is from Smokers Gap. An off track walk through a wild part of the ACT with a lot of fallen timber and scrub. 60km drive $12 per car.

26 November Sunday walk **2A/B**
Alpine Track (extension) **Ref: Corin Dam 1: 25 000**
stage 2
Leader: Frank Clements **Phone: 231 7005**

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. Walk about 14 kms from Booroomba Rocks to Orroral Valley on the extension to the Alpine Walking Track. A car shuffle will be needed. Drive 120 kms $24 per car.

25-26 November weekend pack walk **2/A/D/E**
Corang circuit **Ref: Corang 1:25000**
Leader: Mike Smith **Phone: 2862984h 248 3624w**

Contact leader previous Wednesday for details. A walk from the Wog Wog entrance to the Budawangs via Corang Peak to a camp near Canowie Brook. Next day follow Corang River through some scrub to Corang Lagoon for lunch, possible swim and return to Wog Wog along the worn track. 250 km drive $50 per car.

2–3 December Ski lodge weekend with day walks
Ref: Kosciusko 1:50000
Leader: Phil Bubb **Phone: 248 6769h 275 8028w**

Contact the leader at least two weeks in advance to reserve a place. Day walks to Mt Tate and Consett Stephen Pass or relax. Bring sheets, pillowcases, towels and all food with possibility of co-operative cooking of early Christmas celebration. 400km $80 per car (plus entry to park).

10 December Sunday Christmas Party
Orroral Valley **Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25000**
Leader: Eleanor Stodart **Phone: 282 5813 (office)**

Meet at Orroral Valley picnic ground at 3pm for the annual NPA Christmas get together. Members and friends welcome. Bring a picnic tea.

7 January Sunday walk
Grassy, Sheep Station and Naas Creeks **Ref: Yaouk, Shannons Flat 1:25000**
Leader: Stephen Johnston **Phone: 254 3738h**

Contact leader for bookings and inquiries. A long but very interesting walk through the former grazing leases of southern ACT past old huts, fences and yards. The walk concludes with a 300m climb and descent over Boboyan and Pheasant hills. 140 kms $28 per car.

Points to note

Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead outings. New leaders are welcome. The outings covenor is happy to suggest locations suitable for a walk if you do not have something in mind yourself. Feel free to send in suggestions for outings to the association's office as soon as you think of them, with a suggested date.

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 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.

Exploring Namadgi and Tidbinbilla

Day walks in Canberra's High Country Second edition, completely revised by Graeme Barrow, Dagraja Press, Canberra 1995 (price about $13).

Most people who enjoy walking in the high country around the ACT are familiar with Graeme Barrow's guide books. Exploring Namadgi and Tidbinbilla is his thirteenth book about the region and it would be my guess that one or other of these day-pack-sized guides has served to introduce many people to the delights of walking in the area. And perhaps in passing they may have also encouraged some to become members of NPA.

The walks in this edition are divided into three sections: northern and southern Namadgi, based on the Brindabella Road and the Naas and Boboyan Roads corridor, with Tidbinbilla making the third section. Eighteen of the suggested walks are in the southern sector. Each walk description is accompanied by a Key Details box which gives quite adequate details of access based on the appropriate roads and giving distances from an unmistakable point such as the Namadgi Visitor Centre. Also in this box are salient details such as what to see, walking distance involved, a suggested elapsed time for the entire walk, a brief description of the degree of difficulty and the appropriate topographic map. This little box does not take up very much room but it does give a very succinct account of what to expect and, as it is invariably placed quite near the beginning of the walk description, it should be very useful when planning a day's outing.

In a first for Graeme's books (I think), the photographs are reproduced in colour and his printer has made a very good job of them indeed. They are all very sharp and not in the least bit 'muddy', the latter being a characteristic which often mars similarly-priced books. My impression is that most of these illustrations contain a human figure or two, giving some of the places a sense of scale and also emphasising the fact that these are interesting areas for people to visit. Graeme has also chosen his mapmaker very wisely. Each walk is shown on a simplified but very clear map. Once again colour has been used to good effect with the salient features being emphasised in red. All in all the production of the book is first class.

To Graeme the 'immense granite rocks and boulders on many slopes and ridges are one of the lasting attractions of Namadgi ... they enthral simply by their presence'. This interest is reflected in his choice of walks. Many lead to prominent collections of gigantic boulders and tors. I hope that the many people who will surely read this book find a similar enthusiasm being kindled. One spin-off for NPA could be that we will soon find leaders willing to take walks up beyond the Geodetic Observatory to some of the areas around Mt Orroral which used to figure in our Outings Program some years ago. The book does not concentrate exclusively on rocks and mountains, though; Aboriginal sites, relics of European occupation, rivers and swamps all receive attention. There are walk suggestions to suit anyone and everybody.

The walk descriptions are written in Graeme's own very personal style. As well as directions we are given his often vivid memories of the prevailing weather conditions at the time of his journey as well as an indication of the mood that the walk engendered. It seemed a little strange to me that someone would end a walk description in a guide such as this by writing 'It took me about ninety melancholy minutes to walk back to the stile, thinking as I went that I would never return.' (I won't tell you the destination of this walk but although it is a place of unrealised dreams, I don't think it's as sad as all that. Perhaps we can put it in the Outings Program, too, and see what others think.) To people who know the area well, the book's instructions are more than adequate. I have some reservations as to whether newcomers would always find the directions clear and concise. I don't think there are any glaring inaccuracies but there are perhaps some who could become confused by Graeme's mix of anecdote and instruction. I intend to put it all to the test by combining Walks 16 and 17 in the next Outings Program. I'm going to follow Graeme's directions to the letter and I'm sure we'll all end up at our cars!

As well as walk descriptions, *Exploring Namadgi and Tidbinbilla* offers its readers an excellent introduction to the prehistory and history of the area and a brief account of the geology of the area, its flora and fauna. There is also an excellent chapter on weather conditions so that walkers will know what to expect. Graeme also lists his 'Top Ten Walks'—walks that have given him 'intense pleasure' for a variety of reasons. When you read the book see if you would vote for the same group.

This second edition of *Exploring Namadgi and Tidbinbilla* has been released at a very significant time. There are persistent rumours that both Tidbinbilla and Namadgi could undergo management changes that would adversely affect the ACT's own area of preserved wilderness. Let us hope that this very readable guide will introduce many more people to the beauty and the grandeur of Canberra's high country and that their voices will then be raised to ensure its continued existence.

Len Haskew

The Camargue—conflicting land use

The Camargue is a triangle of 56 000 hectares of marshland, forming the delta of the River Rhône where it flows into the Mediterranean Sea in the South of France. I was fascinated by the complex environment of salt-marshes, wetlands, migratory bird breeding grounds, rice-growing and other agriculture, 'wild' bulls and horses, heavy industry, commercial salt-pans, tourism. Of all the wonderful places I visited in eight weeks in France, southern Italy, Greece and Austria, the Camargue was perhaps the most compelling. I would love to return and spend time exploring its subtleties in more detail.

The delta is formed by the tonnes of alluvium brought down each year by the river from the hinterland (enough to cover Paris 25 cm deep in silt), extending the delta by 10 to 15 metres each year. Yet in other parts of the coast the sea is encroaching so that the Faraman lighthouse, 700 metres inland in 1840, disappeared into the sea in 1917. Similarly, Saintes Maries de la Mer, formerly inland, is now protected by sea walls.

The largest lagoon of the Camargue, the Étang de Vaccarès, comprises the major part of the national reserve—13 500 hectares—which can only be entered by those with professional credentials. The wetlands provide an ideal environment for thousands of migratory birds; the purple heron, ospreys, plovers, avocets and swallows in spring and autumn and duck and teal from northern Europe in winter. The most famous visitors are the flocks of flamingoes which breed in the warm sheltered lagoons in spring, nourished by the tiny, pink crustaceans which flourish in the very salty water (and which enhance the pink colour of the flamingoes). To see half a dozen flamingoes elegantly feeding, completely undisturbed by your presence, is impressive. It is breathtakingly beautiful to see a flock of these improbable birds flying with their necks and legs extended straight out and their pale pink feathers highlighted by their dark salmon and black underwings.

The Camargue is a birdwatcher's paradise. There are access paths and sea dykes from which the inhabitants can be observed, and boat trips, guided tours on horseback and ornithological parks in the less protected areas. Information on all of these is available from the Government Tourist Information Office in Saintes Maries de la Mer.

The flora of the region is adapted to the salty water and the strong winds. (It is said that the principal advantage of visiting in December to February is that the Mistral blows the ferocious mosquitoes and biting flies away, even though it may blow you off your bicycle.) The shrubs are generally low growing—reeds, wild iris, tamarisk, wild rosemary and juniper trees (the latter growing on the islands between the Étang de Vaccarès and the sea). A number of the plants derive their common names from the Latin word for salt—*salicornes* and *saladelles* for example, reflecting their adaptation.

People have been living in the Camargue for thousands of years in an uneasy equilibrium. The Romans farmed in the area and exploited the extensive salt pans in the first century AD. There is some evidence that the salt was traded commercially some 3000 years ago. The saltworks are now among the largest in the world and quite fascinating (although biologically, largely sterile). The huge pile of brilliant white salt contrasts markedly with the huge, shallow, pink-grey salt pans into which the sea water is pumped for evaporation.

The famous 'wild' black bulls and white horses are the traditional basis of the agricultural economy. The bulls, lithe and agile, are used principally in the Provençal bullfights (which are not to-the-death like the Spanish ones) and are treated like heroes. One of the many promotional posters shows the bull making a spirited attempt to follow the *razeteur* (the equivalent of the matador) over the barrier and out of the ring. Although the bulls are called wild, it is all relative; they graze on the indigenous plants in relative freedom. Australian paddocks are much larger but most French fields are much smaller.

After the Second World War the northern marshes were drained and re-irrigated with fresh water. The main crop, rice, was so successful that by the 1960s it was providing three-quarters of France's needs. Wheat, rapeseed, vines and fruit orchards are now significant crops. This is all heavily irrigated, with extensive chemical spraying. I was privileged, if that is the right word, to witness some precision crop-dusting by a helicopter, not far from the banks of the Rhône. As the unmistakable smell filled the air-conditioned bus, the driver assured a nervous passenger, 'No, no, it isn't dangerous at all. Well, perhaps to small animals like dogs and cats.' What, I wondered, about the small fish in the river and the small birds in the trees?

In addition to all this, the French government developed the Fos Complex a few kilometres along the coast in 1965. When combined with nearby Marseilles, the port is the largest in France, and second only to Rotterdam in Europe. It handles 90 million tonnes of traffic each year (two-thirds through Fos itself). The industrial zone includes steel, petrol and other petroleum products,

chemicals and natural gas. Perhaps I am unnecessarily pessimistic, but this seems like an environmental disaster waiting to happen.

Of course, tourism has a major impact on the sensitive and complex marshlands. Two to three thousand campervans, caravans and tents camp on eight kilometres of sand over summer and many thousands more visit the major towns and impinge on the wetlands in search of 'wilderness'. The local traditionalists recognise the conflict—graffiti on an isolated outbuilding says *Tourism mort la Camargue* (tourism is killing the Camargue). There is certainly truth in this; tourism affects the traditional way of life as well as the physical environment. Yet without the tourists who come to experience the environment, would it be protected from the impact of intensive agriculture and industry? This is a dilemma facing many areas in the world, including Australia.

The French government is trying to keep the competing influences of tourism, agriculture, industry, and hunting in equilibrium with the indigenous ecosystems. The whole of the Camargue is a National Regional Park with the restricted National Reserve at its centre. Although it may not be true wilderness, it is a fascinating and fragile environment and a wonderful place to visit.

Elizabeth Smith

Ode to Ettrema

Pack-walk 26–30 January 1995, leaders: Eric and Pat Pickering

Yearning...
Ettrema to see once more
Brick-red craggy rims
Steep, blue-green slopes

Knowing...
Down there the winding stream
Glimpsed glints that lure
Pale pools of pure delight

Descending
Step by careful step
Soft dirt, loose stones our balance test
Brow wet, mouth dry—we touch base thankfully

Enjoying
Comradeship and campfire glow
Bushwalking tales, and tucker too
The peacefulness of Wilderness

Rockhopping
Downstream the vista widens
Sighing She-Oaks long reaches hedge
There banks of bracken; and Burrawangs...

Struggling
Slow ascent up creek called Cabbage Tree
Cliff-walled and rock congested
Gloomy sky a wet change brings

Resting
A lofty plateau campsite
Showers contract and starlight reigns

Morning a ribbon-mist lifts from the deep

Squeezing
Through cliff face slot—
We contour spur and skid in gully
Sunlit Cinch beckons tired trampers

Revelling
In enchanted pool
Bright spangles splash its silken surface
A massive boulder guardian crouches

Crossing Ettrema Creek. Photo by Eric Pickering

Ambling
Back to 'mother' Ettrema
Last swim, last meal, last evening
Review the route—make ready for the morrow

Puffing
Long pull up Transportation Spur
Frequent 'spells'—to keep the party knit
Sustenance to nibble and to sip

Admiring
Tremendous view from Pardon Point
North and south the sweep of gorge.
Across from us proud Hamlet's Crown

Reaching
Skywards—unnamed sandstone spires
Which, in recognition of our leaders' worth,
I now proclaim as 'Pickerings Pinnacles'

Returning
Plateau of unrelenting scrub;
Terraces flowered in white
Farewell Ettrema...farewell.

Judith Webster

Last verse contributed by Eric Pickering

Weeding Lord Howe Island
(or how to feel noble while holidaying in beautiful surroundings)

Lord Howe Island is a small, subtropical island of great natural beauty about 700 kilometres north-east of Sydney. Being isolated, it has many endemic species with different elements showing links with New Caledonia, Australia or New Zealand. It is the breeding site for many thousands of sea birds of 14 species. Because it is unique it has been included on the World Heritage List.

But like all places where people have established themselves, it has been invaded by weeds and animal pests. Of the animals, the pigs and cats have been effectively removed but rats and goats need constant effort to keep numbers down. Of the plants, several pose a serious threat to the natural vegetation and require a major effort to control.

Since I know a number of people in Canberra with great feeling for the natural environment, and the island had provided me with two wonderful holidays when most needed, I offered to organise a group to go on a weeding trip. Ian Hutton, who leads several guided tours to the island each year, agreed to act as guide for the leisure parts of the trip and coordinator with the Lord Howe Island Board and Parks and Wildlife rangers for the weeding part.

So on 13th June 10 of us, nine volunteers and Ian, caught the plane from Sydney to Lord Howe Island.

Although we did not know it at the time, our first afternoon showed us what the week's weather would be like, strong winds (even the waters of the lagoon were rough) and rain squalls. The only time the wind abated was when it poured with rain. However, it was considerably warmer than Canberra and the rain meant that numerous waterfalls graced the cliffs of Mounts Lidgbird and Gower and we were treated to dramatic and beautiful scenes of squalls approaching over the sea. Clouds draped themselves over the mountains in smooth caps or lacy mist, varying with the wind.

One more asparagus fern for the bag. Photo by Eleanor Stodart

The rough seas ruled out boat rides and the wind and wet ground made climbing Mount Gower dangerous, so we had plenty of time to explore the rest of the island on foot and bicycle, to survey the weeds and have several sessions attacking them.

Our main efforts at weeding were confined to the ground asparagus fern, *Protasparagus aethiopicus*, on four transects of Transit Hill. We carefully removed berries from fruiting bushes and the crown from all plants, as it regenerates readily, and carried them back for burning, but our efforts to hold a course parallel to the track while staying five metres apart were laughable at times. One, then another, would be held up over a dense patch of asparagus fern or would get tangled in creepers, or would have to detour to get through, but through it all we kept counting so that we could provide estimates of densities in different areas.

We encountered some clumps too large to tackle for a group trying to do a survey, but found that on the far side of Transit Hill a concerted effort by groups like us could make a significant contribution to limiting the problem. The infestation was clearly heavier near the settlement, where the plumose asparagus fern was also a very serious problem.

Spot the workers among the palms (there are three in the picture). Photo by Eleanor Stodart

Most of the younger plants were close to long-established parents but numbers of seedlings along the track down the far side of Transit Hill and an isolated plant on Mt Eliza showed how effectively birds could carry the seeds. If left, the isolated plant would almost certainly have become the centre of another dense infestation.

We noted bridal creeper (another member of the asparagus fern group) growing near Kim's Lookout and hoped it would be tackled before it could spread further.

We attacked a stand of *Pittosporum undulatum*, pulling out 740 plants in one hour (fortunately this weed only occurs in limited areas at this stage). Another problem, cherry guava, needs to be attacked with chain saw and poison before it spreads into more inaccessible areas. Bitou bush, a pest on the coast of mainland NSW, is present on the cliffs of Lord Howe Island but the rangers felt they were keeping it under control. The weeds of Lord Howe Island are definitely a challenge!

I think everyone in the group enjoyed themselves. Certainly we came away as good friends, even though some of us had not met before, and we saw parts of the island not usually touched by tourists (or by most of the islanders, I think). We developed a definite feeling for the vegetation as we eased our way over, under and around the fine creepers which stretched between trees and bushes with no thought for humans who might want to pass by. We climbed over fallen logs and tried to find a firm footing in rotten ones. We explored the steep sharp rocks of Edie's Glen and we did a little fertilising with scrapes of skin and drops of blood. But we also saw ferns and orchids growing amongst the rocks. I remember one particular scene of a twisted tree spreadeagled over a large mossy rock forming an island amongst the dense undergrowth, more beautiful than any artificial bonsai.

The Lord Howe Island Board has some grant money from the World Heritage Unit to pay labour to tackle some of the heavier infestations of weeds and the Parks and Wildlife rangers attack the problem as they

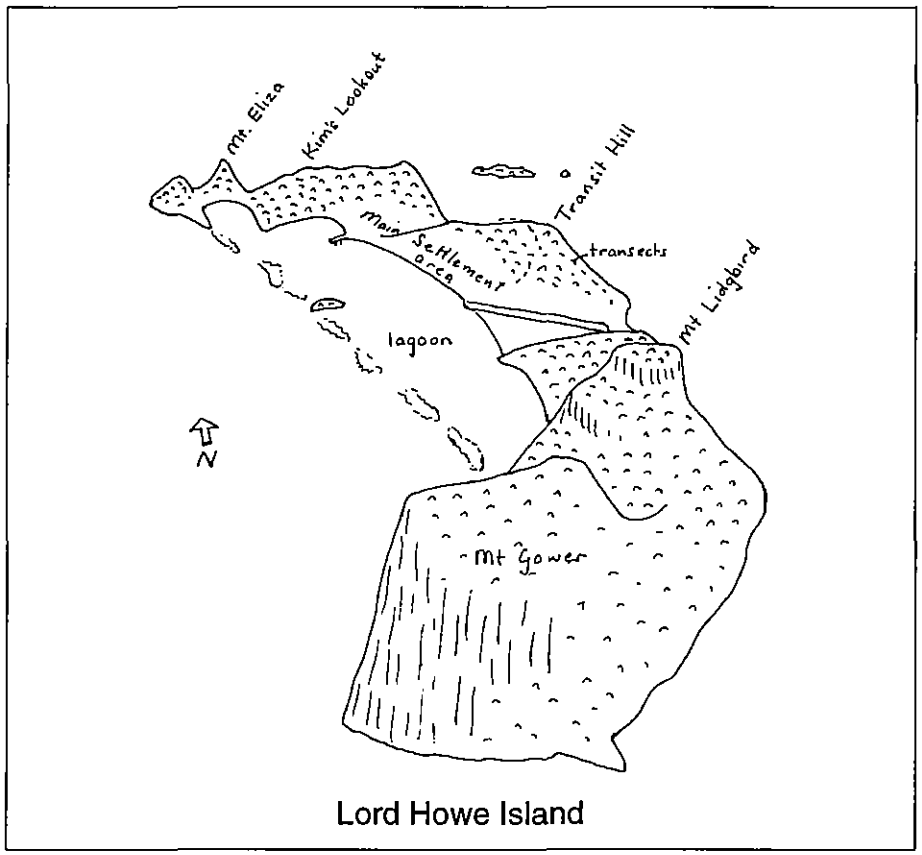
Weeding Lord Howe Island

continued from previous page

can between other duties with the help of a Landcare group, but there is still room for further help and I hope that some other groups besides ours will be able to get the same satisfaction that we did. Our scratches and strange activities caused considerable interest among the other guests at Pinetrees and some even expressed interest in helping if only they had not been leaving. Perhaps Pinetrees could consider adding weeding sessions to their winter program.

The islanders have done a wonderful job of limiting development so that much of the natural heritage is unspoiled and the island still provides an idyllic retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern life. A little weeding is a small return.

Eleanor Stodart



Lord Howe Island

The forgotten ecosystem

While trees and rivers excite the passions of artists and conservationists, most of us ignore grasslands. Grassy areas are utilitarian and invisible; we look across them towards mountains or lakes; we walk on them; in our backyards we mow them; in the suburbs we play cricket on them, but we rarely look closely at them. At the July meeting of NPA Sarah Sharp, the Grasslands Project Officer from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, showed that a close look at grasslands can reveal great beauty and diversity.

She has been conducting research into the small areas of the ACT's surviving native grasslands for a number of years, with support from the Australian Nature Conservation Agency's Endangered Species Program. She is also preparing a management plan for their conservation.

Grasslands and grassy woodlands are the most endangered plant communities in the Territory. During Aboriginal occupation the district had 20 000 hectares of treeless grasslands including what European settlers called the Limestone Plains on which central Canberra is built. Trees did not grow in the valleys below about 600 metres altitude; in these frost hollows the minimum air and ground temperatures may differ by as much as six degrees; ground temperatures reach minus 10 degrees or less in July and August.

During the 19th century observers noted the degradation of grasslands due to grazing. But it was not until the 1970s that the extent of the remaining grasslands was delineated. Only in the last five years have community groups and land managers become concerned enough to study and conserve these rich ecosystems.

Only about 0.5 per cent of Australia's native grasslands remain. The ACT still has five per cent or about 1000 hectares, with another 1000 hectares of secondary grassland, that which has been left after clearing woodlands. Most of the territory's grasslands—the Limestone Plains, Isabella Plains and Ginninderra Creek valley—have been covered by housing. The largest surviving tracts are in the Majura valley (the airport and the field firing range) and at Belconnen naval station. What remains is still threatened by urban development and weed invasions.

What excites the scientists is the diversity of grasslands. Though an area of one square metre may be dominated by one or two species, it could contain 20 or 30 plant species.

These in turn support insects, reptiles and other small animals. Threatened species living in the ACT's grasslands include the button wrinklewort *Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*, the yam daisy *Microseris lanceolata*, the golden sun moth *Synemon plana*, the southern lined earless dragon *Tympanocryptis lineata pinguicolla* and the striped legless lizard *Delma impar*.

Four groups of striped legless lizards were found during surveys carried out before the development of Gungahlin. The daisy, which occurred on Capital Hill until the construction of the new Parliament House, is still found on Stirling Ridge in Yarralumla, in one site in Barton and a few sites near Queanbeyan. The yam daisy was eaten by Aboriginal people, then almost eliminated by sheep. The moth thrives in Belconnen naval base, Majura valley, York Park in Barton and several other small sites. The tiny dragon, which has been wiped out in Victoria, is being reclassified as a separate species. Recent surveys by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and the University of Canberra have found six sites in the ACT and Monaro tablelands. The dragon uses spider burrows for protection from predators and fire.

The building of roads and houses fragments sites into unsustainable pockets, sometimes down to a few square metres. The remaining fragments are subject to many types of disturbance: grazing, ploughing, mowing, burning, flooding, shading, littering and tree planting. These physical changes lead to changes in the composition of species. It is remarkable that native grasslands have survived at all.

Sarah has found about 120 native and exotic species in her studies. Other studies indicate about 180 native species in the ACT.

Sarah said that a strategy to conserve grasslands must take account of national resources. The four aims must be to preserve endangered species, to enhance native components, to control and reduce exotic species, and to retain examples of grassland associations.

The management options are reservation, covenants on development and management agreements with landholders. There are only about 200 hectares of lowland grasslands in reserves in Victoria and Tasmania. Sarah and others are working towards creating safe sites in the ACT.

Because research is now taking place, it is hard to know the best way to preserve a community. Historical studies can reveal what was there before, what has been done to it and how this affected the grassland. Aboriginal management was by burning; graziers slashed, burned and added fertiliser.

All management methods affect species composition. Burning reduces biomass indiscriminately but only happens occasionally; grazing changes species systematically; mowing causes a continuous reduction in biomass. The scientists are trying to work out the best method to retain diversity.

Unlike managing a forest, which grows slowly and visibly, grasslands can change dramatically over five years. This may not mean that species have been lost, but may be a fluctuation in a resilient community. Long-term monitoring is needed to find out the extent of permanent change.

In the ACT there are four dominant genera of grasses: *Themeda, Danthonia, Stipa* and *Bothriochloa*. After looking at diverse grasslands, Sarah has found three major grassland associations containing different proportions of these dominant species, as well as a distinct component of other native species including flowering plants. The three associations are a wet *Themeda* association also containing *Danthonia* which occurs in low-lying valleys subject to run-on, a dry *Themeda* association comprising mainly *Themeda* on slopes with minimal run-on but deeper soils and a *Danthonia* association occurring mainly on slopes on shallow, nutrient-poor soils. *Bothriochloa* features in some associations and is especially apparent in summer. *Poa* is dominant in cooler, higher areas of the Monaro and along drainage lines in the ACT.

One thing Sarah has found is that perennial native species seem to have survived better than annuals. The ACT's grasslands lack annual natives. Annuals are more common in the Riverina and Victoria. In the ACT they have probably been replaced by exotics. Exotics thrive in wet sites, many of which have been modified by changes to Canberra's drainage systems. This means that wetter sites have to be managed more intensively than drier areas.

Roger Green

New NPA members as at 1 August 1995

Millicent Poole	Fadden
Colin Rowell	Watson
Sharon McAuliffe	Chifley
Leon Horsnell	Cook
Nerida Foster, Robert Ryl and Linden Parker	Curtin
Graham Scully	Bungendore
Allen Bills	Wanniassa
Saideh Samantha Kent	Aranda
Felicia Choo	Turner
Philip Watkins	Queanbeyan

Tidbinbilla—the 1939 koala enclosure

Members will be familiar with the present koala enclosure at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Less well known is the site of the 1939 enclosure on Hurdle Creek. Last year, while working in partnership with Freeman Collett & Partners on a conservation plan for the nearby Nil Desperandum homestead (for TNR), I researched the history of the enclosure because of its proximity to Nil. The results of this research were interesting because they showed that the aim of the enclosure was not simply a matter of nature conservation. Below is my text as submitted for the report.

'A small koala enclosure was proposed in 1938 for a site next to the Brindabella Road near Shannons Creek on the eastern ascent of the Brindabella Range. Fencing for the plot was designed and costed at 180 pounds. However, during 1939 this location was dropped for one at Hurdle Creek.

'The reasons behind a koala park were varied. On the one hand there was Mr Lance Le Souef of Melbourne who was lobbying the Prime Minister for a fauna park (particularly a koala park) to be established near Canberra so as to conserve native fauna such as koalas, platypus and so on in order to boost tourism. Le Souef was a zoologist and a brother to the Curator of Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo. Then on the other hand there was the scientific community which wanted to study koalas. On 10 February 1939 Federal Treasurer RG Casey wrote to Minister for Interior John McEwen about the establishment of a koala park in the ACT. Casey had been enthused about the proposal by Sir David Rivett and wrote that such an enclosure would be of "value to science in the determination of problems — chemical, biological and anatomical — affecting the human race". He suggested that a committee be formed to study the proposal and that it should consist of Dr LB Bull of CSIRO Melbourne (it was called CSIR at the time), Dr Clements of the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra, Dr Kellaway of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, Dr IM Mackerras of CSIRO Canberra, and CE Lane-Poole, Inspector General of Forests, Canberra. Casey concluded that the park would not be open to the public, or at least not for some years, and that its purpose would be "to breed up koalas for scientific observation directed towards the development of means for their preservation, and on the broader lines that I have mentioned". So the push for a koala plot was motivated not simply by desires to merely conserve the species.

'McEwen replied that, as his department had recently rejected Le Souef's proposal, the formation of such a committee so soon might be embarrassing to Interior and Le Souef. McEwen asked Casey to consider delaying the committee for, say, six months. The Institute of Anatomy's enthusiasm for the project could not be restrained, however, and in March Director General of Health Dr JHL Cumpston (who must have had responsibility for the Institute) wrote to Interior saying that Dr Clements had located a site of about five acres at Hurdle Creek for a koala enclosure in which "it is desirable to maintain a small number of koalas under natural conditions" for "certain experimental and scientific work which is in progress and contemplated at the Institute of Anatomy".

'The proposal was approved and a block of land, Block 56, District of Paddys River, was set aside for the plot. Fence alignments were cleared (to stop the koalas escaping over the fence in the forest canopy) and the fence was erected by 25 July 1939. The *Canberra Times* reported that day that the Victorian government had agreed to send up six adult koalas (while koalas had once been 'plentiful' in the ACT they had now not been seen for thirty years). The design of the fence had changed slightly from the earlier one planned for Shannons Creek, for the posts as built were shorter (4 feet instead of 6 feet above ground level) and the cross pieces at the top did not extend out from each side (forming a 'T' top) but rather extended out on the inside of the fence only (forming an upside down 'L'). The enclosure became quite a novelty and many local people came to view it.

'The enclosure did not survive long. Trees and branches fell across the fencing, knocking parts of it down and by the end of the Second World War the enclosure was just about derelict (perhaps staff shortages during the war forbade proper management of the site). A few years later the wire netting disappeared. The koalas meanwhile had escaped long ago.

'The main surviving fabric of the site today is a line of fence posts on the northern side of Hurdle Creek, many of which show the anchoring point for the top arm, and one post still retains this arm. The corridor cleared through the timber is still evident. On the southern side of the creek there are no standing posts, although the corridor is evident and there is some very vestigial post timber on the ground. A bottle dump, elsewhere stated to be associated with the building of the fence, consists of bottles dated 1952 and 1953 and was most probably left by eucalyptus cutters who worked nearby.

'Despite the vestigial nature of the site, enough of it remains to enable interpretation, particularly given the enclosure's significance for its early date of construction and the way it reflects biological research activities of the period.'

Members wishing to visit the site should contact TNR staff beforehand.

Matthew Higgins

Nature-based tourism

NPA project officer Nicki Taws has written two submissions on nature-based tourism in the ACT: one to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism and one relating to the ACT Tourism Development Strategy (prepared by Price Waterhouse for the Canberra Tourism Commission). Nicki explained the background and objectives of the NPA; the following is a summary of the Association's stance on nature-based tourism, as outlined in the two submissions.

The primary purpose of national parks and nature reserves is nature conservation. All other developments and uses of these areas are of secondary importance to this objective. Recognition should be given to the remarkable range and quality of natural areas present within the ACT and the good fortune we have in living so close to such areas. A major attribute of the ACT's national park and nature reserves is their unspoilt, undeveloped character.

Consistent with the objectives of appropriate management of these areas, the National Parks Association of the ACT supports the promotion of national parks and other nature reserves for their current qualities.

Any developments for tourism, within or adjacent to Namadgi National Park or other nature reserves, must be consistent with the existing values and management objectives of these natural areas, and avoid promoting the addition of activities or infrastructure which are more appropriate in other areas.

Purposes of national parks and protected areas

In any consideration of the uses of national parks and protected areas, the primary objectives of this type of land use must be understood. The fundamental purpose of national parks and protected areas is for nature conservation, the cornerstone of which is the conservation of biological diversity. The increasingly recognised link between biological diversity, the functioning of the biosphere, and human welfare and economic development is now a major concern for governments, development organisations and conservation groups.

Other purposes and values of national parks and protected areas which are readily recognised include the following:

- aesthetic values
- health and recreation values
- wilderness values
- scientific and educational opportunities
- catchment protection and watershed management
- historic and cultural values.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

The NPA supports low-key developments within the nature reserve (but predominantly in the modified areas on the valley floor), such as additional picnic areas and a food outlet on a modest scale, similar to the one in the Botanic Gardens.

Namadgi National Park

Appropriate outdoor recreation in national parks and protected areas is that which uses the area on its own terms and is consistent with the management objectives for that area. A number of the proposals in the ACT Tourism Strategy document are not compatible with the primary management objectives of Namadgi National Park and are unsuitable for the low-key, wilderness quality of Namadgi.

Scenic tours and recreational facilities

Permitting public vehicle access to fire trails and other management trails would contravene the management objectives of Namadgi National Park and destroy the wilderness quality of the area, particularly for other people who have not driven but walked in. Although some trails in the east of the park could provide 'scenic touring' opportunities, this would not only lead to incremental pressure for more access, but also would require additional management effort and expense.

For natural areas with little disturbance, appropriate recreational activities are usually those which rely on an individual's own resources of physical and mental skill without the need for constructed facilities and mechanised assistance. Recreational activities which have a greater impact, such as car camping, horse riding and mountain biking, may only be suitable in already modified environments, such as some of the nature parks (e.g. Cotter Reserve). Recreational activities and sports which require constructed facilities and other infrastructure are not appropriate for national parks. This is particularly so in Canberra where many excellent facilities are provided for a wide range of sporting and recreational activities.

Accommodation and other developments

The NPA does *not* support the provision of accommodation, camping or convention facilities within Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

Nor does it support accommodation close to Namadgi. There is no justification for providing additional accommodation facilities close to Namadgi on the alleged basis of its 'remoteness from other accommodation'. These facilities are all available in Canberra within about one hour's drive of both Namadgi and Tidbinbilla.

The provision of accommodation is a major undertaking and can have serious environmental impacts in terms of provision of water, sewerage facilities and access, particularly in remote areas which are not already served by these facilities.

Recognising that a major attraction of the ACT's parks is their undeveloped nature and recognising that this may be their greatest marketing asset, the level and type of tourist developments allowed will need to be very carefully considered. Appropriate management of natural areas will mean that there are some places where no infrastructure or development can take place; for example, wilderness areas, protected catchments, reference areas. Low-key developments such as additional walking tracks and picnic areas may be suitable.

Marketing

Any analysis of the benefits to the ACT economy arising from the ACT's national park and nature reserves needs to be fully aware of all the benefits which the community derives from having natural areas. This includes the intangible long-term benefits of the conservation of biological diversity, as well as the more apparent and immediate benefits of the aesthetic, recreational and water catchment values. It also needs to recognise that many of these benefits are easily diminished by short-sighted attempts to create economic benefits by inappropriate development of an area.

In the promotion of the ACT's natural areas, the greatest merit lies in not marketing the parks other than for what they have to offer in their current state—that is, unspoilt natural beauty with minimal infrastructure.

Funding

More tourism developments in Namadgi and other nature reserves will increase pressure on the natural resources and will therefore increase management costs. Additional funds will be needed for park managers to assess and address impacts, and manage the increase in activities and numbers of people. A system of fees or permits may need to be introduced so that some of the additional costs are off-set by users. However, if this occurs, the proceeds should be used only for park management in the ACT, not returned to consolidated revenue.

Greater access

Increasing the vehicle use of tracks can increase soil erosion, earth movement and water run-off. This in turn increases the sediment level in streams, affecting water quality and habitat. Greater vehicle movement also favours the spread of weeds and diseases, and can increase the risk of fire.

Rather than permitting access and then monitoring the impacts, the best strategy for avoiding these impacts is prevention—that is, not allowing increased access. Once problems begin, such as soil erosion on a track, they are difficult to reverse and can consume large proportions of scarce management resources.

Conclusion

The proposals on nature-based tourism in the ACT Tourism Development Strategy show that the consultants have failed to understand the special character of Namadgi and Tidbinbilla. The *lack* of development and the low numbers of people in the parks is most often remarked upon by visitors as a positive feature of their visit. They have also failed to recognise that Namadgi's special values of nature conservation, wilderness and water catchment have particular management needs and that these needs cannot be compromised to cater for the interests of one particular group.

Ecological economics—working towards a sustainable world!

The Australia and New Zealand Society for Ecological Economics is holding their inaugural conference on the topic of 'Redefining resource management and environmental policy through ecological economics'. The conference will take place in Coffs Harbour, NSW, from November 19–23.

The conference program will feature a day of guided field workshops. The keynote speakers are David Suzuki, internationally renowned for his broadcasting, writing and film-making, and Robert Costanza, President of the International Society for Ecological Economics.

For further information, contact:

Centre for Agricultural and Resource Economics
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2350

Publications received by NPA

Publisher/Author	Publication
Australian Bush Heritage Fund	*Bush Heritage News*
Australian Conservation Foundation	*Habitat*
Australian Geological Survey Organisation	*AGSO Research Newsletter*
Australian Science and Technology Council	*ASTEC Update*
Cairns and Far Northern Environment Centre	*Wet Tropics Campaign Update*
Canberra and SE Region Environment Centre	*Bogong*
Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd	*The Colong Bulletin*
Canberra and District Historical Society	*Newsletter*
CSIRO	*ECOS*
Dept of Environment Land and Planning	*Land Information Newsletter*
Dept of Environment Sport and Territories	*Australian Environment News*
Environment and Conservation Council	*Sustainable Times*
Field Naturalists Association of Canberra	*Newsletter*
Greening Australia ACT and SE NSW	*Broadcast*
Japan Publications Trading Co Ltd	*Pacific Friend*
Kosciusko Huts Association	*Newsletter*
National Parks Association Qld	*NPA News*
National Parks Association NSW	*National Parks Journal*
National Parks Association NSW-Southern Highlands Branch	*NPA News*
Nature Conservation Society of SA	*Xanthopus*
Total Environment Centre	*Total Environment Newsletter*
United Nations Environment Programme	*Our Planet*
VNPA	*Newsletter*
VNPA	*Park Watch*
Wilderness Society	*ACTWild*
Wilderness Society	*Wilderness News*

Reports

ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy	*Draft ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy documents for community comment*
Australian Nature Conservation Agency, Canberra	*An Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia*
Australian and NZ Environment & Conservation Council	*Maritime Accidents and Pollution: Impacts on the Marine Environment from Shipping Operations*
ANZECC-MCFFA	*The Development of Consistent Nationwide Baseline Environmental Standards for Native Forests*
Canberra Tourism Commission	*ACT Tourism Development Strategy*, Vols. 1 and 2
Commissioner for the Environment	*Draft ACT State of the Environment Report*
Dept of Environment, Sport and Territories	*Australia's Biodiversity—an overview of selected significant components*
House of Reps. Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts	*Inquiry into the proposal to drain and restore Lake Pedder*

A tour of African game parks

One thing we do not have to worry about in our national parks is damage by elephants. Where they are protected in some game parks in Africa, elephants are increasing in numbers and if left unchecked would completely change the vegetation. The dividing-up of the land into parks and non-parks has changed the animals' ability to move from one area to another and further management, such as the pumping of water from bores, is necessary to keep the animals alive in the dry season and to prevent them wandering out into farmland.

In April I had the opportunity to see some of these problems at first hand when I went on a tour organised by The Australian Museum Society and led by Tim Flannery, head of the mammal department at the museum and author of *The Future Eaters*.

As fast-moving, air-travelling tourists staying in five-star accommodation, we did our share of future eating but we also gave short-term assistance to the economies of Kenya, Zimbabwe and Botswana, and provided some return for their efforts at conservation.

In all we visited seven national parks or game reserves in the three countries so we built up quite a broad picture of the animals and conditions. The antelopes were beautiful and varied, from the deep-chested runners like the wildebeest and hartebeest to the more elegant, fuller-rumped jumpers like the impala and gazelles. They mostly just stood around grazing, although we occasionally saw a pair of bucks fighting. Zebras looked beautiful in their black and white stripes, but also just stood around grazing. Giraffes stooped to browse and we also saw a pair fighting, each swinging his head to hit the other's body with his horns. Lions we saw several times, but usually in a satisfied stupor. Hippos are half asleep by day, and we sighted a number of smaller mammals and birds. The elephants were easily the most fascinating because of the way they behaved to each other and, on occasion, to us.

The Masai Mara in southern Kenya has some steep hills and rolling, grassy plains. On our approach to the park, smoke was rising from several grass fires lit by the Masai and we found that the herds of herbivores were larger and more obvious outside the park where the Masai graze their cattle and burn off. We also discovered that April is not the recommended time for travelling through Kenya as it is the start of the long rains and after heavy showers roads become very slippery.

Further south, in Zimbabwe and Botswana, the rainy season had finished. With water widespread, however, and trees still holding their leaves, April here also has disadvantages for viewing animals but it is the time when young are around.

At Hwange in south-west Zimbabwe the wet season had been the poorest in 70 years and people were concerned for the fate of the young animals. Trees in the deciduous monsoon forests still held their leaves but there was some sign of colouring before leaves would be shed for the dry. The forest grows on sandhills from the Kalahari Desert and in places these Kalahari sands are 3000 feet deep. Here we saw how elephants can fell whole areas of trees or ringbark them, also with devastating effect.

Ivory Lodge, where we stayed, had a large waterhole and it was fascinating watching over 50 elephants at a time. Some would run in to have a splash then sample the saltlick. Others were more sedate. As in human families the babies hung around the mothers and the half-grown youngsters had mock battles.

Rains in Angola had been good and the great rivers flowing from there, the Okavango, Chobe and Zambesi, had plenty of water.

The locals aptly named Victoria Falls as The Smoke that Thunders; the spray is visible like a plume of smoke for many miles and tonnes of water thunder into the gorge. Here the Zambesi changes in just a few yards from a slow, wide stream to a rushing torrent in a narrow gorge several hundred feet below. Boating above the falls provides a dramatic contrast to white water rafting in the gorge. With the river high, the rush of water in the gorge produced waves more like a rough sea than a river and whirlpools swirled strongly then changed to welling-up places. We were told, however, that whitewater rafting is more exciting when the river is low and more rocks are visible and the likelihood of capsizing is quite high.

One of our most impressive viewings of elephants was on, or in, the Chobe River at Chobe National Park, Botswana, when a group of 10 elephants decided to return to high ground from the flat island where they had been grazing. They walked sedately into the river then went mad as they got out of their depth and hurriedly returned to the shallows. Then three set out again to swim by themselves while seven hung back. When swimming, elephants disappear completely between taking breaths then poke their heads out and wave their trunks around like snorkels. So up and down they went, across the river. The next six, perhaps younger and less experienced, seemed to need to keep in touch for reassurance and to build up courage before venturing out of their depth again. Eventually they crossed in a tight group. Meanwhile the tenth just wandered along the bank on its

own and crossed where it thought fit.

In the Okavango the water was still rising and here we found it a restful change to travel by boat to different islands and then walk. While walking you cannot get very close to game but in a different way you get a closer feel for it. We had done a couple of walks earlier in the trip. In Kenya we had three armed guards to protect us as we followed lion footprints along the road. At Ivory Lodge we went out with the manager armed with a shotgun and obediently froze absolutely still while the Cape buffalo pushed through the bush a few yards away, closer than the manager had intended, before smelling us and taking off. They are the most aggressive of the animals and most likely to cause injury. We also saw elephant footprints and followed a trail, probably made by a hyena dragging a kill.

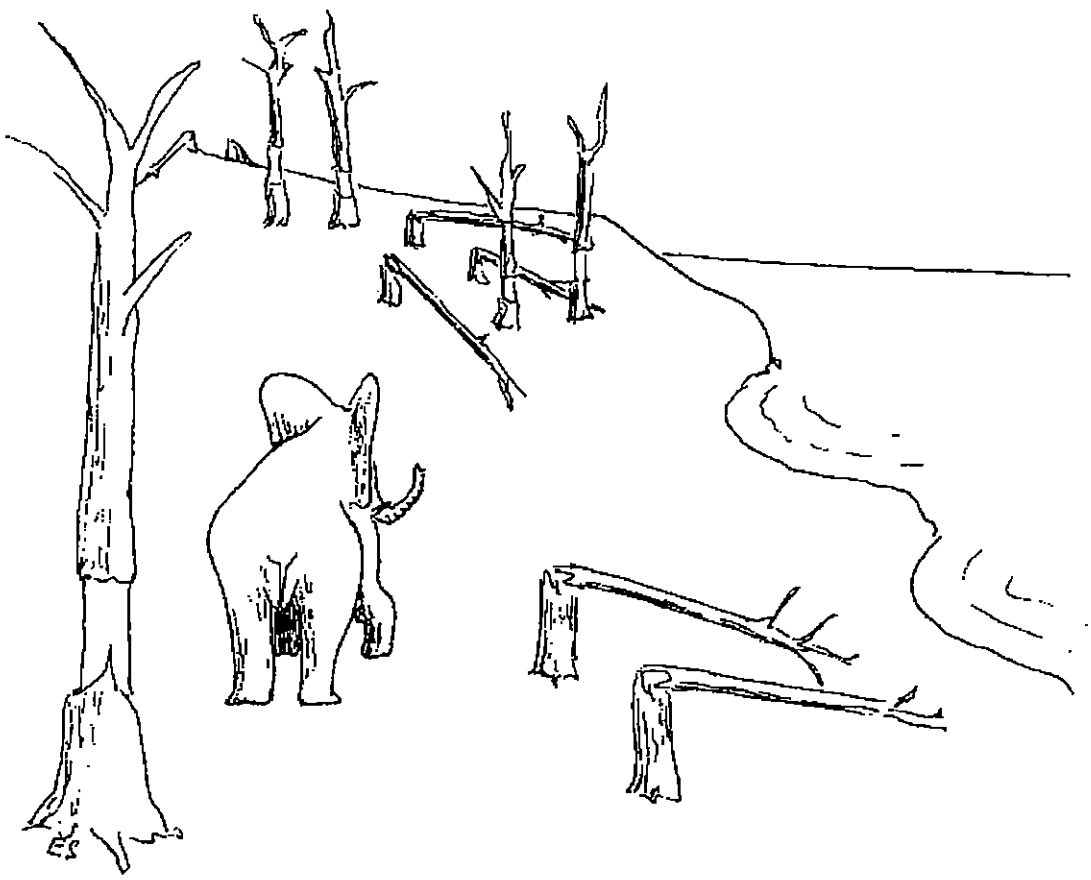
In the Okavango we enjoyed the waterscapes and looked from a distance but we also carefully circumvented a group of vultures and closed in eventually to find the very small remnants of a kill. We were also threatened by an elephant which fortunately was easily satisfied by our hasty retreat to the boat.

I have more animal stories, like the elephant at Ivory Lodge which drank from the swimming pool and delicately plucked seedlings from the garden in front of the bar, and the frog that wet itself when it saw a snake, and the elephant-sized dung beetles with their balls of dung larger than a golf ball, and human stories, too. The Kenyans were wonderfully welcoming and the waiters at Sianna Springs provided a memorable occasion as, dancing to drumbeats, they formed a procession to bring in a birthday cake. Africans and rhythm are natural partners.

Altogether it was a wonderful trip, but I did find myself looking forward to coming home and going out to see some kangaroos.

Eleanor Stodart

Thank heavens acclimatisation societies did not establish elephants around Australia last century. If they had, the rabbit problem would fade into insignificance...



Elephants at Daintree would put even the worst developers in the shade (or do I mean direct sun?).

Calendar

SEPTEMBER
Thursday 7 Committee meeting 7.30pm, for location contact Mike Smith, 286 2984(h)
Thursday 14 Namadgi Subcommittee 7.30pm, for location contact Steven Forst, 279 1326(w), 251 6817(h)
Thursday 28 Environment Subcommittee 7.45pm, for location contact Stephen Johnston, 254 3738(h)

OCTOBER
Thursday 5 Committee meeting 7.30pm, for location contact Clive Hurlstone, 288 7592(h)
Thursday 12 Namadgi Subcommittee 7.30pm, for location contact Steven Forst, 279 1326(w), 251 6817(h)
Monday 23 Outings meeting 7pm, contact Phil Bubb, 248 6769(h)
Thursday 26 Environment Subcommittee 7.45pm, for location contact Stephen Johnston, 254 3738(h)

NOVEMBER
Thursday 2 Committee meeting 7.30pm, for location contact Clive Hurlstone, 288 7592(h)
Thursday 9 Namadgi Subcommittee 7.30pm, for location contact Steven Forst, 279 1326(w), 251 6817(h)
Thursday 23 Environment Subcommittee 7.45pm, for location contact Stephen Johnston, 254 3738(h)

DECEMBER
Thursday 7 Committee meeting 7.30pm, for location contact Eleanor Stodart, 281 5004(h)

NPA Bulletin

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SURFACE MAIL

General meetings

Held at 8pm, Room 1, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, Civic

Thursday 21 September: Glaciation in the Snowy Mountains
Bob Galloway will speak on this area of unique interest—the only part of mainland Australia which shows evidence of being glaciated some 10 000 years ago.

Thursday 19 October: Raptors in the ACT
Jerry Olsen began an association with eagles 25 years ago when he was involved with a search for missing men in the Yukon which was helped by eagles. His interest has continued ever since. Jerry has recently published *Some Time with Eagles and Falcons*, which will be on sale after his talk.

Thursday 16 November: Bushwalking in northern and central Australia
This year several of our members have spent quite some time in Kakadu, the Kimberleys, the Bungle Bungles and the Macdonnell Ranges. Tonight we will share their slides and experiences.

Sunday 10 December: NPA Christmas Party, 3pm
Meet at Orroral Valley picnic area for the annual NPA Christmas get-together. Members and friends welcome. Bring a picnic tea.