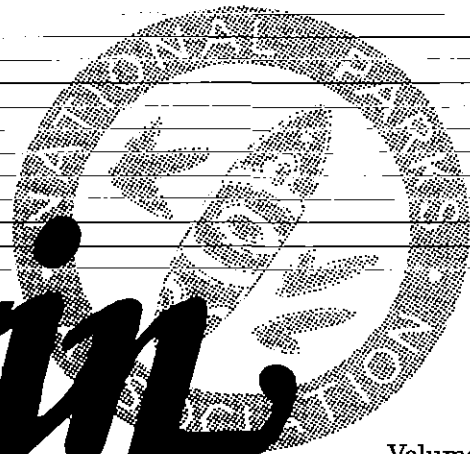


NPA Bulletin



Volume 33 number 3
September 1996

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION FACT INCORPORATED



Use of fire by Aboriginal people

Results of member survey

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Cover photo

Stephen Johnston points to Urambi trig, 15 km distant, on his walk from Mt Stromlo. The Murrumbidgee River and the Bullen Range are in the middle distance. Photo by Reg Alder.

National Parks Association (ACT) Incorporated

Inaugurated 1960

Aims and objectives 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 landuse to achieve conservation.

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Concession \$10

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1 January and 31 March—half specified rate

1 April and 30 June—annual subscription

Membership inquiries welcome

Please phone the NPA office.

The NPA (ACT) office is located in Maclaurin Cres, Chifley. Office hours are:

10am to 2pm Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays

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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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President's foreword

My most important and most pleasant duty is to thank all members who responded so generously to our appeal for funds. Every year some members make a monetary contribution, particularly those who are not able to give of their time, but this year, in response to our special appeal, members have contributed over \$4000 to date. From the donor viewpoint this is quite a large sum, particularly in Canberra's uncertain economic climate, but unfortunately that same uncertain economic climate makes our call for donations an essential part of our aim to protect natural areas.

For the 1995-96 financial year, NPA recorded a loss of \$8000, even with the good response to the appeal, and for 1996-97 we anticipate an even bigger loss. We have the reserves to carry these losses temporarily while we are responding to draft management plans for ACT parks, but we need to work at increasing our income to turn our balance of payments around and then to replenish the reserves. Increasing membership numbers will be a necessary basis for increasing income.

A second pleasant duty is to thank members for returning the survey form. We had a very good response, and you will find a summary of the results on page 4. One significant finding is that most members learned about NPA from friends. That throws the main thrust of our membership drive into your court! If each member could bring in one new member we would double our membership.

Work on rehabilitation of the Boboyan Pines area continues. Our response to Parks and Conservation's proposal should have been returned by the time this *Bulletin* is out. At the last work party at Namadgi, members marked rabbit warrens within wooded areas around the Gudgenby valley so that the warren destruction teams will be able to find them quickly and efficiently. This work party saw a demonstration of warren destruction

techniques and the formulation of a procedure to prevent damage to Aboriginal cultural sites.

The most urgent action by committee members in the last quarter occurred in response to the grading of tracks on O'Connor Ridge to form full-scale roads with potential for erosion of the gutters. Some upkeep of fire trails is obviously necessary, but this work seemed to be particularly out of sympathy with the area, and out of sympathy with the O'Connor Ridge Park Care Group. However, as a result we did have the opportunity to comment on maintenance plans for other parts of Canberra Nature Park and we have made contact with park care groups, which should help in the future.

We have received a copy of the government's response to the Legislative Assembly's inquiry into the expansion of nature-based tourism in the ACT. It is a relief to see government agreement on some of the points that NPA put forward, particularly that 'ecological attractions should receive a higher profile and take into account the needs of conservation as well as tourism' with the government stating that a key element of its 'approach to raising the profile of the bush parks has been a continuing commitment to conservation of these areas'.

The ACT Government has received an award from the World Wide Fund for Nature for the Best New Reserve for 1995 for the native grassland reserve on the former site of the Gungahlin town centre, and at the presentation Kate Carnell promised to do better next year. However, the WWF's report card for the ACT noted the downgrading of services to the parks, which is something we are all too aware of. However much we applaud new reserves, we know that they cannot be effective if not given adequate resources, as the unsupervised grading of tracks on O'Connor Ridge and ploughing of grassland at Gungahlin demonstrate.

Eleanor Stodart

Who'll be Father Christmas?

When several members of the committee met recently to discuss the NPA's 1996-97 budget, they considered various ideas for raising funds.

Ever since voluntary community organisations first began, people have been trying to work out ways of raising the most funds with the least effort. Raffles, cake stalls and chocolate drives have a long history in this regard and still seem to have many dedicated and relentless supporters; but we thought that they might have less appeal to the thrifty and diet-conscious members of the NPA. Two other activities were suggested: an auction of donated outdoor and bushwalking gear, perhaps at the NPA's Christmas general meeting; and a quiz trivia night, perhaps at another general meeting. These were seen as being more relevant to cravings for the bush and wild intellectual excitement evident from our recent survey of members.

As much of the work already involved in running the NPA - apparent from the pages of this *Bulletin* - falls to a fairly small number of people, we are asking a few other members to offer their help by organising these fund-raising functions for the NPA during the next 12 months.

So how about it?

Please ring Diane on 282 5813 with your ideas and offer to organise a fund-raising function for the NPA and a member of the committee will get in touch with you to discuss details.

Results of the member survey

We were very pleased with the response to the survey and thank those members who took the time to return the form. In a voluntary organisation, satisfying members' needs usually depends on other members giving their time and knowledge. A first step is to identify the needs. The response to the survey has confirmed to the committee that the effort in preparing the *Bulletin*, for example, is well worthwhile, but that we should be trying to provide a greater variety of outings.

Over 90 forms have been returned. Roughly equal numbers of men and women responded. Probably not surprisingly, the 41-65 age group was by far the largest, with the over 65s next. The result confirms that NPA needs to attract and hold younger people if it is to maintain its strength.

Most people who remembered how they heard about NPA were introduced by friends. A significant

number heard about it through other clubs or through displays such as at ACT Alive. This shows that the committee's ability to increase our membership is limited - it is up to each and every member to encourage their friends to become involved. If every member could bring in one new member we would double our membership!

There were a range of reasons for joining the NPA, from predominantly to participate socially, to learning and voicing concern about conservation issues.

Reading the *Bulletin* is the most important way in which people take part in NPA. Although more people value the outings above the *Bulletin*, far more read the *Bulletin* than participate in other activities. Those who do not manage to attend outings or meetings overwhelmingly said that the main problem was a lack of time, but we evidently need to try and run a greater variety of outings with more easy and short

walks, but also more challenging walks and particularly more walks with information about plants, animals or geology. And we evidently need to make more of an effort to welcome new members. This effort needs to be made by all members, particularly at meetings when committee members can be tied down by the need to look after the speaker or make certain contacts.

Just over half of the respondents would participate in outings which include children. Slightly fewer were interested in including teenagers. A most effective way of catering for children would be through people with children offering to lead suitable outings.

There was broad support for a special event for new members, most supporting the idea of a special outing rather than a special evening. *New members would be made to feel welcome on any outing, of course, but special outings may help people*

continued overleaf

A day at the NPA office

Over the past few months, getting used to the routine of the office has been an interesting task. Getting used to the variety of phone calls received has been another. Here are just a few of the various requests for information received.

- Membership enquiries over the past three months have numbered in the vicinity of 30 to 40, most people being interested in the Outings Program.
- Nine requests for assistance associated with injured creatures including magpies, cockatoos, galahs, rosellas.
- Requests to remove possums from inside roofs of houses.
- Information regarding a national park somewhere, possibly not in Australia, because I could not even pronounce its name.

Another related to national parks in the US.

- One caller made four attempts to contact the office regarding ranger-guided walks. When I returned her call it concluded with an enthusiastic new member.
- Too many requests to count in relation to national park entry permits, especially Kosciusko NP.
- A request to find the ID tag number for a stray dog. The young caller was upset, mainly because her mother would not let her keep it.
- Apparently some of the trails through Canberra nature parks have had wooden barriers erected without signage. A keen cyclist was not impressed when he was confronted with one.
- Requests for maps of various nat-

ional parks throughout Australia.

- Regulations and conditions pertaining to Perisher Valley.
- School holiday program for children.
- Information as to whether the gate to Cooleman Homestead was closed.
- A request for a kangaroo culling licence.

As the NPA is obviously providing a good referral service for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, a service fee could be levied on these organisations. It would certainly save many people numerous phone calls. (I'm only joking, of course!)

Dianne Bostjancic

ACT weed survey

An Environmental Weed Survey of the Australian Capital Territory, Berry S and Mulvaney M (A report prepared for the Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra. 2 volumes. August 1995.)

This survey was funded by a grant to the council from the Save the Bush Scheme, and is viewed by the council as 'a key piece of research in the protection of our natural ecosystems against threats to their integrity and as a baseline for further research'.

Volume 1 lists the aims of the survey as being to identify weeds currently degrading natural lands in the ACT; to identify species; to survey and map the weeds and natural plant communities most at risk; to rank weeds and to identify species for action; to secure a baseline for management strategies and measurement purposes.

Use was made of the 167 cells into which the Territory was divided for the *Bird Atlas of the ACT*. Data was obtained from field surveys, published papers, herbarium collections, individuals and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Records span the years 1929 to 1995.

The greatest alien species diversity occurs in urban areas – parks, gardens, paddocks, road verges and natural areas. Altogether 10 904 records of the 532 introduced species that have established in the Territory's natural vegetation were collected and collated. The most dominant by significance are:

Hypericum perforatum (St Johns Wort) 80 grid cells, *Phalaris aquatica* (Toowoomba Canary Grass) 76 cells, *Pyracantha angustifolia* (Firethorn), *Rubus fruticosus* (Blackberry) 53 cells, *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle), *Rosa rubiginosa* (Briar Rose) 117 cells, *Salix* (Willow).

The most widespread weeds were: *Hypochaeris radicata* (Catsear) 151 grid cells, *Cirsium vulgare* (Spear Thistle) 125 cells, *Rosa rubiginosa* (Briar Rose) 117 cells, *Rumex acetosella* (Sorrel) 110 cells.

This volume explores control measures and notes that education is needed as prevention is better than control. People need to be able to recognise which plants are in fact weeds and the potential risk to the environment of introducing some plant species.

Many ornamental plants currently sold by nurseries put our environment at risk.

Volume 2 consists of eight appendices. Appendix 2 gives ecological descriptions of ACT weeds and for each weed lists family, origin, reason for introduction, dispersal methods, reproduction, description, distribution (some with grid maps), invasive records elsewhere, impact and recommended control measures.

Appendix 6a is a record of species found in each of the 167 grid cells. Appendix 6b lists each weed alphabetically and the cells in which each is found.

Other appendices list sources, data forms, dominant species, significant sites and reserves, and species which have naturalised in areas with a similar climate to the ACT.

This most comprehensive reference book provides the much needed database from which future weed strategies can be developed. The Weed Description appendix is worthy of publication in a coloured format although the 300 pages would need to be condensed considerably for a manageable pocket identification guide.

Beverley Hammond

Results of the member survey *continued from previous page*

feel at ease and encourage them to try other outings.

People are obviously very happy with the *Bulletin*. There were far more requests for more of everything than for less. Even members' outings, where opinion was most divided, drew more requests for more (18) than for less (15 less plus 2 omit). One question we did not ask was how much people would be prepared to pay to retain the *Bulletin*. It has been subsidised by the ACT Government during the past few years on the basis that it educates the community about heritage and

environment. We have been told that this subsidy is not likely to continue. We have started running advertisements but they will not make a significant difference. The least painful way of covering costs would be to double the number of members; more painful would be to increase the annual subscription or reduce the size or frequency of the *Bulletin*. As the *Bulletin* is so important to members, reducing it will definitely be a last resort. So bring in those new members!

Most members feel that lobbying is adequate, although many do not

know enough about the NPA's lobbying effort. Almost half feel that our exposure in the media is inadequate.

The space for 'other' comments led to a wide range of suggestions, which are difficult to group, but several support conclusions reached from answers to other questions, such as the need for a wider range of outings.

Thank you again, all who responded.

Eleanor Stodart

NPA responds to Boboyan rehabilitation

Dear Ms Garrood,

Thank you for inviting the NPA to comment on the draft 'Recommendations for Rehabilitation of Boboyan Pines' (your letter of 21 December 1995). As you know, the NPA has been arguing for some time that the pine plantation should be removed and the area planted to native vegetation. We are therefore pleased to see that action is now being taken to this end, a little earlier than envisaged in the 1996 Namadgi Management Plan.

In responding to your letter, we have also taken account of information you and other officers of the Parks and Conservation Service have provided to the NPA since you first wrote to us (including the briefing you provided about the rehabilitation project at a recent general meeting of the NPA).

We comment in this letter on what we see as the more important issues in the rehabilitation project (henceforth referred to simply as 'the project'). Comments on each of the draft recommendations and other matters in your Recommendations paper are in an attachment.

Our main concerns at this stage in the development of the project relate to its management, planning and funding. We think that as ACT Forests established and managed the Boboyan Pine plantation, it should have more responsibility in the rehabilitation project, and accountability for its eventual outcome. This would be more consistent with principles of responsibility and accountability generally espoused by the ACT (and other) governments for managing public assets and services.

It should also have some practical advantage for both ACT Forests and the Parks and Conservation Service. As a professional forest manager, ACT Forests stands to benefit most from the lessons to be learned from a failed forest plantation; and if the responsibility which

the Parks and Conservation Service presently seems to carry for the project is reduced, it should be able to focus more on its primary task of park management.

The NPA is concerned about the extent to which, under the present division of responsibilities for the project, scarce management and other resources in the Parks and Conservation Service, and particularly in Namadgi Park, will be diverted to deal with what seems to be essentially a forestry task. It is also concerned about how, under the present division of responsibilities, shorter and longer term objectives in the project will be reconciled. For example, will the rate of clearing of the pines be determined mainly by what is the best rate for logging operations, or for the subsequent processes of rehabilitation? The NPA is also concerned about what it perceives as insufficient planning for the project.

While your Recommendations paper is impressive for its detail and discussion of various aspects of the project, it is not a project management plan: it does not have targets for stages in the project, it does not indicate how expenditure will be phased, and it does not state how progress will be monitored and judged. For a task which you rightly describe as 'an enormous one, encountering a wide range of uncertainties and complexities', with expenditure that seems likely to exceed \$500 000, we think that application of standard techniques of project management could greatly benefit overall management of the project.

A project management plan, that takes account of relevant guidelines in the Namadgi Management Plan and other general strategies for pest and weed control, fire management and so on, should help to integrate systematically all the numerous activities involved in the project. We think that the uncertainties and

complexities of the project reinforce the need for the discipline of planning, even though they may lead to frequent reviews of plans as the project progresses.

Our third main concern, related to the previous ones, is about funds for the project. We think it is important, particularly in this time of tight budgets, to try to make a realistic estimate of the total costs of the project under various scenarios (eg. under faster or slower time for completion, with more or less help from volunteer labour). Together with a more disciplined approach to planning of the project, this could help to ensure that the funds which are needed are provided when they are needed, for the most efficient completion of the project. We appreciate the way you have consulted with the NPA on this project, and other issues of mutual interest which have recently arisen. I hope that we will continue to have an opportunity to contribute in this way towards our joint goals of improving the ACT environment.

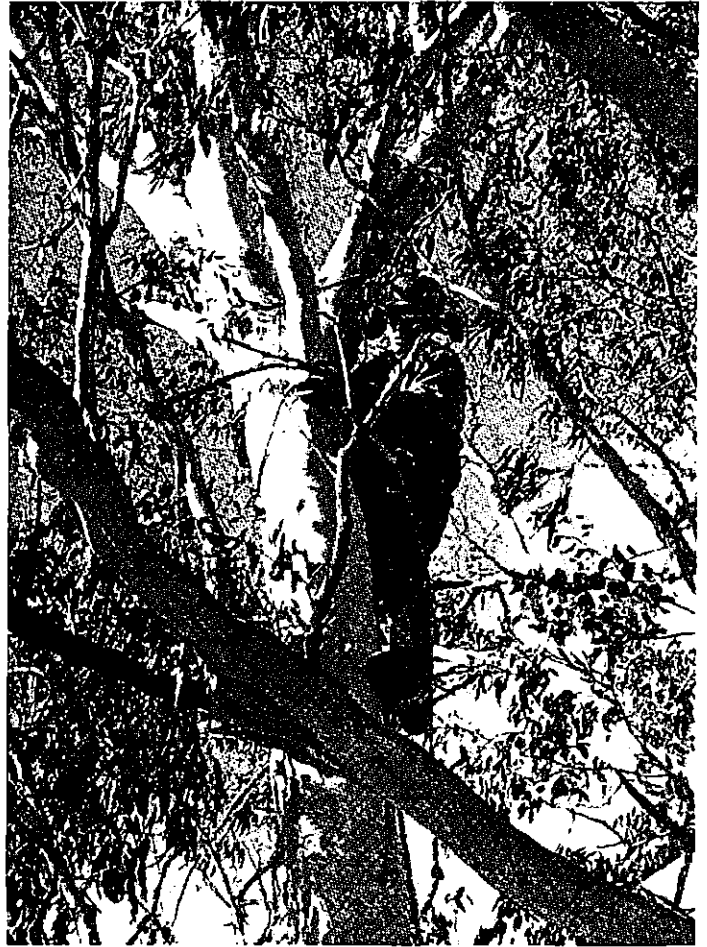
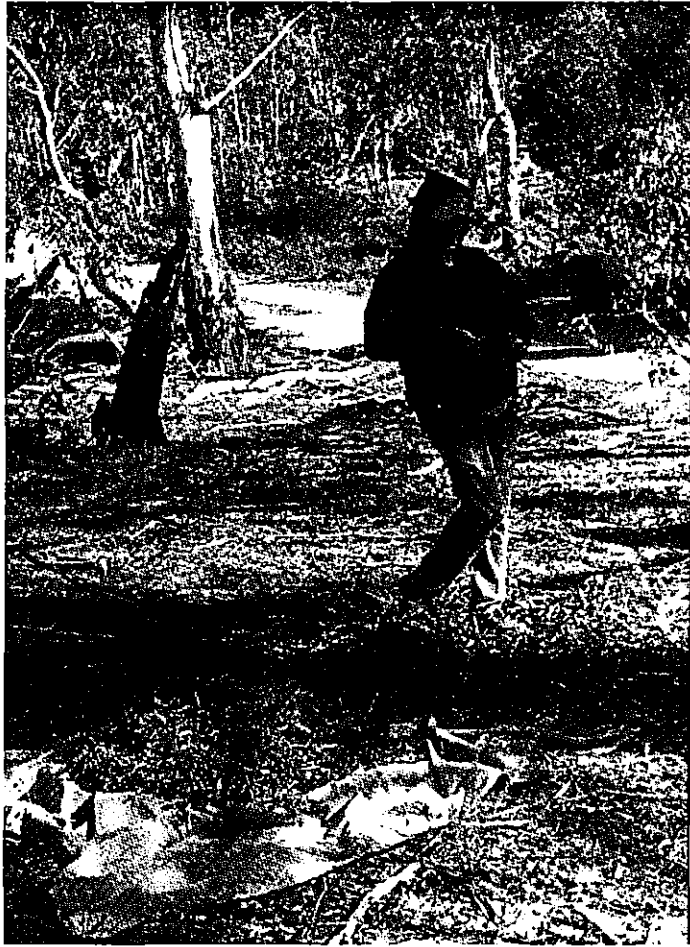
Yours sincerely
Eleanor Stodart
President

Christmas party

A date for your diary

December 8

Christmas party at Nil Desperandum, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Share the wonderful views, and conviviality, and have the opportunity to buy some unique collector's items or enjoy assisting others' enthusiasm.



Seed collecting for restoration of Boboyan pine plantation. Left: 'the clipper', right: 'the climber'. Photos by Reg Alder.

Red spot?

Does your NPA *Bulletin* have a red spot on the address label.

If it does, this will be the last *Bulletin* you receive until you re-new your membership.

If you have already paid and have a red spot, please contact Dianne in the office on 282 5813.

WANTED

New members

The membership form enclosed with this issue is to help members approach interested friends.

You can use it for your own renewal if you have lost the other form, but please don't forget to encourage others to join.

Green Up Day - 15 September 1996

This is the inaugural year for Green Up Day. It is designed to encourage people not already involved in environmental activities to join a group or, at least, to become aware of what is happening and what needs to be done. The full list of activities will be displayed at Woden Plaza, or phone 288 7536 nearer the date.

NPA and Green Up Day

Walk in and around the Boboyan Pine Plantation in Namadgi National Park, to raise awareness of the size of the rehabilitation program needed. Walk to be led by Frank Clements. Anyone interested please call Frank on 231 7005.

Have you seen any fox dens lately?

If you have seen any fox dens in the cleared areas and bordering woodland in the Orroral Valley or at Glendale Crossing, in the Boboyan Pines area from the locked carpark to the fence at Sheep Station Creek, or within five kilometres of the Mt Clear campground, please notify the office so that we can collate the information and pass it on to the Parks and Conservation Service.

Parks and Conservation are monitoring the effect of the outbreak of rabbit calicivirus on rabbit numbers and on predators and alternative prey species at the above sites. NPA members who often walk in Namadgi may discover active fox dens. Passing on this information will assist the monitoring.

Canberra Nature Park

This is an edited version of an address given to the June General Meeting by Odile Arman, Manager, Canberra Nature Park.

Canberra Nature Park is one of five parks/reserves that are managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. As a backdrop to the national capital, the park comprises 24 nature reserves (approx. 6000 hectares) located throughout the urban area of Canberra. These reserves provide corridors for the movement of wildlife to other areas of habitat beyond the urban area.

The management philosophy is to retain the undeveloped character and encourage natural rehabilitation. The reserves range from near natural to significantly modified. The significant natural features include open forest, woodland, grassland and wetlands. Some of these features are habitats for threatened plant and animal species. Other significant features include geological, Aboriginal and historical sites, some of which are listed on the Register of the National Estate.

The close proximity of Canberra Nature Park to the urban area provides excellent opportunities for recreation, scientific research, interpretation and education. An increased awareness and appreciation by the community of the park's features and values will assist management of such a valuable resource.

There are many management issues, some of which are addressed here.

One issue that has received considerable attention in recent times is fire management. A fuel management plan has been prepared and is due to be released for public comment in December. Because Canberra Nature Park is on the urban interface with approximately 6000 residences backing on to the reserve, fire management, including the protection of life and property, is an important issue. The high incidence of fires is usually the result of human activity, either deliberate or accidental. It is not unusual to have 200 fires in a season and their frequent occurrence can affect the sur-

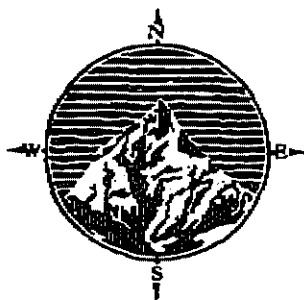
vival or alter the ecology of populations. A series of protective measures are carried out including maintenance of fire access, fire-breaks and strategic fuel reduction in forest areas. An extensive mowing program is undertaken to reduce fire hazards adjacent to the suburban fringe. Community participation is also encouraged to reduce these fire hazards. In addition, ecological burns are carried out where appropriate.

Another recent development is the inclusion of grassland conservation areas into Canberra Nature Park. These reserves in Gungahlin are 500 hectares in total. They are important because, nationally, grasslands are considered to be a threatened community. They are also the habitat for threatened species including the striped legless lizard and the golden sun moth. The proposed Gungahlin town centre was relocated in order to protect the legless lizard and its habitat. This achievement has resulted in the conservation area being nominated by the ACT Government to the World Wide Fund for Nature as the 'reserve of the year'. It is important to understand possible ecological responses to potential management practices in the grassland conservation areas. Little is known about the biology and habitat requirements of the legless lizard. A management strategy is required to address issues such as fire management, weed control, recreational use of the areas, and raising community awareness.

An ongoing issue in Canberra Nature Park is the management of weeds. Occurrences are many and varied, and so are the causes. The vigorous nature of weeds results in native species being replaced and habitats being altered. Every year a considerable amount of money is spent on weed control and the control program is very long term. *Weed control is done by Canberra Nature Park staff, park care groups,*

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Community interest in Canberra Nature Park is very high and to facilitate participation in management Park Care was established in 1989. To date there are 12 park care groups and in the 1994-95 financial year 3280 volunteer hours were recorded, without including additional hours for meetings and planning activities. Park care groups have been involved in woody and annual weed control, seed collection from local native species, propagating and planting, field survey and mapping and soil conservation works. Mt Painter has been nominated and endorsed as a Clean Up Australia 2001 project. It meets the program objectives because it is a degraded site that requires rehabilitation, it is a long-term project requiring extensive hands-on work, and there is strong community interest and willingness to participate. The primary objective for Mt Painter is to rehabilitate and restore the natural habitat through a series of projects including weed control, tree planting and gully erosion stabilisation. The project is a partnership between ACT Parks and Conservation Service, the Friends of Mt Painter and other community groups. Alternative sources of funding are being sought through sponsorship, with some success. The project is an excellent example of how government and the community can work together to achieve a common goal.

Another community group that Canberra Nature Park works closely with is the Wildlife Foundation. Orphaned, sick and injured wildlife are given to carers for rehabilitation and eventual release back into the wild.

A ranger is on call 24 hours per day to respond to urgent wildlife calls and provide advice on a range of wildlife matters. Snakes in the backyard, swooping magpies, possums in chimneys and kangaroos hit by vehicles are some of the problems to be solved.

Liaison with other agencies and developers is time consuming but necessary to ensure that appropriate practices are carried out in the planning stages and when undertaking works in or adjacent to Canberra Na-

ture Park. There are a number of agencies that have infrastructure in the reserves including reservoirs, power lines, stormwater drains and mobile telephone installations. Damage caused by activities associated with this infrastructure includes the scouring of gullies as a result of discharging water from reservoirs, dumping of waste materials, stockpiling and trail damage. ACTEW, in cooperation with Canberra Nature Park and Coleman Ridge Park Care Group, is currently restoring a badly eroded gully caused by discharging water from a reservoir on Coleman Ridge. The work is being funded by ACTEW and marks a turning point. This is the first of a series of gullies to be restored by ACTEW.

There are many other management issues associated with Canberra Nature Park including the following: recreational user conflicts, in particular mountain bikes and horse-riding; overuse of areas resulting in compaction, loss of vegetation and erosion; illegal access; vandalism; graffiti; exotic vertebrates including foxes, rabbits, birds and dogs; illegal dumping, particularly since tip fees were introduced; littering, which is present in the most accessible areas; and continued urban expansion with its associated impacts. Canberra Nature Park continues to grow, without additional resources such as staffing and funding to manage these extensions. As a result of shrinking budgets, other avenues of revenue such as fee-for-service are being investigated.

The Canberra Nature Park Draft Plan of Management addresses the full range of issues and provides for a management framework. In April, the draft plan was sent out to agencies for comment and these comments are currently being incorporated. The revised draft plan will be released for public comment by the end of 1996.

Odile's clear presentation was illustrated with well-chosen slides and at the conclusion of her talk those members present at the meeting had a very detailed understanding of Canberra Nature Park.

Len Haskew

New members events

Following the suggestions made in the recent questionnaire, the Committee is organising the following activities, particularly for new members.

Both events are also listed in the outings program.

Walk and barbecue

On Saturday 12 October 1996 the committee will be holding a special event to welcome new members. We will meet at the Molonglo Gorge car park at 9.30 am for a walk to Blue Tiles and return to the car park for a barbecue lunch. This is an easy short walk of approx. six kilometres and suitable for children. The committee hopes that 'old' members will join in the occasion to welcome newcomers. Everyone attending is asked to bring their own food and drinks.

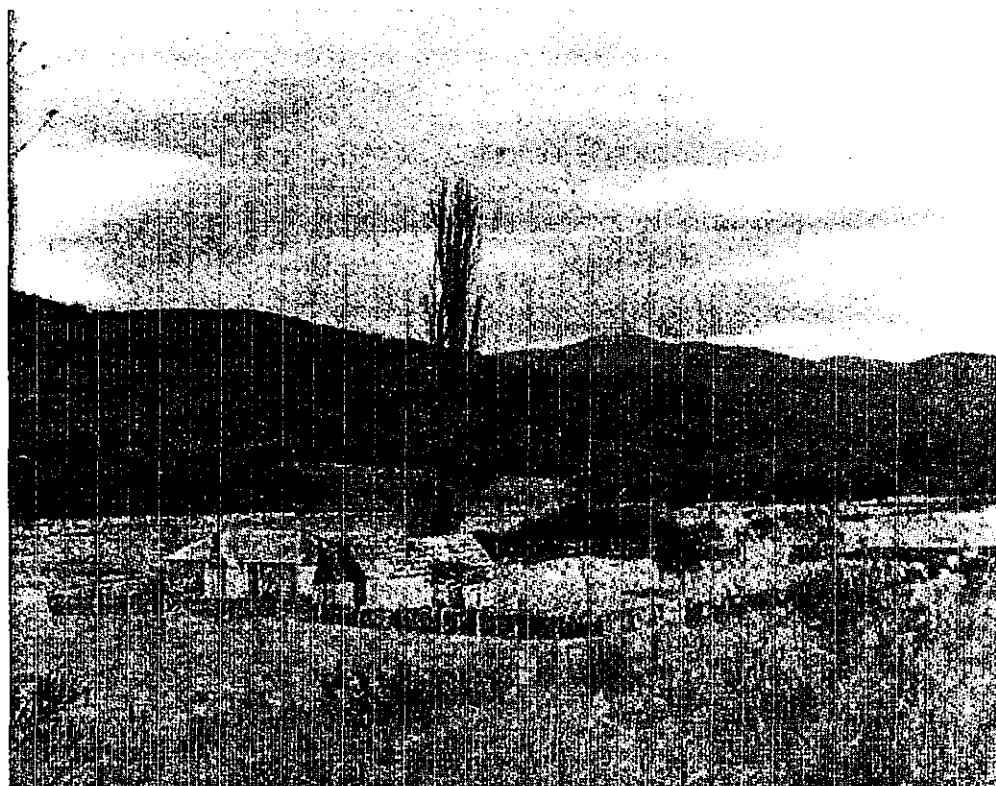
Beginners pack walk

On the weekend of 30 November-1 December the Walks Subcommittee will arrange a beginners pack walk from Smokers Gap to Orrrorral Valley. This is an easy short walk of about 10 kilometres each day. This walk is for people who wish to try pack walking but are unsure of where to start, what equipment is needed, etc. If you are interested in this aspect of walking then contact the leader as soon as possible. The subcommittee will arrange the loan of gear including tents, sleeping bags, rucksacks and cooking stoves, and will provide advice on packing and setting up tents etc. This is a short walk and would be suitable for children from, say, eight years of age. Why not make it a family occasion?

Photo album



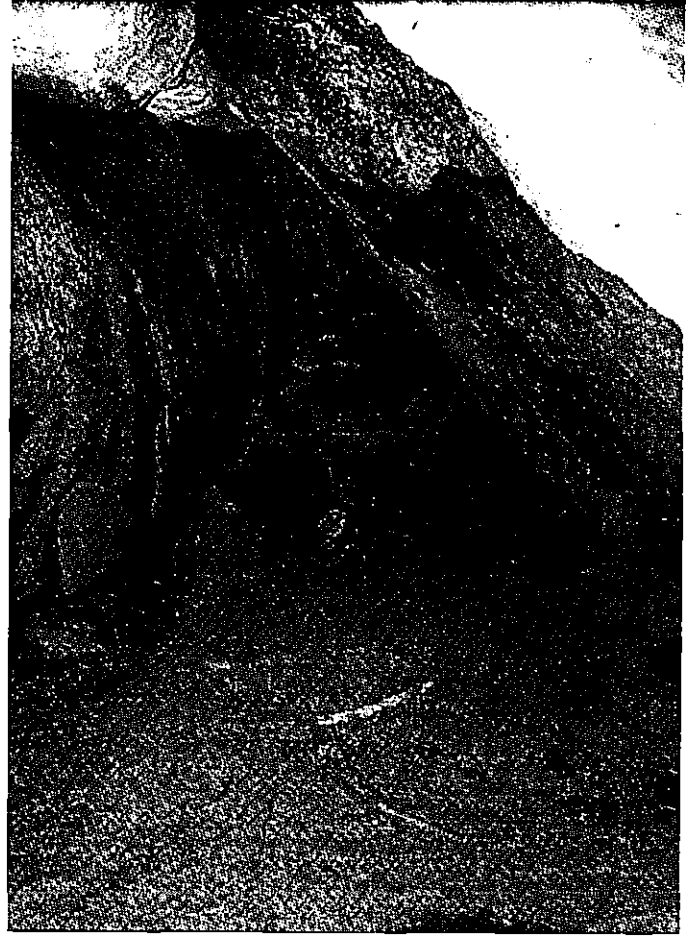
Left: Joan and Phoebe preparing to walk through a gap in the rocks on the Nursery Creek area walk. Above: Precarious looking rocks nearby. NPA walk led by Martin Chalk. Photos by P. Bischoff.



Left: In the March Bulletin an Australian Archives photo of the Cotter Homestead was reproduced. This photomontage shows the 1912 homestead complex superimposed on a 1996 background. The regrowth of trees on the immediate foothills becomes readily apparent when compared with the earlier photo. The position of the homestead buildings was located by divining and observation, the site outlined with paper strips and photographed. The optimum position for the camera could not be located because of trees on the slope. However, for practical purposes, the buildings are nearly located correctly against the background. Photo by Australian Archives and Reg Alder.



Above left: Inaugural walkers on the newly opened Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail. Photo by Len Haskew.



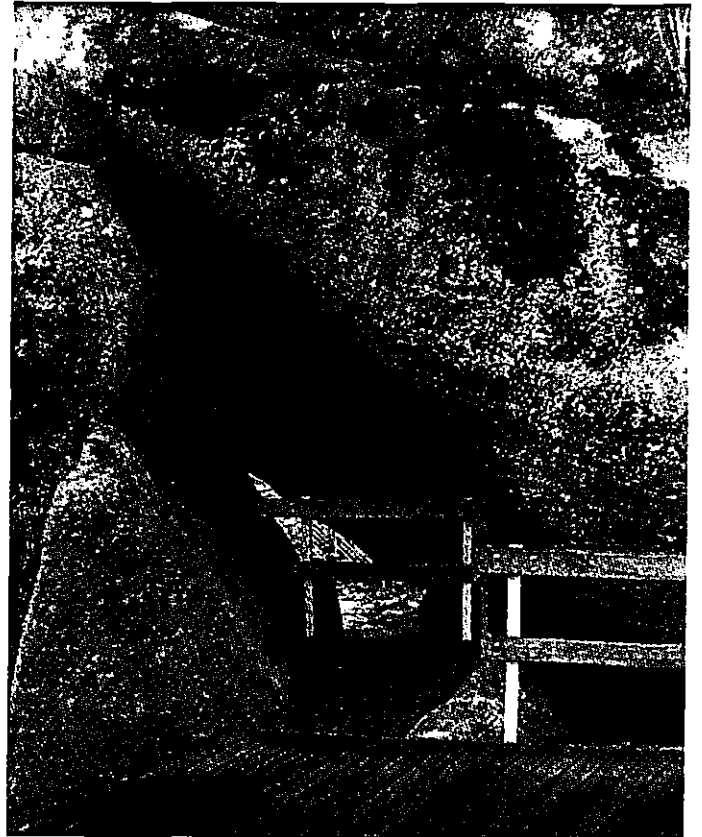
Above right: Inside the recently located rock shelter in Namadgi National Park. The floor has an area of 18 square metres. Some tool flakes were found there which suggests that it may have been occupied by Aboriginal people. Rocks at either end provide protection from the wind. Right: The viewing platform at the Birrigai rock shelter, a point on the Birrigai time trail.

Photos by Reg Alder.

Oral History on the Australian Alps

The NPA office has received a complimentary copy of the recently completed *Bibliography of Oral History on the Australian Alps*. Compiled by Sue Hodges for the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, it contains the most complete record to date of oral histories obtained from people who have an association with the Australian Alps.

Copies can be obtained for \$20.00 each plus \$2.00 postage from the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, PO Box 20 Bright Victoria 3741.



PARKWATCH

Wetlands - important places

Canberrans are fortunate to have wetlands within their city. Jerrabomberra Wetlands, part of Canberra Nature Park, is the largest and most important wetland in the ACT. Jerrabomberra Wetlands is important on a regional, national and international scale. It provides a safe refuge for the waterbirds of Lake Burley Griffin, as well as for visitors and nomadic birds from elsewhere in Australia. Numerous species from the northern hemisphere visit Australia's wetlands each year to escape the northern winter. Of these, the small wader, Latham's snipe, is a regular visitor to Jerrabomberra during summer and spring. It comes from China and Japan.

The Scribbly Gum, Canberra Nature Park volunteer magazine, Autumn 1996A

Of blackberries and bunnies

Blackberries along the Snowy River have taken a battering in an aerial bombardment. Ranger Andrew Harrigan said infestations along a 40-kilometre stretch of the river in the remote and inaccessible Byadbo wilderness area were successfully sprayed from a helicopter in just two days.

While the release of the rabbit calicivirus has been eagerly awaited around the country, Kosciusko National Park rangers and field staff have been burning the midnight oil in spotlighting programs in the national park and Ulandra Nature Reserve. According to pest species coordinator Russel Knutson, the aim of the spotlight surveys is to establish baseline data on rabbits and other wildlife prior to arrival of the virus.

Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter, April 1996

Lamington by any other name

The local council considered the suggestion that the name of Lamington National Park be changed to Woonoongera National Park after a mountain in the area, in accordance with a preference of Romeo Lahey's for local names. The council discussed this in some detail but felt that Lamington National Park was known Australia-wide as well as internationally and that the change would be inappropriate after 80 years.

NPA News, National Parks of Queensland journal, June 1996

A case of not seeing the biodiversity for the cute and cuddly

Normally when an introduced animal is causing serious environmental damage, whether or not to control its population is not an issue. Not so with the koala on Kangaroo Island. The media frenzy over the issue of koala control is both remarkable and disappointing. The most disappointing feature of the koala issue is the massive media and public interest it has aroused. Many species of plants and animals are disappearing in South Australia. Some of these are found nowhere else in the world. South Australia is in the midst of an extinction crisis yet the major environmental stories of the year will be about litter, waste disposal, rabbit calicivirus and the koala. These are negligible or secondary issues as far as nature conservation is concerned. How can we get the public and media excited about the big conservation issues - vegetation clearance, environmental weeds, endangered species, creating a comprehensive parks system and threatened habitat management?

Xanthopus, the journal of the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, April 1996

No peaceful co-existence for dugongs and marinas

The presence of dugongs was one of the values for which the Great Barrier Reef was listed for World Heritage. The southern section of the Great Barrier Reef includes the Hinchinbrook area, which has already been identified as the critical area for the survival of this threatened sea mammal. (The death rate of dugongs in the area of the Great Barrier Reef between Cairns and Gladstone has now exceeded their reproductive capability. Numbers have fallen 50-80 per cent in the last eight years.) Keith Williams' tourist resort and marina proposal for Oyster Point means a 1000 per cent increase in boating activity in the World Heritage Hinchinbrook Channel. Boat strike, loss of sea grass and feeding disturbance in this major and vital habitat will sound the death knell for the Hinchinbrook dugongs. They can only survive if their feeding grounds remain free of boating disturbance - even the sound of a propeller a kilometre away is a major disturbance for these shy and sensitive creatures.

Media release, North Queensland Conservation Council Inc., April 1996

No mines!

The re-emergence of proposals to expand mining in Kakadu National Park raises the whole issue of why we have parks and why some uses are incompatible with them. All these parks have been created because of their high environmental, landscape, wilderness or other values. Such values are generally irreplaceable. Reasons for rejecting mining in national parks include:

- A strong community expectation that these parks be protected from any activity that could damage or degrade their values in any way.
- Whilst the mining industry had,

NPA outings program

September–December 1996

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.

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.

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.



September Saturday walk

Brandy Flat and beyond

Ref: Michelago 1:25

Leader: Colin McAlister

Phone: 288 4171

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8.30am. A pleasant 10 km walk on fire trails from Gudgenby back to Glendale with lunch at Brandy Flat hut. Fine views of both the Booth and Billy Ranges. An initial descent followed by a steep climb, but thereafter fairly easy walking. Suitable for beginners. Car shuffle involved. 90 km, \$18 per car.

Note: this walk replaces the one to Bushfold Flats shown in the previous program. The Bushfold Flats walk has been rescheduled to 15 December (see below).

5–7 October long weekend pack walk

2/C/D/E

Talaterang

Reference: CMW Budawangs

Leader: Steven Forst

Phone: 251 6817 (h), 279 1326 (w)

Contact leader before Thursday 3 October. After a long drive with stops at Fitzroy Falls and Cambewarra Mountain, an easy two and a half hour walk to camp at the top of Ngaitjung Falls – a spectacular spot with views into Pigeon House Gorge. Next day walk to Mt Talaterang without packs, returning to campsite. Return to Canberra Monday. 400 km, \$80 per car.

5–7 October long weekend canoe trip

Lake Burrendong/Macquarie River

Phone: 249 7167

Leader: Chris Bellamy

Relaxing weekend canoe trip launching at Mookerawa SRA at the western end of Lake Burrendong, near Wellington NSW, venturing upstream into the deep valley of the Macquarie River. Canoe-based camping amongst the casuarinas at the top of the lake. Hire or BYO canoes. Phone leader by Wednesday 2 October. Cost \$175 per car.

4–7 October pack walk

3/A

Hume and Hovell – Tumbarumba to Talbingo

Ref: H&H Guide

Leader: David Large

Phone: 291 4830

Joint NPA/FBI track walk. Leave Canberra on Friday evening, camp at Henry Angel Trackhead near Tumbarumba. Over next three days walk through to Talbingo, enjoying the sights of East Burra Creek, Paddy River Dam, and Buddong Falls. Transport arrangements to be advised depending on numbers. Contact leader before 27 September for details.

12 October morning walk and BBQ

1/A

Molonglo Gorge

Ref: ACT 1:100 000

Leader: David Large

Phone: 291 4830

Meet at the carpark at Molonglo Gorge at 9.30am. We will enjoy the easy and scenic walk up the gorge, returning for a get-to-know-you family BBQ at the picnic area. New members are especially welcome, and all are encouraged to turn out for this one. Bring your own everything.

13 October Sunday walk

2 A/B

Fishing Gap to Cotter River

Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Leader: Max Lawrence

Phone: 288 1370 (h)

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 9am. Drive to Tidbinbilla, walk on fire trail to Fishing Gap. From there a track drops down to the Cotter River, where we will have a leisurely lunch before returning. 60 km, \$12 per car.

16 October Wednesday walk

Leader: Colin McAlister

Phone: 288 4171

Phone leader for details. This is the first of a series of mid-week walks to be scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month. Venues will be decided by the leader nearer to the date, but will generally be of moderate duration and not too strenuous.

19–21 October three-day pack walk

1 D/E

Wadbilliga National Park

Ref: Yowrie 1: 25 000

Leaders: Pat and Eric Pickering

Phone: 286 2128

Joint NPA/FBI walk. Contact leaders before 12 October for details. We intend to set up base camps and explore Lake Creek and Queens Pound and Wadbilliga Rivers. A specific goal is to see rock orchids in flower. There will be some rock-hopping and scrambling, and a steep climb is possible. A car camp is a possibility for those so inclined. 400 km, \$80 per car.

19 October Saturday walk

1/A

Black Mountain Nature Ramble

Ref: Canberra street directory

Leader: George Chippendale

Phone: 281 2454 (h)

Meet at 9.30am at the Belconnen Way entrance to Black Mountain Reserve (several hundred metres to the east of Caswell Drive). A morning ramble to see the birds and flowers. Suitable for ages 4–80. Bring your morning tea, camera, binoculars and field guides. Finish before midday.

20 October Sunday walk

2/A

Big Hole and Marble Arch

Ref: Kain 1:25 000

Leader: Phil Bubbs

Phone: 248 6768

Contact leader by Friday. A pleasant walk on a dedicated walking track to two interesting natural sites: the Big Hole, a vast sinkhole, and Marble Arch, a limestone cave through a ridge followed by a narrow and spectacular limestone gorge ending in a swimming hole. Drive via Captains Flat with some gravel. It may be necessary to wade or paddle across the Shoalhaven River. 180 km, \$36 per car.

19–20 October weekend canoe trip

Kangaroo Valley/Tallowa Dam

Leader: Kevin Frawley

Phone: 282 2973(AH)

Easy flatwater weekend trip and introduction to spring. Launch from Tallowa Dam in Kangaroo Valley, paddle up the Shoalhaven arm of the lake to Fossickers Inlet and camp overnight, returning next day. Superb scenery and wildlife. Suit beginners. Local canoe hire. Contact leader for details. Transport cost \$100 per car.

24–28 October pack walk

2/3/A

Hume and Hovell – Wee Jasper to Tumut

Ref: H&H Guide

Leader: David Large

Phone: 291 4830

Joint NPA/FBI track walk. Five days on the Hume and Hovell track taking in Wee Jasper, Log Bridge Camp, Bossawa camp, The Hole, and Walls Creek. Transport arrangements to be advised, depending on numbers. Contact leader before 18 October for details.

26 and 27 October day walks 4/A/C and 3/A
Cotter Rocks and Ref: Corin Dam, Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Alpine Walking Track
Leader: Len Haskew Phone: 281 4268
Join the Illawarra branch of the NPA in one or both of two Orroral-based Namadgi day walks this weekend. On Saturday we will be taking quite a long walk to Cotter Rocks and return, mainly on tracks but with a steep climb through bush up to the rocks. On Sunday we will be doing the easier walk along the new extension of the Alpine Walking Track from Booroomba Rocks to the Namadgi Visitors Centre. Phone leader for details. 100 kms, \$20 per car.

28 October–4 November car camp 1/A
Bournda National Park Ref: Wolumla 1:25 000
Leader: Malcolm Fyfe Phone: 254 3310
This activity includes members of Canberra Ornithologists Group. Bournda is a glorious national park 12 km south of Tathra with great opportunities for birdwatching. The bush camping area is on the shores of Lake Wallagoot and is a 600 metre walk to the ocean beach. The camp has water, hot showers and toilets, but no power. Fees are \$10 per night per site plus park entry (\$7.50 per car). Contact leader for information. 500 km, \$100 per car.

3 November Sunday walk 2/A/B/D
Bullen Range Ref: Tidbinbilla and Tuggeranong 1:25 000
Leader: Syd Comfort Phone: 286 2578
Meet at corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.30am. We will start near Tidbinbilla Tracking Station and follow Bullen Range south, probably descending to the Murrumbidgee near Red Rocks Gorge. Some steep climbs. 70 km. \$14 per car.

2–9 November eight-day pack walk 3/D/E/F
Deua National Park Ref: Snowball and Badja 1:25 000
Leader: Stephen Johnston Phone 254 3738
This joint activity with the Victorian NPA is an exploratory hike through the rugged mountains around the Deua River south of Braidwood. Almost all off-track with some river walking and substantial climbs. A challenging wilderness experience, so appropriate experience will be required. Contact leader well in advance as numbers are limited. About 300 km, \$60 per car.

8–10 November weekend pack walk 3/C/D/F
Alpine Hut site Ref: Mt Jagungal and the
and the Brassies Brassy Mountains 1: 31 680
Leader: Phil Bubb Phone: 248 6769
Contact leader by Wednesday 6 November at latest. For the leader, an exploration of the area from Burrungubugge Hut via Kidmans Hut to the Alpine Hut site, where we expect to camp. Return via Brassies, and the Porcupine Ridge to Burrungubugge Hut. Few tracks exist and a fair bit of scrub is expected. 400 km, \$80 per car.

10 November Sunday family picnic 1/A
Gudgenby Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Leader: Eleanor Stadart Phone: 281 5004
Family picnic with time to use a simple binocular microscope to look at interesting finds and then a short walk after lunch. Leaving Canberra about 10.00am. Contact leader by previous Wednesday (November). 100 km, \$20 per car.

16 November Saturday walk 3/A
Annor Ridge Ref: Canberra and Hall 1:25 000
to the Pinnacle
Leader: Stephen Johnston Phone: 254 3738 (h)
Ring leader for bookings. A bushwalk in Canberra through five sections of Canberra Nature Park, including the new addition of Mt Painter. Quite challenging with many ups and downs, but excellent views.

17 November Sunday walk 3/A/D
Corang Peak Ref: Corang 1:25 000
Leader: Mike Smith Phone 286 2984
Meet at Queanbeyan Swimming Pool carpark at 7.30am. Note early start. A walk in the Budawangs from the Wog Wog entrance to Corang Peak which has 360 degree views. Side trip to Admiration Point for lunch (scrub bashing). Return by same route. 250 km, \$50 per car.

20 November Wednesday walk
Leader: David Large Phone: 291 4830
The November edition of our new series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

22–25 November pack walk 3/A/B/C/D
Mount Tingaringy and waterfalls Ref: Bendoc, Numbla 1:100 000
Leaders: Pat and Eric Pickering Phone: 286 2128
Joint NPA/FBI walk. Four days in total comprising a two-day pack walk (21 km on track with 680 m climb) to Mt Tingaringy and Tingaringy Falls in East Gippsland, plus car camp with medium day and half-day walks to places such as Bonanza Gully and various waterfalls. Contact leaders by 15 November for details and bookings. Numbers limited. 450 km, \$90 per car.

23–24 November
Namadgi Work Party
Leader: Len Haskew Phone 281 4268
Contact Len by Wednesday to express your interest and find out what work is to be done. This is an opportunity for members to demonstrate how much they value Namadgi by doing their bit to maintain and improve it. Attend either day or both.

30 November to 1 December weekend pack walk 1/A
Smokers Gap to Orroral River Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: David Large Phone: 291 4830
A pack walk designed especially (but not exclusively) for first-time pack walkers. Interested members should contact leader early (before 20 November) for advice on gear requirements, and it may be possible to arrange private loans or commercial hire of equipment. 80 km, \$16 per car.

1 December Sunday walk 2/A
Brindabella Range Ramble Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Steven Forst Phone: 279 1326(w), 251 6817(h)
Meeting at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and the Cotter Road at 8.30 am. A fire trail walk through the tall 'shady' forest between the Cotter River and the Brindabella Road. Nestled in a south-east facing valley, this moist temperate/alpine eucalyptus forest provides for pleasant walking even in summer. Some views of Canberra. 80 km, \$16 per car.

7 December Saturday walk 2/A/C
Googong Reservoir – Compo Canyon Ref: Captains Flat 1:25 000
Leader: Mike Smith Phone: 286 2984(h)
Meet at Canberra Railway Station at 8.30am. A walk from the carpark at the southern end of Googong Reservoir past London Bridge limestone arch, old London Bridge Homestead, Curley Falls and then wade across the Queanbeyan River to Compo Canyon. Return to cars by similar route. Old footwear for crossing the river would be advisable. 50 km, \$10 per car.

8 December NPA Christmas Party
Location: Nil Desperandum
Contact: Max Lawrence Phone: 288 1370
Note this very important occasion in your diaries. Our Christmas party this year will be at the fascinating and historic Nil Desperandum homestead in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. There are still some logistics to get in place, and you will be advised of the detailed arrangements in the next *Bulletin*, which will come out a week or two before the party. Such details will, of course, include a map of how to get there!

15 December Sunday walk* 2 A/B
Bushfold Flats Ref: Williamsdale 1:25 000
Leader: Stephen Johnston Phone: 254 3738 (h)
Contact leader for bookings and enquiries. Visit the most recent addition to Namadgi National Park via the start of the Alpine Walking Track, and return along the Mt Tennent ridge. 40 km, \$8 per car.
*Rescheduled from 28 September.

18 December Wednesday walk
Leader: Mike Smith Phone: 286 2984
The December edition of our new series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

22 December Sunday walk 2/A
Mt Gingera (the easy way) Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 2884171
Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.30am. A walk from Mt Ginini carpark to Mt Gingera via Priors Hut and return, a total of 14 km. Suitable for beginners. The climb from the hut to the top of Gingera is about 200 m but the 360 degree views are worth it. 120 km, \$24 per car.

25–26 January 1997 weekend canoe trip
Murrumbidgee River
Leaders: Chris Bellamy (ph. 249 7167),
Kevin Frawley (299 3995 or 282 2973 h)
Either start from Jugiong (faster water) and finishing at Gundagai, or from Oura Beach above Wagga (slower water) and finishing at Currawananna SF, depending on water flows. Good introductory trip for fit beginners. Car-based camping. BYO canoe or hire in Wagga. Contact leaders for details. Cost per car \$140.

at least in part, described the creation of parks as 'locking up' resources, the philosophy behind this type of reservation is one of permanent guarantee of protection. What resource is so desperately needed that we have to obtain it from conservation reserves? There is no pressing need to demand access; access is only desired for economic reasons. For instance, in Kakadu, the excuse is not that the world is short of uranium, but rather that Australia must beat others into the market.

- Damage to values may include intangible aspects.

Park Watch, journal of the VNPA, June 1996

Tourism: boon or dust?

Each year increasing numbers of people visit Australia seeking wide-open spaces, scenic grandeur and unpolluted environments. These are characteristic features of the rangelands. Among the burgeoning tourism operators in the rangelands are former and existing pastoral properties. Some are merely subsidising their income by providing such things as fuel, supplies and camping sites. Others offer tourists a glimpse of life on a cattle station, or capitalise on the natural beauty of wetlands, gorges and escarpments within their leases. But is

tourism the answer for the protection of rangeland biodiversity? Although the main focus of tourism operators is natural and cultural ecotourism, few actually run ecologically sound tours. Some operators attempt to minimise their ecological impact, but the industry has no effective way of controlling operators to ensure sustainable tourism use of these rangelands. The limited number of national parks in the rangelands are coming under increasing pressure. To protect rangelands biodiversity, key sites for tourism will need to be in areas currently used for pastoralism. Otherwise, we would simply be replacing one unsustainable use with another.

Habitat, magazine of the ACF, April 1966

What the papers say

Killer weeds: the most dangerous half dozen

1. Rubber vine: Smothers trees, shades out ground layer, threatens associated animals, forms impenetrable thickets in Queensland's Gulf river systems.
2. Blue thunbergia: Smothers native vegetation in the tropical lowland rainforest of Far North Queensland.
3. Hymenachne: A semi-aquatic weed that has the potential to totally change tropical wetlands if not controlled.
4. Para grass: A semi-aquatic weed that destroys bird breeding

grounds, chokes streams and replaces natives in the wet/dry/subtropics.

5. Bitou bush: Affects a range of coastal systems from foredune to littoral rainforest, displacing native vegetation and with an unknown effect on animals.

6. Athel pine: A small tree of dryland river systems. Displaces native trees; salinises soil; reduces animal resources.

Sydney Morning Herald, 11 June 1996

CALM complaint draws critics

Academic groups have criticised the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) for complaining to Murdoch University's vice-chancellor about a student's research. The groups say CALM's action was unusual and against accepted scientific practice. It was inappropriate for CALM to question the motivation of PhD student, Susan Rhind, when her published research paper showed serious flaws in the department's forestry man-

agement practices. The groups point to the accepted path of science journals or seminars to debate reliability of research methods and conclusions. Ms Rhind's paper, published in the WA Naturalist journal, found loggers left only a third of the trees required under CALM's guidelines and warned of local extinction of species.

The West Australian, 12 April 1996

Footprints gaining an ascendancy?

The declaration of the Budawang and Ettrema Wilderness area by the Carr Government has been achieved with a minimum of fuss. We have gained the southern slopes of the Castle, down to Yadboro River, as an addition to Morton National Park and the Budawang Wilderness, while vehicle access remains much as it was pre-wilderness declaration. The car park at Newhaven Gap will be relocated back towards Nerriga (about an hour's walk north) with a bonus of a wilderness camping area and toilet provided. Four-wheel-drive access along the Tianjara Trail will only be allowed with a permit from NPWS. The only 'losers' are the horse riders, who will not be permitted access because of the risk of bringing in exotic or dangerous fauna and flora with the animals.

NPA Milton Branch newsletter, April 1996

Orroral Homestead

While scuds of rain came down the Orroral Valley, but not quite reaching the homestead, the sub-surface drainage system designed to secure under-floor dryness was completed on Monday 24 June.

This operation marked the completion of an extensive program directed towards the restoration of the c1870 homestead, which will preserve its fabric well towards its second century.

The NPA proposed to the Parks Service that a restoration program was necessary and that it would undertake a principal role in providing assistance with the cleaning up, restoration and stabilisation of the homestead to a state approximating its original condition. Heritage grants, administered by the association, allowed for consultants and contractors to be employed to provide a conservation plan, archaeological surveys, measured drawings and reconstruction of the kitchen chimney, replacement of rotted supporting timbers and flooring, cement rendering of the chimneys, plastering of internal walls, guttering, glazing and some doors and windows.

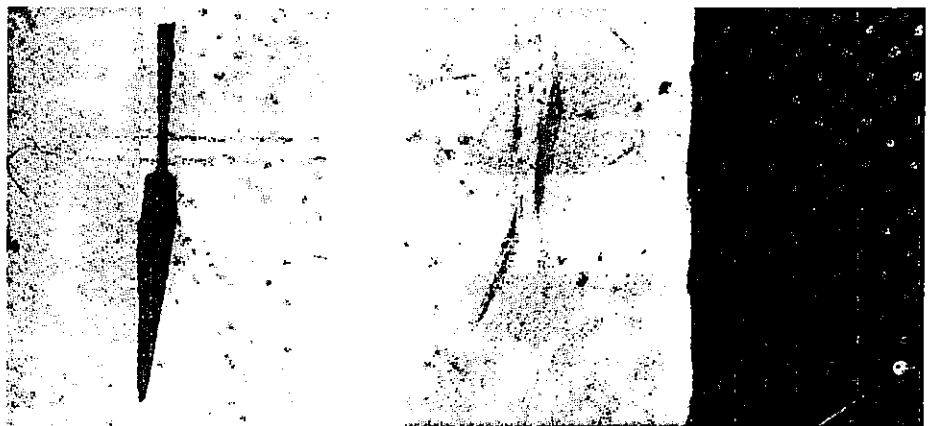
The NPA provided assistance in cleaning the site and to the contractors and service in many essential tasks besides undertaking some individual projects such as glazing, digging out posts, removing rendering and plaster, grouting of stonework, removing excess soil, replacing end gable timbers and flooring and site clearing. Members of the Kosciusko Huts Association assisted with the chimney work.

The work has all been done in the spirit of cooperation and willingness of all concerned to ensure that this prime example of last century vernacular architecture and workmanship in Namadgi National Park remains secure for many years into the next century. It provides the principal feature of European heritage in the Orroral Valley.

Reg Alder



Above: The trench digger used for installing the plastic impervious membrane to divert underground water around the Orroral Homestead. The trench surrounded the building along the rear and two sides. Below left: Artifact found while digging the drainage trench around the homestead, perhaps a pie lifter. Below right: Detail of the membrane which was installed in the trench. Photos by Reg Alder.



Mt Morgan



Mt Morgan trig before its demolition. Over the years its height had already diminished from its original 2.1 metres. Photo by Reg Alder.

The spectacular prominent trig station on Mt Morgan (1874 metres) has been destroyed. The vandals must have had a terrific grudge which required dissipation to carry out the substantial task of hurling as far as possible the individual stones which made up a cairn originally 2.1 metres high and 2.3 metres in diameter. The vanes which surmounted the 3.6-metre pole are missing, either hurled into some crevice or carried away. Only about half a metre of the stone pile remains.

The piling of the trig station in 1897 must have involved considerable work in gathering the stones and carrying them up the steep slope to the site. It is a matter of conjecture whether Aboriginal ceremonial stone arrangements may have been destroyed in the process of gathering these stones.

In our March *Bulletin*, I wrote about how Mt Morgan was originally named Maragwral by surveyor Stapleton, later to be changed to

Murray. Further research shows that the surveyor who established the trig station in 1879 noted that the locals called the mountain Half Moon Peak because of its crescent shape. This name continued on maps from the early part of this century, together with the name Morgan Trig Site, Morgan Trig Station, Morgan T.S. or just Morgan. Its twin peak to the south-west was recorded as Round Half Moon Peak.

In 1973, with the issue of the 1:100000 scale Tantangra map, there was a name change. Half Moon Peak was transferred to its twin peak, the Round being omitted and our 1874 eminence became known solely as Mt Morgan. In 1979 the 1:25000 scale map Rendezvous Creek records that all names on the map, including Mt Morgan and Half Moon Peak, were approved under the Geographical Names Act of NSW.

I have been unable to find who Morgan was. Any ideas?

Reg Alder

Contributions

Contributions to the *NPA Bulletin*, be they photographs or articles, are always very welcome. Please contact the NPA office on phone 282 5813, or contact the editor at Green Words, phone 247 0059.

Deadlines

Deadlines for contributions and advertising are: 1 February, 1 May, 1 August and 1 November.

NPA Bulletin

advertising rates 1996

Black and white only

For camera ready artwork:

Full page \$150.00

Half page \$80.00

One third page \$60.00

Column cm \$3.00

(\$10.00 minimum)

For typesetting add 50%

Insert \$120.00

(supplied ready, 10g or less)

Cottage to let

Mallacoota – Mudbrick cottage available. Sleeps 6–8. Adjacent bush/beach. Easy to walk to town. Abundant birdlife and wildlife. Ideal base camp for coastal walks. Reasonable rates. Contact Barbara or Chris de Bruine (06) 258 6478 (wk) (06) 258 3531 (h).

A burning issue – a response

The report, *The Australian Landscape – Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers*, produced for the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority, is an interesting collection of descriptions by the first European explorers and settlers of the Australian landscape and Aboriginal burning practices.

But contrary to Tim the Yowie Man's suggestions (*NPA Bulletin*, June 1996), the causes and the extent of vegetation changes following the arrival of Europeans in Australia are more conjectural than the report suggests and the implications, if any, for management of national parks and wilderness areas are unclear.

One of the authority's apparent primary objectives in producing the report was to counter the 'common belief that Australia was a vast expanse of thick forest before the arrival of European settlers more than 200 years ago and that there has been massive clearing of that forest land ever since'.¹

This statement needs to be considered in two parts. The first part is a straw puppet which the authors have vigorously pulled to bits. I have not read nor heard of anyone suggesting that Australia was a vast expanse of thick forest and the authors have failed to provide any evidence that such 'a common belief' exists.

Burning

It certainly is reasonable to conclude that centuries of Aboriginal 'firestick farming' had a major impact on the environment and that cessation of that fire regime contributed to significant changes in the natural vegetation. But one must be cautious about drawing too many other hard conclusions.

Firstly, there are huge gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the impact of Aboriginal burning practices. Even if it is true that Aboriginal peoples 'burn regularly, annually, or at least once every three or four years',² it has not been established authoritatively how extensive and intensive those fires were and therefore how often and with what intensity any one area was burnt. Had

it been as extensive as the report suggests, it seems strange that substantial areas of fire-sensitive rainforest, callitris and eucalypt species survived and that, for instance, Count Strzelecki and his party had to fight their way through dense forests in South Gippsland to reach Westernport Bay in 1840, only five years after European settlement in Victoria.

Secondly, we are in just as much doubt about the burning practices of the European settlers. While Josephine Flood is quoted in the report as writing that when Aboriginal people were driven off their land, the regular light burning ceased, a report by the Victorian Government's Land Conservation Council says: 'European settlers, however, used fire to clear the native vegetation in preparation for agriculture, and pastoralists used fire to remove dry grass and encourage green shoots for livestock'.³ The LCC report refers to evidence of burning in the annual rings of snow gums and in swamp sediments which suggests that fires have been more common since European settlement'.⁴ What we need, but are unlikely to get, is a major program of core sampling across Australia before we can reach any firm conclusions one way or the other.

Thirdly, in addition to the cessation of Aboriginal burning, there have been other significant changes to the environment since the early 1800s such as the extinction or severe reduction of some species of native fauna and significant increases in others that benefited from European settlement; the introduction of foreign animals and plants; and the widespread clearing of native vegetation. It is quite possible that the climate has also changed.

Fire management is an extremely vexed and complex issue. The comments by Roger Good, an authority on the effects of fire on natural vegetation, in relation to the Budawangans have wider application: '...controversy and conflict over the use of prescribed burning will be evident for a long time, while the very

limited knowledge of the effects of such burning on natural ecosystems and individual species exists'.⁵

Unfortunately, in the past, management seems to have been influenced by the dangerous half truth that 'fire is good for the bush'. Fire *may* be good for the bush and for the fauna that depend on it. But it may also have quite a negative impact if the frequency and intensity of the fire does not suit the species' requirements.

Following Good's suggestions for the Budawangans, the appropriate approach for Australia's protected areas appears to be twofold. Relatively intensive fuel reduction is necessary in areas adjacent to rural land and/or residential settlement. Burning in the remaining areas will depend on the management objectives. If, as in the Budawangans, the goal is to maintain species diversity and a mosaic of vegetation age classes, this can be maintained by fire and prescribed burning is acceptable.⁶

'Careful fire management and planning must ensure though, that the maintenance of diversity does not become a post-fire justification for 'traditional' prescribed burning, that is, fuel reduction. In some areas of the Budawangans, it may be preferable to endeavour to get the vegetation into the more mature age classes and the later stages of succession. This concept takes cognizance of loss of species diversity as the shift towards late successional stages occurs, but enables the vegetation to be more easily manipulated to meet the park objectives. Areas of mature vegetation can be returned to earlier successional stages by the application of ecologically planned fire, but if the park becomes dominated by young, even-aged vegetation as may occur after regular fire, vegetation options are limited'.⁷

Clearing

The catchment authority's report is quite correct in referring to a common belief that there has been massive clearing of forest and woodland in Australia; it is a belief supported by a formidable body of historical and scientific evidence.

For instance, the former Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands concluded in 1988: 'In 1869 the total area of forest in Victoria was 19 983 000 hectares, representing 88 per cent of the State. By 1987 this area had been reduced to 7 965 580 hectares (35 per cent of the State), comprising 7 045 003 hectares on public land and 920 577 hectares on freehold land'.⁸ For the purposes of its report, the department defined forest as 'all woody vegetation with a height greater than 2 metres and a density (foliar cover) greater than 10 per cent'.

The extent and speed of forest removal in Australia have been quite staggering, particularly considering that so much of it was achieved without modern machinery. It took just over 20 years for what was known as the Great Forest of South Gippsland to be felled and burned,⁹ leaving only a small relic that is now protected in the Tarra-Bulga National Park. The Big Scrub, the rainforest of northern New South Wales that once covered a large area between Lismore and Byron Bay, was cleared between 1862 and 1900¹⁰ and the rainforests of the Illawarra were largely cleared by 1931.¹¹

More recently, it took just over 10 years for the remaining 28 000 hectares of the Heytesbury Forest in south-western Victoria to be cleared for dairy farms¹² and by 1992 a vast area of brigalow in Queensland had been replaced by sown pasture and cultivation.¹³

The report offers a ludicrous apology for past clearing. 'The cessation of regular burning following European settlement allowed the growth of a thick forest of young trees that, together with an increasing shrub understorey, choked out the grasses. The widespread ringbarking that was carried out around the turn of the century was mostly of this regrowth. The landowners were attempting to re-establish the original grazing capacity'.¹⁴

If that is the case one can only conclude that they went a bit too far! And if they were only clearing regrowth, how does one account for the numerous old photographs of tall, bleached spars standing starkly above the paddocks, the victims of ringbarking? These were not saplings nor scrub,

these were trees of great size, of great vintage.

No apologia is necessary anyway. The original settlers did not have the knowledge nor understanding of the environment which we now have. Indeed, scientists such as William Farrer advocated ringbarking as a quick, economical way of drying and sweetening the soil and thus limiting the outbreaks of footrot and liver fluke.¹⁵ Clearing was also one of the 320 pounds worth of improvements required of selectors under the 1869 Grant Land Act.¹⁶

The real story is well described by Professor Geoffrey Bolton in the first comprehensive environmental history of Australia, *Spoils and Spoilers*. In a chapter, aptly titled *They Hated Trees* (a phrase used by Professor Keith Hancock in his 1930 book *Australia*), Professor Bolton writes: 'To most settlers the trees were simply a nuisance to be cleared to make room for building or farming'.¹⁷ And contrary to what the report claims, the destruction began very soon after European settlement. As early as 1803 Governor King felt compelled to issue a proclamation forbidding felling along the banks of rivers and watersheds. 'The main enemies of Australia's trees were the pastoralists. From about 1860, seeking clear grazing for their sheep, they went in for ringbarking on an enormous scale'.¹⁸

The clearing continues to this day, but we do not have any of the excuses of our predecessors. In the 1870s a few voiced their concerns, including geological surveyor Reginald A F Murray. He was commissioned in 1873 to lead a party to open up black coal seams at Cape Patterson in south Gippsland. Murray's recollections are poignant.

'...most of the best forest land was selected, the scrub cut, and the trees rung, to the destruction of an incalculable quantity of valuable woods that in a few years might have become available for use. There seemed then to be in the departmental mind a dread that selectors might make money out of the timber, so they were virtually compelled to destroy it, instead of clearing well and thoroughly only small sections at a time, getting produce from them, and extending

them gradually. Many selectors exhausted their capital on scrub cutting and timber ringing over all their selections and were unable to maintain the clearings; the timber died with the dried bark hanging from it, fresh growths of scrub sprang up, and, unprotected by the green forest, quickly dried in summer, so that disastrous bush fires were the result, the blazing bark from the dead trees being carried ahead by the wind to spread the destruction.

'However, there is no use in crying over spilt milk; it is to be hoped that better care will be taken of the remaining forest resources of Victoria'.¹⁹ It was to be hoped.

Stephen Johnston

- 1 D G Ryan, J R Ryan and B J Starr, 1996. *The Australian Landscape - Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers*. p. 1.
- 2 *ibid.* p. 2.
- 3 Land Conservation Council, 1990. *Wilderness Special Investigation Descriptive Report*. Melbourne. p. 98.
- 4 *ibid.* p. 98.
- 5 Roger Good, 1982. 'Fire Management in the Budawang's' in *Pigeon House and Beyond - A Guide to the Budawang Range and Environs*. The Budawang Committee. Sydney. p. 174.
- 6 *ibid.* p. 175.
- 7 *ibid.* p. 175.
- 8 P Woodgate and P Black, 1988. *Forest Cover Changes in Victoria 1869-1987*. Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Melbourne. p. v.
- 9 South Gippsland Development League, 1966. *The Land of the Lyre Bird. A Story of Early Settlement in the Great Forest of South Gippsland*. The Shire of Korrumburra. Melbourne.
- 10 Harry J Frith, 1976. 'The Big Scrub' in *Rain Forests* (ed. Wendy Goldstein). National Parks and Wildlife Service. Sydney. p. 7.
- 11 Allen A Strom. 'A Story of Environmental Consequence'. *ibid.* p. 15.
- 12 Rosamund Duruz, 1974. *Death of a Forest - A Story of the Heytesbury Shire*. Lowden Publishing Co. Kilmore. pp. 49-51.
- 13 Henry Nix, 1994. 'The Brigalow' in *Australian Environmental History Essays and Cases*. (ed. Stephen Dovers). Oxford University Press. Melbourne. p. 228.
- 14 D G Ryan, J R Ryan and B J Starr. *op. cit.* p. 15.
- 15 Tony Dingle, 1984. *The Victorians - Settling*. Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates. Melbourne. p. 133.
- 16 *ibid.* p. 65.
- 17 Geoffrey Bolton, 1981. *Spoils and Spoilers*. George Allen and Unwin. Sydney. p. 37.
- 18 *ibid.* p. 42.
- 19 Reginald A F Murray. 'Early Coal Exploration in Gippsland'. South Gippsland Development League. *op. cit.* p. 190.

Use of fire by Aboriginal people

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Committee has recently published a booklet on *The Australian Landscape - Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers*. This has led Tim the Yowie Man to revive the question of Aboriginal burning ('A burning issue', June *Bulletin*). It is possible to gain the impression from historical records that burning by Aboriginal people was virtually continual and indiscriminate, with the result that the higher-rainfall areas of eighteenth-century Australia were occupied by open parkland rather than forest. However, the actual situation may have been much more complex and, in particular, the use of fire by Aboriginal people may have been much more sophisticated.

This question has been the subject of many studies, and it is reviewed in detail in the large section on *The Forests and Aboriginal Society in Australia's Ever Changing Forests* (Australian Defence Force Academy/Australian Forest History Society). This symposium provides evidence of the careful, controlled use of fire to produce a large range of outcomes, thereby increasing the diversity of the vegetation rather

than imposing uniformity. There are other significant references to this creative use of fire. In his *Narrandera Shire*, Bill Gammage gives a detailed account of the land management practices of the Narrungdera people. These included the controlled use of fire to open up grassy 'paddocks' to attract game from the adjoining forest. Dave Ashton, in his chapter on the tall open-forests ('Wet sclerophyll forests') in *Australian Vegetation*, Cambridge University Press, observes that persistent folklore from the time of discovery by Europeans relates both to the riding of a horse through the virgin forests and to the hacking of a path for progress.

He points out that such variation can be interpreted in terms of persistent, patchy fire regimes. Further, some early reports from Sydney refer to the well-spaced trees with no understorey, yet William Bradley's 1788 painting of Port Jackson shows quite dense forest with a shrubby understorey. Again, this apparent contradiction could be explained by patch burning.

The observations of some early land explorers may also have been influenced by the fact that they de-

pended on horse transport, and so had to stay close to the water and grass. They would not necessarily obtain a comprehensive view of the vegetation. For example, Thomas Mitchell - sticking to water and grass - skirted the enormous expanse of mallee in north-western Victoria for hundreds of kilometres, apparently without once seeing it. It appears from his journal *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia* that his deputy did eventually sight mallee to the north, just before the expedition headed south from Mount Arapiles, and that he was surprised by the report. On a smaller scale, I have found it possible to drive off-road through areas of Queensland that were largely covered by dense layered forest, by following leads along lower moister ground occupied by grassy woodland.

John Carnahan

(The address of the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Committee is c/o Agricultural Research Institute, PMB, Pine Gully Road, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650. My copy of the booklet was supplied courtesy of Carsten Nannestad, phone 069 381 832.)

Areas of conservation significance in Queanbeyan

Last year some members of NPA walked through areas of conservation significance in Queanbeyan under the guidance of Councillor Tom Baker. Tom is an active member of the Monaro Conservation Society and has a deep concern for the environment and we felt that he should have the opportunity of talking to a larger number of members. He did so at the May meeting, and the following is prepared from his notes.

Following the ceding of 17 square kilometres from Yarrolumla Shire from January 1995, Queanbeyan now occupies an area of 47 square kilometres. It lies in the valley of the

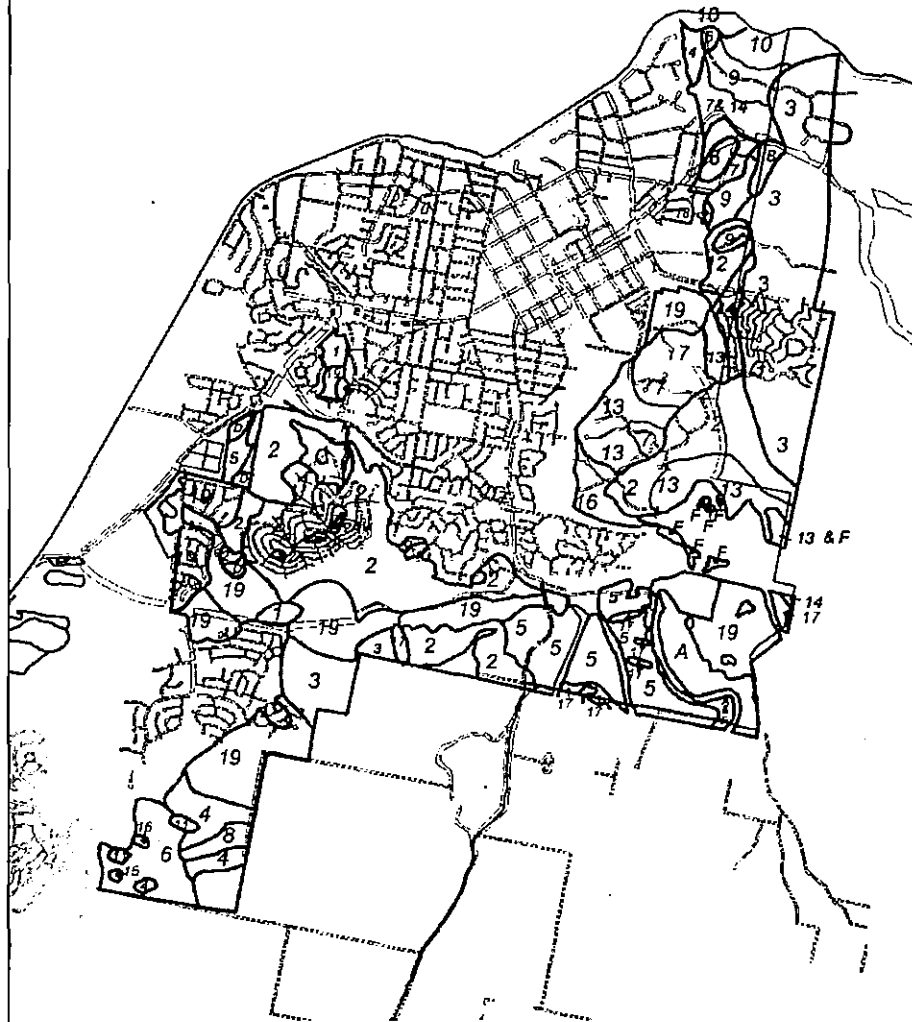
Queanbeyan River, which joins the Molonglo at Oaks Estate. Jerrabomberra Creek, next to Jerrabomberra Park, roughly marks the eastern boundary.

While Queanbeyan's origins go back to 1835, settlement did not really grow significantly until the ACT became the seat of government. The population of 27 600 is expected to increase to roughly 44 000 by the year 2032, through development at Jerrabomberra Heights, Jerrabomberra Park, the Poplars and Environa/Tralea. The Gale precinct was recently rezoned for up to 45 per cent to be used for urban develop-

ment. However, it is subject to a land claim by the Ngunnawal Aboriginal community.

Development is constrained by several physical factors - the railway marking the border of the ACT, from the Molonglo Gorge to Hume; the Queanbeyan River Corridor, extending towards Googong Reservoir; Mt Jerrabomberra and nearby hills and woodlands and the Readymix quarry to the south; the eastern escarpment, running north south along the Queanbeyan fault line from beyond Wamboyn to the Tinderries, an area relatively rich in flora and fauna. This situation,

Vegetative characteristics of Queanbeyan



Forests and woodlands

1. *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* – *E. rossii* community

(a) Type 2 species group

1. Red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) – Red box (*E. polyanthemos*)
2. Red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) – Scribbly gum (*E. rossii*) – Red box (*E. polyanthemos*)
- 2(a) 2 above and Brittle gum (*E. mannifera*)
3. Red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) – Scribbly gum (*E. rossii*)
4. Scribbly gum (*E. rossii*)

(b) Type 3 species group

5. Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) – Yellow box (*E. melliodora*)
6. Mealy bundy (*E. nortonii*)
7. Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) – Mealy bundy (*E. nortonii*)
8. Red box (*E. polyanthemos*)
9. Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) – Mealy bundy (*E. nortonii*) – Scribbly gum (*E. rossii*)
10. Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) – Black cypress pine (*Callitris endlichen*)
11. Broad leaved peppermint (*E. dives*)
2. Transitional between *E. macrorhyncha* – *E. rossii* community and *E. melliodora* – *E. blakelyi* community
12. Apple box (*E. bridgesiana*) – Red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*)

13. Blakelys red gum (*E. blakelyi*) – Red box (*E. polyanthemos*) – Apple box (*E. bridgesiana*)

14. Yellow box (*E. melliodora*) – Apple box (*E. bridgesiana*) – Red box (*E. polyanthemos*)

3. *E. melliodora* – *E. blakelyi* community

15. Blakelys red gum (*E. blakelyi*)

16. Blakelys red gum (*E. blakelyi*) – Yellow box (*E. melliodora*)

17. Apple box (*E. bridgesiana*)

18. Yellow box (*E. melliodora*)

19. Apple box (*E. bridgesiana*) – Yellow box (*E. melliodora*)

Shrublands

1. *Kunzea ericoides* community

A. Green wattle (*Acacia meamsii*)

B. Poverty wattle (*A. dawsonii*)

C. Golden wattle (*A. pycnantha*)

D. Branching grevillea (*Grevillea ramosissima*)

E. Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*)

F. Tea-trees (*Leptospermum* spp.)

Grasslands

Stipa spp. – *Themeda triandra*

Stipa spp. – *Bothriochloa macra*

Wet grasslands (including *Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*)

Source: Gutteridge Haskins & Davey Pty. Ltd.
Queanbeyan Bushlands Management Strategy

and the considerable woodlands and grasslands of high conservation value threatened by development pressures, led to controversial residential land use decisions and also to the formation of the Jerrabomberra Preservation Society in 1987; now the Monaro Conservation Society.

The notable ecological features around Queanbeyan are as follows.

- The eastern escarpment which has a surprising degree of biodiversity. Recent survey work by Dr Peter Barrer shows a large number of regionally significant plant and animals.
- Riparian vegetation along the Queanbeyan River which is quite rich in places this side of Googong Dam.
- The Jerrabomberra Valley including the 'Poplars', which is home to a number of endangered grassland species including the earless dragon, the button wrinkle wort daisy, the golden sun moth and possibly the now famous legless lizard.
- Much of Mt Jerrabomberra, which is on the Register of the National Estate because of its representation of significant woodlands and biodiversity, is privately owned and is becoming degraded.
- Two predominant plant communities, *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* / *E. rossii* and 19 associations, and *E. melliodora* / *E. blakelyi* and seven associations, including uncommon to rare shrub and health communities.
- Species being found within the town.

In 1995 Queanbeyan Council adopted the Queanbeyan Bushland and Grassland Management Plan, prepared by Gutteridge, Haskins and Daveys, which describes the significance of the bushland and grassland and sets out aims, principles and actions in several key areas such as recreation demands, water

continued overleaf

HISTORY

ACT border heritage project

Do you know:

- Which ACT border mountain was at first officially called Mt Townsend?
- How long it took the ACT border to be surveyed?
- Which surveyor was forced off the Brindabellas by heavy snowfalls in 1914?
- Who named Mt Kelly, and why?
- How the surveyors marked the border on the ground?
- That the wives of two of the surveyors lived with their husbands under canvas during much of the border job?
- That the ACT could have been a different shape altogether?

If you would like to know more, you might like to look at *Surveyors above the Snowline*, the latest historical report by Matthew Higgins. Funded by the Commonwealth's National Estate Grants Program and assisted by the ACT Land Information Office, the National Trust project looked at how the ACT came to be its present shape, the personnel involved in the border survey, how the survey was undertaken, and the experiences of the surveyors themselves. These subjects form the essay which is part 1 of the report and is based on surveyors' field books, Australian Archives files and interviews with surveyors' descendants. Numerous historical photographs and maps are included. Part 2 of the report is an inventory of the 272 original border markers located by Matthew during fieldwork for the project. During autumn Matthew walked along one-third of the border, from Mt Coree to the Boboyan Road. Friends and surveyors accompanied him during some of the fieldwork, and he walked the rest on his own.

A reference copy of the report is available in the National Trust library (in Light St, Griffith, ACT). Negotiations are under way to consider having the report published in book form in due course.

In the meantime Matthew is having a holiday away from granite and snowgum.



Matthew Higgins at border marker D56 in the Brindabella Range. D56, a rare type of marker, was installed in 1914. Photo by Reg Alder.

Areas of conservation significance *continued from previous page*

quality protection, vegetation and wildlife protection, landscape values, and cultural heritage management.

The strategy addresses the fact that Queanbeyan has a mixture of tenures making holistic management difficult. Much of the crown land within Queanbeyan is subject to Aboriginal land claims. A series of management plans are now being prepared by the Council, in response to the new Local Government Act.

Several areas require a joint effort with the ACT for management – the Jerrabomberra Valley, and the

Queanbeyan River and Jerrabomberra Creek corridors. In May this year Council resolved to take steps to develop a plan of management for the Queanbeyan River from the base of the Googong Dam to Lake Burley Griffin, together with the ACT, Yarrowlunla Shire and NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation. This plan will be important to guide future work and for identifying water and riparian spots which require attention. Preliminary discussions to achieve a uniform approach where possible have been held.

The Monaro Conservation Society is a community-based organisation which has worked on projects such as the restoration of 118 hectares in the Gale precinct and small urban bushland areas. Through its indigenous plant nursery (MCS Nursery), it propagates local endangered species and grasses. Sales from the nursery provide the society with a source of funds.

Eleanor Stodart

Rabbit calicivirus update

On 16 June a group of NPA members gathered at the Namadgi Visitor Centre for an overview by Don Fletcher from the Parks Service of the policy which had been developed for the rabbit eradication program.

Each member was issued with a very comprehensive brief of graphs and text covering the 'Invisible Impact' of the rabbit on the environment and, just as importantly, within Namadgi National Park.

The graphs vividly showed the need for rabbit control and the effect on wildlife if the important rabbit food source is removed from predators. There is a very direct relationship between predators and rabbits at times of small rabbit numbers.

Graphs presented showed:

- Sheet erosion contributing to sedimentation in water storage dams.
- Biomass of food source and percentage of baits consumed at distances from burrows.
- Numbers of small mammals, reptiles and raptors trapped at varying distances from ripped and unripped burrows.
- Variations in numbers of rabbits when predators were shot and during drought periods.
- The relationship in numbers between predators and rabbits when the flea was introduced, and from poisoning.

The visitor centre presentation concluded with a summary of the draft guidelines for works supervisors carrying out rabbit warren control to manage the competition between objectives for conservation of natural and cultural resources, animal welfare and occupational safety.

- These guidelines recognised that rabbits are the worst vertebrate pest causing loss of soil and nutrients, eliminating seedlings and

supporting populations of predators.

- The most effective control is warren elimination over a large area.
- Rabbit warren removal has the potential to destroy cultural sites.
- Warren removal around boulders is a difficult operation.
- Follow-up action is necessary to prevent a return to uncontrolled levels.
- Eradication by shooting is ineffective, the only reliable techniques are removal and destruction of the



warren, poisoning by bait or fumigation.

- Cross-ripping and compaction of burrows is the preferred technique, followed by blasting if ripping cannot be utilised.
- Fumigation equipment allows burrow entrances to be located, but does not destroy the burrow. Under some conditions there is a danger to the operator inhaling the lethal gas. For safety reasons the use of fumigation is to be restricted to the most difficult situations.

All known sites of cultural significance will be clearly marked for special treatment to preserve the culture of both Aboriginal and European occupation. The sites to be preserved will be nominated by heritage consultants or Heritage Unit staff members. In difficult sites near or surrounded by boulders, fumigation marker smoke will be used to locate hidden burrow entrances.

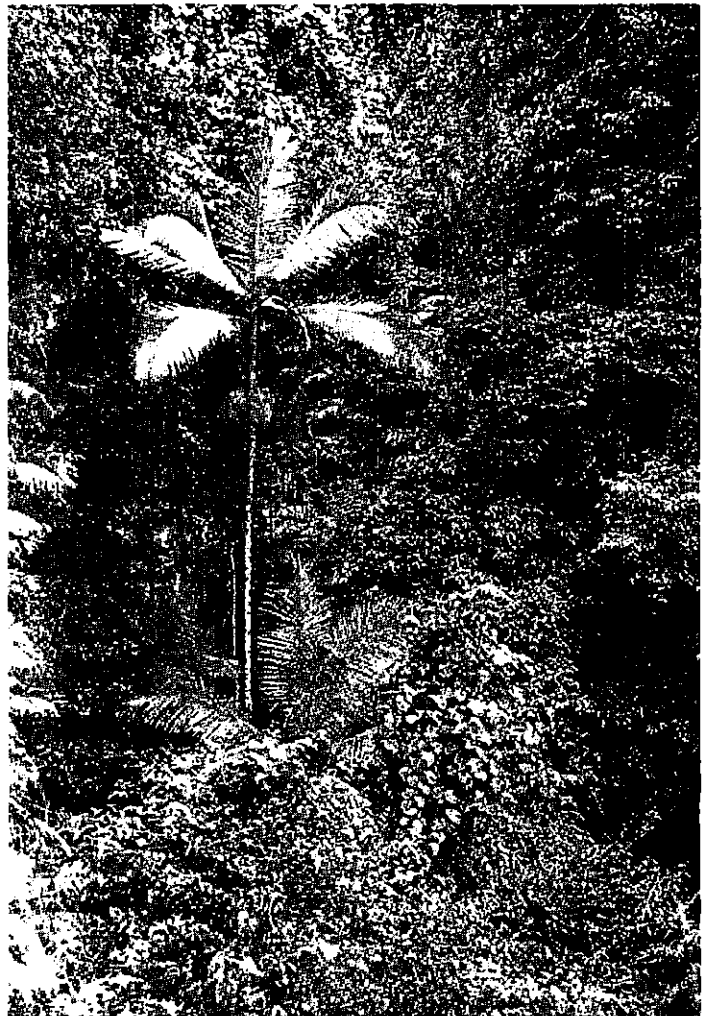
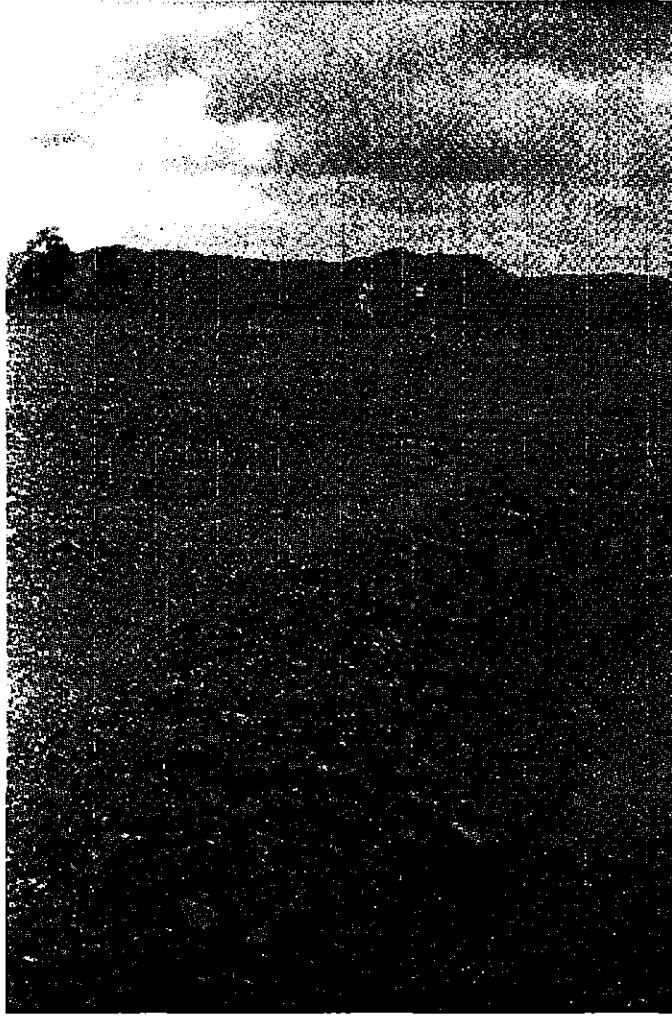
The presentation was followed up with a field demonstration at Gudgenby on the use of ripping and compacting, explosives and fumigation techniques.

There was a follow-up work party on Saturday and Sunday 22-23 June to locate and mark rabbit burrows in the eucalyptus forest area on the fringe of the grazed areas of the Gudgenby property. Members spaced themselves out at about 25-30 metres and walked through the forest marking the locations of burrows on adjacent trees with biodegradable coloured tapes. Sunday turned out to be one of Canberra's infrequent wholly wet days, and although seven members presented themselves for duty, ranger Craig Richardson thought the conditions to be too difficult and the working bee was abandoned because of the persistent rain.

Reg Alder

Photo: ACT park rangers carrying out rabbit control measures. The photo shows non-toxic white smoke being pumped into the entrance of a rabbit warren. Smoke rising from other warren entrances show which ones are connected. These are blocked off before the toxic fumigant Chloropicrin is released into the warren. Photo by Reg Alder.

Don't you worry about that!



Left: Mount Hutcheson's bare top. Right: Mount Hutcheson as it might have been. Photos by Len Haskeu.

The attitude towards environmental damage in Far North Queensland still seems to be encapsulated in the sentiments of this article's heading. Indeed, *The Northern Sun* (Vol.11, No.43), a magazine, which in its own words 'stands for the North', loudly sings the praises of the proposed Quaid Dam extensions and goes on to say that, 'Those greenies who put up signs "No More Dams" are obviously city types who do not know where tap water comes from or are in the great unwashed category who have little use for water.'

When I visited the Daintree/Cooktown area in May of this year the first impression I had was the number of 'For sale' signs that had

been erected along both main and minor roads. Almost without exception, the signs belonged to a Cairns developer who, in the past, has been associated with some rather controversial developments. In the main, these signs stand in front of one-hectare portions of what to me looked like virgin rainforest. It is possible to wander along country roads with environmentally twee names like Bloodwood Road or Palm Crescent and find that many of these small freehold plots have been totally cleared by bulldozers and then left to be revegetated, particularly by invasive grasses that are too strong to slash and that can only be controlled by poisoning or burning. In some cases houses have been

built, complete with European style gardens and lawns, and their accompanying dogs (and it seemed to be always plural) are allowed to roam at will in an area where road signs caution the motorist about the presence of cassowaries. At Cow Bay, where I spent most of my stay, there were reputedly about 15 known cassowaries and my guess would be that they were outnumbered at least six to one by the dog population – what chance their survival? It rained a lot while I was there and the creeks and the beaches were always muddy, no doubt as a result of all the clearing. Not as important as the clearing, but nevertheless irritating to me, was that these properties adjoin the Daintree National

Park and the logical access to me seemed to be across the private land but signs such as 'Do not enter under any circumstances. Trespassers will be shot' were a little off-putting to say the least. By contrast the occasional 'Shut the bloody gate' seemed almost friendly and conducive to asking permission.

Mt Hutcheson summed up the present attitudes for me. Situated about halfway between the Daintree River and Cape Tribulation, this eye-catching landmark was covered in dense rainforest up until about May, 1995. Then the prominent Cairns developer referred to previously had a brainwave and literally cut the top off the mountain to expose two very large homesites with 'unobstructed views.' At the same time a 'road' was constructed to give access to both the despoilers and the new owner. The group I was with trespassed and had a good look at the result. The 'road' was a revelation - huge trees had been removed and pushed over the side to absolutely devastate the underlying rainforest and create huge areas of erosion gullies. The 'road' was not constructed with the weather in mind and is now badly washed away in places and the run-off is causing further degradation. However, the big shock was the summit - not a trace of vegetation remained and two huge areas of bare gravel were all that was left. Apparently the land did not find a buyer and the developer was reputedly left about \$1 million out of pocket. But it seems the sun shines on both the just and the unjust and I believe that the Wet Tropics Management Authority is negotiating to purchase what is left of Mt Hutcheson for about \$1.9 million.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority was established by the Hawke Government in 1988 to oversee the World Heritage Area. Its primary role is to implement our international duty to 'protect, conserve, present, rehabilitate and transmit to future generations the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area,

within the meaning of the World Heritage Convention.' With money from the Commonwealth and Queensland, the authority will spend \$23 million over three years for voluntary land purchase, cooperative agreements with landholders willing to protect their land, and the development of appropriate visitor facilities. I can assure you that it was very comforting to see 'Daintree Rescue Program' signs on what was previously privately owned property!

Despite the exhortations of *The Northern Sun*, there are many very committed environmentalists in the area. I believe that the chairman of the Port Douglas Shire Council is pro-conservation but, from my observations, he apparently has to contend with a pro-development majority. In the Cow Bay community activists abound. The group I was travelling with (Illawarra Branch, NSWNP) assisted the local Save the Cassowary Group to plant rainforest trees on the Cow Bay Recreation Reserve. This group has planted literally hundreds of trees on both public and private land to make corridors for the local cassowary population. They also maintain these trees after planting as well as keeping a detailed register of cassowary sightings. Also in the area is a privately run and maintained Rainforest Environment Centre. A small group of people mortgaged everything they owned to build and equip this centre, despite great resistance from the Port Douglas Shire Council. The building is set in and around the rainforest and the owners have installed the latest in high-tech interactive computer technology to help visitors understand the complex and dynamic rainforest which surrounds the centre. An interpretive boardwalk has been constructed and visitors often see Elvis the cassowary who is a regular visitor to the centre.

I believe that, despite the efforts of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, the Daintree is still under threat. The main threat now

seems to me to be population growth and increasing tourism. Both these interest groups are demanding more infrastructure, including a bridge over the Daintree River (replacing the present day ferry service), improved roads, pathways, bicycle tracks and walking trails, a medical centre, police station, a secondary school and the hot issue while I was there - mains electricity to replace the present alternative energy systems. So don't be surprised if you see cars bearing the one-time familiar yellow triangle with the words 'Save The Daintree'. Only this time the word 'again' will be added.

Len Haskew

Walking companions wanted

Kimberley and/or Nitmiluk NP

Mike Smith is looking for members and friends interested in joining a fully guided trip by a NT commercial bushwalking company during May 1997. The trip includes two weeks in the Kimberleys, the Gibb River Road gorges and possibly the Mitchell River. And then, if you want more, another two weeks in Nitmiluk NP from Katherine Gorge to Edith and Stow Creek area.

Costs would be around \$1500 for each fortnight, cheaper for both trips, but this doesn't include fares to Darwin or Kununurra. Discounts are available for bookings pre-paid up to four months in advance (that is, February 1997). The price includes evening meals, which are prepared by the guide, and walkers carry a share of the supplied ingredients. Other meals could be supplied for a small extra fee. If you are interested or would like more information please contact Mike Smith, phone 286 2984.

Calendar

September

- Thursday 5 Committee meeting, for location contact Clive Hurlstone 288 7592 (h)
Thursday 12 Namadgi Subcommittee, for location contact Robin Miller 281 6314 (h)
Thursday 26 Environment Subcommittee, for location contact Stephen Johnston 254 3738 (h)

October

- Thursday 3 Committee meeting, as for September
Thursday 10 Namadgi Subcommittee, as for September
Thursday 24 Environment Subcommittee, as for September

November

- Thursday 7 Committee meeting, for location contact Eleanor Stodart 281 5004 (h)
Thursday 14 Namadgi Subcommittee, as for September
Thursday 28 Environment Subcommittee, as for September

December

- Thursday 5 Committee meeting, as for November
Sunday 8 Christmas Party
Thursday 12 Namadgi Subcommittee, as for September

NPA Bulletin

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General meetings

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

Thursday 19 September: Black and white. Penguins of every shape and size were among Adrienne Nicholson's memories of her recent visit to Antarctica. She photographed just about every one of them and tonight she will show us her best slides of these wonderful birds as well as entertaining us with her experiences in the ice and snow.

Thursday 17 October: Are there *really* Yowies in the Brindabellas? Who pulled the plug out of Lake George? Is the Tasmanian Tiger alive and well in Namadgi National Park? Did bunyips ever exist at Captains Flat? Tonight NPA member and prominent mystery investigator, Tim the Yowie Man, will unravel the hidden secrets of Australia's mystery capital.

Thursday 21 November: The hogs in the hills (Feral pig management in Namadgi). A very successful pig control program is run annually in Namadgi National Park. Ranger Craig Richardson will discuss the history, background, methodology and future of this program. So if you have ever wondered about the piles of wheat or pigs in the park, here's your chance to find out what it's all about.

Sunday 8 December: Christmas party. See the Outings program for details.