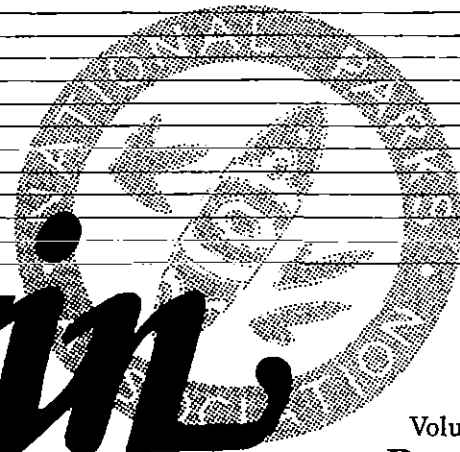


NPA Bulletin



Volume 33 number 4
December 1996

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



The Great North Walk

Boboyan Pines

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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.

Office-bearers and committee

<i>President</i>	Eleanor Stodart 281 5004(h)
<i>Vice-president</i>	Clive Hurlstone 288 7592(h); 246 5516(w)
<i>Immediate past president</i>	Beverley Hammond 288 6577(h)
<i>Secretary and outings coordinator</i>	Max Lawrence 288 1370(h)
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mike Smith 286 2984(h)
Committee	
Len Haskew	281 4268(h); fax 281 4257
Stephen Johnston	254 3738(h); 264 3967(w)
Robin Miller	281 6314(h); 201 2191(w)

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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

Telephone/Fax: (06) 282 5813

Address: PO Box 1940, Woden ACT 2606

Contribute to your *Bulletin*

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

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

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President's foreword

Immediately after the AGM in August I set off to go trekking in the Karakorum in Pakistan and in the Indian Himalayas, leaving Clive Hurlstone to act as president. It was my first visit to Asia and a challenging experience, but also a wonderful one. I thank Clive for acting as president in my absence.

The Draft Management Plan for Canberra Nature Park has been released. Interested groups, such as Parkcare, COG and others, were invited to a meeting organised by Ray Polglaze and chaired by Kathryn Maxwell, president of CCSERAC. That has started a process of consultation which should mean that our response will be very significant. The meeting built on liaison between NPA and Parkcare

groups begun by the Environment Subcommittee.

In the last issue of the *Bulletin* I drew attention to the fact that NPA is currently working at a sizeable loss. Some members understandably are concerned that we are delving into reserves. I would like to reassure all members that the committee has thought through the implications, but the opportunities of the coming year to comment on a number of draft management plans affecting Canberra parks will not be repeated. Stephen Johnston addresses the challenge before us more fully on page 5.

The cost of the research officer is fully covered by government grants and donations. Other government grants contribute to the running of

the office and production of the *Bulletin*. These grants are uncertain. We feel that it would be a mistake to cut further into the running of the office until (and if) absolutely necessary. However, some volunteer help in the office could give Dianne time to do jobs she currently does not manage to fit in. We will be cutting the cost of the *Bulletin*, hopefully with little loss in standard, but here again we need some committed volunteers if the cuts are to be effective. We also need a volunteer to take charge of promotional activities such as our stall at ACT Alive. So, I would like to hear from you! My phone number and those of all committee members are in the front of this *Bulletin*.

Eleanor Stodart

President's report 1995-96

Presented at the annual general meeting on 15 August 1996

During 1995-96 NPA continued to work to its aims and objectives. In this report I have grouped the activities under the five aims and objectives.

- 1) *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.*

This aim covers our response to the Draft Management Plan for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. NPA's research officer, Ray Polglaze, and the Environment Subcommittee headed by Stephen Johnston, put a lot of time into this project. Our response may be summed up as a request for more specific management goals for the protection of flora, fauna and scenery, to flesh out the general policy statements.

NPA has also prepared submissions on the proposals for logging and roading in the Boboyan pine plantation in Namadgi National Park, and on the proposals for rehabilitation of the area. Again Ray Polglaze put in valuable work on this project, with considerable input from the Namadgi Subcommittee headed by Robin Miller.

NPA members have also attended work parties in Namadgi, co-ordinated by Len Haskew from NPA and Craig Richardson from ACT Parks and Conservation Service. The more recent work parties have provided a taste of what will be needed as the Boboyan rehabilitation goes ahead, with removal of pine wildings in the area and the marking of rabbit warrens ready for blasting and ripping.

After upgrading of firetrails on O'Connor Ridge, NPA met with representatives from Parks and Conservation. As a result we had the opportunity to comment on

proposals for other parts of Canberra Nature Park, some restoration work will be carried out, and Parks and Conservation will improve guidelines for firetrail maintenance.

On the cultural heritage front, this year has at last seen the end of a marathon effort by NPA members and Parks and Conservation Service, with the restoration of Orroral Homestead complete.

Further afield, the Environment Subcommittee is following the proposals for development at Perisher, Kosciusko National Park, ready to prepare a submission when the plans and environmental impact statement are made public.

- 2) *Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.*

Outdoor recreation areas form an important part of the Draft Management Plan for the Murrumbidgee River corridor, and of NPA's response to the draft plan.

REPORTS

President's report *continued*

NPA also made a submission to the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and the Environment on the proposed capital works program, in order to emphasise that planning of campgrounds needs to be part of a total environment assessment rather than a series of increments in response to demand.

3) *Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena and cultural heritage by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.*

NPA continues to perform strongly in these areas. Over the year, outings included several with specific objectives – a nature ramble of Black Mountain, a history drive through the Monaro, a history tour of Tidbinbilla, a CE Lane Poole memorial bushwalk, and a tour of Canberra's remnant grasslands – as well as many walks to just enjoy the bush and to explore Canberra Nature Park. The member survey conducted in June showed a demand for a range of walks from easy to challenging. Max Lawrence, as coordinator, is meeting with considerable success in providing the variety requested. I thank Max and all members who come forward as leaders. Without them the program could not begin.

At general meetings, speakers have addressed a variety of topics from glaciation in the Snowy Mountains to threatened species legislation, from the international Ramsar convention to the local Canberra Nature Park and Queanbeyan's areas of conservation value. Most talks have also been reported on in the *Bulletin* so that members not able to attend have been kept informed.

The *Bulletin's* value to most members was demonstrated by the response to the member survey. It has continued to provide a range of articles which stimulate interest in

natural phenomena and cultural heritage. There has been such a range that it may give the wrong idea to single out any one, but the description of the Alpine Track in the ACT, divided in three sections, is worth mentioning. Again I thank all the contributors, and Roger Green and Nicci Haynes of Green Words, whose efforts make the *Bulletin* such a success.

4) *Cooperation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.*

NPA's submission on the Draft Management Plan for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor was prepared in consultation with several ACT groups, in particular with the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra. NPA has had meetings with CCSERAC and Parkcare groups about the upgrading of tracks on O'Connor Ridge, and currently the Environment Subcommittee and Ray Polglaze are working on increasing dialogue between NPA and Parkcare groups.

5) *Promotion of, and education for, conservation, and the planning of landuse to achieve conservation.*

NPA continues actively to educate about and promote conservation and education about it through the *Bulletin* and the speaker program at general meetings, as covered earlier in this report.

One area where we have not yet seen a positive result is in the replacement of the Environment Consultative Committee. The ECC, which included a representative from NPA, advised the ACT Minister for the Environment on environmental matters including the management of parks and reserves. We have received several assurances from the minister that the replacement committee is being organised but we have yet to see anything tangible. The lack of advice to the minister is of

particular concern at a time when many government functions, including the management of parks and reserves, are being extensively reorganised.

In order to support the above program, NPA has a practical business side. The value of the office manager to NPA's every-day functioning was amply demonstrated earlier this year when Maureen Blackmore resigned while on leave so that we had a spell without a manager and then with a temporary manager. The part-time position of office manager provides valuable continuity and support for the voluntary committee members, freeing them from many time-consuming routine duties and enabling them to continue NPA's wide-ranging programs. I thank Dianne Bostjancic for her work as office manager since April.

Management of the accounts is an important business function ably carried out by the treasurer, Mike Smith. He will present his report later. Here I draw attention to the fact that NPA ran at a loss for 1995–96 and we expect a loss again this year. After a build-up of reserves largely as a result of the generosity of Alastair Morrison's support for the bird book, we have the resources to carry the loss. However, we must turn the accounts around in a few years, either by increasing regular sources of income or by curtailing activity.

Contributions by many other members keep NPA active. I mention the regular recording of minutes, for which I thank Max Lawrence, and the provision of suppers at general meetings for which I thank Adrienne Nicholson. Many other members have also played a part in the General Committee, Namadgi and Environment Subcommittees and in less formal ways. I thank you all.

Eleanor Stodart

The challenge before us

Over the next 12 to 18 months the management directions will be largely determined for the ACT's nature parks and reserves for at least the next 10 years.

This unprecedented period of intense activity comes with the release of the draft plans of management for: Canberra Nature Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, the lower Molonglo, Territory Lakes and Government Horse Paddocks, the finalisation of the management plan for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, reviews of the Namadgi National Park and Googong Foreshores management plans, and the fire management plan for the whole territory.

The NPA and its members have a vital role to play in this process: to try to ensure that the management of this remarkable natural estate which occupies more than half the total area of the ACT properly safeguards its nature conservation values.

In preparing the Association's budget for 1996-97, the General Committee decided to draw on reserves to enable the research officer to coordinate and prepare responses to some of the draft management plans. It was not a decision taken lightly. But we recognised that this is a critical period in which we must do our utmost to influence the outcomes, consistent with the first principle of the Association's constitution. Once the management plans have been finalised and approved by the Legislative Assembly, the scope for significant changes in management practices will be considerably reduced if it can be argued that those practices are consistent with the plans.

Clearly, we cannot continue to draw on our limited financial reserves. Our task would be made considerably easier if more people were prepared to volunteer their

time to assist in our endeavours. When too much is left to too few, we simply cannot be as effective as we would like to be, or need to be.

You do not need to be an expert in some branch of ecological science to make a contribution. If you have even passing knowledge and interest in the ACT's parks and reserves, you should be able to, and indeed be motivated to, examine and comment on their proposed future management.

If you have even a glimmer of interest in helping fulfil the crucial goals of your Association, please ring our office on 282 5813, leave your name and telephone number and we will get back to you promptly.

The messages emerging from the two draft management plans already released are mixed. The NPA has applauded the draft plans for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC) and Canberra Nature Park (CNP) for their consistent recognition of the primacy of nature conservation which is evident in most sections. The NPA is nevertheless concerned that the drafts put forward a set of management principles without enough clear prescriptions.

Unlike the 1986 Namadgi National Park plan and plans for many national parks and reserves throughout Australia, the draft plans lack specifics and therefore do not provide a sufficiently clear guide as to how the 29 component parts of the MRC and CNP will be managed in future.

The official response has been that our expectations are unrealistic, that to provide the prescriptive level we believe necessary would be too costly and delay finalisation of the plans by some years.

The credibility of this response is severely compromised by the following considerations.

- Inquiries, studies and draft plans on the Murrumbidgee River

Corridor have been accumulating since at least 1981 and should have provided a more than adequate basis for the sort of detailed plan preferred by the NPA.

- The CNP management planning process commenced seven years ago.
- Detailed maps are available on each of the 24 CNP units along with a significant body of information on their ecological values including the NPA report by Kevin Frawley, *The Conservation of Remnant Woodland and Native Grassland in the ACT*, the NCDC report *Vegetation of the Ainslie-Majura Reserve*, the NCDC/NCPA *Sites of Significance Reports* and a very comprehensive 1972 management plan for the then Black Mountain Reserve.
- In recognition of the limited availability of funds, and the sound management principles set out in the draft plans, planning prescriptions for each of the MRC and CNP units need not have been voluminous nor so restrictive that an appropriate level of management discretion was reduced.

- The NPA's approach is consistent with that adopted for other reserves and parks right around Australia. If other state governments and local councils can achieve the level of specificity necessary within limited budgets, why can't the ACT?

The NPA will therefore continue to push for proper management plans, not sets of planning principles. We will nevertheless also strongly support the broad thrust of those principles which recognise that the needs of recreation must fit in with nature conservation requirements, not the reverse. This

continued on page 6

REPORTS

The challenge before us *continued from page 5*

is particularly important and laudable in the face of an Australia-wide push in national parks and reserves for concessions for private tourist operators, removal of limitations on access for vehicles and horses, and construction of large-scale accommodation facilities.

After all the hard-won battles to achieve protection for important natural areas, the struggle is now increasingly turning to preventing those areas from being compromised. The threat is real and well advanced in other countries. A recent edition of *The Economist* reported on a warning from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to the Canadian Government that the famous Banff National Park might lose its World Heritage status if commercial development was not terminated.

The NPA is not and never has been opposed to reasonable visitor access. The Association was, after all, responsible for the construction of the Yerrabi Track to Boboyan Trig which has enabled thousands of people of all ages and physical capabilities to see the beautiful, subalpine woodlands of Namadgi and the magnificent panorama of the territory's highest mountains. We have also been involved over the years in rehabilitation of the very popular walking track in the Budawang to Corang Peak and beyond.

But we will remain emphatically opposed to compromising the areas' integrity by unfettered vehicular and horse access and tourist developments. While parks *are* for the people, they are primarily for the natural fauna and flora which have been severely reduced elsewhere by rural and urban development.

Stephen Johnston

Photographs wanted

The NPA is updating its promotional display. The new display will be used when the NPA has a stall at community fairs and will also be placed in public libraries.

We need standard colour prints of members and friends taking part in NPA activities such as park care, heritage and natural history outings, day walks, pack walks and car camps in and near the ACT. Please pencil your name and address and where the photo was taken on the backs of your selection of prints and post them to the NPA office or give them to a committee member.

The photographs we select will need to be enlarged which may be done directly from the photo or from your negative. Acknowledgment will be given for all photographs used.

Save Daintree campaign

Recent action by the Queensland Government has prompted the Daintree Rainforest Taskforce to renew its *Save Daintree* campaign. The new Liberal government has decided to put grid power into the privately owned areas of the Daintree rainforest, a World Heritage Area, to supply 1200 subdivision blocks. The previous Labor government had begun a program to provide the residents with solar power systems, but this has since been abandoned with the change of government.

The taskforce has launched a letter writing campaign – you can show support by writing a letter to a relevant minister.

For further information on the campaign contact the Daintree Rainforest Taskforce, PO Box 932, Mossman, Queensland, 4873.

email x-eehs@jcu.edu.au

web <http://www.ece.juc.edu.au/ece/misc/capetrib/rescue.html>

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Christmas party December 8 at Nil Desperandum, Tidbinbilla

★ Nature Reserve. Assemble at the entrance to TNR at 3pm, 4pm or 5pm.

★ Share the wonderful views, and conviviality, and have the opportunity to buy some unique collector's items or enjoy assisting others' enthusiasm.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Access is through locked gates, so members are asked to assemble outside the entrance to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve where there is space for cars to gather. Then at 3pm, 4pm and 5pm, a committee member will conduct each convoy to the homestead. As Nil Desperandum is rather special, those who can are advised to come at 3pm to have a look around.

Snacks and a glass of wine will be provided but bring your own picnic meal.

Matthew Higgins will give a presentation on the history of Nil Desperandum and will show us the eucalypt still and the early koala enclosure. Matthew, a well-known local historian, was involved in assessing the conservation value of Nil Desperandum.

An auction will provide more entertainment. If you have any items of interest to other members, and which you no longer require, please bring them along and come prepared for this chance to obtain collectors' items, Christmas presents (that photo of you on top of Urambi Hill or somewhere even more rare, a jar of Clive's marmalade), or just to be amused as others vie for the items they want.



Hijacked



Newtons Beach protest rally, 8 September 1996. Photo by Len Haskeu

On Sunday, 8 September the Womboyn Ratepayers' Association organised a protest rally to fight proposed wilderness extensions to the Nadgee Wilderness which would block private vehicle access to Womboyn and Newtons beaches. The rally was held at Newtons Beach and as Fiona, Reg and I were already there we decided to stay and watch proceedings. (Incidentally, we all agreed with the proposal to keep the road open and had sent submissions to the NSW Government supporting our viewpoint.) We estimate that about 600 people came to the rally together with the local newspaper reporter and an ABC television crew complete with helicopter.

As we were 'early birds' we had the opportunity to speak to many of the people who had come for the day. Most were mainly interested in access for fishing, and only one person had ventured south into the

present wilderness zone and then only for a brief day walk. So we gained the impression that the rally was really called for the stated purpose of keeping the road open.

How wrong can you be!

Proceedings got under way with a spirited address from the local member. He spoke briefly about the road closure and then continued with his 'set piece' (well, he had no further need for notes). He vehemently attacked the state government, the Wilderness Society, and the faceless bureaucrats and revived the spirit of Paterson and Lawson with emotional city versus the bush arguments. Successive speakers continued in much the same vein but adding their own particular catchcries; for example, the inequity of bans on logging and mining, the locking up of vast resources in national parks and wilderness areas, government interference with commercial

fishing operations, the rights of recreational four-wheel-drive owners to have unlimited access to all public land and, believe it or not, the callous actions of governments in banning grazing in Kosciusko National Park. People who had commercial interests in the immediate vicinity also had their say. Only one of the invited speakers seemed to have no other agenda but public access to the area and a letter was read from a local government councillor whose message was in support of the proposal.

The formalities ended with an exhortation for all present to attend a rally outside Parliament House in Sydney to 'protest about wilderness declarations', on September 17. Indeed, free buses would be provided from Eden. We were all given the impression that the rally had been called to voice concerns about issues such as the proposed road closure to the two beaches. However, the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 September reports that the rally was the result of a possible government proposal to ban logging in 70 per cent of the state's forests and that, in reality, it will be a mass blockade organised by timber interests.

So we found that there is a lot more to protest rallies than the obvious and that the genuine concerns and goodwill of the majority can be very easily manipulated by a minority with ulterior motives.

Len Haskeu

PARKWATCH

The city in a park

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has approved a large increase in accommodation (about 1000 beds) for some of the ski resorts in the Kosciusko National Park. In June this year the service's consultants revealed that there will be a major development at Perisher, with buildings up to five storeys in height. The Perisher development, quite apart from any environmental impacts, will erode the public character of our national parks by a process of privatisation. This is a fundamental departure from national park philosophy and management principles.

Experience at Thredbo shows that the Perisher expansions will be driven by the development and sale of private apartments under long-term leases. In other words, it will be a real estate development in a national park. The National Parks & Wildlife Service can expect to receive a substantial premium – many thousands of dollars per bed – for approving this type of development, and the developers' profits would be commensurate.

If private dwellings can be developed and sold at Kosciusko, the same can happen in any NSW national park.

The Colong Bulletin, Journal of the Colong Foundation, September, 1996

Watered down marine protection

Recent recommendations for marine parks in Victoria fail dismally to offer long-term protection for Victoria's sea life. The Land Conservation Council, the state advisory body on the balanced use of Crown lands, has released recommendations for the protection of Victoria's marine and coastal environment that are conservation in name only. The recommendations will see commercial and recreational fishing, and even marine farming, in marine parks. This is equivalent

to farming rabbits in our land-based parks or killing possums.

Only 3.3 per cent of Victoria's coastal waters will be fully protected from exploitation should these proposals come into effect. We need a minimum of 10 per cent to maintain the diversity and productivity of our marine environment.

People Caring for Nature, VNPA Newsletter, July, 1996

More dam worries

The Kowmung River and Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness are once again under threat from flooding due to the raising of Warragamba Dam. In September last year the Carr Government declared that it would construct a second spillway to provide dam safety, abandoning the more expensive and environmentally destructive plans to raise the dam by 23 metres. Construction of the second spillway still awaits the exhibition of an environmental effects statement. While the government stalls, downstream developers are mounting an increasingly vocal dam-raising campaign.

Wild, Spring, 1996

Park Pass

On the day after the Queensland budget was introduced into Parliament, the Minister for the Environment, Hon Brian Littleproud, held a briefing session for conservation groups and other community organisations. Senior officers of the department explained the provisions of the budget and answered questions afterwards.

The most newsworthy feature was the introduction of park entry fees – proposed to be \$3 per day, or \$10 per month, or \$20 per year for adults (18 and over), with discounts for pensioners to \$2, \$5 and \$10 respectively. Persons under 18 will not be charged.

The minister, in a statement released to the media and those

attending the briefing, stated that 'money raised from the Park Pass would go towards park management'. We sought confirmation of this at the meeting and were assured that Treasury has agreed that proceeds from the fees will, in fact, be added to the budget allocation that would otherwise be made.

NPA News, National Parks Association of Queensland, October, 1996

Fiery end feared for Top End's favourite hopper

A colourful grasshopper – which had become a symbol of the Kakadu area of Australia's wet-dry tropics – could be endangered by the fire management practices in northern national parks, according to a CSIRO researcher.

Leichardt's grasshopper (*Petasida ephippigera*) is a spectacular orange, black and blue insect about six centimetres long which is often used in publicity material for the Northern Territory and was the subject of an Australian postage stamp in 1991.

The grasshopper is dependent on aromatic shrubs of the genus *Pityrodia*, on which it lives and feeds. A preliminary study by Lyn Lowe, from the CSIRO's Tropical Ecosystems Research Centre in Darwin, has shown that when *Pityrodia* is burned, the grasshoppers do not return for at least four years. Yet, at present, nearly all parts of Kakadu and Keep River – the two Northern Territory national parks which contain the only known populations of Leichardt's grasshopper – are burned every few years to prevent large uncontrolled fires from entering the parks.

Ecos No 88, Winter, 1996

Woodlands meet a grave demise

Two hundred years ago, vast areas of land across northern Victoria, the western slopes and plains of NSW and southern Queensland were home to open, grassy woodlands. White box, yellow box or grey box trees thrived, and under them grew an abundance of native grasses and wildflowers.

Early European explorers were impressed by these lush meadows, describing them as park-like and 'covered with thick grass and gay flowers'. As the trees were well spaced, it was possible to introduce flocks of sheep and cattle without even needing to clear the land. And so began the dramatic loss of a unique assemblage of native species. In its stead, we now have vast wheat fields and paddocks sown to introduced grasses. Only about 0.01 per cent of the original grassy white box woodlands exists in a relatively pristine state.

Where are these untouched examples of this important native ecosystem: a national park perhaps? No – the 'top' four sites, containing both tree cover and diverse native understorey, are in cemeteries (two bits of less than five hectares each), on a road strip about 300 metres long, and within a travelling stock reserve. Another ideal place to find native vegetation is along railway easements. And that, sadly, completes the list of places where you're likely to find what was once the most extensive native ecosystem in south-eastern Australia.

Ecos No 88, Winter 1996

Gardens of Stone National Park

In November, 1994, after a 10-year campaign, the Gardens of Stone National Park was declared. It contains habitat for endangered species including koala, yellow-bellied glider, powerful owl, regent honey eater and turquoise parrot. The NPWS is now engaged in the rehabilitation of the area.

Since Gardens of Stone was gazetted, the NPWS has commenced weed and feral animal control programs in consultation with park neighbours, placed signs on park boundaries, removed dumped vehicles and conducted a biodiversity survey in the park. These efforts exceed any land management or conservation initiatives undertaken on this land over the last decade.

In response to a spate of vandalism, including the forcing of a gate at Baal Bone Gap, installed to stop firewood logging and bush rock collection, the service will be increasing ranger patrols.

The Colong Bulletin, Journal of the Colong Foundation, July, 1996

Firestick fictions

A number of recent and influential publications have argued that before 1788 the eucalypt forest had an open woodland structure with widely spaced trees over an open and largely grassy forest floor. This landscape is portrayed as an Aboriginal artefact created by thousands of years of firestick farming, the practice whereby fire was used to increase the productive capacity of the landscape for food.

According to the respected authors, regular light burning was apparently the pattern 'all over Australia' and 'in every conceivable landscape', leaving 'no part of Australia untouched' and resulting in 'very few thick forests'. Since these burning practices have stopped, some now believe that the forests have grown too dense for their own ecological good and need to be thinned by burning or clearing to recreate the open parkland structure.

Enthusiasm for these ideas has taken hold within a range of organisations aware of their utilitarian value. Most recently these arguments have been used by the open parkland fraternity, which includes people from the farming and forestry sectors, to challenge the scientific legitimacy of regulations prohibiting or limiting tree clearing. Such clearing is promoted by them as a massive environmental restoration project.

Farmers, foresters and other open parkland advocates, historically the competitors of the traditional owners, are now using ecological-anthropological ideas in order to advance the use of land for burning, logging, farming and mining. Although these people have in the past minimised estimates of the Aboriginal population of Australia, they now see advantages in claiming high levels of use in forested areas where the evidence suggests there was very little burning. However, it is indeed optimistic to assert, after selective interpretation of selected texts, that we can have as much expertise in managing fire-plant-animal ecosystems as had the original owners after 60 000 years of refinement.

Habitat, Magazine of the ACF, August, 1996

The Great North Walk

The Great North Walk between Sydney and Newcastle was opened in the bicentennial year, 1988. It was the idea of two Sydney bushwalkers and was taken up by the NSW Department of Conservation and Land Management. The total distance is 250 km. Much of the walk is in state forest, national park and council bushland. The 'Discovery Kit' available from the department indicates a walk with great views, splendid forest, historical and some urban features.

We decided on a 10-day walk from Brooklyn, on the south side of the Hawkesbury River, to the town of Teralba, 25 km west of Newcastle, a total distance of 180 km. We camped out on most nights but stayed at Yarradane Lodge in the beautiful Yarramalong Valley on the

fifth night and in cabins at the Teralba Caravan Park on the final night.

On 24 April we travelled by bus to Strathfield, by train to the Hawkesbury River and by water taxi to Patonga on the northern shores of the Hawkesbury River where our walk commenced.

It is wonderful that one can enjoy wilderness so close to the densely populated areas of Sydney and Newcastle. We saw very few people and were in bush most of the time. Some of the features were:

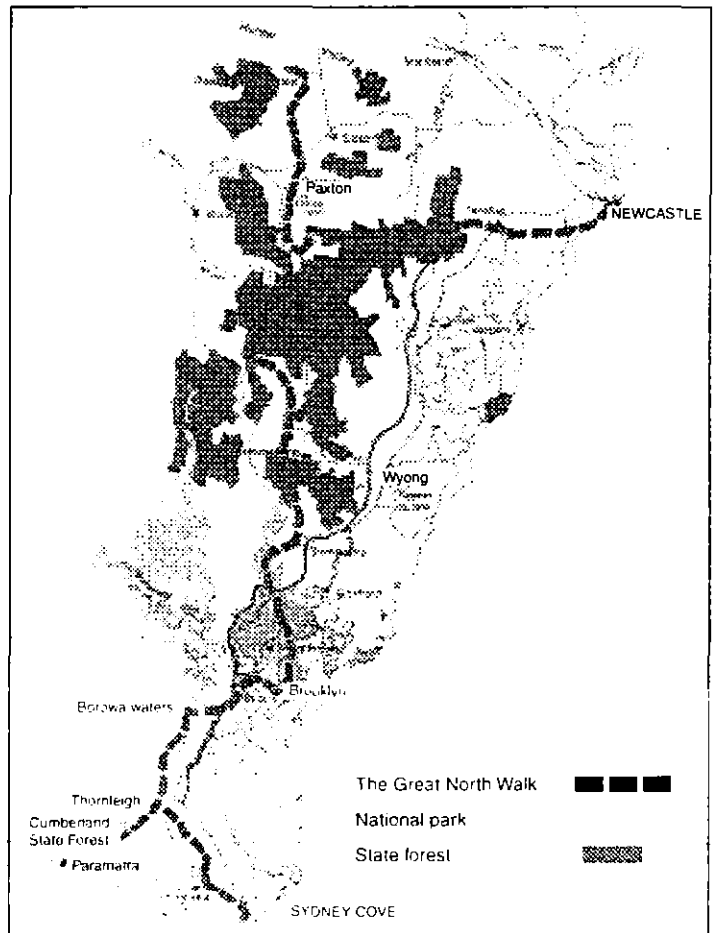
- The naturally-sculptured sandstone escarpment and plateau above Patonga with superb views across the mouth of the Hawkesbury River to Barrenjoey and Pittwater. In flower were eucalypts, banksias, grevilleas

and epacris, including the spectacular red impressa variety.

- Piles Creek with spectacular rainforest: huge, very old kanookas (water gums) and coachwood in its upper reaches; mangrove swamps and ancient shell middens in its lower reaches.
- Majestic, giant birdsnest ferns and gymea lilies growing amongst outcrops of colourful sandstone. Later we saw gymea lilies just bursting into flowers of flame-red on four-metre stems. They rival the waratah in colour, shape, and size.
- The picturesque Bumble Hill Dray Track. It was built in the 1850s to take cedar logs harvested in the Yarramalong area to the Hawkesbury River and on to Sydney by barge.



Photo by Eric Pickering



The route of the Great North Walk

NPA outings program

December 1996 – March 1997

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



6 December Sunday walk
Brindabella Range Ramble
Leader: Steven Forst

Ref: ACT 1:100

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

Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and the Cotter Road at 8.30am. 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 kms, \$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 car park 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 kms, \$10 per car.

8 December (Sunday)

NPA Christmas Party

Leader: Eleanor Stodart

Location: Nil Desperandum

Phone: 281 5004

Our Christmas get-together this year is at the wonderful Nil Desperandum homestead in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. To enjoy this unique location we need to negotiate four locked gates with only one key (which does in fact fit each of them!!). The deal is to meet outside the main entrance gates to the nature reserve, where we will form into groups for the final leg. Car 'convoy's will leave from the entrance promptly at 3, 4 and 5 o'clock, and you are encouraged to join the first of these. Bring a picnic tea.

15 December Sunday walk

2 A/B

Bushfold Flats

Reference: 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 kms, \$8 per car.

18 December day walk

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

2A

Mt Gingera (the easy way)

Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Leader: Col McAlister

Phone: 288 4171

Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.30am. A walk from Mt Ginini car park 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 metres, but the 360 degree views are worth it. 120 kms, \$24 per car.

12 January Sunday walk

3A

Mt Gingera via Stockyard Spur

Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Leader: Col McAlister

Phone: 288 4171

A challenging 900 metre climb for fairly fit walkers. Starting from Corin Dam car park we go to Priors Hut and then (optional) on to Mt Gingera. The first 500 metres is unrelentingly steep but the rewards, particularly the views and changing vegetation, make it all worthwhile. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.00am. 120 kms, \$24 per car.

15 January day walk

Wednesday Walk

Leader: Max Lawrence

Phone: 288 1370

The January edition of our new series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

18 January Saturday walk

1A or 2B/E

Tuross Falls

Ref: Belowra 1:25 000

Leader: Mike Smith

Phone: 286 2984

Meet at Canberra Railway Station at 7.30am. Drive to cascades on headwaters of Tuross River above Tuross Falls east of Cooma. Either (1) walk along new track to overview falls, (2) cross river and walk to top of falls with a scramble to the base of the falls for the adventurous, and/or (3) swim at the cascades if hot for an easy afternoon. 300 kms, \$60 per car.

19 January Sunday walk

1B/C/E

Billy Billy Rocks

Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Leader: Mick Kelly

Phone 241 2330

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 9.00am. Commencing at the Square Rock car park on Corin Dam road, walk to a spectacular pile of granite boulders overlooking the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, with wider views to surrounding peaks and ranges. The route includes some patches of thickish scrub with fallen timber to trip us up. Total climb is about 200 metres, and distance is about 9 kms. Road distance is about 70 kms, \$14 per car.

25–27 January three-day packwalk

4A/C/D

Mt Bimberi

Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000 and

Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

Leader: Stephen Johnston

Phone: 254 3738

From Orroral cross over Cotter Gap to camp in the beautiful Cotter Valley, then a morning climb to the Bimberi summit for a relaxed afternoon. Return on Monday via Murrays Gap and Cotter Gap. Two medium days and one hard. Phone leader early for bookings. 80 kms, \$16 per car.

25–26 January weekend canoe trip

Murrumbidgee River

Leaders: Chris Bellamy

Phone: 249 7167

Kevin Frawley

Phone: 299 3995 or 282 2973(h)

Either start from Jugiong (faster water) and finishing at Gundagai, or start 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.

25 January Saturday walk 1A
Corn Trail Ref: Monga 1:25 000
Leaders: Phil and Leonie Bubb Phone: 248 6769

Book with leaders early as a bus is to be hired to avoid car shuffle, and numbers will be limited. The walk starts near the top of the Clyde mountain, and heads quite steeply downhill into rainforest, with lunch by the river. There may be a few leeches about (bring some salt), but this is a classic walk that bears repeating over and over again. 210 kms, cost to be determined.

1 February Saturday walk 3A/B/C/D
Selectors and surveyors in the South Ref: Shannons Flat 1:25 000
and Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Matthew Higgins Phone: 247 7285

Beginning near Westermans Homestead (1916), we'll walk to a reference tree relating to an early Westerman land survey, and will see an early log fence. We'll follow the southern ACT border, seeing numerous border markers installed in 1915. Return via Grassy Creek to Brayshaws Hut (1903). Nearly 20 kms, mostly off track. Book with leader, numbers limited. Short car shuffle. 150 kms, \$30 per car.

2 February Sunday walk 3A
Red Hill to Mt Taylor Ref: Canberra Street Directory
Leader: Col McAlister Phone 288 4171

A pleasant walk from the Red Hill Lookout to Mt Taylor via Isaacs Ridge and Farrer Ridge. Great views to Canberra City and beyond, and then Woden, Tuggeranong and the Murrumbidgee Valley. Meet at the Mt Taylor picnic area (reached from Waldox St Chifley) at 8.30am. Small car shuffle.

6 February Thursday walk 1A
Brayshaws Hut and Refs: Yaouk 1:25 000
Boboyan Valley history tour and Shannons Flat 1:25 000
Leaders: Graham Scully Phone: 230 3352
Steven Brayshaw Phone: 294 1974

A leisurely walk to the Tin Dish School site, Brayshaws Hut, the Boboyan Homestead site, gravesites, and other sites in the Boboyan Valley. Both leaders will share the considerable information they have gathered over the last few years about the European history of this southern part of the ACT (Steven is a fourth generation descendant of the original Brayshaw settlers). Meet at Namadgi Visitors Centre at 9.00am, but first please book with either leader. 150 kms, \$30 per car.

8-9 February weekend packwalk 1A
Goodradigbee River, Wee Jasper Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Fiona MacDonald Brand Phone: 247 9538

Contact leader by Wednesday for details. A relaxing and easy weekend on the

Goodradigbee River near Micalong Creek. Great campsite with swimming and fishing. 160 kms, \$32 per car.

9 February Sunday walk 1A
Umbagog Park nature ramble Ref: Canberra Street Directory
Leader: Chris Watson Phone: 254 5238

Meet at 9.30am at the footbridge across Ginninderra Creek, opposite the corner of Macrossan Crescent and Backhouse Street, Larham. Explore the trails along the creek, see Aboriginal axe grinding grooves, native grassland remnants, revegetation areas, etc. Bring morning tea. Expect to be finished around 12.30pm.

16 February Sunday walk 2A/B/D
Rendezvous Creek and Nursery Swamp Ref: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Leader: Mick Kelly Phone: 241 2330

Meet at the Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. Commencing at the Nursery Swamp car park, follow track and old firetrail across to Rendezvous Creek via top section of Nursery Creek. From this point a faint track continues downstream to where we can commence climbing to a saddle between spot heights 1351 and 1337. This takes us back into the Nursery Creek swamp system at its southern end where we can pick up the track back to the cars. Two climbs of 200 to 300 metres, and some medium to heavy scrub. 80 kms, \$16 per car.

19 February day walk
Wednesday Walk
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 288 4171

The February edition of our series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

23 February Sunday walk 2A/B
Sawpit Creek, Orroral Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Reg Alder Phone: 254 2240

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. Starting at the Orroral Valley car park follow the Cotter Hut bridle track to Sawpit Creek, and return via Orroral Valley. 80 kms, \$16 per car.

28 February to 4 March car camp
Saltwater Creek Ben Boyd NP
Leader: Mick Kelly Phone: 241 2330

As part of a longer trip south, Joan and Mick Kelly intend spending about four full days at delightful Saltwater Creek in the southern section of Ben Boyd National Park. Activities include walking, swimming, birdwatching, and fishing - or just lazing around. If interested in joining the party, phone leader by mid-January so campsite(s) can be booked.

1 March Saturday morning walk 1A
Uriarra Crossing Ref: Umurra 1:25 000
Leader: Bev Hammond Phone: 288 6577

Meet at 9.30am at Uriarra east car park (on the left before you arrive at the crossing). A 5 km loop walk by the Murrumbidgee with a stop for morning tea. Lunch and a swim if you feel like staying.

1-2 March weekend packwalk 3C/D/E
Mt McKeahnie circuit Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Stephen Johnston Phone: 254 3738

Climb up to the northern end of Mt McKeahnie ridge from Kangaroo Creek on Corin Road, and follow the rocky ridge south to Cotter Hut road. Camp on the headwaters of the Orroral River. Return via Smokers Flat. Almost all off track. Not for beginners. 80 kms, \$16 per car.

8 March Saturday walk 1A/D
Stockyard Creek Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Matthew Higgins Phone: 247 7285

A pretty relaxed (but sometimes steep) walk to one of our more remote arboreta in the Brindabellas. From the Mt Ginnini car park we'll follow the track to the arboretum and have plenty of time to explore the stands of conifers, many dating from the 1940s. Then we'll go on to the ruin of Stockyard Creek Hut, once used by foresters and brumby runners. Book with leader, numbers limited. 120 kms, \$24 per car.

9 March Sunday walk 3A
The Long Flat Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Steven Forst Phone: 251 6817 (h), 279 1326 (w)

Meet at 8.30am at the Kambah Village shops. A fairly easy return walk from the Mt Clear campground along a fire trail for lunch at the southernmost gate in the ACT. The walk passes through some former grazing country and open forest before entering Long Flat, which is a sizable frost hollow alongside the Clear Range. Total walking distance around 15 kms, and there are no steep climbs. 130 kms, \$26 per car.

8-9 March weekend packwalk 3C/D/E
Mounts Scabby and Kelly Refs: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
and Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Phil Gatenby Phone: 254 3094

Contact leader by Wednesday 5 March. Walk from the Boboyan Pines to Sams Creek and Mt Scabby. Climb Mt Kelly on the second day and return via Bogong Gap. A climb of over 800 metres on the first day (not for the unfit or beginners). 100 kms, \$20 per car.

15-17 March long weekend car camp 2A/B/C/D
Kiandra area Refs: Ravine 1:25 000, Cabramurra 1:25 000
Leader: Len Haskew Phone: 281 4268

Car camp at the very pleasant Three Mile Dam reserve. Day walks to suit the party to find indications of previous mining activity, to explore sub-alpine topography, to visit the Yarrangobilly escarpment and photograph some of the best snowgums in KNP. Phone leader for details. 350kms. \$70 per car.

17 March ACT Alive information stall
Lawns of Old Parliament House
Eleanor Stodart Phone: 281 5004
Clive Hurlstone Phone: 288 7592

Annual stall at ACT Alive. Volunteers wanted to staff NPA's information stall.

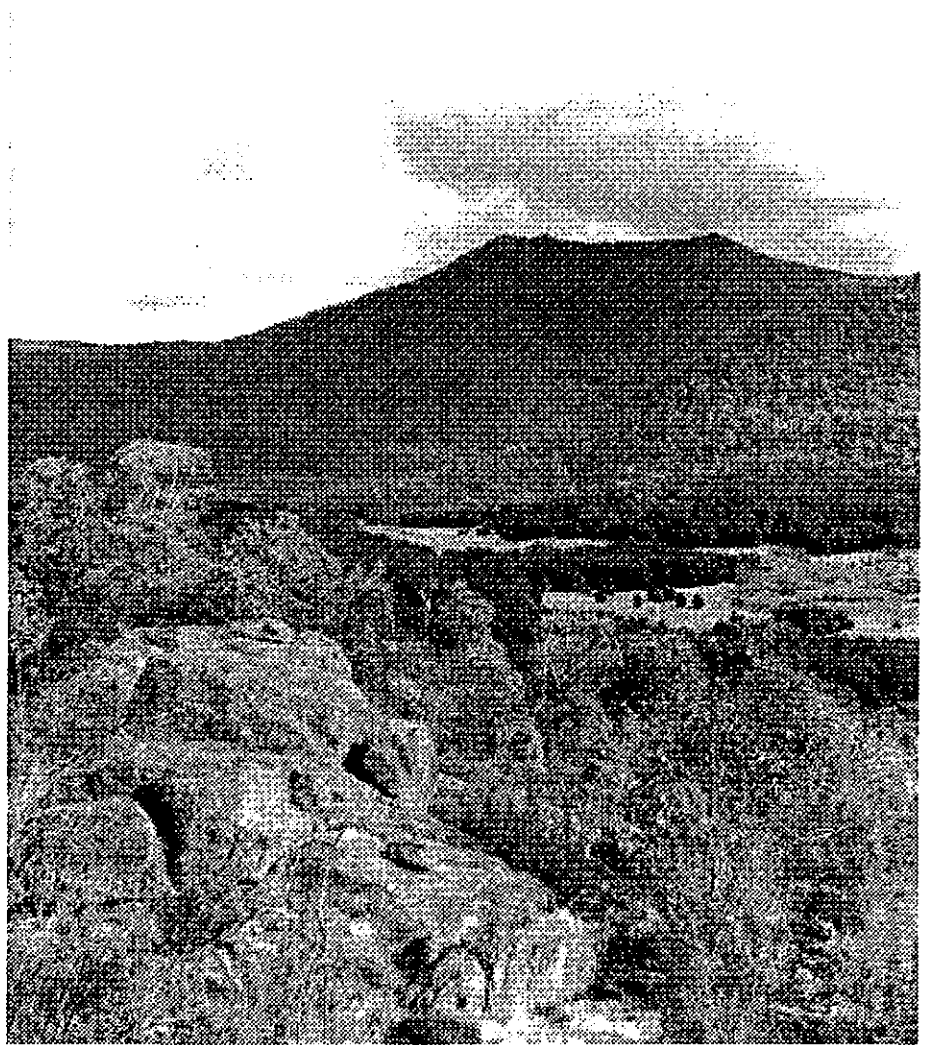
- The care taken in some of the more difficult sections of the foot-track to build steps of wood and sandstone which blend unobtrusively into the forest environment.
- The meeting at Flat Rock Lookout with an elderly woman who had lived all her life in the area. She spoke of Aboriginal secret sites, marked trees, paintings and a tribal battle over fishing rights.
- A forest of spotted gums damp from the rain exhibiting the most beautiful colour patches ranging from pinks to greens and browns.
- A Budawang-like rainforest, amidst sandstone formations. The vegetation glistened in the drizzle. There were birdsnest ferns, tree ferns, cabbage tree palms, a large richea-like plant, thick vines, and hundreds of leeches.

Pat and I thoroughly enjoyed the walk and recommend it to our bushwalking friends as a worthwhile experience. We chose a good time of the year to do the walk. The temperatures were mild. With one exception there was plenty of good water in the creeks. There was enough daylight to walk 20 km a day and set up camp usually by 3.30pm (dark by 5.45pm). An excellent five-day walk would be the Patonga to Yarramalong section. It is also possible to do many sections of the walk as day walks.

The walkers: Syd Comfort, David Frost, Doug Gillies, David Large, Gösta Lynga, Pat and Eric Pickering (leaders), Gary Schneider, John Thwaite, Milton Turner.

Eric Pickering

Boboyan Pines workshop



Gudgenby Peak and the Boboyan pine forest from the knoll to the east of the Old Boboyan road. Photo by Reg Alder

A workshop on the Boboyan Pines rehabilitation project was held on 17 October at the Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre. The rehabilitation project is due to commence this summer with initial harvesting of the pines. The objectives of the workshop were to disseminate current information on the Boboyan Pines project, learn from the experiences gained during similar rehabilitation projects (particularly the Jounama pines rehabilitation in Kosciusko National Park), draw on current research on eucalypt regeneration, and to stimulate discussion on various aspects of the rehabilitation process.

The NPA (ACT) was invited to attend and was represented by Nicki Taws. Also present were representatives from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, ACT Forests, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Conservation Council of South East Region and ACT and researchers from the ANU.

Diane Garrod, business unit manager for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, opened the workshop with a summary of the project, similar to the presentation given to the NPA April general meeting and written up in the June *Bulletin*. Logging of the pines is

continued on page 12

Boboyan Pines workshop *continued from page 11*

scheduled to begin this summer and continue for three seasons. The wet winter and spring this year will probably delay the harvesting until well into the summer. The removal of as many of the pines as possible from the site will be important for the rehabilitation; however, attempts to find a contractor interested in taking some of the non-merchantable pine for pine chips have so far been unsuccessful. A major development for the project has been the appointment of Ann Connelly to the project manager position. One of the first important decisions for Ann will be, in conjunction with ACT Forests, the selection of logging compartments to be removed in the first season. For each compartment removed there will need to be decisions made on the type of rehabilitation to be tried out.

The second presentation was given by Andy Spate, investigations officer for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Andy has been involved with the Jounama rehabilitation project since its inception and he gave a very honest talk about the setbacks and successes they have encountered, and are still encountering, as small areas of the plantation are still being harvested.

The Jounama and Boboyan plantations have some differences, particularly in site history, tree species and weed problems, but also several similarities. The idea of recreating a native ecosystem in the first few years after pine removal is unrealistic. Initially a wide variety of local tree, shrub and ground species were trialled in the Jounama rehabilitation; however, many of the species proved too difficult to collect, store and germinate. Several native species have appeared in the rehabilitation of their own accord and have been extremely valuable as site colonisers. Seed sown is now limited to eucalypt species, which are easy to collect, store and sow.

Experience has shown that perhaps the most cost-effective method of rehabilitation at Jounama is scraping small gaps in the pine slash and sowing eucalypt seed in late autumn. Fire was experimented with as a means of removing the slash; however, it was judged to be too great a risk when the conditions needed for a good burn were invariably those which were likely to result in the fire escaping.

Dr Marilyn Ball, a research scientist at the ANU School of Biological Sciences, gave a fascinating talk on the role of photo-inhibition (light-dependent inhibition of photosynthesis) during tree seedling establishment at low temperatures. A lot of this research has been carried out on snowgum seedlings in the Orroral and Gudgenby valleys and is therefore directly relevant to the Boboyan rehabilitation. When a forest is cleared and converted to a grassland, there are major changes to the microclimate (light, temperature and humidity) at the ground surface. A grassland may be 4-6°C colder on the ground than a forest. Snowgums, as well as the other species to be re-established at Boboyan, have evolved under forest conditions, not grassland conditions. In subalpine areas, these species are growing at the limits of tolerance to the cold conditions and a small difference of only 1-2°C may make all the difference between survival and death.

The work of Marilyn and her students has found that full sunlight and low temperatures are very difficult conditions for plants to contend with. Freezing at night predisposes a seedling to damage by sunlight during the day, and this carries over to slower growth during winter and spring. Damage from frost can be reduced by shading the plants during winter. Secondly, the coldest temperatures on frosty

nights are found at the surface of the grass. Seedlings growing in grass may be up to 5°C colder than those surrounded by bare earth. Protection from the worst cold can be provided by removing grass and exposing the dirt around a seedling. Mulch has the same effect as grass and can dramatically increase the frost damage to seedlings compared to seedlings growing on bare earth. The best regeneration niche for seedlings in these cold environments seems to be where there is protection from frost and protection from intense sunlight.

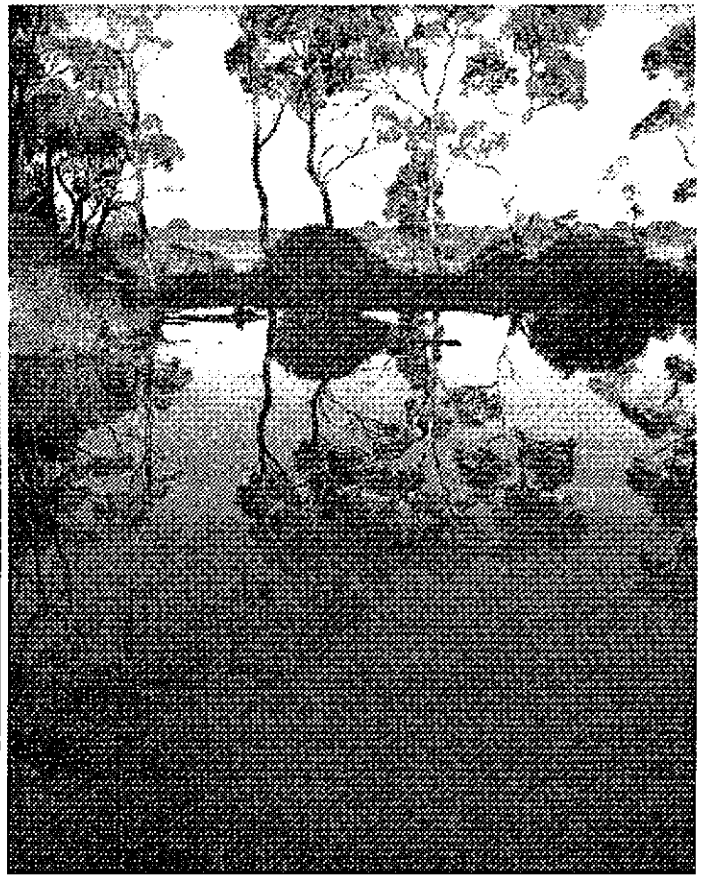
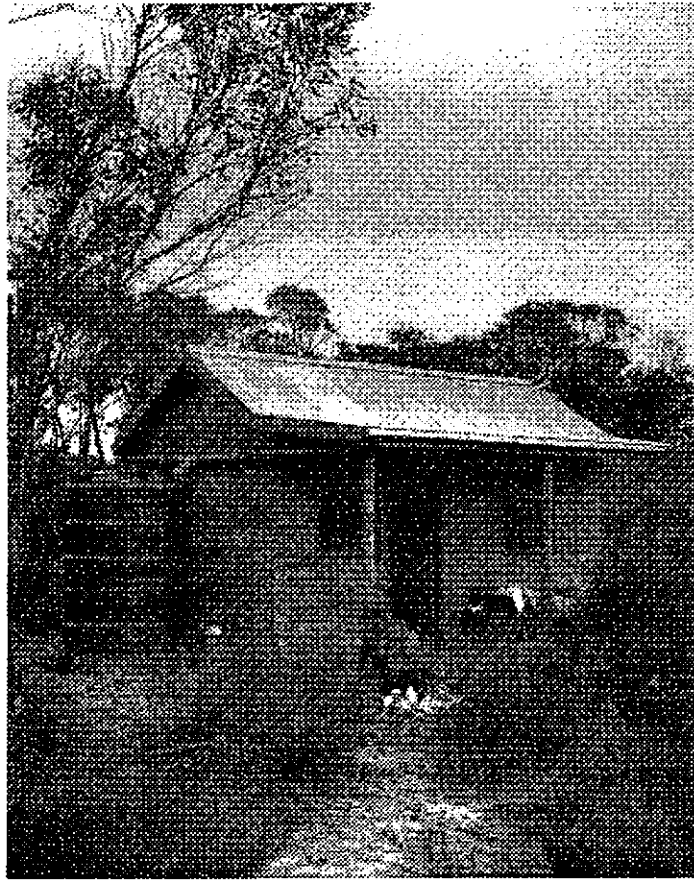
Marilyn's talk led to discussion of the possibilities of leaving shade or shelter belts of some sort to protect the new growth during the first few winters, although this may complicate logging operations and rehabilitation methods. No-one at the workshop was left with any delusions that the rehabilitation is going to be easy or that any one method will be suitable for the whole site. The workshop concluded with an agreement to have key people meet on site to examine suitable areas for different trials to be conducted.

Nicki Taws

New members as at 1 November 1996

Andrew Kettle	Manuka
Milton and Jan Turner	Bonython
Graeme and Patricia Wicks	Mawson
Dorothy Taylor	Cook
Celia Cronin	Curtin
Anne Meade	Kambah
Patricia Williams	Hackett

Desert discovery



Left: Hut at Mallee Camp, and right: waterhole at Eagle Swamp. Photos by Len Haskeew

A long day's drive from Canberra will take you to an area that the Victorian Mallee Tourist Association describes as 'the outback on your doorstep'. If your definition of 'the outback' includes a feeling of isolation, peace and emptiness without the ugly face of tourism, then you would have to agree. And, as one park worker said to me, 'Unless you are totally committed to water or mountains, you will find a part of the Mallee to love.' This proved to be fair comment.

Recently, Reg Alder, Syd and Barbara Comfort, Bonnie Fox, Fiona Brand and I spent about a fortnight exploring and appreciating the mallee parks. Strictly speaking, one of these parks, Little Desert, is in the Wimmera District, and, although the locals see this to be a very significant difference, we tended to see some 'mallee' in all of them.

The Desert Discovery Walk in Little Desert National Park was completed in 1994 and extends through 84 km of gently undulating terrain. It offers many walking options, ranging from one day's duration to four or more. We chose to do a four-day walk from Horseshoe Bend Campground, followed by a day walk from Kiata Campground. The walk is adequately marked with signposts and track markers and the National Parks Service 'mudmap' is all that is necessary for finding the way. The greater part of our walk was on a well-cleared track designated 'walkers only', but, unfortunately, some of the trail bike riders in the area can't read! Each of the designated campsites have water nearby and at two of the sites (Mallee and Yellowgum) there are shelter huts with tank water, fireplaces and toilets. These huts

are, for all practical purposes, identical and have been constructed from recycled timber and corrugated iron. As they are designed to be shelters only, they both have sandy floors and the verandahs and internal benches provide adequate area for cooking in wet weather. The pit toilets are of similar construction but their height in relation to their width makes them look as though they were designed by Emile Mercier.

Walking in Little Desert is both easy and interesting. Most frequently the track winds through extensive heathlands with banksias, tea trees, she-oaks and grass trees predominating. Occasionally, the track traverses stands of trees including brown stringybark, yellowgum, native pines and, of course, mallee eucalypts. The track

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Environment v. exploitation

An old adage states 'Plan for the future from the mistakes of the past'. The 125-year environmental history of the Yosemite National Park in the USA, with the mistakes of management and the exploitation pressures of concessionaires, is covered very fully in *Yosemite - The Embattled Wilderness* by Alfred Runte (1990, University of Nebraska Press).

Yosemite made fascinating reading as it traced the park's environmental history for over a century. There was no discipline of a management plan. Without planning, crisis management predominated with entrepreneurs pressing for developments. Lack of data on which to base decisions made for ad hoc planning. An annual increase in tourists, facilities and amusements was for many years regarded as a measure of successful management.

The passage of the Yosemite Park Act of 1864 provided for the transfer of the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove to the State of California. The park was to be managed by a board of commissioners. It was then

thought that development for tourism was both legitimate and necessary, but barely had the Yosemite Valley been surveyed when there rose the challenge that every park has to face, that protection in name did not guarantee preservation in actuality. Before the area had been surveyed, squatters moved in.

The early history of Yosemite is similar to that experienced in Australia - dispossession of the original inhabitants, squatting and exploitation of the land. In about 1800, smallpox struck the Ahwaneeches and forced their evacuation. On return, they lived peacefully until conflict with miners forced white retaliation and complete evacuation of them from the valley. They never returned. The tribe had practised firestick farming to the extent that the valley's floors were extended green meadows.

Structures to house tourists began to appear by 1857 and the policy of preservation soon changed to one to attract tourists with accommodation, food and facilities for horses and vehicles, roads and tracks. Native

grasses and flowers retreated to parts least used or visited.

By 1880 the High Sierras had been surveyed and thus given legal settlement to the mining, logging and stream-diversion activities that had already taken place. Thirty thousand hectares of prime timberland went to private hands before 1890, when an additional area of 6000 square kilometres established Yosemite as a national park. The Act was the rudiment of future ecological awareness.

In 1891, the United States cavalry was given charge of providing protection to the mountainous area of the park, the commissioners being left with the perplexing problem in that they were expected to protect the park as well as to develop it for tourism.

Grazing of sheep in the park became a problem and the army actively evicted sheep and shepherds to opposite boundaries of the park. The army introduced native trout and exotic fish above the waterfalls to the high alpine streams where previously none existed.

Desert discovery *continued from page 13*

meanders quite a lot and this has been skilfully done to take walkers to little points of interest. This is important because, apart from the first day when Mt Arapliles dominated the southern horizon, a walker's outlook is pretty well confined by the vegetation. We saw much evidence of kangaroos and emus but we did not see any while we were walking. However, we were *more than compensated by bird life*, especially around the campsites. At Mallee Camp we had afternoon tea watched over by a magnificent black kite and at Yellowgum the morning chorus was superb.

We were very fortunate in that there had been heavy rain quite recently but we walked through a large area of the park that had been badly burnt in January of this year

from fires caused by lightning strikes. It was surprising just how the spring growth was rapidly rehabilitating the area and it was interesting to see large areas of white-flowered sundew in between the blackened mallee branches. As we walked through large areas of monocultures, we wondered if they were the result of previous bushfires.

We found that mild daytime temperatures and abundance of spring sunshine made the Desert Discovery Walk an ideal alternative to walks in wetter and colder areas. We also had the track to ourselves and this was an added bonus. Temperatures in summer and mid-autumn often exceed 40 degrees and walking then would be very different to the gentle experience that we had.

After leaving Little Desert we went on to do some day walking in Murray-Sunset, Wyperfield and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks. I would recommend them all.

Also of interest were the small mallee towns. They had obviously been very prosperous in years gone by and had, just as obviously, fallen on hard times. Today, though, they are beginning to make the most of both their history and tranquillity, and we found Dimboola, Nhil, Rainbow, Jeparit, Hopetoun and Ouyen all well worth a little exploration. (I think, though, that Reg was disappointed at not being asked to stay for a wedding breakfast in Dimboola.)

Len Haskew

San Francisco required an extension of their water supply and in 1913 approval was given to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley, a miniature of the Yosemite Valley. In 1963, a proposal to demolish the dam did not eventuate – shades of Lake Pedder!

In 1901, Congress passed a Right of Way Act allowing utility corridors across all public lands. Conceivably this could have meant aqueducts, tunnels, power poles and lines even if a park stood in their way. An excision of 60 square kilometres granted for a railway was made, ostensibly to provide winter access, but really to facilitate logging operations.

In 1906, the control of the park changed from the State of California to the federal authorities.

Changes of superintendents were exploited to secure concessions and, coupled with an array of circulars, letters to the editor and to politicians, and advertisements, the lessees' strategies proved highly effective.

Tensions increased between civilian and military superintendents and in 1914 the era of army administration came to a close. The arrival of civilian administration presaged the establishment of the National Parks Service in 1916. Conservationists' ideals of an agency that could be dedicated to oversee the protection of the nation's resources had been realised. However, the pressures for exploitation of the environment by increased tourism continued.

The beginnings of scientific research to quantify protection ideals began in 1914 when Joseph Grinnell, the Director of Vertebrate

Zoology in the University of California, commenced a survey to identify all the birds, mammals and reptiles to determine their distribution, habits and ecological relationships. His proposal that the park be managed as an island of biological diversity received little support, the superintendents being

that the number of visitors would be in the millions in a century was realised.

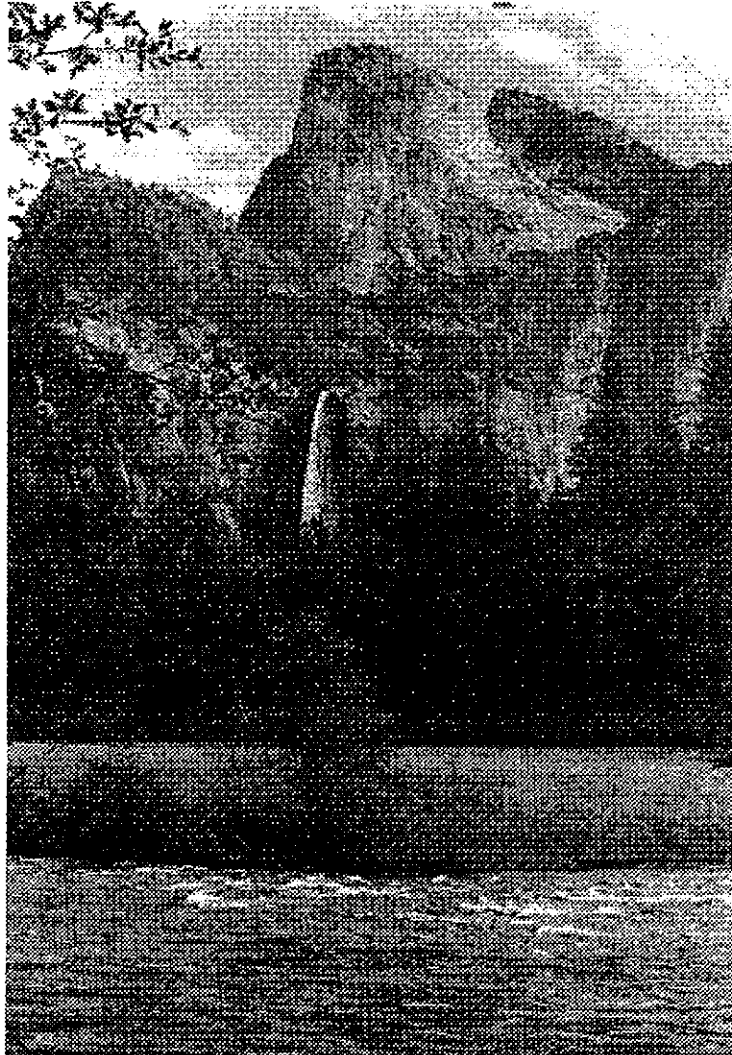
Every serious call for less development came from outside the government bureaucracy while the lessees of the park concessions lobbied for more. Dr John Merriam, President of the Carnegie Institute,

proposed that it was essential to go back to fundamental investigation of the objects dominant in the greater values of the park. This was the origin of a national park board of expert advisers who met and addressed every issue that might have affected the park, such as dredging Mirror Lake to improve reflections, cutting down groves of trees to disclose the view, cableways, sanitation and sewage, trail locations, traffic circulation, and relocation of Yosemite Village. They were faced by concessionaires who believed that there wasn't any problem that couldn't be solved by providing more accommodation and facilities for visitors. The deaths of the leaders in this campaign for environmental awareness brought its impetus to a close, later to be revived only intermittently.

The popularity of the motor car influenced park policies and, with the completion of an all-year highway in 1926, the number of visitors in 1927 rose dramatically to

490 430. After the Depression, government priorities were to put people back to work. For the next nine years, work corps were used in constructing roads, bridges, firebreaks, shelters, picnic sites and tracks with the objective of increasing the number of visitors

(continued on page 16)



The epitome of Yosemite National Park – river, meadow, forest, waterfall, cliffs, mountains – and not forgetting the hidden biota. Photo by Fiona MacDonald Brand

more concerned with attracting and accommodating additional visitors.

The success of a year's work were the statistics in the annual report showing an increase in visitors. Visitors increased to 3 244 512 in 1987, an increase of 261 754 from the previous year. The prediction of a retiring commissioner in the 1860s

HISTORY

Environment v. exploitation *continued from page 15*

without consideration of the biological implications.

In 1945 the Director of the National Park Service instructed the board to address the issue of development. This set the theme for the next 40 years of park planning and debate. The Leopold Committee report of 1968 had ushered in another burst of ecological awareness and commitment to reiterate the proposals that biologists had earlier advanced. The park service changed little and was in practice suspicious of anything deeply scientific.

Over the years, problems which are not unfamiliar in Australia emerged, to be buried and reappear. The 'To burn or not to burn' controversy raged over a long period and prescribed burning has now been introduced as policy.

In 1968 Garrett Harden, Professor of Human Ecology at the University of California, addressed the futility of pleading for voluntary restraint to protect the environment when those involved were intent on increasing personal gain. There was the duality of managing the park for private profit and resource conservation.

Another management plan was commenced in 1968, revising argument to limit access, particularly after a riot occurred on a holiday weekend. Some idea of the magnitude of the problem of the large number of visitors can be realised when you learn that the park has a 22-cell gaol and a resident magistrate. Access to major points of tourist interest was to be by public transport. A gableway was proposed and the absence of park objections made conservationists believe that it was a preferred option.

In 1974 the master plan was rejected and planning was thrown open to the drawn-out process of public comment and citizens' workshops. More than 60 000 participated and, in 1978, comment was included in the master plan released finally in 1980. However, the question of the future of Yosemite remained unanswered; the question

of what was the primary purpose of the park is still relatively unresolved. If it was to be preservation, should everything tangential to that objective be removed? The amount of capital invested was too much and the existing complexes now had a possible heritage value. In a spirit of compromise, the features remain with the existence of development continuing to promote its own self preservation – the new plan only suggested redirection.

It took over a century for a management plan to evolve, but it was too long a period, for most of the damage had been done by then.

* * *

Our parks are being subjected to the same pressures in the name of tourism, skiing, horse riding or trail bike riding, with the argument that facilities for these sports have to be provided because of public demand. The motive of profit never comes into the equation and protection of the environment is a little or unknown factor. The full text of the Yosemite book should be required reading for all involved in the management of national parks and also for conservation organisations. Insidious inroads can be made through ignorance of biological demands and the progression of entrepreneurs taking advantage of the weaknesses in current policies or management plans and proposing yet another small facility.

After 18 years Namadgi still only has an outdated and not wholly applicable management plan. A new version is being rewritten – how much longer will it be before it becomes policy for the park? A long while yet, with the issue of a draft, the process of public consultation, amendment of the draft, approvals and the final issue of the plan.

Does Yosemite's history give you a sense of déjà vu?

Reg Alder

Reg's original article has been edited substantially due to space restrictions.

Contributions

Contributions to the *NPA Bulletin*, be they photographs or articles, are always very welcome. Preference is given to articles about the environment or conservation. Reports of trips are welcome but keep them to two pages, including photographs. Please contact the NPA office, phone 282 5813, or 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 1997

Black and white only

For camera ready artwork:

Full page \$150.00

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One third page \$60.00

Column cm \$3.00

(\$10.00 minimum)

For typesetting add 50%

Insert \$120.00

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Black and white? Colourful Antarctica

Adrienne addressed the September general meeting on her trip to Antarctica.

There is no way I can cover my trip to the deep south last January briefly. I give you some jottings, and you must let your imagination go (mine ran riot).

The journey

A friend and I flew from Australia to Argentina on Christmas day, and spent a week in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego (and thereby hangs a tale) before the main trip. Departed in the Russian icebreaker, *Kapitan Klebnikov*, from Ushuaia on the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego on 2 January. South in a day and two nights of calm seas through the Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties, to the Antarctic Peninsula. A quick side trip around into the Weddell Sea, then a week exploring [the penguins of] the South Shetland Islands, down the western side of the peninsula, and its islands. Out into the open of the Bellingshausen Sea, to the extremely isolated Peter I Island. Blending into the Amundsen Sea, then through thick pack ice into the mirror-calm Ross Sea and sailing along the spectacular Ross Ice Shelf. Around the edge of Ross Island, dominated by the active volcano

Mt Erebus, south through the fast ice of McMurdo Sound to American and New Zealand research bases. Very moving visits to three of the historic huts from the heroic age of Antarctic exploration; Scott's Discovery Hut, and Shackleton's and Scott's huts at Cape Royds and Cape Evans. North along the spectacular west coast of the sound and the Ross Sea, with excursions into the fascinating Dry Valleys, and a close-up visit from an emperor penguin. Left the continent behind, passed the Balleny Islands with a short pause, and on to amazing visits to Macquarie Island, then New Zealand's Campbell and Auckland Islands. On 31 January we sailed up the Yarra into the heart of Melbourne (not Hobart as originally planned, and thereby hangs another tale).

Penguins

A summary of the penguins we came to know (and, in my case certainly, to love). The different species show considerable variety, given the usual impression of 'a penguin is black and white'.

Adelies

This one is the absolute epitome of the fastidious white tie and tails gentleman. A top hat, silk scarf and ebony cane would not have raised

an eyebrow. Except their own white eye ring gives them a permanent quizzical look.

Chinstraps

Also black and white, but with an immaculate fine black line from cheek to cheek constraining any tendency to double chins.

Emperors

The largest of the penguins, and the only one to breed through the dead of winter in rookeries actually on mainland fast ice. Both parents take weeks-long turns nurturing the egg, and then the small chick, on the tops of their feet to keep it off the ice, further keeping it warm under a copious skin fold.

Gentoos

A white splash on either side of the head above and behind the eyes, comically pink feet.

Hoihos (yellow-eyed penguins)

Far and away the shyest of the species we came across. Grey with a pale front, and with an indistinct light yellowish horizontal stripe behind their eyes which are, indeed, yellow. Hoiho is their Maori name and they occur around New Zealand's southern fjords and its subantarctic islands.



Admiralty Mountains, NW Ross Sea coast off Cape Roget. Photo by Adrienne Nicholson

TRIPS

Black and white? Colourful Antarctica *continued*

Kings

Similar to Emperors but smaller, brighter (in colouring at least, who knows about the brain) orange patches sweeping back about the neck and head. Inhabit subantarctic areas, huge rookeries on Macquarie Island beaches.

Macaronis

Named for the yellow fly-away crest of yellow feathers on either side of the top of the head (stuck a feather in his cap, and called it "macaroni"; from a hairstyle in the days of Yankee Doodle Dandee).

Rockhoppers

Very few of these, and possibly some among the royals (which they closely resemble) at Sandy Bay on Macquarie Island.

Royals

Another crested species, with another version of the long, yellow headdress feathers.

Antarctic and subantarctic penguins rarely come in ones or twos, except maybe at sea, foraging. At home in their breeding rookeries, they come in their thousands, their tens of thousands, their hundreds of thousands! I was not prepared for my first sight of a colony on, fittingly, Penguin Island off King George Island in the South Shetland group, even though I had wished for and dreamt about such a happening for decades. Pictures of penguins in numbers described as 'fifty thousand breeding pairs' are amazing; to be right in there amongst them is unbelievable. Throughout the whole trip we must have seen millions of penguins and, contrary to rumour, I did **not** photograph every one of them. Some got away!

Other birds

Cape petrels (pintados), giant petrels, wandering albatross, royal albatross, black-browed albatross, light-mantled sooty albatross, Arctic terns, Wilson's storm petrels, skuas, kelp gulls, prions, sheathbills (a land bird), blue-eyed shags, etc. etc.



'If you want your soul to smile, look at a penguin!' (from Heidi, a fellow passenger). Photo by Adrienne Nicholson

Whales

Killer whales (orcas), humpback whales, minke whales and dolphins, and so on.

Seals

Elephant seals (gross, in size and character), crabeaters, weddells, leopards (eat penguins), Ross seal (rarely sighted, therefore a real treat), hooker sea lions, New Zealand fur seals, and maybe more.

Geography/geology/landforms

Volcanic activity past and present. Ice and snow layered between volcanic ash layers. Hot fresh spring water seeping out **onto** icy sea water (Deception Island). The spectacular Lemaire Channel formed by an earthquake along a fault line. The smoking top of Mt Erebus on Ross Island. The Dry Valleys to the west of McMurdo Sound. Pack ice, fast ice, icebergs, bergy bits, etc. Glaciers calving wonderful sculptural forms as icebergs into the sea, ice shelves calving flat-topped icebergs into the sea. Granites, sedimentary rocks, all kinds of geology.

Vegetation

For Antarctica itself, two flowering species but only in the far north of the Antarctic Peninsula (Antarctic

pearlwort and a grass species). For the rest, mosses, lichens and algae which nevertheless add an amazing amount of colour not only to rocks and soil, but also to ice and snow. Subantarctic islands are a different matter, with a wealth of vegetation too numerous to describe.

Science and environment

As a world park, the Antarctic deserves its unique status. For the scenery, the superlatives spectacular, magnificent, amazing seem inadequate. Despite man's exploitation last and this century, the animals are not afraid of people, and this fact alone makes it an exceptional place, deserving of preservation from any form of future exploitation (a problem for tourism, no matter how ecologically sound). Some of the research bases are highly environmentally aware, to the point of cleaning up past problems, both of their own making and, in some cases, of other nations. Nowadays, theoretically whatever goes down, comes back. At some bases, the policy of removing past rubbish still has a way to go. On the peninsula, which is so accessible from South America, the potential for swamping by tourists is real and it is to be hoped that codes of

practice for tourists and for tour companies can be held up. Our ship discharged no waste after we crossed 60 degrees south, the demarcation line for the Antarctic Treaty to come into effect. It had sophisticated water treatment and recycling plants, and I believe the 'engine room trips' were most impressive and informative on various environmentally friendly points to running the ship (as much as a thumping great diesel engined ship ploughing its way through thick and thin can be 'friendly').

Heritage

Down the Antarctic Peninsula there is a wealth of history. Shipwrecks, survivors' stone huts, crosses for those less fortunate, ruins of old whaling stations, even many of the geographical names are from the past history of exploration, and exploitation. Around the Ross Sea area we visited several historic huts. The dry cold preserves well, and the huts still hold provisions and even personal effects, as left by the early parties. The New Zealanders seem to be doing a good job with an Antarctic heritage program working well. We were tightly (but not unreasonably) controlled for these shore excursions, in several places limited to small numbers at any one time. Visitors to the historic huts, for instance, are limited to six or eight at a time, and must be accompanied by an official guide. I was quite impressed with both the organisation and the flexibility which enabled our opportunities to be maximised while still keeping up all possible protection for the environment. Whether this can be preserved with the ever-increasing numbers going south, I don't know, but I sincerely hope so.

The weather

Fantastic, blue skies and white fluffy clouds much of the time, calm seas and very little wind most of the time, and temperatures mostly around zero! You can be very lucky.

Adrienne Nicholson

Days at the NPA office

Life at the office is never the same and the work never goes away. One project finishes and another one begins. The phone has been a little more silent but still rings with similar requests from the public which include:

- Career advice including unpaid labour for work experience with both the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Parks and Conservation Service
- currency of membership and joining enquiries
- camping enquiries for national parks is on the increase with the summer holidays looming
- requests for information for school projects
- spring has sprung and so do spiders!
- diseased trees and the removal of trees from nature strips
- a request from the pre-school to assist with cleaning up after some thoughtless vandals decided that pouring paint and glue over the floor and ceiling would make for some good entertainment. Our office was untouched.

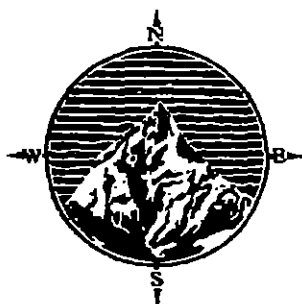
Dianne Bostjancic

Proposed subscription fee increase

At the February general meeting the committee will put forward a proposal to increase the annual subscription for all categories by \$5.00. This increase will go a small way towards balancing the budget.

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Holidays



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Calendar

December

- Thursday 5 Committee meeting, for location contact Eleanor Stodart 281 5004 (h)
Thursday 12 Namadgi Subcommittee, for location contact Robin Miller 281 6314 (h)

January

- Thursday 23 Environment Subcommittee, contact Stephen Johnston 254 3738 (h)

February

- Thursday 6 Committee meeting, as for December
Thursday 13 Namadgi Subcommittee, as for December
Thursday 27 Environment Subcommittee, as for January

March

- Thursday 6 Committee meeting, as for December
Thursday 13 Namadgi Subcommittee, as for December
Tuesday 25 Environment Subcommittee, as for January

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General meetings

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

Thursday 20 February: Planning for the future. Dr Colin Adrian, Director of ACT Parks and Conservation Service, will talk about his role and functions, and his vision for Namadgi National Park. He will also discuss management planning processes.

Thursday 20 March: Land of fire and ice. Judy Webster will share with us her experiences of trekking in Iceland.

Thursday 17 April: New additions. A representative from the southern zone of the NSW NPWS will tell us about the new national parks that have been declared in the area near us. He will discuss conservation problems and what the service has achieved.