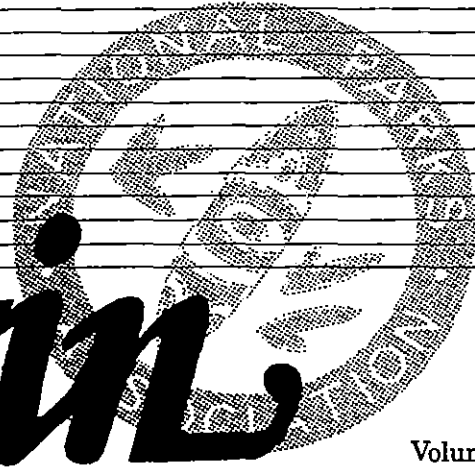


NPA Bulletin



Volume 35 number 2
June 1998

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



Jervis Bay Marine Park

From Wiluna to Billiluna and back

Lower Molonglo Plan

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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

President

Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592(h); 6246 5516(w)

Immediate past president

Eleanor Stodart 6281 5004(h)

Secretary

Max Lawrence 6288 1370(h)

Treasurer

Mike Smith 6286 2984(h)

Yvonne Bartos 6231 5699(h)

Len Haskew 6281 4268(h); fax 6281 4257

Stephen Johnston 6258 3833(h); 6264 2035(w)

Robin Miller 6281 6314(h); 6201 2191(w)

Cover

Remnant rainforest, Green Point, Beecroft Peninsula, Jervis Bay. Photo, Reg Alder

The NPA (ACT) office is located in Maclaurin Cres, Chifley, next to the preschool and is staffed by Dianne Hastie. Office hours are: 9am to 1pm Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Telephone/Fax: (02) 6282 5813

Address: PO Box 1940, Woden ACT 2606

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New members are welcome and should enquire through the NPA office.

Subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

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NPA Bulletin

Contributions of articles, line drawings and photographs including colour prints are welcome and should be lodged with the office or Syd Comfort (02) 6286 2578.

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

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From the President

Members will find two inserts in this edition of the Bulletin: a membership renewal form and a map showing the location of Forestry House.

When completing your membership renewal please consider the reverse side where a number of the activities of the NPA in which you could become involved are listed. If one or more of these interest you please tick the box and you will be contacted and informed of events by a convenor or, if you prefer, contact one of the NPA people listed inside the front cover.

The other insert concerns the change in general meeting venue. The NPA has been meeting at the Griffin Centre for over 20 years but with the increasing levels of night time activity around Bunda Street, intrusive noise has become a problem. So it's a reluctant goodbye to the Griffin Centre and welcome to Forestry House in July.

Whilst driving to a meeting in

Namadgi, one of my companions drew attention to the pale buff coloured tree crowns scattered across the hillsides singly and in clumps – dead trees. Probably fewer than one tree in 500 have died but a significant number none the less. This is an indication of the severity of the drought still gripping us. Just recently I read that the weather experts are predicting a return of more normal weather by spring with the breakup of the current El Nino event. This observation on the drought and its coming end was not unrelated to the meeting at Namadgi to discuss the rehabilitation of the site of the former Boboyan pine plantation.

The meeting was being held to foster the establishment of a Park Care group to channel community involvement in rehabilitation of the area which was previously under pines. About twenty people came along including some locals from the Tharwa area and after a present-

ation on the project at Namadgi Visitors Centre by Ranger Steve Welch and Park Care Coordinator Ann Connolly we went to view the site. When weather conditions are right park staff plan to burn 90ha of pine residue in the Hospital Creek area and west of Bogong Creek; the ash bed is ideal for germinating broadcast seed and establishing transplants and winter the best time. If the drought is breaking we may get some wet winters rather than dry very frosty ones which will mean better survival of tree and shrub seedlings. The timing of volunteer involvement is very weather dependent so at this stage the NPA cannot fix dates in the outings program. I hope that two weeks' notice will be possible and telephone notification will be used. If you would like to be involved with the Park Care group committee or be on the contact list for work parties please phone Diane at the NPA office.

Clive Hurlstone

NSW tourism strategy

The NSW Government has issued a draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy for comment and naturally with our long-standing interest in NSW national parks the association submitted comments, despite the usual ridiculously tight deadline governments of all kinds seem to delight in demanding from their interest groups.

Whilst the strategy makes frequent reference to the fact that national parks were established first and foremost for nature conservation purposes it is quite clear from the tone of the draft strategy and the language used that government tourism bodies have had a major hand in its drafting, its flavour and its direction. This is to be expected. However more than just lip service must now be paid to terms like limits to acceptable change, best practice, ecologically sustainable develop-

ment and the precautionary principle. It is accepted that greater public use of national parks is inevitable, and that this strategy will allow the NPWS to direct this rather than merely react to problems that greater use can cause if unregulated. NPA-ACT stressed, however, that nature conservation and in particular the maintenance of biodiversity, remains the primary purpose of national parks. The mistakes made in such parks as Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Kosciuszko, must never be repeated in NSW in the future.

Our submission made the point that it has to be accepted by the tourism industry and commercial tour operators that some activities, no matter how popular and profitable they become, are never appropriate to a national park and that others, such as horse riding, mountain bike riding, hang gliding,

abseiling, orienteering, rafting, will always be subject to the most critical scrutiny and regulation. National parks cannot provide all the recreational facilities demanded. This is not their purpose. The tourism industry must realise that very often it must turn to state forests, state recreational areas and private land to provide the resources for its activities. Naturally the use of these alternative sites should be in accord with appropriate management plans to ensure that their national values are also adequately protected.

The strategy deals with access issues, funding from commercial activities and developments and 'improvements' within parks. We emphasised in particular that nothing can replace adequate public funding of nature conservation.

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Jervis Bay Marine Park

Jervis Bay Marine Park was gazetted on 2 January this year, realising a long-held ambition of the NPA ACT. With the waters around the Solitary Islands near Coffs Harbour, it became one of the first two marine parks in New South Wales.

The marine park includes the waters of Jervis Bay and its tidal tributaries and a narrow offshore band stretching from Kinghorn Point reef in the north to Sussex Inlet in the south. Wreck Bay is included.

The new park aims to protect rich marine life, including some of the largest seagrass beds on the east coast of Australia, some 231 species of marine algae (seaweed), many sea birds, the endangered Grey Nurse Shark, a colony of fur-seals, a resident pod of bottlenose dolphins, a large colony of Little Penguins that breed on Bowen Island, many fish species, and often late in spring, visiting whales resting on their return journey to Antarctic waters.

The bay contains dramatic underwater scenery, every year attracting tens of thousands of divers. It is said to be one of the best diving localities on the east coast of Australia.

This beautiful marine resource, together with the surrounding Booderee National Park (Commonwealth Territory) and the NSW Jervis Bay National Park, attracts increasing numbers of holiday-makers and tourists each summer.

Conservation organisations, including the NPA ACT, had called for the declaration of the marine park for nearly two decades. In 1990, NPA assisted the Australian Conservation Foundation's Canberra Branch to prepare a proposal for a marine reserve and for protection of its catchment.

Marine park management

Declaration of Jervis Bay Marine Park was made possible by new NSW legislation, the *Marine Parks Act 1997*. This Act also created a

NSW Marine Parks Authority to manage marine parks, comprising the Director-General of the Premier's Department (Chair), the Director of NSW Fisheries and the Director-General of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Mechanisms for ensuring public input into management include a statewide advisory council and an advisory committee for each marine park, made up of local interest groups.

The power of the new legislation relies on the designation of various use zones – determined through a comprehensive public consultation process – through which regulations will be enforced.

At this stage, it looks as if the zones will be similar to those proposed in the draft management plan prepared in 1994 by NSW Fisheries for a proposed aquatic reserve. There are likely to be sanctuary zones, general use zones, refuge zones, special purpose zones and designated management zones. Regulations will dictate what is permitted, and what is not permitted, in each zone.

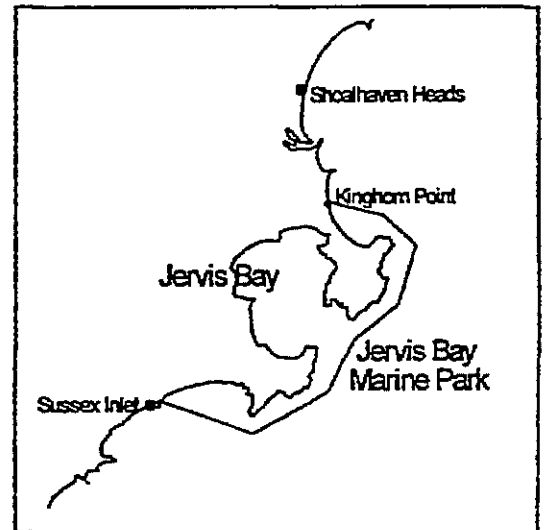
Public consultation

The draft zoning plan is due for release for public consultation in June 1998.

Park authorities say it could be up to two years before the consultation process is completed and the zoning system is in place.

Major issues

While the concept of zoning is based on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park model, it should be borne in mind that the Barrier Reef stretches for more than 2000km and the multiple uses permitted there can be contained in discrete areas. Jervis Bay is a small area – you can see from one shore to the other – and the marine species like dolphins and



penguins use it all. There is a strong argument that the entire bay should be managed as one entity for conservation. It is difficult to imagine how 'ecologically sustainable activities including commercial and recreational fishing' in one locality will not affect the entity. Taking pressure off one zone may increase pressure on another.

Local conservationists are hoping the forthcoming consultation process will clarify some of these concerns. They have a list of issues that they want addressed in the zoning plan. These include:

- extension of the marine park's ocean boundary further eastward to align with the State/Commonwealth waters boundary. Reducing the number of different jurisdictions within a relatively small area would obviously help authorities in watching over the area. Also, extension of the boundary would mean the marine park was more consistent with the foraging range of the Little Penguins;
- a total ban on jet skis;
- a ban on spearfishing. (spearfishing is prohibited in the adjacent waters of Booderee National Park);

continued on page 5

Jervis Bay Marine Park *continued*

- a ban on rock platform foraging;
- an end to sewage being discharged in the bay; and
- regulations on commercial fishing.

Commercial fishing is a difficult issue. Three or four local pilchard boats and a few individual fishermen have been operating out of Huskisson for many years. Their operations probably are sustainable. However, the bay is often used over the mid-summer months by the big fishing trawlers of the east coast tuna long-line fleet that come in for pilchards and other bait fish. Catch returns on their operations are hard to obtain and there is a prevailing view here that they should go elsewhere, or use dead bait bought at the fish markets. This is an issue that is expected to be discussed during the consultation phase.

The naval presence in Jervis Bay – dating back to the first decade of this century – is another major issue. One hopes the zoning plan is not compromised in any way by defence demands.

The present reality is that a marine park has been created, but until the zones and their boundaries have been finalised the beautiful bay and its natural legacy remain unprotected.

The most important decisions for Jervis Bay are yet to come.

If you would like to participate in the consultation process, contact Nowra Office of the NPWS on 02 44239800, or Fisheries on 02 44232200.

Den Robin

Commonwealth environment legislation reform

The association has made a submission in response to the 'consultation' paper issued by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Senator Robert Hill, on proposed changes to Commonwealth environment and heritage legislation. Given that only a month was provided for comments on what is to be the most important review of Commonwealth/State/Territory environmental legislation since the early seventies, it is not difficult to be cynical about the exercise.

Whilst the association agrees that serious consideration should be given to overhauling Commonwealth environmental and heritage legislation, it does not agree that the Commonwealth Government should seek to hand over most of its existing responsibilities to the states and territories, as appears to have been agreed under the Council of Australian Governments' Heads of Agreement on environmental responsibilities.

By and large, the states and territories have a far from satisfactory record in protecting their natural and cultural environments and it has only been through strong Commonwealth interest and action that any action of significance has taken place in the past. One has only to cite Queensland's appalling history of native vegetation clearance and the attitudes of Tasmanian and Western Australian governments to their native forests to

appreciate why the Commonwealth Government must continue to be involved in these *national* issues.

The consultation paper restricts the environmental matters that the Commonwealth will have a continuing interest in to a very limited list. Amazingly this list does not include climate change, vegetation clearance and land degradation. These are three of the major issues in which, by their very nature, the Commonwealth must continue to play a leading role. The states and territories just do not have the political will or resources to take these matters over.

While there can be no doubt that the creation and management of national parks (except in Commonwealth territories) have always been and will continue to be a state responsibilities, the Commonwealth's role through such bodies as the World Heritage Unit and the old Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has been crucial to maintain 'best practice' and to supplement the meager resources provided by the states for the management of their parks. The success of the Alps Liaison Agreement, the good management of the Tasmania Wilderness World Heritage parks, Willandra Lakes and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, feral animal and weed control programs and Land Care all demonstrate the continuing need for a strong Commonwealth presence in national park funding and program coordination. Management issues do not stop at state borders.

The Howard Government's intention to withdraw from most environmental and heritage matters has received little attention from other than the conservation press. NPA members must follow the proposals as they start to be debated in Parliament and ensure that they receive the public scrutiny and debate they deserve.

Timothy Walsh

NSW tourism strategy *continued*

There is much to applaud in the draft strategy. However much of it does appear to be driven by the needs of the tourist industry and the perceived economic advantage to NSW of the Olympic Games. Great care must be taken to allow conservation interests, both government and community, to have

primary standing when management plans and issues are determined. The NPWS must not allow itself to be captured by the tourist and other high impact interests.

Timothy Walsh

From Wiluna to Billiluna and back

In August 1997 an organised group including two Canberrans, Eleanor Stodart and Reet Vallack did a round trip from Alice Springs and travelled the Canning Stock Route from Wiluna to Billiluna, south of Halls Creek. Here are Reet's account of the trip and two of Eleanor's sketches.

The Canning Stock Route in Western Australia is one of the most isolated tracks in the world. In 1942 an army expedition attempted to drive along it and only managed about 350km – less than a quarter of the distance. The first successful vehicular crossing was made in 1968. Nowadays, hundreds of four-wheel-drive vehicles traverse it every year.

The distance to be covered is difficult to determine as a number of wells, or their ruins, are situated away from the main vehicular track: it will vary from 1500km to 1700km.

The vehicles have to be strong and powerful. The track is often stony or badly corrugated, which can shake both the vehicles and passengers, and if there is anything to fall apart, it will. We had luck as our only problems were with roof racks and radio aerials. By the end only two of our four vehicles could communicate. Crossing 800 to 1000 sand dunes adds to the need for well-maintained gear boxes and good tyres.

Our trip started in Alice Springs.

We drove from there to Uluru, and camped at the Yulara Resort. Then we continued west over the WA border to follow the Gunbarrel Highway, built in 1956–58 for use by the rocket range at Woomera. Sometimes this road was worse than the Canning Stock Route. It took five days to reach Wiluna.

This is where the famous stock route starts, but recent rains had closed the southern part, and

we had to drive a few hundred kilometres through Granite Downs Station to join it at Well 5. But we were also lucky because of the rain a few weeks before our arrival. Plants in the desert do not necessarily flower seasonally but wait for suitable rainfall to trigger flowering.

Apart from a few windmills in the southern parts where the route crosses cattle properties, another at Well 33, and a defunct one whirling at Well 51, there are only two 'buildings' along the whole track – a dunny at Durba Springs, the most popular camp site, consisting of tin walls and a hole in the ground, and a telephone box recently erected 4km from Well 33.

Three wells – 6, 26 and 46 – have been fully restored. Georgia Bore on the Talawana Track, about 3km from Well 23, also has a water supply. Well 41 supplies good water with bucket and rope. At Killagurra (Well 17) and Wardabunni (Well 38) there is good water in rock holes. Places where the water is closer to the surface are marked by the

melaleucas that grow in moister areas.

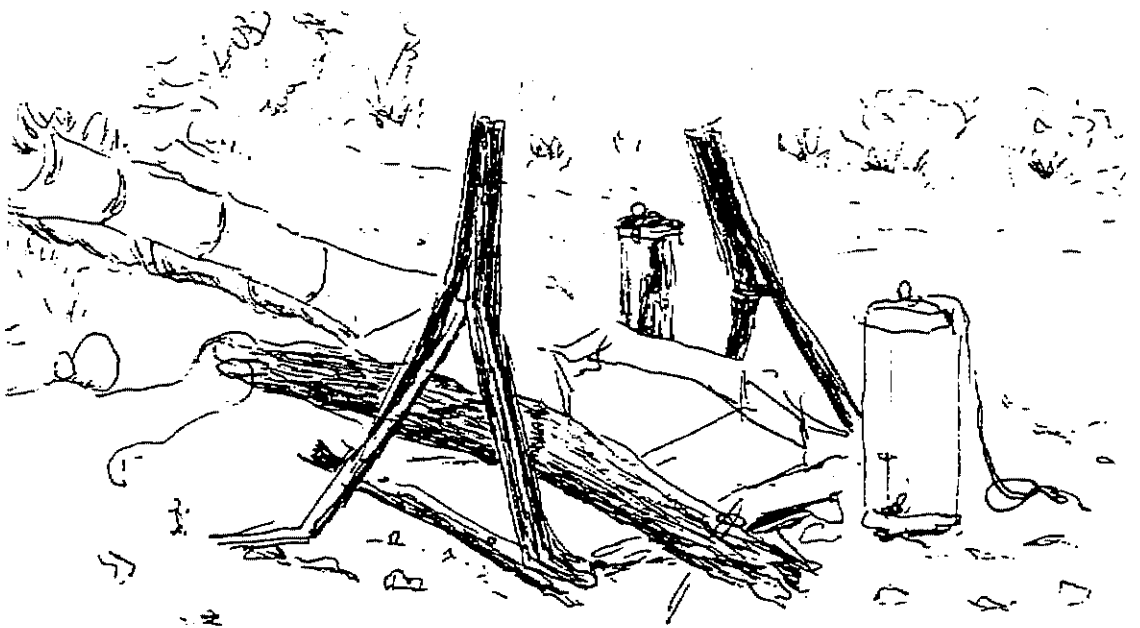
No fuel is available for 1700km, so it must be pre-ordered and paid for. It is brought along the Talawana Track from Newman, 450km away, and collected at the junction of the stock route and the track near Well 23. In the middle of red sand and spinifex lie vast numbers of 44-gallon drums with the names of individuals or companies written on them.

After Well 51, the stock route ends at Billiluna, a cattle station which sent many animals down the stock route, and is now an Aboriginal settlement where fuel is available. From there the Tanami road is accessed to return to Alice Springs in a couple of days.

Our trip, covered about 4500km in 22 days.

The Canning Stock Route owes its existence to the introduction of cattle tick with cattle brought to northern Australia from Batavia in 1872.

In 1879 Alexander Forrest was sent to northern Western Australia



Well 27. Drawn by Eleanor Stodart

to find new pasture lands. He found good grazing country and settlers quickly followed, coming from the Northern Territory, Queensland and even New South Wales. Large Irish families, such as the Duracks, arrived with thousands of cattle.

Cattle tick spread through the herds and came to the new Kimberley pasture lands. To keep the infection from southern herds, the WA Government banned the shipping of cattle from the Kimberley to the southern markets.

At the beginning of the century the Kimberley cattlemen looked to the newly discovered goldfields near Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie as potential markets. Knowing that the tick would not survive the dry desert, they asked the Government to establish a stock route across the inland to a railhead near Wiluna.

The Government Surveyor, Alfred Canning, was appointed to survey a possible route. He had already surveyed the 1833km rabbit-proof fence from the south coast to the coast near Broome, and thus had experience of the vast inland deserts.

Canning left from near Wiluna on 7 May 1906 and, crossing the Gibson Desert and the Great Sandy Desert, reached Halls Creek on 30 October. He used local Aborigines to help him in finding water, often chaining them overnight to stop them escaping. They were rewarded with food and clothing. In February 1907 he began his return to the south, reaching Perth in July. On the journey one of the party, Michael Tobin, was speared to death by an Aborigine.

The main work started in the following year. One hundred tons of supplies were loaded on four wagons and 70 camels. More than 250 goats were taken along as food for the 30 men. A marble cross was taken to mark Tobin's grave.

The men were divided into several groups. The first group would drill a bore to supply water. The following groups would dig a well around the bore, cut bush timbers for lining the walls, and set up the iron stays, winches, buckets, troughing, etc.



Young and mature desert oaks. Drawn by Eleanor Stodart

Whenever available, the dense, termite-proof timber of the Desert Oak (*Allocasuarina decaisneana*) was used.

It took an average of eight days to build one well. The work party completed 31 wells and reached Halls Creek in 14 months. They completed another 20 wells on the return journey, reaching Wiluna in April 1910. Some of the wells were only a few metres deep, whilst the deepest reached 32 metres. The wells averaged 25km apart, which was the distance cattle could move in one day.

A typical herd comprised 500 cattle. Each animal would drink 50 litres of water. The stockmen had the onerous task of watering the herd. The water would be brought up with the help of pulleys and cables, usually in canvas buckets that held up to 50 gallons. A camel or horse would be used to help drag up the buckets.

Cattle cannot eat the spiky 'leaves' of spinifex, but they do eat the seed heads, which is fortunate, since most

of the 1760km of the stock route are covered with spinifex.

There are occasional large lakes which are either flat, dry plains or vast expanses of salt. The largest of these is Lake Disappointment named by Frank Hann in 1897 when he followed creek beds to the hoped-for fresh water.

In January 1911 the first small herd of 150 bullocks started south along the stock route. Tom Cole, who came with the next herd some months later, found straying cattle, a half-eaten horse, and the bodies of stockmen, Thomson and Shoemith, and an Aboriginal stockman, Chinaman, near Well 37.

By the late 1920s the well had fallen into disrepair and William Snell was sent to restore them. He built some new wells and restored 33 of them. Canning, at 70, was called out of retirement to complete the job. He died in 1936.

The last cattle were brought down the Canning Stock Route in 1958.

Reet Vallak

Lower Molonglo Plan: strong on policies, weaker on specifics

It's difficult to talk about the lower Molonglo area without resorting to real estate clichés – 'a hidden wonder', 'so near to the suburbs yet you seem to be miles away' or a 'bit of wilderness on Canberra's doorstep'.

The clichés are all fairly appropriate and help indicate why the NPA has been concerned for some time about protecting the area. Sadly, the NPA member and freelance botanist, Dr Peter Barrer, who carried out the survey work that identified the area's botanical significance, died before the release of the Lower Molonglo River Corridor draft management plan. But Peter's work is frequently referred to in the plan and, notwithstanding the reservations he is likely to have had with it, I am sure he would at least have been pleased to see real evidence to moves to reserve the area for nature conservation.

Before summarising the NPA's submission on the plan, it might be useful first to quote its brief description of the lower Molonglo:

'The Lower Molonglo River Corridor is located along the last 12 kilometres of the Molonglo River extending from Coppins Crossing downstream to the area defined by the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, approximately one kilometre above the confluence with the Murrumbidgee River. The Corridor provides an important habitat for rare and threatened species. For example, it contains the nationally vulnerable shrub, *Pomaderris pallida* and important habitat for the pink-tailed legless lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*) which has special protection status in the ACT. Peregrine falcons breed within the reserve and the river contains native fish species, platypus and long-necked tortoises. The Corridor's riverine and gorge environments provide opportunities for both a stimulating low-impact recreational and remote experience

with places of solitude in a natural setting' (p. x)

As with previous draft management plans, the NPA has welcomed the recognition that the Lower Molonglo plan gives to the primacy of nature conservation over 'public use of the area for recreation, education and research' (p. 3) But once again, often laudable policies are inadequately supported by clear statements as to how they will be implemented and managed.

Still, after persistent pressure from the NPA and Conservation Council over the last few years in relation to other management plans, the Lower Molonglo Plan at least requires the preparation of an implementation plan within 12 months of the release of the final management plan. It 'will confirm the priority listing of actions, detail the tasks to be performed, set target dates and define performance indicators to measure progress. Relevant peak community groups will be consulted during the preparation of the Plan' (p. 42)

One of lower Molonglo's distinguishing features is that continued grazing rather than people pressure is the greatest current threat to its integrity. The conservation values have already been significantly affected by more than a century of grazing.

The NPA believes it should now be terminated in the corridor, enabling the management emphasis to shift from monitoring and controlling the impacts, to alternative weed control methods and active encouragement of rehabilitation. However, if grazing is continued, the NPA believes all significant areas of native vegetation and other areas of conservation value in the nature reserve should be isolated from it with fencing; the river bank should be fenced 200 metres from the bank; and there should be specific provisions for reducing grazing during droughts and after fires.

The existing leases conferring entitlements on lessees which conflict with the draft management plan are clearly one of the major management problems. It is certainly important that 'any new or re-negotiated Property Management Agreements' incorporate the provisions of the Management Plan' (p. 31), but also that where current leases are inconsistent with the management plan, they should be renegotiated.

The NPA believes fire management strategies should be incorporated in the draft plan that specifically protect the fire sensitive vegetation in the nature reserve, for example the Black Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) and *Pomaderris pallida*. There should also be signs at key public access points such as Coppins Crossing and Stockdill Drive, alerting visitors that fires are not allowed in the corridor.

Apart from grazing and fires, the major influence on the area's environmental values are the water quality and flows of the Molonglo River. The NPA believes the ACT Government should respond to the belated, but growing recognition throughout Australia of the need to maintain environmental flows in streams below dams, by examining possible changes to the operation of Scrivener Dam. A catchment strategy should also be developed, drawing on the experience in stormwater management in other areas of Canberra.

The draft plan takes a rather reactive approach to protection of significant native vegetation. For example it says: 'Implement management strategies to protect native vegetation populations when the need arises' (p. 14, 2.2.4 e). The NPA believes protection strategies should be put in place for regionally significant vegetation whether it is

continued on page 9

Lower Molonglo Plan

continued

under threat or not, recognising that the best cure is prevention.

When increased public use and access seem to be having undue influence on governments in Australia and therefore on reserve managers, the draft plan's statements are refreshing and reassuring. For example: 'Management of recreation in the Lower Molonglo River Corridor will aim to minimise disturbance to all natural settings and on-site interpretation will be low-key...It may be necessary to stabilise and realign existing walking tracks to provide the recreational settings desired. No other recreational facilities will be placed within the Corridor at this stage' (p. 17).

As the current conservation values of the area are partly a product of isolation and difficulty of access, increased recreational use should, if anything, be discouraged rather than encouraged. In that context, the NPA supports the ban on swimming, hunting, dogs and camping in the lower Molonglo. Horse riding should not, in general, be allowed in the nature reserve because of its potential for erosion, trampling and spreading of weeds. However, use of the sewerage pipeline road as a horse trail would be reasonable as might the use of other management trails that avoid areas with sensitive conservation values.

The tall cliffs along the river are a natural attraction for rock-climbers. But, as the plan recognises, activities such as rock climbing and abseiling on the cliffs would be totally inappropriate in the raptor pre-breeding and hatching stages from mid-August to October. Otherwise, the NPA would not want to see regular use of the cliff face by large groups because of their impact.

**Stephen Johnston, Convenor,
Environment Sub-committee**

Update on Native Title issues

In the March issue of the NPA's Bulletin there was an article summarising developments with the native title claims to parts of the ACT. The article outlined the nature of the claims, the attitude of the ACT Government towards them, and actions taken by the NPA to consider how recognition of a claim to Namadgi National Park might affect future management of the park. The article indicated that the NPA had, through its endorsement of a statement released by the Conservation Council of the South Eastern Region and Canberra, expressed support in principle for the recognition of native title.

The article noted that the NPA was about to sign a contract with a consultant to prepare a report on possible models for the future management of Namadgi in the event that native title to the park is recognised. A draft of the report, by Dr Dermot Smyth of Smith and Bahrdt Consultants, has now been received and is being considered by the committee. A final version of the report should be produced within

about a month, and details of the report will then be given to members and others interested – including, of course, the claimants.

The NPA is also seeking recognition as an interested party by the National Native Title Tribunal, for the purpose of the tribunal's examination of the ACT native title claims. The tribunal is currently compiling a list of interested parties for these claims. It will also seek in the near future to clarify, with the two groups of claimants, the nature of the claim to be negotiated subsequently with the other interested parties. The tribunal will then organise a meeting between the claimants and the interested parties to discuss the claim and reach an agreed settlement. While these steps could be completed by the end of the year, progress will depend on approaches adopted by the various interested parties, and this is difficult to predict. If a settlement cannot be reached through the tribunal, however, the claim could be referred to the Federal Court.

Robin Miller

The Great Victoria Desert

Travelling

*West in Beadell's tracks
We take the desert road*

Unrolling

*Carpet; rainbow bright
Flowers of every hue*

Or, shining

*Sea of silver green
Spinifex and Mallee*

Juddering

*Endless corrugations
Dislocate our joints*

Lightning

*Flickers in the dark
The storm – it passes by*

Chiming

*Wedgebills tease and taunt
But still remain unseen*

Blowing

*Red, wind-borne dust
Our faces streak and grime*

'Sweet-dreaming'

*beneath the Milky Way
Where satellites meander*

Scampering

*Lizards pause and pose
Dart daintily away*

Lumbering

*An old bull camel looms
Then turns, with proud disdain*

Tantalising,

*Wholesome the aroma
Fresh damper – crusty; warm*

Laughing

*In the camp fire glow
Contentment spreads its balm*

Judith Webster

Bibbulman renewed

A long-distance walking track in south-west Western Australia was proposed in 1972 as a means of encouraging people from urban areas to go into the bush. The Forests Department took up the idea and investigated various routes with the result that the concept of a Perth (Kalamunda) to Albany track was initiated.



The track that was opened as part of Western Australia's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1979 ran some 500km from Kalamunda to Northcliffe, south of Pemberton, and was named Bibbulman in recognition of the Aboriginal people who inhabited the area south-west of Pemberton.

By 1987, when the newly formed Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) assumed responsibility for the track, it was estimated that 5000 people per year walked the track, the majority undertaking walks of one to three days' duration.

At this time, the northern section was relocated to avoid bauxite mining sites, the southern section was extended by nearly 150km from Northcliffe to coastal Walpole, and the Waugal (pictured) was adopted as track marker. The Waugal was a powerful mythological character in the Bibbulman tradition.

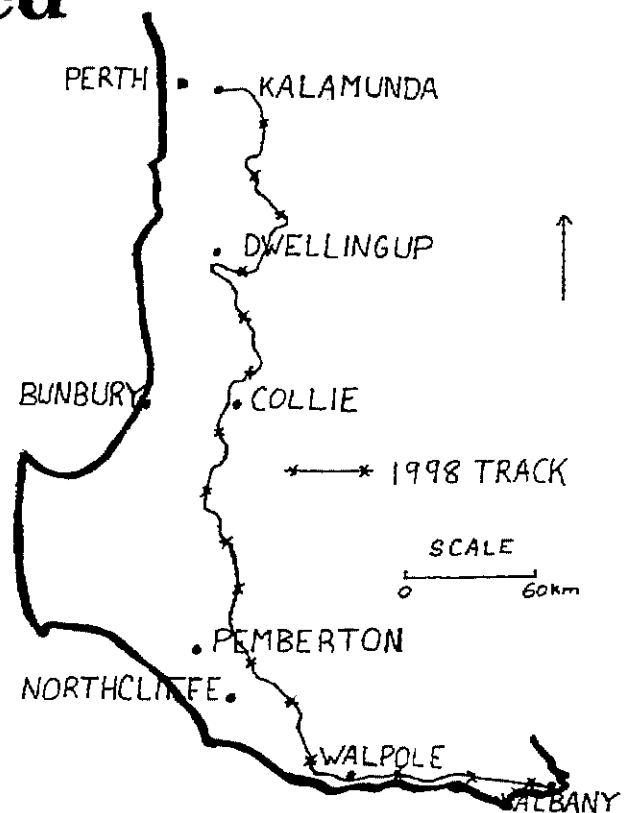
In response to a growing number of problems, in 1993 CALM adopted an imaginative plan to renovate the track and turn it into one of the world's great long-distance walking tracks. The plan involves an extensive re-alignment, placing most of the track in conservation estates and providing the walker with an experience of the best of the south-west region.

Forty-six new campsites between 10km and 20km apart will each

provide a sleeping shelter for 12 people, a tent site, fire place, fresh water and bush toilet. The campsites will be accessible only on foot and will be sited so as to be both practicable and attractive. Hundreds of kilometres of new track will be built, including an extension from Walpole to Albany, making the total length 950km.

The project is being supported by the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments, commercial sponsors and community groups. Until late 1997, the project was co-ordinated by Jesse Brampton, an enthusiastic long-distance walker, well known through his association with the 3450km-long Appalachian Trail. The northern half of the new Bibbulman Track was opened in August 1997, and the remainder is scheduled for completion in August 1998.

A series of excellent track maps has been published by CALM. The track is shown overlaid on a topographical map with separate



Gregory Brook Hut.

continued on page 11

NPA outings program

June – September 1998

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



13 June Saturday daywalk 2B/C
Nursery Creek area Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Leader: Martin Chalk Phone: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502 (h)
Meet at Kambah Village shops for a prompt departure at 8.00am. The walk starts from the Nursery Swamp carpark in Orroral Valley, takes in part of the ridge overlooking Rendezvous Creek, and returns to the cars via the top end of Nursery Swamp, 60kms, \$12 per car.

21 June Sunday daywalk 2A/B/D
Mt Coree and the Devils Peak Map: Cotter Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Matthew Higgins Phone: 6247 7285
Crunch frost in the northern Brindabellas this winter. We'll climb Coree from near Blundell's Arboretum, then walk to Coree Flats, climb Devils Peak, and return to Blundells. Some history, a good deal of great native forest, excellent views from both peaks. Steep climbs, about 14kms. Book with leader, numbers limited. 90kms, \$14 per car.

24 June daywalk
Wednesday walk
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 6288 4171
The June edition of our series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

28 June Sunday daywalk 2A/B
Long Point Map: Caoura 1:25 000
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 6288 4171
Meet at the netball centre just past the Dickson traffic lights on Northbourne Avenue at 8.00am. Drive to Long Point near Marulan, then walk down a track into the Shoalhaven Gorge. Excellent views of the river on the way down. Lunch on a sandy beach. A long haul back up to the cars. 250kms, \$50 per car.

28 June: Final date for bookings for Montague Island
(see 7–8 November below)

5 July Sunday daywalk 3A/B
Camels Hump and Pierces Trig Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Mike Smith Phone: 6286 2984
Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. This walk starts at the car park above the koala enclosure in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. We will follow the fire trail steadily upwards to the Camels Back saddle, climb over the Hump and on to Pierces Trig. Return back along the fire trail. Great views down into the rugged Cotter Valley and beyond. 60kms, \$12 per car.

11 July Saturday car tour
Southern Highlands Devonshire Tea Crawl
Leader: Steven Forst Phone: 6251 6817 (h), 6279 1326 (w)
Meet at the netball centre just north of the Dickson lights on Northbourne Avenue at 8.30am. A drive to visit scenic spots in the

Southern Highlands around Bundanoon and Fitzroy Falls, interspersed with stops at some of the Devonshire tea houses in the area. This trip will go ahead whatever the weather. 300kms, \$60 per car.

12 July Sunday daywalk 1B
Mt Nungar Map: Tantangara 1:25 000
Leader: Max Lawrence Phone: 6288 1370 (h), 6272 2124 (w)
Mt Nungar is a notable peak just to the east of the road into Tantangara Dam from the Snowy Mountains Highway. After a 400 metre climb through the bush we should be in the snow, and weather permitting, enjoying some great winter mountain scenery. Ring leader for bookings and details. This will not be a difficult walk, but arrangements may depend on road and weather conditions. 300 kms, \$60 per car.

19 July Sunday daywalk 2A/B
Canberra's Western Hills Map: Canberra Street Directory
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 6288 4171
A pleasant walk from Duffy to Greenway. We will walk along Coleman Ridge to Mt Arawang, then across to Mt Neighbour and McQuoids Hill, Gleneagles and finally Urambi Hills. Great views of the Murrumbidgee Valley, the Bullen Range, the Tidbinbillas and beyond. Short car shuffle. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am.

22 July daywalk
Wednesday walk
Leader: Yvonne Bartos Phone: 6231 5699
The July edition of our series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

26 July Sunday daywalk (half or full day) 2A
Mulligans Flat Map: Canberra UBD
Leader: Bev Hammond Phone: 6288 6577
Drive down Gundaroo Road Gungahlin to the NSW border (last 5km gravel) to meet at 9.00am. Walk the fence line of the Themada Paddock for expansive views. Morning walkers leave us there. Others continue in main reserve beside the border, along the old tree-lined Murrumbateman-Bungendore road to the woolshed site, 'Mulligans Flat', and return to the start.

1 August Saturday daywalk 3A
Hume and Hovell Track – Wee Jasper Map: H&H Guide
Leader: Mike Smith Phone: 6286 2984
Meet at picnic area carpark on Uriarra Road just off the Cotter Road at 8.00am. Walk the Hume and Hovell Track from the Fitzpatrick Trackhead near Wee Jasper to the Logbridge campsite via Mt Wee Jasper. Total climb about 700m, all on track. Car shuffle involved. 150kms, \$30 per car.

3-9 August seven day packwalk 3AB
Nadgee Map: Nadgee 1:25 000
Leader: Graham Scully Phone: 6230 3352
Day 1, drive to Wonboyn and walk to Newtons Beach. Day 2, walk to Nadgee Lake for base camp followed by days 3-5 walking with daypacks along the coast, including an ascent of Mt Howe for views of the Victorian border country and Gabo Island. Day 6, return to Wonboyn caravan park for shower, hot meal and overnight stay in onsite units, returning to Canberra on day 7. Numbers limited. Phone leader early for details.

9 August Sunday daywalk 2A
Gudgenby, Yerrabi, Maps: Namadgi NP map and guide
Shanahans Leader: Col McAllister Phone: 6288 4171

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.00am. We will crunch morning frost with the kangaroos at Gudgenby before driving on to Yerrabi to climb to Boboyan Trig for lunch-with-a-view. Then we drive on to Shanahans Mountain for another stroll, enjoying views over the valley of the Naas River. Time permitting, a final cuppa at Cuppacumbalong. 120kms, \$24 per car.

16 August Sunday daywalk 3A/B
Naas River Map: Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Frank Clements Phone: 6231 7005
Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.00am. Walk from Boboyan Pines carpark to an unusually coloured rock outcrop, climbing around 70 metres, then proceed to Hospital Creek Falls and Hospital Hut, before resuming the Old Boboyan Road and going on to the Naas River. Return to carpark via the road. 100kms, \$20 per car.

22 August Sunday ski tour 3A
Four Mile Hut Map: Mt Selwyn Ski Touring Map
Leader: Steven Forst Phone: 6279 1326 (w), 6251 6817 (h)
Contact leader by Wednesday. A daytrip to Four Mile Hut for lunch from either Kiandra or Selwyn Quarry, depending on the snow and weather conditions. 300kms, \$60 per car.

23 August Sunday daywalk 2A/B
Alpine Track and Bushfold Flats Maps: Williamsdale and
Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Col McAlister Phone: 6288 4171
Follow the Alpine Track from the Booroomba Rocks carpark to Bushfold Flats, visiting Read's and Russ's huts and the ruins of Dunne's hut. Then rejoin the Alpine Track on Tennant ridge, and a fairly steep descent to the Namadgi Visitors Centre. Car shuffle required. Meet at the Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. 40kms, \$8 per car.

26 August daywalk
Wednesday walk
Leader: David Large Phone: 6291 4830
The August edition of our series of monthly mid-week walks. Phone leader for details, which will be determined nearer the date.

30 August Sunday daywalk 3A/B/E
Mt Palerang Map: Bombay 1:25 000
Leader: Max Lawrence Phone: 6288 1370 (h), 6272 2124 (w)
Meet at Canberra Railway Station, Kingston, at 8.30am. Mt Palerang is a prominent peak in the Tallaganda State Forest between Captains Flat and Braidwood. For travellers to the coast it is clearly visible from the Kings Highway. This is your chance to climb it. 130kms, \$26 per car.

5-6 September weekend packwalk 2A/C/D/F
Sentry Box Map: Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Martin Chalk Phone: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502 (h)
This walk is a rerun of the one scheduled for April, which had to be postponed because of the dry conditions. Leave Canberra 8.00am for an exploratory walk to the Sentry Box from Old Boboyan Road South. We will aim to dry camp on the mountain so we can get some good views and photos of the sunset and full moon, and, for the earlybirds, sunrise. Several historical sites will be visited. Experienced walkers only, numbers limited. Call leader by preceding Wednesday for details and bookings. 150kms, \$30 per car.

6 September Sunday daywalk 1A
Sherwood Map: Cotter Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Doreen Wilson Phone: 6288 5215
Meet at picnic area carpark on Uriarra Road just off the Cotter Road at 8.30am. An easy walk on tracks and steps from Blue Range Hut to 'Sherwood' homestead historic site in spring glory with daffodils blooming. We'll also look for early orchids en route. Leisurely lunch and interpretation of site, plus opportunity for side trip to Dowling Trig for the more energetic. Stroll back to cars along the same tracks. 35kms, \$7 per car.

12 September Saturday daywalk 2B
Alpine Track Alternative,
Honeysuckle area Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Stephen Johnston Phone: 6258 3833
Veteran Canberra bushwalker Ted Fleming has identified an excellent alternative route for the Alpine Track from Booroomba Rocks carpark to the Ridge of Stone - features beautiful open forest, some rock slabs and views across Orroral Valley. All off track. Phone leader for details by 9 September. 60kms, \$12 per car.

19-20 September weekend packwalk 1A/B/E/F
Mt Morgan and Half Moon Peak Map: Rendezvous Creek and
Yaouk 1:25 000
Leader: Phil Gatenby Phone: 6254 3094

Contact leader by Wednesday 16 September. A walk from the Yaouk Valley along the Lone Pine fire trail, up Mt Morgan and across to Half Moon Peak. Total climb of 800m on the first day. 220kms, \$44 per car.

September/October ten day packwalk
Heysen Walking Trail
Contact: Syd Comfort Phone: 6286 2578
Syd is thinking of a ten day walk in the Spring along the southern section of the Heysen Trail, starting from Cape Jervis. He would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in joining the walk. Dates and other details are quite open.

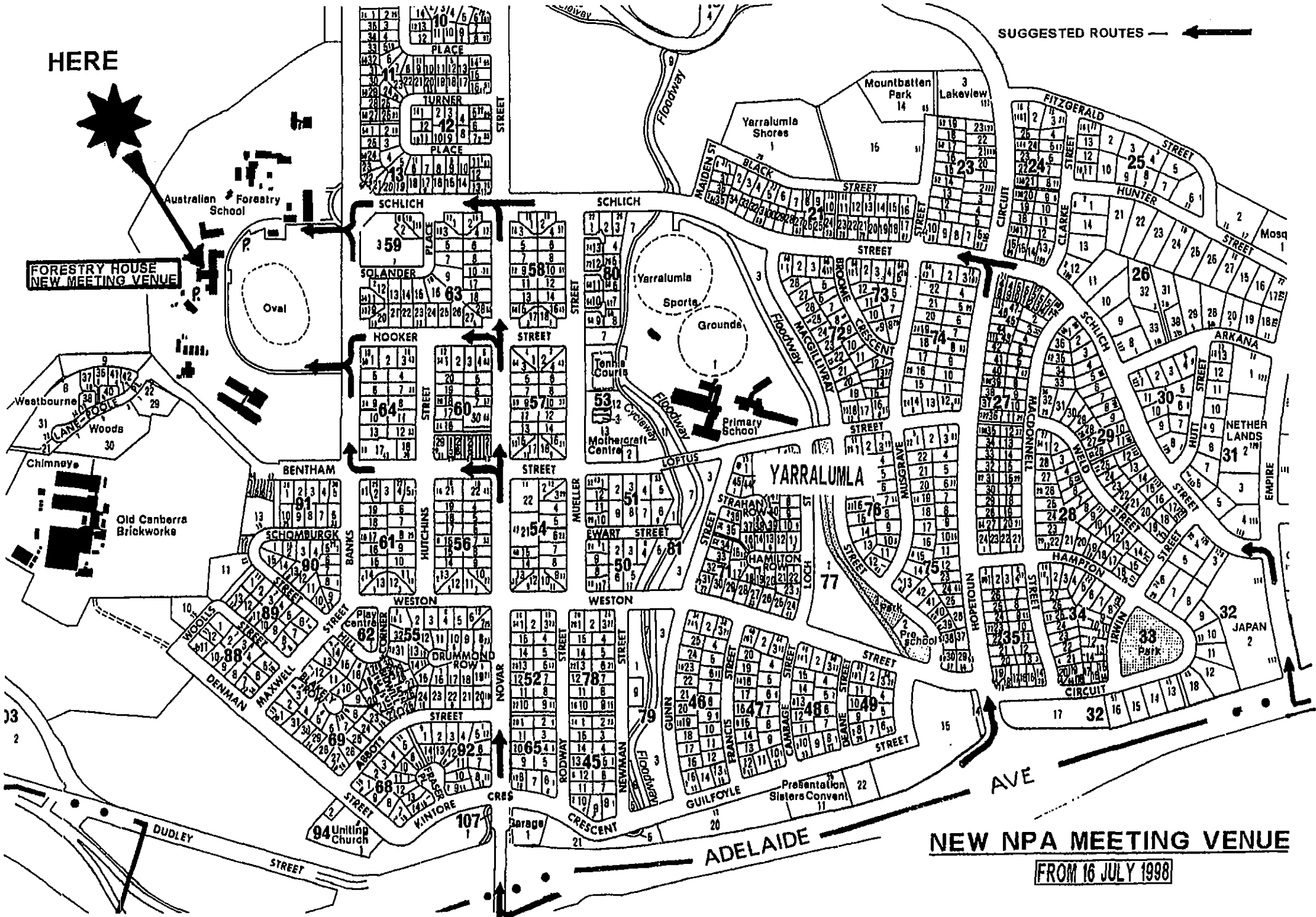
26-27 September weekend packwalk 3A
Royal National Park Coast Walk Maps: RNP Guides
Leader: David Large Phone: 6291 4830
Walk from Otford to Bundeena. An opportunity to experience the Spring wildflowers and magnificent ocean views in Royal National Park just south of Sydney. We will probably depart from Canberra early Saturday morning, arriving Otford mid-morning, then walking on to camp at Curracurang. On Sunday morning we walk to Bundeena, catch a ferry and then a train back to our cars at Otford. Return to Canberra Sunday evening. Numbers limited, phone leader early for details and bookings. 500kms, \$100 per car.

7-8 November car camp and cruise 1A (if the sea is smooth)
Montague Island and Wagonga Inlet 10Z (if the sea is rough!)
Leader: Len Haskew Phone: 6281 4268

Firm bookings together with fare are required no later than 28 June. On Saturday we will take the afternoon cruise to Montague looking for whales on the way across, and then visit penguin and seal colonies on the island itself. The duration of this tour is approximately four and a half hours. Fares are \$60 for adults and \$45 for children under 15. Once booked, fares are not refundable unless the cruise is cancelled because of weather conditions. On Saturday evening we will camp, probably at Mystery Bay. Sunday's three hour cruise will be on the unspoilt, smooth waters of Wagonga Inlet on an electrically powered ferry. There will be a commentary, a short walk in some remnant rainforest, scones and billy tea. Fares are \$15 and \$10, and can be paid on the day. Should the Montague tour have to be cancelled, the area offers a variety of alternatives, ranging from shopping and sightseeing at Tilba to an Aboriginal tour of the Wallaga Lakes.

HERE

SUGGESTED ROUTES —



FORESTRY HOUSE
NEW MEETING VENUE

Australian Forestry School

Oval

Yarralumla Sports Grounds

Primary School

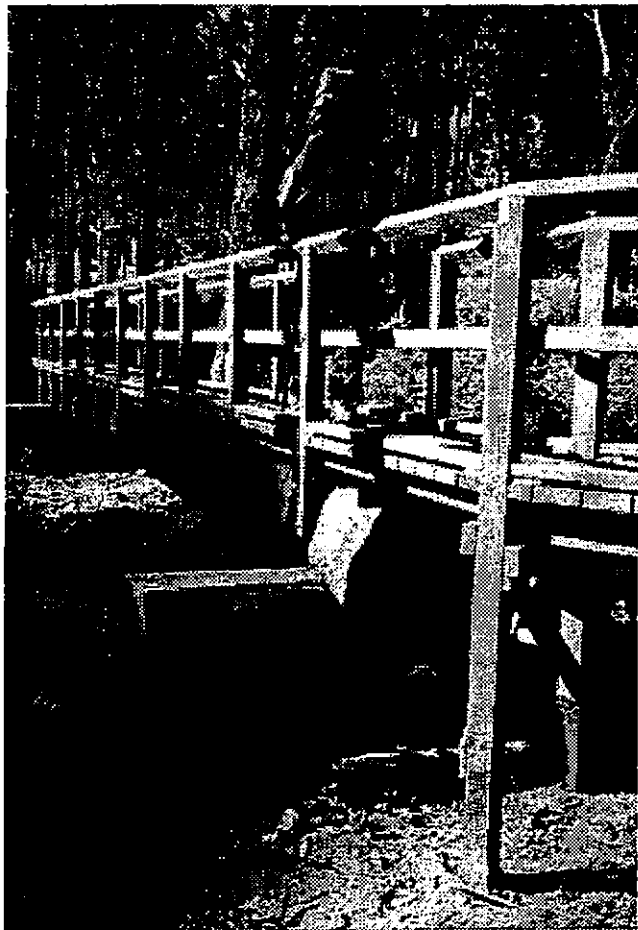
Old Canberra Brickworks

YARRALUMLA

NEW NPA MEETING VENUE

FROM 16 JULY 1998

Bibbulman renewed *continued*



The West Australians still know how to work jarrah. Bridge over Balingup Brook.

vertical profiles of the route. Distances between campsites and other major points are clearly tabulated.

My week's walk on the track in the jarrah country south of Collie in October 1997 confirmed that the design and construction of the track and camp sites were of a high standard and showed that the objectives of this renewal of the track were being achieved. I was also very impressed by the enthusiasm of track workers I met on the way.

Walkers will need to consider the time of year best suited to the sections of the track they plan to cover. Spring was an ideal time for the section I covered, with comfortable walking conditions and the forests and wildflowers a truly wonderful sight. At other times, temperatures, rainfall, fire risk and

availability of water would need to be considered.

Just to hand is a notice of a proposed 'Big Bibbulman Walk 98' which will be part of the official celebrations to open the whole new Bibbulman Track. An end-to-end walk will be conducted starting to coincide with the official opening of the track on 13 September 1998 and ending in Kalamunda on 1 November. Details are available from the Bibbulman Track Project Office (08) 9334 0265.

References:

A Guide to the Bibbulman Track, Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Landscape, issue no. not known, Department of Conservation and Land Management.

**Article and photos,
Syd Comfort**

Vale

It is with regret that we record the passing of two association members, Hela Lindemann and Merle Bailey. Both will be remembered for their long connection with the association and their active participation in the walks program particularly during the 70s. But their walking styles were very different. Merle was noted for always arriving for walks very well dressed and for her great interest in everything along the way. This led to frequent halts to investigate with the consequences of her being a 'tail-ender' and a sometime concern to leaders anxious to see a walk through. On the other hand, Hela was a regular leader of walks with a very direct style of navigation – follow the compass bearing regardless of terrain, vegetation or other obstacles. She had a great interest in going into the bush and was always very helpful to new members. Hela left Canberra for the South Coast in the mid 1980s, pursued her interest in bushwalking there and died in Dalmeny on 16 January 1998. Merle continued to live in Canberra until her death on 13 March 1998.

Syd Comfort

New location for General Meetings

Commencing with the July meeting, NPA general meetings will be held in Forestry House, Yarralumla. Many readers will remember this as the building in which the *Guide to the Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT* was launched by the Chief Minister in December last. By making the change, the committee hopes that some of the problems of parking, noise and glare experienced previously will be reduced. The new location will provide an attractive setting for meetings and offers good facilities and convenient parking. The meeting time of 8pm remains unchanged. Mike Smith has applied his not inconsiderable navigational skills to preparing the map of the site enclosed in this bulletin.

Walking with a 'GPS'

Setting off, half a century ago, on a bushwalk of one to three weeks duration, through areas of which one had only hearsay information, or, at the best, maps of a small scale could be hazardous. These maps would have only rudimentary information of prominent features and large areas of white spaces, which could inspire over-confidence in one's ability to make a safe traverse, when there was little real knowledge of the area. There were, however, benefits in being able to read the topography and an early appreciation was readily acquired, in recognising natural routes and making precise use of the compass and sun in maintaining the direction of a selected route.

Myles Dunphy and other bushwalkers, in the 1930s, drew up 1/2 inch - 1 mile maps from parish and tourist maps upon which they added their own and fellow bushwalkers' exploratory experiences of the rugged terrain of the Blue Mountains and the Burragorang Valley. The publication of the army 1 inch - 1 mile map of the Katoomba area was a great advance, with contours instead of the hatched ridges of the sketch maps. Other army maps were available of some of the coastal areas around Sydney. The war provided a great impetus to map the coastal belt and these were a mixture of contoured and coloured maps, available at two shillings each from selected outlets.

A post-war project was to map the whole of Australia. The first maps suitable for bushwalking were to the 1:100 000 scale but the scale caused some surprises. At times when attempting to make a traverse, cliffs and waterfalls appeared because the contour interval was too large for them to be drawn in. The 1:50 000 scale maps, although contoured, lacked some track detail, which at times could cause some confusion. It was not until the 1:25 000 series of maps became available in the 1970s that the real benefit to bushwalkers came into being. The

guesswork of what lay ahead, could be sorted out on the dining room table. The availability of these maps increased the popularity of bushwalking and it is from this period that tracks on popular routes became established for novices to readily find their way. The availability of light-weight compasses, pedometers and altimeters made for more precise navigation and with it some certainty of arriving at the planned objective.

Satellite navigation aids used during the Gulf War were miniaturised to the size of hand-held pieces and released for public use, but with built-in random error factors from the satellite transmitters, to prevent their use for precision terrorist bombing activities. This random error has now been reduced, and for all practical bushwalking purposes an error of 15-75 metres can only mean that you are where you hoped to be. In the passage of a few years the cost of a hand held Global Positioning System (GPS) has come down, with competition, to one fifth of what the initial cost was. The size now is comparable to a small mobile phone and with the weight of 4 AA batteries only 270gms. As a precaution, a spare set of batteries and compass should always be carried.

A GPS can be used anywhere in the world to give latitude and longitude to 1/10 second and a grid reference to 5 decimal places. It is capable of storing several hundred waypoints (positions) in selected groups (routes), map the track followed or to be followed, and give continuous direction and the correction needed to go to a waypoint. The distance to go is displayed, as well as speed, with an estimated time to cover the route and an arrival time. Time is continuously displayed as well as sunrise and sunset being available.

Waypoints can be marked and stored at any time on route, for back-tracking. Corrections of data from the satellites are made at one second



One hundred and twenty years of bushwalking experience examine a GPS receiver. Bert Bennett (l) and Reg Alder. Photo, Syd Comfort

intervals. The number of satellites acquired, depends on the topography at the location. Open topped trees impose a little restriction provided there is not a dense ground cover. If sufficient horizon satellites are acquired, altitude is displayed to give 3D navigation and, if not, a 2D display for a coarser navigation. Altitude readings take a little time to acquire because of the one second interval of transmission and the calculations involved.

In practical terms, only 3 decimal places for grid reference, can be read from a 25 000 scale map with the 4th place approximated. The grid references are entered into the memory with an allocated 5 letter or figure as waypoints according to the straight line routes to be taken. Distances can only be given as straight lines. When GO-TO is activated, the heading required is activated with the actual heading, and all that is needed is for these figures to be the same and to watch whether a vertical line leans to the left or right. You then need to correct to the vertical position as necessary.

On approaching within about 300m of a waypoint, a message is flashed on the screen to draw attention to its nearness. If a deviation is made from the original straight line between waypoints, the bearing to restore direction is automatically calculated, so large objects can be walked around and

continued on page 13

Speaker tells about 'a pinch of time'

This was the title of a fascinating and absorbing address by well known local, author, broadcaster and educator, Ian Fraser, at the February General Meeting.

Ian has considered the relativity of time over a long period and firmly believes that there are particularly good reasons for nature and environmental conservation to ponder the nature of time. This is not an easy task as the time involved is far beyond the human scale. Ian graphically portrayed evolutionary time with a 10 metre long timeline representing the age of the earth. On this line a point 9.5 metres from the start denotes the rise of the dinosaurs and a point between 5mm and 10mm from the end represents the time when the oldest human ancestors appear. And, as Ian said, "That represents the perspective from which we would presume to manage the place!"

Ian's overview is necessary if we are to grasp the immensity of time, and the minutely insignificant space that we have occupied. Because as he said, "If we forget that, then we have no hope of managing the place properly, because we have no hope of understanding it – and being us – we'll be sure that we do, and get it wrong." Ian's proposition is that if we do not have this perspective of time we cannot conceive how evolution can work.

Walking with a 'GPS'

continued

the new direction re-established. If the direction taken is grossly inaccurate, a message is flashed as to the bearing to be followed, to re-establish the route.

A GPS may not be necessary to navigate, but it takes some guesswork out of it and provides a certainty of location. As Paddy Pallin maintained, he was 'never truly lost'; a GPS would ensure at any time that you were never lost.

Reg Alder

Another insight given to us by Ian was the sheer chance that we are here, 'here and now'. We could easily have been 'here' at other stages of Australia's history that are well within the human history of the area, – in the times of the temperate rainforests, or when this area was a cold, treeless, windy steppe.

Nor does evolution stop – it continues. So it is pure chance that dictates with which other organisms we share the world – apart from those whose company we have dispensed with. One of the mechanisms that has influenced the distribution of species has been the drifting apart of continents. And this, as Ian said, is still happening and in another few million years (not long on the time scale) we shall be well and truly embedded in Asia.

Being prepared to face up to time provides us with the ability to understand the concept of ecological refuges, which Ian believes are the key to environmental conservation in Australia. For instance, during the most recent glaciation much of south-eastern Australia was covered by cold treeless steppes. Species which had been confined to high cold mountains now spread across the landscape – mountain pygmy possums and alpine plants were widespread. When glaciation ended, these cold climate specialists again retreated to the alpine zones. From here they will spread out again during the next glaciation, which is due quite soon – *but they can only do so if we allow them to survive the here and now*. If they do not, there will be no source of species to populate the landscape the next time around – which makes the questions of greenhouse and managing the ski industry even more pressing. And much the same can be said of rainforest refuges and the mound springs, the only refuges for many inland aquatic species.

There is another aspect, too. Not only is there great satisfaction in seeing the world as it really is, but

great dangers in the arrogance of using 'our time' as the norm. This is a bit like bacteria on the body living and dying in a few hours and seeing no change in their environment, and concluding therefore that there is no change. It leads to the assertions that rabbits, starlings, mynas, pines, willows or brumbies are a 'natural' part of evolution because 'they have always been here', ie, as long as I can remember. This short-term view leads to assertions about managing forest fire regimes when we haven't been round long enough to see even a single natural cycle of the fire regime of a wet forest like the Alpine Ash in the Brindabellas.

A quite different danger may even come from accepting, at least in principle, the reality of time and evolution – and using it as an excuse that, because extinction is natural, evolution will 'fix things up', so that we needn't worry. 'Natural' extinctions occur in Australia at the rate of about one every 7000 years. We have managed to extinguish bird species at about 1000 times that rate! Justifying premature extinction is like justifying the murder of a child simply because that child will grow old and die anyway.

Ian also spent some time pointing out to us the joy and wonder of evolution using such examples as:

- the evolution of the feather from reptilian scales;
- other flight adaptations of birds like losing teeth to reduce weight and hollowing out bones for lightness while strengthening them internally with a superlight lattice;
- the marvels of orchid pollination;
- delayed implantation in kangaroos and seals; and
- the wonders of migratory species.

Ian left the last word with the English engineer-poet Henry Austin Dobson – 'Time goes you say? Ah no! Alas, Time stays, we go.'

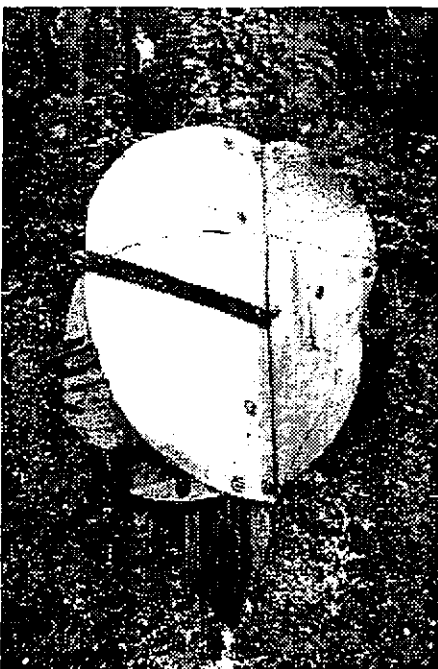
Len Haskew

Gordon's glory in granite: McKeahnie Trig

Many of our nineteenth century trig stations in the ACT have been replaced by more modern 'quadropod' steel trigs. Surviving original trigs consequently have considerable heritage significance, even if some have lost their survey function.

McKeahnie Trig is an original. Located on the range between Kangaroo Creek (ie, Corin Dam Road) and the upper Orroral Valley, the site is in fairly rugged bushland typified by Snow Gums, Mountain Gums, Cassinia and impressive outcrops of rounded granite boulders. It can be reached either from the Kangaroo Creek bridge on the Corin road, or (a no doubt easier route and the one I have used) from near the Square Rock walking track.

Trig stations such as this one were installed as part of the trigonometrical survey of NSW last century. Trig stations enabled precise bearings to be read between stations and by virtue of these a system of triangles was able to be spread across the colony. Using the principles of trigonometry, surveyors were able to calculate from these triangles ever increasing distances



*Vane from McKeahnie Trig.
Photo, Russell Wenholz*



McKeahnie Trig. Photo, Ron Jarman

across the ground and so were able to draw accurate maps.

McKeahnie Trig was built by Surveyor R.C. Gordon and party in September 1896. Gordon (who also built Gudgenby Trig in 1896 and Franklin in 1898) travelled to the site via the Orroral Valley. From the end of the track on the headwaters on Orroral Creek he seems to have made a blazed line to the trig site. He obviously had a hard time getting into Orroral, writing that 'the roads in and out of Orroral are nearly impossible being very rough for vehicles'. With light loads and powerful horses Gordon believed it would be possible to get vehicles within a mile or so of the trig, and from there pack horses could be used to get almost to the trig. (he doesn't actually say in his report how he got to the trig.) Gordon's party camped in the headwaters of Orroral Creek, though they also found water in the small swamp (which you will cross if you come from the Square rock route) at the north-eastern foot of the trig hill.

Gordon described his trig as being built 'upon a very rocky prominent hill'. The trig is marked by a plug set in top of huge granite boulder, the highest part of the hill and which

was very difficult of access'. Today there is no way that you can get onto the boulder (unless you're some sort of super-human climber), so Gordon's men must have made ladders from saplings in order to build the trig. The trig consisted of the usual vast stone cairn topped by a mast and metal vanes. A major task would have been getting the stones up to the man/men piling the cairn on the top of the boulder. The vanes were stamped with the name 'McKeahnie' (in honour of the grazing family of Orroral and elsewhere in present day Namadgi) and were painted black and white. Gordon then read bearings to numbers of other trigs. It is notable that in regard to Bimberi he remarked 'snow over pile'.

I first visited the trig in July 1997 with Ian McLeod. The cairn was intact but the pole had long since broken and the vanes could not be found. We saw stumps and ax-felled trees and concluded these must have been cut by the original party to create visibility around the trig. Thus there could not have been a major bushfire over the hill since 1896, though there are some small fire scars.

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Gordon's glory in granite *continued*

Subsequently Mick Kelly told me he had found the vanes. So in April 1998 I re-visited the site with Russell Wenholz and Ron Jarman. We searched for the vanes and Ron, climbing up amongst boulders adjacent to the trig boulder, found the vanes lying on the granite just west of the trig boulder. So Russell and I climbed up too. There was no sign of paint on the vanes, but then paint would probably wear off after a century of blizzards! So the vanes are probably the original ones. A number of bushwalkers have pencilled their names onto the vanes. The earliest signatures date from 6 April 1953 when the 1st Canberra Rover Crew visited. This would imply that the post gave way some short time before that, because before that the vanes were not accessible to pencil-wielding walkers or anyone else. Look closely at the section of the pole to which the vanes are attached and you will see how much timber has been removed by 102 years of weathering.

McKeahnie Trig is worth the walk, but if you go there please respect the vanes. If you keep your eyes open you will find, en route from the Square Rock side, a survey mark (in the form of a line of stones or rockspit) on a granite slab about a third of the way to the trig. Needless to say the views from the trig area are very good indeed (providing you are prepared to climb up some boulders).

Perhaps there'll be an NPA walk to the site at some time, during which we can all toast – in brandy of course – Gordon's glory in granite.

Matthew Higgins

(with thanks to John Hutchinson, Bathurst, who supplied a copy of Gordon's report)

PARKWATCH

Islands in the wind

Naples, December 4, 1997. The World Heritage Committee announces that Australia's three subantarctic islands – Heard, McDonald and Macquarie – have at last been inscribed on the World Heritage list.

These remote, windswept specks of land are among the wildest places left on earth. Isolated in a freezing ocean, pounded by mountainous waves, they provide a haven for an astonishing concentration of wildlife.

The Tasmanian Government (which has jurisdiction over Macquarie Island) and the Federal Government, now give the subantarctic islands much greater priority.

A Naval task force moved to prevent illegal fishing for Patagonian Toothfish near Heard and McDonald, impounding two vessels, and there are signs that the old, abandoned base at Atlas will be cleaned up. Also, several million dollars have been earmarked for ridding Macquarie island of cats. The descendants of escapees from sealing vessels, there are at present an estimated 500 cats roaming the island, posing a serious threat to wildlife. If all goes well, Macquarie should be cat-free in five years.

Wilderness News, Summer 1998.

The Fitzroy 'dammed'

A scheme to dam the largest river in the Kimberleys has been called the 'Franklin of the North' by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). If the Fitzroy is dammed, it will extinguish native title in the area, flood vast areas of spectacular country and threaten the habitat of the rare Gouldian Finch.

Western Agricultural Industries (WAI), which proposes the dam, has received approval from the WA State Cabinet to carry out a feasibility study for the dam and irrigation project. A memorandum of understanding between WAI and the WA Government was scheduled for signing last December but did not eventuate. A management plan for the region does not exist and the

Government has yet to commit itself to any formal process for assessing the environmental impact of the scheme.

The ACF says the scheme includes:

- construction of one to three dams in the upper Fitzroy and Margaret catchments. The dam at Diamond Gorge would flood nearly 1000 square kilometres;
- construction of an earthen canal of up to 500kms to transport the water from Fitzroy Crossing to Shamrock and Nita Downs stations;
- free allocation of water entitlements to WAI for re-sale to irrigators (capital value \$600 million or more);
- conversion of large area of pastoral leases and vacant crown land to freehold to support 1/4 million hectares of irrigated agriculture (mainly cotton); and,
- construction of a weir at Fitzroy Crossing to lift the water level for gravity-fed diversion into the canal.

The proposal is fiercely opposed by the local Aboriginal population and environmentalists.

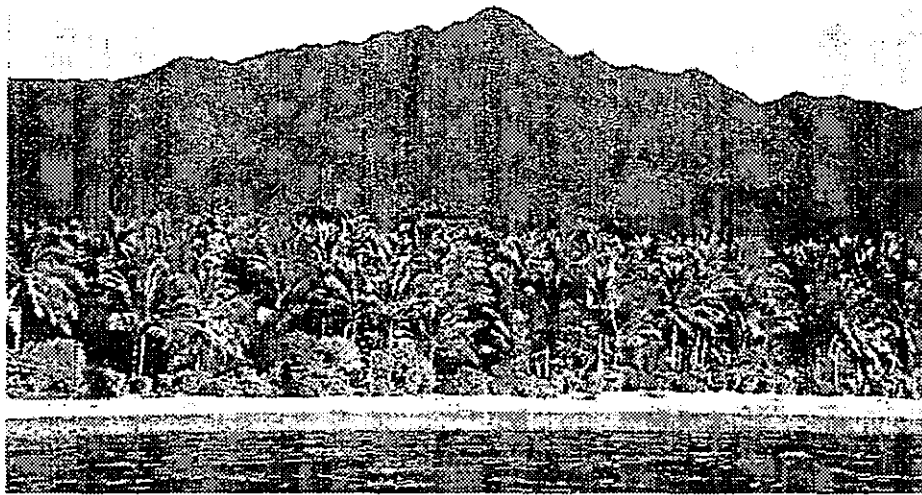
Sustainable Times, March, 1998.

National parks no longer forever

The principle that a national park is forever has been thrown out of the window by the Victorian Government which last November sneaked legislation through Parliament to excise 285 hectares from the Alpine National Park near Falls Creek. The land, which had been added to the park in 1989 and which contains prime pygmy possum habitat, is to be given – without cost – to the adjacent Falls Creek Alpine Resort. The excision was tacked on to the end of a bill establishing a new management authority for alpine resorts in Victoria and, when exposed by conservationists, was described by a spokesperson for the Conservation Minister Marie Tehan as a gift 'to provide for the long-term development needs'. In what would appear to be an attempt at

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Trekking in Seram, Eastern Indonesia



Binaiya-Merkele Range.



Tom and local guides on the Gunung Merkele Ridge.



The Walala River.

Looking back over the stern of our motor canoe at the almost vertical 3000m high mountains of Manusela National Park, it was hard to believe the feat that Tom and I had just completed. In the space of only a few days we had crossed the main range into a remote intermontane valley which hid the Brigadoon-like Manusela village after which the park is named.

Manusela National Park is on the island of Seram, one of about 1000 islands in Maluku (Moluccas) Province in Eastern Indonesia – the fabled Spice Islands, and the women who pick and dry the cloves and nutmeg in the sun are the original spice girls.

Our trek began in the south coast village of Mosso, from where local guides led us up steep foothills of cultivated land where clove pickers called out from the tree tops. We then reached the edge of the wilderness and followed tunnel-like tracks through dense jungle, crossed pristine mountain streams, rested under ancient rock shelters and then climbed unrelentingly up a precipitous limestone gorge.



Robyn with Nuaulu children.

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Trekking in Seram

continued



A Nuaulu man of Manusela village.

We slept the first night in a shelter constructed of timber poles and fern leaves, before a steep climb through mossy cloud forest to a high pass with panoramic views back to the coast. We continued down a long, ridge-top track, sighting Manusela village in the distant valley below. There we met the proud and self-sufficient Nuaulu people who in a time-honoured tradition cultivated the valley floor, fished the streams and hunted in the forests to supply their daily needs.

With rainy weather setting in we were to spend two days in Manusela learning much about the customs of the local people, before the return journey across the mountains. The trek seemed all too short, but the memories of misty cloud forests, stark limestone pinnacles and the lost villages of Seram's rugged interior will stay with us forever.

**Words and photographs by
Robyn Barker and
Tom Heinsohn**

The Tasmanian Trail

The new Tasmanian Trail had its official opening in September 1997, by the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Guy Green. The trail is a long-distance multi-purpose recreational trail extending from Devonport on the northern coast of Tasmania to Dover in the south. The Western Tiers, the Great Lakes area and the valleys of the Derwent and Huon Rivers are included in the trail, which has a total length of 477 kms.

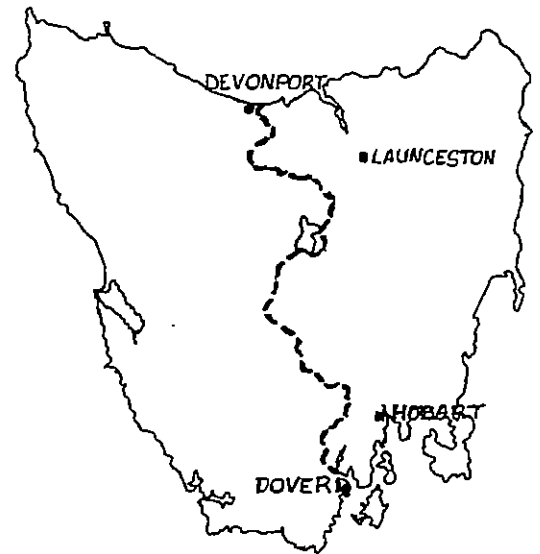
From its conception, the Tasmanian Trail was intended for use by walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders. Therefore it differs from other trails that have usually started as walking tracks and are therefore restricted in use. The trail links up existing forestry roads, fire tracks and country roads and occasionally crosses private land. Nearly all of the trail – 90 per cent – is on some form of made road or track. The trail passes through a wide range of environments including some of the most scenic and historical areas of Tasmania. Through forests and farmlands, across highland plateaus and past the buildings and bridges of Australia's oldest towns, the Tasmanian Trail provides a journey rich in cultural and natural heritage.

The trail has been divided into five sections to correspond to the nature of the land through which the trail traverses. Each section has been further divided into stages which average 32km in length. At the end of each stage a camp site has been provided.

The Tasmanian Trail experience aims to reach audiences not catered for in national parks and reserves, potentially easing the pressure on these areas. It often passes through small towns, thus allowing people to use as little or as much of the trail as they like. It can offer a long-distance walking experience or a

shorter, more relaxing sojourn. The experience provided by the trail is recreational, cultural, historical and nature-based.

The Tasmanian Trail Association is a non-profit incorporated entity which has a charter to promote and manage the trail. The Association is in partnership with government and private landowners. It relies on the



goodwill of government agencies through a memorandum of understanding and through an occupation permit with Forestry Tasmania. The association has a licence agreement with the Hydro-electric Commission which allows access and camping. These formal agreements with government agencies and the goodwill of some 30 private landowners, are integral to the success of the trail.

The association has produced a guide book, *The Tasmanian Trail Guide Book*, which gives walkers, mountain bike riders and horse riders all the information to travel all or part of the trail. The guide book is available from the association at:

The Tasmanian Trail Association,
PO Box 99 SANDY BAY TAS 7005.

Greg Lewis

Book Review

Our Patch: Field Guide to the Flora of the Australian Capital Region as Photographed in the Aranda Bushland.
Produced by the Friends of the Aranda Bushland.

A quick first reaction to this guide could well be "What, \$15 for this little thing!" A closer look, however, soon reveals that it is very good value. The small size is deliberate, making it easy to carry around, but within its 83 pages are 300 good quality photographs. Just the cost of setting it up for printing would have been large, too large to have been carried by the print run for a local market. Not only has an enormous amount of voluntary work gone into the preparation, but grants from Environment Australia assisted.

This is a field guide for the interested person without botanical knowledge. The photographs, plus a few scattered snippets of text, are the only aids to identification. The dependence on the photographs and the use of different colours and fonts for the different items in the captions make this a very easy book to skim through quickly. Readers will find it difficult to distinguish between a few of the wattles and between the egg and bacon peas on the basis of photographs, but flowering times, indicated by the month in which each photograph was taken, will help, and one can take a low powered magnifying glass to examine details of the leaves in the photographs just as one would do to examine the flowers themselves.

Species are arranged by family in approximately standard botanical order. Most have two photographs, one showing the overall shape of the plant and the other a close-up of the flower; a few, such as some grasses and sedges have only one; and the eucalypts have three to five so that the whole tree, and perhaps buds, flowers, gumnuts, juvenile and adult leaves or bark are shown.

The book concludes with two maps, one of the main understorey vegetation and the other of the canopy vegetation for the whole block between the suburb of Aranda and Bindubi, Caswell and William Hovell Drives, thus including Smith's Paddock as well as the Aranda Bushland.

The layout works well. On one page only I was not immediately sure which caption belonged to which photo. There is an index to both common and scientific names.

As well as functioning as a field guide, this book graphically demonstrates the diversity of the flora in the Aranda Bushland, from the snow gum remnant of a once wider frost hollow fringe, to showy wattles and delicate orchids. How rich



Eucalyptus rubida
Fam. Myrtaceae

Candlebark
March

G. STANLEY



Bark
March

G. STANLEY

Buds and leaves
March

P. DREBAY



Juvenile foliage
March

G. STANLEY

Juvenile foliage
March

P. DREBAY



we are to have this protected as part of Canberra Nature Park, right on our doorsteps! The photographs taken for the book and the specimens collected for identification now reside in the National Herbarium.

Thank you, Friends of Aranda Bushland, for the many hours you have spent being economically irrational in producing this gem. The Canberra community is the richer for it.

Eleanor Stodart

PARKWATCH

National parks no longer for ever *continued*

deception, the land was described in the bill as former State Electricity Commission of Victoria property; no mention was made of the fact that it had since been absorbed into the national park.

As it had never been anticipated that the national park status of a piece of land – status which under the *National Parks Act* explicitly ‘guarantees’ protection for all time – would ever be revoked, there is no formal process for doing so. As a result, the Government was able to insist that the excision did not breach any official procedures – there aren’t any. A protest meeting in December called at short notice by the Victorian National Parks Association overflowed the hall in which it was held and resolved to lobby for the restoration of the land to the Alpine National Park. Until now, however, the Government has remained unmoved.

Conservationists suspect that this is only the first of a number of excisions planned by the Kennett Government, which is also at present redrafting the State’s National Parks Act.

Wild, Autumn, 1998.

The good news and the bad news

The good news is that the 41-year-old leasing of the Pretty Beach Caravan Park is to terminate on 31 May. The caravan park is within Murramarang National Park, at the northern end, and the NPWS will take over from the present lessee. The renamed Pretty Beach Camp is to be redesigned, based on extended day use.

The proposed layout has many improvements. However, the existing eight cabins are not to be removed (as canvassed in the 1994 Draft Plan of Management) but replaced and resited out of sight from the beach. Roofed accommodation in-park is contrary to NPA policy. The 105 permanent vans are to be phased out over 5 years.

The bad news? the lease for the Merry Beach Caravan Park (also at the northern end of the park) is to be renewed. The incredible story behind this, of over 20 years of bluffing by the lessee and successive governments, will be told in a future issue of the journal.

National Parks Journal.
April, 1998.

Wilderness retreat in far East Gippsland

For sale

200 acres of temperate woodland with a 30 inch rainfall. Directly adjoining the magnificent Rodger-River-Snowy National Park, with the pristine Bowen Creek flowing through it. Close to Errinundra National Park, McKillops Bridge, and with direct access to Mount Tower-Deddick firetrails, this beautiful block has a north facing log cabin, which is completely secluded and visited by wildlife. The natural bushland is protected by a Covenant with the Victoria Nature Trust.

Ideal for field naturalist, writer, bushwalker, and offering excellent group camping possibilities. Has been a base for Field Naturalist clubs. Asking price \$70,000.

Contact Fiona McIlroy on
6254 8149.

New Members

Ben and Veronica Selinger	Garran
Kay Stoquart	Hackett
Sarah Howard	Garran
Helen Kemmis	Chapman
Ian and Judy Wardlaw	O’Connor
Ken Watt	Gordon
Russell Wenholz	Holt
Lesley Forward	Jerra-bomberra
John McWilliam	Fisher
Peter Black	

The Conservation Council

The Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra is the peak conservation body of the region and promotes the broad environmental interests of the area. It represents over 35 community and conservation groups in the ACT and the south-east region of NSW.

The council’s aims are to maintain and, where necessary, enhance the quality of our environment, particularly, its urban, rural and wilderness aspects. Representatives of member organisations meet quarterly to discuss issues and set policy. A board comprising the executive officers and nine members specialising in different environmental areas, meets fortnightly. In addition, working groups focus on specific issues. The council employs a director and office manager and although receiving funding from the ACT and Commonwealth Governments, relies heavily on community support.

The council acts as an advocacy group, researching issues, presenting submissions, lobbying governments and arranging public meetings. Public campaigns on major issues are organised on matters of significance and action is initiated on emerging environmental issues. The council provides support to member groups and individuals and represents community interests on advisory committees such as bush fire councils and the Natural Heritage Trust. In conjunction with the Environment Centre the Council publishes ‘Sustainable Times’.

Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra (Inc)

Kingsley Street, Acton

GPO Box 1875 Canberra ACT 2601

Tel:(02) 6247 7808

Fax:(02) 6248 5343

Email ccserac@spirit.com.au

Syd Comfort

Calendar

Activity	June	July	August	September
Committee Meeting	Thurs 4	Thurs 2	Thurs 6	Thurs 3
Namadgi Sub-Committee		Thurs 9		Thurs 10
Environment Sub-Committee	Thurs 11		Thurs 13	
General Meetings	Thurs 18 (Griffin Centre)	Thurs 16 (Forestry House)	Thurs 20 (Forestry House)	Thurs 17 (Forestry House)
Montague Island bookings close	Sunday 28			

Further Details

Committee – Secretary

Namadgi Sub-Committee – Robin Miller 6281 6314 (h) 6201 2191 (w)

Environment Sub-Committee – Stephen Johnston 6258 3833(h) 6264 2035 (w)

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General meetings *The June meeting will be held in Room 1, Griffin Centre. July, August and September meetings in Forestry House and the October meeting at the Australian Reptile Centre. All meetings commence at 8pm.*

Thursday 18 June. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy. Graeme Worboys, Regional Manager for the South-Eastern Region will discuss this new Strategy which is being developed for NSW National Parks.

Thursday 16 July. Some European environments and the place of humans in the environment. Phil and Leonie Bubb have travelled, walked and skied extensively in the European Alps. We will see something of their experiences and hear of national parks, reserves, rural villages and building development. Phil will also tell us something of his views of the human place in the environment. (at Forestry House)

Thursday 20 August. (Annual General Meeting) Flinders Island. Unspoilt, unexploited and unbelievable, or so the ads say. Find out if this is correct when John Webster tells us about his recent trip to the island. (at Forestry House)

Thursday 17 September. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Geoff Underwood, Wildlife Officer at Tidbinbilla, will talk to us about the status and conservation of the endangered Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve's involvement in the recovery program. (at Forestry House)

Thursday 15 October. The Australian Reptile Centre. Ross Bennett, the author of our *Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT*, will host this meeting at his recently opened display and education building in Gold Creek. Members will be provided with a unique opportunity to inspect the centre with Ross and to hear an entertaining and enlightening presentation on reptiles. (The Centre is located in O'Hanlon Place, Gold Creek. A map will be enclosed in the September Bulletin).