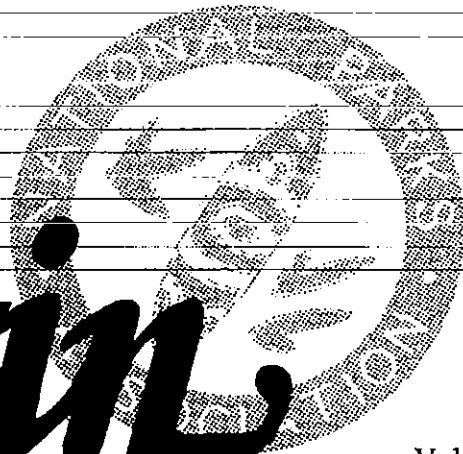


NPA Bulletin



Volume 39 number 2
June 2002

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



Native Title groups agreement

Kosciuszko plan review

Frost hollow to forest walk

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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.

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The NPA (ACT) office is located in MacLaurin Crescent, Chifley, next to the preschool. It is staffed by volunteers but, at present, not on a regular basis. Callers may leave phone or email messages at any time and they will be attended to. Mail from the post office box is cleared daily.

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Advertising

The Bulletin accepts advertisements and inserts. The standard cost of an A4 insert is \$310 but some concessional rates may be arranged through the Membership Officer.

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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Cover photo: Phil and Leonie Bubb on Mount Hotham, see page 14. Photo Phil and Leonie Bubb.

Annual general meeting

All members, friends and those interested are invited to attend the NPA's annual general meeting on Thursday 15 August at 8:00 pm at the Uniting Church hall, Parkinson Street, Weston.

Management Committee positions will become vacant and nominations from people interested in serving on the Committee are very welcome.

Several members, including the President, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary, and Membership Secretary,

will not be standing for re-election, so new faces are needed.

Contact the President, Clive Hurlstone (040 778 3422 mob) or Secretary, Judy Kelly (6253 1859 h) for more information.

Guest speakers

Ever wondered about life in far north-west Canada near the Arctic Circle? Well, our guest speakers, Esther Gallant and Barrie Ridgeway, will show slides and talk to you about their

12-day rafting trip through the Yukon Territory, from Inuvik to the Arctic Ocean. They passed through canyons to the vast coastal plain, home to moose, musk oxen, grizzly bears and arctic fox which they saw at a distance and not always within photo range. Come and share their experiences and enjoy supper afterwards.

We hope to see you there.

Judy Kelly
Secretary

From the Committee

After setting up a system for recording outings participants and considering a number of options to do with paying for liability insurance, a level of uncertainty has now entered the process with the developing crisis around insurance premiums. This is a serious matter for the NPAACT. The Committee has asked committee member David Large to look after this issue; he reports the latest developments in the Outings Program.

The Committee has regretfully accepted the resignations of Tom Heinsohn, Jacqui Cole and Janet Neale from the Committee. Tom is doing postgraduate studies and has run out of spare time. The reasons Jacqui and

Janet have given are to do with the functioning of the Committee and management of business by the President. The decision taken by Jacqui and Janet requires that the President and Committee examine the way they have been carrying out their functions and quickly take steps to rectify the shortcomings. It is most important that the association has, and is seen to have, an effective and robust Committee.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all three, Jacqui for her contribution to the association, particularly with development of a membership strategy and the

introduction and analysis of a membership renewal survey.

Janet was new to the Committee and showed great enthusiasm for getting on with the business of the association and a willingness to take on tasks.

Tom has a strong conservation background and was contributing to NPA's responses to some important current issues.

We will miss all three and I hope they will have the interest to find time to be part of a future Committee.

Clive Hurlstone
President

Environment Sub-committee report

A major discussion followed up with a letter to the Minister revolved around "Our Natural Environment", the environmental component of the Labor Party policy document for the ACT Government elections. A letter to the Minister for Planning, Mr. Simon Corbell, has been sent, raising an issue from the policy document: management of non-reserve land and the proposed Integrated Nature Conservation Plan for the ACT.

Three other issues relating to planning and environment were also raised. These were:

- The impact of the planned Gungahlin Drive extension on Black Mountain Reserve.
- Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve and urban development in north Gungahlin.

- Horse riding in nature reserves and the provision of horse riding trails in north Gungahlin.

NPAACT representatives were due to meet the Minister in late May.

Replies

Replies were received to a letter sent to Chief Minister Jon Stanhope about Labor Party policy on no commercial development at Gudgenby homestead and the proposed sewage treatment upgrade and a reply to a letter (and copies of our submission on the development proposal) sent to the Namadgi Interim Advisory Board about the sewage treatment upgrade and NPA opposition to commercial development. (See page 5, *Gudgenby Homestead developments*.)

In the coming months the Environment Sub-committee will be looking at and making responses to the new plan of management processes for Namadgi National Park and Kosciuszko National Park, as well as the environmental impact statement on the Gungahlin Drive Extension (Bruce Ridge and West Black Mountain).

If members who are not already involved would like to participate in this activity, which in the case of the two national parks will not come round again for another 15 years, they can contact the office (phone message, fax, email or write) to be kept informed of developments and opportunities to become involved.

Clive Hurlstone

Interim Namadgi Advisory Board meeting

A meeting of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board (INAB) was held on Tuesday 23 April 2002 at Boomanulla Oval, Narrabundah.

As you may be aware Ian Fraser resigned, for personal reasons, from the position of Joint Chair, INAB, in the weeks prior to Christmas. The new Joint Chair, appointed by the Minister for Urban Services, is Geoff Butler—and this was his first board meeting.

Geoff is an environmental consultant specialising in flora and fauna assessments, Landcare, total catchment management and natural resource issues. He is also a current or former member of the ACT Heritage Council, the ACT Environment Advisory Committee, the ACT Bushfire Fuel Management Committee and the ACT Bush Fire Council.

Namadgi Plan of Management

The reviews of the Namadgi POM and the Kosciuszko POM each provide a number of opportunities for input over the same time span. While there are efficiencies and issues common to both parks, and cross-border issues, there is clearly the opportunity for people to become confused between the two plans. I might add confusion may increase with the *Draft Wild Horse Management Plan for KNP* also being released for public comment.

Many NPA members will be aware already that Environment ACT recently released the *Namadgi National Park Discussion Paper for the Preparation of a New Plan of*

Management. This paper is exactly that: a discussion paper.

Individuals and organisations are asked to identify issues and gaps, outline objectives and set priorities for development and inclusion. They do not need to develop a lengthy POM themselves. That will be reviewed further and developed with further public consultation.

Environment ACT will also be able to use submissions to identify stakeholders and topics that may require the development of issues papers or public workshops: eg. potentially covering such issues as fire, water quality, mountain bike and other recreational usages. The closing date for submissions on the discussion paper was 17 May 2002.

Enquiries regarding INAB or the discussion paper can be made to (02) 6207 2237, or email environment@act.gov.au. The document is available at www.environment.act.gov.au.

NPA has already received correspondence to the effect that the Gudgenby Homestead waste water upgrade will proceed, although there will be further community consultation regarding the future use of the homestead (see page 5).

Independent body

Dr Rosemary Purdie (Chair) and David Shorthouse, from the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee, addressed the board. As required by legislation, the committee is an independent body of seven experts in biodiversity and/or

ecology. It provides the Minister for Urban Services with an expert, scientific and objective examination of nature conservation issues relevant to the ACT. The attendance, as observers, of the Chairs of the Environment Advisory Committee and the Heritage Council of the ACT facilitates communication between the committees and allows input into the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee.

The Flora and Fauna Committee only addresses threatened species. A broad overview of the declaration process, including an action plan, as prescribed in the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* was presented to board members. Namadgi has the following species identified as threatened: smoky mouse, brush tail wallaby, corroboree frog and the mountain gentian (the latter in Orroral Valley).

Transgrid investigation

A settlement of \$350 000 has been made—\$120 000 for rehabilitation purposes, and the remainder broadly for environmentally based community programs.

Other areas of discussion at the meeting included: Environment ACT Indigenous Employment framework, Signage Capital Works Project, NAIDOC week function (first week in July) and Corin Road Batter Stabilisation.

Dianne Thompson
member

Interim Namadgi Advisory Board

Native Title groups agreement

In April 2001 an agreement was made between the Australian Capital Territory and two ACT native title groups concerning the management of Namadgi National Park. At that time there existed a native title claim made by a third Aboriginal group. The agreement made provision for an interim arrangement to operate with the native title groups who had already signed, and has been implemented through the establishment of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board.

Recently, the outstanding native title claim over Namadgi has been withdrawn and the parties to this claim have agreed to the claim being

discontinued. This clears the way for the long term management mechanism contained in the agreement to be developed. This involves the granting of a Namadgi Special Aboriginal Lease over Namadgi National Park which, subject to negotiation, would involve the establishment of a statutory board of management with responsibility for preparing and overseeing the implementation of a Plan of Management for the park.

The legislation for this arrangement has yet to be developed and clearly, as there is a great deal of work entailed in this, it will be some time before this legislation could be

introduced. In the meantime, the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board will continue to operate. At this stage, the native title group whose claim has been recently withdrawn, has declined to join the Interim Board.

The development of these long term management arrangements is of great significance for the future of Namadgi and will be of great importance to the Territory. It is a task to which our association must make an effective contribution.

Syd Comfort

Gudgenby Homestead developments

The Minister for Planning, Mr Simon Corbell, and the Minister for Urban Services, Mr Bill Wood, have assured the NPA of the Government's opposition to the development of Gudgenby Homestead as a commercial enterprise and outlined its intention to upgrade the wastewater treatment system on 'environmentally responsible land management grounds'.

They were responding to an NPA submission of 2 January 2002 to the Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope.

The NPA has also been advised by the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board that the board considered its submission at a recent meeting.

In a letter dated 3 April 2002, the board's Coordinator, Mr Terence Uren, said it understood calling of tenders by Environment ACT for the upgrade of the treatment plant would occur when development application approval conditions set by the Commissioner for Land and Planning had been met.

'The Minister has also agreed that any decision on the use of Gudgenby Homestead should only be made after consultation with the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board and key stakeholders, including the National Parks Association of the ACT Inc,' Mr Uren said.

'The Board would be pleased to receive a further submission from your association on possible future uses for Gudgenby Homestead or to meet with you to discuss these possible uses.'

Comprehensive response

In a comprehensive response on 20 March 2002, Mr Wood wrote:

'... the ACT Government is opposed to development of Gudgenby Homestead as a commercial enterprise within Namadgi National Park. This does not, however, preclude upgrading of the wastewater treatment system. Upgrading of the wastewater treatment system is considered necessary on environmentally responsible land management grounds. . .

'Gudgenby Homestead's current septic tank system does not comply with the Australian Standard for on-site wastewater management. Moreover, the present system was installed in the 1960s and is considered to have surpassed its useful operational life. . .

'You also point out that the *Australian Heritage Commission Act, 1975* requires that a Minister should:

. . . take no action which will have an adverse effect on a listed place unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative, and if, in his/her view, there is no such alternative, he/she must only take action as will minimise the adverse effect.

'In this instance, Gudgenby Homestead has been identified as an important example of European settlement in what is now Namadgi National Park and therefore being worthy of preservation. Consequently, not replacing the present septic system could be considered an action that will have an adverse effect on a most significant National Estate asset.

Continued use needed

'While Gudgenby Homestead is not to be commercially developed, its ongoing preservation will be dependent upon some continued use of the property. Such uses could include occupancy for park management purposes including ranger accommodation, environmental education or as a scientific research base. Each of these uses are provided for within the broader objectives of the Mountains and Bushlands Land Use Policy of the Territory Plan and the special provisions for Namadgi National Park laid out in the National Capital Plan.

'It is important to note that any ongoing use of the Homestead will continue to place a demand on the present septic system. Consequently, we will upgrade the wastewater treatment system on the grounds that it would be environmentally irresponsible not to do so.

'The proposed system has been designed to service the current Gudgenby Homestead structure (a seven bedroom two bathroom residential building). [The relevant standard] for on-site wastewater management requires that, as a minimum, treatment systems be designed to accommodate five full time occupants per bathroom. The minimum design specification for the Homestead structure therefore is a ten-person system.

'The environment into which the proposed system is to be placed raises a number of uncertainties regarding system performance. The proposed system has been designed with a substantial buffering capacity. This buffering capacity, when coupled with

the intended monitoring program for the new system, will substantially limit any risk of environmental harm being caused.'

Cultural sensitivities

'In his decision of 11 December 2001, the Commissioner for Land and Planning directed that the Interim Namadgi Joint Management Board, through provisions of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management, must endorse any future use of the site. In this way you can be assured that all cultural sensitivities associated with the site will be addressed. In addition, a suitably qualified archaeologist will be present from the moment of breaking ground through to the completion of the new system's installation to ensure that any unregistered Aboriginal cultural sites are appropriately registered and protected.

'The Commissioner also directed that appropriate clearances be obtained from the Environment Protection Authority and ACT Health before installation of the new system could commence. Environment ACT is presently addressing the requirements of that direction.

'I have requested that Environment ACT, in consultation with the Interim Namadgi Joint Management Board, propose a range of options regarding the future use of the Homestead for my consideration. I have also asked that a consultation strategy, which includes key stakeholders, be included in the proposal.'

Public announcement

Mr Corbell said in his letter of 31 March 2002 that while the wastewater treatment system would be upgraded, commercial development of the site as outlined in the preliminary assessment 'is no longer being considered'.

'The ACT Government intends to publicly announce its intentions to upgrade the treatment system once it has satisfied the requirements of the Commissioner for Land and Planning. This notification will clarify the Government's position on no commercial development of the site and indicate the steps taken to ensure protection of the Homestead's surrounding environment,' Mr Corbell wrote.

Clive Hurlstone

Facts, tracks and ferals

February's presentation to the general meeting portrayed the beauty and magnificent scenery of our much loved Snowy Mountains. The March meeting's presentation by Clive Hurlstone, David Large, Judy Kelly and Di Thompson was an appropriate complement as it concentrated on management problems and issues faced by the managers of Kosciuszko National Park (KNP). Penny Spoelder and Steve Horsley from NSW NPWS also contributed to the discussion.

Di, who is a member of the Kosciuszko Support Group established by NSW NPA, invited the representatives of our NPA to participate in a 4-day fact finding visit to the area in October 2001. Also participating were representatives of NSW NPA, Kosciusko Huts Association (KHA), The Confederation of Bushwalkers and Canberra Bush Walking Club. The group was accompanied by NSW NPWS staff, and, as Di pointed out, these were often senior managers, who gave up their valuable time very willingly to ensure the success of the excursion.

As Di explained, the visit coincided with the development of new plans of management for both KNP and Namadgi and the purpose of the NPA evening's presentation was to alert members to a variety of cross-border management issues. The presentation focussed principally on horse issues, although, as Di mentioned, Aboriginal issues will also be particularly important.

Clive showed us a series of slides



NPA President, Clive Hurlstone (left) with Tony Fleming of KNP.

Photo Di Thompson.

giving details of the group's itinerary; this also gave us a clue as to where we could get refreshments in Tintaldra! Clive's slides featured management

issues such as the civil engineering problems associated with turning developmental roads into safe tourist roads. He also noted that feral pigs are a major problem and that some park users are introducing a 'hunting culture' with the gene pool being 'improved' by the introduction of domestic pigs. In the higher country NPWS is trapping feral pigs and aerial culling is another management tool. Increased visitation at areas such as Round Mountain is leading to the development of more formalised parking arrangements and efforts to disperse walkers to other entry points.

The recent CRA process has seen some former State Forest areas added to KNP. While having potential as corridors these areas have somewhat strange shapes and are often remnant land along ridge tops. They also pose many management problems because they have long boundaries, are habitats for pest plants and animals, and have a history of traditional use which is not always compatible with conservation values. NPWS is endeavouring to establish good relationships with adjacent landholders, particularly in the areas of wild dog and pest control.

David addressed the issues associated with recreational horse riding in KNP. His slides revealed the nature of the adverse impacts on the park caused by this activity: deposits of introduced seeds, deleterious impacts on creek banks, tracks on peaks above the snowline and the hardening of roads to horse enclaves within the park.

David firmly believes that horse trekking is not an appropriate activity within KNP. However, he feels that NPWS has been 'captured' by the horse riding fraternity and that the service's policy in providing camps and improved access is testament to this. David is of the opinion that the code of practice for horse riders reflects this influence. (Steve Horsely pointed out that the horse riding code is a voluntary document and so it cannot be enforced).

David believes that it is now too late to attempt to stop horse activities



KNP rangers ready for a pig trapping foray. Photo Di Thompson.

and that it is imperative that conservation groups such as NPA find some way to cooperate with NPWS to contain horse riding activities. He is also firmly of the opinion that no more money should be spent on fostering recreational horse riding within KNP and that some horse camps—eg. Rocky Plain—should be closed. (Steve Horsely advised that NPWS is closely monitoring horse riding. Members of the horse riding fraternity though are well aware of the legal restraints on the Service in this area. NPWS would like to control the numbers of horse riders but in the present political climate this is a difficult option).

Judy gave us a forthright and succinct account of the impact of feral horses on the park. She was concerned that the term 'feral' should be used to describe these animals as they are not 'wild' in the conservation sense and the term 'brumby' had a connotation implying a 'traditional' right to be there. Judy is appalled that tourist organisations still use graphics of feral horses in their promotional material. It is estimated that there are between 2000 and 3000 horses in the KNP and about 200 of them are in the northern section adjacent to Namadgi. South of Thredbo feral horses are having a huge impact on the environment.

Judy urged all NPA members who visit KNP to report all sightings of ferals to NPWS. Judy cited evidence that aerial culling is the best and most humane option for removal, but this is banned in NSW and unlikely to even

continued next page

Management plan; draft or discussion paper?

Three issues associated with management plans have come up for discussion and may be causing confusion. They are:

- The review of the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park
- The Draft Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park
- Discussion Paper for the Preparation of a New Plan of Management for Namadgi National Park

Kosciuszko plan

The review of the *Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park* will take about two years and commenced in May 2002. A community forum and scientific committee will thrash out a draft plan of management for public comment.

While this is happening, people will be able to contact the conservation

representative on the community forum for information or to make comments. Public meetings are being held in Bombala, Berridale, Adaminaby, Jindabyne and Cooma. One was held in Canberra in May.

Contact NPWS on 1800 200 208 for more information, or visit www.npws.nsw.gov.au and follow the links to 'Kosciuszko—your park—your plan' or write to Kosciuszko National Park, Plan of Management Review, PO Box 733, Queanbeyan NSW 2620.

Horse management

The *Draft Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park* will be presented for public comment very soon.

Watch Public Notices, ring an NPA Committee member (see inside cover of the *Bulletin*) or contact NPWS (see above).

Namadgi plan

The *Discussion Paper for the Preparation of a New Plan of Management for Namadgi National Park* is a discussion paper only and is a precursor to the draft Plan of Management.

Brief comments were due in by May 17 and NPA has responded.

Contacts for updates:
Environment ACT Home Page:
www.environment.act.gov.au
Environment ACT Helpline: (02) 6207 9777; or Environment ACT, PO Box 144, Lyneham ACT 2602.

Judy Kelly

Lawrence of the Coree

Wednesday greeted the mid-week walkers with wet grass, fog and a forecast of possible showers. Unperturbed, Lawrence of the Coree led his party of seven off into the border country between Namadgi and Brindabella National Parks to enjoy first-hand the beauty of Coree Falls.

A short walk it may be (four hours round trip), but steep scree slopes covered with bracken, native raspberry and a host of other foot-grabbing plants make for a descent to the falls that only the foolhardy would take for granted. An encounter with a patch of stinging nettles enriched the day for me by retrieving childhood memories of nagging, rashless itches!

Lunchtime at the base of the falls was a vast improvement on my usual



Max at Coree Falls.
Photo Martin Chalk.

weekday dining arrangements in front of a computer. A long ribbon of water reaches into a black pool from Coree Creek somewhere above and out of sight. On all sides are the steep valley walls capped by a sky of intermittent blue and white. The warm air lazily stirs the surrounding vegetation.

As midday passed, this part of the universe slowly moved into shadow and we edged up the valley wall towards our outbound ridge.

As we approached the fire trail, the hard work done, a distinct collective feeling of accomplishment moved through the group. With a good day 'in the bag' we rewarded ourselves *en route* to Canberra with an afternoon coffee break at Mount Stromlo.

Martin Chalk

Facts, tracks and ferals *continued from page 6*

be considered as an option. (In the days when the park was grazing land the traditional method of culling brumbies was by shooting, Judy explained). Options now being considered by the service include: salt lick and trapping, mustering, brumby running, controlling fertility and stunning. Judy urged NPA members to offer constructive criticism of the options and to also comment on the forthcoming *Draft*

Plan of Management for Wild Horses, particularly with reference to its focus, terminology and ambiguity. There was spontaneous applause at the conclusion of Judy's presentation.

Penny concluded proceedings with a brief explanation of the KNP Plan of Management Review Process. She urged all NPA members to participate in the process.

Proof of the fact that KNP is a very special place for so many of our members was evidenced by the enthusiastic discussion and questioning that followed during supper.

Further information on the plan of management review, together with the relevant postal, telephone, email and website information is set out in the item on this page and article on page 10.

Len Haskew

NPA's Mount Tantangara walk

Brian Slee led NPA's April 7 Sunday daywalk. The weather was fine, warm and clear. Eight members accompanied Brian: Janet Neale, Doug Brown, Daryn Jean, Allen Bills, Chris Paterson, Paul Lashko, Jacqui Cole, and Margaret Power.

As there were sufficient starters for a car shuffle, a car was left at the finish, Rocky Plain campground (just off Snowy Mountains Highway), and the walk commenced, as planned, at Alpine Creek Fire Trail. After following the trail about 3km north, the group turned west up a scrubby slope until a brumby track, which led to the top of Mount Tantangara (1745m), was found.

Some time was spent during the 300m climb wandering to various viewpoints. From the summit the group descended north-west to Tantangara Hut. As the hut was very warm inside, and flies being absent, lunch was eaten in the shade of adjacent snowgums. A horseman

from Tumut rode by and stopped to chat.

In the afternoon Tantangara West Ridge was climbed to gain views to the south and it was with reluctance that the group departed this beautiful place to proceed to Rocky Plain. An afternoon tea stop was made at Adaminaby and all participants arrived back in Canberra by 6pm.

This was a satisfying and reasonably leisurely outing. There were excellent views in all directions, lovely open meadows and a good display of weathered snowgums. It is understood that this walk has not been on the program before, or at least not for many years.

In future it would be a good alternative to the Mount Nungar daywalk, and could be conducted in winter, given that the highway is kept clear of snow. However, it may not be suitable during hot weather.

Brian Slee



Janet Neale and Doug Brown enjoy the view to Alpine Hill from Mt Tantangara West Ridge. Photo Brian Slee.

Be wise – look out for owls

The devastating effect of habitat destruction on Australia's owls is well known.

A lesser-recognised threat to owls is 'secondary poisoning' occurring when they prey on mice or rats that have eaten rat poison (rodenticide). The toxins from these poisons may build up in the owls' livers and eventually kill them.

There is evidence that pest rodent species are on the increase; obviously the use of rat bait is necessary sometimes to keep them at bay. The good news is that there seems to be a product on the market which, while not 100 per cent safe (no poisons are), is less harmful to owls.

In a recent campfire discussion stimulated by the calling of a distant boobook, an NPA bushwalking friend suggested I pass on the following information in the interest of the owls.

Rodenticides have been around for more than 40 years. The 'first generations' of these were multiple-dose baits containing anticoagulants (such as warfarin or coumatetralyl), that compete with Vitamin K1 and reduce the rodent's blood-clotting ability. After eating sufficient bait, the rodent dies within 3-8 days after the initial feed. Few secondary poisonings of wildlife were reported from

the use of this first generation of rodenticides.

However, the now more common 'second generation' rodenticides pose a much greater risk of secondary poisoning. The reason for this is that they are single dose and more potent, including anticoagulants such as bromadiolone, brodifacoum and flocoumafen. These products are capable of killing rodents after a single feed, although the rodents still take some 3-8 days to die. Perhaps more significantly, they are effective against populations that have become resistant to warfarin. The greater toxicity of these active ingredients and their greater persistence in animal bodies is what causes the danger to owls.

The issue of rodenticides was discussed at the international *Owls 2000* symposium in Canberra in January 2000.

One of the papers reported on the trials of the product *Racumin*, produced by Bayer Australia Ltd. *Racumin*, containing coumatetralyl, was registered in 1999 for use in Australia's canefields following withdrawal of a second generation rodenticide. As well, a number of measures were recommended to minimise exposure to non-target

species, including the use of *Racumin* in bait stations, as part of the integrated pest management program. It has proved effective in rodent control and with a reduced risk of secondary poisoning.

Racumin is now in use in wildlife recovery programs in environmentally sensitive places such as the Galapagos Islands and Norfolk Island.

As researchers and ornithologists point out, there is no perfectly safe bait, but the risk to non-target species can be reduced by the choice of a product which uses coumatetralyl as the active ingredient.

So look out for the owls! If you have to resort to rodenticides, choose an owl-safe product.

Ornithologists generally distinguish 10 species of Australian owls, including the Christmas Island Hawk Owl. In southeastern Australia, at least four species are listed as endangered or threatened—the Powerful, Masked, Sooty and Barking Owls. It is in our power to reduce the threat to them.

The *Owls 2000* proceedings are expected out soon. It was a fascinating conference and if anyone is interested in the papers, I can pass on contact details.

Den Robin

Tidbinbilla tiny gems

Winter is the time when Tidbinbilla is alive with the sounds of the lyrebird. What is more enjoyable than sitting on a log and munching a sandwich, while listening to a half hour concert, with little repetition of calls, performed by one of these wonderful birds!

However, if the log is in a slightly damp environment take time to look around it; you may be lucky enough to spot the very shy but delightful *Corybas incurvus* or Slaty Helmet Orchid. These tiny orchids, no bigger than a finger nail, enjoy sheltered sloping sites and, as the name suggests, look like tiny helmets.

The genus *Corybas*, or Helmet Orchids, are mostly ground hugging plants with heart/round shaped leaves, preferring cool conditions for flowering—so much so that there is even one species found on Macquarie Island, making it the most southerly growing of all orchids.

Although there are about 100 species distributed throughout Asia, to New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand, only 20 species grow in Australia. Of these we are fortunate enough to have three common in the ACT, all of which may be found in Tidbinbilla. They are *Corybas hispidus*, or Bristly Helmet Orchid, flowering in Autumn, *C. incurvus* flowering in Winter and *C. diemenicus*, or Stately Helmet Orchid, flowering in Spring. All are colony forming, have the typical ground hugging leaves, with the buds forming on the leaves, and all have the tendency for the bud to shrivel up and disappear without flowering if the conditions become too dry.



Corybas incurvus. Photo Tony Wood.

Corybas hispidus has a rich maroon helmet with a large notched lip and numerous marginal teeth with a white central area. *Corybas incurvus* is a much smaller flower, relatively speaking, with a very short stalk so sits very close to the leaf. The helmet is very dark maroon/purple in colour and strongly hooded. The lip has a white central area with incurved margins. Often the leaves of this species are very evident, but the flowers can be sparse. It should be noted that this species might also be found in early Spring in more open woodland areas. The Spring flowering *Corybas diemenicus* can be distinguished easily from the other two species as the flower stands more erect on a longer stalk above the leaf, with a very

coarsely toothed lip around the margins.

Although there are not many other orchids to be seen in Tidbinbilla during the Winter months, by searching diligently colonies of *Acianthus* or Mosquito Orchid can be found early in the season. The leaves of this genus are not dissimilar in shape to those of *Corybas* but are usually larger, and a closer look will reveal that the underside of the leaf is a deep purple/maroon whereas that of *Corybas* is green or silver. *Acianthus* are usually greenish purple in colour on stems up to 20cm long and, as the common name suggests, somewhat insect-like in shape.

Throughout Winter the elegant *Pterostylis melagramma* or Black-stripe greenhood will be in bud, waiting for just a little warmth to be one of the first orchids to burst in Spring. In late Winter *Pterostylis nutans* and *P. pedunculata* will also be preparing for an early Spring show.

So the cycle of orchid hunting starts all over again; visiting old haunts to monitor the orchids from year to year, finding new sites, and hopefully, the greatest thrill of all, discovering species of orchids I have not seen before.

Happy hunting.

For further reading I suggest Anthony Bishop's *Field Guide to the Orchids of New South Wales and Victoria*, 2nd edition, UNSW Press or *A Field Guide to the Native Orchids of Southern Australia*, by David and Barbara Jones, Bloomings Books. Both these books are available from the Botanic Gardens Shop.

Jean Egan

Notes on walks and outings

Members are always interested in accounts of walks or other trips that are included in the *Bulletin*, and I am sure that Martin Chalk's short article in this issue will be no exception. Descriptions of complete walks or short accounts of single incidents make good reading and enable experiences to be shared by other members. An extended caption to a photograph is another way to pass on interesting and entertaining details of outings. The *Bulletin* would like to see more of these tales. What's more, good stories need not always be absolutely true!



Colony of *Corybas hispidus*. Photo Adrienne Nicholson.

Kosciuszko National Park – Plan of Management review

At the February general meeting of the association Penny Spoelder of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) gave a presentation on the *Review of the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park* which has recently been launched. Planning NSW, which is responsible for the planning of the ski resorts, will work closely with the Parks Service in the preparation of a Regional Environment Plan. The two projects will require extensive community discussion and take about two years to complete.

The plan of management will set out how the park is to be managed over the next 15 to 20 years as well as providing a longer term vision for the protection of the park for future generations. The existing plan was prepared in 1982 but due to many social, economic and environmental changes is now in need of review. It is expected that the review of the plan of management will be completed by the end of 2003.

Penny explained that in conducting this review, rather than preparing a draft plan and releasing it for community comment, the Parks Service is going out into the community first in order to seek their

participation in generating the plan. The service is keen to reach a full range of individuals and groups during this process and will work through three approaches to achieve this.

NPWS will seek to inform the public and gain community input through the regular public information sources. A radio and print advertising campaign has been launched, an 1800 telephone number and web site established and pamphlets and posters prepared. A series of workshops to be held in the region, and in Sydney and Canberra, will provide an opportunity for people to identify what they see as important about the park and the issues they would like the plan to address.

A committee of scientists is being established to provide a statement on the condition of the park and to identify issues that threaten its values. This committee will have expertise in the natural sciences, historical and cultural heritage, tourism, recreation and economics.

The Parks Service will establish a community reference group representing various interest groups to discuss key threats to the park and to recommend strategies to address these. It is expected that this forum will represent a wide range of interests and

be made up of approximately 20 individuals selected for their skills and experience and ability to represent the views of their constituents.

Individuals and groups interested in the review may become involved by:

- registering with NPWS to be included on the mailing list to receive regular updates and invitations to make submissions;
- participating in one of the workshops; and
- logging on to the website and keeping up to date as the review progresses.

Further information about the review is obtainable from NPWS:

KNP Plan of Management Review
PO Box 733, Queanbeyan NSW
2620

Freecall (during business hours):
1800 200 208

Email:
kosciuszkopom@npws.gov.au

Website:
www.npws.nsw.gov.au follow
the links to 'Kosciuszko— your park—
your plan'.

Syd Comfort

New members

The association extends a warm welcome to the following 31 new members and invites them to participate in NPA activities.

Sue, Paul, Anna, Catherine,
& Mark Lashko, Macquarie
Margaret Conley, Canberra
Carol Taylor, Monash
Don & Betty Wood, Weetangera
Kate Moore, Weston
John Ridley & Sue Williams, Fadden
Ann Gibbs-Jordan, Kaleen
Doug & Caryl Finlayson, Garran
Margaret & Denis Wylks, Holder
Colin & Val Boreham, Pearce
Steve, Jill & Rowena Small, Hughes
Ross, Sue, Sally & Alice
Kingsland, Hughes
Janelle & Martin Stiles, Reid
Christine O'Connor, Kambah
Barry Reville, Belconnen
Malcolm Greening, Duffy

Policies and policy development

In the recent past the NPA has made submissions on a range of issues that have been well argued and consistent with the majority collective view at the time. They have not however been produced from within a framework of pre-existing policies which would go some way to defining what NPA supports or rejects; policies on, for example, park management practices, recreational activities in parks and commercial development within Namadgi National Park.

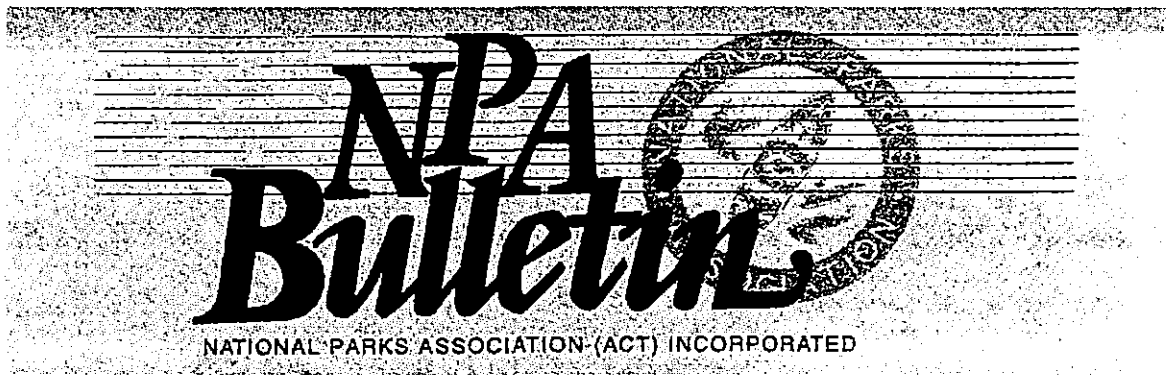
Other national parks associations and community conservation organisations have found having membership-endorsed policies does provide a foundation for discussion on submission content and further policy development. This is especially so when members understand the process and there are accepted steps to endorse new policies and amend existing ones.

The cultural significance and the future use of Gudgenby Homestead remains a contentious issue within the NPA. The development of a clear policy on the status and options for future use of the homestead will involve an understanding of each use option and its potential impact on park values.

When NPAACT has a policy, which all members have had an opportunity to endorse, representatives speaking on behalf of the NPAACT will be confident that a majority of NPA members with a point of view on this topic support them.

It is time to get on with the development of policies for the NPA and their eventual approval (or rejection) by the members.

Clive Hurlstone



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

June–September 2002

Outings Guide	
Walk grading	Terrain grading
Distance grading (per day)	A — Road, firetrail track
1 — up to 10 km	B — Open forest
2 — 10 km to 15 km	C — Light scrub
3 — 15 km to 20 km	D — Patches of thick scrub, regrowth
4 — above 20 km	E — Rock scrambling
	F — Exploratory
Day walks	Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.
Pack walks	Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER BY PRIOR WEDNESDAY OR AS INDICATED IN THE PROGRAM.
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 convenor 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 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, to the nearest dollar, of THIRTY cents per kilometre, DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS in the car, including the driver, be offered to the driver by each passenger accepting transport. Drive and walk distances quoted in the program are approximate distances for return journeys.

**8 June Saturday daywalk
Canberra Sculpture Stroll**

[Note change of meeting place]

**Leader: Col McAlister
1A**

**Map: Canberra Street Directory
Phone: 6288 4171**

A stroll around some of the many sculptures in Civic and the ANU. Meet at National Museum of Australia carpark, end farthest from museum, at 9.00am. 0 km, \$0 per car.

**8 June Saturday work party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group**
**Phone: Eleanor Stodart (6281 5004), or
Syd Comfort (6286 2578)**

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre Tharwa at 9.15am, or Yankee Hat carpark at 10.00am. Weeding, wilding removal or other work for rehabilitation of the Boboyan pines area. Tools will be provided.

**8-10 June long weekend packwalk
Long Point**

**Leader: Steven Forst
2A/2A/2A**

**Map: Caoura 1:25 000
Phone: 6219 5236 (w), 6251 6817 (h)**
Ring leader by preceding Wednesday. A walk down Long Point overlooking the Shoalhaven Gorge. Camp by the river. A daywalk to explore Lake Louise as far as Bungonia Gorge or beyond. A long climb out on Monday. 250kms, \$75 per car.

**15 June Saturday daywalk
Woden Valley Ridges**
**Leader: Pat and Eric Pickering
4A**

**Map: ACT 1:100 000
Phone: 6286 2128**
Joint walk with Family Bushwalkers. Start near the Woden Bus Interchange and walk "cross country" to the Red Hill and Isaacs ridges, then on to Mt Waniassa and Mt Taylor. Follow the ridge to the north and finally walk back to Woden. Undulating, with a total climb of about 580 metres. Mainly track or footpad, with some off-track walking through grassy areas. Meet at the carpark opposite the Hellenic Club, Callam St, Woden Town Centre at 8.20am. No transport involved.

**22 June Saturday daywalk
Split Rock**
**Leader: Martin Chalk
3A/B/C/E**

**Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000
Phone: 6292 3502 (h), 6268 4864 (w)**
A long but rewarding day walk into the Bimberi Wilderness. The "warm-up" starts from the Orroral carpark and proceeds to Cotter Gap. After a well-earned rest we continue the climb to the granite outcrop above Cotter Gap. A self-

catered lunch will be taken amongst the tors and the views. Return via the same route. Depart Kambah Village shops at 7.30am. 85kms, \$25 per car.

**26 June Wednesday daywalk
Leader: David Large
Phone: 6291 4830**

June mid-week walk. Phone leader for details, to be determined near the date.

**7 July Sunday daywalk
Red Rocks on the Murrumbidgee
Leader: Steve Hill
1A/C/E
Map: Tuggeranong 1:25 000
Phone: 6231 9186**

A relatively easy walk, mainly on track, but involving a little rock scrambling along the Murrumbidgee 'corridor' from the confluence of Tuggeranong Creek to Red Rocks. Might diver to the 'canyon' on the way (some mild rock scrambling to do this). This is one of the most scenic stretches of the river and, if we are quiet, we will be overwhelmed by a huge variety of native birds and kangaroos. Meet at Urambi Hills car park near the corner of Athllon and Learmonth Drives at 10.00am. No vehicle costs.

**14 July Sunday daywalk
Micalong Swamp
Leader: Max Lawrence
2A**

**Map: Bobbys Plains 1:25 000
Phone: 6288 1370**
Meet at 8.30am in the pine forest carpark at the Uriarra/Cotter Roads intersection. This walk is described in Graeme Barrow's new (fourth) edition of his book *30 Family Bushwalks in and around Canberra*. It is a nice easy walk on the flat around the largest montane swamp in mainland Australia, and involves a longish drive over the possibly snowclad Brindabellas and down through the scenic Brindabella Valley. 160kms, \$48 per car.

**21 July Sunday daywalk
Canberra Nature Park, Oakey Hill and
Mount Taylor
Leader: Col McAlister
2A**

**Map: Canberra Street Directory
Phone: 6288 4171**
Meet 9:30am at North Curtin District Playing Fields (off Dunstan St). Walk through parkland to Oakey Hill and then on to Mt Taylor for lunch. Descend Mt Taylor by a different route and then retrace original route to Lyons. Walk through 'green' areas of Lyons and Curtin to complete a most pleasant walk through Canberra's hills and suburbs with plenty

of kangaroos and possibly a wedge-tailed eagle or two.

**24 July Wednesday daywalk
Leader: Adrienne Nicholson
Phone: 6281 6381**

July mid-week walk. Phone leader for details, to be determined near the date.

**28 July Sunday snow shoeing day
Guthega Ridge on snowshoes
Leader: Brian Slee
2B (in snow)
Map: Mount Kosciuszko 1:50 000
Phone: 6281 0719 (h)**

Participants need to be fit. Depart early from Kambah Village in order to secure parking at Guthega. After crossing dam wall, climb ridge north toward Consett Stephen Pass. Depending on conditions and ability of group, proceed to either Granite Peaks, Tate West Ridge or Mt Tate (distances vary) before returning to Guthega. Fine views. Book with leader for departure time and weather check; walk may be cancelled if snow is poor. Participants hiring snowshoes (try Jurciewicz at Fyshwick) should get them before scheduled departure. 420km, \$120 per vehicle, plus \$15 park fee for vehicles without permit.

**31 July Wednesday daywalk
Round Flat and beyond
Leader: Max Lawrence
2A**

**Maps: Michelago, Tinderry 1:25 000
Phone: 6288 1370**
An easy walk on firetrail along the 'other' (eastern) side of the Tinderies, but with a climb of about 300m along the way. This is the extended version of the walk described in Graeme Barrow's new book (see 14 July). Meet at 9.00am in the carpark at Kambah Village shops. 120kms, \$36 per car.

**4 August Sunday daywalk
Visitor's Centre to Booroomba Rocks
Leader: Barbara Edgar
2A**

**Map: Williamsdale, Corin Dam 1:25 000
Phone: 6230 5685**
Walk the last (or first) section of the Australian Alps Walking Track. It is about a 700 metres gain/loss (up from Visitor's Centre, down from Booroomba Rocks) all on track. A car shuffle or swap required, depending on numbers.

**11 August Sunday daywalk
Gudgenby Creek area
Leader: Martin Chalk
2A/B/D**

**Map: Michelago 1:25 000
Phone: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502 (h)**
We don't often visit the area around Gudgenby Creek and Brandy Flat. This walk will address this deficiency. At the time of going to press,

NPA ACT ENVIRONMENT MONITORING FORM

How can you help the NPA ACT monitor and prevent environmental problems and illegal activities in our national parks and nature reserves?

By carrying a copy of our '*Monitoring Form*' with you when you venture out into the bush you are ready to record any environmental problems or illegal activities you might observe and to help monitor the general well-being of the park environment. The information you record on the form will help the NPA ACT preserve fragile ecosystems and Aboriginal and European cultural heritage sites and provide a safer environment for everyone to enjoy these last refuges for nature. You will also help the NPA ACT'S Environment Sub-committee address some serious problems facing our national parks and nature reserves and provide a valuable reference for current and future campaign work.

Environmental problems and illegal activities include:

- **Feral** animals such as horses, pigs, dogs, rabbits, foxes, deer, goats and cats. These feral animals compete with or prey upon native animals, may damage native vegetation and habitats, cause soil erosion, or spread diseases and weeds. By recording sightings of, or damage caused by, feral animals, we can help the Parks Service focus eradication efforts within our national parks and nature reserves.
- **Infestations** of weeds displace native vegetation and animal communities. A weed is any introduced plant, whether exotic or native to another part of Australia, which is not local to the area eg. willows, wild pines, blackberry.
- **Illegal** access by motorised vehicles, bicycles or horses in areas restricted to self-reliant activities such as bushwalking and cross-country skiing.
- **Other** illegal activities such as shooting, trapping and smuggling of wildlife, removal of timber, plants and rocks (which provide habitat for native animals), dumping of rubbish, and lighting of fires during a Total Fire Ban.

After reporting the environmental problem or illegal activity to the authorities, could you please send or fax the completed '*Monitoring Form*' to the NPA ACT office at **PO Box 1940 WODEN ACT 2606** or fax **(02) 6282 5813**.

WARNING: If you observe what you believe to be an illegal activity, you should not approach or challenge those observed, but keep a reasonable distance away, or act in an uninterested manner if close eg. passing on a 4WD track. If you have a mobile phone with you contact the parks service and police immediately. A quick call could allow rangers or the police to 'meet' the offenders on the way out. Otherwise, contact the parks service and police as soon as you return home. The authorities are always keen to get information on illegal activities as soon as possible as it greatly increases the chance of apprehending offenders and getting a conviction.

PARKS SERVICE PHONE NUMBERS:

Canberra Nature Park: Northside 6207 2113; Southside 6207 2087

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve: 6205 1233

Namadgi NP: Tharwa 6207 2900; Bendora 6247 8153; Corin 62478146

Kosciusko NP: Jindabyne 02 6450 5600; Perisher Valley 02 6457 5214; Tumut 02 6947 1849;
Khancoban 02 6076 9373; Yarrangobilly 02 6454 9597

POLICE PHONE NUMBERS:

Canberra area: 11 444

Monaro area including Adaminaby, Cabramurra, Jindabyne, Perisher and Thredbo: 02 6452 0099

Khancoban: 02 6076 9433

Talbingo: 02 6949 5244

Tumut: 02 6947 7199

NPA ACT ENVIRONMENT MONITORING FORM

For recording environmental problems and illegal activities

Your name and contact information.	
Brief description of environmental problem or illegal activity observed. For illegal vehicular access include registration number (if possible), colour, type and make of vehicle(s).	
Area name where you observed problem or activity. (eg. Sams Creek Fire Trail in Namadgi NP. Include grid reference.)	
Date and time of observation.	
Did you contact the Parks Service or police? Who did you speak with? What was their response?	
Do you have any documentary evidence eg photos? Can you provide us with copies?	
Further comments (attach additional pages if necessary).	

For NPA ACT office use only

Date received and action taken:	
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the walk's details are still being refined, so call the leader by the preceding Wednesday for bookings and information. You can anticipate a through-walk with a car shuffle. 166km, \$50 per car.

17 August Saturday daywalk

Deadman's Hill

Leader: Rob Forster

2A

Map: ACT Topographic map

Phone: 6249 8546

Starting from Honeysuckle carpark, a very pleasant stroll through a new section of the Alpine Walking Track to Booroomba Rocks carpark, then on an old fire trail to Deadmans Hill for lunch and views. Return by same route. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. 80kms, \$24 per car.

18 August Sunday daywalk

Tidbinbilla Range (Johns Peak and the Camel Back)

Leader: Steve Hill

3A/C/E

Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Phone: 6231 9186

A chance to visit the northern half of the Tidbinbilla Range. There are great views during much of this reasonably strenuous walk. Start with the steady climb of the Mountain Creek fire trail to the famous cherry tree junction, then climb Tidbinbilla spur to Tidbinbilla Peak (1572 metres). Then travel

north down the main ridge to John's Peak (about 1450 metres) and, if we feel inclined, continue on to climb up the southern side of the Camel's Hump. The walk includes some mild bush negotiation and rock scrambling. We might divert to Red Hill rain forest track to return to the car park. Meet at Kambah Village shops car park at 8.30am. 80kms, \$24 per car.

24-25 August weekend packwalk

Boboyan Divide

Leader: Philip Gatenby

3A/B/E/F

Map: Shannons Flat, Yaouk 1:25 000

Phone: 6254 3094

A partly exploratory walk in southern Namadgi National Park on tracks, open grass land and through the bush. Visit the headwaters of Grassy and Sheep Station Creeks and some local huts. Weather permitting, climb Sentry Box Mountain (a climb of 450 metres). Contact leader by Wednesday 21 August for more details and bookings. 160 km drive.

25 August Sunday daywalk

Orroral Valley circuit

Leader: Mike Smith

2A/C

Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Phone: 6286 2984

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. A walk from the Orroral gate along Cotter Hut

Road until saddle at the weather station. Climb to un-named rocky peak 1339m for lunch and exploration. Continue on to Sawpit Creek and return along valley track via site of Rowley's Hut. Total climb 400 metres. 100km drive, \$30 per car.

28 August Wednesday daywalk

Leader: David Large

Phone: 6291 4830

August mid-week walk. Phone leader for details, to be determined near the date.

8 September Sunday daywalk

Sentry Box Summit

Leader: Steve Hill

2C/D/E

Map: Yaouk 1:25 000

Phone: 6231 9186

Due to popular demand, this is a repeat of Max Lawrence's walk from last year. A chance to see fabulous views from a surprisingly interesting monolith in the region, and to see the southern end of Namadgi National Park from a different perspective. We start opposite Yaouk and climb up a steep, but entirely manageable spur to a rocky peak of 1696m. We then visit and explore the summit region (1727m) and return the same way. The climb of 600 metres is steepish in parts, is off track and involves some mild rock scrambling. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 7.30am for a stupendous day. 170km, \$56 per car.

Wednesday Walks

Members should be aware that some years ago the different Canberra walking groups decided to cooperate in organizing Wednesday walks. Accordingly, Family Bushwalkers lead on the first and third Wednesday in each month, Canberra Bushwalkers on the second Wednesday and NPA on the fourth and (when occurring) the fifth Wednesday of each month. Walkers from any group are welcome to walk on any Wednesday.

The contact for the Canberra Bushwalking Club is Allan Mikkelsen 6278 3164.

Leaders for Family Bushwalkers for the next few months are:

3 July	Eric Pickering	6286 2128
17 July	Peter Wellman	6288 5985
7 August	Andrew Walker	6254 6904
21 August	Peter Wellman	6288 5985
4 September	Eric Pickering	6286 2128
11 September	Doug Finlayson	6281 5810

LARAPINTA TRAIL Commencing 8 July

Fit walkers are invited to join a group aiming to walk all, or most, of this trail through the Western McDonald ranges. It may be possible for others wanting to walk fewer sections than the main group to organise this.

A detailed itinerary was not available at the newsletter deadline, due to the trail leaflets being delayed in the mail.

However, it will require organising air flights to Alice Springs and return, accommodation in Alice Springs, a possible rest day and accommodation at St Helen's resort and return transport at the end of the walk. Assistance has been offered by the Alice Springs Bushwalking Club, some members of which may join us for the walk.

Interested persons are invited to contact Graham on 62303352.

NPA outings issues

Insurance

At the time of going to press, Public and Personal Insurance was still being negotiated by the Australian Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs. A couple of brokers have responded and it is hoped (expected?) that costs will be in line with previous policies. One response has been to cover 'pure' bushwalking but exclude 'high risk' activities such as canyoning, abseiling, rock climbing, caving, mountaineering, skiing, etc.

Confederation is also making an approach to commercial operators to look at the possibility of a joint venture.

The insurance issue is close to resolution and members will be kept informed of progress. The method of paying will have to be determined once we have a final figure.

Joint meeting of ACT Bushwalking Clubs

In late April the NPA met with representatives of the Canberra Bushwalking Club and the Family Bushwalkers to discuss a number of issues which affect our operations. These included the issues of insurance, duty of care, changes to the Constitution of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW and the proposed Plan of

Management for Kosciuszko National Park. Insurance is dealt with elsewhere. Duty of Care is an issue where we believe there is a need to develop a consistent approach. The NPA advice to walkers and leaders is well out-of-date and the need to re-write the document gives us an opportunity to adopt 'best practice', drawing on the experiences of other walking organisations. Martin Chalk has accepted the task of drawing up new guidelines.

All representatives attending the meeting felt it had been very useful and future meetings are planned.

David Large
Outings convenor

The Parc des Ecrins

The fortnight circuit of the Parc des Ecrins ('Tour d'Oisans' GR54) is the best walk in France. A bold claim maybe, but you can keep your crowded Tour de Mont Blanc or your long road bashes on the Route de Compostella. Here is a superb walk in a major French national park crossing 14 cols and with a good mix of mountain refuges and gites d'etape in charming villages. These are big mountains with cols above 2000 metres: rarely is there a day out of sight of snow-covered mountains exceeding 3000 metres.

Usually the walk begins at Bourg d'Oisans, a town serviced by a bus at least daily from the train station at Grenoble. We started from La Grave just under the highest pass on the road between Grenoble and Briancon, and camped by the majestic 3982 metres of the Meije and its two glaciers.

When we set off, early in September, the surrounding mountains were white with new snow. The Col D'Arsine is between 3000 metre mountains with glaciers, small tarns, meadows, sheep (yes they have traditional agriculture in French national parks). We spent the night at a gite d'etape and the next day another col and another gite d'etape in a charming village. And the next day two cols, one dramatic, and a mountain refuge.

The following day was superb. We crossed three cols. At the last we were under the glaciers tumbling from 3400 metre Le Sirac. We followed the ridge up from the col in the opposite direction to Pic de Vallonpierre for an

ultimate view. Le Sirac was at one end of the half circle of white and black glaciated horizon. Far below was a green meadow, a small lake and our refuge. In the other direction bare ridges rose to Matterhorn-shaped peaks clear of snow and, eventually, the plain where the River Durance flowed.

We had been meeting people as we went, some day after day. Three cols and two days on, we met a Welshman and a French couple of about our age at a very small, very rural village at the end of the road, Le Desert. We became friends over dinner, which included a stew made with four bottles of wine, one of cognac and several meats served in the one pub in town. We walked together over a col to another village at the end of its road, Valsenestre (for Latin lovers, it is on a left fork of the road), but without a rural bone in its body. We had reached a French Brigadoon; a village where visitors' cars were discouraged, a village of self conscious beauty without any shop or any tourists.

The next day we crossed the 2600 metre Col de la Muzelle, an incredibly steep notch between two mountains that we kept looking at, because it looked impregnable, until we zigzagged up the last crumbly and steep pitch puffing and panting. From



Sheepfold on the Col D'Arsine. Photo Phil and Leonie Bubb.

here the resort of Les Deux Alpes could be seen and, looking back, a glacier with a few chamois moving through the rocks above the pass.

We spent another night. Our new friends drove us the next, rainy day to La Besse, and left us. (We hope to spend a week walking with them again this year.) The final day was through new snow, looking over the gorge of the Romanche which we knew was below, but could hardly imagine. It looked as though we could just walk across to the plateau of glaciers running from Les Deux Alpes to the Meije. As we descended towards La Grave we came across 20 or 30 bushwalkers, sitting, talking and laughing in the sun. They allowed us to take their photo to show members of NPA a French walking club.

We reached our car at La Grave with a celebratory embrace. Not a bad walk was it? Something to remember!

Leonie and Phil Bubb

Stamp features Murrumbidgee scene



This Murrumbidgee River scene, so familiar to members, has been going around the world for the past two years. It was chosen for the \$1 stamp in Australia Post's 'Panoramas of Australia' international range which was introduced to comply with new tax legislation. The nine stamps in the series, in denominations up to \$20, feature a scene from each of the states and the ACT and two (Devils Marbles and Uluru) from the NT. Notes supplied by Australia Post state that the Murrumbidgee River courses for 66km of its 1600km length through 'some of the most spectacular country' of the ACT and concludes: 'The Murrumbidgee River is protected near Canberra by the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, which ensures conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and resources of the river.' The \$1 stamp measures 42.63mm x 18.75mm. The illustration was supplied by Australia Post.

Graeme Wicks



The interpretive signs on the Frost Hollow to Forest walk in the lower part of Aranda Bushland are in place at last, after several years of work and persistence.

The walk starts at a small carpark on the western side of Caswell Drive about 300m from its intersection with William Hovell Drive. This carpark is one aspect of the walk that could do with improvement.

From the carpark one climbs over a stile into the grasslands of the frost hollow and then along a clear footpad. The first interpretive sign has a map of the walk showing how it traverses the frost hollow, does a loop through the forest and then returns through the frost hollow.

The footpad crosses a dam and proceeds to the group of snow gums where it becomes indistinct. Posts with arrows are set at intervals along the route but here an occasional run with a mower could ensure that walkers keep to a single track. Dried sticks from weed removal have been carefully placed on patches of bare earth to help retain moisture and nutrients and assist grass to reestablish.

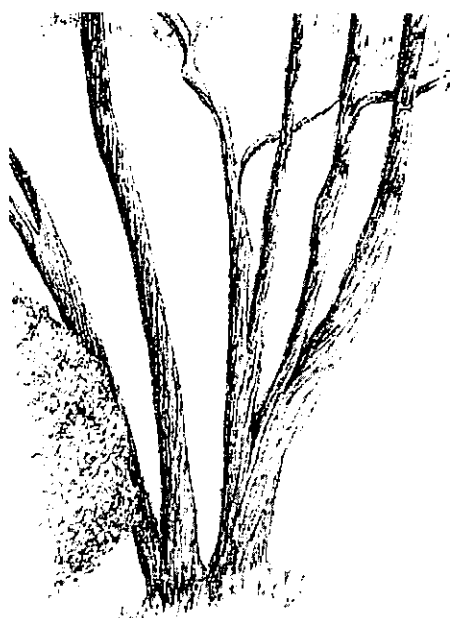
The second sign describes the snow gums (*E. pauciflora*). These are quite young trees with an additional group of seedlings grown at Ginninderra College doing well. The remains of a few grand old trees are visible as grey skeletons. They died after weeds in the area were sprayed in 1992. Their loss stimulated the Friends of Aranda Bushland into having the snow gums placed on the interim heritage listing and began the process of having them included in Canberra Nature Park.

The snow gum area has a problem with groundcover weeds such as St Johns Wort and phalaris. As the '92 fiasco showed it is not wise to use herbicides near the snow gums, the Friends of

Aranda Bushland are investigating other ways of dealing with these weeds, such as covering strips of ground with dark plastic. The cleared strips will then be planted with native grasses. In this area a number of star pickets are markers for survey plots so that changes in ground cover can be recorded.

From the snow gums the walk crosses the highly eroded gully of Black Mountain Creek. This gully has been revegetating naturally but very slowly since the area was fenced off in the 1960s to protect Lake Burley Griffin from silting up.

The walk then proceeds up a corridor which was ceded by the Glenloch lessee in exchange for the Friends of Aranda Bushland having annual work parties to remove woody weeds such as hawthorn from his lease. Removal of these weeds will



Snowgums (top) and Red stringybark (above).
Drawings by Eleanor Stodart.

help the lessee directly and also reduce a weed source for the Bushland.

The third sign, in this corridor, cleverly engages the walker by providing drawings of leaves, buds and fruits of the three species of eucalypt in the corridor (candlebark *E. rubida*, red gum *E. blakelyi*, yellow box *E. melliodora*) and then encouraging the walker to work out which is which. I personally enjoyed the challenge (successfully, I found out later!) and so did my grandchildren.

After the corridor the walk enters the Aranda Bushland proper and follows a ridgeline. Signs ensure that apple box (*E. bridgesiana*), stringy barks (*E. macrorhyncha*), broad leaved peppermints (*E. dives*), and red box (*E. polyanthemus*) are noticed. Of course there is much more to see, such as many healthy cherry ballarts (*Exocarpus*) and various flowers in season. I recommend that the walker take along a copy of *Our Patch* to help identify these. When I did the walk in April the most obvious flower was *Hibbertia obtusifolia*.

The return part of the loop traverses a southwesterly slope where the white trunks of scribbly (*E. rossii*) and brittle gums (*E. mannifera*) give a completely different appearance to the bush. At the bottom the final interpretive sign 'Bringing back the bush' informs the walker of how the weeds have been removed.

This walk is an excellent introduction to the variability of vegetation types and how they relate to topography, and to the identification of those eucalypts mentioned. The signs provide enough information for that without being too wordy. The drawings by Winifred Mumford are clear and to the point. The hand written labels are visually attractive, but unfortunately are not as clear to read as the drawings. For this article I obtained more background information from Jean Geue, a very enthusiastic member of the Friends of Aranda Bushland.

My grandchildren, aged 7 and 9, enjoyed comparing the buds we found

continued next page

My mountains

This year, the International Year of the Mountains, I celebrate 46 years of mountain loving, loving mountains.

My first were the mountains of North Wales—I remember slate quarries, rain and cloud and rocky ridges; I climbed *Mount Snowdon* about seven times and never saw the famous view stretching to Ireland. The romantic feeling for the Celtic hills was nurtured by Wordsworth:

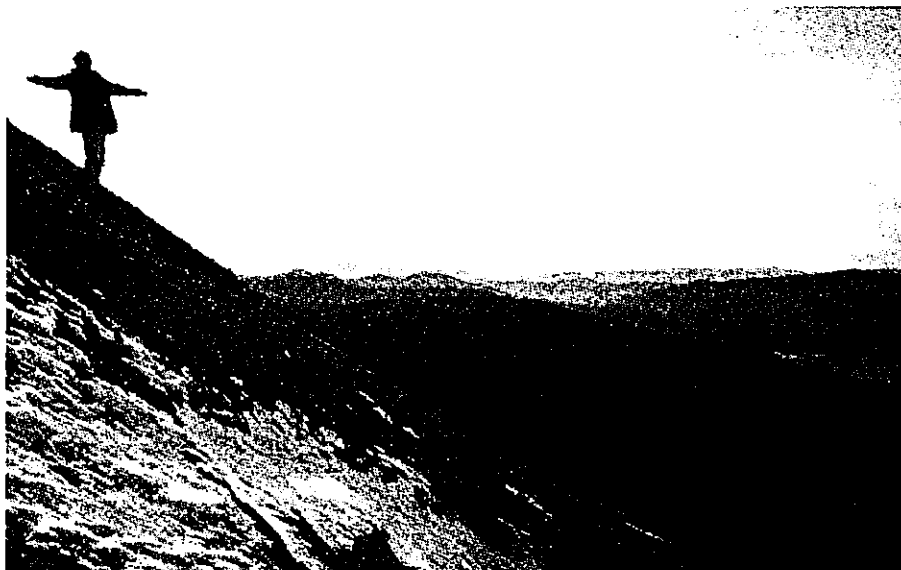
*The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion . . .
And I have felt . . .
a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply
interfused . . .*

I left school at 16 needing to earn money for climbing trips

Then the *Swiss Alps*—I climbed my first Alp on my 18th birthday and vowed to climb an alpine mountain every year on my birthday, a vow that has been totally unfulfilled. Strangely, I have never been back there.

The passion (madness?) for mountains was so intense that I had to have an outdoor job that would keep me close to nature. It was either forestry or geology, so at 18 I emigrated, a '10-pound migrant' (actually only 5 pounds for under 19s), and did geology at Melbourne Uni. The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club provided me with soulmates and trips galore. I discovered Tasmania and New Zealand, revelled in the early trips to the rocky peaks of *Mount Geryon*, and survived three mountaineering 'accidents', including a broken cornice on *Mount Feathertop* in Victoria and a fall on *Malte Brun* in New Zealand. Eventually one of the soulmates, Rae, married me. Our honeymoon was an extended high pass crossing from the *Wilkin* to the *Matukituki* valley in Otago, now Lord of the Rings country.

By my mid-20s geology had become serious, and I realised that I could no longer keep up the training that would make climbing acceptably



Gerry embraces all the mountains. Photo Syd Comfort.

safe. Still, from time to time I was able to go high as part of the job, and the geological exploration of *Mount Kinabalu* in Borneo over two years remains a cherished memory. So does cave exploration in the *New Guinea Highlands* where we lived for a while.

As geology and a growing family became even more demanding, there was only an occasional mountain escapade. One such was a night ascent of *St Marys Peak* in the Flinders Ranges during an overnight stop while returning from a scientific tour of the salt lakes. A friend and I climbed the rockface with torches between our teeth, spent the night on top and ran down in the early morning light to catch the tour bus. More recently I became involved in conservation issues at *Uluru*, and have enjoyed the presence of this awesome mountain.

An aid project in Kathmandu gave me just a glimpse of the *Himalaya* through the smog and I was transfixed, though I couldn't justify mountain travel while working there. I know that the high mountains still draw me and inspire me and I can go there and just stare. I will one day . . .

In retrospect I am glad that I survived the 'accidents' and lived to have a wonderful marriage and see my

children grow up. The risks of high climbing are something that mountaineers accept in the grip of their passion, especially in their youth, but there are many other reasons to live. I regret the deaths of some friends who died young in the mountains, and I think that if they had a second chance they also would choose to live.

Nowadays I very much enjoy our local mountains—we are so lucky to have the *Namadgi* country, the *Snowys*, the *Sandstone Plateaux*, so close. On *Mount Gudenby* last winter with Tim W, Graham S and Syd C, the summit rocks were covered with snow, and I sang with the joy of being up there and being alive:

*Roaming oh, Roaming oh, out
on the rock and snow,
Roly-ay, Roly-ay, ice axe and
good belay,
Let me go free with the
mountains for company
Let me go climbing where the
blue hills are shining . . .*

(to the tune of The Spinning Wheel).

Gerry Jacobson

Frost hollow to forest walk *continued from page 12*

with the drawings and looking for wrinkled armpits on the scribbly gums. I encouraged their enthusiasm by lending them some binoculars for the walk, but in the event I don't think they had any practical use. For those with more patience, however, binoculars for birdwatching would be very

useful. A few incidents added to the walk. The most spectacular was the collapse and packing up of a hot air balloon which had landed in the frost hollow. On return the children delighted in feeding their morning tea apple cores over the fence to horses in the rural lease; they clearly were looking for

such delicacies. Then a jacky lizard obligingly sat and posed for us for several minutes before dashing off into the undergrowth.

Eleanor Stodart

Ultra-light walking

I had not heard about ultra-light walking until Tim Walsh mentioned on a walk that David Large had a book. It was about a couple who had walked the Pacific Crest Trail and who, in the absence of suitable commercial gear, had developed and made their own. I borrowed the book, and later bought author Ray Jardine's latest version, *Beyond Backpacking*.

We had been conscious of weight for some years and would have thought we walked with less than most walkers. But here was a couple who walked thousands of kilometres carrying 4kg before food, water and fuel! Jardine argues that the further you walk, the less you should carry.

Leonie started sewing to the patterns in the book. First two backpacks, without any frame and without a hip belt, weighing 400g; much less than a commercial pack weighing 2½–3kg. A ¾ closed cell foam mat folded into three provided all the structure the pack needed, and protected the ¼ ultra-lite Thermarest from punctures at night.

Then she made a tarp weighing 1kg with the pegs and cords, instead of a tent. As we were walking the Australian Alps Walking Track in May, we did not need a mosquito net. The tarp provided good shelter from wind and rain, was carried in a pocket on the outside of the pack and dried readily during rest stops.

The most radical item was a double sleeping quilt, like a quilt on a bed but tapering and with a short zip at its foot to form a small 'foot pocket' to hold it in place. This was made of a fancy artificial insulation not available in Australia and costing heaps from USA. Jardine argues that the part of a sleeping bag compressed under a sleeping person contributes nothing to warmth.

Our quilt weighed 1kg and kept us warm until the temperature fell below minus 5 degrees, when we could cope if we wore warm clothing to bed. We used a nylon parasilk inner sheet, and a Norwegian 400g 'wind sack' as a ground sheet (and as an outer bag for more warmth on cold nights). Most sleeping bags weigh at least 1kg per person. We should have had three layers of insulation instead of two and made a quilt weighing about 1.4kg.

Like the Jardines, we took obsessive care with clothing weight and followed some of their ideas. They

walk in Lycra shorts, like bike shorts, and carry a long-sleeved shirt and trousers made of rip stop nylon for protection from the wind and from insects.

I used a long-sleeved thermal without a collar, and used my towel as a cravat. I had a short-sleeved thermal for nights (sometimes vice versa when one or other was washed). We had homemade Lycra knickerbockers. One pair of thermal long johns was for day, and a pair to keep dry for evening wear. I used Speedo swim shorts instead of underpants. A homemade 100 pile pullover, a 400g Goretex anorak (Leonie homemade a 300g Goretex), 200g of water resistant overpants, an artificial insulation vest, a Thininsulate beanie for nights and a light sun cap completed the kit.

I wore Dunlop KT26 sneakers instead of boots or padded sneakers, which are slow to dry. A spare, dry pair was carried for night use. They were not good for traversing the side of a hill through wet scrub, but were a delight for stepping over logs. We walked through snow for a day and a half and two socks and two plastic supermarket bags per foot kept my feet warm.

We carried lightweight umbrellas, but were lucky with weather. They were used as much to keep snowfalls off us as rain.

We neither could nor would achieve the Jardines' 4kg packs before food, water and fuel. They carry no warm jackets (just a windproof ripstop nylon shell) nor any waterproofs; no GPS nor EPIRB. I carried about 7-8kg before fuel, food and water, and up to 17kg after a food dump and with a day and night's water (from the Corryong-Benambra road to Johnnies Top). The pack was comfortable within the limits expected of the weight carried. Towards the end of the day and towards the end of the trip, my shoulders started to complain. Better an hour of this than an extra 2kg!

We agree that without Jardine's inspirational and practical book to guide us to ultra-light gear, we could not have completed the Alpine Walking Track in one go. Should anyone wish to see our gear, or exchange views on the topic, feel free to contact us.



Phil and Leonie with their lightweight packs at Walhalla. Photo Phil and Leonie Bubb.

Walhalla to Namadgi

Our walk last year of the 650km of the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) from Walhalla in Victoria to the Namadgi Visitors Centre, commenced late in April and finished early in June. It was not a good time of year because the days were so short. All of the 11 hours of daylight were often needed to reach the next campsite with water. However, we had a choice of walking then or postponing the walk to some indefinite future time.

A minimal requirement for a pleasant walk is at least an hour for lunch and, preferably, a little more to provide ample time for a snooze. On this criterion, our walk was not pleasant. We walked to the beat of a metronome, with 10 minutes each hour spent stretching and half an hour for lunch. The best part of most days was sitting in front of the fire in the dark. We rose before dawn.

Judy Webster recently gave a presentation on the virtues of the AAWT, and we would not wish to overload you with views nor add any discordant notes. The AAWT was a test of our capacity to walk for weeks at a time to prepare for a 1300km walk from the Vosges in north eastern France to Nice on the Mediterranean down France's mountainous eastern border along Grande Randonnee no. 5 (GR5), which we start mid May.

Phillip and Leonie Bubb

Association news

New Committee member

David Large has been coopted as a member of the association's Management Committee. David, who has also recently taken over as Outings Convenor, will represent NPA with the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs.

NPA's Strategic Plan

About half a dozen written responses to the NPA's Draft Strategic Plan and Mission Statement, published in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, have been received, and it is hoped more will be forthcoming. The Committee will shortly consider options for progressing the issue. One option may be an independently facilitated one day workshop or forum on a weekend to which all members will be invited.

Please let's have some more written or emailed responses.

Clive Hurlstone

Response to forms

The environment monitoring form first distributed with the March *Bulletin* has given rise to four responses to date:

- Early February. Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve (Canberra Nature Park), two fallow deer and a holey fence in northern tip of reserve and half a dozen sheep near broken dam site in southern corner of reserve.
- March 11. Bimberi Wilderness, Namadgi National Park. Thistles at Cotter bridge (near Cotter Hut), cat on fire trail 2-3km from Laura Gap and horses in Mount Murray area.
- Easter March 29 to April 1. Gurrangorumbra Creek north of Currango in Kosciuszko National Park. Evidence of illegal vehicular access. Tracks bypassing locked gate.
- April 14. Black Mountain Nature Reserve (Canberra Nature Park) Inappropriate high impact 4WD vehicle use under power lines.

All sightings have been reported to park information officers or park staff by the NPA members concerned.

The Environment Sub-committee will be looking at all Environment Monitoring Reports and deciding on further action.

Keep them coming!

Clive Hurlstone

Volunteer award

On May 17 at the NRMA ACT Volunteer of the Year Awards, ACT NPA member and Past President

Eleanor Stodart received the Award in the Environment and Conservation Category for her work with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

At the time of the award Eleanor was studying *Notoryetes typhlops* in South Australia and Clive Hurlstone accepted the award on her behalf.

The ACT Volunteer of the Year Awards are in 16 categories plus Volunteer of the Year. Highly recommended awards in the Conservation and Environment Category went to Valerie Taylor of Mount Painter Parkcare Group and Tony Fernside of the Green Corridors Group.

The Unique Family Contribution Award went to the Schneider-Kennedy family of the Mount Taylor Park Care Group

The Volunteer of the Year Award went to Barry Williams, recognised for his work with the ACT lone Fathers Association.

New NPA display for ACT Alive

This year, ACT Alive was held for the first time along the lake shore at the foot of Anzac Parade and took a somewhat different form, with a number of new attractions added to the traditional Navy exhibitions and displays by local community groups. The number of community groups exhibiting was rather smaller than in the past but the NPA was well represented through the new display which has recently been assembled by members led by Eleanor Stodart.

The NPA display contained a comprehensive collection of recent photos which gave an attractive picture of our major activities. Display panels featured the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the ACT, the natural and cultural heritage, NPA support for national parks



and bush regeneration, threats to nature reserves and an outline of the aims and objectives of the NPA. Also included were a number of other items which proved of interest to the many people who visited the display.

Some of the heading and text signs were supplied by NPA member Paul Mlakar, of Mlakar Signs, for which we thank him. Other members contributed photographs, and we used posters from *Nature Australia* to fill in the space at the bottom of the panels.

The day was quite warm so members tending the NPA stand were glad of the shade offered by the trees under which the community displays had been set up. The tent for our display was quite large so provided ample space for people to walk around the stands.

Members involved with the exhibition considered that it had offered a good opportunity to bring our activities before the public. Congratulations to those who contributed items and assembled the display and to those who helped on the day.

Syd Comfort

Preparation of NPA Bulletin

For some years the Bulletin Working Group has managed the production of the *NPA Bulletin* from gathering contributions and editing, to the posting out of each issue, with commercial specialists being employed to carry out the final layout and the printing. In the March 2002 issue, for the first time, the working group undertook the complete layout of the publication with Adrienne Nicholson doing the lioness's share of the work. I think you will agree that she has done a first rate job, and, incidentally saved the association a pretty penny. Adrienne is willing to continue to do the 'desk-topping' but would very much appreciate an 'offsider'. Is there a member willing to work alongside Adrienne in this interesting and valuable task?

SFC

A spacious tent housed the NPA display at ACT Alive. Photo Eleanor Stodart.

See Australia's best sand dunes



Trees overtaken by drifting dunes, WA. Photo Brian Slee.

The south-west coast of Australia (known in South Australia as the 'west coast' and in Western Australia as the 'south coast') is usually windy, often cold, more than often deserted, but outstandingly beautiful. An expert on Australian beaches, Professor Andy Short of the Marine Studies Centre at Sydney University (he has visited all 10 000 of them!) when questioned during an interview on ABC radio (3 April 2002), rated the sand dunes and beaches of the coast south of Yalata in SA as the most impressive in the whole country.

For those accustomed to the eastern seaboard, the surge of the ocean will seem remarkably powerful in those parts where the coast is exposed to the prevailing east-flowing current, such as the western side of Eyre Peninsula. Yet any area protected from this current will be an oasis of calm. At Cactus Beach, near Penong in South Australia, the waves may pound in, but a kilometre away on the other side of Point Sinclair, the water in Port Lehunte will be unrippled.

In South Australia and the eastern part of Western Australia, the hinterland consists of harsh limestone. Rainfall is infrequent, the vegetation tough, and there is a saltiness in every scene. Massive smooth granite dominates the western end of the coast in Western Australia. Here the famous wildflowers are at their best—a garden by the sea—in spite of the poor soils. Fitzgerald River National Park is an outstanding example.

The largely inaccessible middle section of this coast, the 1200km stretch from Penong in SA to Esperance in WA, was first explored by Edward John Eyre in the 1840s, but poor soils and the lack of permanent water has meant that it has yielded

little to human settlement. An outstanding feature is the coastal cliff which begins at the southern edge of the Nullarbor Plain near the Head of the Bight in SA and then continues west to near Israelite Bay in WA. At this point the cliff is an inland escarpment, protected by a sandy coastal plain,

as it is also between Eucla and Twilight Cove. There are extraordinarily white sand beaches along this coast plain and for hundreds of kilometres at either end of the cliff/escarpment. The sea has exceptional clarity, bright blue, particularly near Esperance, or emerald green according to conditions. Seaweed accumulates in massive spongy banks (Fowlers Bay can be a sight to see).

When the Eyre Highway was sealed in the 1960s and 1970s it was relocated to the top of the cliff in SA to take advantage of the natural beauty of the area. The roadside viewing areas are, indeed, popular with tourists. More recently, whale watching at Head of the Bight has become popular under an arrangement made with Aboriginal land owners. An occasional tourist will inspect the ruins of the telegraph station at Eucla. Relatively few explore the Eucla sand hills, seashore and jetty, and most will only notice the escarpment when the road drops to the plain at Eucla and climbs to the crest at Madura. The rest of the surrounds are ignored by travellers intent on reaching Perth or Port Augusta in the shortest possible time.

Bird Observatory

The original points of access to the coast grew from the need for a communications link from WA to SA, and thus to the rest of the

world, by the installation of a telegraph line from Albany to Ceduna. This was completed in the 1870s with the principle telegraph stations being established at Israelite Bay, Eyre and Eucla. These stations were all built on the sandy plain near the coast where water could be found.

The station at Eyre is about 1km from the coast, behind the first line of dunes. The area was originally known as Eyre Sand Patch as Eyre's party had camped here for several weeks, near a rare source of water, in 1841. A plaque has been erected to record the event. The 1877 building was replaced by the present stone structure in 1897. However, the telegraph line was soon relocated north, along the trans-Australia railway, and the station fell into disuse. It was abandoned in 1927 and sold to a station owner who scavenged it for reusable materials, particularly roofing iron and timber. Perhaps the walls survived because stone, like sand, is one of the few materials abundant in the area.

In 1977 the building was restored and opened as Eyre Bird Observatory. It is staffed year round and offers basic accommodation, including meals. The wardens have an organised schedule of bird observations in which visitors can participate and there are regular courses conducted on birds and also animals and plants, and other subjects according to the schedule. There is a one-room museum, a library of books and an official meteorological station.

The station should be contacted (telephone (08) 9039 3450) in advance of any visit. Guests can be collected



Old Telegraph Station/Eyre Bird Observatory, WA.

Photo Brian Slee.

continued next page

PARKWATCH

Chocks away for project to help insect bomber

With a wingspan of more than 13 centimetres, *Petalura gigantea* is one of the largest dragonflies on Earth—and one of the strangest airborne insect predators in Australia.

It is also about to become the first dragonfly in the country to benefit from a recovery plan put in place to try to guarantee the species' survival.

The giant insect has a fossil record stretching back over 230 million years into the Jurassic period and, according to John Trueman, a lecturer in the school of botany and zoology at the Australian National University, it is the deadly bomber of the family.

While they look dangerous, they are no threat to humans. 'They are absolutely harmless,' Dr Trueman said. 'They haven't got anything that can sting or bite a person.' But to other insects they are deadly.

'They fly over the swamps like B-52s, chomping their prey with their big powerful mandibles. The giant dragonfly is one of half a dozen claimants around the world for the biggest dragonfly.'

National Parks and Wildlife Service is worried about *Petalura* and how habitat modification seems to have reduced its numbers significantly. The insect lives on semi-swampy seepages on the NSW coast, as far inland as the Southern Highlands and the Blue Mountains.

So far about 20 sites inhabited by

the species have been found but in each case the locations seem to be home to only a few adults.

Dr Trueman and the parks service want the public to help them locate populations of the giant dragonflies.

In spite of their bulk, giant dragonflies are often mistaken by the public for more modern common brown dragonflies. The only sure way for a layman to tell a *Petalura* is by the petal-like claspers at the end of the males' tails.

*The Sydney Morning Herald,
Monday, 1 April 2002*

Horse Park

The ACT Government's Planning and Land Management (PALM) group recently conducted a walking tour through Gungahlin as part of its community consultation over the development of suburbs in North Gungahlin (including the recently named Jacka and Bonner). Part of the tour involved a walk from Amaroo to the historic Horse Park property, via the Horse Park wetlands, where we were addressed by staff from PALM, Environment ACT and by archaeologist Dr Peter Dowling.

Horse Park is listed on the Register of the National Estate and is classified by the ACT National Trust as a significant heritage place. According to the Trust's statement of significance, Horse Park has natural, Aboriginal and European historic value.

The Horse Park wetlands result from a natural constriction on the creek caused by low opposing ridges. The site is inundated after heavy rain, which creates a temporary wetland habitat. It is unique as a wetland in the low areas of the north of the ACT containing plant species rare to the Territory. It is also an important habitat for migratory birds including Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*), which arrives from Japan in August.

According to Dr Dowling, Aborigines are believed to have had an association with the wetlands for at least the last 20,000 years. Artefacts found in the area indicate that the Ngunnawal used the wetlands as hunter-gatherers—the reliable supply of water ensuring a relatively abundant supply of plants and animals. Glass artefacts indicate Aborigines continued to frequent the area up to and for some time after European settlers arrived in the 1850s.

*Canberra & District Historical Society
Inc., Newsletter, Feb/March 2002.*

The common myna

Dr Chris Tidemann is in charge of an initiative to reduce Common Myna numbers. Focussing, at first, on the areas near Mt Taylor and Oakey Hill, Chris asks those living in Chifley, Curtin, Fisher, Kambah, Lyons, Pearce, Torrens and Waramanga to contact him if they'd be interested in reducing Myna numbers in yards and the broader suburban areas listed. He is at Wildlife Management, School of Resources, Environment and Society at the ANU, on 6125 2375 and e-mail to: myna@anu.edu.au. Chris would also be interested in sightings, location and abundance details for the Spotted Turtle Dove as numbers for this introduced species are also increasing.

Field Natter, March 2002

Victorian water crisis

Logging in catchment areas is a significant factor in Victoria's present water crisis, reports Claire Miller in the *Melbourne Age* on 9 January. An expert committee has been appointed to report to the government on the various options to boost water-supplies or reduce demand in the State.

The Water Resources Strategy Commission is evaluating the viability

See Australia's best sand dunes *continued from page 16*

from Cocklebidy roadhouse, 50km north-west on the Eyre Highway. However, it is possible to tackle the route in an ordinary four-wheel drive vehicle—the sign-posted track leaves the highway 16km east of Cocklebidy and after crossing 15km of earth to the microwave tower, crunches its way over 8km of knobbly limestone, including a descent of the escarpment, until the coastal plain is reached. Here the sand is relatively firm and easily managed on deflated tyres. A reliable pump should be carried. Although day visits are permitted, an overnight stay should be the minimum time contemplated. No camping is allowed in the surrounding Nuytsland Nature Reserve.

The station eaves are home to numerous nesting swallows. The building is surrounded by tall mallee

which harbours many species of honeyeaters. It is also a haven for the Major Mitchell parrot (becoming less common in agricultural areas due to degradation of habitat) which is almost guaranteed to make an appearance, with its brilliant plumage and amusing behaviour.

The beach stretches seemingly forever, east and west. It is an observed fact that most visitors proceed along the beach in a westerly direction, probably because the escarpment can actually be seen in the far distance where it returns to the coast beyond Twilight Cove. There are vehicle tracks behind the dunes but the wardens should be consulted on their use. The enormous sand hills are white as snow and quite stunning, particularly in morning and evening light. You will never feel so alone.

Brian Slee

continued on page 18

PARKWATCH

continued from page 17

of shifting the logging industry out of catchment areas, which would prevent a further decrease in the water yield. Water run-off is estimated to be roughly 50 per cent greater in mature forests, which require less water than the younger trees in coupes that have been replanted. Since 1992 successive Victorian governments have commissioned research into the link between logging in catchments and a drop in Melbourne's water-supplies; ten years ago consultants found that a no-logging policy would benefit the Victorian community by an estimated \$140–\$150 million. A further inquiry in 1994 confirmed these findings.

It appears that massive savings could be made by evicting the logging industry from the catchment areas—even when relocation costs and the local community funding shortfalls had been met. A complicating factor is the commitment made by the Kennett Government to supply timber to international buyers, some of which was passed into law in 1996. The director of forest management at the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Ian Miles, claims that the volume of timber required to meet contractual agreements could not be met without some logging in catchment areas, despite the closure in 2001 of the region's largest sawmill, Thomas P Clark, whose timber had been supplied by plantations.

The committee is unlikely to recommend the building of a new dam and is considering the possibility of recycling waste water to increase supplies and improve efficiency to decrease demand on reserves.

A forest update in the *Friends of the Earth Newsletter* for summer 2002 reports that 60 coupes have been set aside in far north-east Victoria for logging in the next three years. Heavy logging is planned in the Mts Wills, Sassafras, Gibbo and Pinnibar regions. Most of these areas are within cooee of the Lake Hume water catchment and some coupes are in the heaviest rainfall areas of Victoria. The Victorian Alps provide about a quarter of Victoria's water-supplies—a very small region feeds a significant proportion of water into the Murray-Darling Basin. Friends of the Earth estimates that the flow of about 210 creeks and tributaries will be affected by logging in the proposed coupes.

Wild, Autumn 2002

Compiled by Len Haskew

Book reviews

30 Family Bushwalks in and around Canberra

30 Family Bushwalks in and around Canberra, 4th edition, by Graeme Barrow, Dagraja Press, Hackett, ACT. \$16.95.

It has often occurred to me that reading a book about bushwalks is akin to reading a road test of a sports car: it might pique the interest, but there's nothing like actually getting out there and experiencing it for yourself. So for me, the real test of whether a book about bushwalks is successful is 'does it stir you into action?'

Graeme Barrow's new book passes with flying colours. In assembling 30 bushwalks in one volume, he has managed to cover a diverse range in terms of proximity to Canberra, level of difficulty, type of terrain and historical interest. There's something for everybody here and no room for excuses, like 'they're all too easy' or 'too hard' or 'too far'; bushwalkers of all persuasions will be stirred into getting out there and doing it.

Graeme's concept of bushwalks being for families strikes a happy chord with me: from a very early age my bushwalking parents encouraged me to enjoy the bush, and as he says in his Introduction, a bushwalk can be quite an adventure for energetic youngsters.

The style of Graeme's writing I find easy to read, probably because it is written as a personal account with interesting observations and descriptive passages which are great memory joggers when you get out there and experience it for yourself. Many of the walks are very familiar to me, some are now on my 'must do that one' list and a couple brought back memories from 30 years or so ago.

I decided, while undertaking this review, I should 'road test' one of these memorable ones: the Tolwong Chimneys walk in a spectacular gorge of the Shoalhaven River. Graeme's description of the walk was both helpful and interesting, especially the references to the history of the area, which has spurred my walking companion to do more research on the history of the mine and smelter. Graeme's cautionary note in the final paragraph encouraged us to drive to the end of the dirt road, thus saving ourselves 3km of uphill drudgery at the end of the day. We did this in a 2-wheel drive vehicle by exercising

caution and going very slowly; the sort of thing most families could do.

Perhaps as proof that the Tolwong Chimneys walk is indeed a family bushwalk, we met a father and son who had just spent a few days camping and fishing along the river and were about to tackle the climb out. The young boy had a glow of contentment that probably came from an early morning dip in the Shoalhaven River, rather than a computer game session.

The maps accompanying the walk descriptions provide a good overall picture of the locations but as Graeme cautions, for safety's sake you should consult the listed topographic maps. That said, if read in conjunction with the text, these maps are relatively easy to understand and for the easy, well signposted walks, are all that you need.

One aspect of the book that warrants special mention is the photographs. While those that accompany each walk description serve to tantalise the reader, I especially enjoy the small 'photoettes' of a couple of emus, a butterfly, a bird's nest and so on. Finding these at random throughout the book is a bit like making surprising discoveries of fauna and flora and geological formations in the bush—it's one of those added attractions that makes a bushwalk more than just a walk.

The photograph which forms the backdrop to the title page captures what could be the essence of a family bushwalk—a drizzly day when there's nothing more enjoyable than a stroll in the Monga Forest soaking up the bush smells and perhaps getting a glimpse of a waratah in full bloom or some rare bird or animal unlikely to be found in suburbia.

All in all, a thoroughly good read which stirred me into getting out into the bush and doing it. Especially recommended for families with young children who have a whole wealth of bush discovery ahead of them.

The book is available at camping/outdoors shops, good bookshops and some newsagents.

Ken Free

Ecological Pioneers

Ecological Pioneers by Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, Cambridge University Press, Oakley, Vic, 2001. 338 pages. RRP: \$39.95

The authors of this book are both academics at the University of Western Sydney, where Hill holds the

continued next page

Festival gives green environment example

Over several years the organisers of the National Folk Festival, which is staged over four days in the large expanse of the Canberra Showground, have very deliberately tried to reduce waste by having a recycling and waste management policy.

There are numerous waste collecting bins, labled to sort garbage, and 900 volunteers clean, collect, direct, sell tickets, supervise, etc. Their aim is to make the festival a 'Waste Wise Event'.

A wonderful piece of organisation is the use of strong green plastic mugs by food stalls to dispense tea and coffee. After use these mugs are placed in containers and volunteers collect them regularly for washing in hot, soapy water and they are then returned clean to the stalls.

Katherine Maxwell from the ACT Environment Centre has commended

the Folk Festival for its well-deserved 'green image'.

Green Corridors

An ACT environmental group, Green Corridors, had a stall at the festival. This Weston Creek group says Canberra's population is growing yet its green spaces, parks, recreational areas are shrinking.

Green corridors of vegetation are the arteries that maintain the health of Canberra and bring birds into the city.

If you are interested to know more about this group, write to
PO Box 20, Duffy, ACT 2611,
or visit their website at
www.greencorridors.tripod.com

Fiona MacDonald Brand

Coffee stall with green mug collection bins. Photo Fiona MacDonald Brand.



Book Reviews *continued from page 18*

Foundation Chair of Social Ecology and Mulligan is a lecturer in the same faculty. They earned the ire of David Salt in his review of the book in *The Canberra Times* because their view of ecology does not conform to the conventional scientific view of the discipline.

To Mulligan and Hill 'ecology' and 'ecological' thought are more of a social history and they encompass the thoughts not only of scientists, but also writers, artists, political activists and the Gurindji and Yolngu people. Their view is that 'There is a consensus among ... historians that at least one source of the development of ecological thinking cannot be owned by the biological sciences.'

The 'romantic' philosophical tradition, beginning with Wordsworth and Thoreau and carried through to the recent 'deep ecology' school of thought, is the basis for their position, and they also believe that the colonisation of 'ecology' by science severely limits the value of the term.

Whether or not the reader espouses this viewpoint is irrelevant because as an historical narrative of influential and exemplary ecological thinkers the book has an appeal of its own.

The authors give much credit to Australian artists for drawing both local and international attention to the unique character of the Australian

landscape. Some, like von Guérard, pioneered an interest in the lush

Considerable attention is also paid to the work of Australian writers and their influence on ecological thinking. Judith Wright figures significantly in two chapters. Women's voices, particularly those of Miles Franklin, Mary Gilmore and Eleanor Dark, are credited with arousing an interest in conservation. This tradition continues to this day through the works of Val Plumwood, whose fascinating life story is also found in the book.

For me the most interesting section of the book covers the birth of the conservation movement. The authors' thesis is that this movement began in widely different parts of Australia at much the same time, suggesting that it was an idea whose time had come. Nevertheless, it was a long, hard and often unrewarding battle for those concerned. Royal National Park was proclaimed in 1897, the Wild Life Preservation Society was founded in 1909; Collins and Lahey successfully campaigned for Lamington National Park, which was created in 1915. Then it was the turn of the bushwalkers—in 1931 the Mountain Trails Club and the Sydney Bushwalkers raised money to save Blue Gum Forest in the Blue Mountains; Miles Dunphy began campaigning for national parks that would be primarily wilderness areas;

and Marie Byles campaigned for the establishment of Bouddi National Park. Judith Wright and John Sinclair later campaigned to preserve significant areas in Queensland.

Scientists, such as Herbert Andrewartha and Charles Birch, are recognised for significant contributions to the science of ecology. Australian innovators in land and resource management are recognised, as are campaigners to save Lake Pedder and the Franklin. So are political activists and Aboriginal challenges to the *terra nullius* point of view.

Indeed so many artists, writers, activists, scientists and campaigners are included in the book it is interesting to think about who have been left out. I would have liked to see some reference made to Nancy Burbidge and her concept of 'a national park for the national capital'.

The book concludes by reminding the reader that the story of Australia's ecological pioneers is an emergent one and in essence advises that the starting point for so much progress was a recognition and a critique of current practices. A timely and apposite lesson, I think, for conservation groups such as ours.

Len Haskew

General Meetings

National Parks Association Calendar

Thursday 20 June 2002

Firewood: a burning issue
Kathryn Maxwell, President,
Conservation Council of the
Southeast Region and Canberra

From collection to burning the use of firewood has environmental impacts. What are they, and can they be reduced to make firewood use more sustainable? Kathryn has been involved both locally and nationally with the campaign to make the firewood supply industry more environmentally responsible, and will have some interesting things to say about the long process to bring about change.

Thursday 18 July 2002.

Red gum – yellow box grassy woodland

Dr Michael Mulvaney,
Coordinator, Red Hill
Regeneration Group

Fragments are all that remain of the rich ecosystem that was once a significant land cover in this region. The ACT has some fine examples on the urban fringe at Mulligans Flat and East O'Malley, but how much and of what level of diversity is left elsewhere? Is it possible to save these fragments and how might it be achieved?

Thursday 15 August 2002

The Annual General Meeting

Followed by: *River rafting in the Yukon Territory*

Activity	June	July	August	Sept
<i>Public Holidays</i>	<i>Mon 10</i>			
Committee meetings	Thu 6	Thu 4	Thu 1	Thu 5
Environment Sub-committee meetings ¹	Thu 13	Thu 11	Thu 8	Thu 12
General meetings	Thu 20	Thu 18	Thu 15 ²	Thu 19
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ³	Sat 8	Sat 13	Sat 10	Sat 14
<i>World Environment Day</i>	<i>Wed 5</i>			

Further details

¹ See contacts page 2.

² Annual General Meeting.

³ Yankee Hat carpark 10 am, Eleanor Stodart 6281 5004.

Intrepid travellers Esther Gallant and Barrie Ridgeway
Esther and Barrie were part of a group of 15 including three guides that travelled down the Firth River from Inuvik to the Arctic Ocean during a 12-day trip on inflatable rubber boats. They passed through canyons with rapids and broad valleys to finally reach the vast coastal plain. This is the area of the migration of the great caribou herds from winter to summer feeding grounds. The wildflowers are spectacular too, as they all bloom simultaneously during the short Arctic summer.
Our speakers will share with us their experience of visiting one of the great North American wilderness areas.

Thursday 19 September 2002

What does NPA want a policy document for?

A forum for members with a program being developed at the time of going to press.

Policy could be defined as a definite course of action adopted as expedient or from another consideration.

The presenters will attempt to address a number of questions about policies, including whether they are needed at all and if so whether they should be publicly stated. How can those policies be developed, how might they be endorsed by the members, and how modified after a time if needed? There will be plenty of opportunity for members to participate.

Should be a stimulating night.

NPA Bulletin

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