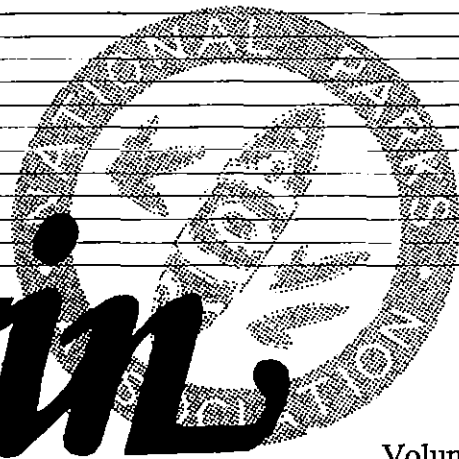


NPA Bulletin



Volume 39 number 4
December 2002

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



New location for general meetings

Sustaining the bush in the Bush Capital

Fire in Namadgi

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National Parks Association of the 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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<i>Secretary</i>	vacant
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NPA Bulletin

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

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

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New Committee members

Lyndall Young and Rod Griffiths were elected to the NPA Committee at the annual general meeting. Here we introduce them to readers.



Lyndall spent her schooldays in Canberra and returned 10 years ago. For 20 of the intervening years she lived in Alberta, Canada, where she enjoyed camping and skiing in some of the many wonderful national parks in Canada and the USA.

She is now having fun exploring as many of Australia's national parks as possible.

Although Rod Griffiths only joined the NPA recently, he has been involved with the association through other conservation activities.

He was an executive member of the Conservation Council between 1994 and 1999 and was responsible for the council's contributions to the joint NPA and Conservation Council submissions on reserve management during that time.

Rod has a strong interest in the environment and, as well as being a committee member of the NPA, is Treasurer/Secretary of the Canberra Branch of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), and the Treasurer of the Environmental Defender's Office, and sits on the ACT Government's environment grants assessment panel.

His past environmental roles have included being a National Councillor for ACF, a member of the ACT Government's Environment Community Conservation Committee, its Landcare sub-committee and its Namadgi and Nature Conservation sub-committee.



Rod has a great love of bushwalking, fostered in the sandstone country of the Sydney basin. He loves the mountains around Canberra and the Snowy and has spent many magic hours exploring in them.

Rod's partner, Amanda, is also a member of the NPA. They have two young daughters, Hannah (5) and Caitlin (1), and a very black dog, Whitby.

THE COMMITTEE EXTENDS SEASONS GREETINGS TO MEMBERS AND

INVITES MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO THE

CHRISTMAS PARTY

ON SUNDAY 15th DECEMBER

IN THE ORRORAL VALLEY

Details are set out in the Outings Program.

A NEW VENUE FOR OUR GENERAL MEETINGS

From February 2003

the association's monthly General Meetings with guest speakers will be held at the

O'Connor Uniting Church hall

56 Scrivener Street, O'Connor

This is located next to the intersection of Scrivener and Brigalow Streets.

The 'third Thursday' arrangement remains unchanged and meetings will begin at the usual time, 8.00pm.

The women conquer "The Hill"

There was much hilarity on Sentry Box summit during Steve Hill's September walk, occasioned by an informal competition to compose a catchy caption for our cover photo, provided by Sue Lashko. The participants in the competition, and in the photo, are: (front row) Sue Lashko, Annabel Wheeler and Jacqui Cole, with Steve Hill, and (back row) Margaret Power, Janet Neale, Madelaine Huckstep, and Jillian Clark.

Cover photo Sue Lashko

Sustaining the bush in the Bush Capital



Dr Maxine Cooper, Executive Director, Environment ACT was guest speaker at the October general meeting of the association. In the short time that Dr Cooper has held this position she has introduced many important policy innovations. It became obvious very early in her presentation that Dr Cooper is an enthusiastic and committed advocate for our local environment.

Maxine believes that Canberra is a unique capital city with so many wonderful natural and cultural resources. She sees the Territory as a sanctuary within an increasingly foreign landscape as it has retained the largest remnants of the original grassy woodland and grassland communities in the region and has not been subject to the massive amount of clearing that has occurred just over the boundaries. Under her guidance natural resource management practice will ensure:

- a regional and holistic base
- an adoption of the principles of economically sustainable development
- an appreciation of the fundamental role of the community as partners.

The Canberra Plan will be the key tool in achieving a sustainable city within our region. At present the Canberra Spatial Plan is being developed and this will provide an exciting opportunity to explore and develop the community's expectation of what is the most appropriate physical form for a sustainable Canberra. Included in the key issues will be the consideration of satellite development in NSW and a recognition that the scope of the Canberra plan extends beyond the ACT's borders.

Catchment and water resource management is a key regional issue. The ACT comprises only 3 per cent of the area of the catchment of the Murrumbidgee but concentrates 58 per

cent of the catchment's population within this small area. A Murrumbidgee Catchment Blueprint is in preparation and it will establish core objectives and targets for the next 10 years which will address environmental flows, salinity, water quality, biodiversity and soil health problems across the catchment.

The Australian Alps National Park remains a key regional partnership. It is planned to:

- resign a new memorandum of understanding
- develop a new strategic plan
- incorporate measures to achieve a greater consistency in policy and programs.

In the near future Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve may complement Namadgi in the ACT contingent of reserves within the Alps.

The Interim Namadgi Advisory Board is currently progressing projects including new interpretive signage, acknowledging the connection of the Ngunnawal people to the park and incorporating local totems and language, for entrance points and art sites within the park.

The board is also currently involved in developing a new management plan for Namadgi. A discussion paper released earlier this year received a response of 70 submissions identifying both common ground and several issues that are to be the subject of further discussion including:

- the potential implications of cooperative management—such as access provisions and natural resource use for traditional ceremonial purposes
- access and general recreation
- pest plants and animals
- fire management.

Follow-up workshops to discuss constraints and possible directions in respect of these issues are planned.

Dr Cooper acknowledged NPA's document *Caring for Namadgi Together* as a very valuable resource and reference for developing the management plan.

The ACT bushfire fuel management plan is currently under development. It is being developed jointly by Environment ACT, Canberra Urban Parks and Places and ACT Forests and is an example of a successful whole-of-government approach to an issue. NPA's concern about fire management within the Cotter

catchment has been noted. A workshop is being planned to discuss the management issues associated with a major landscape fire.

The Government has formed a **range of new advisory bodies** to provide greater scope for impartiality of technical and community advice on key issues. These include:

- the Environment Protection Technical Advisory Committee
- the natural resource management committee
- rural forums
- community forums.

A key initiative in recent years has been the adoption of **Land Management Agreements (LMA)** which are now a prerequisite to the renewal of long term rural leases. LMAs incorporate an assessment of land conservation values such as:

- restrictions on the removal of rock and timber
- restrictions on changes to soil nutrient levels
- retention of native grasses as appropriate, and
- may include additional provisions for contaminated sites or heritage places within the lease.

Dr Cooper was pleased to report that the current Government has increased Environment ACT's budget for the next three years by \$1.5million. This is to be used for:

- increasing staff presence in the field—additional office staff will be employed to enable rangers to be seen more frequently in parks and reserves
- the development of a computer-based natural resource information system to provide a single consistent, comprehensive and authoritative data base setting out the types and extent of our natural resources
- the development of focused public documents
- greater support for community partners.

Maxine Cooper concluded her address with the following statement, "The environmental character and values of the ACT and the Bush Capital contribute in a significant way to the quality of life in the Canberra community. As custodians of the Environment for both future and present Canberrans, it is important that Environment ACT work in partnership with groups such as NPA to build upon the good work done in maintaining the quality of our natural resources."

continued page 5

Yellow box–red gum grassy woodland

Yellow box/red gum grassy woodland is a woodland in which Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*) are the dominant trees. The trees form an open canopy above a species-rich understorey of native tussock grasses, herbs and scattered shrubs. Yellow box/red gum grassy woodlands are utilised by a large number of animal species, including many threatened species.

Before European settlement the yellow box/red gum community was found on the eastern perimeter of the semi-arid rainfall belt and extended from southern Queensland to Victoria, favouring the lower slopes with their deeper soils. Today more than 90 per cent of the area covered by this community outside of the ACT has been cleared. In contrast at least one third of the original extent of this woodland remains in the ACT.

A matter of major concern is that the majority of the remaining yellow box/red gum woodland outside of the ACT exists as small patches with understoreys of low native plant diversity. Their presence is characterised by isolated stands of principally old trees, perhaps 300 to 400 years old. These remaining remnants are under severe pressure from grazing, a salt-laden rising water table, weed invasion, firewood collection and, of course "old age". A recent study in the Holbrook area found that 16 per cent of the total area of yellow box/red gum woodland existed in patches of five or

fewer trees, and 79 per cent of the total area was in patches of less than 5ha. A CSIRO survey in the mid-Lachlan found that only one of the 50 relatively large remnants of this woodland type surveyed, retained an understorey dominated by native species. The most significant remaining stands are along roadways or in travelling stock routes, even these remnants are typically less than 60ha in area. The largest stand left in NSW covers about 250ha. It's a sorry history especially as our guest speaker at the July general meeting, Dr Michael Mulvaney, told us that it would have been possible pre 1750 to walk from Canberra to Young touching one of the box or red gum trees every 50 paces!

Fortunately the ACT is much better off. It retains several remnants of over 1000ha and about 25 per cent of what originally existed remains with a native understorey, some of it "protected" in Canberra Nature Park and much of it in the hills, ridges and buffer zoning around the city. The Government has recognised the *Blakely's Red Gum–Yellow Box Grass Woodland* as a community considered as needing immediate protection and/or restoration and has issued Action Plan 10 to this end. Michael believes that this action plan is seriously flawed partly because of overzealous classification resulting in a very fragmented approach to both protection and management. What is special about the ACT is that large patches still exist. This is likely to be crucial to the survival of the vegetation

type and specific animals that it supports. The ACT retains the best chance of retaining sustainable examples of these woodlands, anywhere in the nation. We should be protecting and enhancing the size of our remnants and managing patches in their entirety rather than adapting the present fragmented approach according to tenure, and spurious mapping of conservation value. The action plan is due for renewal and Michael suggested it would be an appropriate project for NPA and would continue an association that began with Kevin Frawley's excellent publication, which the association sponsored.

To this end Michael reiterated:

- in dealing with remnant vegetation the best should be made of what remains.
- protection and regeneration, rather than planting, should be the major focus. (Planting costs are extremely high and restoration of a community is at best an extremely long term prospect).
- conserved areas should be as large as possible.
- fragmentation and ecological barriers should be avoided.
- restored/regenerated areas should have as much legislative protection as possible (the buffer areas should be incorporated into more secure public land).

Len Haskew

Sustaining the bush in the Bush Capital

continued from page 4

Then followed vigorous and comprehensive questioning from the floor. Dr Cooper answered all questions knowledgeably and comprehensively. The few questions which she felt she could not answer fully were taken on notice and a written reply was promised. A selection from the interchange follows.

Q *What expectations are there on advisory bodies? Are they surrogates for the broader community?*

A Efforts are being made to inform the general public of the makeup of the committees. Committee members are seen as experts and do not represent a community viewpoint. They will give unbiased opinions.

Q *What will be the effect of the current review of open space on Environment ACT?*

A Reserves will not be part of the review.

Q *Is Environment ACT involved in administering open space?*

A Open space is regarded as recreational area and is administered by PALM.

Q *Are rangers appointed as permanent or temporary officers?*

A Rangers are appointed as permanent officers, but the turnover of personnel is high and temporary placements have to be made to cover people undertaking higher duties.

Q *Can groups such as NPA have access to Land Management Agreement (LMA) documents or are they protected by "commercial in confidence" provisions?*

A Environment ACT will endeavour to share the outcomes of LMAs without breaching confidentiality.

Q *Will Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve be added to the Alpine National Park—a*

recommendation made by NPA some time ago?

A A first step will be to make it part of the Alps. It would be most advantageous to have similar management regimes for both Tidbinbilla and Namadgi. To date no decision has been made by Government.

Q *What is the current status of plans regarding the occupation of Gudgenby Homestead and the upgrading of the sewerage system?*

A All considerations will be deferred until the Plan of Management is finalised. [A short time after the meeting Dr Cooper advised Clive that preliminary work is still being undertaken on the sewerage system and it is hoped that the system will be installed in the next few months.]

Len Haskew

The contribution of Charles Weston

Dr John Grey's address to the October general meeting last year came a few days after an outing with Ian Brooker to Westbourne Woods. Those members who attended both events had, as our outings program suggested, a good "on-the-ground" background for John's talk. John is very well qualified to discuss Charles Weston and his contributions. John's initial degree was in forestry, completed at the Forestry School in Yarralumla, and he later gained an MA in landscape architecture, lectured in ecology and environmental landscape architecture and, in his retirement, made Charles Weston the focus of his doctorate.

Charles Weston (1866-1935) was appointed Officer-in-Charge of the Afforestation Branch in 1913, and came to Canberra at age 46 with well-developed ideas about how the landscape of the Australian Capital Territory should grow.

Weston laid the foundations for the landscape of Canberra and his legacy has been followed to this day. He established a nursery and arboretum at Yarralumla (Westbourne Woods), which became an invaluable resource for determining the suitability or otherwise of species for public plantings. In 1921 he was appointed Director, City Planting and in 1925 he became Canberra's first Superintendent, Parks and Gardens. In this capacity he had a great influence on his successors, including Lindsay Pryor. (John also has great admiration for Pryor and has been chairman of a committee formed to establish a memorial to him. In August of this year the Lindsay Pryor Arboretum was gazetted and occupies an area opposite Government House, which was planted by Pryor.)

Weston was born at Poyle, England and at age 13 was apprenticed as a gardener at Poyle Manor. By the time he was 16 he was working for the Duke of Buccleuch at Ditton Park, Buckinghamshire. Evidently his work here was more than satisfactory for six years later he was still working for the duke at Drumlanrig Castle on a vast estate where he was exposed to high quality horticulture and forestry. John believes that his experiences at Drumlanrig had a great influence on his philosophy of the landscape.

In 1896 Weston migrated to Australia and within a short time he was working for Joseph Maiden who was Director of

the Sydney Botanic Gardens. He worked in various capacities at Admiralty House, Federal Government House and Campbelltown State Nursery. Weston noted that he found Maiden "a demanding boss" but nevertheless he had great respect for Maiden and was influenced by him. Maiden was a prolific writer and an important influence on conservation at the turn of the century realising the need for the conservation of native forests and for arboreta and afforestation. Long before Canberra was chosen as the site of the federal capital Maiden had firm ideas about its appearance. In 1901 he addressed a conference and stated:

...that the whole of the Federal territory should be looked upon somewhat in the light of a gigantic park, the street and the buildings to be inserted as details and when required.

...the design of the city itself, which is of supreme importance, should not exclude the rational treatment of non-urban territory.

Another influence on the Commonwealth's (and subsequently Weston's) approach to conservation and afforestation was Griffith Taylor whose 1910 report stated:

One of the most urgent matters in connection with the territory is that of forest preservation. The cutting and clearing of every inch of timber is appalling.....The question of planting the Capital site is under consideration, but the destruction of native timber should be stopped immediately on all high stony grounds unsuitable for pasture....For the timbered ridges control the climate of the whole area to a marked degree.

So when, on Scrivener's recommendation, Weston established the Afforestation Branch in 1913 he was able to establish some clear objectives including:

- the establishment of a first class forest and general nursery to raise a large stock of suitable material, and
- the establishment at an early date of reserves on Canberra's mountains and hills.

Yarralumla Nursery and Westbourne Woods Arboretum enabled Weston to test many different species including indigenous ones for their suitability for use in the ACT. He is credited with the

first successful hybridisation of eucalypts in Australia and in recognition of his study of the indigenous flora of the ACT Maiden named species of eucalypt and acacia after Weston.

By 1914 Weston was appalled by the attitude of the settlers to the local area. He introduced proscriptions on ringbarking and lopping as he noted that on one block on Mount Majura:

A holocaust of destruction has taken place that deserves the severest condemnation, and those responsible for same should most certainly be called upon for an explanation of their conduct.

Weston made requests for reserves to be established on Stromlo, Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie in 1915. Only Stromlo went ahead at the time and it was established that *Pinus radiata* grew well on its slopes. Not only were the dreaded pines seen as good source of timber, but they also helped keep down the dust at the observatory.

Walter Burley Griffin attempted to influence Weston in 1916 but their philosophies were markedly different and there were some notable disputes! Foreshadowing things to come the Government of the day called in consultants to resolve the problems. By and large the consultants (notably Campbell and Corbin) saw things Weston's way and Griffin's proposed plantings (including "coloured hills") were only carried out in a small way.

By 1920 some 78 000 plants had been raised in Weston's nursery and planted out on a range of sites and by 1924 over one thousand hectares had been afforested. Many other areas had received protection from vegetation destruction.

John Grey considers that Weston is an "unsung hero of the ACT", who was so successful because:

- he had good horticultural skills, experience and knowledge
- he was influenced by Joseph Maiden who was one of the most influential protagonists in NSW of conservation and afforestation at the turn of the century.

John sincerely hopes that the contribution of Weston to founding conservation and afforestation in the ACT will not be forgotten.

Len Haskew

This current issue of the *NPA Bulletin* marks the completion of six years during which the *Bulletin* has been produced by association members through the Bulletin Working Group. The association is fortunate that so many members have been willing to devote their time and effort to this important element of the association's activities. Their roles cover a wide spectrum—contributions of articles, news items and photographs, editing, layout, printing labels, enveloping and posting, attending meetings to review the published magazine and decide on future directions.....

All of these members have earned our appreciation, but I would like to single out two for particular mention, Len Haskew and Adrienne Nicholson. Len has continued to assemble the Parkwatch section and to write up the addresses given at meetings. Adrienne has undertaken the layout of this year's issues and in doing this has maintained a very high standard whilst saving the association some \$400 each issue.

Any member who would like to assist in the production of the *Bulletin* in any way would be made most welcome.

Syd Comfort
Convenor, Bulletin Working Group

NPA was invited by Environment ACT to send representatives to an opening at Namadgi Visitors Centre on Thursday morning 7 November. The opening was to celebrate the completion of:

- the Visitor Centre and park entry signs;
- an after hours information shelter—the Gunya; and
- the refurbished visitor reception area at the centre.

ACT Urban Services Minister Bill Wood, Ngunnawal elder Agnes Shea, Environment ACT Executive Director Dr Maxine Cooper, and Manager Brett McNamara spoke at the opening before all gathered for morning tea in the new-look centre. The Minister welcomed guests, including school children from Tharwa and Queanbeyan.

Agnes Shea talked of the long history of Aboriginal occupation as evidenced by the abundant relics to be found

throughout the park and extended a welcome to all visitors. Maxine Cooper and Brett McNamara acknowledged all those who had contributed to the project, especially the Ngunnawal people.

It was a good opportunity for NPA members Clive Hurlstone and Kevin McCue to meet the Minister, some of the traditional owners and joint managers, members of the Namadgi Board and Environment ACT personnel, including many of the rangers.

The decorative signs will be at 11 locations around the park, replacing existing signage. They feature the work of Aboriginal artists Jim Williams and Daniel and Arnold Williams, with contributions from Des Connors.

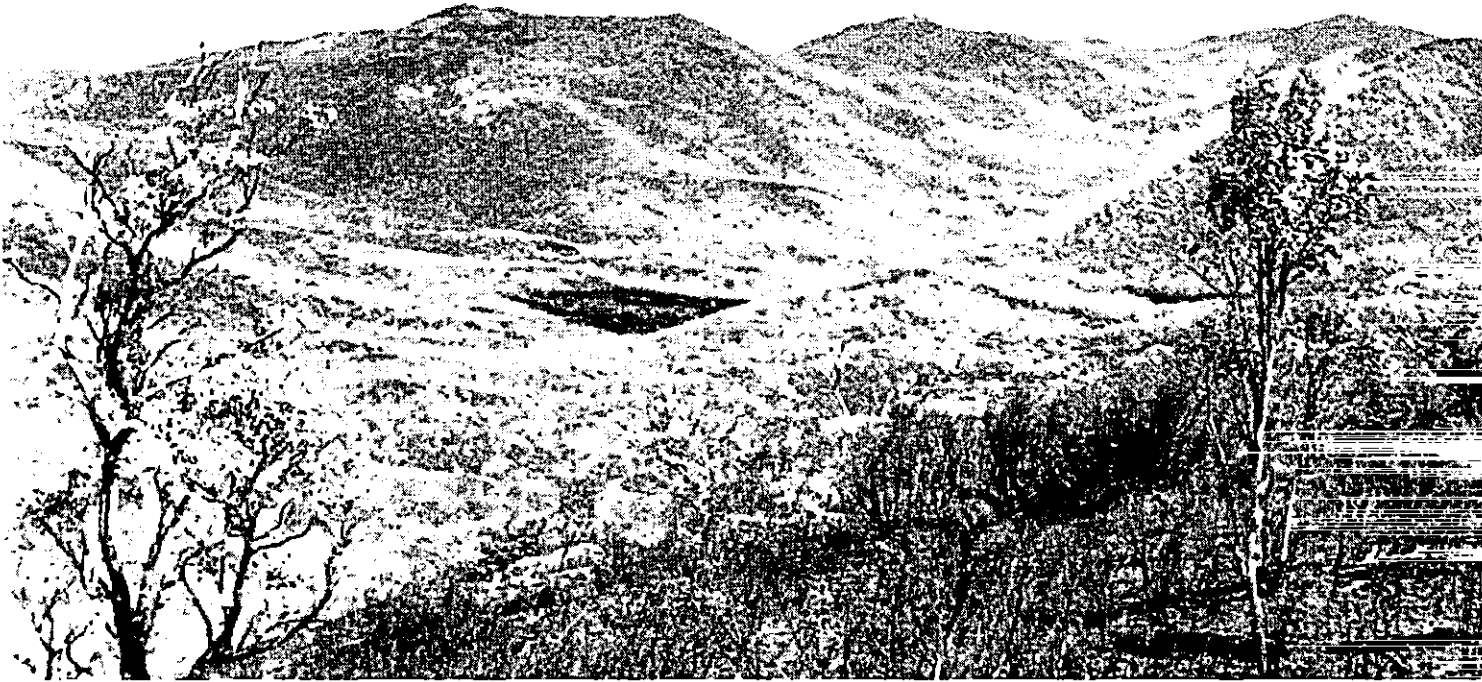
The modernistic Gunya makes use of old and new materials and the spacious Visitors Centre is more attractive with a new sales area and board room.

Let's have some feedback about the changes.

Kevin McCue

Fiona MacDonald Brand (with pack) and Len Haskew try out the new path from the Orroral Tracking Station car park to the fire trail leading up the Orroral Valley.
Photo Reg Alder





Fire in Namadgi

The headline photo, taken by Reg Alder in 1983 from Boboyan Trig, shows the devastation caused by the severe bushfire which swept through a large part of what was then Gudgenby Nature Reserve in January 1983. (Gudgenby Nature Reserve was extended and declared Namadgi National Park in 1986.) Today regrowth covers the area and would frustrate any attempt to photograph the area. However, the photo is a stark reminder of the reality of the fire threat in a season such as we are now experiencing. Reg Alder, Neville Esau and Chris Watson recall the events of 1983.

The 1983 Namadgi fire

For three weeks during January 1983, a devastating out-of-control fire swept across the southern half of Namadgi from Mount Scabby to beyond the Boboyan road and north to Rendezvous Creek. Despite the heroic efforts of the firefighters to secure its containment, it was not until there was a change in the weather that the fire was put out.

The NPA was not allowed to provide firefighting support but attended on a roster basis at the Emergency

Services depot in Canberra assisting in the preparation of steak sandwiches for the night shift of firefighters.

During a discussion about what would become of the bulldozed fire trails created during the fire, Peter Hahn, Manager of Namadgi, outlined details of how the trails would be restored to their natural state.

Fiona Brand asked how the NPA could assist in the work and nine months later, at the appropriate season, the Nursery Swamp fire trail was seeded with an infertile, quick growing grass and erosion impediments placed across the fire trail to Rendezvous Creek. The trail beyond was allowed to revegetate naturally. Today only a few indicators of the trail remain.

Weather conditions this year are the same as in 1983, with drought, little moisture and high winds, so that more than normal care will need to be taken if the 1983 holocaust is not to be repeated.

Reg Alder

Extract from President's Foreword, *NPA Bulletin*, September 1983

During January a fire burnt out more than half the Gudgenby Nature Reserve and part of the Cotter Valley. In a period

of two weeks most of the southern section of the Reserve including the whole of the Kelly wilderness area was consumed. The long drought and hot summer eventually took its toll of the Reserve.

We know from past experience that periodic fires are one of the natural forces which have shaped the Australian bush and helped to produce our distinctive flora. This realisation does not, however, lessen the shock of seeing the Reserve blackened and burnt, seemingly stripped of all life forms. With rain the Reserve will recover and the mountain slopes and plains will again be covered in their distinctive trees, shrubs and wildflowers. As we wait for nature to take its course let us use this opportunity to take stock of the problems facing the future management of the Reserve so that we can make a fresh approach to the solution of some of the problem areas.

One of the questions which must be addressed fairly quickly is the future of the Gudgenby pine plantation; the fire largely destroyed this plantation and it probably now has little or no commercial value. The remains of the plantation should be removed and the area allowed to regenerate naturally. Some assistance may be required to allow regeneration to proceed quickly. If the tree planting



program now underway by the NPA at Glendale is successful we could consider planting part of the former plantation area. This could provide the nucleus for the revegetation of natural species throughout the area.

Neville Esau

Extract from "Nursery Swamp Fire Trail Regeneration", *NPA Bulletin*, March 1984

On October 29 and November 12 Fiona Brand organised NPA parties of 17 and 24 respectively to set out for the Orroral Valley with the objective of revegetating the Nursery Swamp fire trail. The trail had been bulldozed

during the Gudgenby fire of January 1983 and extended from the Orroral Valley to Nursery Swamp and over to a ridge on the south side of Rendezvous Creek. The first section of the trail has been effectively blocked to further vehicular traffic. On the second occasion the party included some helpers from the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra.

Rye-corn seed is used since it is a hybrid and will not produce fertile seed. Hopefully the local native species will then more readily take over once the bare soil has begun to be stabilised. Fortunately both plantings were followed by soaking rains and the initial sowing had already germinated with a good cover within the fortnight.

The technique we used was to sow the seed in furrows dug on the contour

and then cover the whole trail with all the fallen branches and litter we could find. We also placed many large branches and logs, including some already cut by the reserve rangers. These logs, also placed on the contours, would be important on the steeper slopes in slowing down heavy rain runoff and to prevent soil erosion.

Further regeneration work will possibly be undertaken in the autumn if sections of the fire trail show the need for stabilisation after the so far heavy summer rains. It is a good way to get to know your fellow members and feel the "esprit de corps".

Chris Watson

Sullivans Creek catchment wetlands restoration strategy

Len Haskew, writing in the September Bulletin, outlined the work being done to improve the health of the Sullivans Creek catchment. Fiona here outlines current activity on this project.

Sullivans Creek Catchment Group is now preparing to embark on wetland site no 8, known as Banksia Street Wetland, O'Connor.

This wetland is designed to divert water from the O'Connor stormwater channel into a shallow vegetated pond.

While in the pond, chemical and biological processes will break down nutrient and bacterial pollutants before returning the water to the stormwater channel with up to 60 per cent of these pollutants removed.

The wetland will be vegetated with approximately 50 000 native plants, including water plants, grasses, shrubs and trees. Sullivans Creek Catchment Group volunteers will undertake the landscaping of the wetland.

The David Street wetland site (no 7) continues to flourish. In all, there are to be 13 wetland sites helping to restore the Sullivans Creek catchment.

Jennie Gilles is the enthusiastic project manager. She can be contacted by phone on (02) 6125 8168 or by email, jenniegilles@anu.edu.au.

Fiona MacDonald Brand

Development of the Canberra Plan

The ACT Government is continuing with its review of the overall plans for Canberra aiming for a spatial plan, a social plan and an economic white paper to be available during 2003. As part of this process, 17 local, interstate and international experts spoke at an Issues and Ideas Forum held at the Convention Centre in September. One of the speakers, Steven Ames, a planning consultant from Portland, Oregon, gave a fascinating account of the transformation achieved in Portland, which, in 25 years, had moved from a car-oriented city to a more compact, people-oriented city. This presentation reinforced in my mind the importance of both vision and planning for the successful future development of the

ACT and the adjacent region.

Other aspects of the planning process that emerged as fundamental included:

- the requirement to adopt a regional approach and the need for machinery which will effectively involve NSW state and local regional authorities;
- as planning in the ACT is a responsibility shared by the Commonwealth and ACT Governments effective collaboration is needed throughout the planning process;
- the importance of demographic factors to plan formulation and within this the significance of components such as age and social make-up of the population;

- the "Y" plan will remain as the basic planning structure; and
- the potential for greater concentration around Civic, some higher densities elsewhere, higher usage of public transport, and recognition of the interconnections between these, offer possible directions for the future.

Apart from consideration of issues related to water supply, I felt that environmental issues were not adequately aired during the forum. The presentation given by Geoff Butler, Yarrowlumla councillor and prominent conservationist, was the only one to highlight this area. An edited version of his paper is set out below.

Syd Comfort

Address to the Planning & Land Management Forum, September 2002

Today I present an argument for the need for a comprehensive reserve systems and for all of us to pay our way in response to meeting the future sustainability and biodiversity challenges for our home, Canberra and the sub-region.

As drawn out in previous planning forums, biodiversity and sustainability issues for the ACT, Queanbeyan and Yarrowlumla Shire remain much the same:

1. Climate change and management of greenhouse emissions remain the most significant challenge to biodiversity and sustainability at local and international levels.
2. Waste remains a significant regional issue, and must be addressed both at source and through a regional waste initiative.
3. Loss of biodiversity through land degradation and urban construction continues, and there is a critical need to complete a comprehensive regional environment plan, in association with establishing an appropriate maximum regional population level.
4. Deterioration of freshwater and (ultimately) saltwater systems continues.
5. We are high on rhetoric and "feel good" published outcomes, but implementation, monitoring and evaluation remains, in large part, neglected.
6. Energy and natural resource use is still too high. As a community, we are

not paying the cost of our existence and of our ecological footprint.

Some significant progress has been made by governments and communities in the region in planning for positive biodiversity and sustainability outcomes. Such forums as the *ACT & Subregion—Planning Strategy* and *Canberra—a Capital Future* have previously highlighted these issues in broad planning terms.

Useful advances have been made in conservation on rural lands through the ACT Land Management Agreement process, but a similar system needs more application in the region. In urban areas, some advances have occurred though we need more retrofitting of pollution control infrastructure and rehabilitation of urban corridors for habitat, wildlife conservation and movement.

Some practical government/community partnerships have been established, though too much emphasis and public expectation have been placed on the capacity of volunteers to "fix" environmental problems. The costs associated with environmental management must win back a higher profile as core government business.

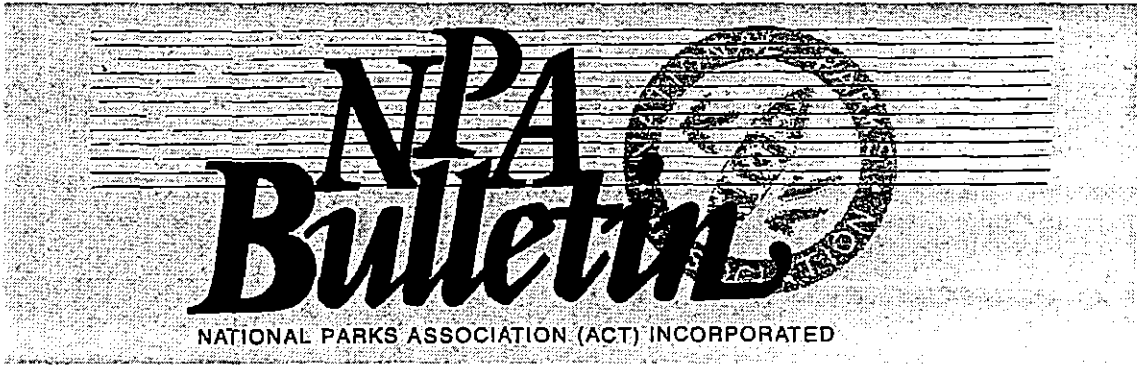
Other issues have arisen that still have impact on biodiversity and sustainability, and should indicate future directions. These include:

- Continued growth of human population continues to be a mainstay of economic and regional development, and continues to threaten ecosystems and their

component species. As sensitive as this matter is, we desperately need to have serious discussions on regional carrying capacity. Water supply remains a significant limiting factor to future population growth.

- We have seen continued development pressure placed on threatened species and vegetation communities, and on our reserve system—for example, at Canberra Airport and East O'Malley. Vegetation fragmentation still occurs, and strategic regional vegetation corridor linkages are not complete.
- We have lost a significant area of endangered Grassland Earless Dragon habitat, and further real threats exist to its last local occurrences.
- Due to cuts in resources, we have depleted the capacity of conservation agencies to educate, to monitor and evaluate biodiversity projects and, where necessary, regulate land tenures.
- Demand for firewood (habitat!) has created a serious environmental impact far beyond our regional borders.
- A further 11 nominations for threatened woodland bird species is currently being prepared for presentation to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee. This massive decline in woodland bird species over a short space of time should be a useful indicator of the urgent need for a

continued on page 11



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

December 2002–March 2003

Outings Guide	
<p>Walk grading Distance grading (per day)</p> <p>1 —up to 10 km 2 —10 km to 15 km 3 —15 km to 20 km 4 —above 20 km</p>	<p>Terrain grading</p> <p>A —Road, firetrail track B —Open forest C —Light scrub D —Patches of thick scrub, regrowth E —Rock scrambling F —Exploratory</p>
<p>Day walks Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.</p> <p>Pack walks Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER BY PRIOR WEDNESDAY OR AS INDICATED IN THE PROGRAM.</p> <p>Car camps Facilities often limited or non-existent. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. BOOK EARLY WITH LEADER.</p> <p>Other activities include nature rambles and environmental and field guide studies.</p>	

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.

1 December, Sunday daywalk
Snowy Mountains, Mt Twynam and
Watsons Crags

Leader: Steve Hill
Grading: 4A/C/E
Map: Perisher Valley 1:50 000
Phone: 6231 9186

A day of great views not available from Mt Kosciuszko. This will proceed only if the weather is likely to be clear. Drive to Charlotte Pass car park (2 1/2 hours) and follow the Main Range track to Blue Lake lookout. We climb Mt Twynam (2196m—third highest “peak”) for great views. Trek west to the spur known as Watson’s Crags, including a view from a peak marked as 2136 metres, for views of the Western Snowys which cannot be matched. To top it off, we visit Carruthers Peak on the way back so we can see where we have been. The walk will require good fitness, will be largely off track and will involve regular climbs which are steep in parts. It brings with it an early start and late return to Canberra, but the sights are supremely rewarding. Ring leader by Friday evening to register and for details of meeting place. 400kms, \$120 per car.

7–9 December, 3-day packwalk
(jointly with Family Bushwalkers)

Brogio River
Leaders: Pat and Eric Pickering
Grading: Exploratory

A hard, exploratory, 3-day walk on the edge of the tablelands east of Cooma, involving a long descent of 900 metres to the Brogio River (and return), with wading, swimming and some rock scrambling. Solitude guaranteed. Contact leaders by 2 December for details.

14 December, Saturday work party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group
Christmas season celebration

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.

22 December, Sunday daywalk

Paddy Rushs Bogong
Leader: Brian Slee
Grading: 2B/C
Map: Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000 or
Thredbo 1:50 000
Phone: 6281 0719

Depart Kambah Village shops 7.00am. Drive past Thredbo and park at Dead Horse Gap. Follow brumby track east

Sunday

15 December



NPA
Christmas
Party

Our NPA Christmas Party this year returns to the Orroral Valley, but we are heading for a different venue.

Sunday 15 December

at the site of the old

Orroral Tracking Station

from

11.00 am onwards

Bring refreshments and a picnic lunch and let’s celebrate the season together.

There are gas barbeques and water at the site, facilities and good shade trees.

Walk down the valley to the Orroral Homestead; it is five years since the official completion of its restoration, an NPA project.

We’ll have the usual fun(d)-raising auction so bring along your superfluous treasures (useful, useless or ‘matter-of-opinion’).

In case of park closure or restrictions (eg high bushfire risk) we have a fall-back arrangement, but hope it is not needed. Enquiries: David Large 6291 4830

along ridge toward Brindle Bull then north through open forest, across Friday Flat Creek and climb to open summit of Paddy Rushs Bogong (1920m). A relatively unvisited area with great views west to the Main Range and Thredbo, and east to Drift Hill. Wildflowers feature on this longest day of the year. Return by similar route. Afternoon tea at Jindabyne. Return drive 420km, \$120 per car plus \$15 park fee for cars without a permit.

18 January, Saturday evening walk
Naas Creek/Grassy Creek area.

Leader: Martin Chalk
Grading: 2A/B/C
Map: Yaouk, Colinton, Shannon’s Flat,
Bredbo 1:25 000

Phone: 6292 3502 (h), 6268 4864 (w)
Leave Canberra about 4.00pm, return about 10.00pm. An evening walk in the gloaming and moonlight through the valleys of southern Namadgi. Come and

experience the bush in a different light! Phone leader for details. Drive 160km, \$48 per car.

19 January, Sunday daywalk
Snowy Mountains – Alice Rawson
Peak

Leader: Steve Hill
Grading: 4 A/C/E
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Phone: 6231 9186

A day of fabulous views when the wildflowers should be emerging. This will proceed only if the weather conditions are likely to be safe. Drive to Thredbo (2 1/2 hours) and catch the chairlift to the top of ‘Crackenback’. Walk along the track towards Mt Kosciuszko, then along the Main Range track to Muellers Pass. Turn off towards Mt Townsend, but rather than climb it, stroll north along the spur to Alice Rawson Peaks for some very stunning views. Next, drop down the

eastern side to a large pond about 150 metres above Lake Albina and scramble back towards the northern end of Muellers Peak to return. The walk requires good fitness, will be partly off track and will involve some climbing. It brings with it an early start, and late return to Canberra, but the sights are absolutely worth it. Ring Steve Hill by Friday evening to register and for details of the meeting place.

22 January, Wednesday daywalk

Leader: Max Lawrence

Phone: 6288 1370

NPA's first January 2003 mid-week walk. Phone leader for details, to be determined near the date.

25-27 January Long Weekend car camp

Thredbo Diggings

Adrienne Nicholson

Grading: 00 / 1A / 2A/B/C choices

Map: Mt Kosciuszko 1:50 000

Phone: 6281 6381

Campers' options will be to be as active or inactive as participants desire. Options include taking the chairlift from Thredbo and walking to Kosciuszko and back; following the Thredbo river from the village to Dead Horse Gap and return; take the SkiTube up to Perisher or Blue Cow for a day walking up there. Half or full day walks, or simply relax by (or in) the river around the campsite. Bookings for the campground cannot be made, so 'first in, best positioned'. (Leader will be there on Friday.) Energetic car campers can join Brian Slee on his Sunday walk, while avoiding the long same-day travelling. Please contact leader by Wednesday 22nd. Drive 430kms, \$130 per car plus \$15 per day for cars without a parks permit.

26 January, Sunday daywalk

Southern Rams Heads wildflowers

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 1A/B/C

Map: Thredbo 1:50 000

Phone: 6281 0719 (h)

Depart Kambah Village shops carpark 7.00am. We'll call at Thredbo Diggings about 9.30am for any car campers, then proceed to Dead Horse Gap (300 metres on from Cascade Trailhead). Climb 400 metres NW on brumby track with morning tea on unnamed 2040m peak (sometimes mistaken for Rams Head South which is actually further south and lower at 1951m). Views into Victoria and the best view of Kosciuszko. Continue north to promontory overlooking gorge formed by Leather Barrel Creek, stopping at saddle on way to see magnificent display of alpine sunrises and other

wildflowers. Return to Rams Head Range and after lunching among huge jumbled rocks on another unnamed peak, proceed on contour to marked walking track east of Bogong Creek and back to vehicles. Afternoon tea at Jindabyne for Canberra-based participants. Short walk mostly above the treeline with a couple of steep climbs which are not difficult for fit walkers. Return drive 420km, \$120 per car (plus \$15 for park entry permit).

29 January, Wednesday daywalk

Leader: Mike Smith

Phone: 6286 2984

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

2 February, Sunday daywalk

Brindabella Range ramble

Leader: Steven Forst

Grading: 2A

Maps: ACT 1:100 000, Cotter Dam &

Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Phone: 6251 6817 (ah), 6219 5236 (w)

Meet in the pine forest carpark, corner Uriarra and Cotter Roads, at 8.30am. A fire trail walk through tall, shady forest between the Cotter River and the Brindabella Road. Nestled in a south-east facing valley, this moist temperate/alpine eucalypt forest provides pleasant walking even in summer. Drive 80km, \$24 per car.

8 February, 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.

9 February, Sunday daywalk

Gigerline Gorge

Leader: Pat Miethke

Grading: 1C

Map: ACT 1:100 000

Phone: 6241 2798 (evenings)

This is a pleasant little gorge on the Murrumbidgee just upstream from Tharwa. If it's hot we'll just go in from near Tharwa and check out the pools as we come to them. If it's cooler, we may do the 10km through walk to Angle Crossing, with a car shuffle. Expect pools, rockhopping, sand and grass seeds. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.00am. Drive 60km, \$20 per car.

23 February, Sunday daywalk

Snowy Mountains – North Rams Head

Cootapatamba, Kosciuszko

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 4 A/C/E

Map: Perisher Vally, Youngal 1:25 000

Phone: 6231 9186

A day of fabulous views at a time when the wildflowers should be at their best. This will proceed only if the weather is likely to be good. Drive to Thredbo (2 1/2 hours) and catch the chair to the top of 'Crackenback'. Trek to North Rams Head (2170m) for superb views, then descend to Cootapatamba Hut, cross the Swampy Plain River below and head to some view points on the western side of the 'plateau'. Climb Mt Kosciuszko from the south west to join the madding crowds on top, then return to the chairlift. The walk requires good fitness, will be largely off track and will involve some short steep climbs and the odd rock scramble. It brings with it an early start and late return to Canberra, but the sights and flowers are absolutely worth it. Ring Steve Hill by Thursday evening to register and for details of the meeting place.

22-23 February, Weekend packwalk

Corang Circuit, Budawangs

Leader: David Large

Grading: 2A/C/D/E

Map: Corang 1:25 000

Phone: 6291 4830

Contact leader by previous Wednesday for details. An easy walk from the Wog Wog entrance to the Budawangs, via Corang Peak, to a camp near Canowrie Brook. Next day follow Corang River (some off track) to Corang Lagoon for lunch and another swim, then return to Wog Wog along the worn track. Drive 250km, \$75 per car.

26 February, Wednesday daywalk

Leader: Rob Forster

Phone: 6249 8546

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

1-2 March, weekend packwalk

Bibbenluke Mountain

Leader: Phil Gatenby

Grading: 3A/D/E

Map: Corang 1:25 000

Phone: 6254 3094

A walk in the western Budawangs starting from the Wog Wog entrance. Mostly on tracks but with some scrub and a bit of rock scrambling in places. Great views, weather permitting. Contact leader by Wednesday 26 February for more details and bookings. Drive 250km, \$75 per car.

8 March, 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.

9 March, Sunday daywalk

Goulburn history walks

Leader: Col McAlister

Grading: 2A

Map: Goulburn street map and self-guiding walking tour pamphlets

Phone: 6288 4171

A walk taking in some of the heritage buildings in Goulburn and a climb up Rocky Hill to the War Memorial for views of the city. The Heritage, Jazz and Roses Festival is on, and several places of interest will probably be open, such as the Water Works Museum, Riversdale Homestead, Kenmore Hospital Museum and the Old Goulburn Brewery. We may also visit some of these sites where fees will be payable. Meet at 8.30am at the ACT Netball Centre carpark, just past the Dickson traffic lights on Northbourne Avenue. Drive 200kms, \$60 per car.

15-17 March, long weekend packwalk

Quilty's Mountain circumnavigation

Leader: Steven Forst

Grading: 3A, 2B, 2A

Map: CMW Budawangs

Phone: 6251 6817(ah), 6219 5236(w)

Ring leader by Wednesday. An extended pack walk around Quilty's Mountain. This walk will include campsites at Styles Creek and the site of Piercy's cabin in the Vines area. If conditions permit, visit Mt Houghton, Hidden Valley and the Bora Ground. Drive 340km, \$100 per car.

22-23 March, weekend packwalk

Mt Bimberi and Mt Murray

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Grading: 3A/C/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

Phone: 6254 3094

This walk is planned to start at Yaouk Gap and include some of the ACT's highest peaks. The first part of the walk will be on a fire trail, but most will be off tracks. A climb of over 800m will be involved. Contact leader by Wednesday 19 March. Drive 200km, \$60 per car.

23 March, Sunday daywalk

Mt Gudgenby

Leader: Ken Free

Grading: 4A/C/D/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek and

Yaouk 1:25 000

Phone: 6295 8894

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 7.00am for a long, tough day conquering one of the best peaks close to Canberra. The views from the top are well worth the sometimes very steep and challenging climb. Some rock scrambling and regrowth to contend with. Walkers need to be fit and well equipped. Drive 140kms, \$42 per car.

26 March, Wednesday daywalk

Leader: Ken Free

Phone: 6295 8894

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

29 March, Saturday daywalk

Corn Trail

Leader: Col McAlister

Grading: 2A

Map: Monga 1:25 000

Phone: 6288 4171

A lovely walk from the top of the Clyde Mountain down to the Buckenbowra River and return which involves a 500 metre plus climb. (This leaves out the second

half of the Corn Trail, but avoids the long and bumpy car shuffle requiring four-wheel-drives.) Afternoon tea in Braidwood. Meet at Canberra Railway Station carpark (Kingston) at 8.00am. Drive 120km, \$36 per car.

29-30 March, weekend YHA pack walk

Royal National Park Coast Walk

Leader: David Large

Grading: 2A

Map: RNP 1:30 000

Phone: 6291 4830

Walk from Bundeena to Otford. Experience the heathlands and magnificent ocean views in Royal National Park. We will see how the Park has recovered from the bushfires last year and in 1994. Depart from Canberra early, arriving at Bundeena mid-morning then walk through to Garie YHA hostel. This is a Wilderness Hostel with basic facilities. On Sunday walk to Otford then take train and ferry back to Bundeena. Numbers limited to 12 as the hostel has only two 6-person dorms, so contact leader early to ensure a place. Bring sleeping sheet, an evening meal and breakfast, as well as lunches for both days. An opportunity to have an overnight walk in the 'European' style! Drive 500kms, \$150 per car, plus hostel fees and train/ferry fares.



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 there is one) 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.

The contacts for the Family Bushwalkers for the next few months are

15 January	Eric Pickering	6286 2128
5 February	Bob Hodgson	6255 2189
19 February	Andrew Walker	6254 6904
5 March	Eric Pickering	6286 2128
19 March	Peter Wellman	6288 5985

Population growth: impacts on Canberra and region

There are all too few of us voicing in public our concern at the many deleterious effects of the continuing growth of population in the ACT and south-eastern NSW.

Syd Comfort exhorts us to have an input into Canberra's planning (*NPA Bulletin*, Sept 2002, p 14) but makes no mention of the population pressures faced by Canberrans and those in our south-east portion of NSW.

A few demographic facts

- ACT's population is now 323 000 and growing by 2700 per year (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], September 2002).
- The combined population of ACT and south-eastern NSW is around 530 000 and growing by some 6000 per year (*Canberra Times*, 26/7/02). Queanbeyan—long a de facto extension of Canberra—is also growing at a fast rate. The coastal shires, too, are rapidly increasing their numbers. For example, witness the population projection for the Eurobodalla: the mayor, Pam Green, anticipates that her shire will double in 10 to 20 years (*Canberra Times*, 30/10/02). This is indeed an alarming growth rate—around 3.5 per cent to 7 per cent a year!
- Of course, we alone can't stop the population surge. Canberra's—as well as regional—growth is certainly a reflection of Australia's growth, which was almost 1 million in the last four years. (243 000 in 2001, ABS Sept 2002). Population growth is not inevitable. As almost half of this increase is due to immigration, the

obvious solution is to markedly lower immigration as well as lowering birthrates (despite a current fertility rate of 1.75, there is still a large surplus of births over deaths).

However, let's be realistic: as long as Australia grows apace the national capital will be almost certain to grow—together with the surrounding south-east region supplemented by movement out of Sydney, especially to the coastal shires.

While acknowledging this fact, it behoves us to be politically active—in both local and federal spheres—to counter the many and huge vested *financial interests which profit from population growth and its associated sale of real estate and consumer goods.*

Local ecological effects

The population growth of Canberra has now spawned Gungahlin with its need for transport links. In such a car-oriented society as this, it is hard to stop the construction of a new connecting freeway, which will carve further into Black Mountain Reserve, let alone O'Connor Ridge.

Queanbeyan's growth continues to alienate large swathes from the wooded Mount Jerrabomberra, while its residents have an earful of aircraft noise.

Biodiversity losses are also rampant up and down the south coast as new subdivisions raze areas of coastal forests, plus the effects of runoff on *marine life.*

Regional planning authority needed

In light of the south-east NSW region's rapidly increasing population, it is

insular and foolish of Canberrans, and our politicians, to limit our vision to the ACT alone (refer to the planning discussion paper entitled *Your Canberra Your Future*). Our Planning Minister, Simon Corbell, should take heed, particularly with the very recent push by our adjacent Yarrowlumla Shire to get into an urban subdivision mode around ACT borders.

Nothing less than continual regional planning is essential. Plans covering a whole host of matters ranging from land use (including urban and rural subdivisions and transport) to regeneration of farmlands, conservation of biodiversity, and so on, will have to be produced—with the maximum of community participation. The responsibility for these plans will reside with a *regional authority* in turn responsible to elected politicians from the ACT, and shires from south-eastern NSW plus the NSW state legislature itself.

We can no longer afford to take the parochial view within the ACT line on the map! The landscape of the south-east region of NSW is known well by most NPA members, who are well aware of its fragility and the need for vigilance in its conservation. What about that recent push to further exploit coastal native forests for charcoal production!

We, especially, have the responsibility of advocating a south-eastern NSW regional planning body with the necessary teeth and finances.

Chris Watson

Address to the Planning & Land Management Forum *continued from page 10*

strategic plan for appropriate and adequate representation of woodlands and grasslands in a regional vegetation reserve system, and through all land tenures.

- While education to raise awareness and bring about attitudinal change must continue, legislative backstops are essential. These have been slow in preparation (for example, proposed new weed regulations), or extreme

reluctance has been shown in applying them.

If we are to meet the challenges and make the changes, a broader community attitudinal change is essential. This also involves governments and private industry. As technologies to achieve desired change become available, we must be prepared to adopt them and begin the process of modifying our habits accordingly.

More importantly, we need to realise that at present we are not paying the direct and indirect costs for our affluence or our effluents. Until this issue is resolved, we cannot meet our obligations to the environment or intergenerational equity required by ESD. It is time to put the "E" back into "ESD".

Geoff Butler

Regeneration progress at Gudgenby

As it is now almost six years since felling of pines and just over four years since regeneration work in the Boboyan Plantation began it is a good time to look at the overall progress. The map and the following comments form a summary of the work achieved to date.

Seeded areas The first work party to begin seeding was held in July 1998. The first batch of pines had been felled by ACT Forests the year before, allowed to dry, and burnt just as the drought broke. In the next three years further batches of pines were felled by contractors employed by the Parks and Conservation Service, dried and burnt and the areas seeded as shown in the map.

No regeneration yet Only part of the area felled in 2000 has been successfully burnt and seeded, as the burn was conducted late in the year and failed to take off. So this area, and two sections felled by contractors employed by ACT Forests last summer (an adjacent area to the west of the Old Boboyan Road, and a small section to the south of the track into Frank and Jacks Hut) are waiting for the slash to be burnt, hopefully next autumn.

There are still three areas of standing pines that we hope will be felled this summer. This will require a much greater effort than occurred last summer.

Areas that became open and grassed The areas in which the pines became greatly thinned after the 1983 fire had become open and grassed with scattered eucalypts. (Incidentally, these areas form a good control for comparing the effectiveness of our regeneration efforts.) Due to their good grass cover these were not seeded, but they have been ripped and planted with small seedlings grown by Greenfleet, an organisation which collects money from motorists in return for undertaking to plant enough seedlings to tie up as much CO₂ as a year's driving would generate. There were a number of problems with the 2001 planting and survival has been low. In total about 60 000 Greenfleet seedlings were planted. This compares with something of the order of 500 000 seedlings germinating from our direct seeding.

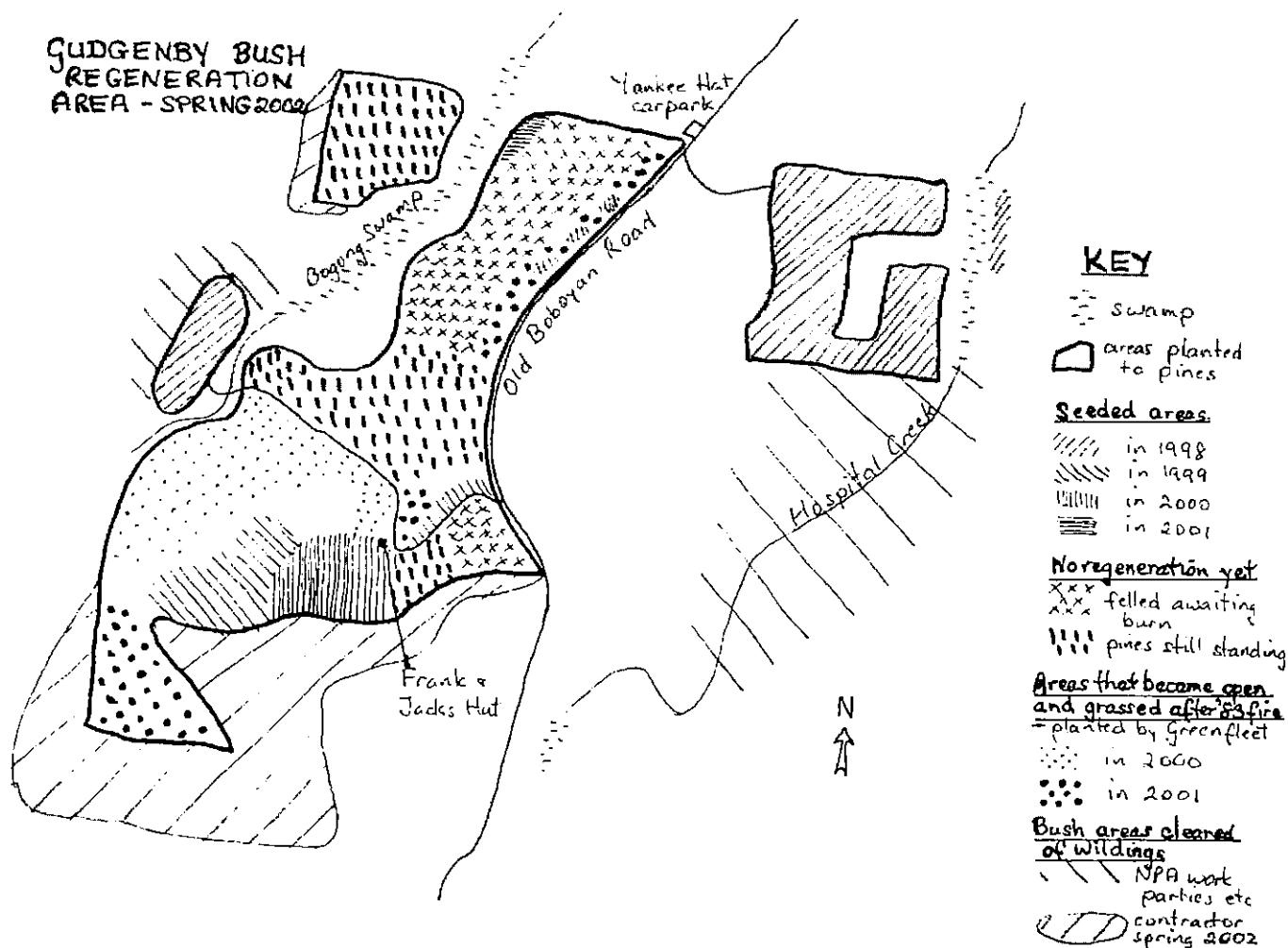
All seed used for direct seeding and for germinating seedlings was collected in the area by contractors employed by

the Parks and Conservation Service.

The areas still without regeneration amount to about one third of the total. The areas with regeneration are weeded in rotation by work parties of the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group (which includes NPA members - more are always welcome). Weeds tackled are pine wildings, blackberries, briars and a few hawthorns. Large infestations of briars, and blackberries which get away, are sprayed by contractors and park staff, but the manual efforts of the volunteers are significantly limiting the need for spraying.

Bush areas cleared of wildings Wildings have spread into the bush, carried by wind and black cockatoos. Scattered wildings occur up to about 15km south from the plantation site. They are most dense and largest (needing chainsaws) immediately to the south of the plantation where we are employing a contractor to clear them. Earlier, NPA work parties cleared wildings from extensive areas of the bush with handsaws.

Eleanor Stodart



Victorian regeneration group visits Gudgenby

In Namadgi National Park the old Boboyan pine plantation is being regenerated to native vegetation. A similar project is under way in Victoria near the Eildon Dam and recently staff from this project paid a visit to Namadgi.

An area of some 1500 hectares on the Delatite Arm of the Eildon Dam which had been planted to radiata pine is being regenerated to native species in a project managed by the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment. A group of three people involved in this work was in Canberra recently to study the Gudgenby regeneration project and to exchange ideas with ACT park staff.

The Delatite Arm project has been undertaken to rehabilitate an area of pines unsuitable for commercial harvesting and has been in progress for nearly two years. The situation differs from Gudgenby in a number of ways. The Delatite Arm project is much more ambitious involving 1500ha as compared with less than 400ha in Gudgenby. The area, although sometimes used for recreation, is on forestry land rather than within a national park. Although burning of timber waste is not available, the use of heavy machinery is, so fallen timber and waste are piled in rows and the areas in between are deep ripped. Eucalypt and acacia seedlings are planted on the edges of the rip lines and seed is scattered over any adjacent areas suitable for seeding at the same time. Thus there is a combination of seedling planting and broadcast seeding. Most of the work has been done through contractors and the results to date have been encouraging.



Dr Sabine Kasel (left) and the Project Leader, Delatite Arm Regeneration, Catherine Jewell. Photo Syd Comfort

So far, no volunteers have been involved in the project. The area is some distance from settlements which could offer volunteers but there is the possibility of summer campers providing some help. A major concern of the project staff is control of pine wildings with counts of 1000 per hectare not uncommon. The visitors were interested in the wilding problem in Gudgenby and noted the success of the steps taken here of burning trash, collecting unburnt cones and regular follow-up weeding by volunteers. Blackberries which are a serious threat in Gudgenby did not appear as a priority in the Delatite area. Park ranger Jeremy Watson was able to show the visitors park areas near the regeneration area where there are many pine wildings too large for volunteers to cull with hand

tools, which, with the support of the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group, contractors are about to clear with chain saws.

One aspect of the Delatite Arm project that is of considerable interest, is the research that is being undertaken in conjunction with the work. The research officer, Dr Sabine Kasel, explained that the work was a joint arrangement involving the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Forest Science Centre, Creswick, and Melbourne University. One part of the ongoing research that could be of value to our work in Gudgenby is the preparation of listings of references to research and publications relevant to native rehabilitation of pine plantings.

Syd Comfort

Sub-catchment plans for southern ACT

Members may recall questionnaires about issues to be covered in proposed sub-catchment plans for Weston-Woden and Tharwa-Tuggeranong. These plans have now been produced by the Southern ACT Catchment Group Inc. They join earlier plans for Ginninderra and Sullivans Creek catchments.

Both plans follow the same format and contain some identical material, but they have a number of differences which reflect the wholly suburban nature of Weston-Woden and mixed suburban/ rural nature of Tharwa-Tuggeranong.

The 'meat' of each plan is a series of tables of actions, with target dates, for

each broad issue such as Catchment Co-ordination, Vegetation Management and Waste Management. The actions are general in nature—'develop well-defined working relationships', 'use sub-catchment plans', 'initiate revegetation strategy'—rather than precise plans for work on the ground. Nevertheless, they form an important framework that will help groups with local plans to work together, and will provide justification and support for obtaining grants to reduce erosion in specific areas or for selection of species to plant.

The ACT Southern Catchment Group was formed in May 2002 as an NPA BULLETIN —DECEMBER 2002

umbrella group for parkcare and urban landcare groups already working in the area. It will channel grants from government bodies to individual groups so these do not need to be incorporated or carry their own insurance. It will also ensure some overall integration of group plans. Already meetings have covered some very interesting topics, such as details of the now postponed development for East O'Malley and the historic erosion patterns in eastern Australia showing that most serious erosion was in the nineteenth century in years with exceptionally high rainfall.

Eleanor Stodart

In support of Kosciuszko huts

A rejoinder to "Huts—an environmental challenge"

(Thanks to Graham Scully for helpful information. Attention is confined to huts south of Kiandra, to keep the article brief.)

I took strong exception to Tim Walsh's article in the September 2002 *Bulletin*. It makes generalised assertions which are not consistent with the evidence and which are untrue. It suggests a situation of crisis which does not exist, environmental damage which does not occur and a need for "solutions" which would constrain the use of huts considerably. It even canvasses the destruction of some huts.

The article's claims are based on the premise that increasing and unsustainable use is made of huts. This, it suggests, leads to three problems with serious environmental consequences:

- nearby firewood depletion with a consequent loss of habitat for flora and fauna;
- substantial tracks are being created where, "due to fragility of the alpine vegetation, none should exist"; and
- hut toilets are "often" full to overflowing, endangering the local water supply.

Increasing use

Leonie has been using the huts for 40 years, and I have been for 20 years. We note that fewer, not more, people are using the huts than previously. Graham Scully says that the ski tourers he talks to agree that fewer ski tourers are in the park these days. Log books suggest fairly frequent use of the more popular huts but, in our experience, huts are not often crowded. We spend more nights in huts by ourselves than in the company of others. We have not encountered in the last decade anything like the 22 people Leonie shared Tin Hut with many years ago in a blizzard!

The volunteers of the Kosciuszko Huts Association maintain the huts and they seem to us to be well kept. We have not found any vandalism in huts without public vehicle access, and no sign of damage from use. Most maintenance seems to be a response to wear and tear by the elements. Cooking, eating and sleeping in the huts do not



Grey Hill Café Photo Phil Bubb

damage them nor detract from them in any way.

I asked the Kosciuszko National Park about records of the use of huts, and possible surveys of usage. Steve Wright of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife service (NPWS) said that no such records are maintained.

The evidence contradicts Tim's claim of increasing and unsustainable use of huts.

Firewood

I find adequate firewood within a few hundred metres of huts, dead branches on trees or fallen branches resting above the ground, and so not rotten and wet. Of dead wood removal, I would estimate that 80 per cent to 90 per cent is within 200 metres of the hut and 99 per cent within 500 metres. Even within the smaller area, about 20 per cent to 33 per cent of dead wood rots on the ground.

This loss of dead wood is likely to represent less than 0.1 per cent of the dead wood of equivalent environments elsewhere in the park. Closed stoves reduce even this impact, because they save wood. They also reduce the risk of fire damage to huts. If an area had a specific problem, the corrective is to explain to visitors why to avoid the specified area. The vehicle tracks used by park management would destroy much more habitat than the modest harvesting of firewood by tired walkers and skiers.

The evidence is not consistent with environmental damage. Indeed, fireplaces in huts protect the environment. Fireplaces and stoves in

huts provide safer and less damaging places for fires than in the open. Several large grass fires have been started by fuel stoves used in the open; none by the use of hut fireplaces.

Foot tracks

Most huts are connected by management vehicle trails that are closed to the public for vehicle use and used only by park authorities, police and, under stringent control, Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA)

parties. The park is so unconcerned about any damage by vehicles that it maintains no statistics of trips by vehicles on management trails (phone conversation with Steve Wright of NPWS). It hardly needs the observation that one vehicle on these tracks would have more impact than hundreds of walkers. Foot tracks are few and far between.

Only a few of the huts south of Kiandra are not accessible by management vehicle tracks; these include Mawsons, Boobee, Pretty Plain, Boltons on Finn, Four Mile, Tin and Kidmans. A foot track from Mawsons goes a kilometre or so before fading out at the tree line on the Kerries. A foot track from the Tooma goes to Pretty Plain and beyond to the Strumbo Range management track. A foot track traverses Arsenic Ridge but does not diverge to Brooks Hut nearby.

The foot tracks and some vehicle tracks are disappearing. Strumbo Hill vehicle trail has disappeared and the remnant foot track has been overgrown by scrub. A foot track from Grey Mare Hut west to the Strumbo Range vehicle track has disappeared, as has the vehicle track itself.

Where the prospect of damage occurs, the corrective would be to re-route the track, which is standard management practice. For example, a notice on the temporary vehicle track to the mobile phone tower on Disappointment Spur asks walkers not to use the remnant so as to allow the ground to recover. In the absence of any such warnings, I conjecture that no unique or irreparable damage has occurred nor is any unique area at risk.

Toilets

The hut toilets provide a service of concentrating human waste. When full they are covered and a new site selected. The old sites regenerate quickly. Mawsons hut longdrop has been dug three times in the last 15 years, the latest hole using the original, in which all of the contents had completely composted.

The experimental compost toilet installed by the Park Service (I think) at the Schlink Hilton hut failed to result in proper decomposition and, apparently, filled up until removed and replaced by the usual pit toilet. This hut has a lot of use because it is one day's skiing with a load from Munyang Power Station.

I have not encountered any other full toilets. Tim says that the toilets at Whites River and at Valentines were overflowing in autumn of this year. The NPWS apparently were informed and enough sullage removed to get through the winter. Presumably new toilets will be excavated this summer.

I question whether Tim's 'often' is an accurate choice of word. I am sure the KHA respond to any toilet problems, and would seek to prevent any recurrences. The Park Service should collate and maintain a public record summarising all reports of sickness, injury, and other relevant incidents (lost people, damage, problem areas and so on). This would be valuable information for users of the park and would encourage care for the benefit of the park and users themselves. No such record is maintained (phone conversation with Steve Wright of NPWS). We often drink untreated water (which is admittedly careless) and have had no problems.

The Arguments for Huts

Huts are not essential in summer, but *come into their own in the long dark nights of autumn, and in the snow covered, cold, short days of winter and early spring.* The alternatives are to huddle next to a warm fire for two to three hours in dry weather, or to spend up to 13 hours in a tent. In rain or snow, there is no comparison between the shelter offered by a hut, and cooking in the open or spending long hours of darkness in a tent.

If there were no huts, the number of back country ski tourers would probably drop by three quarters. Only the young and robust would tolerate tent living in the snow for a week. It is impossible to dry wet boots and clothes, or sleeping bags damp from condensation, without recourse to a hut.

The huts on the Overland Track in Tasmania, or on many tracks and alpine mountains in New Zealand, have encouraged thousands more to visit these incomparably beautiful wilderness areas than would have been willing or able to backpack as so-called "self-



Interior of Pretty Plain Hut Photo Phil Bubb

reliant" walkers. In Europe huts are considered an essential to recreation in snow-covered areas. This is especially so in Scandinavian countries, which probably have the greatest extent in Europe of little-modified wilderness similar to that of Australian high country. To impose barriers to people's quiet enjoyment of nature, when only negligible temporary damage to the environment is likely to occur, seems to me to be the true vandalism.

The huts enjoyed by many do no harm. They are mostly located discreetly, and are far less obvious signs of "civilisation" than vehicle tracks and power lines. All of them have cultural significance in the sense that people loved and laughed in them, and have memories of happy times. History starts today. Why should we wantonly destroy the human artifacts which may have enriched our lives?

Where huts are destroyed, they should be replaced at the most suitable nearby location. In my view, the replacement huts should be practical and architect designed buildings to fit into their landscape so as to be future heritage, and a source of pride to those contributing to their construction. As far

as I know, the only additional hut sought at present is a replacement for Broken Dam hut, which provides a nursery for back country skiers. The remaining huts are not under such pressure of use as to lead to a demand for more hut locations.

Conclusion

Kosciuszko is not a wilderness like the Bogong Peaks, Etrema Gorge, Woila Creek, parts of Wollemi National Park and many other areas. It has been extensively used for grazing, mining, the cutting of timber and tourism even

before it was given a thorough going-over in connection with the Snowy scheme. It has wonderful environments and ecosystems rare in Australia. Little evidence has been presented that these are *under threat* from people. No justification exists for constraining the use of the huts. It would be wrong to allow zealots with aesthetic (not environmental) views about untouched wilderness to impose their personal values on others.

The phrase "self reliant" walkers and skiers is empty of thought if it excludes use of huts in conditions when these add immensely to the enjoyment of the Park. All sensible walkers are self reliant because accidents occur in highly unlikely combinations of snow, rain, wind, being lost, injured and ill.

The "fundamental principle that, in Australia, national parks are created first and foremost for the conservation of the natural environment and to maintain Australia's biodiversity" is such an oversimplification as to be misleading. The objectives of parks have themselves evolved over time from places for hunting or protecting water catchments, and will evolve again in the future. The natural environment is important to people, to provide a breathing space away from vehicles, urban areas and everyday pressures. Access by walkers and skiers not causing damage is important to the environment because broad democratic support can be ensured only by extensive access.

Phillip Bubb

PARKWATCH

Rebirthing Australia

Across Australia, the bush is falling silent as songbirds disappear. It seems the tree-planting efforts of the past decade have not been enough. Now we are learning more about what the birds really want.

But an estimated 90 to 95 per cent of Australia's woodlands are gone and David Freudenberger's sobering message is that despite the good intentions, Australia's revegetation effort in recent years is a long way short of what is needed to sustain the remnant populations of these species.

Freudenberger is now working with Greening Australia on an ambitious new program to bring the small woodlands birds back into the Australian landscape, while there is still time.

The 'rebirthing' program is expected to lift the national revegetation debate to a new level because research has shown that many so-called wildlife "corridors" and the scattered patches of natural bush restored by farmers are generally far too small to have much effect.

"Unfortunately we can no longer afford willy-nilly 'feel good' plantings. We've got to get specific in terms of minimum area, maximum protection from grazing, and correct plant composition," says Freudenberger.

"The main problem is that many replanted areas tend to be narrow corridors or small patches of a few hectares. We're discovering these birds need a minimum of 10 or 20 hectares for them to reoccupy an area; perhaps up to 100 hectares to settle and breed there."

Freudenberger is the first to admit it's a "big ask" of landholders, especially farmers, but he's quick to insist it's not a figure plucked from the air. "I'm afraid if people want to argue they'll have to argue with the birds ... and decide if they want birds in their landscape."

Freudenberger's research and the rebirthing programs being promoted by Greening Australia are emerging as important innovations in the overall landcare effort as results of the past decade's revegetation campaign points to the need for a more strategic approach in the future.

*ABC Science Online
10 September 2002*

Good news for the forests

Environmentalists are celebrating Bob Carr's decision to end the wood-fired power station proposals throughout the state. Years of campaigning by the combined environmental movement sent

a strong message to the woodchip industry that burning woodchips for power is not acceptable.

Independent polling showed the Government a massive wave of opposition against the proposed industry, only 7% supporting the proposal. This is an excellent move, but New South Wales still burns so-called "sawmill waste" for electricity and there are no details on how this is monitored to ensure that waste is not produced if needed for power generation.

It is clear that the NSW ALP sees the environment vote as important. With six months to the election the green fight is on. This is an excellent first step for Bob Carr to re-establish his credentials as a "Green Premier".

*The Sydney Bushwalker
September 2002*

Wildcountry vision

Wildcountry is a plan to re-wild Australia. By means of reservation and rehabilitation Australia's natural ecosystems are to be restored and sustained, breaking the destructive cycle in which modern society competes with (and usually destroys) indigenous cultures, the integrity of ecological communities and the habitats of plants and animal species.

As a first step towards achieving this ambitious goal, the Wilderness Society has established the WildCountry Scientific Council bringing together some of the nation's most eminent environmental scientists. The Council plans to undertake a continent-wide comprehensive assessment of our landscapes and ecosystems.

The Wilderness Society is developing an Implementation Plan which, nationwide, will protect threatened environments, rehabilitate degraded natural areas and restore devastated ecosystems. The objective is to work in partnership with other conservation organisations to develop a conservation network. Where possible, wilderness areas will form the core of the network.

*The Sydney Bushwalker
September 2002*

It's the dung thing: beetle earns respect

It may have the job description from hell but the dung beetle is earning a reputation as an environmental saviour

While politicians quibble over environmental laws, a research project based at Glen Innes in northern NSW is mapping the location of many of the 330-odd native and introduced species

of dung beetle which are hard at work improving soil fertility and water quality.

"Their work has been really underrated but you only have to look at a paddock in drought to see the advantages of having active dung beetles," said Pam Wilson of the Northern Tablelands Dung Beetle Express, a Landcare and Rural Lands Protection Board initiative funded by the Natural Heritage Trust. "They don't just get rid of the dung but also increase soil and water health tremendously."

Living in and entirely on manure, dung beetles suck out the liquid and bury the rest in balls up to 1m underground, enriching soils and stopping millions of kilograms of pollutants washing into the nation's waterways.

"The obvious broader environmental benefits have caused renewed interest in the humble dung beetle" Ms Wilson said. "Cattle dung is one of the causes of algal blooms in our waterways so the benefits just go on and on."

Ms Wilson said many farmers were prepared to pay good money for dung beetles. Canberra company Soilcam is the only Australian supplier of dung beetles. A colony can cost around \$350 for between 500 and 1500 beetles, depending on species.

*The Daily Telegraph Wednesday,
21 August 2002*

Nest box success

Good news! Sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) and ringtail possums (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*) have moved into nest boxes erected on a site near the Black Mountain nature reserve in October 2000. A survey of the eight boxes on 9 March 2002 revealed that:

- four are occupied by sugar gliders;
- two are occupied by ringtail possums;
- one has been occupied by bees; and
- one has been stolen!

Of the four boxes occupied by gliders, three have families of five or more and one has a pair of animals in it. The boxes were built by Environment ACT, Parks and Conservation Service staff member Les Caldramoski, and erected by Dr Chris Tidemann, School of Resources, Environment and Society, Australian National University.

The nest boxes were erected along a 400 metre line, with one every 50 metres at a height of 4 metres. The site, which had few hollows, now provides shelter suitable for sugar gliders, ringtail possums and birds.

*ecoview Vol 1 No 1 2002
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Alastair Morrison—NPA life member

Alastair has been granted life membership of another organisation—the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. This is in recognition of his support of the museum, particularly in the donation of his wife Hedda's photographs of China taken before and during World War II. Alastair had previously donated his collection of Asian and Indian art to the museum.

It will be recalled that Alastair's generous contributions enabled the NPA to publish its popular books, *Field*

Guide to the Birds of the ACT and *Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT*, which continue to generate funds for the association.

Alastair's wife Hedda, who died in 1991, has also been honoured in Beijing by an exhibition of her "Old Peking" photographs taken between 1933 and 1946 when she was resident there as manager of a photographic store. These photographs have now been returned to the Powerhouse Museum and are included with comparable photographs

of modern Beijing in a current exhibition. After Hedda's death, Alastair donated her considerable lifetime photographic collection of prints and negatives to the Powerhouse Museum, the Australian National Gallery, the National Library of Australia and two universities in the USA, taking account of the collecting interests of each institution.

Reg Alder

PARKWATCH *continued from previous page*

Protection for fossils

The outstanding fossils that give World Heritage importance to Riversleigh in north-western Queensland will be better protected than ever with the release of *The Riversleigh Management Strategy*, a joint initiative of the Commonwealth and Queensland governments. Riversleigh is one of the most significant fossil deposits in the world, containing an outstanding record of Australian megafauna and the first records for many distinctive groups of living and extinct Australian mammals dating from 15-25 million years ago. Under the World Heritage Convention, the Federal Government has an international obligation to protect and conserve the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites World Heritage Area. The Riversleigh area is managed by Queensland's Environment Protection Agency.

While the major focus is on World Heritage values, the Strategy also recognises that there is a range of other legitimate values and interests in Riversleigh. It is an internationally important palaeontological research site; it is part of the traditional country of the Waanyi people; it is part of an extensive Queensland national park; it is of considerable regional importance to the tourism industry and it is a valuable education resource.

NPA News September 2002

Horses for courses?

The National Parks and Wildlife Service appears to be intent on capitulating to the horse lobby across the State.

In Guy Fawkes National Park feral horses will now be farmed out to local properties. In a decision which threatens the biological integrity of The Park, aerial culling of horses has been abandoned with no effective strategy for reducing feral horse numbers in its place.

Instead of engaging pest species control experts a local community-based steering committee involving local people and other stakeholders will be established.

In Kosciuszko National Park, musterers will be used to round up horses on the Main Range. Evidence indicates that this "soft" strategy will prove ineffective in reducing horse numbers to any significant degree. Decades of work restoring damage to soils and vegetation caused by alpine grazing will be put at risk. There is no overall strategy to control the thousands of feral horses roaming across the Park.

In other parks such as Blue Mountains and Ku-ring-gai Chase deeply eroded tracks are being designated as bridle tracks and institutionalised through Plans of Management.

Meanwhile, in Royal National Park the deer control strategy is failing. The culling rate does not keep up with the reproductive capacity of the deer population, meaning that deer populations will continue to increase.

In an effort to appease animal lovers NPWS is losing the race. Feral animal populations are expanding and biodiversity is coming a long last.

National Parks Journal, August 2002

What's happening in the Murray-Darling Basin?

Paroo: Conservation groups in NSW and Queensland recently welcomed the release of the Queensland Government's Draft Water Resource Plan for the Paroo, Bulloo and Warrego rivers. The plan seeks to protect 99% of flow at the NSW border, a relief for the near-pristine ecology of the river. However the groups are still awaiting the joint NSW—Queensland announcement on the future management of the Paroo, the last wild river in the basin. An announcement was due in late-2001,

and no reasons have been given for the delay.

Castlereagh: IRN and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW say the Draft Water Sharing Plan for the Castlereagh River is easily the best inland river plan in NSW. In a submission on the plan, IRN said, "we were impressed with the environmental provisions contained within this plan. Of all the plans for unregulated rivers in inland NSW, this is one of the few that actually demonstrates how...low flows are to be protected for the environment."

Namoi: It has been known for some time that the average extraction of groundwater in the Namoi Valley in some areas is greater than can be sustained by the aquifer. The NSW Government has allocated a \$20 million restructure package, available from June 2002, to assist landholders and communities in the Namoi Valley affected by changes to groundwater allocations.

*Inland Rivers Network News
Winter 2002*

Carnarvon campground changes

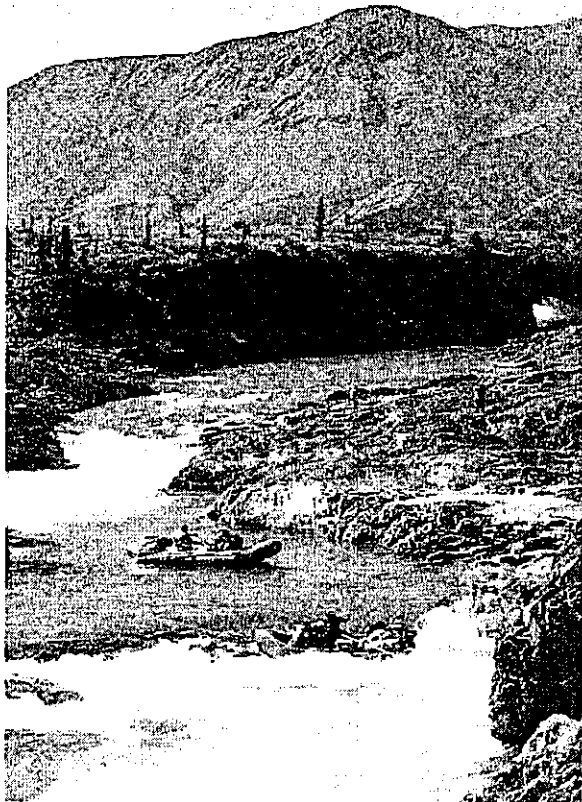
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service will open the Carnarvon Gorge campground for three school holiday periods a year, with camping also available year-round at private campgrounds just outside the Park.

NPA News, July 2002

Compiled by Len Haskew

Many members will know Sarah Porgorney as a bush walker but she is also a talented artist taking her inspiration from scenes revealed during bushwalks. Some of her work is currently on display in the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi Visitor Centres.

Don't bring a torch



Running the rapids on the Firth River

The North American continent is huge! From Minneapolis/St Paul in northern USA it was seven and a half hours flying time to Inuvik, the small Canadian administrative town well inside the Arctic Circle. Most of this journey was over forest, rivers and millions of lakes. At Inuvik we met up with our three guides and the other 10 people who would join us on a Canadian River Expeditions (CRE) raft trip down 136 km of the Firth River through the British Mountains in the north-western corner of the Yukon to the Arctic Ocean. This trip was one of only three down the Firth each year. Less than 50 people a year go through this vast region. The following day a small twin-engined Otter plane took us on an exciting flight across the immense, watery landscape of the Mackenzie River Delta and, at low level, through (not over) the British Mountains to ice-bound Margaret Lake on the Firth. Missing boulders and shrubs, we landed on the tundra beside the river. The plane had already made one trip ahead of ours, taking the three rafts and non-personal gear.

How can one hope to describe the beauty of this incredible, vast wilderness through which the Firth flows, crystal clear, green, and often

deep? We were unprepared for such beauty. The Firth flowed through a broad valley surrounded by ethereal mountains. Everywhere we looked there were mountains, ridge upon ridge, to eternity. I had expected monotonous tundra, not a rich tapestry of scenery, plant life and light that made the scene breathtaking. The vastness, remoteness, wildness, emptiness and silence of the land could be felt as living presences. This was like no other wilderness I had ever experienced. It was immense and incredibly beautiful in its subdued, pastel colours and delicate light. Unlike the Australian light which cuts like a blade, the light up there was soft, warm and gently caressing. It creates an unreal, magical world. The pastel colours

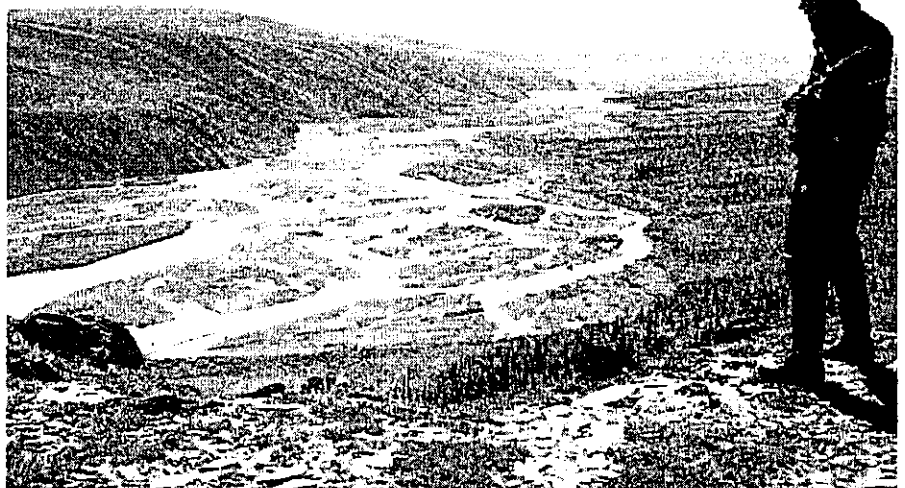
of the landscape were subtle, rich and varied. The tundra and the nearby mountains were a variety of lovely warm golds, browns and reds, while the distant landscape was a variety of soft blues, greens and greys. As soon as we stepped from the plane we were overwhelmed by the richness of the flora. There were so very many species, so many different colours, and everywhere, so many flowers. It is a vast garden of flowers complete with

butterflies, bumblebees and bees. There are also many birds and animals.

Our guides were highly professional, most knowledgeable about the area and incredibly hardworking. Every day they loaded and unloaded the rafts, set up and took down the kitchen, spent hours rowing the rafts, hiked for hours, and cooked the most wonderful meals and then did the washing up. Huge, multi-course gourmet breakfasts, lunches and dinners were prepared for us, and at dinner there was a beer before dinner, wine with it and liqueur afterwards. They were insistent on cleanliness: washing our hands after going to the toilet was mandatory and we had to wash our plates, cutlery and mugs in several washes and rinses, including a final bleach rinse. "Tummy" upsets were entirely absent.

Most of the time temperatures were mild, around 10-12°C, despite a lot of ice along the river and the frozen ground. However, we experienced a couple of really bitter days, and on one occasion were trapped on a gravel bar for two days by a gale which prevented any progress down the river. Mostly, the sun shone all the time, and therefore it was pleasantly warm inside the tent. The ground being frozen, we appreciated the thick thermal-rests provided by CRE. We also hired from them the tent and our sleeping bags. CRE provided us with watertight bags for our clothing, thermal-rests and sleeping bags. These were roped onto the rafts and inaccessible to us during the day. However, we all had day packs which we could access, these also being fastened to the rafts.

As we continued down the river day



Barrie Ridgway overlooking the Firth River Photo Esther Gallant

continued next page

Book Review

Walking from the mountains to the sea.

By Graeme Barrow, Dagraja Press, Hackett, ACT, 2002. \$16.95.

Although a number of organisations and groups have printed sheet-style guides to popular walks in the Shoalhaven Shire in an easy to follow style, Graeme's latest compendium brings together a variety of walks suitable for all, including families who may wish to stretch their legs, taste the salt air or enjoy the coastal hinterland between Nowra and Batemans Bay.

An introduction provides the reader with a short overview of regional

characteristics, connections with Aboriginal life and appropriate comments on safety and the system used to grade each walk. A brief summary of south coast weather, courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology, is also supplied.

Each of the 45 walks described has a short preamble of 'key details' including what to see, directions on how to get there, walking distance, timings, maps and where one may make further enquiries. Having knowledge of the walks near Batemans Bay I thought directions and timings were adequate.

In an easy reading style, actual walk descriptions provide plenty of information as to route and what the

walker will encounter along the way. Interspersed are snippets of information ranging from our Aboriginal heritage to other matters of historical significance such as the naming of Pigeon House by Cook. Relevant maps and grid references are also included. Most walks also have a colour photograph depicting a point of interest.

Overall it is a well produced and user-friendly guide for both the dedicated day walker or for people taking the occasional outing. A useful addition to your 'outdoors' library.

Mick Kelly

Don't bring a torch

previous page

after day, our world became timeless. Changeless, yet ever changing, the Firth flowed without time and carried us along with it, seemingly to eternity. Sunlight for 24 hours of every day enhanced this feeling. Sometimes the Firth flowed through a broad valley, at other times through canyons. Our days were often long, but of course, we always spent some time just sitting on the rafts. Every day the guides took us on hikes into the mountains, usually up high, with wonderful views over the river and mountains. Always the hikes were full of interest: flowers, birds, animals. The river, too, always changing, hypnotised us. One felt that one was on another, unreal, planet. Always we were conscious of immensity, remoteness, eternity, and incredible beauty.

The Porcupine Caribou herd, tens of thousands strong, crosses the Firth every year in its biannual migrations, but unfortunately our paths did not cross. However, we did see caribou, musk ox, moose, an arctic fox, Dall sheep and a she-bear with cubs. That was our only sighting of grizzlies. We were not too worried about them, and did not mind

continued from

pitching our tent away from the snores of the others. We also saw many types of birds, including golden eagles and falcons.

Finally, we entered the flat Firth River Delta, an area of many shallow, meandering, ice-lined channels amongst gravel bars. We spent two days getting through this area, and often had to wade, wearing hip-waders, towing the rafts (wading was not obligatory). On our final day on the water, thick fog closed in. How our lead guide found his way through twisting channels and across open water to Nunaluk Spit without a GPS is beyond us. Nunaluk Spit was not only bitterly cold, but unbelievably desolate, being nothing but a boulder field on the shore of the Arctic Ocean. Icebergs were drifting by.

Our plane the next day was six hours late as it had done another trip before coming for us. Then, on landing, it had sunk through the surface to the permafrost. The two pilots had spent the night digging out the plane. We loaded the plane and were soon on our way back to Inuvik, via a brief stop on Herschel Island to visit an old whaling station where we landed on a boulder beach. We had left behind one guide and the heavy gear for the second flight. Our flight back was as exciting as the



Lost and found—a caribou antler and Barrie

outwards one: we flew at tree top level over the incredible 'land of water' of the Mackenzie River Delta.

Oh, I nearly forgot. We were issued with a detailed kit list which included the instruction *not* to bring a torch.

Barrie Ridgway and Esther Gallant

New members

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

Gilbert Coats	Kaleen
Tim P Falkland	Watson
John and Jan Moore	Campbell
J K Williams	Weston
J and T Miles	Canberra

National Parks Association Calendar

Activity	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Public Holidays	Wed 25 Thur 26	Wed 1 Mon 27		Mon 17
Committee meetings	Thu 5		Thu 6	Thu 6
Environment Sub-committee meetings ¹	To be advised			
General meetings			Thu 20	Thu 20
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ³	Sat 14		Sat 8	Sat 8
Christmas Party ²	Sun 15			

Further details ¹ See contacts page 2 ² See Outings Program.
³ Yankee Hat carpark 10 am, Eleanor Stodart.

General Meetings:
'Third Thursdays' 8.00 pm
NB: No general meetings
December or January.
From February, 2003
Uniting Church Hall,
O'Connor
See notice page 3

Thursday 20th February 2003

Two short walks in the Indian Himalayas: a trekkers perspective on the balance between tourism, conservation and pastoralism in two National Parks

Roger Farrow, NPAACT member.

During April and May of 2002 Roger and his partner Christine Kendrick participated in two customised treks—the first along the Singalila Ridge in Himalayan West Bengal and the second to the base of Kanchenjunga in Sikkim.

Trekking in these areas is much less developed than in neighbouring Nepal but is concentrated on two or three routes, which pass through National Parks; this is already having an adverse impact on the local environment.

They picked this part of the Himalayas because of the presence of pristine montane forests and chose

spring in order to see the rhododendrons and other plants in flower.

Unfortunately there was early and sustained pre-monsoon weather, which meant they were enveloped in cloud, mist, rain and sometimes snow for part of almost every day. At least they could understand why cloud forest is dominant at an altitude of 3000m.

Thursday 20th March 2003

Rehabilitating the Transgrid powerline easements

Roger Good, Senior Projects Manager, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In February and March 2001 contractors for Transgrid, the controllers and managers of the high voltage powerlines running from Tumut to Canberra, cleared extensive areas of the powerline

easements as part of their vegetation maintenance program.

Two of the powerlines pass through Kosciuszko and Brindabella National Parks in New South Wales, and Namadgi National Park in the ACT. The extent of vegetation and soil disturbance was inappropriate to the conservation objectives of the parks and the management of the easements as integral parts of the parks.

Mr Good will speak on the impact of the clearing and the ecological restoration techniques now being used to ensure that the denuded areas are revegetated in sympathy with the management objectives and programs being pursued in the national parks, and the future maintenance of the transmission line easement.

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