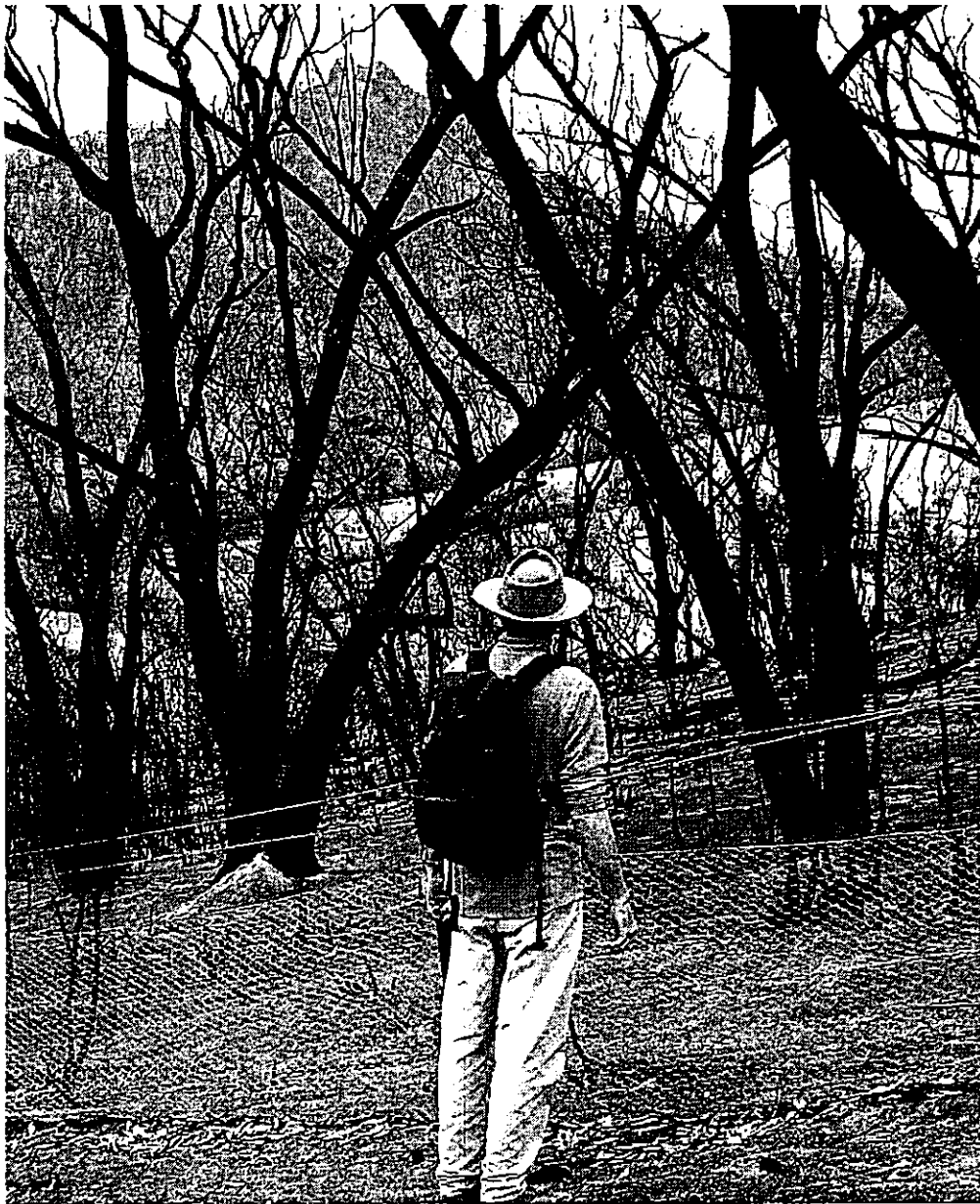


NPA Bulletin



Volume 40 number 1
March 2003

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



From fire to the future

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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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ISSN0727-8837

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Subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

Household membership	\$40	Single members	\$35
Corporate membership	\$30	<i>Bulletin</i> only	\$30
Concession	\$25		

Advertising

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

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.

Deadline for June 2003 issue: 1 May 2003.

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

This *Bulletin* was produced by the NPA Bulletin Working Group.

Cover photo: *After the bush fires—looking to Gibraltar Peak, Tidbinbilla.. Photo Tony Wood*

Printed by Copy-Qik, Canberra, ACT.

From the President

The January 2003 firestorms caused inconceivable and unforeseen damage in the southwestern suburbs of our bush capital, destroying more than 500 homes, including three rangers' homes in Namadgi. Their devastating impact on Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the rest of the Alpine national parks in NSW and Victoria has set the agenda for NPA ACT over the next few years.

Our focus now is to help Environment ACT with the restoration of Namadgi, politically and physically: surveying, replanting, preventing the influx of weeds and feral animals and rehabilitating the bulldozer tracks. Work parties will also be needed to repair our cultural heritage: the huts that were not totally destroyed.

Jointly with the National Parks Associations of Victoria and NSW, NPA ACT has written to Federal, State

and Territory Ministers urging the establishment of a scientific advisory committee for coordinated rehabilitation of the Australian Alps national parks.

Some NPA members have already visited Namadgi and Tidbinbilla with park rangers and Environment ACT planners to see at first hand the extent and intensity of the damage and to start the renewal with seeding of one of the burnt Boboyan pine plantation areas.

The fires burned swamps and ridges, grasslands and forests, sweeping over some areas that remained almost untouched, others that were turned to ash. Three weeks later we could see the first new shoots of life, epicormic buds bursting from the trunks and branches of leafless trees, mainly stringybarks that had not been scorched through. We saw that some birds, mammals and reptiles had indeed survived, from wedge-tailed eagles to diminutive robins, hopefully

enough of them to recolonise the parks. An immigration program will have to be initiated for the koalas.

Without the obscuring bush, Aboriginal heritage sites can now be examined and mapped. Indeed a marked tree was rediscovered in Tidbinbilla during our visit, only metres from the access road. So there is work aplenty.

We need volunteers for the working groups, and group leaders to liaise with Environment ACT staff to manage the work. We need more committee members to strengthen the NPA, to write letters to the media and governments, and commune with our neighbouring national parks associations in Victoria and NSW. The work is most rewarding and even pleasurable.

Please help!

Kevin McCue

International Year of the Mountains conference

The NPA was represented at the Celebrating Mountains Conference held in Jindabyne, 25-28 November 2002, by Di Thompson, her attendance being funded by Environment ACT. In this article Di sets out some ideas about wilderness generated during the conference.

One of the main points for NPA members to consider, which was also raised by the Executive Director, Environment ACT, Dr Maxine Cooper, when she spoke at our general meeting last year, concerns the debate on options for either removing or redefining the term "wilderness" in the new Namadgi Plan of Management. Obviously this is

an issue of great significance to conservationists. Members are asked to explore the issue further. The Malimup Communique (signed in a town in Western Australia) is a good place to start. "The Communique advocates joint management of wilderness by rightful Indigenous communities in decisions that affect their rights and the maintenance of their cultures. It addresses key issues for Indigenous communities including:

- involvement in relevant policy formulation, management plan preparation and day-to-day management;
- incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and land use practices

into wilderness management regimes;

- direct management of places and matters of Indigenous significance by rightful Indigenous people;
- sustainable hunting and gathering;
- limited vehicular access along existing management tracks; and
- the need for accommodation where this is required in order to maintain their culture.

The Communique is a step towards marrying social justice and cultural survival with the long term protection of some of our most cherished wild places."

Di Thompson

New President

News is just to hand that Kevin McCue has accepted the position of President of the association. Members congratulate him and wish him every success in his new office.

New members

The association extends a warm welcome to new members Christine and Michael Goonrey, of Kambah.

E-mail addresses of members

It would be appreciated if members with an e-mail address, who have not notified this to the association, could do so through: npaact@bigpond.com



Fire in the mountains—journey from fire to future

Paul Higginbotham and David Scott, guest speakers at the general meeting of 20 February 2003, addressed the largest gathering I have seen at a National Parks Association meeting. The new venue, the Uniting Church Hall in O'Connor, was packed and extra seating was required, but the hall was adequate for the task.

Paul is the District Conservation Officer, Parks and Conservation and David is the Coordinator of the *Bushfire Recovery Process 2003*. Together they reported on the devastating fires of January this year and discussed the plans for recovery in Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla, the Murrumbidgee Corridor and Canberra Nature Park. Their well-prepared, illustrated and coherent presentation was a thought-provoking mix of frightening statistics, the personal reactions of both themselves and other Parks staff and a tempered but heartfelt optimism that in many instances the area would recover of its own volition, but also with the provision of large doses of resources, and with commitment by the Government, land managers and enthusiastic volunteers.

Sixty-six per cent of the land area of the ACT was destroyed and this figure included the loss of 91 per cent of Namadgi and 99 per cent of Tidbinbilla. Five Parks staff members lost their homes, most while fighting fires elsewhere in the park and many of them lost all their possessions as well. In Tidbinbilla 95 per cent of the captive wildlife was destroyed, including species connected with captive breeding programs such as the brush-tailed rock wallaby and freckled duck. Infrastructure in the various parks and reserves was also destroyed. All that remains of some constructed walking tracks is a row of nails in the ash. Mt Franklin Chalet, which was in what is now the most devastated part of the Alps, was totally destroyed together

with many other culturally significant heritage sites throughout Namadgi and Tidbinbilla. Fortunately the Yankee Hat rock paintings were relatively undamaged and the Rendezvous Creek site has been covered to prevent damage from dust.

The sub-alpine forest suffered intensive hot burning—Coree-Lees Creek, Aggie-Franklin and the upper Cotter were severely burnt. The magnificent alpine ash along the

January 18 was extreme. Consequently there is a distinct mosaic pattern of varying fire intensity. This can be easily seen from the Namadgi Visitor Centre which Paul suggests is one of the best places from which to view the effects of the fire. The burning pattern has left some pockets of vegetation that could provide opportunities for fauna to survive.

Both Paul and David believe that much of the landscape will restore itself over time. The Parks Service is anxious that public access should be allowed as soon as possible. When we are able to visit we will be appalled not only by the effect on the natural environment, but also by the numerous bulldozer trails that were blazed to fight the fire and the incredible amount of litter that is now in clear view. They believe we will also realise the intensity of the fires when we see melted metal road signs and the distorted armourguard railings along the roads. The main barrier to public access at the moment are hazards such as trees falling every day and the structural hazards of damaged infrastructure.

The burnt areas are now under threat from weed invasion (particularly on disturbed soil sites), feral animals (dog movements seem to have increased and spread, goats have been sighted as well as pigs), and contamination from hazardous waste (such as burnt treated pine logs). It is worth noting that the former log barriers are to be replaced by barriers of rock supplied from local quarries.

And on top of everything else there is the threat of contamination to Canberra's water supply from erosion, ash contaminated run-off and the run-off from hazardous waste. The undesired run-off will also adversely effect flora and fauna. The effect of the current drought is a great unknown.



Devastation above the Boboyan Road near Glendale Crossing. Photo Reg Alder

Brindabella Road have all been burnt. The Ginini wetlands are devastated and the fire was severe at other wetlands including Snowy Flats, Cotter Flats, Rotten Swamp and Nursery Swamp. The fate of the corroboree frog, already endangered, is of great concern.

The fires of early January were not very intense but the firestorm of

continued on page 5

Bush fire damage in Namadgi

The following summary of bush fire damage in Namadgi National Park was provided by the Environment ACT Recovery Team on February 17, 2003.

The fires have burnt out approximately 95 per cent of Namadgi (95 000ha of 106 000ha). The only unburnt area is a strip between Naas Creek/River and the border inclusive of Sentry Box Hill through to Mt Clear.

Low intensity fires are still burning on the ridgeline between the Gudgenby Valley and Naas Creek (Boboyan) Valley, however these are within containment lines and subject to a major deterioration in weather conditions are expected to burn themselves out in the near future.

The following historic sites within Namadgi have been CONFIRMED LOST:

Franklin Chalet
Slalom Hut, Mt Franklin
Arboreta—Stockyard Creek,
Snowgum, Picadilly (severely
damaged). Reids Pinch and
Blundells. Blue Range has not
been inspected directly but lies
within a heavily burnt out area.
Bendora Dam Barracks/office
Bendora Explosives Store
Tennent Homestead.

The following historic sites across Namadgi have been ASCERTAINED AS SAVED:

Bendora Hut & Arboretum
Pryors Hut & Scots Pine plot, Mt
Gingera
Orroral Homestead & Shearing
Shed

Gudgenby Homestead & the
Hudson Ready-Cut House
Brandy Flat Hut
Rendezvous Creek Hut, Gudgenby
Frank & Jacks Hut, Gudgenby
Hospital Creek Hut, Gudgenby
Horse Gully Hut, Naas River
Demanding Hut, Naas River
All structures south of Naas
Creek—Left Hand Creek—Mt Clear
Summit including Lutons,
Waterhole, Westermans and
Brayshaws Huts

The condition of Max & Berts Hut, Booth Range is unknown but it is believed to have had a containment line put around it earlier.

The condition of facilities across Namadgi, Tidbinbilla and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor is as follows:

CONFIRMED LOST or badly damaged:

Mt Coree Firetower
Paddys River Slab Building
Bendora Dam Rangers House
(Allan Bendall)
Glendale Rangers House (Amanda
Carey)
Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
Facilities—Education Centre,
Animal House, Wildlife
Enclosures and three staff cottages
(including that of Brett
McNamara)
Rock Valley and Nil Desperandum
pise homesteads, Tidbinbilla
Nature Reserve Cottages adjoining
the Cotter Pumping Station (all but
one)
Cotter Parks Depot (Casuarina
Sands) badly damaged
Cotter Pub and adjoining bridge

Pine Island facilities
Murrays Corner facilities
Kambah Pool facilities—some
damage.

SAVED:

Uriarra Crossing Picnic areas
(damaged)
Cotter Pumping Station (minor
damage)
Casuarina Sands Picnic Area
Cotter (Murrumbidgee River)
Bridge
Cotter Campground
Cotter Reserve Picnic Areas
(damage including loss of
suspension bridge, playground
equipment and at least one WC
block)
Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre and
Depot (minor damage)
Tidbinbilla Deep Space
Communications Complex
C19th Homesteads including
Congwarra, Booroomba, Braeside,
Lambrigg, Lanyon,
Cuppacumbalong
Lanyon & DeSalis Cemeteries
Point Hut Crossing Picnic Area
Mt Tennent Firetower
Cotter Hut, Upper Cotter Valley
Namadgi Campgrounds (Mt Clear,
Orroral, Honeysuckle) degrees of
damage

There are major safety issues from dead and damaged trees overhanging roads throughout the reserves and forestry lands, and the presence of asbestos and arsenic compounds (from burnt treated pine) around damaged sites. Therefore public access is likely to be restricted for some weeks yet.

Fire in the mountains *continued from page 4*

A four-phase plan has been designed for rehabilitation and restoration:

Phase 1—douse fires and reestablish services and facilities (*almost completed*)

Phase 2—Audit and Stabilisation

Phase 3—Consolidation and Repair

Phase 4—Rebuilding – probably from the urban area outwards (*July 2003–2006*)

This plan will depend heavily on adequate resourcing and will have to be supplemented by the assistance of

volunteers from organisations such as ours. Volunteers could be expected to work on such projects as seeding, weeding, hut restoration, removal of hazards to fauna such as partly destroyed fencing and there has been a suggestion that some members would have the skills to undertake ecological monitoring. (*Please contact Kevin McCue if you are able to help in any way*). Former rangers at Namadgi and Tidbinbilla have set a wonderful example in this regard, coming back from their present employment on their

days off to assist with getting Namadgi back to normal.

Both David and Paul were questioned very closely after their presentation. They gave frank and full answers extending our knowledge and appreciation of the severity of the fires. Their obvious concern and dedication as well as their informed optimism that the mountains would recover both in the short and the long run impressed everyone present.

Len Haskew

Brindabellas revisited

Ian Fraser, well-known naturalist, conservationist and broadcaster, has a particular affinity with the Brindabellas. His broadcast, made just after visiting this fire-ravaged area, captured the impact of the devastation with rare force and immediacy. The text, reproduced below with his kind permission, will remain a stark reminder of the reality of January 2003.

Today (3 February) I accompanied Environment ACT officers into the Brindabella section of Namadgi National Park. Our planned trip last Thursday was called off due to the appalling weather conditions. This was the first time anyone had been up there since the fires. I was asked along in order to improve my ability to report accurately to the community (eg, you!), both directly and via the ABC.

A disclaimer to start with. I am very aware of the importance of reporting "objectively" and non-sensationally, but I doubt that I am able to do that. For over 20 years the Brindies and Namadgi have been my "back yard" and my work place. Through the books that I (and of course Marg) wrote about them, and through 18 years of Environment Tours, I think that I know and "feel" the area, especially between Coree and Gingera, better than many. I always felt that one of the more useful things I did with my life was write a report which had a (minor) influence on the inclusion of the northern Brindabellas [in the Namadgi National Park] in 1991. All of this is just to explain that this is very personal to me, and you must take that into account in this report.

As with the Tidbinbilla fire (same fire actually, of course) both the extent and intensity of the blaze are quite shocking.

Today we drove (and walked) along Brindabella Road and Mount Franklin Road to the Ginini Gate, down to Ginini Flat, down to Bendora Dam and out along Warks Road. In all that I would not have seen a square metre of unburnt ground. (Prior to that, too, from the road closure on Cotter Road near Weston to the ranges, everything is scorched.)

That is actually not quite true; the gully across the road from The Boulder on Bendora Road contains a ribbon of tree ferns about a metre wide. And this is really ALL there is left that I saw, though as I shall explain there are variations in the intensity of burning.

There are potential positives. Sections downslope of the Mount Franklin Road between Bulls Head and Aggie Gap, on both sides, have intact green canopy. This suggests some hope for arboreal animals in these areas. I emphasise the "green" because in vast areas dead leaves persist, but leaf fall has begun.

In addition, I saw and heard more bird species (in very low numbers) than I'd have expected in the conditions. In particular, a source of amazement to us all was the number of lyrebirds seen (close to 20 altogether); how the hell (literally!) did they survive? Where? I have to assume that somewhere there are gullies that the fire leapt over. Most of those seen seemed to be foraging in roadside soaks, presumably the only source of ground surface invertebrates? How long will these areas be able to support them? Next most widespread were white-throated treecreepers; against the odds, invertebrates must be surviving in bark crevices. Also more brown falcons than I've seen in Namadgi; I'm aware of their reputation as fire "associates". Also in the high burnt snow gums, gang-gangs, crimson rosellas, spotted quail-thrush, flame robin, striated pardalote, brush cuckoo, kestrel, pair of wedgies, white-browed scrubbie: lower down (including Bendora) pied currawongs, sacred kingfisher, yellow-faced and white-eared honeyeaters, common bronzewing. In each case, one or very few.

Higher up were red-necked wallabies, lower were swampies (ie, black, black-tailed, depending on your origins!). I can't imagine what they've been living on, though along the lower burnt creeks *Carex* (a sedge) is shooting.

Murrumbidgee (at the Cotter): river oaks *Casuarina cunninghamiana* are all burnt; does anyone know of their longer-term fire response? I'd guess that they die, and reseed, but it is a guess.

I am sure that most of the 1939 stands of alpine ash *Eucalyptus delegatensis* will die, and reseed. In some areas (eg, past Bulls Head) many of them will survive. The fate of the regrowth from 1983 is a real worry though; they may well not be able to seed at this age.

We don't know much, I think, about snow gum *Eucalyptus pauciflora* recovery. My guess (again!—this is very frustrating) is that most in the widespread, intensely burnt areas will die. I'm hoping that the largest will have

sufficiently protected underground shoots.

Riverine vegetation along the Cotter River below Bendora Dam: burnt to ground level and to the water line.

Mount Franklin: the Chalet doesn't resemble a burnt building—the closest I can come to it is like a section of a rural rubbish tip. The ancient snow gums are in tatters, some just held up by a ribbon of trunk.

Ginini Flat: one of the worst shocks of the day. The earlier reports are now obsolete; obviously another fire front arrived, or perhaps a smoldering peat fire persisted. Perhaps 25-30 per cent of the swamp vegetation remains in the sections we visited, and saw from the top of Franklin. Of the rest, up to 30cm of sphagnum is burnt. This represents centuries, perhaps a millenium or more, of growth. I don't even want to speculate on the impact of the already greatly diminished corroboree frog population.

Lees Creek area: I had hopes that this lower area (ie, without a fire roaring up to it) may have been spared. Instead it is close to the worst that I saw at Tidbinbilla. In a few places (eg, where Warks Road descends from the west into Bulls Head Creek) there are some shrivelled but intact tree ferns; these will reshoot. Elsewhere though, down Bulls Head Creek, Blundells Creek and Lees Creek, the tree ferns have essentially vaporised and the fishbone fern beds are just blackened stumps. We have little experience of this I think; perhaps there are some records from the Dandenongs from the '39 fires?

Not much more I can add, especially in the way of good news. We must just trust that this must have happened many times before, though not, I think, in European times. It will recover, though I for one will not see it. I am so sorry to be the bearer of such grief; I don't for a moment think that my love for this place is unique.

Now for a valerian and a very large brandy.

Ian Fraser

Mount Franklin Chalet



This early photo of the chalet was taken by Reg Alder during a ski trip from Sydney in 1939, just a year after the chalet was opened. Reg notes that over 60 years the trees have looked substantially the same, particularly the one on the left of the photo.



The photos of the chalet site after the fire were taken on 7 February 2003 by Ian McLeod, an association member, who as a member of the Canberra Alpine Club has been involved with the chalet for many years.



Damage to cultural heritage places in the Brindabella Range

Historian Matthew Higgins who has extensively researched the cultural heritage of the Brindabellas has kindly given permission for this report to be reproduced.

Yesterday, Thursday 13 February 2003, in the company of Namadgi ranger Allan Bendall, I made a field trip along part of the Brindabella Range to gain a better idea of the fires' impact on historic heritage places in this area of Namadgi. The trip was essentially vehicle based, with only relatively short walks being made to sites. More extensive surveys on foot will need to await a later opportunity. The trip was undertaken as a co-operative exercise between the Australian Heritage Commission and Environment ACT.

My observations are as follows:

Arboreta

The Arboreta have been very severely hit. Blundells, one of the best examples, and the best interpreted, is destroyed. Reids Pinch North is destroyed, and Snowgum is destroyed. There may be some surviving trees at Reids Pinch South. There are survivors at Piccadilly Circus, Bendora, and its shelter hut, is known to have survived intact and will obviously be the best Arboretum for future interpretive purposes.

ACT Forests Workers Huts

Condor Camp and Laurel Camp are destroyed. I understand from Allan that Blue Range has survived. All of these camps reflected the past history of working in the ACT pine plantations, when transport difficulties dictated that workers live out in the forest, in comparison with the gradual centralisation of operations to Stromlo.

ACT-NSW Border Survey Marks

The impact on the timber-made border survey marks, and on the hand-inscribed reference trees, has been great. We visited the 11 Mile, 13 Mile, 18 Mile and 19 Mile trees. Only the 11 Mile retains its inscriptions, and is slightly fire damaged. In the case of the others, and all the other general border reference trees that we visited, the surveyors' blaze itself appears to have been an entry point for fire attack as the

blazes were dry, dead timber in the trunk of the tree. In the worst cases (eg 18 Mile), the fire has burnt right through the tree, leaving a hole through and out the other side. The 11 Mile tree was not the best example as it was already damaged when found in 1996, but now it is the only easily accessible mile tree with inscriptions on this section of the border. Although the 19 Mile had lost its inscriptions many years ago to weathering, the blaze was visible prior to the fire and some chisel cuts could be discerned, but it is now just a deep black scarred wound.

The timber survey marks that we visited have nearly all gone. They have been completely burnt out, leaving just a hole in the ground. Included, unfortunately but not surprisingly, is the mark just below Franklin Chalet which was one of the best examples of this type of mark on the Brindabella Range section of the border. The only survivor that we saw was the split, loose mark lying on the ground surface at the south-western corner of the fence around the Mt Ginini air navigation installation. This was a very poor example, but like the 11 Mile, it is now the only one along here.

The rockspits at the marks (naturally, given that they are stone) have survived. The metal and concrete marks that we visited (these were all of the concrete-filled downpipe variety) have all survived, as would be expected.

Mt Franklin Road Survey Trees

We visited both the known standing reference trees associated with the original survey of the Mt Franklin Road in the 1930s. The 7½ Mile Tree just south of Bendora Hill is damaged but is still legible, however damage to this ancient snowgum could see the tree collapse in the not too distant future. The other tree (which from memory was the 9 Mile Tree), located further south, has lost its blaze and inscriptions.

Brumby Yards

Probably the most significant surviving brumby trapyard in the Park was the 1930s/40s yard a little north of Stockyard Gap. Despite the relatively cool fire through here, this yard has been destroyed. The site is identifiable by remnant pieces of

wire around tree trunks, and the 'shadows' of burnt rails on the ground.

The other, better known site, Tom Gregory's wire yard of the 1960s, located just down Harrys Spur from the Ginini summit, has survived. It is damaged (two corner trees have disappeared, the remaining corner trees are damaged, and other posts have burnt bases). The stability of the whole yard is questionable and the yard will require stabilisation; options on this were discussed by Allan and I on site.

The ruin yard a short distance behind Pryors Hut has mostly disappeared, with a handful of charred rails lying on the ground, and some wire nearby. Interestingly, we found a stash of empty beer and other drink bottles, and the one checked was dated 1955—precisely the time the yard was used. So these bottles, previously hidden in the vegetation, are no doubt related to the site (and cast more light on the nature of brumby running trips!).

Spottswoods Hut Ruin

The vestigial ruin of this late 1940s ski hut just west of Stockyard Gap has survived with surprisingly little loss of fabric. Given that there were structural timbers lying on the ground, I thought that the only surviving elements would be the metal ridge-capping and the one or two sheets of corrugated iron. But the small amount of timber, though charred, remains, and in fact the timber base logs for the walls are now more evident than previously.

Mt Franklin Chalet

It is already well known that the Chalet was destroyed, and this is clearly the worst of Namadgi's cultural losses in the fires. Discussions will take place between the Park and stakeholders about what to do with the site, but I would like to suggest at the outset that original fabric be retained at the site for interpretation/commemoration purposes as much as possible. This fabric could include the brick piers and stone woodshed walls which would be left *in situ*, and other items such as the kitchen stove, parts of the brumby tow, and other elements as they are retrieved from the site. Whether the steel ladder (which

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Christmas party

Given the extremely hot weather at the time, it was a select group of members and visitors that enjoyed the NPA's Christmas party at Orroral Valley last December. We settled ourselves at the shaded picnic tables and on the grass at the old tracking station and set up a selection of nibbly—many of the group had brought starters and drinks for sharing.

Eleanor conducted the now traditional auction of miscellaneous articles with her usual panache, realising some remarkable prices for select items, including a prototype camping stove (no doubt by now the subject of a patent application!).

Various luncheon delicacies appeared, including some epicurean barbecues, while chatter continued unabated. A post-prandial excursion was made to the Orroral Homestead to see how it fares since its restoration; some participants travelled in style in their automobiles, while the more plebeian of us ambled off along the track, wondering at the need for the boardwalk sections as everywhere was so dry.

Reg had brought some of the pictures and records of the homestead before, during and after that long drawn-out part of NPA's history. A very entertaining and interesting outing.

The picnic area proved a good place for the gathering and should be kept in mind in years to come.

(It is a relief to note that the homestead has been spared from the devastation of the recent fires. Sadly,

this is not the case for other places which NPA has frequented for its Christmas parties over the years.)

Adrienne Nicholson



Partygoers who visited the Orroral Homestead at the NPA's 2002 Christmas party. Back row (l to r): Adrienne Nicholson, Myrene MacDonald, Allan Bills, Mike Smith, Reg Alder, Norm Morrison, Steven Forst, Clive Hurlstone, Phyl Goddard. Middle row (l to r): Lyndall Young, Sonia Lenz, Max Lawrence, Annette Smith. Front row (l to r): David Kelly, Frank Clements, Judy Kelly, David Large, Fiona MacDonald Brand, Eleanor Stodart, Jenny Morrison, Beverley Hammond.
Photo Kevin McCue

Damage to heritage places in the Brindabellas

continued from page 8

provided access to the wind generator and doubled as a fire escape) could be mounted in the ground to indicate the height of the building might be another idea worth considering. The most pressing issue is dealing with the asbestos risk from the collapsed corrugated fibro roof.

The Austin A40 is almost unscathed and survives as the major intact built element of the Franklin precinct (not including the toilet!). Allan advised that Slalom Hut was destroyed; I believe that it should be left as it is, as a ruin which can be visited in the future as part of the precinct. Loose iron, etc could be secured to the ground if there is a proven public safety risk.

Given that some sort of installation will be created at the Chalet site, that the ski runs and the A40 survive, and that

the Slalom ruin will remain, the Wombat Walk could be re-instituted so that walkers can experience the precinct via a loop track as before. Of course this idea would only be viable if the question of danger from damaged trees along the Walk was resolved. It is good to hear that the Canberra Alpine Club is already negotiating with the ACT Heritage Unit about using an already-awarded grant intended for re-stumping, for interpretative purposes instead.

Pryors Hut

As has been reported, Pryors was saved through a combination of a bulldozer break and particularly, backburning by Parks and volunteer firefighters. The stand of Scots Pine adjacent to the hut is also undamaged.

Bendora Dam Precinct

In addition to Allan's ranger house, the former Dam Site Office and the weatherboard residence were also destroyed. This means that apart from the toilet block which is understood to be part of the original Amenities Block, there are now no surviving buildings from the Bendora Dam Construction Camp. One element of the Site Office which was of particular interest was the collection of drill core samples, stored in timber trays under the building, which were from the exploratory drilling phase prior to construction of the dam. These cores are now broken and scattered along the site.

Matthew Higgins

Siesta, smoke and ...

January in 2001 and 2002 had been hot and dry. January 2003 was also hot but even drier, conditions not exactly auspicious for bushwalking. Our walk had been informally arranged at the NPA Christmas party in the shade of an oak tree which provided surprisingly cool shelter at the Orroral picnic site. We had six takers: Annette and Mike Smith, Max Lawrence, Ross Walker, Judith Webster and Muriel Edwards. Dave Kelly had planned the route from Snakey Plain fire trail to Wheelers Hut, on to the Tooma River and Pretty Plains Hut, then to near Grey Mare Hut, up to Jagungal and out to Round Mountain via Farm House Ridge fire trail between January 7 and 12.

On January 6 at the rude hour of 10.30 pm, Dave tapped into the Bureau of Meteorology's website, then rang the group to warn of a total fire ban for the next 24 hours in the South West Slopes district. He asked people to bring non-cook dinners for the first two nights.

At Adaminaby, we met the rest of the party, then headed for the start of the Snakey Plain fire trail. Although it seemed hotter than the 25 degrees that had been forecast as Cabramurra's maximum, it was pleasant to walk in the shade of the majestic alpine ash and gum trees festooned with ribbons of bark. A treecreeper hopped and tapped its way up a huge bole. Pink trigger plants and yellow pea flowers dotted the side of the undulating fire trail.

About half way along to Wheelers Hut we came to a saddle and open area with a sea of white flowered bushes, probably *Epacris*, and views of forested hills. At about 4.00 pm we descended to a creek and trugged up the incline to Wheelers, a lovely old timber hut built in the early 1900s with a very tranquil air and a welcoming verandah. It was clean and tidy inside and out, with a bunch of everlasting hanging near the front door.

Oh for a cuppa. Quelling those thoughts, we pitched our tents and gathered water from the nearby creek. After disturbing a long black snake in the grass near the creek, Max returned to his tent "walking on air" as he put it. I spotted a red breasted robin and a few blue wrens flitting about.

We had all felt the effects of the heat and sat back on the verandah in the cool evening air for our meal with a distant view of Jagungal and Round Mountain bathed in purplish light. No noisy choofers was an additional boon.



Muriel Edwards, Judith Webster, Annette and Mike Smith, Ross Walker and David Kelly in front of Pretty Plains Hut ("we did not collect the firewood!").

Photo Judy Kelly

Next morning we set off promptly at 8.00 am, hoping to avoid a hot walk over Pretty Plains. The cool change had come in with lower temperatures and cloud, but as we walked, conditions became muggy.

We set off north-east, past the old Toolong gold diggings, crossed the creek, then ascended a scrubby ridge where we caught our breath before wading through bushes and descending in a south-easterly direction to the Tooma River where Mike had spotted a platypus on a previous walk. We treated ourselves to another rest. Thunder reminded us that a storm was brewing and we finally hit the track heading south to Pretty Plains Hut. Nearby, on a snowgrass flat near the Tooma River, we saw a tent with two campers.

It had been a good 30 years since I'd walked the track which had become very well defined and easy to follow. Feral pigs had dug up patches of snow grass and we saw horse droppings, presumably feral, because recreational horse riding is not allowed in the Jagungal Wilderness where we were walking. The earth along the track seemed particularly dry and dusty.

Stopping for a break near a fence line, we saw the remains of Pugilistic Hut, reduced to wooden supports and part of a galvanised iron roof.

About half way to Pretty Plains Hut, we met a father and his two sons, whom Judith knew from near Bowral. They

were going to fish at the Tooma River before heading to Wheelers Hut.

Lightning strikes to the south were splitting the sky as we sat on a rocky knoll peering down to where we could see Pretty Plains Hut poking out from the trees. We reached the mellow old log hut at about 1.00 pm, pitched our tents and had lunch inside the hut while wind, thunder and lightning and a splatter of rain performed an erratic symphony.

Very little had changed since I'd last seen the hut except for one thing: the hut's chimney had been badly damaged in May when a party had woken up at 2.00 am to realise the chimney was on fire! I enjoyed sitting in the log and hessian chair, good old bush furniture that Joliffe used to portray in his Saltbush Bill cartoons. Ancient skis, a tennis racket and two enamel basins hung from the walls; the hi-tech world of computers and answering machines seemed far away.

After lunch, we dispersed to snooze, wash or rearrange packs. A helicopter flew overhead at a fairly high altitude from north to south. All of a sudden, the usually imperturbable Max shot out of his tent, saying "I can smell smoke!"

Max hurried up the hill behind the hut but could see nothing because of the trees. He and Ross, both conditioned by country living in Yass, were on their mettle and hurried off to view the fires from a vantage point along the track. When they returned, their report caused concern. They'd seen four fires to the west, south-west and north-west, and a spot fire in an area through which we'd walked.

... a quick escape from Pretty Plains

They'd taken compass bearings and had started to pinpoint the fires on the map inside the hut when we heard the sound of a helicopter flying low down the valley. It was about 5.30 pm. We ran outside and watched the helicopter circle and come down to land. The pilot stayed at the controls while a tall figure in orange overalls extricated himself and came towards us.

Ian Dicker, Chief Fire Officer for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, told us we'd have to leave straightaway. A fire 4 1/2 kilometres to the west was moving in our direction. He gave us two options: walk out along a route that he indicated on a map, or else we could be helicoptered out in twos and threes.

The second seemed the better option. Because the chopper had a full fuel load, only two passengers plus their rucksacks were to go first. Annette and I were candidates. I raced into the hut, packed my rucksack in minutes and headed for the helicopter. We clambered aboard, strapped ourselves in, were shown how to open the door in an emergency and how to communicate with the crew using an awkward toggle that resembled an old-fashioned light switch. We were also instructed not to leave or approach the helicopter from the rear. Rather like a horse.

We were off. From behind we could see Ian Dicker's helmet with his name and blood group but the pilot, Ian Harris, had no such identification. We headed south, and banked over Pretty Plains, trees looking green and the plains reasonably healthy.

Then we were over patches of smoke which were building up with the help of wind. I caught a brief glimpse of flames. The Tooma River winked from below but there was no sign of the tent and two campers. Tooma Dam shimmered briefly. The helicopter tilted and turned a tight circle, making me feel queasy.

I gave directions for where the car was parked and we landed 100m away on a grassy patch next to the road after the crew checked that there were no power lines in the vicinity. The flight had taken about 10 minutes. We thanked the two Ians who set off to ferry the rest of the party out and to locate the three men at Wheelers Hut. For the entire saga, they were patient, professional and good humoured and had been quick off the mark in locating and evacuating us.

Annette had the presence of mind to sign us off in the log book at the start of Snakey Plain trail before we returned to photograph the rest of the party's return.

We were all back together at 6.30 pm. The tragic realisation of what has happened is seeping through my mind now but will not completely sink in until I see the devastation in real life and that is something I'd like to delay for as long as possible.

germination and growth. If wildfires occur more frequently because of climate change, ecosystems as we know them will be destroyed, or will change dramatically, with untold consequences on certain species of plants and fauna that are already close to extinction, such



Ross Walker and Mike Smith leaving the helicopter near the road south of Tooma Dam, 8 January 2003. Photo Max Lawrence

After an unsuccessful attempt to have dinner at the Adaminaby Bowling Club, Max and his passengers headed for Canberra while the Kelly car stayed in Adaminaby where we experienced the strange nuances of a small country town facing a few night time dramas.

Most people would be familiar with the aftermath of the Kosciuszko fires which continued and gathered strength on January 8. Roughly half of Kosciuszko National Park has been burnt and the lovely old Pretty Plains hut went. NPWS staff bombarded the hut with flame retardant but a stray ember slipped in and the hut caught fire. Wheelers, so far, is safe.

The beautiful forest along the Snakey Plain fire trail has probably been burnt along with subalpine areas. The alpine areas are relatively unscathed; some parts, relative to altitude, have been burnt in small mosaics. The higher altitudes were less affected than the lower alpine areas. The Main Range is largely unaffected.

Although fire is part of the Australian bush life cycle, it is very hard to face such large-scale devastation. Vegetation regrows, but species like the alpine ash need a high intensity fire just once in their life cycle, at a frequency of about 100-150 years for seed

as the corroboree frog.

Staff with both NPWS and Environment ACT have been under enormous pressure during January with several ACT staff losing their houses in fire. As the backlash against conservationists grows, Ministers with environment portfolios and Parks staff will come under increasing pressure to allow logging, grazing and more fuel hazard reduction to keep ground vegetation down.

For those who want to find out about burning off, the chapter on fire management in the *Independent Scientific Committee Interim Report*, written by Bruce Leaver, Environment Australia, with input from Roger Good from NPWS, provides an excellent summary of the complex variables that need to be considered in burning off.

If burning off is too frequent or intense, removal of vegetation cover can lead to soil erosion and siltation of watercourses. Both Kosciuszko and Namadgi include vital water catchment areas. It can also result in regrowth that is more of a fire hazard than before.

Although the Interim Report was written for the new KNP Plan of

continued on page 12

A constitutional matter—NPA ACT members to vote

Notice is given that at the general meeting of the National Parks Association of the ACT inc. to be held on 15 May 2003 the following special resolution will be put to the meeting for a vote:

That this general meeting of the National Parks Association of the ACT inc. nominates the National Parks Association of NSW inc. to be the organization to which the assets of the Association should be transferred in the event of the dissolution of the Association.

Reasons for the special resolution.

A. Under Section 42 (Surplus Property) of the NPA ACT Constitution there is the requirement that:

- (1) *At the first general meeting of the association, the association shall pass a special resolution nominating*
 - (a) *another association for the purpose of paragraph 92(1)(a) of the Act; or*
 - (b) *a fund, authority or institution for the purpose of paragraph 92(1)(b) of the Act,**in which it is to vest its surplus property in the event of the dissolution or winding up of the association..*
- (2) *An association nominated under paragraph (1)(a) must fulfil the requirements specified in subsection 92(2) of the Act.*

(The Act referred to above is the *Associations Incorporation ACT, 1991*)

B. The Association has not yet passed a special resolution as required by the constitution.

The NPA ACT Committee recommends a vote in favour of the special resolution.

Siesta, smoke and a quick escape ... *continued from page 11*

Management, information can be extrapolated and comparisons can be made with the situation in Namadgi. The

report can be accessed on www.npws.nsw.gov.au or may be viewed at a public library. For more information, phone Mark Adams, NPWS, on 6124 9001.

Huts are a contentious issue.

The current Plan of Management for KNP states in section 4.4 that historic huts, like Wheelers and Pretty Plains "would be replaced if it can be demonstrated that it is essential for safety, or that full restoration (as distinct from reconstruction) of historic values is feasible".

NPA(NSW) has a huts policy which says that huts, once destroyed, should not be replaced. NPA(ACT) does not have a set of policies and needs to consider its stand on this

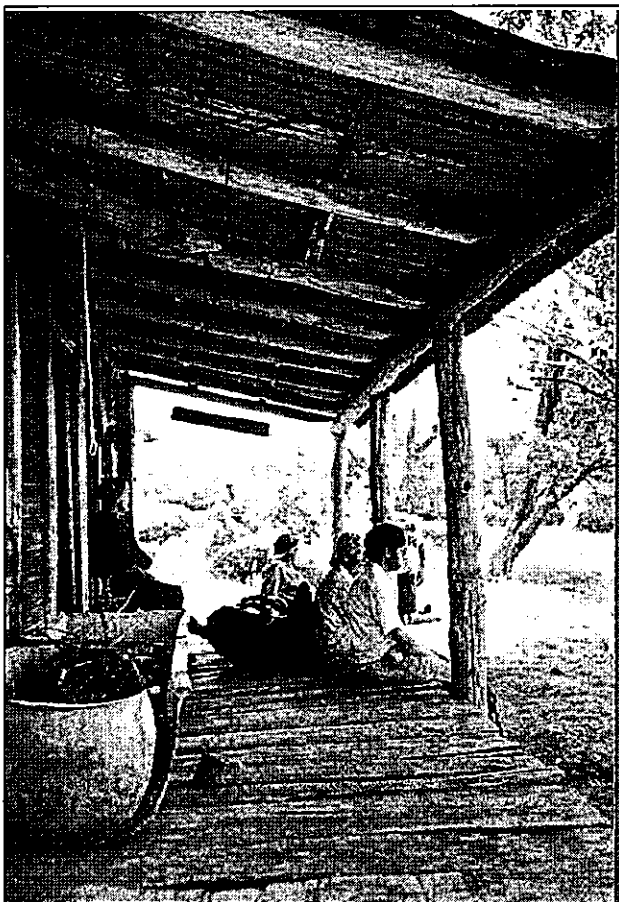
issue. Should historical huts that have been burnt down be replaced? If so, what sort of structure should be built? A basic survival shelter? Something else?.

Bushwalkers are expected, quite rightly, to be self-reliant. Unfortunately, there are times when circumstances and events can overtake the most self-reliant of walkers. I was very glad to be whisked out of the fire zone.

Fatigue and smoke inhalation are not a good combination, but the three stalwarts at Wheelers Hut chose to walk out via Patons which subsequently burnt down. They reached their car at 9.00 pm and drove to Bowral, collecting a 'roo along the way.

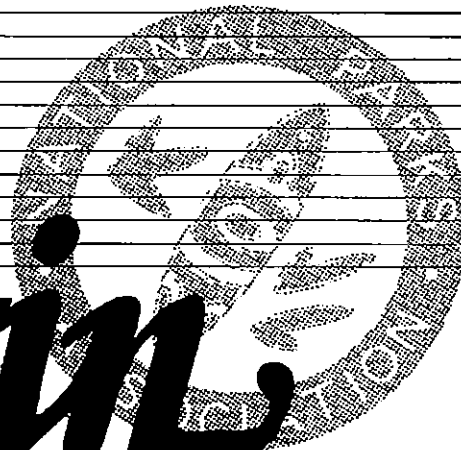
One thing is certain. Those interested in conservation and protection of the environment, need to read about fire management, be well informed, prepared to speak out and to support staff from the environment agencies who are already under siege. NPA (ACT) members will need to be proactive and support their new management committee as well as giving input to the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board.

Judy Kelly



Dave Kelly, Judith Webster, Mike Smith and Ross Walker relaxing on the verandah of Wheelers Hut on 7 January. Photo Max Lawrence

NPA Bulletin



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED

NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

Outings Guide

Walk grading

Distance grading (per day)

- 1 —up to 10 km
- 2 —10 km to 15 km
- 3 —15 km to 20 km
- 4 —above 20 km

Terrain grading

- A —Road, firetrail track
- B —Open forest
- C —Light scrub
- D —Patches of thick scrub, regrowth
- E —Rock scrambling
- F —Exploratory

Day walks Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.

Pack walks Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER BY PRIOR WEDNESDAY OR AS INDICATED IN THE PROGRAM.

Car camps Facilities often limited or non-existent. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. BOOK EARLY WITH LEADER.

Other activities include nature rambles and environmental and field guide studies.

March–June 2003

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.

15-17 March, long weekend packwalk
Quilty's Mountain circumnavigation
Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 3A, 2B, 2A
Map: CMW Budawang's
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 pack walk
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 day walk
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 day walk
Leader: Ken Free
Phone: 6295 8894

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

29 March, Saturday day walk
Corn Trail
Leader: Col McAllister
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.

6 April, Sunday day walk
Coolleman Ridge
Leader: Brian Slee
Grading: 3 A/B (fire damaged)
Map: Canberra Street Directory
Phone: 6281 0719 (h)

Park vehicles at Oakey Hill Reservoir (use access gate on Heysen St, Lyons; if locked, meet at corner of Heysen and Devonport Streets) and proceed south through Canberra Nature Park to Mt Taylor for morning tea. Descend west and after passing through burnt areas of north Kambah, cross Tuggeranong Parkway and climb Mt Arawang. Follow Coolleman Ridge north-west, diverging at various points to observe the impact of the firestorm on Chapman. After lunch, descend to Kathner St and walk west of Rivett, then around and through Duffy. Stop at Holder mini-mart for refreshments before returning to vehicles via Weston. Bring fire theories but expect each to be challenged by what is observed. Drive 0km, no car costs.

8-10 April, 3-weekdays pack walk
Mt Clear Campground to Caloola Farm
Leader: David Large
Grading: 2A/B
Map: Colinton, Michelago 1:25 000
Phone: 6291 4830

A three day mid-week walk during the Heritage Festival, from Mt Clear Campground to Caloola Farm along the Naas Valley. An easy walk mainly on 4WD track and some open country. We will visit a number of huts, ruins, a grave and site of an early settlement on Reedy Creek. There are seven creek crossings on day three so sandals/sneakers are advised. Meet at Caloola Farm and bus to start of walk. Transport cost TBA (bus \$5).

12 April, 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.

13 April, Sunday day walk
Googong Reservoir/Compo Canyon
Leader: Mike Smith
Grading: 2A/C
Map: Captains Flat 1:25 000
Phone: 6286 2984 (h)
Meet at Canberra Railway Station, Kingston, at 8.30am. A walk from the carpark at the southern end of Googong Reservoir past London Bridge limestone arch, old London Bridge homestead, Curley Falls and then wade across the Queanbeyan River to Compo Canyon. Return to cars by similar route. Old footwear for crossing the river would be advisable. Drive 50km, \$15 per car.

20 April, Easter Sunday day walk
Mt Tumanang
Leader: Pat Miethke
Grading: 2D
Map: Tinderry and Jerangle 1:25 000, or ACT 1:100 000
Phone: 6241 2798 (evenings)

I found the name Mt Tumanang, 4835 feet, on a map which is so old that Woden is shown as a homestead quite a distance from Canberra. Mt Tumanang is a little east of the Tinderries and a little south of Captains' Flat, and according to the map is above the snowline. More recent maps show the contours are extremely close together on its western face, so it could be worth a

visit to its long summit ridge. Expect anything, from open ridges to impenetrable jungle and long-lost tribes, though if all else fails there is a fire trail up its eastern side. Meet in the car park at Canberra Railway Station, Kingston at 7.45am. Drive 160km, \$48 per car.

23 April, Wednesday day walk

Sculpture stroll, Canberra

Leader: Col McAlister

Grading: 1A

Map: Canberra Street Directory

Phone: 6288 4171

Enjoy autumn colours as we stroll through some of the many sculptures in the Parliamentary Triangle, Anzac Parade and Civic. Meet in the National Library car park at 9.00am. 0km, \$0.

25–28 April, long weekend car camp

Yerranderie

Leader: Max Lawrence

Grading: Options range from short and easy to long and hard

Map: Yerranderie 1:25 000, and

Burraborang 1: 100 000

Phone: 6288 1370

Email: mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

Yerranderie is an old silver mining town buried deep in the Blue Mountains and these days is only accessible via a long and slow, but not unusually difficult, 4WD track from Oberon. The scenery is spectacular, the history fascinating and the choices of full and half day walks endless. Some of the places we might visit include Yerranderie Peak, Byrnes Gap and the Axeheads; perhaps the Kowmung or Wollondilly Rivers, or Colong Caves. There's also heaps of history to discover in short walks around the old town itself and the mines thereabouts. Something for everyone. We'll be camping in "Government Town" where facilities are free and basic. Those wanting lodge or cabin accommodation, or hot showers, may book in at "Private Town" but they'll need to get in early. Numbers will depend on how many 4WDs we can muster, so leader would appreciate offers of cars and seats ASAP. Vacancies will be filled on a "first in, best dressed" basis, so get in early. Drive 500km, \$150 per car.

30 April, Wednesday day walk

Leader: Gerry Jacobson

Phone: 6281 3850

Second mid-week walk this April.

Phone leader for details, to be determined near the date.

4 May, Sunday day walk

Mt Morgan

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading 3A/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

Phone: 6231 9186

A chance to see fabulous views, and some of the fire damage from one of the most spectacular mountain tops in the region, including over much of the KNP and Namadgi National Park. We climb up the Lone Pine trail before turning left, towards the summit at some high alpine frosty hollows. We tour the many view spots on the summit for a view of the things that matter to us. The climb of nearly 700 metres is steepish in parts, but is mainly on track and no serious bush bashing is involved. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 7.30am for a fabulous day. Drive 210km, \$70 per car

6–14 May, packwalk

Hume and Hovell Track

Leader: David Large

Grading: 3/4A

Map: Various and Harry Hill

Guidebook

Phone: 6291 4830

A seven/eight day walk on the southern portion of the H&H Track from Tumbarumba to Albury. Possible re-supply and rest day at mid-point (Lankey's Creek). An opportunity to walk the unfrequented section of the track. I intend to use public transport (CountryLink), approximate cost \$50 for seniors and juniors who take 14-day advance bookings. Expressions of interest by 17 April please.

10 May, 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.

17–18 May, weekend pack walk

Mount Kelly

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Grading: 3 B/D/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000;

Yaouk 1:25 000

Phone: 6254 3094

A walk in Namadgi National Park, starting at Boboyan Pines car park. The plan is to set up camp in a frost hollow below Bogong Gap and then climb Mt Kelly. If time permits we may also climb Mt Burbidge. Mostly off tracks and a climb on the first day of over 800 metres. Contact leader by Wednesday 14 May for more details. Drive 140kms, \$42 per car.

24 May, Saturday day walk

The Long Flat

Leader: Martin Chalk

Grading: 3A/B

Map: Colinton, Bredbo 1:25 000

Phone: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502 (h)

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.00am. The walk will start at the Mount Clear camp ground. We will travel south along Grassy Creek to the NSW border, then follow it to the most southerly point of the ACT. The return will be along the peaceful length of the Long Flat and then either along the bush track back to Grassy Creek, or via Chalker's Chimney to the Horse Gully Hut road (depending on interest). This walk guarantees secluded valleys, open forests, history and a dose of heavy breathing. Drive 160km, \$48 per car.

28 May, Wednesday day walk

Leader: Rob Forster

Phone: 6249 8546

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

1 June, Sunday day walk

Mt Budawang

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 1A

Map: Braidwood 1:25 000

Phone: 6281 0719 (h)

Depart Canberra Railway Station carpark, Kingston at 8.30am. Drive through Braidwood and Mongarlow to park vehicles at the intersection of Budawang and Mt Budawang Roads.

Follow the latter to the base of the mountain, then climb part way up via an old overgrown road, then fire trail, to the fire tower on Mt Budawang. Fine views of the higher peaks of Budawang National Park. After lunch, return to vehicles via fire trail. Afternoon tea in Braidwood. An easy walk, designed to warm up a short winter's day. Drive 200km, \$60 per car.

14 June, Saturday work party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group
Phone: Eleanor Stodart (6281 5004),
or Syd Comfort (6286 2578)
Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre Tharwa at 9.15am, or Yankee Hat carpark at 10.00am. Weeding, wilding removal or other work for rehabilitation of the Boboyan pines area. Tools will be provided.

25 June, Wednesday day walk
Black Mountain and National Botanic Gardens
Leader: Col McAlister
Grading: 1A
Map: Canberra Street Directory
Phone: 6288 4171
Enjoy the cooler time of year with a climb up Black Mountain from Rani Road and then to the Botanic Gardens for lunch. Return much the same way. Meet at Rani Road at 9.00am. 0km, \$0

Please supply email addresses for

Work Parties in the park

The NPA will be conducting a number of work parties to restore, revegetate and rehabilitate Namadgi National Park. I expect this work to start in earnest in June. It would be helpful if members wishing to help could forward their email addresses to the NPA office at npaact@bigpond.com so they can be contacted as dates are settled.

Expressions of interest called.

I propose to book the Hostel at Bundanoon for two days in June or July. Could you advise me if you would like to take part in a number of day walks in Morton National Park, and your preference for a weekend or weekdays.
David Large, 6291 4830

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group (GBRG) work parties (which included a number of NPA members) were able to go into the Gudgenby area on Thursday February 6th and on the following Sunday to seed some recently burnt areas. The work was concentrated on the west side of the old Boboyan Road between the Yankee Hat carpark and the turn-off to Frank and Jacks Hut where pines that had been felled some time ago but not burnt, were burnt during the bushfires. Germination is assisted by seeding into fresh ash so this opportunity was taken to broadcast a mix of acacia and eucalypt seeds and sand giving preference to ash beds protected by charred logs.

Parks staff were on hand to bring in the seed and sand and distribute the mix for volunteers to broadcast. We were relieved to see that they had also towed in our faithful tool trailer which apparently had had a rough time when the fire threatened the Glendale work depot where it was parked, but in the event had escaped with only a damaged jockey wheel.

The Yankee Hat and Gudgenby areas appeared to have escaped the worst of the fires although some damage had been sustained mainly in scattered patches. The parts of the regeneration



Ranger Anna Farnham briefs the GBRG on the extent of the Namadgi fires prior to commencing reseeded. Photos this page Reg Alder

area that we could see (we did not enter the Hospital Creek area) were substantially intact and the Olympic Landcare planting had not, as previously thought, been burnt.

Within the remaining pine plantation there were only patches of burnt trees. Much of the regeneration area looked to be growing better than could be expected given the seasonal conditions.

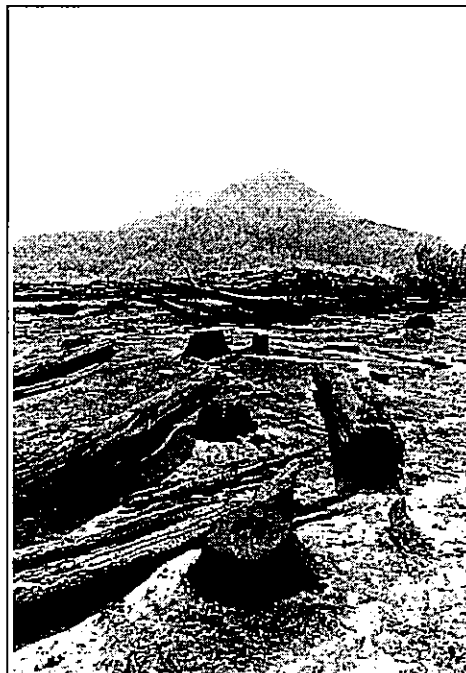
If the regeneration area appeared in fair shape, the same could not be said of much of the park we passed through on the drive out and we had stark images of the fate dealt out to other areas.

Reg Alder has taken the photos on this page.

Syd Comfort



The fire god took notice of the "No Fires" sign and Frank and Jacks Hut escaped unscathed.



Fire damage and reseeded ground in the Gudgenby Valley.



Eleanor Stodart casting the sand/seed mix. The pines in the background were not burnt, except in isolated patches.

Joint Management Arrangements for Namadgi National Park

An edited version of a paper presented at the Celebrating Mountains Conference, held at Jindabyne, 25-28 November 2002, by Matilda House—Interim Namadgi Advisory Board (Aboriginal Joint Chair), and Dr Maxine Cooper—Environment ACT (Executive Director)
Author: Terence Uren—Environment ACT (Coordinator, Interim Namadgi Advisory Board)

Abstract

In April 2001, Namadgi National Park became the first of Australia's alpine national parks to be subject to joint management arrangements, following the endorsement of an agreement between the ACT Government and a number of local Aboriginal groups. The agreement provides for the granting of a Namadgi Special Aboriginal Lease and for the participation of the Ngunnawal community in the management of the park.

The paper considers the progress that has been made to date in the implementation of joint management and considers the prospects for effective joint management in the future.

Joint Management Arrangements for Namadgi National Park

Aboriginal Australians have had an association over many thousands of years with the region around and including what is now known as the Australian Capital Territory. Since colonisation of the region, this association has been constrained, to the detriment of Aboriginal people.

In the spirit of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, the Australian Capital Territory Government has entered into an Agreement with members of the Ngunnawal Aboriginal community that provides for joint management of Namadgi National Park by the parties to the Agreement.

Under the Agreement which was signed on 30 April 2001, the Ngunnawal community has been offered a Special Aboriginal Lease over Namadgi National Park. Negotiations on the detailed terms and conditions and the grant of the Special Aboriginal Lease are dependent

on the resolution of a native title claim over the Territory that is currently before the Federal Court. The claim is by a group that has declined an invitation to be a party to the Agreement.

The parties to the Agreement have agreed on interim arrangements that apply until the native title claim is withdrawn or determined. Under these interim arrangements, the Aboriginal parties to the Agreement:

- have been acknowledged as people with an historical association with the area that is now Namadgi National Park;
- have the right to participate in the management of Namadgi;
- have the right to be consulted on specific regional cultural issues; and
- have the right to be consulted on the development of any legislation that will impact on Namadgi National Park.

Interim Namadgi Advisory Board

The most important element of the interim arrangements has been the setting up of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board. The Board consists of five Aboriginal and five non-Aboriginal members¹. The role of the board is to provide advice to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna:

- in the preparation of a new draft Plan of Management for Namadgi National Park
- in relation to consent decisions by the Conservator made in accordance with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act 1980
- at the request of the Conservator, in relation to emerging and current issues related to the management and protection of Namadgi National Park.

The board also provides a forum for its Aboriginal members to raise issues of interest and concern to the Ngunnawal community that they believe may be able to be addressed through joint management.

In preparing advice for the Conservator, board members are expected to achieve consensus on the issues being addressed. In the event that the board cannot reach agreement, the views of each member would be set out separately. To date, consensus has been

reached on all issues addressed by the board.

Participation in the Draft Plan of Management for Namadgi National Park

The board's primary task is to work with Environment ACT on the preparation of a new plan of management for Namadgi National Park. The plan will replace the existing 1986 Plan of Management.

In April 2002, the board released a discussion paper that addressed the park's values and sought community views on the relative importance of these values and on key issues that need to be addressed in the new plan. Some seventy community submissions were received in response to the discussion paper. The board has subsequently considered issues raised in the submissions with a view to facilitating public workshops on issues identified in the submissions as being of most interest or most likely to lead to conflict between park users. The board is expecting to release a draft plan for community comment in mid-2003.

Ngunnawal culture— acknowledgment, respect and celebration

Environment ACT has taken the view that for joint management to be successful, it must involve not only the exercise by the parties of rights set down in the Agreement but also the acknowledgment, respect and celebration of Ngunnawal culture.

Non-Aboriginal board members and Environment ACT staff who work with the board have all undertaken intensive Cross Cultural Awareness Training that gives them a better understanding of Aboriginal history and heritage.

Environment ACT has replaced all of Namadgi's entry and interpretative signage with new signage that properly acknowledges the long association of Aboriginal people with the area that is now national park. The project has involved close consultation with the Ngunnawal community, the Ngunnawal Language Centre and local Ngunnawal artists.

Joint management has also resulted in an increased emphasis on Aboriginal culture in Environment ACT's activity programs. Aboriginal musicians, dancers, artists, crafts practitioners and

story tellers actively participate in regular public events held at Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and in one-off celebrations such as the Festival of the Bogong and the ACT Mountain Challenge. Ngunnawal presenters regularly run ranger guided activities and school holiday programs based around aspects of their culture and heritage.

Economic benefits of joint management

The grant of the Namadgi Special Aboriginal Lease will not confer or create any lease or licence within the meaning of the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* and there will be no payment of rent to the leaseholders.

However, the ACT Government is committed to provide opportunities for the Ngunnawal community to gain economic benefit from joint management.

Aboriginal members of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board receive sitting fees at a level determined by the ACT Remuneration Tribunal.

An Aboriginal cultural heritage specialist has been recruited to take responsibility for Environment ACT's interpretation and education programs, for the proper integration of cultural heritage and land management practices and for developing initiatives for employment and work experience for Aboriginal people.

A number of young Aboriginal people have been recruited to work as Trainee Rangers or Park Workers or in Environment ACT's Visitor Information Centres.

Environment ACT has provided part time employment to local Aboriginal people to assist with the running of ranger guided and schools activities and developed a program that will provide young Aboriginal people with training to allow them to assist with these activities.

Environment ACT has also set up a volunteer program that will allow young Aboriginal people to gain work experience through participation in park care activities. The program's first project is the upgrade of a walking track to an Aboriginal rock shelter in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve with similar projects to follow in Namadgi National Park. The projects are being funded through an ACT Government Community Development Program.

Aboriginal board members are also keen to assist the local Aboriginal community to gain economic benefit in ways other than through permanent or

contract employment within Environment ACT.

Companies bidding for contract work in Namadgi National Park are now required to include with their tenders details of the extent to which they employ Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal consultancy firms with the necessary skills are invited to submit proposals for available consultancy work. Ngangaana Wiradjuri has successfully bid for work under these arrangements and Environment ACT is currently finalising the appointment of an Aboriginal facilitator to conduct public workshops on recreation, pest plants and animals and fire management as part of the development of the new Namadgi draft Plan of Management.

Aboriginal board members and Environment ACT are currently looking at the merits of providing assistance to the Ngunnawal community to set up a small business that could tender for some of the contract work in Namadgi that is available on an annual basis, such as weed and feral animal control.

Tentative steps have been taken to determine whether or not there might be financially viable opportunities for the community to become more actively involved in Aboriginal cultural tourism, nature based tourism and food tourism.

Implementation of joint management arrangements

Joint management is working for Namadgi National Park and some significant achievements have been made during the eighteen months since the Agreement was signed. It will, however, take a number of years for joint management to be fully effective.

Namadgi differs from many other jointly managed national parks in that the association of the Aboriginal community with the area that is now the park has been so constrained since colonisation that much of the community's traditional knowledge of this area has been fragmented. As a result, there is much to be done to restore "connection to country" and to transfer to the community information held by Environment ACT about the community's sites and places.

There are still tensions between the preoccupation of non-Aboriginal land managers with decision making, project schedules and output reporting and the desire of the Aboriginal board members to take the time needed to consult with their community so that decisions made are properly informed. At times, the Ngunnawal community rightly complains about feeling excluded because of the use by non-Aboriginal

people of technical language, jargon and acronyms.

The inability to progress negotiations on the permanent joint management arrangements because of the unresolved native title claim over Namadgi is of concern to the Ngunnawal community as is the lack of a statutory basis for these arrangements.

At a philosophical level, cultural differences can give rise to conflicting viewpoints that are not always easy to reconcile. For example, the Board is currently debating options for either removing or redefining the term "wilderness" in the new Namadgi draft plan of management. Many local Aboriginal people take offence at the use of a term that makes invisible the occupation and settlement of Namadgi by their ancestors. The difficulty for the Board is how best to address this issue whilst giving proper recognition to the energy invested by conservation groups in lobbying for declaration of wilderness areas over a long period of time.

The understandable focus of the Aboriginal board members on improving social and economic outcomes for their community means that they are not always able to devote as much attention to cultural aspects of joint management as they would like. Their available energies are, at times, diverted to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage in the fields of health, housing, education and justice. As leaders of their community, they are in great demand for service on other ACT Government representative bodies.

The success of joint management to date is founded on the high level of trust and goodwill that has been built up between the parties to the Agreement. With a number of key projects completed or underway, the Aboriginal board members have begun to take a more strategic view of what they would like to achieve from joint management in the longer term.

Their goal remains to use joint management as a mechanism for improving social and economic outcomes for their community in a way that does not conflict with the values for which Namadgi National Park is treasured. They believe that economic security is critical to the future of their community and that, without this, the community will be less inclined to engage fully with Environment ACT on the joint management of Namadgi National Park.

The first steps taken in support of this goal have been modest but significant. The view of the Aboriginal board members is that joint management can be a strong unifying force for their community. They believe that it is now appropriate for joint management to be

continued on page 20

PARKWATCH

NSW Wilderness Declarations

The NSW Government has recently declared as wilderness an additional 274 000ha of land in Northern and Southern NSW, including 123 000ha within our part of the world.

The new wilderness areas of most interest to us are:

Morton-Budawang (23 000ha)

Additions to the existing Ettrema Wilderness

The Tolwong Road remains open but the 4WD trail from Tolwong to Tolwong Mines via Tryers Ridge is now closed from Wattle Flat. The Cedar Road is closed between Caoura Ridge Fire Trail and Purnoo Lookout. Also closed are the Wombat Hill Lookout Fire Trail from Rebeccas View Fire Trail to Morton Trig and the 4WD trail to the east of Wombat Hill between Griffin Fire Trail and Lake Yarrunga.

Far South Coast (40 000ha)

New Tuross Wilderness (east of Countegany)

New Buckenbowra Wilderness (east of Araluen)

Additions to the existing Woila-Deua Wilderness

The new Tuross Wilderness includes Bumberry Creek and Tuross Gorge below Tuross Falls. The falls are outside the new wilderness area and access to them from the west remains unchanged. Jillicambra Fire Trail is now closed from Conways Gap to its intersection with Green Hills Fire Trail. Green Hills Fire Trail is closed from the park boundary (1km west of Wadbilliga Creek) to Tuross River (4.5km west of Barren Jumbo).

North Kosciuszko-Southwest Slopes (21 000ha)

New Bramina Wilderness (west of Brindabella)

Additions to the existing Bimberi Wilderness, Bogong Peaks Wilderness and Goobarragandra Wilderness

Two fire trails within the Bramina Wilderness are affected by the wilderness declaration—the Cooleman Creek Fire Trail between Rocky Flat and Wombat Ground and the 4WD trail that gives access to Mt Bramina and Half Moon Gap.

Two fire trails within the Goobarragandra Wilderness are affected—Buckleys Fire Trail between Wells Creek and Sawpit Creek and Boundary Road between Broken Cart Fire Trail and Dubbo Creek.

Sketch maps of the new wilderness areas can be found at:

<http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/wildlife/southwildern.htm>

*Canberra Bushwalking Club IT
November, 2002*

Corporate sponsorship helps threatened species

On 21 March 2002, Snowy Hydro presented NSW NPWS in Queanbeyan with a cheque for \$20 000 to aid in the establishment of the captive breeding program for the Corroboree Frog. Last year Snowy Hydro presented NPWS with \$40 000 towards a captive breeding program for the Spotted Tree Frog.

NPWS director southern, Dr Tony Fleming said that captive breeding is expensive and Snowy Hydro's contribution would be extremely helpful in taking on such an ambitious project. 'The bottom line is that the frog needs friends quickly and has found one in Snowy Hydro, which I am delighted to say is making a very generous offer through a substantial financial contribution to the breeding program'.

Experts believe that the plight of the Corroboree Frog has become so dire that a captive breeding program may be the only way of preventing the species from becoming extinct within the next few years. A survey of 40 sites in January 2002 showed a drastic reduction in the population from 200 adult males in 2001 to a record low of 75.

Further funding will also be provided for the Corroboree Frog and the Pygmy Possum through the sale of a new range of 'Corroboree Frog' and 'Pygmy Possum' soft toys, with 100 per cent of the money raised from the sale of these toys going to the preservation of the Corroboree Frog and Pygmy Possum. This initiative is estimated to return an additional income of \$24 000.

Snowy Hydro is pleased to be involved in such initiatives and looks forward to selling as many toys as possible to reach their target. The toys sell for \$4.95 and you can help the cause by making a purchase.

news from the ALPS Spring, 2002

Colo nearly willow-free

During September sixteen volunteers—members of the Friends of the Colo—spent five days in the remotest section of the Colo River, in the third major onslaught on willow trees. The helicopter-supported operation was aided by white-water rafts piloted by Jack Hodge and his friends from the Penrith Whitewater Stadium. Funding

for the program is provided by the NSW Government's Environmental Trust.

The Friends of the Colo, which includes bushwalkers from several clubs, hopes it has now achieved 'primary kill' of willows along the Colo River within the Wollemi National Park.

There is much more to be done. There will be continuing mopping up, and there are yet some live willows on Wollemi Creek, the Capertee and Wolgan. There are other nasties including Cape Ivy and Lantana which the group will be turning its attention to. And there are the many willows downstream from the national park—thought to be the source of the infestations in the park. The group hopes to become involved with the local community in eventually removing these willows.

The Bushwalker November 2002

VNPA launches Park Guardians

For several years the VNPA has been considering how the experience of its members could contribute to the management of parks. A Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Mick Lumb developed the 'Park Guardians' proposal that has been approved by the VNPA Council. The program is a response to calls from members concerned about aspects of parks they had encountered when visiting.

The objectives of the program are to;

- train interested members in assessing the condition of parks and reserves;
- identify and record benchmarks or reference points to assess change over time;
- provide a basis for progressing substantive park management issues through discussion with Parks Victoria;
- allow regular reporting on the condition of parks and other conservation reserves;
- provide an interesting and stimulating activity to inform and involve VNPA members, Friends and other interested groups.

The program provides a structured and consistent way of compiling information on the condition of our parks and reserves from a user's perspective. In this way it complements the official assessment of parks prepared by the park managers, Parks Victoria and published as the *State of the Parks Report*.

A Score Card that rates the park or the part of a park visited is compiled by

the Park Guardians team and is recorded in the VNPA database. The Score Card includes ratings for pest plants, threats to biodiversity, signage, track maintenance, camping areas, amenities and park information.

Park Watch December, 2002

Going to the Grose? Better get out the choofer!

On 22 September 2002 the NPWS will introduce a trial 'fuel-stove only' policy at Acacia Flat and other areas near Blue Gum Forest. The group Friends of Blue Gum recommended the policy after several years of frustrating volunteer work in the forest. Confederation supported it when it was included in the Blue Mountains National Park Plan of Management.

The purpose of the trial is

- to reduce the habitat destruction and damage to young trees caused by firewood scavenging
- to halt the proliferation of fire rings and associated ground compaction
- to reduce fire-based littering
- to introduce new walkers to the idea that there is 'another way' other than lighting fires every night
- to improve the quality of experience for the many visitors who do not rely on campfires
- to discourage visits by the selfish few whose behaviour is noisy and destructive

How long the trial will continue, exactly what area it will be applied to, and the criteria for 'exceptions' will depend on the public response. The situation will be monitored. It is hoped there will be a positive change of user culture and that, once there has been a clear improvement things might be loosened up again. Everyone likes a campfire!

The Bushwalker November 2002

Patch genetics

When CSIRO geneticist, Dr Andrew Young, sees a patch of native vegetation in an otherwise bare paddock, he ponders the invisible genetic threats to these increasingly rare communities of Australian native plants. The subtle threats arise because strange things happen to the breeding behaviour, genetics and overall fitness of plant populations as the number of individuals dwindles to a few hundred or so.

Young heads a team of scientists in CSIRO Plant Industry with broad interests and expertise straddling conservation biology, ecology and population genetics. The group is examining the viability of plant populations in small and isolated

remnants of native vegetation. Fragmented patches are mostly all that remain of these once widespread habitats. In the case of native grasslands, just 0.5% persist after decades of cropping and grazing.

'Our aim in studying the genetics and ecology of fragmentation is to come up with firm advice for conserving and managing these remnants,' Young says.

'Which particular species are most in need and what is the best way to treat them? Which ones will respond to intensive care? Are some populations beyond help? What are the population size thresholds for various plant species to remain viable?'

ecos, October–December, 2002

Rights and wrongs of property rights

Do rivers have a right to be healthy? Should native vegetation have rights to exist?

We think so. That's why ACF has entered into the current debate around claimed 'property rights' for farmers in relation to irrigation, clearing of native vegetation, and even endangered species. One way or another, the controversy around rights versus responsibilities is holding up real progress on both of these issues.

While ACF recognises genuine equity concerns, we reject calls to inflate property rights at the environment's expense and we've prepared a discussion paper, *Rights & Responsibilities in Land & Water Management*, on the topic. It is available from www.acfonline.org.au.

habitat, October 2002

Mapping salinity in Qld

New salinity hazard maps for the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin show that over half of the area faces a serious threat from dryland salinity caused by land clearing. Similar maps are soon to be released for other Queensland regions, and may echo these findings.

This grim problem will reduce farm production, damage roads and infrastructure and affect water supplies unless land clearing is brought under control.

The Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) recently suggested that the 'collateral benefit' of avoiding salinity costs by controlling land clearing would be in the order of \$110 per hectare per annum. A ban on tree clearing in areas of high salinity risk is clearly justified on economic, social and environmental grounds, but the recent Queensland salinity summit failed to endorse that approach and the federal government has

once again rejected calls for funding support to deal with the clearing issue.

ACF is calling for stronger Queensland government controls on clearing in salinity risk areas, and federal government financial support for this. But quick and decisive action is needed from Premier Peter Beattie, to minimise future costs and protect the land for future generations.

habitat, October 2002

A piscatorial profile

Carp are not only a big problem, they are often just plain big. They can reach a length of 120 centimetres and weigh in at 60 kilograms. Total biomass can be upwards of 1 500kg per hectare and they have colonised many inland waterways.

This success of carp in Australia is largely attributable to their adaptable biology and ecology. They can tolerate a broad range of environmental conditions in both still and flowing water. They thrive in degraded habitats and can even tolerate water that is up to half as salty as seawater.

Young carp eat plankton, switching to larger items as they grow. Adults are generalist feeders, eating plant material, crustaceans and aquatic insects. Carp feed by filtering small particles from the water or sieving food from the bottom sediments.

The fish mature in two to five years and females lay numerous eggs on plant material, in spring to early summer, when water temperatures exceed 16 °C. Young carp are preyed upon by birds and other fish, including Murray cod. Up to 98 per cent of young fail to survive the first year of life. Survivors though can live for decades.

Carp get around. Tagged carp have moved more than 200 kilometres in a few months and they can migrate at any time of year. One could characterise carp as opportunistic fish that are good at feeding, breeding and spreading.

ecos, July–September 2002

Cat Killing—ice work if you can get it

Spare a thought for the six park rangers who have spent years combing the 34km long and 6km wide sub-antarctic Macquarie Island for cats. After a four-year intensive eradication program, the rangers believe all of the cats have been wiped out from the World Heritage area. But it hasn't been easy. Their only shelters were 'apples'—small, round, insulated, fibre-glass two-bunk tents. And what weather—even inside the apple the temperature was well below freezing point in winter.

Park Watch September, 2002

The Larapinta Trail—Alice Springs to Mount Sonder

In July 2002 four NPA members, Graham Scully, Brian Slee, Ross Walker and Timothy Walsh walked the Larapinta Trail in Central Australia from Alice Springs to the top of Mount Sonder through the West MacDonnell Ranges—a distance of 234 kilometres in 17 days, including one rest day. The walk was long, unrelenting and at times difficult. The country was dry and stony, but well wooded in parts and very beautiful. The need to carry additional water over several stages added to the challenge. However, we agreed it was one of the finest long distance walks each of us had done.

A table showing our route, distances between camps and the time taken for each days' walk is available from the author.

The Larapinta Trail (the name derives from an Aboriginal word for the Finkc meaning "salty river") is made up of 12 sections, which have been opened progressively over a number of years, and was completed in April 2002. It runs through the traditional lands of the Arrernte people. Fittingly, the trip

coincided with the centenary of Albert Namatjira's birth. Fitting because his life and evocative paintings dominated our thoughts and conversations concerning the landscape. The dominant symbol is Mt Sonder—the form, the colours, the changing light.

The walk starts at the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station and finishes at the top of Mount Sonder (1331 metres). For ease of transport we completed the last two sections in reverse, being driven from Glen Helen to Redbank Gorge, and after climbing Mount Sonder, hiking back to Glen Helen. We were then driven to Alice Springs from Glen Helen at the end of the walk.

The track is almost all through national park, much of which was until recently cattle country. The Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission (NTPWC) have done a magnificent job in routing the track through varied terrain and erecting markers every kilometre. Navigation is easy, especially when compared to the Alpine Track. A series of section brochures have been produced by the NTPWC showing the route and including information on Aboriginal sites, places to camp, significant geological features and details of the flora and fauna.

Although the track runs parallel to Namatjira Drive, the main road from Alice Springs to Glen Helen, it is only glimpsed occasionally from higher points. However, it does provide access to the tourist-frequented gorges along the way and gave us the means to deposit food drops beforehand (at Standley Chasm kiosk, Ellery Creek Big Hole—buried in creek bed—and Ormiston Gorge kiosk).

Permits are not required for the walk but the NTPWC asks walkers to register details of their trip and provide a rescue deposit. This is returned when the authorities are

notified of your safe return.

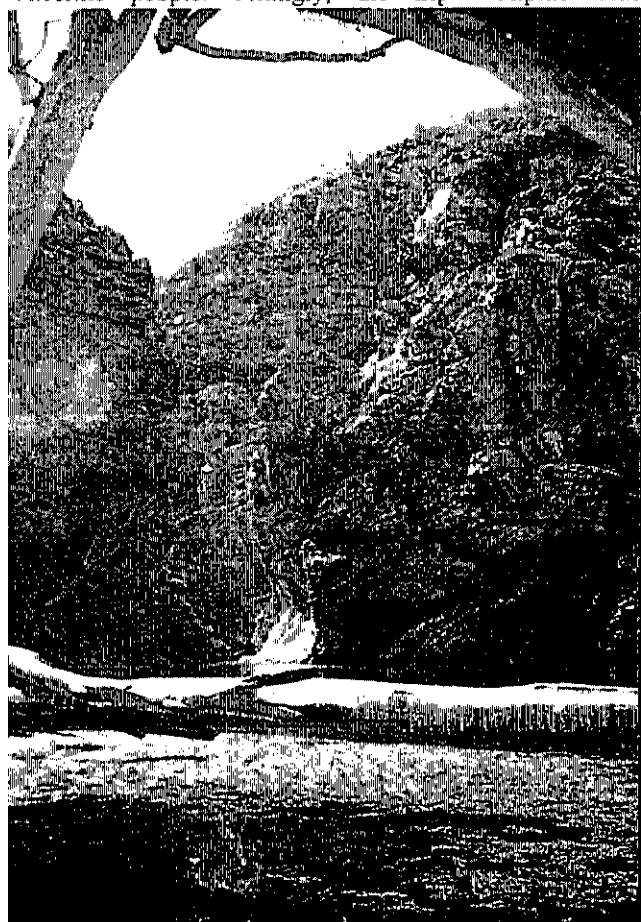
The walk

This is not a walk to be undertaken lightly. Despite considerable prior research, the actual walk brought daily surprises. The climbs were more frequent and steeper than we had imagined—there are real mountains out there—and some of the ascents and descents more technically difficult than expected. Some rock scrambling was required. While difficult at times, it was never seriously dangerous. Walking days were often long and the stony desert conditions proved a real test of feet and footwear. Campsites were varied. Our favourites were in sandy riverbeds, where we ended up more often than not. These were one of the delights of the trip. Although we carried fuel stoves we usually had a campfire. There was plenty of river "driftwood" for this purpose and it boosted group morale to have a fire at the end of an arduous walk. We cleared each fire site so that we left no trace. However, there can be no doubt that as the number of track users increases it may become necessary to insist on fuel stoves only. Our campfires set the scene for the unlikely occurrence of Ross's nightly reading from an Oscar Wilde collection (including several fairy stories!)

Geology, flora and fauna

Some hundreds of million years ago the area was the bed of an inland sea. A granite intrusion uplifted the old seabed about 10 kilometres and at the same time tilted it so that the northern section is higher than the southern. Aeons of erosion have reduced the mountains to the present-day ranges, and the tilt causes rainfall to run southerly, come up against the ranges, find faults, thus creating the chasms and gorges for which the MacDonnells are so famous. We frequently gazed in wonder at fossilised remnants of the old seabed such as wave ripples and the coral-like white formations of stromatolites.

The geology sets the scene for much of the flora and fauna, the damp southern-facing gullies holding remnant vegetation from earlier rainforest communities such as ferns and cycads, the gorges concentrating permanent water thus attracting wildlife to their focus. Another wonder is Gosse's Bluff, some distance away, a remnant of an impact from a comet 250 000 years ago.



Ellery Creek Big Hole. Photo Brian Slee

There are over 250 species of plants in the MacDonnell Ranges. River red and ghost gums are found along the watercourses and are just as Namatjira painted them. Magnificent! Also common are bloodwoods, coolibah, ironwood, longleaf corkwood, whitewood, white cypress-pine, desert oak, several wattles, desert grevillea, saltbush, native fig, tea-trees and witchetty bush. A number of species of spinifex predominate as groundcover with wild flowers, including the purple parakeelya. Ruby dock appears after rain. The moist gullies and gorges are filled with all manner of ferns (including the rock fern) and cycads. Mistletoe was present on many trees.

Before starting the walk we spent a few hours at the wonderful Alice Springs Desert Park. Here we saw many of the small, mainly nocturnal animals we knew were present on our walk but which we were rarely to see. (go to www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au for a full description of plant and animal life in the MacDonnells). We did see plenty of black-footed rock wallabies in the gorges. Early on in the walk we had several nights dominated by the howl of dingoes echoing around us.

The West MacDonnells have at least 148 species of birds recorded. Birds we saw included crested bellbird, zebra finches, wrens, boobook owl (heard rather than saw!) and several types of birds of prey. Small fish abound in the pools. There are 10 species of native fish in the MacDonnells, fish that were providing much feasting to many of the birds we saw.

To our surprise we saw no feral animals although we did come across cow and horse dung and some bleached bones. We put this down to a bold policy of shooting on the part of the Northern Territory authorities. Camels were reported as being present in the park but again we did not see any. The introduced African buffel grass covered much of the ground. The Weed of National Significance, tamarisk, was in evidence in the Finke River area.

Weather

This walk can only be done safely in the cooler months. We had several nights when the temperature fell below freezing and we were very glad of our heavy-duty sleeping bags. Humidity was practically zero so there was no accumulation of frost and clothes washed in the evening were dry by morning. The days were generally clear and warm, the temperature being in the mid-twenties. It was day seven before



Mount Sonder east of Davenport River. Photo Brian Slee

the first cloud appeared. The heat was usually tempered on the higher ground by a pleasant breeze.

Water

Water, or lack of it, dominates the walk. The well-known water features (Standley Chasm, Ellery Creek Big Hole, Hugh Gorge, Ormiston Gorge, Glen Helen) provide water for drinking and washing. However, gorge water is shaded all day and is generally too cold for more than a quick sponge down. At several points along the track water tanks have been provided by NTPWC.

However, water supply is still not reliable. On four occasions we had to carry sufficient for a night and two days. Five to seven litres of water is heavy! This will no doubt put some groups off doing the whole walk in one go. Indeed, we did come across the improbable sight of a group of young German scouts dressed in lederhosen but shirtless, who seemed to be running short of water.

Cultural heritage

There is little physical evidence of the many thousands of generations of Aborigines who lived in this region. We kept our eyes open for signs of axe grinding grooves in the gorges but saw only one "possible". There are none of the wonderful examples of rock art found in Kakadu and the Kimberley. The geological formations have not created the galleries for this. However the track notes ask walkers not to camp at several places known to be of special cultural significance. Perhaps the most tangible Aboriginal evidence are the colourful Ochre Pits which can be reached by a side trip from Inarlanga Pass.

Traces of European presence are easier to identify. First of course the old Telegraph Station, dating back to 1872, where the walk starts and where the steel telegraph poles are still present for several kilometres along the track. At Serpentine Gorge one comes across the unlikely site of a small dam built in the '50s to supply a short-lived tourist chalet. At Glen Helen we saw date palms planted by the Afghan camel drivers in the 1880s and wondered at the discrepancy between the admiration felt at their contribution and the often negative view of some Australians to today's Afghan refugees.

The impact of humans, both Aboriginal and European, on the West MacDonnell Ranges is more subtle than the presence of sacred sites, abandoned homesteads, telegraph lines, droving roads and the like. It is to be found in the very nature of the landscape and the vegetation. The Aborigines' use of fire in hunting and signalling and using bush tucker plants undoubtedly had an impact on the Centre's vegetation. Ernest Giles, in his classic *Australia Twice Traversed* indicates that at the time of initial European exploration burnt out sections of the landscape were a common feature. Larapinta Trail visitors guide number 11 states, *inter alia*, "Many scientists now believe that the long term effect of Aboriginal burning was the spread of grasslands, at the expense of woodlands. Spinifex in particular, is thought to have benefited from burning: rich mulch and soil crust is frequently washed away from bare, burnt ground and spinifex is most suited to the poor soils that result" and "Some scientists believe that Aboriginal people with their 'firestick'

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Our Ol' Man River

With the building of the Snowy scheme, the source of the Snowy River was cut off at the Jindabyne Dam and its water diverted for power generation into the Murray River system. In its natural state, the river flowed to the sea; but with the diversion, its normal flow from the highlands, swamps and porous valleys, no longer replenished the flow in times of intermittent rain.

The problem of the Snowy's minimal flow has recently been corrected by the release of a small amount to restore some life to stagnant pools in the upper reaches and to provide a continuity of flow downstream.

But what about our "Ol' Man River", the Murrumbidgee? Like the Snowy, it had all of the upper reaches impounded, the water being stored in the Tantangara Dam and diverted into the

Eucumbene Dam for power generation. Eucumbene only fills during periods of high rainfall and at most times can be observed to be at a static half-full level. In addition its capacity is augmented by diversion of water from the upper reaches of the Goodradigbee River.

For most of the year one has only to observe the sand filled bed of the Murrumbidgee River from the Tharwa bridge to see that it has become a narrow, shallow channel carrying a sluggish flow of water. The low flows in the river are also reflected in the frequent reports of the low level of Burrunjuck Dam, which was designed in the 1920s before its sources of replenishment were cut off by the upstream dams.

Perhaps it is time now for agitation to restore the flow of the Murrumbidgee and Goodradigbee to what was once

normal over all seasons and have a lively, healthy Murrumbidgee flowing for more than 60km through the ACT. The restoration of flows in these rivers might be at the cost of some reduction of the electricity generated, but would still see the maintenance of irrigation of the high-value fruits and crops of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and along the Murray around Mildura.

Our Ol' Man River needs to be kept more than just flowin'.

Reg Alder
October 2002

On going to press, the Murrumbidgee at Tharwa has stopped flowing and it is understood that a release of water from Tantangara Dam has been made into the Murrumbidgee.

Larapinta Trail *continued from page 19*

farming set the scene for pastoralists, by promoting the growth of fodder grasses". The same publication goes on to describe the impact of cattle grazing. Unlike native animals, whose numbers rise and fall quickly with the seasons, "Consistent heavy grazing by cattle can decrease seed production in grasses to such an extent that the grass cannot regenerate well, the soil becomes bare and is washed away and the country becomes permanently degraded". It is interesting to note here that the NTPWC is attempting to reintroduce controlled burning to produce fire breaks to decrease the intensity of spring and summer wild fires.

To this could be added the effect of feral animals on the native animals and birdlife, and watercourses. The impact of cats and foxes on small mammal populations is well known but could not be judged on a trip of this nature.

However, the *impact* of cattle, horses and camels could be observed, especially around the water holes.

Bushfires were a major feature of our walk. For several days we walked through recently burned and in some cases still burning grasslands. We expect careless campers started some of these fires.

Environmental issues

The West MacDonnell Ranges are undoubtedly better off now under a national parks regime than they ever were when used for cattle grazing. The Larapinta Trail is a major tourist asset for the region and this will hopefully mean that money for management will continue to flow to the NTPWC. Feral animals, weeds and unintentional fires will need continued attention. However this is not all. Numbers of walkers may

have to be restricted and campfires banned.

Conclusion

This was a tough, challenging walk undertaken by a small, well-equipped and experienced group. We would be delighted to help anyone wishing to do the walk. The Northern Territory authorities should be congratulated on its creation. In answering a questionnaire on the track we have, in fact, suggested how it could be extended. Undoubtedly some improvements will be made in the supply of drinking water. However, we feel the Larapinta Trail will soon take its place beside other Classic Treks of the world.

Timothy Walsh
assisted by Graham Scully,
Brian Slee and Ross Walker

Joint Management Arrangements for Namadgi NP

put in place throughout all of the Australian Alps National Parks.

For Environment ACT, joint management has forced its land managers to rethink the way in which they do business but has resulted in a richer understanding of Namadgi National Park for them at both a professional and personal level. The reaction to joint management by visitors to the park and the broader Canberra community has been overwhelmingly supportive. This positive experience

suggests that it might now be timely for other jurisdictions to consider the implementation of joint management arrangements for their alpine national parks.

Note 1. At November 2002, members of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board were:

Matilda House (Aboriginal Joint Chair); Geoff Butler (non-Aboriginal Joint Chair); Roslyn Brown (Aboriginal member); Valda Connors (Aboriginal member); Fred Monaghan (Aboriginal member); Agnes

continued from page 15

Shea (Aboriginal member); Dr Sue Briggs (NSW NPWS Senior Research Scientist); Dr Michael Pearson (Heritage Consultant); Dianne Thompson (representing Conservation Group interests); and Geoff Wells (representing the interests of the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna).

Kosciuszko huts

Attention is now focused on the destruction wrought to huts in the Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) by the recent bushfires, but just before this tragedy struck, Barrie Ridgway had written in response to the issues raised in Tim Walsh's and Phil Bubb's articles on Kosciuszko in the two previous Bulletins. Barrie's article addressed fundamental issues, and so remains relevant, perhaps even more so, as park management faces challenges left in the wake of the fires. This is an abridged version of his article.

Tim has made some very good points and it is very unfair of Phil to imply that he is "a zealot with aesthetic (not environmental) views about the wilderness ... (imposing his) personal values on others". Many of Phil's assertions seem to be based on assumptions, and he seems to be zealously trying to find arguments that support his European experiences. Phil would like to see a network of European-style huts in the KNP to bring in more people, and he does not see that there has been or will be serious degradation of the environment. He takes the view that because the KNP has once been vandalised by mankind it does not need to be returned to a wilderness state or be treated as wilderness.

Phil seems to overlook the possible increase in horse riding parties, especially by commercial operators, in the KNP and he favours increasing numbers into the KNP on the basis of little environmental damage in the past. It is well known that horses do great damage to fragile environments and pollute otherwise pristine streams. If no controls are brought in now on horses in KNP, if commercial operators are not banned or severely limited, if controls are not placed on the numbers using the huts and other areas of our national parks, environmental damage will occur but by then the power of the vested interests will be too great for the administrators to do anything about it. Commercial operators are starting to use the national parks as regional headquarters, concentrating traffic onto certain areas of parks. Last year we were disenchanted to find a commercial operator in outdoor development working more or less permanently out of the Bungonia Gorge campground, degrading the area where they and their clients camp and concentrating large

numbers of people into areas for specific activities such as climbing and abseiling.

Phil says that the NPWS has advised him that environmental degradation is slight. However, what is the agenda of the NPWS? Does it want to increase numbers into the KNP and increase revenue? Is it considered politically dangerous to act against commercial operators? To what extent is environmental degradation acceptable in order to meet such agendas? You have only to look at the Lakes Walk or the development of Thredbo to see that the NPWS is more concerned with numbers and development than with protection of the environment. Some years ago on part of the Lakes Walk I ducked into the shelter of a rock dyke to brew some tea to find that I had stepped into a lavatory.

Increasing usage of the KNP will lead to increased environmental damage. There is no doubt about that, yet Phil argues for increased usage on the basis of minor *past* damage. He suggests that more huts should be built and that when the existing ones die they should be replaced with stone ones along the European style. He states that it would be wrong to limit "people's quiet enjoyment of nature, when only negligible temporary damage to the environment is likely to occur". Negligible temporary damage? Phil ought to look at the terrible damage inflicted on British hills and mountains and to some areas of the USA. Environmental damage in the Himalaya is well-known. The more huts and tracks you put into the wilderness, the more you attract people into the wilderness, the more you will destroy the wilderness and you will end up with the tamed landscapes of the UK and Europe.

Unfortunately, huts will draw people to them. Without the huts, people may disperse somewhat. Huts will encourage large groups to focus on small areas and damage will be done to the environment there. Commercial operators especially can be expected to focus on the huts, which make it much easier for them to operate and there is little doubt that firewood will be used up in an increasing radius from the huts. There is therefore a strong case to limit numbers visiting the huts and to ban commercial operators from using them. They should be used only as emergency refuges.

I do not accept Phil's view that because man has already used the KNP it should not be returned to a wilderness state. The soul of mankind needs wilderness and what is more, the earth

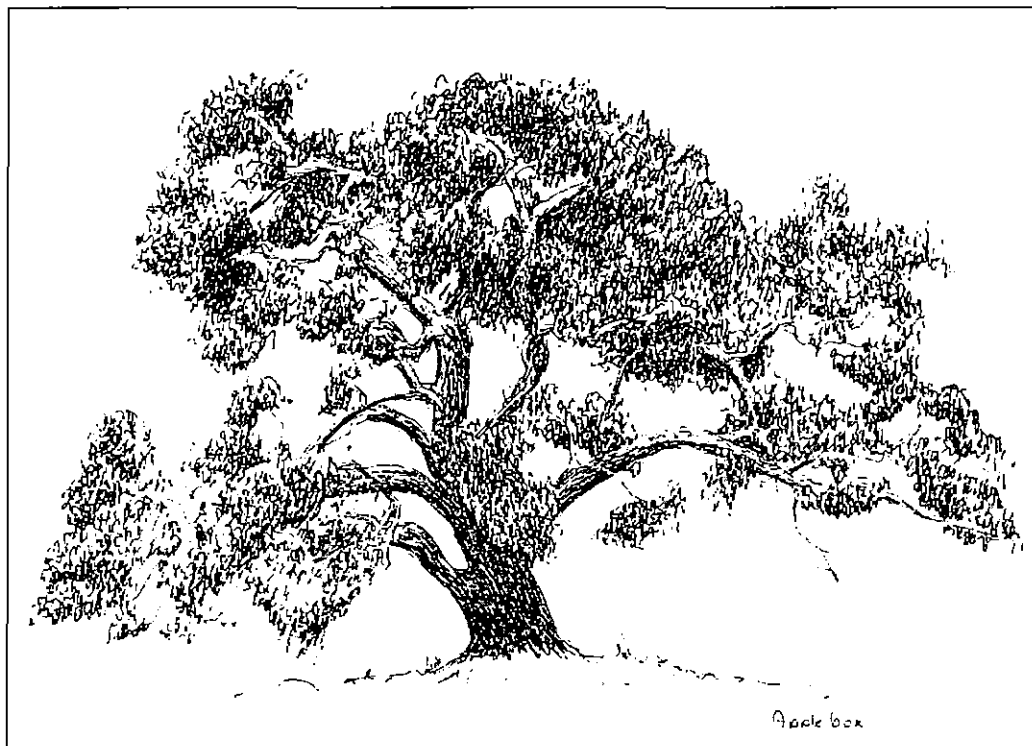
needs wilderness. Wilderness is not there as a plaything for us. It too, was created for a purpose, and has a right to exist in its own right.

We have a duty to protect wildness from further damage, and we have a duty to restore areas which have already been desecrated by man, for the sake of man, and for the sake of the earth itself. Wild places, from the polar regions to the tropical jungles are not there just as playgrounds for man. If we take Phil's view, where do we stop? More huts, more vehicle tracks to service them, more walking tracks. And why should only walkers be allowed in? What about commercial adventure operators? What about the people who cannot hike? What about snowmobiles? Snowmobiles in USA national parks are so well entrenched that it is hard to limit them, yet their noise pollution has ruined many areas, and it has been found that the exhaust pollution from one is equivalent to that from 1 000 cars. And what of small *all-terrain vehicles* which are now devastating areas of the USA? However, man does not connect with the wilderness unless he is on foot or canoe and is camping. Once he uses other methods of transport or stays in dwellings he shuts himself off from the wilderness, he is not subservient to his environment, and he learns nothing. Either one becomes a part of the wilderness or one uses it as a playground, and if the latter, then degradation is inevitable.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota, on the Canadian border, is a case in point. Once this vast area of lakes and forest was used by the Indians, who managed the forests with controlled burning. Later it was ravaged by trappers, then by loggers and miners, and more lately by increased tourism. However, the US Government, to its credit, decided to return this area to its wilderness state. No commercial ventures are allowed there, no motor boats may be used in summer or motorised transport in the winter. All dwellings have been removed. Aircraft may not fly low over the area. The only persons who may use the area are those on foot, on skis, or in canoes. Today, the USA has a jewel of an asset. Entry is controlled by permit, and camping is only allowed at designated sites which can only take one or two small tents. Cooking fires are allowed, but campers are asked to

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A look at the woodland in East O'Malley



Apple box

Late last year an auction of land in East O'Malley was postponed at the last minute. The land to be auctioned was on the western slope near the houses and the auction was postponed because of community concern at selling the land while the Action Plan to protect yellow box/red gum grassy woodland was being revised. It is time to consider whether the postponement should become something more permanent.

The debate about the future of ACT Forests has relevance, as the use of some forestry land for suburbs could reduce the pressure on the government's perceived need to develop East O'Malley for housing.

Members will remember Michael Mulvany talking about yellow box/red gum grassy woodland at an NPA meeting last year. Once this community was part of an extensive woodland stretching north and south along the western slopes of NSW and into Victoria, but today in NSW over 90 per cent of woodland trees has been cleared. Many of those that remain are isolated paddock trees without any natural understorey. The woodland, with its open structure and grassy understorey, was particularly vulnerable to clearing and alteration for grazing. In Canberra the remnants are on good building slopes and so are vulnerable to suburban development.

The threatened part of East O'Malley has some features which make it worth protecting for its own values. It

is even more worth protection when looked at in the context of the few remnants available for protection today.

If one walks through East O'Malley from the top of Callemonda Rise, one first crosses a ridge with a watertank to the right. This ridge has few trees but many briar rose bushes apparently killed by an application of herbicide, and so has little conservation value. However, as part of the hills ridges and buffer system this ridge is not available for subdivision.

As one proceeds down the slope, the size and quality of the trees improve. There are patches of pyracantha and other weeds but these could readily be tackled,

just as the briars have been.

On the lower slopes the yellow box and red gum trees form an open woodland of mature trees. Older trees provide valuable nesting hollows. The few apple box include one magnificent spreading specimen. Saplings 1-3m high provide good perches for small birds and their chewed leaves indicate they also provide a good range of insect food. This is where most birds are found.

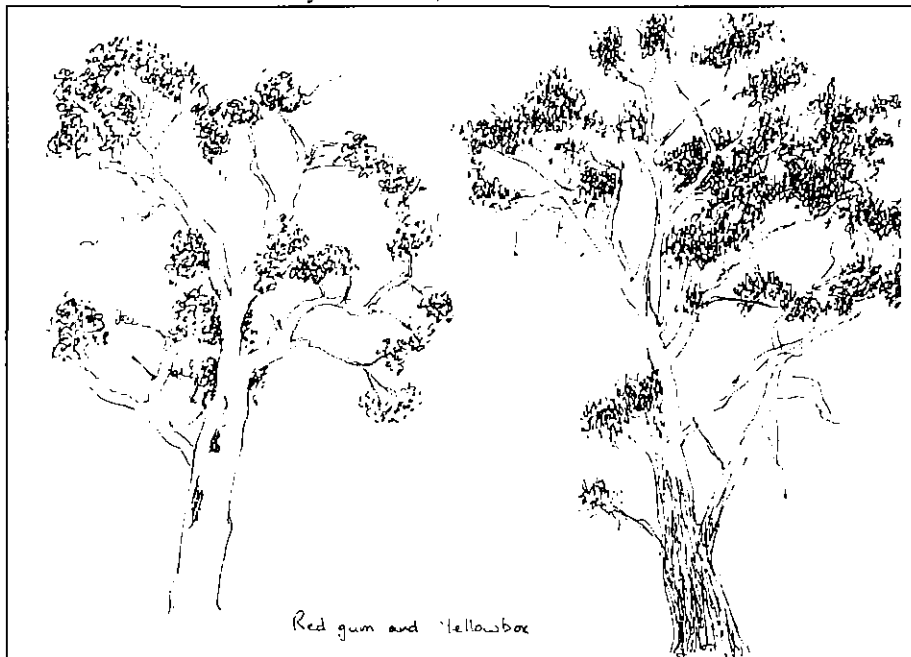
Last October the Friends of Grassland conducted a walk here on one short windy afternoon and found 18 species of birds and the active nests of a pair of cuckoo shrikes and of a pair of little eagles.

The intermittent creek at the bottom has cut an erosion gully about 5m deep, showing how deep the soil is here and why the trees have grown so well.

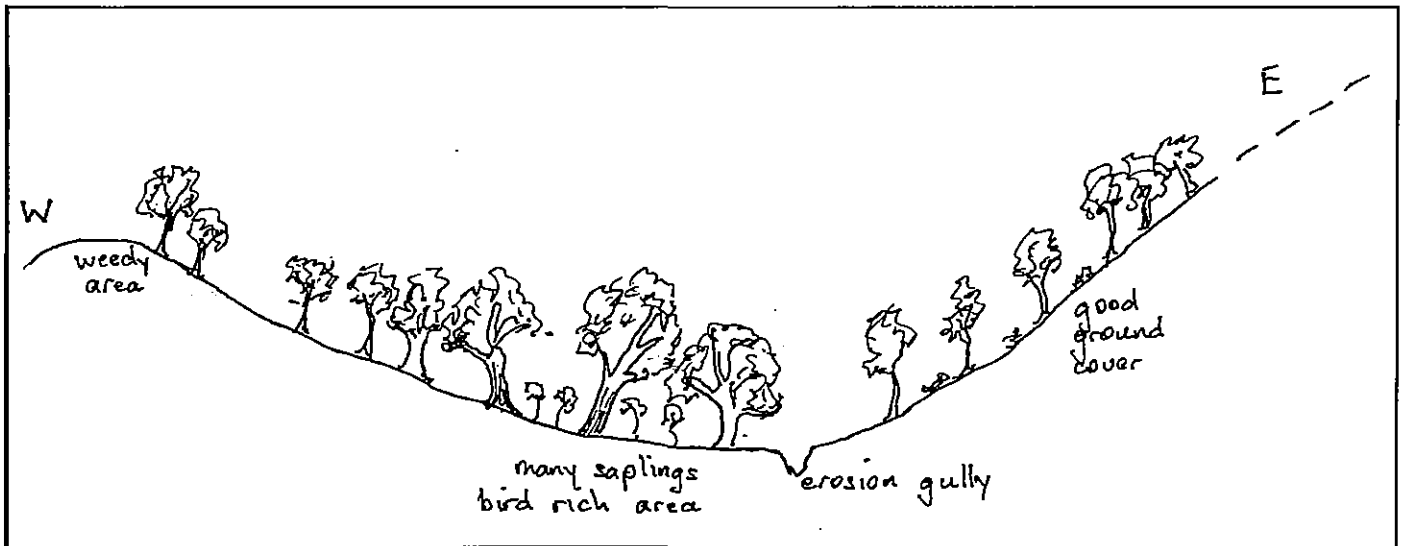
Woodland with such a base of deep soil is very rare today as these have been the areas first targeted by farmers, and in Canberra by suburban development. Native sedges cover some of the valley floor. These are not present in yellow box/red gum grassy woodland already protected on Red Hill, for example.

The Action Plan (unrevised) shows the slope just traversed as being of high conservation value and scheduled for protection within the urban fabric.

Subdivision might save individual trees but it will not protect the ecological community, and many trees will be



Red gum and Yellowbox



severely damaged by disturbance, overwatering or overfertilising of surrounding land. The gardens already established in O'Malley do not raise much hope for sympathetic treatment of native woodland species.

One section in Callemonda Rise, shown as urban park on my map, has some remnant bush, but exotic trees have carefully been planted around the eucalypts and a watering system installed. Such urban fabric is unlikely to protect an endangered grassy woodland.

Subdivision would also mean bulldozers will be brought in to flatten the edges of the erosion gully, with considerable disturbance to the trees near the gully.

Across the creek the land rises again and the quality of the understorey increases, with fewer weeds and a greater variety of native herbs, such as the tiny greenhood orchids. The trees are less robust however, as the soil is steeper and stony; as well there are fewer birds. This area is shown as of very high conservation value in the Action Plan (unrevised) and it is scheduled to be added to Canberra Nature Park.

Being an ecological community, yellow box/red gum grassy woodland varies from place to place. It would take many hundreds of years to recreate woodland with such a mixed age range of trees as occurs in the western section of East O'Malley, but a persistent effort

at eradicating weeds will quickly improve the understorey. It is also worth noting that open grassy woodland does not carry a heavy load of fuel for bushfires.

This woodland is a national asset. Protection is important for the ACT, but it is even more important when looked at in a national context. We need to ensure that we protect the few areas left that are sufficiently large to maintain themselves and their associated fauna, such as the woodland birds which have lately suffered reduction in numbers.

Eleanor Stodart
drawings by Eleanor Stodart

Kosciuszko huts *continued from page 21*

collect their wood from about a mile away. Consequently, most people do not bother to light fires. Today, increasing numbers are coming to this wonderful area even though they have to sleep outside, survive bad weather and walk or paddle a canoe.

I do, however, find some sympathy with Phil's views on fires. It is strange that Australia can cut down forests, export wood chips, condone wood barbecues and wood slow combustion

stoves yet prohibit the small fires of a few bushwalkers. I suspect that the NPWS is more scared of forest fires and takes the opportunity to ban cooking fires on so-called conservation grounds. Bushwalkers should be allowed to have small cooking fires in our national parks. Fire has always been a part of the wilderness, thus it is absurd to say that there should never be small camp fires because using firewood destroys habitat. The wilderness experience is after all

about connecting with the wilderness. Fires are part of that experience, they are part of man's past when he used to live in the wilderness. The ban of camp fires in, say, the Bimberi wilderness, is absurd and it is time that the NPA opposed all such bans. Fire has always been a part of the Australian wilderness and the sticks not burnt by bushwalkers will be burned in the next forest fire.

Barrie Ridgway

Cottage available: For nature lovers out there, our mudbrick cottage is available for rent! Set amongst trees in Mallacoota, Vic, approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra. Only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. Sleeps 4-6 upstairs with a sofa bed downstairs; fully self-contained with kitchen and laundry. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 62583531) for further information.

Achieving an Ecologically Sustainable Firewood Industry in the ACT

Saturday 29 March 2003, 9:30am to 4:30pm
Pilgrim House Conference Centre, Canberra City.

The Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra, and Environment ACT, invite you to a one-day workshop on *Achieving an Ecologically Sustainable Firewood Industry in the ACT*.

There is NO registration fee and a light lunch will be provided.

For further information, or to register your interest, please contact Environment ACT on 6207 6637 or environmentACT@act.gov.au

National Parks Association Calendar

Activity	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<i>Public Holidays</i>	<i>Mon 17</i>	<i>Fri 18 Mon 21</i>		<i>Mon 9</i>
General meetings	Thu 20	Thu 10⁴	Thu 15	Thu 19
Committee meetings ¹	Thu 6	Thu 3	Thu 1	Thu 5
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ²	Sat 8	Sat 12	Sat 10	Sat 14
Bulletin Working Group meeting ³	Tue 25			
Further details ¹ See contacts page 2. ² Yankee Hat carpark 10 am, Eleanor Stodart 6281 5004. ³ Syd Comfort 6286 2578: ⁴ NB change due to Easter break				

General Meetings:
'Third Thursdays' [except
 this April, see Calendar]
8.00 pm
Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor

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.

Thursday 10th April 2003

NB change from usual Thursday

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 15th May 2003

The Integrated Nature Conservation Plan.

Greg Keen, Wildlife Research and Monitoring, Environment ACT.

An ACT Government initiative to improve the linkage between Environment ACT's management of nature conservation information and our community partners.

Note: A constitutional matter is to be voted on at this meeting. See notification on page 12.

Thursday 19th June 2003

Measuring the tracks.

Dr Sara Beavis, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU.

The talk on recreational tracks and trails in National parks and reserves will examine the current status of scientific knowledge on the subject and identify key knowledge gaps. The issue is an important one, given the development of management plans ahead of the capacity for scientific research to deliver information relevant to specific sites.

Dr Beavis, a research fellow at CRES with a background in hydrology and soils science, has undertaken a number of studies to identify the environmental impacts of horses in multi-use forests and the national estate.

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