

# NPA Bulletin



Volume 42 number 1  
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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



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**Kokoda adventure**

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**Meetings in the mountains**

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**Developments in management plans**

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## CONTENTS

From the President.....3 <i>Kevin McCue</i>	Shoreline birds.....13 <i>Syd Comfort</i>
Interim Namadgi Advisory Board.....3 <i>Di Thompson</i>	Walking the Kokoda Trail.....14 <i>Max Lawrence</i>
Eleanor Stodart 25/10/1940 – 2/12/2004.....4 <i>Kevin McCue</i>	AIAS seminar in the mountains.....16 <i>Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz</i>
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.....5 <i>Syd Comfort</i>	Honouring the alpine ecologists.....17 <i>Den Robin</i>
ACT water developments.....5 <i>Syd Comfort</i>	Submission on Perisher Village — Kosciuszko.....18 National Park Development Application <i>NPA ACT submission</i>
A Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT.....6 <i>NPA ACT submission</i>	Seamans Hut, Kosciuszko National Park.....19 <i>Fiona MacDonald Brand</i>
Update on the Bushfire Management Plan.....9 <i>Christine Goonrey</i>	PARKWATCH.....20 <i>Compiled by Len Huskew</i>
Montague: the nature of the island.....10 <i>Den Robin</i>	Environmental announcements.....21 <i>Compiled by Graeme Wicks</i>
Additions to south NSW national parks.....11	Book review.....23 <i>Mike Smith</i>
Namadgi conservation management plans.....12 <i>Syd Comfort</i>	Meetings and Calendar of events.....24
Effective bushfire management: response.....13 to Phil Cheney's <i>Bulletin</i> article <i>Christine Goonrey</i>	

### 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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#### NPA Bulletin

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

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**Cover Photo:** *The association's Christmas Party in December 2004 at Honeysuckle Creek campground. Can you spot the President, centre stage? Photo Chris Emery*

# From the President

Early in the Christmas break the Committee began to contemplate what activities and actions would be undertaken on your behalf in the year ahead. Ongoing activities close to home include those satisfying work parties in Namadgi National Park, the well-organised bushwalks to appreciate and enjoy our bush heritage, and the office-bound challenges of responding to the Strategic Bushfire Plan and the soon-to-be-released Plan of Management for Namadgi.

This quiet contemplation turned to grief and sympathy for those who lost so much, so quickly, in the Sumatran earthquake and tsunami. The final death toll is likely to exceed even the number killed at Tangshan in the 1976 earthquake in China, and the number of injured and homeless is 10 times that number again. More Australians were killed in the Sumatran earthquake and tsunami than in any earthquake in Australia in the last two centuries.

It occurred to me that we are very privileged to have the year ahead to contemplate how we will use our time, unlike the many millions of people, including the survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunami, who must eke out a day-to-day subsistence never knowing what tomorrow will bring. Not all of those people are in Third World countries either, Australian cities seem to have an ever-increasing number of people sleeping in the streets or in temporary shelter and relying on charities for handouts of food and clothing. Poverty and ill health are inextricably linked, so the life expectancy of these under-privileged is lower than it should be.

Many academics and philosophers are attempting to look further ahead, 10 years and more, to speculate on what

our world and ecosystems might be like for future generations if we continue our current trends of resource usage, of energy and water in particular.

I was given a book to read over the Christmas holiday period which lays out the options for governments to either continue as they are, Plan A, and risk turning many First World citizens into Third World citizens in as brief a timescale as 10 years, or turn to Plan B (the title of the book by Lester Brown subtitled *Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*). One of his oft-repeated statistics is that it takes 1000 tons of water to grow a ton of wheat (1000 litres of water per kilogram of wheat) which bears consideration.

There have been doomsday prophecies over the millennia which I have never subscribed to, but I am coming around to believe the groundswell of informed opinion that we continue on our present path at our peril. Consider the satellite imagery used to monitor changes in vegetation that shows that 3.4 million ha of forested land was cleared across Australia between 1988 and 2001. Clearly this cannot continue indefinitely; it is unsustainable practice, it leads to land degradation, salinisation, water pollution and increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels and their downstream effects on human populations.

The mining of underground water for agriculture to feed current populations has led to dramatic and unrecoverable drops in the level of so-called fossil ground water in some of the major granaries of the US, China and India. Such practices are unsustainable now, without considering how we will feed future populations,

with or without global climate change. Some major world cities may have to be abandoned. It is not hard to contemplate what this might mean for Australia.

The ACT Government under Jon Stanhope is reportedly considering a campaign to boost Canberra's population growth (*Canberra Times*, 20 December 2004) at the same time as they review ACTEW Corporation's assessment of the need for additional water storage for the ACT, *An Assessment of the Need to Increase the ACT's Water Storage*. This report concludes that unless the ACT community is prepared to accept recurring water restrictions, the ACT will need more water storage (another dam) sooner than previously expected, especially if the population keeps growing.

This unrelenting pressure on resources translates into pressure on our natural environment. Already NPAs across Australia are trying to parry the attempts by lobby groups to change our national parks from tiny zones of conservation to outdoor playgrounds, from parks preserving examples of Australia's remnant plants and animals to whatever survives the annual burning of the understorey, and a complex of planned interconnecting roads and fire containment lines.

So there is plenty to contemplate: the long-term survival of our parks and reserves, our wildlife, our way of life, our very existence. The good news is that there is a Plan B and that we have intelligent and well-educated politicians who will surely take heed, with a bit of prodding from groups such as ours.

Kevin McCue, President

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## Interim Namadgi Advisory Board

*Di Thompson has provided the following notes on the board's activities.*

The board has continued to provide input to the Bushfire Strategy. Major issues including proposals for new fire trails and the funding to manage them. There is now a Development Application for a watering point (small holding dam and bore) on a side creek from Back or Grassy Creek near Mount Clear camping ground.

Work on the damaged alpine bogs continues. The board is to do a field trip

to inspect the bogs and observe the tree felling along the Mount Franklin Road.

The usage of Namadgi by large groups both for overnight stays and for events has always been a concern and now there is further consideration of the issues involved.

Australian Archaeological Survey consultants have carried out surveys of most of the fire trails in Namadgi with representatives of the Ngunnawal community. To date they have found 99 sites including many sites with between 21 and 50 items.

Terence Uren has retired from the position of Secretary to the board.

Terence had held the position since the creation of the board and has made a great contribution through establishing procedures and managing the board business very efficiently. A new secretary has yet to be appointed.

**Ed's note:** *At the time of writing, the draft Namadgi National Park Plan of Management is expected to be released during March. Our guest speaker at our March general meeting will be Environment ACT's Sharon Lane who has been coordinating the preparation of the plan.*

# Eleanor Stodart 25/10/1940 – 2/12/2004

President of the National Parks Association, 1994 (jointly with Clive Hurlstone) and 1995 and 1996. President (1999 – 2002) and Secretary (2003 – ) of the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

*It is with sadness that we report the death of former association President and Life Member Eleanor Stodart. Members of the NPA extend their sympathy to her sons, Duncan, Kevin and Robert and all members of the family. Association President Kevin McCue spoke feelingly at the service for Eleanor held on Tuesday December 7 2004.*



Our hearts go out to Eleanor's family; she was too young to go, right to the end she was still creative and very productive and there was much more to do on her wish list.

The facet of her multifaceted life that I have been asked to mention is her great contribution to the conservation movement which she embraced with all her energy. Her untimely death is a great loss to that cause. Eleanor had a profound appreciation of the natural environment and gave freely of her many talents to advance environmental issues. Her contributions ranged from writing and illustrating children's books with scientific and environmental themes, through active membership of many conservation groups such as Park

Care, to membership of the Minister for the Environment's Advisory Committee. I will focus on the two groups to which she directed a great deal of energy over the past 10 years, The National Parks Association of the ACT and the affiliated Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

Eleanor didn't do things by halves. She joined the National Parks Association in 1994 and moved quickly on to the Committee, shortly afterwards becoming President, a post she held for nearly three years. She recounted to Fiona MacDonald Brand that she joined the National Parks Association to return something to the parks, having enjoyed enriching family holidays there, bush walking, skiing and being in close contact with nature. She even managed some skiing at Guthega this last winter.

Eleanor was a significant contributor to many National Parks Association submissions and reports, particularly *Caring for Namadgi Together*, an important document that formed the basis of our recently compiled policy statement. She represented the National Parks Association at many meetings with Environment ACT and always made clear and pointed contributions to the discussion, as she did at our monthly general meetings. She was a regular contributor to the National Parks Association's *Bulletin* and had many articles and letters published in the *Canberra Times*.

When removal of the Boboyan pine plantation at Gudgenby started in 1997, Eleanor joined the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group and soon became its President (again). Eleanor was a born organiser, the monthly work parties at the southern end of Namadgi National Park in the Gudgenby bush regeneration area were well planned and executed and held up as a shining example of what could be achieved with a bit of hard work and many hands. Eleanor was involved in each and every activity, planning, propagating and broadcasting seed, planting seedlings and weeding, and directing the follow-up research. She must have had a lot of quiet satisfaction

with the dramatic results, some of the young trees are now big enough to shelter beneath from either the driving sleet or scorching sun, important now with the pines completely gone.

Eleanor and Clive Hurlstone did the follow-up scientific study for which she was well trained as a zoologist, planning and logging traverses to map the regrowth and distribution of flora, and measuring the results of different ways of trying to re-establish native plants. Eleanor carefully documented this work and the progress of the Gudgenby project, using both text and photographs, which led her to conclude that broadcasting seed in warm ash beds was far and away the most successful regeneration method.

She knew and was on friendly terms with every park ranger and their position, and was not beyond reproaching them if they were late bringing the trailer for the work outings. She scolded Sonja and me on a recent work party for weeding outside the planned area, walking several hundred metres to redirect us back on track with loud cooeeing. It was hilarious at the time, even though I felt like an errant school kid.

Eleanor had an eye for detail, she planned each work party meticulously, using the local area map the group had assembled with geographic features like Syd's Blackberry Patch (a hillside Syd Comfort had set his mind to clearing), Car-key Corner where Eleanor had once lost her car keys, Steve's Tors, and so on. She reluctantly agreed to the naming of a creek, Eleanor Springs, something for future generations to ponder if they can ever find it in the regrowth.

In 2001 Eleanor was awarded an ACT Landcare special commendation for her work with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group and in the following year received the NRMA ACT Volunteer of the Year Award in the environment and conservation category. She was made an honorary life member of the National Parks Association ACT, one of only 15 such awards in our 44 year history, not that she sought such recognition.

Eleanor was strong, she was resilient, determined and stoic to the end, a complex human with many facets. We will remember her kindly and with much gratitude but her best conservation legacy is the thriving native forest of trees and shrubs marking the former Gudgenby pine plantation.

**Kevin McCue**

# Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group news

The February, March and April work parties will continue weed control in regenerating areas and will also clear old fencing and enclosure materials from the Hospital Creek areas. The program beyond that is dependent on progress in burning and reseedling of the 80ha felled last year. The Parks Service plans to burn off the remaining trash in the autumn and seed into the resulting ash bed. The present intention is to seed the area from a helicopter, a practice widely used in regenerating native forests after commercial felling. If this goes ahead the group will hand-seed areas not reached from the air, and will spread seed with special requirement such as banksia.

The Parks Service is to place the Gudgenby area into its southern section, Senior Ranger Bernard Morris taking over responsibility. Thus we will see less of Ranger Darren Rosi who has made a great contribution to the project in recent years.

Hazel Rath has joined the group committee and Fiona MacDonald Brand has agreed to look after the photo record of our work. Clive Hurlstone is making arrangements for group members to be trained in the use of knapsack sprays and when this is done we will be better placed to deal with larger weed areas.

Environment ACT is planning to commemorate Eleanor Stodart by

establishing a regeneration grove in her memory in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Area. Remembering Eleanor's interest in re-establishing black sallys near Hospital Creek, the Parks Service believes that this would be an appropriate location for the grove and has arranged for some black sally seedlings to be raised for planting in the grove in the autumn. Saturday, May 7, has been tentatively set for the dedication of the memorial grove; details will be given in *Burning Issues* when confirmed. Please contact Clive Hurlstone or myself for details.

Syd Comfort.

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## ACT water developments

The year 2005 will be an important one for the ACT water supply system and for the environment as the Territory moves closer to making decisions on future water supply issues. Two significant documents which bear on this matter have recently been released.

Environment ACT has published *Environmental Flow Guidelines — A Technical Background Paper* which aims to provide background on the environmental flows in the ACT and how the current guidelines were set. Environment flows are the flows of water in our rivers and streams that are necessary to keep them healthy. Consideration of these flows in the ACT reflects a growing appreciation across governments and in the Australian community of the degradation of some rivers and waterways due to insufficient water in them.

Environmental flow guidelines specifying the flows required to maintain aquatic ecosystems in the ACT were finalised in 1999 and since then water allocation and licensing in the ACT has been based on these guidelines. The 1999 guidelines indicated a need for review after five years and this review has now commenced and will lead to revised environment flow guidelines in 2005.

Environment flows are a significant, some would say critical, component in

assessing future water supply requirements, an issue which will be addressed this year. Further, as the Government intends to issue revised environmental flow guidelines during this year, and to provide the opportunity for community input before new guidelines are adopted, there is a need for an understanding of the legislative and technical bases for determining ACT environment flows. This paper goes a long way towards meeting this need.

ACTEW Corporation has produced a report, *Future Water Options*, in response to an ACT Government request to address the questions of whether, and if so when, there is a need to provide additional water storage for the ACT and region. This is a concise, 24-page, but well referenced report which sets out the results developed from the construction of a computer model which assesses key variables in predicting when the next storage is required.

The key variables in this process are:

- natural environmental risk factors
  - climate variability and climate change;
- government planning parameters
  - population growth to 500 000 in 2 0 3 2
  - meeting water efficiency targets by reducing per capita use by 25 per

cent by 2032; and

- other factors on which agreement could be reached
  - level of environmental flows
  - level of water restrictions.

Whilst recognising the many factors bearing on the issue of future water supply for the Canberra region, the major thrust of this report is that Canberra is water rich, and that the catchments would meet existing environment flow obligations and support a population of 1 million. However, unless a high level of water restrictions is accepted, additional water storage will be required. In an exhibition titled *Palette of Possibilities* ACTEW presented the outcomes of its Future Waters Options project to the public during February and invited public comment before recommendations are made to government.

ACTEW Corporation will furnish government in March/April with recommendations on a strategy to meet future water needs.

Whichever strategy is proposed, it will have important environmental consequences for the ACT and is most likely to have direct implications for Namadgi National Park.

Syd Comfort

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### *Burning Issues*

Members who have an email address and are not receiving the association's monthly email newsletter, *Burning Issues*, are asked to email the NPA office giving their name and email address so that the distribution database can be updated.

# A Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT

*Late in October 2004 the ACT Emergency Services Authority released a draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (Version 1) for public comment. Recognising the significance of this document for the management of Namadgi National Park, the NPA prepared a comprehensive submission by early December. This important submission is set out below in full.*

*In January 2005 the Emergency Services Authority released The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Version 1 which will be effective for an interim period until 1 July 2005 when Version 2, a 10-year plan, will be introduced. Association Secretary Christine Goonrey's comments on this plan are set out following the submission on the draft.*

## **NPA submission on draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan**

### **Introduction**

The National Parks Association of the ACT was formed in 1960 as part of a national movement to create a system of properly managed national parks and to promote environmental awareness. NPA ACT worked for nearly twenty-five years for the creation of Namadgi National Park, which was finally gazetted on 3 October 1984. Over the following years, members have brought considerable scientific, organisational and political skills to the rehabilitation and conservation of the park.

Following the bushfires of January 2003, the issues of restoring and preserving the park have taken on a new magnitude. Ninety-five percent of Namadgi National Park was burnt at a level of severity which will prolong its recovery over several decades. At the same time, pressure is being exerted to increase prescribed burning and a network of service roads within the park to protect the park's neighbours.

We understand that the Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT has been developed within a challenging economic and political environment. Nevertheless, this pressure must be balanced against the overriding purpose of Namadgi National Park which is the protection and enhancement of the natural values of the environment as an

ecologically viable and sustainable system.

- Namadgi National Park contains unique plants and animals, including insects and birds, which would alone justify the most rigorous care and protection. In addition it has important examples of coastal, mountain, woodland and grassland ecosystems which are rarely seen in such close conjunction. Namadgi National Park contains a unique mingling of these ecosystems and often marks the most northern or western extent of important species.
- It is also an integral part of the Australian Alps environmental system, its landforms and landscapes. Policies and management practices of the different parks in this system require careful and close alignment to protect their unique and inter-related values.

Maintenance and enhancement of wilderness areas is crucial to the purpose of Namadgi National Park. It is important also to note that those areas which survived the bushfires in 2003 better than others now have a very special value as refuge/regeneration areas. Fire prevention works and activities should be kept to a minimum in these areas and the lowest environmental impact options should be selected when planning such works and activity.

### **General Comments on the Plan**

- In general the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan has many excellent statements of purpose in the first sections but there is little reflection of these when it comes down to specifics and measurable goals. For example, the specific targets in the table in Appendix 10.2 are in some cases well beyond the limits of sound environmental practice. This dichotomy between good intentions and prescriptive standards is a disturbing feature of this draft.
- The report lacks research or references to support proposed changes to existing practice. For example, the fuel reduction cycle for the Landscape Division Zone has been changed from the present 12–15 years to 8–12 years without supporting evidence for such frequent burning which has the potential to permanently alter

sensitive landscapes.

- The hierarchy between this plan and Bushfire Operational Plans is not clear. For example, the strategic principles on fire access (page 36) would appear to require or authorise the construction of an extensive network of fire trails, roads and other infrastructure such as dams for Namadgi. Yet these principles are so vague as to be virtually meaningless in determining the actual extent of works in sensitive areas. It appears an important argument about the extent of such infrastructure is being carried out away from the public gaze and this is not acceptable.
- The plan does not demonstrate an appreciation of the very real conflict between fuel reduction and protection of natural values in national and urban parks. Invasive practices such as construction of broad, well graded roads may be seen by some as an essential part of fire management in remote areas, but they are a threat to the wilderness values of the national park and invite illegal access by off-road motor vehicles to the most sensitive areas.
- The plan offers no mechanism for resolution of potential conflict between different land managers, and between land managers and individual land holders regarding fuel reduction and fire management. It attempts to resolve the current blame game simply through prescriptive fuel reduction regimes. NPA ACT believes that such conflict can be resolved through education, sharing of values and experience, and use of appropriate research to inform opinion and action. There needs to be a substantial section in the plan to address these strategies or the whole plan will be undermined by suspicion and self-interest.
- The plan relies on traditional, orthodox equipment and methodology, eg large tankers and prescriptive fuel reduction, which are not appropriate in wilderness areas. It needs to set out strategies to develop more appropriate fire management techniques for sensitive areas over the next few years.

### **Specific comments on the Draft Strategic Bushfire**

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Management Plan

### 1. Context of the Plan

- The discussion of environmental impacts of fire is too brief and what is there is not reflected in the fire management strategies except in the vaguest terms. There is not an adequate exploration of the perceived conflict between fire management and management of the National, Nature and Urban Parks. This is an appropriate place to discuss this perceived conflict and establish some principles for resolving it.
- There is a lack of detail and of focus on protecting ecological systems and biodiversity and scant mention of the significance of biodiversity (only mentioned on p 61). For example, there should be vegetation maps showing dominant plant communities and distribution of fauna; there should be checklists of rare and endangered flora or fauna species. This needs to apply not just to Namadgi but across the ACT's parks and conservation areas.
- There is no flow chart to show how different fire agencies operate and communicate or to show how the chain of command works.

### 2 Bushfires and the ACT

- The NPA ACT agrees with the statement that "The majority of fire ignitions are from arson ... people are the major source of bushfire ignitions ..." (p 25, section 2.2) The implications of this statement should be reflected in the rest of the plan. The proposed road network in the Namadgi Wilderness area will increase people's access to these sensitive areas and hence increase the risk of fire through arson and accidental ignition.
- The maps on page 23 are too small and impossible to read. Including the effects of the fires on surrounding regions would make them more useful.
- There is inadequate discussion about the impact of climate change. Page 25 contains one of the few references to climate change but it is specifically related to fire fighting and the nature of fires. The plan needs to demonstrate some understanding of the impact of climate change on the overall viability of ecosystems, their sensitivity to fire and related factors such as growth and regeneration rates. For example, prolonged drought has the capacity to reduce growth in our native forests and impair the capacity of forests to

recover from even relatively mild burns. There needs to be a discussion of how this plan would operate under different climatic conditions.

- The pragmatic analysis of opportunities for prescribed burning on pages 25-27 is not reflected in the setting of actual targets for prescribed burning in the table at 10.3. The frequency targets could lead to periods in which prescribed burns were conducted which caused unacceptable damage to the park, simply because the weather was right.

### 3 Bushfire Risk Assessment

- There is not sufficient research cited into the different types of fire, impacts of fire reduction, effectiveness of fire management strategies. There need to be planned research targets and strategies and an inbuilt capacity to respond to new research findings as they become available.
- There is no reference to satellite imagery or related research and analysis to refine and delineate risk areas so as to protect fragile ecosystems from both prescribed burning and bushfire.

### 4. Prevention

- It is nice to see the acknowledgement that "fuel management is not the panacea for bushfire protection and it will not eliminate the risk of severe bushfires." However, the plan then goes on to ignore this valuable principle and discuss fuel reduction as if it is to take precedence over competing priorities such as conservation. If this is to be the case, the plan needs to specify this and to give sound research-based reasons why a prescribed burning target should override a more conservation-based strategy in the event of a clash.
- As it stands, the proposed prevention methods are a model of orthodoxy rather than seeking clever solutions to competing priorities. Surely the ACT can take a leading role in developing low impact fire prevention and management strategies, given the scientific resources, the inter-connectedness of our urban and remote landscapes and the wealth of experience we have on hand.
- The discussion on the role of grazing is confused and inconclusive. It appears to use grazing as a legitimate fire reduction strategy for leased land and in

regard to hoofed animals. Yet the plan does not mention the risk-reduction role for native animals grazing on native grasses in parks and reserves. Why is this not included?

- The section on standards and indicators on page 37 is simply inadequate for public discussion and comment.

### 5. Preparedness

- The problems of keeping an appropriate level of community awareness are outlined but no real solutions or strategies are set out. This reinforces the need for the plan to set strategies on a long term education and information program which instils in the community an understanding of their role in fire management in the ACT.
- Fire fighters need to be trained to recognise and understand the environmental values of the areas they are dealing with. For example, back burning to protect a vulnerable forest is counter productive if it burns through an alpine bog. Fire fighters in urban parks are usually unaware of rare plants which need to be conserved such as orchids endemic to the area. A clearer understanding of the ecology of the bush would enable fire fighters to better plan, prepare and manage fire in these areas.
- Automatic lightning detection systems for large areas of bush have been developed in Australia but again there is no mention of establishing this technology in the ACT in order to improve our ability to implement low impact strategies (p 43).
- The discussion on use of aerial fire suppression is an excellent example of the mixed messages in the plan on environmental protection. It flags expansion of remote area helipads in Namadgi as a matter of course without regard to its environmental impact and then talks about being sensitive to the environmental impacts of fire retardants. This plan needs a thorough review by expert environmental managers before it is finalised.

### 6. Response — Reacting to Bushfires

- It is not stated clearly in the principles in 6.3 on page 45 where responsibility for fighting fires within Namadgi National Park will actually lie. We strongly support

(Continued on page 8)

# A Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT

(Continued from page 7)

park management as having a key role in managing the response to all unplanned fires within the park, except where the extent of fires makes this impractical.

- We also support the principle of “the use of appropriate equipment suitable for the terrain”. Very large tankers and low loaders are not suitable for the wilderness terrain and this must be acknowledged in the plan. Suitable alternatives such as aerial fire suppression should be specified.

## 7. Recovery — Restoring Bushfire Damage

- Research gets a mention here but it should play a much larger role than this, as specified above.

## 8. Standards, Monitoring and Reporting

- This section asks for consistent monitoring and reporting yet the only reportable standards in the plan are those for prescribed burning. This is deeply worrying. It indicates an approach to practice-driven fire management rather than research or science-driven management.
- We do not support the inclusion in the reporting section (8.4.5.2) of “burning for ecological outcomes”. This reference gives support to a contentious notion that ecological outcomes can be achieved by burning and this theory is not applicable to large areas of the ACT. It reflects a tendency to rely on unexamined assumptions that all Aboriginal communities used burning in the past to increase food supplies. In many areas of the ACT, frequent burning promotes shrubby undergrowth — and increased fuel loads — at the expense of other species such as grass and hence inhibits food gathering.
- We support an adaptive and flexible approach to planning (page 55) but cannot see where this approach is spelled out in any detail in the plan.

Flexibility is not synonymous with lack of detail. The plan should be driven by a research-based approach which follows a cycle of observe, assess, evaluate and adapt. This approach should be built into the Strategic Plan from the outset.

## 9. Resource Requirements

- Resource requirements should include adequate provision for ameliorating erosion, and setting up weed control programs where fire prevention infrastructure has damaged the area. It should also include the cost of patrolling and policing to prevent illegal access where fire trails have opened up previously inaccessible areas or improved access for illegal vehicles.

## 10. Appendices

- The map in this section is impossible to read with any accuracy but it appears that the proposed Landscape Division Zone includes areas of wilderness which should not be subjected to the severe fire management regimes proposed. There needs to be more accurate and careful delineation of this zone if it is to achieve the desired intention without causing severe damage.
- The prescribed burning cycles are too broad and do not address the different responses of different ecosystems to fire. For example, the targets appear to focus on managing *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* (red stringy bark) forests and to set standards for management of fuel loads in this type of forest which are inappropriate to other types of forests.
- The terminology is unclear and unreferenced. For example, what does ‘fuel hazard <35’ on page 65 refer to? There is no table defining fuel hazard ratings in the plan.
- In previous fuel management plans, description of fuel loads has been in terms of tonnes per hectare. This appendix refers to Overall Fuel Hazard, litter bed depth, elevated fuels, ungrazed grasslands fuel hazard bark fuels, surface fine fuels

and litter bed height without specifying how they all work together or how they relate to previous practice. This further emphasises the need for a glossary or section defining such terms and listing references in regard to their development and use.

- Referring to the proportion of DUS land in these tables appears to establish all DUS land as interchangeable in use and value, and this is very clearly not the case. This plan needs to list different strategies for different land uses within the broad categories of land delineation. For example, “unleased land awaiting development” can wear a far more rigorous prescribed burning regime than Canberra Nature Parks. Then, within Canberra Nature Parks themselves, different strategies need to be applied to different areas. For example commercial grazing is proposed for the grasslands on Coleman Ridge but this would be completely inappropriate for the grasslands in Aranda. Combining all these areas together, even at this broad level of planning, conceals the complexity of the issues which is not helpful.
- As mentioned elsewhere, the cycles of prescribed burning are too harsh and too general. The time periods are not related to any supporting research and they do not differentiate between different types of bush or different stages of the climate cycle. Yet they are the only numerical targets in the plan and hence would come to dominate managers’ planning and accountability. This is unacceptable.
- The plan does pay some attention to ecological impact at this point but it is so vague as to be virtually meaningless. As stated before, there are conflicts between fire management and ecological sustainability of our parks and nature reserves. These conflicts need to be laid out and addressed in the plan.

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## Old NPA Bulletins

Doreen Wilson, phone 6288 5215, is about to dispose of her *Bulletins* post March 1992 and would be happy to pass them on to anyone who would like them.



# Update on the Bushfire Management Plan

NPA ACT made a submission to the ACT Government in December 2004 on a draft of the "Strategic Bushfire Management Plan". In January 2005 the Government published Version 1 of the plan. This version has been released "to set the scene and provide clear objectives, strategies and actions for bushfire management."

Further analysis and investigation will be conducted until 1 July 2005 when Version 2 will be finalised and formalised. Public consultation on this final version is not yet specified but we would expect the public would be able to make comments and submissions prior to its finalisation.

So how does this first draft reflect the concerns put in our submission? A first reading does not reveal a more consistent approach to environmental issues or greater accessibility to specific information. Our major concern has always been the potential for new, significantly widened fire trails to open up Namadgi to weeds, illegal vehicles, arsonists and feral animals without significantly reducing the impact of fires on the Park or on the city. The good news is that Map 9 indicates, at this stage, a less dramatic interference with wilderness areas by fire trails than was first planned. However, the burden of proof for effectiveness of new fire trail regimes seems not to have been addressed, leaving the assumption that "the more fire trails the better" is the standard underpinning the plan.

Further, we are no more the wiser in this plan as to what the standards for

fire trail development will be. We are merely informed that "the standards for ground access have been developed and documented by the Department of Urban Services". So, over the next few months we will have to chase information and cobble it together to understand how the different proposals, standards and assessments will impact on the Park.

There are worrying indications that the strategy is even less sympathetic to environmental considerations than the first draft. It still states that "The majority of fire ignitions are from arson and arson ignitions are correlated to the demographics of the ACT" (page 26) but the plan appears to have shifted emphasis from such fires to "relatively rare but severe events (which) cause 95% of the damage and loss to people, property and homes" (page 23). There are no figures to back up this assertion.

This shift is demonstrated in Maps 3, 4 and 5 "Risk Assessment — Where Fires Start", "Risk Assessment — How Fires Spread" and "Risk Assessment — Potential Consequences" which draw a picture of Namadgi National Park as a high risk for fire ignition and fire spread but low on the impact and potential consequences scale. Again, there is no data to back up the assertions of risk or discussion of the basis for these assessments. It is hard to make sense of all this until we see the low assessment of the impact of the 2003 fires on Namadgi, as shown in Map 5. We need to understand that this strategic plan deals only with

commercial values, not environmental values.

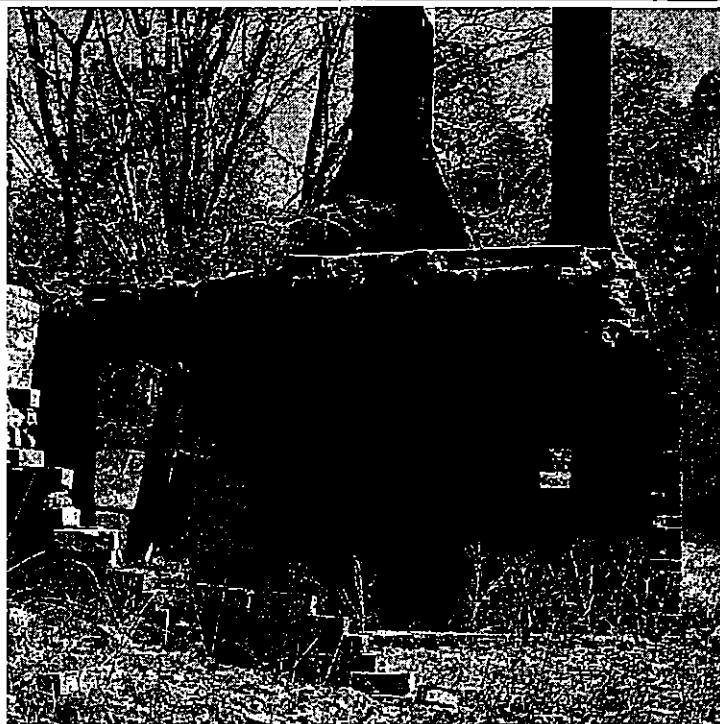
Overall the pre-eminence of fire management strategies over environmental concerns is made clear: "Better access to parks and forested areas of the ACT and neighbouring NSW is required. Land managers and owners across all land uses must develop and maintain appropriate fire access networks to support bushfire management activities." (Page 43)

Fair enough, but what is equally clear is that the strategic plan has no clear guidelines or reporting standards on what are the most effective fire management activities. Perhaps this is because there has not been enough research done in this area, perhaps there is not enough agreement among the experts. A continuing criticism of the plan is that it is very thin on research into effective fire management and incorporating such research into future plans. However, the Council of Australian Government (COAG) report of January 2005 has identified research as one of the community's highest priorities.

All of which leaves us with a real concern that areas of the park could be significantly damaged in order to install fire trails which offer no real protection or useful role in fire management but encourage residents in the ACT to assume they are protected from wildfires. The Committee will keep you up to date as we explore these issues further.

Christine Goonrey

*Jounama Homestead ruins are located in central Kosciuszko National Park between Blowering Reservoir and Yarangobilly, and were occupied until the 1950s. They have been subjected to fire damage on at least two occasions. Their substantial brick construction echoes an era of considerable wealth. Photo Martin Chalk*



# Montague: the nature of the island



Montague Island — the small island that we hear about during the Sydney to Hobart yacht race or in weather reports — is undergoing a major transformation.

It is demonstrating that a sustained, dedicated effort can rehabilitate native vegetation after more than a century of heavy use and feral invasion. The final goal — to turn the island into a world class nature reserve — is still a little way off, but with every season is appearing more achievable.

Montague Island, about 9km offshore from Narooma, is a significant seabird breeding colony. During summer up to 12 000 little penguins nest under the *Lomandra* and in just

about any available space. The sky at dusk is a sight to behold as huge numbers of adult wedge-tailed, short-tailed and sooty shearwaters bring home the day's catch to their rowdy, hungry chicks. Silver gulls and crested terns crowd in for their space to nest and on the breeze often wafts the distinctive smell of the Australian and New Zealand fur seals from their haul-out sites on the northern perimeter.

The island is a remnant of a volcanic pipe formed during the violent volcanic eruption that created Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) and the other pipe Najanuga (Little Dromedary) about 95 million years ago. The local Aboriginal people know the island as

Barunguba. Archaeological sites record their long use of the island's rich food resources.

This wild and windswept place is also the location of the romantic Montague Island lighthouse, commissioned in 1881 and manned up until 1987. Designed by colonial architect James Barnet, the impressive tower, the keepers' quarters and outbuildings are a lasting monument to the aesthetics, technology, innovation and back-breaking labour of the time. Granite quarried and hewn on the island forms the basic construction and other materials were landed at a jetty on the western shore and taken by a tramway to the building site. Reluctant horses were swum from Narooma to help in the work.

Today a small cemetery bears testimony to the hardships and isolation of the early lighthouse keepers. The graves are those of an assistant keeper, Charles Townsend, who was killed when a horse bolted, and of children John (9 years 10 months) and Isabella Burgess (1 year 8 months) who died of suspected meningitis.

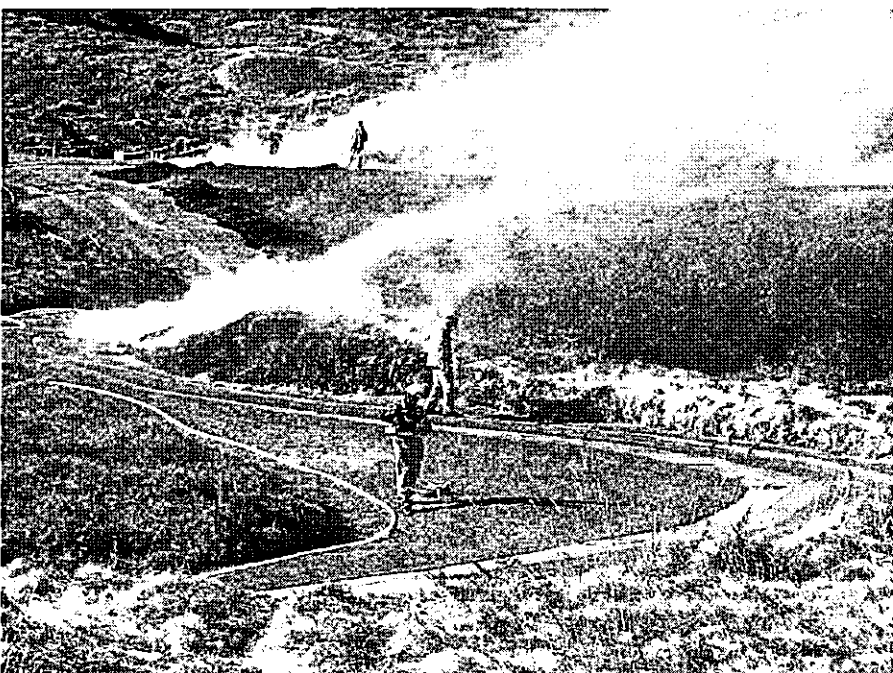
Gradual improvements in technology, transport and communication ushered in new eras on the island but in the late 1980s everything on Montague was showing signs of severe wear and tear. Tonnes of rubbish had accumulated, the buildings were weathered, weeds choked the native flora and goats and other feral animals were rampant. Although declared a wildlife sanctuary with restricted public access in 1953, little had been done about conserving the native species.

The light was automated in 1986 and the old lens and lantern dismantled and taken to the museum at Narooma. Today a massive solar array powers the halogen light.

Fortunately, an injection of heritage funding accompanied the Department of Transport's hand-over of Montague Island to NPWS. Urgent restoration of the historic buildings and a whole island cleanup dominated the first decade of NPWS' stewardship.

Since 1997, however, the focus has been on restoring and protecting the island's ecosystems. The goats were removed (not without controversy!). Then the service and Charles Sturt University (CSU) developed an action program to rehabilitate the native vegetation and to protect the seabird colonies. Many happy student hours have been spent on the island collecting

*(Continued on page 11)*



Top. Aerial view of Montague Island.

Above. One of last winter's controlled burns to eradicate kikuyu grass on Montague Island. Photos Ross Constable, Ranger, NSW NPWS.

# Additions to south NSW national parks

*The NSW Government made additions to three national parks in December last. Some details are set out in the following extracts from the press release of 17 December 2004 by the Primary Industries Minister for NSW, Ian MacDonald.*

“The State Government today announced that 6115 hectares of forest will be added to national parks and state conservation areas in the south east of NSW.

“This brings the total forested area of the national park estate in the southeast to more than 808 000 hectares. At the same time, 364 000 hectares of native forest will remain as state forest, which will support

sustainable timber production for the region.

“Under the Southern Icons decision, 3033 hectares of the Monga State forest will join the Monga National Park and state conservation areas. Nearly 2790 hectares in the upper reaches of the Deua River catchment in the Dampier State Forest will also join Deua National Park.

“Roughly 290 hectares of forest east of the Princes Highway near Termeil will become an extension of the Murramarang National Park — including the area surrounding the famous giant spotted gum known as ‘Old Blotchy’.

“This decision strikes a reasonable balance between the preservation of

natural heritage areas and continued support for a sustainable, profitable timber industry in regional NSW.”

Friends of Durras spokesperson John Perkins said the organisation was very grateful that Compartment 70, which includes the largest spotted gum in the Murramarang area, had been added to the national park. “It is a significant addition and it is only logical that all forest east of the highway be protected,” Mr Perkins said.

It was, however, through the lobbying of conservationists and not the generosity of the Government, he said, that the decision had come about.

SFC

## Montague: the nature of the island

*continued from previous page*

data and shaping aspects of the program.

In the middle of last year prescribed burning and aerial spraying tackled sections of the kikuyu infestation which has been smothering the penguin burrows and tangling and killing some of the birds. The timing coincided with the penguins’ absence at sea. Close monitoring will show which method works best and determine how the remainder of the area should be managed.

The success of the revegetation efforts is clearly apparent this summer with a marked difference between the untreated areas and the study plots where weeds have been removed and seedlings planted. Over the last few years, 30 000 tube stock have been planted out, mostly grown from locally collected seeds. In some plots the acacias are already nearly 2m tall and providing shelter for associated species.

The research is also monitoring human impact on the island generally and ensuring that future management decisions are based on best available information.

The latest pilot program is an ecotourism venture involving CSU and Conservation Volunteers Australia. Interested members of the public are paying for the exclusive experience of participating in “hands on” projects, such as seabird census, beach counts

and vegetation surveys. They also get to see the seals and, at the right time of year, whales and turtles.

At the end of the day the tour group — 10 participants and two guides — stays in the recently-renovated lighthouse keepers’ cottage, enjoying the magnificent outlook and laid on meals.

As well as giving members of the public the opportunity for an extended stay on the island, the pilot program is providing a volunteer labour force and some extra dollars for ongoing research and maintenance costs.

The tours started in January 2005 and the ranger responsible for Montague Island, Ross Constable, is

pleased with the outcome so far. “The tours appeal to nature lovers, lighthouse enthusiasts and people who have an interest in science and adventure ecotourism,” he said. “I think participants are happy that they have had value for money, experiencing life in a working offshore light station located on one of the most beautiful coastlines in Australia.”

Tours are already scheduled for next summer. For more information:

Conservation Volunteers Australia  
Freecall 1800 032 501 Email:  
info@conservationvolunteers.com.au

Den Robin

*Right. PhD student Amy Jorganson and Andy Young, NPWS Narooma field officer, measuring Little Penguins to monitor breeding success.*

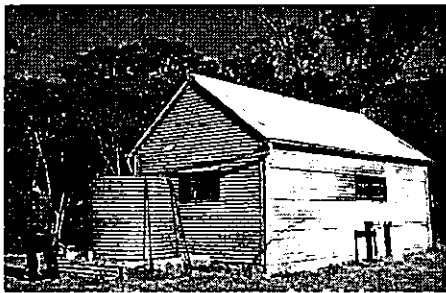


# Namadgi conservation management plans

*Conservation management plans for a number of huts and other places in Namadgi National Park were prepared in June 2004, and most of these were outlined in articles in the September and December 2004 issues of the Bulletin. This article describes the plans for the remaining two places and summarises the position with regard to the heritage listing of all the places reported on in June 2004.*

## Horse Gully Hut

Located on a small tributary of the Naas River, this is a former stockman's hut and is now used as a recreation shelter. The present hut was built in the 1940s and is an excellent example of a simple one-roomed corrugated iron stockman's hut. It is the third hut built on the present site, the first being in the 19th century, surface remains of which are still visible.



The hut is already in the ACT Heritage Places Register as part of a series of Stockman's Huts. The plan confirmed that the hut and exotic trees noted in the current listing are of significance, but also observed that other cultural features of the complex add to the hut's importance, are important in their own right, and form a cultural precinct around the hut. These features include a series of fence posts and remnant and collapsed fences and gates.

The plan draws attention to the significance of the precinct for its cultural continuity dating back to pre-European times. The precinct is considered to have high aesthetic and cultural landscape value and is highly valued by community groups. It is

recommended that the area to be registered for heritage significance should be extended, with a 150m radius around the current hut.

## Cotter Hut

The current Cotter Hut is located on the river flats of the upper Cotter River on the western side of the river within the Bimberi Wilderness Area of Namadgi. The original Cotter Hut (often referred to in the past as Cotter House) was located on the eastern side of the river about 250m from the current hut and was relocated to the western side of the river about 1937. It was demolished in c.1960 and all that appears to remain is a slight depression about 20m to the east of the present Cotter Hut.



Cotter Hut is not in the ACT Heritage Places Register, but the plan assessed it to have heritage significance in the following statement:

"The present Cotter Hut, the Ranger's Hut was built in 1960 as a base for rangers in the then upper Cotter River water catchment, and is now used as ranger's base for the Bimberi Wilderness Area. This use of three different phases of huts, or houses, at the site over almost a hundred years, follows some fifty years as a remote pastoral homestead, and serves to highlight the very remoteness of those early settlers. The present hut is the third or fourth phase of accommodation over that time, and maintains its role as a centre for remote high country activity. In the past it was a social focus for a network of families and places forming a pastoral landscape across the high country, and for those who stopped at Cotter House on the way to their snow leases.

"The Cotter Huts precinct is

therefore significant for its association with early remote pastoral activity in high country, and for its current continuity of remote high country activity to the protection of pristine naturalness, reflecting the shift in priorities for such areas in Australia ..."

The plan proposes an area of 300m radius be registered for heritage significance to take in the present Cotter Hut and the cultural remains of the early hut and associated features.

## Heritage listings

The ACT Heritage Council has proposed entries to an interim Heritage Places Register for the following places:

- Old Orroral Homestead & Ploughland (currently listed on the Register of the National Estate as an Indicative Place)
- Brandy Hut Precinct (not entered in an interim Heritage Places Register)
- ACT Forest (Boboyan) Hut (not entered in an interim Heritage Places Register)
- Cotter Hut Precinct (not entered in an interim Heritage Places Register)

Public submissions on these proposed entries were invited and closed on 7 February 2005.

I understand that entries for the register are being prepared for the places set out below, which are already included in heritage listings. These entries will aim to revise the existing listings and extend the areas covered. If accepted, these revisions will take effect under new legislation which comes into force on 9 March 2005

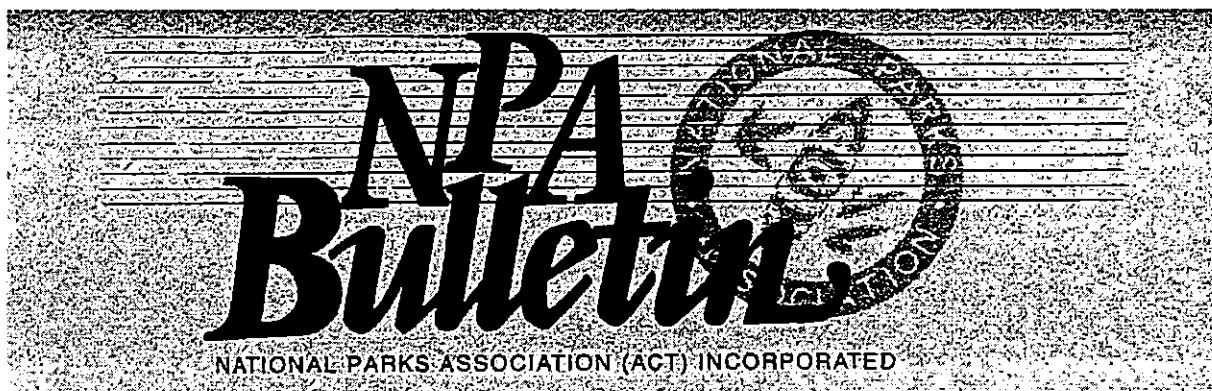
Tennent Homestead  
Gudgenby Precinct  
Frank and Jacks Hut  
Horse Gully Hut.

**Syd Comfort**

*Conservation management plans for Horse Gully Hut and Cotter Hut were prepared by Marilyn C Truscott, Pip Giovanelli, Alistair Grinbergs and Duncan Marshall. The photos are from these reports.*

## Two Fires Festival

The *Two Fires Festival*, to be held in Braidwood in March is to include an interesting walking program being arranged by the Braidwood Walking Group. Also during the festival the *Monga National Park* book, which the NPA supported, is to be launched. The festival website is [www.twofiresfestival.com](http://www.twofiresfestival.com)



# NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

March 2005 – June 2005

## 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.

## Points to note

Please help keep our outings program alive by volunteering to lead outings. New leaders are welcome. The outings convener 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.

Passenger transport. The committee suggests a donation, to the nearest dollar, of THIRTY cents per kilometer. This is based on four occupants in the car including the driver. When odd numbers arise, the total contribution is divided by the number of cars. The amount may be varied at the discretion of the leader.

Drive and walk distances quoted in the program are approximate distances for return journeys.

**12 March Saturday Work Party  
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration**

**Contact:** Syd Comfort 62862578,  
scomfort@netspeed.com.au  
or Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,  
clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15am or at Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00am. Work for the rehabilitation of the old Boboyan pine forest area. Tools will be provided.

**12 March Saturday Walk  
Goulburn Historical Walk**

**Map:** Goulburn Street Map

**Grading:** 1A

**Leader:** Colin McAlister

**Contact:** 62884171

A walk taking in some of Goulburn's historic sites. This is the weekend of the Rose Festival. Sites to be visited will depend on what is open. Possibilities include: the old Goulburn Brewery, Rocky Hill war memorial, the two cathedrals, the K Water works Museum and Kenmore Hospital. Fees/donations apply at some sites.

Meet at 8:30am at the ACT Netball Centre carpark just past the Dickson traffic lights on Northbourne Ave. Drive: 200 km, \$60 per car.

**19-21 March Weekend Walk  
Mt Kelly**

**Map:** Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A/B/C

**Leader:** Steven Forst

**Contact:** 62516817 (h) 62195236 (w)  
or steven.forst@aca.gov.au

A walk to Mt Kelly for views over southern Namadgi. The walk starts from the Yankee Hat car park and proceeds over the Gudgenby saddle and on to a campsite on Sam's Creek. Visit Mt Kelly the next day as a day walk for majestic views over Namadgi. Walk out the third day. Drive: 140 km, \$40 per car.

**23 March Wednesday Walk  
Mountains Majura and Ainslie**

**Map:** Canberra Street Directory

**Grading:** 2A

**Leader:** Rob Forster

**Contact:** 62498546 or

[mrforster@home.com.au](mailto:mrforster@home.com.au)

Meet at 9:00am at the Anthill Street, Hackett access to the Canberra Nature Park (just past the last house). Walk up trail to Mt Majura then along the ridge line to Mt Ainslie. Return by the lower route back to the cars.

**27 March Sunday Walk  
Botherum Plain**

**Map:** Nimmo Plain & Kalkite Mountain 1:25,000

**Grading:** 2 A/B/C/F

**Leader:** Brian Slee

**Contact:** 6281 0719 (h) or

[brianslee@iprimus.com.au](mailto:brianslee@iprimus.com.au)

Depart Kambah Village 6.45am and after passing through Cooma, take Rocky Plain Road (toward Eucumbene Dam), turn on to Nimmo Road and then on to Island Bend Fire Trail (following powerline) to Gungarlin River. After parking on northern side of bridge, cross it and head south-east to Botherum Hut for a break. Wade across Gungarlin River and continue across Botherum Plain to Kalkite Gap. If feasible, climb Kalkite Mountain for views over Lake Jindabyne. Return by same route. Afternoon tea at Cooma. Book with leader as vehicles with basic 4WD are required for road in. Drive: 300 km, \$90 per car.

**30 March Wednesday Walk  
Gudgenby-Middle Creek**

**Map:** Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A

**Leader:** Syd Comfort

**Contact:** 6286 2578 or

[scomfort@netspeed.com.au](mailto:scomfort@netspeed.com.au)

A walk up Middle Creek to a rock shelter and axe grinding grooves, then across to the Yankee Hat rock art site and back through the Gudgenby bush regeneration area. Mainly off track through open areas but some scrub. About 14km. Meet Kambah shops at 8.30 am. Drive: 140 km, \$40 per car

**2 April Saturday Walk  
Hume & Hovell – Wee Jasper**

**Map:** Brindabella 1:100 000

**Grading:** 3 A

**Leader:** Mike Smith

**Contact:** 6286 2984 or

[msmith@netspeed.com.au](mailto:msmith@netspeed.com.au)

Meet at Deeks Forest carpark off Uriarra Rd near the Cotter Rd at 8:00am. Walk the Hume and Hovell Track from the Fitzpatrick trackhead at Wee Jasper to the Logbridge Creek via Mt Wee Jasper with a climb of 600m. Car shuffle. Drive: 130 km, \$39 per car.

**3 April Sunday Walk  
Mt Tantangara**

**Map:** Denison, Tantangara 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A/B/C

**Leader:** Brian Slee

**Contact:** 6281 0719 (h)

[brianslee@iprimus.com.au](mailto:brianslee@iprimus.com.au)

Depart Kambah Village 7:30am. Drive to Adaminaby and follow Snowy Mountains Highway to Alpine Creek Fire Trail. Walk north on trail through forest to Boggy Plain and climb to summit of Mt Tantangara (1745m), mostly on brumby tracks. Continue north one km to unnamed peak (1695m) for views of frost plains north of Kiandra. Descend to Tantangara Hut for lunch. In afternoon, walk through lovely open country to ridge further west for fine views of Jagungal and Tabletop. Return via Mt Tantangara. Almost 15km but can be shortened, depending on conditions and preferences of group. Afternoon tea in Adaminaby. 250 km, \$75 per car.

**2-3 April Beginners Weekend Walk  
Namadgi National Park**

**Map:** Corin Dam, Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A

**Leader:** David Large

**Contact:** 62914830 or

[david.large@bigpond.com](mailto:david.large@bigpond.com)

An easy walk, downhill all the way on track or footpad, ideal for those who would like to experience overnight hiking. Walk from the Smokers Trail Carpark down to Orroral Valley to find a pleasant campsite near the river. On Sunday, walk down the valley to the Picnic Area then on the Heritage Track, past Orroral Homestead to Orroral Campground. Contact leader if you require gear for overnight camping or advice on what to bring.

**9 April Saturday Work Party  
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration  
Group**

**Contact:** Syd Comfort 62862578,

[scomfort@netspeed.com.au](mailto:scomfort@netspeed.com.au)

or Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,

[clive.hurlstone@csiro.au](mailto:clive.hurlstone@csiro.au)

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15am or at Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00am. Work for the rehabilitation of the old Boboyan pine forest area. Tools will be provided.

**10 April Sunday Walk  
KHA Three Huts Walk –  
Heritage Week**

**Maps:** Yaouk and Shannons Flat

1:25 000

**Grading:** 1AB

**Contact:** David Large 6291 4830 or

[david.large@bigpond.com](mailto:david.large@bigpond.com)

A joint event with the Kosciuszko Huts Association to celebrate Heritage Week. A circular walk from Brayshaws Hut to Westernmans Homestead and Waterhole Hut. Walks will take place both morning and afternoon. Bring the family, easy walking on track and footpad. Information about the history and families who lived and worked in this area will be given by guides.

**17 April Sunday Walk  
Coree Falls and Devils Peak**

**Map:** Cotter Dam 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2 A/C/E

**Leader:** Max Lawrence

**Contact:** 6288 1370

[mlawrence@netspeed.com.au](mailto:mlawrence@netspeed.com.au)

Meet at Cooleman Court carpark next to Macdonalds at 8.30am. From Blundells Arboretum we will initially walk along Pabral Road before heading offtrack to the top of Coree falls, and thence climb a further 350m to the top of the Devils Peak for good views of Mt Coree. Return via Two Sticks and Pabral Roads, with shortcut. Whole area has been burnt, so expect some regeneration underfoot. Drive: 90kms, \$27 per car.

**16 – 21 April Five Day Pack Walk  
Hume and Hovell –**

**Tumbarumba to Tumut**

**Map:** H&H Guide book and strip maps.

**Grading:** 3A

**Leader:** David Large

**Contact:** 6291 4830 or

[david.large@bigpond.com.au](mailto:david.large@bigpond.com.au)

Walk deferred from January. Five days of walking on the Hume and Hovell Track plus driving time. Walk may go N/S or S/N depending on numbers and transport arrangements. This is a fairly easy walk but with some longish days. We may take the short cuts along the Blowering Dam to fit into time. Contact leader for details and expressions of interest by 8 April.

**23 April Saturday Work Party  
Yerrabi Track**

**Leader:** Martin Chalk

**Phone:** 6292 3502

This work party will involve continuing maintenance of the track (cairn re-building, acacia removal from track edges and waterbar replacement) plus some weeding of thistles from around Mura Swamp. Tools will be provided but if you have some gardening gloves, please bring them along. Meet at Namadgi Visitor

Centre at 8:30am. Drive: 140km, \$42 per car.

**24 April Sunday Walk  
Tidbinbilla and Johns Peaks**

**Map:** Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

**Grading:** 3 A/C/E

**Leader:** Steve Hill

**Contact:** 62319186; email;

[landshil@webone.com](mailto:landshil@webone.com)

A chance to visit the northern half of the Tidbinbilla Range. There are great views during much of this reasonably strenuous walk – all of which is revegetating vigorously now. We follow the steady climb of the Mountain Creek firetrail to Tidbinbilla spur to climb Tidbinbilla Peak (1572m), maybe first ducking south for a few hundred metres to a nice viewpoint. We then travel north, down the main ridge to John's Peak (about 1450m). The walk includes some mild bush negotiation and plenty of rock scrambling. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 8.30 for a beaut day. \$24 per car.

**23-25 April (Anzac day Weekend)**

**Base Camp "Burrawang"**

**Map:** Wandella 1.25 000

**Grading:** 2B

**Leader:** Geoff and Den Robin

**Contact:** (02) 6493 6552 or

[robin@acr.net.au](mailto:robin@acr.net.au)

A camp at Geoff and Den's bush block at Dignams Creek will provide an opportunity for a day trip up Gulaga (Mount Dromedary) and some local walks in Kooraban, Gulaga and Eurobodalla National Parks. Basic camping facilities, a BBQ one night and a shared 'party' meal the other. Contact leaders at least a week beforehand for directions and more details.

**27 April Wednesday Walk**

**Leader:** David Large

**Contact:** 6291 4830 or

[david.large@bigpond.com.au](mailto:david.large@bigpond.com.au)

Details to be advised by the midweek walks email list or contact the leader.

**30 April Saturday Walk  
Demanding and Horse Gully Huts**

**Leader:** Steven Forst

**Grading:** 2 A

**Map:** ACT 1:100 000

**Contact:** 6219 5236(w) 6251 6817(h)

[steven.forst@aca.gov.au](mailto:steven.forst@aca.gov.au)

Meet at the Kambah Village Shops at 8:30am. A walk from the

Mt Clear camping ground along the Naas river to Demanding Hut and then on to Horse Gully Hut. 150 km, \$45 per car.

**1 May Sunday Walk**

**Tinderry Twin Peak**

**Maps:** Tinderry, Michelago 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2 A/D/E

**Leader:** Max Lawrence

**Contact:** 6288 1370

[mlawrence@netspeed.com.au](mailto:mlawrence@netspeed.com.au)

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8:30am. A solid climb of nearly 800m (on the vertical axis!), mostly on the steep Mt Allen and West Tinderry fire trails. Final 2km to the summit is through bush, and involves some rock scrambling. Great views. Drive: 120kms, \$36 per car.

**7 May Saturday**

The dedication of a grove in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Area to the memory of our past President, Eleanor Stodart, is being planned for this day but is not yet confirmed. If the grove dedication is not to go ahead on this day there will be a normal Gudgenby work party

For further information please contact Syd Comfort 6286 2578, [scomfort@netspeed.com.au](mailto:scomfort@netspeed.com.au) or Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422, [clive.hurlstone@csiro.au](mailto:clive.hurlstone@csiro.au)

**15 May Sunday Morning Stroll  
ANU and West Civic Sculptures**

**Grading:** 1A

**Leader:** Col McAlister

**Contact:** 62884171

A gentle morning stroll through the ANU grounds and west Civic to view some of the many and varied sculptures. Meet in Museum carpark at 9.00 am.

**15 May Sunday walk  
Mt Gudgenby**

**Maps:** Rendezvous Creek and

Yaouk 1:25 000

**Grading:** 4A/C/D/E

**Leader:** Martin Chalk

**Contact:** 6292 3502

This walk was programmed last November but forecast poor weather caused a cancellation, so here we go again! From casual observation, much of the standing dead timber towards the top has now gone, so the route might be a little easier. Rise to the

challenge: see the now 'gone' Boboyan Pines from above, witness the result of the fires and 28 month's of regeneration; return to Canberra's iconic day walk mountain. Fit walkers only please. Meet at Kambah Village at 7:30am for a long but rewarding day. Drive: 140km. \$42 per car.

#### **14/15 May Weekend pack walk**

##### **Mt Scabby**

**Leader:** Philip Gatenby

**Grading:** 3A/C/E

**Map:** Yaouk 1:25,000

**Contact:** 6254 3094 or

[philip.gatenby@dewr.gov.au](mailto:philip.gatenby@dewr.gov.au)

A walk from Boboyan Pines to one of the ACT's highest peaks. At 1798m Mt Scabby offers spectacular views of surrounding peaks in Namadgi National Park and beyond. It is also the headwaters of the Cotter River. Getting there includes a total climb of about 900 metres, but not all in one go. Some scrambling over rocks is also involved. Contact leader for more details by Wednesday before the walk. Drive: 140 kms, \$40.

#### **21 May Saturday Walk**

##### **Mt Tennant**

**Map:** Williamsdale 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A

**Leader:** Margaret Power

**Contact:** 62530131

For the first time since the January 2003 fires, this is a chance to visit the summit of Mount Tennent, the closest "real" mountain to southern Canberra. This whole region was seriously burnt and this will be an opportunity to see how the varied forest on this mountain is regenerating. We follow the now substantially reconstructed walking track from Namadgi Visitor Centre until it meets the Mt Tennent fire access trail from the south at around 1,200 metres asl. There are great views during much of this 700 metre climb. The views from Mount Tennent take in much of Namadgi National Park, Canberra, as well as Mt Rob Roy Nature Reserve and the Murrumbidgee Valley. If we don't rush the climb, we can enjoy a leisurely early lunch on the summit. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre outside car park at 9.00 for a beautiful day. There are no vehicle costs.

#### **22 May Sunday Walk**

##### **Mt Gingera and Brumby Flat**

**Map:** Corin Dam 1:25 000

**Grading:** 3A/E

**Leader:** Steve Hill

**Contact:** 62319186; email;

[landshil@webone.com](mailto:landshil@webone.com)

A chance to visit Mt Gingera again, because ... the road to Ginini car park is open!!! We start with the traditional walk from Ginini car park to the southern summit (1857m) for fabulous views. There is fire damage throughout the region, but its severity is nowhere near as bad as around Mt Franklin, for example. Then we drop down a short way to a beautiful, secluded alpine frosty hollow to the west called Brumby Flat. We visit some ancient snow gums which more or less survived January 2003 and lunch at another view with a difference. Then we find our way to a quite spectacular viewpoint from just below the northern summit (1847m), before we drop down to Pryors Hut. The walk is partly off track but no serious bush bashing is involved. Meet at the entrance of the car park at the Cotter road/Uriarra Road intersection ex-pine forest (or Kambah Village Shops car park) at 8.30 for a great day. Drive: 150km, \$50 per car.

#### **25 May Wednesday Walk**

**Leader:** Mike Smith

**Contact:** 6286 2984 or

[msmith@netspeed.com.au](mailto:msmith@netspeed.com.au)

Details to be advised by the midweek walks email list or contact the leader.

#### **29 May Sunday Walk**

##### **Booths Hill**

**Map:** Michelago 1:25 000

**Grading:** 2A/C/D

**Leader:** Max Lawrence

**Contact:** 6288 1370

[mlawrence@netspeed.com.au](mailto:mlawrence@netspeed.com.au)

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. From the carpark near the end of the bitumen at Gudgenby we take the Brandy Flat fire trail before heading off track up the side of Booths Hill for good views from the top. The total climb is over 800m, including the final slog from Dry Creek back up to the cars at the end of the day. Drive: 100kms, \$30 per car.

#### **28-29 May Weekend Pack Walk**

##### **Sentry Box from Gudgenby**

**Map:** Yaouk 1:25 000

**Grading:** 3A/B

**Leader:** Steven Forst

**Contact:** 62195236

Contact leader by preceding Wednesday. A walk from the Yankee

Hat car park over the Gudgenby saddle to camp on or immediately below Sentry Box mountain. Drive: 140 km, \$40

#### **4 June Saturday walk**

##### **Red Rocks on the Murrumbidgee**

**Map:** Tuggeranong 1:25 000

**Grading:** 1 A/C/E

**Leader:** Steve Hill

**Contact:** 62319186; email;

[landshil@webone.com](mailto:landshil@webone.com)

A relatively easy walk, mainly on track, but involving a little rock scrambling along the Murrumbidgee "corridor" from the confluence of Tuggeranong Creek to Red Rocks. We might divert to the "canyon" on the way (some mild rock scrambling to do this). This was one of the most scenic stretches of the river, but has been badly burned in parts. It is recovering and the variety and form of recovery is quite interesting – especially now that we have had some rain. We should see a large variety of native birds and kangaroos. Meet at the Urambi Hills car park near the corner of Athllon and Learmonth Drives at 10.00am for a pleasant day. No vehicle costs.

#### **5 June Sunday Walk**

##### **Honeysuckle Ridge**

**Map:** ACT 1:100 000

**Grading:** 2A/B

**Leader:** Steven Forst

**Contact:** 62195236(w) 62516817(h)

[steven.forst@aca.gov.au](mailto:steven.forst@aca.gov.au)

A walk from the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station camping ground out to the ridge overlooking Orroral Valley. Drive: 100 km, \$30 per car.

#### **11-13 June Long Weekend Walk**

NNP and KNP Circuit

**Maps:** Rendezvous Creek and Rules Point 1:25000

**Grading:** 3/4A

**Leader:** David Large

**Contact:** 62914830 or

[david.large@bigpond.com](mailto:david.large@bigpond.com)

Day 1, walk from Orroral Picnic area to Cotter Valley and overnight, then across Leura Gap and down to Murray Gap Fire Trail and camp at Oldfields or Bimberi for second night and walk out to Orroral on third day. Longish days and significant ascents. Experienced walkers only. Drive: 100 km, \$30 per car.



# Effective bushfire management: response to Phil Cheney's *Bulletin* article

It is very disappointing that the extracts from Mr Cheney's Canberra Day 2004 speech quoted in the December *Bulletin* contributed so little to the debate on effective fire management in reserves and national parks. Despite his impressive academic credentials and long experience, his argument does not stand up to the most basic scientific scrutiny and the article is peppered with emotive language which does not advance the debate.

On examination, the expert opinions he offers turn out to be gross simplifications or wildly inaccurate. He states that "The only way to prevent widespread conflagration fire is to use fire to reduce fuel loads well before the extreme weather hits." A more thoughtful approach is that of the recent report from the Council of Australian Governments ([www.coagbushfireenquiry.gov.au/findings](http://www.coagbushfireenquiry.gov.au/findings)) which states that "Advances in technology, analytical tools and communication (such as the increasing availability and quality of satellite remotely sensed data and its interpretation and communication to diverse audiences) are very important to bushfire mitigation and management."

Mr Cheney states that "When Aborigines arrived the climate was

probably not much different from that which we have today." A primary school student could tell him that 40 000 years ago the climate was very different and it has gone through significant change at different periods since: for starters, Lake Mungo is now a desert and the Australian Alps are no longer marked by glaciers. His references to Aboriginal fire management also propagate the crude myth that Aborigines in all regions of Australia had the same burning regimes that we see today in northern Australia. This is, at the very least, disrespectful to local indigenous culture. At its worst, this simplistic approach will interfere with our proper understanding of what Aboriginal fire management does have to teach us.

Then there is the assertion that "Broad-scale prescribed burning is essential in our forests to allow our firefighters the opportunity to suppress fire before it becomes too large ... " Which particular forests are not specified, there is a disingenuous assumption here that all forests are the same: that a stand of alpine ash has the same "forest" characteristics as a pine plantation. Again, such generalisations have no place in a reasoned debate.

We will have to pass over his statement that "The only way to have people understand fires is to expose them to it on a regular basis." It is a rather breathless assertion, more suited to flagging dinner party debate than a serious discussion in this journal. Of more interest is his disclosure that "I consider a forest subjected to mild prescribed fire, where the scene is one of freshly regenerated shrubs under an intact canopy, is far more attractive and far better for the conservation of biodiversity than long unburned forest with its sickly understorey of moribund shrubs and massive accumulations of tussock grasses and leaf litter." A sickly understorey Mr Cheney? Moribund shrubs? Personal opinions are all very well, but this is a serious scientific debate not Creative Writing 1A.

Decisions on appropriate fire management in our national parks and reserves deserve a higher level of debate than this. The COAG report is recommended for readers looking for a more reasoned, scientific discussion of this issue.

Christine Goonrey

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## Shoreline birds

As a visitor to North Durras over the Christmas period I noticed that sections of the dune area were roped off with the request that people keep off the enclosed area as it was a nesting area. For some plovers this is the only remaining breeding site in New South Wales and the section of the beach north of the lake where the nesting occurs is permanently closed to dogs.

Each morning the Parks ranger checked the area for nesting activity and, if necessary, moved the ropes. I might say that the breeding places selected by these birds could hardly be termed "nests" as the eggs are laid directly on to the sand. During the last week of December there were three nests of hooded and red-capped plovers in the sand between the edge of the lake and the shore. Durras Lake at that time was not open to the sea and had been separated from the ocean by a wide section of beach for some time. During

this week, however, a southerly change came through bringing strong south easterlies accompanied by rising seas. One day at high tide about mid-day a couple of waves higher than their fellows swept over the beach and into the lake carrying one of the nests away and threatening two others. Fortunately there were people on the beach who quickly organised a rescue operation. The nest swept away was lost but something could be done about the remaining two. A driftwood structure about a metre high was built and the eggs from one threatened nest were moved into this, and this was effective in keeping the eggs out of the water. Some spades were rustled up and a bank was built around the other nesting place and this also provided enough protection to save the eggs.

After a short while the seas retreated somewhat and the nests were no longer at risk. Nor were they threatened again.

The question remained as to whether the parent birds would return to their eggs. The area was again roped off and before long the parents did return to their duties. The birds were still on the eggs when we left Durras and a recent visitor reported sighting a number of young birds in the area who, I am sure the rescuers would like to think, were there due to the salvage work.

Incidentally, some fishermen claimed that even that brief entry of new sea water into the lake was recognised by the fish and as a result they congregated in that part of the lake.

Syd Comfort

# Walking the Kokoda Trail



*On the Kokoda Track. Ian Hawke is at front left.*

The Kokoda Trail is basically still a footpath which runs north from near Port Moresby across the mountainous backbone of Papua New Guinea to the north coast. It was originally opened up by goldminers in the 1890s, but of course its main claim to fame is that it saw some of the most intense fighting involving Australians in the whole of the Second World War. In recent years it has become a very popular destination for Australians of all ages who have an interest in history and/or bushwalking. Just as Gallipoli is visited every Anzac Day by thousands of mainly young Antipodeans wishing to explore or experience the roots of their national identity, Kokoda also is rapidly becoming a major destination.

Debate continues as to whether it is the "Kokoda Track" or "Kokoda Trail". It seems the terms have been used pretty much interchangeably since WW2, but the official pronouncement by the Battles Nomenclature Committee in 1957 comes down in favour of "Trail". Such a pronouncement must be beyond question, but even so, many of us still prefer the term "Track".

Ian Hawke walked the track with a commercial trekking group in August 2003, and shared his experiences with NPA members at our general meeting on 18 November 2004. Now retired, Ian had particular interest in walking the track both from the military and historical perspective as he has been a member of the Army Reserve most of his adult life, and also as he is a

bushwalker.

Ian commenced his presentation with a brief rundown on the Kokoda campaign. The Japanese forces were frustrated by the battle of the Coral Sea in their intention to land an invading force at Port Moresby, and as an alternative landed at Gona on the north coast of PNG on 21 July 1942, intending to cross the Owen Stanley Ranges and come into Moresby by the back door. They were met by a small force of Australians, who fought a defensive action which held them up by several weeks on their approach to Moresby.

The closest the invaders got to their goal was Ioribaiwa Ridge, less than 20 air miles from and within earshot of the Port Moresby aerodrome. By this

time the Japanese were operating at the end of a long and tenuous supply line. Our forces were being resupplied and reinforced from Moresby, and had artillery within range of the Japanese positions. The tide of the battle turned and it was the turn of the Japanese to fight a defensive retreat over the ranges back to their beachheads on the north coast.

Meanwhile the Japanese had also suffered severe losses at the hands of the Americans at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, and their forces in PNG were virtually abandoned. By the end of 1942 Australian casualties in the campaign amounted to approximately 625 killed and 1600 wounded, with additional casualties due to sickness of around 4000. On the Japanese side, it is estimated that of their total force of 16 000 only about 700 survived the fighting, disease and starvation.

Today the track runs from Owers Corner outside Port Moresby to the village of Kokoda, a distance of nearly 100km over successive steep ridges and muddy gullies. At its highest point it is 2190m above sea level, almost the same as Mount Kosciuszko. Most groups take around 10 days to complete the walk. The climate is not conducive to walking during the wet season, and August and September are the recommended months. Ian went in August, and generally had good weather, but rain and mist can occur at any time. Temperatures get quite chilly at night at the higher altitudes, but generally days are warm and humid, even during the dry season.

Ian and his mate, Tony Kidney, had to decide whether to mount their own expedition, as some do, or to join a commercial trekking group. They decided on the latter, and are glad they



*Villagers along the trail.*

did. A major consideration in their choice was the prospect, as privateers, of carrying a heavy pack up and down several hundred vertical metres over successive steep ridges in probably muddy and wet conditions for ten days with no prospect of resupply. This would require a combination of youth, fitness and experience beyond most people. The fact that our WW2 soldiers did it and much more in far less favourable circumstances is, in Ian's words, a humbling experience.

Ian walked in a group of 17, of whom seven were females, with the same number of carriers. Their leader (Frank Taylor) was a PNG veteran who had excellent rapport not only with his clients, but also with his team of carriers and with the various villagers along the way on whom they were dependent to varying degrees for fresh tucker, hospitality and communications with the outside world. Frank's group seemed to receive a warmer welcome at the villages they visited than some of the other groups encountered along the track. He had also extensively researched the wartime history of the area and was responsible for locating and documenting many of the common defensive positions held by both the Australians and the Japanese at different stages of the conflict. He was able to guide his group to these positions and interpret many of the relics and artefacts still to be found there.

A typical day on the track comprised putting on clothes damp from having been washed the previous evening, breakfast and pack up, briefing



*The group's carriers, cooks and general all-round camp assistants.*

*Photos Ian Hawke*

on the day's activities (climb more ridges, see where our soldiers did what they did), get on with it. Most of the heavy stuff is taken by the carriers. They also do the cooking and set up camp when the group is not using village accommodation. The carriers were a very friendly and hard working lot, and the whole team was absolutely fastidious about hygiene, but even this did not save Ian from a couple of days' tummy wog. However, it has to be said he was the only one so afflicted.

While Ian's impressions of his Kokoda experience and the friendly highland people are invariably

favourable, he had somewhat less favourable impressions of urban and town life in PNG. Any Australian contemplating visiting PNG should be aware that it is very much a Third World country and economy, with minimalist infrastructure in the way of transport, utilities, education, law and order, emergency services and health facilities. If you get into trouble, help might not be as readily forthcoming as we have come to expect in our own society.

**Max Lawrence**

## Reg Alder collections

The association was privileged to receive two collections from the late Reg Alder as gifts from Reg's daughters, Marjorie and Allison.

The map collection contains some 300 maps that Reg had assembled over the years and is made up mainly of topographic maps, many of them early editions and some made by the Army Survey Corps. In examining how the maps should be preserved, the Outings Committee agreed that the maps should be retained as a collection rather than split up. The Outings Committee will hold the maps and plans to catalogue them so that members will have access to them.

The photographic collection comprises over 30 large, framed prints of Reg's black and white images. Most

of these photos were taken in the Canberra and Kosciuszko areas and include, for example, photos of the old township of Adaminaby before it was flooded.

Again, the association wanted to retain these photos as a collection. Not itself having a suitable location to store or display the collection, the association approached the ACT Heritage Library with a view to the photos being incorporated into the library. The library has accepted the photos as the Reg Alder Collection to be held in its Woden premises. The library will make the photos available to the public, probably through its website, and is considering mounting an exhibition of the collection.

**Syd Comfort**

### Photographic exhibition

At the request of the Shadow Minister for the Environment, Michael Richardson MP, Di Thompson will be presenting an exhibition of her photographs in Parliament House, Sydney.

Titled "After the Fires in Kosciuszko" the exhibition will run from March 2 to March 30 and be located in

The Fountain Court,  
NSW Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Di extends a warm welcome to association members and friends to visit the exhibition.

# AIAS seminar in the mountains

The Australian Institute of Alpine Studies (AIAS) held a seminar at the Kosciuszko National Park Sawpit Creek Education Centre on the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning of 22 and 23 January 2005. This was a forum for all those doing research associated with alpine areas of Australia to get together to discuss their results. Ken Green from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Director of AIAS, organised and ran what turned out to be a quite informal but energetic and most enjoyable learning experience.

Some 30 scholars and post-graduate students, mostly zoologists and botanists, travelled from Victoria, Queensland, NSW and the ACT to attend the seminar, including Roger Good who has been an invited speaker at several NPA ACT general meetings. Roger led part of the Sunday field trip to examine *Fire effects on bogs: research and rehabilitation*. NPA ACT committee members Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz attended the meeting — Kevin presenting a brief discussion on earthquake activity in the Alps during the first session, titled *Miscellaneous*, where all the talks not obviously about *Plants, feet and peat* or *Fire* were lumped.

Graeme Enders started off the talkfest with 10 minutes on *Mountain catchments/river health* with a brief discussion of environmental flows and the parlous state of the Eucumbene River below Eucumbene Dam. Wil

Allen then spoke on a *Comprehensive regional assessment of wilderness in the Snowy Mountains* which focused on “naturalness” as a measure of wilderness (1987 NSW Wilderness Act) but does not take Aboriginal sensitivity to that concept into account. An outcome of their assessment is that alpine areas above 1800m are excluded from the declared wilderness area.

Glen Sanecki entertained us with his research on the *Home range and activity of Rattus fuscipes and Antechinus swainsonii in the subnivean space*. There were some stuffed specimens of these in the visitors centre so we could compare their relative size and features (*Rattus* has a tail about 1.5 times its body length, and is much larger than *Antechinus*). On the field trip Glen spotted a disused dry-grass nest of the broad-toothed bush rat near the Charlotte Pass lookout. It would have been built under the snow cover last winter.

We finished the first session with another two talks, beginning with *Lepidopterous soils: effects of Bogong moths* by Stuart Johnson who explained that the soils were formed from windblown loess from as far as South Australia, mixed with the moth remains. Incidentally, the Aboriginal hunters feasted not just on the moths but on all the fauna, including the antechinus that also gathered there to prey on the moths. Ken Green led us to afternoon tea (with real coffee!) after his talk on the *Dynamics of the ice*

*cover on Blue Lake*, a 28m deep lake chosen for the International Tundra Experiment as a baseline for global climate change data. Cores of multi-layered ice up to 2m long were taken regularly through winter for analysis.

The second session *Plants, Peat and Feet* was a necessary primer for Roger's later field trip. Suzanna Venn is field testing a theory for her PhD: do alpine plants compete or interact positively with one another at different altitudes? Sam Grover talked about *Water movement and storage in peat soils*. The sphagnum plants are alive at the surface but dead at about 1m depth where they decompose and compact to form peat, with water flowing faster through the top than the base. *Climate change and its impact on peatlands* was Andrea White's contribution. Her approach is to use conceptual models to assist management of the Bogong High Plain.

John Morgan's *Colder plants in a warmer world* suggested that climate change would be characterised by more rain and less snow so plants would be subject to the diurnal temperature range without the insulating snow cover. Thus frost tolerance would determine the re-distribution of plants. *Summer snowdrifts in the Kosciuszko alpine area and their effects on the composition and structure of alpine vegetation* was Tobi Edmunds's topic which discussed the implications of global change on plants in these very localised areas. He is looking for trends in the distribution of snowdrifts over time.

We adjourned for pre-dinner drinks after Andrew Growcock's interesting analysis of a large sample of campers in Kosciuszko National Park to gauge their environmental impact. He concluded that restrictions on group size would not be effective in reducing the impact because 93 per cent of groups were fewer than four people, that education of campers was necessary, that best-practice approaches lead to minimal impact and that dispersed camping is a reasonable management tool.

The seminar dinner was held in Jindabyne where further informal discussion followed some excellent nibbles; when the restaurant closed we returned to the Sawpit Creek camp ground in welcome rain.

The Sunday morning session on *Fire* started with Catherine Pickering's talk on *Regeneration of Snowgums post fire*, and she and Zanni Bear later led a

(Continued opposite)



Snowgum trunks growing from an ancient lignotuber, 9 metres in circumference. Note the proliferation of *Stellaria*. Photo Kevin McCue

# Honouring the alpine ecologists

As alpine issues continue to be a focus of conservation in our region, some of the venerable alpine ecologists, as well as their younger colleagues, are celebrating new milestones in their work.

In mid-December many old friends came together at a weekend reunion held by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to honour a half-century of scientific research in the Alps. Eminent microbiologist Professor Frank Fenner gave the address at a celebratory dinner at Jindabyne on 11 December. Other events included field trips, slide shows and the issue of a facsimile copy of Alec Costin's highly regarded work *A Study of the Ecosystems of the Monaro Region of New South Wales* published 50 years previously. The reunion was organised by former Parks Service and Soil Conservation Service officer Roger Good.

Alec Costin is one of a number of wonderful former CSIRO scientists who still keep a watching brief over the Alps. With Dane Wimbush he is currently co-authoring a paper on *Sphagnum* bogs, building on previous research undertaken by Dane for his Master's thesis.

Last year also marked the 25th anniversary of the publication of that alpine bible *Kosciuszko Alpine Flora*. This work, by Alec Costin, Max Gray, Colin Totterdell and Dane Wimbush, was originally published in 1979 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of



*Alpine ecologist Dane Wimbush explaining the impact of fire on a Sphagnum bog on a field trip to Kosciuszko National Park on 9 February 2005. Dane is President of the Far South Coast branch of NPA NSW. At left, partly obscured, is Geoff Robin. Photo Den Robin.*

the CSIRO's Division of Plant Industry.

The preface to the revised edition and accompanying field guide of 2000 explains:

As in the first edition, Alec Costin and Dane Wimbush are responsible for the general text, ecological data and colour vegetation maps. Max Gray is responsible for the taxonomic part. The photography is by Colin Totterdell, who also contributed to both taxonomic and ecological information through extensive field collections and observations ...

We hope your enjoyment of

Kosciuszko Alpine Flora outlasts us, as it is unlikely that we shall be able to do it again.

The individual and collective work of these four men has done much to save Australia's alpine region. As well as providing a scientific base for protection and rehabilitation work, it has promoted the understanding and enjoyment of thousands of people who visit the high country each summer to see the wildflowers.

Colin Totterdell's photographs are still in demand. His old Kodachrome slides reproduced better in the 2000 edition than in the original print run.

Dane Wimbush still helps to monitor the plots he established in the 1950s to study the regeneration of native species after the cessation of grazing and

the aftermath of bushfires. Dane was a member of the independent scientific committee that developed the statement of significance underpinning the current *Kosciuszko National Park Draft Plan of Management*.

The commitment of these scientists in imparting information and mentoring young researchers continues to make a valuable contribution to the conservation of Australia's fragile and biologically diverse alpine region.

These are our heroes of the high country.

**Den Robin**

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## AIAS seminar in the mountains *continued from previous page*

field trip to show us the lignotubers sprouting everywhere and the many seedlings emerging in the 2nd year post-fire. One lignotuber Catherine showed us had a base circumference of ~9m (photo) and was obviously much older than the trunks dated at 29 to 186 years. Arn Tolsma showed an excellent set of slides on *Podocarpus* regeneration after fire at the Cobberas, sampling on five rocky peaks above the treeline with percentage of *Podocarpus* killed on the peaks ranging from 2 per cent to 67 per cent. This slow growing plant has suffered severely in the fire, one 1000 year old *Podocarpus* was badly burned at the base and was showing no signs of regeneration. Later, near Charlotte Pass, Arn showed us how to identify the male and female

plants.

Libby Rumpff, in her talk *Tree line dynamics in the Victorian Alps: examining interactions between soils, vegetation and fire* suggested that treeline altitude depended on soils and vegetation rather than climate so that treeline change would not make a good indicator of climate change as had been predicted.

Seraphina Cutler had the distinction of closing the meeting after her presentation *Regeneration of vegetation in mountain environments following disturbance*. There were 7000 km of bulldozed "fire control lines" in Victoria, not all of them in the national parks and reserves, that required revegetation after the 2003 fires. The impact included removal of vegetation

and soil, loss of seeds, loss of soil values, increased potential for introduction of pests and weeds, and potential access by 4WD and trail bikes. She concluded that a study of the appropriateness of fire control lines was needed.

We thoroughly enjoyed the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere, a reflection of the obvious enjoyment everyone got from and gave to their studies. None of the talks were long enough and question time far too short for us, the uninitiated. Next year's seminar will be held in Tasmania and we are already looking forward to going there.

**Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz**

# Submission on Perisher Village — Kosciuszko National Park Development Application

*The following is the National Parks Association of the ACT's submission on the Perisher Village — Kosciuszko National Park Development Application, Ref: DA 262-10-2004*

1. The National Parks Association of the ACT was formed in 1960 as part of a national movement to create a system of properly managed national parks and to promote environmental awareness. Over more than forty years NPA ACT has had a strong relationship with Kosciuszko National Park because of its common borders with Namadgi National Park in the ACT and because members have been actively involved in maintaining and protecting the cultural and environmental values of the park, including contributing to the recent Review of the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park.

2. DA 262-10-2004 represents a considerable threat to those cultural and environmental values. It is, quite simply a private, for-profit, real estate proposal in the middle of a national park. Its proposed profitability is based on consumption of natural resources of KNP for which there will be no adequate return to the public estate. Its size and capacity to increase consumption of KNP resources makes it unacceptable, even within the existing planning process.

3. This expansion would be taking place at the same time that flora and fauna in the park would be at greater risk from changed climatic conditions. According to the park's scientific advisers, rare and endangered species are likely to be subjected to even

greater competition from lower altitude plants and animals migrating to these areas, thus doubling the impact of increased resort activity on the ecological balance of the Park.

4. The proposal pre-empts the new KNP Plan of Management and does not even attempt to address its requirements. This is, of course, legally permissible but gives no confidence as to the developer's respect for the environmental and cultural values of the Park. This is, after all, the sector whose representative walked out of the Draft Plan of Management Community Forum process and sought support for more active development of the resorts at the highest political level.

5. The development has no satisfactory economic analysis of the resort's viability over the next 20 years. Expert predictions, commissioned by the NPWS, are that climate change will lock such resorts into dependence on snow making facilities and associated infrastructure such as dams and roads. Application for these developments may be expected after the buildings in this DA have been built and occupied so that they themselves will be cited as a reason to override the environmental protection measures in the new POM. This cycle of build now and use the investment to lobby for further access to public resources is completely unacceptable.

6. The sale of private accommodation park leases which lock up public park facilities and rely on expensively maintained public infrastructure is contrary to the purpose of KNP. It is represented as private ownership of real estate within national parks which is not legally permissible.

7. Expansion of bed numbers in KNP cannot be sustained without significant environmental damage unless it is impact neutral. At the very least this DA must encompass "bring in-take out" technology which will dispose of all waste, including sewage, outside the park. The application must specify measurable standards of environmental sustainability now, in order to demonstrate its capacity to comply with the charter of KNP and its management over the life of the buildings.

8. The application must include measures to compensate the government for the high public costs incurred to reduce the ecological damage of further expansion. It must also address the costs of deconstruction and rehabilitation of the site when the buildings are no longer viable.

9. Far from enabling greater public access to the park, this development will lock up scarce resources in private ownership and increase costs to the average public park user through increased service charges, higher traffic flows and greater foot traffic congestion.

10. Shopping for clothes and accessories is not a core activity to be promoted in national parks. The facilities proposed in this DA are not appropriate in the park though they may benefit the region overall. They belong in the village and towns which service the mountains and which have already experienced economic hardship, fluctuating real estate prices and investment uncertainty because of the increased concentration of non-core facilities in alpine resorts.

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## Organisational changes for Environment ACT

*This note is based on information provided by Marg Wade, Acting Public Affairs Manager in the Chief Minister's Department.*

Environment ACT, formerly an agency within the Department of Urban Services, has recently joined the Chief Minister's Department within the agency of Arts, Heritage and Environment (AH&E). This move resulted from a direction of the Chief

Minister who is also Minister for Environment to report directly to him, and this is seen as a very positive and exciting time for Arts, Heritage and Environment. Dr Maxine Cooper, formerly Executive Director of Environment ACT, heads up this new agency. The linkage of Arts, Heritage and Environment works well with synergies between the three areas.

Arts, Heritage and the Environment is one of six major areas within the

Chief Minister's Department, the others being, Cabinet and Policy, Public Sector Management and Industrial Relations, Executive Support, Strategic Projects and Implementation, and the Office of Sustainability.

The new agency takes over the range of responsibilities previously held by Environment ACT.

What was important to Environment ACT before the change is still important.

# Seamans Hut, Kosciuszko National Park

Seamans, on the ridge above the Snowy River, is a goal as you walk up the Summit Road from Charlotte Pass to Rawsons Pass and Mount Kosciuszko. The grand scenery of the mountains, slopes and river valley is constant company as the stony road winds through meadows of wild flowers.

This year two Parks Service rangers were at the hut repairing the cement

between the stone layers and generally checking the hut over. Michael, a tall, cheerful fellow and his companion, "Sherpa", a former mountain guide in his homeland, Nepal, worked together and were company for each other.

I rested in the hut to escape the gale force wind on Tuesday January 11 and noticed the new memorial to the four snowboarders who died in their snowcave in 1999.

The hut was clean and tidy and is a much respected shelter for the travellers who are caught in poor weather.

The inscription on the snowboarders' memorial is set out below.



To commemorate the lives of these  
Four young snowboarders, who lost  
Their lives in a snowcave approximately  
1.5 km south east of Seaman's Hut on  
7th August 1999

The families and friends of the  
Young men offer their thanks to all the  
Searchers and helpers, who for three  
Months continued to search with  
Dedication and compassion

Above, Seamans Hut and above right, Michael and "Sherpa" working on the hut's stonework.  
Photos Fiona MacDonald Brand

Fiona MacDonald Brand

## Two books for children

The Wilderness Society *Buyers Guide for 2004/05* contains several books for children. One, *Diary of a Wombat*, by Jackie French and illustrated by Bruce Whatley, is just delightful. A simple text takes the reader through a week as the wombat sleeps, eats, scratches, sleeps, has a dust bath, digs a tunnel under the farmhouse, sleeps, demands carrots at the back door of the house, destroys a doormat, sleeps, digs up the vegetable garden carrots but discovers a bowl of rolled oats is the very best.

Jackie has based her story on observations of wombats on her farm in the Araluen Valley. The storyline follows the point of view of a wombat

who feels at the end of the story that he has trained humans to fit in with his needs. Printed by Angus and Robertson, the recommended retail price is \$24.95.

An English book, *Dear Greenpeace* by Simon James, is a fictional correspondence between a small child and Greenpeace UK. The child, Emily, writes to Greenpeace, "I love whales very much and I think I saw one in my pond today." She asks in a series of letters for advice about looking after whales and receives back very "public service" type replies from Greenpeace. Finally Arthur, the whale, disappears but she sees him when she goes to the beach so all is well. "Dear Greenpeace"

is published by Walker Books, London and the recommended retail price is \$13.95.

These two books may be purchased by phone 1800 628 596, fax 03 9489 1455, on the net [wilderness.resources&wilderness.org.au](http://wilderness.resources&wilderness.org.au), or by mail 221 High St Northcote Vic 3071.

Fiona MacDonald Brand

# PARKWATCH

## Great Barrier Reef healthier than most

About 70 per cent of the world's coral reefs have been wrecked or are at risk from human activities but some are showing surprising resilience to climate change, a report says.

The international survey, by 240 experts in 98 nations, said that pollution, over-fishing, rising temperatures, coastal development and diseases were among major threats to reefs, vast ecosystems often called the nurseries of the seas.

"Twenty per cent of the world's coral reefs have been effectively destroyed or show no immediate prospects of recovery," said the report, issued on the first day of a UN environmental conference in Buenos Aires.

*The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2004* report also said that another 24 per cent of the world's reefs are under imminent risk of collapse through human pressures, and a further 26 per cent are under a longer-term threat of collapse.

"The major emerging threat to coral reefs in the last decade has been coral bleaching and mortality associated with global climate change," it said.

Even so, it said some reefs had recovered sharply from a 1998 bleaching which seriously damaged 16 per cent of all reefs worldwide, especially in the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

It said the 1998 warming had been the most serious in 1000 years but was likely to happen about every 50 years in future, largely because of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels in cars, factories or power stations.

The report said the major success of the past five years had been strict protection of a third of the Great Barrier Reef by Australia.

But 75 per cent of coral reefs are in developing countries where human populations are rising rapidly and millions depend on reefs for food.

*ABC Science Online, 7 December 2004*

## Alps report — A cow's a cow

As the government draws close to a decision about cattle grazing in the High Country, a couple of points should be made.

First, the VNPA wants cattle removed entirely from the Alpine National Park. National Parks (the legislation is clear) are reserved, above all, for the purpose of nature

conservation. There is no study known to us that indicates that cows are in any way good for the conservation of natural systems in the park.

Second, the problem is exacerbated because we are to enter the second year of post-fire exclusion for most of the cattle currently licensed to graze in the park.

We note that Parks Victoria's Scientific Advisory Panel on post-fire Grazing recommended (p17) that "The burnt closed heathlands on steep slopes will remain at elevated risk (from cattle) for 5-10 years (and the burnt bogs for decades." The word "elevated" is used, presumably, because these ecosystems are at risk from cattle anyway.

## It's time to end cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.

*Victorian National Parks Association Update, November 2004.*

## Climate change action plan released

*The National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan* has now been released and is available on the web at [www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/nbcap/index.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/nbcap/index.html).

Australia is one of the first countries in the world to develop a comprehensive plan to address the potential impacts of climate change on our environment.

Individual requests for the publication should be directed to the Department of Environment and Heritage Community Information Unit:

on: 1800 803 772

or email: [ciu@deh.gov.au](mailto:ciu@deh.gov.au)

*National Parks Journal, December '04 - January '05.*

## A step back for threatened species

The Carr Government significantly weakened threatened species laws in November when the NSW Parliament passed major amendments to the *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995*.

Major changes include:

Rural activities approved under new native vegetation laws and development "certified" under local environmental plans will now be exempt from threatened species assessments.

The scientific committee will be subject to political interference.

Recovery plans and threat abatement plans are no longer mandatory.

The Government accepted amendments from the NSW Greens that improved transparency and public input into the operation of the threatened species laws as well as new "maintain or improve biodiversity values" prior to biodiversity certification, but rejected more significant changes.

An Opposition amendment to review the Act's operation and the success of biodiversity certification after five years was also accepted.

With 200 new species and ecological communities listed as threatened over the last four years and few effective recovery and abatement actions occurring, it is clear that the Labor Government needs to match rhetoric to protect threatened species with new resources that permanently protect threatened species' habitats.

*National Parks Journal, December '04 - January '05.*

## Feasibility study on hydro power plant under way

Power generator Southern Hydro this week begins looking into the feasibility of building the largest hydro power station since the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

Drilling and testing will be undertaken on Lake Guy, adjacent to the Bogong township in the Victorian Alps.

Southern Hydro's Tim Rourke says the station would reinstate flow in the Pretty Valley Creek using water from Rocky Valley Dam, which would produce power without fossil fuel emissions. He says it would create and maintain employment in the region.

"If everything was to fall into place, from the obtaining of planning permits and the successful commitment of the Southern Hydro board to the development, we could see a new power station commissioned by the end of 2008," he said.

*ABC News Online*

## Rare contagious cancer suspected of killing thousands of Tasmanian devils

A disease devastating Tasmanian devils may be an extremely rare transmissible cancer, spread when sick animals bite healthy ones and implant tumour cells.

Scientists at the Tasmanian Government's Mount Pleasant Laboratories and the Australian Animal Health Laboratories are near to ruling out a viral cause for the disease. A pilot

*(Continued on page 21)*



# Environmental announcements

## Woodland recovery

Recovery of woodland birds, other animals and native plants, particularly in yellow box-red gum grassy woodland, is the aim of a program of research prepared by Environment ACT and the ANU's Centre for Resource and Environment Studies.

Welcoming the application for an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant to support the National Capital Woodland Initiative linking scientists from Environment ACT, Australian National University and CSIRO, the Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, Mr Jon Stanhope, said on December 13 ACT Government funding was the catalyst for the bid for Commonwealth support.

The initiative was the first of several projects being developed to address the recovery of ACT's threatened species and communities, he said, and the ACT Government has allocated \$582 000 over the next four years for threatened species research.

Ecological research and surveys will be undertaken in the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves, with results linked to other similar research in NSW. Timber taken from these areas in past years will be replaced to enhance habitat for species that depend on decomposing wood. Fox control, burning and grazing will also be studied for

their effects on animal and plant habitats.

Environment ACT ecologists and ranger staff will work closely with other scientists, including Professor David Lindenmeyer and Dr Adrian Manning (Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU) and Professor Iain Gordon and Dr Sue McIntyre (CSIRO, Sustainable Ecosystems).

If successful, the ACT's funding for the woodland initiative would be multiplied three times, thus enabling a research program of major significance to woodland conservation in both the ACT and the surrounding region, Mr Stanhope said.

## Rare plant in Namadgi

Perhaps the January 2003 bushfires have revealed the existence of a rare plant in Namadgi National Park whose presence was previously unknown. The plant, *Dampiera fusca*, has no common name. It was discovered by members of the Australian Native Plant Society while walking in the park.

Announcing the find, Mr Stanhope said it was possible that the plant existed in the area, but remained unseen due to thick scrub. "With a maximum height of around 30cm and blue/purple flowers around the size of a two-dollar coin, it takes a keen eye to spot this rarely seen plant with its distinctive

leaves," he said.

*Dampiera fusca* was previously only known from small populations in the Kybean Range near Nimmitabel, the Tinderry Ranges south-east of the ACT and from the Alpine National Park in Victoria.

Environment ACT is investigating the status of the plant in other locations to determine whether this plant should be declared threatened under the ACT Nature Conservation Act.

## Wallabies at Tidbinbilla

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve has taken delivery of three endangered brush-tailed rock wallabies for its cross-fostering program. A pair has come from the Adelaide Zoo where they were bred, and an immature male has come from Kawaii Island in New Zealand.

The ACT is a member of both the National and Victorian Recovery Teams for the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby, and it was through this cooperative arrangement Tidbinbilla obtained the wallabies from the Adelaide Zoo.

There are now 15 of the wallabies at Tidbinbilla, but by the end of this year it is hoped new arrivals and breeding will raise the number to about 25. The population was reduced to five following the January 2003 bushfires.

Compiled by Graeme Wicks

## PARKWATCH *(continued from page 20)*

trial will examine whether natural or man-made toxins are responsible.

But the scientists are closer to understanding why the disease spreads so rapidly. The way the tumour rearranges chromosomes in individual animals is identical, regardless even of sex.

"This has led to the hypothesis that the tumour may be passed from animal to animal directly by implantation of the cell line during fighting and biting," the report said. "Tasmanian devils, by virtue of their behaviour are possibly one of very few species where this mode of transmission would apply."

With the devil population reduced from an estimated 150 000 in the mid-1990s to as few as 50 000 now, the Tasmanian Government is considering whether to establish captive populations outside disease zones to maintain genetic diversity.

"Extinction of the devil is unlikely, but there is a big question mark at the

moment over the long-term performance of this disease," Mr Mooney said.

A \$1.8 million State Government program is trying to tackle the disease, and \$2 million was promised by the Howard Government at the last election. Work is being done by six scientific institutions, including Taronga Zoo.

*The Sydney Morning Herald,  
January 22-23 2005*

## Climate talks end in disappointment

Buenos Aires, Saturday, 18 December, 2004: Greenpeace today expressed disappointment at the outcome of the climate talks in Buenos Aires, and anger at the USA and Saudi Arabia for their deliberate tactics of obstruction and delay.

The agreement means that discussions on future greenhouse gas cuts will not progress substantially during the coming year and will not

ensure that countries most at risk from climate impacts get the assistance they need from the industrialised world.

"We hope that everyone has taken note of the bullying and blocking tactics of the USA at these negotiations. As a result we have a deal that barely keeps the process moving" said Greenpeace spokesperson, Steve Sawyer.

"This agreement ensures that there will not be the kind of progress we need on negotiations of future emissions cuts during the next twelve months, and the adaptation package is far from adequate."

Next year's negotiations will see the Kyoto countries meeting as a group for the first time. The USA will have observer status only at this and future Kyoto Protocol meetings unless and until it ratifies.

*Greenpeace Australia Pacific—  
News Release—18 January 2005*

Compiled by Len Haskew

# Association news

## NPA policies

A major association task last year was to develop policies covering most areas of particular concern to the NPA. The Committee has now commenced developing policies in two other areas: "other parks and nature reserves" and "the role and purpose of conservation areas". This will cover such areas as lowland reserves and grasslands, and specific areas like the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

## Tree and bird books

Work on the revised *Native Trees of the ACT* is continuing, with Roger Farrow making good progress in assembling the coloured photos needed for this full

colour edition. The remaining stocks of the *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT* are running low with only 400 of the two printing runs remaining. The Committee is now examining the reprinting of the book.

## Outings Committee

Following an Outings Committee recommendation, David Large has been endorsed as the NPA ACT liaison officer with the Confederation of Australian Bushwalkers.

## First aid subsidy

The Committee has decided to allocate funds to subsidise first aid training for NPA members. This funding is part of

the association's risk management strategy and represents an ongoing commitment to the health and safety of NPA members and other members of the community.

Funds will be provided to meet up to 75 per cent of the cost of first aid training from one of the recognised training organisations (Red Cross, St Johns Ambulance) and will be paid on presentation of a certificate and receipt, on a "first come first served" basis, within the funds allocated in any financial year. Members interested in taking up this offer should contact the Treasurer before booking a course, to determine the availability of funding.

# Big book presentation

Victorian Alpine campaigner Phillip Ingamells visited Canberra in mid December to present a book on Australia's Alpine national parks to the Chief Minister of the ACT and Minister for the Environment, Jon Stanhope.

To call it a book is a gross misrepresentation — it is more a large-format folio of photographs; a grand, hand-made, leather-bound, folio of exquisite photographs printed on hand-

made paper, extolling the natural beauty of the Alpine national parks of Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT. The photographs show the moods of the national parks in all seasons over a representative sample of landscapes with natural and cultural themes.

The Chief Minister was too busy pre-Christmas but we had the pleasure of making the presentation to Dr Maxine Cooper, Chief Executive Officer for the Arts, Heritage and Environment, and Aidan Bruford, adviser to Jon Stanhope. Most of the NPA ACT committee and Fiona MacDonald Brand were at Macarthur House on December 16 with Phillip Ingamells for the presentation.

Phillip discussed the book and its purpose; to commend the virtues of one Alpine national park and to support proposals for its joint management.

Dr Cooper graciously accepted the book on behalf of the Chief Minister and assured us that he would receive this unique book on behalf of the people of Canberra and that it would be put on show for public perusal.

Only four copies of the book have been published and bound, for presentation to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, and counterparts in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

The photographers donated the photographs and a master bookbinder out of Melbourne made the covers, but Phillip Ingamells did the design and layout. It was however published under the aegis of the NPAs of Victoria, NSW and the ACT. Our sincere thanks to you, Phil!

Kevin McCue



*Dr Maxine Cooper and Aidan Bruford admire the book presented by Phillip Ingamells (right). Photo Steven Forst*

# New member

The association extends a warm welcome to new member, Susan Dyer of Swinger Hill.

All members are invited to participate in the wide range of NPA activities. See the outings program for regular activities and outings; check the *Bulletin* and *Burning Issues* for working

groups and subcommittee opportunities; contact conveners, email the office or leave a message to volunteer your skills and enthusiasm to assist the association in its aims and objectives.



# Book review

## Terror and the Scenic Coast Walking Tracks Between Batemans Bay and Green Cape

By Graeme Barrow

This is the latest of Graeme's many books (19 in all) on bushwalking and local history. This book and its companion book, *Walking from the Mountains to the Sea: Bush Tracks between Nowra and Batemans Bay* published by Graeme in 2002, essentially replace his earlier, now out of print, *Walking the South Coast: Tracks from Nowra to Eden*, first published in 1986 and revised and reprinted in 1993.

It is interesting to compare the style and editorial appearance of this book with Graeme's earliest book, *25 family bushwalks in and around Canberra*, first published in 1977 and written as part of a Professional Writing course at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education. That book was in black and white (except for the cover), with rather basic unscaled sketch maps on how to get there and had only a few summarised details heading the text. This new book is in full colour, has well-presented colour photographs and many scaled maps with contours and adequate detail. Also, each walk description includes a summary on key details: what to see, how to get there; distance from a known point; walking distance; time; category; CMA map reference and where to obtain further details.

In the informative Introduction, the origin of the title "*Terror and the Scenic Coast*" is explained. The coast has seen brutal murders, suicides, shipwrecks, bizarre mysteries, acts of war, dreadful floods and the earlier confrontations between Aboriginals and white exploiters or settlers, all of which resulted in loss of life, hence "terror". The origin of "scenic coast" is really self-evident: precipitous cliffs; long and curving beaches; sheltered bays and coves; as well as lagoons, lakes and lofty mountains.

Following the Introduction is a section on South Coast weather sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology. Mean average temperature range, rainfall, humidity and other data are given for five locations along the South Coast. Strangely, two of the locations given — Nowra and Jervis Bay — are not within the area covered by the book.

The remainder of the book covers 40 coastal and inland walks between

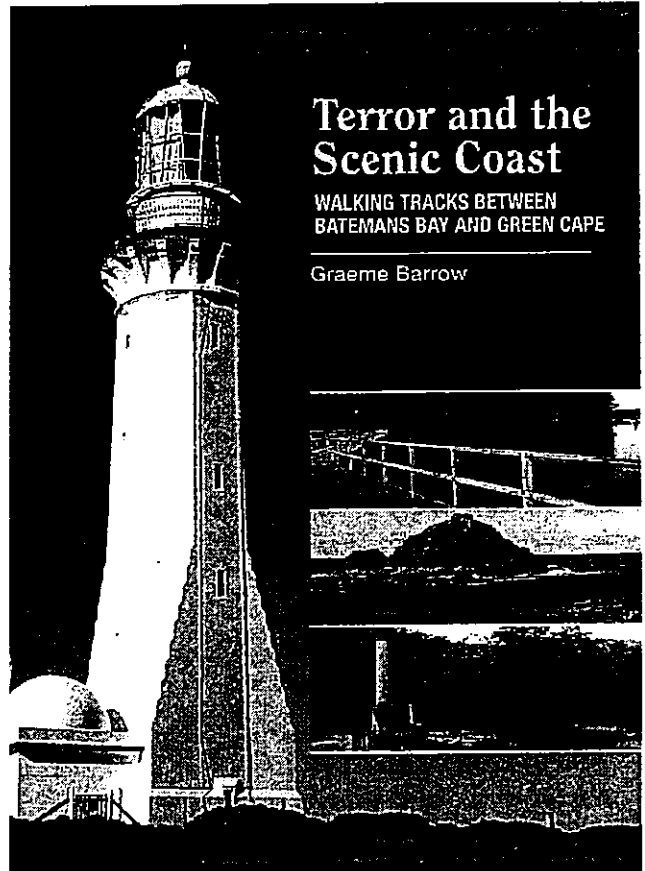
Batemans Bay and Green Cape, categorised from easy to hard. There are 31 walks classed as easy, taking from 30 minutes to two hours, six classed as moderate and three classed as hard. As you would expect, two of the three hard walks are climbing mountains: Mt Dromedary (Gulaga) and Mt Imlay.

All of the walks are on track and are claimed by Graeme to be easily accessible by road although many of the access roads are unsealed and some described by Graeme as "boneshakers". Most of the walking tracks, particularly the easy ones, appear to have been developed by local organisations or councils to access noteworthy, historic or especially scenic features along the coast or slightly inland. Some of the tracks are even boardwalks. Most of the tracks are signposted and several also have interpretative signage along the route. I noted that in several of the walks Graeme deplors senseless vandalism that has occurred to some signs. I'm sure we would all concur with that.

Seven of the walks described are sections of the well-known National Parks and Wildlife Service "Light to Light" trek, a multi-day walk from Boyds Tower to Green Cape Lighthouse, some 31km. Each of these walks is included as a return trip from a road access point.

As previously mentioned many of the walks have well presented maps which have been sourced from the NSW Land and Property Information Group. In some cases several of the walks are shown on a single map. Quite a few of the walks do not have maps and I believe that for a number of these a map would have been beneficial even if just to indicate the relationship of the starting point to local roads.

I have only walked a few of the tracks in Graeme's book (and am looking forward to walking many more) but found the walking descriptions to be extremely good, well written and entertaining. As well as details on the



walk and views, the text is also interspersed with other details such as local wildlife, special points of interest and historic facts, particularly the "terror" aspects of the area.

Graeme is not averse to gently criticising aspects of the track and making suggestions which are presumably aimed at the local maintainers of the track. The signs mentioned previously, vehicle damage in boggy areas and the need for safety fencing along some cliff-lines, are a few of his critical comments. I hope that the local powers do take notice and continue to improve the good work on the tracks that they are responsible for.

This book by Graeme Barrow is ideal for families and others holidaying on the South Coast who want ideas for morning or afternoon walks. It is not really a "bushwalking" text as it lacks any grid or directional references; it is purely a track walking text and as such more than achieves its objective.

In conclusion I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to NPA members, their families and friends for touring, holidaying or just visiting the area. I'm sure they would enjoy both the walking tracks and Graeme's entertaining descriptions along the way.

Mike Smith

## General Meetings

Third Thursday of the month

8:00pm

Uniting Church hall  
56 Scrivener Street  
O'Connor

### Thursday 17 March 2005

*A new vision for Namadgi.*

Sharon Lane, Environment ACT

Sharon will present an overview of the development and content of the Draft Management Plan for Namadgi National Park.

### Thursday 21 April 2005

*The Southern Tablelands  
Ecosystems Park.*

Cathy Robertson, President of STEP

What is The Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park? Cathy, assisted by other members of STEP, will give an illustrated talk about the purpose of, and concept for, a southern tablelands ecosystems park and the proposal for a demonstration garden at Birrigai.

### Thursday 19 May 2005

*An exercise in detection.*

Emeritus Professor Henry Nix

Professor Henry Nix, formerly Director of the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CRES) at

## National Parks Association Calendar

	March	April	May	June
<i>Public holidays</i>	<i>Mon 21 Fri 25 Mon 28</i>	<i>Mon 25</i>		<i>Mon 13</i>
General meetings	Thu 17	Thu 21	Thu 19	Thu 16
Committee meetings	Thu 3	Thu 7	Thu 5	Thu 2
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration <sup>1</sup>	Sat 12	Sat 9	Sat 7*	Sat 11
Eleanor Grove dedication			Sat 7*	
Bulletin Working Group <sup>2</sup>	Tue 15			Tue 14

**Further details** <sup>1</sup> Yankee Hat carpark 10:00am, Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592 (h) 040 778 3422 (mob)

<sup>2</sup> Syd Comfort 6286 2578 \* to be confirmed

the ANU, and now a visiting fellow in that centre, is a generalist in an age of specialists. His interests in landscape ecology and macro-ecology have led him to revalue the contributions of Ludwig Leichhardt, explorer and natural scientist.

What was the state of the Australian environment, vegetation and dependent wildlife immediately prior to European settlement? By far the most comprehensive records, backed by specimens, were those Leichhardt and Gilbert made on the Port Essington expedition of 1844-45. Using birds as the vehicle, Professor Nix compares their records with those of the *Atlas of Australian Birds I (1977-1981)* and

*II (1998-2002)* and speculates on possible factors causing the enormous changes.

### Thursday 16 June 2005

*Camping and skiing in the 1940s.*

Geoff Hall

Geoff Hall recalls some of his experiences of bushwalking, camping and skiing in the Canberra region in the immediate post-war period. A long bike ride over gravel roads could precede a bushwalk and there seemed to be plenty of snow at Mt Franklin, but getting there and back could be tricky.

### NPA ACT Bulletin

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