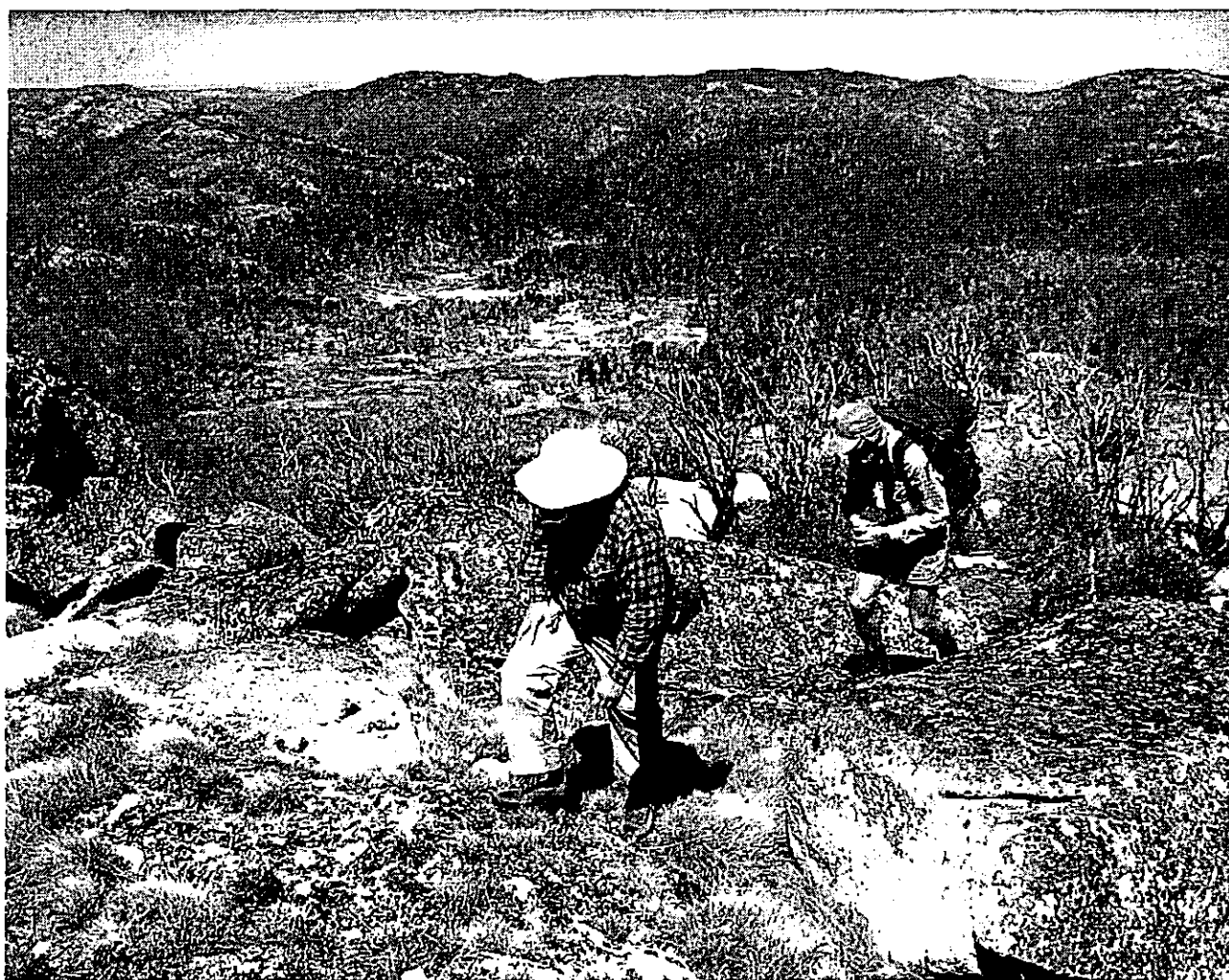


NPA Bulletin



Volume 42 number 4
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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



The Kelly gang

Strategies, plans and responses

Vale Amanda Carey

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National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated Inaugurated 1960

Aims and objectives of the Association

- Promotion of national parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery, natural features and cultural heritage in the Australian Capital Territory and elsewhere, and the reservation of specific areas.
- Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.
- Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena and cultural heritage by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.
- Cooperation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.
- Promotion of, and education for, conservation, and the planning of landuse to achieve conservation.

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NPA Bulletin

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Cover Photo: Steven Forst and David Kelly climbing Mt Kelly—view back down to Sam's Creek.
(Story starts page 12) Photo Max Lawrence

From the President

New Pathways Demand Smaller Footprints

This was the theme of a conference on "Making Canberra Sustainable" presented by Manning Clark House and the Nature and Society Forum. This quote from Professor Bob Douglas struck me as very apt for more than one reason. Not only can it inspire our personal efforts to walk more softly across this planet, it also directs us to look at the activities undertaken in our name. I am referring, of course, to some of the proposals outlined in the draft *Management Plan for Namadgi National Park* which was released on September 6. Some of the things outlined in the draft plan will strike a very large footprint indeed! Building major fire trails through wilderness areas, creating the possibility of commercial, 4WD and bicycle tours through the wilderness and allowing groups of up to 400 to use the semi-remote Booth Range for events are some of the things the plan would permit.

Working up the NPA ACT submission on the draft plan has been the biggest task on our agenda. However, in addition to this, every NPA member should put in their own personal submission so that the government will understand how serious we are about reducing the human footprint on our beautiful park. Check out the documents on our website which we have prepared to help you make your own submission and there you will also find directions on where to send it.

Another conference which Chris Emery, Kevin McCue and I attended recently was the 10th Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Environmental and Public Works Committees on Bushfire Recovery and Sustainability. Speakers included Mr Stuart Elliss who chaired the COAG

inquiry into the 2003 bushfires; Maria Taranto from the CRC on Bushfire Research, and Sandy Holloway. We did a field trip to inspect the new water treatment works at Mt Stromlo. We also had a presentation by the Director of the Observatory, Professor Penny Sackett, on plans to restore the area, including the Heritage listed observatory. As you can imagine, off-site back-up of their computer files is one of the most important tasks on their regular round of bushfire preparation. Their fire management plan was very impressive and sits on everyone's desk!

The most interesting presentation was from Ms Lyn Breuer who chairs the SA Inquiry into "Native Vegetation and the Eyre Peninsula Bushfire", which has been asked to investigate the role of natural vegetation in the Eyre Peninsula bushfires. Although 83 per cent of the land use in the fire-affected areas was cropping or grazing, native vegetation took the main blame for the intensity and spread of the fires. Ms Breuer indicated that scientific examination of the fire areas may indicate the opposite, namely that native vegetation actually slowed or diverted the fire in places. We look forward to the committee's report in 2006.

Another big event for us was hosting the National Parks of Australia Council meeting, held in Canberra on September 17 and 18. I would like to thank Kevin McCue for organising a very successful and interesting meeting. The venue at Manning Clark House was friendly and relaxed. Dr Maxine Cooper, from Environment ACT, and Dr Bruce Leaver, from the Australian Alps National Park, spoke to the group and provided some interesting background briefing on some of the big issues facing national parks today.

In fact, World Heritage listing of the Alpine National Parks was discussed by

the Council now that cattle grazing has been banned in the Victorian national parks and there are mixed views on whether to proceed. It was interesting to see that the Federal Minister attempted to restore cattle to the Victorian Alps parks within a few weeks of the NPAC meeting by offering to cooperate with a World Heritage listing. I'm personally very wary of pursuing a listing under current circumstances.

My personal highlight of the past few months was on a much smaller scale. On a work party with Martin Chalk on the Australian Alps Walking Track in October, I saw my first real in-the-wild colony of bird orchids or *Chiloglottis*. Nothing beats the thrill of being in the bush, of finding its small secrets and enjoying its peaceful environment. That's what NPA ACT is all about.

Which reminds me of the point made by one speaker at the "Making Canberra Sustainable" conference. He said that we are "eroding public spaces by privatisation". There is an increasing emphasis on commercial and private use of public spaces; on activities such as 4W driving; large group use and competitive events in parks. These uses, by their nature, exclude other people from enjoying the public amenity. Associated with this is the discounting of those uses of public spaces which do not consume resources and produce a profit. We know that this narrow view of the world will eventually pass so it's up to us to ensure that, when economic rationalism has gone the way of all the other management fads, Namadgi will still be there in all its glory for quiet, public enjoyment.

Christine Goonrey

Volunteers bar none

On Saturday October 22 seven NPA ACT members answered the call to work on the Alpine Walking Track. With assistance of park ranger Ollie Orgill, 14 water bars were placed on the eastern slope of the steep section of track some five minutes walk from its intersection with the Cotter Hut Road. This work complemented the 32 steps and seven water bars installed

on the steeper opposite slope by a contractor during the preceding weekend.

All were justifiably satisfied with completing the job and secure in the knowledge that this section of track is safe from severe erosion for years to come. The group then proceeded up the track for lunch on the banks of Sawpit Creek and observed a number of briars

on the way (these were chipped out) and an equal number of orchids (these were left!).

Should anyone see anything during their travels through the park that might be a suitable project for volunteer involvement, please contact me at home on 6292 3502.

Martin Chalk
Volunteer Coordinator

NPA responds to draft Namadgi plan

The tone of this management plan is set by the order in which different values are listed and unfortunately 'economic' values tend to be listed first throughout the document. ... in order to reflect the true value of the park, 'economic' should always be listed last throughout the management plan in terms of values!

NPA submission.

The association supports—even strongly supports—much that is in the draft plan, but there is also much in it to criticise. And—as the above quotation shows—some of the principles on which some of the recommendations and objectives are based are both wrong and out of step with good environmental practices as well as the formally stated objectives for Namadgi National Park.

In what follows, the much that is good in the Namadgi National Park Draft Management Plan gets little or no mention: the focus is on those issues that need attention and correction.

Weeks of concentrated effort from the plan's release on September 6 culminated in the delivery of the NPA's submission on the draft before the deadline of November 28. The formal response was nearly 40 pages and some 14 000 words long.

Prior to that members were informed about the main issues and involved in the formulation of the association's response and encouraged to make their own individual responses.

Media release

Christine Goonrey, as President, issued a media release on the day the draft plan was released, noting that the community had to get the plan right "if we want our unique national park to be still healthy and beautiful in 20 years' time."

"Much as Canberrans love the Park, NPA ACT recognises that one of its greatest risks is that we are in danger of loving it to death," she said. "Bikes, horses, vehicles, camping, walking, adventure sports, large groups and events all take a toll on the fragile landscape. Canberrans have to take a close look at the impact we have on our national park, no matter how harmless our activity seems. We need to have agreed limits to our use of the park, in order to preserve it."

Christine noted that the new draft came at a critical point in the park's future. The park is still affected by the worst drought and bushfire since European settlement began, and its fragile ecosystems are threatened by



NPA ACT President Christine Goonrey is interviewed by the ABC at the launch of the draft Plan of Management, at the Orroral Homestead in September. Photo Max Lawrence

global climate change. Some scientists were predicting that the park's wetlands may dry up over the next 40 years and even the potential loss of the much loved alpine ash forests.

"NPA ACT believes that it's not just a matter of preserving the natural values of the park," she said. "If we want affordable, clean water for many generations to come we have to develop sustainable fire management strategies, manage recreational access, especially to wilderness areas, and control feral animals and weeds. We have to protect the park's rich cultural heritage, both Aboriginal and early European."

This initial response was followed up by:

- a special edition of *Burning Issues* encouraging members to make submissions to ensure that voices representing members' interests are at least as numerically strong as those of other groups such as 4WD drivers, horse riders and potential commercial interests;
- documents in *Burning Issues* and on the website setting out the association's position on points of particular concern; and
- a members' forum at the October general meeting to discuss the draft plan.

The final document incorporated much of the substance of the forum discussion as well as many ideas communicated by members to the draft plan working group by email and telephone. The document went through many drafts as new information was added and new thoughts were taken in, but the original thrust was maintained:

- the maintenance and expansion of

declared wilderness areas;

- strong support for remote and natural values and recognition of their fundamental importance in managing the park; and
- opposition to new fire trails in fragile and sensitive areas and some proposals on prescribed burning intervals in sensitive areas.

The formal response also strongly advocates adequate research and monitoring in wilderness areas.

It points out that the association was formed in 1960 for the purpose of creating "a national park for the national capital", and that members lobbied and campaigned until the park was finally declared in 1984 and have since turned their attention to preserving and enhancing the park's natural values and those of its neighbours.

Nature first

"The primary purpose of the Namadgi National Park is for nature conservation," the submission states. "The first priority of this management plan should be 'to maintain and improve the natural and cultural values of the park for future generations'. This is the first and primary principle to which the plan should refer when conflicts arise between the different uses of the park. We are disappointed that this is not more clearly articulated in the draft plan. The plan currently lacks any such clear statement of purpose, merely including nature conservation within a list of various other purposes for which the park is currently used: e.g. to collect water, manage fire and enjoy recreation opportunities.

"It is not acceptable, in our view, to leave open vague possibilities which theoretically can be resolved further down the track. In the face of climate change, it is foolish to assume a level of robustness in the park's ecosystems upon which we can rely. An arid, degraded and pest-prone park may be the price of our failure over the next 10 years."

More wilderness

The submission gives prominence to its call for three additional areas to be given wilderness status to better protect the different ecological systems of the park and to provide greater protection to existing wilderness areas.

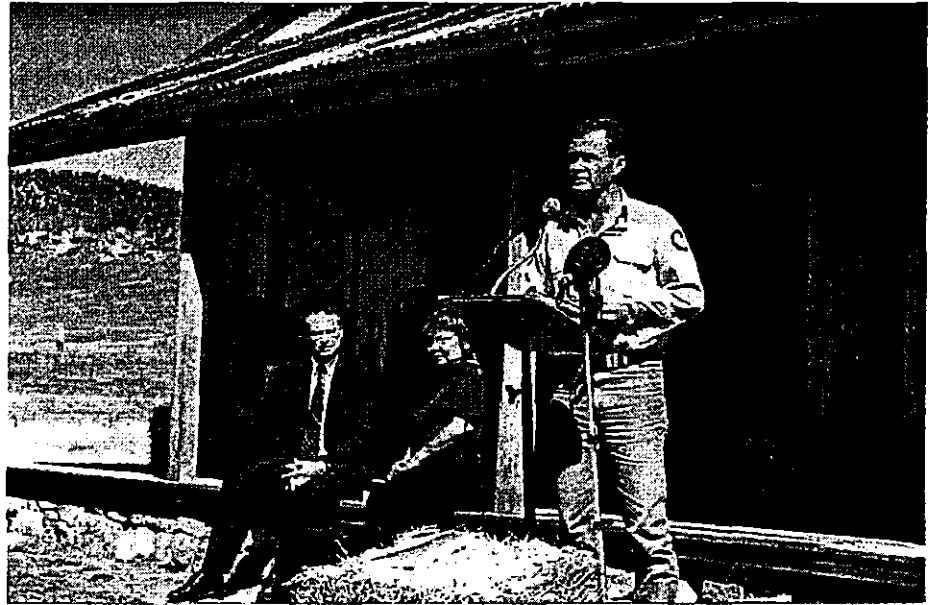
After outlining problems with the existing wilderness system, the submission makes a number of recommendations:

- that the existing wilderness zone be expanded to include parts of the Middle Cotter, western portion of the upper Orroral River catchment west of Smokers Trail, and lands bordering the eastern part of the current wilderness zone up to existing fire trails further south such as Old Boboyan Road and Grassy Creek Fire Trail;
- that the Blue Gum Wild Semi Remote area be expanded and upgraded to a wilderness zone to abut Smokers Trail, Bushfold Flats and fire trails; and
- that the Booth Range Wilder Semi Remote area be expanded and upgraded with wilderness to the edge of the surrounding fire trails and the Naas River or Bicentennial Trail (whichever is westernmost) on the eastern boundary.

Fire management

The submission is highly critical of many aspects of the proposed fire management strategy. "We **strongly object** to the current landscape classification and distribution as a guide for frequent burning," it states. "The areas indicated are too broad and do not reflect the wide diversity of plant communities and fauna, especially birds and invertebrates. The sweep of this area's classification does not take into account soil erosion and landscape values, nor the heavy use of such areas by walkers."

It says the plan of management also needs to address the widely held view that forest litter is merely a 'fuel load' and presents unacceptable 'fire hazards' so that it must always be reduced. The plan needed to more clearly establish the value of forest litter and soil biota as essential elements of the eco-system and critical to the prevention of soil erosion and land degradation.



Brett McNamara speaks at the launch of the plan while the Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, and Ngannawal elder Matilda House listen from the Orroral homestead verandah. Photo Fiona MacDonald Brand

Opposition to new fire trails in the wilderness area is another point of concern. The proposed upgrading of Cotter Hut Road which, in effect, would become a new road, is also opposed. "The rationale for increased width and a straightening of roads and fire trails is based on past fire fighting methods which are rapidly becoming obsolete," the submission states. "More effective methods of fire suppression and hazard reduction are being developed which do not require the use of large bulldozers; these roads would be redundant before the noxious weeds they would introduce had even begun to take hold. 'Tanker Trails' and 'Float Trails' are effectively 2WD roads—not 4WD 'trails' as implied by use of term 'trails'."

Climate change

NPA maintains that there is inadequate reference in the draft plan to managing the park under climate change. Ecosystems, such as herbfields and sphagnum bogs, can become vulnerable under climate change, and the precautionary principle must be applied to activities (such as some recreational activities, large group activities and overuse of some areas through commercial exploitation) that could escalate damage to the natural values of the park.

(The precautionary principle means that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.)

Research

There is inadequate commitment to appropriate funding or research, especially for fire management and pest control. And almost no reference is made to birds, the impact of too-frequent prescribed burning on complex bird habitats, and the relationship of bird habitats in the park and in surrounding areas. There is no listing of bird species or invertebrates in the park.

The NPA recommends that "a separate section be developed in the management plan which sets a specific objective for research work in the park; which acknowledges its important contribution to national and international work and sets a series of concrete objectives for future work which can contribute to local, national and international conservation of its natural values over the next few decades."

Other omissions

Other omissions from the draft plan concern the protection, maintenance and repairs of heritage sites; public scrutiny of park use; an implementation, evaluation and reporting mechanism for the plan; required legislative and legal strategies (such as land management agreements with rural lessees and other land managers); and the need to review the *Nature Conservation Act*.

The Act should be amended to enable the appointment of an independent statutory Conservator who has no direct role in the management of the park, and to reflect changes to and provide appropriate legal status for other areas of the plan of management,

(Continued on page 6)

New process for appointing life members

NPA ACT Committee proposes to establish a clear, fair and transparent process for nominating honorary life members. NPA ACT will call for nominations each year, but does not expect that the honour will be bestowed every year. There have been 15 such appointments in our 45-year history.

The process for nominating and electing honorary life members will be:

1. A life membership working group will be formed to include the Immediate Past President and at least one other Committee member and one or two life members to develop the process and selection criteria. The working group will assess the

suitability of nominees and make a recommendation to the Management Committee.

2. Draft selection criteria will be considered at the December 2005 Committee meeting and revisions made for confirmation at the February 2006 Committee meeting.
3. Nominations with supporting material will be called for in *Burning Issues* and at each February general meeting.
4. Nominations with supporting information close at the April general meeting.
5. The Sub-Committee meets through May and June and makes a

recommendation to the Management Committee meeting in July.

6. The Management Committee proposes any eligible new honorary life members at the annual general meeting in August for confirmation.

The association's constitution states that any person who has rendered meritorious service to or on behalf of the association may, on the recommendation of the Committee, be elected a life member by a general meeting, and for all purposes shall be considered a financial member of the association.

Kevin McCue

NPA responds to draft Namadgi plan

(continued from page 5)

such as the use of permits, fees and charges.

Key point buried

The submission criticises the setting out of the park's management objectives as the basic and inherent goals of the management plan in the preface of the draft document, where they are not given sufficient prominence.

"Burying such a key point in the preface means that the management plan fails to establish from the outset that the conservation of natural and cultural values is the primary purpose of the park," the NPA submission states. "Even so, this section confused the issue further by its reference to 'water as the primary value of the water resource catchments in the park' and does not discuss how the management plan will handle any conflict between the two statutory purposes."

Quotes show detail

The draft plan is a detailed document that covers many separate but interrelated issues, and this has been matched by NPA's formal response. Such detail is lost in a summary, but the following quotes will give an idea of the substance of the NPA's position on the wide range of issues dealt with.

"... the table (referring to the Upper Cotter Catchment and Wilderness area) ... which refers to its high wilderness quality only in terms of its water and recreation uses rather than for its own sake. This is a good example of the confusion and failure to sort out priorities which riddles the draft plan."

"Clarification and definition is needed for commercial and non-commercial groups. In all areas of

activity it is becoming increasingly impossible to differentiate between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations and there can be no rational assumption that this classification actually reflects an organisation's capacity to protect and care for the park in its activities."

"Apply a system whereby permits, licences and other strategies to ration or restrict park use should be granted by public process to organisations and activities which best reflect the purpose of the park and its limited resources."

"The Strategic aim needs to make clear that the best protection of Canberra's water supply relies on the highest standard of conservation of the area's natural values. This can be done simply by adding 'whilst maintaining the highest conservation values consistent with a National Park.'"

"... we note an absolute lack of strategies to protect, maintain and conserve the wilderness area. This is a serious weakness of the draft plan and must be addressed in the actual management plan. Strategies should include priority funding for monitoring of illegal vehicle use and low impact fire management."

"The *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* and National Capital and Territory Plans clearly place recreational values secondary to the natural values of the park. Recreational activities must be compatible with the conservation of natural (and cultural) values and in planning recreational activities, we need to recognise that Namadgi National Park is not suitable for large groups or intensive recreational use."

"Adding to these concerns (that the park is not suitable for large groups of intensive recreational use) is an

underlying assumption ... that commercial activities in the park are something to be encouraged. Trying to make a profit from a public asset like a national park is always a dubious exercise and any such profit is often gained only by drawing down public capital and avoiding paying for replacement and repairs to public resources. It opens the door to commercial exploitation of a public resource, often without adequate compensation to the public purse."

"We are even more concerned that special privileges are being contemplated for commercial operators ... There should be no special access for commercial use of wilderness areas, even if they are doing 'wilderness management' projects."

"Whatever the justification for group sizes of up to 400 being permitted in the Booth Range area, it is not articulated. In fact the sensitive nature of the area and the lack of information about its ecology are referred to and yet groups of up to 400 are to be permitted."

"Recommendation: that the number of full time rangers should be increased to assist with delivering interpretation programs. If casual staff, volunteers or seasonal rangers are recruited for interpretation, they must have training and continuing support to ensure they deliver programs to a high standard. Where 'an ongoing interpretation training program for Aboriginal guides' is recommended, similar training must be given to all staff involved in interpretation."

The complete submission may be read on NPA's website.

Graeme Wicks

Vale Amanda Carey

After a long illness Amanda Carey is now at peace.

Amanda Carey was a truly inspirational and gifted person; she will be sadly missed by all those who have had the privilege of working with her and calling her a friend.

Amanda had a strong spiritual connection to the mountains of Namadgi; a place she called home for a number of years having lived and worked at Glendale Depot as the Local Area Ranger.

Amanda joined the Parks Service in 1996 after a highly successful career as an Intensive Care Nurse. Amanda often recalled that it was from the ICU windows

at Canberra Hospital, when the sun rose at the end of a long night shift, that she knew one day she would work in the mountains.

The goal she set herself has been realised, and she will now be at one with her beloved Mountains. Amanda has asked for her ashes to be scattered over the mountains of Namadgi.

Amanda was involved with a number of key projects during her time at Namadgi and her legacy is a rich and lasting one. Notably Amanda worked



with the local Ngunnawal Community on the management of their art sites within the park, and played an instrumental role in guiding the removal of the Boboyan Pines and regeneration of the area. Amanda got a huge thrill from seeing the last pine tree felled and witnessing the regeneration now underway.

As a Ranger, Amanda undertook a variety of roles and functions some of which included liaising with academics on scientific research projects,

coordinating a number of monitoring programs, co-authoring several scientific papers and occasionally blowing up rabbit warrens as part of the vertebrate pest program! Then there were the day-to-day tasks associated with the management of visitor facilities and delivering the operational aspects of natural and cultural resource programs.

Amanda was closely involved with the Australian Alps national parks program as Convenor of the Natural Heritage Working Group. Amanda embodied the spirit of cooperation and goodwill that the Alps program is renowned for. Her organisational skills and leadership will be missed.

But perhaps her most lasting legacy is her involvement with the Alpine sphagnum bogs. Amanda provided the energy and passion in overseeing this vitally important work in not only coordinating an interagency response but also supervising all the operational aspects of the project.

Brett McNamara
District Manager
Namadgi National Park

Celebrating a life

To the sounds of rolling thunder, bird songs and the wind in the trees, over 100 family, friends and colleagues farewelled ranger Amanda Carey in the open air on Saturday, November 26.

Although heavy rain fell in other parts of the ACT during the celebration of Amanda's life at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, none fell there as family, friends and colleagues stood in the open or sat on logs and hay bales to hear family members and others who loved and knew her speak about her and her achievements.

Her work brought her into contact with many NPA members and good working relationships and friendships developed. She was much involved with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group, and her death came as a shock and with sadness to NPA members who knew her.

NPA President Christine Goonrey said in a message on behalf of the association: "We would like to express our deepest sympathy to Amanda's

family, friends and work colleagues. She will be missed sorely by all of us. She got to live her dream of working in the mountains but there was so much more we still wanted to talk with her about. She knew so much about the park, its mountains and valleys and she loved sharing it with us all. We will remember her every time we work on 'Amanda's Slope' in Gudgenby; may the trees grow thick and tall in her memory."

Responding to the condolence messages from NPA members, Brett McNamara said: "Ranger Amada was



Family, friends and colleagues farewelled Amanda at Namadgi Visitor Centre on 26 November. Photo Sabine Friedrich

certainly one of a kind. Mere words cannot adequately describe a truly inspirational person."

Amanda died on November 23, aged 43. She left a son and a daughter, Harrison and Lauren.

Graeme Wicks

Message from the Alps/Forests World Heritage Working Group

A new working group has been formed to revive the campaign for the Alps and Eucalypt Forests of South East Australia nomination. The campaign was once actively pursued by all the main conservation groups with an interest in the future of the region, but lapsed when other campaigns were given precedence. The following gives some background to the campaign and an outline of future action.

We believe this revival is urgent because the initiative is otherwise being taken by a Federal Government which has interests and motives beyond those of objective protection of the international conservation values of the area.

We believe it is particularly important that the position of the groups is clear and united. Following Minister Campbell's outrageous move to try to overturn the decision to ban cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park, we have noted some confusion in the media over what exactly are the boundaries of the World Heritage proposal. Some have confused the support for the Greater Alpine National Park with this, wrongly believing that the nomination proposal is limited to the Alps. We hope the following information about the history of the campaign and the aims of the new working group will be helpful.

The world heritage proposal dates back to a submission by the Academy of Science to the Land Conservation Council in the early 1980s. By 1987 the Victorian Government was supporting a proposed nomination which included the forests of East Gippsland as well as the Alps.

As usual the lead in identifying the values was taken by the voluntary groups with studies by Broadbent, Blakers, Mosley and Costin. Then followed a series of official reports by Boden, Good, Busby and Kirkpatrick and Lennon, all of which addressed what Bob Hawke referred to as "the

strict criteria of the World Heritage Convention". They supported a nomination which included the alps, the forests and the coastal areas although, as a short hand, the collective name of "Australian Alps" was also used.

In 1990 the VNPA, with seed finance from the ACF (donated for this purpose by *Wild* magazine), set up a World Heritage Committee to promote the nomination. By 1991 there were 13 supporting groups. Four years later this had increased to 25 groups. It included the national parks associations and the ACF. The Committee in 1991 produced the first of several World Heritage Bulletins for the proposal. Most of the campaigning was done by Doug Humann of VNPA and Geoff Mosley, an ACF Councillor. In NSW Anne Reeves provided generous assistance.

The Committee put the case to the media, the conservation groups through their journals and lectures, the four governments, and the Alpine Ministers Council with a fair degree of success, particularly in the case of the ACT, and the Oppositions in NSW and Victoria. For anyone who would like to consult the expositions of the case as put at this time, those in *Park Watch* No 163, *Wild* No 40 and *Habitat Australia* 23(2) are typical and, hopefully, a good source of campaign reference material.

The work of the Committee was suspended in 1996 to avoid a clash with the Greater Blue Mountains Area nomination and to allow for input into the comprehensive regional assessment process carried out prior to the signing of the RFAs. As you are probably aware the concept of the sea to snow nomination as a "stand-alone" nomination, as developed by the reports mentioned above, was confirmed by the World Heritage Expert Panel.

The campaign should by rights have been taken up again after the world heritage listing of the Blue Mountains in late 2000 and the signing of the RFAs. However by this stage the NPAs were giving priority to the Greater

Alpine National Park proposal.

Aware of the vacuum, the Colong Foundation, which had played the leading role in securing a Blue Mountains listing, began to express concern about the future of the proposal in 2003 (see *Colong Bulletin* 198, for May 2003, which also includes a statement of the values and a map). The proposal comprises a linked series of corridors connecting the coastal, escarpment and alpine areas. A copy of the map showing the 24 areas in the proposal can be found on the Colong Foundation's website (www.colongwild.emess.org.au).

In July of this year the Board of the Colong Foundation decided to set up the Working Group and the membership is currently being extended to include people representative of various relevant fields of expertise and the different regions

Over the last two months the Working Group has focused on nominating the 24 areas for the National Heritage List because it is Federal Government policy to require such listing for any area included in a World Heritage nomination. The Department of Heritage and Environment rejected the group's NHL joint nomination of the 24 areas on the basis of its interpretation of the EPBC Act as not providing for serial nominations. The same advice has been given to the Alps Liaison Committee in relation to the Greater Alpine Park proposed NHL nomination (Baw Baw and Mt Buffalo not being contiguous).

We do hope these background notes will be helpful. This is indeed the most challenging and the most potentially rewarding heritage project in our history and we look forward to a cooperative relationship with you all.

If there is any further information we can supply please contact either Fiona McCrossin at the Colong Foundation or Geoff Mosley on 03 9718 2998.

Geoff Mosley

More grassland protected

The ACT Government is to protect an area of grassland in the new suburb of Lawson as an area of high conservation value. The area, site of the recently decommissioned Belconnen Naval Transmission Station, is home to a number of endangered plant and animal species, such as the golden sun moth

and the endangered Ginninderra peppercress, a perennial herb. The site contains about 100ha of grassland.

Both the Naval Transmission Station and its associated grasslands have been nominated for the ACT Heritage Register and will be assessed for conservation before the suburb of

Lawson is developed.

The Government in July launched the ACT Native Grasslands Conservation Strategy, a blueprint to protect areas of great ecological importance.

Graeme Wicks

Alps nominated for heritage list

The Australian national parks agencies of the ACT, NSW and Victoria are pursuing a National Heritage List nomination of the Australian Alps for its natural values, according to the Executive Director of the Arts, Heritage and Environment Division of the ACT Chief Minister's Department, Dr Maxine Cooper.

Addressing the National Parks Australia Council meeting in Canberra on September 17 (see p19), Dr Cooper said the nomination addressed only the natural heritage values, as it was felt that it was not feasible to pursue the nomination of cultural heritage values as this would require considerable consultation with Aboriginal communities across the Alps.

A proposal to nominate the Australian Alps national parks to the National Heritage List was discussed at the Australian Alps Ministerial Council in May 2003, and Ministers agreed to prepare a nomination.

The Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) commissioned a study to identify the significant values of the Australian Alps that met nomination criteria. A nomination, based on scientific research where values of national and international significance had been identified, was prepared and was now being considered by each of the jurisdictions.

Achieving listing may take some time as each jurisdiction feeds the nomination through the required

political processes.

The Alpine National Park in Victoria was emergency listed for its natural values in response to an emergency listing for the Alpine Grazing Areas licensed in the Alpine National Park.

"However, Victoria is pursuing, with the ACT and NSW, a nomination for the listing of all of the Australian Alps national parks," Dr Cooper said. "It may be of interest to you to know that the forests of South-Eastern Australia, which includes forests in Victoria, NSW and the ACT that stretch from the coast to the mountains and beyond, has also been nominated for national heritage listing by Peak Environmental Enterprises, a non-government organisation directed by Mr Geoff Mosley."

No to world plan

A Commonwealth Government proposal in October to seek World Heritage listing for the Alps National Park, which was contingent on a scheme to allow cattle grazing in the parks, has been rejected by the three jurisdictions, which instead have agreed to seek a National Heritage listing for the area.

The ACT Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope, said in response to the Commonwealth proposal that there was "no longer any real dispute about the fact that alpine grazing has the potential

to seriously damage the environment".

"Cattle were excluded from the ACT's national park that forms part of the Australian Alps decades ago, in order to protect our vulnerable ecosystems and ensure the pristine quality of our water catchment," Mr Stanhope said. "Victoria's announcement earlier this year that it was banning grazing in its own alpine national parks was a great boost for hopes that one day the Australian Alps could be considered for national—and eventually *world*—heritage listing. Any reintroduction of cattle grazing could seriously undermine those hopes."

The Australian Alps National Park covering a million and a half hectares would come into being by amalgamating existing alpine and sub-alpine national parks: the Namadgi National Park in the ACT, the Kosciuszko and Brindabella national parks in NSW, and Victoria's Alpine and Snowy River national parks.

Since 1986, there has been a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the various governments responsible for the Australian Alps National Parks. The principle of co-operative management has been growing since then.

Many co-operative programs are already in place.

Graeme Wicks

Park or paddock

Phil Ingamells, an Alps Campaigner for the Victorian National Parks Association, was the main speaker at the September meeting of the NPA ACT. Phil was one of those mainly responsible for the successful two-year campaign to remove licensed cattle grazing from Victoria's Alpine National Park. (See also **National Parks Australia Council meets**, p19.)

The beautiful photographs of alpine scenery, and pictures of the dramatic damage caused by cattle formed the major portion of Phil's presentation. These photographs were a significant factor in persuading the Victorian Government's decision to remove cattle grazing from Alpine National Park.

Another important factor in the success of the campaign was strong scientific support to remove cattle grazing. Fourteen eminent scientists, the Carruthers Group of Alpine

ecologists and scientists, acknowledged 50 years of accumulated scientific evidence of damage to the park. This evidence led also to the removal of cattle grazing from Kosciuszko National Park and Namadgi National Park.

Further support for the campaign came from nine environmental organisations and *The Age* newspaper ran a strong editorial favouring removal of cattle grazing over the "rights" of cattlemen.

The slide presentation showed abundant visual evidence of how cattle have damaged the Alpine National Park. Some of the major issues covered were how grazing spreads weeds; damage to ancient peat beds and alpine streams and rivers; the threat to plants and animals including 20 plants and plant communities; and trampling of moss beds and snow patches. It has

been shown that cattle grazing does not reduce the fire risk in the Victorian Alps as claimed, and that the economic cost of managing alpine grazing far exceeds the minimal revenue earned from licence fees.

Following Phil Ingamells's presentation there was a series of questions regarding the promotion of public interest in the campaign, the issue of the public subsidy involved in the licensing of cattle grazing, and the lessons learned in Victoria that could be applicable to the issue of feral horses in the ACT.

David Pfanner

Challenges for national parks today

The following is an edited version of part of the opening address by the Executive Director of the Arts, Heritage and Environment Division of the ACT Chief Minister's Department, Dr Maxine Cooper, at the National Parks Australia Council annual conference in Canberra on 17-18 September 2005. (See also National Parks Australia Council meets, p19.)

The ACT Government has just released the Namadgi National Park Draft Management Plan. Namadgi National Park surrounds the people of Canberra every day—it provides a beautiful visual backdrop to our urban existence, it is the source of the water we drink and the clean air we breathe. It is a living museum of our natural and built heritage, a place of recreation and education for 160 000 visitors a year.

It's been 20 years since the last Namadgi National Park management plan was drafted. As you would expect the preparation of the new management plan has drawn out divergent community views. And, as always, we are faced with the challenge of balancing community use and expectations with the protection of the natural and cultural resources that reside in the park.

The challenges for the future of Namadgi that we've learnt through this planning process are common to many parks throughout Australia. They include:

Working in partnership with our local Aboriginal peoples. Namadgi's Aboriginal heritage stretches back at least to the last ice age. Relics of the long Aboriginal habitation of this country are found in identifiable quarry and camp sites and in some of this region's most outstanding rock-art sites. Working with the Ngunnawal to cooperatively manage Namadgi is as much about reconnecting the people with country and fostering opportunities for reconciliation, as providing them with a say about the interpretation, identification and protection of their important heritage places.

Working effectively with the community in a host of areas such as working with neighbours on common land management issues; working with those who have a connection to the park through their history or commitment to

protecting the park's values, and of course working with park users so that everyone who visits the park adopts a stewardship role.

Planning and implementing effective fire management strategies that are commensurate with the protection of the key values of the park. This is an extremely complex area and will be an evolving process as we gather knowledge and understanding through research and monitoring programs.

And finally, **balancing human use of the park with the protection of natural and cultural values.** Parks are for people but the kinds of activities and the numbers of people engaged in activities in the park must not be to the detriment of the important values we're trying to protect and we need to ensure that the range of activities are compatible with each other.

The United States National Park System Advisory Board, in July 2001, released a report: *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*. The Board took a long, hard look at park management in an attempt to identify where the National Parks Service should focus so that they can be successful in their goals and meet future challenges.

Many of the issues identified by the US Advisory Board ring true for Australia. They include:

Building our pathways to learning. The US Advisory Board says that *it is time to re-examine the "enjoyment equals support" equation and to encourage public support at a higher level of understanding.* We need to embrace community education at a higher level by successfully communicating the importance of protecting our natural and cultural assets. National parks need to be understood as an essential element of human geography—just like we have towns, cities and farmland to meet our human needs, we also have national parks. Parks ... provide essential eco-services for human wellbeing. Our parks are much more than a "consumer product".

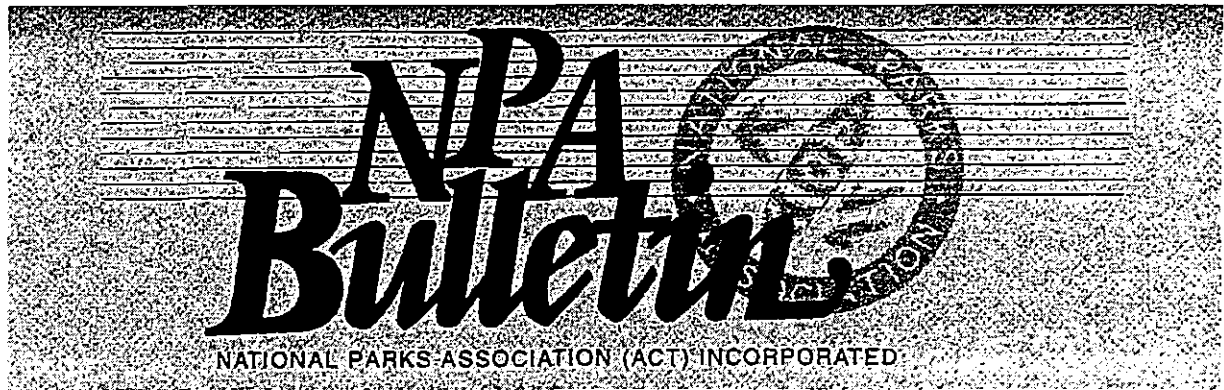
Bringing Australia's history alive. Parks should not be treated as islands. They are the heart and soul of our history—both indigenous and European. There are so many secrets about our history hidden away in our national parks—it's time we revealed them all so that national parks occupy a

proud and important part of our national identity.

Protecting nature, protecting ourselves. Improving our understanding of the ecological systems and cultural values through research and monitoring is essential. In the US I understand that there has been some significant trade-offs between managing for people (eg, visitor services in all its forms) and in the application of resources to research and monitoring (ie, knowledge building) has not been undertaken at the same rate as the provision of visitor services. Is this scenario true for parks in Australia, particularly in many of our icon parks? It is unlikely that, in general, more funding for research in national parks will be available, so we have to work closely with our tertiary institutions and be strategic and clever in directing and extending where our limited research dollars should go. Here in the ACT, we are already doing this. Increasing our knowledge base is paramount to ensuring that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced and to provide the basis for adaptive management.

Pursuing and teaching sustainability. The important element of sustainability identified by the US Advisory Board is that the park service should monitor and interpret the ecological footprint of park development and attempt to reduce it. What does this mean for Australia? This is challenging—there are pressures for development in our national parks, but where should it be? Should the development focus be on park neighbours' properties? If we are to have development in parks, it must be sustainable.

Finally—**ensuring institutional capacity.** Three key elements of institutional capacity identified by the US Advisory Board are professional development and training; diversity of talent; and adequate funding and resources. ... I'd like to add two more—flexibility and knowledge. Flexibility I believe is important as we are constantly going through organisational change and we need to be able to do this and increase efficiencies while still getting the job done. To facilitate change, well developed systems and information management is essential.



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

December 2005 — March 2006

Outings Guide

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 EARLY.

Car camps Facilities often limited. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

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

Passenger transport. The committee suggests a donation, to the nearest dollar, of THIRTY cents per kilometre. 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 the return journeys.

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.

In voluntarily participating in these activities conducted by the NPA, participants should be aware that they could be exposed to risks that could lead to injury, illness or death, or to loss of, or damage to, their property. These risks could include but are not limited to slippery and or uneven surfaces, rocks being dislodged, falling at edges of cliffs or drops or elsewhere, risks associated with crossing creeks, hypothermia, heat exhaustion and the risks associated with any of the Special Hazards listed on the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* provided by the leader at the start of the activity.

To minimize these risks participants should endeavor to ensure that the activity is within their capabilities and that they are carrying food, water, equipment, clothing and footwear appropriate to the activity. Participants should advise the leader if they are taking any medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect their participation in the activity. Participants should make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity and accept the instructions of the leader. By signing the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* participants agree that they understand these requirements and considered the risks before choosing to sign the form and waive any claim for damages arising from the activity that they might have against the club, the leader or any other participants in tort or contract.

**10 December Saturday Work Party
and Christmas Party**

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au or
Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,
clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre,
Tharwa at 9:15 am or at Yankee Hat
car-park at 10:00 am. Work in the
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area
replanting, weeding etc following
removal of pines. Tools for the
morning's work will be provided, as
will a Christmas lunch in the shade of
the regenerated trees.

**Sunday 11 December
Honeysuckle Creek**

NPA Christmas party

Join fellow members and friends at
the association's Christmas Party at
the Honeysuckle Campground. All
the usual features; bring a picnic
lunch and share nibbles and drinks
(hopefully Santa will provide
Christmas cake too). Take a short
walk to see the regeneration
between Honeysuckle and
Booroomba Rocks.

Contacts: NPA committee

**18 December, Sunday Walk
Cascade Hut**

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 3 A

Map: Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000

Contact: 6281 0719 (h)

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6.45am Wanniasa Shops,
Langdon Ave (cnr Rylah Cr, opp. Red
Rooster). Drive 5km south of Thredbo
to Dead Horse Gap. Follow Australian
Alps Walking Track (Cascade Trail) via
Crackenback River and Bobs Ridge to
Cascade Creek. Lunch among
snowgums at the much-loved hut. Feral
horse area. A couple of steep climbs in
the 17 km walk but great views of
Chimneys Ridge and Rams Head Range
and chance to check recovery after 2003
fires. Afternoon tea in Jindabyne.
Drive 420km. \$120 per car, plus \$16 for
vehicles without park entry permit

15 January 2006, Sunday Walk

Muellers Peak

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 2 A/C

Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart Wanniasa Shops, Langdon
Avenue (cnr Rylah Cr., opp. Red
Rooster) 6.30 am. Park at Charlotte
Pass, descend to and cross Snowy
River, climb Mt Clarke, contour south
of Mt Northcote and climb Muellers
Peak (latter optional). After break
descend to Lake Albina for lunch.
Return via Northcote Pass and Club
Lake Creek. Great Views,
wildflowers. Several steep climbs.
Afternoon tea at Jindabyne. Book with
leader as weather check is essential.
Numbers limited. 420km drive, \$120
per car plus \$16 for vehicles without
entry permit.

22 January, Sunday Walk

Brindabella Ramble

Leader: Steven Forst

Grading: 3 A

Map: ACT 1:100 000

Contact: 6251 6817(h)

6219 5236(w) or

steven.forst@aca.gov.au

Meet at the forest car park on Uriarra
Road near Cotter Road at 8.30 am. A
walk in the mountain forest along Old
Mill Road and Warks Road in the
Brindabella Range. Visit the cooler,
south-facing folds of the Brindabella
Range including areas that escaped
significant damage during the fires,
and other regrowth areas. 85km drive,
\$25 per car.

25 January, Wednesday Walk

Contact: Neville Esau 62864176

or nemax@bigpond.com for
information

Mid week walk in conjunction with
CBC and FBI. Leader and destination
TBA

**26-29 January, Joint Pack Walk
with Family Bushwalkers**

Ettrema Gorge

Leaders: Pat and Eric Pickering

Grading: 3 B/D/E

Map: Touga, Yalwal 1:25 000

Contact: 6286 2128 or

pater@tpg.com.au

Four days in this interesting and
remote 400 metre deep gorge. Rock
scrambling, swimming in crystal-clear
pools and magnificent views. Total
climb up to 800 metres. Contact
leaders by 12 January for details.
375km drive, \$110 per car.

**29 January, Sunday Walk
Snowy Mountains – Wildflower
ramble from Charlotte Pass**

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 2 A/C/E

Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000

Contact: 6231 9186 or

landshil@webone.com.au

With all the recent rain, this year should
be great for the wildflowers. We drive
to Charlotte Pass carpark (2½ hours)
and wander around the moraines
surrounding Hedley Tarn, and the Blue
Lake, pop up to Carruthers Peak for
some views as well as more
wildflowers, and then down to Club
Lake to return along Club Lake creek to
the cars. There are over 30 species of
wildflowers unique to the Snowy
Mountains and many can be found in
bloom around this area. The walk will
require fitness, will be largely off track
and will involve regular climbs. It
brings with it an early start and late
return to Canberra, but the sights are
supremely rewarding. Contact Steve
Hill by Friday evening to register and
for details of the meeting place. This
walk will proceed only if the weather is
likely to be clear. 400km drive,
\$120 per car

**5 February, Sunday Walk
Ramshead Range area**

Leader: Margaret Power

Grading: 3 A/C/E

Map: Perisher Valley, Chimneys
Ridge 1:25 000

Contact: 6253 0131 (a.h.) or

margaret.power@act.gov.au

Drive to Thredbo and start walking from
the village, following the Merritts
Nature Track to the top of the chairlifts.
From here we'll set off along the track
that goes to Mt Kosciuszko but after a
short distance we'll turn onto the Dead
Horse Gap track. After about half an
hour we'll leave the track to walk across
open bushland and do a bit of rock
scrambling and climbing to explore
some of the area around the Ramshead
Range and to find a good scenic spot for
lunch. In the afternoon we'll return
across open bushland until we meet up
with the Dead Horse Gap track again.
We'll then follow the track down to
Dead Horse Gap, taking time to enjoy
the views along the way. From the Gap
we'll follow the Thredbo River back to
the village and our cars. This will be a
long day, with an early start (6.30am).

(continued)

The walk is all about views. It is a reasonably strenuous walk, covering about 16km, with total ascents of 700–800m. Contact leader by Friday evening to register and for details of meeting place. 400km drive, \$120 per car + \$16 for cars without a park entry permit.

**11 February Saturday Work Party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group**
Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au ,or
Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,
clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or at Yankee Hat car-park at 10:00 am. Work in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area replanting, weeding etc following removal of pines. Tools provided.

**12 February, Sunday Walk
The Big Hole and Marble Arch**
Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 3 A
Map: Kain 1:25 000

Contact: 6251 6817 (h) 6219 5236
(w) or steven.forst@aca.gov.au

Meet at Canberra Railway Station at 8.00 am. After crossing the Shoalhaven River, a walk on track mainly through open forest to visit the large sink hole over 110m deep, known as The Big Hole. Then continue on to the Marble Arch; a limestone feature at the entrance to a narrow limestone gorge. 180km drive, \$54 per car.

**19 February, Joint Sunday Walk
with Family Bushwalkers
Gorges of the ACT**

Leader: Pat and Eric Pickering
Grading: 2 E

Maps: Corin Dam, Williamsdale
Contact: 6286 2128 or
pater@tpg.com.au

From Ingledene Forest near Angle Crossing we will walk along Reedy Creek Gorge to a magnificent swimming hole on the Murrumbidgee River for a swim. If the weather is not too hot we shall visit the hidden Guises Gorge. These gorges are listed as sites of significance in the ACT. Rock-hopping and possibly river crossings. Only a short climb back to the cars. Swim time will be lengthened and the walk shortened if the weather is hot. Not much shade so an umbrella is a good idea! A car shuffle will be involved. Meet at Kambah Village at 8.20am. Drive 60km, \$18 per car

**19 February, Sunday Walk
Snowy Mountains—Rolling
Grounds and Granite Peaks**

Leader: Steve Hill
Grading: 3 B/C
Map: Geehi Dam: 1:25 000
Contact: 6231 9186 or
landshil@webone.com.au

A day of fabulous views from different perspectives. This will proceed only if the weather is likely to be clear. We drive to Guthega (2½ hours) and follow the foot track up from the Guthega Dam to Consett Stephen Pass. Continue north along the first half of the Rolling Grounds to the Granite Peaks. There could still be plenty of wildflowers around at this altitude (1,900 metres). The walk will require good fitness, will be all off track and will involve some climbing. It brings with it an early start and late return to Canberra, but the sights are awesome. Ring Steve Hill by Friday evening to register and for details of the meeting place. 400km drive, \$120 per car.

22 February, Wednesday Walk

Leader: Mike Smith
Contact: 6286 2984 or
msmith@netspeed.com.au
Mid Week walk in conjunction with
CBC and FBI. Destination TBA

**25 February, Saturday Work
Party**

Naas Creek/Brayshaws Hut area
Leader: Martin Chalk
Contact: 6292 3502(h)
6268 4864 (w)
or mchalk@tpg.com.au

This work party has two areas of operation. Firstly, the right hand bank of Naas Creek between the Mt Clear Camp Ground and the Boboyan Rd has a number of briars. These will be tackled by cutting and dabbing. Secondly, a minor infestation of Broom has occurred in the vicinity of Brayshaws Hut. These will be removed. All equipment will be provided. All we need is willing helpers to endure what is likely to be a rewarding but hot day. Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 9:00am. 160km drive, \$48 per car.

**25 – 26 February, Pack Walk
Rock Flats**

Leader: David Large
Map: Corin Dam, Rendezvous
Creek 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/B/C/D
Contact: 62914830 or
egerald@bigpond.net.au

Walk from Orroral Picnic Area along the AAWT to Cotter Gap then up to Split Rock and across to Rock Flats for overnight camp. On Sunday, drop down to upper Rendezvous Creek and come out at Nursery Swamp Carpark. Short car shuffle. We will see how this area has recovered from the 2003 fires. Partly on track, with some cross country. 100km drive, \$30 per car

**4 – 5 March, Canoe Trip
Talbingo Reservoir**

Leader: Mike Bremers
Grading: Suitable for beginning
canoists
Maps: Ravine 1:25 000 or
Yarrangobilly 1:100 000
Contact: 6292 3408(h)
6283 2052(w)

Paddle 4km from O'Hares Rest Area (Sue City) to a lovely campsite accessible only by water by lunchtime on the Saturday. Then an optional afternoon paddle, walk and/or rest. Return to cars Sunday morning. Suitable for beginners. BYO canoe or hire (try Wetspot in Fyshwick). If interested ring leader by previous Monday to organise transport and canoes. Limit: 10 people. 500km drive, \$150 per car.

**4 March, Saturday Navigation
Exercise. Continuation
Navigation Exercise – Hills &
Valleys of Naas Creek**

Leader: Martin Chalk
Grading: 1 A/B/C/E
Map: Yaouk, 1:25 000
Contact: 6268 4864 (w) 6292 3502
(h)

or mchalk@tpg.com.au
Meet at the Namadgi Visitors' Centre car park at 9.00am. This walk will start along the grassy flat of the Naas Creek valley and will progress to the subtle ridges and forested hilltops to the south west of the valley. It will build on the navigation exercise held in December by concentrating on the use of map and compass in close country. If you wish to participate in the navigation exercise, please bring your own maps and compass – no GPS receivers thank you. If this is not you, come along for the walk any way. 160km drive, \$48 per car.

**5 March, Sunday walk
Snowy Mountains – Mount
Townsend and a pond**

Leader: Steve Hill
Grading: 4 A/C/E
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Contact: 6231 9186 or
landshil@webone.com.au

By Popular demand. You read about this walk in the NPA *Bulletin* mid year. This will proceed only if the weather conditions are likely to be safe. We drive to Charlotte Pass (2½ hours) and walk along the track towards Mt Kosciuszko. About two kilometers along we leave the track and head west across the Snowy River to Muellers Pass on the Main Range. Follow a foot pad to Mt Townsend, then drop down the eastern side towards Lake Albina to a large pond for fabulous views, and scramble back towards the northern end of Muellers Peak to return. The walk will require very good fitness, will be mainly off track and will involve significant climbing. It brings with it an early start and late return to Canberra, but the sights are absolutely worth it. Contact Steve Hill by Friday evening to register and for details of the meeting place. 400 km drive, \$120 per car

**11 March Saturday Work Party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group**
Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au ,or
Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,
clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or at Yankee Hat car-park at 10:00 am. Work in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area replanting, weeding etc following removal of pines. Tools provided.

**11 March, Saturday Walk
Goulburn Historic Walk**

Leader: Col McAlister
Grading: 1 A
Map: Goulburn Street Map
Contact: 6288 4171

We will take in some of Goulburn's historic sites. This is the weekend of the Rose Festival and the sites to be visited will depend on what is open and interests of participants. Fees/donations will apply at some sites. Meet at 8.30am at the ACT Netball car park just past the Dickson traffic lights on Northbourne Ave. 200km drive, \$60 per car.

**18 – 21, March Packwalk
Gulf and Nungar Plains**

Leader: David Large
Maps: Tantangara and Denison
1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/B
Contact: 6291 4830 or
egerald@bigpond.net.au

Easy walking around the Gulf and Nungar Plains. An opportunity to visit a number of huts that survived the 2003 fires. Start from near Tantangara Dam and visit Townsends Hut and go on to Pedens Hut, camp on the Murrumbidgee with side trip to Love Nest in the Salleys. Then follow the boundary track over Jadar Mount down to Brayshaws Hut and on to Gavels Hut. We will go across to Schofields Hut and return to cars via Circuits Hut. This walk can be done in three or four days and can include a climb of Mt Nungar. Please advise interest to allow final route to be determined. 300km drive, \$90 per car.

**19 March, Sunday Walk
Munyang Peak**

Leader: Brian Slee
Grading: 2 A/B/C
Map: Nimmo Plains and Kalkite
Mountain 1:25 000

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au
Depart Wanniasa Village, Langdon Avenue (cnr Rylah Cr., opp. Red Rooster) 7.15am. Drive via Cooma, take Rocky Plain Road (toward Eucumbene Dam), Nimmo Road and Island Bend Fire Trail to Gungarlin River. Park at 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. Climb south to Munyang Peak trig (1644m). Lovely spot, rarely visited. Return same route. If sufficient time, visit ex-CSIRO hut. Afternoon tea at Cooma. Book with leader as vehicles with basic 4WD are required for fire trail. Drive: 300 km, \$90 per car.

22 March, Wednesday Walk

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson
Contact: 6281 6381
Midweek walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Destination TBA.

**24-26 March, Pack Walk
Hoddles Castle**

Leader: Philip Gatenby
Grading: 3 A/D/E
Map: Endrick 1:25 000
Contact: 6254 3094 or
philip.gatenby@dewr.gov.au
Hoddles Castle offers great views of nearby parts of the Budawangs. The walk starts at the Nerriga entrance to Morton National Park and is partly on tracks. Some creek crossings and rock scrambling through cliff lines will also be involved, as will a number of climbs of up to 200 metres. Contact the leader by the Wednesday before the walk. 240 km drive, \$72 per car.

29 March, Wednesday Walk

Leader: David Large
Contact: 62914830 or
egerald@bigpond.net.au
Midweek walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Destination and meeting place TBA.

Canoeing in a wilderness

NPA members attending the August General Meeting were treated to a stunning slide show and talk by Esther Gallant. Her presentation focused on the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), a land of waterways in the Superior National Forest of northeastern Minnesota and the adjacent Quetico Provincial park in southwestern Ontario. Millions of acres have been set aside here as wilderness accessible only by canoe or kayak. Esther has made five trips to these magnificent forests and waterways that stretch for 150 miles along the meandering US-Canadian border.

Native Americans are known to have used the area for 9000 years, leaving behind impressive rock art pictographs of moose, spirit figures, wolves and canoes. Historically, the BWCAW area was an important trade route in the fur trade before the beavers were almost eliminated due to the demand for pelts for the beaver hat trade.

The 1.1 million acres of BWCAW contains over 1000 lakes and 1200 miles of canoe routes along and through rivers, islands, waterfalls, and large and

small lakes. Navigation is no problem using maps and compass. This area has been designated by National Geographic as one of the world's 50 greatest places to visit and is significant for its bird population. A permit system regulates the number of visitors. There are about 200 000 visitors annually, but group size is restricted to 10. There are 60 specified entry points which, along with camp sites and recommended portages, are noted on available maps. Motorised craft and overflights by airplanes are banned.

Conifers (firs and spruce) and birch make up the majority of tree species in the wilderness area. Esther's photographs showed some of the many wildflowers present, especially the beautiful orchids, a favourite treat for deer.

Although black bears were never seen, they are present and a nuisance. Campers are warned that food and other items favoured by bears must be secured in special ways since bears can climb trees. Food must be suspended on ropes between two high trees and/or secured in "bear barrels".

Other animals seen in the area

include deer, beaver, wolves (heard not seen), painted turtles, chipmunks and red squirrels. Among the birds present were bald eagle, loon, mergansers, and chickadees. A recording of the eerie bubbling, hooting call of the loon was played. Since the area was visited in early spring and autumn, insects were not a problem as they can be at other times.

The equipment taken for visits to BWCAW was especially interesting to see in the photographs. The lightweight Kevlar canoe weighed only 39 pounds. Items that were carried in the canoe or on backs included paddles, tent, three packs weighing 40 pounds each, life jackets, rope, tarp, stove, food and fuel for two weeks, cameras, rain gear, wash basin, billy, solar shower, and bear barrels. Since all gear had to be carried on portages, Esther on one trip estimated she walked a distance greater than the distance paddled.

For a trip of any length, rain is unavoidable but the magnificent photographs of sunrises, sunsets, wildflowers, and waterfalls made it seem every day was a sunny one.

David Pfanner

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group reaches a milestone

After seven years of hard work the GBRG can look back with some satisfaction as the last section of felled pines was burnt earlier this year. In August two work parties were held to hand broadcast seed into some of the more inaccessible burnt areas, using *Eucalyptus stellulata* and *E. viminalis*. Some mechanical seeding was performed by park service personnel but there was still a need for GBRG members to do their part in getting the job done. We had two very pleasant sunny days for the work parties which made it all the more enjoyable.

Generally the cooler months are the time for seeding with the warmer months devoted to weeding. This year our weeding chores will be improved with the purchase of new tools—

mattocks, loppers, saws, weeding wands and a small backpack sprayer. GBRG was successful in obtaining a small grant to buy some new equipment and these new tools will be a very welcome addition as we continue to try and win the weeding battle.

At a recent committee meeting, plans for work parties over the next six months were discussed. The summer months will require lots of weeding to be done, especially after the recent rains, but by autumn we hope to plant some seedlings of acacias, banksias and eucalypts in areas near to tracks and roads so that they can be watered.

GBRG welcomes new members to join in the activities. There is still a lot of work to be done but we always have time for some fun and social interaction

as well!

The GBRG, having completed their main objective, is now looking to the future of the group and considering their long-term goals. There will always be weeding and there are many gaps in the slopes and valleys where drought, poor soils and other variables have influenced the regeneration of native seeds and seedlings. The group is planning to examine what methods of planting have been most successful, which species have survived the long drought and what methods of weed control have worked effectively. We hope that our experience will be of use to other groups and plan to collate this information for future projects.

Hazel Rath

The NPA ACT and the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group are both having Christmas Parties. See Outings Program for details (10th and 11th December).

Party, party, party.

Mount Kelly packwalk, October 2005



*On Mt Kelly summit. Steven, Judy, Kevin, Sonja, Murray and David.
Photo Max Lawrence*

The October long weekend was looming and we were in the mood for a packwalk that didn't involve a long drive. Mount Kelly with Steven Forst seemed ideal even though we had gone there at the same time last year with Steven. The magic of the place called.

There were seven of us. Besides our leader we were: Max Lawrence, Sonja Lenz, Kevin McCue, and three Kellys: Dave, Judy, and Murray. The weather forecast was fine for the weekend and we set off on a mild Saturday morning, leaving the cars at the Yankee Hat carpark. After we had negotiated the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area, we

had a brief stop at the banks of a creek as we approached the ascent to the saddle flanking Mount Gudgenby.

The ascent is moderately steep and steady but pleasant on a cool day as it takes you through the eucalypt forest. The track going up is definite but hard to find on the return. Yellow pea flowers and the purple *Hardenbergia* added their splashes of colour to the scene as we toiled upward and gained the grassy saddle for lunch.

Then it was down to a creek and following the fire trail undulations to Sam's Creek, past the spectacular granite boulders that are bushland

sculptures in themselves. Last year we had been caught in light rain that had highlighted the olives, greens and salmon pinks of the tree trunks. I'd been fooled into thinking they'd been black sallys but no, this time in the dry weather they revealed themselves as snow gums, or so we thought.

Down to Sam's Creek which was flowing strongly. We managed to cross via a log through the thicket of dead tree, remnants of the 2003 fire. On the other side we stopped for a cup of tea which Steven boiled up on his little stove. It was a welcome drop and had been doubly welcome last year when we were cold and damp after walking in the rain. A tea room orchestra of frogs chorused in the background, giving a drowsy, rhythmical beat to the afternoon.

The bliss of simplicity

We followed Sam's Creek near its bed, negotiating a few spongy sphagnum areas while others in the party wisely chose the higher route which avoided the sphagnum. About 45 minutes after crossing Sam's Creek and passing a lone tarn, we pitched our tents where the trees gave way to a grassy open area. Last year we'd spotted a heap of rusty nails that looked as if they'd been used for putting up a yard many years ago.

The creek was close by and all seemed perfect, except that Steven had left his collapsible tent poles at home. He managed to pitch his tent with some ingenuity, using my aluminium walking sticks.

Fire permits are mandatory in Namadgi National Park, but because we were camped just over the border in NSW in Scabby Range Nature Reserve we didn't need one. We could relax and enjoy the bliss of simplicity: a camp fire, ginger wine, various nibbles, an easy meal and an early bed.

We heard the evening chorus of frogs plus the confidential warblings and varied calls of lyrebirds. Mopokes were calling but Kevin was certain they were dingoes or feral dogs.

Next morning we were off by 8:30 and heading for Mt Kelly. The 2003 fire has left the forest in various shades of black and grey but the trees and understorey are regenerating well enough. In a year or so, scrub bashing might be mandatory.

Steven was trying to find the route



Kevin and Sonja enjoy a break on Gudgenby Saddle. Photo Max Lawrence

he'd followed during a solo walk in February but it was proving evasive. We seemed to be following almost the exact route of the previous year: negotiating Sam's Creek and tributaries various times before climbing a ridge and heading in a north-westerly direction.

We finally reached the top of the ridge with a full view of Mt Kelly, and a partial view of Mt Morgan to the west. A pesky wind had risen and bullied us while we rested and gazed at our destination.

We soon headed down the spur, crossing open country with snow grass where we saw what looked like rabbit droppings but were identified as sheep droppings. I wonder how long is it since sheep were up near Mt Kelly? It's strange to think of them there.

As we started up the boulder-strewn and bush-covered slopes of Mt Kelly, Kevin and Max spotted stone arrangements that marked the ACT/NSW border and Max told the tale of Mouat, (think Mouat Street, Lyneham) a surveyor who'd camped out in the area for months with his hardy wife. As we continued our climb, Kevin spotted a wedge-tailed eagle, soaring with the wind currents.

At the top

When we finally reached the top of Mt Kelly, the wind made standing upright almost impossible. We had a sweeping 360 degree panoramic view of blue peaks, some rounded, others jagged, folding away into the distance. They included Mts Morgan and Murray and the dip where the Cotter runs. Away to the south we could see part of the snow flecked Main Range which merged with the clouds, Jagungal with snow on its shoulders, and Table Top.

Each peak was a memory of past walks from the 1960s onwards, years with different people and groups, coming full circle to when Dave and I started introducing our children to the pleasures and rigours of walking.

In March 1960, NPA members Fiona MacDonald Brand, Julie Henry, and my father, Robert Story, with Alan Bagnall from the Canberra Alpine Club, marvelled at the view from the top of Mt Kelly. From their vantage point, they visualised the extent of what they thought should be a *National Park for the National Capital*.

Nancy Burbidge, CSIRO scientist and botanist, had been the main protagonist for the idea and her namesake, Mt Burbidge, lies to the east of Mt Kelly.

To celebrate Namadgi National Park's 20th birthday, Steven's intention for the 2004 Mt Kelly walk had been to



Steven, Judy, Murray and Sonja approaching Mt Kelly, day two. Photo Max Lawrence

join the Canberra Bushwalking Club, who had also worked towards having a national park declared.

We hadn't meet up with the Canberra Bushwalkers whose route had been too ambitious for us, but we did reach the top of Mt Kelly in strong wind just before the weather broke with sleet and rain.

For our 2005 lunch, we huddled in the shelter of rocks, just under Mt Kelly's trig point where we'd hurriedly taken a few photographs of the windswept party. Down below lay the burnt-out sphagnum bogs with evidence of the restoration work that Amanda Carey, a ranger with Environment ACT, had helped to coordinate.

Lunch was short and then came a choice: climb the smaller peak to the west of Mt Kelly or climb Mt Burbidge which looked rather forbidding with its large expanses of bleached rock and dead snow gums. And the wind kept blowing.

Five of us decided to head for Mt Burbidge while Sonja and Steven waited at a saddle below Mt Kelly with rocks and trees that provided a little shelter.

After Max and Dave consulted the map and took bearings, we descended to a lower saddle. The effects of the 2003 fire revealed themselves starkly with the tree skeletons and the backdrop of granite.

Max had clear memories of an uncomfortable scramble up Burbidge from the southern end, followed by rock and scrub along the top to the highest point. He led us towards the northerly end, in between the boulders

and up a rocky slab or two. We gained the top where the wind was blowing with renewed zest.

No acrobatics

Kevin had his eye on the cairn on top of a rock, separated from the rest of the rocky summit by a deep gulch, but was dissuaded from attempting any acrobatics with a reminder that Sonja was waiting for him back at the saddle. We looked back at Mt Kelly which had felt the full fiery blast on its flanks in 2003. Mt Namadgi and the other surrounding hills were reduced to their harsh, unyielding rocky faces and outcrops, the softening effect of vegetation all but erased.

To the south lay the Orroral Valley, showing yellow and grey in the distance. Time to go. About one and a half hours later, we joined Sonja and Steven who were pleased to see that the wind hadn't spirited us away. We headed downwards through thickets of ti tree, towards the beautiful open frost hollow that has a lovely golden glow in the late afternoon light.

We spotted a flame robin just on the edge of the hollow and yes, we had also seen one last year as we emerged from the ti tree thickets in the face of flurries of sago snow.

The frost hollow is a very peaceful spot with the sound of frogs inviting you to sit down and take a nap or set up camp. Inevitably coming to the frost hollow raises questions of the old track that used to run to one side of the open area. It is marked on old maps and provided a good route back to the lower reaches of Sam's Creek.

(Continued on page 14)

Parkwatch

Pest management in Southern Highlands national parks

National Parks staff and contractors conducted many weed and feral animal control programs during the year and will continue with these works:

Fox control continues in the Kangaroo Valley area as part of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Protection Program. Other control areas include Jervis Bay National Park (in partnership with staff from Booderee National Park) and Becroft Peninsula.

Goat control programs were conducted in the Shoalhaven Gorge, Tarlo River National Park and around the brush-railed rock-wallaby colony near Banaby.

Several new pig traps were purchased to assist in pig control

programs where problems have been identified.

Weed control has been undertaken in Murramarang National Park and the Blackbutt Road area in Conjola National Park. Bitou bush control has been carried out in Cullendulla Creek Nature Reserve, Tollgate Islands, Seven Mile Beach National Park and Comerong Island Nature Reserve.

Madeira vine has been targeted at the Coomanderry Swamp section of Seven Mile Beach National Park, with the assistance of volunteers.

Tree of Heaven and blackberry control was undertaken at Yalwal and McKenzie Station in Morton National Park.

Coral tree and lantana has been targeted throughout the region with special emphasis on Minnamurra Rainforest.

Sandpad monitoring has been initiated in Bugong National Park to further assist the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Recovery Program.

Deer control is a complex and difficult issue. Southern Highlands staff have been researching deer control strategies in vulnerable areas in the northern part of Morton National Park.

Woody weed eradication has been undertaken at Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve and extensive native species plantings will occur when the drought breaks. Volunteers continue to undertake weed control in the Bundanoon Section of Morton National Park and in Robertson Nature Reserve. These groups have been operating for several years and do a magnificent job.

The fight continues...

*Highlands to coast Park News,
Summer 2005*

Mount Kelly pack walk, October 2005

(continued from page 13)

We couldn't find it but simply followed the edge of the frost hollow to the south west and then into the forest. About half an hour from our camp we passed a waterfall, the water flowing fast and plentifully, a welcome sign of the good rains that had fallen.

Camp that night was punctuated by the sounds of the mopokes again (no, Kevin, not dogs of any kind), and dear reader, you wouldn't believe it, the fleeting commentary of the grand final of the rugby league; then from the other side of the fire we were brought sharply back to the 21st century with a snippet of sobering news—Bali.

Our little escape bubble had burst for a while ... then the camp fire, smoke, and the sounds of the frogs brought us back to the bush and to bed.

Return walk

Next morning after a slow, leisurely breakfast, we set off on our return, well above Sam's Creek. The day was warming up fast and after a break near Sam's Creek crossing, we returned the way we'd come in, with lunch and a doze just below the grassy saddle.

I was glad the day wasn't any hotter. Summer is forecast to be hot and dry, not an inviting prospect. What effect will global warming have on Namadgi and its neighbour, Kosciuszko? What will happen to the sphagnum bogs, the frogs, snow gums and many other species that haven't

even been identified? What is the best way of protecting these areas?

We eventually roused ourselves for the last stretch. Once we reached the saddle, the track we'd followed in was elusive. Other animal tracks criss-cross the area, giving false leads but finally we reached the cars just after 3:00pm on Monday afternoon.

I noticed that the pace had quickened after lunch and was feeling just a little tetchy. Evidently Steven was concerned that he'd specified Sunday as our return date, not Monday, so he was eager to reach the log book and sign us off before any alarm was raised. The plus was that with extra time up our sleeves, we finished the walk with

delicious coffee and milkshakes outside the Lanyon café, under a tree.

We enjoyed a frank critique about Nolan and Streeeton. To express anti-Nolan sentiments at Lanyon is tantamount to treason or blasphemy you'd think, but no tree branch fell on us and it was Streeeton who seemed to be the firm favourite.

It was an ideal way to end a lovely walk into Namadgi and beyond. Long may the frogs keep croaking and the sphagnum bogs hold their own, a peaceful retreat from life's frantic pace. Thank you, Steven.

Judy Kelly



Soma, Kevin, Murray (tiding Judy) and Steven happily on the home straight.

Photo Max Lawrence

Parkwatch

Garden escapers—landscape wreckers

Plants escaping from Australia's home gardens are inflicting ugly damage on the nation's landscapes, National Parks and Nature Reserves. Home gardeners and gardening advisers must be conscious of the harm their choice of plants can have on our native bush, and be vigilant in preventing escapes.

Scientists round Australia report scores of new weed invasions every year, many being plants which have escaped from home gardens. Some invasive plants can cause greater damage than that caused by feral animals, taking over an entire landscape, wiping out the native vegetation and drastically changing the mix of birds, animals, reptiles and insects it can support. They out-compete native plants for water, light or nutrients, and increase the frequency and intensity of bushfires.

Some are poisonous to native and domestic animals, others cause human allergies.

Among the many garden favourites which have gone feral are: Agapanthus, broom, Singapore daisy, bridal creeper, asparagus fern, ivy, purple morning glory, periwinkle, Japanese Honeysuckle, seaside daisies, gazanias, ericas, arum lilies, pampas grass, pigface and Italian lavender.

Responsible gardening includes replacing any invasive species with safe plants. There are hundreds of beautiful plants, many of them natives, which can be grown as alternatives to the invasive species. Lists of substitutes are available in most States and Territories.

It also involves safe disposal of garden rubbish—not just dumping it over the back fence or in the bush. It means covering your trailer when you go to the tip, so bits don't blow off and establish along the roadside. People whose homes adjoin the bush or parkland need to take particular care—and weed the bush as well as their garden!

NPA News, May 2005

Birds on the move

Something odd is happening in the bird world. In Melbourne, the presence of Crested Pigeons, known for making a distinctive squeaking sound as they take off, is increasing in the streets and parks. In the Snowy Mountains, Flame Robins have started arriving weeks earlier than normal. The migration patterns of our birds is changing, and according to bird watchers, it's most

likely due to climate change.

Listen to Doctor Mike Weston, Head of the Research and Conservation Department with Birds Australia, and he will tell you that birds are letting us know that climate change is happening now. In an interview on ABC radio Dr Weston explained that bird migration patterns are an extremely accurate measure of climate change.

"There are some birds that migrate with very precise timing," he said. "Some seabirds, when they return to their colonies, for example, you can basically set your watch by them; you know that they're going to come in on a particular day every year."

Change in migration patterns, he concludes, points to fundamental changes in the world's climate.

habitat, June 2005

The case of the missing logs

The illegal logging of Snowy River National Park during the 2003 bushfires drew scathing criticism from the Auditor-General in his report released in May. The report confirms that the logging was illegal, breaching three separate Acts; that the logs went "missing"; and that the "fire-break" made the area more fire prone and put fire-fighters' lives at risk. However, no one will be prosecuted for the offences.

Wild, Spring 2005

Victoria's new water policy: logging in catchments

In the depths of Victoria's montane forests lie Melbourne's water catchments. The Thomson River, which flows into Melbourne's largest reservoir, begins its journey on the often snow-capped Baw Baw plateau. From here it meanders through grassy fens, finally dropping down into the forested catchments. Yet logging rates in these catchments are some of the highest in the State. Trees that grow back after logging use twice as much water as an old growth forest—meaning half as much water is left for cities, towns, farms and aquatic ecosystems.

Three years ago, the Victorian Government acknowledged there was a problem: water was estimated to start running out in Melbourne by 2012. They also accepted that logging reduced water supply and that logging was occurring in catchments that supplied 60 per cent of Melbourne's drinking water. Despite this, the Bracks Government is proposing more research and another lengthy process.

Although the Victorian State

Government is addressing the issue, there is concern that this process has the potential to drag out well beyond the necessary timeframes. Scientists confirm that the investigation proposed can be undertaken within a year rather than the proposed two-and-a-half year timeframe.

In addition, the policy presently focuses on yield and excludes quality issues associated with logging. The Australian Medical Association wants industrial and agricultural activities in water catchments to be independently monitored—their concern is related to the contamination of water by logging and associated activities in Tasmania.

Wilderness, Winter 2005

Recovery at the Prom

Biologists from La Trobe University recently spent two days at Wilsons Promontory examining how the flora and fauna of the park have responded to, and are recovering from, disturbance by fire.

In the majority of burnt areas the litter layer has been burnt back to mineral earth. There are many extensive patches of re-sprouting grass-trees, and since their simultaneous flowering is stimulated by fire, spring should be a spectacular sight!

A walk from Norman Bay to Little Oberon Bay showed that the flanks of Mt Little Oberon had fire of high intensity with little understorey remaining, and even the vegetation of the rocky outcrops (mainly Burgan, *Kunzea ericoides*), along with the encrusting lichens of the granite boulders, was not spared. The fire spread to the ocean's edge in most places.

Observations from the trip included:

- the speed at which some plants are re-sprouting. Amazingly, tree-ferns and ground ferns are among the first plants to re-sprout in moist areas
- the fire has burnt in a mosaic-like pattern according to vegetation and fuel type, wind speed and topography, as well as other variables
- few birds were seen in burnt areas, except for White-throated Treecreepers, Eastern Yellow Robins and Grey Currawongs
- spiders and ants were very seldom seen. Their recolonisation may take some time.

Update, July 2005

Compiled by Len Haskew

Community concerns for natural values in Molonglo Valley plans

Natural and cultural heritage and environmental management issues have featured strongly in community consultations for the development of the Molonglo Valley Draft Structure Plan. Current planning provides for development in three zones in an area reaching from William Hovell Drive to the Uriarra and Cotter roads and from the ridge above the Tuggeranong Parkway to west of the Coppins Crossing road.

Initial development is planned for the East Molonglo zone which is contained within an area bordered by the Cotter Road, Tuggeranong Parkway and William Hovell Drive. This will provide for 20 000 dwellings and a population of 44 000. It is expected that this will absorb Canberra's population increase in coming years and, according to the ACT Planning and Land Authority, "the central and western areas would not need to be developed in the foreseeable future".

However, it is these west and central zones that are the main concern of the Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra because they include an important woodland wildlife corridor running south of the Belconnen suburbs, and because the valley is home to 12 species of birds of prey. Ten of the species breed in the valley and the other two may breed there, but all need large open spaces for hunting.

The council's Director, Trish Harrup, says the birds would not be

able to survive if the west and central zones would be for the breeding sites to be protected, while the land around them is developed.

The raptor population of the Molonglo Valley comprises the wedge-tailed eagle, the little eagle, black-shouldered kite, whistling kite, white-bellied sea-eagle, brown goshawk, collared sparrowhawk, the peregrine falcon, the brown falcon, Australian hobby and the nankeen kestrel.

Ms Harrup said proposals for the eastern section were "acceptable", since that section mainly covers former pine plantation areas and is reasonably central to existing urban development. And there were potential positives. The Molonglo River valley in the eastern zone is highly degraded in parts and urban development in the area may give the opportunity to carry out restoration work.

Consultation results

Natural and cultural heritage and environmental management comprised 24 per cent of the issues raised in workshops and written submissions earlier this year. Urban growth made up 40 per cent, and recreation and the built and social environment issues aggregated 36 per cent of the total.

The planning authority says environmental corridors and endangered habitats "need to be protected". It states in a public information pamphlet that current planning for the Molonglo Structure

Plan "has retained key environmental and habitat corridors such as the Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland that runs south west from Weetangera, and the wildlife corridors adjacent to William Hovell Drive and along the Molonglo River corridor".

Studies have already included investigations into the potential impacts of urban development on birds of prey and the pink tailed worm lizard. "These studies identified important habitat areas and nesting sites, which have been incorporated into wildlife corridors in the current planning for the structure plan," it says.

Hills, ridges and significant views should be protected, the authority says, and significant trees and tree stands should be retained where possible. A survey of Aboriginal and European heritage is being undertaken and any sites that are identified "will be appropriately protected".

Public comments were due to close on November 28 and it was expected that the Molonglo Valley Planning Studies would be finalised by the end of December 2005. Formal consideration of a preferred plan through a Preliminary Assessment, a Draft Amendment to the National Capital Plan and a Draft Variation to the Territory Plan will also include a formal consultation process.

Graeme Wicks

Sustainability and Bushfire Recovery Conference

Three NPA ACT committee members (Christine Goonrey, Kevin McCue and Chris Emery) were invited to attend the three-day "Tenth Annual Conference of Parliamentary Environment and Public Works Committees" hosted in Canberra in September. The conference was chaired by Mick Gentleman, Chair of the ACT Standing Committee on Planning and Environment.

Summing up at the end of the conference, Mr Gentleman recalled the statement by the Chair of the National Bushfire Inquiry, Stuart Ellis, that bushfires were part of the ecological system, and that there was no such thing as being fireproof, containment was "more hope than reality", and that

the use of the word "prevention" in public discussion can be misleading.

This message was reinforced by another delegate, Jim Gould, who is Research Leader, Bushfire Behaviour and Management at CSIRO, who made the following points:

- Fire as an ecological process has shaped our landscape. It is our role to manage how we live with fire.
- Our capacity to manage fires is sometimes as low as five per cent.
- We need to be mindful of the fact that we in Australia are in a continuous fire season.
- Climate change studies indicate that this one season will become more intense and for individual states and

territories, the fire season will be longer.

The conference also heard presentations on the environmental response to the recovery from the ACT 2003 bushfires and short and long-term strategies, the recovery process for ACT Forests and the need to involve the community, the redevelopment at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, the best way to deal with spontaneous volunteers, and related topics drawing on experiences in South Australia and Victoria as well as the ACT.

Graeme Wicks

Great Australian Bushwalk 2005

The Great Australian Bushwalk, inaugurated last year by our sister organisation the NPA of NSW, was held again in all State capitals and many regional centres on Sunday 16 October 2005. In Canberra we had a very hard act to follow. Last year something like 650 people had registered for the two walks in the northern sections of Canberra Nature Park. On the Big Day then it poured rain in the middle of the drought, but the wet mob of walkers arriving at a soggy Mulligans Flat were generally a very happy lot, and the event was pronounced a big success.

This year's Canberra event was again *Bigger Than Ben Hur*. It was based on three separate walks in the Murrumbidgee Corridor, using Pine Island as a base. Walkers were taken by ACTION bus to their respective starting points, and then walked back to Pine Island where they were fed by Rotary and entertained by a bush band. The long walk was 23km from Casuarina Sands along the new walking track constructed following the 2003 fires, the medium walk was 9km along part of the same track from Kambah Pool, and the short walk was 4.5km from Point Hut Crossing.



In total 642 people participated, comprising 71 who did the 23km, 343 who did the 9km, and 228 who did the 4.5km short walk. There were lots of families walking together, including several strollers on the short walk. The weather was cool and cloudy, but dry—an excellent day for walking. The country was unbelievably GREEN. The company was congenial, and a good time was had by all.



As was the case last year, NPA was greatly assisted in running this year's event by strong support from the ACT Government, especially Environment ACT. As well as providing grant funding for the event, Environment ACT provided staff to help plan and coordinate the logistics. In this regard, special mention should be made of the excellent work done by Kylie Lahiff, Emily Crimmins and Margaret Wade. On the Big Day many rangers and staff members also gave generously their own time to lead walking groups and ensure that the wheels turned smoothly. National sponsor Paddy Pallin provided special shirts to walks leaders and organisers.

NPA volunteers turned up in large numbers. We had primary responsibility for the 23km walk, which was led by Steven Forst, Martin Chalk, Philip Gatenby and Brian Slee. On the

shorter walks NPA leaders included Steve Hill, Syd Comfort, Gary Thompson, Barbara Edgar, Beverley Hammond, Jacqui Cole and Sue Chadwick.

NPA volunteers who helped keep things running at Pine Island, notably by checking hundreds of walkers in and out and running the NPA display, included Christine and Michael Goonrey, Clive Hurlstone, John Webster, Di Thompson, Adrienne Nicholson, Kathy Saw, Pat Miethke, Chris Emery, and Sabine Friedrich. Chris especially was very active in handing out NPA brochures, and very quickly had a selection of photos up on our website. Hopefully all of this will translate into a boost to our membership.

All in all, a very successful day, and one that served to significantly raise NPA's profile in the community.

Max Lawrence



Top right; Some of the Great Australian Bushwalkers negotiating a rocky creek crossing on the longest walk.

Above; Walk leaders and their flocks catching the buses arranged to take them to the various walk starting points.

Right; All walkers had to register before participating, and report in on completion of their walk.

Photos Max Lawrence

Thanks for the broken ankle

NPA ACT member Ben Selinger has demonstrated a great capacity to look on the bright side of a broken ankle. He found many positives in the help he received from members and many others following an accident on a Sunday Walk in the Orroral Valley in August.

In a message to fellow walkers a few days after the accident, he said: "My sincere thanks for all your help and support on last Sunday's walk at Orroral. Going for help at speed, coming back up again with the rescue, staying and chatting and watching over me for almost four hours and finally that really hard walk down with the stretcher. All very, very much appreciated. I hope the strain of the going out and the carrying out were not too much. Sarah, the ambulance lady, and the park rangers were really terrific and the story of the locked gate will no doubt initiate an upgrade of arrangements."

Ben said the Canberra Hospital operated with efficiency and care and a

great physio gave him some remedial crutch training, and he was looking forward to returning to walking in the bush as soon as possible—"possibly sticking to 'easy' for a while".

"It's the first bone I've ever broken in many decades of bushwalking, so I count myself very lucky indeed to have avoided the almost inevitable for so long," he wrote.

President Christine Goonrey wrote to the District Manager, Namadgi National Park, Brett McNamara, to record the association's thanks "for the sterling effort of three Parks and Conservation Service rangers", with particular thanks to David Whitfield, who was working in the area at the time.

Christine's letter states that Mike Smith, the party leader, made the accident victim as warm and comfortable as possible and dispatched three volunteers to get help. She continues:

"Kevin McCue expressed the feeling of the group later: 'It took us

over an hour just to get to the nearest mobile phone access point to ring for an ambulance. The injured walker was in a lot of pain and we knew it would not only be a difficult site for the ambulance officers to get to but that it would be a bit tricky getting him out on a stretcher. But on the way back from ringing we were able to flag down David's ute and to our great relief he was able to establish radio contact between us, the ambulance and the Visitor Centre, and organise the rescue effort. David was a great calming influence with his expertise and good humour, and we knew we were OK when we were joined by two of his ranger colleagues with the ambulance a short distance behind. The hardest part was still ahead: getting the accident victim in the stretcher down to the ambulance on the road through 1.5km of rough bush. However, with good teamwork, and to our great relief, we all made it out safely before dark.' "

Graeme Wicks

Draft Budawangs strategy: NPA comments

The association has responded with some detailed as well as general comments on the *Draft Budawangs Walking and Camping Strategy*. In a covering letter to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Christine Goonrey pointed out that the NPA ACT had been involved for many years in bushwalking in the Budawangs and in conducting work parties to improve the environment there.

An estimated 16 000 walkers visit the central sections of the Budawangs each year, and a further 20 000 walk to Pigeon House Mountain.

A summary of main points in the draft, thanks to the Autumn 2005 issue of *The Bushwalker* (see Len Haskew's PARKWATCH extract in the September 2005 *Bulletin*) is as follows:

- It continues the existing ban on camping and wood fires in Monolith Valley, Hidden Valley, the Castle Saddle, the Vines and along the Two Rivers track within wilderness.
- It prohibits camping in rock overhangs except for a number of listed sites.
- It bans wood fires in all caves and overhangs.
- Maximum tent numbers and a fuel stove only requirement are imposed in five popular camp sites that are suffering significant damage.

- Toilets of minimal construction are proposed to address pollution.
- Walkers will be required to keep to designated tracks and camping areas in the former artillery impact area.
- Walkers will be encouraged to keep group sizes small, to a recommended maximum of eight and an absolute maximum of 12.
- A permit system is proposed for popular routes at peak times.
- Minor track works such as relocation, water diversion or hardening will continue to be undertaken where necessary to prevent erosion and track braiding.

The NPA's submission stated that the overall theme of the draft strategy (acceptance of popular established walking routes and camp sites and managing their use to minimise environmental damage, while aiming to minimise disturbance and maximise wilderness experience in the remainder of the Budawangs) was a desirable goal—but it was believed that in some areas it would be necessary to be more proactive in the measures considered.

Entrances and access were an important consideration. "On the whole, the range of entrances to the park is good and aids the dispersion of foot traffic," the NPA noted. "Given the level of use, it is essential that these

entrances are sufficiently hardened to cope with the level of use even at the potential risk of encouraging more use." However there was concern for the need to re-establish linkage at the Endrick entrance to maintain significant access to a major portion of the park. The proposed strategy of no new tracks was supported provided some form of access towards the Vines and/or Round Mountain was re-established from the Endrick entrance.

The association also documented its support for group size and walker registration. It recognised, however, that this could cause difficulties for some groups, as would the implementation of the proposed registration system. The NPA called for an advertising campaign and on-site information to redirect groups to close alternative walks and/or camping areas.

Among other observations were:

- the proposed tent camping restrictions appear to be no different to existing arrangements;
- the proposed camping caves provide a range of options for those inclined to use them;
- the moves towards the use of fuel stoves is necessary in a number of areas, but fallen wood is relatively plentiful away from camping areas

(continued on facing page)

National Parks Australia Council meets

The National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) annual conference was held in Canberra on the weekend of 17-18 September 2005. The NPAC is the national umbrella group for State and Territory national parks associations and their equivalents.

Christine Goonrey arranged the venue at Manning Clark House in Forrest which was just perfect, the large glass windows of the conference room overlooking a classic Canberra winter garden.

Christine introduced Dr Maxine Cooper to the President (Anne Reeves), Secretary and Public officer (David Campbell) and Treasurer (Leon Misfeld) of NPAC, and the NPA delegates from Tasmania (Anne McConnell), Victoria (Phil Ingamells), NSW (John Macris), Queensland (Martin Taylor), ACT (Kevin McCue) and the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia (Helen Vonow). Anne Reeves opened the meeting and welcomed Dr Cooper who spoke about plans for National Heritage Listing of the Australian Alps national parks (see **Alps nominated for heritage list**, p9, and **Challenges for national parks today**, p10).

Minutes of the 2004 meeting were approved and actions arising from the minutes included agreement to

- revamp the NPAC website with Martin Taylor offering to be web master
- support the Mittagong Forum with a small donation.

Delegates each gave an annual report and then Di Thompson gave a short report on the Management Plan for Namadgi.

After lunch in Dymphna Clark's heritage kitchen, Bruce Leaver led a discussion of issues being considered by the Alps Liaison Committee including heritage listing of, and a scientific advisory committee for, the

Alps, and projects for the bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).

The conference was adjourned for the NPAC AGM which saw the re-election of the current executive and agreement for NPAC to rejoin the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The treasurer submitted the audited accounts.

Phil Ingamells gave a presentation on the Alps National Park and spoke about the Victorian Government's recent commendable decision to end cattle grazing in the Victorian Alps National Park (see also **Park or paddock**, p9). He pointed out the need for NPAC to support the tri-state *Alpine Park concept* which would require common legislation to be adopted by the three governments. NPAC agreed to monitor progress.

Discussion led by Anne then followed on issues of changing public attitudes to national parks and the roles that national parks play including

- limiting the size of some parties using the parks
- dealing with park users who are anti-park in attitude such as some outdoor recreational users or those with different understanding of what national parks are for
- compatible versus non-compatible uses
- the need for application of value-based assessment.

On Sunday morning the meeting resumed to discuss the state of the NPAC website, the need for a new letterhead, sharing of software and a business plan. Discussion then moved to marine parks and their current inadequate protection.

Helen Vonow focussed discussion on management of fires in national parks and protected areas where asset protection often overrides conservation values. In NSW there was appreciation of the concept of "living with fires" and

how that translates into building codes.

The Nature Conservation Society of South Australia has produced a set of biodiversity training manuals or regional bushland monitoring manuals for parkland groups, agencies and individuals. Kevin McCue has a copy should anyone be interested to check it out.

John Macris explained the establishment of the Eastern Highlands Conservation Blueprint in NSW to improve the conservation links between public or private land and the parks and reserves through binding written agreements with government. Helen Vonow outlined a similar, as yet *unfunded, program that will operate in South Australia*. VNPA has funding to develop site-specific plans: eg, for a catchment to achieve desired environmental outcomes.

There was much more and we all continued the exchange of information and ideas over lunch at the National Botanic Gardens before delegates departed for home.

The strength of NPAC is its coordinating role, getting NPAs together to discuss issues of common interest and national significance, and its potential for strengthening environmental outcomes by collective lobbying of governments. It is up to the delegates to ensure that this interesting and useful meeting translates into actions.

Christine Goonrey facilitated the meeting by organising the wonderful venue. She, Sonja Lenz and Judy Kelly arranged and prepared lunch and morning teas and hosted billets. Sonja also chaired the election committee, and several NPA ACT members participated in the meeting at various times.

Kevin McCue

Draft Budawang strategy: NPA comments

(continued from facing page)

and camping caves and it is unlikely that any overall ban on lighting fires would be successful;

- on toilets, a number of areas are very heavily used and are likely to need substantial efforts to provide facilities and harden sites, while the placement of low impact toilets at popular camping sites deep within the park is an unfortunate but necessary addition to help minimise

environmental damage: composting toilets are now a more economically feasible alternative than they have been and are probably worth further consideration; and

- off-road motor cycles traveling at speed on the western fire trails in the Budawangs are of concern to walkers.

Graeme Wicks

Vale Allen Atkins

It is with regret that we note the passing of long-time member Allen Atkins, who was aged 86. Noela, Allen's widow, expressed her appreciation of a message of sympathy sent by the association on behalf of members.

"During our early years in Canberra we enjoyed our activities with your group—the walks and work parties and Xmas activities," she wrote. "Everyone made us feel very welcome."

National Parks Association Calendar

**No general meeting in either
December or January**

**Next General Meeting
Thursday 16 February 2006**

8:00pm

**Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor**

	Dec 05	Jan 06	Feb 06	Mar 06
<i>Public holidays</i>	<i>Sun 25 Mon 26 Tues 27</i>	<i>Mon 2 Thur 26</i>		<i>Mon 20</i>
General meetings	—	—	Thur 16	Thur 16
Committee meetings		—	Tues 7	Tues 7
<i>NPA Christmas party</i>	Sun 11			
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 10		Sat 11	Sat 11
Bulletin Working Group ²	TBA			

Further details ¹ Yankee Hat carpark 10:00am, Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592 (h)
040 778 3422 (mob)
² Syd Comfort 6286 2578

General meetings

Thursday 16 February 2006

Walking the Bibb!

David, Tim and Neville

The Bibbulmun Track is 965km long and runs from Perth to Albany. It is unique in Australia. NPA members David Large, Tim Walsh and Neville Esau completed their "end to end" in 2005 and will talk about their experiences.

Thursday 16 March 2006

*Howard's environment agenda:
preservation or just plain politics*

Andrew Macintosh, Research Fellow,
The Australia Institute

Andrew's talk will discuss the Howard Government's handling of the environment and heritage portfolio, with particular emphasis on the question of whether the Federal Government's environment achievements have been more about politics than substantive environmental outcomes. A focus on terrestrial issues including reserves and biodiversity policy will be of particular interest to NPA members.

New members

NPA ACT welcomes the following new members.

Jeff and Jenny McGrath	Kambah
Jill and Don White	Gordon
Meg Boyd	Downer
Bruce Gall	Wallaroo
Gemma Dodds	Bonython
Andrew Snedden	Garran
Judy Collett	Turner

We hope to see you at meetings or upcoming outings.

NPA ACT *Bulletin*

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