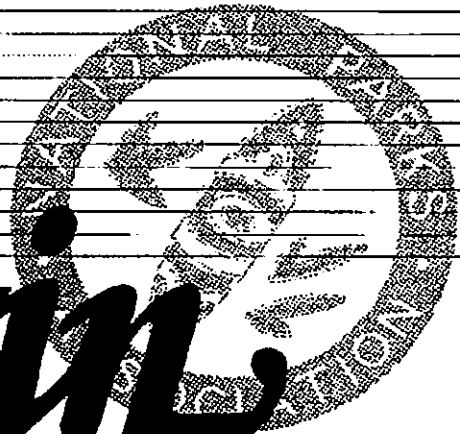


NPA Bulletin



Volume 43 number 2
June 2006

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (ACT) INCORPORATED



Ecotourism in Namadgi

New marine park

Gift creates a wilderness legacy

Syd

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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

Contributions of articles, letters, drawings and photographs are always welcome. Items accepted for publication may also be published on the NPA website. Send all items to The *Bulletin* Team, npaact@bigpond.com

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

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Cover Photo: Tina Siver enjoying the NPA canoe outing on Talbingo Dam in March (see p 14). Photo Max Lawrence

From the President

I am very happy to report that our Symposium *Caring for Namadgi – Science and people* was a resounding success. The range of speakers was exciting and their presentations were fascinating; the venue was good — except for the queues for tea and coffee; and the walks were inspiring. As we had hoped, we heard up-to-the-minute reports about the research going in Namadgi and how the park is recovering from the fires. But it was so much more than that because our scientists and researchers are among the best and they are not content to just note progress, they seem to be always probing deeper, trying to understand cause and effect so as to better conserve this complex environment. The question and answer sessions sparked such interesting additional information it was often hard to stop and move on to the next speaker — who invariably proved just as interesting. We did make sure there was plenty of time for discussion on how we can support such research and how we can assist it in the future. Judy Kelly has the hard task of drawing this together for future meetings.

The highlight for me was when Hilton Taylor made his announcement — in answer to a question from the audience — that there would not be any more pine plantings in the lower Cotter catchment. We had come to believe that such a decision would never be taken, despite all the scientific evidence that it was the best way to protect the

catchment. However, common sense has prevailed and, while the existing pines will be allowed to mature, the rest of the area will be allowed to revegetate naturally. A draft plan of management for the area is being developed and I imagine NPA will be commenting on it in good time. This is a significant victory for the environment!

It was especially pleasing to be able to make the Amanda Carey Memorial Award to Rachel Sims at the Symposium. There was a real synchronicity in Rachel being the inaugural winner because it was Amanda who first helped Rachel select her research site. In accepting the award, Rachel said she missed her advice and support when Amanda was no longer able to carry on. Rachel's work on Dusky Woodswallows illustrates the unique nature of Namadgi which has much to offer national and international research.

Others will report more fully on the proceedings elsewhere but I would like to offer a huge bouquet of thanks to the people who put it all together and made the event such an outstanding success. Kevin McCue was an outstanding conference convener, ably helped by Sonja Lenz; Chris Emery and Sabine Friedrich ran the electronic bookings, printing and other electronic support; Adrienne Nicholson and her team managed the rather difficult hospitality side of things admirably; Annette Smith and her team managed the registrations and sales wonderfully well; the walks

leaders were ably organised by Steven Forst. Judy Kelly, Clive Hurlstone and other members of the executive committee have been part of the meeting and planning and phoning for over nine months and doing the thousands of things necessary for such an event to work so well. I thank them and all the other volunteers who have put a tremendous amount of work and thought and care into making this so successful. They all did NPA ACT proud!

The buzz around the symposium brought home to a lot of us what a strong and effective organisation really NPA ACT is. Sometimes, when we are waist deep in paper and the politics of environmental management seems to be impossibly complicated and just plain stupid, we may think of NPA ACT as powerless to make a difference. The symposium showed us this is simply not true. By sticking to what we believe, by working together and drawing on the talents of members, we can move pine plantations (we don't actually want to move mountains)!

So talk to your friends, family, work colleagues and people who share your interests. Encourage them to come along to general meetings, outings and workparties, to sign on as members and to get actively involved in our activities. With our web site working so well, it's never been easier and it is so very rewarding.

Christine Goonrey

Thankyou Syd Comfort, ex-editor

Syd Comfort was editor of the *NPA Bulletin* for 10 years, probably the longest serving editor in the association's history. He produced some 40 issues, a total of more than 800 pages. An even more impressive total is the number of phone calls he must have made requesting, discussing and chasing up articles — they would number in the thousands.

The *Bulletin* does not come together by itself. Each issue means hard work by contributors and those associated with its production, especially by the editor. Syd never stopped thinking about how it could be made better and working to achieve it.

On the editorial side he thought up ideas for content — a balance between coverage of news and issues, stories of walks and the bush and its creatures, book reviews, the business news of



*Syd in another of his hats—as a Great Australian Bushwalker.
Photo Max Lawrence*

notices of meetings, the walks program, etc.

Although there were many contributors and helpers with editorial and production and distribution, Syd took it on himself to oversight — and where necessary do — everything involved in the production and distribution. If there was no one else to meet the deadline, he would write the material himself, and was sometimes embarrassed by the number of times his byline would appear in a single issue. He also took over the distribution when first Muriel Edwards and then Margaret Aston were unable to continue the task.

At editorial meetings held at his home he and “the team” would discuss the latest issue, and topics to be covered in the next one. Often the NPA President would attend, and the fact that four presidents were present at his

(Continued on page 5)

Namadgi news: far-reaching proposals

The draft Namadgi Plan of Management is still dominating the agenda of the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board. The public consultation period is over and organisational and individual submissions have been analysed and key issues derived for further discussion at the board level. As you have all been involved in the Kosciuszko and Namadgi draft plans of management, the list of key issues and the arguments from all players will not come as any surprise.

With respect to Namadgi I have the distinct impression that there will be flow-on efforts from a cash-strapped Territory Government which is seeking to find other sources of income whilst also investigating areas where cost-recovery can be applied.

Conservation ACTION – ecotourism proposal

The following Conservation ACTION ecotourism plan has created significant discussion between board members and members of the NPA committee; [please refer also to article on facing page for a discussion of the NPA response]

Tourism and Conservation Partnerships funded in 2005-06

Fifteen business partnership projects have been awarded funding under the Tourism and Conservation Partnerships initiative for 2005-06. The successful ventures were announced by Federal Tourism Minister Fran Bailey and Tourism Parliamentary Secretary Warren Entsch on 29 September 2005.

An overview of the ventures can be found below.

Conservation ACTION

Conservation Volunteers of Australia (CVA), in partnership with the ACT Government Department for Arts, Heritage and Environment, will create a new tourism product for the ACT region. Forecast to increase visitor numbers to Namadgi National Park, the ecotourism packages and volunteer camps for conservation will provide visitors with a unique opportunity to experience and study charismatic endangered species at dawn and twilight. Overnight accommodation will be provided at the Gudgenby Homestead and Birrigai Camp, allowing the option for nocturnal tours. The partnership will provide extended access to parks, leading wildlife experts

and marketing officers. CVA currently operates Naturewise tours to Montague Island, Tasmania and Carnarvon Station in Queensland. This proposal received funding of \$70 000.

A trial of this proposal was conducted in April. As I understand it, the board and NPA concerns for vehicular access through the Bimberi Wilderness and camping at Cotter Hut (all illegal under the current POM), altered the trial route, and participants camped at Woods Reserve for their first night. The collection of corroboree frog eggs and other activities were a huge success on the first day in calm autumn weather, but the onset of the high winds and a drop in temperature brought the party down from the border high tops to the Namadgi Visitor Centre. The board has asked for a full report, including costing of staff time.

Do have a look at the website: <http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au/volunteer/nature-holidays.htm>. This provides background, location and program details, and charges for participation for already established projects.

Plan of Management Issues:

The major draft POM issues discussed by the Board included:

- overnight accommodation at Gudgenby Homestead
- licencing and activities of tour operators
- access to the wilderness
- tourist drives
- vehicle based camp grounds
- recreational bicycle access
- special events
- rock climbing
- plaques and infrastructure in the wilderness
- campfires in the wilderness
- entry fees and permit systems
- co-operative management of Namadgi.

As you can imagine this made for a very heavy workload, and at times hotly debated sessions, scheduled for a single day. I have to admit my experience through the draft KPOM helped. However, there were few areas of consensus when it came to the policy specifics and I cannot help but feel a certain disquiet that the new POM will not contain as many levels of protection, and therefore improvements on the current POM, as we would wish to achieve.

For instance, several nights' homework identified that Namadgi already hosts between 10 and 16 large

events (with 200-1000 participants) a year. That is more than one a month. My presentation on 'pressure on the park' was countered to the contrary: that my statistics clearly showed that Namadgi had not yet reached its full carrying capacity as damage was not noticeable. This well-articulated view came from a person (like most other board members) who gets as close to the park as the Visitor Centre. Nevertheless that argument had sway.

The major gains have been that monitoring will occur and hopefully action taken if the impacts become too heavy and that could of course include moving the activity to another area – which could be either on or off-park.

Emergency Services Authority (ESA) communication structures

Communication towers will be built or upgraded in NSW (but near the Namadgi border) at Mt Clear and on Mt Tennent. Some comparative analysis has been done on the installation, service, maintenance and application of renewable energy models and mains power. At this stage the arguments presented point to mains power. Issues such as vandalism, access and claimed higher and more regular maintenance costs have been identified. These structures will allow coverage of much of the Monaro Highway and of southern Namadgi and adjoining NSW areas.

At the same time the Chief Minister's Office has drafted its energy and climate change strategies and recently conducted its public consultation phase. At least the ESA staff are going to contact the energy and climate change policy people.

On another matter; the Snowy Mountains Region Advisory Committee was due to meet in early May in Khancoban. There will be report in the next *Bulletin*.

Diane Thompson

Ecotourism in Namadgi

The association is greatly concerned at the impact some of the proposals for ecotourism will have on the Namadgi National Park if they are implemented, and also at the way these proposals have been put forward. This is an edited version of the letter the association sent to the Department of Environment.

The NPA has recently become aware of an ecotourism proposal in the wilderness areas of Namadgi National Park. The proposal involved driving and camping in wilderness areas and collection of Corroboree frog eggs by tourists. The NPA has contacted Environment ACT to discuss the proposal. Despite receiving some assurances that aspects of the proposal have been slimmed down, there are still a number of aspects of real concern:

- a Federal government grant of \$70,000 has been spent developing a proposal which contravened existing policy and practice as well as being unsustainable;
- the proposal had no clearly defined financial benefit to Namadgi or EACT, though considerable costs to the park are already clear in the proposal;
- it remains connected with vague assurances of "additional Federal funds following the grant", and that

such promises may encourage further proposals which will again threaten the good management of Namadgi and its wilderness area;

- the proposal is associated with a submission to the draft Namadgi Management Plan and a press release from the Department of Industry and Tourism on 27/10/2005, to turn Gudgenby homestead into a 12 bed accommodation unit for eco-tours, despite previous assurances from your department that the use of the homestead would be restricted to low impact day use;
- that collection of Corroboree frog eggs by tourists remains part of the proposal despite scientific concerns that this would expose the frog breeding areas to imported viruses; and
- that camping at Cotter Hut may be off the agenda for now, but there are no assurances that the idea of driving tourists through the wilderness has been abandoned.

In short it seems to us that there remains too much "wriggle room" in the assurances we have received about the current proposal and no commitment about how any future ecotourism plan will be developed in the future. It appears that tourism policy and practice is driving this agenda, not proper scientific and conservation based management of the park.

We are seeking assurances from Environment ACT that appropriate changes will be made to this and any future ecotourism proposals so that promotional and tourist activities work within accepted park management practices and sound scientific principles.

We are also seeking advice on how the community and visitor services program is reviewed and adjusted to ensure its goals and strategies do not conflict with good conservation and park management practices; and how and at what stage all proposals, strategies and activities to promote Namadgi National Park as a tourist and visitor destination are reviewed by park management and policy development areas in your department to ensure they comply with regulations and with sound scientific management principles.

NPA ACT believes that eco-tourism has its place in conserving and maintaining our natural heritage but that, by its very nature, it should never threaten the natural values of our parks and nature reserves. We are deeply concerned that this proposal progressed as far as it did without proper checks and controls and we seek your assurance that appropriate changes will be made so that promotional and tourist activities work within accepted park management practices and sound scientific principles.

Gulaga-Biamanga handback

The NSW Environment Minister, Mr Bob Debus, formally handed over the Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks to the Aboriginal community in a ceremony at Tilba Tilba on May 6.

After two years of negotiations the State Government, the Aboriginal Owners and local Aboriginal land councils reached an agreement on the conditions under which these two parks

will be leased by the State Government for use as national parks, paving the way for the freehold title to be given back to the Aboriginal community.

The head of the NSW National parks and Wildlife service, Dr Tony Fleming, said this was an historic occasion. The return of the lands to the Aboriginal owners was a recognition in law that the lands had a deep spiritual

and cultural significance for all Aboriginal people and belonged in their hands.

"While they will continue to be managed as national parks, these lands can now be managed under a joint board of management with majority Aboriginal owner representation," he said.

Thankyou Syd Comfort, ex-editor *(continued from page 3)*

meetings — the late Eleanor Stodart, Clive Hurlstone, Kevin McCue and myself — is a sign of the length of Syd's tenure.

Typographical errors would be brought to light, spelling, grammar and punctuation would receive attention, and the content would be discussed against standards of reader interest and information. Sometimes the poor reproduction of photographs or other

printing faults would be commented on, and it was Syd who would follow them up. And when everyone had had their say, Syd would become the perfect host and provide an excellent supper.

In the early years Greenwords did the layout and preparation of the material for the printer following layout instructions from Syd, but in 2002 Adrienne Nicholson volunteered for this task and has done it ever since.

The result of Syd's ongoing quest for improvement is seen in today's *NPA Bulletin*, both in the content and its presentation and the printing. Syd has set a very high standard, and we are fortunate that Neville Esau who, like Syd, is a Life Member and a former President of the association, has stepped into the breach.

Christine Goonrey

Batemans Bay Marine Park

The NSW Government has recently declared a new 85 000ha multiple-use marine park on the NSW south coast to protect important marine habitats, bolster fish stocks and boost tourism in the area.

Environment Minister Bob Debus and Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald claim the new park will balance marine conservation with the need to protect existing recreational and commercial activities such as fishing and tourism. In addition, \$8.5 million will be spent on the buy-back of commercial fishing licences.

Mr Debus said the management of the new marine park will be shaped by an extensive public consultation process, which will include the establishment of a local advisory committee to guide the park's planning, information days and the public exhibition of a draft zoning plan.

The Batemans Shelf Marine Park will stretch from just north of Brush Island, north of Batemans Bay, to Wallaga Lake, south of Narooma. It includes the Murramarang coast, north of Batemans Bay, with stunning landscapes, rocky reefs and islands that provide breeding areas for many seabird species; coastal lakes characteristic of the south coast, such as Durras, Coila, Brunderee, Tarourga and Brou; Clyde River and Batemans Bay, a drowned river valley with important estuarine habitats; Tollgate Islands, an important site for the grey nurse shark and noted for seaweed diversity; Tuross Lake, Wagonga Inlet and Wallaga Lake, extensive waterways with a diversity of habitats and large barrier estuaries; and the waters around Montague Island, a south coast icon renowned for seals, grey nurse sharks, and penguins and many other seabird species.

A zoning plan will determine what activities are allowed in various areas. Final zoning arrangements are to be worked out through extensive consultation with the local communities.

Despite assurances from the government, the declaration has been greeted with considerable hostility by recreational fishers and members of the Batemans Bay community, concerned for their potential loss of fishing areas and other recreational pursuits. This is surprising, given the success of the Jervis Bay Marine Park further north along the south coast. Marine parks are a relatively new concept along our south-east coast and we recognise their importance for marine conservation.

To highlight the positive outcomes from marine parks a recent article from NSW NPA Marine Campaigner Nicky Hammond explains how everyone can benefit from new marine parks:

"With two new marine parks to be established in NSW by the end of 2006, recent positive reports from areas with existing marine parks are helping gain support for the new parks. The reports show that marine parks in NSW are beneficial to its users, marine life, and tourism. These results highlight the advantages the new Port Stephens–Great Lakes and proposed Batemans Bay Marine Parks could have to the NSW coast.

Beneficial to users

User surveys taken between 2002 and 2005 from the first NSW marine park in the Solitary Islands have shown a very high satisfaction level for users of the park. They also show that non-extractive activities such as swimming and surfing are the most common usage of the park, enabling this to be compatible with scientifically recommended protection of our oceans through large areas of the park zoned free from extractive activities — as marine sanctuaries.

Such marine sanctuaries still allow swimming, surfing, diving and boating but prohibit fishing to safeguard our marine life. Since marine parks are multiple-use, the remainder of the parks can be zoned to cater for fishing.

Beneficial to marine life

A second recent study on marine sanctuaries in the Solitary Island Marine Park backs up the global scientific consensus that sanctuaries increase marine life. The three-year study indicated that the density of certain fish species had increased in the sanctuary zones.

Beneficial to tourism

Coffs Harbour City Council has stated significant benefits to the tourism industry flowing from the Solitary Islands Marine Park as well as benefits to the community through additional recreational marine pursuits and the SIMP is widely recognised as a major draw card to the region.

Meanwhile Tom Phillips, the Tourism Manager at Shoalhaven Council, recently claimed that Jervis Bay Marine Park has improved the experience of recreational fishing in the area. 'The size of the fish have been

bigger, it's easier to get your bag limit and overall it's been a very positive experience from a tourism point of view. ... if the recreational fishers are having a good time and getting their catches, well then, they come back'.



Top: White's Seahorse

Above: Fiddler Ray

Photos David and Leanne Atkinson

The information gained from the Solitary Islands and the Jervis Bay Marine Parks shows that marine parks and their sanctuaries are valuable and much appreciated tools for enabling us to safeguard and enjoy our oceans whilst also boosting the economy. The new Port Stephens–Great Lakes and proposed Batemans Bay Marine Parks, if properly zoned, look set to be real assets to the NSW coast, benefiting the environment, local economy, and the users of the parks."

With thanks to NPA NSW National Park Journal April–May 2006

Gift creates a wilderness legacy

Catherine White, a school teacher and a passionate bushwalker who loved Morton National Park, gave half her estate toward the protection of the area by making a gift in her will. Leonie Gale, the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (FNPW) executive officer, sourced suitable properties in the Morton area and made enquiries regarding 11 properties offered for sale. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness assisted through the development of a systematic evaluation process and identified potential properties that might fulfil the wishes of Ms White, in consultation with the Dunphy Wilderness Fund Reference Group.

The happy result, after years of hard work by the FNPW, is the acquisition of the 241ha Quiltys with a 4km frontage to the Nerriga River and the 1846ha Saec perpetual leasehold property that will protect the headwaters of Ettrema Creek from development. These properties have been gifted to the Dunphy Wilderness Fund and will be added to the Ettrema and Budawang wilderness areas respectively. If more funds were available, several other properties in Morton National Park could be purchased, including Quiera which is of concern to bushwalking groups.

Since 1996 the FNPW has lent its public relations and fund raising expertise to the Dunphy Wilderness Fund Reference Group. The fund acquires private land to consolidate and protect wilderness areas in NSW. The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife has raised over \$1.3 million for wilderness protection. It conducted the Green Gully campaign that saw the



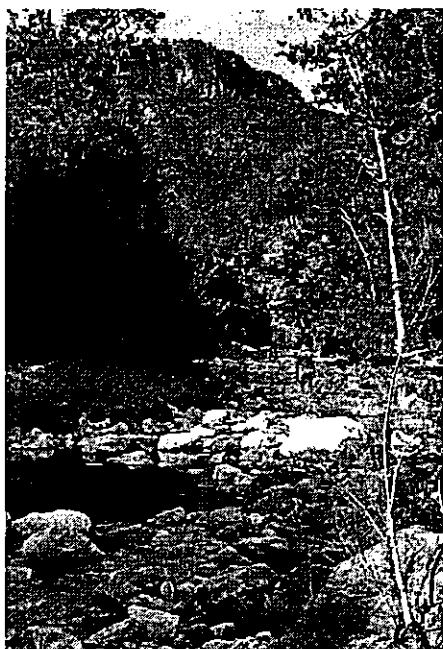
Pagoda Rocks. Photo Phil Gatenby

addition of 12 600ha to the Macleay Gorges Wilderness and the Carr Government provided \$10 million to the fund.

The Fund's most important acquisitions are Guy Fawkes (over 22 000 ha), Macleay Gorges (over 23 000ha), Ettrema (4000ha) and Washpool Wilderness (2700ha). Other areas where the Dunphy Wilderness Fund has been used to acquire land include: southern NSW: Brogo, Budawang and Deua; Central NSW: Nattai, Kanangra, Wollemi and Yengo; and northern NSW: Levers, Timbarra, Tuggolo, Willi Willi, Cataract and Cathedral Rock. The Fund has purchased over 70 000ha for \$11 million but there now remains only about \$200 000 of the final allocation in the fund. West of the Dividing Range, the wilderness in Mount Kaputar National Park and Pilliga Nature Reserve is still being studied; some such as Yengo are still to be declared wilderness and other areas may be located after careful evaluation.

The NSW Government will only continue to adequately support the Dunphy Wilderness Fund with your support. So far, very little money has been offered by Government to provide for the on-going voluntary purchase of the 200 000ha of wilderness land that remains privately owned. Please write to the Premier of NSW, the Hon Morris Iemma, at Parliament House, Sydney 2000 and ask him to provide a new allocation of \$15 million of Government funds over five years to the Dunphy Wilderness Fund. Such further funding would permit acquisition of about 75 000ha. The acquisition of wilderness has a proven track record of efficiently protecting threatened but intact landscapes and support should be continued. Bequests and donations for wilderness would accelerate over time with on-going awareness and promotion of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund.

With thanks to The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Bulletin 215 March 2006



Left. A typical scene on Ettrema Creek; cliffs and casuarinas. Right. A group of NPA members looking into spectacular Ettrema Gorge.

Photos Syd Comfort



Victoria gets a new coastal park

It has rainforests, heathlands, breathtaking coastal views, some of the highest sea cliffs in Australia and a new long-distance walk that many hope will become a famous attraction. Welcome to the Great Otway National Park, Victoria's newest park, which links the existing Otway National Park with the Angahook-Lorne, Carlisle and Melba Gully State Parks, and tracts of former state forest.

More than nine times the size of the old Otway National Park and totalling 103 000ha, the Great Otway National Park is the largest coastal park in Victoria and was officially opened on 11 December 2005. At its opening, Premier Steve Bracks spoke about the area's wonderful scenery, including many spectacular waterfalls and coastal views, and added that the Otways was the most popular tourist destination outside Melbourne.

Will Cox, ranger in charge at the Great Otway National Park, says the new park and the \$13 million being spent on upgrading facilities within it would encourage visitors to look beyond the Great Ocean Road. "We've inherited some fantastic walks and natural attractions such as Triplet Falls and Lake Elizabeth. The focus in this part of the world in the past has been on the Great Ocean Road and the Twelve Apostles. Many visitors miss out on the stunning Otway Ranges hinterland, its amazing rainforests and short walks in what really is a quite beautiful part of Australia," he says.

Will says the funds allocated to the park's establishment include \$2 million



Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and Environment Minister John Thwaites open the new park.

spent on pathways, viewing platforms and a toilet block at Triplet Falls; pest animal and pest plant control; upgrade of campgrounds, visitor sites and toilet blocks throughout the park; and the hiring of 17 new staff.

More has been spent on establishing the Great Ocean Walk, a 91km, eight-day walk from Apollo Bay to the Glenample Homestead near the Twelve Apostles. Aside from the track itself, seven purpose-built hiking campgrounds have been established but, according to Will, if camping is not your style, you can still do the hike.

"The beauty of the walk is that there are numerous step-on, step-off points along the way, so it allows people of all abilities to choose from short, half-day,

overnight or two- or three-night walks. It only takes an hour to drive from one end to the other, so no matter where you are, you can be picked up at the end of each day, spend the night in a warm bed in a comfortable B&B, have a glass of wine and a nice meal and be dropped off the next morning to start where you left off.

"The walk takes you inland in some stages through tall mountain ash forest, it takes you along deserted beaches, through heathland and you'll see some amazing vistas. The animals you might spot on your walk range from kangaroos, wallabies and koalas to sea eagles, wedge-tailed eagles, whales and dolphins. It is quite an amazing experience to complete the walk and it has the potential to become an iconic walk both within Australia and internationally.

"Parks Victoria is working very closely with accommodation and transport operators to provide the additional services to support the Great Ocean Walk. The park offers so many opportunities for local tourism operators to provide sustainable tourism adventures, activities such as sea kayaking trips in the Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary and guided tours along the Great Ocean Walk."

For further information on Victoria's parks visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au or call 13 1963.

**From *Canopy* No 28 February 2006
Parks Victoria**

Alpine Grazing comes to an end

The Federal Government has at last admitted defeat in its battle with the Victorian Government over the grazing of cattle in Victoria's alpine country. Senator Campbell had proposed a 15 million dollar plan to create a greater Alpine National Park including allowing cattle to return to the high country with electric and conventional fencing to exclude stock from sensitive areas. The plan, which also included the use of satellite technology to track the movement of cattle, has been widely condemned as "confused, absurd, and inappropriate" by scientists. Australia's leading alpine ecologists, Dr Alec Costin and Dr Roger Good, said using fencing to exclude cattle from

ecologically sensitive areas was unworkable.

The Victorian Environment Minister, John Thwaites, has also reiterated that they would not agree to the Federal Government plan. "We would accept additional funding for the Alpine National Park but we cannot accept a proposition that would destroy the natural heritage of the park" the Minister has said.

Senator Campbell had earlier proposed an emergency heritage listing of the Alpine Park in an attempt to preserve grazing. The Australian Heritage Council has rejected that plan and instead recommended that the entire alpine area including Victoria,

NSW, and ACT be assessed for heritage listing. This has been supported by Mr Thwaites who has said that Victoria will work with New South Wales and the ACT to pursue listing of an Alpine park covering the three jurisdictions on the national and then world heritage lists.

Now Senator Campbell has admitted that grazing will not return to the park and he would ask the Heritage Council to assess the entire alpine area for the national heritage list, which could lead to world heritage listing.

Neville Esau

Government an “environmental window-dresser”: speaker

Despite some positive outcomes, the Howard Government's environment programs had been “woefully ineffective from an environmental perspective, but highly successful from a political one”, Andrew Macintosh, a research fellow at The Australia Institute, told members at the March general meeting.

He said that since the Government took office in 1996, there had been a shift from “the presumption ... that polluters should bear the primary responsibility for shouldering the costs associated with addressing environmental harm, to the situation where taxpayers are forced to pay for environmental outcomes.”

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the presumption in favour of the polluter pays principle was reflected in the structure of environmental policies and the environmental laws that emerged over the period, but now, if the environment needed fixing, the presumption was that taxpayers must pay.

The three main drivers of the shift were “the political ideology of profits, vote hunting and the fact that ‘funding-based programs provide the government with considerable scope to mould industry subsidies with environmental programs and, in doing so, to kill two birds with one stone.’”

Such an approach frittered away scarce resources, such that voluntary, taxpayer-funded programs rarely achieved their environmental objectives, and they had proved to be a highly effective means of undermining the public momentum for environmental reform.

Underspend

In 1999 the Government introduced a four-year, \$900 million package called Measures for a Better Environment (MBE), but at the end of four years \$630 million had not been spent, and despite a four-year extension indications were that there would be a \$364 million underspend on the original promises.

The most offensive part of the MBE package was that where the money had been spent, the programs, on the whole, had been staggeringly unsuccessful. It appeared that a significant proportion of the gains would have occurred anyway and very few of the project objectives have been met.

“For example, the \$400 million Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program

(GGAP), which is probably the most successful of the MBE initiatives, pays big business to cut emissions,” Andrew said. “When it was devised, the Government said it would abate around 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year between 2008 and 2012, ie the Kyoto commitment period. The latest projections, which are probably on the generous side, are that GGAP will abate a little over 6 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents during this period. Don't forget though that this is the *most* successful of the MBE programs.”

Another example of how effective voluntary taxpayer funded programs could be from a political perspective and how ineffective they are from a policy perspective was the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), described by the Government as a \$3 billion program that represented “the biggest financial commitment to environmental action by any Australian Government in Australia's history”.

The NHT's three main objectives were: the conservation of biodiversity through the protection and restoration of habitats; the sustainable use and management of resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource-based industries; and community capacity building and institutional change.

“Improving productivity, profitability and industry sustainability is a worthy objective, but why should taxpayers front the bulk of the bill to address these issues?” Andrew asked. “The areas targeted by the sustainable use projects concern highly modified, mainly agricultural, landscapes that have very little value as a source of biodiversity and the projects in question generally seek to improve soil and water conditions and provide shelter for livestock. In many if not most cases, the public good benefits that we derive from these projects are small compared to the private benefits gained by landholders. Yet, taxpayers bear most of the costs.”

Despite statements about the billions of dollars spent on the NHT and its partner, the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP), there had been no mention of how the money had been spent or what it had achieved. There was a dearth of information available and to test outcomes would involve “a 50,000km road trip across Australia, have a large war chest and a small army of

workers”. But notwithstanding these problems, there was enough information available to conclude that the NHT had not been effective in stopping the decline in biodiversity.

Threatened species

The number of threatened species and ecological communities was growing at an alarming rate. There were currently 383 species of fauna and 1300 species of flora on the national list of threatened species. These numbers had been increasing, yet there was little doubt, Andrew said, that they were a significant underestimation of the real number. Only 36 ecological communities had been listed as being nationally threatened, but it was estimated that around 3000 terrestrial communities alone qualified as threatened.

“The growth in the number of threatened species and ecological communities is partly due to improvements in our understanding of our environment. However, it also reflects upon the unsustainable nature of our lifestyles and the failure of governments to respond effectively.”

The NHT did not appear to have made any significant inroads into dealing with the major threats to biodiversity, such as land clearing, altered fire regimes, modification of river and groundwater systems, climate change, overfishing and the spread of pests and weeds. “The most positive outcomes from the NHT probably relate to pest and weed control and fire regimes. The worst relate to habitat loss. There is no accurate Australia wide data on land clearing. The best available information comes from Queensland, which also happens to be the state with the highest estimated rate of clearing. Since the NHT commenced in 1996–97, approximately 3.38 million ha of woody vegetation has been cleared in Queensland, of which around 2.2 million ha was remnant vegetation.

“So, for the bargain price of almost \$1 billion, we got 780 000 ha of native vegetation works and 84 500 ha of threatened species works, while at the same time around 2.2 million ha of woody vegetation was cleared in Queensland alone,” Andrew said. “It is obvious that it would be far more cost-effective to stop land clearing and increase reserves than direct money to revegetation and fencing.”

(Continued on page 10)

The bush in our backyard

The bush capital is losing its bush, slowly but surely. According to Urban Services, 6550 drought affected trees were removed in the last two years (Letters to the *Canberra Times*, 11 April 2006) but that's in addition to the uncounted number burnt in the bushfires or cut down to make way for larger houses or units with urban infill, and those removed from private blocks for "safety" reasons. Parts of Canberra already resemble the Daly City of San Francisco immortalised in the 60s song "Little Boxes".

Our own urban-bush interface suburb of Aranda has been transformed on weekdays from a quiet backwater to an industrial zone by the sound of heavy earthmoving equipment on the Gungahlin Drive Extension in daylight hours. This will only last until construction has been completed and will then be replaced by the steady drone of traffic.

On weekends, the sound of birds chattering and calling to each other has been replaced by the angry whine of chainsaws as newcomers and old residents alike set about ridding their backyards of "dangerous" eucalypts and transforming our suburb.

What are we going to lose? On one day earlier this year we watched at home most of the species of parrot and cockatoo to be found in the

NPA ACT's *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT*: black and white cockatoos, our favourite squeaky-gate gang gangs, galahs hanging upside down on the electricity wires in the rain, elegant king parrots, eastern and crimson rosellas and a small flock of escapee rainbow lorikeets.

Probably one of our most welcome visitors this year was the blue-tongued lizard which stayed around for a couple of days (see the NPA ACT's *Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT*). We hope it survived the neighbourhood cats and dogs whose owners seem so happy to share these unwanted feral animals with us, and all their other neighbours.

Construction of the GDE seems to have caused a mass exodus of wildlife through Aranda judging by the nightly commotion. We found a pair of frogmouths in a tree in our front yard one evening and a ringtail possum in a tree hollow on another occasion. We think the ringtail has found a safe haven in our scribbly gum, the frogmouths didn't return. The local southern boobook owls were obviously upset for a month or so, trying to revise their hunting/breeding boundaries with their mournful cries at 4 am. One of the no-shows of our regular international visitors this year was the dollar bird, usually several pairs breed within a few hundred metres of our house, but they

must have gone elsewhere to find a nesting hollow after flying all the way from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

Aranda is fortunate having the bush corridor along the ridge from Black Mountain which is no doubt the reason we are so native-species rich. More of these interconnecting corridors of native trees and grasses need to be established if Canberra is to retain its character as the bush capital. Further increases in the population of Canberra are demonstrably unsustainable and will surely take the last of the bush out of the national capital.

Will there then be birds and animals? Of course, like Sydney and the other state capitals, there will be pigeons, starlings, sparrows and blackbirds but not the gorgeous natives we now share our backyards with. There will be cats and dogs as usual but few of the possums and gliders, owls and frogmouths that grace our bush at night, calling softly in the early hours of the morning.

Just as Adelaide has lost its fabled green zone, Canberra is losing its bush, bit by bit, for bus corridors, wider roads, fire tracks, arboreta, phone towers and many other seemingly desirable things. What a loss! What short-sightedness!

Kevin McCue

Government an "environmental window-dresser"

continued from page 9

The 2004-05 NHT annual report indicated that around \$78 million has already been spent in New South Wales under the new regionally-orientated program delivery structure, but outcomes outlined in the report include agreements and other measures covering a total of only 31 236 ha in NSW, while "information from the NSW Department of Natural Resources indicates that clearing rates in New South Wales may have been as high as 200 000 to 300 000ha per year since the early 2000s."

And there were problems concerning the small number of agreements that had been signed (potentially allowing small gains to be lost if there were changes of mind or ownership), and the difficulties of the administration of the agreements and the monitoring of problems that "leave the NHT wide open to rotting".

Positives

However, there were some positives in the Government's programs, and

Andrew said his favourite among these was the National Reserve System (NRS) program. The program funds the acquisition of new national parks and similar reserves for conservation purposes. "Between 1996-97 and 2002-03, approximately \$72.5 million was spent on the NRS, resulting in the addition of 20.568 million ha to the terrestrial reserve system. Approximately 13.8 million ha was added through the Indigenous Protected Areas program, the remainder were standard reserve acquisitions. With these additions, Australia's terrestrial reserve system now covers around 77.5 million ha."

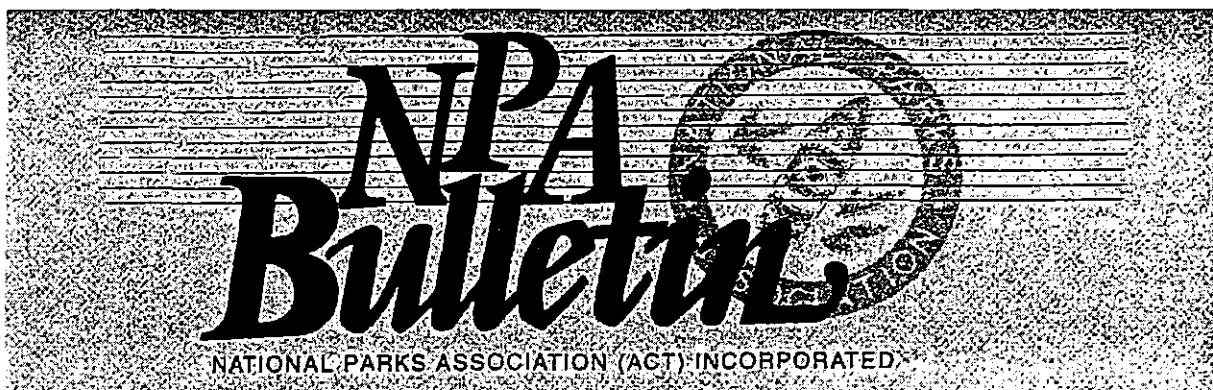
"In terms of cost-effectiveness, it is hard to go past the NRS," he said. "The government has effectively paid around \$3.50 per ha for the permanent protection of these areas. This figure is somewhat misleading, as the bulk of the new reserves are located in Indigenous areas in the middle of Australia where commercial pressures are few and far between. However, there is little doubt

the NRS has outperformed most, if not all, of the other NHT programs in terms of the cost-effective delivery of biodiversity benefits."

Another extremely important part of the NHT has been the funding it has provided for research into the condition of our natural resources. The National Land and Water Resources Audit is the prime example — it has expanded our knowledge of the environment and assisted in pulling together a vast array of information.

Andrew concluded by saying that the Howard Government was "the ultimate politically motivated environmental window dresser", and we would continue to see the degradation of the environment and the squandering of resources until more people engaged in criticising its policies.

Graeme Wicks



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

June — September 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 waiver 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.

1-4 June, Thursday to Sunday
Four day coast walk

Location: Lake Conjola-Batemans Bay

Leader: Neville Esau

Grading: 2 C/D/E

Map: see map list

Contact: nemax@bigpond.com

Last year a few of us did an exploratory walk from Lake Conjola to Batemans Bay. It was a delightful walk of beaches, headlands, and coastal forest, with lots of sea birds, shore birds, sea eagles, and wedgies on display. We stayed in caravan parks along the way as water is scarce for bush camping. We were thinking of repeating the dose this year! If you are interested in joining the walk, contact me and I will give you the details.

4 June, Sunday walk

Location: Canberra Nature Park

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 2 A

Map: Canberra street map

Contact: 6281 0719 (h),

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Meet at western end of Kathner Street, Chapman, at 9.00 am. (Arrange car shuffle to finishing point in Isaacs.) Follow Cooleman Ridge to Mt Arawang for morning tea. Cross Tuggeranong Parkway and climb Mt Taylor for lunch. Continue east along Farrer Ridge to Wanniasa Peak and then north to Isaacs Shops (supermarket sells drinks/icecream/etc). Approx. 15 km. Repeat of Bushfire Recovery walk of July 2003. 0km drive, \$0 per car

10 June, Saturday Work Party

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.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 June, Sunday walk

Location: Red Rocks Gorge, on the Murrumbidgee River

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 1 A/C/E

Map: Tuggeranong 1:25 000

Contact: 6231 9186,

landshil@webone.com.au

A relatively easy walk, mainly on track, but involving a little rock scrambling

and plenty of fence hopping along the Murrumbidgee "corridor" from the confluence of Tuggeranong Creek to Red Rocks and maybe a wee bit further. We might divert to the "canyon" on the way (some mild rock scrambling to do this). This is one of the most scenic stretches of the river. It is recovering well from the January 2003 fire and the variety and form of vegetation is quite interesting — especially now that we have had some rain. We should see a large variety of native birds and kangaroos. Meet at the Urambi Hills car park near the corner of Athlton and Learmonth Drives at 10.00 for a pleasant day. No vehicle costs

18 June, Sunday walk

Location: Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve

Leader: Steven Forst

Grading: 2 B

Map: ACT 1:100 000

Contact: 6251 6817(h),

6219 5236(w),

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Meet at the entrance of Goorooyaroo (off Horse Park Drive near Black Stump Hill) at 8:30. A walk through Goorooyaroo climbing Old Joe Hill with views of Canberra and surrounds. The walk continues along the ACT boarder through to Mulligans Flat and then back to the start. \$0 per car.

25 June, Sunday walk

Location: Blue Gum Hill (Mt Lincoln)

Leader: Mike Smith

Grading: 2 B/C/E

Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Contact: 6286 2984,

msmith@netspeed.com.au

Meet at Kambah Shops at 8.30am. From Smokers Gap carpark walk across open bushland to rocky top of Mount Lincoln for lunch and views across Canberra and region. Return by more direct route. 300m climb.80 km drive, \$28 per car.

2 July, Sunday walk

Location: Upper Rendezvous Creek

Leader: Barbara Edgar

Grading: 2 A/C

Map: Rendezvous Creek

Contact: 6264 3886(w),

6230 5685(h),

barbara.edgar@immi.gov.au

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. A leisurely walk from Nursery Swamp carpark in Orroral Valley. We walk on track to Nursery Creek and then

via an overgrown footpad across a low saddle to Rendezvous Creek. We proceed downstream to some pleasant flats and a small waterfall. Return by the same route. 80km drive, \$24 per car.

8 July, Saturday Work Party

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.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.

9 July, Sunday walk

Location: Mount Rob Roy

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 3 A/B/E

Map: Tuggeranong, Williamsdale 1:25 000

Contact: 6231 9186,

landshil@webone.com.au

Rob Roy — with a difference.

It has been quite a while since we have visited Rob Roy; at 1,099 metres ASL, the biggest hill of all in the Canberra Nature Parks. But this walk is one with a difference, because once we are up on the Rob Roy "massif" we head south to several view points south including one known as 1 032. The views from down there are second to none and being 400 metres plus above Tharwa, one can see much of Namadji, the Tinderries, all of Canberra, the Brindies... Then we climb the southern end of Rob Roy itself — and enjoy many more view points as we return. Now that you are tempted, be warned; this is quite a big day. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 9.00 am for a beaut day. \$10 per car.

16 July, Sunday walk

Location: Tidbinbilla Peak, Johns Peak

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 3 A/C/E

Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Contact: 6231 9186,

landshil@webone.com.au

A chance to visit the northern half of the Tidbinbilla Range. There are great views during much of this reasonably strenuous walk. We follow the steady climb of the Mountain Creek firetrail to about mid way between John's Peak and the Camel Back. Then we travel south along the main ridge to John's Peak (about 1 450 metres) and, "pop up" to Tidbinbilla Peak for lunch. I plan to

return the same way as the "Cherry tree" spur is densely overgrown in many places with snow gum saplings — not a lot of fun to be had at all. The walk includes some mild bush negotiation and rock scrambling. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 8.30 for a beaut day. \$32 per car.

22 July, Saturday morning stroll

Location: ANU campus

Leader: Col McAlister

Grading: 1 A

Map: Canberra street maps

Contact: 6288 4171,

cvmac@actewagl.net.au

A gentle morning stroll through the ANU grounds and west Civic to view some of the large number of the varied and wonderful sculptures. Coffee and cake for morning tea at the National Film and Sound Archive. Meet at entry to the National Museum carpark at 9.00am.

Wednesday 26 July, Wednesday walk

Location: to be advised

Leader: David Large

Contact: 6291 4830,

egrald@grapevine.com.au

30 July, Sunday walk

Location: Nursery Hill circuit

Leader: Max Lawrence

Grading: 3 B/C/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek

Contact: 6288 1370,

mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am. From where Boboyan Road crosses Nursery Creek climb ridge to Nursery Hill summit (climb of 500m), then descend to Nursery Swamp. Return to cars via ridge on northern side of Nursery Creek. Good views over Glendale to Billy and Booth Ranges. Walk is entirely off track through burnt country — steep grades, loose rocks, regrowth. 70kms drive, \$21 per car.

6 August, Sunday snowshoe walk

Location: Snowy River

Leader: Brian Slee

Grading: 2 (on snow)

Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000

Contact: 6281 0719,

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6.15am. Drive to Thredbo and take the Kosciuszko Express chairlift to Rams Head Range. Follow the range north and cross the Snowy River at Kosciuszko Road. Continue north to a gorge and then climb Etheridge Ridge to

Seamans Hut for lunch. Continue climbing, then crossing, Etheridge Ridge from the west with magnificent views. Return to the chairlift across Snowy Plain. Afternoon tea at Jindabyne. Suitable for beginners. Participants hiring snowshoes should be in possession of them prior to departure. Book with the leader for departure location and weather check. 420km drive. \$120 per car plus park entry fee plus chair lift fee

12 August, Saturday Work Party

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contact: Syd Comfort 6286 2578,

scomfort@netspeed.com.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 August, Saturday walk

Location: McKeahnie Trig

Leader: Martin Chalk

Grading: 2 A/B/C/E

Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Contact: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502

(h), mchalk@tpg.com.au

This walk starts at the Square Rock walking track on the Corin Dam Road, proceeds along the track to a point above Smokers Flat. Once to the west of the Flat will leave the track and head south west along the broad ridge towards McKeahnie trig. There are limited views from the trig (indicating its age) but there is a challenge in attaining the top of the rock on which the trig is located. We will return along the ridge to Square Rock and then descend to the road for the short return to the cars. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8:30. 65km drive. \$20 per car.

20 August, Sunday walk

Location: Nungar Ridge

Leader: Steven Forst

Grading: 2 B/1 B

Map: Tantangara 1:25 000

Contact: 6251 6817 (h),

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Mount Nungar is a notable peak to the east of the road into Tantangara Dam from the snowy Mountains highway. There are two routes for this walk depending on numbers. If numbers allow a short car shuffle the walk will start at the quarry near Nungar Creek up onto Nungar ridge and northward to the peak and back to the road. Otherwise an up and back route from the road will be

used. The walk will be through open bush and possibly snow on the ridge providing great winter mountain scenery. The walk is not difficult but arrangements will depend on road and weather conditions at the time. Ring leader early. 300 km drive. \$90 per car

Wednesday 23 August,

Wednesday walk

Location: Brandy Flat and beyond

Leader: Max Lawrence

Grading: 2 A

Map: Michelago 1:25 000

Contact: 6288 1370,

mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8.30am. A pleasant walk on fire trails from Gudgenby back to Glendale with lunch at Brandy Flat hut. Fine views of both the Booth and Billy Ranges. An initial descent followed by a steep climb, but thereafter easy walking. Suitable for beginners. Car shuffle involved. 90kms drive, \$27 per car.

25-27 August, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, three day walk

Location: Mount Tarn

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Grading: 3 A/D/E

Map: Corang 1:25 000

Contact: 6254 3094,

philip.gatenby@hotmail.com

A three day walk to the heart of the Budawangs, where the views are spectacular. The walk starts from the Wog Wog entrance to Morton National Park and is partly on tracks, some of which may be overgrown. Rock-scrambling and swampy ground will also be involved. Note the Friday morning start. Contact the leader by the Wednesday before the walk. 250km drive. \$75 per car.

Wednesday 30 August, Wednesday walk

Location: to be advised

Leader: David Large

Contact: 6291 4830,

egrald@grapevine.com.au

(continued)

**2-3 September, Saturday, Sunday
Weekend walk**

Location: Talaterang Mountain
Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 1/2 A/C/D
Map: CMW Budawangs
**Contact: 6251 6817 (h),
steven.forst@acma.gov.au**

Ring leader by Wednesday. An easy pack walk to a campsite on top of Ngaityung Falls at the edge of the Little Forrest Plateau. The walk provides spectacular views of the Clyde Gorge and Pigeon House Mountain. The next day walk from the campsite to the top of Mt Talaterang before returning to camp for afternoon tea, packing up, and walking out. 600 km drive. \$180 per car.

**3 September, Sunday
snowshoe walk**

Location: Mount Tate
Leader: Brian Slee
Grading: 2 (on snow)
**Map: Perisher Valley, Mount Tate
1:25 000**
**Contact: 6281 0719,
brianslee@iprimus.com.au**

Depart 6.15am and drive to Guthega. Cross the dam wall and climb steeply up Guthega Ridge. After a break, climb from Consett Stephen Pass to Mount Tate (2068m) for lunch, a lovely location, fine views. Return probably via Gills Knobs and the bridge across the Guthega River but this will depend on conditions. Afternoon tea at Jindabyne. The route is the same as cross-country skiers do in a day. Participants must be fit. Book with the leader for departure location and weather check. 420km drive. \$120 per car plus park entry fee.

**9 September, 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.

10 September, Sunday

Great Australian Bushwalk

The NPA will be hosting a number of walks for the GAB again this year. Watch the NPA ACT website for up-to-date information on venues and transport arrangements.

16 September, Saturday walk

Location: Shanahans Falls Creek
Leader: Martin Chalk
Grading: 2 B/C
Map: Colinton 1:25 000
**Contact: 6268 4864 (w), 6292 3502
(h), mchalk@tpg.com.au**

Meet at Namadgi Visitors' Centre at 8.30am. The walk will start at the Mount Clear camp ground. We will proceed north east across the southern ridges of Shanahans Mountain and into the secluded valley of Shanahans Falls Creek for an early lunch. Apart from the odd briar, there is little sign of human disturbance in this quiet location. From there we will scramble out of the valley to the east to inspect Demanding Hut and note any work that might be needed.

The return to the camp ground can either be via the fire trail or along the ridge, depending on the wishes of the group. 160km drive, \$48 per car.

24 September, Sunday walk

Location: Long Flat
Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 3 A
**Maps: Colinton 1:25 000, Bredbo
1:25 000, Shannons Flat
1:25 000, ACT 1:100 000**
**Contact: 6251 6817,
steven.forst@acma.gov.au**

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8:00 am. A walk from the Mt Clear camp ground along the Grassy Creek fire trail then through to Long Flat. A possible climb on to the Clear Range for views south east over Bredbo. The walk is on fire trails, grassy areas and light bush. Highlights are Sam Aboud's dunny, remote flats, and mountain views. A walk to Namadgi's southern boundary and the ACT/NSW border. Eastern grey kangaroos abound. Drive 160 km drive. \$48 per car

**Wednesday 27 September,
Wednesday walk**

Location: to be advised
Leader: Philip Gatenby
**Contact: 6254 3094,
philip.gatenby@hotmail.com**

NPA news

NPA Annual General Meeting

The NPA ACT annual general meeting will be held on the 17th of August. This is an advance notice of the event and a call to all members to think about helping with NPA activities. Elections for all executive positions and membership of the management committee are held at the meeting and are open to all members. Nomination forms are available from members of the committee, from the NPA office, or you can copy it form from page 17 of this *Bulletin*.

Email npaact@bigpond.com for further information.

NPA campfire policy

.Di Thompson, representing a group of NPA members, has proposed a change to the association's policy, to allow small campfires in wilderness areas outside the bushfire season.

The current policy states:

At any given time only small groups and small numbers of people should be permitted access to wilderness areas to maintain their essential remoteness and solitude. They should be fuel-stove only areas.

The proposed new policy is:

That camp fires be allowed in the Bimberi Wilderness outside of the designated bushfire season under a permit system.

A number of reasons for this change are proposed including:

- People who are prepared to walk in these areas are experienced and environmentally aware and will not use fires indiscriminately.
- Campfire policies should be consistent with other alpine parks; there is no ban on fires in KNP or Victorian alpine park wilderness areas.
- It can be very wet and cold at any time of the year, but particularly in winter when days are short and the valleys are shaded for longer parts of the day.
- If fuel reduction fires are to be carried out in Namadgi wilderness areas, campfires will not create further significant environmental impact.
- It is inequitable to allow unrestricted fires in some parts of parks, for example campgrounds, and not in other parts.

Clive Hurlstone has put these reasons for not changing the policy:

- Wilderness is the highest conservation category we have in Namadgi National Park. The

management objectives of the wilderness area are, first to conserve the natural environment in a manner ensuring that disturbance to the environment is minimal, and second to provide for the use of the area for recreation by limited numbers of people.

- Most of Bimberi Wilderness is in the catchment of the upper Cotter River and its tributaries. No campfires are permitted in the Cotter Valley, and where overnight camping is permitted in the Upper Cotter it is a fuel stove only area.
- In the rest of Namadgi no campfires are permitted away from official constructed fireplaces during the bushfire season. At all other times campfire permits are required, these are provided at the discretion of park management depending on location and conditions in the park.
- The NPA supports these park management policies and has proposed that a fuel stoves only policy should be extended to cover the entire Bimberi Wilderness. The majority of overnight stays in the wilderness are associated with the Australian Alps Walking Track and bushwalks to five upper Cotter peaks above 1500m. Each walk has only two or three preferred campsites, thus camping activity is concentrated into a few specific locations. All of these campsites have had, in the past, stone fire rings and fire scars.
- All Alpine National Parks now have fuel stove only zones and in other areas of the parks the use of fuel stoves is encouraged.
- Campfires can escape even in the cooler months as one did in Namadgi two years ago.
- NPA ACT as a member group of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs of NSW supports low impact bushwalking which promotes the use of fuel stoves.

Members will be able to vote for or against the proposed change at the coming August AGM.

Several members have already expressed their views on this issue which ranged from: education is better than prohibition as prohibition often brings out the worst in people, to: preservation and integrity of a wilderness area is paramount and NPA ACT policy should be seen by the public as supporting this.

If you wish to express a view in the *Bulletin* or at general meetings you are encouraged to do so; email your comments to The *Bulletin* Team, npaact@bigpond.com.

This is an edited version of the arguments for and against a change in camp fire policy. The full article is available on the NPA ACT web site.

National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) AGM

The next annual general meeting of the National Parks Australia Council is pencilled in for 28–29 October 2006, which the Victorian National Parks have generously offered to host in Carlton Victoria. Phillip Ingamells (Alps Campaigner, VNPA) has already proposed 'funding for National Parks and Reserves' as an item for the agenda. Kevin McCue is the NPA ACT representative on NPAC until the August AGM so if you have an issue you think important to get on the NPAC agenda, send it to the committee for consideration.

Volunteers wanted

We need many more of our members to become involved. With so much going on in NPA ACT, now is a good time to become more active in your organisation.

- You can join one of our committees or working groups
- You can volunteer for a specific task from time to time
- You can lead outings, help with the bulletin, or assist in the office.

To find out more contact any committee member or email npaact@bigpond.com

NPA Symposium

As all members are no doubt aware the NPA Symposium was held 5–7 May. It was a great success. There will be a full report in the next issue of the *Bulletin*. Any member is welcome to contribute to our coverage; email us at The *Bulletin* Team, npaact@bigpond.com. Meanwhile keep in touch with the NPA web site for all the latest updates on the symposium reports.

Great Australian Bushwalk

The NPA has applied for a grant to run the Great Australian Bushwalk in the ACT for another year. The walks this year will be held on Sunday 10 September. As in previous years a large number of volunteers will be needed to coordinate and lead the walks, so step forward all the keen walkers!

Thanks to a member

One of NPA's members, Paul Mlakar, has made us some magnificent signs for

(Continued on page 13)

Camping and skiing in the 1940s – Part 1

Wherever NPA members walk in the bush (at least within a few hundred kilometres of Canberra) it is likely that Geof Hall has been there before – a long time before. Geof came to Canberra in 1942 and combined his love of outdoor activities with a distinguished public service career. Starting as a base grade clerk with the Public Service Board, he subsequently worked in the Department of Post War Reconstruction, the Prime Ministers' Department and the Department of Commerce and Agriculture (later the Department of Trade). His work mainly involved international trade policy and trade negotiations, and he was posted overseas a number of times – to Washington DC, Geneva and Paris. He retired in 1983. His recreational activities have included gardening, bushwalking, skiing, sailing, cycling and environmental work as a member of the Friends of Tidbinbilla, the O'Connor Ridge Parkcare Group and the Sullivan's Creek Catchment Group. This is the first instalment of three in which Geof has recorded some of his memories of being in the bush 60 years ago.

The age of the bicycle

In the early post-war years cars were scarce and expensive with long waiting lists and only the well off could afford them. The bicycle was the main means of private transport and then, as now the mountains near Canberra provided endless opportunities for bush walking.

My friend Cliff and I used our bikes to get to the beginning of the wilderness, hide them in the bushes and then start our hike. We were not too worried about security as usually we did not see anyone else on our hikes.

Our camping gear was very simple compared with what is available now. The tents could only fit one person with any degree of comfort, there was no floor, nor any insect mesh. Lightweight poles did not exist so we would string the tents between two trees or break off a couple of branches to serve as poles. Later, when we were able to afford to run a car the side of the car could serve as a support for one end of the tent.

Our food consisted of rolled oats which we ate uncooked with powdered milk and sultanas mixed in for breakfast. For lunch we had bread and cheese, and for dinner we cooked a

mixture of flour, powdered milk and cheese or some chopped up meat which we had cooked before leaving home. We drank copious quantities of tea. We cooked over a fire – there were no fire restrictions in those days and we were very careful.

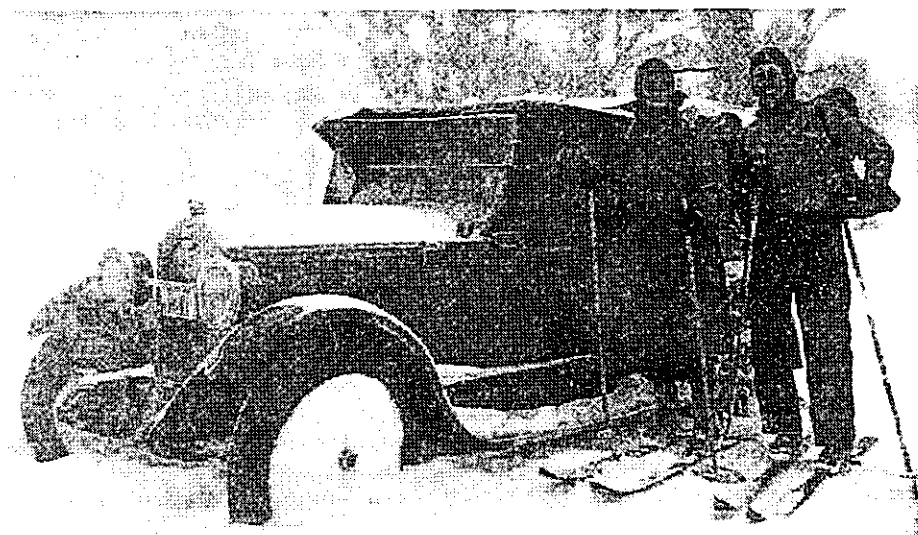
Sometimes we were able to supplement our diet with fish. On one occasion they were caught with just our hands. Usually I brought my fishing rod with me – it was easier as well as being legal.

a smooth covering of snow but were quite rough underneath.

A trip to the coast

Once during the Christmas holidays a group of us went camping at Broulee on the south coast.

The cars did not have enough room for everyone who wished to go plus the camping gear so I decided to go by bicycle. It took me a day and a half to get there, sleeping overnight under the bridge over the Shoalhaven river near



The water in the mountain streams was pure so usually we did not bother boiling the billy at lunch time.

Most of our hikes were taken over the weekend but we occasionally took longer hikes over a long weekend or the Easter holidays.

One memorable trip was to Mt Gingera when it snowed overnight and it was quite a strange experience riding our bikes on the tracks which had

Braidwood. After the camp I returned via Araluen and Major's Creek, again sleeping under a bridge over the Shoalhaven. In those days most of the roads were unsealed which made riding a bicycle with a pack on the back quite difficult.

One Easter, Cliff and I rode our bikes, with our packs on our backs as usual, to Yass junction, put our bikes and packs in the guard's van, and took the train to Gundagai. At one point we

Camping and skiing in the 1940s

continued

wondered why the train was stationary for a long time for no apparent reason and then discovered that a cow had wandered onto the track and was refusing to move.

From Gundagai we rode to Kiandra and camped. It snowed overnight so the next morning we were thankful for the hospitality of the Kiandra ski club for letting us share their fire at breakfast time. Coming back we had the daunting prospect of going down the steep descent to Talbingo, but met this by tying a branch to the back of the bike to slow us down.

The use of cars when bushwalking

At this stage one of my friends, David, had enough money to buy a 20-year-old Buick tourer, which we called *Jalopy*. This extended our horizons for bushwalking even though it meant that

if we tackled a steep grade such as Fitz's Hill, which was a dirt road with a nasty hairpin bend at the steepest part, the passengers had to get out onto the running board and be prepared to push when the engine faltered. Going down was simpler. We did what others did in a similar situation and just tied a large branch to the rear of the car and it supplemented the feeble braking system.

I also became the owner of a series of old cars. The first was *Ethyl* an Essex Super Six. This turned out to be unsuitable and I sold it to a mechanic who could attend to its faults.

I then bought a strange vehicle — a T Model Ford converted to a utility. We called it the *Hopper* because of its resemblance to a grasshopper. It was great for going on picnics in the bush so

long as two of the passengers did not mind a hard ride sitting in the back.

After the *Hopper* came a Rugby tourer which we called *Genevieve*. Having a hood and a back seat made it more comfortable for passengers. It was slow but sure, and once it took four of us to Melbourne with two overnight stops camping on the way. *Genevieve* had a leaky radiator and consumed a lot of water, despite the fact that we all munched plenty of chewing gum with which to try to stop the leaks.

To be continued next *Bulletin*

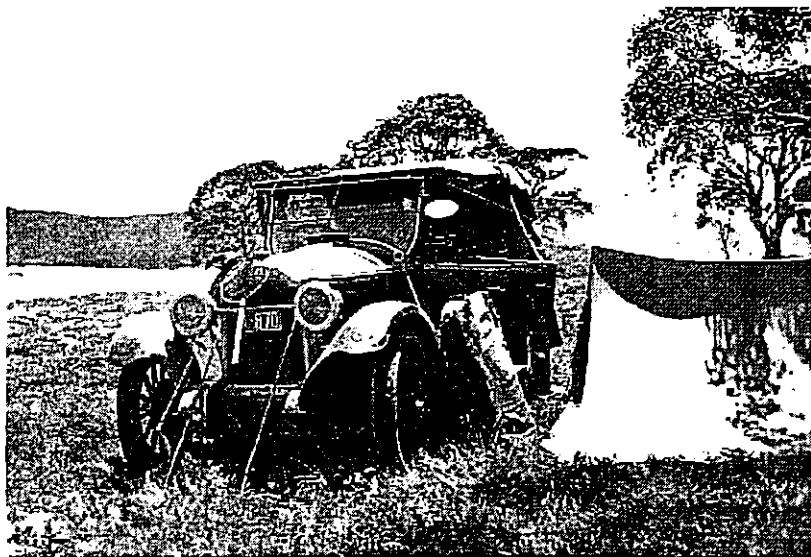
Facing page, top: On the Old Gudgenby Road.

Facing page, below: Snowed in at Mount Franklin

Right: The Cotter near Fishing Gap

Below: Car camping 1940s style

Photos Geof Hall



NPA news

continued from page 11

use in displays and events. A new "sandwich board" and a "rostrum sign", featuring the NPA ACT's logo, made their debuts at the NPA's *Caring for Namadgi — Science and People* symposium. Thankyou Paul.

NPA web site gallery

Martin Chalk, doyen of NPA photographers writes:

I have recently been entrusted with the maintenance of the NPA's website photo gallery. As the window to the NPA, this gallery is an important asset. Accordingly, I wish to include high

quality images that each clearly tell their own story.

I will maintain regular sub-galleries to showcase Namadgi and Kosciuszko National Parks and the activities of the NPA (such as walks). Additionally, I will maintain other sub-galleries as circumstances warrant.

I believe that web-based galleries should not be static. Therefore, I am always in need of new images. If you would like to assist in bringing the NPA to the world (sobering thought, isn't it!), you can send your CDs, photos, negatives or transparencies to me at:

33 Alabaster St
Monash

ACT 2904

Email: mchalk@grapevine.com.au

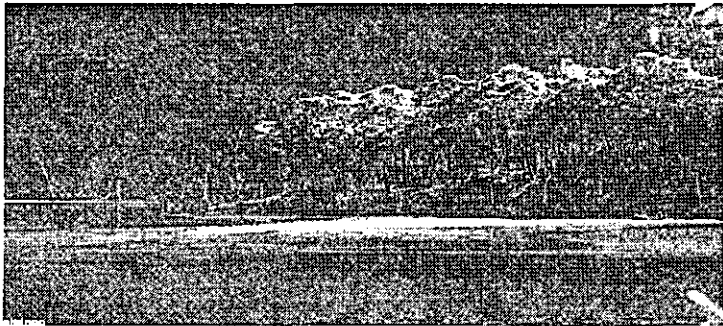
I will return all photos, negatives and transparencies but will not return CDs unless requested to do so.

Martin Chalk, Gallery Director

New members

Welcome to Sybil Free, Susan Buik, Patricia Leslie, Don and Betty Wood, Chris Smith.

Up the creek with a paddle



A Talbingo morning from our campsite. Photo Max Lawrence

Some time ago canoe trips appeared quite regularly in the NPA Outings Program, but from what I hear they weren't always well supported, and eventually disappeared from the program. Mike Bremers decided to rectify this, and offered to lead a beginners' canoe trip on Talbingo Dam in the program appearing in last December's *NPA Bulletin*. Mike is well qualified to do this, with an impressive record of long distance kayaking on our inland rivers.

The big trip was scheduled for the weekend March 4-5, which turned out to be a weekend of glorious weather, ideal for paddling, or just about anything else. Our team was a small one, but (dare I say it) top quality, comprising Dale and Tina Siver, myself and of course Mike.

We had a somewhat motley collection of craft, ranging from Mike's swish Kakadu kayak and Dale's racing solar powered outrigger to the plastic sit-on kayaks piloted by Tina and myself. All proved more than up to the task, but it has to be said that Mike and Dale were usually well ahead of the pack. One thing I did find was that it was much easier carrying overnight camping gear in the kayak than on my back. In fact there was even space for a few extra luxuries — Mike even had a hammer for his tent pegs!

We launched at O'Hares Rest Area on the Elliott Way, otherwise known as Sue City. This is at the head of the lake formed by Talbingo Dam, and is where water enters the lake from Tumut 2 Power Station. In fact when we arrived there was quite a large flow from this source, resulting in a

significant following current in the early stages of our voyage. Fortunately it had stopped altogether when we returned the next day. This part of the lake is very popular with fisherfolk, many of whom were camped at the launchsite, and there was more than the odd tinny cruising around looking for the big one.

On day one we had a leisurely paddle for about four or five kilometres down to the Coonara Point Rest Area, which is accessible only by water, but which has a toilet, fireplaces, and levelled out tent sites. A sign pronounces that it is maintained by the Tumbarumba Boat Club, and indeed it was clean and well maintained. We had it to ourselves, sort of.

After setting up camp Mike and I paddled across the lake and climbed the steep hill opposite, where we were rewarded with great views of the lake and mountains, and our campsite. Before our very eyes we saw our beaut camp turn from wonderful solitude to water skiers' Grand Central Station, as boats arrived from the opposite (dam) end of the lake. Fortunately they only stayed for an hour or so, peace returned and we had the place to ourselves again.

Day two dawned with the lake like a huge mirror. We set out quite early, and it was a memorable experience quietly cruising along the shoreline back to our cars. In fact it was almost a disappointment to have to get the boats out of the water and return to the real world. But that's life. Thanks Mike for a truly great weekend.

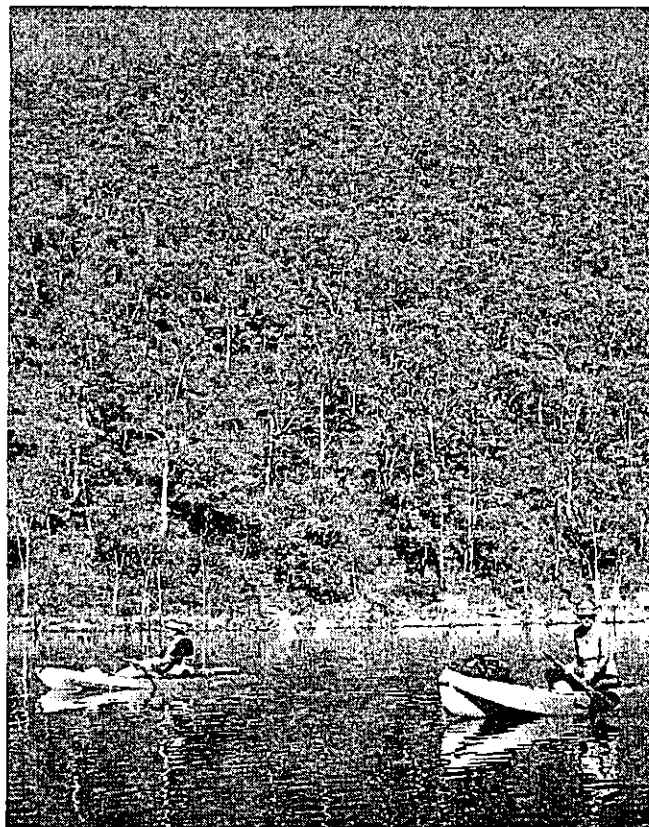
Max Lawrence



Mike Bremers in his super Kakadu kayak on Talbingo Dam. Photo Max Lawrence



Max Lawrence in his handy low-key hired craft. Photo Mike Bremers



Max and Tina relaxing in the millpond conditions. Photo Max Lawrence

Weed control on Naas Creek

Namadgi West District rangers have initiated a strategic program of woody-weed control along the rivers and creeks of Namadgi. A big task you might think! Indeed it is, but the work has to start somewhere.

Naas Creek has been targeted initially. Contract spray work was conducted downstream of the locked gate on the Horse Gully Hut Road during last summer. Over the same period, NPA volunteers undertook the more painstaking task of cutting and dabbing individual plants.

Over two work parties, the area between the Mount Clear camp ground and a point about 2km west of the Boboyan Road was covered. The country is variously flat and steep but generally open woodland. Approximately 1000 briars were treated along with some 30 broom plants, four apple trees, two blackberry plants and countless thistles.

The second work party observed that some of the previously treated briars had not died and that the number of briars seemed to increase the further

upstream one travelled. The message here is that there will be plenty of work next spring and summer. Keep an eye on the outings program if you would like to contribute to the maintenance of our wonderful national park.

Martin Chalk
Volunteer Coordinator

Weeding and seeding with the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

The GRBG has been busy over summer weeding and spraying blackberries and briars. The wet spring meant an increase in weeds which thrived in the moister conditions. The work parties for this year have been held in ideal weather conditions and we have been able to spray with backpacks as well as use the traditional method of cutting and dabbing. This means that we can cover a much larger area and complete the work at a faster rate.

Two work parties have been held on Croajingalong slope which is to the west of Bogong Creek. This slope is an ideal example of what can be achieved through our regeneration program. Many trees are 3-4 metres or above and

the understorey species are beginning to emerge. This slope was first seeded in 1998 with *Eucalyptus rubida*, *E. viminalis*, *E. pauciflora* and some acacias. A few banksias are also present.

A new program for the winter months will be available soon and anyone who would like to help is most welcome to attend.

Hazel Rath



L to r: Frank Clements, David Kelly, Sonja Lenz, David Hall, Saravan Peacock, Clive Hurlstone, Diana Heins and Brian Slee. Photo Hazel Rath

Re-erected Colverwell gravestones unveiled

The Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope, on February 28 officially unveiled the re-erected Colverwell gravestones at Glenburn in the Kowen forest which, together with the graveyard, have been wonderfully restored by ACT Forests and The Heritage Unit.

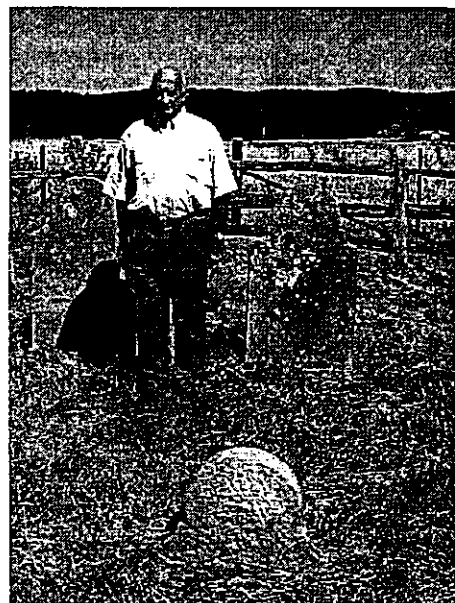
A crowd of some 40 or so attended the ceremony at the graveyard which was presided over by Dr Maxine Cooper, head of ACT Arts, Heritage and Environment.

Those attending the formalities included Rhueben Colverwell, the last direct descendant of Luke and Mary

Colverwell who, together with three of their children Margaret, Elizabeth and Eliza are buried in the small graveyard. The gravestones in the graveyard belong to Margaret and Elizabeth, aged five and six, who drowned in 1837 in or near Glen Burn creek which runs just to the east of the graveyard.

Others attending included descendants of other early residents of Kowen, members of NPA, members of The Heraldry & Genealogy Society, staff of ACT Forests and The Heritage Unit, and of the Heritage Library.

Colin McAlister



Right: Rhueben Colverwell, the last direct descendant of Luke and Mary Colverwell, attended the unveiling of the re-erected gravestones at Glenburn. Photo Col McAlister

Environment news

Biosphere listing considered

The ACT Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and Environment has invited the community to participate in its inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Biosphere reserves are internationally recognised within the framework of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB). Their aims, under the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves, include fostering sustainable economic and human development, preserving landscapes, ecosystems, species, and genetic resources, and supporting demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

The proposed nomination of the ACT is particularly significant because the ACT includes a major urban environment. The Mornington Peninsular and Western Port Biosphere Reserve is the most comparable in Australia, as it also includes an urban component. More information about biosphere reserves can be accessed via the following web-sites:

<http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/channel/channel.asp?cid=685&tid=685&sid=&spi> and <http://www.unesco.org/mab/index.shtml>

Submissions were due to close on June 2.

Master plan for Tidbinbilla

A master plan for a new Nature Discovery Zone at Tidbinbilla provides for an open environment that will allow visitors to experience the region's wildlife in a natural setting. There will be no obvious fences between the animals and people. The zone will be based around an upgraded Tidbinbilla Wetlands.

Announcing the plan on April 23, the Chief Minister and Environment Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope, said the challenge was to create a place where the needs of the animals and the visitors were both catered for. "The plan sets out how we can provide safe, natural habitats for the animals while still giving visitors the best possible experience," he added.

Animals such as the brush-tailed rock wallaby, koalas, reptiles, birds and insects would be among those on display. The zone would also feature exhibits telling the stories of the

relationships between our environment, animals and people.

The ACT Government is also investigating the establishment of a volunteer education program, hoping to use the wealth of scientific and cultural understanding within the Canberra community.

Future planning will include consideration of how technology — such as spy cameras in birds' nests and web cameras monitoring wetlands — could be used to enhance the experience for visitors.

Construction, the bulk of which is to be funded from bushfire insurance, is expected to be completed in early 2008.

Native plants replace pines

The site of a former pine plantation, burnt during the 2003 bushfires, has been planted with native species. The planting, at Mt McDonald, was part of the ACT Landkeepers program, which has involved 1050 volunteers planting 12 000 tubestock. Further plantings are planned.

ACT Landkeepers is a partnership between Environment ACT and Greening Australia and is jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments. The program encourages urban Canberrans to get involved in the restoration of rural and non-urban land in the ACT. The program uses the best available science to target areas of most need, including the Mt McDonald area of the lower Cotter.

Strategy for South Coast

The NSW Planning Minister, Mr Frank Sartor, has released the draft strategy for future development on the South Coast to guide the region's growth over the next 25 years.

The strategy spans the local government areas of Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley. It will support up to 45,600 dwellings by 2031 to accommodate the expected population growth of up to 60 300 new residents.

"We need to manage this population growth in a way that protects the region's 400km of coastline, as well as its sensitive environmental areas such as rivers, wetlands and rainforests," Mr Sartor said.

More than half the State's coastal lakes and lagoons are located in the region, which also contains 400 significant coastal wetlands and three large bays.

The protection of sensitive catchments from new residential or

rural-residential development zones, unless the proposals maintain or improve the waterway's condition is listed as one of the strategy's objectives, as is the protection of the area's cultural and Aboriginal heritage values.

Mr Sartor said the strategy was one of a number of coastal regional strategies prepared by the NSW Government designed to ensure balanced growth while protecting important environmental, cultural and natural resource assets.

Water supply options open

The new Cotter-Googong Bulk Transfer program is poised to play a bigger-than-anticipated part in securing Canberra's water supply, and plans to extract water from the Murrumbidgee River at Angle Crossing for pumping to the Googong Dam have been put on hold.

The bulk transfer scheme, which was switched on in December, pumps water from the Cotter reservoirs, which tend to overflow in the wetter seasons, delivering surplus water of up to 150 megalitres a day into the Googong reservoir. Essentially, the scheme takes water that would otherwise spill over dam walls, and makes it available for consumption in the Canberra region.

At the time the transfer was announced, ACTEW expected that it would secure the water supply for at least the next five years, but new analysis has indicated that the scheme has significantly greater potential.

"Even the most conservative estimates would see the bulk transfer scheme transferring up to 12 gigalitres of water a year to Googong — about 20 per cent of the ACT's average annual consumption," Mr Stanhope said.

When ACTEW delivered its report on future water options for the Territory to the ACT Government in April 2005 it recommended a second water transfer scheme that would take water from the Murrumbidgee River, near Angle Crossing, and store it in the Googong reservoir, and advised that the combined transfer schemes would provide enough water to secure supply for the ACT and the region until at least 2023.

ACTEW now believed that it would be able to extract Murrumbidgee water at the Cotter pumping station, using existing infrastructure, without the need to build new infrastructure to pump

(Continued on page 17)

Environment news *continued*

water from Angle Crossing in the short to medium term.

"ACTEW will continue to prepare to be ready to proceed with options for a new dam, should that route prove unavoidable at some stage in decades to come. I personally hope that such an investment — which would have a huge impact environmentally and socially, as well as being a significant financial commitment — can be put off indefinitely," Mr Stanhope said.

Mr Stanhope also announced during March that permanent water conservation measures in the ACT would come into effect at the end of the month and were expected to deliver savings of 8 per cent a year.

New water guidelines

New guidelines governing the amount of water the ACT must release into downstream waterways in order to secure the health of rivers and streams were announced in February.

"The new guidelines not only allow us to determine the volume of water required to protect aquatic ecosystems, they will help guide future decisions regarding water abstraction. The guidelines will ensure better ecological outcomes for such endangered species

as the two-spined blackfish and the Macquarie perch, while securing greater volumes of water for the use of the Canberra community," Mr Stanhope said.

"The guidelines are the result of an extensive period of review and consultation. They reflect the best available scientific knowledge as well as taking into account the views and expectations of the community and other stakeholders."

The guidelines are the result of extensive consultation and review and replace Environmental Flow Guidelines that have been in place in the Territory since 1999. They are available for public viewing at <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/airandwater/water/environmentalfloes>

The value of parks

An investment of \$300 million to \$400 million would achieve 80 per cent protection of a full range of Australia's regional ecosystems, save 14 700 native species, and yield benefits worth \$2000 million, according to World Wildlife Fund Australia senior policy adviser Mr Andreas Glanznig.

He is quoted in a report in the *Canberra Times* of March 31 as saying that Australia's national reserve system is one of the most cost-effective investments that governments could make to secure biodiversity. The only other developed country considered to be megadiverse has preserved, in relative terms, 1.5 times more of its land in protected areas than Australia has.

The same report also quotes a CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems submission to a Senate inquiry that says that Australia's protected areas contain "a biased sample of biodiversity from ecosystems and habitats that were selected because they were remote and inaccessible, or were unfit for alternative uses such as agriculture or urban development".

The submission, prepared by Dr Chris Margules, also said that Australia's parks and World Heritage Areas would become little more than "havens for feral animals and weeds" and the source of fires if current underfunding continued.

Graeme Wicks

Notice of Annual General Meeting

National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.

All members of the Association are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting to be held at the Uniting Church Hall, O'Connor at 8:00 pm on Thursday 17 August 2006

The business:

Minutes of the 2005 AGM
President's report
Financial report

Appointment of auditor
Election of office-bearers and committee
Any other business

Note: all office-bearer and committee positions become vacant at the AGM. Nominations for the ensuing year are welcome. See *Bulletin page 19* for the nomination form for office-bearer and committee member positions for the coming year.

Following the formal business and guest speaker, members are invited to the traditional AGM supper.

Nominations for NPA office bearers and committee 2006/7

Nominations are sought for office bearers and committee members to be elected at the AGM on August 17. This form can be photocopied and used for nominations.

We nominate for the position of.....in the NPA ACT for 2006/7

Proposed by (signature)

Seconded by..... (signature) I accept the nomination.....(signature)

..... (date)

PARKWATCH

“Plastic Surgery” for subalpine bogs

Just as gardens were damaged in Canberra’s devastating 2003 bushfires, many key subalpine bogs were also severely burnt, requiring specialised regeneration to repair damage they suffered.

The regeneration involves transplanting divots of unburnt sphagnum moss into bogs severely damaged by fire, in an effort to recolonise the bog. The technique is one of several innovative ways in which the ACT and NSW Governments, with funding from the Natural Heritage Trust, are trying to rehabilitate the ecologically important and sensitive bogs. Two other innovative methods are the use of shade cloth to protect bogs and slow the release of nutrients to feed bog development.

The Sphagnum Moss Bog Restoration Project is underway in the Namadgi National Park in the ACT and, across the border, in the subalpine areas of the Kosciuszko National Park. The subalpine bog sites include Cotter Source Bog, Rotten Swamp and the Ramsar listed Ginini Flats Wetland Complex. Sphagnum moss bog experts from the ACT, NSW and Tasmania are assisting restoration efforts by Environment ACT and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It’s groundbreaking work, much of which has not been attempted before and the teams are using an adaptive management approach to assess what works best in the long term.

The bogs are crucial for water flow through alpine ecosystems and as habitat. The bogs are also important to Canberra’s water supply because they store and slowly release water (helping provide a continuity of water supply) and also purify the water. The sphagnum moss is like a giant sponge covering a peat base and, normally being wet, is little affected by bushfire. However, the very dry 2003 season saw, on average, 75 per cent fire damage to each bog in the region.

In the first days of the 2003 fires, a fire front swept through and did relatively little damage. An assessment by rangers that the bogs were safe proved premature, as a second major front involving crown fires in the tops of trees was so intense that all the bogs were damaged.

The problem is that once the bog’s protective cover of moss is burnt, the peat underneath becomes hydrophobic

and rewetting isn’t possible. It therefore becomes critical to prevent the peat drying because, once dry, it erodes, which may lead to loss of part or all of the bog and its habitat. An erosion edge “nibbles into the bog” and the problem snowballs.

To take the strain off the recovering bogs, recovery teams have dug in hay bales along contours and likely erosion channels and smaller ecologs (geotextile “sausages”) in shallow grooves. The “hay” bales have usually been bales of rice stalks from the Riverina and both products are designed to decay naturally over time. The aims are to:

- reduce water velocity and erosion;
- help the bogs retain water to prevent the peat drying; and
- enable sphagnum moss and other wetland plants to grow.

While resources have not been available to revitalise every affected bog, recovery teams have concentrated efforts to help the most severely affected bogs, and particularly those most important as water sources and habitat.

This is good news for the endangered corroboree frog (the bogs are its main breeding habitat) and also the broadtoothed rat, a rare species of herbivore that tunnels in the moss outcrops. The bogs themselves range in size from an average lounge room upwards to several hundred metres across.

Both Environment ACT and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are looking at ways of accelerating sustainable regeneration of the sphagnum moss bogs but, at present, it is “early days” in determining just which ways are the most effective.

National Wetlands Update, 2006

Wonga Wetlands learning place

Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Corporation has established a unique project at Wonga Wetlands, 5km west of Albury, to raise community understanding of Aboriginal culture and the environment.

The Wiradjuri Winnagganna-da — Wiradjun Learning Place — model campsite was established through a grant from the NSW Environmental Trust, which supports exceptional environmental projects.

This model of a traditional Wiradjuri Aboriginal campsite at the Wonga Wetlands provides

opportunities on several levels to learn about the cultural heritage of the traditional owners, while increasing local environmental interaction and knowledge.

The campsite is part of a network of walking trails where people can wander through the wetlands, as well as through the campsite itself. It features specific gender areas, a general gathering area, cooking sites, meeting and conference sites, and locations for tool making and rock painting.

The project includes environmental remediation through stabilising foreshore erosion. It established a program to carry out weed eradication and revegetation with 1,000 native plants, featuring local bush tucker.

The project cost just over \$12 500 and was completed between February 2004 and June 2005.

*National Parks Journal
February – March 2006*

Phytophthora hits Wollemi Pine

With great fanfare, October 2005 saw the release of the first generation of Wollemi Pines propagated from the trees in the wild. They sold for thousands of dollars each. Unless you are an unusually wealthy bushwalker (with a very big backyard!) you probably dipped out — but you will get further chances when much cheaper second and third generation specimens are released in later years

A few days later the Department of Environment and Conservation revealed that the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* had recently been found in one of the trees in the wild. It is understood that a second tree nearby is also showing symptoms. Tests on cultivated trees have indicated that the pine is susceptible to the disease, though the effects are not necessarily fatal. DEC Deputy Director General and Parks head, Dr Tony Fleming, said “Phytophthora is a soil-borne fungal-like disease that causes root rot in many native and introduced plant species.”

There are three separate stands of the wild trees. Hopefully the disease is confined to one stand. However, as it can take years for the symptoms to become apparent, this cannot be guaranteed. The department has embarked on a program of detailed testing of the soil and trees. Strategies for combating and isolating the disease will be implemented.

PARKWATCH *continued*

The risk of human visitors importing *Phytophthora* was recognised — and publicised — soon after the pines were first discovered. Since then scrupulous measures have been taken to minimise the number of official researchers visiting the pines, and to disinfect boots and equipment. And of course, unauthorised visits were banned under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*.

The department considers it likely that the disease was introduced by an unauthorised visitor. ... Any bushwalker who happens to hear of the supposed location of the Pine should keep it to himself, and not attempt to visit it. Any other course of action would be contrary to the conservation objectives of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs.

The Bushwalker, Summer, 2006

Forest audit reveals blunders

In its first Special Forest Audit, the Environment Protection Authority has failed to call for serious action, despite identifying a series of whopping blunders by government forest managers.

VNPA Director Charlie Sherwin said: "The EPA has shone a spotlight on an appalling series of blunders by forest managers, but seems unable or unwilling to recommend proper environmental protection."

Friends of the Earth spokesman Jonathan La Nauze said, "The destruction of a special breeding site for the endangered superb parrot should send alarm bells ringing across government. You only get one chance at saving a species from extinction, and this Audit shows we're blowing it."

The EPA 2005 Special Forest Audit, released in February this year, found that government forest operations had resulted in illegal logging in national parks, destruction of old growth trees in special protection zones, and multiple breaches of procedure. Problems identified in the report include:

- poor planning, mapping, communications and training
- false assumptions
- failure to follow procedure and obtain proper approval for logging.

These findings are bad enough, but the EPA also fails to point out the conflict in the Barnah forest area, where the Department of Sustainability and Environment is charged with both running logging operations and at the same time protecting the trees.

The report highlights a litany of errors by DSE forestry, including the logging of over 15 per cent of the entire Victorian breeding area for this endangered bird.

Parkwatch March, 2006

Big tree logging blockade on again

Twenty conservationists have again stopped logging on the Bonang River in East Gippsland. The group has walked into the controversial coupe, preventing logging from continuing since early this morning. The coupe, on Centre Rd, contains mixed forest, a rare rainforest type, as well as 600 year old trees. It is adjacent to Victoria's largest tree, which was discovered by conservationists two years ago.

There have been five forest blockades in the Bonang River area since logging started there six weeks ago. Last week a tree platform preventing logging was removed by Search and Rescue police, and in February, a four-day blockade of the logging coupe ended in four arrests. There have been 13 forest blockades in East Gippsland since December and 30 people have been arrested so far.

*Goongerah Environment Centre,
Media Release, 7 April 2006*

Six SCGs cleared every hour in NSW

Leaked information from Government sources reveals that NSW bushland is being destroyed at an alarming rate with the equivalent of six Sydney Cricket Grounds of native bush being cleared every hour.

Land clearing is the greatest threat to our wildlife directly contributing to the mass extinction of animals and plant species and threatening hundreds more species. It is the greatest cause of dryland salinity, affecting natural ecosystems and destroying farmlands. It is also a major contributor to greenhouse gases as cleared vegetation is burnt or rots with emissions equivalent to more than two million cars annually.

The NSW Government has been caught out in new media reports revealing that illegal land clearing in the state is much higher than was previously thought. The documents indicate that up to 100 000ha of native bush is being destroyed every year with the State Government failing to prosecute those who illegally clear the bush.

Disappointingly, the news has been met with denials from the State Government who refuse to acknowledge the problem. Minister for Natural Resources, Ian Macdonald, has claimed that the clearing, detected by satellite imagery, has been exaggerated by the drought and has labelled The Wilderness Society "mischievous".

Premier Iemma needs to address this environmental crisis before we witness more lost bushlands and more wildlife extinctions. There are currently more than 240 species of plants and animals that are directly at threat of extinction because of the government's failure to deliver on the key environmental promise of the 2003 election.

*The Wilderness Society, Media
Release, 25 February 2006*

Law reform needed to prevent being gagged

More than 140 of Australia's leading legal minds have joined forces to call for urgent law reform to protect the community's right to speak out and take action over public issues, such as Tasmania's forests.

The unprecedented move by so many working in the law is in response to an increasing number of law suits against ordinary Australians for speaking publicly or demonstrating on public issues. The most recent example is the current \$6.8 million action by Gunns Ltd against 20 people in relation to disputes over the protection of Tasmania's forests.

"The increasing use of litigation against community participation in public issues has the serious effect of intimidating the community, chilling public debate and silencing voices that should be heard in a democratic society," sponsors of the lawyers' statement said.

Also released today, a report prepared by The Wilderness Society's legal adviser Dr Greg Ogle documents the increasing number of cases that have chilled public debate through law suits against community activists and groups. The report *Gunning for Change* also examines a range of reforms and models for protecting public participation from this type of lawsuit.

*The Wilderness Society, Media
Release, 3 April 2006*

Compiled by Len Haskeew

National Parks Association Calendar

	June	July	August	Sept
<i>Public holidays</i>	<i>Mon 12</i>			
General meetings	Thur 15	Thur 20	Thur 17	Thur 21
Committee meetings	Tues 6	Tues 4	Tues 1	Tues 5
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 10	Sat 8	Sat 12	Sat 9

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

General Meetings

Third Thursday of the month

8:00pm

Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor

Thursday 15 June 2006

*New Plans and New Opportunities for
Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.*

Rod Hillman, Manager Community and Visitor Programs, ACT Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment.

Rod will speak on the Nature Discovery Zone, plans for camping and new and restored walking trails in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

Thursday 20 July 2006

*Canberra International Arboretum
and Gardens — a Plan for the
21st Century.*

Jocelyn Plovits, Senior Manager, Strategic Projects and Implementation, Chief Minister's Department.

Ms Plovits will speak about the genesis of the project, the goals (including conservation and the economic benefits) and the steps the ACT government is taking to achieve those goals over the next few years.

Thursday 17 August 2006

Annual General Meeting

Followed by guest speaker.

.Dugongs.

Dr George Heinsohn, NPA member and formerly Senior Lecturer in Zoology at James Cook University.

The biology of the only extant herbivorous marine mammal will be described and its conservation in Australia's sub-tropical and tropical waters discussed

NPA ACT Bulletin

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