

NPA Bulletin



Volume 43 number 3
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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC



Lower Cotter Catchment Plan

Namadgi Firetrail Frenzy

Environment ACT disappears

Symposium report

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National Parks Association of the ACT Incorporated Inaugurated 1960

Aims and objectives of the Association

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

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NPA Bulletin

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Cover Photo: Mr Mick Gentleman MLA and NPA ACT President Christine Goonrey with Rachel Sims receiving her award at the NPA's Symposium dinner (see page 4).

From the President

Just when we thought it might be safe to slip into a nice mid-winter snooze, the ACT Government sprang its functional review and 2006 Budget surprises. We weren't expecting any good news from the Budget, but to find that Environment ACT had disappeared into a black hole labelled 'Territory and Municipal Services' (TAMS) was a big shock. There was no new money of course for things like research into climate change and I suppose we should be grateful for \$35,000 extra in the endangered species program. However, there was \$10 million — yes ten million dollars — over the next four years for fire trails in the park. So money can be found to knock trees down but not to protect the natural values of our national park.

I might sound a bit bitter and twisted — government budgets can do that to you — but the greatest shock was to find that there was no longer going to be an Environment ACT. Dr Maxine Cooper has been moved out and the entire staffing and functions of what we knew as EACT has become part of a 'land management division' within this new department cobbled together from the old Urban Services group. The CEO of TAMS, Mike Zissler, has assured the Conservation Council that environmental issues are

high on the new department's agenda and that the person heading up the Land Management functions, Hamish McNulty, is keen to get to know this new area but it still begs the question: why is the administration of environmental policy and programs being buried like this?

Despite the disruption to good management which this must be causing, the need to continue bulldozing fire trails through the national park continues. Martin Chalk did a lot of good work to prepare our submission on the new Grassy Creek fire trail preliminary assessment which is covered elsewhere in this *Bulletin*. We hope it will make a difference to the final proposal because we have seen the damage done by tanker standard fire trails in other areas of the park. On a recent walk along Smokers Fire Trail we were shocked by the amount of tree clearing and bulldozing which had taken place. It looked more like a logging camp than a national park.

If we had any hope that the upgrades of existing fire trails might not be too bad, it has well and truly been crushed. People walking in the park are reporting this type damage throughout the area and the potential for silting of streams, erosion of wilderness areas and general



degradation of the natural values of the park is of huge concern to us. Control of erosion on these existing roads alone will cost millions of dollars over the next ten years and there seems little hope of such money being found in the current circumstances.

So we have a long term task ahead of us: to remind this and future governments that they cannot take the environmental vote for granted; that the downgrading of environmental protection in the ACT will be a critical issue in the next election and that supporters of our national park have very long memories.

Christine Goonrey

Where Have All the Values Gone?

We hear and read a lot in the media these days about the dangers we face in losing our 'traditional' values. Well, we may also be in danger of neglecting the values we place on our national parks and forgetting the reasons why areas were declared as national parks — to protect natural values, biodiversity, and wilderness. Our parks were primarily set up as havens for our unique and wonderful biodiversity to flourish and evolve, but reading many of the statements and management ideas from governments these days you could be forgiven for thinking that these basic purposes have been forgotten in the rush to commercialise our parks.

Change, they say, is inevitable in this era of globalisation. Change for our national parks, however, must not be backward-looking, ushering in lower standards of care and levels of protection for our parks. Are we going to undo all the advances we have fought for over the past fifty years in managing parks to conserve natural values? Our record of extinctions of our Australian

flora and fauna is a very sorry one for just 200 years. In our local area, the corroboree frog faces an uncertain future in the wild.

It is very tempting for Governments to look to national parks as a revenue source when coffers are under strain and there may well be ways to cater for sustainable commercial use. Many of the proposals I have seen recently however, including those in the Namadgi Draft Plan of Management, are definitely not in that category, being insensitive, high impact, and unsustainable. We need to rediscover our 'values' to resist this impending takeover. It has been shown many times in national park management, when commercial interest conflicts with conservation, parks are nearly always the loser.

We need to revive our passion and enthusiasm for natural areas to ensure that they remain just that, natural. We need to see our care and management get better, with adequate resources, not subject to a takeover by the commercial

world as open-air theme parks. Only in this way will future generations of Australians continue to enjoy the thrill and wonder of exploring our superb national parks.

I have taken on the role of *Bulletin* editor as Syd Comfort takes a well-earned back seat. As you have just read (I hope) I have staked my claim as a defender of national parks. I want to hear and debate your views on this and many other topics important to NPA members in our *Bulletin*. I hope you will join me.

In closing I would just like to pay my personal tribute to Syd for his long and excellent stint as *Bulletin* editor. We will still be able to tap his experience and expertise as a member of the *Bulletin* Team and I would like to encourage any other members who would like to help with the *Bulletin* to join us.

Neville Esau

Namadgi Symposium a Great Success



In late 2004, the management committee of the National Parks Association of the ACT decided to organise a public conference to explore the scientific research currently undertaken in Namadgi National Park.

Our goals were:

- to discover what research was being conducted of relevance to Namadgi NP for the education of the committee and all members of the association,
- to evaluate the scope of research available for managers preparing to sign off on the draft plan of management for Namadgi NP,
- to determine whether there were any gaps in the research, and finally
- to expose the public to the wealth of knowledge of our local natural world available in the national capital and to the management processes put in place to protect the conservation values of Namadgi NP.

The committee had already started to think about planning an appropriate celebration for NPA ACT's 50th anniversary, still six years away at that time. This conference would give us some practical experience of hosting a

conference, albeit on a smaller scale than that planned for the half-century celebration.

This was to be the second scientific conference hosted by NPA ACT since its inception in 1960. The first was held to coincide with the association's silver jubilee year in 1985, two decades ago, and nearly two years after the gazetting of the southern half of the ACT as a national park for the national capital. In late November/early December of that year NPA ACT held a conference at the Australian National University titled *Australia's Alpine Areas: Management for Conservation*. The proceedings, edited by Kevin Frawley, were published in 1986. That conference aimed at fostering a cooperative approach to the conservation of alpine areas in Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The conference goal was achieved, to a limited extent although precious little news filtered down to the public from the regular meetings between park managers, so it was difficult to assess their impact on management outcomes. This lack of transparency is also true of

the scientific outcomes of research. Research, we knew, was underway or had already been signed off on, but wasn't being publicised. This second conference would, we hoped, shine a bright light on the science and highlight the necessity for its continuation and possible expansion.

The extent to which we have achieved our goals is up to the reader of the proceedings. From the organising committee's viewpoint I think it has been a great success. The scientists have been put on the podium, their faces are known, their research shown to be not only relevant but most interesting and exciting. The great depth of their knowledge has really only been hinted at, a taste for future nourishment. And there are other researchers who either couldn't join us or whom we didn't know about until too late.

On behalf of both the organising committee and the management committee of NPA ACT I would like to thank each and every one of the presenters, to congratulate Rachel Sims who was awarded the inaugural Amanda Carey prize for the adjudged best paper by a young researcher and to thank my fellow committee members without whom this conference would not have occurred.

Kevin McCue

Rachel Sims wins Amanda Carey Award

The winner of the inaugural Amanda Carey Award was announced at the NPA ACT Symposium on 8 May (*see cover photograph*). Rachel Sims, a talented young researcher at ANU won the award for her work with dusky woodswallows in Namadgi National Park. In making the presentation, Mr Mick Gentleman MLA, said she had won the award not only because her work was fascinating but because it has international significance in that it indicates bird migration and social behaviour is more complex than has previously been thought.

The award commemorates the work of the popular national park ranger and researcher Amanda Carey who died last year. The award is designed to recognise and encourage young scientists and researchers and to promote sound scientific management

of our parks and reserves. It carries a grant from NPA ACT of \$250 to assist with publication and dissemination of the research and associated costs.

In her presentation to the weekend conference Rachel Sims said that dusky woodswallows provide an exceptional example of very complex social behaviour. They combine colonial nesting with migratory habits but they also have a cooperative social system which allows them to share the task of raising young. Adults set up a crèche, bringing together young fledglings from different families so that adults can share their feeding and care. This system has not been observed anywhere else in the world.

Rachel's research shows that our local eco-systems are an important part of international research. It underlines how important it is to conserve and

protect Namadgi National Park because of its unique nature. Before Rachel's work, there was no detailed work on dusky woodswallows so we had no idea that such unique behaviour was going on right under our noses. We have only just begun to scratch the surface of the treasures we have in the park.

It was particularly fitting that the award was made at the first NPA Symposium because it was Amanda's presentation to the 20th anniversary celebrations for the declaration of Namadgi National park that sparked the idea of the symposium in the first place. Her enthusiasm, professionalism and delight in the work she was doing inspired us to think about how we could get the general public could hear about the work being done in the park. So her legacy lives on in the Amanda Carey Award and in the NPA symposium.

Lower Cotter Draft Management Plan Released

The ACT Government has at last released a Draft Strategic Management Plan for the Lower (northern) Cotter Catchment (LCC), which is the catchment for the Cotter Dam. Participants at the recent NPA Symposium heard a brief preview of the new management plan which represents a complete about face on the original plan by the ACT Government to replace the pine plantations in this area burnt in the 2003 fires. There was considerable criticism and community debate of the original plan focusing on the impact the replanting and subsequent plantation management would have on water quality in the lower Cotter.

At present sixty-six per cent of the LCC is part of Namadgi National Park and the rest is former ACT Forest. The draft plan refers only to the forestry land.

Under the draft plan, no further commercial pine plantations would be established in the Lower Cotter Catchment and existing plantations would be phased out over thirty-five years. Areas in the catchment zoned for commercial pine plantations in the Territory Plan would be rezoned as Mountains and Bushland.

The draft plan has been prepared by Environment ACT together with ACTEW and the Emergency Services Authority, and draws on the findings of the CSIRO study "Re-vegetation of water supply catchments following bushfire", commissioned by the ACT Government last year. The draft plan is being driven by the recognition, following our recent prolonged droughts in the ACT and surrounding regions, that the water from the Lower Catchment, stored in Cotter Dam, is very valuable. Following the completion of the Mount Stromlo treatment facility we have begun to use Cotter Dam water for the first time in over thirty years. The volume of water flowing into the catchment is equivalent to about half of the water that is currently drawn from the Bendora and Corin Dams, which together provide most of Canberra's annual water requirements. Water from the LCC can therefore contribute significantly to Canberra's water supply.

The quality of water from the LCC, however, is generally poor compared with the upper catchment. This is partly due to the 2003 fires, but also to the dense road network in the catchment

and the consequent disturbance of fragile soils that are highly prone to erosion. The CSIRO study identifies roads and gullies as a major source of sediment pollution in streams. The extensive road network required for commercial pine plantations cannot co-exist with a high quality water catchment. The draft plan proposes that there will be no more commercial or broad-



Above. Hardy Range pre-fire.
Left. Condor Creek post-fire.

Photos Max Lawrence

acre pine plantations in the catchment. The existing plantations will be managed on a non-commercial basis and phased out when it is feasible to convert the area to a native vegetation cover. This may mean, says the plan, that the plantations will grow for a full crop cycle of 30 to 35 years. The areas with pines are likely to be converted to eucalyptus woodland with grassy under-story.

Since the 2003 fires some restoration work has been carried out in the catchment to address water quality issues, including removal of pines, de-commissioning of roads, and installation of sediment control. Some 1300 hectares of replanting has also been carried out although it is regrettable that this includes pines as well as native species. It is now proposed that the area in the LCC zoned for commercial pine plantations in the Territory Plan be re-zoned to be consistent with the rest of the Cotter catchment (the upper catchment) currently zoned as Mountains and Bushland.

The majority of the Cotter catchment has been part of Namadgi since the park was declared; management of this area for biodiversity and to conserve park values has proved highly compatible with management for water quality. There seems no good reason why the LCC should be treated any differently.

The Boboyan pine plantation which had also been in Namadgi since inception and has now been removed, is well on the way to restoration with native species, largely through voluntary effort. This could be a blueprint for the restoration of the LCC.

To ensure the long-term conservation of the LCC the whole area should be included in Namadgi; this would provide a totally compatible and consistent management regime for the whole of the Cotter catchment and a secure long-term future for high quality water from the Cotter dams for Canberra. The need for a better level of protection was reinforced with the events of May 16 when the management of the Lower Cotter was again embroiled in controversy. A large number of windrows, the remains of pine plantations from the 2003 fires, were burnt; the resulting high-intensity fire escaped, destroying areas of native regrowth, and again exposing steep slopes to the risk of severe erosion. More appropriate management for water quality and conservation is clearly needed.

Submissions on the Draft Strategic Plan will have closed by the time you are reading this; the closing date was 31 July. The NPA/ACT has made a submission advocating the addition of the LCC to Namadgi. The Chief Minister has said that "clean water from healthy catchments is a priority for the ACT Government". We should make sure that this means the best and most secure conservation of the Cotter Valley in the Namadgi National Park.

Neville Esau

Mt Franklin Chalet – replacement or upgrade?

As you might have noticed in the report of the June NPA meeting, Rod Hillman informed members that there was a proposal to erect a substantial structure on the site of the Franklin Chalet; all approvals had been obtained, contracts had been let, footings would be poured in September and building completed by February 2007. This is a very unsatisfactory outcome from an NPA perspective. Our Vice-President, David Large, has been following the issue and brings us this update.



From the chalet as it was (above), to the chalet site after the 2003 fires (below), to ... ? Photos Max Lawrence



Background

The Mount Franklin Chalet, the oldest ski club chalet on the mainland, was constructed for the Canberra Alpine Club in 1938, with bunk accommodation for 32, on leased land. The chalet reverted to the Government when Namadgi National Park was created.

Mt Franklin Chalet and Precinct is listed under the *Heritage Act 2004* and is on public land and subject to a plan of management.

In the January 2003 bushfires, the Mt Franklin Chalet was burnt to the ground and totally destroyed.

Commemoration of Mt Franklin Chalet

Immediately after the 2003 fires, it was proposed that there be some form of recognition of the site. Various proposals were suggested, but the one that appeared to be most likely was a simple shelter with interpretive signs. This was expected to be similar to the arrangement at Honeysuckle Creek Campground which recognises the old tracking station. An elaboration on this proposal was to include a picnic area, possibly as elaborate as that at Bulls Head.

In April 2006, I called in to the Namadgi Visitors Centre on another matter and noticed a sketch plan of a proposed Franklin Commemorative structure. Staff told me that this was just one of many proposals being considered and that no decisions had been taken. I was assured that NPA

would be kept informed of any decisions.

Where to now?

It is very disturbing that NPA has not been kept informed of progress in commemorating the site of the Mt Franklin Chalet. There is no doubt that NPA is a major stakeholder in Namadgi National Park and advice would have been expected. It is doubly disturbing that the proposal has proceeded so far despite specific inquiries by members of NPA — this is not fair dealing.

The plans and models can be discovered on the Canberra Alpine Club website at www.cac.org.au under *What's New*. Note that they were posted on 30 April 2006 although an earlier notice says they were available to members on 28 March 2006. It would appear that the only organisation involved in this project was the Canberra Alpine Club. The question should be raised whether other stakeholders, such as Kosciuszko Huts Association and other historical and heritage organisations, have been informed.

We have no knowledge of where the money is coming from. The plans show a substantial building possibly larger in size than the destroyed chalet. (Certainly the footprint appears larger.) We understand that the structure was designed by students at the University of South Australia and is being prefabricated in SA and shipped to the site for erection. The cost must be considerable.

The design shows a public area and private area. The private area is said to be for CAC to store artefacts. Most of the artefacts were in fact lost in the bushfire and any organisation wanting to put any left (which must now be valuable) in such an isolated situation would be seen to be irresponsible. Moreover, the previous structure was fully secure, there was no public access. This new structure by its nature is designed to draw the public. The opportunity for vandalism is greatly increased.

It could be argued that the old Mt Franklin Chalet was used exclusively by the Canberra Alpine Club. This may be so. However, it was an accepted situation given the significant heritage value of the chalet and the need to have an active organisation to maintain the structure. If CAC achieved some ancillary benefit by using the chalet — so be it.

But this situation changed dramatically when the chalet was burnt down. The question of recognising heritage structures falls within the purview of the Heritage Council and the Heritage Unit in [the former] Environment ACT. There is an approved process to be followed under the *Heritage Act 2004* and necessary approvals provided. The commemoration of the chalet should have had regard to the Burra Charter.

NPA will be having further discussions with Environment ACT (or its successor); we will be bringing you further updates.

Firetrails: NPA joins debate

Fire management in Namadgi: Where are we headed?

Over the past 12 months many fire trails in Namadgi have been "upgraded" and this work continues; new trails are also planned. This activity arose initially from the recommendations of the McLeod Inquiry following the 2003 fires. NPA has become very concerned that the extent of these additions and upgrades will impact severely on the natural values of Namadgi.

The rationale for all the new activity is usually given as "better protection from wildfire" and "access for fuel reduction burns to decrease the likelihood of wildfires" to quote a recent preliminary assessment for a typical upgrade. Other subsidiary reasons unrelated to fire management are sometimes added to bolster the case.

The evidence from past fire events has never seemed to support the rationale for constructing an ever widening web of trails criss-crossing our national parks, even one as catastrophic for Canberra as the 2003 fire. One cannot avoid the conclusion that constructing firetrails is a sort of knee-jerk reaction to any perceived shortcomings in stopping or preventing wildfires by our bushfire services. Firetrail construction almost always seems to be an inevitable outcome of any enquiry or investigation into fire management and, over time, seems to spread across the landscape like some form of creeping organism.

We have now begun lobbying to try to scale back this construction to limit damage to park ecosystems. The NPA has recently lodged a submission on the proposed changes to firetrails in the Grassy Creek area and written to the Canberra Times to publicise our concerns.

Our President wrote:

The National Parks Association of the ACT is deeply concerned about the proposed development of new fire trails in the Grassy Creek area of



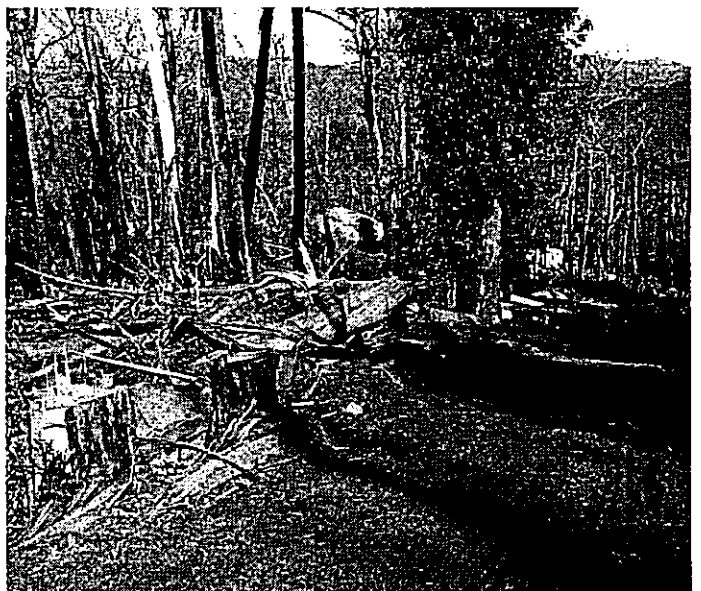
Namadgi National Park. It is claimed these new fire trails are required under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, put in place following the McLeod Inquiry in 2003. NPA ACT is suspicious that the government is cherry picking which of the inquiry's recommendations it wants and abandoning others at its own convenience.

At the time of their release, the recommendations of the McLeod Inquiry were accepted in their entirety by the ACT Government. However, the recent functional review of the ACT bureaucracy and the 2006/07 ACT budget has seen one of the key recommendations from the McLeod enquiry rejected, with the loss of the independence of the Emergency Services Authority. Other McLeod recommendations have been made redundant by better planning and improved fire fighting strategies, including new works to support aerial firefighting, but it is clear from the Grassy Creek proposals that the full scope of the original proposals is still being pursued.

It is now the time for ACT

Government to come clean about what it wants for Namadgi National Park, whether it respects the conservation values of the park or is looking to build a vast network of fire trails as a stalking horse for creating tourist roads through the park. For example, why put part of the current Grassy Creek fire trail through pristine bushland and animal habitat if it merely duplicates existing fire trails? This level of unnecessary investment seems to be part of a strategy that has the capacity to destroy the very characteristics of our national park that attract people to visit in the first place and to threaten the quality of the ACT's water supply.

Namadgi National Park is the ACT's environmental jewel and the Minister responsible for environmental issues must either declare his intention to exploit the park commercially or put such ideas to rest once and for all.



Top right and right. Firetrail 'upgrading' on Smokers Trail. Many trees felled, lengths pushed aside; much of this debris pushed into gullies, extra-wide passing or turning bays are frequent, leaving even bigger scars bulldozed into the bush.

Photos Adrienne Nicholson, July 2006

The ACT Budget and Environmental Implications

As our President noted in her foreword (page 3) the ACT budget and departmental reorganisation will have a devastating effect on the delivery of environmental services in the ACT. Impacts arising from new arrangements proposed by the still secret Costello Functional Review will be widely felt with cuts of up to 20 per cent of previous budget for the area and staff losses of 30 or 40 people.

The analysis of budget papers can be both difficult and time consuming. Added to this, the 2006–07 Budget is alarming in its breathtaking lack of detail regarding the delivery of policy and programs, the restructuring of Environment ACT (EACT) and its mooted amalgamation with other land management areas of the bureaucracy. This means that it is virtually impossible to identify what money is specifically targeted to the environment and who will be responsible for environmental outcomes for the Territory.

The Budget

A further 10 per cent cut in staff and funding has been flagged but there is no recognition that there has been about 20 per cent reduction in staffing in Environment and Heritage over the past two years. Subsequent reports state that \$7.9 million must be saved either from the environment budget of about \$24 million or from the combined Environment, Sustainability, Heritage and Forestry budget of about \$40 million — it is very difficult to tell which.

We are already greatly concerned about the loss of park management staff to date. It is reasonable to assume that further cuts will prevent proper management of the park, undermine feral animal and weed control programs as well as exacerbate existing concerns about public safety in the park because of increases in illegal activities such as shooting, pig hunting and illegal access to management trails. There could also be a complete collapse in vital research activities and fire damage mitigation

works such as bog recovery.

New money in the budget has been allocated to the funding of an extra 44km of fire trails and the upgrading of the existing 55kms of fire trails. This is a focus on out-dated and often ineffective wildfire management through reliance on large-scale tankers to access remote bushland. It ignores the more effective and efficient strategies being developed including quad-bike operations, remote area fire fighting capacity and aerial fire fighting. There is no on-going funding for maintenance of these fire trails so we can expect serious erosion problems as time goes on.

What's missing?

There is no specific funding recognising climate change, for example, additional funding for research into the appropriate response to invasion by species migrating into the area in response to habitat changes in their traditional areas. There is no funding for implementation of the Namadgi Management Plan and no funding for the rehabilitation of the degraded Lower Cotter area.

The Functional Review

From early reading of the proposed changes there is considerable cause for concern. The new administrative arrangements seem to offer little budget savings but would appear to significantly reduce the authority and capacity of environmental agencies to carry out reasonable regulatory and administrative protection of the ACT's environmental assets, including clean water, air and management of our parks and reserves.

During EACT's reorganisation there is no transparent process for organisations or the general public to understand, support or liaise with EACT. However, thanks to information in the *Canberra Times* we know a little of what is proposed. Outsourcing Namadgi Park to NSWPS has been denied by the Minister but cuts to feral

weed programs, to pig eradication programs, to weekend supervision of the park and closure of the Namadgi Visitors Centre and campgrounds have not been denied.

We also know a little of the people charged with carrying out these budget cuts. Russell Watkinson has been appointed acting Director of Parks, Conservation and Land Management and he at least has extensive experience in national park management and conservation. Hamish McNulty, an engineer with little environmental experience has been appointed acting Executive Director of the Recreation and Land Management Division and Conservator of Flora and Fauna, reporting directly to the departmental head, Mike Zissler. They express great enthusiasm for the job ahead and a willingness to listen to the community — after the cuts have been made!

There are other losses, apart from the subsuming of EACT into a land management agency. Our community has a reasonable expectation that there would be, somewhere in the system, an office of environmental advocacy whose role it is to highlight the importance of and sustain the profile for significant environmental issues within the ACT. Both the Environmental Defender's Office and the Office of Sustainability are for the chop and independent statutory offices are to be abolished.

Without specific expertise and interest at senior agency level, eg in the Conservator's role, housing developers will be free to remove trees and vegetation; road builders will be able to pollute water courses and activities harmful to both urban and rural environments will become extremely difficult to monitor, check and be held appropriately accountable for.

NPA members are urged to contact the Minister, their local member, the media, or anyone else who can help correct a disastrous outcome for the environment in the ACT.

Fifth National Wilderness Conference

Celebrating Wilderness — The Contribution of Wilderness to a Sustainable Society

8-10 September 2006
Main Campus, UTS, Broadway, Sydney
www.colongwilderness.org.au

Contact: Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd
Tel 02 9299 7341; Fax 02 9299 5713
Email foundation@colongwilderness.org.au

New plans and new opportunities for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

*NPA ACT General Meeting,
Thursday 15 June 2006*

*Speaker: Rod Hillman, Manager,
Community and Visitor Programs,
ACT Department of Arts, Heritage
and Environment. Rod previously
held positions in teaching, tourism
overseas for 10 years, ecotourism
in Qld and WA, park service in WA
and ACT and is deputy chair of
Ecotourism Australia.*

To be fair, Rod Hillman had accepted Clive Hurlstone's invitation to speak to the general meeting well before the ACT Government announced its decision to demolish the Arts, Heritage and Environment Department and relegate environment issues to a junior officer in the mega Department of Territory and Municipal Services. He began by putting up the vision statement of Visitor Services:

*A community that values and
supports its natural and cultural
environment.*

Rod's goal is to get every resident of the ACT to value their natural and cultural environment. He summarised the Visitor Services projects under his wing until the capital works are complete, but concentrated his comments on: Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) tours, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR), The Great Australian Bushwalk and Mt Franklin Chalet replacement.

CVA Tours

Rod affirmed that he is a great believer in ecotourism and mentioned tours in the Grampians and on Montague Island. The tourists are considered to be volunteers and are expected to work. The proposed CVA ecotour in the ACT would be led by Ian Fraser and contribute to the *Corroboree Frog* and *Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby* programs. Over three days and two nights, participants would each pay about \$650 to: drive to Bulls Head, find and collect frog eggs at Ginini wetlands (with scientist Murray Evans) and watch and assist TNR staff in frog husbandry tasks, then participate in walks and talks in Tidbinbilla with Ian Fraser and a Ngunnawal representative, Adrian Brown.

It is envisaged that there would be four parties of 12 volunteers (48 maximum per year) who would camp at Wood's Reserve, in January and March each year. According to Rod roughly 10 per cent of the fee would

contribute directly to the scientific research projects (~\$2800/yr maximum), and the ranger's time will also be paid by CVA. Following submissions from organisations such as NPA ACT, the tours will not enter wilderness areas.

Rod believes the tours are about achieving a conservation outcome. Environment ACT provides expertise, advice and the venue, CVA is the tour operator, Ian Fraser and the rangers are the guides.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Community and Visitor Program staff hope to attract more than 100 000 visitors per year to the rebuilt TNR and nature discovery centre which would have a new look based around two open ponds or wetlands (previously there were five ponds), a closed two kilometre walk with natural unfenced areas with endemic species (feeding themselves to 80 per cent of requirements) and a secondary path around Blackflat weir with a recreation area. Previously the ponds were silting up and harboured botulism.

They will establish interpretative signage and seek the involvement of dedicated volunteer-guides, rangers and wildlife staff. There will be a veterinary centre open to public viewing. The management plan expects a return on the investment (Rod intimated a second phase with more development and an access fee — down the track and with private sector partnership or else the cost will come out of the conservation budget).

Rod commented that the playground is already proving successful in attracting new people to Tidbinbilla, people who might take successive steps from there to Namadgi.

The two pisé buildings in TNR, Nil Desperandum and Rock Valley Homestead, were badly damaged in the 2003 fires and will be treated differently. Nil Desperandum will be restored and tenders have been called for that. A roof might be erected to cover the Rock Valley Homestead remains or the ruins made safe, the walls cut down to one metre high, and managed as a ruin according to the Burra Charter.

Great Australian Bushwalk

Community and Visitor Program staff believe that the GAB provides an opportunity to introduce first-time

walkers to the bush and an opportunity to introduce new facilities. That is why NPA ACT wants to be involved said Rod. It is hoped to reach as many people as practical. There were about 700 participants at the first walk through Gorooyarroo and Mulligans Flat nature reserves and some 500 on the Murrumbidgee River Corridor walk trail last year.

Mt Franklin Chalet

The chalet was burnt to the ground in the January 2003 fire. Rod outlined plans to build a new L-shaped shelter in a new location so as not to compromise the heritage site of the old chalet. [This was news to NPA ACT! — author]. A design has been developed in consultation with the Canberra Alpine Club (CAC) by staff and students from the University of South Australia who will also construct the building. It is planned to start erecting the building in February 2007 on footings laid this September. All planning approvals have been obtained, said Rod.

Rod dealt with lively, spirited questioning over the plans for the new chalet and the program for the conservation volunteers. Why had other organisations with an interest, like NPA ACT, not been included in the discussions to change the plan from providing interpretative signage to erecting a new building on Mt Franklin? Why was no development application made public as part of a normal planning process? Why is it necessary to put at risk of fire and theft valuable heritage equipment by storing it on site? Why provide accommodation facilities if none is needed or desired? Is this project in conflict with the management plan of Namadgi National Park? What training and quarantine regulations would the volunteers undergo who would be handling the eggs of endangered species? Is the financial reward sufficient to compensate staff resources?

Rod bemoaned the lack of public transport out to Tidbinbilla, and we agreed that many issues remain unresolved!

Rod was thanked for his informative presentation and agreed we live in interesting times.

Kevin McCue

A Biosphere Reserve Nomination for the ACT?

Earlier this year the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (the Standing Committee) invited community participation in its inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. NPA ACT cooperated with the Conservation Council in responding to this request. On July 18 the Standing Committee launched an issues paper on this subject that provided background information, summarised community responses to the earlier request, and indicated the Standing Committee's position on a number of aspects of the proposal. The community was invited to provide feedback on the matters raised in the paper.

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves had their origin in the UNESCO's *Man and the Biosphere Program* which was officially launched in 1970 and was initially intended to establish representative examples of terrestrial and coastal areas in a range of biogeographical regions where a broad range of human interactions with ecosystems could be studied, genetic resources could be preserved, and research and training could be undertaken. The first Biosphere Reserves were named in 1976. Since the mid 1980s the focus of the program has moved to ecologically sustainable development and associated research and monitoring. The aims of the program were restated along these lines at Seville, Spain in 1995 and include:

- to foster sustainable economic and human development;
- to preserve landscapes, ecosystems, species, and genetic resources; and
- to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

As at 7 July 2005 there were 482 Biosphere Reserves worldwide in 102 countries. Since 2000 the extension of the Biosphere Reserve concept to urban areas has been under examination and recent nominations are increasingly located close to urban areas, and development functions are recognised

As at June 2006 Australia had 13 Biosphere Reserves, most of which were listed between 1977 and 1982 under the pre-Seville Strategy approach. The Australian Government established a UNESCO Working Group

on Biosphere Reserves in the early '90s but this has not met since 2001. Since 2003 an organisation for volunteers supporting Biosphere Reserves has operated from the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport Biosphere Reserve. Australian Government legislation provides that each Biosphere Reserve in Australia should have a management plan and that this plan be developed and implemented cooperatively by the Australian Government and the State or Territory. There is also provision for the Commonwealth Government to give financial or other assistance for the protection or conservation of a Biosphere Reserve.

In the ACT, ecologically sustainable development has Government policy support as set out in such documents as the *Natural Resource Management Plan 2004-2014*. The Chief Minister has affirmed that the ACT Government is committed to pursuing the nomination of the Territory as a Biosphere Reserve and has established a Sustainability Expert Reference Group headed by Professor Roberts of the University of Canberra. The Centenary of Canberra Task Force has recommended that Canberra should bid to establish a Biosphere Reserve by 2013.

The Conservation Council supports the concept of the ACT applying to have the ACT accepted as a Biosphere Reserve and believes such a declaration would:

- provide international recognition for the ACT's approach to integrating sustainable economic and human development, within a context of preserving landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic resources;
- attract international tourist interest and investment in the ACT around the themes of sustainability, social equity and healthy environment and natural landscapes;
- enable the ACT to have a positive influence internationally on issues such as sustainable development, social equity and ecology; and
- provide a basis for ACT stakeholders to come together to examine how to harmonise and promote the aims and objectives of a Biosphere Reserve and the ACT as a place of interest, tourism and investment.

The Council's support for the application is conditional on the ACT being committed to *Man and the*

Biosphere and devoting resources to it. At a minimum, the council would envisage the establishment of a committee representing all stakeholders.

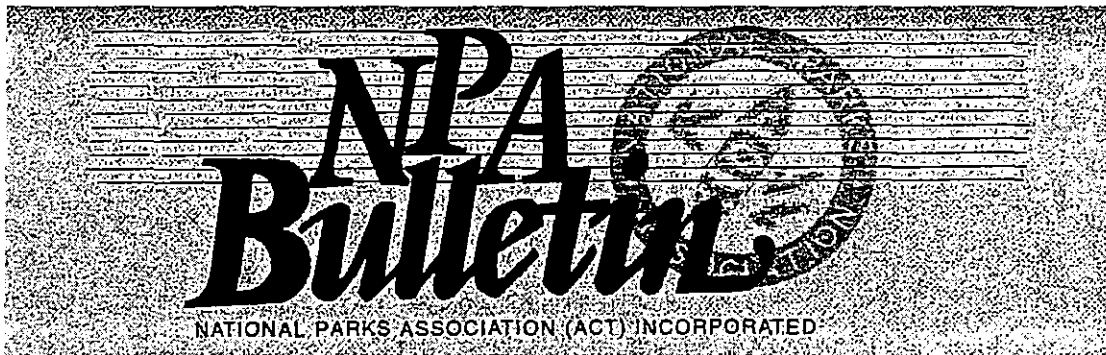
All but four of the submissions lodged with the inquiry supported the proposed nomination of the ACT as a Biosphere Reserve. The Issues Paper summarises the advantages of such a nomination as presented in some submissions and the reservations expressed in others, and indicates the Standing Committee's preliminary views on many facets of the proposal. The Issue Paper goes on to consider the following aspects of such a nomination:

- the basis of the nomination in relation to the stated criteria;
- the boundaries of the nominated area;
- the identification of the three component areas — core, buffer and transition — within the proposed reserve;
- cross-border issues and the relationship of the ACT proposal to neighbouring areas in NSW;
- logistics support functions such as research and monitoring;
- name of the proposed Biosphere Reserve;
- timeframe for the proposed nomination;
- viability of the proposed nomination;
- management bodies and structures for processing the nomination and managing the reserve; and
- funding needs and sources.

In its conclusion, the Standing Committee recognises the significant opportunities that creating a Biosphere Reserve would have in many areas such as the knowledge-based industries, tourism, commitment to sustainability and the development of an innovative, sustainable regional economy. But in the Standing Committee's view there is much consultation and discussion that has yet to occur in relation to this proposal. Community ownership and enthusiasm are needed for the potential of the proposal to be realised.

Syd Comfort

Postscript. The Conservation Council has been awarded a \$15 000 Environment ACT grant to 'engage the community in developing support' for the Biosphere Reserve nomination.



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

September 2006 – January 2007

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 SIX 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 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 of 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 endeavour 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.

9 September, Saturday Work Party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group
Contact: Syd Comfort 62862578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au
or Clive Huristone 0407 783 422,
clive.huristone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or at Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00 am. Work in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Area replanting, weeding etc. Tools provided.

10 September, Sunday Walks
The Great Australian Bushwalk

The NPA will be hosting a number of walks for the GAB again this year. See the NPA website for information or visit the National Great Australian Bushwalk website
www.greataustralianbushwalk.org.au/

16 September, Saturday Walk
Shanahans Falls Creek

Leader: Martin Chalk
Grading: 2 B/C
Map: Colinton 1:25 000
Contact: 62684864(w),
62923502(h) or
mchalk@tpg.com.au

Meet at the Namadgi Visitor Centre at 8:30 am. Start walk at the Mt Clear camp ground. Proceed north east across the southern ridges of Shanahans Mountain and on to the secluded valley of Shanahans Falls creek for an early lunch. Apart from the odd briar, there is very little sign of human disturbance in this quiet location. 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 be either via the fire trail or along the ridge depending on the wishes of the group. 160km drive, \$48 per car.

24 September, Sunday Walk
Long Flat

Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 3 A
Map: ACT 1:100 000
Contact: 6219 5236(w) or
6251 6817(h) or
steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Meet at the Kambah Village Shops at 8.00 am. Walk from the Mt Clear Camping ground along the Grassy Creek fire trail then through to Long Flat. Possible climb on to the Clear Range for views south east over Bredbo. The walk is on fire trails, grassy areas and light bush. 150 km drive \$45 per car.

27 September, Wednesday Walk

Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or
philip.gatenby@hotmail.com

Mid week walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Details to be advised by email or contact leader.

30 Sept – 2 October Pack Walk
Gulf and Nungar Plains

Maps: Tantangara and Denison
1:25 000

Grading: 2 A/B

Leader: David Large
Contact: 6291 4830 or
egraid@bigpond.net.au

A joint walk with KHA. Easy walking around the Gulf and Nungar Plains. Opportunity to visit a number of huts that survived the 2003 fires. Start from near Tantangara Dam and visit Townsend's Hut and go on to Peden's Hut, camp on the Murrumbidgee with side trip to Love Nest in the Salleys. Then follow the boundary track over Jadar Mount down to Brayslaws Hut and on to Gavels Hut. We will go across to Schofields Hut and return to cars via Circuits Hut. This is a pleasant and easy walk mostly on track and repeats the autumn walk. Hopefully there will be more water and more scope for camps. There will be campfires. Please advise interest by 28 September to allow transport to be arranged.

1 October, Sunday Walk
Brindabella National Park

Leader: Pat Miethke
Grading: 2 A-D/F.
Map: Umburra 1: 25 000
Contact: 6241 2798 or
pat.miethke@anu.edu.au

The plan is to drive to the Baldy Range Fire Trail, then gallop down to Mountain Creek and up onto the ridge between Mountain Creek and California Creek where stands of grevilleas and acacias are recovering since the fires. We may follow the ridge and creek to Top Crossing and walk back to the cars via Doctors Flat Road. This is Gosta Lynga's standard walk, but anything is possible on the day. I expect it could be pretty steep and rough, but the distance is moderate. Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8.30 am. Drive 80 kms, \$28 per car.

8 October, Sunday Walk
Glenburn and Burbong Historic Precinct

Grading: 2 A/B
Leader: Col McAlister
Contact: 6288 4171

An enjoyable walk around twelve historic sites. In addition to the usual sites like the shearing shed complex, the Colverwell graves, Glenburn homestead and Collier's homestead, we will also visit some 'new' sites: old sheep yards and plunge dip; ruins of John Coppin's homestead and 'Argyle'; site of an old copper mine. For those who do not feel up to the full walk, arrangements can be made for a shorter walk, with the sites to be visited depending, in part, on their particular interests.

Meet at Kingston Railway Station at 8.30am. Drive 50km, \$18 a car.

14 October Saturday Work Party
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contact: Syd Comfort 62862578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au
or Clive Huristone 0407 783 422,
clive.huristone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or a Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00 am. Work in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area replanting, weeding etc. Tools provided.

15 October, Sunday Walk
A Black Mountain Spring
Wildflower Celebration

Leaders: Gwyn and Geoff Clarke
Contact: Jean Geue 6251 1601,
jean.geue@alianet.alia.org.au

Meet 9.15-9:30am at the stile off Belconnen Way just before Caswell Drive corner (immediately after the first road-works sign) the walk will finish around 12:30pm. This is the 35th year of the Burbidge/Chippendale traditional social ramble to enjoy the spring flowerings and to learn more about the incredible diversity of our Black Mountain plants. Lead by Gwyn and Geoff Clarke an invitation has gone out to members of the Native Plants Society, University of the 3rd age and Friends of Aranda Bushlands. Bring your friends, your enthusiasm, morning tea, water, hat, sunblock and stout shoes.

21-22 October, Pack Walk
Mt Kelly

Leader: Steven Forst
Grading: 3 AB
Map: ACT 1:100 000
Contact: 6251 6817(h) or
steven.forst@acma.gov.au

A walk to Mt Kelly for views over southern Namadgi and the Bimberri wilderness area. Start from the Yankee Hat car park and go over the Gudgenby saddle and on to a campsite on Sam's Creek. Visit Mt Kelly next

day without packs then pack up camp and walking out. Drive: 140 km, \$50 per car

22 October, Sunday Walk Mulligan's Flat

Leader: Jacqui Cole

Grading: 2 A

Map: Umburra 1: 25 000

Contact: 6262 2152 or

jacquicole@bigpond.com

Aim for a 9am start — meeting at the Gundaroo Road carpark — not sure of the route that I will take yet but it will include the quartz ridge (a terrific specimen), the historic shearing shed and the Dam. Bird people should bring their binocs as there will be plenty of bird life at the dam as well as a lovely carpet of spring flowers. Not an energetic walk but an enjoyable one. And don't forget the cameras.

25 October, Wednesday Walk

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 6251 6817 or email

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Mid week walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Details to be advised by email or contact leader.

28 October Saturday Work Party Brayshaw's to Westermans

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 62684864(w)

62923502(h)

This work party will involve the removal of Broom in the area between Brayshaw's and Westerman's huts. The location of the Broom plants is known to NNP rangers and the duty ranger will assist the group to locate them. All tools and equipment will be provided, just bring an appetite to sweep the area. Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre at 9:00am. Drive: 160km \$57 per car.

5 November Sunday Walk Mt Gingera from Corin Dam

Leader: Barbara Edgar

Grading: 3 A/B

Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Contact: 6230 5685 or

barbara.edgar@immi.gov.au

Meet at the Kambah Village Shops at 8.30 am. From Corin Dam we have a long ascent to Stockyard Spur and then along the ridge to join the Mount Franklin Road. We follow the road south past Prior's Hut and, after about 2 km, turn to follow the track to the top of Mt Gingera for fabulous views. Return via the same route. 900 m climb. 90 km drive \$32 per car.

11 November Saturday Work Party

Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group

Contacts: Syd Comfort 62862578,

scomfort@netspeed.com.au

or Clive Hurlstone 0407 783 422,

clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15 am or a Yankee Hat carpark at 10:00 am. Work in the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration area replanting, weeding etc. Tools provided.

12 November Sunday Work Party Brayshaws to Westermans

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: 6254 3094

This work party continues from that in October and will also involve a reconnaissance for new plants. The area will be around Brayshaw's and Westerman's huts. Again, all tools and equipment are provided, just bring an appetite for looking and weeding. Meet at the Namadgi Visitors' Centre at 9:00am. Drive: 160km, \$57 per car.

18 November Saturday Work Party Naas Creek area

Leader: Max Lawrence

Contact: 6288 1370

This work party will be a continuation of the 1 April work party, and is a part of the NNP task to rid the Naas Creek of woody weeds. The area of operation will be down-stream of the Mt Clear campground and will involve cutting and dabbing of briars and blackberry. If time permits, we will also move upstream from the Boboyan Rd. in a reconnaissance of the creek banks. All tools and equipment will be provided, just bring an appetite for weed control. Meet at the Namadgi Visitors' Centre at 9:00am. Drive: 160km, \$57 per car.

19 November Sunday Walk Cotter Reserve and Mt McDonald

Leader: Max Lawrence

Grading: 2A

Map: Cotter Dam 1:25 000

Contact: 6288 1370,

mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

A circuit walk around some of the new walking tracks at the Cotter, with a side trip to Mt McDonald. Walk takes in the Cotter caves, Paddy's River, Cotter campground, Stoney Creek Nature Reserve, Grass Tree Lookout, old mine sites and trout hatchery ruins. Excellent views of Cotter Dam and Murrumbidgee. All on track and

firetrail, but involves around 400m climb, including some steps. Meet at 9.00am at the carpark of the now non-existent Cotter pub.

22 November, Wednesday Walk

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: 6254 3094

Mid week walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am.

25 November Saturday Walk Horse Gully and Demanding Huts

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 6219 5236 or

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Meet Kambah village shops at 8:30 am. A walk to check on the condition of Demanding and Horse Gully Huts in southern Namadgi. The walk from the Mt Clear campground is mainly on fire trail but also includes some animal paths along the creek. There are several creek crossings to be made along the way that might be wet if we have some rain. Drive: 160km, \$57 per car.

26 November, Sunday Walk Mt Morgan

Leader: Steve Hill

Grading: 3 A/E

Map: Rendezvous Creek 1:25 000

Contact: 6231 9186 or

landshil@webone.com.au

With a snowy, windy front putting paid to the scheduled early May visit to the second highest mountain in the Brindies, here is another chance to see some fabulous sights from one of the most spectacular mountain tops in the region, including over much of the KNP and Namadgi National Park. We climb up the Lone Pine trail before turning left, towards the summit at some high alpine frosty hollows. We tour the many view spots on the summit for a view of our regenerating paradise. The climb of nearly 700 metres is steepish in parts, but is mainly on track and no serious bush bashing is involved. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 7.30 for a fabulous day. It won't snow in late November will it? Distance 210km: \$75 per car.

27 to 28/29 November

Midweek Pack-Walk

Morton NP – Danjera /

Bundundah Creek Area

Map – Sassafras 1:25,000

Grading: 2/C/D

Leader: Mike Smith 6286 2984

msmith@netspeed.com.au

A 4 or 5-day, 3 or 4-night midweek pack-walk for those not gainfully employed (retirees, between jobs, beachcombers, etc) and others (escaping from work) in the Boolijah, Danjera, Bundundah creeks area of Morton NP. Pack walking generally in mornings, camp by lunch and afternoons for exploring, swimming or relaxing. Scrub bashing, cliff-line scrambling and climbs of 300-m involved. Contact leader in November (away Sept/Oct) and at least a week before the event for more details and/or to book in. Numbers limited. Final few km of access requires 4wd vehicles. Around 400-kms, \$144 per car.

29 November Wednesday Walk

Leader: David Large
Contact: 6291 4830 or egerald@bigpond.com.au

Mid week walk in conjunction with CBC and FBI. Details to be advised by email or contact leader.

3 December Sunday Walk

Tate West Ridge
Leader: Brian Slee
Grading: 3 A/B
Map: Mt Kosciusko 1:50 000
Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Meet Wanniasa Shops (cnr Langdon Ave and Rylah Cres. opp.Red Rooster) at 6:45 am. Park at Guthega and walk up Guthega Ridge towards the Rolling Grounds. Cross Windy Creek north of Consett Stephen Pass and continue up Tate West Ridge. Visit various rocky outcrops along the broad ridge, stopping for lunch at a daisy meadow on the way. Panoramic views. Some steepish climbs.

Afternoon tea in Jindabyne. Contact leader in advance. Distance 420km: \$150 per car plus Park entry fee.

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

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9.15 am or Yankee Hat car park at 10.00am Work in the regeneration area in the morning. Tools will be provided. Stay on for a Christmas Party lunch which will be provided and enjoyed in the shade of the regenerating trees. The afternoon will conclude with a leisurely check on the progress of some of the recently planted areas.

10 December Sunday

NPA Christmas Party

Venue: Orroral Valley
Contact: NPA committee
This year we plan to hold our Christmas Party at Orroral Valley. All the usual features. We will hold a short walk to see the Orroral homestead and the river. Details will be in the next *Bulletin* and *Burning Issues*.

17 December Sunday Day Walk

Grading: 3 A
Teddy's Hut
Grading: 3 A/B
Map: Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000
Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or brianslee@iprimus.com.au
Depart 6.45 am Wanniasa Shops, Langdon Ave (cnr Rylah Cr, opp. Red Rooster). Drive 5 km south of Thredbo to Dead Horse Gap. Follow Australian Alps Walking Track (Cascade Trail) via Crackenback River and Bobs Ridge to Cascade Creek. Lunch among snowgums at the much-loved hut. Feral horse area. A couple of steep climbs in the 17 km walk but great views of Chimneys Ridge and Rams Head Range and chance to check recovery after 2003 fires. Afternoon tea in Jindabyne. Drive: 420km, \$150 per car, plus Park entry fee for vehicles without a permit.

14 January 2007 Sunday Walk

Place: Southern Ramshead
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A/C
Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 (h) or brianslee@iprimus.com.au
Depart Wanniasa Shops, Langdon Ave (cnr Rylah Cr, opp. Red Rooster) 6.30am. Park at Charlotte Pass. Descend to and cross Snowy River, climb Mt Clarke, contour south of Mt Northcote and climb Muellers Peak (latter optional). After break, descend to Lake Albina for lunch. Return via Northcote Pass and Club Lake Creek. Great views, wildflowers. Several steep climbs. Afternoon tea Jindabyne. Book with leader as weather check essential. Numbers limited. Return distance: 420 km Cost per car: \$150 plus Park entry fee for vehicles without entry permit.

2006 Great Australian Bushwalk

National Membership Competition

Join us and WIN!

Join as a new member of any Great Australian Bushwalk organisation before 31 October 2006 for your chance to WIN an amazing World Expeditions 8 Day Larapinta Trek for two (value \$3,590) or other great bushwalking prizes from Sea to Summit, Silva and Rockport.

Up to \$5,000 worth of prizes to be won in each State/Territory.

National 1st prize



World Expeditions 8 Day Larapinta Trek (Central Australia) for 2 people
Value: \$3590

2nd prize in each State/Territory



Sea to Summit Deluxe Bushwalking Pack
Includes a Wilderness Equipment Echo backpack, Black Diamond Trail Poles, Sea to Summit Quagmire Garters, Pilbara Hat and set of 3 Stuff Sacks and Bridgedale Trekker socks.
Value \$692 per pack

3rd prize in each State/Territory



A Silva Compass and Headlamp Set
Includes a Silva 15T Ranger Compass, Silva Headlamp & cap. Value \$255 per set

4th prize in each State/Territory



1 pair of Rockport Walking Shoes.
Value: \$250 per pair

Participation in a GAB walk not required for entry—just join as a new member.
For full competition terms and conditions and information on membership of your local GAB organisation visit www.greataustralianbushwalk.org.au or call NPA NSW 02 9299 0000

In the Heart of the Budawangs

[Best read in conjunction with
Endrick map 1:25,000]

Hoddles Castle lies to the west of some of the more famous landmarks of the Budawangs and forms a northern projection of Mount Hoddle. The three sides of the castle consist of extensively weathered sandstone. It was named in 1828 by the surveyor Robert Hoddle (of Melbourne fame), who also named The Castle around this time and seems to have been the first European to explore the Budawangs (The Budawangs Committee 1982, *Pigeon House and Beyond*, Eastwood).

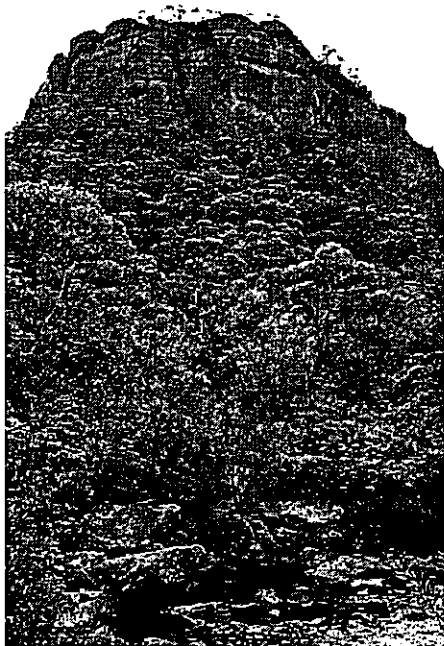
The plan for the walk was to camp two nights near Hoddles Castle. This would give us (my companions were Brian, Judith, Mark, Neville and Tim) a full day to explore without heavy packs.

Our campsite was beside Sallee Creek, south-east of Fosters Mountain, and the first day of the walk was spent getting there. Water can be guaranteed here in most years and Hoddles Castle is in easy striking distance. Setting out from the Nerriga entrance to Morton National Park the first hour of the walk was along a firetrail (Alum Creek Track) in warm and humid conditions. About 200 metres into the walk we passed a recently installed (within the last year) gate near the track's crossing of an old water race. Flattened shrubs and churned earth showed that vehicles were already being driven around the gate. Further on, on the northern side of a flat-topped hill (called Flat Top Mountain) we turned east off the firetrail and after a short descent crossed Running Creek, which wasn't doing anything of the sort, and almost trod on a snake out in the morning sun. Running Creek was followed for several kilometres in a south-easterly direction, then after lunch we climbed over a ridge, crossed another firetrail (the Square Top Mountain Track) and dropped into the headwaters of Sallee Creek. The walk took us to the south of both Square Top Mountain and Fosters Mountain, through a range of vegetation types, including low scrub of various thicknesses and swampy grassland. Eventually we joined an old vehicular track, now considerably overgrown, and set up the tents where this track crosses Sallee Creek.

The weather on the next day was more typical of the Budawangs — misty and drizzling. As we made our way towards Hoddles Castle the showers became heavier and more frequent and thoughts of climbing wet slippery sandstone in mist and rain were abandoned. Instead we stayed on



the track to its crossing of Styles Creek, a beautiful spot beneath the towering cliffs of Quiltys Mountain. Near the crossing an ill-defined foot track runs mainly southwards. It passes below Pagoda Rock and makes its way along the base of the cliffs on the eastern side of Mt Haughton before heading to Mt Tam and beyond. We stayed on this track until reaching, wet and bedraggled, a large overhang on Mt Haughton's southern side. Later, we continued along the base of the cliffs. Progress was slow as patches of thick scrub and large boulders had to be negotiated as we almost circumnavigated Mt Haughton before rejoining the track and returning to the campsite. Soon after reaching the tents Steven, who had spent the day walking in from the Nerriga entrance, arrived.



Sunday morning was still and sparkling. A larger group now and as we walked northwards on the old vehicular track all the surrounding mountains were in view. Our track ran between Quiltys Mountain and Fosters Mountain through forest where many decaying moss-encrusted stumps signified previous logging. An hour from camp we reached the Square Top Mountain Track which we followed for about a kilometre. To avoid private property we left this firetrail near Round Mountain for the crossover to the Alum Creek Track and the end of the walk. This part of the walk involved three creek crossings. At the second creek we stopped for lunch in a picturesque clearing formed by the confluence of a number of side creeks. The clearing seemed popular with feral pigs and in places looked to have been rotary-hoed. Shortly after climbing up out of the third creek, Running Creek, we disturbed a pair of glossy-black cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*). Their crimson tail feathers were prominent as they flew from the casuarinas abundant on the ridge top we were crossing. The firetrail was a short distance west of the ridge. By mid-afternoon the cars were a welcome sight. All in all an enjoyable walk through some spectacular country, even though Saturday's weather thwarted our attempt to climb Hoddles Castle.

Philip Gatenby

Photo top. Hoddles Castle
Photo left. Styles Creek and Quiltys
Mountain

Photos Philip Gatenby

Easter walk to Mount Gingera

The frost hollows, bogs, and lower hills were dun coloured and khaki. Ranges on the horizon wore subdued blues and olives. The once lovely majestic gums on the road up to Bulls Head were looking moth eaten, dusters missing more than a few feathers.

This was my first visit to the Brindabellas since the 2003 fires and it was Easter Saturday 2006. Dave, Colin, and I joined Kevin and Sonja for a walk up to Mt Gingera. It was Kevin's first walk up to Gingera and he, the eternal optimist, was bubbling over with enthusiasm about the regeneration.

Comparisons with earlier visits to the top of the Brindabellas left me feeling despondent. The alpine freshness had gone and the area was looking faded and jaded, although comparing the April vista with random memories of other months may have been unfair.

Anyway, after parking our cars near the Ginini gate, we headed off down the hill along a faint track to Cheyenne swamp. The day was overcast and chilly and we were glad to get moving.

The sphagnum bogs carried notices at intervals, explaining that regeneration work was being undertaken post fire. The bogs were dry, and grass and sedges seemed to be taking over.

We followed the Flats before descending to a copse of conifers, the remnants of an arboretum, on the edge of a gully. A long and gradual ascent, pushing through *Dampiera* and *Prostanthera* bushes, returned us to the road and we started feeling the sun's warmth as it broke through the clouds.

Once up at the road we continued to Pryor's Hut, mellow and gloomy, but welcome in a homey way. As we had lunch outside, a ranger drove up to check the hut, stopped a few minutes for a chat and then returned towards Ginini.

Heading up to Mt Gingera, we crossed the small stream that was at a pretty low ebb. Would winter rain and snow give it a much needed boost and how much of each would we get this year?

About six walkers passed us on their way down, testimony to the popularity



*Firetrail 'upgrading?' near Mt Gingera.
Photos Judy Kelly*

of the walk. The track up is eroding and Kevin was muttering darkly that it'd be better if resources were spent on track maintenance as well as on checking a hut.

We finally reached the rocks on the top of Gingera with their crackling lichen and stunted snow gums while to the east, we could see the faded looking hills and flats. One of my last walks up pre-fire, had been with Steven Hill, when everything was uncompromisingly fresh alpine and subalpine, with the sparkle of moisture and beautiful twisted gums on Brumby Flats, to the west of Gingera's summit.

Colin dived into his day pack and distributed Easter eggs as we looked west over to Tantangara Dam, nearby plains, and the Main Range.

Clouds were starting to build up so we followed Gingera's ridge back towards Ginini. The fire had hit this area, leaving charcoal trunks and branches with leaves bravely emerging. We passed a line of granite boulders,

the old survey marker indicating the border between NSW and the ACT. Just before we reached Pryor's Hut, Sonja, Kevin, Dave, and I (although to a lesser extent), were seized with an energy impulse to remove as many pine wildings as possible. Colin, all of 20-something, sat on the edge of the road and said rather disparagingly 'Just like kids in a playground!' 'Why don't you come and do your bit for *The Cause, Col?*' 'Na, live and let live' was his slick response.

As we followed the road back to the cars, we noticed large turning circles, big, rather messy ones. At the turnoff to the Stockyard spur track, we saw a pink balloon. Bush birthday party? Not likely. Probably a marker for the proposed Stockyard Spur firetrail.

At the NPA Namadgi forum, one of the speakers had spoken of the steep terrain as being unsuitable for a fire trail. He also mentioned the high cost involved in building one. How will the ACT government, strapped for cash, meet the cost of building and maintaining firetrails and minimising erosion in the sensitive

subalpine environment? The aerial approach is the more modern and cost efficient way to go in such terrain.

Back to the cars just in time, as lighting forked to the west, thunder rolled, and a welcome deluge followed. As we drove towards Mt Franklin we passed 20 cyclists. We wondered if they'd be bedding down in Pryor's Hut and if bikes were allowed past the Ginini gate in what we thought was a wilderness designated area. We later found out they were permitted there.

In a way it was good to return to Ginini and Gingera. What chance does it have of retaining its alpine and subalpine character and its precious biodiversity in the face of climate change and the possible onslaught of firetrails?

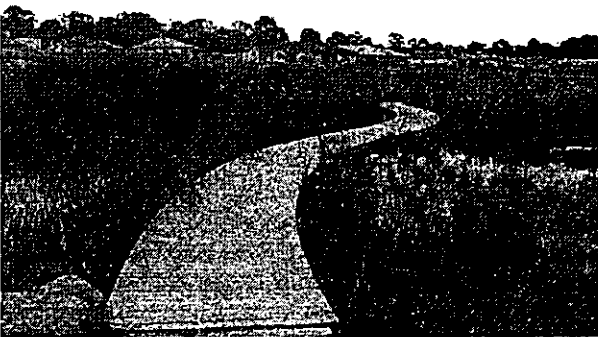
Judy Kelly

Nature conservation starts in our own backyards

While many of us think primarily of national parks and other reserves as our jewels of nature conservation, we often forget that conservation starts in our own backyards. Rachelle McConville, Waterwatch and Frogwatch Coordinator for the Ginninderra Catchment Group, discusses the successes and challenges of working towards nature conservation in an urban catchment.

Sustainability and nature conservation in an urban setting

The idea of nature conservation conjures up images of untouched wilderness, vast areas of native vegetation and rich diversity of wildlife, and of the many highly publicised fights for the protection of national parks, wild rivers and threatened species. Whilst we do not wish to undermine the importance of protecting areas specifically for nature conservation, the Ginninderra Catchment Group is working towards changing our way of thinking about our suburbs and urban areas, so that they too can become areas that we can appreciate for their natural values.



McKellar Wetland — an example of quality habitat in an urban setting. Photos Rachelle McConville

Our urban areas are highly modified environments where much native vegetation has been cleared, buildings and roads dominate the landscape, and the hydrological regime has been drastically altered. Urban areas are also where most of our population actually lives, and the impacts of stormwater pollution, weeds, feral pests, erosion, poor water quality, changed flow regimes and loss of native vegetation all take their toll. These issues present many challenges for volunteers who are

working to improve our urban environments.

The group believes in the importance of education and public engagement as avenues to advance the community's awareness of environmental issues, and to initiate and maintain sustainable behaviour change in individuals. The urban Landcare ethic provides engaging activities and valuable education about natural and ecological values. By supporting people to care for their own backyards and neighbourhoods, we believe we can generate a wider sphere of awareness that will have flow-on effects for our whole landscape, especially with respect to the attitude and level of engagement of the community at large.

While our urban environments may not offer the rich diversity of some of our better protected areas, smart urban management can provide significant areas of habitat for a range of Australian flora and fauna. Many of the environmental problems apparent in our national parks and nature reserves are directly related to individual behaviour in our suburbs. For example, the introduction and spread of many weed species can stem from some of our "favourite" garden plants that have gone bush.

For more than a decade, Landcare, Waterwatch and Frogwatch volunteers from the group have been contributing large amounts of their time and energy to restore, maintain and improve as much of the natural setting as possible within the Ginninderra catchment. The main

activities of our volunteers include:

- revegetation of open spaces and nature parks with native grasses, shrubs and trees;
- Waterwatch monitoring, including water quality and macro-invertebrates;
- Frogwatch monitoring of frog species and abundance; and
- removal of woody weeds and other weed species.

One of our most popular volunteer activities is the ACT and Region



Planting at the McKellar Wetland 'frog highway'.

Frogwatch Program. In 2005 over 200 volunteers participated in our annual Frogwatch Census, and monitored local frog populations at over 140 sites. Participants in this fun program learn about local frog species, their habitat needs, threats to their survival and ways to help conserve frog populations. Frogwatch volunteers also collect important information about the abundance and species diversity of our local frog populations, and the data will help to identify future community monitoring and action priorities that will create a healthier Upper Murrumbidgee catchment.

The Ginninderra Catchment Group is always looking for more members who would like to assist with any of our activities. For more information about our programs, or to register your interest, please contact our office on: 6 2 7 8 3 3 0 9 or landcare@ginninderralandcare.org.au.

The Ginninderra Catchment Group is an umbrella group of Landcare, Waterwatch and Frogwatch volunteers in the Belconnen, Gungahlin and Hall areas. The primary focus of the group is the advancement of the health of the Ginninderra Catchment through effective engagement with government agencies, business and the catchment community. The group has strong commitment to community education and capacity building and seeks to create diverse opportunities for people and their local communities to become involved in catchment management decision making and on-ground action.

Projects of the Ginninderra Catchment Group are funded by the ACT Government and the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, the National Landcare Program and the ACT Government Environment Grants.

NPA ACT news

Bird Book Gets New Wings!

The NPA ACT has produced a revised edition of its popular *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT*. Written by McComas Taylor and illustrated by Nicholas Day the field guide is a great companion for rambles in the local region.

The revision to the field guide coincided with a major review by the CSIRO of the taxonomy of Australia's birds and has been able to incorporate the latest scientific and common names for our local species.

Many thanks to Clive Hurlstone, Sonja Lenz, David Pfanner and Rod Griffiths for their editorial input. The book retails at \$19.95 and has a special member's price of \$16.00. Orders can be placed by contacting the NPA ACT's office.

Yerrabi Track brochure

A new brochure for the Yerrabi Track has been prepared by the Environment ACT in conjunction with NPA. It is now available and can be downloaded from the NPA web site.

Vale Olive and Ian

Since our last *Bulletin* two long-standing NPA life members, Olive Buckman and Ian Currie, have passed away. Tim Walsh, Adrienne Nicolson, and Gary Thompson have prepared tributes (see separate articles).

New Outings convenor

Mike Smith has taken over as Outings Convenor from Steven Forst; he can be reached at msmith@netspeed.com.au. Note that any interested members are welcome to contribute to the outings program which is prepared quarterly. New leaders and walks are always welcome.

Letters

Walks transport

A member has written to query NPA walks transport arrangements; one for the Outings Committee!

As petrol prices rise, and will continue to rise, I wonder whether the NPA is doing its best not only to help to combat that, but also to do its bit to combat unneeded pollution, and at the same time help those without a car or those couples or families with only one car, to attend NPA meetings and bushwalks. NPA meetings are held 'miles away' from bus routes, and it is impossible to get home by bus after an

NPA meeting. Surely the meetings could be held in a more central location such as the churches centre in Civic, or Gorman House.

Similarly, one can usually get in to the Woden bus interchange or in to Civic by the time the bushwalk car pool sets off, but one cannot get to Kambah Shops by that time by bus, and Deeks Road in the Weston Creek 'pine forest' is not served by busses. Then again, other bushwalks meeting places are places like Queanbeyan, or Namadgi Park HQ etc. This assumes that everyone has a car, or does not have to share his car with any other family members. Some clubs not only have a central meeting place but they do not use private cars for their hikes. They hire a bus or mini bus. This avoids maintenance on private cars and avoids unnecessary petrol consumption and pollution.

Barrie Ridgway

Some well-earned praise to keep us on our toes! ...

I'd like to congratulate and praise the NPA for running such a well organised and enthusiastic conference on Namadgi National Park. I'm not a great conference goer preferring to quietly compose another chapter, muse in the sun or be on another journey, but the two sessions I attended were most impressive. The hall was almost full, the speakers were erudite and entertaining, the visuals had the usual technical glitches and the questions were curly. The rest of the conference appeared to cover everything there was to know, hear and see about Namadgi. Most of it should go in a book (I'll help distribute it).

It seems that after almost fading away a few years ago the NPA has had a blood transfusion of mammoth proportions. The journal is fatter, committee positions are being filled very readily and there is gutsy enthusiasm in the air. As well someone obviously has a direct conduit to the *Canberra Times*. The spread on 1/5/06, especially the photos by Martin Chalk and Kevin McCue, was a beauty. I loved the balancing rock and the reference tree. One reason for this new vigour is obviously the big burn of 2003. It has released epicormic shoots in the human genus as well as the eucalypt.

Don't stop now.

Klaus Hueneke

... and a member's concern

We have also received a letter from Chris Watson, a long-time member, querying the article in the March Bulletin [Vol 43/1, March 2006] on arboreta; Chris writes:

I am concerned that the NPA *Bulletin* has given a page written by one Alan Brown, extolling the virtues of arboreta, and, moreover, giving publicity to an organisation, Friends of ACT Arboreta (FACTA).

As arboreta are made up of species from all over the world, my feeling is that it does not lie within the Association's 'Aims and Objectives', which promote our own native flora and fauna.

Also, the aim of local arboreta was, and possibly still is, to find plantation species; the widespread monocultures of radiata pine (mentioned on p 14) are a biological disaster, in my view!

Far better for the NPA to encourage articles that restore our native woodlands and grasslands. Surely our knowledge and passion for the flora and fauna of reserves, and national parks, should extend to the rehabilitation of our landscape, as a whole, with indigenous species appropriate to each location.

Our Secretary, Sonya, has replied to Chris pointing out that NPA strongly supports revegetation with native species saying:

I sympathise with your concern about arboreta being non-native plantings and that NPA should promote our own native flora and fauna. I believe that on a whole we do, and that the *Bulletin* reflects that attitude. For instance, the *Bulletin* has published several articles over the last decade on the removal of the Boboyan Pine Plantation and its revegetation with local species. However, in our aims and objectives we do have 'cultural heritage' as being worthwhile conserving, which is the status of the Bendora Arboretum.

Dogs and cats

We have also had feedback about Kevin's article in the last Bulletin. Vince writes (in part):

The NPA does great work in ensuring that the national parks and reserves in and around the ACT are protected.

However, I am greatly concerned with the June *Bulletin* article by ex-president Kevin McCue titled 'The bush in our backyard' and in particular:

".....We hoped it survived the neighbourhood cats and dogs

(Continued on page 15)

Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens

Jocelyn Plovits, Senior Manager within the Chief Minister's Department, was guest speaker at the association's July general meeting and gave a very comprehensive address on the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens.

The area on the west side of the Tuggeranong Parkway now being developed for the arboretum had been part of a pine plantation that was destroyed in the 2003 bushfires. The proposal to use the area for an arboretum was put forward in the post-2003 bushfire study "Options and Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT" published in August 2003:

The remnant stand of Himalayan cedars on the slopes above the Tuggeranong Parkway and the cork oak plantation near Glenloch Interchange have given rise to the proposal by the Steering Committee to rehabilitate the eastern slopes of Dairy Farmers Hill and the Green Hills ridge as an international arboretum.

The 250 hectare site offered unique opportunities for redevelopment in this role being located near the middle of the city but unavailable for suburban development as it was within the sight lines of the Parliamentary Triangle. The notion of an international arboretum derived from the original Griffin plan which incorporated an arboretum based on areas representing each of the world's continents.

Following a government decision to proceed with the arboretum a design competition was announced in December 2004. From the 45 entries an Australian proposal emerged as the winner. Featuring 100 forests of primarily threatened species the design was developed by landscape architects, Taylor, Culluty and Lethem, and architects, Tonkin, Zulaikha and Greer. The concept was seen to offer the opportunity to redefine the whole

meaning of a public garden in the 21st century, growing out of the issues of sustainability, biodiversity and public environmental concern. The design of the arboretum is based around the 100 forest plots, each of one hectare, separated by wide alleys. Entry is to be along the existing underpass beneath Tuggeranong Parkway into an open space in the central valley leading to garden terraces and to Dairy Farmers Hill for extensive views over Canberra.

The challenge facing the development of the garden is to embody the following aspects:

- the arboretum is to be a community asset;
- the development is to be a legacy to endure into the future;
- there is to be provision for research and education;
- there is to be a contribution to maintaining biodiversity;
- the garden will demonstrate sensitive water and bushfire management; and
- operate as an economic multiplier.

Expert advice is being tapped in the selection of tree species. It is important that the trees be able to survive on the site; not more than 10 per cent may be irrigated. Plantings will not be limited to Australian natives; a repetition of the Botanic Gardens is not sought. Initially plantings will be from seeds and plant material available in Australia but it is intended to use imports mainly in the forms of seeds and cloning material rather than tree seedlings. Genetic conservation of threatened species is an important role of the plantings.

Water for the project is to be sourced from an existing sewer line which runs under the site. Estimates indicate that annual arboretum needs will be met by the equivalent of two days' flow in the sewer. The wide alleys running through the site will assist fire management by separating treed areas and by allowing access throughout. The variation in species amongst the plantings is also expected to slow the progress of any fire.

It is hoped that development of the arboretum will be facilitated by the involvement of the community partly through a volunteers program but also by direct cooperation with community groups. One such plan is in hand with the Southern Tablelands Ecological Project (STEP) and involves a planting within the arboretum to link up with an existing remnant woodland across the border of the arboretum. In the longer term the arboretum may be in a position to make economic benefit from seed collected from plantings.

To be effective as an economic multiplier the arboretum would need to attract visitors from outside the ACT: internal visitation would not have this effect. The arboretum is considered to have the potential to encourage visitors to spend extra time in the Territory and thus bring benefits to the local economy. The hotel indicated on the site plan is clearly not a realistic proposal at present but this or some other facility could be considered when it becomes commercially attractive.

In her presentation Jocelyn emphasized the long-term nature of the project and the willingness of the management to be flexible in its progress and to take account of emerging developments. The 2006 program involves some earthworks, securing trees and ground covers and the planting of trees — a start on six forests is planned. A similar program is envisaged for 2007. Maintenance of the site, including weed and erosion control, will continue to be an important commitment. One goal is to have some recognisable forest plots established by the centenary year of 2013.

Jocelyn's address was supported by some wall-mounted displays of maps and plans for the arboretum and by her frank answering of the many questions raised by members.

Syd Comfort

NPA ACT news

(continued from page 14)

whose owners seem so happy to share these unwanted feral animals with us, and all their other neighbours."

Companion animals are a great source of comfort and joy to a large percentage of suburban Australia. Owning a pet can enhance people's

lives. Research shows that companion animals can assist people who are recovering illness and can improve people's sense of well being.

Vince Bagusauskas

Kevin has replied to this letter pointing out that dogs and cats, while performing their companion animal role admirably,

are also unfortunately responsible for a great deal of predation on native animals and birds, particularly in urban areas.

PARKWATCH

Velcro vector

Ubiquitous Velcro may be an environmental hazard. Scientists and support staff arriving at Macquarie Island were subjected to a vacuum cleaner and forceps inspection by botanists. Out of sixty-four staff only twenty were clean. Between them the other forty-four carried 981 seeds and fruit belonging to ninety species. Seeds were plucked from pockets, cuffs, seams, socks and boots, but the great majority were attached to velcro fasteners of clothing and gear.

Some of the ninety species are known to be highly invasive and would pose a threat to the island. The spread of alien species into other lands is second only to habitat loss as a cause for declining biodiversity.

Field Natter, May 2006

Open space protected

The ACT Planning and Land Authority's *Open Space Network Project* has concluded with planning protection, or enhanced protection for 248 open space areas.

Variation 165, giving effect to the project's recommendations, was recently tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The project involved a review of more than 300 undeveloped or open space areas around the ACT.

Among the areas to gain additional protection are:

- 6.5 ha of former Monash Drive road reservation in Campbell;
- 5.6 ha grassy woodland (the Conder grassland moratorium site) adjoining the north east edge of Conder;
- 36 ha of buffer area known as Fisher parkland, between Fisher and Kambah;
- 2.2 ha of native grassland adjoining Ginninderra Creek at Umbagog District Park in Latham;
- 2.3 ha of unleased Community Facility land associated with the former Primary School, Section 78 Griffith; and
- 0.2 ha of unleased Commercial land at Block 3 Section 79 Giralang (Local Centre).

Shape, Autumn, 2006

Plenty more fish in the sea?

NSW needs marine sanctuaries

If humans were able to traverse NSW's marine environment as we can our terrestrial wilderness, we would find ourselves strolling along a continental shelf that drops off into grand canyons, scaling sea mounts,

climbing reefs and pinnacles, rolling in seagrass meadows with dugongs and dolphins, relaxing in sponge gardens, and chasing schools of migrating tuna and swordfish. It truly is an incredible world that lies beneath the surface. Unfortunately for our marine life, out of sight is also out of mind.

New South Wales has an amazing variety of rare and unique wildlife. However, in recent years there has been a dramatic decline in both number and types of marine species. The major decline in NSW ocean fisheries catches from over 27,000 tonnes in 1992/93, to around 10,000 tonnes in 2000/01 helps illustrate this. Sadly, examples like this are plentiful.

Once a prolific deep-sea species, the Eastern Gemfish was fished into near oblivion in the 1980s. Meanwhile, snapper catches that were 731 kilograms in September 1972, declined to 101 kilograms in September 1979, and reached a pitiful nine kilograms in September 1995.

Recreational fishing is also taking its toll on our sea-life, taking the equivalent of 30% of the commercial catch. With a rapidly increasing population along the entire NSW coast, there is a need to regulate the areas available for recreational fishing and ensure proper management of our seas, so that our marine environment can be enjoyed by generations to come.

The most practical solution to this decline in marine wildlife is to create protected areas, free from fishing, called 'sanctuaries' in NSW. The World Conservation Union recommends 20-30% of each marine habitat be protected in this way. Currently, less than 3% of the NSW marine environment is protected in sanctuaries.

Responding to public pressure, the NSW Government has initiated the creation of Marine Parks along the coastline. However, this does not go far enough because in NSW, Marine Parks remain open to multiple uses including fishing. Only in areas zoned as sanctuaries will sea life be properly protected.

The recently created Batemans Marine Park and Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Parks are steps in the right direction. However, the Government is yet to announce how much of these parks will provide real protection for our marine life. In response to this, The Wilderness Society Newcastle has launched a campaign to see 50% of the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park

(stretching from just north of Newcastle to Forster) listed as sanctuaries.

(keep up to date with The Wilderness Society's campaign by requesting a fortnightly email letter from clare.dunne@wilderness.org.au)

Wilderness News, Winter, 2006

Iemma Government's park revocation proceeds

In the last *Journal*, NPA raised concerns about the revocation of a 1,000 ha chunk of Bargo State Conservation Area near Picton for a shooting complex for seven shooting clubs centred on the site of an existing small shooting range.

The legislation passed through Parliament in April with Opposition support. This is the largest park revocation in NSW over the last 20 years.

The Government failed to formally consult with NPA [NSW] about the plan. Minister for Sport and Recreation, Sandra Nori, who steered the revocation through Parliament, did not respond to NPA's written concerns. There are no alternative mechanisms to protect the undisturbed bushland in the upper catchments of Rocky Waterholes and Iron Creek from future development now that they are under shooting club management. Concerns about lead contamination of Sydney's water supply were dismissed and sites outside the national park estate were not seriously looked at.

NPA has written a letter of complaint to Minister Nori.

*National Parks Journal,
June-July 2006*

Parks are for people – a comment

The sentiment so succinctly stated in the above slogan has a long history.

In 1872 the world's first National Park (Yellowstone) was established 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.' The same sentiment was expressed in the NSW Parliamentary Debates on Australia's first two National Parks — Royal NP (1879) and Ku Ring Gai Chase NP (1894).

According to John Dorman (an NPA NSW member), Raymond F Dasmann in his book, *A Different Country*, published in 1970, says:

'If Yellowstone is to be just another playground for city folk, let's not call it a National Park. National Parks have a primary responsibility towards the wild creatures and landscapes within their boundaries.' I assume that the book was written in response to a campaign for more tourism facilities.

PARKWATCH *continued*

Only secondarily can 'Parks are for People' be accepted as a slogan for park management.

Somewhere in the next decade the slogan became anathema for NSW Conservationists when an ultra conservative Minister thought it was a vote catcher, to the severe detriment to nature conservation. Fortunately his was a short tenure and many of the NPWS staff in the Parks kept the faith.

The slogan has been used at times in the 'correct' context, notably in the first four paragraphs of NPAQ's 'Policy on Tracks in National Parks (2001).'

In an article in the NPA NSW Journal for June 2005, relating to the latest Plan of Management for Kosciuszko NP, the writer condemns the increase of the number of official horse campsites from seven to 13, for the benefit of the 5 000 horse riders in the non-winter season but to the detriment of the many other camp site users who are expected to share the facilities. Sharing does not work in the largest of the existing sites which boasts of 500 riders per season and, in severe drought (Autumn 2002), had two bare horse paddocks taking up more than half the site.

I have no objection to Norm Traves' alternative slogan, 'Parks are for Protection and People (NPA News, April 2006). However, I prefer 'National Parks are for People who Respect national park values.'

[NSW] NPA News, May, 2006

Forest giants still falling in NSW

Many people believe that it is illegal to log rainforest or oldgrowth forest in NSW. It's not true.

There are more than 4 million hectares of forests and woodlands on private land in NSW - equivalent to an area two-thirds the size of Tasmania - that can be logged or clear felled without any meaningful environmental controls?

Many of these forests are being logged right now - including rainforest and oldgrowth forests, creek banks and gullies, endangered and vulnerable plant communities, and habitat for many threatened species, including Koalas, Squirrel Gliders and Barking owls.

Uncontrolled firewood collection is also having a devastating impact. Large old logs and dead trees that many threatened species need to survive are going up in smoke through the uncontrolled collection and burning of about 1.5 million tonnes of firewood each year in NSW.

Logging of private forests is big business, 30% of all timber logged in NSW comes from private forests including rainforest and the remaining oldgrowth.

Private forestry is most active in the tall forests of north-eastern NSW, the River Red Gum forests along the Murray River and the Cypress-Ironbark woodlands of central-western NSW.

Two centuries of unconstrained logging in private forests in NSW has seen many forests seriously degraded. Those that have survived are under threat now.

www.nccnsw.org.au/ June, 2006

Bilby national news round-up

Ngaanyatjarra Council Land Management Unit is about to commence a TSN-funded multi-species monitoring project with Yamangu on Ngaanyatjarra lands in the Gibson Desert and Central Ranges bioregions. This work will include training in the use of cybertrackers to record bilby (ninu) tracking information and habitat data, as well as the analysis of predator scats to look at predation pressure on bilbies, marsupial moles, mulgara and the great desert skink (tiakura).

In the Northern Territory, Warlpiri rangers from Yuendumu community surveyed and monitored threatened species including bilby (*walpajiri*) and great desert skink (*warrarna*) at two control sites and one treatment site in the Tanami Desert. Twenty-two bilby burrows and 57 great desert skink burrows were found at two of the surveyed sites.

Tracking results indicated that approximately four foxes were living within the area prior to baiting. With the help of the Parks and Wildlife Service a dingo proof fox baiting device was made. This device enabled baits to be delivered to foxes whilst excluding dingos. Two rounds of baiting and monitoring track activity of bilbies and foxes, dingoes and cats will be completed by autumn this year.

Six bilbies were released between December and February into the Currawinya fenced enclosure in Queensland, and 40 animals are planned to be progressively released by the middle of 2006. Other reintroduction programs in South Australia (Arid Recovery at Roxby Downs, Banrock Station, Yookamurra, Thistle Island and Venus Bay), in Western Australia (Project Eden at Shark Bay and Return to Dryandra), and at Australian wildlife Conservancy's Sanctuary in NSW are

also progressing.

The Web, Autumn, 2006

The tragedy of climate change in the high country

For many years I have walked over the beautiful alpine ranges, peaks, high valleys and sloping fields in summer time. The white snow daisies are sometimes so dense that they look like fields of snow. Scattered about in clumps and singly are yellow billy buttons, white varying to purple *Euphrasia*, yellow candle heaths, soft sphagnum moss by creeks and bogs and yellow alpine *Stackhousia*. (I always encourage my companions to kneel down to this ground hugging plant to smell its strong fragrant scent.) There is tough low growing alpine sunray with papery white petals and a sunny yellow centre, and in February the beautiful white gentian take over on high snow gross slopes.

There are many, many more of these lovely alpine and subalpine flowers.

On the lower slopes we walk through forests of wonderfully shaped and colourful snow gums. Snow grasses grow everywhere except on the windy tops, the 'feldmark'.

Under all this during winter and summer live many small animals, which depend on the snow covering in the winter to quietly hibernate or forage for a little food, animals such as the pygmy possum and broad toothed rat.

The spectacular little southern corroboree frog of which now only a few remain in high valley has become very endangered and at the moment is being helped long by laboratory breeding.

All these little animals will be affected by climate change.

A personal reminiscence by Heather Roy in National Parks Journal, April-May 2006

Compiled by Len Haskew

Diary Dates

Great Australian Bush Walk
Sunday 10 September

NPA ACT Christmas Party
Sunday 10 December

See Outings Program

Ian Currie — Life Member, President, Car-camper extraordinaire

Ian and Jean Currie joined NPA ACT in 1970 and rapidly immersed themselves in association activities. Ian became a committee member in 1971, Vice-President in 1972 and President (his first of a number of years) in 1974. Ian was elected to Life Membership in 1985.

In the NPA Bulletin of December 1985, Sheila Kruse wrote:

At our annual [general] meeting in August, and coinciding with his retirement from the NPA Committee, Ian Currie was proposed for Life Membership of the National Parks Association. His election with applause and acclamation was a demonstration of our appreciation of his fourteen years of official and unofficial service in his fifteen years of Association membership. Just listen to this official record:

After twelve months of fairly peaceful membership Ian was elected a Committee member at the 1971 annual [general] meeting. At the 1972 meeting he became Vice-President under Bill Watson's Presidency and after serving a two-year apprenticeship he moved on to become President. At the end of two years in that job we persuaded him to stay on as President for just one more year, and then just one more. In 1978 he cried enough and we let him go, almost. Of course, he was still expected to sit on sub-committees and attend all Committee meetings as Immediate Past-President, and a year later we again elected him to full Committee status, not wishing to deprive ourselves of those sensible and irreverent comments we had come to value when Committee discussion threatened to become bogged down or flighty. In 1983/84 he came to the aid of the party again as President for (just) one year. He is now a well-loved private member.

Unless of course you consider that being retained on various standing and ad hoc sub-committees, walks leader and Camp Father isn't being all that private. But when you've shown your willingness to be ready and able over a period of fourteen years NPA doesn't let you go too easily. So in congratulating Ian on this well-deserved honour we add that we hope our pipe-

smoking, chocolate-eating, bird-watching, person-baiting Life Member will not become too private too soon.

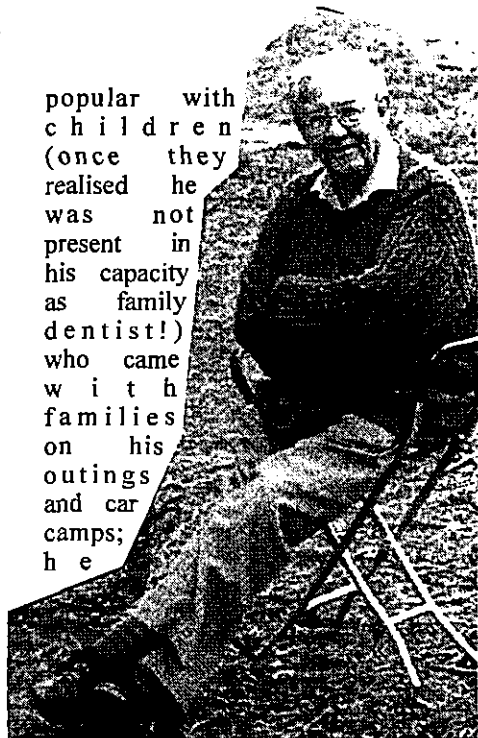
Ian was a modest man, a gentle man, but with a wonderful and quirky sense of humour. Unaware of any give-away twinkle in his eye, many fell for his frequent pranks. Nevertheless, he could be firm and was very good at controlling meetings. He steered NPA and its subcommittees along very nicely as a lobbying organisation. He was President of the NPA ACT from 1974 to 1977 and again in 1983. He participated in many of NPA's subcommittees and working groups over many years, examining environment issues, organising excursions and social outings, acting as judge for some of NPA's competitions (we had poster and essay competitions for school children, members' "International Year of the Tree" photography competition), membership sub-committee and the Nancy Burbidge Memorial sub-committee.

He was a regular walker and outings leader until this became an impossibility as his knees, etc gave too much trouble. He was definitely one of the "Eyes" (a Nancy Burbidge term), very observant and knowledgeable about his surroundings. He introduced many to birding, and pointed out to anyone interested, the plants, insects, fossils, etc, to be found whenever out and about.

He and Jeannie will long be remembered as organisers of great car camps: some in parks and reserves, some on private properties; some along the coast, some in the mountains. From his wide circle of contacts (it is said some quaking before him in his dentist's chair!) he found some wonderful venues for these camping excursions. Among his contacts he surely counted the Easter Bunny, as unnecessarily rich chocolate eggs would miraculously appear outside the tents of Easter campers! It is understood there were also some people who regularly had an early morning cuppa delivered.

Their first car camp for the NPA program was a Burrinjuck weekend in September 1971, which attracted 24 members and 14 children! He led and attended numerous weekend (and longer) car camps and some of his favourite areas included Ravine, Bundanoon, Thredbo Diggings, Bournda, Araluen, Wapengo. He was

popular with children (once they realised he was not present in his capacity as family dentist!) who came with families on his outings and car camps; he



Ian Currie, born in 1924, President of NPA ACT 1974-1977 and 1983, died on 26 June 2006

Photo Fiona MacDonald Brand

loved to share their interests and encouraged them to explore their natural surroundings. He usually had around 20 to 25 participants on his car camps, and would arrange activities such that the 'hard walkers' could go off on a challenging day-walk, while others could spend their time with easier walks or leisure activities — birding, fishing, canoeing etc.

Ian and Jean were also willing work party participants: at the Glendale 'road works rehabilitation' tree planting, Curries' Corner, the most inhospitable area of the whole site, miraculously seems to have more long-term survivors than the rest of the site. Ian helped with the NPA's construction of the Yerrabi Track, participated in 'fire trail rehabilitation', notably bush restoration in the Orroral Valley/Nursery Swamp area after the 1983 bush fires.

Ian was renowned for his very sweet tooth — he considered a supply of Rocky Road an absolute necessity for the happy camper, the day walker, the journey there and back, even (I suspect) for daily existence. Many were the jokes about keeping up his client base. He also knew all the best bakeries on the way to and from everywhere (never stuck for a recommendation to stop at Nimmitabel, Bemboka, Jindabyne, Bundanoon, etc for cakes and particularly for pies!).

(Continued on page 19)

Olive Buckman

Olive arrived in Canberra from England in October 1963 to take up the position of Director of the YWCA. This followed a career in welfare and community work in post war England, Europe and the Middle East.

On arrival in Canberra Olive set about reviving the "Youth" element of the YWCA. Here her vast experiences working with teenagers were soon put to good use. Membership numbers at the YWCA increased rapidly. She did much to encourage Canberra youth to take up bushwalking, camping and orienteering and to appreciate and care for the environment.

Her work did not prevent Olive pursuing her love of travel and wild places. For example in 1970 she trekked in Nepal, in 1973 she rafted the Grand Canyon, in 1978 she trekked in New Zealand, in 1980 the Andes and Patagonia and in 1991 and 1993 she visited the sub-Antarctic Islands and

Antarctica itself.

In 1970 Olive joined the National Parks Association of the ACT, although she had walked with the Association as a guest since 1963. She was soon asked by Secretary Sheila Kruse to respond to requests to the Association for public speakers, and to supervise guides' and scouts' first aid and conservation awards. As well, Olive organised and led hundreds of day walks (she instigated mid-week walks) and longer camping tours to the Flinders Ranges in 1976 and the Warrumbungles and Carnarvon Gorge in 1977. In later years Olive was also a keen member of the Family Bushwalkers Inc.

Olive contributed significantly to NPA activities by writing numerous articles for the *Bulletin* (including many pioneering ones on first aid in the bush), leading holiday walks for ACT Parks and Conservation, attending working parties and Clean-up Australia



days, staffing displays and conferences, giving talks on her travels to general meetings and frequently administering first aid on walks. Olive was made a life member of the NPA for her enormous contribution to its activities.

Olive lived a remarkable life — based on helping others in as many ways as possible and enjoying the natural environment to the full. She died peacefully at Amity Nursing Home, Aranda on 11 May 2006.

Tim Walsh

Memories of Ian

Like many long time members of NPA, I was saddened to hear of the recent death of our life member and former President, Ian Currie.

Dianne, Ben, Jenny, Alice and I have many fond and happy memories from being members at the time and fortunate enough to participate in many of the now legendary Ian Currie car camps during the 1980s.

As a young family at that time, many friendships were made on these trips that always took us to interesting, exciting and unusual places. When I passed the news of Ian's death on to my children, Ben, Jenny and Alice, the news was greeted with a quiet silence and then followed a flood of 'do you remember when' from their memories of these trips. To cite but a few:

- An Easter camp at the Ravine near Kiandra, where the Currie's refrigerator in their old Commer van produced a supply fresh Easter eggs (Ian distributed them dressed as the Easter bunny) — the heat had melted the Thompson collection of Easter eggs into unrecognisable shapes;
- The pushing of the old Commer van up the greasy slopes on our departure from a camp in the Tantawangalo Forest. This trip corresponded with a viewing of Halley's Comet;
- The numerous trips to the Manning Clark property at Wapengo;
- The discovery of 'Bush Bottoms' north of Goulburn, and on one trip the children's ride back from the walk on an old tractor;
- The wonderful camp fire games on the Saturday evening and many others.

Dianne and I will always be grateful to the consideration, care and attention that senior NPA members, many unfortunately no longer with us, gave not only to our children during that time but also to the other children who were fortunate enough to share those experiences. They helped foster a deep love of nature and the environment that is those members' continuing legacy to this day.

Gary Thompson

Ian Currie—Life Member, President, Car-camper extraordinaire

(continued from page 18)

Ian masterminded the gluhwein tradition for NPA's Annual General Meetings, and ensured he trained an apprentice to carry on. He has left us with many fond excursion memories and some very worthwhile traditions to carry on.

Ian led an equally active life beyond NPA. He was a very keen golfer, playing whenever possible both locally and when away travelling. He and Jean explored widely within Australia, beetling around in their camper van, and enjoyed off-the-beaten-track

overseas trips (birders trips to the SW USA, to Fair Isle between the Orkney and Shetland Islands, to Iceland (falling for the enthusiasm of one whom they had introduced to the NPA).

Memories:

- He was a proud Australian of Scottish heritage — Mr Currie out on NPA walks under the protection of a very large tartan umbrella.
- From a young and impressed passenger 'Gee, Mr Currie, you're a real stunt driver'.
- Mr Currie, playing medico to one unfortunate camper, removing a tick

from 'somewhere indescribable but usually invisible'

- A tremulous young voice heard as camp was being set up 'Mummy, why is the dentist here?'

Ian had not been able to come to many NPA ACT meetings over the last few years, but he had not been, and will not be, forgotten. Our thoughts go out to Jean, to Marian and Peter, and to Ian and Jean's grandchildren, Melissa, Harry and Callum.

Adrienne Nicholson

National Parks Association Calendar

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Public holidays</i>		<i>Mon 2</i>		<i>Mon 25 Tues 26</i>
General meetings	Thur 21	Thur 19	Thur 16	—
Committee meetings	Tues 5	Tues 3	Tues 7	Tues 5
<i>NPA ACT Christmas Party</i>				Sun 10
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 9	Sat 14	Sat 11	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
(not December and January)

8:00pm

Uniting Church hall
56 Scrivener Street
O'Connor

Thursday 21 September 2006

Heritage in the ACT

Dr. Sandy Blair, Manager,
Heritage Unit, Environment ACT.

Dr. Blair will bring us up to date on the activities of the ACT Heritage Council and the Heritage Unit.

Thursday 19 October 2006

*With movie camera in bush
and snow*

Matthew Higgins, Nature
documentary maker, historian and
museum curator.

Matthew will present two short films and tell us the background to their creation. *Winter Road* (16 mins) is a personal ode to the beauty of the high country once the snow starts to fall, seen from a cross-country skier's

viewpoint; *Echidnarama* (15 mins) is an intimate journey into the secluded lives of these intriguing spiny bush friends.

Thursday 16 November 2006

*Ecology and Management of the
Spotted-tailed Quoll: a Threatened
Marsupial Carnivore.*

Dr. Andrew Claridge, Fauna
Ecologist, Department of
Environment and Conservation,
Parks and Wildlife Division,
Reserve Conservation Unit,
Southern Branch, Queanbeyan
NSW.

The spotted-tailed quoll is the largest extant marsupial carnivore on the Australian mainland. Despite their charismatic nature and threatened status, little is known about the ecology

of the species. This talk will discuss recent research activities on quolls in south-eastern Australia, with emphasis on management of the species.

The association welcomes the following new members:

Mary Hoffmann, Don Fletcher,
Julie & Toni Lindner, Glynis
Whitfield, Onko & Jennifer
Kingma, Louise Kench, David
Lyddieth, Noel Semple, Shirley
Pipitone, Andrew Zelnik, Cathy
Hook, Hiromi Uzu, Joslin Moore,
Jeffrey Miles, Jinnie Lovett,
Alyson Groom, Margaret Strong

We look forward to seeing you at
association activities

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