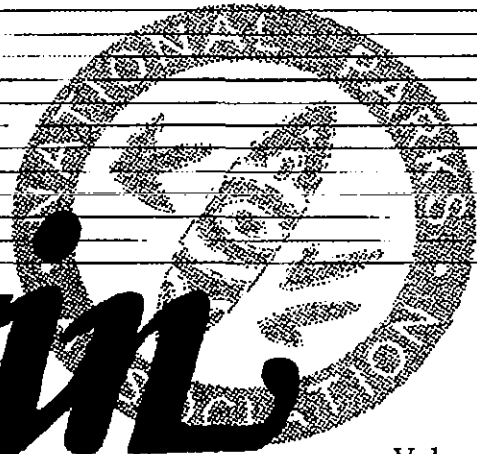


NPA Bulletin



Volume 44 number 1
March 2007

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC



News from the Alps

Cape Farewell beckons

Bush on the boundary

Nancy Burbidge remembered

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

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: *Happys Hut, Kosciuszko National Park, on a recent walk; signs of fire and drought were everywhere. Neville Esau.*

From the President

This past summer has been dominated by bushfires, drought and the Blame Game. Newspaper articles and letters, talkback radio and television have been targeted by politicians and interest groups to push the proposition that the fires and the lack of water for farming are the result of the pernicious influence of "the greenies". It is not hard to see an orchestrated campaign behind this chorus of blame. The same stock phrases such as "lock it and leave approach to park management" have popped up in all sorts of different places. Even our Prime Minister was heard to utter the phrase in regard to the Victorian bushfires. In a similar way those bumper stickers which appeared in 2003 saying "Grazing not blazing" attempted to capture the public debate with simplistic and untenable slogans.

There is no doubt that the change in natural resource management from private use to long-term public interest has left some groups financially disadvantaged and some people have had to stop doing things they really enjoyed, such as trekking cattle into some areas of the high country or riding horses through some areas of the mountains. But in the past 12 months, the stakes have got a whole lot higher than personal animosities and individual politics, as the rate of change in factors influencing our climate has even the politicians paying attention.

It would be nice to think that "the greenies" have the sort of influence on public policy and land management which is being attributed to them. If that were so, we would have wind farms all over the country, a carbon tax

imposed on non-renewable energy and we would all be driving electric cars. Moreover, our national parks would be getting substantially more funding, we would have vermin-proof fences all around endangered areas and Ministers for the Environment would be more important than Treasurers in every government. Ah, such lovely day dreams!

The reality is that small, voluntary organisations such as NPA ACT will spend another year putting on activities — in our own time and at our own expense — to help people understand and appreciate our natural environment and to support its conservation. We don't want to *lock-and-leave* our national parks. We want to protect and conserve them so that their plants, animals, landscapes, even soil biota, can survive whatever lies ahead. It is worthwhile reading the *Proceedings of the NPA ACT Symposium*, held in 2006, to see what work is being done in our own backyard and to realise how much more needs to be done.

Most of all, we will be working to keep the importance of conservation uppermost in people's minds as these groups escalate their attacks on "greenies" in the various election campaigns. For them it may be now or never, because further climate change will make it that much harder to win back their previous privileges. We already know that the NSW Leader of the Opposition has entered a Memorandum of Understanding with horse rider associations to allow horse riding in all areas of all national parks



in NSW and that the cattle farmers are seeking the same guarantee from him. The inquiries into this year's bushfires will hear the same story about negligent land managers as we heard in the ACT, in order to promote commercial use of parks. One group is even suggesting harvesting "senescent timber in national parks" by helicopter to reduce the fire risk!

The only answers these lobbyists provide are to burn, graze and exploit the parks in order to protect them. Members of NPA ACT realise it is much more difficult and complex than that to properly manage and conserve our natural areas. That is why we will be, among other things, leading walks; publishing more of our excellent field guides; cutting, daubing, digging and watering at work parties; attending meetings and enjoying our guest speakers; and planning our next symposium for 2008. We have a very busy and enjoyable year ahead for all of us and we may just make a difference!

Christine Goonrey

The fire management debate rumbles on



The recent release of the coroner's report on the 2003 bushfires has reignited a literary conflagration almost as great as the real fires. The letters columns are running hot (another terrible allusion) with brickbats for the government and emergency services

authorities and advice on how to better (?) manage our natural and urban areas for fire protection.

It is this issue of natural areas that is of special interest to our members; in this ongoing debate we stand for the management of parks to conserve biodiversity as the first priority. This can be achieved without compromising the protection of life and property in areas surrounding parks and reserves. It is very common to read, in reports of bushfires, that five or 50 000 or even 500 000 hectares of bush has been "destroyed". But this is surely an alarmist response. The power of the bush to regenerate after fire is truly awesome. We must protect our towns and villages, but if protecting "the

bush" means destroying those values we so treasure then maybe it is better left alone.

We need to take a hard look at the way our habitation interacts with fires in surrounding bushland. Many houses and settlements are sited in ways, often on ridge tops, that makes fire protection almost impossible. A remote retreat, or a nice view, may seem the ideal place to build a home but when fire advances it becomes a trap. The first law of fire protection should be better urban design.

The science of wildfire management is an inexact one; there seems to be lots of room for discussion and disagreement about the effects,

(Continued on page 4)

Fire debate *continued from page 3*

especially long-term effects, of the various strategies and techniques of fire management, particularly fuel reduction burning. Doubts have been expressed about the sustainability of the current remote area firefighting model. It is currently under-funded, and relies on a mix of paid parks service staff and fire service volunteers. Most agree the model is a good one, but not viable during a longer bushfire relying on

volunteers.

Attendees at the recent NPA ACT symposium were able to learn of some of the recent research and future directions and there was room for lots of vigorous discussion there as the record will show. Should we proceed more carefully with fire management when outcomes are unknown? The answer seems self-evident, but the record of human intervention in landscape change is a singularly depressing one. How and when we

“protect” natural areas like national parks from the effects of wildfires remains a contentious issue, partly, as I have said, through ignorance of our interventions, and partly through the more basic question of whether we should modify natural evolution in this way.

Is the best way to protect homes to destroy biodiversity?

Neville Esau

News from the Alps



Mt Jagungal

Horse riding in Namadgi

Whilst the official route of the bicentennial trail from the Mt Clear Pound to the NSW/ACT border grid has been along the Boboyan Road, for some years now users have been rerouted through Long Flat, along the NSW/ACT boundary fence tracks and then to the border grid. This occurred following concerns for the safety of trail users with the existing route, particularly with respect to horse riders and vehicles.

Members of the Interim Namadgi Board have repeatedly proposed that this part of the trail be routed instead to run parallel to the Boboyan Road and recent road works on that part of the road appeared to be an ideal opportunity to facilitate that option. However, not surprisingly, any route running parallel to a road is not the preferred route of horse riders.

Therefore recent deputations from the bicentennial trail representatives and other horse riding interests to the ACT Government have again proposed to permanently re-route the bicentennial trail along Grassy Creek, both east and west of the Boboyan Road until some point where riders can depart the ACT and travel through private property to the road leading to Yaouk Valley. All of the Grassy Creek valley is relatively weed-free and of ecological importance. It is part of the southern area of Namadgi that escaped the 2003 fires. The area is also rich in non-

Aboriginal cultural heritage sites (huts and ruins) and Aboriginal sites continue to be identified.

NPA ACT has opposed this proposal many times and we were pleased to see that it was not adopted in the Draft

Namadgi Management Plan. Even though this management plan is still not published in its final form, horse riding organisations are already trying to renegotiate it to get their own way. Will they succeed simply because they never give up, despite all the scientific and management reasons against their proposal? Where will it end? Will we see horse riding permitted in other areas of the park, simply because such groups will never let this matter rest? If this is the way things will be decided for park management, should NPA ACT stop trying to play by the rules also?

NPA has serious concerns about this rerouting proposal.

Perisher Village approval

All lovers of Kosciuszko National Park as a magnificent natural treasure will be saddened to hear that the NSW Planning Minister, Frank Sartor, has announced the approval of the Perisher Village Concept Plan, allowing Perisher Blue to move to the next stage in the process.

The concept plan is for a village centre including a pedestrian plaza, shops, restaurants and bars, recreation facilities and accommodation to be built on part of the area currently used as an open air car park in Perisher Valley. Previous approvals for the project include ministerial approval of the 800 new village beds in 1999. Under the plan the existing number of daytime car spaces will also be maintained.

Construction of the first stage of the

village is expected to commence no earlier than in the summer of 2008/2009, pending approval of further development applications and the satisfactory completion of leasing and commercial arrangements with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

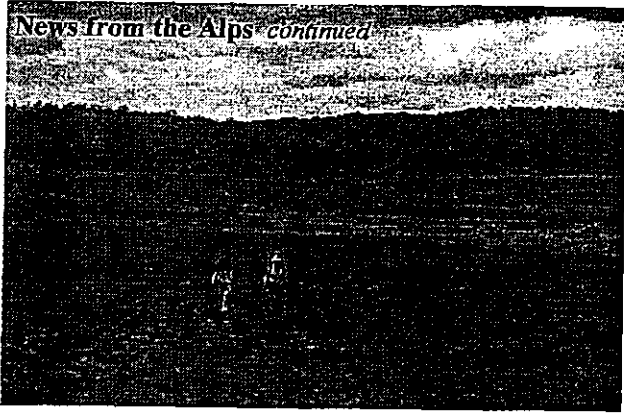
There is plenty of hype in the statements about the project on ways that Perisher Village will incorporate the principles of ecologically sustainable development, from energy and water efficiency to the building materials and use of natural light. A spokesman for Perisher Blue has also stated, “We want to provide world class alpine resort facilities for both summer and winter while minimising the environmental impact. The Perisher Village will provide visitors with a sustainable platform from which Australians can better appreciate and understand the natural and cultural values of the Park.” Well, maybe, but as environmentalists we can only regret the further intrusion of commercial activities into natural areas.

With climate change and drought already having significant impacts across our alpine areas, large-scale commercial developments will put greater pressures on sustainability and the conservation of biodiversity.

Report ranks ACT parks system top in Australia

A report released by WWF-Australia recently has ranked the ACT parks system the top among the eight States and Territories based on protection of biodiversity, area covered, and standard of management up to 2004, when the most recent comparison was possible. The report, entitled *Building Nature's Safety Net*, found that despite adding 31 million hectares of new reserves between 1991 and 2004 across the entire country, governments were still falling short of agreed targets due to “insufficient and declining funding.”

The report's principal author Paul



Happy Jacks Plain.

Sattler was lead researcher for the Australian Government's 2002 Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment. The report drew on data provided by all parks agencies and data from the assessment. Comprehensiveness of the ACT parks system — the percentage of natural ecosystems with some protection inside a reserve — was high relative to other states and had met agreed targets. All reserves increased from 43 per cent to 54.7 per cent of the ACT's land area from 1991 to 2004, five times the national average of 10.5 per cent of Australia's land area in reserves. Moreover, standard of management was generally high, with effective management plans, threatened species plans and monitoring in place.

"The ACT is the stand-out leader for how to establish and run a parks system in Australia," said Dr Martin Taylor, Protected Areas Policy Manager for WWF.

"This reflects foresight and good planning but also shows the advantages of having no freehold land and being the smallest of Australia's States and Territories. Challenges remain in securing high conservation lands as Canberra expands, particularly habitats that are currently poorly reserved."

Dr Taylor also expressed concern at recent budget cuts by the ACT Government in investment and personnel devoted to parks management. "Unless this trend is corrected, a decline in standard of management could occur leading to a lower rating in the next review," he said.

The report also named the "Top 10" reserves that made the greatest contribution to protection of biodiversity in each jurisdiction. The Gungahlin and Dunlop Grassland Reserves aggregation on the suburban outskirts of Canberra was selected as the "Top 10" reserve for the ACT. "These grassland reserves are great examples of the strategic approach to reserve creation, focusing on under-protected and under-appreciated native

grassland remnants," Dr Taylor said.

Snowy Mountains centenary

A landmark in Australian conservation was celebrated at dawn on December 5, with a ceremony to mark the centenary of the beginning of Kosciuszko National Park.

NSW Environment Minister Bob Debus said the ceremony on the summit of Australia's highest peak, Mount Kosciuszko, would mark the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Chase Snowy Mountains. "It's a little known chapter of our history that on 5 December 1906 the NSW State Parliament gazetted an area of 100 square miles (285km²) centred on Mount Kosciuszko and called it the National Chase Snowy Mountains," Mr Debus said.

"It was the first alpine reserve in NSW and along with Victoria's Mount Buffalo National Park was the embryo of today's vast alpine reserve network stretching across three states. The Chase included sections of the Murray River to the west, much of the Main Range to the north, Spencer's Creek to the east and Thredbo Valley to the south."

As early as the 1890s there was also growing awareness among scientists of the need to preserve its unique alpine ecosystems from the loss of vegetation cover. "Conservation in 1906 was not as it is today but the foresight of these early pioneers has provided the basis for a reserve of monumental importance in terms of conservation and in importance to local communities. Today the park covers an area of 690 000 hectares, linking in a network of reserves stretching from Namadgi National Park in the ACT to the north, and Baw Baw National Park, north-east of Melbourne in the south," Mr Debus said.

Kosciuszko State Park was declared in 1944 and Kosciuszko National Park in 1967.

Snowy region report

Di Thompson reports on the Snowy Mountains Region Advisory Committee (SMRAC) meeting which was held in Jindabyne in November.

A field trip to the broom clearing and rehabilitation sites along the Island Bend Road occurred in cold and wet conditions. Because broom tolerates a much higher level of weedicide than do

the native plants special protective cones have been used to ensure the native vegetation is protected from herbicide spraying. Special recognition and praise was given to the team, who have now successfully tackled large areas of broom and willow and rehabilitated many sites over recent years. The task requires repeated follow-ups, as well as work on a multitude of other known sites.

SMRAC members also visited a private property in the Eucumbene-Gungahlin region. This field site comes under the Bushfire CRC's HighFire Risk Project, being headed by Dr Maria Taranto. The project was funded by the Federal Government post the 2003 fires and subsequent to the Nairn Enquiry which was boycotted by the ACT, Vic and NSW Governments. The property is beautiful sub-alpine grazing country. The physical research design covers exclusion plots on both snowgrass pastures and bushland sites. These will be "fired" or "left" at intervals and monitored, to study the effects and interactions of grazing in alpine areas and fire.

Another fire project of particular interest is the PhD being undertaken by NPWS officer Phil Zystra. His project involves the study and understanding of the flammability of certain vegetation types, particularly the kerosene bush (as he notes the name says it all — its a pea-bush). His work to date is looking very, very interesting and will assist in assessing resourcing, timing and effects of fire in natural areas.

Alpine resorts report

The report on the economic significance of the Australian Alpine resorts continues to be a very contentious issue and the survey methodology and results from a past report have been seriously called into question. Nevertheless, the shire councils, tourism businesses and organisations, and resorts are running with the report. NPA NSW remains concerned that future economic and development oriented decisions will be made on the basis of questionable data and analysis.

There is a general push from governments, and particularly NSW, that parks are there to be used and as an economic resource. The significance of this policy position is of serious concern to NPA NSW and others, and we are also seeing elements of it in the push for eco-tourism in Namadgi.

Cloud seeding

Snowy Hydro is now progressing to the

(Continued on page 6)

News from the Alps *continued from page 5*

next round of activities under the cloud seeding-snow precipitation six-year trial. NPA NSW has a number of concerns for the latest round of proposals involving four new sites and the installation of fluviometer wind shields. These are the circumstances as understood at the time of the SMRAC meeting:

- Snowy Hydro has four existing sites in the alpine area — Guthega Dam, Perisher Valley, Grey Hill and the Kerries.
- Snowy Hydro has sought to improve the snow catching capabilities of these sites and have already installed

fluviometer wind shields.

- The wind shields proved successful, and data collection subsequently improved.
- Snowy Hydro wants to install a further four sites all with fluviometers.
- The four proposed new sites are at Mt Anderson east, Rams Head, Bulls Peak and Spencer Picket.
- Snowy Hydro has been asked to give up some of the existing sites and/or keep the footprint low
- The current footprint of the windshields is 18 footings (cement) with 6ft high fences, plus the fluviometer (which is a tripod structure, staked to the ground).

- Snowy Hydro has been asked if stakes or other less intrusive methods of installation of the wind shields and of course later removal can be used (so the option to use stakes is going to be considered).

- Snowy Hydro argues they cannot remove the existing structures, because they need the continuity of data from those sites.

Discussions are ongoing.

Canberra's centenary approaches

Five Chiefs have a vision for 2013

The Three Amigos are household figures but how many recognise our home-grown Five Chiefs? In its short history since self government the ACT has had five chief ministers, Rosemary Follett, Trevor Kaine, Kate Carnell, Gary Humphries and the current incumbent, Jon Stanhope. They have been brought together to form a bipartisan Centenary of Canberra Task Force that has now released its first report and prepared an interim strategy for the 2013 event which will mark 100 years since the naming of Canberra. Their role is to advise on the most effective way to celebrate the centenary of Canberra including organisation, funding and community engagement, and to propose programs for the centenary year and each year until 2013.

The Task Force has completed a period of community consultation and this is reflected in the vision statement that has been developed:

all Australians proudly celebrate the centenary of Canberra, the nation's capital — a city that symbolises our freedom, spirit, achievements and aspirations.

The goals of the centenary are considered to be:

- increase* the pride and ownership of Australians in their capital;
- build* the positive image of Canberra as a city and community;
- increase* the international recognition of Canberra as the capital;
- fully engage* the community of Canberra, the region and Australia, in the celebration;
- provide* a memorable celebration experience;
- build* lasting legacies of broad community benefit and value; and

create impetus for Canberra's future development.

The report goes on to outline guiding principles to influence all stages of the program for *Canberra 100* that include the establishment of partnerships at the local, national and international levels, celebration timeframes, organisational, communication and marketing arrangements, and funding strategies. It goes on to indicate projects for inclusion in the program that are considered to have the potential to achieve the centenary goals. These have been grouped into the following areas:

- major events including some 'blockbusters';
- legacy projects;
- community events;
- arts and culture;
- sport and recreation;
- heritage and history;
- environment;
- education;
- meetings and conferences;
- publications and memorabilia; and
- promotion.

Taking the environment area into a little more detail, it is noteworthy that during the consultation process there was overwhelming support for *Canberra 100* to preserve, and where possible enhance, our natural environment for future generations. There was also support for initiatives to improve sustainability. Set out below are some of the projects favoured for further investigation.

The Great Australian Bushwalk —This project will begin with the upgrading of reserves to provide walking tracks, benches and bridges, and particularly to create a "Hall to Tharwa" walking trail (sic) linking Canberra's existing nature reserves and other natural areas. The annual Great Australian Bushwalk

would officially open the new and upgraded facilities.

A self-sustaining capital —Canberra should make every effort to become a self-sustaining capital city, and should be promoted as "green and water smart".

World Biosphere Reserve —Canberra should bid for world Biosphere Reserve status by 2013.

A Centenary Healthy Rivers Program —Through partnerships with volunteers to, among other things, remove willows from creeks and rivers and replace them with native species to achieve accessible and healthy river corridors.

The Centennial Park —Located as part of the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens or elsewhere.

A Living Environment Community Walk —Through mountains, bush, river valleys and farmland. This should be a long-distance multi-day walk.

An international Clean Air Index — Establish and monitor an index for capital cities, providing a focus on environment management and promoting one of Canberra's special features.

The Task Force report should alert us to some of the possibilities and problems associated with developing a program and projects for *Canberra 100*. The centenary year is a long way off and early enthusiasm could lead to 2013 fatigue. Nevertheless planning has had a robust start and will firm as it progresses. Now is the time to influence the process. The Task Force may be contacted through:

www.canberra100.com.au

calling 132281

writing to The Centenary of Canberra Task Force, GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601.

Syd Comfort

Federal government emasculates the Biodiversity Conservation Act

Late last year the Australian Government rushed a Bill through Parliament making a large number of amendments to the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* commonly referred to as the EPBC Act.

The Amendment Bill, the *Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment (No.1) Bill 2006*, was introduced in the House of Representatives on 12 October 2006 and had passed through the Senate by December 7. During that time it was referred to the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee (SECITA) for consideration.

Anne Reeves, Honorary President of the National Parks Australia Council (NPAC), was contacted by SECITA on 27 October 2006 and invited to comment on the Amendment Bill. During NPAC's annual meeting held in Melbourne over the weekend of 28-29 October 2006 (which Kevin McCue and Sonja Lenz attended) the council decided to take advantage of the invitation by putting in a submission and speaking at the committee hearing.

Anne lodged a submission with SECITA the following week and, given the very short notice, asked that NPA ACT represent the council at the committee hearing on Monday 6 November 2006. The NPA ACT team was led by our President Christine Goonrey, and supported by Committee member Clive Hurlstone and member Michael Goonrey.

In the presentation to SECITA, our first and obvious concern was the short time allowed for public input into such major changes to the EPBC Act. The Amendment Bill alone was over 400 pages with the memorandum explaining what the Bill itself was about 100 pages long! To expect a voluntary environmental group like NPAC to analyse this volume of material in a week was simply unrealistic. We sought deferral of the Bill to allow further time for issues to be properly addressed and to allow for consultation within the wider community.

Main concerns

Our overriding concern was that amendments in the Bill would weaken the environment protection offered by the EPBC Act and diminish the ability of the public to participate in the procedures in the Act. The changes

could undermine the capacity of the Act to provide a legislative framework for resolving conflict between people seeking divergent uses for specific areas of land. We supported the submission of the Australian Network of Environmental Defender's Offices, in particular the Amendment Bill's failure to deal with climate change.

The EPBC Act is based on a premise that we can use a case-by-case basis to strike a fair and reasonable balance between development needs and environmental needs. Our growing awareness of the repercussions of climate change makes this premise no longer workable. We are rapidly approaching a point where relatively small actions, minor destructions, can alter the balance forever, sending a species into extinction, an ecosystem into irreparable damage.

A basic underlying problem with the Bill was that it did not address the need for planned, national action in the face of the very real threats emerging around climate change. What it actually did was offer protection to places, species and ecosystems on an exceptional basis while allowing development on a normative basis. That is, we decide which bits to save and all the rest of Australia is up for development or exploitation of one sort or another.

This case-by-case approach cannot protect us from the mounting damage to our water, soil and air because, as we are coming to understand, the systems we are looking at operate within regional, continental and whole-of-earth systems. Those who have claimed that the loss of a particular species or system is no big deal must now face the prospect that the ecosystems we are in danger of losing are the very ones we humans depend on for our water, our food, our prosperity. We need to have legislation which is capable of looking at the overall interaction of species, systems and human beings on a national, even global scale.

Threatened species consideration reduced

Also of great concern were the changes to the process for the listing of threatened species. One of the main purposes of listing is to permit such species to be taken into consideration in any action taken under the EPBC Act. It is a key part of the rules of engagement. Provisions of the Bill

undermine the role of the *List of Threatened Species*, in particular by dropping Federal consideration of 500 threatened species already listed by State and Territory governments. This means that these 500 species would have no standing in any action under the EPBC Act.

As well the Bill restricted new listings to those which fall within an annual "theme" decided by the Minister. In practice this is likely to exclude consideration of species which do not fit that theme. This does not mean the species or ecosystems which are not within the theme are any less threatened; rather it increases the risk of their destruction or extinction because, without that listing the Act cannot be triggered to protect their environment. Currently groups like NPAC are able to nominate threatened species for listing according to the environmental merits of such a listing.

This new process for listing means a move away from an objective scientific listing process to one based much more on ministerial discretion. The effect of these amendments will be to constrict the role of environmental groups like NPAC in the listing of species and to increase our members' distrust of the listing process. They are already asking, quite rightly, how many of the 500 species currently waiting for assessment will fit within the next year's theme? How many within the next five years' themes?

Further, the Minister has such a broad discretion in deciding on a theme we think it is highly likely that political considerations, not the conservation status of the species, will be given undue weight in specific cases. It is likely that the more controversial species, such as those commercially exploited or in areas under pressure for development, will not be covered by an annual theme in the foreseeable future. This is altering the rules of engagement in a way that will undermine the very operation of the EPBC Act. Overall these changes will lead to a reduction in the opportunities of bona fide conservation organisations like NPAC to contribute to the nomination process and will thereby diminish public accountability and transparency.

Third parties limited

A further concern was that the Bill limited the role of third parties like NPAC in a number of ways. They can

(Continued on page 8)

Biodiversity act amendment

continued from page 7

no longer seek an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) review of a number of decisions made personally by the Minister: for example, a ministerial decision to grant a permit to a person to take a particular action in breach of a provision of the EPBC Act in relation to a listed threatened species or ecological community.

It is not defensible in a democracy to claim that ministerial decisions are too important to allow citizens to challenge them. Ministers must be held accountable, particularly in situations where they could be tempted to personally make decisions because a matter is politically sensitive and so avoid a review on the merits of their decisions.

A further limitation on third parties is that the Federal Court will now be able to require an undertaking for damages from them before they can be granted an interim injunction, imposing a significant barrier to environmental groups taking such action in future.

These amendments have the potential to allow the process to be dominated by one group, for example commercial interests, with no recourse by environmental groups. Again, this is significantly altering the terms of engagement and, if exercised in this

manner, would severely weaken the commitment by environmental groups to the use and operation of the EPBC Act to resolve conflict.

The Bill removed the guarantee of regular review of the EPBC Act. Currently the Minister must report every five years whether additional matters of national environmental significance should be added to Part 3 of the Act. Such additional matters would then trigger the Commonwealth's environment assessment and approval powers. The removal of the requirement for regular review carries the danger of preserving the EPBC Act in aspic so that it becomes less and less relevant to the management of our national environmental issues. Regular, transparent reviews open to informed public discussion are essential to maintaining the public commitment to resolving environmental disputes through legislative means.

Concerns dismissed

SECITA reported on 27 November 2006. The Government majority report generally dismissed concerns about the Bill and supported its passage without amendment. Separate minority reports were presented by Labor and the Australian Greens (both wanted to amend the Bill, while the Greens also wanted the Bill withdrawn) and by the

Democrats (who wanted the Bill deferred). The Bill was passed by the Senate without amendment on December 7 and is now law.

The NPAC submission to SECITA (submission no.61) can be found at www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/ecita_ctte/environment_heritage/index.htm. For readers wanting more detail about the Amendment Bill the submission of the Australian Network of Environmental Defender's Offices is worth looking at (submission no.17). Guides on the EPBC Act are located at www.wwf.org.au/about/epbc, a joint project of WWF-Australia, the Australian Council of the National Trusts and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (click on "EPBC Project" and then on "downloads"). The Australia Institute website also has papers on the Act — see www.tai.org.au

Christine and Michael Goonrey

New water supply proposals for Canberra under consideration

Investigations by ACTEW into two new proposals to augment Canberra's water supply have been announced in the past few months.

The first involves increasing the height of the Cotter Dam wall to increase capacity from the existing 4.5 gigalitres to some 78 gigalitres, an increase of over 17 times! According to ACTEW this could increase Canberra's total storage capacity by up to 30 per cent. With this increase the ACT could supply water to Yass and Goulburn and still have sufficient for all local needs.

The cost of extending the dam is estimated at \$150 million. Of course any increased capacity still relies on rainfall to fill the storage and we all know how scarce that is at the moment.

The second proposal involves re-using the water from the Lower Molonglo Water Treatment Plant. At

present this water is discharged into the Molonglo River and thence to the Murrumbidgee. From what I read in the press this water is at "nearly" potable quality already, in other words, almost fit to drink.

How close "nearly" is to convincing Canberra's population to drink recycled water remains to be seen, although the Government seems confident at this stage. In any case, upgrades to the treatment plant are planned to further improve effluent quality before diverting the water back into Cotter Dam. As conservationists I guess we should all applaud these initiatives, especially recycling, as providing a more sustainable water supply for Canberra without more dams. Recycling may also help to maintain environmental flows in the Cotter and Murrumbidgee rivers during drought.

These proposals are only two of many options that ACTEW is considering to secure Canberra's long-term future water needs. A final decision on which options will get the nod is probably some way off yet.

Neville Esau

Nancy Burbidge: botanist and visionary — Part 1

The CSIRO prefab building that originally housed the Herbarium Australiense, now re-housed as the Australian National Herbarium, repository of dried plant specimens mainly from all over Australia and New Guinea, was an unpretentious but homey building. With its lino floors, stacks of plant specimens on counters and pungent smell of naphthalene, it was Dr Nancy Burbidge's workplace. Nancy, or Nance as some colleagues called her, had originally been appointed in 1946 to the Division of Plant Industry's new position of Systematic Botanist, later becoming the Herbarium's Curator. Her special field was systemic botany.

On hot summer days punctuated with the shrill reverberations of cicadas, a soporific calm would descend on the Herbarium. Bustling steps and a call of "Edna!" would give the lie to any thoughts that staff might be enjoying an extended siesta. Nancy had a deep, distinctive voice.

"Ghost!" Edna D'Arney murmured at the end of one of her lunch breaks as she swung her feet from desk to floor, ready for action. Edna, Nancy's assistant, would then spend the next few hours scrutinising plant specimens, checking their characteristics while Nancy read out the descriptions. Both worked doggedly, checking specimens, probably against Nancy and Max Gray's key for the *Flora of the ACT*. They would stop only for tea or to answer inquiries via the phone or from visitors.

Nancy channelled her energy, botanical expertise, and intellect in many directions, one of which was as the principal founding member of NPA ACT in 1960, and as the driving force to establish a national park for the national capital. She also helped lobby for Molonglo Gorge and Gibraltar Falls Reserves as well as Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

Nancy assembled a committee of like-minded people; including Julie Henry who remembers Nancy as being an "extremely patient person" prepared to answer "the same question over and over again".

Park proposal

Julie says "Nancy whipped around" asking scientists for input to make a submission to Parliament which she, Julie, and Robert Story prepared as the proposal for a modest sized national park. Julie says it took three years to do



the preliminary work which was finally submitted to the Minister for the Interior, Gordon Freeth, in 1963.

Nancy was founding Secretary of NPA, President in 1962 and 1969, and a Committee member for 11 years. In 1972 she became NPA's first honorary life member.

Laurie Adams, botanist and NPA ACT member, worked in the Herbarium during Nancy's time and recalls her "ability to do 15 things at once." He remembers that early NPA committee meetings were held in the prefab, and that any undue waffle made Nancy restive.

Jean Currie, long time member of NPA, remembers Nancy's chairing of meetings as both "an education and entertainment".

"Nancy endeared herself to all the association members through her intelligence, all-encompassing background knowledge of the wide ranging issues with which the association dealt, great sense of humour, passionate pursuit of conservation goals and personal charisma." She had the "ability to sidestep any waffling and irrelevant verbosity at both Committee and general meetings, yet she somehow managed not to hurt members' feelings."

Despite not having children of her own, Nancy was relaxed with the younger generation and realised the importance of tapping into children's curiosity and fostering it to awaken an interest in the wonders and secrets of the bush. My sister Muriel remembers Nancy's loan of one of May Gibbs's classics to us when we were children. The *Banksia* was never the same again.

Early NPA trips catered as much for children as for adults. Members without 4-wheel-drive giants would negotiate

paddocks and rough roads in their trusty, ordinary Holdens, VWs and Vanguards. Specialists from different fields would provide live "show and tells": Ken Key revealed insect antics, his specialty being grasshoppers, and a Dr Weatherly showed the marvels of creek inhabitants, kids standing in front for a good view.

Often with a cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth, Nancy would explain the parts of plants or their peculiarities, in language that all could understand.

Informative writing

She reproduced her clear explanations in *Eyes or No Eyes* which she wrote engagingly and informatively with her beautiful line drawings. The 40th anniversary supplement to the *NPA Bulletin* (March 2000, Vol. 37, No. 1) reproduces *Eyes or No Eyes* number 31, the Australian Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*). Nancy wrote "the creamy white flowers have a spicy-honey scent but this is more attractive to the beetles which pollinate them than it is to human noses."

Fiona MacDonald Brand, honorary life member and one-time *NPA Bulletin* editor, remembers going to Nancy's workplace in the shadow of a *Bulletin* deadline. Fiona was rather in awe of "this very busy woman" as Nancy downed tools to write and illustrate her edition of *Eyes or No Eyes* so that Fiona could complete her preparation of the *Bulletin* in long hand.

Fiona retains a mental picture of Nancy in gumboots, striding off the path to talk about an *Indigofera* in the lower Brindabellas.

Jean Currie also remembers Nancy's excursions to the Brindabellas. "On one of these she started with an entourage of 14 cars, which in no time was down to her car and one other — all the rest disorientated by their interest in the environment. Nancy, completely unfazed, continued to lead the excursion. On another occasion our eight year-old son Peter, much to Ian's displeasure, took his tomahawk on the excursion. Nancy's enraptured audience was soon distracted by his frantic efforts to retrieve the despised item which had been lost in a large bush. Nancy wryly commented to Ian, 'It doesn't take much to amuse some people, does it?' All in the best sense of humour."

Nancy could also laugh at herself.

(Continued on page 10)

Nancy Burbidge

continued from page 9

At a tea break in the Herbarium, she recounted with a throaty chuckle that after a young boy on a bike had ridden past her shouting "Out of the way, Fatty!" she had decided to take action and reduce her biscuit intake.

George Chippendale remembers Nancy's "willingness to give you time" as one of her greatest attributes, citing how she took time off to show him the National Library when he arrived from the Northern Territory to live in Canberra.

Recently, after George had given a talk to Probus, a woman from the

audience came up to him to talk about Nancy's mentoring role with her daughter who had expressed an interest in working with plants. The woman had taken her daughter to Dr Burbidge who had spent one and a half hours talking to her. Subsequently her daughter found a position in Forestry and is still there.

When the travel bug hit me and I wanted to visit Europe and work in the hallowed Kew Herbarium, Nancy was instrumental in helping me get there.

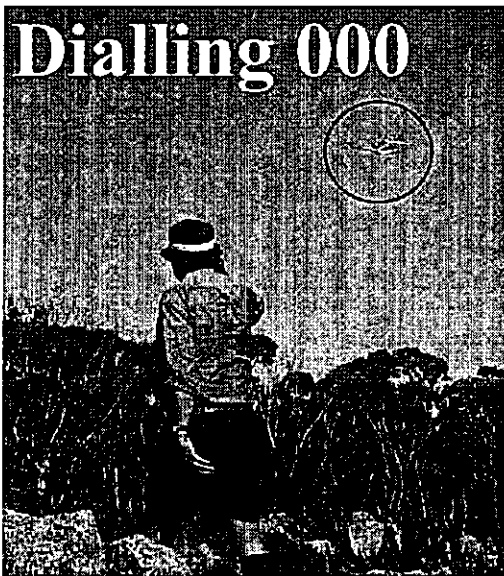
Nancy initiated the Black Mountain spring walks in the early 1960s to show people the plants and to talk about them informally. George Chippendale accompanied Nancy, providing the ecological background. He says she

was aware of the importance of the social aspect of the walk, how some people might absorb a lot of information, others just a little. Despite teeming rain on one occasion, Nancy was undeterred and led the way.

George and Laurie Adams took over the Black Mountain walks from Nancy when her health failed and now Laurie and others with local knowledge lead the walks which usually attract large numbers and cater for members of U3A and the Australian Native Plant Society as well as for NPA.

Judy Kelly

To be continued



Mobile phone in action, 1 October 2006

Pat Miethke's Brindabella Jaunt (Misadventure?) is described in her excellent article in last December's NPA *Bulletin*. This article describes events from the point of view of those of us who found ourselves in the position of having to arrange Pat's rescue. Hopefully there may be some lessons for all of us.

To recap briefly, on Sunday 1 October 2006 Pat was leading her NPA walk into the wilds of Brindabella National Park when she fell, breaking her right ankle in two places and also her fibula (as we later found out). There were four of us in the party — Pat, Chris Paterson, Barbara Edgar and myself. We decided that Chris would stay with Pat and that Barbara and I would go for help.

Pat's accident happened in a deep, narrow and remote gorge, and it was immediately apparent that we were going to need outside help, and lots of it, to get her out of there. But we were reasonably well prepared under the circumstances: we had two mobile

phones (neither of which had reception at that point); we had a good first aid kit which included instructions for dealing with fractures; we had a GPS and were able to establish our coordinates; and we had a yellow rain cape which we were able to spread over a rock in the creek bed in the hope that it might be visible from the air. We did not have an EPIRB.

When Barbara and I climbed back to the top of Baldy Range we were on an exposed rocky peak with practically direct line of sight back to Canberra. CDMA reception was good. When we dialled 000 we were answered by a male voice who wanted to know which city was nearest. We were put through to a female voice in Canberra who wanted to know which roads or picnic areas were nearby (none). She recorded the GPS coordinates and put us through to the ACT Ambulance controller. He quickly assessed it as a job for SouthCare, which (luckily) had just arrived back from a job at Batemans Bay or somewhere. It would be heading our way very shortly.

Which way was our way? The GPS coordinates at this stage didn't get a look in, although they could of course have come into play had a search become necessary. The key words seemed to be northern Brindabellas, Baldy Range, Doctors Flat Road, Baldy Range Fire Trail, Mountain Creek. We were told to hang up, not to make any other calls, and SouthCare would be calling us.

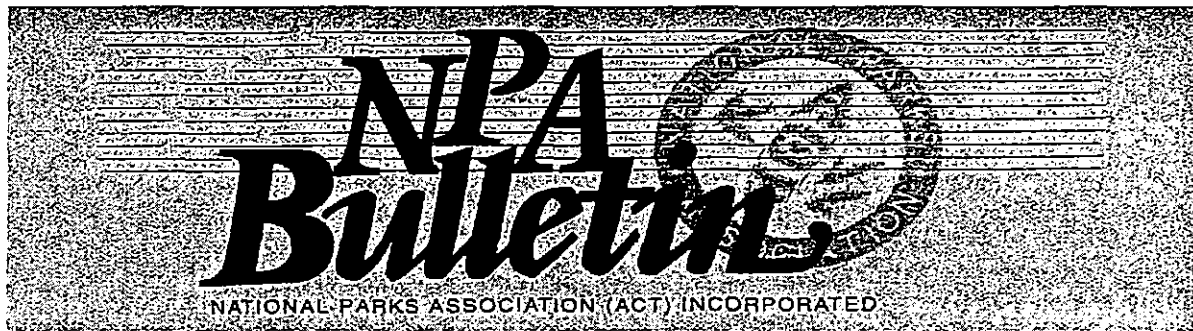
Sure enough, a few minutes later the phone rang. Beauty. SouthCare wanted to know whether we were on the first major range they would come to (yes), and could we direct them to our location. Soon we heard them off in the distance, and not long after we saw them off to the south. We told them

"right hand down a bit" and soon they were coming straight over us. They had no trouble finding us on our exposed peak. We were able to tell them where Pat was (in the worst possible part of the rugged landscape spread out before us) and off they went and did their job brilliantly. It was less than two hours since we had left Pat and Chris, and more than half of that time was taken up in climbing the range to our vantage point.

While the paramedics were on the ground attending to Pat the helicopter went for a bit of a fly around, during which time they phoned us and asked what arrangements we proposed to get the rest of our party out. Muggins of course thought they were referring to Himself and Barbara, and heroically said we would be OK and would walk out. But could they please take both Pat and Chris back to the Hospital. On talking to the said folk later on, it now seems SouthCare was actually concerned to minimise the amount of work they had to do hovering in a potentially dangerous situation at the bottom of the gorge, and one possible way to do this was to leave Chris behind. Thankfully they didn't and the recovery operation, along with every other aspect of the rescue, went off in a very efficient, professional, and ultimately safe manner. Thank you to the personnel of Snowy Hydro SouthCare, ACT Ambulance, and all of the other emergency services involved.

Unfortunately, Pat's recovery has turned out to be a much more protracted process than her rescue. She has had three lots of surgery, and at the time of writing (four months after the accident) she is still hobbling around on crutches and unable to drive her car. She certainly did not get to compete at the World Rogaining Championships. But she still puts on a brave front.

Max Lawrence



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

March 2007 — June 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 | E — Rock scrambling |
| B — Open forest | F — Exploratory |
| C — Light scrub | |
| D — Patches of thick scrub, regrowth | |

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.

Wednesday Walks are arranged on a joint NPA/CBC/FBI basis. Notification and detail is by email to registered members. Only NPA-run walks are shown in this program. For email registration contact the Outings Convener.

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 to their property. These risks could include but are not limited to slippery and/or uneven surfaces, rocks being dislodged, falling at edges of cliffs or drops or elsewhere, risks associated with crossing creeks, hypothermia, heat exhaustion and the risks associated with any of the Special Hazards listed on the Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form provided by the leader at the start of the activity.

To minimize these risks participants should 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 have 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.

**17–19 March; Long Weekend
Car Camp**

WAPENGO

Map: Murrah 1:25 000

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson

Contact: 6281 6381

An outing to a well-loved camping area on private land north of Tathra. Long-term members will remember this as one of the many places the late Ian Currie favoured. Situated on Wapengo Inlet and next to Mimosa Rocks National Park it is a great area for coastal scenery—walk, swim, fish, canoe, birdwatch, botanise, explore the rocky coast and hinterland, etc. Bush camping with no facilities; participants need to bring water and firewood.

Numbers will be limited, so contact leader early to book and for information and directions.

**17–19 March; Canoe Trip and
Walk**

TALBINGO RESERVOIR

Maps: Ravine 1:25 000,

Yarrangobilly 1:25 000 or

Yarrangobilly 1:100 000

Leader: Mike Bremers

Contact: 6292 3408(h),

6283 2052(w) or

mcbremers@optusnet.com.au

A repeat of the trip last March. See article in the June 2006 NPA *Bulletin*. Paddle 4 km from O'Hare's Rest Area (Sue City) to a lovely campsite (accessible only by water) by lunchtime on the Saturday, then an optional afternoon paddle, walk and/or rest. On Sunday there will be an optional walk up a nearby mountain (perhaps Pinbeyan depending on conditions). Expect a 600m steep climb and an 8km walk. Return to cars Monday morning. Suitable for beginners, BYO canoe or hire (try Wetspot in Fyshwick). If interested contact leader by previous Sunday to organise transport and canoes. Limit: 10.

Drive 500km, \$180 per car.

24 – 25 March; Pack Walk

TANTANGARA

Map: Denison & Tantangara

1:25 000

Grading: 2 B/C

Leader: David Large

Contact: 6291 4830 or

egerald@grapevine.com.au

Walk from Tantangara Road over the Blackfellows and Blanket Hills ridge then drop down to camp on the

headwaters of Tantangara Creek. On Sunday, climb Mt Tantangara before following the Monaro Range back to the cars. Area burnt during Jan 2003 fires, so walking should be through open forest and alpine meadows. Drive 300 kms. \$108 per car.

28 March; WEDNESDAY WALK

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: 6254 3094(h) or

jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

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

31 March; Saturday Day Walk

BRANDY FLAT HUT

Map: Michelago 1:25 000

Grading: 1 A

Contact: 6251 68178(h)

6219 5236(w) or

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

A walk to celebrate Frank Clements eightieth year. Meeting at Kambah Village Shops at 9:00am.

Drive 90 km. \$32 per car.

6 – 9 April; EASTER PACK WALK

Map: TBA

Grading: 1/2 C/D/E/F

Leader: Eric & Pat Pickering

Contact: 6286 2128 or

pater@tpg.com.au

Our January walk "Yalwal to Quiera via Ettrema" was so successful, we are inspired to lead another four-day walk over the Easter period but in a different area of NSW. If there is a possibility you may be interested, please contact us as soon as possible (preferably by email). We shall keep you informed of our plans as they develop taking into account the water and weather situations. Closing date for definite nominations is 31 March. Numbers limited

9 April; Easter Monday Walk

GUDGENBY VALLEY RAMBLE

Map: Rendezvous Ck 1:25 000

Grading: 2 A/B

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 6251 6817 (h) or

steven.forst@acma.gov.au

An easy walk to make up for all the Easter eggs. Meet at the Kambah Shops at 8:30 am. A walk from the Yankee Hat carpark in the Gudgenby Valley through the regeneration area across the creek back along the river to the Yankee Hat rock art site for morning tea. Then following a meandering trail along the edge of the

cleared bottom of the valley to Middle Creek. Following the creek to the waterfall for an early lunch. After lunch we will wander off towards the Gudgenby homestead before turning home towards the cars and completing the loop. Drive 100 km, \$36 per car.

14-April; Saturday Work Party

GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP

Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578,

scomfort@netspeed.com.au

or Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422,

clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

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

15 April; Sunday Day Walk

LOVE NEST IN THE SALLEES

Map: Tantangara 1:25 000

Grading: 2 A/B

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart Kambah Village 7.15am. Drive via Adaminaby to Tantangara Dam and park near Gulf Bend. Follow tracks through Gulf region of Murrumbidgee River to Pedens Hut for a break. River is crossed several times – boots off. Proceed to exotic hut, Love Nest in the Sallees. Lunch overlooking river. Return same way, but visit Townsend Hut if time allows. Afternoon tea Adaminaby.

Drive 250 km, \$90 per car

**17 April: WALKS COMMITTEE
MEETING**

Convenor: Mike Smith

Contact: 6286 2984 or

msmith@netspeed.com.au

Meeting to set Outings/Activities program for July to September 2007

22 April; Sunday Day Walk

TIDBINBILLA PEAK, JOHNS PEAK

Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Grading: 3 A/C/E

Leader: Steve Hill

Contact: 6231 9186 or

landshil@webone.com.au

A chance to visit the northern half of the Tidbinbilla Range. Rain and snow washed this one out last time. There are great views during much of this reasonably strenuous walk. We follow the steady climb of the Mountain Creek firetrail to about mid way between John's Peak and the

Camel Back. Then travel south along the main ridge to John's Peak (about 1450 metres) and, "pop up" to Tiddinbilla Peak for lunch. I plan to return the same way as the "Cherry tree" spur is densely overgrown in many places with snow gum saplings — not a lot of fun to be had at all. The walk includes some mild bush negotiation and rock scrambling. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 8.30 for a beaut day. Cost is \$32 per car.

25 April; WEDNESDAY WALK
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Neville Esau
Contact: 6286 4176 or
nemax@bigpond.com

Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list otherwise contact the leader.

28 April; Saturday Work Party
KANGAROO CREEK AREA

Leader: Martin Chalk
Contact: 6292 3502

This work party will tackle briars and blackberry in the valley of Kangaroo Creek, near Corin Dam. This area has not been visited by NPA work parties, so the experience will allow participants to become familiar with this little-visited part of Namadgi. Kangaroo Creek joins the Cotter River at Corin Dam and the area is steep in parts, so participants will need to be prepared. All materials will be provided. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am.

Drive 88 km, \$32 per car

29 April; Sunday Day Walk
GLENBURN HISTORIC SITES

Map: Bungendore 1:25 000
Grading: 1 A/B

Leader: Col McAlister
Contact: 6288 4171

Meet at the Canberra railway station at 8:30am. An easy walk around 10 to 12 historic sites. Those to be visited will depend, in part, on interests of those attending.

Drive 50 km, \$18 per car

5-7 May; Extended Weekend
Car Camp

BOURDA NATIONAL PARK

Map: Wolumla 1:25 000,

Bourda NP Pamphlets

Grading: 1 A (or less)

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson

Contact: 6281 6381

A delightful camping ground by Lake Wallagoot in the Bournda National Park with mod cons including a shelter shed and hot showers. Opportunities for coast and forest walks and good bird watching. Can mess about in boats. Do as little or as much as you like to enjoy this interesting and scenic part of the coast. For details contact leader by preceding Wednesday. Leader will be going down on Friday. Drive 400 kms, \$144 per car, plus camping fees (\$8.00 per adult per night) and NSW Park entry fee (\$7.00 per car per day) if you have no NSW annual pass.

6 May; Sunday Walk

RIDGES ABOVE NURSERY SWAMP

Map: Rendezvous Ck 1:25 000

Grading: 3 A/B/D/E

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 6292 3502

This walk will visit the length of Nursery Swamp as well as half of the Nursery Hill ridge. The first few kilometres will be through forest that had been cleared by the 2003 fire. This visit will allow us to look at the recovery. It will also afford grand views across Gudgenby from a lunch spot that is hard to beat. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8:30am

Drive 85 km, \$30 per car

12 May; Saturday Work Party

GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP

Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578,

scomfort@netspeed.com.au

or Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422,

clive.hurlstone@csiro.au

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

13 May; Sunday Day Walk

SHANAHANS MT & YERRABI TRK

Map: Colinton & Yaouk 1:25 000

Grading: 1 A/B

Leader: Mike Smith

Contact: 6286 2984 or

msmith@netspeed.com.au

Two or three short walks — First walk to Shanahans Mt for morning tea (about 2 km return) drive to, then walk, the Yerrabi Track for lunch on a rock tor with views over Namadgi (about 4 km return). On way back to Canberra may divert to walk to the

Yankee Hat aboriginal paintings for those interested.

Drive 120 km, \$44 per car

19-20 May; Weekend Pack Walk
MT NAMADGI

Map: Rendezvous Creek & Yaouk
1:25 000

Grading: 2 B/D/E

Leader: Philip Gatenby

Contact: : 6254 3094 or

jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

A walk mostly off-track from the Yankee Hat car park via Middle Creek to one of the highest parts of the ACT. A total climb of about 800 metres will be involved. Patches of regrowth will be encountered. Contact leader for more details by the Wednesday before the walk.

Drive 140 km, \$50 per car

20 May; Sunday Day Walk

RED ROCKS, MURRUMBIDGEE

Map: Tuggeranong 1:25 000

Grading: 1 A/C/E

Leader: Steve Hill,

Contact: 6231 0186 or

landshil@webone.com.au

A relatively easy walk, mainly on track, but involving a little rock scrambling and plenty of fence hopping along the Murrumbidgee Corridor from the confluence with Tuggeranong Creek to Red Rocks and maybe a wee bit further. We might divert to the "canyon" on the way (some mild rock scrambling to do this). This is one of the most scenic stretches of the river. The variety and form of vegetation is quite interesting. We should see a large variety of native birds and heaps of kangaroos. Meet at the Urambi Hills car park near the corner of Athllon and Learmonth Drives at 10.00am for a pleasant day. No vehicle costs and you may get to go home in time to see the second half of the footy!!

23 May; WEDNESDAY WALK

[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: David Large

Contact: 6291 4830 or

egrald@grapevine.com.au

Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list otherwise contact the leader.

**26 May; Saturday Work Party
SNOWY FLAT & STOCKYARD
SPUR (Brindabella Range)**

Leader: Max Lawrence
Contact: 6288 1370 (h) or
mlawrence@netspeed.com.au

Escapes from the various arboreta still lurk in this part of the Brindabella Range. This work party will locate, and hopefully remove, any wilding pines. Expect some walking to the various sites. Meet at the forest car park on Uriarra Road (near the junction with Cotter Road) at 9:00am.

Drive 112 km, \$40 per car

**27-May; Sunday easy Day Walk
WOODSTOCK RESERVE**

Map: Umburra 1:25 000

Grading: 1 A

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson

Contact: 6281 6381

A very leisurely walk, but ends with uphill to the cars! Start with the short walk to Shepherds Lookout, which overlooks a big bend of the Murrumbidgee River. Downhill to cross the Molonglo River near its junction with the Murrumbidgee; follow this around to Uriarra Crossing picnic area. Meet at 9.00 am at the parking bay for Shepherd's Lookout, Holt, on Stockdill Drive (marked on some maps as Weetangera Road), about half a km before the Lower Molonglo Water Treatment Station.

30 May; WEDNESDAY WALK

[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Mike Smith

Contact: 6286 2984 or

msmith@netspeed.com.au

Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list otherwise contact the leader.

3 June; Sunday Day Walk

PIERCE'S TRIG, TIDBINBILLA RANGE

Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Grading: 3 A/C/E

Leader: Steve Hill

Contact: 6231 9186 or

landshil@webone.com.au

This is fun, even if it's snowing!! If it's not, Pierces trig offers some of the best views of Canberra and environs to be seen. Follow the steady climb of the Mountain Creek fire-trail to the trig. Return to the carpark largely the same way, but may (depending on conditions) divert to climb up the northern side of the Camel's Hump for some spectacular views all round. The

walk is on track, except for some mild bush-bashing if we divert over the Camel's Hump, and a rock scramble down the southern side to return to the fire-trail. Meet at Kambah Village Shops car park at 8.30 for a beaut day. Cost is \$32 per car.

**9 June; Saturday Work Party
GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP**

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

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

**9-11 June; Long Weekend Pack
Walk**

HIDDEN VALLEY, BUDAWANGS

Map: Budawang Sketch Map

Grading: 3 A/B/C

Leader: Steven Forst

Contact: 62516817(h), 62195236(w)
or steven.forst@acma.gov.au

Contact leader by Wednesday. A winter walk into the Budawangs visiting Hidden Valley with views of Quilts Mountain, Pagoda Rocks and possibly into the Holland Gorge. Walk into a base camp near Styles Creek and then walk with day gear only to Hidden Valley and the views.

Drive 340 km, \$122 per car

17 June; Sunday Day Walk

MTS MAJURA AND AINSLIE

Map: Canberra, Hall 1:25000

Canberra Street Directory

Grading: 1 A/B

Leader: Brian Slee

Contact: 6281 0719 or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Meet at 9.00 am at McKenzie St carpark (north of Grayson St intersection), Hackett. Follow steep track to summit of Mt Majura (Canberra's highest mountain). After a break, head south on ridge to Mt Ainslie for lunch there or on the way. Descend north on track through Canberra Nature Park and return to Hackett. Great views of Canberra and airport. Walk approx. 10 km.

**23 June; Saturday Work Party
HONEYSUCKLE CAMPGROUND**

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 6292 3502

This work party involves fence removal and site works around the campground. While not as exotic or glamorous as some, this work party allows us to assist in the management of the Park. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 9:00am.

Drive 87 km, \$32 per car

**24 June; Sunday easy Day Walk
DEVILS GAP & GIBRALTAR
ROCKS**

Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Grading: 1 A/B

Leader: Adrienne Nicholson

Contact: 6281 6381

Meet at 8.30am at "forest" carpark on Uriarra Rd near the turnoff from Cotter Rd. Walking in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve mostly on tracks. Start with uphill along the Devils Gap fire trail before cutting across to the edge of pine forest. A mid-morning side adventure to the Devils Pyramid for those who want to expend a little extra energy. Follow the ridge along to the Gibraltar Rocks fire trail. Lunch among the rocks with a selection of extensive views, before following the fire trail down to the road. Short car shuffle saves a road slog back up to the start point.

Drive 80 km, \$30 per car

27 June; WEDNESDAY WALK

[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Phil Gatenby

Contact: 6254 3094(h) or

jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

Details to be advised through the midweek walks email list otherwise contact the leader.

Outings Convenor

Mike Smith

6286 2984 or msmith@netspeed.com.au

Molonglo Valley under threat

Opening up the Molonglo Valley for residential development could provide sufficient space to house 40 000 residents, according to information provided by the planning authority in mid 2005. At that time the ACT Planning and Land Authority presented concept plans for this development and invited public comments on the proposals. The area under consideration extends from near the Cotter Road between the Coppins Crossing Road and the National Arboretum and Gardens, in a generally north westerly direction towards Holt near the Pegasus Riding Facility.

The opportunity to open this area for residential use flowed from the destruction of the pine forests in the Stromlo vicinity and west of the Tuggeranong Parkway in the January 2003 bushfire. Some rural properties in the Molonglo Valley were added to these burnt-out areas and further land extending towards western Belconnen was included. Thus in addition to the burnt forest areas the proposal includes a considerable length of the Molonglo, grazing land and woodlands.

At present these areas offer a fine landscape when viewed from William Hovell Drive. A high level crossing of the Molonglo is proposed, as is the establishment of a town centre to the north of the river. However, the plans as presented in 2005 were conceptual and subject to modification following the consultation process. This was the position in July 2005 and very little further information has been provided by the Authority since then.

Disturbing statement

In December 2006 the Chief Minister in addressing the subject of residential land releases said that he expected the first release of land in the Molonglo Valley within 18 months. Bearing in mind that agreed plans for the Molonglo area have yet to be released and noting the time needed for preparation and approval of these, I found this statement disturbing.

When contacted on this matter Mr Bruce Fraser of the Planning and Land Authority (PLA) informed me that release of some land within 18 months was feasible.

The first land to become available would be near Stromlo in the vicinity of the Land and Environment offices on the Cotter Road. This would be followed by releases in the old "Deeks" area and near the Uriarra Road. Mr Fraser said that the PLA has been

developing amendments to the Territory Plan that would lay the foundations for the developments in the Molonglo Valley.

Land use change

The present intention is to release, probably in March 2007, a Preliminary Assessment that would propose changing the land use policies in the Molonglo Valley from rural and forestry to urban. This would be accompanied by a draft variation to the Territory Plan setting out the broad scheme for the area. Because the Territory Plan prepared by ACT authorities needs to be consistent with the (Commonwealth) National Capital Plan it is expected that the National Capital Authority would release a draft amendment to the National Capital Plan at about the same time thus permitting the variation to the Territory Plan to proceed.

Each of these proposed plan amendments must meet requirements of public exposure and consultation and possible consequential amendment before being approved. The PLA is hopeful that these processes would be completed by mid 2007 or soon thereafter. This would allow for detailed planning of the first suburb to be completed in time for land to be released by early 2008.

Stakes high

I have a number of concerns with these proposed arrangements. With pressure on the ACT Government to release residential land, the opening up of the Molonglo Valley may be driven by the perceived need to provide land in the area at the earliest possible time and to achieve this, the whole planning process may be accelerated.

The Molonglo Valley with its proximity to the city centre and other established areas, and located in a valuable environment provides the opportunity for a unique development that warrants careful planning directed towards the long term. The plan must be consistent with the principles of sustainability recently enunciated in the Canberra Plan and reflect the hard-learned lessons of bushfires and the need for water conservation.

The principles guiding the development of the whole area must be established before land is released in any one location. Perhaps it is asking too much to anticipate the nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve but it demands more than a

passing thought. Clearly the stakes are too high to accept any undue acceleration of the planning process.

Public input needed

Another concern relates to the opportunities for public involvement in the planning process. As noted above, the proposals presented for public comment in mid 2005 were indicative rather than specific and since then there have been virtually no public updates or progress reports. Nor has there been substantial critical appraisal in the media or public debate.

Noting the significance of the development, its likely effects on the environment and landscape, and impact on established bordering areas, there is a requirement for adequate participation in the planning process by the community and all interested parties.

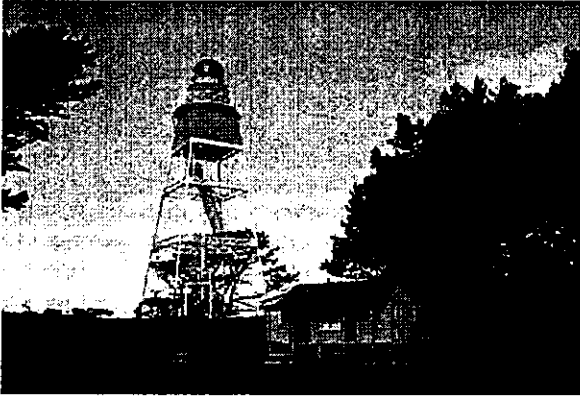
Although the draft planning documents will be subject to public consultation and comment when released, there is concern that having developed proposals to the level of draft amendments to the planning instruments the authorities can be expected to be reluctant to accept major amendments. I consider that, rather than proposing firm amendments to the planning instruments at this stage the PLA should release a more specific proposal than provided 18 months ago and seek public reaction.

The move from the conceptual outline of mid 2005 and to draft amendments is too large a step to permit adequate consultation between the community and the planning agencies. The approach that has been foreshadowed could well result in the planning authorities being locked into the draft amendments and the public locked out.

If this happens Canberra and the future residents of the Molonglo Valley would be the losers.

Syd Comfort

Cape Farewell beckons



Touring the wonders of Farewell Spit

It was the great navigator himself, Captain Cook, who gave the northernmost point of New Zealand's South Island the name Cape Farewell, although Cook hyphenated it Fare-well, a practice not followed today. The name was bestowed on the headland when the Endeavour's company said goodbye to New Zealand on 31 March 1770. A botanical artist on board, Sydney Parkinson, also recorded Cape Farewell as the name, but without a hyphen, when writing of the bark leaving NZ and setting out for New Holland, eventually arriving back in England on 13 July 1771.

Cook and his crew were not the first Europeans to see Cape Farewell and a nearby marvel, Farewell Spit, a huge curving sand bank sheltering the waters of Golden Bay. Abel Tasman saw them in 1642 and gave Farewell Spit the name Sand Duining Hoeck.

Both cape and spit can be visited by means of a conducted tour beginning at the hamlet of Collingwood, north-west of Nelson. You get there after a dizzying drive up and down the awesome Takaka Hill of steep climbs, tight bends and superb views of farms, valleys and mountains.

My tour group was taken out to Cape Farewell in a bus called Maryann driven by a woman called Elaine. The feminine connection ended there and then, because there is nothing gentle about the cape, notable for a rocky arch forming its tip. Grazing land stretches to the very edge of sheer cliffs and careless sheep and cattle may well have found a watery death in the sea below or been dashed to pieces on rocks.

There is a short fence at a viewing area, perhaps designed to reassure anxious visitors.

Farewell Spit is a nature reserve and its ocean beach of hard sand stretches for 35km from what is known as Fossil Point. Some of the shifting sand dunes

are 20 metres high. Tours are carefully timed to allow visits while the tide is out. Blissfully unaware of this, I was lucky because when I reached Collingwood at noon on a rainy Friday, I was told a tour would leave at 3 pm. We got back six hours later and in another stroke of good fortune the rain ceased before we set out.

The tour visits Cape Farewell first and on the way we were treated to the sight of hundreds of birds along the coastline. Gannets, shags, spoonbills, oyster catchers, black swans and godwits kept us entertained as they fossicked in sand and on the water or dived for prey.

It takes an hour to get to Cape Farewell and on the way farm gates must be opened and shut and wandering stock avoided. The wind was fierce at the cape and most of us huddled at the viewing platform gazing at the arch and at two seals dozing on rocks below the cliffs.

From there it was a short drive to Farewell Spit where Elaine had a key to a locked gate stopping unauthorised vehicles from entering the inner or southern side of the spit. More than 80 bird species forage in this amazing place where 12 000ha of sand flats are reduced to 2000ha when the tide comes in. We drove along the sand flats and then took a track inland between farmland and the nature reserve. This brought us to the spit's ocean beach, fronting the Tasman Sea.

It's a wonderful beach of breaking waves, high vegetated sand dunes, boulders and cliffs and the contrast with the sand flats could not be more startling. Grey-black in colour and firm underfoot, the sand easily supported our heavy bus. Elaine gave us a look at the honey- and ochre-coloured cliffs of Fossil Point before setting off along the beach for our destination, a lighthouse 25km or more away. A 4km marker on the beach represents the limit for walkers in the reserve, one reason being the possibility of losing your way in sand storms.

The bus powered along for some time before crossing a shallow Lagoon Creek and rumbling on to reach the lighthouse, which resembles an Australian broadcasting tower. It is set among pine and macrocarpa trees planted many years ago by a lighthouse keeper who lived in one of three cottages on the site. The trees are so

conspicuous from out at sea that it is claimed they are almost as valuable as the light itself, first lit in the 1870s.

This oasis would also have made the keepers' living conditions more comfortable in a place buffeted by the wind. The cottages are in a good state of repair and one is used for dispensing coffee, tea and muffins to tour groups such as ours. Alas, the lighthouse, which is not the original structure, is no longer manned, the last keeper having left in 1984 when it was automated. Its light flashes every 15 seconds and is visible for 24km. It was a thrill to see it winking away during our return to



Collingwood.

A notice with Maori carvings near the lighthouse states that the Maori name for this area is Onetahua, said to mean "sand formation". Another source claims the Maori name for the spit is Tuhuroa.

It is possible to visit a gannet colony of many hundreds of birds on Farewell Spit, the subject of another tour. What you do is walk on for about 30 minutes from the lighthouse, a brochure warning you may get your feet wet. This tour is a little longer, about 6½ hours, and unlike me you should first enquire about availability of both tours. The email address for the tour company is enquiries@FarewellSpit.co.nz

On our return journey from the lighthouse a strong breeze whipped the sand into streaming billows and attractive ripples. Farewell Spit is growing even longer because ocean drift is continually bringing sand up to it from eroding granites, schists and

Cape Farewell *continued*

other rocks on the west coast of the South Island. One prediction is that the spit will extend by almost 2 kilometres in the next five years. It is amusing to look at it on a map and see how this vast area resembles the long, slender bill and head of a kiwi, New Zealand's

famous, if flightless, bird. More importantly, the spit is designated a wetland of international importance, one of only three such areas in NZ.

I suggest that NPA ACT *Bulletin* readers visiting New Zealand make the effort to tour Cape Farewell and Farewell Spit, although both are off the main tourist routes. There are two or

three motels at Collingwood, but it would be wise to book. I should have spent more time in this part of NZ because it has many attractions for those who love outdoor activities. There is a web site

www.AbelTasmanGreenRush.co.nz

Graeme Barrow

Camping and skiing in the 1940s – Part 3

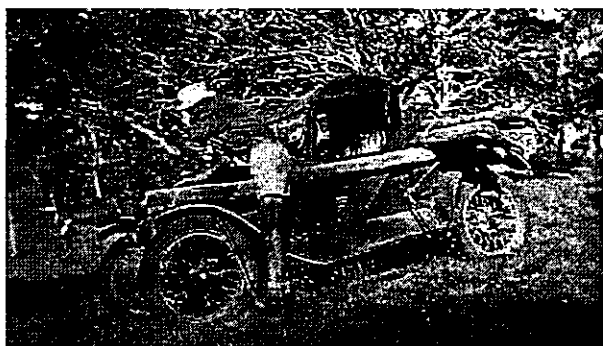
Geof Hall's love of the bush, the beach, and the snow had plenty of scope with Canberra as his base, but getting there 60 years ago was sometimes an adventure in itself. This is the final instalment of his memoir of those early days.

Adventures in the snow country

Getting to Mt Franklin was not always without its exciting moments. It was necessary to include with the food and skiing equipment for the weekend, snow chains, an axe, a shovel and a length of rope.

Frequently it snowed during the week and the crew of the first car up had to clear enough snow off the road and sometimes cut through a tree which had fallen across the road to enable the car to get through. On one occasion we got to Mt Franklin OK, but there was a heavy snowfall overnight and we had to ski out to Maxwells, which was the rangers' station, and telephone Canberra to get one of our friends, Johnny, to come and pick us up. No snow fell during the week and Johnny took us back the next weekend to pick up the cars.

The sad fate of the Hopper



The *Hopper* was a good vehicle for travelling over snow-covered roads as it had good clearance and low gearing. One trip however led to a near disaster.

We were returning down a steep hill when I realised that the brakes were no longer operating. I stopped it by gently edging the car to the bank on the side of the road (the other side led to a steep

drop to a creek). We hitched rides to Canberra with other returning skiers. The next weekend our good friend Johnny took us in his truck to retrieve the *Hopper*. Imagine our dismay when we found that the car was not where we had left it but in the creek at the bottom of the ravine.

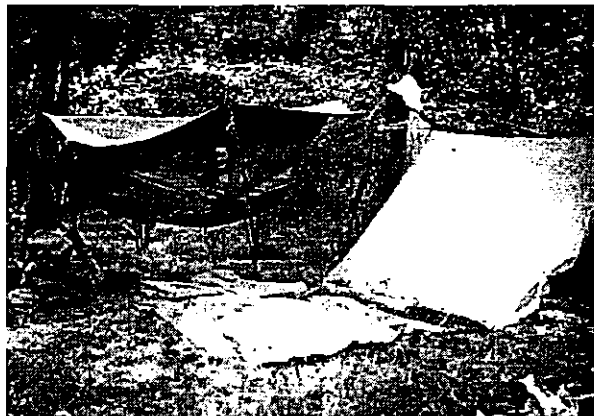
Luckily there was a track running at the side of the creek and with a lot of ingenuity and hard work got the car onto a truck and back to Canberra where it was dumped in a paddock next to a friend's place. Over the next few weekends I managed to restore it to working order. A friend became very interested in it and I sold it to him.

A hut in the mountains

Things got pretty crowded in the Franklin clubhouse, so a group of us decided to build our own hut. We chose a spot between Mt Ginini and Mt Gingera just over the border so we could ignore the ACT building regulations and it was too remote for the NSW authorities to know of its existence. There was a pile of surplus logs at Maxwells and the ranger said he would be glad if we took them as it would save him the trouble of disposing of them.

The *Hopper* was very useful for carting the logs to our building site where they became the foundations for the hut.

We had some difficulty getting them horizontal as we had no spirit level. Doug said "No problem. Just tie a weight to a piece of string to get the vertical. Make a right angled triangle and if you line this up with the vertical you get the horizontal." He proceeded to put his idea into practice. We wondered why we still could not



get the foundations to line up with each other until we realised that he had used the measurements 5, 6 and 7 instead of 3, 4 and 5 to get a right-angled triangle. From there on the building proceeded without a hitch.

I was posted to Washington for three years and when I came back was saddened to find that the hut had disappeared. It had been vandalised and anything useful stolen.

The demise of skiing at Mt Franklin

The alternative to Mt Franklin was the Perisher Valley in the Snowy Mountains. This involved travelling over atrocious pot-holed and corrugated roads and was tackled only by the more enthusiastic.

This was all changed with the advent of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Good roads were built and better cars became available and more affordable. This, combined with a run of poor seasons, made skiing at Mt Franklin less attractive and nowadays no one goes there to ski. There is now a number of resorts in the Snowy Mountains with groomed runs and man-made snow and the roads are kept clear of snow. The pioneering spirit and sense of adventure of the old days is carried on by the cross-country skiers.

Geof Hall

Community engagement at the bush interface

'BUSH ON THE BOUNDARY'

KAREN WATSON



Photo by Karen Watson

Big changes are afoot for the Gungahlin Woodlands. Development is now underway in the new suburb of Forde, with Bonner to follow soon. Urban development has often contributed to the degradation of nearby nature reserves. Some proactive steps are underway to protect the Gungahlin woodlands of Mulligan's Flat and Gorooyarroo from this new influx of people and associated impacts.

Community Engagement in Conservation at the Bush/Urban Interface is a project of the Conservation Council with assistance from the Australian government's Natural Heritage Trust, and over the next 18 months will concentrate on engaging this new and growing community in local conservation.

We all know there are major issues with the management of nature reserves, and it is not helped by the fact that under current circumstances, ACT conservation rangers and their resources are stretched to the limit.

Unfortunately, not all people appreciate the conservation values of nature reserves

and managers, now as always, must contend with an array of inappropriate activities. In Gungahlin, we have an early opportunity to counter these attitudes and effects. How the new population perceives the reserves from the outset will make a huge impact on how they interact with them.

Mulligan's Flat and Gorooyarroo form the largest publicly reserved area of critically endangered Grassy-Box Woodland(1) anywhere in Australia. The Grassy-Box Woodlands of the ACT are primarily represented by the Yellow-Box Red Gum Grassy Woodlands(2) complex. Additionally, these reserves provide habitat for other endangered and declining species.

Woodland birds, particularly, are a focus of the area, with several threatened species listed in the ACT and NSW occurring in the reserves. Some species appear to be seasonal visitors or at the extent of their range, like the Superb Parrot and Regent Honeyeater. The woodlands also provide refuge for a suite of other woodland birds not yet listed as threatened, but which appear to be steadily declining in numbers throughout South-eastern Australia. These include the Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin and Dusky Woodswallow.

Other fauna, like the Shingleback lizard and red-necked Wallaby are now rarely found in other places in the ACT, but can still be found in these two reserves. It is also possible that cryptic small mammal fauna such as the Common Dunnart and Yellow-footed Antechinus still exist in these reserves. Recent studies have unfortunately shown these animals are now absent from other Canberra Nature Park reserves.

So how are we going to protect the reserves?

Protection is going to come from a combination of policy, physical measures and the encouragement and motivation of the local people to value and protect the woodlands as their special community asset.

Protection policy includes the declaration of Forde and Bonner as cat-containment zones,

cont. next page

'BUSH ON THE BOUNDARY' (CONT.)

meaning that those residents choosing to keep a cat must keep it contained to their property. All residents and visitors to these suburbs will be reminded of this by the cat-containment symbol which is on every street sign.



Physical protection will be coming from a range of management initiatives, including increased signage and presence of domestic animal rangers but most notably a predator-proof fence that will buffer most of Mulligan's Flat reserve.

This picture is of an example piece of the fence that is now erected inside the reserve. The overhang at the top is the main feature that stops cats and foxes from climbing the fence. This type of fence has proven effective in other predator exclusion projects around Australia.

The most important ingredient in this protection is to recruit the community themselves to consider the value of the reserves to their community and lifestyles. Introducing the community to new messages that challenge their attitudes is never an easy undertaking. Targeting messages about conservation is even more challenging because the messages do not necessarily provide an economic benefit; nor are they a mainstream cultural value that people are willing to accept into their busy lives. We are living now in a world where wants overtake needs, and well-researched and targeted commercial marketing shapes and drives consumer attitudes and values.

How then can conservation messages compete with a commercially-driven consciousness? The concepts of conservation, lifestyle values, participation and custodianship of the woodlands asset will be introduced through a variety of community linkages, including schools, youth groups and multicultural groups.

We hope to learn more about the attitudes and demographics of this new community, through a collaborative project with social researchers at the Australian Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre (AIACRC).

The Gungahlin community has a nationally significant asset on its doorstep. This asset represents to them opportunities for relaxation, learning, recreation and lifestyle. My ultimate aim is to convince them of this, using a network of collaborative opportunities, and a few of the marketing tactics they are already tuned to accept.



Photo by Karen Watson

The above pages are from *Sustainable Times*, December 2006, with thanks to Trish Harrup and the Conservation Council. *Sustainable Times* is the

quarterly newsletter of the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra.

PARKWATCH

Portent of things to come

Dr Barrie Pittock, former head of the CSIRO's Climate Impact Group and author of Climate Change: Turning Up the Heat (CSIRO Publishing), spoke on Climate Change and Biodiversity to VNPA members and representatives from interstate NPAs on Saturday 28 October.

He said the present drought has been exacerbated by the global warming trend, and that as warming continues worse droughts will follow. Drought relief may well be appropriate in the short term, but we have to treat the cause as well as the consequences.

Increased temperature, due to emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels and deforestation, is leading to increased evaporative losses from soil and vegetation, making droughts worse.

In addition, he said, global analyses of observations and climate models show that global warming is pushing the mid-latitude westerly winds further polewards in both hemispheres.

The low-pressure systems and cold fronts that bring rain to southern Australia are further south, so we only get the tail end of the fronts, with less rain than in earlier years.

Dr Pittock said this trend was first seen in southwest WA, where it led to decreased rainfall from the 1970s. This region has suffered continuously low rainfall ever since. A similar pattern is now becoming evident in SE Australia.

This has to be put in a global context, as it is evidence of world-wide trends due to global warming, with similar long-lasting droughts in other winter rainfall regions (e.g. southern Europe).

Such trends are having drastic impacts on farming, biodiversity and urban populations, with large costs in drought relief and water supply infrastructure investments such as piping irrigation water, new dams and desalination plants.

They will result in loss of biodiversity in rivers and streams, more severe wildfires and dust storms, he said.

The present drought, said Dr Pittock, is a symptom of climate change, and while adaptation to drought is essential, the underlying cause must also be tackled – meaning that serious attempts must be made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This has to happen in this decade if more drastic impacts are to be avoided.

update, November 2006

Water for wetlands essential

The condition and management of Ramsar wetlands, not only in New South Wales but across Australia, is currently under the spotlight. This follows an audit by the WA Auditor General and a request by private Ramsar landholders in the Gwydir for the de-listing of their wetlands due to continued, unabated declines in ecological functionality.

WWF-Australia has a long history of involvement with management of Ramsar sites, most particularly those on private land, and we have long hoped water sharing processes driven by state governments and catchment managers would provide adequate flows for their maintenance, especially in over-allocated catchments and in times of drought. The Commonwealth, through delivery of natural resource funding, has also had significant opportunity to ensure Ramsar outcomes are prioritised in relevant catchments, however little has been made of this potential to date.

In regulated systems, planned and adaptive environmental flows for internationally significant wetlands appear to be failing to prevent significant declines. Sites such as the Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir wetlands, where wetlands compete with thirsty floodplain developments, must remain a priority for programs seeking to buy back licences, such as New South Wales' Riverbank. However, while the NSW Government's floodplain harvesting policy remains firmly lodged in the too hard basket, no real degree of security for the supply of environmental flows to wetlands can be assumed.

The importance of Ramsar management goes beyond preservation of a suite of freshwater biodiversity. Ramsar recognition includes, as a core ideal, wise and productive use of wetland areas. The inability of governments to provide enough water to private landholders seeking the dual outcomes of economic and ecological success reflects poorly on Australia's wetland record, and inclusion of declining sites on Ramsar's Montreux Record may well be the only appropriate policy response.

*Inland Rivers Network News,
Spring 2006*

The marshes are drying

The Macquarie River was named after the far sighted Governor who planned Sydney as a city rather than a convict settlement. Unfortunately the

governments which dammed the river and allocated water rights were sadly lacking in foresight. The estimated annual yield of the river system is 475 000 megalitres, but the allocation for extractive use was 738 793 mL. In addition 160 000 mL was allocated to the environment, which consisted mainly of the Macquarie Marshes. The allocation was therefore almost twice the average annual yield of water.

In our arid country, fresh water marshes are a rarity and there are none on the scale of the Macquarie wetlands. They are the habitat of large areas of Red Gum, and a large range of water flora and fauna, including 200 bird species. Their significance as a destination for migratory birds has been recognised by listing as a Ramsar Wetland of International Significance.

The draining of much of the wetlands to produce grass for grazing, which involved the construction of drainage channels and levees, has greatly reduced the area of swamp, but the main cause of desiccation is the use of the water for irrigation before it reaches the marshes (80% of it used for that water-hungry crop, cotton). For five years the marshes have received little or no water. Only 20 000 ha of the original 220 000 ha remains in a healthy condition, and the Macquarie Marshes have shrunk by half. Eric Fisher, whose family have grazed cattle in the Marshes for 100 years, is quoted by Daniel Lewis as saying that probably the most important site for colonial water birds "was dying at an alarming rate." In times gone by his property would flood eight years out of 10; "now we are lucky to get three out of 10." He says that before the Burrendong Dam the number of ibis, ducks, swans, egrets, stilts, herons and cormorants could blacken the sky, but there had been no breeding on his land for six years. River gums and reed beds were dead or dying and the carrying capacity of his land had halved. George Falkiner, owner of the famous Haddon Rig merino stud, is distressed about the social consequences of the drying up of the river. In Warren, a town of 2000 which relies on irrigation, people are leaving, shops are closed and real estate is unsaleable.

Only a reduction in irrigation will ensure that, when it does rain, water will replenish the marshes. This has been recognised by the NSW Government which has devoted \$105 million to a Riverbank Fund, though only \$6 million will be used for the Macquarie River. Bob Debus,

PARKWATCH, *continued*

Minister for the Environment, wrote to Macquarie irrigators that, while grazing had some impact, excessive water for irrigation was "far more significant, and without doubt the main reason for the critical decline of the marshes." The NPA has called on the NSW and Federal Governments to provide \$280 million to buy back water licences and restore the marshes. Whether even this amount would be effective will depend on the continuance of global warming, the probable cause of the Australia wide decrease in rainfall, which is called a drought, but is probably climate change.

The Colong Bulletin, November 2006

Dingoes for native species

Reintroducing more dingoes to Australia would help control the population of nuisance pests and restore some of the country's dwindling native species populations, according to research by Professor Chris Johnson from the School of Marine and Tropical Biology at James Cook University.

Introduced predators, including humans, account for the significant 50% extinction rate of native fauna in Australia. The major culprits are feral cats and foxes, which are efficient and diverse hunters.

"We cannot bring back what we've already lost, but we must now urgently deal with the threat from cats and foxes, which prevents recovery of rare species and could cause more extinctions in the future," Professor Johnson urges.

Although fencing and poison baiting can be used for dealing with the unwanted pests, they are not always successful and require significant resources to set up and maintain.

Dingoes, on the other hand, could be the answer farmers are looking for. They compete for the same food supply as feral cats and foxes, and even prey upon them (as well as other species, such as feral pigs and kangaroos, which can be a nuisance for farmers).

Professor Johnson's research has shown that more dingoes would help control the population of these pests, releasing pressure on the country's diminishing biodiversity. He has recently published his findings in the book *Australia's Mammal Extinctions – a 50 000-year history*.

Having studied the decline of Australian mammals for nearly 30 years, Professor Johnson has seen first-hand how native populations, such as rufous bettongs, can thrive when dingoes are present.

"I found that for ground-dwelling

species the presence of dingoes makes a big impact on probability of decline. In places where dingoes are rare or absent, and foxes and cats are abundant, 50% or more of ground-living mammals have vanished; where dingoes remain abundant the rate of local disappearance is 10%, or less," Professor Johnson says.

Once dingoes are reintroduced, fox numbers could be suppressed within a few years.

This is good news for threatened species, which are sometimes wiped out from the mainland but survive in small numbers on predator-free islands.

But Professor Johnson also highlighted that there are complex processes required to restore stable native animal populations and their habitats.

"Getting these species back to the mainland depends not just on establishing the right ecological conditions on mainland sites (which mainly means having foxes and cats under control), but going through the expensive and lengthy process of translocation from their refuges and building up populations in the reintroduction sites. This whole process will take decades."

ECOS, October-November 2006

True blue or too risky?

Tasmanian blue gums (*Eucalyptus globulus ssp. globulus*) are increasingly being planted for commercial forestry on public and private land in the higher rainfall regions of South Australia. While actively promoted by primary industry agencies and the private sector, Tasmanian blue gums are well known to many field botanists and conservationists as an invasive tree species capable of spreading from plantings into native vegetation (Robertson 2006, Muyt 2001). Consequently, serious social and scientific apprehension exists over the current trend to increase the area of plantations due to the deleterious impacts they are likely to pose to indigenous biodiversity through risks of weed invasion, threats to ecosystem processes such as alterations to groundwater hydrology, and by competing for land needed to restore and reconstruct natural ecosystems.

Xanathopus, Summer 2006

Controlled burning and bushfires

The Country Fire Services is researching why so many permit burns get out of control on South Australian properties. CFS prevention services

manager Leigh Miller says such fires are the third highest contributing cause of bushfires. He says unknown causes and arson are the leading cause of bushfires followed by incidents such as those involving barbecues and incinerators and said that a lack of preparation can lead to permit burns on farms getting out of control.

Edilillie farmer Peter Treloar says the problem of local councils carrying liability for controlled burns during the fire ban season could be avoided. He says more farmers should delay burning until the season is over when conditions are safer and it becomes the landholder's responsibility. Local councils are seeking legal advice about their liability if it gives a permit for a burn that gets out of control.

*ABC Rural – South Australia,
28 July 2006*

A halt to salt

Once renowned for its dryland salinity risk, Talaheni a 250-hectare property in the Yass River Valley of southern New South Wales, is now renowned for its success story.

Proud owners are John and Robyn Ive, whose primary business is the production of ultra fine wool. A commercial Angus herd is run as well, focusing on the production of feedlot steers. Their business has been made possible because of their most successful activity, the management of saline groundwater, supported by the Natural Heritage Trust.

When the Ives purchased the property located between two tributaries of the Yass River, Dicks and Williams Creeks, Talaheni was in the grip of severe dryland salinity with many saline seeps causing declining pastures. The soil surface was vulnerable to erosion resulting in extensive areas of sheet erosion and long deep, active gullies. Productivity was declining as the impact of dryland salinity increased.

This could be seen in the farm dams, which were monitored regularly and the salinity levels over time used as an indicator of the salinity levels in the runoff Talaheni contributes to the Yass River.

"We started the project by fencing out a treeless hilltop with high recharge potential and establishing trees to reduce the rate of recharge and amount of deep drainage to the lower flats," John explains. "We linked remnant vegetation with corridors and fenced to exclude domestic stock from these and other planted tree vegetation areas.

When it came to tree-planting, the

(Continued on page 18)

Ives took a different approach. Usually, farm forestry woodlots are planted with a single species, a factor that John believes limits the environmental benefits that the woodlot can provide while achieving logging requirements. For this woodlot, a mixture of acacia and eucalyptus species was selected, all of which have the capacity to produce timber with high quality characteristics.

The project then saw the establishment of deep-rooted perennial pasture on the deeper soils of the flat to increase sub-surface water usage to provide greater production and environmental benefits.

To measure the effectiveness of the project, the Ives installed four

piezometers from near the top of the hilltop down the slope to the lower flats. These historical records of piezometer and soil acidity recordings over some time led to the site being adopted by the Department of Agriculture as an Acid Soil Action study site.

To further measure how the project was restricting the movement of water, soil and nutrients through the landscape, samples were taken from dams in three paddocks with different vegetation. In addition, simple technology was installed to calculate the change in runoff from each of these catchments from major rainfall events.

"A central undertaking, not only behind this project but all activities undertaken at Talaheni, is to measure

and record the response to actions and conditions," John emphasises. "In the words of others, if you do not measure it, you cannot manage it."

By managing saline ground water, the Ives have witnessed a persistent lowering of the water table and a major reduction in the salinity levels of the groundwater. As a result, pastures have been reinvigorated and now play a part in further lowering of the water table. Carrying capacity and quality of stock and commercial product have increased as a result.

Natural Heritage, Summer 2006

Compiled by Len Haskew

Rogaining article reaction

As one of those NPA members who apparently " ... have been wondering what rogaining is and how it impacts on Namadgi National Park" I read with interest the article *Rogaining in Namadgi, friend or foe?* (NPA ACT Bulletin 43/4 December 2006) — interest, then increasing concern. The first couple of paragraphs introduced an interesting and fun outdoor activity, then the numbers involved started to penetrate. And as I read on, I did not find reference to any reasons why this activity needed to be carried out in an area whose prime purpose is conservation. I have never been to a rogaining event, so my comments are based entirely on the *Bulletin* article and the accompanying pictures.

"... teams of two to five people ..."; allowing for teams of the usually unlikely average-size of two and a half people (delightfully represented in the first picture, at a control point!), and "... an event with around 200 teams": we have some 500 people so far, without counting the non-participants present, such as organisers and presumably non-participating visitors.

"... each separate control is visited by [on average] thirty teams": that is, some 75 people based on the "averages" being used (if all teams were five people, all teams visited a checkpoint and 200 teams participated, that would be 1000 people visiting one point in the landscape!). The fact that this impact could be spread over a 24 hour period (or six hours, or 12 hours), still allows for a considerable impact at a focal point. Yet the article states that "the environmental impact ... is no greater than overnight

bushwalkers". Heaven forbid that we should encourage overnight bushwalks in a national park for even 75 (much less up to 1000) people!

Participants "... return to the start/finish area to use the port-a-loos provided ... and to have their meals at the catering tent". Another of the pictures provided suggests that these services would be **additional** to the trappings we now take to keep ourselves comfortable on a car-camp. Again, the mind boggles that we would organise a car-camp for upwards of 500 people in a **national park**.

The introductory description of "...navigating on foot to control points set throughout an area, usually of native bushland" does not explain what characteristics specific to a conservation area (eg national park) could be required to support this activity; which characteristics could not be found in other areas?

"Appreciation of the natural environment is a central feature of the sport." At what level? The article calls rogaining "a type of bushwalking" and of course not all bushwalkers notice the minutiae of their environment. In such an article one cannot expect a full description of the activity. However, my impression was that the main aim of this sport was navigating around the physical environment using "macro-scale" features, an activity which surely does not need to be carried out in a **national park** whose *raison d'être* is conservation of the natural and cultural environment, things often of the "micro-scale".

I wish rogainers well; their sport sounds like a stimulating and

entertaining way to enjoy outdoor activity. My concern is not with small groups navigating their way around by understanding the land: it is with the event aspect where, by definition, large numbers of people become concentrated in an area. Surely such events can be held in areas where conservation is not the primary concern, such as state forests, private land, even urban areas.

Sadly, this article left me feeling uneasy that this is the kind of activity our national parks managers are being urged to encompass—the park must pay its way, bring in revenue, provide "experiences" for everyone, etc.

Let us not forget why national parks (be it Namadgi or any other) are different.

Adrienne Nicholson



The association welcomes the following new members:

Don and Sylvia Mountain
Allyson Peters

We look forward to seeing you at association activities.

NPA ACT news

Meeting with Territory and Municipal Services

Our President, Christine Goonrey, reported to the October general meeting that Russell Watkinson, Director of Sustainability Policy and Programs at TAMS, had attended the last NPA Committee meeting for a mutual information session. He tabled a new structural chart that he hoped to have implemented by the end of 2006, and the status of major fire trail developments. He is interested in having regular communications with NPA ACT. Russell wants a more rigorous environmental impact process with public consultation and hopes that NPA will get involved in that process.

New Office accommodation needed

NPA has been advised by the Department of Education that we will have to vacate our present office accommodation at MacLaurin Crescent, Chifley by Easter 2007. The Committee is reviewing our accommodation and storage needs and examining a number of options for both short-term and long-term solutions.

Fires in Namadgi

A recent fire in the southern part of Namadgi National Park burnt 140 ha of the park. The Mt Clear dam worked well in fighting the fire. There was no water bombing, but the firefighters put bulldozer lines around the fire, some of which had to be rehabilitated. The fire was lit by a landowner on his land adjacent to the park and spread into Namadgi.

NPA ACT supports purchase and stationing in the ACT of a third aerial water-bombing helicopter.

Nancy Burbidge added to ACT Honour Walk

A conservationist, a pioneer broadcaster, a war historian, a nurse and a Catholic bishop have now been added to the ACT Honour Walk. The ACT Honour Walk recognises individuals or groups, from across all categories of endeavour, who have made a significant and sustained past contribution to the ACT.

The new plaques recognise Mr George Barlin AM, Bishop Pat Power, Mr Charles Bean, Ms Sylvia Curley OAM and Dr Nancy Burbidge AM DSc.

NPA members will be particularly pleased to see the recognition for Nancy Burbidge who was well-known

both as a botanist and conservationist. She was a former President of NPA and made significant contributions to the early proposals for a national park for the ACT. Her well-known book, *Flora of the ACT*, with Max Gray, is still a standard reference work.

This latest tribute to Nancy adds to the Nancy Burbidge amphitheatre in the National Botanic Gardens dedicated to her memory some years ago.

It is great to see a Canberra conservationist honoured in this way.

(See Judy Kelly's article on page 9)

GAB a "great" success

The ACT segment of The Great Australian Bushwalk organised by the NPA last September was again a great success. We organised a number of smaller walking groups in dispersed locations to lessen the impact of the very large groups seen in past years.

We will continue with dispersed small walks in the future. Christine Goonrey extended special thanks to Steven Forst and all walks leaders for a fabulous job, and also thanked Brett MacNamara and his rangers for their contributions, as well as Kylie Lahiff, Marg Wade and the EACT office staff who did such tremendous work in organising buses, water bottles and more. The launch of the new display at the Namadgi Visitors Centre was held on the same day. We will negotiate with Lois Padgham to add information about NPA's role in establishing and maintaining the park.

New walk brochures

NPA has negotiated an agreement that will allow the balance of the NPA's Great Australian Bushwalk grant to be used to produce up to eight brochures of various walks in Namadgi. A number of new walks will be included as well as reprints of some existing brochures.

Walks to be covered include the Orroral Valley, Nursery Swamp, and Boroomba Rocks. New track signage will also be funded to be installed at Yerrabi Track, Orroral Valley tracking station site, and Nursery Swamp.

GAB Prizewinners for 2006

One of the exciting parts of the Great Australian Bushwalk in 2006 was the chance for three lucky members who joined NPA ACT during the GAB promotion to win prizes donated by top outdoor adventure manufacturers. Allyson Peters won first prize in the ACT section, a beautifully designed backpack, walking sticks, and accessories from Sea to Summit. Leon

and Kay Pietsch won a Silva compass and headlamp set and John Harper won a pair of Rockport walking shoes.

Allyson (pic on facing page) is a newcomer to the ACT so the prize was a welcome to the nation's capital and a real bonus to help her explore our parks and reserves. Leon Pietsch had just returned from a Wednesday Walk when he was given his prize so the compass will be very useful. Kay had her eye on the headlamp, which she said was much better than Leon's old one. John Harper was very pleased with his new walking boots and is looking forward to cooler weather to try them out in Namadgi.

In addition to the new members' prizes, there were a set of Black Diamond Walking Poles and Sea to Summit Quagmire gaiters for walks leaders. The names of all the park rangers and walks leaders who led the walks so capably on the day were put in a hat and drawn at the November 2006 General Meeting. The lucky winners were David Large for the walking poles and Max Lawrence for the gaiters.

The next GAB is in September 2007 and maybe there will be other nice surprises for participants and new members.

Christmas Party at Orroral

Despite the hot weather, a large contingent of NPA members turned up at the Orroral Camp Ground Sunday December 10 for the annual end-of-year celebrations. The effects of the drought were very evident all around us but the convivial atmosphere soon overcame the defects of the day. I must admit we did spend some time chasing what shade was available but even this was greatly helped by Adrienne's supply of cool drinks and watermelon.

Many thanks are due to Adrienne, Christine, and all their helpers for making such a successful day.

Mystery solved

Many thanks to Don and Betty Wood, Paul Carmen, and Kathy Hook for responding to our plea to identify the mystery plant in the December *Bulletin*.

The mystery plant is *Dracophyllum secundum*, a member of the Epacridaceae family. It grows on damp rock ledges and wet cliff faces in sheltered sites, and has one-sided heads of white or pink tubular flowers. Don and Betty pointed out that a similar photo can be seen on page 35 of their book *Flowers of the South Coast & Ranges of NSW II*. Don photographed it on Porters Creek Road, on the plateau above the escarpment behind Ulladulla.

National Parks Association Calendar

General Meetings

**Third Thursday of the month
(not December and January)**

8:00pm

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

	March	April	May	June
<i>Public holidays</i>	<i>Mon 19</i>	<i>Fri 6 Mon 9</i>	—	<i>Mon 11</i>
General meetings	Thur 15	Thur 19	Thur 17	Thur 21
Committee meetings	Tues 6	Tues 3	Tues 1	Tues 5
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 10	Sat 14	Sat 12	Sat 9

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

Thursday 15th March

God save the Queen

Bill Lines

Bill will look at how our British heritage has influenced the kind of society we have built in Australia and, in turn, the kind of conservation movement we have.

Since 1991 Bill has published six books about people and nature in Australia. His sixth, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, was published in 2006 and is a history of, and commentary on, Australian's conservation movement since 1946.

Thursday 19th April

Thursday 17th May

Details for these meetings are not available at going to press. Information will be given in our email newsletter *Burning Issues*.



New NPA ACT member Allyson Peters with her bounty from the 2006 Great Australian Bushwalk promotion (see GAB Prizewinners item in NPA news p19).

NPA ACT Bulletin

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