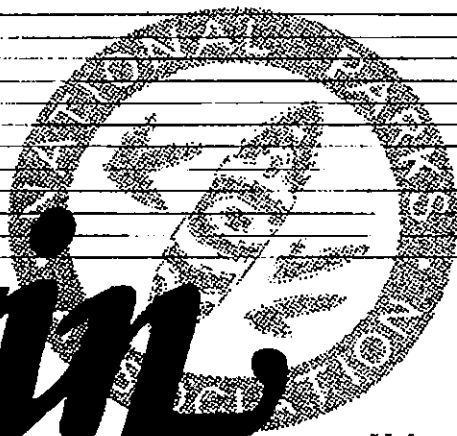


NPA Bulletin



Volume 44 number 3
September 2007

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC



To burn or not to burn

New life members

Wilds of Tasmania



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Articles by contributors may 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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Subscription rates (1 July to 30 June)

Household membership	\$40	Single members	\$35
Corporate membership	\$30	<i>Bulletin</i> only	\$30
Concession	\$25		

Advertising

The *Bulletin* accepts advertisements and inserts. Contact the Editor for information and rates.

NPA Bulletin

Contributions of articles, letters, drawings and photographs are always welcome. Items accepted for publication may also be published on the NPA website. Send all items to The *Bulletin* Team, admin@npaact.org.au, or postal address above.

Deadline for December 2007 issue: 31 October 2007

This *Bulletin* was produced by the NPA *Bulletin* Working Group. Printed by Copy-Qik, Canberra, ACT

ISSN 0727-8837

Cover Photo: *Kathy Saw on Frenchmans Cap summit with two climbers who found an even harder way up.*
Story page 16. Photo Max Lawrence

From the President

The past three months have been a roller-coaster ride as we have pursued our campaign to stop the building of new fire trails on Orroral Ridge and Stockyard Spur. Members threw themselves wholeheartedly into the campaign and people from across the ACT and in NSW have contacted members of the committee to let us know they support us.

Our arguments against these two fire trails were well-researched and supported by a weight of evidence provided by members. Photos and information supplied by members such as Adrienne Nicholson and Martin Chalk provided graphic illustrations of the damage done by the new fire trails already built in the park. Di Thompson and Joan Goodrum researched Aboriginal heritage in the affected areas. Others such as Max Lawrence and Mike Smith led walks and collected evidence on key issues such as the re-vegetation of alpine ash in areas proposed for intensive prescribed burning for which the Orroral Ridge trail was designed. General meetings

gave the committee a good opportunity to brief members on progress and get feedback on what they wanted.

Senior officials in Territory and Municipal Services have taken our concerns on board and I believe are looking very seriously at the irreparable damage these roads would cause to the environmental values of the park. It was much more difficult getting a response from the Emergency Services Authority which is the body pushing for the building of these fire trails. The Commissioner, Gregor Manson, eventually came to our July general meeting to give an informal view on how he wanted his organisation to work with NPA and other community groups.

The process of reviewing the current Strategic Bushfire Management Plan has now begun and we have serious concerns about whether this will prove to be a genuine review or merely a sop to public concern before a predictable return to the destructive and ineffective practices of the past. We are currently considering how to make our contribution as effective as possible.



Check our website at www.npaact.org.au for progress reports. While we continue to have no formal agreement that Orroral Ridge and Stockyard Spur fire trails are officially abandoned, an effective, sustainable fire management plan is our only guarantee that these trails will never be built because there will be no good reason to build them.

Christine Goonrey

Sunday 9 December
Blue Range Hut
from 11.30am

NPA Christmas Party



This year we plan to hold our Christmas Party in the Uriarra Forest at the Blue Range Hut picnic area. The hut is located on the Blue Range Road which turns right off the Brindabella Road some 5km past the Uriarra Homestead. The hut was originally part of an internment camp, during World War II, for Italians who worked on afforestation of the area.

All the usual Christmas Party features. Bring your own picnic lunch (BBQ facilities are available) and Christmas cheer. Nibbles, Christmas cake and some drinks will be provided. If you need a lift, please contact a member of the committee (see page 2 of the *Bulletin*).

Further details will be in *Burning Issues* and on our website closer to the event.



Afternoon tea in the garden

Association member Dianne Thompson and then Vice President Beverley Hammond in the Mawson garden of Barbara and Syd Comfort during an NPA social in November 1992. The garden will be open to association members and friends again this November. Details are set out in the *Outings Program*.

Photo Barbara Comfort.



Annual report, August 2007

It is just over a year since the ACT environment portfolio went through a massive re-structure which caused us great concern. The new arrangements offered highly suspect savings but significantly altered the way environmental agencies were to do their job. The changes downgraded the Ministerial portfolio for the Environment; merged Environment ACT with roads, parks and municipal services; removed an identifiable agency head for the environment; and collapsed identifiable costings and outcomes for the environment into those of the general portfolio. In those circumstances, NPA ACT strongly questioned this Government's commitment to being held accountable for its care of our environment.

Twelve months on we are able to see some positive outcomes from these changes and some areas where we remain concerned. Staff losses remain our greatest concern and we have seen a falling off of park care because of reduced staff numbers.

The unholy trinity of feral pest damage (particularly pigs), weeds and erosion increased significantly over the past year as funds dried up. Skills and long-term knowledge about the park have been lost as staff have moved on to other jobs or retired. Key tasks such as finalising the Namadgi Management Plan have failed to be completed and the Interim Namadgi Management Board has disappeared.

On the other hand we have seen some benefits from the changes. There is greater integration of resources and staff resulting in a wider and more comprehensive focus on managing our parks and reserves as an integrated

system, rather than separate patches of turf to be defended. This is increasingly important in managing the old ACT Forests estate, particularly the Lower Cotter, and in building an environment-focussed culture from quite different workforces.

The immediate impacts of the continuing drought and the longer term challenges of climate change require this whole-of-territory approach and senior management of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) appear to be taking this challenge seriously. Officers of the department have made a concerted effort to stay in touch with NPA ACT and to keep us informed as issues emerged which has been a nice change too.

Against this background NPA has taken on some significant challenges in the past year, especially in trying to mitigate the bulldoze-and-burn approach to fire management in Namadgi. We have commented on all development applications for new fire trails including Grassy Creek, Long Flat and Burnt Hill.

Our submissions have argued strongly that these fire trails are too large for the needs of the park, introduce weeds, erosion and risk of arson as well as threaten native habitat and cultural heritage. Members have collected evidence and documented some of the worst examples of the damage done by the trails, but there has been no let-up on the demand for more trails from some elements in the fire fighting community.

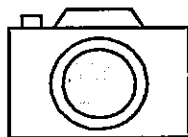
One of our most important campaigns in recent memory began in May when TAMS commenced the planning process to construct tanker

standard fire trails on Orroral Ridge and Stockyard Spur. Members mounted a vigorous campaign (see *From the President* page 3) to halt this planning process because of the damage the trails would do and because they are so palpably unnecessary to good fire management practices in the park.

We are also pressuring the Government to remove destructive strategies from the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan. These include setting a trigger for prescribed burning at a fine fuel depth of just 35mm which would lead to massive degradation of open forest in the park. We are fighting an entrenched and active forestry culture in taking on these issues and it is proving a long, hard haul to bring about any sort of change to last century's fire fighting mentality. These battles will continue into 2008 and beyond, but NPA has a history of sticking with the difficult tasks. We will eventually prevail here as well.

Our normal busy round of activities has continued while all this drama has been going on. Thanks to the Outings Sub-committee for organising and running another year of successful outings and work parties. The general meetings have had a succession of interesting speakers and the Publications Sub-committee has produced new editions of our bird and tree books and the symposium proceedings, with other works still in the development stage. We moved into our new office in Civic and began organising next year's symposium. All in all, a challenging year which members have met with great energy and enthusiasm.

Christine Goonrey



Photograph Competition

The Publications Sub-committee needs your photographs to compile a calendar for promoting Namadgi. What better way than to have our members showing how they see our own national park. Therefore — a competition!

The theme for this 2009 calendar will be

Walking in Namadgi

The competition is open to NPA ACT members, and (because we know how keen they are) to ACT park rangers/staff.

Please submit your photos as colour prints (limit five per person) size A5 to A4, by the end of February 2008. Each photo should be accompanied by about 50 words, describing the location, time of year, features of significance, and should identify the photographer.

We will appoint an external judge.

Submit to the office: NPA ACT calendar photo competition
GPO Box 544
Canberra ACT 2601



Support your Association

Annual General Meeting 2007

After welcoming members to the AGM on Thursday, 16 August 2007, the President, Christine Goonrey, paid respect to life members who had died over the last year: Ian Currie, Olive Buckman and Sheila Kruse.

Before giving her President's Report Christine expressed her sincere thanks to a very active committee. She mentioned some of the year's achievements, in particular the website that was always up-to-date, the hospitality group and especially Adrienne Nicholson, the outings sub-committee who manage to organise up to 100 events a year, and the work of the publications sub-committee.

After last year's changes to the ACT Government's environment portfolio we had been left questioning their commitment to the environment. We are still waiting for the final Namadgi Plan of Management, and the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board is defunct. Senior officers in the Department for Territory and Municipal Services are gradually more willing to talk to NPA representatives which shows the increasing respect for our Association.

The proposed four new fire trails in Namadgi greatly occupied the committee and concerned members. We objected especially to the trails on Orroral Ridge and Stockyard Spur.

Christine commented that NPA members' great expertise comes from 'walking the park'.

Christine mentioned that the new edition of the ACT tree book would be out very soon and that NPA will be publishing an orchid guide next year. See page 4 for the full President's annual report.

Treasurer Rod Griffiths then gave his report for the year ended 30 June 2007. He indicated that the profit was about \$5000, similar to the previous year. A complete copy of the audited financial report was available for perusal at the meeting. The report was accepted by the meeting and Mr Malcolm Prentice, FCPA, reappointed as auditor for the coming year. The meeting extended their gratitude to the honorary auditor for his assistance to the Association and to the Treasurer for his excellent work, carried by acclamation.

Kevin McCue reported that Clive Hurlstone and Adrienne Nicholson had been nominated by NPA members this year for Honorary Life Membership: The meeting accepted the Committee's recommendation to grant this honour to both worthy members with acclamation. See the article below for the citations.

David Large took over the chair to conduct the Association's annual election of office bearers and committee members. He reported that 11 nominations for 2007-08 had been received and the nominees were duly elected (see inside cover page of the *NPA Bulletin*).

David noted that there are still two vacant positions on the Committee and that additional members can be co-opted during the year. Christine Goonrey extended a warm welcome to the two new committee members, Annette Smith and Mike Bremers, and a special thanks for his work and dedication over several years to David who had decided to resign from the committee. The meeting thanked David for acting as the returning officer, by acclamation.

Dave and Judy Kelly gave an interesting illustrated presentation on their recent walk through beech forest filled valleys to rugged alpine ridges in Kahurangi National Park, New Zealand, The President then invited all to enjoy the sumptuous supper provided by members, and Adrienne's special gluhwein.

Sonja Lenz

NPA ACT's new life members

According to the Constitution of NPA ACT (see www.npaact.org.au) any member may be eligible for Honorary Life Membership—a member who has rendered meritorious service to or on behalf of the Association. The August 2007 AGM unanimously ratified the committee's recommendation to honour two members this year, Clive Hurlstone and Adrienne Nicholson.

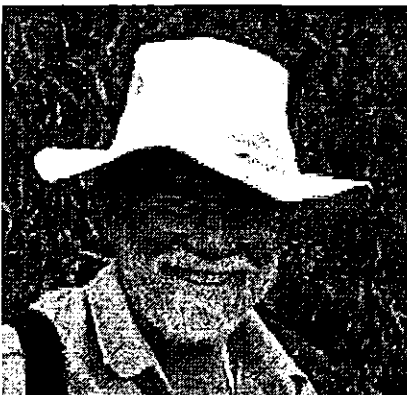
Clive has served NPA ACT as President and committee member for longer than any other member of the

Association. He was joint author of several important NPA documents and submissions including *Caring for Namadgi* and *Conservation of Land under ACT Forests*. Clive represented NPA ACT before the Senate Standing Committee and on the Conservation Council of the ACT. He organised the NPA office for years, guided re-publication of NPA ACT guidebooks such as the *Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT* and the *Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT*. He has also arranged the selection and invitation of guest speakers for our monthly general meetings and the technical support for the conduct of the meetings for many years. Clive is a founding member and President of the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group.

Adrienne is well known and appreciated for her management of general meeting suppers and Christmas parties for many years. She has organised and led some very interesting day walks and car camps and has been active on the Outings sub-committee. She has been the public face of

NPA ACT at numerous fairs and ACT functions, designing, erecting and manning the NPA display. Adrienne has contributed extensively to the *Bulletin* with articles and photographs, and by organising the layout for printing and helping with the mail-out over a long time. She worked behind the scenes on the 2006 NPA symposium and has been an active member of the Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group, again for many years.

Kevin McCue



Vale Sheila Merlyn Kruse OAM 1913–2007

It was with sadness that NPA members learnt of the death of their highly regarded Honorary Life Member, Sheila Kruse, on 3 May 2007 at the great age of 93 years. Born in Melbourne and a resident there for most of her life, Sheila was a much loved and loving family member to her siblings and several generations of nieces and nephews. Many were her stories of happy holidays spent at the family seaside cottage at Dromana.

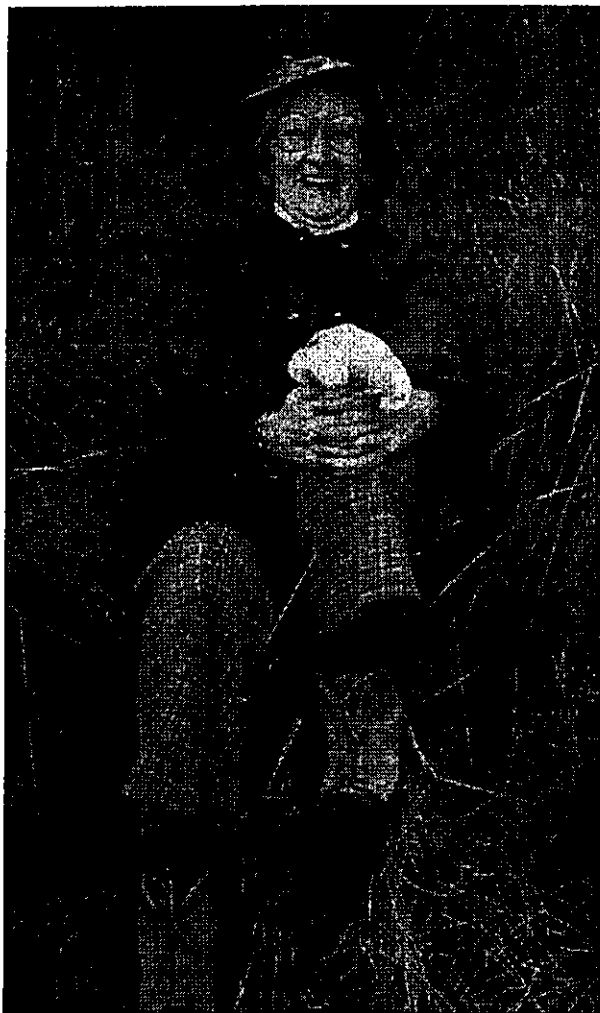
During World War II Sheila served in the Australian Women's Army Service. In 1949 she joined CSIRO as secretary to the Secretary of that organization. She retained this position to a number of Secretaries, and later to the Chairman of the Executive, until her retirement in 1974.

When CSIRO moved its headquarters from Melbourne in 1970, Sheila found herself in Canberra where she was allocated a unit in the Currong Flats, Braddon. Here she met NPA members Gabrielle Watt and Julie Henry, and was soon enjoying monthly walks and evening meetings. It was Julie Henry who suggested to Sheila that she would make an excellent Association secretary, and Sheila happily agreed to be nominated.

She was NPA secretary from 1971 to 1981, working with six presidents (George Chippendale, Bill Watson, the late Ian Currie, Darryl Hawke, John Banks, and Neville Esau). Sheila's high secretarial skills greatly enhanced the Association's meeting procedures, minute taking and general filing methods. She was a meticulous worker and a woman of extremely wise counsel. Her ability to relate to people of varying backgrounds and natures was of tremendous benefit to the Committee and the Association as a whole.

Sheila's inquiring mind and passion for the beauty and awe of the bush and its creatures ensured that she soon became involved in policy as well as administration. This included the submissions and correspondence leading up to the declaration of Gudgenby Nature Reserve in 1979.

In 1976–77, as a Black Mountain Sub-committee member, she worked on protests against the building of the telecommunications tower there, and in 1977–78 was convener of the Membership Sub-committee. After her



Sheila Kruse on an NPA walk on Mount Majura, 5 August 1984. Photo Betty Campbell

retirement as the NPA secretary in 1981, Sheila continued with sub-committee work. This included the group that produced the first edition of our *Field Guide to the Native Trees of the ACT* in 1980, the campaign against proposed development on the western side of the Murrumbidgee River corridor, and the opposition to the Corin Forest ski development.

For a few years she was the NPA's publicity officer and librarian, and also worked on archiving NPA records. Sheila assisted Den Robin with library research into the history of the Orroral Homestead and in the early 1980s wrote a light-hearted column for *Bulletin* issues on NPA events and personalities. NPA members elected her an Honorary Life Member in 1979.

While not a strong walker, Sheila loved being outdoors and in her interview by Matthew Higgins in 1999 talks of her "being dragged up mountains" and her "great sense of achievement when I got to the top". On a hot summer walk to Blue Lake,

Sheila, after the return pull up from the Snowy River, declared firmly "I am never going to Blue Lake again". And she never did!

A woman of strong social responsibility, Sheila volunteered at the Goodwin Homes Op Shop in Civic until it closed in 1991 and was a long time secretary of the now defunct Majura Helpers Guild which raised funds for Barnados Australia. Sheila's other interests included classical music and attending U3A classes, particularly those on Australian history. She read widely, her eclectic taste returning often to her most enjoyed subjects of poetry, classical fiction, travel and biography, and was quite fluent in French. She visited Europe several times and particularly enjoyed travelling in France and Greece. Her friends remember Sheila as a generous and hospitable lady of simple and elegant style.

In retirement, Sheila enlisted the aid of NPA member, the late Dr Robert Story OAM, to translate letters of her grandfather to and from his brother. These were written in 19th century German and the task, including the typing by Sheila, was one of considerable magnitude. These letters and a translation are now lodged in the

Latrobe Library in Melbourne and are a valuable resource for students of Australian social history and the pharmaceutical industry.

Sheila received the well earned award of the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1979 for her work with CSIRO and the community, particularly with NPA and Barnados.

In 2000 Sheila retired to Melbourne to live in order to assist an ailing sister and to be closer to family members. When her own health deteriorated, she moved to an aged care facility where she lived until she died. I was privileged to speak to her on the phone just five days before her unexpected death, and in conversation she confirmed yet again her great pleasure in her Canberra years and asked about various NPA members.

Vale Sheila.

Margaret Aston

What is going on at Mt Franklin?

NPA ACT has been accused by some of interfering in the construction of a new building on Mt Franklin to replace the old and much loved chalet, so it is time to set the record straight. In April 2006 a development application was lodged on behalf of Environment ACT with the ACT Planning Authority to "erect a public facility adjacent to the site of the former Mt Franklin Chalet". ACTPLA issued an approval without conditions on 12 May 2006. The grounds for this decision were that the proposed building replaced a facility that was destroyed in the 2003 bushfires.



*Mt Franklin chalet replacement during construction, 26 May 2007.
Photo Michael Goonrey*

There was no preliminary assessment process, usually mandatory for buildings in the park, no public consultation and little more than a cursory glance at what was proposed. When the NPA committee discovered that approval for a new building had been given without a full planning approval process, we were worried on several counts. Firstly the committee was alarmed that a new building was being constructed in the park without public consultation and we worried that this might set a precedent for other work in the park. Secondly, the proposal could not be considered simply an alteration or addition to an existing situation — it is a new building on an adjacent site with a substantially different construction, footprint and building type.

Thirdly, the approval had been given before comments from the ACT Heritage Council had been received; in fact advice from the ACT Heritage

Council was received two weeks after the approval had been issued. And lastly, there were reports that the building was to be used for accommodation in association with a proposed eco-tourism initiative being trialled in the park at the time. The floor plan associated with the development application supported this interpretation with a private locked area to be constructed, with cupboards, a pot belly stove and other facilities indicating an intention for use as accommodation. It seemed that the new building may have been part of a plan to introduce commercial accommodation into Namadgi National Park in the guise of "management approved activities". These are the sorts of ideas which gain credence under a hasty and secretive approval process.

We knew we had a very good legal case to challenge the approval process but we decided our first step would be to write to the department in July 2006 to seek an undertaking:

1. That no part of the facility be used for overnight residential accommodation;
2. That the public area of the facility be used only for day recreation purposes;
3. That the part of the facility which is not open to the public be used only by park officials for prescribed purposes directly related to the management of Namadgi National Park.

There is no need to bore readers with the endless round of letters, phone calls and follow up which we had to conduct in order

to get an answer. The first two points were agreed on eventually but it was only in April 2007 that the department finally shared with us a definition of "management purposes" which it proposed to insert into the Namadgi Management Plan and stated that it would exclude "people paying for overnight accommodation." We were satisfied that we had made our point.

Members can make up their own minds about the aesthetics of the new building on Mt Franklin and whether it is in keeping with the character of the old one, or of its setting. We understand that we annoyed some people who considered they were acting in the best interests of the park but the idea that buildings could be constructed in the park without public consultation had to be resisted firmly. We hope any future work will be given full and proper consideration.

Christine Goonrey

Caring for Namadgi – Science and People

This magnificent book will tell you more about the origins and workings of Namadgi National Park than any other publication. This is an ideal Christmas or birthday gift book. You, your family and friends will value this collection of invited articles about Namadgi National Park, its history, its plants and animals and the people who care for it.

Support your NPA — great value at only \$22 for members!

Available at general meetings and by contacting the NPA ACT office.



To burn or not to burn — the prescribed burning issue

Prescribed burning — often referred to as planned burning, fuel reduction burning, hazard reduction burning, and sometimes, even more loosely and incorrectly, protection burning — remains an issue of considerable and polarised debate.

Prescribed burning is the application of planned fire to an area under a prescribed or defined set of weather conditions, for a prescribed outcome, irrespective of whether the burning is for fuel reduction or for ecological purposes.

If the outcome is for fuel reduction then the prescriptions include a defined level of fuel removal, which is generally in the order of 25% to 50% of the existing fuel load. Even where well-determined weather conditions are defined, confusion often prevails as to whether a burn is to remove a percentage of the fuel by weight only or a percentage of the fuel over a percentage of the proposed burn area.

Science and “experience”

The science behind prescribed burning is sound but it is the application to any one area that leads to the continual (and polarised) debate. All too often the weather conditions and the outcomes are not determined, even in part, prior to a burn, and burning programs are generally implemented on so-called “experience”.

Unfortunately this “experience” has all too often resulted in crown scorch above prescribed and acceptable levels caused by fire intensities well beyond acceptable fuel reduction levels (3000 plus kilowatts per metre of intensity compared with acceptable levels of 500 to 1500 kilowatts per metre).

Wildfire intensities are often reached, as evidenced by the high percentage of wildfires that occur each year as a result of prescribed burns getting out of control.

Because of the all-too-often failure to define the weather conditions required for acceptable prescribed fire intensities, not only does crown scorch of the overstorey trees occur but excessive amounts of fuel are removed, exposing soils to erosion from any storm events that may follow the burning. This issue is particularly important in the mountain water catchments of the Brindabella Ranges and the Snowy Mountains.

Almost all prescribed burning programs are nominally for fuel

reduction purposes to provide protection for life and property. This in itself is incorrect, as fuel reduction does not provide “protection for life and property”.

If correctly and effectively implemented, prescribed burning reduces the ground litter loads, thereby reducing the fire intensity of a wildfire which may subsequently burn through the area during the summer months.

The reduced fuel loads lead to lower wildfire intensities which, in turn, provide a greater opportunity for fire fighting personnel to suppress a subsequent wildfire. Prescribed burning does not stop a high intensity fire as seen in the 2003 bushfires in the ACT and south-east NSW.

Protection of life and property from the impacts of all wildfires cannot be guaranteed through the implementation of prescribed burning, and to assert that it does would be grossly negligent.

Plans and probabilities

The planning of a prescribed fire not only requires fire management personnel to calculate and define the prescribed weather conditions under which a desired fuel reduction will occur, but also demands that a fire hazard and risk assessment of the area to be burnt be undertaken. This requires the determination of the probability of a wildfire ignition occurring in the proposed area, or the probability of a wildfire starting some distance away and entering the prescribed burn area.

If the probability of an ignition or impact from wildfire is very low, the need for fuel reduction must be carefully considered. Part of the hazard and risk assessment involves the quantification of the litter fuel complex itself, not only in terms of weight (tonnes/ha) but also in terms of fuel structure and flammability. A heavy fuel load does not always directly equate to high wildfire intensities, as fuel moisture regimes, fuel structure (aeration) and fuel type influence combustion and combustion rates as well as the rate of spread of a wildfire.

The hazard and risk assessment also involves a review of the history of fires in the area(s) proposed for prescribed burning. If a wildfire has not burnt an area for a very long time, the need to prescribe burn it must be carefully reviewed even if a high fuel hazard level exists, subject to the probability of a wildfire event occurring.

Ecological assessment

Since prescribed burning is generally carried out in the cooler months — a different time of fire occurrence to that in which native vegetation has evolved survival mechanisms — a basic ecological assessment of the impacts of a prescribed burn must also be included in the hazard and risk assessment program.

While the time of prescribed burning may have little impact, in terms of a single fire, it is the regular and frequent prescribed burning that has greatest impact upon the native biota.

Once a program of prescribed burning for the “protection” of life and property is commenced it must be carried out on a regular and frequent basis to ensure that the litter fuels do not accumulate back to the perceived hazardous level(s).

The hazardous level is generally considered to be in the order of 10 t/ha and even where all ground litter is removed in a prescribed burn, most eucalypt woodlands or forests accumulate fuel levels in excess of 10 t/ha within three to seven years after a fire. Hence prescribed burning has to be carried out regularly within the three to seven years: a much more frequent fire regime than most woodlands and forests evolved under.

The impacts of the regular and frequent prescribed burning on the environment must therefore be assessed and balanced against any benefits accruing from prescribed burning in terms of protection of life and property.

Where sensitive, isolated, or fragmented native vegetation communities are involved, or rare and threatened species exist, the requirement for an impact assessment is even more demanding and has to be even more detailed.

Major ecological issue

A major ecological and fire management issue is that, once prescribed burning is commenced, it usually has to be continued on a regular basis as it provides an advantage to “fire-loving” species and so more and more of these species regenerate after each prescribed burn.

These species are often referred to colloquially as fire-weeds or woody-weeds as they grow rapidly and are very flammable, presenting a new but

(Continued on page 9)

Fire behaviour and plant responses

At its Quarterly General Meeting, the Conservation Council of South East Region and Canberra arranged for three speakers to help to inform our input into the review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT. Bruce Leaver spoke about fire behaviour and prescribed burning and Michael Doherty about plant responses to fire and plant community monitoring. Disappointingly, the third speaker, Professor Mark Adams from the University of NSW and Bushfire CRC, failed to turn up.

Bruce Leaver outlined the role of prescribed burning in fire management. He cautioned that while it has its place in a range of strategies to manage fire, it was not a general cure-all for mitigating unplanned fire behaviour. A number of factors need to be considered before choosing it as an effective tool.

Reducing fuel loads for their own sake is pointless; prescribed burning has to be targeted at a particular strategy, eg protecting a specific asset which in turn dictates what sort of vegetation you require close to the asset and how prescribed burning fits in with that. Prescribed burning doesn't solve the problem of inappropriate vegetation near an asset.

Fires are spread by dry material no bigger than 60mm thick. Larger than that and it takes an intense heat to start them but once started, they contribute to the overall fire intensity. So prescribed burning can only address the fine fuels — less than 60mm. All forests reach equilibrium in the build-up of leaf litter at some point and most reach it within 10–15 years. After that, the "fuel" is broken down as quickly as it forms. So there is some benefit in waiting for some areas of forest to reach equilibrium rather than institute a program of regular burning.

The type of ecological community you're working with is important: dry sclerophyll forest will have a lower bed of fuel but burn more intensely than wet

sclerophyll which has a high level of fuel but burns slower. To understand this, Bruce showed a pile of 50 newspapers compacted down and one newspaper all ripped up and loose. Obviously the latter burns more easily and it is a lot harder to get the compacted stuff to burn. He described wet sclerophyll as having four or five layers: first is dry and aerated, second is wet and aerated, third is damp and compacted; fourth is wet and compacted and fifth is basically mush.

Usual fuel load

The usual prescribed fuel load in Australia is the equivalent of a box of muesli spread over a square metre — it's not a lot of fuel. Keeping fuel loads below that level is not appropriate for most vegetation types. Prescribed burning acts the same as any other burn: fires don't know who lit them and they escape from prescribed burning more often than people like to admit. Prescribed burning is especially dangerous on steep slopes: 5 degrees of slope increases flame height 33%.

Trying to do prescribed burning in proper weather is very hard. There is no such thing as "normal" weather, especially in the south east of Australia. You also have to know what leaf litter you require to keep your ground covered, damp and stable. Removing ground cover in steep, loose soil or scree means you will have erosion problems. Mosaic burning is just that — the same piece tends to get burnt every time because of the fire prone nature of some areas and fire resistant nature of others. Start a prescribed burn and the bits that burn are the bits that always burn. The bits of the mosaic that don't burn are the bits that usually don't burn anyway. So you're not spreading the burden by mosaic burning.

Finally there is the vexed question of frequent fire impact on vegetation

communities. Frequent burning appears to destroy or weaken the biota which breaks down leaf litter. The more frequently you burn, the higher the leaf litter afterwards because it has not been broken down as fast or as much. Fire-responsive species are likely to be more flammable. Mid storey species such as bossia and acacia respond rapidly to fire and colonise an area, thus increasing its potential fire load. The more you burn, the more burnable material you get.

Vegetation response

Michael Doherty of the CSIRO then spoke about vegetation response to fire. Basically his 130 plots show that even intense fires don't kill trees but they do kill shrubs and other plants. Each ecological system returns to where it was within a certain number of years — often less than 10 — because that is the way they are structured to respond to fire.

The first few years after a fire show a huge increase in the diversity of plants but many of these return to the seed bed and do not grow again till the next fire: they are programmed only to appear after a fire and disappear quite quickly after that. They have a 15–70 year life cycle which is a concept we have a little difficulty thinking about. Frequent burning returns this vegetation regime much more quickly to the area and these species can replace more fire sensitive species if fires are frequent enough.

His point was that it is very hard to say that fire intensity has a long term effect on a community, it stays the way it was. But fire frequency has an effect in that fires too close together affect the seed bed and only species with annual seed set will prosper. Trees etc which take 10–15 years to reach maturity and set seed are very disadvantaged.

Christine Goonrey

To burn or not to burn — the prescribed burning issue *continued*

different fire hazard situation. They are, in fact, native primary colonisers, many being leguminous hard-seeded species which benefit from any fire event. Hence they provide a fire hazard situation very soon after their establishment (two to four months after a fire).

Prescribed burning often only changes the hazardous fire situation from one form to another, providing

only a very short period of any quantifiable benefit in terms of the reduction in potential wildfire intensities and "protection" of life and property.

Prescribed burning has its role in fire management but like all natural area and land management programs, must be fully assessed as to the positive and negative impacts that accrue from its implementation.

Similarly it must be implemented and controlled within the prescribed weather conditions to ensure the prescribed outcomes are met without unacceptable detrimental impacts upon the native biota of the area. In a worse-case situation a wildfire may be the outcome of prescribed burning.

Roger Good, Alpine Ecologist
Lecturer, Fire Science & Land Management
Sydney and Charles Sturt Universities

Forest flammability and fuel dynamics

At the 17 May general meeting, Phil Zylstra, Fire Technical Officer with the Snowy Mountains Region Fire Unit, gave his talk based on a five-year project examining the history and science that define the impact of fire and climate change on forest flammability in the Australian Alps.

Phil is with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and is doing his PhD with ADFA at the University of NSW, with funding and support from the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. He started his thesis in 2003 and expects to complete it by the end of 2008.

In his presentation which included his thesis material, Phil covered the variables of forest flammability and fuel dynamics in the Australian Alps with particular reference to climate change.

The variables include:

- soil moisture
- plant moisture
- flammability of leaves, plants, forests and landscapes; and
- changes in fuels over time — as plants change, so the fuels change.

Another variable Phil referred to was fire frequency: a more frequently burnt patch of bush will produce a different suite of plants compared with one that is less frequently burnt. What has to be determined is how frequent burning affects the flammability of plants.

Varied responses needed

Regrowth after a fire can produce a diversity of vegetation, some non-flammable and some that is more flammable than previously. Aborigines took each patch of bush on its merits and their approach varied in different areas.

In the Snowy Mountains Phil investigated wet sclerophyll forest incorporating alpine ash. He showed the difference between unburnt forest and a patch struck by lightning.

During a fire, if trees are killed, an alpine ash forest will drop a tremendous number of seeds, resulting in a single age forest. It is affected by fire intensity and frequency: a low intensity fire may not kill the trees but a moderate or high intensity fire will kill them.

In the 2003 fires, alpine ash were burnt and many were killed; three years later, the 2006 fires burnt the seedlings.

How do we best protect the forests, bearing in mind that some treatments can increase the impact of fires? Vegetation type must be considered.

Phil illustrated this point by referring to the United States, where the number of megafires is increasing. Where conifers dominate in the west coast, the more that fires are suppressed, the bigger the fire crests when a fire does occur.

In the broadleaved forests of the eastern United States, the understorey stops the fire from developing enough to reach the canopies.

This indicates that a rule of thumb cannot be applied across different species. Another factor behind fire behaviour and its impact is the actual weather on the day.

In considering tree-killing fires, more frequent burning often produces more understorey vegetation. This begs the question as to whether more burning increases or lessens the incidence of fires. Does a ten year burning cycle make the forest safer from fire and is the resulting denser vegetation more flammable?

In snowgum woodland, the growth of grasses and shrubs make the woodland more fire prone during the first five years after fire.

The points that have to be considered with flammability are:

- Will fire spread in the ground fuels?
- Will the higher fuel strata ignite?
- What is the connectivity of the higher strata and the connectivity between strata?
- What is the final fire behaviour that is produced?
- What will happen to this vegetation if burnt or not burnt?
- What successional stage do we want for this forest if our goal is to reduce the risk from fire?

Phil showed how connectivity between plants, which can lead to a merged flame, is a key factor in the spread and intensity of fire. In a ground fire, the shrubs and ground are dry whereas the canopy is too moist for burning or not well enough connected to the understorey; under different conditions, a wet understorey may dry out and fire may extend to and burn a dry canopy.

Fire frequency is not a guarantee of fire proofing. An area regenerating after being burnt in 2003, can burn fiercely a few years later and management that reduces the fire incidence may well coincide with the preservation of plants. On the other hand, burning is good management for some bush plants.

The impact of fire frequency at different intervals in one open forest type was well illustrated with a slide

that showed an area six years after a fire with a bushy understorey. On the other side of a fence the area that had been burnt 15 years previously had a markedly less dense understorey.

Estimating variables

Phil referred to the McArthur index for forest and grassland fire which was developed in the 1960s and 1970s to estimate fire behaviour for specific fuel types from measurements of wind speed, fuel moisture content and drought. The index also combined the most important fire danger variables to estimate rate of fire spread and flame height.

The index predictions may not match fire behaviour when fire danger ratings range between high and extreme and are not suited to the ecology of the Australian Alps. This was evident in a comparison of maps where fire in the Mt Toolong area of the Snowy Mountains extended in a narrow band 5km beyond the McArthur prediction.

Phil's talk reflected the complexity of vegetation systems and of fire regimes and the need for continuing research, particularly in the face of climate change when higher temperatures are occurring.

Questions at the end of the presentation reflected the interest and concern NPA members have about the response of authorities to bushfires and to so-called "fuel reduction".

The talk was also very topical because it gave the NPA further material on which to base its review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for Namadgi National Park. At the time of writing, the Plan has yet to be finalised and we are still waiting to be consulted as one of the stakeholders.

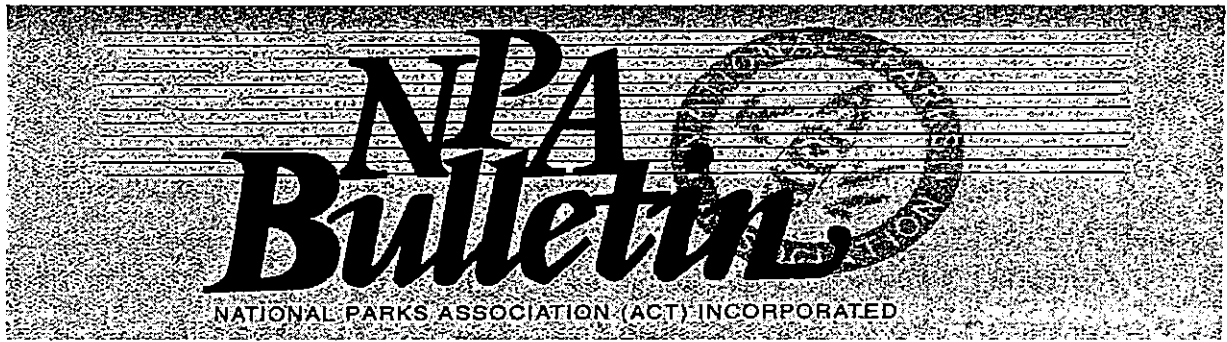
Phil has accepted an invitation to present his topic at NPA's 2008 Symposium.

Judy Kelly

The association welcomes the following new members:

Julie Priestley
Charles and Bridget Anyon
Belinda Trushell
Kerry Byron
Carmel Leahy

We look forward to seeing you at association activities.



NPA OUTINGS PROGRAM

September 2007 — December 2007

Outings Guide

Distance grading (per day)

- 1 — up to 10 km
- 2 — 10 km to 15 km
- 3 — 15 km to 20 km
- 4 — above 20 km

Terrain grading

- A — Road, firetrail track
- B — Open forest
- C — Light scrub
- D — Patches of thick scrub, regrowth
- E — Rock scrambling
- F — Exploratory

Day Walks: Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.

Pack Walks: Two or more days. Carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER EARLY.

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

Other activities include ski trips, canoe trips, nature rambles and environmental & 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 per person to the nearest dollar, of THIRTY SIX cents per kilometer per car divided by the number of occupants in the car including the driver. When odd numbers arise, a total contribution may be 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 most 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.

11-12 Sept - Midweek Pack Walk**FOSTERS MOUNTAIN**

Joint NPA / FBI Activity

Map: Endrick 1:25,000**Grading: 2 A/D/E****Leader: Philip Gatenby****Contact: 6254 3094 or**jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

Fosters Mountain is on the western edge of the Budawangs. Walk from the Nerriga entrance, Morton National Park. Partly on tracks, some rock scrambling across creek gullies and through cliff lines. Climb of about 350m. Contact leader by the Wednesday before the walk.

Drive 240-km, \$86 per car

15-16 Sept -**BURRAWANG COASTAL WEEKEND****Leader: Judy Kelly****Contact: 6253 1859 or**judy.kelly@tpg.com.au

Burrawang is a 40ha block of coastal bushland near Mogo with self-contained cabins. The options are for short walks around the property, along the adjoining beaches and/or following the cliffline to Malua Bay. Another possibility is climbing Durras Mt, Murrumbidgee NP near Peppy Beach. Or you might want to just relax, read, sleep, swim or watch the feathered birds. Suitable for young families.

Four cabins tentatively booked. Each has 2 beds + 1 mattress upstairs and a double bed downstairs. Charge per cabin = \$85.00 for one night or \$130 for two nights. Contact leader by Friday August 31 for further details.

15 Sept - Saturday Work Party**SQUARE ROCK TRACK REPAIR****Leader: Philip Gatenby****Contact: 6254 3094 or**jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

This work party involves track repair work and restoration of pig damage. The actual location will be selected closer to the day. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 9:00am.

Drive: 65km, \$24 per car

16 Sept - Sunday Walk**PARALYSER, PERISHER****Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000****Grading: 2 B (on snow)****Leader: Brian Slee****Contact: 6281 0719 or**brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6.15am for Guthega carpark. Proceed via bridges over Blue Cow and Farm Creeks before climbing to the Paralyser trig then Mt Perisher and

return via Farm Creek. Some steep climbs but is suitable for beginners with good fitness. Be in possession of snowshoes prior to departure. Book with leader for weather check, and vehicle arrangements.

Drive 420-km, \$150 / car + Park fee.

23-Sept - Sunday Walk**MT GINGERA AND BRUMBY FLAT****Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000****Grading: 3 A/E****Leader: Steve Hill****Contact: 6231 9186 or**landshil@webone.com.au

Walk from the Ginini car park to the Mt Gingera south summit (1857) for the views. Drop down a short way to a secluded alpine frosty hollow called Brumby Flat. Lunch at another view with a difference. Then walk to a spectacular viewpoint below the north summit (1847) before returning via Pryors Hut. Walk is partly off track but no serious bush bashing. Meet at the car park, Cotter Road & Uriarra Road intersection at 8.30.

Drive 150-km, \$55 per car

26 Sept - WEDNESDAY WALK

[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Henry Hatch**Contact: 6290 1138 or**hhatch@netspeed.com.au

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

29 Sept to 1 Oct - Pack Walk**MT SCABBY****Leader: David Kelly****Contact: 6253 1859 or**judy.kelly@tpg.com.au

Walk on Saturday from Boboyan car park, via either Middle Ck or upper Naas Ck, camping two nights near the head of Sam's Ck. Sunday, a day trip to Mt. Scabby, with extensive views of the granite peaks of the Brindabella Range. Monday, return via Naas Ck to Boboyan car park, Contact Dave by 27th September for details.

Drive 120-km, \$44 per car

5 Oct - Friday Social Gathering**KLAUS HUENEKE –****PHOTOGRAPHING HUTS AND****HIGH COUNTRY**

Joint KHA / NPA Activity

7.30pm, Graham Scully's home,**Macs Reef Road, Bywong.**

This gathering is targeted at people who have a copy of his latest book, 'Mountain Landscapes and Historic

Huts', who love the huts and mountain photography, and who would enjoy an evening discovering aspects of mind and technique associated with the photographs.

Bring your book with a couple of photos that you find intriguing or personally meaningful and enjoy engaging with Klaus and others.

It will be possible to purchase a copy on the night at \$39.95 (RRP).

Numbers limited, so get in early by contacting Graham on 6230 3352 or scullymobs@netspeed.com.au

7-Oct - Sunday Walk**MT DOMAIN****Map: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000****Grading: 2 A/D/E****Leader: Mike Bremers****Contact: 6292 3408(h) or**mcbremers@optusnet.com.au

Meet 8:30am at Kambah Village Shops. Walk the fire trail to Fishing Gap then off track through patches of regrowth and some rock scrambling to reach the peak. Lunch on top whilst admiring views of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Cotter Valley. May return to the cars via the direct route. Total climb of about 700m.

Drive 90-km, \$32 per car

13 Oct - Saturday Work Party**GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP****Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578,**scomfort@netspeed.com.au, or**Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422,**cjhurls@bigpond.net.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 Oct - Saturday Walk**Black Mountain Spring****Wildflower Celebration****Leader: Peter Ormay****Contact: Jean Geue, 6251 1601****or jean.geue@bigpond.com**

The Burbidge/Chippendale traditional social ramble to enjoy spring flowerings and learn more about the incredible diversity of our Black Mountain plants. Joint activity with Native Plant Society, U3A and Friends of Aranda Bushland. Bring your enthusiasm, morning tea, water, hat, sunblock and stout shoes.

Meet 9:30am at stile off Belconnen Way just before Caswell Drive corner. The walk will finish around 12:30pm

14 Oct - Sunday Daywalk
MT KOSCIUSZKO
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 2 A (on snow)
Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or

brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6.30am for Thredbo. Take chairlift to top and follow track to summit of Kosciuszko. Return via Etheridge Ridge. Some steep climbs but suitable for beginners. Be in possession of snowshoes prior to departure. Book with leader for weather check, and vehicle arrangements. If insufficient snow, alternative walk will be arranged.

Drive 420-km, \$150 / car plus Park fee.

16 Oct – Tuesday
WALKS COMMITTEE MEETING

Convener: Mike Smith

Contact: 6286 2984 or

msmith@netspeed.com.au

Meeting to set Outings/Activities program for Jan to Mar-2008. Contact convener for details.

21 Oct - Sunday Walk
SCULPTURES – OLD AND NEW –
COFFEE AND CAKES
Leader: Col McAlister
Contact: 6288 4171

A gentle stroll around some of Canberra's wonderful old and new sculptures in Civic, the ANU and the Parliamentary Triangle. Morning tea at the National Sound and Screen Archive. Bring lunch, in the sculpture garden of the National Gallery. Afternoon tea at the National Library.

Meet in car park off London Circuit opposite Fletcher Jones at 9.00am.

20–21 Oct - Weekend Pack Walk
MINUMA RANGE
Map: Krawarree 1:25 000
Grading: 2 B/D/F
Leader: Philip Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or
jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

The Minuma Range lies west of the Deua River. The plan for this exploratory walk, starting from the Wyanbene Caves area, is to follow the range to the north and east towards Appletree Mountain and beyond. Steep climbs will be involved. The precise route will depend on the weather at the time, the availability of water and the strength of the party. Contact leader by the Wednesday before the walk.

Drive 210-km, \$76 per car

20 Oct – Saturday
BIRDWATCHING WITH COG

A joint activity with COG, full details to be advised in *Burning Issues*, closer to the event.

24 Oct - WEDNESDAY WALK
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Phil Gatenby

Contact: 6254 3094 or

jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

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

27 Oct - Saturday Work Party
KANGAROO CREEK AREA

Leader: Martin Chalk

Contact: 6292 3502 (h)

This work party will tackle briars and blackberry in Kangaroo Creek, which flows into Corin Dam. This area has not been visited by NPA work parties. The Creek is steep in parts, so be prepared. All materials provided. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8.30am.

Drive 88-km, \$32 per car

30 Oct to 3 Nov - Car Camp
SHOALHAVEN RIVER
Leaders: Di & Gary Thompson
Contact: Gary on 6248 9057

All the luxuries of home — suitable for caravans and camper trailers. Close to home too. Probably camp two nights at Charleyong and two nights Oallen Ford. Swimming, birdwatching, sitting about, canoeing, visiting nature reserves, explore riverine environment and day trip into Budawangs.

31 Oct - WEDNESDAY WALK
[Joint NPA / CBC / FBI Activity]

Leader: Henry Hatch

Contact: 6290 1138 or

hhatch@netspeed.com.au

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

4 Nov - Sunday Walk
ELAINE MINE
Map: Cabramurra 1:25000
Grading: 3 ABF
Leader: Martin Chalk
Contact: 6292 3502 (h)

This walk is from the Selwyn ski area along the Tabletop Mt fire trail to a point 2.5-km past Yan's Yards where we will turn off to the Elaine Mine via a steep descent. Will be ample time to explore the old workings before returning to Selwyn via Bloomfield

Creek and Four Mile Hut. Meet at Kambah Village shops at 8:00am.

Drive 300-km, \$108 per car

5-8 Nov - Pack Walk
NADGEE NATURE RESERVE
Map: Kiah, Nadgee, and
Narrabarba 1:25 000

Grading: 3 A/B

Leader: Neville Esau & Tim Walsh

Contact: Tim on 6285 1112 or

thompson.walsh@netspeed.com.au

A 4-day walk in the Nadgee NR south of Eden visiting Merrica River, Harry's Hut, Nadgee Lake, Cape Howe and Newtons Beach. NPWS limit of 8 per group and permits are required. If interested contact leader asap for a detailed description.

Drive 600-km, \$216 per car

10 Nov - Saturday Work Party
GUJDENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP
Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au, or
Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422,
cjhurls@bigpond.net.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.

11 Nov - Sunday Walk
HONEYSUCKLE TO BOOROOMBA
Map: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Grading: 1 A
Leader: Adrienne Nicholson
Contact: 6281 6381

An easy walk from the Honeysuckle campground to Booroomba Rocks along Aust Alpine Track for views and lunch. Total Climb of 300m, steepish up to Rocks. Return by same route. Meet 9:00am at Kambah Village Shops

Drive 90-km, \$33 per car

17 Nov - Saturday Work Party
BRINDABELLA RANGE AREA
Leader: Phil Gatenby
Contact: 6254 3094 or

jandp.gatenby@optusnet.com.au

This work party will be picked from three options: water tank installation at Bendora Hut, wilding pine control at Blue Range Hut, or blackberry control at Thompson's Corner. None of these locations has been visited previously by work parties. All materials provided. Meet at the forest car park on Uriarra Road (near Cotter Road) at 9:00am

Drive 86-km, \$30 per car

18 Nov - Sunday Social Event
AFTERNOON TEA IN THE GARDEN
At: 87 Shackleton Crt, Mawson
Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578

Barbara and Syd invite members and friends to afternoon tea and a stroll in their garden (and maybe see a few items of interest about Canberra)

25 Nov - Sunday Walk
HORSE GULLY HUT
Map: ACT 1:100 000
Grading: 3 A/B

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

Meet at the Kambah Village Shops at 8:00 am. A walk from the Mt Clear Camping ground along the Naas river to Horse Gully hut. Returning via Demanding Hut to survey the condition of these huts
Drive 150-km, \$55 per car

25-28 Nov - Pack Walk
UPPER CRACKENBACK
Map: Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000
Grading: 4 A/B/C

Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Drive past Thredbo and park at Dead Horse Gap. Walk to Teddys Hut, top of Crackenback River and set up camp. Day trips to Chimneys Ridge, Drift Hill and Paddy Rushs Bogong. Return via Brindle Bull on day four. Lunch at Jindabyne. Hut now complete with a chimney and may become popular so get in early. Contact leader by Friday. Departure date flexible.

Drive 420-km, \$150 / car + Park fee.

28 Nov - 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.

30 Nov to 3 Dec - Car Camp
GUNGARLIN RIVER,
Joint KHA / NPA Activity
Leader: Graham Scully
Contact: 6230 3352 or

scullymobs@netspeed.com.au
A 4-day weekend with the Willis family, the builders of Botheram Plain hut, and John Libke, a CSIRO rabbit researcher into myxomatosis.

A grand opportunity to talk with and learn from people who lived and worked in the area before it was declared a National Park.

Conservation works will also be carried out on Botheram Plain hut during this weekend.

Shorter stays ok.

2 Dec - Sunday walk
MT GUDGENBY
Map: Rendezvous Creek & Yaouk 1:25 000
Grading: 4 A/C/D/E

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

Meet at the Namadgi Visitors Centre, past Tharwa, at 8am for a long day conquering one of the iconic peaks close to Canberra. The views from the top are well worth the sometimes very steep and challenging climb. Some rock scrambling and regrowth to contend with. Fit walkers only please.

Drive 140-km, \$50 per car

8 Dec - Saturday Work Party and Christmas lunch

GUDGENBY BUSH REGENERATION GROUP
Contact: Syd Comfort, 6286 2578,
scomfort@netspeed.com.au, or
Clive Hurlstone, 0407 783 422,
cjhurls@bigpond.net.au

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre, Tharwa at 9:15am or Yankee Hat car park at 10:00am. Work in the regeneration area in the morning. Tools provided. Stay on for Christmas party lunch which will be provided and enjoyed in the shade of regenerating trees. In the afternoon a leisurely stroll to check the progress of tree plantings.

NPA Christmas Party

Sunday, 9 December
BLUE RANGE HUT
from 11.30am



Contact: NPA committee members

This year we plan to hold our Christmas Party at Blue Range Hut off the Brindabella Road.

All the usual features. Bring your picnic lunch and Christmas cheer—nibbles, Christmas cake and some drinks will be on hand.

Check *Burning Issues* for details.

10 to 14 Dec - Pack Walk
JAGUNGAL WILDERNESS
Map: Khancoban, Kosciusko 1:50 000 (or equivalent 1:25 000s)
Grading: 3 A/B

Leader: Neville Esau & Tim Walsh
Contact: Tim on 6285 1112 or
thompson.walsh@netspeed.com.au

A 5-day pack walk exploring the Jagungal wilderness with visits to Mount Jagungal, Brassy Mountain, Valentine Falls and many other interesting features. Group numbers will be limited. If interested contact leader asap for a more detailed description.

Drive 480-km, \$173 per car

16 Dec - Sunday Walk
BLUE LAKE FROM GUTHEGA
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 3 A/C

Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 6.45am for Guthega. Walk south to Ilawong, cross Snowy River then climb west to pass between Twynam and Little Twynam. Descend to Blue Lake via spectacular western route. After lunch cross Blue Lake Ck, climb Crummer Spur and return via outward route. Alpine meadows and wildflowers. Afternoon tea Jindabyne. About 16-km with several steep climbs. Contact leader for meeting place.

Drive 420-km, \$150 per car plus Park entry fee.

13 January; Sunday Walk
LAKE ALBINA
Map: Perisher Valley 1:25 000
Grading: 2 AC

Leader: Brian Slee
Contact: 6281 0719 or
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Depart 7.00am and drive to Charlotte Pass. Cross Snowy River then follow Club Lake Creek and Kunama Creek to Kunama ruins. After a break, climb to Moraine Pass, contour around Northcote and descend to Lake Albina for lunch. Return via Club Lake. Excellent wildflowers. Afternoon tea Jindabyne. Steep climbs. Contact leader for meeting place.

Drive 420-km, \$150 per car plus Park entry fee.

Outings Convenor - Mike Smith
6286 2984 or msmith@netspeed.com.au

Burning in the Lower Cotter Catchment

Following widespread concern about environmental damage caused by the burning of the windrows in the Lower Cotter Catchment (LCC) last year, members of NPA ACT, Clive Hurlstone, Martin Worthy and Christine Goonrey were given a tour of the site and an explanation of the proposed burn for 2007 by Stephen Alegria (Parks, Conservation and Lands, Territory and Municipal Services), Tim McGuffog (Rural Fire Service) and Gregor Manson (Emergency Services Authority).

We drove to the top of Mt McDonald to look over the areas which comprise the LCC. Below us were the areas re-vegetated by Greening Australia with voluntary help; further out were areas burnt last year with marked burn scars on several hills. Other areas were clearly pine plantations, put in before the decision to return the area to natural vegetation.

Stephen pointed out the area in the distance which was proposed for the 2007 burn. He explained that the original decision to re-plant pines meant that virtually the whole area had been slashed and put into windrows as was accepted forestry practice, and this

was something he had to manage as best he could. In addition, planting or re-vegetating often required heavy vehicle access which necessitated the removal of the windrows. They were trying to leave as much of the windrows as possible to decompose over the next five to seven years.

The vertical windrows to be burnt this year had been laid in shorter rows and non-sequentially as a lesson from last year's burn. Other windrows were being burnt where they touched major access roads as the RFS had advised that they represented a fire hazard to crews in a potential fire fighting situation.

Last year's mistakes

The mistakes of last year's burn were that it had lacked centralised control and there were too many players to ensure proper control of the burn sites in the manner set out in the original burn plan. The damage done by extremely hot fires and by the burn escaping into re-vegetating areas would be avoided this year by hand lighting, not using helicopters; by using limited numbers of fully briefed personnel; and by having closer management of the burn areas.

We then drove to one of the proposed burn sites off Blue Range Road, reached by an extremely steep access road, which Stephen said would be closed after the burn. The burn site is approximately 48ha spread across a steep ridge bordered by native vegetation at the top and defined by a horizontal access road which will remain open after the burn. Below the road native vegetation was at least equal to pine wildings, but above the road pine wildings were the dominant vegetation though there were signs of healthy native vegetation in there as well.

The burn is to allow vehicle access to control the pine wildings and it is hoped it will take out some of the wildings as well. Sites have been marked to enable evaluation of native re-vegetation after the fire and a comprehensive restoration program will be undertaken after the burn. Details of this program will depend on the extent of the burn and the response of the native vegetation, but could include hand removal of the pines and re-seeding.

Christine Goonrey

Science chief: cut birthrate to save Earth

Edited from an article by

Robin McKie, science editor

The Observer, Sunday July 22 2007

The new head of the British Science Museum has an uncompromising view about how global warming should be dealt with: get rid of a few billion people. Chris Rapley, who took up his post on 1 September, is not afraid of offending. 'I am not advocating genocide,' says Rapley. 'What I am saying is that if we invest in ways to reduce the birthrate — by improving contraception, education and healthcare — we will stop the world's population reaching its current estimated limit of between eight and ten billion.'

'That in turn will mean less carbon dioxide is being pumped into the atmosphere because there will be fewer

people to drive cars and use electricity. The crucial point is that to achieve this goal you would only have to spend a fraction of the money that will be needed to bring about technological fixes, new nuclear power plants or renewable energy plants. However, everyone has decided, quietly, to ignore the issue.'

Such arguments give an indication of the priorities of the new Science Museum chief. Rapley, head of the British Antarctic Survey since 1977 and a passionate believer in man's influence on climate, is now in charge of one of Britain's most challenging institutions where strict academic requirements must be met while competing with Legoland and Disneyland to attract visitors. Only by tackling the issues of the day can he succeed, Rapley said.

Hence his urging that we deal with overpopulation, a call of wide public

interest and one that reflects the contents of the recent report by the Optimum Population Trust, which called for each couple in Britain to be limited to having two children each. 'A voluntary stop-at-two guideline should be adopted for couples in the UK who want to adopt greener lifestyles,' it stated.

'As to my job at the Science Museum, my remit is very simple,' Rapley said. 'It is to make it the most advanced museum in the world. I will only be able to do that by addressing the key issues in science today and the most important of these is climate change and energy policy. However, there are topics like stem cell science and genomics that are set to have enormous impact and which will have to be tackled in detail.'

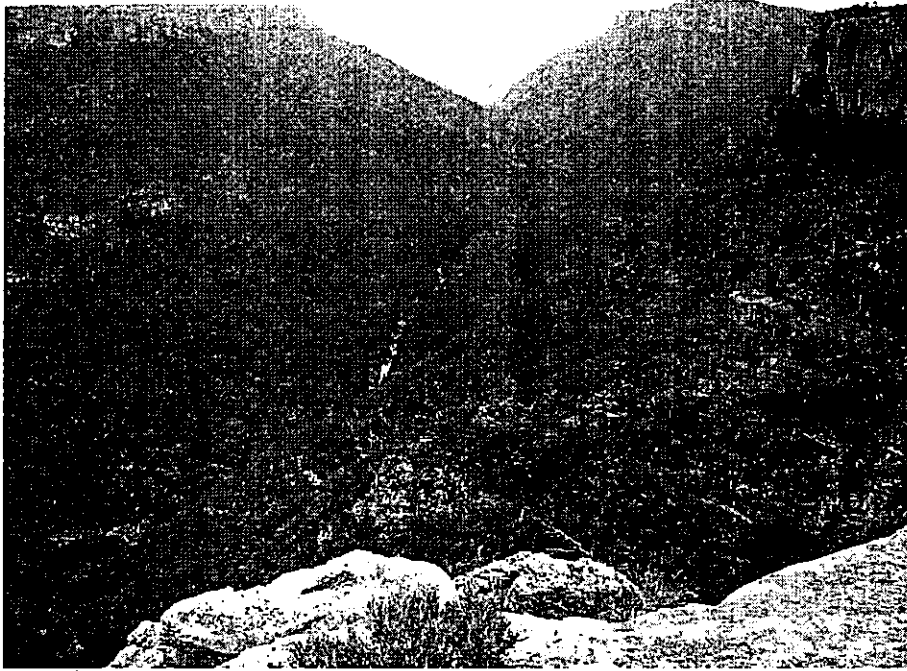
Symposium 9–10 May 2008

The National Parks Association of the ACT is holding a third public Symposium, this time on issues of climate change for the ACT and wider region.

Please keep Friday and Saturday 9–10 May 2008 free and again support your NPA.

The Program, speakers and timetable will be published on the NPA ACT website (www.npaact.org.au) as they are finalised. More information can be obtained from the convener Kevin McCue (ph. 6251 1291 or email kmccue@grapevine.com.au).

Yalwal to Quiera via Ettrema Gorge



Ettrema Gorge from Possibility Point.

Photos Pat and Eric Pickering

On 24 January 1993, an NPA group stood on Possibility Point overlooking Ettrema Gorge.

The point juts out into the gorge and at its extremity is only a couple of metres wide. To the north you can see the steep-sided 400m deep gorge for seven or more km, and to the south-west as far as Hamlets Crown some 5km away. The view is truly breathtaking, one of the best on the planet. In the amphitheatre behind us, the waters of Cinch Creek, with the spectacular Perryman Falls, cascade and tumble down to Ettrema Creek.

27 January 2007. Here we are again! Our companions, Barbara Edgar, Neville Esau, Madeleine Huckstepp, Grahame Muller, Steven Reynolds, Mike Smith and Peter Wellman are also enjoying this magnificent view. I can see the incredibly steep spur, 500m away running from our cliff-line to Cinch Creek, our route for the late afternoon. I wonder how on earth we will manage to get down it. I have done it a number of times but from this perspective it looks a little daunting.

It had taken almost two days to get to Possibility Point from the Yarramunmun fire trail near Yalwal — down through a break in the cliffs at Mission Point — crossing Danjera and Bundundah Creeks. Like Ettrema, they rise on the coastal plateau above Ulladulla and Nowra, flow northwards, and enter the Shoalhaven River near Burrier. Pat's mother was born there as were other Thomson descendants of Mary Reibey.

We had worked hard, with two significant climbs, the last being up the Twelve Apostles Spur. It has a few shady trees and many dense thickets of burrawangs. Standing on a huge boulder at the top of the spur we had excellent views of the spectacular Bundundah Creek valley across to Morley Saddle and yesterday's route. The Twelve Apostles are freestanding monoliths — pieces of broken cliff-line — standing in dense patches of ferns. This is a really beautiful place. Two hundred metres farther on we found Packhorse Pass. As the name implies, it is a ramp, which provides easy access over the last 20m of climb to Colleys Plateau.

It was then a scrubby but flat walk across the plateau to Possibility Point above Ettrema Gorge where we had stood 14 years ago almost to the day! Sonja, Kevin, Mike and others were with us then.

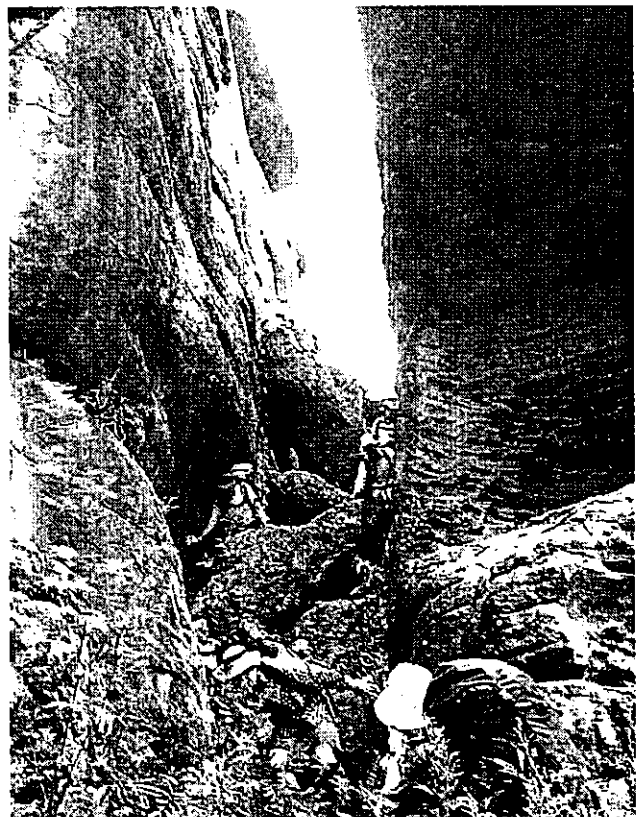
Enough reminiscing, there was much walking still to be done. The plan was to get into Ettrema Gorge

via nearby Pauls Pass and Cinch Creek and set up camp.

Pauls Pass is an amazing route. It starts near Dog Leg Creek and involves traversing a narrow ledge in the cliff face which you have to crawl or bend to negotiate before dropping into a crack. Here a huge chunk of cliff-face has moved about a metre away from the rest of the cliff. Earth and leaves have built up in this gap to form a ramp. Once inside the crack it is a simple matter of walking down the steep ramp, literally inside the cliff, and scrambling over a few boulders to the base of the cliff.

The next challenge for the tiring party was to scramble down the very steep spur to Cinch Creek, negotiating some parts on our bottoms. At Cinch Creek we enjoyed a well-earned swim in a beautiful swimming hole with a waterfall at one end. By 7pm we were setting up camp near the Ettrema/Cinch Creek junction. It had been a long day and there were no injuries! We were happy.

The next day was relaxing, wandering along Ettrema Creek, enjoying swimming in the beautiful pools of clear, deep water filtered by underground flows through sand and pebbles. The final day involved a steep but thankfully short 400 metre climb



Mission Point Cliff line scramble.

(Continued on page 13)

Mixed news on snowfields

With the best snowfalls in 17 years comes good news and worrying news from the snowfields. The Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, Phil Koperberg, on July 27 released the first report produced under the Perisher Range Environmental Management System (EMS), calling it "a great starting point" for assessing environmental performance in the resorts, while National Parks Association NSW executive officer Andrew Cox stated that trampling of vegetation, rubbish left by visitors, and high energy and water consumption during the ski season are a cause for concern.

Mr Koperberg said that the EMS report was designed to ensure parties working the area improved their environmental performance. "This first assessment is a great starting point for further improvements and sends a message to all organisations operating

in such a fragile area to take a serious look at how they can improve their environmental performance," he said.

The report found:

- lodges met their water consumption target of 220 litres of water per visitor per day;
- waste going to landfill fell by 17 per cent between 2002-03 and 2005-06;
- major organisations operating in the area trained 90 per cent of their staff in general environmental awareness;
- a reduction of the weed Yarrow in the resort area by 90 per cent;
- a reduction of the fox population by 70 per cent; and
- all substandard oil tanks had been removed.

Mr Koperberg said this first assessment allowed the setting of the first series of benchmarks "from which we can better measure our

environmental performance in the future."

However, Andrew Cox said holidaymakers should be encouraged to stay overnight outside the parks and skiers should use the Skitube rather than drive to the snow. The operation of snow-making machines depleted water reserves.

The NPA NSW wanted to see a lighter environmental footprint by all resorts at Kosciuszko so the sub-alpine environment was not damaged any further, he added.

More than 250 000 people visited the snowfields in June and July — 8000 more than in the same period in 2006. About 3 million people visit Kosciuszko National Park each year.

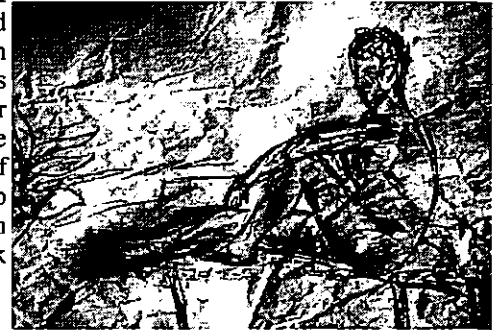
Graeme Wicks

The things you find on work parties

The NPA ACT's June work party involved collecting up rubbish from the bush around the old Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station site. The clean-up unearthed an amazing, even horrifying, amount of stuff; old building materials; gates and fencing wire both standing and of the tripping-up kind; bottles, cans, and tins of all shapes and sizes (from drink cans to 44 gallon drums); all sorts of electrical cabling and fittings; miscellaneous rusty iron packing bands and objects, recognisable

and otherwise. There were some surprises — including all sorts of bathroom parts (tiles, toilet seat and cistern pieces, toilet roll holder, etc), an electric coffee percolator and this (right) piece of artwork. If the artist, or subject, wishes to claim it, we'd be delighted (possibly) to see you at one of our meetings! A second cleaning-up day around the tracking station site in July resulted in a further couple of truck loads of rubbish.

Adrienne Nicholson



Yalwal to Quiera via Ettrema Gorge *continued*

out via Transportation Spur. We located the car hidden near Quiera Clearing four days earlier; unscrambled the long car shuffle and enjoyed the now traditional hamburger and walk celebration at the Nerriga Trading Post Restaurant.

Eric and Pat Pickering

Pardon Point at the top of Transportation Spur. Grahame Muller, Peter Wellman, Steven Reynolds, Madeleine Huckstepp, Mike Smith, Neville Esau, Pat Pickering, Barbara Edgar, Eric Pickering



Two Flats in the Uriarra Valley

Mark Butz, a Canberra-based environmental scientist and consultant, addressed the June meeting of the association. Following the destruction of 18 of the 19 arboreta in the lower Cotter Valley in the 2003 fires (Bendora Arboretum survived), Mark was asked to research the background of the Blundells Flat area, and subsequently studied the natural and cultural heritage of Blundells Flat and Shannons Flat under a heritage grant. In his address Mark outlined the results of these studies.

Blundells Flat and nearby Shannons Flat lie at an altitude of approximately 700m in the north west corner of the ACT close to Mount Coree, which at 1421m is the dominant feature of this area. The flats are located near Condor Creek and thus form part of the lower Cotter catchment. They occupy a distinctive montane position between the higher ranges and the lower land of the Canberra area.

The flats have a varied history of occupation extending back to Aboriginal times when their rich plant and animal resources were gathered, the large range of environments providing year-round yields. Extensive finds of Aboriginal artifacts have provided evidence of this occupation.

Early European settlers became familiar with the area. In the 1830s Terence Murray and Stewart Mowle moved stock through it to outstations in the higher land to the west. In 1875 journalist John Gale journeyed through the Uriarra area and reached the homestead of John Blundell.

Blundell was attracted to this remote area for the same reasons as the Aborigines and ran sheep and cattle and had established a large orchard. With his large family he lived a modest, perhaps mean, existence. The Blundells cleared native forest to open up the valley for farming, as did Samuel Shannon on adjoining holdings in the early 1900s.

Water supply protected

The selection of Canberra for the site of the federal capital in 1908 and its acquisition from NSW in 1911 brought significant changes to the pattern of land use as the Cotter catchment was designated for the city's water supply. Surveys yielded a greater knowledge of the lower Cotter valley. Subsequently a series of debates over the policies to be

adopted in the management of the area focussed on whether or not occupation and grazing should continue. In 1913 a policy of depopulation to protect the water supply as advocated by Dr J Cumpston was adopted and over the next few years the landholders were removed.

After the Australian Forestry School was set up in Canberra in the late 1920s, extensive use was made of the Blundells area for forestry field work, and from that time arboreta to test radiata and alternative pine species were established. Forestry-related studies and other scientific work were undertaken in the area and continued for many years.

By the 1950s multiple uses of the area were widely seen as acceptable and a hardwood forestry industry had been established, brown barrel being the main species removed, but there was also felling of other species including alpine ash. The establishment of forestry camps drew many workers into the area. This period saw the "great turbidity crisis" and while Charles Lane Poole supported multiple uses Lindsay Pryor claimed that roads and firebreaks associated with forestry activities were largely responsible for pollution in the water catchment. In 1958 Blundells Flat was planted to pines and this entailed clearing of the native forest and extensive modification of the landscape. Hardwood forestry operations were terminated in the early 1960s.

The speaker drew attention to the influence of people seeking recreation in the area as Canberra grew. John Blundell had in the early 1900s entertained tourists in what would now be called nature-based tourism. The 1930s saw bushwalkers pushing into these then remote areas and skiers passing through on the way to Mount Franklin. In the '70s and early '80s Blundells Flat, with the 1958 plantings of pines maturing, became a popular place for picnics and outings. These recreational uses began to shift community values towards conservation.

The 2003 fires razed the pine plantations and arboreta and completely transformed the area. On the one hand, this created a mecca for four wheel drivers and trail bikes, and control over the area was threatened. The water quality in Condor Creek was adversely affected. But on the other hand, things that had been masked by the pines could now be seen: granite outcrops and meadows of wildflowers.

"Wheatfield germination" of eucalypts and acacias took place on the site of the arboretum.

Old values re-emerge

Attention was drawn to values in the area which had preceded plantations but had since apparently been forgotten, or at least were not acknowledged in management. These included corroboree frogs and a burrowing land crayfish (*Engaeus cymus*) at Blundells and the only ACT occurrence of *Eucalyptus camphora* at Shannons. The presence of corroboree frogs at this lower altitude could be important for the survival of the species in the face of climate change and the dramatic recovery of this eucalypt was unexpected as it had been heavily suppressed by pines for half a century.

Since the fire, a conservation management plan has been developed for the Blundells Flat-Shannons Flat area and is now being implemented. Old forestry roads no longer required are being closed, weeds such as blackberries are being targeted, willows and poplars are being removed. Restoration of the natural drainage patterns that had been modified for farming and forestry is being progressed whilst retaining some components of heritage value.

An entirely different picture of Blundells Flat post-fire is emerging. A number of volunteer groups are active in the area, some assisting with regeneration and some recording what is in the area: about 270 plant species and more than 40 bird species have been recorded to date. Student groups are also involved. Geoff Hope, who is leading such a group, told the meeting the fascinating story that is emerging from the study of peat deposits in the flat.

Many groups are involved in the restoration work: government authorities, contractors, volunteers, students and researchers. But the work is not without its problems such as the rapid growth of pine wildlings and the incursions of trail bikes and four wheel drivers.

The need is to recognise and protect the values of the flats so that a restored complex montane wetland environment will be available for study and enjoyment, all within half an hour of the city.

Syd Comfort

Myna milestone passed

I noticed last summer that there weren't so many Indian mynas visiting my so-called garden, and now I know why. The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc. (CIMAG), set up in April last year, is already making a difference. By March its members had removed 10 001 mynas (and 961 starlings). The reduction would be much greater because not all members had reported in, and the counts of non-members are not included.

Congratulating members on this "major milestone", the President of CIMAG, Bill Handke, also announced the group's first "1000 trapper": he is "Peter Green, the genius mostly responsible for developing the little trap that most of us use".

Other notable trappers are Ross Tinsom, of Tuggernong, (906 mynas) and Len Davies, of Garran, (875 mynas, not included in CIMAG total because he is not a member).

"The CIMAG Strategy includes raising public awareness and undertaking public education about Indian mynas: the threat they pose and how people can reduce the opportunities mynas have for feeding, breeding and roosting," Mr Handke said. "You can read the CIMAG Strategy on our website: www.indianmynaaction.org.au."

The strategy also refers to the need to be involved in a strong research program, and CIMAG is looking to develop information brochures and public education material, and to sponsor a research project about the impact of our trapping on myna numbers and native birds.

"The research project would enable us to clarify the impacts of our trapping efforts," Mr Handke said. "Up to now, we have had a lot of anecdotal evidence that intensive trapping has markedly reduced myna numbers in that local

area and seen the return of native birds to gardens. A

research project will help to put a scientific base around those general observations. Professor David Lindenmayer and Dr Chris Tidemann (both from ANU) and Dr Tony Peacock from the CRC on Invasive Animals, are discussing a possible PhD research project that would give us these answers."

CIMAG is conscious of the need to adopt sound animal welfare practices and to ensure that euthanasing is quick, painless and stress-free. Following a discussion with the RSPCA, the group is working with ANU to put some facts together on euthanasing options.

Graeme Wicks



Bullanamang—bush property for sale

As the prospect of fire trail incursions into Namadgi still looms large, the thought of buying a property close to the southern border of the park, to act as a buffer and as a sanctuary adjacent to it, is very tempting.

Bullanamang, a 2 010ha bush property 8km north of Bredbo, is for sale. It is undulating to steep bush with a 3.4km frontage to the Murrumbidgee and extends to the summit of Mt Clear.

The owner offered to sell it to Bush Heritage but this did not eventuate because it did not meet all the necessary criteria. One of Bush Heritage's consultants has described it as "a beautiful property". Asking price is \$350 000 – \$400 000.

I have received a short PowerPoint presentation of the property and it looks just lovely — box woodland, a tranquil river frontage, an alpine community with grass tussocks and mature, healthy eucalypts, and a very spectacular view from the top of Mt Clear.

I would like to work with a group of people towards buying the property or encouraging a conservation organisation to do this and to manage it appropriately.

Some of the characteristics of the property gleaned from a report for Bush Heritage are that it has:

- superb wetlands, creeks and alpine fens;
- a diverse range of habitat;

- outstanding riparian values both along the river, and along all creeks and upland fens/wetlands;
- a 100 year old cattleman's hut;
- a low intensity fire area;
- the Bush Heritage property, Scottsdale as a neighbour;
- no building entitlement and access is 4WD.

It is an important 'stepping stone' for ecological connectivity.

Ideas I've received have included a group's purchasing the property and sharing advice and equipment with Bush Heritage with the present owner as manager, or trying to interest organisations like Birds Australia, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, or The Nature Conservation Trust of Australia in purchasing the property.

Bullanamang is currently being offered in several blocks and if it is sold off as hobby farms, bang goes any chance to preserve it as is.

If you have any questions or are interested in trying to help secure Bullanamang as a bushland sanctuary, please contact me by email on judy.kelly@tpg.com.au or by phone: 6253 1859 (h), 0428 435 661.

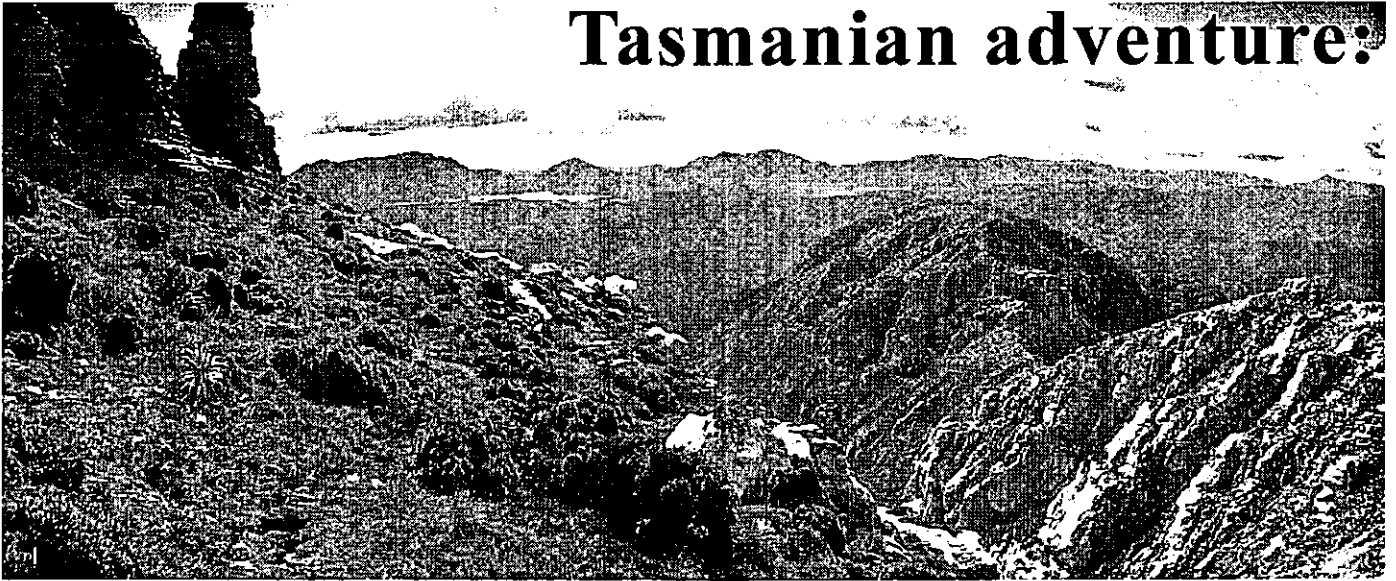
Judy Kelly

[See item about 'Scottsdale', *A start for Kosciuszko to Coast*, in PARKWATCH, page 18 – Ed]



Small dam in woodland area on Bullanamang. Photo Kevin McCue

Tasmanian adventure:



Starting in mid February eight hardy but fairly senior NPA members set out for a three-week pack walking adventure exploring some of Tasmania's choice walking spots. Our team comprised Tim Walsh, Brian Slee, Ross Walker, Neville Esau, Kathy Saw, David Large and myself. Our (illustrious) leader was Graham Scully, who put in a fantastic effort arranging the itinerary and logistics, all of which went off with what seemed like military precision but thankfully without the need for military discipline. Graham's one "failure" was that he himself contracted a fairly nasty dose of the wog part way through and had to miss the last bit. Fate can be cruel.

Our starting point was Devonport, from which Graham had prearranged transport to and from the trackhead for the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. We spent four days in this wild and remote part of Tassie.

This was my introduction to the wonders of our island state and the impressions were all favourable. Even the weather was idyllic, and the views of the ice-formed landscape of the central plateau with its lakes and bordering mountains sublime. Indeed the weather stayed like that for virtually the whole of our trip, despite the dire warnings we'd had regarding the "normal" state of weather in the areas we were visiting. It was something of a shock to realise that Tasmania was going through a drought which appeared to be every bit as bad as ours. The farmland around Devonport was just like Canberra's — waterless, brown and bare.

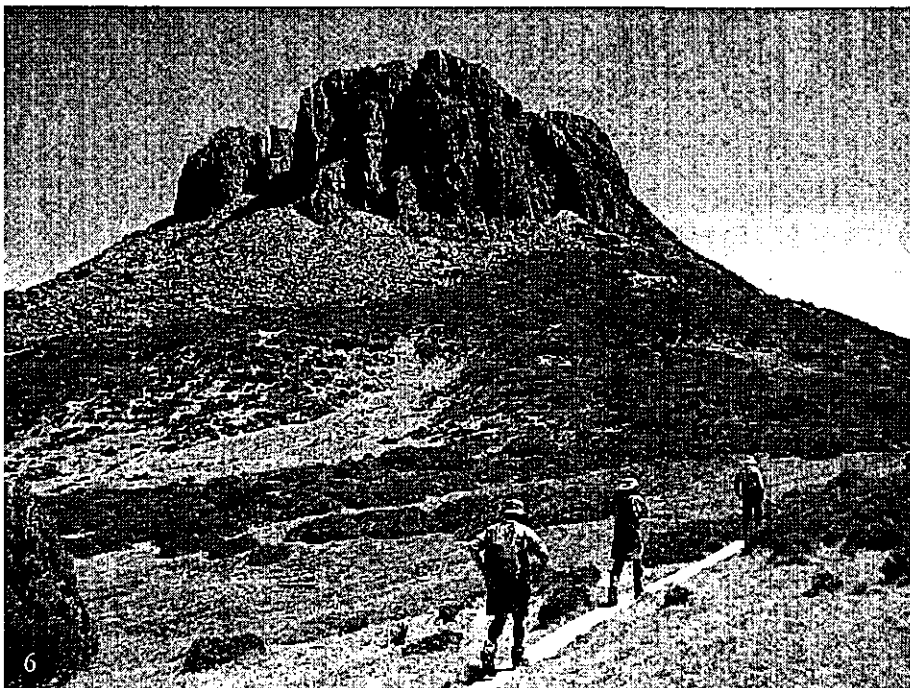
Our second departure from Devonport was by another Scully-arranged bus, to Cradle Mountain where we had a couple of nights at Waldheim Chalet and a day walk round Dove Lake and up Cradle Mountain

before setting out on the ubiquitous Overland Track. The weather smiled on us the whole way as we spent a week with what seemed like every other bushwalker in the world wandering along the fabled track taking in a smorgasbord of side trips to places such as Barn Bluff, Lake Wills, Mt Ossa, and Mt Oakleigh.

The *pièce de résistance* came towards the end of the track, where we were joined by Den and Geoff Robin and David and Jenny Boyer for the two-day sidetrip to Pine Valley Hut and The Labyrinth. Den and Geoff are former Canberra residents well known to the NPA ACT, who now live in Hobart, and David and Jenny are friends of Graham's from Bruny Island (and now also friends to the rest of us).

A boat trip along Lake St Clair, a nice dinner at the Lake St Clair Resort, and a night under a roof in a proper bed

(Continued on page 17)

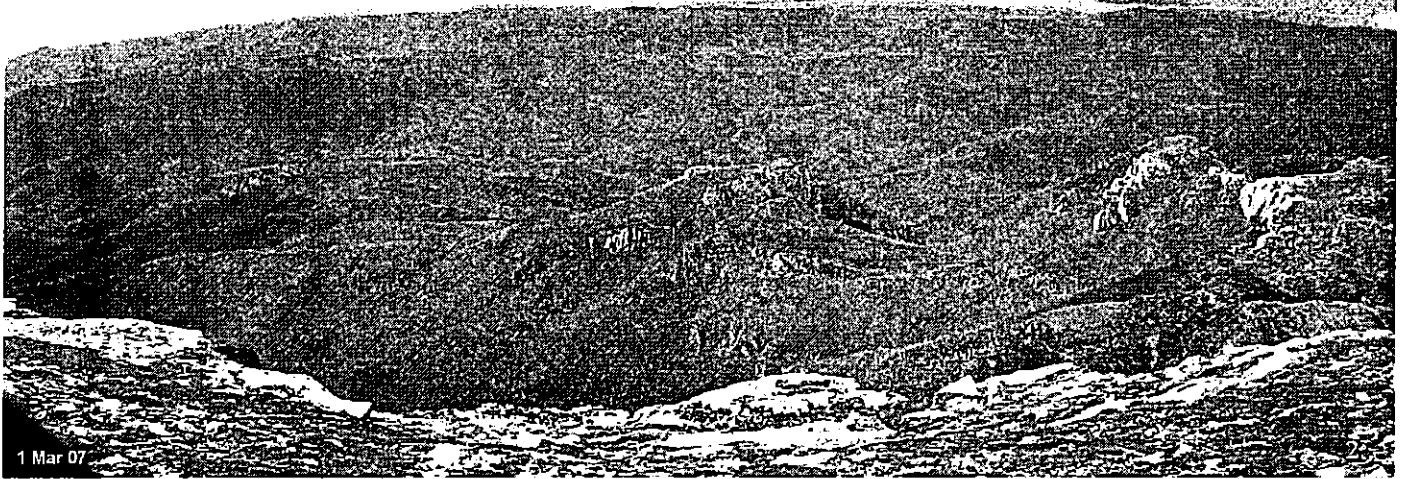


Photos, clockwise from top of this page.

1. Frenchmans Cap, the view.
2. Frenchmans Cap, more views.
3. Kathy Saw on the Sodden Lodden (not quite so sodden this day).
4. Geoff Robin, David Boyer, Tim Walsh, Kathy Saw, Neville Esau and Ross Walker at Barron Pass with Frenchmans Cap behind.
5. Max Lawrence not quite lost in the mist on Mt Ossa, Overland Track.
6. Ross Walker, Graham Scully and Brian Slee approaching Solomons Throne, Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

Photos Max Lawrence.

a three-week pack walk



1 Mar 07

was what could have been a nice conclusion to a fantastic couple of weeks pack walking. But this was not to be.

Graham had even more planned for us. Yet another "Scullybus" picked us up early the next morning and took us out to the trackhead for Frenchmans Cap. We'd no sooner donned our packs than we came upon a notice that included the following words:

The Frenchmans Cap Track is for experienced walkers only. It is considerably more physically demanding than the ... Overland Track. The track is rough, wet and muddy. You can expect to get muddy to your knees. Snow and blizzards can occur at any time of the year. Everyone must be equipped to cope with such conditions, even in summer.

Cripes, it said "muddy" three times. Another sign nearby had more details, including that it's 27km out and another 27km back, the overall climb is 1080m, and it usually takes three to five days. Of course we knew all that, but seeing it put so bluntly at the beginning of our

enterprise had a decidedly sobering effect. But the bus had gone so there was no turning back. In the event we had a dream run with the weather and much (but not all) of the mud was on a drought induced holiday; but even so we used up most of the allotted five days.

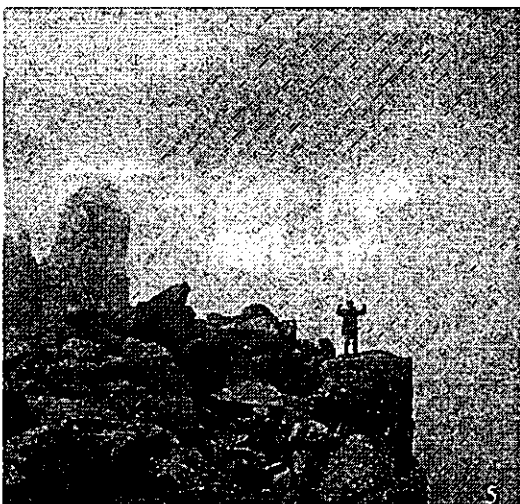
Overall, by my calculations we walked slightly more than 200km over the 19 days we were in Tassie. At the end of it all this old walker was pretty much all used up, but full of happy memories that will last a lifetime.

Speaking of lifetimes, the trip back from the Frenchmans Cap trackhead to Hobart on a big coach was indeed the trip of a lifetime. The driver was certainly into multi-tasking with a unique style of managing

his bookwork, making conversation with passengers, making calls on the mobile, and driving fairly adventurously, all at the same time. Hello Hobart, I love you!

Thank you, Graham, for setting it all up so well, and thank you fellow walkers for your wonderful companionship.

Max Lawrence



PARKWATCH

A start for Kosciuszko to Coast

On the fringes of Namadgi National Park Scottsdale covers more than 130,000 hectares of fertile native grassland and mountain woodland rising up from the Murrumbidgee River near Bredbo in New South Wales. Bush Heritage Australia bought Scottsdale for conservation earlier this year, with help from the Australian Government's National Reserve System Program and generous private donations from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and private donors commemorating the lives of Helen Liliam, Manning Rickards and Dr Peter Barrer. Bush Heritage Chief Executive Doug Humann says Scottsdale is a cracker in its own right, but its conservation potential goes well beyond its boundaries.

"Scottsdale is the first major action of an ambitious landscape reconnection project called *Kosciuszko to Coast* that aims to create a network of protected areas linking the snowgums of Kosciuszko National Park to the sea," he says.

"The project is a collaboration between the community, local environment groups, conservation organisations and all levels of government. Scottsdale is the first anchor in phase one of this conservation corridor and gets us off to a great start."

Scottsdale is home to two significant endangered vegetation communities — box gum woodlands and native temperate grasslands. These communities support a wealth of listed species including the endangered golden sun moth, the gang gang cockatoo and diamond firetail finch.

... It is one of the last-remaining remnants of highly productive grassland amid a sea of farmland and almost all the surrounding viable property has been developed.

Lauren Van Dyke manages the property for Bush Heritage, and has been discovering some real benefits to having so many farmers as neighbours. Lauren says she's been working with them to tackle the issues that are common to many properties in the area, like the control of the invasive weed, African lovegrass.

"We are learning a lot from the local farming community and they're watching what's going on at Scottsdale with great interest," Lauren says.

Scottsdale is proving to be a perfect hub for research partnership opportunities. The Australian National University, Canberra Institute of

Technology and CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems are pursuing on-ground research projects to guide future management.

Lauren says they have some really innovative trials in the pipeline.

"We are looking at the use of zero-till smother crops for weed suppression and want to investigate timed chemical weed-control that both suppresses target weeds and stimulates native grasslands. We plan to try harnessing fire as a restorative process, stimulating recovery and increasing diversity in some of Scottsdale's less intact native grasslands.

"We are setting up a survey program to monitor the growth of vegetation, and have already shown things are progressing well with the regrowth of red grass and a spring flush of bluebells."

The first native grass production area on Scottsdale has already been seeded and significant progress has been made on the development of low-cost native grass seed harvesting and delivery systems.

Scottsdale just goes to show the innovative and practical solutions that can be developed when conservationists, the community and government work together.

Natural Heritage Winter 2007

The weeds are climbing

Here's the good news — wherever they are in the world, mountains are amongst the least weedy of environments, and this offers us the opportunity to keep them that way. Now comes the not so good news ...

In Australia, thanks to 2,000 alpine quadrats we are data rich. The information which has been gained from these tells us that while there are currently few exotic species (weeds) in alpine vegetation (13 species recorded in natural vegetation above 1900m), there are a further 30 species sitting in the zone below — waiting.

As Keith McDougall from the Environment Protection and Regulation Division of the DEC puts it, "Climate change will enable more exotic species to invade natural mountain vegetation."

Knowing your enemy has always been a good tactic, and through the DEC'S involvement with MIREN (the Mountain Invasion Research Network), altitudinal transects in Oregon, Switzerland, Australia and Chile have provided a basis from which weed progress can be monitored.

"Weeds will be moving uphill by a variety of means — vehicles, people

with dirty shoes — but how the weeds reach there is irrelevant. What is important is that people on the ground keep a look out, know what they're looking for and have the time and resources to deal with it."

For more on alpine weeds from a global perspective visit the MIREN site, www.miren.ethz.ch

*News from the Alps
Summer-Autumn 2007*

Weed gallery online

Australian weed scientists have set up an image gallery featuring some of the worst weed infestations in the country. Their aim is to alert policymakers, funding bodies, nurseries and the public to the extent of the problem, which costs Australia about \$4 billion a year, much more than the cost of salinity and roughly equivalent to the yearly value of our gold exports. The gallery is at www.weeds.crc.org.au/main/image_gallery_index.html.

*The Sydney Morning Herald
5 July 2007*

Bring back the dingoes

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.

Professor Johnson states that: "I have found that for ground-dwelling species the presence of dingoes makes a big impact on the probability of decline. In places where dingoes are rare or absent, and foxes and cats are abundant, 50 per cent or more of ground-living mammals have vanished; where dingoes remain abundant the rate of local disappearance is 10 per cent or less ..." (*Ecos*, Oct/Nov 2006).

In April, Janine Haddow, Executive Director of Natural Resources in the Victorian Department of Sustainability and the Environment wrote to the Colong Foundation and advised that trapping, baiting and shooting of wild dogs is restricted to a 3 km buffer zone on public land that adjoins private land. This policy of not controlling wild dogs away from these buffer lands is "in recognition of the role of dingoes as a top order predator." These small steps toward dingo conservation are a start, we hope that they inspire others to take up the challenge before the dingo becomes extinct.

The Colong Bulletin May 2007

Tidbinbilla Centre progress

From early next year, visitors to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve will be able to encounter free-ranging wildlife in their natural habitat with the opening of the new \$6 million Nature Discovery Centre now under construction.

Set in the Tidbinbilla Valley, this unique outdoor attraction will feature exciting exhibits, a scenic path system, visitor education, amenities, and of course, plenty of wildlife.

The entire 30-hectare site will become one large enclosure, ensuring that visitors experience local wildlife such as the endangered brush-tailed wallaby, koalas, reptiles, water birds, possums, echidnas, platypus, emus and even insects, in their natural setting.

The centre will also feature informative exhibits and presentations that tell the stories of our wildlife and their habitats.

The Tidbinbilla wetlands are now closed to the public due to the construction works.

(For further information visit www.tams.act.gov.au)

Our city our community Canberra n.d.

An Aboriginal seat of the gods

A rock platform in the heart of the Wollemi Wilderness may be the closest thing Australia has to Mount Olympus, the seat of the gods in Greek mythology.

Last spring archaeologists discovered an enormous slab of sandstone, 100 metres long and 50 metres wide, in the 500,000 hectare Wollemi National Park. It was covered in ancient art.

The gallery depicted an unprecedented collection of powerful ancestral beings from Aboriginal mythology.

Last week the archaeologists who found the platform, Dr Matthew Kelleher and Michael Jackson, returned with a rock art expert from Griffith University, Professor Paul Tacon, a Blue Mountains based archaeologist, Wayne Brennan, and several of their colleagues. Two senior members of the Aboriginal community — a Daikinjung sites officer, Dave Pross, and a Central Australian artist, Rodger Shannon-Uluru — and the *Herald* joined the expedition. ...

The team had five days to document 42 figurative motifs, and by the first evening Professor Tacon, Mr Brennan and Dr Kelleher had recognised a gathering of the gods. The supreme being Baiame and his son Daramulan

were both there. Near them is an evil and powerful club-footed being, infamous for eating children.

Several ancestral emu women and perhaps the most visually powerful of the images — an eagle man in various incarnations — are also depicted.

"The site is the Aboriginal equivalent of the palace on Mount Olympus where the Olympians, the 12 immortals of ancient Greece, were believed to have lived," Professor Tacon said.

The Sydney Morning Herald
21-22 April 2007

Politics and island's pest problem

A comprehensive eradication program to rid Macquarie Island of rabbits, rats and mice is finally going ahead after the Tasmanian and Federal governments agreed to share the bill, estimated at \$24.6 million.

Macquarie Island is politically a part of Tasmania, but lies about 1500km south-east of Hobart, in the Southern Ocean. The island supports more than 17 threatened species of marine mammals and seabirds and was listed as a World Heritage Area in 1997.

"Baiting could not begin until the winter of 2009," says Dr Jenny Scott, a University of Tasmania plant ecologist who has been studying Macquarie Island's ecology since 1979.

As Dr Scott explains, the anti-coagulant bait — to be dropped by helicopter — cannot be laid until winter, when threatened seabird species leave the island.

Dr Scott says a number of factors have contributed to the rabbit population explosion from 10 000 or so in the late 1990s to the current estimated 100 000. These include an apparent resistance to the myxo virus, which was introduced in 1979; eradication of feral cats by 2000; and increased rabbit breeding success, possibly due to climate change.

The intense grazing pressure from rabbits on steep coastal slopes has caused landslips on slopes used as nesting areas by albatrosses and burrowing petrels.

One landslip in September 2006 destroyed a king penguin rookery, killing hundreds of birds.

"It was a turning point for people to sit up and take notice," says Dr Aleks Terauds, who spent 11 years studying the island's seabirds as a researcher with Tasmania's Department of Primary Industry.

Dr Terauds says four albatross species nest on Macquarie, with the grey-headed — listed under the EPBC Act — being the most vulnerable to habitat damage.

"The grey-headed only breeds on one small area — on and around the slopes of Petrel Peak. Grazing damage from rabbits is bad here. Nests are literally falling off the side of the hill.

"There will come a point where these birds will no longer have breeding habitat on Macquarie Island, their only Australian breeding habitat."

Even more threatened are the island's burrowing petrels. Rabbits are destroying the tall tussock grass that regulates the temperature of the nesting burrows and also provides critical cover from predators.

The WWF's Andreas Glanznig visited Macquarie Island in April to oversee the installation of an Automatic Weather Station — part of a \$100 000 package funded by WWF and Peregrine Adventures to "kick-start the eradication plan".

Weather station data will be critical to the helicopter baiting program.

(based on an article in *ECOS April-May 2007*, modified following agreement by the Tasmanian Government — Ed.)

Parks raise revenue

The Victorian National Parks Association has welcomed the Victorian Environment Assessment Council's draft report and the estimated \$92 million increased revenue to the state from new national parks. VNPA spokesman Nick Roberts said a recent report showed three of Victoria's national parks generated about \$500 million revenue each year. "National parks are a major driver for economic activity and growth," Mr Roberts said.

VNPA also said the proposed increased Aboriginal involvement in park management would allow for new opportunities for the regional nature-based tourism economy. "These new parks will have the potential to be the 'Kakadu of southern Australia' and the flow on benefits to regional towns will be enormous," Mr Roberts said.

VEAC estimated that the recommendations in their draft proposals paper would result in a net increase in economic value to Victoria of \$92 million/year, excluding the costs of environmental water.

Country News, 30 July 2007

Compiled by Len Haskew

National Parks Association Calendar

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Public holidays</i>		<i>Mon 1</i>		<i>Tues 25 Wed 26</i>
General meetings	Thur 20	Thur 18	Thur 15	–
Committee meetings	Tues 4	Tues 2	Tues 6	Tues 4
Gudgenby Bush Regeneration ¹	Sat 8	Sat 13	Sat 10	Sat 8
Great Australian Bushwalk *	Sun 9			
NPA ACT Christmas Party				Sun 9

Further details * GAB, visit the website, www.greataustralianbushwalk.org.au
¹ Yankee Hat carpark 10:00am, Clive Hurlstone 6288 7592 (h)
 0407 783 422 (mob). GBRG Christmas Party is on 8 December.

General Meetings

Third Thursday of the month
 (not December or January)

8:00pm

Uniting Church hall
 56 Scrivener Street
 O'Connor

General Meeting

Thursday 20 September

Can K2C be a catalyst for farming back ecological function and creating hyper-habitats?

Owen Whitaker, Farmer and Manager of Bush Heritage Australia's NSW properties

K2C (Kosciuszko to Coast) is a collaboration between local, regional, state and national non-government and government organizations to link two conservation corridors : the Australian Alps and the Great Escarpment of Eastern Australia.

General Meeting

Thursday 18 October

The Mulligans Flat–Goorooyarro Woodland Experiment.

Dr Adrian Manning, Research Fellow, The Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University.

How can we manage box gum grassy woodlands to improve them for biodiversity? The aim of the Mulligans Flat–Goorooyarro Woodland Experiment is to try and find answers to this question. The experiment will implement a long-term, large-scale 'natural experiment' to provide critical new data, analyses, and scientific insights on the simultaneous effects of management regimes on temperate woodland biota.

General Meeting

Thursday 15 November

Bushfire planning for the ACT's national park and nature reserves.

Gregor Manson, Emergency Services Commissioner, and Nick Lhuede, Strategic Planning Manager for Emergency Services.

Gregor has an extensive background in fire fighting in national parks in the Blue Mountains and Australian alps. He and Nick will provide an update on the current review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, particularly as it affects Namadgi and nature reserves in the ACT.



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